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## PRE-URARTIAN (EARLY IRON AGE) GROOVED POTTERY OF THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES OF EASTERN AND SOUTHEASTERN ANATOLIA (NAIRI-URUATRI LANDS) AND ITS INFLUENCE IN THE URARTIAN POTTERY

*PRE-URARTU (ERKEN DEMİR ÇAĞ) DOĞU VE GÜNEYDOĞU ANADOLU YEREL TOPLULUKLARI (NAİRİ-URUATRİ ÜLKELERİ) YİVLİ ÇANAK ÇÖMLEĞİ VE URARTU'DAKİ ETKİSİ*

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### Abstract

The highland of eastern Anatolia, southern Caucasia, and north-western Iran were the main territory of pre-Urartians, in other words, small local independent polities of the land of Nairi and Uruatri communities. Grooved ware related to the local communities of Nairi-Uruatri lands is spread for centuries over this vast area associated with other distinct pottery groups in peripheries during the EIA, from the c. 13<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries to the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC. It decreasingly continued with new forms during the MIA until the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. The distribution and chronology of the grooved pottery well matched the borders and dates of the Nairi and Uruatri lands mentioned in Middle Assyrian sources starting from the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC. The fortified site area, the settlement system of the Nairi and Uruatri territory, which is the formation of a mobile-sedentary lifestyle of local communities, also contains these borders. The existence of grooved ware beyond eastern Anatolia in the south indicates to spread of these agropastoral groups in the Middle Euphrates and Upper Tigris valleys during the temporary void of the Assyrian Empire. The east side of the Lake Van basin within the vast pre-Urartian land shows a particular situation with its different pottery subgroups and fine wares. It seems that Urartian red polished ware (Biainili ware) was derived from the pinkish-buff red slipped ware of the pre-Urartian period on the northern and eastern shores of Lake Van, where major pre-Urartian and Urartian settlements were located and most probably the core area of grooved ware. The northern and eastern sides of Lake Van, which is the heartland of the Urartian Kingdom, are also well matched to Uruatri land. The characteristics of the foundation of the Urartian Kingdom seem mainly developed based on the local traditions of the pre-Urartians who lived in the eastern part of Lake Van. Later, establishing the Urartian capital in the same area reinforces this suggestion.

**Keywords:** Pre-Urartu, Nairi, Uruatri, Grooved Ware, Early Iron Age, Urartu, Eastern-Southeastern Anatolia

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## Özet

Doğu Anadolu yüksek yaylası, güney Kafkasya ve kuzeybatı İran pre-Urartu merkezi bölgesidir, bir başka tanımlamayla küçük yerel bağımsız yönetimler olan Nairi ve Uruatri topluluklarının ülkesidir. Nairi-Uruatri ülkelerinin yerel topluluklarını temsil eden yivli çanak çömlek kenar bölgelerdeki ilişkili diğer çanak çömlek gruplarıyla birlikte, bu geniş alanda oldukça uzun bir süre, Erken Demir Çağ boyunca, yaklaşık. MÖ 13.-12. yüzyıllardan MÖ 9. yüzyıla kadar var olmuştur. Orta Demir Çağ'ında ise azalarak ve yeni formlarla MÖ 7. yüzyıla kadar devam eder. Yivli çanak çömleklerin dağılımı ve kronolojisi, MÖ 13. yüzyıldan itibaren Orta Asur kaynaklarında bahsedilen Nairi ve Uruatri ülkelerinin sınırları ve tarihleriyle uyumludur. Yerleşik-mobil bir yaşam tarzına sahip olan Nairi ve Uruatri ülkelerinin yerel gruplarının yerleşim sistemi olan kale kent bölgesi de bu sınırları kapsar. Güneyde, Doğu Anadolu'nun ötesinde yivli malın varlığı ise Asur İmparatorluğu'nun geçici boşluğu sırasında bu agro-pastoral grupların Orta Fırat ve Yukarı Dicle vadilerine yayıldığını gösterir. Geniş pre-Urartu toprakları içinde Van Gölü havzasının doğu kısmı, farklı çanak çömlek alt grupları ve kaliteli çanak çömleği ile özel bir durum gösterir. Urartu kırmızı cilalı çanak çömleği (Bianili malı), pre-Urartu ve Urartu dönemlerine ait büyük yerleşimlerin bulunduğu ve büyük bir olasılıkla yivli çanak çömleğin çekirdek alanı olan Van Gölü'nün kuzey ve doğu kıyılarındaki pre-Urartu Dönemi pembemsi-devetüyü kırmızı astarlı maldan türemiş görünür. Urartu Krallığı'nın merkezi bölgesi olan Van Gölü'nün kuzey ve doğu kısmı aynı zamanda Uruatri ülkesiyle aynı sınırları kapsar. Urartu Krallığı'nın kuruluş özellikleri, daha sonra Urartu Krallığı'nın başkenti olan Van Gölü'nün doğu kesiminde yaşayan pre-Urartuların yerel gelenekleri temelinde gelişmiş görünür. Daha sonra aynı bölgede Urartu başkentinin kurulması bu öneriye destek sağlar.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Pre-Urartu, Nairi, Uruatri, Yivli Mal, Erken Demir Çağ, Urartu, Doğu-Güneydoğu Anadolu

## Introduction

The paper aims to present the pottery tradition of the pre-Urartians, the evidence from studies in eastern and southeastern Anatolia. The work is mainly based on the material of the excavation and survey projects in which I have worked as a team member and director; these are excavations at Üçtepe (Diyarbakır), İmikuşağı (Elazığ), Karagündüz (Van) and Van Fortress mounds; Van Fortress-Altıntepe, Karagündüz, Bozkurt (Mt Ağrı) cemeteries, and Hakkari stelae and graves; surveys at Diyarbakır, Elazığ-Malatya-Bingöl, Muş-Bitlis, Van-Ağrı-Iğdır and Yüksekova (Hakkari). The evidence from previous and as well as current research is discussed together.

Investigations of the pre-Urartians or Late Bronze-Early Iron Age (LBA-EIA) are scarce in eastern Anatolia. In the highland of eastern Anatolia east of the Upper Euphrates valley, the central area of this culture, the evidence mostly came from excavations at some cemeteries and surveys. No fortress city, which is the characteristic of the settlement system of this period, is excavated; fortresses and related cemeteries have been investigated only in surveys. The mounds at the Upper-Middle Euphrates (Fırat) and Upper Tigris River (Dicle) valleys on the western end and beyond the southern side of the highland within the artificial settlement

mounds horizon of the Near East have been more systematically investigated due to Rescue Projects.

The highland of eastern Anatolia, southern Caucasia, and north-western Iran, which have shared a common culture throughout the archaeological periods, were the main territory of pre-Urartians (Nairi-Uruatri lands). The most favourable living spaces of this mountainous and volcanic terrain bordering the north of the Near East are primarily concentrated in the valleys of the Murat and Karasu (main tributaries of the Upper Euphrates), Aras and Kura rivers, and in the basins of Sevan, Urmia and Van lakes, where vast pastures surrounding foothills and highlands, high plateau river valleys-plains, the volcanic lakes, the lakeside and the river valleys-plains in lowlands, and significant natural routes are located. The entire region is covered with vast grasslands on the foothills and highlands, which is suitable for animal husbandry, except for limited agricultural lands in the coastal plains and river valleys-plains of the lowlands.

The culture changed in the last centuries of the second millennium BC in the highland of eastern Anatolia, southern Caucasia, and north-western Iran (LBA-EIA c. 1500/1400-850 BC). The long mobile pastoral life of the Middle Bronze Age (MBA, c. 2500/2400-1500/1400 BC) turned into a more settled life but, again, mainly based on a pastoral lifestyle. EIA (c. 1300/1200-850 BC) begins with the widespread use of iron and ends with the establishment of the Bianili Kingdom. A hierarchical and more complex social structure and a sedentary life started to emerge around the major socio-economic centers, as indicated by a large number of fortress cities. The political frame of these small LBA-EIA highland communities was defined by the many local independent polities, which could be named fortress-states, city-states, or small kingdoms, the tribal structure around a central fortress-city (capital or royal city) dominating small geographical units. This cultural change is compatible with Middle Assyrian records starting from King Shalmaneser I (1274-1244 BC) over the centuries by the name of the Nairi and Uruatri lands, ruled by kings or chiefs. Later, Urartian written sources give information about these highland polities of the pre-Urartian land. The stelae of Hakkari are the most remarkable finds of the pre-Urartian elites or rulers of one of the Uruatri and Nairi lands.

Nairi or grooved ware showing the same morphological and technological features represent the cultural unity of the pre-Urartians spreading in a vast area from the Eastern Black Sea Mountains in the northwest, the Kura River valley to the northeast, the Lake Urmia basin to the southeast, the Upper Tigris Valley to the south and Upper-Middle Euphrates River valley in the west with regional variations (Southern Georgia, Armenia, Nakhichevan, Azerbaijan,

Eastern-Southeastern Anatolia, and North-western Iran), (Fig. 1)<sup>1</sup>. Nairi and Uruatri lands mentioned in the Middle Assyrian texts from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> centuries BC overlap the spread of grooved ware as indicated by scholars<sup>2</sup>. Although the Uruatri is recorded earlier than the Nairi, the name Uruatri is not mention for a long time. The general suggestion for Uruatri is a polity around the northern and eastern sides of the Lake Van basin, and the development of this group is the Urartian Kingdom comprising the nearby local polities<sup>3</sup>.

The area of the pre-Urartian landscape had a common culture, as seen mainly in pottery, settlement system, and architecture. The primary markers of the pre-Urartian land are the fortified settlements-cemeteries, sedentary lifestyle and agropastoralism, grooved ware, and associated pottery groups (Fig. 1). Turning to Anatolia, the pre-Urartian identity is quite strong in the highland of eastern Anatolia east of the Upper Euphrates Valley, which has the same geographical and cultural features as the southern Caucasus and north-western Iran. The characteristics of settlement pattern and material of this mountainous region of Caucasian communities were defined as the ‘Caucasian Model’ that surrounds the Near East to the north demonstrates a different, contrasting model to that of the mounds (höyüks, tepes, tells) in the central area of the Near East<sup>4</sup>. The vast area of the Nairi-Uruatri lands is the fortified settlement zone from the LBA to the end of the MIA, even from the EBA. However, the EIA culture of eastern Anatolia spread beyond the Mt Southeastern Taurus for a while between Middle and Neo Assyrian hegemony, to the Middle Euphrates and Upper Tigris valleys in the south into the northern Mesopotamia cultural zone. Evidence of these valleys, outside the geographical and cultural boundaries of eastern Anatolia, appears to be a slightly later extension of the Nairi communities. The territory of fortress cities-cemeteries associated with Nairi ware which is the same boundaries of the kingdom of Urartu, is the precursor of the Urartian socio-political system. Therefore, the Kingdom of Urartu is considered the final development of the Caucasian Model and Uruatri-Nairi polities.

### **Subregions and Pottery**

The characteristic of pre-Urartian pottery of eastern Anatolia is the disappearance of the LBA wares and the appearance of new monochrome pottery named Nairi or grooved ware, which indicates an important distinctive feature. The pre-Urartian pottery comprises grooved ware and associated groups of the same ceramic horizon. Grooved pottery is one of the most

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<sup>1</sup> Guardicci 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Schachner 2002, 26; Roaf- Schachner 2005: 120; Guardicci 2019: 127.

<sup>3</sup> Salvini 1967; Salvini 2006: 28-35; Guardicci 2012; Guardicci 2019: 114-115, 149; Brancato 2017, 66-67.

<sup>4</sup> Masson 1997: 127-132; Biscione 2002: 365; Biscione 2003: 183; Hammer 2014: 758-759.

significant markers to identify the context and cultural zone of the EIA in eastern and southeastern Anatolia. This monochrome pottery probably starts in the final stage of LBA and belongs specifically to the EIA between the LBA and the MIA.

The main characteristic of this pottery is applying horizontal grooves around the rim. The forms and fabrics change depending on the region. The grooved ware and its ungrooved samples have local subgroups, such as grey-black ware in north-eastern Anatolia, pinkish-buff, red slipped and red-brown-buff wares in the basin of Lake Van, pinkish red-brown ware in Hakkari, red-brown-buff ware in Upper-Middle Euphrates and red-brown-buff-pink ware Upper Tigris valleys (Figs. 1-2). Some minor differences are seen in the chronology due to different cultural and political developments of the sub-regions, such as the hegemony of the Hittite Empire in the Upper-Middle Euphrates Valley or the Middle Assyrian Empire in the Upper Tigris Valley in the LBA. Nairi-grooved ware and related cultures dominated these regions until the Urartian and Neo-Assyrian Kingdoms. Grooved ware continues within MIA contexts in eastern and southeastern Anatolia; it slowly disappears, changing to a new version of MIA types and fabrics together with dominant pottery groups of the kingdoms of Urartu and Neo Assur.

Eastern Anatolia is divided into two main geographical and cultural sub-regions: the Upper Euphrates River valley and the Highland. The valley of the Upper Euphrates River, situated at the western end of eastern Anatolia, is separated from the Highland with its local cultures and strong relations to central Anatolia and northern Mesopotamia in the late Chalcolithic, Middle, and Late Bronze Ages. But, they are the same cultural zone in the EIA and the border Urartian Kingdom. The highland of eastern Anatolia also has three sub-regions: the Lake Van basin, north-eastern Anatolia, and Hakkari (Southern Taurus Mountains). Although the pottery in these areas has the same characteristics, the architecture and settlement patterns are somewhat different. Sites in the Upper-Middle Euphrates Valley are small villages; there are no architectural traces in the Upper Tigris Valley; the highland of eastern Anatolia lies in the fortresses-cemeteries zone, which constantly dominates the landscape. The pastoral socio-economic structure in these areas, as in southern Caucasia and north-western Iran, indicates among sedentary and mobile transhumance lifestyle of the Nairi-Uruatri polities. The pre-Urartian period in the highland of eastern Anatolia was defined by the fortress cities and contemporary cemeteries on the foothills and highlands, showing the intensity of the population. Mounds in the river valleys and likeside plains in the lowlands were not densely settled during the MBA-EIA in contrast to the thick layers of the Kura-Araxes and Urartian

periods. The EIA fortresses-cemeteries have been only investigated in surveys; some cemeteries and the flimsy architectural levels in the mounds were excavated in the highland of eastern Anatolia. Even in the Upper-Middle Euphrates and Upper Tigris valleys, where settlements are concentrated in the artificial mounds on the river valleys-plains, the levels found in the mounds are also weak or flimsy. They do not show traces of a robust and substantial settlement.

Nairi ware has been found more or less in almost all sites during the excavations, and the surveys (Fig. 1). Excavations with relatively, straightforward strata evidence are listed here. Selected bibliography was used in the bibliography. Excavation and survey reports and pottery theses of excavations are based. Due to a large number of excavation reports, the last publication was used because references were made to the previous ones, except for those containing detail pottery and architectural information.

**North-eastern Anatolia** contains the Erzurum-Kars Plateau at the Karasu, Aras, and Kura rivers headwaters (The Upper Aras and Kura rivers basins) and Mt Ağrı located in the Middle Aras River valley. The material comes from limited excavations in some mounds and some cemeteries (Fig. 1). The rather weak architectural levels were excavated at the settlements and mounds of Bulamaç II<sup>5</sup> and Sos III-IIA<sup>6</sup> in the Pasinler Plain, Karaz, Güzelova, Pulur<sup>7</sup>, Alaybeyi<sup>8</sup> and Büyükdardıç<sup>9</sup> in the Erzurum Plain, and some kurgans at the cemetery of Ani<sup>10</sup> in the Kars Plateau. On the other hand, only some kurgans have been excavated in the cemeteries of Gökçekaynak<sup>11</sup> and Bozkurt<sup>12</sup> on the southern side of Mt Ağrı.

Nairi-grooved ware of these sites is grey-black ware which is the main local ware of the area, a smaller amount of red-brown ware, and painted ware. The evidence of the Erzurum-Kars Plateau closely relates to the northern part of southern Caucasia. Likewise, the pottery tradition shows continuity during LBA and EIA. In contrast to the rest of eastern Anatolia, grooved pottery is exceptionally scarce in this region and is found in the EIA levels. Radiocarbon dates come from Sos IIA (EIA, 1000-800 BC), (EIA C-14 dates: 1200-855, 1220-800 BC) and Alaybeyi (EIA, C-14 dates: 1001-844 BC). The significant number of grooved pottery sherds we have found from the Mt Ağrı survey and excavations at cemeteries shows the

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<sup>5</sup> Güneri 2008, 148-153

<sup>6</sup> Sagona-Sagona 2000, 66-67; Sagona 2012: 255-258.

<sup>7</sup> Işıklı-Can 2007; Işıklı 2008; Işıklı-Erdem 2009; Işıklı 2013

<sup>8</sup> Altunkaynak-Özdemir 2019, 183-274

<sup>9</sup> Şenyurt 2006

<sup>10</sup> Balkan-Sümer 1965; Özfirat 2019, 93; Özfirat 2021a

<sup>11</sup> Bozkurtlar 1976; Konyar 2004; Özfirat 2019, 95

<sup>12</sup> Özfirat In press

same features as those of the northern part of the Middle Aras Valley. Burnished and unburnished examples of sherds are seen; the latter probably belongs to the late phase. No painted sherds were found.

**Lake Van Basin** is the most investigated area for the EIA burial tradition in the highland of eastern Anatolia. Excavations were carried out at the cemeteries and mounds in the east part of the lake, except for Ernis, which is located on the northern shore (Fig. 1). The cemeteries at Ernis-Ünseli are directly connected with contemporary fortresses at Evditepe, and Alacahan (no excavation was carried out in fortresses)<sup>13</sup>; the Karagündüz mound 5 and cemetery<sup>14</sup>; the Dilkaya mound IIB and cemetery<sup>15</sup>; the cemetery at Yoncatepe is adjacent to an Urartian structure complex<sup>16</sup>; Van Fortress mound III<sup>17</sup>, Tilkitepe O<sup>18</sup>, Çelebibağ<sup>19</sup> and Tepeköy<sup>20</sup>. The EIA level 5 at the Karagündüz mound is represented only by some earthen pits showing characteristics of a temporary settlement. A radiocarbon dating from this level gives a C-14 date of calibrated 1092-956 BC. This pre-Urartian level 5, even though it was either flimsy architectural, remains separate from Urartian level 4a-4b by its pottery. The pottery of level 5 is the same as those in the cemetery; pinkish-buff and red slipped wares are the most common groups. A C-14 date (with 1 sigma confidence) yielded a calibrated date range of 1250-1120 BC of grave K6 in the cemetery.

The chronological sequence of the EIA is based mainly on these cemeteries since the mounds have thin and flimsy architectural layers and excavation in limited areas during the MBA, LBA, and EIA in the basin. However, due to a lack of sufficient stratigraphical context, only the evidence from cemeteries can provide data for both the chronology and material of the EIA in the basin. Nairi-grooved ware, the main ceramic group of this period in the basin, can be divided into three groups of the Ernis and Karagündüz cemeteries: pinkish-buff ware, red slipped ware and red-brown-buff ware (Figs. 3-7)<sup>21</sup>. The main feature of the northern and eastern parts of the Van Lake basin is that they are fine wares compared to those found in the Nairi-Uruatri lands. The vessels are wheel-made, sand-tempered, and well or medium fired; chaff and grit tempered are

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<sup>13</sup> Erzen *et al.* 1963 (1965): 34; Korfmann 1982, 188-189; Sevin 1996; Sevin 2005, 358-362; Sevin 2014; Özfirat 2018a, 151-160; Özfirat 2021b

<sup>14</sup> Sevin-Kavaklı 1996; Sevin 2005, 362-373; Sevin-Özfirat 2001, Özfirat 2018a, 160-168

<sup>15</sup> Çilingiroğlu 1991; Sağlamtimur 1984; Özfirat 2018a, 169

<sup>16</sup> Belli 2009; Özfirat 2018a, 169-172

<sup>17</sup> Sevin 1994, 222; Konyar *et al.* 2018, 148

<sup>18</sup> Korfmann 1982, 179-184

<sup>19</sup> Çavuşoğlu 2011, 6.

<sup>20</sup> Erdoğan *et al.* 2021, 65.

<sup>21</sup> Özfirat 2018a, 152-160, 160-168; Özfirat 2018b; Özfirat 2021b.

not seen. Surfaces are mottled because of the firing process and range from pink, buff, red, and grey hues, and also grey-black tones can be seen due to soot. Hues are seen mainly in pinkish-buff ware. Pinkish-buff ware is self-slipped surfaces or lightly burnished. In the second phase, burnished vessels are more common, especially in the red-slipped ware, but not shiny. The forms are not diverse due to they were found in the graves. Carinated and globular-bodied bowls with closed mouths, carinated with open mouths and simple, everted rims bowls, small hemispherical and round-bodied jars, and vases are the main forms. Spouted and hole mouth vessels and handles are not seen in Karagündüz, although common in the Upper-Middle Euphrates and Upper Tigris valleys, there are some spouted cups in Ernis material. Another distinguishing feature between the two cemeteries shows itself in the decoration. While the decoration is few in Karagündüz, it is widespread in Ernis; mainly, the rows of notches, dots, and triangles with incised and applique knobbs are seen on the upper part of the external surface of the vessels. The string-hole lugs and triangular-ledge handles are seen very often. The string-hole lugs and triangular-ledge handles are rich repertoires in Ernis; Karagündüz has only simples ones. This distinctness may be chronological or regional variations. Unfortunately, there is no clear evidence in the records of the old excavation of Ernis. A few painted pieces were found in the pinkish-buff ware at Karagündüz and Yoncatepe cemeteries. They are decorated with simple red painted geometric motifs like those in the other areas (Fig. 3: a).

The most remarkable characteristic of the EIA pottery in the Lake Van basin is the distribution of groups of grooved ware which is the dominant group. Whereas red-brown-buff ware existed in the whole basin, pinkish-buff ware and red slipped ware are found almost only in the northern (Erciş-Ernis-Muradiye plains and lesser amount in Patnos Plain) and eastern parts of the basin (Van Plain, Özalp, Karasu and Güzelsu valleys), indicating strong local character in the area (Figs. 1-2). They were found in a small amount in other parts of the basin. Pinkish-buff ware (Figs. 3: a-4; 5; 7: 1-17) and red-brown-buff ware (Figs. 3: d-4) are the main groups seen throughout the EIA (I-II). Red slipped ware belongs to the last phase and is much fewer in number (EIA II), (Figs. 3: b-4; 6; 7: 18-21). It is divided into two subgroups. The earlier group is thin and patchily red slipped ware, which is derived from the pinkish-buff ware; it can also be called pinkish-buff red slipped ware (Figs. 3: b; 4), and the latter group is thick and bright burnished red slipped ware (Figs. 3: c; 4). The distinctive feature of thick and bright burnished red slipped ware is the representation of the transitional phase to Urartian red polished ware. Thick and bright burnished red slipped ware does not demonstrate the same features as the classical red polished ware of the kingdom of Urartu because of its different technique and shape. But some of the features are comparable with the characteristics of



Urartian red polished ware, such as thick red slip and burnished surface. Red slipped ware also has some closer forms to Urartian pottery, such as round bodies with thick rims or carinated bowls with simple or everted rims, jugs with trefoil rims, and ribbed on the shoulders in the late phase (EIA II). The characteristics of the Urartian Kingdom began to emerge with these new forms, decreasing grooves, disappearing string-hole lugs and triangular-ledge handles, and bronze pins. No classical Urartian pottery was found in the cemeteries of the Lake Van basin, such as red polished ware and fine brown ware, as also other materials (beads, pins, belts, weapons, etc.)<sup>22</sup>. Along with these new forms, earlier (EIA I) pinkish-buff and red-brown-buff ware forms are prevalent in the red slipped ware.

**Hakkari (Southern Taurus Mountains)** is on the high mountains at the convergence of the Southern Taurus Mountains and Mt Zagros, on the basin of the Great Zap River. Thirteen stelae and two chamber graves (M1-M2) were excavated in the city center of Hakkari (**Fig. 1**)<sup>23</sup>. No related settlement traces around the graves and stelae were discovered. The stelae of Hakkari, foreign to the Near East, bear the traces of pastoralist steppe cultures of the north rather than urban agricultural cultures of the south. The stelae with descriptions of some ruling elites and graves of Hakkari seem to belong to a local dynasty of the pre-Urartian kingdom. The grave M1 appears to have been used for around 300 years, from the end of the first quarter of the second millennium BC to the third quarter of the same millennium showing the connection with a wide-ranging region. Pinkish red-brown ware constitutes the largest group, while earlier groups of Khabur and Van-Urmiya wares are fewer. This latest group of pinkish red-brown ware in grave M1 is similar to the LBA-EIA I (Nairi-grooved ware) pottery of the highland of eastern Anatolia. Pinkish red-brown ware represents the main and longest time span group in graves M1-M2 with its strong local character. Only the late phase of pinkish red-brown ware (EIA II, Nairi-grooved ware) was found in grave M2, which was used for a

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<sup>22</sup> Konyar and Koroğlu suggested that cemeteries at Yoncatepe, Karagündüz and Dilkaya must belong to the Urartian Period based on two bronze fibulae found in Yoncatepe grave M3 and an arrowhead from grave M6 (Koroğlu-Konyar 2005). Published material from Yoncatepe contains a large number of pinkish buff ware and the fewer numbers of red slipped ware found just like in Karagündüz and Dilkaya, which is typical EIA pottery of the region as pointed out by Sevin (2014: 359-360). The well-known EIA elements of the Lake Van basin, such as grooved ware, iron artefacts, beads and limited using of bronze, burial tradition and architecture of the graves, makes the EIA dating of Yoncatepe graves undisputable. The explanation for this confusion may be the long-term usage of the Yoncatepe graves M3, M5 and M6 in MIA-Urartu. The large Urartian structural complex adjacent to the cemetery is evidence for continuity of the EIA-MIA in Yoncatepe. During EIA or in earlier periods such as Hakkari Grave M1, the long-term usage of the chamber graves with multiple burials was common in the Lake Van basin, as seen in some of the chamber graves at Karagündüz and Dilkaya.

<sup>23</sup> Sevin 2015; Özfirat 2018a, 172-177

short time. (Fig. 2) It is more of a continuation than an interruption in both graves regarding architectural characteristics, burial traditions, pottery, and other finds.

**Upper Euphrates Valley** at the western end of eastern Anatolia is closely related to the Near East, where the artificial mounds zone. The where local cultures, central Anatolia, and Upper Mesopotamian cultures were mixed is within the eastern Anatolian cultural area. The valley was under the hegemony and culture of the Hittite Empire during the LBA. Between the full control of the Hittite Empire and the Urartian Kingdom, the Nairi-grooved ware without a precursor, a new foreign culture, appears in the EIA levels of the excavations in the valley (Fig. 1). Norşuntepe II<sup>24</sup>, Tepecik 2a<sup>25</sup>, Korucutepe K<sup>26</sup>, Elazığ-Değirmentepe<sup>27</sup>, İmikuşağı 6<sup>28</sup>, Malatya-Değirmentepe<sup>29</sup>, Köşkerbaba IV<sup>30</sup> and Murat Höyük III<sup>31</sup> have the most remarkable layers in the basin. However, these are rather weak levels compared to other periods. Nairi-grooved ware of these sites is red-brown-buff ware, the main ceramic group of this period, and a small percentage of painted ware. Grooved pottery occurs without a precursor in the basin. The painted pottery shows a link to the former LBA-Hittite Period. In the early phase, Hittite pottery and grooved ware were together. The Hittite types disappear in the late phase. Korucutepe K (EIA, c. 1200-800 BC), (C-14 dates: 1217 ± 17, 1050 ± 35 BC) and Murat Höyük III (EIA, c. 1200--800 BC), (C-14 dates: 1131-976) gives radiocarbon dates.

**Middle Euphrates Valley** at the western end of southeastern Anatolia lies in the northern Mesopotamia cultural influence. The basin is outside the geographic and cultural zone of eastern Anatolia. The local, central Anatolia, and northern Mesopotamia cultures were together in this southeastern Anatolian cultural area. The valley was under the hegemony of the Hittite Empire and Neo Hittites, and their culture was dominant from the LBA to the MIA. Nairi-grooved ware, which is foreign to the region, is not standard in the valley. According to the evidence, they are seen in some sites in the northern part of the valley towards the Upper Euphrates. The small villages at Lidar 6d, 6e1-2, and Tille I-III are significant sites where grooved ware is seen

<sup>24</sup> Hauptmann 1969/70, 32; Hauptmann 1982, 54-64; Bartl 1988; Bartl 1994; Bartl 2001; Müller 2005, 107-112

<sup>25</sup> Esin 1971, 108-110; Esin 1970, 154; Esin 1974, 112-113

<sup>26</sup> Van Loon 1978: 40-42; Winn 1980

<sup>27</sup> Esin 1987, 91-101

<sup>28</sup> Sevin 1995, 19-31

<sup>29</sup> Duru 1979, 39-44

<sup>30</sup> Bilgi 1987, 224-225; Bilgi 1991, 12

<sup>31</sup> Özdemir *et al.* 2021, 37-38.

between the Hittite Empire and Neo-Hittite levels (Fig. 1)<sup>32</sup>. However, there was no cultural change in pottery and architecture parallel to the political situation due to the full control of the Neo Hittites. Pottery shows continuity with the LBA-Hittite characteristics; painted ware is also seen. Nairi-grooved ware of the basin is red-brown-buff ware; it is in a small number and later than the Upper Euphrates evidence. Lidar C-14 dates give a later period for grooved ware (EIA, c. 1100-900 BC)<sup>33</sup>, and Tille dendrochronological dates (EIA, c. 1150-1090 BC) are close to Lidar<sup>34</sup>.

**Upper Tigris Valley** in southeastern Anatolia, which creates the northern border of Mesopotamia, stays out of the eastern Anatolian geographical and cultural zone. The local traditions and the cultures of northern Mesopotamia have coexisted in this basin. The valley was under Middle Assyrian political and cultural hegemony in the second phase of LBA. Shortly after the end of full control of the Middle Assyrians, the Nairi-grooved ware emerges in the basin until the Neo Assyrian levels during the EIA (1150/1050-882 BC). This new culture foreign to the region shows itself in weak strata and grooved ware, without a precursor in the basin. Another change is the decrease in the number of settlements. The small and seasonal settlements in flimsy architecture were excavated in the EIA levels of Gre Dimse<sup>35</sup>, Gricano<sup>36</sup>, Kavuşan VI<sup>37</sup>, Salatetepe IIIA<sup>38</sup>, Ziyarettepe<sup>39</sup>, Kenantepe<sup>40</sup>, Gre Amer<sup>341</sup>, Hakemi Use<sup>42</sup>, Müslümantepe<sup>43</sup> and Hirbemerdon IVA<sup>44</sup>(Fig. 1). No EIA level was excavated at Üçtepe; only a few grooved wares were found in Neo Assyrian context at Üçtepe. Nairi-grooved ware of these sites is red-brown-buff-pink ware, the main ceramic group of this period, and a small percentage of painted ware. No radiocarbon dating exists in the basin. The grave of Gre Dimse dated to 1150-1000/950. Gricano tablets give the end of the Middle Assyrian

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<sup>32</sup> Müller 1999a; Müller 1999b; Müller 2005, 112-113

<sup>33</sup> Görsdorf *et al.* 2002.

<sup>34</sup> Summers 1993, XVIII; Blaylock 2016, xviii-xix

<sup>35</sup> Karg 2001: 648-653; 657-658; Karg 2002: 705, 709

<sup>36</sup> Schachner 2002, 24-26; Roaf-Schachner 2005, 117-118.

<sup>37</sup> Kozbe 2006, 497-498; Kozbe 2008, 295-296.

<sup>38</sup> Ökse 2015, 263-264; Ökse-Görmüş 2014, 235-236, 238-239

<sup>39</sup> Matney *et al.* 2004, 387-398; Matney 2011: 447-450; Matney *et al.* 2017, 29-30; Matney *et al.* 2020, 88-89, 96-97; Roaf-Schachner, 2005, 116

<sup>40</sup> Parker *et al.* 2004, 590-591; Parker-Dodd 2005, 81

<sup>41</sup> Pulhan-Blaylock 2018, 119-121

<sup>42</sup> Tekin 2006

<sup>43</sup> Guarducci 2019, 80

<sup>44</sup> Guarducci-Laneri 2010: 21, 27, 33, 51; Guarducci 2011, 29-100; Guarducci 2012; Guarducci 2016; Guarducci 2019, 81-82.

period around 1069 BC.

## Conclusion

Nairi-grooved ware related to the pre-Urartians, in other words, local communities of Nairi-Uruatri lands have been spread for centuries over a vast extensive area covering southern Caucasia, eastern Anatolia and north-western Iran associated with other distinct pottery groups in peripheries during the EIA, from the c. 13<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries to the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC and decreasingly continued until the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC during the MIA. It is necessary to consider the pottery groups of Nairi-Uruatri lands as a whole horizon and as a cultural unity of the local communities of its vast area (Fig. 1). The distribution and chronology of the grooved pottery well matched the borders and dates of the Nairi and Uruatri lands mentioned in Assyrian sources. The fortified site area, the settlement system of the Nairi and Uruatri territory, which is the formation of a sedentary-mobile lifestyle of local communities, also contains these borders; the existence of grooved ware beyond eastern Anatolia in the south indicates to spread of these agro-pastoral groups in the Middle Euphrates and Upper Tigris valleys during the temporary void of the Assyrian Empire (Fig. 1).

Grooved ware has shown strong common morphological and technological characteristics throughout the southern Caucasus, Lake Urmia basin, highland of eastern Anatolia, Upper-Middle Euphrates and Upper Tigris basins (Fig. 1). Guardicci, who has done a very detailed study on this subject, indicates that some grooved pottery is found in the Upper Khabur Valley, the south part of the Middle Euphrates Valley, Eastern Mediterranean and Central Anatolia sites, even Troya VIIb, which is out of the grooved pottery zone, showing connections the southern Caucasia and eastern Anatolia. He describes evidence of these and north-western Iran sites as the related context in the outer periphery and other secondary connections. Grooved ware in these regions is in small amounts groups along with the main pottery groups of these regions, while the situation in north-western Iran is different. Although the main pottery is grey ware in the Urmiye basin, grooved ware is not scarce and is within the borders of Nairi-Uruatri lands and fort area.

Turning to Nairi-Uruatri lands, the core area of the grooved pottery seems to contain the basin of Lake Van, specifically the northern and the eastern parts of the basin, due to the pottery being only grooved ware and its ungrooved samples. This wheel-made pottery also shows fine ware characteristics in the horizon of grooved ware. Guardicci defines eastern and southeastern Anatolia (Highland, Upper-Middle Euphrates, and Upper Tigris valleys) as the core area, southern Caucasia (Georgia, Armenia, Nakhichevan, Azerbaijan) as the periphery, and north-

western Iran as the outer periphery<sup>45</sup>. The EIA pottery of these regions has distinct pottery groups besides grooved ware but is related by some common characteristics. There is a small percentage of typical grooved ware in the northern and eastern peripheries, although they are in the fortified site zone. Southern Georgia and Armenia show the continuity of local cultures. The final phase of the LBA has strong evidence of continuity in the EIA of these regions. In the south, Hocalı-Gedebe Culture was dominant in Nakhichevan and Azerbaijan. North-western Iran is separated by its grey ware (Iron I-II), including some sites in the Lake Urmia basin of grooved pottery. Guardicci also indicates that southern Caucasia and north-western Iran, located in the periphery, have the earliest evidence of grooved ware (Proto Nairi ware)<sup>46</sup>; it appears in a small percentage in the LBA II and starts to increase during LBA III (1300-1150 BC, Lchashen-Metsamor 3), and spread on a large scale throughout the EIA Ia-Ib (1150-800 BC, Lchashen-Metsamor 4-5). However, the relative and absolute chronology of the eastern Anatolian high plateau covers almost the same dates. The scarcity of stratified excavations can explain it.

Although the pottery of the eastern and southeastern Anatolia subregions shows the same common characteristics, the architecture and settlement pattern seems rather different. The situation is coherent except in southeastern Anatolia. All the subregions of eastern Anatolia (Upper Euphrates-Highland) are within the fortified settlement horizon, ruled by independent small local polities with central authority and organization in Nairi-Uruatri lands (Fig. 2). Small villages and temporary settlements in the Middle Euphrates and Upper Tigris basins indicate no central planning and authority of any administration, in contrast to the occupation of urban-like Middle Assyrians.

Fortress cities-cemeteries constantly dominate the landscape of the highland of eastern Anatolia. Although settlements have been excavated in the mounds of plains in the Upper Euphrates Valley, the western end of the highland of east Anatolia, it must be considered that systematic research has yet to be done outside the plains in the valley. The settlements of the plains in the Upper Euphrates Valley are small villages, unlike the urban-like sites of the Hittite Empire. Most probably, fortress cities are situated on the foothills and high plateaus in the valley's surrounding mountains. Settlements in the mounds, all in the river valleys-plains, are also the rural settlements in the highland of eastern Anatolia, such as villages, hamlets, and temporary sites. But, the most striking feature of this mountainous area, except for the Upper

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<sup>45</sup> Guardicci 2019: 53-120.

<sup>46</sup> Guardicci 2019: 148.

Euphrates Valley plains, is that the mounds in the lowland are limited and small in size, and the MBA-EIA layers are almost nonexistent or rather weak architectural levels. Therefore, the LBA-EIA settlements in the artificial mounds of this region must be related to the fortress cities on the foothills connected to the plains. Central fortress cities directly overlook the plains and could have been administrative and military centers that controlled both the plains and the main roads in a system connected to some permanent and seasonal settlements or fortresses in the surrounding area that had varying sizes and functions, supplying highland and lowland resources and routes. The same settlement system must have existed in the Upper Euphrates Valley.

In eastern Anatolia, the limited stratified evidence and the weakness of the architecture in the artificial mounds, the absence of fortress city excavations, and the minority of a reliable chronology based on calibrated radiocarbon dates create difficulties in chronology and cultural characteristics. In north-eastern Anatolia, evidence of Sos, Pular, and Alaybeyi mounds indicate that the grooved ware appeared during the EIA in the Erzurum-Kars Plateau. Sagona dated to the Sos EIA (IIA) 1000 to 800 BC, but the C-14 dates earlier for EIA (around 1200 BC). This region is related culturally to the northern part of the southern Caucasus. The grooved ware is less in number, and the local characteristics are strongly seen in this region. However, Mt Ağrı in the south part of north-eastern Anatolia is characterized by grooved pottery in the EIA, probably starting in the last phase of the LBA. Only Bozkurt kurgan cemetery is excavated in Mt Ağrı, which shows standard subregion features with the northern part of the Middle Aras Valley (Lchaschen Metsamor 3-5) with some minor differences. The grooved ware may have reached later north-eastern Anatolia from the Lake Van basin via Mt Ağrı and Patnos Plain in the west.

The Lake Van basin is separated by its distinctive subcategories of pottery. Unfortunately, we need more evidence about the LBA of the basin. However, when all the data are considered, the MBA painted pottery (Araxes painted pottery) seems to have continued with simplified decoration during the LBA and some in the EIA in the basin as in the western Azerbaijan-Nakhichevan, which is the painted pottery and Hocalı-Gedebey cultures existed together in the LBA-EIA. On the contrary, grooved ware is dominant in the Lake Van basin throughout the EIA starting around the c. 1300 BC. The lack of archaeological investigations and the mountainous and isolated geographical characteristics of the Hakkari (Southern Taurus Mountains) region make it harder to describe its culture. But the existence of grooved ware in the EIA is evident, probably coming from the Lake Van basin.

Nairi-grooved ware seems to have spread slightly later to the west and south, according to the political situation that ended the LBA. After the full control of the Hittite Empire in the Upper-Middle Euphrates valleys and the Middle Assyrian Kingdom in the Upper Tigris Valley, the entrance of a foreign new culture shows itself with Nairi-grooved ware and weak or temporary settlements without a precursor. The grooved ware is distinctive from those industrial-like productions of the Hittites and Middle Assyrians. This new pottery tradition and settlement system, indicating a radical change (c. 1200 BC), stand until the Urartian Kingdom in the Upper Euphrates Valley on the western end and the Neo-Assyrian Kingdom in the Upper Tigris Valley in the south (starting around c. 1150/1050 BC). But, the strong cultural continuity and pottery tradition of Hittites is seen in the Middle Euphrates Valley due to the hegemony of Neo-Hittite kingdoms. The grooved ware is found only northern part of the Middle Euphrates Valley next to the Upper Euphrates and the less in number in the EIA (starting c. 1100 BC).

In the Upper Tigris Valley, the withdrawal of the Assyrians from the basin clearly shows itself in material culture at the end of LBA. In these centuries, the Arameans spread to the basin from the south and the Nairi peoples from the north. Archaeological materials related to Arameans didn't identify in the basin. The grooved pottery defines the EIA in the valley on the border of Nairi land. This pottery represents the EIA groups of eastern Anatolia descending from the north of the Southeastern Taurus Mountains throughout the EIA in the valley. Nairi peoples seem to have spread the valley in the void formed due to the withdrawal of the Assyrians. The grooved pottery is also the archaeological equivalent of the Assyrian description on the border of the Nairi land north of Tur Abdin mountain in the Upper Tigris Valley. It started to be seen in the Late Middle Assyrian levels until the LIA (Achaemenid) for a long time. But, MIA-LIA variations of grooved ware in small numbers together with other main pottery groups of the Neo Assyrians and Achamaneids in the basin. In the Neo Assyrian period (MIA), this pottery was concentrated in rural settlements as you moved away from the Dicle (Tigris) River line, where large cities are located.

No sufficient evidence has been found yet in eastern Anatolia of this cultural change and its origin; more detailed investigations are needed. But, after the long pastoral lifestyle of the MBA, the cultural continuity between the pre-Urartians and Urartians is very distinctive in the highland part of the region. Furthermore, the strong relationship between Anatolia, southern Caucasia and north-western Iran also appears in the Urartian Kingdom, such as its fortified settlements and the socio-political frame of the predecessor pre-Urartians. The pottery shows Urartian characteristics and local MIA properties, which continue from the EIA, especially in

the peripheries of the kingdom. Grooved ware has also continued decreasingly into the Urartian period with some distinctions. However, their form and fabric, which has the MIA features, differ entirely from those in the EIA. Only the grooves on the rims are similar but have fewer rows. The pottery of the Urartian Kingdoms is quite distinctive and dominant within the borders of the kingdom.

**In sum**, in the grooved pottery tradition of eastern Anatolia (Figs. 1-2), red-brown-buff ware is more or less found in the whole region. However, the two groups only exist in two regions: pinkish-buff ware and red slipped ware in the northern and eastern parts of the basin of Lake Van and grey-black ware in north-eastern Anatolia; red-brown ware is rarely found in these areas. The distribution of these pottery groups is also fit in with grave types. North-eastern Anatolia was the territory of grey-black ware and kurgans. In the basin of lake Van, chamber graves are concentrated in the northern and eastern parts of Lake Van, with the same area of pinkish-buff ware and red slipped ware.

The northern and eastern sides of the Lake Van basin within the vast pre-Urartian land show a particular situation with its different pottery subgroups and fine wares. The grooved ware of the basin is quite remarkable with its intensity, variety and quality. The pottery is wheel made, and especially those in the east of the basin are different from the rest of the basin with their elaborate and much more quality samples. The material from the late phase of EIA Ernis and Karagündüz cemeteries on the northern shore and eastern part of the Lake Van basin also indicates that some of the characteristics of Urartu started to appear strongly, such as bronze objects and chamber graves and red slipped ware. Red slipped ware, derived from the pinkish-buff ware; (this early group can be classified as pinkish-buff red slipped ware), is found only on the northern and eastern sides of Lake Van. The late group of red slipped ware represents a prototype of the Urartian red polished ware (Biainili ware). With them, typical forms of earlier pinkish-buff and red-brown-buff ware are in large quantities in the red slipped ware.

No evidence of classical Urartian features is found in the EIA cemeteries of the Lake Van basin. It seems that Urartian red polished ware was derived from the pinkish-buff red slipped ware of the pre-Urartian period on the northern and eastern parts of Lake Van, where major pre-Urartian and Urartian settlements were located and most probably the core area of grooved ware. The east side of Lake Van, which is the heartland of the Urartian Kingdom, is also well matched to Uruatri land. The characteristics of the foundation of the Urartian Kingdom seem mainly developed based on the local traditions of the pre-Urartians who lived in the eastern part of Lake Van, which later became the heartland of the Urartian Kingdom. A



very different variation and fine ware of grooved pottery on the east side of the basin, which is the predecessor of Urartian pottery, separates the east shore of the lake from the rest of the region. Later, establishing the Urartian capital in the same area reinforces this suggestion.

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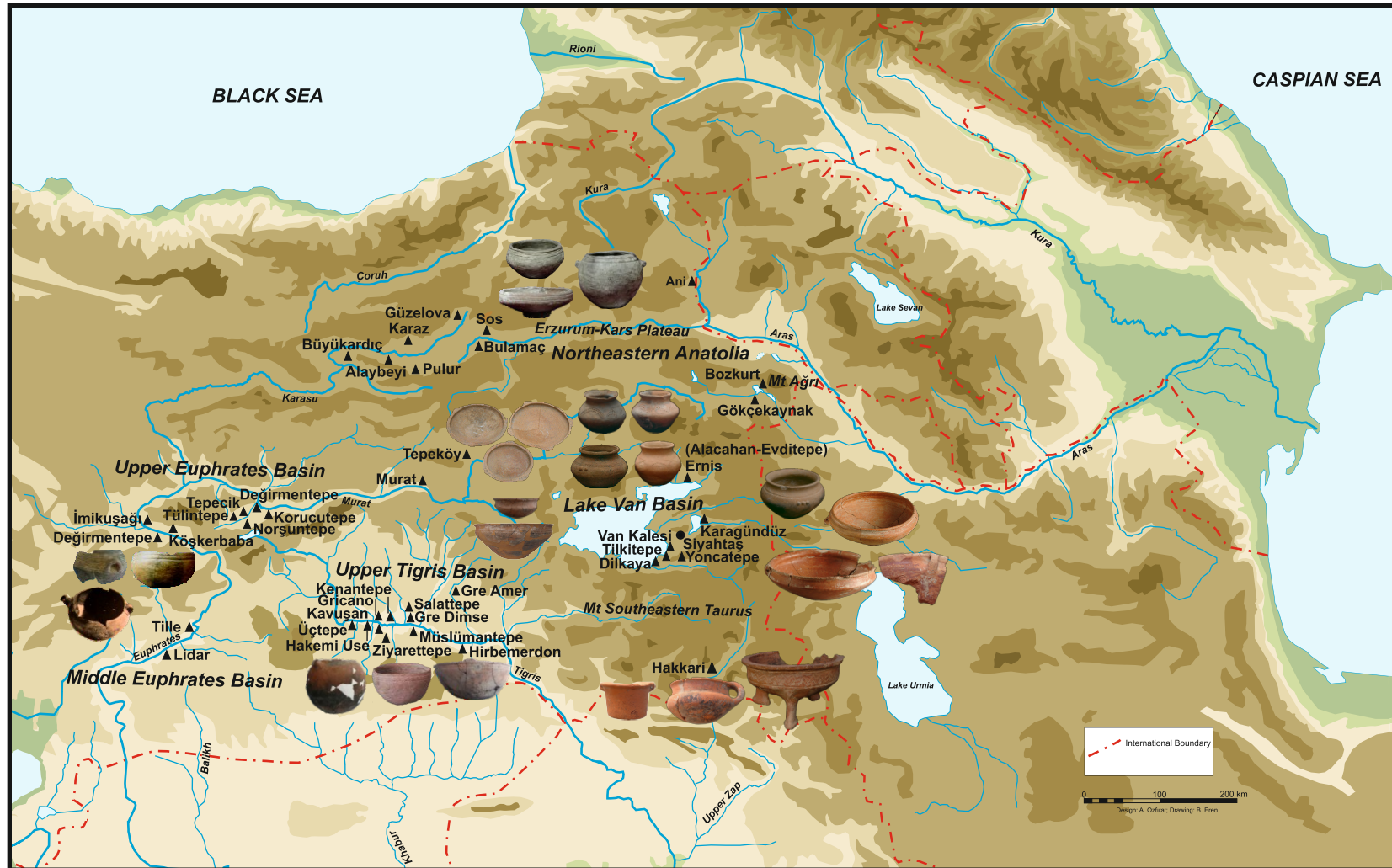
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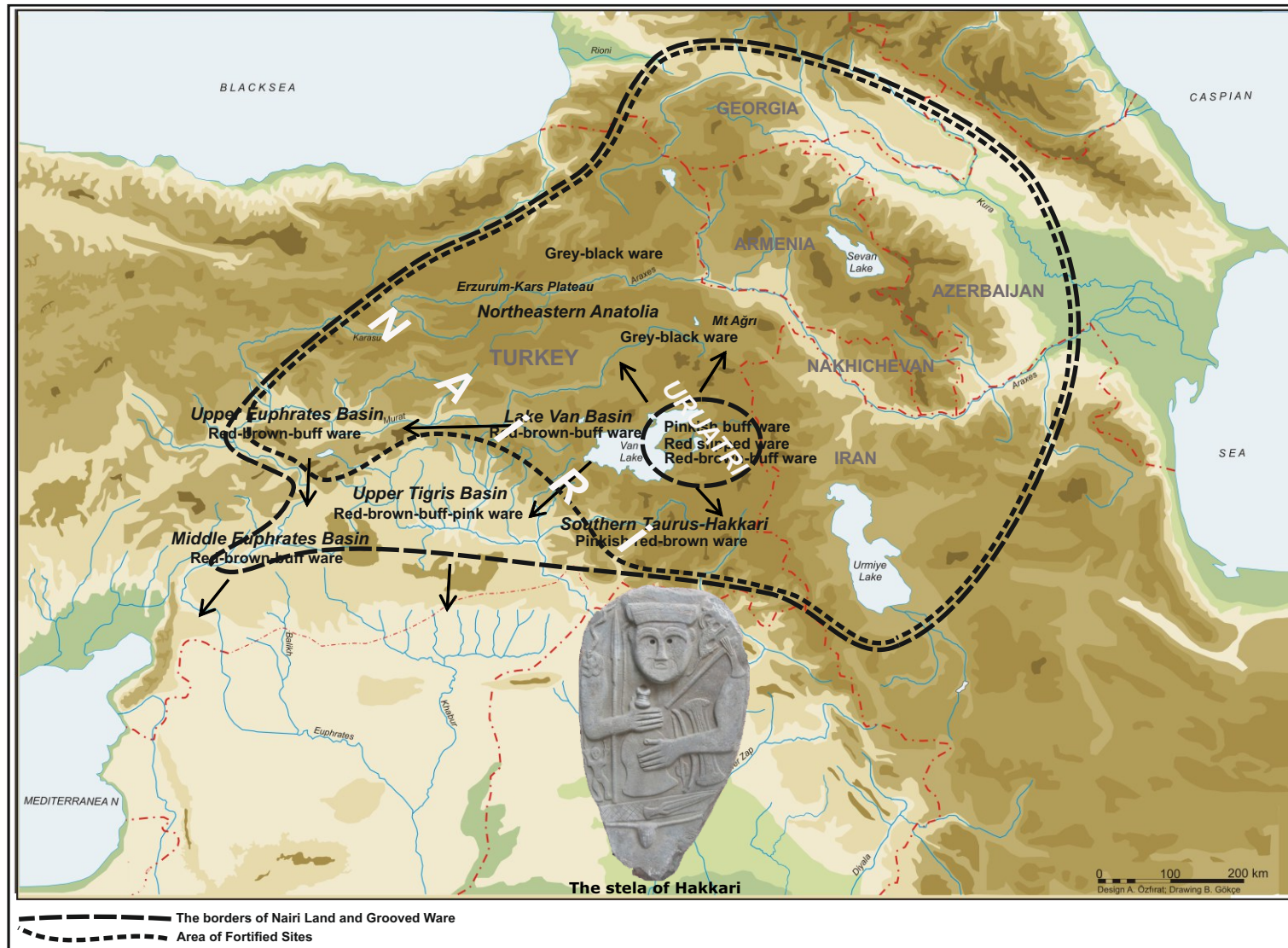
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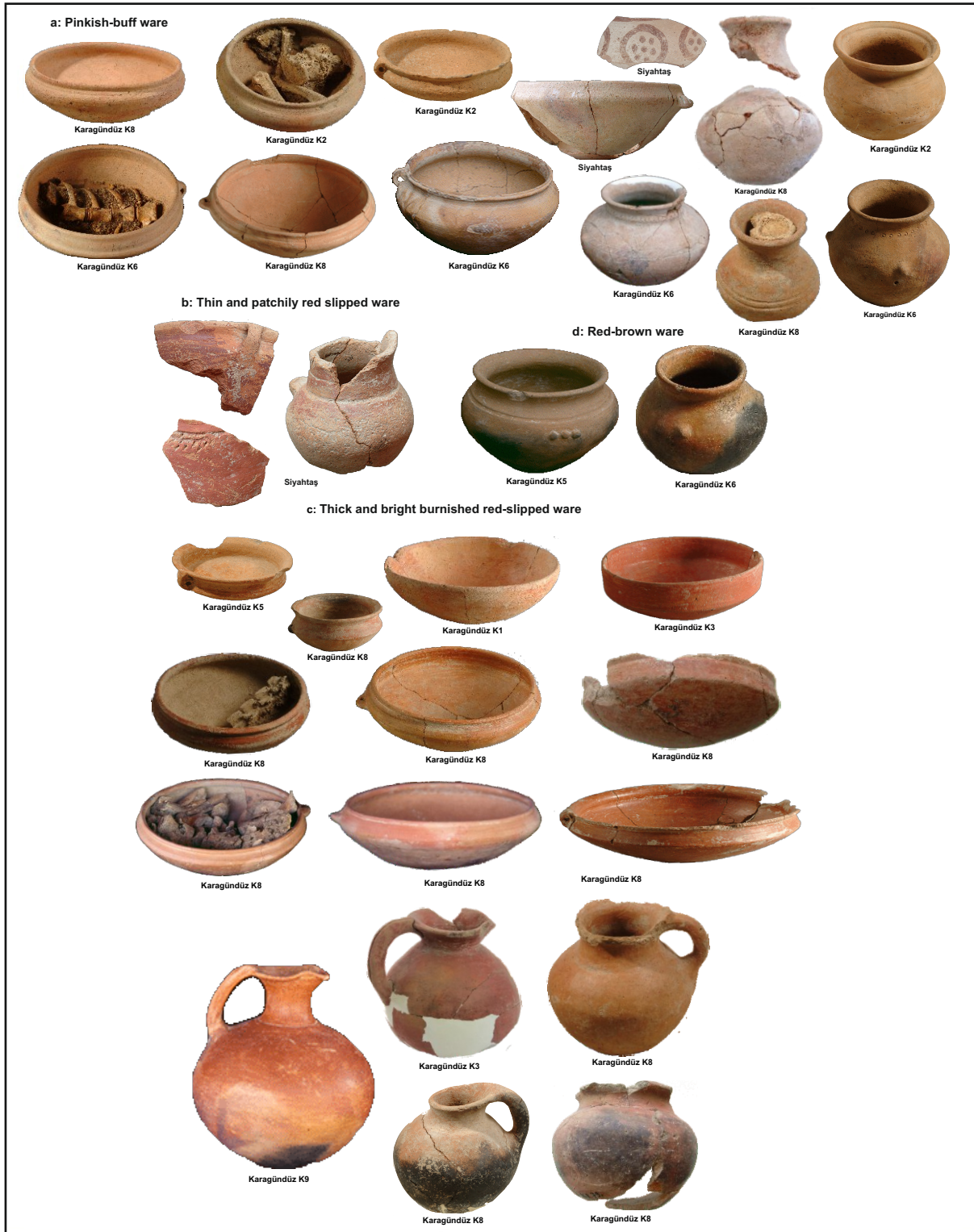
## FIGURES



**Fig. 1:** EIA excavation sites in eastern and southeastern Anatolia (Siyahtaş survey)



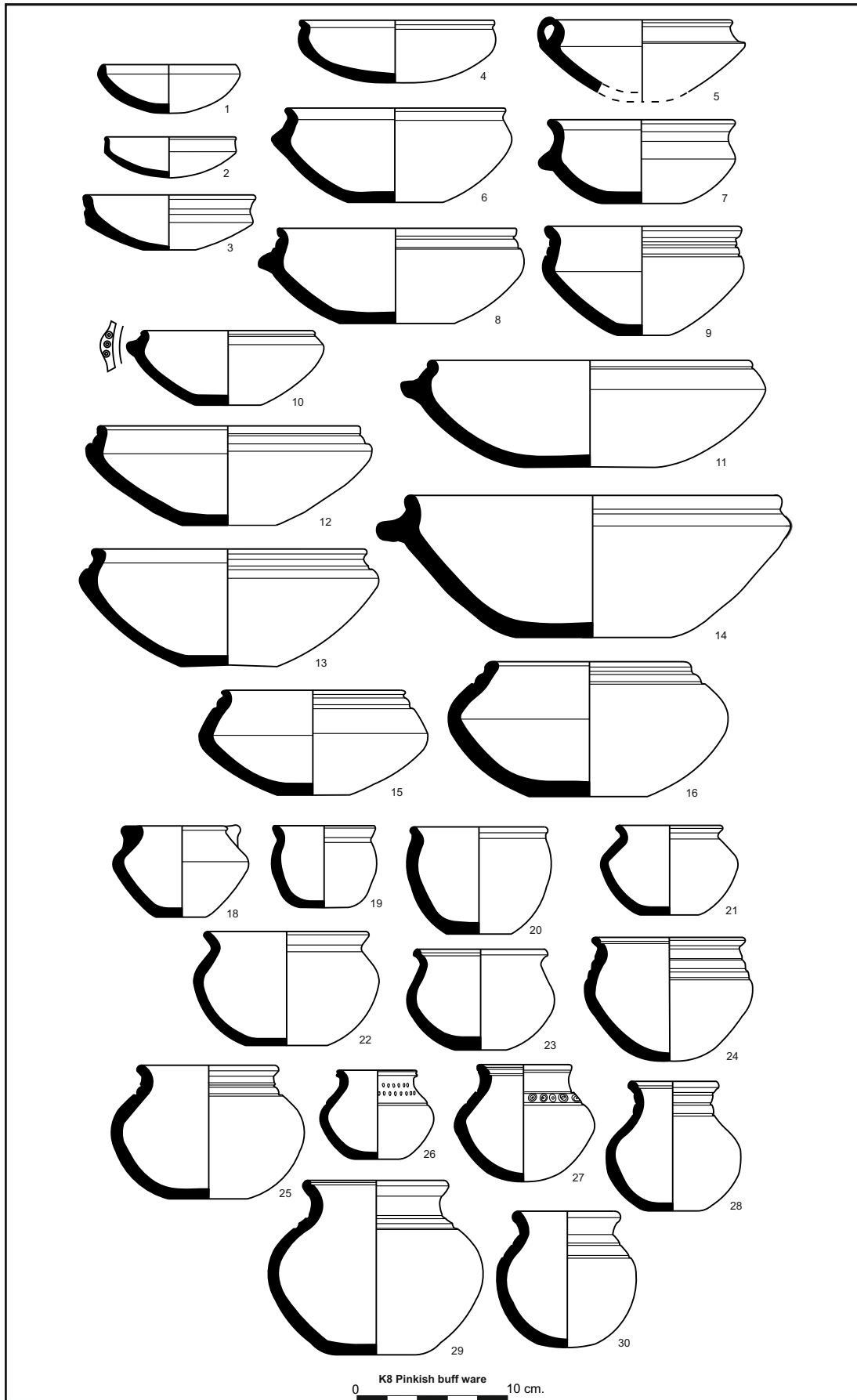
**Fig. 2:** Nairi-Uruatri Lands and spread of grooved ware in eastern and southeastern Anatolia; Area of fortified sites



**Fig. 3:** Pottery groups of Karagündüz and Siyahtaş Cemeteries

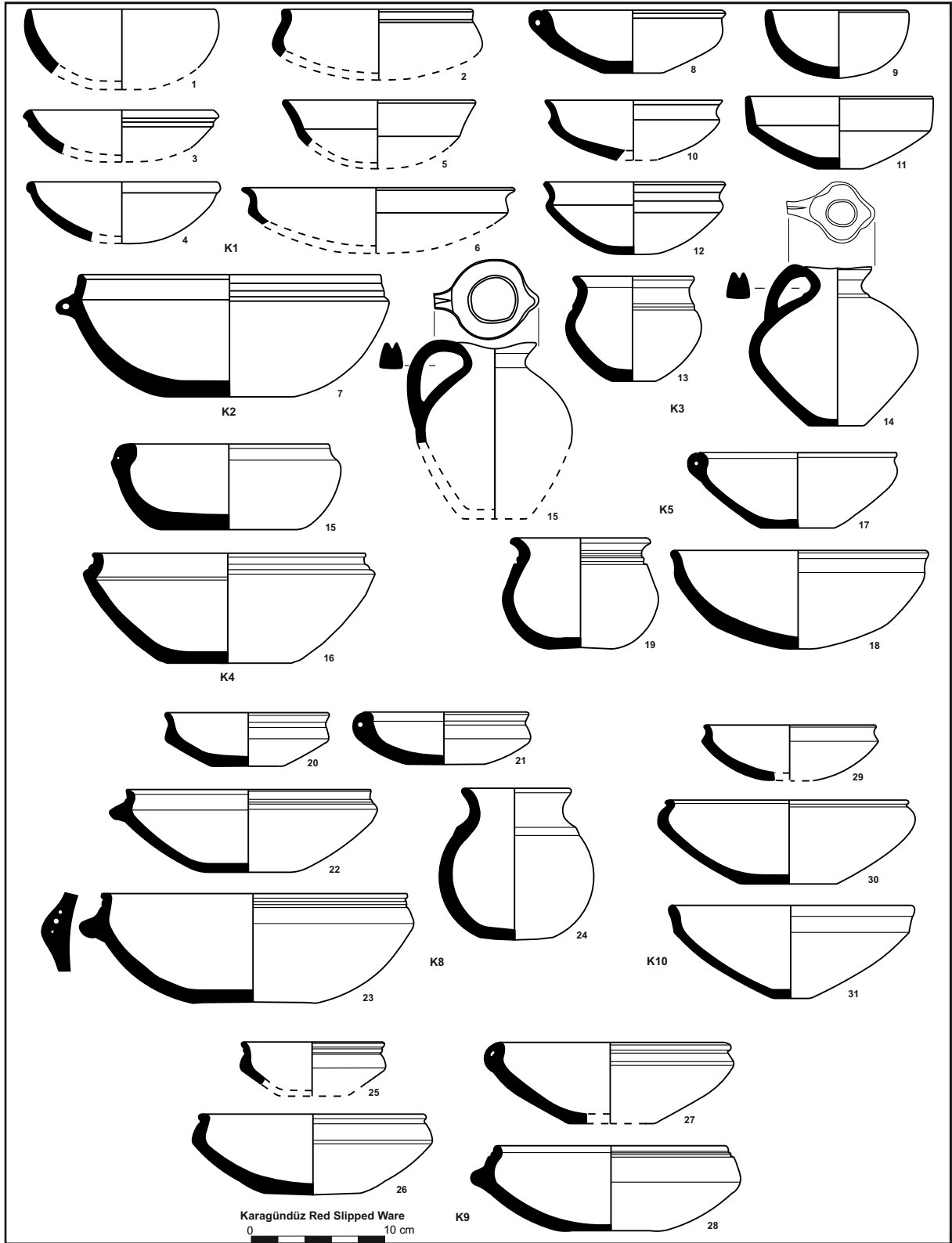


**Fig. 4:** Pottery of Karagündüz Cemetery



**Fig. 5:** Karagündüz Cemetery Pinkish-buff ware

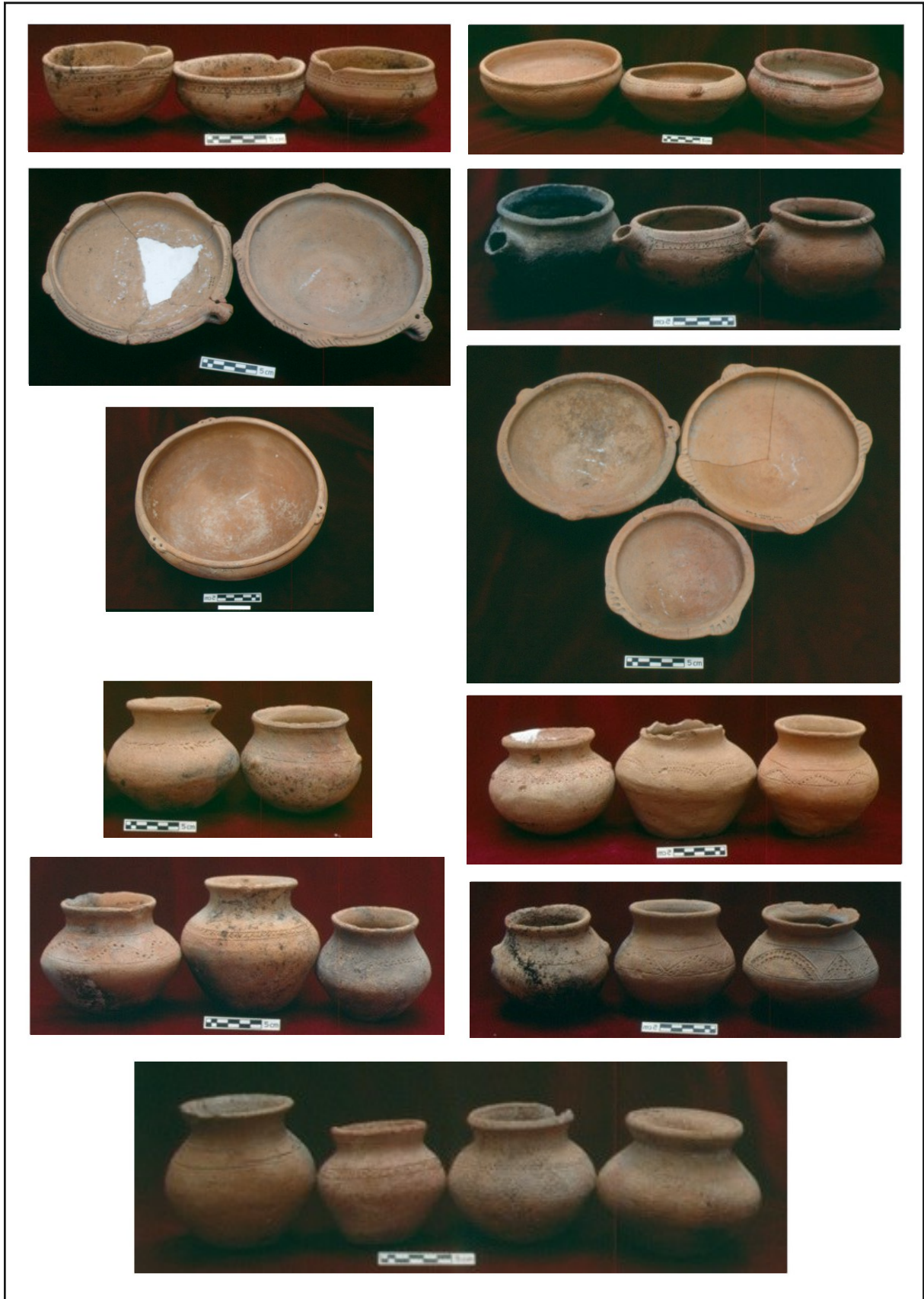




**Fig. 6:** Karagündüz Cemetery Red slipped ware (K1: 1-6, K2: 7; K3: 8-14; K4: 15-16; K5: 17-19; K8: 20-24; K9: 25-28; K10: 29-31)



**Fig. 7:** Ernis-Ünseli (Alacahan and Evditepe cemeteries) Pinkish-buff ware (1-15) and Red slipped ware (16-21)



**Fig. 8:** Ernis-Ünseli (Alacahan and Evditepe cemeteries) Pinkish-buff ware