



IRON AGE POTTERY

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Introduction

The Iron Age pottery from the Syrian-German excavations at Tell Halaf can be divided into two large complexes. The older one includes the pre- and early Aramaean periods and can roughly be dated to the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 1st millennium B.C. The younger complex is dated to the Neo-Assyrian to the Late Babylonian periods and covers the 9th–6th centuries B.C. Significant amounts of pottery from the «Kapara Period» (late 10th to early 9th century B.C.), which marks the climax of Aramaean settlement at Tell Halaf, and from the Achaemenid Period (late 6th to late 4th century B.C.) have not been recovered yet.

As a part of the excavation project, detailed typological catalogues have been established for the pottery of the Aramaean, as well as for the Neo-Assyrian and Post-Assyrian periods. They are continuously being extended and they will serve as the foundation for the final publication of the Iron Age pottery from Tell Halaf.

Early Aramaean Pottery

Pottery ensembles from pre- and early Aramaean times have been collected north and east of the «West-Palast» (*Hilani*). The deep sounding has shown that the early Iron Age can be traced over a longer period of time in this central part of the site, but the deposits here are usually fillings and re-fillings. Thus, the evolution of the pottery at the transition from the 2nd to the 1st millennium B.C. can only be studied to a limited extent so far. However, there are graves with pottery in this area, as well.

Residential structures that have been excavated on the northern slope since 2007, have provided a more detailed stratigraphic sequence of the pre- and early Aramaean periods. Presently, the chronological correlation of structural layers and pottery sequences from the excavation areas around the *Hilani* and on the northern slope are being scrutinized.

Generally speaking, the pre- and early Aramaean pottery is coarse and strongly chaff-tempered. Its typological range is characterized by large jars and bowls, often with relatively thick walls. In very few cases, relations to the Assyrian pottery traditions can be observed. Furthermore, samples of «Groovy Pottery», originating from Anatolia, can be provided (**Fig. 1**).

Neo-Assyrian and Post-Assyrian Pottery

On the one hand, extensive pottery ensembles dating back to the Neo-Assyrian and Post-Assyrian periods, which can partly be reconstructed, were recovered from building A 1 on the mudbrick-terrace at the southern end of the citadel, which might represent an elite residence. On the other hand, such ensembles were found on a number of subsequent floors inside the economic wing of the «Nordost-Palast» (Governor's Palace). While the pottery from building A 1 is to be dated back to the 7th–6th century B.C., the floors of the «Nordost-Palast» cover a span of time from the 9th–6th century B.C.

Apart from the predominant common ware the pottery of building A 1 holds numerous examples of fine ware ceramics, among them a significant amount of beakers of the so-called

«Palace-Ware». By comparison, the pottery from the »Nordost-Palast« is characterized by storage vessels and jars. This may be connected to the functional context of storage and maybe even economic output of the palace (**Fig. 2-4**).

A series of examples of polychrome glazed ceramics deserves special mention. In shape and decoration, they show strong resemblances to objects from Late-Assyrian Ashur and thus, they probably represent imports from the Assyrian heartland. All in all, the Neo-Assyrian and Post-Assyrian pottery from Tell Halaf shows a high degree of standardization, which is essential for mass-produced pottery. As at other settlements of the Assyrian empire, no obvious break can be detected within the pottery sequence. However, the high amount and well-stratified inventories from the new excavations at Tell Halaf offer excellent pre-conditions to further study the development of the younger Iron Age pottery of the Upper Khabur area, based on database-founded qualitative and quantitative analyses of form and fabric.

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