

II WORKSHOP ON LATE NEOLITHIC CERAMICS IN ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA: POTTERY IN CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

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The second workshop focused on the study of Neolithic pottery production in the Near East aiming to consolidate and demonstrate the research carried out by various international teams in the Middle East, a wide geographical area covering Anatolia, Levant, the Taurus and Upper Mesopotamia and the foothills of the Zagros. The technological contribution implied by pottery knowledge and its technological development is shown by the technical skills and know-how of Neolithic artisans and also by the complex networks of circulation and distribution of ceramic vessels as well as materials, and the symbolic value reached by these productions from the seventh to fifth millennium BC.

The first meeting held in Brno and Rejvic (Czech Republic) in January 2012 revealed the need to consolidate meetings between specialists which could go beyond the research provided in specialized conferences and journals. The opportunities offered in this type of activity were patent both in its research side and in a more formative aspect.

The participation of 31 researchers from 13 nationalities, with a long history of fieldwork and, therefore, of treatment and obtention of primary archaeological data, along with the presence of students and new researchers undergoing training, showed a wealth and diversity of methods and registries. (Fig. 1). They shared the same objective, to make solid contributions to the knowledge of ceramic production; an activity materialized in the recent publication by W. Cruells; I. Mateiciucová; O. Nieuwenhuys 2017. *Painting pots, painting people: Late Neolithic Ceramics in Ancient Mesopotamia*. Oxbow books.

The workshop held in Barcelona and Empúries from October 14th to 17th 2015, was conceived and executed in two main areas of action. Firstly, in an open session at the Archaeological Museum of Catalonia in Barcelona with lectures by four invited researchers, summaries of work and an updated state of research were given by renowned researchers such as Prof. Frank Hole, Dr. Walter Cruells and Dr. Rana Özbal, with the following titles:



Figure 1. Participants on the second workshop. Up, right to left: M. Molist, C. Moulhérat, C. Breniquet, F. Hole, J. Becker, W. Cruells, A. Gómez-Bach, Y. Gallet, H. Plug, O. Nieuwenhuys, R. Ozbal, I. Matieciuciova, A. Hazelkova, L. Grimbergen, down right: M. Erdalkiran, E. Gabrielli, T. Odaka, Y. Tonoike, X. Li, S. Akimova, S. Amirov, S. Calvo, A. Breu.



Figure 2. Dr. Cruells presenting his conference during the open session at Archaeological Museum of Catalonia-Barcelona.



Figure 3. Participants visiting Empúries site, during brief open air sessions thanks to the Archaeological Museum of Catalonia-Empúries.

Dr. Walter Cruells (GRAMPO, UAB): The emergence of the first pottery productions in the Near East. (Fig. 2).

Dr. Rana Özbal (Koç University, Turkey): Pots for Cooking: A Developmental Overview.

Prof. Emeritus Frank Hole (Yale University, USA): The Creative Centuries (6000-5500 BC): Variability and Innovation in Neolithic Ceramics.

The second part of the workshop, at the Empúries archaeological site headquarters, focused on the presentation of case studies with 21 communications and 4 posters. Finally, a workshop concentrated on archaeological material from excavations in the East in the SAP-PO collection at the UAB.

This conference was organized by the Autonomous University of Barcelona and the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, with the invaluable collaboration of the Archaeology Museum of Catalonia and its director, Josep Manel Rueda, and the support of the team at the headquarters at Empúries led by Marta Santos.

The stay at the Empúries headquarters allowed delegates not only to enjoy and visit the Greco-Roman site but also to use the facilities and the library, which greatly facilitated the work and the exchange of data and results beyond the presentations and numerous debates initiated. (Fig. 3).

The dissemination of the activity was carried out from both the Autonomous University of Barcelona, with the support of Silvia Gili¹ (<http://blogs.uab.cat/potteryworkshop2/pagina-exemple/>), and the headquarters in Empúries and Barcelona.

CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE SESSIONS

The session for specialists was organised on four main axes where the results of their work were presented. These four parts can be briefly summarized as follows:

PART I: EXISTING TOOLS FOR COMPREHENSIVE COMPARISONS

The session presented by Inna Mateiciucová and Frank Hole provided new tools for the work of comparative studies. With the contributions by Russian, Japanese, Dutch and Catalan teams, methodological approaches were presented, such as practical implementation studies, and the need was expressed for unified, useful and realistic comparative data for the studied sets.

The contribution by Shahmardan Amirov, on *The Morphology of Halafian Painted Pottery From Yarim Tepe II, and the Process of Ubaidian Acculturation*, introduced difficulties in identifying cultural transfer through Neolithic culture material, mainly pottery.

1. Because of her loss, we would like to make a special acknowledgement of her work and the support offered during the workshop organization. She would surely have liked to see the final publication of this work.

Regional particularities were introduced by Takahiro Odaka with a contribution called *Neolithic Pottery With Horizontal Applied Bands From Tell El-Kerkh, The Rouj Basin*. His capacity of synthesis let us approach North-western Mesopotamian traditions.

New residue analysis was presented by Adrià Breu *et al.* The paper called *Investigation Into The Preservation Of Lipids In Pottery Samples From Tell Halula (Syria) Using The Acidified Methanol Extraction And GC-MS* demonstrates, once again, the possibilities of organic conservation and identification. Diversity and culinary strategies will help to identify Neolithic cooking and storing strategies.

The possibility to develop new archaeological fieldwork in open regions such as Iraqi Kurdistan will let us approach new assemblages and new subjects. In that sense, Olivier Nieuwenhuys's contribution is essential to identify new productions linked to upper Mesopotamian traditions but with strong particularities. Their identification, chronology and regional development will be increased and contextualised with new sites and global studies. In that case, the Shahrizor area will be studied in depth by this researcher.

Finally, Hannah Plug presented an interesting contribution on specific archaeological stratigraphy, the funerary context: *Pots in burials: the case of Tell Sabi Abyad*, an emblematic site.

PART II: HOW TO CROSS CHRONOLOGY AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL STRATIGRAPHIC SEQUENCES USING POTS

The second thematic session was conducted by Shahmardan Amirov and Catherine Breniquet. The sessions were centred on chronology and stratigraphy during the Pottery Neolithic.

A well-known sequence from Chagar Bazar, excavated during more than 10 years of continuous research, has enabled an understanding of a long sequence from the Proto-Halaf to Late-Halaf. Pottery production was analysed and presented by Anna Gómez-Bach and Walter Cruells with the aim of establishing a referential dataset for the Khabur area.

New assemblages were presented by Claudia Beuger and Konstantinos Kopanias in *Prehistoric Pottery from Tell Nader (Erbil) and Ashur (Qal'at Sherqat)*. Both presentations show the methodological difficulties in approaching new pottery materials, more specifically for the Iraqi Kurdistan.

The characterization of other assemblages is studied by Inna Mateiciucová and Maximilian Wilding in the contribution *Pottery Sequence from the Late Neolithic Site Tell Arbid Abyad in the Upper Khabur Region (Syria)*.

The possibility of publishing such as interesting site will be very helpful to understand variability in the upper Khabur basin.

The interdisciplinary research carried out at Tell Halula, Middle Euphrates valley, has become essential to date and identify the first pottery productions. The paper presented by Miquel Faura and Miquel Molist, titled *VII millennium pottery sequence at Tell Halula: New lights focused on stratigraphical and chronological aspects of sector 30* is an example of a large analytical program which has obtained a huge amount of data.

Finally, the results of survey projects will increase in value with new approaches. The contribution of Sona Krollová is an example of this type of research in the Khabur valley.

POSTER PRESENTATION

A poster presentation session made other research known. Some of this work comes from on-going PhD and MA theses. These contributions demonstrate the progress of young researchers and the vitality across teams and projects.

a) Anna Hanzelková; Maximilian Wilding. *Strainers: Observations On A Distinct Type Of Neolithic And Chalcolithic Pottery In The Khabur Valley (Northeastern Syria)*.

b) Adonis Wardeh; Anna Gómez-Bach; Miquel Molist. *Decorative Techniques On Pottery At Tell Halula (Euphrates Valley, Syria) In The 7th Millennium Cal BC. Contribution Of An Experimental Method*.

c) Lonneke Grimbergen. *Animals in Halaf Ceramic Art*.

d) Silvia Calvo; Anna Gómez-Bach; J. Miquel Faura; Miquel Molist. *Technological approach to Ceramic manufacture in the Pre-Halaf at Tell Halula (Syria)*.

PART III: MANUFACTURING TECHNIQUES, NETWORKS AND IDENTITIES

The last thematic session was directed by Walter Cruells and Olivier Nieuwenhuys. The session examined contacts through manufacture and techniques.

Interesting contributions such as *Local Matters: Pottery Production at Tell Halaf and Tell Tawila* by Jörg Becker *et al.* provided an understanding of regional strategies in profound research. This exercise is an example of an intensive and accurate investigation.

Other contributions, like the one by Eva Gabrieli titled *At the periphery of the oikoumene: the Halaf and Ubaid 'bichrome ware' tradition in the Levant*, offered an interesting wide perspective of traditional interpretations in a specific production such as bichrome ware.

In the same direction, the contribution by Anna Gómez-Bach *et al.* on another specific production called “red ware” offered another approach to exogenous pottery productions during the 6th millennium cal BC.

The richness of the Halaf production was presented by Mücella Erdalkiran, in reference to the Tigris region and focused on painted decoration. The comprehension of this region will be essential to understand the circulation of ideas and products between Anatolia and the upper Mesopotamia (Syria and Iraq).

Other contributions are essential in terms of symbolic interpretations. The paper named *Why pots eat their mother? A General Overview On the Near Eastern Late Neolithic anthropomorphic pottery* by Catherine Breniquet and Béatrice Robert were an example of new approaches to specific containers.

Finally, another contribution, referring to Anatolia, presented by Rana Özbal and focused on Tell Kurdu, approached painted designs with a social and innovative interpretation.

PART IV: CERAMIC TECHNOLOGY AND RAW MATERIALS

New archaeometric methods were the topic of the last session under the direction of Inna Mateiciucová.

One of the contributions was presented by Christophe Moulhérat, Béatrice Robert and Catherine Breniquet. It described 3D techniques that go beyond the sphere of research and enter the field of conservation. We consider that these tools are very useful in view of the current situation in the near East.

The use of archaeometric data was presented by Stanislava Akimova, Yves Gallet and Shahmardan Amirov under the title *New archeointensity data from Yarim Tepe II: How archeomagnetism can help synchronize Halafian sequences*. As it is well-known, these new data must be developed using interdisciplinary research and this is an example of its implementation.

Finally, Yukiko Tonoike's presentation of the petrographic data from the Khabur survey was titled *Preliminary Results of Technical Analyses of Late Neolithic Ceramics from the Khabur Basin Survey Project*. This important contribution focuses on sampling strategies and the formation of collections and is a part of a strong project leaded by Frank Hole partially published at Hole, F.; Tonoike, Y. (2016) *Homesteads on the Khabur, Tell Ziyadeh and other settlements*. BAR International Series 2827.

A total of 20 contributions are presented in this volume. All the authors made a huge effort to prepare these papers. Even if not all of them have been included we consider these contribution as a great success.

PART V: CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

The final consideration by Jörg Becker, Anna Gómez-Bach and Miquel Molist highlighted the importance of these meetings in three ways. One of them is related to updating research in a double direction, working with specialists and with real materials and other unpublished documents. The second is the formative and pedagogic experience, working with unpublished collections and sharing terminology and learning from other colleagues, especially for young researchers and other specialists, and the final one is centred on transferring methodologies and database creations across countries and across sciences.

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