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THE IRON AGE POTTERY OF ZINCIRLI HÖYÜK: AN ASSEMBLAGE AMONG NEIGHBOURING TRADITIONS

Sebastiano Soldi

Summary

This article presents the results of the renewed excavations at Zincirli Höyük, in the İslahiye valley in the province of Gaziantep in southeastern Turkey, focusing on the local ceramic assemblage and on some imported items. The excavations both in the lower town and on the citadel mound have yielded abundant documentation useful to analyze the local pottery horizon in the period of Iron Age II and III and connect it to contemporary assemblages of northern inland Syria and southeastern Anatolia. The presence of Assyrian and Phoenician imported items is extremely relevant not only to anchor the relative chronology of materials, but also to understand the relationships and exchanges taking place in the ancient kingdom of Sam'al in the time-span between the 9th and 7th centuries BC.

INTRODUCTION

New excavations carried out by the Chicago-Tübingen expedition at Zincirli Höyük are providing a set of data that is useful to analyze and identify the Iron Age material culture at the site and in the surrounding region. Although Zincirli is well known in previous archaeological literature, stemming from the first pioneering expeditions in the Near East, its material assemblage still needs further studies and reassessment in order for its main features and evolutions to be clearly understood. The opportunity of investigating it in conjunction with new stratigraphic excavations in different areas of the site offers a valuable occasion to compare the local assemblage with that of nearby sites, establishing a regional framework for an area which is still in need of deeper comprehension, as it is surrounded by regions such as northern Syria, the Euphrates area, Central Anatolia and Cilicia which have produced new documentation in the last few years.

The aim of the paper is to present and discuss the main aspects of the ceramic assemblage from the lower town and citadel mound in Iron Age II and III, especially between the 9th and 7th centuries BC, during one of the town's wealthiest periods.

GEOGRAPHICAL SETTING OF ZINCIRLI

Zincirli Höyük is located in the southeastern Turkish province of Gaziantep, 10 km north of modern İslahiye and some 30 km north of the Syrian border (Fig. 1). The Kara Su valley is a narrow fertile valley closed on the eastern side by the Kurt Dağı and on the western side by the high peaks of the Amanus Mountains (Nur Dağları), famous in antiquity for its timber woods and rich in fresh spring water from the mountains which flows into the Kara Su river plain. The valley runs from northeast to southwest, connecting the Kahramanmaraş Plain and Taurus Mountains to the north and the Amuq Plain (Hatay) and Orontes River to the south, thus forming a natural corridor between western Syria and the Anatolian plateau. The northern edge gives access to Kahramanmaraş (Marash), the ancient capital of the kingdom of Gurgum, and hence, through the Göksun pass, to the Anatolian plateau and the Taurus Mountains. The southern extension, opening onto the Plain of Antioch, is where major archaeological sites are located, such as Bronze Age Tell Atchana/Alalakh and Tell Taynat/Kunulua, the capital of the Iron Age kingdom of Unqi/Pattina. The area of Antioch was one of points of access from Anatolia to the great plains of Syria and to the region of Aleppo, connecting the Syro-Mesopotamian world with the eastern Mediterranean shores.

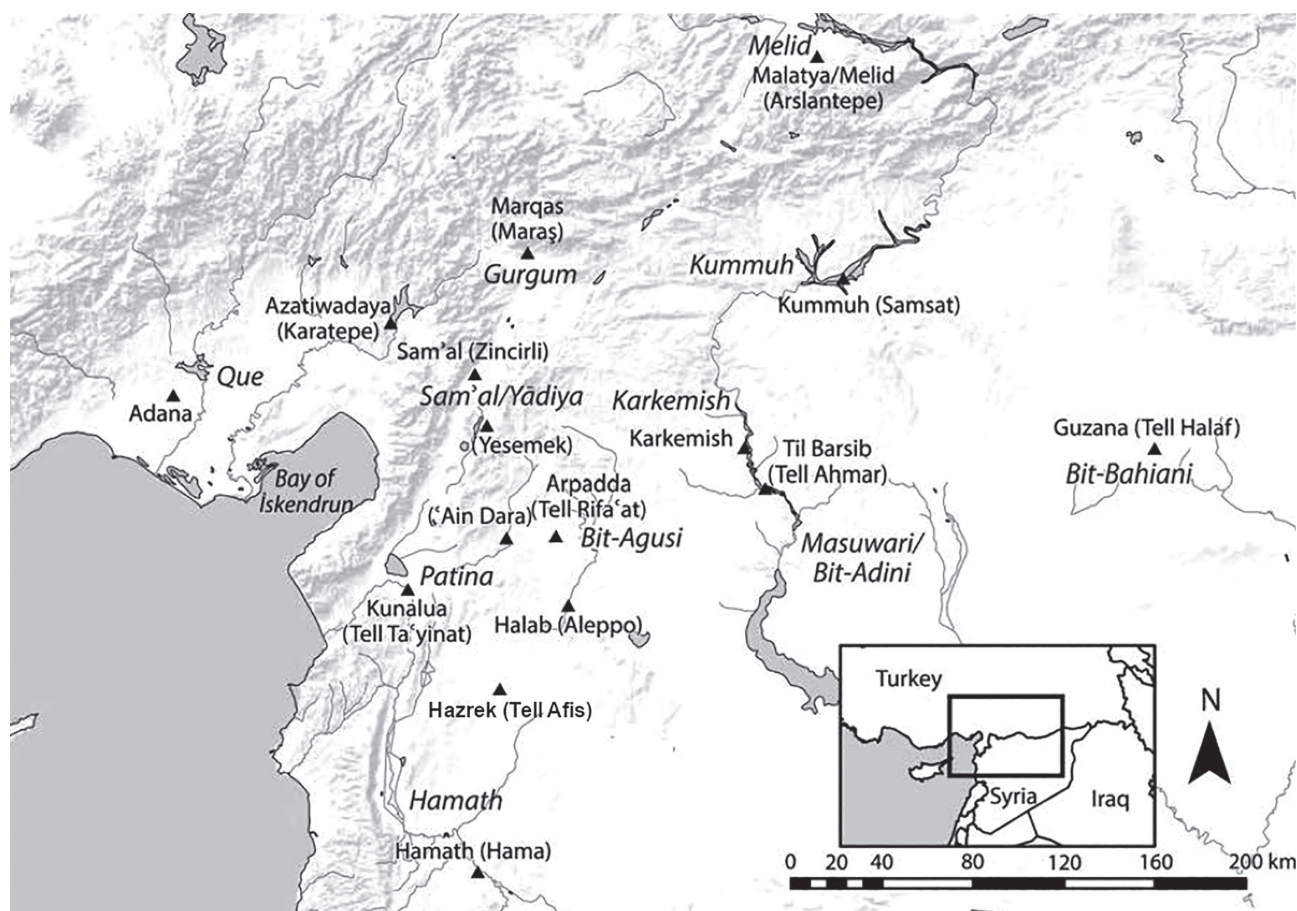


Fig. 1. Zincirli and the northern Levant in the Iron Age (after Herrmann 2017, fig. 1, modified by the author).

The location of Zincirli was strategic also because of the east-west connections, since it lies on the road linking the area of Karkemish, on the Euphrates on the present day Syro-Turkish border, and Cilicia and the eastern Mediterranean coast, which can be reached through the Bahçe Geçidi, known in the Classical period as the Amanian Gates. Therefore the setting of Zincirli is in a distinctive location well connected to strategic areas, and its archaeological records show a long sequence of occupation, spanning from the 3rd to the 1st millennium BC (Wartke 2005, 17-19; Schloen 2014, 27-30).

THE HISTORY OF EXCAVATIONS AND SETTLEMENT PHASES

Zincirli was first excavated by a pioneering German expedition which carried out five archaeological campaigns in the years between 1888 and 1902. The expedition was conducted on behalf of the newly set up German Orient-Comité in agreement with the Berlin Museum (Wartke 2005, 9), and led by Carl Humann and Felix von Luschan (who took over its leadership starting from the second campaign) (Pucci 2008, 3-4; Schloen 2014, 31). The German expedition paved the way for the first historical understanding of a pre-Classical settlement of this area of southern Turkey, providing rich documentation in stone sculptures, inscriptions and small finds, which are nowadays displayed and stored in Istanbul's Ancient Orient Museum and Berlin's Vorderasiatisches Museum. The Orient-Comité expedition published five volumes devoted to Zincirli's excavations (*Ausgrabungen in Sendschirli*, I to V) under the supervision of Felix von Luschan; only the last volume (von Luschan, Andrae 1943), devoted to

small finds and ceramics, was published after von Luschan's death, thanks to the editorial work of Walther Andrae. The large exposure of archaeological levels by the German expedition provided an extensive insight into the capital city of the Iron Age kingdom of ancient Sam'al, which flourished between the 10th and 7th centuries BC, when it was included within the western expansion of the Assyrian empire.

In recent years a new expedition of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago undertook excavations under the supervision of David Schloen starting in 2006 (Schloen, Fink 2009). In 2014 the University of Tübingen joined in the project, with Virginia Herrmann as co-director, establishing the current Chicago-Tübingen Expedition. The aim of the research is to achieve a deeper understanding and reassessment of the phasing of the Iron Age town and its urbanization (Herrmann 2017b), opening new excavation trenches both on the citadel and in the lower town in order to investigate the occupation sequence in different portions of the site. Besides the Iron Age occupation, the most recent investigations on the citadel mound have provided an excellently preserved settlement belonging to the Middle Bronze Age II and dated by ^{14}C analysis to the 17th century BC (Herrmann, Schloen 2018, 522-524; Morgan, Soldi forthcoming), also resulting in a reattribution to the Bronze Age of the monumental building excavated by the Orient-Comité expedition and labelled as Iron Age *Hilani I* (Herrmann, Schloen forthcoming).

Though never properly investigated, it was already clear from the German expedition results that Zincirli had been inhabited at least since the mid 3rd millennium BC (Schloen 2014, 34; Early Bronze Age pottery in von Luschan, Andrae 1943, pls. 15, 16. a-d) and continued during the first half of the second millennium BC (Middle Bronze Age pottery in von Luschan, Andrae 1943, pls. 17. a-b; 18. g-i; 24. a, o, t, u; 30. b, d), with Iron Age materials analyzed in the Berlin Museum storerooms clearly mixed with Bronze Age vessels (Lehmann 1994, 107). The Middle Bronze Age II occupation of Area 2 (Fig. 2), on the eastern citadel, with a wealth of extraordinary materials recovered *in situ* following an episode of violent destruction, provides a vivid picture of a place well integrated in the network of trades taking place among central Anatolia, eastern Mediterranean, northern Syria and Mesopotamia (Morgan, Soldi forthcoming); it is likely that the site was destroyed by the Hittite king Hattušili I and his army during his campaign against Zalwar/Zalpa – convincingly identified with nearby Tilmen Höyük (Marchetti 2010, 370) – probably only a few years before the destruction of Alalakh Level VII (Herrmann, Schloen forthcoming).

The exploration of the Iron Age city has been carried out by opening different excavation areas on the citadel, in the lower town and in the outer town in the proximity of the city walls, for a total of ten excavation areas (Fig. 2). The upper mound is excavated in Area 2 on the eastern citadel, which has revealed an overlapping of the Iron Age buildings (already excavated by the German expedition) with the Middle Bronze II settlement, and in Area 3, on the southern slope of the mound, where the step trench yields the Iron Age II and III occupation sequence, lying on top of the Bronze Age settlement, with a stratum dense in Middle Bronze and Early Bronze Age sherds (Schloen, Fink 2009, 211-212; Herrmann, Schloen 2018, 524-525). The lower town is the portion of the site which has been more thoroughly investigated by the Chicago-Tübingen expedition to obtain information on the urbanization in the period of largest expansion of Sam'al, between the 9th and 7th centuries BC: two large excavation areas have been explored in the northern part of the lower town (Areas 5 and 6: Schloen, Fink 2009, 214-215; Herrmann 2017b, 289-301), and two in the southern part (Areas 4 and 8: Schloen, Fink 2009, 212-214; Herrmann, Schloen 2018, 525-527). More trenches have investigated the northeast city wall and gate (Area 1: Schloen, Fink 2009, 209-210) and *extra-moenia* buildings (Areas 0 and 7: Schloen, Fink 2009, 216).

In this paper, we present and discuss some of the relevant results from the ceramic record of the recent investigations, with particular attention to those from the lower town belonging to the local Iron Age II and III.

THE IRON AGE POTTERY OF ZINCIRLI

As a general assessment, the local assemblage of Iron Age ceramics from Zincirli upper and lower town is consistent with the Iron Age II and III chronological framework of northwestern Syria, spanning in terms of absolute chronology from the end of the 9th century BC to the 7th century BC. Only very feeble evidence of materials belonging

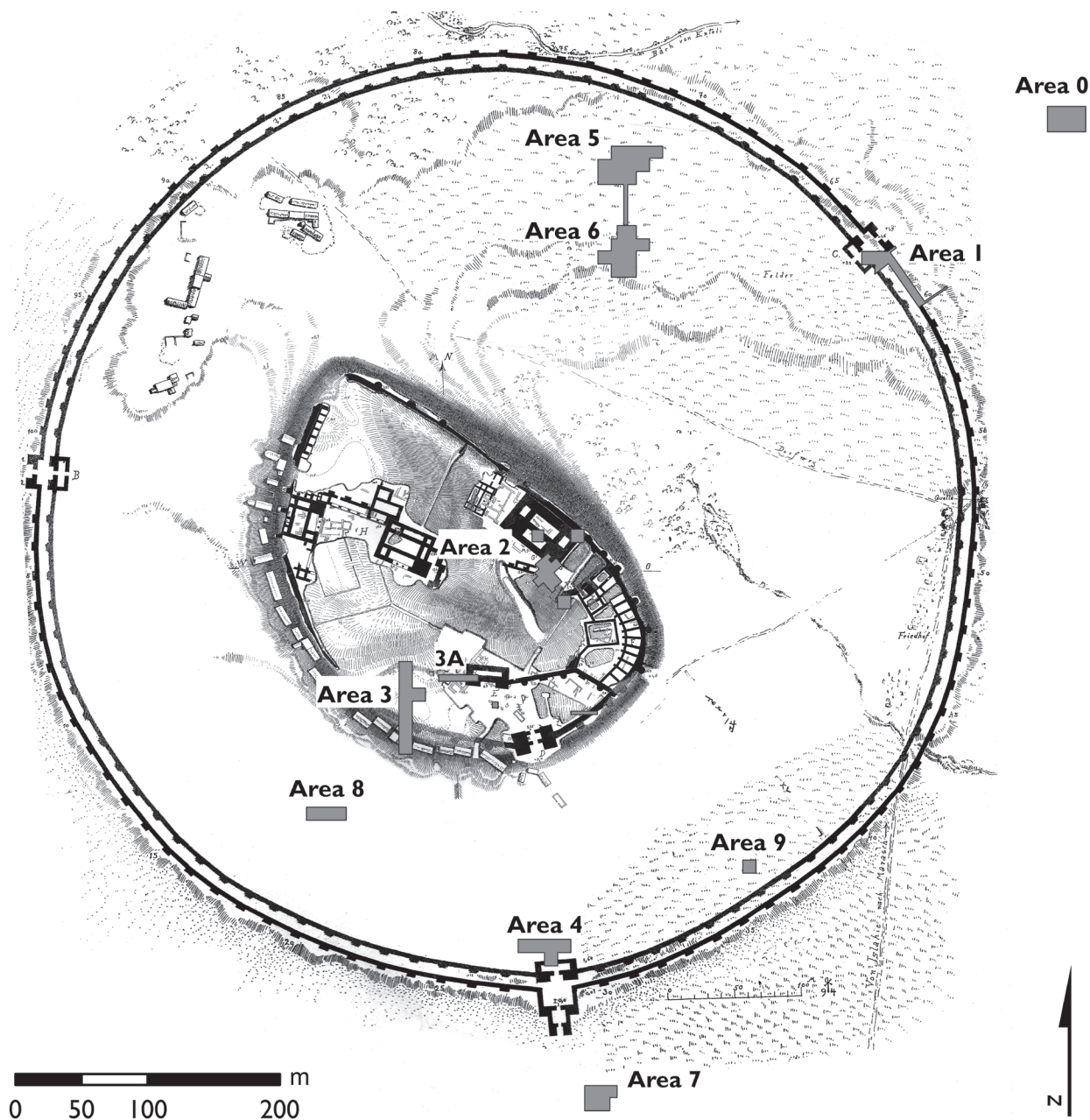


Fig. 2. Plan of Zircirli combining the results of the Orient-Comité expedition and the Chicago-Tübingen excavation areas (courtesy the Chicago-Tübingen Expedition to Zircirli; elaborated by J.T. Herrmann).

to previous Iron Age phases, namely to the final part of Iron Age I, have been sparsely identified on the citadel mound, without a clear and consistent archaeological context, mainly coming from fills together with later materials. Zircirli local assemblage during the Iron Age indeed presents common features with the horizon of northern Syrian Iron Age pottery, the vast majority being common simple ware open shapes and light-red fabric, sometimes identified as “orange” ware, because of the homogeneous overall colour in surface aspect and fabric composition (Lebeau 1983; Lehmann 1996; 1998; Mazzoni 1992; 2014).

One peculiarity we had to face during data collection and analysis of the ceramic material, especially concerning the exemplars coming from the northern lower town, was the general poor state of preservation of the pottery, which was heavily weathered on its surface and usually covered by encrustations. A possible explanation for this phenomenon can be found in the very high water table in this part of the valley, as testified also by the marshes recorded in the notes of the first German explorers. Carl Humann, at the very beginning of the exploration in 1888 notes that “Das Dorf selbst liegt voll nassen Kothes, vom Hügel nördlich schleicht ein Sumpfbach, [...] Nach Nord-Ost und Ost sieht man am Fuße des Kurd-Dagh meilenlange Sümpfe, den Auran-göl”,¹ testifying that at that time the area north and northeast of the tell (upper mound) was muddy and marshy. The high water table in different spots of the northern lower town has been experienced by the modern expedition too (Schloen, Fink 2009, 209-210; Herrmann 2017b, 297), confirming the hypothesis that this could be one of the causes heavily affecting the quality of the ceramic materials, also strengthened by the effect of basaltic soil and the fairly extreme temperature range throughout the year. This issue affects in particular the analysis of the pottery sherds regarding their surface treatments (slip, polishing, burnishing, etc.) and painted decorations.

However, the extensive excavation and exposure of Iron Age layers in the various areas of the site helped in collecting and gathering enough data to identify a local assemblage with its morphological variations.

The local pottery production at Zincirli is part of the same material culture of the whole region of western Syria, which is the area roughly included between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean coast, bordering on the northern edge with the Anatolian Plateau and south with the Syrian desert and the area of Damascus. Thus Zincirli can be considered enclosed within this ceramic tradition; it represents one of its northernmost expressions, bordering with the traditions of the central Anatolian area. Among the sites where we can clearly recognize a similar “aire de famille”, using a definition by Marc Lebeau’s pioneering study of Iron Age II-III pottery of northern Syria (Lebeau 1983, 126), we can confidently mention Tell Abou Danné in the Jabbul area east of Aleppo (Lebeau 1983), Tell Shiukh Fawqani (ancient Burmarina) on the eastern shore of the Euphrates (Makinson 2005) and Karkemish on the western one (Marchetti 2014; Pizzimenti, Zaina 2016; Zaina 2019), Tell Rifat (ancient Arpad) northeast of Aleppo (Seton-Williams 1961; Matthers 1981), Tell Tayinat (Harrison, Osborne 2012) and Chatal Höyük (Pucci 2019) in the Amuq, Tell Afis (Mazzoni 1987; Oggiano 1997; Soldi 2013; Mazzoni 2014), Tell Mardikh (Mazzoni 1992; Pizzimenti 2014-2015), Tell Tuqan (Baffi 2006; Fiorentino 2006; 2014) and Tell Mastuma (Wada 1994; Wakita *et al.* 1994; Wakita, Wada, Nishiyama 2000; Iwasaki *et al.* 2009) in the Idlib plain, and southwards along the low Orontes river Hama (Fugmann 1958), Tell Acharneh (Cooper 2006) and Tell Mishrifeh (Besana, Da Ros, Iamoni 2008; Russo 2018), to mention just a few of the main sites which have provided relevant data to increase our knowledge of ceramic assemblages in Iron Age II and III in the northern Levant.²

The pottery of this region of Syria and southern Anatolia can be clearly identified by the fabric and texture of its simple ware, *i.e.* the everyday food serving and consumption vessels: the light-red fabric, sometimes called “orange ware”, identifies most local productions of simple ware, employed for processing (with the exception of cooking), serving and presenting/consuming food; a limited range of local variations is due to the different sources of raw materials, with technological aspects (firing and surface treatments) tending to be rather homogenous within the whole region. The association of such fabric to distinctive surface treatments (polishing and burnishing, presence of reddish clay wash or slip) and to a specific set of morphologies (plates, bowls, jugs and jars), constitutes the typical mark of the northwestern Syrian assemblage of Iron Age II and III, historically attested between the mature period of the Syro-Hittite states and the emergence of the Neo-Assyrian power over the region.³ The great

1 Quoted in Wartke 2005, 19: see also the indication “Wasserlauf” in fig. 14 and the frequent annotations “Sumpf” in sketch plans of the area, figs. 6 and 24, representing nearby Gerçin Höyük.

2 Many relevant studies offer a detailed and well grounded synthesis on the chronology, typologies and regional developments of Iron Age II and III pottery in northern Syria: Mazzoni 1990; 1992; 2000; Lehmann 1996; 1998; a different perspective, which criticizes the regional framework approach proposed by Mazzoni and Lehmann, is outlined by Whincop 2009, 88-93.

3 This feature is well described and grouped within Assemblages 1 and 2 of Lehmann 1996; 1998.

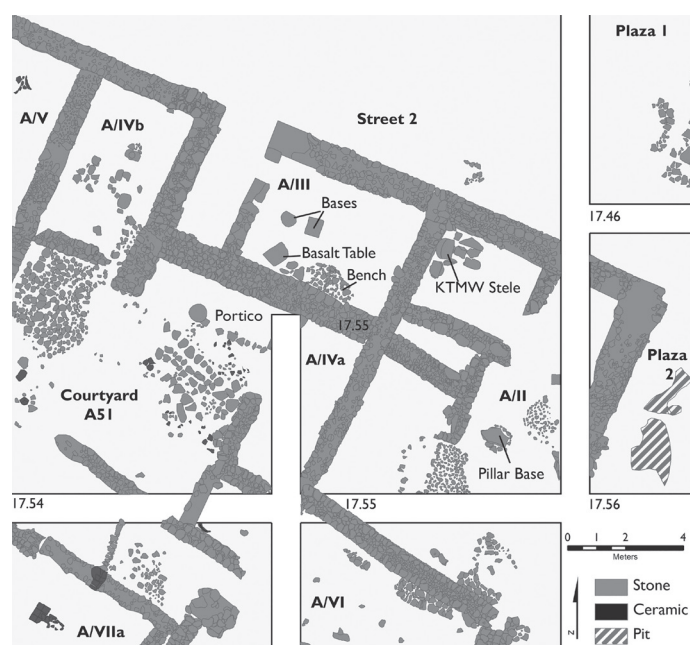


Fig. 3. Plan of Area 5, Buildings A/II, A/III and Courtyard A51 in use during the period of the Katumuwa stele, Phase 2c, second half of the 8th century BC (courtesy the Chicago-Tübingen Expedition to Zincirli; after Herrmann 2014, fig. 3).

BC (Schloen, Fink 2009, 214-215; Struble, Herrmann 2009; Herrmann 2014; Herrmann 2017b, 294-297). The general assemblage of the simple ware and cooking and storage ware units is very homogenous throughout the subphases of Areas 5 and 6, showing a great continuity of the whole pottery horizon throughout the late Iron Age II and III period, from the early 8th to the 7th centuries BC.

Morphological Repertoire

Main morphologies for the local simple ware are open shapes for food preparation, serving and consumption, especially plates, bowls and, to a less extent, kraters: the first two shapes, with their morphological variations in size and profile, statistically represent the larger part of the assemblage.⁴

Plates usually present a simple rounded or slightly outflaring rim and flat or slightly concave base, less frequently ring base (Fig. 4). It is a very common shape widespread throughout northern Syria and southern Anatolia, already starting in Iron Age I deriving from the evolution of Late Bronze Age plates, and it is not particularly diagnostic for a more exact indication of chronological issues because of its homogenous continuity through time. It is quite remarkable to note that plates from the lower town usually present a polished surface finishing, when the surface of vessels is still preserved, whereas a deeper sounding carried out in 2018 in Area 3 on the citadel produced exemplars in burnished Red Slip comparable to possible earlier Iron Age II north Syrian plates.⁵

4 We should warn that most of the Iron Age pottery from the site has been recovered from the field in small fragments and only seldom in primary contexts, with almost no item left *in situ* after destruction or a sudden abandonment; the study and the identification of the local typology has been carried out for the great part on small fragments, with very few complete vessel shapes. The only remarkable exception to this issue is the kitchen assemblage in Area 8 excavated in 2017, which contained a domestic set composed of common, kitchen and storage wares.

5 Red Slip plates with simple rim are well attested throughout Amuq Phase O (Swift 1958), now much more detailed in three subphases according to Chatat Höyük's documentation extensively analyzed by Marina Pucci (2019, 186-193), and in northern Syria (Afis Area G: Soldi 2013; Hama, Bulding Period E: Fugmann 1958, 213); for a recent reassessment of Red Slip ware in the northern Levant, see Pucci, Soldi 2019.

homogeneity and continuity of local assemblages between the archaeological phases of Iron Age II and III, makes it very hard to clearly identify a diachronic sequence of materials, leaving a more exact indication of the absolute chronology between the second half of the 9th and 7th centuries BC to other classes of materials or to imported goods, such as those coming from the Mediterranean coast, especially Phoenician or Cypriot imports, and those arriving from northern Mesopotamia with the Assyrians.

The Zincirli Iron Age repertoire fits well within this regional framework, presenting common features with the north Syrian horizon. The material evidence from the Chicago-Tübingen excavations is well represented in the lower town, and associated to specific findings which allow a firm reference to date the assemblage. The main resource in this case is the well-known funerary stele of Katumuwa, found within his mortuary chapel belonging to Phase 2c of Building A/II in the northern lower town Area 5, which provides a date in the third quarter of the 8th century

Bowls present a larger variety of shape profiles and rims, stretching from large vessels for serving food to small size bowls (Fig. 5). The evidence of Zincirli bowls well harmonizes with the attested assemblage of Iron Age sites from northern Syria, especially from the area west of the Euphrates to the region of Hama, and southwards to Tell Mishrifeh and Tell Nebi Mend. It should be stressed that all of the shapes are produced in local simple ware, but we observe the appearance of shapes which have close similarities with Assyrian proto-types, especially for the carinated bowls with an out-flaring rim and large hemispherical bowls with folded (or 'triangular') rim. This phenomenon has been observed at other sites in the northern Levant, especially in the sequence of Tell Afis and the surrounding areas, where such shapes tend to appear during the 8th century and become predominant in the course of the 7th century BC (Oggiano 1997, 191; Cecchini 2000, 202). In Afis and other sites such bowls present a typical Red Slip surface treatment, usually associated with burnishing or polishing, but in Zincirli they mostly tend to remain plain, with no slip or other surface treatment except for a light 'self slip' due to the turning on the potter's wheel and contact of the wet surface of the vessel with the craftsman's hands.

Other local simple ware productions are large kraters, with two or four handles, biconical profile with rounded shoulder and everted flat or swollen rim (Fig. 6). They always come in common simple ware, and no painted decoration has ever been detected on any of the items collected, as it can be found in earlier examples from northern Syria. In the case of kraters it is evident how the more

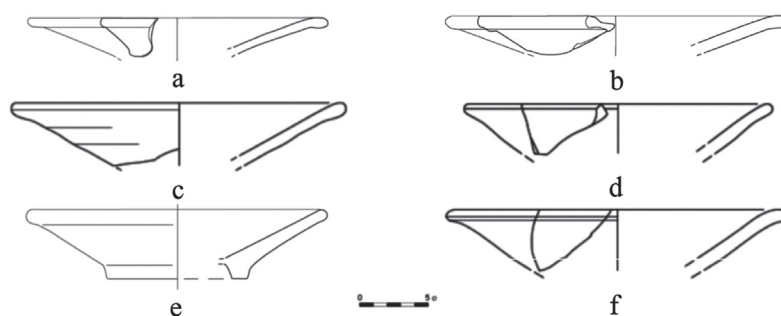


Fig. 4. Simple ware plates from the northern lower town of Zincirli.

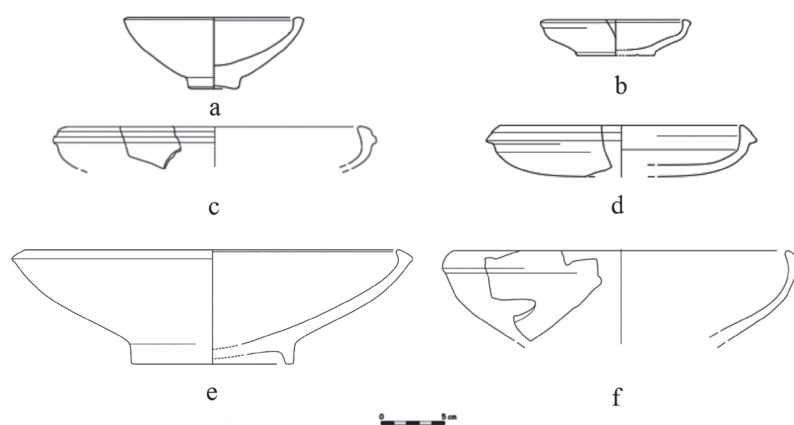


Fig. 5. Simple ware bowls from the northern lower town of Zincirli.

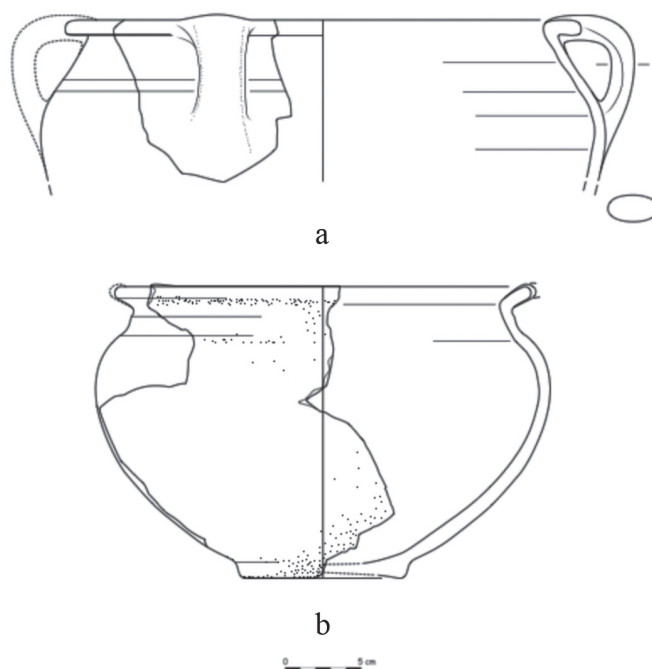


Fig. 6. Simple ware kraters from the northern lower town of Zincirli

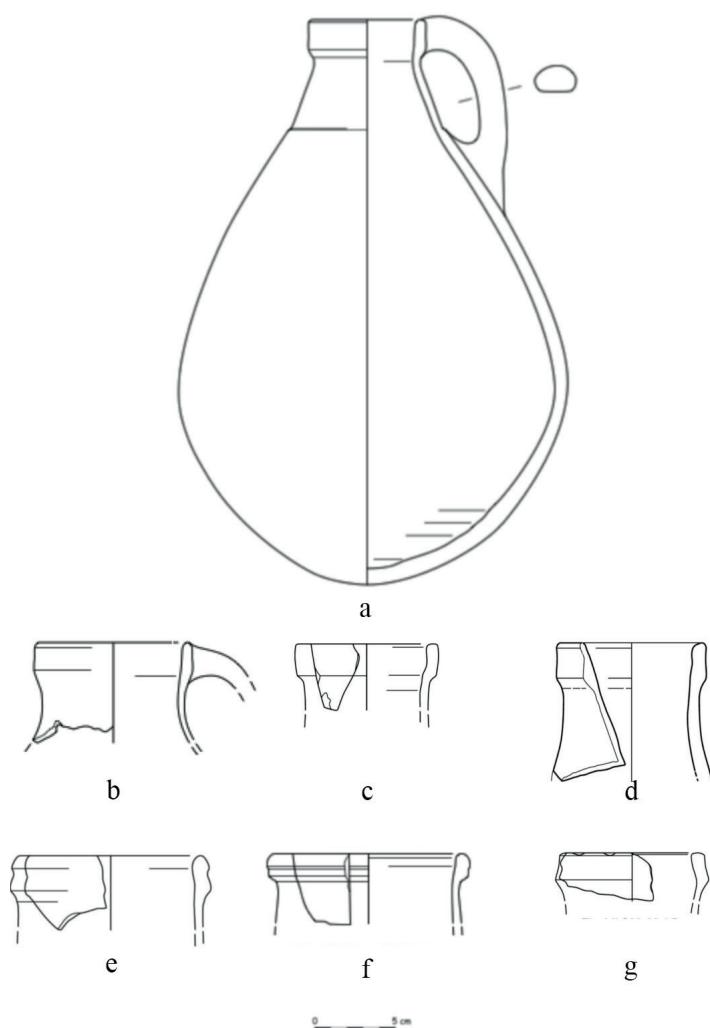


Fig. 7. Simple ware jars and jugs from the lower town of Zincirli.

quent range of mouth opening diameter, stretching from 16/18 cm to 24/26 cm), rim and lip orientation, but always maintains the globular shape with rounded bottom (so that it can be put on a fire on clay or metal andirons). Cooking ware differs considerably from simple ware in its fabric composition, as it is composed of a gritty dense texture of mineral grits and grog inclusions and micaceous sediments with the function of resisting and balancing the temperature range in the presence of fire.

A significant variation in cooking ware assemblage is attested by the presence of open shapes, which are otherwise unusual in the northern Levant assemblage, such as plates and pans (some fragments bearing handles with rounded sections) with thick walls and simple rim, or shallow bowls with simple or pointed rims. They share the same fabric, highly tempered and rich in mica, as the more common hole-mouth cooking pots.

Hole-mouth cooking pots with a simple rectangular rim or swollen rim are among the morphologies which we can consider to be a clear trademark of Iron Age II and III production in northwestern Syria (Form 438a and 438b in Lehmann 1996, 450, pl. 83. 438; Cecchini 1998, 277), representing in certain specific cases a “reliable diagnostic element” (Mazzoni 2014, 356, fig. 14). Following the evolution of this shape in the Tell Afis archaeological sequence as proposed by Stefania Mazzoni in her recent reassessment (2014), Zincirli lower town items can be placed consistently towards the end of this chronological development, a data which well harmonizes with

complex tradition of painted pottery, otherwise present in the Amuq region (see Pucci 2019, 211-212), is apparently lacking in the local Zincirli tradition, but finds close parallels in the unpainted tradition of late Iron II and Iron III of northern Syria (Tell Afis: Mazzoni 2014, fig. 21. 7-8; Tell Abou Danné and Tell Sheikh Hassan: Lehmann 1996, pl. 33. 133/3-4).

Closed shapes in simple ware are represented by jars and pear-shaped single-handled jugs with thickened lip (Fig. 7). This morphology is also well attested throughout inner northern Syria in Iron Age II and III (Lehmann 1996, 423-424, pl. 55, Form 333, 334, 335). Less frequent but well attested is the type with double rim and handle attached on the neck, a typical exemplar of Iron Age II inland Syria (see at Tell Afis, Area G on the acropolis: Cecchini 1998, fig. 25. 1-10; Area D in the lower town: Oggiano 1997, pl. IX. 11-20). Trefoil jugs with one handle in local simple ware are the most common vessels for pouring water.

Cooking ware is almost exclusively characterized by hole-mouth cooking-pots with inner thickened rim or elongated inward folded rim and flat strap handle (Fig. 8). The whole cooking ware horizon is composed of a standardized hole-mouth shape, with extremely rare variations which affect the dimensions of the vessel (and its conse-

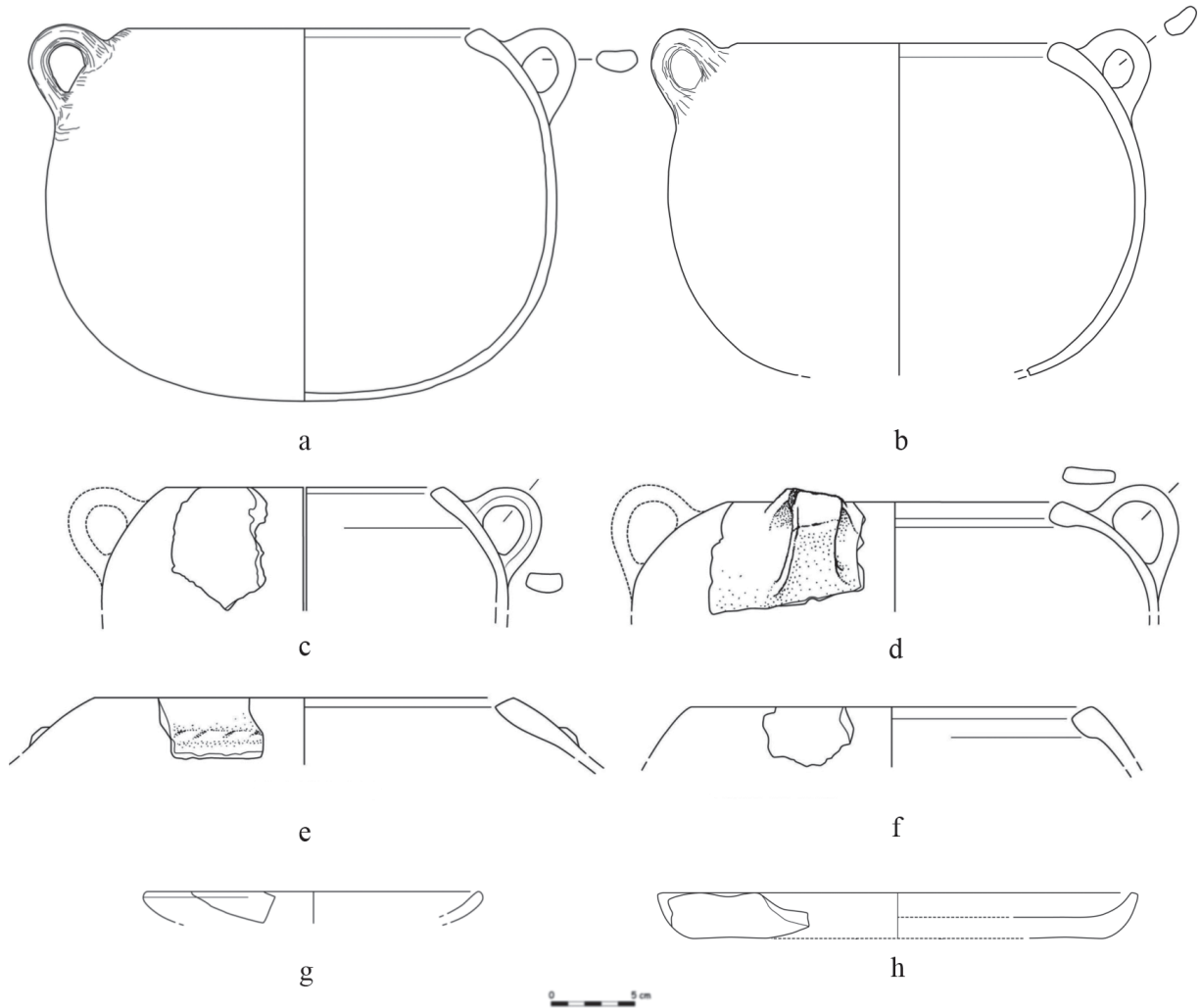


Fig. 8. Hole-mouth cooking pots and plates in cooking ware from the southern and northern lower town of Zincirli.

the absolute date spanning from the second half of the 8th and 7th centuries BC. At a regional level, this trend is confirmed by Iron Age III pottery evidence at Taşlı Geçit Höyük, located south of İslahiye and recently excavated by a rescue expedition of the University of Bologna (Marchetti 2011), where globular hole-mouth cooking pots with a similar profile can be clearly compared to Zincirli vessels (Zaina 2013, fig. 6). At nearby Sakçagözü the same class of hole-mouth cooking pots is also well attested (Du Plat Taylor, Seton-Williams, Waechter 1950, fig. 27. 7).

Zincirli plates and pans in cooking ware seem to be a regional attestation, already noted among the materials stored in Berlin (Form 437 in Lehmann 1996, 450, pl. 83. 437/2-30), as the evidence from Sakçagözü (Du Plat Taylor, Seton-Williams, Waechter 1950, fig. 27. 5) and Taşlı Geçit Höyük (Zaina 2013, fig. 6) seems to confirm.⁶

⁶ Some more exemplars of this open shape are present on the coast (Lehmann 1996, 450, pl. 83. 437/1 from Tell Sukas), so far it is not common in northwestern Syrian assemblages.

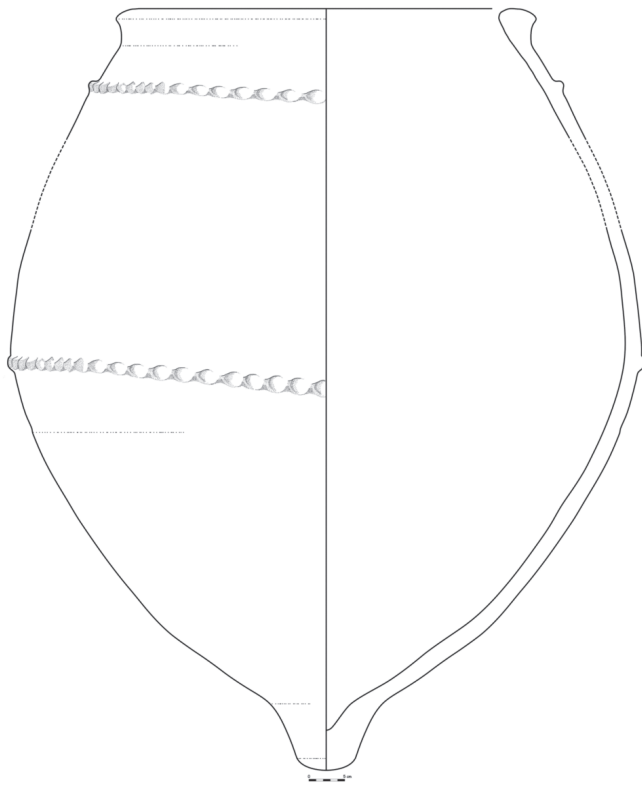


Fig. 9. Storage ware pithos from the citadel of Zincirli.

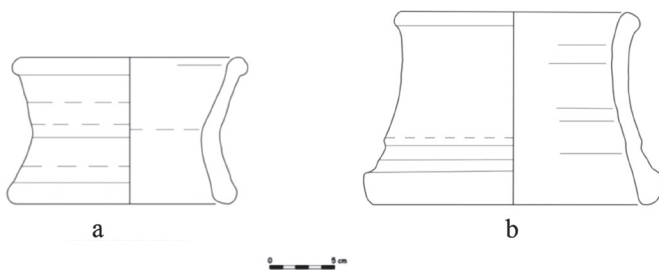


Fig. 10. Pot-stands from the southern lower town of Zincirli.

The storage ware assemblage is composed of large pithoi with a swollen rim or inner angular rim, biconical profile ending in a small flat or slightly rounded knob foot; the pithoi usually have a rope finger-impressed decoration running horizontally on the shoulder and close to the maximum diameter of the body (Fig. 9). Similar items were already excavated and published by the Orient-Comité expedition (von Luschan, Andrae 1943, pls. 29. d, 30. a, c; Lehmann 1996, 429, pl. 67. 368/1-2, 369/1). The best comparanda for these shapes are those from the area of the Euphrates, with special regard to the large storage vessels in the Neo-Assyrian houses assemblages from Tell Ahmar Area C (Jamieson 1999, 307, fig. 9; 2000, 286, fig. 10) and those recently published from the new Karkemish excavations (Bonomo, Zaina 2014, fig. 6. 11-14). Along the upper Euphrates, towards central Anatolia, interesting comparisons can be identified at Tille Höyük (pre-Assyrian level V: Blaylock 2016, fig. 10. 16, 156; Assyrian level VIIa: Blaylock 2016, fig. 10. 34, 307). It is remarkable that storage ware shapes find closer comparisons in the Anatolian and Euphrates region rather than in north and central Syria, where the main shape is the so-called cylindrical “cigar-shaped” (Mazzoni 2014, 345, fig. 13), attested in inland Syria at Tell Afis, Tell Mastuma and Tell Mardikh, and southwards as far as the area of Mishrifeh.

Pot-stands with a biconical profile and swollen rims – made in local simple ware, and found both in the north and south lower town – find good parallels at other north Syrian sites from the end of Iron Age II and in Iron Age III

(Tell Afis, Iron III: Mazzoni 2014, fig. 21. 9-10; Chatal Höyük, phase O_{late}: Pucci 2019, pl. 138. g–red slipped; Tell Tayinat, Neo-Assyrian precinct: Harrison, Osborne 2016, fig. 7. 14), on the Euphrates (Tell Shiukh Fawqani, Period IX: Makinson 2005, pl. 27. 176; Tille Höyük: Blaylock 2016, fig. 10. 35, 309-310) and in the Assyrian region (Nimrud: Anastasio 2010, pl. 34. 1-3). We may confidently suggest that pot-stands increased their popularity in the region during the Iron Age III period, probably because of the Neo-Assyrian expansion and the arrival into the West of new drinking habits from the Assyrian heartland.⁷

⁷ As a matter of fact, Assyrians employed a drinking set composed of cups and bottles for pouring liquids (so-called “Assyrian bottles”, see below) which could not stand alone vertically if not supported by a pot-stand (see examples in Stronach 1995), hence the possible increase of such types in the Syro-Anatolian provinces during the Iron Age III/Neo-Assyrian period, but these were not so common in previous Iron Age I and Iron Age II periods.



Fig. 11. Sample of restored shapes with a cooking pot, three small shallow bowls and two pot-stands, from the southern lower town (Area 8) of Zincirli.

Area 8, in the southern lower town produced a well preserved context with late Iron Age II / Iron Age III ceramics for domestic use, including cooking, storage and simple wares (Fig. 11). The set includes two small plates and a larger bowl with a simple rim, one small jar with handles, no neck and everted rim, three complete cooking ware vessels composed of two hole-mouth cooking pots and a larger cooking pot with thickened everted rim, and two pot-stands. This whole assemblage belonging to Area 8 Phase 4a is useful to establish a chronological and typological relationship with Phase 2c in Area 5 of the northern lower town, corresponding to the architectural phase where in which the Katumuwa stele was found, which can be dated to the reign of king Panamuwa II, possibly between 743 and 733/732 B.C., and contemporary to king Tiglath-Pileser III who, especially throughout these years, gradually began the transformation of the western independent Syro-Hittite kingdoms into proper Assyrian provinces with a stronger political and cultural manoeuvre (Herrmann, Schloen 2016; Herrmann 2018, 504-505, 512-519).

We can thus assume that Zincirli's ceramic assemblage can be compared and contextualized within the regional framework of southern Anatolia and northern Syria of late Iron Age II and Iron III. On a strictly regional level, we can compare the pottery of Zincirli with the few published items from nearby Sakçagözü (Du Plat Taylor, Seton-Williams, Waechter 1950), which are indeed helpful to establish a synchronism with local Iron Age III materials. The results from rescue excavations at Taşlı Geçit Höyük (Marchetti 2011) are even more useful, where the University of Bologna team revealed a late Iron Age local assemblage (Zaina 2013), which is very well comparable in wares and morphologies with Zincirli's lower town complex of materials.

This horizon can be extended to other sites of the northern Syrian region, in the Amuq and in the region of Aleppo and along the Orontes river down to Hama, framing a picture that is consistent with the period of Iron Age II and III, with a local horizon of simple ware mainly composed of open forms, plates and bowls, and hole-mouth cooking pots, reflecting the main subdivisions of ceramic regions as proposed by Gunnar Lehmann (1996; 1998) and Stefania Mazzoni (1990; 1992; 2000). We can also argue from the comparanda proposed here that a general trend of Zincirli pottery assemblage in this period is linking assemblages in the Euphrates area, especially as new evidence from Karkemish excavations is revealing the essence of local material culture (Marchetti 2014; Zaina 2019) and good parallels can be established with sites such as Tell Shiukh Fawqani, Tell Ahmar and northwards with Tille Höyük, with western Syria (the Amuq, the region of Aleppo, the area of Hama from Afis to

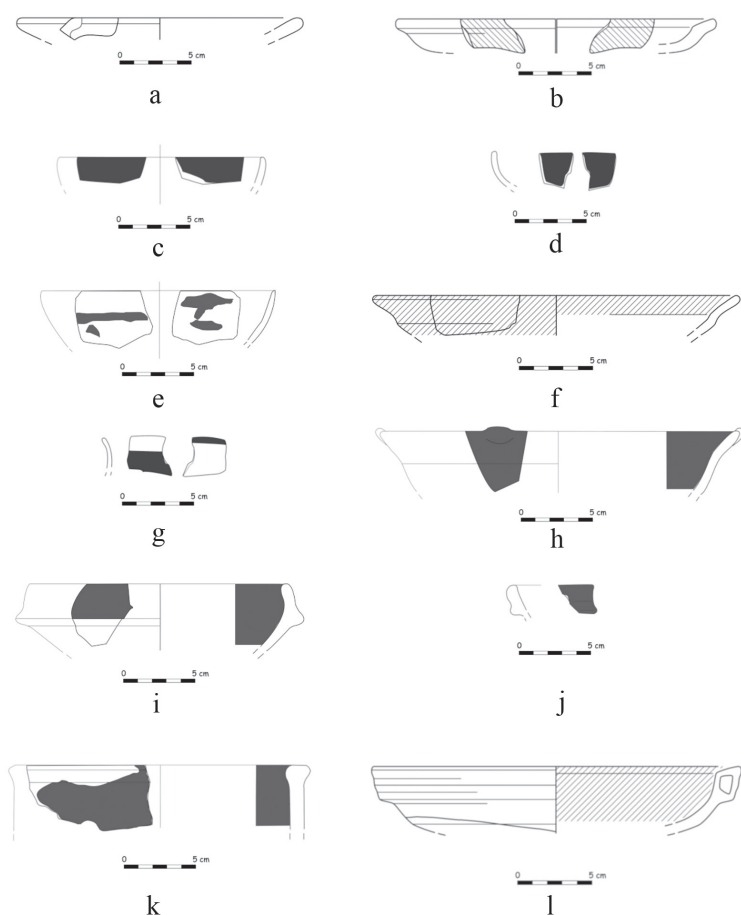


Fig. 12. Red Slip ware from Zincirli.

and Iron Age levels of nearby Tell Mardikh (Mazzoni 1992) and Tell Tuqan (Fiorentino 2006), Tell Mastuma (Egami, Wakita, Gotoh 1984), Tell Qarqur (Dornemann 2000) on the Orontes and southwards to Hama, Tell Acharneh (Cooper 2006) and Tell Mishrifeh (Besana, Da Ros, Iamoni 2008; Morandi Bonacossi 2009; Russo 2018). The diffusion of Red Slip extends eastwards of Aleppo as far as the Euphrates but, as noted by Martin Makinson (2005, 465) in describing the ceramics of Chantier F-Period IX in Tell Shiukh Fawqani, its proportion is definitely less relevant than in western Syria. In this respect, the so-called “*aire de famille*” mentioned by Marc Lebeau (1983, 126) when he was dealing with the pottery of Tell Abou Danné and defining the relationship between local simple ware assemblage and Red Slip ware of inland Syria in the regions of Aleppo, Idlib and Hama, has waned somewhat in dealing with the Zincirli local assemblage: we can state that Red Slip is attested at the site, but it is quantitatively fairly limited in terms of occurrence and morphological variations.

The first possible explanation for this issue can be found in the quality of the contexts of excavations: considering the evidence from a site like Tell Afis, we can observe that the vast majority of Red Slip sherds come from the acropolis of the site and mostly from the large structure at the centre of Acropolis Area G, whereas the lower town has provided much less evidence for it (Soldi 2009; 2013). In Zincirli most of the documentation analyzed so far for the Iron Age II and III ceramics comes from the lower town, whereas contexts on the citadel mound have only been partially processed; we must stress that excavation trenches on the citadel (namely Areas 2 and 3) have produced pottery fragments of much better quality (not affected by the water table as those from the lower town),

Mishrifeh). In this regard, Zincirli, with its geographical location in the narrow corridor of the Kara Su valley, seems to be located at the confluence of these traditions, similar in many traits with a few peculiar differences. The strong political influence of Karkemish over the region of modern Gaziantep can be one of the causes of all this, as well as the growing influence of Assyria expanding from the East, all along the Syrian Jazirah and the area of the Euphrates.

Another interesting element in this regard is offered by the phenomenon of Red Slip ware (Fig. 12). In collecting data from the Zincirli assemblage, we noticed over the years, also comparing both materials from the lower town and from the citadel, that Red Slip ware does not seem to play a primary role at Zincirli. It definitely represents a clear mark of the local horizon in the western Syrian region: it is absolutely true for the Iron Age II Amuq Phase O (Pucci 2019; Pucci, Soldi 2019), Tell Rifaat/Arpad, Tell Afis (Cecchini 1998; Soldi 2009; 2013; Mazzoni 2014)

thus increasing the number of Red Slip's attestations, slightly modifying the whole picture.⁸ Another possible explanation could be the chronological one, arguing that we are dealing with a period (Iron Age III) later than that of the maximum diffusion of Red Slip ware (Iron Age II); we suppose that this hypothesis is not completely satisfactory because we know from other sites that the production of Red Slip still continued in the 7th century BC, and the assemblage from Zincirli's lower town stretched throughout the whole of the 8th and 7th centuries BC.

We can probably try to explain this feature by connecting this aspect of the assemblage, as we suggested here above, with the production of the area of the Euphrates and especially of Karkemish, directly connected to Zincirli through the northern end of the Kara Su valley and the region of modern Gaziantep. We should stress that the Red Slip in the Euphrates region is never attested in great quantity, especially if compared with inner western Syria (Makinson 2005, 465, especially n. 48): at Karkemish, especially during Iron Age II phases of inner town Area G, where it reached a maximum percentage of 17% in phase 10 (Zaina 2019, 125-126), whereas at Tille Höyük it is poorly attested both in Middle Iron Age levels and Neo-Assyrian period levels (Blaylock 2016, 6).⁹ If this suggestion corresponds to reality, it could also fit with the evidence that conservative shapes such as the storage ware pithoi find closer parallels in Tell Ahmar, Karkemish and Tille rather than with the elongated "cigar shaped" pithoi of the Idlib and Hama region. A combination of a regional and chronological explanation could better account for the low percentage of Red Slip at Zincirli, an issue that surely deserves further research (Pucci, Soldi 2019).

Imported ceramics at Zincirli

A final consideration must be made on ceramics that were not locally produced as those analyzed so far, but were clearly imported to Zincirli from distant areas. They occupy the first place as a possible chronological anchor, and are extremely helpful in defining the areas that had established an effective interaction with Sam'al.

Among these foreign elements, we recall the finding of two fragments in Area 5 (Phase 2c) of an imported Phoenician amphora type (Fig. 13). They are different both in shape and in fabric from the local assemblage, and were surely produced in the area of the Levantine coast, arriving at Zincirli as a maritime trade container for its valuable content, which could have been wine, olive (or other vegetal) oil or animal fat.¹⁰ The Zincirli amphora has angular shoulder and thickened rim with no neck, belonging to the 'torpedo' jar typology established by Antonio Sagona as type 2 (Sagona 1982, 74, fig. 1. 3), also included in Aznar type 9b1 (Aznar 2005), presenting a very similar thickened rim (see exemplar from the Elissa Shipwreck, off the Ashkelon coast: Ballard, Stager *et al.* 2002, 160, fig. 9. 2).¹¹ We date this type to between the mid and the second half of the 8th century BC, a data consistent with the date so far proposed for Area 5 Phase 2c and related to the Katumuwa stele. Such amphoras found their way to inland Syria, probably through the Amuq or through Cilicia and the Bahçe Geçidi, as the rare examples from Tell Ahmar Area C (Jamieson 1999, 306, fig. 8. 6) and Tell Afis Area G Level 5 (Soldi 2010, pl. 13. 12) clearly show.

Another group of foreign elements is the one connected to Assyria, composed of materials directly imported from there (or from regions where Assyrian material culture was already widespread during the 8th and 7th centuries BC) and by local imitations of Assyrian productions, however, this phenomenon is limited to few specific items. The general picture of the local assemblage is that it maintained its local traditions without being deeply affected or changed by the Assyrian presence. Nevertheless, both the citadel mound and the lower town have pro-

8 As already noticed, another element which affects the possibility of identifying Red Slip sherds in the lower town is the poor conditions of the fragments, upon which heavy erosion often removes the uppermost surface of the pottery and its treatments.

9 On the contrary, at Arslantepe/Malatya, further north along the Euphrates, a recently excavated Iron Age II context has produced abundant documentation of Red Slip, roughly estimated as 30% of the pottery production from this phase (Manuelli, Pittmann 2018, 155-156).

10 This issue has been recently investigated via organic residue analysis on a relevant sample from Tell el-Burak on the Lebanese coast (Schmitt *et al.* 2019, 4, 23-28), but the results have not offered a unique and unequivocal result, giving indications for both wine and other plant oils on different amphorae.

11 See also Form 383 and 385 (especially 385/2) in Lehmann 1996, 433-435, pl. 71. 383; pl. 72. 385. Form 385, most likely the one fitting at best to Zincirli exemplars, has attestations in Assemblages 1, 2 and 3, with occurrence from the second half of the 8th to the first half of the 7th centuries BC.

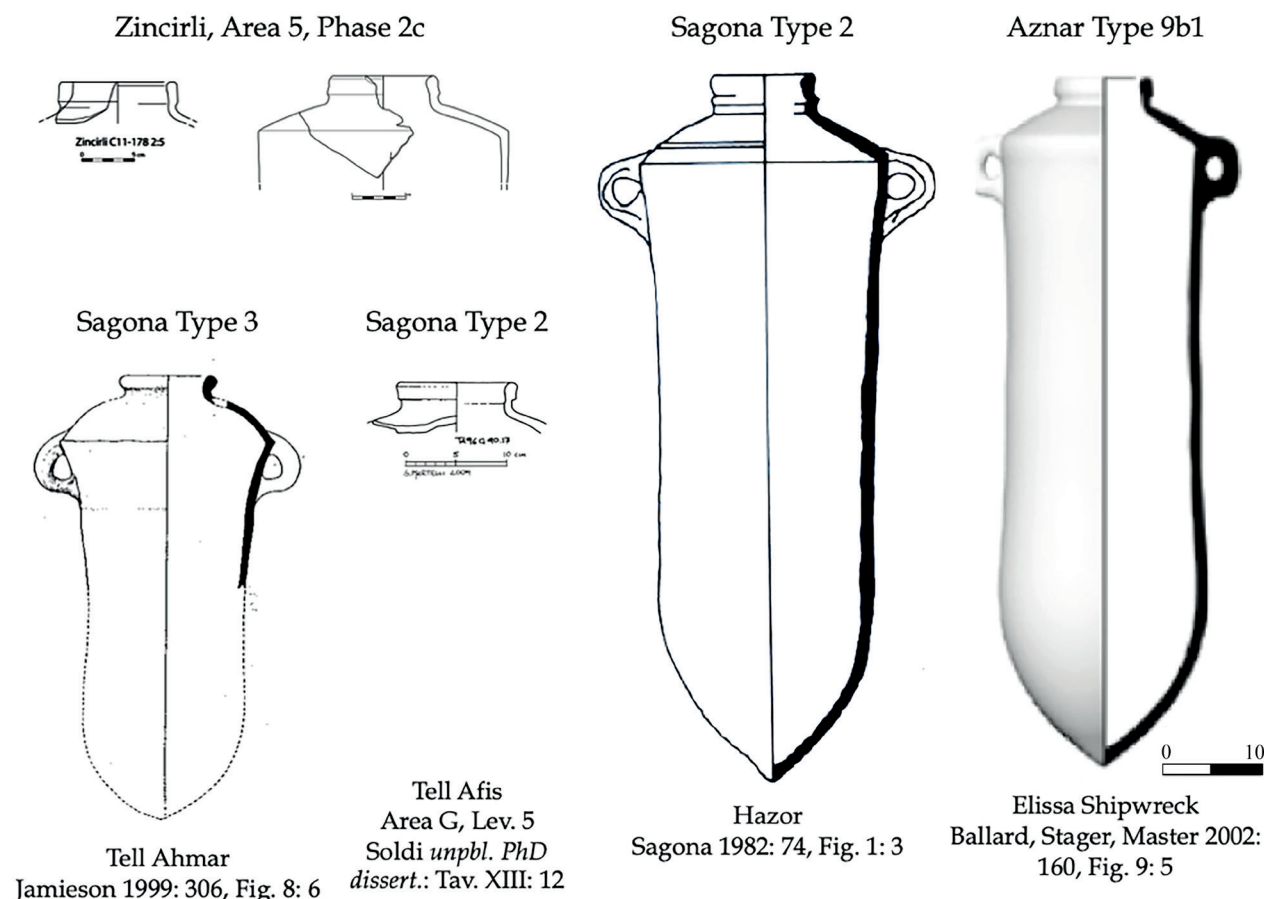


Fig. 13. Fragments of a Phoenician amphora type from Zincirli northern lower town (Area 5), and comparisons from Hazor, the Elissa Shipwreck, Tell Afis and Tell Ahmar.

duced some elements clearly connected to Assyria, with a few shapes previously not attested in the local assemblage: a few fragments of carinated bowls with flaring rim in fine depurated ware and a small jar with fine walls and red painted horizontal bands (Fig. 14. c, a). Fragments of extra fine eggshell Assyrian Palace ware were found only in tiny exemplars from the levels of Area 3 on the citadel: these tiny sherds belong to a class that is surely not local and most likely produced in the Assyrian heartland, are characterized by extremely depurated fabric, pale yellow paste and thin walls (Fig. 14. b).

A remarkable find is a complete Assyrian jar (sometimes called “Assyrian bottle”) found in Area 4 in 2017, probably standing in a pit close to the South Gate of the south lower town (Fig. 14. e). It has elongated body, with distinct and thickened neck, and pointed rounded base. This vessel is very similar in fabric, inclusions and paste to the local productions, but its morphology finds the best comparisons in the Assyrianized Euphrates area: at Tell Shiukh Fawqani (Chantier F-Période 9: Makinson 2005, pl. 23. 146) and Tille Höyük (Level VIII, Assyrian period: Blaylock 1999, fig. 9. 5; Blaylock 2016, 10. 21, 201). A good parallel is also in the Iraqi Tigridian region, at Khirbet Khatunyah (Level 7, 7th century BC: Curtis, Green 1997, fig. 40, 172; 174-75). It fits within Anastasio’s type BT_06 (Anastasio 2010, pl. 30. 3), confirming a date between the very end of the 8th and 7th centuries BC.¹²

12 This shape is also similar to Anastasio’s Type SJ_06 (Anastasio 2010, pl. 25) but we found BT_06 more fitting because of the pointed bottom, the general profile and the distinction of the neck from the shoulder.

Among these Assyria-oriented productions we need to focus our attention on two peculiar fragments, unfortunately very badly preserved but still bearing traces of glazing, apparently belonging to a multiple glazed vessel composed of several tiny hemispherical cups joined together (Fig. 14. f). It is difficult to offer a firm reconstruction, but it seems likely that the two different fragments that we have found belong to the same vessel, which could be a composition of six or eight small cups displayed around a central one, for a total of seven or nine bowls. If this reconstruction is conceivable, this kind of vessel finds possible comparisons only in the Assyrian region, with one exemplar from the vaulted chambers underneath Room 74 of Ashurnasirpal II's palace at Nimrud (Hussein 2008, Fig. 12. l; Anastasio 2010, pl. 49. 4) and a striking example in the small glazed table from a Neo-Assyrian grave (Grab 06/12) at Tell Sheikh Hamad / Dur Katlimmu (Kreppner 2008, fig. 12). Another interesting comparison comes from Boztepe in the northern Tigris area in Turkey (Parker, Creekmore 2002, fig. 20); this enigmatic vessel found in a collapsed building dated to the Neo-Assyrian period at Boztepe, is not in glazed ware, but the archaeologists attributed its production to Neo-Assyrian influences.¹³

The appearance of glazed artefacts at Zincirli seems to be a clear indicator of a few Assyrian or Assyrianized customs which were previously not present in the area and became stronger and more evident as the Aramaean kingdom fell under the sphere of influence of the kings of Ashur (Herrmann, Schloen 2016; Soldi forthcoming).

It is not our intention here to go into more depth on the issue of the glazed items at Zincirli in the Iron Age, as we have dealt with it elsewhere (Soldi 2017; 2019), but we briefly need to stress how these elements start to appear at Zincirli in different contexts both in the lower town and the citadel mound only from the second half of the 8th century BC, most likely as a consequence of the growing Assyrian presence in the region.

A remarkable example of Assyrian influence over local productions not directly involving ceramic containers but still related to clay manufacturing is the complex of glazed architectural elements. In the northern lower town Area 5 two small fragments of glazed hands were found in the proximity of the Katumuwa stele shrine (Herrmann,

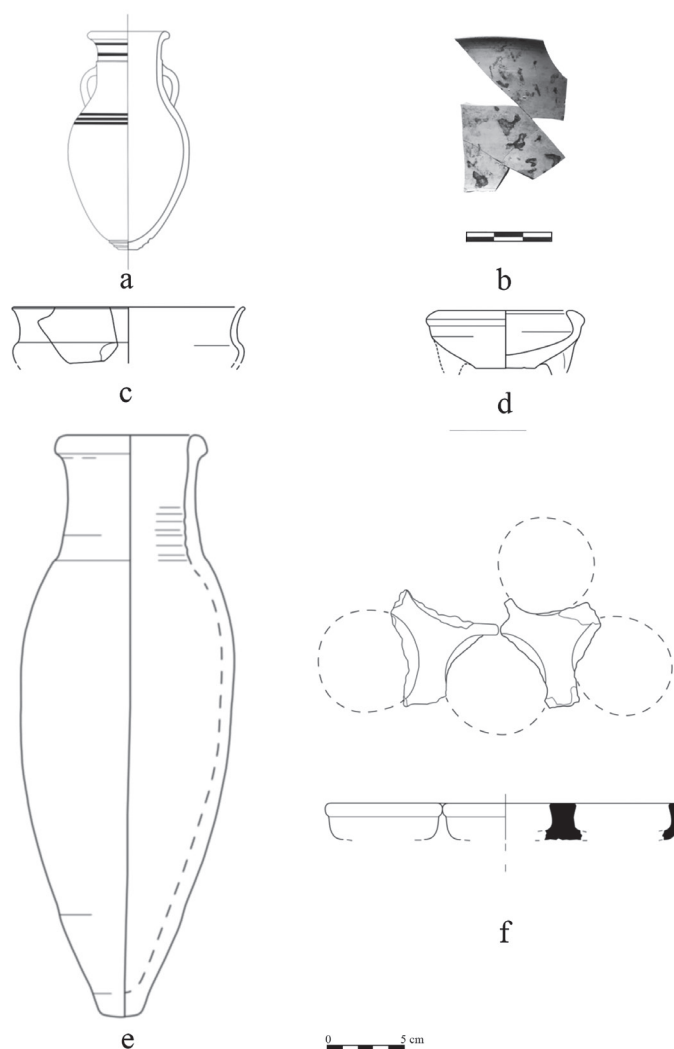


Fig. 14. Assyrian imports and imitations from Zincirli.

13 Parker, Creekmore, Easton 2001, figs. 9-10; a revised and updated version is proposed in Parker, Creekmore 2002, 33, 37-40, figs. 18-21. Archaeologists express doubt as to whether it could be considered an importation or of local production (p. 49), but they suggest that the Iron Age ceramic assemblage of Boztepe is clearly oriented towards Assyrian productions rather than indigenous Anatolian ones, establishing a possible relationship with the inhabitants resettled at the site by the Assyrians; the new comparison with Zincirli could strengthen the hypothesis of an Assyrian or Assyrian-inspired production.

Schloen 2016, 272, fig. 24. 5, a; Soldi 2019, 210-211, fig. 18). They represent the fingers of cupped hands, very similar to those already found by the Orient-Comité expedition on the acropolis (von Luschan, Andrae 1943, pl. 31. d-e). The new fragments of the Chicago-Tübingen excavations belong to phase 2c of Area 5, dated to the third quarter of the 8th century BC. This chronological data harmonizes well with the information we have from the old German excavations, which, following Marina Pucci's detailed reanalysis of the building phases in Zincirli (Pucci 2008), are reported to come from the area of the building dated to Barrakib's era, which follows the period of Panamuwa II, the king that Katumuwa mentions in his stele declaring himself to be his loyal servant. Glazed hands, though different in shape from the Zincirli exemplars, are well known from various locations in the Assyrian heartland between the reigns of Ashurnasirpal II and Sargon II (Pelteburg 1968; Frame 1991; Soldi 2017). A large number of hands with Ashurnasirpal II's inscriptions were identified in the North West palace and the Ninurta temple in Nimrud and in Ashur, employed in Room 2 of the Old Palace. Later examples have been found by French and American archaeologists in Dur Sharrukin / Khorsabad and dated to the time of Sargon II, and a few specimens also coming from various spots in Nineveh.

Zincirli is so far the only site west of the Euphrates where such items have been found, except for a representation of the hands within their architectonic framework on a Syro-Hittite mortuary altar from Marash dated to the 8th century BC (Schachner, Schachner 1996; Soldi 2017, 18-19; 2019, 210-212).

Both the archaeological records in Zincirli and the iconographical document from Marash clearly testify to some new Assyrian elements affecting at least the elites of the society, *i.e.* those who played a role at the highest level in the relationships between local parties and Assyrian counterparts.

CONCLUSIONS

Material evidence resulting from the new Chicago-Tübingen excavations at Zincirli shows a consistent local assemblage of late Iron Age II and III, very homogenous but hardly discernible for a possible diachronic sequence of materials throughout this period. So far, no proof of an earlier Iron Age assemblage has been detected at the site. Only a few scattered fragments likely belonging to Iron Age I can be identified on the citadel mound, but it generally seems from various soundings that the Iron II settlement leans directly on Early Bronze (Areas 4, 8) or Middle Bronze Age (Area 2) remains, if not directly on virgin soil (Areas 5 and 6), with an apparent site abandonment or at least a dramatic reduction or contraction during the second half of the 2nd millennium BC.

The ceramic evidence points to a new resettlement at Zincirli no earlier than the mid or end of the 9th century, flourishing during the 8th and 7th centuries BC, and a major occupation and larger expansion of the lower town in the 8th century.

The assemblage of pottery locally produced has common traits with the wider region of northern Syria, especially northern inland Syria and the Amuq, but some specific elements connect Zincirli with the area of the Euphrates, specifically to the area of Karkemish, which is most likely due to the easy passage ways through the northern end of the İslahiye valley and the region of Gaziantep. Red Slip ware was definitely known and used at Zincirli, but its diffusion is more nuanced and patchy than in northern Syria. Further studies and excavations will clarify if this fact should be related to the archaeological contexts (lower town *versus* citadel mound), chronological issues (Iron II *versus* Iron III) or regional features of the material culture of the Kara Su valley (Euphrates area connections *versus* western Syria connections).

The gradual inclusion in the 8th century BC into the Assyrian cultural and political sphere brings new foreign elements to Zincirli, most likely arriving from the East through the Assyrians, in certain cases reinterpreted according to the local 'dialect', as the presence of peculiar glazed items different from the original Assyrian prototypes seems to indicate. Though no major change is evident in the local ceramic assemblage, the introduction of shapes resembling Assyrian morphologies, a few imports and the implemented use of pot-stands can probably be connected to the presence of groups of people bringing different eating and drinking habits to the region.

The reassessment of Zincirli material assemblage within its regional and historical context is one of the goals of the Chicago-Tübingen expedition, and new results from studies and further excavations will provide a clearer picture of the settlement itself and of the İslahiye valley in the Iron Age.

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