

THE MB II AND LATE BRONZE AGE SIMPLE WARE FROM TELL MISHRIFEH/QATNA

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Abstract

The excavations of Operation K and J¹ in Tell Mishrifeh during the 2000 and 2001 seasons led to the recovery of a sizeable amount of pottery, which may be dated, in association with the related structures to a period spanning the end of the Middle and the beginning of the Late Bronze Age. This paper, as a part of my current PhD research,² intends to give a preliminary analysis of the simple ware of this assemblage with a special focus on the typologies occurring in the sequence and the relationships between the two assemblages. The imported pottery has been analysed by M. Luciani in a paper presented at this same conference and published in this edition (LUCIANI, this volume).

INTRODUCTION

The object of this study is Simple Ware coming from four phases (14 – 11) of Operation K and an attempt of their comparison/correlation with the MB II (Phases 14 – 10) sequence of Operation J, in order to evidence, where possible, common traits and diversities.³ As a preliminary study, it does not analyse the entire body of data but only some stratigraphical units excavated during 2000 and 2001. With regard to the fabrics, the data presented here concern all of the recovered fragments of the last two years (roughly 3100 pieces from Operation K and 2000 from Operation J). As far as the form typology is concerned, I examined only the potsherds coming from some well stratified contexts, i.e. mainly some deposits coming from J and some fills and floors of Building 6 from K which was partially excavated in

2000–2001 (LUCIANI 2003, 24–26). They number approximately 600. As last comment before the discussion of this study, I must add that as to Operation K phases, only three of them have been excavated extensively: 11, which belongs to Building 5 (LUCIANI 2002a, 152–158), 12 and 13, which constitute two different moments of Building 6. Phase 14, the oldest level of the same building (LUCIANI in press), has been only partially examined and therefore its data can give only tentative indications as to the real characteristics of its assemblage. On the other hand the MB II sequence from J refers to different phases of a large production area (MORANDI BONACOSSI 2002, 128–137; in press; this volume) I avoid considering Phase 12 of this sequence in my analysis, since it represents an abandonment phase of the pottery workshop, which was used as a cemetery for infants, as three graves testify (MORANDI BONACOSSI 2002, 133) and therefore, it is not significant for the purpose of this study.

THE FABRICS

The method used to analyse the fabrics has, as its first goal, the fast but accurate assemblage of a body of data that allowed us to obtain initially a general idea of the main physical characteristics of the pottery and, subsequently, a thorough description of the different fabric types present in the field. Therefore we decided to single out, through a macroscopic examination, a set of fabric-samples (more than 70 until now⁴) with an accurate description of their physical features (main and secondary tempers, percentage of inclusions and their sorting⁵ and finally colours of inner/outer surface

¹ For a complete and detailed report of these two operations cf. LUCIANI 2002a, 2002b, 2003a, 2003b for K and MORANDI 2002, 2003, this volume, in press, for J.

² The title of the thesis is *Transition or Shift? The Late Bronze Age in Central Western Syria and its Possible Genesis in the Middle Bronze Age from the Perspective of Qatna*.

³ I am extremely grateful to D. Morandi Bonacossi and to M. Luciani for the opportunity they offered to me to study the pottery coming from their operations in Tell Mishrifeh.

⁴ It should be added that we decided to include eventual vari-

ants to our sample collection in order to reduce the risk of losing data because of a possible apparent similarity of different pottery fabrics. This can give, at least in a first moment, a misleading idea of the total *corpus* of fabrics occurring in Tell Mishrifeh; however we are sure that following examinations will allow us to discard redundant types.

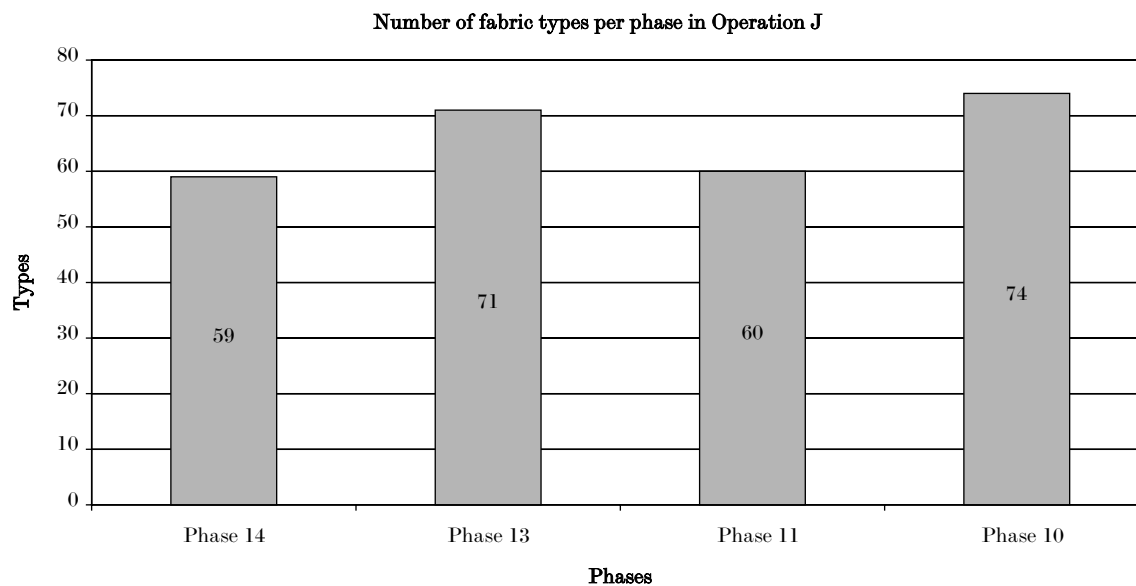
⁵ We used a percentage inclusion estimation chart (ORTON, TYERS, VINCE 1993: fig. A.4, after MATHEW, WOODS, OLIVER 1991: 217–218) and an inclusion sorting chart (BARRACLOUGH 1992: fig. 3).

and core⁶). We then grouped these samples into two different categories on the basis of the presence, or absence of vegetal temper and we used them to elaborate a classification of the pottery coming from all the three operations opened on the site (Operation H, J, and K). Obviously not all of them occur in every period but we have a complete and, moreover, constantly updated, range of all the fabrics occurring in Tell Mishrifeh / Qatna and for every excavated phase we are able now to provide a preliminary fabric-outline. With regards to the other physical features (i.e. surface treatment, firing) that are not object of this study, we have considered them in the analysis of every single sherd.⁷

Beginning in chronological order with the final MB II sequences of Operation J (Phases 14–10), which have been more completely studied, the first interesting observation concerns the quantity of fabric types present in every phase: as we can see from graph 1 a singular trend indicating a low grade of standardization seems to affect all four levels but with a different ratio that increases toward the end of the sequence. In fact the fabric types exceed in the

final phases of the sequence always the consistent amount of sixty, with a sharp increase in Phase 10, where the total amount touches its highest point. If we enlarge the period analysed and take into consideration the LBA levels of Operation K and continue the analysis always in chronological order, from Phase 14 (the oldest Late Bronze K phase) to Phase 10 (the more recent) we can see that this trend seems to be confirmed. In Phase 14, 37 fabric types occur but the significant types (i.e. those present in a proportion of more than 5%) are only seven (one reaching 9%). In Phases 13, 12 and 11 the number of fabrics present increases sharply and then seems to decrease a little. However about 70–75 different types of fabric used to produce vessels are found with none of them constituting a significant proportion (only three types exceed the five percent in Phase 11 – with one reaching 9% – two in Phase 12 and only one in Phase 13, see Graph 2).

Therefore, leaving aside Phase 14 due to the low quantity of sherds examined (as it represents only 3.44 % of the total number of fabrics studied in Operation K) a high degree of fabric-differentiation

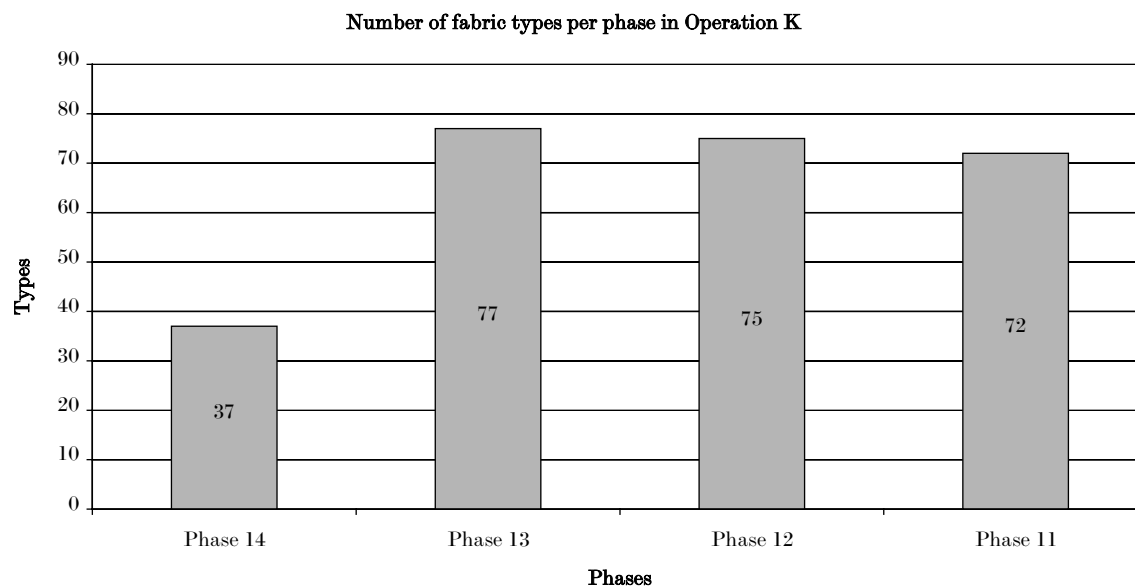


Graph 1

⁶ We used in this case a Munsell chart as reference.

⁷ As final comment on this introduction to our method of investigation, I must add that the examined potsherds come from a preliminary selection of the entire amount of pottery coming from the excavation: we consider in our

analysis only those fragments with a significant value as diagnostic types (mainly bases, rims and decorated sherds). All the other potsherds are numbered, registered in different typologies and, if possible, dated.



Graph 2

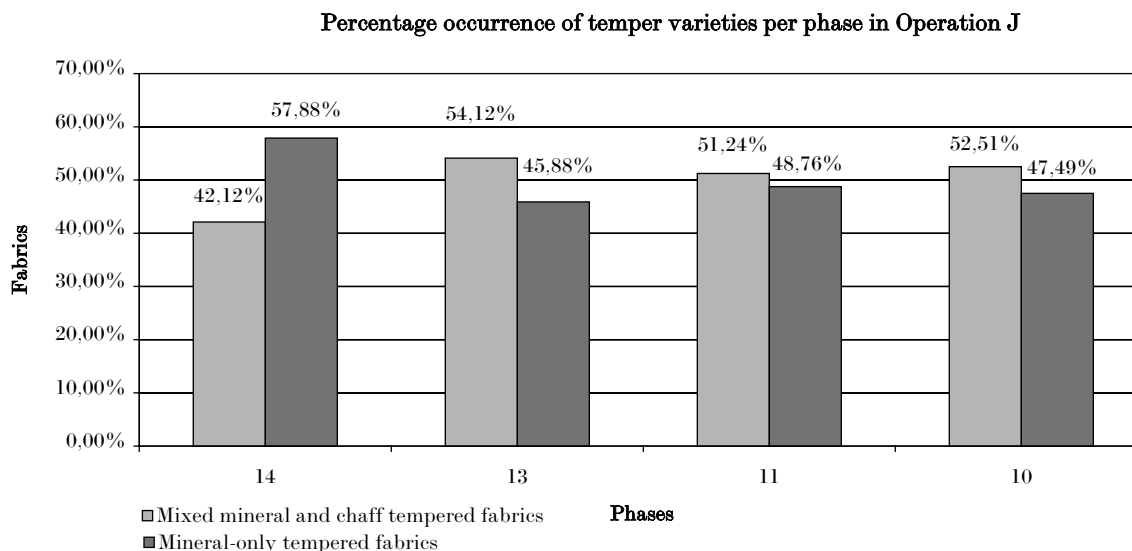
seems to characterise the final MB–early LB phases in Qatna.⁸ It is still not possible to put forward a hypothesis to explain this particular situation which finds no parallel: an increasing standardization in the Middle and especially Late Bronze Age is in fact attested at Tell Afis especially with reference to the Common Ware, although we do not know in which ratio (MAZZONI 1998: 34–37). Furthermore the phases analyzed at Tell Mishrifeh should coincide, at least in part, with a still important role played by Qatna in central Syria as regional capital. This would allow postulating a controlled and eventually standardized production of common pottery, especially for the fragments coming from the massive production area excavated in J. However it can be argued that this low standardization in fabric technology emerged in Operation K and J seems to be part of a more general trend affecting the second millennium B.C. from at least XVII to XV–XIV century B.C., in contrast to the standardization of the third millennium B.C. apparently visible in Tell Mishrifeh. Unfortunately the scarcity of data and references in this field of research for central Syria deprives us of an important help for the comprehension of this element. Whether this depends on

particular technologies concerning not only the pottery itself, but also the kilns and the way of firing, is still an open question that we will be able to answer in future.

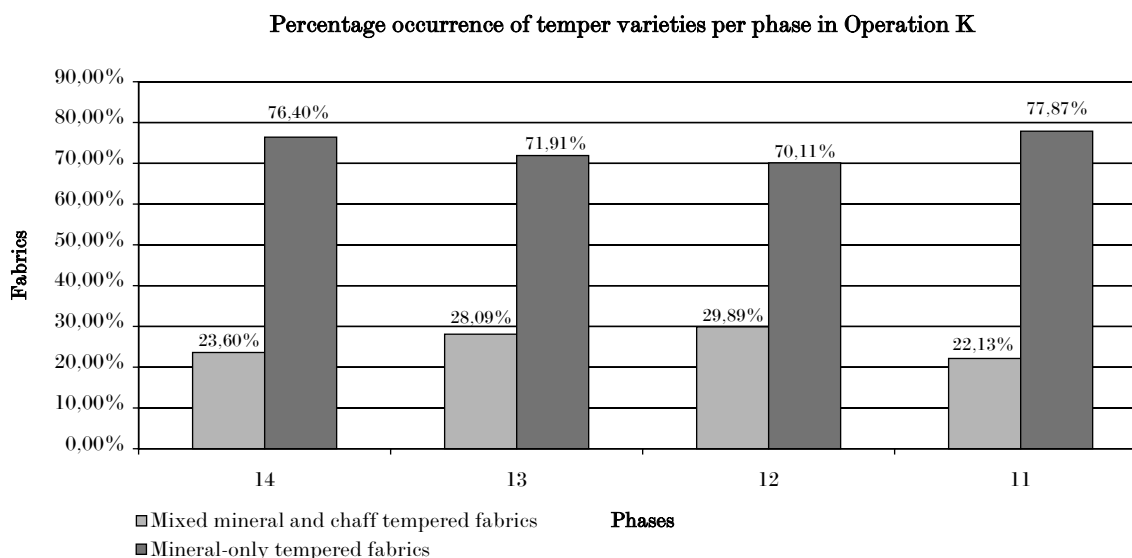
A following significant study of the fabric features regards the use of only mineral or mineral and vegetal tempers. Our subdivision of all the types into two main classes allows us to evidence another remarkable aspect of the second millennium pottery, which in this case differentiates clearly the MBA from the LBA. In fact, on the basis of the MB II pottery sequence (see Graph 3), we observe a roughly balanced situation, due to the constant increasing of the ratio of mineral and vegetal tempered fabric throughout all the four phases, which touches its highest point at the end of the sequence. At this point the occurrence of the two typologies is almost equal with still a slight preponderance of mixed mineral-vegetal tempered fabrics (52, 50% vs. 47, 50%). On the other hand, the results of graph 4, which shows the four phases of Operation K, stress a clear prevalence of fabrics tempered only with mineral inclusions. Inside this small sequence of K, a hypothetical trend can be recognised: it seems that the proportion of mineral-only tempered

⁸ The same trend emerged in a presentation of preliminary data of 2000 season (LUCIANI 2002b: 254). The only difference concerns the total amount of samples regarded. Unlike Luciani, in my research I, in fact, considered both

variants and main samples and this, together with a small annual increase of the samples, has determined a slightly higher number of fabrics per phase.



Graph 3



Graph 4

fabrics decreases slightly towards the more recent levels and shows a sharp rise in the last LB phase of Operation K.

Basing our analysis on the best known LBA phases of Operation K (13, 12 and 11), only the large predominance of fabrics tempered with mineral inclusions clearly emerges as the main characteristic.⁹ To sum up, there is a clear change of tendency during

the LBA in the production of fabrics. This is a result still to be confirmed by means of a more accurate analysis such as thin sections and petrographic examinations. Nevertheless, at least in a preliminary study, it can be seen as the introduction of a type of temper, which, after leading in the EBA, had fallen into disuse since the beginning of the MBA, during the first half of the second millennium B. C.¹⁰ This

⁹ This analysis, for the larger amount of data examined, updates previous results, which were based on the very first data available (LUCIANI 2002b: 254). For further analysis on the subject, see IAMONI 2005.

¹⁰ In a wider analysis this general reprise of the fabrics tem-

pered only with mineral inclusions, seems to reach its apex in Tell Mishrifeh during the Iron Age. Unfortunately the lack of data in this field of research forbids any eventual comparison with reference points.

feature becomes more interesting if compared with the results of two studies of Mitannian ceramics sourced from Tell Barri (PECORELLA 1993: 532–537) and Tell Bderi (PFÄLZNER 1995: 71–103), which represent for their methodology the first important references for the examined age in this field. With regard to the Late Bronze Age materials, exactly the opposite situation has emerged in both cases: a clear prevalence of mainly vegetal tempered fabrics.¹¹ Tell Bderi in particular, whose study had the most similar approach to this problem evidences the presence of vegetal inclusions as main temper with a ratio of 75,1 % (PFÄLZNER 1995: 81). The radical fabric-change between chronologically and, to some extent, typologically identical sherds coming from different zones is an aspect which can be explained at least in first instance as derived from the use of different primary sources (i.e. clays). However, besides the simple evidence of different materials used in different regions¹² and its influence on the methods of production, it is still to be further investigated the change of technology, which seems to affect the MB/LB phases of Tell Mishrifeh.¹³ If this archaeological evidence is linked to some extent to the situation observed in the Jazirah, then we should search for other supplementary reasons, which may explain this sharp transformation in the pottery horizon. In this case the research for other eventual determining factors may receive a significant contribution, at least for central Syria, from the excavations in Qatna and from a future more detailed study of its materials (Graph 4).

THE SHAPES

The drawings in this study represent only a small part of the entire MB and LB assemblages of Operation K and J; however they constitute the more frequent and (from a typological point of view) interesting shapes, although it is still not possible to perform a statistical analysis on their occurrence in every level. The possible contacts between the two

assemblages are at present examined only in the final paragraph. In order to furnish the most reliable and important data, although preliminary, I chose to work only on a group of sealed contexts and to ignore some shapes, which were less significant. I included here a selection of drawings, which represent about 10% of the entire assemblage of the four phases of K, whereas with reference to J, the shapes examined belonged only to Phase 10 (I have included Phase 11 in the following statistical analysis as well, in order to have a more significant result) and constitute 5% of the assemblage. All the shapes studied here are simple ware; consequently no decorated, imported or fine ware will be taken into account.

A first consideration regards the statistical analysis of the two bodies of data: as we can see from graph 5, which examines the proportion of closed and open shapes in the last two phases of the MB II sequence of Operation J (roughly 2000 pieces), a slightly decreasing occurrence of closed shape vs. open shapes marks this pottery assemblage. On the other hand, the examination done in graph 6 of the assemblage of LB pottery subdivided in phases shows a clear prevalence of open shapes vs. closed shapes.¹⁴ These aspects give simple but significant indications on the contexts of origin: thus, the pottery workshop uncovered in J seems to distinguish itself more as production centre of storage vessels, whereas the pottery of K belong to a more domestic horizon, with a large presence of open shapes. Some other interesting remarks can be added to the pottery of K by taking into consideration the data emerged for the study of the fabric subdivision into mineral and mineral and vegetal tempered typologies.

In fact, a noteworthy aspect comes out if we compare this graph with the types of tempers present in the four phases: the same trend occurs in both diagrams, that is the larger occurrence (although in different ratio) of one aspect vs. the other from Phase 14 to 12.¹⁵ This could suggest in a very hypothetical

¹¹ This feature seems attested in Tell Afis, where the fabrics in MB and LB is described as only “occasionally chaff tempered” (MAZZONI 1998: 34, 36). However, since no particular attention is given to this aspect, mainly because of a different method of study, it is not possible to make a more detailed comparison between the two assemblages.

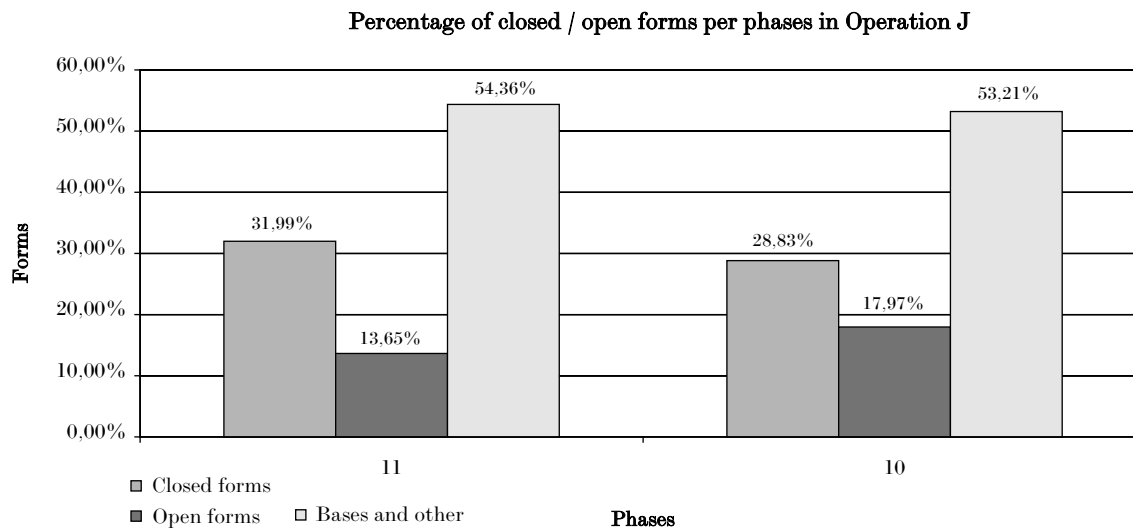
¹² This feature has been already highlighted as characterizing the MB pottery as well (NIGRO 1998: 289).

¹³ It should be noted that the usual distinction between “older” chaff tempered fabrics and “younger” grit-tempered fabrics has been recently rejected as marking chronological feature of the MB and LB pottery on the basis of

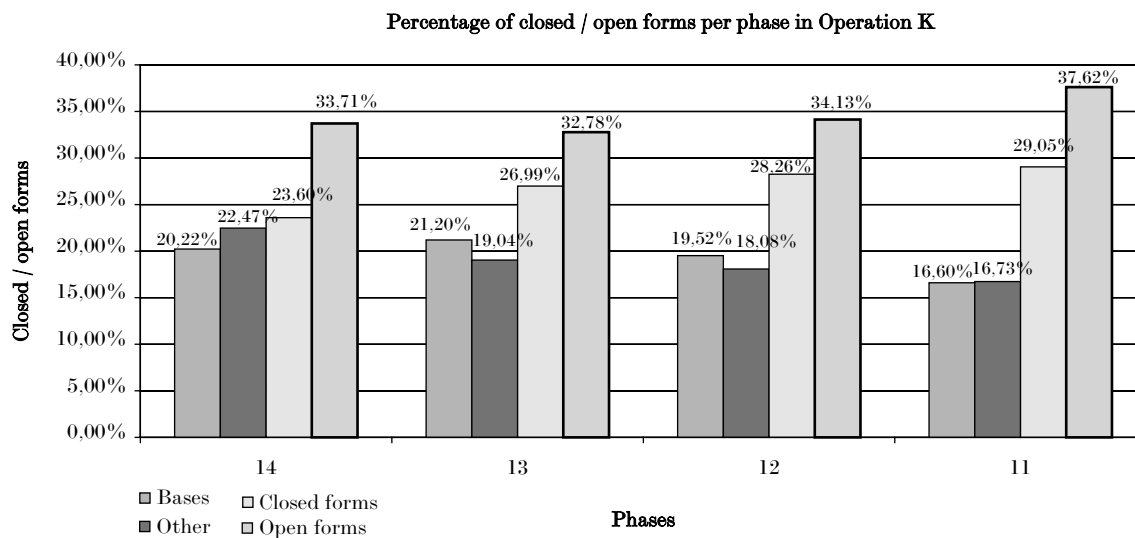
the examination of the ceramics from Tell Brak and Tell Rimah (OATES, OATES, McDONALD 1997: 64).

¹⁴ In the presentation of preliminary data of 2000, a slightly different proportion was stressed by M. Luciani (LUCIANI 2002b: 253). However this can be ascribed to a different grouping of the shapes examined in that study.

¹⁵ Hypothetically it can be recognised the same trend: decrease of open forms and mineral only tempered fabrics with a sharp reprise at the end of the sequence (Phase 11).



Graph 5



Graph 6

way the correspondence between closed shapes and mixed mineral-vegetal tempered fabrics as well as between open shapes and mineral-only tempered fabric. In other words it could mean that a particular type of tempered fabric is preferred for the production of open shapes and a different one for the closed. From this point of view, the trend described above could in some way be derived from or also simply be affected by a diversification of pottery use and as a consequence, by a different function of the excavated structures (Graph 5).

This feature seems to be stressed also in Operation J. In this case there is a clear predominance of the closed shapes, as well as in graph 3 a slight prevalence

of mixed mineral-vegetal tempered fabrics emerged. Anyway, this aspect remains only a curiosity: at present I have not worked sufficiently on my data, but it certainly represents something to verify in future (Graph 6).

As in previous paragraphs, I will begin with the pottery of Operation J (MB II), and then I will continue with the shapes present in Operation K (LB I), reserving some chronological hypothesis to the conclusions. Phase J 10, which I summarized in figures 1, 2 and 3, has the predominance of the closed vs. open shapes confirmed by the jars as most recurring shapes. In fact both big jars and small jars occur in large number: the first with out-turned oblique,

with expanded or with ridged rim (Fig. 1: 1–5), whereas the second appear especially with the typical MB ridged neck (Fig. 2: 1, 2, 5, 6, 7) or with the everted ridged rim (Fig. 2: 3, 4, 8–10). As to the open shapes, besides the simple rim bowls (Fig. 3: 2, 3), we have a large number of bowls with high carination (Fig. 3: 1, 4, 6, 9, 10) and of inset rounded rim bowls (Fig. 3: 5), which occur together with the small cups with simple /slightly expanded rims (Fig. 3: 7, 8).

As far as the assemblage from Operation K is concerned, the clear prevalence (although based on very little data) of open shapes in Phase 14 is especially due to the bowls (24%), whereas the closed shapes are only represented by simple jars with a very small number of storage jars. Here is a first selection of the few drawings available at present. The bowls are well represented by types with simple inset rounded rims (Fig. 4: 1, 3–6) and with simple inset triangular rims; the plates have the simple rounded rims (Fig. 4: 2). The jars occur with the simple upright out-turned rounded rim (Fig. 5: 3–5) and with the upright pinch or swollen rounded rims (Fig. 5: 1–2), usually narrow necked.

In Phase 13 a larger number of drawings affords a fuller description of the shapes occurring in these deposits. The closed shapes increase and reach 26,99%, due to a sharp growth of the simple jars and to a small decrease in the bowls. The shapes are attested by kraters with grooved rims or expanded long rims (Fig. 6: 1, 2, 5, 6), sometimes slightly oblique (Fig. 6: 9) and large jars with simple upright out-turned rims (Fig. 6: 4, 7, 8) or flaring neck (Fig. 6: 3). The small jars are always, as in Phase 14, narrow necked with upright pinched rims (Fig. 7: 5, 8) but new profiles occur now: the out-flaring pinched square rims (Fig. 7: 1, 2, 5, 7, 9) and the upright triangular rims (Fig. 7: 3, 4) are examples. As far as the open shapes are concerned, two particular types of bowls appear in this phase: the simple upright high rim (Fig. 8: 1, 10) and the slightly out flaring bowls (Fig. 8: 2–5). Another new type, probably an MBA heritage, is represented by the small cups with simple upright swollen rounded rims (Fig. 8: 11–12) and by the deep bowls with simple or simple inset rounded rims (Fig. 8: 9), whereas the plates and the bowls with simple rims continue (Fig. 8: 6–8).

In Phase 12 there is an almost balanced occurrence of open and closed shapes, still with a slight prevalence of the first, even though the most frequent shape is now the simple jar, which outnumber the bowls. The latter, like the plates, are characterised by the out flaring profile already seen in Phase 13 and by simple rims, sometimes slightly inward rounded as in the other phases (Fig. 9: 1, 2,

4, 6, 8–11). The simple upright high rim cups appeared in Phase 13 persist in this level but with some variants like a mildly out-turned rim (Fig. 9: 3, 7), together with the deep cups which may now be bigger with a triangular rim (Fig. 9: 5). The closed shapes now show a bigger number of variants for the narrow necked jars: the rims are now swollen rounded, pinch rounded, and out-turned triangular (Fig. 10: 2–7). The large jars and kraters exhibit a little wider diversification too, with the introduction of the triangular rim (which becomes typical of the cooking pots) among the already attested shapes, like the out-turned grooved or rounded rims (Fig. 1, 8–10).

Finally, Phase 11 shows a return to the prevalence of open shapes over closed (37,62% vs. 29,05%), although the most frequent shape remains the simple jar with a percentage of 26%. These occur both as the small necked jars already seen in the previous levels, like the upright swollen rim jar and the out-flaring pinched square rim jar (Fig. 11: 5–7, 9) and as new types coming from the MBA tradition. An example is the jar with ridged neck and out-flaring rim (Fig. 11: 8). Kraters and bigger jars still occur with expanded rims, but not grooved (Fig. 11: 2, 3). Particularly interesting are the jar with out-turned oblique rim and the cooking pot with triangular rim (Fig. 11: 1, 4), which at present seem to be typical of the final MB / initial LBA. The open shapes have always a great range of bowls and plates with simple and sometimes swollen rims (Fig. 12: 1, 3, 6–10), but now the bowls occur with high carination (Fig. 12: 2, 4), usually typical of final MB culture (MAZZONI 1998: 35), and less frequently with the high rim (Fig. 12: 5). In synthesis the typologies I examined (which belong, it must be reminded, only to simple ware) in these levels consist mainly of small jars and bowls and, in a smaller grade, of plates. Other shapes, like storage jars and cooking pots always appear in very low percentages especially in K and at the moment do not constitute a valid sample for this analysis.

CONCLUSIONS

The two kinds of analysis made in this paper offer a first collection of data from which some conclusions may be drawn. The study of the fabrics, which at present constitutes the most accurate study for both the number of examined sherds and for the clarity of the resulting data, has clearly showed two tendencies.

Firstly a very low level of standardization seems to affect the entire assemblage. The large number of

fabrics occurring is evidence of a diversification in the production technology that emerges as the clear continuation (and, possibly, increase) of a trend attested since the end of the MBA. The constant growth in fabric numbers starts already in full Middle Bronze Age: from 59 types recorded in the MB II until 70–75 in the LB I phase of Operation K.

On the other hand, a completely opposite trend concerns the composition of tempers used in fabric production. From a general consideration of the percentages, a sharp difference in the use of mineral-only or mixed mineral-vegetal tempered fabrics emerges immediately, with the evident prevalence of the first in Phases 14–11 of K. This result can be misunderstood if compared with the MBA sequence where a trend towards a balanced use of both types of tempers is found, since the beginning of the MBA (from 20% vs. 80% to 56% of mixed and only 44% of mineral). Moreover, it can be difficult to understand if we compare it with the data coming from the excavations in the Jazirah (Tell Barri and, especially, Tell Bderi). Different technology (i.e. new mineral fabric types for new kind of kilns), as well as different possibilities of obtaining tempers or different contexts with diverse recurring shapes, are nevertheless hypothetical reasons, which justify a similar situation. The opposite trend is attested in the East (i.e. prevalence of vegetal tempered fabric during the LBA).

As far as the shapes are concerned, the assemblages of these phases can be well collocated in the MB / LB horizon of central inner Syria, with strong contacts with Hama H and G.¹⁶ It is still not possible to propose chronologies in a precise manner for every phase through typological comparisons and analysis, due to the small number of sherds, which have been drawn. However some hints can be made, thanks to some particular types, which occur here as well as in other well-known sequences.

The assemblage of Phase 10 from Operation J shows several shapes very well known in the final MB material culture of inner Syria: this especially concerns the jars with ridged neck or rim, occurring in Level 15 of Tell Afis (MAZZONI 1998: Fig. 25: 24–25, 28–30), the carinated bowls with high carina-

tion that are present in Mardikh IIIb (MATTHIAE 1980: fig. 40 and 41) and the inset rounded rim bowls, which seem to begin in this phase and continue in the following phases of K until at least K 12, comparable to those occurring in Tell Arqa M (THALMANN 2000: fig. 53) and Hama H 1–2 (FUGMANN 1958: fig. 124: 2c926, 2c928; fig. 127: 4b178, 4b372).

With regard to Operation K phases, the narrow necked jars with upright swollen or pinch rounded rims are well known usually from the LB I phase of Tell Nebi Mend (BOURKE 1993: fig. 21: 2, 4, 7, 9, 12), Tell Afis (MAZZONI 1998: fig. 26, particularly nr. 15), Tell Hadidi (DORNEMANN 1981: fig. 5: 16, 19, 22) and in the final MB/LB phase of El Qitar (McCLELLAN 1986: fig. 8: 10–16). On the other hand, the jars with everted and ridged rims, with upright swollen rounded rims and the kraters with expanded grooved rims occur more frequently among MB II types, whereas the upright triangular rim jars occurring in Phases 12 and 13 are considered diagnostic of LB I phase in Tell Nebi Mend (BOURKE 1993: fig. 22: 11). Finally, the jar with out-turned oblique rim, a typology found also in the royal Palace of Qatna (Salle du Jarres) (DU MESNIL 1935: fig. 27: 38, 15, 13), occurs here as probable diagnostic of MB/LB periods, as the parallels found in Hama seem to confirm (FUGMANN 1958: fig. 143: types R9 and R1).

The open shapes include a wide variety of bowls and plates with out flaring profile, simple rims or with swollen rounded rims which are well attested not only in a typical LB I horizon of central and coastal Syria, like in Tell Nebi Mend (BOURKE 1993: fig. 13: 1, 3, 5; fig. 12: 4), Afis (MAZZONI 1998: fig. 26: 6–10) and in Arqa (THALMANN 2000, figs. 58–59), but also in sites extremely far from Mishrifeh like the already mentioned Tell Hadidi (DORNEMANN 1981: fig. 13: 30, 32), Tell Bderi (PFÄLZNER 1995: fig. 2: type C; fig. 4 particularly type C and D), Tell Brak (OATES, OATES, McDONALD 1997: fig. 184: 69–70 and 64 and 186 with in particular nr. 102), el Qitar (McCLELLAN 1984–5: fig. 5: 1–8 and 12–14) and Tell Barri (PECORELLA 1993: fig. 3: particularly nr. B3). It is noteworthy to see how the out flaring

¹⁶ I noted some remarks upon similar typologies, which occur in both the sites (Hama and Mishrifeh) in the following part of this paragraph. However, at present it is not possible to go deeper in a more detailed correlation of the two stratigraphical sequences, not only for the preliminary trait of

this exposition but also because the stratigraphy of Hama does not provide by itself sure contexts, and therefore needs to be more carefully considered and compared with a bigger body of data.

bowls in Tell Brak and Tell Barri seem to belong more to a Middle Assyrian context (PECORELLA 1998: fig. 3–5; OATES, OATES, McDONALD 1997: fig. 181: 7, 28). Particularly interesting are the bowls with upright high rim, which seem at the moment to occur only in Phases 11, 12 and 13 of K. In Tell Nebi Mend a similar typology is confined to a phase between LB I and II (BOURKE 1993: fig. 20: 5–6) whereas in Tell Arqa they belong to the LB period of the site (Phase L) (THALMANN 2000: figs. 58–59) and in Alalakh they seem to appear mostly in level V (CARRE GATES 1976: p. 60, type 106a).¹⁷ The deep cups still need to be fully studied: they represent a likely heritage of the MBA assemblage. The presence of a similar typology in level V of Alalakh (CARRE GATES 1976: fig. 7: 8) might be a possible confirmation of this hypothesis.¹⁸

In summary, the assemblage of examined types shows a good fit with a final MB II–Early LBA horizon, which seems to cover in some cases a large area, from the coast to the Syrian Jazirah. This could be the result of a strong influence of the Mitannian empire during the middle second millennium, as the presence of ceramic parallels from different regions testifies. At present we have only a change in the methodology of production, but all other data suggest that Phases 13, 12, 11 (and perhaps 14 too) can

be included in an LB material culture which continues in the MBA tradition evidenced by the sequence recovered in Operation J.

Addenda

The last 2002 season, whose data have not been considered in this study, has added new, important information about Operations K and J, which have improved the understanding of the stratigraphy. Namely, Building 6 in Operation K, whose dimension exceeds currently 1300 square meter, has reached at the moment a total number of 34 rooms with a very well preserved stratigraphical sequence, which seems to cover the very late MB / LB I (LUCIANI, 2003 b). Its data will therefore represent the main reference point for future studies concerning the mid 2nd millennium B. C. in Qatna. Operation J has revealed the presence of a very early LB or MB/LB transitional phase in Operation J (Phase 7), which is unfortunately very badly preserved due to Iron Age intrusions, mainly storage pits and graves, coming from the overlaying layers. However, it has been possible to distinguish two pottery production sub-phases followed by two other squatting sub-phases (MORANDI BONACOSSO, 2003). Thus, the production area excavated in Operation J seems to span the entire first half of 2nd millennium B.C.

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¹⁷ A similar example comes from el Qitar from a likely, although not sure, LB context (CULICAN and McCLELLAN 1983–84: fig. 4: form D).

¹⁸ It has been argued that level VI and V can be grouped with level VII (whose assemblage is final MB) on the basis of statistical analysis (McCLELLAN 1989: 207–212); this could underline the strong continuity, which seems to exist between the final MB and the initial LB material culture

attested in Mishrifeh. However, the material culture from Alalakh, at least with reference to the MB/LB transition, seems in some degree different from Qatna: only few typologies, mainly open forms, recur in both sequences. This could derive from a different cultural horizon of Alalakh and the future study of the complete body of data of pottery from Qatna will clarify this point.

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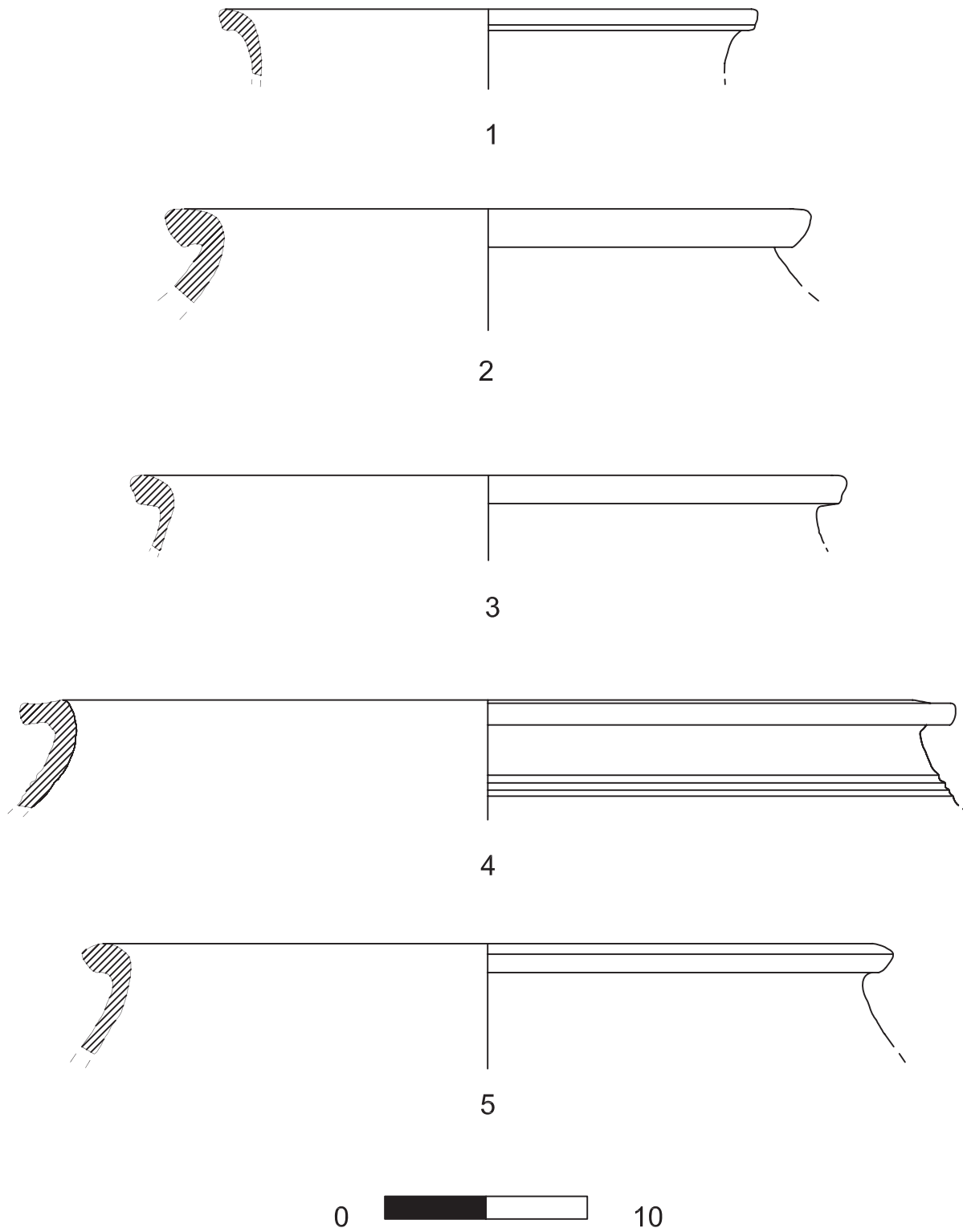


Fig. 1 Big jars MB II from Operation J

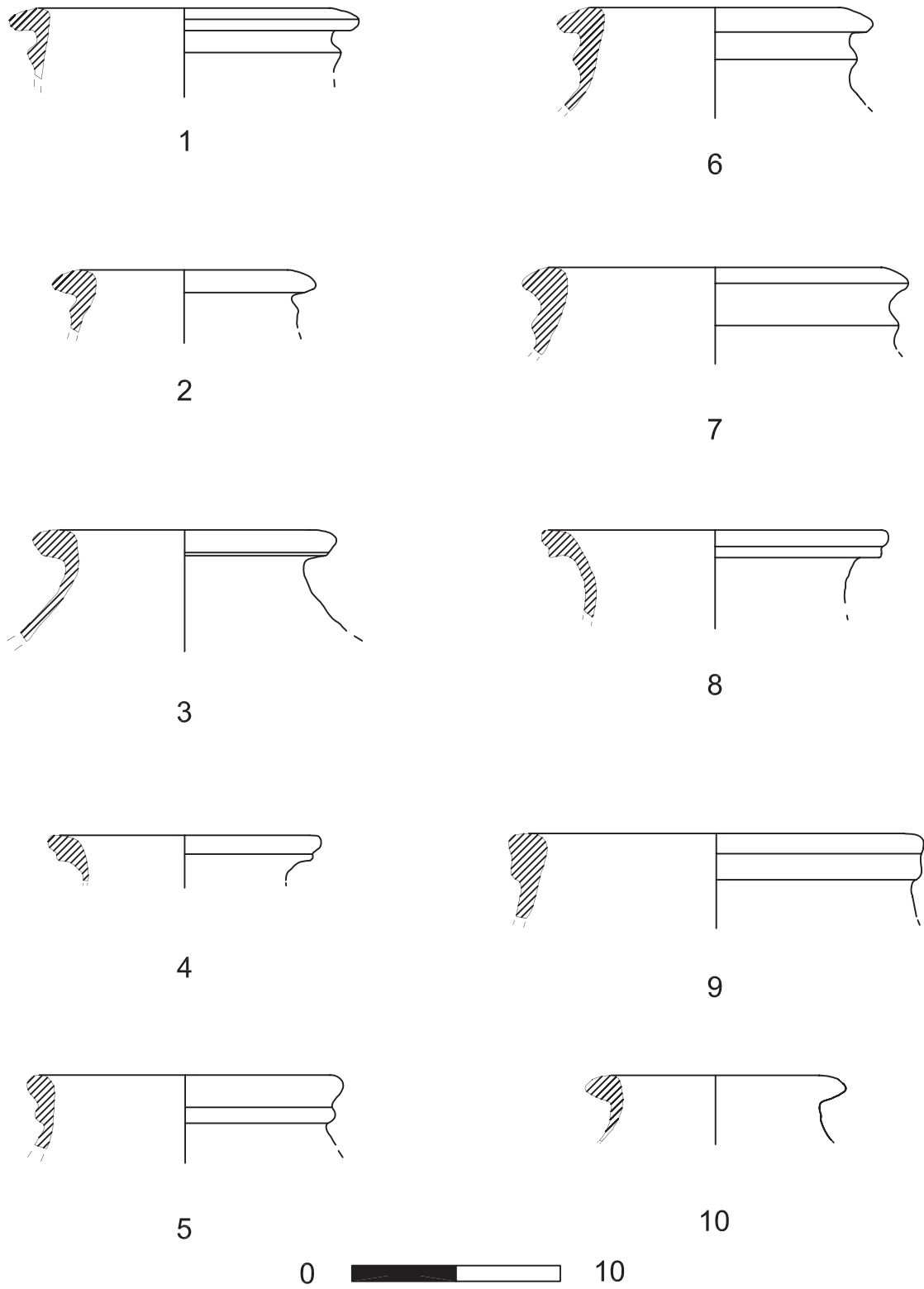


Fig. 2 Small jars MB II from Operation J

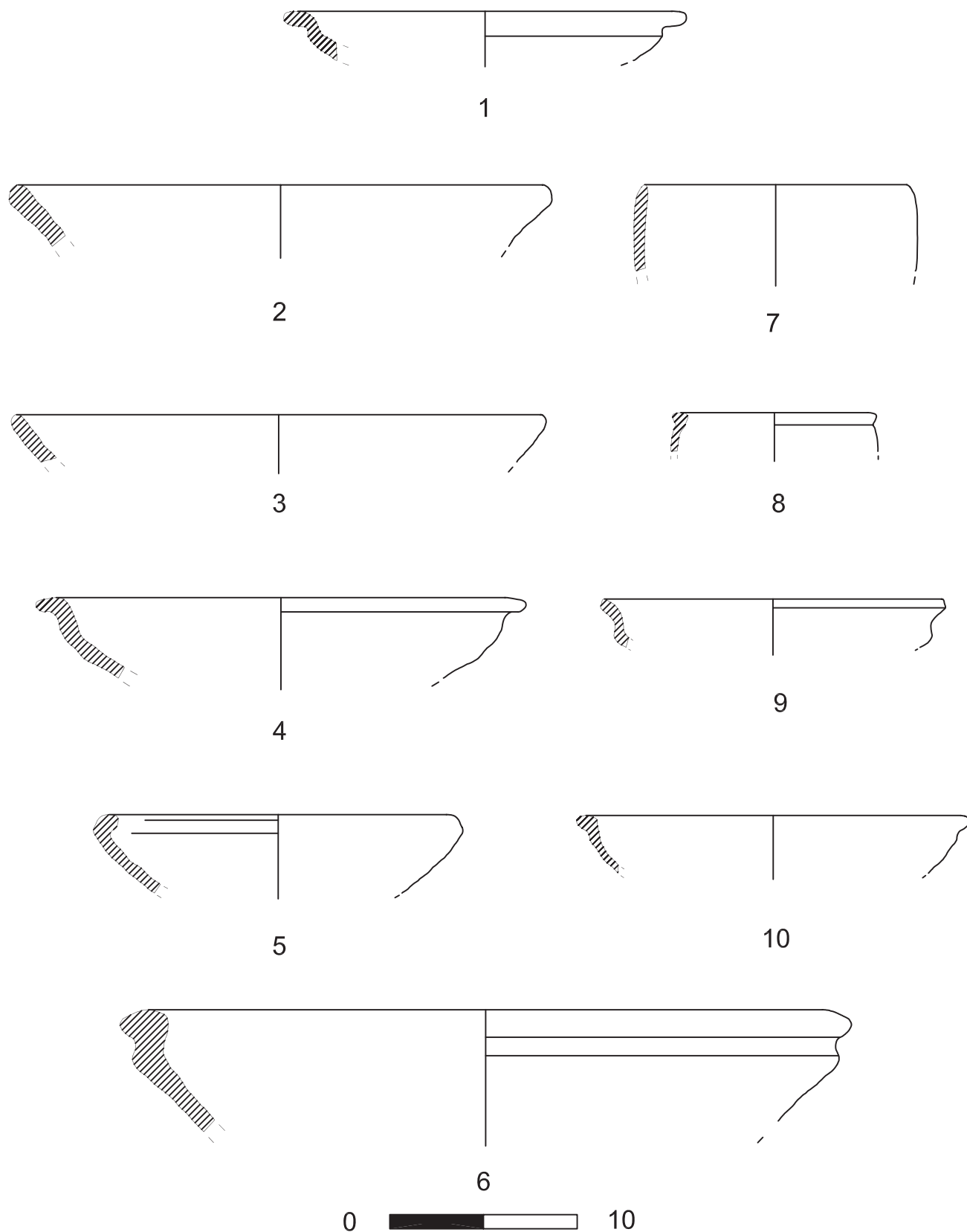


Fig. 3 Bowls and cups MB II from Operation J

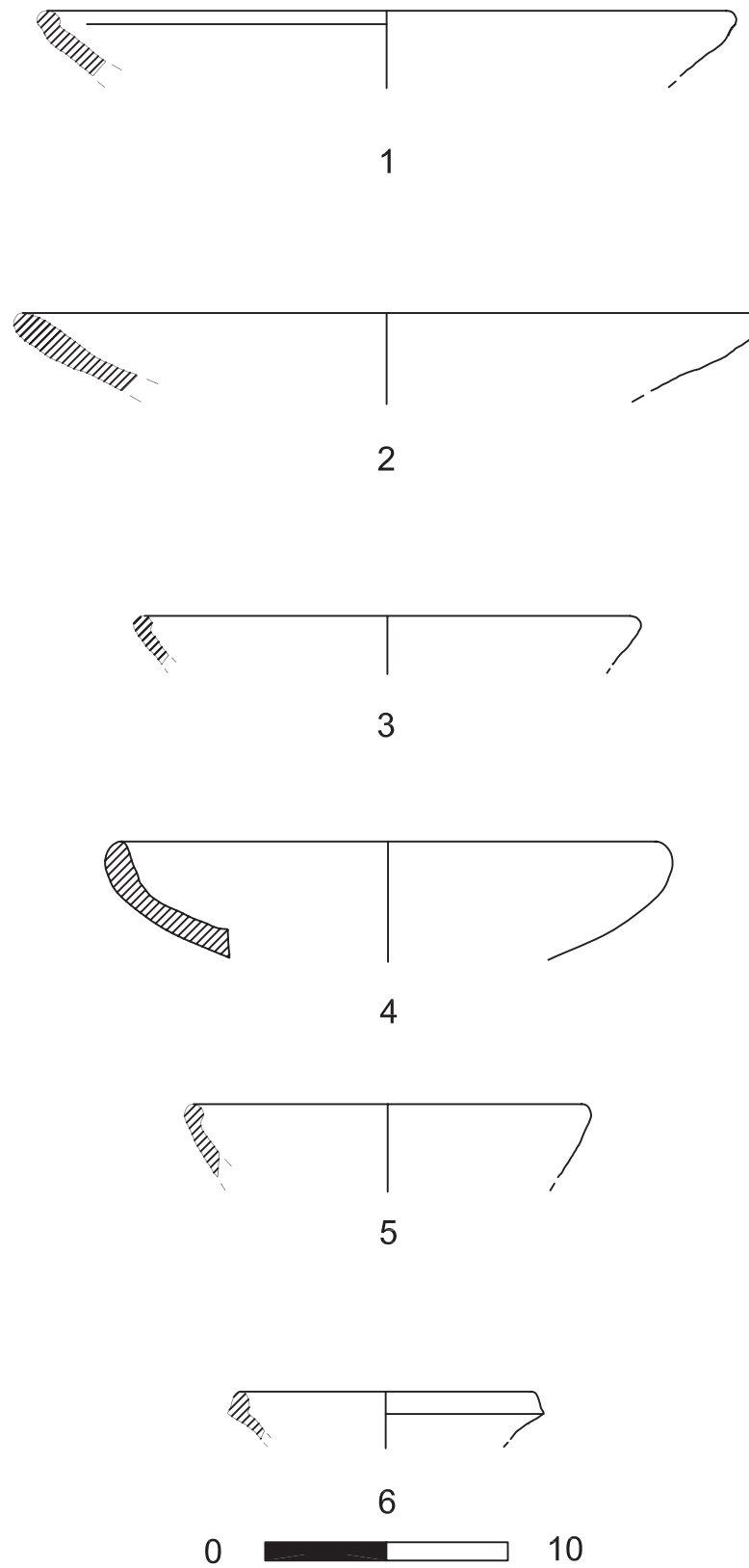


Fig. 4 Bowls from Operation K (Phase 14)

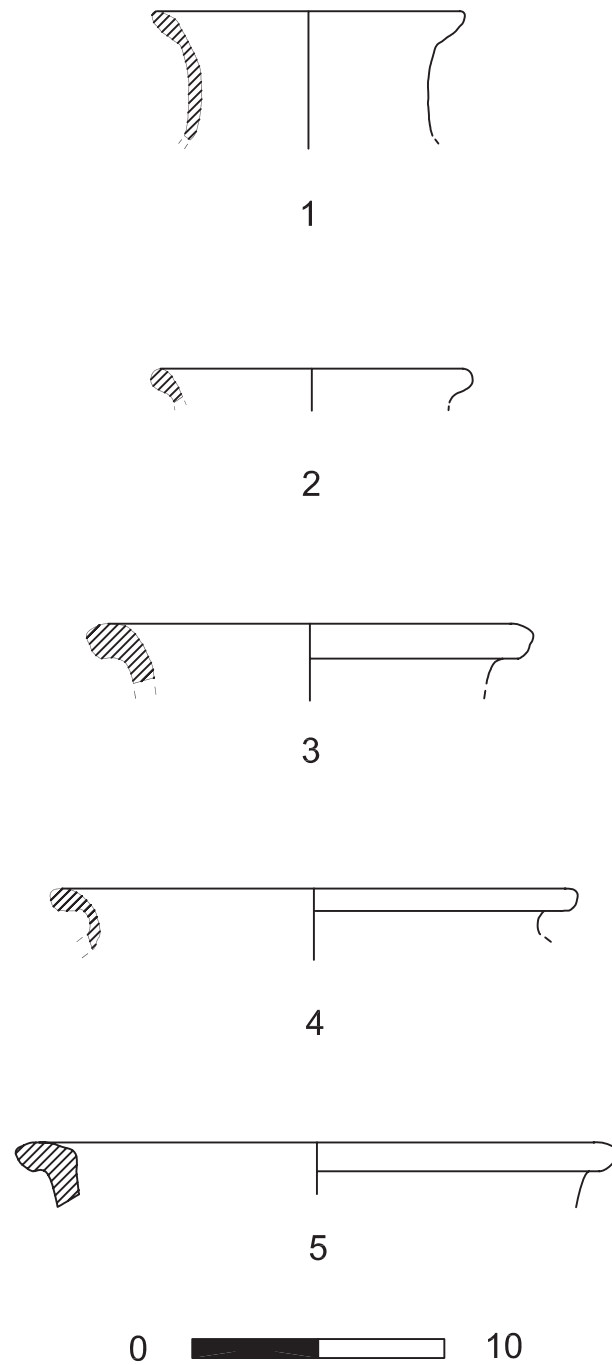


Fig. 5 Jars from Operation K (Phase 14)

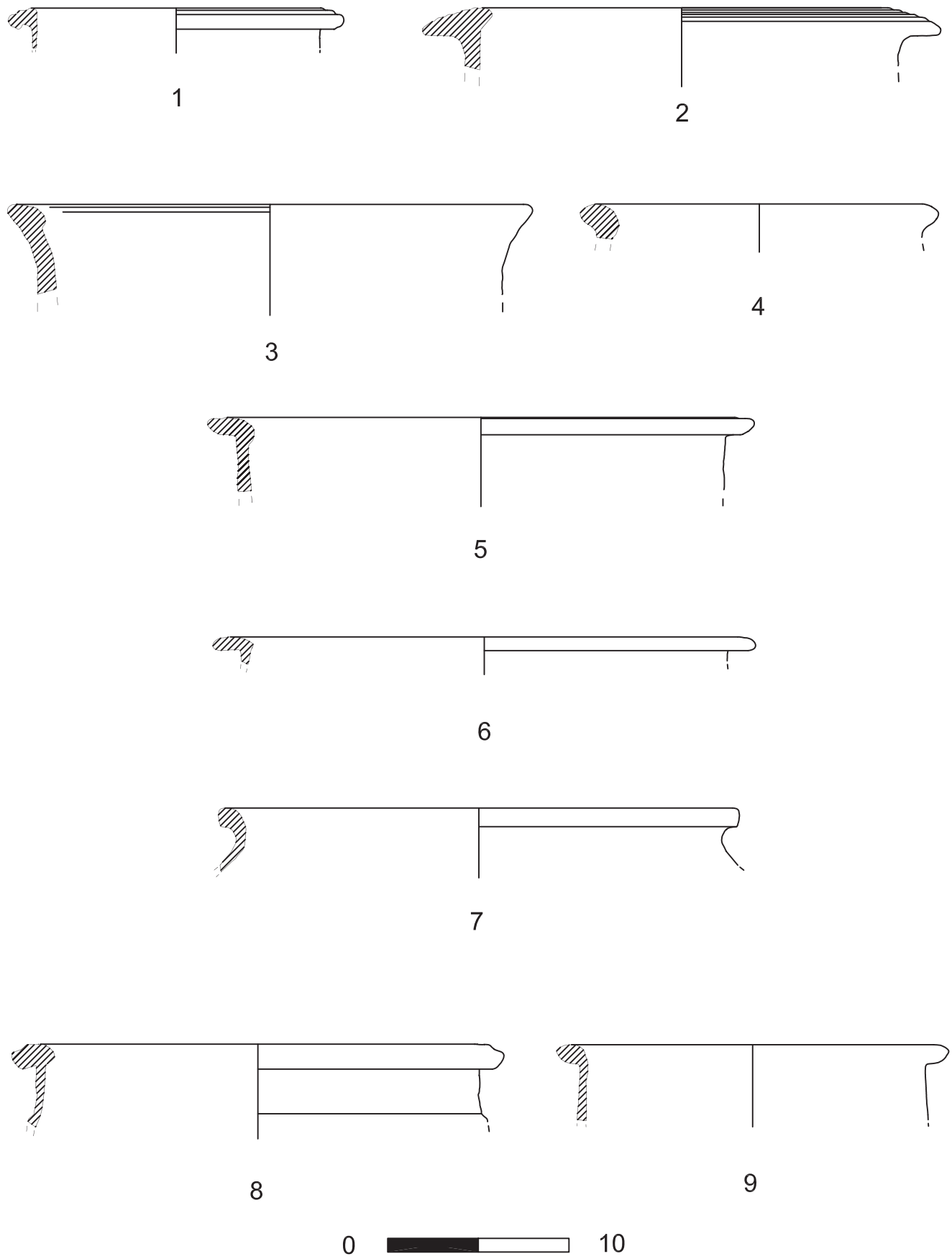


Fig. 6 Kraters and big jars from Operation K (Phase 13)

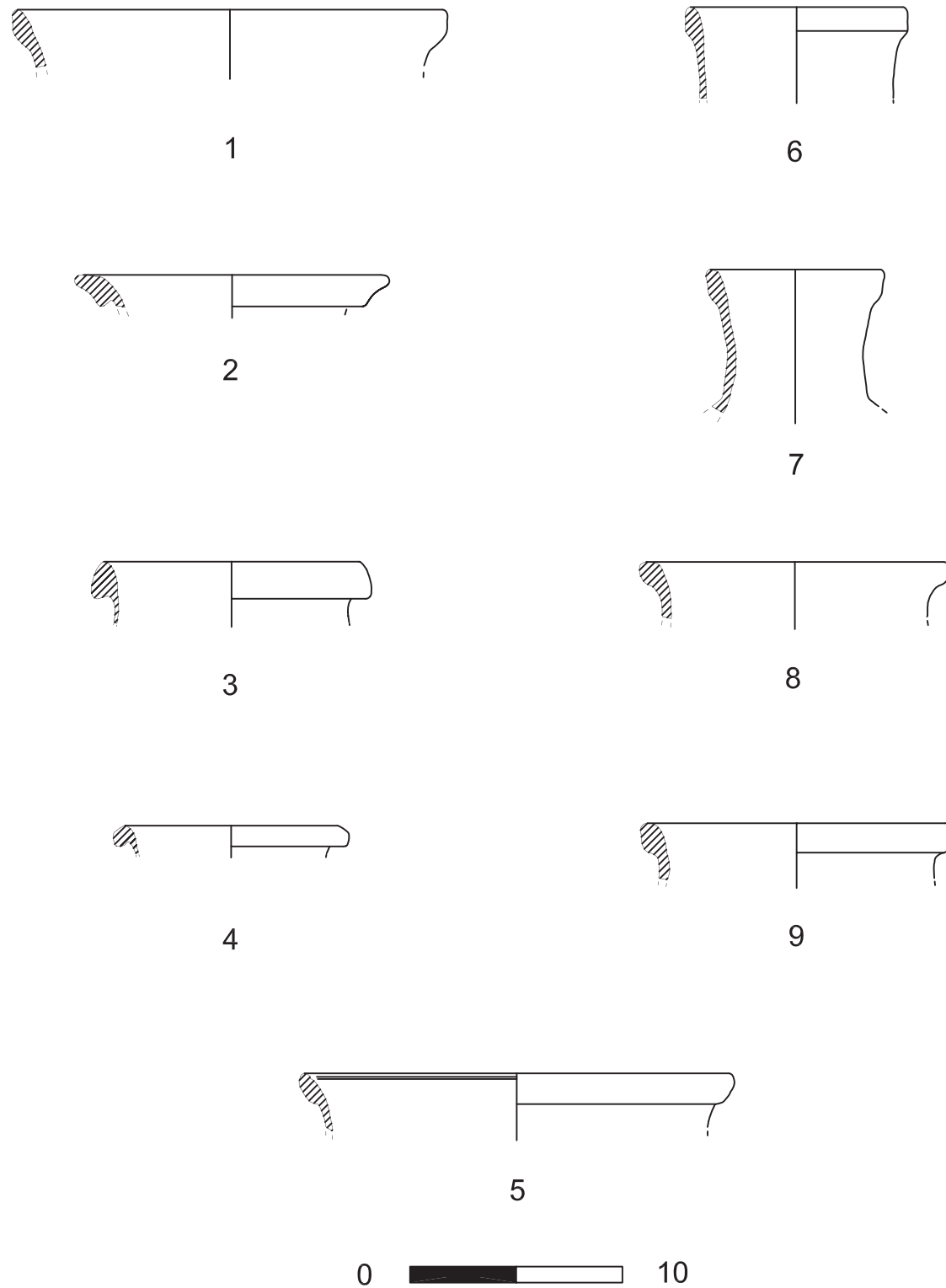


Fig. 7 Small jars from Operation K (Phase 13)

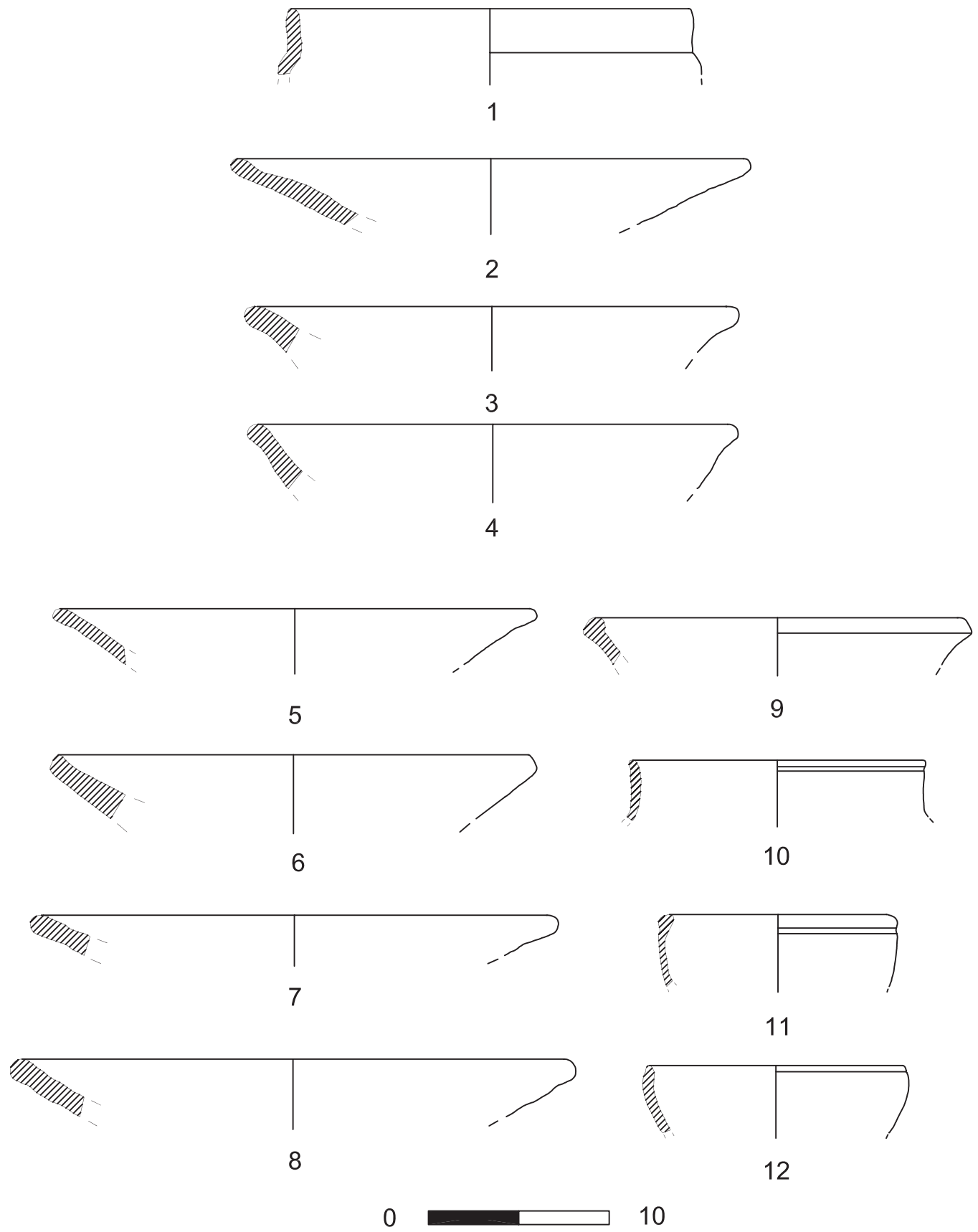


Fig. 8 Bowls and cups from Operation K (Phase 13)

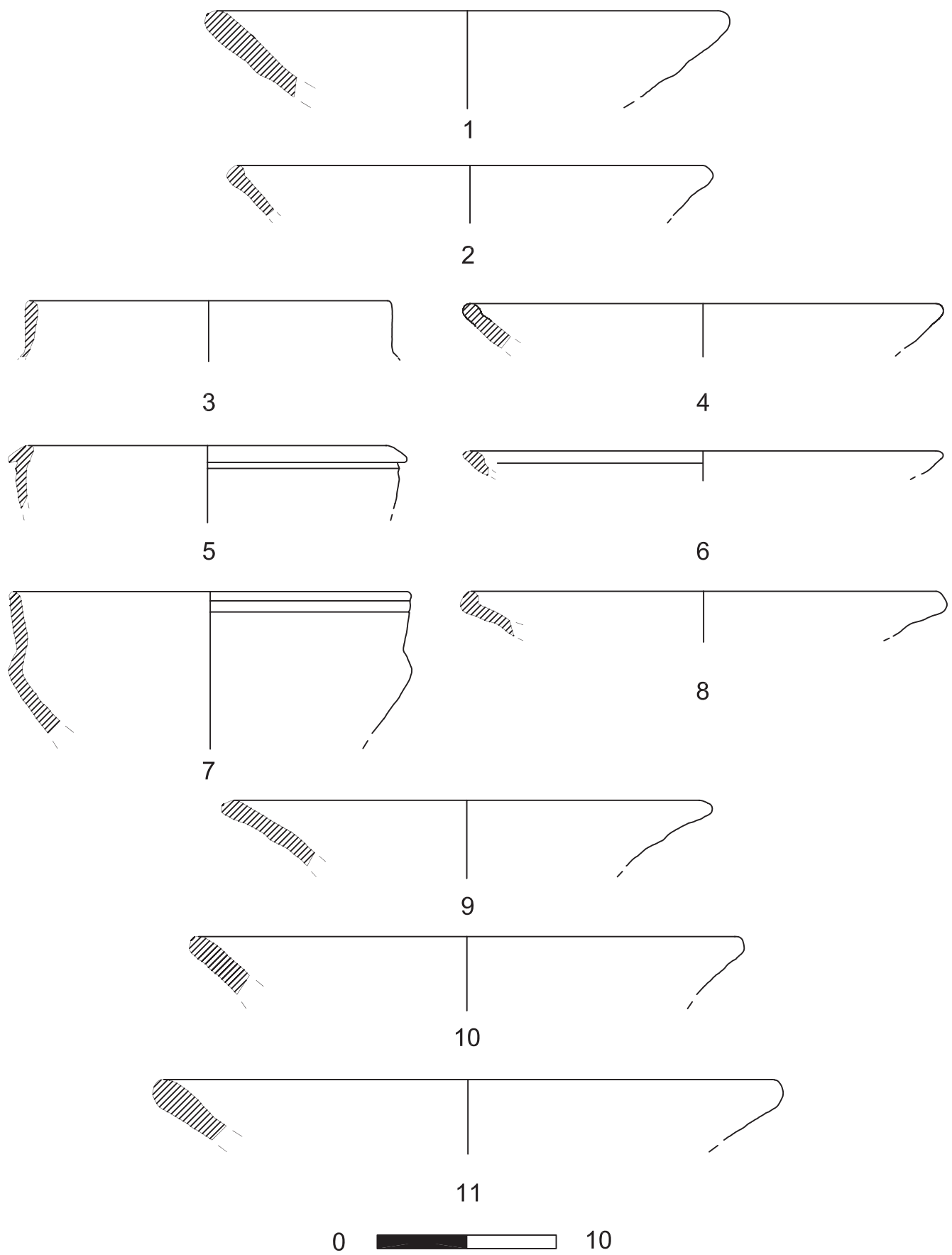


Fig. 9 Bowls and cups from Operation K (Phase 12)

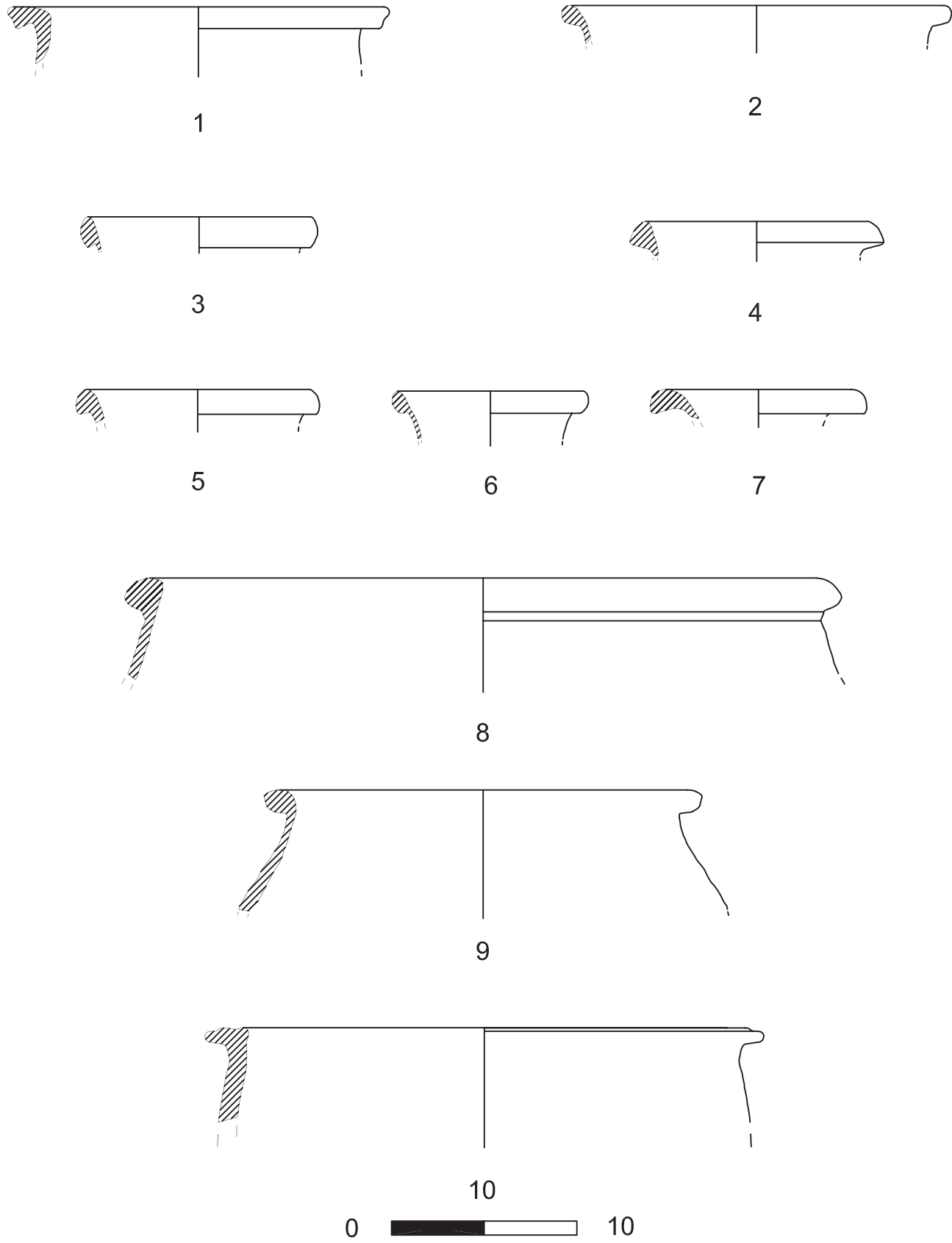


Fig. 10 Jars and kraters from Operation K (Phase 12)

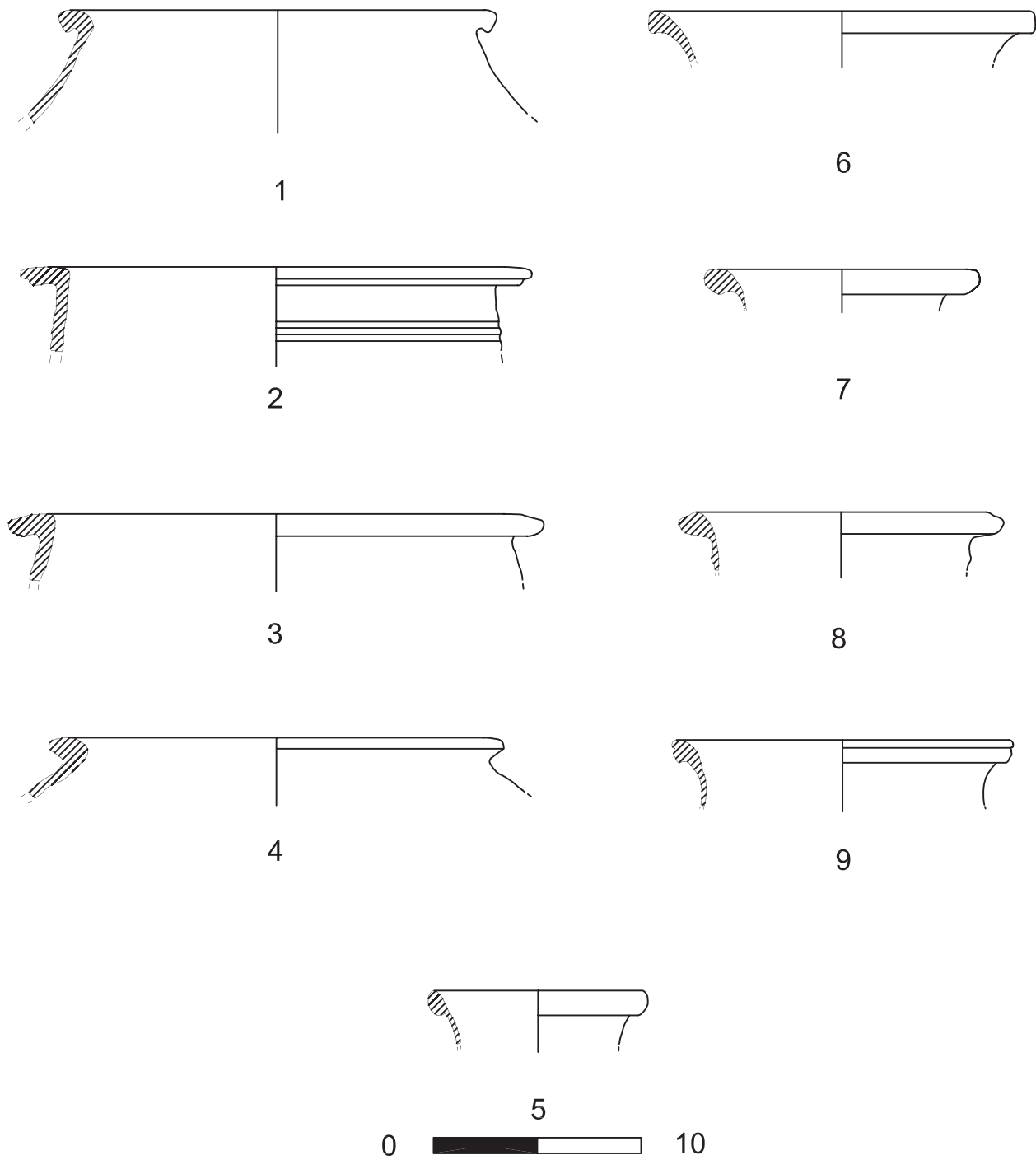
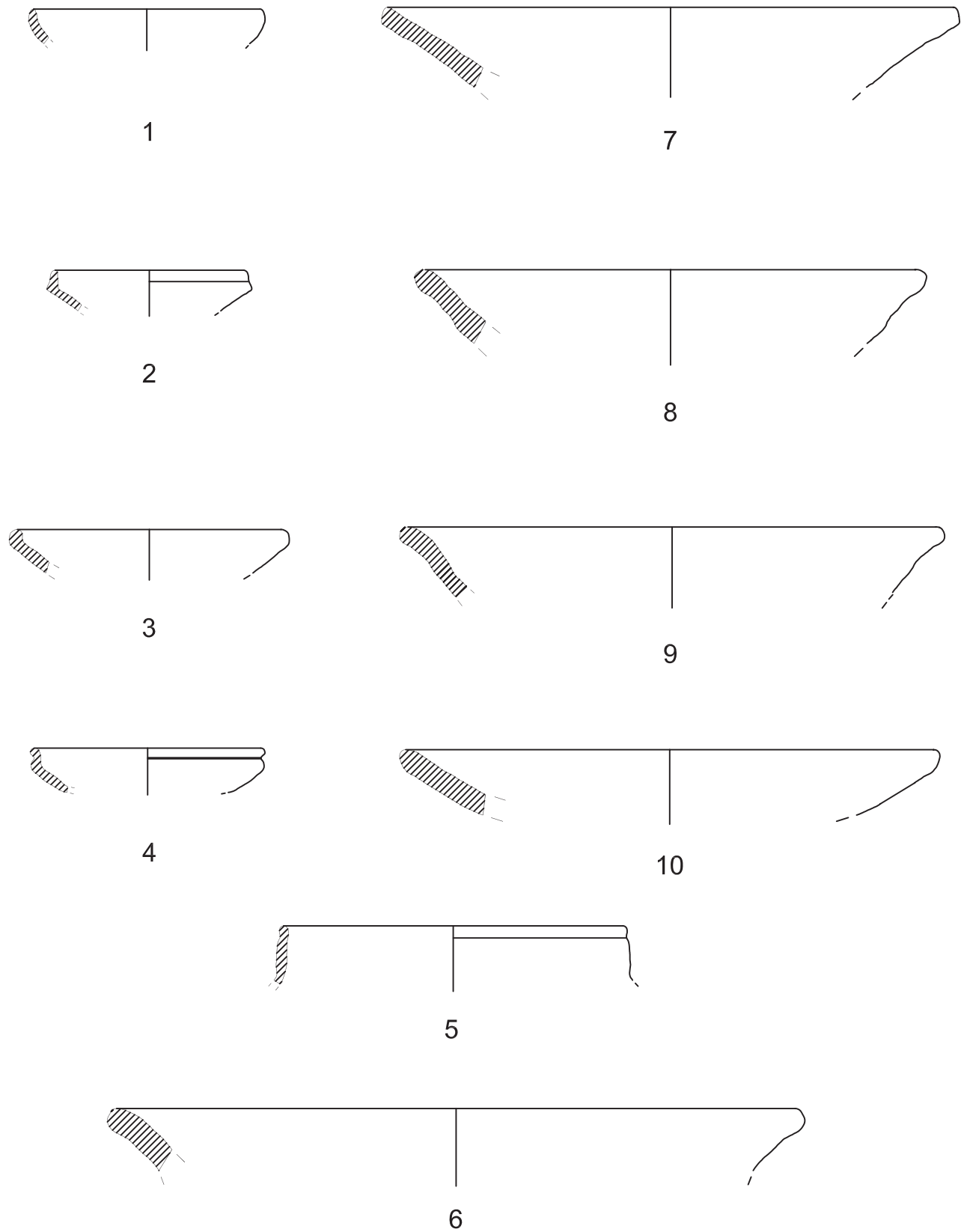


Fig. 11 : Jars and kraters from Operation K (Phase 11)



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Fig. 12 Bowls from Operation K (Phase 11)