

**TITLE: A COMPOSITIONAL REASSESSMENT OF MARKED CERAMICS FROM EARLY BRONZE AGE TELL EL-‘ABD, SYRIA**

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**ABSTRACT**

A highly distinctive feature of the Early Bronze Age ceramics from the site of Tell el-‘Abd in northern Syria is the presence of large numbers of pots marked with a diverse range of symbols. Despite detailed macroscopic analysis of these ceramics and the proposal of several hypotheses, the function of the potmarks is still not known. It is possible that they may serve as workshop identification, individual ownership or could have a social/cultural significance. The present study sheds light new on this problem by applying compositional analysis to 33 examples of ceramics marked with several common types of symbols. Using a combination of thin section petrography, instrumental geochemistry and scanning electron microscopy, the sherds have been characterised and classified according to their raw materials and manufacturing technology. By comparing this to the ceramics shape and marking style, the local geology and the study of ceramic marking practices in other periods and parts of the world, the various hypotheses have been reassessed.