

VII. THEBEN*

1. NEW EVIDENCE ABOUT THE EH II PERIOD IN THEBES: A NEW ARCHITECTURAL COMPLEX AND A GROUP BURIAL WITHIN THE KADMEIA

by

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To the north end of the Kadmeia, in an area adjacent to the Archaeological Museum of Thebes, the excavations have revealed a unique set of Early Helladic II architectural remains¹. They consisted of a three-roomed apsidal building, an open air hearth, an outdoor storage area with pithoi, a narrow street and a monumental construction of stony terraces and huge blocks of mud bricks which surround the complex northwards and eastwards (pl. 1). Fifteen skeletons were also found in addition to the impressive architectural remains. The group burial was located inside the apsidal building. The architectural remains and the burial were covered by blocks of mud bricks which resemble an irregular shaped, possibly ellipsoid tumulus. According to the pottery style, the new finds are dated to the end of the EHII period.

The new promising evidence may contribute to the understanding of human presence and activity during the EHII period and especially of matters concerning patterns of intra-communal land-planning and social organization, funeral practices, production and the use of material culture².

* For abbreviations see Part A, Bibliography, in volume 1 of this monography.

¹ Aravantinos, V. L., Θήβα, ADelt 51, 1996, B'1 Chron 259–261. Aravantinos, V. L., Θήβα, ADelt 52, 1997, B'1 Chron 354–359. The excavations began during 1996 and finished in 2000.

² The impressive finds and the fine preservation of most of the architectural remains which have been completely uncovered led to the systematic study and publication of this excavation. This ambitious project is supported financially by the Greek Ministry of Culture and the Institute for Aegean Prehistory (INSTAP), whilst other institutions such as the Fitch Laboratory of the British School at Athens and the University of Bradford participate too.

During the Middle Helladic period the mud brick tumuli had been used as a cemetery with cist tombs, pits and mud brick tombs. As for the Mycenaean period, it is represented by a few graves, sparse architectural remains and almost certainly a sizeable part of the Mycenaean cyclopean wall of the north end of the Kadmeia. Also, Byzantine *bothroi* had been chiseled into the bedrock at the south whilst a street with an east-west orientation in the centre of the plot had disturbed all earlier remains.

In this paper we shall focus on the EHII finds of the excavation. This is a preliminary report concerning the architectural remains and the pottery assemblage.

During the final stage of the EHII period the monumental and elaborate architecture is well-known in the citadel of Thebes. Previous excavations in the centre of the Kadmeia have revealed two other apsidal buildings³ and the so-called "Fortified" Building⁴. Meanwhile, on the Amfeion Hill, a short distance from the plot of the Archaeological Museum of Thebes, a tumulus of mud bricks had been dug, dated by the excavator to the EHII period⁵. The new architectural complex offers an outstanding example of a monumental construction which combines the type of apsidal building, the erection of a thick-set wall which were covered afterwards with a tumulus that was built of mud bricks. Also, the discovery of an intramural burial with 15 skeletons, dated to the end of the EHII period, is considered very important as EH burials in Thebes are extremely rare.⁶

The apsidal building was a freestanding construction with an east-west orientation and 12 × 7 m in size (approximately 82 m²). It was erected directly on the solid bedrock which had been levelled at the south in order for the foundation of the south wall to be laid. As the bedrock slopes to the northwest, the north walls of the building were deeper than the south ones. The foundation of all the walls was constructed of small and medium sized stones while the upper part was constructed of mud bricks. The north wall is well preserved and it reaches a total height of almost 1.40 m, and it has an average width of 0.70 m. Both the inner surface of the north wall as well as the inner surface of the apsidal wall and the

³ Andrikou 1995, 294–295. Demakopoulou 1975, 194. Demakopoulou, K., *Θήβα*, *ADelt* 31, 1976, B'1 Chron 121–126: 124. Symeonoglou, S., *Θήβα*, *ADelt* 21, 1966, B'Chron 177–194: 178, 180. Konsola 1984a, 62.

⁴ Aravantinos, V. L., *Θήβα*, *ADelt* 37, 1982, B'1 Chron 165–170. Aravantinos, V. L., *Θήβα*, *ADelt* 38, 1983, B'1 Chron 129–131. Aravantinos 1986.

⁵ Spyropoulos, T. G., *Θήβα*, *ADelt* 27, 1972, B'1 Chron 307–312: 308. Spyropoulos, T. G., *Αιγυπτιακός Εποικισμός εν Βοιωτία*, *AAA* 5, 1972, 16–26. Spyropoulos 1981, 102–112. A review of all the opinions concerning the character and the dating of this tumulus is given by Forsén J. 1992, 133–134.

⁶ Touloupa, E., *ADelt* 19, 1964, B'Chron 192–197: 192, Konsola 1981, 110; 151–152.

surface of the wall that divides the central and the west room was covered with a whitish plaster. The floors were made of packed earth and since they were renewed from time to time, at least two different levels were recognized in the central and in the east room. Due to the fine preservation of the external and internal walls, the north entrance of the building a short distance from the northeast corner of the east room and the doorway between the apsidal and the central room are clearly visible. In the east room two successively constructed hearths lie at a short distance of 1 m from the east wall and 1.5 m from the northeast corner where one storage vessel had been put. In the same room a pit had been dug in the solid bedrock in order for a pithos to be installed. In the central room two successive floors were recovered at a higher level than the ground level of the east room. One may suggest that there was a divergence in floor level between the rooms due to the level of the bedrock.

A small amount of pottery was collected from the floors and the deposits of the building. The most common shapes are the basins with T-rim, the saucers and bowls with an incurved rim and the cooking pots. Less common are the shapes of the amphora, of the hydria, of the askos, and the two handled tankards with wavy rim. Just a few sherds belong to one handled tankards or "Trojan" cups and to two handled cups with wavy rim. As for the other categories of finds we can discern one stone seal with a geometric pattern, flaked stone tools and animal bones.

Contrary to the other contemporary buildings of Thebes there is no evidence of destruction layers caused by intense fire. Parts of the mud brick walls were demolished and formed a deposit of tattered mud bricks that covered the floors of the building.

A narrow path of packed earth and pebbles was dug out at the same depth as the threshold of the north doorway of the apsidal building. It surrounds the building to the north covering the distance between the building and the terraces with the mud bricks. After the abandonment of the building, the gap above the surface of the path and between the apsidal construction and the surrounding wall was covered with compact layers of mud bricks. These mud brick layers adjoined both the mud bricks of the building walls and the ones of the surrounding wall of the tumulus that sealed the EHII habitation, at least in this area of the plot.

The stony terraces that were uncovered northwards and eastwards of the apsidal building were the most impressive constructions of the plot. They constituted the stony foundation of a surrounding wall built of mud bricks. This wall was situated on the edge of the north bluff of the Kadmeia hill and protected the apsidal building. As has been suggested in the case of the "Fortified building" of Thebes⁷, during EHII, individual walls encompassed some of the buildings or some

⁷ Aravantinos 1986.

specific areas of the citadel. There was no unified fortification which would entirely protect the settlement of EHII Thebes. The land-planning of Thebes probably reflects a type of social organization based on kins which used to stay in these communal units. Besides, the erection of these monumental and elaborate constructions presupposes a kind of social organization that could mobilize a multitude of people who would work for the public weal.

The stony terraces were constructed of small and medium sized unworked stones filled with clay in between. The north wing has an east-west orientation. As it lies on the edge of the bluff it is situated on the solid bedrock whilst at the north edge it is situated on earth. The north wing was uncovered for a length of 20 m. The width of the terraces reaches 3 m. Two channels with a north-south orientation cut across the stony terraces. They have been dug into the solid bedrock and their sides are built with the same stones as the ones that have been used for the terraces. It is obvious that they were used to drain away the plentiful rain.

East of the apsidal building the terraces rise gradually. They are divided into two parts. The one in the centre of the plot has an east-west orientation and was partly uncovered. Along this part of the surrounding wall we did not remove all the layers of the mud bricks and only in three trenches did we reach the stony terraces. The second one in the east area of the plot has a northwest-southeast orientation and adjoins to the foundation of the west wall of the Archaeological Museum of Thebes.

Compact layers of mud bricks overlaid the stony terraces creating a massive and impressive wall which, in some areas, is preserved to a height of 2 m. The width of the mudbrick layers is 4 m and extends to the north from the edge of the stony terraces.

According to the pottery that was uncovered in soundings along its foundation and according to the sparse sherds that were picked up from the mud bricks, the surrounding wall was constructed at the same time as the apsidal building and is dated to the end of the EHII period.

To the east of the apsidal building we have found small stony constructions of indefinite function and parts of walls. Also, a storage area with big pithoi and a 'hoard' comprising of two metal weapons were uncovered in the trench E6. A clay construction with intense traces of fire, probably an open air hearth, was revealed under the layers of the tumulus mud bricks in the area of trench XI between the surrounding wall and the stony construction at the south. The deposit was extended eastwards and westwards and was filled with ashes. Also a large amount of late EHII pottery and animal bones were collected.

A burial with fifteen skeletons was brought to light in an area about 4×2.70 m in size that extends between the southeast corner of the central room of the apsidal building and the southwest corner of the east room (Trenches E7 and E8).

The dead persons had been placed with neglect as indicated by the different orientation and the different positions of the skeletons. Also, some of the skeletons were overlapping parts of other skeletons. They belong to adults and only in one case to a child. The burial followed the abandonment of the apsidal building as indicated by the fact that the skeletons have been put on the destruction layer of the building. The burial is dated to the end of EHII. One handled tankards of “Anatolian” type, two handled tankards with wavy rims, askoid vessels, small spherical vessels⁸, ellipsoid bowls with a curved rim, small bone artifacts and obsidian blades were offered to the dead.

The burial, just like the whole architectural complex, was covered with the mud brick tumulus that sealed the EHII human presence in this particular area of the citadel. The size and the shape of the tumulus can not be assigned as the human activity of MH, LH and Byzantine periods destroyed the upper levels. Also, contemporary modern buildings affected the archaeological deposits. In any case the tumulus extends all over the north half of the plot (approximately 32 × 14 m (448m²)).

2. A NEW EH II POTTERY ASSEMBLAGE FROM THEBES

by

ΚΥΡΙΑΚΙ ΨΑΡΑΚΙ

The discovery of a new archaeological complex which is ‘sealed’ by a mudbrick tumulus offers the opportunity to examine, with more certainty, the characteristics of the late EHII material culture. The layers under the tumulus are almost undisturbed and only the Byzantine presence disturbed or ruined the previous activity to the southern half of the plot. Even the MH burials or the LH architectural remains disturbed mainly the upper layers of the tumulus and they scarcely reached the EHII habitation levels. Besides, in most cases the LH layers follow a deposit which expands all over the northeast area of the plot and it indicates the levelling of the tumulus before the erection of the Mycenaean wall and all the other LH constructions to the south.

We also have to mention that the evidence for EHIII activity in the area is mostly missing. We did not find any sherd that may be ascribed to characteristic

⁸ The type is well known from the graves of Manika. Papavasileiou, G., *Περί των εν Ευβοία Αρχαίων Τάφων*, 1910.

categories of EHIII pottery⁹ like painted vessels of the Ayia Marina style¹⁰, partially glazed pots¹¹ or the so-called dark burnished pottery¹².

The EH pottery was collected from the floors and the destruction layer of the apsidal building, from the storage area with the pithoi and the open air hearth and finally from soundings along the foundation of the apsidal building and along the surrounding wall. This pottery assemblage is dated to the end of the EHIII period¹³. As already mentioned, the burial and the tumulus are dated to the same period too. The archaeological finds belong to successive phases of human activity which is contemporary to the so-called period “Lefkandi I”¹⁴.

A variety of open and closed shapes has been recognised¹⁵. The most common shape is the small or medium sized ellipsoid bowl with in-curved rim (pl. 2: 3, 4) and then follows the medium or large hemispherical and conical bowls and basins with T-rim (pl. 2: 5, 6). They are discerned by the variety of rim profiles, the flat bases and the horizontal long lugs below the rim. The category of open shapes is accomplished with small sized pots like the conical and ellipsoid saucers (pl. 2: 1, 2), the “Trojan cups” with ribbon handles (pl. 2: 7), and the cups with simple or wavy rim, two ribbon handles and ring bases (pl. 2: 8). The last open shape associates the concept of a small two-handled drinking vessel which finds parallels in the ‘Anatolianising’ bell-shaped cups and the local feature of the wavy rim¹⁶.

⁹ Pottery of group C by Konsola. Konsola 1981, 124–126.

¹⁰ Donovan, W., *A Study of Early Helladic Pottery with Painted Decoration*. Ph. D. Cincinnati (Univ. Microfilms, Ann Arbor, Michigan) 1961, 94–107. French, D. H., *Anatolia and the Aegean in the Third Millennium B. C.* Ph. D. Diss., Cambridge University 1968: 60. French, D. H., *Notes on Prehistoric Pottery Groups from Central Greece*, Athens 1972, 20–22.

¹¹ Konsola 1981, 124.

¹² Rutter 1983a; Rutter 1986b.

¹³ It concerns the pottery Group B of Konsola. References about the EH pottery from Thebes, see Konsola 1981, 119–126, Demakopoulou 1975. Demakopoulou – Konsola 1975.

¹⁴ Popham, M. R. and Sackett, L. H. (eds.), *Excavations at Lefkandi, Euboea, 1964–1966*, London 1968. Renfrew, C. A., *The Emergence of Civilisation: The Cyclades and the Aegean in the Third Millennium B. C.*, London 1972, 103–105; Rutter 1979. Regarding the issue of relative chronology for the phase “Lefkandi I” see Manning 1995, 51–61.

¹⁵ Psaraki, K., *Πρωτοελλαδική κεραμική από την πόλη της Θήβας*. Ανασκαφή στο «Όμοιο οικόπεδο του Αρχαιολογικού Μουσείου Θηβών». International Symposium “100 Years of Archaeological Research at Thebes. The first excavators and their successors”. 15–16 November, Thebes 2002 (in press).

¹⁶ This type of rim occurs in two-handled tankards from Orchomenos. Kunze, E., *Orchomenos III. Die Keramik der frühen Bronzezeit* (Abhandlungen der Bayrischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Abteilung, Neue Folge, Heft 8), München 1934, 30–36.

The closed shapes are characterised by greater variability. The shape of the askos with a tubular or troughed spout and a broad ribbon handle (pl. 2: 9), the small spherical vessel with short neck and lugs on the shoulder (pl. 3: 11, 12) and the tankards with simple or wavy rims, two ribbon handles and ring bases (pl. 2: 10) are of medium size. The shape of the hydria (pl. 3: 13) and the amphora (pl. 3: 14, 15) are of medium to large size. Initially, the shape of the hydria has been considered by Konsola as one of the characteristic pots of group C¹⁷, dated to EHIII. However, after the latest finds we can be sure that the hydria was in use since the late EHII period and it should be added to group B of Konsola. As for the cooking pots, three types are distinguished: the medium sized one-handed pot (pl. 3: 16), the medium to large sized two-handed pot (pl. 3: 17) and the pans (pl. 3: 18, 19)¹⁸. Finally, large pithos with flat bases and two short ribbon handles are added to the ceramic repertoire.

The systematic macroscopic examination of pottery has shown a high degree of production standardization, mainly in choices reflecting consistent combinations of fabric, shape and surface finish. After the recording and study of the pottery one may distinguish two groups of wares. Between these two groups there are distinctive traits concerning the surface finish and the shapes of vessels.

In group "A" there are coarse and medium/coarse wares with visible red, black and calcareous inclusions. In group "A", pots are plain or they are covered with dark brown or red slip. The surface finish ranges from burnished or smoothed to scored or left untreated. In most cases the slip is waterish and only some basins and bowls are covered with a thicker slip. The most common shapes are cooking pots, pithos, basins and small bowls.

In group "B" there are fine and medium/fine wares without visible inclusions or with sporadic calcareous inclusions that appear on the surface of the vessels. In group "B" there are just a few plain pots and most of the vessels are covered with slip or glaze. The surfaces are almost always burnished. The most common shapes are the hydria, amphora, askos, two-handed tankards, small closed spherical vases, small bowls and saucers, two handled-cups and the one-handed "Trojan" cup.

With regards to the shapes, in group "B" we can distinguish two stylistic traditions, the local and the "Anatolian". Between the main shapes of the local tradition, i.e. the askos and the two-handed tankard¹⁹, and the shapes of the

¹⁷ Konsola 1981, 126.

¹⁸ The shape of the pan occurs in Eutresis, Goldman, H., *Excavations at Eutresis in Boeotia*, Cambridge, Mass. 1931.

¹⁹ Askos is a common shape in Boeotia, Kunze 1934 (Fn. 16), 24–27, taf. VII, VIII; Konsola 1981, 121–122; Demakopoulou – Konsola 1975, fig. 53; Goldman 1931 (Fn. 18), 104, fig. 135; Caskey, J. L., Caskey, E. G., *The Earliest Settlement at Eutresis*:

“Anatolian” tradition, especially the “Trojan cup” and the saucers²⁰ we recognize macroscopically important similarities of fabric, colour of biscuit, surface treatment, quality of slip and thickness of the body. Also the pots of both stylistic traditions are handmade. Besides, the first results of spectrographic analyses for the samples of group “B” confirm the technological similarity of the local and “Anatolian” shapes²¹. Consequently, one may suggest that the “Anatolian” shapes are the products of local potters who adapted the foreign types of vessels in their technological tradition.

It seems that the community of Thebes adopted only two of the shapes that comprise the well-known group “Lefkandi I” or “Kastri”, that is the “Trojan cup” and the saucer²². The two-handled bell shaped cup is missing and it is replaced by the two-handled cup with wavy rim. The lentoid jug and the type of beak-spouted jug are replaced by the askos. As for the shape of the so-called *depas amphikypellon*, it is missing from the particular assemblage²³. The local communities of Boeotia appear to have chosen a variety of anatolianising shapes or features and adapted them to their own requirements in order to generate a particular set of vessels which is mainly related to the serving and drinking of liquids. To this group, which is a mixture of local features and Anatolian types, we may add the two-handled tankard with simple or wavy rim which is also considered as a liquid pot. The local production and use of this pottery set reflects the occurrence of new consuming habits among the community of Thebes at the end of the EHII period. The enhancement of a local pottery tradition with Anatolian types and the assimilation of these types to the local system of production reflects not only the place of Thebes among the “international spirit”²⁴ of the period but also the active participation of the community to the formation of this spirit in the Aegean.

Supplementary Excavations 1958. *Hesperia* 29, 1960, 126–167: pl. 49 VIII, 17. For the relationship of askos with the pottery tradition of Fokida see French 1968, 64, 73, fig. 61j. However, the askos occurs in Lerna III, Caskey J. L. – Blackburn 1997, fig. II, I. For the two-handled tankard see Kunze 1934 (Fn. 16), 30–36, taf. X, XI3b, XIV2; Konsola 1981, 122.

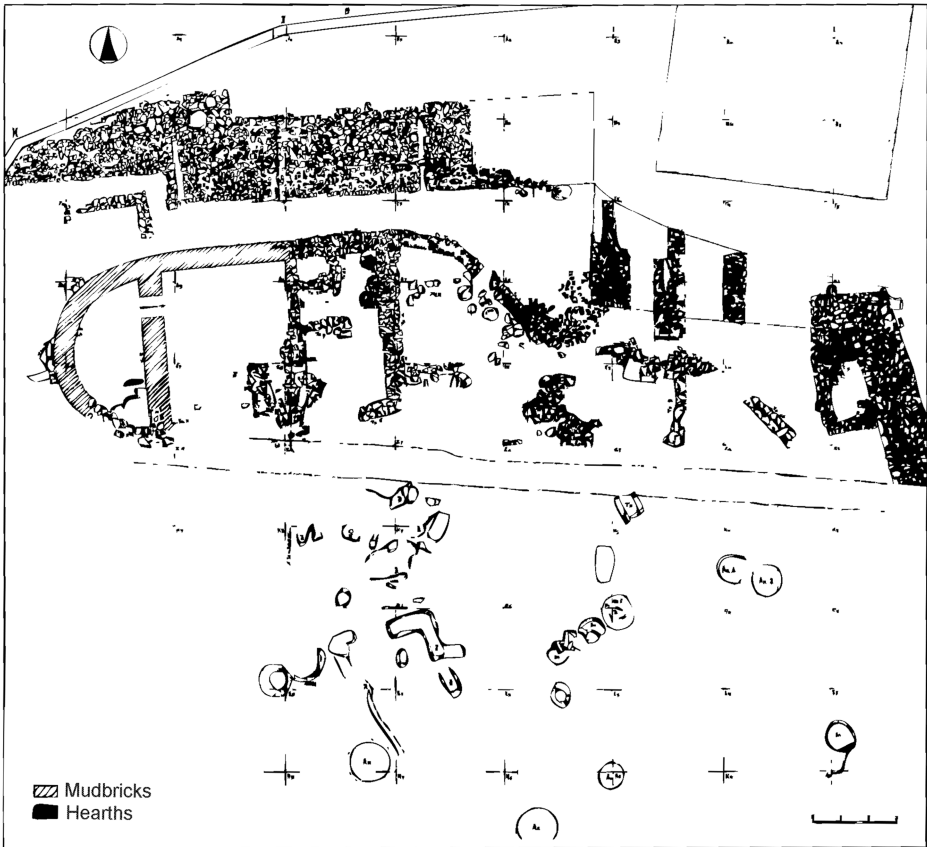
²⁰ Renfrew 1972 (Fn. 14), 103–105, 116, 533–534; Rutter 1979.

²¹ Hilditch, J., E. Kiriati, K. Psaraki, V. Aravantinos, EHII Pottery from Thebes: An Integrated Typological, Technological and Provenance Study, in 4th Symposium on Archaeometry, 28–31 May, 2003, Athens (in press).

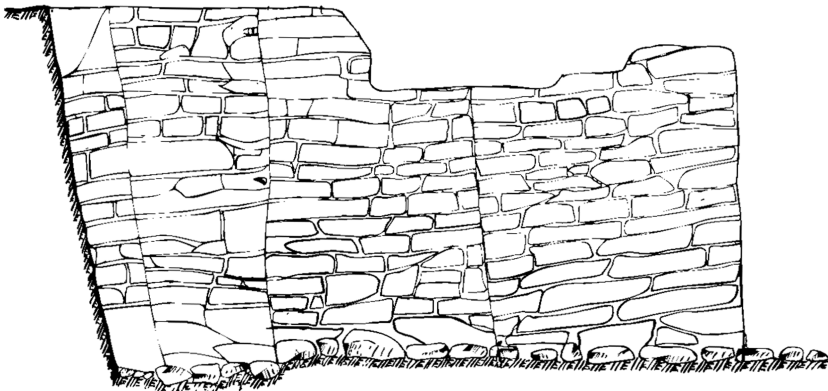
²² Renfrew 1972 (Fn. 14), 103–105, 533–534; Rutter 1979.

²³ Konsola mentions the presence of two small funnel cups that resemble the cups from Orchomenos called “spitze Becher” and resemble the *depas*, Konsola 1981: 123, Kunze 1931: 57).

²⁴ French 1968 (Fn. 10), 166–172; Renfrew 1972 (Fn. 14), 451–455.

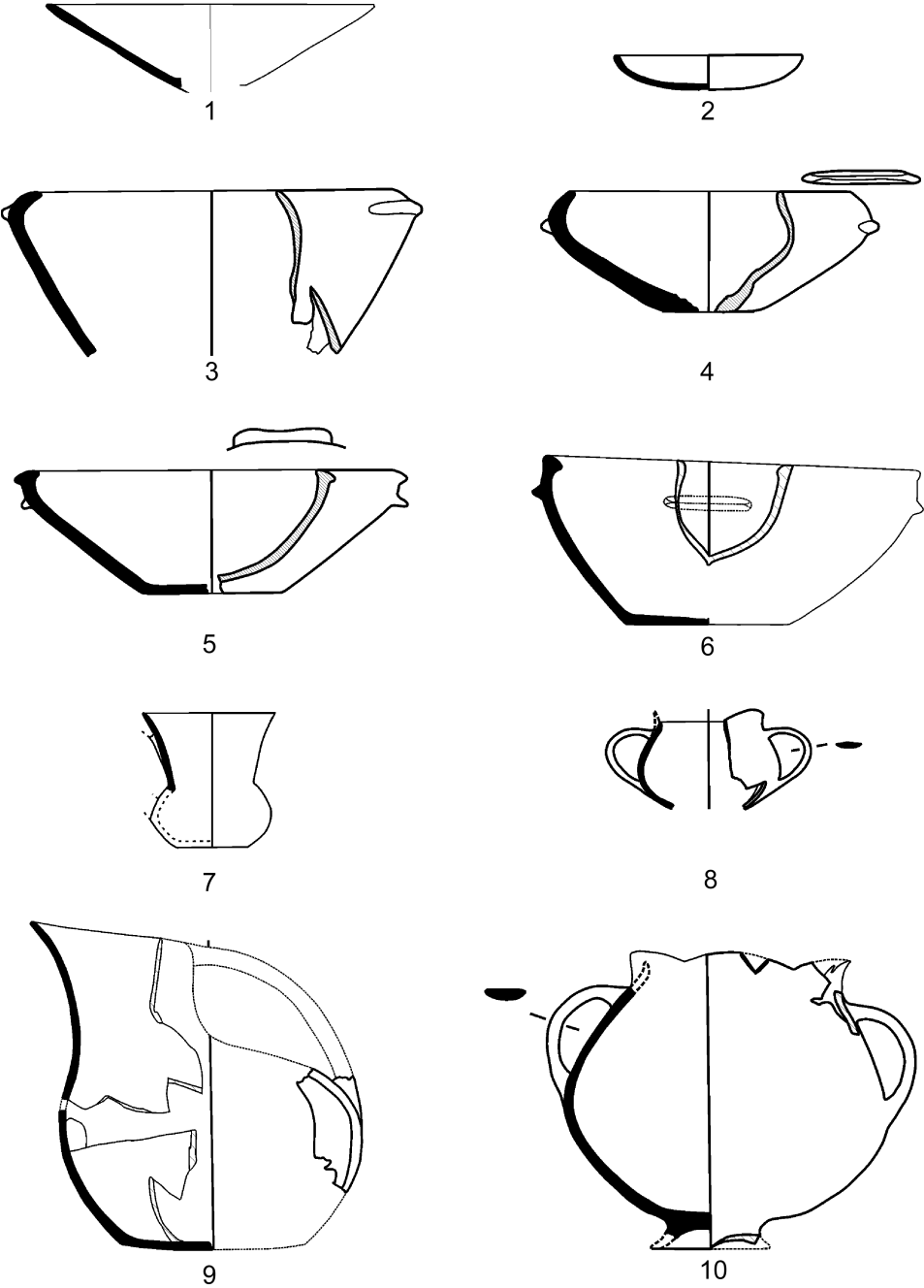


a) EHIII architectural complex from Thebes

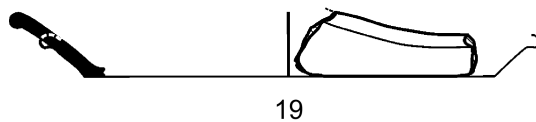
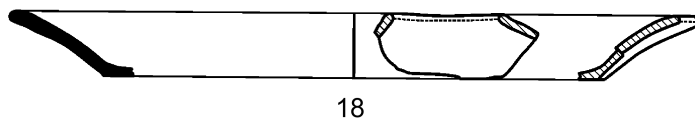
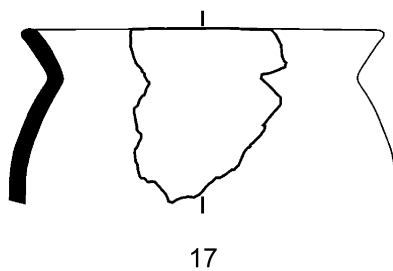
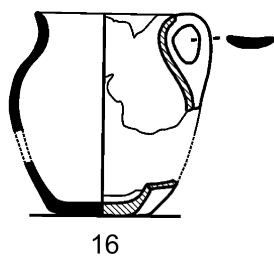
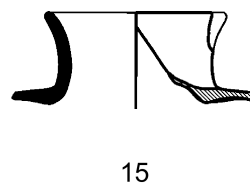
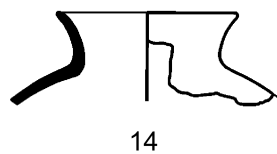
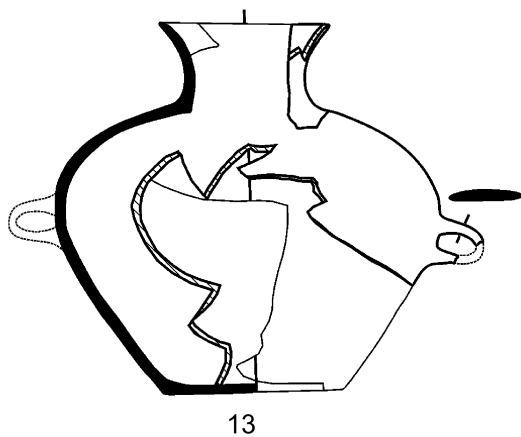
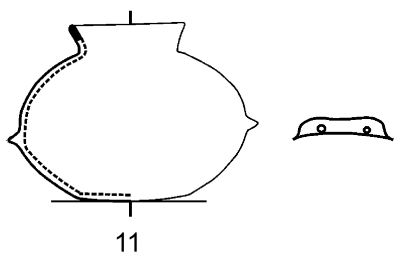


b) Stone terrace and mudbrick wall. Section X: vertical facet of east side (1:40)

Plate 2



EH pottery from Thebes



EH pottery from Thebes

