# 3. FU TEI

## THE SITE

The "plateau" at Fu Tei is a very gently sloping lower hillslope, dropping off sharply to the beach and valley floor. Langford (1990:25) defines the feature as a "debris flow deposit" comprising a mix of silt, sand, gravel, cobbles and boulders in varying proportions; he later stated a preference for the terms "hillslope deposit" or "slopewash" (personal communication 1993). These deposits on Chek Lap Kok are "probably Pleistocene in age, although they may be younger."

The cultural deposit is in a layer of subsoil overlying the main hillslope deposit, which is several metres thick. During the first test pits at Fu Tei, the harder yellowish orange colluvium of this hillslope or "slopewash" deposit was believed to be decomposed granite which it resembles, and was referred to as "DG" in field documents. In some areas it may actually be DG or residual soil which has been transported with very little sorting or other change. We will continue to use the term "DG" to refer to this basal sterile deposit, but it should be understood that it is not decomposed bedrock in situ as usually understood. One deep trench yielded charcoal well in the matrix which was dated to ca 11,000 years BP, thus at least the upper portion of the deposit is Holocene.

By the Middle Neolithic period, however, the hillslope deposit had formed a

*Figure 3.1 -- View of the plateau area at Fu Tei, facing southeast.*

relatively flat surface at 12mPD nearer to the beach, gently rising to around 14mPD where the slope of the hill increases. This plateau is clearly visible in the 1945 aerial photograph of Chek Lap Kok, when vegetation cover was considerably less than today, and before the terracing of the 1950's and 1960's modified somewhat its shape. It is easy to understand why the site would be attractive to Middle Neolithic people, and puzzling why there is no trace of any use of the site in Late Neolithic and Bronze Age times. As mentioned already concerning Fu Tei Wan, it was thought possible at one stage that erosion of deposits on the higher plateau had brought material down to the sand bar, but this notion is partially refuted by the nature of the deposits on the plateau. Of a total of ca. 10,000 Neolithic sherds excavated at Fu Tei, not one is of Late Neolithic type. It is of course still possible that Middle Neolithic material was washing down the gullies and mixing with Late Neolithic material on the eroding sand bar, but there is no evidence that the Middle Neolithic chalky ware is any more rolled or abraded than the Late Neolithic soft geometric pieces.

## EXCAVATIONS AT FU TEI

In the course of the survey, Middle Neolithic sherds and stone flakes were found in the area just west of the sand bar, and at the southern end of the plateau west of the Tang kiln. Because of the initial refusal of the landowner to allow any excavation on his property (near the sand bar), the first test pits were located further south (Squares A-C). One of these, Square A, was (as luck would have it) on the edge of the most important area of the entire site, and provided sufficiently in teresting material to require an expanded excavation in the adjacent area (see Figure 3.2).

The stratigraphy revealed in these initial test pits was duplicated many times over in various parts of the site (see Figure 3.8). Three layers were identified :

L1 -- dark brown or greyish brown topsoil with Ching/recent, Sung and Tang artifacts, generally 30-50 cm thick but extending deeper in a few squares such as G, FX-Z, and FA where a Tang/Sung layer could be distinguished from the Ching/recent.

L2 -- a light brown subsoil with Middle Neolithic material, generally 20-40 cm thick.

L3 -- yellowish orange hard gritty soil (DG) with no artifacts, but with numerous holes from L2.

The first question which presented itself was whether or not the Middle Neolithic material was in situ, or transported down from the upper slope. It was clear however that the assemblage of artifacts was exclusively Middle Neolithic, and any such movement would have had to take place in the pre-Sung era. Many sherds were "rolled", normally taken as evidence of movement from an in situ position but dramatically demonstrated by evidence from Fu Tei and later from Kwo Lo wan to happen frequently in situ. A more precise term should be "rolled" or "abraded", and this trait must not be viewed in future as evidence of movement or transport. The fragmentary chalky vessel FT43 (see Figure 3.55) was clearly in situ, having been placed in the mouth of a small pit; one side of the

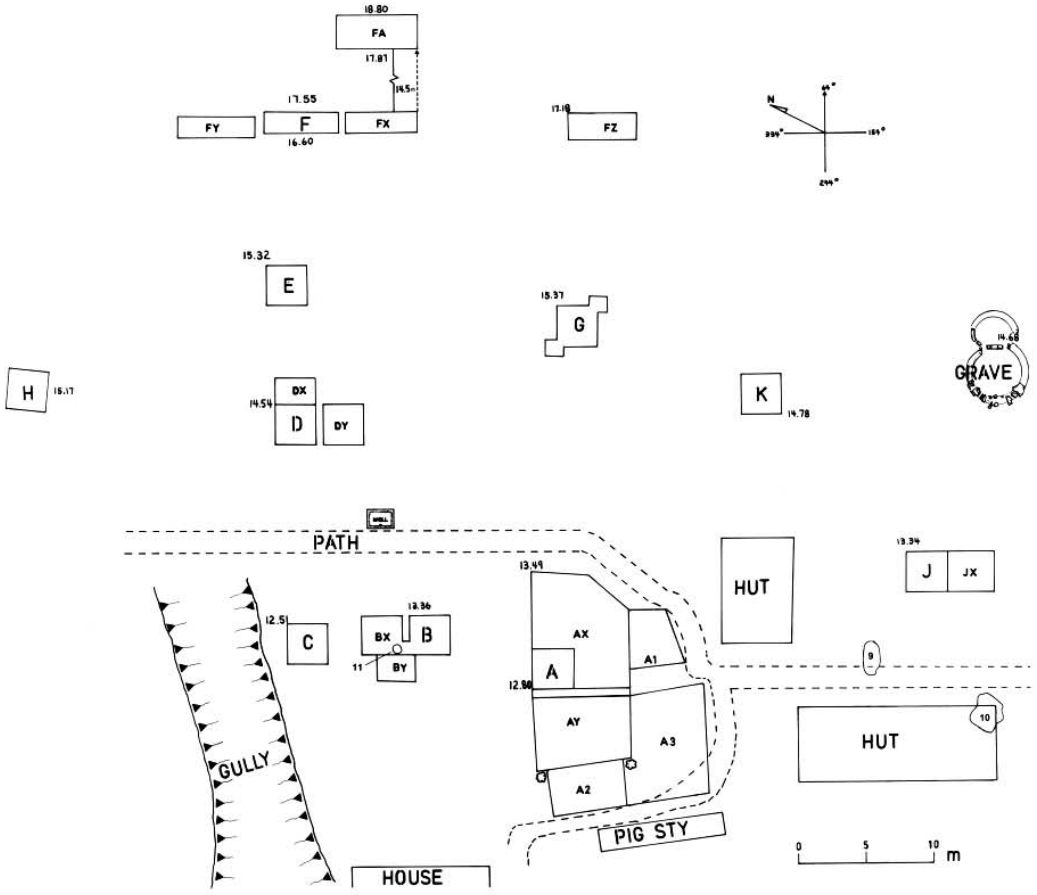



*Figure 3.2 -- Excavation plan of the Fu Tei "plateau" site.*

vessel had pieces severely rounded, while those on the other side were sharp and the pattern clear. KLW22 was another striking example of this phenomenon. The degradation process obviously can take place in situ, and selectively; the causes of this process are unknown, but probably relate to root action, insect activity, water percolation through the soil, etc. An explanation of how such general processes can affect one side of a vessel and not the other is elusive.

The question of the in situ nature of the material was answered well before the discovery of FT43, by the deposit in Square A. A total of six complete grooved or concave polishing stones (see Figure 3.62, 3.64) were unearthed, as opposed to only one small fragment of polishing stone in the other three squares. In addition, there were clusters of very small flakes. A nicely worked roughout (see Figure 3.59) for an adze was also found. The area around Square A seemed to have been a stone workshop, possibly for polishing roughly formed tools that had been produced elsewhere. There were very few ordinary flakes.

*Figure 3.3 -- Excavation of Square AX.*

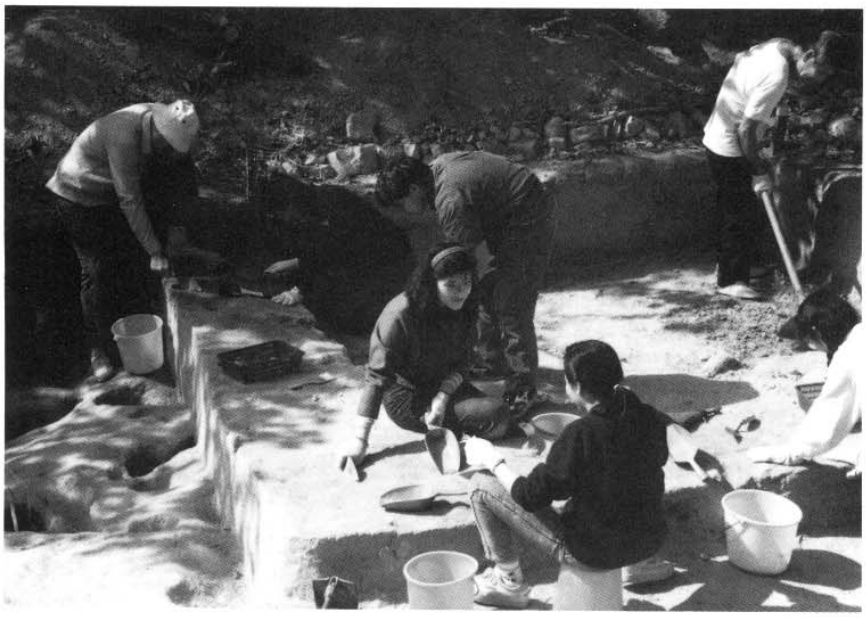


*Figure 3.4 -- Excavation of Square A.*

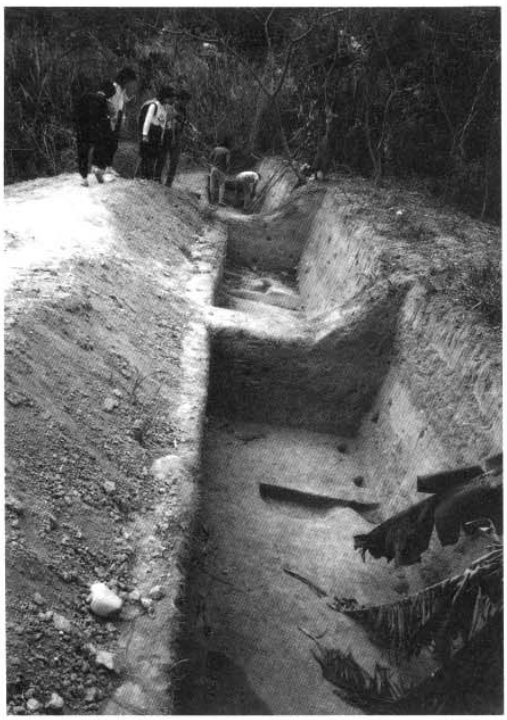


*Figure 3.5 -- Excavation of Squares F, FX and FY.*

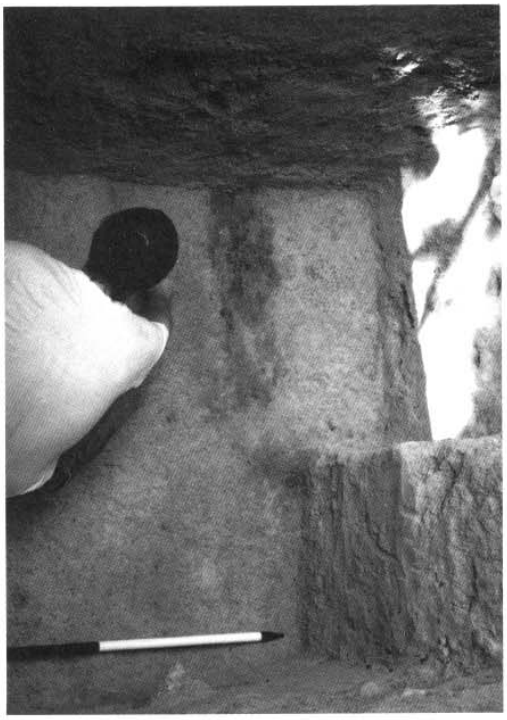


*Figure 3.6 -- Excavation of the charcoal lens in Square FA.*

*Figure 3.7 -- Excavation of Square E.*

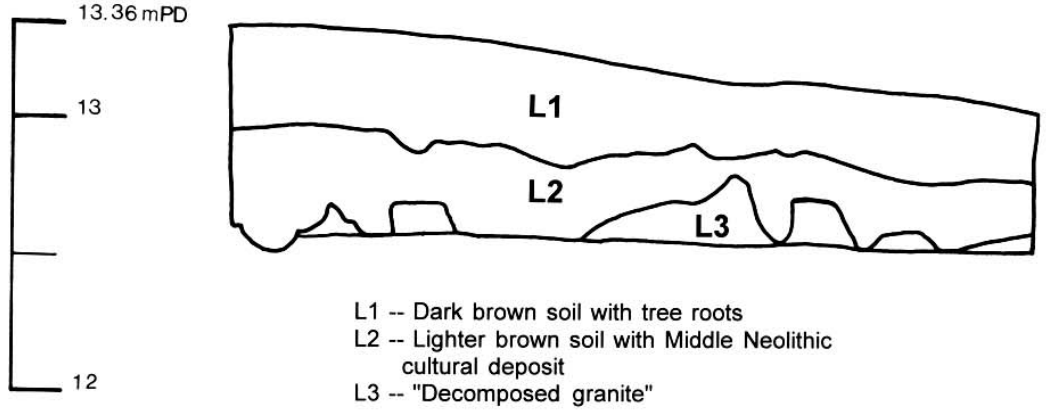



*Figure 3.8 -- Profile of Square B southeast wall.*

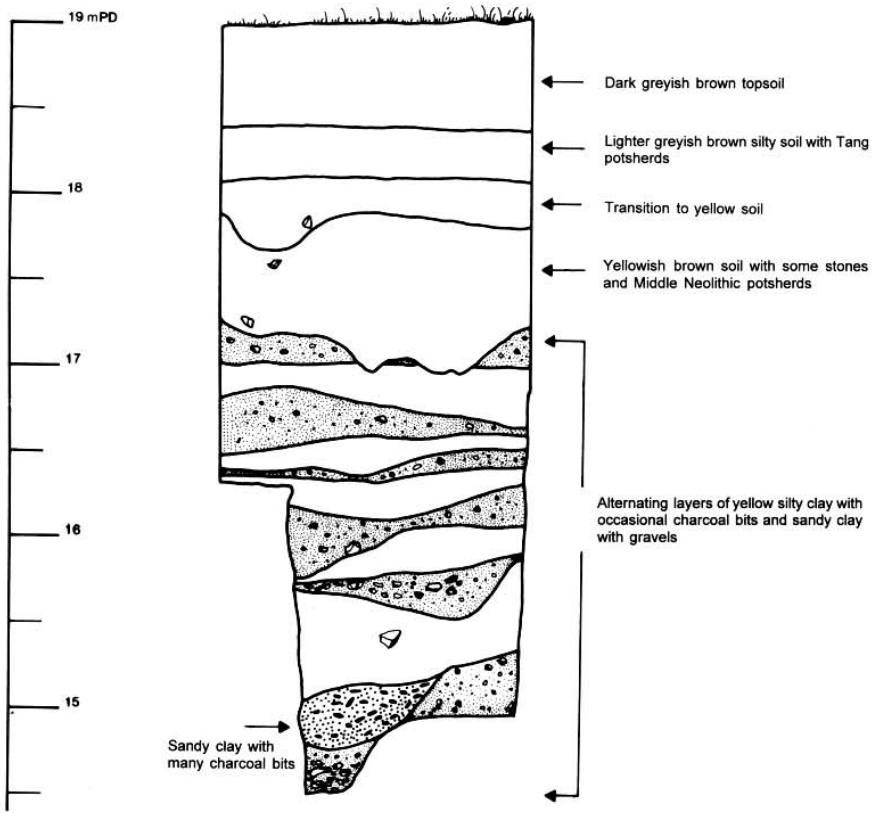



*Figure 3.9 -- Profile at the centre of Square FA.*

The second question that was raised by the initial excavation was one which dogged the project for the next several months, and was encountered again at Kwo Lo wan. The basal layer of DG was pock-marked with holes and pits of various sizes and shapes. Some appeared natural, others man-made, the majority indeterminate. Two holes in Square B-BX had striking evidence that they were made by humans : the first was filled with red fired clay and must have been some sort of fire pit or sunken oven; the second had upright stones just above the mouth and smaller stones just below the mouth. The function of this hole was less clear, as it did not seem possible to have served as a posthole. Two large holes in Square C had large arteries leading off laterally into the DG and were thought at first to have been formed by tree trunk taproots.

The question of the holes in the DG was much clarified during the course of the excavation (see Figure 3.10-21). Virtually all of the holes had rounded or squarish bottoms that did not taper off as would the tap roots of large trees. Many had stones set upright in the mouth, which could only indicate human agency. Ant nests, water percolation, root crops, digging for clay, storage pits, burial pits, post holes, and other explanations were considered to account for the phenomena, but none was satisfactory to explain the great variety of shape, size, depth, presence of stones, and total absence of any trace of carbonized post. The contents of the holes generally was similar to the Middle Neolithic cultural deposit in L2 , with sherds, flakes, an occasional tool, small bits of charcoal. Samples from holes in two different squares produced C-14 dates of around 5500 years (see below).

The discovery during the excavation of Square AX of complete pots and stone artifacts in some of the holes confirmed that at least some were made for ritual offerings, probably burials. No human or animal bones were found on this site or any early site on

*Figure 3.10 -- Excavation of a hole in the DG.*

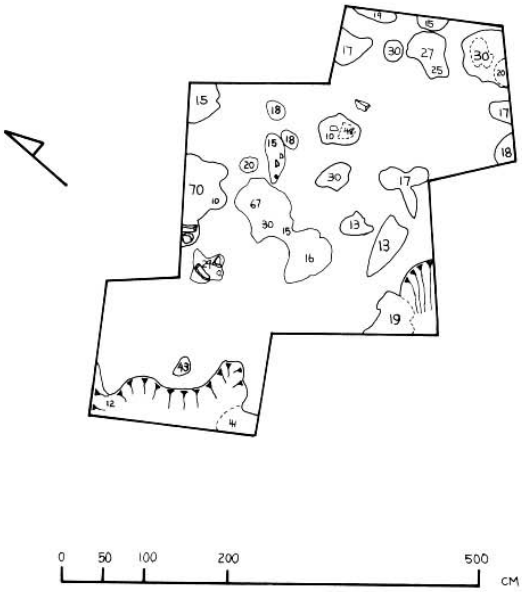



*Figure 3.11 -- Floor plan of Square G showing holes in the DG.*

**CODE FOR FU TEI FLOOR PLANS**

R rock

hole in DG and profile line

area at base of hole

natural (?) scarp in the DG

39 62 depths below DG of base of hole


*Figure 3.12 -- View of the floor in Square G.*

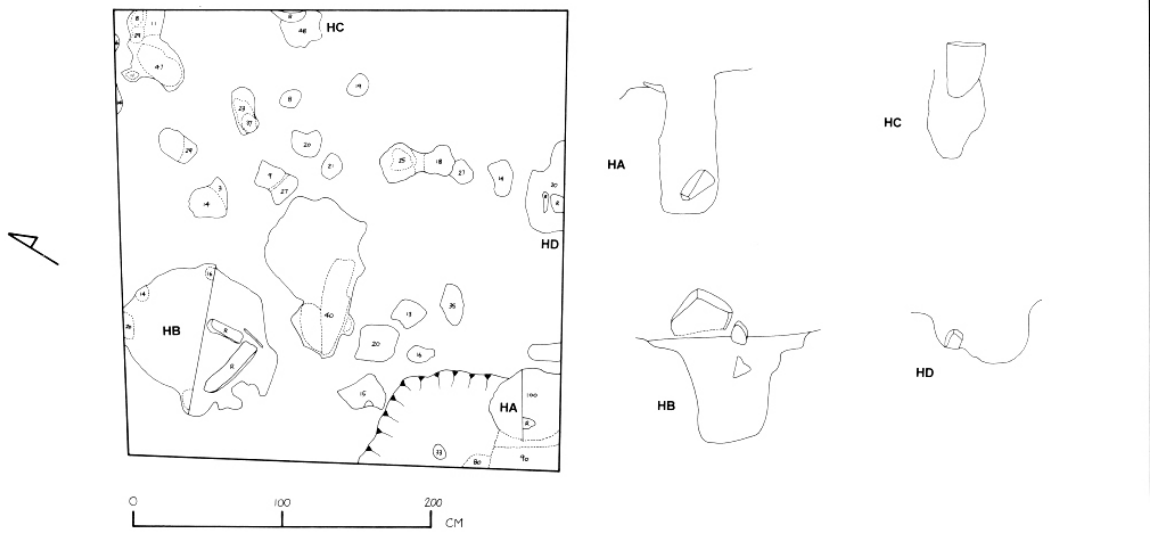



*Figure 3.13 -- Floor plan of Square J with profiles and views of the major holes.*

[redacted]

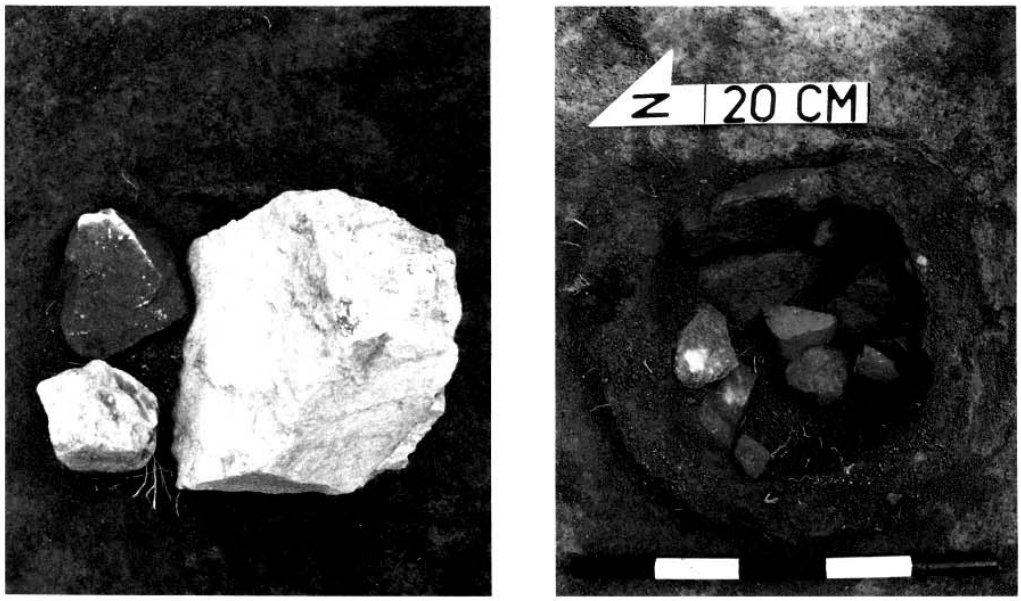



*Figure 3.14 -- Large rocks (left) in the mouth of a hole in Square BX and smaller rocks within the hole (right).*

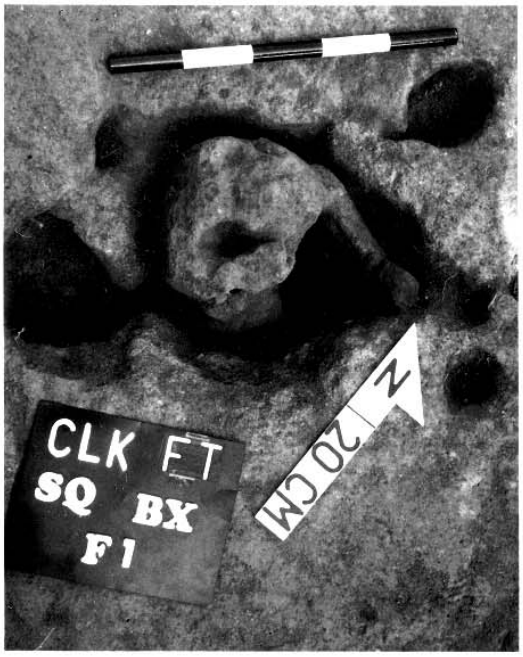



*Figure 3.15 -- Hole 11 in Square BX with fired red clay core.*

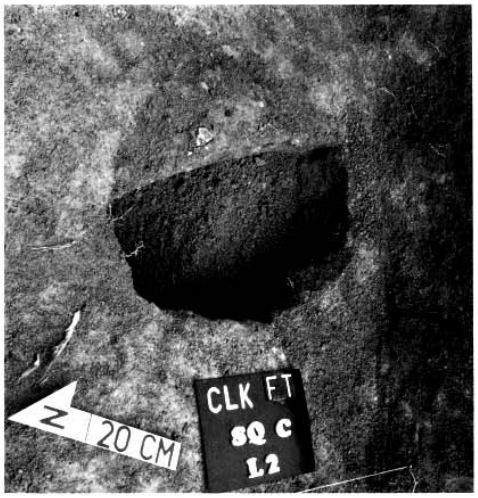



*Figure 3.16 -- A hole in Square A partly excavated.*

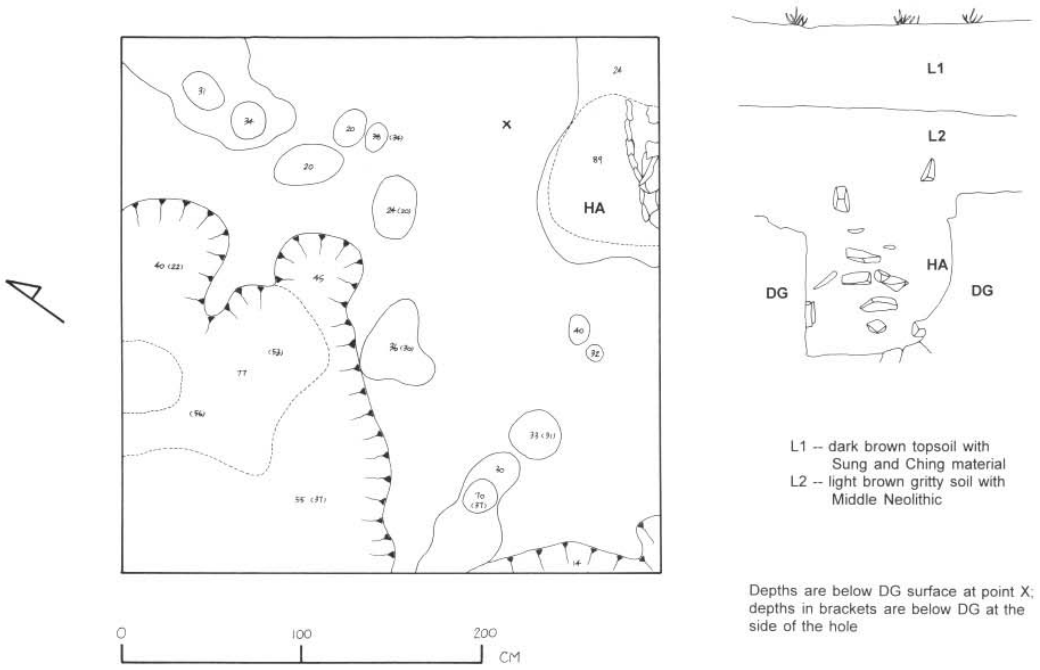



*Figure 3.17 -- Floor plan of Square K with a profile of the major hole (HA).*

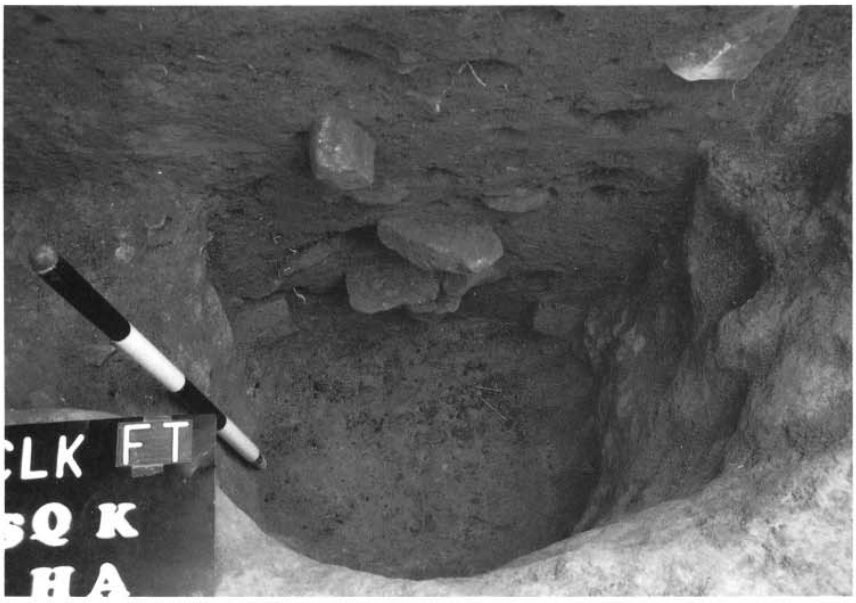



*Figure 3.18 -- View of HA (partly excavated) facing down.*

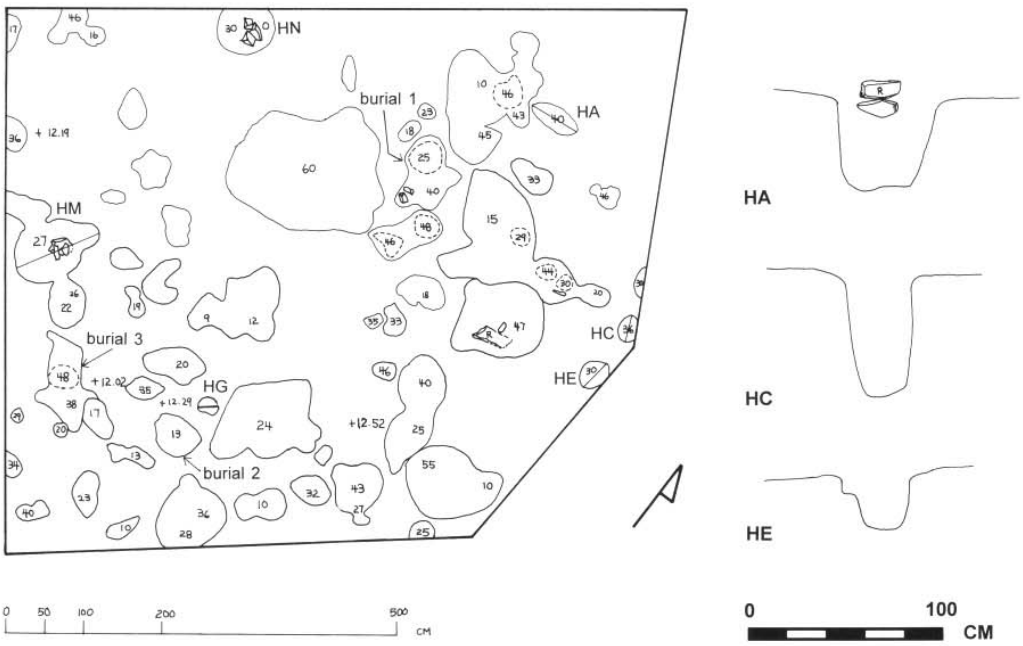



*Figure 3.19 -- Floor plan of Square AX showing location of burials 1-3; profiles and views of important holes.*

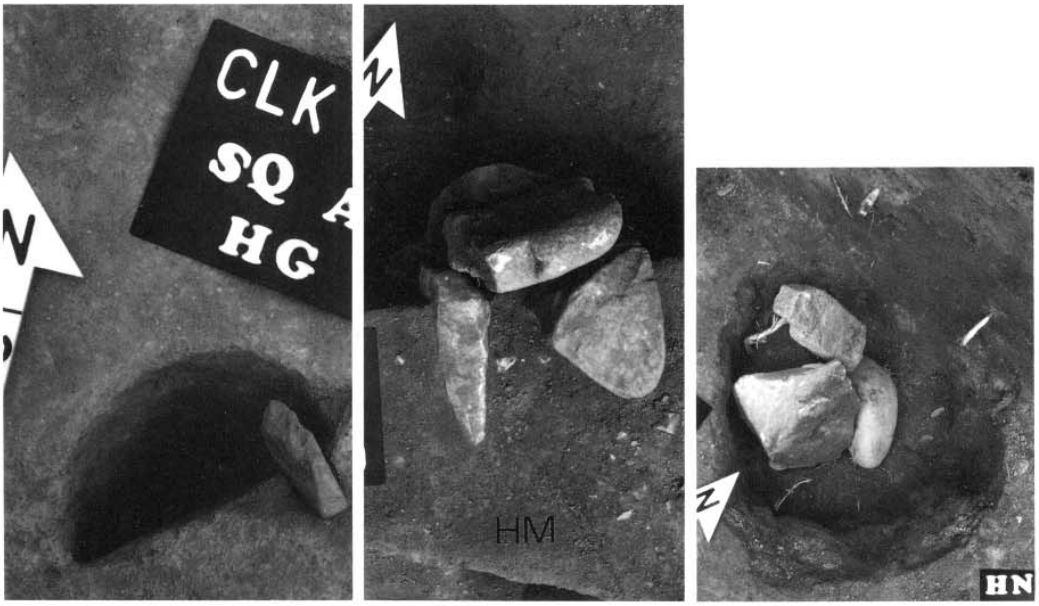


*Figure 3.20 -- Excavation of Squares A and AX.*

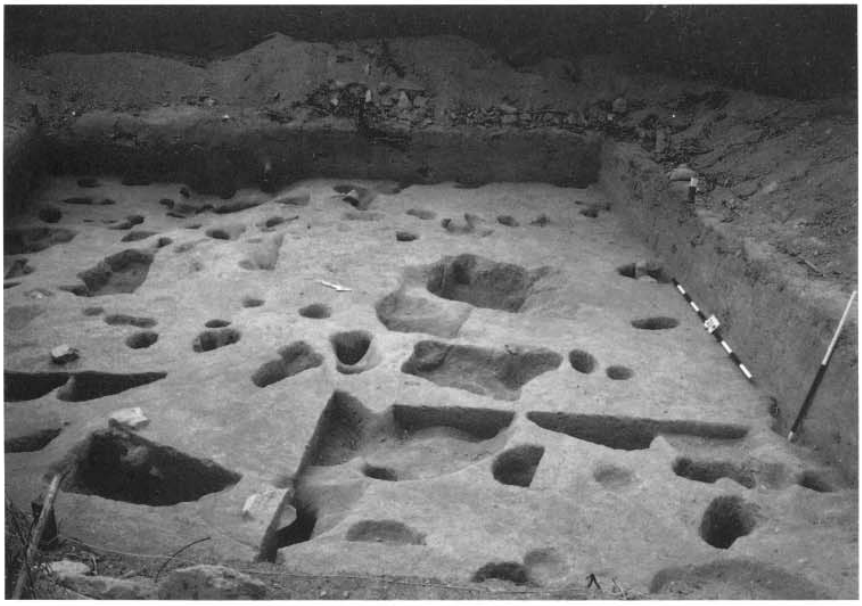


*Figure 3.21 -- Squares A and AX after excavation.*

Chek Lap Kok, undoubtedly because of the acidity of the ground water. But the burial pits are in every case too small for an adult human body, and the idea that secondary burial and/or cremation was practiced is an attractive although totally speculative one.

Throughout the excavation at Fu Tei, close attention was paid to the search for a pattern of holes which might indicate that they were related in some cases to habitation structures. Several arcs or relatively straight series of 3 or 4 holes were seen, though always of differing sizes and shapes. In each instance these alignments did not show a pattern that might argue for their use as post-holes. In an effort to investigate this question further, and to define the limits of the area used for ritual/burial/intentional placement of objects in the pits, a bulldozer was engaged at the end of the excavation to clear three large areas of ca. 3000 sq.m. each down to DG (see Figure 3.38, 3.39). The surface was then cleaned by hand tools and the pits excavated. Two additional "intentional placements" (burials 9 and 10) were found in large pits (one under the concrete floor of a chicken coop), but over the entire area cleared no pattern or meaningful alignment of holes could be ascertained. The only features uncovered in the bulldozer clearance operation that had not been seen previously were three hearths with fairly plentiful amounts of charcoal (50 to 100g as opposed to the minuscule amounts collected from the cultural layer in the excavated squares). No identifiable plant remains were found in these hearth deposits.

Squares D-DY, E, G, H, , J, JX and K all followed the initial squares in the type of deposit encountered. Square G had the greatest concentration of holes in its DG floor (see Figure 3.11, 3.12), Square H the fewest, but all had a very clear transition from L2 to DG, and the holes were easily recognizable. No special features marked these squares. Squares F-FA were similar but the transition to DG was less clear, and almost indistinguishable in FA, with the result that the holes were much more difficult to define. Even the squares well up the hillslope (FA and FZ) still yielded considerable deposit, but again with no special features.

In Square FA, a deep trench was excavated on account of charcoal bits that continued below the bottom of the cultural deposit. It was found that the "DG" consisted in fact of alternating layers of more silty clayey material with more gravelly rocky zones (see Figure 3.9). Charcoal specks were associated with both types of deposit, but at a depth of 395 cm below surface, 2m below the base of the Middle Neolithic layer, a lens of charcoal (see Figure 3.6) was found. A sample produced a C-14 date of 11,280 years. No artifacts were found below the Middle Neolithic layer.

The most important discoveries on the site were in the area of squares AX, AY, AZ, and A2 where a total of eight pits were found to contain complete pots, and stone artifacts in one pit known affectionately on site as the "adze-hole". Two other holes with intentional placements were found 15-20m to the southeast by bulldozer clearance. These features are referred to as "burials" in shorthand but pose a problem of interpretation, discussed below. The items in each hole varied (see the chart following Figure 3.41) from a single pot (burials 1, 4, and 5) to a pair of pots with one in the mouth of the other (2 and 3), to two vessels (7 and 10) to the "adze-hole"(6) with three pots and nine adzes. Two sherd-lined pits (8 and 9) had no other objects apart from an adze and a pottery leg which may not have been intentionally placed.

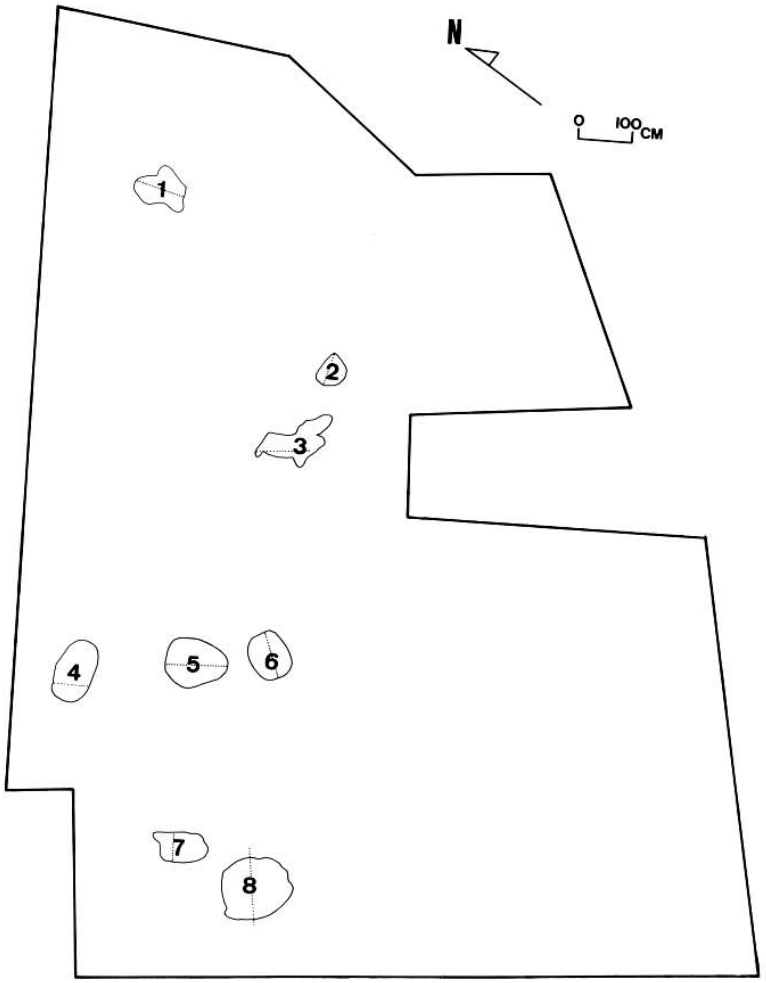



*Figure 3.22 -- Plan showing location of burials 1-8 in Squares A, AX, AY, A1-3.*

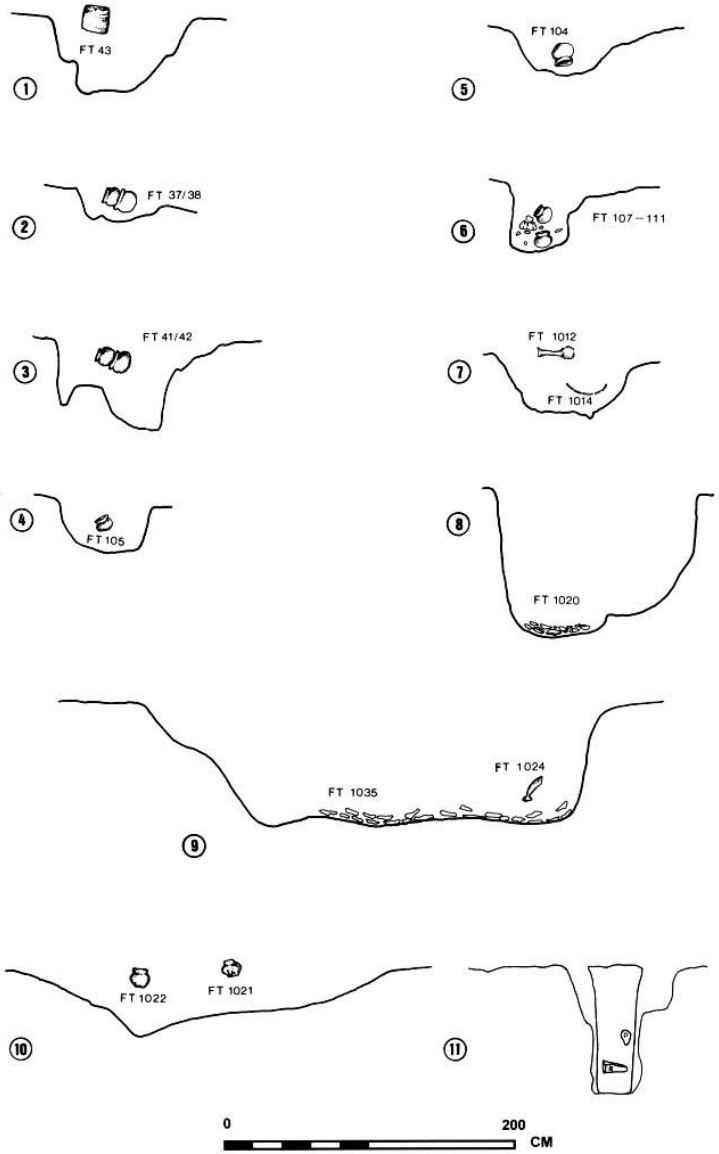



*Figure 3.23 (at right) -- Profile of burials 1-10 and hole 11 (see figure 3.15; for location of burials 9 and 10 see figure 3.2).*

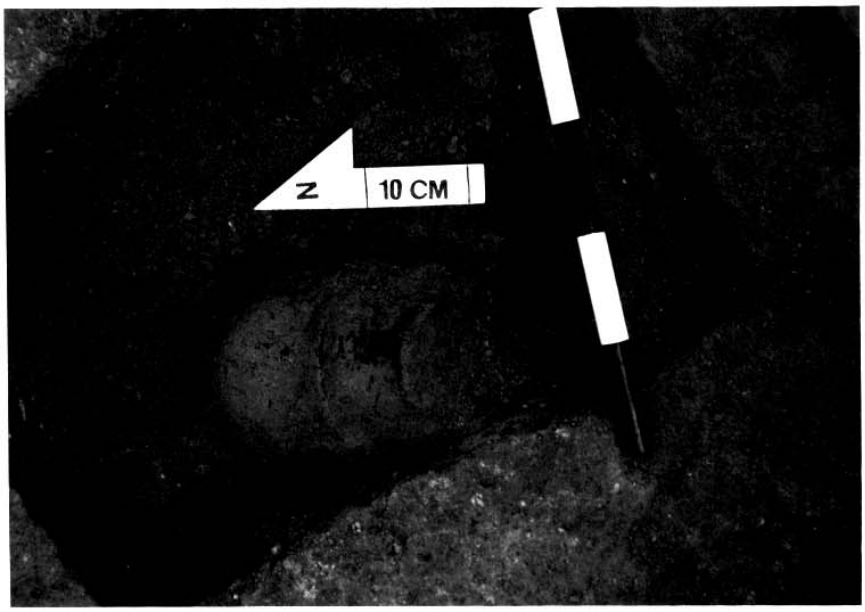



*Figure 3.24 -- The pair of pots in burial 3.*

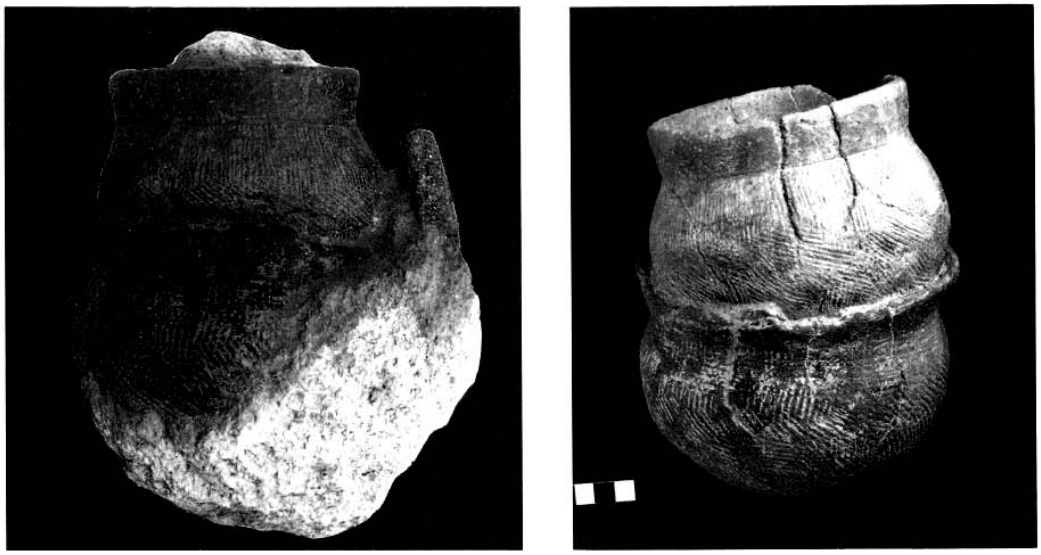


*Figure 3.25 -- The pair of pots and crude pebble tool in burial 2, removed as a block of soil (left) and after excavation (right).*

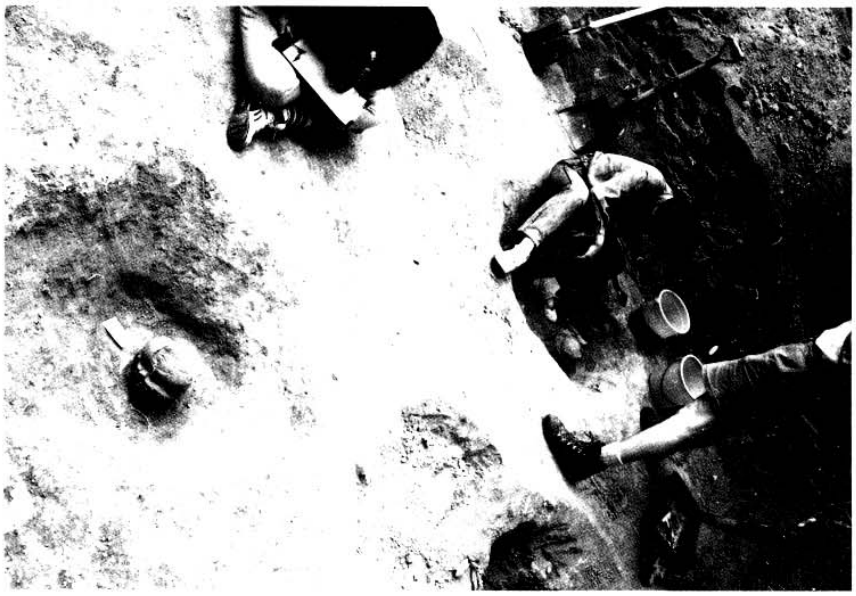


*Figure 3.26 -- Excavation of burials 4 and 5 (foreground).*

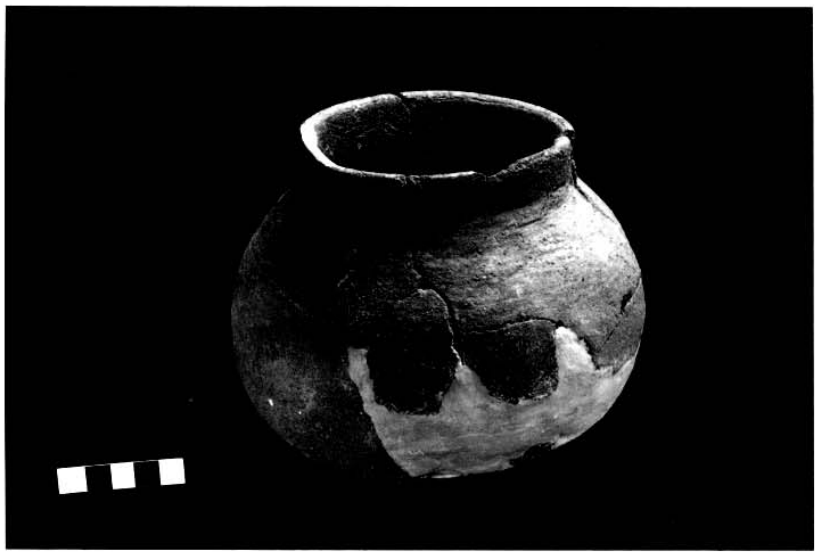


*Figure 3.27 -- Coarse plain pot FT104 of burial 5.*

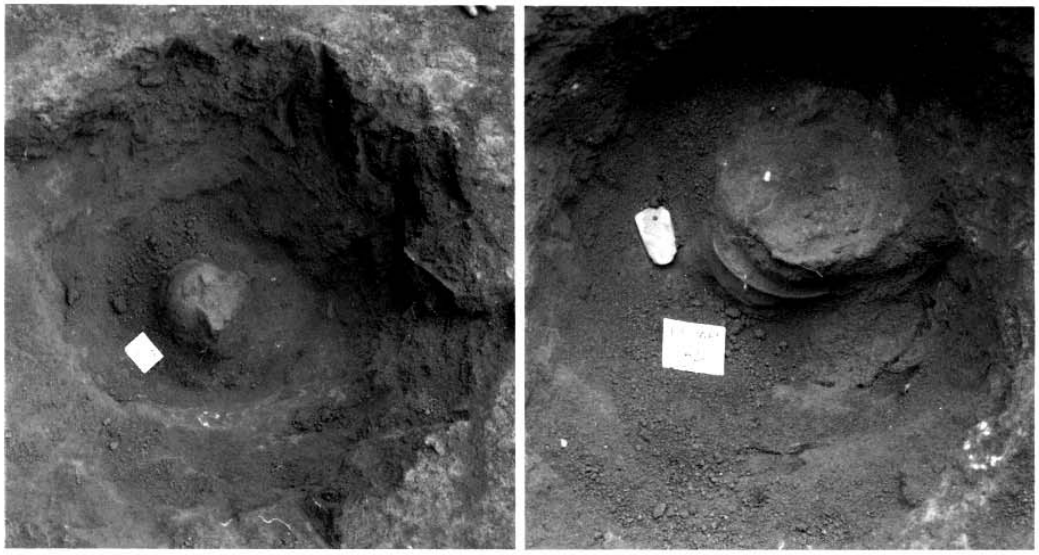


*Figure 3.28 -- Excavation of burial 6 with the coarse corded pot FT107 exposed and the chalky vessel FT108 faintly visible beside it (left), and after the removal of FT107 (right) with another coarse corded pot FT110 faintly visible below it.*

*Figure 3.29 -- The chalky vessel FT108 in a block of soil with an adze in situ under it.*

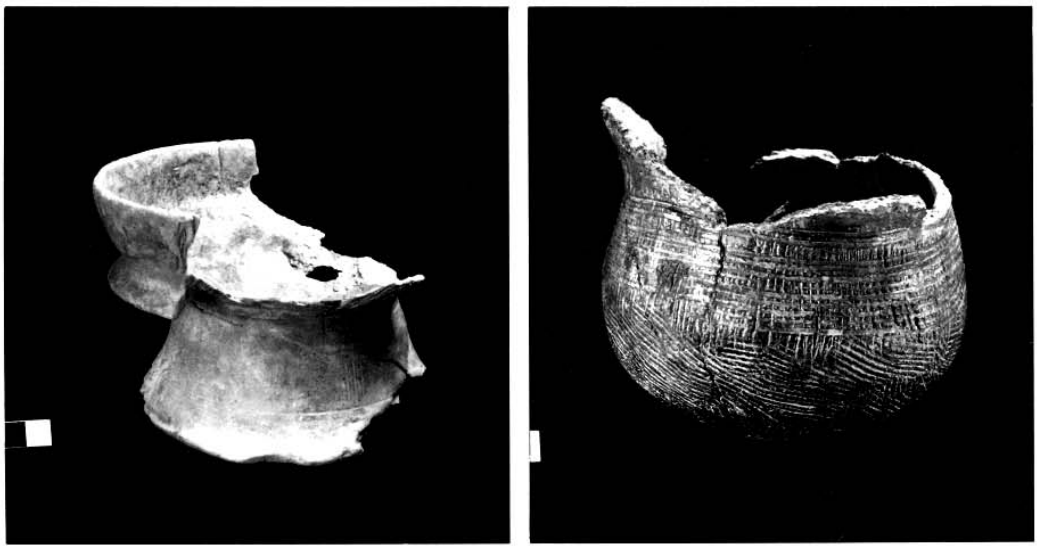


*Figure 3.30 -- FT108 (left) and 107 (right) of burial 6.*

*Figure 3.31 -- The adzes and roughouts of burial 6.*

*Figure 3.32 -- Excavation of the high-pedestalled cup FT1012 (left) and the cluster of sherds FT1014 (right) of burial 7.*


*Figure 3.33 -- The large chalky vessel FT43 of burial 1 in situ.*

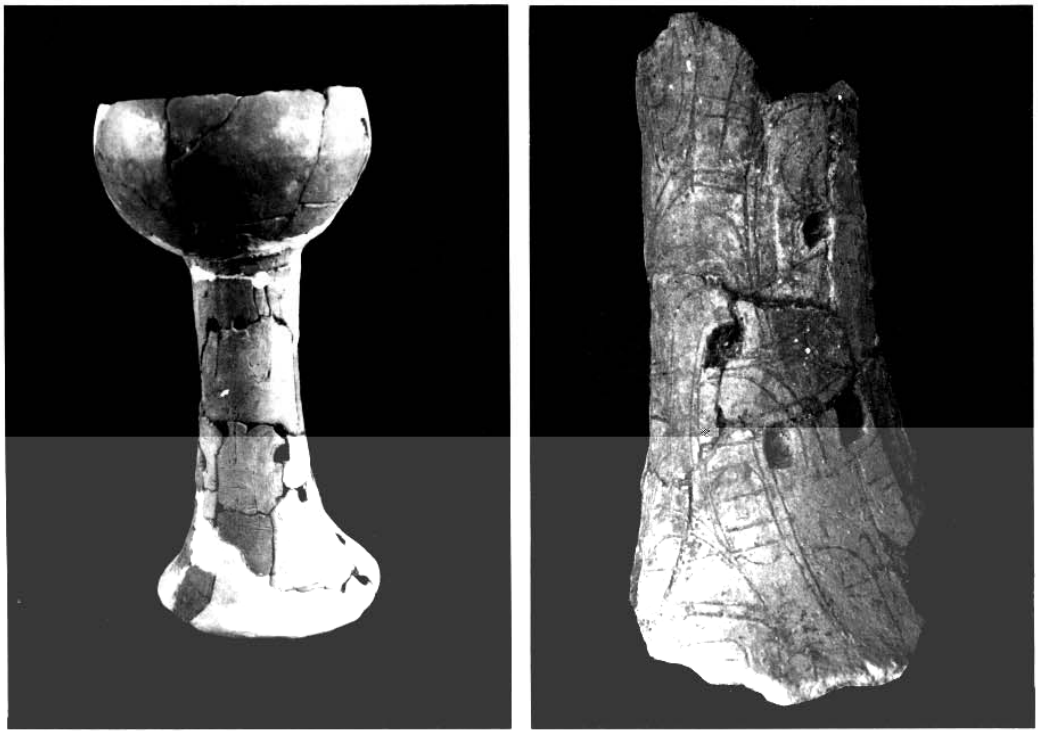


*Figure 3.34 -- The high-pedestalled cup FT1012 and detail of the decoration on the pedestal (right).*

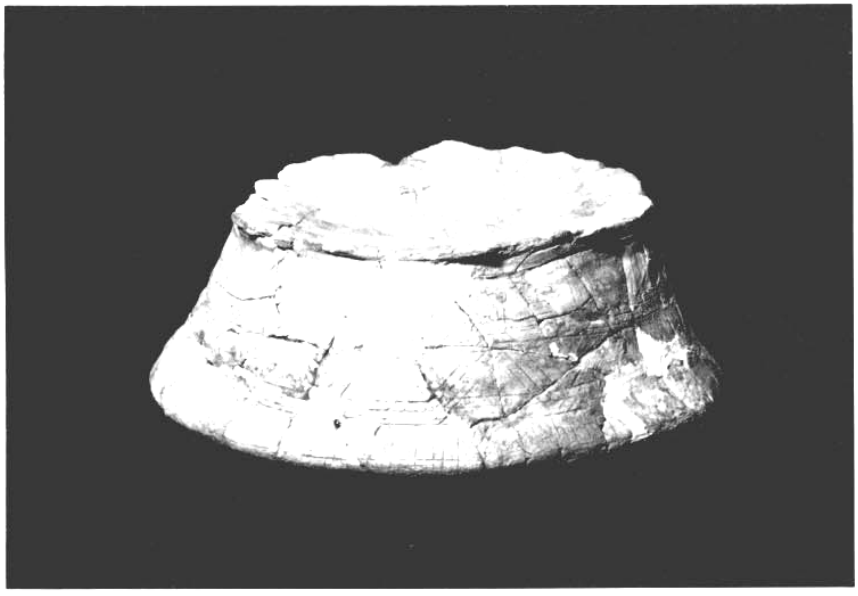


*Figure 3.35 -- The footrim of FT43.*

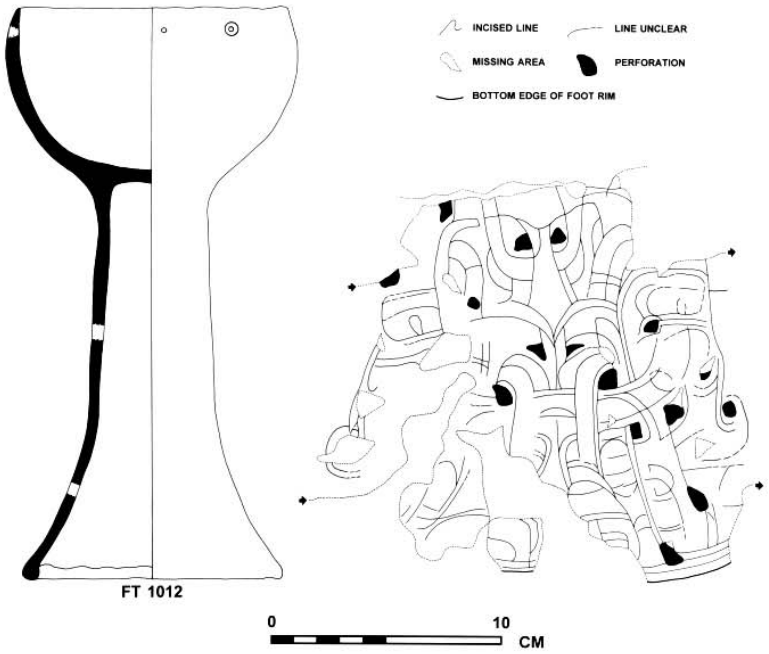



*Figure 3.36 -- The high-pedestalled cup and its decoration.*

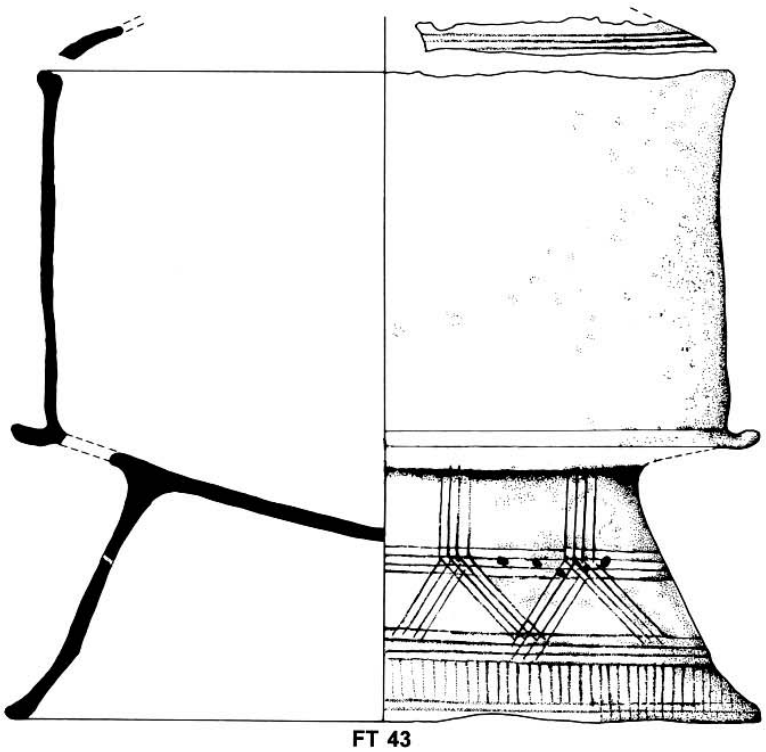
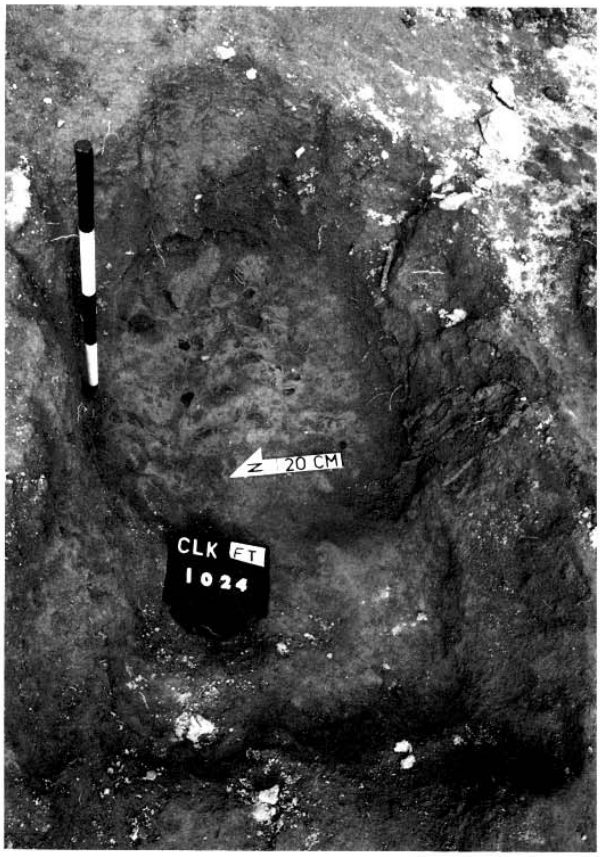



*Figure 3.37 -- Reconstruction of FT43.*

*Figure 3.38 -- Bulldozing and clearing down to DG in a large area around Squares D, E, and H.*

*Figure 3.39 -- Excavating holes in the DG identified after clearing.*



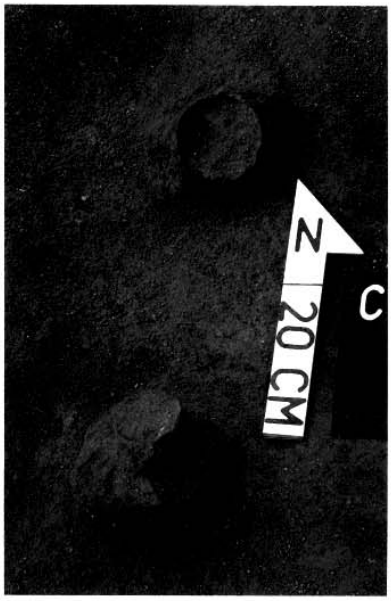




*Figure 3.40 -- The sherd-lined pit of burial 9 (left) and the vessels FT1021 and 1022 of burial 10 in situ.*

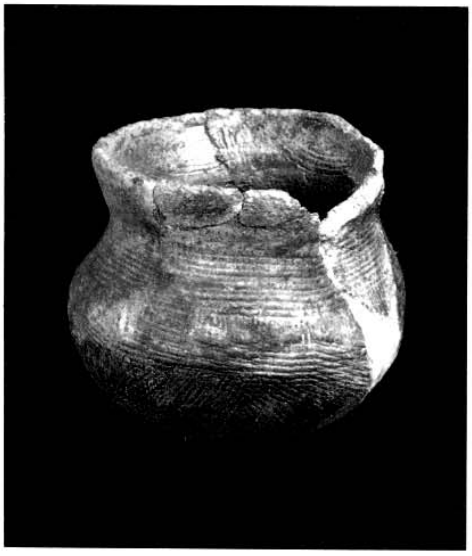


*Figure 3.41 -- The coarse corded pot FT1022 (left) and the chalky jar FT1021 (right).*

MIDDLE NEOLITHIC BURIALS
AT FU TEI

| *Burial* | *Square* | *Cat. no.* | *Catalogued object* | *Figures* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | AX | FT43 | large chalky vessel | 3.19, 3.33, 3.35, 3.37 |
| 2 | AX | FT37 | coarse corded pot | 3.19, 3.25, 3.44 |
| | | FT38 | coarse corded pot | 3.19, 3.25, 3.44 |
| | | FT38A | crude pebble tool | 3.19, 3.25 |
| 3 | AX | FT41 | coarse corded pot | 3.19, 3.24, 3.45 |
| | | FT42 | coarse corded pot | 3.19, 3.24, 3.44, 3.50 |
| 4 | AY | FT105 | coarse corded pot | 3.26 |
| 5 | AY | FT104 | coarse plain pot | 3.26, 3.27, 3.45 |
| 6 | AY | FT107 | coarse corded pot | 3.28, 3.30, 3.44 |
| | | FT108 | chalky vessel | 3.28, 3.29, 3.30, 3.43 |
| | | FT109 | adze | 3.31, 3.55 |
| | | FT110 | coarse corded pot | 3.28, 3.44 |
| | | FT111A-G | adzes and roughouts | 3.31, 3.55 |
| 7 | A2 | FT1012 | high-pedestalled chalky bowl | 3.32, 3.34, 3.36 |
| | | FT1014 | coarse sherd cluster | 3.32 |
| 8 | A2 | FT1020 | coarse sherds | 3.46 |
| | | FT1025 | coarse sherds | 3.46 |
| 9 | area 2 | FT1024 | pot leg | 3.40, 3.44 |
| | | FT1035 | coarse sherds | 3.40, 3.43, 3.45 |
| | | FT1036 | adze | 3.40, 3.54 |
| 10 | area 2 | FT1021 | chalky jar | 3.40, 3.41, 3.43 |
| | | FT1022 | coarse corded pot | 3.40, 3.41, 3.44 |

Note: For the location of burials 1-8 see Figure 3.22; for burials 9 and 10 see Figure 3.2. For profiles of the burials see Figure 3.23. The feature numbered 11 on Figure 3.2 is a hole with fired clay plug, and hence is not listed here.

Finally, three Ching graves were noted in the area, all from information provided by the villagers. One grave, reported by Philip Yiu to have been visible 20 years ago on his family property at the back of the valley, was entirely buried and had a large pine tree over it. The burial jar was eventually found, after some difficulties posed by roots, oozing pine sap and very hard soil. It was a typical late Ching type with an undated inscription on the inner lid (FT116). The grave near Mr. Lin's house was removed by government workers, and monitored by our team. It consisted of two burial jars, one containing human remains and the other empty except for a bronze ornament (FT115), explained by the workers as a symbolic memorial for the wife of the husband whose remains were in the other jar. The third grave, near Square K, was also removed by government workers, and had a standard Ching burial jar with bones but no inner lid inscription. The inscriptions on the grave plaques of the two removed graves were ambiguous as to the original date of the grave. No inscription could be read on the grave at the Yiu property.

*Figure 3.42 -- The Ching grave discovered on the Yiu property.*

## DESCRIPTION OF FINDS FROM FU TEI

Historical period material from the site consisted of Tang, Sung and Ching/recent pottery. There were a few glazed bowl fragments enabling a firm dating of each period, in addition to more numerous village ware pieces. No kiln debris was found, even in the two test squares in the plateau directly above the kiln.

Of greatest interest are the complete or near complete specimens of chalky ware (FT43, 108, 1012 and 1021), since it is very rare in Hong Kong to recover complete examples of this type of pottery. Together with the chalky ware from Kwo Lo wan, they make an important contribution to our knowledge of Middle Neolithic pottery. Each is a

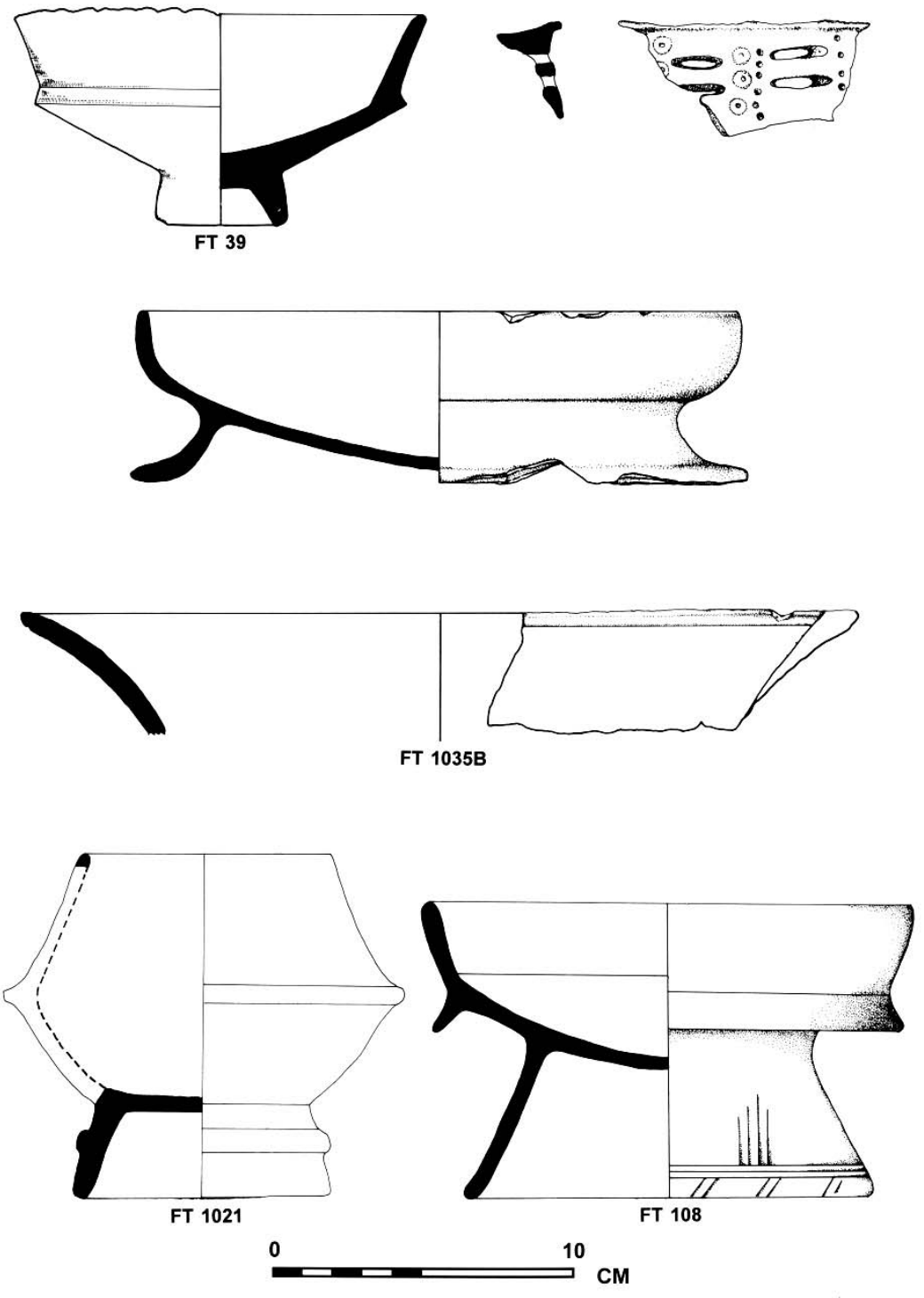



*Figure 3.43 -- Chalky ware and black ware (FT39; FT1035B burnished) from Fu Tei.*

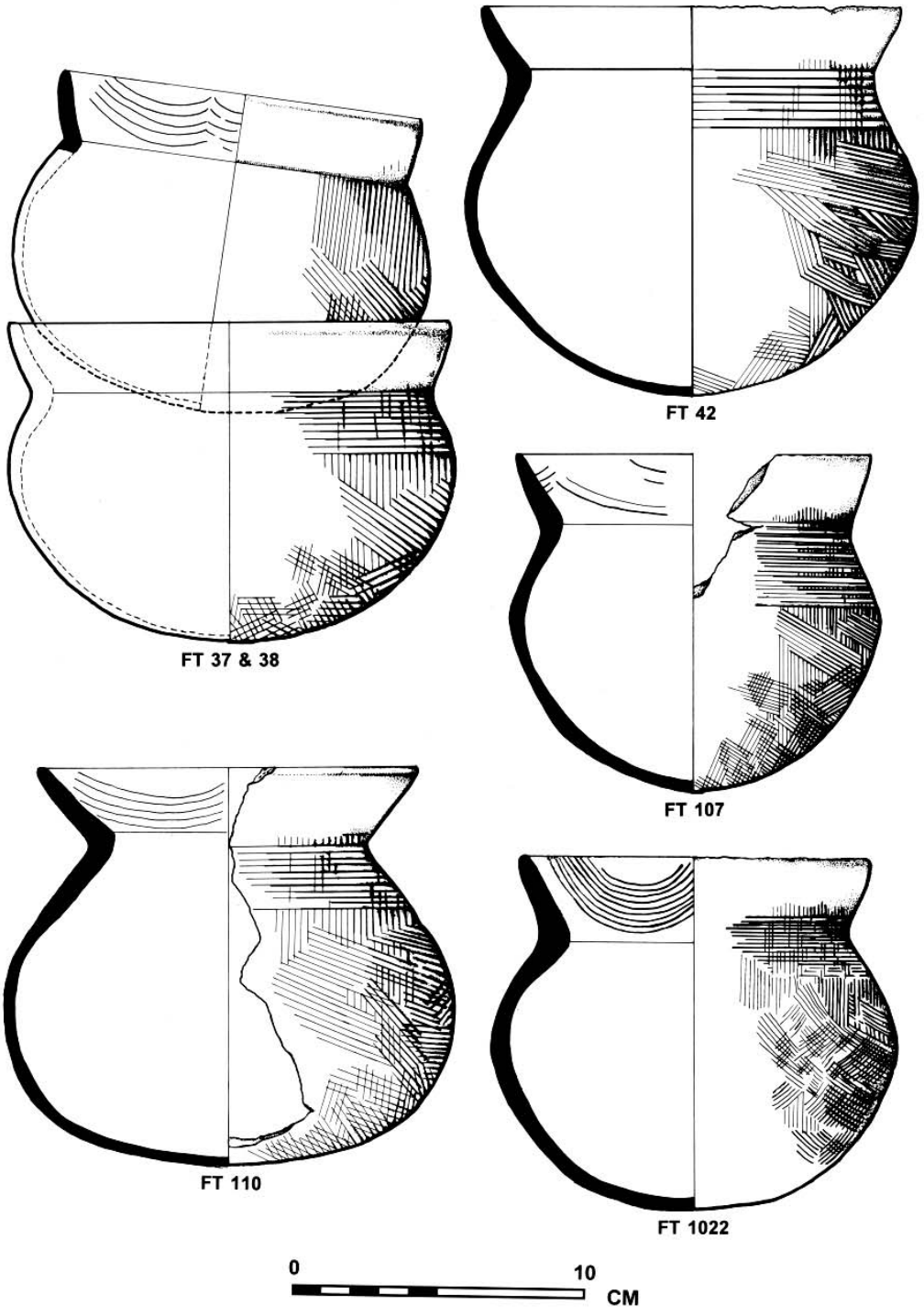



*Figure 3.44 -- Coarse corded pots from Fu Tei.*

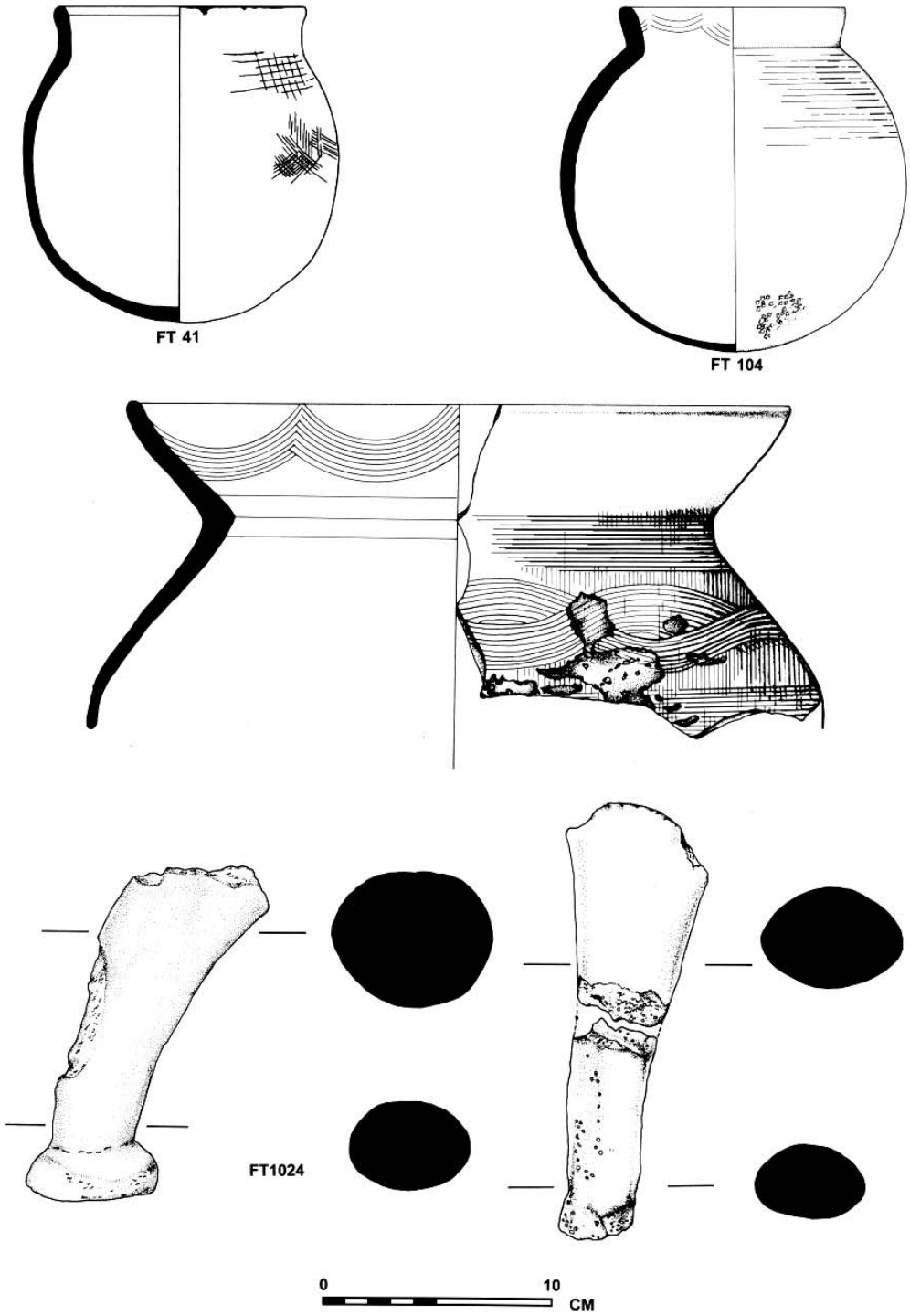



*Figure 3.45 -- Coarse corded and incised pots (above and middle) and coarse pot legs? (below) from Fu Tei.*

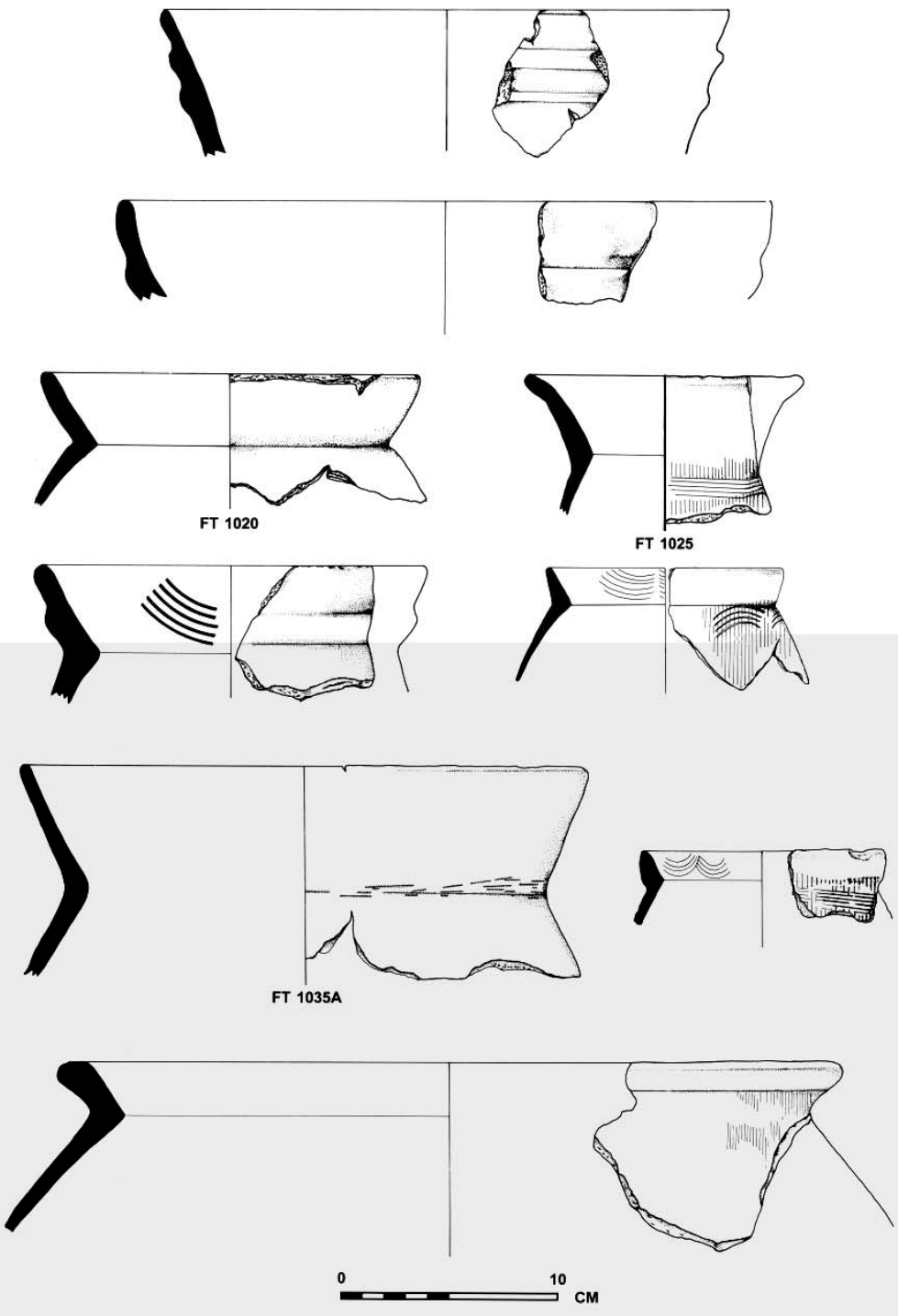



*Figure 3.46 -- Coarse plain and corded rims from Fu Tei.*

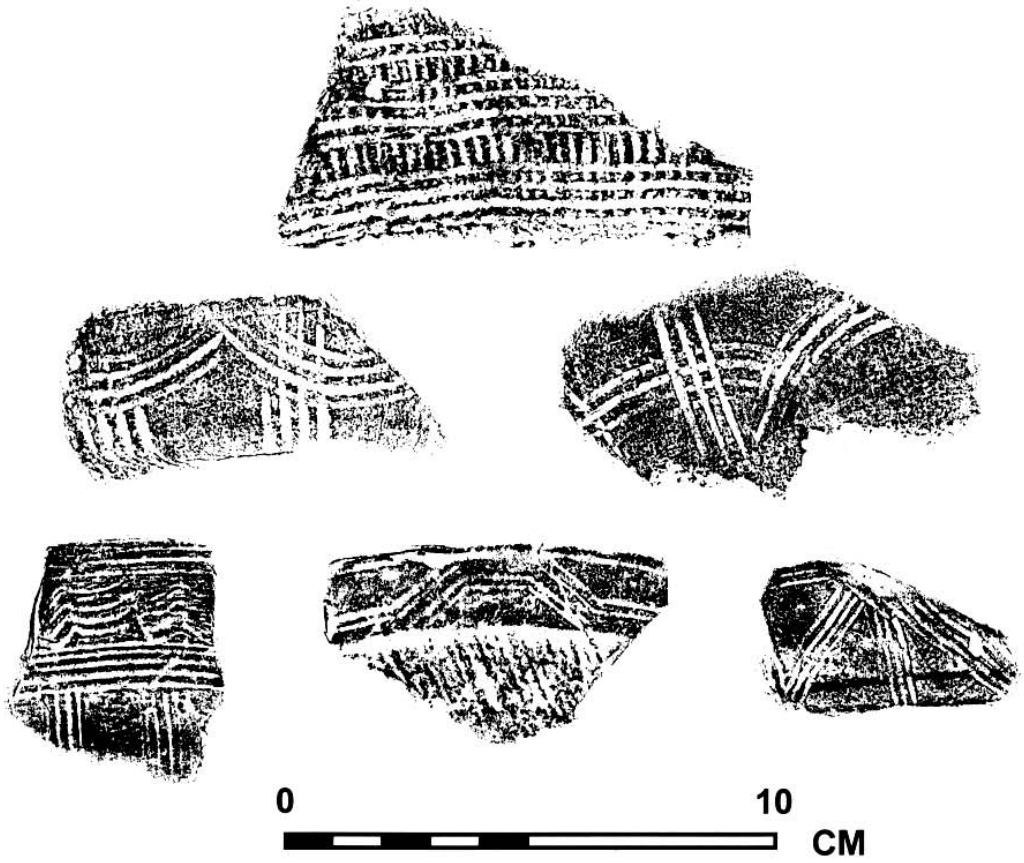



*Figure 3.47 -- Incised patterns on corded body sherd (above), on the inside of rims (middle) and on fine black ware (below) from Fu Tei.*

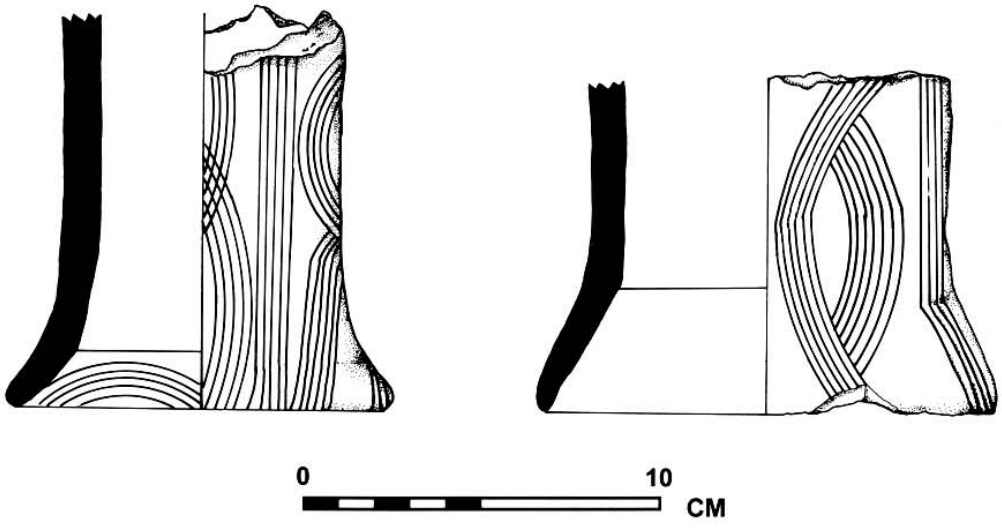



*Figure 3.48 -- Coarse incised potstands from Fu Tei.*

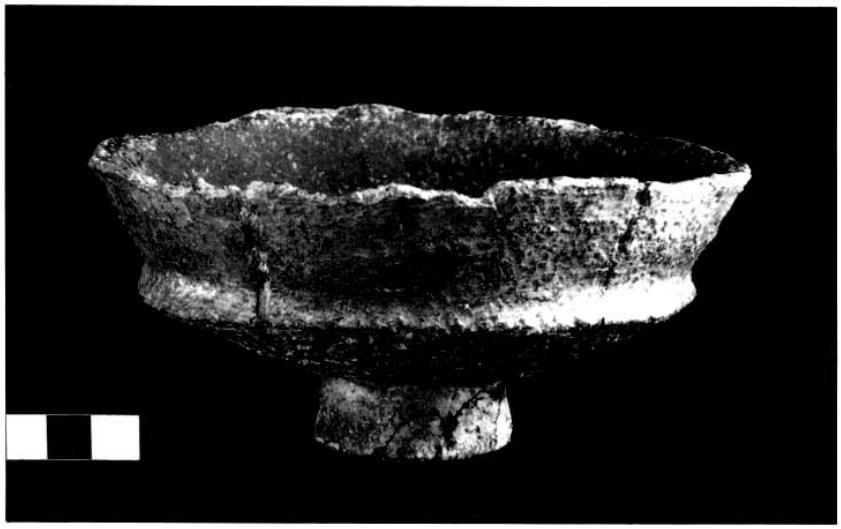
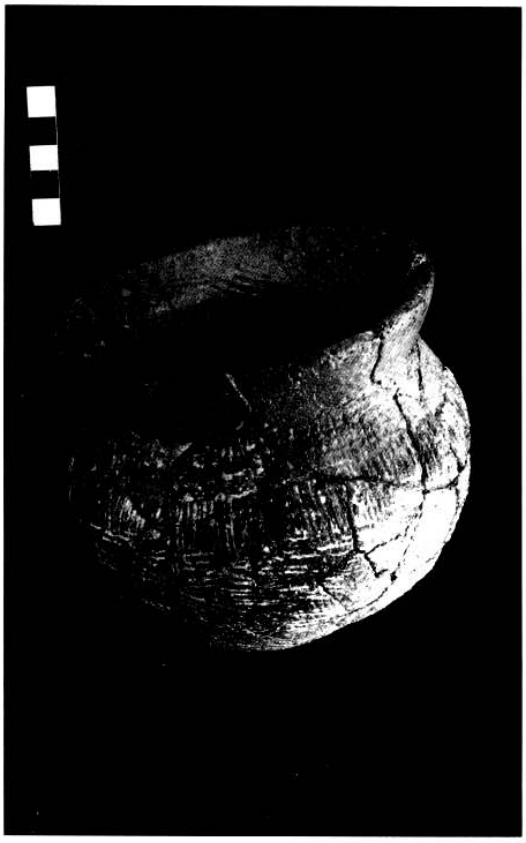


*Figure 3.49 -- Complete coarse black bowl from FT39 (see Figure 3.43).*



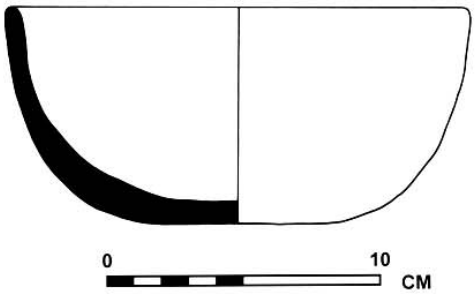



*Figure 3.50 -- The coarse corded pot FT42 (left) and a complete plain coarse bowl (right).*

new type not seen in Hong Kong nor indeed in Guangdong. FT43 is the most difficult to understand, as its walls seem to be too thin in relation to its large diameter to have been used for any function or even for handling. It could only have been made for ritual purposes. FT1012 is similar in appearing non-functional, but it is at least more structurally sound as an object. The elaborate incised decoration on its stem has never been seen before on Middle Neolithic pottery from the region, nor is any comparable shape known. The others have unusual shapes, and their functions are not readily apparent.

Among the bulk of potsherds excavated, approximately 10-15% (by weight) were chalky, the remainder being coarse. Most of the chalky is plain, and the incised patterns usually occur on the foot-rim, along with occasional round or square perforations. The coarse pottery is predominately corded, and many rims have the characteristic Middle Neolithic incised concentric semi-circles on the inside. The cord markings are super-incised with a multi-point comb -- another common feature of the local Middle Neolithic. The assemblage of pottery from Fu Tei is equatable in almost every respect with that of stratum F at Sham Wan; this "incised chalky phase" has been recorded at several other sites in Hong Kong. Some of the patterns are identical to those from Sham Wan, and neither site had any painted pottery. The only vessels that do not have parallels at Sham Wan are the four chalky ware items mentioned above. The so-called "potstands" (of unknown function) such as FT25 also have almost exact parallels in the Middle Neolithic materials from other sites.

There were however two pottery types which have not been seen before locally, though they are found in Guangdong. The first is a very finely burnished brown ware; only a handful of sherds were found, some with the burnish partly worn off. These sherds were all from the large sherd-lined hole designated as burial 9, which also provided an example of the other new type -- a large solid pottery leg. A similar leg was recovered from an adjacent hole. No pot was found with a juncture where such a leg might have been attached, and it is possible that the piece is a cooking spit or stand rather than a tripod leg.

The stone tools from Fu Tei consist of polished adzes and roughouts for adzes, and chipped or use-formed pebble tools. These tools have been studied in detail by Robert Esser, and his discussion is included in chapter 10. The number of adzes is remarkable, as is their generally small size. A few extremely small "flake adzes" would be difficult to haft, and pose a problem of interpretation. The main forms among the ordinary adzes are plain tapering rectangular and shouldered.

The pebble tools fall into major groups : chipped pebbles with edges suitable for chopping or scraping; pitted pebbles; grinding stones with one or more surfaces flattened from use; and grooved or concave polishing stones. There is also a group of very large polishing stones which may have served as quernstones for grinding a food substance, in tandem with the smaller hand-held pebble grinders. In comparison with other Middle Neolithic sites, the number of chipped pebble tools is considerably smaller and the number of grinding stones larger.

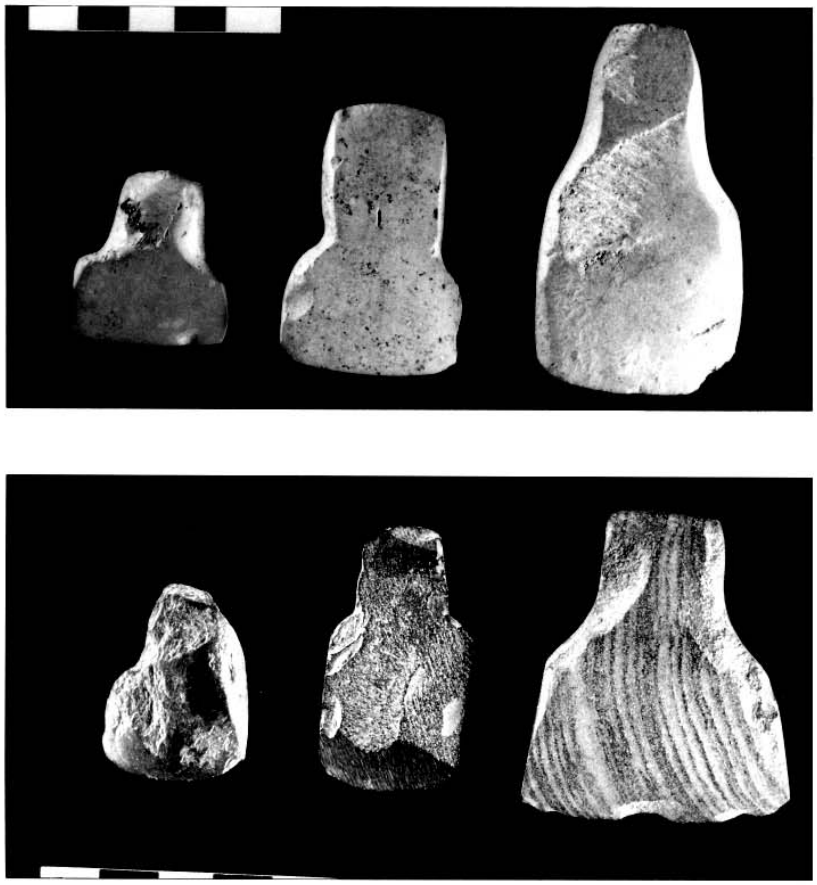


*Figure 3.51 -- Shouldered adzes from Fu Tei.*

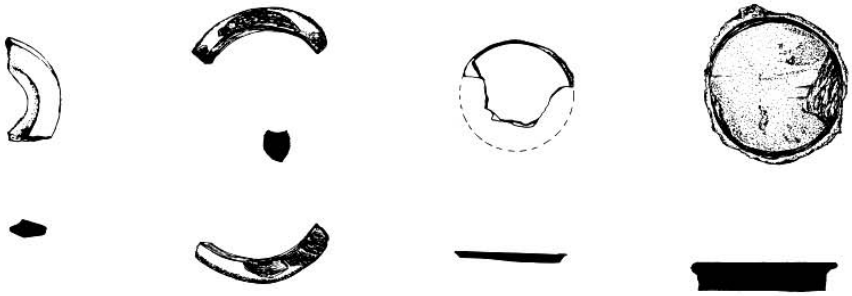


*Figure 3.52 -- Ring fragments and ring cores from Fu Tei.*

*Figure 3.53 -- Adzes of various size from Fu Tei.*

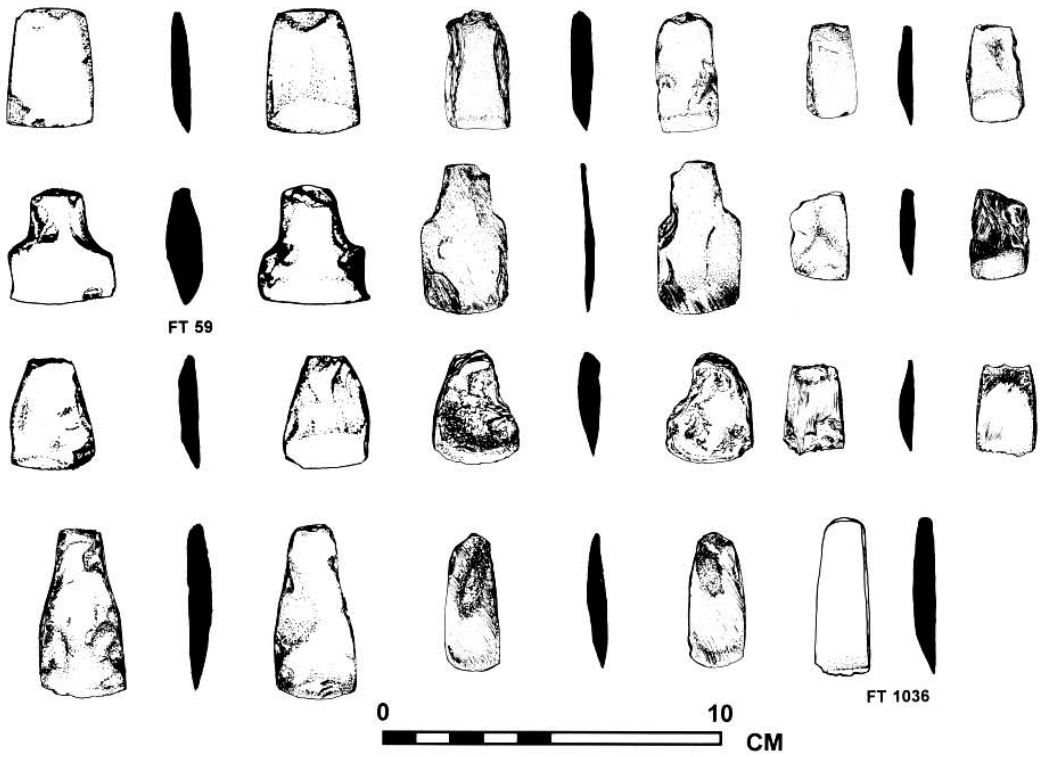



*Figure 3.54 -- Small adzes from Fu Tei.*

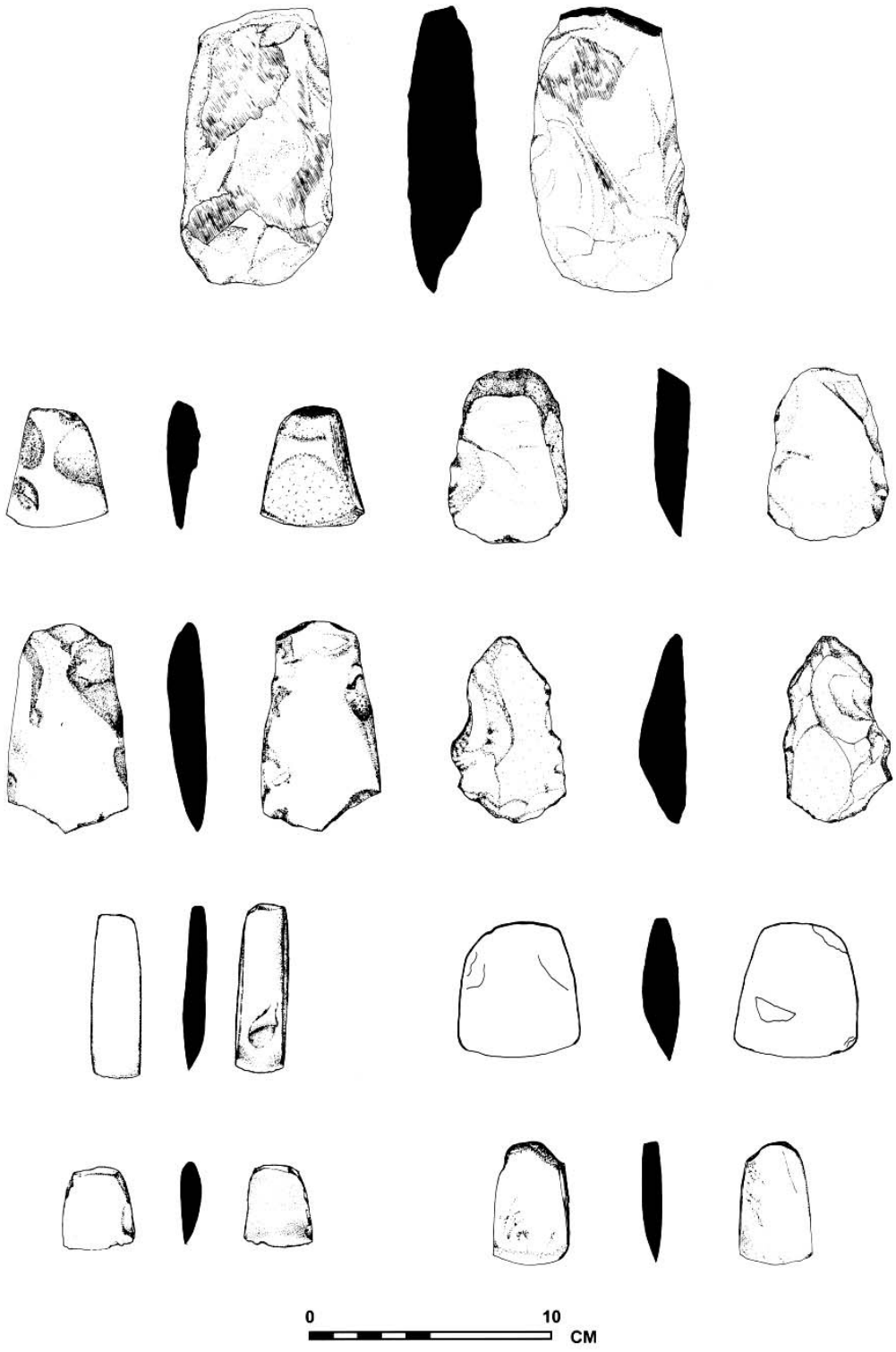



*Figure 3.55 -- Adzes and roughouts from burial 6.*


*Figure 3.56 -- Small adzes from Fu Tei.*

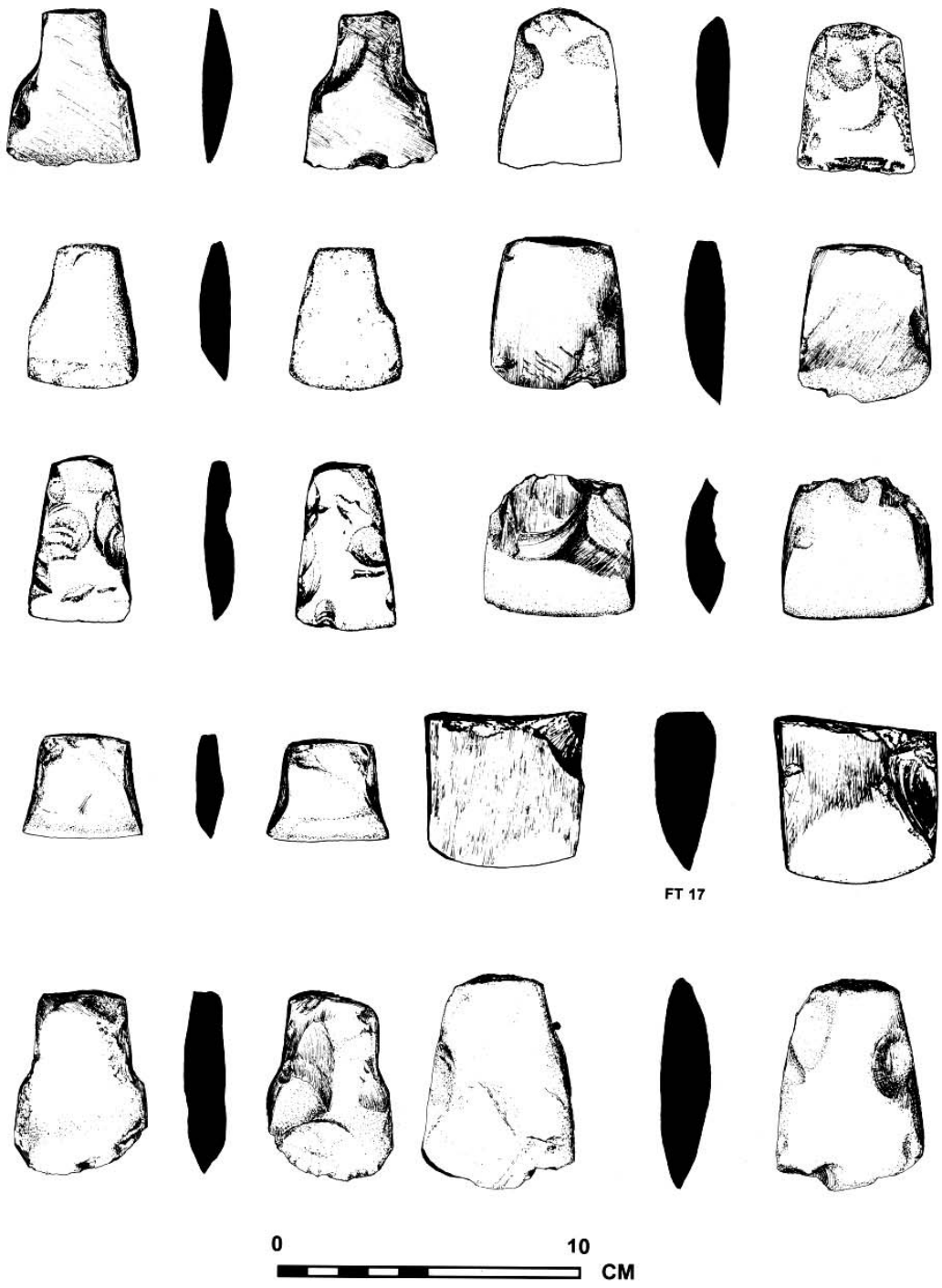



*Figure 3.57 -- Adzes from Fu Tei.*

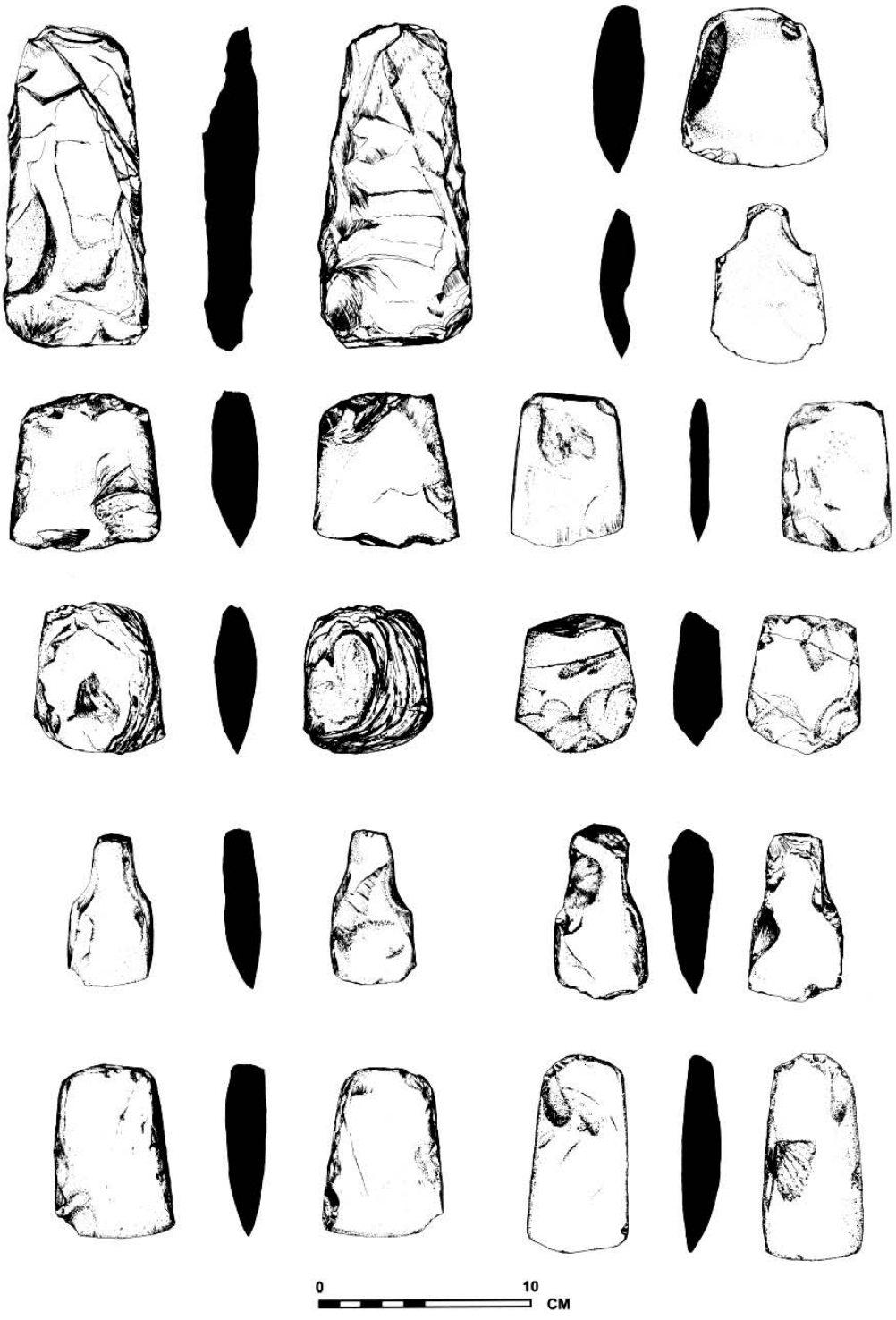



*Figure 3.58 -- Adzes from Fu Tei; the roughout at top left is pictured in Figure 3.59.*

*Figure 3.59 -- A finely worked adze roughout.*

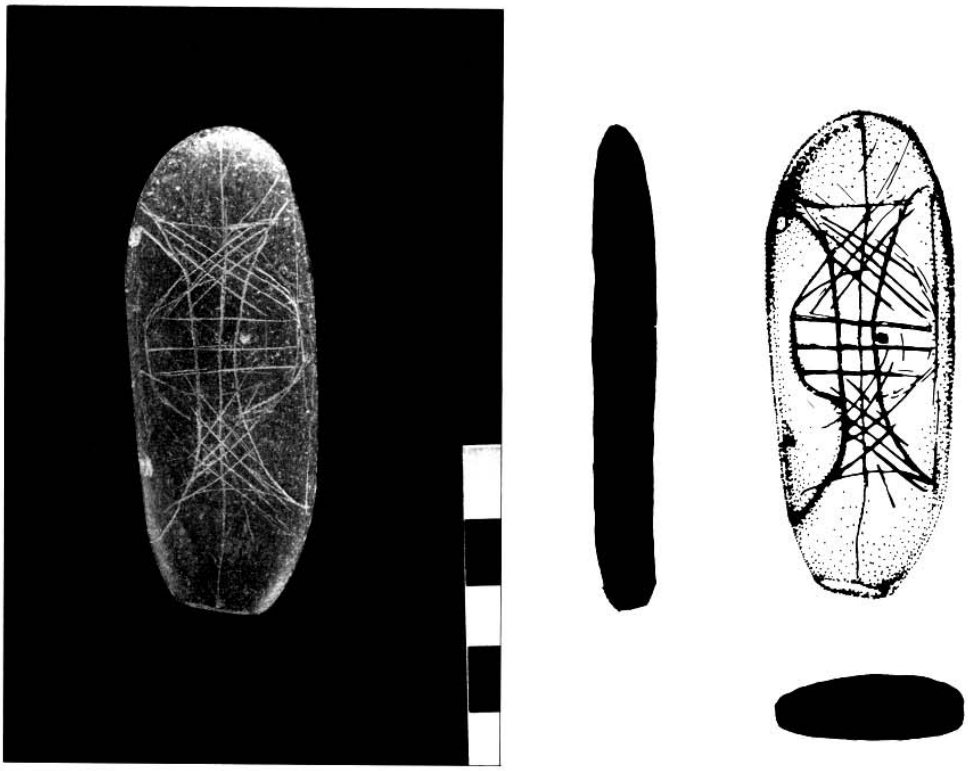


*Figure 3.60 -- A small pebble grinder with carved pattern.*

One small pebble with end use (FT1031, see Figure 3.60) is remarkable for the carved pattern on one side. It is the first known example of a portable work of art from the prehistoric period in Hong Kong, excluding of course the decoration on pottery. The pattern is unlike anything seen on pottery, and its meaning will probably remain unknown.

Stone ornaments were very few, consisting of several small fragments of polished stone rings and one ring core (see Figure 3.52). These objects indicate that rings were being made on the site, but are extremely rare compared with other Middle Neolithic sites having the quantity of cultural deposit present at Fu Tei.

There were no human, animal or plant remains from the Middle Neolithic layer, and no structures apart from the holes described above.

## ANALYSIS OF MATERIAL FROM FU TEI

C-14 dates on four samples of charcoal were obtained:

Square DY, HB -- 5050 +/-100 (BETA-42857) calibrates to 4100-3655 BC.
Square FA, L2 -- 4830 +/-160 (BETA-42858) calibrates to 3890-3355 BC.
Clearance area 2 -- 5200 +/- 60 (BETA-63461) calibrates to 4221-3817 B.C.
Square FA, L3 -- 11,280 +/80 (BETA-42859)

These dates suggest an occupation of the site during the Middle Neolithic sometime between 3900-3600 B.C. However, the dating may be affected by "old," pre-cultural charcoal from the DG. The question of dating is discussed in detail in chapter 10.

The stone tools, flakes and debris from the Middle Neolithic deposit at Fu Tei were examined by Richard Langford, who noted that almost all were of rock types not present on Chek Lap Kok. A few pieces were possibly from Chek Lap Kok dyke rock. Most of the material came from North Lantau, and included lamprophyte, rhylotic tuff, chert, graphite and tufaceous sandstone. Some artifacts were believed to come from rock types not found in the Hong Kong area, including FT17 (see Figure 3.57) an adze of basalt or arkosic sandstone, FT36 (see Figure 3.56) and FT59 (see Figure 3.54) adzes of meta-siltstone, FT1031 the portable rock carving which is fine-grained felsite.

## DISCUSSION OF THE FU TEI SITE

The material excavated at Fu Tei is a valuable collection of Middle Neolithic artifacts. The Tang and Sung pottery was sparse and of no special interest, except as chronological markers. The Middle Neolithic deposit was intact everywhere it was tested except in the area just west of the Fu Tei Wan sand bar. It was surprising how little

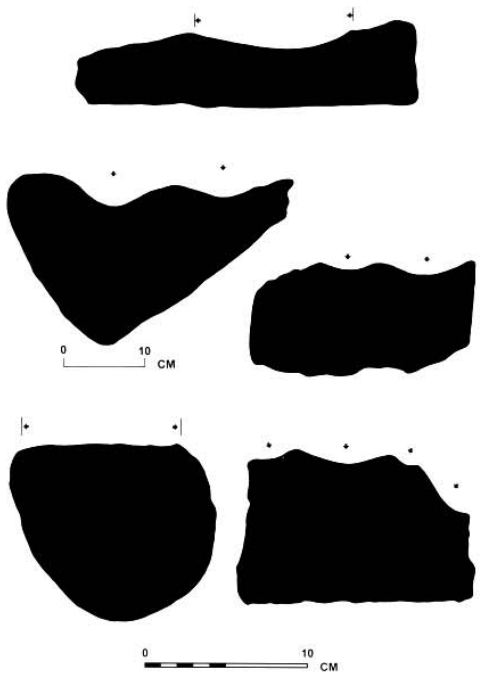



*Figure 3.61 -- Large flat and concave polishing stones from Fu Tei (the arrows indicate the polishing surface or grooves).*

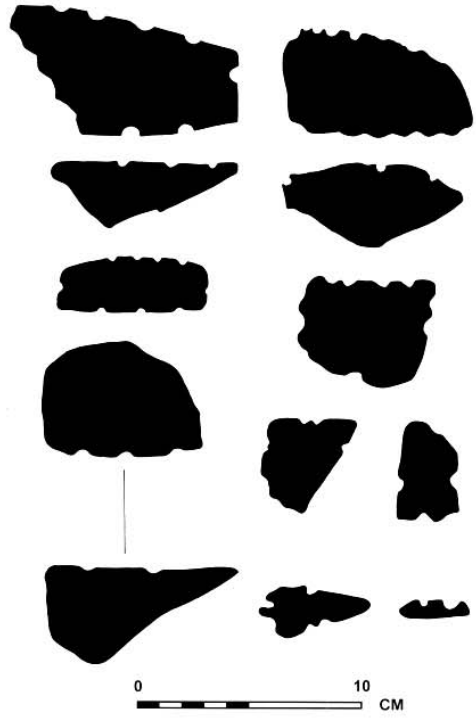



*Figure 3.62 -- Small, finely grooved, sandstone polishing stones from Fu Tei.*

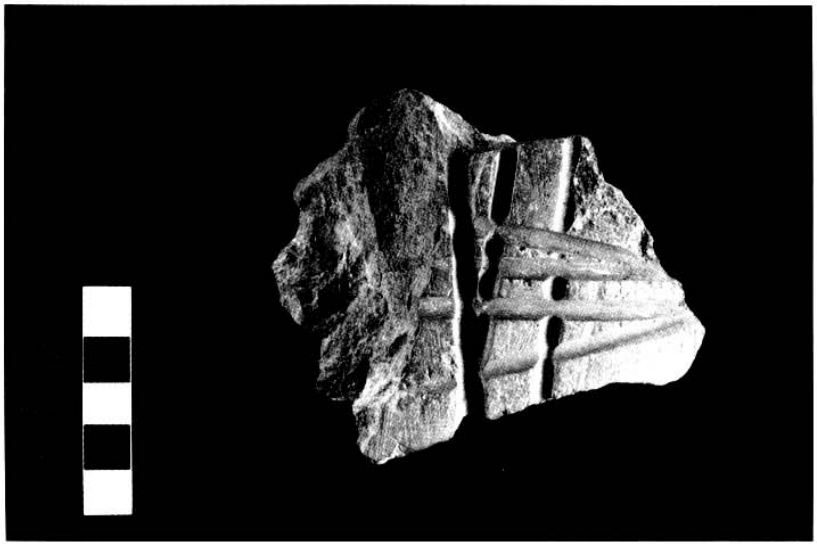


*Figure 3.63 -- A finely grooved polishing stone of volcanic rock.*

disturbance there had been, considering the level of agricultural activities on the site this century.

The discovery of burials or intentional placements of objects in the pits was the most important data to be obtained. It seems highly likely that these were indeed burials, probably secondary burials; if not, they are ritual offerings for another purpose. Utilitarian functions such as storage, cooking or cache do not offer a reasonable explanation for the variety of goods and combinations of goods. On the other hand, most of the burials are very poorly endowed, with a single pot or two but no stone tools or ornaments. Only the pit of burial6 had what might be termed a moderately rich burial accoutrement on a general Neolithic scale. None had any "ritual" or sophisticated stone artifacts. It is quite possible that many of the holes with no objects inside may represent common secondary burials in which no grave offering was made. Why so little emphasis was placed on burial offerings, amongst a people who had a very highly developed material culture in at least pottery and stone media, is difficult to fathom.

The sherd-lined pits (burials 8 and 9) apparently had no objects placed inside, but again any explanation other than burial is difficult to sustain. The sherds are of portions of two pots (8) or of fragments of many different pots (9), so storage cannot be possible. The two pairs of pots in burials 2 and 3 could conceivably be interpreted as an arrangement for cooking or storage, but they would be most unlikely to survive the abandonment of the site without being intentionally buried. Together with the other pits with different types of goods, the burial/ritual option seems the only viable one.

The general use of the Fu Tei site by man is more problematic; the holes are clearly for more purposes than simply ritual, since they are found over the entire site. One

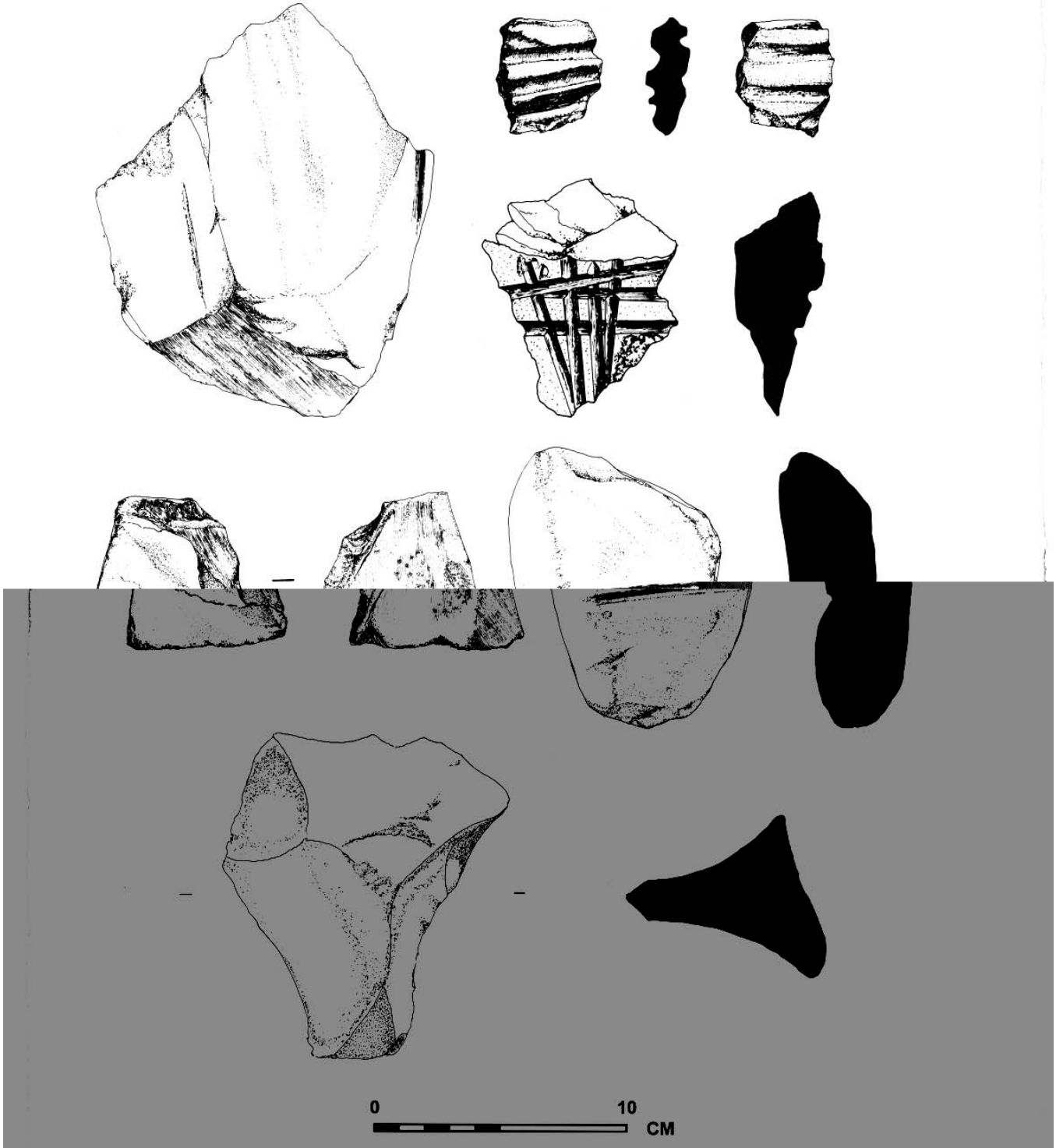



*Figure 3.64 -- Grooved and concave polishing stones from Fu Tei.*

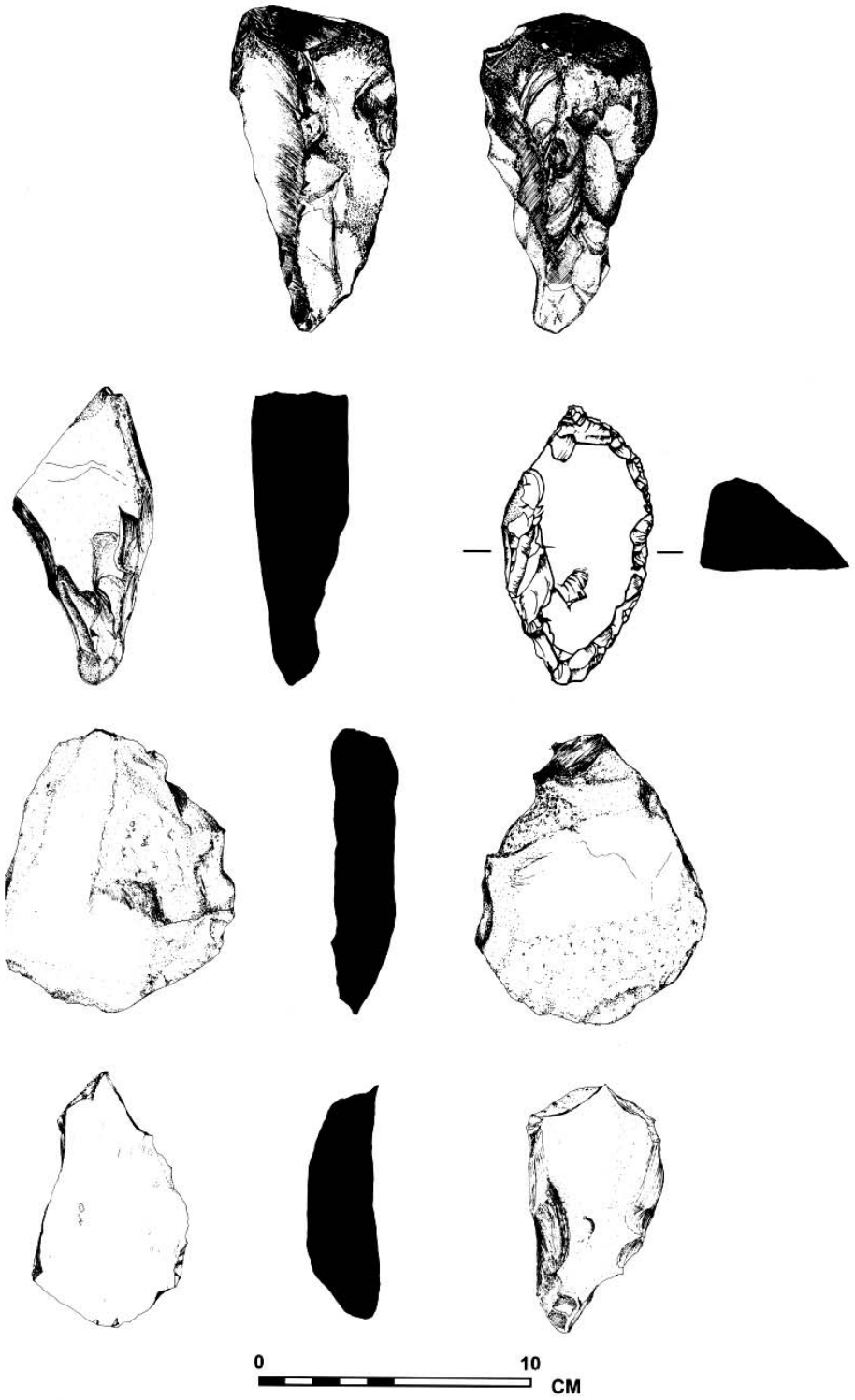



*Figure 3.65 -- Chipped pebble tools from Fu Tei.*

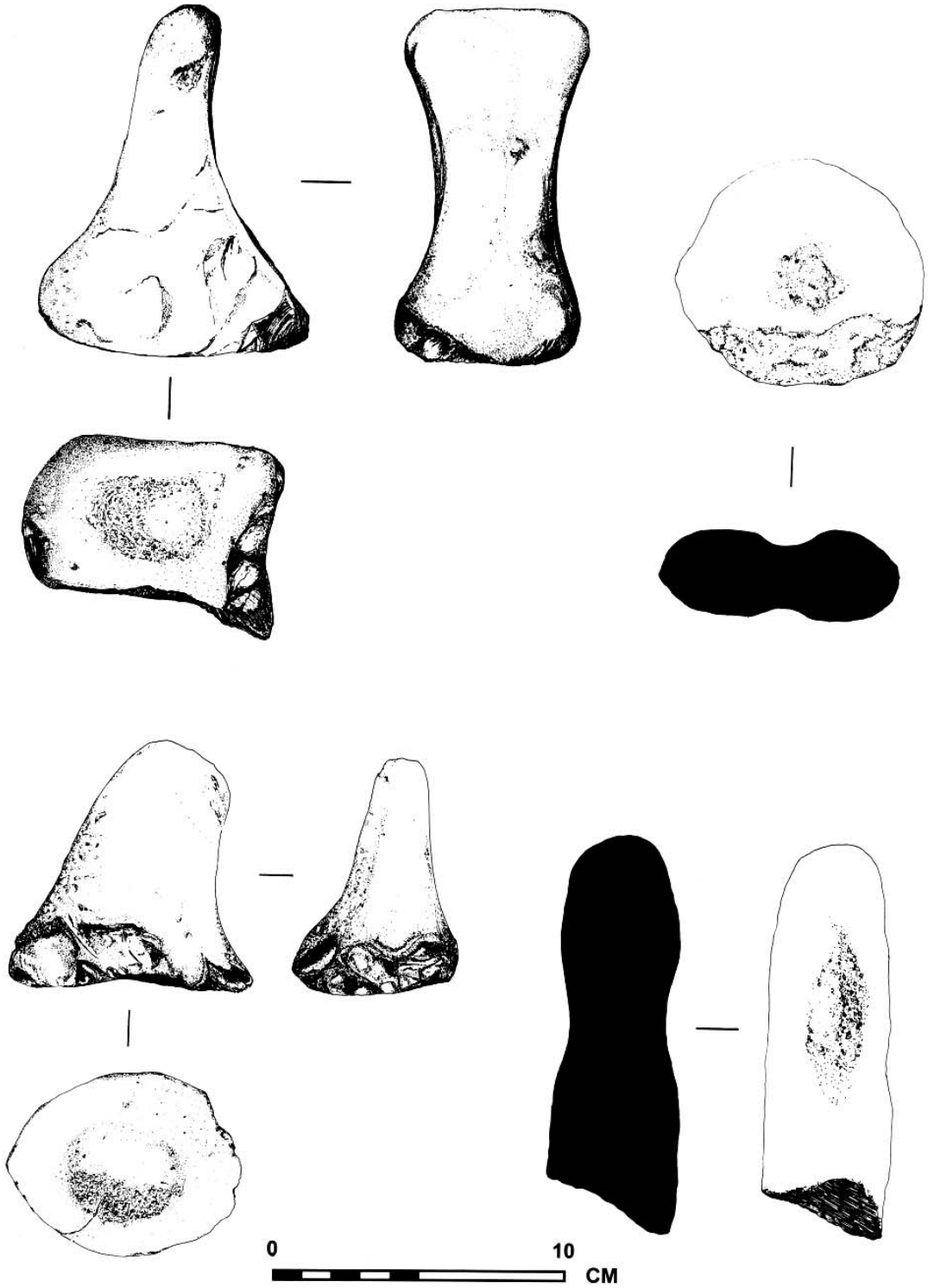



*Figure 3.66 -- Single pitted pebble tools with handle-like shapes (left) and double pitted pebbles (right) from Fu Tei.*

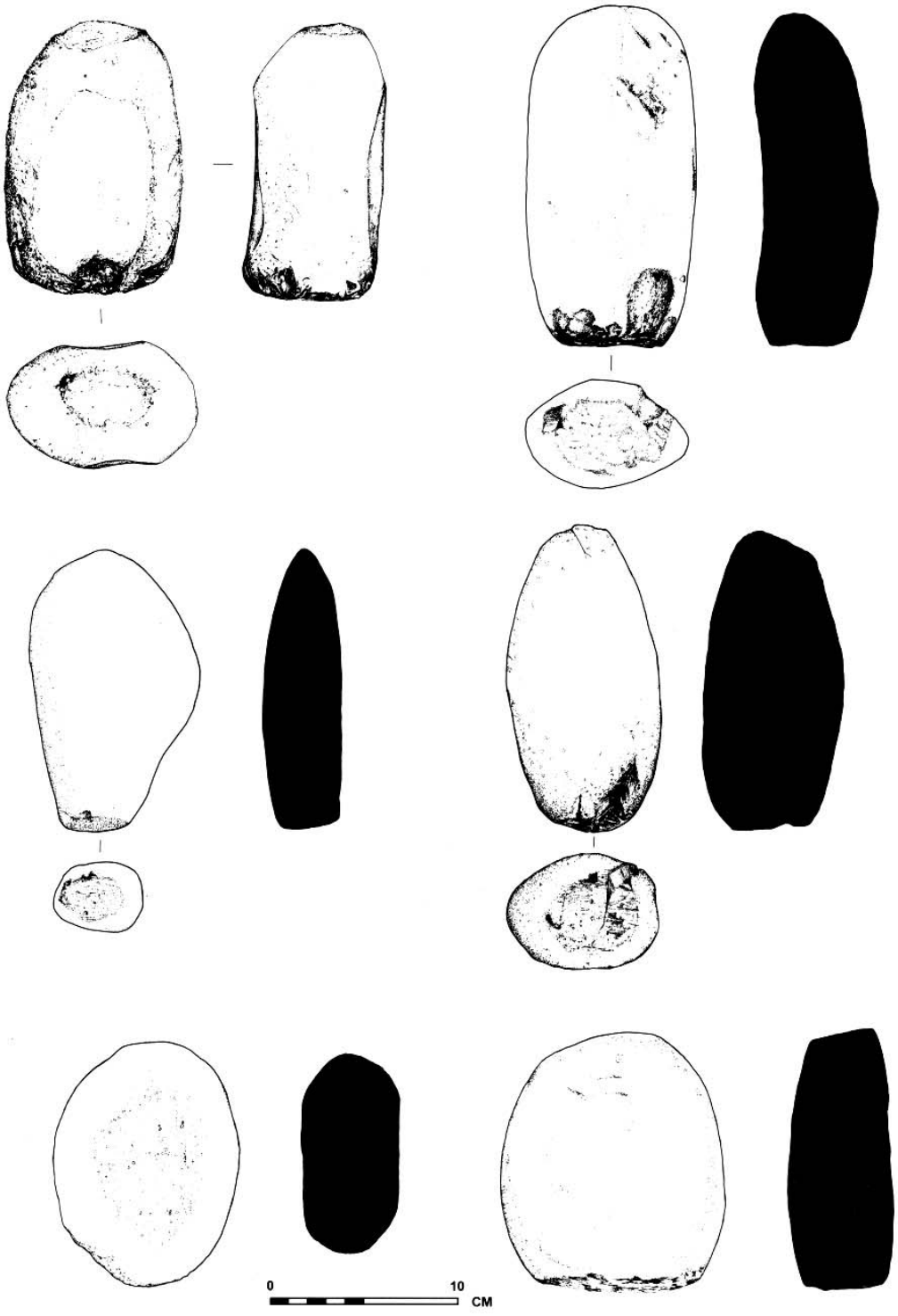



*Figure 3.67 -- Pebble grinders with one or both ends or sides flattened from use.*

possibility is that each represents a single-post structure (tent, lean-to or hut), the size and shape of which varied significantly from family to family and over time. The resultant pock-marked DG from perhaps two to three centuries of occupation would present an unintelligible mass of postholes of different sizes, shapes and styles, and no clear pattern. The major problem with this interpretation is that many of the holes seem much too large in diameter and depth (up to 1m and 1.4m respectively) to be required for a single post, even a large one, and indeed would have distinct disadvantages e.g. loosening soil around the post that would have been much firmer if a smaller posthole was dug.

Fire pits can be eliminated as a possibility, for unlike open or shallow hearths such deep pits would have problems with draft, and would certainly preserve large quantities of charcoal which could not be blown away or trampled and crushed. Pits dug for clay can be eliminated as the DG is unsuitable for pottery, its clay fraction being too small. Storage remains a possibility for some, but the upright stones in the mouths of many holes and the packing of stones in many other holes strongly suggests that these holes were for posts rather than storage.

Turning to the evidence from the cultural layer itself, only a few activity areas can be identified : the burials/intentional placements, the polishing area centred on Square A, the fired clay pit in Square BX, the shallow hearths in the vicinity of burial 9. The deposit in all the squares tested is homogenous, suggestive of general village or camp activities distributed over a wide area. The two test pits at the southern end of the plateau, above the Tang kiln, had similar material. It is unclear why Fu Tei had so few polished stone rings and chipped pebble tools, and so many pebble grinders and pitted pebbles in relation to other Middle Neolithic sites mostly on sand banks. An explanation may be found in the activities related to back beach and upper slope occupation, but a detailed analysis of a number of sites of each type will be required.

The charcoal lens dated to 11,000 years BP, and subsequent deposits of charcoal bits in the residual soil up to the Middle Neolithic occupation is intriguing, and it is tempting to see it as evidence of man in the general area of North Lantau. While nothing earlier than Middle Neolithic has been found in Hong Kong, there were almost certainly small bands of hunter-gatherers making use of the territory on occasion. Their use of fire may have accidentally or even intentionally created massive forest fires. If it is not due to human agency, the fires must be attributed to regular lightning strikes during the dry seasons when the forest was susceptible to burning. While extremely rare, such events do happen, so it is not possible to take the question of the early presence of man any further on the available data.