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Journal: *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 22 (Research 2010)

Year: 2013

Pages: 421–438

ISSN 1234–5415 (Print), ISSN 2083–537X (Online)

Publisher: Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw (PCMA UW),
Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego (WUW)

www.pcma.uw.edu.pl – www.wuw.pl

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DECORATIVE MOTIFS ON EARLY INCISED/EXCISED NINEVITE 5 POTTERY FROM TELL ARBID

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Abstract: The paper considers an assemblage of Early Incised and Excised Ninevite 5 pottery from Tell Arbid. It focuses on the vessels' decoration, its basic elements and complex designs. Their relation to the vessels' shape is discussed with some reference to wares and context of the ceramic material. The relation of this assemblage to the Early Incised and Excised Ninevite 5 pottery from other archaeological sites in Syria and Iraq is also mentioned.

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Early Incised and Excised Ninevite 5 pottery is one of the characteristic ceramic types of Ninevite 5 culture. Research is still underway, but most published studies concern Late Incised/Excised Ninevite 5 pottery. Moreover, there are few parallels for early Ninevite 5 pottery from sites in northern Mesopotamia, where exploration often finished on more recent strata without exploring the Ninevite 5 cultural remains. On some of the sites where early Ninevite 5 ceramic material was excavated, such as Tell Barri, Tell Brak and Tell Leilan, the collection was fairly limited, coming either from test pits or from trenches exposing late Ninevite 5 layers (see Valentini 2008; Matthews [ed.]

2003; Schwartz 1988). More material is available from early Ninevite 5 sites in Iraq [Fig. 1].

Tell Arbid in northeastern Syria is one of a handful of archaeological sites in the Khabur River basin where extensive Ninevite 5 settlement levels were excavated over a considerable area of the settlement. The site is located in the upper reaches of the Khabur River basin, about 45 km south of the modern town of Qamishli (near the Syrian–Turkish border) and 48 km northeast of Hassake [see Fig. 1]. Today it is a small village situated on the slopes of the main tell. The site covers an area of approximately 38 ha and its height is over 30 m above the present ground level.

It was first excavated in 1936 by Max Mallowan, who uncovered two Early Jezirah IIIB graves and other remains of the 3rd and 2nd millennium BC (Mallowan 1937: 117, 126–127, Fig. 8.1, Koliński 2007: 80–85, 88, 92–93). He also established the presence of Ninevite 5 pottery, albeit of the late phase (Koliński 2007: 83–87, 89, Figs 4, 8, 9, 14, 16, 17; for two decorated bowls, see Mallowan 1937: 149 and Figs 25.4, 25.5). Mallowan's excava-

tions were followed by a short survey by Bertille Lyonnet in 1989–1990 (Lyonnet 2000), which did not bring any finds of Ninevite 5 date, and by regular excavations, undertaken in 1996, by a joint Polish–Syrian archaeological mission directed by Prof. Piotr Bieliński (PCMA UW) in association with the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums.¹ The excavations uncovered settlement remains of considerable size, contributing impor-

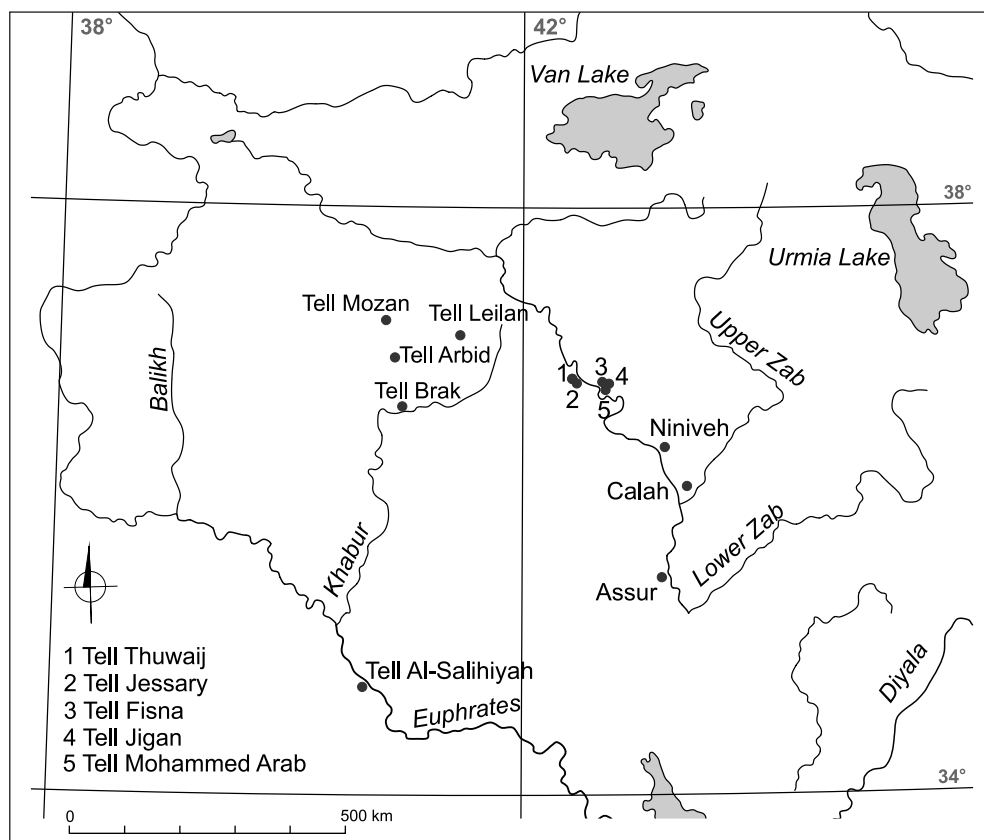


Fig. 1. Distribution of sites with Early Incised/Excised Ninevite 5 pottery mentioned in the text (Map by M. Momot, J. Hamburg)

¹ Annual reports are published in the journal *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean*, published by the PCMA UW (www.pcma.uw.edu.pl/en/pam-journal/); for a full bibliography of the site, see www.tellarbid.uw.edu.pl.

tantly to studies of Ninevite 5 settlement in the Khabur region. Significantly for this paper, the work has brought to light one of the most abundant assemblages of Early Incised and Excised Ninevite 5 pottery to be discovered so far in present-day Syria. This has permitted a study of the decoration repertoire on this type of ceramics.

The analyzed sample included 187 sherds with decoration found in the course of fieldwork between 1996 and 2010

(unprovenanced material and surface finds were excluded from the study). The pieces were catalogued, their decoration drawn and photographed. The documentation was carried out during the excavation season in August and September 2010, whereas the actual study was completed later in Poland. The object of the study were decorative motifs — their basic elements and sequences — occurring on Early Incised/Excised Ninevite 5 pottery.

DATING AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The studied collection dates to the Incised+Excised phase of the Ninevite 5 period (in Elena Rova's relative chronology, Rova 2003: 4–6). Some late painted Ninevite 5 potsherds (a negligible quantity, which has not been included in this discussion) contemporary to the Early Incised Ninevite 5 pottery were also found at the site, making it tenable that at least some specimens from the studied group came from Elena Rova's Final Painted+Early Incised period (Rova 2003: 5).

In the assemblage from Tell Arbid, as in those from other sites in the Khabur region, there is a quantitative predominance of incised versus painted potsherds. This is in opposition to results from Iraqi sites, where painted potsherds are often more numerous than those with incised/excised decoration (e.g., Tell Fisna, Tell el-Hawa, Tell Jessary, Tell Mohammed Arab, Tell Thalathat 5, Tell Thuwajj), which can reflect a regional or chronological difference, or both.

It is worth noting that a great number of the Late Incised and Late Excised Ninevite 5 potsherds was also recorded at the site (see Smogorzewska 2004: 69–71; Ławecka 2006: 71–73).

Of the 187 studied fragments, 161 were found in sector W and only 16 in sector S (including SR and SL). In sector W excavations have uncovered a dense settlement from the 3rd millennium BC, developing from Ninevite 5 to Akkadian times. Concentrations of Early Incised/Excised Ninevite 5 potsherds were noted in several squares: 51/56 (13 sherds), 52/55 (46 sherds), 52/56 (26 sherds), 52/57 (25 sherds), 53/55 (21 sherds) and 53/56 (15 sherds) (for a plan and overview of results, see Bieliński 2006: 459, Fig. 14).

Most of the potsherds from sector W were found in three contexts. One was the fill of locus 7 (7-52/57), that is to say, a Ninevite 5 temple building (so-called Southern Temple). The predominant form in this assemblage were small bowls with pointed bases (Bieliński 2006: 454), overlapping with our conclusions concerning the morphology of the studied material (see below). Locus 15-52/57, a small room just north of a presumed granary to the east of the temple cella, also produced considerable quantities of the sherds under discussion. The room was filled with ashes, which contained also several hundreds of clay *bullae* with impressions of classical

Piedmont style seals (Bieliński 2006: 454). The third findspot was an accumulation of ashes in the fill of an open courtyard with an oven, used probably for drying grain (loci 23-52/57 and 12-52/57; on the oven, see Szelağ 2011); it contained many potsherds that could be recomposed into virtually complete vessels (Szelağ 2011: 114). An open courtyard with ashes and Ninevite 5 potsherds, although without an oven, resembling locus 12-52/57 discovered at Tell Brak (area HS4, level 8) has been inter-

preted as a “multi-activity zone, or at least the disposal of refuse from such activities” (Matthews [ed.] 2003: 107).

In sector S, where remains of a 3rd millennium BC dwelling quarter were found, incised/excised potsherds were excavated in squares 36/58 (10 out of 16 sherds) and 36/59. The sherds from square 36/58 were found in the context of a sequence of layers discovered in a courtyard paved with potsherds and in a “kitchen” (Bieliński 1999: 215–216).

FORMS AND WARES

Vessel form was established for 68% of the studied sherds. The remaining 60 body sherds could not be attributed with absolute certainty to any of the Ninevite 5 pottery forms, incised/excised decoration being their only diagnostic feature.

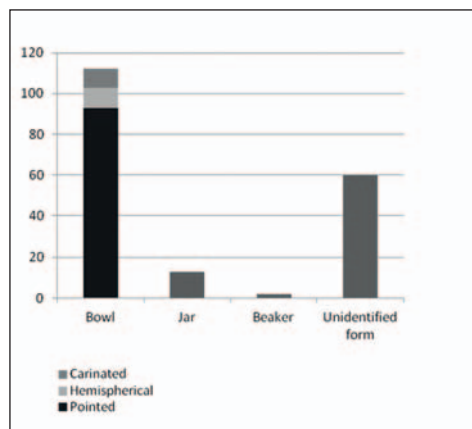
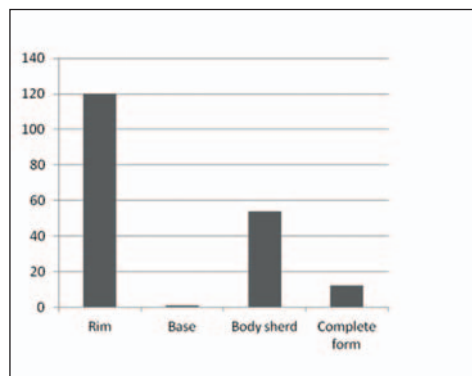
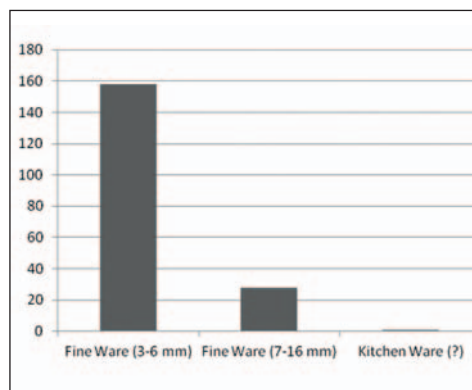
In the analyzed sample there is a striking disproportion between the number of rim and body sherds on the one hand and base sherds on the other [Fig. 4]. Admittedly, bases are almost never decorated in Ninevite 5 pottery and the fragmentation of rim and body sherds is greater compared to base sherds.

Fineware vessels were mostly thin-walled (3–6 mm) with a smaller share of thicker-walled sherds (7–16 mm). All were wheel-made, either with occasional fine grit or straw inclusions or without visible temper. Glenn M. Schwartz’s study, based on pottery uncovered in Operation 1 at Tell Leilan, indicated that high-fired vessels of this kind constituted the majority of Early Incised/Excised Ninevite 5 pottery (Schwartz 1985: 53). This conclusion is apparently confirmed by the Tell Arbid assemblage [Fig. 2]. The most common paste for this fineware

pottery was yellow (2,5 Y 8/6), light grey (2,5 Y 7/1), and greenish-grey (5 BG 8/1).

Of the diagnostic fragments that could be identified to form (127 sherds), 112 pieces originated from fineware bowls [Figs 2, 3], including two complete specimens [Fig. 5, top row]; 83% of the bowls had a pointed base. A complete beaker (footed bowl) [Fig. 5, bottom left] finds an almost identical twin, albeit slightly higher, among vessels discovered at Tell Mozan (Inv. no. MZ 8/9–12, unpublished) and at Tell Thalathat 5 (Numoto 1997: 124, Fig. 4.37) [Fig. 5, bottom left]. Two sherds from cup-like vessels were also recorded.

The fineware bowl is one of the most characteristic forms of Ninevite 5 pottery. Its special interest lies firstly in that its form probably imitated metal vessels and secondly in that it seems to have been used as a drinking vessel. Jean-Daniel Forest has suggested that the grey color of hemispherical bowls was the result of special firing and was intended to imitate the color of oxidized silver and lead (Forest 2003: 566). Also the shape of the body and rim, as well as the choice of decoration



Figs 2–4. Ware types, vessel forms and different diagnostic sherds and complete forms (count by quantity of sherds)

techniques indicated that it was supposed to imitate the appearance of metal vessels. Forest also noted that “the flutings which animate the profile of the walls recall hammering, the incised decoration that of stamping. In addition, the incised twisted lines recall strands of inlaid metallic wire, while the beaded or flattened rims evoke the technique of folding back a sheet of metal to avoid injury” (Forest 2003: 566). This bowl type was a drinking vessel with its shape and size well adapted to this purpose. It is probable that fineware decorated bowls were used for banquets and important ceremonies in the life of the community. Such use of this type of bowl has been attested by the furnishings of a Ninevite 5 grave in trench A-1 at Tell Rijim, which included 28 drinking vessels placed inside two craters with fenestrated pedestals and one painted jar, all placed near the body of the deceased and presumably representing the remains of a funerary banquet (Bieliński 2003: 493–494, 499, Fig. 2; Forest 2003: 567).

The Tell Arbid fineware assemblage also included jars, represented by 12 complete forms and by a number of diagnostic potsherds. The decoration was located on the body, at the maximum bulging of the body. One jar was of particular interest, being richly decorated with ornaments covering the entire body of the vessel (the neck and rim are lost) and thus deviating from typical Ninevite 5 jars [Fig. 6]. This kind of decoration is unique among the decorated vessels from Tell Arbid.

One should also note a single and quite extraordinary chaff-tempered coarseware decorated potsherd (kitchen ware?) [Fig. 7]. It was identified as part of a lid, morphologically unique in this assemblage, decorated on the upper side with

a motif representing a spike of grain in an open triangle (motif 1, see *Table 2*) and a grooved line, as well as a cross-hatched band at the edge. There are virtually no decorated kitchen ware vessels in the Ninevite 5 period, at least not of purely ornamental character. Designs on kitchen ware are limited to impressions which make the bottom rough to the touch and

are usually associated with hole-mouth kitchen vessels [*Fig. 8*].

Another specificity of the Ninevite 5 ceramic material from Tell Arbid is the striking disproportion between rim and body sherds on the one hand and base sherds on the other [*Fig. 4*]. It is not to be explained merely by the risk of misidentifying base fragments, which are almost never

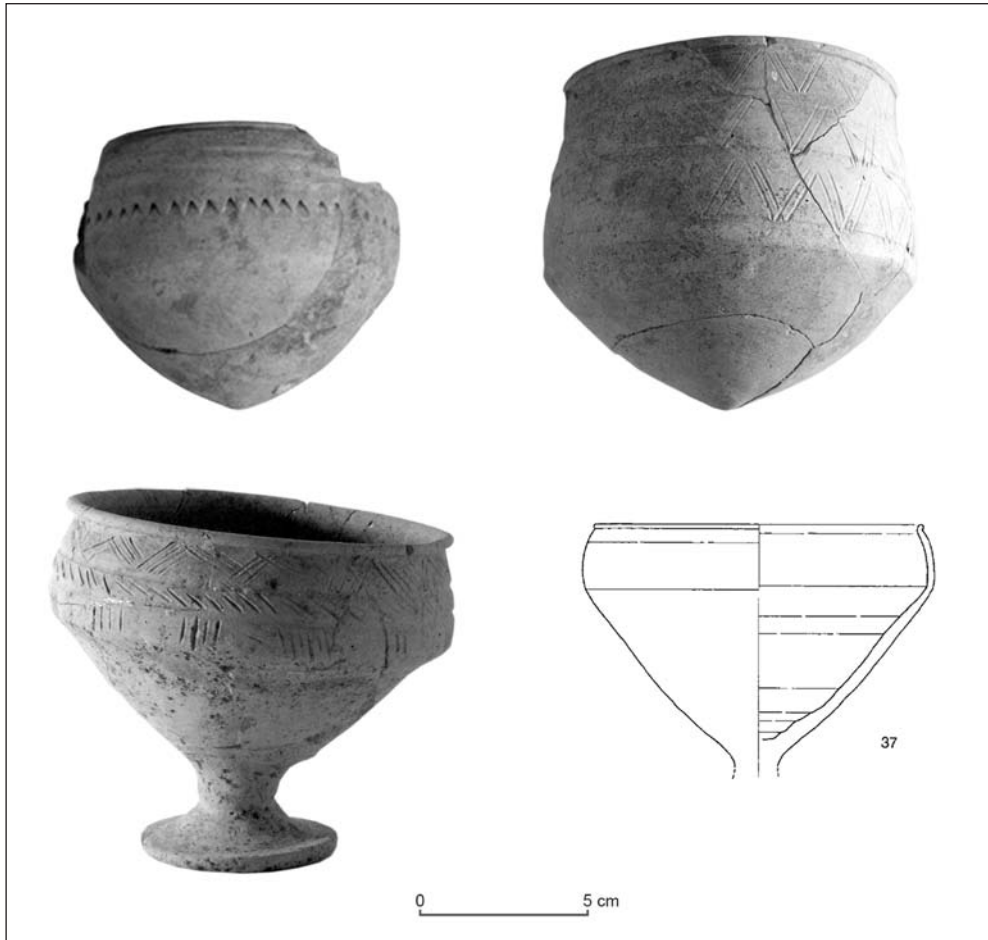


Fig. 5. Fineware bowls with pointed base, simple (top left) and carinated (top right); beaker (footed bowl) (bottom left) and parallel from Tell Thalathat 5 (All photos J. Hamburg; drawing after Numoto 1997: 124, Fig. 4.37)

decorated in Ninevite 5 pottery, as fragments of undecorated fineware vessels or even quite simply the greater fragmentation of rim and body sherds as compared to base sherds. The authors suppose that the pottery assemblage from sector W consists mainly of sherds from the fill of abandoned buildings and structures, in many cases overlying the Southern Temple, the slope around it and in the neighborhood, as well as the production area to

the north of the temple, together with a considerable amount of ashes and *bullae*. One can imagine that, at the site, there should be some dump area(s) for ceramic material which has not been as yet discovered.



Fig. 6. Decorated jar, side and top views

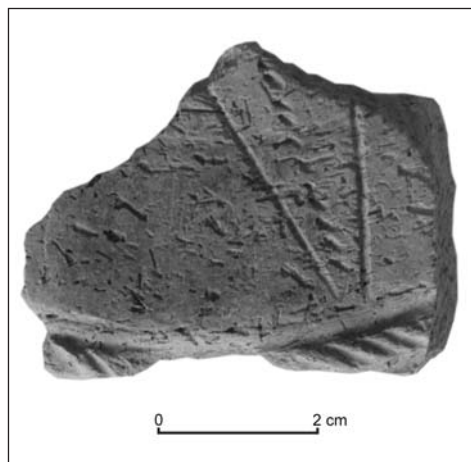


Fig. 7. Decorated kitchen-ware(?) sherd, presumed lid



Fig. 8. Incisions on the base and bottom part of a cooking pot; Tell Arbid, Early Incised/Excised Ninevite 5 pottery phase (after Smogorzewska 2010, Fig. 5:11)

DECORATIVE MOTIFS AND SEQUENCES

Examination of the decoration on sherds of Early Incised/Excised Ninevite 5 pottery from Tell Arbid permitted 23 decorative motifs to be identified. Many of these had from two to four variants. The motifs consisted of fairly simple, most frequently geometric shapes, typically triangles, grooves, straight lines that could be either long or short, horizontal or vertical, as well as punched dots and impressed “wedge-like” shapes [Table 1]. The execution of this decoration was clearly finer than in the case of Late Excised Ninevite 5 pottery.

The motifs were located most frequently in the upper part of the vessel between the rim and the middle of the body, usually directly below the rim or in the upper part of the body sherd, both belonging to Hirotoshi Numoto’s Zone B (Numoto 1993: 71). With the exception of one jar [see above and Fig. 6], none of the vessels from Tell Arbid had decoration on the bottom of the body, which is an equivalent of Numoto’s Zone C (although this may be due to the incomplete preservation of many of the vessels). When the decoration occurs in the lower parts of a vessel, it is usually associated with a simultaneous occurrence of ornamental motifs in the upper part as well.

The decoration on early Ninevite 5 vessels was executed using a few basic techniques. The most widespread methods are incised/excised (72 sherds) and grooved (90 sherds), in sum, 162 of 187 sherds, that is, 87% [Fig. 9]. Excised decoration is made with the use of a rounded spatula which removes part of the still damp clay before firing. The difference between incising and grooving is more complex and merits extra attention. The tool, a sharp

stick, is the same in both techniques, but the way in which it is used is different. Incising creates a thin and acute line recalling a “V” in cross-section, whereas grooving forms a wide and shallow line, the final appearance of which resembles an excised line, but achieved in a different manner and with a U-shaped section (Rice 2005: 146). Fifteen sherds were decorated with a stick, flat or triangular in cross-section, impressed before firing in damp clay. Other methods

Table 1. Basic elements

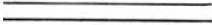





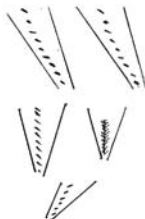



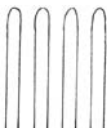


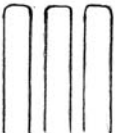


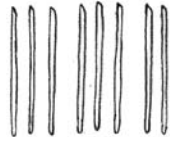
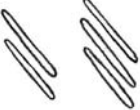






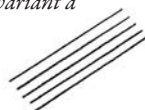
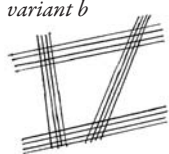


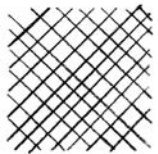

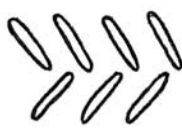

Element A	
Element B	
Element C	
Element D	
Element E	
Element F	

Table 2. *Repertoire of motifs*

Motif	Description
	<p>Motif 1</p> <p><i>Motif:</i> resembling a spike, incised technique. Occurs separately or in groups. Common around the neck or body of a vessel, just below the rim. Four variants have been noted, differing in motif orientation (vertical or diagonal) and the manner in which the central part was treated. <i>Parallels:</i> Frequent at other sites in the Khabur region: Tell Brak (Matthews [ed.] 2003: 146–151), Tell Leilan (Schwartz 1988: 108–109, 116–117) and Tell Mozan (four sherds, unpublished), as well as in Iraq: Tell Jessary (Numoto 1990: 226, Fig. 15), Tell Jigan (Numoto 1992: 144–145, Fig. 3) and Tell Thuwail (Numoto 1996: 88, Fig. 8).</p>
	<p>Motif 2</p> <p><i>Motif:</i> straight horizontal or vertical line, grooved technique. Very often combined with other motifs, most often with motif 3 (see below).</p>
	<p>Motif 3</p> <p><i>Motif:</i> Cross-hatched band, incised technique. One of the most widespread in the Tell Arbid collection (40%), occurs often in combination with motif 2. Motifs 2 and 3, used in the sequence: 2 / 3 / 2, frequently served to separate zones of decoration horizontally or, seldom, vertically. <i>Parallels:</i> Common motif on early Ninevite 5 pottery from many sites. Widespread on beakers in Iraq (four complete vessels from Tell Thalathat 5, see Numoto 1997: Fig. 5) and also in northeastern Syria (Tell Mozan, one complete vessel and three sherds, unpublished).</p>
	<p>Motif 4</p> <p><i>Motif:</i> Wavy dotted line, punching technique. Runs around the vessel, usually directly below the rim. On Tell Arbid, it was applied most often as a decorative motif on jars, but appeared also on carinated and pointed bowls. Fragment of sequence VII (see Table 3), which is widespread on Iraqi sites. <i>Parallels:</i> In Iraq, also on jars and carinated bowls from Tell Thalathat 5 (Numoto 1997: 123–124) and Tell Thuwail (Numoto 1996: 88–89). One unpublished sherd (bowl fragment) from Tell Mozan.</p>
	<p>Motif 5</p> <p><i>Motif:</i> Vertical line, excised technique. Often repeated in groups of three or disposed all around the vessel. <i>Parallels:</i> A few fragments with this motif from Tell Jessary (Numoto 1990: 226, Fig. 15.160) and Tell Jigan in Iraq (Numoto 1992: 144, Fig. 3.37) as well as Tell Mozan (one unpublished fragment).</p>
	<p>Motif 6</p> <p><i>Motif:</i> Three twisted lines, incised technique. Occurs most often in different sequences of patterns attested only on carinated and pointed bowls. <i>Parallels:</i> Carinated bowl from Tell Brak (Matthews [ed.] 2003: 149; 150, Fig. 5.62.21).</p>
	<p>Motif 7</p> <p><i>Motif:</i> Triangles, impressed technique. Runs around the circumference of a vessel. Not found separately (at least on bigger sherds or complete forms). The exact sequence in which it appears could not be established because of fragmentation of the vessels. <i>Parallels:</i> Quite frequently represented at other sites in the Khabur River region (e.g., Tell Leilan, see Schwartz 1988: 108–109 and two unpublished sherds from Tell Mozan) and northern Iraq (Tell Jigan, see Numoto 1992: 143–144, and for other examples, see Numoto 1993: Fig. 1).</p>

Motif	Description
	<p><i>Motif:</i> Vertical figure, excised technique. Often repeated in several groups of three (a formal similarity in this aspect with the disposition of motif 5, see above), disposed around the vessel (hemispherical and pointed bowls). <i>Parallels:</i> Sherd from Tell Jigan in Iraq (Numoto 1992: 143; 144, Fig. 3.36).</p>
	<p><i>Motif:</i> Short lines set in pairs or bigger groups, obliquely with regard to each other (referred to as "running multiple chevrons", Numoto 1993: 71), incised technique. Found usually immediately below the rim (80% of vessels with this decoration from Tell Arbid); attested on jars and hemispherical and pointed bowls. <i>Parallels:</i> Several sherds from Tell Brak with the same decoration in principle, also directly below the rim (Matthews [ed.] 2003: 151–152).</p>
	<p><i>Motif:</i> Zigzag line composed of lines running just below the rim, incised technique. <i>Parallels:</i> Potsherd from Tell Jigan in Iraq (Numoto 1992: 143; 144, Fig. 3.36).</p>
	<p><i>Motif:</i> Repeated vertical lines running around the upper part of the vessel body, incised technique. Execution quite careless in most cases.</p>
	<p><i>Motif:</i> Two or three short lines, incised technique. Present directly below the rim or disposed in vertical groups.</p>
<p>variant a</p>  <p>variant b</p> 	<p><i>Motif:</i> Dashes disposed in a circle, stamped technique. The motif runs around the vessel just below the rim, as in the case of some of the other motifs from the Early Incised/Excised Ninevite 5 pottery.</p>
	<p><i>Motif:</i> Two perpendicular lines accompanied by two rows of short lines, incised technique. Arranged as a vertical group, the motif often occupied a large part of the vessel body. <i>Parallels:</i> Sherd with this decoration found at Tell Mozan (unpublished).</p>
<p>variant a</p>  <p>variant b</p> 	<p><i>Motif:</i> Two rows of punctures, impressed with a stick of triangular section. In some cases the motif covers most of the vessel body. The two variants that were distinguished differed in the way in which the potter handled a stick.</p>

Motif	Description
 <p><i>Motif 16</i></p>	<p><i>Motif:</i> Chaotic pattern of very thin vertical lines, incised technique. Careless execution.</p>
<p><i>variant a</i></p>  <p><i>variant b</i></p>  <p><i>Motif 17</i></p>	<p><i>Motif:</i> Decoration made with a potter's comb. Very rare (only two sherds in the assemblage). Two variants distinguished: a) fairly straight imprint of a comb at an oblique angle to the vessel axis; b) crossing comb imprints forming an irregular grid.</p>
 <p><i>Motif 18</i></p>	<p><i>Motif:</i> Long vertical or horizontal line, incised technique. Although it is similar to motif 2, it should be distinguished as a separate motif deriving from the "tradition" of Painted Ninevite 5 pottery.</p>
 <p><i>Motif 19</i></p>	<p><i>Motif:</i> Two columns of short lines next to one another, incised technique. Occurs separately or, frequently, in groups.</p>
 <p><i>Motif 20</i></p>	<p><i>Motif:</i> Checker pattern made by lines crossing at right angle, incised technique. Possibly covering the whole body, but the sherds from Tell Arbid with this motif are too fragmentary to tell.</p> <p><i>Parallels:</i> On the one unpublished sherd from Tell Mozan with the same motif, the pattern ends approximately 1 cm below the rim in the upper part of the body. On the sherd from Tell Arbid, it is separated from the rim by a horizontal recess (see motif 2).</p>
 <p><i>Motif 21</i></p>	<p><i>Motif:</i> Zigzag, impressed technique. Rare in the collection, placed just below the rim.</p> <p><i>Parallels:</i> Same decoration found at Tell Billa in Iraq (Roaf, Killick 1987: 214), where the motif is referred to as "rocker-type", and at Tell Mozan (one unpublished sherd).</p>
 <p><i>Motif 22</i></p>	<p><i>Motif:</i> Horizontal rows of elliptic grooves, impressed technique. Paired elements in rows, placed at right angles to one another.</p>
 <p><i>Motif 23</i></p>	<p><i>Motif:</i> Crescent-shaped motif, incised technique.</p>

observed in the material included stamping (six sherds, executed with a special kind of stamp) and puncturing or punching (three sherds, using a sharp or pointed tool, such as a stick, hollow reed, awl or fingernail, see Rice 2005: 145). Some designs were made using a potter's comb (two sherds).

The decorative motifs, 23 in all [Table 2], were often combined on the same vessel (mainly two or three) and almost always separated from one another. Most of the motifs consisted of one or two out of six basic elements. A horizontal grooved line and cross-hatched incised band were the most popular elements used to separate the motifs. Furthermore, it is possible to distinguish sequences of patterns, that is to say, groups of motifs placed in a specific and repetitive order that was repeated on many vessels. Twelve main sequences were distinguished [Table 3].

Element A (for this one and the next, see Table 1), grooved, is always in vertical position and usually runs around the circumference of the vessel. It may stand alone and may be one of the elements of a more complex motif. Element B, incised, occurs both horizontally and vertically. It is always part of a more complex motif. Element C, excised, occurs alone, in groups or all around the vessel, forming an independent motif. It is also found as an element of a pattern. Element D, incised, appears (always duplicated) in a few motifs. Element E, incised, was similar to a chevron composed of two perpendicular lines. Element F, excised, appears usually in groups repeated around the vessel. Most of the motifs were composed of one or two of these basic elements.

Motifs 17a, 17b, 20 and 23 are very rare at Tell Arbid (only four sherds, one

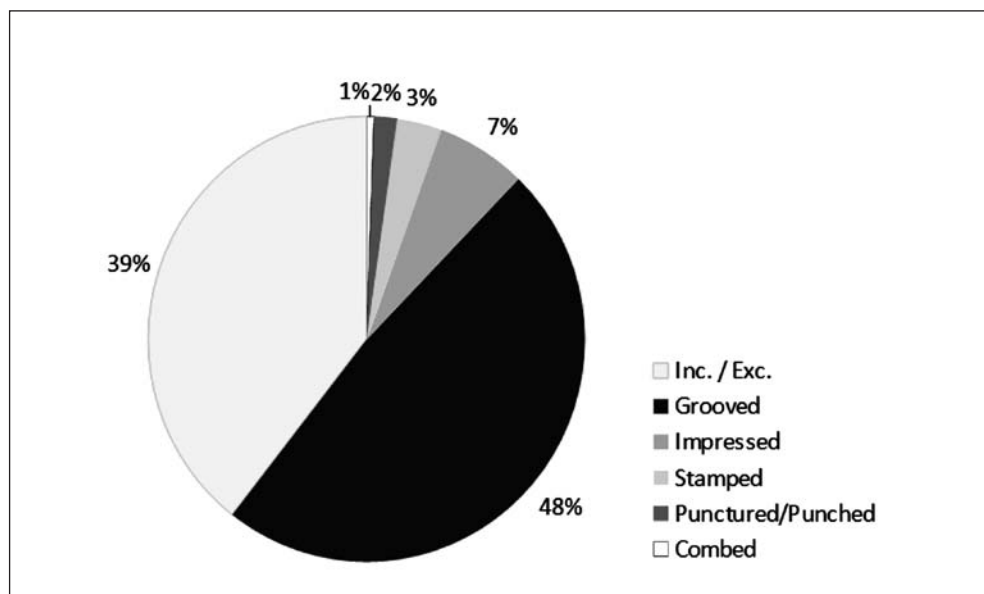





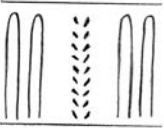


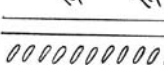
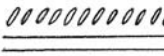
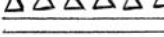
Fig. 9. Percentage of different decoration techniques used on Early Incised/Excised Ninevite 5 pottery from Tell Arbid

for each motif) and in all cases they were standalone patterns. Motifs 3, 7, 10 and 18 came from decoration patterns found on Painted Ninevite 5 pottery (compare Numoto 1993: 97–98, Fig. 7). Moreover, motifs 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22 and 23 appear to be unparalleled at any of the other sites in the Khabur River region and in northern Iraq.

Sequences consisted of several motifs executed in the same order on a number of vessels (from top to bottom of body sherd, from rim to base of the vessel, see *Table 3*).

At least three sherds had to have the same order of motifs in order for a sequence to be identified. To avoid confusion with motif numbers, sequences were given Roman numerals. Some correlation with particular vessel forms has been noted [*Table 4*]. Sequences II, VIII, IX and XII occurred exclusively on fineware bowls. Sequence XI, which is present only on hemispherical bowls, occurred also on two thicker-walled jars. Sequence I, occurred mostly on jars (both thin- and thicker-walled) and on a single bowl.

Table 3. Principal sequences

Sequence	Motif sequence (enumerated from the rim to the base)
  <i>Sequence I</i>	<i>Motif sequence:</i> 10, repeated three times / 2 / 16 Typical of jars from Tell Arbid. The sequence begins always immediately below the rim and extends down the neck to the upper part of the body. The decoration is similarly placed on a pointed bowl.
  <i>Sequence II</i>	<i>Motif sequence:</i> 9, repeated several times around the vessel / 2 / 15a, alternately with 15b / 2 The pattern is common on pointed bowls from Tell Arbid.
 <i>Sequence III</i>	<i>Motif sequence:</i> 13a or 13b / 2 Not frequent (only three sherds in the assemblage). <i>Parallels:</i> One pointed bowl with this sequence was found at Tell Leilan (Schwartz 1988: 116–117).
  <i>Sequence IV</i>	<i>Motif sequence:</i> 1 / 2 / 3 Present on different kinds of vessels and relatively frequent. <i>Parallels:</i> At Tell Leilan, this sequence occurred on one jar (Schwartz 1988: 116–117).
  <i>Sequence V</i>	<i>Motif sequence:</i> 3 / 2 / 7 / 2

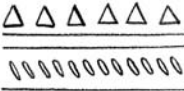
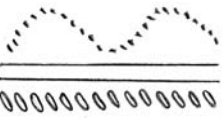
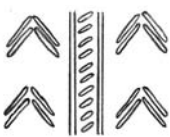
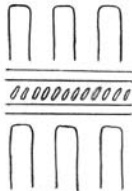
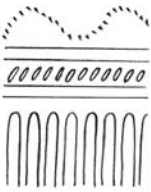
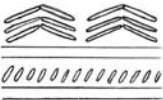
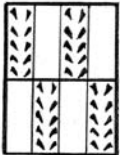
Sequence	Motif sequence (enumerated from the rim to the base)
 <p>Sequence VI</p>	<p><i>Motif sequence:</i> 7 / 2 / 3 / 2 (the same motifs as in sequence V, but in a different order)</p> <p><i>Parallels:</i> A presumed bowl fragment from Tell Leilan bears this decoration (Schwartz 1988: 108–109).</p>
 <p>Sequence VII</p>	<p><i>Motif sequence:</i> 4a / 2 / 3</p> <p>Begins always directly below the rim.</p> <p>Pattern common in Iraq and also in the Khabur region, but in the Tell Arbid assemblage it is present only on three small fragments of pointed bowls.</p> <p><i>Parallels:</i> The sequence can be compared to decoration belonging to patterns of group 1, class B distinguished by Hirotoshi Numoto (1993: 73). This pattern group occurred in Numoto's Zone B, which is also present in the material from Tell Arbid. It was present on a bowl fragment from Tell Leilan (Schwartz 1988: 108–109) and on a vessel without rim (bowl or pot) from Tell Thuwail (Numoto 1996: 88, Fig. 8). A sherd with this sequence was recorded at Tell Jessary (Numoto 1990: 226, Fig. 15).</p>
 <p>Sequence VIII</p>	<p><i>Motif sequence:</i> 9, vertically doubled in alternation with 2 / 3 / 2 vertical pattern</p> <p>At Tell Arbid this decoration is present on pointed and carinated bowls.</p>
 <p>Sequence IX</p>	<p><i>Motif sequence:</i> 8 / 2 / 3 / 2 / occasionally followed by 8</p> <p>The most frequent sequence at Tell Arbid (14 sherds, including two sherds with motif 8 next to the bottom). Present for the most part directly below the rim, but sometimes over the entire surface of a body sherd, between two other motifs or below a different pattern. Found only on fineware bowls at Tell Arbid.</p>
 <p>Sequence X</p>	<p><i>Motif sequence:</i> 4 / 2 / 3 / 2 / 5</p> <p>Similar to sequence VII, but covering bigger parts of vessels.</p> <p><i>Parallels:</i> Comparable with patterns from Hirotoshi Numoto's group 5 (Numoto 1993: 74; 79, Table 2), especially a sherd with this motif from Tell Brak (Numoto 1993: 78, Fig. 2.58).</p>
 <p>Sequence XI</p>	<p><i>Motif sequence:</i> 10, tripled / 2 / 3 / 2</p> <p>Always immediately below the rim and ending in the middle of body (eight sherds from Tell Arbid). Mostly on fineware thin-walled bowls, but was recorded also on two of the thick-walled sherds.</p>
 <p>Sequence XII</p>	<p><i>Motif sequence:</i> 15a and 8, in alternation with 8 and 15b</p> <p>One sherd at Tell Arbid bears this sequence.</p> <p><i>Parallels:</i> Similar fragment from Tell Mozan (unpublished).</p>

Table 4. *Distribution of motifs and sequences on vessel forms*

	Pointed bowls	Hemispherical bowls	Carinated bowls	Unidentified forms	Jars	Beakers	Others	Total number (n)
Motif 1	33.33%	0	0	60%	0	0	0.07%	15
Motif 2	40%	7.50%	2.50%	33.75%	15%	1.25%	0	80
Motif 3	39.30%	4.76%	2.37%	39.30%	11.90%	2.37%	0	84
Motif 4	21.40%	0	28.50%	14.40%	35.70%	0	0	14
Motif 5	73.70%	10.50%	0	10.50%	5.30%	0	0	19
Motif 6	33.33%	0	33.33%	33.33%	0	0	0	6
Motif 7	25%	10%	0	55%	10%	0	0	20
Motif 8	25%	12.50%	0	62.50%	0	0	0	16
Motif 9	37.50%	6.25%	12.50%	12.50%	25%	6.25%	0	16
Motif 10	42.85%	4.75%	9.50%	23.90%	19.00%	0	0	21
Motif 11	20%	20%	0	20%	20%	20%	0	5
Motif 12	80%	0	0	0	20%	0	0	5
Motif 13	75%	0	0	0	25%	0	0	4
Motif 14	33.33%	0	0	50%	16.67%	0	0	6
Motif 15	100%	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Motif 16	20%	0	0	0	80%	0	0	5
Motif 17	100%	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Motif 18	33.33%	0	0	0	66.67%	0	0	3
Motif 19	100%	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Motif 20	100%	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Motif 21	100%	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Motif 22	100%	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Motif 23	100%	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Seq. I	20%	0	0	0	80%	0	0	5
Seq. II	100%	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Seq. III	100%	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Seq. IV	30.77%	0	0	53.85%	15.38%	0	0	13
Seq. V	44.45%	0	0	44.45%	11.10%	0	0	9
Seq. VI	0	20%	0	80%	0	0	0	5
Seq. VII	100%	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
Seq. VIII	75%	0	25%	0	0	0	0	8
Seq. IX	28.57%	0	0	71.43%	0	0	0	14
Seq. X	50%	0	0	0	50%	0	0	4
Seq. XI	66.67%	0	0	0	33.33%	0	0	6
Seq. XII	100%	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

CONCLUSION

To sum up, the studied collection can be dated to the Incised+Excised Period, although some of the potsherds may date back to Final Painted+Early Incised Period. From a morphological point of view, the forms of decorated Ninevite 5 vessels from Tell Arbid are typical of decorated “table ware” of this culture. The assemblage is dominated by fineware bowls (112 of 127 morphologically identified sherds), which were probably used as drinking vessels. All other potsherds, with the exception of a single example of a possible kitchen ware lid(?) mentioned above, represented fineware.

The observed correlation between vessel forms and specific decoration sequences and motifs suggests that some motifs and sequences were better fitted to specific forms of vessels and thus probably to specific purposes of the different types of pottery. Moreover, it has been noted that, at least at the present stage of research (considering the published material and personal observation at Tell Mozan), certain motifs and sequences were specific to Tell Arbid in the Early Excised/Incised Period (although they have been noted at other sites on Late Excised period pottery). A comparative study of material from other sites in the Khabur River basin has demonstrated that motifs 6, 9, 14 and 20 were present at Tell Arbid, as well as at other sites in the region. Motifs 1 to 5, 7 and 21 appear to have been common not only at Tell Arbid, but also in the Khabur River region and northern Iraq. Motif 10 is common at Tell Arbid and the northern Iraq region. The fairly simple motif 3 was apparently the most popular

one at Tell Arbid and occurred on 40% of all the sherds.

Sequences distinguished as specific to Tell Arbid include Nos I, II, V, VIII, IX and XI. Some similarities have been noted between sequences from Tell Arbid and Tell Leilan (sequences III, IV and VI, each represented by single sherds, respectively an unidentified form, a jar and a bowl). Sequence VII was common on specimens from Tell Arbid, Tell Leilan, Tell Jessary and Tell Thuwajj. Sequence XII was also uncovered at Tell Mozan. Sequence X has been attested also at Tell Brak.

The decoration motifs and sequences present on the ceramic material discussed in this paper show considerable similarities with pottery from the Khabur River region, especially with the finds from the sites of Tell Mozan and Tell Leilan, but a much less direct one when compared to pottery from Iraqi sites. More relevant material needs to be published in order to examine the question of apparently very similar motif sequences appearing on an inter-site scale. It is not to be excluded, for instance, that there were some sequences consistently executed in the same manner in the various settlements of the territory occupied by the Ninevite 5 culture. The considerable differentiation in the composition of a limited number of motifs, which could be used to form a sequence, indicates an overall lack of well-defined typical sequences of motifs and thus suggests their purely ornamental character. Assuming even that some principles of arranging motifs into sequences can be observed at a given site (e.g., Tell Arbid), they do not appear to be so evident on an

inter-site and inter-regional scale. In the latter case, it seems more accurate to speak of general tendencies rather than some strictly defined principles in the choice of decorative motifs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors wish to thank Prof. Piotr Bieliński for the opportunity to study early Ninevite 5 pottery from Tell Arbid. We are particularly grateful to Dr. Anna

Smogorzewska and Dr. Dariusz Szelać for consulting our research. Our thanks also go to Dominika Kossowska and Katarzyna Pawłowska for their help with documentation on site, as well as for drawing the collected material. We are grateful to Prof. Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati for showing the unpublished Ninevite 5 material from Tell Mozan. We also thank Agnieszka Pioruńska for proofreading the present article.

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POLISH ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

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