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Contents

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Contextualizing the Consumption of Syro-Cilician Ware at Tell Atchana / Alalakh (Hatay, Türkiye): A Functional Analysis

MÜGE BULU*

Abstract

Syro-Cilician Ware was the prevailing painted pottery style of the Amuq Valley, Cilicia and northwestern Syria in the first half of the second millennium BC and is characterized by its specific painted motif arrangements applied on particular vessel shapes. This paper investigates the consumption of this ware type at Tell Atchana / Alalakh (modern Hatay, Türkiye) in the Amuq Valley as a case study. Embracing a multi-dimensional approach, a functional analysis is conducted based on technological and morphological characteristics of the vessels as well as the nature of selected contexts from different parts of the site. The results have shown that Syro-Cilician Ware was likely appreciated as a serving set, in either abbreviated or elaborated variations, which completed a larger consumption set consisting of other ware and shape types. This is a pattern that reoccurs throughout both time and space at Tell Atchana / Alalakh, except for rare cases, signifying its role within the food and / or drink consumption traditions at the site. Moreover, several lines of evidence further point to the possible symbolic function of Syro-Cilician Ware, which appears to be reflected in the bird motif.

Keywords: Tell Atchana / Alalakh, Amuq Valley, Syro-Cilician Ware, Middle Bronze Age, functional analysis, ancient foodways

Öz

Belirli seramik formları üzerine işlenmiş özgün boyalı motif düzenlemeleriyle nitelendirilen Suriye-Kilikya Boyalıları, MÖ ikinci binyılın ilk yarısında Amik Ovası, Kilikya ve Kuzeybatı Suriye'de yaygın olarak görülen boya bezekli seramik geleneğidir. Bu makalede, Amik Ovasında yer alan Aççana Höyük / Alalah kenti (Hatay, Türkiye) özelinde Suriye-Kilikya Boyalıları'nın kullanımı incelenmiştir. Çok yönlü bir yaklaşımın benimsendiği çalışmada, seramiklerin teknolojik ve morfolojik özelliklerinin yanı sıra, kentin farklı bölümlerinde bulundukları bağlamlarla ilişkili olarak da değerlendirildiği bir işlevsel analiz yapılmıştır. Söz konusu analizin sonuçları, Suriye-Kilikya Boyalıları'nın, sadeleştirilmiş ya da genişletilmiş varyasyonları olmakla birlikte, farklı mal ve form gruplarının da var olduğu daha geniş bir yeme-içme setinin tamamlayıcı bir parçasını oluşturan bir servis seti olarak kullanıldığını göstermektedir. Aççana Höyük / Alalah kentinde istisnai durumlar dışında aynı örüntüye farklı zaman ve mekanlarda rastlanması, Suriye-Kilikya Boyalıları'nın kentin yeme-içme âdetlerindeki önemine işaret etmektedir. Ayrıca, bir dizi farklı veri seti incelendiğinde bazı seramiklerde kuş motifinin işlenmiş olması, Suriye-Kilikya Boyalıları'nın muhtemelen sembolik bir işlevinin de olabileceğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Aççana Höyük / Alalah, Amik Ovası, Suriye-Kilikya Boyalıları, Orta Tunç Çağı, işlevsel analiz, antik yeme-içme âdetleri

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Introduction

The Middle Bronze Age[1] (ca. 2000-1600 BC, hereafter MBA) in Anatolia and the Near East witnessed the development of an aesthetic trend in painted pottery production. Distinct geometric, figural and / or floral motifs applied on specific vessel shapes define the painted pottery traditions observed in the settlements of the Levant, inner Syria, the Amuq and Cilicia in Anatolia. One of these traditions was Syro-Cilician Ware (SCW), in reference to its main geographical distribution area, which is Cilicia in the west, the inner northwestern Syrian sites in the east and south, and the Amuq that connects those two regions. SCW is not only the prevailing painted pottery tradition of its main distribution area, but also as evidenced by its much wider distribution to central Anatolia,[2] Cyprus[3] and the Nile Delta[4] as imports, it was the materialized reflection of interregional networks of interaction prior to the zenith of internationalism in the following Late Bronze Age (ca. 1600-1200 BC, hereafter LBA).

Before and after the first classification and evaluation of this painted pottery as a particular ware type by Veronica Seton-Williams,[5] SCW has been examined as part of the site and survey assemblages in the Amuq,[6] Cilicia,[7] Syria,[8] Islahiye Plain[9] and Kilis Plain;[10] included in comprehensive studies regarding different painted pottery traditions in the broader Near East;[11] or published as selected vessels from museum collections or excavated sites.[12] In the latter two cases, different names that were used to describe the ware type, the vessel shape and motif repertoire, as well as its origin, distribution and chronology has been much discussed and therefore will not be repeated here.[13] However, in the current literature, SCW has been studied through imperfect datasets and mainly as comparative material to the other painted pottery traditions of the MBA Eastern Mediterranean, namely, Habur Ware and Levantine Painted Ware. Moreover, it has also often been used as an index fossil for broad brush dating and for

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1 This paper does not intend to make a statement about the absolute chronology of Tell Atchana or the broader Syro-Anatolian region, and it follows the Middle Chronology that has been embraced at the Tell Atchana Excavations. See Yener et al. 2019c.

2 From Kültepe / Kanesh (Özgüç 1950, 1955) and Acemhöyük (Öztan 2008).

3 Merrillees and Tubb 1979.

4 Bagh 2003.

5 Seton-Williams 1953.

6 The Amuq material comes from two rounds of surveys (Braidwood 1937; Yener 2005; Bulu 2017a; Yener et al. 2017) and the excavations conducted at Tell Atchana / Alalakh (Woolley 1955; Heinz 1992; Yener and Akar 2013a, 2014), Toprakhisar Höyük (Akar and Kara 2018, 2020), Tel al-Judaidah (Swift 1958) and Chatal Höyük (Pucci 2019).

7 The Cilician material comes from multiple sites detected in various surveys (Gjerstad 1934; Seton-Williams 1954; Mellaart 1958) and the excavations conducted at Kazanlı (Garstang 1938), Mersin Yumuktepe (Garstang 1940, 1953; Jean 2010, 2019-2020), Tarsus Gözlükule (Goldman 1956; Slane 1987), Sirkeli Höyük (Garstang 1938; Hrouda 1997; Ehringhaus 1999; Ahrens et al. 2010; Novák and Kozal 2013; Novák et al. 2020; Kozal 2022), Kinet Höyük (Gates 2000, 2011) and Tatarlı Höyük (Girginer et al. 2014; Girginer and Oyman-Girginer 2020).

8 SCW was reported from the excavations conducted at Tell Mishrifeh / Qatna (Du Mesnil du Buisson 1927, 1930; Iamoni 2012), Hama (Ingholt 1940; Fugmann 1958), Ras Shamra / Ugarit (Schaeffer 1949; Courtois 1978), Tell Mardikh / Ebla (Matthiae 1980, 1984, 1989; Nigro 1997, 2002a, 2002b), Tell Tuqan (Nigro 2002b, 312, fig. 16; Peyronel 2008; Baffi 2010) and Umm el-Marra (Curvers et al. 1997; Schwartz et al. 2000) as well as various sites surveyed during the Tell Rifa'at survey in the River Qoueiq region (Tubb 1981).

9 From the excavations conducted at Tilmen Höyük (Alkım 1969; Marchetti 2008) and the cave site of Sakçegözü (Waechter et al. 1951).

10 From the excavations conducted at Oylum Höyük (Özgen and Helwing 2001; Çatalbaş 2008; Engin 2020).

11 Hrouda 1957; Tubb 1981, 1983; Gerstenblith 1983; Bagh 2003; Bieniada 2009.

12 Margueron 1968; Wild-Wülker 1977-1978; Dündar 2008; Merrillees and Tubb 1979; Jamieson 2005; Bulu 2017b.

13 For the most recent literature review of SCW, see Bulu 2021, 11-43.

cross-site comparisons. Therefore, the main focus of the former studies has been its physical characteristics based on macroscopic analysis, and further technological and functional aspects have remained understudied.

While the functional aspects of Habur Ware and Levantine Painted Ware have recently been examined,[14] those of SCW were given less attention in the former studies. Among them, Nigro[15] suggested that all painted wares retrieved from the palatial and funerary contexts of Tell Mardikh / Ebla, including SCW, pointed to a specialized function that was related to funerary banquets at the site during the MBA. Taking this intra-site interpretation to a regional level, Jamieson[16] argued that the pitchers decorated with the "eye" motif gained a symbolic meaning by reflecting zoomorphic representation of birds and that the appearance of such vessels in funerary contexts in the broader northwestern Syria pointed to shared funerary practices encountered at various sites. While Nigro and Jamieson embraced a contextual approach in their interpretations, Bieniada,[17] who focused on the stylistic and functional origins of Habur Ware and incorporated SCW into his discussion as well, mainly focused on the morphological characteristics while making an inference on the functions of SCW and Habur Ware. Pointing out the consumption of different beverages in Eastern Mediterranean and Mesopotamia, he suggested that SCW vessels were used for mixing, serving and drinking wine in the West, whereas Habur Ware vessels were used for storing beer and consuming it with straws in the East.[18]

In the interpretation of the functional aspects of SCW, instead of focusing on one, all characteristics regarding technology, morphology, and context should be taken into account, because the choices that were made in each aspect would have an effect on the production and utilization of the end product. This would vary at a site and / or region-specific level. While Nigro's and Jamieson's interpretations remain limited to some of the Syrian sites, and therefore cover only one of the main distribution areas of SCW, Bieniada's broader interpretation based solely on vessel shape types misses the fact that it was associated with burial practices and likely had a symbolic function at Syrian sites. A preliminary overview based on contextual information retrieved from excavated sites has already pointed out the differentiated utilization of SCW within and outside its main distribution zone.[19]

Providing an in-depth analysis from one of its main distribution areas as a case study, production and consumption of SCW at Tell Atchana / Alalakh has recently been investigated by the author as her Ph.D. dissertation, based on published and unpublished datasets retrieved from the stratified contexts of the renewed excavations at the site.[20] In this paper, the consumption aspect is discussed through a functional analysis of the SCW based on both technological and morphological characteristics, as well as the contextual information. Following a brief theoretical background, the technological and morphological characteristics of SCW are presented to make an inference about what these vessels might have been designed for. The results of this analysis are then contextualized in three selected MBA loci of use from different parts of the site, through a detailed analysis of all pottery assemblages retrieved from each

14 Bieniada 2009; Marcus 2021.

15 Nigro 1997, 274; 2002b, 312.

16 Jamieson 2005, 81.

17 Bieniada 2009.

18 Bieniada 2009, 170-77.

19 Bulu 2017b, 109-10.

20 Bulu 2021.

context. This approach enables us to see whether SCW vessels were consumed at Alalakh in a single way, or if there was a differentiation within and between different sectors of the site. Furthermore, the possible symbolic function of at least some of the SCW vessels and their likely ritual / religious significance to the inhabitants of Alalakh is also discussed.

Theoretical Background for Functional Analysis

Pottery can be considered a "tool,"[21] that is and has been manufactured to be used for fulfilling either one particular or a variety of needs. A vessel would have a techno-, a socio- and / or an ideo-function in a given context, all of which could be interrelated and ultimately affect the design of that particular object.[22] Techno-function would refer to its utilitarian characteristic, and provides fruitful insights as to how and for what reasons it might have been used. The techno-function of pottery can be investigated via morphological characteristics, constituents of the ceramic paste, surface treatments and firing.[23] The socio-function and ideo-function of a vessel, on the other hand, would refer to its non-utilitarian and more special use, such as being containers, consuming media or gifts in a ritual context, grave goods in burials or prestigious objects representing status and / or power.[24] Moreover, specific vessel shapes and decorative aspects of vessels that were used for communication or "information exchange,"[25] as well as marking social boundaries, identity and / or gender, would also reflect the non-utilitarian function of pottery.[26]

A vessel would have an intended function and an actual function.[27] The intended function refers to what that particular vessel was designed for, whereas the actual function is what that vessel was used for. In the functional analysis of pottery, the intended function can be inferred based on the technological and morphological attributes of a vessel, since specific technological choices are made from paste preparation to firing by considering whether that vessel would meet what it was designed for. For instance, coarser pastes with heavy tempering would be a desired characteristic for cooking pots, whereas tempering with organic materials results in a porous fabric, which makes a vessel lighter, and increases its portability, as well as makes it ideal for short-term water storage.[28] In terms of surface treatments, while smoothing the surface increases the permeability of a vessel, burnishing or applying a slip to a vessel's surface would increase resistance to abrasive processes.[29] Finally, while higher firing temperatures result in a less porous fabric with a higher strength for impact and abrasion resistance, lower firing temperatures result in a more porous fabric, which increases the thermal shock resistance and permeability of a vessel.[30] The morphological attributes of a vessel also have an impact on its intended use regarding its capacity, stability, accessibility and transportability.[31]

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21 Braun 1983.

22 Skibo 1992, 33-34.

23 Skibo 1992, 34; 2013, 35.

24 Tite 2008, 228; Skibo 2013, 5.

25 Wobst 1977.

26 Schiffer and Miller 1999; Skibo 2013, 15; Hegmon 1992, 1998.

27 Rice 1987, 207-42; Skibo 1992, 35-42.

28 Rice 1987, 231; Skibo 2013, 36-41.

29 Tite 1999, 218; Skibo 2013, 16, 119-21.

30 Skibo 2013, 46-47.

31 Rice 1987, 211-26; Orton and Hughes 2013, 246-61; Skibo 2013, 30-31.

Making an inference about the actual function, on the other hand, requires identifying the use-alteration traces on the vessels[32] as well as the nature of the contexts, if available, which provides essential information in comprehending the ways in which a vessel was used.[33] Preserved residue in the vessels that can be subjected to instrumental analysis also provides information regarding the actual contents.[34] For the investigation of possible function and / or importance of pottery assemblages, as well as the ways in which they were used in a given society, the ideal case is to examine the intended function in conjunction with their actual function.[35] Moreover, incorporating textual and iconographic evidence, as well as ethnoarchaeological studies and ethnographic parallels, if available, would result in a more synthetic analysis. Such an approach, with varying types of available evidence, has already been embraced in a number of studies that focused on function and uses of pottery, not only at Tell Atchana and the Amuq,[36] but also at other second millennium BC sites of the neighboring regions.[37]

Based on technological and morphological attributes, ceramic vessels have been broadly categorized as being containers for three main purposes: storage, processing and transfer.[38] These three categories are also divided into sub-categories, based on whether the contents are dry or liquid, hot or cold, the frequency of content movement and / or access, duration of use and distance.[39] In addition to those three purposes, as suggested by Pucci,[40] "consuming" could be treated as the fourth main category, which encapsulates the activities of eating, drinking, pouring and serving. Overall, as mainly being associated with food- and beverage-related activities, functional analysis of ceramics, along with other types of evidence, provides significant information regarding ancient foodways in a given context, from domestic everyday practices to occasional events such as feasts and rituals, and the nature of the preparation, storage, distribution and consumption of food and beverages.[41]

In this paper, a multi-dimensional approach is embraced to make a better inference about the ways in which SCW was used at Tell Atchana / Alalakh, and the intended function of the vessels has been investigated together with their actual function. The technological aspects from paste preparation to firing, as well as the morphological (shape and size) attributes, were taken into account for their likely intended function. Due to the absence of any residual analysis conducted on SCW, as well as the fragmentary nature of the assemblage which limits the investigation of use-alteration traces, the actual function has been inferred based on the contexts that they were retrieved from. In addition to the architectural and artefactual characteristics of contexts, the pottery assemblages retrieved from particular units have been studied as a

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32 Skibo 1992, 2013.

33 Hodder 1981; Ellison 1984, 63; Tite 1999, 207; 2008, 228; Stockhammer 2012, 2016.

34 Heron and Evershed 1993; Evershed 2008; Stockhammer 2016, 92-93; Barnard and Eerkens 2017.

35 Rice 1987, 201-11; 1996, 138-41; Skibo 2013, 4-5; Tite 1999, 207; 2008, 228.

36 Bulu 2016; Horowitz 2019; Pucci 2019, 2020; Montesanto and Pucci 2019-2020; Montesanto 2020b.

37 Gates 1988; Pfälzner 1995; Pulhan 2000; Otto 2006, 2014; Duistermaat 2008; Perini 2014.

38 Henrickson and McDonald 1983; Rice 1987, 208-9, fig. 7.1; Smith 1988; Skibo 1992, 35; 2013, 27.

39 Henrickson and McDonald 1983; Smith 1988; Rice 1987, 209, fig. 7.1. However, recent archaeometric studies using residual and chemical analyses have shown that liquid and dry contents were contained in similar vessel shape types and therefore have proven that making inferences about contents solely based on morphological characteristics would be erroneous. See Beck et al. 2004; Knappett et al. 2005, as cited in Pucci 2019, 201.

40 Pucci 2019, 201.

41 Sinopoli 1991, 122; Dietler and Hayden 2001; Bray 2003; Ökse 2015; Spataro and Villing 2015; Çilingiroğlu and Godon 2018.

whole.[42] This has enabled tracing which SCW vessels were used in a given context, their role within the assemblage and their relationship with other ware types.

Tell Atchana / Alalakh

Tell Atchana / Alalakh is located near the main branch of the Orontes River in the Amuq Valley, 20 km away from the Reyhanlı district of modern Hatay, in the southernmost part of Türkiye (fig. 1). It is the largest mound in the valley at ca. 22 ha and was the capital city of the regional kingdom of Mukish, named Alalakh in the second millennium BC. The site was initially surveyed and identified by Robert Braidwood in the 1930s,[43] and the first round of excavations at Tell Atchana was conducted by Sir Leonard Woolley in 1930s and 1940s.[44] Woolley identified 18 occupation levels during his excavations, from Level XVII to Level 0, which were concentrated on the northern and northwestern parts of the site (now referred to as the Royal Precinct). While Woolley's large-scale exposures contributed to the understanding of the MBA and LBA of Alalakh, there were also various errors in site stratigraphy and the pottery sequence. A more accurate revision of Tell Atchana's problematic stratigraphy was necessary, and new data acquired through systematic excavations has been provided by another round of research conducted at the site under the direction of K. Aslıhan Yener in 2000-2019[45] and Murat Akar since 2020.[46]

The earlier periods of Alalakh pre-dating Level VII were investigated in two soundings;[47] therefore, knowledge of the MB I and early MB II phases is limited and very partial. Level VII, or Period 7 in the new terminology,[48] at the end of MBA, is the best-known phase of MBA Alalakh, which is defined by a monumental palace complex (the Level VII Palace), a temple, a tripartite city gate and a fortification wall.[49] During this period, Alalakh was a vassal of the kingdom of Yamhad centered in Aleppo.[50] The city participated in international networks, as evidenced from objects, technologies and iconography, such as the frescoes found in the Level VII Palace, stone vessels and statues, and a stone / obsidian workshop, ivory / bone inlays, objects, and elephant tusks, and cylinder seals, all of which reflect cultural contacts with the Levant, Mesopotamia, the Aegean, Egypt and central Anatolia.[51]

After the destruction of the city at the end of the MBA, likely as part of the military campaigns of the Hittite king Hattušili I,[52] Alalakh became a vassal of the Mitannian Empire during LB I[53] (Periods 6-4, ca. 1600-1400 BC). The prominent elements of Mitannian culture at Alalakh

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42 For the details of recording and processing of pottery assemblages at Tell Atchana Excavations, see Horowitz 2019, 199; Yener et al. 2019a, 7-9.

43 Braidwood 1937.

44 Woolley 1955.

45 Yener 2010; Yener et al. 2019c.

46 Akar et al. 2022, 2023.

47 Woolley 1955, 11, 34, figs. 2, 18.

48 As opposed to the term "Level" used by Woolley, the term "Period" has been used for the periodization of the Yener Excavations (Yener 2013, 13). Therefore, throughout this article, the term "Level" is only used when referring to structures exposed by Woolley, such as Level VII Palace.

49 Woolley 1955; for city-scape plans, see also Yener 2005.

50 Wiseman 1953; Lauinger 2015.

51 Woolley 1955; Collon 1975, 1982; Akar 2017; Yener 2007a, 2007b, 2021; Healey 2020; Akar et al. 2021.

52 Bryce 2005, 71.

53 Smith 1949; Wiseman 1953; von Dassow 2008; 2022, 484-91; Akar 2018.

can be traced not only in the complexity of the social hierarchical structure, as documented in the Level IV texts,[54] but also in its architecture, both public and domestic, and in the aesthetic choices made in local production industries, including pottery, metal and glass-making.[55] In the following LB II (Periods 3-1, 1400-1300 BC) the Hittites took political control of the city and incorporated it into their empire.[56] The site was mostly abandoned around 1300 BC, although a small area around the temple appears to have continued in use into the 13th century BC, after which there was a limited reoccupation in the Iron Age.[57]

New Syro-Cilician Ware Corpus from Tell Atchana / Alalakh

SCW was the prevailing painted pottery tradition at the site during the MB II (Period 9-7, ca. 1800-1600 BC), and examples retrieved from this period constitute 74% of the whole SCW assemblage. However, new excavation results demonstrated that it continued to be produced and consumed in the LB I (Period 6-4, ca. 1600-1400 BC) in smaller quantities (21%), and sporadically appeared (5%) in LB II (Periods 3-2, ca. 1400-1350 BC) as well. A total of 1255 SCW sherds that belong to a minimum number of 685 individual vessels (MNI)[58] have been analyzed in this study. 259 of the SCW vessels have a diagnostic fragment, i.e., rim, handle, base or spout, whereas 426 of them consist of non-diagnostic body sherds. For the macroscopic classification of technological and morphological characteristics of SCW assemblages, the pottery ware and shape typology used at Tell Atchana Excavations was mainly followed. However, while the LB II ceramics of Tell Atchana have been extensively studied and published,[59] the studies of LB I and MB II assemblages are still ongoing and have only been partially published.[60] Therefore, modifications and additions were made to the original typology during the study of the SCW assemblages where necessary. Moreover, the production technology was further investigated through ceramic petrography and Neutron Activation Analysis on selected sherds, so as to make an inference about the different stages of production from raw material procurement to firing.[61]

The SCW vessels have either a fine or a medium-coarse fabric prepared from locally available calcareous clays and very fine to very coarse sand-sized inclusions. The majority of the vessels (84%, MNI: 576) were manufactured with the use of a medium-coarse fabric, which is characterized as having inclusions in varying sizes and amounts, but there are also vessels (16%, MNI: 109) manufactured with a fine fabric representing a compact paste with very few or no visible inclusions. Neither fabric types were deliberately tempered with organic materials, which resulted in dense fabrics with minimum pores. The vessels were mainly (87%, MNI: 576) fashioned by the use of a rotary kinetic energy (hereafter, RKE).[62] Although not encountered in

54 von Dassow 2008.

55 Horowitz 2017; Dardeniz 2018; Johnson 2020; Yener and Akar 2020.

56 Yener and Akar 2013b; Yener et al. 2019c.

57 Yener 2013; Yener et al. 2019b, 341; Montesanto and Pucci 2019-2020; Montesanto 2020a.

58 In the context studies of Tell Atchana Excavations, the MNI numbers are primarily indicated for the diagnostic sherds in a given context. However, since the body sherd fragments of SCW vessels can also be identified as individual vessels during the study of a context assemblage as a whole, the MNI numbers were also indicated for such non-diagnostic sherds.

59 Horowitz 2019.

60 Horowitz 2015, 2017; Bulu 2016; Akar et al. 2021.

61 Bulu 2021.

62 This research follows the terminology used in Roux 2019 for different stages of pottery production.

higher amounts (13%, MNI: 85),[63] another potting tradition in which the combination of hand modeling and the use of RKE was adopted was also encountered within the assemblage.

The finishing techniques are characterized as wet-smoothing, either with the use of a RKE (87%, MNI: 578) or hand smoothing (13%, MNI: 83). Executing further surface treatments, such as burnishing (10%, MNI: 71) or application of a slip (0%, MNI: 2), was not a common tradition among the SCW vessels. The only instance where a vessel was both slipped and burnished is seen in a single example, which is also confirmed to be a non-local tradition through petrographic analysis.[64] The SCW vessels were mainly hard fired at approximately the same temperatures and in an oxidizing atmosphere, which resulted in acquiring products with oxidizing surface colors ranging from cream and tan to pink and light red. However, those with slightly higher and / or lower firing temperatures, as well as those that were produced in an insufficient oxidizing atmosphere, which resulted in cross-sections with slightly darker cores, also occasionally encountered.[65]

The SCW assemblage is represented by a limited number of vessel shapes in comparison to the much wider range of shapes that are seen within the Tell Atchana local pottery assemblages.[66] Pitchers (fig. 3.15-17) constitute the most frequent shape type attested within the SCW corpus[67] (22%, MNI: 152). These are characterized by having a trefoil rim, a narrow neck, a strap handle (or rarely a twisted handle), a globular body and a flat, convex or disc base. The second most frequent shape type is the krater (19%, MNI: 127), which has a rather intermediate form with a wide mouth and rounded or carinated shoulder (fig. 2.10-14). It has three subtypes: the biconical kraters (fig. 2.10), necked kraters (fig. 2.13) and holemouth kraters (fig. 2.14). Bowls (8%, MNI: 55) constitute the third most frequent shape type and are divided into three main sub-types: the s-curve bowls (fig. 2.1-3), carinated bowls (fig. 2.4-5), and shallow bowls (fig. 2.6-7). Jars (5%, MNI: 32) are mainly small-sized, thin-walled globular jars with an outturned rim (fig. 3.3). There are also medium-sized wide-mouthed (fig. 3.5) and narrow-mouthed globular jars (fig. 3.4) as well as short-necked (fig. 3.1) and bottle-necked jars (fig. 3.2). The other shape types encountered in much lower amounts are juglets (2%, MNI: 15, fig. 3.12-13), side-spouted jars (1%, MNI: 9, fig. 3.8-10), krater / jars (1%, MNI: 4, fig. 3.11), cups (1%, MNI: 3, fig. 2.8-9), irregular-shaped vessels (0%, MNI: 2, fig. 3.6-7), and a single example of a jug (0%, MNI: 1, fig. 3.14). There are also reused SCW sherds (0%, MNI: 3), which were cut around their edges and given a rounded shape.

Almost all of the SCW vessels at Tell Atchana have a monochrome paint decoration in different shades of red, brown and gray (or black), whereas bichrome paint decoration is only seen on three sherds. Painted decorations of SCW vessels consist of geometric, animal, floral and figural motifs. The other decorative techniques rarely found within the assemblage are adding applique types of clay pieces, raising horizontal lines, or incising single or multiple horizontal lines. These are exclusive to closed vessels, mainly pitchers but also jars.

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63 The hand-modeled handle and spout fragments within the assemblage, preserved without the body part that they were originally attached to, have been categorized separately as hand-modeled attachments (MNI: 24), since these parts could belong to the products of either potting tradition.

64 Bulu 2021, 222.

65 Bulu 2021, 240.

66 Horowitz 2015, 2019; Bulu 2016; Akar et al. 2021.

67 In addition to the designated vessel shape types, the corpus also consists of non-diagnostic body sherds that were classified as open (0%, MNI: 1), closed (35%, MNI: 239), or unknown shapes (6%, MNI: 42) due to their fragmentary conditions.

Regardless of the vessel shape, the top of the rim, the shoulder and the handle (where applicable) of all SCW vessels were adorned with painted motifs (figs. 2-3). The top of the rim is mainly decorated with a line of dots, vertical dashes or diagonal dashes; however, a horizontal line running on top of the rim is also rarely seen (fig. 3.1). The highest variety in the motif arrangement occurs on the shoulder decoration of SCW vessels. In the most basic or simple arrangement, the shoulder of the vessel is adorned with sets of vertical (figs. 2.1, 3.5) or diagonal lines (figs. 2.10, 3.3); the panel between each set is left empty. The coarser version of this arrangement would result in thicker bands instead of lines. The other basic arrangement is the application of alternating diagonal lines (figs. 2.13, 3.1), in which no empty panel was created between each set of lines. In the more elaborate motif arrangements, the empty panel between sets of vertical or diagonal lines would be decorated further with geometric, animal, floral or figural motifs (figs. 2.3, 14, 3.4, 6, 8, 16-17).

Having additional painted decorations compared to the other shape types, the most lavishly decorated vessel shape is the pitcher. The complete and partially complete examples show that all pitchers have the eye and eye frame motifs right below the trefoil rim; the bottom of the neck is adorned with multiple horizontal registers of geometric motifs; the handle is decorated with the branch or branch-like motifs; and the area below the handle was decorated with a tassel motif (fig. 3.15-17). The shoulder decoration predominantly consists of a single register, but a two-registered decoration is also encountered. Different from all of the variants above, the continuous cross-hatching applied to the shoulder is also seen on pitchers, although rarely (fig. 3.15).

The overall distribution of motif types per vessel shape demonstrates that the animal and figural motifs were almost exclusively seen on pitchers, whereas floral and geometric motifs were used to decorate other shape types as well. The contextual distribution of these motif types indicates that, while vessels with geometric, animal and floral motifs are seen in all areas of the site, those with figural motifs are exclusive to Area 1, the Royal Precinct (fig. 4). Among the animal motifs, while stylized depictions of goats and other quadrupeds are seen in different areas of the site, the bird motif is exclusive to Area 1.[68] The possible reason for such a phenomenon might be related to the importance and / or symbolic function of birds at the site, which is further discussed below.

The Intended Function of Syro-Cilician Ware Vessels

In this section, the technological and morphological characteristics, classified and outlined above, are evaluated in order to make inferences about the intended function(s) of SCW vessels, that is, what they might have been designed for. The interpretations have not only been made through considering classifications and analysis results of previous studies in the literature cited above, but also based on common-sense observations.

The fabric constituents and coarseness clearly confirm that the SCW vessels of Tell Atchana were not used for food or drink processing with heat. This would require a coarse and heavily tempered fabric,[69] as is the case for the cooking pots of the site.[70] In addition, the absence of highly porous fabrics implies that none of the SCW vessels were intended to be particularly

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68 Bulu 2021, 228-30.

69 SCW vessels with a fabric similar to that of cooking pots are attested at Kinet Höyük; see Gates 2000, 85.

70 Horowitz and Çakırlar 2017; Horowitz 2019; Akar et al. 2021, 86.

light in order to be used for long-distance transportation or for short-term water storage.[71] In terms of surface treatments, since both open (bowls and kraters) and closed shapes (jars, pitchers and juglets) appear with burnished surfaces, burnishing was likely applied for aesthetic reasons (such as having a shiny surface) rather than practical ones (such as reducing permeability). The thicknesses of the body walls also do not point to any correlation with the latter reason(s). Mainly ranging between 0.3 cm and 0.8 cm, the vessel walls of the majority of the SCW vessels are not particularly thick, rarely exceeding 1 cm. Nevertheless, kraters usually have thicker body walls (mainly between 0.6 cm and 1 cm) in comparison to other medium-sized vessels, such as pitchers and jars. This might indicate that the majority of the SCW vessels were not intended to be used for keeping contents fresh and / or on steady heat for a long period of time. Finally, the similar relatively hard-fired fabrics also point to the fact that SCW vessels were intended to have dense and non-porous fabrics, which would give them a higher resistance to impact and abrasion. This might have been a desired characteristic, given the short-distance mobility of SCW vessels due to their small to medium sizes, as well as their being resilient during certain serving-related activities.

Bowls and Cups

Representing the most frequently attested bowl type within the SCW assemblage, the s-curve bowls (fig. 2.1-3) have out-turned rims and a rounded or carinated shoulder that makes an "s" profile. Similarly, carinated bowls with an opening mouth (fig. 2.4) also have the same outward curve with their flared rims. Therefore, these SCW bowls are suitable for either eating and / or drinking liquid or semi-liquid contents directly from these vessels, or for consuming solids with the use of a utensil.[72] Since all of the s-curve and carinated bowls examples are of a small size (the rim diameter range is 9-16 cm and 9-12 cm, respectively), they could have been used for eating and / or drinking single portions. Constituting the least common open shape within the SCW repertoire, the cups (fig. 2.8-9) also have an s-profile with flared rims, though they are deeper and much smaller in size (rim diameters 6 and 9 cm). Therefore, cups would be suitable for drinking and / or pouring their liquid contents, while being held in one hand for either function.

On the contrary, rounded shallow bowls (fig. 2.7) and hook-rimmed shallow bowls with bent-in rims (fig. 2.6) would not allow direct consumption of food or drinks, but would be suitable for holding liquid, semi-liquid or solid contents that could be accessed easily.[73] The same can also be suggested for the carinated bowls with closing mouth (fig. 2.5), which lack an out-turned rim. Therefore, these bowl types were likely used either for eating with a utensil or for serving. While the small-sized carinated bowls with a closing mouth (rim diameters 7-13 cm) would be suitable for eating a single portion, the hook-rimmed shallow bowls (rim diameter range 14-21 cm) and the rounded shallow bowls (rim diameter 20 cm) would also be suitable for multiple servings because of their slightly larger sizes.

71 Rice 1987, 231.

72 Pucci 2019, 210.

73 Pucci 2019, 201.

Kraters

Based on the function of kraters known from Classical Greece, which were used for mixing wine and water, kraters of the Bronze and Iron Ages have also been considered as serving vessels, specifically for mixing liquids.[74] Regardless of the subtypes, the wide mouths of SCW kraters would allow access to their contents. This implies that the contents were likely served via a utensil, such as a ladle, or bowls / cups dipped directly into them. However, until this is supported via archaeometric analysis, it is not possible to determine whether a particular krater was used for mixing and serving liquids, since the shape is also suitable to contain and / or serve a semi-liquid food as well. Regardless of this ambiguity, the reason to use an open shape like a krater for serving could be related either to the visibility of its contents or, as typically suggested by default, to the necessity of mixing the content at certain intervals.

SCW kraters appear in two sizes: the small-sized ones have a rim diameter range of 14-17 cm (fig. 2.12), while the medium-sized ones have a rim diameter ranging between 18-32 cm (fig. 2.10-11, 2.13-14). Generally speaking, although kraters have medium to large rim diameters, their small-sized counterparts with identical profiles and typical rim types within the SCW assemblage have been classified as a sub-type. Based on the size difference, while the medium-sized kraters might be suitable for serving large quantities of food / beverages to a larger group of people, the small kraters might have been used to serve smaller quantities to smaller groups. Alternatively, if they were used together with the medium-sized ones, the contents of small kraters might also have been some sort of side-food.

Despite the differences in vessel sizes, both small- and medium-sized SCW kraters, along with their contents, would be suitable for transportation.[75] The only handle types attested on SCW kraters are the knob handles (fig. 2.11), which were very likely added for decorative purposes rather than practical / functional ones. The typical outward bent rim types of kraters (everted, flanged or rail), on the other hand, might have served as handles for easier transportation. Alternatively, those rims could have enabled stretching a covering material, such as a cloth or leather, across the vessel opening or to hold a lid. Kraters with a lid ridge rim, which has a single groove running on top (fig. 2.13), also supports the possibility of them being covered with lids. These either retained the heat of their contents or prevented contamination before, during or after use. The slightly thicker body walls of kraters might be related to this function, such as for serving hot contents, when a lid or some type of material that could be quickly fastened around a suitable rim type would help keep the contents warm.

Pitchers, Juglets and Side-spouted Jars

The morphological characteristics of SCW pitchers indicate that they were intended to be used for pouring liquids, likely the beverages that were consumed in the bowls and cups discussed above. The complete / partially complete examples show that their sizes range from small to medium and large (fig. 3.15-17), which implies that pitchers were used for pouring different quantities of liquids contained in those vessels, likely for consumption by groups of individuals of varying sizes.

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74 Hendrix et al. 1996, 39; van Wijngaarden 2002, 283; Bieniada 2009, 170-77; Pucci 2019, 212; Horowitz 2019, 241.

75 Pucci 2019, 212.

The SCW juglets are mainly preserved as sherds. The only example with a preserved rim, neck and handle (fig. 3.13) implies that their full profiles were likely similar to much smaller versions of pitchers and jugs. Due to their small size and being closed vessels, they might have been used for preserving and / or pouring (if they originally had a trefoil rim) small amounts of liquids. The limited quantity might be related to the higher value of the content (such as oil) in comparison to those poured from the pitchers. Alternatively, they might have been used for pouring other types of liquids, such as sauce.

The SCW side-spouted jars with a closed spout on the upper body (fig. 3.9-10) and a basket handle (fig. 3.8) also point to pouring activities. These jars are medium-sized (rim diameters 12-15 cm), and their closed spouts would enable a much slower pouring activity in comparison to a trefoil-rimmed pitcher. Only one of the side-spouted jars has a much smaller size (rim diameter 6 cm), and its partially complete spout is in the form of an animal head (fig. 3.9). Similar to the juglets, the small-sized versions of side-spouted jars might have been used for pouring a precious liquid.

Jars and Krater / Jars

Due to their closed shapes, jars in general are mainly associated with storage-related activities. Representing the most frequently attested jar type within the SCW assemblage, the globular jars might have been used for short-term storage purposes. The medium-sized, narrow-mouthed ones (fig. 3.4) would be suitable for liquid storage, since their narrower opening (rim diameter range 8-12 cm) would prevent spilling. Due to their out-turned rims, the contents of these jars could also have been easily poured into another container. The medium-sized, wide-mouthed jars (fig. 3.5, rim diameter range 13-16 cm), on the other hand, could have been used for both dry and liquid storage, the contents of which might either be retrieved with a utensil or poured. Since the small-sized versions of these jars (rim diameter range 8-13 cm) have an s-profile (fig. 3.3) similar to those of the bowls and cups discussed above, they would also be suitable for the direct consumption of liquids. Similarly, the small-sized, short-necked jars with straight rims (fig. 3.1) might have been used for short-term storage and / or drinking purposes. The bottle-necked jars (fig. 3.2), on the other hand, which are probably globular jugs with a single handle on the shoulder,[76] would be suitable for liquid storage by preventing their contents from spilling. Their narrow openings suggest that their contents were not meant to be accessed easily, but were likely to be poured. All of the SCW jars are small- to medium-sized vessels, which means that they could be transported easily when full. Therefore, the SCW jars might have been used for short-term storage or short-distance transport.

As a somewhat intermediate shape, a krater / jar (fig. 3.11) has the flared rim and upper profile of a globular jar, but it also has a wider mouth than a jar, similar to that of a krater (rim diameter range is 19-26 cm). Their available morphological characteristics suggest that their contents could have been accessed easily with a utensil, or they could have been poured by tilting the vessel, enabled by the flared rim. Therefore, they might have been used for short-term storage purposes.

[76] For complete examples of this vessel shape, see Matthiae 1989; Gates 2000, 97, fig. 6, no. 8.

Other Shape Types

The single example of a jug, which is only fragmentarily preserved, has a rolled out rim, a tall neck and a strap handle (fig. 3.14). The preserved profile indicates that it might be suitable for preserving liquids rather than pouring / serving them.[77] Lastly, two examples of irregular-shaped vessels (fig. 3.6-7) are also fragmentarily preserved, but they might have originally been animal-shaped vessels, whose unpainted counterparts are known from the Woolley excavations at the site.[78] If this were the case, they originally might have had perforations that would enable them to store any liquids and / or to pour them out, which could imply a rather non-utilitarian function.

The Archaeological Contexts of Consumption: The Actual Function

In this section, the actual function of the SCW vessels is examined through a multi-dimensional approach that combines their intended functions discussed above and the contexts that they were recovered from. During the renewed excavations at Tell Atchana / Alalakh, SCW examples have been retrieved from 13 different excavation squares located in Areas 1, 3 and 4, dating from MB II to LB II (fig. 4).[79] SCW was the widely preferred painted pottery style of the MBA, and its production and use gradually decreased being replaced by other local painted pottery traditions during the LBA.[80] For a better understanding of SCW's actual function when the ware type was most commonly used, three selected MB II contexts exposed in two different parts of the site will be presented here. Furthermore, the role of SCW vessels in a given context will be evaluated by comparing them to the other ware types[81] that they appeared together with. This approach will demonstrate whether there was a pattern in the consumption of SCW vessels, or if there was a differentiation within and between different sectors of the site in terms of how they were appreciated.

One of the best-preserved contexts excavated at Tell Atchana so far is a palace kitchen that was exposed in local phase 3c of square 33.32 (Period 9, MB II), located in the courtyard of the Level VII Palace.[82] Due to its destruction by fire, the preservation of this context is remarkable and it provides the most helpful information regarding the actual function of SCW vessels. The context consists of a fully exposed southern room (Room A) and a partially exposed northern room (Room B) connected to each other through a doorway (fig. 5). Room A is defined with a horseshoe-shaped hearth, an elevated platform in which three pithoid jars were found *in situ*, and a bench-like feature along the southern wall of the room. However, the architectural features of the partially exposed Room B are limited to a semicircular and a rectangular bench. Both rooms yielded considerable amounts of pottery ranging from discarded sherds to *in situ* vessels from the destruction event. The functional analysis of this palace kitchen has already shown that Room A was mainly associated with food processing and storage, whereas Room B predominantly yielded evidence for serving-related activities, indicating that the latter could have been used as a staging area for storing these vessels.[83]

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77 Pucci 2019, 218.

78 Heinz 1992, pl. 78.

79 Bulu 2021.

80 Horowitz 2015, 2019, 2022.

81 For the detailed description of MBA ware types of Tell Atchana, see Horowitz 2015; Bulu 2016; Akar et al. 2021, 83-87.

82 Bulu 2016.

83 Bulu 2016, 309-11, fig. 8.

While the SCW examples of Room A are restricted to fragmentary sherds of a pitcher and closed vessels, those retrieved from Room B are preserved as partially complete examples of two pitchers and a juglet, as well as fragmentary sherds of an s-curve bowl and a krater. The overall distribution of vessel shape types retrieved from Room B (fig. 6a) shows that, while the bowls are predominantly of Simple Ware, there is only one example of a SCW bowl. On the contrary, the two pitchers, as well as the single example of a juglet, only appear as SCW vessels. The only exceptions are the kraters retrieved from this room, which are of both ware types.

The difference in vessel shape types and the fact that SCW vessels are present in very small quantities in comparison to the Simple Ware assemblages indicates that the SCW vessels might have functioned as a serving set (fig. 7). Referring to the intended functions described above, pitchers (fig. 7.7, 7.10) might have contained liquids related to the consumption activity, which could be directly poured into the bowls of individuals (fig. 7.1-3). The smaller-sized juglet (fig. 7.6), on the other hand, might have been used for containing and pouring another type of liquid that was not consumed as a beverage, such as a sauce or oil. If kraters were used for serving food, the three kraters (fig. 7.4-5, 7.9) retrieved from Room B might have contained different dishes. The SCW krater, with its painted decoration, might have been reserved for the most "special" dish. The appearance of SCW s-curve bowl as a single example (fig. 7.8) implies that it may have been used as the utensil to remove the contents of the kraters and to serve them into the bowls of individuals. Alternatively, it might have been used by the most important and / or the highest-ranking individual during the consumption activity, while the rest of the people used the Simple Ware counterparts.

The coexistence of three kraters (both Simple Ware and SCW) and two SCW pitchers might be indicative of the potential use of kraters. One of the pitchers is large-sized (figs. 3.17, 7.10) and could contain a large quantity of liquids to be consumed by a big group of people. If this assemblage was meant to be used for a consumption event (such as a feast), the suggestion that these three kraters as well as the pitchers were all used for serving liquids is somewhat questionable. This would mean that at least two different types of beverages were served from at least five different vessels. For this reason, and assuming that food consumption would also take place during the same event, kraters might have functioned as vessels for serving food rather than beverages. As suggested above, the relatively thicker walls of kraters, and their rim types which are suitable for holding lids, could be related to retaining the heat of their contents. This could be food rather than beverages, although it is also possible that they were serving hot beverages in the kraters. This suggestion remains tentative, since the question of what any of the SCW vessels originally contained can only be answered through future residue analysis.

The second context comes from square 32.57, located in the courtyard of the Level IV Palace. Local phase 5 (Period 7, MB II) of this square is defined by a partially exposed monumental building, whose exterior area to the east was consistently used as a street (fig. 8). Seven sub-phases that were traced in this building through continuous modifications in the arrangement of spaces and the raising of floors, as well as the scarcity of *in situ* remains, suggest that it was constantly renewed over a long period of use. In local phases 5g, 5f and 5b, an apsidal extension was added to the southern part of this building. Based on its close proximity to the Ishtar Temple to its southeast, ritual-related objects retrieved from and around this building, and the architectural similarity to apsidal structures from Anatolia, the Aegean and the Near East, the function of this "Apsidal Building" has been suggested as a temple or cult building.[84]

[84] Yener 2015a, 2015b; Akar et al. 2021, 78, 88.

Retrieving SCW vessels from this particular building implies that their consumption was not limited to palatial contexts but also included ritual ones. In local phase 5b of this building, while the eastern room has only yielded a single SCW bowl, the assemblage retrieved from the room within the apsidal extension provides the most information regarding the function of SCW vessels (fig. 6b). This room yielded a large amount of Simple Ware bowls and jars, along with much smaller amounts of jugs, kraters and pitchers. The SCW vessels retrieved from this room also appear as a serving set consisting of seven pitchers, a krater and a juglet. Considering that this structure was likely a cult building, the quantity of SCW pitchers found might be associated with serving liquids involved in consumption activities that took place during rituals. Alternatively, the SCW pitchers might have been used for libations, if these were performed during the rituals. A religious text from the Level VII Palace archives mentions 100+ large and 300 small pots of oil among the offerings made to the Ishtar temple by King Yarim-lim.[85] These pots do not necessarily represent SCW vessels; however, if at least some of these liquid offerings were poured during rituals, the SCW pitchers and juglets might be likely candidates for this activity. This suggestion is also supported by the presence of SCW vessels in the Temple Sounding excavated by Woolley, which testifies to the role of SCW vessels in religious activities during the MBA.[86]

Representing the third context, square 45.44 in Area 3 is located on the northeastern slope of the mound, and the investigations in this area yielded the city's fortification wall with multiple modification phases from MB II to LB I (Periods 7-4). The results have shown that the area to the west (interior) of the city wall was characterized as domestic and industrial spaces, whereas the area to the east (exterior) of the city wall was consistently used as the cemetery of the site.[87] Local phase 5 (Period 7, MB II) is defined by domestic structure that is attached to the MB II fortification wall of the city, which was only partially exposed due to the limits of the square to the west (fig. 9). The structure consists of a southern room where two distinct floor deposits were identified, and a northern room.

Retrieving SCW vessels from this part of the site shows that consumption of this painted pottery style was not associated only with palatial and / or ritual contexts but also with domestic ones. Moreover, although the Area 3 contexts are represented by limited exposures, the nature of the SCW assemblages and their association with other ware and shape types are not very different from what is seen in Area 1. The SCW vessels from the two different floors of the southern room are limited to a side-spouted jar, a pitcher and a krater. This again constitutes a serving set that appears with Fine Simple Ware and Simple Ware bowls and cups, as well as Simple Ware kraters and single examples of a small-sized jar and a jug (fig. 6c). The SCW repertoire from the northern room shows a much larger variety, and consists of three bowls, a pitcher, and small- and medium-sized kraters. They appear as a serving set similar to those retrieved from the Area 1 contexts and were accompanied by Simple Ware kraters, pitchers and juglets, the contents of which were likely consumed with the Simple Ware bowls and cups.

85 AlT (=Excavation registration number for Alalakh cuneiform tablets) 126; Wiseman 1953, 63.

86 Heinz 1992, pls. 3, 65.

87 Ingman 2017; Akar et al. 2021, 82-83.

Symbolic Function

In addition to the technological and morphological characteristics and their contextualization, which yielded information regarding what SCW vessels might have been designed and used for, the painted decoration of SCW must have functioned to fulfill non-utilitarian needs as well, such as conveying messages and representing specific values or identities. There have been a number of studies which have attempted to make inferences about the possible meanings and functions of the geometric motifs depicted on ceramics.[88] Closely related with SCW, one of these studies[89] suggested a correlation between textile motifs and the painted pottery (specifically the cross-hatched motifs) during the late third through second millennia BC in the eastern Mediterranean. The author focuses on their "non-garment" function for "dressing" objects. The suggestion of "dressed" pots stems from vessels with textile fragments and vessels with rope-patterned decorations. In addition to the many reasons for dressing pots from practical to symbolic, this study has suggested that the anthropomorphic vessels with painted motifs, or literally "dressed" ones, may represent a metaphorical association between people and their dresses or tattoos and they could have been used as a manifestation of identity and power in a society.[90]

The detailed technological analysis of SCW vessels has shown considerable variety detected in the decorative aspects, from the choices of motif types to the ways in which they were executed to the level of care given to their execution, especially in pitchers.[91] This phenomenon might be related to them being manufactured by different potting groups, which has been detected through the traces of different technical behaviors during production.[92] Alternatively, it might be associated with the customers' specific demands that resulted in non-standardized and rather customized products. This might represent materialized reflections of certain groups / families at Alalakh, through which their identities and / or power was expressed. The specific motifs on the SCW vessels, without a doubt, had certain meanings for the Alalakhians. However, making inferences about this aspect would be extremely challenging (and very likely erroneous), if not impossible. Nevertheless, various types of evidence might provide useful insights regarding the reasons for depicting one specific motif among many: the bird.

Depictions of different animals and floral elements on SCW vessels might reflect the effort of representing the natural life at and around the site. However, the bird motif might have had a different meaning or function than the others. When we look at the SCW vessels from other sites within its distribution zone, goat or other quadruped motifs are part of the motif repertoire of pitchers. However, those with a bird motif are almost exclusively seen at Tell Atchana. The only exceptions would be the single examples from Hama[93] and Ayia Pareskevi.[94] Considering the fact that vessels decorated with bird motifs have been found in all MBA levels of both the

88 Bernbeck 1999; Campbell 2010; Cruells et al. 2017.

89 Wilkinson 2014.

90 Wilkinson 2014.

91 Bulu 2021, 223-32.

92 Bulu 2021, 215-37.

93 Ingholt 1940, pl. 17, no. 3

94 Merrillees and Tubb 1979, 225, fig. 2, pl. 24, nos. 1-2. The example from Tarsus Gözlükule (Goldman 1956, pl. 315, no. 1085) has a bichrome paint decoration, which might also belong to the Cypriot Bichrome Ware tradition; see Kozal 2017, 179, cat. no. 96. The pitcher from the Antalya Museum (Dündar 2008) also has bird motifs but was acquired through confiscation, therefore the provenance is unknown.

Woolley and Yener excavations (fig. 10),[95] SCW vessels with the bird motif might be regarded as the most specialized products of Alalakh, signaling the provenance of this style. The reason for such specialization might be related to the importance and / or symbolic function of birds for the Alalakhians.

This argument can be supported with several lines of evidence. To begin with a natural one, modern Hatay is located along a major bird migration route,[96] and it must have been the same case for the Mukish Kingdom during the Bronze Age. Therefore, the Alalakhians, and probably other populations residing at different settlements in the Amuq, very likely witnessed the passage of various types of birds during the migratory seasons, and they might have hunted them to eat and / or to keep them for non-utilitarian purposes. The recovery of bird bones among the faunal remains of Tell Atchana confirms their presence at the site.[97] Moreover, birds similar to those on the SCW pitchers are also seen on some of the seals from Tell Atchana.[98]

Cuneiform texts from the site also provide evidence for the importance of birds. Fowlers, who received grain for birdfeed, and bird-keepers are mentioned in the Level VII Palace (MB II) archives.[99] Within the archives of Level IV (LB I), a bird-catcher is listed as belonging to the *eḫelle* class, representing the second highest ranking group within the social stratification of the society, which included craftspeople and / or skilled personnel employed by higher-ranking parties.[100] Moreover, while one tablet[101] records buying birds, another tablet[102] records the distribution of eight birds to certain individuals during specific occasions, an activity in which the king was involved. The presence of specialized occupations such as bird-catcher and fowler, as well as the buying and distributing of birds, might be related to the need for these animals for religious purposes.[103] In a text from the Level VII archives,[104] 300 birds are mentioned as part of the offerings made to the Ishtar temple on behalf of the King Yarim-lim. The birds might have been used for omens as well.[105] This can be inferred from the mention of a diviner named Kuzzi who was a significant official in the Level VII texts.[106] Yet another tablet from Level I / II[107] written in Hittite shows that an individual called Pirwannu, who might be a king of Alalakh, sent birds to a Hittite king. He asks if the king was pleased with this gift and whether he wants more of them. This particular text signifies the high value (and perhaps also the religious meaning) of the birds that lived at and / or migrated through Alalakh. These were used as royal gifts to send to the Hittite "lord" that this possible Alalakhian king served as a vassal. Although no SCW examples with the bird motif have been found in LB II contexts, this lexical tablet implies that the importance of birds at Alalakh continued into this period.

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95 Woolley 1955; Heinz 1992; Bulu 2017b.

96 Çalışkan 2008.

97 Çakırlar and Rossel 2010, 145, table 12.1; Çakırlar et al. 2014, 270; (Canan Çakırlar personal communication, 2019).

98 Collon 1982, nos. 30-32, 58 and 65.

99 AlT 18, AlT 243, AlT 268, AlT 273, AlT 274 and AlT 281, Wiseman 1953, 12; Lauinger 2015, 51, 79.

100 von Dassow 2008, 262, table 4.4.

101 AlT 269, Wiseman 1953, 86.

102 AlT 355, Wiseman 1953, 99; von Dassow 2008, 58.

103 Minunno 2013, 89-91.

104 AlT 126, Wiseman 1953, 63.

105 Wiseman 1953, 12; Collon 1975, 113; Minunno 2013, 90.

106 Lauinger 2015, 82, 390.

107 AlT 125, Wiseman 1953, 62.

Another fragmentary tablet,[108] retrieved as a surface find during the renewed excavations and listing the Sumerian names of birds, contributes further to the possible significance of birds at Alalakh.

Connections to bird motifs are also present in other types of ceramic evidence throughout the occupation of the site. Animal-shaped vessels in the forms of birds occur not only in the MBA[109] but also in the LBA, such as the example painted in Nuzi Ware style.[110] Birds continue to appear among the motifs of other painted pottery styles throughout LB I.[111] As previously suggested by other scholars,[112] the SCW pitchers themselves may represent birds. These different types of evidence thus point to the significance of birds for Alalakhians, and they very likely had a symbolic meaning related to the religious activities that took place at the site. In addition to their recovery from the Temple Sounding of the Woolley excavations, the restriction of pitchers with the bird motif to Area 1 of the renewed excavations also confirms this suggestion.

Conclusions

This paper presented a functional analysis of SCW vessels from Tell Atchana / Alalakh by combining their technological and morphological characteristics with the nature of the contexts that they were recovered from. The results show that the intended and actual functions of SCW vessels are compatible and that most of the recovered examples seem to have had a serving-related purpose. This is clearest in the appearance of a well-defined and consistent serving set that appears throughout both time and space at Tell Atchana. The set in its basic form consists of a pitcher, a krater, an s-curve bowl, and a juglet, although it can occur in either abbreviated or elaborated variations in different contexts. It is also consistently accompanied by Simple Ware vessels, which seem to complete the larger consumption set, with SCW vessels used to serve and Simple Ware vessels used for eating / drinking.

The MB I exposures at the site are only known from the previous excavations. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the first appearance of this serving set. But it is clear that it had formed and was in use at least by the late MB II. Its presence in contexts throughout the site - in the Royal Precinct and outside - demonstrate that SCW was not only used by the royal administration and / or elite, but was also utilized in both domestic and ritual contexts. Linkages to the ritual use and importance of SCW vessels at Tell Atchana are also implied by the reoccurring bird motif. Based on the textual and iconographic evidence, birds seem to have had a special, likely ritual or religious significance to the inhabitants of Alalakh. This appears to be reflected in the SCW bird motif.

Although it has not been elaborated here, the use of SCW vessels as a serving set evidently continued into LB I with variations on the MB II set, and much rarely encountered in LB II.[113] Therefore, the pattern of SCW consumption at Tell Atchana does not change drastically throughout the occupation of the site. The only exception is the single appearance of a SCW vessel in an infant burial, dated to the LB I / II transition period.[114] In contrast to northwestern

108 A03-R1001+A03-R1139, Lauinger 2010, 85.

109 Heinz 1992, pl. 78.

110 Woolley 1955, 350-51, pl. 103d.

111 Woolley 1955, pls. 94a, 95, 104.

112 Jamieson 2005, 80; Bieniada 2009, 175, 179.

113 Bulu 2021, 275-85.

114 Akar 2019, 18, fig. 2, no. 25.

Syria, where SCW seems to be associated with MB II burial practices, this example is the only case of a SCW vessel found in a grave at Tell Atchana, with no MB II graves containing SCW, although MB II graves are well-attested at the site, and pottery is the most common type of grave goods in that period.[115]

The wide geographical distribution of SCW raises the question about the extent of regional and interregional encounters, and their consequent effects on not only the production but also the consumption of this particular ware type. Thus, future work is needed to explore the case of SCW at a regional level and to investigate patterns of production and consumption among contemporary settlements within the Amuq Valley and its surroundings. One specific site is Toprakhisar Höyük in the Altınözü highlands above Alalakh, where early MBA levels have recently been excavated[116] and now is under study by the author. This will allow us to comprehend consumption traditions of a specific ware type from different proxies with diverse functional attributes.

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115 Ingman 2020a, 2020b; Akar et al. 2021.

116 Akar and Kara 2018, 2020, 2022.

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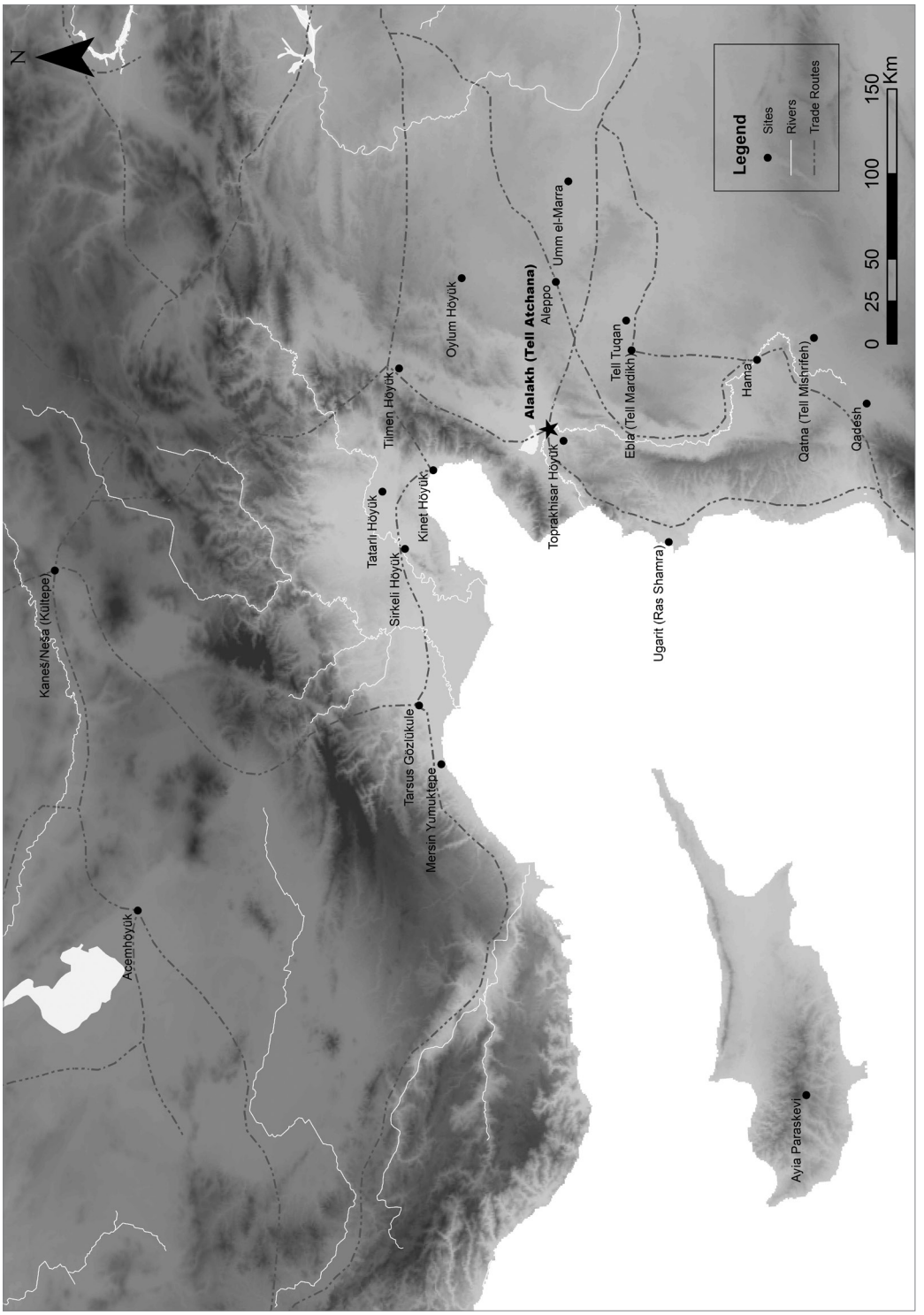

FIG. 1 Map showing the location of Tell Atchana / Alalakh and other contemporary settlements in the neighboring regions (©Tell Atchana Excavations Archive).

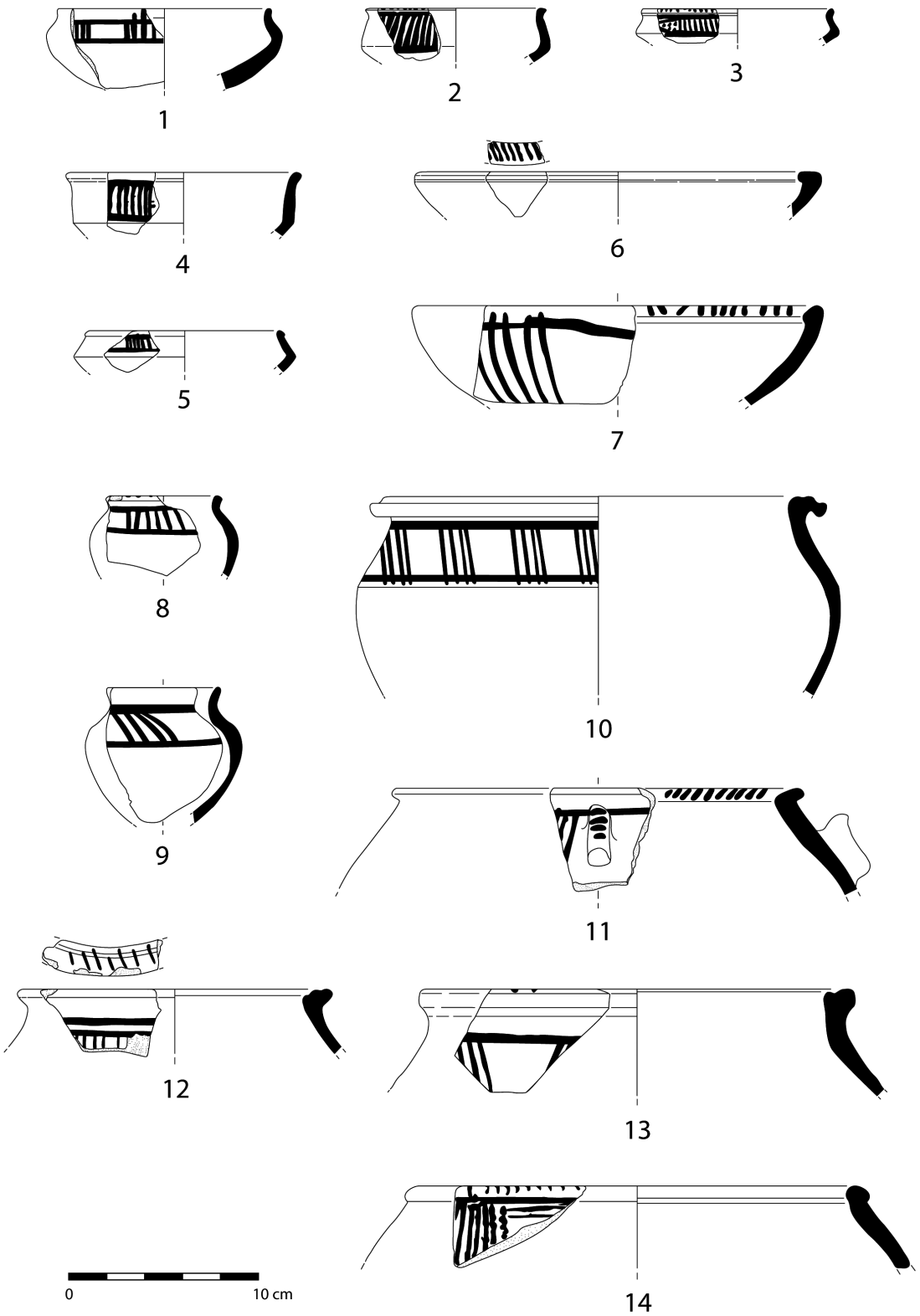

FIG. 2 New Syro-Cilician Ware corpus from Tell Atchana (©Tell Atchana Excavations Archive).

1- AT19010.14, s-curve bowl. Findspot: Square 32.57, Local Phase 5f (Period 7, MB II). Rim diameter: 11 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: cream (2.5Y 7/2), cross-section: tan (7.5YR 6/4), paint: brown (10YR 4/1).

2- AT22262.1, s-curve bowl. Findspot: Square 33.32, Local Phase 3c (Period 9, MB II). Rim diameter: 9 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: cream (2.5Y 7/2), cross-section: tan (10YR 6/4), paint: brown (10YR 5/2).

3- AT24126.1, s-curve bowl. Findspot: Square 33.53, Local Phase 3 (Period 9, MB II). Rim diameter: 10 cm. Fine fabric.
Exterior surface: cream (2.5Y 7/2), cross-section: cream (10YR 7/2), paint: black (10R 4/1).

4- AT24125.1, carinated bowl. Findspot: Square 33.53, Local Phase 2 (Period 8, MB II). Rim diameter: 12 cm. Fine fabric.
Exterior surface: tan (7.5YR 6/4), cross-section: tan (7.5YR 5/4), paint: brown (7.5YR 5/2).

5- AT24508.1, carinated bowl. Findspot: Square 33.53, Local Phase 2 (Period 8, MB II). Rim diameter: 10 cm. Fine fabric. Exterior surface and cross-section: cream (2.5Y 7/2), paint: brown (7.5YR 4/2).

6- AT26080.2, hook-rimmed shallow bowl. Findspot: Square 33.53, Local Phase 2 (Period 8, MB II). Rim diameter: 20 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: tan (7.5YR 6/4), cross-section: tan (5YR 5/4), paint: brown (10R 5/6).

7- AT23666.1, rounded shallow bowl. Findspot: Square 33.53, Local Phase 4 (Period 9, MB II). Rim diameter: 21 cm.
Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: cream (2.5Y 7/2), cross-section: tan (10YR 6/4), paint: black (2.5Y 6/2).

8- AT19013.1, s-curve cup. Findspot: Square 32.57, Local Phase 5f (Period 7, MB II). Rim diameter: 6 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: cream (2.5Y 7/2), cross-section: tan (10YR 6/4), paint: red (10YR 4/1).

9- AT19034.1; s-curve cup. Findspot: Square 32.57, Local Phase 5g (Period 7, MB II). Rim diameter: 6 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: tan (10YR 6/4) and pink (7.5YR 7/4), cross-section: tan (7.5YR 6/4), paint: light reddish brown (5YR 6/4).

10- AT12855.1, biconical krater. Findspot: Square 32.57, Local Phase 5b (Period 7, MB II). Rim diameter: 22 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface and cross-section: cream (2.5Y 7/2), paint: brown (7.5YR 5/6).

11- AT23666.2, medium-sized krater. Findspot: Square 33.32, Local Phase 4 (Period 9, MB II). Rim diameter: 21 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: cream (2.5Y 7/2), cross-section: tan (7.5YR 6/4), paint: brown (10YR 5/2).

12- AT23137.2, small-sized krater. Findspot: Square 33.53, Local Phase 3 (Period 9, MB II). Rim diameter: 16 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: cream (2.5Y 7/2), cross-section: tan (10YR 6/4), paint: brown (10YR 5/1).

13- AT18086.2, necked krater. Findspot: Square 45.44, Local Phase 5 (Period 7, MB II). Rim diameter: 22 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: light reddish brown (5YR 6/4), cross-section: tan (7.5YR 5/4), paint: red (10R 4/4).

14- AT10598.1 holemouth krater. Findspot: Square 33.32, Local Phase 3b (Period 9, MB II). Rim diameter: 23 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: pink (7.5YR 7/4), cross-section: tan (7.5YR 6/4), paint: red (2.5YR 5/6).

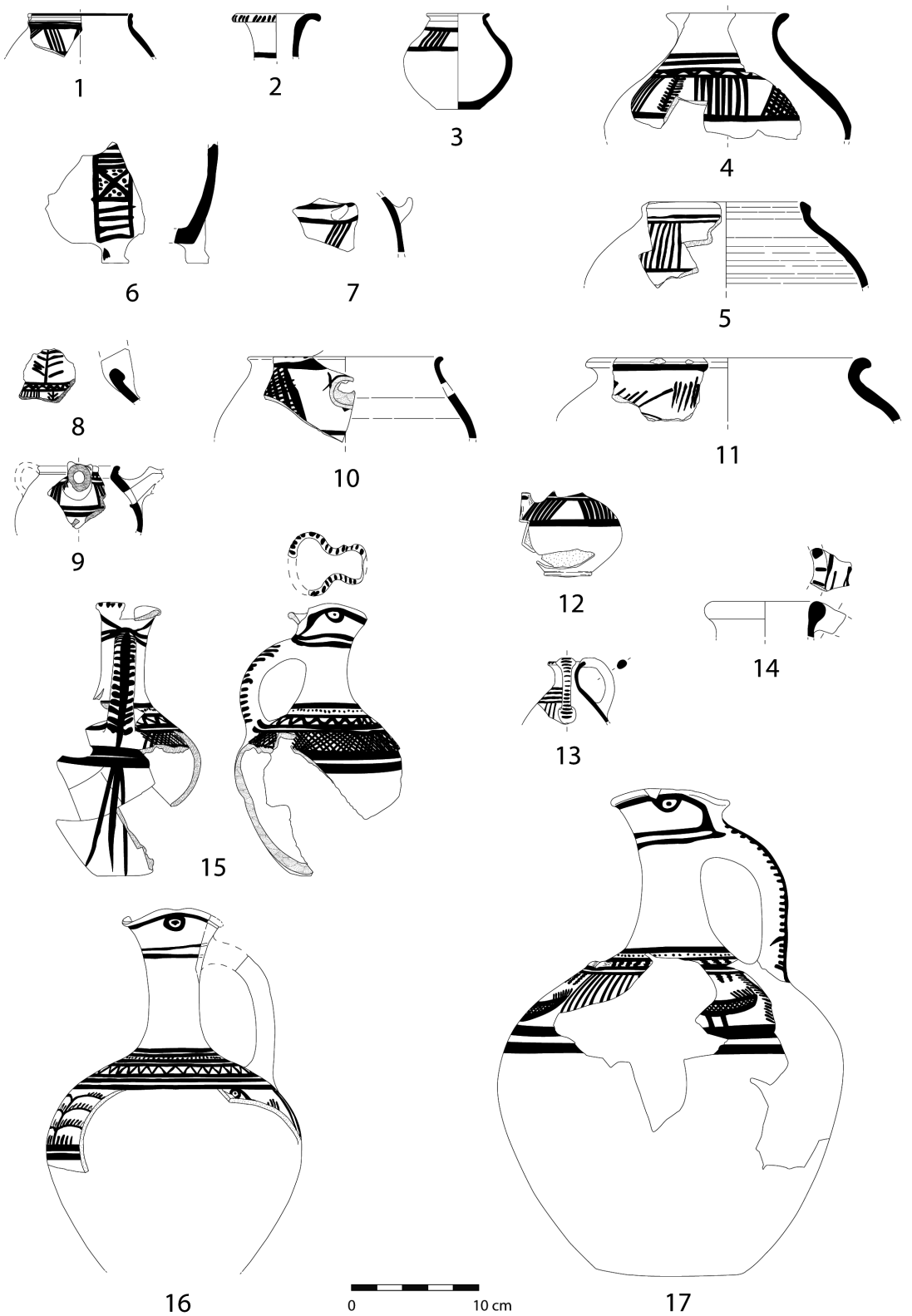

FIG. 3 New Syro-Cilician Ware corpus from Tell Atchana (©Tell Atchana Excavations Archive).

1- AT26628.3, short-necked jar. Findspot: Square 33.53, Local Phase 2 (Period 8, MB II). Rim diameter: 8 cm. Fine fabric. Exterior surface: cream (2.5Y 8/2), cross-section: tan (10YR 7/4), paint: red (2.5YR 5/4).

2- AT19022.2, bottle-necked jar. Findspot: Square 32.57, Local Phase 5g (Period 7, MB II). Rim diameter: 7 cm. Fine fabric. Exterior surface: cream (10YR 7/2), cross-section: tan (10YR 6/2), paint: brown (7.5YR 5/2).

3- AT12903, small-sized globular jar. Findspot: Square 32.54, Local Phase 2d-2c transition (Period 3, LB II). Rim diameter: 7 cm. Fine fabric. Exterior surface and cross-section: tan (7.5YR 6/4), paint: brown (5YR 5/4).

4- AT22266.1, narrow-mouthed globular jar. Findspot: Square 33.32, Local Phase 3c (Period 9, MB II). Rim diameter: 9 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: green (5Y 7/2), cross-section: gray (2.5Y 6/2), paint: brown (10YR 4/1).

5- AT12346.102, wide-mouthed globular jar. Findspot: Square 32.57, Local Phase 5a (Period 7, MB II). Rim diameter: 12 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: cream (2.5Y 7/2), cross-section: pink (5YR 7/4), paint: brown (7.5YR 4/2).

6- AT13745.1, irregular-shaped vessel. Findspot: Square 32.57, Local Phase 5b (Period 7, MB II). Maximum height: 9,4 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: tan (7.5YR 6/4), cross-section: brown-gray-brown (7.5YR 5/4-10YR 4/2-7.5YR 5/4), paint: red (5YR 4/4).

7- AT23167.4, irregular-shaped vessel. Findspot: Square 33.53, Local Phase 3 (Period 9, MB II). Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: tan (7.5YR 6/4), cross-section: tan (10YR 6/4), paint: red (10R 4/4).

8- AT1698.3, side-spouted jar. Findspot: Square 32.57, Local Phase 2b (Period 5, LB I). Maximum height: 2,15 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: pink (7.5YR 7/4), cross-section: cream (2.5Y 7/2), paint: brown (5YR 5/4).

9- AT19409.1, side-spouted jar. Findspot: Square 32.57, Local Phase 5g (Period 7, MB II). Rim diameter: 6 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: cream (2.5Y 7/2), cross-section: tan (5YR 6/4), paint: black (10R 4/1).

10- AT24258.3, krater / jar. Findspot: Square 64.72, Local Phase 6 (Period 6, LB I). Rim diameter: 15 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: cream (2.5Y 7/2), cross-section: tan (5YR 6/4), paint: brown (10YR 4/1).

11- AT23695.1, side-spouted jar. Findspot: Square 32.53, Local Phase 2d (Period 4, LB I). Rim diameter: 15 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: cream (2.5Y 7/2), cross-section: tan (5YR 6/4), paint: brown (10YR 4/1).

12- AT10595, juglet. Findspot: Square 33.32, Local Phase 3c (Period 9, MB II). Base diameter: 3,5 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: cream (2.5Y 7/2), cross-section: tan (10YR 6/2), paint: brown (10YR 4/1).

13- AT17108.2, juglet. Findspot: Square 45.44, Local Phase 4 (Period 6, LB I). Rim diameter: 3 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: pink (5YR 7/4), cross-section: tan (5YR 6/4), paint: red (2.5YR 5/4).

14- AT18096.2, jug. Findspot: Square 45.44, Local Phase 5 (Period 7, MB II). Rim diameter: 8 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: tan (5YR 6/4), cross-section: tan (7.5YR 6/4), paint: red (7.5R 5/4).

15- AT19024.2, pitcher. Findspot: Square 32.57, Local Phase 5f (Period 7, MB II). Base diameter: 5 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: tan (10YR 7/4), cross-section: tan (7.5YR 6/4), paint: red (10R 4/4).

16- AT17591, pitcher. Findspot: Square 32.57, Local Phase 5f (Period 7, MB II). Maximum height: 28,5 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: green (5Y 7/2), cross-section: light gray (5Y 7/1), paint: brown (10YR 4/1).

17- AT10539, pitcher. Findspot: Square 33.32, Local Phase 3c (Period 9, MB II). Base diameter: 10,5 cm. Medium-coarse fabric. Exterior surface: cream (2.5Y 7/2), cross-section: cream (2.5Y 7/2), paint: black (5YR 4/1).

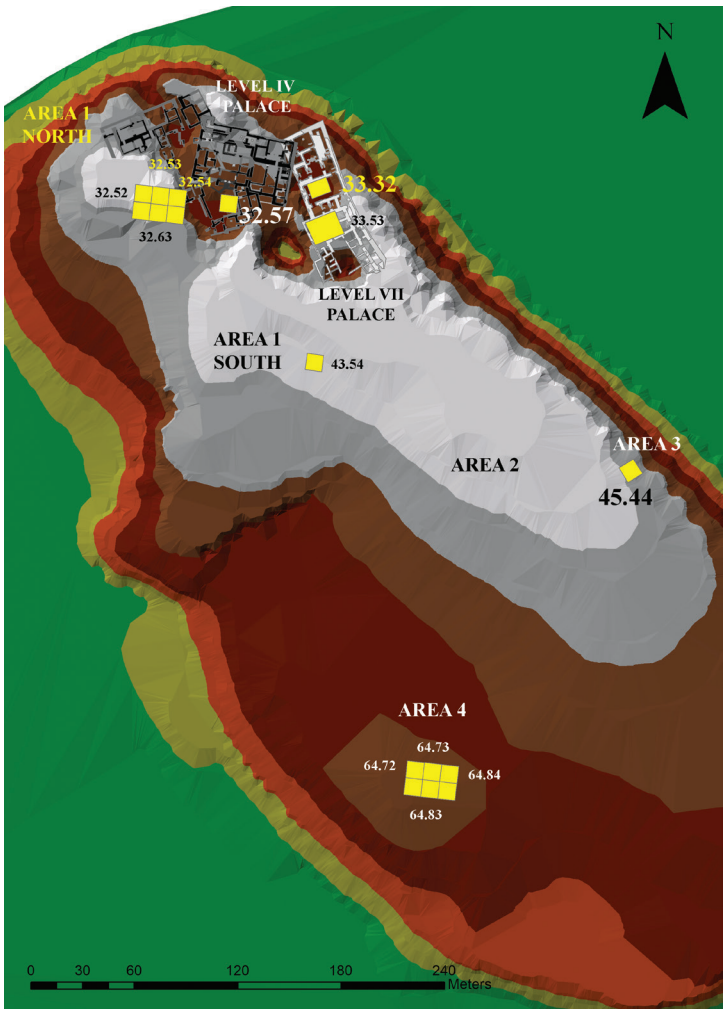

FIG. 4
Map of Tell Atchana, showing the location of the areas and squares that yielded SCW examples in the renewed excavations (©Tell Atchana Excavations Archive).

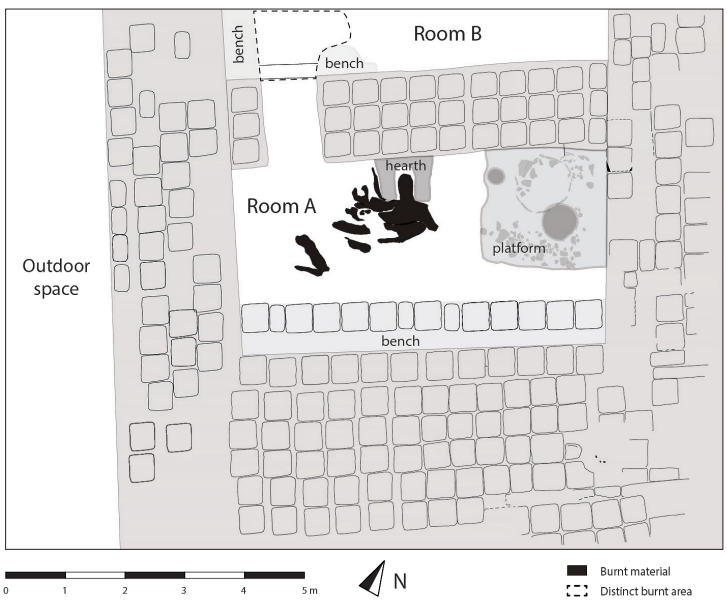

FIG. 5
Plan of square 33.32, local phase 3c, Palace Kitchen (©Tell Atchana Excavations Archive).

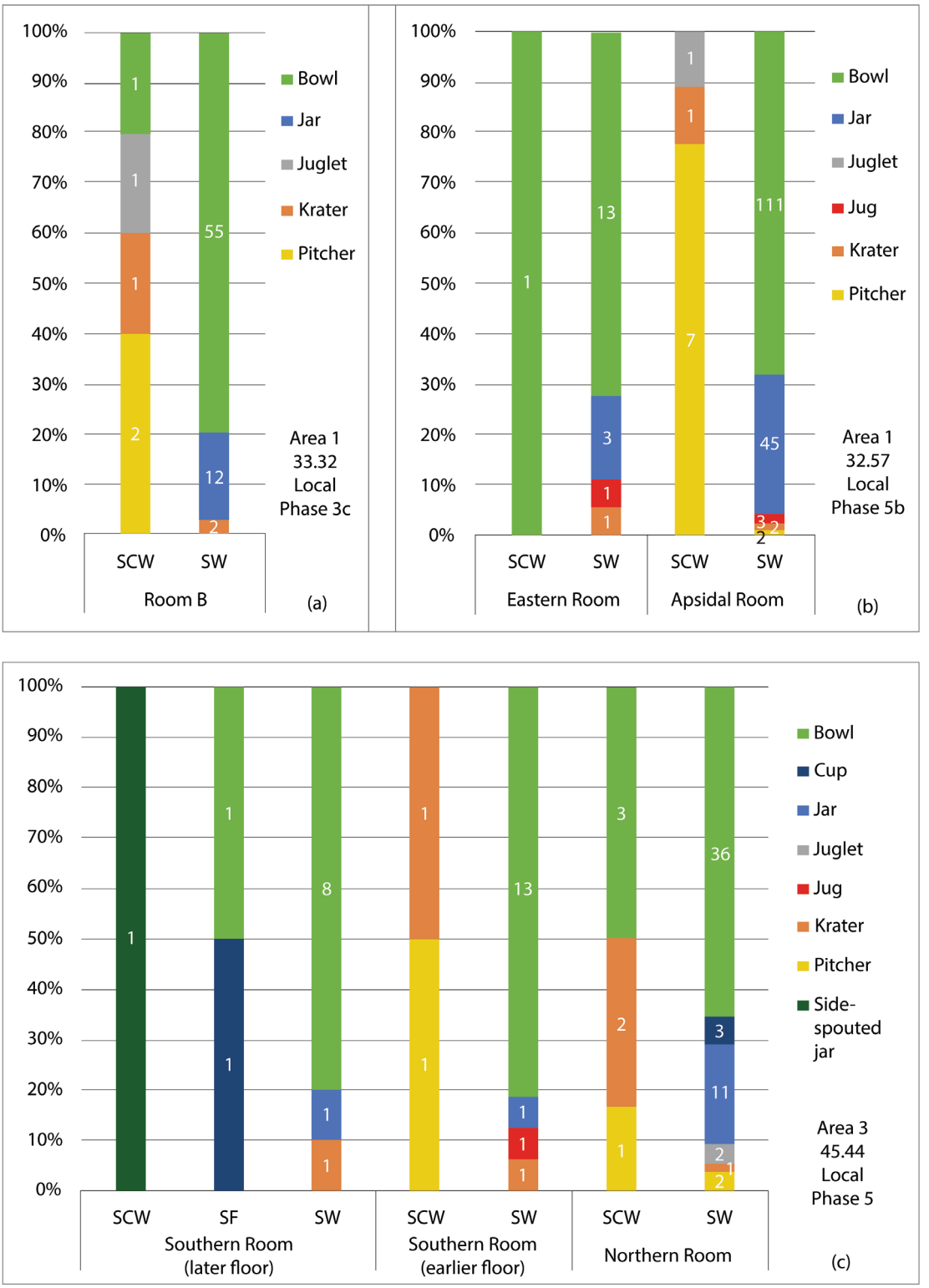

FIG. 6 Distribution of shape types in Syro-Cilician Ware (SCW), Simple Ware (SW) and Fine Simple Ware (SF) from the MBA contexts of square 33.32 (a), square 32.57 (b) and square 45.44 (c). The numbers in the charts indicate minimum number of individual vessels for each shape (©Tell Atchana Excavations Archive).

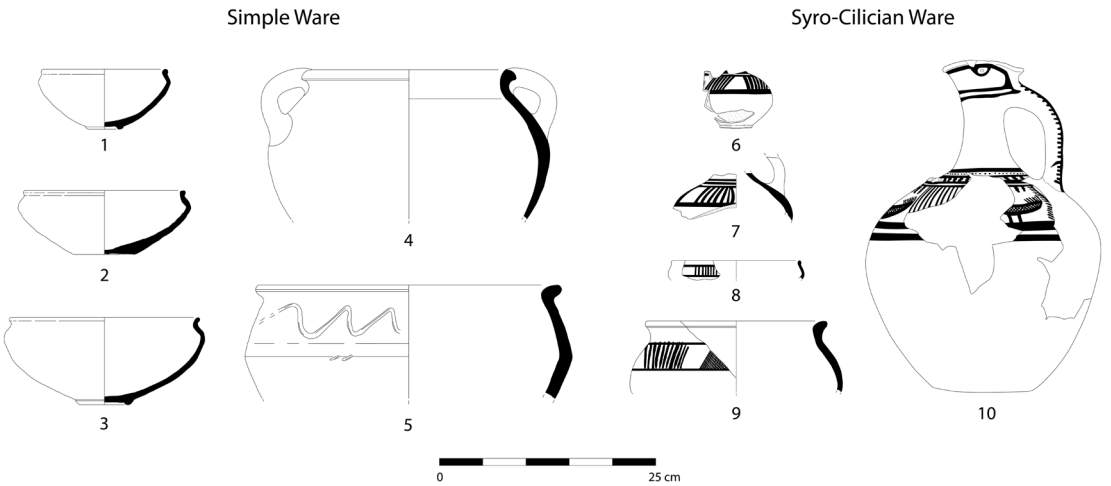

FIG. 7 The SCW serving set as part of a larger consumption set from Room B of square 33.32, local phase 3c, Palace Kitchen (©Tell Atchana Excavations Archive).

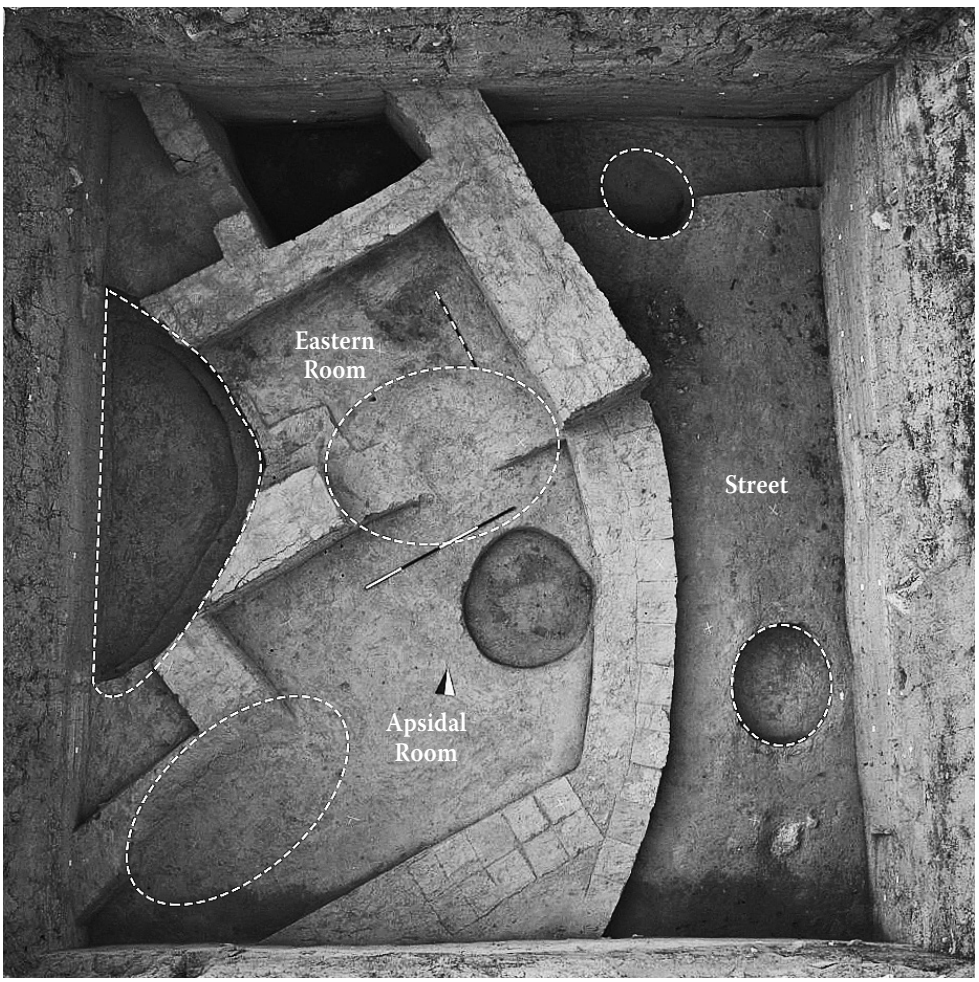

FIG. 8 Aerial view of square 32.57, local phase 5b, Apsidal Building. Features indicated in yellow belong to later phases (©Tell Atchana Excavations Archive).

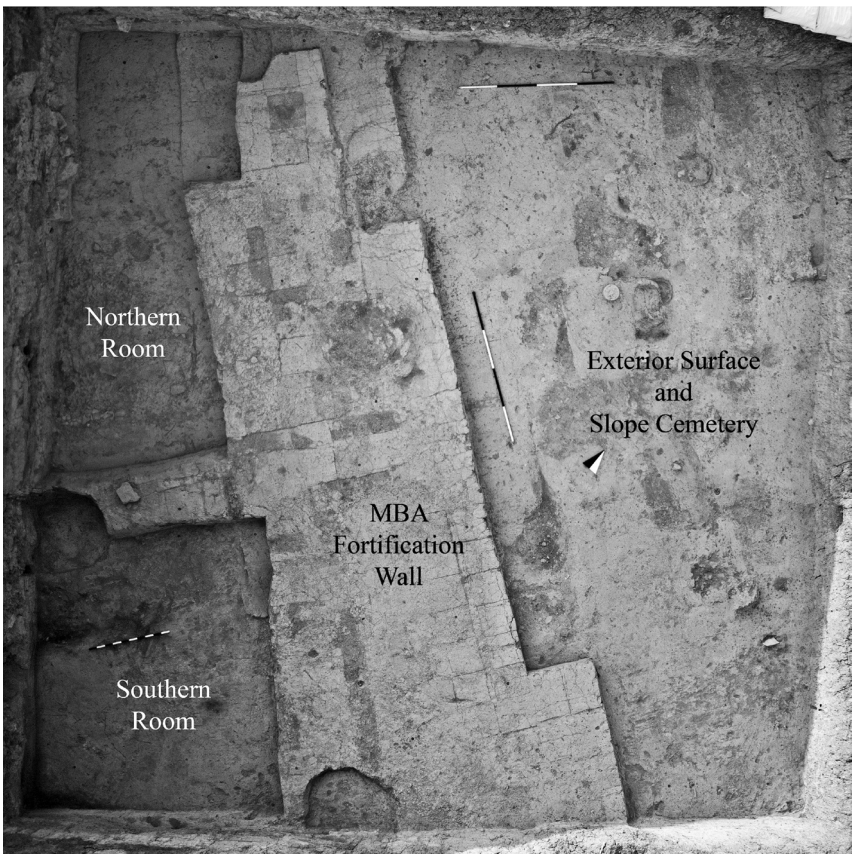

FIG. 9
Aerial view of square 45.44, local phase 5, Domestic Structure (©Tell Atchana Excavations Archive).

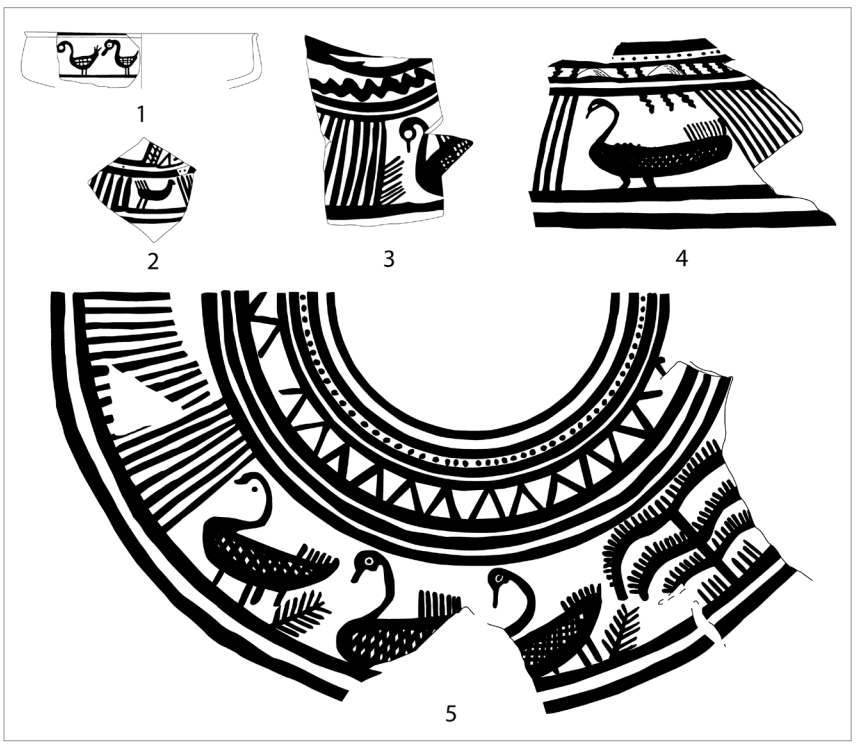

FIG. 10
A selection of SCW vessels with the bird motif from Tell Atchana.
1- Level XIV (Heinz 1992, pl. 85, no. 3),
2- Level X (Heinz 1992, pl. 65, no. 77),
3- Level XII (Heinz 1992, pl. 77, no. 26),
4- Period 9, detail from AT10539 depicted in fig. 3.17 (©Tell Atchana Excavations Archive),
5- Period 7, detail from AT17591 depicted in fig. 3.16 (©Tell Atchana Excavations Archive).