

EXCAVATIONS AT KARATAŞ - SEMAYÜK 1967

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The Bryn Mawr College excavations at Karataş - Semayük in the plain of El-malı were continued for a fifth season in September - November 1967. The previous work at the site had shown that an extensive habitation area and a cemetery of the Early Bronze Age existed in the plain to the west of the village of Semayük. We had cleared about 200 pithos - graves in the extramural cemetery and had excavated houses both in the small central mound (a fortified mansion of the Early Bronze II period) and in outlying trenches to the west and east (principally houses of megaron type belonging to the Troy II period).

In 1967, we deepened trench 37 (PLAN I) northwest of the mound to investigate the levels below megara 1-4 discovered in 1966. Several earlier habitation levels were found (Fig. 1). These contained a series of rectangular large houses related to the megaron plan (houses 3A - C). These houses, however, had been abandoned long before the megara were built, and in the interval a large number of pithos - burials (Fig. 2) intruded into the area of trench 37. These graves belong to the Early Bronze II period and are contemporary with houses found in level V of the central mound and in a number of newly opened trenches in the southeast area of Karataş.

The houses of the southeast area are partly built of pise on a framework of thin wooden posts (Fig. 3). Their plans follow the layout of megara, both in small sizes and in houses to 13.50 m. in length. Some of the smaller units were storage barns and had wooden walls and pisé partitions (Fig. 4).

Among the pottery from these Early Bronze Age II houses, red polished pitchers and bowls decorated with white paint (Fig. 5) are prominent. Many of the bowls have lug - handles. Red polished jars often have relief decoration in the form of concentric circles and knobs. Simple white painted designs also occur on black polished wares.

In the megara of the upper level, e. g. megaron 3 in trench 37, the pottery is clearly related to Troy II types. Wheelmade plates, red platters, depas fragments are characteristic. Near megaron 3, a face - jar of local grey ware was found. This jar is decorated in the relief technique characteristic of the Early Bronze II-III periods at Karataş (Fig. 6).

The tombs in trench 37 had the same kind of pottery as the Early Bronze II houses. Many of the smaller burial jars are decorated with relief medallions (Fig. 7). Similar tombs occur in the large extramural cemetery field south of the mound, of which an extension was found to the southeast in 1967. The best preserved graves came to light in trench 98 between the cemetery areas excavated in 1963-64 and the small central mound. In trench 98, the superstructures of the tombs were preserved perhaps nearly as they were in antiquity. Each pithos was buried well below the surface, in a slanting position (Fig. 8) with the rim at the highest point, facing east. The pithoi were closed with stone slabs, large fragments of pottery, or complete bowls and basins; these covers were in turn overlaid by a pile of stones. These stones as a rule still lie about 30 cm. below ancient surface level. On the surface,

the area of the grave was marked by a circular wall of fieldstones, making a closed round precinct over the tomb (Fig. 9). Access to the tomb (for secondary burials) was via the eastern half of the circles. The largest grave-circle was about six meters in diameter and had a doorway in its east side; this is presumably a family precinct. Some of the individual pithoi were excavated in 1967, but most of the work in trench 98 remains to be done. The new evidence from Karataş will help us to visualize the original appearance of many of the 'Yortan' type cemeteries.

A preliminary sounding about 700 m. to the west of the small Karataş mound revealed remnants of pisé houses of an early phase of the third millennium, perhaps of

the late Chalcolithic period. The pottery is grey burnished. Basins and straight-rimmed jugs (Fig. 10) were typical of this level.

The habitation area of Karataş continues under the modern vineyards to the west of trench 37. Both the cemetery and the settlement were in use during most of the third millennium B. C. Dr. J. Lawrence Angel of the Smithsonian Institution is studying the skeletal material from the site for an anthropological and statistical analysis of the ancient inhabitants of the area. His study combined with the archaeological analysis will provide a solid body of evidence for comparative studies of the Early Bronze Age in Western Anatolia and the Aegean.



Plân 1



Fig. 1 — Megaron 3 and lower levels from southeast.

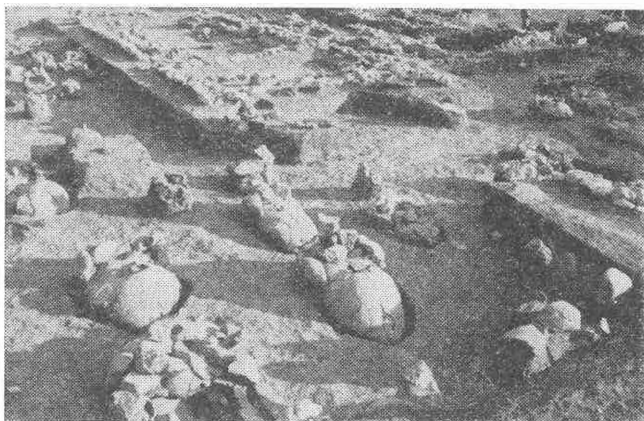


Fig. 2 — Tombs in trench 37 west of megaron3.



Fig. 3 — Fallen pisé wall in sautheast area.



Fig. 4 — Storage shed with pisé portions.

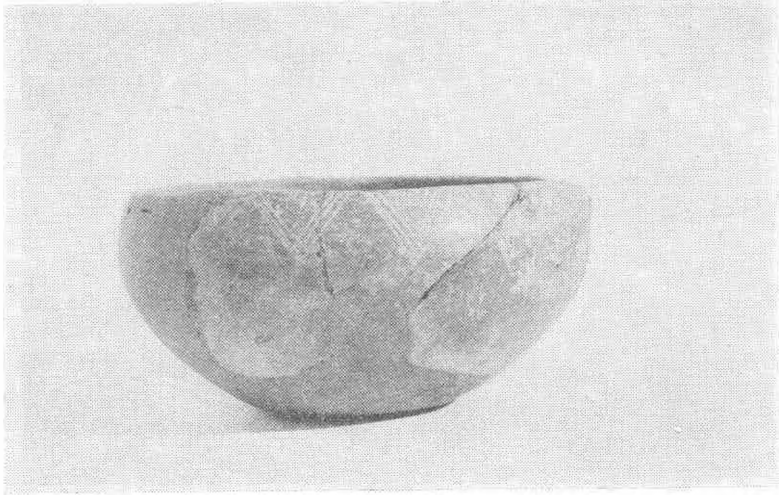


Fig. 5 — Red polished bowl with white paint.

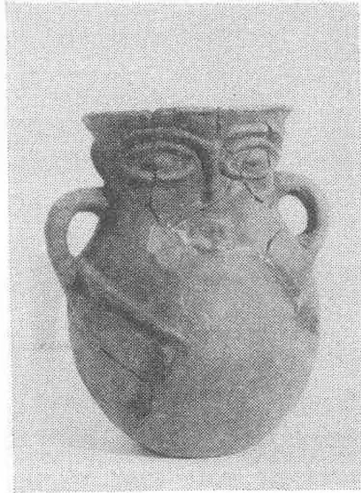


Fig. 6 — Grey ware face jar.

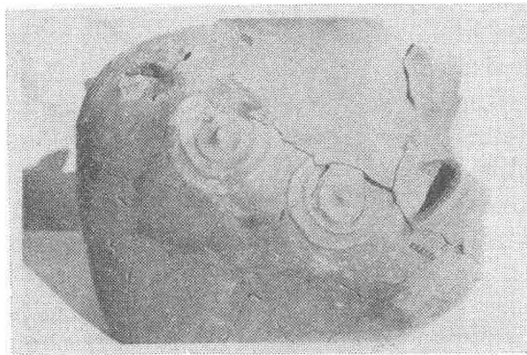


Fig. 7 — Red polished jar with relief ornaments.

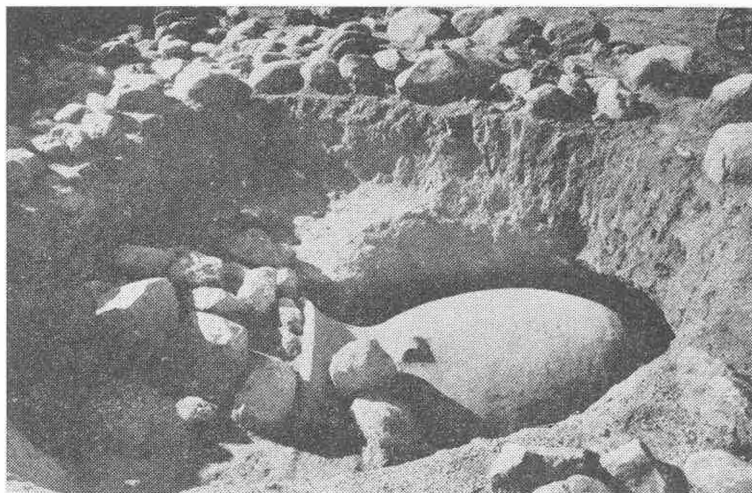


Fig. 8 —Trench 98. Circle A with pithos.



Fig. 9 — Trench 98. Stone circles oerepithos-graves.

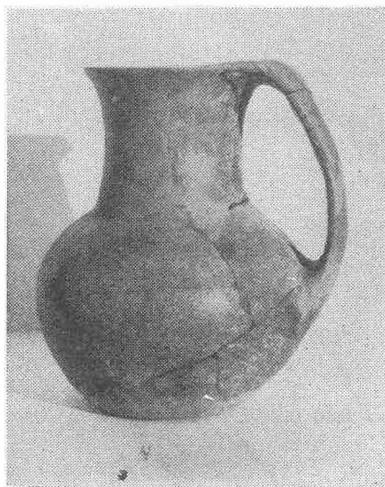


Fig. 10 — Grey burnished jug, "Chalcolithic" trench.