

EXCAVATION AT TELL TABAN, HASSAKE, SYRIA (3): REPORT OF THE 1999 SEASON OF WORK

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I. Introduction

The archaeological site of Tell Taban ($36^{\circ}20'N$ and $40^{\circ}47'E$) is located in the *Salvage* area along the Middle Khabur in the suburbs of the city of Hassake, some 500 km north-east of Damascus, the capital city of the Syrian Arab Republic (Figs. 1 and 2).

In October to December of 1997, the archaeological mission from the Institute for Cultural Studies of Ancient Iraq of Kokushikan University conducted the first season of three years' excavation campaigns at this site. These three years' campaigns were aimed to widen and deepen our knowledge of Mesopotamian history accumulated through field works in Iraq, particularly through excavations in Eski-Mosul near the Iraqi-Syrian border, 50 km north of the city of Mosul.

The first campaign resulted in more than a mere success, yielding parts of Middle Assyrian and Mitannian buildings and, noteworthily, baked-clay cuneiform pieces including two fragments of cylinder inscriptions and two fragments of baked bricks with cuneiform letters [Ohnuma et al. 1999].

Translation and interpretation of these inscription pieces by Professor Dr. Stefan Mario Maul of the

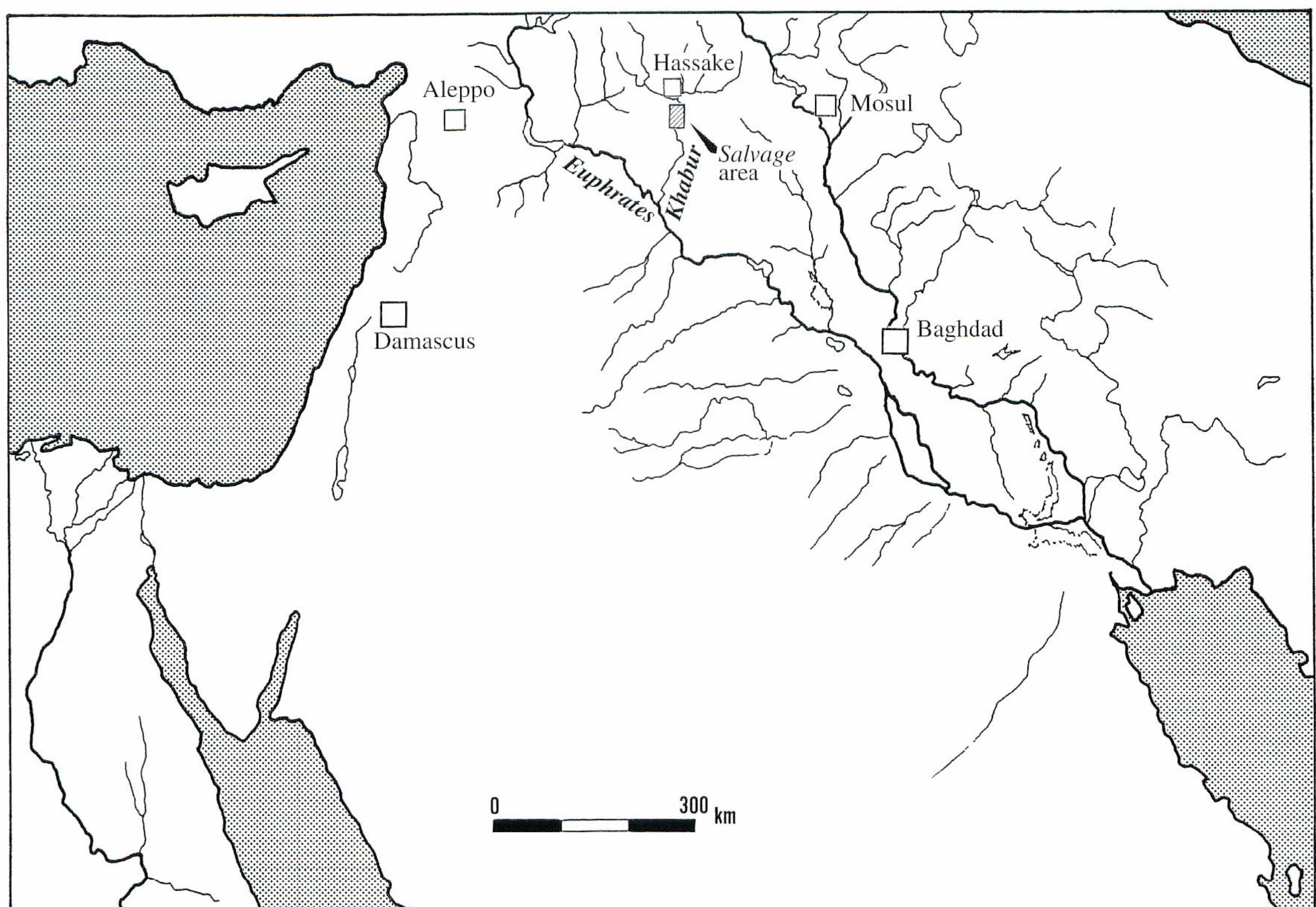


Fig. 1 Map showing the location of the Hassake *Salvage* area

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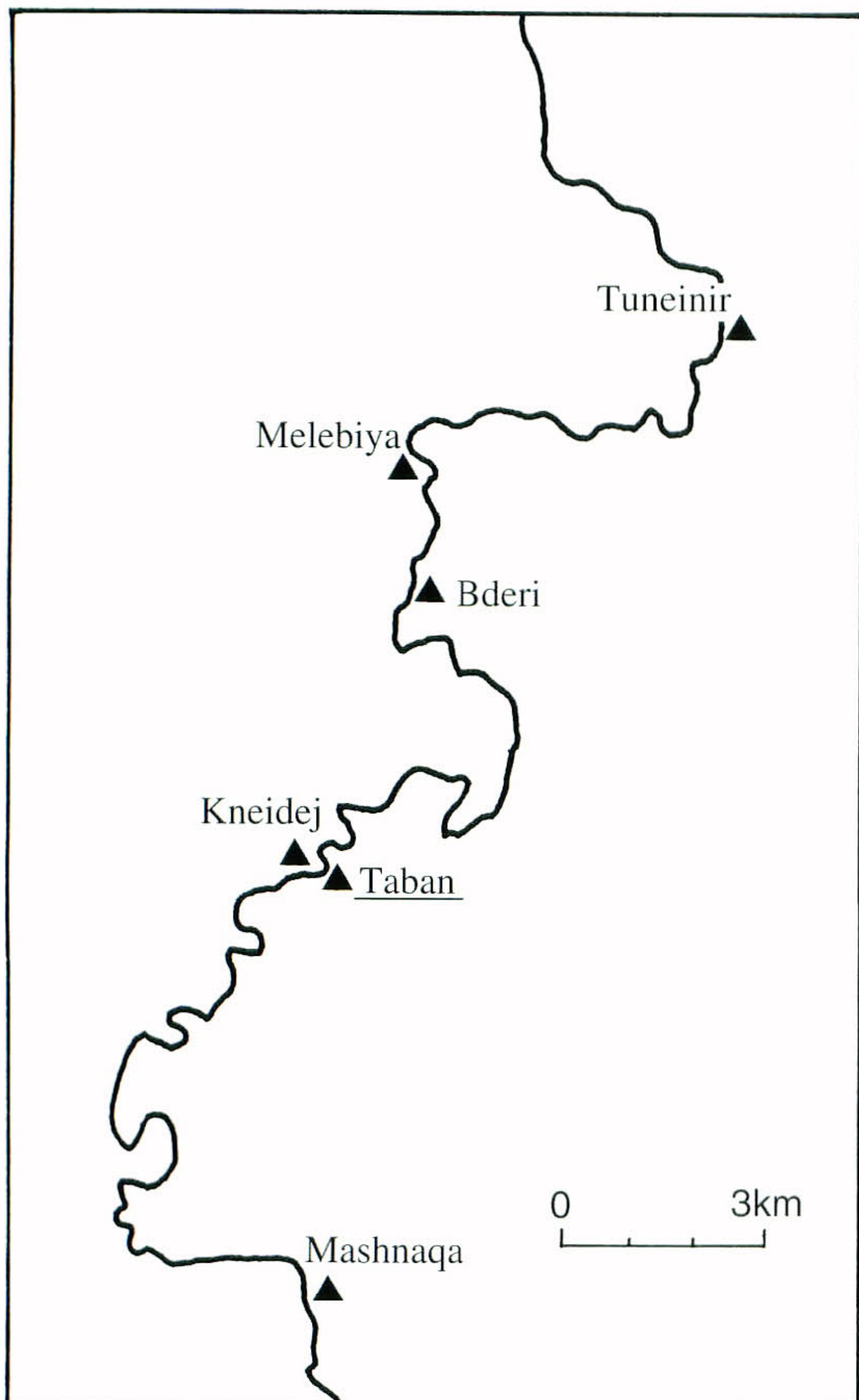


Fig. 2 Map showing the locations of Tell Taban and other sites in the Hassake *Salvage* area

Seminar für Sprachen und Kulturen des Vorderen Orients, Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg clarified that they describe the name of the ancient city Ṭābētu and the name of a Middle Assyrian local king Aššur-Kettī-Lēšer, who had called himself “the King of the Land of Mari” during the reign of the Middle Assyrian King Tiglatpilesar I (reign: 1114 ~ 1076 B.C). Professor Maul also made it clear that these pieces describe that the king Aššur-Kettī-Lēšer had built a palace-like building at Ṭābētu [Maul 1999].

Thus, the first campaign finally proved that Tell Taban itself was the ancient city Ṭābētu, and validated the location of Ṭābētu thus far estimated by German scholars through their years of research in the Khabur region including excavations at the site Tell Bderi, 6 km north of Tell Taban [Forrer 1921:144; Röllig and Kühne 1977/1978:127; Pfälzner 1986/1987; Maul 1992].

The second campaign undertaken in September to November of 1998 again yielded fragments of baked clay cuneiform cylinder inscriptions and of baked bricks with cuneiform letters, as well as potsherds with cuneiform letters, similar specimens to which had not been

unearthed in the first campaign in 1997 [Ohnuma et al. 2000].

Most of the inscription pieces from the second campaign were unearthed from the floor levels of the Middle Assyrian buildings in undisturbed archaeological contexts, and as such provided us with information that could be more reliably used in research than the pieces from the first campaign in 1997.

After analyzing these inscription pieces, Professor Maul clarified that the three cylinder inscription pieces from Levels 6 and 8a, like the pieces from the first campaign, had been left by Aššur-Kettī-Lēšer at the time of the eponym Mudammeq-Bel during the reign of Tiglatpilesar I. He also made it clear that these inscription pieces describe that Aššur-Kettī-Lēšer had restored the walls and the city gate of Ṭābētu.

From September 25 to November 7 of 1999, the third or the last season of the three years' campaigns was carried out (Pls. 1 and 24), and the results of this campaign are reported in the present paper.

The staff members of the third campaign were Katsuhiko Ohnuma and Hirotoishi Numoto, with Mr. Oorham Nano representing the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums of the Syrian Arab Republic. Professor Dr. Stefan Mario Maul joined the mission to analyze all the cuneiform data from Tell Taban. In spite of a rather short stay in Hassake, he produced excellent analysis results, and we greatly appreciate his joint work and thank him for his heart-warming cooperation.

Before and during the field works at Tell Taban, we received kind help and invaluable suggestion from Professor Dr. Sultan Muhesen, the former Director General of the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums of the Syrian Arab Republic, and we express to him our sincerest gratitude. Mr. Abdul Masih Bagdoo, Head of the Department of Antiquities in Hassake, kindly gave us daily help, and

Mr. Edward Youkhanna, our car driver, was always with us toward the completion of the field works. And, we thank both of them for their warm cooperation. All of the works at Tell Taban in this last campaign were realized with the budget of Kokushikan University and the grant-in-aid for 1999 from the Science Research Promotion Fund of the Japan Private School Promotion Foundation, and we express our thanks to both of the organizations for their kind help.

In the final form of the present paper, Ohnuma is responsible for Sections I and IV, Numoto is responsible for Section III, and Ohnuma and Numoto are responsible for Section II.

II. Excavation

In this season, we excavated in Trench III, 23 m × 8 m, set up into the east direction from Trench II in which we had excavated in the second campaign in 1998 (Figs. 3 and 4). Trench III was established along a series of walls that had been exposed by the increase of the Hassake Dam water in the early spring of 1998 (Pl. 2). Setting-up of this trench was determined in order to clarify natures of buildings associated with the exposed series walls.

In Trench III, floor levels of the Middle Assyrian periods and the associated walls of different sizes were uncovered. It was confirmed that all these walls had been built using the older ones as foundation and that they had been repaired several times. A brief description of these levels, structural remains and findings from them is given below in the order from the upper levels downwards (Figs. 4 and 5).

Level 5: In this level, one burial urn of the New Assyrian period was unearthed (Pl. 3-a). This urn measures 60 cm long and 30 cm wide, and we confirmed that it had been buried down from the upper levels. Human bones of a single infant and potsherds of the Middle Assyrian period were unearthed from this level, as were two fragments of baked bricks with cuneiform letters (Pl. 3-b).

Level 6: A mud-brick wall (Pl. 4-a), 70 cm thick, with the remaining length of 2 m and running in the north-south direction was uncovered in this level. Potsherds of the Middle Assyrian period and one fragment of baked brick with cuneiform letters were unearthed from this level. A grave measuring 170 cm long and 60 cm wide was uncovered, of which the upper part was covered with mud-bricks (Pl. 4-a). Extended human skeleton of an adult was unearthed from this grave (Pl. 4-b), together with ornaments such as bronze ring, carnelian necklace and faience beads (Pl. 49-a).

Level 7: Potsherds of the Middle Assyrian period were unearthed, but no structural remains were uncovered from this level.

Level 8a: This level is 15 to 20 cm thick and was mixed by black ash. No structural remains were uncovered, but Middle Assyrian potsherds and two fragments of baked bricks with cuneiform letters were unearthed from this level.

Level 8b: A wall running in the south-north direction, 150 cm thick and 130 cm in the remaining height, was uncovered in this level (Pls. 14 and 15-a). Potsherds of the Middle Assyrian period and one pit-grave of the Middle Assyrian period (Pl. 5-a) was unearthed from this level. We confirmed that this pit-grave had been made by digging from the upper levels. From this grave, upper part of a child's body was unearthed with funeral goods such as a finely made earring, of which the bronze core was wrapped with gold (Pls. 5-b and 49-b). On a hardened floor reminiscent of a corridor (Pls. 9 and 10), layers of collapses from a Huge Wall (HW1-2/1-3), 150 to 200 cm in thickness, were uncovered (Pl. 9-b). The upper part of these layers yielded two fragments of baked-clay cylinder inscriptions and one fragment of pottery with cuneiform letters (Pls. 6 to 8). From the lower part of these layers, one fragment of clay nail and five fragments of baked bricks with cuneiform letters were unearthed.

Level 9a: Uncovered in Level 9a was a wall, probably of the same size as the one in the overlying Level 8b. This level is a floor directly lying on the brick pavement below (Pls. 11 and 12-a), and potsherds of the Middle Assyrian period were unearthed from it. The brick pavement was still in use at the time of this level, but for a different use, most probably functioning as a cooking room. In fact, many animal bones, a stone mortar and a pottery-made drainage were unearthed associated with this



Fig. 3 Contour map of Tell Taban

level (Pls. 15-b, 16 and 17-a). Many pebbles and fragments of baked bricks and pottery, which formed the deposit between the underlying brick pavement and the overlying lowest part of Level 8b, seem to have been used for levelling. From this deposit, fifteen fragments of baked bricks with cuneiform letters (Pl. 13-a), one clay nail, two potsherds like clay nail (Pl. 13-b), and one baked earthen plate with decoration were unearthed.

Level 9b: In this level, a wall with the thickness of 160 cm was uncovered. We confirmed that this wall continued from the wall uncovered in Trench II in the second campaign in 1998. We uncovered the

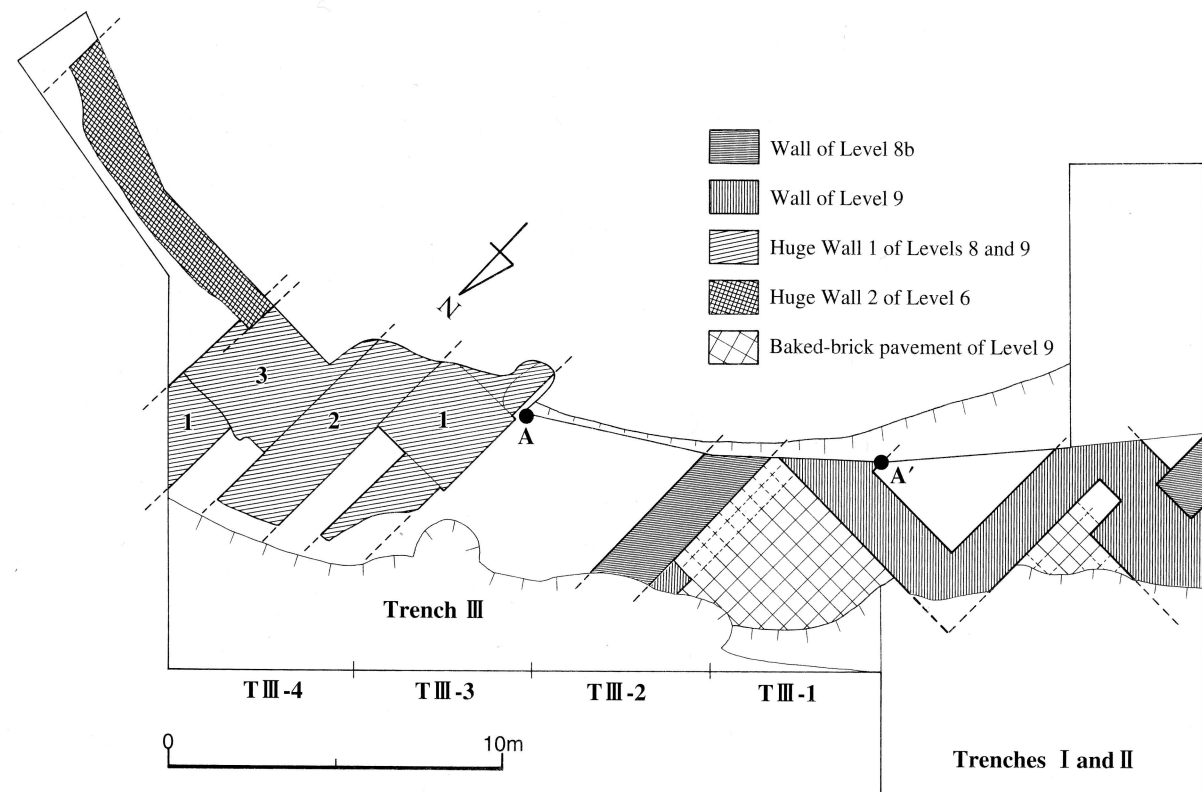


Fig. 4 Plan of Trenches I (1997), II (1998) and III (1999) at Tell Taban

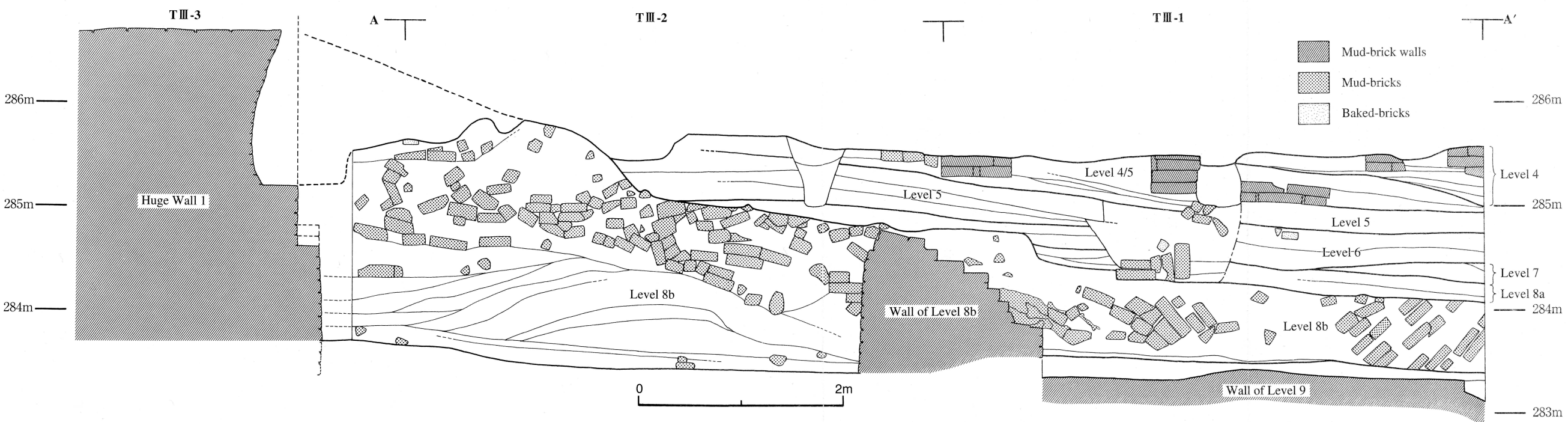


Fig. 5 A-A' section of Trench III

brick pavement in the area of $4\text{ m} \times 4\text{ m}$. A part of this brick pavement had been already confirmed in Trench II in the 1998 campaign. The bricks used for this pavement are $47\text{ cm} \times 47\text{ cm}$ and 5.5 cm thick (Pl. 12-b). We could not confirm any cuneiform letters on these bricks, however. It was made clear that the brick pavement had been associated with the Level 9b walls, which led us to suppose that there had existed a courtyard-like space at the time of this level in the areas we excavated. Potsherds of the Middle Assyrian period were found on the brick pavement, and two fragments of baked bricks with cuneiform letters were found inside a floor underlying the HW1-1 (Pl. 22).

Huge walls: After examining the Huge Walls (Pl. 17-b), we confirmed that the Huge Wall 1 (HW1) (Pls. 18 to 20), which had been first constructed at the time of Level 9a, had been rebuilt twice at the time of Level 8b. We also confirmed that the Huge Wall 2 (HW2) (Pl. 23) was later constructed along the HW1. The brief history of construction and reconstruction of the Huge Walls is given below (Fig. 6).

(1) Level 9b: Any Huge Wall was not constructed at the time of this level. Afore-mentioned floor made of pebbles, flat stones and fragments of baked bricks of this level underlies the HW1-1 (Phase 1 of Huge Wall 1) (Pl. 21), so this floor was not associated with it. It appears most probable that this floor

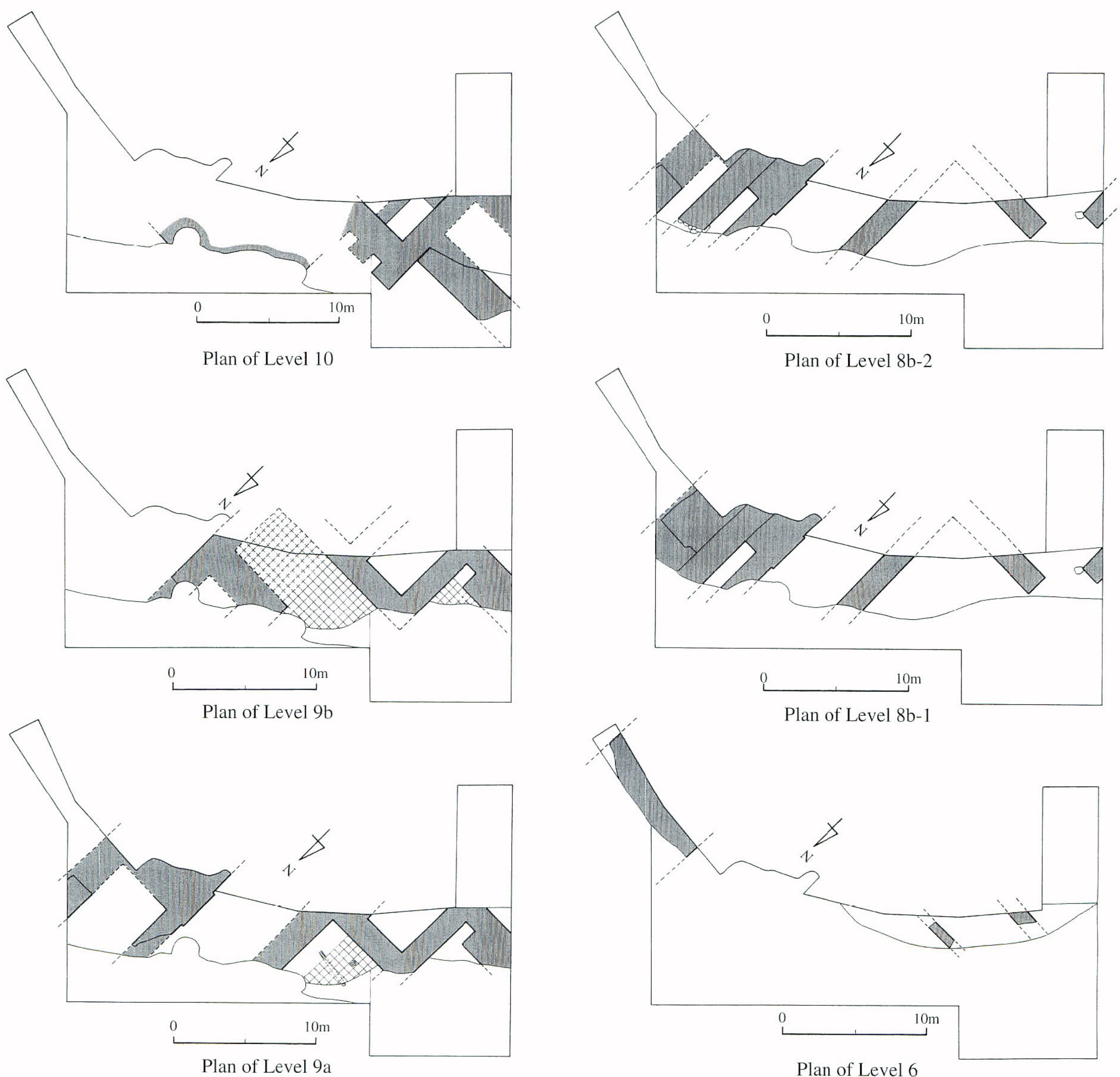


Fig. 6 History of construction / reconstruction of Huge Walls at Tell Taban

was outside the 9b building.

(2) Level 9a: The HW1-1 running in the south-north direction and having a room inside was constructed at the time of Level 9a. It seems that this wall was more than 8 m thick.

(3) Level 8b-2: The HW1-1 was still in use at the time of this level, but the HW1-2 (Phase 2 of Huge Wall 1) was constructed by adding a wall, 2 m thick, at the center of the Level 9a room mentioned above. The HW1-2 is 1.2 m in the remaining height from the floor, and the height of piles of bricks added on the HW1-1 is 3 m as seen in a truncated section at the site. The bricks for the added wall are creamy, orange and whitish in colour, and differ in this respect from the bricks for HW1-1.

(4) Level 8b-1: After the rooms of Level 8b-2 had been buried, the HW1-3 (Phase 3 of Huge Wall 1) was constructed by adding a wall, 3.5 m thick, on the eastern part of the HW1-1. The HW1-3 is 2.5 m in the remaining height at the truncated section. The bricks for the added wall are dark grey in colour, and in this respect differ from the bricks for the earlier phases of the Huge Wall 1.

(5) Level 6: When the HW1-3 was abandoned, completely buried and became like a hillock, another huge wall was constructed along its eastern slope. This new huge wall HW2 (Huge Wall 2) with the thickness of 8 m seems to have run in the south-north direction like the Huge Wall 1. The bricks used for the HW2 are dark greenish-grey in colour, and are the same as the bricks for the Level 6 walls uncovered in Trench II.

III. Findings

Pottery

A large number of potsherds of the Middle Assyrian periods were unearthed from levels 9 to 5, but complete pottery specimens are extremely rare with the exception of one bowl from Level 9b (Fig. 7–10, Pl. 48-c). Details of representative specimens are presented in the <Catalogue of pottery specimens> below.

<Catalogue of pottery specimens> (Figs. 7 to 9)

— In Fig. 7 —

1. Bowl (from Level 5 in Grid TIII-2): reddish buff outer and inner surfaces and core (5YR6/6); fine sand and a medium amount of vegetable (1–5 mm long) inclusions; wet-smoothed on the bottom after pallet-cut; supposed rim diam. 10.1 cm; base diam. 4.6 cm; height 3.7 cm; bottom complete; 1/3 of the body and 1/8 of the rim extant.
2. Round-base bowl (from Levels 6 or 8a in Grid TIII-1): creamy white (10YR9/2) and pinkish cream (5YR8/4) outer surface; pinkish cream (5YR8/4) inner surface and core; fine sand, sparse vegetable (1–7 mm long) and coarse chalky particles inclusions; scraped on the lower part of the outer surface using the wheel-turn; supposed rim diam. 14.6 cm; height 5.1 cm; bottom complete; 1/3 of the rim extant.
3. Bowl (from Level 5 in Grid TIII-2): greenish outer and inner surfaces and core (10Y8/2); fine sand, sparse chalky particles and a large amount of vegetable (1–7 mm long) inclusions; base made by scraping; carbide sticking on the inner surface and rim of outer surface; two grooved lines incised on the outer surface of the rim; fragile; supposed rim diam. 18.0 cm; base diam. 5.5 cm; height 6.1 cm; bottom complete; 2/3 of the body and 1/12 of the rim extant.
4. Small bowl (from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-3): greenish cream (10Y9/2) outer and inner surfaces and core; sparse fine sand inclusions; fine fabric; hard; three grooved lines incised on the outer surface of the rim; supposed rim diam. 6.5 cm; base diam. 3.1 cm; height 2.3 cm; 1/3 of the rim and 4/5 of the base extant.
5. Small bowl (from Level 8b in Grid TIII-2): greenish cream (7.5Y9–8/2) outer and inner surfaces and core; fine sand and a large amount of vegetable (1–8 mm long) inclusions; supposed rim diam. 8 cm; supposed base diam. 2.9 cm; height 3.0 cm; 1/6 of the rim extant; 1/4 of the base and the body extant.
6. Bowl (from Level 9b in Grid TIII-3): reddish buff (5YR7–6/6) and cream (2.5Y9/2) outer surface; reddish buff (5YR7–6/6) inner surface and core; fine sand, chalky particles and a medium amount of vegetable (1–8 mm long) inclusions; wet-smoothed on the bottom after pallet-cut; supposed rim diam. 10.0 cm; base diam. 3.8 cm; height 3.7 cm; 1/6 of the rim and 4/5 of the body extant; bottom complete.
7. Bowl (from between Levels 9a and 8b in Grid TIII-1): greenish white (7.5Y8/2) outer and inner surfaces and core; sparse fine sand and a large amount of vegetable (1–7 mm long) inclusions; pallet-cut on the bottom; supposed rim diam. 9.0

cm; supposed base diam. 2.1 cm; height 2.4 cm; 1/3 of the rim and the base extant.

8. Bowl (from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-3): dark cream (10YR9–8/2) outer and inner surfaces; pinkish buff (5YR8–7/4) core; sparse fine sand and a medium amount of vegetable (1–8 mm long) inclusions; wet-smoothed on the bottom after pallet-cut; supposed rim diam. 10.0 cm; base diam. 4.1 cm; height 3.0 cm; 1/4 of the rim extant; 1/2 of the body and the base extant.
9. Bowl (from Levels 8b to 9a in Grid TIII-1): cream (5Y9/2) outer and inner surfaces; light buff (5YR6/5) core; sparse fine sand and a medium amount of vegetable (1–5 mm long) inclusions; wet-smoothed on the bottom after pallet-cut; rim diam. 10.1 cm; base diam. 4.0 cm; height 3.0 cm; 1/2 of the rim extant; 2/3 of the body and the base extant.
10. Bowl (from Level 9b in Grid TIII-2): creamy white (7.5Y9/2) outer and inner surfaces; sparse fine sand and a medium amount of vegetable (1–5 mm) inclusions; wet-smoothed on the bottom after pallet-cut; rim diam. 14.0 cm; base diam. 4.1 cm; height 3.7 cm; complete (Pl. 48-c).
11. Bowl (from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-4): greenish (7.5Y7/3) outer and inner surfaces and core; sparse fine sand and a medium amount of vegetable (1–7 mm long) inclusions; wet-smoothed on the bottom after pallet-cut; base made by scraping; supposed rim diam. 13.0 cm; base diam. 4.7 cm; height 3.4 cm; 1/4 of the rim and 2/3 of the body extant; bottom complete.
12. Bowl (from between Levels 9a and 8b in Grid TIII-1): reddish buff (5YR7–6/6) outer surface and core; creamy white (10YR9/2) inner surface; sparse fine sand and a medium amount of vegetable (1–5 mm long) inclusions; pallet-cut on the bottom; supposed rim diam. 14.2 cm; supposed base diam. 4.2 cm; height 3.7 cm; 1/4 of the rim extant; 1/3 of the body and the base extant.
13. Bowl (from Level 8b (lower) in Grid TIII-2): greenish (10Y9–8/2) outer and inner surfaces and core; sparse fine sand and vegetable (1–3 mm long) inclusions; pallet-cut on the bottom; supposed rim diam. 14.1 cm; base diam. 4.1 cm; height 3.8 cm; 1/3 of the rim and the body extant; 1/2 of the base extant.
14. Bowl (from Level 8b (floor) in Grid TIII-2): light buff (7.5YR7/5) outer surface; light reddish buff (5YR7–6/6) inner surface and core; sparse fine sand and vegetable (1–4 mm long) inclusions; pallet-cut on the bottom; supposed rim diam. 14.9 cm; base diam. 4.5 cm; height 4.2 cm; 1/20 of the rim and 1/3 of the body extant; 1/2 of the base extant.
15. Bowl (from Level 8b (lower) in Grid TIII-2): greenish white (7.5Y9–8/2) outer surface; reddish buff (5YR7–6/6) inner surface and core; sparse fine sand, coarse sand and vegetable (1–5 mm long) inclusions; wet-smoothed on the bottom after pallet-cut; supposed rim diam. 18.0 cm; supposed base diam. 6.4 cm; 1/4 of the rim, the body, and the base extant.
16. Bowl (from between Levels 9a and 8b in Grid TIII-1): light buff (2.5YR7/5) and greenish cream (5Y9–8/2) outer and inner surfaces; light buff (2.5YR7/6) core; sparse fine sand and vegetable (1–5 mm long) inclusions; wet-smoothed on the bottom after pallet-cut; supposed rim diam. 21.8 cm; base diam. 7.1 cm; height 5.6 cm; 1/4 of the rim and the body extant; bottom complete.
17. Bowl (from Level 9a in Grid TIII-3): greenish white (7.5Y9–8/2) outer and inner surfaces; buff (2.5YR7/5) core; sparse fine sand and a large amount of vegetable (1–5 mm long) inclusions; wet-smoothed on the bottom after pallet-cut; carbide sticking on the outer and inner surfaces; rim diam. 21.5 cm; base diam. 6.9 cm; height 7.1 cm; 1/2 of the rim extant; bottom complete (Pl. 48-d).
18. Bowl (from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-2): creamy buff (10YR8/3) outer and inner surfaces; reddish buff (5YR7–6/6) core; sparse fine sand, coarse sand and a medium amount of vegetable (1–5 mm long) inclusions; pallet-cut on the bottom; supposed rim diam. 22.3 cm; supposed base diam. 8.7 cm; 1/16 of the rim and 1/6 of the base extant.
19. Bowl (from Level 9b in Grid TIII-3): greenish white (10Y9/2) outer and inner surfaces; reddish buff (5YR7/5) core; sparse fine sand and a medium amount of vegetable (1–10 mm long) inclusions; pallet-cut on the bottom; supposed rim diam. 27.7 cm; supposed base diam. 8.3 cm; 1/5 of the rim and 1/10 of the base extant.

—In Fig. 8 —

20. Nipple-base sherd (from Levels 4/5 in Grid TIII-1): greenish (7.5Y7/3) outer and inner surfaces and core; sparse fine sand and vegetable (1–3 mm long) inclusions; nipple part made by scraping; extant height 3.7 cm; bottom complete.
21. Nipple-base sherd (from Level 6 in Grid TIII-1): greenish white (5Y9/2) outer surface; buff (10YR8–7/4) inner surface and core; sparse fine sand and coarse chalky particles inclusions; nipple part made by scraping; extant height 4.3 cm; bottom complete.
22. Rim to body of beaker (from Level 9b in Grid TIII-1): greenish white (10Y9/2) and pinkish cream (7.5YR7/4) outer surfaces; reddish buff (5YR6/5) inner surface and core; sparse fine sand and chalky particles inclusions; fine fabric; rim diam. 7.5 cm; supposed max. diam. 8.5 cm; 2/3 of the rim and 1/4 of the body extant.
23. Nipple-base beaker (from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-1): cream (2.5Y9/2) and reddish buff (2.5YR6–5/6) outer surface; reddish buff (2.5YR6–5/6) inner surface and core; sparse fine sand and chalky particles inclusions; wet-smoothed on the lower part of body of the outer surface after scraping; max. diam. 8.2 cm; extant height 11.0 cm; 1/3 of the neck and 2/3 of the body extant; bottom complete (Pl. 48-a).

24. Button-base beaker (from Level 9b in Grid TIII-3): cream (2.5Y9–8/2) outer and inner surfaces; creamy buff (5YR7/4) core; sparse fine sand and chalky particles inclusions; wet-smoothed on the lower part of body of the outer surface after scraping; max. diam. 7.7 cm; extant height 8.5 cm; body and bottom complete (Pl. 48-b).
25. Nipple-base sherd (from Level 8b (lower) in Grid TIII-2): greenish white (5Y9/2) outer and inner surfaces; pinkish buff (7.5YR7/4) core; sparse fine sand inclusions; nipple part made by sticking; extant height 3.1 cm; bottom complete.
26. Nipple-base sherd (from between Levels 9a and 8b in Grid TIII-1): greenish white (7.5Y9/2) and pinkish cream (7.5YR9/2) outer surface; pinkish buff (5YR7/4) inner surface and core; sparse fine sand inclusions; nipple-part made by sticking; extant height 6.5 cm; bottom complete.
27. Nipple-base sherd (from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-1): greenish white (7.5Y8/2) outer surface; greenish cream (7.5Y9/2) inner surface; pinkish buff (7.5YR7/4) core; sparse fine sand inclusions; nipple part made by sticking; extant height 3.1 cm; bottom complete.
28. Nipple-base sherd (from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-1): cream (2.5Y9–8/2) outer surface; buff (7.5YR7–6/6) inner surface; pinkish buff (5YR6/4) core; sparse fine sand inclusions; nipple part made by sticking; three grooved lines incised on the outer surface; extant height 3.8 cm; 3/4 extant.
29. Nipple-base sherd (from Levels 9a/9b in Grid TIII-1): greenish white (7.5Y9–8/2) outer and inner surfaces; light buff (7.5YR8–7/4) core; sparse fine sand inclusions; nipple part made by sticking; extant height 3.7 cm; bottom complete.
30. Nipple-base sherd (from Level 9a in Grid TIII-4): greenish white (10Y9–8/2) outer and inner surfaces; pinkish buff (5YR6/5) core; a medium amount of fine sand inclusions; nipple part made by sticking; defaced outer and inner surfaces; extant height 4.6 cm; bottom complete.
31. Nipple-base sherd (from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-2): creamy white (2.5Y9/2) and light buff (5YR7–6/6) outer surface; light buff (5YR7/5) inner surface; buff (7.5YR6/6) core; sparse fine sand inclusions; fine fabric; nipple part made by sticking; extant height 5.4 cm; bottom complete.
32. Button-base sherd (from Level 8b (floor) in Grid TIII-2): greenish cream (2.5Y8–7/2) outer surface; creamy buff (10YR7/4) inner surface and core; sparse fine sand inclusions; button part made by scraping; wet-smoothed on lower part of outer surface after scraping; extant height 4.1 cm; bottom complete.
33. Button-base sherd (from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-2): greenish (10Y8/3) outer and inner surfaces and core; sparse fine sand and a medium amount of vegetable (1–5 mm long) inclusions; button part made by scraping; wet-smoothed on lower part of outer surface after scraping; extant height 7.8 cm; 1/2 of the body extant; bottom complete.
34. Button-base sherd (from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-3): creamy buff (10YR8/3) and greenish white (5Y9/2) outer surface; greenish white (5Y9/2) inner surface; pinkish buff (5YR7/4) core; sparse fine sand and coarse chalky particles inclusions; button part made by scraping; wet-smoothed on lower part of outer surface after scraping; extant height 4.1 cm; 1/3 of the body extant; bottom complete.
35. Button-base sherd (from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-2): greenish (10Y8/4) outer and inner surfaces and core; sparse fine sand and a medium amount of vegetable (1–5 mm long) inclusions; button part made by scraping; extant height 6.2 cm; 1/3 of the body extant; bottom complete.
36. Footed base sherd (from between Levels 9a and 8b in Grid TIII-1): greenish white (7.5Y9–8/2) outer and inner surfaces; light buff (10YR8/4) core; a medium amount of fine sand and sparse coarse chalky particles; foot part made by sticking; extant height 5.1 cm; bottom complete.
37. Button-base sherd (from Level 8b (lower) in Grid TIII-2): greenish white (7.5Y9–8/2) outer surface; dark pinkish buff (10YR8–7/2) inner surface and core; a medium amount of very fine sand inclusions; button part made by scraping; wet-smoothed on lower part of outer surface after scraping; extant height 3.2 cm; 1/2 extant.

—In Fig. 9—

38. Rim to shoulder of jar (from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-3): greenish white (7.5Y9–8/2) outer and inner surfaces and core; fine sand and a large amount of vegetable (1–5 mm long) inclusions; supposed rim diam. 13.0 cm; 1/4 extant.
39. Rim to shoulder of jar (from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-3): greenish white (10Y8/3) outer and inner surfaces and core; fine sand and a medium amount of vegetable (1–7 mm long) inclusions; supposed rim diam. 12.5 cm; 1/3 extant.
40. Rim to shoulder of jar (from Level 8b (lower) in Grid TIII-1): creamy buff (10YR7/5) and creamy white (5Y9/2) outer surface; dark buff (7.5YR6/5) inner surface; light buff (5YR6/6) and blackish grey (N5/) core; fine sand and a medium amount of vegetable (1–7 mm long) inclusions; supposed rim diam. 14.3 cm; 1/4 extant.
41. Rim to shoulder of jar (from Level 8b (floor) in Grid TIII-2): cream (10YR9–8/2) outer surface; pinkish buff (5YR7/4) inner surface and core; fine sand, coarse quartz sand and a medium amount of vegetable (1–7 mm long) inclusions; supposed rim diam. 18.0 cm; 1/5 extant.
42. Rim to shoulder of jar (from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-1): reddish brown (2.5YR6/6) outer surface; cream (2.5Y9/2) inner surface; reddish buff (5YR7/5) core; fine sand and medium amount of vegetable (1–7 mm long) inclusions; defaced inner surface; three ridges remaining on the shoulder; supposed rim diam. 26–32 cm; 1/10–1/12 extant.

43. Rim to shoulder of jar (from between Levels 9a and 8b in Grid TIII-1): greenish white (10Y9/2) outer and inner surfaces; pinkish buff (7.5YR7/4) core; fine sand and a large amount of vegetable (1–7 mm long) inclusions; defaced inner surface; one ridge remaining on the shoulder; supposed rim diam. 30–32 cm; 1/8 extant.
44. Base of jar or bottle (from Level 8a in Grid TIII-1): reddish buff (5YR7–6/6) outer surface; light buff (7.5YR7/6) inner surface and core; fine sand and a medium amount of vegetable (1–5 mm long) inclusions; pallet-cut on the bottom; base diam. 3.7 cm; extant height 4.5 cm; 1/2 extant.
45. Base of jar or bottle (from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-4): greenish white (7.5Y9–8/2) outer surface; cream (10YR9/2) inner surface; pinkish buff (5YR7/4) and blackish grey (N4/) core; fine sand and a medium amount of vegetable (1–5 mm long); wet-smoothed on the bottom after pallet-cut; base diam. 5.3 cm; extant height 6.7 cm; 2/3 extant.
46. Base of jar or bottle (from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-1): dark greenish cream (2.5Y9–8/2) outer and inner surfaces; dark pinkish buff (5YR7–6/4) core; fine sand and medium amount of vegetable (1–10 mm long) inclusions; wet-smoothed on the bottom; carbide sticking inner surface; base diam. 6.6 cm; extant height 9.3 cm; 3/4 extant.
47. Base of jar or bottle (from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-1): greenish creamy white (5Y9–8/2) outer surface; creamy buff (2.5Y8/3) inner surface; reddish buff (5YR7/4) core; fine sand and a medium amount of vegetable (1–7 mm long) inclusions; wet-smoothed on the bottom; base diam. 4.6 cm; extant height 7.4 cm; 1/2 extant.
48. Base of jar or bottle (from between Levels 9a and 8b in Grid TIII-1): greenish white (10Y8/2) outer and inner surfaces and core; fine sand and a medium amount of vegetable (1–7 mm long) inclusions; defaced outer surface; base diam. 4.5 cm; extant height 6.3 cm; all of the base extant.
49. Base of jar or bottle (from Level 8b (floor) in Grid TIII-2): greenish white (7.5Y8/2) outer and inner surfaces and core; fine sand and a medium amount of vegetable (1–10 mm long) inclusions; scraped on the outer surface of the body; wet-smoothed on the bottom after pallet-cut; base diam. 7.4 cm; extant height 8.3 cm; 1/2 extant.

Cuneiform cylinder inscription of baked clay (Pls. 25 to 30)

Four fragments of cuneiform cylinder inscriptions of baked clay were found in this season as below.

- TIII-S-3 (Pl. 25): from the surface north-west of Trench I; length 8.0 cm; width 3.0 cm; thickness 2.6 cm.
- TIII-S-1 (Pl. 26): from the surface soil in Grid TIII-2; length 3.0 cm; width 1.3 cm; thickness 1.1 cm.
- TIII-2-1 (Pls. 27 and 28): from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-2; length 9.1 cm; width 5.7 cm; thickness 2.5 cm.
- TIII-8-1 (Pls. 29 and 30): from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-3; length 5.5 cm; width 5.4 cm; thickness 2.5 cm.

Fragment of a clay tablet (Pl. 31)

- TIII-S-2 (Pl. 31): from surface soil in Grid TIII-2; length 3.0 cm; width 2.6 cm; thickness 1.4 cm.

Baked bricks with cuneiform letters (Pls. 32 to 38)

A total of thirty one fragments of baked bricks with cuneiform letters were found in this season.

- TIII-S-4 (Pl. 32-a): from surface in Grid TIII-4; length 10.6 cm; width 8.7 cm; thickness 6.0 cm.
- TIII-D-1 (Pl. 32-b): from surface soil in Grid TIII-3; length 10.0 cm; width 10.0 cm; thickness 6.0 cm.
- TIII-22-1 (Pl. 32-c): from Level 5 in Grid TIII-1; length 10.6 cm; width 10.4 cm; thickness 6.2 cm.
- TIII-22-2 (Pl. 32-d): from Level 5 in Grid TIII-1; length 11.5 cm; width 11.0 cm; thickness 6.3 cm.
- TIII-27-1 (Pl. 33-a): from Level 6 in Grid TIII-1; length 10.0 cm; width 8.7 cm; thickness 6.3 cm.
- TIII-49-1 (Pl. 33-b): from Level 8a in Grid TIII-1; length 11.5 cm; width 9.0 cm; thickness 6.2 cm.
- TIII-38-10 (Pl. 33-c): from Level 8a in Grid TIII-1; length 7.0 cm; width 6.5 cm; thickness 6.0 cm.
- TIII-50-1 (Pl. 33-d): from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-2; length 5.3 cm; width 3.0 cm; thickness 4.8 cm.
- TIII-35-1 (Pl. 33-e): from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-2; length 11.5 cm; width 9.3 cm; thickness 5.9 cm.
- TIII-40-1 (Pl. 34-a): from Level 8b (upper) in Grids TIII-2/3; length 9.0 cm; width 8.0 cm; thickness 5.7 cm.
- TIII-14-1 (Pl. 34-b): from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-3; length 11.5 cm; width 9.6 cm; thickness 6.5 cm.
- TIII-19-1 (Pl. 34-c): from Level 8b (lower) in Grid TIII-3; length 11.2 cm; width 9.8 cm; thickness 5.5 cm.
- TIII-69-2 (Pl. 34-d): from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-4; length 13.0 cm; width 6.0 cm; thickness 6.3 cm.
- TIII-69-1 (Pl. 35-a): from Level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-4; length 11.3 cm; width 10.5 cm; thickness 6.0 cm.
- TIII-63-1 (Pl. 35-b): from Level 9a in Grid TIII-4; length 11.0 cm; width 6.5 cm; thickness 6.2 cm.
- TIII-63-2 (Pl. 35-c): from Level 9a in Grid TIII-4; length 15.5 cm; width 14 cm; thickness 7.5 cm.
- TIII-68-1 (Pl. 35-d): from Level 9b in Grid TIII-4; length 13.5 cm; width 10.5 cm; thickness 6.5 cm.
- TIII-68-2 (Pl. 36-a): from Level 9b in Grid TIII-4; length 25.3 cm; width 21.0 cm; thickness 6.3 cm.
- TIII-70-1 (Pl. 36-b): from between Levels 9a and 8b in Grid TIII-1; length 20.0 cm; width 19.0 cm; thickness 6.4 cm.
- TIII-73-1 (Pl. 36-c): from between Levels 9a and 8b in Grid TIII-1; length 26.0 cm; width 23.0 cm; thickness 6.3 cm.
- TIII-73-8 (Pl. 36-d): from between Levels 9a and 8b in Grid TIII-1; length 12.0 cm; width 11.0 cm; thickness 5.8 cm.

- TIII-73-3 (Pl. 37-a): from between Levels 9a and 8b in Grid TIII-1; length 9.5 cm; width 7.0 cm; thickness 5.6 cm.
- TIII-73-4 (Pl. 37-b): from between Levels 9a and 8b in Grid TIII-1; length 9.3 cm; width 7.5 cm; thickness 6.3 cm.
- TIII-73-5 (Pl. 37-c): from between Levels 9a and 8b in Grid TIII-1; length 8.8 cm; width 8.0 cm; thickness 5.6 cm.
- TIII-73-2 (Pl. 37-d): from between Levels 9a and 8b in Grid TIII-1; length 11.0 cm; width 8.2 cm; thickness 5.8 cm.
- TIII-70-2 (Pl. 38-a): from between Levels 9a and 8b in Grid TIII-1; length 10.0 cm; width 7.6 cm; thickness 6.4 cm.
- TIII-73-7 (Pl. 38-b): from between Levels 9a and 8b in Grid TIII-1; length 9.5 cm; width 9.4 cm; thickness 6.3 cm.
- TIII-73-6 (Pl. 38-c) (stamp): from between Levels 9a and 8b in Grid TIII-1; length 7.7 cm; width 6.8 cm; thickness 4.2 cm.
- TIII-70-3 (Pl. 38-d): from between Levels 9a and 8b in Grid TIII-1; length 10.0 cm; width 9.5 cm; thickness 7.0 cm.
- TIII-80-1 (Pl. 38-e): from Level 9a (floor) in Grid TIII-1; length 15.0 cm; width 12.0 cm; thickness 6.8 cm.

Fragment of a bowl with cuneiform inscription (Pl. 39)

- TIII-7-1 (Pl. 39): from level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-2; length 17.5 cm; width 4.5 cm; thickness 0.7 cm.

Fragments of clay-nail heads with cuneiform letters (Pls. 40 and 41)

- TIII-25-1 (Pl. 40): from level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-2; length 6.6 cm; width 6.5 cm; thickness 0.9 cm.
- TIII-73-10 (Pl. 41): from between Levels 9a and 8b in Grid TIII-1; length 6.7 cm; width 6.4 cm; thickness 0.8 cm.

Pottery reminiscent of clay nail with cuneiform letters (Pls. 42 to 47)

- TIII-34-1 (Pl. 42): from level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-3; length 8.2 cm; width 6.7 cm; thickness 1.6 cm.
- TIII-47-1 (Pl. 43): from level 8b (upper) in Grid TIII-2; length 11.4 cm; width 9.0 cm; thickness 1.7 cm.
- TIII-66-1 (Pl. 44): from level 8b (floor) in Grid TIII-2; length 8.3 cm; width 7.2 cm; thickness 1.7 cm.
- TIII-70-5 (Pl. 45): from between Levels 9a and 8b in Grid TIII-1; length 6.5 cm; width 6.0 cm; thickness 1.4 cm.
- TIII-73-9 (Pls. 46 and 47): from between Levels 9a and 8b in Grid TIII-1; diameter 19.5 cm; width 11.0 cm; thickness 1.6–2.5 cm.

IV. Concluding remarks

In our previous excavations in 1997 and 1998, fragments of baked-clay cylinder inscriptions and fragments of baked bricks and potsherds with cuneiform letters were also unearthed. These cuneiform pieces were analyzed by Professor Maul, who clarified that they describe the name of the Middle Assyrian local kingdom, Ṭābētu, which had existed in the Middle Khabur region, as well as the name of its king, Aššur-Kettī-Lēšer. Professor Maul also made it clear that Tell Taban had been Ṭābētu, the capital city of the kingdom Ṭābētu, with a palace restored by Aššur-Kettī-Lēšer, who like his ancestors had called himself “the King of the Land of Mari” (Maul 1999).

In this last field season, Professor Maul joined our mission to analyze all the cuneiform data unearthed ever since the start of our excavations in 1997. After successfully translating and interpreting the data, he clarified that Tell Taban (Ṭābētu) was owned by eight kings at least, most of them having been the kings before Aššur-Kettī-Lēšer, most probably from the same family. He also made it clear that there had stood a temple and a palace at Tell Taban.

Thus, the cuneiform data from Tell Taban are now providing us with important information for the history of the Middle Assyrian local kingdom Ṭābētu, presenting archaeological proofs to the implication by ancient documents that the kingdom Ṭābētu had a long history before the time of Aššur-Kettī-Lēšer.

It is hoped for the future that further analysis of the inscription data from Tell Taban will contribute to the clarification of the Middle Assyrian history in the Middle Khabur region, particularly of unknown aspects of the kingdom Ṭābētu.

It is also hoped that future research on these inscription data will lead us to grasp real pictures of relations that existed between the Khabur region and North Iraq in the 2nd to the 1st millennia B.C.

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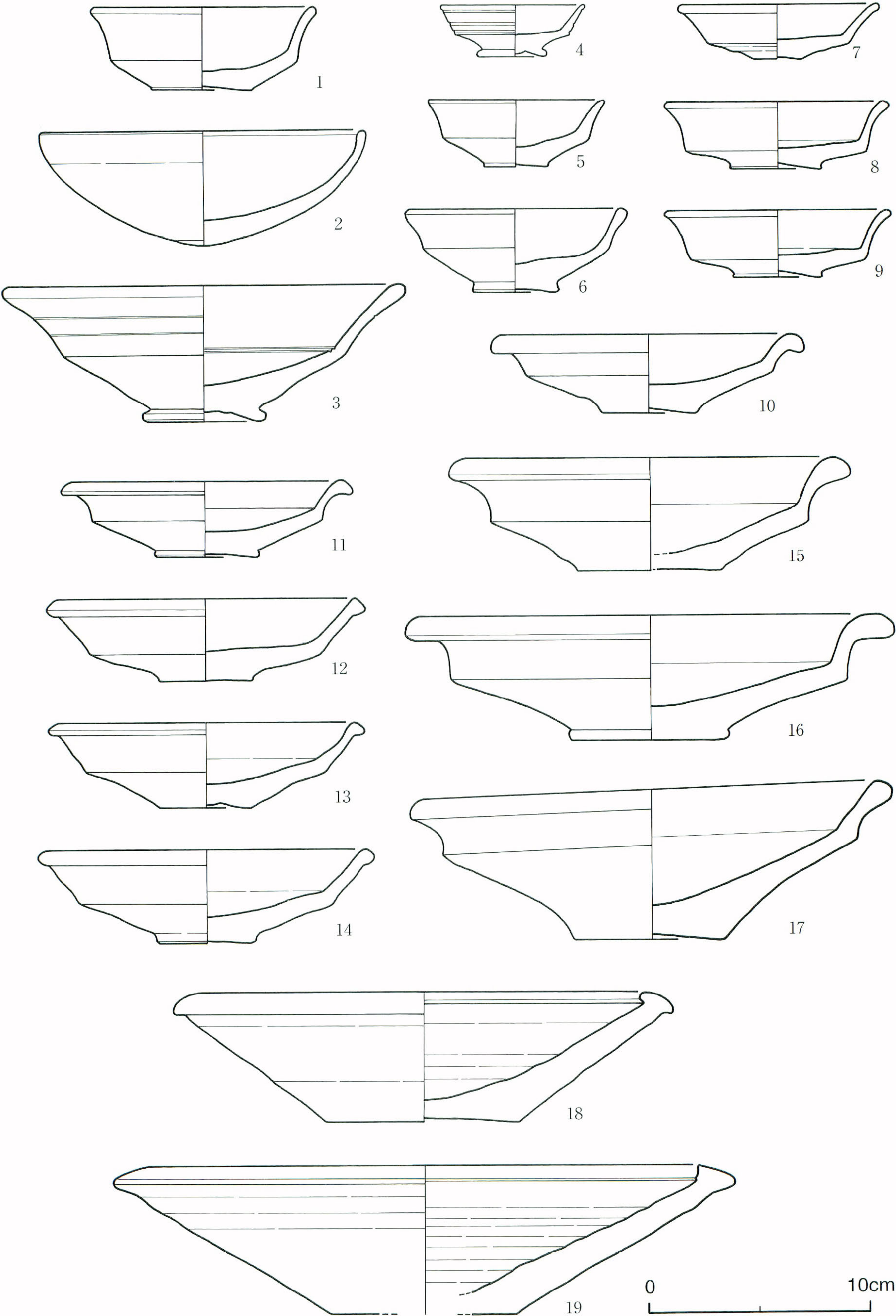


Fig. 7 Pottery from Levels 5 to 9b

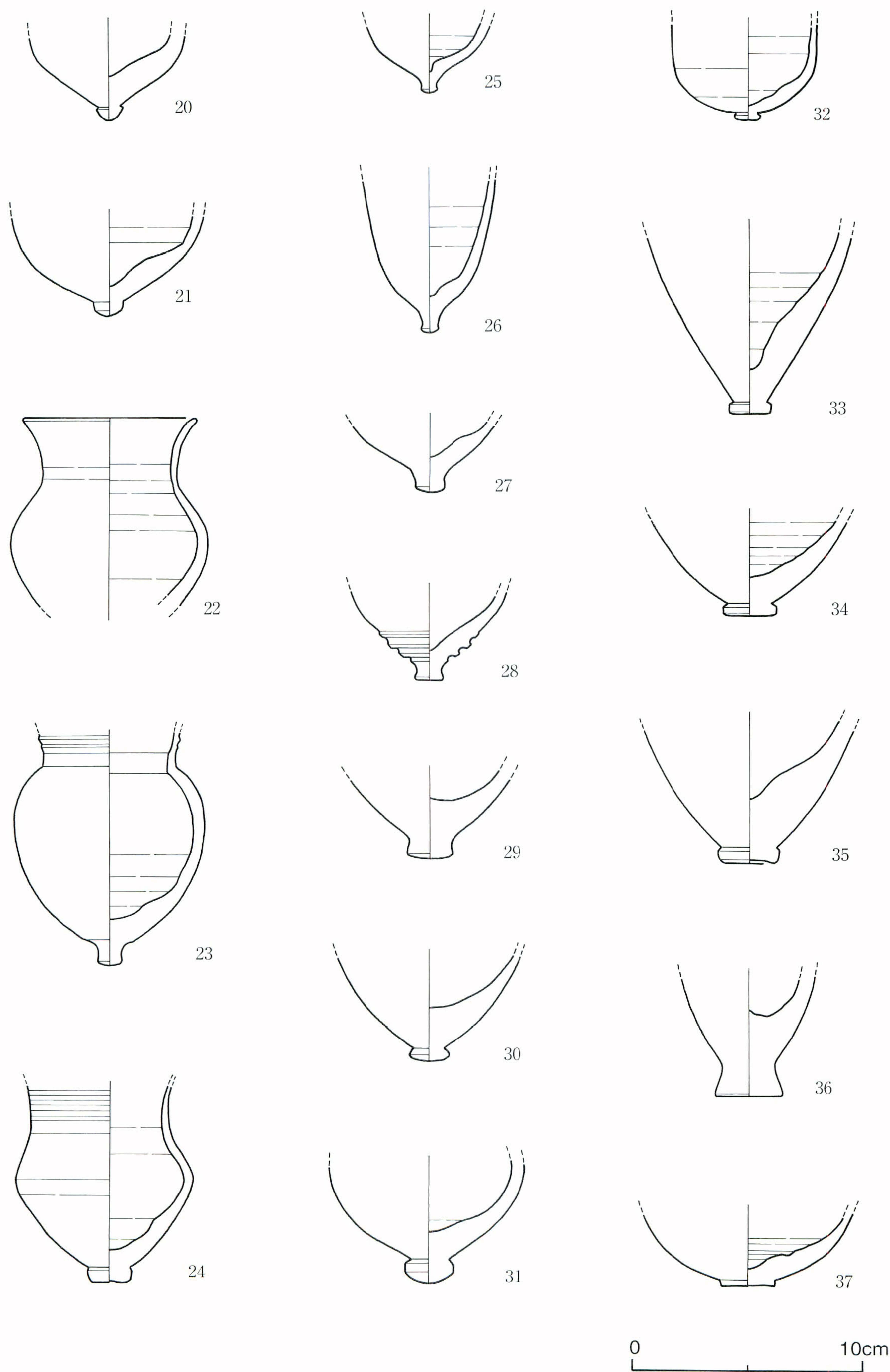


Fig. 8 Pottery from Levels 4/5 to 9b

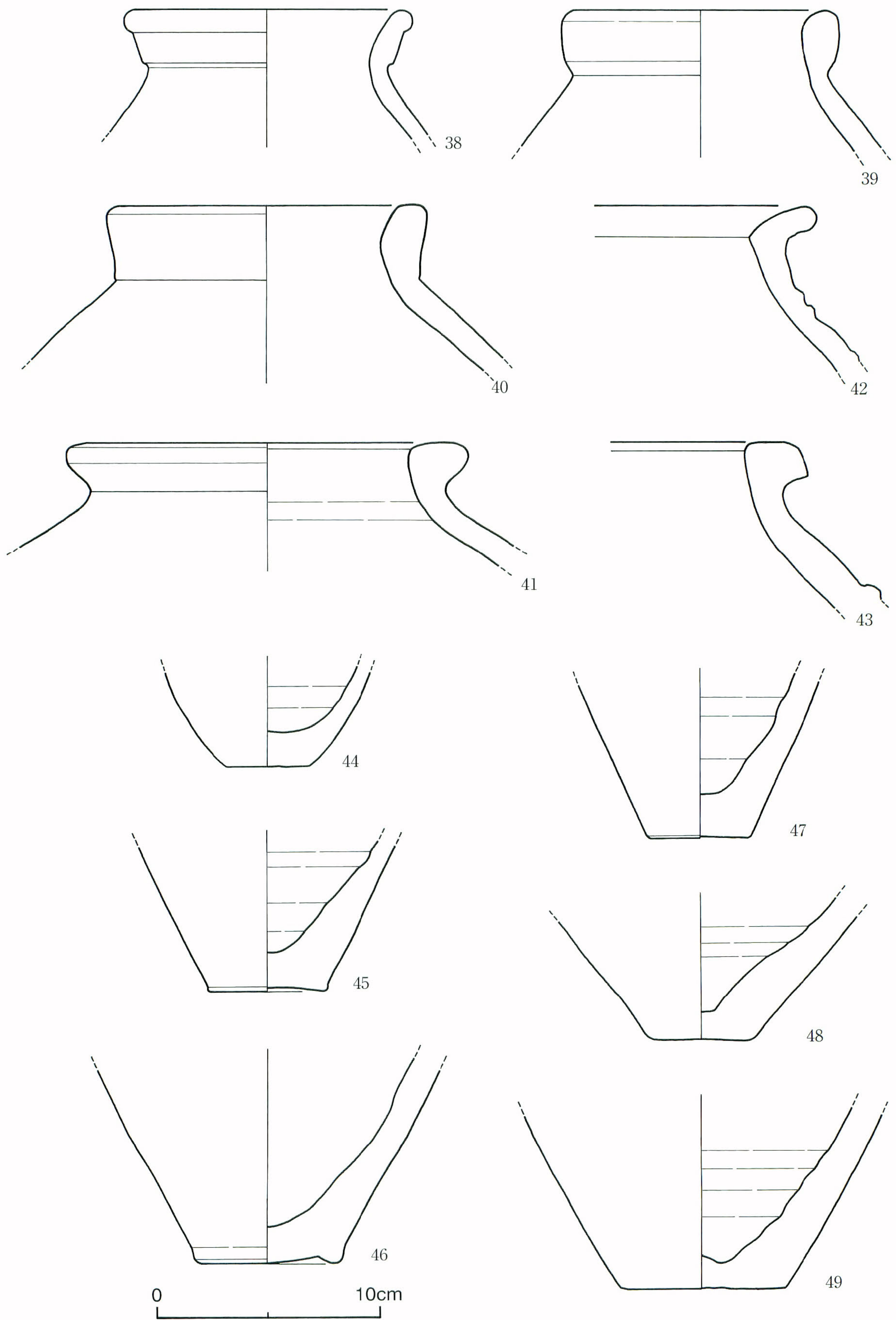


Fig. 9 Pottery from Levels 8a to 9a



a. Tell Taban seen from the north-west before the 1999 excavation



b. Trench III before the 1999 excavation



a. Trench III before excavation and walls exposed in 1998



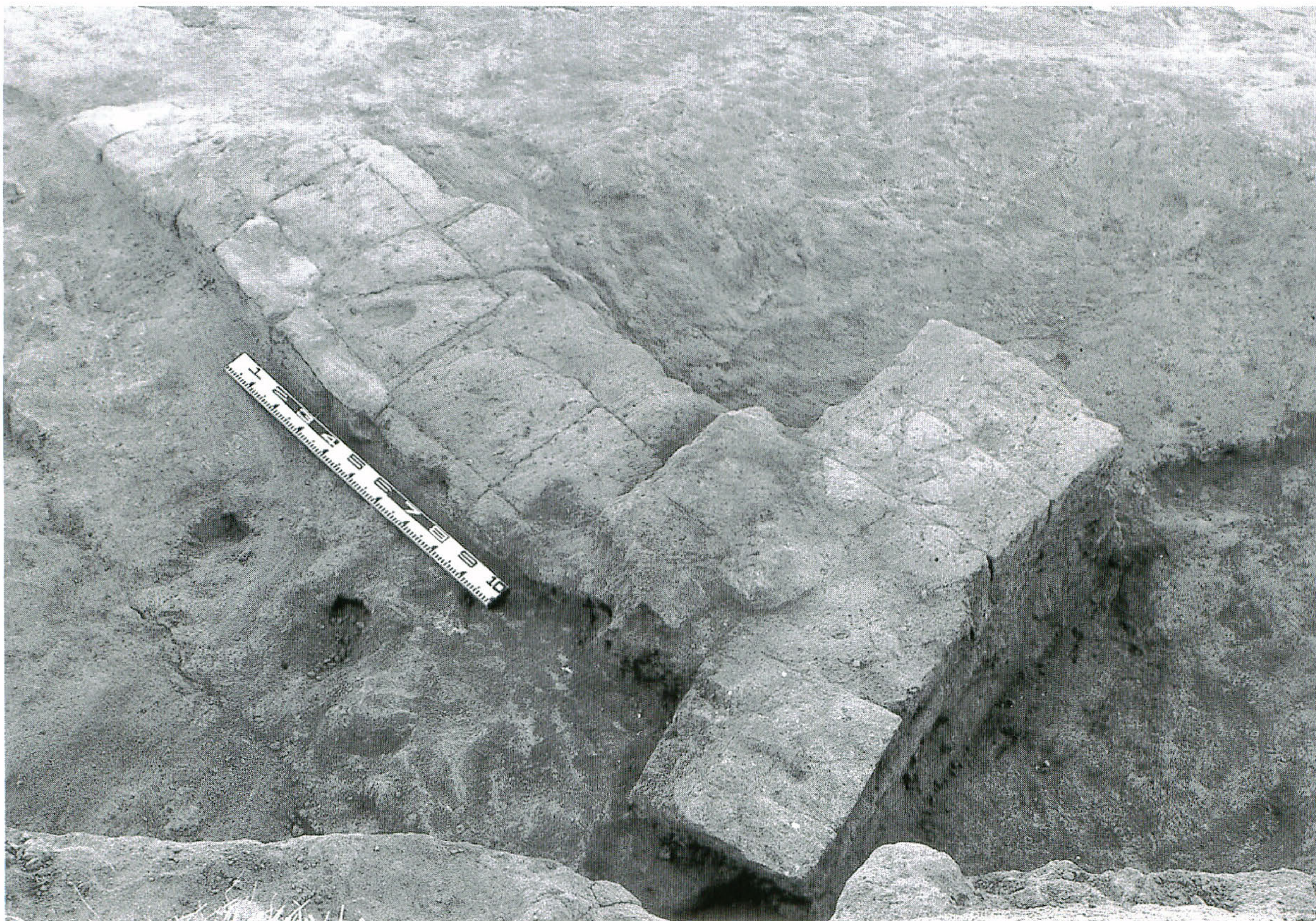
b. Trench III and exposed walls seen from the north-east



a. Burial urn of the New Assyrian period (Level 5)



b. Fragmental baked brick with cuneiform letters (TIII-22-2) from Level 5



a. Mud-brick wall of Level 6 and grave covered with mud bricks



b. Grave of Level 6 with mud bricks removed



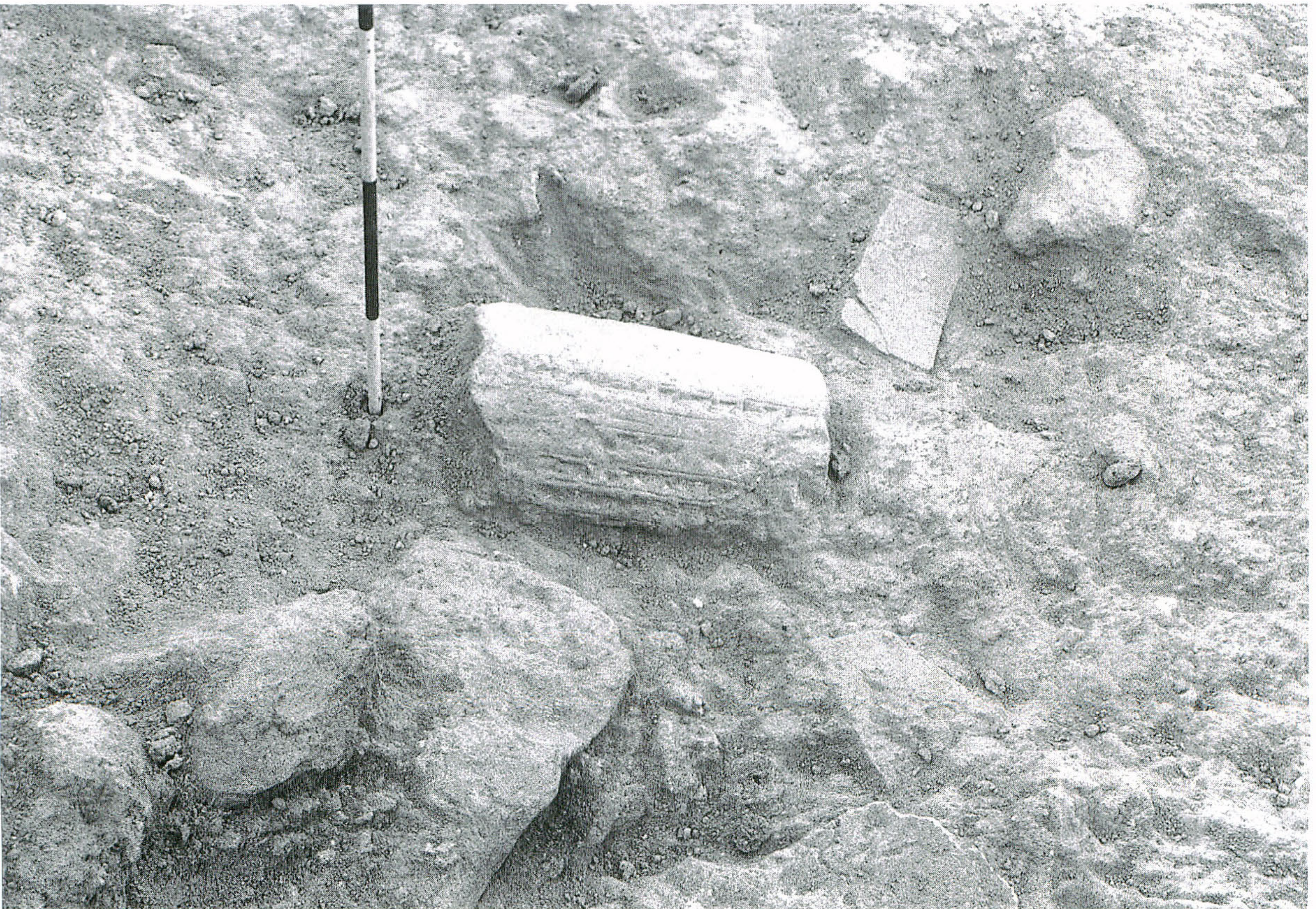
a. Pit-grave uncovered in Level 8b



b. *In situ* view of earring from grave of Level 8b



a. Fragmentary cylinder inscription (TIII-2-1) from Level 8b



b. Closer view of TIII-2-1



a. Fragmentary cylinder inscription (TIII-8-1) from Level 8b



b. Closer view of TIII-8-1



a. Fragment of a bowl with cuneiform inscription (TIII-7-1) from Level 8b



b. Closer view of TIII-7-1



a. Corridor-like floor of Level 8b seen from the south



b. Corridor-like floor of Level 8b seen from the north



a. Corridor-like floor of Level 8b seen from the west



b. Corridor-like floor of Level 8b seen from the east



a. Brick pavement of Level 9b seen from the south



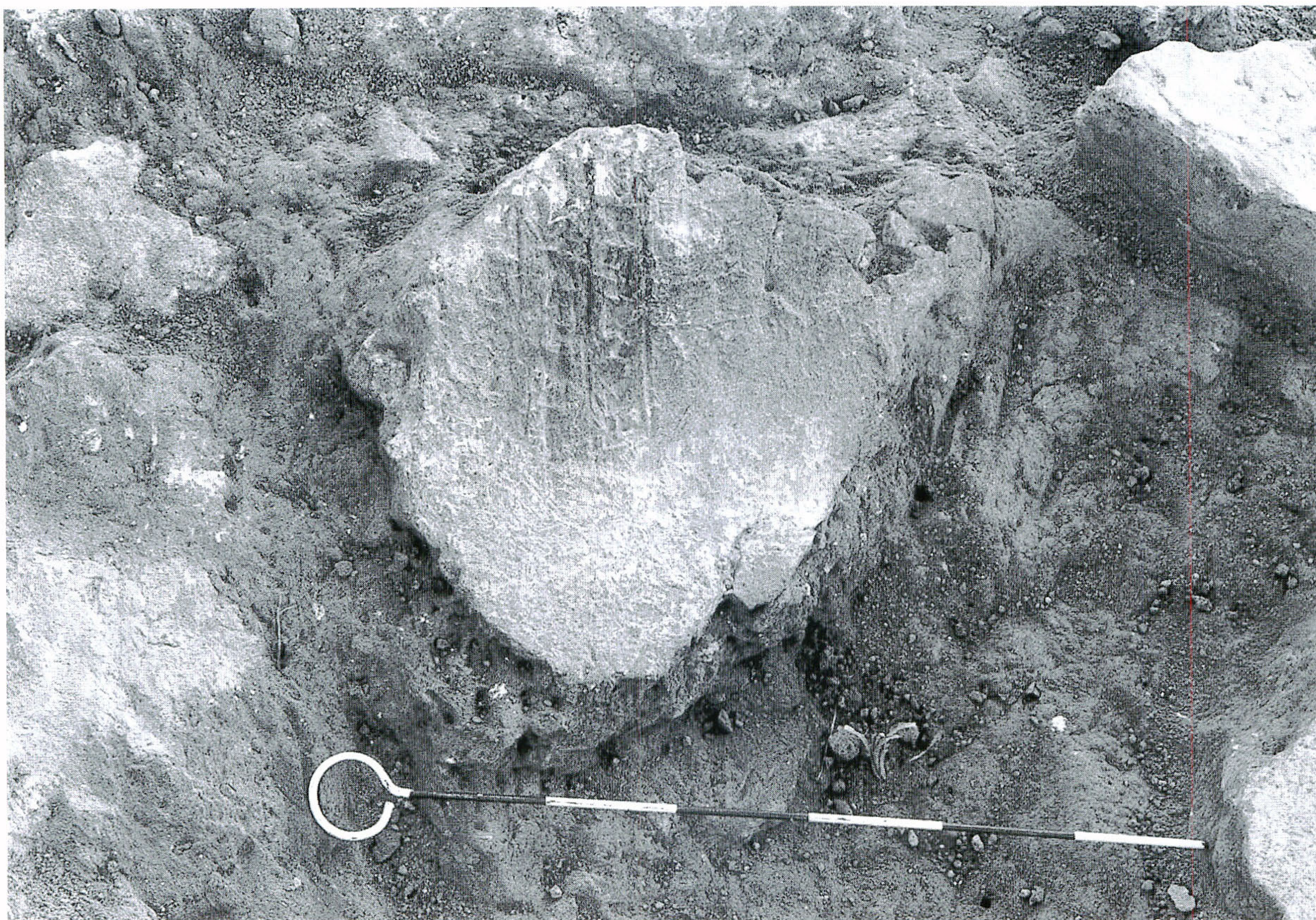
b. Brick pavement of Level 9b seen from the east



a. Closer view of brick pavement of Level 9b seen from the east



b. Bricks used for brick pavement of Level 9b



a. Fragment of baked brick with cuneiform letters (TIII-73-1) from 9a deposit



b. Clay-nail-like potsherd with cuneiform letters (TIII-73-9) from 9a deposit



a. Wall of Level 8b seen from the east



b. Wall of Level 8b seen from the south



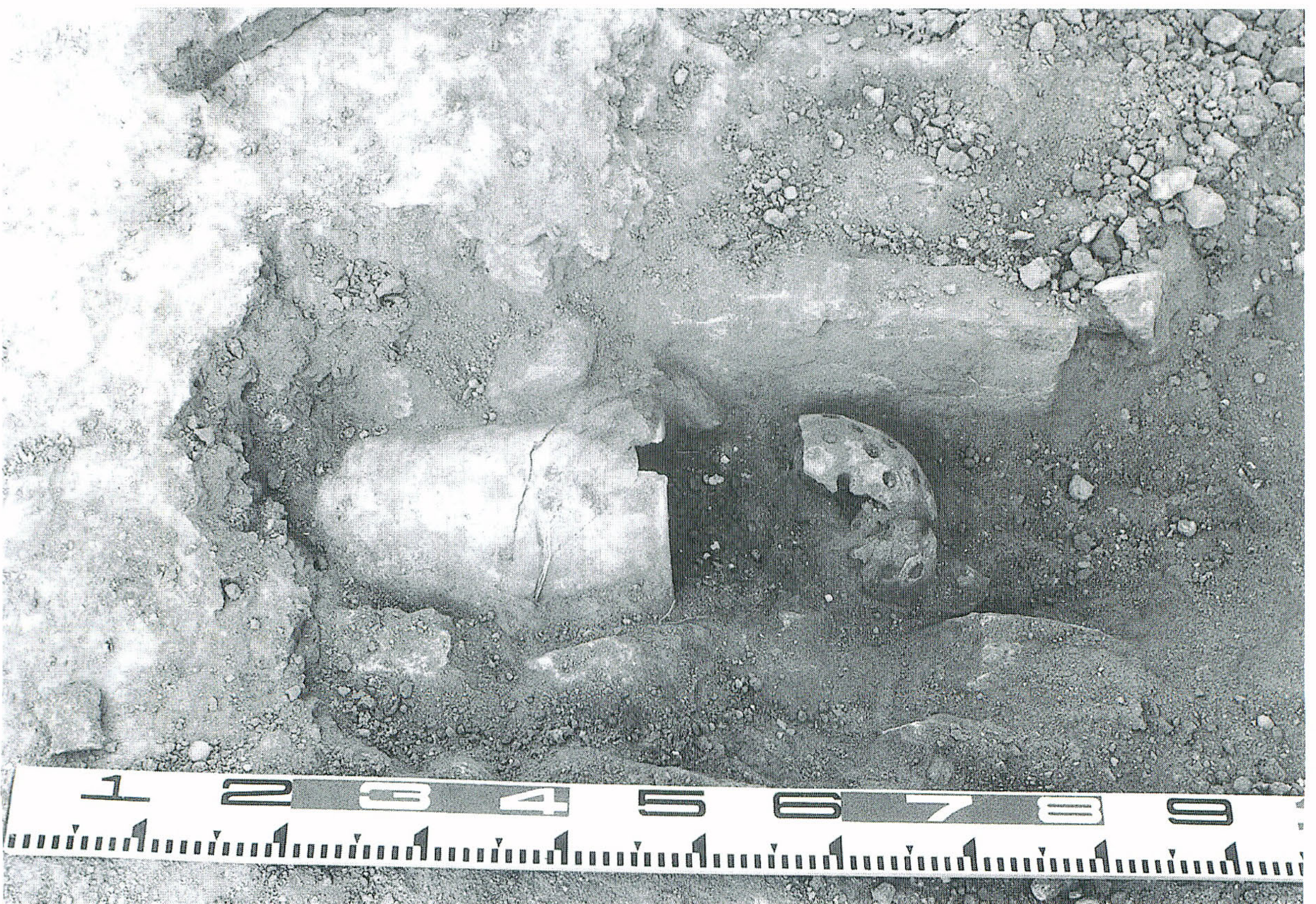
a. Wall of Level 8b seen from the west



b. Brick pavement before pottery-made drainage was uncovered (Level 9a)



a. Pottery-made drainage of Level 9a



b. Closer view of pottery-made drainage of Level 9a



a. Pottery-made drainage of Level 9a seen from the north-west



b. Huge Walls seen from the north-west



a. Huge Wall 1 seen from the south-west



b. Huge Wall 1 seen from the south



a. Huge Wall 1 seen from the west



b. Huge Wall 1 seen from the north-west



a. Huge Wall 1 seen from the north



b. Huge Wall 1 seen from the north-east



a. Floor of Level 9b underlying HW1-1



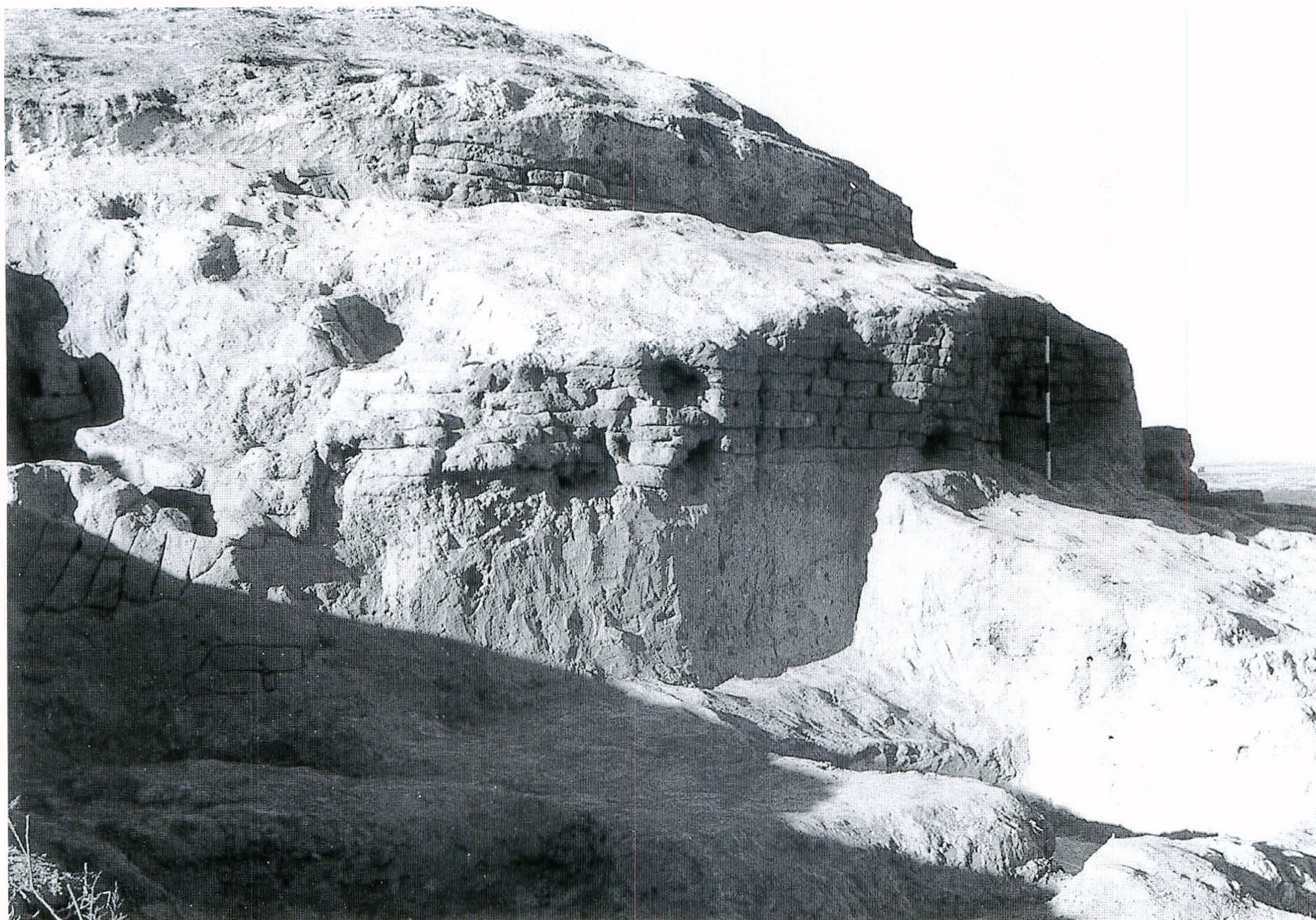
b. Floor of Level 9b underlying HW1-1 seen from the north



a. Fragments of baked bricks with cuneiform letters (TIII-68-1, TIII-68-2) from inside the floor under HW1-1



b. Closer view of TIII-68-2



a. Huge Wall 2 seen from the north-east



b. Huge Wall 2 seen from the north



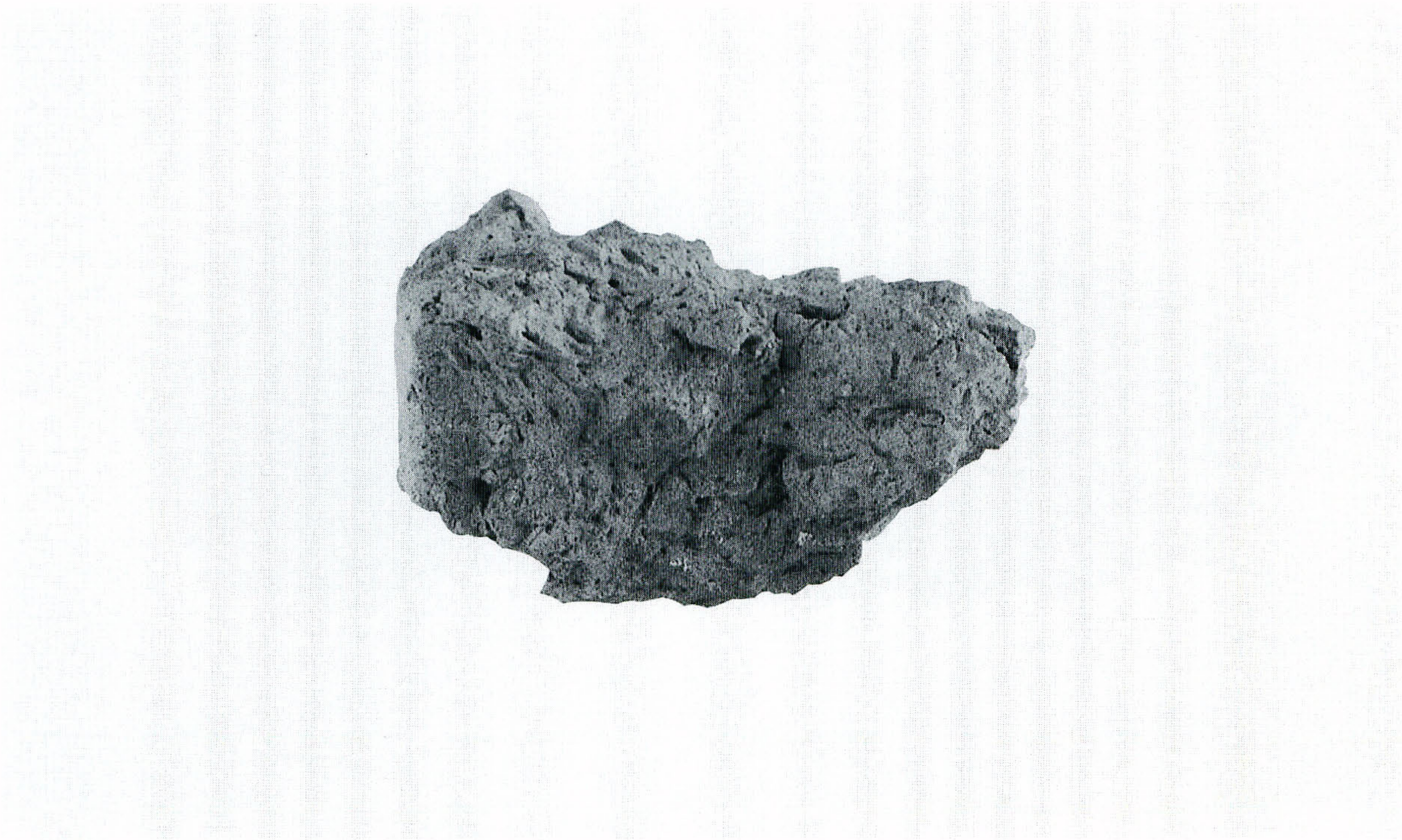
a. Trench III after the 1999 excavation



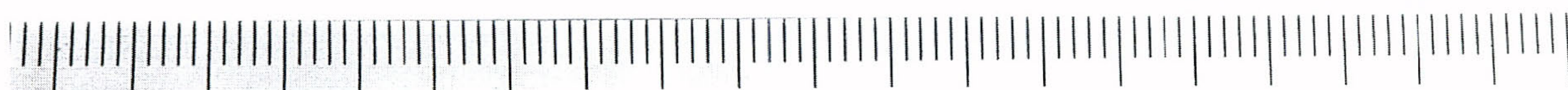
b. Tell Taban seen from the north-west after the 1999 excavation



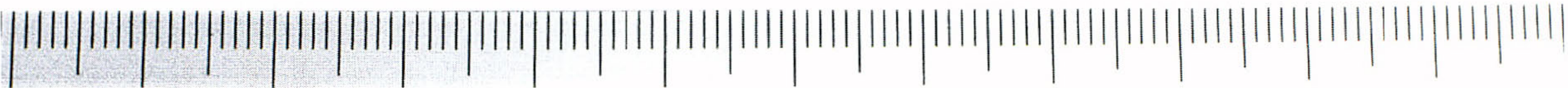
Fragmentary cylinder inscription from the surface



Fragmentary cylinder inscription from the surface soil



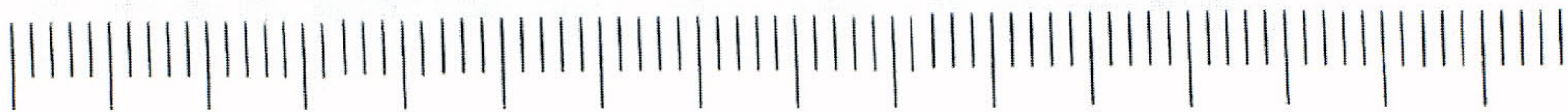
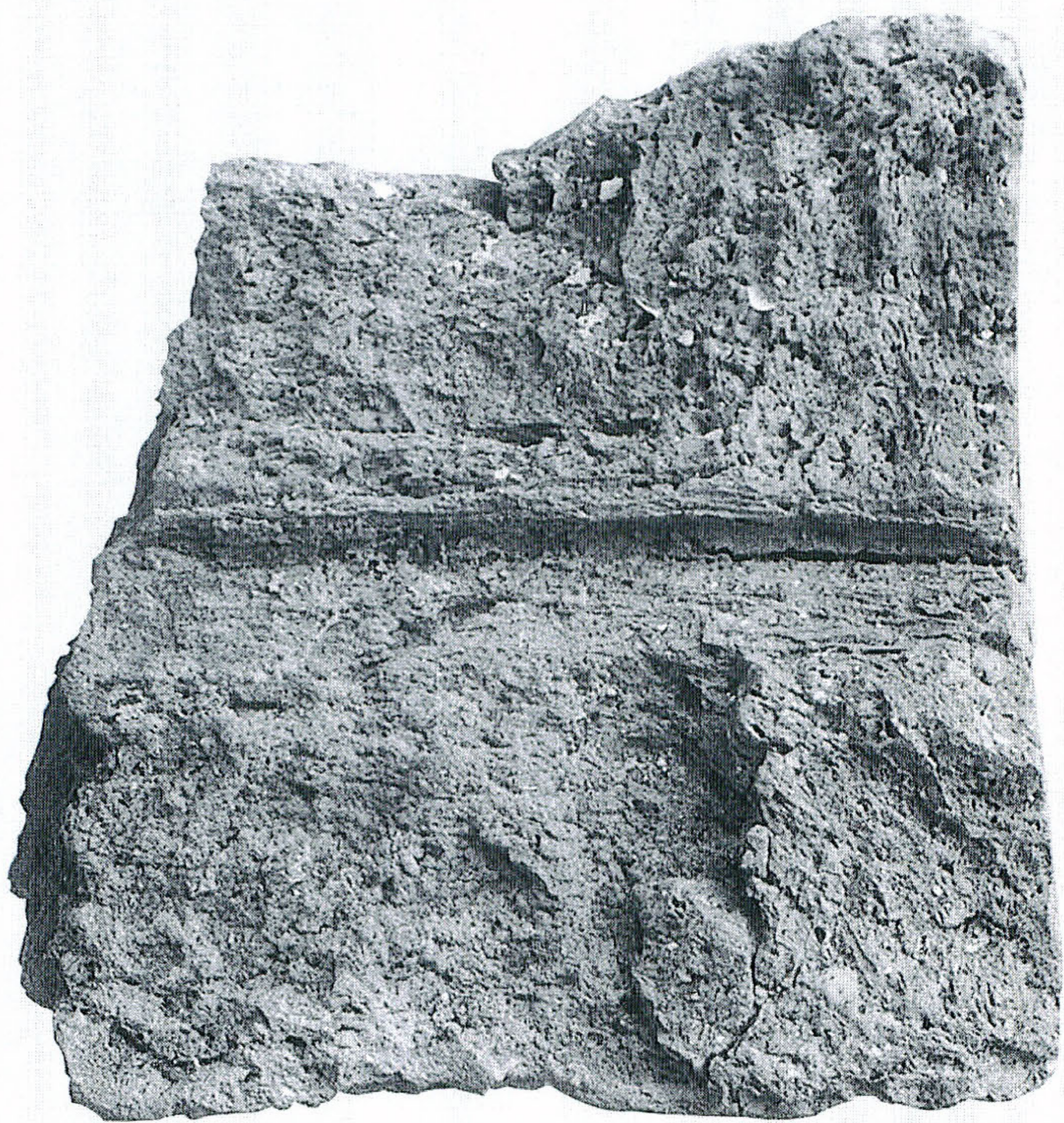
Fragmentary cylinder inscription (TIII-2-1) from Level 8b



Fragmentary cylinder inscription (TIII-2-1) from Level 8b



Fragmentary cylinder inscription (TIII-8-1) from Level 8b



Fragmentary cylinder inscription (TIII-8-1) from Level 8b



Fragmentary clay tablet from the surface soil



a



b

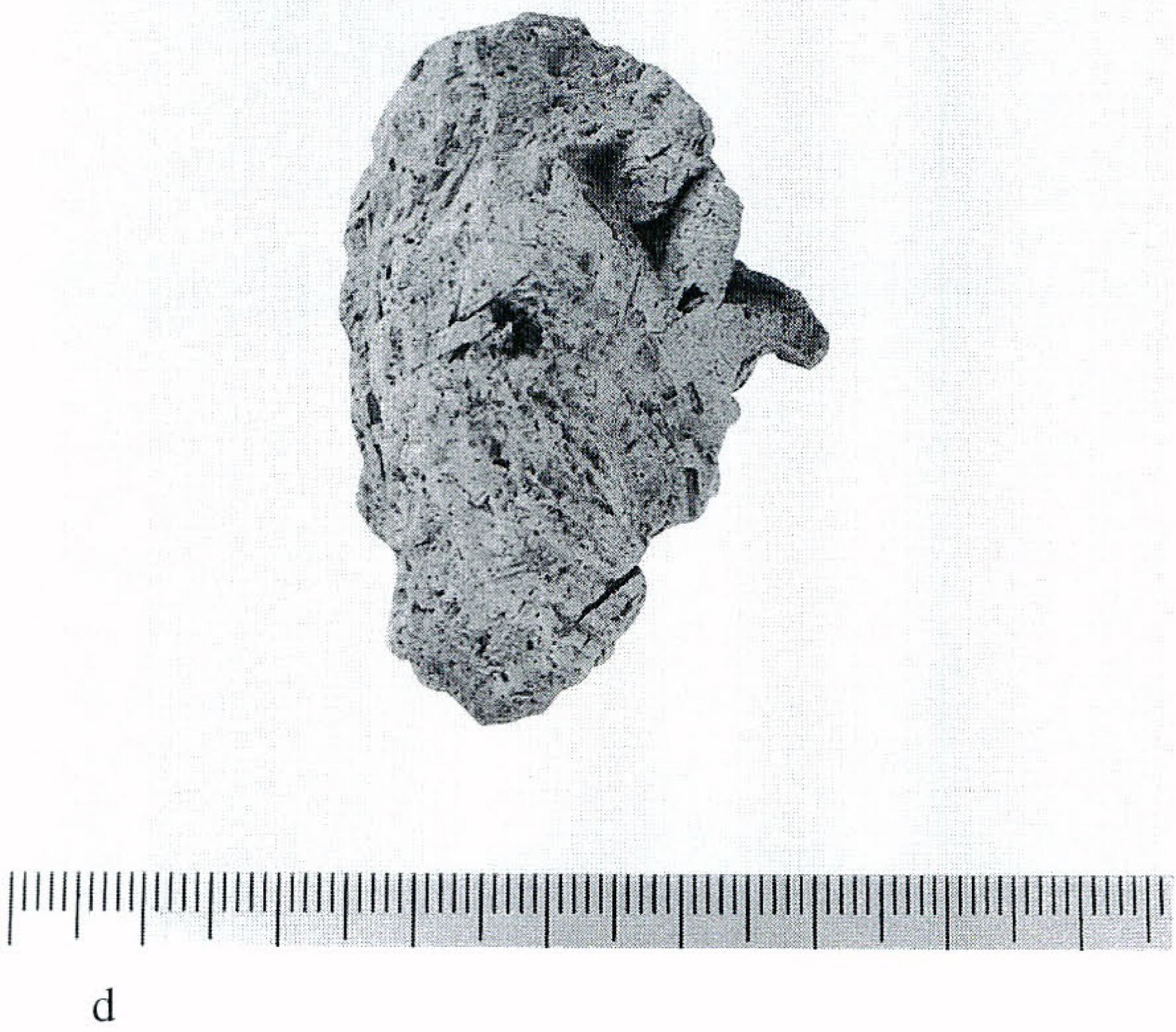
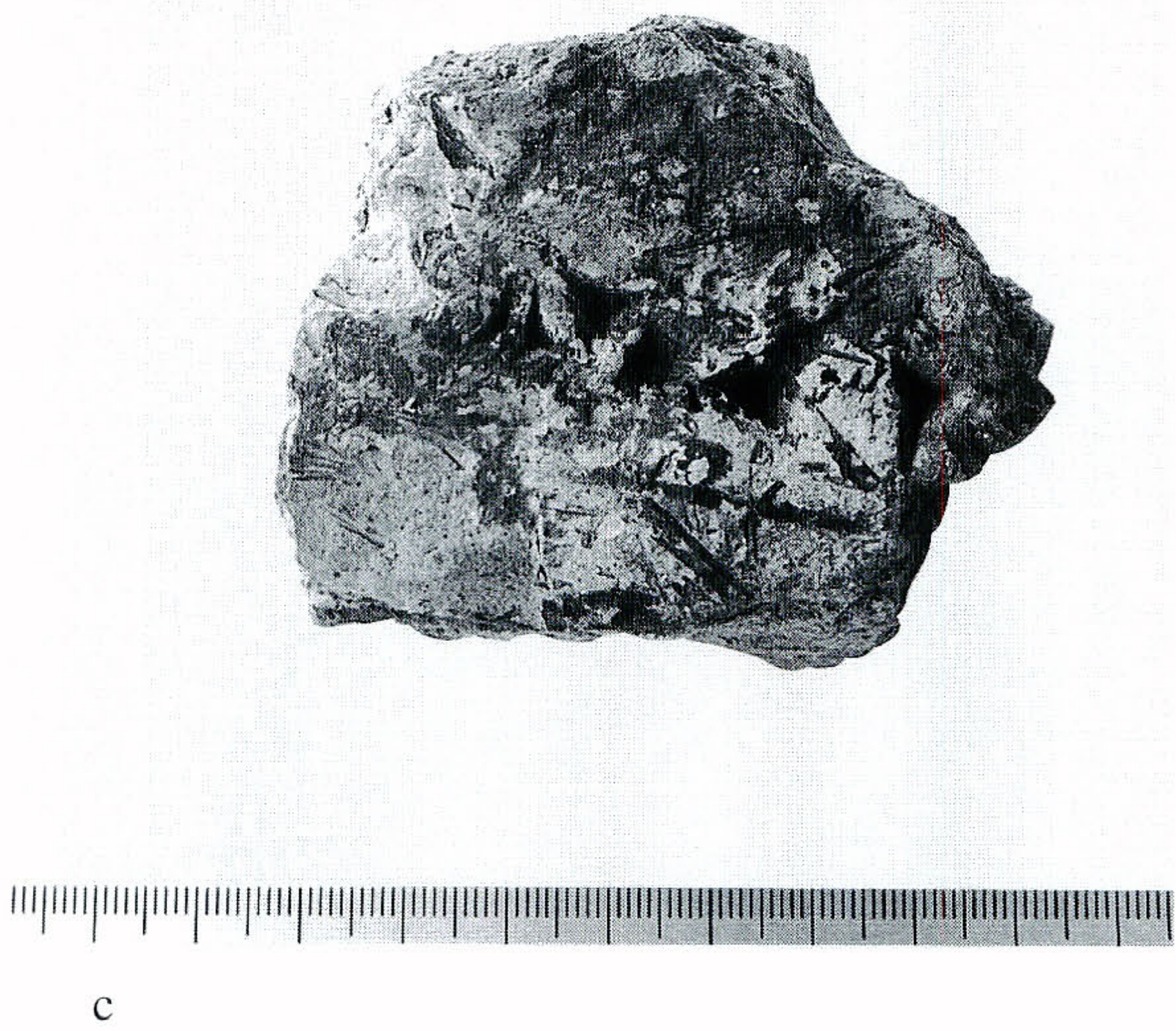


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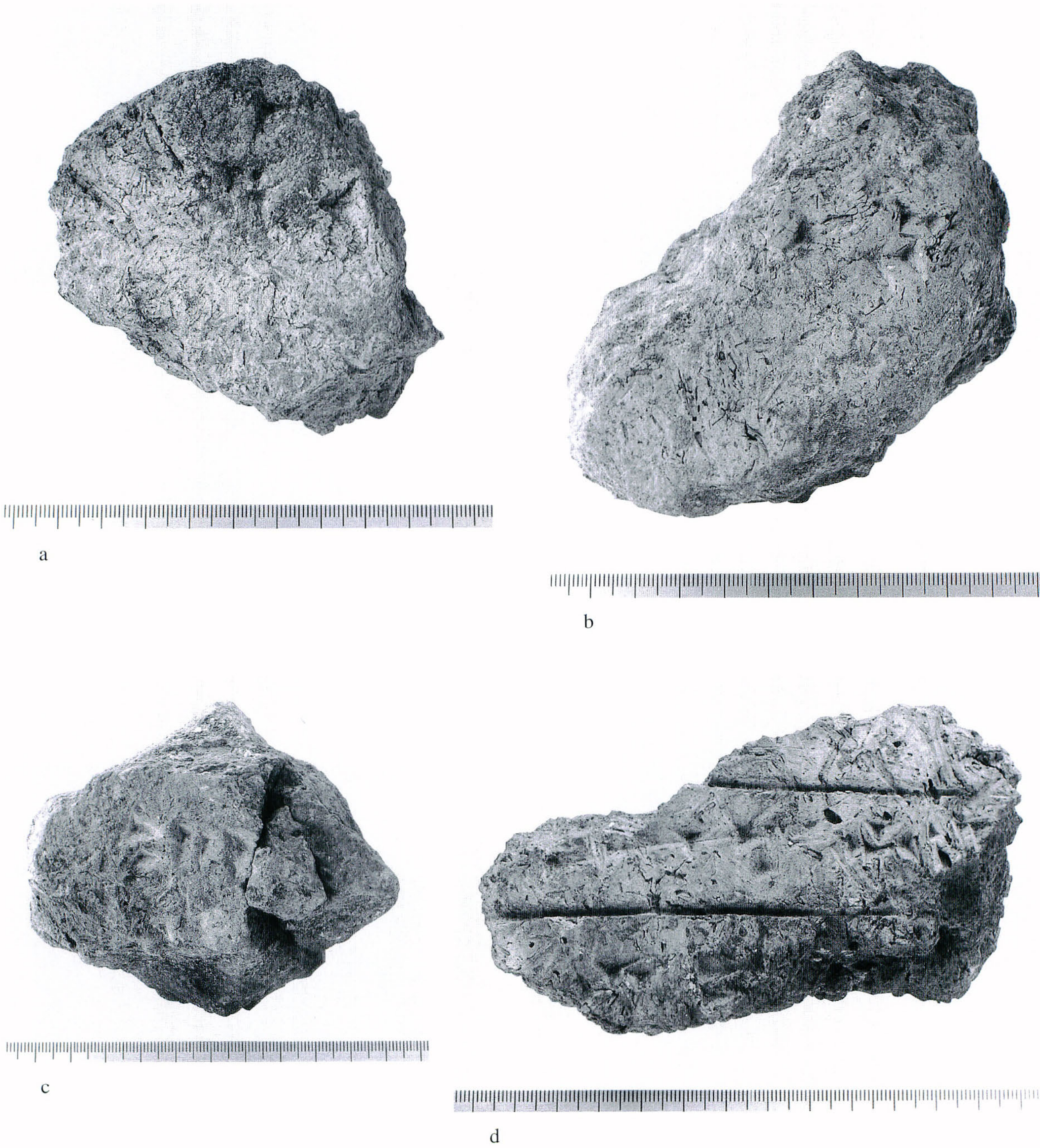


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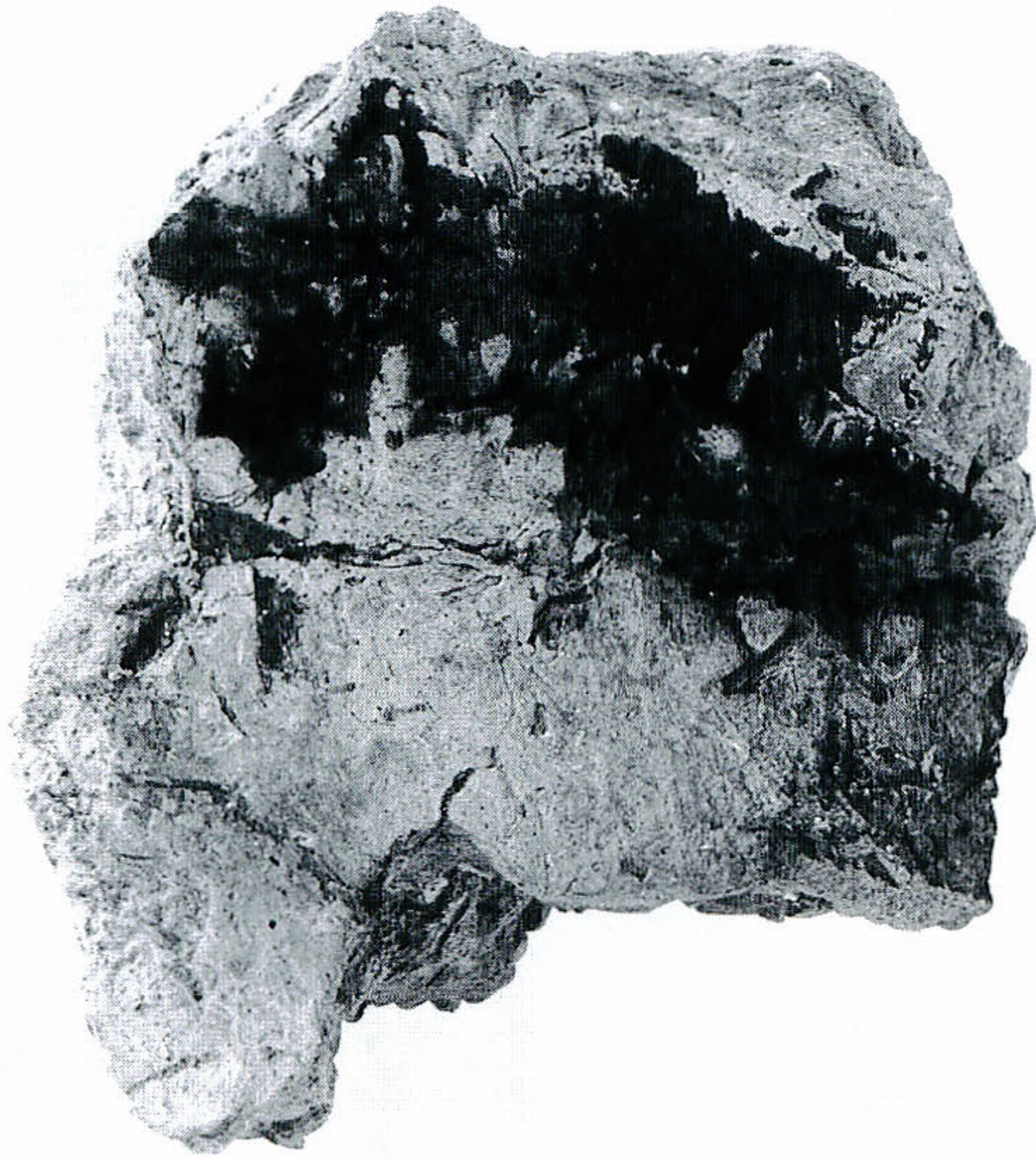
Fragmentary baked bricks with cuneiform letters from the surface (a), surface soil (b) and Level 5 (c, d)



Fragmentary baked bricks with cuneiform letters from Levels 6 (a), 8a (b, c) and 8b (d, e)



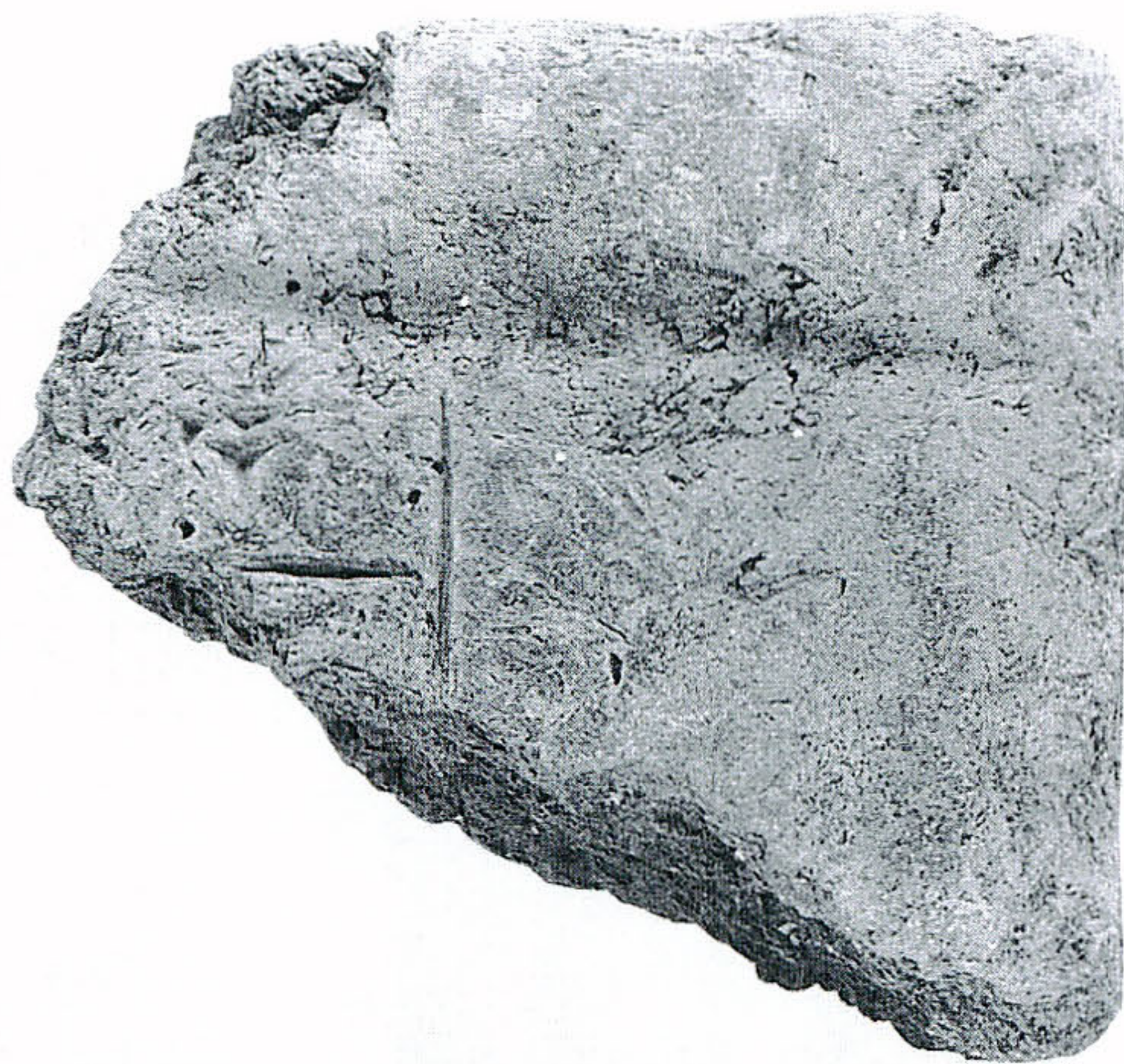
Fragmentary baked bricks with cuneiform letters from Level 8b



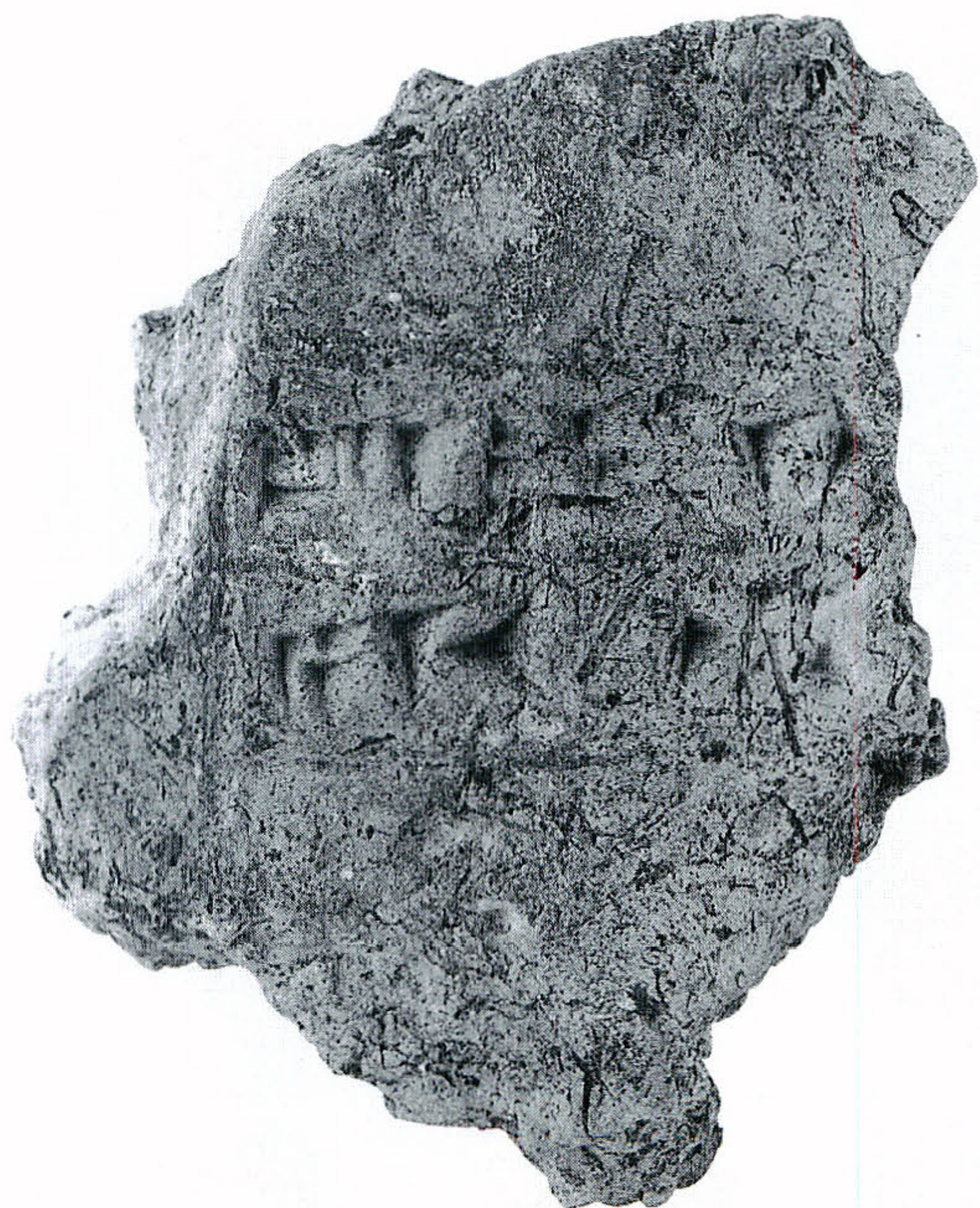
a



b

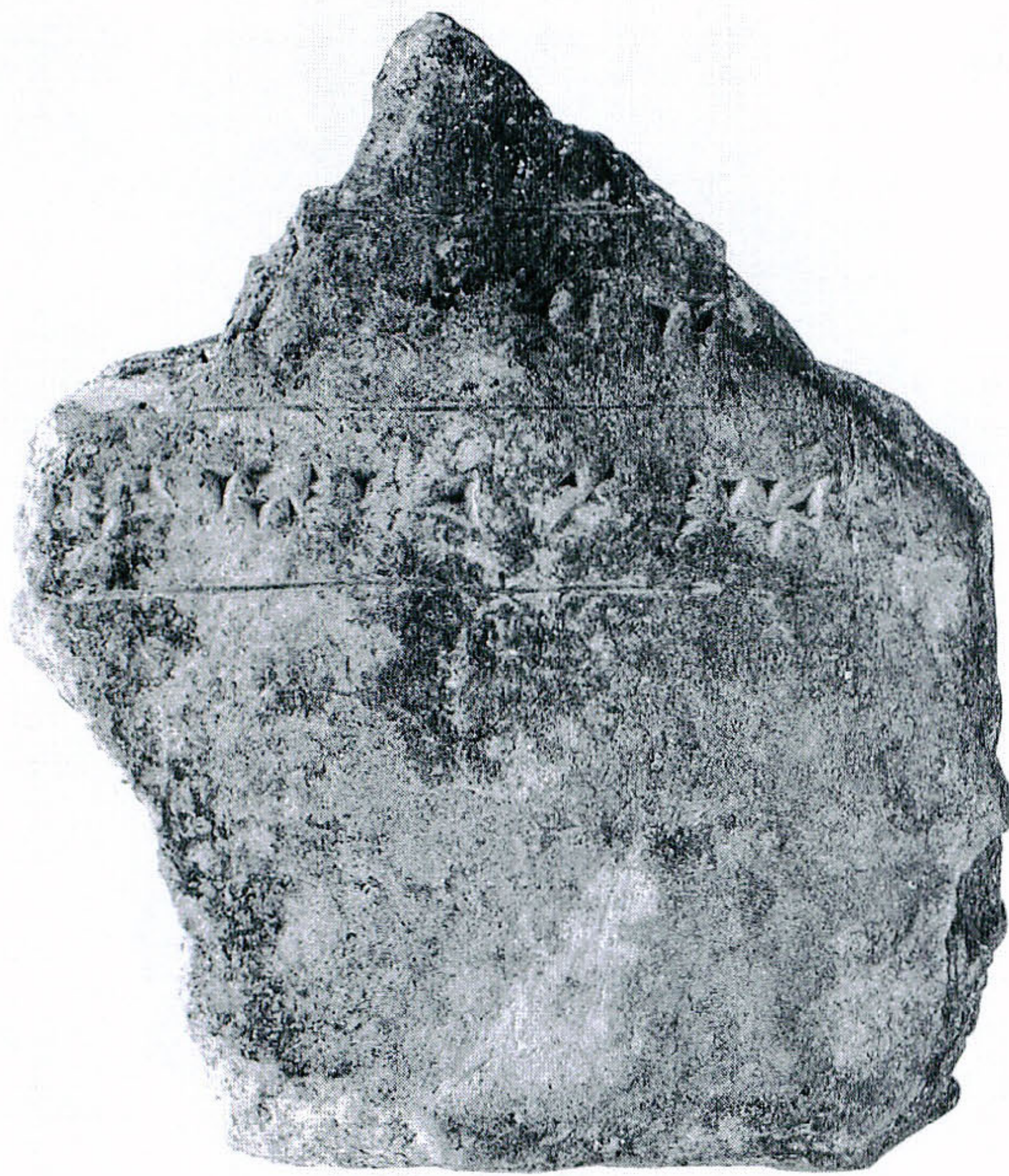


c



d

Fragmentary baked bricks with cuneiform letters from Levels 8b (a), 9a (b, c) and 9b (d)



a



b



c



d

Fragmentary baked bricks with cuneiform letters from Levels 9b (a) and 9a/8b (b, c, d)



a



b



c

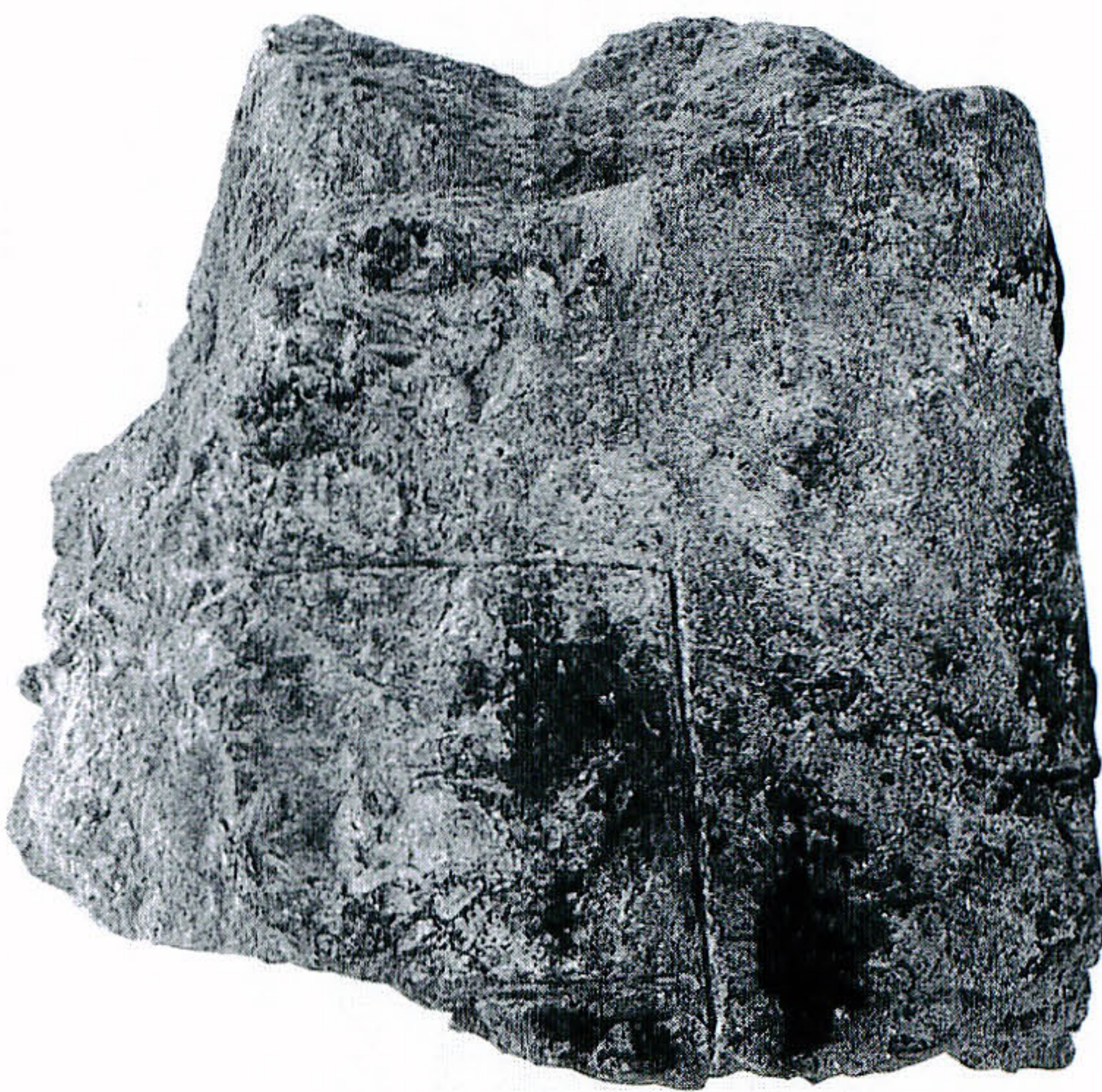


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Fragmentary baked bricks with cuneiform letters from Level 9a/8b



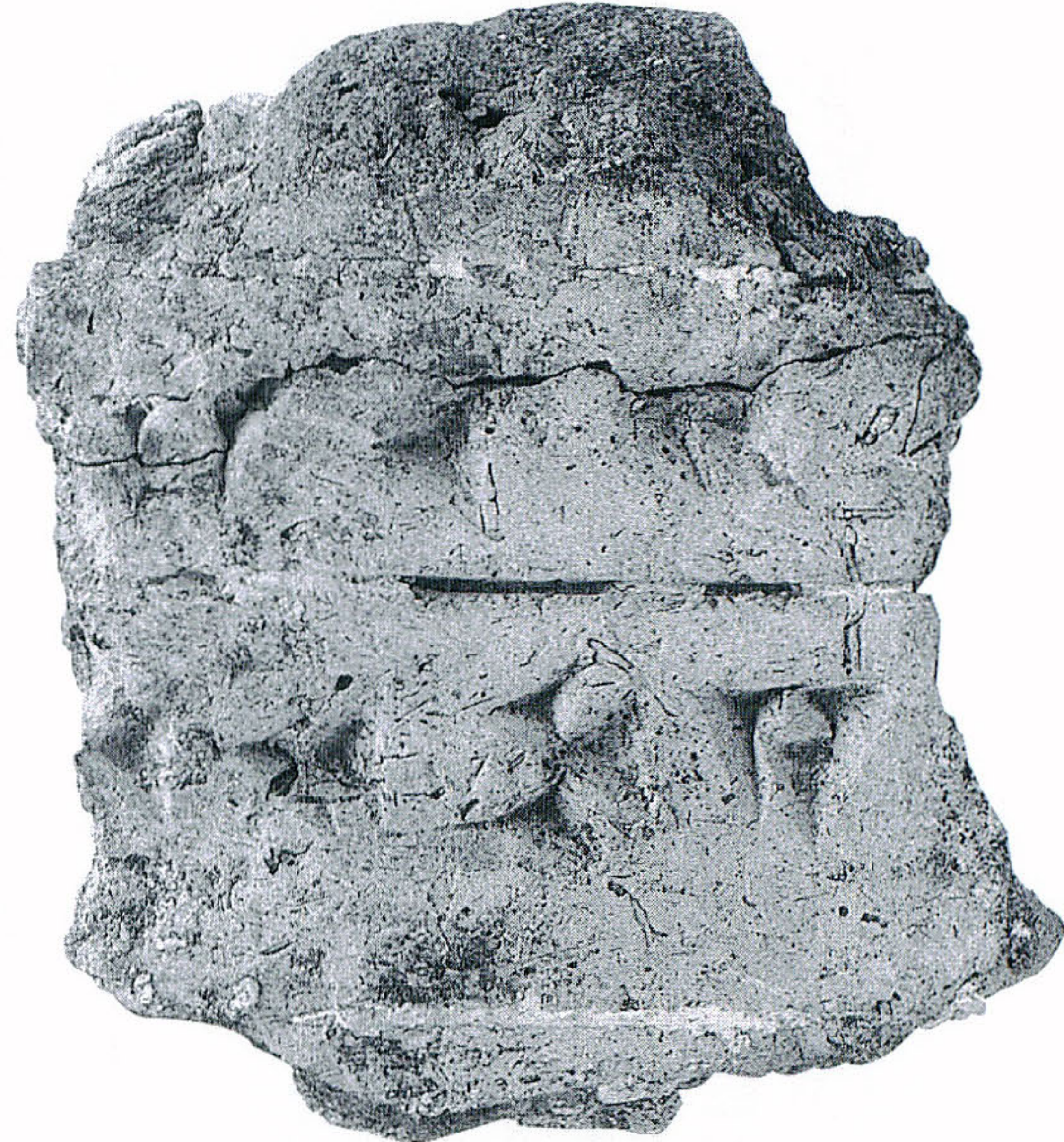
a



d



b

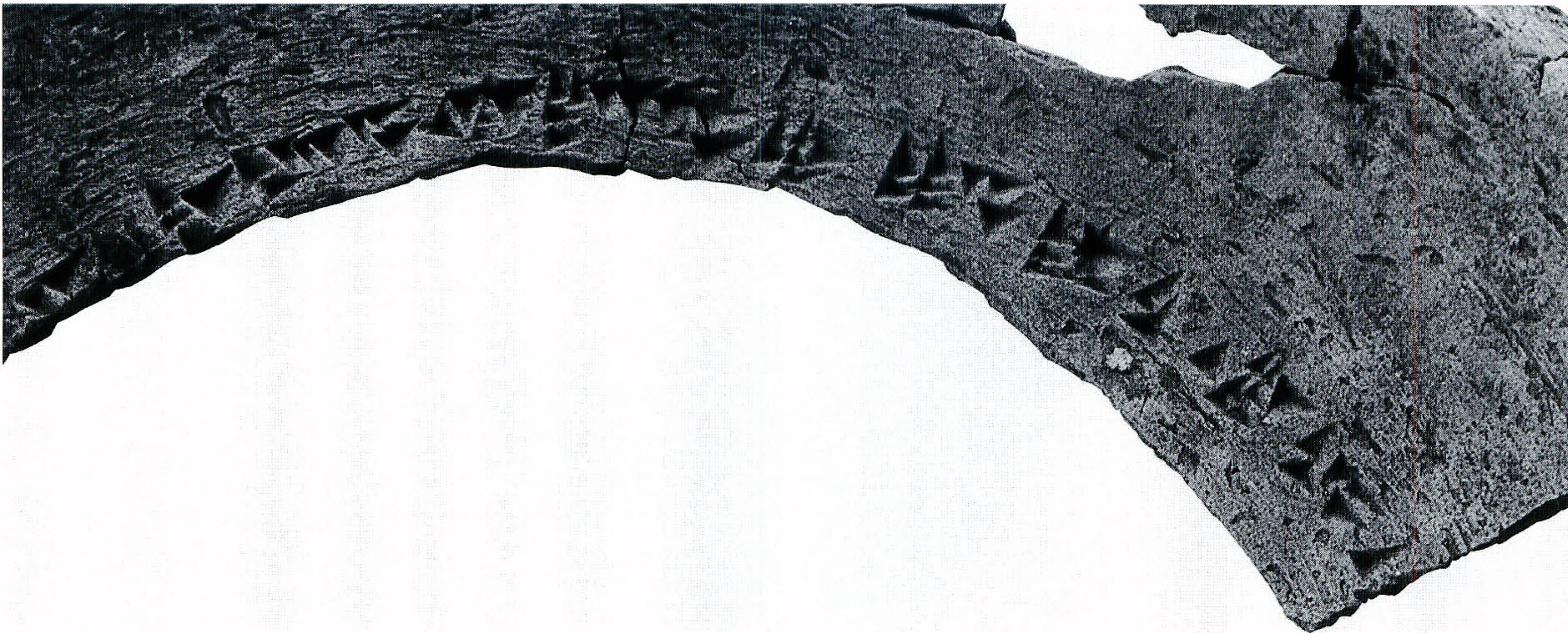
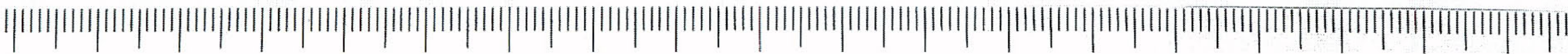


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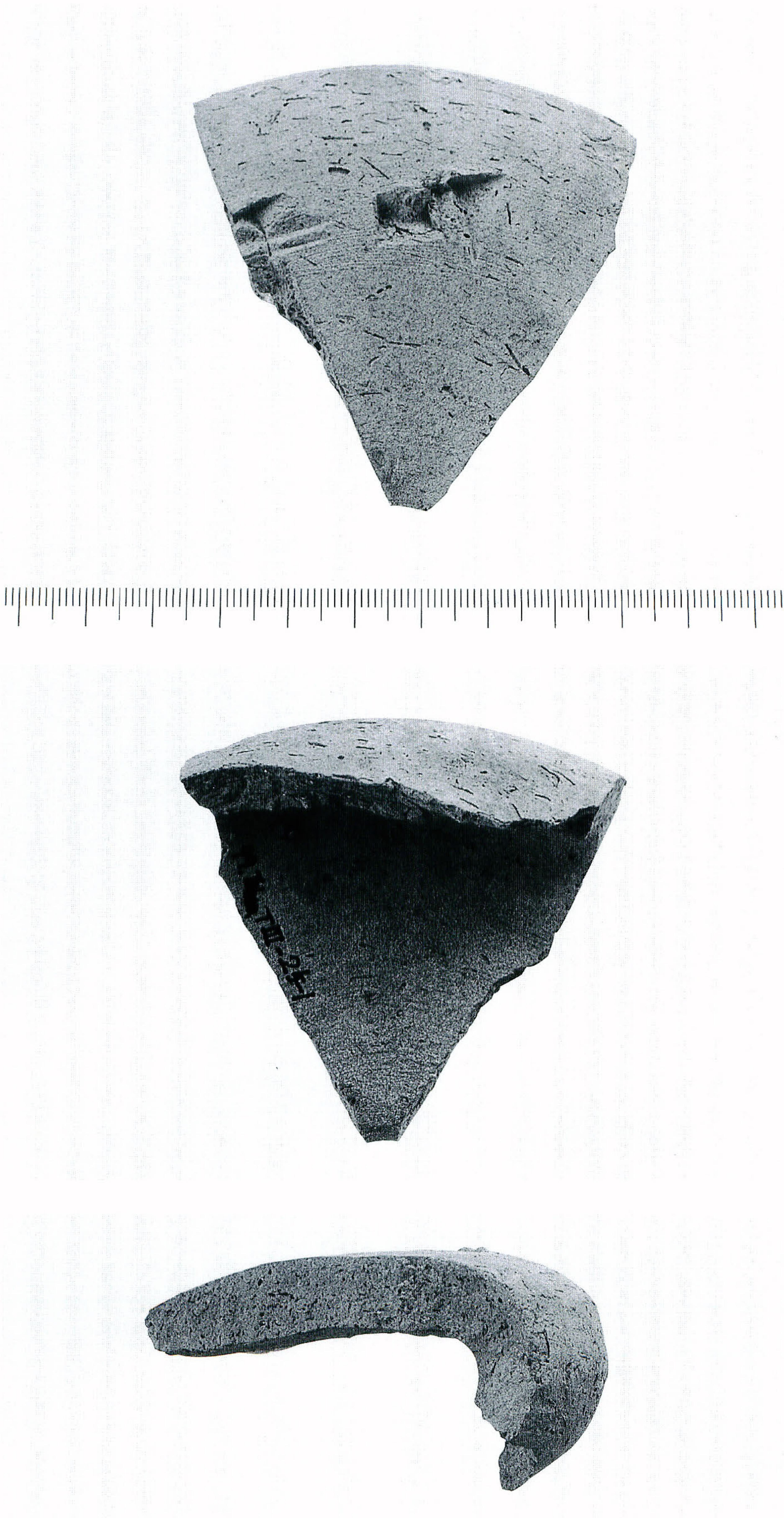


c

Fragmentary baked bricks with cuneiform letters from Levels 9a/8b (a, b, c, d) and 9a (e)



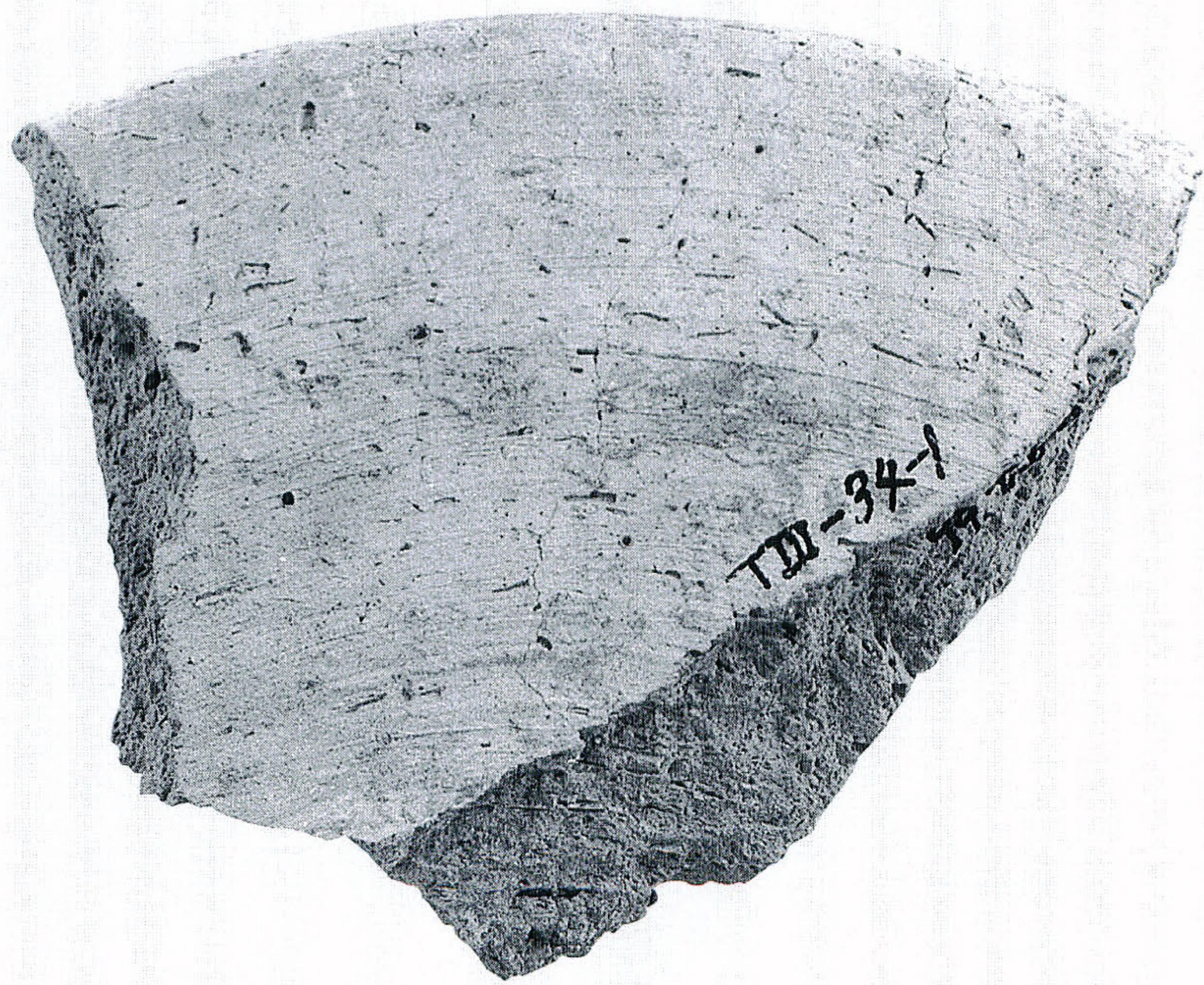
Fragmentary bowl with cuneiform inscription from Level 8b



Fragmentary clay-nail head with cuneiform letters from Level 8b



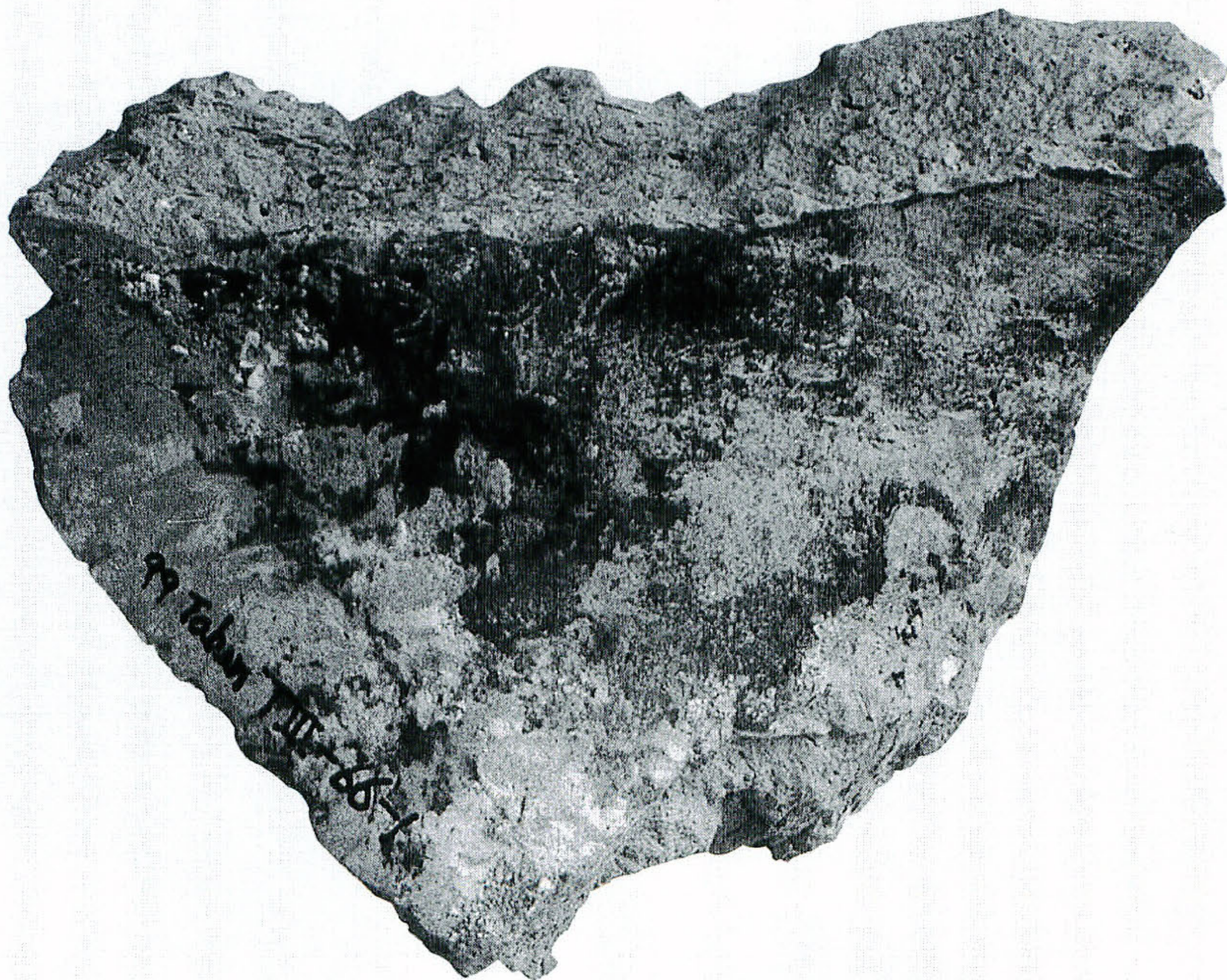
Fragmentary clay-nail head with cuneiform letters from Level 9a/8b



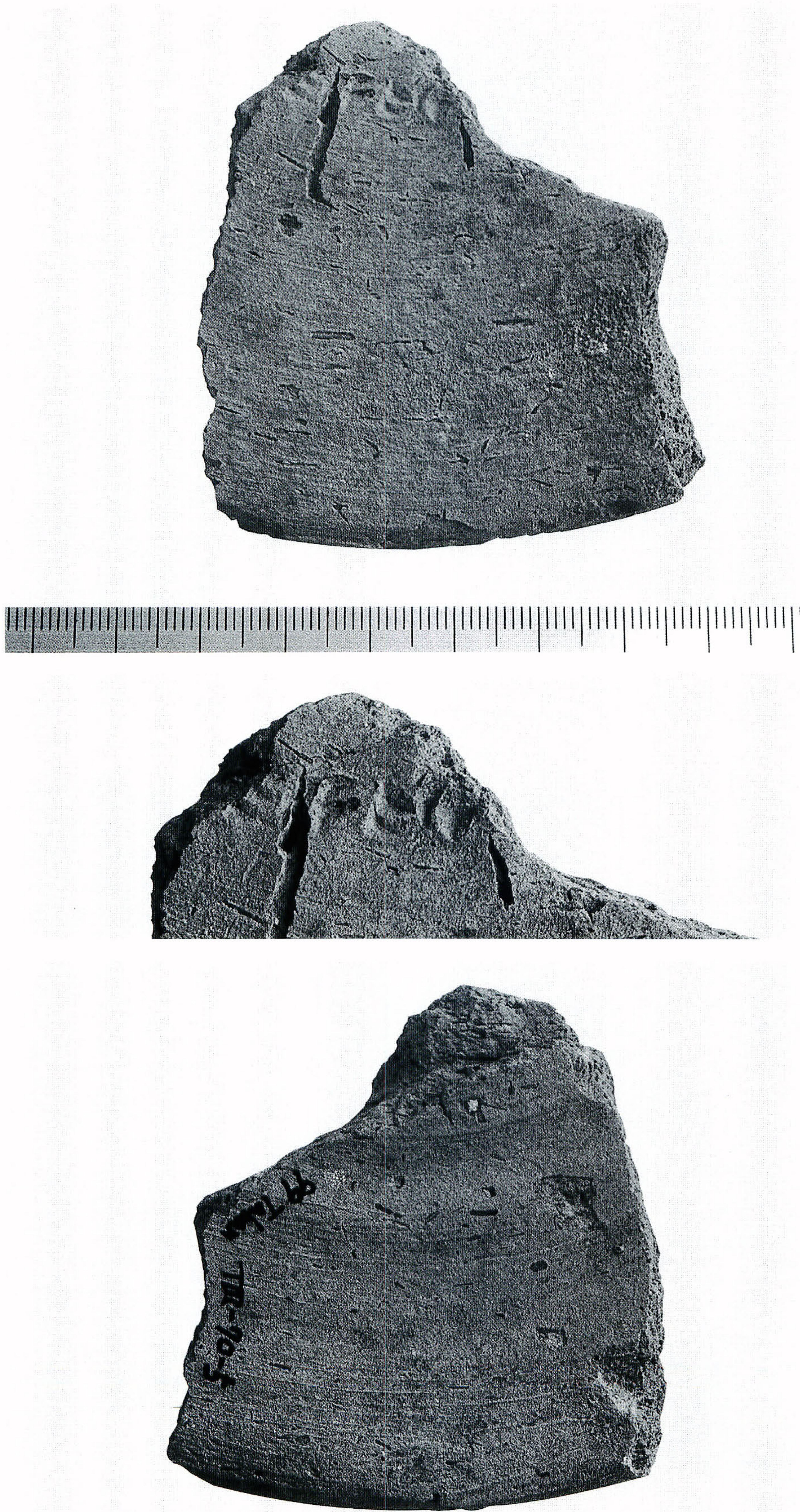
Clay-nail-like potsherd with cuneiform letters from Level 8b



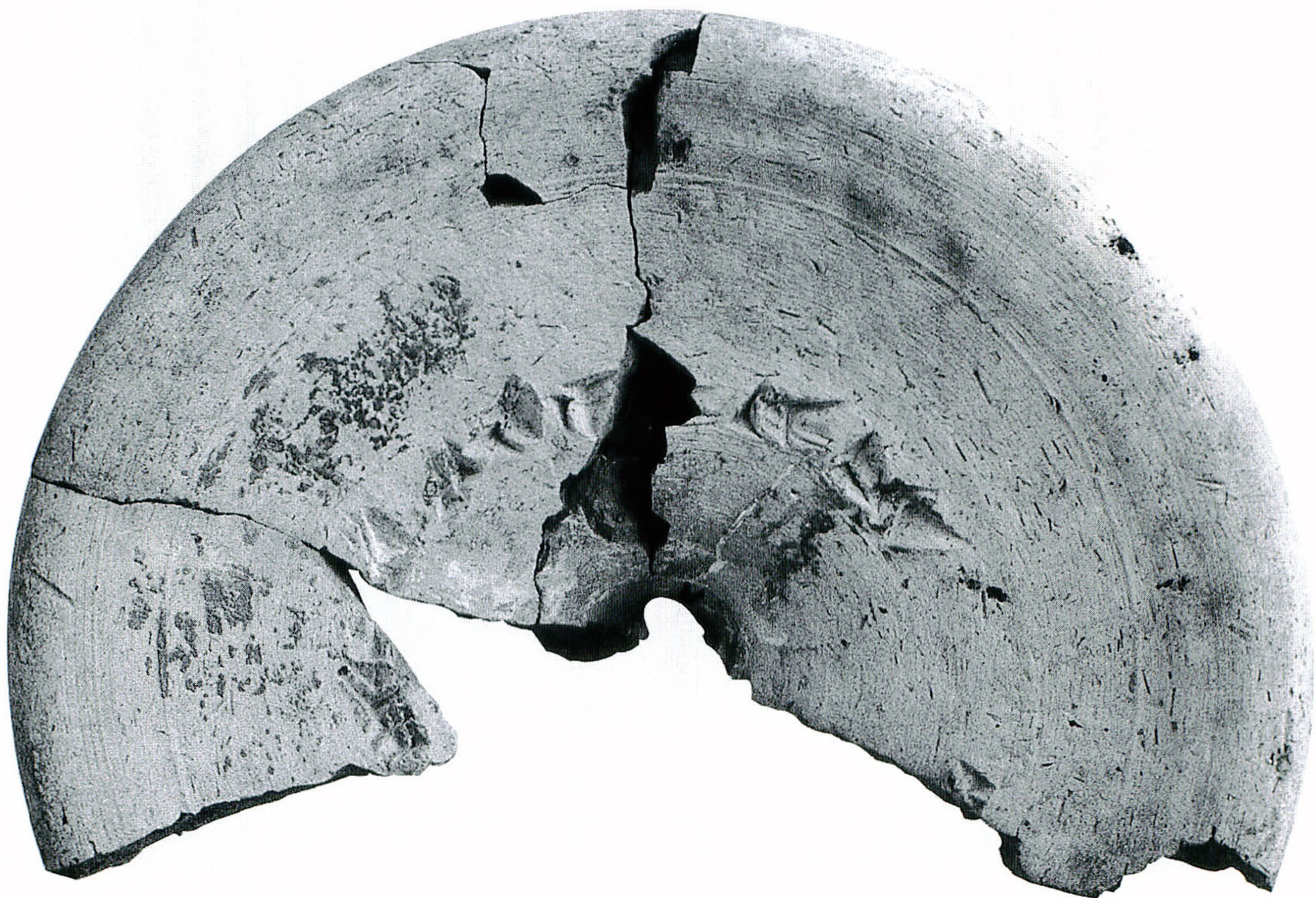
Clay-nail-like potsherd with cuneiform letters from Level 8b



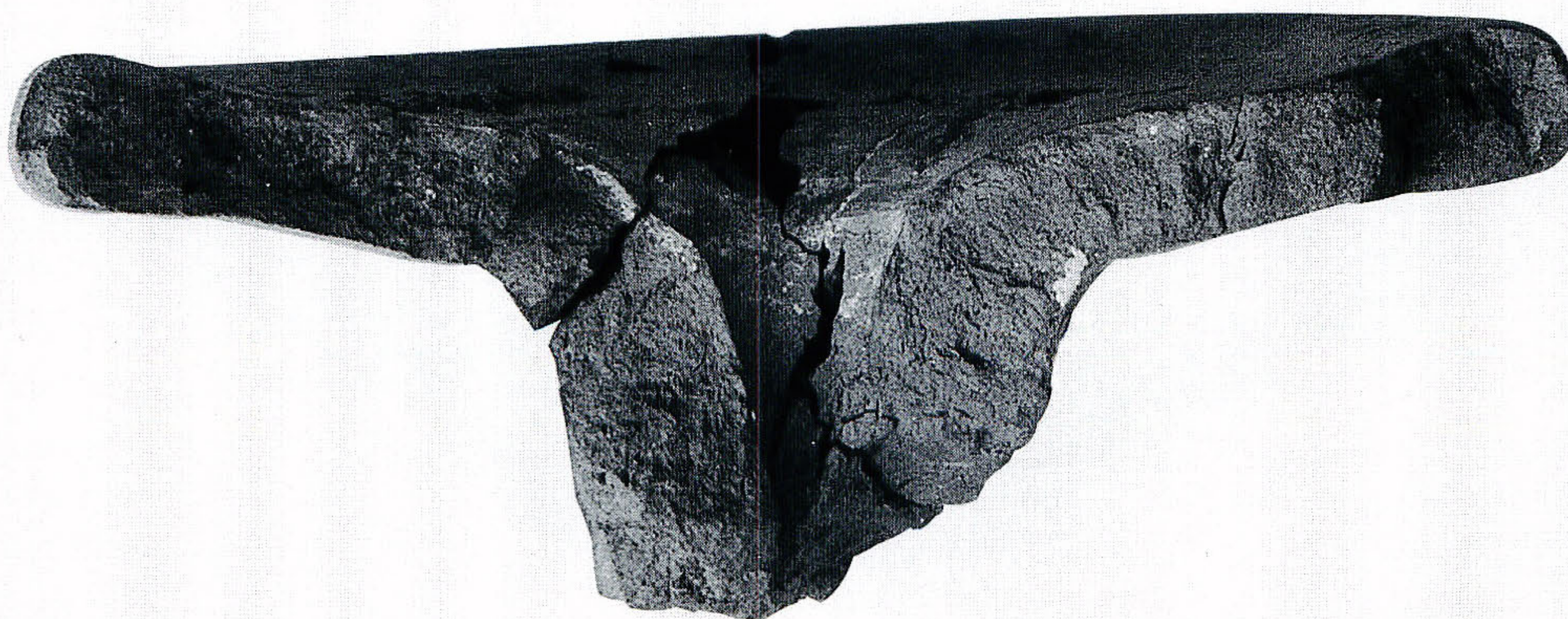
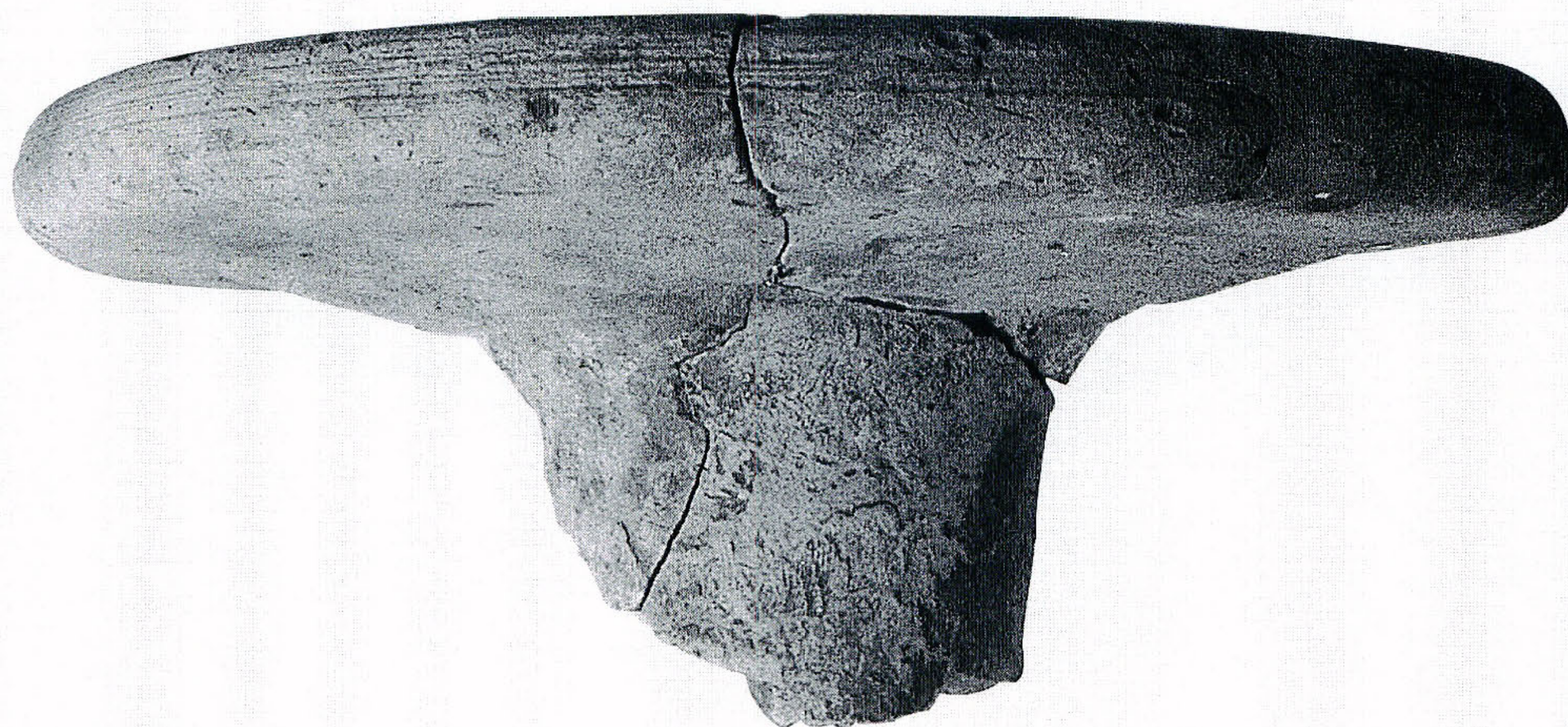
Clay-nail-like potsherd with cuneiform letters from Level 8b



Clay-nail-like potsherd with cuneiform letters from Level 9a/8b



Clay-nail-like potsherd with cuneiform letters (TIII-73-9) from Level 9a/8b



Clay-nail-like potsherd with cuneiform letters (TIII-73-9) from Level 9a/8b



a. Nipple-base beaker from Level 8b



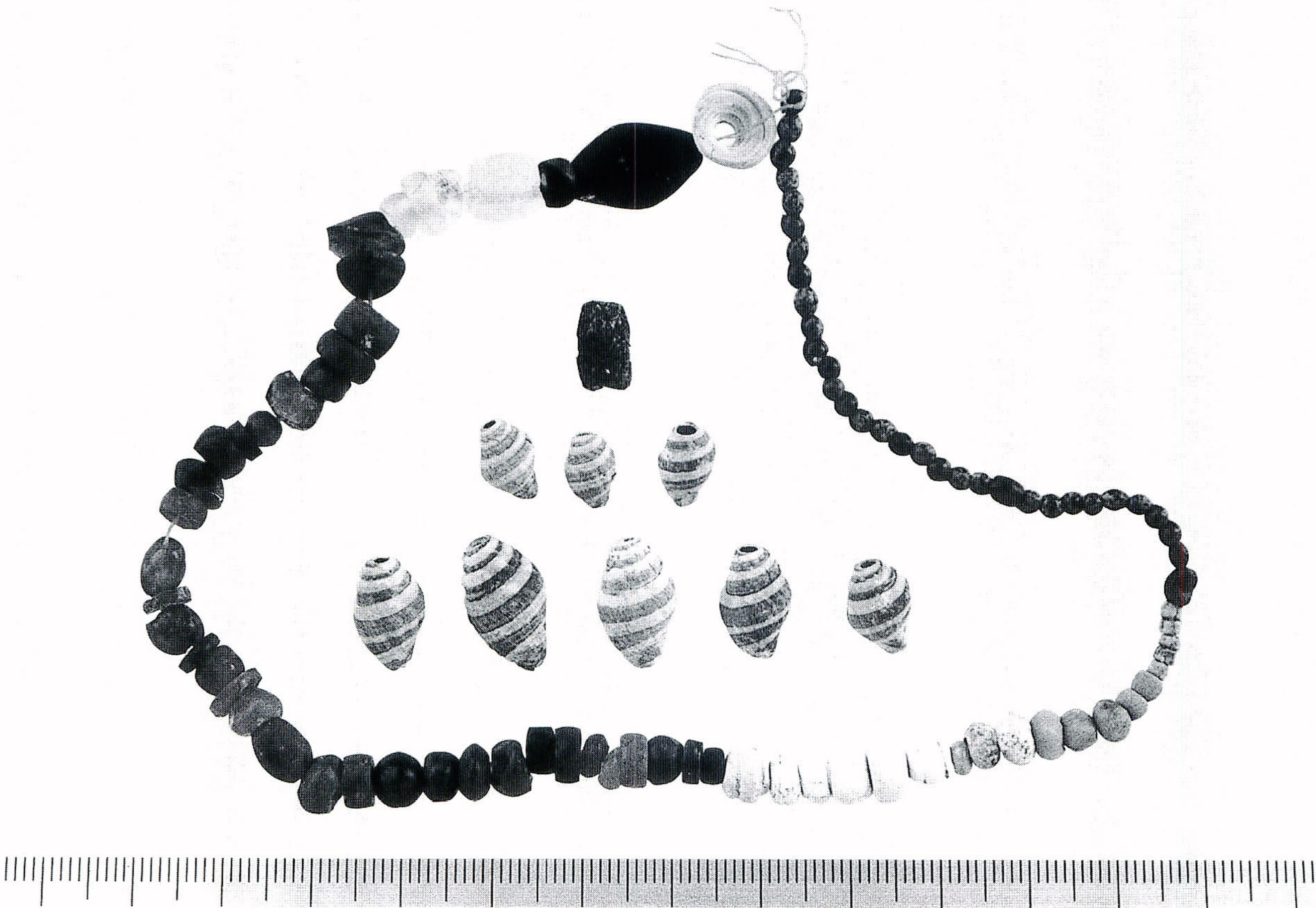
b. Button-base beaker from Level 9b



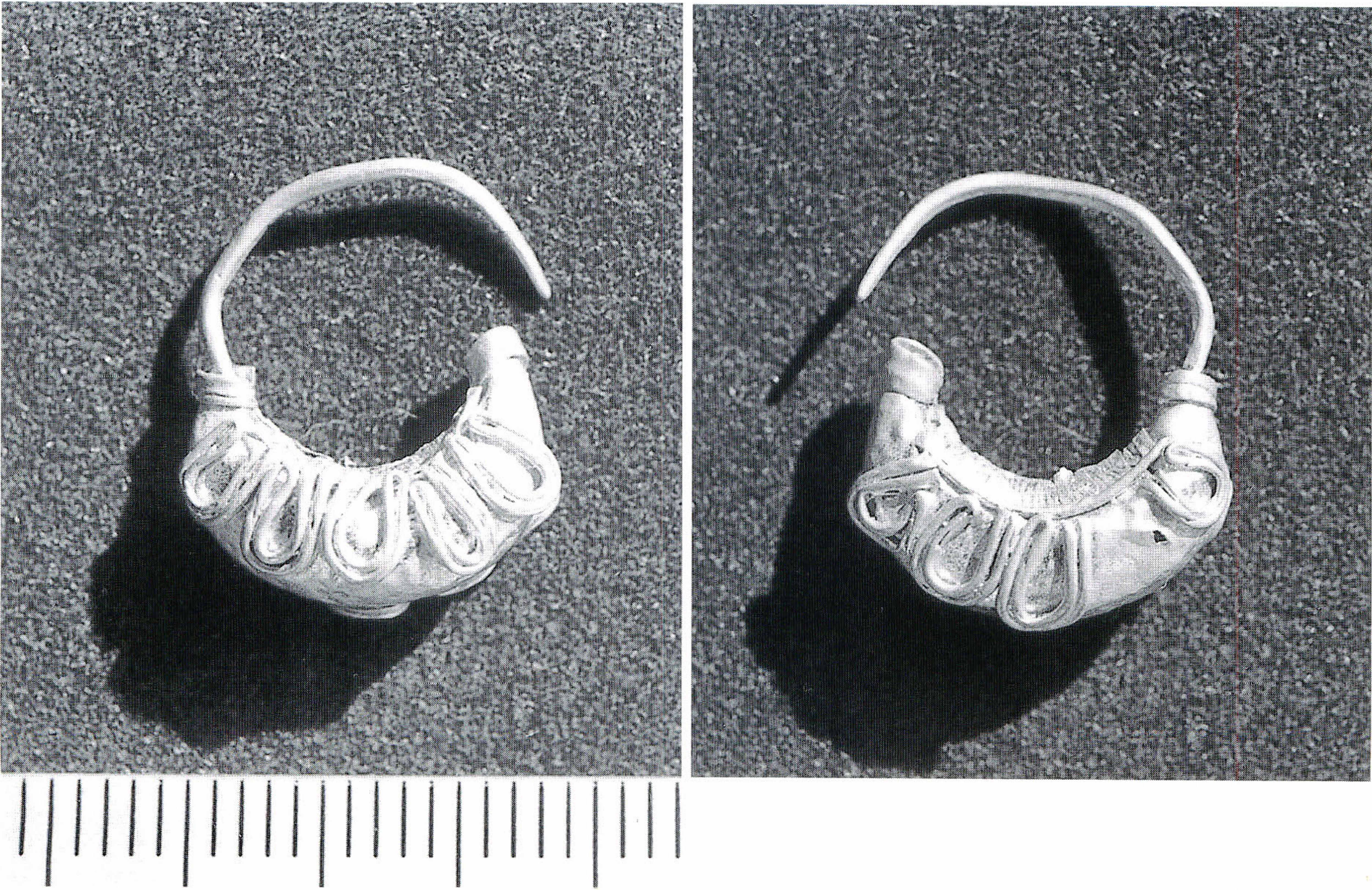
c. Bowl from Level 9b



d. Bowl from Level 9a



a. Beads from grave of Level 6



b. Earring from grave of Level 8b