

ROMAN POTTERY IN THE NEAR EAST.
LOCAL PRODUCTION AND REGIONAL TRADE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE ROUND TABLE HELD IN BERLIN,
19-20 FEBRUARY 2010

Edited by

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and Hanna Hamel**

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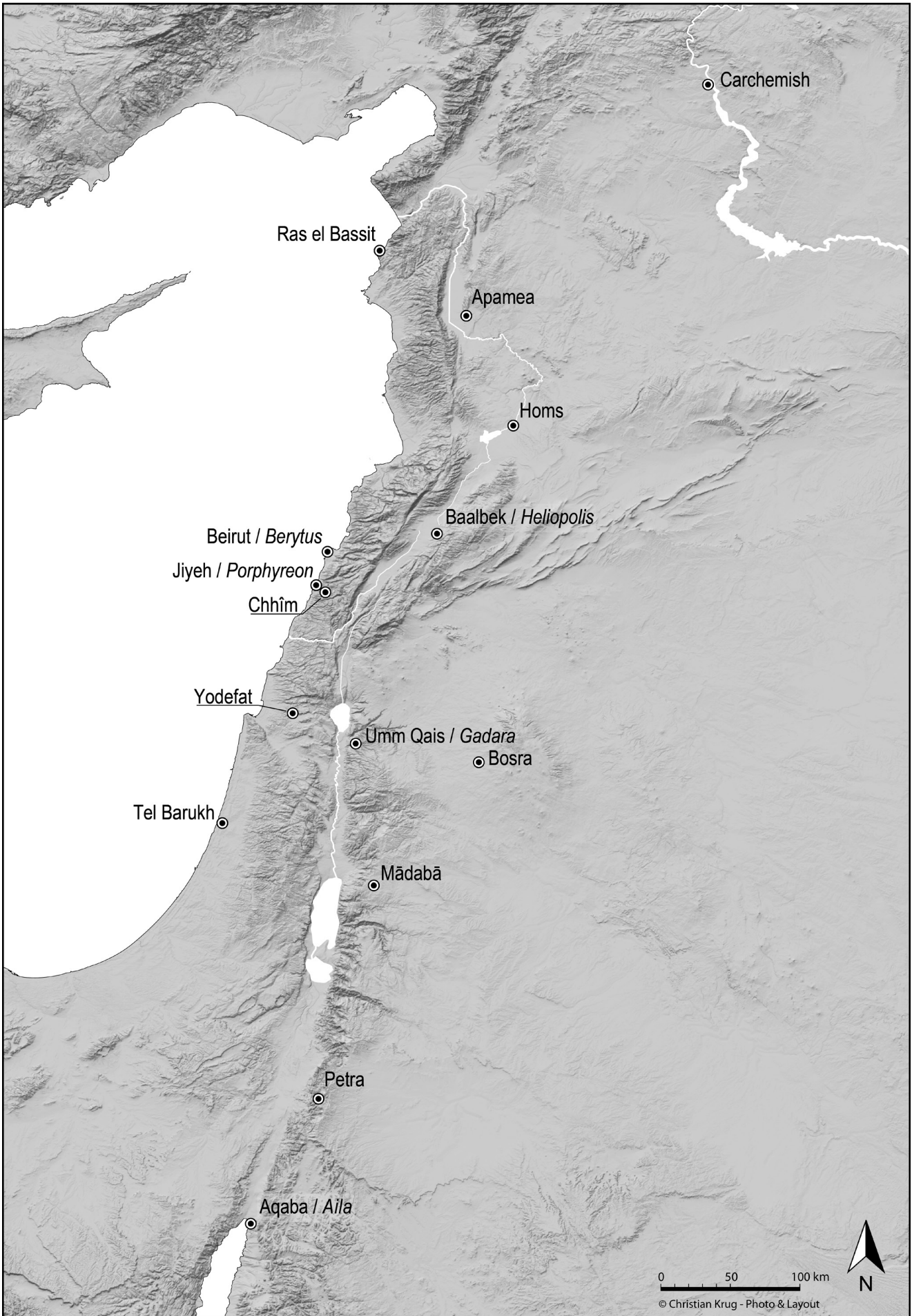
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Roman pottery in the Near East: Local production and regional trade

Discussions and scientific exchange are crucial for the advancement of a young discipline such as the study of Roman pottery in the Near East. Therefore, in addition to large conferences such as the 'Late Roman Coarse Ware Conference' (LRCW) where the Near East plays only a marginal role, an international workshop with 20 participants dedicated solely to the study of Roman common ware pottery in the Near East was held in Berlin on February 18th and 19th 2010.

The goal of this workshop was to provide researchers actively engaged in the study of Roman common wares the possibility to meet and discuss the current state of research as well as questions and problems they are facing with their material. Some of the participants were able to bring pottery samples, which provided the possibility to compare and discuss the identification and denomination of specific fabrics on a regional and supra-regional scale.

The modern political boundaries of the Near East often cut through historical territories and pottery regions, and therefore obstruct scientific exchange and supra-regional comparisons.

In this first workshop current research conducted in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel was presented. Some of the researchers unable to attend the meeting submitted papers now included in this volume. Many of these studies are still underway and some of the papers represent intermediary stages of work in progress. Nevertheless, this volume intends to make accessible the current state of research of the various projects. The goal is to draw attention to this neglected field of research and to enlarge the group of scholar involved in an interdisciplinary scientific network through which data on fabrics and archaeometric analysis can be exchanged and compared.

A number of major problems in the study of common ware pottery were addressed. Although this material is abundant at every site the construction of regional typo-chronologies proves difficult, as many pottery traditions continue over a long period of time.

The identification of local production of pottery remains problematic because few sites have yielded pottery kilns and wasters. New excavations presented at the workshop enlarged the group of known production sites with wasters in Jiyeh (U. Wicenciak) and Aqaba (S. T. Parker), and several kilns in Yodefat (M. Aviam). These have shown that well known types such as the Beirut amphora were not only produced in one production centre but at several sites: the so-called Beirut amphora at Beirut, Jiyeh and Khalde; Kefar Hananya ware also at Yodefat. Ras el Bassit on the

Northern Syrian coast provided useful insights into local ceramic production of *mortaria* as well as other utilitarian wares and building materials (P. Mills).

Not only pots are traded, but also forms are exchanged and even copied on a regional scale. There is the phenomenon that vessel types clearly coming from one centre are imitated in distant local workshops – Nabataean jars characteristic for the manufacture of Petra were exported to Aqaba as well as imitated in Aqaba ware (Y. Gerber). For this reason archaeometric analysis is important for the identification of production centres.

While the fine wares and transport amphorae are extremely useful in providing precise dating criteria for the assemblages and information on long-distance trade routes (G. Schneider), they do not help with the identification of local production centres and regional trade networks (P. Reynolds). On the other hand, they may reflect political events such as in Madaba, where the shift from Hasmonean to Nabataean rule is reflected in the ceramic repertoire by the introduction of Nabataean fine ware (J. Ferguson). The possible distinction of settlement types according to the ratio of fine and common wares was discussed for local urban centers such as Zeugma and Carchemish versus rural settlements in the valley of the Euphrates and on the drier inland plateaus (P. Newson).

The problem of the denomination and function of certain vessel types appeared frequently in the discussions. When trying to differentiate between the local table amphora of Baalbek (H. Hamel) exported at least to Beirut and Homs and genuine transport amphorae such as the Beirut and Aqaba amphorae, the question of functional distinction between transport, storage (e.g., the ribbed-neck jar from Yodefat) and table ware arises. Were these defined vessel categories really restricted to one specific type of usage in antiquity?

The forms mostly ascribed to long-term storage were discussed in the case of the Chhîm *pithoi* (Z. Kowarska and S. Lenarczyk), and the possibility of a specific production of large storage containers for rural settlements was proposed for the Baalbek survey (B. Fischer-Genz).

The same problem appears in the often indiscriminating use of terms such as cooking ware versus kitchen ware, as the first one implicates the actual placement on or in fire, while the latter encompasses different categories used in culinary practice. Due to its supra-regional distribution only in northern Syria – probably mainly using riverine transportation – the 'brittle wares' are a special phenomenon (A. Vokaer), while the kitchen wares from

Gadara were mostly imported from neighbouring regions such as Galilee and the Golan (M. Daszkiewicz, B. Liesen and S. Schneider).

The geographical distribution of two-part ceramic incense burners indicate a well-defined regional production and use (I. Taxel and M. Iserlis). Other specific vessel types, such as the *orlo bifido* baking dish, arriving together with the Romans in the Near East are first imported from Italy and later on locally produced and may indicate immigration (D. Frangié).

The lively discussions on problems such as these revealed how much work still needs to be done, especially in the comparisons within regions and between neighbouring regions in order to understand the local and regional

production and trade patterns in the course of four centuries of Roman rule over the eastern provinces of the empire.

This workshop would not have been possible without the generous funding of the Fritz Thyssen foundation, which provided travel and accommodation grants for the participants. We are indebted to the German Archaeological Institute, which provided funds and a venue for the evening reception as well as institutional support to the organizers. Finally, we owe the beautiful workshop venue at the TOPOI House of the Humboldt-University Berlin to the gracious help of Prof. Stephan G. Schmid, and the capable technical assistance of Marco Dehner and Ursula Müller. We would like to thank Patricia Francis for the stylistic corrections she kindly made, and Paul Reynolds for his thorough review and inspiring comments.

Pottery of the 'Land of Carchemish' project and the Northern Euphrates

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The 'Land of Carchemish' landscape survey project is investigating settlement patterns and development to the south of the major settlement site at Carchemish (Greco-Roman Europolis), in northern Syria. In terms of the Greco-Roman to Byzantine and early Islamic pottery collection this takes the form of surface collection from a range of sites. The paper presents a summary of Greco-Roman-Islamic pottery forms and fabrics collected. It then considers whether broad differences in settlement type can be distinguished from these assemblages; e.g. local urban centres such as Zeugma and Carchemish; settlements in the valley of the River Euphrates; rural settlements on the drier inland plateaus. The results show that even with casually collected surface pottery assemblages it is possible to differentiate between sites and if used carefully, to make some valid insights concerning a range of issues such the development of settlement and inter-regional relationships.

KEY WORDS: HELLENISTIC, ROMAN, BYZANTINE, EARLY ISLAMIC, SURVEY POTTERY, REGIONAL DISTRIBUTIONS

1. Introduction – the survey

The pottery which is the subject of this paper was collected as part of the 'Land of Carchemish (Syria) Project' (LCP) landscape survey which has been undertaken during the past 4 years (2006-2010) in what is now known as the 'Sajur triangle'. This triangular area of land lies against the modern day border between Syria and Turkey, which forms the northern line of the triangle, with the eastern edge defined

by the River Euphrates and the south-western line which completes the triangle being that of the River Sajur itself (Figure 1). The purpose of the survey is to investigate aspects of long-term settlement development and the relationships between upland plateau areas and those of the lower fertile valleys of the River Sajur and the densely settled middle River Euphrates valley (Peltenburg *et al.* 2012; Wilkinson *et al.* 2007; Wilkinson and Peltenburg 2009, 2010). The region of the Sajur triangle can be characterized into three distinct

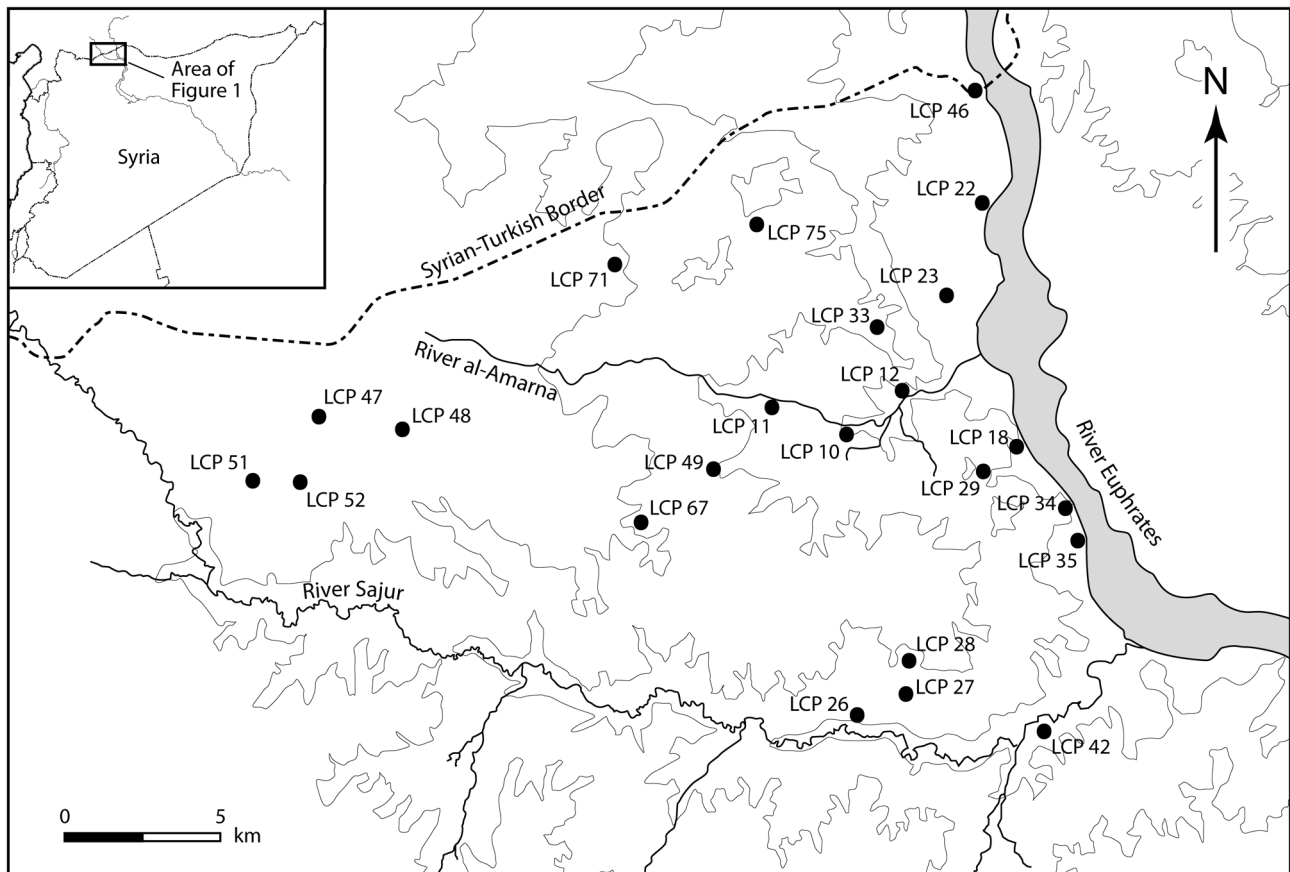


FIGURE 1. LOCATION OF THE LCP SURVEY – 'SAJUR TRIANGLE' AND LOCATION OF MAJOR SITES

environmental zones (Wilkinson and Peltenburg 2010). Each zone has a different topography and underlying geology which has affected land-use and long-term settlement histories. The most densely settled is that of Zone 1, which is the area immediately bordering the Euphrates River, and comprises its floodplain and adjoining terraces of alluvial soils, and whose fertility is closely linked to river irrigation. To the west of these lie the two upland plateau zones: Zone 2 is comprised of a region of rolling limestone hills to the immediate west of Zone 1; beyond and to the west of Zone 2 is Zone 3, which is characterized as a fertile upland plain of *terra rossa* soils (Peltenburg *et al.* 2012; though see a more nuanced characterisation of the topography and environment in Wilkinson *et al.* 2012: 145-49). The entire region lies within the zone of 350mm of precipitation per annum, which means that dry farming agriculture can be undertaken within the upland regions.

The aim of this paper is to assess the pottery assemblage deriving from what might be termed the Graeco-Roman to Byzantine periods in a broad sense (that is from the commencement of the Hellenistic period in the 4th century BC until the advent of the early Islamic period in the 7th century AD) that was collected at the sampled sites within the survey area. For this broad Graeco-Roman to Byzantine period I shall begin by considering what this assemblage might reveal in terms of settlement and the use of different pottery wares both chronologically and spatially. To date, there is a relatively limited body of work exploring the pottery of this period for the region around the River Euphrates, and work carried out on pottery assemblages resulting from surface collection during landscape surveys comprises an even smaller resource. However, exciting new work in recent years has begun to change this, and of considerable importance is the excavation work undertaken at nearby Zeugma during rescue operations in the 1990s and early 2000s which has allowed a stratified assemblage of pottery to be analysed, and this important work is due to be published shortly (for the excavations: Abadie-Reynal *et al.* 1996; Early 2003; Kennedy 1998; for the pottery: Abadie-Reynal 2004, 2005; Gschwind 2003; Kenrick 2013; Martz 2007; Reynolds 2013). In addition to this, further stratified pottery assemblages have been published from rescue excavations at sites further downstream on the River Euphrates in advance of the building of a dam and the formation of Lake Tabqa (renamed Assad) (Harper 1980; Holland 2006; Wilkinson 2004). There are also the extensive excavations at Resafa and Dura-Europos which have added to knowledge of both the Hellenistic and early Roman wares, as well as the Late Roman and early Islamic wares (e.g. Dyson 1968; Konrad 1992, 2001; Lugar 1992; Mackensen 1984; Miglus 1999).

Regarding pottery collected during survey, a number of brief pottery analyses have been carried out for surveys which centred on the River Euphrates basin and its tributaries in North Syria and into southern Turkey (Bartl 1994, 1996; Dorna-Metzger 1996; Gerber 1996; Northedge 1981; Wilkinson 1990). Given the increasing recognition of survey as an appropriate way of exploring

archaeological landscapes, and the ever-increasing amount of pottery which is collected (often primarily as a dating tool) during these surveys, I believe that it is important to begin to explore different ways of utilizing these assemblages in order to begin to address wider archaeological questions. This is very much a preliminary presentation of results based on analytical approaches to survey pottery and is primarily concerned with exploring the potential of the methodologies used here.

2. Techniques of collection

In order to fulfil the aims of the landscape survey a number of different field techniques were employed in the recovery of material evidence for settlement across the three different zones of the survey area. This meant that a selection of diagnostic surface sherds of pottery was collected either from sites identified in earlier surveys or new sites identified through information gathered from locals or sites located at points of site-potential such as significant topographical points, for example hill tops or prominent bluffs. An additional number of sites were located through close analyses of satellite imagery. Many of the previously identified sites took the form of tell settlements located along the valleys of the River Euphrates and Sajur, and that of the Amarna River (Peltenburg 2007). A further batch of new sites was recovered as a result of walked transects undertaken in a selection of sample fields within all three zones (Wilkinson *et al.* 2007, 216). By the close of the 2009 season a total of 78 sites had been identified and from each a representative sample of surface pottery sherds had been collected (i.e. both diagnostic and non-diagnostic sherds) (Rice 1987). Many of these sites were quite extensive in area and were consequently divided into a number of sub-sites depending on certain basic criteria which distinguished each sub-site. Many of the tell sites were divided into sample collection zones which delimited physical elements of a tell structure, and this in turn allowed a potentially complex site to be considered in terms of component areas. In practice, this meant that the tell summit would comprise one collection zone, a second would perhaps consist of the tell slopes, while often it was necessary to have a further sample area which covered an area at the base of the tell.

3. Pottery collected

The sample strategy employed in this project ensured that pottery from a range of site types and site sizes was collected. Analysis of all the data obtained during survey has allowed the classification of settlements of all periods into three types: nucleated settlements, some of which are associated with tells; villages or single farmsteads in dispersed locations across the whole landscape; hill-top sites (Wilkinson *et al.* 2007, 219). Some of the sites have been interpreted as representing single period occupation, or periods of occupation which fall outside chronological periods of interest in this current analysis (that is, outside the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine periods), and thus are not considered here.

In this analytical exercise, I am not considering every site with pottery identified in the survey, but rather a sample of sites in order to explore the application of a particular approach to pottery analysis. The quantity of pottery (both present on the surface and collected during survey) differed from site to site, with some sites producing only a handful of quite small, worn sherds, whereas from other sites (particularly those associated with tell sites) large numbers of diagnostic sherds were noted, a sample of which was recovered and recorded. Given the intrinsically biased nature of assemblages collected through surface survey, absolute quantities are considered to be less important in this current analysis than presence or absence. While it is recognised that quantification of surface finds is important and should play a role in the analysis of all categories of material, for this exploration of methodology I am primarily interested in determining whether it is possible to detect broad trends which can be understood through presence and absence and relative quantities of different types.

An important consideration and the subject of continued debate has been about whether sites can be dated adequately using just the surface sherds (e.g. Orton 2000). Whilst the collection of surface sherds produces a pottery assemblage which is undoubtedly limited in a number of ways when attempting to carry out detailed, in depth analyses of past human activity, it remains a key element of most (if not all) landscape surveys. Surface sherds permit the initial identification of sites and are usually the first indication of broad chronological periods represented at individual sites. Furthermore, any changes in gross trends across sites and the landscape region as a whole permit suggestions about settlement change within the survey area across both space and time. Given the ubiquity of pottery assemblages resulting from landscape survey, any consideration of ways in which these assemblages can enhance our understanding of settlement activity and change is likely to be useful. To this end, the data derived from assemblages of pottery collected during the survey and used to characterize each site can allow us to go beyond this basic employment and to begin to ask more specific questions related to the use of particular forms of pottery, the exploitation of the landscape and the development of settlement for the period from the 4th century BC until the 8th century AD.

The range of pottery collected from the sites for the Greco-Roman to Byzantine periods comprises a typical range of amphorae, fine wares, table wares, and coarse wares, including cooking vessels, storage jars and *pithoi*. Amphorae comprise both imported transport-amphorae of various fabrics and local buff wares. The fine wares are essentially decorated table vessels of cup, bowl, plate and dish forms. These forms are also included within the general category of table wares, along with jars, small flagons and jugs for table use and domestic storage and are distinguished from fine wares generally by the coarseness of the fabric. Cooking wares include flat pans and casseroles. Coarse wares make a large component of the sherds collected in a surface survey context, and because

surface sherds are often much worn the identification of a particular form can be sometimes problematic.

As discussed elsewhere, the pottery assemblage of the LCP survey and of other site assemblages for what might be termed the Northern Euphrates has more parallels within pottery assemblages of sites downstream rather than those of the Mediterranean coastal regions (Kenrick 2013). Important in this regard is the pottery from the nearby rescue excavations at Zeugma (currently awaiting publication). The majority of the pottery collected both at Zeugma and in the LCP survey could be ascribed to the category of Buff wares (alternatively, 'plain wares'), used for food preparation vessels and storage jars, identified in these excavations and which run through several periods in various forms. The main vessels which can allow for more accurate dating are the various imported fine wares and brittle (cooking) wares of later centuries, as well as certain amphorae.

The dating of Hellenistic phase material is based on a range of what can be termed fine wares, which may be locally or regionally made and include red and black slipped wares. The majority of sherds in these Hellenistic slipped wares consist of fish-plates and incurved rim bowls. A number of other Hellenistic fine wares were identified, though in much smaller numbers, and included in this category were some sherds of what has been termed the black-slipped predecessor (BSP) of Eastern Sigillata A (Slane 1997, 269) or black-slipped ware. A few Megarian bowl sherds were also found, as well as some fine grey wares. Other Hellenistic forms include incurved rim bowls and folded rim jars. Dominant in terms of fine ware for the early Roman period is Eastern Sigillata A and various related red wares. By the Late Roman period the so-called 'brittle wares' (cooking-kitchen wares) along with regionally-traded amphorae are the main identifiable sherds, particularly for the 3rd century AD. By the 5th century AD, the region of the survey area was receiving small quantities of Late Roman fine wares, such as African, Phocaean, and Cypriot red slip wares (Hayes 2001).

4. Distribution between various sites

Preliminary analyses of the material collected during the survey have resulted in the emergence of some basic patterns in the distribution of the sherds. These distribution patterns can cast some light on a range of issues including the changing use of pottery, trade and cultural links on an interregional scale, and the change in distribution and types of settlement. These are all relatively large-scale changes and, as noted above, this type of analysis provides only broad trends; nevertheless the trends that can be seen are arguably a reflection of a range of cultural factors and other influences combined.

More pottery analysis needs to be undertaken to explore the full survey dataset and to allow for more detailed interpretations of these influences. However, I would argue that the results here show that if surface pottery is

collected in sufficient quantity then it can provide some basic, useful indicators for the Classical or Graeco-Roman period beyond the usual classification of sites into broad chronological groupings. This information can be summarized on a period by period basis and, when this is done, it is possible to distinguish trends in the data which indicate some key changes.

Hellenistic and early Roman period

One very interesting site which in all probability precedes the Roman period is LCP Site 34, a tell site situated on the terrace overlooking the floodplain of the River Euphrates. An Attic sherd was recovered from this site and the rest of the pottery collected here comprises a very distinctive

LCP08

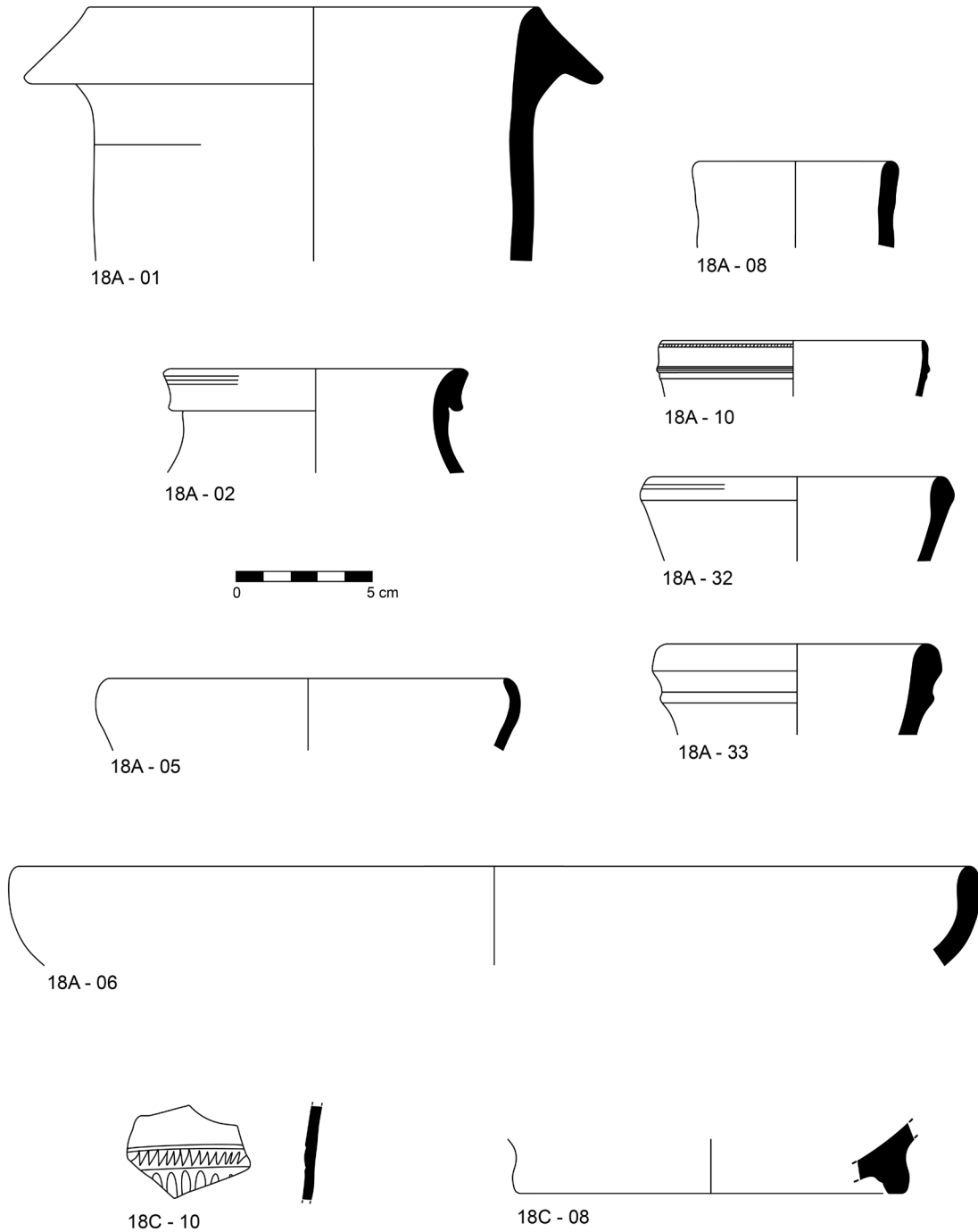


FIGURE 2. LCP SITE 18: POTTERY FORMS

assemblage not observed at any other site within the survey area. Amongst the sherds collected in the first season were one black sherd with brown paint on a buff surface in a hard pale grey-green fabric and one distinctive rim in pale grey-green fabric. These sherds, as well as others collected in a second visit to the site, whilst bearing some similarities in form to Iron Age and Hellenistic sherds, were distinctive in their fabric and so at present are thought to belong to the Persian period. It would seem from comparanda from a number of additional downstream sites, that this is indeed likely to be a site of Persian period date (Wilkinson 2004, 96-97). In addition to this very distinctive material, during the first survey in 2008, five bodysherds of what is commonly termed 'brittle ware', a red fabric with red or black surfaces, were collected at LCP Site 34; these sherds, while difficult to assign to a particular period, do signify some activity in the Greco-Roman to early Islamic periods. The pottery collected at LCP Site 34 is important as it is indicative of the types and degree of external contact in this region and also a degree of continuity which is particularly interesting if this site was originally founded as a small Persian site on the high terrace overlooking the River Euphrates.

The change in terms of settlement understood from analysis of the collected pottery for this period sees the beginning of a distinct shift away from the previously dominant location of settlements, that is the tell sites situated at regular intervals along the line of the Rivers Euphrates, Sajur and Amarna, to a more dispersed pattern of small, low off-tell sites. This is partly a consequence of a developing network of canals and roads. Furthermore, we can see the appearance of new sites on the edge of the hills above the floodplains, particularly in relation to the River Euphrates. A particularly good example of this shift away from the tells and into areas which previously show very little sign of settlement activity is LCP Site 18, situated on the edge of the limestone bluff which overlooks the floodplain of the River Euphrates and spreads back into a steep-sided valley cut into the hills behind. Amongst the prominent features of this site are a number of building foundation walls and rock-cut stairways leading out of the valley bottom up to a number of impressive and elaborate rock-cut tombs.

The pottery from LCP Site 18 yielded a semi-fine angled rim table amphora (Figure 2, LCP 18A-01 = Berlin 1997, 39, PW1, Plate 1); a number of local Hellenistic fine ware bowls with incurved rims (for example LCP 18A-05, 06 = Kenrick 2013, PT6 etc.); along with associated bases (e.g. LCP 18A-17, 23). Many of these fine ware sherds exhibited red and brown painted interiors. Occupation seems to have extended at least from the late Hellenistic period and into the early Roman period clearly indicated by the presence of moulded decoration on some fine ware sherds (LCP 18A-35, and 18C-10). The early Roman period is represented by a fine example of ESA in the shape of a hemispherical bowl, (LCP 18A-10 = Kenrick 1981, 446 [Hayes Form 48]) and by the base of a fine ware red-painted bowl, (LCP 18C-08).

However, whilst new dispersed settlements were being established, occupation of the tells themselves continued throughout the Hellenistic period. This is true of many of the tell sites within the survey area, and a few clear examples of continued occupation can be seen from the assemblages of pottery sherds collected from LCP sites 10 (Tell 'Ain al-Beida) and 11 (Tell Ma'zala). These two sites are small, prominent tells situated along the north side of the small Nahr al-Amarna river. Among the collected sherds are many Seleucid incurved rim bowls of various sizes, fish plates, and examples of Hellenistic slipped wares.

In the Seleucid to Roman periods, evidence of structures reveals continuity of occupation at several early settlement sites. This can be seen for example at LCP Site 22, Tell Jerablus Tatani (e.g Peltenburg *et al.* 1995) and LCP Site 46 or Carchemish itself (Peltenburg *et al. forthcoming*), and there may also be evidence for structures on Tell Amarna (Tunca 2004). Both Tell Amarna and the complex at Carchemish are large and prominent in the landscape and so are likely to have continued to act as natural foci in the region over many periods, and continued to attract building activity of some sort.

In terms of surface pottery, the collection of surface sherds from sections or zones based on the topographical areas of a particular tell has revealed patterns which would appear to emphasize and highlight the distinct shift that seems to occur in the early Roman period. A prime example of this shift in activity is provided by LCP Site 10. Here the site was divided into three distinct zones (the tell summit – 10A; the tell slopes – 10B; and the area adjoining the southern half of the tell - 10C) and the surface sherds collected, while not being absolutely rigidly demarcated in terms of period, do show strong indications of higher densities of sherds of particular periods in particular zones. Analyses seem to suggest that on the summit of the tell (Zone 10A) Hellenistic period sherds were significantly more numerous than any other period within the broad Hellenistic to early Islamic periods. Hellenistic period sherds were also recovered from the tell slopes and the area at the foot of the tell, though these were outnumbered by Roman, Byzantine and early Islamic period sherds, with Byzantine and early Islamic finds being dominant in number in the zone at the base of the tell (10C) (Figure 3). This pattern gives a clear indication of very long-term site continuity and reveals the continued importance of a site in the landscape over a very long time and through various different cultural changes. What it also reveals is that occupation of the tell sites shifts at some point in the Roman period from the upper levels of the tell.

Another very interesting site in terms of the pottery assemblage is LCP Site 42 which, according to current interpretations represents a site exclusively of the late Hellenistic period, with a pottery assemblage that can be categorized as being almost exclusively of a comparatively elite nature. Included in the surface collection were a number of fine ware bowls (LCP 42-02 to 42-05); the rim of a krater (LCP 42-06 = Berlin 1997, 138, PW419,

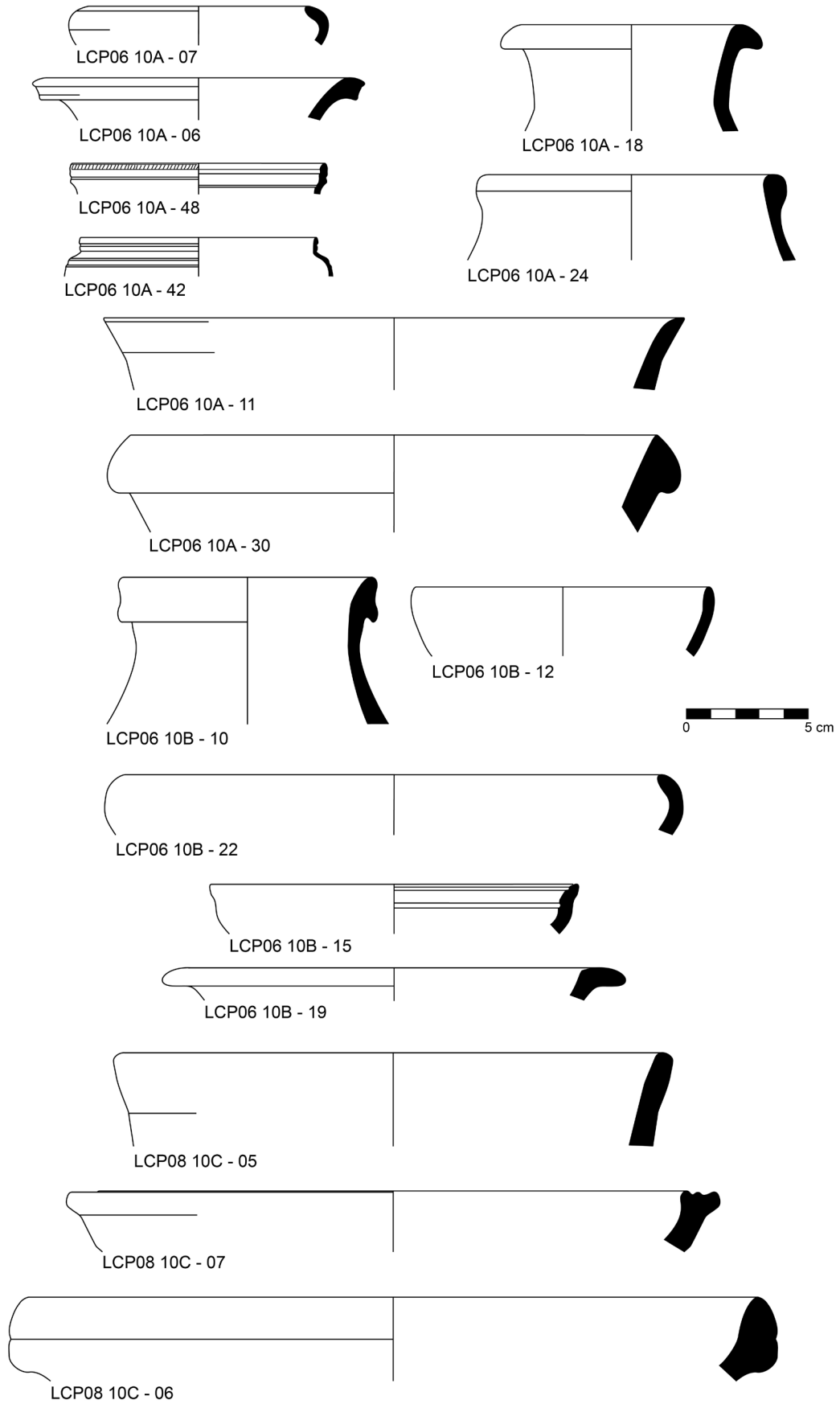


FIGURE 3. LCP SITE 10: POTTERY FORMS

Plate 46); a fragment of a moulded bowl, with *ovolo* and vegetation decoration (LCP 42-13); an amphora base (LCP 42-14); and an ESA rim of a Hellenistic footless bowl (Figure 4:LCP 42-01 = Slane 1997, 219, TA type 26, FW 217).

Other small sites situated along the course of the river valleys continue to develop into what can be described as villages based on the density and extent of surface sherds. Examples of such sites are LCP 26 along the course of the River Sajur, and LCP 35, a complex site on the edge of

LCP 08

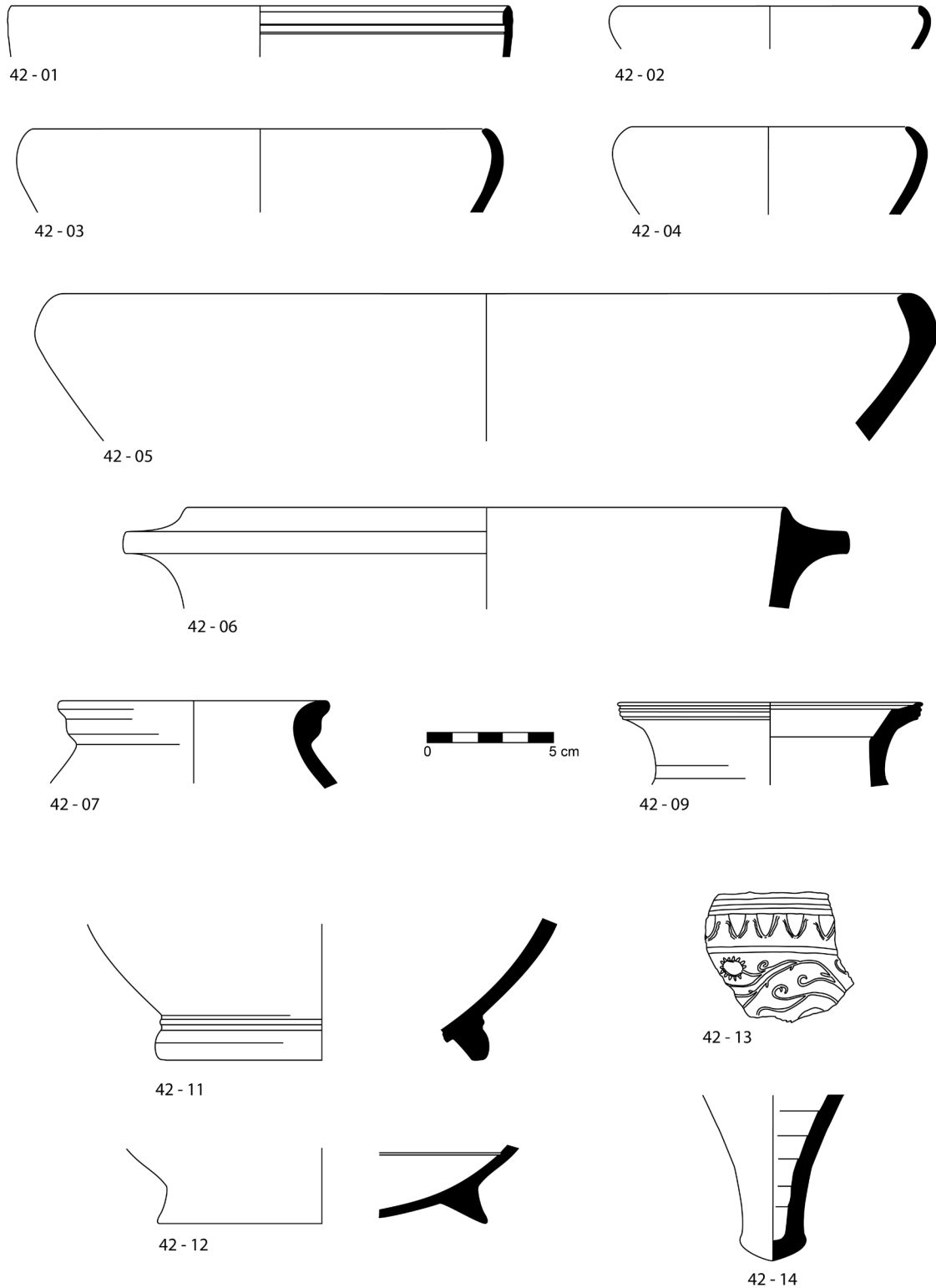


FIGURE 4. LCP SITE 42: LATE HELLENISTIC FORMS

the River Euphrates floodplain. Both these sites continue to be inhabited villages today. LCP 26 produced a low sherd count which consisted of a number of Hellenistic fine ware sherds including some incurved rim bowls and some bodysherds from much later within the Roman to Byzantine periods. The pottery recovered from LCP 35 derives mainly from the agricultural fields surrounding

the modern day village and thus was on the whole very weathered. The assemblage included a range of vessel types from the Roman and Byzantine periods such as the fine ware bodysherds of ESA and ARS and a number of bowls, jars and handles, of which some might be described as local buff wares (Figure 5). In all, the assemblage represents a preponderance of coarse table and storage

LCP 08

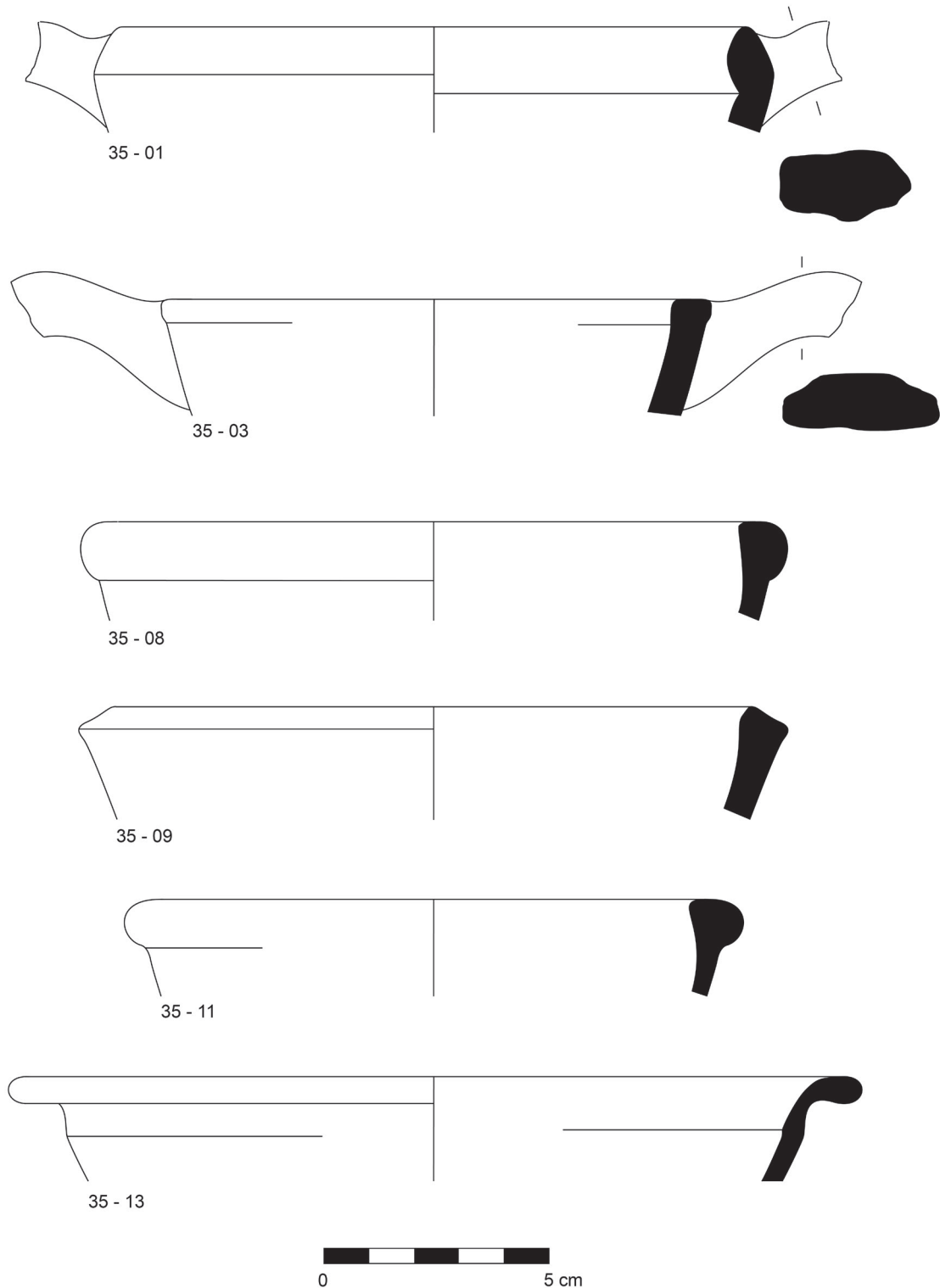


FIGURE 5. LCP SITE 35: A ROMAN VILLAGE SETTLEMENT

wares, as we might expect for a village of this time, but with the addition of some imported fine wares.

From initial analyses of the surface pottery, it appears that the Roman period sees an expansion of sites out into the previously relatively undeveloped regions of the 'terra-

rossa' soils which lie in the north-west region of the survey area. Such sites in this region include LCP sites 67, 71 and 75, and these are now flat sites in stony areas, partially ploughed and situated within areas of modern arable fields. The abundant surface pottery sherds are mixed in among the stones with many tile fragments and the whole

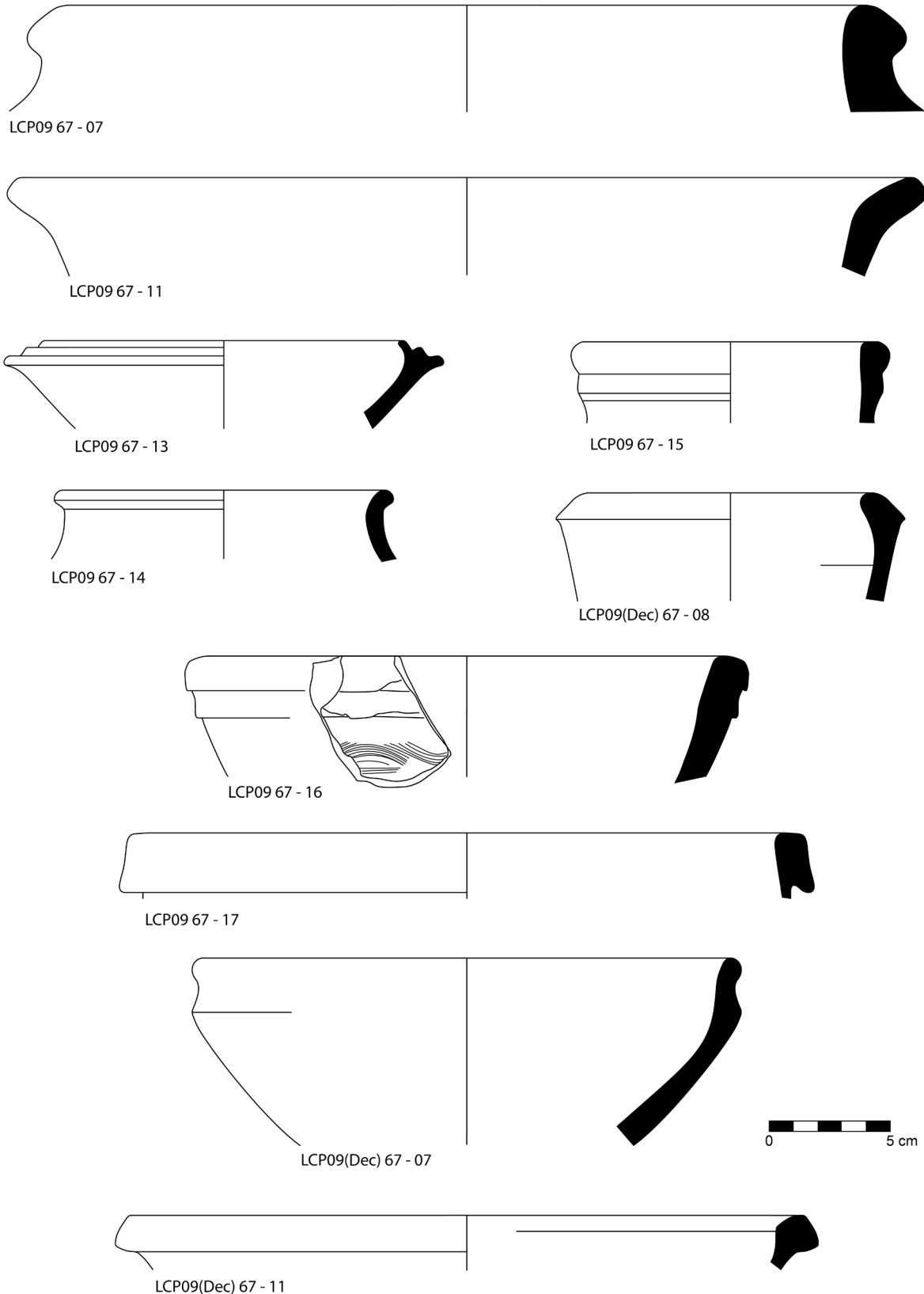


FIGURE 6. LCP SITE 67: POTTERY FROM AN UPLAND *TERRA ROSSA* VILLAGE

of each site appears to cover an extensive area. It seems that these represent village communities which, based on our understanding of the surface pottery, emerged during the Late Roman period and continued to flourish into the early Islamic period (Figure 6).

Thus we have seen some broad settlement shifts evident in the surface pottery, which, on the inter-site level, indicate a move from mainly tell sites in the early Hellenistic period, to more regular, nucleated villages along the river floodplains alongside continued tell occupation. During the Roman period, we see a major settlement shift out into the previously largely unoccupied areas to the west. On the intra-site level the period is marked by changes in the way tells are occupied from the Hellenistic to Roman periods.

Byzantine-early Islamic

During the Byzantine period further changes in settlement patterns occurred, many of which continued on into the early Islamic. New small, isolated sites were established on the limestone hills, further inland than the majority of previous settlement, and away from the primary water sources. On the fertile plains of 'terra-rossa' soils in the west, the assemblages of surface sherds provided evidence to show that the initial surge of settlement here continued into the Byzantine period, mainly in the form of village sites.

Through analysis of the surface sherds, Sites LCP 27 and 28 provide examples of Byzantine to early Islamic occupation. Indeed, at these particular sites we can go beyond these simple statements about occupation and continuity, obtain a sense of the ways in which pottery was being used, and take a measure of the activities and function of the site generally. The assemblages of both LCP27 and 28 represent what we might expect of farmsteads, with a number of large storage vessels, in the form of either (storage?) jars (Figure 7, e.g. LCP 27-2, 3, 8 and LCP 28-1, 9), storage basins (e.g. LCP 27-5 and LCP 28-2, 7, 8) or amphorae (e.g. LCP 28-6, beside an amphora base and 4 handles not illustrated). Along with these examples a number of brittle ware body sherds were recovered from both sites together with a few sherds of blackened cooking wares and also sherds of dark brown, handmade pottery. There were no fine wares recovered from either site, which reinforced the general understanding of farmsteads as places heavily involved in agricultural production and utility living. The fabrics of some of the sherds suggest that these isolated farmsteads date from the Byzantine into the early Islamic periods.

In terms of pottery wares, the dominant types are 'brittle wares' from the Late Roman period onwards, though there is much dispute as to what can be classified as brittle ware (Bartl, Schneider and Bohme 1995; Kenrick 2013). While this debate is both interesting and potentially very important for our understanding of the use of pottery and varying activities on sites, this is largely outside the scope of this paper, and here brittle wares are understood to

comprise the hard-fired metallic quality sherds common in Northern Syria (Bartl, Schneider and Bohme 1995; Vokaer 2009; Vokaer, this volume). These brittle wares were relatively numerous at many sites within the survey area, which would suggest occupation from the Roman period right through into the early Islamic period. Other sites also revealed a number of Late Roman fine ware sherds, which is a strong indication of continued connections and trade with the Mediterranean. At a number of sites African Red Slip (ARS), Cypriot Red Slip (CRS) and Phocaeian Red Slip (PRS) (Late Roman C) fine wares were also retrieved, which supports this westward focus for trade and contact. This is particularly interesting given the relatively northern and eastern focus of earlier periods evident in the pottery, and this is discussed further below.

It appears that many fabrics and forms of pottery developed in the late Byzantine period continue into the early Islamic. Some sites have yielded characteristic early Islamic pottery sherds, such as Islamic glazed wares, and soapy pale cream or green fabrics. None of the characteristic early Islamic wares came from what might be described as purely early Islamic sites i.e. single period sites: all early Islamic pottery came from sites previously occupied, particularly sites which contained earlier Byzantine pottery (see Reynolds, this volume, for a similar pattern in the Homs region). One interesting aspect was that in a number of cases characteristic Islamic sherds were located on the tops of tells which had last been occupied (according to the surface pottery) during the Hellenistic and early Roman periods.

5. Discussion - Trade and Production

As the key themes for the workshop at which this paper was originally presented concerned the evidence for trade and production through pottery analysis, this section will focus initially on Hellenistic to Byzantine period imports and trade. However, as the research for this paper has developed, one of the stated aims of the analysis of survey pottery assemblages has been to determine whether these assemblages can indicate site chronologies and settlement patterns, and these issues will also be covered for all the periods touched on in this paper.

Trade is generally indicated by the presence of imported wares – whether these are fine wares that have been specifically imported for use in the region, 'piggybacking' as part of consignments of other goods, or transport amphorae which are themselves actively used to carry traded goods and indicate also, to some extent, trade routes. In terms of the distribution of the imported wares found within the survey area, some interesting patterns can be discerned when the find spots are mapped. For the late Hellenistic period finds of local Hellenistic fine wares and other, imported Hellenistic fine wares show a particular distribution (Figure 8). While Hellenistic fine wares are to be found across the survey area, there is a heavier concentration at sites located at more or less equal intervals along the Sajur and Amarna Valleys. A number of

LCP08

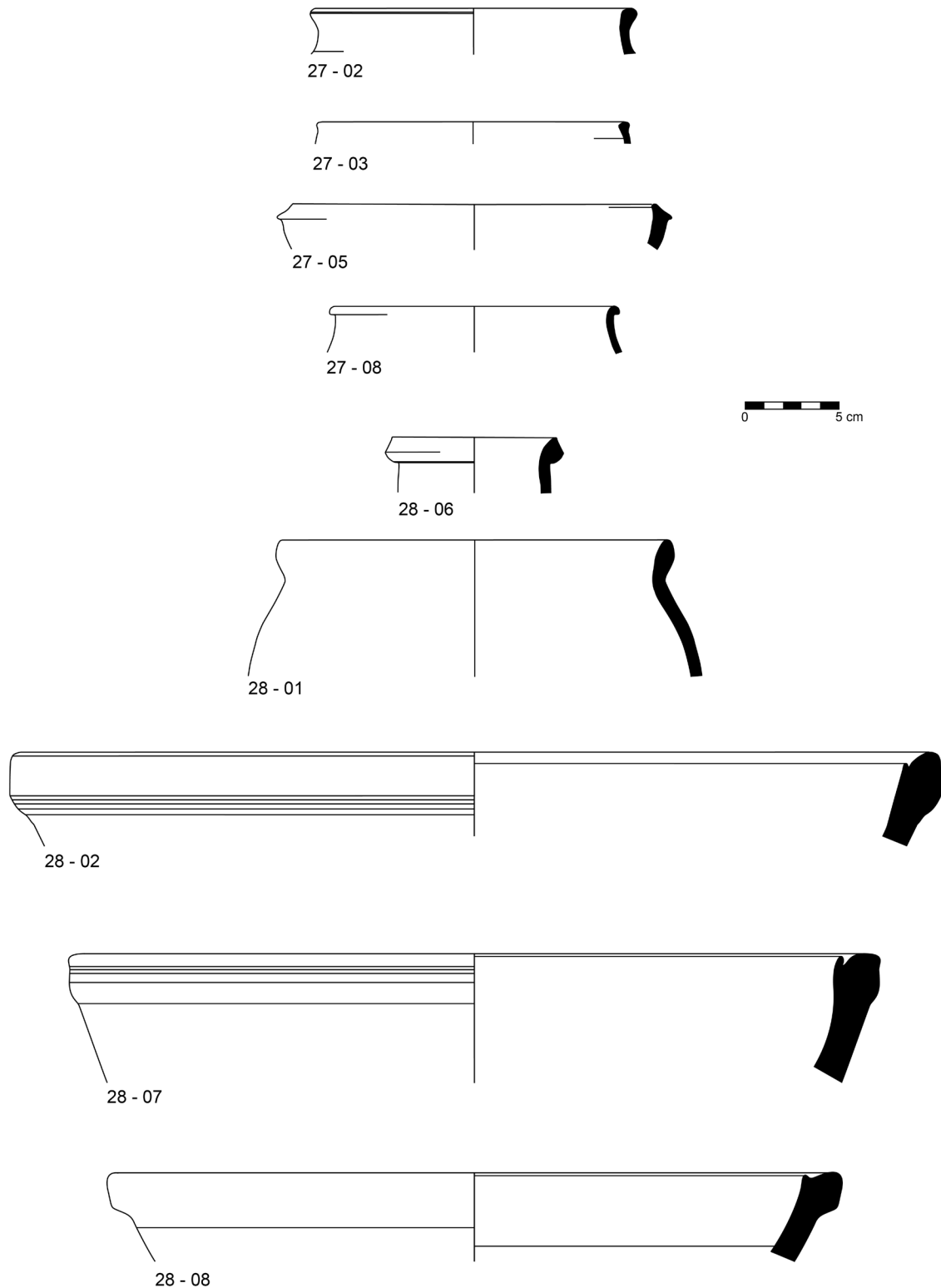


FIGURE 7. LCP SITES 27 AND 28: BYZANTINE TO EARLY ISLAMIC FARMSTEADS

these sites, particularly along the Amarna River, represent ancient tell sites – for example the ancient tell sites LCP 10 and 12. Of great interest are those sites along the Sajur valley which are relatively evenly spread along the line

of the river valley, and represent a combination of ancient tell sites and new (non-tell) sites established during the Hellenistic period. Several sites high on the *terra rossa* plain were also found to contain Hellenistic fine wares –

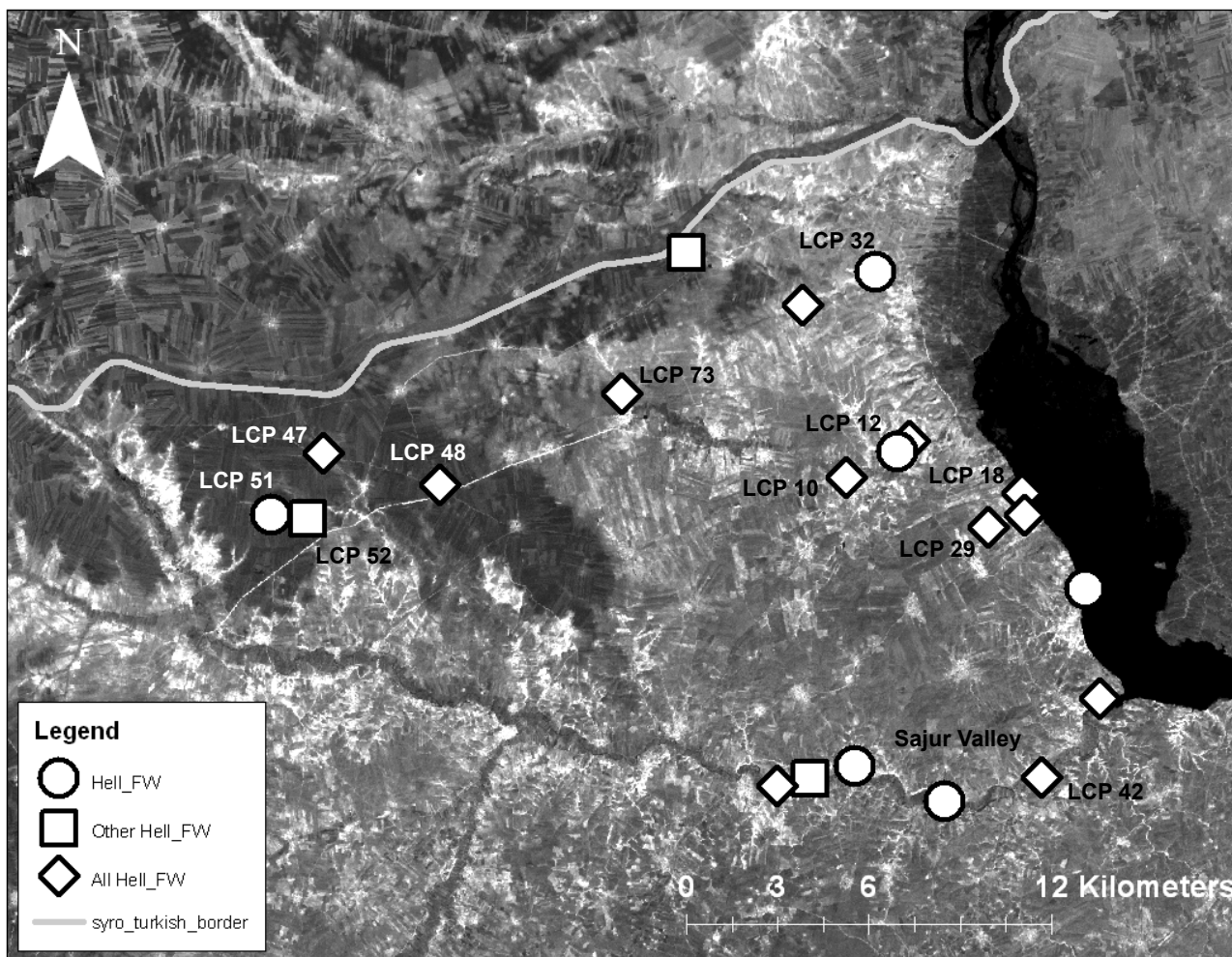


FIGURE 8. DISTRIBUTION OF HELLENISTIC FINE WARES

some of these are again tell sites (LCP 47, 48, 51 and 52), whereas others such as LCP 29 and 32 are sites located on the top of prominent hills.

The early Roman period sees a continuation of what seems to be occurring in the late Hellenistic period: there is a clear pattern of imports in the form of bowls and other fine table wares following on from the importation of Megarian and other mould-made bowls and BSP alongside the continued use of local (or regional) Hellenistic fine ware bowls. These new table ware imports take the form of certain forms of ESA, although there may be occasional pieces of Italian Sigillata and even very scarce examples of Gaulish *sigillata* probably from the second and third centuries as identified in the Zeugma excavations (Kenrick 2013) and elsewhere on the River Euphrates and its tributaries (Kenrick 1981). In addition, a small number of cups and beakers of Classical thin-walled wares were present at a number of sites.

Examination of ESA indicates a close correlation in the distribution of sherds to that of the earlier Hellenistic fine wares which is perhaps a potential indicator of continuity; however, ESA was recovered from fewer sites in total than the Hellenistic fine wares, suggesting a rather altered

distribution pattern. This is further indicated by a strong emphasis on ESA recovery from sites in the eastern half of the survey area, with ESA recovered from only site LCP 47 in the western *terra rossa* (Figure 9).

The later Roman and Byzantine periods see the re-emergence of fine wares with a number of examples of particular wares having been identified within the surface survey pottery so far. These fine wares include rims and bodysherds of ARS, PRS and CRS. By far the most common within the survey area were sherds of PRS (particularly Form 3) which may at least in part be the result of the very distinct rims of this form, being easily recognised during both field survey and in subsequent pottery identification and analysis procedures. However, it has been noticed at the various excavation sites in the upper and middle Euphrates region that this form of the ware is also the dominant form of all the later Roman-Byzantine fine wares (e.g. Harper 1980; Knötzele 2006; Holland 2006). Within the survey there have so far been very few examples of ARS sherds and no readily identifiable sherds of CRS.

For the Late Roman - Byzantine fine wares the distribution pattern is less marked (Figure 10). It is perhaps significant

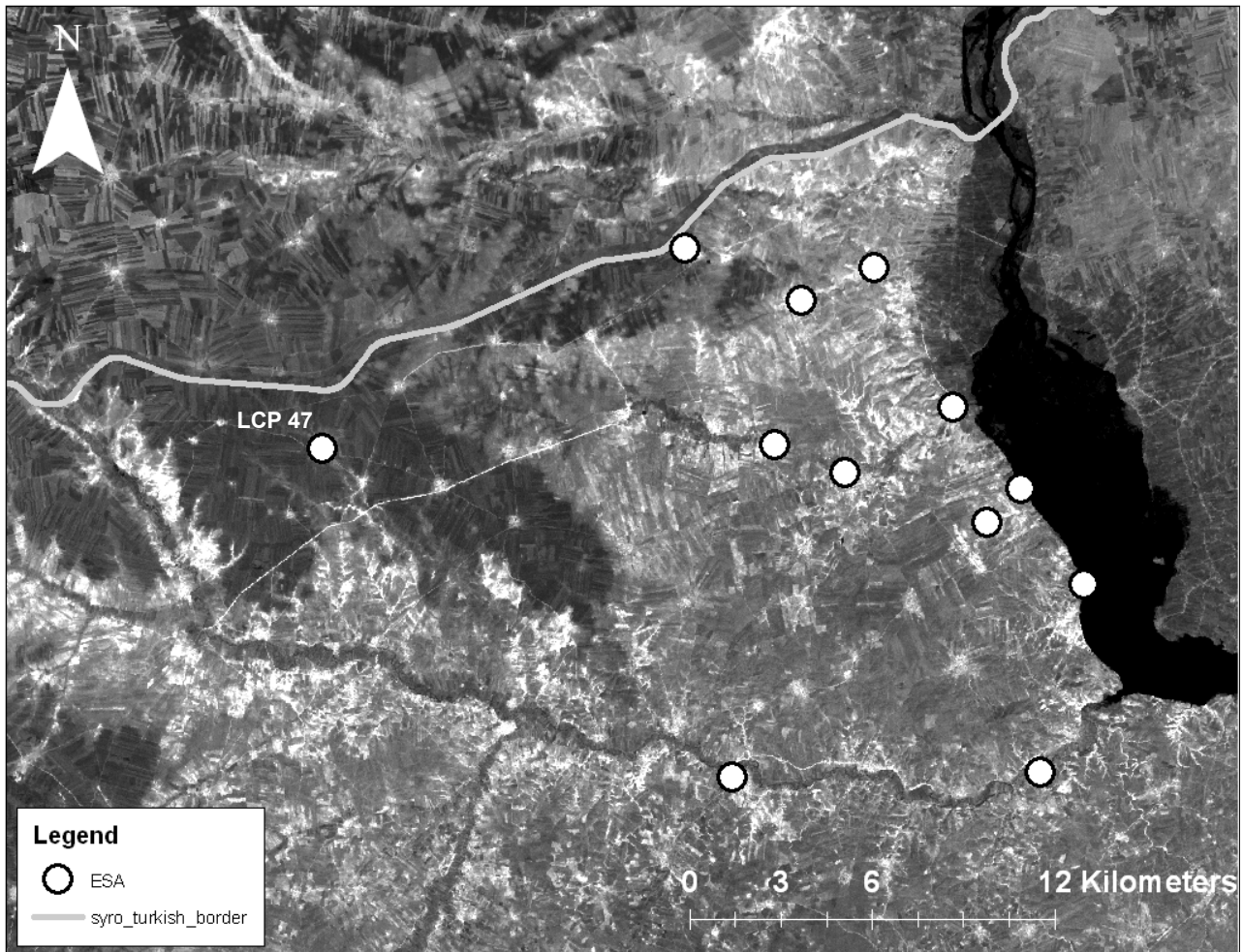


FIGURE 9. DISTRIBUTION OF EASTERN SIGILLATA A (ESA)

that the distribution of such fine wares is both much sparser than in previous periods and is also largely confined to particular areas, especially in the case of ARS which has been recovered from the major settlement sites of LCP 35 and 46. Whilst the distribution of PRS is slightly more widespread than the fine wares, this too is restricted to a number of key sites, particularly large settlement sites such as LCP 23, 46, 47, and 52.

Other than the distinctive imported fine wares, the majority of the pottery relating to the Roman-Byzantine period comprises local-regional buff wares which make up a large percentage of the coarse wares of most sites which is used for storage, food preparation and amphorae (Kenrick 2013). An important component of the assemblages from a large number of sites is that of the so-called brittle (cooking) wares. These brittle wares which seem to have originated in the late Hellenistic period and continued in some forms until the Abbasid period (10th century AD) go on to dominate cooking wares in the Late Roman and Byzantine periods. Recent work on these brittle wares has established that they had specific production locales, and each of these was limited to the production of particular forms and distribution areas (Bartl, Schneider and Bohme 1995; Schneider *et al.* 2007; Vokaer 2005, 2007, 2009;

Vokaer, this volume). These detailed studies are thus able to provide considerable information about factors influencing production and distribution networks on a local scale which is important for understanding change and contact within a clearly defined chronological period and spatial area. However, this paper is concerned with broader, issues and analyses of the data, and within this framework, brittle wares provide a useful indicator for dating sites in the lacuna between the demise of the earlier fine wares of the late Hellenistic and early Roman periods and the introduction of the later fine wares, such as ARS and PRS.

The preliminary analysis of the distribution of brittle wares reveals a strong presence in the eastern half of the survey area, which declines markedly towards the western half of the survey area. A number of sites reveal the permeation of these wares into the interior areas away from the Euphrates, particularly in the area of the *terra rossa* centred on LCP 47, 48, 51, 52 in the Hellenistic periods (Figures 1 and 11). Noticeable also for brittle wares and a more utilitarian pottery assemblage are the two farmsteads of the interior limestone area – LCP 27 and 28. Of course these were not the only two isolated farmsteads within the limestone hills to the immediate east of the River Euphrates, but

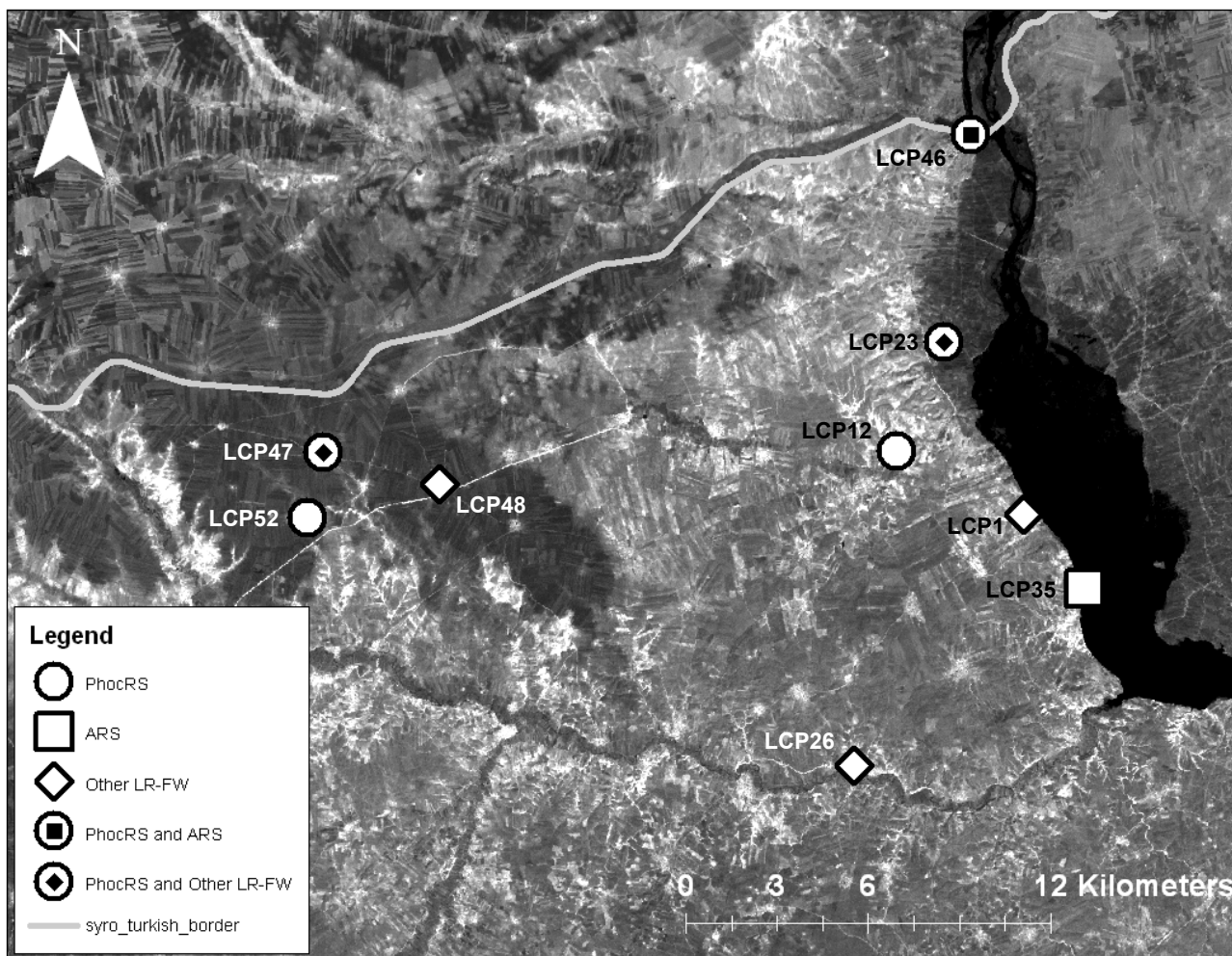


FIGURE 10. DISTRIBUTION OF LATE ROMAN FINEWARES, INCLUDING AFRICAN RED SLIP (ARS) AND PHOCAEAN RED SLIP (PRS) WARES

they do serve as good examples of the type of site which was emerging during the late Byzantine period in this particular region. The similarity in the pottery assemblages from both LCP 27 and 28 suggests that they are typical examples of such sites. As has been noted by other scholars, most brittle ware sherds are small in size and this does not aid the process of dating particular brittle ware forms (Harper 1980, 335). The task is made more difficult when consideration of the long manufacture of such brittle wares is taken into account – from the early Roman (1st century AD) at least until the early Abbasid (9th century AD) period (Harper 1980, 334-335; Reynolds, 2013).

Do the various distribution patterns noted above have what archaeologists would call ‘meaningful’ significance? It could be argued that to a certain degree any distribution patterns considered here will be a result of the methodologies and limitations of surface field survey - limitations which have been explored in great detail in many previous papers (e.g. Alcock and Cherry 2004; Francovich and Patterson 1999). However, moving beyond these limitations, the initial analyses do indicate a corollary between the location of particular wares and forms of pottery, and the geographical location and functional aspects of particular sites, with potential to extend our

understanding to possible links between the presence (or absence) of certain wares and forms and site continuity (or discontinuity). This former trend is especially clear for the Roman and Byzantine periods where there is a thorough penetration of locally traded cooking wares in the form of the long-lived brittle wares compared with the more selective distribution of the imported fine wares. When comparisons are made between the distribution of ESA of the late Hellenistic-early Roman periods and the red slipped wares of the Byzantine periods it can be seen that, in general, wares such as ARS are restricted to particular site types and particular geographical locations. These distributions must reflect aspects of the trade networks within the Euphrates valley, with consignments of ARS travelling and being traded at major settlements along the line of the River Euphrates. It is also highly likely that differences in social status and/or pottery usage are responsible for the restricted distribution of ARS and PRS to larger sites which would have provided larger potential markets for costly table wares (and potential supplies to the army of the Syrian *limes*). Alternatively, larger urban sites contained populations which may have required different forms of pottery to reflect particular aspects of identity; an identity which would serve to differentiate themselves from the inhabitants of the villages in the countryside.

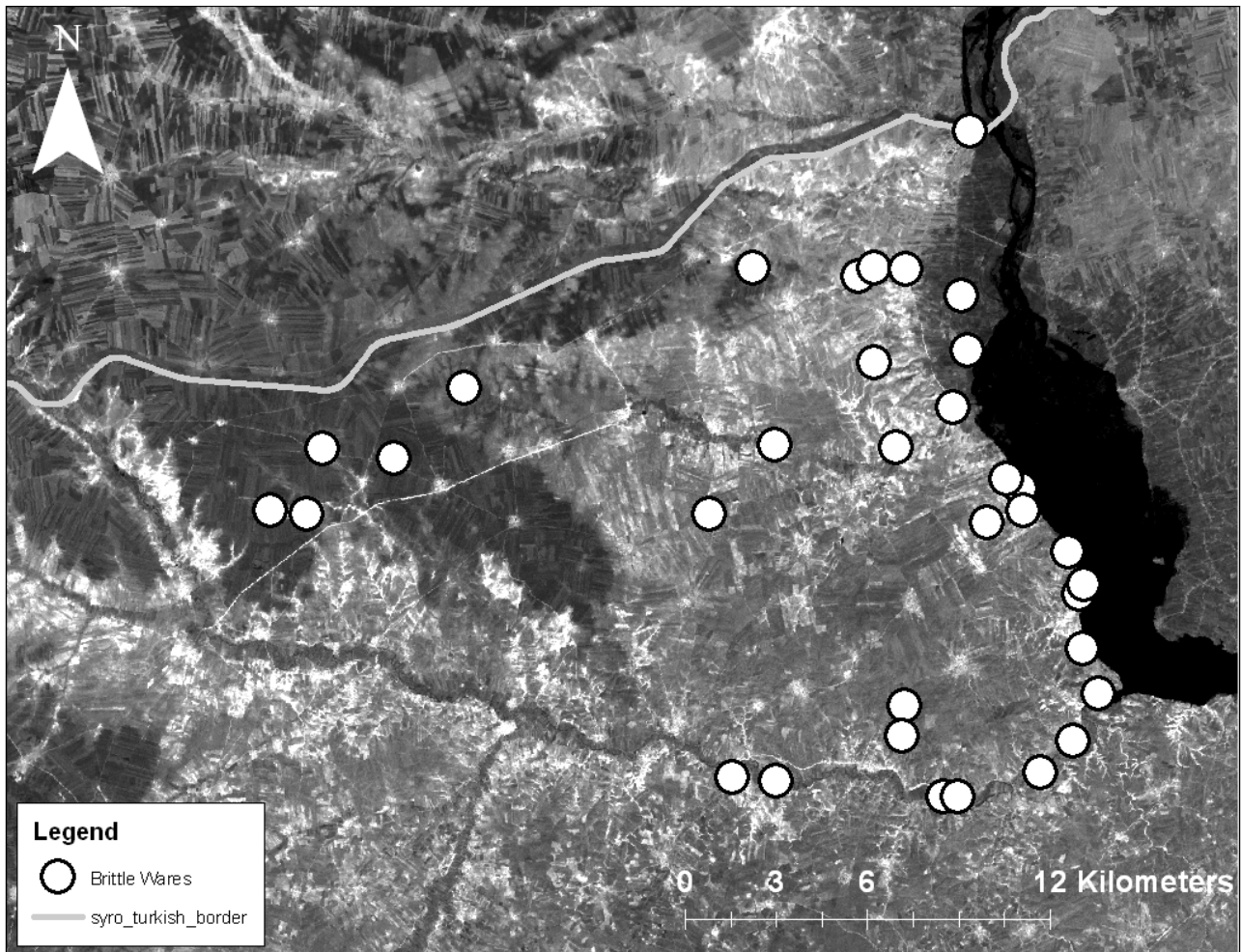


FIGURE 11. DISTRIBUTION OF 'BRITTLE WARES'

LRC was the dominant fine ware at the rescue excavations in Zeugma, with fewer examples of ARS and very few sherds of CRS (Kenrick 2013). Paul Reynolds (2013, 13) recently discussed the basic distribution of these Late Roman-Byzantine fine wares and amphorae within the interior of Northern Syria. Whilst it has already been recorded elsewhere that ARS and CRS are less visible and thus thought to have been less traded within inland Northern Syria (Hayes 2001, 279), Reynolds made the additional observation that the quantities of LRC recovered from Zeugma were much lower than one would expect for the northern and middle Euphrates regions when compared to numbers at Resafa and Qusair as-Saila (Kenrick 2013; Knötzele 2006; Konrad 2001; Mackensen 1984). He went on to speculate that the distribution of imports of fine wares and amphorae reflected the use of particular sites which formed part of the supply line network or had some connection with the Byzantine *limes* (Reynolds 2013, 13).

6 Conclusions

As explained at the beginning of this paper, this work covers only a very preliminary assessment of the surface pottery collected from a landscape survey whose primary aim is to identify long-term changes in settlement. This

analysis of certain elements of the pottery assemblages collected during survey is intended to show the potential such analyses can have to support the project aims by providing a more general understanding of trade, contact and settlement in different areas of the survey area; and that this could be used both to direct areas of more focused enquiry within the extant assemblages, and also to direct further fieldwork. It is expected that some of these initial thoughts will be subject to much greater refinements and change in the coming seasons as the number of sites increases and the pottery analyses progress.

What can be said, however, as a result of this very preliminary investigation, is that it is possible to detect differences in the distributions of particular ware types at different sites, in different periods, and in different geographical zones, and these differences are likely to be the result of a number of different factors which will themselves have changed over time. These factors include such things as the development of new settlements, the continuation of established settlements, the settlement of hitherto sparsely populated areas, the development of new trade links, and the continuation and even expansion of old trade networks. All of these factors can be traced within the survey pottery discussed in this paper, which shows

that investing time in analysing the (admittedly limited) assemblages has great potential value.

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