

A CHALCOLITHIC BURIAL CAVE AT ET-ṬAIYIBA

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A cave containing ancient artifacts (Fig. 1; map ref. NIG 2005/6855; OIG 1505/1855) was discovered in the grounds of the az-Zahara School at Et-Ṭaiyiba in March 1989.¹ A salvage excavation was immediately launched by the staff of the Central District of the IAA and remains of pottery ossuaries typical of the Chalcolithic period were uncovered.² Similar caves have been excavated in Israel (cf. van den Brink 1998) from Peqī'in in the Upper Galilee (Gal, Smithline and Shalem 1997) to Kissufim Road in the south (Goren and Fabian 2002). The excavations at Et-Ṭaiyiba revealed that looters had intensively overturned the soil accumulated in the cave while looking for

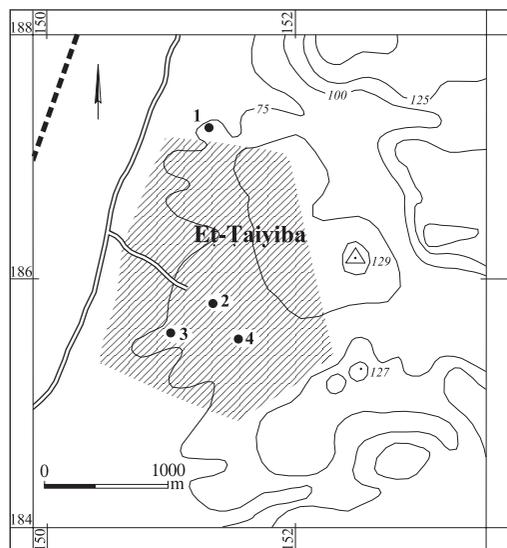
intact vessels, leaving behind a chaos of broken pieces. The contents of the cave were sifted and several ossuaries and offering vessels were restored from the fragments.

THE CAVE

The cave, quarried into a soft bed of Eocene chalk laid between harder beds, formed an irregular oval, measuring c. 4.5 × 6.0 m, and up to 1.5 m high. A solid pillar-like section had been left in the southern side of the cave. Apparently, the cave's opening had been in the northern side, in the section destroyed by a modern cesspit (Plan 1). The cave's margins were slightly higher than the floor, forming 'elevated benches', either left deliberately or due to harder chalk.

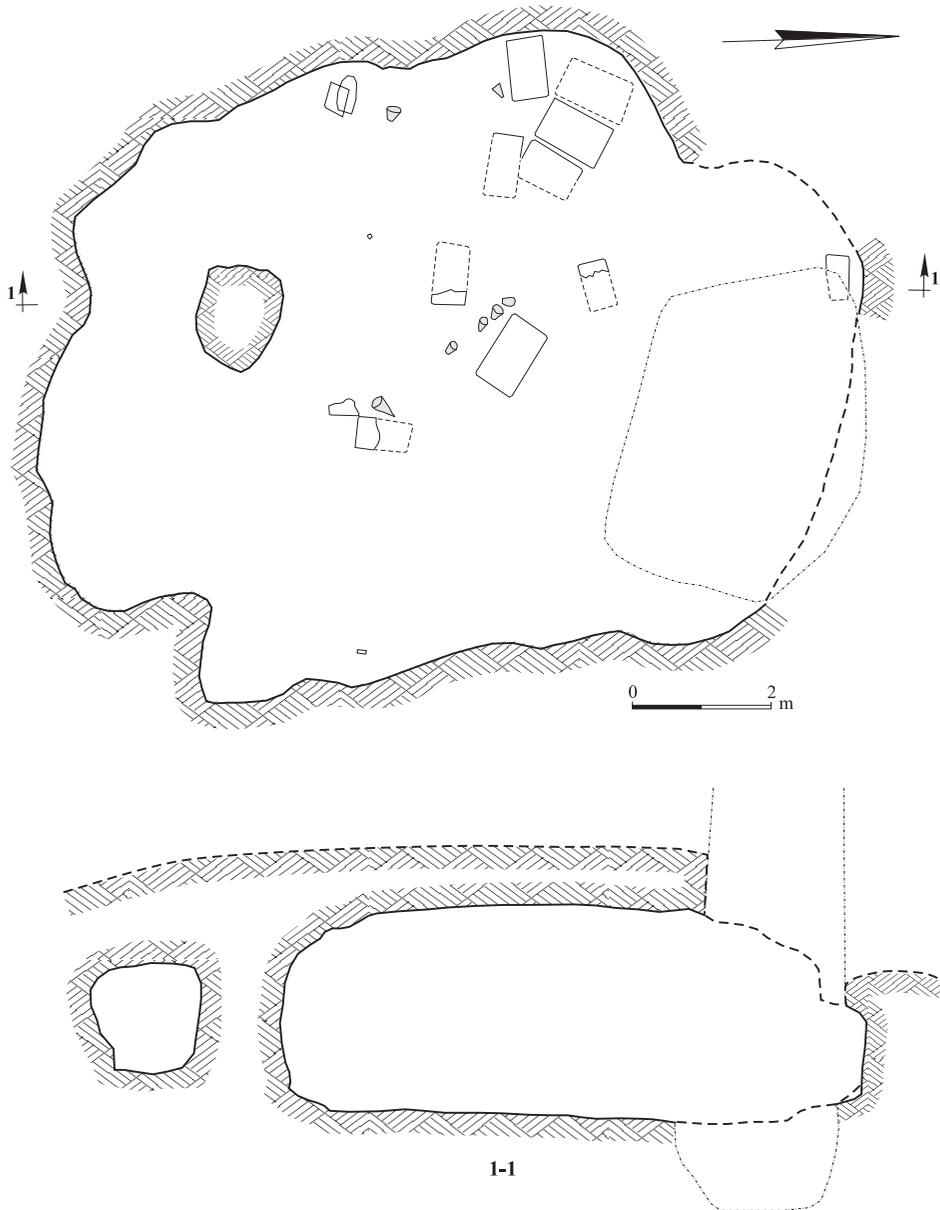
Only very limited patches—on the cave's bedrock floor and along its northwestern side—escaped the looters. The arrangement of ossuaries and other finds in the undisturbed patches suggests that the ossuaries had been densely laid on the benches and on the floor (see Plan 1). Some of the rectangular ossuaries (see below for details) had been placed on flat stone slabs, probably to produce a solid, level surface to avoid their breaking.³ Several ossuaries had been removed, some already broken, during the cave's use in the Chalcolithic period. Funerary gifts, all ceramic vessels, were uncovered in direct and indirect association with the ossuaries.⁴ The human bones in the ossuaries were entirely lost, due to the looting and the local conditions; only a few human teeth of adults were found in the sifted material.

No remains of a Chalcolithic settlement have yet been surveyed at Et-Ṭaiyiba (Gophna and



- 1. Iron Age burial cave
- 2. Roman period burial cave
- 3. Chalcolithic burial cave
- 4. EB I pit

Fig. 1. Map of Et-Ṭaiyiba and the location of sites in the vicinity.



Plan 1. Plan and section of the cave.

Porath 1972:221, No. 123). A small Chalcolithic settlement was excavated at Kh. Jallameh (Porath 1978), about 1 km southwest of the burial cave, and a much larger one at Far'un (Porath, n.d.) about 2 km north of our site (Fig. 2). Few Chalcolithic sherds were exposed at Tel Shevaḥ,

2 km west of Eṭ-Ṭaiyiba (Yannai 2000). It seems that the people buried in the cave inhabited one of the Chalcolithic sites on the chalk hills above the eastern margin of the Sharon, similar to those at Tel Esur (Yannai 1997), Kh. Bassa (Gophna 1974:71, No. 6) and Meṣer (Dothan 1957; 1959).

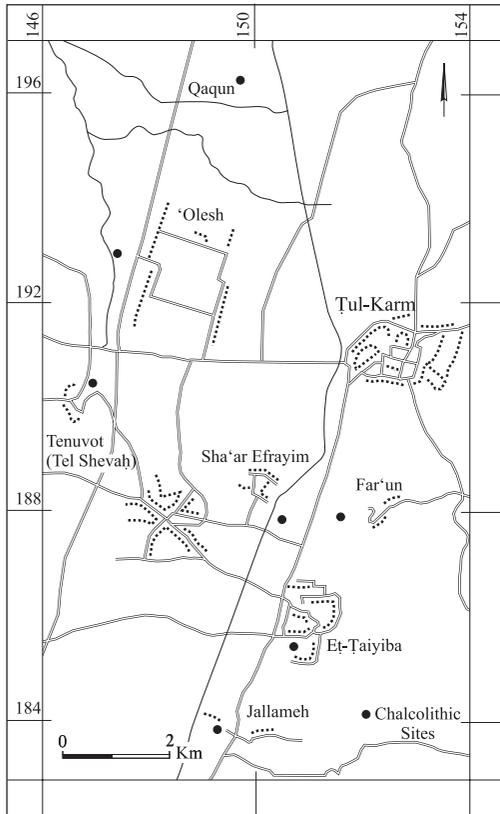


Fig. 2. Regional map of the Et-Ṭaiyiba area and its Chalcolithic sites.

THE FINDS

Ossuaries and Burial Vessels

Twenty-two complete ossuaries, fragments of at least another five that could not be completely restored, five burial kraters, two ossuary jars and four vessels that perhaps were also used as bone receptacles were recovered. In sum, a minimum of 38 ossuaries were present in the cave.

The great variety of shapes and the many differences between the ossuaries make it very difficult to divide them into defined groups. Our division differentiates between open ('box-shaped') and closed ('house-shaped') rectangular ossuaries on the one hand, and ossuary jars and kraters on the other. The latter in our opinion were used as burial receptacles in the cave even though the kraters also have parallels in settlement contexts.

Open, Box-Shaped Ossuaries

No. 1. Reg. No. 90-1130

Fabric: Very bright yellow clay with white temper.

Decoration: Horizontal red stripes 3 cm wide on the sides and a vertical red stripe in each corner.

No. 2. Reg. No. 90-1148

Fabric: Bright yellowish clay with white temper.

Decoration: Three horizontal red stripes 5 cm wide around the body, a red stripe on the rim and a wavy red stripe between the upper and middle stripes around the body.

No. 3. Reg. No. 90-1153

Fabric: Whitish yellow clay, with white temper.

Decoration: Pink slip. Four horizontal red stripes 3 cm wide, a stripe on the rim and vertical stripes on the corners.

No. 4. Reg. No. 90-1144

Fabric: Orange and dark pink fabric with a gray core and white temper.

Decoration: Vertical and horizontal red stripes 1.5 cm wide forming a net-like pattern on the body of the box. Red zigzag stripe painted on the rim. Six tubular handles are attached midway up the sides of the body—two on each side and one at each end.

Closed, House-Shaped Ossuaries

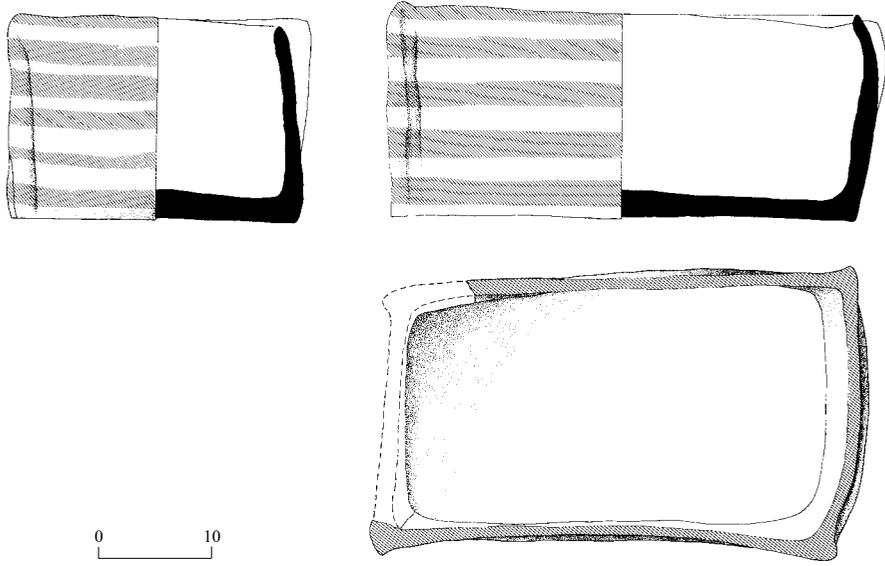
There are differences in the design of the facade of the ossuaries, in body proportions and structure, and in the decoration of the body and facade, as well as considerable variations in the preparation of the fabric from which the ossuaries are made.

No. 5. Reg. No. 90-1151

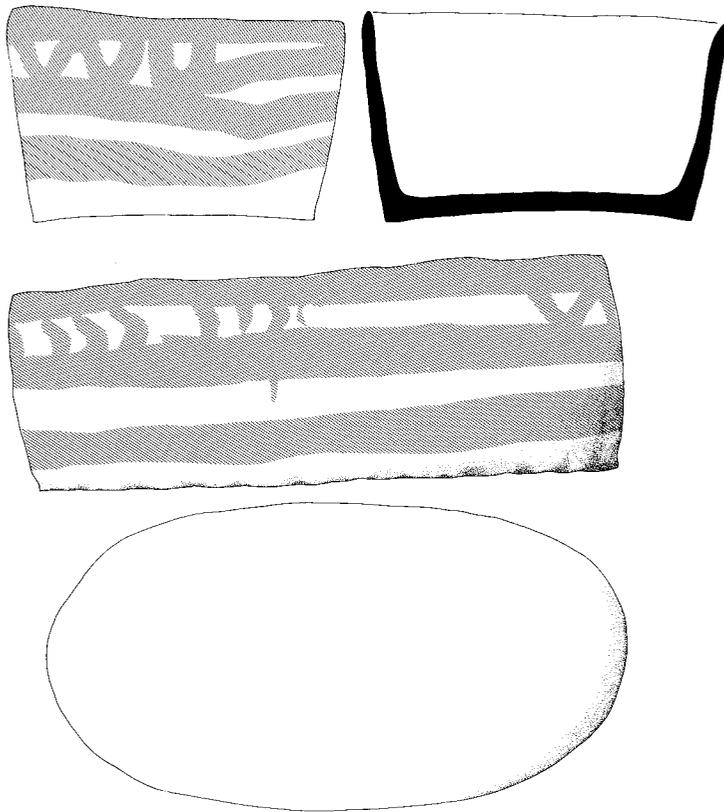
Fabric: Orange clay with a light gray core and a large quantity of small white temper.

Body Design: Rounded, barrel-shaped body.

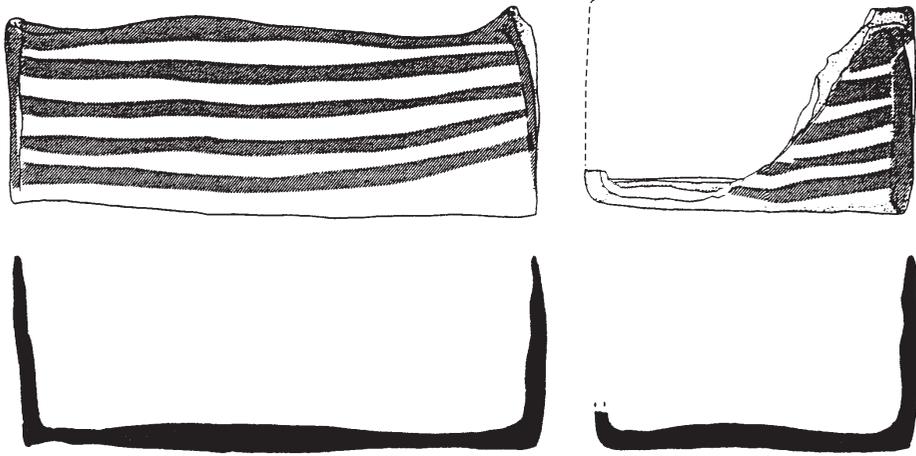
Back: Straight on the bottom and curved toward the top.



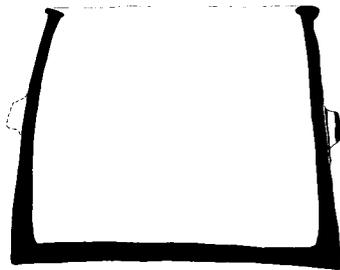
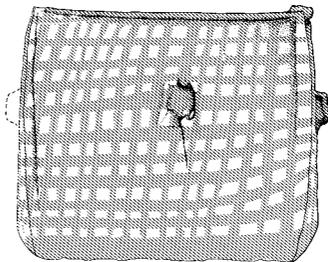
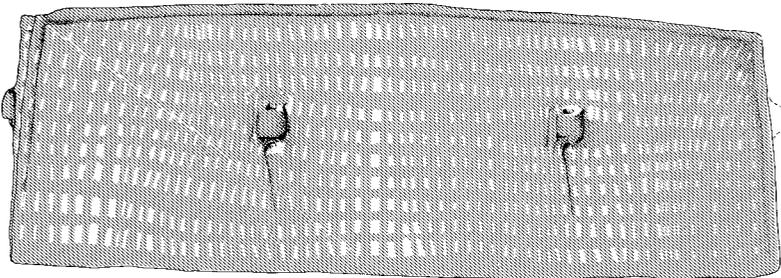
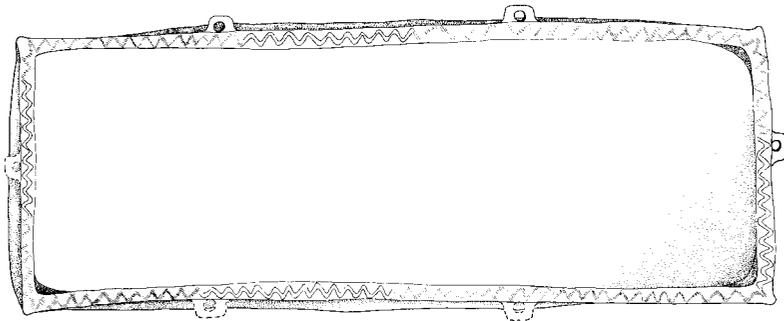
Ossuary No. 1.



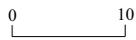
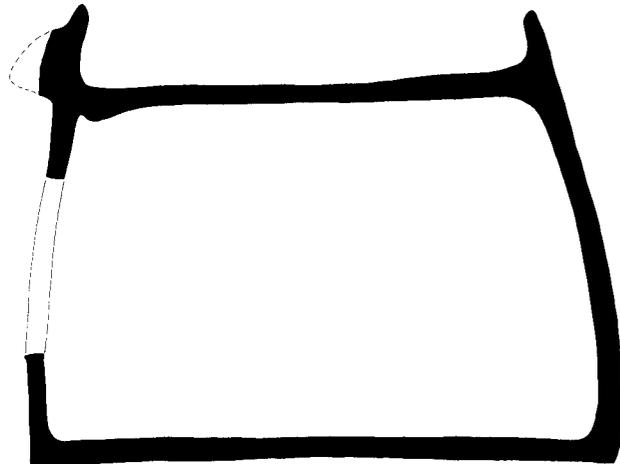
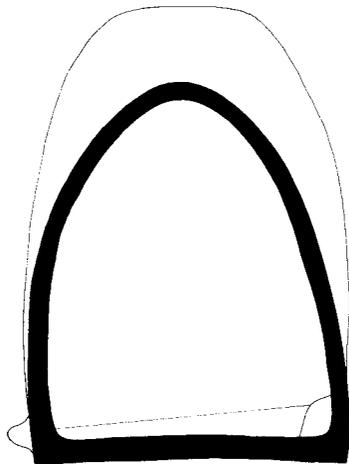
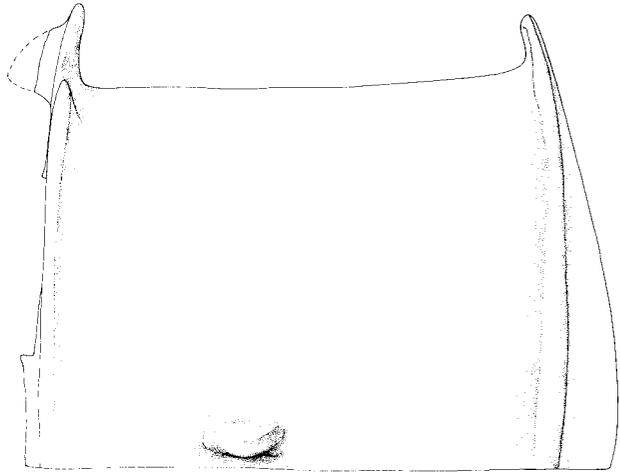
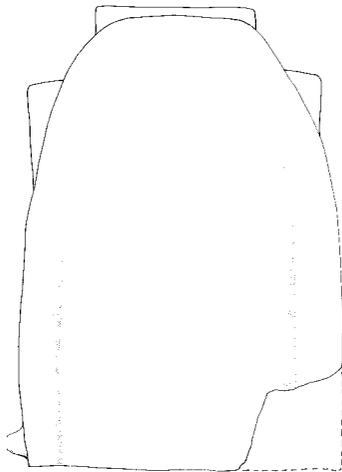
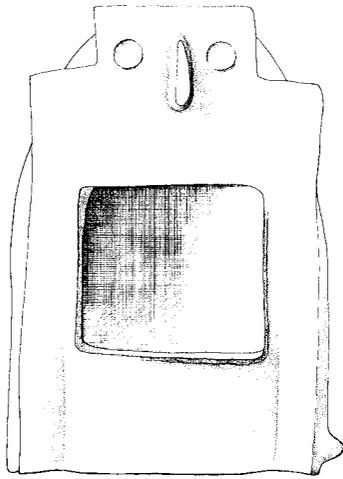
Ossuary No. 2.



Ossuary No. 3.



Ossuary No. 4.



Ossuary No. 5.

Facade: Rectangular, the upper portion of the facade is a raised rectangle with two impressed eyes and a molded nose.

No. 6. Reg. No. 1633-4

Fabric: White clay with a light gray core and a large quantity of small white temper.

Body Design: Rounded body; the roof is tapered and has no ridge. The front is higher than the back.

Facade: The upper panel is trapezoidal. The nose is in the middle of the facade. Four knobs, in the shape of pegs, are attached in pairs to the corners formed between the front of the ossuary and the panel.

No. 7. Reg. No. 90-1129

Fabric: Light to dark yellow clay with a light gray core and a large amount of gray and white temper.

Body Design: Flat on the bottom; the roof is tapered and has a ridge.

Body Decoration: Six red-painted horizontal stripes, each 3 cm wide, on the lower two-thirds of the body. Above these are four red-painted arches topped by three additional red stripes that extend to the top of the roof. Both sides and the back of the ossuary are treated with identical decoration.

Facade: Horizontal lug handles are attached above and below the ossuary's opening.

Cover: The cover is fitted to match the opening and has a horizontal lug handle attached to its center in alignment with those on the facade to facilitate closure of the cover.

No. 8. Reg. No. 90-1135

Fabric: Light yellow to almost white clay with a dark gray, almost black core. The clay contains a large quantity of large white temper.

Body Design: Flat on the bottom and a tapered roof.

Body Decoration: Six red-painted horizontal stripes, each 3 cm wide, and four painted arches above them. This decoration covers both sides of the ossuary and its back. The entire roof is red slipped.

Facade: A horizontal lug handle is situated above and below the trapezoidal opening. The top of the ossuary's facade is damaged and its original shape, therefore, remains unknown.

Cover: The cover is fitted to match the ossuary's opening and has a horizontal lug handle attached to its center in alignment with those above and below it.

No. 9. Reg. No. 90-1142

Fabric: Dark pink fabric with a gray core and white temper.

Body Design: Flat on the bottom with a tapered roof. The ossuary stands atop four cylindrical feet, each 13 cm high and 9 cm in diameter.

Body Decoration: Seven red-painted horizontal stripes, each 3 cm wide, topped with three red-painted arches. Three additional painted stripes extend from above the arches to the ridge of the roof. This decoration covers both sides of the ossuary and its back.

Facade: Horizontal stripes above and below the opening and a vertical red stripe on either side. Above the opening, the front of the ossuary is trapezoidal with a molded nose and nostrils encompassed in a red-painted circle. Beneath the nose is a horizontal lug handle for securing the cover.

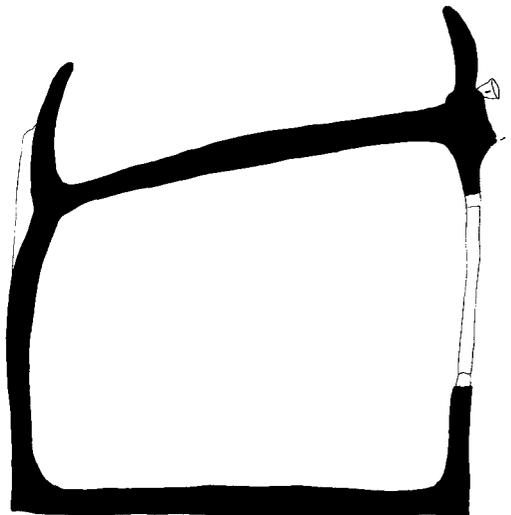
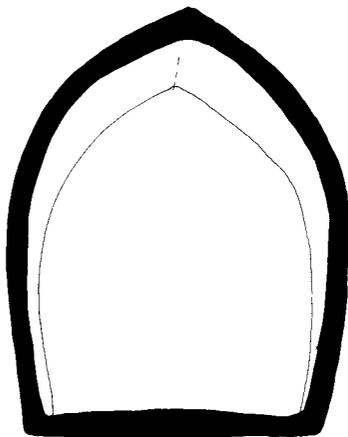
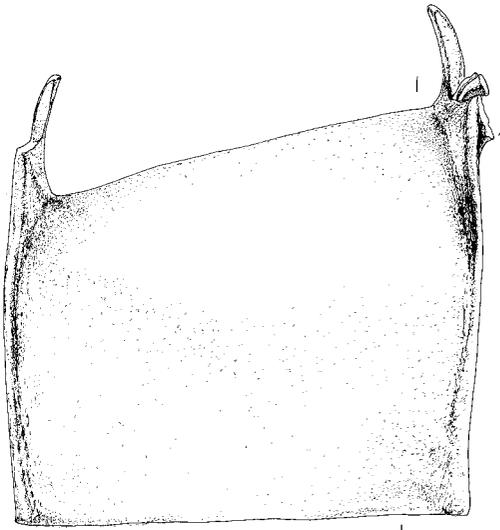
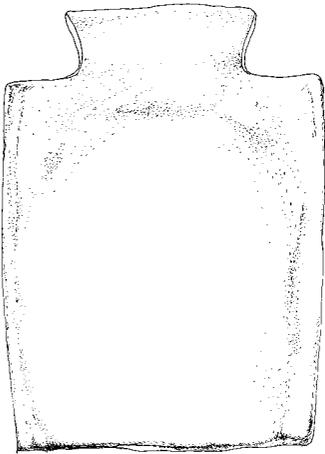
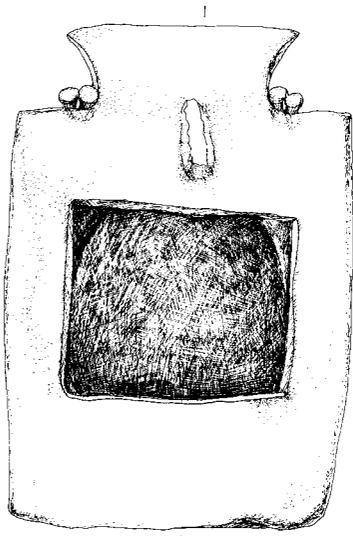
No. 10. Reg. No. 90-1141

Fabric: Light pink to light orange clay with a dark gray core. The clay contains a large amount of brown, gray and red temper.

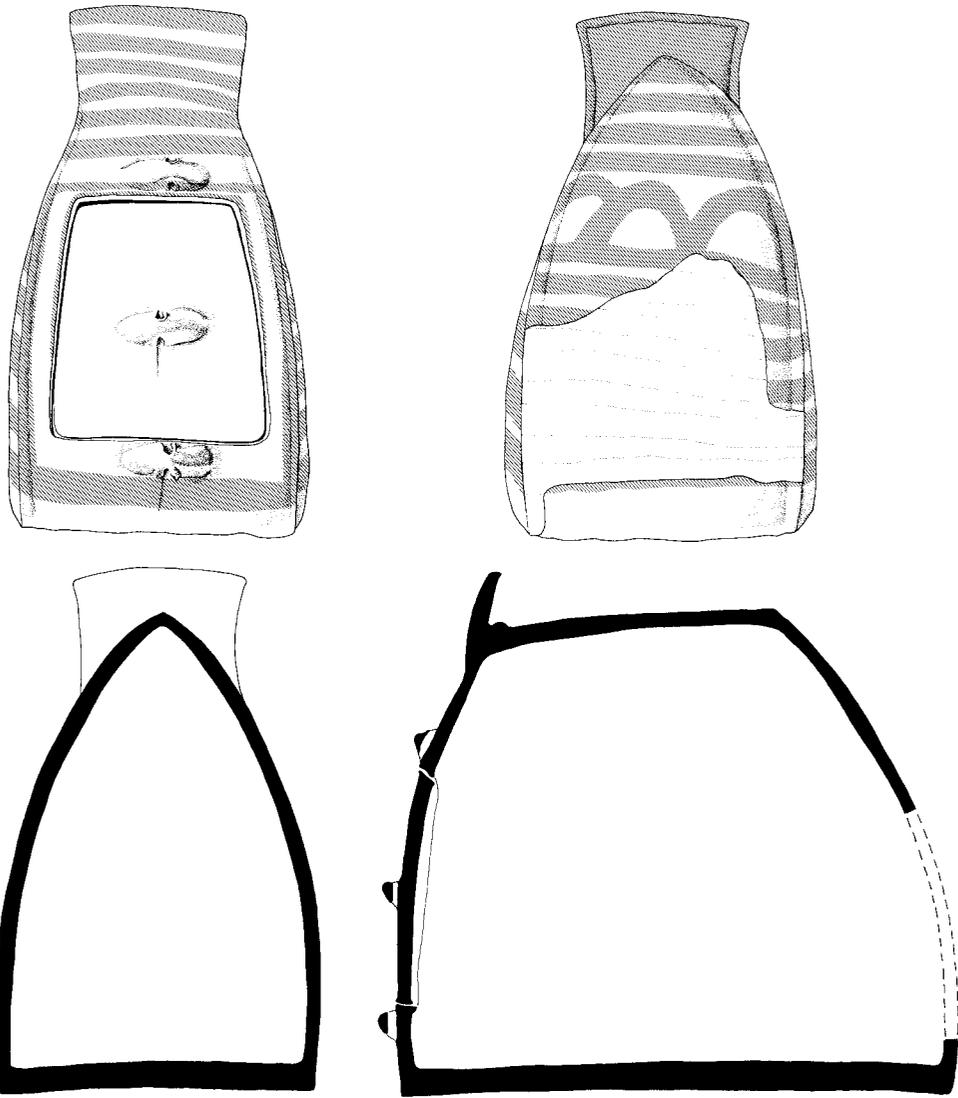
Body Design: Flat on the bottom with a tapered, rounded roof and ridge.

Body Decoration: Nine red-painted horizontal stripes, each 2.5 cm wide, cover 80% of the body surface except for the roof, which is left plain.

Facade: A vertical lug handle is attached to either side of the opening. The horizontal red-painted stripes on the sides of the ossuary extend around to its front. The partial remains of a small panel are situated above the opening. The panel is damaged and its original shape is unknown.

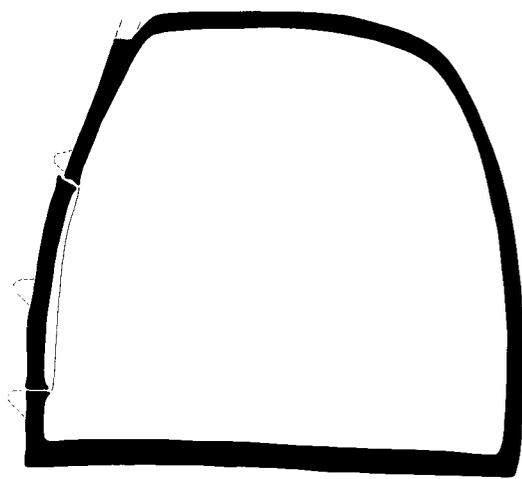
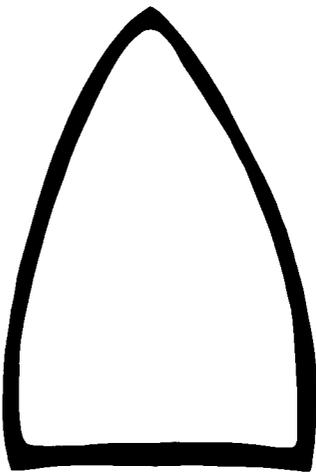
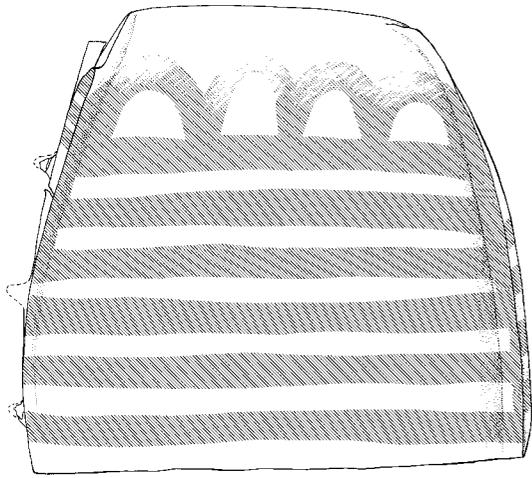
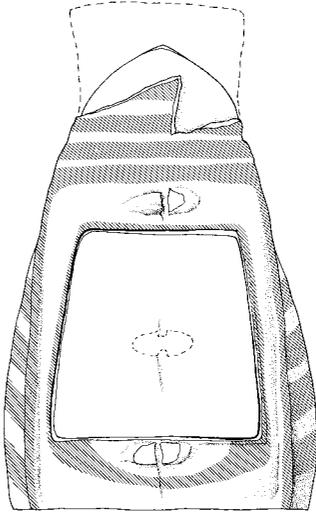
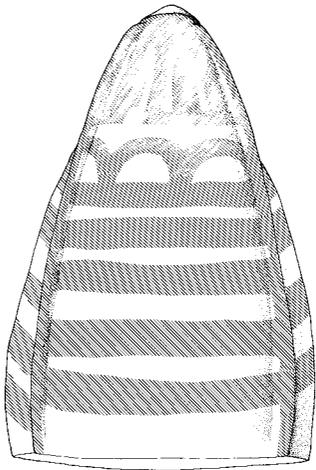


Ossuary No. 6.

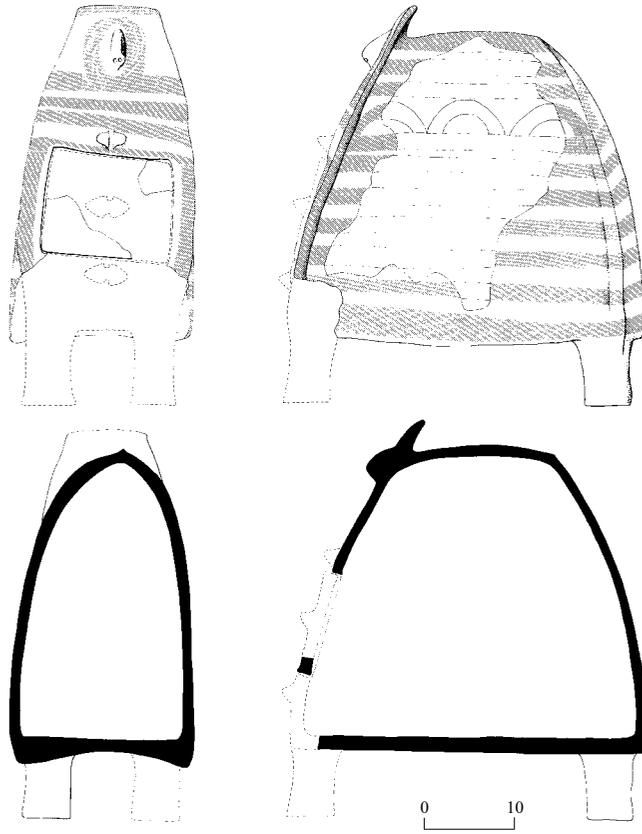


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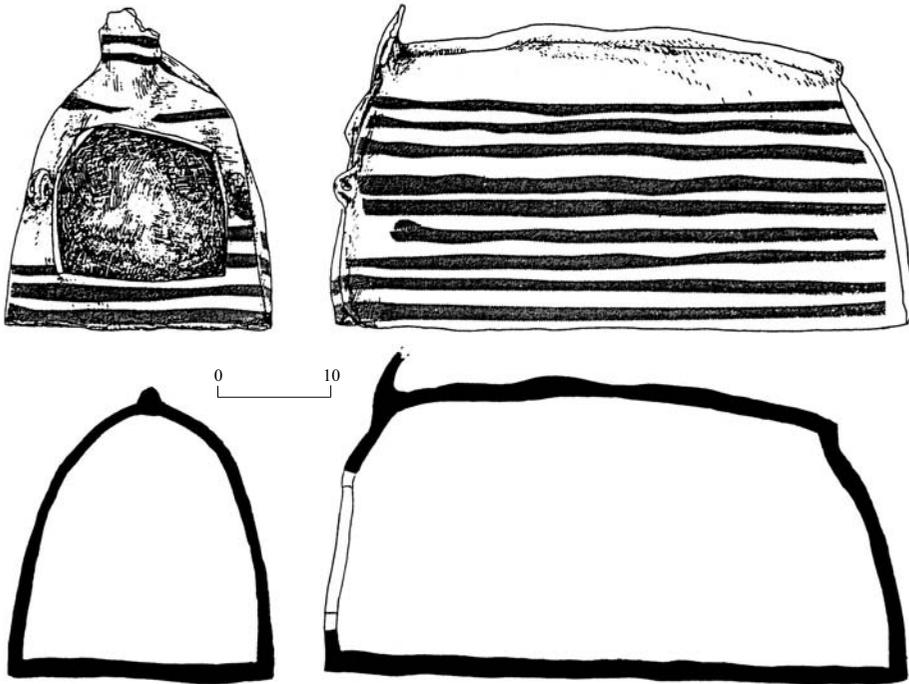
Ossuary No. 7.



Ossuary No. 8.



Ossuary No. 9.



Ossuary No. 10.

No. 11. Reg. No. 90-1139

Fabric: Yellow to light orange clay with a light gray core. The clay contains a large amount of white temper. The quantity of temper in this ossuary's clay is far greater and denser than that in the other ossuaries.

Body Design: Flat on the bottom with a rounded roof that does not have a ridge.

Body Decoration: A horizontal red stripe, 3 cm wide, midway up the side of the ossuary. Two vertical red stripes, 3 cm wide, on the facade and back of the body.

Facade: Two vertical lug handles flank the opening of the ossuary. The ossuary is covered with a red slip from the bottom of the opening to the base, with a red stripe around the opening. The upper panel above the opening is damaged; hence, its original shape is unknown. There is a molded and painted nose in the center of the panel.

No. 12. Reg. No. 90-1136

Fabric: Uniform yellowish clay with a very light gray core and material, and a small amount of gray and brown temper.

Body Design: Flat bottom; tapered roof and no ridge.

Body Decoration: The ossuary is red slipped on all of its sides and facade.

Facade: The partial remains of an upper panel whose complete shape is unknown are located above the opening. There are two small square windows on the upper portion of both sides of the ossuary.

No. 13. Reg. No. 90-1145

Fabric: Light gray to dark orange clay with a dark gray core and a large amount of gray and white temper.

Body Design: Barrel-shaped body, flat bottom, tapered roof. There is a ridge around the back where it joins the body of the ossuary.

Body Decoration: Horizontal and vertical red-painted stripes, 3 cm wide, cover the entire body and back of the ossuary.

Facade: The horizontal painted stripes on the body continue around beneath the opening

of the ossuary. The opening is delineated with a red-painted stripe. Above the opening is a rectangular upper panel with a smaller rectangle above it. In the center of the upper panel are a nose and a pair of eyes that are molded and decorated with paint to include pupils and eyelashes. The upper panel is surrounded by a red-painted stripe. Four clay peg-shaped knobs are attached to the top of the upper panel.

No. 14. Reg. No. 90-1146

Fabric: Very dark yellow to light brown/orange clay with a dark gray core and a small amount of white and gray temper.

Body Design: Flat bottom; tapered roof without a ridge. A small window is cut in the back wall of the ossuary.

Body Decoration: Two dark brown/black horizontal stripes, 3 to 5 cm wide, around the lower portion of the body, and three horizontal stripes 1.5 cm wide above them.

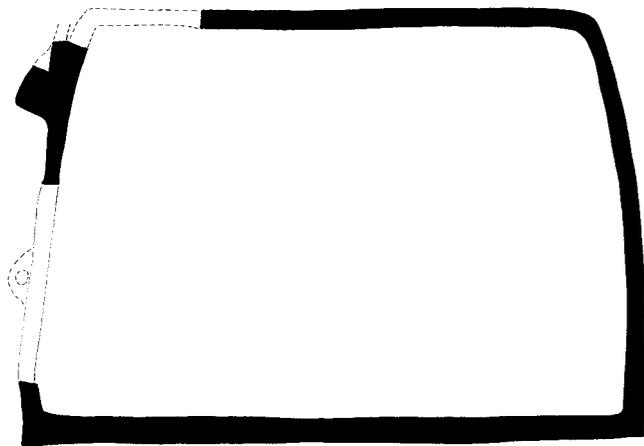
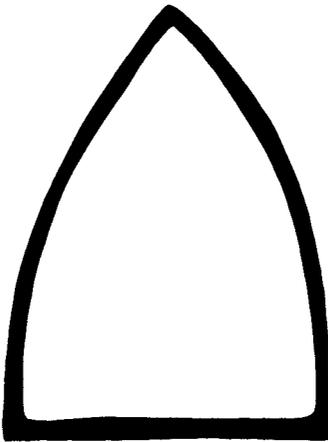
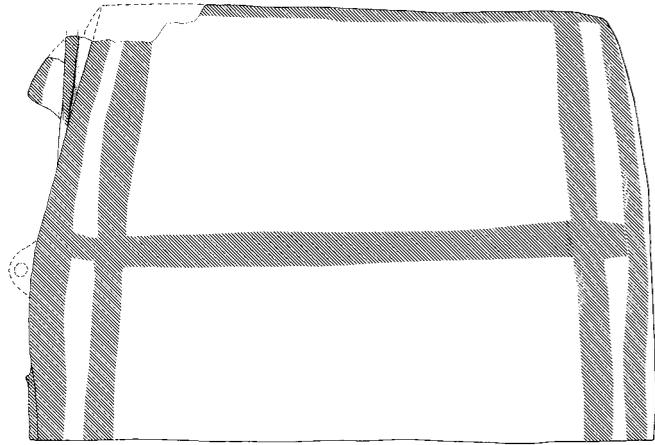
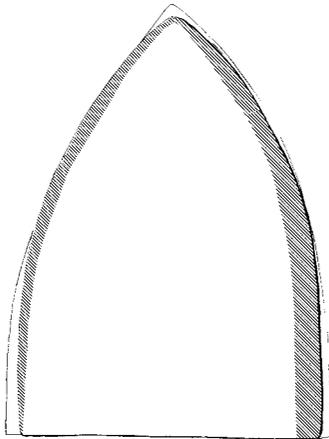
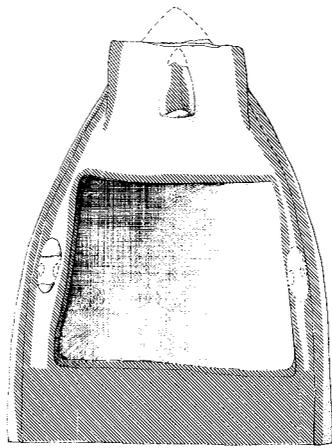
Roof Decoration: The entire surface of the roof is painted with a net pattern of brownish-black stripes 1.5 cm wide.

Back Decoration: The back of the ossuary is decorated with a series of horizontal stripes, each 1.5 cm wide, to a height of 35 cm, above which are vertical stripes 1.5–2.0 cm in width. The entire back of the ossuary is outlined within a black/brown painted border.

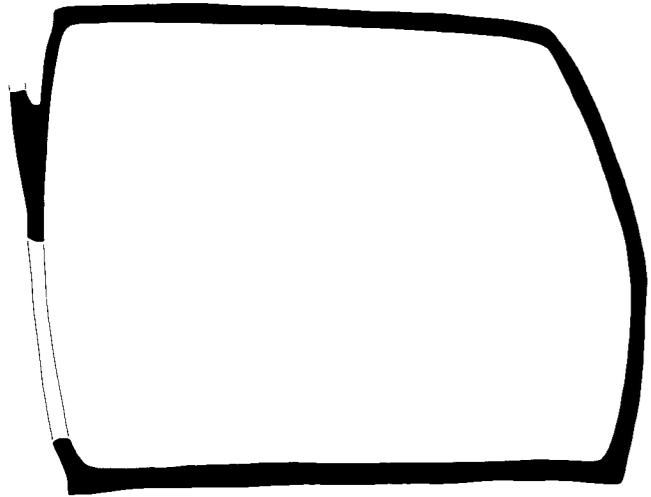
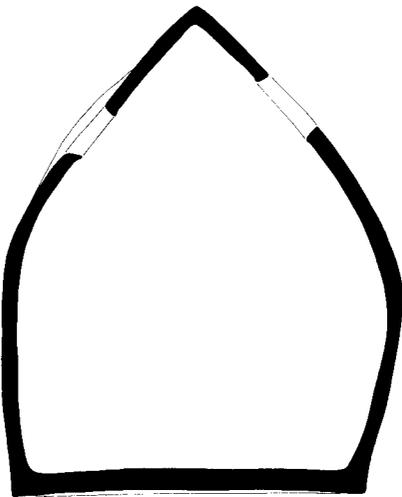
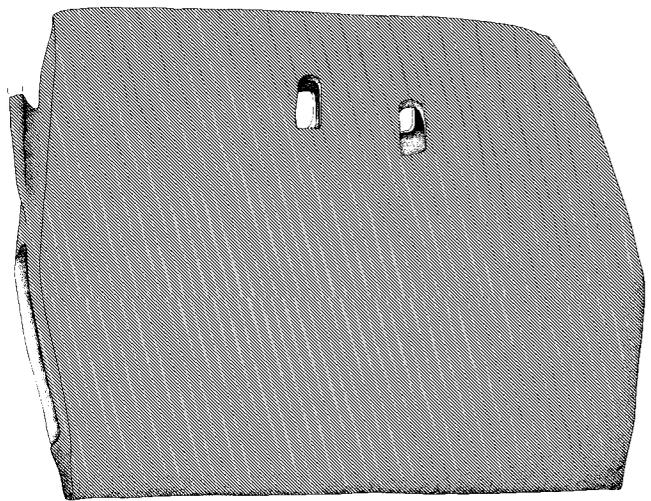
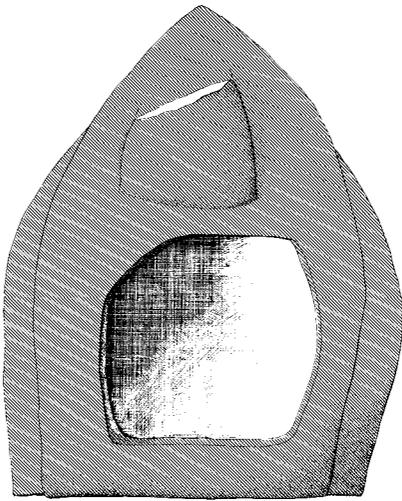
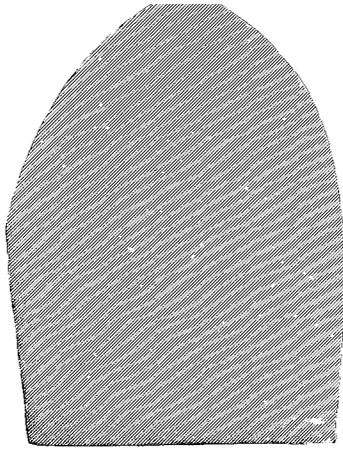
Facade: An upper panel is attached to the ossuary above the opening. Two vertical lug handles flank the opening from both sides.

Facade Decoration: The upper panel is decorated (from bottom to top) with black/brown painted stripes 4.5 cm wide. A band with rhombi, finely drawn from black/brown lines 1 mm wide, is situated above them. Above this band is a row of squares, each 5 mm in size, arranged in a checkerboard pattern.

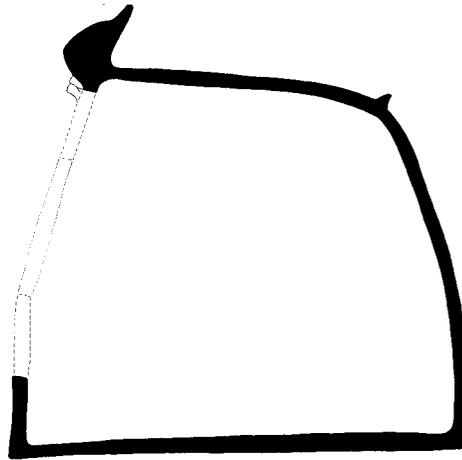
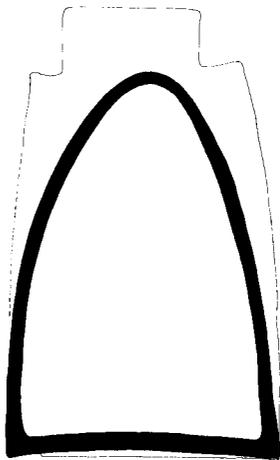
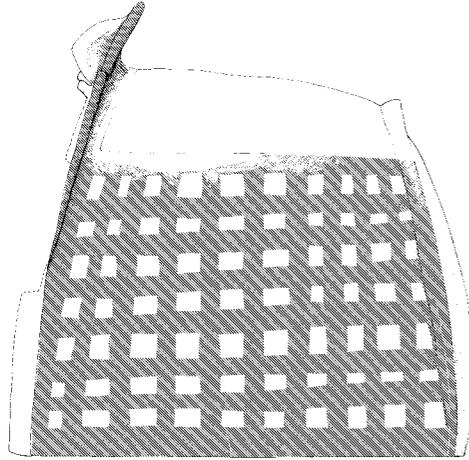
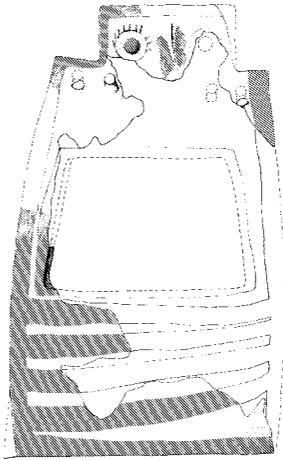
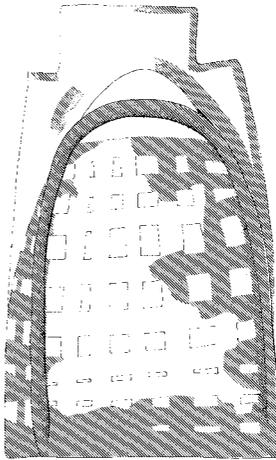
Facial features appear on the panel above the checkerboard pattern. The face is flanked by a 1.5 cm wide vertical stripe that is filled with blackish brown rhombi 1 mm wide. The nose, between the two sets of rhombi, is anchored by a black-painted triangle. A series of lines,



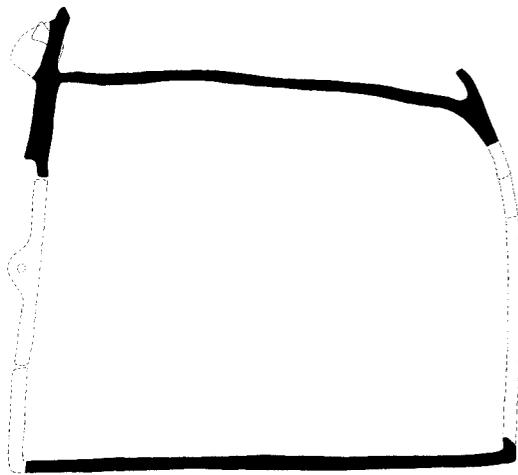
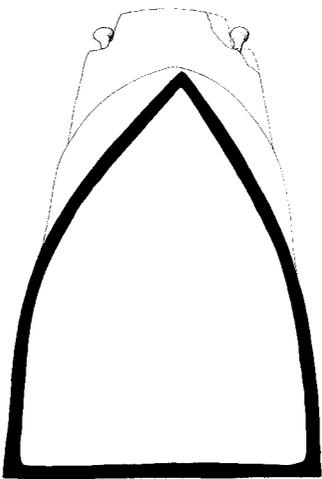
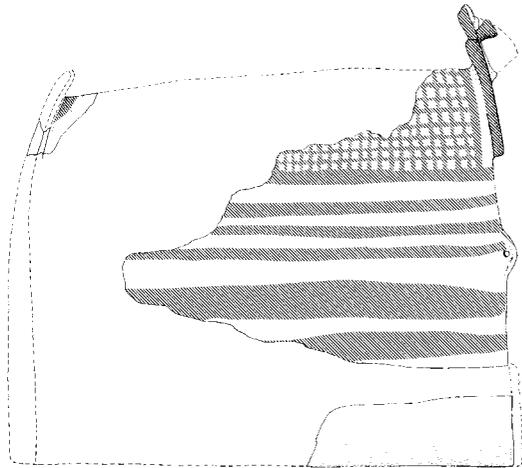
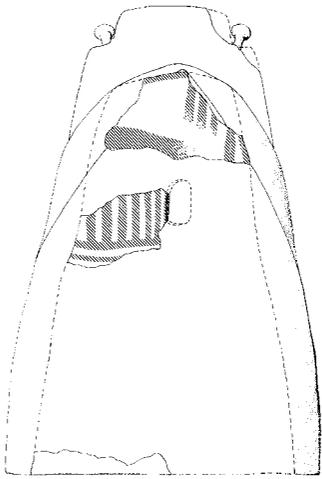
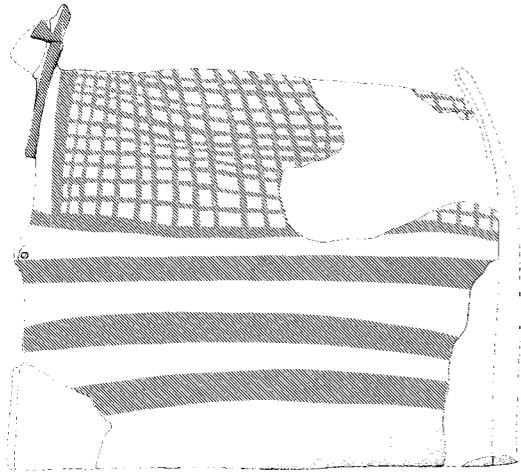
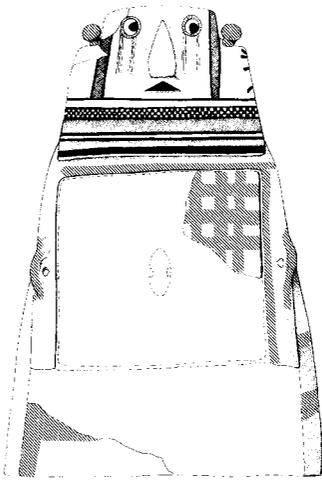
Ossuary No. 11.



Ossuary No. 12.



Ossuary No. 13.



Ossuary No. 14.

extending from the lower part of the triangle, may suggest a mustache.

Two eyes, molded from clay and painted, are situated parallel to each other on either side of the upper part of the nose. Finely drawn lines around the eyes depict the eyelashes. Two circles within the eye portray the eyeball, which is slightly crossed to the right.

A set of four finely drawn lines, each 0.5 mm thick and extending from the side of each eye downward, probably depicts tears.

Two peg-shaped clay knobs are attached on either side of the face to a step especially cut into the frame of the upper panel. The heads of the pegs are painted red.

Cover: Among the lid fragments that were found in the cave, one fragment was definitely identified as the lid of this ossuary. The identification is based on the lid fitting the frame of the opening in the front of the ossuary, as well as the matching colors on the lid and the front of the ossuary. It is decorated with a net pattern consisting of black stripes 1.5 cm in width.

No. 15. Reg. No. 1633-5

Fabric: Dark orange to brown clay with a gray core and orange and pink temper, as well as a few pieces of gray temper.

Body Design: Flat on the bottom with a rounded tapered roof and ridge. Three small windows are cut into the back of the ossuary.

Body Decoration: A red, 8 cm wide, horizontal stripe is painted along the bottom of the ossuary. Three red horizontal stripes, 1 cm wide, adorn the center of the body and two red stripes, 2 cm wide, decorate the seam where the roof is attached to the body of the ossuary. The entire surface of the roof is painted with red vertical stripes 1.5 cm wide.

Back Decoration: A red stripe delineates the entire back of the ossuary.

Facade Decoration: Red horizontal and vertical stripes surround the opening and facade of the ossuary. Two vertical lug handles flank the opening. Red-painted triangles, filled in with

red lines, adorn the edges around the upper part of the front of the ossuary.

A nose is attached to the center of the upper panel and is flanked by two eyes (unmolded) that are drawn in red. The area between the nose and the opening is not decorated uniformly. On the left are three lines forming a sort of moustache and to the right are two triangles filled with finely drawn lines similar to the border of triangles surrounding the entire upper part of the front of the ossuary.

No. 16. Reg. No. 90-1155

Fabric: Dark orange to brown clay (very similar to the clay in Ossuary No. 15) with a light gray core and a large amount of white, gray and brown temper.

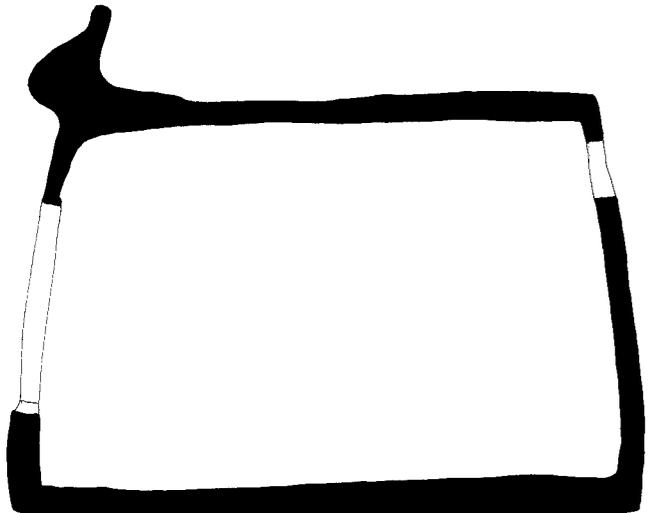
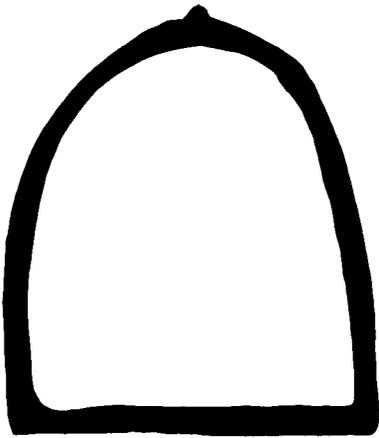
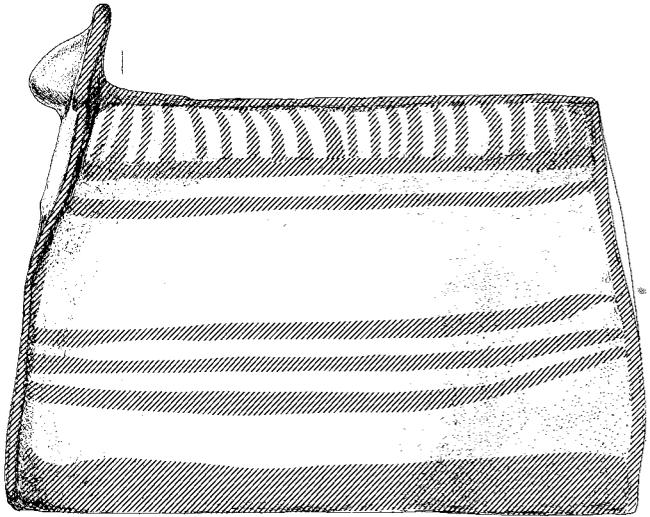
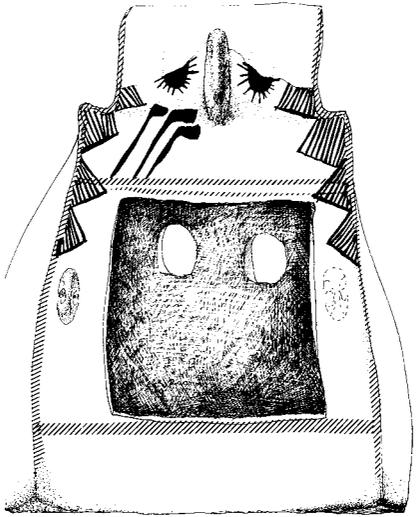
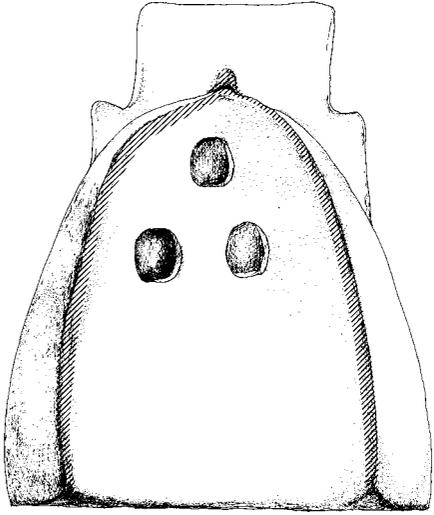
Body Design: Flat on the bottom. The roof is tapered and has a ridge.

Body Decoration: Three red horizontal stripes, 10 cm wide, adorn the lower left side of the ossuary. Above these are red vertical stripes, each 1.5 cm wide, which cover the entire left side of the ossuary. The right side is decorated with six horizontal stripes 0.9 cm wide and a series of red triangles above them.

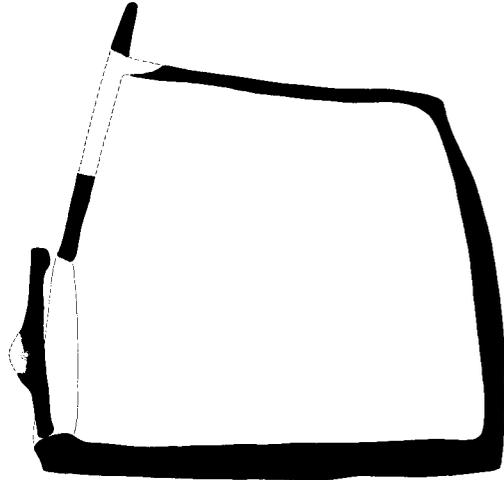
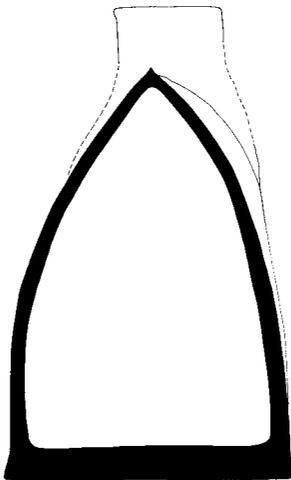
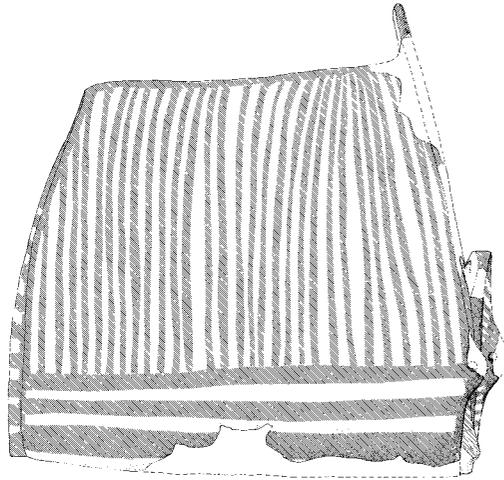
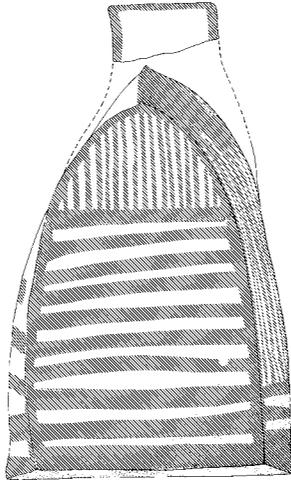
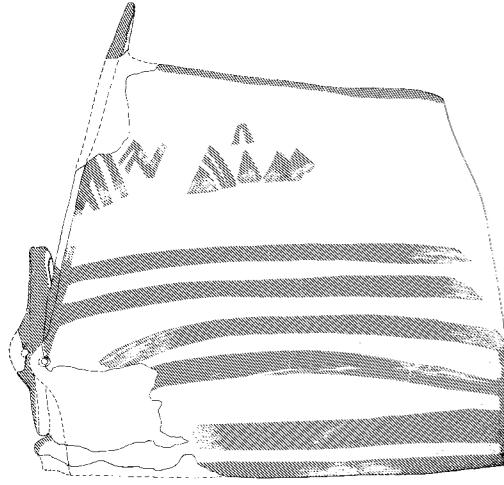
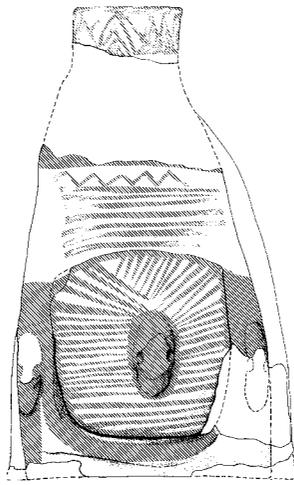
Back Decoration: The lower two-thirds of the ossuary are decorated with eleven red horizontal stripes, each 3 cm wide, above which is a series of thinner vertical stripes. The seam joining the back to the body of the ossuary is also painted red.

Facade: Above the opening are several red horizontal lines 1 cm wide and a horizontal zigzag line above them. The upper panel resembles a bird's tail in shape. Most of the panel is broken. The upper part of it is decorated with triangles and semicircular lines. We are unable to reconstruct the entire motif.

Cover: The ossuary's cover is relatively square, and has rounded corners and a vertical, red-painted lug handle affixed to its center in alignment with those attached to either side of the opening. The surface of the cover is decorated with red stripes that radiate from the handle outward. The edges of the cover are bordered with red paint.



Ossuary No. 15.



Ossuary No. 16.

No. 17. Reg. No. 90-1152

Fabric: Clay ranging in color from light gray to light brown to dark orange with a dark gray core, remnants of organic material and white, gray and dark brown temper that may be flint.

Body Design: Flat on the bottom. The roof is tapered and does not have a ridge.

Body Decoration—Right Side: Horizontal red stripe on the lower part of the side with a thin, 1.5 cm wide red stripe above it. Above this are two wavy red lines followed by a series of additional red stripes. Three bands of red triangles are drawn above the group of red stripes. The lower band is completely filled in with red paint whereas the other two bands of triangles enclose diagonal lines. Three painted stripes were added between the top and middle band of triangles.

Roof Decoration—Right Side: A zigzag formed by finely drawn lines is decorated with diagonal lines. The large triangles created by the zigzag are filled in with red paint.

Body Decoration—Left Side: The lower part of the side is decorated with a broad, red horizontal stripe above which is a group of horizontal red lines each 1 cm wide. The horizontal lines are overlapped by a series of thin red diagonal lines. Above this group of painted lines is a complex motif; the preserved segment consists of intersecting red lines and filled triangles. Atop this motif are two rows of triangles, filled in with thin lines, which are separated by groups of red-painted lines.

Roof Decoration—Left Side: Red zigzag lines cover the entire surface of the roof.

Back Decoration: On the lower part of the back of the ossuary are red horizontal and vertical lines 1.5 cm wide arranged in a net pattern within a border of slightly broader lines. Two horizontal rows of triangles, filled with lines and separated by red lines, are situated above the top border of the net pattern. The upper part on the back of the 'bird's tail' upper panel is entirely covered with thin red lines arranged in a herringbone pattern.

Facade Decoration: A vertical lug handle, now partially broken, is attached to either side

of the ossuary's opening, exceptionally not in alignment with each other. A molded nose, decorated with red lines 5–6 mm wide, is situated above the opening. Red stripes extend out around the nose in different directions. A group of thin horizontal lines separates the stripes from three checkerboard rows above them. At the top of the front of the ossuary, above the three checkerboard rows, is an eye painted in red concentric circles surrounded by a circle of dots. Surprisingly, another nose is drawn between the eyes, ending in two curls, which may represent either nostrils or a moustache. As with the eye, the nose is also surrounded by a decoration of dots.

No. 18. Reg. No. 90-1128

Fabric: Dark brown clay with brown spots, a dark gray core and light gray temper.

Body Design: Flat on the bottom. The roof is convex, tapered and has a ridge.

Body Decoration: Both sides of the ossuary and the back are entirely covered with red stripes 4–5 cm wide. The two top stripes on the roof, which flank the ridge, incorporate a row of triangles.

Facade: The opening is delineated by a red stripe. A molded nose is attached to the upper panel above the opening and is flanked by two impressed eyes. A pupil is depicted in the center of each eye, which is surrounded by painted decorations resembling eyelashes. A border of red triangles runs along both the sides and the top of the upper panel.

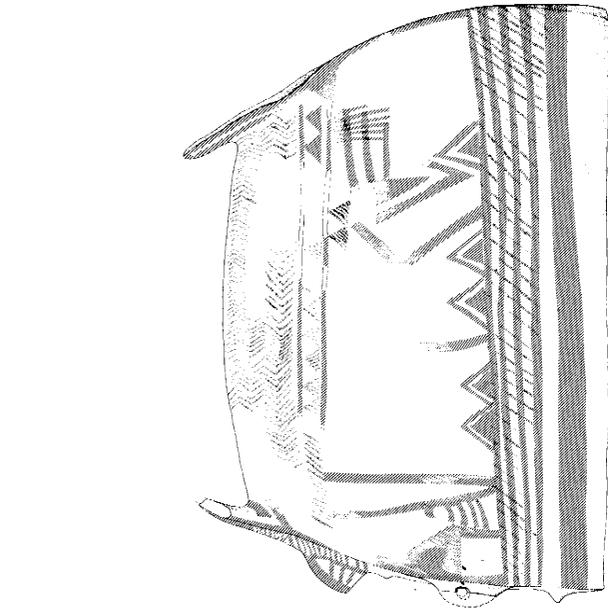
No. 19. Reg. No. 1633-1

Fabric: Brown clay with orange spots, a dark gray core and a large amount of white temper.

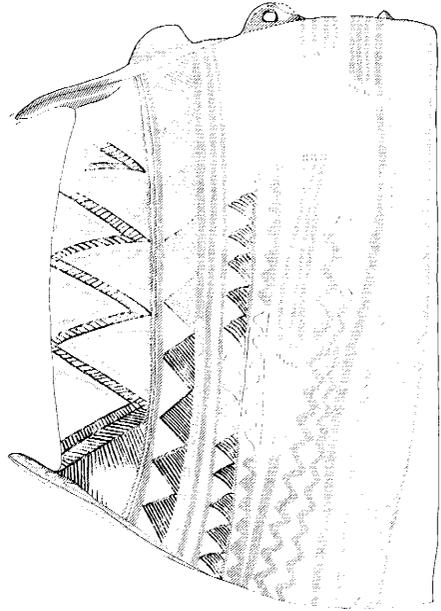
Body Design: Flat on the bottom. The roof is tapered and has no ridge.

Body Decoration: Five horizontal stripes, 2–3 cm wide, are on the upper part of the body and back of the ossuary. The roof is decorated with vertical stripes 2–3 cm wide.

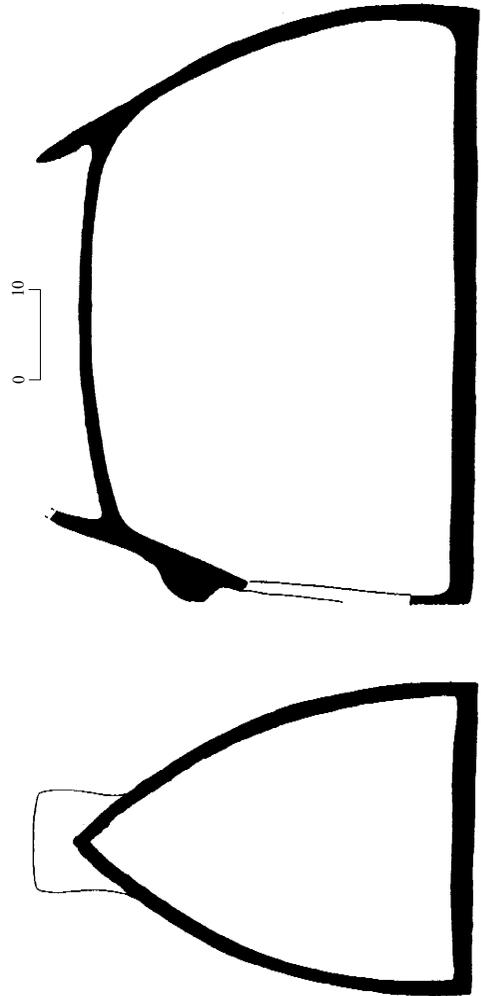
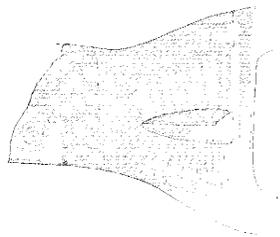
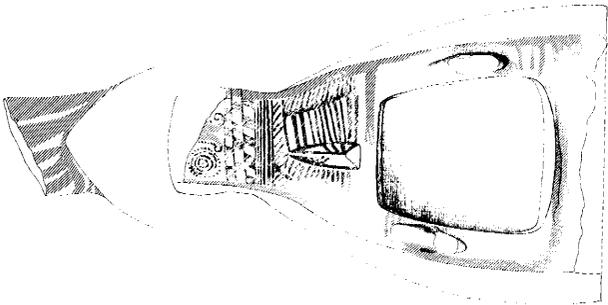
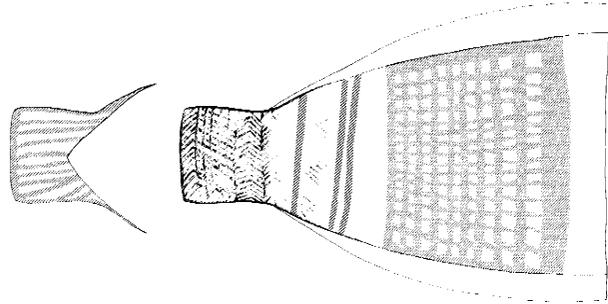
Facade Decoration: The entire front of the ossuary and its opening are delineated by stripes. A nose is attached to the upper panel above the



Left

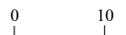
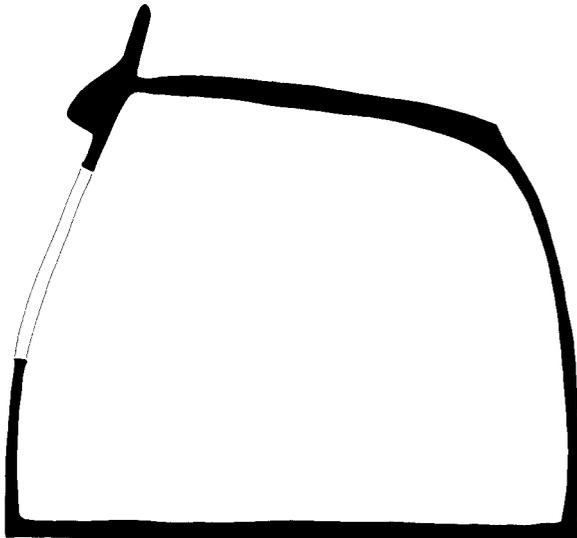
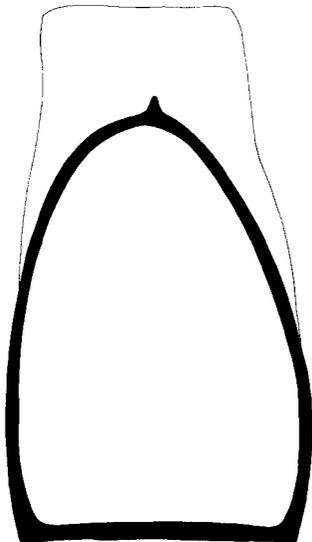
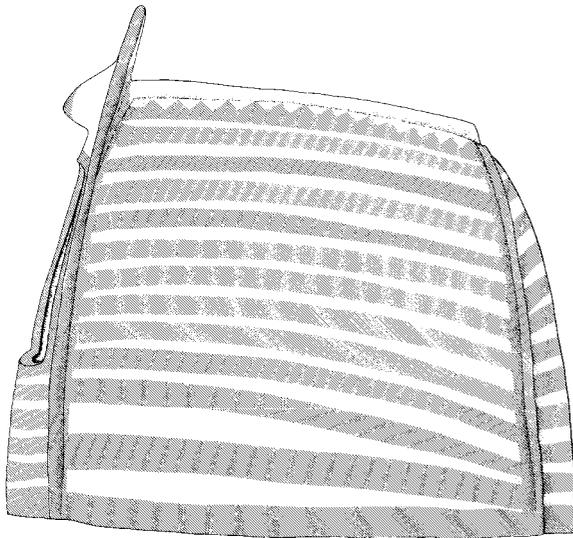
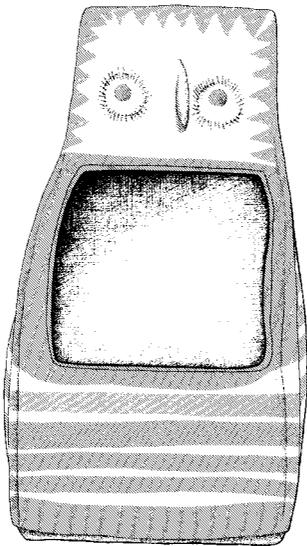
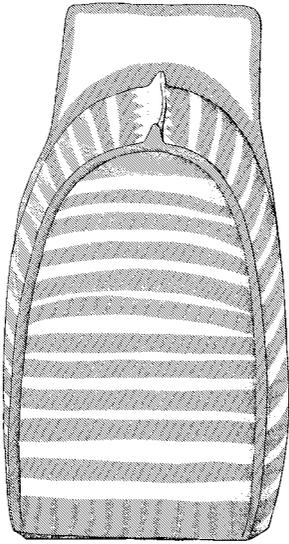


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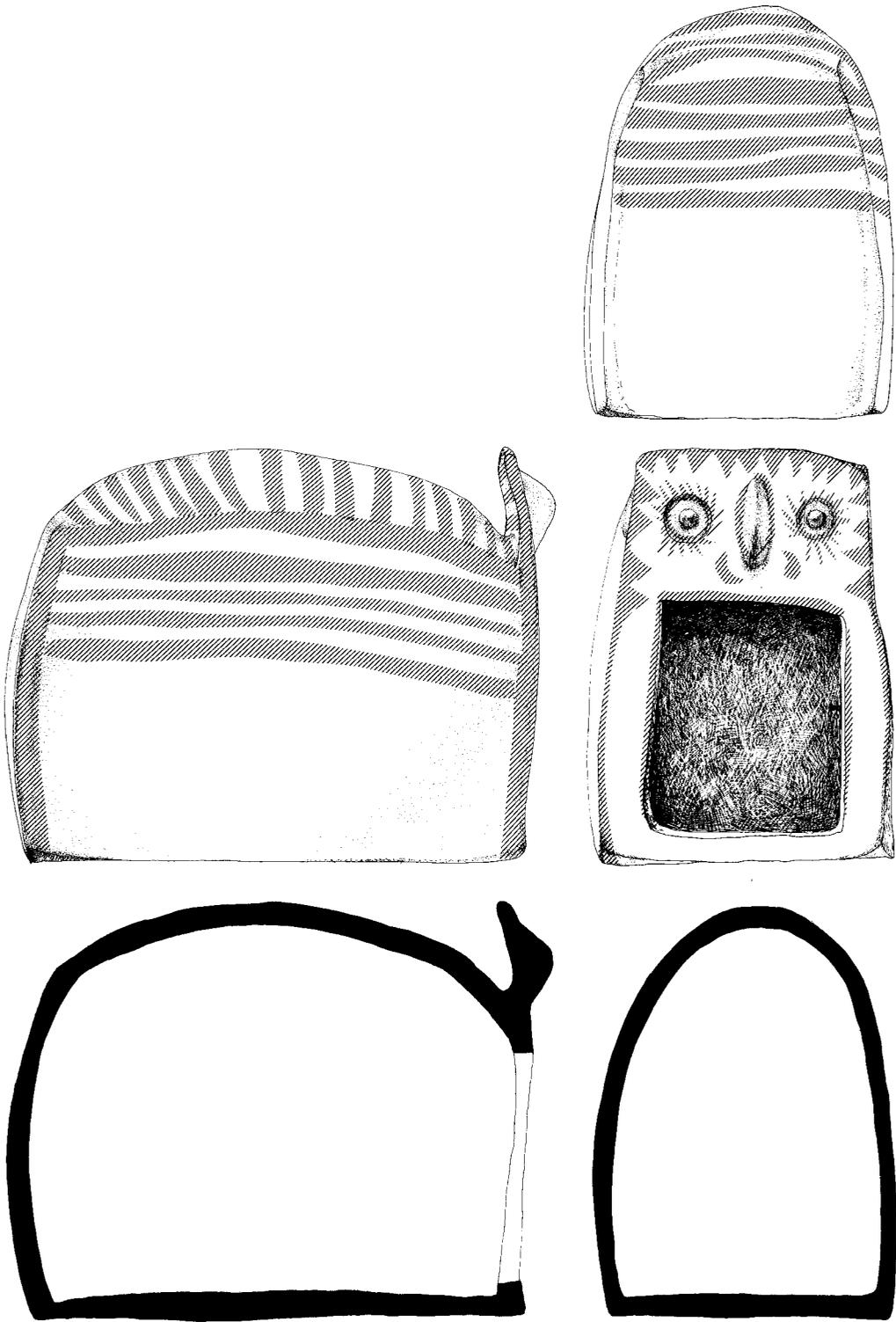


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Ossuary No. 17.



Ossuary No. 18.



0 10

Ossuary No. 19.

opening. A pair of molded eyes with pupils is affixed alongside the nose. Lines representing eyelashes are drawn around the eyes. All three sides of the upper panel are bordered with a line of red-painted triangles.

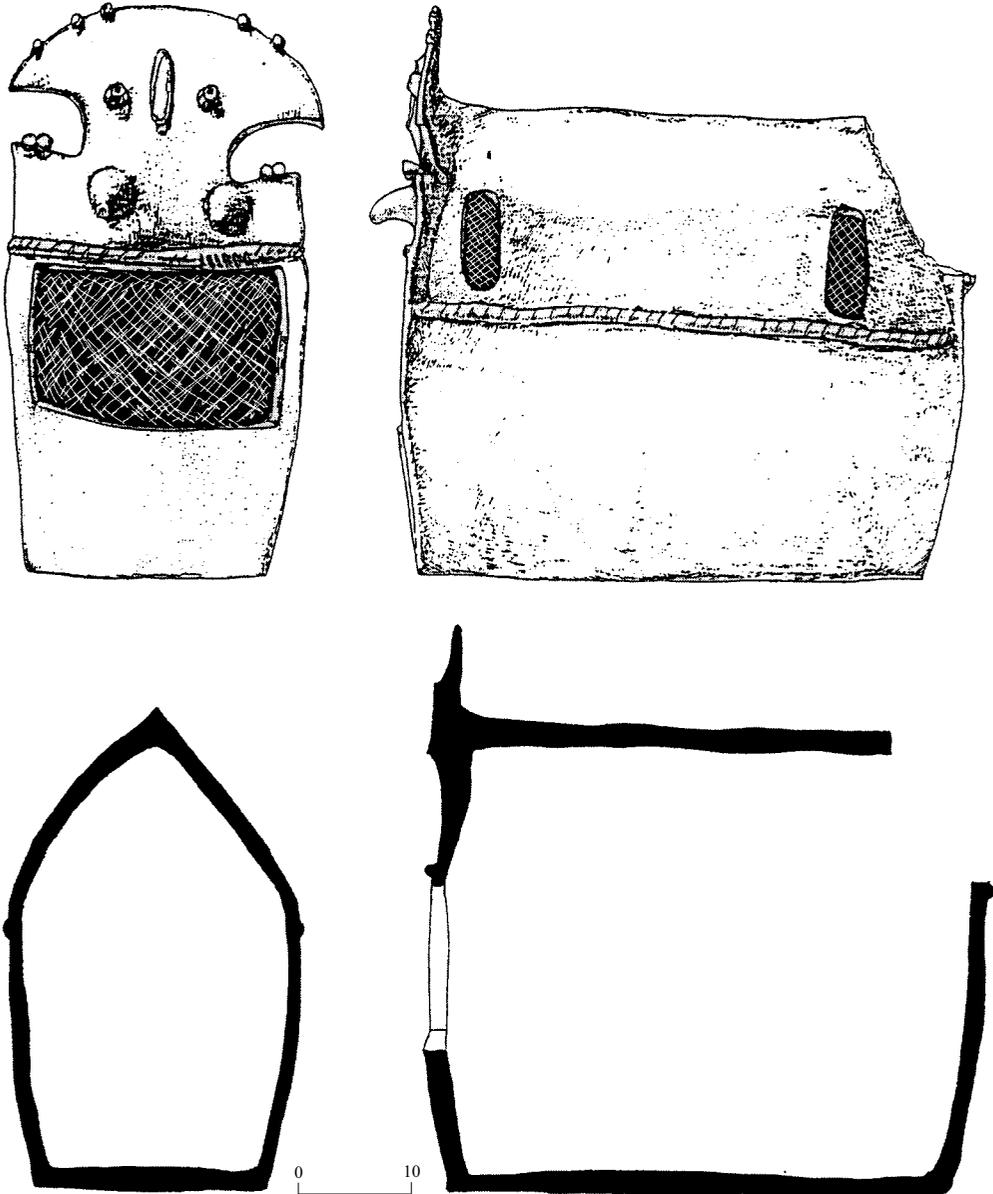
No. 20. Reg. No. 90-1143

Fabric: Alternating brown and dark orange clay with a dark gray core and a large amount of white, gray and brown temper.

Body Design: Flat on the bottom. The roof is triangular with a ridge.

Body Decoration: Two rope-like stripes occur at the widest part of the body midway up the ossuary, extending on to its back. The entire surface of the ossuary is covered with a dark orange slip.

Facade Decoration: The opening is rectangular, with a rope ornamentation above it. Two cone-like protrusions, perforated in the center, which



Ossuary No. 20.

may represent breasts, are located above this ornamentation. A pair of peg-like knobs are affixed next to each other atop both of the squared off edges on the front of the ossuary. A mushroom-shaped upper panel with tapered ends rises up above the front of the ossuary. In the center of the panel is a nose flanked by two small cones perforated in the center, perhaps meant to represent eyes. There are five peg-like knobs attached to the upper, rounded edge of the panel. The remains of a sixth peg are discernable, indicating there were originally three knobs grouped together on each side of the upper panel.

No. 21. Reg. No. 90-1154

Fabric: Light orange clay with a dark gray core and a large amount of white and gray temper and some organic matter.

Body Design: Flat on the bottom. The roof is triangular and without a ridge.

Body Decoration: A 10 cm wide stripe extends around the entire bottom portion of the ossuary. Horizontal stripes and a series of vertical stripes, 2 to 3 cm wide, form a net pattern that covers both sides, as well as the roof of the ossuary. The horizontal stripes on the body are separated from those on the roof by a slightly wider stripe.

Back Decoration: Five horizontal stripes extend down to the bottom part of the back of the ossuary. A group of vertical stripes 1.5 cm wide also covers the bird-tail panel at the top of the ossuary's back. A single, wide border stripe encompasses the entire back.

Facade Decoration: There is a red border below the opening. The opening is cut back at an angle in respect to the roof of the ossuary. A panel is affixed atop the opening and has a nose attached to its center. The entire upper panel and nose are red slipped.

No. 22. Reg. No. 1633-2

Fabric: Light gray clay with a dark gray core and a large amount of white, gray and dark brown temper.

Body Design: Flat bottom; rounded, tapered roof and ridge.

Decoration: Almost the entire ossuary, including its body, roof and back, is red slipped.

Facade Decoration: There are 2–3 cm wide horizontal stripes located above the opening and stripes less carefully applied below the opening. A pair of lug handles appears at either side of the opening. The upper panel was not found; hence, neither its shape nor the original height of the ossuary's front is known.

Cover: A horizontally pierced lug handle is placed vertically in the center of the net-pattern cover, in alignment with those flanking the opening.

Nos. 23–27. Reg. Nos. 1633-7, 1633-13-10, 1633-13-7, 1633-13-2 and 1633-15

The various painted fragments of ossuary facades—at least two of which have molded noses and impressed and/or painted eyes—represent at least five additional ossuaries. Body design and decoration are similar to those described before.

Nos. 28, 29. Reg. Nos. 1633-13-5, 1633-13-1

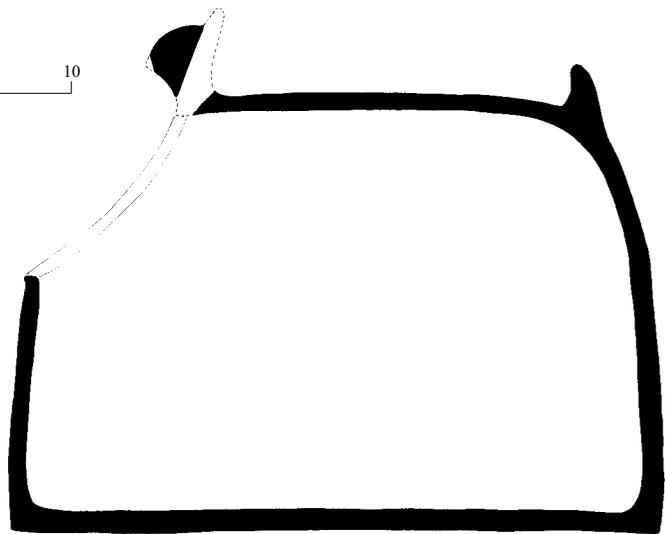
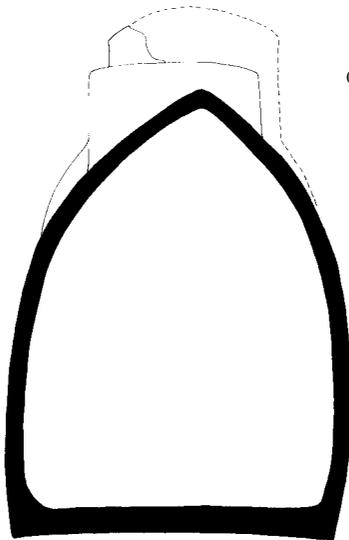
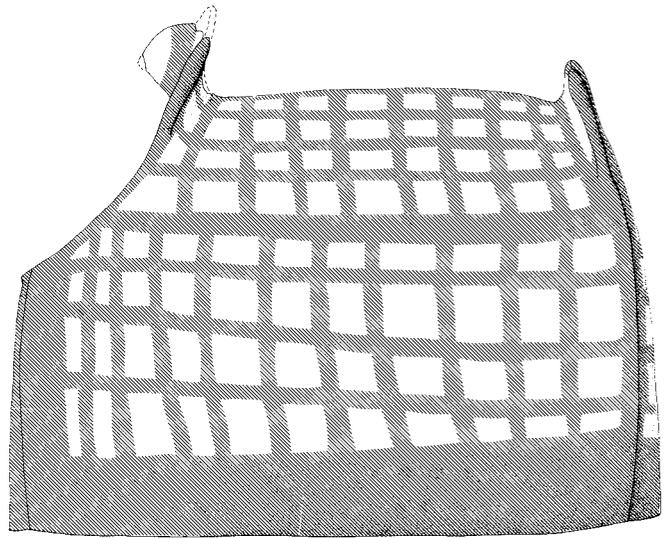
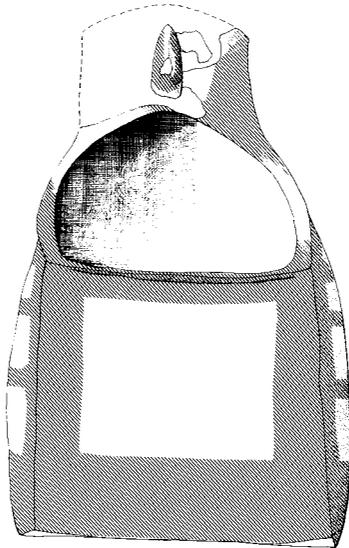
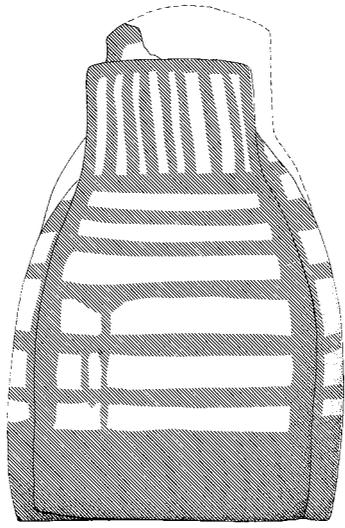
Although incompletely preserved, the main notable feature of these two ossuaries is the fact that their bases are supported by legs, in contradistinction with almost all previously described ossuaries (except for No. 9), which all have flat bases without additional support of legs.

No. 30. Reg. No. 1633-14

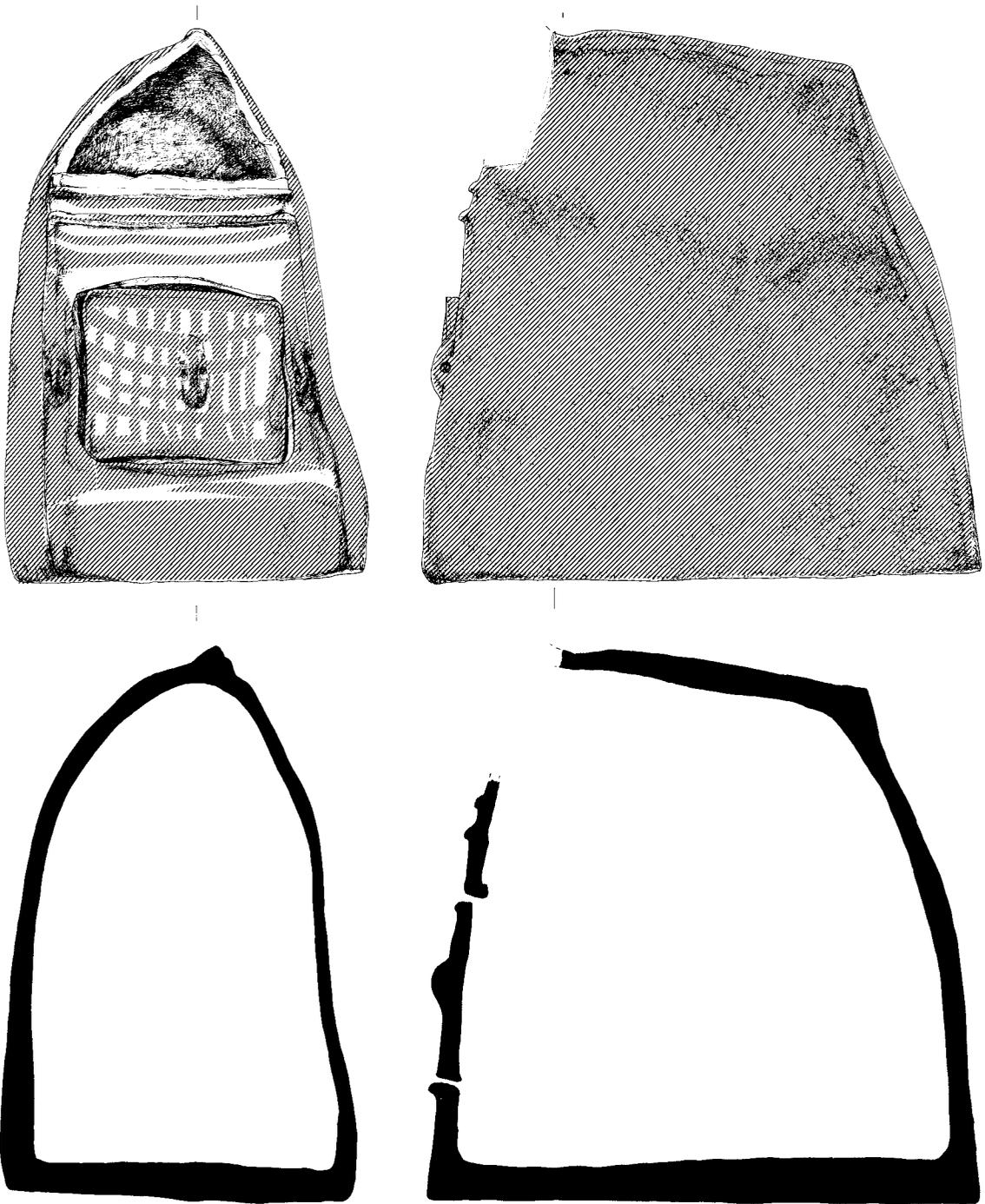
Only a single fragment of this diminutive, house-shaped ossuary was recovered.

Nos. 31–36. Ossuary Covers

Covers for closing the ossuary openings were found at Azor (Perrot 1961: Fig. 34). No covers have been published to date from other sites. Some of those from the Et-Ṭaiyiba cave fit ossuaries, and it was possible to establish exactly from which ossuaries they were cut. Others did not conform to any of the ossuaries.

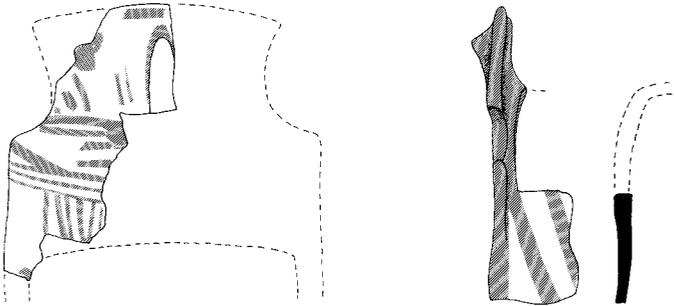
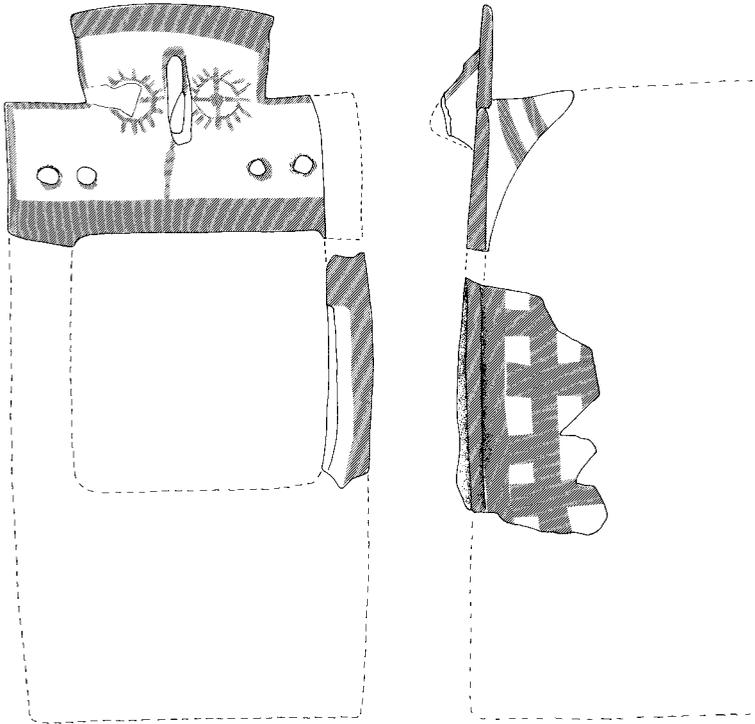


Ossuary No. 21.



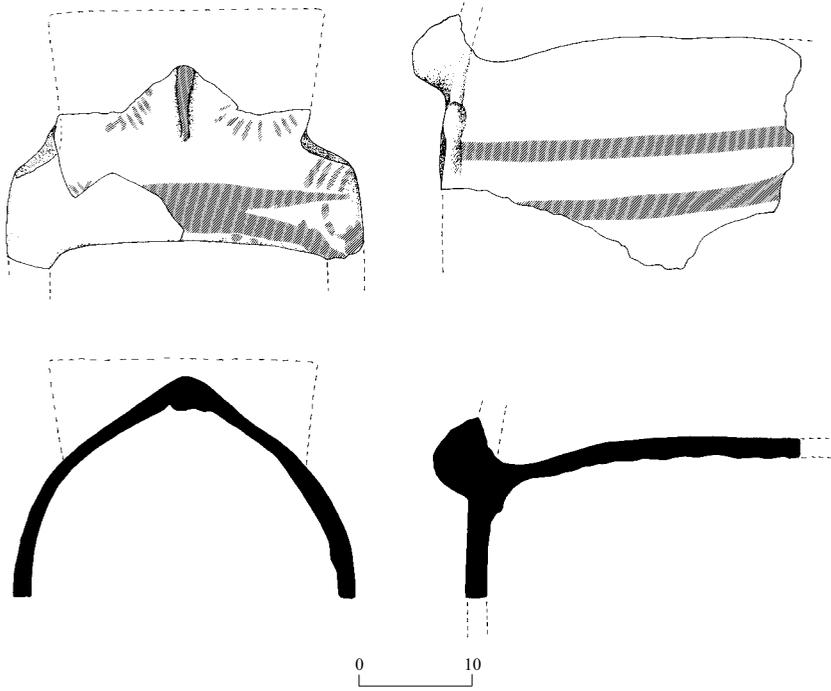
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Ossuary No. 22.

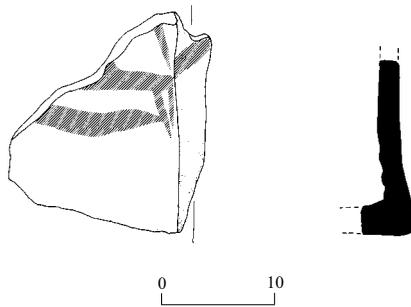


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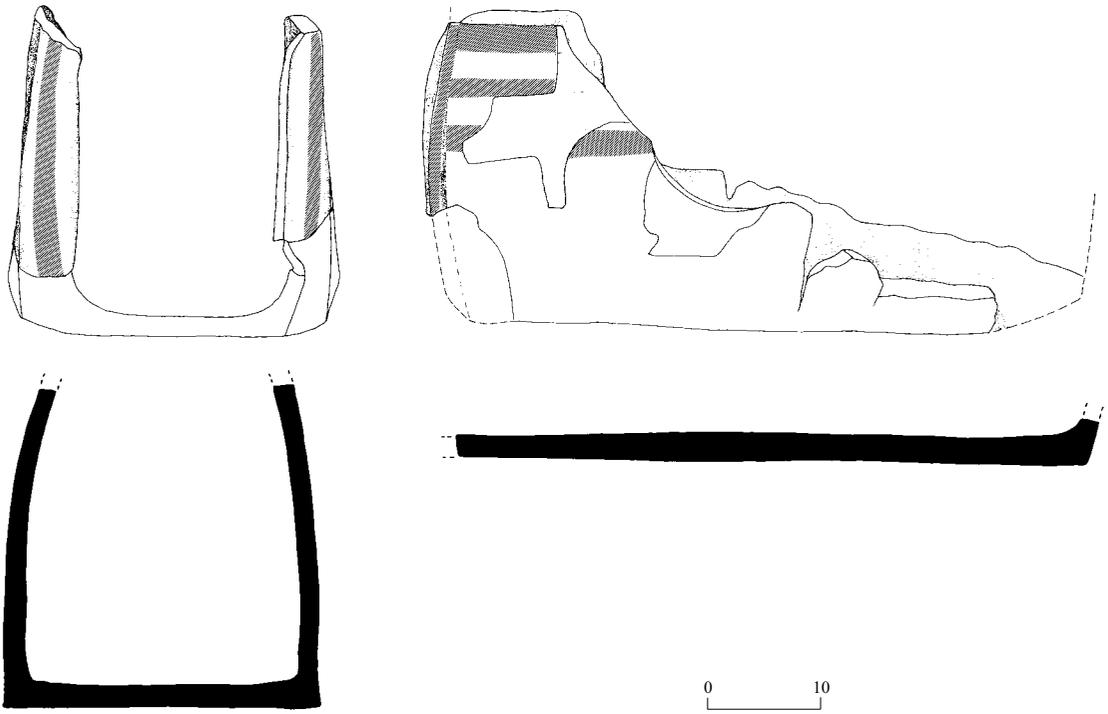
Ossuary No. 23.



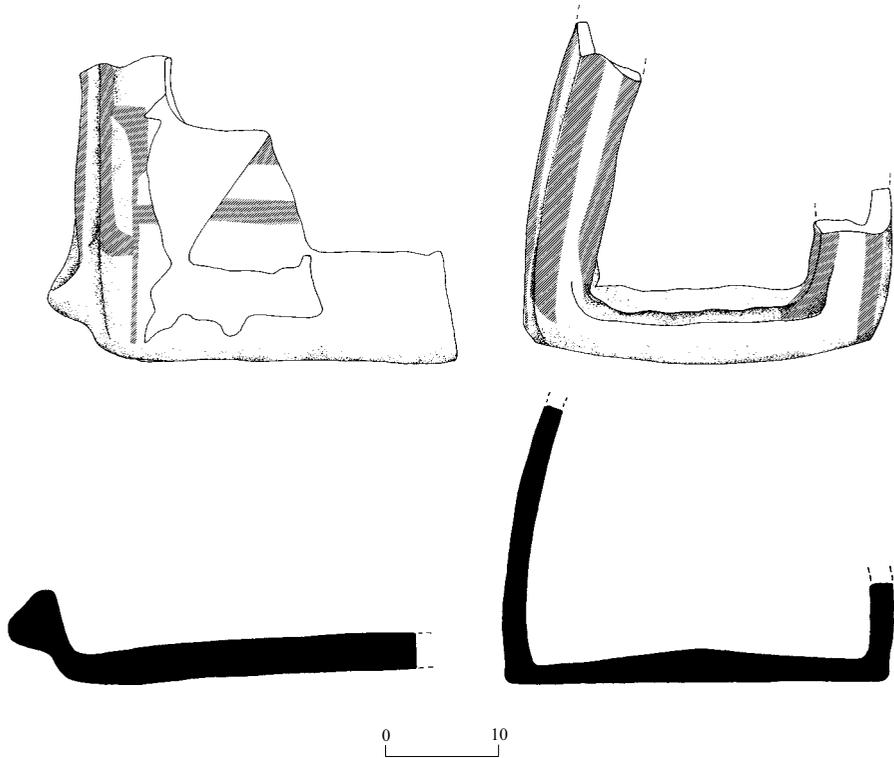
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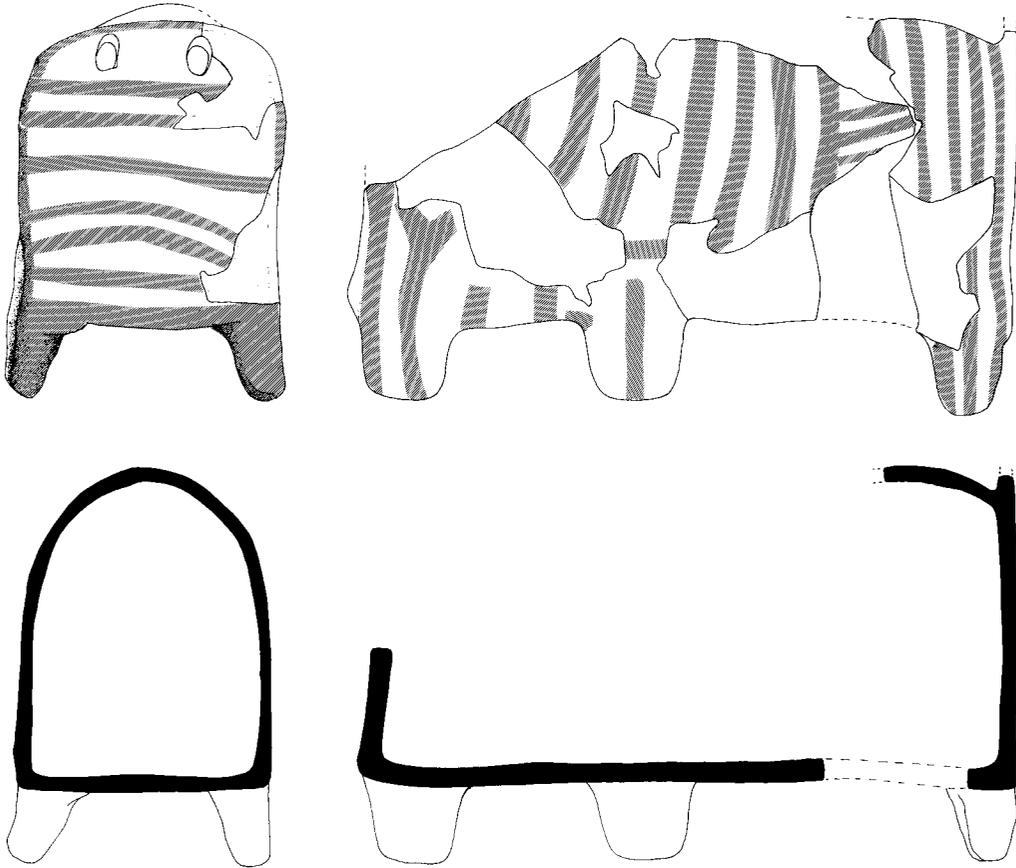
Ossuary No. 25.



Ossuary No. 26.

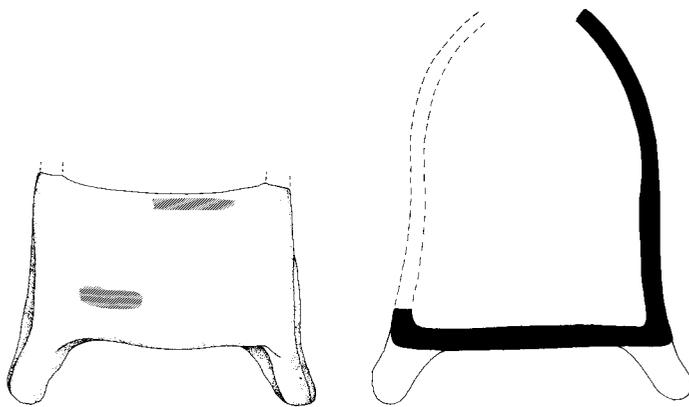


Ossuary No. 27.



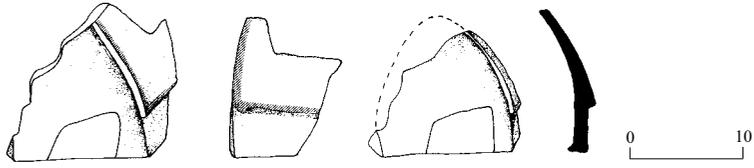
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Ossuary No. 28.

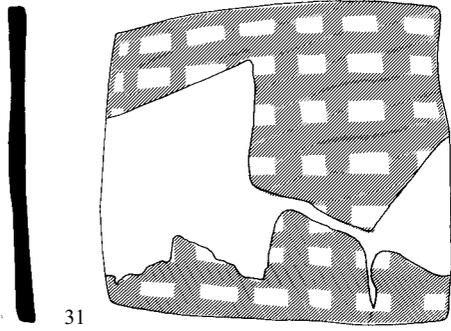


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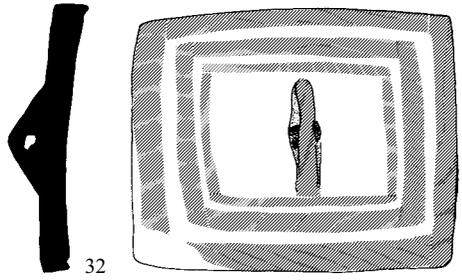
Ossuary No. 29.



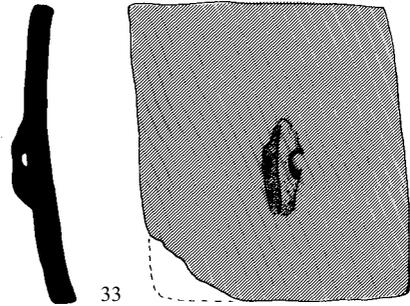
Ossuary No. 30.



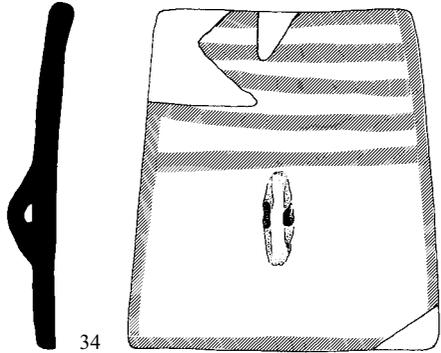
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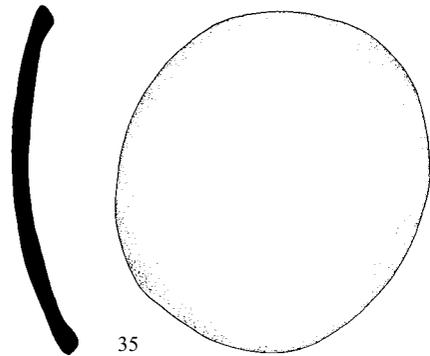
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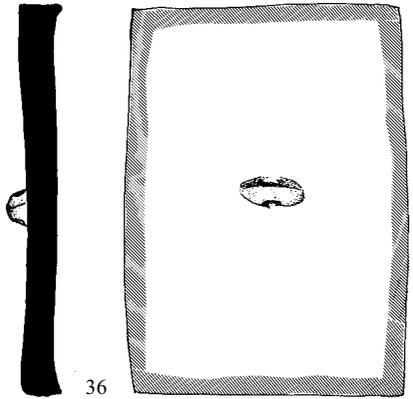
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34



35



36

Ossuaries Nos. 31-36.

The covers usually have a lug handle in their center. They are attached either horizontally, or, less commonly, vertically, depending on the alignment of the corresponding handles flanking the opening (e.g., on a vertical axis, Nos. 7–9, or on a horizontal axis, Nos. 10, 14–16, 22).

Burial Kraters (Figs. 3–5)

The pottery vessels that were used as burial containers are made of the same clay used to fabricate the funerary gifts that were found in the cave (see below).

Amongst the burial kraters are three spoutless kraters (Fig. 3), two with knob or plain ledge handles and one without handles. The rim of the krater in Fig. 3:3 was pinched slightly to facilitate the pouring of liquids. Two spouted specimens have large, vertically placed lug handles, triangular in profile (Figs. 3, 4).

Burial kraters were found at Azor (Perrot 1961: Fig. 39:10, 11), Giv'atayim (Sussman and Ben-Arieh 1966: Fig 1:4), Palmaḥim (Gophna and Lifshitz 1980: Fig. 4:7) and Ma'abarot (Porath, this volume). Similar types of vessels were also

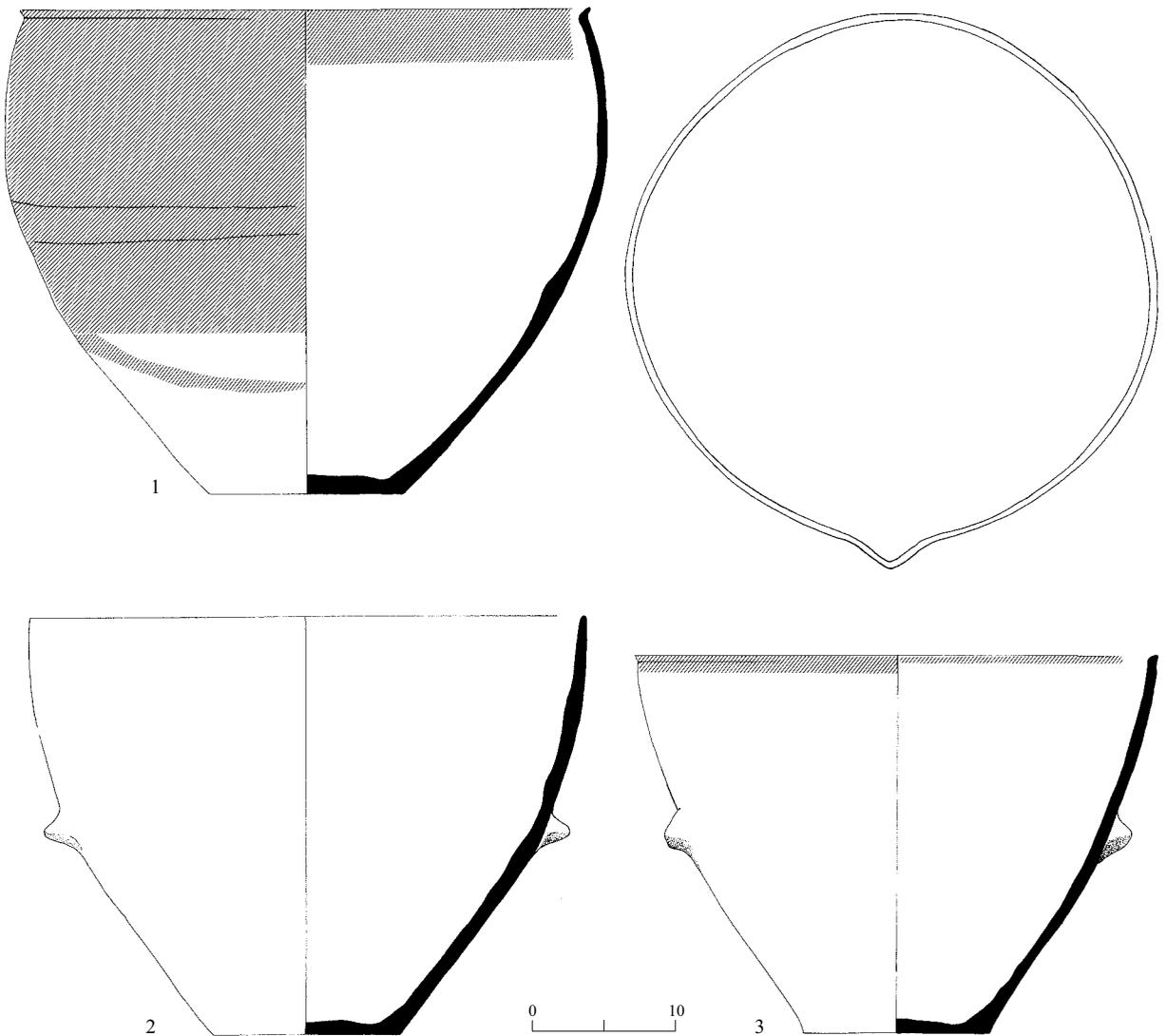


Fig. 3. Burial kraters.

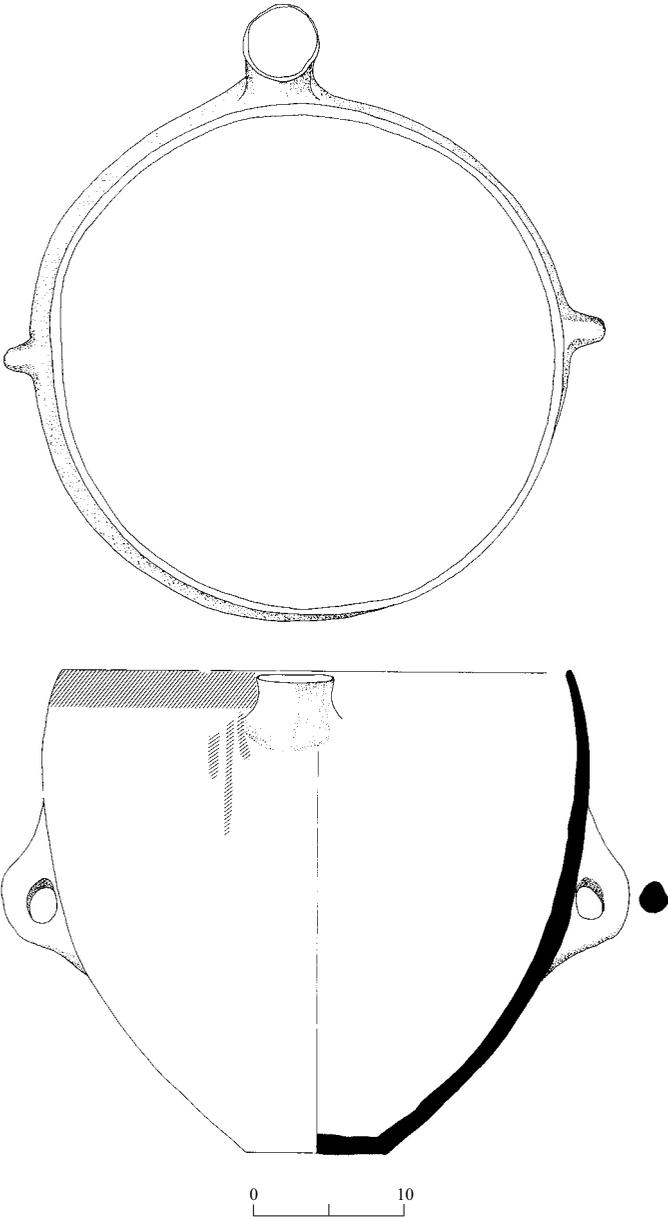


Fig. 4. Burial krater.

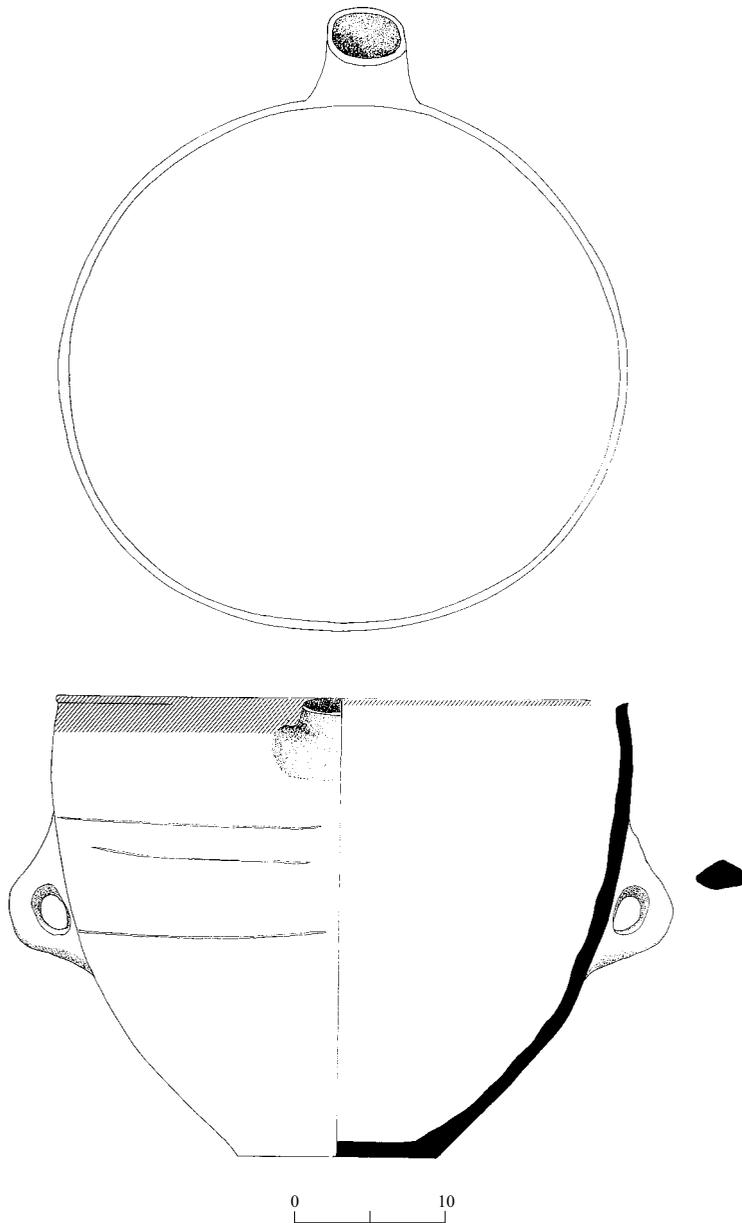


Fig. 5. Burial krater.

discovered in all of the settlement sites, hence there is no point in presenting a catalogue of parallels. The kraters from the cave at EṬ-Ṭaiyiba were not *in situ* and it is impossible to establish whether they contained any skeletal remains. Kraters used in burials were recovered *in situ* in the caves at Ma'abarot (Porath, this volume)

and Peqi'in, and in a semisubterranean burial structure at Kissufim Road (Goren and Fabian 2002: Fig. 4.3:1, 2). Since all of the other vessels from the cave at EṬ-Ṭaiyiba are small and open (see below), we assume that the kraters from this cave were originally made for domestic use in workshops and were only later used for burial.

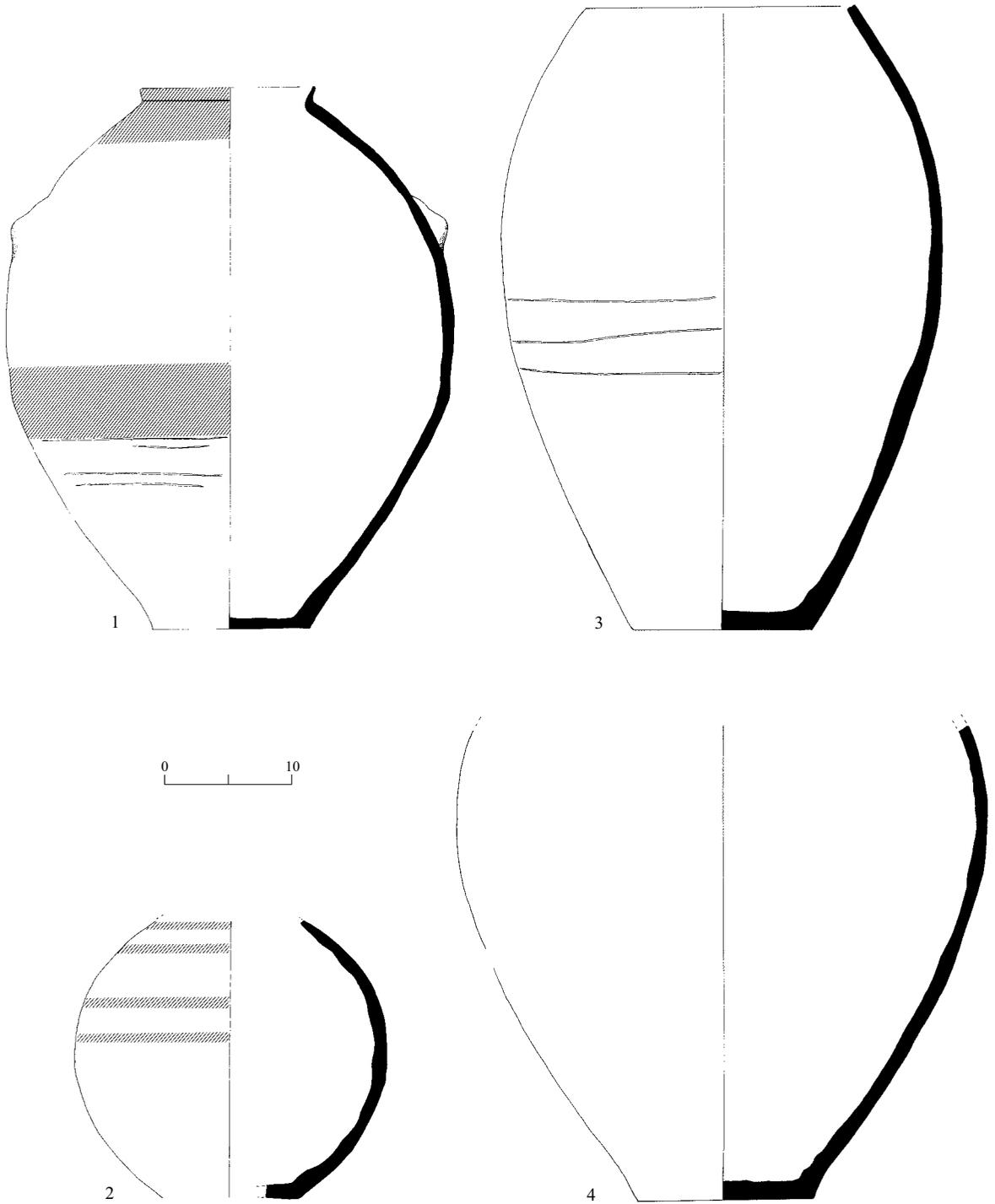


Fig. 6. Jars (urns).

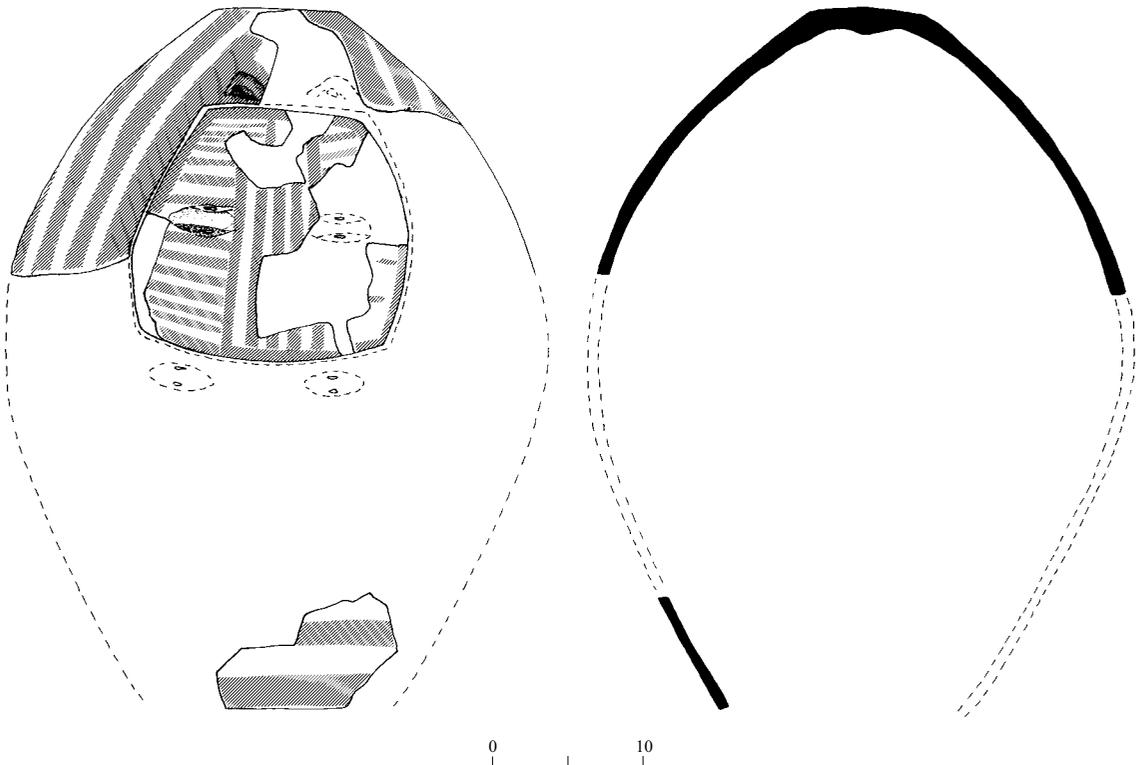


Fig. 7. Jar (urn).

Jars (Urns) (Fig. 6)

Four medium- and large-sized jars (necked or holemouth), usually encountered in settlement contexts, could also have been used as bone receptacles.

The closure of the upper part of the jar in Fig. 7 and the opening in its side were intended to make it conform to its function as a burial vessel. Ossuary jars are known from Giv'atayim (Sussman and Ben-Arieh 1966: Fig 4:4), Azor (Perrot 1961: Fig. 35, 36), Shoham (van den Brink and Gophna 1998: Fig. 87), Palmaḥim (Gophna and Lifshitz 1980: Fig. 3:1) and Kissufim Road (Goren and Fabian 2002: Figs. 4.9–4.13).

One cover (Fig. 7), without handles, is round and convex and belongs to an ossuary jar. This is the first example of this type of cover to be published.

Pottery Vessels

Almost all of the vessels are either made of clay that is dark yellow or sometimes orange or light pink in color. The core of these vessels is light gray and the temper is light gray (flint) and white. The size of the temper accords with the size of the vessels—in large vessels with thick walls (kraters, jars and fenestrated bowls) the temper is large, and in smaller vessels it is proportionately smaller. However, the V-shaped bowls and cornets are made of well-levigated light yellow, sometimes almost white clay without temper.

Bowls (Fig. 8:1–14)

Sherds from V-shaped bowls represent the predominant type found in the cave; the rim and base count indicate there were several hundreds

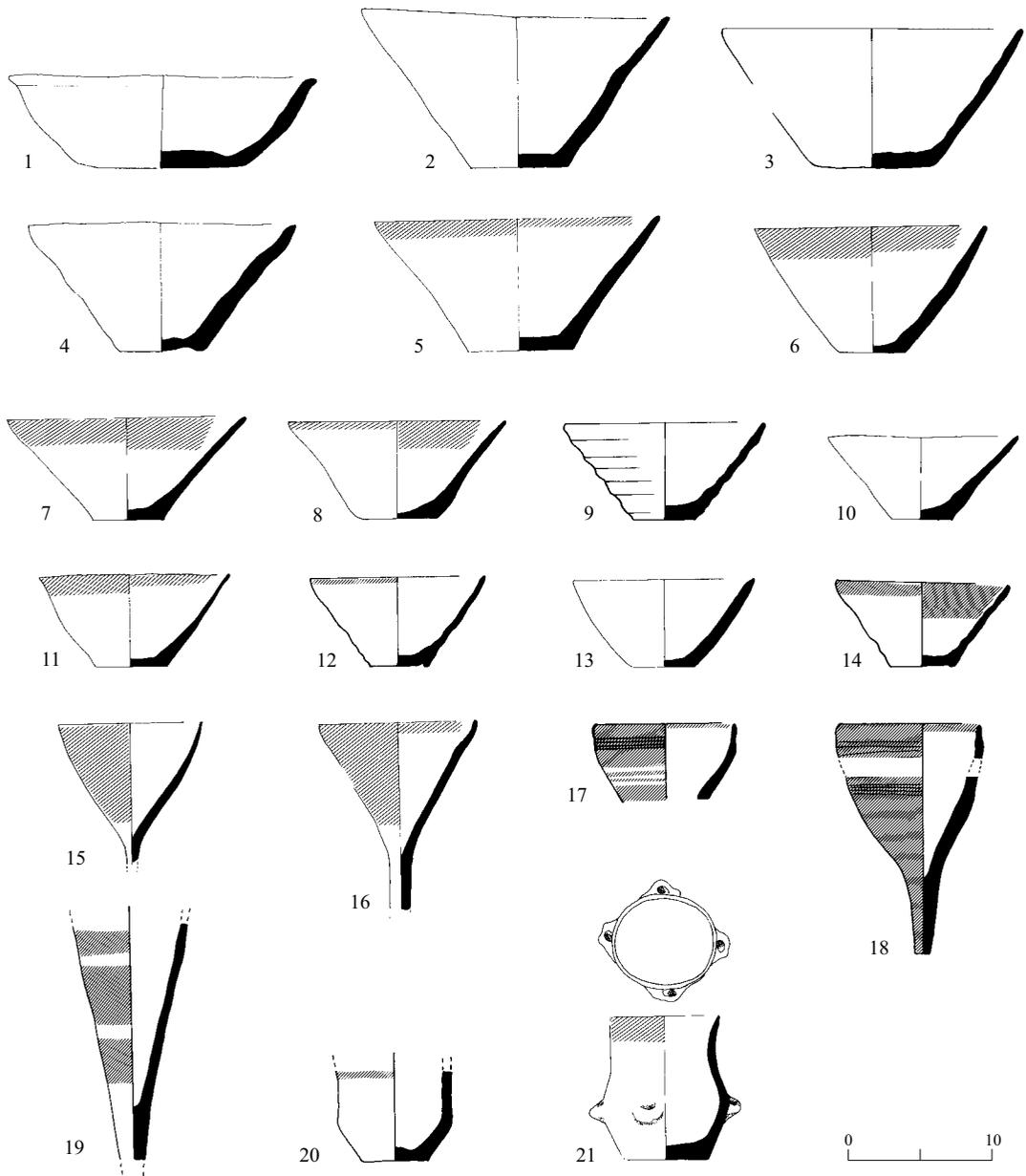


Fig. 8. Pottery.

of these vessels. V-shaped bowls are also the dominant find present in other burials in which ossuaries were discovered, such as at Azor (Perrot 1961: Fig. 37:1–24) and Kissufim Road (Goren and Fabian 2002: Fig. 4.1:1–6). In other caves—Giv'atayim, Palmahim, Bene Beraq, Shoham, Hadera and Ma'abarot—smaller quantities of bowls were retrieved, as were

fewer ossuaries. In the absence of quantitative data from the many excavations, it is difficult to determine if there is a correlation between the quantity of vessels and the number of ossuaries. It should be noted, however, that in the two caves at Et-Taiyiba and Azor, where a much larger number of ossuaries were recovered, there was also a greater quantity of bowls.

Cornets (Fig. 8:15–19)

One cornet (Fig. 8:16) was uncovered *in situ* on the floor of the cave. Other fragments were located in the pile of sherds near the opening. One of the cornets is elongated with a conical contour (Fig. 8:19). This type is commonly known from the sites located in the Be'er Sheva' Valley (Gilead and Goren 1995: Figs. 4.8, 4.9). The rest of the cornets belong to the type with an open contour consisting of a round and wide body with a long and narrow base. The rims on the cornets from Et-Ṭaiyiba are round and slightly inverted, differing from those of the Be'er Sheva' cornets, which tend to be somewhat everted (Gilead and Goren 1995: Fig. 4.8:1–3; Commenge-Pellerin 1990: Fig. 36:1–6). No cornets classified as ice cream cones by Commenge-Pellerin (1990:158) were discovered. Two cornet fragments belonging to a different type were published from Azor (Perrot 1961: Fig. 40:20, 21). The bottom of these vessels is round rather than tapered as in those from Ṭaiyiba. It is interesting to note that with the exception of the Peqi'in cave, no cornets were discovered in the other caves.

Amphoriskoi (Fig. 8:20, 21)

Parallels for the amphoriskoi under discussion were found in the cave at Bene Beraq (Kaplan 1963: Fig. 9:9) and at Kissufim Road (Goren and Fabian 2002: Fig. 4.1:9–15). Similar vessels were also discovered at 'En Esur (Yannai, forthcoming).

Fenestrated Pedestal Bowls (Fig. 9:1–6)

A large variety of bowls with tall, fenestrated pedestals (as much as three-quarters the height of the vessel), as well as a bowl with an open, fenestrated pedestal and a large open bowl (Fig. 9:3), was recovered from the cave. A wide assortment of fenestrated pedestal bowls was also discovered in the cave at Azor (Perrot 1961: Fig. 38). Other such bowls were found in the cave at Bene Beraq (Kaplan 1963: Fig. 9:10) and at Kissufim Road (Goren and Fabian 2002: Fig. 4.2:1). Vessels of this type are also known from the settlement sites in the Be'er

Sheva' Valley (Gilead and Goren 1995: Figs. 4.10; Commenge-Pellerin 1990: Fig. 20).

Cylindrical Stands (Fig. 9:7–10)

This type is fairly rare—one stand was published from Azor (Perrot 1961: Fig. 36:12), where it was included among the ceramic burial vessels rather than with the regular domestic vessels. No vessels of this type have been published from other sites.

TECHNOLOGICAL ASPECTS

The normal 'mundane' pottery forms, mainly the medium and larger ones, as well as the specialized 'mortuary' types, share the production method of the coil technique, diversified according to the shapes and sizes of the vessels. During the restoration of the ossuaries at the Rockefeller Museum building it was possible to discern many details pertaining to their manufacturing methods and to closely examine the clay used to produce them (see fabric descriptions, above).

The ossuary base comprised three or four ceramic slabs that were placed on a flat surface of stone or wood, or on a mat. Evidence indicating the use of mats was found on the bases of some of the ossuaries, as at Azor (Perrot 1961: Pl. VII:14–17).

It is possible to discern the seams between the clay slabs, as well as the ceramic coils that were placed between the slabs' junctions. These coils sometimes produced a long flat clay protrusion on the inner part of the bottom of the ossuary. Sometimes these connections are detectible based on the straight lines along which the bases fragmented. It is also possible to distinguish diagonal incisions along the connections of the fragments in places where ceramic coils were used to join the clay slabs together. These incisions were made by the craftsman with a knife in order to reinforce the connecting coil seam between the bottom slabs.

The ossuary body was composed of coils from the base to the top, including the roof. Little evidence for the use of clay coils was

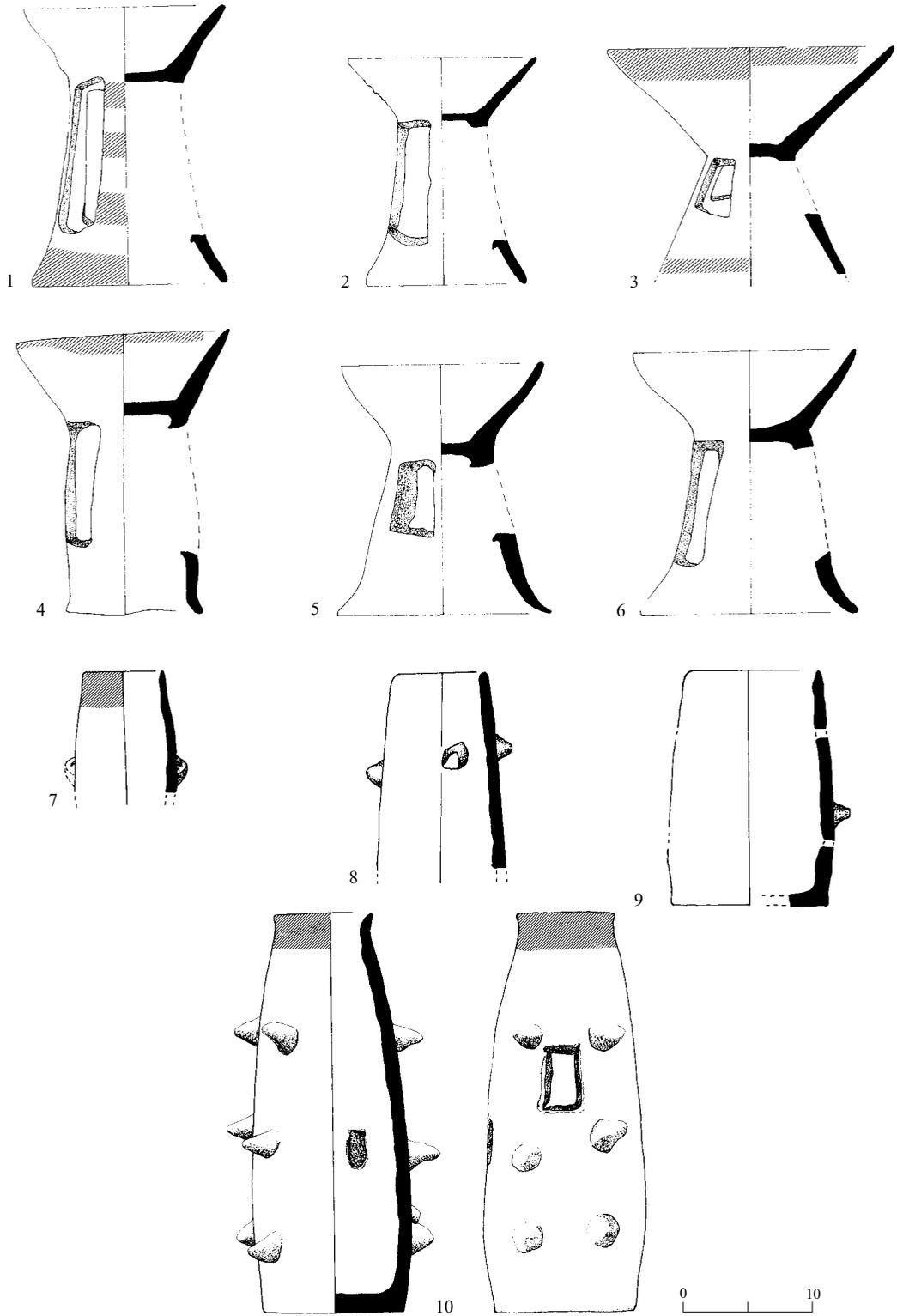


Fig. 9. Pottery.

found in the sections of the ossuaries' body sherds. However, clear evidence was visible in the corners of the body and in the seams between the body and the base, back, front and sometimes along the seam formed between the back and the side (see also Kaplan 1963: Fig. 6:2). On some of the roofs there are signs of a limited use of clay coils for the purpose of closing and completing the roof at the point of connection with the back of the ossuary. We assume that when the ossuary body was complete, the craftsman was unable to reach all the way inside with his arm in order to finish the inner seams. This is especially true regarding the rear and back parts of the large ossuaries. Based on the locations of the coils in the upper rear portion of the ossuaries, it is assumed that the craftsman intentionally left this point open in order to seal the back and inner parts of the ossuary. This opening was subsequently sealed only after the seams were treated from inside.

Producing the Cover and the Finish on the Facade

The original covers belonging to some of the ossuaries were located. Although they were not found within their openings, their fabric, decoration and dimensions allowed us to establish without any doubt which cover fits which ossuary. The fit of a cover to an ossuary clearly shows that it was cut from the ossuary's front panel when still in leather-hard condition and was not made as a separate unit. The covers were painted in the same color and with the same brush as the ossuaries. We can conclude that they were refitted in place in the ossuaries during the drying and painting process before being fired. The potter attached horizontal or vertical lug handles on some of the covers and on some of the facades. Perrot (1961:11) believed that the handles were intended to fasten the cover to the ossuary by means of wooden sticks following the placement of the bones within the ossuary.

As the ossuary opening is large and the front panel is small, it was possible to treat the joints along the facade in one step without

any difficulty. However, the facade in the long-bodied ossuaries (e.g., Nos. 10–12) could also be built in one step even via a narrow opening because the body of the ossuary is narrow and could be treated with no difficulty from inside.

Alternately, when the artisan was unable to complete the construction in one step, as in the construction and closing of those ossuaries that are tall and have a narrow opening (e.g., Nos. 6, 9, 13), he would cut out the upper front panel and reattach it at the leather-hard stage. At this point it was possible to seal the inner seams of the facade and to connect and align the fitted lug handles to each other. At the end of the process the craftsman could cut the cover out and, via the hole that was made, could finish the seams on the inside of the upper panel.

In this phase all of the plastic elements were added to the ossuary—nose, peg-shaped knobs and the shallow molding of the eyes. The windows were cut, feet were added and the entire body of the ossuary was cleaned of the clay coils and clay remnants from the production process.

After drying, the cover was replaced and the craftsman painted the ossuary as he saw fit. The design on the cover and the ossuary was therefore executed as a unit.

The covers were fired in the kiln separately from the ossuaries. During the firing process, the covers and ossuaries changed shape due to the extreme heat and some of the covers became deformed and no longer fit the ossuaries from which they had originally been cut.

Ossuary Ornamentation

Plastic Ornamentation

Pegs.— Pegs occur in even numbers and are arranged in one (No. 14), two (Nos. 13, 23) or three pairs (No. 20) on the front of the ossuary.

With the exception of the pegs on Ossuary No. 20, all of the pegs appear on ossuaries with rectangular front panels.

Noses.— Molded noses were found on all of the ossuaries belonging to all groups. They are

similar to the noses known on clay ossuaries from other sites and to noses on other clay finds from the Chalcolithic period. These are the most common plastic addition to Chalcolithic ossuaries.

Eyes.— Several kinds of eyes were found on the facades of the different sizes and shapes of ossuaries. Molded eyes occur on Ossuary No. 5, and on the group of ossuaries with rectangular panels (Nos. 13, 14, 18, 23). The eye consists of a tapered knob in its center, which represents the pupil and a plastic circle around the knob meant to represent the eyeball. The occurrence of eyes coincides in part with that of the pegs.

Rope.— Rope ornamentation appears only on Ossuary No. 20. There are parallels for this from Azor and other sites. It is a characteristic of the pottery vessels from the Chalcolithic period; its presence on ossuaries is not surprising.

Painted Decoration

The decoration on the facades can be divided into three primary groups, comprised of borders decorated with triangles (No. 18), borders decorated with lines (Nos. 11, 13, 23), and linear decorations covering the entire facade (Nos. 10, 16, 17). The border decorations are found on the ossuaries with square front panels. Ossuaries Nos. 16 and 17 are treated with linear decorations on the entire facade, as well as on the cover.

There is a correlation between the decoration of the facade and that of the body. Ossuaries with a linear decoration on the body also have lines on the facade (Nos. 11, 13). This is most prominent on the ossuaries decorated with painted arches (Nos. 7–9).

The body decoration on Ossuaries Nos. 16 and 17 consists of finer lines and the decoration is comprised of more complex motifs; therefore, the decoration on their facades is also more complex (Nos. 16, 17).

The combination of the shape and decoration on Ossuary No. 14 differs from that of all the other ossuaries. The body of the ossuary is

decorated with fine lines like on Nos. 16 and 17 and the front panel is square. The rich detail on this ossuary is both exceptional and differs from all the other ossuaries found in the country.

Eyes.— With the exception of Ossuary No. 5 all of the ossuaries with plastic eyes were also painted. One assumes that the absence of painted decoration on that ossuary stems from the fact that not all ossuaries were decorated with paint. To date, painted eyes are known on ossuaries from Azor and other sites. At Eṭ-Taiyiba, eyes, which are a combination of plastic decoration and applied paint, were found for the first time.

The eye decorations usually include a painted pupil and lashes around the eyeball (Nos. 13, 18). One ossuary is painted with a cross on the eyes and eyelashes around them (No. 23).

Ossuary No. 14 is extremely unusual. The pupil is not in the middle of the eyeball but rather is crossed slightly to the right. The eyeball is small and recessed as opposed to all the other eyes that protrude. The edges of the eyeball are emphasized by a pair of circles within which are extremely fine lines, perhaps representing eyelashes. Two groups of four vertical, finely drawn lines below the eye presumably represent tears.

An unusual eye is portrayed on Ossuary No. 17. This eye is not molded from plastic decoration. It is composed of four painted concentric circles with a dot in the middle that was perhaps intended to symbolize the pupil.

Noses.— The noses on some of the ossuaries are decorated with paint. Beneath the triangular nose drawn on Ossuary No. 14 is a row of small vertical lines, probably meant to be a moustache. This detail is not surprising in light of the overall facade of this exceptional ossuary, which includes unique eyes and tears.

Painted decoration is the predominant decoration appearing on the ossuaries' surfaces. On most of the ossuaries it is extremely simple, consisting of broad stripes (Nos. 10, 11, 18),

broad stripes with a wavy line (Nos. 7–9), a net pattern of broad lines (No. 13) or a combination of broad and fine lines (Nos. 14, 16).

An unusual body decoration is that on Ossuary No. 17. This example is most complex, consisting of solid triangles, triangles filled with lines, zigzag and herringbone patterns.

The complex decorations on the bodies of the ossuaries allow us to attempt to discern the origins of the motifs. The ossuary decorated with a triangular design and herringbone pattern indicates a clear connection with the decorative motifs that appear on the Neolithic pottery from the Yarmukian, Jericho IX and Wadi Rabah cultures. Although we are unable to point to a direct relationship between these cultures and the Chalcolithic culture of the Sharon, it is difficult to accept that the similarity between the decorations is solely coincidental. The similarity in the decorations indicates a common motif that was known to both the Neolithic and the Chalcolithic cultures. The shapes of the decorations—triangles, herringbone and fine lines—may indicate that the common source of these motifs is found in weaving or in wickerwork whose interweaving produces similar kinds of geometric shapes. These types of patterns were also found on tombs in Egypt dating from the Old Kingdom. Several scholars have assumed that these types of decorations and patterns were intended to imitate huts covered with mats. The great similarity between the decoration on the ossuaries and the woven patterns may stem from the array of geometric shapes on the organic materials, mats and objects woven from straw or branches that were commonly found in the dwellings during the Chalcolithic period. Evidence of this is found in the mat impressions on the bottom of some of the ossuaries and the mat patterns occurring on the bases of pottery vessels from the Ghassulian culture. It is reasonable to assume that this array of shapes constitutes a background for the drawings on the bodies of the ossuaries.

CONCLUSIONS

The cave at EṬ-Ṭaiyiba is not exceptional among the other burial caves from the Chalcolithic period that were discovered along the coastal plain. The contribution from this cave falls within the typology of ossuaries and the variety of decorations on them. At each site, practically every group of ossuaries that was found in a cave is unique in its own way. We can perhaps point out similarities amongst the ossuaries from different sites. A large group of caves and ossuaries is known to date from the Naḥal Yarqon, Naḥal Alexander and Naḥal Ḥadera basins (Ḥadera, Ma'abarot, Sha'ar Efrayim, Ben Shemen, Bene Beraq, Giv'atayim, Palmaḥim, El'ad, Shoham and Azor). The ossuaries of this group have similar characteristics despite the wide variety of types. The EṬ-Ṭaiyiba cave is distant from the Naḥal Yarqon basin; therefore, the uniqueness of some of the ossuaries found within it should not come as a surprise. The important discovery from the cave at Peqi'in indicates that as the distance between the caves increases, the greater is the difference among the various groups of ossuaries. This hypothesis holds true not only for ossuaries. The ceramic finds recovered from the Chalcolithic sites in the Naḥal Yarqon Basin show a clear affinity between them and the Chalcolithic cultures in the Be'er Sheva' Valley. From the recent excavations at 'En Esur it has become clear that the Chalcolithic culture in the north of the country is typologically quite similar to that elsewhere in Israel; however, the decoration of the pottery vessels is very different, more varied and more intricate. The ossuaries from EṬ-Ṭaiyiba reflect some of this phenomenon. The complexity of the designs, the thin lines, the emphasis placed on individual details and the widespread use of colors all indicate that the cave at EṬ-Ṭaiyiba reflects a more northern Chalcolithic culture than the caves located in the Naḥal Yarqon basin.

NOTES

¹ The cave was located during the digging of a cesspit for the school. The schoolmaster reported the discovery about three months after the actual find; by then the cave had been looted. The IAA Unit for Prevention of Antiquities' Robbery found the thieves (who were later convicted), and confiscated some artifacts (cf. Fig. 9:10). Over the years, several tombs from the Iron Age (Yannai 2002) and the Roman period (Yannai 2001) were exposed in the city of Ṭaiyiba. A pit containing pottery sherds from EB I was also uncovered in the city (Yannai and Yunis 2001). A number of Middle Bronze Age and Iron Age sites were discovered in a survey conducted in the city.

² The excavation (Permit No. A-1633) was jointly directed by the authors. Radwan Badhi, Aviva Bushennino, Amir Feldstein, Yossi Levi, Yoram Lotan, Yehuda Neeman, Erella Tzarfaty and Ahmed Yunis of the Central District staff, supported by volunteers from the United States, Elizabeth

Bergman, Isabel Lipson, Vivian Singer and Patricia Seinhart, participated in the work. Field photographs and the surveying of the cave were carried out by the authors. The pottery vessels were restored by Erella Tzarfaty and the ossuaries by Michal Ben-Gal. Tsila Sagiv photographed the finds. The pottery vessels were drawn by Ziv Atar and the ossuaries by Noga Ze'evi and Marina Suiskey-Arnov, all of the IAA. The authors wish to thank Don Glick for the English translation and all those who participated in bringing this excavation and its finds to publication.

³ A similar phenomenon was also noticed at Ma'abarot (Porath, this volume).

⁴ Many unworked flint pebbles were also found in the fill accumulated in the cave. Due to their disturbed location it was not possible to decide whether the pebbles had been brought as gifts or had infiltrated with the soil (we suggest they infiltrated after the burial process had terminated).

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