

CHAPTER 10

THE POTTERY FROM GATE STREET 8

by

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10.1 Introduction

The excavations carried out inside the Workmen's Village in 1985 in Gate Street 8 had as part of their aim the complete documentation of the pottery contents of one of the village houses, with a view to examining a domestic pottery assemblage. It was not expected that the house fill would be intact, in view of the known illicit excavations on the site, but since the fill of the house would, even if not from Gate Street 8 itself, be from neighbouring houses or streets the vessels could still be related to a village context. However, the excavation revealed that parts of the house had been only slightly, if at all, turned over by later robbers (see *AR* III: 1-14 for the report on this). The excavation of these rooms resulted in the finding of a number of potentially reconstructable vessels which were undoubtedly associated with the house occupation, as well as a few which, although not definitely from Gate Street 8 since they came from disturbed deposits, would certainly have originated inside the Village, either in the neighbouring houses or adjacent streets.

The presence of relatively undisturbed deposits prompted the attempt to record the position of sherds within the room in a more detailed manner. This was done in the hope that data on the location of pots at the time of the abandonment of the house, and the effect of house collapse on sherd distribution, could be obtained. To this end, the fill was subdivided into two parts, which were given either different unit numbers (in the case of the Middle and Front Rooms) or a separate north or south designation (in the case of the Rear Room South). This did not, however, prove to be as useful a distinction as was hoped (a much finer subdivision of the room fill would have been necessary for this), and the nature of the fill itself, caused by the collapse of one or two roofs, almost certainly means that no clear pattern of localisation of vessels could be distinguished.

As well as the original location of the pottery within the house, the effects on the sherds of the disturbance that had taken place since its abandonment were of obvious interest. In only five cases were complete vessels, their component sherds, or vessels which, although incomplete, could well have been used in their present condition, found. In all other cases where individual vessels could be distinguished, sherds were usually found either scattered throughout several units within the same room (as occurred in the Middle Room and the Rear Room South), or were more widely spread over more than one room and incorporated in the upper debris overlying the house. When these sherds from a single vessel were gathered together the vessel itself was rarely found to be complete. It is unclear whether this is the result of later disturbance or whether, since at least small vessels are easily portable, such vessels as were left behind were already damaged. The fact that sherds from several vessels were localised solely in the lower units of the Middle Room, where disturbance was minimal, suggests perhaps that the vessels were incomplete prior to becoming incorporated in the house fill.

In the following report, the sherds used to calculate vessel numbers are those from deposits underlying the top debris of the house, since units [1362] and [1400] are the result of the turning-over of any of several houses in the vicinity. These units did however contain pieces joining with vessels encountered lower down in the house fill (and have therefore become incorporated in the overlying units as a result of later disturbance), and these are noted where relevant. The relatively undisturbed rooms will be dealt with first.

10.2 The Middle Room

By far the greatest number of sherds and most of the reconstructable vessels were found in this room. It appears to have been relatively little disturbed, although some sherds adjoining pieces found in this room were located in both the Front Room and the upper deposits of the Rear Room South. However, at least 4 vessels, 3 of which were complete, were restricted to units within this room.

For the reconstructed vessels from this room, see Figures 10.3-10.5.¹

Vessel 69053 (= [1895]). Hearth, found *in situ* in the emplacement on the floor of the Middle Room, set on top of an earlier worn hearth (see below, Vessel 69154). Fabric I.1, unslipped;² characteristic deep cord impressions around the upper exterior of the vessel, scraping marks around the lower vessel wall; the interior surface shows many finger marks from poor-quality finishing. There are no signs of burning on the vessel, despite the fact that the hearth was filled with ashy material. The vessel had cracked in several places and been repaired anciently by smearing gypsum plaster over the cracks whilst *in situ* in the hearth emplacement. Complete. Diameter: 57 cms. Height: 17.1 cms. COA type: not in corpus.

Vessel 69154 (= [1896]). Hearth, found *in situ* in emplacement on Middle Room floor below Vessel 69053. Fabric I.1, unslipped. Deep cord impressions around the upper exterior of the vessel, below which were scraping marks. The interior shows traces of a thin coating of mud plaster, possibly to secure the upper hearth in position. As with the upper hearth, despite the layer of ashy material between the two hearths there were no signs of heating on the lower hearth. The hearth was in considerably worse condition than the upper hearth: several rim sherds were missing, the vessel was cracked, and the edges were badly worn. Diameter: 59.5 cms. Height: 18.3 cms. COA type: VII.3 (ix/1007).³

Vessel 63243. "Cooking" bowl. Fabric I.4, unslipped; upper body wet-smoothed, lower body scraped. There were no signs of fire blackening to indicate that the vessel had been used. Sherds from this vessel were found restricted to units [1577] and [1583]. Diameter: 23 cms. Height: 16.5 cms. COA type: approximately V.4

Vessel 63107. One-handed cup. Fabric III.2, cream slipped; exterior and rim burnished. Found in fragments throughout the lowest units of the Middle Room. About 2/3 preserved. Diameter: 9.2 cms. Height: 10.9 cms. COA type: XX.11 (xlii/1009B).

The following vessels came primarily from Middle Room units, but joining sherds were found in others of the rooms of Gate Street 8.

Vessel 62485. Canaanite amphora. Fabric 4.1, self-slipped. The neck and rim of the vessel are missing, but it could well have been used in this condition. Found with lower body intact; the upper body occurred as sherds in the Middle Room (units [1508], [1571], [1575], [1707] and [1669]), and in the upper units of the Rear Room South ([1501], [1490N] and [1491N]) as well as in the overlying debris. In the Middle Room, fragments of the amphora were located primarily in the southern part of the room, and in the Rear Room South in the northern part, i.e. just inside the door from the Middle Room. On reconstruction, it was noted that on the underside of the top of the handles were several deep rounded grooves, as if the amphora had been suspended on a regular basis or had been used to give tension to a cord or rope.

Vessel 63573. Small jar with outward-flaring rim. Fabric I.1, thin red slip over upper exterior. Upper body wet-smoothed, lower body knife-scraped; cord impressions around the maximum diameter of the vessel. The exterior is heavily blackened through exposure to fire. Found in sherd form throughout the Middle Room, and also in the debris overlying the house (unit [1400]). About 2/3 preserved. Rim diameter: 12.3 cms. Height: 28 cms. COA type: xxi/1049.

Vessel 62026. Jar with outward-flaring rim. Fabric I.1, thin red slip over upper exterior. Upper body smoothed, lower body knife-scraped. Found in sherd form in the northern units of the Middle Room, the upper debris overlying the house, and low down in the fill of the Front Room

¹ I am grateful to Andrew Boyce for drawing the vessels in this report. Vessels 69053, 69154, 63243, 62485, 63107 and 63573 occurred only in units in the Middle Room.

² The pottery classification used in the following descriptions is discussed in detail in AR I: Chapter 10; the fabrics and ware groups are described in AR II: Chapter 8.

³ In quoting COA corpus types, references with large Roman characters refer to the renumbered corpus given in COA II; those with small Roman characters are taken from the original COA I corpus.

on the south side. The vessel is incompletely preserved. Rim diameter: 10.8 cms. Height: 18.8 cms. *COA* type: xxi/1049.

Vessel 62041. Jar with outward-flaring rim. Fabric I.1, unslipped. Upper exterior smoothed, lower body coarsely knife-scraped. Found throughout the fill of the Middle Room, the debris overlying the house, and in the upper levels of the Rear Room South. Incomplete. Rim diameter: 10.5 cms. Height: >22.7 cms. *COA* type: xxi/1049.

Vessel 63109. Vase. Fabric I.1, red polished slip on the exterior and over the rim. Found in sherd form throughout the Middle Room fill, primarily on the northern side, and also in the Front Room. About 3/4 preserved. Diameter: 10.4 cms. Height: 24.2 cms. *COA* type XV.17 (xxvi/1013).

Evidence from sherds

One vessel type conspicuous by the quantity of its sherds in the Middle Room is **group 2**, bread platters. Sherds from these made up 17% of the diagnostic sherd numbers in this room, and represent at least two vessels: one of c. 24 cms. diameter, and the other slightly larger, c. 30 cms. Both are of approximately *COA* type II.5 (iii/1020). All the sherds were of a coarse friable chaff-tempered silt ware, very lightly fired, and were unslipped. In most cases, the sherds were coated with a thin white gypsum plaster on the interior, or exterior or both surfaces, and this showed no signs of heating. Unfortunately due to the friable nature of the fabric it was not possible to reconstruct the platters.

Sherds belonging to **group 5**, small red-slipped simple-rimmed bowls, were found to be abundant, forming 29% of the diagnostics in the Middle Room. At least 2 vessels are present, although it is probable that the sherds in fact represent rather more incomplete vessels, and that joins could be made with group 5 sherds in adjacent rooms.

Other groups present in sufficient quantities to suggest the presence of complete vessels are:

Group 13 (meat jars). Substantial parts of one (fabric III.6, cream slipped), and the lower body fragments of another, the bulk of which was found in the Front Room (see below Vessel 63549, Figure 10.5) were recovered.

Group 17 (biconical jars). Rim and base fragments occur in sufficient numbers to suggest at least one vessel of fabric I.1, with a thin red slip over the exterior. Of the known joining sherds, the base and body fragments are located throughout the units of the Middle Room, primarily on the northern side; the rim sherds (joins between which and the body of the vessel have not been made due to the worn condition of the former) come from the overlying debris.

Group 20. Sherds of part of a further amphora of this shape occur throughout the units of the Middle Room. This is of fabric III.11 and is cream-slipped. A fragment of the base of this vessel was found in the Front Room North (unit [1706]).

Group 23 (tall-necked vases with turned-over rims). This group is represented by a single vessel, the rim of which is complete; the lower body of the vessel was found in the upper debris of the house (the intervening body sherds were unfortunately disposed of in the initial stages of house clearance). The fabric of this vessel is III.1, and it is self-slipped. The vessel probably approximates to *COA* type XVII.10 (lxxvi/228).

Other groups represented by small numbers of sherds, insufficient to indicate the presence of individual vessels within the Middle Room, are groups 6, 7, 11, 16, 20, 21 and 38; there are also a few sherds of blue-painted siltware.

10.3 Rear Room South

The fill of this room was found on excavation to be only slightly disturbed. It produced far fewer sherds than the Middle Room, but amongst these were substantial parts of two vessels (see Figure 10.2).

Vessel 60413. Hearth. Fabric I.1, unslipped. On the upper exterior are deep cord impressions; also a small design (?) incised between 2 of the rows of impressions before the vessel was fired. On the interior towards the middle of the hearth a zig-zag line was incised in the wet clay before the vessel was fired. The hearth itself shows no trace of burning. Fragments were found in units [1431] and [1501]; the hearth is about 2/3 preserved. Diameter: 46.2 cms. Height: 15.3 cms. *COA* type: not in corpus.

Vessel 61154. Biconical jar. Fabric I.1, red matte slip over the exterior. The jar as illustrated is a composite taken from 3 reconstructed parts; however, the appearance of the breaks supports

the idea that all the parts come from the same vessel. On the shoulder of the jar an owner's mark has been deeply incised after firing, representing the hieroglyph *mn*. Rouletting marks are conspicuous on the lower body, presumably the result of the trimming of the vessel whilst it rotated on the wheel. On the rim are traces of a black substance, presumably connected with the sealing of the vessel. Fragments of the jar were found in units [1500S] and [1502S].

Evidence from sherds

Bread platters, **group 2**, are represented in the room fill by sherds from a single vessel of c. 18 cms. diameter.

Group 5 bowls are, as usual, abundant, and represent at least one vessel.

Group 6 vessels are encountered in sizeable numbers only in this room of Gate Street 8. Here just over half of an unslipped bowl of fabric I.1 was found, with a wide ledge rim. It was approximately of 16 cms. diameter, and was coated with gypsum plaster on all its surfaces; clear signs of burning were visible on its interior. It may well have been used as a lamp in this dark innermost room, or for burning incense. However, on present excavated evidence from the Village the burning of incense seems to have been more of a religious than a domestic practice.

Group 13 was represented by a substantial part of a meat jar base in units [1491S] and [1431N], with adjoining fragments in the Rear Room North and in the upper debris.

From the sherds, at least one or possibly two other **group 17** jars are present in the room fill. Both of these are of fabric I.1, and have a red slip over the exterior (except sometimes over the very base of the jar). One such is **Vessel 61103**, which was unslipped at the base, and which shows traces of a layer of mud plaster on the interior.

10.4 The Front Room

Both this room and the Rear Room North had been completely turned over by robbers, and between them produced only two reconstructable vessels. However, many sherds were found to belong to vessels already known from the Middle Room and the Rear Room South. In the case of the Front Room, it was noticeable that both the reconstructable vessels and almost all the joining sherds (there being only two exceptions) came from the south part of the Front Room; it must be assumed from this that the fill from the north part of the room derives from a different source, and that the same is true of the Rear Room North.

Vessel 63531. Fabric I.1. This is the more interesting of the vessels present in the Front Room South. It is formed from the lower part of a small round-based jar, the broken upper edge of which has been ground off smoothly. The surface treatment cannot be seen due to the extensive blackening on all surfaces and the adhering encrustations. This suggests the vessel was used as a lamp. Sherds of the vessel, which is complete, were recovered from units [1504], [1585], [1578] and [1734].

Vessel 63524. Simple-rimmed bowl. Fabric I.1, red slipped. This shows traces of burning on both its interior and exterior, and could also have functioned as a lamp. It is probable that other sherds from this vessel are present in other rooms in Gate Street 8, since it is incompletely preserved. Diameter: 21.7 cms. Height 7.5 cms. COA type: III.5

Vessel 63549. Meat jar. This was of a distinctive bright green fabric, which had no striking similarities to other known marl fabrics, and was cream slipped. The fabric may have been an over-fired III.9, although the latter lacks the tiny black particles which were noticeable in the meat jar. The exterior surface shows clear wiping marks or broad brush strokes from the application of the slip. Deep cord impressions run round the maximum diameter of the body. The Front Room produced a large number of body sherds and the rim of this vessel, the lower body fragments were found low down in the fill of the Middle Room (see above). It should therefore be noted that because of the spread of its sherds throughout the house (i.e. sherds were found in the Front Room South, the Middle Room and the Rear Room as well as in the overlying debris) it is by no means clear where this vessel was originally located; because part of the body was located in the relatively undisturbed Middle Room (units [1575] and [1709]) it is illustrated along with the Middle Room vessels.

A further reconstructable but incomplete vessel from the Front Room is not yet drawn, and comes almost entirely from the north part of the room and the overlying debris. The exception is a single sherd, found in unit [1707] of the Middle Room. It is a large *zir*-like vessel, most of the

neck and rim of which are missing. It is of a soft siltware, and is unslipped. The vessel is of great interest because the body is clearly handmade, with heavy walls of irregular thickness. The neck, however, in the small area preserved, shows regular turning marks, and the walls are considerably thinner and of more even thickness than those of the vessel body. The evidence therefore suggests the application of a wheelmade neck to a handmade body, which poses interesting questions as to the nature of pottery manufacture in the vicinity of Amarna. The vessel contrasts markedly with the *zirs* of the *Zir*-area which, whilst of comparable size and shape, were entirely wheelmade; however, the vessel in question shows a great resemblance to one of the water jars placed in the streets in the Workmen's Village (see Woolley 1922: pl.IX; one such vessel is visible in the background). The location of the present vessel, in the area immediately inside the doorway to the street, is consistent with it having originally stood outside the house.⁴ The number of sherds from large handmade vessels present in the area may indicate the presence of part of another such vessel.

Evidence from sherds

In the sherd material from the Front Room, the commonest group represented by diagnostic sherds was as usual **group 5** bowls. Including Vessel 63524, discussed above, they form over half the assemblage. At least three vessels are represented; it is probable that many of these join with fragments from other rooms.

Group 18 (jars with outward-flaring rim) are also represented in the Front Room by part of a single vessel, sherds joining which are found in the Rear Room South (unit [1502S]) and in the overlying debris. The vessel is of fabric I.1 and is unslipped.

Apart from the above-mentioned groups, no others contain sufficient sherds to suggest the presence of complete vessels. However, given the number of known joins between this room and others, it may well be that others can be made. This will be discussed below.

10.5 Rear Room North

The fill of this room was extensively disturbed, and apart from producing a few sherds which made joins with vessels in the adjacent Rear Room South and Middle Room, no other data of interest in the context of this room alone were recovered.

10.6 Upper Debris overlying the house

Whilst this material has not been extensively analysed because of its uncertain provenance, it produced a number of fragments joining vessels known from deeper, less disturbed contexts within Gate Street 8, and these have been mentioned above. It also produced parts of several other vessels, unique to this debris, which because of their intrinsic interest are discussed here. The first is about 2/3 of a "cobra bowl" found in many fragments (Figure 10.1, Vessel 40022; COA type XXIII.1; see Kemp 1981: 14-16 for a more detailed description of these vessels). This was of fabric I.1 and was unslipped except for a somewhat unevenly applied red rim band. It had the characteristic wavy rim. Inside the bowl, the tip of the tail and the upper body of the cobra are preserved; the upreared head is missing. It is interesting to note that such vessels are found within the village and obviously fulfilled a function within a domestic setting.

Vessel 62767, the upper part of a bottle, also comes entirely from the upper debris. It is interesting both for its rim shape, and the fact that it appears to have come from a flask-shaped bottle, i.e. one with a flattened profile in side view. However, because its lower body has not been found this is not completely certain. The neck is of fabric I.4, and the whole is red-slipped.

The debris also produced sherds forming the lower parts of three large round-based vessels; one of these, Vessel 61722 (of Fabric I.1) is illustrated.

Finally, there occurred amongst the sherds in the upper debris three large rim fragments from an open bowl of distinctive fabric and shape. Further small fragments of rim and body were thereafter located in units [1578], on the south side of the Front Room, and [1509] in the Middle Room. The proximity of the latter unit to the upper disturbed material, and the lack of other

⁴ Sherds of similar handmade *zirs* are also visible in great numbers on the surface of the Stone Village.

sherds within the Middle Room suggests that this vessel should be grouped with those occurring in the overlying deposit rather than with those from within the room itself. The bowl fabric appears to be of siltware (it does not react with dilute hydrochloric acid), and contains far larger quantities of sand than are usually seen; this gives the fabric an extremely granular appearance, resembling that seen in fabric III.8. The surfaces are cream-slipped. In shape, the bowl is of about 30 cms. in diameter, and has, to judge from the small amount preserved, a flat base. The rim is cut squarely to the vessel wall, and its inner edge projects beyond the inner vessel wall. No parallels are known for this from the Workmen's Village. It is however possible that the vessel is a spinning bowl (Group 26; COA type XXIII.5 would be the most similar to the sherds in question) of somewhat unusual kind.

Evidence from sherds for the entire house

As stated above, the fill of Gate Street 8 has in the case of the Front Room and the Rear Room North, and to a lesser extent in the other rooms, been subject to disturbance by illicit digging. It is therefore very probable that in the course of this more sherds will have been moved around between rooms than those picked out in the process of reconstruction. Because of this, it is worth looking at the contents of the house as a whole, including all the excavation units except those belonging to the upper debris. Running through the groups in order, one can note the presence of at least 3 bread platters (group 2), 7 group 5 bowls; a virtually complete group 6 bowl, unslipped and with a gypsum plaster coating, and lesser portions of 2 similar bowls, red-slipped and red-slipped and polished respectively; one group 8 cooking bowl, 3 group 11 hearths, 3 group 13 meat jars, at least 2, and probably more, group 17 biconical jars, 4 (and again probably more) group 18 vessels, 2 Canaanite amphorae (group 20), 1 group 23 vase, a one-handled cup (group 25), a red-polished vase and at least 1 handmade *zir*.

Other groups present but in too small a quantity to suggest the presence of one or more complete vessels are groups 1, 7, 8, 11 (these hearths are smaller than the more complete examples found in the house, and are red-slipped or have a red rim band), 14 (both marl clay and siltware), 15, 21 and 38. Also noteworthy are three sherds which, although small, are very reminiscent of the fenestrated lid found in the dumps overlying the Main Chapel (see AR I: 165-6), and like these had a thick gypsum coating on the exterior. These odd sherds presumably represent fragments of vessels from other houses or from the dug-out rooms in Gate Street 8; a few may also originate from the broken bricks themselves, since sherds are occasionally found in them as tempering material.⁵ Few blue-painted sherds were recovered, although interestingly two of these were on a marl fabric, III.1, which is virtually unprecedented in the Workmen's Village or its vicinity.

10.7 Conclusions

The excavations inside the Workmen's Village have again shown the presence of a distinctive pottery assemblage as well as several pottery types not previously encountered in the current excavations. However, all the vessel types recovered from Gate Street 8 are paralleled by the discoveries of the earlier excavations as reported in COA I.

The domestic assemblage can perhaps be described as a combination of the utilitarian (i.e. the bread platters, the group 18 jars which may well have been used for cooking, the biconical jars and hearths) and the much more "exotic" vessels, parallels for which have not been found in the current excavations outside the Village (Vessels 63107, 63109). The presence of the latter bespeaks perhaps a rather more elegant or sophisticated element in the lives of the villagers than might be otherwise thought.

As for the localisation of vessels and the effects of later disturbance on the distribution of sherds within the house, it is fairly clear that in the case of the Middle Room probably Vessels 62485 and 63107 were positioned in the southern area and that 62026, 63243, 63109 and the Group 23 vessel were in the north. It seems probable that most of the vessels would have

⁵ At the end of the 1985 season Kemp tested a small marl brick sample for sherds. Pieces from two rubble units from Gate Street 8 (nos. [1509] and [1502]) were crumbled into a 12-inch geological sieve. In three sieve-fulls from the former one sherd was recovered, and in two from the latter no sherds were found. This infrequency of sherds matches the appearance of weathered wall surfaces at the Village.

Pottery from Gate Street 8

belonged to the pottery in the upper room, since the sherds are caught up in the brickwork from the latter's floor; the only vessels securely associated with the ground floor room are the two hearths and Vessel 62041, two sherds of which were embedded in the ashy fill of the hearth 69053. The other vessels turned up in roughly equal numbers in units on the northern and southern parts of the room. It is also noticeable that it is the vessels in the northern area of the Middle Room which have adjoining fragments in the Front Room South. It seems then that what disturbance there was to the Middle Room was in its northern part, and the debris from this was redeposited in the southern part of the Front Room. It is therefore quite possible that the vessels listed as belonging to the Front Room, which are both small, may have been redeposited from an original placing in the Middle Room. The fill of the northern part of the Front Room bears virtually no relation to that of the rest of the house: the only exceptions to this are a sherd of the Canaanite amphora of fabric III.11 known from the Middle Room, and a fragment of the group 5 bowl known from the Front Room South. The fill of the Rear Room South has many vessels in common between its northern and southern parts, which is not surprising for a relatively small room. The fact that at least one of the vessels therein also has joining sherds in the Front Room South again indicates disturbance and redeposition of some of the material therein.

References

Woolley, C.L. (1922). "Excavations at Tell el-Amarna." *JEA* 8: 48-82.

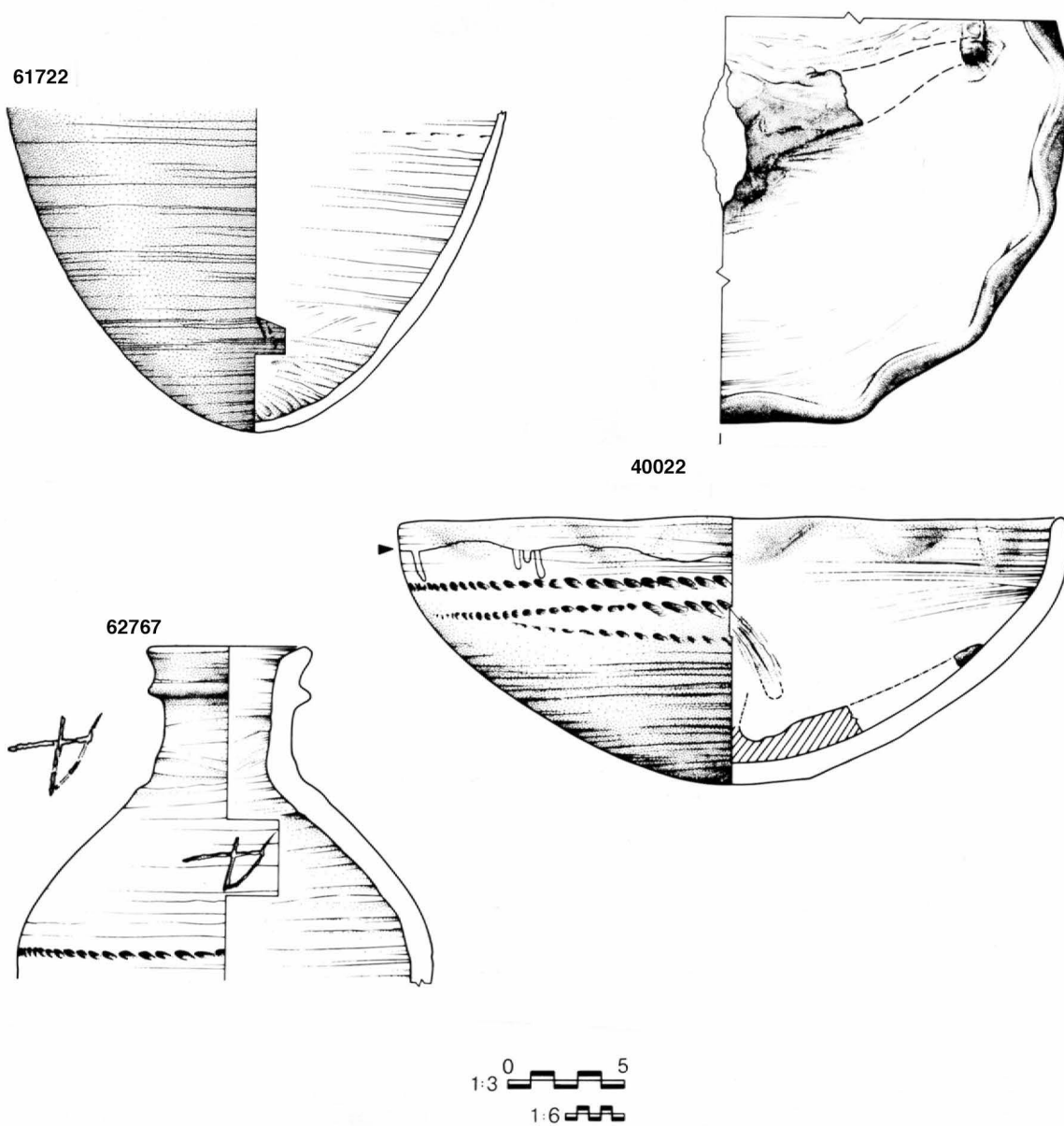


Figure 10.1. Vessels from the upper house fill. Scales: 40022, 62767 - 1:3; 61722 - 1:6.

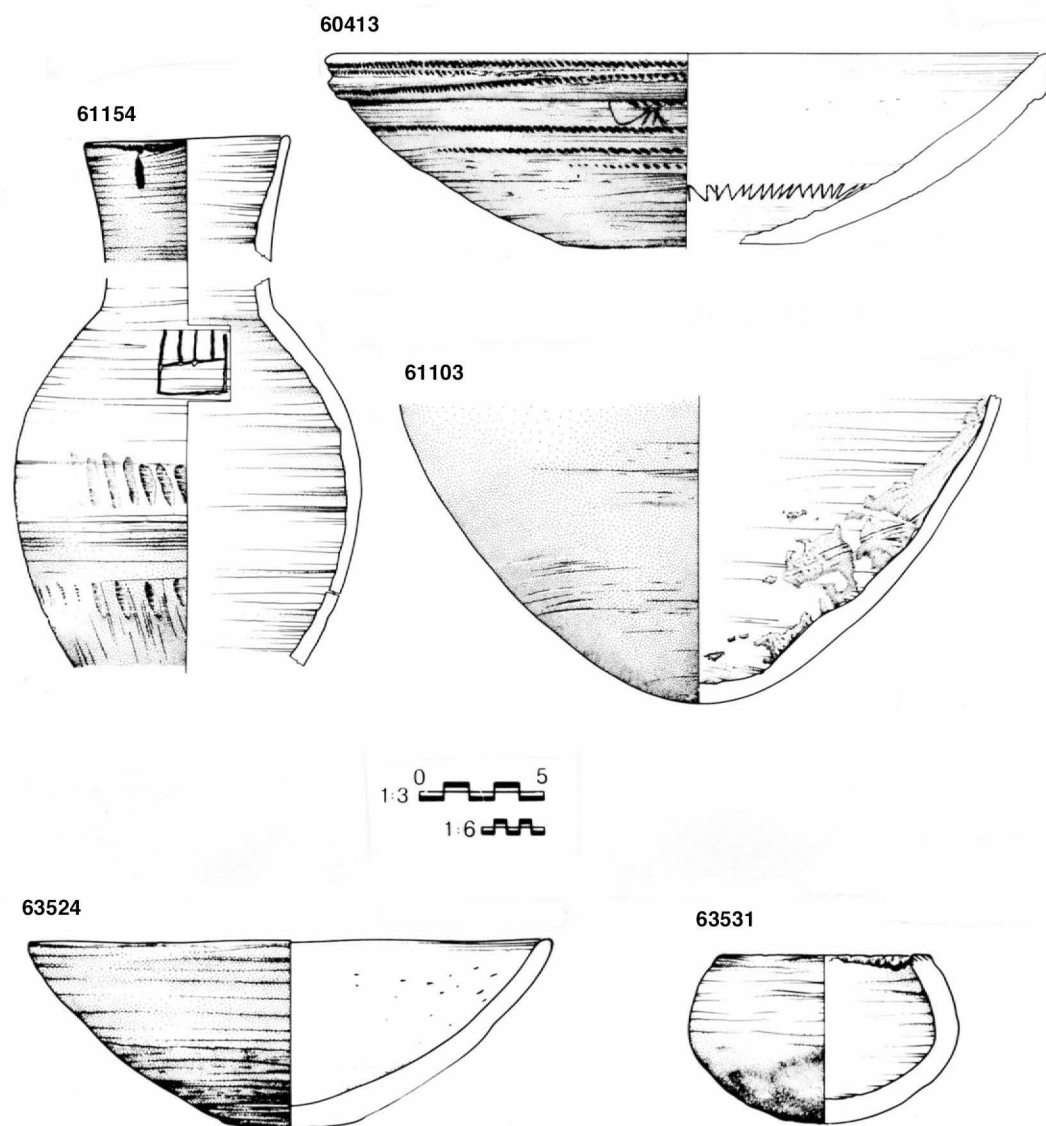


Figure 10.2. Vessels 61154, 60413, 61103 from Rear Room South; 63524 and 63531 from Front Room. Scales: 61154, 60413, 61103 - 1:6; 63524, 63531 - 1:3.

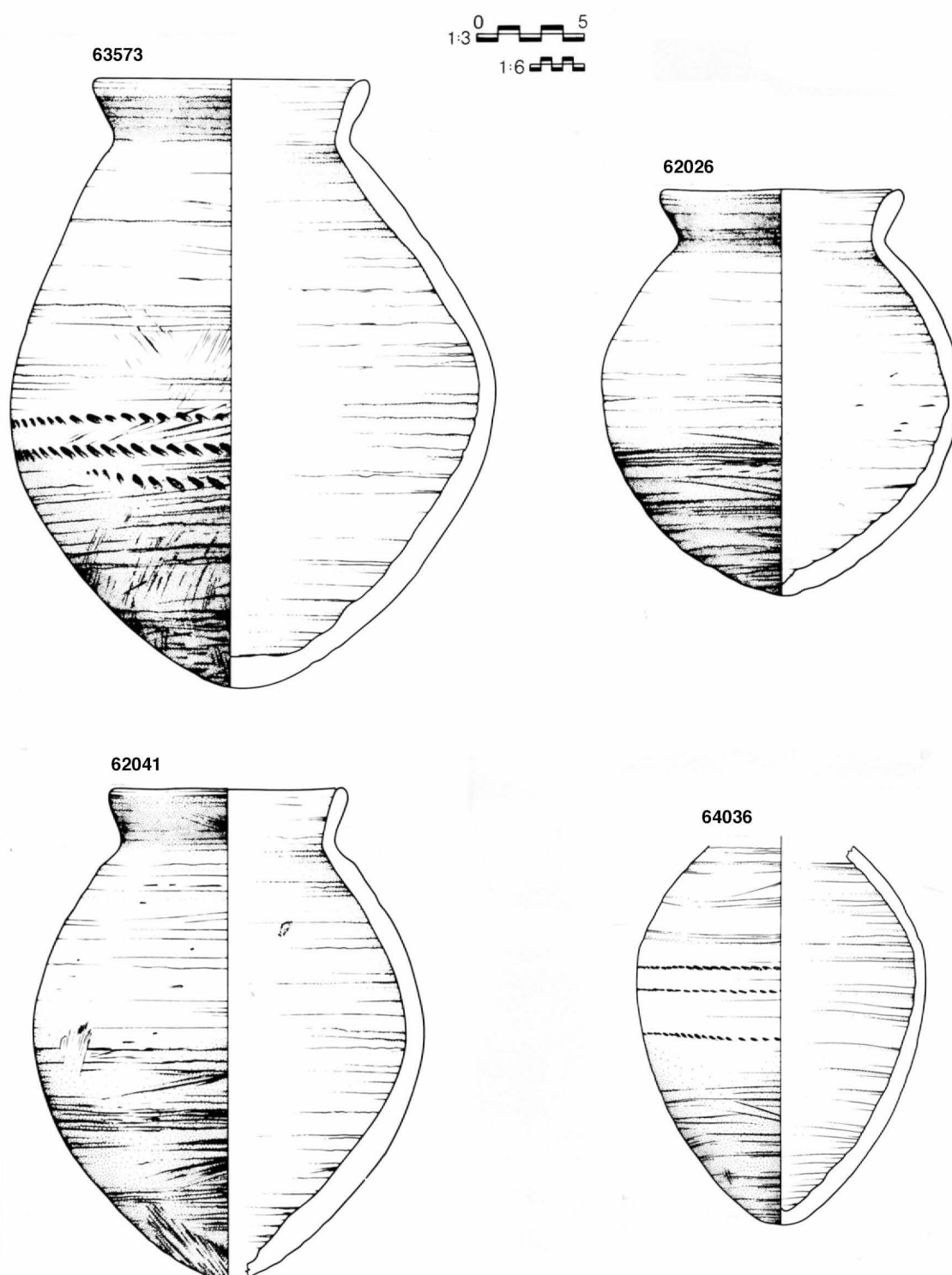


Figure 10.3. Vessels from Middle Room. Scales: 63573, 62026, 62041 - 1:3; 64036 - 1:6.

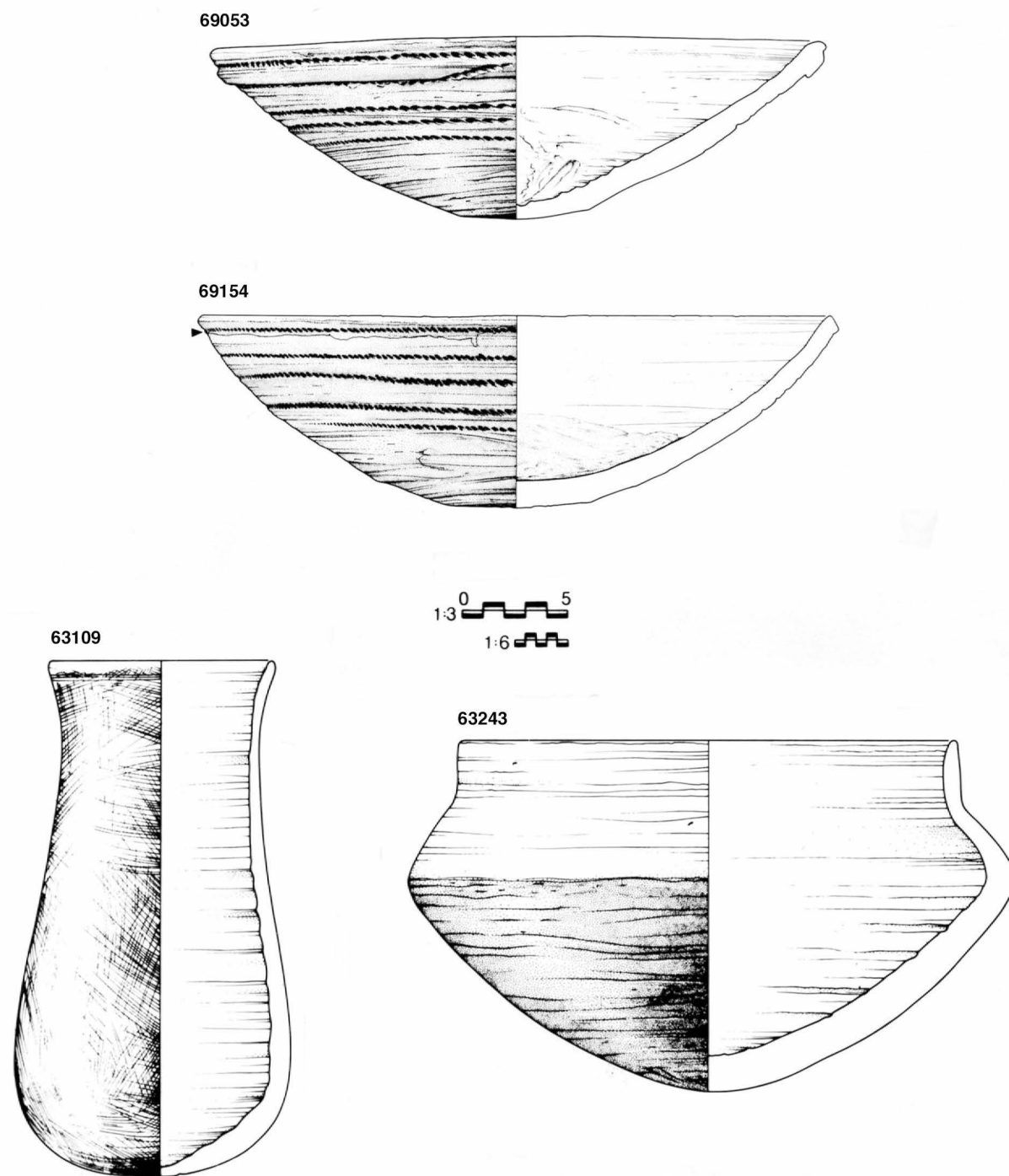


Figure 10.4. Vessels from the Middle Room. Scales: 69053, 69154 - 1:6; 63109, 63243 - 1:3.

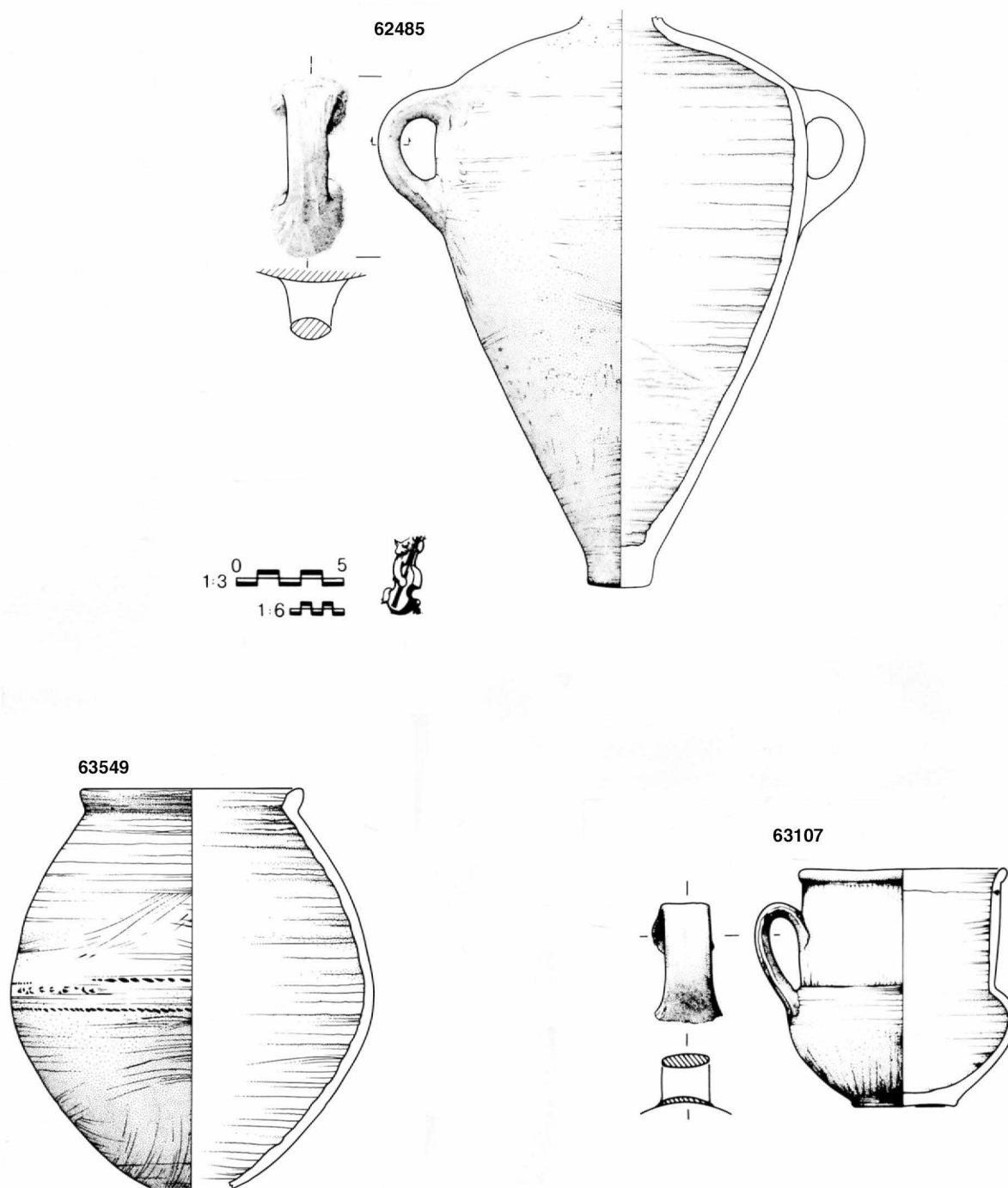


Figure 10.5. Vessels from the Middle Room. Scales: 62485, 63549 - 1:6; 63107 - 1:3.