

THE IMPACT ON CORRELATIONS TO THE LEVANT OF THE RECENT STRATIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE FROM THE ARGOLID

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The problem under discussion here results from the time lapse between research and its dissemination by publication or other means. Most of those working on correlations in the 12th cent. BC are specialists in only part of the wide spectrum of information needed to produce a meaningful result and depend on their colleagues to keep them in touch with the rest. Thus when in the 1980's two vital books appeared, both well researched and based on up-to-date information supplied by a multitude of scholars (MOUNTJOY 1986, WARREN and HANKEY 1989), these became essential tools. They are still almost universally quoted but unfortunately research has moved on in the intervening period. Though the new information has been communicated as far as possible, it has been variously ignored.

Some of this new information comes from my work at Mycenae. It had been Lord William Taylour's intention to publish himself the stratigraphic results from the 12th cent. strata of the Citadel House Area as he did both the overlying Hellenistic and underlying Bronze Age Palatial levels. But at his death in 1989 he had completed only preliminary notes and it became obvious that I should undertake to deal with the Post Palatial levels as soon as time allowed.¹

From the very first discovery of good LH III C strata at Mycenae in 1960 the excavation team had circulated work notes; in addition some very preliminary suggestions were put forward in my note in the *AA* (FRENCH 1969) but this article has subsequently proved to be partially wrong and definitely misleading. It should no longer be quoted. We were in constant communication with Penelope Mountjoy and with Vronwy Hankey and our preliminary conclusions were used by both but they were preliminary conclusions and liable to change. Then amid the multitude of

compelling finds of the Palatial levels which came to light in the final years of the excavation the minutiae of the Post Palatial strata became overlooked.

I gave warning of the implications of my new study in Jerusalem in 1995 (FRENCH 1998) and presented the detailed results to the Mycenaean Seminar in London 1997 (FRENCH 1999) and subsequently in Israel two years ago (FRENCH forthcoming). The implications have been accepted by all those working intimately on similar material.

So what is this new stratigraphy and what are the implications that follow? In the excavation of the Citadel House Area at Mycenae by the British School on behalf of the Archaeological Society, the last remaining major sector within the Acropolis untouched by either Schliemann or Tsountas (IAKOVIDES 2003, fig.1) was excavated and it is for this reason that we suggest that the stratigraphy we found *may* form a valid interpretive hypothesis for the other remains on the citadel.² In the levels of the Palatial period there was revealed the northern half of a Cult Centre. The construction of this sector began during the late 14th and 13th centuries, well before the West extension of the Citadel Wall. The area was adapted, enclosed by the citadel wall and then suffered a calamity probably in the form of earthquake, leaving large quantities of pottery *in situ*. Following this, some buildings were restored, others mothballed (i.e. taken out of use) and the whole area finally suffered a major destruction with burning which we place about 1200 BC.

Some walls of solid construction and, in particular, the relatively recently constructed West section of the citadel wall survived this major destruction intact. This feature conditioned the rescue strategy.³ At Mycenae the programme of reconstruction was

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¹ On my retirement from Athens in 1994, I was awarded a Leverhulme Trust Emeritus Fellowship for this purpose. These Fellowships are aimed specifically at those who have been hampered in completing research by the duties of academic administration.

² *Pace* IAKOVIDES 2003 and 2005.

³ Those of us who have lived and worked in the earthquake-prone areas of Greece and Turkey will be well aware of the very different reactions of the survivors and how they face rebuilding – indeed the late Klaus Kilian kept an album of both the damage and the subsequent reconstruction throughout the East Mediterranean area.

ROOM xxxiv			
PAINTED	32	UNPAINTED/COOKING WARE	45
Storage: Stirrup Jar	1	Vat	1
Inscribed Stirrup Jar	1	Pithos	1
Piriform Jar	1	Amphora, small	1
Kalathos	1	Kalathos	1
Pouring: Hydria, small	1	Hydria, large	5
Jug	1	Spouted krater	1
Miniature: Bowl	1		
Cup	1		
Bird Askos	2		
Drinking: Cup	2	Cup	1
		Mug	1
		Kylix	12
		Stemmed Bowl	1
Eating: Deep Bowl	16	Deep Bowl	2
Shallow Bowls/Basin	4	Shallow Bowl	2
		Shallow Angular Bowl	1
Cooking		Tripod Cauldron	3
		CP Jar	4
		CP Jug	1
Accessory		Dipper	2
		Lamp/Brazier	4
		Platter	1
ROOM xxi (additional shapes)			
Collar-Necked Jar			
Strainer Jug			
Krater			
Kylix			
Ring Vase			

Fig. 1 Table of shapes found in Rooms xxxiv and the additional ones from Room xxi

based on two factors: first, previous experience: about a century earlier some event had caused building practice to alter and a method of solid construction based on an artificial foundation terrace, well constructed and well drained had become commonplace;⁴ second, the problem caused by the very diverse levels of the surviving remains. The floor levels of the Palatial period varied not only from East to West⁵ but also from North to South: those of the South House itself, standing on an exceptionally strong terrace, lay at 238 ASL, the floor of the adjacent Area 36 was at 236.46 and of the Room with the Fresco (Room 31) at 234.75.

The major reconstruction comprised the use of the surviving walls, including the Citadel Wall, to form a solid terrace on which to build two complexes.

In two or three places we can trace intermediate floors or working surfaces, accompanied by pottery finds. The main reoccupation floor that can be traced over a large portion of the West side of the area, however, lies above these interim surfaces at a height ASL of 236.80. This is lower than those of the original South House where the equivalent levels of the 12th cent. were apparently removed during later terracing for building in the Hellenistic period.

By one of those amazing strokes of good luck, these complexes also seem to have been destroyed by earthquake leaving again large quantities of pottery *in situ* on the floors – some 90 vases in all from five entirely separate rooms of differing function (Fig. 1). From this material (Figs. 4–7) we can define a phase of pottery development *not previously identified*. The character of this stratified corpus of pottery is so simple and basic that were it not *in situ* in a sequence above the burnt level and the subsequent terracing and sealed by clear later levels, the individual pots would not and could not be identified stylistically.

Immediately after this destruction the complexes were reconstructed, with complete realignment of one and rebuilding of the other. There is very little restorable pottery associated with this phase – Phase X – but what there is shows clear stylistic development. Of particular interest are several pieces stratified between two subphases (Fig. 8).

The buildings of this Phase X were not destroyed but were allowed to lapse into disuse and then were in the main covered by deep layers of wash held up by the West Citadel Wall with sequential layers containing pottery of LH IIIC Middle and then LH IIIC Late. In one area however this debris had been disturbed down to a level of 238 ASL for the construction of a pyre in Submycenaean/ Protogeometric times, thus destroying much intermediate material.

Supporting evidence for all aspects of this sequence is given by the excavations of Professor Mylonas inside the Hellenistic Tower – a small area, again untouched, some 35m to the south of the Citadel House Area – here three major levels with floors, an accumulated depth of 3m, culminated in a floor on which were restorable vessels of the end of LH IIIC Middle (IAKOVIDES 2003, 121 and forthcoming). Further confirmation comes from the excavations of 2000 to the north of the citadel of Tiryns.

⁴ Current work on the Petsas' House area destroyed in LH IIIA2 is giving information on this change of practice (kind information of the field director Dr. Kim Shelton).

⁵ For a section see TAYLOUR 1981,6: Section 1.

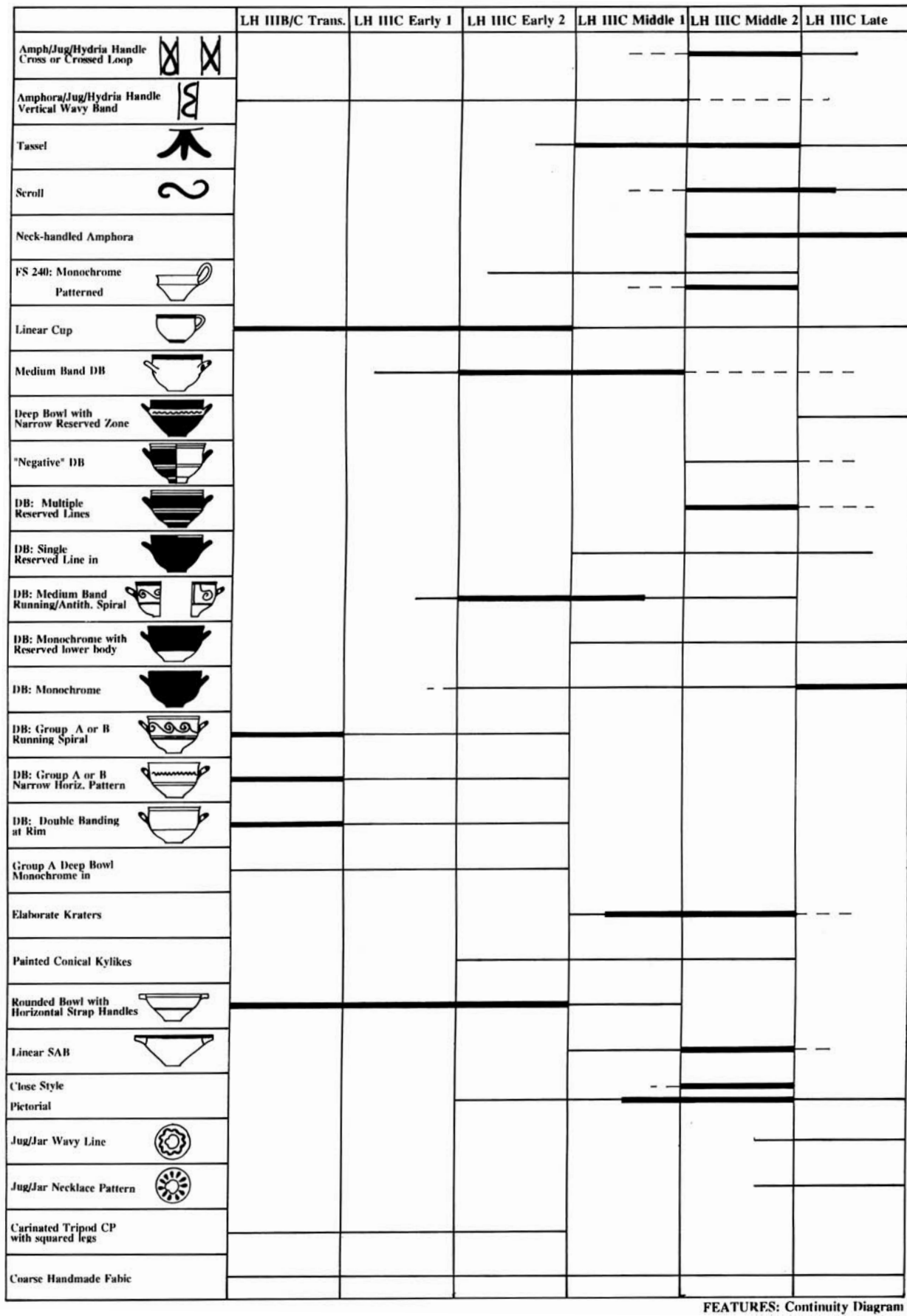


Fig. 2 Chart to illustrate the features found in the phases of LH IIIC at Mycenae

This evidence was presented by Professor Maran at the Mycenaean seminar in London (MARAN 2002–03). He has kindly allowed me to mention it, sending me drawings of the material concerned. After levels which echo a stylistically developed version of Mycenae's Phase IX or the start of Phase X there is a complex – called Phase 2 – with a range of restorable pottery which can be equated with the transition between Phases X & XIA. The Tiryns evidence is especially important as Professor Maran has identified a number of Levantine imports among the material and there are thus possibilities for cross dating.

This then is the stratigraphy but what does the pottery itself indicate. Here there are two points which it is very important to bear in mind. First that restorable pottery must be used in a quite different way to sherd evidence. A group of restorable vessels is the result of an event – what has can be termed a “freeze frame”; all were in use (which of course includes storage) simultaneously though they may not have been manufactured at exactly the same time, particularly in certain types of context (e.g. shrines). Sherds are deposited in a cumulative process over varying lengths of time. A group of sherds may include residual material and they were quite certainly not all manufactured at the same time. What such a group of sherds can give are *termini post* and *ante quem* for the underlying and overlying strata. This is relevant in particular to the two groups of sherds illustrated here (Fig. 4, row 5 and Fig. 8, rows 1 and 2. These antedate the subsequent floors of Phase X but cannot be assigned definitely to the lower floors of Phase IX.

Second it does not matter what names we use to describe the pottery phases represented in the stratigraphic sequence, what is important is to relate the actual material.⁶ The names are irrelevant though they can and have caused much confusion.

The copious pottery caught by the first earthquake at the end of Phase VII belongs both to the end of LH III B1 and the start of LH III B2. I have therefore often used the term LH III B mid but in

absolute terms the division of the 13th century is uneven and this point is now usually placed at $\pm$ 1230 BC. The pottery in the burnt destruction at the end of Phase VIII already begins to show features of LH IIIC and is thus now compared to Penelope Mountjoy's “LH III B/C Transitional” but there is very little of it (or of any pottery for that matter) on the floors of the actual destruction level. Pottery of this type is also found widely throughout the fill of the terraces built after the burnt destruction and on the intermediate floors mentioned above. It was studied in detail by Susan Sherratt for her PhD, forming the first of her five groups and she termed it LH III C Early. Her five-part terminology which was used in the preliminary study of the Mycenaean material was shown in a diagram published by MOUNTJOY 1986, 133 Table II. It did not seem to apply extensively beyond Mycenae and is now largely disused in publication in favour of Mountjoy's tripartite division.

Sherratt, however, because she was not dealing with the relevant trenches, was not aware of the important deposits of whole pots that lay on the floors above the terraces (Figs. 4–7). This group must be inserted into the scheme of development given in her (unpublished) thesis.⁷ The additional material forms the first part of Mountjoy's LH III C Early – which for current convenience we can call LH III Ce1. The subsequent Phase X (Fig. 8) can then be called LH III Ce2. Sherratt's chart has been adapted and appears here as Fig. 2.⁸

There follow two important conclusions in our search for correlations with the Levant. First as we now know a great deal more about the stratigraphic and stylistic sequence it can clearly be seen that the only point in the stylistic sequence of the Argolid from which the features found in the Levant could originate is between Mycenae's Phase IX and X. The new “linear” groups previously suspected and recently firmly identified can be related to ripe Phase IX, LH IIICe1, while the material more generally called in the Levant Myc IIIC 1B relates to Phase X, LH III Ce2. Second, this point in real time

⁶ Thus it is by ignoring the names and looking at the material that we can link the sequence at Midea to those of Mycenae and Tiryns to make a coherent history in the Argolid.

⁷ Her thesis, “The Pottery of Late Helladic IIIC and its Significance”, Oxford 1981, is available for consultation in Oxford and in the British School at Athens. The Mycenae section will form part of the forthcoming Fascicule 17 of the *Well Built Mycenae* series.

⁸ The correlations between the original phase names and the new ones are: Early = LH IIIB/C Transitional, Inserted phase = LH IIICe1, Tower = LH IIICe2, Developed = LH IIICm1, Advanced = LH IIICm2, Final = LH IIICl(ate) but see Addendum below.

must be well into the 12th Century given the amount of preceding deposit (Fig 3).

If we attempt to outline a background scenario at Mycenae to this development in the years after the burnt destruction of ca. 1200, we would start with a period still strongly related to the preceding but disorganized and in disarray. Eventually strong organization reasserts itself.⁹ The new complexes were planned and the terraces on which they were to stand were constructed with a filling of the pottery from the preceding period. The pottery which is found on the floors of the new complexes is of excellent quality and still has many echoes of the previous century but it seems to me to be intentionally austere and simple. I would suggest that this is a period of deliberate retrenchment, of sturdy utility both in construction and in pottery. It would not be unlikely that during this period overseas contacts which have been dormant, almost non-existent, for about half a century start to be reestablished. However this period comes once more to an abrupt end. It is not unreasonable to suggest that the impetus for more extensive overseas contact was the result of a second (if not third) earthquake within a century – ideas for “earthquake storms” in the Eastern Mediterranean are currently widely discussed¹⁰ and would seem to have some validity. At this point the new contacts were enriched and expanded; there was perhaps some emigration, particularly of craftsmen. The contacts continued and allowed substantial stylistic development in some areas, into a full blown “pleonastic” one. The imports at Tiryns, a site which in my view always took a lead in such affairs,¹¹ show that the contacts were reciprocal.

The chronological chart (Fig. 3) is the result of detailed consultation with the aim of incorporating as many factors as possible. As to any potential problems with the correlations to the Levant there seem to me to be at present several considerations to be weighed.

1. It must always be borne in mind that the impetus

for the new style and range may not have come solely from the mainland of Greece but also from elsewhere in the Aegean, and influenced not only the Levant but perhaps also in due course the mainland itself.

2. There may be an actual gap in occupation between the destructions at the end of the Bronze Age in the Levant and the reoccupation with material seemingly linked to the LH IIICe2 of the Aegean or perhaps an unevenness of occupation over the area of a site – exactly what caused the confusion at Mycenae.

3. Perhaps pottery of the elusive LH III B/C Transition and LH IIICe1 was present either before or after the destructions in the Levant but in such an exiguous quantity or unprepossessing quality that it has been ignored. The difficulty inherent in its identification has been highlighted above.

4. Finally we know that there is a clear fall off in trade during the *whole* of the 13th century (though perhaps particularly the latter part); many of the items and the contexts which contained material assigned stylistically to LH III B were ones, particularly ritual ones, where residual imports are frequently found.

It seems possible that one or more of these factors may in the past have caused correlations to be falsely aligned. What is clearly essential is that material from the Levant is correctly identified.

Addendum November 2006

Following the completion of the study of the Post-Palatial levels at Mycenae (which will appear as *Well Built Mycenae*, Fascicule 16/17) and the initial study of the material from Tiryns Northeast,* it has been decided to term the pottery found on the floors of the burnt destruction level of ca. 1200 BC “Late Helladic IIIB2 Late”. This does not affect the identification and analysis of the pottery in any way but makes the terminological equation with both earlier Tiryns reports and the Midea excavations much clearer.

⁹ This was a suggestion some years ago by the late K. KILIAN (1988, 135).

¹⁰ The article by NUR & CLINE (2000) though based on some questionable and out of date archaeological data presented an interesting hypothesis which was notably developed, with some care, by the BBC Horizon team in 2003.

¹¹ To be discussed by me at the Emporia conference, Athens 2004.

* J. MARAN *et al.*, *Forschungen im Stadtgebiet von Tiryns* 1999–2002, *AA* 2006 especially 99–133 (stratigraphy) and 139–162 (pottery).

+/- 1300 1290 1280 1270 1260 1250 1240 1230 1220 1210 1200 1190 1180 1170 1160 1150 1140 1130 1120 1110 1100 1090 1080 1070 1060 1050	POTTERY PERIOD	MYCENAE	LEVANT / CYPRUS
			Suggested Correlations
	LH IIIB1	Phase VI	
		Phase VII	
		?Earthquake	
	LH IIIB2	Phase VIII	
	LH IIIB/C Transitional	— Destruction —	Kition T9 Lower
		Interim floors/ Terraces	Ugarit destroyed
		Phase IX	
	LH IIIC Early 1		Miqne-Ekron VIIIB monochrome, Asdod XIIIB G/4106
		?Earthquake ²	
	LH IIIC Early 2	Phase X	Miqne-Ekron VIIA monochrome, Kouklia start of Enkomi IIIA, Kition T9 Upper
	LH IIIC Middle 1	Phase XIA	
			Enkomi IIIB
	LH IIIC Middle 2	Phase XIB	
		Granary Destroyed	
	LH IIIC Late	Phase XIIA	
	Submycenaean	Phase XIIIB	

Fig. 3 Chronological chart

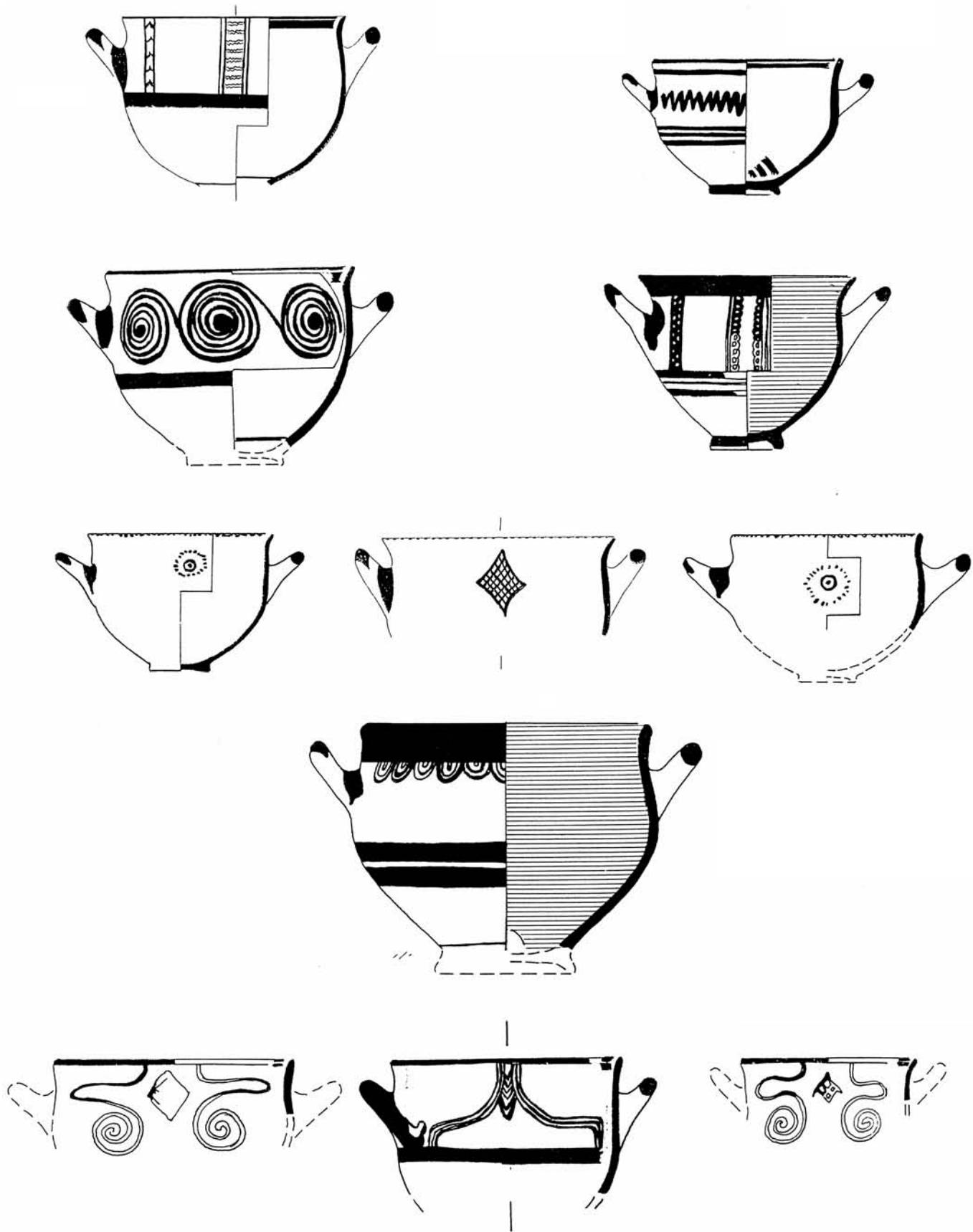


Fig. 4 *Row 1*: Phase VIII Destruction Floors, Deep Bowls of LH III B/C Transitional; *Row 2*: Phase IX Intermediate Floors, Deep Bowls of LH III B/C Transitional; *Row 3*: Phase IX Room xxxiv Deep Bowls of LH III Ce1; *Rows 4 & 5*: Phase IX/X Deep Bowl sherds of LH III Ce 1/2

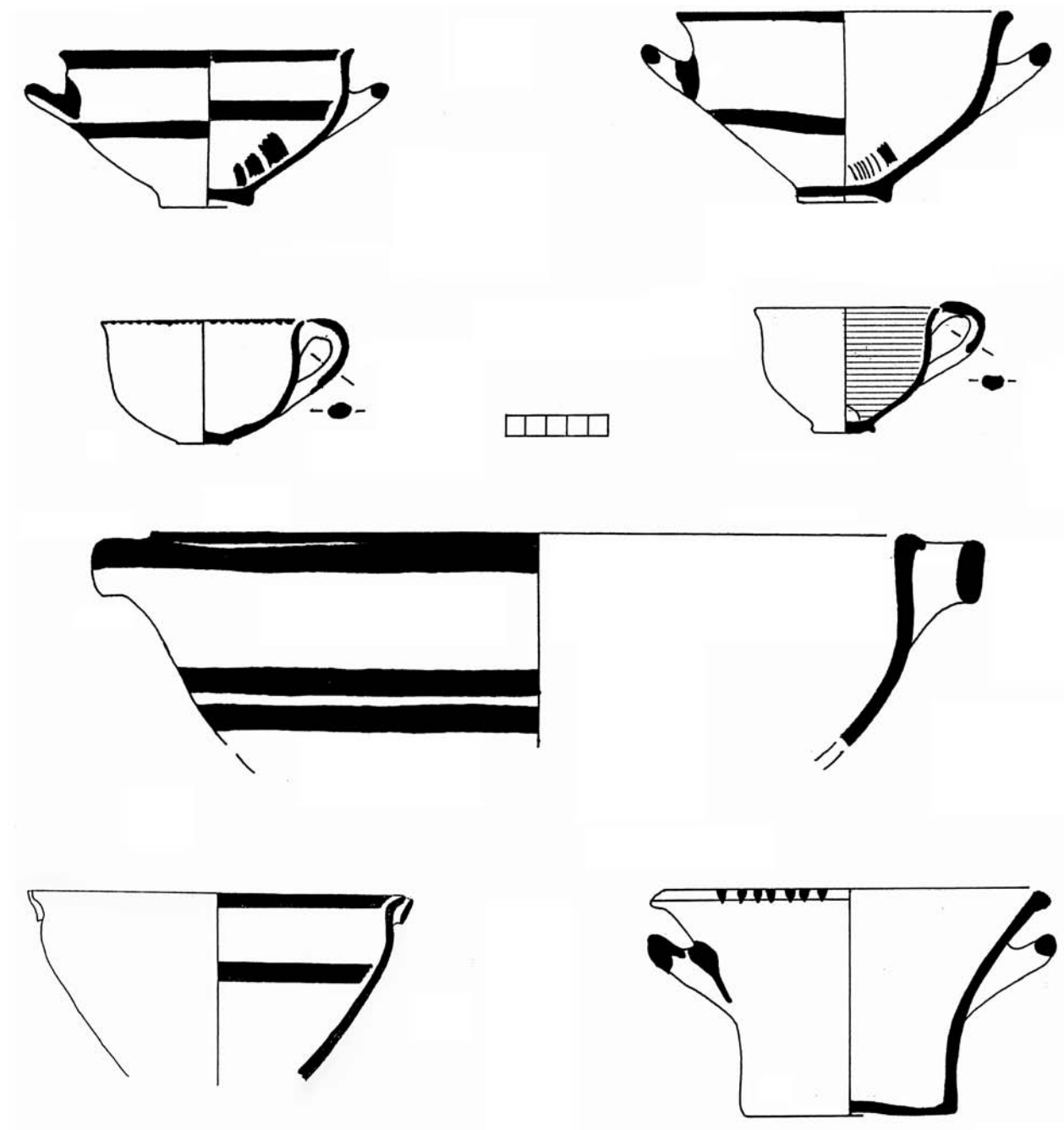


Fig. 5 Phase IX: Room xxxiv Other Open Shapes

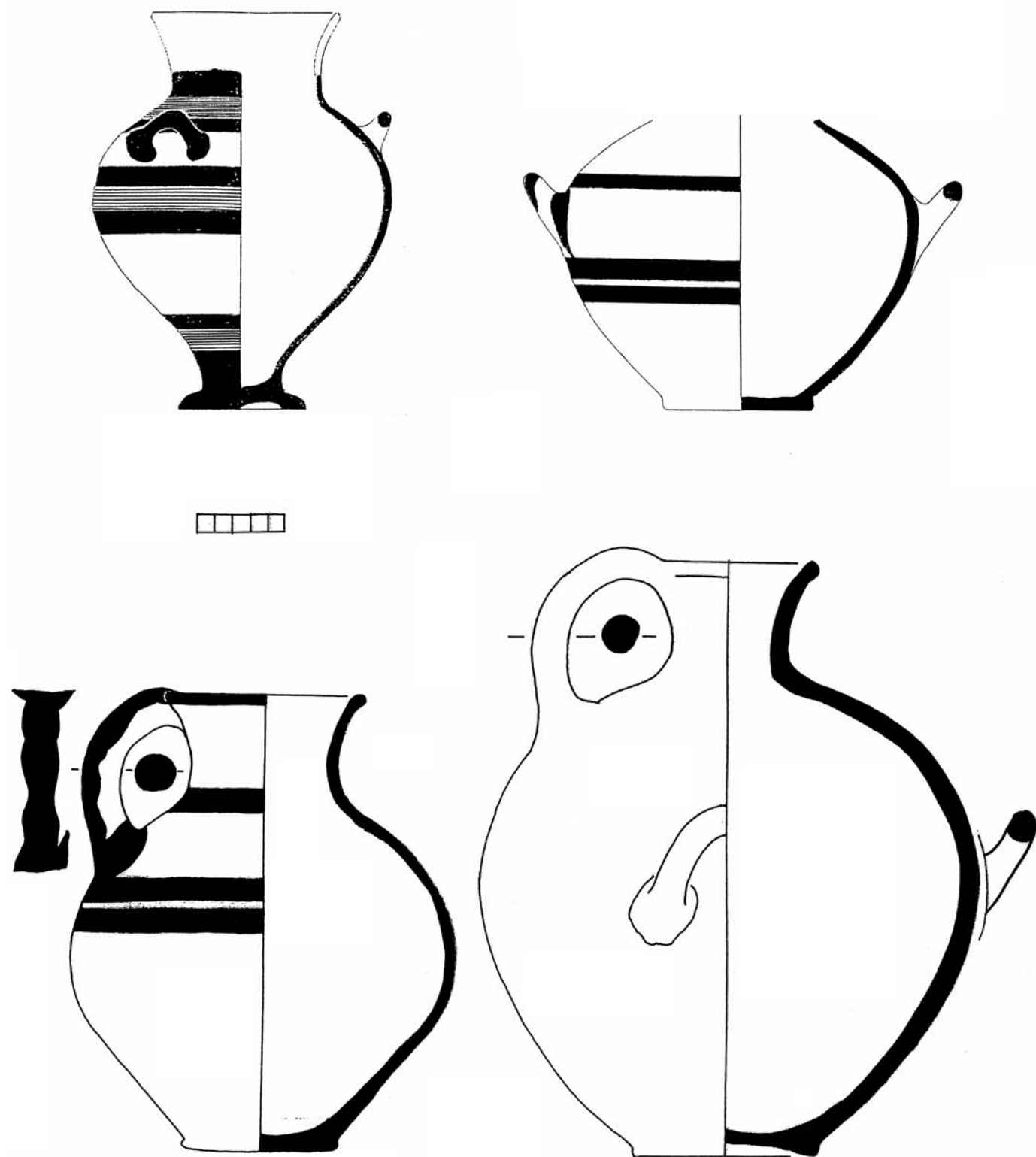


Fig. 6 Phase IX: Room xxxiv Closed Shapes

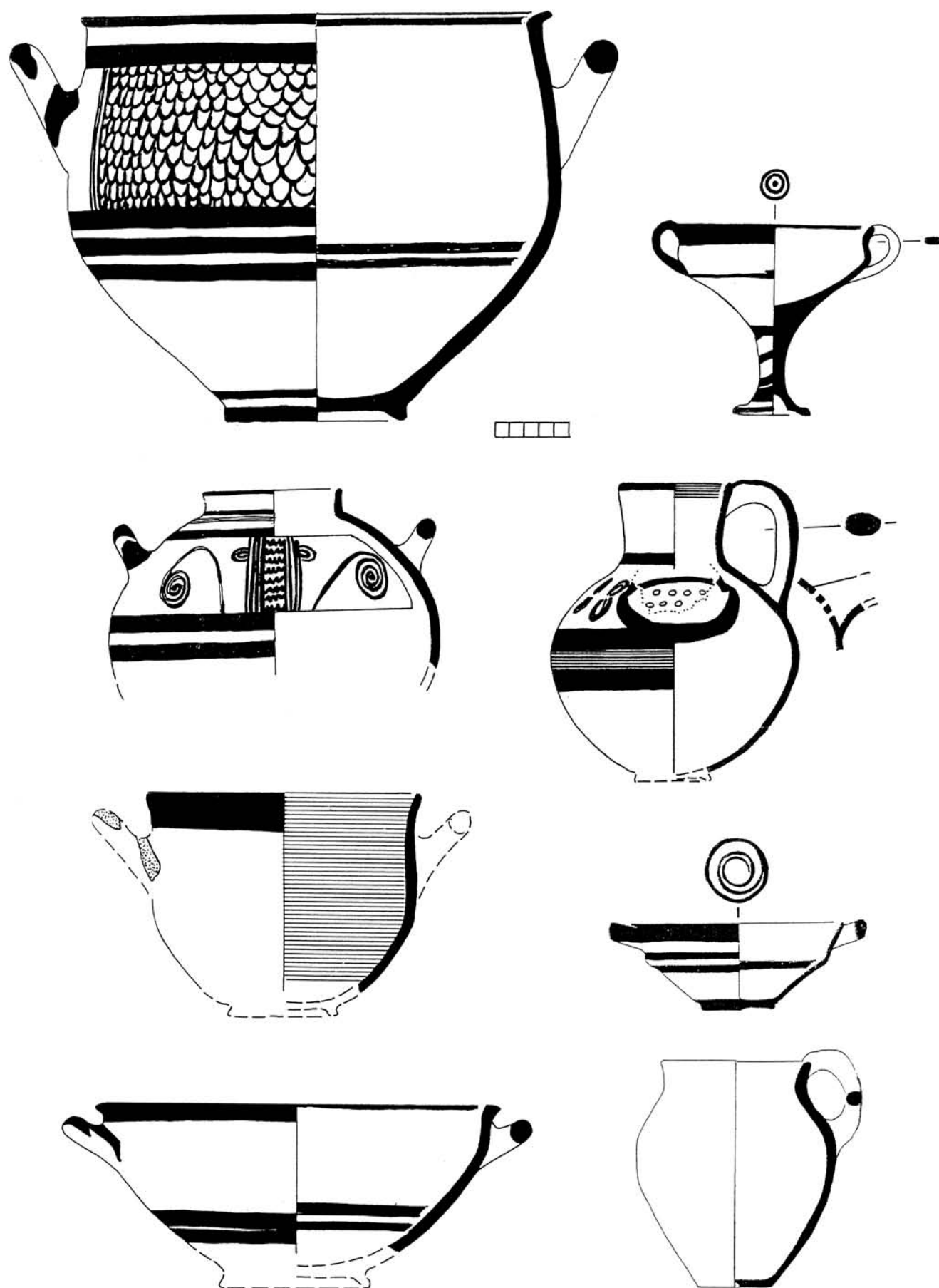


Fig. 7 Phase IX: *Rows 1-2:* Room xxi additional shapes; *Rows 3-4:* Rooms xxiv and xxxiii, duplicated set of pots

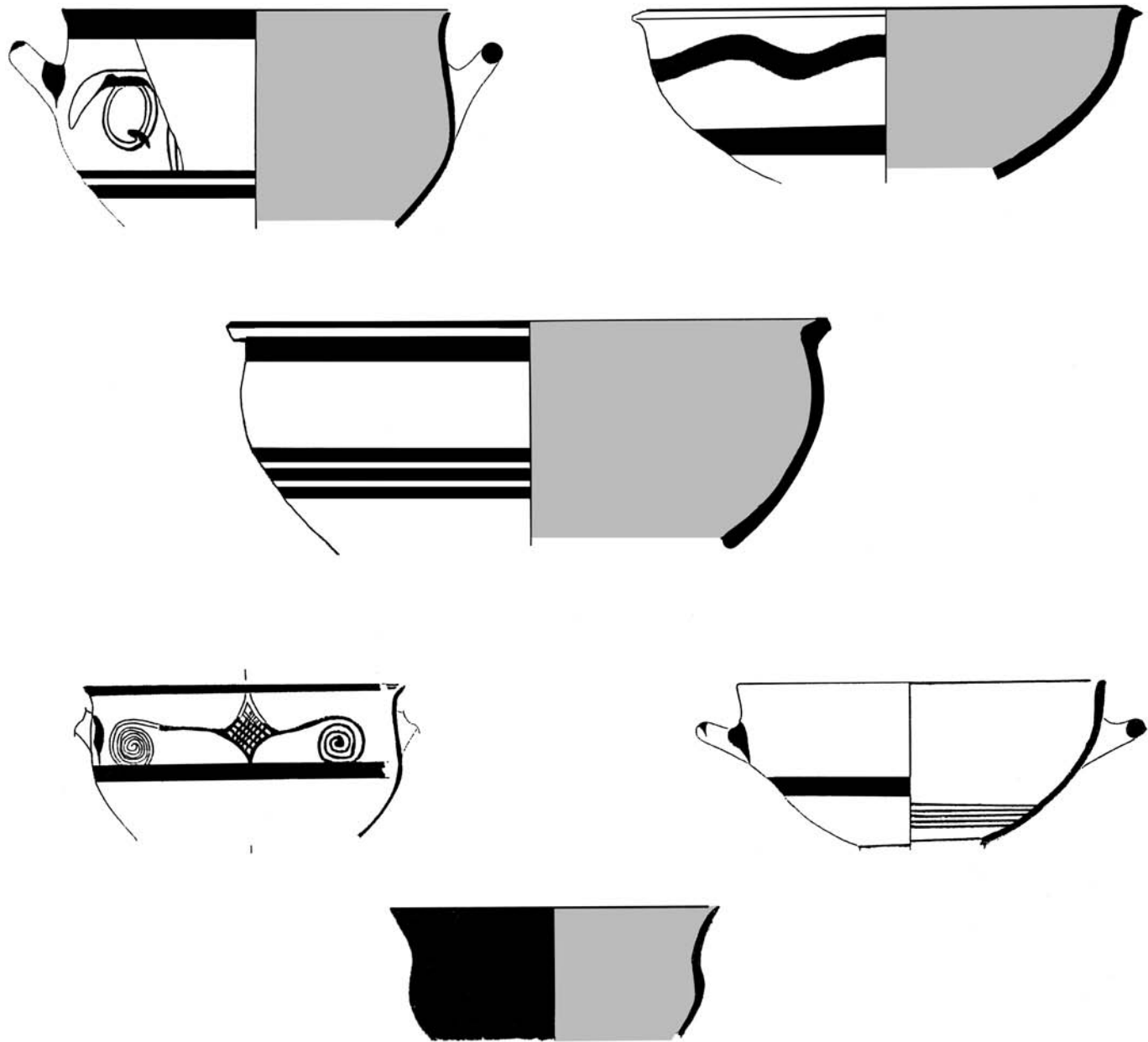


Fig. 8 Phase X: *Rows 1-2:* below the floor of Room 17; *Rows 3-4:* Room liii

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