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New Results and Remarks about Neolithic Pottery in Central Anatolia: A view from Tepecik-Çiftlik

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Introduction

Only a couple of years ago, there were no excavated archaeological evidences of a Pottery Neolithic settlement in Cappadocia (Özdoğan, Başgelen (eds) 1999; Gérard, Thissen (eds), 2002). Despite the lack of evidence, the potentialities offered by settlements like Köşk Höyük, Pınarbaşı Bor, or Tepecik-Çiftlik were recognized but only discussed theoretically. Up to now, as already stressed by M. Özdoğan (Özdoğan 1999: 9-12; 2002: 253-261), discussions were mainly focused on the possible links between the aceramic site of Aşıklı, which ended around 7400 BC cal., and the emergence of the Pottery Neolithic site of Çatalhöyük East in the Konya plain, where earlier known dates, disregarding the probable aceramic levels, coincide with the end of Aşıklı. The archaeological facts were not homogeneous enough in time or space: The eastern part of Central Anatolia testified for the Aceramic Neolithic that shows evidences of local development leaning heavily back on Upper Mesopotamian influences, and the western part of Central Anatolia bore witness to the Pottery Neolithic period, to which one must add the excavated sites in the Lake District, showing a development pattern based on farm-like settlements (Godon 2004). Recent excavations at Tepecik-Çiftlik, in addition to the excavations at Köşk Höyük and Güvercinkayası located in the same micro-region, start to fill the gap in terms of evidences that follow the ending of Aşıklı (Fig. 1).

In this paper, we will briefly present some preliminary results about the archaeological sequence already excavated at Tepecik-Çiftlik, as well as an overview of its pottery productions. A first proposal for the Tepecik-Çiftlik chronological sequence will be put forward on the basis of relative datations.

I. The stratigraphy

Tepecik-Çiftlik, a mound of 3,5 hectares first surveyed by I. Todd between 1964-1966 (Todd 1980), is located on the Melendiz Plain, near the Göllü Dağ volcano and its obsidian sources and workshops from the Paleolithic (Slimak et ali. 2005: 287-294) up to the late Neolithic (Balkan-Atlı, Binder 2000: 199-214). The mound has an extension of more or less 11 hectares in the surrounding plain (Bıçakcı 2000). It has been excavated since 2000 by the Istanbul University and Niğde Museum under the direction of Erhan Bıçakcı, but further fieldwork is needed to reach the virgin soil and to grasp the complete archaeological sequence.

The 2005 excavation provided additional information about the stratigraphy even if more cross-analysis results are still required to present it as a definitive one. However, we can already distinguish five main levels from the top to the deepest excavated point, which is at a depth of four meters from the topographic field reference[1].

The levels from the earliest to the latest are presented below (Fig. 2).

Level 5: (4.00-2.70 meters.) Restricted to the sounding zone and covering an area of approximately 27m^2, this level shows the characteristics of an open-air settlement. No architecture was found, due to the limited area excavated. Basically, the nature of the archaeological artifacts, which comprises very small sherds, the sediments, the distribution of artifacts, and the large firing place found at the bottom lead us to interpret it as an open-air settlement. Distinction between sublevels is rather difficult, because of the fragmentation of archaeological material as well as their tri-dimensional distribution.

Level 4: Analyses of the pottery and preliminary studies on the faunal remains show changes at the end of the level 5 sequence. An extensive layer of dark ashes could be recovered, covering almost 64 m^2 on the top of this sequence. This can be distinguished as a transitional level. However to understand this transition, the relationship between level 5 and the preceding layer of level 3 needs to be further investigated both in the field and by means of artifact-analyses.

Level 3: On top of and/or embedded into the thin level 4 and upper level 5, appear the first changes with six human burials discovered in open-air site. So from an open-air settlement (level 5) used for external activities and as a discharge place, the site became a place of more symbolical content. Linked

1 For a presentation of the fieldwork and architectural patterns, see Bıçakcı 2004.

to it in stratigraphy, is the first building layer 3.4, actually only excavated in trench 16K and presenting a long-duration period according to the multi-layered floor and the addition and re-plastering of inner cells. Then, at levels 3.3 and 3.2, a main change in the architectural organization is evidenced by the re-orientation of the buildings, while the building techniques (basically stone walls fitted by mortar and traces of plaster in the interiors) remain the same.

Level 3.1 is characterized by another important change, not only concerning the architectural pattern but also evidenced by a specific pottery production associated with a new kind of secondary burial, which will be described below. In the stratigraphy, as seen in trench 16J and partly in 17J, the layers change their slope abruptly, which influences the sloping of the architectural remains. This can be due to a relocalisation of the building area in the northwestern part of the mound.

From the base of level 3 to its top, three main changes occur in architectural planning. Can those changes be related to some cultural evolution? According to what we can ascertain while material-analyses and absolute datings are still in progress, the burial pattern also shows some modifications, going from open-air burials to more complex redepositional ones organized with gifts of artifacts like unipolar cores, deer antlers, long animal bones, and relief-decorated pottery.

Level 2: Just beneath the topsoil, this level still presents remains of architecture, mostly eroded, with material in secondary position due to natural disturbances caused by erosion and also due to the removal of building stones and agricultural activities of humans. The opening of two new trenches in an apparently better-preserved level in 2005 will yield more contextual information from an occupation that seems to be culturally similar to Gelveri and Köşk Höyük level II, as shown by the pottery production.

Level 1: Topsoil including mixed material from deeper levels as well as Roman and Byzantine finds. No architectural remains, no in-situ layers.

II: Pottery production

In comparison with the stratigraphy, one may try to analyse whether the pottery production follows the evolution outlined before. The aim is not to deliver here a detailed description of the different groups of pottery and the methodological background inherent to their distinction but to expose a main framework leading us to envisage possible technological changes if not cultural ones.

To start from Tepecik-Çiftlik pottery production without disposing of any previously attested references in the region, especially for the earlier levels, requires an objective stance in front of the archaeological material found. In other terms, the terminology used in this study bears no references to others, except when indicated.

Level 5: Nature of the paste: Natural mineral inclusions are thin in section, but big mineral inclusions sometimes appear in the coarsest sherds, which were not systematically refined. Temper contains thin-sectioned and well-shortened grassy inclusions and composes approximately 20% of the paste. Even if this amount increases the porosity of the paste, it does not seriously impair the strength and produces compactness in clay, which is favourable for the building process. Pots of different shapes, volumes, and functions are made with the same kind of paste. The reduction in vegetal temper becomes significant, when a possibility arises for it to effect specific surface treatments, such as burnishing. But even in this case, vegetal temper is continued to be used although in less amount. According to the physical properties of the pottery, which are associated with the building process including the firing, nine main groups can be distinguished independent of typological features, namely shapes and volumes (Fig. 3).

Group 3 is the most common ware and is basically characterized by a final oxidizing process at the end of the firing. Some variations may occur (groups 1 and 2), which may be due to variability during the firing process.

Group 5 is characterized by firing in a controlled reductive atmosphere, which results in the dark brown coloration of the surface.

Group 6 is what can be called a black-burnished ware, without a suggestion to connect the term to any broad cultural assessment. It simply means that the pottery is fired in a reductive atmosphere in order to obtain the black coloration of the surface. The surface must have been previously burnished, in the technological sense of this term, and not in the final phase. Group 7 represents imported black-burnished wares as well. There are no organic tempers in the paste. Ten different kinds of imported pottery can be distinguished, but it should be stressed that the number of each is very low.

Group 4 and 9 represent respectively red-slipped and decorated wares.

Red-slipped ware appears only at the top of the level 5 sequence with heavily eroded tiny sherds. They can be evaluated as pollution from upper levels as their characteristics are similar to the latest red-slipped examples from level 3. Decorated pottery appears also only in the upper layers of level

5 and is characterized by whipped-back chevrons. This decorative pattern occurs in upper levels but there it is mainly incised and not in relief (Fig. 4).

Level 4: As seen previously, level 4 is very thin and needs more field investigations to be interpreted in nature and context. The burials dug in this level are a taphonomic factor, which might have disturbed the primary position of the artifacts. Without more reliable archaeological context and larger amount of in-situ material, it is better not to make further assessments about it.

Level 3: The change of context at level 3.4 has been explained above. Changes also occur in pottery production: There is an increase in the amount of vegetal temper in the paste that reaches up to 35-40% for most of the productions except the burnished ones. Increase also occurs with red-slipped wares and whipped-back chevron decoration, repeated on large shapes as well as small ones red slipped or not. If the shapes were simple in level 5 (open shapes, holemouth, small bowls), they start to be much more diversified from the level 3.4 on. Diversification increases at the top layers of level 3. Noteworthy are the presence of carinated bases and carinated walls, as well as the first occurence of jars, either long- or short-necked. With the main production, the firing still has a final oxidizing phase that is less controlled as evidenced by the variation in coloration on certain finds. These facts should be evaluated in respect to changes and main tendencies, again factual ones. But especially for level 3.4, it would make no sense to compare the productions on a statistical basis, although the context is specific: The presence of burials and building areas are known to be unrepresentative in terms of amount of the production.

With the production of large jars, a new building method appears, as testified by the material found from level 3.2 to the level 2. This method consists of building and shaping the lower part of the pottery in a concave mould, in this case a basket. The upper part of the walls (from the inclination at the belly until the shoulder) is built by slabbing portions of paste, sticking them together, and then shaping them on the ready base by pinching. On the long-necked jars, the neck is added at the shoulder's enclosing point. In some cases, this upper part is modelled on a convex mould made of basket. The finishing process tends to delete the negative traces of the mould, so this method might have been more common than can be deduced from the whole corpus. Such negative basket traces are also present at Köşk Höyük and Gelveri (personal observation). At Boğazköy-Büyükkaya similar negative traces were found at the bottom of some pottery from the Lower Plateau (Schoop 2005: 15-37) and they were interpreted as matt impressions (as long as there are no basket traces on the walls themselves or other traces

undoubtely linked to the moulding technique, traces on the bottom can be related to a matt rather than to a basket mould) (Fig. 5).

As the diversity of shapes increases (cups, red-slipped footed cups) from level 3.4 to 3.1, another step is reached with the production of basket-moulded jars, which is applied anthropomorphic and faunal patterns. This new kind of production, made for the specific purpose of depositing in secondary burials found in level 3.1, is certainly the result of specialization carried out by craftsmen rather than by common potters. Skills obviously involving training in what can be called new artistic techniques as well as time investment were developed in order to execute the decoration, while the building of the jars themselves were executed in accordance with the earlier method (Fig. 6).

Level 2: Among the mixed material from the surface and scant information about the archaeological context, a new kind of decorated pottery appears, still sharing the organic temper used in earlier levels but distinctively different in terms of the patterns and techniques of decoration. Patterns basically consist of series of incised triangles or waves filled by small pipes made with sharp tools. Mainly embellishing black-burnished carinated bowls, these patterns also occur on simpler types of pottery (Fig.7).

Conclusive remarks about the chronology

Without an absolute dating established as yet, one can try to figure out a chronological frame for the excavated sequence at hand. As seen above, the top layer presents mixed material from Roman and Byzantine periods as well as from level 2. At level 2, the pottery shows similarities with the pottery from Gelveri and Köşk Höyük level 2 (Öztan 2002: 57-72; Silistreli 1989), dated around 5500 BC cal.[2], a little earlier than the earliest levels of Güvercinkayası. The fact that this incised pottery is not found deeper than level 2 can be due to a gap in the chronological sequence. This comment is supported by the presence of relief-decorated pottery in level 3.1, similar to the ones from Köşk Höyük level 4 and dated around 6500 BC cal[3]. No comparison is available for the earliest level. The pottery does not have strong similarities with either Çatalhöyük East or other Pottery Neolithic settlements in

[2] Thissen 2002, and the Canew website which provides updated radiocarbon databases: http://www.canew.org/

[3] Öztan, 2005: "Köşk Höyük Kazılarının Öntarih Arkeolojisindeki Yeri ve Önemi" oral presentation held at the Niğde Symposium organized by Niğde İl Kültür ve Turizm Müdürlüğü, Niğde, 25/27 May 2005

southeastern and western Anatolia. Nevertheless some elements can suggest chronological information: A very few number of imported black-burnished wares, especially impresso decorated ones and those related to the upper layers of level 5 find parallels in Tarsus (Goldman 1956) and Mersin Yumuktepe (Caneva, Sevin (eds.) 2004; Garstang 1953), dated around 7000 BC cal. Level 5 presents also bifacial obsidian tools which can be related to Çatalhöyük. Those found in Tepecik-Çiftlik may be related to the already known workshops on Göllü Dağ. In these respects, it seems that Tepecik-Çiftlik archaeological sequence covers at least the Pottery Neolithic period. A minimum of four meters in the archaeological sequence still needs to be excavated to have a fuller understanding of the complete chronological sequence.

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Orta Anadolu Neolitik Çanak Çömleği Üzerine Yeni Sonuçlar ve Gözlemler: Tepecik-Çiftlik Örneği

Tepecik-Çiftlik kazısında, çanak çömlek üretimi ve çanak çömlek gruplarının şu ana kadar kazılmış olan arkeolojik tabakalarla olan ilişkileri, M.Ö. 7000-5500 (cal.) arasındaki döneme tarihlendiklerini işaret etmektedir. Ayrıca, çanak çömlek üretimindeki hem biçimsel hem de teknolojik değişimler, M.Ö. 6. bin boyunca, Kapadokya Bölgesi'nde kültürel gelişimlerin ortaya çıkarılmasında ilk bulgular olabilir.

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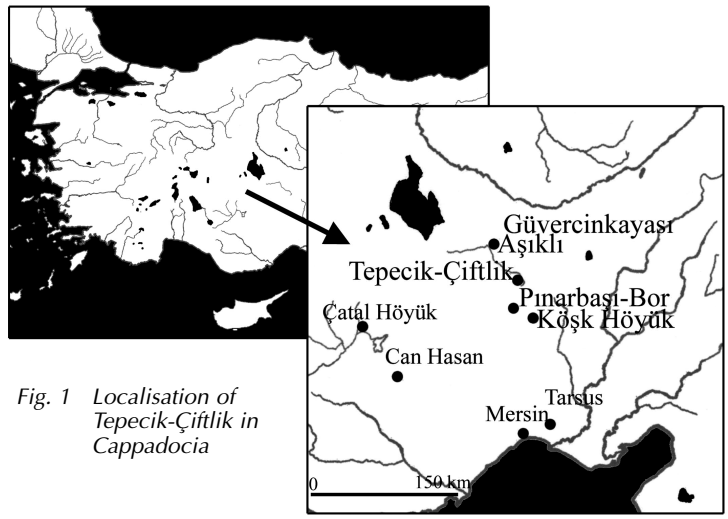
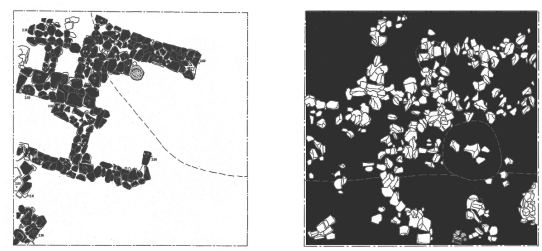


Fig. 1 Localisation of Tepecik-Çiftlik in Cappadocia



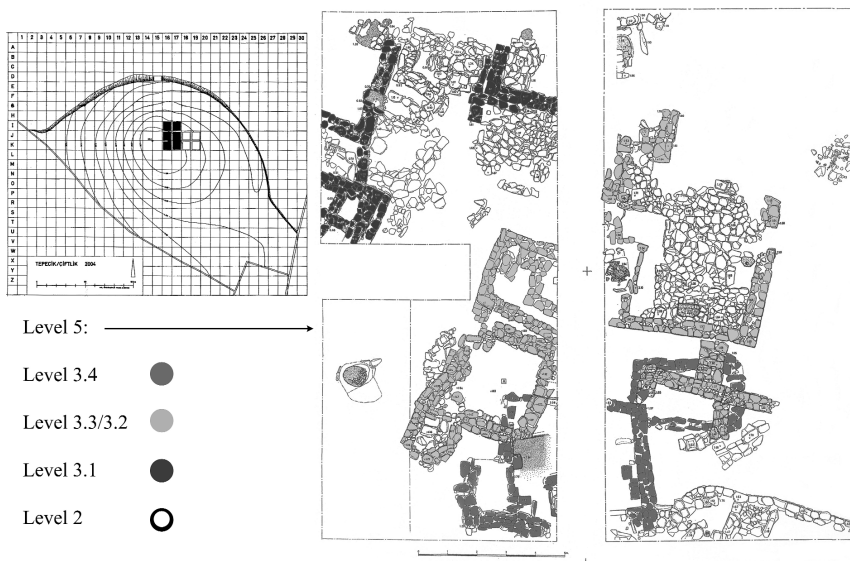


Fig. 2 Plan of Tepecik-Çiftlik and archaeological levels

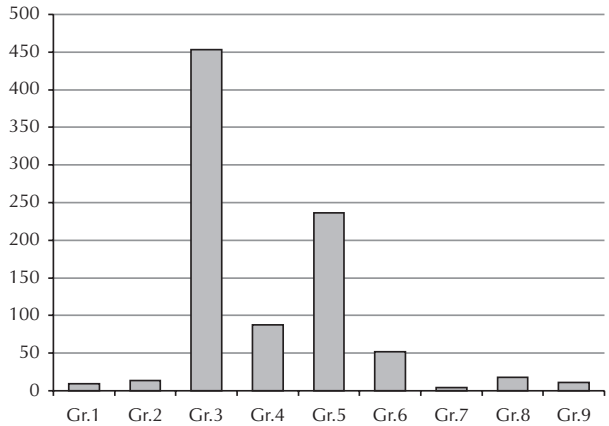


Fig. 3 Amount of sherds among the corpus

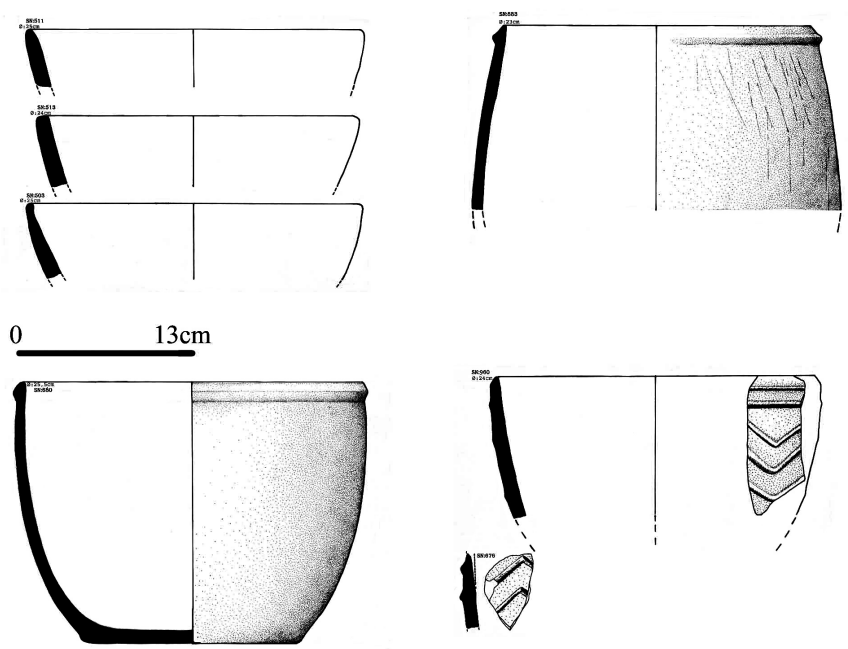


Fig. 4 Exemple of potteries from level 5

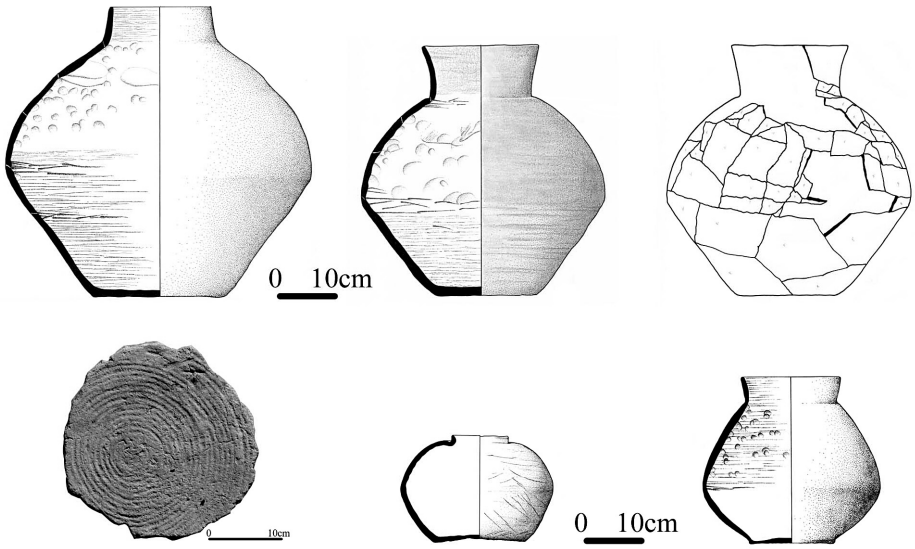


Fig. 5 Moulded potteries from level 3

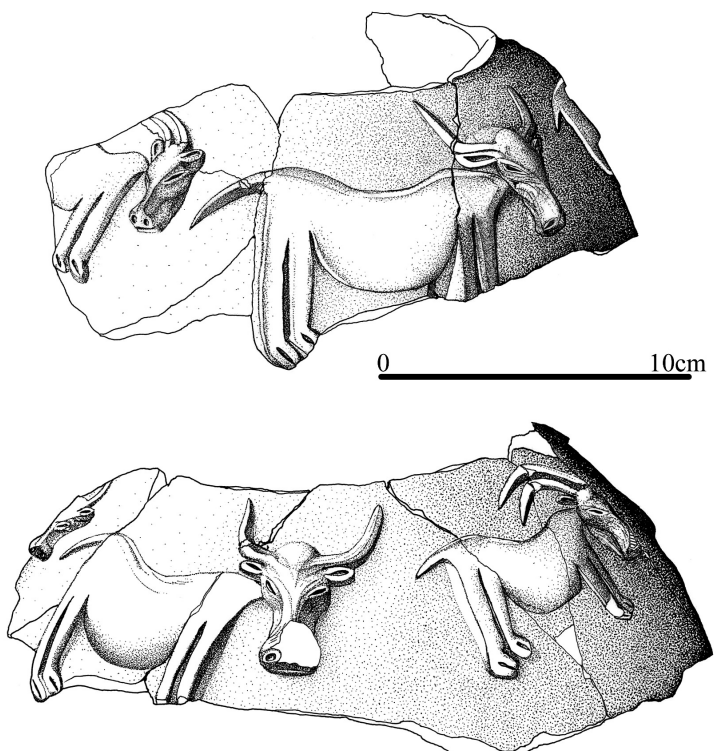


Fig. 6 Exemple of relief decorated potteries from level 3.1

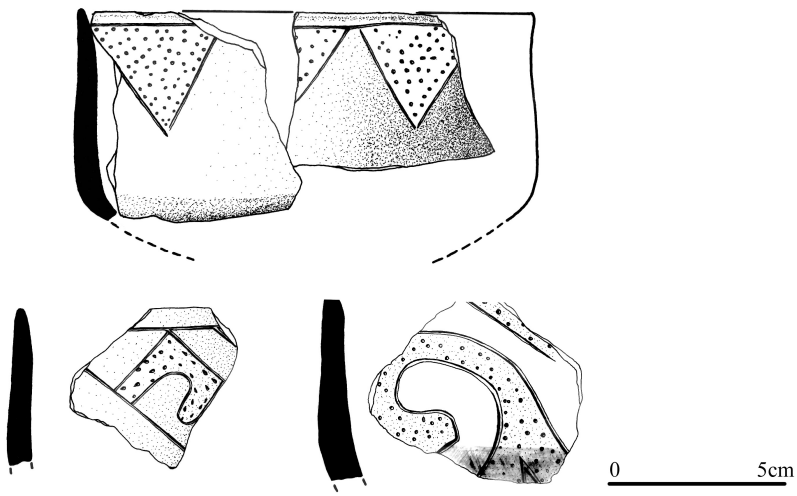


Fig. 7 Decorated potteries from level 2