

Evboean connections with eastern Boeotia: Ceramics and synchronisms between Lefkandi and ancient Eleon

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Περίληψη

Στο πλαίσιο ενός προγράμματος συνεργασίας μεταξύ του Καναδικού Αρχαιολογικού Ινστιτούτου και της Θ' Εφορείας Προϊστορικών & Κλασικών Αρχαιοτήτων πραγματοποιούνται ανασκαφικές εργασίες ακριβώς έξω από το σύγχρονο χωριό Αρμά που έχει ταυτιστεί με την αρχαϊκή / κλασική *κώμη* του Ελαιώνα και το κέντρο της Ύστερης Εποχής του Χαλκού που αναφέρεται ως e-re-o-ni.¹ Αν και η συνολική έκταση που έχει ανασκαφτεί ως σήμερα δεν είναι μεγάλη, έχουν ήδη προκύψει σημαντικά ευρήματα που αναδεικνύουν τον κομβικό ρόλο του Ελαιώνα στα εμπορικά δίκτυα κατά την Ύστερη Εποχή του Χαλκού. Σύμφωνα με προκαταρκτικές και συνεχιζόμενες μελέτες της κεραμικής στον Ελαιώνα σε αυτό το άρθρο παρουσιάζεται και συζητάται μια σαφώς καθορισμένη απόθεση, σύγχρονη με τη φάση Ιβ στο Λευκαντί. Αυτή η απόθεση επισημαίνει τις στενές τεχνοτροπικές σχέσεις ανάμεσα στον Ελαιώνα και το Λευκαντί και υποδηλώνει ότι οι δύο θέσεις αποτελούσαν τμήματα ενός ευρύτερου δικτύου θέσεων της ανατολικής Βοιωτίας και της δυτικής Εύβοιας που όχι μόνο επιβίωσαν από την καταστροφή της θηβαϊκής ηγεμονίας αλλά άνθισαν σε όλη τη διάρκεια της Υστεροελλαδικής ΙΙΙΓ περιόδου.

Introduction

Since 2007, the Eastern Boeotia Archaeological Project (EBAP), a *synergasia* between the 9th Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities and the Canadian Institute in Greece, has investigated the acropolis identified with the ancient site of Eleon, located on the outskirts of the modern town of Arma.² The first phase of this project consisted of a regional survey, designed to analyse diachronic patterns of land use within the region.³ This research demonstrates that Eleon was an important set-

1. I would like to thank the directors of the Eastern Boeotia Archaeological Project, Vassilis Aravantinos, Brendan Burke, Bryan Burns and Alexandra Charami for allowing me to study and present this material. Further thanks to Brendan Burke and Bartek Lis for reading drafts of this research at various stages and offering feedback, and to Tina Ross for preparing the figures. Any errors or omissions that remain are my own. This research was undertaken with the help of a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada doctoral fellowship.

2. Ulrichs (1840, 79-80) was the first to argue for the identification of the acropolis outside Arma (Dhritsa) with ancient Eleon, an identification that was supported by Frazer (1913, 65) based on geographical considerations. More recently, Fossey (1988, 94-95) has reconsidered the testimonia and their usefulness. While the identification with ancient Eleon remains circumstantial, the richness of the Late Helladic occupation combined with its appearance as a Boeotian toponym in the *Iliad* (2.500; 10.266) and the Linear B tablets from Thebes (Ft 140.5 and X 155.1) continues to suggest that this identification is correct. The site of ancient Eleon was known as late as Strabo (9.2.12; 9.2.14), but the lack of evidence for Hellenistic and Roman occupation suggests that it was largely abandoned by this time. It is likely significant that Pausanias never mentions the site, despite passing nearby.

3. The Eastern Boeotia Archaeological Project Survey (2007-2010) was directed by Vassilis Aravantinos, Brendan Burke, Bryan Burns and Susan Lupack.

tlement in east Boeotia during the Late Bronze Age. While the earliest ceramic finds uncovered by the survey date to the Early Bronze Age, the first significant settlement likely took place in the Middle Bronze Age. Results obtained thus far suggest a period of abandonment from the Late Helladic (LH) IIIC Late until the Late Geometric period, followed by a reuse of the acropolis in the 8th century BC that lasted until sometime in the 4th century BC.⁴ Since 2011, the focus of EBAP has shifted to the excavation of the ancient acropolis.⁵ These excavations have uncovered the remains of a significant destruction level of the LH IIIC period. This paper considers the destruction deposit and suggests a preliminary date for it by comparing the numerous vessels found associated with the destruction with those found in the significant LH IIIC deposits at Lefkandi, as well as other sites when necessary.⁶ In particular, the focus is on the increasing regionalization observed in the ceramics of the LH IIIC Early period, which demonstrates the emergence of a strong stylistic *koine* between Eleon and Lefkandi.

The site

Although the excavated area of ancient Eleon remains relatively small thus far, comprising a total of 100 m² in the settlement proper and 200 m² in the area of the ancient gate at the close of the 2012 season, it has produced an abundant amount of stratified ceramic material dating from the Early Helladic to the LH IIIC periods. Excavation has focused on three sectors of the site grid: the north-west (NW), the south-west (SW) and the south-east (SE) or Gate sectors.⁷ Thus far, the burnt destruction deposit has only been identified in the NW sector. Within the NW sector, a series of rooms has been identified that seem to form part of one or more domestic structures. At least three distinct phases of construction are documented in the architecture of this area, most clearly demonstrated by the wall running east-west across the central part of trench NW B2c and into NW B2d (Fig. 1), which is clearly formed from three individually constructed, but abutting, parallel walls. Preliminary analysis of the ceramics has thus far focused on the large room in the eastern part of the NW sector, which yielded well-preserved destruction deposits of the LHIIIC period. Although the same destruction deposit has been observed in all the rooms located in the NW sector, the assignment of ceramics from these other rooms is made more difficult on account of anthropogenic and biological disturbances, chiefly medieval pitting activities and rodent burrows. The appearance of this destruction level across the sector does, however, tentatively suggest a *terminus ante quem* for the preserved architectural remains in the LH IIIC period.

The destruction deposit

The destruction level is easy to identify since all the vessels found within it exhibit moderate to severe levels of blackening. In several cases sherds forming a single vessel display differential levels of blackening, demonstrating that they broke either immediately prior to, or in the early stages of the fire. Other vessels preserve distinctive rings of ash near their bases, demonstrating that they were positioned *in situ* on the earth floor of the room at the time of the destruction. In total, 16 complete or almost

4. Preliminary publication of the survey results can be found in Aravantinos et al. 2007; 2009; 2013. The final publication of the survey of the acropolis is now available (Aravantinos et al. 2016)

5. The Eastern Boeotia Archaeological Project Excavation in 2011 was co-directed by Vassilis Aravantinos, Brendan Burke and Bryan Burns. Since 2012 the project has been co-directed by Alexandra Charami, Brendan Burke and Bryan Burns.

6. Due to the preliminary nature of this study, statistical analysis of the entire assemblage, including sherd material, could not be included in this publication.

7. Preliminary results from the 2011 and 2012 seasons of excavation are available: Aravantinos et al. 2011; Burke, et al. 2013.

complete profiles have been reconstructed from the deposit located within the room. It is important to note, however, that the excavation of the room remains incomplete since its walls extend into the baulk to the west and to the south. Despite this, the concentration of vessels already uncovered attests to the functionality of the room as a domestic kitchen. In this regard, the assemblage is similar in character to the domestic assemblages documented at the LH IIIC settlement at Lefkandi, which consist of fine decorated tablewares, and large decorated closed shapes for serving, pouring and storing liquids.⁸ In addition, cooking pots, a bath/*asaminthos* and a dipper jug suggest facilities for storing and preparing wet or dry foodstuffs—although no obvious carbonized remains have yet been documented.⁹

The function of this room as a domestic kitchen is further emphasized by its internal features and the findspots of the preserved vessels within. A large hearth, measuring 0.88 x 1.25 m along its maximum axes, was uncovered in the southern part of the room. The construction of the hearth follows the usual LH IIIC form, with a layer of large sherds and tile fragments forming the foundation for a rather thick (max. 0.07 m) accumulation of clay and ash, attesting to its repeated use as the platform for a moderate-sized fire.¹⁰ The size of this hearth would seem to prevent the reconstruction of a second storey over the room. The vessels found at a higher level within the destruction deposit (one hydria [P0255], two jugs [P0026 and P0253], and the lone kalathos [P0254]) should therefore be assigned to high shelving along the walls, or some form of storage space within the rafters. The position of the bath/*asaminthos* on a common axis with the hearth indicates that there was an intentional relationship between the two features. This is supported by the considerable quantity of earth that had built up around the base of the bath, which means that the original surface on which both the bath and hearth were laid several centimetres below floor level at the time of destruction, suggesting the continuous functioning of this space over a considerable period of time.¹¹

The discovery of the dipper jug (P0027) *in situ* at the western end of the bath suggests that it was located for convenient use, for scraping out whatever was stored within. Support for this hypothesis is provided by the scratch marks visible on the rim and body of the dipper jug.¹² Whether this bath held liquid or dry goods remains unknown, but a bathing function, a function that has not entirely been ruled out at Lefkandi for a bath found *in situ* in Room 11 of the Phase 1b destruction, does appear to be ruled out at ancient Eleon in favour of a storage function.¹³ Although it is tempting to link the three kylikes (P0009, P0010 and P0243) that were found crushed within the bath with its final function, the discovery of additional joins from loci outside the basin suggests that they are more likely to have fallen into the basin from an adjacent shelf along the wall to the north.¹⁴

The remaining vessels were stored neatly in a row along the north wall of the room. The sequence of the vessels from the north-western corner to the east was as follows: a two-handled cooking pot (P0024), a jug with branch motif on the shoulder (P0015), three deep bowls (P0001, P0025 and P0032)

8. See Evely 2006 for a complete listing of finds and their interpretation.

9. Flotation samples taken from the destruction level have yet to be fully analysed and may yet reveal traces of foodstuffs not identified during the excavation.

10. Evely 2006, 18. A detailed description of the sherd hearth found in Room 11 indicates a similar structure and duration of use to the Eleon hearth (Evely 2006, 14-16). Similar hearths are a feature of the LH IIIC period at Mycenae as well (French 2011, 33).

11. Current indications from our 2013 season suggest that an earlier LH IIIC deposit containing mendable unburnt ceramics may be contemporary with this initial phase of construction. Further analysis of these finds is in progress.

12. I would like to thank Bartek Lis for this observation. Lis (2014) more fully explores this phenomenon and what it can reveal about the use and function of Mycenaean vessels.

13. Evely 2006, 150, 220.

14. Blegen and Rawson (1966, 185-189) suggest a bathing function for the Pylos example. It is striking that kylikes and baths seem to occur in relation to each other, but the evidence from ancient Eleon does not favour the bathing hypothesis. The evidence from Eleon does not, however, rule out a function related to the mixing of wine, although given the likely capacity of the bath, this seems somewhat excessive for domestic use. One suggestion is that the bath in Room 11 of the Phase 1b destruction could have served to store water (Evely 2006, 220). This may ultimately prove to be the most likely function for the bath at ancient Eleon as well.

and a one-handed cooking pot (P0028) (Fig. 1). The heavily fragmented nature of two of the three deep bowls makes it conceivable that they too were stored on a shelf above, but their position alongside the wall is also appropriate with them being *in situ*. Their fragmentary condition may simply be a product of the intense heat of the destruction and the collapse of the wall to the north, which was found in a rather fragmentary state of preservation itself (perhaps the product of later stone robbing?). It is notable that an equal number of deep bowls and kylikes was discovered within the room and in close spatial proximity, indicating that these may have been employed simultaneously in sets by the inhabitants of the house during dining activities. This follows the conventional logic that kylikes are functionally suited to the consumption of liquid beverages such as wine and could also have acted as deep bowls for serving various porridges, gruels or stews.¹⁵

Dating the destruction

Stylistically, all the vessels from the destruction layer can be readily assigned to the LH IIIC period (Fig. 2). Comparison with the well-documented pottery from Lefkandi suggests numerous parallels with the Phase 1b destruction levels that have produced an abundance of mendable vessels. For the most part, the fine ware shapes found at ancient Eleon are decorated with simple linear or monochrome designs that can be noted across the Greek mainland during LH IIIC Early. The ubiquitous use of monochrome interiors (with the exception of the kalathos [P0254]), highlights the advanced nature of this LH IIIC Early deposit. While many of these traits could also be assigned to Lefkandi Phase 1a, the appearance of a thick-thin-thick banding on the shoulder of one jug (P0015) from Eleon is a feature that only occurs at Lefkandi, beginning in Phase 1b.¹⁶ Additionally, the dipper jug is popular in Phase 1a and 1b, before quickly being abandoned in Phase 2a.¹⁷ Furthermore, the decoration of the kalathos, with linear banding on the interior and the exterior, also suggests a more advanced stage of LH IIIC Early or even a date early in LH IIIC Middle. At Lefkandi, the earliest kalathoi documented were either monochrome or decorated with a dotted rim, with more complex systems of banding only occurring in Phase 2a, and then in conjunction with more elaborate designs on the interior.¹⁸ The closest parallels for the kalathos from ancient Eleon, however, are the kalathoi from Phase II at Perati.¹⁹ This phase overlaps with the last half of the Lefkandi 1b phase, suggesting that the destruction level at Eleon likely precedes that at Lefkandi by a generation or less. An additional parallel is found in a tomb from Pellana in Laconia, which Penelope Mountjoy and Katie Demakopoulou likewise assign to LH IIIC Middle, again suggesting that the Eleon destruction must belong to the most advanced stage of LH IIIC Early.²⁰

While it is possible that the Eleon destruction was contemporary with the Lefkandi Phase 1b destruction, certain features suggest that the Eleon destruction may have occurred a generation or so earlier than the Lefkandi Phase 1b destruction. First and foremost, we should note the complete lack of LH IIIC Middle features in the assemblage from Eleon (most notable is the lack of elaborate decoration on the rim and interior of the kalathos from Eleon). Secondly, the presence of a carinated cup (P0246), which at Lefkandi is associated with Phase 1a deposits, but is lacking in the Phase 1b destruction deposits, suggests the Eleon destruction should have occurred some time earlier. The carinated cup, however, may not be the most

15. Tournavitou 1992, 198-200. As Lis (2014, 11) demonstrates, wear patterns on the interiors of deep bowls are consistent with some sort of utensil being used to scrape out the contents.

16. Evely 2006, 199.

17. Evely 2006, 204-205.

18. Evely 2006, 195.

19. Iakovides 1969/1970, 79c.412, figs. 81c.433, 81.c.437, 84d.244, 114e.767 and 123c.855.

20. Demakopoulou 2007, 165, fig. 18; Mountjoy 1999, 293, no. 242, fig. 100.

reliable indicator of date, as this shape continues to be continuously well documented at Tiryns and Mycenae, and the shape reappears at Lefkandi in Phase 2a. More important for dating the destruction is the presence of three deep bowls with three different decorative schemes (linear, monochrome, and triglyph with antithetic spiral), since in the Lefkandi Phase 1b almost all of the complete or near-complete deep bowls consisted of those which were monochrome and those which were not were linear.²¹ It seems likely therefore that the destruction at Eleon took place prior to the proliferation of monochrome deep bowls, which occurred towards the end of Lefkandi Phase 1b. The deep bowl with triglyph and antithetic spirals is likely to be particularly important in this regard. It is perhaps notable that these bowls do not reappear at Mycenae until the Tower phase (equivalent to an advanced stage of LH IIIC Early) after the LH IIIB2 destructions.²² This seems to be the case at Lefkandi as well, since the earliest relatively complete example was found in a Phase 1a/b deposit in Alleyway 1 (although with a double rim band on the exterior instead of a medium band), and two other fragmentary examples (one with added white) were found in Phase 1b deposits.²³ Taken together, the diagnostic features present at ancient Eleon suggest a destruction date located within the Lefkandi Phase 1b, but perhaps a generation before the great destruction deposits. This would be equivalent to the incipient part of Phase II at Perati and the Tower phase at Mycenae. It is perhaps best equated with Jeremy Rutter's Phase 3 (see Table 1).²⁴ Although the Eleon destruction deposit exhibits some similarities with the following LH IIIC Middle period, these are equally consistent with an advanced LH IIIC Early date, when one might expect to find some incipient LH IIIC Middle shapes and styles.

Ancient Eleon	Lefkandi [Euboea]	Mycenae [Argolid]	Perati [Attica]	Rutter 1977	Mountjoy 1999	Absolute chronology
		?		1	Transitional	1200 BC
	1a	Early		2	LH IIIC Early	1190
NW Fire Destruction	1b	Tower	I	3		1170
	2a	Developed	II	4 Early	LH IIIC Middle	1150
		Advanced		4 Late		1130
	2b		III		LH IIIC Late	
	3	Final		5 Early		1100>
	Chaliothis					
	Skoubris Cemetery	<present?>		5 late	Sub-Mycenaeen	1080

Table 1: Comparative ceramic chronologies of LH IIIC.²⁵

21. Evely 2006, 188.

22. French 2011, 68-69.

23. For the ambiguous context of this find, see Evely 2006, 35, 145. For illustrations, see Evely 2006, 28, P5 (panel with antithetic spiral), 191, fig. 2.22.1, pl. 55.11 (with added white); Mountjoy 1986, 150, fig. 189.2 (double rim band).

24. Rutter 1977, 2-3.

25. Modified from Mountjoy 1999, 39, table II.

Conclusions

The overall character of the deposit strikingly resembles that of the LH IIIC material from Lefkandi. Distinct features, such as the thick-thin-thick banding on the upper shoulder of closed vessels, and the unusual branch motif on P0015, thus far only found at Lefkandi, highlight close stylistic affinities that are likely indicative of close relations between these centres in the Postpalatial period.²⁶ Additionally, the appearance of the dipper jug, a shape only otherwise attested at Lefkandi, emphasizes the stylistic *koine* existing between these two sites in the LH IIIC Early. Although it remains unknown whether any of the pottery from the destruction deposit was actually manufactured at Lefkandi, an unpublished study of Mycenaean pottery from central and northern Greece undertaken by Selina White at the University of Bradford indicates that some sherds analysed from ancient Eleon were traced to Euboea and some sherds from Euboea to an east Boeotian group.²⁷ As a result of her analysis, White concludes by observing that ‘there was considerable contact with, and trade between, Euboea and Boeotia in the Late Bronze Age.’²⁸ Unfortunately, the chronological resolution of this study prevent it from demonstrating whether there was any change in ceramic distribution networks between the LH IIIB2 and LH IIIC Early phases, following the collapse of the palatial node located at Thebes.²⁹ Further research is thus necessary to answer this question. Nevertheless, the stylistic evidence from ancient Eleon highlights that during the LH IIIC Early period east Boeotia and Euboea were enmeshed in a regional network that facilitated the movement of goods, ideas and the people who transported them. This highlights the important role of the Euboean Gulf as a conduit rather than a barrier.³⁰ Mycenaean ceramics in Boeotia remain understudied, however, and with the exception of Mountjoy’s publication of unstudied material from several secondary sites, few publications have considered the regional character of Boeotian pottery in the Late Bronze Age.³¹ In this regard, the presentation of this deposit represents a small contribution towards a better understanding of Postpalatial networks in the Late Bronze Age Aegean.

The Pottery³²

Conical kylikes [FS 274]

P0009 Height (H) (maximum): 18.5 cm, diameter (D) (rim): 15.0, diameter (base): 6.5

Linear banded bowl on exterior with monochrome interior. Stem and foot monochrome

P0010 H (max.): 18.8, D (rim): 16.0, D (base): 6.6

Thin lip band on exterior of bowl with monochrome interior. Lower bowl, stem and foot monochrome

26. Evely 2006, 146.

27. White 1981, esp. 191, 209.

28. White 1981, 221.

29. It remains unclear how much of an impact the LH IIIB destruction of the palace at Thebes had on the settlement. While little evidence for the LH IIIC period is known outside a few tombs excavated by Keramopoulos on the Kolonaki hill south of the Kadmeia (Symeonoglou 1985, 60, 248-249), the fragmentary but significant deposits published by Andrikou (2006) suggest that the settlement continued uninterrupted.

30. As highlighted most recently by Knodell 2013.

31. Mountjoy 1983. Little pottery has been fully published from Boeotia. Beyond Mountjoy’s synthesis, the only well-published material comes from the site of Thebes. Theban publications are those of Andrikou 2006; Dakouri-Hild 2001; Symeonoglou 1973. The forthcoming publication of Keramopoulos’ excavation of the House of Kadmos by Dakouri-Hild promises to add significantly to this dataset, and will include the results of recent Neutron Activation Analysis. All measurements in the catalogue are in centimeters, unless otherwise specified.

32. All dimensions given in centimetres. Only fully preserved dimensions are recorded. In the case of vessels heavily distorted by fire, the variability of rim diameters has been noted as a range. A small number of vessels have yet to be restored, but their identification is secure.

P0243 H (max.): n/a, D (rim): 14.0, D (base): 6.4

Thin lip band on exterior of bowl with monochrome interior. Lower bowl, stem and foot monochrome

Evely 2006, 143, fig. 2.3.7; 185, figs. 2.3.8, 2.17.1 and 2.17.5, pl. 27.3

Deep bowls [FS 285]

P0001 H (max.): 13.3, D (rim): 15.9-16.9, D (base): 5.4

Triglyph [FM 75] with antithetic spirals [FM 50]

P0025 H (max.): 11.9, D (rim): 15.5-16.5, D (base): n/a

Linear with monochrome interior

P0032 H (max.): 11.9, D (rim): 15.5, D (base): 5.3

Monochrome

Triglyph with antithetic spirals: Evely 2006, 191, fig. 2.22.1, pl. 55.10, 55.11; Mountjoy 1986, 150, fig. 189.2; 1999, 600, no. 481, fig. 223.481. Linear with monochrome interior: Evely 2006, 186, fig. 2.16.7; 139, fig. 2.1.12, 2.1.14; Mountjoy 1983, 30, fig. 10.215, pl. 4c. Monochrome: Evely 2006, pl. 17.7, pl. 26.2; 189, fig. 2.20.4, pl. 27.1

Kalathos [FS 291]

P0254 H (max.): 14.5, D (rim): 33.0, D (base): 12.0

Linear banded interior and exterior

Iakovides 1969/1970, and figs. 79c.412, 81c.433, 81c.437, 84d.244, 114e.767 and 123c.855; Mountjoy 1999, 293, no. 242, fig. 100.242

Carinated cup [FS 240]

P0246 H (max.): n/a, D (rim): 17.0, D (base): n/a

Monochrome

Evely 2006, 183, fig. 2.16.10; 139, fig. 2.1.1-2.1.5

Jugs [FS 106/107]

P0015 H (max.): 30.0, D (rim): 11.7, D (base): 9.3

Thick-thin-thick banding with branch motif

P0026 H (max.): 26.4, D (rim): 11.5, D (base): 8.2

Linear banded

P0253 Unrestored

Linear banded and badly burnt

Thick-thin-thick banding with branch motif: Evely 2006, pl. 18.1. Linear banded: Evely 2006, 140, fig. 2.2.6

Hydria [FS 128]

P0255 H (max.): 39.0, D (rim): 14.6, D (base): 12.0

Linear banded with tassel motif [FM 72]

Evely 2006, pl. 19.3-19.5

Dipper jug

P0027 H (max.): 19.6, D (rim): 13.9, D (base): 7.6

Undecorated

Evely 2006, 149, fig. 2.5.2; 205, fig. 2.32.1, pl. 21.7 and fig. 2.32.2.

One-handled cooking pot [FS 65]

P0028 Unrestored

Undecorated

Evely 2006, 208, fig. 2.33.3, 2.33.4

Two-handled cooking pot [FS 66]

P0024 Unrestored

Undecorated

Evely 2006, 209, fig. 2.34.3

Bath/asaminthos [FS 1]

NC³³ Unrestored

Undecorated

Evely 2006, 213, fig. 2.38.3

33. Not yet catalogued.

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Figures

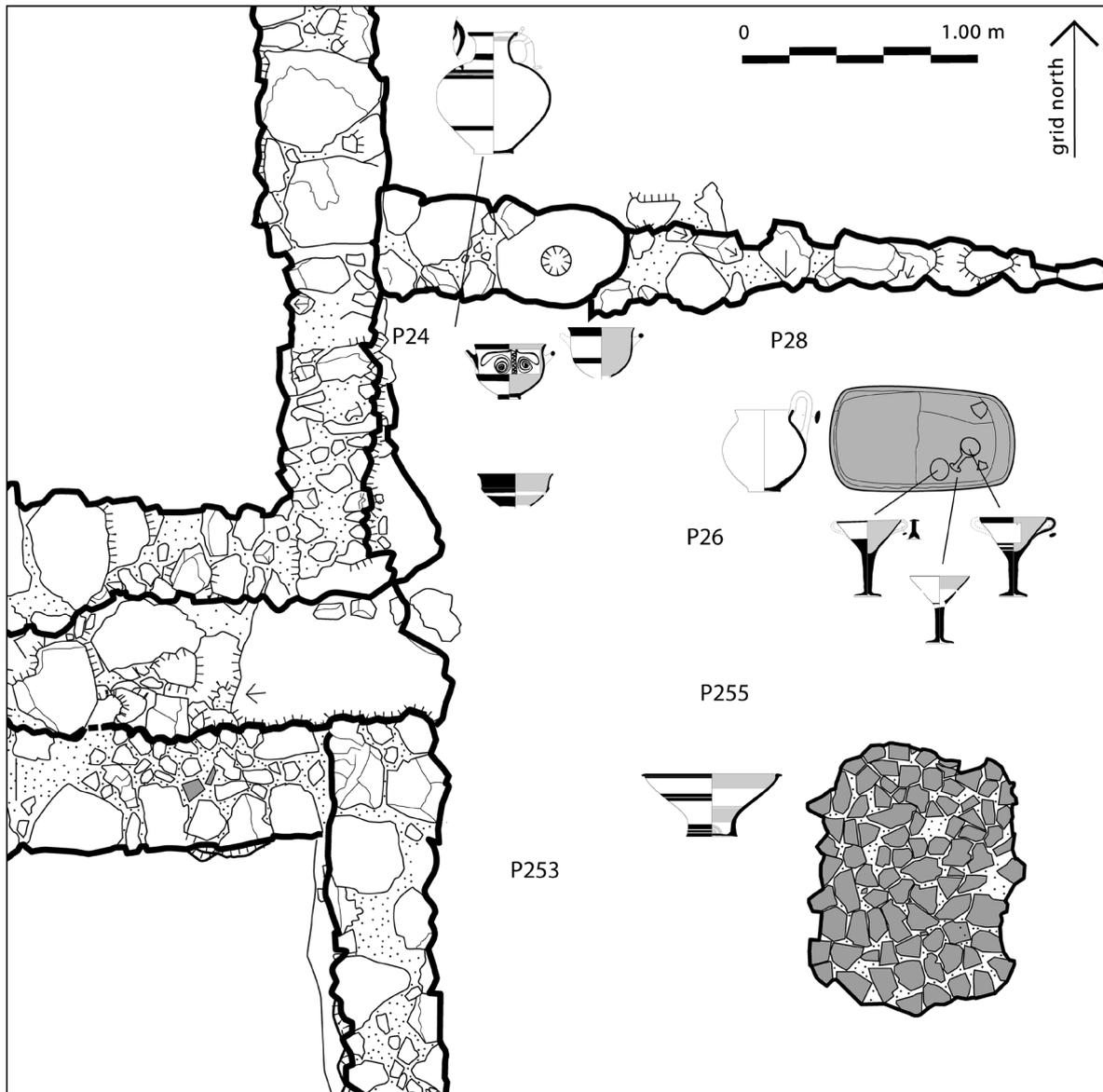


Figure 1. Plan of trench NW B2d with findspots of pots and features from the destruction deposit marked (T. Ross and G. Bianco).

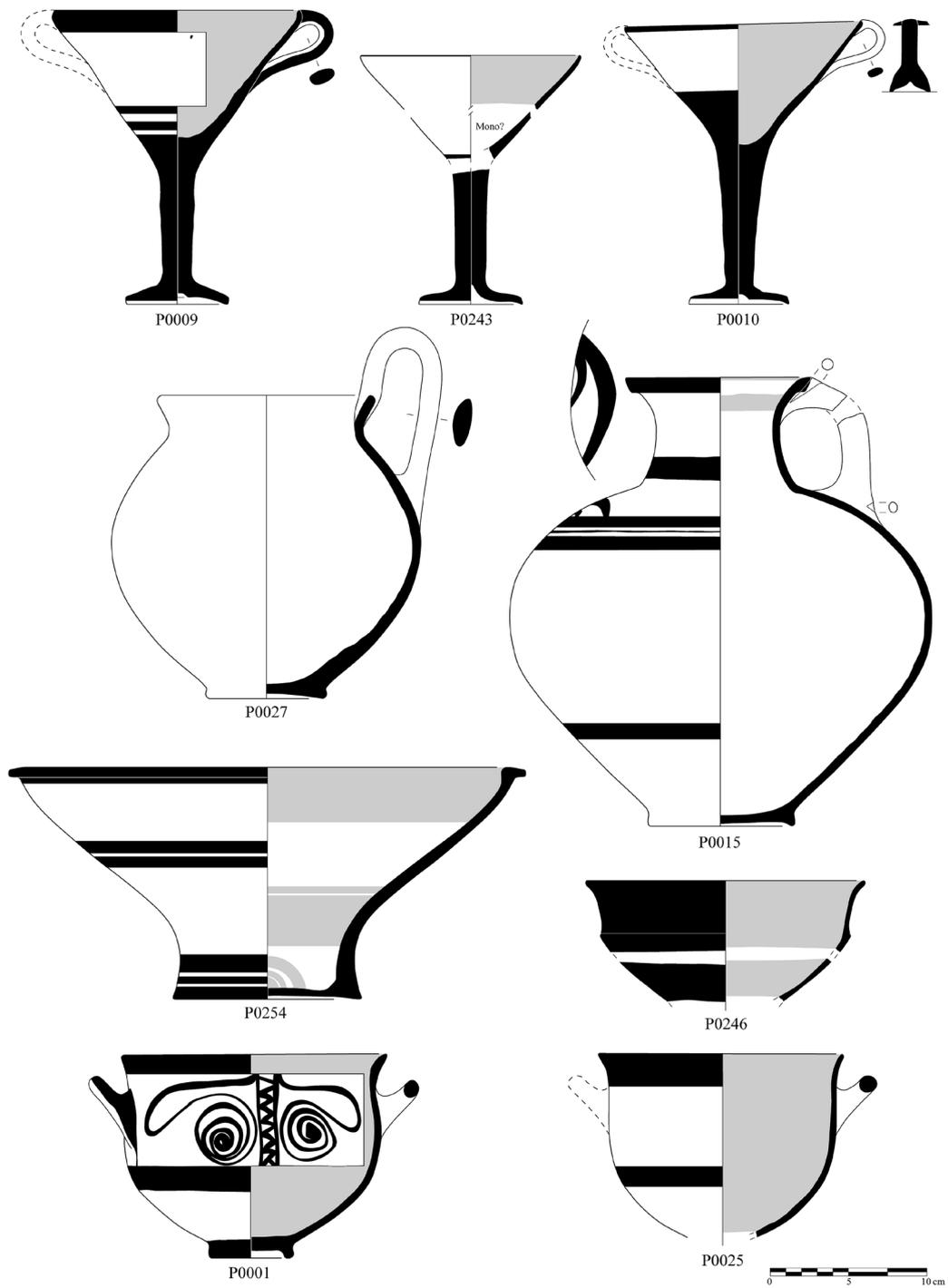


Figure 2. A selection of vases from the NW B2d destruction deposit (T. Ross).