

TWO STONE PLATES FROM THE SARIKAYA PALACE AT ACEMHÖYÜK *

ALİYE ÖZTEN

From the west wing of the Sarıkaya palace at Acemhöyük have come objects of a variety of precious materials, including gold, ivory, rock crystal and obsidian. Before the systematic excavations of the site began, much damage had been done in this area by villagers in search of stone or clay. Although the disturbed condition of the palace remains has thus prevented a clear understanding of the provenience of these objects, recent excavations have contributed new information for this inquiry. Investigations at the palace, in particular in Room 17, have established that the ground floor of this two-story structure served for storage purposes¹. That the second floor was used at least in part to protect valuable possessions is indicated by the provenience of the obsidian plate and the radiolarium plate with stand which form the subject of this discussion². They were recovered from the collapsed ceiling debris in Room 17 of the Sarıkaya palace, at a height of 2.5 m. above the floor level³.

1. Plate with stand

The dimensions of the radiolarium plate are as follows : (Ac. f. 33; Pl. I) diameter of rim 19.8 cm., height 6.5 cm., thickness 1 cm., and diameter of base 9 cm. The edge of its plain rim is turned slightly inward. The shoulders are rounded, and it has a ring-shaped base. The edge of the rim as well as that of the base was neatly smoothed.

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¹ N. Özgüç, "Acemhöyük Saraylarında Bulunmuş Olan Mühür Baskıları Belleten XLI/162 (1977), p. 358-360.

² The type of stone used for this plate and its stand was analyzed by Dr. C. Şahin, Department of Geology, Faculty of Letters, Ankara University. I am grateful for his kind assistance and cooperation.

³ N. Özgüç, *ibid.*, Plan. 2.

Both interior and exterior are carefully worked and polished. Situated 1.2-1.4 cm. below the rim of the plate are eight indentations 5.5 cm. apart. These circular indentations, measuring 0.5 cm. in diameter with a depth of 0.7 cm., do not continue toward the inner side of the plate. Below one of these indentations a mark can be distinguished (Pl. I, under the indentation at the left), it was either mistakenly placed or resulted from the slip of the drill. These indentations spaced at regular intervals may have been used as a base for appliquéés.

The stand is made of the same stone material as the plate and measures 6.7 cm. in height (Ac. f. 34; Pl. I-II). The diameter of the circular section on which the rests is 13 cm. above and 17.6 cm., below. The inner face is straight, while the outer face has a smooth rounded edge. This section extending to the foot was carved in one piece. The transition to the foot measures 0.5 cm. height. The two sections underneath the stand have been worked with less care. An octagonal foot is attached to the stand with rounded lines. Between the top of the stand and the base with its three circular holes (1.3 cm. in diameter) is a section with three triangular openings. Circular openings 0.3-0.6 cm. in diameter are also found on the side and inner faces of the foot; these may have been used for attachment purposes.

The holes on the underside of the stand indicate that the foot was a separate attachment made of the same stone or perhaps of a different material. These attachments were very likely in the shape of an animal's foot. The side and inner faces of the base have small indentations which again would have served to attach the foot to the stand. This type of attachment hole can be seen among the ivory artifacts recovered from the Sarıkaya palace as well as among those ivory finds of the same provenience, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art⁴.

This stand represents a product similar in concept to the fruit-stands made in two parts known from the Assyrian Colony Period⁵.

⁴ N. Özgüç, "Excavations at Achemhöyük" *Anadolu X* (1966) pp. 43; M. S. Dimand, "A Gift of Syrian Ivories" *Bulletin of The Metropolitan Museum of Art (BMMA) XXXI* (1936) p. 221; "An Additional Gift of Syrian Ivories" *BMMA XXXII* (1937) p. 88.

⁵ T. - N. Özgüç, *Ausgrabungen in Kültepe 1949. Ankara* (1953) p. 161. Pl. XXVII, 132 a-b.

The closest parallel to our example is a stand of baked clay (Kt. 1/k 107) from Kültepe Karum Level II⁶. Here the vessel rests on the grooved section of the stand, the stand itself ends in three animal-shaped feet. In the section where the feet are attached to the stand are three triangular holes, as in our stone example. A baked clay stand of similar form, dated to the same period, has been recovered from Level IV d at Boğazköy⁷. These examples demonstrate that this kind of stand was frequently found in Anatolia in this period and was a local product. This type of stand served as an altar in representations on seal and seal impressions of the same period⁸.

2. Obsidian plate (Ac. f. 65; Pl. III)

This plate measures 21 cm. in diameter at the rim, 7.8 cm. in height, and 1.2 cm. in thickness. The edge of its plain rim is turned slightly inward. The shoulder area is rounded and it has a rounded base. Both inside and outside surface have been carefully worked and polished. The conflagration which brought an end to the palace of this level had caused the plate to break apart into some 27 pieces; examples of these measured 2.8 cm. in thickness. The plate has now been restored through the careful work of Abdurrahman Çulha of the Ankara Archaeological Museum.

This shape of plate in baked clay, is known from every period in Anatolia and is represented by numerous examples recovered from the Sarıkaya palace. At Acemhöyük these have also been found to serve as lids for vessels.

The earliest examples of stone vessels from Anatolia are known from the Neolithic period⁹. Obsidian obtained from the rich sources of Hasandağ and Melendiz Dağları in Central Anatolia was used for a variety of purposes in this period. This stone, whose principal sources in this region included Çiftlik near Aksaray, was exported during

⁶ N. Özgüç, *The Anatolian Group of Cylinder Seal Impressions From Kültepe*. Ankara (1965). Pl. XXXII, 100.

⁷ P. Neve, "Die Grabungen auf Büyükkale im Jahre 1962" *MDOG* 95 (1965) p. 31, Figs. 19 a-b.

⁸ *Anatolian Group*, p. 55; E. L. B. Terrace, *The Art of the Ancient Near East* in Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Mass. (1962). No. 12.

⁹ J. Mellaart, *Excavations at Hacilar*. Edinburgh (1970) pp. 149, Pl. 439-445.

the Neolithic period as well. The obsidian used for artifacts found at Petra tou Limniti in Cyprus, Jericho, Byblos, Ramad, and Beidha has been shown to derive from the sources at Çiftlik¹⁰. At the beginning of the second millennium B. C. obsidian artifacts made from raw material obtained locally were favored treasures of the Sarıkaya palace. Carefully worked vases of this material have been recovered from Rooms 19 and 20¹¹. These include an example published previously, with a grooved body, two handles connected to the edge of the rim by carefully carved animal heads, and another fragment of this vase that had been repaired with gold¹². The conflagration which destroyed the Sarıkaya palace, increased in intensity by the extensive use of timber for its construction, also damaged the fine objects which fell among the charred wood debris. Artifacts recovered from the corners of rooms or the bases of walls have suffered the most damage from the conflagration; an example of such a fragmentary state of preservation is the obsidian plate just described. Those objects which fell into an area where less use of timber decreased the intensity of the fire, such as the radiolarium plate and its stand, have survived in more complete form.

The stone vessels from Acemhöyük were burned during the last phase of the Sarıkaya place, which may be dated through written sources to the first half of the eighteenth century B. C.¹³ It is surely possible that they had already been in use for a considerable length of time.

¹⁰ J. Mellaart, *The Neolithic of the Near East*. London (1975) p. 48, 64-65, 130, 231.

¹¹ N. Özgüç, *Belleten XLI*, p. 360.

¹² N. Özgüç, *Anadolu X*, p. 48, Fig. 6, Pl. XXIII 2-3.

¹³ N. Özgüç, *Belleten XLI*, p. 362.