

A GROUP OF LATE ROMAN POTTERY FROM HARABEBEZIKAN MOUND IN UPPER EUPHRATES (TURKEY)

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ABSTRACT

From the 1960s, the building of large scale dams on the Euphrates River, unfortunately have placed many ancient and modern settlements under water, including important ancient sites like Samosata, and Apamea totally, and Zeugma partly. Harabebezikan is such a site, that it was affected by Carchemish Dam construction, and this paper will present a group of Late Roman pottery found in a short term rescue excavation there. Among the Late Roman pottery finds from sites, quite a number of local coarse ware, a few “Late Roman C” Ware; cooking pots belonging to the so-called Brittle Ware and also North Syrian Amphorae are represented. Only a handful of examples from sites in Southeast Anatolia and North Syria have been published. For that reason, their types, production centers and distribution areas have been not clear so far. Although Harabebezikan examples do not provide new evidence for dating, they are important as there are some new types here and the site gives new distribution evidence.

Keywords: *Late Roman Pottery, Brittle Ware, North Syrian Amphorae, Harabebezikan, Euphrates, Southeast Anatolia*

FIRAT NEHRİ KIYISINDAKİ HARABEBEZIKAN HÖYÜĞÜNDE BİR GRUP GEÇ ROMA DÖNEMİ SERAMIĞI

ÖZ

Fırat nehrinin doğu yakasında, bölgenin önemli kenti Karkamış yakınlarında yer alan Harabebezikan Höyüğünde 1999 yılında sadece bir sezon kurtarma kazısı yapılabilmemiş, Karkamış Barajının su tutması ile birlikte höyük üst seviyesine kadar suyla çevrelenmiştir. Erken Bronz, Demir Çağ ve Hellenistik tabakaları içeren höyüğün tepe açmalarında etrafı surlu Geç Roma Çağı tabakaları tespit edilmiştir. Geç Roma Çağı tabakalarında çok iyi tanınmayan yerel günlük kullanım kaplarının yanı sıra, az sayıda “Late Roman C” tabağı, “Brittle Ware” olarak adlandırılan pişirme ve mutfak kapları ile “Kuzey Suriye Amphoralar”ı olarak adlandırılan transport kapları ele geçmiştir. “Late Roman C” kapları tüm Anadolu dâhil olmak üzere Doğu Akdeniz’in pek çok yerinde ele geçen yaygın mal grupları iken, “Brittle Ware” ve “Kuzey Suriye Boyalı Amphoralar” çok iyi tanınan mal grupları değildir. Anadolu ve Kuzey Suriye’deki birkaç merkezden yayınlanmış az sayıdaki örnek dışında, bu seramiklerin form, hamur özellikleri, üretim ve dağılımları hakkında bu gün bilinenler oldukça sınırlıdır. Özellikle amphoralar, Fırat nehri boyunca yapılan nehir ticaretinin önemli göstergesi olarak daha detaylı araştırmaları hak etmektedir. Harabebezikan örnekleri, bu seramik gruplarının dar aralıklı tarihlendirilmesine yardımcı olmasa bile, yeni tipler ve bunların dağılımı hakkında önemli ipuçları sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Geç Roma Seramiği, “Brittle Ware”, Kuzey Suriye Amphoraları, Harabebezikan, Fırat*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Harabebezikan Mound is located on the east bank of Euphrates River in the Southeastern Turkey in Şanlıurfa Province) about 8 kilometers north of famous site of Carchemish and Syrian Border (Algaze et al. 1994) (Figure 1). Because of the construction of Carchemish Dam, rescue excavations could be held on site only in 1999, after which the dam lake water level reached up to the uppermost levels of the mound. Before the dam construction, almost half of the mound had already eroded away because of the shifting of the watercourse. The excavations show that the mound was occupied from Early Bronze Age to Late Roman-Early Byzantine periods (Alp and Tekinalp, 2001).

The Late Roman-Early Byzantine settlement was surrounded by a large stone wall with semi-circular buttresses (Figure 2). This fortification wall probably had a rectangular plan and it was enclosing approximately 600-700 m² occupied area with at least three sub-phases. The pottery and the small finds show that the settlement may have been abandoned latest in 7th century A.D.

Most of the Brittle Ware and North Syrian Amphorae sherds presented here were obtained from Late Roman levels in summit trenches and surface of the mound. In the following analysis, the pottery is examined by ware and form.

2. BRITTLE WARE

The Brittle Wares are red or red-brown pottery wares, which can be easily distinguished from other contemporary wares by their fabric, surface colors and shape. They were produced from the Roman times to the Early Islamic periods in Syria, Jordan and Palestine. Northern Syria was one of the well-known distribution and production centers. Fabric colors of Brittle Ware range from dark red to reddish-brown. Exterior surfaces range from dark red, red brown to black depending on their firing and slip. Clays of this ware are non-calcareous and tempered heavily with minerals such as quartz, mica, feldspar, etc. Cooking pots and jars are the main forms observed in Brittle Ware but there are a few bowls and jugs in the vessel repertoire. Excluding a few examples all Brittle Ware fragments are belong to cooking pots. All of these examples are well fired and have dark red clay, with inclusions of fine sand, quartz and mica, and they have dull red surfaces. Table wares are represented by two forms; plate and jug. The shallow plate with vertical body has typical characteristics of Brittle Ware (Figure 3. 1) in terms of fabric and other properties. Although different service pottery was noted among the Brittle Ware, the plate forms have not been published yet.

Between the two jug sherds, first one belong to the trefoil mouth, the second one to a shoulder with impressed decoration (Figure 3, 2-3). In Brittle Ware, jugs with trefoil rim are very common, and they were produced both in the Late Roman-Byzantine time and Early Islamic periods. Similar examples with a handle and long body were found at Apamea (Lemaire and Belly, 1969, fig.29, 2), Dêhès (Orssaud, 1980, fig. 308, Type 3a) and Qasr al Hayr al-Garbi (Grabar et al. 1978, fig. B, 15). Also oblique shaped jugs without trefoil rim have recently been published by A. Vokaer (2007, fig.2-3) from Apamea and Dibsî Faraj.

The body sherd with a row of deeply impressed ornament may possibly belong to a jug (Figure 3, 3). This type of impressed decoration on the shoulder has generally been recorded on mostly the mold-rim cooking pots, dated to the late Roman and early Islamic period. But a similar jug type has not yet been recorded among the Brittle Wares.

The majority of the finds, as stated above, are cooking pots, which are parallel with the published examples of the other sites. These can be divided into two groups as long-necked cooking pots and without a neck. Cooking pots with long neck have five variants on the basis of rim and neck shape. These are;

1. thin walled and flanged rim (also called small concave rim) (Figure 3, 4-5).
2. thin walled and ribbed neck (Figure 3, 6-8).
3. thick walled and rounded and thickened rim. (Figure 3, 9-11).
4. thin walled and everted rim (Figure 3, 12-15).
5. thin walled and tall flaring rim (Figure 4,1).

The most common types among these are the thin walled, flanged rim and ribbed neck.

1. The cooking pots with a flanged rim were published from the sites of Resafa (Mackensen, 1984, fig.27-29), D  h  s (Orssaud, 1980, fig. 307, Type 2), Apamea, Androna and Dibsi Faraj (Harper, 1980, fig.D, 63). The cooking pots with double handle, corrugated body on the shoulders are dated to between 4th-6th centuries A.D. At D  h  s, they were dated to the 4th century A.D., whereas at Basilica B in Resafa between 475 and 518 A.D.

2. The sherds of ribbed neck cooking pots were found abundantly at the sites of Resafa (Mackensen, 1984, fig. 11, 16, 21, 22, 25), Apamea, Androna and Dibsi Faraj (Vokaer, 2007, fig.4). These cooking pots were dated to generally 6th – 7th century A.D.

3. The third group of pots have thicker wall and simple rim in comparison to the former groups. The necks are usually vertical and slightly corrugated, whereas rims might be thickened in or out. It is impossible to determine whether these belong to the Late Roman or Early Umayyad periods. They may have been produced together with ribbed neck ones in the both periods.

4. The cooking pots with everted rim are new types among the “Brittle Ware”. Apart from a parallel found at Tell Ahmar in Northern Syria, nearby Harabebezikan (Wightman, 1990, fig. 49, 3, 50, 1) as far as we know; similar examples were not recorded in the sites to the further south.

5. Among all of the pottery presented here, only this example is almost complete. Two handles near the bulgy and ribbed body are terminated at the neck. While the base is round as usual, the shape of the rim inclined towards the sides is new for the Brittle Ware.

The cooking pots without neck have 4 different types;

1. Cooking pot with a mold rim (also called hole-mouth) (Figure 4, 2-5).
2. Cooking pot with a carinated neck (Figure 4, 6-9).
3. Cooking pots with a “S” profiled (hunched shoulder) (Figure 4, 10-11).
4. Cooking pots with a inward angular rim (Figure 4, 12).

Cooking pots with mold rim are one of the most common types in “Brittle Ware” in Northern Syria and neighbouring regions. Four sherds were represented in our catalogue, and three of these sherds have



impressed and incised decorations, the last one is plain. Two examples have decoration with zigzag rocker stamp. Well preserved pots dated to second half of the 8th century to the Abbasid period have the stamp decoration usually between the triangular ledge handles. The majority of the pots without ornament have a wide and shallow horizontal groove below the rim on the exterior. The body is widely ribbed until the base from below the lugs. There is also glazed versions that date to 8th -9th century. One of the decorated cooking pots is slightly different from the others. Incised decoration was found together with the stamp and relief decoration on this sherd. No similar example has been noted among Brittle Ware till now.

The cooking pot with a carinated neck is another type which is extensively found. Similar examples of this type were found in Apamea, "Basilica B" in Resafa (Konrad, 1992, fig.8, 9-14), Dibsî Faraj, Dehes, Androna, Tell Sheikh Hassan (Bartl, 1999-2000, fig.12, 8), Tell Bari and Tell Sweyat and dated to 4th -5th century.

The cooking pots with inward angular rim are again a new type for the "Brittle Ware".

Only one sherd of the casserole body was recovered from the site and it is ribbed and fired black in some parts on the outer surface (Figure 4, 13). Inclined inward mouth rim is different from the similars recognized in this group. These type casseroles with double or single handle, date back from the Late Roman period to Umayyad- Abbasid periods and widely distributed in North Syria.

To sum up, it could be said that Brittle Ware forms of Harabebezikan is mostly limited to the cooking pots, which are known from North Syrian sites.

Brittle Ware is a little studied pottery subject yet. Although it was found at quite a number of sites, the chronological vessel typology is not yet determined clearly. And production centers have not been identified firmly.

Two studies on the chemical and mineralogical analysis of the Brittle Ware have been conducted in the last decade. The first study was carried out by Bartl and her colleagues (Bartl et al. 1995) as an archaeometric study. They have analyzed specimens from different sites on the Euphrates, Khabur and Balikh river valleys in the Northern Syria and determined five compositional groups.

More comprehensive second study is, was published by Gerwulf Schneider and his colleagues (Schneider et al. 2007). The chemical analyses revealed the existence of six workshop groups in Syria according to them. One of these has been identified as situated towards the west of Aleppo, and another in the area of Apamea; and the other two which are in further east.

Unfortunately, no archaeometric analysis was done on samples found in the excavations and the surveys along the Euphrates River in Turkey. Such a study may reveal the northern workshops of Brittle Ware and its relation to those identified in Syria.

3. NORTH SYRIAN AMPHORAE

Amphorae with globular shape, rounded bottom, two handles and painted scroll decorations on carinated shoulder, have been called generally "North Syrian Amphorae" or "Scroll Painted Amphorae". They are widely distributed including the regions like North Syria and Middle Euphrates (Figure 7). What commodity they carried is unknown. But, it may have been wine or olive oil. Also, it is not yet possible to determine a beginning date for these amphorae but, they are in existence by 6th

century and continue 7th century A.D. These amphorae have usually surface colours from light buff to pale yellow and tempered with sand, white chalky grits and minerals.

Well preserved examples have been found at D  h  s (Orssaud, 1992, fig. B/2, 14), Q  sir as-Seileh near Resafa (Mackensen, 1984, fig. 28, 1), Androna (Mango, 2002, fig.19, 7) in North Syria and at Zeugma (Reynal, 2004, fig. 2) upper Euphrates in Turkey (Figure 6). These amphorae can be dated from the Late Roman-Early Byzantine to beginning the Umayyad periods (6th – first half 7th c. A.D.). Except for Androna, others have similar forms, decorations and type of rims. The amphora, found in Androna, has a longer neck and different ornament style than those mentioned. However, there is no doubt that it is the ware of the same cultural environment.

Two different types are observed from the published examples in terms of rim and neck. The first group has grooved rim and usually curved neck inwards. All the Harabebezikan examples belong to this group, and related finds were made in Dibsi Faraj (Harper, 1980, fig.E, 69), Al Qu  air near Resafa (Mackensen, 1984, fig.25-23), Tell Ahmar (Wightman, 1990, fig.50, 2) and Akar  ay H  y  k (Algaze et al. 1994, fig.31, I). The rims of the second group were thickened out, and their necks are even or curved slightly inwards (Figure 6). Examples of these have been found in Zeugma (Reynal, 2004, fig.2), Resafa and Qseir es-Seile (Mackensen, 1984, fig.13, 29, 15, 17, 18, 7, 28, 1).

Approximately 30 fragments were recovered from the site (20 illustrated here). The rim and shoulder sherds from Harabebezikan constitute a homogeneous ware group in terms of clay, temper, firing and surface treatment. The Amphorae have beige to light brown fabric with heavy sand, chamotte and mica, as well as occasional coarse grit and lime particles. There are brown-red, orange and black slip ornaments made by brush on the shoulders.

The most important difference among the amphorae is decoration rather than clay, temper and the shapes of the rims. Decoration was generally applied as interconnecting circular bands of painting by turning the brush. The shoulders of amphorae were decorated in several ways on the surface. While the ornament is on the upper part of the shoulder in two bands for one amphora (Figure 5, 5), most of the ornaments are consisted of small and big circles at the joint of the shoulder and the body (Figure 5, 7-11). Single big spirals were added in some examples of the second group (Figure 5, 13-14). There are examples which have plain decoration formed by dripping of the slip applied on the joint of the body and shoulder, and their character is not found out definitely (Figure 5, 17-19-20). One of the shoulder sherds is different from the others not only with its light brown clay and greenish-beige surface colour, but also with the character of the thick slice ornament made orderly and its careful workmanship (Figure 5, 18). If this sherd doesn't belong to an earlier or later period, it may be interpreted as a product of another contemporary workshop.

As indicated by the archaeological finds, these amphorae were mainly used along the Euphrates - probably also on Balikh and Khabur rivers- for the river trade and restricted as a specialized type especially for North Syria and Southeast Anatolia. The fact that the proportion of the amphorae imported from the Mediterranean is 5 per cent of all the ceramic finds in Zeugma where the North Syrian Amphorae are abundant (Reynal, 2004, 16). This data strengthen the thought above.

Until now, no ceramic workshop producing North Syrian Amphorae has been identified. As these amphorae have been distributed along the Euphrates River and vicinity, the workshop or workshops should be sought in the same area. Especially, these amphorae deserve detailed study, as they are indicators of commerce along the Euphrates River during the Late Roman Period. Detailed analyses of

these materials on excavated sites along the Euphrates River will yield much important information about the trade of Late Roman Period in this area.

4.CONCLUSIONS

Among other pottery found together with the Brittle Ware and the North Syrian Amphorae presented in this paper from Harabebezikan, the main group constitutes almost unknown local pottery. But there are few “Late Roman C plates” that belong to 3E and H types of Hayes, dated to the second half of the 5th and the first half of the 6th century A.D.

Although Harabebezikan Mound finds add little to the already known data about the production and chronology of these wares examined in this paper, the site has provided us with new forms and types for the Brittle Ware. For both wares, the Harabebezikan finds push the distribution of these further north. Even if all types of the wares studied in this paper is not represented, a group of Late Roman-Early Byzantine pottery of one ancient site from the Turkish side of the Euphrates River is for the first time introduced.

CATALOGUE

Brittle Ware (Fig. 3)

1. F17/IV-1302, Diam. 17 cm. Dark red fabric, very fine gold-silver mica, reddish brown on exterior,
2. E15/I-905, Diam. 8 cm. Dark red fabric, very fine mica and few gritty, greyish brown on exterior.
3. E14/III-2200, Body sherd. Dark red fabric, fine mica, inner and outer surface are dull red.
4. D11/IV-1220, Diam. 12. cm. Dark red fabric, fine silver mica, dull red on exterior.
5. D14/III-1701, Diam. 8.3 cm. Dark red fabric, very fine mica, reddish brown on exterior.
6. F17/IV-1300, Diam. 12.4 cm. Dark red fabric, fine mica, inner and outer surface are dull red.
7. D15-II-1023, Diam. 11 cm. Dark red fabric, few mica, inner and outer surface are dull red.
8. D15-I-1602, Diam. 7.8 cm. Dark red fabric, fine mica, dull red on exterior.
9. E15/I-905 Diam. 7.9 cm. Dark red fabric, fine mica, reddish brown on exterior.
10. E15/I-906, Diam. 9 cm. Dark red fabric, fine mica, reddish brown interior and exterior.
11. E14/III-2201, Diam. 7 cm. Dark red fabric, very fine mica, reddish brown on exterior.
12. G17/IV-1316, Diam. 18 cm. Dark red fabric, heavy fine mica, dark brown on exterior.
13. D15/II-1006, Diam. 13.8 cm. Dark red fabric, fine mica, outer surface is brown.
14. F17/IV-1316, Diam.13.2 cm. Dark red fabric, very fine silver-gold mica, reddish brown on exterior.
15. Surface, Diam. 10.4 cm. Reddish brown fabric, fine mica, reddish brown on exterior.

Brittle Ware (Fig. 4)

1. West Profil, Diam. 13 cm. Dark red fabric, fine mica, red on exterior.
2. E 15/I-901, Diam. 20 cm. Dark red fabric, heavy fine mica, greyish black on exterior by overfiring.
3. D14/III-704, Diam. 18.4 cm. Dark red fabric, heavy mica and sand, inner and outer surface are dull red.
4. D14/IV-602, Diam. 16.3 cm. Dark red fabric, fine mica, inner and outer surface are dull red.
5. E15/I-905, Diam. 18.2 cm. Dark red fabric, heavy fine mica, few sand and lime, dull red on exterior.
6. Surface, Diam. 22.5 cm. Dark reddish brown fabric, fine mica, black on exterior by overfiring.
7. D15/II-1022, Diam. 12 cm. Dark red clay, few grit, fine sand and mica, inner and outer surface are dull red.
8. D13/III-1204, Diam. 11.5 cm. Dark reddish brown fabric, heavy fine mica, greyish black on exterior.
9. G17/IV-2501, Diam. 14 cm. Dark reddish brown fabric, heavy fine mica, black on exterior by overfiring.

10. C13/IV-3002, Diam. 16 cm. Dark reddish brown fabric, heavy mica, dull red on exterior.
11. C11/II-D11/I-1917, Diam. 13 cm. dark brown fabric by overfiring, heavy mica, reddish brown on exterior,
12. G18/I-1500, Diam. 18 cm. Dark reddish brown fabric, fine mica, reddish brown on exterior.
13. I12/II-1108, Diam. 17.6 cm Dark red fabric, few lime and fine mica, reddish brown on exterior.

North Syrian Amphorae (Fig.5)

1. D13/III-1210, Diam. 13 cm. Beige fabric, heavy sand, chamotte and mica.
2. D14/III-1706, Diam.14 cm. Beige fabric, heavy sand, chamotte and mica, a band of black matt slip on neck.
3. F17/IV-1311, Diam. 16 cm. Beige fabric, heavy sand, chamotte and mica.
4. D15/I-1603, Diam. 11 cm. Beige fabric, heavy sand, chamotte and mica.
5. D13/III-1222, Beige fabric, heavy sand, chamotte and mica, black matt slip.
6. D13/III-1221, Beige fabric, heavy sand, chamotte and mica, light yellow brown matt slip.
7. D13/III-1223, Light brown fabric, heavy sand, chamotte and mica, few lime, brown matt slip.
8. D13/III-1221, Beige fabric, heavy sand, chamotte and mica, dark brown matt slip.
9. F17/IV-1308, Beige fabric, heavy sand, chamotte and mica, dark brown matt slip.
10. F17/IV-1305, Beige fabric, heavy sand, chamotte and mica, dark brown matt slip.
11. D13/IV-1219, Light brown fabric, heavy sand, chamotte and mica, dark brown matt slip.
12. D11/III-1220, Light brown fabric, heavy sand, chamotte and mica, yellow-brown matt slip.
13. Surface, Beige fabric, heavy sand, chamotte and mica, black matt slip.
14. C13/IV-3000, Beige fabric, heavy sand, chamotte and mica, orange-brown matt slip.
15. D13/III-1209, Beige fabric, heavy sand, chamotte and mica, light yellow-brown matt slip.
16. F17/IV-1311, Light beige fabric, heavy sand, chamotte and mica, dark brown matt slip.
17. E15/I-900, Beige fabric, heavy sand, chamotte and mica, dark orange matt slip.
18. D13/III-1224, Brown fabric, few lime, heavy mica and fine sand, black matt slip on green buff exterior.
19. E15/I-901, Beige fabric, heavy sand and mica, light yellow brown matt slip.
20. D 13/III-1215, Beige fabric, heavy sand and mica, orange-brown matt slip.

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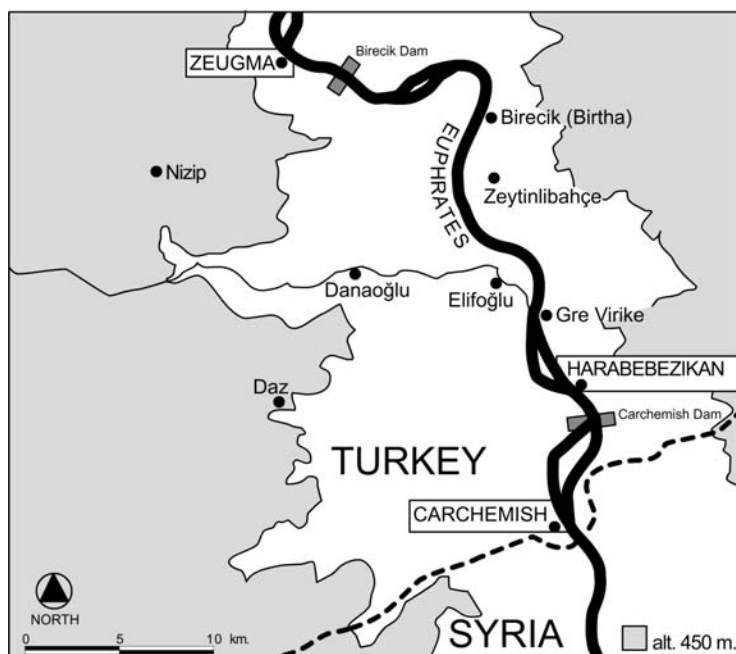


Figure 1. Map showing the location of Harabebezikan with important ancient sites.



Figure 2. Plan of Late Roman building levels on summit of mound.

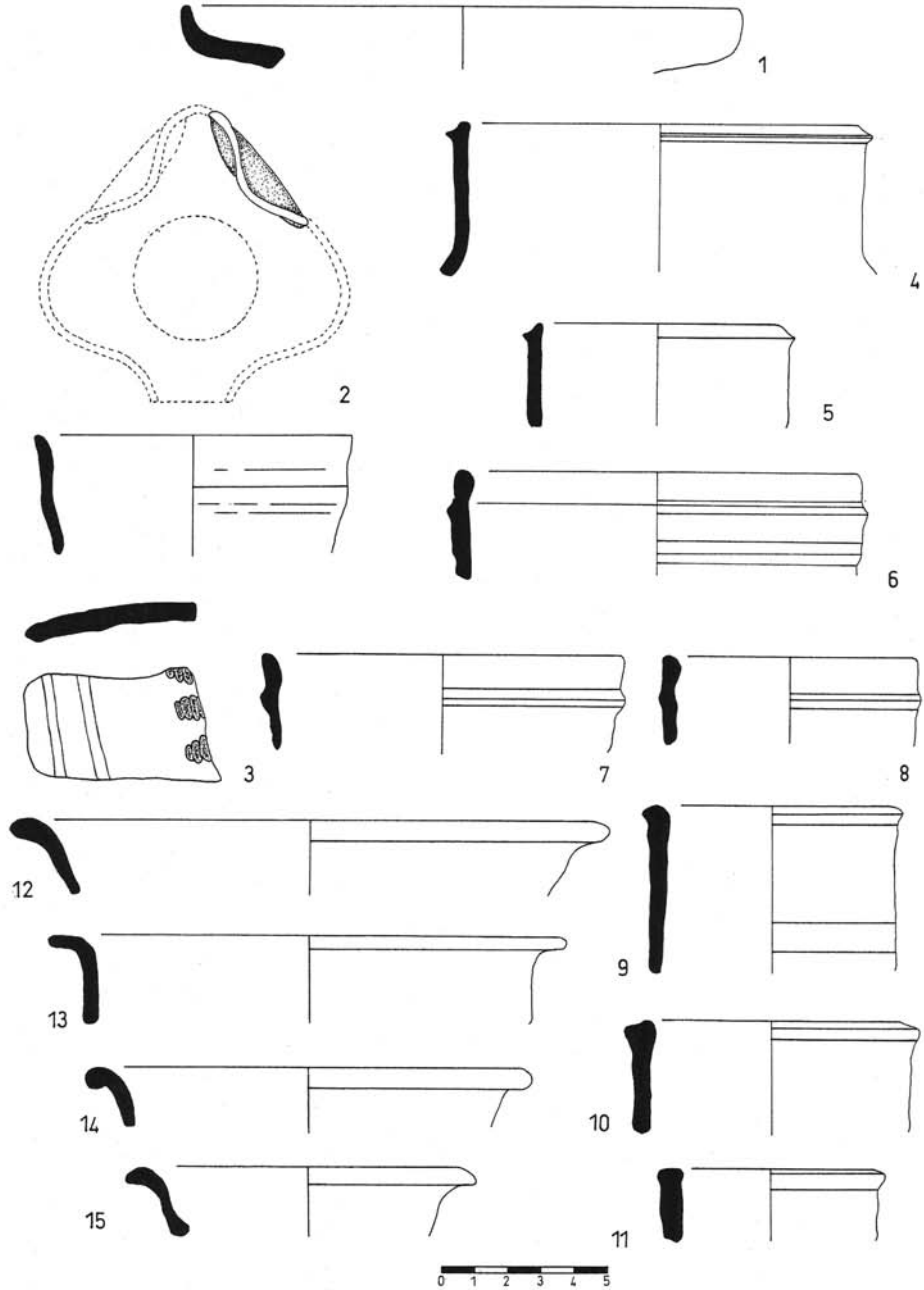


Figure 3. Table ware and cooking pots of Brittle Ware (1. F17/IV-1302, 2. E15/ I-905, 3. E14/III-2200, 4. D11/IV-1220, 5. D14/III-1701, 6. F17/IV-1300, 7. D15/II-1023, 8. D15/I-1602, 9. E15/I-905, 10. E15/I-906, 11. E14/III-2201, 12. G17/IV-1316, 13. D15/II-1006, 14 F17/IV-1316, 15. Surface).

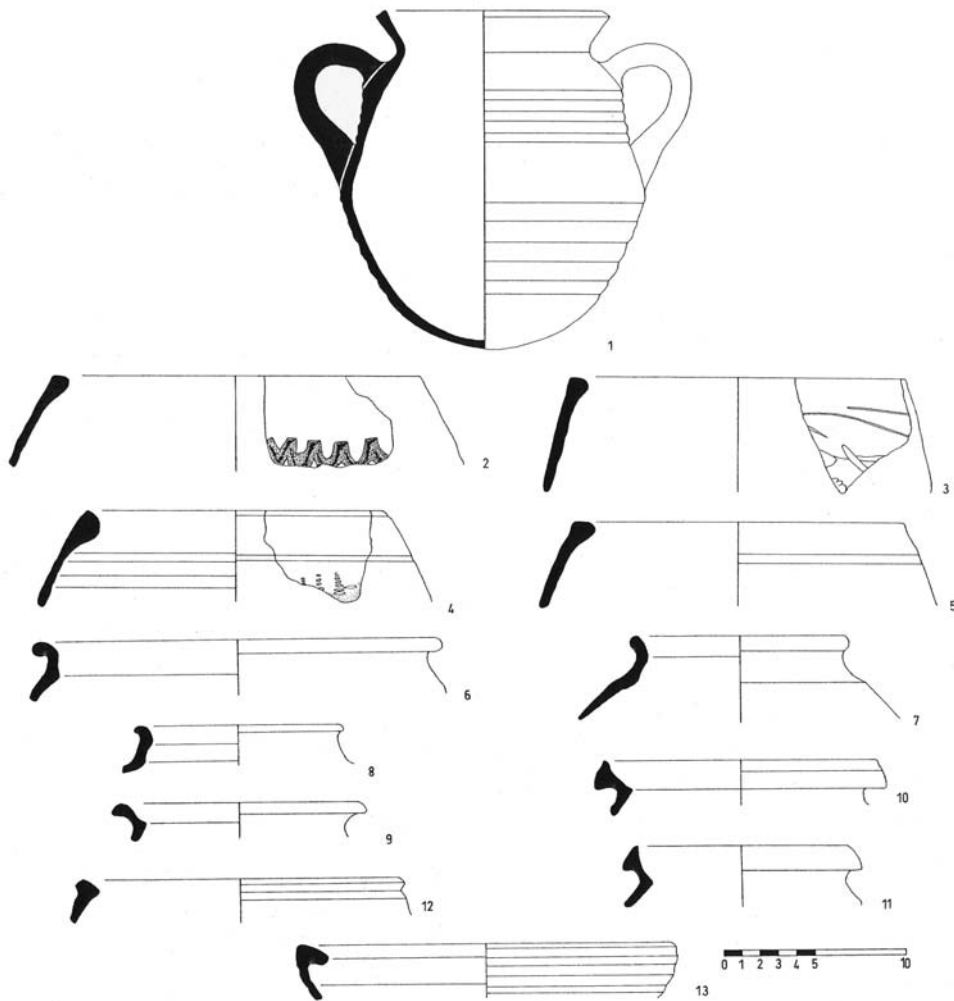


Figure 4. Cooking pots of Brittle Ware (1. West profil, 2. E15/I-901, 3. D14/III-704, 4. D14/IV-602, 5. E15/I-905, 6. Surface, 7. D15/II-1022, 8. D13/III-1204, 9. G17/IV-2501, 10. C13/IV-3002, 11. C11/II-D11/I-1917, 12. G18/I-1500, 13. II2/II-1108).

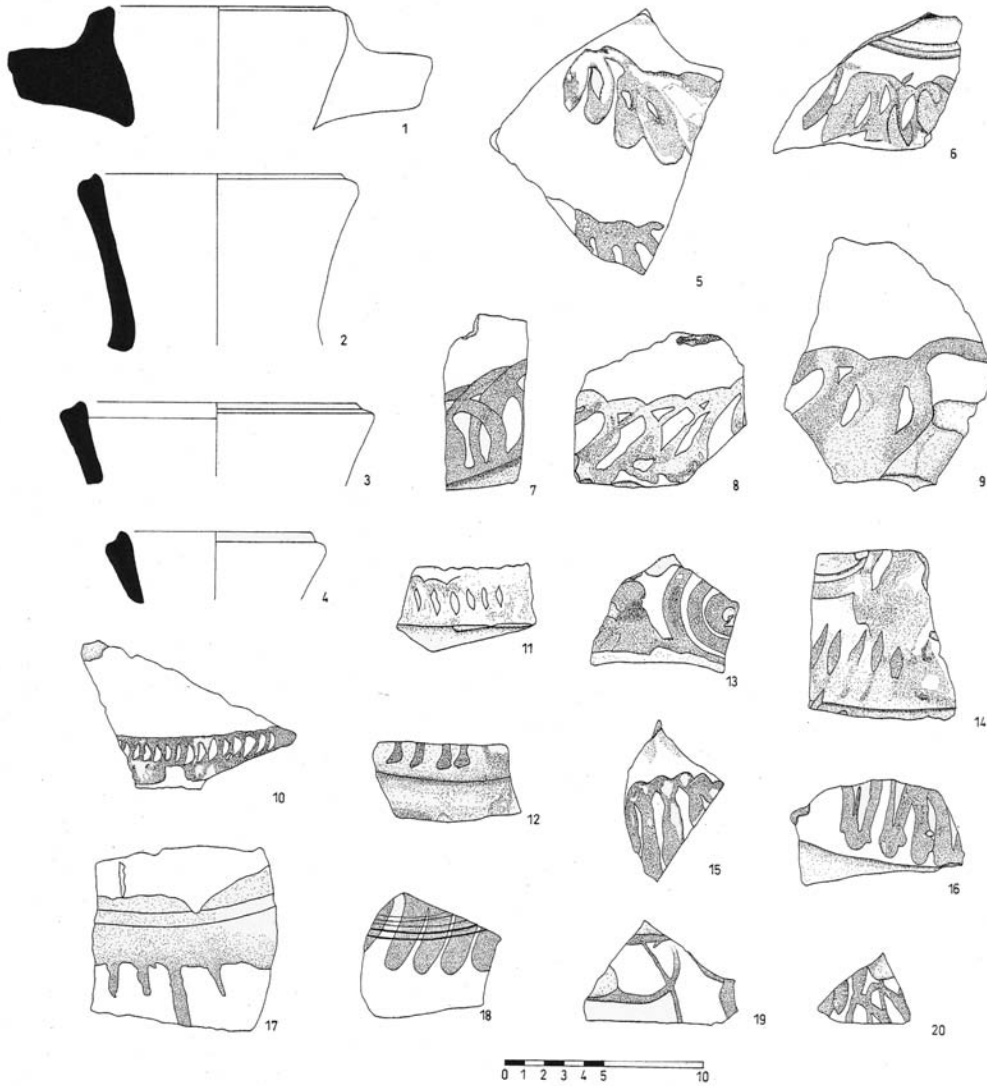


Figure 5. Rims and body sherds of North Syrian Amphora (1. D13/III-1210, 2. D14/III-1706, 3. F17/IV-1311, 4. D15/I-1603, 5. D13/III-1222, 6. D13/III-1221, 7. D13/III-1223, 8. D13/III-1221, 9. F17/IV-1308, 10. F17/IV-1305, 11. D13/IV-1219, 12. D11/III-1220, 13. Surface, 14. C13/IV-3000, 15. D13/III-1209, 16. F17/IV-1311, 17. E15/I-900, 18. D13/III-1224, 19. E15/I-901, 20. D 13/III-1215).

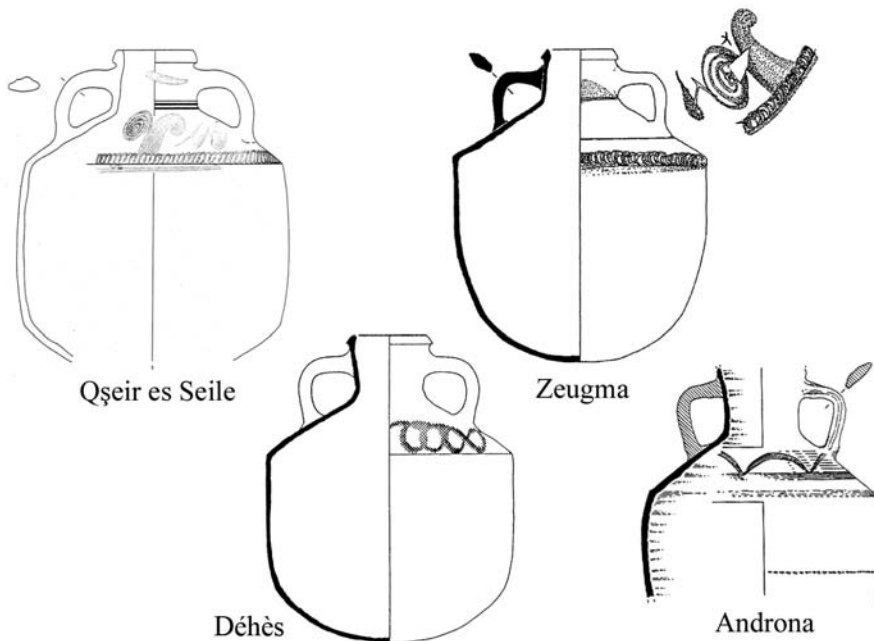


Figure 6. Well preserved examples of NSA from sites in Syria and Turkey (no scale).

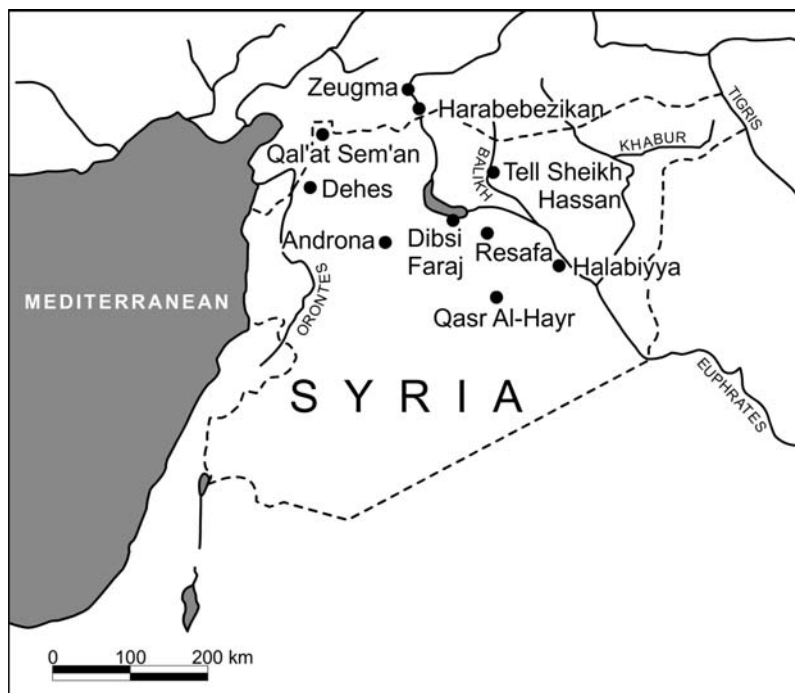


Figure 7. Map showing the distribution of North Syrian Amphora.

