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ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS AT NAKHCHIVAN TEPE SETTLEMENT

NAHÇIVAN TEPE YERLEŞMESİNDE ARKEOLOJİK KAZILAR

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Abstract

In 2019, excavations of the Nakhchivan Tepe settlement were found a Neolithic layer which characterized ceramic products with impression ornament. Finding allows reviewing the connections between the Neolithic cultures of Mill Plain, Karabakh and the basin of Lake Urmia. On the basis of research, it can be said that the cultures of the Mill Plain and Karabakh, which are characterized by impression ornament, contributed to the formation of Dalma Tepe culture. It can be assumed that the area of formation of Dalma Tepe culture covered the territories of Nakhchivan and the basin of Lake Urmia. Research shows that Nakhchivan Tepe settlement was part of the area of Dalma Tepe culture formation. Thus it can be concluded that the culture of Dalma Tepe, which appeared at the junction of the borders of the Middle East and the South Caucasus, reflects the traditions of the cultures of these two regions. This culture from the main center spread south of Lake Urmia, to Iran, Iraq and East Anatolia.

Keywords: South Caucasus, Karabakh, Nakhchivan Tepe, North-West Iran, Impression Ceramics, Painted Pottery.

Öz

2019 yılı kazıları sırasında Nahçıvan Tepe yerleşmesinde Neolitik Çağ'a ait yapı katı bulunmuş ve bu tabakadan ele geçirilen baskı bezemeli çanak çömlek Mil bozkırları, Karabağ ve Urmiye Havzası'nın Neolitik kültürleri ile ilişki kurmak için olanak tanımıştır. Araştırmalara dayanarak söyleyebiliriz ki, baskı bezemeli çanak çömleğin özgü olduğu Mil bozkırları ve Karabağın

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Neolitik kültürlerinin etkisi Dalma Tepe kültürünün yerleşmesine neden olmuştur. Bizim fikrimize göre, Dalma Tepe kültürünün yerleşme alanı Nahçıvan'ı ve Urmiye Havzası'nı kapsamıştır. Araştırmalar Nahçıvan Tepe yerleşmesinin Dalma Tepe kültürünün yerleşme alanına girdiğini kanıtlamaktadır. Böylelikle, böyle bir sonuca varabiliriz ki, Yakın Doğu ve Güney Kafkasya'nın sınırında ortaya çıkan Dalma Tepe kültürü bu iki bölgenin kültür özelliklerini yansıtmıştır. Bu kültür öz anavatanından Urmiye Havzası'nın güneyine, İran, Irak ve Doğu Anadolu'ya yayılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Güney Kafkasya, Karabağ, Nahçıvan Tepe, Kuzeypatı İran, Baskı Bezemeli Çanak Çömlek, Boyalı Çanak Çömlek.

Introduction

Studies from 2000-2019 in the territory of Azerbaijan revealed new Neolithic and Chalcolithic Period sites, which make it possible to trace the progressive stages of these cultures, as well as the connections with these sites and regions in the Middle East. Based on studies, it can be said that the ties between the regions of the Middle East and the South Caucasus were mutual. But in archaeological literature, researchers usually argue for the unilateral influence of the cultures of the Middle East on the culture of the South Caucasus. Nevertheless, studies show that the South Caucasus was one of the main cultural centers of peace, and the cultures of this region, in turn, influenced those of the Middle East. In this regard, it can be said that in the second half of the VI millennium BC, similar features appear in the Neolithic cultures of the Mil Steppe and Karabakh. Groups of ceramics characterized by an impression ornament are found among these sites. Similar ceramics are also characteristic of the Neolithic layer of the settlement of Nakhchivan Tepe. Impressed ceramics are also characteristic of the culture of Dalma Tepe, and are found in Northwestern Iran. Undoubtedly, the development of painted ceramics of Northwestern Iran was influenced to some extent by the cultural centers of the Zagros and of Mesopotamia¹, however, researchers have expressed the opinion that the painted ceramics of the Dalma Tepe culture, which reflects the influence of Mesopotamian cultures, and some local features differ from the painted ceramics of northern Mesopotamia and Central Iran², which seems to be associated with the original development of this culture.

According to researchers, the impressed decorations of the Dalma Tepe culture have no roots in the cultures of Northern Mesopotamia and Central Iran³. It is notable that contemporaneous Neolithic sites of the Mil Steppe, Karabakh and the Neolithic layer of Nakhchivan Tepe's settlement are characterized by ceramics with impressed decorations. It can be assumed that the impressed ceramics of the culture of Dalma Tepe had origins in the sites of the South Caucasus.

The Settlement Of Nakhchivan Tepe

The settlement of Nakhchivan Tepe is located on the right bank of the Nakhchivan River, on the eastern outskirts of the city of Nakhchivan (Fig. 1). Since the beginning of 2017, archaeological excavations have been carried out in the settlement by an expedition of the Nakhchivan branch of the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan. During the study, four occupation periods were identified. At the same time, three of these horizons belong to the culture of Dalma Tepe⁴, and the fourth to the Neolithic period. The first horizon was at a depth of 0.8 m from the surface of the hill (Nakhchivan Tepe 1). This horizon was characterized by rectangular rooms. Analysis of charcoal from this horizon has not yet been

¹ Мунчаев 1975, 127; Mellaart 1975, 183; Voigt 1983, 161.

² Henrickson, Vitali 1987, 37-45; Mellaart 1965, 70.

³ Mellaart 1965, 70; Henrickson, Vitali 1987, 37-45

⁴ Бахшалиев 2019, с. 108-121; Бахşəliyev, Quliyeva, Бахşəliyev, Həşimova, Mehbəliyev 2019, 4-23.

carried out. However, based on a comparative analysis of ceramics, this period can be dated 4600-4400 BC. The second construction horizon (Nakhchivan Tepe 2), located at a depth of 0.78-2.10 m, dates from 4720-4529 BC (Tab. 1). This horizon was characterized by rectangular rooms (Fig. 2). For the third construction period, which was located at a depth of 2.10-2.50 m (Nakhchivan Tepe 3), buildings were constructed in the semi-dugout type. Analysis of charcoal taken from this horizon yielded an occupation of 4945-4722 BC⁵.

Most of the archaeological materials of these horizons are represented by ceramics. Ceramics according to the stratigraphy of the settlement are divided into two periods. Ceramics from the upper horizon (Nakhchivan Tepe 1) are assigned to the Middle Chalcolithic, and ceramics from the lower horizons (Nakhchivan Tepe 2, Nakhchivan Tepe 3) are dated to Early Chalcolithic⁶. These horizons are characterized by impressed and painted ceramics (Fig. 3; Fig. 4), which are also characteristic of the culture of Dalma Tepe.

The Neolithic layer of the Nakhchivan Tepe settlement

The fourth construction horizon (Nakhchivan Tepe 4), which was revealed in the 2019 excavations, dates from the Neolithic period. The Neolithic layer was found at excavation unit A and B. At site A, two semi-dugout type rooms were identified, the all walls of which are buried in the ground. They were rectangular in shape (Fig. 5, 1). The depth of the building is 1 m. The length of one of them is 3.9 m, and the width of the preserved part is 2.3 m. The length of the second room is 3.3 m, and the width of the preserved part is 1.3 m. These rooms, apparently, were intended for individual families. On the inside of the buildings, round hearths with a diameter of 0.6 m were identified. Within the hearths, the remains of charcoal, obsidian debitage and ceramics were found. Analysis of charcoal taken from the center of the first room yielded a date of 5209-4930 BC (Tab. 1).

In Unit B, excavations revealed a large semi-dugout building (Fig. 5, 2). The length of this semi-dugout building is 4.6 m, and the width in varies, at places 3, 5.3, and 7 m. Four hearths, numerous ceramics, animal bones and obsidian debitage were identified inside the room. Analysis of charcoal taken from one of the hearths yielded a date of 5038-4799 BC. Analysis of charcoal taken from the second hearth yielded a date of 4941-4722 BC (Tab. 1). Apparently, this room was settled at different times. About this room we can say that life in it existed at the end of the Neolithic and the beginning of the Chalcolithic. Apparently, the lower parts of the rooms were buried in the ground, and the upper parts of the walls were constructed as a light structure plastered with a layer of clay. The results of charcoal analyses show that the settlement of Nakhchivan Tepe was not settled simultaneously. Apparently, at first its southern part was inhabited, and then the settlement expanded. The settlement grew, especially in the first half of the 5th millennium BC.

Ceramics

Most of the archaeological finds from the Neolithic layer comprise ceramics. They are made of clay with chaff temper and are well-fired in various shades of red. Some samples are burnished. The outer surface of some instances is pained with red slip. Ceramics with sand temper are represented in a single example. This can also be said of gray ceramics, which are represented in two examples. Ceramics can be divided into four groups. The first group includes simple ceramics. Some of them are painted red. This group of ceramics is includes jugs (Fig. 6, 1, 2), bowls (Fig. 6, 3, 4, 6, 7) and cooking pot (Fig. 3, 8). Some of them have flat ear-shaped protrusions (Fig. 6, 5). The bottoms of these vessels are flat, sometimes with a protruding edge (Fig. 3, 10-11). Analogues of such ceramic products are well known from the

⁵ Baxşəliyev, Quliyeva, Baxşəliyev, Həşimova, Mehbəliyev 2019, 22-25.

⁶ Baxşəliyev, Quliyeva, Baxşəliyev, Həşimova, Mehbəliyev 2019, 22-23.

Neolithic layer of the settlement of Kültepe I⁷ and Hajji Firuz⁸. Moreover, vessels with ears are very similar to similar vessels from Kültepe I. The second group is represented by painted ceramics. Painted ceramics are few in number, with only two examples. Ceramics are decorated with a black color directly on the unpainted surface of the rim of vessels (Fig. 6, 9). The third group is represented by ceramics with impressed decorations. At the same time, some of them are decorated with fingerprints (Fig. 7, 1-2, 6, 10-11), and others by means of special tools (Fig. 7, 3, 7, 9, 12). Generally the torso of the vessel is decorated with a similar ornament, and in several cases the bottom of the vessel is decorated with fingerprints (Fig. 7, 8, 14). In the South Caucasus, ceramics with impressed ornamentation are known from the Neolithic sites of the Mil Steppe and Karabakh. Similar ceramics were found at Chalagantepe⁹, Ismailbeytepe¹⁰, Ilanlitepe¹¹, Goshatepe¹².

Ceramics from Nakhchivan Tepe were sometimes painted red and burnished some of the bowls with impressed decorations (Fig. 7, 6) are similar in shape to bowls associated with the Shomutepe culture¹³. The fourth group of ceramics is decorated with nipple protrusions (Fig. 7, 4, 5, 13). Such ornamentation is well-known from various periods of the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods¹⁴. Apparently, the simple chaff-tempered ceramics of the settlement of Nakhchivan Tepe are connected with Neolithic ceramics to Kültepe I. However the impressed ceramics of the settlement of Nakhchivan Tepe differ from ceramics to Kültepe I. I think that the impressed ornaments commonly found in the Neolithic layer at Nakhchivan Tepe reflect influences from the cultures of the Mil Steppe and Karabakh. In the sites of the Mil Steppe and Karabakh, impressed decorations appear in the second half of the VI millennium BC¹⁵, and in Nakhchivan Tepe - at the end of the VI millennium BC. Some examples of ceramics with impressed ornaments from the settlements of the Mil steppe and Karabakh differ in design techniques from ceramics of the Dalma Tepe culture (Fig. 9, 1, 7). However, the second group of the ceramics completely resemble the impressed ceramics of Dalma Tepe (Fig. 9, 2, 3, 4-6, 8-11), which suggests that the origin of this type of ornament is associated with the Neolithic sites of the Mil Steppe and Karabakh.

Obsidian resources

The location of Karabakh near Nakhchivan undoubtedly contributed to the development of intercultural relations. This was also facilitated by the rich deposits of copper and obsidian in the South Caucasus. In the Neolithic period, obsidian deposits were of particular importance. In the settlements of Nakhchivan and Karabakh, the obsidian deposits of Sunik and Geghasar were used. In the sites of the Mil Steppe, 33% of the obsidian came from Sunik, as was 85% of the obsidian at Alikemektepe in Mugan. Recent studies show that at the settlement of Kültepe I obsidian from the deposits of Sunik and Geghasar was mainly used.

⁷ Бахшалиев, Маро, Бертон, Кулиева 2017, Fig. 3-5, 10-13.

⁸ Voigt 1983, Fig. 76, a-e; Fig.77.

⁹ Ахундов 2017, 763, Tab. 378, 3.

¹⁰ Алмәтмәдов 2018, 160.

¹¹ Ахундов 2017, 313, Tab. 189, 1-2.

¹² Ахундов 2017, 54, Tab., 22, 1.

¹³ Ахундов 2012, таблица 207, 5/506.

¹⁴ Ахундов 2012, таблица 208; Бахшалиев 2017, рис. 7, 1.

¹⁵ Helwing-Aliyev 2017, 41.

	Sampl ID	Sample	Radiocarbon Age (BP)	$\delta^{13}\text{C}$ (‰)	Date BC (95,4%)
	NA-2019-1240	LTL19695A	6102±45	-23.2 ± 0.4	5209-4930BC
	NB-2019-2277	LTL19694A	6028 ± 45	-22.1 ± 0.3	5038-4799 BC
	NA-2019-1253	LTL19693A	5967 ± 45	-21.2 ± 0.4	4959-4725BC
	NB 2019- 2278	LTL19696A	5951 ± 45	-30.8 ± 0.6	4941-4722 BC
	NB-2017-2095	LTL17636A	5956 ± 45	-25.9 ± 0.5	4945-4722 BC
	NA-2018-1165	LTL18624A	5724 ± 45	-20.3 ± 0.1	4686-4464 BC
	NA-2018-1179	LTL18625A	5777 ± 40	-23.1 ± 0.5	4720-4529 BC

Table 1: Results of analysis of charcoal from Nakhchivan Tepe (Radiocarbon analyses conducted in Lecce, Italy).

There were no obsidian deposits in Iran. In the sites of North-Western Iran, including the basin of Lake Urmia, 95% of obsidian came from the Sunik deposits¹⁶, which are located 45 km north of the city of Nakhchivan. Obsidians¹⁷ found at Nakhchivan Tepe (Fig. 8) came from Geghasar (27-41%), Sunik (37-55%),) And Meydandag (19%). Undoubtedly, rich mineral deposits, especially obsidian, contributed to the development of relations between Northwest Iran and the South Caucasus.

Issues Of Dating The Cultural Sites Of Dalma Tepe

As has discussed, ceramics with impressed decorations are characteristic of the culture of Dalma Tepe. Similar ceramics are known in a number of sites in North-West Iran and Iraq (Fig. 1). Various opinions have been expressed regarding the dating of the culture of Dalma Tepe. At the settlement of Hajji Firuz, Dalma Tepe type ceramics were identified in the interval of the layers of Hajji Firuz and Pisdeli¹⁸, and in the settlement of Hasanlu - in Hasanlu IX (Dalma). Therefore, Hamlin¹⁹ proposed to date this culture 5000-4000 BC. Since analyses of charcoal recovered at the settlement of Dalma Tepe yielded a date range of 4215-84 BC, most researchers tend to date this culture to the second half of the 5th millennium BC²⁰. A. Abedi attributed the culture of Dalma Tepe to the first half of the 5th millennium²¹ based on excavations of the settlements of Dava-Gez and Julfa Kültepe. However, for such dating, he does not yet have solid data, as strata related to the culture of Dalma Tepe were not identified of Dava-Gez. And an analysis of charcoal from the settlement of Julfa Kültepe suggests an occupation of 4600-4350 BC. This is the oldest date for this settlement. On the

¹⁶ Khademi, Abedi, Glascock, Eskandari, Khazae 2013, 1956-1965.

¹⁷ The geo-chemical analyses have been graciously carried out by Dr. Marie Orange (Southern Cross University, Australia) in the framework of the PAST-OBS project directed by François-Xavier Le Bourdonnec (U. de Bordeaux-Montaigne, France).

¹⁸ Voigt 1983, 20, Fig. 8.

¹⁹ Hamlin 1975, 120.

²⁰ Zeynivand, Hariryan, Heydarian 2012, 39.

²¹ Abedi, Omrani, Karimifar 2013, 329.

other hand, only painted ceramics of the Dalma Tepe type have been identified at this settlement. Ceramics with impression ornaments have not been identified here²².

Researchers expressed the opinion that the painted ceramics of the Dalma Tepe culture are different from the painted ceramics of Mesopotamia and Iran. However, it is suggested that its appearance was influenced by the ceramics of Halaf and Ubaid²³. D. Mellart and R. Munchaev compared the impressed decorations of the Dalma Tepe culture with similar ceramics of such settlements of the Mil Steppe as Ilanly, Shakh-tepe and Camil-tepe²⁴. R. Munchaev concluded that such striking coincidences are not accidental²⁵. Due to the fact that ceramics with impressed ornaments were not found in Neolithic settlements of Central Iran and Northern Mesopotamia, there was no consensus regarding the genesis of this type of ceramics.

Monuments Of The Mil Steppe And Karabakh

Monuments of the Mil Steppe, in which ceramic products with impression ornaments are revealed date from 5600-5200 BC²⁶. There is a chronological gap between the sites of the Mil Steppe and the culture of Dalma Tepe. However, as has already been said, some of the ceramics from the sites of the Mil Steppe and Karabakh, and especially the ceramics of Ilanly-tepe, is very similar to the ceramics of Dalma Tepe. We can say that the process of formation of the Dalma Tepe culture spanned the end of the VI and the beginning of the V millennium BC. This is also confirmed by excavation of Nakhchivan Tepe's settlement. Analyses of charcoal taken from various horizons of the settlement show that this culture existed here in 5200-4400 BC (Tab. 1). Currently, the oldest sites characterized by impression ornaments are located on the territory of the Mil Steppe and Karabakh. At the same time, it can be said that the cultures of the Mil Steppe and Karabakh, to a certain extent, influenced the formation of the culture of Dalma Tepe, and especially the formation of ceramics with impressed ornamentation. In my opinion, the Neolithic layer of the Nakhchivan Tepe settlement is a link with the sites of the Mil Steppe and those of North-Western Iran, and that Nakhchivan Tepe was part of the Dalma Tepe cultural formation area. In archaeological literature, some argued that painted ceramics like those at Dalma Tepe appeared earlier at sites in Northwestern Iran, than impressed wares. However, at present on the basis of excavations of sites of North-West Iran it is possible to say that such ceramics appeared around the beginning of the 5th millennium BC. At Nakhchivan Tepe ceramics with impressed ornamentation also appeared at the end of the 6th millennium BC, and painted ceramics similar to those at Dalma Tepe mostly abound at the beginning of the 5th millennium BC. Despite that fact that painted ceramics of the culture of Dalma Tepe have particular features, I argue that the formation of painted ceramics of the culture of Dalma Tepe was influenced by southern influences, namely the Late Halaf and Obeid traditions.

Result

Studies show that the rich natural resources of the South Caucasus contributed to the development of ties between the cultures of the South Caucasus and North-West Iran. At the same time, the cultures of North-West Iran influenced the South Caucasus. The cultures of the South Caucasus also influenced North-West Iran. Based on studies, it can be said that the

²² Abedi, Khatib Shahidi, Chataigner, Niknami, Eskandari, Kazempour, Pirmohammadi, Hoseinzadeh, Ebrahimi 2014, 54-55.

²³ Abedi, Khatib Shahidi, Chataigner, Niknami, Eskandari, Kazempour, Pirmohammadi, Hoseinzadeh, Ebrahimi 2014, 33.

²⁴ Мелларт 1975, 183; Мунчаев 1975, 128-129.

²⁵ Мунчаев 1975, 129.

²⁶ Alməmmədov 2016, 20; Alməmmədov 2018, 160; Helwing-Aliyev 2017, 41.

cultures of the Mil steppe and Karabakh, which are characterized by impression ornaments, contributed to the formation of the culture of Dalma Tepe. It can be assumed that the range of the formation of the culture of Dalma Tepe included the territories of Nakhchivan and the basin of Lake Urmia. Thus, it can be deduced that the culture of Dalma Tepe, which appeared at the junction of the borders of the Middle East and the South Caucasus, reflects the traditions of the cultures of these two regions. This culture from the main center spread south of Lake Urmia, to Iran, Iraq, and East Anatolia.

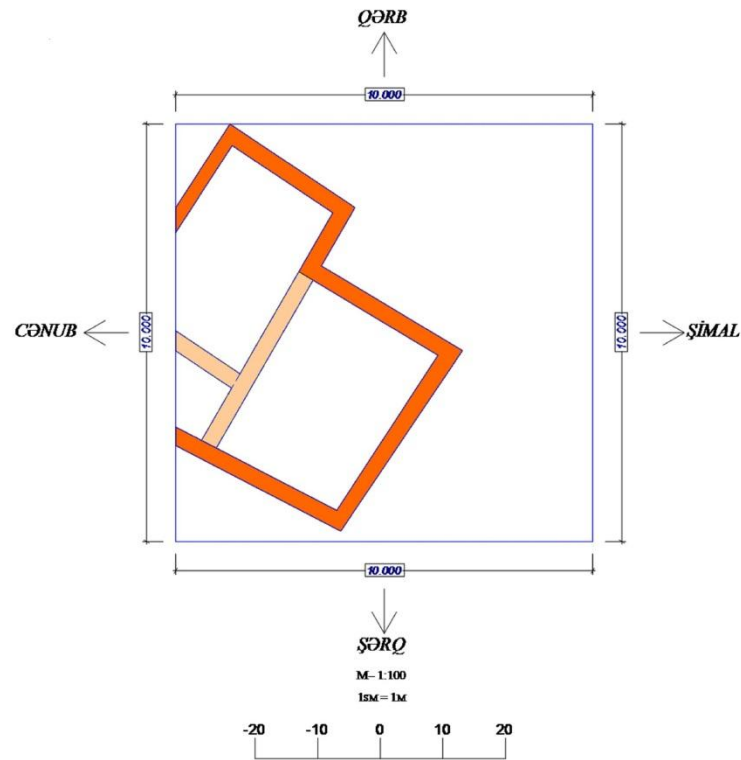
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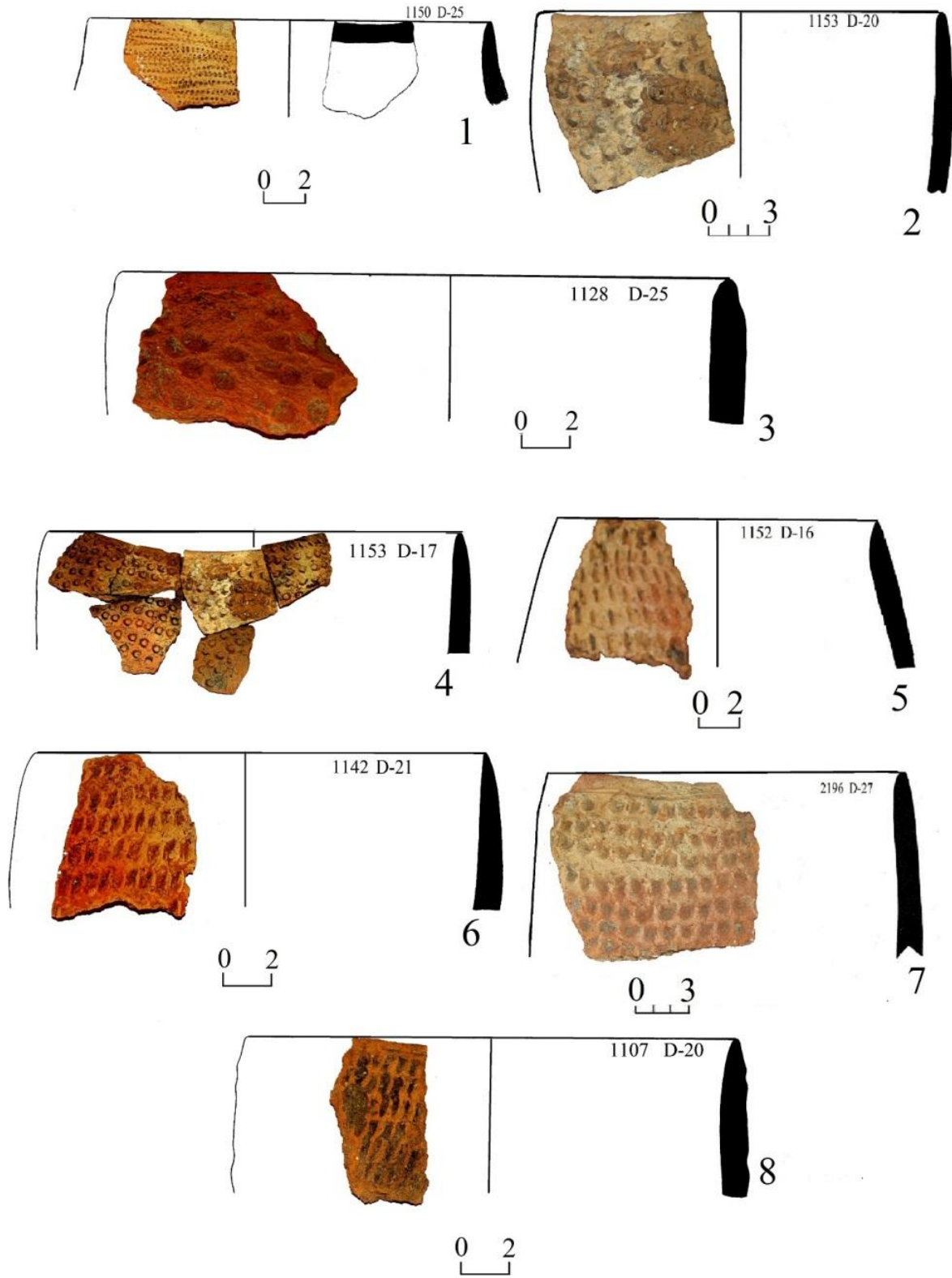
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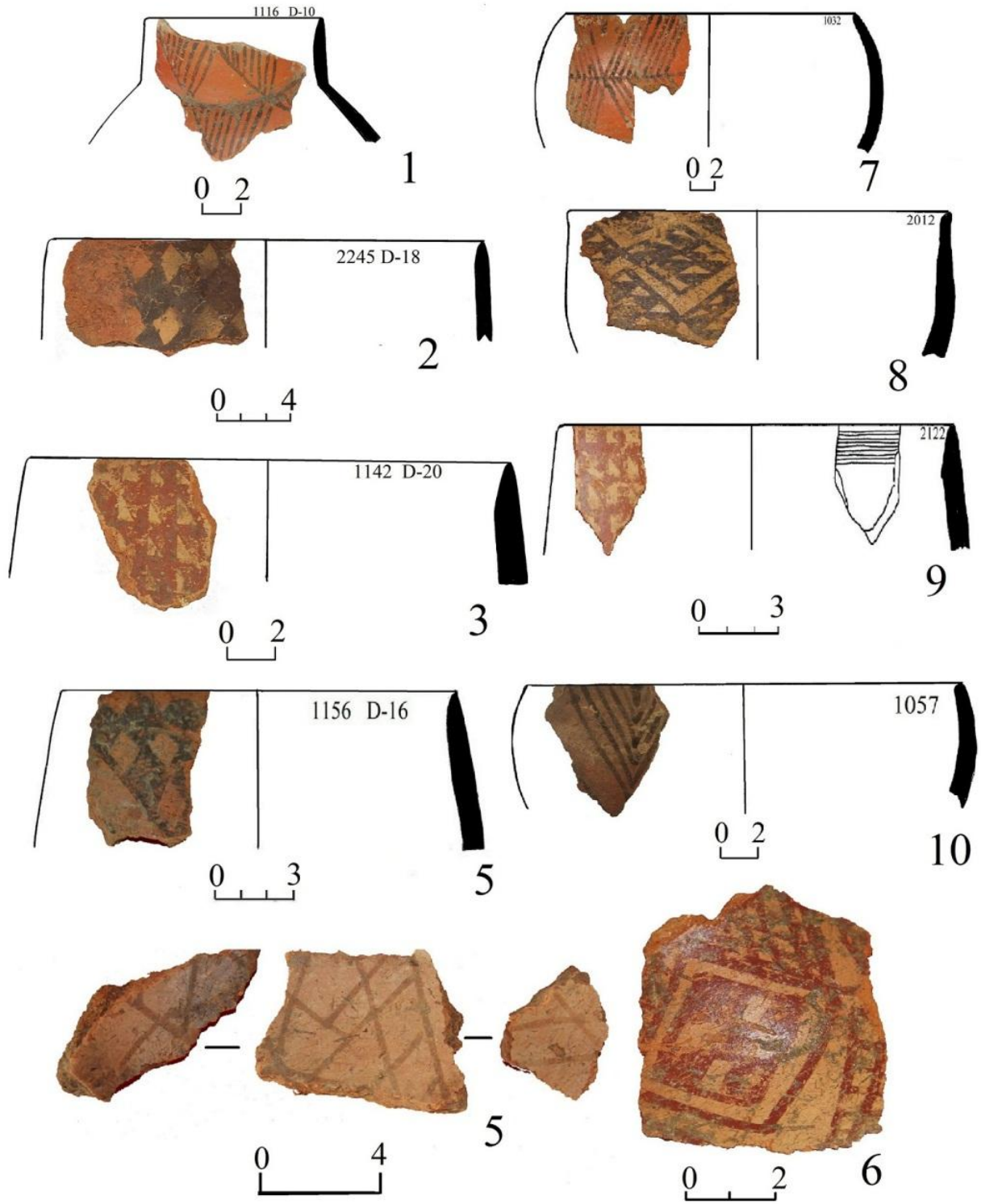
Şekil 1: Baskı bezemeli seramiklerin haritası (Veli Bahşeliyev). Fig. 1. Map of ceramics with impression ornament (Veli Bakhshaliyev).



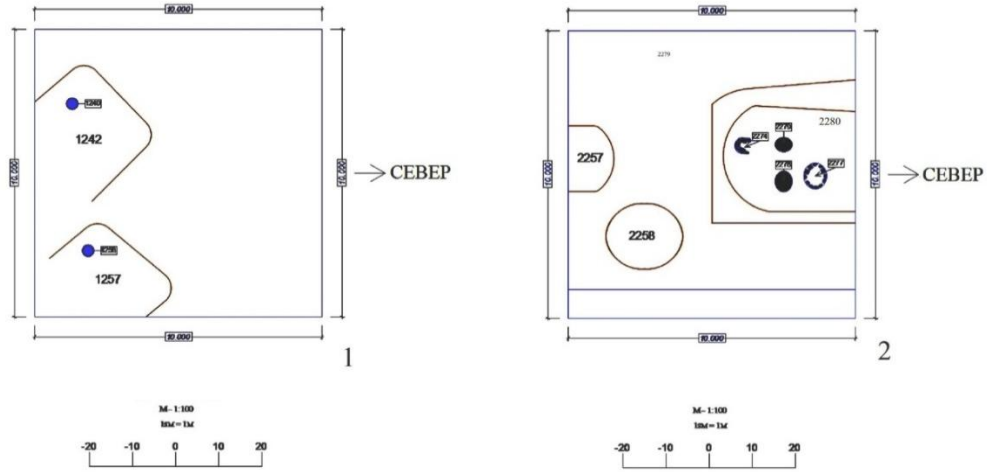
Şekil 2: İkinci yapı katının planı (Veli Bahşeliyev, Turan Heşimova). Fig. 2. Plan of second occupation level of Nakhchivan Tepe (Veli Bakhshaliyev, Turan Haşimova).



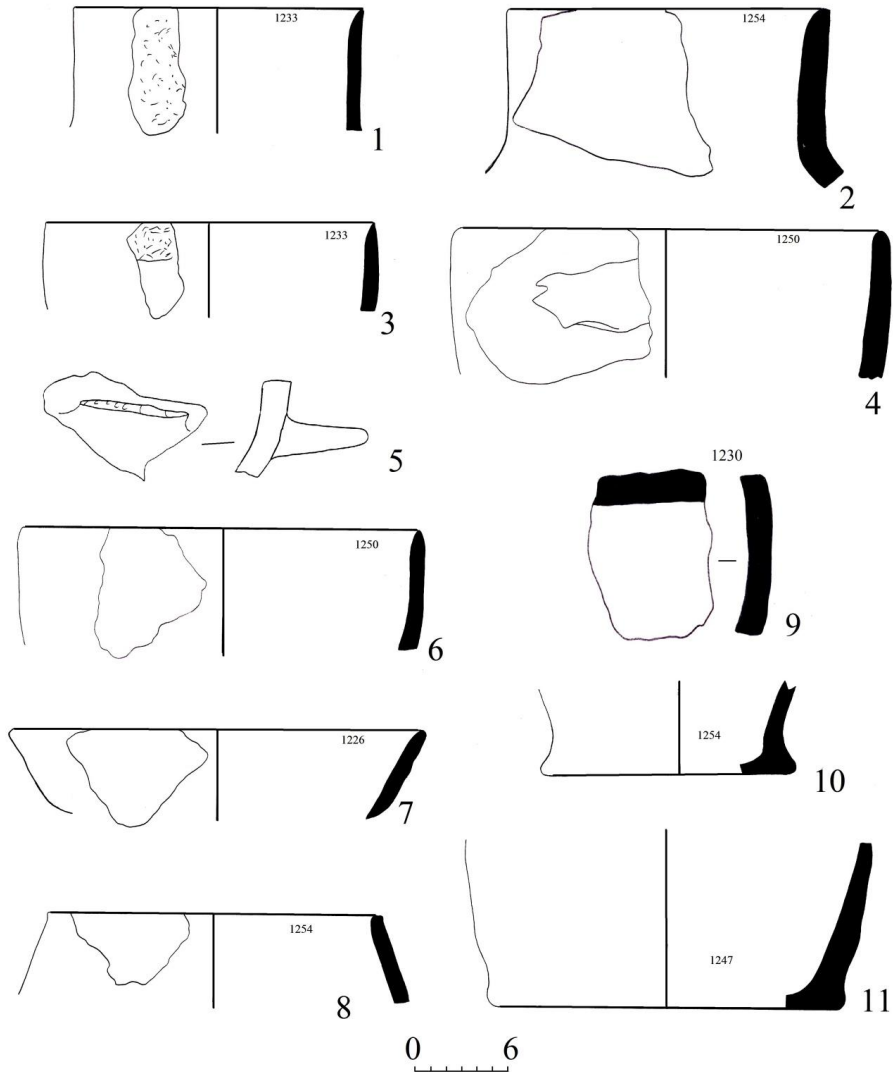
Şekil 3: Nahçıvan Tepe'nin baskı bezemeli çanak çömleği (Veli Bahşeliyev). Fig. 3. Ceramics with impression ornament from settlement Nakhchivan Tepe (Veli Bakhshaliyev).



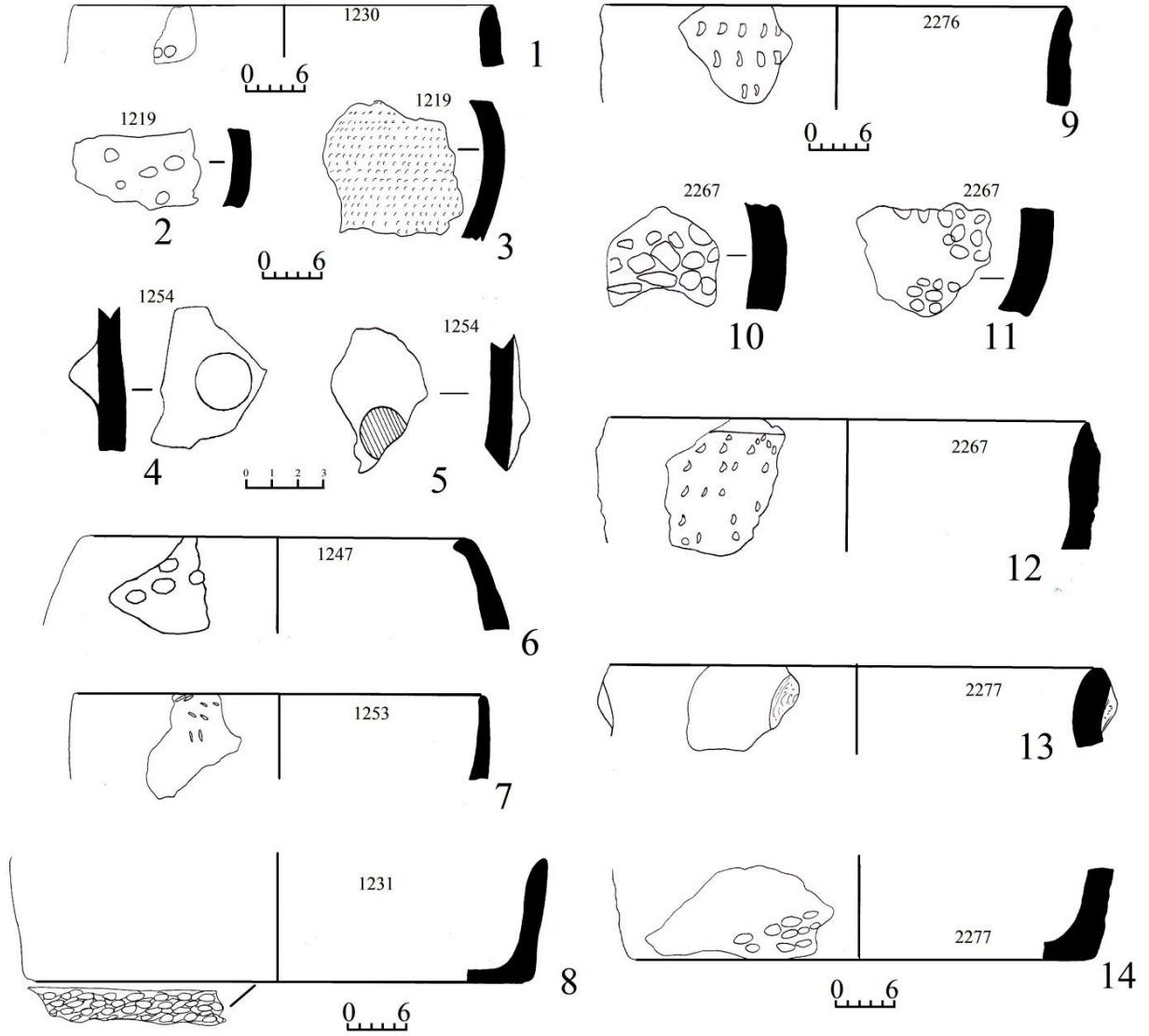
Şekil 4: Nahçıvan Tepe'nin boya bezemeli çanak çömleği (Veli Bahşeliyev). Fig. 4.
Ceramics with painted ornament from settlement Nakhchivan Tepe (Veli
Bakhshaliyev).



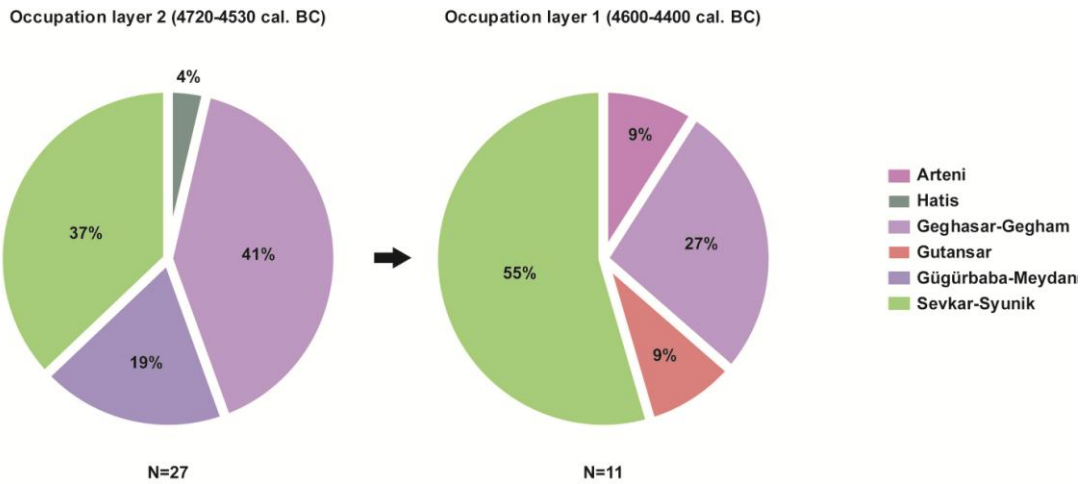
Şekil 5: Nahçıvan Tepe’de arkeolojik kazıların planı (Veli Bahşeliyev, Turan Heşimova). Fig. 5. Plan of archeological excavations at Nakhchivan Tepe (Veli Bakhshaliyev, Turan Haşimova).



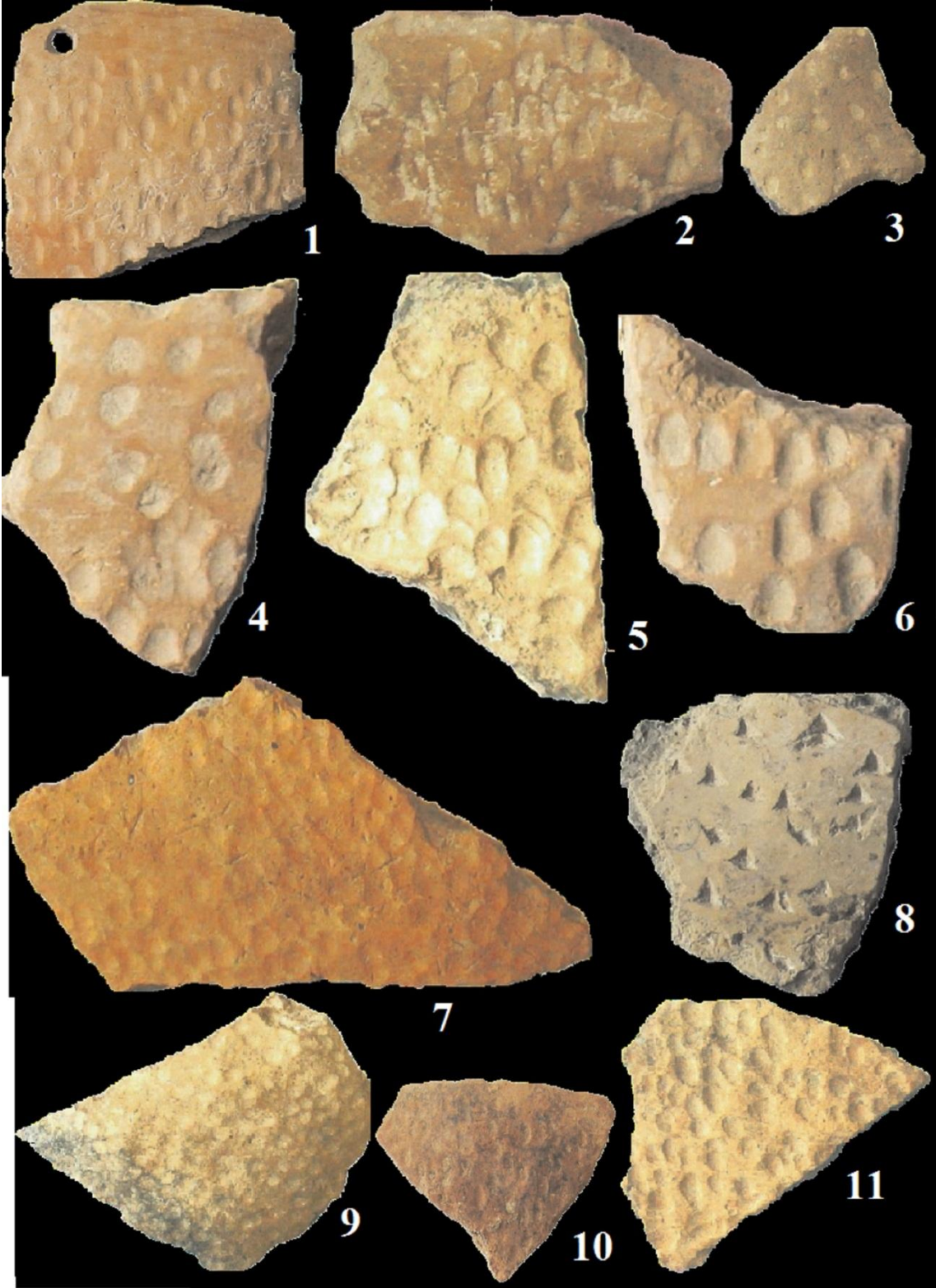
Şekil 6: Nahçıvan tepe yerleşmesinin Neolitik yapı katının sade ve boyalı çanak çömleği (Veli Bahşeliyev). Fig. 6. Simple and painted pottery from Neolithic level of Nakhchivan Tepe settlement (Veli Bakhshaliyev).



Şekil 7: Baskı ve kabartma bezemeli çanak çömlek (Veli Bahşeliyev). Fig. 7.
Ceramics with impression and knob ornament (Veli Bakhshliyev).



Şekil 8: Nahçıvan Tepe obsidyenlerinin analizinin sonuçları (Marie Orange). Fig. 8.
Results of obsidian analysis from Nakhchivan Tepe (Marie Orange).



Şekil 9: Mil bozkırı ve Karabağ yerleşmelerinin baskı bezemeli çanak çömleği (Т.Ахундов 2017). Fig. 9. Ceramics with impression ornament from settlements Mil Steppe and Karabakh: 1, 3,4, 5, 6, 8-11-İlanlı Tepe; 2-Abdaleziz; 7-Beybalalı (Т. Ахундов 2017).