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THE FIRST HALAF PAINTED FINE WARE FROM THE TIGRIS VALLEY IN TURKEY

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El valle del Tigris turco se investigó, de manera más exhaustiva gracias a los trabajos de la presa de Ilısu iniciadas hacia el año 2000. En este contexto, se obtuvo información más detallada sobre el Neolítico tardío de esta región. En este trabajo, se hablará de la cerámica fina pintada, la producción típica del Período Halaf, y se identificará la presencia de una fase de "Transición al Halaf" en esta región.

Halaf, Valle del Tigris turco, Transición Halaf, Cerámica pintada, Takyan.

The Anatolian Tigris Valley was investigated more comprehensively particularly with the Ilısu Dam Salvage fieldworks, which started near 2000. In this context, more detailed information on the Late Neolithic Period was obtained. In this paper, the Painted Fine Ware, the typical ware of the Halaf Period, will be addressed and the presence of the Transition to Halaf Phase in the region will be revealed.

Halaf, Anatolian Tigris Valley, Transition to Halaf Phase, Painted Fine Ware, Takyan.

INTRODUCTION

Bordered by the South-eastern Taurus Mountains in the north and within greater Mesopotamia, South-eastern Anatolia is quite rich in raw materials and it is convenient for settlement. The Tigris River is one of the most important waterways in this area, which, together with its branches and tributaries, offered an optimal environment for settlement as well as a natural passageway between the northern high mountainous region and the low steppes to the south. This region has been settled at least since the Paleolithic Age (Taşkıran 2007; 2013) with archaeological evidence continuing through the prehistoric and historic periods and features various anthropogenic activities along this natural route of communication such as material culture diffusion, interaction, and trade.

This paper discusses the Painted Fine Ware from the Transition to Halaf phase (6000-5900 cal. BC)[1] settlements detected during surveys and excavations of Halaf settlements in the Anatolian Tigris Valley within the boundaries of Turkey. The paper presents the Painted Fine Ware as evidence of the first Halaf settlements within the Anatolian Tigris valley. I will first describe the geographical and regional context which made this region ideal for and cultural interaction between Transition to Halaf phase settlements, including those further south within the borders of Syria and Iraq. Then, the ceramic evidence including characteristics, vessel shapes and decoration of Painted Fine Ware from four

1. For discussions of Late Neolithic chronology for Upper Mesopotamia in Cruells/Nieuwenhuyse 2004 and Bernbeck/Nieuwenhuyse 2013.

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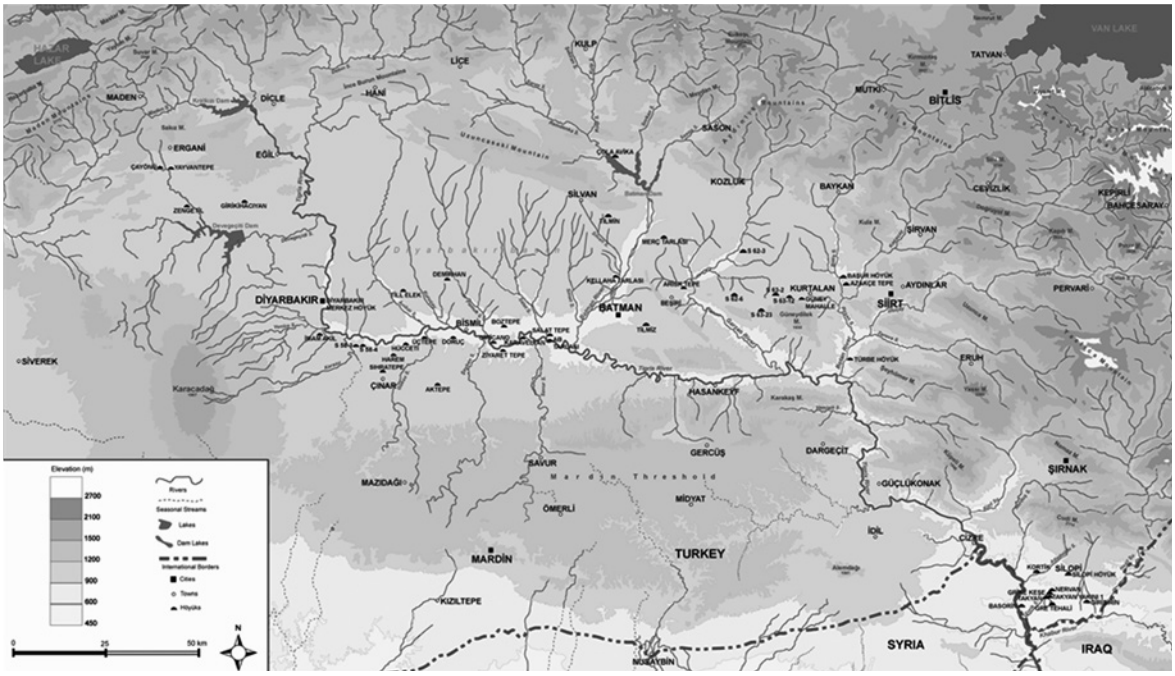

Figure 1. The physical geography of the Tigris Valley in Turkey and the Halaf settlements on the valley (Adapted from Erdalkıran 2010, Harita 2).

settlements dated to the Transition to Halaf Phase in the Anatolian Tigris Valley will be described. This data will be then compared with Painted Fine Ware known from contemporary settlements excavated in Iraq and Syria, where it has been proven to be diagnostic of the Transition to the Halaf Phase (Cruells/Nieuwenhuyse 2004).

THE TIGRIS VALLEY IN TURKEY

The Tigris River originates near Lake Hazar, north of Diyarbakır; a large number of brooks as well as streams with a higher flow join to form the Tigris, which flows southwards into Syria and Iraq (Fig. 1). Passing through numerous plains, plateaus, and canyons, the Tigris River leaves the Turkish border at Şırnak, some 523 km from where originates. The geological structure of the Tigris Valley consists of a large basin with a central depression covered by relatively new layers but whose margins are high and encircled by some older land which includes partially plain and hilly areas, plateaus, and valleys with wide floors (Sözer 1969, 3).

The Tigris valley offers wide fertile riverside plains formed by these alluvial processes as well as fluvial processes resulting from changes in the river bends and flows. Thick with fluvial and alluvial sedimentation, these plains are optimal for agricultural activities since they offer favorable soil morphology and climatic conditions. Narrow alluvial plains and vast limestone plateaus at 500-600 m above the sea level are seen in the Upper Tigris Valley north of Diyarbakır to the Batman River (Özgen 2007, 53). The Upper Tigris Valley is intersected by streams originating from the foot-hills of the South-eastern Taurus Mountains in the north and from the Mardin-Midyat Threshold in the south. The highest flowing rivers are the Batman, Garzan, and Botan in the north, while the southern tributaries such as the Göksu, Şeyhan, and Savur tributaries have a small flow which desiccates in summer (Sözer 1969, 27; Saraçoğlu 1990, 263). The Cizre and Silopi are the western and southern plains bordering the Tigris Valley south of Mt Cudi. The Tigris flows in a south-east direction from Turkey through Syria into Iraq. These plains end east of the Khabur headwaters and the Hezil Su, where the river flows across the Turkish-Syrian and Iraqi state borders (Algaze 1989, 246; Algaze et al. 2012, 4). The Cizre and Silopi plains are irrigated by a system of small brooks joining rivers such as Kızılsu, the Neduş Tributary, and Atladıoldu. Besides the aforementioned waterways, there are also underground water and small lakes in the Tigris Valley (Doğan 2005).

BRIEF SUMMARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE TIGRIS VALLEY

As also stated above, the Tigris Valley offered a well-watered geological structure optimal for settlement with a river system, underground waters, small lakes, terraces, and alluvial plains. Despite these features, the region,

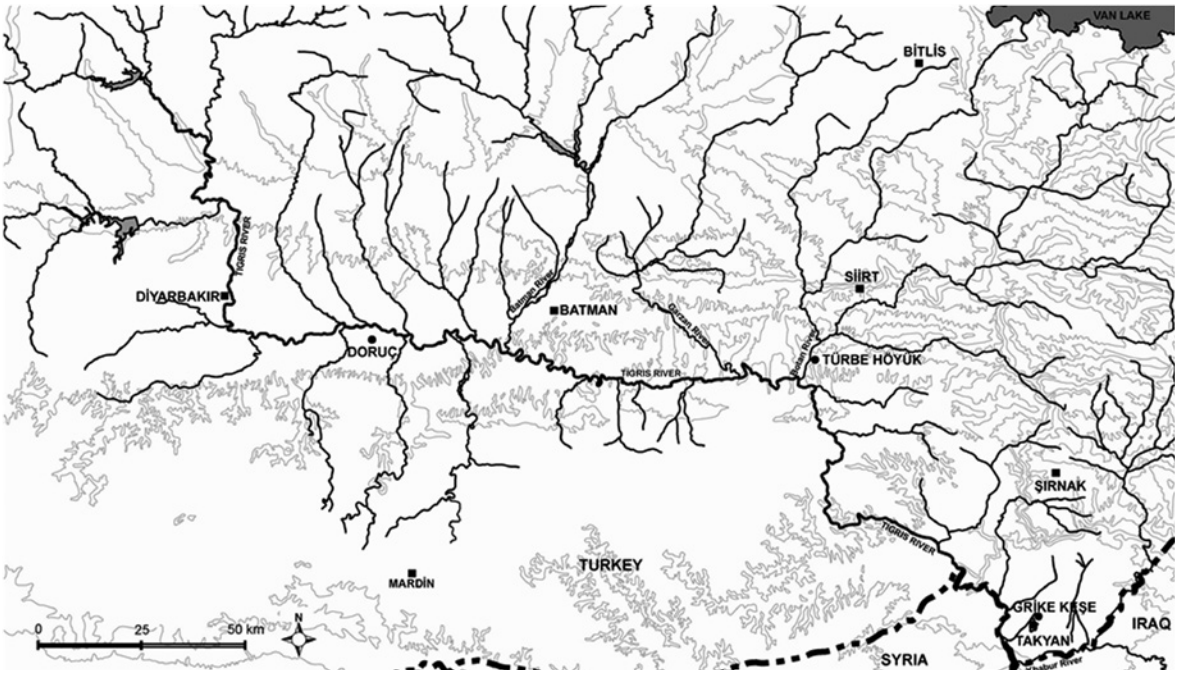

Figure 2. The Transition to Halaf Phase settlements on the Tigris Valley in Turkey.

settled since the Paleolithic Ages, has not been adequately explored and the full archaeological picture of the region is unknown. To date, there have been only two major extensive survey projects in the region. The first project was the "Prehistoric Research in Southeastern Anatolia", carried out in 1963 by H. Çambel and R.J. Braidwood (Çambel/Braidwood 1980). The scope of this project was to investigate the Tigris River Valley from Diyarbakır east to Siirt. The second was "The Tigris-Euphrates Archaeological Reconnaissance Project", conducted between 1988 and 1990 by G. Algaze (Algaze 1989; Algaze et al. 1991; Algaze et al. 2012). The scope of this project was to survey a quite vast area of the Tigris River Valley between Bismil and Silopi in advance of the construction of the Ilısu, Batman, and Cizre Dams. In addition to these two large projects, various smaller-sized surveys were carried out in the region (Velibeyoğlu/Schachner/Schachner 2002; Kozbe 2006, 2007, 2008; Tekin 2009).

Surveys conducted on the Tigris Valley were followed by excavations carried out in the region. The Halaf was detected during excavations at Girikihacıyan (Watson/LeBlanc 1990) and Yayvantepe, (Caneva 2011) located north of Diyarbakır, as well as at Boztepe (Parker/Creekmore 2002), Hakemi Use (Tekin 2011a), Salat Tepe (Ökse/Görmüş 2013), Karavelyan (Tekin 2011b), and Türbe Höyük (Sağlamtimur/Ozan 2007), which are within the Ilısu Dam area (Fig. 2). Some of these settlements were generally dated to the Halaf Period, but no distinction was made between the developmental phases of this period.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

Forty-seven Halaf settlements were identified during the aforementioned surveys carried out on the Tigris River Valley. As part of the author's PhD dissertation research,[2] I was able to study the pottery collections from twenty-six of these settlements. As no settlement representing all phases of the Halaf Period has yet been excavated on the Tigris Valley, the overall criteria for phasing in this study was based upon available pottery analysis and diagnostics from the settlements with reliable stratification in Northern Syria (Tell Sabi Abyad; Le Miére/Nieuwenhuyse 1996, Nieuwenhuyse 2007, Chagar Bazar; Cruells 2006) and Northern Iraq (NJP 72; Campbell 1992, 1998) The following diagnostic qualities of the Painted Fine Ware group were identified: varying paste characteristics, vessel shapes and decorations. Corresponding to the five-stage developmental chronology of the Halaf Period, these phases are: the

2. This study was carried out for my PhD dissertation, entitled "The Development of the Halaf Period in the Tigris Valley Based on the Pottery Evidence".

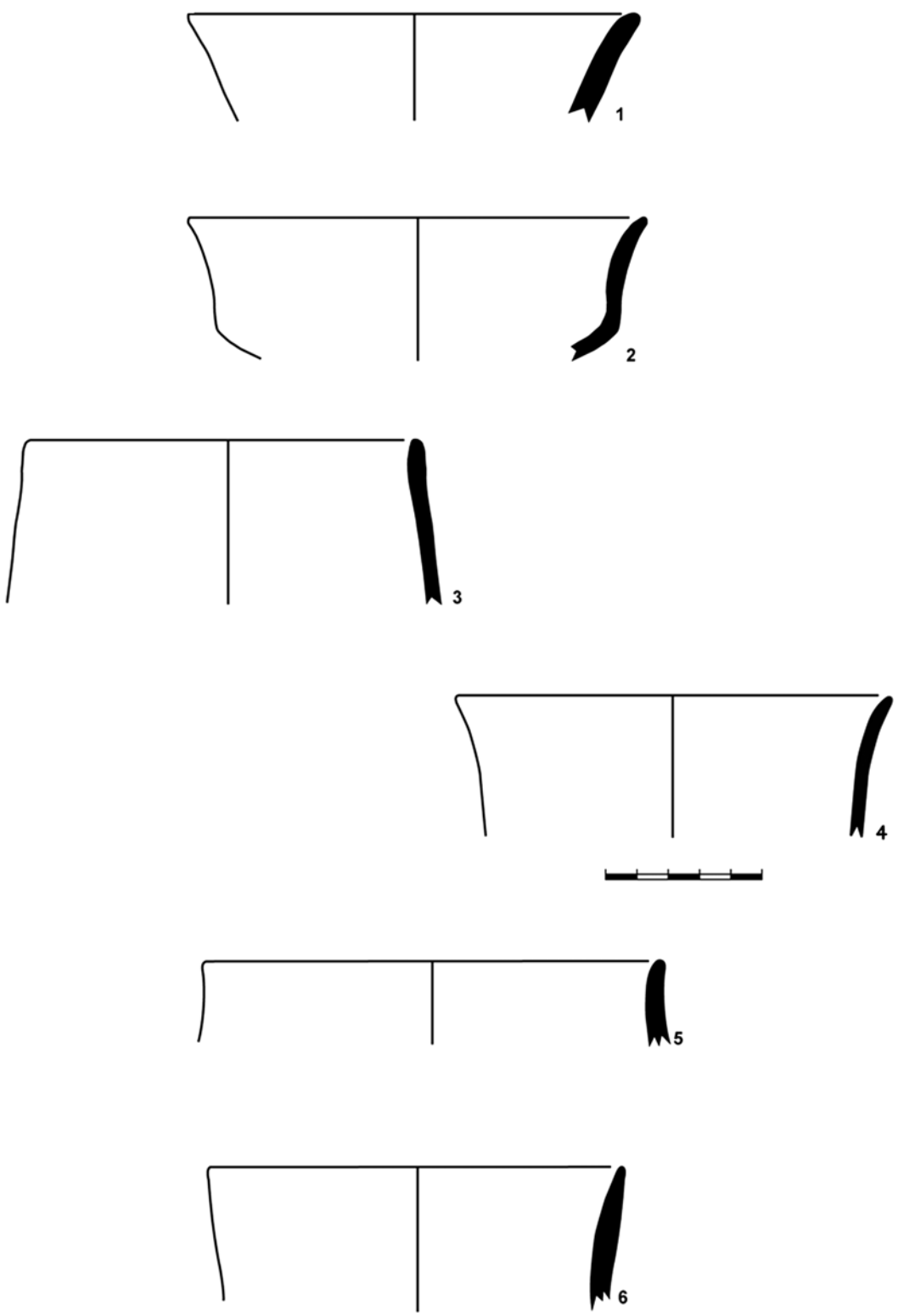

Figure 3. The Transition to Halaf Phase vessel forms; 1: the everted sided bowl (Form IA), 2: the carinated bowl (Form IB), 3: the deep bowl (Form IC), 4: the sinuous sided bowl (Form ID), 5: the short-necked jar (Form IIA), 6: the high-necked jar (Form IIB).

Transition to Halaf, Early Halaf, Middle Halaf, Late Halaf, and Halaf-Ubaid Transition Phases (Erdalkıran 2010, 323-338). The Painted Fine Ware collected from Halaf settlements in the Tigris Valley was studied and divided into its phases according to the diagnostic criteria established. As a result of my analysis of the Painted Fine Ware, all developmental stages of the Halaf Period were determined to be present in the Tigris Valley. The evidence for Transition to Halaf settlements in the Tigris Valley based upon the Painted Fine Ware evidence follows.

THE FIRST HALAF PAINTED FINE WARE FROM THE ANATOLIAN TIGRIS VALLEY

In the Anatolian Tigris Valley, the Painted Fine Ware of the Transition to Halaf Phase was detected in four settlements: Doruç, Türbe Höyük, Grike Keşe, and Takyan (Fig. 1-2) (Erdalkıran 2010, 324). Although the Transition to Halaf Phase was also detected at Hakemi Use, the Halaf Painted Fine Ware was not reported there (Tekin 2011a), so it is not included in this study. Each of the Transition to Halaf settlements with Painted Fine ware are presented from east to west.

DORUÇ

Doruç is located in the Upper Tigris Valley, by the Köseli Brook, a branch of the Tigris River, in the district of Bismil, in Diyarbakır (Fig.1-2). Doruç is about 6 m high and has a width of more than a hectare. Tekin, who discovered the settlement, states that the Hassuna/Samarra, Halaf and Ubaid cultures all existed here and highlights the significance of their coexistence (Tekin 2009, 282-284, Resim 2 and 3). He therefore emphasizes the significance of the place due to the presence of this apparently uninterrupted and long sequence in the settlement.

According to the Painted Fine Ware pottery collected from Doruç, the Halaf Period is represented with the Transition to Halaf, Early Halaf, and Middle Halaf phases. The vessel shapes of the Transition to Halaf at Doruç comprise the everted sided bowl (Form IA), the deep bowl (Form IC), the flat base, and body sherds likely to have belonged predominantly to jars (Fig. 3).

The Transition to Halaf Painted Fine Ware pottery from Doruç was decorated exclusively with geometric patterns such as horizontal crosshatching, a step motif between straight bands, and diagonal lines.[3]

TÜRBE HÖYÜK

Located east of the Botan River around 27 km to the south-west of Siirt province, Türbe Höyük is on a natural hill roughly 6 km away from the intersection of the Botan and Tigris Rivers (Fig. 1-2). Measuring approximately 100 m by 40 m, Türbe Höyük was excavated between 2002 and 2007 by H. Sağlamtimur within the scope of the salvage excavations of the area to be inundated by the Ilısu Dam (Sağlamtimur/Ozan 2007, 2).

Structures with a stone foundation at Türbe Höyük, constructed in the 2nd millennium BC destroyed the settlement layers of the Pre-Halaf, Halaf, Ubaid and Uruk periods. These earlier periods were predominantly identified through the pottery unassociated with settlement layers. However, grain pits dug into the virgin soil in the south of the mound date to the Halaf Period; these are the only architectural elements representing this culture. This discovery led to the interpretation that settlement had been concentrated in the southern part of the mound (Sağlamtimur/Ozan 2007, 8).

Around thirty six Painted Fine Ware items from Türbe Höyük were studied, and twelve of them were determined to date to the Transition to Halaf Phase. The paste of the Painted Fine Ware of the Transition to Halaf Phase at Türbe Höyük is generally light brown and, to a less extent, cream and sand-tempered or limestone-tempered. The vessels are generally highly fired, and the core is either scarce or undetectable at the edges. It has been observed that all sherds other than one example had been cream or buff slipped and unburnished. The decoration paint color is dark with homogenous shades of brown and grey, with no difference in shades, creating a monochrome effect. It is striking that the exterior surfaces of the sherds studied were densely decorated. In this pottery group, dancing ladies and naturalistic elements such as birds were used as decorative motifs as well as geometric patterns such as horizontal crosshatching, vertical crosshatching, undulating lines, pendants, diagonal lines, steps, and crosshatched lozenges (Fig. 4).

Six shapes, in which bowls predominated, were among the Transition to Halaf Phase pottery from Türbe Höyük, namely the everted sided bowl (Form IA) (Fig. 4: 1), the carinated bowl (Form IB) (Fig. 4: 2-5), the deep bowl (Form IC) (Fig. 4: 7-8), the sinuous sided bowl (Form ID) (Fig. 4: 6), and the short-necked jar (Form IIA) (Fig. 4: 9). Apart from the vessel shapes listed, two jar body sherds were studied. A neck-shoulder sheds, a shoulder sherd and three pottery sherds comprised again of another

3. No detailed study was carried out on this pottery, but their shapes and decorations were recorded. Some of these vessels can be seen in Tekin (2009, Resim 3).

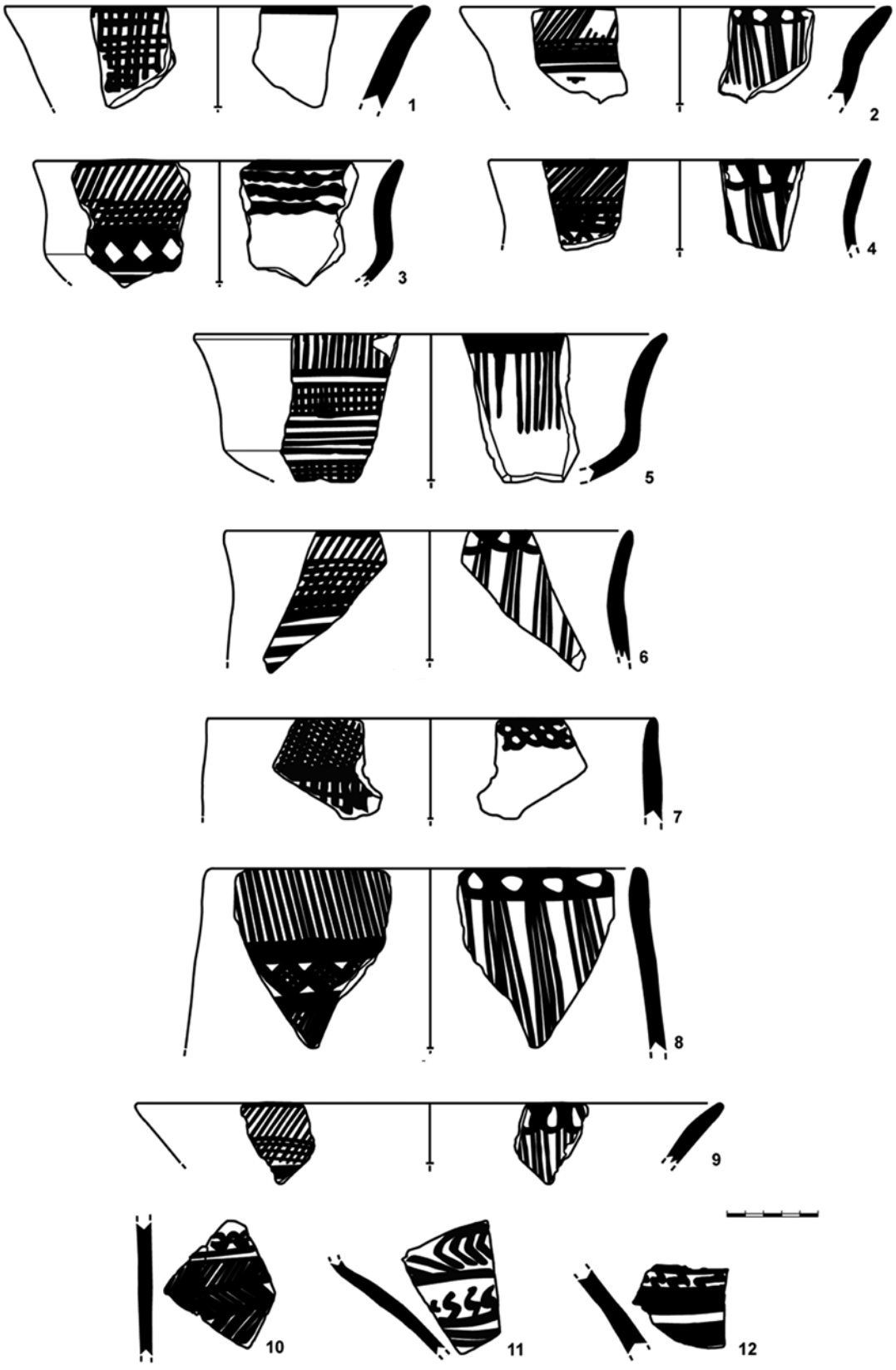

Figure 4. Sherds of the Transition to Halaf Phase Painted Fine Ware from Türbe Höyük.

example of a jar without a reconstructable profile were examined (Fig. 4: 10-12) (Erdalkıran 2010, 267-269).

GRIKE KEŞE

Located by the Şurik Brook in the district of Silopi in Şırnak province, Grike Keşe is 100x220x4 m in dimension (Fig. 1-2). The Transition to Halaf, Early Halaf, Middle Halaf and Late Halaf phases were reported at Grike Keşe (Erdalkıran 2008, 756-757, Table 1). In other words, it was settled almost throughout the entire Halaf Period. Out of the one hundred thirty seven pottery sherds of the Halaf Period from Grike Keşe that were collected by G. Kozbe, twenty were identified as Painted Fine Ware, which is diagnostic of the Transition to Halaf Phase.

The paste of the Painted Fine Ware of the Transition to Halaf Phase from Grike Keşe is generally light brown and buff; sand temper and limestone temper were generally used either collectively or individually and plant temper was observed in only one example. Half of the pottery items were highly fired, whereas the rest were fine fired. Therefore, no core was encountered in their edges. Although slipping the vessels was generally uncommon in this phase, buff slip was found in six examples. Even though burnishing was not widely used, it is striking that it was seen on both inner and outer surfaces on some of the sherds from this site. Paint used to decorate the vessels was monochrome and mostly shades of dark brown and grey were used. The decoration motifs generally comprise geometric elements except for the dancing ladies. Among the patterns observed are single or multiple simple bands, crosshatching, crosshatched lozenges, vertical zigzags, diagonal lines, and pendants. It is notable that the vessel surfaces were densely decorated by painted motifs (Fig. 5).

Body sherds were identified in the Transition to Halaf Phase at Grike Keşe, along with five vessel shapes. The everted sided bowl (Form IA) (Fig. 5: 1), the sinuous sided bowl (Form ID) (Fig. 5: 2-4), the short-necked jar (Form IIA) (Fig. 5: 5-6) and the long-necked jar (Form IIB) (Fig. 5: 7-9) are the vessel shapes detected. Apart from these, non-diagnostic body sherds of various vessel shapes were also found (Fig. 5: 11-16). The sinuous sided bowl is the most common shape among the bowls with three forms, whereas the long-necked jar is the most common shape among the jars. The other vessel shapes are represented with one or two examples (Erdalkıran 2010, 282-285).

TAKYAN

Takyan, which is another of the important settlements of the Halaf Period in this region, located about 10 km to the south-west of the district of Silopi in Şırnak and in the east of the Şurik Stream, which flows on the same plain (Fig. 1-2). It is particularly striking because of its size, being 350x680x15 m in dimension. Pottery analysis suggests that this mound was settled throughout all phases of the Halaf Period (Kozbe 2006, 297; Erdalkıran 2008, 757-758, Table 1). Takyan was first discovered during the survey that Algaze carried out in the region (Algaze 1989, 247) and then re-investigated by Kozbe (Kozbe 2006, 297; Erdalkıran 2008, 757-758, Table 1).

The pottery collected from Takyan documents a long sequence of settlement starting from the pre-Halaf. Moreover, as Algaze and Kozbe have stated, Takyan had its densest settlement in the Halaf Period (Algaze 1989, 247; Kozbe 2006, 297). I conducted a study of the pottery which supports the suggestion that Takyan is a mound settled throughout all phases of the Halaf Period (Erdalkıran 2008, Table 1).

I examined over a thousand items of Halaf Period pottery found at Takyan by Kozbe and thirty seven sherds collected by Algaze. Out of the potsherds studied, eleven belonged to Painted Fine Ware dating to the Transition to Halaf Phase. The phasing of a large number of non-diagnostic body sherds could not be determined.

The paste of the Painted Fine Ware in the Transition to Halaf Phase at Takyan is in shades of brown and buff and is generally sand or limestone-tempered, or a combination of them. The vessels are fine or highly fired; hence no core was detected on the sherd edges. Although applications of slip and burnish were uncommon in the Transition to Halaf phase, light brown and buff slip and burnish were detected in a few examples. The paint is dark shades of brown and grey, which appeared quite worn in some examples. The decoration motifs are comprised of geometric elements such as horizontal crosshatching and vertical, undulating, and diagonal lines. In one sherd, dancing ladies were depicted holding hands with each other. These sherds also demonstrate these vessels were densely decorated with these painted motifs (Fig. 6).

Out of the Painted Fine Ware items of the Transition to Halaf Phase found from Takyan, eight offered reconstructable profiles that yielded the vessel shapes: the deep bowl (Form IC) (Fig. 6: 1), the short-necked jar (Form IIA) (Fig. 6: 2-3), the long-necked jar (Form IIB) (Fig. 6: 4-6), and the flat base (Form VIA) (Fig. 6: 7-8). Whilst there is a bowl among the detected vessel shapes discovered, the dominant group is jars. Apart from these, non-diagnostic body sherds of various vessel shapes were also found (Fig. 6: 9-11) (Erdalkıran 2010, 299-301).

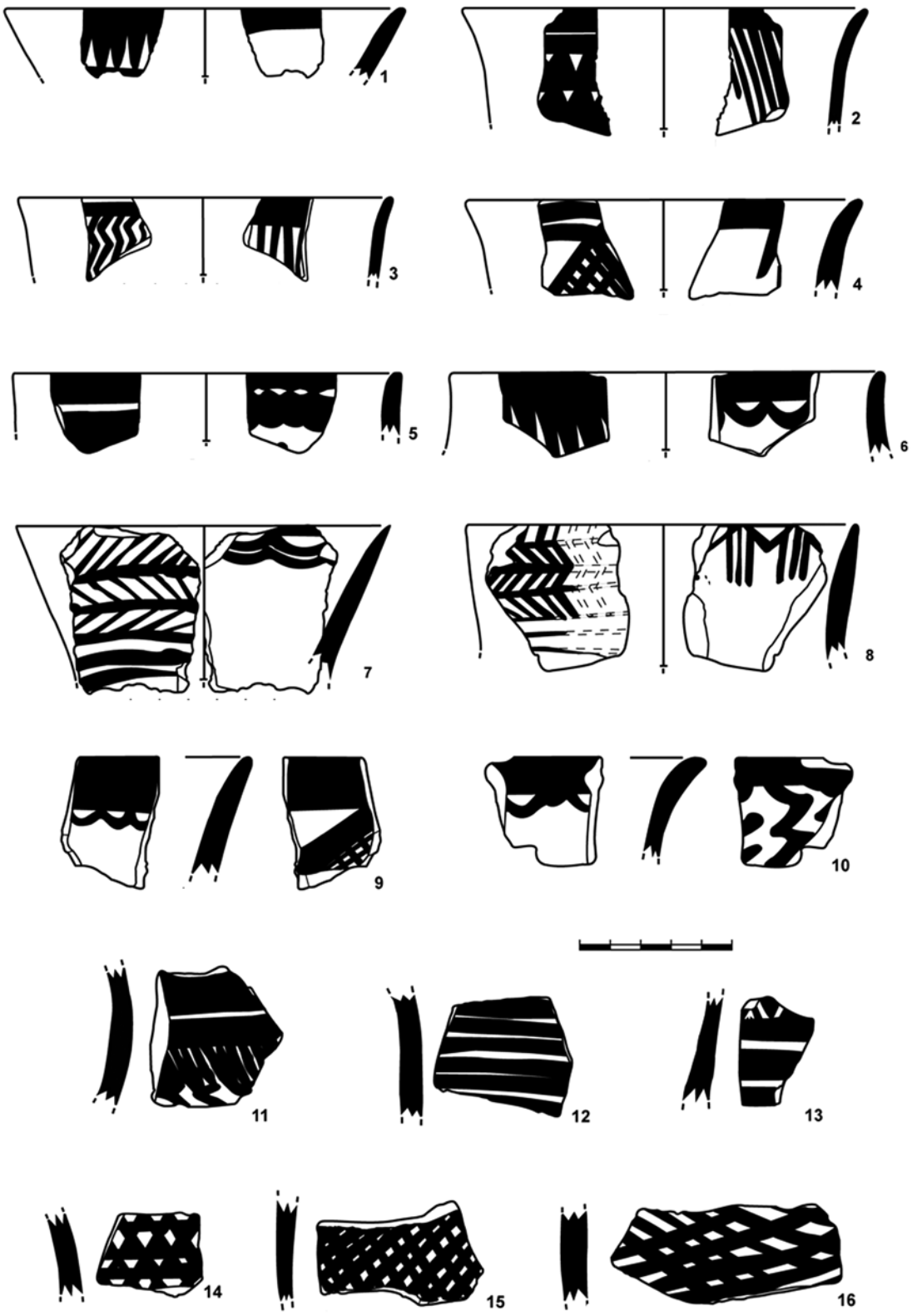

Figure 5. Sherds of the Transition to Halaf Phase Painted Fine Ware from Grike Keşe.

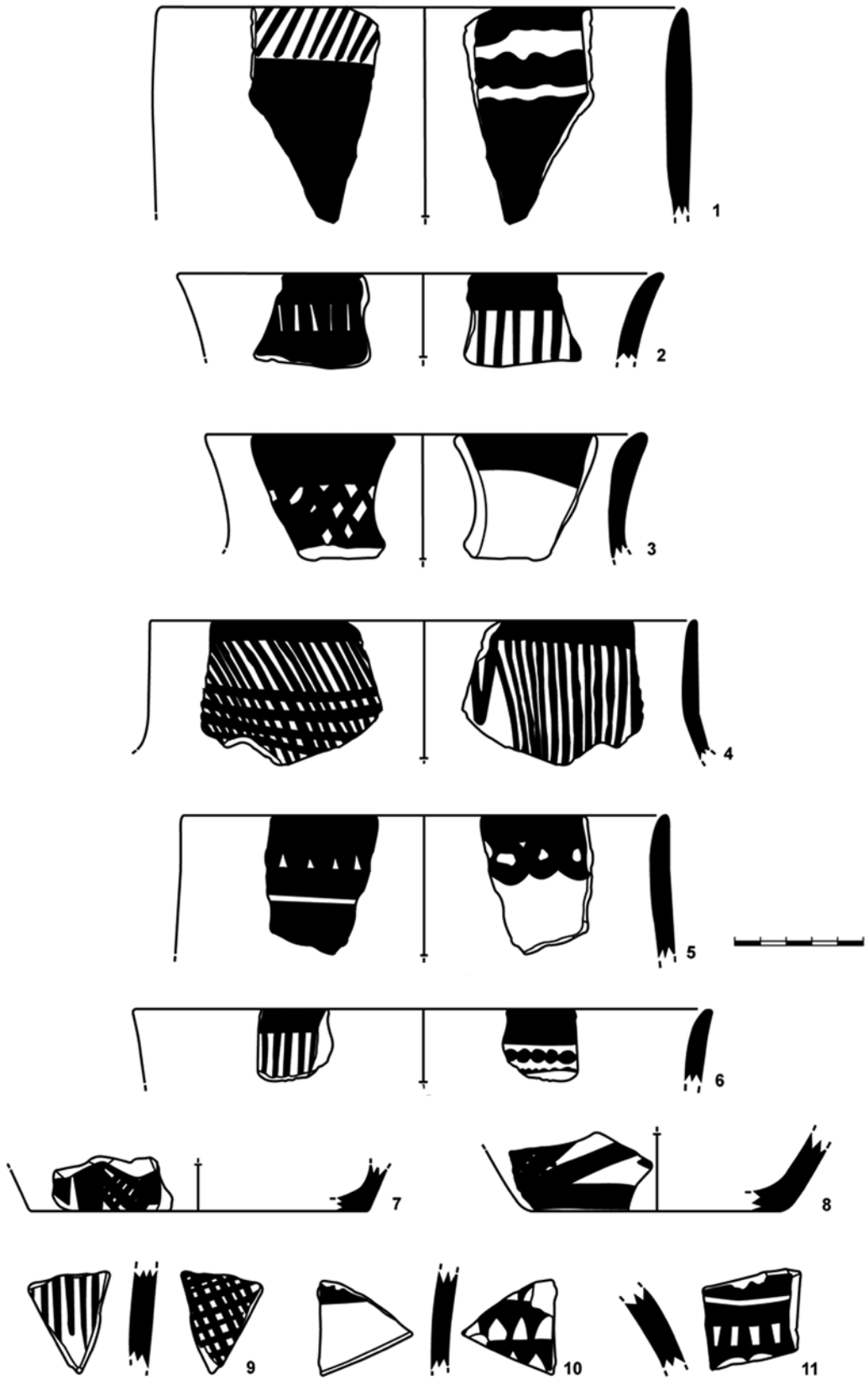

Figure 6. Sherds of the Transition to Halaf Phase Painted Fine Ware from Takyan.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

A few general traits are shared across the pottery from the Transition to Halaf Phase. For example, vessels of the Transition to Halaf Phase on the Tigris Valley are sand-tempered or limestone-tempered or a combination of both, and highly fired. The paste used is in light colors such as cream, buff, and light brown, sometimes colored through the use of slip. The painted decoration is monochrome in shades of black and grey. Almost all the whole surface, particularly the exterior, of the vessels was densely decorated with painted motifs. The interior surface decoration was limited to the rim. The decoration particularly highlighted the contrast of paint in the dark shades on a light background. The typical decoration motifs of this phase include dancing ladies and naturalistic elements like birds but geometric elements such as horizontal crosshatching, vertical crosshatching, undulating lines, pendants, diagonal lines, steps, and crosshatched lozenges were predominant. Six Halaf vessel shapes can be identified in the Transition to Halaf Painted Fine Ware in the Anatolian Tigris Valley. Predominant forms are open bowls, namely the everted sided bowl (Form IA), the carinated bowl (Form IB), the deep bowl (Form IC), the sinuous sided bowl (Form ID), the short-necked jar (Form IIA), and the high-necked jar (Form IIB) (Fig. 3).

It should be mentioned that pottery diagnostic to the Transition to Halaf period and other than that of the Halaf Fine Ware is also present in the Anatolian Tigris Valley. As previously discussed in the author's study on the pottery collected from the Cizre-Silopi plains, Samarra Painted Ware, Red Slipped Burnished Ware, Dark Faced Burnished Ware, and Orange Fine Ware were detected.[4] In addition to this, Bitumen Painted Ware was observed as present in this phase at Türbe Höyük.

As described above, the Transition to Halaf Phase was detected in four settlements in the Tigris Valley; Doruç, Türbe Höyük, Grike Keşe, and Takyan. Out of these settlements, Doruç and Türbe Höyük are located at a great distance from each other (see map) and in different geographies. This study also demonstrates that the Tigris Valley functioned as a passageway for communication between far distant settlements in the Transition to Halaf phase. Despite the limited data available, it is possible to say that the Transition to Halaf Phase can be found throughout the entire Tigris Valley. Therefore, it is now possible to establish Transition to Halaf Fine Ware pottery analogies with concentrations of settlements in the Balikh and Khabur River Valleys, south of the Tigris in Syria, and other settlements in the Mosul district adjacent to the Tigris Valley. In this context, Fine Painted Ware pottery of the Transition to Halaf Phase is analogous to that published from Layers 7-4 at Tell Sabi Abyad (Le Miére/Nieuwenhuyse 1996; Nieuwenhuyse 2007) and Layer I at Chagar Bazar Cruells 2006. in Northern Syria as well as from the NJP 72 (Campbell 1992, 1998) settlement in Northern Iraq.

As a result of all these data, it is possible to state that the communities producing painted ware in the Late Neolithic Period did not remain merely within a limited area such as Northern Iraq and Northern Syria but existed as far as the feet of the South-eastern Taurus Mountains in Anatolia.

Further systemic surveys and excavations focusing on prehistoric settlements in the Tigris Valley and in the plains south of and within the Mardin foothills, (planned for the future) will undoubtedly provide us with an opportunity to better understand the scope of Transition to Halaf settlements in the Anatolian region, and its material culture relationships with the surrounding regions.

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