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Arsen L. Budaichiev
Researcher
Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnography
Dagestan Federal Research Center of RAS, Makhachkala, Russia
arseneihae@yandex.ru

CERAMIC “FRUIT-STANDS” FROM THE EARLY BRONZE AGE SITES OF COASTAL DAGESTAN

Abstract. Vases constitute a distinct category of ceramic ware discovered at Early Bronze Age sites in Coastal Dagestan. In domestic studies, these vessels have not yet been sufficiently covered. In foreign archaeological literature, this type of vessels on tall hollow stems is conventionally referred to as “fruit-stands”. The article explores the typology of ceramic vases from the burial grounds of Velikent I (Catacomb 8) and III (Catacomb 1), Kayakent VI, and the Torpakh-kala settlement. It delves into aspects such as their decoration, purpose, chronology, and origin. A total of seven vases (excluding fragments) were identified across the mentioned sites, each possessing distinctive features. During this period, vases were not as common as other types of ordinary ceramic tableware and are notably absent in the archaeological sites of the mountain and foothill regions of Dagestan. Analogies to these vases in Dagestan are recorded in sites from Northeast Azerbaijan (e.g., Serkertepe settlement, Garachay burial ground etc.) as well as in sites of Central and Eastern Anatolia, Northwestern Iran, and other regions. The abundance and size variety of “fruit-stands”, previously classified as ritual vessels, on Late Chalcolithic sites in Anatolia suggests a regional origin for this ceramic tradition. In the East Caucasus region, these vessels emerge in the early 3rd millennium BC and persist until the middle of the 3rd millennium BC.

Keywords: Eastern Caucasus; Dagestan; Early Bronze Age; Kura-Araxes Cultural-Historical Community; ceramic ware; fruit-stands

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Исследовательская статья

Будайчиев Арсен Лахманович
младший научный сотрудник
Институт истории, археологии и этнографии
Дагестанский федеральный исследовательский центр РАН, Махачкала, Россия
arseneihae@yandex.ru

КЕРАМИЧЕСКИЕ ВАЗЫ-«ФРУКТОВНИЦЫ» ИЗ ПАМЯТНИКОВ ПРИМОРСКОГО ДАГЕСТАНА РАННЕГО БРОНЗОВОГО ВЕКА

Аннотация: Одной из категорий керамических изделий памятников раннего бронзового века Приморского Дагестана, являются вазы. В отечественной литературе они еще не были предметом специального изучения. В зарубежной археологической литературе этот тип сосудов на высоких полых поддонах условно именуется «фруктовницы» (*fruit-stands*). В статье рассматриваются вопросы типологии керамических ваз, происходящих из Великентских могильников I (катакомба 8) и III (катакомба 1), Каякентского могильника VI и поселения Торпах-Кала, их декора и назначения, хронологии и происхождения. Всего на упомянутых памятниках представлено только семь ваз (не считая фрагментов), каждая из которых имеет свои отличительные особенности. Вазы в Дагестане в указанный период не получили такого широкого распространения, как другие типы обыденной керамической посуды, а в памятниках горной и предгорной зон они и вовсе не представлены. Аналогии керамическим вазам из Дагестана обнаруживаются не только на памятниках Северо-Восточного Азербайджана (поселение Серкер-тепе, могильник Гарачай и др.), но и на памятниках Центральной и Восточной Анатолии, Северо-Западного Ирана и других областей. На памятниках позднего халколита Анатолии было обнаружено большое количество различных по размеру т. наз. «фруктовниц», которые исследователями были отнесены к ритуально-культовым сосудам. Именно этот регион стал исходным в распространении этой керамической традиции. На территории Восточного Кавказа они появляются в нач. III тыс. до н.э. и бытуют до сер. III тыс. до н.э.

Ключевые слова: Восточный Кавказ; Дагестан; ранний бронзовый век; куро-аракская культурно-историческая общность; керамика; фруктовницы

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Introduction

One of the distinctive categories of ceramic ware found at sites in Dagestan belonging to the Kura-Araxes Cultural-Historical Community (hereinafter as “CHC”) is the category of vessels known as vases. These vessels have not yet been comprehensively covered in Russian literature, with only a concise overview provided in R.G. Magomedov’s book [1, pp. 16–17]. In his work, the author draws comparisons between local vases and those from the Serkertepe settlement in North-East Azerbaijan, highlighting individual parallels between these vessels.

From the Early Bronze Age sites of Coastal Dagestan, specifically the Torpakh-kala settlement, Velikent burial ground I (Catacomb 8), Velikent burial ground III (Catacomb 1), and Kayakent VI burial ground, a total of seven archaeologically intact ceramic vases have been unearthed (Fig. 1), excluding fragments. These are two-part vessels, taking the form of either round-sided or straight-sided bowls mounted on tall hollow stems. The height of these stems accounts for at least 1/3 of the vessel’s overall height. The determination of whether certain fragments recovered during excavations belong to vases is primarily based on the examination of the fragments of hollow stems. This distinction is crucial, as fragments of rims and walls may belong not to vases but to bowls themselves (for bowl typology, see: [2, pp. 33–53]). It is noteworthy that the category of vases does not encompass wide-mouthed two-handled bowls on low stems (with a height of 1/6 of the vessel’s height) and one-handed goblets resembling deep bowls with an inset belt of shaded triangles on high stems, originating from the Kayakent burial ground VI [1, p. 10, 13–15, fig. 4, 4, 5, 6]. R.G. Magomedov classifies the aforementioned sites, along with others in the North-Eastern Caucasus from the Early Bronze Age, as part of the Velikent culture within the Kura-Araxes CHC [3, pp. 38–44; 4, pp. 687–696; 5, pp. 157–166].

Typology

We confine our classification of vases to whole specimens, although it is acknowledged that individual subtypes can be discerned based on variations in shape, size, and design of stems. The proposed typology relies on the configuration of the primary structural elements of the vase – the bowl and its stem. Each vase exhibits distinctive morphological features, establishing its identification as a distinct type. As new material accumulates, this typology may undergo refinement and revision.

Type I

This type represents a robust vase (with a wall thickness of 1.5–2 cm) in the form of a wide-mouthed bowl with nearly straight walls and a collared rim, mounted on a tall three-section corrugated stem (Fig. 2, 1). The vase includes a horizontal tubular handle, adorned with “tendrils” extending to the sides, situated at the edge of the vessel’s rim. A round hole can be seen at the base of the stem ($d = 2.8$ cm). The outer surface of the vessel is smoothed and exhibits a brown-ocher hue. The vase’s dimensions are as follows: $h = 23.8$ cm, d mouth = 38 cm, h stem = 13.8 cm, d stem base = 12 cm. The height of the vase to its stem ratio is 1:0.58, and the height of the vase to the diameter of the mouth is 1:1.6.

This vase was discovered *in situ* on the adobe floor of the upper (final) horizon of the Torpakhkala settlement within the layer affected by a significant fire that destroyed the dwelling¹. From the same level of the settlement, more than two dozen ceramic vessels were found lying on the floor, along with numerous fragments of vessels².

Type II

This type represents a vase configured as a wide-mouthed, round-sided bowl with a thickened collar, mounted on a tall conical stem featuring a rim at the base, adorned with encircling double incised zigzag lines (Fig. 3, 1). Originating from a disturbed burial at Kayakent burial ground VI [1, p. 13, fig. 4, 3; 6, p. 147, fig. 2, 12], the vase is equipped with a loop-shaped handle positioned at the rim's edge. The handle's interior is embellished with an incised double zigzag belt, while on the opposite side, two conical moldings are present. In the middle of the stem, four round holes are arranged opposite each other ($d = 1.1$ cm). The outer surface of the vessel is smoothed and exhibits a light brown color. The vase's dimensions are as follows: $h = 17$ cm, d mouth = 27 cm, h stem = 8 cm, d stem base = 14 cm. The height of the vase to its stem ratio is 1:0.47, and the height of the vase to the diameter of the mouth is 1:1.58.

The next three vase types originate from Catacomb 8 of the Velikent I burial ground, where approximately 500 ceramic vessels, including bowls, jars, pots, mugs, etc., were unearthed and are currently stored in the Archaeological Funds of the IHAE DFRC RAS [7, p. 135, fig. 26].

Type III

This type features a vase designed as a deep, wide-mouthed, almost straight-sided, wide-open bowl situated on a conical stem (resembling an inverted bowl with straight walls). The vase is adorned with tendril-shaped ribbon handles exhibiting grooves at the top, positioned at the mouth of the vessel (Fig. 3, 4) [7, p. 135, fig. 26, 17]. In the middle part of the stem, three evenly spaced round holes are present ($d = 2.5$ cm). The outer surface of the vessel is gray-brown, burnished. The vase's dimensions are as follows: $h = 18.5$ cm, d mouth = 28 cm, h stem = 8 cm, d stem base = 19 cm. The height of the vase to its stem ratio is 1:0.43, and the height of the vase to the diameter of the mouth is 1:1.51.

Type IV

This type is characterized by a vase in the form of a wide-open bowl featuring an internal thickening at the rim, placed on a low stem without holes (Fig. 3, 3). A single tendril-ribbon-shaped handle has been preserved on the vessel. The outer surface of the vessel is brown, burnished. The vase's dimensions are as follows: $h = 12.7$ cm, d mouth = 23 cm, h stem = 5 cm, d stem base = 11 cm. The height of the vase to its stem ratio is 1:0.39, and the height of the vase to the diameter of the mouth is 1:1.8.

Type V

This type features a bowl-shaped vase with straight walls, exhibiting a small rounded inner rim, positioned on a high conical stem with two round holes ($d = 1.6$ cm) (Fig. 3, 2). The vessel is furnished with two small hemispherical handles situated opposite each other, featuring grooves at the top. The outer surface of the vessel is gray-brown, burnished. The vase's dimensions are as follows: $h = 13$ cm,

1. Gadjeiev M.S. Report on the work of the Derbent archaeological expedition in 2001. Makhachkala, 2002 // Archive of the IHAE DFRC RAS. F.3, Inv. 3, D. 916/10172. P. 83, fig. 46, 5.

2. Ibid, pp. 81-86.

d mouth = 16 cm, h stem = 7 cm, d stem base = 11 cm. The height of the vase to its stem ratio is 1:0.54, and the height of the vase to the diameter of the mouth is 1:1.23.

Type VI – Rattle Vases

Type VI encompasses rattle vases, with two specimens discovered: one (Fig. 4, 1) originating from the Torpakh-kala settlement, and the second (Fig. 4, 2) from Catacomb 1 of the Velikent burial ground III. These vases represent bowls on higher stems (2/3 or more of the vessel's height), featuring a hollow chamber inside housing small round stones or ceramic balls. Both rattle vases share a common design but vary in size and details.

The Velikent rattle vase (Fig. 4, 2) takes the form of a bowl with straight walls mounted on a conical stem without holes, featuring two opposing handles (one preserved) [3, p. 147, fig. 2, 9]. The vessel's outer surface is brown and burnished. The vase dimensions are as follows: h = 14.3 cm, d mouth = 15 cm, h stem = 9.3 cm, d stem base = 11.7 cm. The height of the vase to its stem ratio is 1:0.65, and the height of the vase to the diameter of the mouth is 1:1.05.

The Torpakh-kala rattle vase (Fig. 4, 1) has a high stem supporting a round-sided bowl (although due to fragmentary evidence, the alignment with the stem is uncertain). The bowl features a handle, and part of an elongated tendril is preserved. The upper section of the stem is corrugated with four encircling grooves, dividing it into three segments, while the lower part is bell-shaped with two round holes (d = 1.6 cm). It is adorned with an incised geometric composition of straight and triple zigzag lines as well as wavy lines. In the inner chamber of the stem, five balls (presumably made of clay) produce a distinctive sound. The surface of the vessel is red-ocher, with some areas appearing gray, slightly burnished. Vase dimensions are as follows: approximate h = 20-21 cm, d mouth = 22 cm, h stem = 14.5 cm, d stem base = 12 cm. The height of the vase to its stem ratio is 1:0.7, and the height of the vase to the diameter of the mouth is 1:1.05. This vase, like other vessels, was discovered on the adobe floor of a burnt room within a round ceramic portable hearth with a corrugated tray³.

In the provided typology, we have confined ourselves to archaeologically intact specimens. However, the predominant distinguishing feature of the aforementioned vases lies in their diverse stems. Numerous fragments of varying stems, displaying dark brown, dark gray, and gray polished surfaces (Fig. 2, 2-8), originate from the Torpakh-kala settlement, where this specific type of ceramic ware is characteristic. These fragments allow for the identification of distinct subtypes of vases, characterized by differences in shape (corrugated and smooth-walled), size (high, low), presence or absence of holes, and design (with or without decoration). At this stage, given the fragmented nature of the specimens, we refrain from further subclassifying the vases.

Fragments of vases, albeit in singular copies, have also been unearthed at various other locations in Coastal Dagestan. For instance, within Catacomb 1 of Velikent burial ground III, alongside the aforementioned intact rattle vase, a bowl with straight walls, one handle, and a stem fragment (rim d = 13 cm, stem d = 9 cm) were discovered. Additionally, there is a vase stem (d = 12 cm, h = 4.5 cm) with a single hole (d = 1.2 cm) from the Kayakent settlement V [1, p. 18, fig. 6, 5], bearing a resemblance in form to the stem of the Type IV vase from the Velikent Catacomb.

3. Ibid, pp. 85-86, fig. 11, 4, 46, 4, 51, 5, 59, 1.

Analogies and parallels

Analogous ceramic vases from the Coastal Dagestan region find their closest counterparts in the Serkertepe settlement of North-Eastern Azerbaijan during the Early Bronze Age. The ceramic assemblage at Serkertepe features numerous “vessels with a wide bell-shaped stem (with two or three holes), a smoothly expanding upper part, and a curved rim” [8, p. 40, tab. XXVII, 1-4; XXVIII, 1-3; XXIX, 1-3] (Fig. 5). Two morphological groups of vases stand out here – those on low stems (Fig. 5, 1-5, 7, 8) and those on high stems (Fig. 5, 6, 9, 17). Some of the Serkertepe vases exhibit a similar shape to the Velikent vase (Type III), where the stems mirror the upper parts (Fig. 3, 4). Additionally, Serkertepe features a one-handled vase (Fig. 5, 9) with a ledge at the base of the stem, resembling the Kayakent vase (Type II) (Fig. 3, 1). However, the most significant similarities in forms, details, and decoration are observed between the vases from Torpakh-kala and Serkertepe. Researchers have already noted this, contributing to the discussion of identifying the Velikent culture within the Kura-Araxes CHC [9, p. 281].

From the Garachay burial ground in North-East Azerbaijan, dating to the mid-3rd millennium BC, there are 9 gray clay two-handled vases (h = 14-20 cm) with round and oval holes on the stems [10, p. 119, şəк. 5, 6] (Fig. 6). These vases bear a striking resemblance to the Velikent vases (Types III, V). The excavations' author, recognizing the proximity of Early Bronze Age sites in North-Eastern Azerbaijan and Southern Dagestan, has raised the question of identifying the East Caucasian culture within the Kura-Araxes CHC and several of its local variants [10, pp. 120–122].

Among the surface finds from Early Bronze Age settlements in Kuchumhantepe, Gevdeshantepe, Filtrtepe I, and Chakkalyktepe in North-East Azerbaijan, fragments of hollow vases are also present [11, fig. 2-B, 1-2; 6-B, 12; 10-A, 5; 16, 22]. Based on their specific features (shape, holes, carved decoration), it is evident that they belong to the category of vessels known as vases.

We find relatively close analogues to East Caucasian vases on high stems in Anatolia. The tradition of producing vessels of this type became widespread here, especially in the Kızılırmak and Upper Euphrates basins, during the late Chalcolithic (Eneolithic) period. Notably, the settlement of Arslantepe stands out, where, in the “palace-temple” complex dating back to the late Chalcolithic (VIA period), samples of red-black and cream-colored vessels of different types were discovered. These vessels are in the form of wide-mouthed bowls on high stems, with variations in base designs, some with holes and others without, conventionally referred to as “fruit-stands” in western literature [12, p. 45, fig. 4, 8; 13, p. 175, fig. VIII.1, b, f; 14, fig. 4, a-c, 15, f-i; 15, fig. 4, a-b; 16, p. 189, fig. 13.2, a, d; 17, fig. 12, c; for a general overview see: 18, pp. 85–97] (Fig. 7, 14-20). The upper parts of such vessels include wide-mouthed bowls, some with curved edges, and deep bowls. The “fruit-stands” of Arslantepe represent the largest examples of ceramic ware in this category.

Among the Late Chalcolithic sites of Anatolia featuring the vessels in question, Alaca Höyük, Alişar Höyük, Çadır Höyük, and Tepecik should be mentioned [18, p. 85-87]. More than a dozen vessels of small sizes (h = 10-15 cm) with a bowl-shaped body (d = <20 cm) on a relatively high (h = 6-8 cm) “pedestal foot” from the Aşaga Salat burial ground (Upper Tiger Valley) dating from the Chalcolithic to the Early Bronze Age (3300-2900 BC) are classified as “fruit-stands” [19, p. 50, fig. 13]. Notably, finds of similar, very small (h = 4-9 cm) bowl-shaped vessels on a stem in a sanctuary from the Early Bronze Age II period (2800/2700–2600/2500 BC) in Beycesultan

(Western Anatolia) are particularly intriguing. These findings suggest their role as votive items [20, p. 43–45; cit. from: [18, p. 90].

Vase-type vessels of various sizes, dating back to the transitional stage from the Chalcolithic to the Early Bronze Age, are also present at sites in Eastern Anatolia (Korucutepe, Muslimantepe, Norsuntepe, Tepecik, Hacinebi, Hassek Höyük, Şaraga) [21, fig. 106, 2; 22, p. 67, pl. 2, 7, 8; 23, p. 202, fig. 7, 8, F; 24, p. 365, fig. 5, 8-11; 25, fig. 4; 26, p. 381, fig. 6, 7; 27, fig. 6, 20].

The territory of Northern Iran was also encompassed within the distribution orbit of such distinctive vessels as “fruit-stands”. In the Eneolithic layer of the Yanik Tepe settlement (Northwestern Iran), low vase-like vessels on a stem were discovered [28, fig. 16, 7-8]. In the Early Bronze Age IIA and IIB layers of the Shah-Tepe burial ground (Northeastern Iran), a series of ceramic vessels on bases resembling flat “plates” and deep bowls resting on a “stem-shaped” foot or on a cylindrical stem with an expanding conical base were identified [29, p. 182-184, fig. 345*b*, 350, fig. 223, no. 1704-1705, fig. 236, no. 618].

Decor and purpose of the vases

Among the Dagestan specimens, only the Torpakh-kala settlement contains vases adorned with incised decorations. Based on available fragments, the stems were decorated with multi-row belts featuring wavy and straight lines, zigzags (Fig. 2, 4-6, 8, 10). As was previously mentioned, in terms of decoration, the Torpakh-kala vases exhibit close analogies to vases from Serker Tepe, where the stems were also decorated with the same incised encircling ornament of straight, zigzag, and wavy lines (Fig. 5, 10-13, 15-17). Similar to other sites, the upper parts of the vases at both settlements were generally left undecorated. An exception is a vase from the Kayakent burial ground (Fig. 3, 1), where the base of the stem and the inside of the mouth are adorned with a double zigzag. It's noteworthy that incised decoration on Anatolian vases is exceptionally rare [30, taf. 40, 11/13].

Evidently, the handles on these vases served a more decorative than utilitarian purpose. These handles, whether small, horizontally tubular, or ribbon-shaped (with “antennae” extending from the base of the handle) and featuring narrow holes, were positioned at the outer edge of the vases' mouths. While it's conceivable that they might have been employed for threading a cord to hang the vase, as has been suggested before, it's worth noting the absence of wear signs on the handles.

The holes on the stems of numerous vases, whether with low or high stems, to some extent, also bear a figurative and decorative significance. Based on the available specimens, these stems featured 1-4 small round holes ($d = 1.1-2.5$ cm), and their purpose remains unclear. Such vessels with cutouts on high stems are often considered as incense burners (see, for example: [31, pp. 31–34, Fig. 1]). While it can be hypothesized that vases with low stems might have been used to heat their contents in the upper bowl using coals placed in a hollow stem, for bowls with high stems, heating the contents in this manner is, for obvious reasons, impossible. This brings us to the question of the purpose of vessels of this type.

Researchers suggest that “fruit-stands” might have been utilized for heating liquids, as indicated by drops of oil and stains on their bowls [18, p. 89]. Anatolian region data suggest that these vessels

could have served cult and ritualistic purposes. In Arslantepe VIA, the majority of specimens were discovered in temples near the altar and podium (Temples A and B), as well as in specific locations within the houses of the elite. Researchers believe that the “fruit-stands” from Arslantepe could have been used as cult vessels for the consumption of special foods and drinks, or for eating in specific ritual contexts and occasions, possibly involving individuals of high status [13, p. 175; 15, p. 71; 17, p. 38]. According to G. Palumbi, they were employed as “burners or vessels with precious liquids and essences used in ritual and ceremonial practices (which explains their presence in the temple)” [12, p. 45]. It is acknowledged that such vessels were used in various rituals but not in household activities [14, p. 112; 18, p. 89].

Discoveries of small votive fruit-stands in the Beycesultan sanctuary [20, 1962, p. 43-45; cit. from: [18, p. 90] also point to their ritualistic purpose. Lastly, the use of fruit-stands in funerary practices is noted not only as an offering placed in the grave (Alaca Höyük) but also as lids for pot burials (Alişar Höyük, Çadır Höyük) [18, p. 89].

In the context of materials from the Eastern Caucasus, one could also speculate about the use of vases in certain rituals. According to M.G. Gadzhiev, vessels on stems from Velikent catacomb 8 were possibly employed as containers for “sacrificial moisture during ritual libations” [7, p. 223, fig. 25, 17].

Compared to other types of ceramic ware, vases on stems are relatively scarce in number in the Early Bronze Age sites of Coastal Dagestan. It could be assumed that they were not intended for everyday use but rather for consuming “festive ritual food”. However, attention should be given to their relatively higher prevalence in the cultural layers of Torpakh-kala and Serkertepe, while cult vessels found during excavations are typically rare. This might suggest, in the context of the discovery of vases in Torpakh-kala, their use in intimate family ceremonies rather than in collective community rituals.

At the Torpakh-kala settlement, two vases were discovered among numerous other ceramic vessels on the floor of a burnt home. An intact vase (Fig. 2, 1) was found lying upside down between two clusters of purposely placed grain grinders, while a rattle vase (Fig. 4, 1) stood *in situ* inside a round portable hearth⁴. The positioning of these vases might suggest their cultic purpose and association with grain production, considering the role of the hearth in the sites of the Kura-Araxes CHC as a sacred object and a home “altar”, along with the significance of grain as a divine gift and a symbol of fertility and abundance. It’s noteworthy that at the Serkertepe settlement, one of the vases was filled with grain. However, the excavations’ author speculated that these vessels might have been used as a form of measurement for determining weight or exchange [8, p. 40].

There is undoubtedly a ritual purpose associated with rattle vases (Fig. 4). As a regionally close but chronologically distant parallel, ritual incense censers-rattles in the form of bowls on low, closed hollow stems with clay balls inside have been identified from the Tarki and Cherkezkutan burial grounds at the turn of the eras in Coastal Dagestan [32, p. 221, fig. 2, 14, 3, 2]. Despite the significant chronological gap, these objects and phenomena, as previously noted, reflect typologically similar historical processes that occurred in the North-Eastern Caucasus during the Early Bronze Age and in the Albanian-Sarmatian period. They mirror the socio-economic and cultural-historical development of society, including in the realm of religious and ideological ideas [33, p. 241]. The significance of rattles, objects producing noise or ringing, in the beliefs

4. Ibid, 83, 85–86, fig. 9, 11, 32.

and ritual practices of many peoples worldwide is well-documented in historical, ethnographic, and archaeological literature. Believers often considered rattle vases and incense censers-rattles as magical means for expelling evil spirits [32, p. 221].

Lastly, it is noteworthy that among the esteemed and socially significant metal artifacts in Anatolia, there are goblets on high hollow stems – three gold ones (Alaca Höyük, Mahmatlar) and a bronze one (Khoroztepe) [34, pp. 27–31, fig. 3, 2, 4, 4, 2, 5, 2] originating from elite burials of the Early Bronze Age III period (2400–2000 BC). These metal goblets are typologically close to earlier “fruit-stand” vases from Anatolian and other sites (Alaca Höyük, Arslantepe VIA, Shah Tepe, etc.) (see, for example: [16, fig. 13.2, a; 29, p. 182, 223, fig. 345, b, no. 1704]). It is believed that these vessels were used in public rituals such as ceremonial meals, funeral ceremonies, and temple offerings [31, p. 37]. According to L.I. Avilova, ceramic vessels were imitations of metal ones due to the rarity and value of the latter [31, p. 23]. However, considering that ceramic “fruit-stands” predate metal goblets, it is plausible to consider that metal vessels of this type were replicas of ceramic forms.

Chronology and origin

The origin of Anatolian vases was previously considered as one of the indicators of contacts between Central Anatolia and the Balkans at the end of the 4th millennium BC based on finds of vases on high stems with incised decoration of the late Chalcolithic at the settlement of Tilkiburnu (European part of Turkey) [35, pp. 238–246]. However, as noted by H. Çalyshkan Akgül, examples of such vessels on high stems are known from a number of sites of earlier times: at the Chalcolithic settlements of Büyük Güllücek, Alaca Höyük (between layers 8–13), Alişar Höyük (between layers 12–16), as well as on the Middle Chalcolithic settlements of Tepecik-Çiftlik, Köşk Höyük [18, p. 88]. The researcher reasonably notes that it is necessary to distinguish between vessels on high and low stems according to chronology, form, and function, and suggests that the high-stemmed bowls tradition of the Kızılırmak basin may have evolved from the short-stemmed ceramic tradition [18, p. 88]. The last phase of the Arslantepe VII period, in which fruit-stands emerge, dates back to ca. 3500 BC, and the Arslantepe VIA period, characterized by “fruit-stand” vases, covers the range 3400–3100 BC; the layers of settlements where the vessels in question are represented are dated in a similar range: for Tepecik, a date of 3644–3376 BC is proposed, for Çadir Höyük – 3620–3590 BC [18, p. 90–91]. Thus, we can consider Central Anatolia as the territory of origin of the ceramic tradition in question, from where it spread to neighboring regions, particularly to South-Eastern Anatolia, Mesopotamia [18, p. 90], and to the Eastern Caucasus.

More than a century ago, the authors of the monograph “Ancient Cultures of the South Caucasus (5th–3rd millennia BC)” highlighted the presence of one of the oldest forms of tableware, vases on stems, in the lower horizons of the Kvatskhelebi settlement. They drew parallels with similar types of ceramic ware from Chalcolithic sites in Northern Iran (Yanik Tepe, Hisor) and Northern Mesopotamia (Khalaf) [36, p. 142–143, 149, fig. 26, 21]. The absence of vessels of such form within the Eneolithic sites of the Eastern Caucasus suggests a lack of genetic connections with the previous era, indicating the introduction of this ceramic tradition in the Early Bronze Age.

As of now, our knowledge of the Early Bronze Age sites, particularly those yielding the discussed vessels, relies on only a limited number of radiocarbon dates. Notably, Catacomb 1 of the Velikent III

burial ground provides relatively synchronous dates with other early catacombs from the Velikent I and II burial grounds: 1st σ – 2865–2505 BC; 2nd σ – 2879–2474 BC [37, p. 557]. Another key date (Bln-5374), ranging from 1st σ – 2920–2760 BC to 2nd σ – 2930–2690 BC, originates from the layer of the Torpakh-kala settlement, yielding the vessels in question [9, p. 281]. Combining these dates with chronological data from North-Eastern Azerbaijan (Garachay, Serkertepe, etc.), Anatolia (Troy I, ca. 2900–2600 BC – see: [38, p. 231; 39, p. 157–199], etc.), and Mesopotamia (complexes of the Early Bronze Age IB, 2900/2800–2700/2650 BC and Early Bronze Age II, 2800/2700–2600/2500 BC – see: [18, p. 88]), where similar vessels are found, suggests that these vases in Coastal Dagestan and North-Eastern Azerbaijan emerged in the early 3rd millennium BC and persisted until the mid-3rd millennium BC.

In the subsequent Middle Bronze Age, vases are notably absent from the archaeological sites of Dagestan. However, in the South Caucasus, particularly at the Shakhtakhty burial ground in Azerbaijan [40, p. 166, tab. XXXI, 5, 10], remnants of vases persist, although in limited quantities. Additionally, it's worth mentioning that in the Middle Bronze Age layers of Tell Yunatsite, a typical Anatolian form of “fruit-stands” is present [41, fig. 2, 12], exhibiting close parallels with the East Caucasian vase types previously discussed.

Conclusion

The vases on stems, originating in the Eneolithic era around the mid-4th millennium BC in Central Anatolia (Alaca Höyük, Alişar Hüyük, Çadir Höyük, etc.) [12, p. 45], emerged as a distinctive feature of early agricultural cultures. Between 3500–3250 BC, they spread eastward to the upper reaches of the Euphrates (Arslantepe, Norsuntepe, Tepecik, etc.) and South-Eastern Anatolia (Aşagi Salat, Muslimantepe, Hacinebi, Hassek Höyük). During the transition from the Chalcolithic to the Early Bronze Age, this ceramic tradition extended into Mesopotamia, reaching the Iranian Plateau (Yanik Tepe, Hisor, Shah Tepe) and further east to Hindustan (Harappa, Zhob, Jhukar).

By the early 3rd millennium BC, the spread of this ceramic tradition, along with the associated ritual and cult practices, reached the territory of the Eastern Caucasus, encompassing burial grounds such as Velikent I, II, Garachay, and settlements like Serkertepe and Torpakh-Kala within the area of habitat of early agricultural societies. This element became an integral part of the material and spiritual culture in the life of the tribes of the Kura-Araxes Cultural-Historical Community. The boundaries of the spread of the vases in question in the Eastern Caucasus at the moment are as follows: the westernmost discovery is at the Garachay necropolis [10, p. 120], and the northernmost discovery is at the Kayakent burial ground.

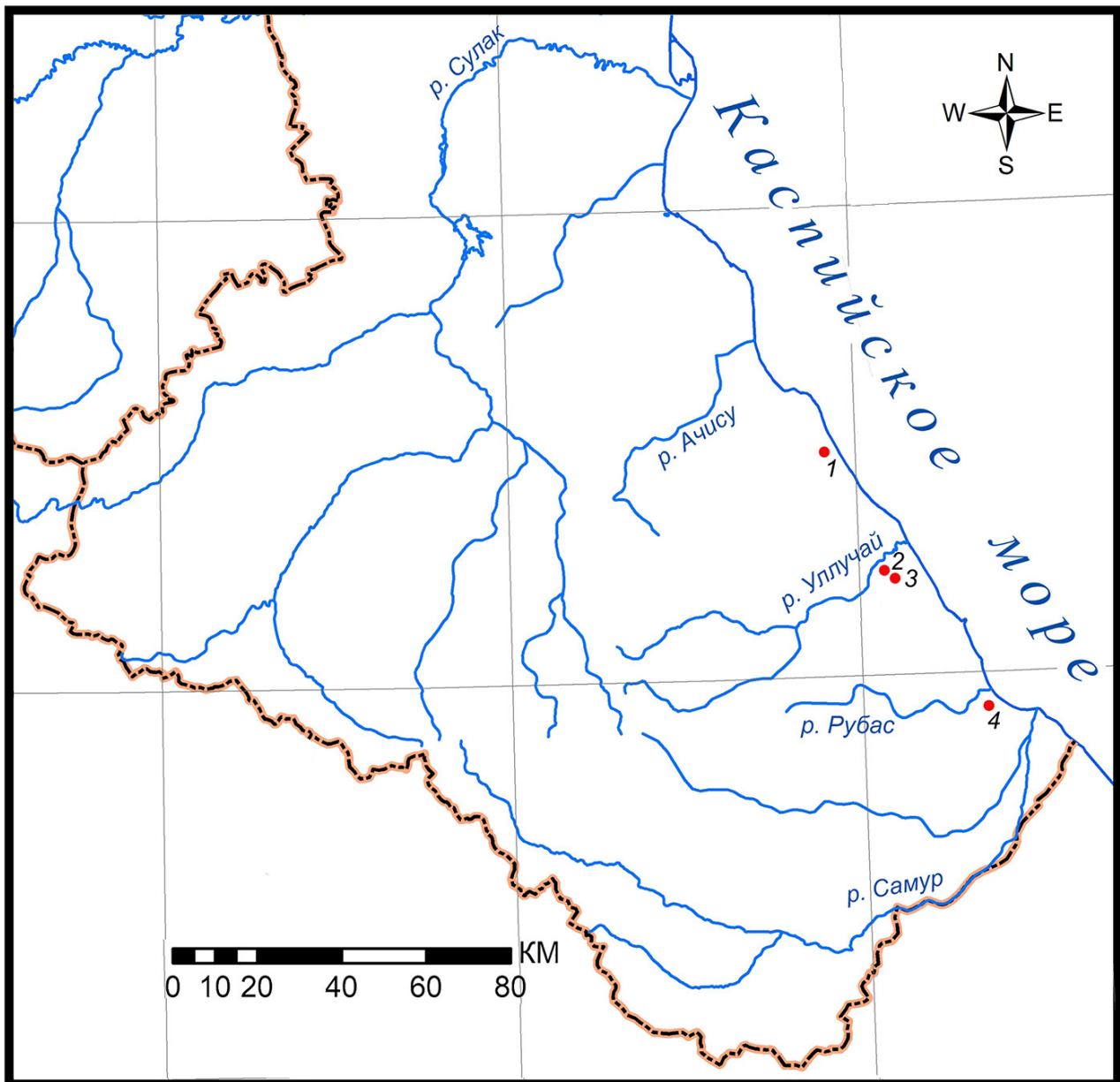


Fig. 1. A map of a part of Dagestan indicating the location of the sites where ceramic fruit-stands were found: 1 – Kayakent burial ground VI, 2 – Velikent burial ground I, 3 – Velikent burial ground III, 4 – Torpakh-kala settlement

Рис. 1. Карта части Дагестана с указанием местоположения памятников, на которых обнаружены керамические вазы-«фруктовницы»: 1 – Каякентский могильник VI, 2 – Великентский могильник I, 3 – Великентский могильник III, 4 – поселение Торпах-кала

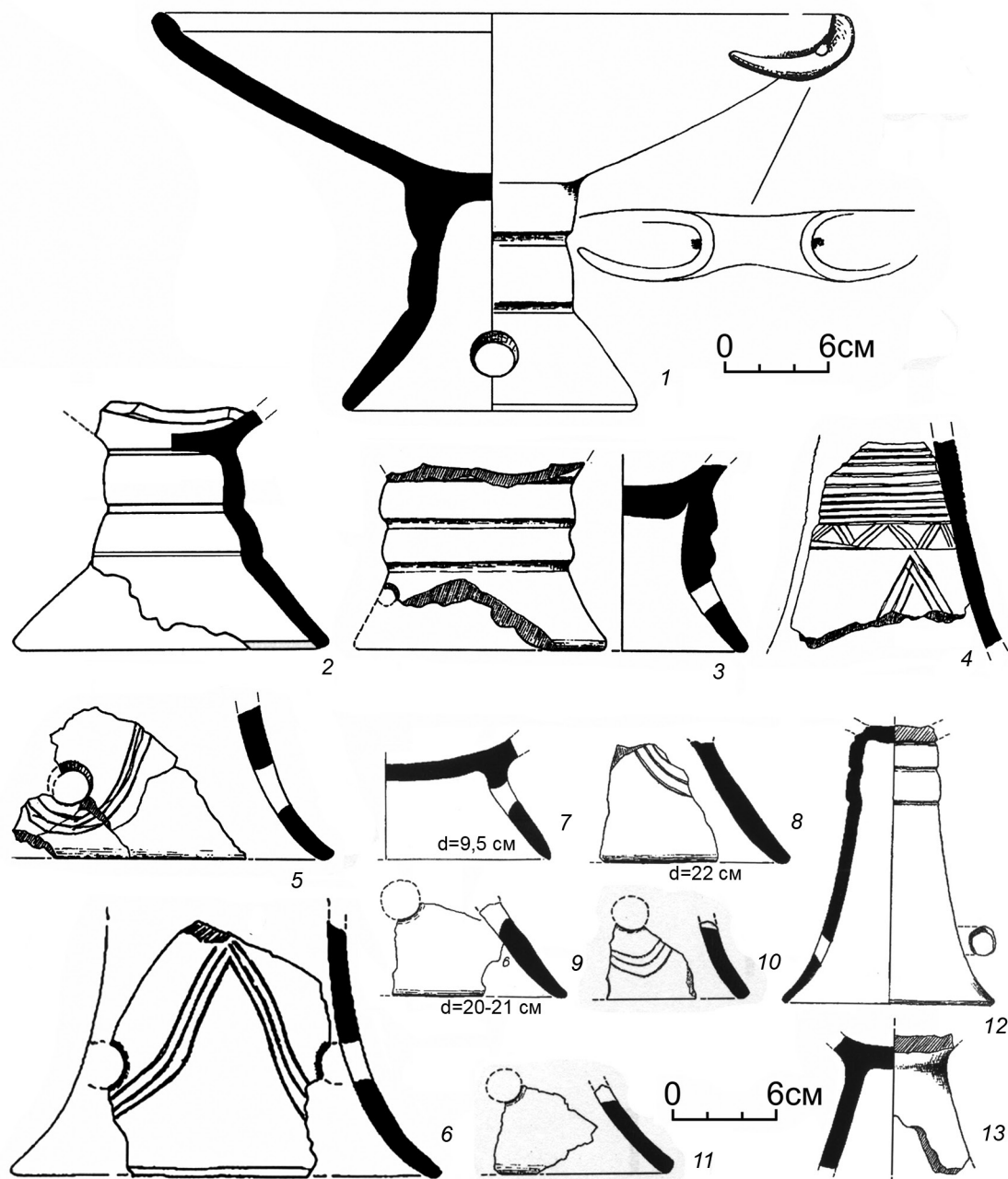


Fig. 2. Torpakh-kala settlement. Ceramic fruit-stands
(on: Gadjev M.S., 2002)

Рис. 2. Поселение Торпах-кала. Керамические вазы-«фруктовницы»
(по: Гаджиев М.С., 2002).

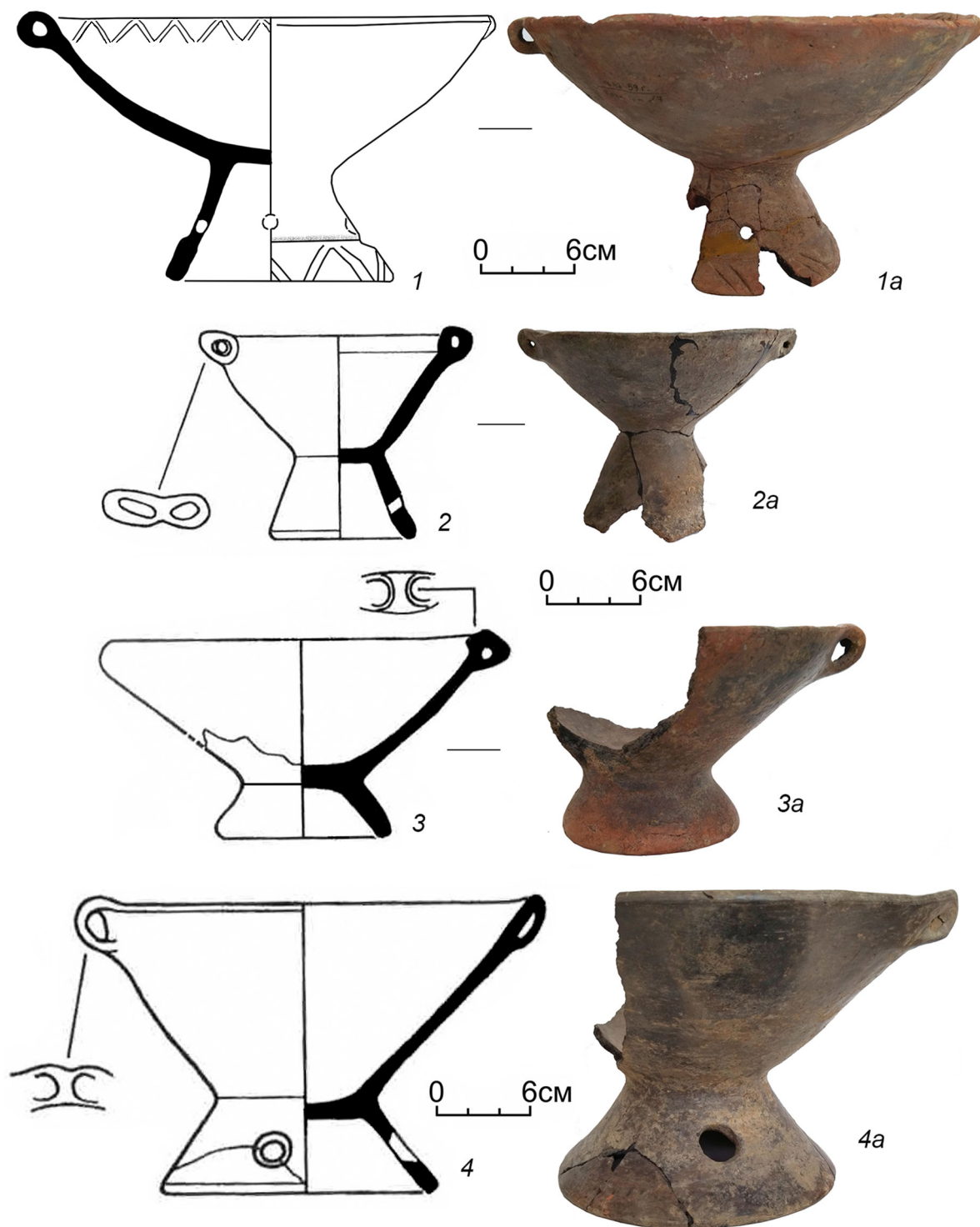


Fig. 3. Ceramic fruit-stands:
 1 – Kayakent burial ground VI, 2-4 – Velikent burial ground I.
 (1 – on: Magomedov, 2000; 4 – on: Gadjiiev M.G., 1991)

Рис. 3. Керамические вазы-«фруктовницы»:
 1 – Каякентский могильник VI, 2-4 – Великентский могильник I
 (1 – по: Магомедов, 2000; 4 – по: Гаджиев М.Г., 1991)

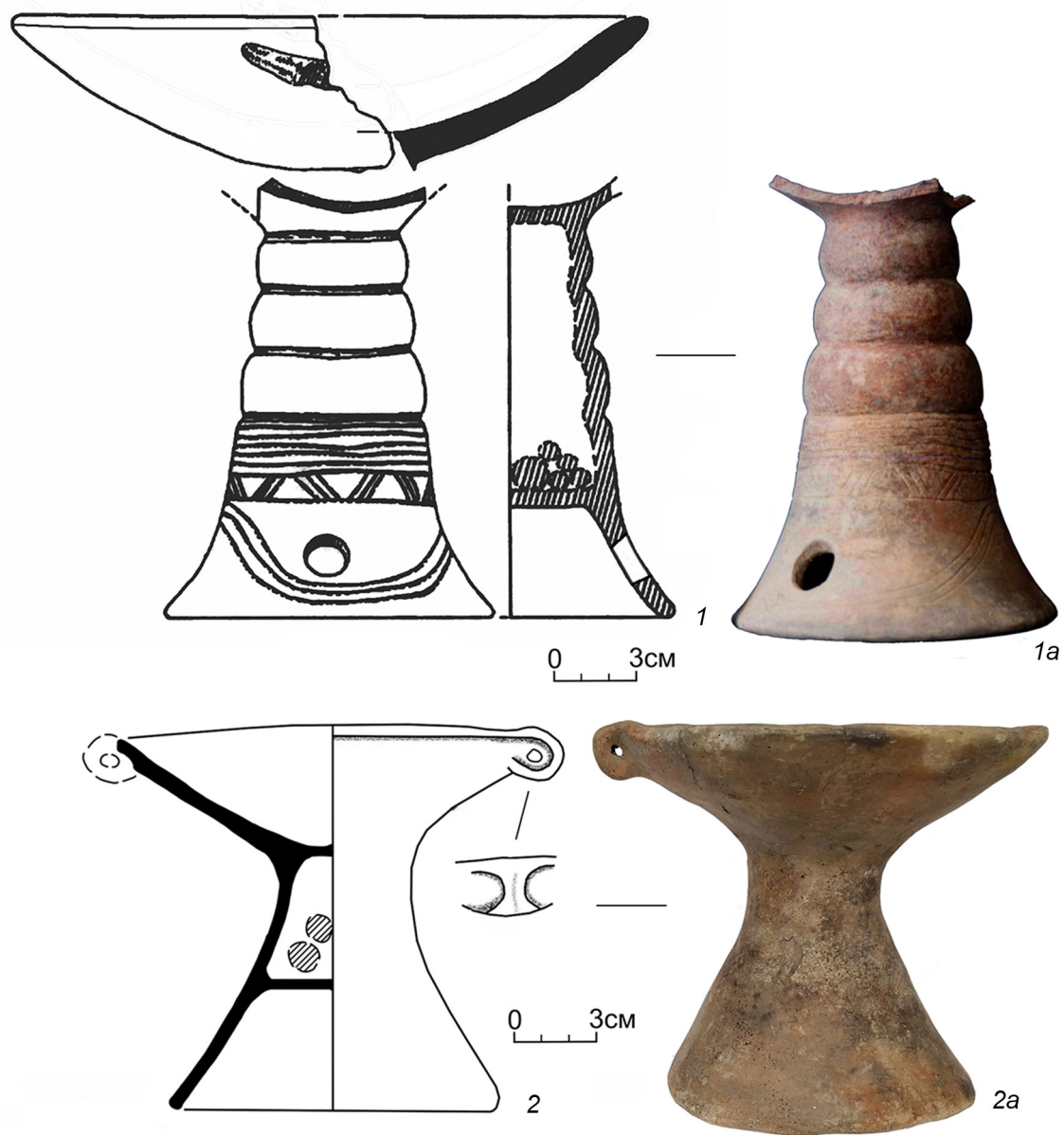


Fig. 4. Ceramic fruit-stands – rattles:
 1 – Torpakh-kala settlement, 2-4 – Velikent burial ground III
 (1 – on: Gadjeiev M.S., 2002; 2 – on: Magomedov, 2006)

Рис. 4. Керамические вазы-«погремушки»:
 1 – поселение Торпах-кала, 2 – Великентский могильник III
 (1 – по: Гаджиев М.С., 2002; 2 – по: Магомедов, 2006)

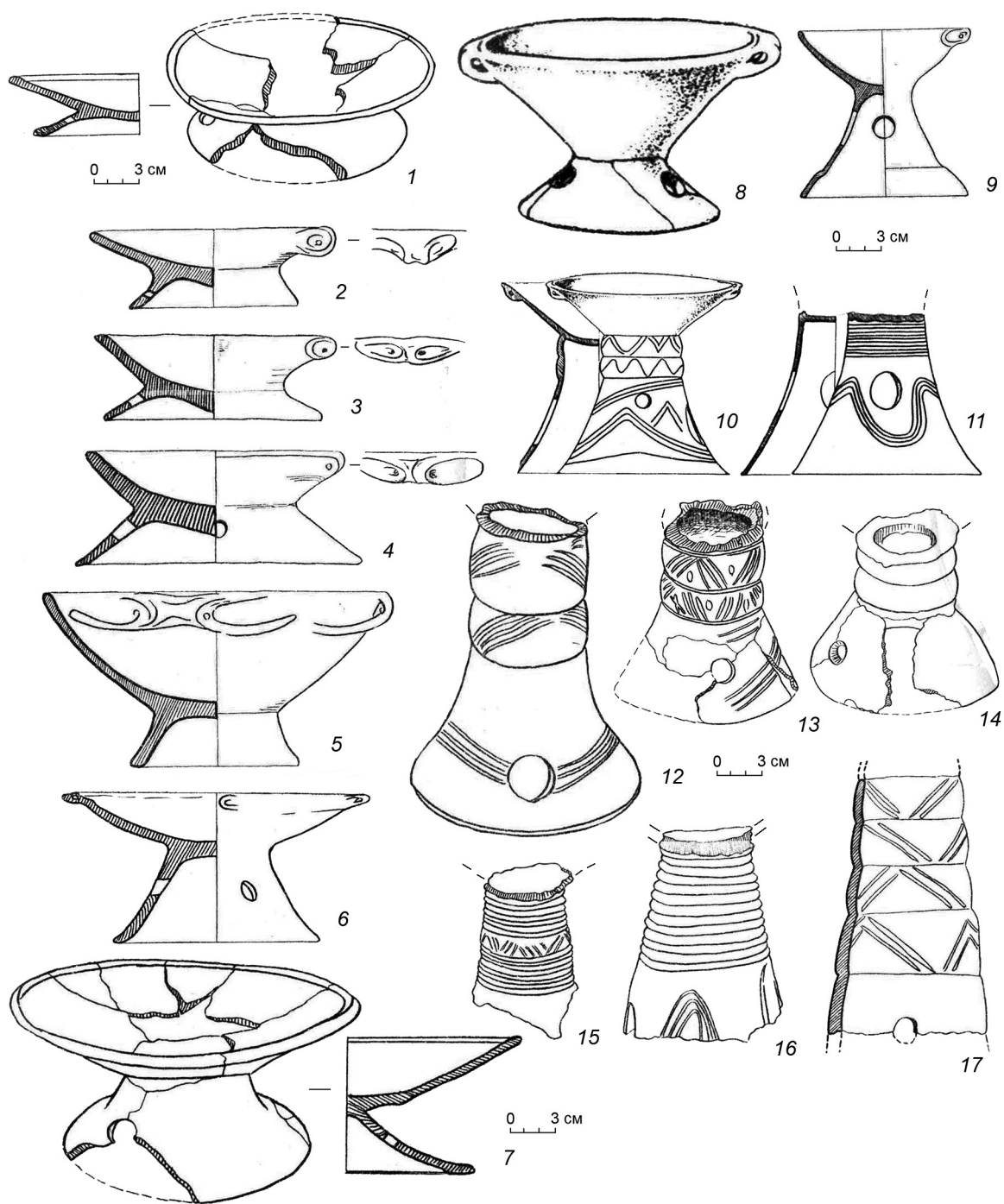


Fig. 5. Serker-tepe settlement. Ceramic fruit-stands and short-stemmed bowls (on: Musaev, 2006)

Рис. 5. Поселение Серкер-тепе. Керамические вазы-«фруктовницы» и миски на низких поддонах (по: Мусаев, 2006)



Fig. 6. Garachay dural ground. Ceramic fruit-stands (on: Müseyibli etc., 2017)

Рис. 6. Могильник Гарачай. Керамические вазы-«фруктовницы» (по: Müseyibli etc., 2017)

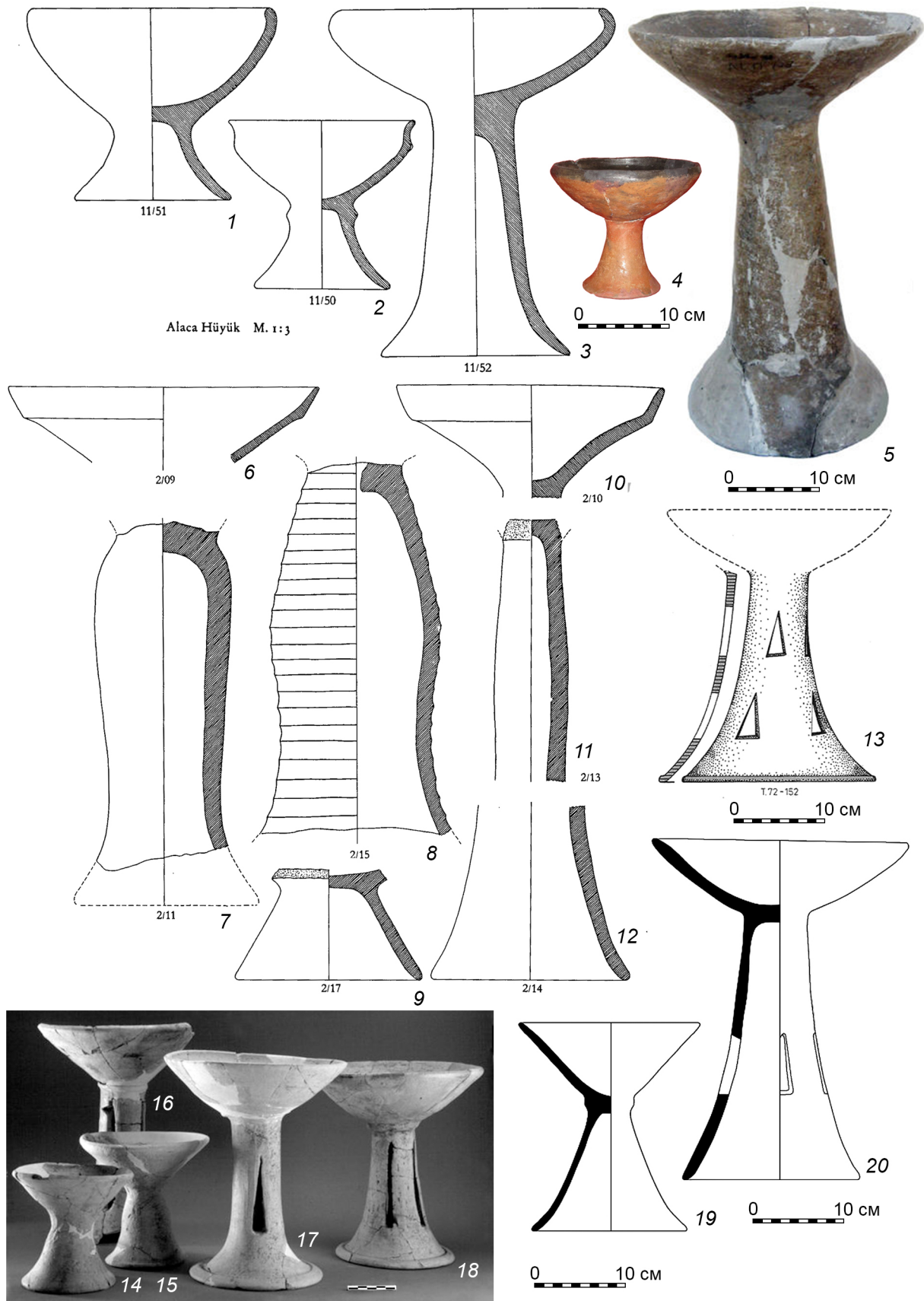


Fig. 7. Ceramic fruit-stands from the sites of Anatolia:
 1-5 – Alaca Höyük, 6-12 – Alishar Höyük, 13 – Tepecik, 14-20 – Arslantepe
 (1-3, 6-12 – по: Orthmann, 1963; 4, 5, 14-20 – по: Çalışkan Akgül, 2020; 13 – по: Dikkaya, 2003)

Рис. 7. Керамические вазы-«фруктовницы» из памятников Анатолии:
 1-5 – Аладжа Хююк, 6-12 – Алишар Хююк, 13 – Тепеджик, 14-20 – Арслантепе
 (1-3, 6-12 – по: Orthmann, 1963; 4, 5, 14-20 – по: Çalışkan Akgül, 2020; 13 – по: Dikkaya, 2003)

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