

# The Spanish Archaeological Project in Somaliland

Field Report 2020

Excavations at the medieval settlement of  
Fardowsa



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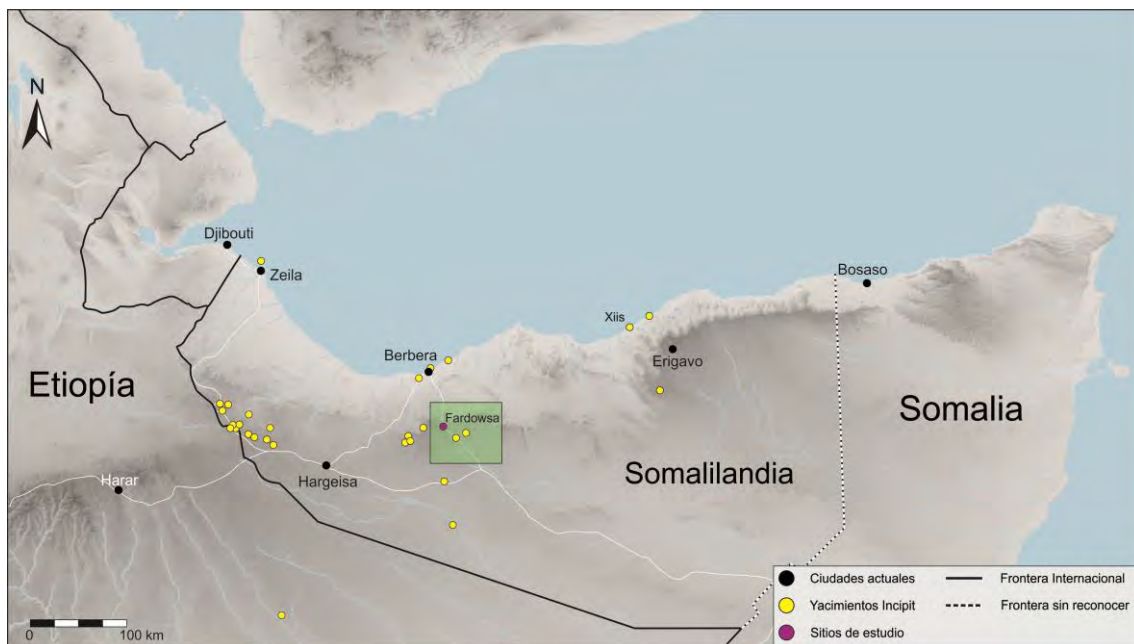
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## 1. Introduction

The medieval city of Fardowsa (also named as Ferdusa or Fedowsa) is located at the outskirts of the modern village of Sheikh, about 60 km south of Berbera, in a plateau immediately after the mountain pass that connects Berbera with the interior, a strategic position which undoubtedly was fundamental for its development and growth. Until the 1930s the only settlement in the area was a small religious community –*tariqa*– which gave name to the current village of Sheikh, which has progressively expanded affecting the southern part of the site and destroyed many of the structures in the periphery of the site. Although there are several references to the existence of ruins in the area by 19<sup>th</sup> century British travelers who used this pass on their way to the south of Somaliland (Swayne 1903), the site was archaeologically identified only in 2001 by Fauvelle-Aymar et al. (2011: 41-42), who visited it briefly and documented its general characteristics. The materials collected –an Arab coin, glass bangles, pottery sherds including Chinese porcelain– made them propose a chronology of the 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries for the site, suggesting a height occupation between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. The site was also briefly surveyed in 2015 by the Incipit-CSIC team, and although no additional information was obtained, the site was considered important enough to conduct a more systematic study, including some test pits.



Location of Fardowsa in Somaliland



Location of Fardowsa at the outskirts of Sheikh, with the location of the trenches excavated in 2016 (1. C-1000, 2. C-2000) and 2020 (3)

During the 2016 field season, the site was surveyed again and the entire perimeter was recorded, increasing the area previously estimated for the settlement up to 20 Ha. A significant number of amount was recovered during the survey, especially imported materials which were very abundant and included celadons, blue and white Chinese porcelain and several types of glazed potteries including turquoise, green, yellow and whitish examples, as well as examples of unglazed sgraffiato. Glass vessels and bangles were also very abundant. These materials suggested an older chronology than the one proposed by Fauvelle-Aymar, which would range between the twelfth and the sixteenth centuries (González-Ruibal et al. 2017: 157-159) marking the end of the site in relation to the end of the Sultanate of Adal (around 1577). Regarding the local pottery, it was very similar to that found in the rest of medieval sites throughout Somaliland, with a predominance of middle sized pieces with globular bodies, the decoration usually consisting in punctuations or incisions on the upper part of the rim. The smaller pieces have similar decorations, but placed on the body.

In addition to the surveys, two sondages were conducted in Fardowsa (Contexts 1000 and 2000), located to the northeast and the southwest of the site. The first one documented a square structure with at least two rooms and several pots still in their original position. Under the foundations of the structure numerous layers alternating ashes and soil yielding a significant amount of animal bones, including a vertebral spine still in anatomical connection. Pottery was abundant too, consisting mainly in coarse, undecorated sherds, in some cases burnt. The second sondage was carried out in the southwest of the site, an area affected by the construction of modern houses, but with remains of older square structures that can be

seen scattered among them. One of these buildings, a two-room structure, was selected, with dimensions of 7 x 6 meters and a partition wall which divided the space in two; and a test pit was excavated at the southwest corner, between the external and partition walls. The excavation showed a simple stratigraphy consisting on a 0.2-0.3 m level of undisturbed collapse under which a thinner layer of soil (0.15 – 0.2 m) was documented, probably corresponding to the abandonment of the building. In this layer a number of significant pieces were documented, including several glass fragments of good quality, part of a glass bracelet and two pieces of rotary quern stones lying on the floor of the house, made of packed earth. The doorstep which communicated the two rooms has been located at the northwest corner of the test pit, providing evidence to trace the hypothetical layout of the house.



Test pit C-1000 (2016)



Test Pit C-2000 (2016)

In 2020, the availability of resources and time has allowed a more ambitious plan of excavation, and a new, bigger area of excavation was selected to the east of the site. The selected area presented two rectangular concentrations of rubble corresponding to buildings (some parts of walls were still visible) and delimiting a rough L shape, and a lower area in front of them which was considered an open space. The area, of approximately 300 sq. m, was not as covered by vegetation and rubble as other parts of the site, allowing a fast clearing of the upper part of the collapse and the documentation of the structures underneath. This process would allow us to document the documentation of a large area without necessarily excavating all the structures in one field season. In addition, the existence of differentiated spaces would allow us to analyze the relationships between complementary areas –between houses, houses and courtyards, for example- and to compare their differences in stratigraphies and materials. The study of the space interpreted as a courtyard was regarded as especially important, as an area where older phases of the site could be recorded and where a number of chemical and pollen analyzes could be conducted.



View of the selected area before the excavation

After the exhaustive surface cleaning of stones and vegetation in the whole area, four large contexts were identified, which were numbered following the series started in 2016. The main rubble accumulation running North-South was named C-3000, the one running East-West was named C-4000, while a group of less clear structures to the south-westernmost site of the excavation area were labelled C-5000. The courtyard and any structures associated received the C-6000 code. Under this level of denomination, a second level of codes C-4100, C-4200, etc. was prepared for secondary structures or trenches, if necessary. The excavation was conducted following the Harris method of documenting stratigraphic units (SU's) naming them starting with the specific code number of each context (from 4001 to 4999, for example) or subcontext (from 4101 to 4199, for example). In addition to the classical excavation of structures, photogrammetry using drones and cameras was conducted regularly to document structures and the general process of excavation in the area. The archaeological materials and samples were collected according to their SU's, cleaned, documented, inventoried and stored at the premises of the Department of Archaeology of Somaliland.



Clearing process of the excavation area



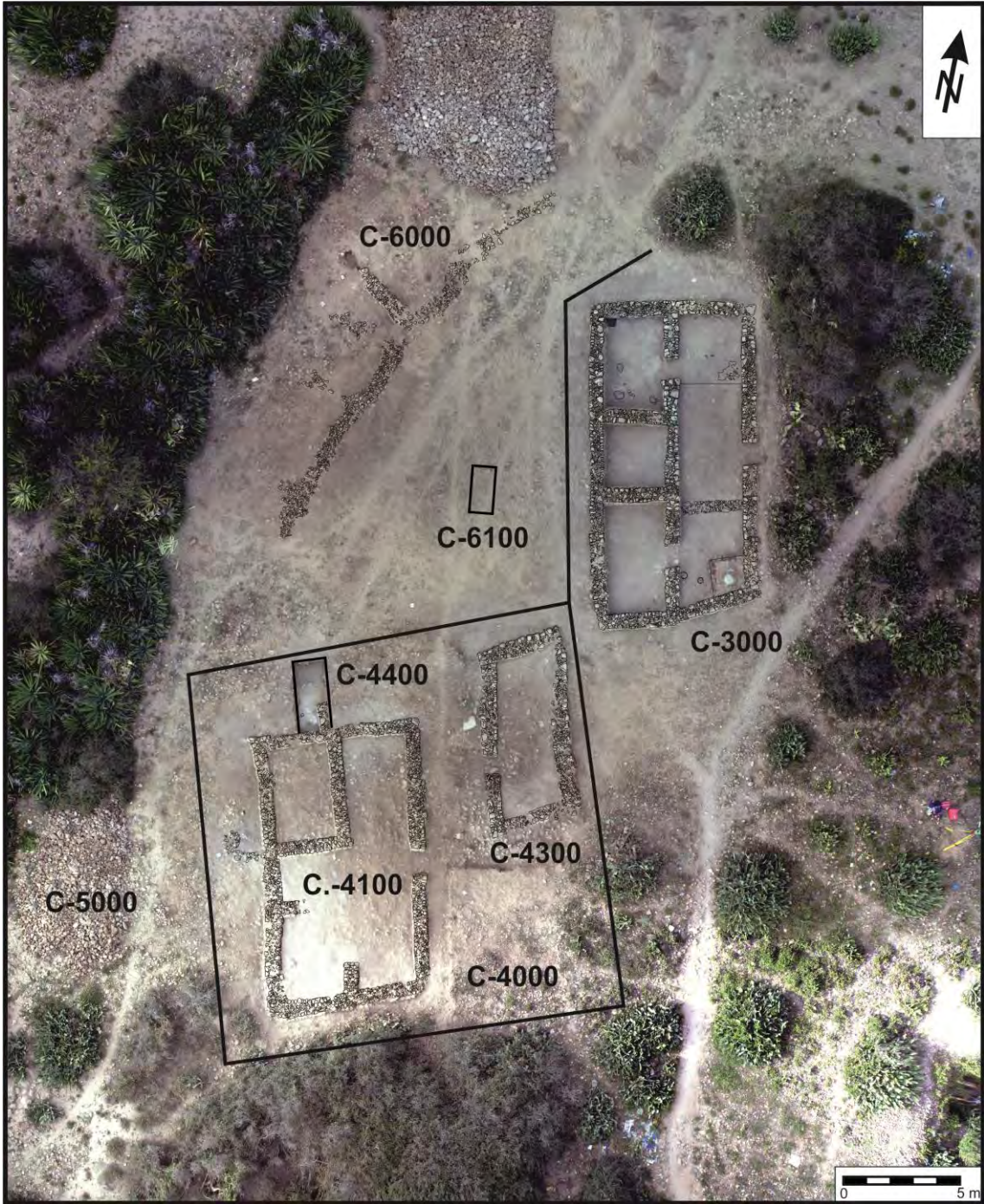
Excavation area after the removal of the surface level



Excavation process of C-3000



View of C-3000 during the excavation



Main areas and contexts of the 2020 excavation

## 2. Context 3000

### General overview. Process of excavation-classification of rooms

The Context 3000 was identified as a single, large building since the preliminary survey of the excavation area, as several of the walls were clearly visible among the rubble. It is broadly N-S oriented, with a significant difference of height between the western site (better preserved) and the eastern side much more dismantled. In the southeastern corner of the building, a contemporary cement milestone delimiting a land lot was found and kept in its place during the whole excavation of the building. Under the removal of the vegetal cover and several agaves, a layer of collapse was found covering the whole building and its exterior, and a number of partitions E-W and N-S were also visible dividing the internal space in several rooms. In order to define better the structure, part (between 10 and 30 cm) of the external layer of collapse (SU 3001) was removed around the building to identify the limits of the building. This preliminary clearing allowed establishing the basic layout of the building: three rooms to the west (3A-3C) and a long corridor to the east (3D), which was initially interpreted as an open space. At the beginning of the excavation the partition walls were not visible for all the rooms, especially to the east side where the building is more weathered. However, there were clear differences among the layers covering the different spaces and therefore the distinction –with individualized stratigraphic unit numbers for each space. These differences were also clear in the longest room (3D), to the extent that a subdivision was made (3D1, 3D2, 3D3) for the three spaces equivalent to rooms A, B and C even if no partitions were detected initially. This distinction was fortunate as the excavation progressed, as two low partition walls were documented when the collapse layer was removed, defining new areas whose archaeological deposits and structures need to be studied separately. When the excavation progresses in future seasons and the final number of rooms is completely established, it is likely than the spaces 3D1 to 3D3 will be renamed. The total dimensions of C-3000 are 14 by 7 m (12,9 by 7 in the eastern side), with a total area of 100 sq. meters.



Rooms and spaces at C-3000



Distribution of the main Stratigraphic Units at C-3000, showing walls (white), deposits (violet) and floors (yellow)

SU number	Type of SU	Description
3001	Collapse level	Stone collapse around C-3000
3002	Collapse level	Stone collapse inside C-3000
3003	Deposit	Sand depositis north of C-3000.
3004	Wall	Wall delimiting C-3000 to the north
3005	Wall	Wall delimiting C-3000 to the East (north side)
3006	Wall	Partition wall between Rooms 3B and 3C
3007	Wall	Partition Wall between rooms 3C and 3D3 (north side)
3008	Wall	Wall delimiting C-3000 to the west
3009	Collapse level	Stone collapse covering Rooms A and 3D1
3010	Collapse level	Stone collapse covering Rooms B and 3D2
3011	Collapse level	Stone collapse covering Rooms C and 3D3
3012	Wall	Partition Wall between 3A and 3B
3013	Wall	Wall delimiting C-3000 to the South (eastern side)
3014	Deposit	Deposit inside room 3A, under collapse 3009
3015	Deposit	Deposit inside room 3D1, under collapse 3009
3016	Deposit	Deposit inside room 3B, under collapse 3010
3017	Wall	Partition Wall between rooms 3A and 3D1 (north side)
3018	Deposit	Deposit inside room 3C, under collapse 3011
3019	Deposit	Deposit inside room 3D3, under collapse 3011
3020	Deposit	Deposit inside room 3A, in the south-western corner
3021	Deposit	Deposit inside room 3A
3022	Deposit	Deposit inside room 3A
3023	Wall	Partition Wall between rooms 3A and 3D1 (south side)
3024	Deposit	Deposit inside room 3D2, under collapse 3010
3025	Wall	Partition Wall between rooms 3B and 3D2
3026	Wall	Partition Wall between rooms 3C and 3D3 (south side)
3027	Wall	Wall delimiting C-3000 to the East (south side)
3028	Wall	Wall remodelling south-western corner of C-3000 (south part)
3029	Wall	Wall remodelling south-western corner of C-3000 (west part)
3030	Floor	Floor inside room 3A under 3022
3031	Deposit	NW trench. Deposit inside room 3A under 3030
3032	Floor	NW trench. White floor inside room 3A under 3031
3033	Deposit	NW trench. Deposit inside room 3A under 3032
3034	Deposit	NW trench. Deposit inside room 3A under 3033
3035	Deposit	NW trench. Sterile Deposit inside room 3A under 3034
3036	Deposit	NW trench. Deposit inside room 3A under 3035 and the wall
3037	Deposit	Deposit inside room 3D1, North area
3038	Deposit	Infilling of posthole in Room 3D1
3039	Negative structure	Posthole in Room 3D1
3040	Deposit	Deposit of ashes and charcoals northeast of Room 3D1
3041	Floor	Floor inside room 3D1, south-west area

List and description of Stratigraphic Units of C-3000

Along with the definition of these internal spaces, the cleaning of the walls showed evidences of at least two constructive moments during the use of the building, especially well documented at the southwest corner where the orientation and fabric of the wall was radically different than the rest of the walls. As the excavation advanced, it became also evident that the height of the preserved structures was much higher than was expected by previous experiences (preserved height at C-2000 was just 50 cm), and work focused on the two northern spaces (Rooms 3A and 3D1). Room 3A had yielded a remarkable amount of archaeological materials and several living floors, while D1 was selected to provide an adjacent, open space to identify the different uses of the spaces and their processes of abandonment. In the rest of the rooms, the excavation was halted when the collapse level was removed although in some cases, the immediate layer was started to be excavated to solve some archaeological questions –identification of doors or walls, for example. Once the excavation was finished, all the structures and rooms were refilled and protected for future research.

## Room 3A

The Room 3A is located at the northwestern corner of the building and it was easily defined by three walls to the west, north and south, while the eastern wall was buried under the collapse level and was only found after its removal. It is a space of 3.86 by 2.6 meters, with a door with a giving access to the Room 3D. The door has a slightly trapezoidal design, being wider to the east (93 cm) than to the west (83 cm) and the gap was covered with a number of flat big stones initially interpreted as the threshold of the door, but which were later identified as the collapse of the lintel and removed. The constructive technique of the walls varies: the northern and eastern walls are built with stones of medium and big size, in some cases resembling ashlar, while the western and southern walls alternate stones of medium size laid presenting a slightly regular external face with smaller, flat stones laid in lines to compensate irregular rows during the building process. None of these techniques used any binding material rather than compacted soil.



Location of Room 3A

The Room A was covered by a deep and compacted layer of collapse (SU 3009) of about 60 cm of depth, undisturbed and with few archaeological materials. The end of the collapse was marked by a layer of light brown, loose sand mixed with stones of the upper part. In this lower part of the collapse a number of archaeological materials started to appear –small fragments of glass and bones, charcoals. Under this transitional level a more compacted, brown layer with middle-sized grain was found (SU 3014), with about 20 cm of depth and a significant amount of material including local and imported pottery, glass, glass bangles and bones. This layer was identified as a filling level after the abandonment of the building. Under this strata situation becomes more complex, as in some areas (especially the southwestern corner) a new strata of compacted, orange-yellow sand with medium sized grain is located, distributed unevenly throughout the room. This layer is named SU 3021 but the transition between SU 3014 and 3021 is not clear, the lower part of 3014/upper part of 3021 is grouped in a transitional unit coded 3014-3021. The amount of archaeological materials is remarkable,

including local hand-made and fine wheel-made wares, celadon and porcelain. Glass bangles are especially abundant, along with some pieces of small glass perfume bottles. Bones were also common. From this transitional layer onwards, all the soil extracted was comprehensively sieved. Once completely cleaned, SU 3021 resulted a deep –about 20 cm- layer full of archaeological materials, similar to those of the transitional layer but more abundant.



Room 3A seen from the north, after the removal of the stone collapse

Under 3021 another stratigraphic unit –SU 3022- was documented, with slightly different characteristics that allowed us the identification of this level with the latest occupation moment of the room. The stratum had medium compacted sand of light brown color and a fine grain. Throughout the room, several concentrations of charcoals and ashes were identified, probably corresponding to occasional fires. Materials were abundant too, including some metal objects –a buckle, an earring, a taweez (cylindrical metal amulet to keep verses of the Quran)-, imported and local pottery, tens of cowries and glass, especially bangles. Bones were also common. The fact that these materials appear very fragmented and scattered, the presence of bones in what seems a living room and the fires inside the room led us to think that the occupation represented by the SU 3022 could be an occasional use of the structure once the building was abandoned and the town had lost its original use. This interpretation was confirmed by an accidental hole excavated by a dog at the northwestern corner of the room, which was used to excavate a small test pit of 70x70 cm to document the foundations of the structure. This sondage documented these foundations and at least three levels of occupation of the site under 3022, with two well-prepared floors which undoubtedly correspond to the period of use of the building. The small test pit showed that the preserved height of the room was of about 20 cm higher than expected, and impossible to excavate properly with time available. It was decided to stop the excavation at the height of SU 3022, preserving the older levels of occupation for future seasons. A number of charcoal and soil samples were collected at the different strata of the test pit (SU 3030 to SU 3036).



Room 3A seen from the south. Stratigraphic Unit 3021



Room 3A seen from the west, showing the access to the space 3D1



Fragments of a glass bottle found at SU 3021



Room 3A. Small test pit at the NW corner of the room

Room A has provided an interesting set of information about the state of preservation of the building and its potential to answer important questions about the use and history of the structures. First of all, it has confirmed the surprising preservation of the archaeological remains. The highest section of the wall (at the southwestern corner) had a height of 1.3 meters when the excavation was halted. Assuming the depth of the test pit at the NW corner is roughly equivalent in the SW, we would have at least 1,6 meters of preserved archaeological strata in this part of the building. Secondly, it has confirmed that the archaeological remains have been perfectly preserved by the collapsed layers, which seem to be undisturbed. That means that the different phases of use and abandonment of the building can be documented, providing a valuable information about the history and end of Fardowsa, whose chronology is broadly known but without great detail. The existence of these phases of use and reuse of Fardowsa is the third set of valuable information acquired during the excavation of the room, which has proved the existence of sporadic use of the space after its abandonment, maybe by nomads who use the structures once the town was abandoned. The detailed excavation of the lower levels of occupation during future seasons will allow us to determine the span of use for the site, the existence of previous stages of occupation before the building was built and the moment the building was abandoned.



Detail of the NW test pit at Room 3A, where the different living floors can be appreciated

Regarding the archaeological materials, the sample collected in Room A is extraordinarily rich and varied, and at the same time chronologically very coherent. Local hand-made pottery is not especially abundant, contrary to the presence of imported pottery including Martaban stone ware, blue and white porcelain, celadon, thin grey wares (TGW) and Yemeni unglazed wheel made pottery. Along with the pottery, glass vessels and bangles are very abundant and in some cases well preserved. A significant amount of cowries (85) have been documented during the excavation, a number that make us think they could be attached to an object of

perishable material (a gourd or a garment, for example), a common practice in many African regions. All these materials set a generic end for the site in the 16<sup>th</sup>-early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries (no potteries of later chronology have been found), coherent with the general dismantling of the urban network which grew under the sultanate of Adal (1415-1577). The beginning of the use of the room is still unclear until the lower levels of occupation are excavated, although some glazed pottery could point to an older chronology of the 14<sup>th</sup> century.



Imported materials and iron objects found at SU 3014



Local hand-made pottery documented at Room 3A



Bangles found at Room 3A

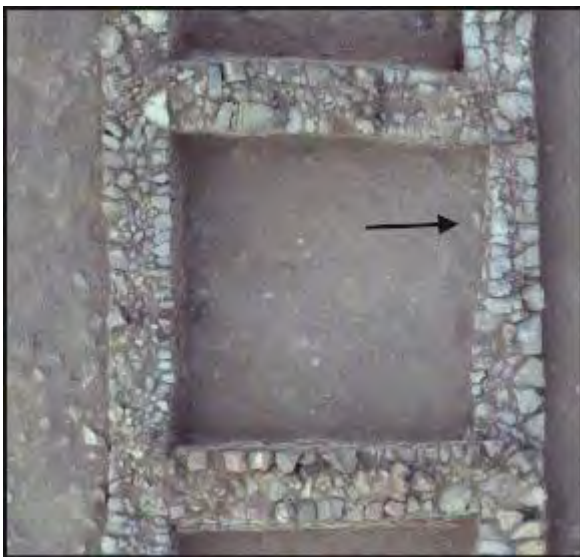
All these materials mark this room as a living room or bedroom, and therefore the fires and bones located on the floor (SU 3022) and the upper levels clearly point to a reuse of the room after its abandonment. That reuse is also coherent with the state of preservation of the materials which appear very fragmented, scattered and with some remarkable exceptions, decontextualized. The chronology of this later use of the room is still unknown, but as there are no significant chronological differences between the materials of the upper layers (SU 3014) and those found at the moment of the abandonment, our hypothesis is that this occupation took place shortly afterwards.

#### Room 3B

Room 3B corresponds to the central-western space of the building, a square measuring of 2,7 meters whose north, south and west walls are well preserved and were visible from the very beginning of the excavation. The eastern wall, on the contrary, wasn't detected until the last days of the season, having a lower height which was intentional and not explained by the collapse and weathering of the building. This eastern wall didn't present any visible door to connect room 3B with Room 3D1, although as none of these rooms was completely excavated this fact has still to be fully confirmed. The northern part of the wall is significantly thinner (20 cm less) than the southern side, which could point to a closing of this wall in a later period, but this extent can only be to be confirmed once the room is fully excavated.



Room 3B



Detail of a thin part of the eastern wall of 3B, which could correspond to a sealed door

The excavation of Room 3B showed a different collapse layer than in rooms 3A or 3C, something which could be explained by the better state of preservation of its walls. This collapse level (SU 3010) had about 20 cm of depth and consisted in small and medium sized stones mixed with dark brown soil mixed with abundant roots. As happened with the room 3A collapse, it was undisturbed pointing that the lower levels will also be intact. The underlying level was a deep level of light brown, loose sand with occasional stones of mid-sized stones. Materials were not as abundant as in Room 3A, but they were include a number of interesting objects such as a glass bangles, a big sized glass bottle rim or a big quern stone. Chronologically speaking, they are all coherent with those of Room 3A and the rest of the site



Room 3B after the removal of the surface level, seen from the south-west



Room 3B (SU 3016) seen from the east



Room 3B from the east, where the lack of door can be easily appreciated



Materials found at Room 3B

Once the SU 3016 was excavated about 50 cm to reach a similar level to the rest of the rooms in C-3000 and the east partition was located, the excavation in this room was halted to concentrate efforts in other areas. SU 3016 has been preliminarily interpreted as a filling deposit after the abandonment of the building, with the upper part probably corresponding to the beginning of the collapse of the house roof. The remarkable differences in the materials found in this room in comparison with those of Room 3A point to a different function, but this hypothesis can't be confirmed until the room is fully excavated.

### Room 3C

Room 3C has dimensions of 4.65 by 2.6 meters and it's located at the southwestern corner of the room and presented some specificities which differentiated it from the rest of rooms in context 3000. The first one was that the west and south sections of the wall correspond to a different constructive moment. These modifications are very evident both in the orientation of the southern wall, which doesn't follow the original layout of the building; and in the constructive technique which is remarkably sloppier than the rest of walls, being made of stones piled carelessly and bound with mud. These differences clearly point to a reconstruction of the building at a latter stage which, given its carelessness, could be related to the moment prior its abandonment or even to a post-abandonment phase, as detected in Room 3A. The second specificity corresponds to the eastern wall, where a door has been found connecting rooms 3C and 3D. As happened with Room 3A, this wall has a trapezoidal shape with the wider side (111 cm of width) to the west and the narrower side (97 cm) to the east. The southern part of this wall is severely destroyed, maybe affected by the same event that led to the reconstruction of the southwestern side of the house. This reconstruction also had an impact on the state of preservation of the walls: the north and northeastern part of the wall are significantly better preserved than the south and southeastern sections. In the better preserved area, the height reaches 60 cm (although the room has not been fully excavated yet).



Location of Room 3B



Room 3C seen from the east, after the surface clearing

The collapse level at Room 3C (SU 3011) was very similar to that of Rooms 3B and 3C, consisting on small and medium sized stones mixed with dark brown soil. It had a depth of about 50 cm similar to the Room 3A and clearly superior to that of Room3B. As with the other units, the collapse level seem undisturbed and sealing completely the lower archaeological levels, and provided very little archaeological materials. Under the collapse level a second stratigraphic unit was documented (SU 3018), consisting in a light brown, compacted layer of sand with middle sized-grain which seems similar to SU 3014 at Room A. Contrary to the upper layer, materials were relatively abundant, including big fragments of hand-made pottery, imported wares (speckled, celadon), bones and glass. At the southeastern corner of the room, a number of fragments of the same hand-made vessel were found, implying that the floor of the room could be close. However, due to lack of time it was decided not to continue the excavation, to concentrate efforts at Room 3A and to leave the more interesting archaeological levels untouched and protected for future campaigns.



Room 3C seen from the south. SU 3018



View of the door that communicates Room 3C with the space 3D3, seen from the west



View of the southern wall of C-300, where a reordering of the direction following a remodeling of the building can be seen



Materials found at Room 3C

## Room 3D



Area occupied by Room 3D, including spaces 3D1-3D3

### Space 3D1

The Space 3D1 corresponds to the northeastern corner of the building, delimiting a space of approximately 4.3 by 2.7 meters. It is connected to the room 3A with a door, and probably is the same room as 3D2, to the south, although for methodological reasons it was decided to be differentiated in case there were lower structures dividing room 3D, as happened between the spaces 3D2 and 3D3. The height of the structures was significantly lower than in the room 3A to the west, with the eastern wall reaching about 40 cm of depth when the excavation stopped. The northern, western and eastern walls were very similar, made mostly of middle and small sized stones bound with mud and presenting flat irregular faces. The upper layer of collapse was the same (SU 3009), and the depth of this layer approximately the same (about 40 cm). In this layer, undisturbed and with very few archaeological items. Among the collapse a score of very big and heavy stones were recovered, probably belonging to the jambs of the door as some of these stones can be seen still in place.



View of the space 3D1 after the surface clearing

Under the collapse level, a new strata of light brown sand with average compaction is documented (SU 3015), similar in its physical characteristics to SU 3014 and but with much less archaeological remains consisting mostly in hand-made local pottery and bones. It is identical to the strata located under the collapse (SU 3014) something that fits well with the interpretation of all this area as an open space –with the exception of 3D3. This layer had a depth of about 20 cm and was partially excavated in both 3D1 and 3D2. However, given the availability of time the efforts were concentrated in 3D1, to analyze the relationship between the levels found in 3A (considered a roofed room) with 3D1 (an open space) and to determine if the occupation post abandonment documented at 3A had equivalent levels at the other side of the door.



Space 3D1 from the south. SU 3015

Therefore, a trench of three meters N-S covering the whole width of the room was dug, reaching approximately the southern side of Room 3A. In this area, SU 3015 was completely removed (it had a total depth of about 40 cm), and under it a number of other stratigraphic units were found which defined two different moments of occupation of this space. The first one was a reddish layer of sand medium compaction (SU 3037), thicker in the northwestern corner of the excavation area and which was related to a fire area to the south east (SU 3040). To the north of the site a post hole was documented, excavated on SU 3041). Both the reddish level (SU 3041) and the fire area (SU 3040) can be clearly related with the post abandonment level of Room 3A (SU 3022), constituting a common occupation level for the two areas. In addition, the posthole excavated in 3040 reaffirms the residual use of these spaces once the house was abandoned. The second level of occupation –a whitish, compacted layer of sand (SU 3041) appeared in the southwestern part of the excavation area, below the reddish level and extending on the threshold door and likely under SU 3022 in Room 3A. This level has been interpreted as one of the floors of the house prior to its abandonment, and could be related to the SU 3030 which was documented at the small test pit at the northwest corner of Room 3A. This level presents similar characteristics (whitish compacted sand) and is under SU 3022 too.



View of Space 3D1 from the north showing the occupation floor and the threshold of the door connecting with Room 3A



Final view of Space 3D1, showing 1. Fire area, 2. Possible floor, 3. Post abandonment deposit 4. Post hole 5. Threshold to Room 3A

Once these different occupation levels were properly documented, the excavation was halted due to lack of time and to preserve the most relevant archaeological levels for future campaigns. The study of the 3D1 space has achieved its main objectives: identify the living floors of this area and contextualize them in relation to those of the adjacent Room 3A. The combination of both stratigraphies reinforces the hypothesis of a post abandonment use of C-3000, although a proper assessment of its intensity and duration of will require the full excavation of the building. Another element of interest is the material assemblage collected during the excavation, which consisted mostly in local hand-made pottery and bones, very similar to that of Space 3D2 but radically different to that of Room 3A, which likely corresponds to a differential use of both spaces, unless until the abandonment of the site.



Materials found at 3D1.

### Space 3D2

Space 3D2 presents very similar characteristics to Space 3D1 –probably they correspond to one single room. It has dimensions of 3.7 by 2.7 meters. The height of the preserved remains was lower than that of the western site, as was the depth of the collapse level (SU 3010) which was

just of 30 cm. with the exception of the south side of the area, which had a significant amount of stones which was later explained by the presence of a low wall dividing the spaces 3D2 and 3D3. Another wall was found under the rubble of SU 3010, dividing the spaces 3D2 and 3B. Architecturally speaking, the most relevant feature of this space is the access to the building, a door located approximately at the center of the eastern wall of the building and with a rectangular gap of 90 cm.



Access door to the building C-3000, at the east side of Space 3D2

Under the collapse, a stratum of light brown, medium compacted sand was located, distributed horizontally along the whole area (SU 3024). This layer is identical to that of Space 3D1 (SU 3015) and similar to that of the Space 3D3 (SU 3019). It wasn't fully excavated as the efforts were concentrated on the Space 3D1, but the materials collected were very similar to those of Space 3D1 and consisted mostly in hand-made local pottery and bones. As with 3D1, the area is provisionally interpreted as an open space. The SU 3024 was excavated to a level where the wall dividing Space 3D2 and 3D3 was completely visible.



Final view of Space 3D3 from the south, with the partition wall between 3D2 and 3D3 to the south and the access door to the building to the east



Materials found at Space 3D2, SU 3024.

### Space 3D3

The Space 3D3 was considered part of the long Room 3D, but this area presented some specificities that led to its classification as a differentiated area within this room. This specificities included a significant amount of collapse (SU 3011) which was more similar to that of Room 3C to the west than to the other spaces in Room 3D. The second specificity was the presence of a property landmark on the southeastern corner of the room, which wasn't removed, leaving a 1.5 m by 1.5 m unexcavated area in this corner. The dimensions of this space were 3.7 by 2.7 meters. Finally, the remodeling documented at Room 3C partially affected this room, too; its southwestern corner being part of the reconstruction of the southern wall found at that part of the wall. Moreover, the southern wall of this room is not parallel to the general layout of walls in the building, with an orientation tending to NE-SW. As happens in all the building, the walls are lower in this room than in the western part of the building, although they are better preserved than in the spaces 3D1 and 3D2.

The removal of the collapse layer (SU 3011), which had about 50 cm of depth and was made of medium sized stones mixed with a dark brown soil. As with the rest of the building C-3000, the collapse level was undisturbed and presented very few archaeological materials. Under this layer a new level of light brown and medium compacted soil was found, similar to that of paces 3D1 and 3D2 with scarce materials consisting mostly in hand-made local pottery and bones. After the removal of about 30 cm of this new layer, a low wall was located to the north dividing spaces 3D2 and 3D3. This wall explains the higher amount of collapse in this area, although given the lack of time, only the upper part of the wall was cleaned to be included in the map of the building. At the southwest corner of 3D3, two pottery vessels were identified still in their original position, indicating the presence of a living floor just 10-15 cm lower. However, as work concentrated at the north of the building, these pieces were protected and left in their position to be excavated in future seasons.



Detail of the partition wall between 3D2 and 3D3

The Space 3D3 raises some questions that won't be fully answered until the room is properly excavated in future seasons. The archaeological infillings and the material assemblages collected during the excavation are very similar to those of the northern spaces room 3D. However, the existence of a low partition wall at the northern side and the bigger amount of collapse within the room point to a differential use for the space which has yet to be elucidated, although considering that no doors have been identified at the northern wall so far.

## Discussion

The remarkable amount of information provided by the context C-3000 has been to some extent unexpected, with the structures much better preserved than expected based on previous excavations and the archaeological deposit sealed and undisturbed. The amount, quality and state of preservation of the archaeological materials is also remarkable, offering an important set of well-contextualized assemblages which will be invaluable to establish the chronology of Fardowsa and its different stages of occupation. However, this excellent context has had an impact on the progress of the excavation which has had to adapt to a more complex excavation than initially expected. In the Context 3000, that has implied the decision of excavating only two of the six defined spaces and focusing on the study of the general layout of the building and its main architectural features. For example, the planned removal of the external layer of collapse and the identification of the courtyard floor was ruled out as it would imply a huge amount of work that would leave the walls uncovered and subject to damage due to rain, animal and human activities. The same can be said inside the building where leaving aside Room 3A and Space 3D1, the rooms were not excavated down to the living floors, leaving these important archaeological levels protected with the original deposits.

Although during the 2002 field season we have been able to determine the layout of the building and a remarkable number of its architectural and archaeological features, some aspects that remain unclear; especially those related to the preserved height of the different walls, the existence and the emplacement of some door gaps and the stages of the building process. These aspects will have to be investigated in future campaigns, completing the wide set of data gathered during this field season.

According to the information gathered during the 2020 season, the building was designed and built all at the same time and following a specific identical to that of the nearby C-4100 (see page 47). This layout consisted in three roofed rooms to the west and a long space to the east, probably open to the air although that is still unclear. The access to all the spaces was on the eastern walls. The building technique was the simple disposition of middle and big sized stones in irregular rows, placing the stones with flatter, dressed faces to the exterior. In some cases as in the Room 3A these bigger stones almost become irregular ashlar, which can also be observed at the jambs of the rooms 3A and 3C. From time to time, rows of small flat stones were laid horizontally; probably to help to keep horizontal levels during the construction of the building. In some of the corners, big slabs of stones were placed to add extra stability for the structure. The construction system is very clear in the central-western part of the building: the perimeter wall was erected first, while the partitions were added at a later stage, untied to the main walls. No windows have been documented in the building, although given that the maximum preserved height was only of 1.40 meters it's impossible to know if they never existed or if they are currently lost. The doors that gave access to the inner rooms have a trapezoidal shape with the wider side to the east, while the main access door was simpler and with a rectangular shape. Only one of the thresholds could be excavated (between 3A and 3D1), but no elements to fix a wood door were found, the entrance maybe being covered by cloths.



Southern wall of Room 3A, where the maximum height of C-3000 has been documented



Northern side of Room 3D, where the irregular lines of stones can be appreciated



Detail of the eastern wall of C-3000



Detail of threshold communicating 3A and 3D1

Although these are the building was designed and probably erected in one single event, it soon became evident that there had been some restructuring during its use. This restructuring is especially evident at the southern side of the building, where it was made with the attachment of two walls of different orientations. The southwestern corner of the building (in the Room 3C) was built with a sloppier technique and smaller stones, but the walls followed the general orientation of the rest of the walls in the building. To the southwest, the wall had a similar constructive technique to those of the original building, but showed a different orientation which points to a different constructive moment. This extent will need to be investigated in the future, once the outer collapse of this area is removed and the whole area excavated. The partitions between 3B-3D3 and 3D2-3D3 haven't been fully excavated and thus it's not clear if they were part of the original design or were added afterwards. In the case of the Room 3B, the southern side of the eastern wall is clearly tied to the southern wall – implying it is part of the original design-, while the northern side is thinner and could correspond to a later closure of the room. The post hole at Space 3D1 should also be considered part of the restructuring of the building.



Areas where remodeling activities have been documented

Finally, there are some questions regarding the western wall of the building, which presents a slightly different technique -with smaller stones laid flat- but it's unclear if these differences were part of the same constructive process or if they correspond to a different phase of construction. As with the wall at Room 3D3, a full removal of the collapse levels is required to determine this extent. With the available data, the construction process of the context C-3000 can be summarized as follows: 1) the perimeter wall was built 2) the partition walls between rooms 3A, 3B and 3C and the long space 3D were built 3) the southeastern corner is remodeled at some point. The closure of the eastern wall of 3B, the partition between 3D2-3D3 and the southeastern corner of the building were built at an unidentified moment.



Detail of the SW corner of Room 3C, where two different construction techniques can be appreciated, the one to the left corresponding to a remodeling of the building

### 3. Context 4000

General overview. Process of excavation – classification of sub-contexts

Like the Context 3000, the Context C-4000 was identified as a structure due to a rectangular heap of rubble running East-West for approximately 17 meters, with a width of 13 meters and defining an “L” shape with C-3000 and the courtyard inside. However, the amount of rubble and vegetation was significantly higher, and walls were only documented to the westernmost side of the heap. The initial objective at C-4000 was just a surface cleaning of stones and vegetation to determine the layout of the building, complementing the information obtained at C-3000 and C-6000 to achieve a general overview of the area which would support future research decisions. However, unlike what happened C-3000 the clearing of the C-4000 did not provide any significant clues to determine the layout of the building, locating only three parallel walls running North-South. The distances and disposition of these walls pointed to that they belong to different contexts, and therefore the sub-contexts were named (C-4100 to C-4300) from west to east, in order to have a better control of the deposits and structures that were being documented.

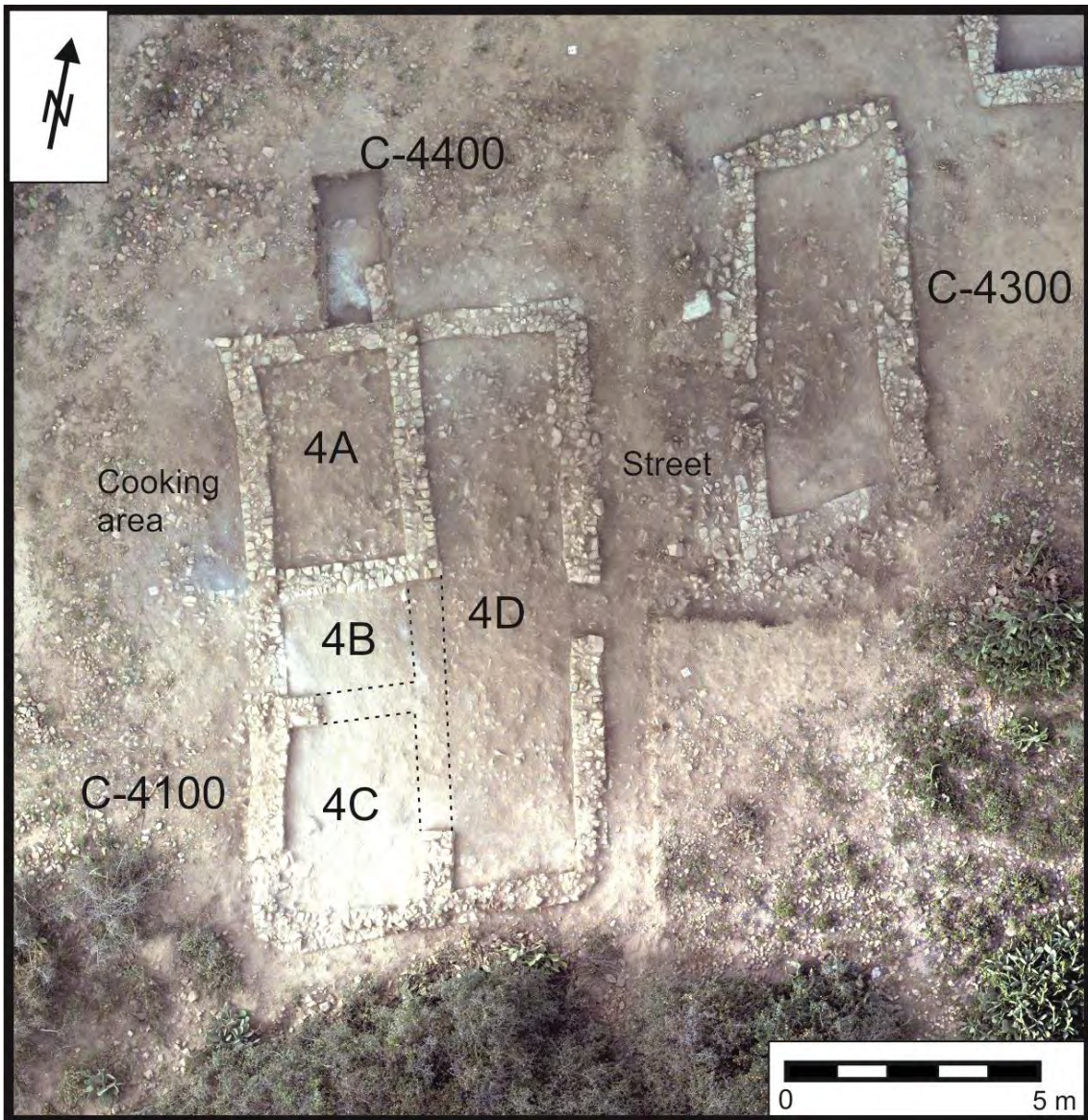


C-4000 area before the clearing



View of C-4100 after the removal of the surface level

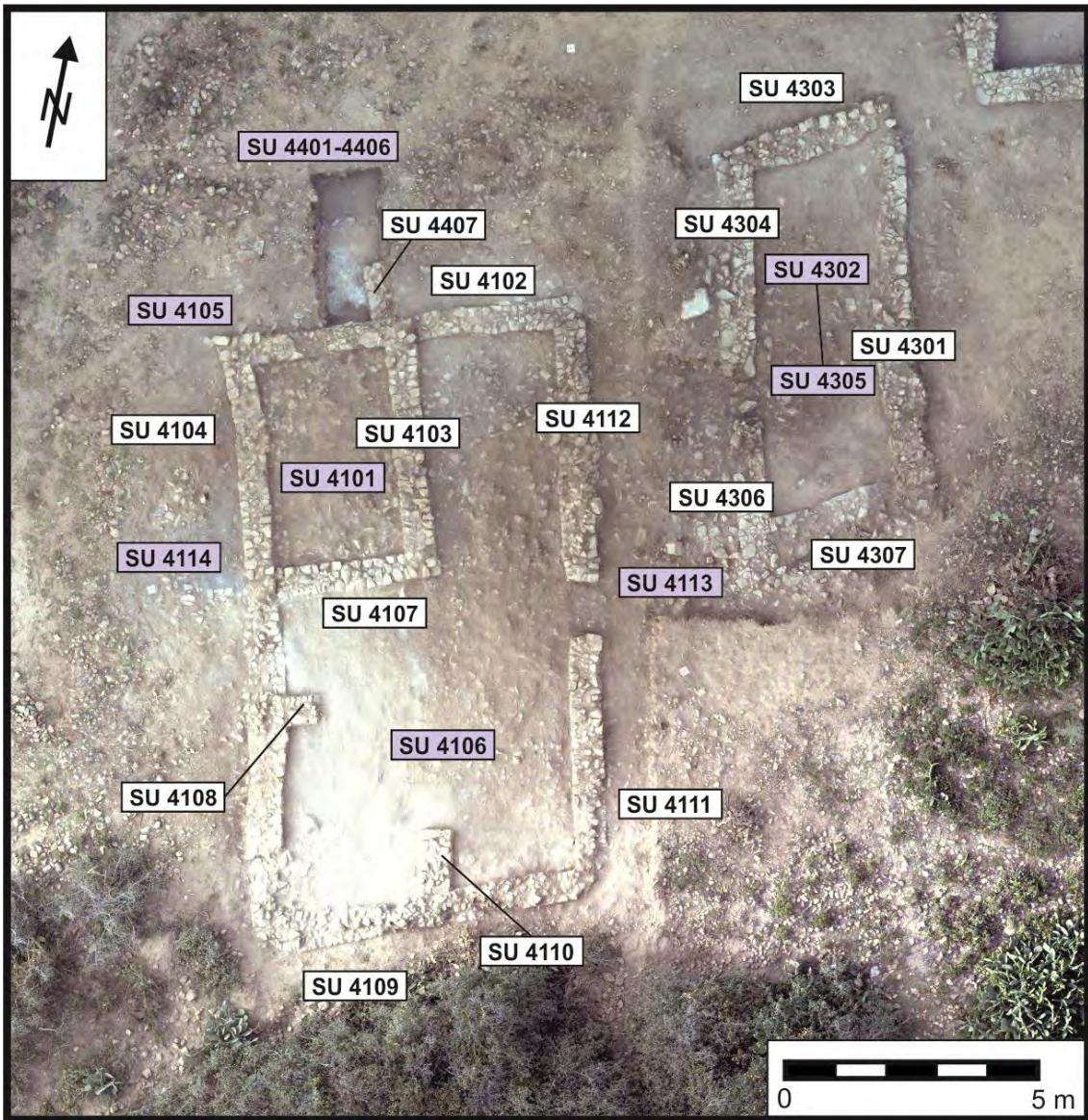
The lack of results through the surface clearing led to a more intensive work in the area, which included the removal of the upper part of the collapse in order to locate the rest of walls lying underneath. This partial excavation has allowed the identification of two buildings that contrarily to what was expected were not E-W but N-S oriented. The westernmost one (C-4100) was a big building of 12.5 m by 7 m with an almost identical layout and dimensions as C-3000. The second one (C-4300) was a building with a single room, N-S oriented and with a rhomboid shape. During the process of excavation C-4200 was identified as the easternmost side of C-4100, and therefore this subcontext was deleted and its stratigraphic units assimilated to C-4100. The space between C-4100 and C-4300 has been interpreted as a street or alley. The analysis of the structures led to the excavation of a trench to the north of C-4100 (C-4400) to determine the height of the structures at C-4000 and to identify the floor of the courtyard. As happened with C-3000, all the structures and archaeological deposits were covered and protected for future campaigns.



Main areas of Context 4000

SU number	Type of SU	Description
4001	Collapse level	Superficial level over C-4000
4101	Collapse level	Stone collapse covering Room 4A
4102	Wall	Stone Wall delimiting C-4100 to the north
4103	Wall	Partition wall between rooms 4A and 4D
4104	Wall	Stone wall delimiting C-4100 to the west
4105	Collapse level	Collapse level around C-4100
4106	Deposit	Collapse level inside rooms 4B, 4C and 4D
4107	Wall	Partition wall between rooms 4A and 4B
4108	Wall	Partition wall between rooms 4B and 4C (only west side preserved)
4109	Wall	Stone Wall delimiting C-4100 to the south
4110	Wall	Partition wall between rooms 4C and 4D (only south side preserved)
4111	Wall	Wall delimiting C-4100 to the east (south side)
4112	Wall	Wall delimiting C-4100 to the east (north side)
4113	Collapse level	Collapse level between C-4100 and C-4300 (street)
4114	Deposit	Ashes deposit west of C-4100, close to Room 4B
4115	Wall	Small Wall structure surrounding SU 4114
4301	Wall	Wall delimiting C-4300 to the east
4302	Deposit	Superficial level covering C-4300
4303	Wall	Wall delimiting C-4300 to the north
4304	Wall	Wall delimiting C-4300 to the west (north side)
4305	Collapse level	Stone collapse level inside C-4300
4306	Wall	Wall delimiting C-4300 to the west (south side)
4307	Wall	Wall delimiting C-4300 to the south
4401	Collapse level	Test pit north of C-4100. Stone collapse covering test pit C-4400
4402	Deposit	Deposit under the stone collapse. South side of test pit C-4400
4403	Deposit	Thin deposit layer under SU 4403 Occupation floor?
4404	Deposit	Deposit under SU 4402. South side of test pit C-4400
4405	Deposit	Deposit of organic materials (Rubbish dump?). North side of test pit C-4400
4406	Deposit	Deposit of organic materials (Rubbish dump?) under SU 4405. North side of test pit C-4400
4407	Wall	Small stone wall running N-S. South side of test pit C-4400
4408	Floor	Thin deposit yellow layer mixed with ashes. South side of C-4400
4409	Deposit	Infilling of posthole south of the test pit C-4400
4410	Negative structure	Posthole south of the test pit C-4400

List of Stratigraphic Units of C-4000



Location of main Stratigraphic Units showing walls (white boxes) and deposits (violet boxes)

SU number	Description	Length (m)	Width (cm)
4102	Stone Wall delimiting C-4100 to the north	7.2	48
4103	Partition wall between rooms 4A and 4D	5.1	57
4104	Stone wall delimiting C-4100 to the west	12	56
4107	Partition wall between rooms 4A and 4B	3.2	56
4108	Partition wall between rooms 4B and 4C (only west side preserved)	0.69 (preserved)	58
4109	Stone Wall delimiting C-4100 to the south	6.95	67
4110	Partition wall between rooms 4C and 4D (only south side preserved)	1.31 (preserved)	61
4111	Wall delimiting C-4100 to the east (south side)	5.11	65
4112	Wall delimiting C-4100 to the east (north side)	5.65	68
4301	Wall delimiting C-4300 to the east	8	72
4303	Wall delimiting C-4300 to the north	3.64	68
4304	Wall delimiting C-4300 to the west (north side)	4.42	66
4306	Wall delimiting C-4300 to the west (south side)	1.9	60
4307	Wall delimiting C-4300 to the south	4.1	57
4407	Small stone wall running N-S. South side of test pit C-4400	1.1	42

Dimensions of walls of C-4000

### 3.1. Context 4100

As mentioned before, the Context 4100 is a rectangular building of 12.5 m by 7 m (85 sq. meters) oriented N-S, with a similar layout as the one of C-3000: three rooms to the west and a long room to the east. Following the coding designed for C-3000, the rooms have been named 4A, 4B, 4C and 4D. As the context hasn't been excavated it's impossible to determine the height and state of preservation of this building, but the northern side is much better preserved than the southern one, where the identification of the perimeter wall has been difficult given its poor state. The rubble heap dips to the south, with a difference of height of about 30 cm between them. The internal partitions of the building present very differential state of preservation, better in general in the northern part. The walls of Room 4C are especially badly preserved, with only those parts close to the main walls are visible. However, we have some clues that point to they could be preserved under the deposits that haven't seen excavated yet. As happens with C-3000, the archaeological work has detected a number of remodeling activities visible in slight changes in the orientation of walls and in the ways some walls are attached to others. As the rooms haven't been fully excavated, it's not clear if these remodeling correspond to different constructive phases or if they are related to sporadic repairs on some walls.



View of C-4100 after the removal of the upper part of the collapse



Process of excavation at C-4100

One of the most interesting outcomes of the work at C-4100 is the identification of areas of activity external but directly related to the buildings. In C-4100 two of them have been documented so far: a square low structure infilled with ashes and a pottery container in its original position, and a small wall attached to the northern main wall. These structures, in addition with those found at the courtyard, will allow a more complete and coherent integration and understanding of the different functions of the whole area and the relationships between them.

#### Room 4A

Room 4A is the better defined of the whole building, with the four walls well preserved. It's a room of 4 m by 2.5 m, with well-built walls made of medium-sized stones irregularly dressed and bound with earth. As only the upper part of the collapse has been removed, it is difficult to determine where the door was located but some irregularities in the layout of the wall point to that it would be to the east of the room, which would be coherent with the information that we have from C-3000. Regarding the height, the excavation of a test pit to the north of the room (C-4400) has proved that the standing height of the northern wall is at least 1.2 meters, making it the best preserved in the whole area. The partition walls (east and south) are attached to the main perimeter walls but not tied to them, again as happened in Context C-3000. From the analysis of plans and orthophotos a clear remodeling can be appreciated at the northwestern corner of the room, where there is a section of the wall that has a slightly different orientation than the main walls. At the center of the northern wall, a gap could point to the existence of a window, although this extent has yet to be confirmed in future excavations.



Location of 4A

Regarding the deposits filling the room, the only excavated layer has been the upper part of the collapse level (SU 4101), consisting on what looks like a thick layer of dark brown soil with abundant middle and small sized stones and numerous roots. As happened with the collapse levels of other areas, the strata seems completely undisturbed and therefore the lower levels will probably be sealed and well preserved. The archaeological materials were very scarce, mostly consisting in hand-made local pottery and bones. Considering the height of the preserved walls documented to the north at the test pit C-4400, Room 4A can potentially provide significant information about the use and abandonment of the building.



View of Room 4A from the south



Materials found at Room 4A

## Room 4B

Room 4B is a small (2 m by 2.5 m) rectangular room which at first was identified as an open space with a short wall (70 cm of length) protruding from the west main wall marking a division between spaces 4B and 4C. However, the different color between the deposit inside room 4A –light brown- and the immediate whitish deposit to the south –especially visible after the rain- undoubtedly pointed to the existence of a wall which will be fully documented in future campaigns as the excavation progresses. To the west, the perimeter wall was significantly weathered, while to the east a closing wall hasn't been documented yet. However, the southeastern corner of Room 4A doesn't have any wall attached to it, so the whole interpretation of this side of the room remains unknown.



Location of Room B



View of the damaged western wall of Room 4B from the east. To the left the partition wall with 4C can be seen

The collapse level found at 4B (SU 4101) seems to be smaller than the one found at 4A, as after 30 cm it gives way to a new layer (SU 4106), characterized by a light brown, loose soil mixed with roots and some middle and small stones. This layer, which also covers Rooms 4C and 4D is an abandonment level which can probably be explained by the lower height of the walls of the building to the south, in a similar way as happened in the Room 3D in C-3000. Archaeological materials in Room 4B have been very scarce, and have been merged with the rest of materials collected in Rooms 4C and 4D.

#### Room 4C

Room 4C is the worst preserved space at C-4000, to the extent that there were serious problems to identify the perimeter wall to the south and to find the corner of the building that seems to be curve. The estimated dimensions are 3.6 by 2.5 meters. As with the other rooms only about 20 cm of the wall were excavated and therefore it's impossible to know how well preserved it is underneath. In this room the northern and eastern walls are almost disappeared, only small sections remaining attached to the perimeter walls. As mentioned above, the partition between 4B and 4C has been tentatively identified thanks to the differential color of the deposits and the wall lying underneath, and it's likely than the wall to the east will be also preserved to some extent under the deposits. The door between communicating 4C with either 4B or more likely 4D hasn't been located yet.



Location of Room 4C



View of Room 4C from the west

As happened with 4B, the deposit infilling the room was a collapse level much thinner than to the north, with less stones and a light brown, loose sand (SU 4106). Archaeological materials were relatively abundant and in some cases well preserved, as happens with a perfectly preserved small bowl glazed and painted and a base of celadon pottery with a potter mark at the base, both found in the southeastern corner of the room. The state of preservation of these pieces points to a small thickness of the archaeological deposits in this area, coherent with the lower height of the archaeological remains and the almost inexistent collapse layer in this area.



Whole bowl found at the partition between Rooms 4C and 4D



Materials found at Room 4C

#### Room 4D

Room D is a long room of 10.7 m by 2.6 m occupying the eastern side of the building. The northern, eastern and southern sides of the room, corresponding to the main perimeter wall are well defined although they are much better preserved to the north than to the south. The western side, on the contrary, is only visible in the partition with Room 4A and a short section to the south, dividing rooms 4D and 4A. At the center of the room the wall has not been found, and therefore the access to the west side from the Room 4D is still unclear. The fact that the corner of Room 4A is closed and doesn't continue to the south could point to the existent of a gap for the door there, but that has yet to be determined. The southeastern corner of the room is slightly curved –as happened with the southwestern corner of Room C. The main entrance to the building has been identified at the center of the eastern side, reproducing exactly the position at C-3000. It's a rectangular door of 1 meter width, with several well-dressed stones at the jambs in the side that faces the street.



Location of Room 4D



View of Room 4D from the north



View of 4D from the south



Detail of the access to C-4100 before the removal of the collapse at the gap

About 20-30 cm of the infilling of the deposits the room have been removed, corresponding to a collapse level of a light brown, loose soil mixed with medium and small stones (SU 4106). As happened with the western side of the room, the collapse level is much better preserved in the northern part of the room, while in the southern side the structures seem much more eroded and the collapse has almost disappeared to give way to a light brown-whitish layer of sand identical to that of Room 4C. Materials consist mostly in local hand-made pottery and bones.

#### External areas

One of the most interesting elements documented during the excavation of C-4100 has been the identification of areas of activity at the exterior of the building but attached to the main building. One of them is a small wall and a floor documented to the north of the building which will be described in the context C-4400. The second one is an small area to the west of the building, consisting on a short (0.7 m) line of stones running E-W and delimiting an square area of 70 cm of side infilled with ashes (SU 4114) and a medium sized container still in its original position. This area was documented during the clearing of the external part of the collapse and could correspond to a cooking area considering the amount of ashes covering the area and the presence of a small stone structure to the south. The emplacement of this structure is also coherent with the dominant winds in the area, which run mostly east-west. Therefore, the area would be protected from the winds and would allow the smoke to run outside from the building and not inside it.



External areas 1. Ashes area. 2. street

A third external space around the context C-4100 is the street between this context and context C-4300. It is an area with a thick collapse layer (UE 4113) of which about 50 cm were excavated. The removal of this layer has allowed the identification of the entrances to C-4100 and C-4300. The materials recovered during the excavation consisted mostly in bones and local hand-made pottery.



Possible cooking area with pot in situ, to the west of C-4100



View of the street between C-4100 (left) and C-4300 (right)

## Interpretation of the context

The clearing and partial excavation of the context C-4100 have achieved its main objective of determining the basic layout and technical characteristics of the building, although logically some aspects remain unclear until a proper excavation takes place in future campaigns. The most relevant conclusion is the outstanding similarity between the layouts of C-3000 and C-4100, following the same pattern of three rooms at the western side of the building and a longer space to the left. Although with minor differences, this pattern points to a well-established concept of design in the planning and use of houses of big size, although obviously these houses do not correspond to the average house size. To the moment, it has been impossible to document the existence of a predefined building module with a recurrent size, at least until we have a bigger sample of rooms to detect trends.

Regarding the constructive technique, it is very similar to that of C-3000 with some minor differences: stones are in general of smaller size –no big slabs have been recovered in C-4100– and the quality of some of the walls looks a bit sloppier. The basic process of construction is identical to that of the C-3000, too: first the perimeter wall is built and then the partition walls are added to divide the internal space. As mentioned before, the building also shows evidences of remodeling, the most evident at the northwest corner of the building. At this moment, with just the upper layer of the collapse level excavated, it's impossible to determine the chronological span of this remodeling and whether it corresponds to a secondary, post abandonment use of the building (as happened at C-3000) or to occasional repairs throughout the use of the building.

Regarding the stratigraphy of the context, little can be said as the excavation has just removed the upper part of the collapse levels. As happened with C-3000 the collapse upper layers seem undisturbed implying that the lower archaeological layers are intact. As mentioned before, to the south of the building the collapse level is much smaller and the layer documented underneath (SU 4106) could be tentatively interpreted as a post-abandonment deposit prior to the final collapse of the structures. The height of the northern perimeter wall (known thanks to the test pit C-4400). Obviously, the lack of excavations makes impossible to propose functional interpretations of the different spaces through the analysis of stratigraphy and archaeological materials.

### 3.2. Context 4200

As mentioned before, the context C-4200 was considered an independent building in Context 4000. However, as the excavation progressed it became clear that C-4200 was actually part of C-4100 building, and therefore the Stratigraphic units were integrated in this context and the C-4200 code was eliminated. However, the code was not assigned to any other context to avoid confusion.

### 3.3. Context 4300

C-4300 was identified very early during the excavation as the easternmost wall was visible after the superficial clearing of stones and vegetation, and it was initially identified as the perimeter wall of a big building that would occupy the whole C-4000 area. As the excavation progressed, it became clear that there were different buildings in the area and the walls were assigned the code C-4300. Since the beginning of the excavation, the definition of the walls of this building has been complicated due to the poor state of preservation of the structure and the poor quality of the construction. The identification of the walls has also been complicated due to the existence of a nearby property landmark very close to the building, which couldn't be removed and made difficult the clearing of the walls. Although the building was not fully excavated and only the upper part of the collapse was removed, the preserved height of the archaeological remains seems to be lower than in C-4100 and similar to the room 3C of Context 3000.



View of C-4300 from the north

The clearing and partial excavation of C-4300 has documented a north-south oriented building, with a single room and a rhomboid plan measuring 6.6 by 2,4 meters and a total area of 31 sq. m. The building follows the general orientation of C-3000 and C-4100 and it's relatively well aligned with the southern perimeter of C-3000, but it's not so well aligned with C-4100, which follows the same orientation but it's placed about 2 meters farther to the south. The access to the building is to the west, consisting on a door with a rectangular shape of 82 cm of width. C-4300 and C-4100 define a short street of 5 meters of length and 2.6 meters of width, which gives access to both buildings.



View of the southern side of C-4300

The construction technique of this building is difficult to interpret: some parts of the building – the western wall and some stretches of the rest of the walls- are very similar to those of the other buildings, with medium sized stones laid flat and bound with earth. However, in some other parts of the wall the technique is remarkably clumsier, consisting in accumulations of small-sized stones which make difficult to identify the sides of the wall which in some cases is barely straight. In the east wall there are significant differences on the width (up to 20 cm) difficult to explain, as happens with the orientation of the north and south walls which don't follow a 90° angle. Although some of these aspects can probably be solved once the excavation progresses in future field seasons, and some could correspond to reconstruction or remodeling activities not detected at this moment, there is an evident difference of quality with respect to C-4100 and C-4300 which has to be explained. The most likely explanation would be that this building had a specific function –as a storeroom or a productive area- which was directly related to the nearby courtyard and the bigger houses. Another alternative explanation would be the identification of this building as a household of lower status. However, the experience with other smaller houses excavated in Fardowsa such as C-2000 show that even smaller, modest houses were well built and had inner partitions (González-Ruibal et al 2017: 158). This fact and the emplacement of C-4300, clearly integrated in the general disposition of buildings around the courtyard, make us consider the first option more plausible, although this extent has to be confirmed with future excavations.



View of the western wall of C-4300



Access to the C-4300 building, from the west

Regarding the deposits infilling and surrounding the building (SU 4302 and SU 4305), they have consisted in collapse levels identical to those of the rest of the rooms, undisturbed and very compact. The area to the west of C-4300 (corresponding to the street) was especially compacted, while the south of the building shows a not so deep layer of collapse (SU 4302). The materials found during the excavation of these strata were relatively abundant and

consisted mostly in hand made containers of mid-size and numerous bones, especially abundant on the street area. Imported materials are very scarce, consisting in some examples of Thin Grey Ware, glazed potteries and glass. This low presence could be explained because we did not reach the lower archaeological levels related to the occupation levels of the building.



Materials found at C-4300

#### 3.4. Context 4400

The context C-4400 is a test pit of 3 m. by 1.5 m north-south oriented and located at the northern side of C-4100, against its perimeter wall. It was set to answer two key questions during the excavation process: the height of the C-4100 walls to the north and the existence and characteristics of a floor in the courtyard, and its relationship with the 4100 building. The trench had remarkable differences in height between the area closer to the building and the courtyard (about 70 cm) which made us think of the existence of a platform on which C-4100 could have been built, a hypothesis that was dismissed as the excavation went on.



View of test pit C-4400 before the excavation

The excavation of the test pit started with the removal of the collapse layer outside the building (SU 4401, which was significantly thicker close to the wall (about 40 cm) than to the north (10-20 cm). Once this collapse level was removed, to the south a new layer was documented (SU 4402), consisting on a light brown, loose sand stratum mixed with stones, which could probably correspond to a moment post abandonment but prior to the collapse of the building. Unlike what happened in the rest of the collapse layers throughout the site, both SU 4401 and SU 4402 yielded numerous materials, mostly local hand-made pottery and bones of large animals such as cattle and camel. To the south of the trench and under SU 4402, which had a depth of about 20 cm, a new layer was documented extending from the wall to the north for about 1.7 meters. This layer (SU 4403) was a thin -5-8 cm of depth- layer of very compacted sand of light brown color which had almost no materials. To the north of this layer the last remains of the collapse level (SU 4401) were documented. The interpretation of 4403 is complex: it could have been an occupation floor prior to the collapse of the buildings, but as the excavation progressed, it became clear that it wasn't the original floor corresponding to the buildings while they were still in use.



View of C-4400 after the removal of the collapse level

Once SU 4403 to the south and SU 4401 to the north were removed, a significant change was appreciated in the stratigraphy of the test pit. To the south, a new strata (SU 4404) was documented, with approximately the same dimensions of the upper SU 4403 and a depth of 10-15 cm depending on the area. The SU 4404 had a light brown color and a medium compaction, with abundant archaeological materials and charcoals. This layer partially covered a small wall (SU 4407) which run north-south with a length of 1.1 meters and an unknown width (it was partially inside the profile, although the visible part measured 43 cm). This small wall, which has been documented to a height of 20 cm, is clearly attached (not tied though) to the perimeter wall of C-4100, and correspond to the moment in which the building was used.

Occupying the 90 cm to the northern side, a new deposit was found (SU 4405) consisting in a very organic dark soil mixed with an astonishing amount of bones and to a lesser extent, archaeological materials (about 60 kg of bones collected in an area of just 1.35 sq. m and just 0.50 cm of depth). This layer has been identified as a refusal dump excavated cutting the older levels that can still be appreciated to the south. The refusal dump has not been fully excavated due to lack of time, as a proper excavation of this structure would require a significant enlargement of the test pit to determine the extension and structural characteristics of the pit. Therefore, once the excavation reached a depth of 50 cm it was halted to focus on the southern area.

In this southern part, the removal of SU 4404 documented a new layer of a yellowish, loose sand (SU 4406), with very few archaeological materials, and under it another strata of compacted sand mixed with ashes (SU 4408) which seems to have corresponded to an occupation floor. This hypothesis is reinforced by the existence of a posthole (SU's 4409 and 4410) at the southwest of the test pit, excavated on this layer, and what seems the end of the low wall to the southeast. SU 4408 was tentatively interpreted as the living floor

corresponding to the period in which the buildings were active, and the excavation was stopped as further investigation of the area (to determine the extension of the low wall or the refusal dump) would require an investment of resources and time that was considerable unavailable. After the main archaeological evidences were protected and covered for future works in the area.



Final view of the test pit C-4400 showing the low wall to the bottom left, the posthole to the bottom right and the dump pit to the front.

The excavation in C-4400 not only has answered the questions for which it was originally planned, but it provided a lot of interesting information about the activities conducted in the courtyard, the history of the compound and the social and economic background of the inhabitants of the households. The excavation has dismissed the existence of a platform, confirming a noticeable height of the C-4100 northern wall that reaches 1.20 cm of height. It has also located the potential floor corresponding to the moment of occupation of the houses, and has confirmed the existence of stone structures attached to the exterior of the main building, as happened in the west side of C-4100.



Camel vertebra documented in the dump pit



Materials found at C-4400

However, the most interesting element of the test pit C-4400 has been the discovery of a huge refusal dump excavated in what seem to be the level where the houses were active. That means that the refusal dump was dug at an undetermined moment when the buildings had already been erected, and maybe abandoned. However, the archaeological materials recovered at the refusal pit don't show significant differences with those found in the older levels in the test pit –and actually, with none of the other assemblages throughout the excavation area. Therefore the excavation and infilling of the refusal heap must have happened shortly after the construction of the buildings, although given the small area excavated it is difficult to determine what was the context of use of this pit which seems to be slightly posterior to the buildings.

In addition to the information provided about the use of the courtyard and the relation with the rest of structures and buildings in the compound, the most interesting aspect of the refusal pit is the incredible amount of bones which has provided. Although this sample is currently under study, it includes species usually not consumed such as camels or cattle, so far very scarcely represented in the medieval faunal assemblages. Camels, specially, are used as beasts of burden and considered prestigious animals whose meat is only consumed in festivities and ritual occasions. The presence of abundant remains of this animal in this test pit reinforce the interpretation of the compound excavated in 2020 as a wealthy household with large houses and differential access to imported objects and special food.

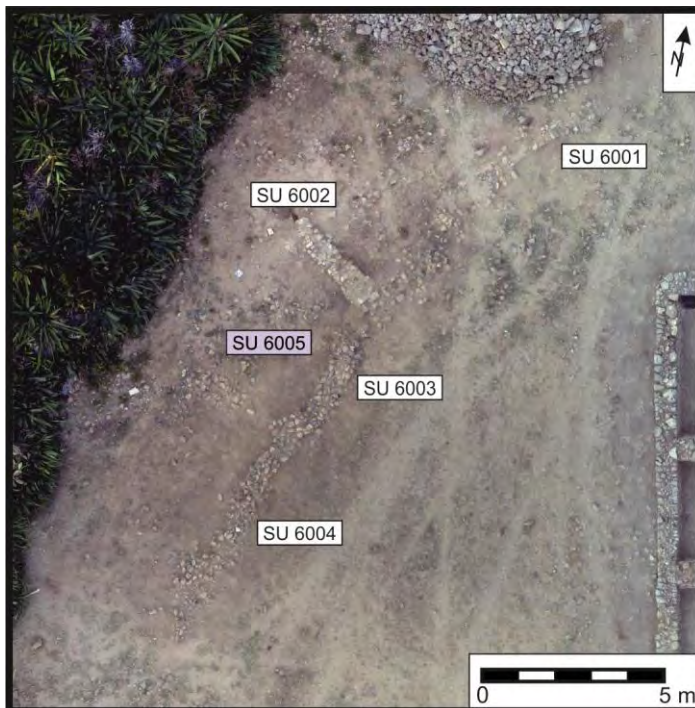
#### 4. Context 5000

Context C-5000 was the code given to a number of low walls visible to the east of C-4000, detected during the early moments of the clearing of the area. They were at a significant lower level than the walls of C-4000, and although no complete structures could be identified, several corners and partitions oriented north-south and east-west were documented and recorded with the total station, to incorporate them in the general plan of the area and in case it was decided to excavate them in the future. Finally, the area was used as a spoil heap for stones recovered from the clearing and excavation of C-4000, and the structures were not further investigated.

## 5. Context 6000

The C-6000 is an area of approximately 320 sq.m which encompasses the open space delimited by C-3000 and C-4000 and a low stone wall to the west and north, as well as some small, poorly defined structures attached to this wall to the west. The area was considered specially important because it could provide relevant information about the activities conducted in a domestic environment, filling the gaps that we have in our understanding of the open spaces in medieval settlements such as Fardowsa. The fact that the open spaces is fenced helps us to incorporate this information to the data obtained during the excavation of the contexts C-3000 and C-4000, achieving a much better understanding of the functioning of the compound and the complementary activities conducted in it. The area is a flat surface between 70 and 30 cm lower than the upper part of the preserved remains of C-3000 and C-4000. It was relatively covered of small sized stones and vegetation, although logically much less dense than the building areas. As happened with the other areas, a systematic clearing of the area was conducted, with allowed to identify several walls and structures to the west and north.

This low wall –interpreted as a fence- surrounds the buildings in what seems a ring, and it is made of several sections with different constructive techniques and gaps between them and a width between 50-60 cm. A section to the northwest is regular and very similar to the technique documented in C-3000 and C-4000 (medium-sized stones at both sides presenting dressed surfaces), while the longer section running southwest-northeast has a clumsier technique consisting in small-sized stones piled together. To the northwest corner, remains of what seems a square structure with rounded corners of approximately 5.5 m by 5 meters has been found, with one of the walls integrated in the fence. From the structural relationships between the walls, the fence seems to have been added at a later stage, including the east wall of this small building in the perimeter wall.



Location of C-6000 stratigraphic units, showing walls (white boxes) and deposits (violet boxes)

SU number	Type of SU	Description
6001	Wall	Stretch of wall fence north of excavation area
6002	Wall	Stretch of wall west of excavation area, running NW-SE
6003	Wall	Central stretch of wall fence west of excavation area,
6004	Wall	Southern stretch of wall fence, west of excavation area
6005	Deposit	Collapse level defined by SU 6002 and SU 6003
6101	Deposit	Surface level of test pit C-6100
6102	Deposit	Deposit under SU 6101
6103	Floor?	Possible living floor under SU 6102
6104	Deposit	Deposit under SU 6103
6105	Floor?	Possible living floor under SU 6104
6106	Deposit	Deposit under SU 6105
6107	Deposit	Deposit filling a hole at the base level, north of test pit C-6100 and under SU 6105

List of Stratigraphic Units of C-6000

SU number	Description	Length (m)	Width (cm)
6001	Stretch of wall fence north of excavation area	3.1	45
6002	Stretch of wall west of excavation area, running NW-SE	3.1	58
6003	Central stretch of wall fence west of excavation area,	3.3	71
6004	Southern stretch of wall fence, west of excavation area	6.5	52

Dimensions of walls at C-6000



View of C-6000 from the south



View of possible room to the west of C-6000



Attachments of two different walls at C-6000

No excavation has been conducted in these walls, which seem to have been very low and could correspond to the foundations for a bush or wood palisade that kept animals inside and delimited an internal space for private or semiprivate activities. The small room could correspond to a pen or a store, although it is not clear the access between the room and the courtyard. It is not completely clear that all the walls are coetaneous: given the widespread

evidence of remodeling and restructuring in the compound, the possibility of different constructive episodes cannot be dismissed at all. At first, it was assumed that the fence would link with the corners of C-3000 and C-4000 closing the area between them, but these links has not been found and it seems more likely than the low wall encircled completely all the buildings.

#### Test Pit 6100

A test pit of 2 m by 1 m, north-south oriented was dug at the center of the courtyard in order to 1) determine the stratigraphy of the courtyard, including the existence of living floors and other potential structures 2) gather geochemical and pollen samples. The excavation showed a relatively simple stratigraphy. After the removal of the surface level (an organic dark and loose soil of coarse grain, about 15 cm of depth, mixed with abundant roots and stones– SU 6101) another similar layer was documented, with similar color and compaction but with less stones and roots (SU 6102) and a depth of 20 cm. Both layers yielded abundant materials consisting in animal bones and local hand-made pottery. Under this two layers a very compacted, thin -3-5 cm- layer of brown sand was documented, interpreted as a living floor of an undetermined chronology (SU 6103).



Test pit C-6100 before the excavation



First occupation floor of Test pit C-6100

As the objective of the trench was to identify the whole stratigraphy of the courtyard, SU 6103 was removed and a layer of brown sand was documented (SU 6104), with numerous charcoals and decomposed stone. This layer had still archaeological materials, including a relevant number (19) of cowries, most of them whole. Under this layer that had 15 cm of depth, a second living floor was recorded (SU 6105), with a thickness of 3 cm and made of compacted light brown sand. Under it, a much compacted layer (SU 6106) of brown-reddish sand of 15 cm of depth, with numerous bones, sporadic fragments of pottery and abundant fragments of decomposed stones which suggested the proximity of the geological stone base on which the site rests. That base was found in all the test pit with the exception of the northern site, where a small basin was found infilled with a very loose grey sand, without archaeological materials. The lack of time and physical space to excavate and document properly this basin prevent us from determining if it had a natural or anthropic origin, something which will be clarified in future excavations when this test pit is expanded. After the documentation of the stratigraphy of the test pit, two columns were dug on the profile to collect geochemical and pollen samples. Once analyzed, the first one will provide information about the uses of this open space, while the second one will offer information about the characteristics and transformations of the environment of Fardowsa. After the collection of the samples, the test pit was covered again.



Final view of Test Pit C-6100



Cowries found at the bottom of Test Pit C-6100

The excavation of C-6100 has achieved several important objectives. The first one is the identification of the geological foundations of the settlement, which has been documented about 70 cm under the current floor and sets a reliable reference level for potential depth of the the building foundations. The existence of two living floors is coherent with other data that we have collected throughout the site, especially in C-4400 where the refusal pit seems to have been dug at an undetermined moment after the construction of the buildings. However, the materials recovered during the excavation were chronologically inconclusive, so the chronology of both occupation periods remains unclear, although there were not significant variations between the materials of the different layers. With a test pit of just 2 m by 1 m is impossible to establish the relationship between these floors and the C-3000 and C-4000

buildings, and in future campaigns a longer test pit running east-west from C-3000 to the fence will be conducted. The results of the excavation and in general, those of the work at C-6000 make necessary a more active work in this area, which can provide valuable information to understand the history of the whole compound.

## 6. The material culture

### 6.1. General overview

For different reasons, the assemblage of materials collected during the 2020 excavation of Fardowsa constitutes the most exceptional sample of late medieval-early modern materials ever recovered in Somaliland. Not only it is the first site of this chronology documented with a modern archaeological methodology in Somaliland, but it also constitutes the largest area ever excavated in the region, allowing a more comprehensive study of the material culture in the site. In addition, Fardowsa presents some characteristics that make the sample especially valid to understand the material framework of Somaliland medieval settlements during the medieval period. The first one is a good state of preservation of the archaeological deposits, well-sealed and protected under undisturbed collapse layers. The second one is the remarkable height of the preserved structures (between 50 and 1.30 meters), which increases our possibilities of finding representative archaeological assemblages. Finally, the extension of the area makes possible the comparisons between different spaces and a preliminary interpretation of their different uses and functions.

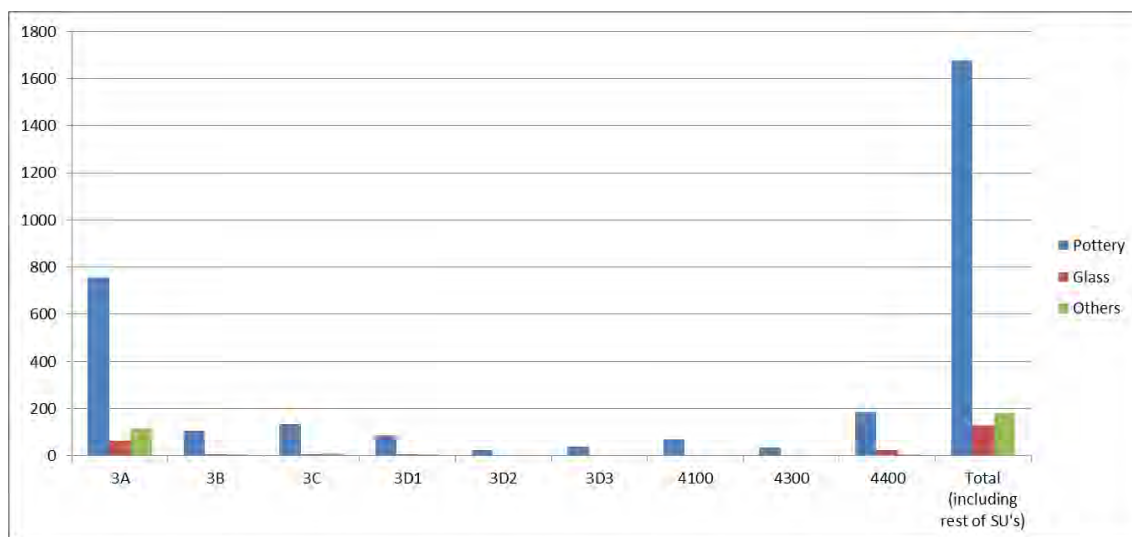
This said, the fact that the archaeological contexts are undisturbed does not mean the material culture is well preserved. In some areas such as the south of C-4000 or C-3000, some pieces perfectly preserved have been documented (either whole or fragmented but in their original positions), while in other contexts such as Room 3A the material assemblages were very fragmented and incomplete. As both types of samples were undisturbed at the moment of the excavation, their state of preservation must be explained by the different processes related to the use and abandonment of the houses.

The sample of materials found in Fardowsa in 2020 (1983 pieces) is the largest sample of contextualized materials ever recorded in Somaliland, and along with the pieces recovered during the surveys and the excavations of contexts C-1000 and C-2000 (excavated in 2016) it will provide a well based chronological context for the medieval material culture in the region. It will also help to contextualize the much less known local pottery of Somaliland, of which little is known in terms of chronology, distribution and evolution. Of course, as the area has not been fully excavated, some of the conclusions of this report must be taken with precaution. Some of the differences in materials found in the different spaces could be explained because in some rooms only the superficial level of the deposits was removed. Therefore, the prevalence of some types of materials (bones or coarse pottery, for example) could be just determined by lack of a complete excavation of these spaces during the 2020 campaign.

	C-3000							C-4000				C-6000	Total
	3A	3B	3C	3D1	3D2	3D3	Other	4100 Building	4100 other	4300	4400	6100	
Porcelain	5	0	2	2	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	12
Celadon	2	0	1	1	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	9
Martaban	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
IRSW	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	5
Yemen Yellow	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Speckled	7	1	3	1	0	1	2	2	6	1	2	0	26
Other glazed	13	3	5	8	1	1	3	3	4	1	0	0	42
White-cream	34	9	2	4	0	0	1	1	1	1	2	0	55
TGW	3	2	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	9
Wheel-made	52	10	20	12	0	4	14	18	15	2	10	0	157
Local hand-made	639	79	101	59	22	34	61	44	83	28	168	41	1359
Glass	21	3	4	5	2	0	4	2	7	2	22	0	72
Bangles	41	2	3	3	0	0	2	0	2	0	2	0	55
Cowries	85	5	6	6	0	0	4	4	2	0	5	19	136
Metal	6	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	8
Lithic	13	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	15
Quern	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	5
Other	11	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	0	15
Total	934	118	147	102	26	40	99	78	129	38	212	60	1983

Summary of archaeological artifacts recovered during the 2020 excavation

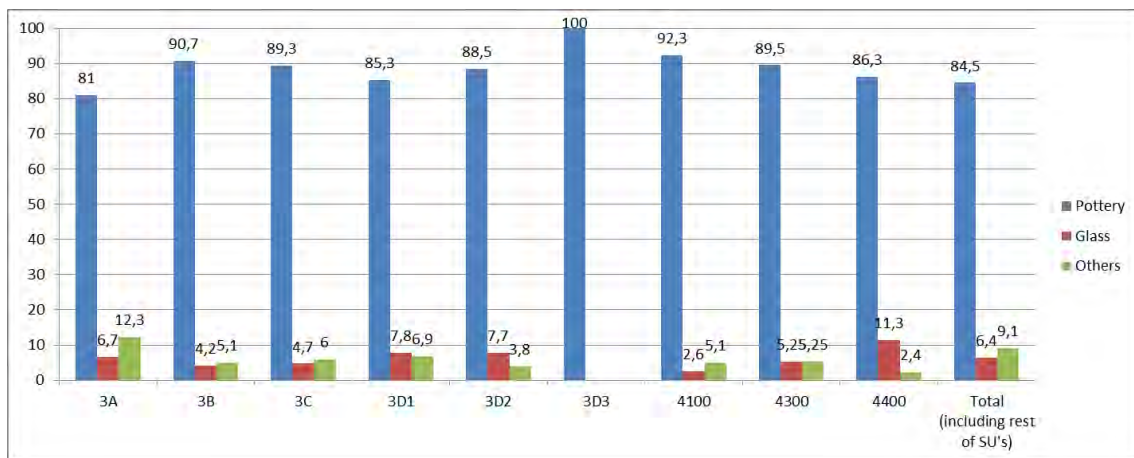
The table above summarizes all the artifacts recovered during the 2020 excavation and shows clearly how materials are concentrated in one of the two rooms excavated (3A), which holds the 47% of the artifacts of the sample. The only other excavated space, 3D1, holds only 5.1% of the pieces so the differences between these two areas probably correspond to different uses of the two rooms. Comparisons with the other areas of the excavation are not reliable, as they are either non excavated rooms (3B, 3D, 3D2 and 3D3) or to full areas as the interior of C-4100 and C-4300, where the different rooms haven't been established yet



Distribution of type of materials in the main spaces of the excavation (total numbers)

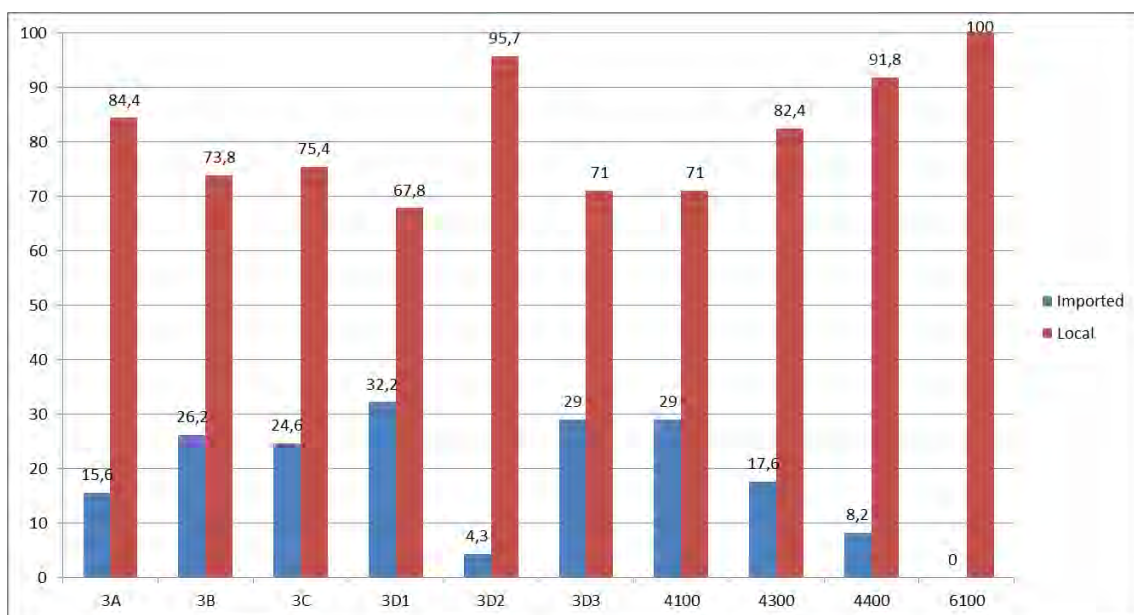
As can be seen from the graphic above, pottery is by far the most represented material in all the relevant spaces (rooms and buildings) and in the total amount of materials (84,6% of the total), and in many cases it is the only material that appears along with bones. The Room that as been more extensively excavated (3A) is logically the one that presents more pottery fragments, but if we consider the percentages (see figure below), pottery represents a similar percentage in all the spaces, with percentages that run from 81% to 100% and most of the spaces being between 81% and 90%. Other objects present more irregular distributions: Room 3A, for example, presents a high percentage of "others" (cowries, metal and stone objects,

etc.) which in this case clearly corresponds to the more exhaustive excavation of this Room. It is assumed that, once the rest of rooms are excavated, the percentages of types of objects will vary and pottery will diminish a bit.



Distribution of type of materials in the main spaces of the excavation (total numbers)

Within the pottery sample, local handmade wares constitute the immense majority of pieces, with imported wares amounting between 0 to 32% and usually ranging from 15% to 30%. These percentages, unfortunately, can't help us to suggest hypotheses about the uses of the different, as most of the rooms and other spaces in the excavation area haven't been excavated and therefore these percentages will likely vary. The room that has yielded a larger number of imported objects (3A) is significantly the one that has one of the lowest percentages of imported materials. Contrarily, the other excavated room (3D1) has the highest percentage of imported materials, although only 100 artifacts have been collected there. These contradictions point that a proper comparison of these percentages will only be possible once the rest of the rooms are fully excavated, and probably introducing more refined approaches such as the use of a Minimal Number of Individuals (NMI) or the comparison of stratigraphic units instead of full rooms. These comparisons will be possible once work progresses in the future campaigns



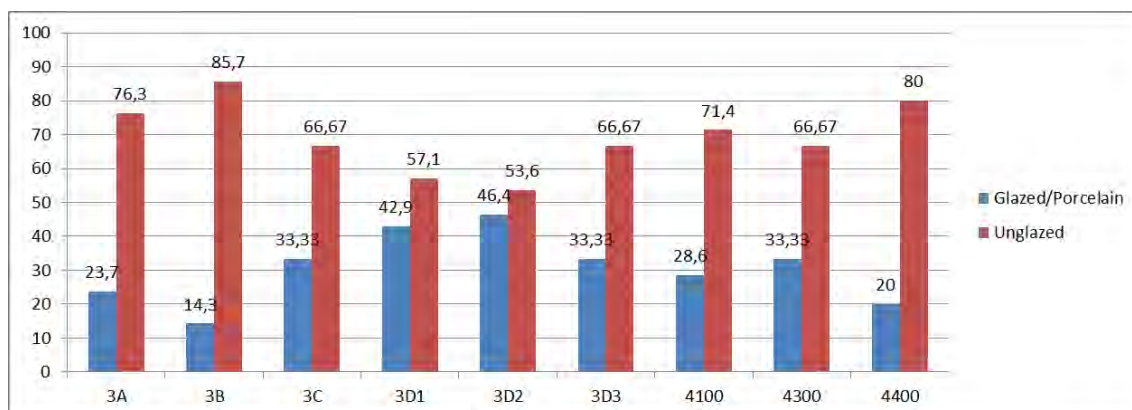
Percentages of imported vs local wares in the main spaces of Fardowsa

Something similar happens with the distribution of the main imported wares in the excavation. The graphic below shows the main types identified in the excavation, which will be described in the following sections of the report. The objective was to determine some chronological patterns (for example, specific areas where older wares could be concentrated), or distributions where a specific ware could be more abundant. However, the results are not conclusive, probably due to the same reasons as with the imported – local wares.



Distribution of imported wares in the main spaces and rooms of the excavation

Finally, another analysis was made to analyze the percentage of glazed vs unglazed imported pottery. The results again are inconclusive, leaving aside a recurrent predominance of the latter.



Percentages of glazed vs unglazed wares

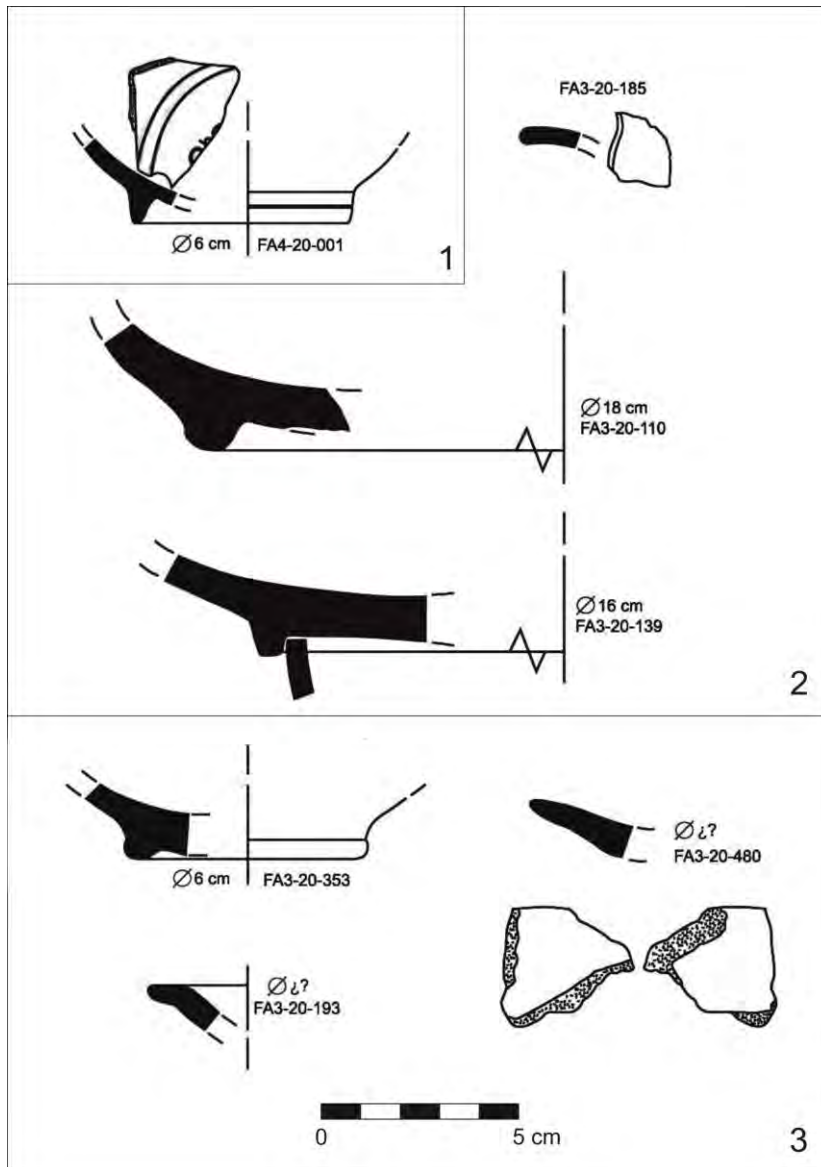
## 6.2. The sample

### 6.2.1 The imported wares

The presence of imported wares in Fardowsa was documented since the first survey conducted by Fauvell-Aymar and his team in 2001 (Fauvelle-Aymar et al 2011) and confirmed in the different surveys and excavations conducted by the Incipit-CSIC during these years. Most of these materials correspond to three broad groups: Asian wares coming from China, the South East and India; glazed wares with a mostly Persian, Middle East or Arabic origin and unglazed, wheel-made pottery of different types made in Arabia. Although the variety of wares found in Fardowsa is remarkable, a close analysis of the sample evidences that there was an especially common group of imported wares, while the rest appear just occasionally throughout the site. With some minor exceptions, the imported wares in Fardowsa correspond to small objects –bowls, plates- used for the consumption of food and also probably in a symbolic display of wealth; while local, hand made pottery was used for cooking and storing.

#### Asian wares

Asian imported wares are abundant in Fardowsa, and were documented since the 2016 survey where a significant number of Chinese celadon and Blue and White porcelains were recovered (González-Ruibal et al 2017: 159). They are also abundant in context C-3000 where they have been found in four of the different rooms, and less abundant in C-4000, where only five fragments have been found so far (although this could be explained due to the superficial excavation conducted in C-4100). In this group we include Chinese celadon, Blue and White porcelain, several fragments of Martaban stoneware and a number of small fragments of red slip pottery which could correspond to Indian Red Slip Ware.

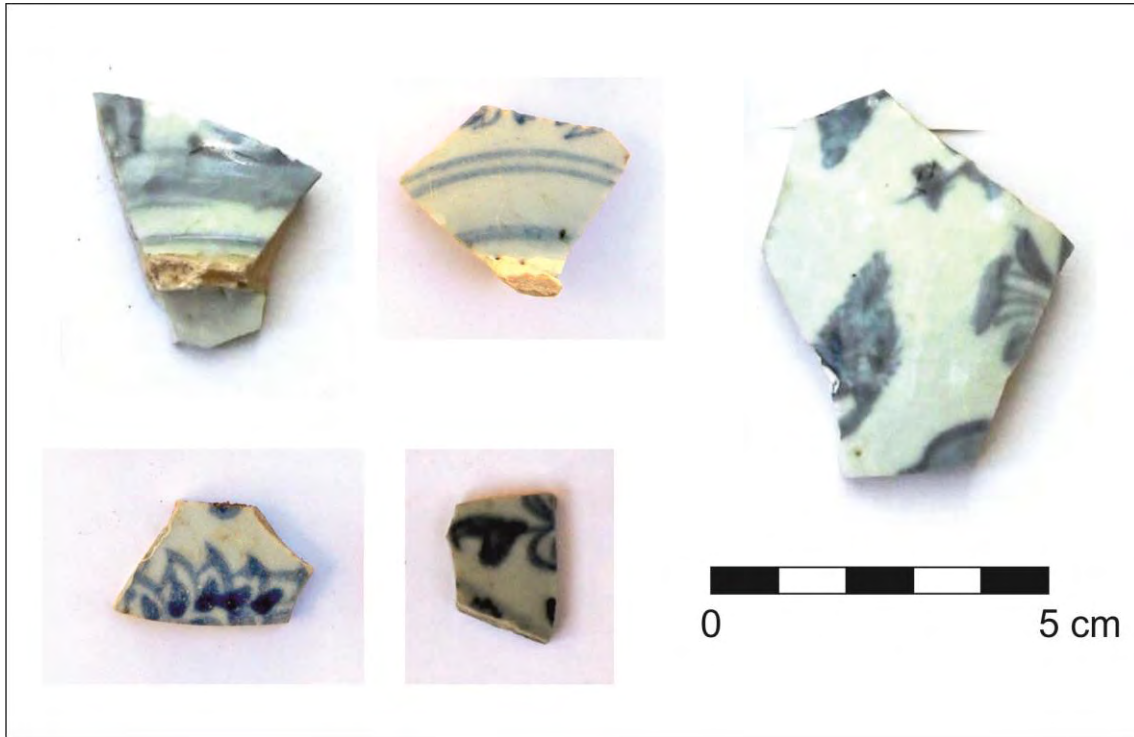


Asian and glazed pieces found in Fardowsa 1. Blue and White ware 3. Celadon 3. Glazed pottery

Blue and White porcelain is the most common Asian ware found in the excavation (12 fragments), and the one that appears in more contexts and stratigraphic units. In general, the fragments are very small, and with the exception of two bases found in Rooms 3A and 3C, another small base and a rim found at the upper part of the collapse in C-4000 and C-3000, respectively. The fact that most of the fragments Blue and White porcelain appear in the more excavated areas point that they could be underrepresented in the 2020 sample, although its level or fragmentation is remarkable (most of the fragments measure just around one centimeter). In Room 3A where five fragments have been recovered, they appear in different layers and correspond to different pieces.

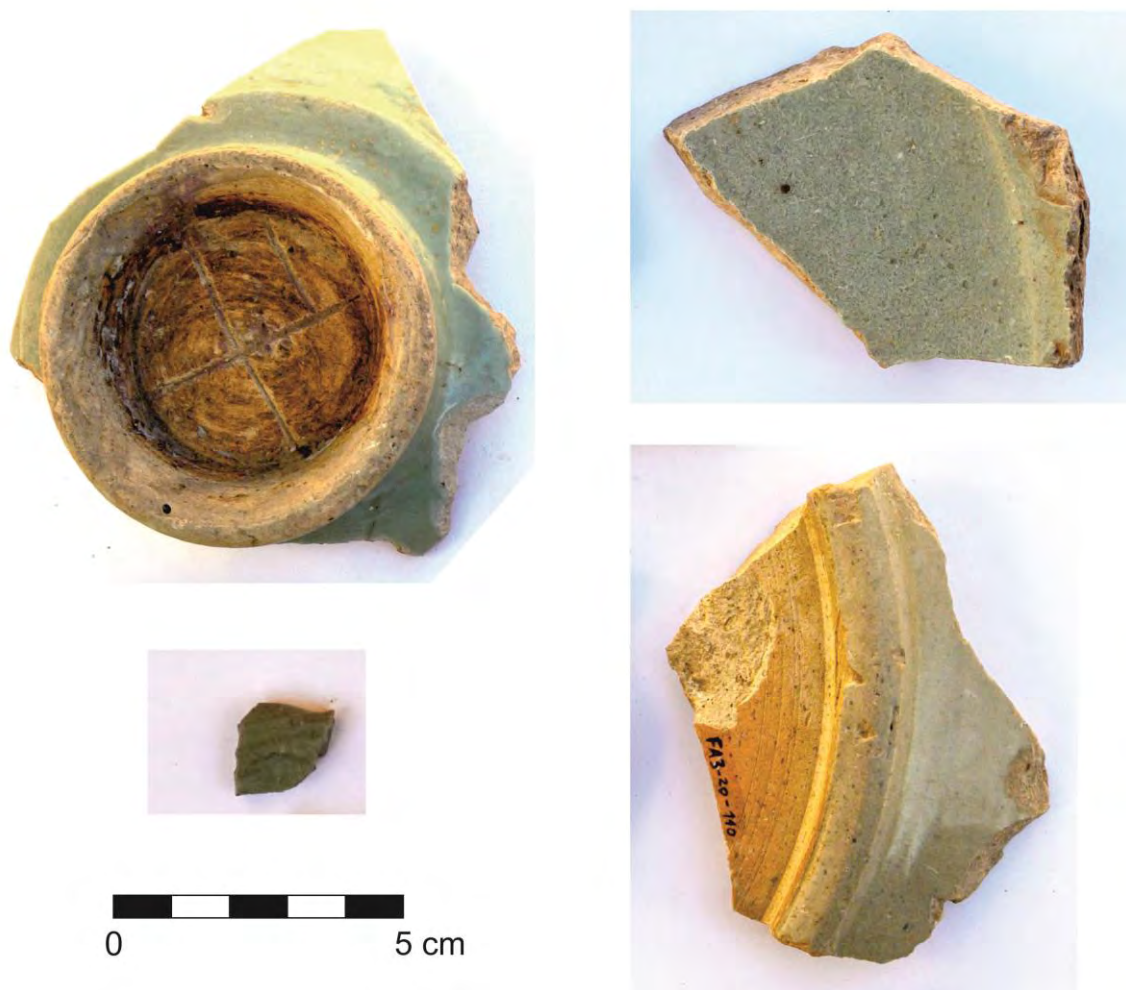
As corresponds to this type of ware, all the pieces correspond to small bowls decorated with floral designs and parallel blue lines. In general, the quality of the porcelain is very good, with very sharp motifs and deep blue color, which would point to an early period for this productions (from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards). Blue and White porcelain is very well documented throughout Somaliland, occurring in many medieval sites, although is less common than celadon and usually appears in big towns such as Fardowsa or Zeila (González-

Ruibal et al 2017: 139-140) or coastal trading outposts (González-Ruibal and Torres 2018: 7-9). Given its chronology, its appearance coincides with the end of the Sultanate of Adal (1415-1577) and the severe disruption of the trading routes in the Red Sea. The presence of this ware in Fardowsa, therefore, would be indicating the last stages of the site, at least with its original function as a town.



Chinese Blue and White porcelain

Celadon (Chinese light green glazed ware) is, on the contrary, much more abundant and widespread throughout Somaliland and has been found in almost all the sites surveyed by the Incipit-CSIC team (González-Ruibal et al 2017, González-Ruibal and Torres 2018). Its presence is not limited to the coastal outposts of trading towns, it has been documented in almost all the settlements in the interior regardless of their size (Curle 1937, Torres 2018). With a chronology that reaches the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries, it is to some extent the Asian pottery *per excellence* of the medieval period in Somaliland. In Fardowsa more than 20 fragments have been found so far in the different surveys and excavations, usually bowls of medium size but also some bigger containers with the based unglazed. During the 2020 excavation, nine fragments were recovered, most of them again in C-3000, although the better preserved one –the base of a bowl- was found in C-4000 and has a potter mark on the bottom of the base. The sample is completed with two bases of containers found at Rooms 3C and 3D1 and rim with a wavy, flower-like design common in celadon bowls found at Room 3A. In general, the quality of the glaze and the paste is good. Although the pieces are not diagnostic enough to offer a proper chronology, late celadons tend to have a bluish glaze, while those from the excavation have a green glaze that is characteristic of earlier periods. Therefore, they could be ascribed to a generic 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> chronology.

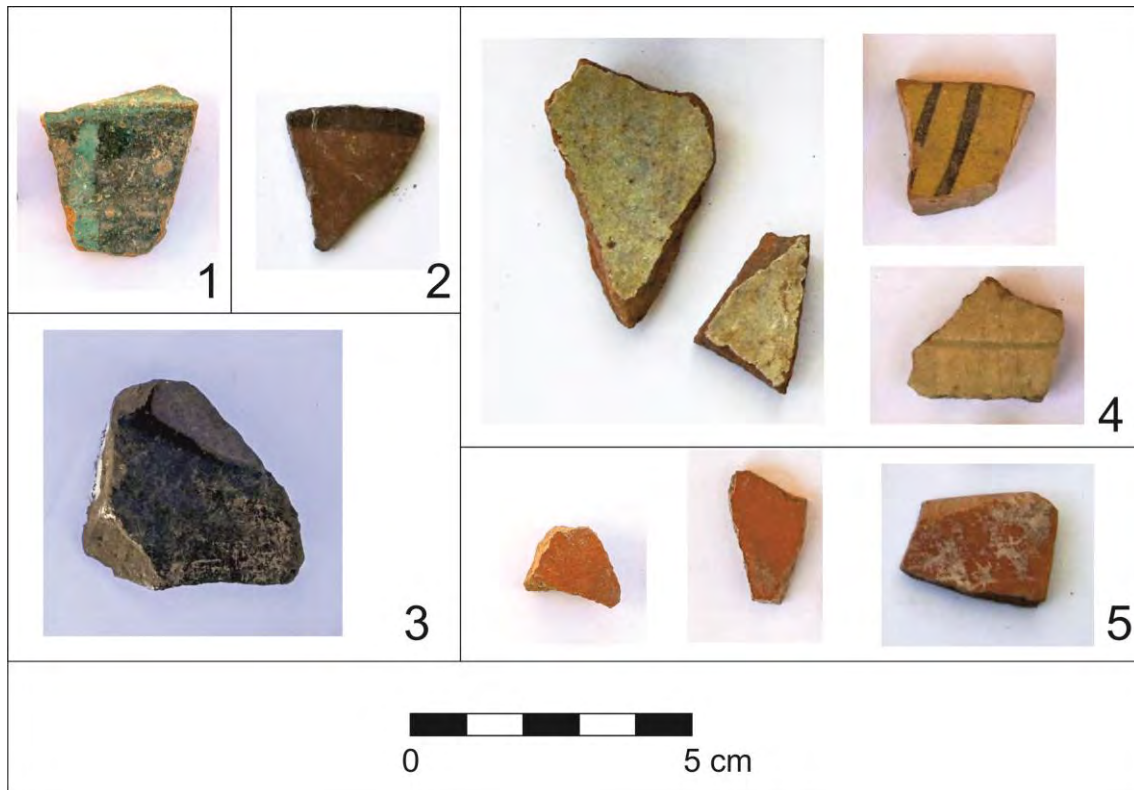


Different types of celadon found during the 2020 excavation

The third type of Asian wares –Martaban or other stonewares- is much worse documented in Somaliland, and so far it has only been documented in Bandar Abbás, Farhad (at the outskirts of Berbera), Siyara (González-Ruibal and Torres 2018: 7-8) and in the surveys of A.T. Curle in Saad Din (Zeila) now deposited at the British Museum (Catalogue number Af1935,0709.52). In Fardowsa, two fragments of this stoneware have been found, one in the upper layer of C-4000 and another one in the collapse level that covered the test pit C-4400. Unfortunately, both come from very superficial layers and didn't provide any shape, so beyond their presence and the characteristics of their varnish and paste not much can be said. The fragment found in the superficial level of C-4000 had a dark brown varnish and a light brown paste, while the one at C-4400 had a black varnish of excellent quality and a dark grey paste.

The sample of Asian wares is completed with three small fragments which could correspond to the so-called Indian Red Slip Ware (IRSW), a common pottery found at coastal settlements such as Bender Abbás (González-Ruibal et al 2017: 143) and Siyara (González-Ruibal and Torres 2018: 8), and very common throughout the Indian Ocean since at least the 7<sup>th</sup> century. These productions are characterized by complex and elaborated rims and a red polish that gives the name to this pottery. Unfortunately, the fragments recovered in Fardowsa (all in C-3000) are undiagnostic and very small, and although they have been classified as IRSW their ascription is not confirmed yet. The chronology of the IRSW reaches the 14<sup>th</sup> century and therefore it would

correspond to an earlier period than the one represented by most of the material culture in Fardowsa. However, the presence of other examples of wares dated in the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries such as the Yemenite Yellow ware make us not to reject the possibility of IRSW present in our sample.



Other imported wares found in Fardowsa 1. Painted underglazed 3. Painted 3. Martaban 4. Yellow Yemenite 5. Indian Red Slip Ware

#### Glazed wares

The sample of glazed potteries collected during the excavation gathers around 50 fragments of different qualities, glazes and styles. In general, the sample shows a smaller variety than could be appreciated in coastal sites such as Farhad or Siyara, with most of the fragments consisting on monochrome glazes. The most abundant type is the so called Speckled glazed pottery, a poor quality, coarse glazed pottery with a color that ranges from turquoise to maroon and a very characteristic mottled surface that gives its name to the ware (Kennet 2004: 42). This pottery is very abundant in Somaliland, appearing regularly in all the sites either coastal or mainland and to some extent the glazed ware that characterizes the late medieval sites in the region. In general, it is very common in East Africa, having been documented in sites such as Manda (Chittick 1984), Shanga (Horton 1996: 293) and Gedi (Kirkman, 1954). The origin of this ware has yet to be properly determined. Originally (Kennet 2004: 42) it was considered to be come from Iran, but in recent studies a Southern Arabian origin has been proposed (Priestman 2013: 368), based on technical similarities and distribution analyses. The proposed chronology for this glazed pottery is the 14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries, a period that fits very well with the rest of materials we have for Fardowsa.



Speckled glazed pottery

Speckled pottery is very common in Fardowsa and about 50 fragments have been collected during the different surveys and excavations. Although little is known about the typology of this important but poorly studied ware, the pieces documented in Fardowsa correspond broadly to two main types: medium or large dishes with a flat everted rim, and medium sized containers with short and flat handles. In the 2020 excavation, Speckled wares are by far the most regularly found throughout the site, appearing in almost every context and room. Two main types have been documented, one with green or dark green glaze and a second one, less abundant, with a dark maroon glaze. Regardless of the color, all the fragments present the poor quality of glazing that characterizes these productions. Unfortunately, almost none of the fragments recovered during the excavation are undiagnostic with the exceptions of a small rim found in Room 3A, a base found in Room 3C and a small handle recovered during the clearing of context C-3000.

Of the rest of the glazed fragments found during the excavation, most of them are small sherds with different shades of green glazes, of which little can be said. According to Priestman (2013:

76) monochrome green glazed wares are common during the 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, but the lack of diagnostic fragments, the long tradition of turquoise and green glazing in the Middle East and the possibility of different local production centers still unknown make impossible a proper identification of these wares. The same can be said about two or three sherds of black and honey glaze whose presence in the sample can be considered anecdotic at this moment of the excavation.



Glazed wares found in Fardowsa

Leaving aside this second group of glazed potteries, there is a small number of pieces that could be properly identified. The first group is a small sample of four fragments of Yemenite Yellow (or Yemenite Mustard) Ware, of which two were collected at Room 3A and another two at Room 3D1. Their presence in the sample, although reduced, it is very significant as this type of pottery has a very well establish chronology which runs from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the early 14<sup>th</sup> centuries (Priestman 2013: 76). Therefore, it is important because it indicates an older chronology for the buildings, and a longer period of occupation of Fardowsa than previously documented. The fact that all the fragments were found in the only two areas of the excavation which were excavated down to the living floors points that this type of materials could be more abundant once the excavation goes on. In Somaliland, Yemenite Yellow Ware is not very common, although it has been found in small quantities in coastal trading posts such as Bandar Abbás (González-Ruibal et al 2017: 144), Siyara or Farhad (World arch 7-8) and inland sites such as Qubuurale (González-Ruibal et al 2017: 161). In Fardowsa, one fragment was collected during the 2016 survey (González-Ruibal et al 2017: 159).

Of a more modern chronology are a number of underglazed painted wares found in the different areas of the excavation. The better preserved is a small bowl found intact in Room 4D, with a motif of wavy green lines coming out of the bottom of the bowl. Unfortunately the glaze –which only covers the interior and the upper part of the external side- was very deteriorated and the original color couldn't be identified. In rooms 3A and 3B, two fragments of “Green on Green” wares were recovered. This type of underglazed painted pottery has been found in coastal sites such as Farhad or Siyara (González-Ruibal and Torres 2018: 11), but it's uncommon inland where it has only been documented in Biyo Gure and Fardowsa and exceptionally, in the Borama area (British Museum, catalogue numbers Af.1935.7-9.68 and Af.1935.7-9.69). In general, underglazed painted wares have chronologies that run from the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (Kennet 2013), although for examples very similar to those of Fardowsa a chronology of the 13<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries have been proposed in Al-Baleed (Oman) (Fusaro and Pavan 2016: 59). In Somaliland, these wares have a proposed chronology of the 14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries (González-Ruibal and Torres 2018: 7-9).



Underglazed painted bowl found at C-4100

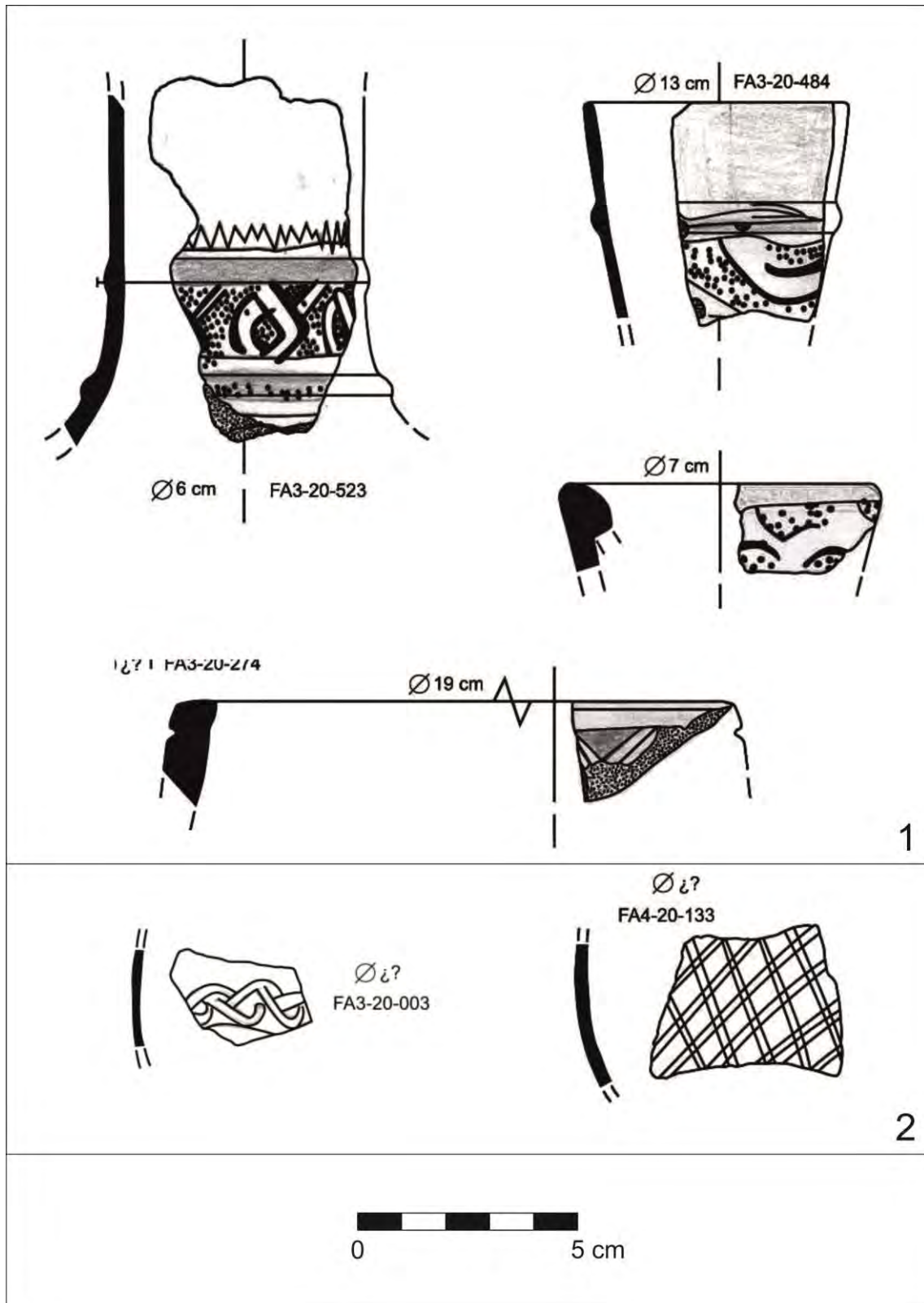
#### Unglazed wares

Although glazed wares are the most common types of pottery found in Somaliland, there are a number of unglazed wares that are regularly documented throughout the region. These wares were usually used as containers to transport goods or to be used as kitchenware. In Fardowsa, two main types have been found so far: a number of wheel-made pieces identified as White Cream wares of Arabian origin and a smaller sample of Thin Grey Ware objects. The first one is a group of wares which share white slip and a white or pink paste, usually with good quality firings and incised or punctuated decorations. They seem to have been widely made throughout Arabia and the Middle East, and used as tableware. In Somaliland, these productions seem to correspond to two basic types. The first one is a group of containers with square or triangular rims, straight walls and wavy or crisscrossed incisions, found in Bandar

Abbás and with very clear parallels in sites like Sharma in Oma (Rougelle 2015) and dated in the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries. The examples of Fardowsa, on the contrary, seem to correspond to a different tradition, sharing the white-cream (sometimes pink) paste and white slip but being much thinner, with a smaller size and in general consisting in globular jars or serving bowls. Decoration is also different combining incised, curved geometric designs which are partially infilled with series of punctuations. These designs are usually framed by horizontal mouldings or wavy and straight incised lines, giving an almost baroque appearance.



White-Cream unglazed ware



Unglazed pottery of Fardowsa 1. White-Cream ware 2. Thin Grey Ware

This type of pottery is relatively common in Somaliland, with some examples documented in sites like Abasa, Siyara or Ceel Dheere. Some examples found in the 1930s in the region around Borama are currently kept at the British Museum (Curle 1937, Catalogue numbers Af1930.4-8,15; Af1935.7-8,56). However, parallels outside are difficult to find: the only one has been found in Al Baleed (Oman), with a very similar decoration to those of Somaliland (Fusaro and

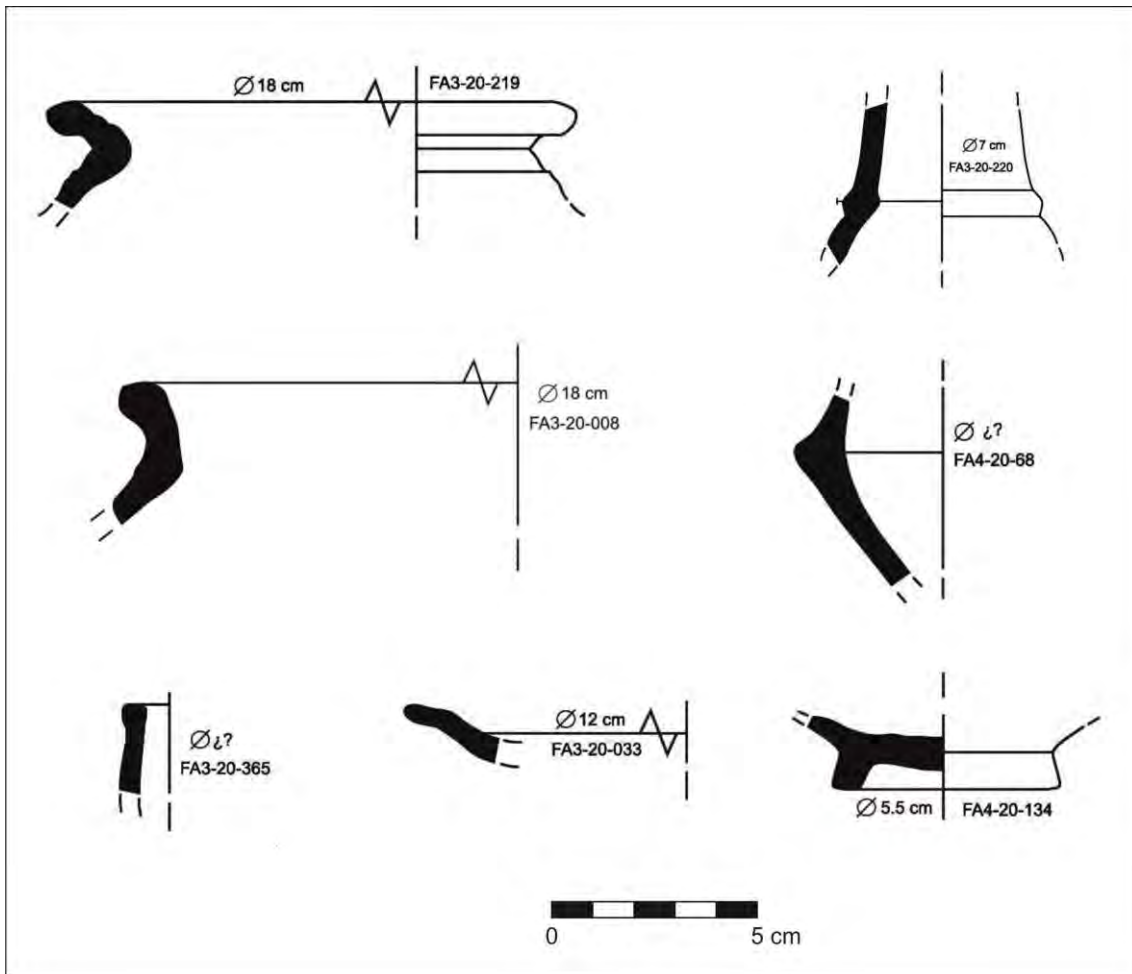
Pavan 2016: 53). The chronology of these ware is not well established in the publication, but a significant part of the materials in the report are very similar to those of Fardowsa and have a similar chronology (14<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries), so that's probably the chronology of this specific type of White Cream ware.

The second type of unglazed imported ware is even less known, consisting on a grey pottery of very thin walls corresponding to small bowls and glasses with incised decorations. This type of pottery has been documented very occasionally throughout Somaliland, always in small quantities. It is remarkably abundant in Fardowsa, where some fragments were collected during the 2016 survey and the excavation of Context C-2000. In addition, fragments have been recorded in Qalcadda (González-Ruibal et al 2017: 150, 152); Siyara, Dameraqad and the region around Borama (Curle 1937: 320). During the 2020 field season, 11 fragments of this ware have been found in contexts C-3000 and C-4000, which is more than in the rest of the Somaliland sites together. Nine out of eleven have been found in C-3000 (Rooms 3A and 3B), with two more recovered in C-4000. The fragments can be organized according to their decorations: 1) floral motifs 2) interlaced patterns and 3) crisscrossed designs. The two first types have been already documented in other sites, while the third one to the moment has only been recorded in Fardowsa. Regarding the chronology of these pieces, all the sites where they have been found have a chronology between 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries, with one of them well dated through radiocarbon in the period of the Sultanate of Adal (González-Ruibal et al 2017: 150).



Different decorative styles of Thin Grey Ware

In addition to these well identified wares, there are some wheel-made sherds that are also imported but haven't been identified with some of the better known wares in the Red Sea or the Indian Ocean. This includes a rim of a polished black bowl and another outward rim without any surface treatment belonging to a container, documented in Room 3A, another container of mid-size with an outward rim and a polished surface found at Room 3B and another body sherd with a brown painted surface, also in Room 3B.



Wheel made pottery

### 6.2.2. The local pottery

The local medieval pottery of Somaliland has traditionally left aside in the archaeological studies on the medieval period of Somaliland. Only recently (González-Ruibal et al 2017, González-Ruibal and Torres 2018, Torres et al 2018) the local productions have been paid more attention with proper description, drawings and photographs. Although a lot of work has still to be done to understand the processes of manufacturing, firing and distribution, the existence of local styles and their changes throughout time. In Somaliland, the presence of abundant imported wares that provided accurate chronologies for the sites has somehow relegated this pottery to a minor role in the analysis of the settlements, forgetting about the important information that this type of pottery can provide about the social and economic life of the medieval communities in the region.



Local hand-made pottery found at Fardowsa (1)

The local pottery in Fardowsa is all hand-made and in general presents a good firing, often with a reduced (dark grey or black) core and a brown, light brown or light grayish color at the walls. The surfaces of the potteries doesn't present areas of differential color which would be interpreted as a result of an open air firing, as happens in many parts of the Horn of Africa (Torres 2017). Therefore the existence of proper kilns can't be dismissed –although none has been found so far. Although the quality of the firing is good and the surfaces are generally very regular, the final aspect of the pieces can look a bit sloppy, with irregular rims and surfaces caused by an excess of pressure on the vessel walls during its preparation.

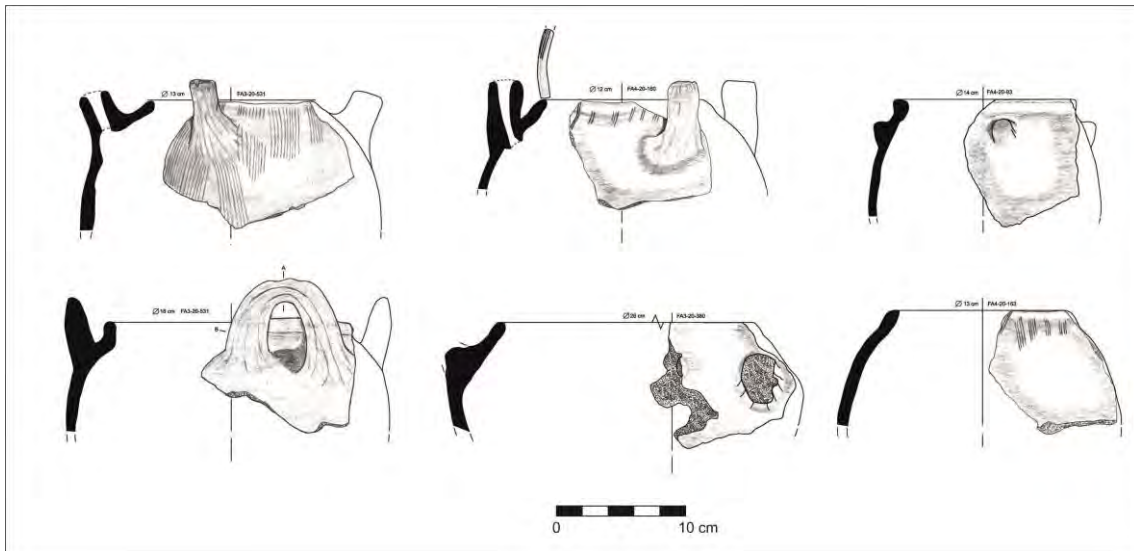


Local handmade pottery found at Fardowsa (2)

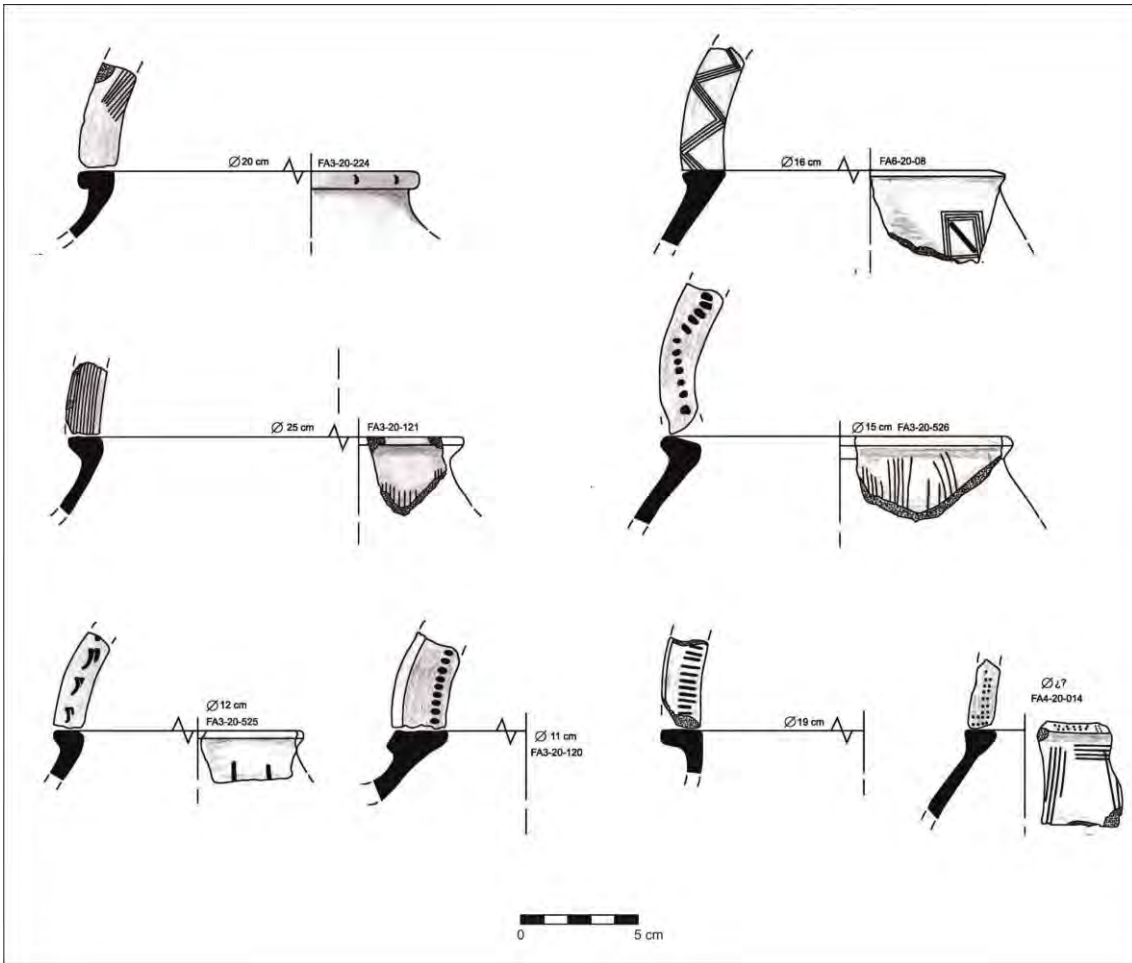
All the pottery found at Fardowsa –and all the other medieval sites investigated so far- can be qualified as coarse wares, something logical if we consider the easy access to imported pottery of good quality that the population of the town had as one of the most important trading towns in the region. These imported wares were systematically used as tableware pieces, and therefore there is not a local tradition of good quality vessels dedicated to the serving and consumption of food, as happens in other regions such as the Christian Abyssinian kingdom during the same period (Torres 2017). The local pottery found in the medieval sites in Somaliland –Fardowsa included- was mostly used for storing, water transportation, cooking and frankincense burning. The sample collected at Fardowsa (1359 objects) is the biggest ever recovered from a medieval settlement in Somaliland and the only one which comes from a well recorded, extensive archaeological context and not from a survey or a test pit. It shares strong similarities with the materials collected in other regions in Somaliland (González-Ruibal et al 2017; Torres et al 2018) in terms of technique, types and decorative techniques, but its better contextualization also allows a better approach to its functionality and its role within the material assemblages of Fardowsa. Finally, excellent state of preservation of the archaeological materials in Fardowsa –including some pieces still in their original position- allows a better estimation of the shapes and sizes of the different vessels.

In general, five main types of potteries have been documented in Fardowsa. All of them have globular shapes, with differences in their rim shapes and orientation, their size and their function. The first type is a mid-sized pottery containers –about 40 cm of height, with short straight necks and round rims. Walls are relatively thick – around 1 cm- and the surfaces are relatively smooth and well finished. The most relevant feature of these vessels is the presence of horizontal handles with triangular section, located in the upper part of the body and rising vertically. This type of handle is well documented both in historical and contemporary pottery

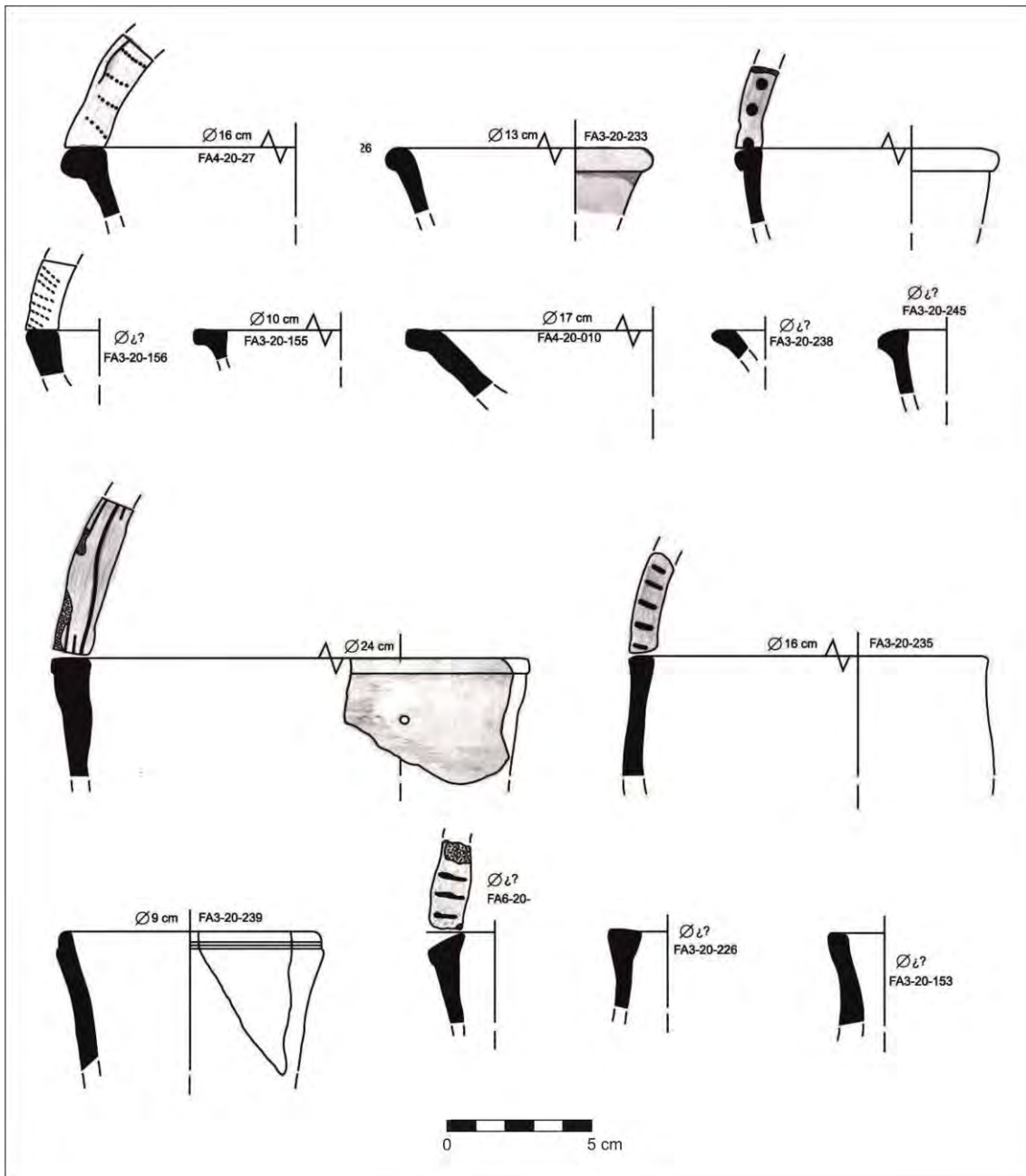
sets throughout the Horn of Africa, and that is normally used to put ropes through them in order to carry the vessel to collect water (Torres 2017). A second, very similar type of vessels presents an identical shape and rim, but does not have handles, presenting a long spout instead. The size of these potteries dismiss them as tableware, their most likely use that of a containers for liquids. This type of spouts is very abundant in the sample: seventeen of them have been found in the different rooms and spaces of C-3000 and C-4000. Regarding the bodies, none of these types have been found complete, so there are no clear evidences about the complete shape and base. A number of mid-size containers have been found still in place, and although they lack the upper part they most likely correspond to these vessels. They have a relatively straight body which enlargers slightly at the bottom, with a flat base.



Globular vessels found at Fardowsa

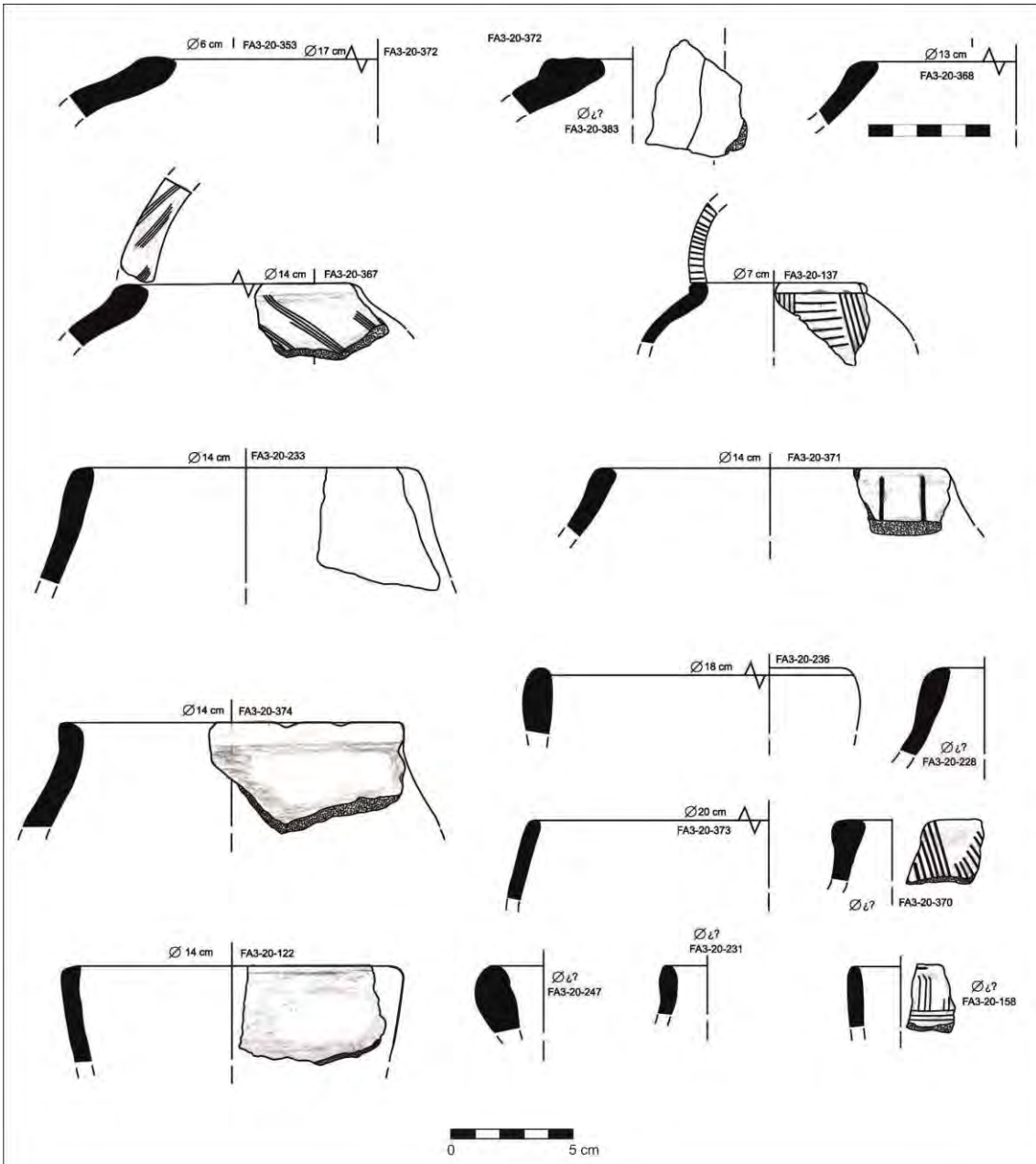


Globular vessels with flat rims

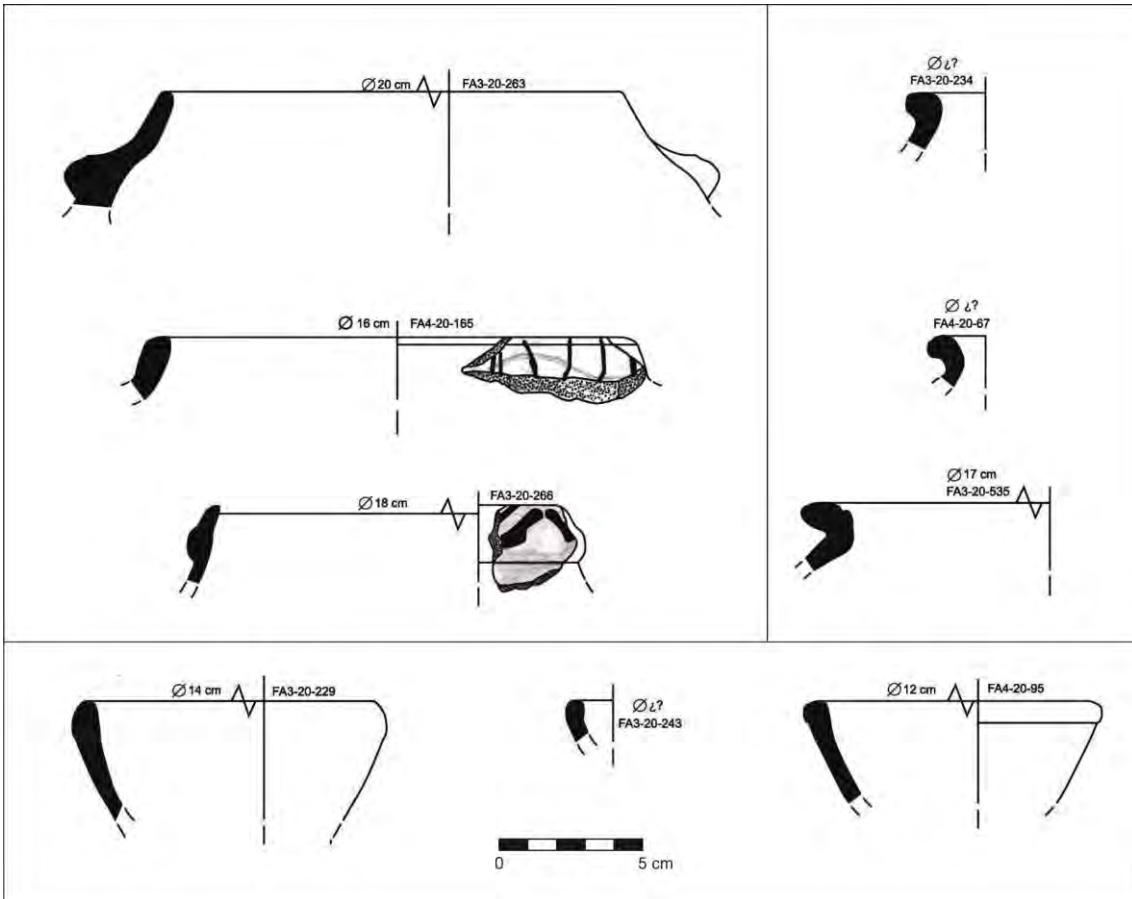


Open (up) and straight shapes of Fardowsa local vessels

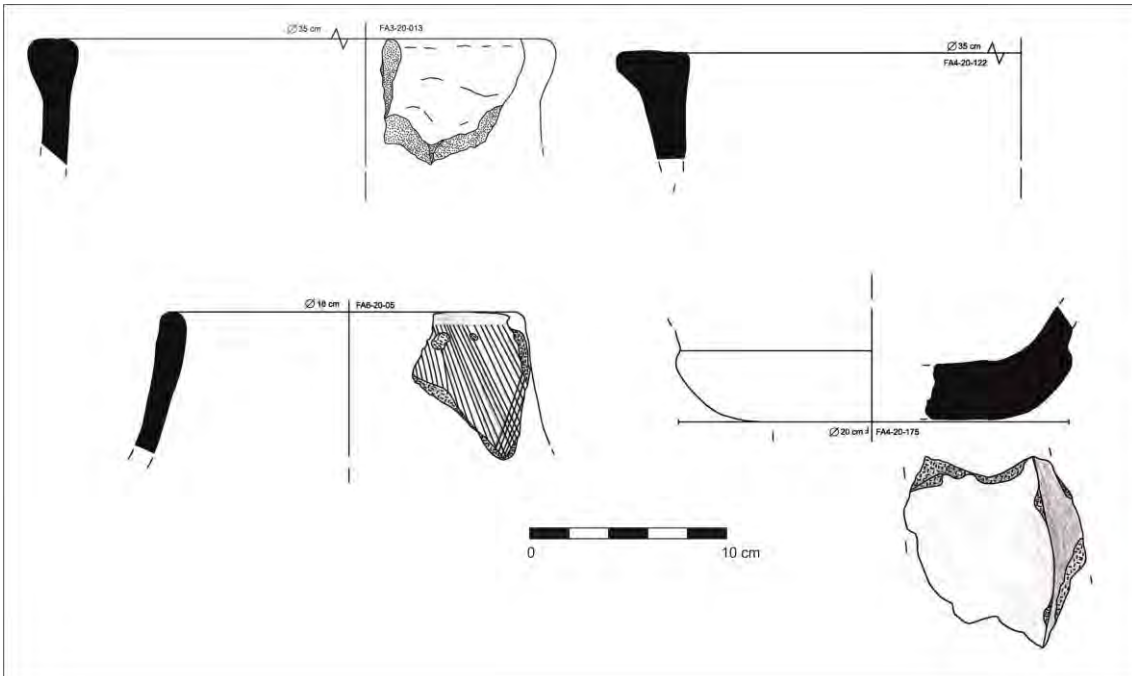
The other two types of vessels documented in Fardowsa are a globular, mid-sized bowl with thinner walls than the previous types. One of them presents a round rim slightly thicker than the walls, while the second one has a very characteristic flat and thick rim, usually decorated with incisions or impressions. These types are very common throughout Somaliland, but at the moment no complete pieces have been found and therefore the exact shape of the type and its base are unknown. The fifth type found in the excavation is a simple type of small and simple censer, with a tall, ring base and low walls. It is also a common piece found in most of the medieval sites in Somaliland, but they are not especially abundant in the excavation: only five have been found in the different contexts and rooms. The sample is completed with a number of globular pieces with short straight necks, similar to types one and two but without handles or spouts: some container with outward rims and some semi-globular bowls, all of them not representative enough to be considered a type in itself.



Mid-sized vessels of local pottery



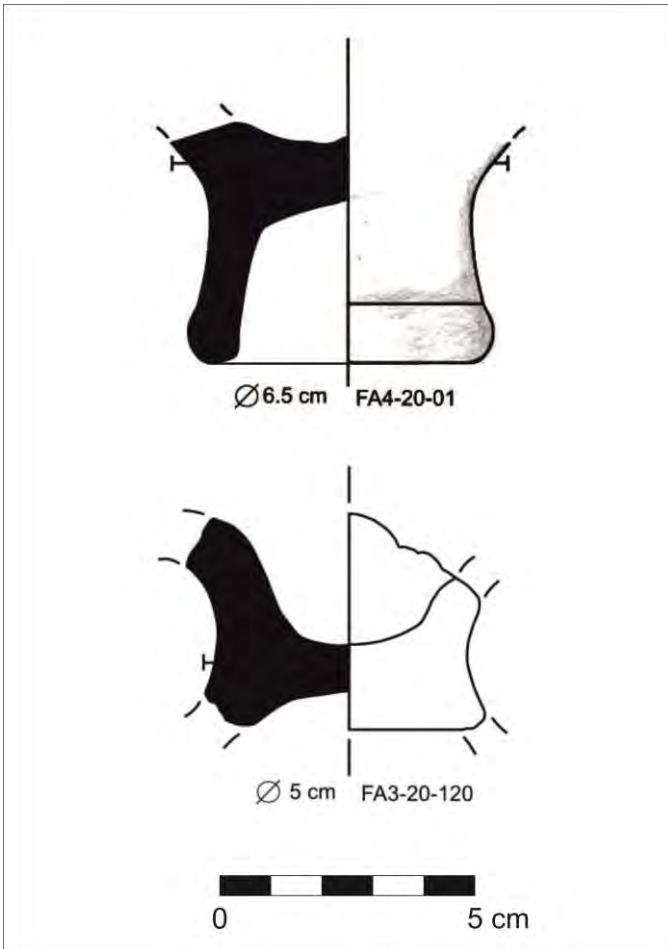
Hand-made vessels documented at Fardowsa



Big containers



Lower part of container found at SU 4114

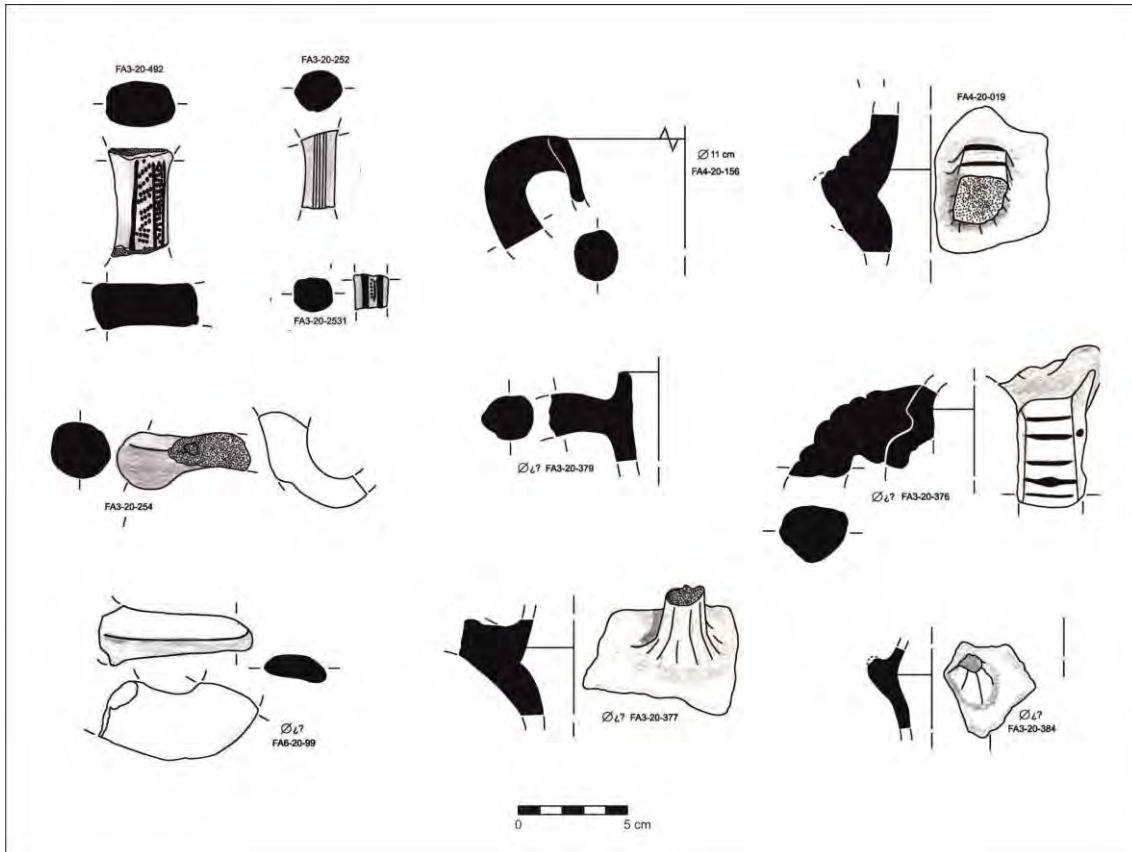


Censer found at Fardowsa

Regarding other elements of the pottery assemblage, there are a number of elements which couldn't be associated to any specific types but are significant in the sample. The first one is the existence of a relevant number of short straight handles (a length of about 10) with a circular section, which could be part of lids, but which have never been recovered attached to the wall of the vessel. Curved vertical handles with a circular section are also common, although again they appear isolated. Some simple, circular knobs have been documented in the sample, but they seem to be decorative and not a suspension element. Not many bases have been recovered in the sample, but most of them seem to be flat, with some ringed bases for small sized vessels.



Types of handles 1. Flat handle with triangular section 2. Vertical handle with oval section 3. Short straight handles with circular section 4. Horizontal handle with circular section



Handles found at Fardowsa

Regarding the decoration, it is very frequent and consists mostly in series of incised parallel lines or punctuations, usually distributed randomly on the neck and the upper part of the body. In bowls with flat rims, incisions and punctuations are placed in lines or zig zag on the upper part of the rim. In addition to these two decorative techniques, the sample of Fardowsa includes examples of deeper, wider incisions; circular impressions; fingernail and finger impressions, clay appliquéés, excisions and grooves. No painted decoration has been found in Fardowsa, or in any other medieval settlement so far. In that sense, Fardowsa seems to have a wider array of decorative resources than found in other areas such as the region of Borama (Torres et al 2018: 33).



Decoration at the upper part of hand-made local bowls



Decorative styles of Fardowsa 1. Punctuations 2. Deep groves 3. Series of parallel incised lines

### 6.2.3. The glass

After pottery, glass is the most abundant imported object documented in Somaliland, being omnipresent in all the archaeological sites documented so far by the Incipit-CSIC team regardless of their chronology and geographical position. Its weight and volume made of them an easy transportable object which according to the numbers, was in highly demand in Somaliland. Most of the glass found for the medieval period –and by extension, in Fardowsa– corresponds to two types of objects: small perfume bottles or phials and glass bangles from different types and colors. During the 2020 excavation, about 80 fragments of glass (and hundreds of tiny shards) and 50 were recovered, a remarkable sample because its quantity and coherence. In general, the pieces are identical to those found in great numbers in coastal sites like Zeila, Siyara o Farhad (González-Ruibal et al 2017: 139-140, González-Ruibal and Torres 2018: 7-8).

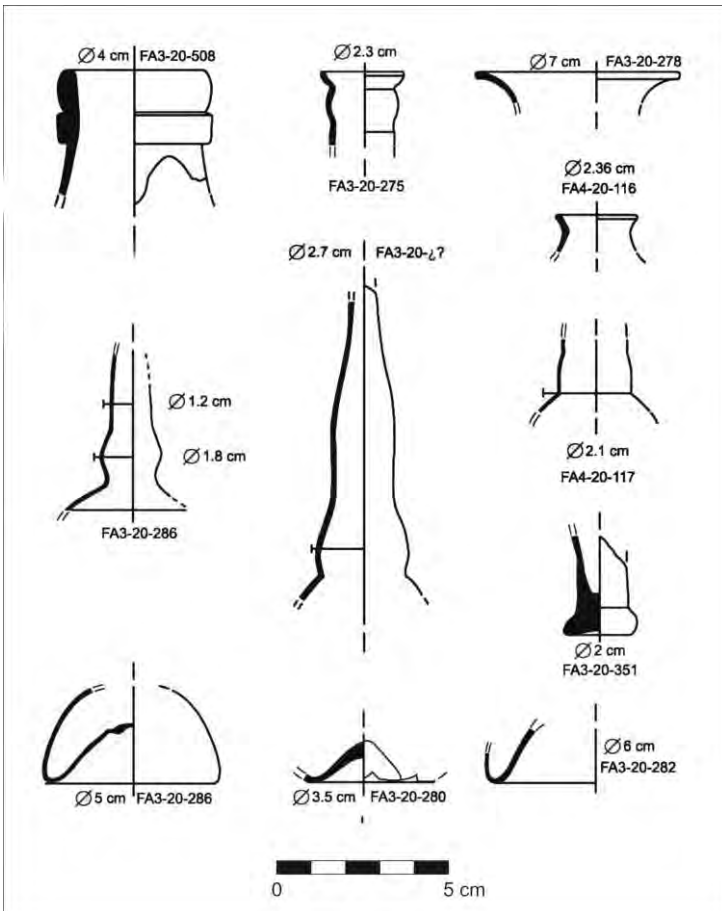
Glass vessels are overwhelmingly green, although honey, white, blue and black examples have also been found. With one exception they are all plain and lack decoration. Unfortunately the fragments are very small and not many rims or bases have been recovered in the sample. The better preserved pieces are those found at Room 3A, consisting in bottles of slightly flaring or thickened rims. The complete body of two bottles with a characteristic rounded swelling, thinning neck and kick-up bases have been found, similar to examples found in Zeila (González-Ruibal et al 2017: 139). Most of the rest of the diagnostic fragments in the site correspond to a kick-up bases, with the exception of a flat base found in the street between C-4100 and C-4300. A bottle with a straight rim and a grooved neck found in Room 3B has probably an Ottoman origin and a white fragment of glass with a moulding was found during the cleaning of C-4000.



Glass bottle found at Room 3A



Fragment of Glass Bottle found at 3A



Glass pieces

As mentioned before, 50 bracelets have been found during the excavation, 47 of them in the C-3000 and 37 in Room A. They can be grouped in three main groups: plain bracelets with a triangular section, usually black although some blue and honey examples have been also documented. They are by far the most numerous group totaling 66% of the total. Of this, 55% have a decoration consisting in fingernail impressions along the upper part (in one case, they are circular impressions). A second group has threads of different colors inserted in the main wire (usually black, dark blue or green), sometimes spiraled and in some other cases they have small prunts on the exterior of the bangle. The more common colors are yellow, red and white. They usually have a triangular or a beveled-triangular section. They are the second more numerous group (13), representing the 26% of the sample. All these bangles are small (about 0.5 cm of width), with the exception of a plain bracelet of about 2 cm of width, with a black core and yellow, brown and white threads setting a geometric design. Finally, a small number of spiraled bangles (4, the 8% of the sample) have been collected, three of them in Room 3A and one more in Room 3B. These bangles are made twisting several wires of different colors (Meyer 1992: 92). In three of them the wires protrude from the core of the bracelet, while a fourth one has the surface of the bangle smooth. One of the bangles doesn't have a circular but undulated shape. This type of spiraled bangles are very rare in Somaliland, with the other only examples documented so far in Siyara.



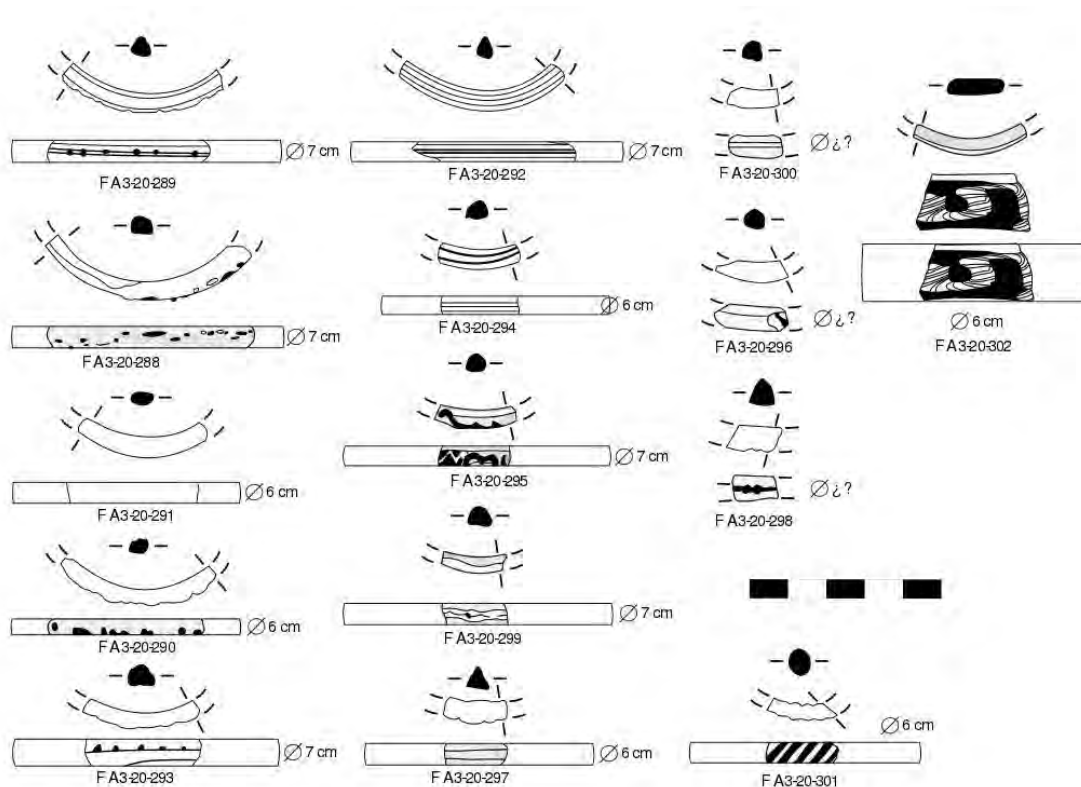
Bangles found at 3A



Bangles at 3A



Flat polychrome bangle



Bangles types found during the 2020 excavation

Regarding the chronology and origin of the bangles, all the types found in Fardowsa probably come from Egypt and start in the Mamluk period (13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries), expanding throughout Arabia, India and Africa and lasting at least until the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The main difference with the corpora known for the Red Sea (Boulougne and Hardy-Guilbert 2009, Lester 1996, Meyer 1992) is the presence of fingernail impressions on plain bangles in Fardowsa, a type of decoration which we haven't documented in sites with an earlier chronology. The bangles of Fardowsa are also radically different from those found in 19<sup>th</sup> century sites in Somaliland, and therefore and considering the rest of materials from the excavation, a chronology between the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> centuries could be reasonable.

#### 6.2.4. The small finds

The lack of comprehensive publications of excavation results is one of the main problems of the medieval archaeology in Somaliland, especially in what concerns to small objects that appear sporadically and are recurrently understudied. Although small finds of metal, stone or other materials are cited in articles, they usually lack descriptions, proper contextualization and photographs/drawings. The focus put on imported pottery and glass –easier to identify and contextualize- has somehow left aside other important objects which complement our understanding of the materiality of the inhabitants of Somaliland. If we consider that another relevant percentage of the material culture of these groups –especially nomadic populations- was made with perishable materials, then we will have an idea of how partial is our knowledge of the material culture of the medieval period. In that sense, the well-preserved levels of Fardowsa have yielded a number of very interesting objects that offer us a more complex and complete of the town dwellers.

## Metalwork

Metal objects are scarce in Somaliland towns, most of them corresponding to coins. Curle provides the largest list of pieces including six coins, several ring fragments, an iron barbed arrowhead and a copper bar (Curle 1937: 322). Fauvelle-Aymar et al (2011: 42) refers to an Arab coin collected in Fardowsa, and the Incipit-CSIC team documented a fragment of a bronze bracelet in a small test pit conducted in 2018 in the medieval site of Abassa (Torres et al 2018: 90). Considering this scanty sample, the materials found in Fardowsa constitute a remarkable assemblage due to their singularity and state of preservation. Seven objects have been found during the 2020 excavation, not a large quantity. However, six of them have been found in the only room fully excavated during the campaign (3A), which makes highly probable that this number will be significantly increased in future seasons. Two of them were iron pieces, the first one a fragment of a small plaque of 3.1 cm by 2.5 cm and the second one a ring-like implement (maybe a 8-like chain link) of 1.6 cm of diameter. These two objects were found in SU 3014, immediately under the collapse. Leaving aside the materials found at Room 3, only another fragment of iron was found in the excavation, on the upper level of C-4000. It's a bent strip of iron of 10 cm of length and 1.2 cm of width, with an undetermined function. In the same layer was recovered the only fragment of slag documented in the excavation.



Iron objects 1. Slag

Much more interesting are the set of pieces found in the lower levels (SU 3021 and SU 3022) corresponding to the late moments of occupation of the building. The first object is a tin or copper wire coiled in a 8-shape, perfectly preserved of about 9 cm of length and 3.4 cm of width. The wire width is 0.4 cm. Although the total length of the wire if uncoiled cannot be estimated, it was likely several meters long, and the wire was probably related to some craftwork –maybe wire or pendants or amulet-case like the one found very close to the wire. This is a small cylindrical case with rounded sides (3.8 cm by 1.5 cm) which was used to hold a scroll or piece of paper with a Quran verse (taweez). On the upper part of the case, a small tube parallel to the case has been placed to run a wire or a cord through it. The taweez is a

Muslim term that designs an amulet and which can be applied to different objects, including verses written on different materials and kept in cases of leather or metal, as it is the case. So far, we haven't been able to find archaeological parallels to our example, although it's one of the most common designs which can be found in nearby areas such as Yemen or Sudan.



Copper-tin wire



Islamic amulet (taweez)



19<sup>th</sup> century photograph of Somali women wearing Taweez

The third object found in the occupation levels of Room 3A is a small (2.2 cm by 1.9 cm) bronze buckle with a dented design. The sample of metal objects in this room is completed with a big (3.5 cm of diameter) bronze ring-like earring, which has a slight enlargement in one of the sides. The wire of the earring is 0.2 cm. For the moment, we haven't been able to parallels for any of these pieces.



Bronze buckle of a belt



Bronze earring

## Beads

Beads are scarce in Fardowsa: so far only four have been found in the excavation, all of them in the Room 3A. Three of them correspond to coral tubes reused as beads with dimensions of 1.4 cm by 0.27 cm; 0.9 cm by 0.27 cm and 0.9 and 0.35 cm. The fourth one is a small bead made of rock crystal with a hexagonal shape and dimensions of 1.1 cm by 1.35 cm. An identical bead was found during the 2016 campaign in the context C-1000 (González-Ruibal et al 2017: 157).



Beads found at Fardowsa: coral (left), crystal (center) and crystal found in 2016 (right)

## Cowries

116 cowries and other shells have been found during the 2020 excavation, a very high number considering that only two rooms were actually dug to the living floors. Of these cowries, 62 (53.4%) were cropped to which we should add 7 halves for a total of 59.6% of the sample. 41 cowries were found intact (35.4%). Finally, 6 shells of a type unidentified yet were also located throughout the site.

Although the presence of cowries which is a very common fact in most of the sites in Somaliland and was well documented in the previous surveys and excavations in Fardowsa (González-Ruibal et al 2017: 157, 159), the materials found in 2020 provide some bits of information about the use, management and context of these pieces. First of all, as it was already noted in 2016, the abundant presence of unpierced cowries proves that they were imported intact and worked in place (González-Ruibal et al 2017: 159). More interestingly, there are clear patterns of distribution of the cowries within the site. In Room A, 67 out of the 110 cowries have been found, 61% of the total and 80% of the pierced ones. The accumulation of pierced cowries suggest that they could have been part of the decoration of an object made with a perishable material (gourd, wood, vegetal fibers) to which the cowries were tied. This decorative use of the cowries is a common practice throughout Africa and is well attested in ethnographic reports that document the material culture of the Somali in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. (Puccioni 1936: plate VII). Alternatively, Room 3A could have been used as a space to pierce and prepare cowries, or these cowries could have been kept in a bag which was later decomposed.



Cropped and whole cowries found at Room 3A. The two at the upper left are other types of shells



Somali wedding Gourd decorated with cowries

Regarding the distribution of the cowries throughout the site, an overwhelming proportion of the cowries have been found at context C-3000 (72%). However, this distribution is probably inaccurate: if we consider that 80% of the cowries of C-3000 have appeared in Room 3A, the only one fully excavated down to the living floor, it is highly likely that as the excavation progresses in future campaigns and more rooms are excavated the percentages will change significantly. With regard to the unpierced cowries, they are concentrated in two very specific areas of the site: Room 3A (12, 30%) and the test pit C-6100 (17, 41%).

### Stone objects

Although different types of stones are a recurrently present in Somaliland medieval sites, their study is usually neglected and these objects are simply listed in the articles (Curle 1937: 322). Broadly speaking, stone objects could be classified in four different types: imported vessels made of softstones, querns and handstones made of volcanic stones, Lithic tools made of flint and quartz and gemstones. Of these four types, all but softstone objects have been documented in Fardowsa, something strange considering that the amount of imported wares present in the site. Softstones objects are very common in Somaliland, and have been reported both in coastal posts such as Siyara (González-Ruibal and Torres 2018: 8) or Bender Abbás (González-Ruibal et al 2017: 143) and in the inland settlements (Torres et al 2018: 33). Probably the absence of these objects which come from Arabia in Fardowsa is a just a simple accident.

Querns and hand-stones are relatively common in the site, made of different types of volcanic stones. In C-3000, one fragment of a rotatory quern was found in Room 3A, and another fragment of a hand stone was identified during the clearing of the surface level. The most interesting piece was a complete, large and very heavy saddle quern found in Room 3B, unfortunately not in its original position. In C-4000, two fragments of rotatory querns and a hand stone were found during the clearing of the upper part of the collapse level. As mentioned before, none of the pieces have been found in their original position. However, most of the areas which have been interpreted as production spaces (such as the rooms 3D and 4D and the courtyard) have not been excavated yet, and therefore is likely that some of these objects will appear *in situ*, as happened in 2016 during the excavation of C-2000 (Azania 158). At this moment, it is impossible to know if the existence of different models of querns in the same house was due to their use for different products or had any other reasons.



Quern found at Room 3B



Rotatory querns (right) and stone hand for a quern (lower left)

Regarding lithic tools, it is a type of object whose study has usually been neglected in the archaeological publications, although they are common in medieval settlements (Curle 1937 323, Torres et al 2018: 33). In Fardowsa, 13 flint pieces have been found, all of them flakes or blades of small size (2-4 cm) some of them retouched. 10 out of the 13 (77%) of the pieces have been found in Room 3A. The sample of stone pieces is completed with a hololithic ring made of a red hardstone (carnelian?). This type of rings are very common in Islamic contexts since the earlier periods of Islam to the Ottoman period, although is the first one to be documented in an archaeological context in Somaliland. Carnelian objects have been found so far only in Bender Abbás a small square cabochon with a probable Gujarat origin (González-Ruibal et al 2017: 143).



Lithic tools



Hololithic ring (carnelian?)



Persian hololithic ring made of carnelian (British Museum)

### Ostrich eggshells

Ostrich eggshells a common presence in archaeological sites in Somaliland since at least the Neolithic, although they usually appear in low quantities. In medieval settlements, they have been found in all the sites investigated by Curle in the 1930s (1937: 323), but the fragments found in Fardowsa are the first ones found by the Incipit-CSIC team. They consist on three small fragments found in the living floor of Room 3A



Ostrich eggshell fragments

### 6.2.5. Faunal remains

The 2016 excavation in Fardowsa yielded a remarkable amount of bones which are now starting to shed some light on the economic life of the populations of this town (Yravedra and Estaca 2016). These data showed a predominance of caprines in the sample, with a low representativeness of camels –an animal consumed only occasionally and in ritual occasions– and wild animals. The results of the 2020 excavation, although still in progress, add some layers of complexity to this interpretation, pointing to the existence of privileged groups within Fardowsa with a better access to meat and to the consumption of prestigious and expensive animals such as the camel.



Bones found at Fardowsa



Shoulder plate with cutting marks

The amount of bones documented in the different areas of the excavation has been outstanding, especially in the context C-4400 where tens of kilos of animals have been recovered in a small area interpreted as a refusal pit. Although the animal bones are currently under study and not much can be said about them, it is evident that along with the caprines which are represented everywhere throughout the site, camels are also documented in a much higher proportion than in the other areas excavated in 2016. Camel bones are especially

abundant in the C-4400 refuse pit, along with some examples of gazelles. Although no conclusions can be presented at this moment, the presence of camel, an expensive animal, would reinforce the interpretation of the compound excavated in 2020 as a wealthy, elite household transmitted by the size of the buildings or the amount and quality of imported materials collected during the excavation.

#### 6.2.6. Samples

During the excavation a number of samples were collected to address specific questions about the chronology and uses of the building. In Room 3A, samples of charcoals were collected in the excavated living floor (SU's 3021 and 3022) and in each of the sediments alternating with living floors documented in the test pit at northwestern corner of the room (SU's 3031, 3033 and 3036). Charcoal samples were also collected at the refuse pit in context C-4400 (SU 4405). All these samples were collected to conduct radiocarbon analyses.

Soil samples were collected in the SU's 3021 and 3022, which constitute the first living floor of Room 3A, and in Room 4D (SU 4106), the open space of C-4000. These samples can potentially provide information about the uses of the floors. Finally in Context C-6100 two columns of samples were conducted on the west profile. The first one (with samples every 15 cm) was meant to recover pollen and seed samples to analyze the environmental changes in Fardowsa during its existence. The second one, continuous collecting samples every five cm or every time a new stratigraphic unit was documented on the profile. This second column was meant for geochemical analyses, in order to study the different occupations of the courtyard during its use. Additionally, both samples can provide seeds and charcoals than can be studied or dated through radiocarbon.



Pollen columns collected at Test pit 6100

### 6.2.7. Chronological and functional analyses

Chronologically speaking, the excavated buildings shows a very coherent sample of materials which places them in the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries, a horizon defined by imported wares such as Celadon, Blue and White porcelain and Speckled pottery, a real chronological marker for the sites occupied during the so-called Sultanate of Adal period (1415-1577). The Chinese porcelain would therefore mark the final stages of the occupation of the site. This information is coherent with the materials gathered during the excavations conducted in 2016 and the different surveys conducted at the site since 2015.

However, there are some clear material evidences that Fardowsa was occupied before: the identification of several Yellow Yemenite fragments (with a chronology of the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries) in the C-3000 building points to a longer occupation of the site, reinforced by the identification during a survey of a fragment of a sgraffiato ware with an even older chronology of the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries). This evidence is very coherent with the identification of several floors at the test pit to the northwest of Room 3A, which prove a continued use of the building of which the 16<sup>th</sup> century occupation would be the last. The radiocarbon dating of these floors will provide a more accurate framework for the older occupation of Fardowsa, which seems logical considering the strategic position of the town.

Regarding the functionality of the different spaces in the buildings and the courtyard, as stated in the description of the sample the distribution of archaeological materials it is almost impossible to determine different functional areas from the analysis of the types of objects found in them. There seems to be a radical difference of material culture between the two excavated spaces (3A and 3D1), with the first one having an astonishing variety and ten times the number of objects found to the east. These differences seem to point to a different functional use for both rooms, with 3A being a living space and 3D1 an open space where manufacturing or processing activities could take place.

In general, a proper analysis of the sample, beyond the identification of the different types of wares and their chronological context; requires the complete excavation of the rooms and a more refined analysis of the sample. The rich material culture found in Fardowsa, in a sealed and well preserved context, will undoubtedly provide an very accurate and well defined

## 7. Final remarks

The excavation conducted in Fardowsa has provided an incredible set of data which in many aspects constitute a revolution in the way medieval archaeology has been conceived in Somaliland. It is not only the first time that an excavation of this scale is planned in Somaliland, and the first time that research is focused not just on a building but on a whole area including buildings and the spaces among them. Until now, medieval settlements in Somaliland were understood as a disarray of houses scattered without any traces of urbanism. The excavation of Fardowsa has proved the existence of a complex set of fences, accessory buildings and floors which connected the houses and will help us to rethink about the spatial organization of Fardowsa and other medieval settlements. Moreover, the orientation and distribution of the buildings excavated in Fardowsa reflects the existence of some traces of urbanism in the cities, defining private and public spaces and different functional areas.

The excavation of the buildings C-3000 and C-4000 is also exceptional because it has documented two houses uncommonly large (the biggest documented so far in medieval Somaliland). The size of the two houses and its complex and identical distribution points to the existence of wealthy elites who were able to erect a full compound of buildings for their family. This existence of elites had been so far undetected in the archaeological record, and raises interesting questions about the poorly known medieval society in Somaliland during the Sultanates of Ifat and Adal.

The ascription of the houses to a wealthy family is confirmed by the materials found in the different rooms and spaces, which show an easy and regular access to imported materials, logical considering the location of Fardowsa. The amount and quality of imported materials found in the buildings shows, however, a high purchasing power which looks above the average of a normal family. This hypothesis is also supported by the preliminary analysis of the bones found at the different dump pits and refusal areas, which correspond to camels (a prestigious and very expensive animal only consumed in ritual ceremonies or feasts) or young specimens of ovicaprines, again expensive animals. All this evidence shows that the area excavated during the 2020 campaign corresponded to the household of a wealthy family, probably related to trade, which probably had a high social status in Fardowsa.

The detailed analysis of all the information gathered during this month of work is just starting, but the combination of analysis of soil samples, faunal remains, and the detailed studies of imported wares and specific objects such as the amulet found at 3A can provide the most comprehensive and deep overview of a medieval settlement in Somaliland. If we consider that only the 10% of the opened area has been fully excavated, the information kept under the remaining areas can represent a benchmark in the history of archaeological research in Fardowsa. This fact has moved the archaeological team of the Incipit to design a specific protection of the excavation area which will allow an easier launching of the next field campaign which will continue the excavation of these two exceptional buildings.



Protection of walls before the covering



Refilling of Room 3A

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