

Figure 5.11. Simple pit burial (Feature 3) of an adult female under midden north of the structure.

## 5.2. Feature 3 Burial

The individual interred in the pit grave was an adult female laid on her left side with her knees flexed (Figure 5.11). The skeletal remains were largely complete, and the skull was well enough preserved to see that the individual had undergone oblique tabular cranial deformation. Several maladies include an infection (likely osteomyelitis) on the left tibia, an infection in the nasal cavity, and heavy wear and caries on several molars. Scars on the mandible show healing from prior trauma. As there were no grave offerings with the body, this individual may have been afforded lesser personal standing or status than the individuals interred in the tomb.

## 5.3. The Domestic Assemblage at Ejutla

### 5.3.1. Ceramics

The large midden north of the structure contained more than cut shell debris. It also was filled with residential trash including huge amounts of broken utilitarian pottery, stone tools and chipping debris, and animal bones. Domestic trash also was abundant in fill contexts under the structure, in exterior areas around the house, and in all

the pit kilns. After the kilns served as firing features, refuse was deposited in them.

By quantity and volume, ceramic remains are the most abundant material that we collected during the excavations. These remains are heavily dominated by gris (gray) and café (brown) plainware vessels that are typical of the Classic period (ca. 250–900 CE) in the Valley of Oaxaca (e.g., Caso et al. 1967; Feinman 2018; Kowalewski et al. 1978). Overall, the Ejutla assemblage is generically similar to the Classic period contexts at the three sites—El Palmillo, Lambityeco, and the Mitla Fortress—we later excavated in the eastern arm of the valley (Feinman and Nicholas 2009, 2011b, 2016b). These two paste categories comprise approximately 95% of the utilitarian pottery at Ejutla, with roughly twice as much grayware as café. The proportions vary slightly between the later occupation (associated with the structure) and the earlier one below the house: ~37% café in the lower levels and ~32% in the later levels (Table 5.1). This decline is similar to changes over time in the ceramic assemblages at El Palmillo and the Mitla Fortress (Feinman and Nicholas 2009, table 4b, 2011b, table 5a); across the entire Valley of Oaxaca, gris paste vessels increased slightly as a proportion of all ceramic wares during the Classic period (Feinman 2018).

Table 5.1. All ceramics at Ejutla by paste for each general context\*.

Context**	Gris	Café	Amarillo	Crema	Total for context
surface	3080	1172	242	35	4529
plow zone	3374	906	228	19	4527
upper midden	38763	17883	2431	116	59193
house & middens	35514	18527	1841	180	56062
top of 4 kilns	5666	3351	237	33	9287
base of kilns	10857	6691	345	23	17916
below house	28960	17213	2461	341	48975
kiln below house	773	1177	267	10	2227
total for paste	126987	66920	8052	757	202716

Percentage of each paste in each general context

Context	Gris	Café	Amarillo	Crema	Total
surface	68.01%	25.88%	5.34%	0.77%	100%
plow zone	74.53%	20.01%	5.04%	0.42%	100%
upper midden	65.49%	30.21%	4.11%	0.20%	100%
house & middens	63.35%	33.05%	3.28%	0.32%	100%
top of 4 kilns	61.01%	36.08%	2.55%	0.36%	100%
base of kilns	60.60%	37.35%	1.93%	0.13%	100%
below house	59.13%	35.15%	5.03%	0.70%	100%
kiln below house	34.71%	52.85%	11.99%	0.45%	100%

\* includes all ceramics in the assemblage, including nondiagnostic bodies, but not concretions, unknown paste, or sherds from mixed deposits.

\*\* listed in order from highest level to lowest level; see Figure 4.55.

Nondiagnostic body fragments were abundant in our collections. They accounted for almost three-quarters of the vessel fragments that we counted and weighed. It was not possible to refit most of these pieces. The remaining 25% (~55,000 sherds) includes rims, handles, supports, bases, and other miscellaneous or decorated sherds that were distinctive and/or large enough to determine their form, or they were temporally diagnostic. We base our descriptions and analyses on this smaller component of the ceramic assemblage, which contains all the basic vessel forms that typically are found in domestic contexts in the Valley of Oaxaca.

Bowls are the dominant vessel form (approximately 60% of the assemblage), of which almost 80% are gris (Table 5.2). Most of the bowls at Ejutla, like those in the subfloor tomb, are undecorated (see Figure 5.10). The drab, utilitarian G-35 conical bowls, with outleaned walls and either direct or flared rims, that are ubiquitous at Classic period sites in the Valley of Oaxaca are also the most common vessel form in the domestic assemblage at Ejutla (Table 5.3, see Figure 4.36, Table 4.3). Their size is variable, mostly around 20–26 cm in diameter, but some are as large as 40 cm (Appendix 3). Another common

utilitarian gris vessel form are shallow outleaned bowls with flat bases (Figure 5.12); they tend to be smaller than the conical bowls. Other gris bowl forms are present in lower quantities, including hemispherical bowls (Figure 5.13), cylinders, cylindrical bowls (Figure 5.14), plates (see Figure 5.10 top), and large basins, some as large as 74 cm in diameter (Appendix 3). These Classic period vessels generally have no decoration beyond streaky or black burnishing, and some have small solid supports or larger hollow supports (see Figure 4.36). A small proportion of bowls (approximately 15%) were made of café paste, usually with outleaned or shallow outleaned walls (Figure 5.15). Ceramic bowls also range in size from small and miniature ones, generally smaller than 10 cm in diameter (Figure 5.16) to large serving vessels (Figure 5.17). Some of the largest vessels are café basins (Figure 5.18). The gris and café basins are unlike other large serving vessels and may have been used for other, unknown purposes.

Approximately 25% of the utilitarian vessels in the assemblage are jars. In contrast to bowls, more than half of the jars were made in café paste. Large, coarse-paste jars for storage and cooking are abundant in both pastes,

**Table 5.2. Vessel forms at Ejutla by paste\*.**

Paste	Bowls	Jars	Comals	Sahumadors	Figurines	Urns	Total
amarillo	2053	239	–	–	8	4	2304
crema	231	38	21	–	–	–	290
gris	24531	5356	98	72	77	166	30300
café	4804	6202	4680	3284	1918	118	21006
total	31619	11835	4799	3356	2003	288	53900

Percentage of each vessel form that was made from each paste

Paste	Bowls	Jars	Comals	Sahumadors	Figurines	Urns
amarillo	6.49%	2.02%	–	–	0.40%	1.39%
crema	0.73%	0.32%	0.44%	–	–	–
gris	77.58%	45.26%	2.04%	2.15%	3.84%	57.64%
café	15.19%	52.40%	97.52%	97.85%	95.76%	40.97%
total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Percentage of each paste that was used to make each ceramic form

Paste	Bowls	Jars	Comals	Sahumadors	Figurines	Urns	Total
amarillo	89.11%	10.37%	–	–	0.35%	0.17%	100%
crema	79.66%	13.10%	7.24%	–	–	–	100%
gris	80.96%	17.68%	0.32%	0.24%	0.25%	0.55%	100%
café	22.87%	29.52%	22.28%	15.63%	9.13%	0.56%	100%

\* does not include nondiagnostic bodies.

**Table 5.3. Ceramic forms by paste for sample of rims with measured diameters\*.**

General form	Specific form	Amarillo	Crema	Gris	Café	Total
basin	–	–	–	43	11	54
bottle	–	–	–	6	–	6
bowl	composite silhouette	1	–	2	–	3
bowl	cylindrical	3	–	15	–	18
bowl	flared rim	2	–	4	2	8
bowl	hemispherical	–	–	34	1	35
bowl	miniature	1	–	15	1	17
bowl	outleaned wall	8	–	222	11	241
bowl	outleaned wall everted rim	–	–	1	–	1
bowl	outleaned wall flared rim	3	–	216	7	226
bowl	shallow outleaned	12	–	453	8	473
bowl	shallow with flared rim	–	–	1	–	1
bowl	small	–	–	–	1	1
comal	comal	–	–	3	194	197
cylinder	–	13	–	77	5	95
cylinder	tall cylindrical	1	–	22	–	23
jar	curved back neck	1	1	1	48	51
jar	flared rim	–	–	1	–	1
jar	globular	–	–	14	–	14
jar	large storage jar	–	–	9	6	15
jar	long neck with flared rim	1	–	–	–	1
jar	long-necked	–	–	1	–	1
jar	seed jar	–	–	55	10	65
jar	short neck	–	–	3	–	3
jar	small	–	–	310	5	315

General form	Specific form	Amarillo	Crema	Gris	Café	Total
jar	straight neck with everted rim	1	–	–	3	4
jar	upturned rim	–	–	1	–	1
jar	wide mouth	1	–	1	–	2
molcajete	–	–	–	6	–	6
plate	–	–	–	3	–	3
sahumador	shallow outleaned	–	–	1	59	60
total		48	1	1520	372	1941

\* rim diameters for each form are listed in Appendix 3.

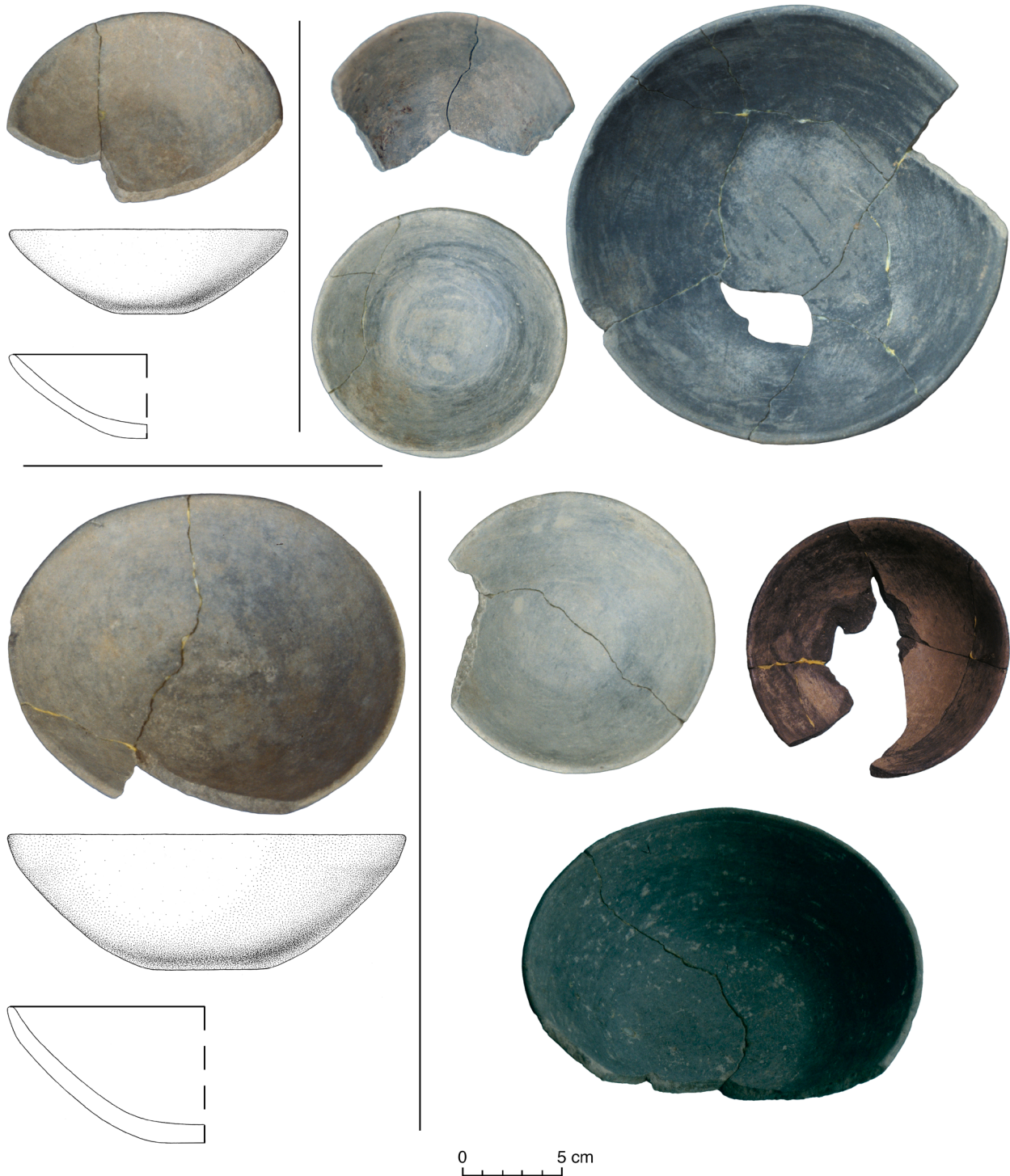


Figure 5.12. Gris shallow outleaned bowls with flat bases.

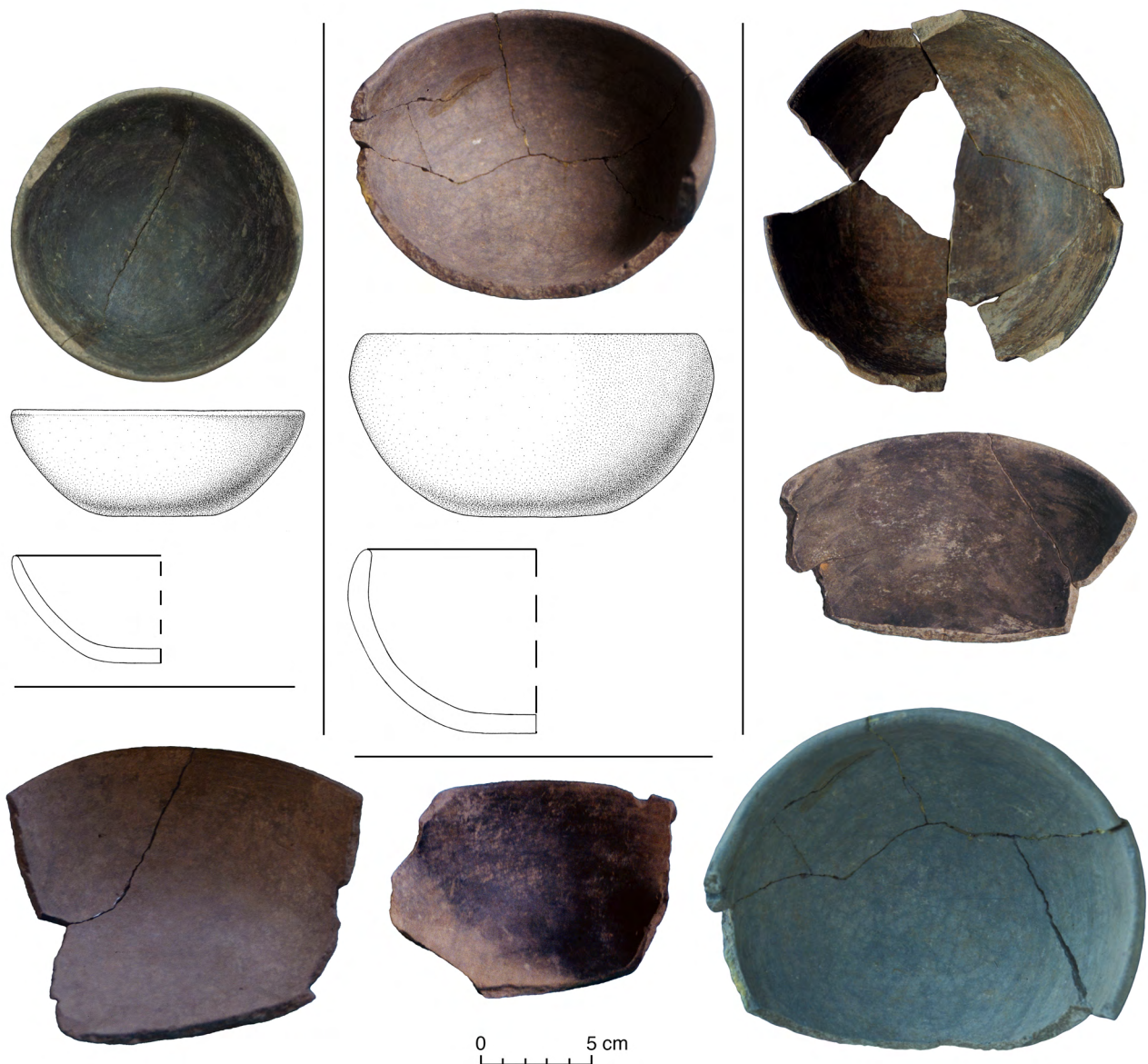


Figure 5.13. Gris hemispherical bowls.

including large café storage jars that often have handles (Figure 5.19). Many large cooking vessels have exterior charring from exposure to heat during meal preparation (Figure 5.20). Other gris jars are fine-paste vessels with thinner walls; larger ones were most likely used for storing water (Figure 5.21) and smaller ones for storing seeds and the like (Figure 5.22). Although there are some café seed jars (see Figure 5.19 left), those and other jars with small mouths are much more likely to have been made in gris paste (see Table 5.3). The assemblage also includes lids for covering large storage vessels (Figure 5.23) and several small café jars with simple appliques on the exterior shoulder (Figure 5.24; see Caso et al. 1967, figure 350a).

The other common vessel forms are comals (tortilla griddles, ~9%) and sahumadors (incense burners, ~7%), almost all (98%) of which were made of café paste. Café paste was the preferred clay for ceramic vessels that were

subjected to heat in the normal course of their use lives. At Ejutla, only low quantities of these forms were made of gris paste (see Table 5.3). Grayware vessels (often made with fine, alluvial clay) are much more likely to be bowls. Alternatively, vessels made of café paste are more evenly divided between bowls, jars, comals, and sahumadors. Café paste generally includes more inclusions or temper. Most of the comals that we could measure are quite large, between 35 and 40 cm in diameter (Figure 5.25). Most of the sahumadors are shaped like small frying pans, with small perforations in the bowl (Figures 5.26) and thick hollow tubes for handles (Figure 5.27; Martínez López et al. 2000, 191–93). Most sahumadors are undecorated. An exception in the collection is one unusual large vessel with a medallion applique just below the exterior rim (Figure 5.28) that appears to be a sahumador or brazier. Although it was broken, a large hollow tube of the same paste was found adjacent to it during the excavations.



Figure 5.14. Gris cylindrical bowls and amarillo cylinders.

The various utilitarian vessel forms were dispersed throughout the excavated area, in the house and pit kilns and throughout the middens both above and below the domestic structure. Although the densest accumulations of most forms were in the middens, the distribution of several vessel forms provides some indications regarding probable room functions. For example, comal fragments were especially abundant in several excavation units in the northwestern corner of the residence (Feinman and Nicholas 1994, figure 30), where we had uncovered a shallow firepit (see Figure 3.14). The high density of

comals helps confirm what we had suspected during the excavations, that this area of the structure was used as the ‘kitchen’ for food preparation; comals were especially abundant in the midden outside the kitchen. *Gris molcajetes* (a form used for grinding) also clustered in one of the units that includes parts of the kitchen and kitchen midden (see Figure 4.37; Feinman and Nicholas 1994, figure 21).

Another class of objects, generally made of ceramic, are spindle whorls. These spinning weights were unusually abundant in and around the excavated house at Ejutla



Figure 5.15. Café shallow outleaned bowls.



Figure 5.16. Small and miniature gris bowls.

(Figure 5.29). A key variable in spinning distinct types of fibers is the size, or weight, of the whorl (e.g., Parsons 1972; Parsons and Parsons 1990). Based on prior studies, the Ejutla spindle whorls ( $n = 109$ ) could be divided into three basic categories based on weight (Carpenter et al.

2012). Most (>75%) of the whorls are small (<8 g) and best suited for spinning cotton thread or very fine maguëy fibers (Parsons 1972, 61). Although a small subset was too fragmentary to determine size, the remaining 19 are medium-sized whorls (8–28.9 g), appropriate for spinning

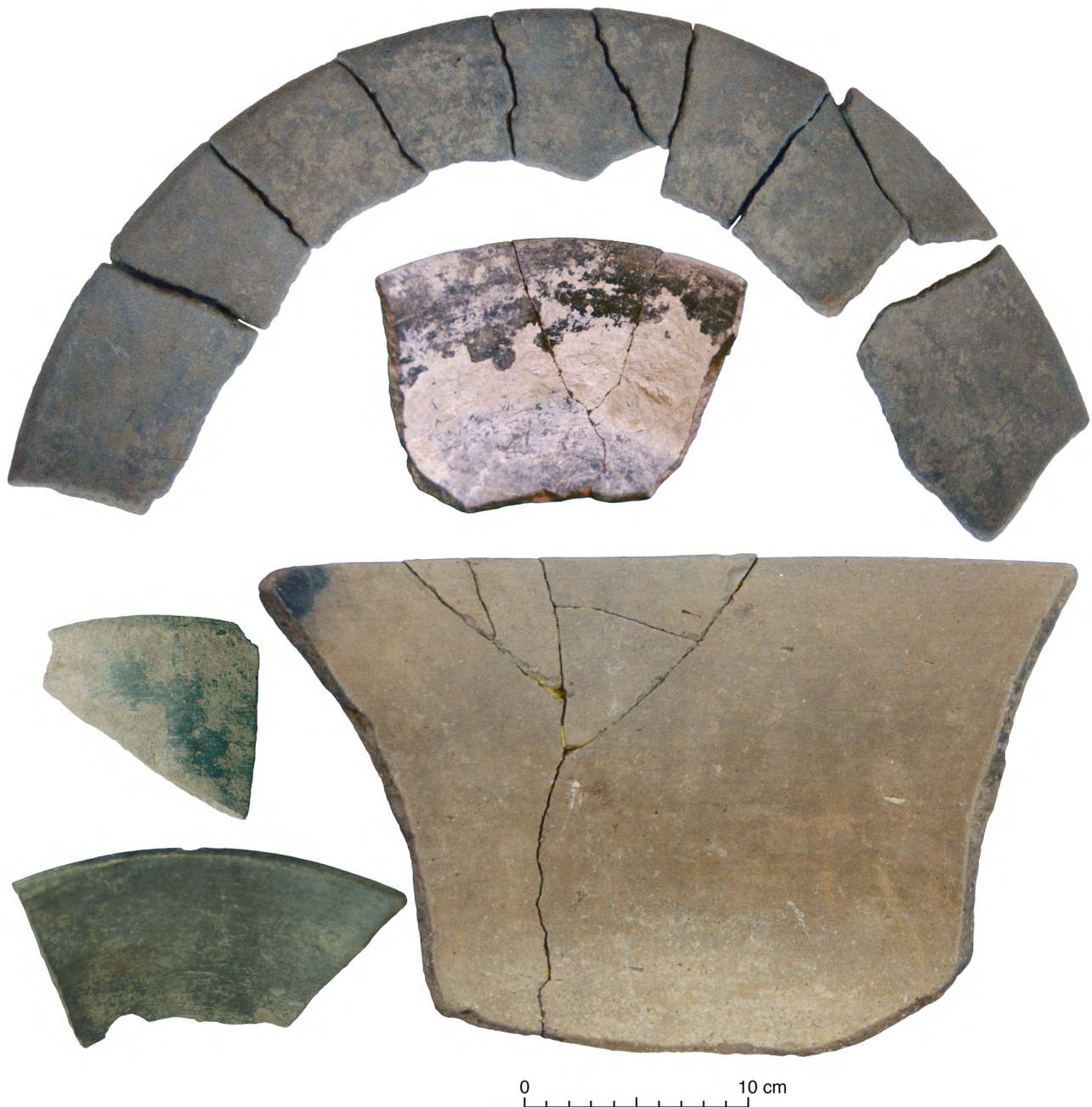


Figure 5.17. Large serving vessels.

fine and multipurpose maguey fibers. Larger whorls (>29 g) for spinning coarse maguey fibers (Parsons 1972, 61; Parsons and Parsons 1990) were absent at Ejutla. We present evidence for the local manufacture of ceramic spindle whorls in chapter 7.

The ceramic figurines and effigy vessels (urns) that were introduced in chapter 4 also are part of the domestic ceramic assemblage. These objects were used in various funerary and other household rituals instead of daily quotidian activities and, when broken, were discarded with other residential trash. There were thousands of mostly mold-made figurine fragments and hundreds of urn fragments in the kilns and middens. Because making figurines (and

also urns) was one of the craft specializations of the Ejutla potters, we discuss the figurines and their manufacture in chapter 7.

The pottery assemblage collected in and around the house we excavated in Ejutla includes objects that they made, objects that they used, and objects that they likely made and used. It is not always easy to determine the production and use life of every artifact. Nevertheless, we generally can make these determinations for classes of objects. We also observed that the residents of this Ejutla residence had a full Classic period Valley of Oaxaca ceramic assemblage, some classes of which they fabricated themselves.





**Figure 5.18.** Large café basins, some with bolstered rims (top left).



**Figure 5.19.** Café jars including small seed jar (left) and large coarse-paste café storage jars with handles.



Figure 5.20. Charred gris and café jars.



Figure 5.21. Large, fine-paste gris and amarillo jar rims, including jars for storing water.

### 5.3.2. Stone Tools

Mixed with the ceramic trash were chipped and ground stone tools that are commonly found in prehispanic

domestic contexts in the Valley of Oaxaca. Basalt, chert, quartz, and obsidian tools dominated the assemblage (Table 5.4). The most abundant tools were imported obsidian blades, most of which were broken and heavily