

# SOME CONTRIBUTIONS TO EARLY ANATOLIAN ART FROM ACEMHÖYÜK

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During the 1978 excavation campaign at Acemhöyük, sponsored by the Turkish Historical Society, the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums and Ankara University, the Sarıkaya palace and its vicinity were investigated. Finds of interest and relevance to the subject of this article were recovered from excavations of the palace foundations and contemporar building levels, where the effects of weathering had removed some of the mudbrick walls not taken down during earlier campaigns. Among these finds are bullae with seal impressions, and large fragments of a painted vase, which provide new evidence for aspects of Anatolian art and architecture of the 18th century B. C..

## 1. Seal impressions

A large number of stamp and cylinder seal impressions on bullae came to light while clearing the foundations of Rooms 3 and 6 (The bullae room) of the Sarıkaya palace (Plan 1). Some of these impressions were repetitions of designs known from bullae recovered in previous years. The new examples had been cut in a variety of styles. Of the three impressions examined here, one is of Old Hittite and two of Old Syrian style.

The stamp seal of Old Hittite style was twice impressed on a large lump of yellow clay (Ac. r 37, Pl. I, 1). The main subject of the seal design is the antelope or mountain - sheep goddess frequently seen among the Acemhöyük seals of Old Hittite stlyle. Dressed in a long garment, the goddess is seated on a square throne and holds a goblet in her right hand. In front is a fruitstand - altar and a perching bird; in the field in front of her face, and also behind the throne, is a rosette. Two antelopes are shown seated back to back. The feet of the goddess rest on the hind quarters of one on the left; her throne is above the antelope on the right. Below the antelopes is a reclining lion, on whose right is a seated monkey; to its left is a reclining monkey with a bird.

On the right side of the seal are two hybrid creatures turned to the right. One of these is a bearded sphinx. The other is a fish - woman, certainly the most interesting motif of this impression. Previously attested in Early Anatolian art were fish hybrids of these types: fish - men; lion - fishes; and goat - fishes<sup>1</sup>. A similar repertory is also known from ancient Mesopotamia<sup>2</sup>. The fish - man of the Anatolian group of cylinder seal impressions is depicted standing erect on his tail, or swimming<sup>3</sup>. In one example he is shown frontally, in the other in profile<sup>4</sup>. The most unusual feature of the fish - woman depicted in profile in our seal is her long hair which reaches to the tail.

The mountain - sheep goddess is characteristically surrounded by a rich assortment of animals or hybrid creatures, including sphinxes, griffins, lion - headed eagles and bison - men. To this repertory may now be added a hybrid creature, the fish - woman depicted in the seal described above.

A bulla of triangular form, mottled yellow - brown in color, preserved two impressions of an Old Syrian style cylinder seal depicting two scenes (Ac. r 39; Pl. I, 2). The first scene shows a god seated on a low - backed throne; opposite him stands a Syrian lady. Together they hold their right hands and with left hands a lyre with five strings. The second scene is more crowded: here a man shown to the waist is depicted in the presence of the nude goddess on a bull well known among seals of Old Syrian style<sup>5</sup>. To the left is a god wearing a short skirt and cylindrical crown, holding an object which resembles a club in his left hand and a boomerang in his right hand.

The second seal of Old Syrian style is also twice impressed on a triangular bulla (Ac. r 33; Pl. II). Although the yellow - colored bulla is well preserved, the clay surfaces could accommodate only two partial impressions of the same cylinder seal which depicted several figures. The impression on one side of the bulla depicts a god holding a thunderbolt in his right hand and an antelope, in the presence of a

<sup>1</sup> Nimet Özgüç, *The Anatolian Group of seal Impressions from Kültepe, Ankara 1965*, pl. 33, 60, 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* vol. III, "Fischkentaure (Fischmensch)".

<sup>3</sup> *Anatolian Group*, nos. 33, 60.

<sup>4</sup> *Anatolian Group*, 33, 44.

<sup>5</sup> E. Porada and B. Buchanan, *Corpus of Ancient Near East N. Y.*, Nos. 942-943, 967.

Syrian lady preserved to the knees. Behind the Syrian lady are two seated monkeys above and below, with backs turned toward her. In the impression on the other side of the bulla the head and body of the god are more clearly impressed; here his extended left arm is visible. Behind him are two large hands which are known on seals of the Old Syrian style<sup>6</sup>. Further behind him is an unclear impression of a small man.

## 2. Painted vase

In the 1965 campaign a fragment of a vase was recovered the room north of the round mudbrick silos in quadrants PA/48-49 at Sarıkaya<sup>7</sup>. Related fragments were found scattered in quadrants TA/49-50. Some of these mudbrick structures with weak foundations were later than the palace but still of the Assyrian colony period; a small area was occupied during the Hellenistic period. In 1978, since these buildings had been completely lost through weathering, they were removed in order to investigate the building level contemporary with the palace. Numerous vase fragments were again found scattered in the area SA/49-50 and in particular below the constructions of Hellenistic date (Pl. III). In addition to these sherds, a vase fragment which joined the others was found during the clearing of Room 3 of the Sarıkaya palace.

A date for the vase in the period contemporary with Kanis Karum level Ib, slightly later than the palace, was indicated at first by the pottery found with the vase fragments in the mudbrick room, and by the technique and probably bathtub form of the vase itself. Although the recent find have confirmed the contemporaneity of the vase with the period of level Ib, it is now clear that the vase formed part of the palace inventory and was not a later product.

Although the sherds recovered in 1965 clearly dated to the 18th century B. C. and included two fragments of hunting scenes, a building with architectural details, bird, fish and geometric designs, it could not be determined to which sides of the vase these scenes belonged. On the basis of the 1978 finds which joined the fragments found

<sup>6</sup> N. Özgüç, *Seals Allegedly from the Regions of Afyonkarahisar, Kayseri and Malatya, Anadolu X*, p. 158, pl. XLV, 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Anadolu X*, 1966, pp. 5-7; pl. IX-X.

earlier, the form and dimensions of the vase as well as the arrangement of the decoration were established with greater certainty. This evidence clearly demonstrates that the vase is of the bathtub form, of which a variety of examples are known from all sites of the 18th century B. C. in Anatolia<sup>8</sup> (Fig. 1). The Acemhöyük example finds a close parallel in a vessel recovered from a cellar of a house of Karum Level Ib at Kültepe (Pl. IV). In Room 33 of the Sarıkaya palace was found part of a bathtub without painted decoration, but with red slip and well burnished. Thus far this type of vessel is represented in the palace only by these two examples.

Among the vases purchased by Burhan Tezcan from Yeşilova (Acemhöyük) were fragments with geometric decoration similar to that of our examples. It is possible that these also belong to a painted bathtub<sup>9</sup>.

The bathtub from the Sarıkaya palace (Ac. 80, Figs. 1-10; V-VI) is of well-levigated, tile-colored clay, grit-tempered and mixed with small particles of mica, and well-fired. It is slipped on both inside and outside. Although the slip is generally greenish-cream in color, in some places the conflagration has turned it to a pinkish or reddish-brown color. As recognized earlier, only brown paint was used for the designs and decoration. Two joined fragments which form the bottom of the vase indicate that at a height of 14 cm a narrow ledge forms a bank as frequently observed in other examples of bathtubs, whose purpose is not known. The thickness of the body is 1.5 cm, that of the base is 2.3 cm. The upper and side edges, which form a rim extending slightly away from the sides of the vase, measure 4 cm in width. The entire upper edge and the side designated as "A" are decorated with diagonal stripes and triangles. Of the other two preserved side rims one

<sup>8</sup> OIP XXIX, p. 190 (d1766). h. 29, l. 1. 39, w. 32 cm. (Alişar); Alacahöyük h. 75, w. 72 cm (H. Koşay and M. Akok, Alacahöyük Excavations 1940-1948, Ankara 1966, p. 41, pl. 7; Al. e 253, drawing on pl. 107); Boğazköy: h. 80, w. 53 cm. (MDOG 75, fig. 5 p. 8-10; K. Bittel and R. Naumann, Boğazköy - Hattusa, Stuttgart, 1952, pl. 48). Kültepe: pl. XXXV, 246: h. 86 w. 86; 247; h. 64, w. 72 cm. (T. Ozguç and N. Ozguç, Kültepe Excavation Report for 1949, Ankara 1953, p. 52); from the Late Bronze Age levels at Tarsus: h. 88, w. 68, l. 76. 8 cm. (H. Goldman, M. J. Mellin and I. J. Gelb, Excavations at Gözlü Küle, Tarsus, Princeton 1956, vol. II, p. 197, pl. 310, 1054).

<sup>9</sup> Belleten, XXII, p. 525, pl. 18 (Burhan Tezcan).

face is embellished with a crescent or curve, the other with a sun symbol (Fig. 2).

Although many fragments of the vase have been recovered, its large size prevents a complete restoration. The drawings made by Cengiz Erol permit an estimate of the height of the vase; the width of the narrow sides is firmly established. This restoration provides the basis for the following description.

*Side A* (Figs. 3-5). On this, one of the wide sides of the vase, were depicted separately hunting scenes and animal figures. If the first hunting scene is joined to the large fragment as in the restoration suggested here, the side measures 70 to 75 cm in width, corresponding to the usual dimensions of other such vessels known from this period. According to this restoration, on side A, were at least four horizontal registers separated from one another by thick lines. The uppermost register (Fig. 3) depicts a row of figures including a hunter, birds, and a four-legged animal. Preserved are the head of the hunter, a flying bird pierced by a spear, the rear of an animal resembling a pig together with its ear and a small part in front of this, the claw of an animal, the tail of a bird, and the front part of a walking bird. On the left side the register joins a vertical band decorated with a herringbone pattern (Figs. 3-4).

In the second register are three fish swimming towards the right, of which part of two are preserved.

The third register depicts a hunter throwing a spear, a dog, and the rear legs of an animal probably to be identified as a bull, preserved to the knees. On the level of the hunter's head is an object resembling a net, but to what this belonged cannot be determined.

In the fourth register, within a frame formed by triangles, vertical and horizontal parallel lines and hourglass motifs, is shown an animal. The parallel bands on the animal's hindquarters and the wavy lines on its body suggest an identification as a tiger. One of its rear claws is preserved on this fragment.

Two additional small fragments may belong to this side of the vase, but how they joined the preserved larger fragments could not be ascertained (Fig. 5).

*Side B* (Fig. 6). Two rim fragments of this narrow side which joined the body of the vase indicated that it was located to the left of

Side A. This evidence established that the narrow sides of the vase measured 46 cm in width, a dimension which accords well with that of a large bathtub from Boğazköy. This large fragment preserves the area where handles were attached and thus forms the upper part of this side of the vase. Here the decoration consists of triangles painted in brown, either solid or filled with hatched patterns; lozenges; parallel and straight lines; and solid - painted hourglass motifs. Between this decorated upper area and the unpainted base of the vase is a space framed by two thick parallel lines in which are depicted four fish swimming toward the right. Two of these are fully preserved; the head of one and the body of another are missing.

*Side C* (Fig. 7-8; V-VI). On both sides C and D were representations of buildings, of which those on Side C are especially clear. Both fragments of this side are here illustrated in the same figure, but how they were related on the vase surface cannot be determined. They provide important evidence for contemporary wooden construction techniques, including stairs and posts with railings connecting to the ceiling of a monumental building.

To judge by the slightly curved part of one edge of the large fragment, it should be restored on the right of this side of the vase. It shows seven representations, most of which are architectural features. To one side is a mudbrick wall, connected to a staircase with four steps; in addition, there is a ground - floor entrance with posts and a railing; a door; the rectangular painted area might represent the four m. wide stone foundations of the palace. Connected to the door and surrounded by wooden constructions is a part of a room; and, on the other side of the break, a very stylized figure perhaps representing a bird.

Since both edges of the second fragment were broken, this piece measuring some 20 cm in width must have been located in the middle of this wide surface of the vase. It shows on the right a wooden construction connected to a four stepped staircase and an entrance with posts and a railing, directly above which is a second - story with balcony. The balcony post tapers towards the ceiling and is similar in thickness to the mudbrick wall and wider than the lower story post. It is composed of a series of least twelve horizontal sections which are alternately painted and slipped. Like the lower story post, it

supports a wide flat capital. The balcony railing is lower than that of the ground floor, but the details of both constructions are otherwise the same.

A fragment depicting a wooden construction and a stylized figure, with unpainted lower part, may also belong to Side C (Fig. 8).

The construction technique and the fallen floor of the upper story observed during the excavation of the Sarıkaya palace indicated that this monumental building was composed of two stories. The vase fragments described above provide the first contemporary illustration of a building, to confirm the reconstruction based on the archaeological remains.

Architectural representations on relief or painted vases thus provide important sources for further understanding of contemporary buildings and construction techniques. The portico connected to a mudbrick building shown on the Bitik vase<sup>10</sup>, and the buildings represented on the Acemhöyük bathtub, offer useful evidence for reconstructing details especially of the upper stories and roof constructions of the excavated structures. The relief representation of a shrine on the rhyton from Kato Zakro plays, in this connection, a role of first importance, and is a most valuable example of this kind of evidence.

*Side D* (Fig. 9-10). To judge by the two vertical handles joining the vase, this fragment belongs to the upper part of this side. On the right is shown part of a mudbrick wall; to the left of the handle the upper part is decorated with parallel or intersecting lines. A variety of geometric ornaments are found on the lower part: rectangles, lozenges, triangles filled with hatching or left plain, and parallel lines.

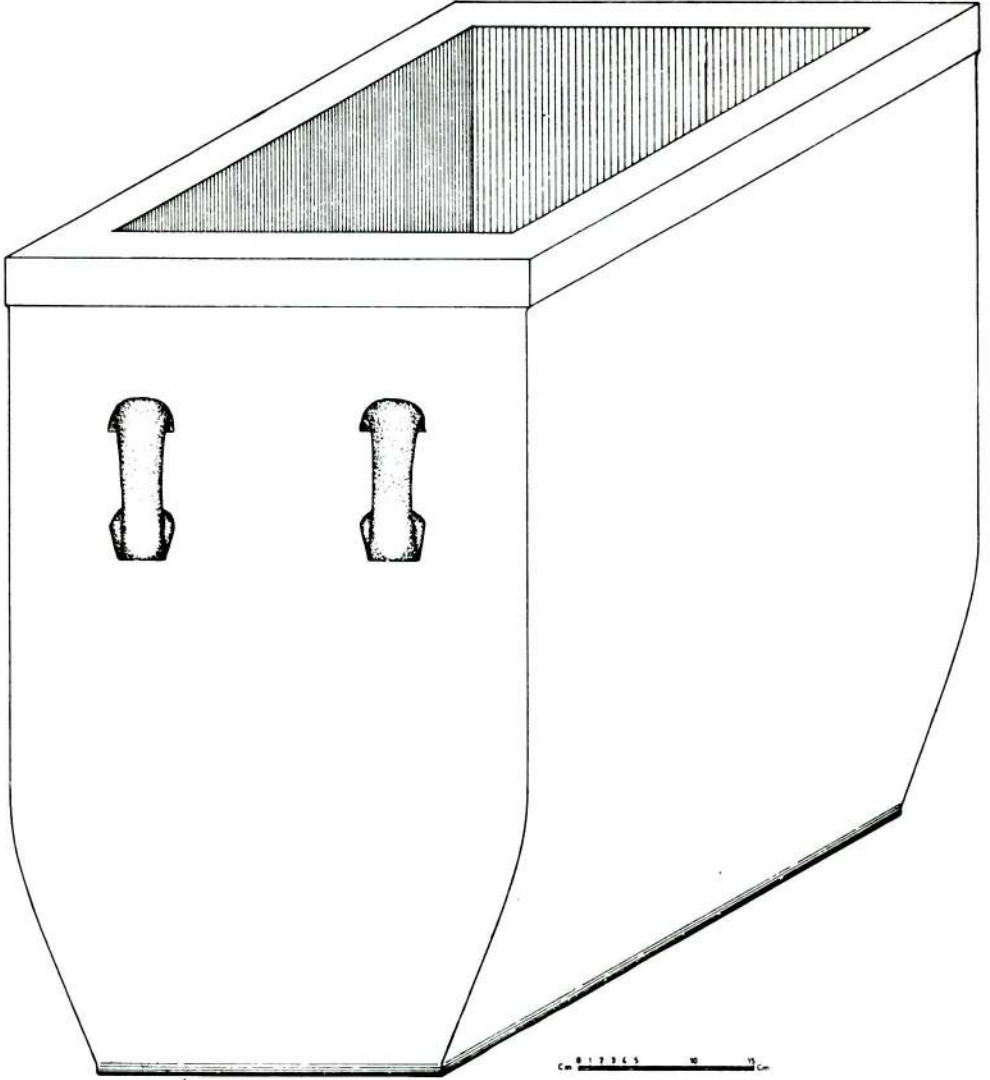
A corner piece depicting a fish and geometric designs might belong to the left part of side D.

Several additional fragments of the vase indicate that the area near the base was left unpainted, but covered with a cream slip.

In the coming season we hope to find further fragments of this painted bathtub which has already proved of considerable importance for Anatolian cultural history.

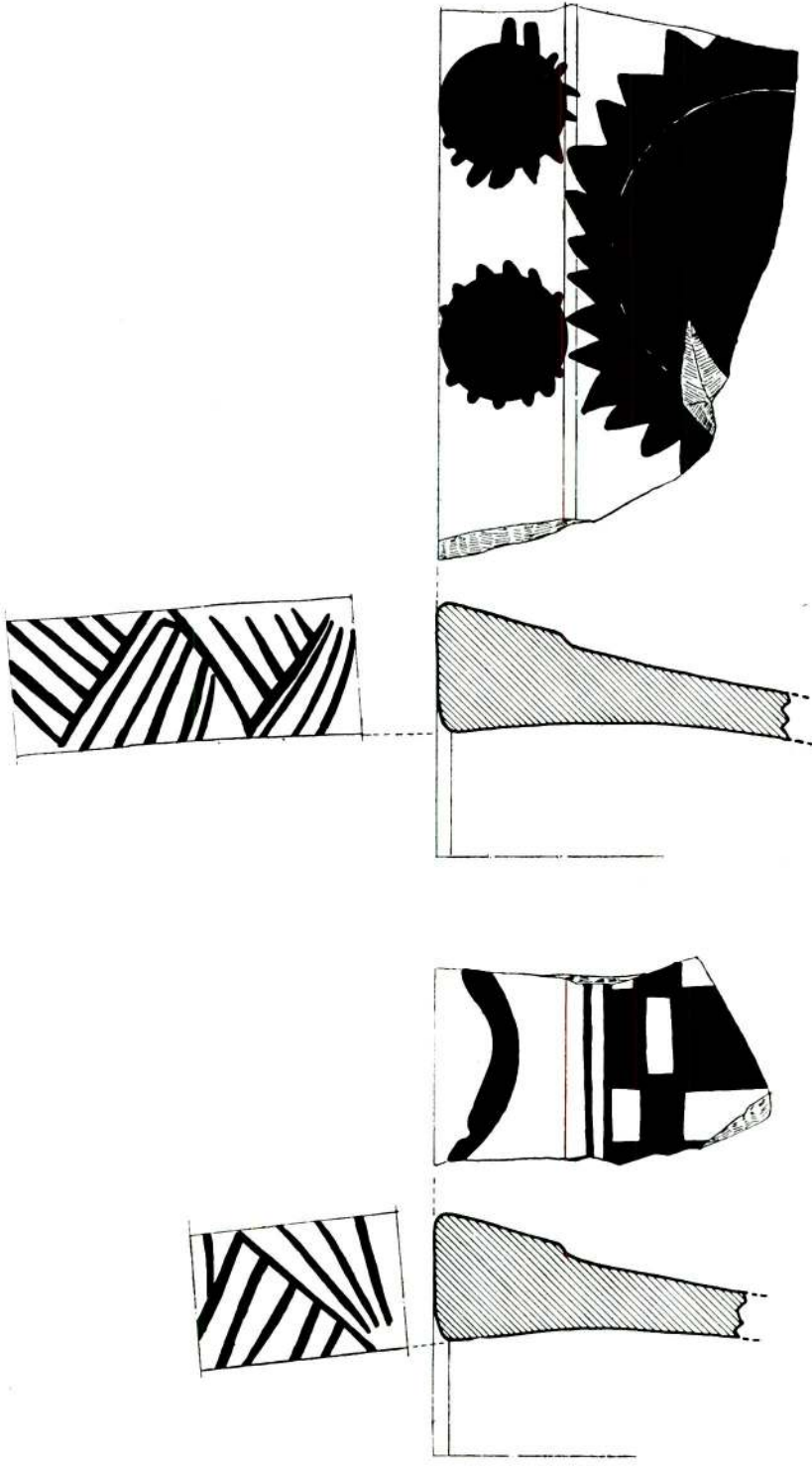
<sup>10</sup> Tahsin Ozgüç, *The Bitik Vase* (Anatolia II, 1957, p. 57 ff.; E. Akurgal and M. Hirmer, *Die Kunst der Hethiter*, Munich 1961, pl. XIV; K. Bittel, *Die Hethiter*, Munich 1976, pl. 140.

<sup>11</sup> J. W. Shaw, *Evidence for the Minian Tripartite Shrine* (*American Journal of Archaeology* 82: 4, 1978, p. 431 ff; figs. 5-9).



Res. 1 — Fig. 1





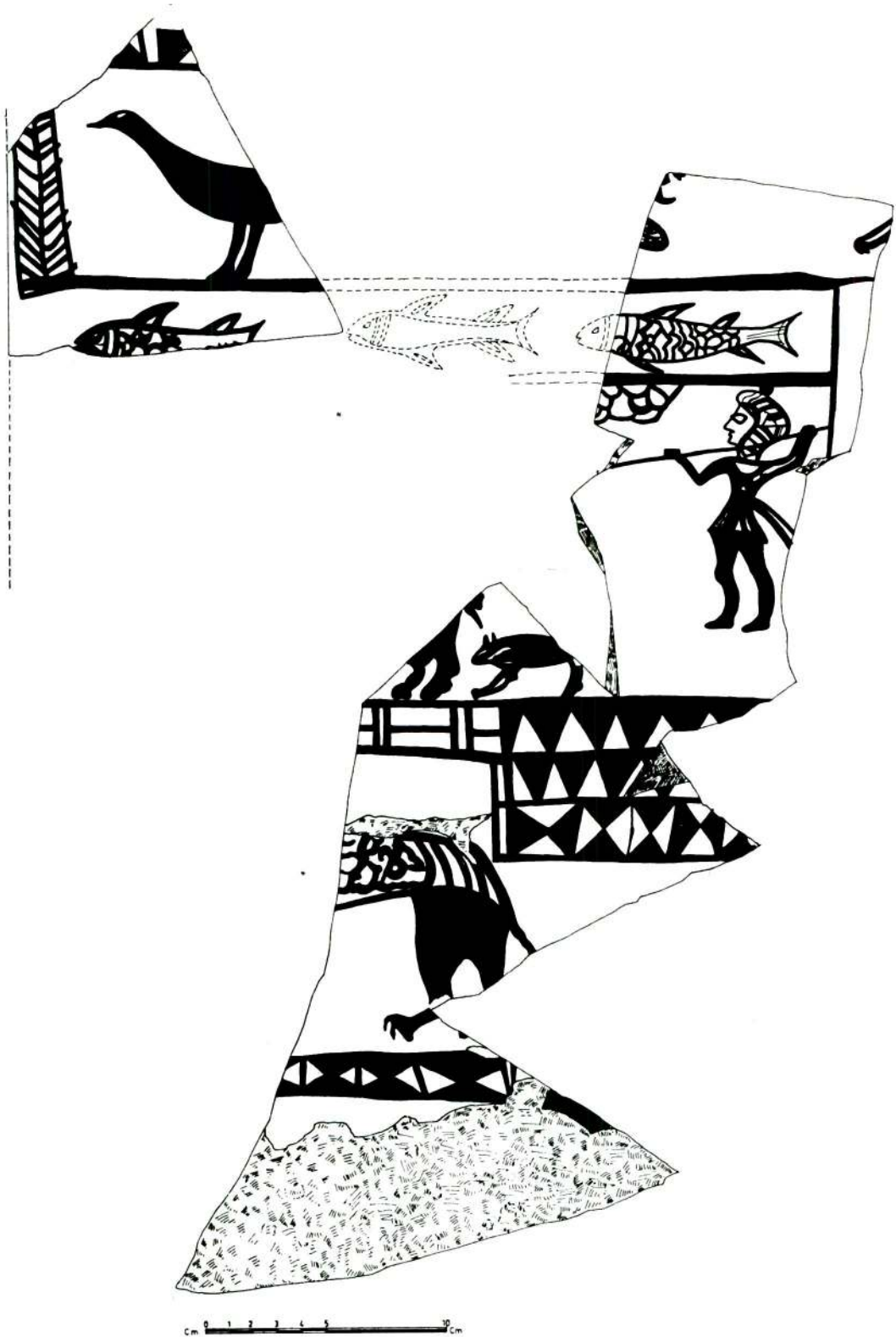
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Res. 2 — Fig. 2

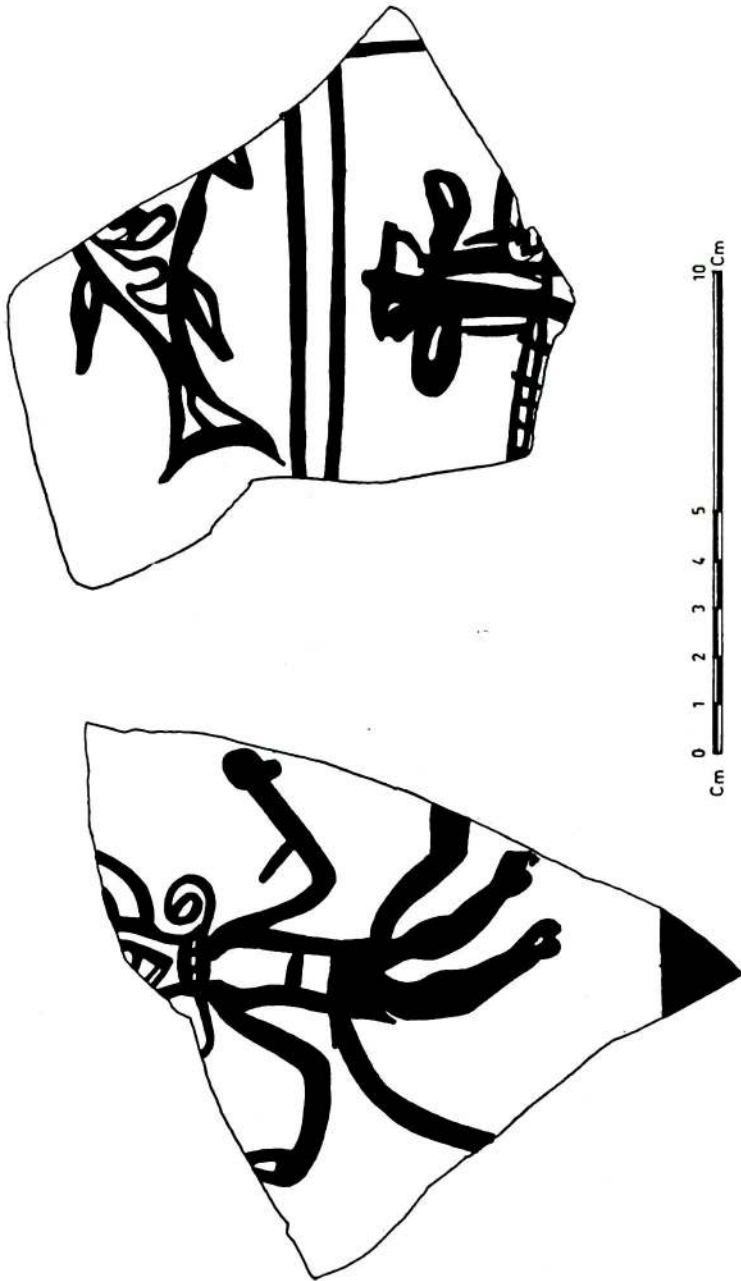


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Res. 3 — Fig. 3



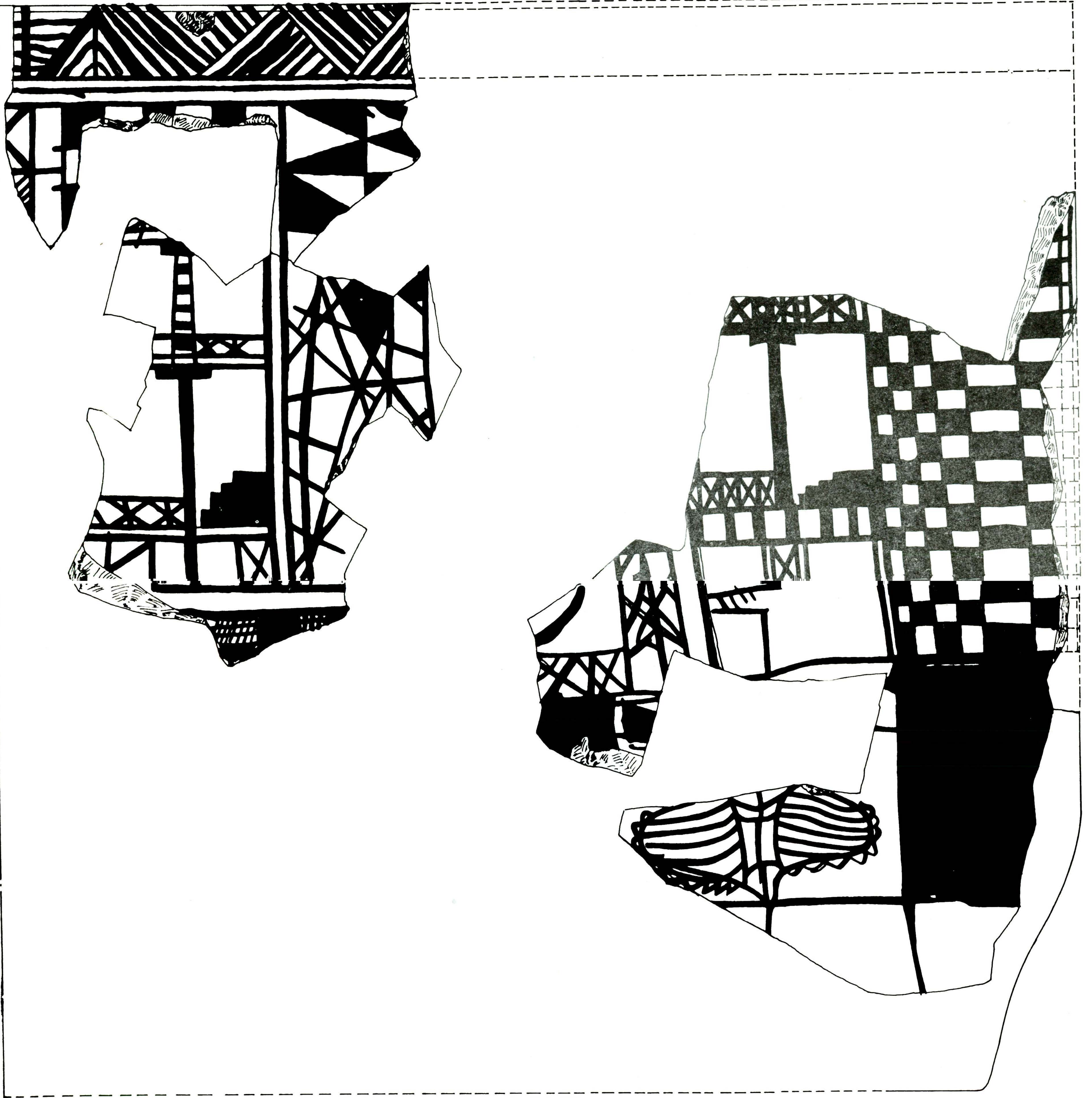
Res. 4—Fig. 4



Res. 5 — Fig. 5



Res. 6 — Fig. 6

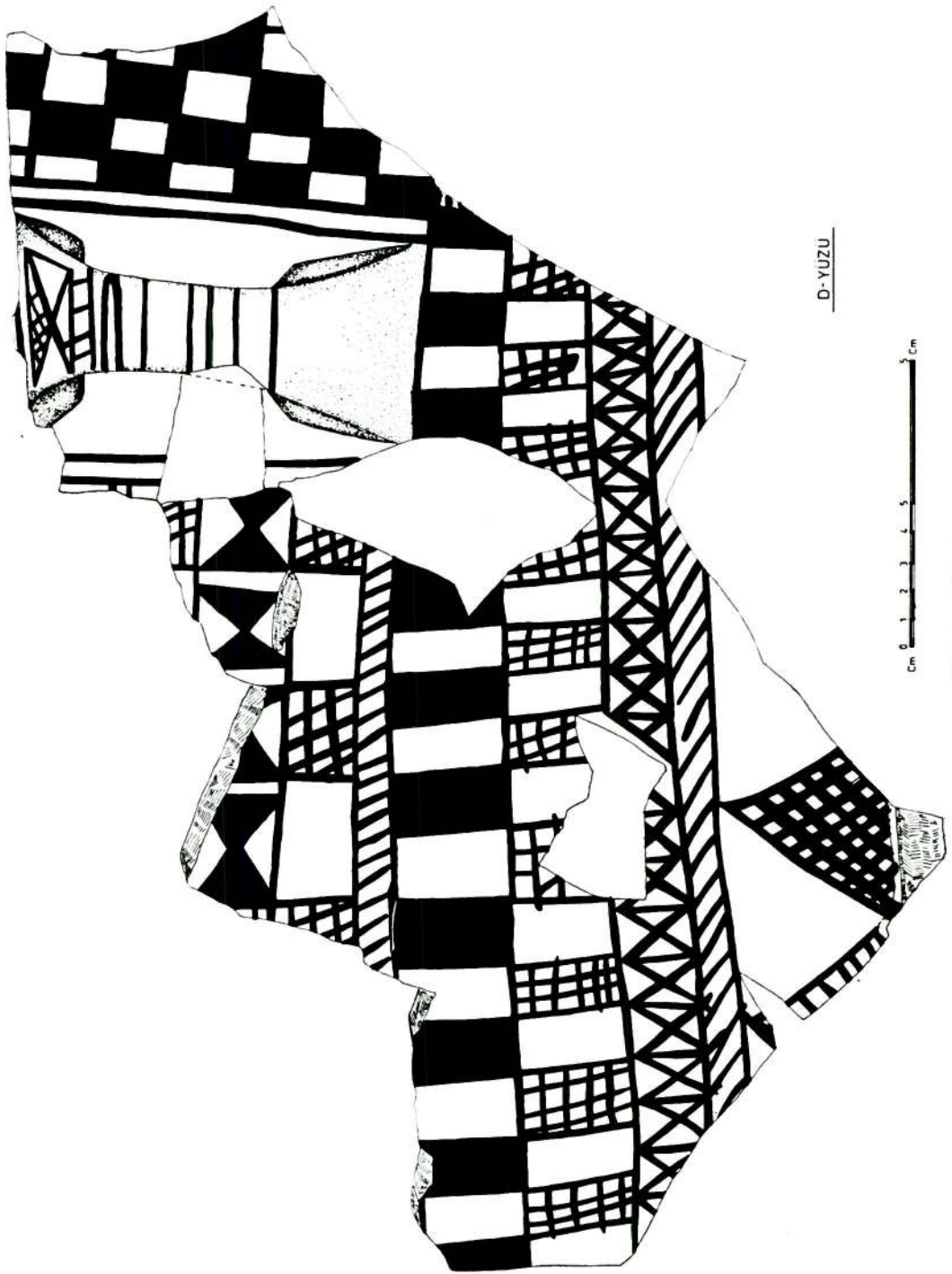


Cm 1 0 1 2 3 4 5 10 15 Cm

C-YÜZÜ

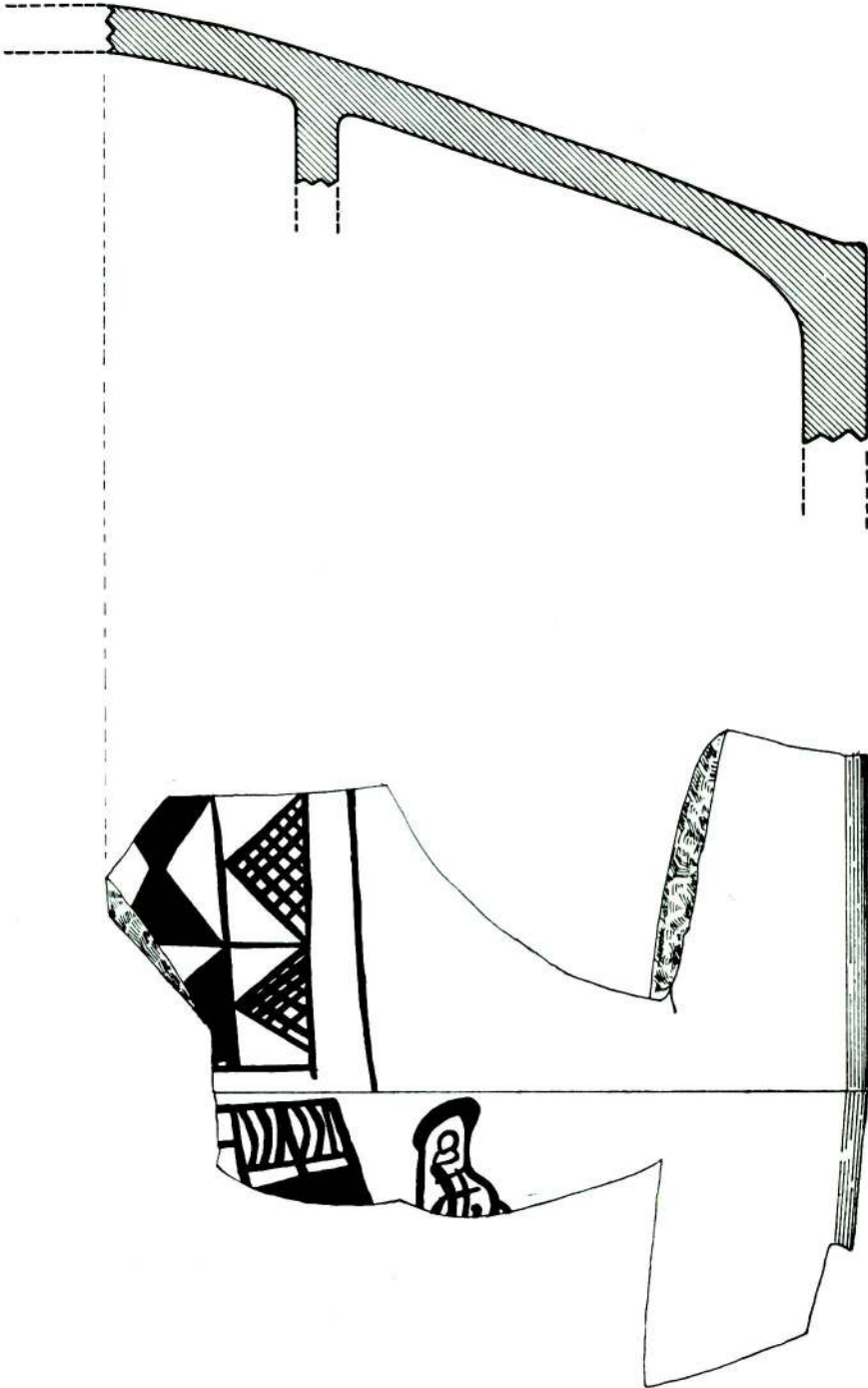


Res. 8 — Fig. 8



Res. 9 — Fig. 9





Res. 10 — Fig. 10

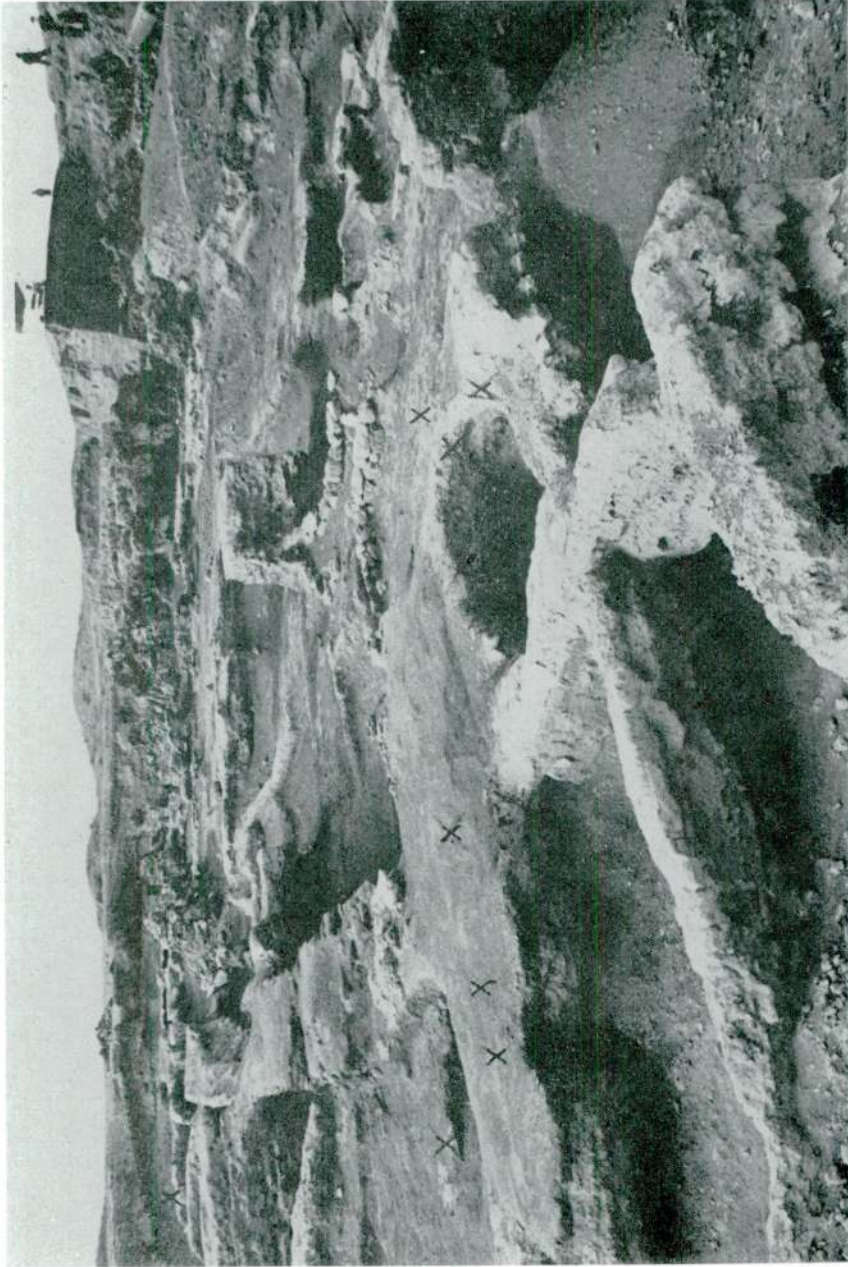


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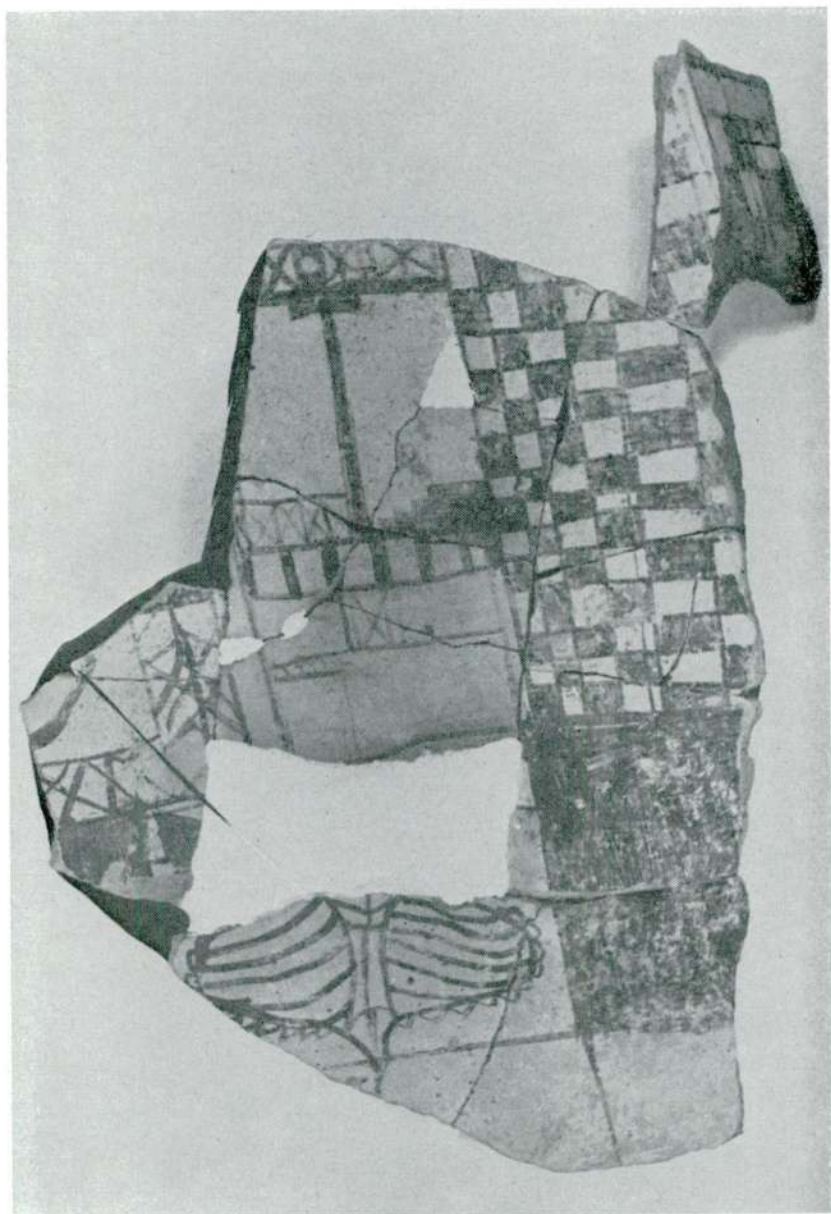


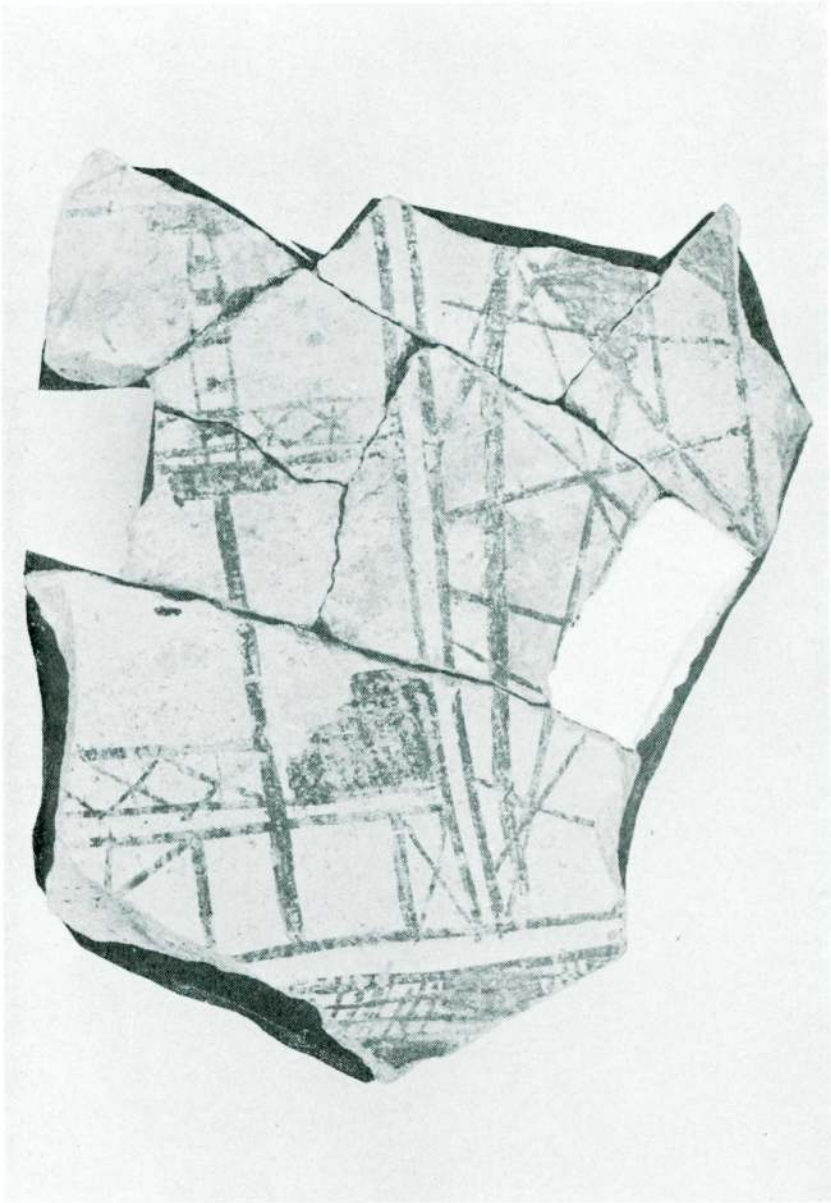
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Plan 1