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# Reconsidering Identity in the Halaf World: A Study of Coarse Wares in Sixth Millennium North Mesopotamia

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## Introduction

For over a century North Mesopotamian Halaf painted wares with their intricate designs have dominated sixth millennium ceramic studies while coarse wares have regularly been disregarded. In fact, coarse wares, and especially cooking pots, are surprisingly diverse in form, temper, and overall size and show remarkable variability from region to region. This article aims to target this lacuna of study, approach coarse wares and, when possible, the actual cooking pots, and then address comparatively the daily lives of the sixth millennium inhabitants of northern Mesopotamia.

Even though recent research on the incipient emergence of coarse wares has highlighted the quality in production in the seventh millennium[1], by the Halaf period the best quality fabrics were often decorated and plain wares were often indeed "coarse", as their name would imply[2]. This juxtaposition provides some justification as to why coarse wares have traditionally received less attention in the sixth millennium. However, we could argue that the main reason why painted pottery has received priority in archaeological discourse likely stems from archaeology's general fascination with cross-regional similarities[3]. Comparative studies in material culture across regions continue to govern archaeological studies[4]. Theories of group affiliation and membership based on similarities in pottery styles, forms, and decorations abound both past and present archaeological literature for the Halaf period and extend far beyond individual communities and across entire landscapes[5]. In addition to pottery, other elements of the culture including round houses and characteristic seals/sealings, for example, have collectively been considered a way of unifying diverse geographies into a remarkably homoge-

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1 Tsuneki – Nieuwenhuyse – Campbell 2017.

2 Akkermans – Schwartz 2003, 136; Castro-Gessner 2011, 780.

3 Peregrine 2001.

4 Fischer 1961; Smith – Peregrine 2012.

5 Campbell 1992; Dabbagh 1966; Davidson 1977; Frangipane 2015, 9182; LeBlanc – Watson 1973; Nieuwenhuyse 2007.

neous culture in the sixth millennium[6]. Collectively, these material cultural constituents have often been viewed as a "horizon style" or a unified culture group[7]. Pottery with articulate and painstakingly adorned motifs has become the defining element of participation in this common Halafian "grammar"[8].

In this vein, Frangipane, for example, when discussing Halaf pottery states that "this pottery… must have been a very powerful cultural identity marker, and a sign of membership ranging beyond individual households, clans or tribal groups, and linking together the numerous Halaf communities in a single cultural system and to a single origin"[9]. Likewise, Akkermans and Schwartz, suggest that "[c]eramics produced according to distinct stylistic conventions could have symbolized group membership and the participation of the many small and dispersed late Neolithic communities in a wider cultural framework"[10].

However, while this stylistic overlap may indicate some sort of contact, sometimes some of the most earnest markers of identity may, in fact, remain in the least likely and often the least remarkable of objects. For pottery, cooking vessels are often the most locally distinctive forms in existence. Their uniqueness and the loyalty demonstrated by the long-standing adherence the inhabitants of a given region exhibit to a certain cooking-pot type may, in fact, offer an alternative method of assessing group membership and identity[11]. This identity need not function as a replacement for the one described by the above-quoted researchers as people can harbor multiple overlapping identities simultaneously[12]. The regional study of cooking wares presents a way in which this neglected arena of local identities can be featured. Unlike broad-ranging designs ubiquitous across the vast expanses, cooking vessels are often indigenous in their shapes, wares, and forms. We must assume that adherence to these traditions follow deliberate decisions and local explanations all intimately bound with indigenous understandings and identities[13].

Cooking pots and the formulae for making them can be "maintained for centuries", even if the resultant vessels offer no practical benefits[14]. This domestic conservatism remains surprising in light of the dynamic exchanges of forms, shapes, and motifs that must have been in circulation across entire regions when painted wares proliferated with the advent of the Halaf period. Moreover, Halaf painted wares show similarities in their fabrics and seem consistently to be made using fine mineral tempering often consisting of micritic levigated clays[15]. In fact, fine ware tempers often tend to be so similar that analysis of Halaf painted wares, whether based on pastes or elemental composition, has shown that they were likely exchanged across sites sometimes reaching quite substantial distances[16].

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6 Redman 1978, 199; Perkins 1949, 16-45; Watson 1983.

7 Caldwell 1964; Freidel 1979; Hole 2013.

8 Hole 2013.

9 Frangipane 2007, 162.

10 Akkermans – Schwartz 2003, 134.

11 Villing – Spataro 2015.

12 Casella – Fowler 2005.

13 Hodos 2010.

14 Villing – Spataro 2015, 11.

15 Spataro – Fletcher 2010, 106.

16 Campbell 1992, 158-160; Davidson – McKerrel 1976; Davidson – McKerrel 1980; LeMière – Picon 1987; Spataro – Fletcher 2010.

A focus on the often-disregarded coarse ware ceramics yields a general lack of mineralogical and/or stylistic study, but a precursory examination reveals few compositional or formal similarities from region to region. Instead, one notes distinct differences across northern Mesopotamia. Systematic study of Halaf coarse wares is rare[17], and Miyake has addressed this general indifference to coarse wares and cooking pots and suggests that:

> [they] have been unfairly handled or, even worse, totally ignored. The high standard of manufacturing techniques and elaborated decorations of Halaf Painted Ware naturally deserve much attention. Nevertheless, Coarse Ware is also a regular component of the Halaf pottery assemblage, no matter how inconspicuous and rather featureless it might be. It appears quite likely that Coarse Ware, usually lumped together against Halaf Wares, is fairly diverse among the regions[18].

Importantly, it must be stressed that not all coarse ware vessels, which clearly include vessels of a diverse range of purposes, were used as cooking pots[19]. In fact, based on their smudge marks, combination of tempering agents, or vessel forms and wall thicknesses, only a small percent can be pinned down with certainty as cooking vessels[20]. Because many publications on North Mesopotamian ceramics of the sixth millennium BC treat coarse wares more generally, by necessity this article uses vessel forms and temper descriptions to identify elements of the repertoire that likely had a role in cooking[21]. This procedure, however, brings with it biases; identifying cooking vessels is difficult enough among a collection of real sherds, let alone from publications and drawings. Nonetheless, for much of the Halaf period, painted decoration is so prevalent across a large majority of storage, serving, and transport vessels that, when combined with the above-mentioned indications of form and temper, some basic insights on cooking vessels can be extracted.

A greater challenge for this article is perhaps the lack of published data on coarse wares altogether. This is especially true for sites published prior to or around the middle of the last century. Even so, based on what can be said with some degree of confidence, a brief survey of the pottery from different regions explored here shows great variability and demonstrates the uniqueness either in form, shape, size, or temper that we find among cooking vessels across many regions of northern Mesopotamia (Fig. 1). Even when shapes show an overall similarity, we find that wares in terms of temper remain distinctly different from site to site. This variability sharply contrasts with the notable consistency that painted wares show in terms of fabrics, shapes, clays, and motifs. Attempted here, is an effort to re-address Halaf-period identities, not through the oft-studied painted wares, but instead through the regionally confined coarse ware cooking pots of the sixth millennium. The immense diversity one finds in this category when compared with the ever present and easily recognizable forms, wares, and designs of painted Halaf assemblages, so well known to most prehistorians of the Near East, remains noteworthy.

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17 But see Hopwood 2010.

18 Miyake 1998, 76.

19 Hopwood 2013, 184-185.

20 Rice 1987, 422-424.

21 Hendrickson – McDonald 1983; Rice 1987, 422.

## Amuq Valley (Hatay) Sites with Halaf-like Ceramics

Based on abundant sooting and smudge marks suggestive of placement on an open fire, splayed-rim vessels clearly functioned as the cooking vessels of the sixth millennium B.C. Amuq C period contemporary with the Halaf phase[22]. At Tell Kurdu, the largest site in the valley at the time, this vessel shape – known already from nearby Tell Judaidah's seventh millennium levels (Amuq B) – comprised about 20% of all the form diagnostics[23]. Splayed-rim vessels are immediately recognizable, given their surprisingly thin walls yet remarkably thick lips reaching 1 cm and giving the brittle vessel walls some tensile strength (Fig. 2). Splayed-rim vessels from Phase C come both in bowl and holemouth variants. They often have large diameters as well as large mineral, shell, sand, and grit inclusions endowing them a sandpapery look and feel[24]. Using Rye[25], Diebold suggests the high frequency of large inclusions could have added some resistance to these thin-walled vessels against thermal shock[26].

Though sites in the Amuq Valley such as Tell Kurdu, Tell Rasm, AS80, Hasanuşağı, and Tell Judaidah yielded an abundance of splayed-rim vessels, the shape and ware does not appear to extend far beyond into surrounding regions, making their geographic distribution notably narrow[27]. With the exception of closely related types discovered during the Qoueiq survey[28], examples are not present among other published sherd assemblages. For example, this shape is absent in the neighboring Rouj Basin and specifically the Tell Aray I pottery repertoire, and is missing from Ras Shamra's IVC levels. Nor is it present in Hama and Tarsus Gözlükule's prehistoric levels[29]. In fact, a focused look at these sites and others from surrounding regions indicates that each settlement had its own unique shape, style, temper, and/or size for cooking vessels.

## Orontes Valley Sites with Halaf-like Ceramics

Considered in this section are the sites of Tell Aray, Ras Shamra, Hama, and Arjoune located in western Syria. A survey of coarse wares and potential cooking pots across these sites remains challenging given insufficient publications. For Tell Aray, the closest to the Amuq Valley, no Amuq-type splayed-rim cooking pots have been published for the El-Rouj 2d or El-Rouj 3 periods, contemporary with the Amuq C sequence[30]. Likewise, plain wares are few and far between when it comes to the Ras Shamra and Hama excavations with reports reflecting publication biases, rather than actual pottery ratios. For Ras Shamra, located only 100 km south of the Amuq, as the crow flies, level IVC provides the best chronological equivalent[31]. Unpainted coarse wares include shapes with flat bottoms[32] and lug handles[33]. Whether these

22 Özbal et al. 2004; Yener et al. 2000a, 2000b.

23 Braidwood – Braidwood 1960, 142; Diebold 2004; Özbal 2006.

24 Braidwood – Braidwood 1960.

25 Rye 1976.

26 Diebold 2004, 54.

27 Casana 2003; Diebold 2004, 54; Özbal 2006.

28 Mellaart 1981, figs. 90-91.

29 de Contenson 1992; Goldman 1956, 65-75; Ingholt 1934; Iwasaki et al. 1995, figs. 16-17.

30 Iwasaki et al. 1995, figs. 16-17.

31 de Contenson 1982, 95.

32 de Contenson 1992, 158.

33 de Contenson 1992, 382, fig. CXXX 1.

shapes are ubiquitous is unclear from the publication, but the latter are extremely rare in the Amuq sequence[34]. Overall, the coarse wares from Ras Shamra display differences from those published in the excavation report of nearby Hama. Located 130 km south of Tell Kurdu along the Orontes River valley, Hama's Period L coarse wares include jars with flaring necks and simple rims[35], holemouth jars with pierced lug handles[36], and open-sided vessels[37]. Comparisons are made difficult by insufficiencies in publications. For Hama, for example, Thuesen's 1988 report is based on prehistoric wares excavated during the 1933 season when "whole vessels, complete profiles and decorated sherds" were deliberately selected[38]. Overall, the descriptions are too piecemeal to make sense of, but, based on appearances, one gets the sense of different local potting traditions and a lack of splayed-rim type cooking vessels known from the Amuq Valley.

The site of Arjoune, located only 55 km directly south of Hama, is better published and therefore may be the most representative[39]. Excavations here yielded unburnished pottery, some of which quite likely functioned as cooking vessels, although no indication of soot marks or other characteristics are given. Arjoune V shows unburnished coarse wares in a "limited" range of shapes but includes rounded bowls and holemouth pots[40]. Vessels with thickened rims do exist at Arjoune, but Campbell and Phillips underline that they are "not especially common"[41]. Unlike the Amuq examples, the lip shapes of these vessels are flat topped preventing them from "splaying" and their walls are thicker, but some examples do have sand temper (Fig. 3)[42].

## Sites in the Turkish Upper Euphrates and Surroundings with Halaf-type Ceramics

There are several sites located in the Turkish Euphrates region and the surrounding areas of the Maraş Plain to the west and Urfa Plain to the east that exhibit Halaf influences in their painted wares. However, they show a different repertoire than the Amuq sites further to the west. Coarse wares and cooking vessels tend to be thick-walled holemouth jars at some sites, though not all. Even when shapes are more-or-less similar, with thick-walled holemouth jars dominating the assemblages, the surface treatment and mineral inclusions show distinct variability from site to site, indicating that different regions use different clay preparation formulae and temper combinations based on regionally available resources and perhaps long-standing local traditions.

Even at sites in a single Turkish province, one finds the presence of different traditions of temper and ware and a general adherence to local resources or clay preparation recipes. Sites in the Urfa region such as Çavi Tarlası, Kazane Höyük, and Kurban Höyük, for example, are primarily chaff tempered and come in burnished and unburnished variants[43]. Yet

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34 Braidwood – Braidwood 1960; Diebold 2004; Özbal 2006.

35 Thuesen 1988, 47, fig. 22.5.

36 Thuesen 1988, 47, fig. 22.6.

37 Thuesen 1988, fig. 23.14.

38 Thuesen 1988, 39.

39 Campbell – Phillips 2003.

40 Campbell – Phillips 2003, 32.

41 Campbell – Phillips 2003, 32.

42 Campbell – Phillips 2003, 41-43, fig 18.

43 Algaze 1990, 224; Bernbeck et al. 1999, 120; von Wickede – Herbordt 1998, 21.

mineral-tempered vessels and vessels with both mineral and chaff tempering are typical at Fıstıklı Höyük[44], also located in the Urfa region[45]. Three-fourths of the holemouth vessels from this latter site have been left unburnished[46], although at Kurban Höyük, Algaze reports that "[m]ost examples are burnished on the exterior"[47].

Careful study of use marks and the biography of coarse wares at Fıstıklı Höyük have been able to demonstrate that straight-necked and sinuous-sided jars as well as open bowls were used for placing upon a fire. Hopwood further argues, based on the intensity of use, that "[t]he preferred cooking vessel at this time was the medium-sized Sinuous Walled Jar, showing exposure to high levels of heat that occasionally caused its contents to burn"[48]. For the smaller open bowls, on the other hand, she observes that they too were placed on an open fire and were exposed to heat. However, she remarks that "the burning was primarily an exterior phenomenon, suggesting that what was inside could either not burn, such as water, or did not burn often"[49]. Likewise, straight-necked jars, she believes, must have been covered with lids and been subject to low levels of heat by being placed next to the fire or directly within the hot ashes to keep the contents warm[50]. These precious and detailed insights indicate that each vessel shape was specific to a different task and call for well-established local practices.

The coarse wares from Domuztepe on the Kahramanmaraş plain have not been published as intensively. Reports indicate that cooking wares include both grit and vegetal tempering and tend to lack burnishing but, surprisingly, are even at times incised[51]. They have straight or slightly incurving profiles and a carination around the body of the vessel. Domuztepe provides a good example for regionally distinct coarse ware vessels with its globular-bodied, thick-walled vessels with straight cylindrical necks[52]. Though likely not cooking, what purpose they served is unknown. Nonetheless, this coarse ware vessel type clearly connected to a specific activity or practice is unique to this region and demonstrates the importance and insularity of regionally distinctive habits and understandings. Indigenous traditions provide complimentary methods for identifying group membership and add to the oft-cited supra-regional memberships derived from painted motifs that pervasively appear across different regions.

Finally, Tülintepe in the Keban Dam area, where sherds of Halaf-type decorations are certainly present, is another site located in the Upper Euphrates region. Plain wares at Tülintepe are burnished and have raised decorations resembling Central Anatolian type ceramics known from the sixth millennium of Köşk Höyük and Tepecik-Çiftlik[53]. Dull-colored coarse wares tend to be lightly burnished in this region, as known also from Pirot Höyük, Korucutepe, and Tepecik[54]. Although no information is provided regarding function, one wonders whether sinuous-sided vessels with lug or ledge handles could have been used for cooking[55]. In any case,

44 Bernbeck – Pollock 2003, 40.

45 Hopwood 2010, 90; Pollock et al. 2001, 48-49.

46 Hopwood 2010, 245.

47 Algaze 1990, 225.

48 Hopwood 2013, 186.

49 Hopwood 2013, 186.

50 Hopwood 2013, 186.

51 Campbell et al. 1999, 408; Carter et al. 2003, 129.

52 Campbell et al. 1999, 409; Carter et al. 2003, 129.

53 Esin 1976, 84; Esin 1993.

54 Özdoğan 2013, 378, 382.

55 Esin 1979, 72 and 73.11; Esin 1982, 97.

the practice of applying small vertical handles represents a long-lasting tradition in this region and surrounding areas. In his description Özdoğan notes that "this ware is present in the earliest layers of both Tepecik and Çayönü, but continues up to the Halaf-Ubaid transition phase, as evidenced at Tülintepe or Fatmalı-Kalecik with only minor changes"[56]. Regardless, here one can safely say that the tradition of potting is distinct in this region, even though Halaf as well as Halaf-Ubaid transitional wares, always consistent in form, speckle the assemblage[57].

## Sites in the Turkish Upper Tigris and Surroundings with Half-type Ceramics

Included in this section are the sites of Karavelyan, Boztepe, Girikihacıyan, and Kerküşti Höyük, though the last is officially perhaps more an Upper Khabur site than an Upper Tigris site. Discussion of coarse wares and/or cooking vessels among these site reports is sparse. Nonetheless, the available evidence suggests variability. At Girikihacıyan, for example, coarse wares tend to be grit tempered, yet remain burnished[58]. On the other hand, at not too distant Karavelyan, even though, as in Girikihacıyan, coarse ware vessels have grit tempering, they lack burnishing[59]. Interestingly, for Girikihacıyan Watson and LeBlanc report that several of the jar bases are "blackened" on their insides suggestive of cooking[60]. Unfortunately, interpreting the rim shape from the base is not always possible. But, in addition to holemouths, the repertoire yielded a range of flare-neck and everted rim jars which could equally have functioned as cooking vessels. At Boztepe, Halaf levels were excavated in a narrow exposure for a single season so the information available is limited[61]. Nonetheless, the coarse wares excavated are primarily grit tempered, though chaff is also occasionally added[62]. As in Karavelyan just a few kilometers away, the coarse wares are not well fired[63]. Though grit temper seems to be the norm along the Upper Tigris, the coarse ware at Kerküşti Höyük, located further south in the province of Mardin just north of the Khabur triangle, "displays vegetal temper and is plain and moderately or badly fired"[64]. When viewed together – though sand temper is a cross-regional hallmark for painted Halaf and Halaf-like sherds – one finds a range of differences in specific ware recipes when it comes to local coarse ware forms.

## Middle Euphrates and Balikh Valley Sites with Halaf-type Ceramics

Coarse wares in the Middle Euphrates Region are best represented at Carchemish-Yunus, Sham ed-Din Tannira, Tell Amarna, and Tell Halula, while Sabi Abyad and Khirbet es-Shenef provide a good overview for the Balikh valley. All sites, excluding Carchemish, yielded thick-walled, globular holemouth vessels suggesting at least some congealing similarity in shape. Yet the recipes of preparation clearly differ from settlement to settlement. This, as I suggest above, may be representing the presence of local recipes and community-specific knowledge in pottery production.

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56 Özdoğan 2013, 383-384; for Fatmalı Kalecik refer to Wright – Whallon 1998.

57 Esin – Arsebük 1974, 120-121; Esin 1982, 91.

58 Watson – LeBlanc 1990, 77.

59 Tekin 2011, 353.

60 Watson – LeBlanc 1990, 68.

61 Parker – Creekmore 2002.

62 Parker – Creekmore 2002, 26-27, 55.

63 Parker – Creekmore 2002, 55; Tekin 2011, 353.

64 Sarıaltun 2013, 508; Sarıaltun – Erim-Özdoğan 2011, 44.

Based on observations of smoke-blackening and soot made by Gustavson-Gaube for Shams ed-Din[65], globular holemouth vessels likely functioned as the cooking vessels of this period (Fig. 3). At Shams ed-Din the shape comes in both coarse and common ware variants and is unburnished[66]. The latter are sand tempered, while the former includes grit or pebbles, gypsum, calcite, and grog, as well as chaff and grit[67]. For the site of Tell Amarna where the same vessel shape is found, Cruells records both vegetal and mineral-tempered coarse wares. But given their ability to withstand thermal shock, he notes that the latter "had dark coloured lower external parts, probably as the result of being in contact with open fires"[68]. Tell Halula's coarse wares also contain both mineral and vegetal wares, although this particular globular and hole-mouthed vessel shape tends to be mineral tempered[69]. Both the Halula and Amarna samples have a light layer of burnishing.

At Sabi Abyad, on the other hand, cooking vessels instead have a dense grit temper[70]. Of the cooking wares at Sabi Abyad 87% are burnished, which LeMiere and Nieuwenhuyse argue "may have reduced permeability during cooking" for liquid substances[71]. The coarse wares from Khirbet esh-Shenef, are also regularly burnished, but the wares contained either lime or sand or some combination thereof of these two tempering agents[72]. The shape repertoire at Khirbet esh-Shenef corresponds with those from other sites described in this section, and the assemblage comprises thick-walled, hole-mouth vessels as described above[73].

At Carchemish-Yunus, on the Turkish-Syrian border, Woolley did not indicate the presence of holemouth vessels in his vessel shape typology[74]. Instead he claims that "[t]he cooking-pots, always, of course of the rougher ware, are generally of the more or less straight-sided cauldron type"[75]. Such bucket-like, straight-sided shapes are also indicated in his shape typology and are likely to be closely related to the open bowl shape known from Fıstıklı Höyük, located only about twenty kilometers further north. Indeed, Hopwood identifies these straight-sided, open bowl shapes as being placed directly on open fires[76].

In sum, while shape-wise one can identify some level of overarching resemblance when it comes to the Middle Euphrates, the differences in tradition just a few kilometers further north along the Euphrates at sites like Fıstıklı Höyük and Carchemish-Yunus is remarkable. Tell Amarna, only about ten km south of Carchemish, is a closer neighbor than Fıstıklı, yet the two sites seem to belong to different cooking pot traditions, with the former having holemouth vessels and the latter not. This issue brings us back to questions of identity and group membership based not on overarching supra-regional painted motifs, as frequently resorted to in Halaf research, but instead on what probably are material manifestations of local traditions and practices.

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65 Gustavson-Gaube 1981, 168-169.

66 Gustavson-Gaube 1981, 13, 1981, 168-169.

67 Gustavson-Gaube 1981, 13.

68 Cruells 2004, 31.

69 Cruells et al. 2013, fig. 22.1833, 24.1832, 24.1834; Gómez et al. 2013.

70 LeMiere – Nieuwenhuyse 1996, 187; Akkermans 1989.

71 LeMiere – Nieuwenhuyse 1996, 187.

72 Akkermans – Wittmann 1993, 159.

73 Akkermans 1993, 102.

74 Woolley 1934, 152. But Dirvana 1944, Pl. LXXXII.25, suggests it may be representing a holemouth shape.

75 Woolley 1934, 153.

76 Hopwood 2013, 186.

## Khabur Triangle and Sinjar Area Sites with Halaf-Type Ceramics

Moving further east, a look at sites in the Khabur Triangle such as Umm Qseir, Chagar Bazar, Tell Halaf, and Tell Aqab, as well as the site of Yarım Tepe in the Sinjar region, we find elements that are familiar from adjacent regions but flavored by local interpretations. In Umm Qseir, the clay of the coarse ware vessels, which are granular in texture and poorly-levigated, are easily distinguishable from fine Halaf-type wares. Miyake points out that over 83% of these coarse ware vessels are holemouth jars, a large percentage of which show evidence for secondary firing and soot. This suggests, as Miyake acknowledges, that they must have functioned as cooking pots[77]. Made using mineral temper and a combination of sand and grit, the vessels regularly have lugs and extremely thick walls regularly exceeding 10 mm (Fig. 3). Late Halaf holemouth vessels from Chagar Bazaar also tend to have lugs[78] as well as those from Tell Halaf[79]. Chaff mixed with grit tempering, on the other hand, characterizes the burnished coarse ware of Tell Aqab to the north[80]. Similar burnished holemouth vessels are known to be a long-lasting tradition at Tell Halaf[81]. On the other hand in the Sinjar region at Yarim Tepe III, coarse ware cooking pots are primarily holemouth vessels with globular bodies. These were made using black and grey clay, although little indication is given for the precise tempering agents[82]. Overall, hence, globular holemouth vessels known from the Middle Euphrates and Balikh are also found here in the Khabur and Sinjar regions. Indications of smudging and soot has only been recorded at Umm Qseir, but one presumes that similar shapes at other sites were used for similar purposes. Nonetheless, based perhaps on local geologies and local recipe combinations, such vessels tend to show remarkable differences cross-regionally when it comes to their tempering agents.

## Conclusion

This article calls for a revision of currently accepted ideas that painted wares provide the most effective ways to measure group membership and identity, as has been argued for the Halaf period[83]. The above examples instead demonstrate how coarse wares are insular and differ considerably from region to region, likely because of long-standing conventions. Research shows that cooking pots not only demonstrate regional variation, but that communities adhere to cooking methods and vessel types for remarkably long periods of time[84]. This notable continuity may be a consequence of the conservatism societies exhibit when it comes to culinary traditions. The pots and associated habits can remain unchanged for exceedingly long time spans[85]. In fact, long-lasting bonds with cooking pots are retained, sometimes regardless of their functional effectiveness, such that even vessels demonstrating poor heat conductivity persist for generations[86]. Often continuity in cooking vessels highlights the loyalty that societies

77 Miyake 1998, 74.

78 Cruells et al. 2013, 472; no unpainted sixth millennium wares are provided in Mallowan 1936.

79 Schmidt 1943, Tab. XXXIX.2.

80 Davidson 1977, 156-157.

81 Becker 2013, 463.

82 Merpert – Munchaev 1993, 176.

83 Frangipane 2007, 162; Akkermans – Schwartz 2003, 134.

84 Graff – Rodrigues-Alegria 2012; Sparato – Villing 2015.

85 Villing – Spataro 2015, 11.

86 Quercia 2015; Villing – Spataro 2015, 12.

feel towards the routines and the unwavering daily task of preparing food. This constancy is correspondingly why cooking vessels are often demoted to a subordinate role in the archaeological study of ceramics. They tend to lack the typo-chronological sequencing that short-lived and readily refashioned serving and display vessels often exhibit.

Likewise, foods and foodways tend to show the same type of insularity. What one society considers edible may differ from one community to another[87]. Moreover, food prepared in local vessels is the cornerstone of shared meals – an inherently social phenomenon that get repeated several times a day. Food and foodways are among the best ways of strengthening bonds between participants and maintaining group affiliation[88]. While assuming a direct and somewhat superficial relationship between cooking vessels and types of food may be naïve, this equation is not always flawed[89]. Both concepts are so intrinsically bound up with identity that they remain stable for long periods of time[90].

Hence, oft-voiced opinions that painted pottery is the only indicator for assessing cultural identity and the notion that north Mesopotamia's Halafian ceramic motifs of the sixth millennium B.C. signaled group membership, as argued by various researchers, may require reconsideration[91]. In a study examining the ceramic pastes of painted sherds from Arpachiyah, Chagar Bazar, Domuztepe, and Tell Halaf, Spataro and Fletcher claim that "Halaf fine ware was made from similar clay sources at all four sites studied" and underline that the "same formula was employed"[92]. All of these claims highlight the overarching consistency and the large-scale similarity in design, production, manufacture, and decoration. Though such large-scale correspondences are undeniably remarkable, we should not overlook the stability that deep-rooted traditions such as cooking ware production carry. The unwavering faithfulness to certain formula of production indicates loyalty to local habits, even as fashion trends wax and wane. One could argue that habits, traditions, and the daily routines demonstrate a deeper appreciation of identity and belonging than affiliations based on painted-pottery motifs, regardless how popular the latter styles may be. Long-standing and trusted coarse wares and cooking vessels provide an alternative archaeological correlate for the question of membership. An increasing awareness of the importance of mundane wares is bound to alleviate the challenge of a lack of systematic analyses.

87 Dietler 2007; Russel 2012.

88 Dietler 2007; Smith 2006; Twiss 2007; Twiss 2012; Weismantel 1989.

89 Villing – Sparato 2015, 17.

90 Quercia 2015.

91 Frangipane 2007, 162; Akkermans – Schwartz 2003, 134.

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# Özet

## Halaf Dünyası'nda "Kimliği" Yeniden Düşünmek: Altıncı Binyıl Kuzey Mezopotamyası'nda Kaba Malların İncelenmesi

MÖ altıncı binyıla tarihlenen Halaf Dönemi, Kuzey Mezopotamya'nın geniş coğrafyasında kültürel öğeler açısından benzerlik gösterdiğinden genelde homojen bir kültür grubu olarak ele alınmaktadır. Bu bağlamda en belirleyici öğesi geometrik motiflerle bezenmiş boyalı çanak çömlekler olan Halaf Dönemi, yuvarlak yapıları ve karakteristik mühürleriyle farklı coğrafyalarda da beraber bulunan bir materyal kültür paketi olarak bilim literatürüne girmiştir. Dönemin boyalı çanak çömlek motifleri benzerliğinin, "kimlik" anlamında bir tür kültürel grup üyeliği göstergesi olduğu öne sürülmektedir. Başka bir deyişle, genelde çanak-çömleklerin bezeme motiflerinin Halaf Dönemi yerleşimlerini birbirlerine bağlayan ve grup ayniyetini sağlayan ana ve belirleyici bir öğe olduğu varsayılmaktadır.

Grup üyeliğini gösteren en yalın ölçütün aslında en az göze çarpan unsurlarda saklı olduğunu savunan bu çalışma, sıradanlığından dolayı genellikle göz ardı edilen kaba yemek pişirme kaplarına odaklanmıştır ve söz konusu malların grup üyeliğini değerlendirmede bir alternatif olabileceğinin altını çizmektedir. Yerel olarak üretilen ve bölgeden bölgeye farklılık gösteren pişirme kapları, yerleşim sakinlerinin nesillerdir kullandıkları geleneksel yöntem ve teknikleri özümseyen kültürel unsurlardır. Her grubun kendine has imalat tekniklerinin bulunması yöre içi bağları güçlendirirken bölgeler arası mevcut ayrımları da belirginleştirmektedir. Bu makalede kuşaklar arası devam eden ve bölgeden bölgeye farklılık gösteren geleneklerin de grup üyeliği ve kimlik kavramını tanımlada bir alternatif olabileceği savunulmaktadır. Dolayısıyla Halaf boyalı çanak çömlek motiflerinin MÖ altıncı binyılda kimlik kavramı kapsamında bağlayıcı kültürel öğe olması fikrine ayrı bir bakış açısıyla yaklaşılmaktadır.

Bilimsel anlamda boyalı malların çalışılması ve kaba malların önemsenmemesi karşılaştığımız en önemli zorluklardan biri olsa da çalışmamızda Amuk Ovası, Asi Nehri Vadisi, Yukarı Fırat ve Yukarı Dicle havzaları, Orta Fırat, Balik Vadisi ile Sinjar Yöresi ve Habur Üçgeni'nde bulunan yerleşimler incelenerek farklı pişirme kapları ele alınmış ve bu bölgelerin kaba mal üretimi açısından belirgin farklılıklar göstermekte olduğu ortaya konmuştur.

Şimdiye dek Halaf Dönemi arkeolojisinde tasarım, üretim, imalat ve bezemede geniş anlamda tutarlılık gösteren, ince cidarlı boyalı malların araştırılması tercih edilmiştir. Elbette bu nitelikte büyük çapta iletişime işaret eden boyalı mallar, bölgeler arası grup üyeliği hakkında önemli ipuçları sağlayabilmektedir. Ancak yukarıda açıklanan ve köklü gelenekleri barındıran durumlar da göz ardı edilmemelidir. Pişirme kapları, form olarak benzerlik gösterse bile katkısı, cidar kalınlıkları ve yapım teknikleri açısından farklılıklar sergilemektedir. Kaba mallar,

dolayısıyla nadiren değişim geçiren ve uzun bir geçmişe sahip kap türleridir. Yemek pişirme gibi her gün yapılması gereken işler, rutin ve artık kalıplaşmış özelliklerinden dolayı yerleşim sakinlerinin nesiller boyu sadık kaldığı faaliyetlerdendir.

Bir grubun kimlik ve aidiyeti, bölgeler arası benzerlik gösteren motif paralelliklerinin yanında, zamanla alışıla gelmiş ve artık oturmuş günlük rutinlerinin de araştırılmasıyla daha anlaşılır hale gelmektedir.

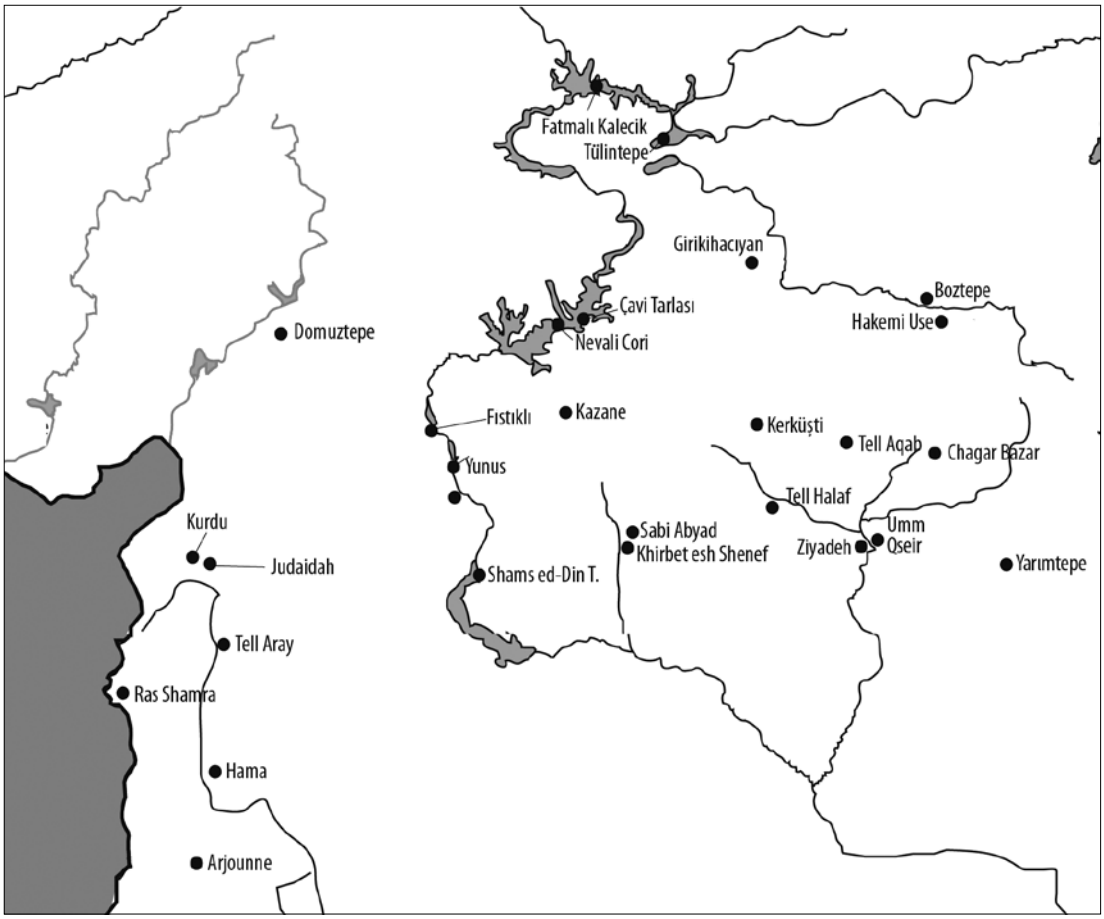



Fig. 1 Map indicating the location of the sites discussed in the text

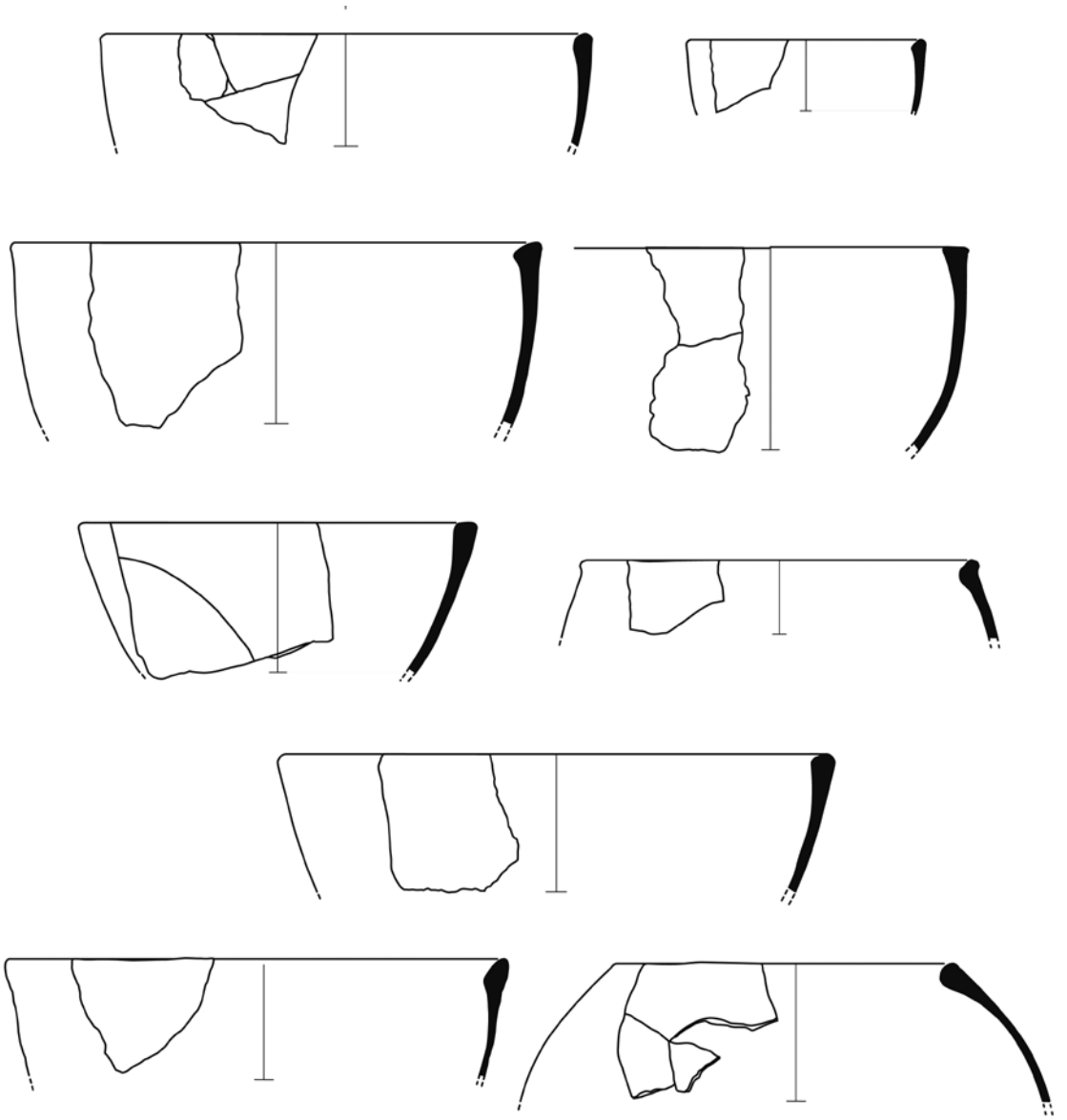


Fig. 2 Splayed rim vessels from Tell Kurdu in the Amuq Valley

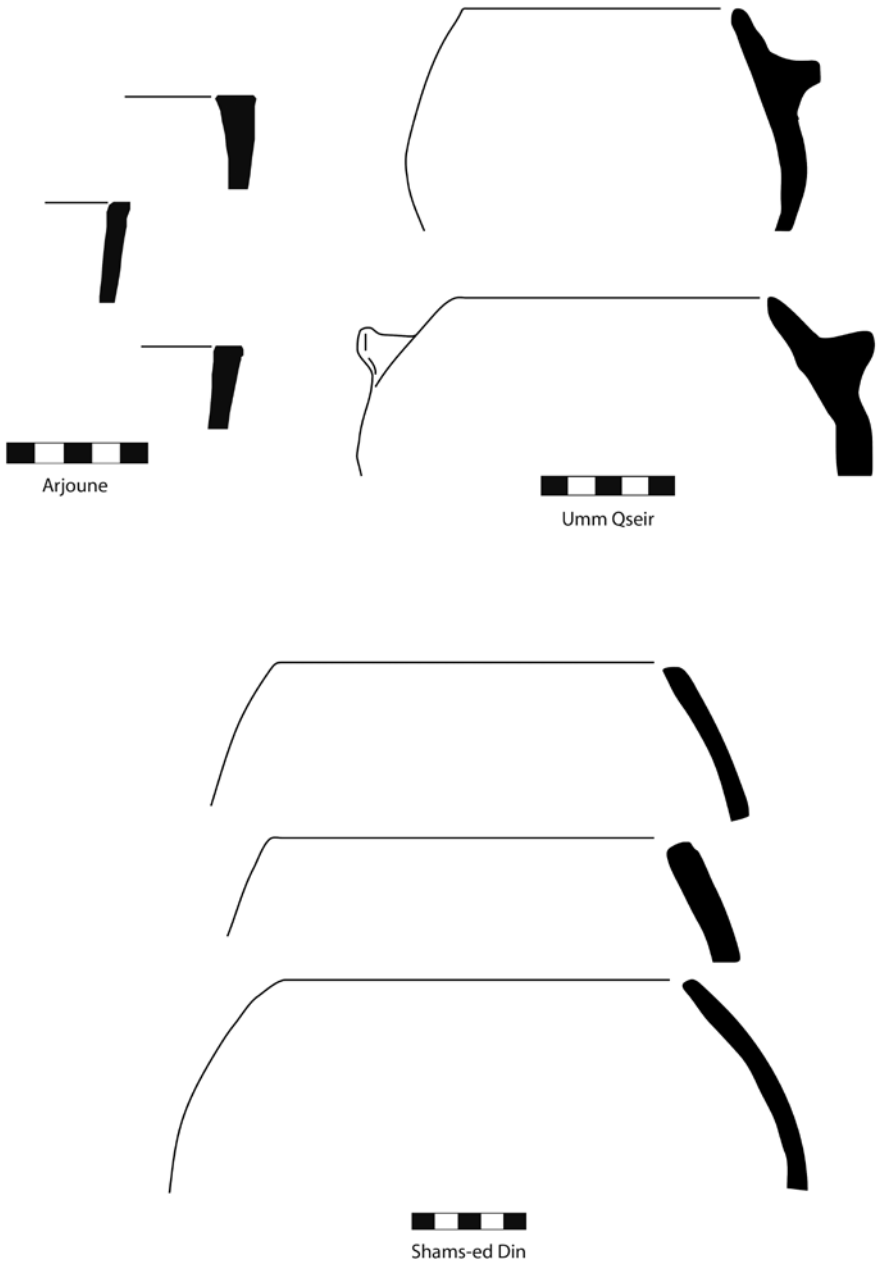



Fig. 3 Examples of coarse wares vessels from Arjounne, Umm Qseir and Shams ed-Din Tannira