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## PRELIMINARY INSIGHTS INTO THE CERAMIC ASSEMBLAGE FROM ERIMI- PITHARKA (2022-2023 SEASONS)

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper presents a preliminary analysis of the ceramic assemblage excavated during the 2022-2023 seasons from Area 1A at Erimi-*Pitharka*, a regional site located in the Kouris Valley in south-central Cyprus. The ceramics date to LC IIC-LC IIIA (ca. 1300-1150 BC) and contain a range of locally produced wares and imported pottery. The two seasons of excavations yielded almost 4,000 highly fragmented sherds, dominated by a high proportion of Pithos and Plain White wares. The analysis suggests that Erimi-*Pitharka* functioned as an agricultural processing site, with a focus on industrial activities and storage. This preliminary study serves as a first step towards understanding the role of agricultural production and storage at Erimi-*Pitharka* within the broader socio-economic landscape of the Late Cypriot Kouris Valley.

**KEYWORDS:** Late Bronze Age, Cyprus, Kouris Valley, Erimi-*Pitharka*, Ceramics

## Introduction

This paper presents a preliminary analysis and discussion of the ceramics from the 2022-2023 excavations at the Late Bronze Age site of Erimi-*Pitharka*, located

in the Limassol District of Cyprus. The ceramic assemblage is characterised by wares typical of the crucial LC IIC-LC IIIA transition, a pivotal period marking the final stages of the Late Bronze Age on the island (ca 1300-1150 BC). The assemblage includes Plain White ware, Pithos ware and Coarse/Cooking ware, as well as fine wares such as Base Ring, White Slip and Aegean-type pottery, along with imported vessels from the Aegean and the Levant. Notably, the overall assemblage is dominated by Pithos and Plain White ware, reinforcing the interpretation of the site as one with a strong regional character and a functional emphasis on agricultural production and storage. We here present the general composition of the pottery assemblage from these two excavation campaigns and the main ceramic wares and vessel shapes identified to date, considering their implications for the role of the site within the broader Late Bronze Age landscape. The aim is to present a preliminary but more detailed study of the ceramic assemblage than is possible in the excavation report (Recht *et al.* 2024), and to make this information available in a timely manner.

## The site of Erimi-*Pitharka*

Erimi-*Pitharka* (hereafter: Pitharka) is a Late Bronze Age site located in south-central Cyprus, in the Limassol District (Pl. 1: 1). It is part of the Kouris Valley and once lay along the course of the Kouris River, which has now dried up due to the construction of a dam to the north. The valley has a long history of occupation, starting in the Neolithic period, but it is perhaps best known for its Chalcolithic 'Erimi' culture, named after the nearby site of Erimi-*Pamboula*, excavated in the 1930s (Dikaios 1934; Bolger 1988). Closer in time to Pitharka is the settlement and cemetery of Erimi-*Laonin tou Porakou* (currently under excavation by an Italian team: Bombardieri 2017), where there is evidence of workshops related to textile production. Based on the ceramics presented here and from earlier excavations, Pitharka was primarily occupied during the LC IIC-LC IIIA period (ca 1300-1150 BC). This makes it contemporaneous with the well-known site of Alassa (Hadjisavvas 2017), located about eight kilometres to the north, with which Pitharka must have had close ties. Even closer to Pitharka, and possibly an extension of the site, is Erimi-*Kafkalla*. Erimi-*Kafkalla* was used as a cemetery in the Early and Middle Cypriot periods, but there is also

evidence of Late Cypriot tombs (for more about the archaeological landscape of the region, see Violaris 2012).

Pitharka was first investigated through rescue excavations by the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus, initially after the discovery of a subterranean structure during construction work in 2001–2002 (Vassiliou and Stylianou 2004) and subsequently as part of a broader programme of excavation in the area from 2007 to 2012 (Flourentzos 2010; Papanikolaou 2012). In addition to the subterranean structure, the site was excavated in four different areas: Area I, featuring a large building complex interpreted as a central place for storage and production (Pl. 1: 2); Area II, comprising a sequence of terraces, workshop areas and a large building; Area III, containing possible retaining walls; and Area IV, with buildings and workshop installations (Papanikolaou 2012).

Since 2022, new excavations have been carried out by the University of Graz and Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw. These excavations have focused on uncovering the northern and eastern extensions of the large complex in Area I (labelled Area 1A) (Pl. 1: 2, Pl. 2: 1–3) (Recht *et al.* 2024).<sup>1</sup> So far, this has demonstrated that the building indeed continues in both these directions (with walls connecting to the previously detected rooms) and that the stratigraphy is deeper than initially anticipated. In the northern trenches, a sequence of interior and exterior spaces includes what may be workshop or production areas, separated and interspersed with a corridor in Trench 7 and a courtyard area in Trench 3 (see Pl. 2: 2–3). This includes Room 101, which had a plaster floor with several levels, indicated by a marked slope in the floor, and installations related to production activities. The interior of the room and its installations were burnt (the only fire identified so far at the site). All rooms are semi-subterranean, and walls were sometimes created using the *kafkalla* bedrock.

Two phases can be identified architecturally and stratigraphically, with a change in the layout and size of the rooms (Recht *et al.* 2024, Fig. 11), but both are within a fairly short period and not immediately detectable in the movable material culture. At least Area I/1A was occupied during the LC IIC–LC IIIA period and was probably abandoned during the earlier part of LC IIIA. Previous excavations suggest an earlier presence at the site (Papanikolaou 2012). The abandonment appears to have been peaceful as there is little evidence of destruction and, overall, the rooms tend to have been cleared of their contents.

<sup>1</sup> This paper was written after the 2023 excavation and includes material from the 2022 and 2023 seasons. For a preliminary report on the 2024 season, see Recht *et al.* 2025.

## Recording methods

Ceramic finds were collected and analysed according to ware and typology, with recording carried out by each locus and bag. The classification of wares is roughly based on Åström's classification system (Åström 1972), with reference to recent work done on specific wares and subdivisions, along with recent publications of larger LC II-III ceramic assemblages (e.g. Eriksson 2007; Hadjisavvas 2017; Fischer and Bürge 2018; Mountjoy 1999; 2018). All ceramic material from the excavated areas was collected and documented. Each locus was excavated in 'pottery bags', separating day-to-day excavation and, when necessary, smaller areas within the locus. The pottery was recorded in two Epicollect5 databases<sup>2</sup> – firstly, one in which all sherds are counted by ware and part of vessel (rim, base, handle, spout, body sherd), along with an overall summary of the fragmentation level and characteristics of each bag and locus.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, some sherds were selected for more detailed registration, with each given a unique identification number. These were sherds that are diagnostic, representative of specific types or of special interest. Particular attention was paid to local diagnostic Cypriot wares in order to determine ceramic use and site function, as well as imports to correlate chronologies and synchronise cultures. All complete or nearly complete vessels are also included in this database. The entries are all described, measured, drawn and photographed. Current analysis has focused on macroscopic descriptions and categorisations of fabrics, including information on production techniques (handmade vs wheelmade), fabric (colour, hardness/ firing temperature, inclusions), surface treatment (slipped, burnished, etc.) and decoration. This methodology is standard practice and follows that of other projects (see e.g. Fischer and Bürge 2018, 188-189).

<sup>2</sup> These are online databases that allow immediate digital recording and enable several team members to work on the material simultaneously (<https://five.epicollect.net/>). The collected data is regularly downloaded and backed up in the form of simple .csv files.

<sup>3</sup> Sherds clearly coming from the same vessel are counted as one statistical entry. Typologically similar sherds that cannot be definitively identified as belonging to the same vessel are counted separately. Finds from surface deposits are not included in the statistical analysis presented.

## Pottery from 2022 and 2023 excavations at Erimi-Pitharka

The 2022 and 2023 excavation seasons at Pitharka yielded a total of 3,791 ceramic sherds (Pl. 2: 4). The range of wares present is typical of an LC IIC-LC IIIA site. They include Plain White, Pithos, Coarse and Cooking, Base Ring, White Slip, White Painted Wheelmade and Aegean-type wares, as well as limited examples of imports from mainland Greece, Crete and the Levant. While there are variations in the excavated contexts, the overall concentration of pottery is relatively low considering what would usually be expected from a Late Cypriot period site. This is a general feature of Area 1A: the majority of spaces appear to have been deliberately cleared of most of their contents, leaving behind heavier and highly fragmented items. This is further reflected in the ceramic assemblage, which is also highly fragmentary, with a few notable exceptions discussed below. The cultural layers are, in some cases, visible even on the modern surface or appear very close to the surface; this has no doubt contributed to the high level of disturbance of at least the upper layers of excavation.

Ceramic sherds were recovered from all contexts and from both interior and exterior spaces, with a fairly even distribution throughout the excavated areas. While the stratigraphy and architecture at Pitharka indicate several phases of occupation (see Recht *et al.* 2024), the ceramic types suggest that these phases are all within the LC IIC-LC IIIA period. Possible variations in the ceramic repertoire appear in our preliminary analyses to be related to the function and use of spaces rather than to chronological changes, but this aspect requires further analysis and is the subject of a forthcoming study.

The assemblage is dominated by Pithos and Plain White wares, which together make up more than 60% of the total number of sherds and vessels. The shapes of these are associated with liquids and storage, with pithoi (large storage jars), jugs, jars and deep basins ('bathtubs') comprising most identifiable shapes. The exact use of these needs to be determined, but they do support the idea of Pitharka as a site specialising in agricultural production and storage, as also suggested by other evidence such as the stone tool assemblage, workshop areas, installations and storage facilities. Another set of wares, Coarse and Cooking ware, further points to production, but also to more domestic activities in the form of food preparation. Fine wares make up only a small overall percentage of the assemblage, as do the imports from outside Cyprus. No detailed statistics are available, but this general impression of the assemblage is consistent with that reported from the previous excavations, where Pithos and Plain White ware

dominated, with smaller amounts of Coarse, Plain White Wheelmade, Aegean-type, White Slip, Mycenaean and Levantine ware (Papanikolaou 2012).

### ***Pithos ware***

True to its name, Pitharka has yielded a remarkably high proportion of Pithos ware: almost a third of the entire ceramic assemblage consists of pithos sherds (33%, 1,249 sherds, Pl. 2: 4). Pithoi are medium to hard-fired large storage jars made with a coarse fabric, with fabrics varying in hardness, colour and inclusions. They have been categorised by Keswani into three main groups based on vessel size, wall thickness and neck type: Group 1, short-necked with a wide opening; Group 2, long-necked with a comparatively restricted opening and a wall thickness of less than 3 cm; and Group 3, long-necked 'mega' pithoi with a wall thickness of more than 3 cm (Keswani 1989; 2017; categorisation also used in the work of Pilides 2000). All three types of pithoi were present at Pitharka (Pl. 3), but those belonging to Groups 1 and 2 seem to be the most common in Area 1A. There is a corresponding variation in volume, with estimates ranging between 250 and 1,000 litres (Keswani 2017, 382).

Like other ceramics from Pitharka in this area, the majority of pithos sherds are highly fragmented, but there were also several examples of large parts of pithoi still *in situ*, abandoned or partially reconstructable. In one case, a pithos had been embedded into the *kafkalla* (bedrock) of Trench 3 (Pl. 2: 2, embedded pithos); roughly the lower third, the part placed in the ground, was preserved (Pl. 4: 1). The capacity of the preserved part was measured to be 125 litres, suggesting a total of about 300 litres for the complete vessel. In contrast, roughly the upper half of a short-necked pithos was found in Trench 4, within Room 101, the room with workshop installations and a plaster floor on two levels, separated by a slope (Pl. 2: 2, 4: 2, EP22T4L43-P2; for a detailed description of this room, see Recht *et al.* 2024). The capacity has not been measured, but this was certainly a smaller vessel. The upper half was fractured but still complete, apart from some of the rim, and decorated with linear plastic bands. It had possibly been thrown in or fallen into the room, since it was partly sitting on some stones and itself contained a large grinding stone.

A third, also smaller-sized, pithos comes from Trench 6, in this case entirely broken and fragmented; nevertheless, the surviving sherds represent almost the entire vessel (Pl. 2: 1, 5: 1, EP22T6L28-P17). This small pithos was found together with a partially preserved bathtub (see below) in F3/F4, an installation

that had been partially cut into the *kafkalla*, and associated with channels, also cut into it. Its top level includes two stone 'platforms', and the pithos and bathtub were found against these, along with grinding stones, a small stone basin and large sherds of additional pithoi below. This installation and the bathtub, with its pierced base, may be related to activities involving liquids. The pithos and bathtub were possibly used together and certainly deposited in the installation together, as parts of the pithos were found both directly above and below the bathtub (see Pl. 5: 1 for the sherds of the pithos on top of the bathtub).

There is, as yet, no evidence from Pitharka for the applied bands of clay impressed with seals found at Alassa and other contemporaneous sites in Cyprus (Georgiou 2016a; Hadjisavvas 2017, 279-321), but some were decorated with the plastic bands frequently found on pithoi. For example, linear bands can be found on the shoulder of the pithos from Room 101 (Pl. 4: 2), and another body sherd illustrates the use of a wavy band (Pl. 3: 11). As demonstrated by the vessel in Trench 3, pithoi were used as permanent fixtures at Pitharka, presumably as part of the storage and production facilities at the site. The pithos embedded in the *kafkalla* appears to have been placed in an exterior space, possibly a courtyard. This embedding to stabilise and possibly cool pithoi is a strategy also used at, for example, Pyla-Kokkinokremos and Alassa (Kanta 2014, 86-87; Hadjisavvas 2017, 260-264).

Deep oval basins are also known as 'bathtubs' due to their resemblance to this modern shape, an idea exacerbated by the frequent presence of a 'plughole' in the bottom or towards the bottom of the vessel. They are related to pithoi in that they are large shapes, made from the same type of clay and fired in a similar manner. Smaller sherds can, therefore, be difficult to distinguish. Nevertheless, the Pitharka repertoire includes a number of sherds belonging to these bathtubs and, most significantly, part of the flat bottom and lower part of the walls of a bathtub from F3/F4, found with the small pithos discussed above (Pl. 2: 1, 5: 2). As with the embedded pithos in Trench 3, the bathtub here seems to have been part of a permanent or semi-permanent installation involving liquid-related production. Bathtubs sometimes appear in industrial contexts that suggest use in the production of textiles (Mazow 2008; 2013), but such an association is not yet evident at Pitharka. Bathtubs were also found in previous excavations in this area of the site, and one nearly intact example from Pitharka is currently on display in the Limassol Museum (Papanikolaou 2012, 311-312, Fig. 3).

These large storage and production containers merit further in-depth study, which is one of the future aims of the Pitharka project. This includes not only

developing detailed typologies to better understand function, but also archaeometric analyses, including organic residue, petrography and starch granule analyses in order to detect contents and place of manufacture. Recent research on pithoi from the sites of Alassa and Pyla-Kokkinokremos suggests that, despite their bulk and size, not all vessels were made locally at each site (Nodarou 2017; Porta and Cannovò 2023). Pitharka's role in these regional networks still needs to be determined, and the pithoi in particular may hold one of the keys to doing so.

### **Plain White ware**

Plain White ware is the most frequent ware collected from Late Cypriot contexts, yet it remains poorly understood. The ware is characterised by substantial variability in fabrics, with a range of colours, coarseness and manufacturing techniques, including both handmade and wheelmade varieties (Crewe 2015, 115-116; Eriksson 2007, 51-53; Jacobs 2009, 92-99; 2010, 83-84, who includes Plain White and Pithos ware in her discussion and preliminary categorisation of the fabrics of Plain ware at Alassa-*Pano Mandilaris*). A very thin slip is often applied (Fischer and Bürge 2018, 215). The ware first appears as handmade in small numbers in the Middle Cypriot III period (ca 1750-1600 BC) and continued to be produced throughout the Late Cypriot period as wheelmade technology expanded (Åström 1972; Crewe 2007). It is often impossible to distinguish manufacturing techniques due to wear and poor preservation. Vessels of this ware may include open and closed shapes of varying sizes (Fischer and Bürge 2018, 215-222). From the 2022-2023 seasons, 30% (1140; Pl. 2: 4) of the sherds have been identified as belonging to Plain White ware (Pl. 6-7). The full variety of shapes is represented at the site, including kraters (Pl. 6: 1-3), jars/jugs (Pl. 6: 4-6, Pl. 7: 1-2, pl. 8) and bowls and basins of varying sizes (Pl. 6: 6-12). When the manufacturing technique can be identified, it seems that many vessels are wheelmade.

The handle and part of the rim of a medium-sized Plain White wheelmade ware jug or jar were found in Room 101 (Pl. 7: 2). In two cases, the lower parts of jugs or jars were preserved or could be restored from sherds. One comes from the higher layers inside Room 101, broken but restorable; it has a globular lower body and a small flat base and is wheelmade (Pl. 7: 1). Another Plain White wheelmade ware jug or jar has a more conical lower body and base with a ring base. It comes from Room 104, where it appears to have been set into the ground, in the

northwestern corner of the room (Pl. 2: 3, Pl: 8, EP23T8L60-P2) – a practice also noted in the previous excavations (K. Papanikolaou, pers. comm.).

In the deeper levels of Room 101, there are a few examples of bowls with complete profiles, including a shallow carinated bowl with a thick flat base (Pl. 6: 11) and a small hemispherical shape with a simple rim and circular indentation in the base (Pl. 6: 10). The latter is found in a painted (Aegean-style) version at Evreti (LC IIC-LC IIIA), where it is considered characteristic of the Paphos regional production (Georgiou 2016b, 89-90, 99; 2017, 221-222, Fig. 12). The same trench yielded a rim fragment from a rounded or hemispherical bowl with a pierced lug handle (Pl. 6: 8). A fragment from a slightly larger and deeper bowl with a slightly indented rim and grooved walls was also found (Pl. 6: 9). Of note is an almost complete ‘pyxis’, with a semi-coarse olive grey (Munsell 5Y 5/2-5Y 4/2) fabric (Pl. 7: 3). The shape is somewhat reminiscent of Aegean straight-sided pyxides, with a high-angled shoulder and a vertical, double-strand basket handle. The fabric appears in other sherds found at the site and is presumed to be of Cypriot origin. Two tripod legs are also preserved, supporting a round, bag-like base. No close parallels to this vessel have been found yet.<sup>4</sup> The pyxis was found, broken but nearly complete, in the upper part of an extensive and dense stone collapse that also includes grinding stones, a gaming stone and a small stone press (see Pl. 2: 3, EP23T7AL62-P1).

### ***Coarse ware and Cooking ware***

Coarse ware and Cooking ware are often used synonymously, though their classification remains unclear (Bürge 2023). The main difference lies in vessel shapes, with cooking pots (frequently with signs of burning) assigned to Cooking ware, and other shapes such as bowls, juglets and lamps referred to as Coarse ware. They are, therefore, discussed together here. The fabric of both is generally reddish, greyish or dark brown and often relatively coarse, gritty and porous (Bürge 2023, 239). The walls often appear porous or gritty and, in most cases, the surface is untreated and simply wet-smoothed (Åström 1972, 266; Fischer and Bürge 2018, 226; Bürge 2023, 239). Coarse and Cooking ware are very common in most Late Cypriot settlements, as is the case at Pitharka, where 13% (507 sherds, Pl. 2: 4) have been identified as Coarse ware, largely as jugs and jars. In addition to Coarse ware, 8% (299 sherds, Pl. 2: 4) have been identified

<sup>4</sup> Pyxis-like vessels with tripod legs are known from 13th to 12th century BC contexts in the Aegean (see Benzi 1992, pls 60a, 100g, 109e, 131f for examples from Rhodes).

as Cooking ware. Together, they account for 21% (806 sherds) of the Pitharka ceramic assemblage (Pl. 9).

The term *Cooking ware* often corresponds to a typical cooking pot shape consisting of a globular body, simple everted rim and one to two vertical handles. Several distinct types of cooking pots have been identified, for example at Hala Sultan Tekke (Bürge 2023; see also Jung 2017). One is the traditional Cypriot shape, which is handmade with a round bottom and one or two handles from rim to shoulder; these may also have vertical ridges on the globular body. No completely preserved examples come from Pitharka, but there are sherds of round bases (Pl. 9: 5), handmade vessels (Pl. 9: 2) and a significant part of the body of a cooking pot with vertical ridges (unfortunately much fragmented and not restorable due to the porous nature of the fabric) (Pl. 9: 4). A second type is wheelmade with one or two handles, a globular and slightly biconical body and flat or disc base; it is a shape inspired by the Aegean (Dikomitou-Eliadou *et al.* 2016, 236), corresponding to the shapes FS 65 (one-handled) and FS 66 (two-handled) in that typology. The one-handled types are often smaller with capacities ranging from 0.6 to 1.0 litres and rim diameters between 8 and 12 cm; it is assumed that examples with a larger rim diameter (more than 20 cm) had two handles for practical reasons (Bürge 2023, 239).

This type is again represented by individual sherds at Pitharka and, remarkably, a once complete but now broken and much fragmented vessel was found in Trench 7 (Pl. 10: 1). This was found in the corridor between Room 101 and Room 102, deposited on top of a dense stone collapse (Pl. 2: 2, EP22T7L37-P3). It was placed with its opening directly against the opening of a White Painted wheelmade deep bowl; a bronze needle was found inside the two vessels. The deposition of this assemblage appears to be associated with the final abandonment of this part of the site. The handmade rounded type of cooking pot has been associated with LC IB/IIA-LC IIC, and the flat-based wheelmade with LC IIIA. This may also hold true for Pitharka, but is not yet clearly demonstrated in the stratigraphy, and the distinction is not as clear at nearby Alassa, where the majority of the cooking vessels were handmade (with the aid of the slow wheel) and flat-based (Spagnoli 2017).

A wide variety of Coarse ware sherds are found at Pitharka, including many sherds of closed vessels such as the mended sherds from a ridged shoulder of a jar or jug (Pl. 9: 6), but open shapes are also present (Pl. 9: 8). Eleven fragments of wall brackets were identified (Pl. 10: 2–5). Wall brackets are known in Cyprus from the LC II period to the Early Iron Age and are common in LC IIC-LC IIIA

contexts (Fischer and Bürge 2018, 232). The general characterisation features a plain, flat upper part and an oblong scoop or small bowl attached perpendicularly to the lower part, with a circular hole at the upper end of the flat part, likely serving to attach to walls. The ware type ranges from Plain White ware to Coarse ware fabrics, including those at Pitharka. They are often decorated with one or more incised wavy lines on the flat upper part (Pl. 10: 4–5).

### ***White Slip ware***

White Slip is distinguished by its vibrant bright white slip, ranging from light bluish-grey in early periods to light grey and yellowish-brown towards the end of its occurrence. The ware has a long chronological span, lasting about 400 years, with minor but distinct variations that act as chronological indicators (Kara-georghis 2001, 9). The pottery scheme established by Popham divided White Slip into White Slip I, which appears in LC IA:2, followed by White Slip II in LC IIA:1-LC IIC, including its various subgroups (Popham 1972a; 1972b).

Compared to other Late Cypriot sites, Pitharka has a relatively small percentage of White Slip ware sherds, totalling less than 1% (0.79%, 30 examples, Pl. 2: 4). All are highly fragmented and consist of single sherds of so-called ‘milk’ bowls (a round-based bowl with a ‘wishbone’ handle) (Pl. 11: 1–6). Of these, the vast majority (28 sherds) are typical White Slip II ware, characterised by a somewhat darker slip and dark brown decoration, often sloppily applied, in a standard repertoire of patterns that includes lattices, ladders and hooked chains (Pl. 11: 1, 5) and with wishbone handles (Pl. 11: 6). White Slip I ware was identified in the 2022-2023 excavations (Pl. 11: 4) and is reported from the previous excavations (Papanikolaou 2012, 311), and there are two examples of White Slip IIA ware. White Slip IIA ware typically has thicker walls, a shinier slip and dark brown paint, with decorations such as zig-zag/palm-tree patterns (Pl. 11: 3). The chronology of White Slip IIA is placed in the LC IIA:1 to early LC IIC:1 period (Eriksson 2007, 82, Fig. 12).

### ***Base Ring ware***

Base Ring ware has a hard, fine and very well-levigated fabric, ranging in colour from reddish brown to dark brown, and usually a dark grey core (Fischer and Bürge 2018, 246-247). The surface treatment also varies between vessels, from a reddish brown to dark grey slip, and is usually matt. The ware is almost exclu-

sively handmade, with very few wheelmade examples occurring at the end of the ware's lifespan (Åström 1972, 197-198; Eriksson 2007, 153). Base Ring ware first appears in LC IA:2, ending within the transition from LC IIC to LC IIIA. A variety of tableware shapes are known, including jugs and juglets, bowls, kraters and spindle bottles. Various subdivisions of Base Ring have been proposed, including Vaughan's four major ware classes ('Metallic Slip', 'Red Burnished', 'Matte Slip' and 'Uncoated'; Vaughan 1991) and Fischer and Bürgé's petrographic subdivisions ('Red Base-ring I' and 'Grey Base-ring I'; Fischer and Bürgé 2018, 246). By far the most popular categorisation is Åström's system of Base Ring I (with the defining characteristic of plastic decoration) and Base Ring II (with the defining characteristic of matt white paint) (Åström 1972, 137-137).

The current excavations have distinguished very few recognisable Base Ring I or Base Ring II sherds and, therefore, the possible chronological distinctions of those subtypes will not be discussed here. Almost 3% (122) of all sherds excavated are from Base Ring ware (Pl. 2: 4). Of the identifiable sherds, most shapes are smaller open and closed forms, including small jugs, juglets and bowls (Pl. 11: 7-11). Sometimes, a lone complete base is uncovered (Pl. 11: 10-11). The main types of identifiable sherds are carinated bowls (Pl. 11: 7, 9), along with some small jugs/juglets (Pl. 11: 8). No large jugs or kraters have been identified.

### *Aegean-type ware*

A third category of Cypriot-produced fine ware found at Pitharka is the Aegean-type ware, known as such because it resembles Aegean shapes and decoration, but was produced in Cyprus during the LC IIC period and became increasingly popular in LC IIIA.<sup>5</sup> The fine fabric is typically very pale brown or light red, and open shapes often lack the 'sandwich' section found in the imported Aegean pottery; vessels tend to have a lower level of burnish, and the painted decoration is commonly but not always matt.<sup>6</sup> Overall, the Aegean-type ware sherds from

<sup>5</sup> The earliest known examples of local Cypriot production appear even earlier, in the 14th century BC, when the specific shape of small three-handled jars (FS 46 and FS 47) was made (Graziadio 2017). The early 13th century BC then sees the Aegean-type pottery, also known as White Painted Wheelmade III in Åström's typology (Åström 1972, 276), which partly replaces the imported Aegean pottery. See also Georgiou 2018 for an excellent outline of history and confusion in the related terminology and chronology.

<sup>6</sup> There is also a strong similarity between some of the sherds of this type and so-called 'Plain White Wheelmade II', the only difference being in the presence or absence of painted decoration (Jacobs 2009, see also her 'Fabric III').

Pitharka are quite fragmentary, with just a few examples of several sherds coming from the same vessel; a total of 65 sherds (2% of the total assemblage, Pl. 2: 4) have so far been identified as Aegean-type ware (Pl. 12).

Interestingly, although the overall numbers are low, it seems that, in contrast to the imported Aegean ceramics, open shapes such as shallow bowls were more popular in local production at Pitharka. It is not yet clear whether this preference is a chronological development or purely related to different wares. It does, however, follow general trends elsewhere on the island, where shapes from the Aegean repertoire were selectively adopted by the inhabitants of Cyprus, including a greater apparent popularity of shallow bowls in Cyprus than in Mainland Greece (Recht and Bürg 2024, 11-12). In terms of open shapes, the sherds of six shallow bowls identified at Pitharka (Pl. 12: 6-8) are supplemented by three examples of deep bowls. One of these has a monochrome interior, suggesting a date of LC IIIA (Pl. 12: 4). Another is a nearly complete small deep bowl (or 'skyphos'), broken into over 40 sherds, but mostly restorable (Pl. 10: 1). This was found in the layers immediately below colluvial deposits in the corridor of Trench 7, with the complete cooking vessel mentioned above (Pls 2: 2, 10: 1; EP22T7L37-P2); although its decoration is not well preserved, a monochrome interior is still discernible, again suggesting an LC IIIA or possibly later date.

The few identifiable examples of closed shapes include four sherds of a stirrup or piriform jar (three of which were mendable, ancient breakage) decorated with bands and running spirals (Pl. 12: 1), as well as the base of a piriform jar (Pl. 12: 3). The linear and geometric painted patterns are the most common, but one sherd from a krater also features part of a figurative scene (Pl. 12: 2).

### ***Imports***

The local and regional character of Pitharka is also reflected in the low quantity of pottery imported from outside the island. Such imported pottery comprises less than 1% of the total assemblage to date. Nevertheless, its presence indicates that Pitharka did take part, directly or indirectly, in the extensive international exchange networks that characterise the Late Bronze Age of the Eastern Mediterranean. The imported pottery identified so far includes pieces from the Aegean and the Levant.

## ***The Aegean***

So far, a total of 28 sherds have been identified as being of Aegean production (Pl. 2: 4, Pl. 13). Many are highly fragmented pieces, but there are also instances of larger fragments or mendable segments, for example, five sherds belonging to a small to medium-sized stirrup jar and parts of two false spouts, again from stirrup jars (Pl. 13: 3). Most of the sherds come from closed vessels, mainly medium-sized jars (Pl. 13: 3, 6). There are examples of open vessels as well, including part of the rim and handle scar of a shallow bowl (Pl. 13: 2) and the rim of a ring-based krater (Pl. 13: 1). Five small sherds have the characteristic coarse fabric of large Minoan transport jars (Pl. 13: 4–5), suggesting that relations were not only with the Greek mainland. All the Aegean-imported sherds belong to the height of Cypriot trade with the Aegean, i.e. the LH IIIA-B / LM IIIB period.

## ***The Levant***

Levantine storage jars, colloquially known as ‘Canaanite jars’, are large vessels with ovoid bodies, slight to sharply carinated shoulders and a short cylindrical neck with two to four handles (Pedrazzi 2022, 119). The ware is widely distributed across the Mediterranean and broadly originates from the Levantine coast. In the Levant, they are dated from the Middle Bronze through the Iron Age and, in Cyprus, they are attested as early as the MC III/LC IA period.

So far, there are few examples of Levantine wares from Pitharka, but these include two Levantine storage jar handles and an almost complete example (Pl. 14). This jar has a potmark incised on one of its handles (sign CM006; Olivier 2007, 414). It was found in Trench 8, in Room 104, apparently having fallen into the room along with stones and sherds of other vessels, and immediately covered by additional stone collapse (Pl. 2: 3, EP23T8L84-P2). Although complete examples are rare, imported Canaanite jars are known from various Late Cypriot sites, including Maa-Palaekastro (Hadjicosti 1988, 340–385), Pyla-Kokkinokremos (Georgiou 2014; Bretschneider *et al.* 2015), Hala Sultan Tekke (Fischer and Bürge 2018, 225, Fig. 3.16), Palaepaphos-Skales (Karageorghis 1983, pls. CLXVI: 40, CXIV:2, CLIV: 46), Kition (Karageorghis and Demas 1985; Georgiou *et al.* 2023, 135–136, Fig. 9) and Alasa (Jacobs 2017, 412–414, 432, Fig. 7.8). Further analysis is necessary to determine the precise provenance of these vessels along the Levantine coast.

## Conclusions

The ceramic assemblage from Area 1A at Pitharka dates this part of the settlement securely within the LC IIC period, with continuation and abandonment in LC IIIA. Preliminary analysis of both local and imported ceramics, including Cooking ware, White Slip ware, Base Ring ware, Aegean-type ware (with its height of production in LC IIIA) and imported Aegean wares, supports this chronological framework.

A variety of wares across all trenches are represented, including Plain White ware (both handmade and wheelmade), Pithos ware and Coarse/Cooking wares. Generally, the ceramic assemblage consists of both larger storage vessels and small fine ware/table wares, although storage vessels are predominant. Notably, over 1,200 sherds of Pithos ware were collected over the course of the two seasons, in addition to the two mostly intact pithoi. This indicates a significant storage capacity, likely related to Pitharka's role as an agricultural processing site. The presence of ceramic 'bathtubs', along with high amounts of stone tools and the pithoi, suggests activities connected to storage or food production involving large amounts of liquids (Recht *et al.* 2024).

The occurrence of Cooking ware, Coarse ware, Base Ring ware and White Slip ware indicates activity at the site beyond industrial processing and storage, perhaps related to habitation activities. Pitharka actively engaged in large-scale storage production chains; the evidence presented here highlights the role of regional sites in Late Cypriot society. The concentration of large-scale storage and processing vessels – especially pithoi and Plain White ware jars – alongside limited fine wares and imports suggests a specialised site geared towards regional industry. The limited presence of imports from the Aegean and Levantine coast demonstrates that the site was also connected to larger Cypriot polities that engaged in intercultural exchange. The Aegean ceramics are represented by both large transport shapes and eating-drinking vessels, while the Minoan and Levantine vessels are closed transport shapes, indicating Pitharka's participation in Mediterranean exchange networks, if only indirectly.

Future work is planned on many components of the ceramic assemblage. Additional typological studies are necessary to understand nuanced transitions in technology at the site, such as from handmade to Plain White wheelmade ware and cooking vessels, and the arrival of Aegean-type wares. Further analysis is needed to understand the local clays of the Kouris Valley, the production of local vessels compared to potential imported ones and the role of large storage

and processing vessels, such as pithoi, Plain White ware jars and jugs and 'bath-tubs', along with their contents at the site.

## Acknowledgements

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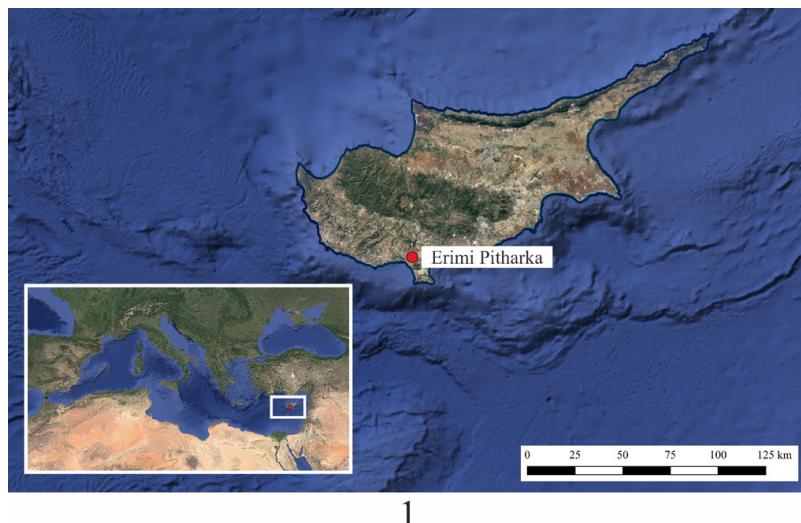
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## PLATE 1



1

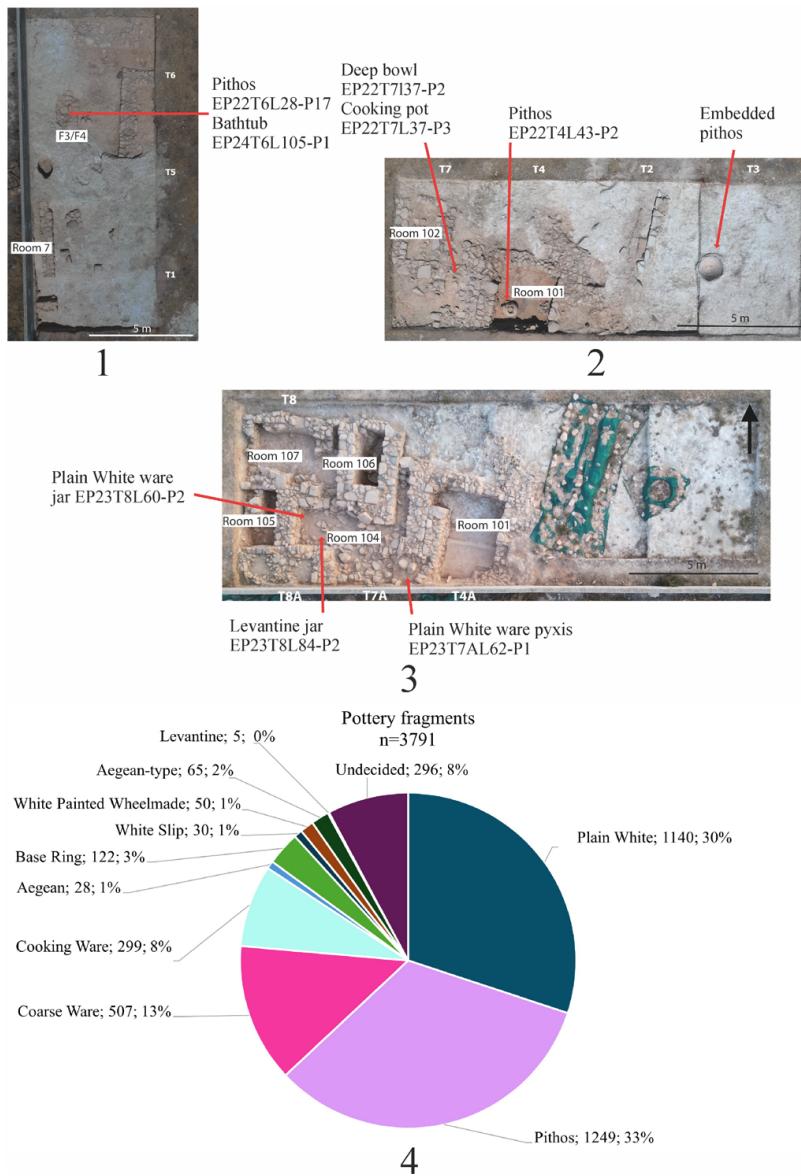


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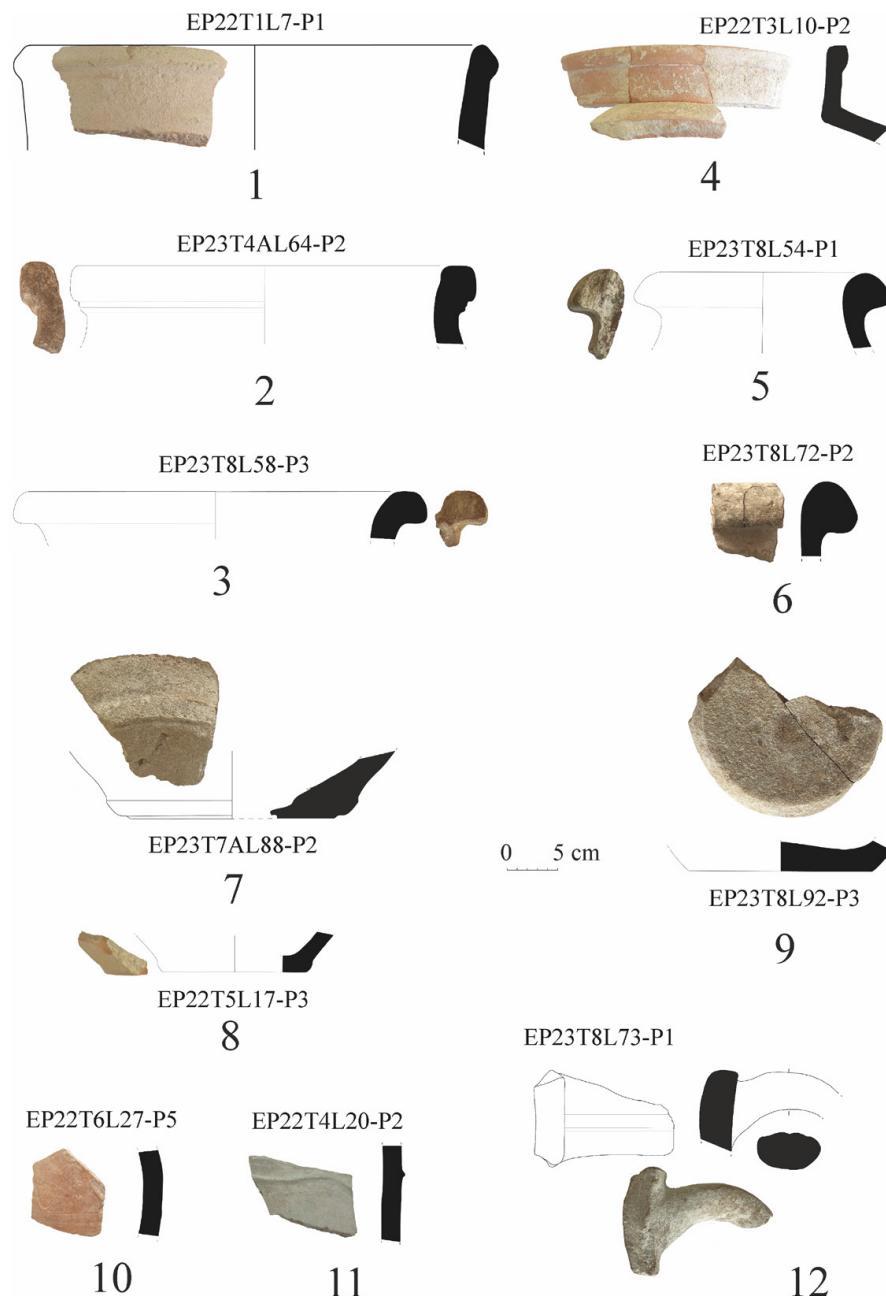
**Pl. 1: 1** – Map showing the location of Erimi-Pitharka on Cyprus (base image from Google Earth).

**Pl. 1: 2** – Drone photo of main excavation areas, end of season 2022. Photo A. Villani

## PLATE 2



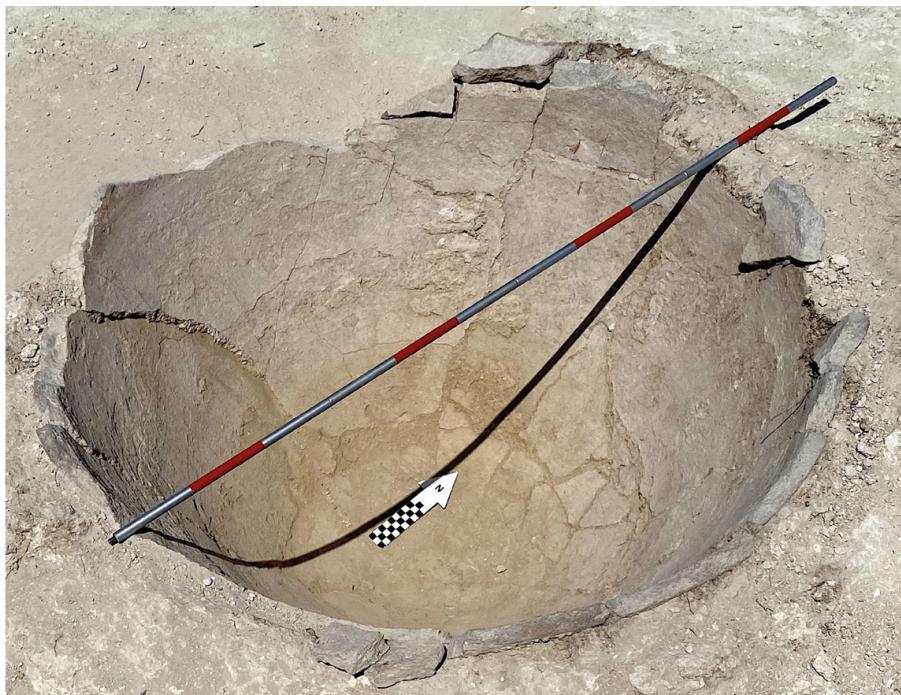
## PLATE 3



Pl. 3 – Selected Pithos ware sherds: 1–6 – rims; 7–9 – bases; 10 – body sherd decorated with applied wavy band; 11 – body sherd decorated with incised wavy band; 12 – handle.

Photos by M. Wiśniewski and L. Gran, pencil drawings K. Zeman-Wiśniewska, M. Yamasaki, T. Welz, J. Preininger, digitisation by L. Recht, L. Gran and M. Schutti

## PLATE 4

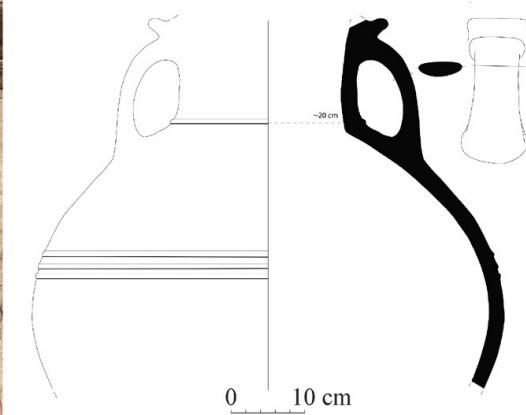


1



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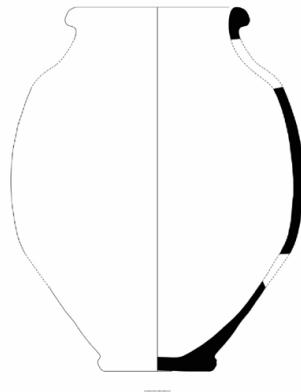
2



Pl. 4: 1 – Lower part of pithos embedded in the *kafkalla* in Trench 3. Photo by L. Recht.

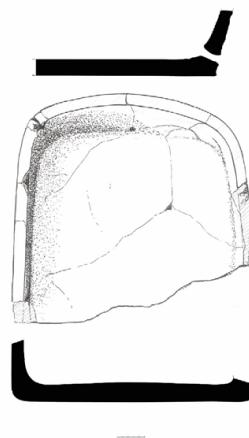
Pl. 4: 2 – Pithos found in Room 101 (Northern trenches). Photo by L. Recht, pencil drawing and digitisation by M. Yamasaki

**PLATE 5**



EP22T6L28-P17/EP24T6L105-P3

1

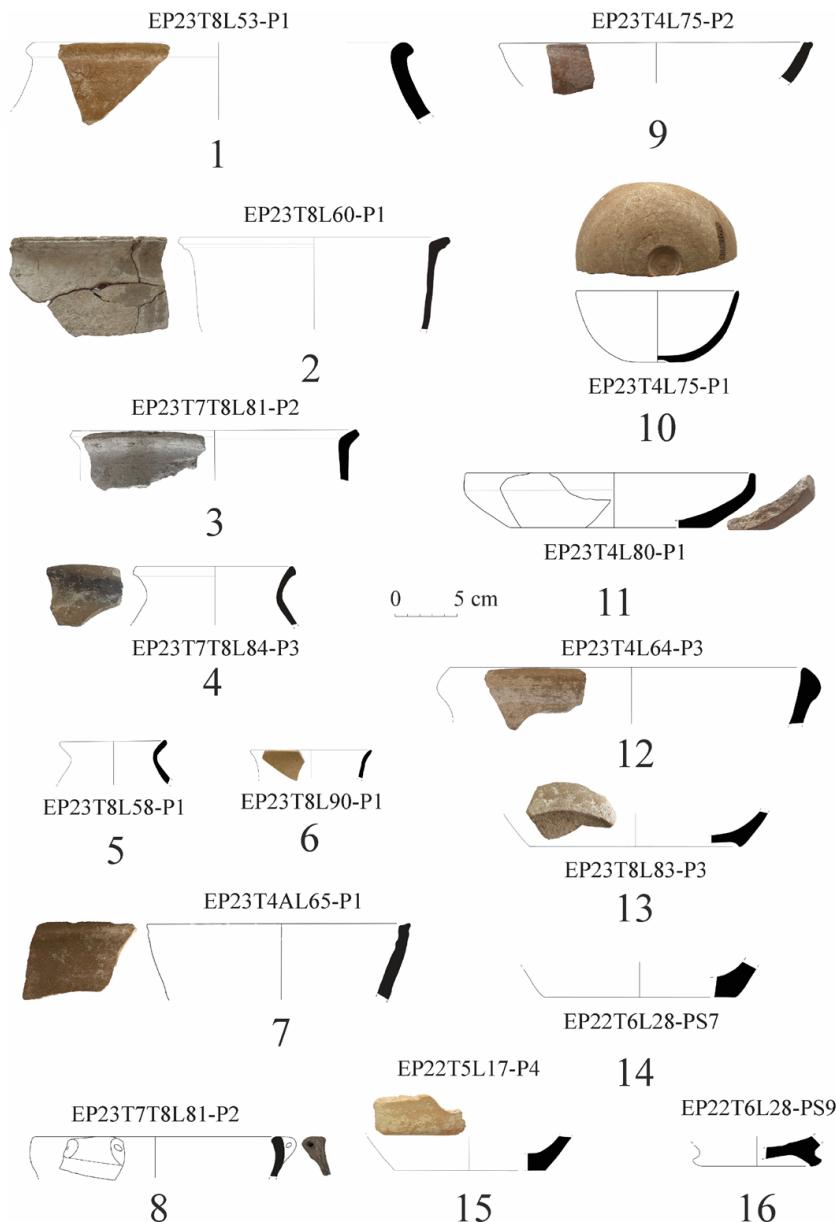


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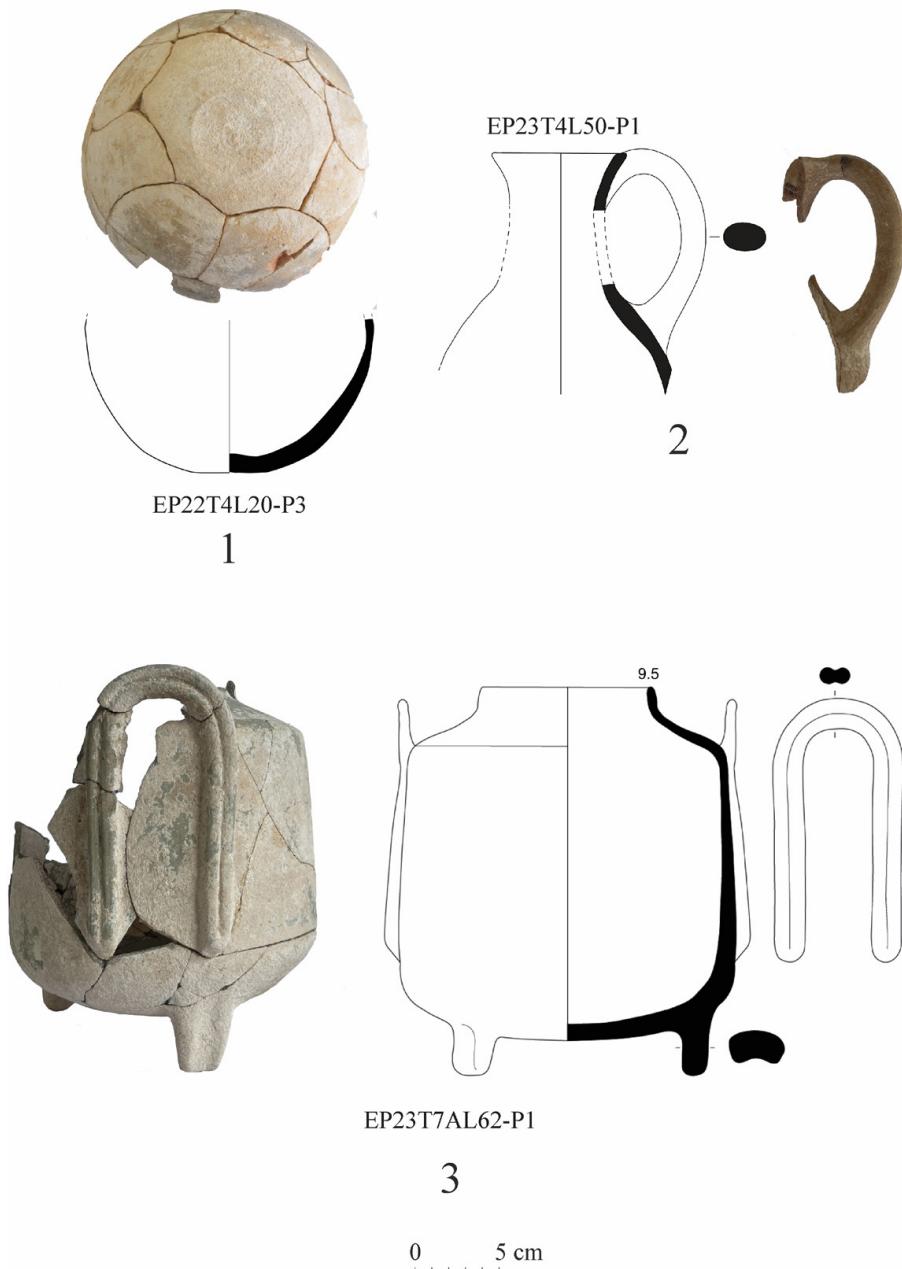
**Pl. 5** – Feature 3/4 in Trench 5/6 (Eastern trenches): 1 – pithos; 2 – bathtub. Photos by M. Schutti, pencil drawings by M. Yamasaki, digitisation and reconstruction by L. Recht

## PLATE 6



Pl. 6 – Selected Plain White ware sherds: 1–3 – krater rims; 4–5 – jug rims; 6–7 – bowl rims; 8 – bowl rim with pierced lug handle; 9 – grooved rim of bowl; 10–11 – bowls; 12 – basin rim; 13–16 – closed vessel bases. Photos by L. Gran, pencil drawings by T. Welz, K. Zeman-Wiśniewska, J. Preininger, M. Schutti, L. Gran, A. Say-Otun, E. de Koning, E. Semidei, digitisation by L. Recht, L. Gran, M. Schutti and M. Yamasaki

## PLATE 7



Pl. 7 – Selected Plain White ware vessels: 1 – closed vessel base; 2 – jug rim and handle; 3 – three-legged ‘pyxis’. Photos by M. Wiśniewski and L. Gran, pencil drawings M. Yamasaki, digitisation by L. Recht and M. Yamasaki

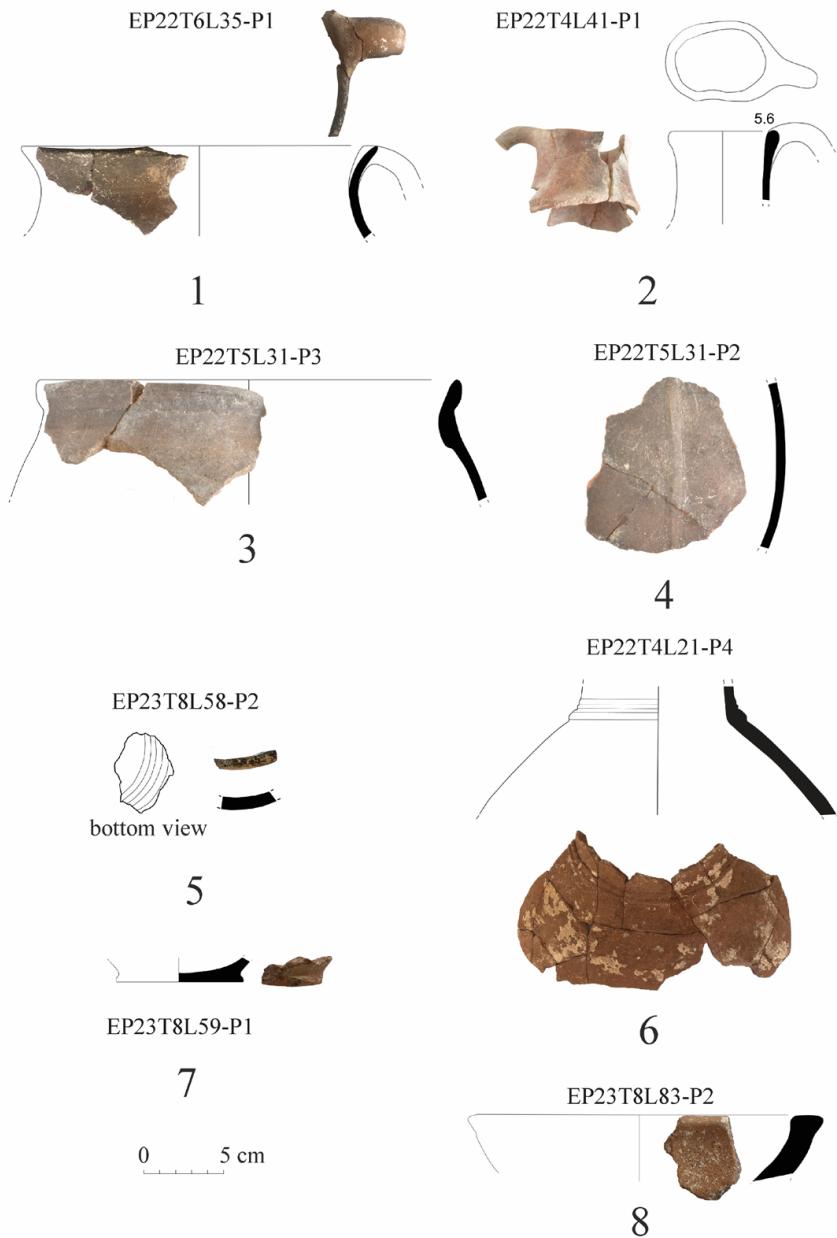
## PLATE 8



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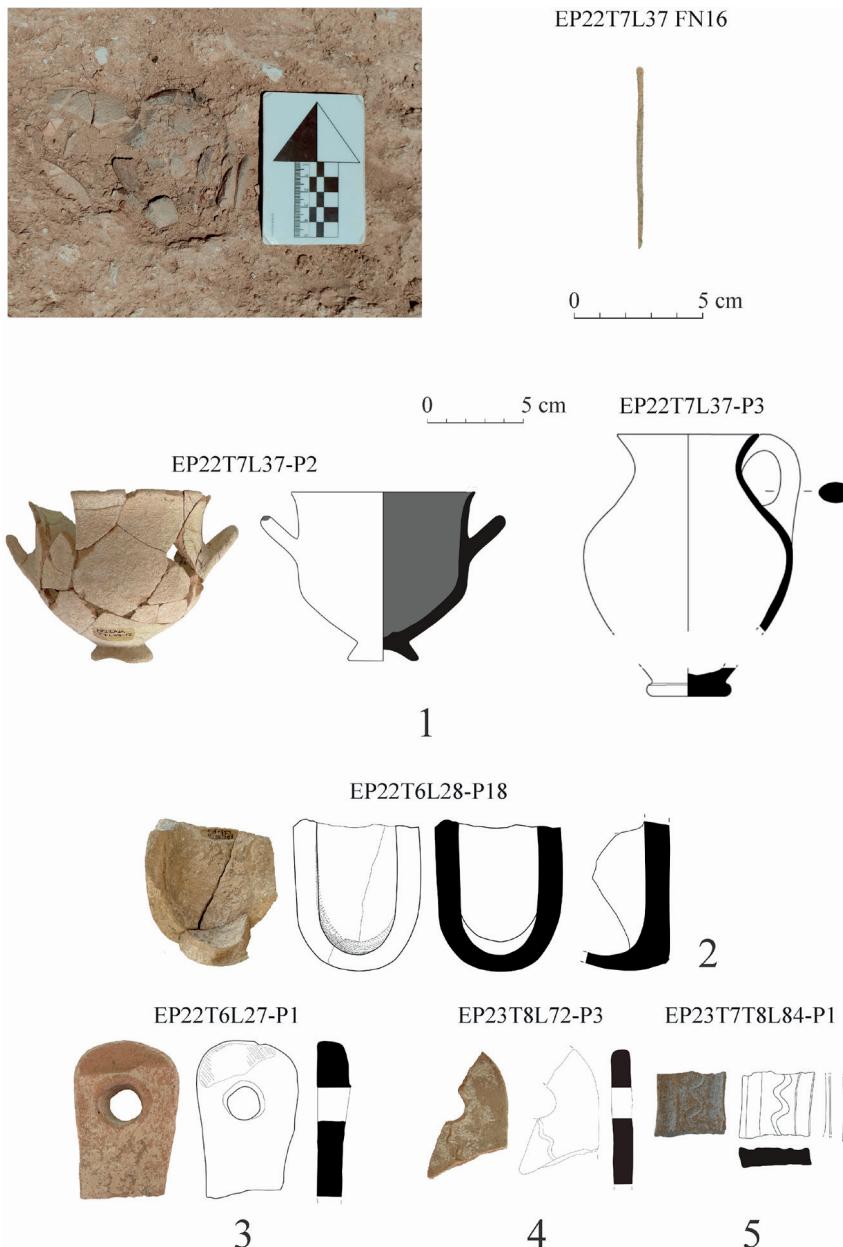
Pl. 8 – The lower part of a Plain White ware closed vessel in the northwestern corner of Room 104. Photos by L. Gran, pencil drawing by J. Preininger, digitisation by L. Recht

## PLATE 9



**Pl. 9** – Selected Cooking (CP) and Coarse (CW) ware sherds: 1 – CP rim and handle; 2 – Rim and handle of handmade CP jug; 3 – CP rim; 4 – CP ridged body sherd; 5 – CP rounded base; 6 – CW neck and shoulder; 7 – CW base; 8 – CW large bowl or tray rim. Photos by M. Wiśniewski and L. Gran, pencil drawings by M. Schutti, M. Yamasaki, K. Zeman-Wiśniewska, T. Welz and C. Sanfilipo, digitisation by M. Yamasaki, L. Recht and L. Gran

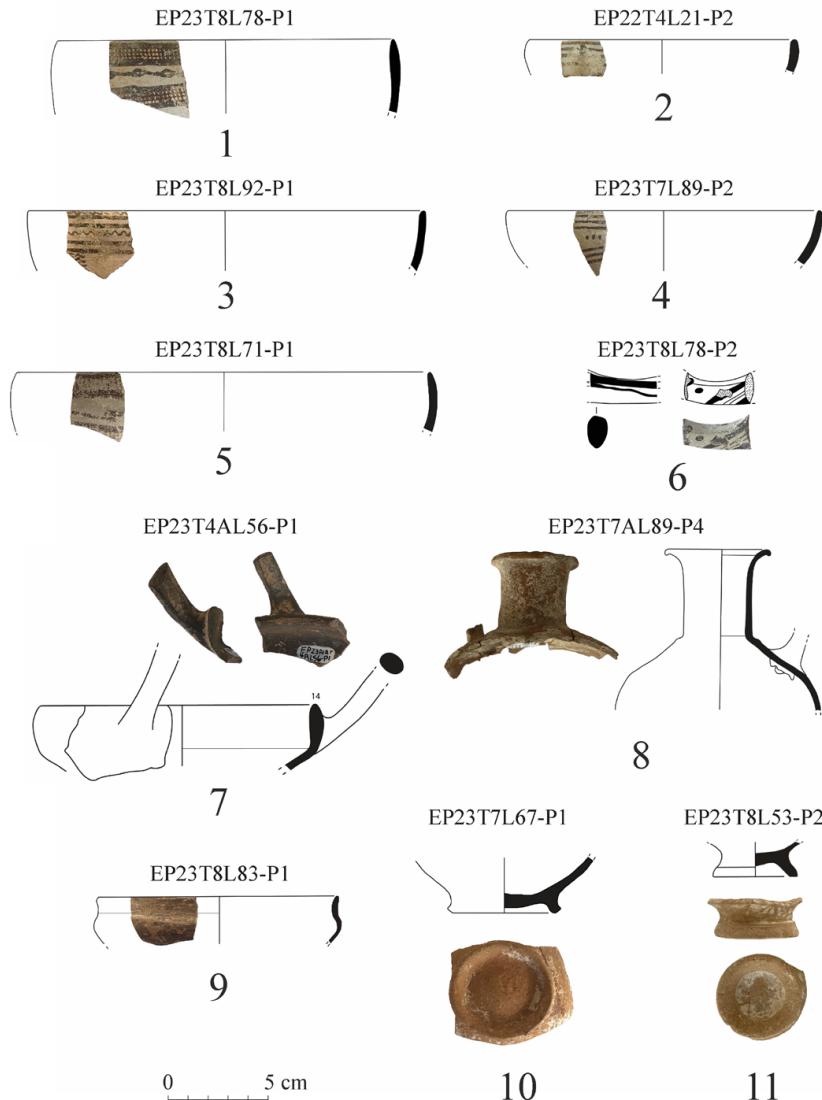
## PLATE 10



**Pl. 10: 1** – Deposition of Aegean-type deep bowl, wheelmade Cooking ware pot and bronze needle in Trench 7 corridor. Photos by L. Gran, pencil drawings by L. Mazzotta and A. Say-Otun, digitisation by L. Recht

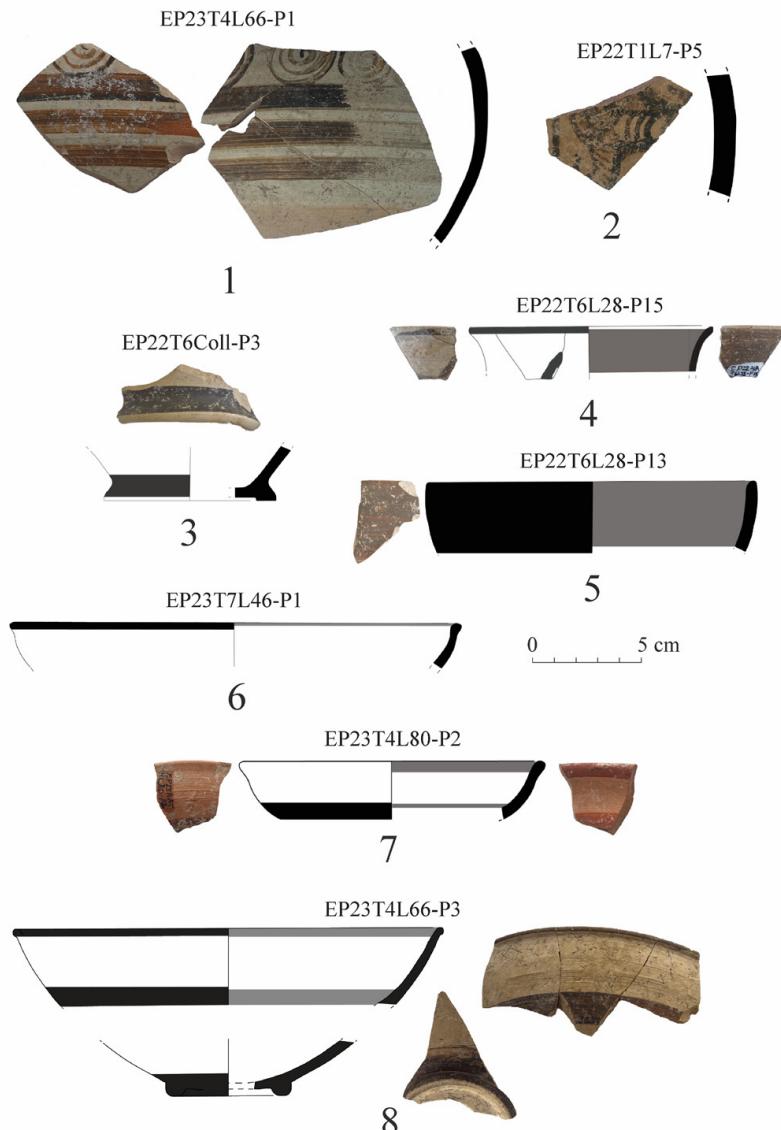
**Pl. 10: 2-5** – Selected wall bracket sherds. Photos by L. Gran, pencil drawings by M. Yamasaki, K. Zeman-Wiśniewska and J. Preininger, digitisation by M. Yamasaki, L. Gran and L. Recht

## PLATE 11



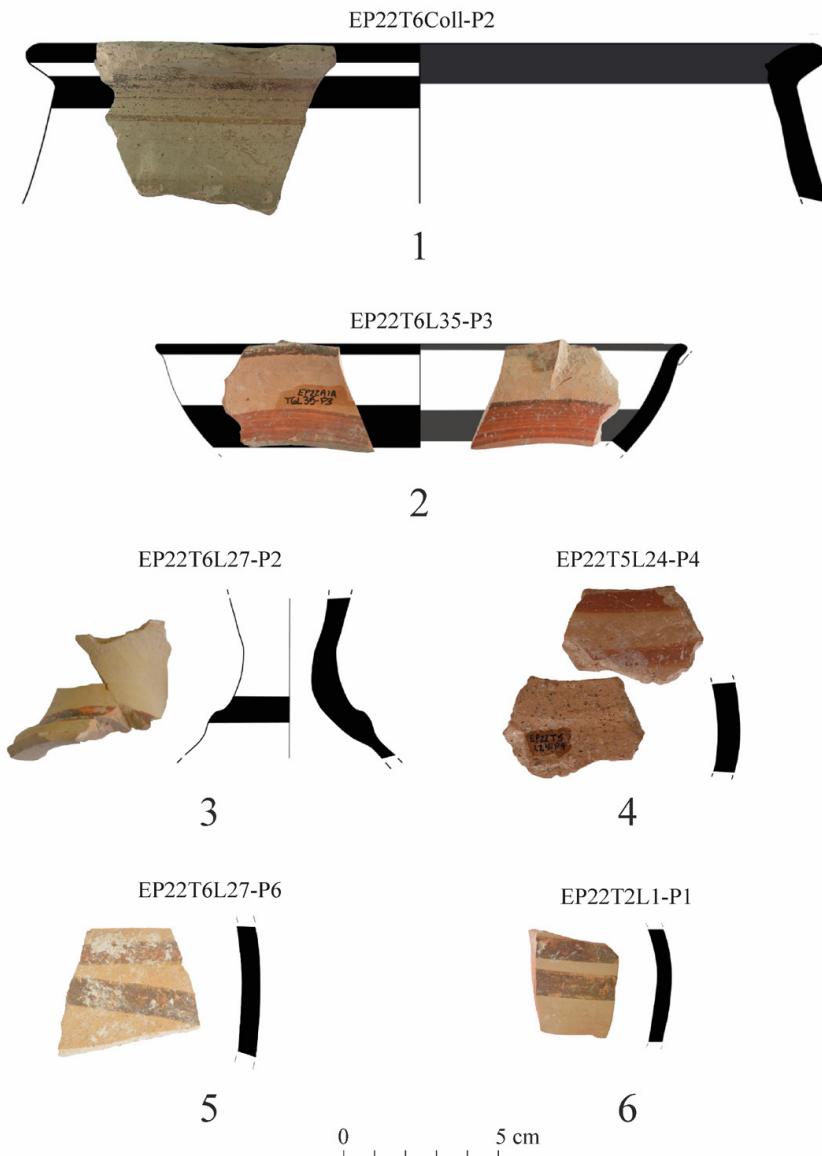
Pl. 11 – Selected White Slip (WS) ware (1-6) and Base Ring ware (7-11) sherds: 1-2 – WS II bowl rims; 3 – WS IIA bowl rim; 4 – WS I bowl rim; 5 – WS II bowl rim; 6 – WS II wishbone handle; 7 – carinated bowl rim and wishbone handle; 8 – top portion of jug; 9 – carinated bowl rim; 10-11 – jug ring bases. Photos by M. Wiśniewski and L. Gran, pencil drawings by J. Preininger, K. Zeman-Wiśniewska, A. Say-Otun, M. Schutti and T. Welz, digitisation by L. Recht, M. Schutti and L. Gran

## PLATE 12



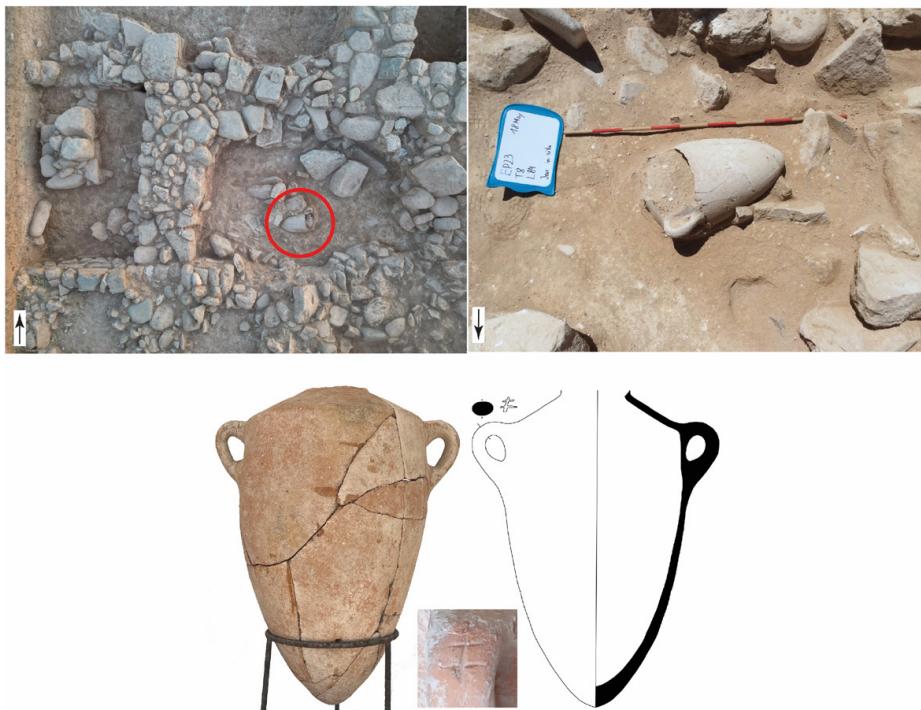
Pl. 12 – Selected Aegean-type and White Painted Wheelmade ware sherds: 1 – closed vessel body sherd; 2 – krater body sherd; 3 – closed vessel base; 4 – deep bowl rim; 5 – bowl rim; 6–7 – shallow bowl rims; 8 – shallow bowl. Photos by M. Wiśniewski and L. Gran, pencil drawings by M. Yamasaki, K. Zeman-Wiśniewska and J. Preininger, digitisation by M. Schutti, L. Gran and L. Recht

## PLATE 13



Pl. 13 – Selected Aegean ware imports: 1 – ring-based krater rim; 2 – shallow bowl rim and handle scar; 3 – false spout of stirrup jar; 4–5 – Minoan closed vessels body sherds; 6 – Mycenaean closed vessel body sherd. Photos by M. Wiśniewski and L. Gran, pencil drawings by K. Zeman-Wiśniewska, digitisation by M. Yamasaki, L. Gran and L. Recht

## PLATE 14



EP23T8L84-P2

Pl. 14 – Levantine storage/transport jar with potmark on one handle. Photos by L. Recht and L. Gran, pencil drawing by M. Yamasaki, digitisation by L. Recht