TWO STRUCTURES FROM MEZRAA HÖYÜK DATING TO THE SECOND HALF OF THE THIRD MILLENNIUM BC

MÖ III. BİN YILIN İKİNCİ YARISINDA MEZRAA HÖYÜK'TE AÇIĞA ÇIKAN İKİ YAPI

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ABSTRACT

Mezraa Höyük is located north of Turkish-Syrian border on the east bank of Euphrates within the borders of Şanlıurfa district, south of the modern town Birecik. The mound remains inside the Karkamış Dam reservoir impact area. On the summit of the mound ruins of two structures, partly disturbed by the Middle Age architectural layers, were recovered. These buildings date to the end of the 3rd millennium BC (Early Bronze Age III/IVA). Excavations showed that the buildings were abandoned following a sudden and severe destruction and were never rebuilt again. The location of these structures, their architectural planning and building techniques as well as the items, such as seals and rich ceramic repertoire allows us to interpret them as a building complex which probably belonged to a ruler of the whole region or the center itself. These findings constitute one of the earliest indicators of the existence of a prosperous class in Mezraa Höyük along with some social changes that begun in the region.

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ÖZET

Türkiye-Suriye sınırının kuzeyinde, Fırat nehrinin doğu yakasında Karkamış Barajı etki alanında kalan Mezraa Höyük, Şanlıurfa ili, Birecik ilçesinin güneyinde yer alır. Mezraa Höyük'ün Tepe alanında Ortaçağ mimari tabakaları tarafından tahribata uğramış olan iki yapıya ait kalıntılar açığa çıkarılmıştır. MÖ III. bin yılın sonuna (Erken Tunç Çağı III/IVA) tarihlenen bu yapıların ani gelişen bir felaketle son bulduğu ve onarılmayarak terk edildiği saptanmıştır. Yapıların konumu, mimarideki planlama ve inşaat tekniği ile yapılardan ele geçen mühürler ve seramik buluntular, Mezraa Höyük'ün tepe üzerinde yer alan yapılarının bu bölgenin veya merkezin yöneticisine ait bir yapı topluluğu olabileceğini düşündürmektedir. Bu veriler, bu dönemde Mezraa Höyük'te zengin bir yönetici sınıfının varlığını ve bölgede başlayan sosyal değişikliklerin ilk işaretlerinden birini oluşturmaktadır.

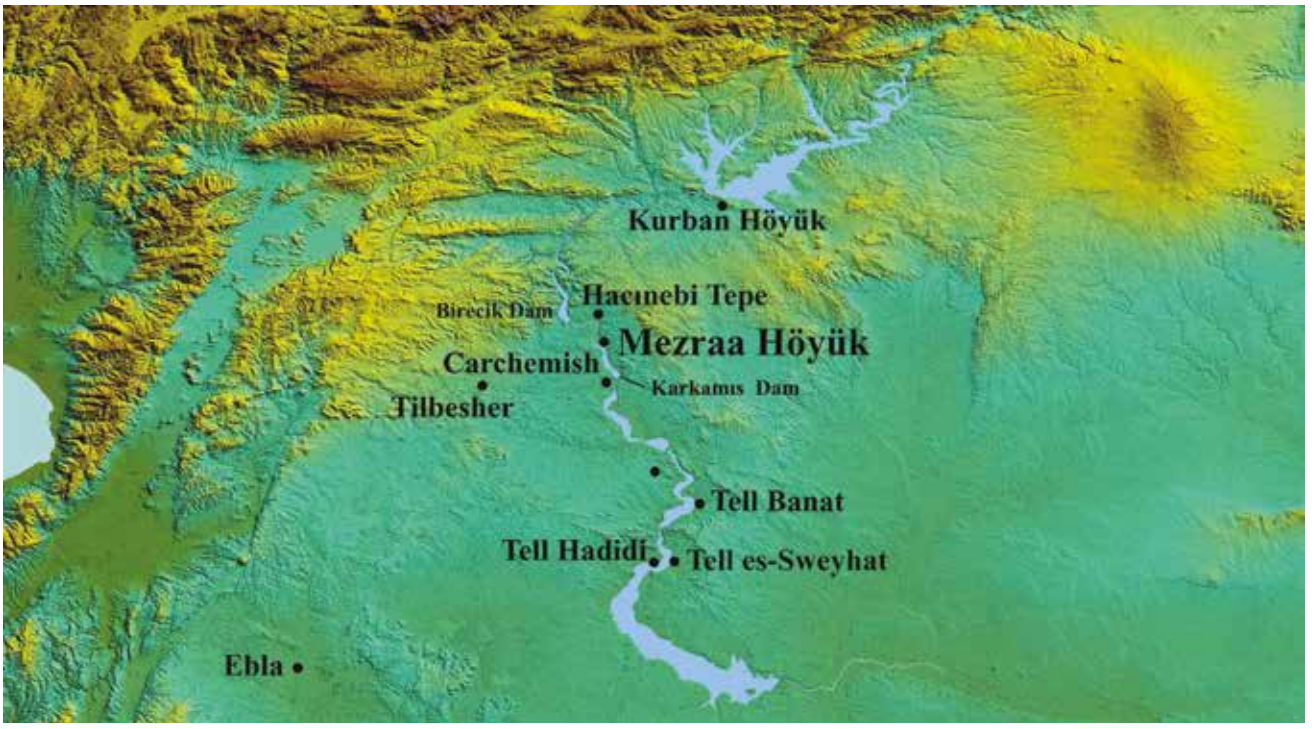


Figure 1: Map Showing the Location of Mezraa Höyük / *Mezraa Höyük'ün Yeri*

INTRODUCTION

Mezraa Höyük is located 7 km to the south of Birecik in the district Şanlıurfa to the north of the Turkish-Syrian border. The valley, where Mezraa Höyük is located, is flooded by the water from the Kargamış Dam (Fig. 1). The mound is situated on the north bank of the Euphrates. This low and flat mound is 13 m high and has a dimension of 180 x 140 m (Fig. 2).

An initial survey on Mezraa Höyük was carried out by G. Algaze and his team between 1987–1990[1]. In 1998–1999 salvage excavations have been investigated within the territory to be flooded by the dam in the frame of the "Salvage Project of the Archaeological Heritage of the Ilısu and Carchemish Dam Reservoir" conducted by the "Center for Research and Assessment of the Historic Environment" of the Middle East Technical University in Ankara[2]. Subsequently, between 2000–2002 and 2005–2007 salvage excavations were carried out under the co-directorship of the Şanlıurfa Archaeological Museum. Today the excavations at Mezraa Höyük are being carried out as a project of the Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University.

The excavations have been carried out at three different sectors of the mound; East slope, South east slope and the Northeast sector on the summit (Figs. 3-4).

A total of seven architectural levels dating from the Late Chalcolithic period (Uruk) to the Early Bronze Age were identified in trenches P14/15 at the southeast slope. Above these lies another stratum dating to the Middle Ages.

As for the east slope trenches R/11-12, four architectural levels dating to the second half of the Early Bronze Age have been identified. Above these some architectural elements from the Middle Bronze Age have been revealed, which were destroyed by the building activities during the Middle Ages. The final Middle Age settlement in the east of the mound is composed of three architectural levels dating to the 11th – 13th centuries.

On the mound summit (northeast sector) the trenches M-N/12 revealed seven architectural levels. The top of the mound was used as a cemetery until recently. The graves were dug into the Middle Age debris. Level IV dating to the Iron Age is situated right beneath the Middle Age settlement consisting of two levels dating to the AD 11th and 13th centuries. Conceivably, the Iron Age deposit was damaged by the Middle Age settlement. Levels V and VI lying under these are dated to Early Bronze Age III-IV and level VII to Early Bronze Age I-II.

[1] Algaze/Breuninger/Knudstad 1994: 48, Fig. 7.51.

[2] Ökse/Engin/Tekinalp/Dağ/Görmüş 2001: 213–232.



Figure 2: Mezraa Höyük from the South / *Güneyden Mezraa Höyük'ün Görünüşü*

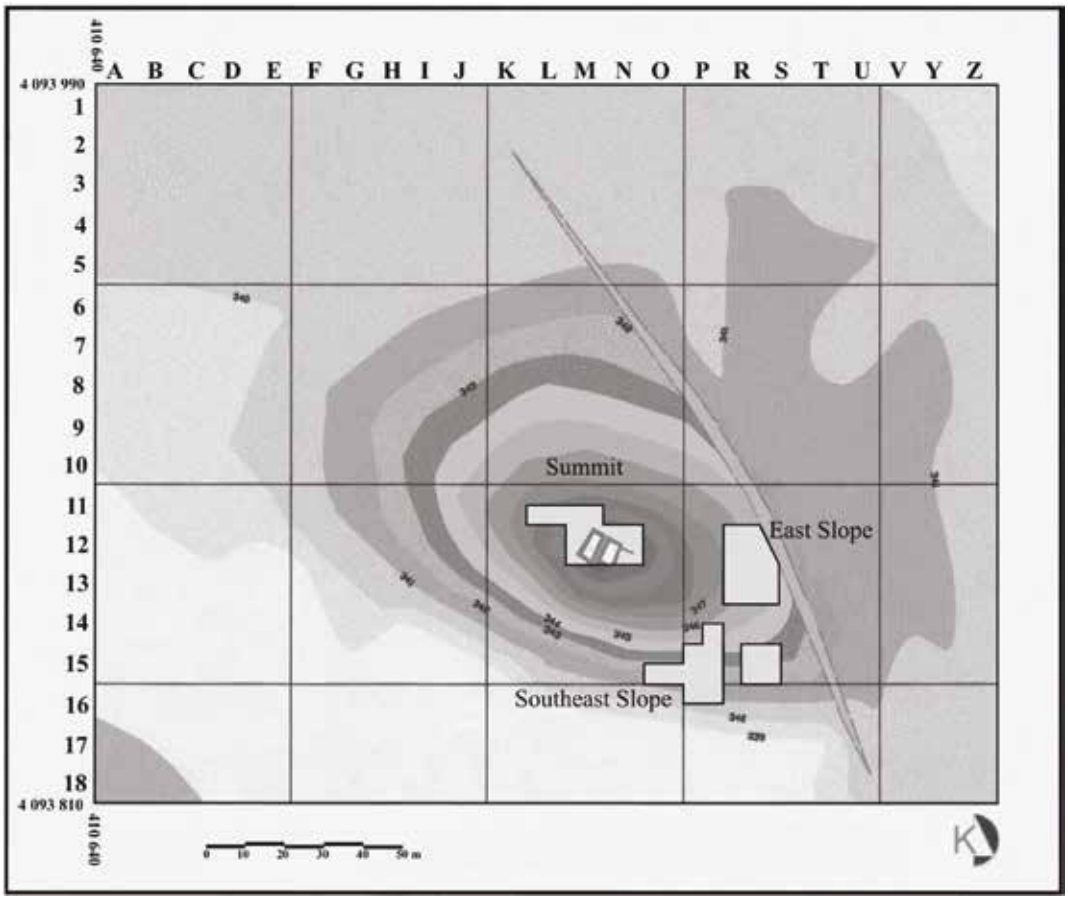


Figure 3: Topographical Map of Mezraa Höyük / *Mezraa Höyük'ün Topografik Haritası*



Figure 4: The Plans of the Structures / *Yapıların Planı*



Figure 5: Structure A / *Yapı A*

THE STRUCTURES ON THE SUMMIT

On the densely settled mound summit two structures dating to the second half of the Early Bronze Age have been uncovered. Both structres were damaged by the Middle Age building activities. These structures were uncovered at first in Trench M12 in 2002[3], and Structure B was excavated in 2006–2007.

The structures are situated on the highest part of the mound. Both structures are rectangular in plan, adjoining eachother with their long axis oriented in northeast-southwest directions. The structure to the west (Structure A) is a single chamber, and the structure to the East (Structure B) is composed of two chambers; only a small portion of the eastern chamber is unearthed (Fig. 4). The other parts of these structures suffered erosion and agricultural activities.

Structure A: The Structure A on the northeast-southwest axis with outer dimensions of 8.2x4.9 m and inner dimensions of 6x2 m was completely explored. The thickness of the walls of Structure A varies between 1.2-1.4 m. The foundations are built by two rows of large stones. Only limited information about the superstructure of the walls are available, since these were used as floors during the Iron and Middle Ages. The collapsed mud-brick

[3] Yalçıklı/Tekinalp 2004: 379; 2011: 125–126.



Figure 6: Skeleton Found in Structure A / *Yapı A'da Saptanan İskelet*

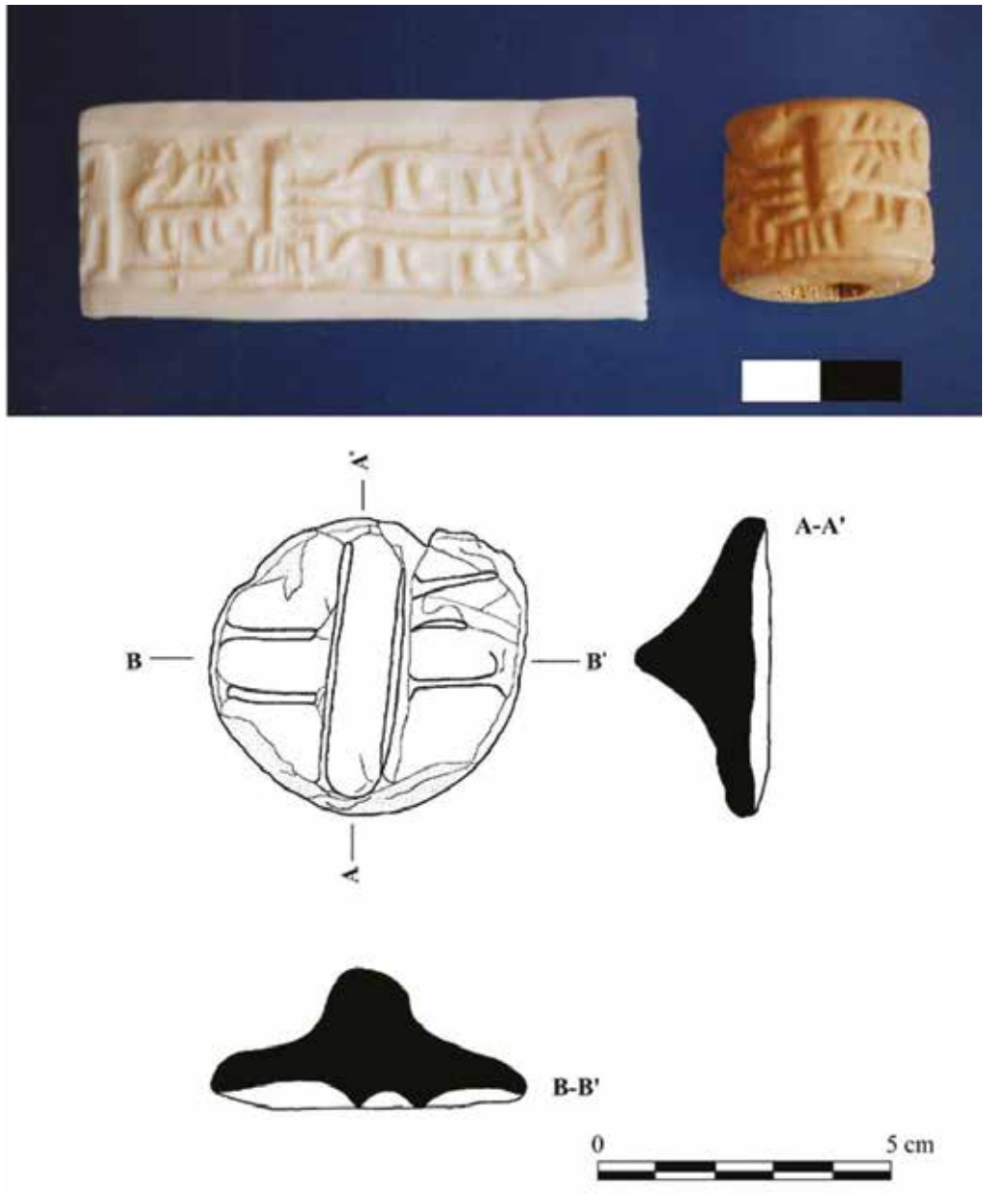


Figure 7: Seals / *Mühürler*

walls on the floor of the building point to the existence of a superstructure by mud-brick. The middle part of the east wall leans slightly towards the west. The pear-shaped storage bins from the Middle Ages damaged the walls and floors. The diameters of eight storage bins uncovered so far vary from 1.2 to 2.3 m. The floor of the structure was paved by large flat stones (Fig. 5). Although the most parts of the structure witnessed severe damage, about the half of a hearth attached to the eastern wall has been uncovered. On the floor at the souther part of the structure, a skeleton has been uncovered that lyes in west-east directions with its legs open. The upper part of the skeleton was damaged by a later silo (Fig. 6). On the stone paved floor, one cylinder seal, one stamp seal (Fig. 7) as well as pottery including beakers (Fig. 8.1–13), bowls (Fig. 8.14–15), bottle (Fig. 8.16), jars (Figs. 8.17, 9.1–11) and base fragments were collected (Fig. 9.12–18).

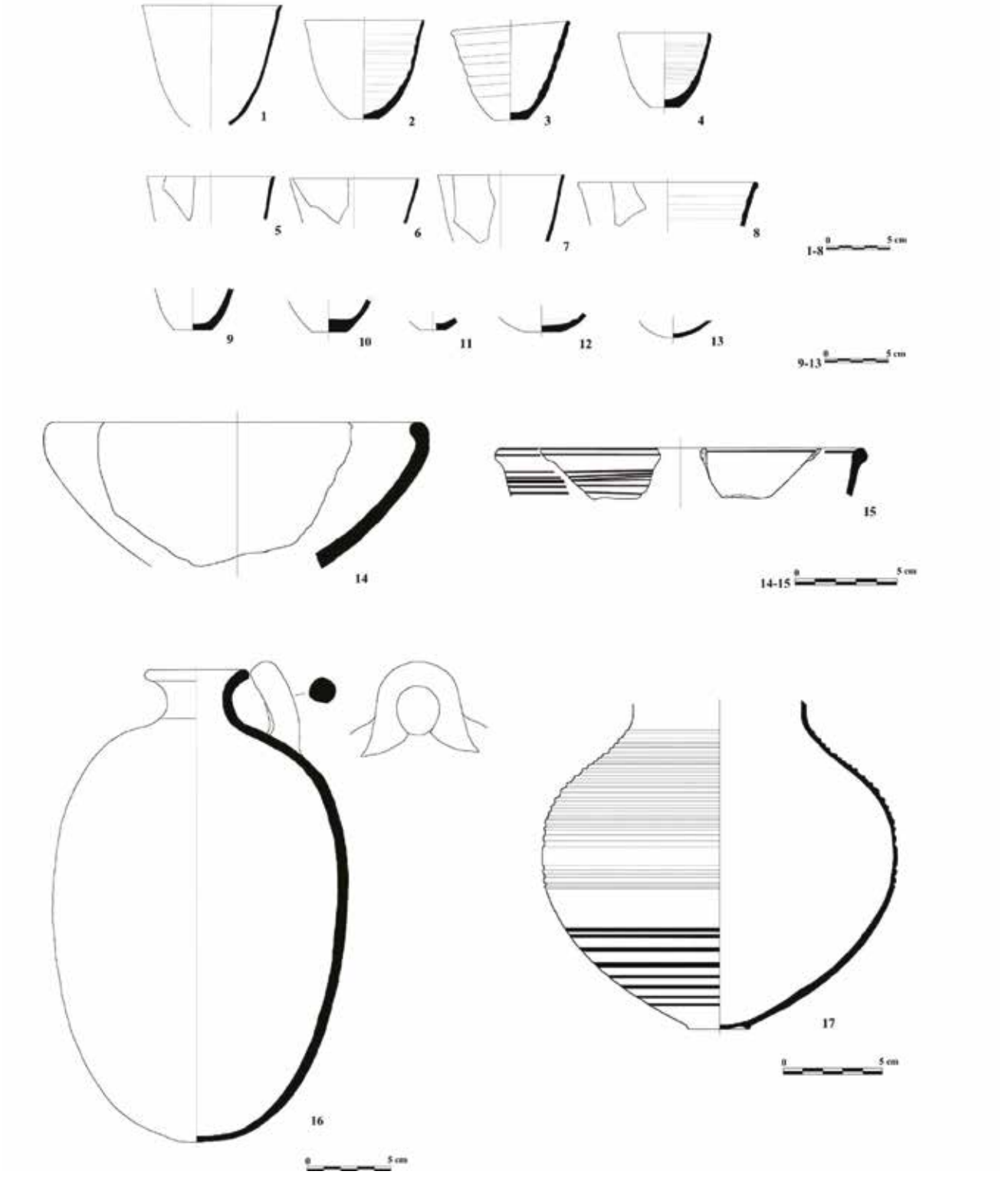


Figure 8: Pottery from Structure A / *Yapı A'dan Seramik Buluntular*

Structure B: Structure B, located to the east of Structure A, consists of two separate chambers called 'West Chamber' and 'East Chamber'. The western contour of the structure was built adjacent to and runs parallel to the East wall of Structure A. The total thickness of both walls measures 2.4 m.

The West Chamber: The West Chamber is represented by only a part of 4.8 m in length. The rectangular chamber is oriented in northeast-southwest direction. The short side has dimensions of 5.2 m from the ofter contours, and 2.7 m from the inner. The wall thicknesses range between 1.2-1.4 m. The large stones of the eastern

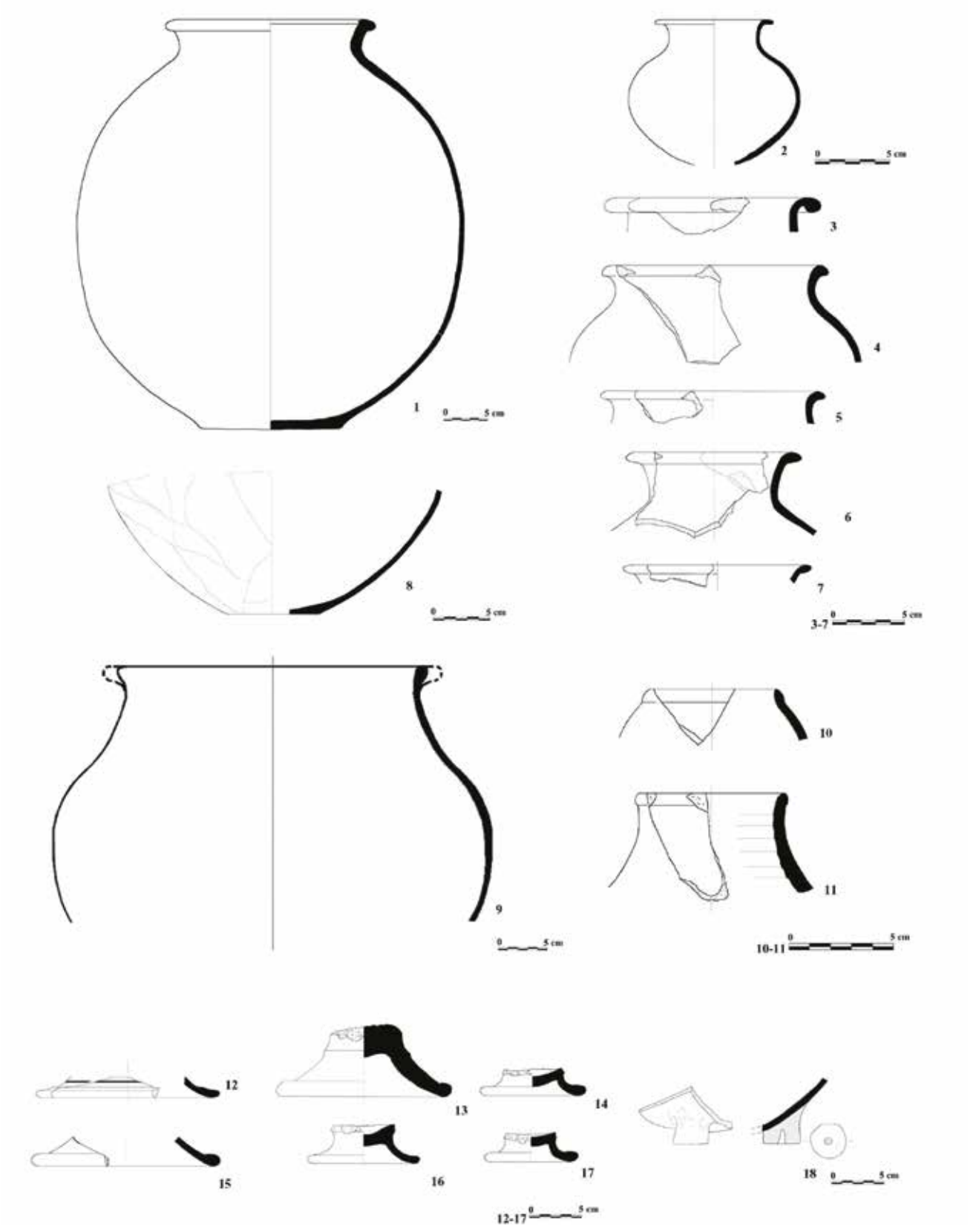


Figure 9: Pottery from Structure A / *Yapı A'dan Seramik Buluntular*

wall are preserved up to five rows; the wall was damaged by a recent pit on the northeast section. The collapsed mud brick superstructure lies on the floor. Contrary to the stone paved floor of Structure A, the floor of the West Chamber is compacted clay. The floor was damaged by two Middle Age storage bins.

Among the finds recovered on the floor one grinding stone, jars (Figs. 9.1, 6–8), beakers (Fig. 10.1–4) and fragments of tripods feet are collected (Fig. 10.9). A pit has been dug into the floor.

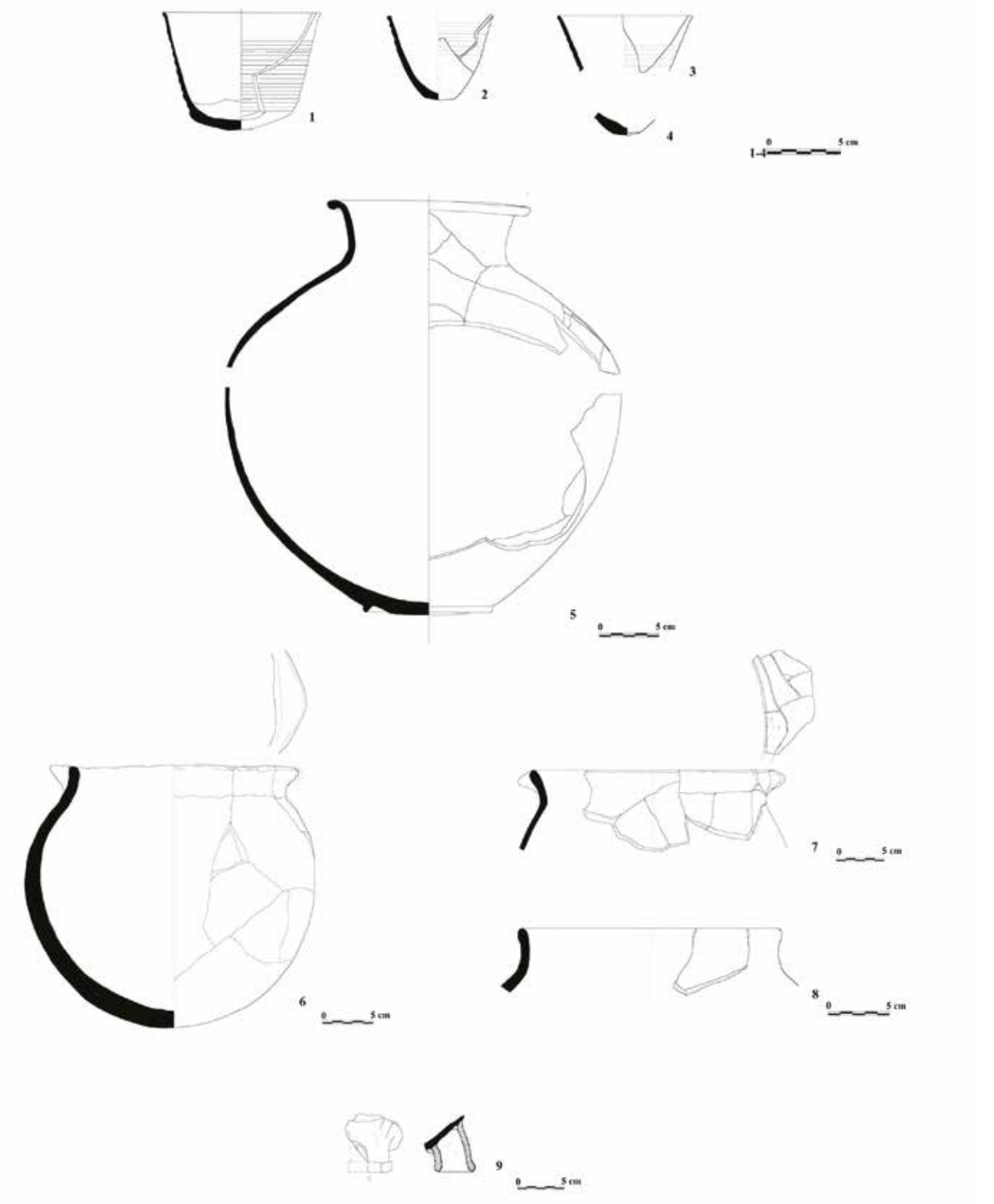


Figure 10: Pottery from Structure B, West Chamber / *Yapı B Batı Mekan'dan Seramik Buluntular*



Figure 11: Structure B, East Chamber / *Yapı B Doğu Mekan*

The East Chamber: This chamber is bordered by the eastern wall of Structure B and by another wall in East-West orientation (Figs. 4, 11). The northern wall of the chamber is connected to the eastern wall of the West Chamber in right angles. The Northwest corner of this wall was also damaged by a Middle Age storage bin. The northern wall is 3.4 m long and 0.6 m thick. The eastern continuation of the wall is damaged. Only the western and northern walls of the Chamber were preserved; the other walls are still uncovered. The compacted clay floor is heavily damaged by Middle Age deposits and a silo. On the southern side of the northern wall, a stone door-jamb is found. In the same area a threshold had been created by two 1m-wide flat stones placed horizontally next to each other. Thusx this part of the building seems to have a door providing acess from outside. Several pits of varying dimensions were cut into the floor. There were remains of ash and pebble Stone fills in pits which might have been connected to cooking facilities. In one of those pits four basalt grinding stones, one large bowl, one jar and four miniature vessels were placed (Figs. 12, 13.1–6). The pit might possibly have been closed, in order to be used as a cache[4]. In this pit a number of basalt grinding stones were stored which also provides us clues about the agricultural practices at the site. Deposited grinding stones indicate that the structure was not out of use during sowing or harvesting seasons. A similar practice of storage in pits is is known from Hacınebi Tepe in the Late Uruk period[5]. In Pit 84, situated at the north east of the summit, tokens, small and medium rimmed jar stoppers, jar rim sealings and carefully shaped clay slabs have been deposited, indicating that such pits were used as a safe for important and valuable belongings. In Tell es-Sweyhat on the Euphrates, findings that were considered as important were also deposited in pits in the middle of the Early Bronze Age[6].

In smaller pits in the East Chamber no finds are recovered. The finds recovered on the floor determine an area for daily activities. The pot sherds collected on the floor include conical cups (Fig. 13.7–14), bowls (Fig. 13.15–18), jar (Fig. 14.1–9) and bases (Fig. 14.10–13).

SMALL FINDS

Structure A: The cylinder seal found in this area is preserved as four pieces; the seal is made of bone[7] (Fig. 7). On the seal

[4] According to the pit and its content, it might have been a grave or might have been used for ritual (votive) purposes; however, since no bones were found in the pit, it could not be used as a grave. On the contrary, Middle and Late Bronze Age graves in southern Levant contain ground stone tools (see Ebeling 2002: 149–51). The existence of miniature vessels in a large pot might indicate a votive pit; however, this thought can only be proved when similar instances come to light in other centers.

[5] Stein/Bernbeck/Coursey/Mc Mahon/Miller/Mısır/Nicola/Pitmann/Pollock/Wright 1996: 232, Fig. 20; Pittman 1999: 48.

[6] Zittler 1997: 48; Cooper 2006: 116.

[7] Seals and Bulla which have been retrieved during the Mezraa Höyük excavations are in press (Yalçıklı D. "Mezraa Höyük'te Bulunan Mühürler ve Mühür Baskısı" in A. Öztan, ed., *Uğur Silistreli Armağan Kitabı (Memorial Book)*, Ankara University, Ankara).



Figure 12: Pit and Grinding Stones / *Çukur ve Öğütme Taşları*

an agricultural theme is depicted. The scene is composed of two oxen pulling a plow, a person sitting on the plow and another person controlling the oxen. The scene continues with a scorpion placed above a quadruple, probably a dog. The plow is depicted in detail. A horizontal line takes place on the shoulders of the oxen and the yoke is represented by four vertical lines. The plow itself is composed of five horizontal cylindrical furrows. The horizontal line under the oxen represents the field being plowed. The individuals are stylistically similar to each other; these are depicted with schematic forms and heads bowed down, flat bodies, fork-shaped hands and feet. All extensions of their bodies are somewhat pointed. Likewise, the oxen are also given in schematic style with triangular heads. The scorpion at the end of the scene has body parts that resemble fork-shaped hands of the individuals. The body parts of the scorpion resemble fork-shaped hands of the human figures. The dog-like animal has been depicted similar to the head and tails of the oxen. If we consider that the erected tail of the animal is curved and according to the shape of the head, we can suggest that this figure represents a dog.

Similar agricultural scenes on cylinder seals are known from several sites[8]. At Hassek Höyük a seal with a plowing scene was found[9]. Another example with a possible agricultural scene is known from Amuq Phase H[10]. The seal from Mezraa Höyük differs from the other examples showing the preparation of fields for sowing with a plow. The scorpion on the seal is also similar to those from Tell Brak[11], Tell Huera[12] and Tell Leilan[13]. The schematic style and thematic flexibility of the animal and human representations on the Mezraa seal, specifically the heads, hands and feet forms, bear common characteristics with seals from other contemporary sites like Norşuntepe[14], Gre Virike[15], Amuq, Tell Brak, Jerablus-Tahtani[16], Tell Selenkahiye[17], Tell Huera and Tell Leilan. These common features show a common style in northern Syria; Amiet[18] names this style "cylindres prédynastiques schèmatiques", or even defined local northwest Syrian style[19] dating to the Early Dynastic III period[20]. The spatial distribution of such seals largely overlaps with the distribution area of the Metallic Wares.

[8] Collon 1987: 145-48 Figs. 615-619.
[9] Bhem-Blancke 1981: 25, Pl. 11.2.
[10] Braidwood/Braidwood 1960: 388, Fig. 297.5.
[11] Matthews 1991: 152, Figs. 1.4,5, 2.14–15.
[12] Marchetti 1998: Fig. 2.17.
[13] Parayre 1990: 8557, Fig. 28.4.
[14] Schmidt 2002: 113, Pl. 86.1365.
[15] Ökse 2002: 275–76, Fig. 7.K9/0009/S/02.
[16] Peltenburg/Campbell/Croft/Lunt/Murray/Watt 1995: 70.
[17] van Loon 2001: Pl. 12.11a–b.
[18] Amiet 1961: 33.
[19] Mazzoni 1984: 34; Collon 1987: 20-23; Ökse 2006b: 555.
[20] Marchetti 1998: 130–34.

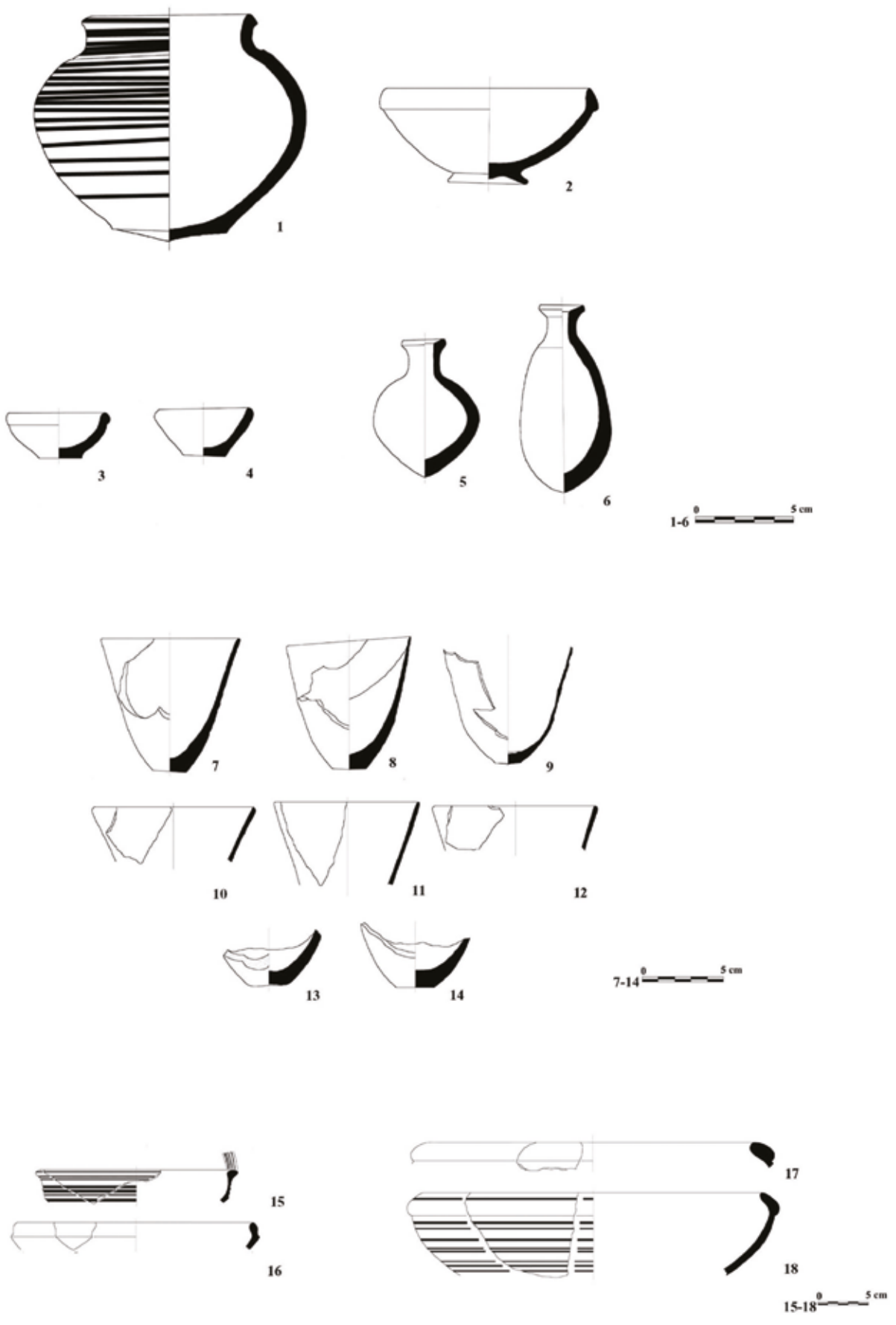


Figure 13: Pottery from Structure B, East Chamber / *Yapı B Doğu Mekan Seramik Buluntular*

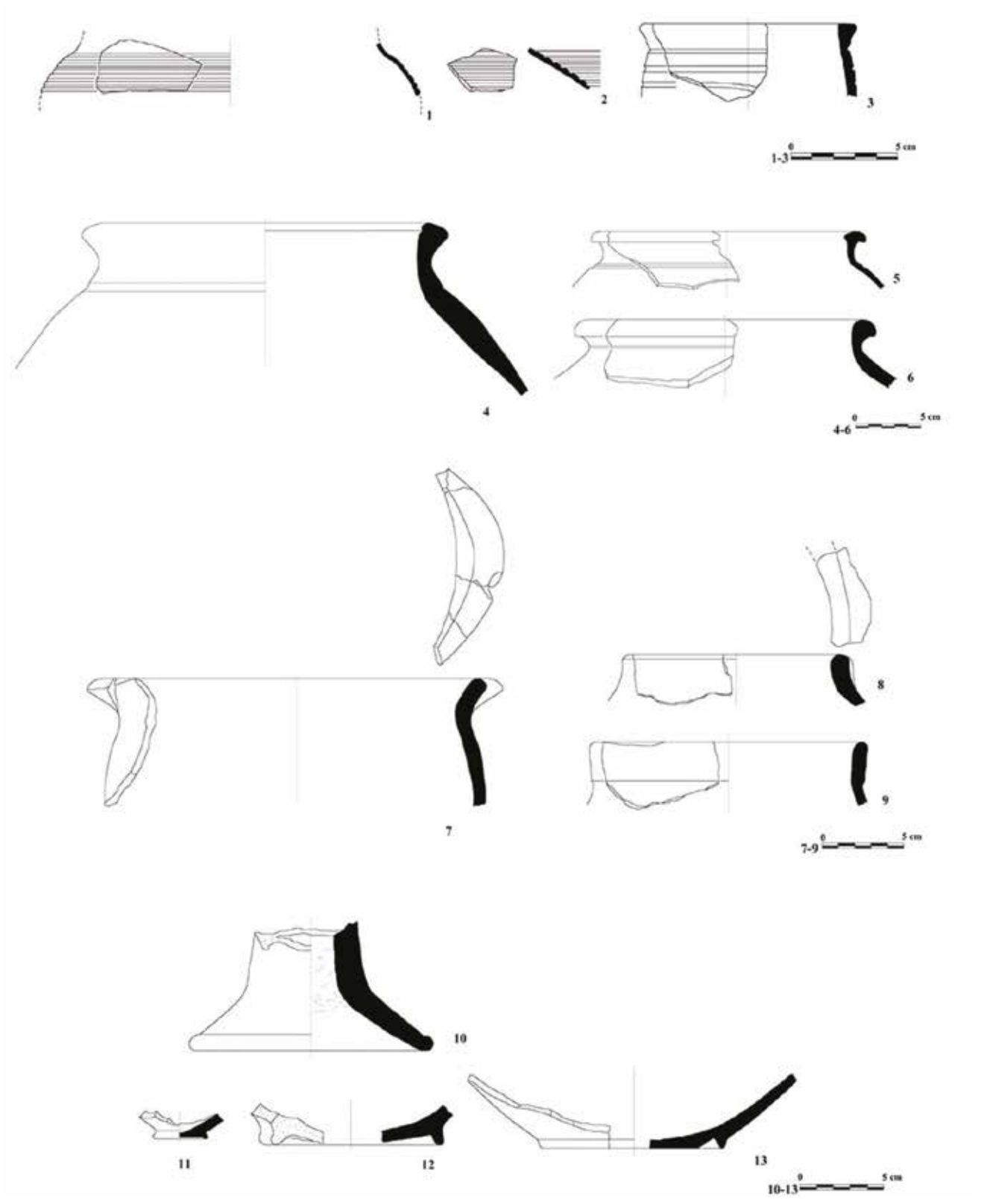


Figure 14: Pottery from Structure B, East Chamber / *Yapı B Doğu Mekan Seramik Buluntular*

One disc-shaped stamp seal is made of terracotta (Fig. 7) bears a pointed lug on one side and a geometrical motive on the other. The motif is composed of two lines on the right and three lines on the left which run perpendicular to two other lines in the middle. A similar scene is known from the Early Bronze Age level at Gritille[21]. Both seals are made of terracotta and have larger sizes, indicating that they may have been used in daily practices such as sealing pottery and doors or decorating textiles.

[21] Ellis/Voigt 1982: 325, Pl. 43, Fig. 12.

A large variety of ceramics were found in Structure A. One of the most important types of ceramics from this area is the large and small sized jars which are identified as 'Standard Ware' (Fig. 9.1–8, 10–11). In this group, large sized jars and rims, base fragments of these are numerous. Among other jar types, highly burnished jars with triangular handles take place (Fig. 9.9). A ring-based jar with horizontal grooves on its shoulder and upper body and a horizontal band made with burnishing tool on its lower body (Fig. 8.17) as well as a bottle with an oval body and a horizontal handle (Fig. 8.16) represent different types in the assemblage. "Euphrates Metallic" type beakers, their rim and base fragments (Fig. 8.1–13), undecorated bowls with inturned rims and pattern burnished bowls with outturned rims (Fig. 8.14–15) are among the ceramic types. One of the significant ceramic groups is represented by pedestal bases with broken edges which were levelled with care (Fig. 9.12–17). It can be suggested that these pedestal bases were used as lids for narrow-mouthed jars. One tripod piece is also observed among the base fragments (Fig. 9.18).

Structure B, East Chamber: A metallic jar with horizontal pattern burnishing (Fig. 13.1), a bowl (Fig. 13.2), miniature bowls (Fig. 13.3–4) and bottles (Fig. 13.5–6) are among the ceramics from the pit in Structure B. "Euphrates Metallic" type beakers, body sherds and base fragments belonging to such beakers are one of the major groups of ceramics found from this area (Fig. 13.7–14). Bowls decorated with burnishing tool or undecorated bowls (Fig. 13.15–18), jar fragments with horizontal grooves on their upper bodies (Fig. 14.1–2), similar to those found in West Chamber, large jars belonging to Standard Ware (Fig. 14.3–6) and rim sherds belonging to pattern burnished jars with triangular handles on the rim (Fig. 14.7–9), ring bases (Fig. 14.11–13) and one pedestal base (Fig. 14.10) are among the most important ceramic findings from the East Chamber.

Assession of the Ceramic Findings: "Euphrates Metallic" type beakers constitute the largest number of ceramic group in these structures (Figs. 8.1–13, 10.1–4, 13.7–14). These kind of ceramics are called 'Euphrates Ware'[22] and are represented by well-fired, wheel-made, thin-walled, brown and reddish brown colored beakers which include low amounts of mica and lime. Their distribution is widespread especially in the Middle Euphrates region. Since these wares are made out of clays that include lime, they are not fired in very high temperatures in order not to turn the fired ceramics into slags. As a result, one cannot describe their firing as 'very hard'[23]. Similar cups were uncovered at Samsat[24], Tepecik[25], Kurban Höyük[26], Hayaz Höyük[27], Gre Virike[28], Harabebezikan[29], Oylum Höyük[30], Titriş Höyük[31], Harran[32], Tall Bi'a[33], Tell Matsuma[34], Jerablus-Tahtani[35], Tell Hadidi[36] and are dated to Early Bronze Age III/IV[37].

Among the ceramic finds small and large sized jars constitute an important group (Figs. 9.1–7, 10.5, 14.4–6). Large sized jars as well as rimsherds and base fragments belonging to these jars are quantitatively high in this group. These wares are wheel-made and are tempered with fine sand, few lime particles and mica. Their colors range from pinkish buff to reddish brown. Similar jars were recovered from Titriş Höyük as well[38]. These ceramics belong to the same group which are variably labeled as "Simple Ware"[39], "Plain Simple Ware"[40], "Standard Ware"[41] or "einfache Ware"[42]. These were mass-produced in northern Syria and southeast Anatolia (Euphrates Basin) during the 3rd millennium BC.

Jars with triangular handles and pattern burnish found in all three spaces (Figs. 9.9, 10.6–8, 14.7–9) find their close parallels at Titriş Höyük[43], Gre Virike[44], Harran[45], Amuq J[46], Tell es-Sweyhat[47] and Hammam et-Turkman[48]. Oval shaped bottle with horizontal handle is similar to that from Amuq[49].

The undecorated or pattern burnished bowls are similar to standard wares (Figs. 8.14–15, 13.15–18). The ones with horizontal bands made with burnishing tools are similar

[22] Orthmann/Rova 1991: 73.
[23] Fitz 1984: 124; Schneider 1994: 99–109.
[24] Abay 1997: Fig. 181.e.
[25] Esin 1979: 87 Pl. 57.1.
[26] Algaze/Evins/Ingraham/Marfoe/Yener 1990: Figs. 77.C, 78.C.
[27] Thissen 1985: Fig. 3.2.
[28] Ökse 2001: Fig. 19.b; Ökse 2006a: Fig. 42.6; Engin 2007: 273 Fig. 18.5.4–7.
[29] Bilgen 2001: Figs. 20–21.
[30] Özgen 1989/90: 23, Fig. 1.1.
[31] Algaze/Mısır 1994: Fig. 8.
[32] Prag 1970: 78, Fig. 7.36–37.
[33] Strommenger/Kohlmeyer 1998: Pl. 159.7.
[34] Tsunaki 1995: Fig. 27.12.
[35] Peltenburg/Campbell/Croft/Lunt/Murray/Watt 1995: Fig. 28.2.
[36] Dornemann 1988: 38 Fig. 20.21.
[37] Rova 2011: Tablo 4:038, 5:038; Falb, Porter, Prub 2014: 167-174; Sconzo 2015: Table 4-6; Finkbeiner/Novák/Sakal/Sconzo 2015: 433-36: EME 3-4, 2625-2236 BC.
[38] Matney/Algaze/Pittman 1997: Fig. 17.B–F.
[39] Braidwood/Braidwood 1960: 406.
[40] Braidwood/Braidwood 1960: 264; Thissen 1985: 76, 80–81; Algaze/Evins/Ingraham/Marfoe/Yener 1990: 311.
[41] Orthmann/Rova 1991: 71.
[42] Kühne 1976: 73; Abay 1997: 27.
[43] Matney 1997: Fig. 18.E.
[44] Engin 2007: 277 Fig. 18.8.5–9.
[45] Prag 1970: 78 Fig. 8.54–55.
[46] Braidwood/Braidwood 1960: Fig. 345.2.
[47] Holland 1977: 53 Fig. 5.8,10.
[48] Curvers 1988: Pl. 113.36.
[49] Braidwood/Braidwood 1960: 410, 413 Fig. 315.1, Pl. 40.10.

	beakers	bowls		jars			bottles	bases			Total
	Metallic	Ring Burnished Ware and caliciform	Simple Ware	Ring Burnished Ware and caliciform	Simple Ware	Black Burnished Ware	Ring Burnished Ware and Simple Ware	Ring Burnished Ware	Simple Ware	tripod	
Structure A	13	1	1	1	10	1	1	1	5	1	35
Structure B	12	3	5	3	4	6	2		4	1	40
		4	6	4	14	7		1	9	2	
Total	25	10		25			3	12			**75**

Figure 15: Distrubition of Pottery from Structures A and B / *Yapı A ve B Seramik Buluntuların Dağılımı*

to the ones which are called "Grey/Bruff Spiral Ring Burnished Ware"[50] or "Graue Ware mit Spiralglättung"[51] that have a wide distribution in the Middle Euphrates Basin. Similar bowls are known from Horum Höyük[52], Harran[53] and Tell Hadidi[54].

Structure A and East Chamber of Structure B contain grooved jar fragments (Figs. 8.17, 14.1–2). Similar jars are known from Amuq[55], Tell Hadidi[56], Oylum Höyük[57], Tell Matsuma[58], Tell Bi'a[59] and Gre Virike[60] during the Early Bronze Age III/IV periods.

Form Distribution of Ceramic findings:

The total number of ceramic findings is 75 (Fig. 15). Twenty five "Euphrates Metallic" type beakers and jars with 67% compromise the most common group among these findings. Twelve and thirteen beakers uncovered at Structures A and B represented by nearly equal numbers. Other common groups of pots are either handmade or wheel made. In this group, wheel-made Plain Simple Ware are in majority whereas Ring Burnished Ware and Caliciform pots are less common. The number of bottles are limited. Compared with these groups, the bowl group is quantitatively behind and consist of vessels of Ring Burnished Ware, Caliciform and Plain Simple Ware. Another well known bowl type described as "Champagne-cup" or "Fruid Stands" is represented only by a piece of a pedestal[61]. These types are frequently found in the graves around Carchemish region, thoug these are rare in household inventories.

"Euphrates Metallic" type beakers have a ratio of 33% among the ceramic findings in places whereas there are nine Ring Burnished Ware and Caliciform bowls with a ratio of 9.1% in total. These proportions show us that ceramic forms used in these two forms are concentrated on "Euphrates Metallic" type beakers and jars. A similar ceramic distribution observed in several sites around the Carchemish region shows a cultural relationship with the region on the eastern side of Euphrates.

One particular example (Fig. 8.16) among bottles, has an oval body, round base and a horizontal grip that could be hold with an index finger, differentiating it from other bottles known in the region. The closest parallel of this type of grip is seen in Amuq I phase[62]. This parallel indicates the relations of Mezraa Höyük with the Amuq region in the west.

Like in other sites of the region, the caliciform assemblage indicates the relation between Ebla and Middle Euphrates Region. The relations of the Middle Euphrates region with Mezraa Höyük and Ebla have been increased towards the end of the Early Bronze Age which had become obvious with pots with two or three stripes around their rims and Caliciform pots often found on the East Slope level VI. Such ceramic findings are not retrieved from the structures described as level "V" on the summit. Considering the ceramic material in these structures, we see that they are contemporary

[50] Braidwood/Braidwood 1960: 450.
[51] Strommenger 1970: 46.
[52] Marro/Tibet/Ergeç 1998: 288, Pls VII.1–2, VIII. 1–3.
[53] Prag 1970: 78 Figs. 7.10; 8.39–40, 48.
[54] Dornemann 1977: Fig. 18.10.
[55] Braidwood/Braidwood 1960: 370 Figs. 286.13, 315.1, 410, 413 Pl. 40.10.
[56] Dornemann 1988: 38, Fig. 7.27.
[57] Özgen 1989/90: 23 Fig. 1.5.
[58] Tsunaki 1995: 88 Fig. 11.6.
[59] Strommenger 1993: 29 Fig. 19.
[60] Ökse 1999: Fig. 7.21.
[61] Falsone/Sconzo 2007: 79–84; Porter 2007: 5.
[62] Braidwood/Braidwood 1960: 410 Fig. 315.1.

with those in Kurban Höyük IV[63], Tilbeshar IIIC[64], Gre Virike IIA[65], Tell Ahmar[66], Qara Quzak Level IV[67], Tell Banat Period III[68], Tell Shiyukh Tahtani Phase 11-12[69], Jerablus Tahtani 2B fortified settlement[70], Tell Hadidi 2[71], Amuq I[72], Tell Mardikh IIB1- Ebla Palace G[73] and Umm el-Marra Period V[74].

In East Slope excavations at Mezraa Höyük, we did not come across a parallel layer of settlement to level VI of the summit, dating to the Early Bronze Age IVB[75]. We assume that structures which belong to Early Bronze Age IVB and expected to be found in that specific point that has a comfortable and dominating view over its surroundings have probably been destroyed by the later four settlements dating to the Iron Age and Middle Age.

During the excavations we have often asked ourselves and been asked to by other colleagues the same question: could these structures be graves just like those in Tell Banat or Gre Virike? During the digging process of a granary situated on the south corner of the Structure A dating to the Middle Ages, a skeleton with a damaged upper part has been recovered *in situ*. The preserved part of the skeleton shows that the individual was lying on its left, as he/she died. Its legs lie apart from eachother and one of the legs is more wriggled. The position of the skeleton reflects that the individual was not placed as if in a grave; the phosition shows that she/he lies as originally fallen.

A hearth half destroyed by a Middle Age granary, unearthed at Structure A, and pot sherds laid on the flat stones next to that hearth show us that this place was used as a living area. Additionally, there were similar bowls and pots with cooking pits, grinding stones and storage pits found in Structure B. Among other findings were the threshold stones that belong to the backyard door which connected Structure B to the outside and a Stone door-jamb belonging to another door next to it.

The pottery repertory retrieved in those two structures, we see that burnished jars and pots with triangular lugs, storage jars and a great number of pots stand mostly out. This period is also called as "Champagne-Cup-period". Such pots are common around this region and they are represented in two structures with just one base sherd. When we take architectural qualities and small findings into consideration, it would be assumed that these structures were not used as graves.

The Middle Euphrates region in written sources, and Mezraa Höyük's place in the region

The written documents retrieved from Ebla present information about its political and economical situation as well as about its neighbors. The information concerning the regions in the north are of particular interest. These documents, inform us on the political, economical and social situation of the period of these structures. Ebla documents reveal the names and properties of several sites and settlements in the northern regions[76]. The name of Carchemish, which is situated in North Syria, is mentioned in these documents. Ursa'um/ Ursu is localized to the Gaziantep region and Tall Bazi-Banat Armi/Armium to the Jezirah[77]. According to these documents, Carchemish, during the mid- 3.000 B.C and under the authority of Ebla, was an important city at the border zone[78]. In these documents, the existence of *"badālum*" has been mentioned, certain overseers consisted of merchants or viceroys, in the region between Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa. Also, in these documents, Gaziantep region with its still uncertain borders has been localized as Ursu[79]. According to the texts, even though the limits of their authority and jurisdiction is still to be determined, these persons are connected with the king of Ebla. These documents are important since they show us that the influence of Ebla has been spread up north, towards the Taurus Mountains[80]. Little is known about the beginning of the domination and its duration in northern regions. We have learned from written documents that there was a *badālum* in Ursu yet Carchemish's name, even though it was located within the sphere of Ebla's influence, is not mentioned in these documents among the list of centers with Badalums[81]. It is understood that Carchemish was trading with Ebla in that period of time[82]. Our knowledge on the size and political structure of Carchemish in that

[63] Algaze/Evins/Ingraham/Marfoe/Yener 1990: 311–367.
[64] Kepinski 2005: 149–50; 2007: 305.
[65] Ökse 2011: 271.
[66] Roobaert/Bunnens 1999: 164–166.
[67] Pereiro 1999: 118–119.
[68] Porter 2007: 6,11–12.
[69] Sconzo 2007: 274–77.
[70] Peltenburg 1999: 101–02.
[71] Dornemann 1985: 54.
[72] Braidwood/Braidwood 1960: 397–419.
[73] Mazzoni 1985: 9–12; 2003: 180.
[74] Schwartz/Curvers/Dunham/Stuart/Weber 2006: 628; Schwartz 2007a: 514.
[75] Finkbeiner/Novák/Sakal/Sconzo: 2015: 436-38: EME 5-6.
[76] Matthiae 1981: 169, 180; Astour 1988: 142.
[77] Astour 2002: 81 ftn. 146; Otto and Biga 2010: 481–492.
[78] Bunnens 2007: 50.
[79] Klengel 1988: 250; Lipiński 1988: 258–60; Bonechi 1998: 234–35; Ökse 2007a: 101.
[80] Astour 1988: 142.
[81] Astour 2002: 150 ftn. 617.
[82] Milano 1995: 1227.

period is very limited and the explorations in the center reveals no data[83]. Our problem arises from the limited information obtained from small areas during Woolley's [84] excavations. We hope that recent excavations may determine the borders of early layers occupied by levels dating to the 2nd and 1st centuries BC.

The data from Ebla texts lead us to think that Mezraa Höyük was a settlement which was subjected to Carchemish or Ursu under the authority of a minor regional ruler. This type of political structure was probably valid for some other small settlements on the south of Birecik such as Zeytinlibahçe, Şavi Höyük and Akarçay Höyük. Names of diverse settlements are mentioned in Elba documents; however, none of those could be localized[85].

DISCUSSION

The two structures uncovered on the summit of Mezraa Höyük and their finds display original characteristics. The related buildings which were used simultaneously with these structures remain mostly disturbed due to long-lasting agricultural activities carried out on top of the mound.

The location, planning, building techniques and findings recovered suggest that these structures had an important function in the settlement. The findings from Structure A found *in situ* and the skeleton of an adult are important indications for such an interpretation. The position of the skeleton gives the impression that the person died as a result of a sudden event which might have caused the collapse of the building as well. No traces of burning were observed that might have been aroused during such a collapse. Beside the skeleton, the remains of other findings lying scattered on the floor are also an indication of a sudden collapse. No clues that might explain the reasons of this sudden destruction of the structure are available.

The findings from the west and east spaces of Structure B show close parallels in terms of their dating with the pottery of Structure A. This implies that both structures were actively used at the same time period. A pit on the floor of the yard provides an important data as a storage place. Finding similar applications at Hacınebi Tepe dating to the Late Uruk period, and Tell es-Sweyhat dating to the Early Bronze Age, indicate continuity in the traditional ways of life in the region.

The ceramic repertoire in both structures certainly belongs to the same time period. A considerable amount of these ceramics are of Metallic Ware. Beakers seem to have been one of the most commonly utilized items at Mezraa Höyük as well as at the other contemporary sites in the region. Yet another typical group of ceramics from the site is jars of the 'Standard Ware'. Although they appear in varying sizes, large jars probably used as storage vessels are more common. The jars with glossy polish and triangular handles seem to have been intensively used, probably for cooking purposes as some of these show traces of sooting. Horizontal bands applied with burnishing tool on bowls and jars are observed on ceramics recovered from all structures.

According to findings, both structures can be dated to Early Bronze Age III/IVA. According to the cuneiform tablets found at Ebla, in the mid 3rd millennium BC Carchemish was an important city under the political authority of Ebla[86]. These texts mention certain tradesmen, local rulers or governors appointed by the king called *"badālum"* in the area between Gaziantep and Şanlıurfa, suggesting that the region was under the control of the Kingdom of Ebla. Thus we can infer the existence of a ruling class and the well-established social differentiation. The Structures A and B on the summit of Mezraa Höyük are, according to their location, architectural planning and building techniques as well as the seals and pottery, imply that these structures were used by a local ruler and his family. These structures seem to have been destroyed during a sudden event and were abandoned; so, never inhabitted again.

The rule of Ebla bases on information obtained from Ebla documents, and the region around Carchemish and Gaziantep, including Mezraa Höyük, in accordance with archeological findings. An identical culture is observed among the archeological findings in the region including burial traditions, architecturale, seals, manufacturing techniques, ceramic forms, the ratio of these forms and decoration.

Even though it is not possible to explain the reason behind the destruction of structures in the summit of Mezraa Höyük, such a demolition took place in a time period contemporary with the emergence of some changes observed in the region. The differentiations in ceramic forms coming from the latest phase of the Early Bronze Age are among the important evidences in this regard.

There are many studies focused on the possible reasons for this "crisis", "collapse", "transformation" or "continuity" that took place in Northern Syria and

[83] Matthiae 1981: 169; Astour 1988: 144.
[84] Woolley / Barnett 1952.
[85] Astour 1988: 142–143.
[86] Pettinato 1976: 11–15.

Northern Mesopotamia[87] which had lasted well into Middle Bronze Age II. Some studies focused on the climate changes in the region stated that a severe draught in Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine could have triggered social changes[88]. Contrary to the view basing on large centers, Wossink[89] asserts that climatic changes did not affect the Carchemish region so much. It may be possible that the inhabitants of Mezraa Höyük and some of the other small settlements might have abandoned the region because of severe draught affecting the Middle Euphrates region and have migrated to the Taurus foothills with better climatic conditions.

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[87] Cooper 2006: 258–74; 2012; Schwartz 2007b; 2012; Schwartz / Miller 2007; Sconzo 2007.

[88] Weiss 2000: 91–92; Weiss and Bradley 2001; Peiser 2003: 195–197; Staubwasser and Weiss 2006: 381–383.

[89] Wossink 2009: 140–141.

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