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XXXIV
2011

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pisa university
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EVO XXXIV (2011)

THE EXCAVATION OF AN EARLY BRONZE AGE TOWER NEAR SALUT (BISYAH, SULTANATE OF OMAN): THE IRON AGE LEVELS

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Introduction

In autumn 2010, the planning of an archaeological park centred on the site of Salut in Wadi Sayfham, immediately north of the town of Bisyah (Dakhiliyah region - Sultanate of Oman), necessitated the excavation of some peripheral sites. The park, with its focus on the Iron Age site of Salut, is rich in archaeological remains which span from the Early Bronze Age to the Islamic era and among these, of peculiar interest to the project is a circular Early Bronze Age (EBA) tower located about 300 meters to the north-west of the hill of Salut. Still visible on the surface but whose foundations lie buried beneath more recent sediments (fig. 1).

Fig. 1 - The remains of the Bronze Age tower as visible on the surface before excavation.

The tower occupies the inner sector of the park, and the Office of the Adviser to His Majesty the Sultan for Cultural Affairs entrusted the IMTO[1] (Italian Mission to Oman, University of Pisa) with the excavation of the site, in order to reveal its general layout and features, prior to preservation and restoration.

The work at the site took place in November 2010 and February 2011, for a total of nine weeks. The plan of the tower was revealed, and a number of later stone walls were also revealed, some of which were initially thought to be contemporary with the circular structure. Two fundamental features, known from other excavated EBA towers, were also located: a well in the centre of the tower and a large ditch surrounding the latter.

Further work will be needed to investigate more accurately the layout of the ditch, and of a structure visible on its external side which extends beyond the current excavation.

It became clear from the excavation, that there was a substantial re-use of the site during the Iron Age, witnessed by a few building activities and by a remarkable quantity of potsherds. It is this period of occupation in the monument's history which will be accounted for in this paper.

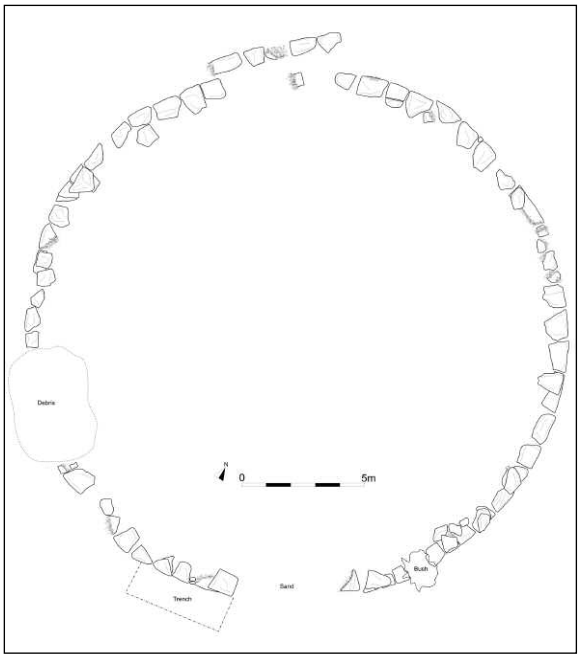

Fig. 2 - Plan of the Bronze Age tower before excavation.

The excavation

Methods

Given the architecture which was already visible prior to excavation (fig. 2), several trenches established with different objectives (plate 1.2b).

Initially, a small rectangular trench (T0), previously excavated by the Birmingham team[2] against the southern part of the tower's ring-wall, was re-excavated, empting it out from the sandy Aeolian and erosion deposits which had almost completely back-filled it.

This provided a first indication of the local stratigraphy and of the ring-wall foundation. Such a small trench was not, however, considered sufficient for a satisfactory idea of the entire site's stratigraphy to

[1] The Author would like to acknowledge the support of the Office, as well as the help and encouragement of Prof. A. Avanzini, Director of IMTO. Carl Phillips is gratefully acknowledged for revising the paper, pointing out problems and making valuable suggestions; the responsibility for all the remaining shortcomings rests entirely on the author.

[2] No specific news about the works in Wadi Sayfham and on this building in particular has been published yet.

be gained. Two wide and deep trenches – T6 and the enlarged T0 itself – were, therefore, dug in order to expose the foundations of the main circular wall. These were further revealed in the small trench T1 which, together with T2 and T0, was then useful to obtain a long section through the tower (plate 3 - section 1).

The internal structure of the tower, and the possible existence of subdivisions or features, was investigated by digging an articulated trench running through it, along a roughly north-south line, and later expanded with a perpendicular addition going from the centre westward (trenches 2, 2north, 2west). In the exact centre of the tower, trench 2 uncovered the remains of a well which was then excavated down to a depth of around 8,3 meters from modern surface.

T2south was intended to shed some light on the nature of a gap visible in the circular wall.

Trenches T5 and T9 were initially laid in relation to a couple of fragmentary stone walls visible on the surface, the building technique of which involved the use of huge limestone boulders and suggested a possible EBA date for their erection, and thus contemporary, therefore, with the main tower wall. This appeared not to be the case, and all the exposed walls turned out to be far later; trenches T3 and T4 were then excavated in order to clarify the stratigraphy lying beneath them. Trench 1 was also fundamental in documenting the relations of the main tower wall and later walls.

Finally, trench T8, dug on the opposite side of a modern garden wall which was taken as a limit for T1, showed the continuation of the wall outlined inside the latter, but was not investigated further.

In the south-western corner of T6, some limestone blocks were revealed, resting at the same level of the tower's foundations, thus hinting at the presence of a Bronze Age date structure: trench T7 was then devoted to the investigation of this structure, which turned out to be the Bronze Age ditch, whose consequent excavation will not be dealt with here.

General stratigraphy

The entire stratigraphical sequence was investigated in the large trenches T0 and T6 and further confirmed by the survey of T1, T3 and T4.

The ground base for the EBA occupation was a compact, extremely thick horizon of calcium carbonate rich deposits, with a mainly gravelly and silty matrix, cemented by the percolation of water and subsequent deposition of carbonates. This sediment (*caliche/calcrete*) corresponds to "the product of later conditions which were evidently less arid than those obtaining during deposition of the unit 4 sediments" in the description of the area's sedimentary regime given by G. Stanger[3].

The tower ring-wall rests directly on top of the caliche, in places showing a shallow foundation trench cut through a slightly softer silty deposit sitting above the caliche, well cemented by carbonates deposition but not including gravel (recorded as S.U. 004) (section 1 and 4 - see plate 3). In some places it has been possible to spot gravel deposits lying

[3] ORCHARD-STANGER 1994, p. 97.

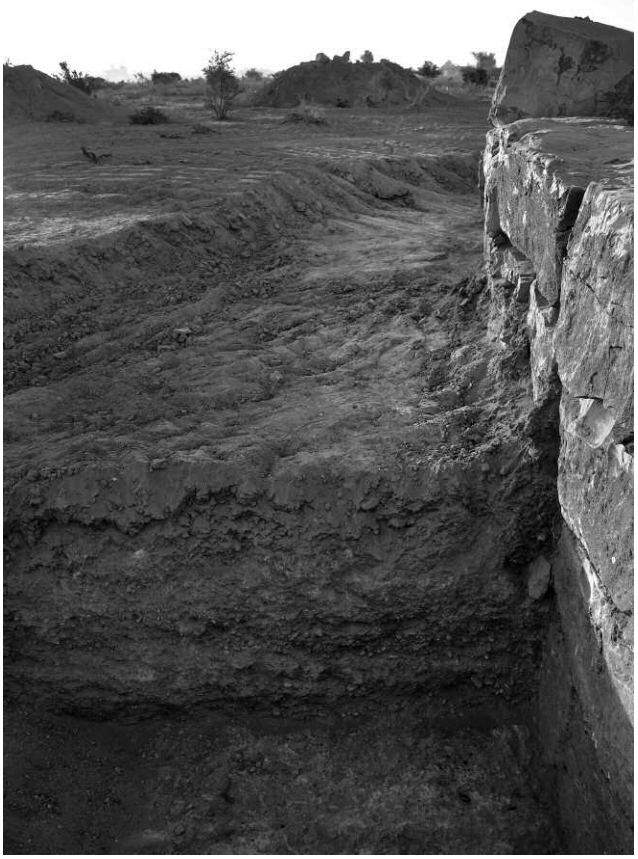

Fig. 3 - Against the tower's ring wall, the stratigraphy shows a series of gravel lenses directly above the caliche - see section 3.

between S.U. 004 and the caliche layer, thus indicating some wadi activity before the establishment of the Bronze Age building. Again, the presence of such lenses of gravel is in line with the general sedimentary regime reconstructed by Stanger, who notes how the transition from his unit 4 to unit 5 is indicated by "thin gravels of sheet flood or deflation origin, by gravel lenses of local provenance within the upper half meter" (*ibid.*), which mark a return to fluvial sedimentation. Hence, the initial Bronze Age occupation of the area took place in a moment when previous dry conditions had already changed to wetter ones, and no dramatic reverse transition seems to be indicated by higher sediments, although these indicate a gradual reduction in water regime.

The stratigraphy is not, however, homogeneous all over the site, and this appears to be linked to the relation between the tower's location and the wadi stream. Against the eastern side of the tower, toward the wadi bed, a series of gravelly deposits of different granulometry were evident, but were absent on the opposite side (fig. 3). This clearly suggests how, at a certain point, the building acted as a localized dam.

Though minor discrepancies from one point to the other keep standing, the stratigraphical sequence above S.U. 004 and the mentioned gravel wadi deposits can be interpreted in a coherent way.

The whole site appears, therefore, to have been subjected to a continuous deposition of wadi sediments, further mixed up by wind and water erosion/deposition and more recent ploughing. Such origin for the layers identified during the excavation is clearly mirrored in their composition, in all cases classifiable as silty or sandy, with the various intermediate mixtures. It is worth noting that none of the upper deposits surrounding the tower could be described as gravelly and show less morphological variation than the lower ones. This might indicate that the water flow inside the wadi diminished its violence, at least in this "peripheral" part[4], and that Aeolian deposition became the principal factor in

[4] This is not the case for the central part of the wadi bed. A series of trenches for geo-archaeological evaluation of the stratigraphy were excavated on the east and west side of Salut and showed how, in some places,

soil formation from a certain moment. This as well appears consistent with the reduced accumulation of soil visible above the Iron Age layers, when compared with that occurred between this period and the previous Bronze Age phase.

This sedimentation process caused the loss of entire layers, in some places, and in other the mixing of materials originally belonging to different *strata*. Thus, while in some of the examined sections it was possible to identify two separate horizons relating to the Bronze Age and the Iron Age or later periods respectively, this was not always the case. Furthermore, a neat distinction between the uppermost, recent and sub-recent deposits, and an underlying Iron Age deposit, was nearly always impossible. Even when the morphology and nature of the deposits would have allowed such a separation, the materials were completely mixed, and Islamic or more recent shards were collected almost at the bottom of presumably Iron Age levels.

Two separate layers are more clearly visible to the west of the tower, again depending on the protection from the wadi action provided by the tower itself and by S.U. 004. The latter, in fact, coincides with the extension of a low mound which perhaps influenced the choice for the tower's location: the ring-wall was built around this mound to avoid the need of transporting huge loads of soil in order to built the solid base of the structure. The hardly cemented core, S.U. 004, would no doubt be much more reliable than any backfilling material.

Fig. 4 - The Iron Age wall W2 above older sediments deposited on top of the *caliche* horizon in trench 3 (see section 7).

coarse sandy and gravely deposits of fluvial origin completely eroded and substituted the Bronze Age soil (CREMASCHI-ZERBONI, *Geoarchaeological investigation in the Salut area - 2010 field season preliminary report*, unpublished report, http://arabiantica.humnet.unipi.it/fileadmin/Arabian_Files/pdf/salut_preliminary_10a.pdf).

In sections 1, 2, and 8, a Bronze Age level can be distinguished below an Iron Age one, further overlaid by the most recent deposits[5]. Small ceramic fragments help the chronological attribution. In sections 5 and 6 the situation is similar, but no dating evidence was retrieved. The above-mentioned mixture of recent and Iron Age material in the upper contexts was noticed also in these areas, so that the Iron Age label must be considered as a *terminus post quem* rather than a strict chronological indication.

In sections 3, 4, and 7, on the other hand, only two main layers could be isolated, and it is not yet possible to determine whether an Iron Age+Bronze Age context lies beneath the modern deposits or if a pre-Iron Age layer is overlaid by a mixed later one.

Be that as it may, the lower deposits serve as a base for a series of low stone walls, made up of hand to head size wadi pebbles, with some occasional larger boulder, all resting some 50 to 70 cm higher than the tower foundations (fig. 4). Below a superficial Aeolian sand deposit, a loose slightly silty sand layer covered all these walls, and could be considered as one throughout the whole site, being the result of recent wind erosion and re-deposition. This layer was named S.U. 040 within the south-eastern compound area, and it corresponds to what in other places was named S.U. 001 (Trench 0), S.U. 007 (Trenches 1 and 3), S.U. 044, S.U. 050 (Trench 5, south-eastern part). The deposits connected to the walls foundation levels were lying just under this recent layer, and were thus far from sealed and safely datable. Given the internal partition of the south-eastern compound, three such layers were named, one in each of the spaces delimited by the stone walls: from north to south they are S.U. 042, S.U. 041, S.U. 043.

The abundance of Iron Age shards in the upper levels of the stratigraphy, facing their absence in the lower ones, seems to indicate with a reasonable degree of certainty that at least the original building of the small stone walls surrounding the tower has to be dated to the Iron Age. Furthermore, within the upper contexts themselves, the mixing up of Iron Age and later material sensibly decreases moving downward, and Islamic shards are very rare near the bottom of the layers associated with the stone walls.

Other stone features unearthed on the site represent later interventions, presumably linked with an occupation of the site during the Early Islamic period (9^{th}-10^{th} century, based on the retrieved potshards). These features, in some cases built against Iron Age walls, lie on higher sediments and/or display poorer and inferior. The focus of this Islamic occupation appears to be in the area to the south of the tower, where a fragment of a rotary quern was also retrieved. This could possibly account for the function of the squared, deep pit S.U. 006, excavated against one of the earlier walls (W25), and possibly interpreted as a granary bin[6].

Other late structures were revealed west and north of the above mentioned compound. The paucity of associated pottery hampers any plausible dating, but their poor aspect and the height of their foundation would point to a Islamic, possibly quite recent date. Structure W16, until now only cleaned superficially, could be the only one of earlier date among these, since it rests on a lower surface then W13, W17 and W15.

[5] The descriptions of the different Stratigraphical Units and the correspondences between them will be given as a commentary to the sections drawings.

[6] The bottom of the pit was not reached, due to its reduced dimension (circa 70 x70 cm).

Also wall W14, built of irregular large stones, is surely later than the compound located west of the tower, though it rests at a slightly lower level than the other late walls.

Foundation level seems not to be a decisive dating factor when it comes to the small room defined by the two small stone walls W7 and W8. This small structure was built against the tower ring-wall, with W7 leant to it and W8 leant against the compound's northern wall W3. The masonry and general aspect of these two walls indicate a different building technique that can be tentatively associated with a late phase. This view is strengthened by the presence of Islamic pottery within the silty loam deposit filling the room (S.U. 038).

Due to the nature of the excavated layers, where no concentration of burnt material was spotted and bioturbations were abundant, no sample suitable for radiocarbon dating could be collected.

On top of the late features, the most recent accumulation of Aeolian deposits constitutes the current surface, and includes modern field walls.

The Iron Age occupation

Unmistakably related to an Iron Age occupation are two major features at the site which can be related to specific events.

The first and more important event was the re-excavation of the tower's well (fig. 5). Its date is clearly witnessed by the filling of the foundation trench cut for the curb partly preserved around the well-head. The trench (S.U. 032), with gently flaring sides, cuts

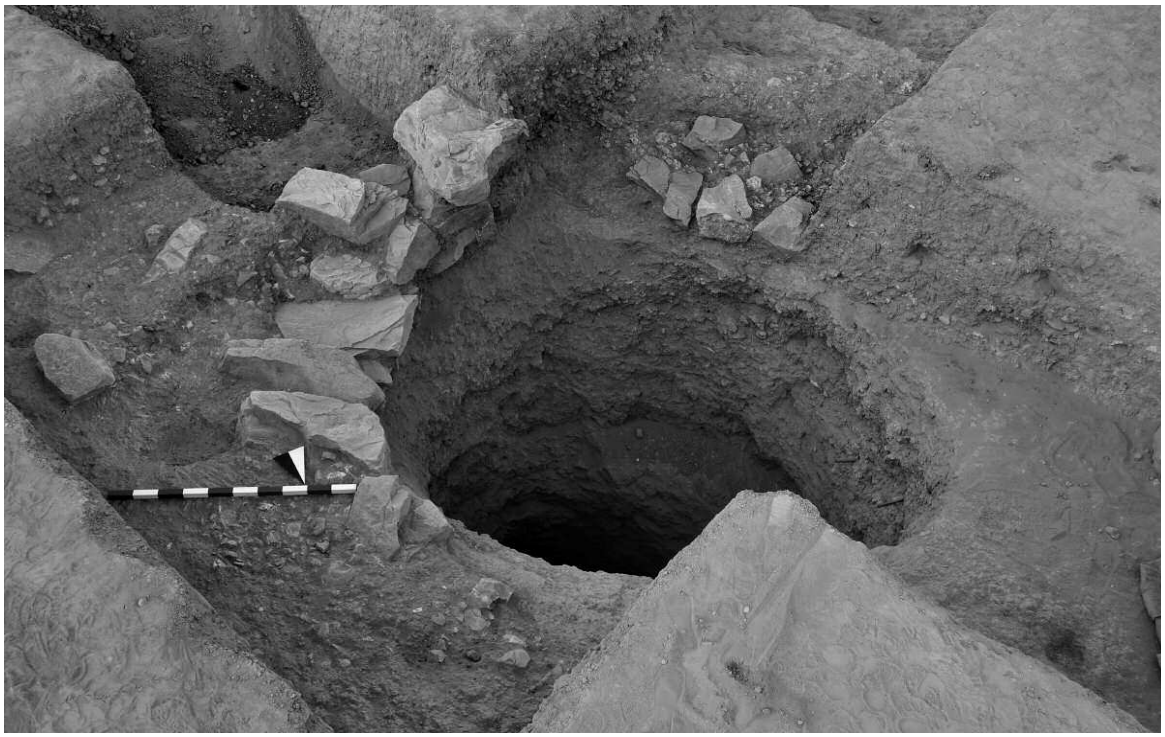

Fig. 5 - The surviving portion of the Iron Age well's curb. Scale is 1 meter.

through the compact S.U. 004 sediment and the above lying thin S.U. 063, a clean brown silty layer which could be the only remnant of any original Bronze Age filling/surface. The trench was intended for the laying of wall W6, an stone wall bound with clay mortar, which has an average width of *circa* 50 cm and formed a curb around the well. In fact, W6 had collpased for almost half of its circumference, the remaining standing stones not exceeding the height of the surrounding layers, just below the uppermost modern deposit identified inside the tower, S.U. 009. It is not possible to say with absolute certainty, therefore, whether the wall originally stood higher, representing a real well-head, or whether it lined the upper part of the well shaft. S.U. 004, though compact, is anyhow softer than the underlying caliche, and its lining would have been necessary to prevent erosion and collapse. The backfill of W6's trench, S.U. 020, deposited after the well was built, contained only Iron Age shards.

The excavation inside the well, below a thick series of more or less compact deposits[7] originating both from intentional backfilling deposition and partial collapse of the well-head and upper sides (see section 1), revealed a layer of dumped pottery at the depth of around 7,5 meters from the modern surface.

This layer, S.U. 039 (fig. 6), only contained Iron Age pottery, mainly large, coarse fabric storage jars. All the pots, if not all the shards, showed evidence of bad firing: core (in cases throughout the whole body section), blackened surfaces, slip loss, high porosity and friability of the ceramic body. A few fallen stones originally belonging to W6 were also retrieved from amongst the pottery deposit.

Fig. 6 - The layer rich in dumped Iron Age pottery S.U. 039, excavated inside the well.

At about the same depth of S.U. 039, the well sides showed clear traces of water action, the *caliche* surface being softened and covered by a greenish uneven film; dethatched portions of *caliche* also made up part of S.U. 039. Below S.U. 039, the thick deposit S.U. 061, partially removed, was an accumulation of silty-loamy, green-greyish lumps, again dethatched from the *caliche* cut sides.

Such a stratigraphy clearly indicates that S.U. 039 was contemporary with the final obliteration of the well, probably linked with the lowering of the water table and possibly determinant for the abandonment of the site. An intentional backfilling of the well at the end of the Iron Age occupation is also witnessed by the fact that from all the layers excavated inside the well, from S.U. 10 downward, no later pottery was retrieved.

[7] Worth mention is S.U., a small accumulation of broken mud bricks which were sampled to allow a comparative study with those coming from Salut.

The other event contemporary with the Iron Age occupation was the dismantling of a small portion of the tower's ring wall – a couple of large boulders removed in the southern part of W1. The "robbing" pit S.U. 048, traceable from the surface of S.U. 63 and cutting trough the wall was backfilled with two superimposed layers (S.U. 046 and 049, the latter being the deepest) which only contained Iron Age shards (fig. 7).

The importance of this intentional disruption in the ring wall resides in that the removed boulders were apparently used to build one of the small stone walls which surround the tower, namely W21, tentatively dated to the Iron Age. Bearing in mind all the cautions mentioned above, this re-use would thus provide evidence in favour of this chronological attribution, at least for the original building of these walls.

To the north and to the south-west of the tower these walls define two large compounds, of which only the southern one was probably outlined in its entirety (see plate 2).

The south-western compound (fig. 8) is bordered to the north by wall W3, to the west by W4, perpendicular to the former, and to the south/south-west by the long, slightly curving wall W12. The surviving east end of W12 is roughly aligned with the corner of the above mentioned W21, which is L shaped and built against the tower wall, to define a sort of entrance to the compound. Walls W25 and W18, though surely later than the other walls of the compound[8], could be related to a re-arrangement during the Iron Age of the entrance, thus making it narrower. Wall W5, parallel to W4 and built against it, seems to serve as a reinforcement for this latter; two more walls, W9 and W10, running parallel to W3 and leant perpendicularly against W4, divide the compounds in three areas, two of which noticeably smaller than the third.

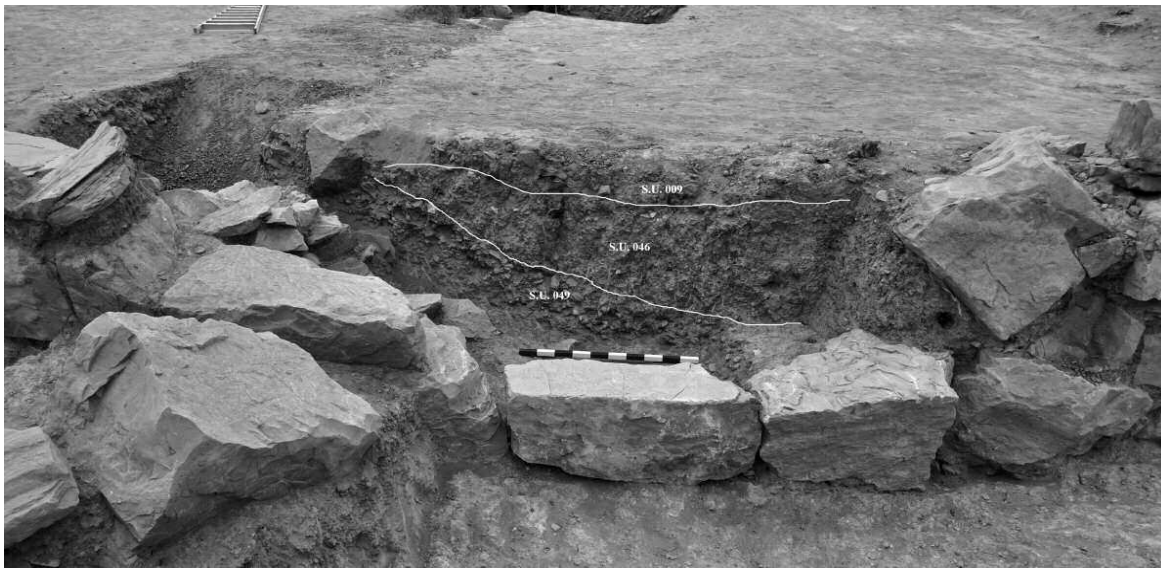

Fig. 7 - The dismantled portion of the tower's wall. Below S.U. 009, the two fillings of the dismantling trench are indicated.

[8] W25 sits on top of the east-west oriented branch of W21, while W18, leant against W12 internal face, rests on a thin deposits accumulated above the foundation level of W12.

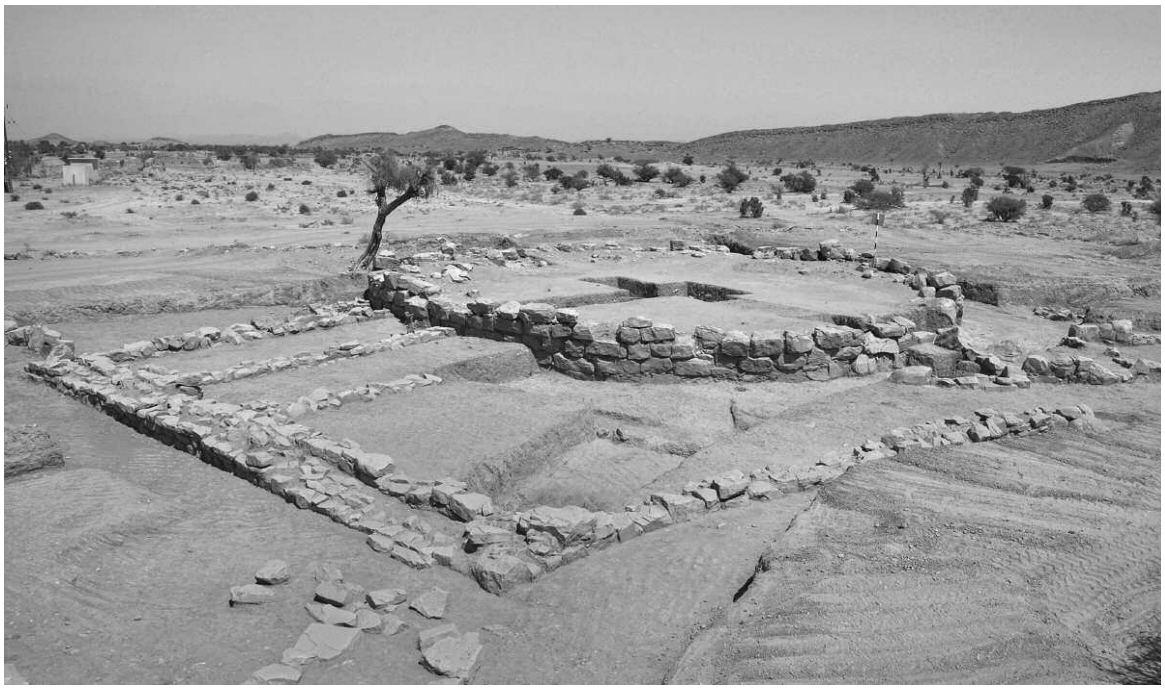

Fig. 8 - The south-western compound.

The northern compound (fig. 9) is delimited by the two sub-parallel walls W2 and W11, built against the tower ring wall and running on a south-west/north-east direction. The ends of these walls were not reached, but it seems probable that a wall spanning the distance between them should close the compound somewhere to the north-east of the current excavation limit. Short bits of further small stone walls (W27 and W28) were traced inside the small trench T8, now backfilled. W2 anyway seems to be running further north than the limit of T8, and is unlikely that any of these small walls could represent the original boundary of the compound.

It is noteworthy that both W2 and W11, later dismantled for stone quarrying, had themselves been built using a few large boulders taken from the tower ring wall, that also were the only evidence of their existence before excavation[9].

This accounts for the original interpretation, based on surface observation, that these two walls formed part of an outer structure adjacent to the tower and contemporary with it, an interpretation also influenced by the actual presence of such structures connected with the two other EBA towers located nearby (Buildings 3 and 4 in the al-Hajar project's listing)[10]. This provides, therefore, a clear example of how survey data have to be approached critically prior to excavation.

[9] The date of this compound is more controversial than that of the southern one; many Early Islamic sherds were retrieved close to W11 foundation level, and another small wall was superficially uncovered, probably earlier than W11. Further investigation is needed to clarify the stratigraphy.

[10] ORCHARD-ORCHARD 2006, plate 6-d.

Fig. 9 - The northern compound.

The function of these compounds is not clear; nevertheless, their extension and general layout, and the absence of specific ceramic or tools assemblages, would point to a non-residential use. Their location, in the middle of the plain, and their connection with the reused well inside the tower, suggests that they could be large and relatively low terraces, presumably exploited for small scale agriculture.

If this interpretation is accepted, the re-occupation of the Bronze Age site would indicate an importance in relation to the general settlement pattern and land use strategy during the Iron Age in the area around Salut.

The Iron Age pottery

From what reported about the site's stratigraphy it is clear that a significant amount of the Iron Age shards come from unsealed contexts. They are usually found together with much later pottery, and the Stratigraphical Units with which they are associated do not usually present discrete and reliable contexts. The only reliable, sealed contexts containing Iron Age pottery were the well head's foundation trench filling (S.U. 020), the lower layer filling the wide pit linked to the dismantling of the tower ring-wall (S.U. 049), and deposits excavated from inside the well, below S.U. 010.

Diagnostic shards are generally scarce, and this applies also to the primary contexts mentioned above. For all this reasons, only the assemblages from the sealed Stratigraphical Units will be presented here grouped by context. For the other shards, a shape-based typology will be followed.

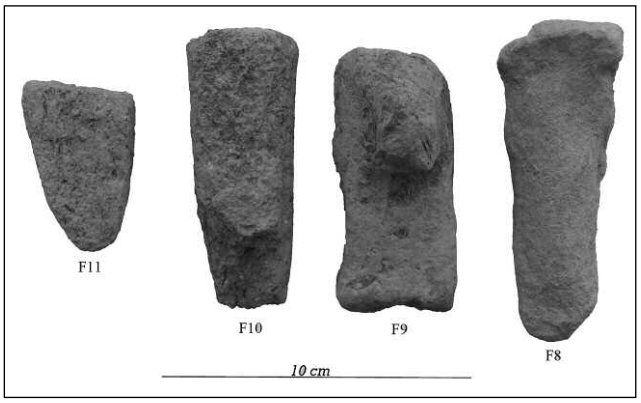

Fig. 10 - Fragmentary LHB handles.

In general terms, coarse fabrics are the most widely represented, with a significant presence of medium fabrics, and a notable lack of fine fabric.

Painted shards are completely absent, and incised decorations are also extremely rare.

Shapes include bowls and basins, large jars and few necked jars. Small cups are occasional, and no shard attributable to spouted vessels was retrieved.

A typical Iron Age production is the long handled-bowl, or censer lamp, of which four fragmentary handles were collected from different contexts. Generally badly preserved, a few decorative features could anyway be recognized. A common fishbone decoration was incised on the fragment F11[11], while a raised cordon, probably representing a snake body, was applied on fragment F8. Fragment F9 showed a broken element, which could be interpreted as the surviving fragment of a snake's body climbing to the bowl's edge, in analogy with a specimen found at Salut[12].

This general picture, though a bias towards coarser and more "solid" fabrics and shapes has to be taken into account, considering the described stratigraphy and the impact of fluvial erosion and deposition on the site, seems consistent with the hypothesized agricultural nature of the site. It would also account for the marked difference with the nearby site of Salut, whose nature, although not clearly definable, was definitely not totally domestic. At Salut in fact small simple and carinated cups are almost ubiquitous, along with a consistent percentage of painted pottery and spouted jars and bowls. Fine fabrics represent a significant percentage of the whole assemblage at Salut.

Coming to the mentioned sealed Iron Age contexts, both SU 020 and 046 unfortunately provided few diagnostic shards. Non diagnostic fragments generally mirror the fabrics witnessed by the few drawn specimen, i.e. they vary from medium-coarse to coarse.

More interesting is the pottery recovered from the dump layer inside the well, SU 039. This assemblage mainly includes badly fired pottery. Most of the shapes, which are not so many, belong to the category of large storage jars, produced in a coarse fabric with large grits, and well-known Iron Age shapes.

This is the case for SU 039,5-7 (plate 10, 92-94), while SU 039,4 (plate 10, 89) is a fragment of a large bowl with straight flaring walls and flattened rim, of which the complete profile was preserved.

Though only its neck and rim were drawn because it would have been impossible to

[11] Following the procedure in use at Salut, these objects were catalogued as "Finds" in a separated list, and thus labelled with an "F" + number code.

[12] Unpublished. See the preliminary report available on-line, URL http://arabiantica.humnet.unipi.it/fileadmin/Arabian_Files/pdf/report_salut08B.pdf

restore it due to its extreme friability, jar SU 039,6 displayed a quite striking shape, where the inclination of the body and that of its neck would have given a general hour-glass shape. This is assumed to be a consequence of bad firing which caused the deformation of the vessel, eventually causing it to breaking up. Deformation due to the same reason has to be envisaged also for SU 039,3 (plate 10, 90), probably meant to be a necked jar with flattened rim.

Numerous fragments of a jar in a pink-jellowish fabric, internally coated with a black substance (bitumen?) were also recovered from this layer.

Fig. 11 - A large potshard coming from S.U. 039 clearly shows the traces left by the potter's work. Width at the base around 13 cm.

An odd item among this collection is represented by the almost half body of a jar, devoid of rim of neck, made in a medium-fine sandy fabric, hard fired to the point that it became very brittle. On the outside is a dark red slip and traces of a localised burnishing are visible, while the inside shows neat horizontal grooves, circular and horizontal near the base of the vessel, but straight and vertical on the walls.

Peculiar were also two small shards in a hard fired, compact sandy wine-red fabric, with an almost folded rim, one of which still has an organic residue attached to it (that will be considered for radiocarbon dating).

The most interesting of the large coarse jars recovered from S.U. 039 is a specimen of which unfortunately no diagnostic part was preserved (the rim, dethatched and further fragmented, awaits proper restoration). The large portion of wall that could be reconstructed still bears a pale red-pink slip and shows a couple of typical raised cordon running around outside the upper one close to the rim and decorated with an incised herringbone pattern, the lower one plain. Between these two, hanging from the upper one, is a rectangular panel constituted by a series of incised vertical palm fronds, bordered at the bottom by a straight line and at the top by a row of small drop shaped incisions adjacent to the raised cordon. An identical row of incisions runs above the upper cordon, and seems to be included within two small circular raised notches, as well covered by the drop shaped incisions. Immediately to the left of the panel, two incised signs are visible which could bee tentatively defined as pseudo-alphabetical. Although the closest parallel for this evidence no doubt is the storage jar with three South Arabian letters incised below the rim found at Muweilah[13], in our case the identification of the two signs as letter is

[13] MAGEE 1999.

more problematic, in particular for the rightmost sign. Be that as it may, it is a suggestive hypothesis to view a correlation between this signs, decoration and the content of the jar, which could then have been meant for storing dates, and possibly owned/produced by someone indicated by the two "pseudo-alphabetical" signs (or containing a quantity of goods indicated by them?).

What seems more certain and of not negligible importance is the fact that S.U. 039 clearly represents a dump of production rejects, and thus indicates that, whatever its scale, pottery production took place near the site. That the well was used to dump such rejects coincident with its final obliteration, could indicate that other places were usually used for this purpose, and the chance of finding them, as well as the production installation site itself, would be of significance for the future study of pottery production and circulation.

Where shapes are concerned, the repertoire collected from the excavation fits perfectly the known picture for the Iron Age production in South-Eastern Arabia, witnessed on an increasing number of sites[14].

A few peculiar shards need anyway to be mentioned. The small carinated cup with cut rim SU 038,1 (plate 5,3) is characterized by a low ridge running just above the carination; its unusual shape could indicate that it belongs to a later horizon. The fabric is in fact undistinguishable from medium-coarse Islamic shards also retrieved in the mixed context from which this shard comes.

Different is the case for the carinated cup SU 051,2 (plate 5,6). Though coming from a mixed and high level it finds a very similar parallel in the bowl SU 026,16 (plate 9,77). S.U. 026 is a safe Iron Age context excavated inside the well, with no trace of later intrusion. The two shards are characterized by a beaded, almost almond shaped rim, separated from the body by a deep groove. While for SU 051,2 the rim is vertical, with a triangular section ridge running immediately below it, SU 026,16 shows a more inclined rim above plain walls.

Among the large storage jars, two shards display an internal lip for supporting the lid (plate 6,40 and 44). The shape is not unknown, though not so frequent; similar shapes were recorded at Rumeilah Husn Madhab and Lizq[15], all in Iron Age II contexts.

From a chronological point of view, the indications given by the collected pottery would place the site in the period generally defined as Iron Age II, i.e. 1100/1000 - 600 BC.[16]. On the basis of the Salut excavations, the IMTO suggested a more satisfactory division, for the area of central Oman, between an "Early Iron Age", comprehensive of Iron Age I and II periods - 1300-600 BC[17]. In this scheme, the presence of a straight necked jar coming from S.U. 20 (plate 8,65) could actually provide some evidence in favour of this long phased chronology. It in fact resembles the shapes considered to constitute the typical Iron Age I assemblage at Tell Abraq[18], but it comes in a fabric that nothing has to

[14] Still the larger summary of the various collections can be found for comparison in MOUTON 1998.

[15] Respectively BENOIST 1998, fig. 2,12 and fig. 4,10; BENOIST-CORBOUD 1998, fig. 2,4 and fig. 4, 2-4-7; KROLL 1998, fig. 4,46.

[16] MAGEE 1996.

[17] See PHILLIPS 2010, p. 77.

[18] MAGEE 1998, fig. 3.

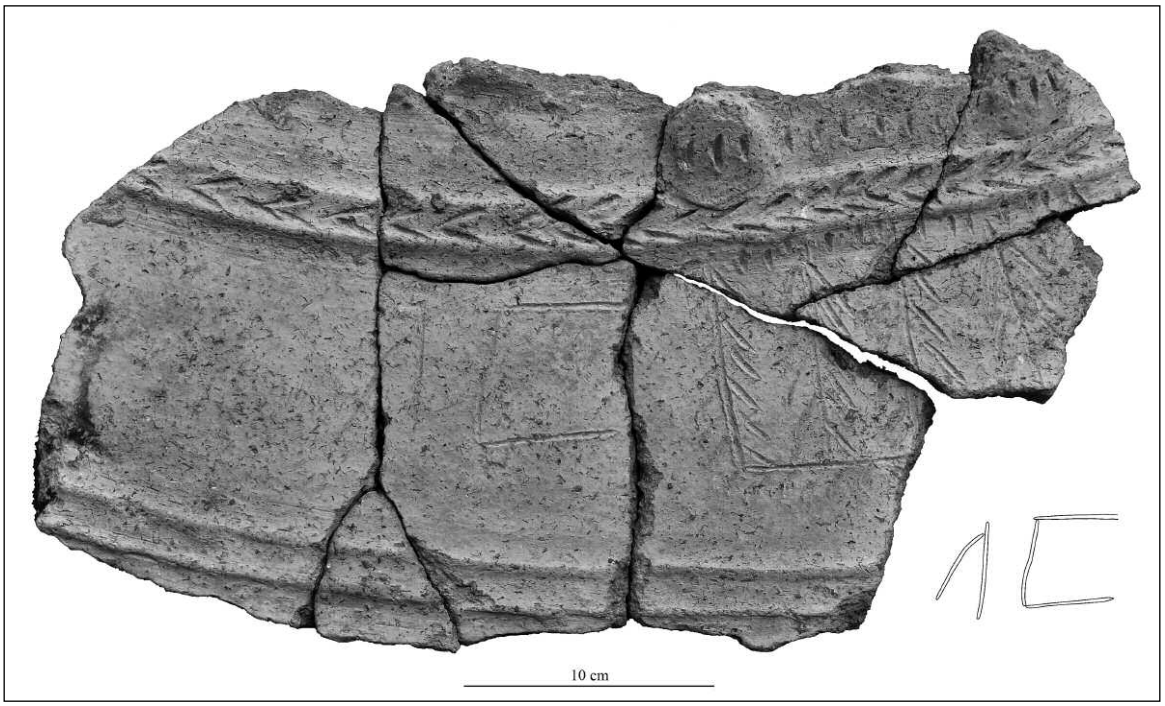

Fig. 12 - The incised fragment of large storage jar found in S.U. 039, with a drawing of the two "pseudo-alphabetical signs".

do with the grey-back ware which characterizes Tell Abraq's shards. Iron Age pottery was also reported from a multi-period collective burial at Dadna, where two straight-necked jars were retrieved[19] "made in a coarse fabric, handmade and heavily tempered with mineral and vegetal inclusions. […] neither slipped or decorated"[20]. Though the colour of the fabric is not given, the fabric seems to fit the general picture from Salut's EBA tower excavation. The conservatism shown by fabrics and manifacture techniques, both at the EBA tower and at Salut, again speaks of a long ceramic tradition, rather than a succession of different periods. This is also consistent with the data from Salut, where the same pottery was found throughout the whole stratigraphy prior to the Iron Age III phase, and associated to very high C14 dates[21].

A few shapes could tentatively be interpreted as markers of a longer, though probably more ephemeral, occupation. In particular, a series of hollow bowls with flaring walls and more or less pointed rim (plate 5,16; plate 8,58; plate 9,73 and 75-76) are similar to those found in period II contexts at Rumeilah[22]; although the fabrics are markedly different and no evidence for the burnished ware which characterizes Rumeilah was found.

Other resemblances in shape, not corroborated by a similarity in fabrics, could be seen

[19] BENOIST-ALI HASSAN 2010, fig. 3, 9/11.
[20] *Ibidem*, p. 88, with further parallels.
[21] PHILLIPS 2010.
[22] BOUCHARLAT-LOMBARD 1985, plate 58, 1-7.

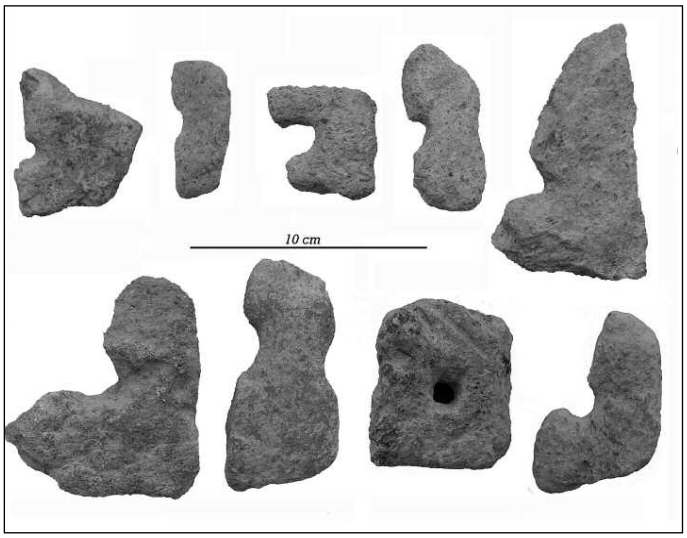

Fig. 13 - Re-worked potshards from various contexts: loomweights?

in a few short-necked, nearly globular jars (plate 6, 35-36 and 43), which again find quite fitting parallels in Rumeilah period II assemblage[23].

If these similarities are to be given an effective importance in the chronological placing of the site, then it would be consistent with what emerged from Salut excavation, where the occupation extends well into the Iron Age III period, though witnessed more by substantial architectural activities rather than from an abundance of post-600 BC pottery[24].

Other finds

Objects other that potshards were extremely rare within the Iron Age contexts excavated so far.

The majority of them were reworked shards, coming from both mixed and sealed contexts, pierced in order to obtain what have been interpreted as loom-weights. Identical objects are widely represented on the site of Salut.

Interesting for what concerns daily subsistence, and in particular in relation to the supposed agricultural function of the site in the Iron Age period, is the fragment of a saddle quern retrieved from one of the upper fillings of the well (S.U. 018), for which the pottery statistics indicate a good degree of stratigraphical reliability.

Finally, from S.U. 039 came an egg-shell fragment, whose identification (ostrich?) has still to be confirmed.

Discussion

Large towers are a characteristic feature of the Early Bronze Age landscape throughout Oman and the United Arab Emirates, and a significant number of these monuments in the area around Bisyah was reported already in the early seventies by the Harvard archaeological team[25]. Three such sites stand in Wadi Sayfham, not far from the town of Bisyah itself, a short distance upstream of Salut, following the wadi. The tower excavated by the

[23] *Ibidem*, plate 58, 12-14.
[24] AVANZINI-PHILLIPS 2010.
[25] HASTINGS *et alii* 1975.

IMTO is the closest to the site of Salut and, quite surprisingly, it was not reported by the Harvard team, nor by de Cardi, Collier and Doe[26].

Mentioned in the works of the Al-Hajar Project as Building 5[27], it had not been the object of any archaeological excavation, except a small test trench dug by the Birmingham team against the southern wall (here named Trench 0) and of which no mention was published.

The importance of the site in the reconstruction of the Bronze Age settlement pattern of the area can not be overlooked, especially if one considers that the excavation of the ditch produced a well stratified EBA ceramic assemblage. The Bronze Age finds will be published subsequently following further work at the site anticipated for late 2011.

Iron Age exploitation of Bronze Age structures is a phenomenon which needs no complex explanation, and several instances are known in Oman, related to Bronze Age towers. While at a few sites a continuous occupation is witnessed, covering the Second Millennium BC and continuing in the Iron Age (Tell Abraq[28] and Kalba[29] for example), in other cases a long hiatus separates these two major periods of occupation. Interestingly, Iron Age pottery was found in association with EBA structures, with no mention of Second Millennium evidence, at two sites located in the same wide central region as Salut, one near Ibra'[30] and the other near Izki[31].

In the current debate concerning the chronology for the Iron Age in South Eastern Arabia, this is surely an aspect that has to be taken into account, obviously linked with the remarks recently made by Schreiber (2010), and already suggested years before by Phillips (1998).

To those points, the excavation at the EBA tower near Salut can add some stratigraphical data, that is, the absence of a recognizable Second Millennium phase in terms of both cultural artefacts and in the revealed soil sequence. The absence of a soil horizon that can be attributed to the Middle and Late Bronze Age (Early and Late Wadi Suq) was evident in a series of test trenches excavated in the plain to the north-east of Salut as well as between the site and the EBA tower[32]. This is a problem which requires further consideration.

The results from the excavation of the EBA tower are of fundamental importance in the reconstruction of an Iron Age landscape around the prominent site of Salut. Until a couple of years ago the site appeared to be located in a striking solitary position, lacking any assured evidence of coeval settlements.

Survey by the IMTO already located an important Iron Age settlement on a small hill not far from the site[33], but occupation of the plain directly dominated by Salut still remained hypothetical.

[26] DE CARDI *et alii* 1976.

[27] ORCHARD-ORCHARD 2006, plate 6-d.

[28] POTTS 1990; POTTS 1991.

[29] EDDISFORD-PHILLIPS 2009.

[30] HASER 2010, p. 160.

[31] *Ibidem*, p. 162.

[32] See CREMASCHI-ZERBONI, *Geoarchaeological investigation in the Salut area - 2010 field season preliminary report*, unpublished report, http://arabiantica.humnet.unipi.it/fileadmin/Arabian_Files/pdf/salut_preliminary_10a.pdf. The point was also put forward in a paper given at 2011 Seminar for Arabian Studies and currently in press (DEGLI ESPOSTI-PHILLIPS in press).

[33] PHILLIPS *et alii* 2010.

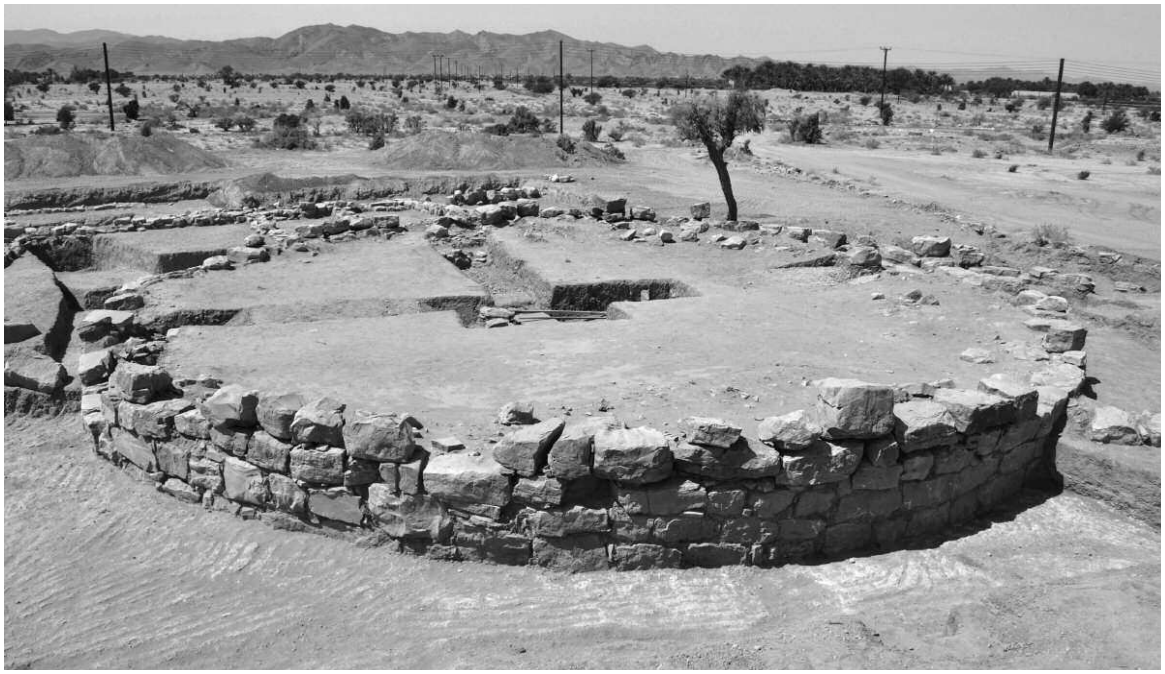

Fig. 14 - The EBA tower at the end of the excavation, seen from the south-southest.

The occupation witnessed at the EBA tower can not be compared with such an independent site, rather being an appendix of Salut itself. Nevertheless, it permits to substantiate with direct evidence what had already been reconstructed indirectly on the basis of the finds from Salut[34], that is, the existence of some form of agricultural exploitation of the land around the site. The layout of the EBA tower site is consistent with an interpretation of the walled compounds as being small terraced fields, protected from the wadi floods by their perimeter walls. The depth of the later sediments confirms that the power of the wadi flow in this point of its bed had significantly diminished by the time of Iron Age occupation, and such apparently small walls were sufficient to protect the cultivated soil from erosion.

The saddle quern fragment, though at the moment isolated, could add strength to the productive interpretation of the site, where grain processing could take place, as well as storage, witnessed by the retrieved fragments of large storage jars.

The idea of a small quite self-sufficient community centred on the site of Salut is further corroborated by the dump layer of badly fired pottery retrieved inside the well, which seems to account for some, probably small scale, production *in situ*. Evidence is still too thin on the ground to advance more hypothesis, but the presence of a few shapes which are usually found in different fabrics at other sites could also point to a local production carried out with local raw materials and techniques.

[34] Paleobotanical finds, evidence for basketry, storage jars, date-stones in abundance and agricultural tools.

The question of water supply found no decisive solution from the excavation. The re-use of the Bronze Age well would suggest that a developed falaj system was not yet existing, at least at the moment of the first Iron Age occupation of the site. Nevertheless, its intentional obliteration could on the other hand be linked with the realization of such an irrigation network, but data regarding this matter are still in the way of collecting and nothing sure can be said at the moment.

Excavation at the site of Salut will hopefully shed more light on this issue; the main tower of the site, projecting on the plain, is in fact still in course of excavation, and evidence emerged for the presence of good Iron Age surfaces in its deeper part. One of the hypothesis, which curiously is mirrored in the traditional opinion of local inhabitants, is that it could have hosted a well, which would account for the need of building such a structure as part of a site that would have anyway been strongly fortified with an independent entrance on top of the hill.

Be that as it may, a note can be made on the plausibility of imagining an agricultural activity based only on well-supplied water without an additional falaj supply. It is clear that the extension of the terraced field unearthed around the EBA tower could easily be irrigated just using the water collected from the well. Then the problem remains if one has to envisage how a large settlement like Salut in the Iron Age, or the area occupied by the nearby EBA towers in more ancient times, could be fed on such small scale agriculture. The problem has to remain unsolved, until new data come to light, and generally one could hypothesize that several wells could lie buried under wadi sediments, being extremely difficult to trace.

Anyhow, it has to be noted that many of the modern farms around the site only rely on wells for water supply; these are now no more sufficient for a satisfactory irrigation, but it has to be borne in mind that the lowering of the water table deeply affected its availability.

Apart from this site and the settlement on Jebel al-Agma[35], new evidence for the reconstruction of the Iron Age landscape of the area came from a survey of the hills rising to the north-northeast of Salut. Here a large Bronze Age necropolis is visible, with its Hafit-type cairns tombs. Surveying a few of these tombs, unmistakable Iron Age shards were retrieved, in particular from a tombs cluster which witness a highly probable phase of additional building during the Iron Age[36]. Re-use of other tombs is likely to have occurred, as also witnessed by many occurrences throughout South Eastern Arabia.

The area around Salut and north of the town of Bisyah is thus confirmed as one of extensive archaeological occupation not only during the EBA, but during the Iron Age as well. This is hardly surprising given its favourable position, at the junction of two wadis, thus rich in water availability, with elevated lands that could host the settlement in a safe position from flooding but at the same time close to agriculturally exploitable fields.

[35] PHILLIPS *et alii* 2010.
[36] DEGLI ESPOSTI-PHILLIPS in press.

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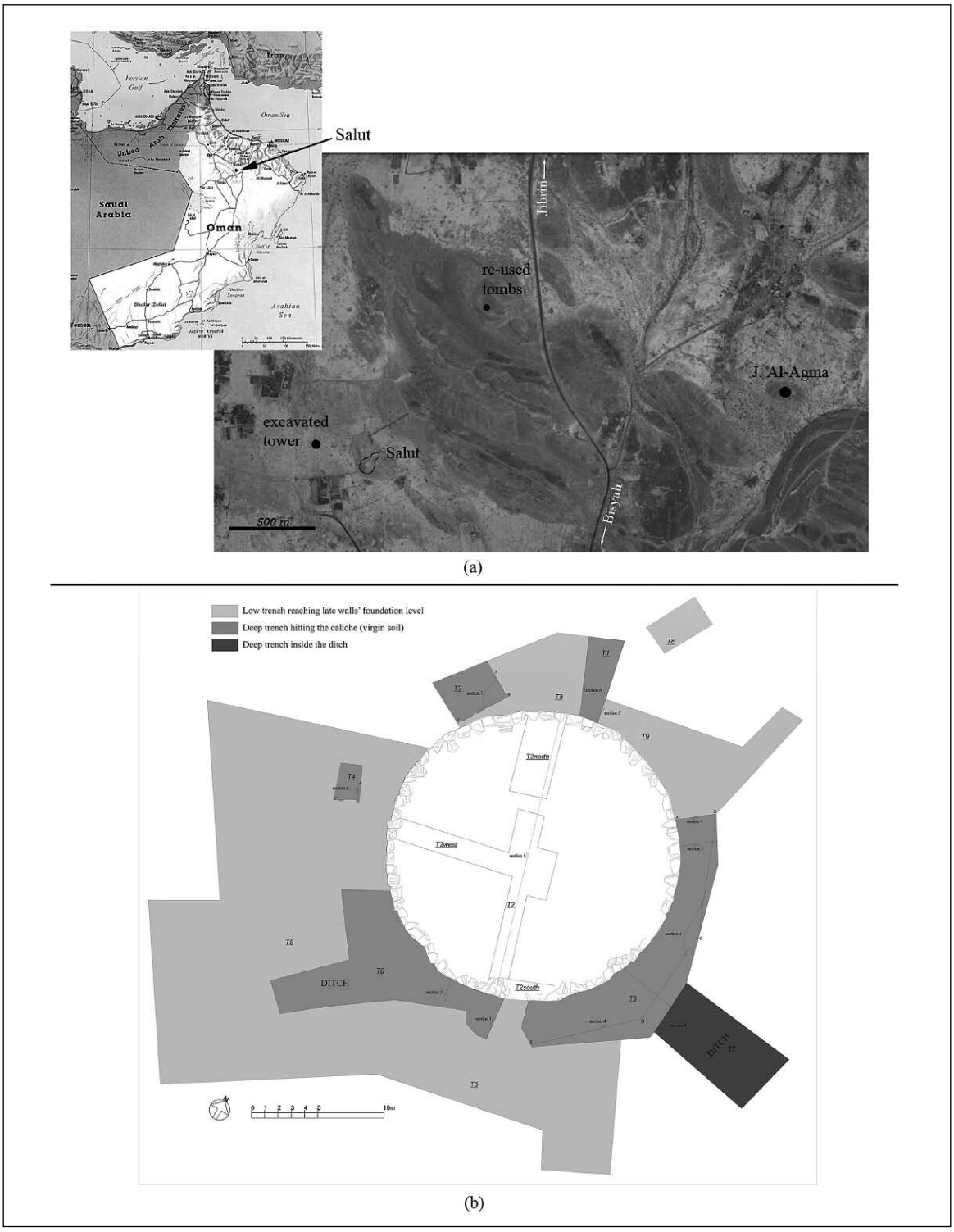
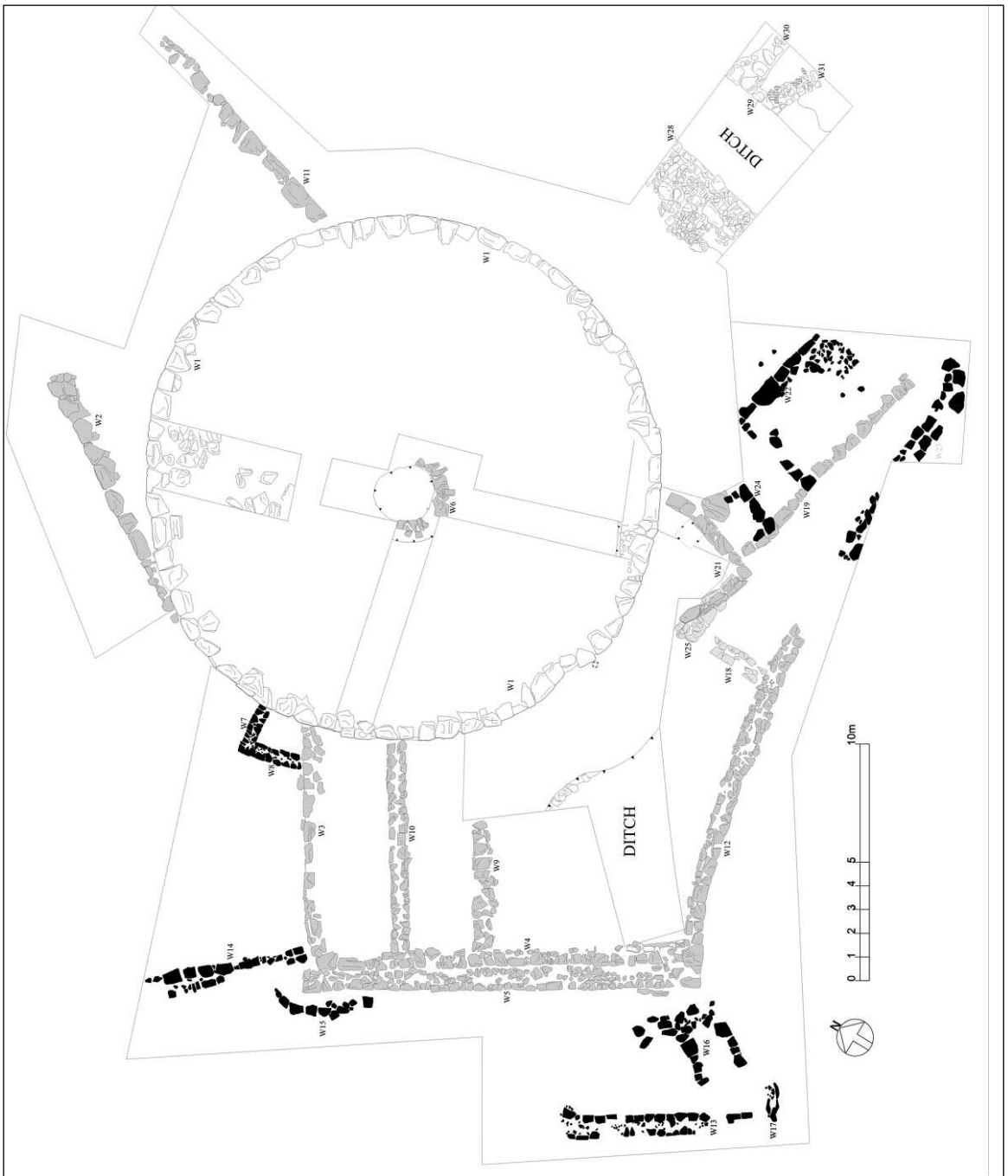
PLATE I



(a) The location of Salut and a map showing Iron Age sites around Salut; (b) Plan of the excavation showing the different trenches and location of the drawn sections.

PLATE II



Salut - Bronze Age tower excavation. General plan

White - Bronze Age features
Grey - Iron Age feaures (with re-arrangement walls W18 and W25)
Black - Post Iron Age features

PLATE III

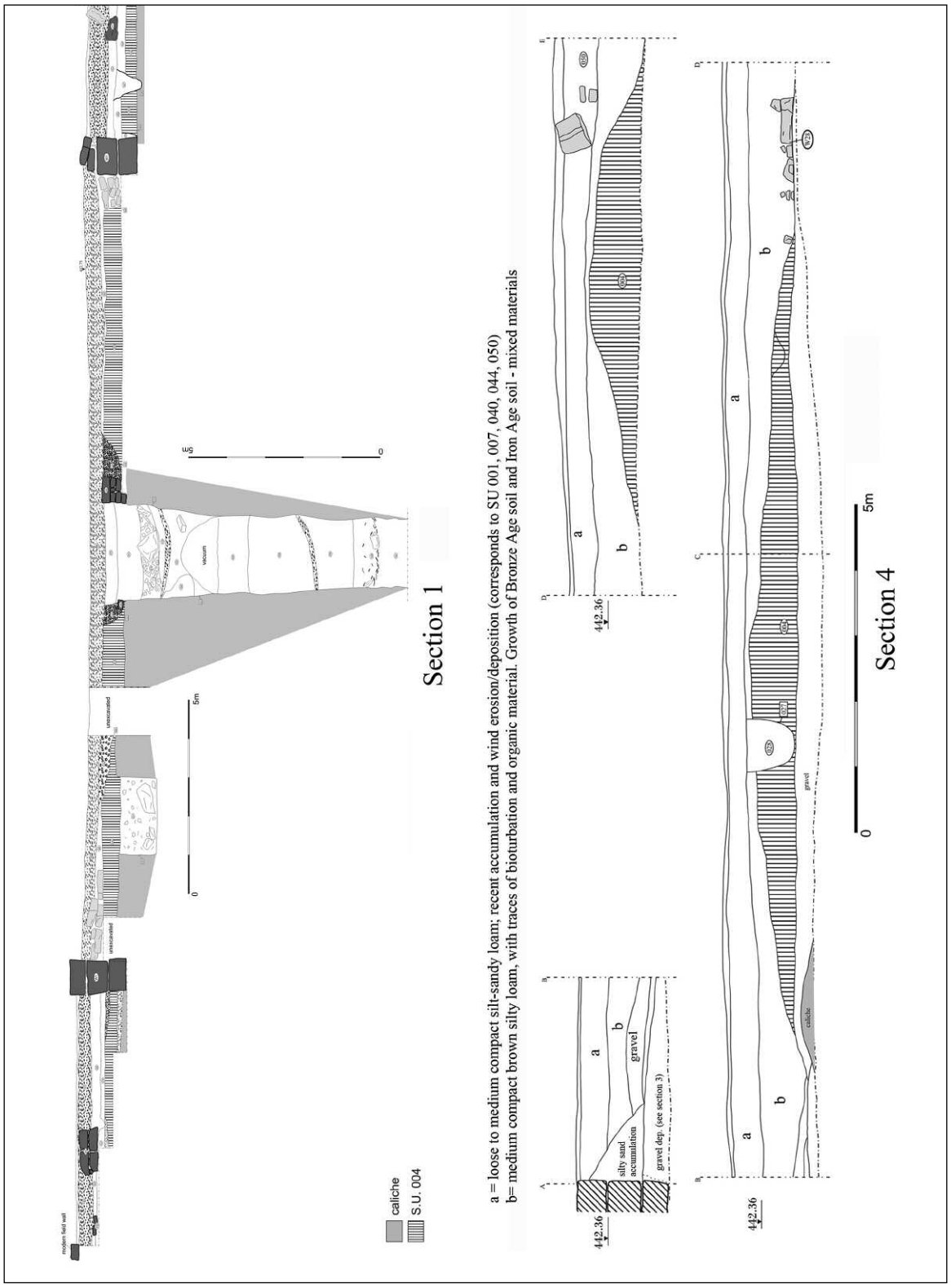

modern field wall
unexcavated
unexcavated
vacuum
5m
0
caliche
S.U. 004
Section 1
a = loose to medium compact silt-sandy loam; recent accumulation and wind erosion/deposition (corresponds to SU 001, 007, 040, 044, 050)
b= medium compact brown silty loam, with traces of bioturbation and organic material. Growth of Bronze Age soil and Iron Age soil - mixed materials
442.36
a
b
silty sand accumulation
gravel
gravel dep. (see section 3)
442.36
a
b
gravel
caliche
442.36
a
b
0
5m
Section 4

PLATE IV

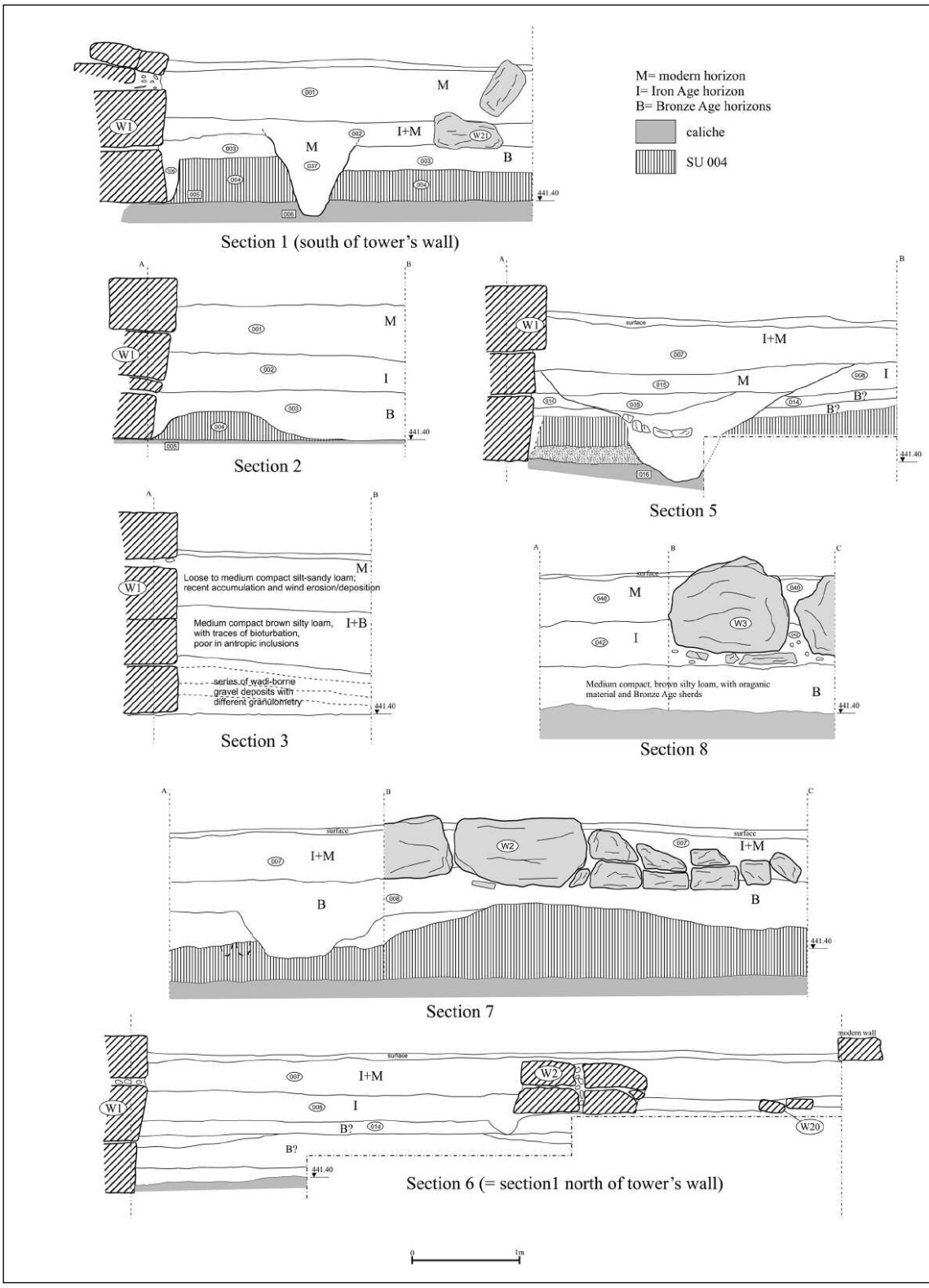
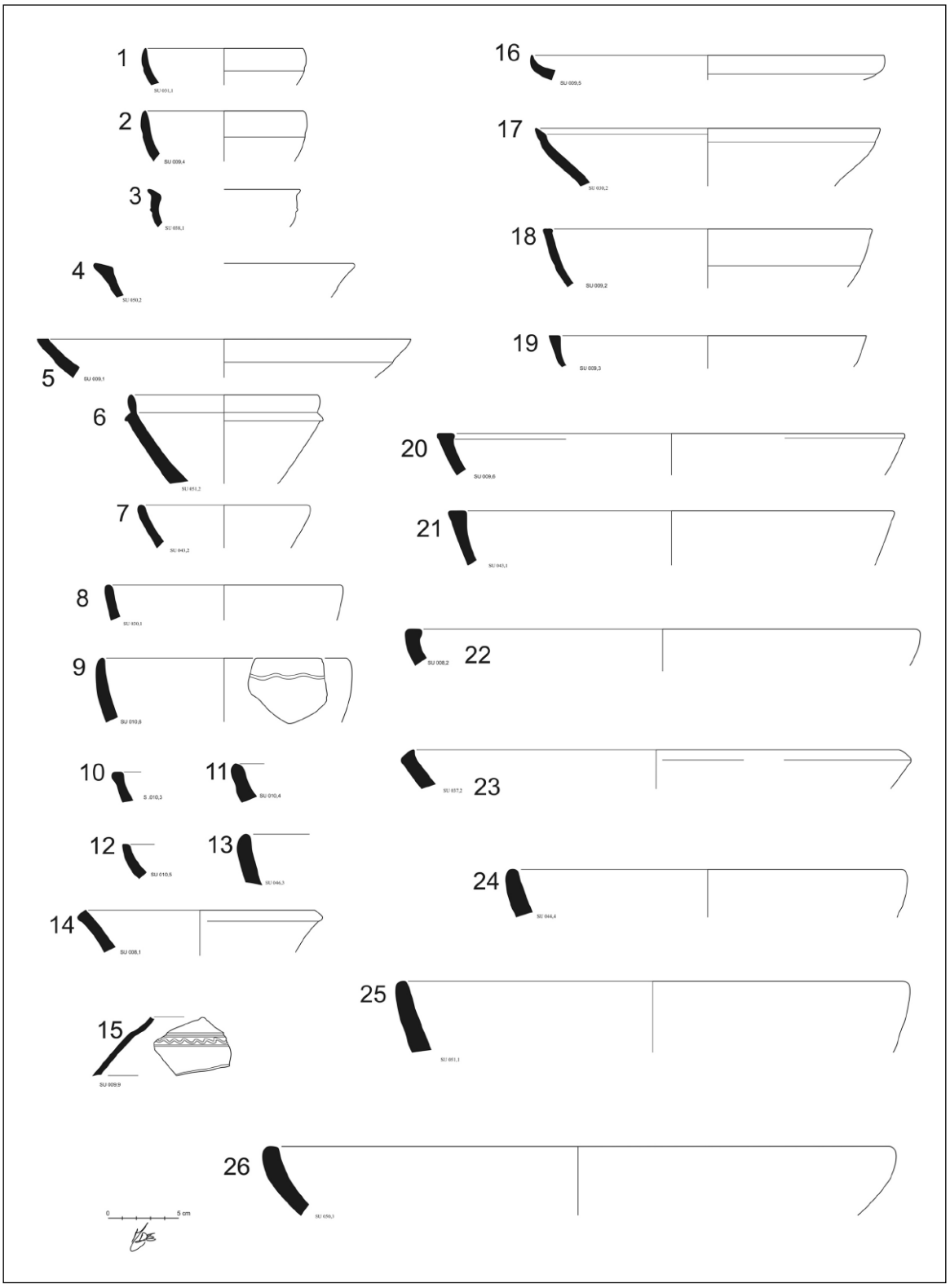

M= modern horizon
I= Iron Age horizon
B= Bronze Age horizons
caliche
SU 004
Section 1 (south of tower's wall)
Section 2
Section 5
Loose to medium compact silt-sandy loam; recent accumulation and wind erosion/deposition
Medium compact brown silty loam, with traces of bioturbation, poor in antropic inclusions
series of wadi-borne gravel deposits with different granulometry
Section 3
Medium compact, brown silty loam, with oraganic material and Bronze Age sherds
Section 8
Section 7
modern wall
Section 6 (= section1 north of tower's wall)
0
1m

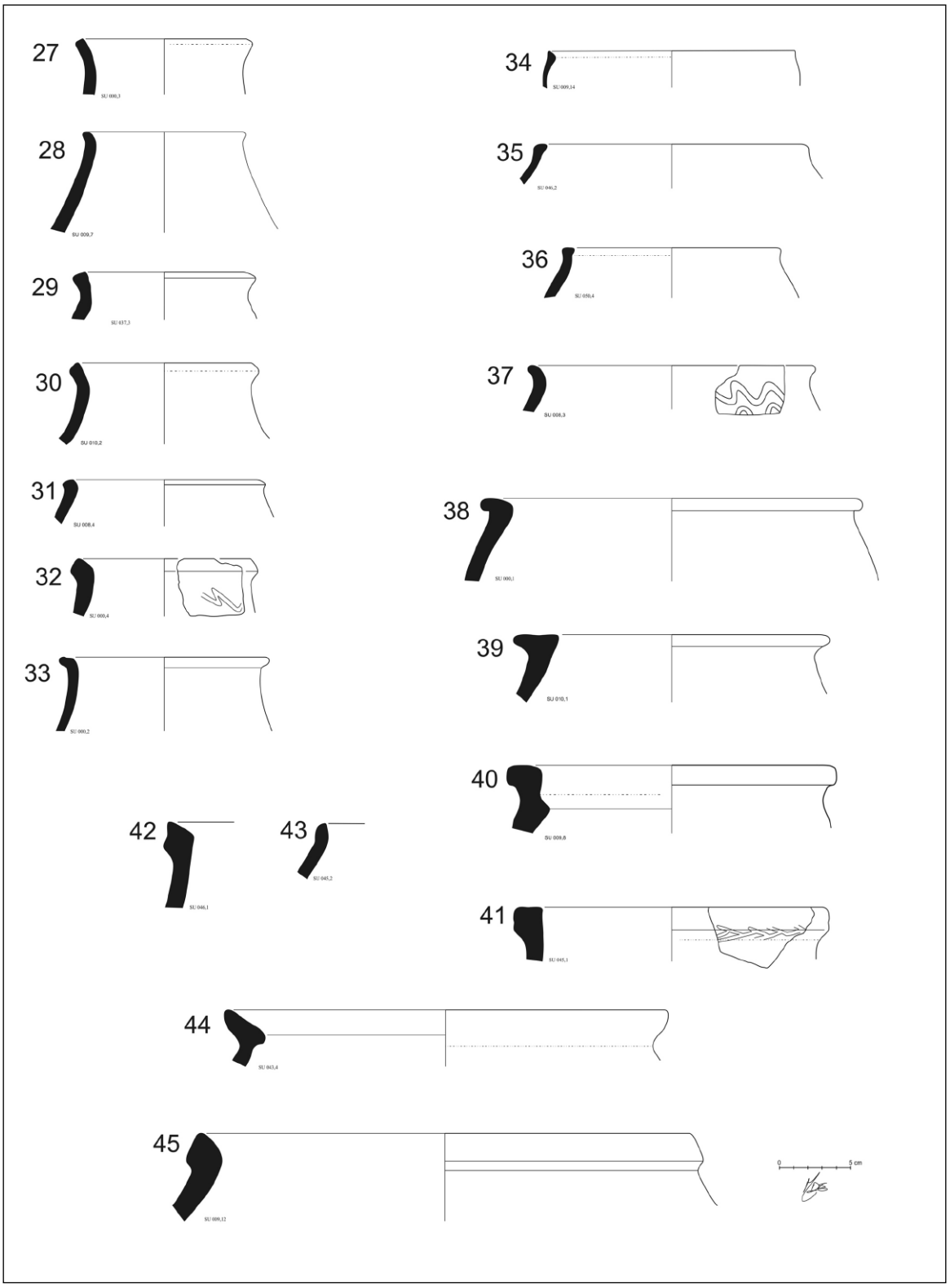
PLATE V



Key to plate 5 - Pottery from different contexts

1. Fine red fabric. Sparse vegetable temper with sparse small black and white grits. Light red slip exterior and interior.
2. Fine red-pink fabric. Sparse vegetable temper with sparse small white grits and occasional mica grits. Red-purplish slip exterior.
3. Medium red fabric. Abundant vegetable temper with black and white grits.
4. Medium red fabric. Grey core. Sparse vegetable temper with grey grits. Black slip exterior and interior.
5. Medium light orange fabric. Vegetable temper with red and grey grits. Pale brown slip exterior, pale red interior.
6. Medium orange fabric. Gray core. Vegetable temper with small white grits. Red slip exterior and interior.
7. Fine pale brown-whitish fabric. Sparse vegetable temper with occasional small white grits. Pale brown-greenish slip exterior and interior. ISL??
8. Medium dark grey fabric. Bad firing. Vegetable temper with red and pale brown grits, some large. Trace of red slip on exterior.
9. Medium/coarse red fabric. Vegetable temper with abundant black and white grits. Red slip exterior and interior. Incised decoration exterior, done before firing.
10. Fine pale red fabric. Occasional vegetable temper with occasional small white and black grits. Dark red slip exterior and interior, dark burnished band on external rim.
11. Medium orange fabric. Vegetable temper with abundant red grits. Pale brown-yellowish slip exterior, light red interior.
12. Fine orange fabric. Sparse vegetable temper with occasional small white grits. Red slip exterior and interior.
13. Coarse red fabric. Vegetable temper with abundant white, black and red grits, some large. Light brown-greenish slip exterior, light brown interior.
14. Medium pale brown fabric. Vegetable temper with abundant dark grey grits. Dark red slip exterior and interior.
15. Fine orange-red fabric. Vegetable temper with occasional small black and red grits. Dark red slip exterior, light red-pink interior. Incised decoration exterior, done before firing.
16. Fine red fabric. Occasional vegetable temper with sparse white and grey grits. Black slip, burnished, exterior and interior.
17. Fine brown fabric. Grey core. Vegetable temper with small white grits and sparse mica grits. Pale red slip exterior and interior.
18. Medium light brown fabric. Vegetable temper with small grey and brown grits. Red-brown slip exterior and interior.
19. Medium light orange fabric. Vegetable temper with pink and brown grits, some large. Brown slip exterior and interior.
20. Fine dark red fabric. Vegetable temper with sparse black. Black slip exterior and interior.
21. Medium orange fabric. Vegetable temper with abundant black and white grits. Pale red-brownish slip exterior and interior. Incised decoration on exterior.
22. Medium light brown fabric. Vegetable temper with red and black grits, some large. Grey slip exterior, red-orange interior.
23. Medium light red fabric. Sparse vegetable temper with brown and red grits, some large. Light brown slip exterior and interior.
24. Medium red fabric. Vegetable temper with small black and red grits and occasional mice grits. Pale brown-whitish slip exterior, pale brown interior.
25. Coarse pale red-brown fabric. Vegetable temper with abundant red, grey and pale red grits. Brown slip exterior and interior.

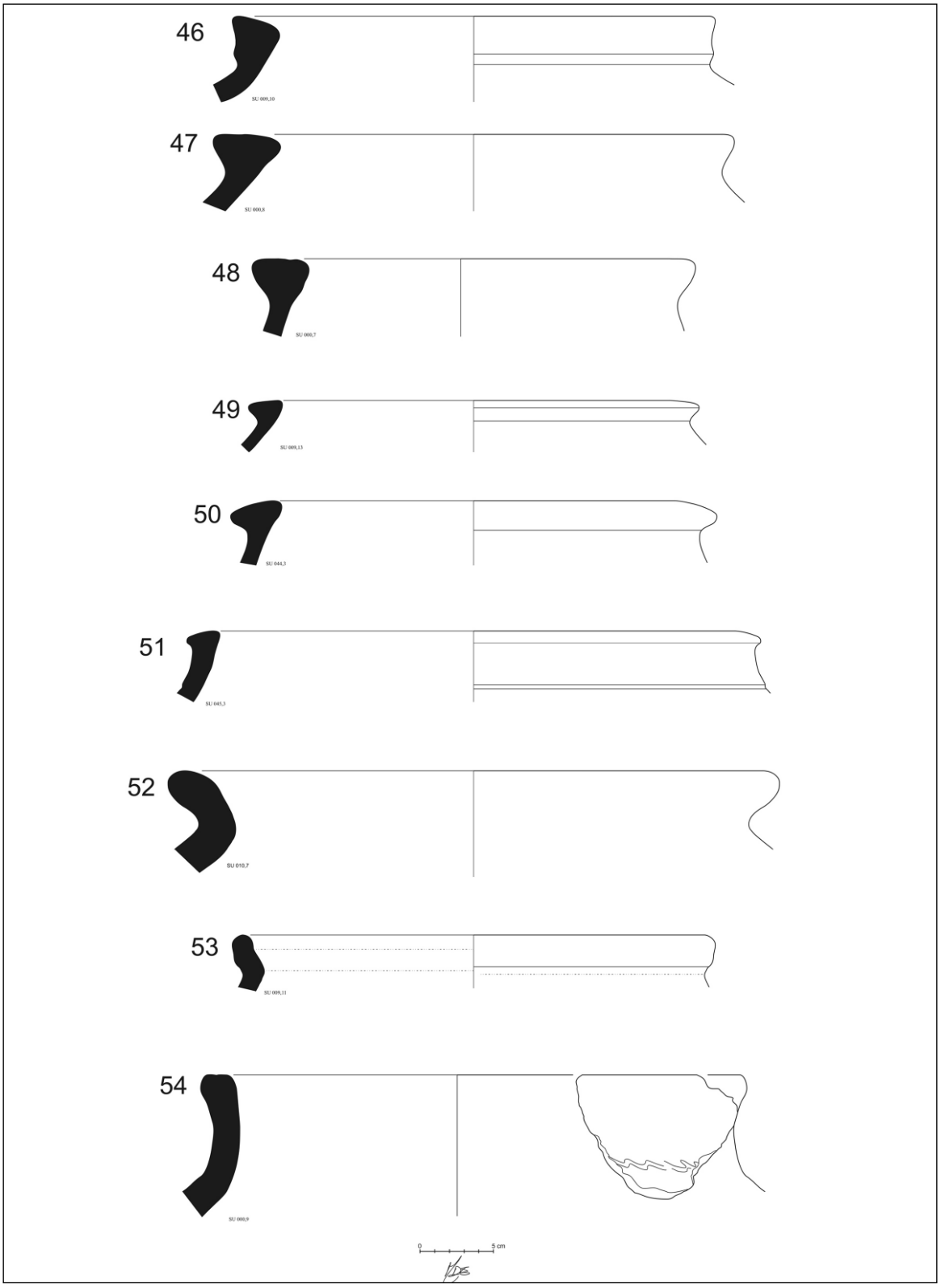
PLATE VI



Key to plate 6 - Pottery from different contexts

26. Coarse red fabric. Vegetable temper with abundant black and grey grits, some large. Dark brown slip exterior and interior.
27. Coarse red fabric. Vegetable temper with abundant red and black grits, some large. Pale red slip exterior and interior.
28. Coarse pale brown-greenish fabric. Abundant vegetable temper with large grey grits.
29. Medium brown fabric. Vegetable temper with black grits. (slip worn out)
30. Medium brown-greyish fabric. Vegetable temper with red and white grits, some large. Pale brown slip exterior, more pinkish interior.
31. Medium light brown fabric. Abundant vegetable temper with occasional small white and pink grits and occasional mica grits. Light brown slip exterior.
32. Medium pale brown-yellowish fabric. Vegetable temper with black and white grits, some large. Grey-greenish slip exterior and interior.
33. Medium-Fine dark red-brown fabric. Sparse vegetable temper with small white grits and occasional mice grits. Dark brown slip exterior, darker interior.
34. Fine red fabric. Grey core. Occasional vegetable temper with occasional small white grits. Red slip exterior and interior.
35 Fine brown fabric. Grey core. Vegetable temper with occasional small black grits and occasional mica grits. Red slip exterior and interior.
36. Fine-medium pale brown-orange fabric. Vegetable temper with abundant small grey and red grits. Red slip exterior and interior.
37. Coarse pale brown-yellowish fabric. Vegetable temper with very large dark grey grits. Incised decoration exterior, done before firing.
38. Medium red fabric. Vegetable temper with abundant white and red grits, some large. Light brown slip exterior and interior.
39. Coarse pale red fabric. Grey core. Vegetable temper with abundant white and grey grits. Dark brown slip exterior and rim, red-pink interior.
40. Coarse pale brown-whitish fabric. Vegetable temper with abundant large dark grey grits. Brown-red slip exterior and interior.
41. Medium light red fabric. Grey inner section. Sparse vegetable temper with small black, grey and white grits. Dark brown slip exterior and interior.
42. Medium-coarse pale brown-orange fabric. Vegetable temper with grey, black and red grits, some large. Light brown slip exterior and interior.
43. Medium red fabric. Abundant vegetable temper with sparse small white and grey grits. Red slip exterior and interior.
44. Medium red-orange fabric. Grey core. Vegetable temper with small black and pink grits. Brown slip exterior and upper rim.
45. Coarse brown fabric. Gray core. Abundant vegetable temper with dark red, pink and grey grits, some large. Pale brown slip exterior, dark brown interior.

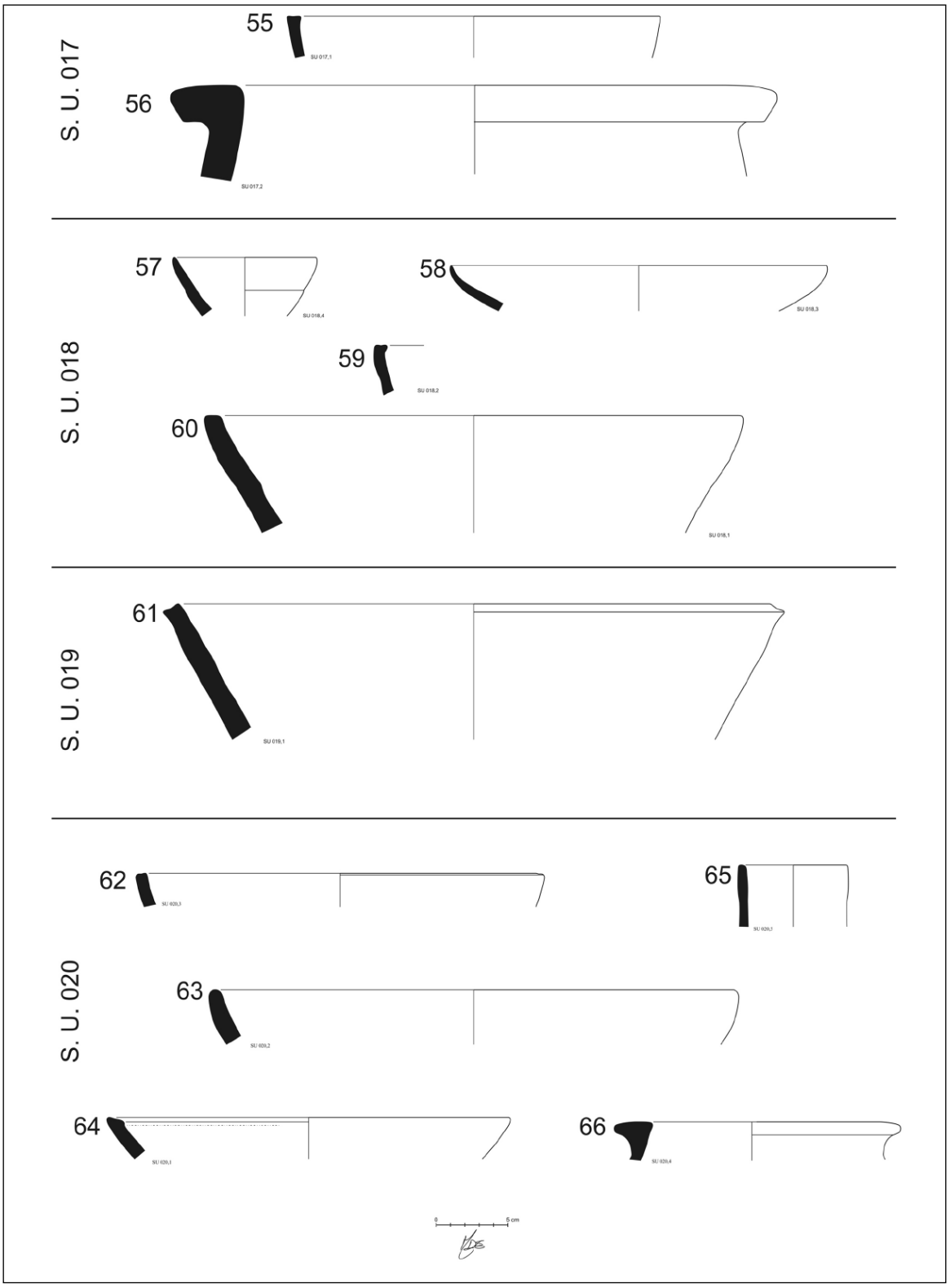
PLATE VII


46
SU 009,10
47
SU 000,8
48
SU 000,7
49
SU 009,13
50
SU 044,3
51
SU 045,3
52
SU 010,7
53
SU 009,11
54
SU 000,9
0
5 cm

Key to plate 7 - Pottery from different contexts

46. Medium-coarse red fabric. Abundant vegetable temper with black grits. Brown slip exterior, red interior.
47. Coarse brown fabric. Vegetable temper with black and red grits, some large. Pale brown slip exterior, darker on interior.
48. Medium red-orange fabric. Occasional vegetable temper with black and white grits, some large. Pale brown slip exterior and interior. Finger impressions on the rim.
49. Medium orange fabric. Vegetable temper with black, white and grey grits. Red slip exterior.
50. Coarse brown fabric. Vegetable temper with abundant dark grey, red and white grits, several large. Pale brown slip exterior.
51. Fine red-brown fabric. Vegetable temper with small black and white fabric. Dark brown-red slip exterior, red-brown interior.
52. Coarse pale red fabric. Abundant vegetable temper with abundant large red and grey grits.
53. Coarse red-orange fabric. Sparse vegetable temper with abundant red, grey and white grits, some large. Pale brown-yellowish slip exterior and interior.
54. Coarse pale red fabric. Vegetable temper with abundant larger red grits. Pale brown slip exterior, rim, and upper interior.

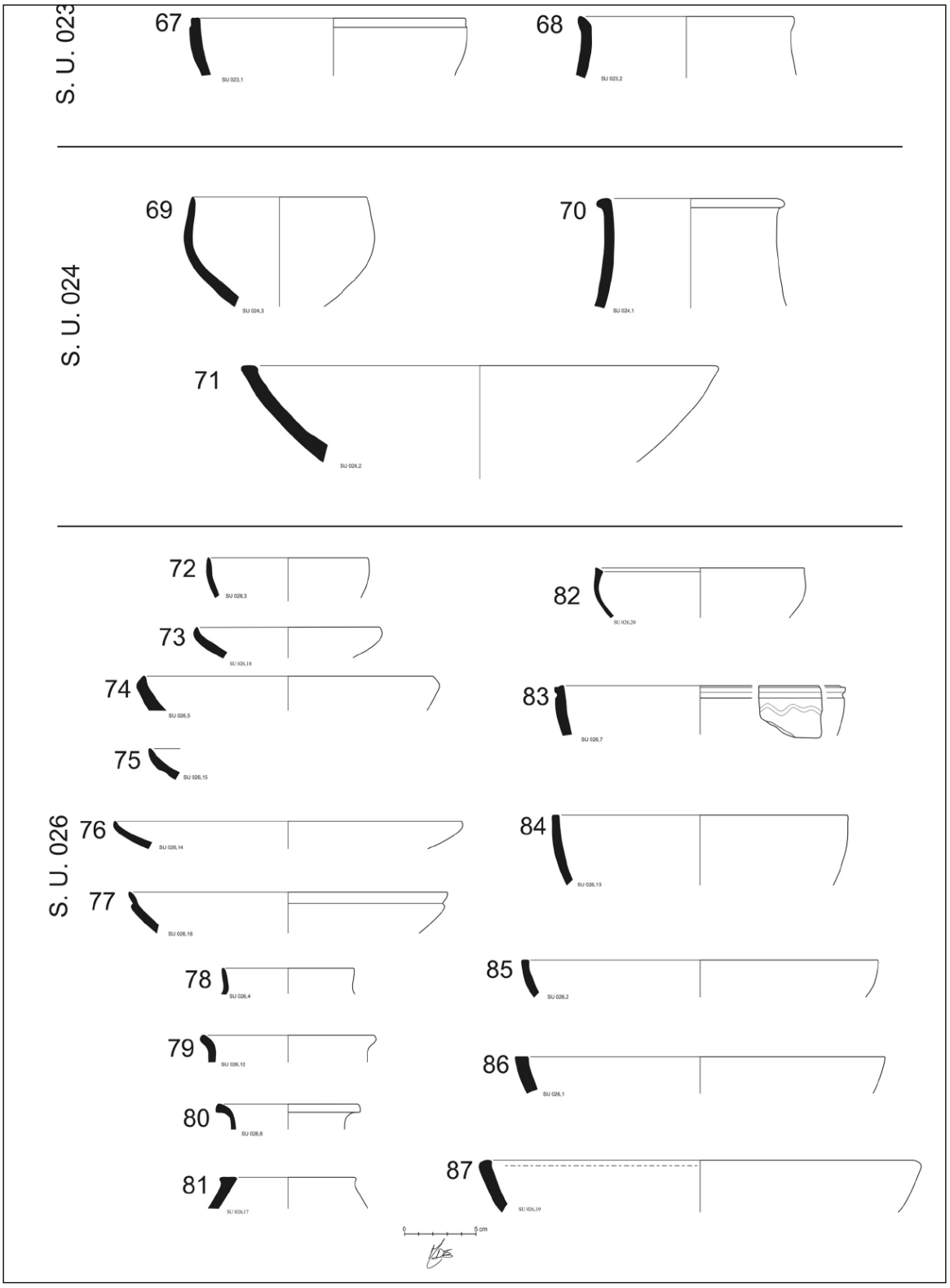
PLATE VII


S. U. 017
55
SU 017,1
56
SU 017,2
S. U. 018
57
SU 018,4
58
SU 018,3
59
SU 018,2
60
SU 018,1
S. U. 019
61
SU 019,1
S. U. 020
62
SU 020,3
65
SU 020,5
63
SU 020,2
64
SU 020,1
66
SU 020,4
0
5 cm

Key to plate 8 - Pottery from sealed Iron Age contexts (well and well curb's foundation)

55. Medium red-pinkish fabric. Vegetable temper with red and grey grits, some large. Dark brown-red slip exterior and interior.
56. Coarse brown red fabric. Darker brown-greenish external section. Vegetable temper with abundant large grey grits. Dark grey slip exterior and interior.
57. Fine/medium light brown-orange fabric. Vegetable temper with white and pale brown grits. Dark red-brown slip exterior and interior.
58. Fine light red fabric. Sparse vegetable temper with occasional red and white grits and occasional mica grits. Dark red-brown slip exterior and interior.
59. Fine pale brown-pinkish fabric. vegetable temper with small red and white grits. Red slip exterior and interior.
60. Coarse light brown-pinkish fabric. Abundant vegetable temper with red grits. Light brown slip interior.
61. Coarse orange fabric. Abundant vegetable temper with abundantred and grey grits. Pale brown slip exterior and interior.
62. Medium red fabric. Sparse vegetable temper with white and red grits. Pale brown slip exterior and rim, pale red interior.
63. Medium-coarse red fabric. Abundant vegetable temper with white and red grits. Plae brown slip exterior and interior.
64. Medium pale brown fabric. Vegetable temper and grey grits. Brown slip exterior, pale brown-yellowish interior.
65. Fine sandy red fabric. Occasional vegetable temper with sparse small white and black grits.
66. Fine brown fabric. Grey core. Vegetable temper with occasional white grits. Dark grey-brown slip exterior and interior.

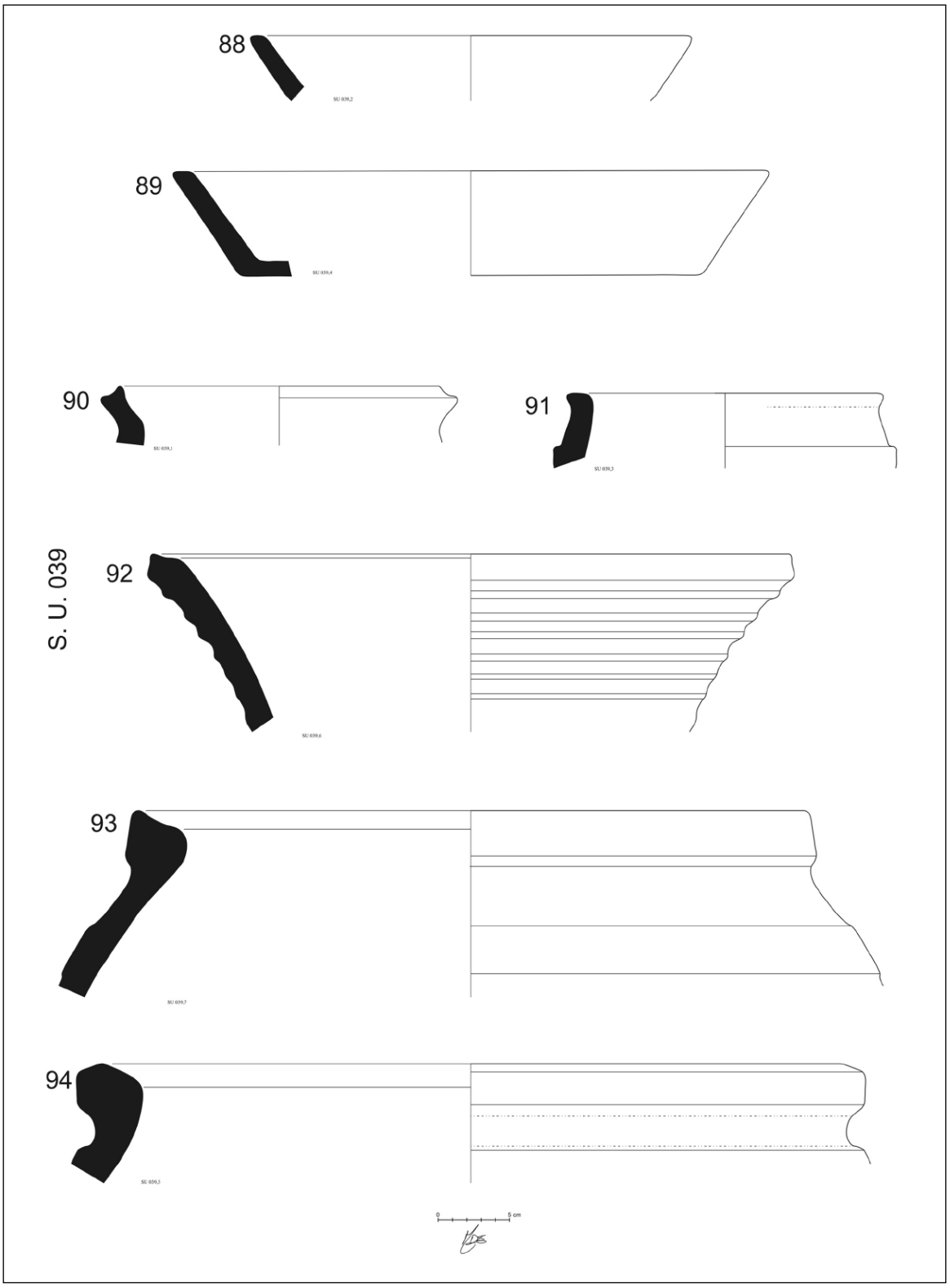
PLATE IX


S. U. 023
67
SU 023,1
68
SU 023,2
S. U. 024
69
SU 024,3
70
SU 024,1
71
SU 024,2
S. U. 026
72
SU 026,3
73
SU 026,18
74
SU 026,5
75
SU 026,15
76
SU 026,14
77
SU 026,16
78
SU 026,4
79
SU 026,12
80
SU 026,6
81
SU 026,17
82
SU 026,20
83
SU 026,7
84
SU 026,13
85
SU 026,2
86
SU 026,1
87
SU 026,19
0
5 cm

Key to plate 9 - Pottery from sealed Iron Age contexts (well)

67. Fine light orange fabric. Occasional vegetable temper with occasional small black and white grits. Dark brown slip exterior and interior.
68. Medium light red fabric. Thick grey core. Vegetable temper with pink grits. Red slip exterior and interior.
69. Medium sandy light brown fabric. Vegetable temper with red and black grits. Brown slip exterior and interior.
70. Medium light red fabric. Abundant vegetable temper with occasional white and grey grits, some large. Black slip exterior, pale red interior.
71. Medium/coarse red-orange fabric. Vegetable temper with abundant white, grey and pink grits, several large. Dark brown slip exterior and interior.
72. Fine orange fabric. Occasional vegetable temper with sparse small white grits and. Red slip exterior and interior.
73. Fine orange fabric. Occasional vegetable temper with small red and white grits. Red slip exterior and interior.
74. Fine orange fabric. Vegetable temper with small white grits. Red slip exterior and interior.
75. Fine light orange-brown fabric. Vegetable temper with white and pink grits. Red slip exterior and interior.
76. Fine orange fabric. Sparse vegetable temper with sparse small red and white grits and occasional mica grits. Red slip exterior and interior.
77. Fine brown fabric. Vegetable temper with white and red grits. Red slip exterior and interior.
78. Fine orange fabric. Vegetable temper with small white grits. Red slip exterior and interior.
79. Fine orange fabric. Occasional vegetable temper with small red and white grits. Light brown slip exterior and interior.
80. Fine grey fabric. Sparse vegetable temper with black and white grits and occasional mica grits. Pale brown slip exterior and interior.
81. Fine brown fabric. Sparse vegetable temper with small white and red grits. Red slip exterior.
82. Fine orange fabric. Sparse vegetable temper with small black and white grits. Brown slip exterior and interior.
83. Medium sandy orange-brown fabric. Vegetable temper with white and pale brown grits, some large. Dark brown slip exterior and interior. Incised decoration exterior, done before firing.
84. Medium orange fabric. Vegetable temper with abundant white and brown grits, some large. Dark brown slip exterior and interior.
85. Fine red-brown fabric. Vegetable temper with black and red grits. Dark slip exterior and rim, dark red interior.
86. Fine red fabric. vegetable temper with sparse small white grits. Red slip exterior and interior.

PLATE X



Key to plate 10 - Pottery from sealed Iron Age contexts (SU 039 – dump layer inside the well)

87. Medium pale brown fabric. Abundant vegetable temper with red and brow grits. Dark brown slip exterior and interior.
88. Coarse pale brown-pink fabric. Vegetable temper with abundant red and grey grits, some large. Pale brown-whitish slip exterior and interior (worn).
89. Coarse brown fabric. Abundant vegetable temper with abundant red, brown, white and black grits. Grey slip exterior. Bad firing – whole section grey except outer 2 mm.
90. Medium sandy pale red fabric. Vegetable temper with red, white and black grits, occasionally large. Pale brown slip exterior and interior.
91. Coarse pale brown fabric. Vegetable temper with abundant large red grits. Smoothed brown slip exterior.
92. Coarse brown fabric. Badly fired, grey section except superficial 4 mm on exterior. Vegetable temper with abundant white, black, red and large grey grits. Grey-greenish slip exterior.
93. Coarse red fabric. Abundant vegetable temper with abundant large red grits. Pale brown-whitish slip exterior. Incised decoration on cordon, done before firing.
94. Coarse red fabric. Brown core. Abundant vegetable temper with abundant large red and black grits. Pale brown-whitish slip exterior.

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Finito di stampare nel mese di dicembre 2011