

# THE URARTIAN POTTERY FROM ALTINTEPE

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The site of Altintepe, which is situated 20 kms east of Erzincan and close to the Erzincan-Erzurum road, has been subject since 1959 to excavations led by Prof. Dr. Tahsin Özgüç and carried out under the auspices of the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums, and the Turkish Historical Foundation<sup>1</sup>. I would like to express my sincere thanks to my instructor Prof. Dr. Tahsin Özgüç, who has provided me with the opportunity to publish the Altintepe pottery.

Urartian pottery has been being discussed for a considerable period of time, namely since the last quarter of the 19th century<sup>2</sup>. However, overshadowed by other attractive Urartian finds, this interest did not reach the stage of serious investigation until the excavations undertaken by K. Lake at Van in 1938, through which Urartian pottery became a separate field of research. H. H. von der Osten, who participated in the Van excavations, published the two kinds of existing pottery, namely the monochrome and the painted varieties<sup>3</sup>. In the article the author mentioned essential points about Urartian pottery. From the Second World War onwards research on Urartu has considerably developed and the excavations at the important Urartian sites have increased our knowledge of the pottery to a great extent.

Two Urartian building levels have been established at Altintepe<sup>4</sup>. The first, that is, older building level, contains the temple, the storehouse, the tombs and the open air temple, and dates to the second

<sup>1</sup> T. Özgüç, *Excavations at Altintepe*. *Belleten* 98 (1961), p. 269.

<sup>2</sup> H. H. von der Osten, *Die urartäische Töpferei aus Van und die Möglichkeiten ihrer Einordnung in die anatolische Keramik*. I. *Orientalia* 21 (1952), p. 308, Note 3.

<sup>3</sup> Von der Osten, *Orientalia* 21 (1952), p. 307-328; *Orientalia* 22 (1953) p. 329-354.

<sup>4</sup> T. Özgüç, *Altintepe Architectural Monuments and Wall Paintings*. Ankara 1966, p. 46.

half of the 8th century B. C. The second building level, which dates to the second half of the 7th century B. C., covers the colonnaded reception hall and its related parts<sup>5</sup>. The pottery discovered in these building levels displays a certain technique<sup>6</sup> and an established form. In general, the paste is dark brick or rust-red coloured and is tempered with rather large particles. A potter's wheel was used in shaping the wares; the discovery of a potter's wheel at Karmir Blur has been made known<sup>6</sup>. Urartian masters have put more emphasis on the slipping and polishing of vessels, rather than the paste itself, in an effort to render the pottery attractive.

#### Pottery of the first (Early) building level:

The pottery was discovered : 1 – In the graves where wares were left as burial gifts, 2 – As offerings in the temple, 3 – In the storehouse, and 4 – In the debris which covers the yard and the auxiliary chambers of the temple.

#### The Forms :

A. *Jars with rounded orifices and tubular necks* : The everted rim has a thick profile. The specimens have been left in burial chambers as gifts, as well as having also been used as urns to preserve the ashes of the exhumed bodies. The three jars used for the latter purpose were discovered in front of the outer wall of the third tomb. They exist in two secondary types : a – Ovoid bodied jars b – Rounded bodied jars.

a. The ovoid bodied vessels have short, wide necks and in all cases they have a wide, flat base. The space between the two horizontal lines, which lie on the base of the neck and on the wide part of the body respectively, is adorned with a wide wavey band. The area between the lines always contains a pair of close set holes. Parallels to this secondary type have not been obtained in other Urartian sites.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> Von der Osten, *Orientalia* 21 (1952), p. 310; M. van Loon, *Urartian Art*. Istanbul 1966, p. 32.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*, p. 36, Note. 32.

Alt. a/1. h. 29 cm., w. 22 cm. Dark orange-red slipped, polished; partly damaged slip. From the sarcophagus chamber of the third tomb (Fig. 1).

Alt. a/2. h. 32 cm., w. 24.5 cm. Red slipped, polished. A groove to place the lid is set inside the rolled, everted rim. A third horizontal line lies at the base of the neck. From the sarcophagus chamber of the third tomb (Plate I, 1).

Alt. a/3. h. 27 cm., w. 21.5 cm. Orange-red slipped and polished to a gloss. From the first room of the third tomb (Plate I, 3).

Alt. a/4. h. 32 cm., w. 22.5 cm. Red slipped, polished. From outside the third tomb.

Alt. a/5. h. 32.5 cm., w. 22.5 cm. Red slipped, polished. From outside the third tomb (Plate I, 2).

b. A bronze vase<sup>8</sup> found in the same grave proves that the jars included in this secondary type, with very rounded bodies and with long, narrow tubular necks, are the faithful copies of metal prototypes (Plate I, 4). Some specimens have close set holes on their shoulder like the bronze vase in question. Their slips are much more glossy and refined than usual.

Alt. a/6. h. 36 cm., w. 31.5 cm. Dark wine-red slipped, polished to a gloss. Everted rim. The tubular neck is supported by a relief band at the base. Rounded body. From the third room of the third tomb (Fig. 2).

Alt. a/7. h. 32 cm., w. 27.5 cm. Wine-red, slipped, brightly polished. Short tubular neck, rounded body. The bottom is mended with plaster of Paris. Three holes on the shoulder, around which a schematic human face has been arranged (Fig. 3-4). The specimen, filled with human ashes, was discovered outside the third tomb. The representation of the human face on the urns are observed in many different civilizations and is a common tradition. However, the similarity between the eye-shapes on this urn with the eyes-hapes on other Urartian works of art is notable.

The two fragments shown in (Fig. 5-6) belong to vessels of the subtype b also. They are deep red slipped and brightly polished.

<sup>8</sup> T. Özgüç, *Bellekten* 98 (1961), p. 273.

There are some holed urns at Malaklu, which are identical to Altuntepe examples in form and technique<sup>9</sup>.

The last jar to be included among the specimens of type A is differentiated by its long body and the absence of holes :

Alt. a/8. h. 53.3 cm., w. 31.5 cm. Red-brown slipped, polished. Rolled, everted rim. Short and narrow tubular neck. Flat base. From the first chamber of the third tomb (Fig. 7).

B. *Bowls* : The heights vary between 3.2-9 cms. The bowls are one of the most common forms. In most cases, the rim is rolled and everted, and there is a rather deep groove below (Fig 8). Metal prototypes in a fragmented condition were discovered in the third tomb (Fig. 9).

Alt. a/9. h. 9.6 cm., w. 29.1 cm. Red-brown slipped, brightly polished. A recess below the rolled everted rim. The flat base is slightly hollowed (Plate II, 1; Fig. 10). From the third chamber of the third tomb.

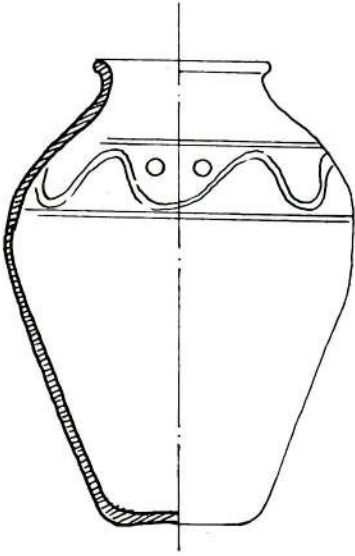
Alt. a/10. Mus. No. 1027, 19328. h. 4.5 cm., w. 18 cm. Red slipped inside and out, brightly polished. The slip on the outer surface is slightly marred. Very slight ring base (Plate II, 2; Fig. 4) From the third chamber of the third tomb.

Alt. a/11. Mus. No. 1028, h. 4.5 cm., w. 18.3 cm. Red-brown slipped inside and out, polished. The rounded bottom is slightly hollowed inwards. From the third chamber of the third tomb. (Plate II, 3)

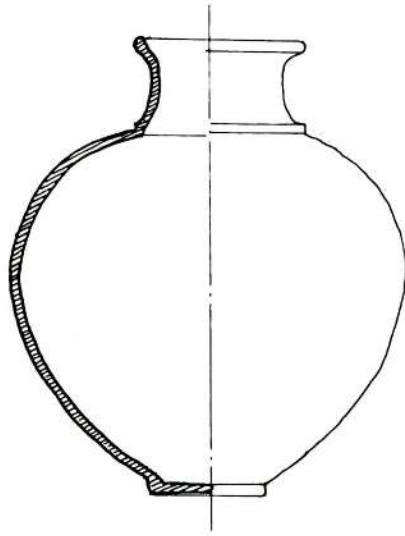
Alt. d/3. h. 3 cm., w. 14.8 cm. Red-brown slipped inside and out. Charred. Thick walls. Slightly hollowed base. From the temple yard. (Plate II, 4).

Alt. d/4. h. 3 cm., w. 14.4 cm. Brown slipped inside and out, polished. Thick walls. Slightly inverted rim, rolled from without. Small, flat base. Mended with plaster of Paris.

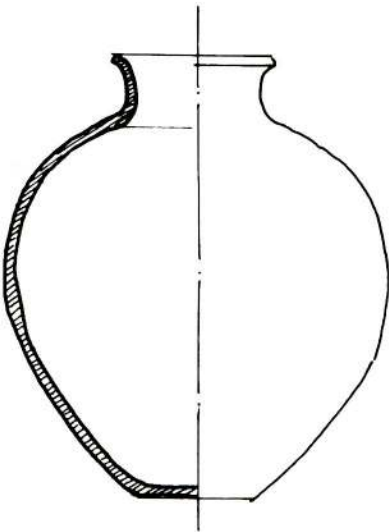
<sup>9</sup> R. D. Barnett, The Urartian cemetery at Igdyr. AS. XIII (1963). p. 154 ff., Fig. 12.



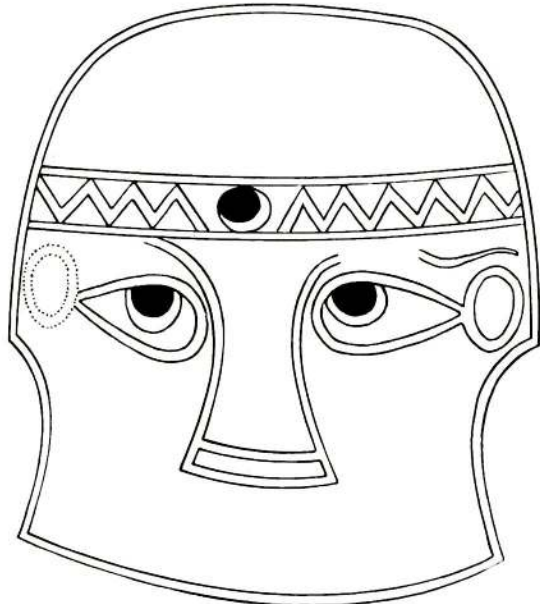
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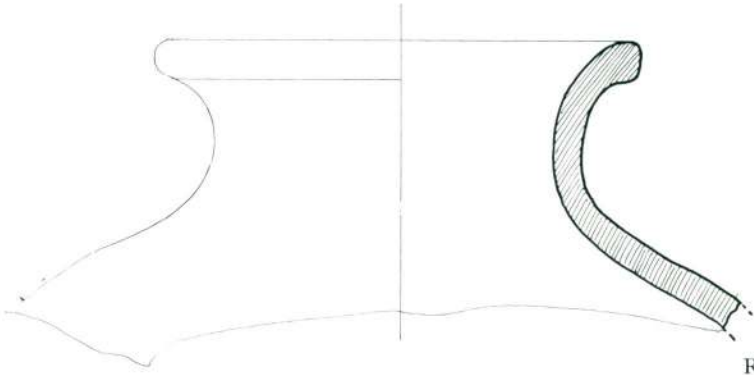
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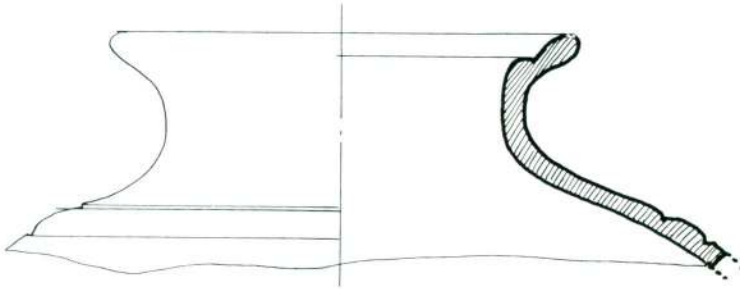
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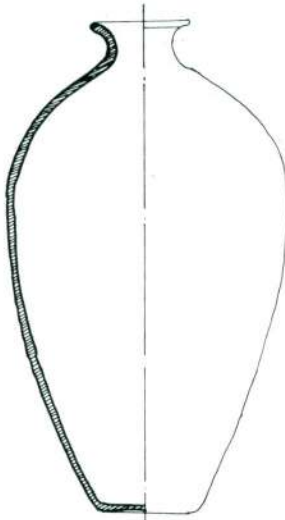
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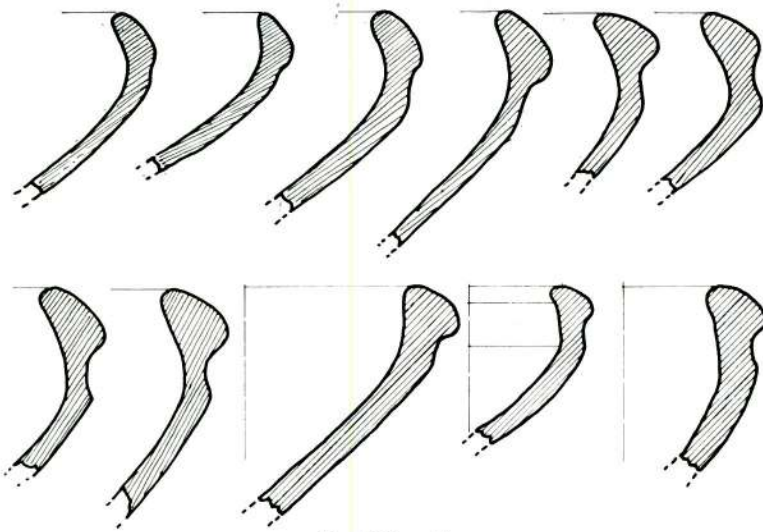
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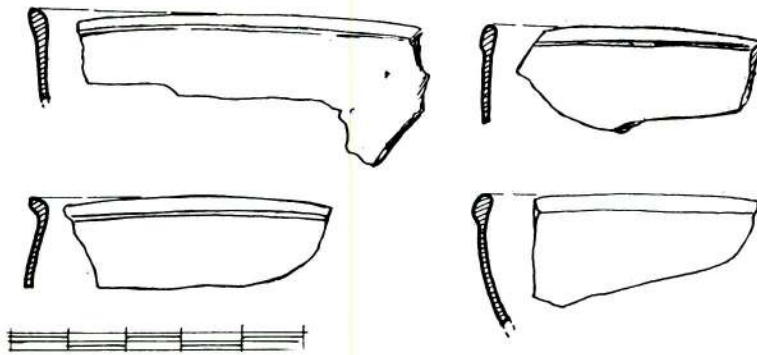
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Res./Fig. : 7

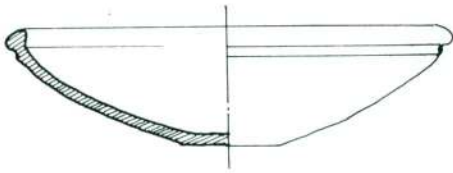


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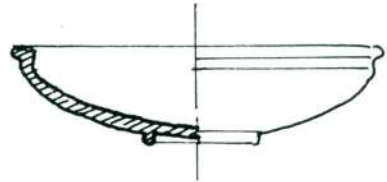


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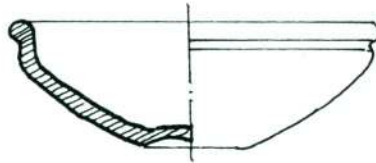
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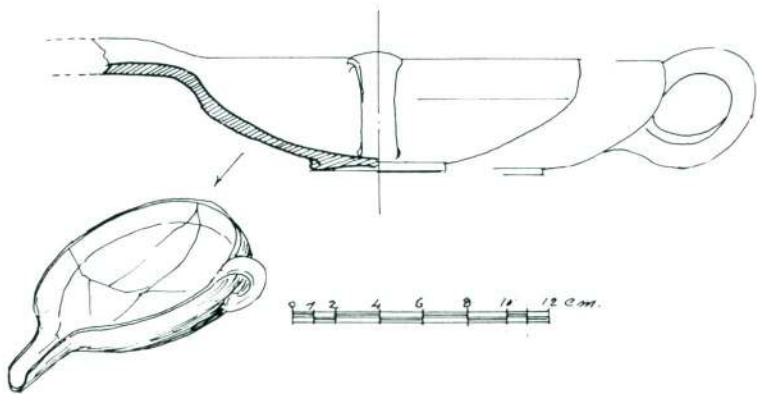
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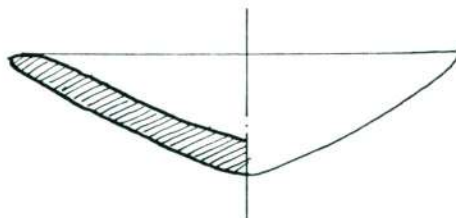
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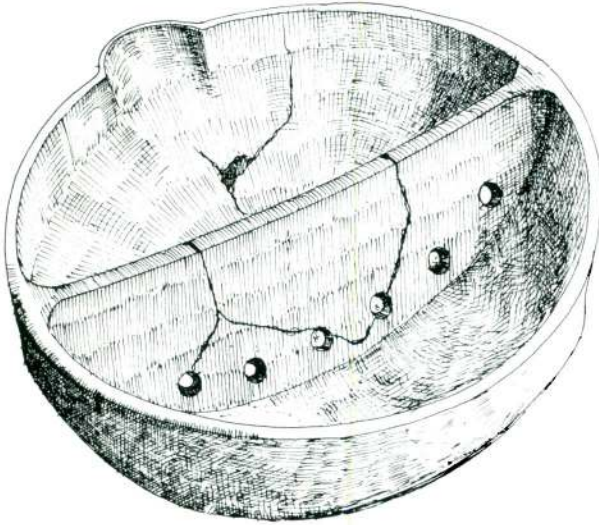


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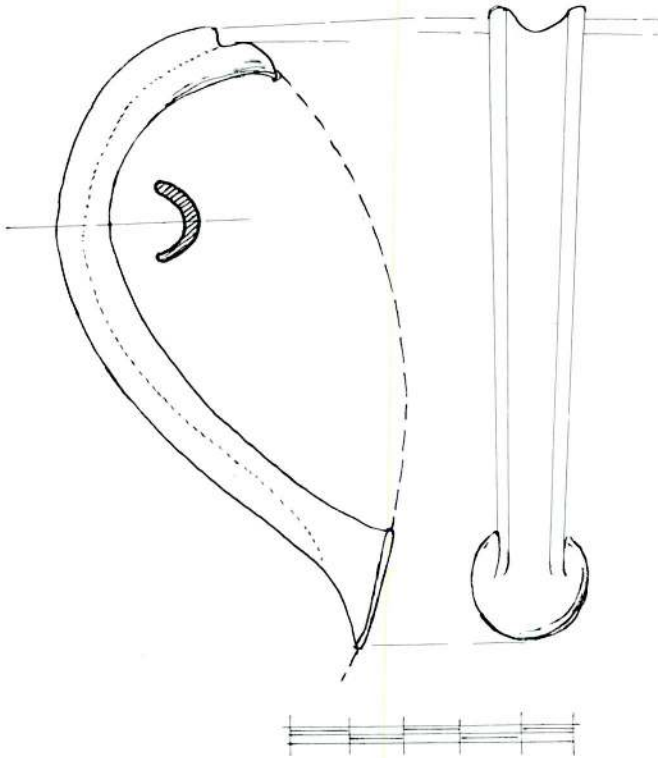


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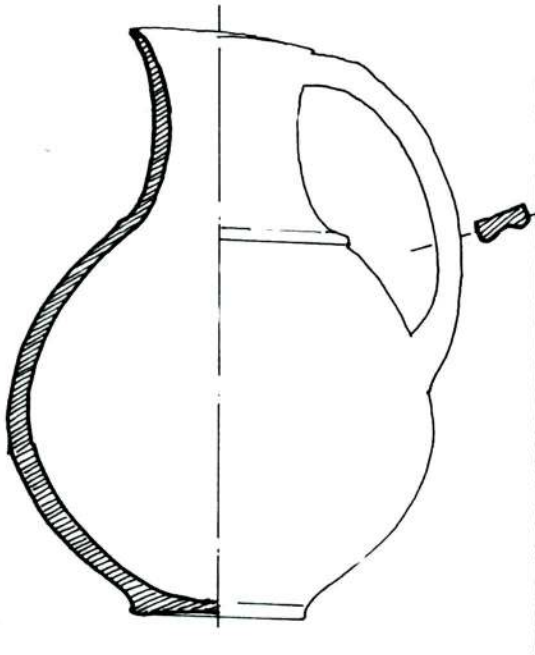


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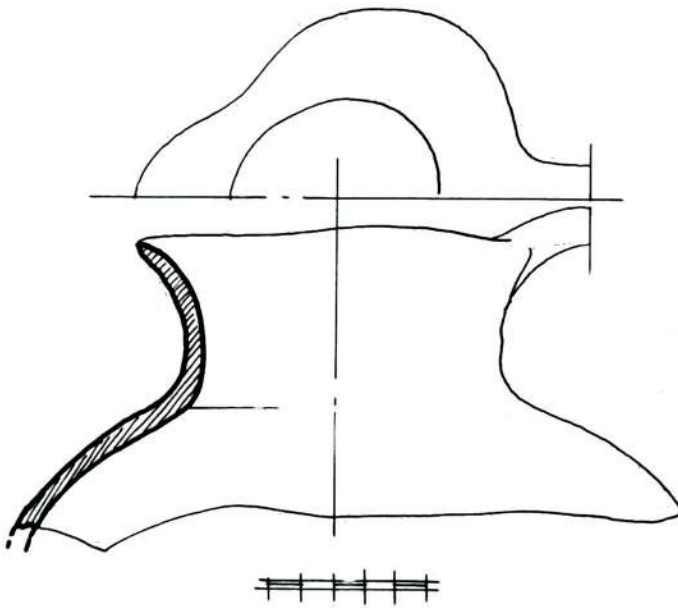


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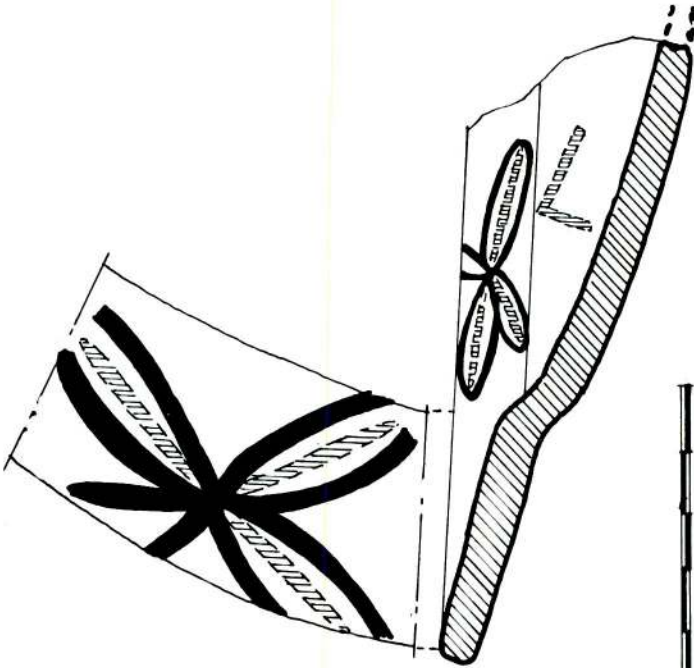
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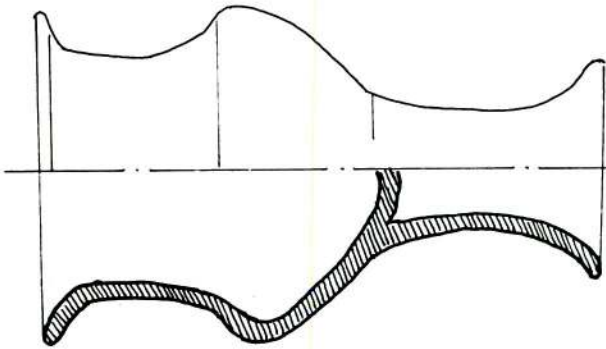
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Res./Fig. : 18

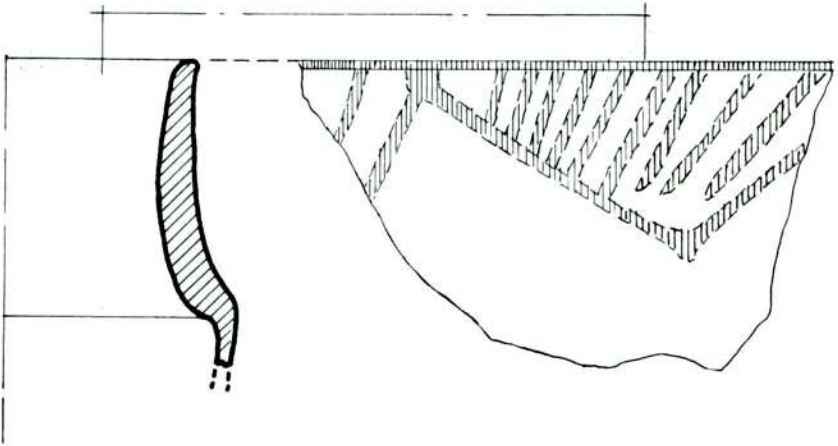


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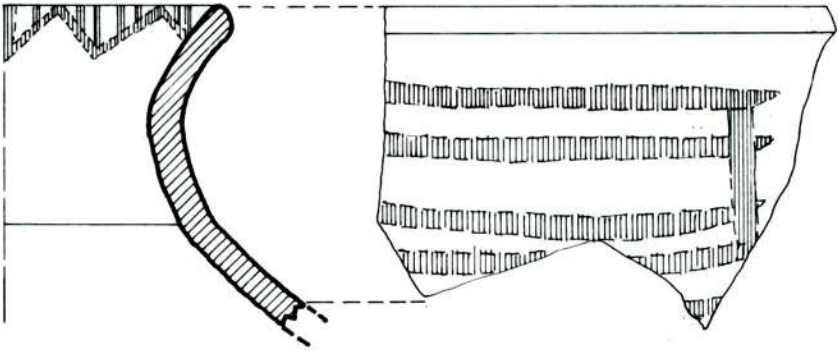


Res. Fig. : 19





Res./Fig. : 21



Res./Fig. : 22



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2



3



4



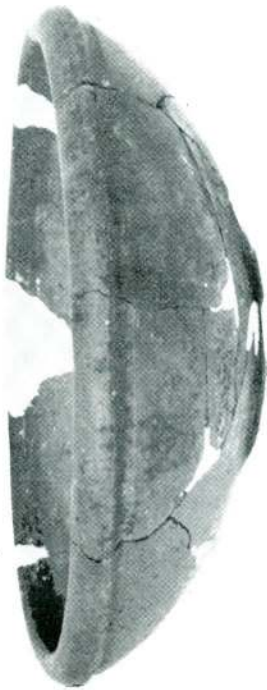
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6



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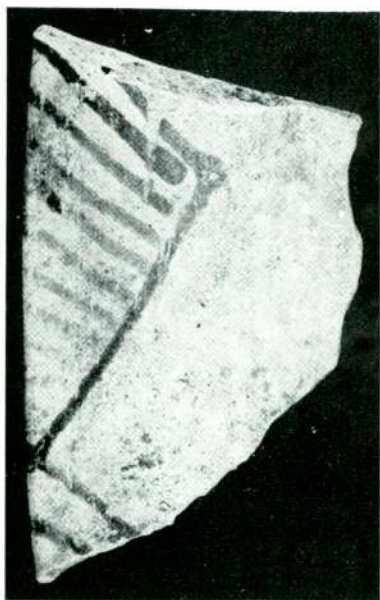
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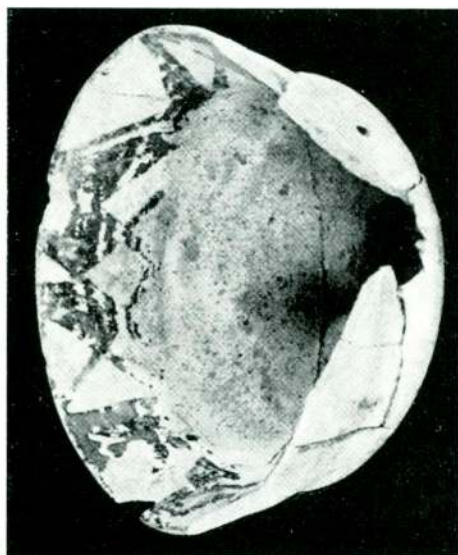
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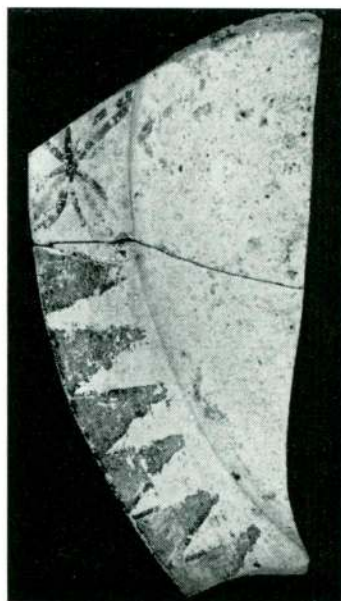
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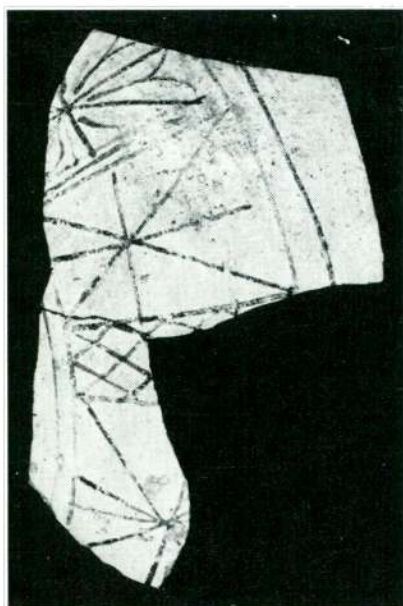


1

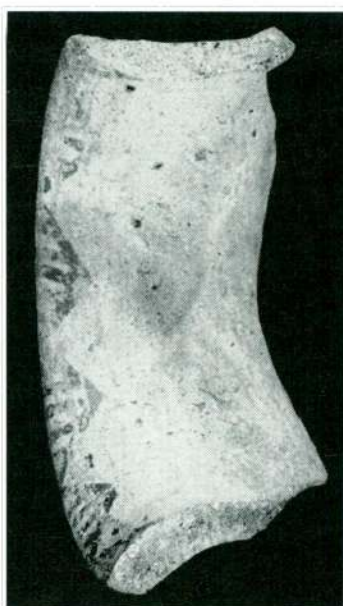


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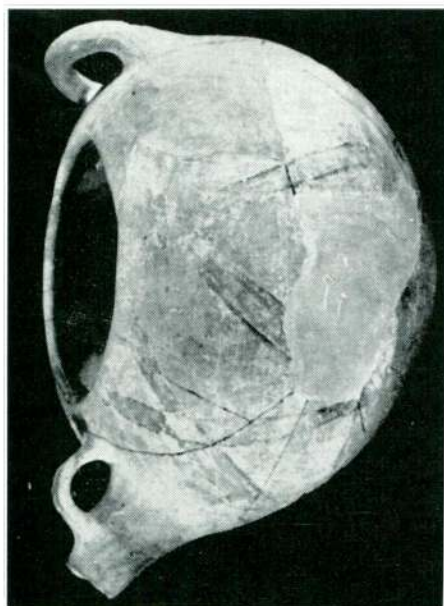




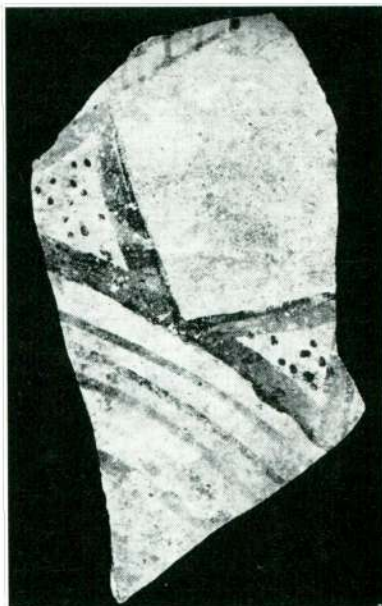
2



4



1



3



Alt. d/5. h. 3.1 cm., w. 15.8 cm. Brown slipped inside and out, polished. The flat base is slightly hollowed. Partly mended with plaster of Paris.

Alt. a/12. Mus. No. 1026. h. 5.3 cm., w. 18.3 cm. Red-brown slipped inside and out, brightly polished. The rolled, everted rim grooved below. The small base is hollowed inwards (Fig. 12).

A thin-walled bowl with a simple rim is differentiated by its spout, set sideways, and its handle :

Alt. a/13. Mus. No. 1030. h. 5 cm., w. 18.5 cm. Red-brown slipped inside and out, brightly polished. Thick walled. Slightly carinated shoulder. Very slight ring base. The long spout is set at the side of the handle which links the rim to the shoulder carination. From the third chamber of the third tomb, discovered next to the throne (Plate II, 5; Fig. 13).

The other bowl type, which is represented by a single complete example, is set apart by its simple rim and its rounded bottom. This small and shallow piece might have been used as a lid.

Alt. a/14. Mus. No. 1029. h. 3.2 cm., w. 12 cm. Red-brown slipped inside and out. Thick walls. From the sarcophagus chamber of the third tomb (Plate II, 6; Fig. 14).

C. *Lamps* : This type of ware, a common one in the Urartian sites<sup>10</sup>, is present in Altuntepe as well. The spout is small. A bronze lamp discovered at Toprakkale<sup>11</sup> verifies that this form, too, is an imitation of metal examples.

Alt. c/1. h. 6.5 cm. Brown slipped inside and out, polished. Slightly profiled rim. Small spout. Small flat base. Six slots on the inside partition. From one of the destroyed chambers of the temple (Fig. 15).

<sup>10</sup> Lehmann-Haupt, *Armenien einst und jetzt*. II, 2. Berlin/Leipzig 1931, p. 563; B. B. Piotrovskii, *Karmir-Blur*. II. Erivan 1952, Fig. 13.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 562.

D. *Trefoil Pitchers* : Pieces of this pottery form in Altuntepe appear as complete examples and as sherds; they have been discovered in the temple chambers, and as burial gifts in graves. It has parallels at Toprakkale<sup>12</sup>; in the state store-houses of Karmir-Blur, arranged in large groups<sup>13</sup>; and in Iğdır<sup>14</sup>. The bronze pitcher discovered at Toprakkale<sup>15</sup> and the bronze handle found in the third tomb at Altuntepe (Fig 16) show that the trefoil pitchers, which were very common in Western Anatolia in the 3rd Millenium B. C. and in Central Anatolia in 2nd Millenium B. C.<sup>16</sup>, were manufactured in the Urartian area as well, in imitation of metal prototypes. The pitchers, always red slipped and brightly polished, are grooved on the outside of their handles, as with metal examples.

Alt. a/15. h. 38 cm. Dark red slipped, polished to a gloss. Trefoil orifice, wide neck. The base of the neck is supported by a band in relief. Wide, rounded body. Slightly ring based. From the third tomb (Plate III, 1; Fig. 17).

Alt. d/1. h. 20.8 cm., w. 21.5 cm. Red slipped, brightly polished. Partly damaged slip. Broken rim. Slightly rounded shoulder. Slight body carination. The upper body is ornamented with flutings with curved ends. Partly completed in plaster of Paris.

The fragment of a rim (Fig. 18) is part of a pitcher of this type. It is red slipped and brightly polished.

E. *Goblets* : The specimens have everted rims, wide tubular necks and high, hollow stands. The parallels of this type are frequent in other Urartian sites<sup>17</sup>. They have also served as offerings in the temple cella<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*, p. 565; A. Erzen-E. Bilgiç-Y. Boysal-B. Ögün, Van-Toprakkale sondajları ve bu bölgedeki çalışmalar. *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi*, X, 2 (1960), p. 17.

<sup>13</sup> B. B. Piotrovskii, Karmir-Blur. III. Erivan 1955, Plate VI, VII, IX.

<sup>14</sup> R. D. Barnett, *Anat. Std.* XIII (1963), Fig. 20/2.

<sup>15</sup> N. T. Özgüç, *Augrabungen in Kültepe, Bericht über die im Auftrage der Türkischen Historischen Gesellschaft, 1949 durchgeführten Ausgrabungen.* T. T. K. Yayınlarından V. Seri-No. 12. Ankara, 1953. p. 158.

<sup>16</sup> Lehmann-Haupt, *Armenien* II, 2, p. 563.

<sup>17</sup> B. B. Piotrovskii, Karmir-Blur, III. Plate IX.

<sup>18</sup> T. Özgüç, Altuntepe. p. 41, Plate XXXIII, 3; Fig. 7.

Alt. b/1. Mus. No. 2189. h. 16.8 cm., w. 11.2 cm. Red slipped, brightly polished. The joint of the neck and the body forms a sharp line. From the cella (Plate III, 2).

Alt. b/2. Mus. No. 2190. h. 17 cm., w. 11.4 cm. Red-brown slipped, brightly polished. From the cella (Plate III 3; Fig. 19).

Alt. b/3. Mus. No. 2191. h. 22.3 cm w., 12.7 cm. Wine-red slipped, brightly polished. The slip and part of the rim is damaged. The space between the shoulder and the beginning of the stand is ornamented with a flower petal motif, composed of shallow grooves. From the cella.

Alt. d/2. h. 12.5 cm., w. 13.4 cm. Brown slipped, polished. Everted rim. Short neck. Rounded belly. Thick walls (Plate III, 4). From the debris which covers the temple area.

F. *Pithoi* : As in other Urartian sites<sup>19</sup> a large store-house was discovered at Altintepe<sup>20</sup>. In the store-rooms, large pithoi used for food storage were found with half of their bodies buried in the ground (Pl. VI). The bodies also have hieroglyphic signs<sup>21</sup>. In contrast to the pottery of Karmir-Blur, there were no smaller shapes in this store-house. As the pithoi are going to be seperately published, together with the store-house, the subject will not receive a detailed treatment here.

It is observed that, as with the Hittite pottery, the Urartian wares are decorated with plastic representations of animal heads and bodies set on the rim and on the shoulder<sup>22</sup>. An animal's head has been discovered in the early building level of Altintepe (Plate IV, 4). This is a spout in the shape of a ram's head, brown slipped and

<sup>19</sup> A. Erzen-E. Bilgiç-Y. Boysal-B. Ögün, T. A. D. X, 2 (1960), p. 13-14; K. Balkan, Patnosda keşfedilen Urartu tapınağı-Atatürk konferansları Ankara 1964, p. 240, 241; E. Bilgiç-B. Ögün, Excavations at Kef Kalesi of Adilcevaz, 1964. *Anatolia VIII* (1964) p. 97; B. B. Piotrovskii, Karmir-Blur. I. Erivan 1950, p. 47, 48, Plate 5, 6.

<sup>20</sup> T. Özgüç, *Belleten* 98 (1961), p. 280.

<sup>21</sup> T. Özgüç, The Urartian Architecture on the summit of Altintepe. *Anatolia VII* (1963), p. 48; Plate XV, 1; *Ancient Ararat. Scientific American* 216/3 (1967), p. 41, bottom figure.

<sup>22</sup> M. van Loon, *Urartian Art*, p. 33, Fig. 2; O. Sümer, Urartu pişmiş toprak eserleri hakkında, *Anatolia VI* (1961/62), Plate, LXIV, LXV.

polished. As K. Bittel also thinks<sup>23</sup>, this probably is a continuation of a native Anatolian tradition. M. Van Loon who considered the Karmir-Blur jar decorated with bull's heads, thinks that the statuettes served a practical purpose as well as being used as ornament<sup>24</sup>.

Von der Osten has pointed out the resemblance between Hittite and Urartian pottery<sup>25</sup>. In fact, there is a similarity in the slip and polish application technique. However, aside from the complete discrepancy in vessel forms, the colour and the workmanship of the paste, there is quite a difference between the two civilizations. Hittite pottery was not used in Central Anatolia later than 1200 B. C. and its area of distribution does not include the Urartian settlements. According to Tahsin Özgüç, in the Second Millenium B. C., different pottery types must have been used in the Urartian area of Eastern Anatolia<sup>26</sup>. In our opinion, the similarity between Urartian and Hittite pottery in slip and gloss technique should be attributed to their common roots, that is, adherence to the old native Anatolian tradition. K. Bittel writes that the Hittite tradition could have passed on to the Urartians through the Hurrians<sup>27</sup>.

#### Pottery of the second (Late) building level:

The monochrome Urartian pottery was used at Altıntepe throughout the entire Urartian Age, that is, in both the Early and Late building levels. In Level II, represented by the colonnaded hall and related buildings, there is a painted variety of pottery which was used together with the monochrome. They are few in numbers with regard to monochrome pottery. Their brick or buff coloured paste is sand tempered; the decoration consists of crosshatched, filled triangles, lozanges and crossed lines, painted in brown or red on a buff or cream ground.

<sup>23</sup> K. Bittel, *Grundzüge der Vor und Frühgeschichte Kleinasiens*. 2. Auflage, p. 80.

<sup>24</sup> M. van Loon, *Urartian Art*, p. 35.

<sup>25</sup> Von der Osten, *Orientalia* 21 (1952), p. 314.

<sup>26</sup> T. Özgüç, *Early Anatolian Archaeology. Anatolia VII* (1963) p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> K. Bittel, *Grundzüge*, p. 81.

## The forms :

A. *Plate* : The brick coloured paste is sand-tempered. The outside of the ware is polished; the inside has been paint-washed in cream. The inside of the everted rim is ornamented with rows of triangles and flower patterns in dark or red-brown (Plate IV, 3; Fig. 20). The parallel of this pottery form has been discovered at Van<sup>28</sup>.

B. *Bowl* : Buff paste. Slipped in the same colour. The inside of the slightly everted rim is ornamented with triangles, whose insides have been filled with diagonal lines (Plate IV, 2; Fig. 21).

Alt. h/5. h. 6.5 cm., w. 13.8 cm. Cream slipped and polished inside and out. Simple rim. The wide, high neck narrows towards the base and is linked to the wide part of the body in the shape of a concave curve. The inside of the rim is ornamented with butterfly and lozange patterns, their contours outlined in dark brown and filled in with rust shaded red (Plate IV, 1).

C. *Large kettles* : This type of ware, whose closest parallel has been discovered at Karmir-Blur<sup>29</sup>, is represented by abundant sherds and complete examples at Altintepe. It is one of the types of ware which appeared at the latest phase of Urartian art. This type has not been found in the earlier phase, at least for the present.

Alt. h/6. h. 18 cm., w. 27.5 cm. Red-buff slipped, polished. Simple rim. Rounded body. Flat base. The round-sectioned handle is horizontally linked to the shoulder; set across it, a smaller handle links the spout, which comes out of the shoulder, to below the rim. The upper part of the body is painted with lines and bands outlined with brown and filled in with red (Plate V, 1).

A sherd of the same type of ware; brick-red paste, slipped in the same colour, polished. The preserved shoulder and belly fragment is ornamented with flower motifs, criss-cross patterns and crossed lines, composed of black and glossy bands (Plate V, 2).

<sup>28</sup> Von der Osten, *Orientalia* 21 (1952), Fig III.

<sup>29</sup> G. R. Meyer, *Die sowjetischen Ausgrabungen in Teschebaini und Ir (e) pûni. Wissenschaftlichen Annalen* VI, 12. Fig. 11.

D. *Vases with rounded orifices* : The brick-red paste is pierced for ventilation. Everted rim. Ornamented with red and black parallel lines, a row of triangles with dotted insides, and cross-hatched triangles. The red paint is glossy, as is that of the monochrome vessels (Plate V, 3).

One other fragment possibly belongs to a specimen of this type. The buff paste is tempered with rough sand and is dark cream paint-washed. Slightly rolled, everted rim. The neck is ornamented with red-brown horizontal lines; the decoration on the inside of the rim consists of triangles with vertically lined insides (Plate V, 4; Fig 22).

The first impression created by these specimens is their resemblance to Phrygian pottery. Von der Osten has stressed this and has pointed out the similarity between the pottery he calls "Post-Hittite, Phrygian," and the painted Urartian pottery<sup>30</sup>. The similarity is simple to explain when it is considered that the Phrygians and the Urartians were contemporaries, that they created a united stand against the Assyrian threat, and that objects of Urartian origin are present in Phrygian land<sup>31</sup>. However, the painted Urartian pottery conforms with the native technique. The wavy-line motif was not used at Altintepe; on the other hand, it is observed that among the Van pottery published by Von der Osten, the popularity of this motif was comparable to its wide use on Phrygian specimens. The use of other patterns are common to both Urartian centers. The concentric circles or other typical Phrygian motifs have not as yet been observed on painted Urartian pottery, except for the askos from Karmir-Blur<sup>32</sup>.

Von der Osten has dated the pottery in question, found on the southern coast of Van, to the period before 714 B. C., which is the year signified by the transfer of the state capital to Toprakkale<sup>33</sup>. He points out that the monochrome Urartian pottery discovered at Van is a later product than the painted pottery, and that, for a while, the two kinds were used simultaneously. The author bases this opinion on the absence of painted pottery at Toprakkale, which is an Urartian

<sup>30</sup> Von der Osten, *Orientalia* 21 (1952), p. 314.

<sup>31</sup> R. Young, *The Gordian Campaign of 1957*. *AJA* 62 (1958), p. 151-152.

<sup>32</sup> See footnote 29.

<sup>33</sup> Von der Osten, *Orientalia*, 21 (1952), p. 310.



site built after 714 B. C. and where only monochrome pottery was used. However, recent excavations have clearly shown that the monochrome, slipped kind of pottery was used throughout the Urartian era. After the final results of the new excavations at Van and Patnos are published, the relationship between the monochrome and the painted pottery will be greatly clarified, and the position of majority occupied by monochrome pottery at all phases will be obvious.

The appearance of the painted Urartian pottery at Altintepe, (in contrast to Van) in the second half of the 7th century B. C. (as related to the building level) should not cause confusion because they were absent in the early phase of Van. These painted wares, which display a certain closeness to Van pottery, might have been specimens which continued into the late phase of Western Urartu.

Before concluding the article, the points made can be summed up as follows :

1. The monochrome Urartian pottery was used throughout the Urartian age.
2. The similarity between Urartian and Hittite pottery is related to the old (native) Anatolian tradition, which is the common root of the two civilizations.
3. The pottery forms are based on metal prototypes<sup>34</sup>.
4. In Urartu, there are no differences of form and technique between the pottery discovered in the fortifications, the houses or the tombs.
5. Urartian pottery was not used by other peoples after the Urartian era came to a close.

As mentioned before, the pottery forms of Altintepe are limited. The explanation lies in the fact that it was possible to excavate only the official buildings, as the related service quarters, the kitchens and the cellars are within the area which had been subject to destruction. The publication of objects of the kitchen-cellars can help us to recognise the real character of the Urartian repertoire of pottery. Patnos is, without doubt, the richest source for such a study.

<sup>34</sup> As Lehmann-Haupt points out in *Armenien II*, 2, p. 562, the examples are considerable in numbers. Many pottery forms are the reproductions of metal vessels, in spite of the difficulties in applying the shapes to clay.

