

ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN STUDIES

SUPPLEMENT 27

CERAMICS IN TRANSITIONS

Chalcolithic Through Iron Age in
the Highlands of the Southern Caucasus and Anatolia

Edited by

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Cover: Vessel fragment from Karagündüz, Turkey. Polychrome painted pottery, second millennium BCE

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THE HIGHLAND PLATEAU OF EASTERN ANATOLIA IN
THE SECOND MILLENNIUM BCE:
MIDDLE/LATE BRONZE AGES

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In the Middle Bronze Age, there were two painted pottery traditions in and around eastern Anatolia (Fig. 1: 1). One tradition was confined to the Malatya-Elazığ region, which we know well from the latest excavations in the Keban-Karakaya dam areas.¹ The other is a completely different tradition in the high plateau of eastern Anatolia, Transcaucasia and northwestern Iran in late third and early second millennium BCE. The distribution of this second tradition spread to eastern Georgia in the north, the Caspian Sea in the east and Lake Urmia in the south.² Our surveys in the eastern Anatolian high plateau³ and excavations at Hakkâri⁴ suggest that a line drawn from Hakkâri, around the basin of Lake Van, more or less to the southern Taurus mountains in the south, and northwest through the modern cities of Muş (Bingöl Mountains), Erzurum and Artvin (eastern Karadeniz Mountains), might serve to show the extent of this tradition in the south and west. This Middle Bronze Age culture follows the Early Transcaucasian culture, or Kura-Araxes culture, in the southern area. But in the

¹ Di Nocera 1998; Oguchi 1998; Sevin 1998. For the Early Bronze Age painted pottery tradition see Marro 1997.

² Martirosyan 1964, pp. 47–70; Rubinson 1976; Abibullaev 1982, pp. 145–178; Edwards 1986; Aliev 1991; Lordkipanidze 1991, pp. 54–70; Djaparidze 1969; 1995b; Edens 1995; Khanzadian 1995, pp. 5–38; Simonyan 1996; Başşaliyev 1997, pp. 105–110; Kushnareva 1997, pp. 81–150; Puturidze 2003b.

³ Özfirat 2001a; 2001b; Marro and Özfirat 2003; 2004; 2005; Özfirat and Marro 2004; 2005; see also Çilingiroğlu 1984; Yakar 2000, pp. 410–413.

Our surveys in the eastern Anatolian high plateau have been carried out with the permission of the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, General Directorate for Monuments and Museums. I wish to express my appreciation to the General Directorate for Monuments and Museums for granting me permission to undertake the surveys since 1995. I wish to thank the University of Istanbul, University of Yüzüncü Yıl/Van BAPB, Project No: 2002-FED-093, TÜBİTAK (The Scientific and Technical Research Council of Turkey) Project No.: SBB-CNRS-2011, CNRS (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique) and the Türk Tarih Kurumu (Turkish Historical Society) for their support of this project, and I am especially grateful to Veli Sevin for providing considerable and valuable assistance.

⁴ Özfirat 2002.

north of Transcaucasia and northeast part of the eastern Anatolian high plateau, the Early Kurgan period (Martkopi-Bedeni) has been interpreted as a transitional phase and first stage of the Middle Bronze Age.

A scarcity of sites on the eastern Anatolian high plateau, as opposed to the lowland plains where most of our surveys have taken place, and the pastoral existence of the population in the second millennium BCE explain our limited awareness of this period.⁵ Archaeological research has thus mainly dealt with third and first millennia BCE settlements. Even today we do not have a detailed definition or accurate time range for this second millennium tradition in general, at least for the Anatolian high plateau. Excavations at mounds such as Karagündüz,⁶ Van Kalesi⁷ and Tilki Tepe⁸ in the Van region have not revealed any relevant stratigraphic evidence, except for scattered pottery sherds (Fig. 1). Furthermore, the amount of pottery from settlement mounds is negligible compared with pottery found in cemeteries during our survey. In contrast to the deserted settlement mounds on the plains of these regions, we have found plenty of cemeteries on the high grazing pastures.

The problem is that most finds come from large cemeteries pillaged by villagers or treasure hunters. We surveyed many of these, especially those on the southeastern and northern slopes of Mount Süphan. There is no clear evidence for the tomb types, but we can distinguish mainly simple or stone-lined pits and low burial mounds (also known as kurgan, tumulus or barrow burials) from the illegal excavations in cemeteries of the Lake Van basin. To the north, kurgan-type tombs are predominant, especially around Ağrı Dağ (Mount Ararat).

Although some of the examples of painted pottery in eastern Anatolia have been legally excavated, much of the material has been pillaged and scattered to Turkish museums. Therefore, some of the following comments are based on museum collections, as well as the excavated material.⁹

In respect to ware, the pottery is quite homogeneous. It is mostly red-brown, which probably reflects the fact that nearly all the vessels considered here were for burial use. The vessels are wheelmade. The fabric of most is brown, that of the others generally brickish red. Most show a reasonable degree of sand temper and average firing. Slips, except on the open forms, are restricted to the exterior, extending just over the rim. All are burnished to some extent, with more attention usually in the burnish of polychrome examples.

The most popular of the common forms seem to have been rounded or carinated open shapes with inturning rims for bowls (Figs 2–4: 1–5), globular or ovoid body

⁵ Özfirat 2001a; 2001b; 2002; 2005; 2006; in press; Marro and Özfirat 2003; 2004; 2005; Özfirat and Marro 2004; 2005.

⁶ Özfirat 2001a, pp. 83–85.

⁷ Özfirat 2001a, pp. 85–86.

⁸ Korfmann 1982, pp. 179–183.

⁹ Özfirat 2001a, pp. 89–104.

with neck (Figs 8–11) for jars and closed shapes for pots (Figs 5–7). Rims are generally simple or outturning; a relatively small number are thickened on the exterior. The lips are usually offset, sometimes emphasized by a single groove.

Ornamentation falls into two styles of painting: monochrome and polychrome on red-brown ware. Ornamentation on both is strictly limited to frieze-like panels on the upper exterior vessel surfaces. The monochrome designs are executed in black over brickish red to brown slips (Figs 3: 5–9; 4: 3–4; 6: 1–5, 9, 11; 7: 1–3; 10: 1–8; 11: 1–2); a few designs are in brown. More attention in respect to motif and technique is given to vessels with polychrome painting (Figs 3: 1–4, 10; 4: 5; 6: 6–8, 10; 7: 4; 8: 9; 11: 3). A thick cream paint slip was applied over the panels to be decorated. This second layer of slip forms a background for the motifs, which are more complex and varied than those in monochrome. Black and brickish red are generally used for the painted designs; occasionally, the pattern is in brown and red. Very few examples show designs in one color, black or red applied over a cream slip. A small group of vessels with motifs outlined in black paint and filled with cream slip is also among the polychrome wares. The most striking motifs are those depicting animals, which have been executed in various styles.

Not surprisingly, undecorated vessels are infrequent in the museum collections, but we collected plenty of undecorated pieces in our survey. They seem to be identical to the painted pottery in form and ware (Figs 2: 1–14; 4: 1, 6; 5: 1–6; 7: 5; 8: 1–8; 9: 1–11). There is also incised decoration in red-brown ware (Figs 2: 15; 5: 7–8) and black-burnished ware (Figs 2: 12; 4: 1), some of which are decorated with punctate ornament, as attested from survey material and museum collections (Fig. 7: 6).

Throughout the Middle Bronze Age and into the Late Bronze Age this tradition developed differently in diverse regions and thus acquired increasingly local characteristics. According to these characteristics, four distinct ceramic traditions are defined and discussed: 1) Trialeti/Trialeti-Kirovakan/Trialeti-Vanadzor; 2) Karmir Berd/Tazekend; 3) Sevan-Uzerlik, and 4) Van-Urmia/Karmir Vank/Kızıl Vank.¹⁰ Each tradition is found within eastern Anatolia proper.¹¹

The vessels from the cemeteries of Ani,¹² Küçük Çatma (Maly Pergit)¹³ and Sos Höyük IV¹⁴ resemble those of Trialeti and comprise black-burnished and monochrome painted wares. It is possible that the large number of monochrome painted and black-burnished wares in the collections of the Kars and Erzurum museums suggest that the area east of Erzurum is critical in determining a western limit for the painted pottery

¹⁰ Martirosyan 1964, pp. 54–60; Çilingiroğlu 1990; Edwards 1986, pp. 57; Areshyan *et al.* 1990, p. 74; Kushnareva 1997, pp. 89–149; Khanzadian 1995, pp. 29–37; Simonyan 1996, pp. 54–57; Puturidze 2003a; 2003b; Rubinson 2004; 2005. Avetisyan and Bobokhyan this volume.

¹¹ Özfiat 2001a, pp. 17–26; 2001b; 2002.

¹² Özfiat 2001a, pp. 68–70.

¹³ Martirosyan 1964, p. 61.

¹⁴ Sagona 2000, pp. 337–338; 2004, pp. 491–493.

zone. According to excavations at Sos Höyük (levels V–IV), the Kura-Araxes tradition, defined by a particularly gritty fabric, continued into the second millennium BCE.¹⁵ Painted pottery forms a very small part of the tradition in this area of Pasinler. By contrast, there, during the Kura-Araxes through Martkopi-Bedeni to Trialeti, black-burnished wares are dominant. The Trialeti tradition should be placed outside the painted pottery zone or at least be considered on its periphery.

The area around Ağrı Dağ seems to fall within the borders of the Karmir Berd (Tazekend) and Sevan-Uzerlik traditions. This northerly area is interesting for its burial mounds (kurgans). We can propose that the kurgans at Suluçem IV,¹⁶ Gre Herşe,¹⁷ and Bozkurt (Mollacem)¹⁸ on the slope of Ağrı Dağ reflect the same structural characteristics that are seen at several cemeteries in the southern Caucasus.¹⁹ The monochrome painted (Fig. 10: 1, 3; 11: 2) and punctated black-burnished pottery (Fig. 7: 6) demonstrate elements typical of Karmir Berd and Sevan-Uzerlik styles from these kurgans found in our survey, and in the Kars Museum. But the proportion of monochrome painted pottery is less than black-burnished ware in the survey data and Kars museum holdings.

The fourth of these painted categories, Van-Urmia, is distributed in Anatolia roughly from Hâkkari in the south, to the south of the Erzurum region in the north (Fig. 1: 2). There are plenty of large cemeteries from this group mainly near the western shores of Lake Van, such as Yuvadamlı, Eriklik, Çaygeldi and Elmakaya (Figs. 2–6; 7: 1–4; 8–9; 10: 2, 5–8; 11: 3).²⁰ The pottery is held in the museums of Erzurum, Van and Ahlat. Together with these sizeable holdings, many other Turkish museum collections have a lot of Van-Urmia painted pottery. Vessels without ornamentation in the Van-Urmia tradition represent 25 percent of the material in the museum collections, containers with monochrome painting constitute 39 percent, and those with polychrome ornament 36 percent. But unpainted pottery is more conspicuous in the material collected on survey, comprising approximately 60 percent. Owing to the funerary function of painted pottery, these percentages should not be interpreted as reflecting the actual proportion of the wares that might have occurred in daily use. Polychrome painting ware appear only in the Van-Urmia group and not among the other painted ware groups.

Together with the black-burnished wares of the Middle Bronze Age, those of Late Bronze Age repertoires named after three other regions (Trialeti-Vanadzor, Sevan-Uzerlik and Tazekend/Karmir Berd) do not seem to have existed within the region of the Van-Urmia. The region where Van-Urmia material occurs has just polychrome

¹⁵ Sagona 2000.

¹⁶ Özfirat 2001a, pp. 71–75; 2001b, pp. 29–31.

¹⁷ Marro and Özfirat 2003, pp. 391–393; Özfirat and Marro 2004, pp. 18–21.

¹⁸ Marro and Özfirat 2004, pp. 234–236; Özfirat and Marro 2005, p. 302.

¹⁹ Aliev 1991, pp. 56–79; Djaparidze 1995a; 1995b; Kushnareva 1997, pp. 81–149.

²⁰ Özfirat 2001a, pp. 77–83; 2001b, pp. 31–40.

painted wares and their unpainted variations. In contrast, polychrome painted ware does not occur in the northern part of southern Caucasia, where Middle Bronze Age pottery is monochrome painted and black-burnished ware.²¹ With the disappearance of painted pottery in Georgia and northern Armenia, a new ceramic style, black, gray and buff wares with incised design, appears. These typical Late Bronze Age repertoires are known as Lchashen-Metsamor I-II and Lchaschen-Tsitelgori traditions.²² In the Ağrı Dağ region, such southern Caucasian Late Bronze Age wares are attested in our survey material, and Middle Bronze Age black-burnished and monochrome painted wares occur. The Kars museum collection also has the same categories of ceramics. The painted pottery seems less frequent than black-burnished pottery of the Middle Bronze Age in this northeast part of the eastern Anatolian high plateau.

The sequence from Haftavan Tepe B-C,²³ Geoy Tepe D-C,²⁴ and Dinkha Tepe IVD²⁵ provide important stylistic and chronological data for the pottery sequence within the eastern Anatolian high plateau. The pottery from the less definitive stratigraphical sequences of Kül Tepe II and Shakhtakhtı in Nakhichevan, also shows a similar pattern of development. The Middle Bronze Age/Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age painted pottery of Nakhichevan sites has been studied according to four phases.²⁶ Combinations of Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age shapes together with the polychrome painting style occur in the Nakhichevan and Urmia regions. In Nakhichevan (Kül Tepe I levels III-IV, Kültepe II Level III, Kızıl Vank 1b-2, Shor Tepe, Şakhtakhtı and Çulfa) the polychrome painting continued not only throughout the Late Bronze Age, but — if rather simplified in pattern with monochrome painting — into the Early Iron Age period exemplified by spouted vessels. Also we can see polychrome painted pottery continuity into the Iranian Iron Age I, appearing with gray wares at Hasanlu and Dinkha, when a new shape, the spouted vessel is introduced in gray ware.²⁷ In addition, Geoy Tepe has some spouted vessels with polychrome painting.²⁸ Polychrome spouts do not occur at Dinkha, but there is a tall-necked polychrome painted jar in an Iron Age I burial and another was found at Hasanlu. A similar development seems to have occurred in the Van-Erzurum region. Contrary to the affinities with the Urmia

²¹ A polychrome painted jar from Aruç Tomb 2 was discussed by Avetisyan and Bobokhyan during a pottery workshop held at Barnard College, Columbia University, see Avetisyan and Bobokhyan this volume.

²² Martirosyan 1964, pp. 71–160; Khachatryan 1979; Lordkipanidze 1991, pp. 70–73; Khanzadian 1995, pp. 39–91; Pizchelauri 1995; Avetisyan and Bobokhyan this volume.

²³ Edwards 1983.

²⁴ Burton-Brown 1951, pp. 69–140.

²⁵ Rubinson 1994; 2004; 2005.

²⁶ Abibullaev 1959, pp. 85–108; 1982: pp. 153–174; Aliev 1977, pp. 5–91; 1991: pp. 93–112; Bahşaliyev 1997, pp. 105–115; Seyidov 2003.

²⁷ Rubinson 2004, p. 663; 2005.

²⁸ Also see some monochrome and polychrome painted pottery from Geoy Tepe B: Burton-Brown 1951, pp. 141–152.

region in the Middle Bronze Age, the region from Van to south of Erzurum underwent developments²⁹ that are closer to Nakhichevan in the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age, when painted wares, especially polychrome, continued until *ca.* 1400/1300 BCE in both areas.³⁰

Finally, we can suggest that the densest concentration of Middle Bronze Age painted wares occurs in the highlands between the Kura and Araxes rivers. The most important sites of the culture seem to be located along the middle Araxes valley in Armenia and Nakhichevan such as Kültepe II, Kızıl Vank, Metsamor, Elar and Verin Naver. Although sites such as Trialeti, Meskheti and Uzerlik Tepe in eastern Georgia and Azerbaijan can be considered representative of the culture, the painted pottery appears to have been relatively insignificant in their ceramic repertoires, which were in fact dominated by black-burnished wares.³¹ A similar pattern seems to have occurred in the northeastern part of the Erzurum region and the area around Kars. In contrast, the painted pottery becomes dense in the highland of between Van and the southern Erzurum regions (Van-Urmia tradition). There the material comes mainly from large cemeteries (Yuvadami, Eriklik, Çaygeldi and Elmakaya); the other sites marked on our map (Fig. 1: 2) have one or two pieces of these painted ceramics. The Van-Erzurum and Urmia regions are on the southern and western borders of this painted pottery zone. Haftavan Tepe and Geoy Tepe in the Urmia region, and the Sariveli and Çelebibağ³² mounds in the Lake Van region appear to be important settlements for the Van-Urmia pottery tradition. But settlements are rare in Lake Urmia and Van districts and their size, stratigraphy and density seem weak in comparison to the Armenian and Nakhichevan sites. In light of this evidence, it would seem that an appropriate designation for this early second millennium BCE pottery would be 'Araxes Painted Ware'.

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²⁹ Sevin 1996; 2003; 2004; 2005.

³⁰ Özfırat 2001a, pp. 122–123.

³¹ Ismayilov 1981, pp. 38–39; Seyidov 2003.

³² The excavations conducted at Çelebibağ were focused on the Seljuk cemetery but large quantities of Early Bronze Age pottery and a number of Middle Bronze age monochrome and polychrome painted sherds were brought to light in a sounding opened on the western part of the mound. The material from this sounding is now stored in the archaeology department of the University of Yüzüncü Yıl, Van. We would like here to thank A. Uluçam for entrusting us with this material for study.

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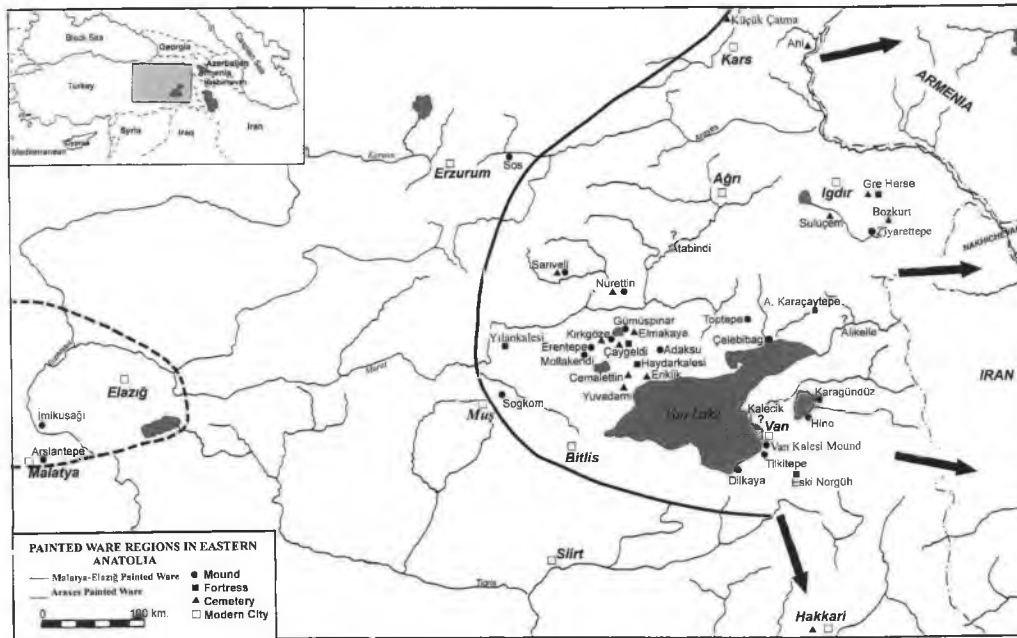
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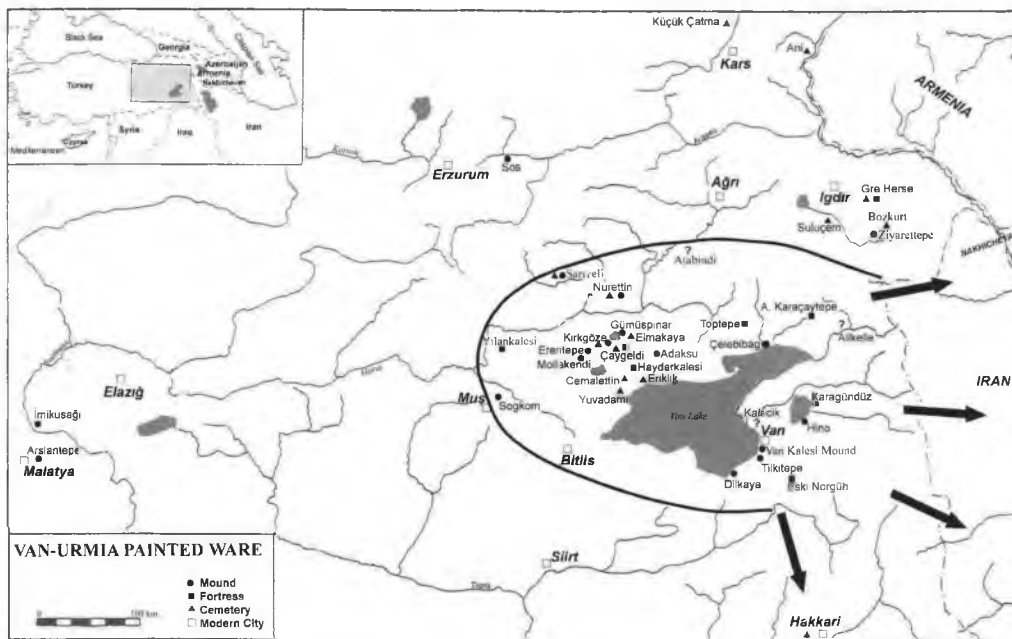
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Fig. 1: 1. Map showing painted ware regions in eastern Anatolia;
2. Map showing range of Van-Urmiya painted ware.

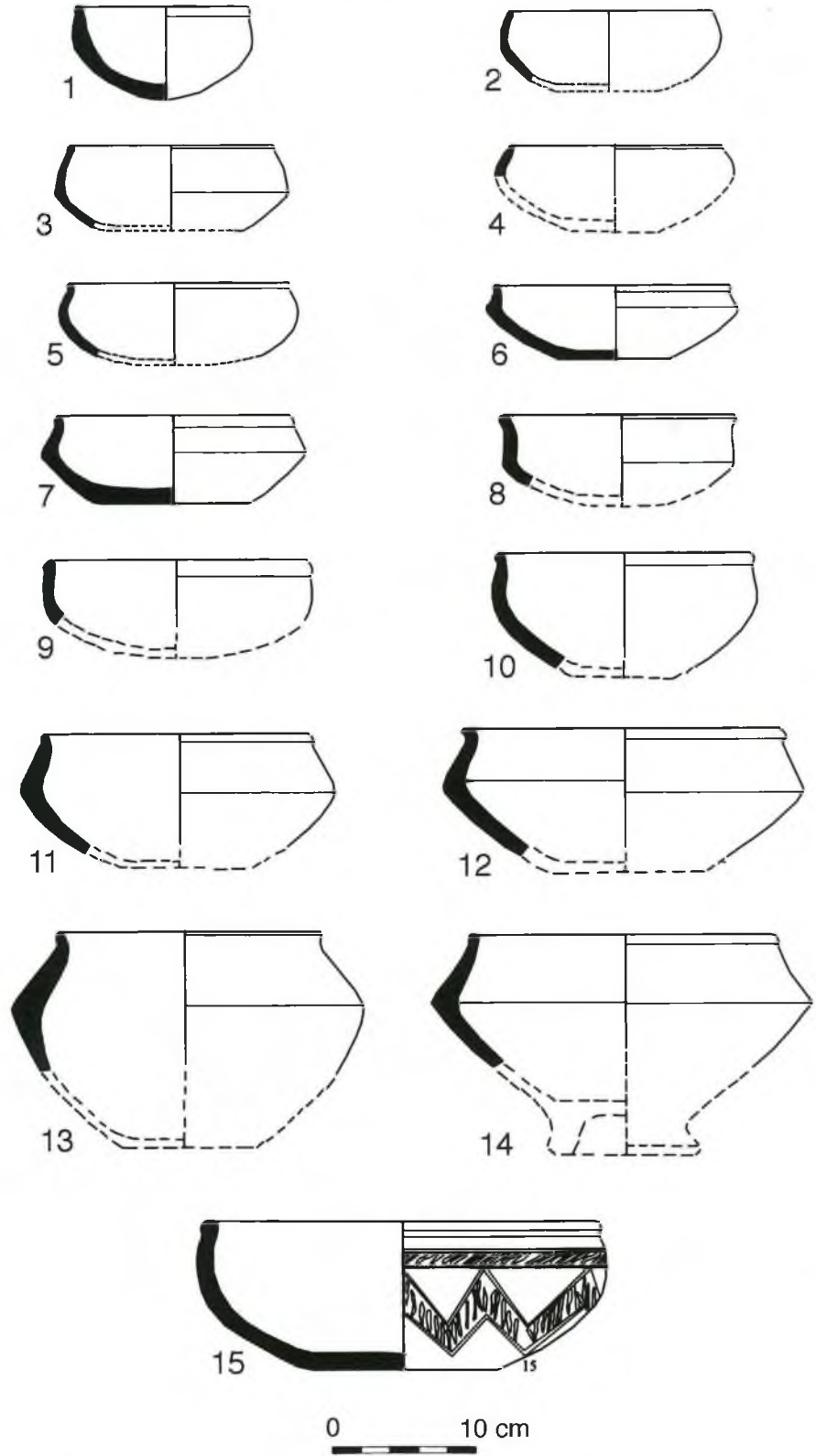


Fig. 2: Bowls: Red-brown ware, unpainted, and incised decoration (1. Eriklik; 2. Toptepe; 3. Aşağı Karaçay; 4. Eski Norgüh; 5. Yalçınkaya; 6-7. Yuvadami; 8-9. Elmakaya; 10-11. Yuvadami; 13. Eriklik; 14. Yuvadami; 15. Kırkgöze); Black burnished ware (12: Cemaleddin).

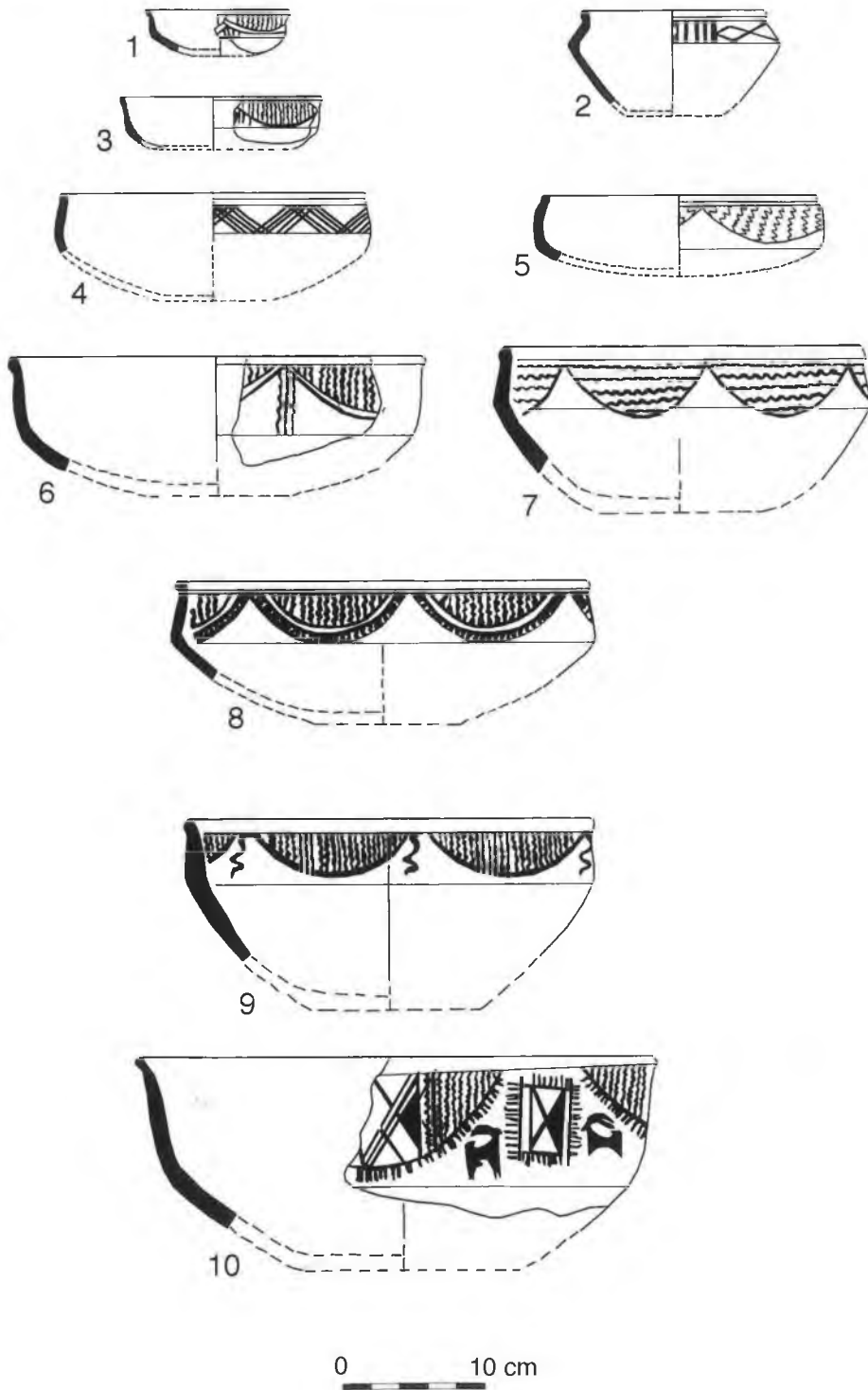


Fig. 3: Bowls: Monochrome and polychrome painted
 (1. Çaygeldi; 2. Hakkari M1 grave; 3. Çaygeldi; 4-5. Hakkâri M1 grave; 6. Elmakaya;
 7. Nurettin; 8-9. Elmakaya; 10. Çaygeldi).



Fig. 4: 1. Bowls: Red-brown ware, unpainted (Yuvadami); 2. Bowls: Black burnished ware (Yuvadami); 3. Bowl: Red-brown ware, monochrome painted (Nurettin); 4. Bowl: Red-brown ware, monochrome painted (Elmakaya); 5. Bowl: Red-brown ware, polychrome painted (Çaygeldi); 6. Pots: Red-brown ware, unpainted (Yuvadami).

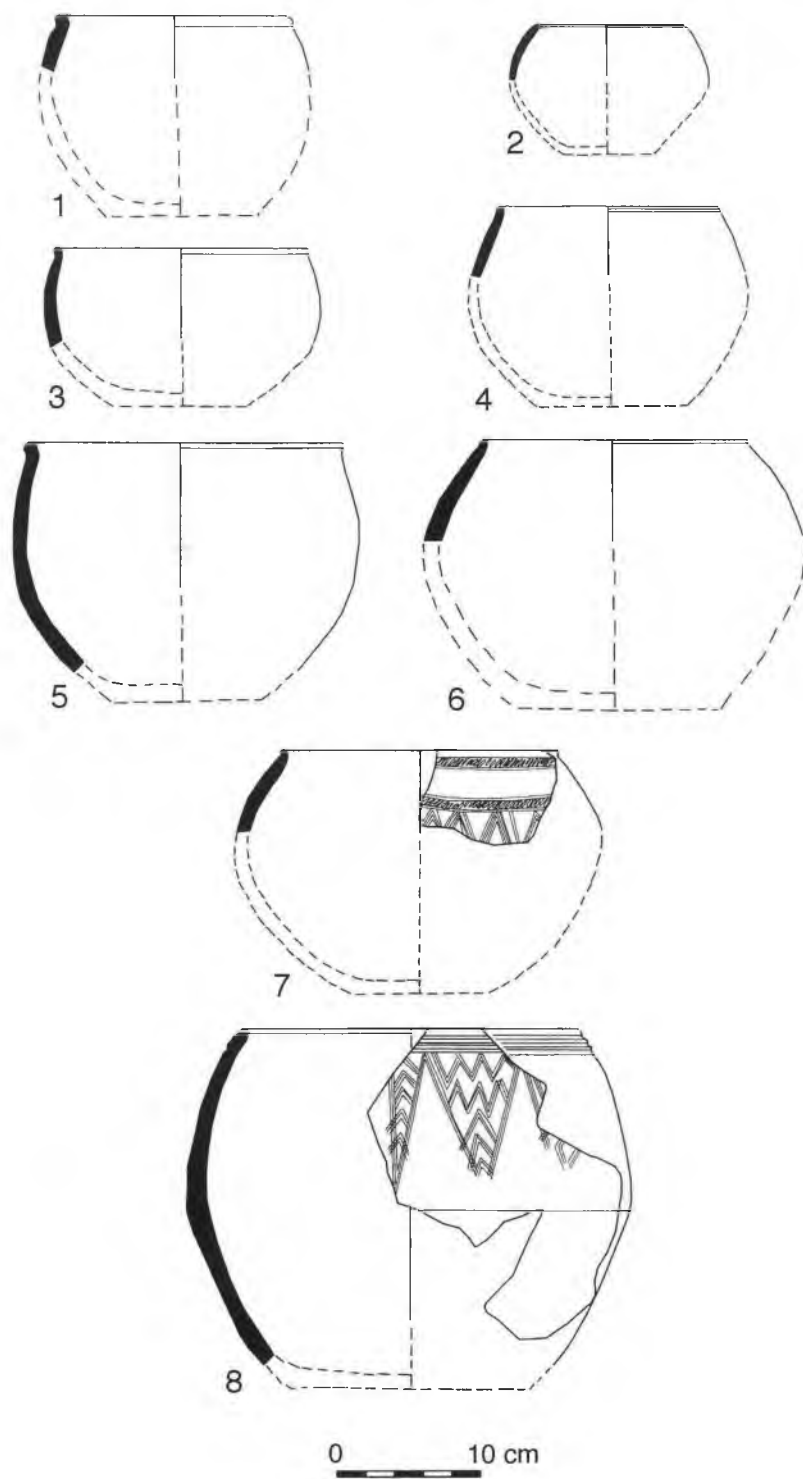


Fig. 5: Pots: Red-brown ware, unpainted and incised decoration (1–6. Yuvadami; 7–8. Eriklik).

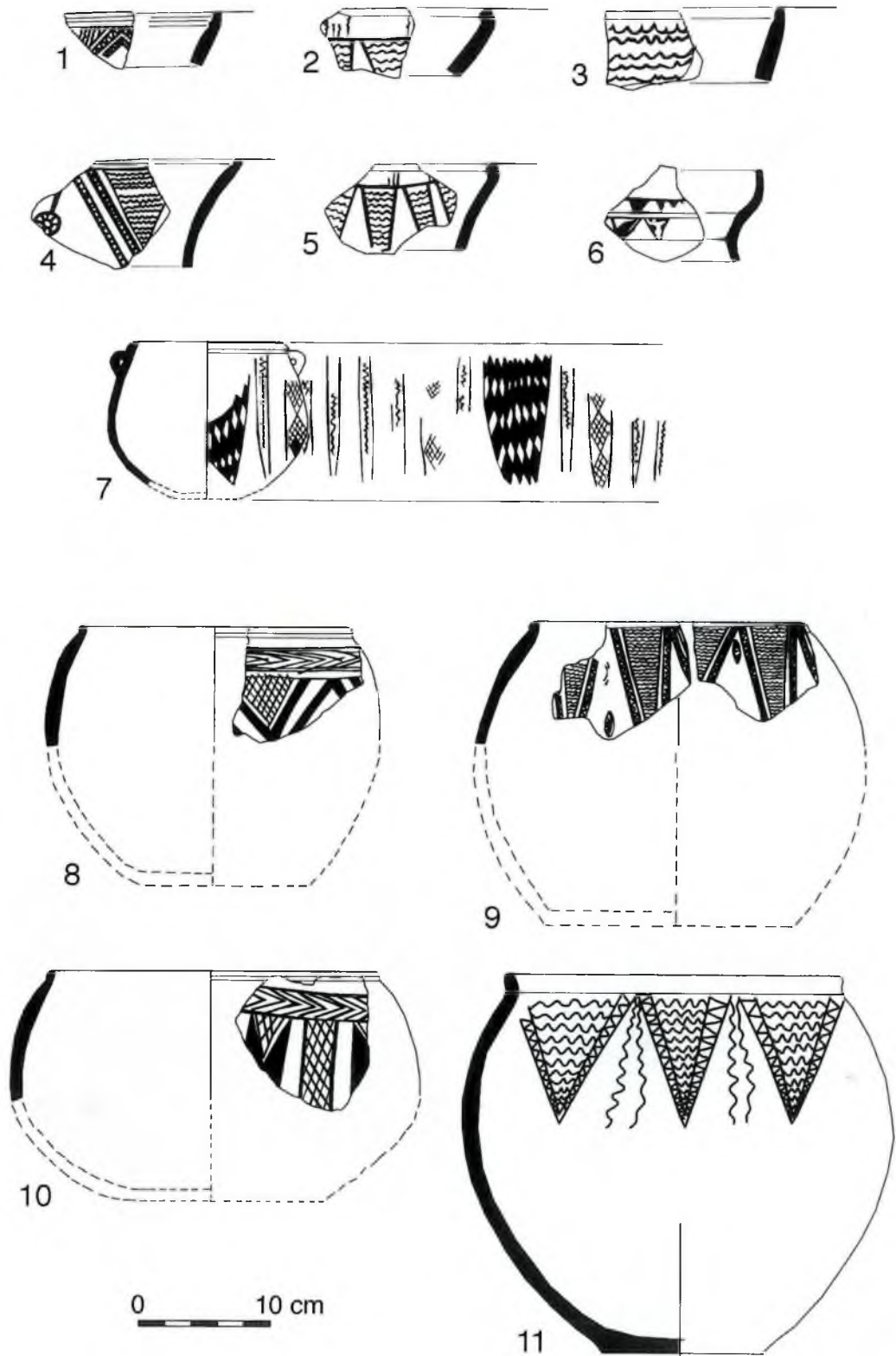


Fig. 6: Pots: Red-brown ware, monochrome and polychrome painted (1. Çaygeldi; 2-4. Elmakaya; 6-7. Hakkâri M1 grave; 8. Eriklik; 9. Elmakaya; 10. Eriklik; 11. Nurettin).

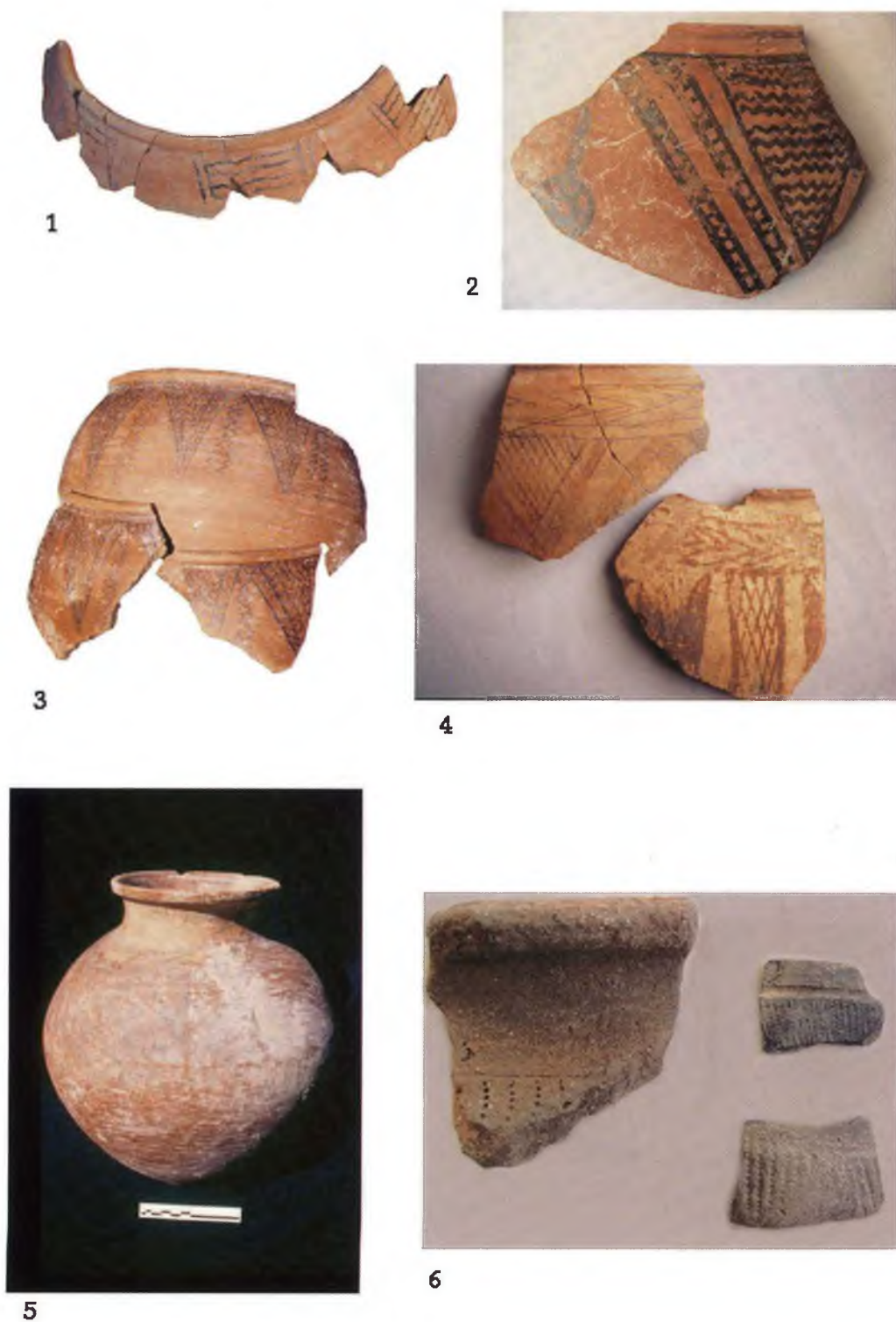


Fig. 7: 1. Pot: Red-brown ware, monochrome painted (Yuvadami);
 2. Pot: Red-brown ware, monochrome painted (Eriklik); 3. Pot: Red-brown ware,
 monochrome painted (Nurettin); 4. Pots: Red-brown ware, polychrome painted (Eriklik);
 5. Jar: Red-brown ware, unpainted (Nurettin); 6. Jars: Black burnished ware,
 incised decoration (Gre Herşe; Kasım Tığı; Karakoyunlu).

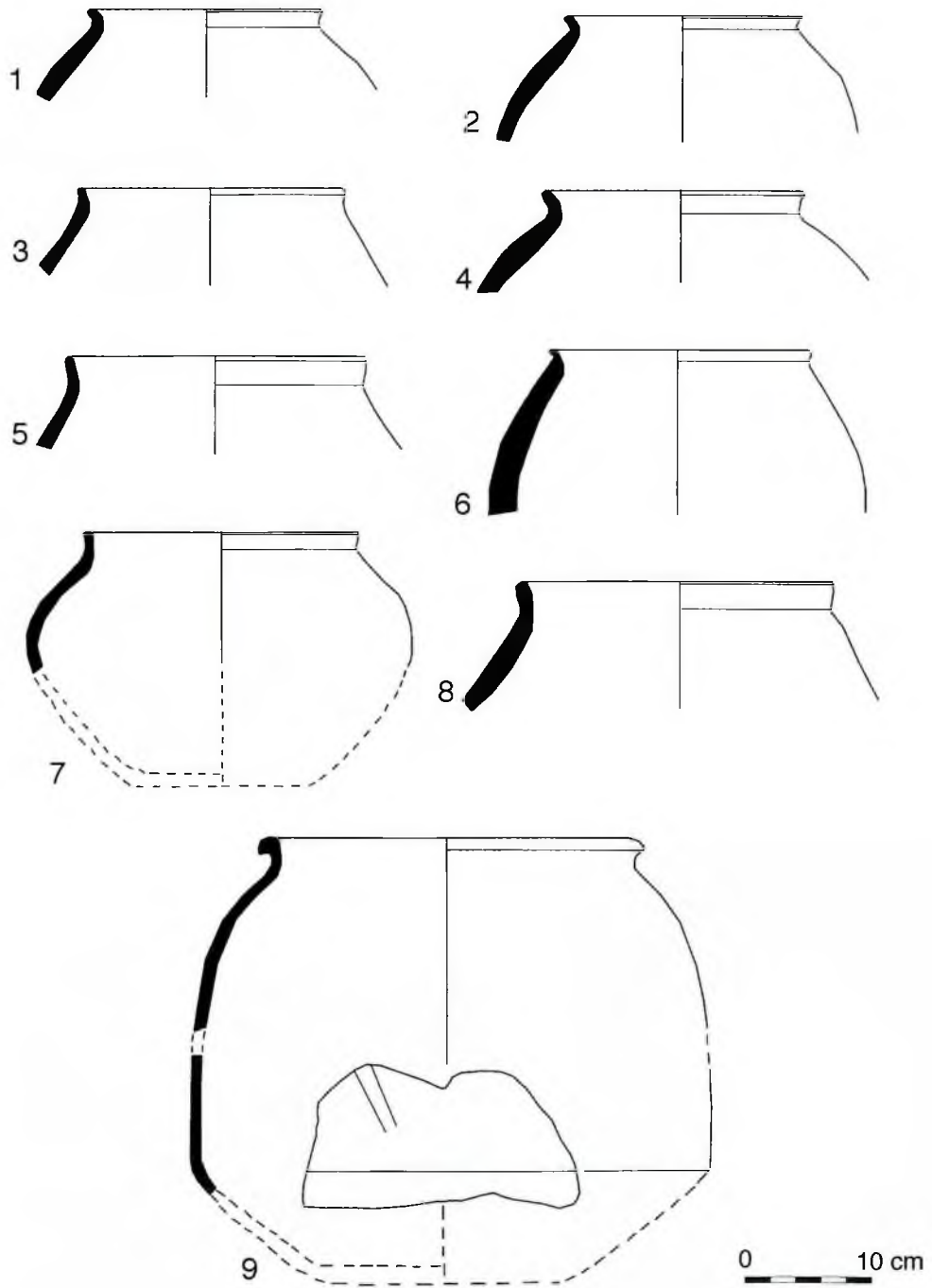


Fig. 8: Jars: Red-brown ware, unpainted and polychrome painted (1-6. Yuvadamı; 7. Hakkâri M1 grave; 8. Yuvadamı; 9. Hakkâri M1 grave).

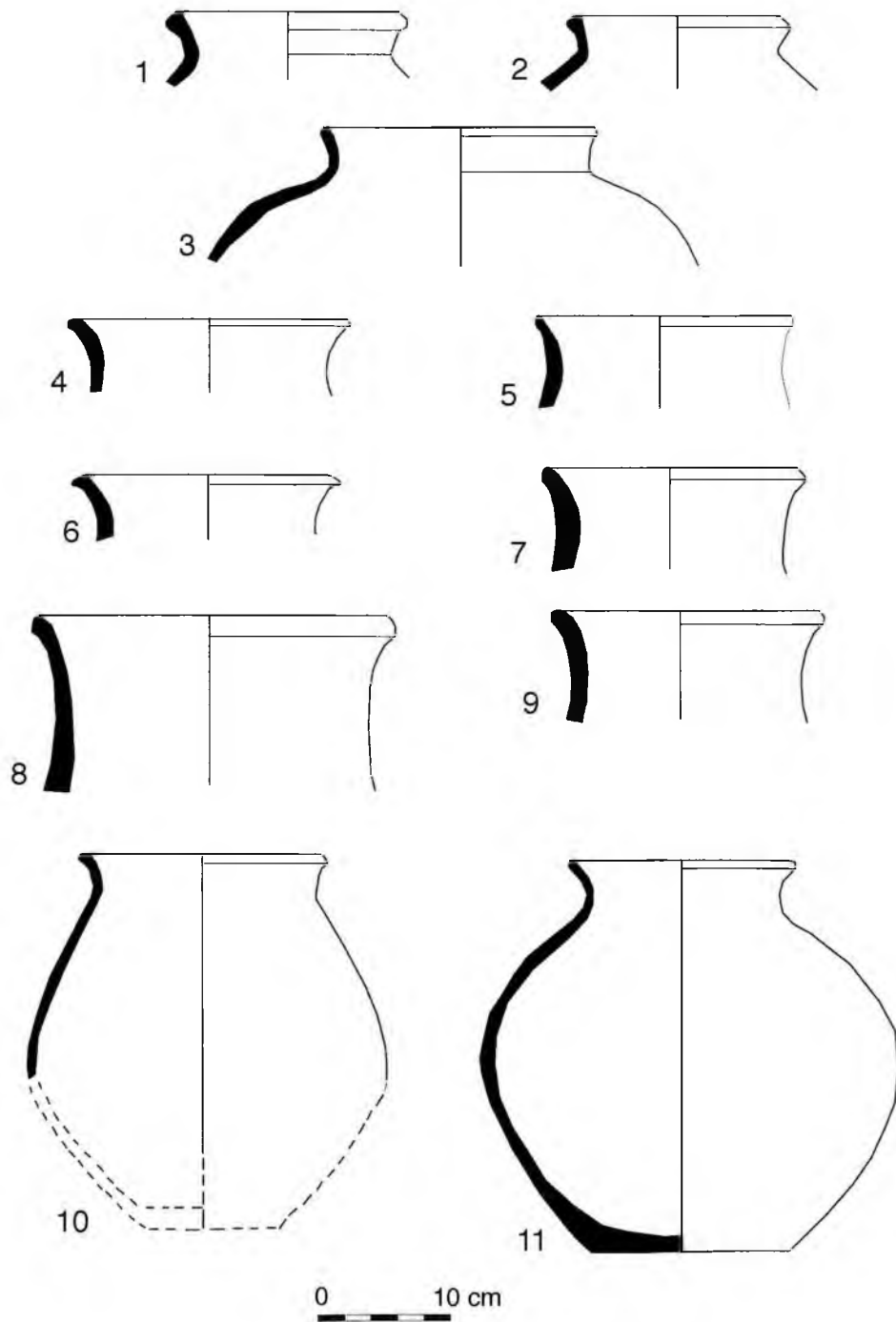


Fig. 9: Jars: Red-brown ware, unpainted
(1-7. Yuvadamı; 8. Yalçinkaya; 9-10. Yuvadamı; 11. Nurettin).

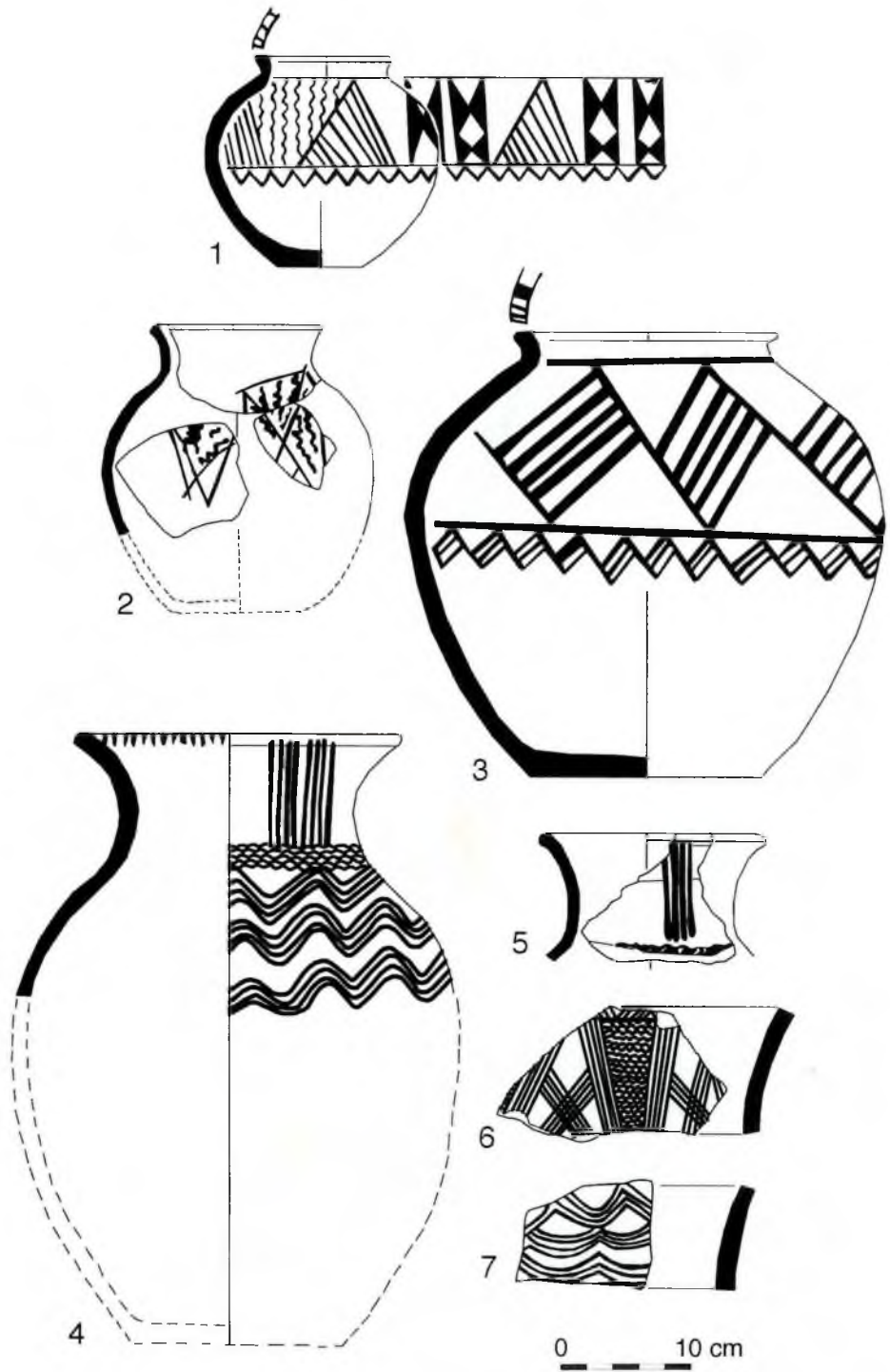


Fig. 10: Jars: Red-brown ware, monochrome painted (1. Suluçem; 2. Hakkâri M1 grave; 3. Suluçem; 4. Elmakaya; 5. Ziyarettepe; 6-7. Elmakaya).



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Fig. 11: 1. Jar: Red-brown ware, monochrome painted (Elmakaya); 2. Jar: Red-brown ware, monochrome painted (Suluçem); 3. Jar: Red-brown ware, polychrome painted (Karagündüz).