

## YEŞİLÖZ HÖYÜK. A NEW PREHISTORIC SITE IN VOLCANIC CAPPADOCIA

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### Abstract

The corpus of knowledge pertaining to prehistoric cultures in Central Anatolia is predominantly informed by research conducted in the southern part of the territory. The region is divided into two distinct sub-regions: The Konya Plain in the west and the Volcanic Cappadocia region in the east. The primary reference sites for comprehending the Late Neolithic-Early Chalcolithic transition and the Early Chalcolithic Period in the region are Tepecik Çiftlik, Köşk Höyük and Gelveri sites in the western part of the Volcanic Cappadocia region, and Çatalhöyük and Canhasan sites in the Konya Plain and Karaman, which are regarded as part of the late seventh millennium BC and sixth millennium BC. In this context, it is notable that all of the settlements mentioned in the Volcanic Cappadocia Region are located in the western part of the region. Nevertheless, upon evaluation of the prehistoric periods of Nevşehir province and its environs, which can be defined as the Central Volcanic Cappadocia Region, a conspicuous chronological gap becomes evident. Consequently, Yeşilöz Höyük is a significant archaeological site, as it demonstrates that the region was inhabited during the late seventh millennium BC and the transition to the sixth millennium BC. As part of the Nevşehir Neolithic Surveys Project (NENESU), the prehistoric pottery and chipped stone finds recovered during the researches carried out at Yeşilöz Höyük, located within the borders of Yeşilöz Village in Gülşehir Province, north of the Kızılırmak River, are comparable to the archaeological finds from the settlements mentioned above. The present study aims to evaluate the transition from the seventh-sixth millennium BC and the sixth millennium BC sequence in Volcanic Cappadocia, in the light of the finds from a prehistoric settlement in Central Volcanic Cappadocia, for the first time.

**Keywords:** Volcanic Cappadocia, Prehistory, Late Neolithic, Early Chalcolithic, Pottery, Nevşehir.

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### Introduction

Evidence on the early prehistoric pottery in the Volcanic Cappadocia region is based on archaeological research in the provinces of Niğde and Aksaray, which could be defined as the western part of the region. The Tepecik Çiftlik and Köşk Höyük settlements, which are located within the geographical confines of Niğde province, represent the primary source of data concerning the transition from the Pottery Neolithic to the Early Chalcolithic period in the region. The Gelveri settlement, situated in Aksaray province, constitutes a significant site within the Volcanic Cappadocia region. This is particularly noteworthy due to the presence of decorated pottery, which dates back to the sixth millennium BC. Archaeological investigations for this millennia are much more limited in central (Nevşehir province and its surroundings) and eastern (Kayseri province and its surroundings) Volcanic Cappadocia, where the results of the few studies on the prehistory of the region are extremely scarce.

In order to comprehend the sixth millennium BC as it pertains to the Volcanic Cappadocia region, the 'Gelveri Culture' should be considered in view of its notable pottery finds. The Gelveri settlement (fig. 1), which was first identified in 1951 during Burhan Tezcan's surveys covering the provinces of Aksaray and Niğde, is located in the rocky geography where the High Church is situated in the town of Gelveri in Aksaray province<sup>1</sup>. The site was subjected to archaeological sounding excavations by Ufuk Esin for two seasons in 1990-1991<sup>2</sup>. In 2007, Sevil Gülçur conducted additional sounding excavations in the same area, yielding pottery, obsidian, and bone findings<sup>3</sup>.

The Gelveri Settlement is evaluated within the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BC, especially in the light of the data obtained as a result of Sevil Gülçur's research<sup>4</sup>. In their analysis, Martin Godon and Ozan Özbudak have categorised the Gelveri pottery into two distinct groups. They assert that the limited number of potsherds from the early phase of the settlement are classified as 'Archaic Gelveri', while the examples from the late phase of the settlement, as evidenced by nearly three thousand finds, are termed 'Classical Gelveri'<sup>5</sup>.

As demonstrated in the preceding paragraphs, the data available for the understanding of the early Pottery Neolithic in the Volcanic Cappadocia region are derived from the settlements of Western Volcanic Cappadocia. Nevertheless, at this juncture, when a more holistic perspective is desired, no descriptive data is available for the centre (Nevşehir) or the east (Kayseri) of the Volcanic Cappadocia Region. In order to contribute to the solution of this problem, significant data on the early settled life of the Middle Volcanic Cappadocia region were obtained as a result of the comprehensive surveys carried out at Yeşilöz Höyük within the scope of the Nenesu Project. This article focuses on understanding the place of the Yeşilöz settlement within the prehistoric cultures of Volcanic Cappadocia.

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the data from Yeşilöz Höyük in the context of the regional chronology established based on the settle-

1 Tezcan 1958.

2 Esin et al. 1991, Özdoğan 2019, 453.

3 Gülçur – Kiper, 2009; Özbudak 2012, 270-272.

4 Godon – Özbudak 2022, 106.

5 Godon – Özbudak 2022, 106.

ments of Western Volcanic Cappadocia, and to assess the transition period between the seventh and sixth millennia BC in the Volcanic Cappadocia region in the context of the first comprehensive research produced using data from Central Volcanic Cappadocia.

### **A Prehistoric Settlement in the Middle Volcanic Cappadocia region, Yeşilöz Höyük**

Yeşilöz Höyük is situated 3 km northwest of Yeşilöz Village, Gülshehir District, Nevşehir Province (fig. 1-2). The mound measures 170x150 m in dimensions and is located at an altitude of 1270 m above sea level (fig. 3). The Kızılırmak River flows in the east-west direction 5.5 km south of the mound. Yeşilöz Höyük is located in a natural environment characterised by a high level of groundwater. The area to the east of the mound, known as 'Kale Bağları', is particularly notable for its abundance of green vegetation (fig. 4). To the west of the mound, the deep valley through which the Gürleyen Stream flows extends in a north-south direction. The surveys conducted at the Civelek Cave, situated on the western side of the valley, yielded painted pottery samples that are regarded as being of the Late Chalcolithic period. The region to which the Yeşilöz mound belongs is characterised by the presence of reddish brown soil, a type of brown soil defined by its reddish hue, which is predominantly observed in arid and semi-arid climates. This colouration is attributed to the high level of iron oxide present in the soil. The region's substantial soil fertility<sup>6</sup> and its abundance in groundwater have been identified as significant criteria in determining its location. Notably, the mound's location north of the Kızılırmak River is significant due to the pronounced topographical rise to the north of the river, as compared to the south. This location is regarded as a key dominance point for the Kızılırmak River valley and its surroundings.

The geographical characteristics of the region in which Yeşilöz Höyük is situated are conducive to the development of a prehistoric settlement. Firstly, the abundance of water sources around the mound is a primary criterion in the selection of settlement locations, as evidenced by prehistoric settlement strategies.

Secondly, the site is situated at an elevation of 1,270 metres above sea level in an area that dominates the surrounding geography. Yeşilöz Höyük overlooks the Kızılırmak River to the south, which flows east-west and is considered the primary water source of the Volcanic Cappadocia Region. Given its dominant position for prehistoric hunting strategies, it presents an extremely strategic location where different animal herds could be easily observed. Moreover, its predominant position in the surrounding area demonstrates its optimal location when evaluated in terms of the security strategies of prehistoric settlements.

Thirdly, the location of Yeşilöz Höyük, situated to the north of the Kızılırmak River, is of particular importance in terms of prehistoric research in the Volcanic Cappadocia Region. It is acknowledged that the majority of extant data concerning the prehistory of the region derives from settlements situated to the south of the Kızılırmak River. Consequently, the paucity of data from the north of the river is all the more significant, as it provides invaluable insights into

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6 Sürer 2022, 29-30.

the prehistoric character of the north of the region and the relationships between the north and south in prehistoric times.

Yeşilöz Höyük was first identified by S. Yücel Şenyurt in 1997 during surveys carried out in the region, and it yielded pottery fragments from the Hellenistic-Roman, Iron Age and Bronze Age. In addition, obsidian tools and Neolithic-Chalcolithic sherds were found on the surface of the mound, especially on the terrace to the west of the mound, although in smaller numbers<sup>7</sup>.

Archaeological surveys were conducted in and around Yeşilöz Höyük between 2020 and 2022 as part of the Neolithic Survey Project (Nenesu) in Nevşehir province. The mound and its environs were analysed in six distinct areas (fig. 5). The terrace area, delineated as Area 1 in the western part of the mound, is of particular significance due to its abundance of artefacts from the chipped stone industry and prehistoric pottery. The section separating the mound from the terrace area to the east from the terrace area to the west was identified as section 2. In this area, where current agricultural activities are carried out, fewer finds that can be evaluated within the scope of prehistoric periods were encountered compared to the terrace area to the west. In addition, especially Hellenistic-Roman pottery samples were observed from this area. The mound surface identified as Area No. 3 encompasses an area measuring 170 x 150 metres. The area was analysed under four different units: north, south, east and west. Particularly noteworthy are the western and southern units, which contain a high density of pottery finds that can be defined within the Hellenistic-Roman periods. However, the eastern unit of the mound facing the Kızılırmak River is particularly noteworthy due to its remarkable increase in the density of prehistoric pottery and chipped stone samples. The northern unit, on the other hand, exhibits a significantly lower numerical ratio of finds evaluable across different periods in comparison to the other units. The southern and southeastern section of the mound, delineated as Area 4, stands out for its distinctiveness from the other areas with respect to the density of Hellenistic and Roman pottery finds. Within the context of the illicit digging pit, wall extensions that can be ascribed to these periods were observed, along with traces of blue-coloured plaster on the wall surface. The digital elevation model (fig. 6) was created using aerial photographs of the mound and its surroundings, and analysis of this model clearly reveals traces of Hellenistic and Roman architecture in area number 4. Furthermore, notable traces of an area measuring 24 x 36 m are present on the summit of the Yeşilöz mound. Given the designation of the area to the east of the mound, which is characterised by a abundance of green vegetation and is referred to as 'Kale Bağları' (Kale Vineyards), it can be hypothesised that the top of the mound may have been the site of a castle or similar architecture, which could be dated to the Hellenistic and Roman periods (fig. 6).

### **Prehistoric Pottery of Yeşilöz Höyük**

All of the prehistoric pottery from Yeşilöz Höyük is handmade. The paste colours comprise black, brown and grey, with plant tempered and stone inclusions of various sizes. The slip is the same colour as the paste and burnished; the

<sup>7</sup> Şenyurt 1999, 453.

burnishing is lustrous on some samples and matt on others.

Yeşilöz prehistoric pottery, which can be evaluated under the definition of “Dark Faced Burnished Ware”, are divided into two sub-groups:

- 1) Brown-Grey Tones
- 2) Black Tones

The brown and grey examples of the dark faced burnished ware demonstrate a more dominant character in terms of quantity when compared to the black tones. As a result of the atmospheric conditions during the firing process, some examples exhibit a mottled appearance on certain parts of the surfaces. The brown and grey tones are present in both bowl and jar forms.

The black tones of the dark-faced burnished ware are represented by a smaller number of examples in comparison to the other group. In cases where the oxygen distribution is irregular during the firing process, it is a common result that the surfaces are transformed into black or near-black colour tones. The black tones are represented by both bowl and jar forms in the Yeşilöz samples.

In consideration of the prehistoric pottery forms at Yeşilöz Höyük, the presence of both bowl and jar forms is observed. The jar forms are analysed under two different types: necked (fig. 7) and hole-mount (fig. 8) jars. As for the bowl forms, the frequency of straight walled bowls is particularly noteworthy (figs. 9-10). S-profiled bowl forms are also found in different examples (Fig. 11). Although they are represented by fewer examples, round-bodied straight walled bowl forms are also observed (fig. 12). A different type of bowl form is characterised by the open-mouthed vessels (fig. 13). Handle fragments are not observed in the prehistoric sherds of Yeşilöz Höyük, and the few base fragments recovered are in the form of flat bottoms. Upon analysis of the numerical data, it is evident that 55 of the evaluated sherds are profiled examples, with 52 samples in rim form and 3 samples in base form. Of the 52 rim sherds, 33 are classified as bowls and 19 as jars. The body sherd group, comprising 278 specimens, is dominated by brown tones (195 specimens), with grey tones accounting for 23 specimens and black tones for 60 specimens.

The mat traces evident on two samples of prehistoric pottery from Yeşilöz are of particular interest. In the first instance, the traces, which cover the entire body of the vessel in a specific order, are hypothesised to be the result of a basket mould utilised during the vessel's shaping process (fig. 14). Similar examples are known from the Tepecik Çiftlik settlement in Volcanic Cappadocia. In the other example, traces of the mat floor on which the vessel was placed, probably when the surface was not yet completely dry, can be observed on the bottom of the vessel (fig. 15).

Some of the prehistoric sherds from Yeşilöz Höyük exhibit incised, grooved, *impresso* and relief decorations. The incised decorations produced various motifs as a result of narrow and shallow incisions made with a pointed tool while the surface of the vessel was not yet completely dry. Examples of incised decorations can be observed in the terrace area located to the west of the Yeşilöz Höyük. This area is of particular interest due to the density of prehistoric material it contains. On a body fragment, which can be evaluated within the grey tones of the dark faced burnished ware group, a rectangular area bounded by an incised line is decorated with small dots (fig. 16h). Another example found in the same

area has a black surface colour with two parallel horizontal lines incised along the body fragment (fig. 16g).

Grooved decorations also exist in Yeşilöz Höyük prehistoric pottery assemblage. In certain motifs, characterised by linear or curvilinear treatment of grooved lines in horizontal and vertical style, dots formed in the form of grooves are observed between these lines. In another example, the presence of nested circle motifs formed in groove style is observed in conjunction with horizontal and vertical lines (fig. 16a-f).

Another type of decoration that has been identified on the prehistoric pottery of Yeşilöz is known as the “*impresso*” decoration. This style of decoration, which can be defined as ornamentation created by using a nail, reed or pointed tool on the surface of a vessel that has not yet completely dried<sup>8</sup>, is found in the Eastern Mediterranean, Northern Syria, Lake District, Western Anatolia, Marmara, Continental Greece, Malta and North Africa in prehistoric times. Two body sherds decorated in *impresso* style were found among the prehistoric pottery of Yeşilöz. One of the sherds is decorated with nail impressions (fig. 16j), while the other sherd is decorated with comb impressions<sup>9</sup> (fig. 16k).

It has been determined that a single instance of relief decoration has been identified among the prehistoric pottery from Yeşilöz Höyük (fig. 16i). The examined surface of the sample features a relief decoration in the form of a horizontal line extending along the length of the body fragment. This relief is characterised by a brown colour tone, indicative of the dark faced burnished ware group (fig. 16).

### **Yeşilöz Höyük Chipped Stone Industry; Preliminary Observations**

The surveys conducted at Yeşilöz Höyük as part of the Nenesu Project yielded chipped stone artefacts on the surface of the mound, classified as Area No. 3, in Area No. 2 to the west of the mound, which was subject to agricultural activities, and in the terrace area to the west of the mound, labelled Area No. 1. The initial observations pertaining to the chipped stone tool industry indicate that the predominant raw material is obsidian. The presence of flint constitutes 10% of the chipped stone industry. The presence of obsidian cores is of crucial significance in indicating that production activities were carried out in the settlement. The cores identified are exhausted flake cores. Both unidirectional and bidirectional blades were observed. A small number of thin blades and a greater number of thicker and larger triangular and trapezoidal blades were identified in chipped stone assemblage. Arrowheads made from obsidian are particularly abundant in terrace area 3 (fig. 18). Pressure retouched blades on both sides are common. The presence of retouches on both sides of the arrowheads distinguishes from the Late Neolithic site of Musular within the Volcanic Cappadocia Region. The most comparable examples with Yeşilöz arrowheads with pressure retouches are known from another Late Neolithic-Early Chalcolithic site of Tepecik Çiftlik<sup>10</sup>. Similar examples can also be identified in the Late Neolithic lay-

8 Güldoğan 2008a, 156.

9 Güldoğan 2008b, 56.

10 Bıçakçı et al. 2007, 244-245.

ers of the Köşk Höyük settlement, which is located in the same region<sup>11</sup>. In the Konya Plain, small shouldered, tanged points with bifacial retouches have been found in the Late Neolithic layers of Çatalhöyük<sup>12</sup>. These points are comparable with Yeşilöz examples.

### **Comparison and Dating: Yeşilöz Höyük in the context of the prehistoric Volcanic Cappadocia**

In the process of placing Yeşilöz Höyük within a historical context, the primary approach applied is the comparison of archaeological materials with the prehistoric settlements in the Volcanic Cappadocia Region. In consideration of the prehistoric settlements in the Volcanic Cappadocia Region in which Yeşilöz Höyük is located, the Tepecik Çiftlik settlement is regarded as the fundamental reference point for evaluations of Yeşilöz Höyük. This is due to the diversity of available data and the establishment of a reliable stratification system.

The dark faced burnished wares found in the fifth and fourth layers of the Tepecik Çiftlik settlement, dated to the first half of the seventh millennium BC, are comparable to the dark faced burnished wares of Yeşilöz Höyük. The presence of open-fired and mottled surfaced wares has been identified in both sites.

A comparative study of vessel shapes reveals a notable similarity between the hole-mount jars of Tepecik Çiftlik, dating to the first half of the seventh millennium BC, and those of Yeşilöz Höyük. Open-vessel forms belonging to the fifth and fourth layers of Tepecik have also been observed to be comparable with those found in Yeşilöz Höyük. The absence of handles in the layers belonging to the first half of the seventh millennium BC at Tepecik Çiftlik is another resemblance to Yeşilöz Höyük.

According to the surface treatments, It is evident that red slipped zigzag decorated vessels bearing a date of the first half of the seventh millennium BC have not been identified in Yeşilöz. The prevalence of *impresso* decorations in Tepecik Çiftlik is an infrequent occurrence (fifth layer). Nevertheless, two *impresso* decorated sherds have been identified at Yeşilöz Höyük that are comparable with those from Tepecik Çiftlik. Mat impressions on vessels are known from Tepecik Çiftlik and one similar example was identified at Yeşilöz Höyük. The dark-faced burnished ware group identified in the third layer of the Tepecik Çiftlik, which is dated to the second half of the seventh millennium BC, is comparable to the Yeşilöz Höyük examples. Examples of wares featuring red slip and relief decorations in the form of humans and animals, as seen towards the end of the third layer at Tepecik Çiftlik, have not yet been found at Yeşilöz Höyük. At Yeşilöz Höyük, relief decoration is represented by only on one body sherd. Among the prehistoric wares from Yeşilöz, there is one body sherd thought to have been shaped by using a mat mould. The mould technique is known from the third layer of the Tepecik Çiftlik<sup>13</sup>.

In the second layer of the Tepecik Çiftlik, which was dated to the Early

11 Öztan 2007, 224-225.

12 Conolly 1999, 793.

13 Bıçakçı et al. 2012, 97-98.

Chalcolithic period (spanning the end of the seventh millennium BC to the beginning of the sixth millennium BC), a notable innovation emerged, particularly in terms of both the technique and the figures depicted in the decoration. As previously mentioned, both the incised and grooved decorations of this layer are comparable to the Gelveri examples. When examining the decorated examples from Yeşilöz Höyük, the presence of instances belonging to both categories is of paramount importance for the purposes of identification and dating. The moulding technique employed during the production process is consistent throughout the second layer as well.

It is evident that, on the basis of the pottery characteristics previously referenced, specific chronological correlations can be deduced between the artefacts unearthed at Yeşilöz Höyük and the Late Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic strata of the Tepecik Çiftlik settlement.

These chronological correlations can be elucidated within three primary headings; Firstly, according to pottery groups, Dark Faced Burnished Wares are seen at Tepecik Çiftlik throughout the seventh millennium BC and at the beginning of the sixth millennium BC. It is evident that these instances bear a resemblance to Yeşilöz's instances. Consequently, in a comparative chronology based on Tepecik Çiftlik, the primary basis is pottery groups.

Secondly, a correlation of pottery forms has been demonstrated in which hole-mount jars, as well as open vessels, were observed to be present during the seventh millennium BC. Comparable examples of both forms have been identified at Yeşilöz Höyük.

In light of Tepecik Çiftlik pottery, the third basis for dating Yeşilöz Höyük is surface treatments. Despite their rarity, *impresso* decorations have been observed in the fifth layer at Tepecik Çiftlik, dating to the first half of the seventh millennium BC. In a similar vein, the discovery of a small number of *impresso* decorated examples at Yeşilöz Höyük is of considerable importance with regard to dating the site to the seventh millennium BC.

Relief decorations have been identified at Tepecik Çiftlik towards the end of the third layer, which is dated to the second half of the seventh millennium BC. At Yeşilöz Höyük relief decorations is represented by only one body sherd. Despite the paucity of examples, the presence of an relief decoration at Yeşilöz Höyük could be cited as a significant dating indicator, placing it within the second half of the seventh millennium BC.

The mould technique is known from the third layer of Tepecik Çiftlik which is dated to the second half of the seventh millennium BC. At Yeşilöz Höyük the existence of one body sherd which was shaped by using a mat mould is crucial example which supports to date Yeşilöz within the second half of the seventh millennium BC.

Incised and grooved decorations are present in the second layer at Tepecik Çiftlik, which is dated to the end of the seventh millennium and the beginning of the sixth millennium BC. The identification of comparable examples of both types of decoration at Yeşilöz Höyük provides significant support for dating the settlement to a time span covering the end of the seventh millennium and the beginning of the sixth millennium BC.

The assessments made on the Tepecik Çiftlik pottery in accordance with

the aforementioned criteria lend support to the evaluation of Yeşilöz Höyük within the time frame between the end of the seventh millennium BC and the beginning of the sixth millennium BC. In addition, the evaluations conducted on the vessel forms and pottery assemblages corroborate the assessment undertaken within the first half of the seventh millennium BC.

Köşk Höyük is an additional pivotal site in the process of comprehending the prehistoric periods of the Volcanic Cappadocia region. Within the pottery groups belonging to the Late Neolithic period, which is considered to span the period between the second half of the seventh millennium BC and the first half of the sixth millennium BC, one group stands out due to its similarities to Yeşilöz prehistoric pottery. In certain instances, the presence of black, grey, brown and red pasted, as well as analogous surface-coloured and burnished bowl forms, has been noted. On some instances, line and dot decorations have been observed. This group is included within the Late Neolithic pottery assessed within the context of layers 2-5 of the Köşk Höyük. Within this group, examples featuring line and dot decoration, when evaluated in terms of both decorative techniques and motifs, have been associated with the 'Gelveri Culture' by Aliye Öztan. The identification of analogous instances at Yeşilöz Höyük serves as the foundation for the establishment of a comparative chronology through Köşk Höyük. In view of the data cited above, it is therefore appropriate to propose a time frame for the Yeşilöz examples between the second half of the seventh millennium BC and the first half of the sixth millennium BC.

The pottery culture of Gelveri settlement is of particular significance within the context of the Volcanic Cappadocia region in the sixth millennium BC. As previously mentioned, Gelveri pottery is regarded by certain researchers as having been subject to two distinct phases: Archaic and Classical. A comparative analysis of the prehistoric pottery from Yeşilöz reveals that examples from the Archaic period of the Gelveri settlement are comparable in terms of clay colour, glaze, incision, engraving and relief decoration. In the prehistoric pottery instances from Yeşilöz, those adorned with grooves, which enable comparison with the Classical period of the Gelveri settlement, are represented by a greater number than those decorated with incisions and reliefs. Given that the chronological distinctions within it remain controversial, if these distinctions are disregarded, the similarities between the Gelveri pottery, which is considered to date to the sixth millennium BC, and the Yeşilöz Höyük examples become clearly evident when considering the clay colour, glaze and, in particular, the decoration styles. Consequently, given these parallels, the proposition that Gelveri pottery signifies the presence of a settlement at Yeşilöz Höyük during the sixth millennium BC emerges as a highly coherent approach.

When the neighbouring regions of the Volcanic Cappadocia region are considered in relation to the dating of the prehistoric settlement of Yeşilöz Höyük, the Mersin Yumuktepe settlement (fig. 1), located in the Cilician Plain to the south of the region, provides important information about the Neolithic and Chalcolithic periods in the Mediterranean region. The settlement's location at the intersection of Central Anatolia and the Mediterranean coastline is of sig-

nificant importance in terms of interregional relations<sup>14</sup>. In light of the ongoing excavations at the site, the Neolithic period has been defined as comprising four distinct phases: Early, Middle, Late and Final Neolithic<sup>15</sup>. During the Middle Period, which is defined as 6200-6000 BC, the emergence of dark faced burnished wares is observed. Wares classified as brown burnished, black unburnished and burnished examples. The dark faced burnished ware group of this period has been shown to be comparable to the prehistoric pottery of Yeşilöz<sup>16</sup>. The Late Phase, spanning from 6000 to 5800 BC, is distinguished by the emergence of painted pottery, marking a significant development in the region's prehistoric cultural developments. The dark faced burnished wares group, although decreasing in number, continues to exist. This phase also features pottery decorated with geometric motifs. A small number of examples with *impresso* decoration have been identified<sup>17</sup>. The dark faced burnished ware group, geometric and *impresso* decorations are features comparable to Yeşilöz prehistoric pottery. Consequently, these parallels are of paramount importance for the dating of the Yeşilöz Höyük settlement in terms of the transition period between the seventh and sixth millennia BC. In the context of the evaluation of *impresso* decoration, the examples of *impresso* decorated pottery from both the seventh and sixth millennium BC unearthed at Mersin Yumuktepe are of particular interest<sup>18</sup>. However, in this context, when evaluating the contemporary nature of Mersin Yumuktepe's Middle and Late phases through dark faced burnished wares and geometric decorated pottery, a more consistent approach would be to compare the sixth millennium BC impressed decoration examples with those from Yeşilöz.

The Konya Plain, which constitutes the southwestern part of the Central Anatolia region, occupies a distinctive position within the context of prehistoric research undertaken in Turkey. The region is of particular significance in the study of the Neolithic period in Anatolia, due to the pioneering research that was conducted there. The settlement of Çatalhöyük (fig. 1), located within the borders of Konya province, has been the subject of excavations for many years and can be considered a key settlement in the process of defining the region's prehistoric cultures. With regard to the subject matter under discussion, Çatalhöyük provides significant data on the transition from the Late Neolithic to the Early Chalcolithic period in the region, as evidenced by material from both eastern and western settlements.

In the process of understanding the Late Neolithic-Early Chalcolithic transition in the East settlement of Çatalhöyük, the "TP" area is notable for its 400-year settlement fill dating to 6350-5950 BC<sup>19</sup>. In this area, beginning from the sixth layer, which is dated to the Late Neolithic period, a group of dark faced, burnished wares in various forms is observed. Beside hole-mouth jars, straight walled and "S" profiled bowls have been observed. The presence of miniature containers is worthy of note in this area, where large storage containers have not

14 Rosenstock et al. 2019, 182-183.

15 Caneva 2012, 2.

16 Caneva 2012, 6.

17 Caneva 2012, 8-9.

18 Caneva 2012, 4,9.

19 Franz – Payzel 2022, 179.

yet been observed<sup>20</sup>. According to surface treatments the Late Neolithic pottery is unpainted and generally undecorated. A limited number of specimens bearing lines and grooves have been identified and are analogous to Gelveri specimens from the Volcanic Cappadocia region<sup>21</sup>.

In this context, a comparison of prehistoric pottery from Yeşilöz with examples from the East settlement of Çatalhöyük reveals several significant similarities. Firstly, the dark-faced, burnished ware group is used in similar forms. Secondly, there is an absence of large storage vessels. Thirdly, miniature vessels are found in both settlements. The pottery with incised and grooved decoration, represented by a small number of examples in the eastern settlement of Çatalhöyük in the second half of the seventh millennium BC, is comparable with the specimens from Gelveri and Yeşilöz.

The pottery of the Çatalhöyük West settlement has been classified within the scope of the Early Chalcolithic period. “S” and “C” shaped bowls are predominant, and plate and jar forms are also observed. In contrast to Çatalhöyük East where storage vessels are absent, they have been identified in the West mound. The necked storage vessels have been observed to have extensions that could be described as handles or grips<sup>22</sup>. In addition to incised decorations similar to those found at Gelveri, studies have identified pottery with relief decoration at the Çatalhöyük West settlement<sup>23</sup>.

A comparison of the pottery from the Çatalhöyük West settlement with prehistoric pottery from Yeşilöz reveals a significant difference between the pottery of the two settlements in terms of the presence of handles, grips and storage vessels. Furthermore, the use of incised decorations serves as a clear indication of the continuity between the eastern and western settlements at Çatalhöyük. While there are similarities with Yeşilöz examples in terms of decoration, the differences in form are more prominent in this respect. We therefore believe that the Yeşilöz specimens share more similar characteristics with Çatalhöyük East, which is dated to the Late Neolithic period. However, the possible Early Chalcolithic or sixth millennium BC continuity at the Yeşilöz settlement is also a situation that must be taken into account.

Eva Rosenstock has noted the predominant plant tempers in the painted pottery found in both the Eastern and Western settlements at Çatalhöyük. She emphasises that this type of decorative technique was not commonplace in either Çatalhöyük East or Çatalhöyük West. Rosenstock argues that these examples should be defined as imported material for Çatalhöyük, and not as local imitations. Furthermore, the presence of imported Gelveri material in the early phases of Çatalhöyük West indicates that Gelveri should be evaluated within the context of the sixth millennium BC<sup>24</sup>.

In the same region as Çatalhöyük, archaeological excavations at the Can Hasan I settlement (fig. 1), located within the present-day borders of Karaman Province, have uncovered layers dating to the Late Neolithic Period (5-7) and the

20 Franz – Payzel 2022, 179.

21 Franz – Payzel 2022, 188-189.

22 Franz – Payzel 2022, 186-187.

23 Franz – Payzel 2022, 190.

24 Rosenstock et al. 2019, 182.

Early, Middle and Late Chalcolithic periods (1-4)<sup>25</sup>. David French highlights the similarities between the pottery of the Late Neolithic settlement of Can Hasan I and the layers XXVI-XXVA of Yumuktepe in Mersin and the eastern mound of Çatalhöyük<sup>26</sup>. Can Hasan I Late Neolithic pottery has been classified into three groups: dark-faced burnished wares, black-brown burnished wares, and dark red burnished wares. Hole-mouth carinated bowls, “S” profiled bowls and open vessels are common forms. Incised and relief decorations have been identified<sup>27</sup>. The pottery from the Late Neolithic period at Can Hasan I has been shown to be comparable to the prehistoric pottery from Yeşilöz Höyük in terms of clay colours, tempering, forms, as well as examples of incised and relief decoration. The emergence of painted pottery in phase 2B<sup>28</sup>, which is considered part of the Chalcolithic period, can be defined as a major distinction. Despite the presence of pieces decorated with incised decorations within the buff/grey burnished pottery, they are distinct from the prehistoric pottery of Yeşilöz when evaluated in terms of ware groups. Regarding the ware group from the Can Hasan I settlement, which can be identified as Late Neolithic and Chalcolithic period pottery based on the pottery samples, it would be correct to emphasise that, in light of the comparable characteristics mentioned above, a definite relationship can be established with the prehistoric pottery samples from Yeşilöz. It would be correct to emphasise that the ware group in question is the Late Neolithic pottery defined within the seventh to fourth layers of the Can Hasan I settlement.

### Conclusion

The primary objective of this article is to determine the dating of the prehistoric settlement at Yeşilöz Höyük. The Nevşehir province, also referred to as Middle Volcanic Cappadocia, has extremely limited data available on its early prehistoric pottery cultures. At this juncture, the extant data concerning the early prehistoric pottery cultures of the western part of the Volcanic Cappadocia region and the neighbouring regions of the Volcanic Cappadocia region such as Konya Plain and Cilicia region are being analysed in order to establish the chronology of the prehistoric settlement of Yeşilöz Höyük. As emphasised in the preceding paragraphs, comparisons are made by using pottery finds from the prehistoric settlements of Tepecik Çiftlik, Köşk Höyük and Gelveri in Western Volcanic Cappadocia, as well as from the neighbouring settlements of Mersin Yumuktepe in Cilicia, Canhasan and Çatalhöyük in Konya Plain. According to these comparisons the Yeşilöz Höyük is the only settlement within the framework of Nevşehir province and its surroundings (where could be defined as the Middle Volcanic Cappadocia Region) that could be evaluated in light of the data available to date within the scope of the end of the seventh millennium BC and the sixth millennium BC. Yeşilöz Höyük offers the opportunity to establish a correlation with the prehistoric chronological models of Volcanic Cappadocia, based on the settlements of Western Volcanic Cappadocia. This is facilitated by the first detailed data obtained from systematic research in the Central Volcanic

25 Fairbairn et al. 2020, 346.

26 French 2005, 16.

27 French 2005, 116-130.

28 French 2005, 18-19.

Cappadocia region. Yeşilöz Höyük represents a significant novelty in the context of prehistoric research in the Volcanic Cappadocia region, as it is the first site in Central Volcanic Cappadocia to offer insights into the transition from the seventh to the sixth millennium BC in the Volcanic Cappadocia region.

## Öz

### Yeşilöz Höyük. Volkanik Kappadokia Bölgesinde Yeni Bir Tarihöncesi Yerleşim Yeri

Orta Anadolu bölgesinin tarihöncesi kültürleri üzerine bilgilerimizin temeli, bölgenin güneyinde gerçekleştirilen araştırmalara dayanmaktadır. Bu bölge kendi içerisinde batıda Konya Ovası ve doğuda Volkanik Kappadokia bölgesi olarak iki farklı alt bölgeye ayrılmıştır. Bölgede Geç Neolitik-Erken Kalkolitik geçişinin ve Erken Kalkolitik Dönemin anlaşılması sürecinde temel başvuru yerleşimleri MÖ 7. binyılın sonu ve MÖ 6. binyıl kapsamında değerlendirilen, Volkanik Kappadokia bölgesinin batısında bulunan Tepecik Çiftlik, Köşk Höyük ve Gelveri yerleşimleri ile Konya Ovası ve Karaman içerisinde tanımlayabileceğimiz Çatalhöyük ve Canhasan yerleşimleridir. Bu bağlamda Volkanik Kappadokia Bölgesinde adı geçen yerleşimlerin tümü bölgenin batısında konumlanmaktadır. Ancak Orta Volkanik Kappadokia Bölgesi olarak tanımlayabileceğimiz Nevşehir ili ve çevresinin tarihöncesi çağları değerlendirildiğinde büyük bir kronolojik boşluğun varlığı açıkça görülmektedir. Bu bağlamda Yeşilöz Höyük bölgenin MÖ 7. binyıl sonu ve 6. binyıl geçişi sürecinde yerleşime sahne olduğunu göstermesi açısından son derece önemli bir arkeolojik buluntu yeridir. Nevşehir İli Neolitik Çağ Yüzey Araştırmaları Projesi (NENESU) kapsamında bölgede gerçekleştirilen çalışmalar sırasında Kızılırmak nehrinin kuzeyinde, Gülşehir İli, Yeşilöz Köyü sınırları içerisinde bulunan Yeşilöz Höyük'te gerçekleştirilen yüzey araştırmaları sırasında tespit edilen tarihöncesi çanak çömlek ve yontmataş buluntuları, yukarıda bahsedilen yerleşimlerin buluntularıyla karşılaştırılabilir niteliktedirler. Bu çalışma Volkanik Kappadokia Bölgesinde MÖ 7. binyıl-6. binyıl geçişi ve 6. binyıl sürecini ilk kez bir Orta Volkanik Kappadokia tarihöncesi yerleşimi buluntuları ışığında değerlendirmeyi hedeflemektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Volkanik Kappadokia, Tarihöncesi, Geç Neolitik, Erken Kalkolitik, Çanak Çömlek, Nevşehir.

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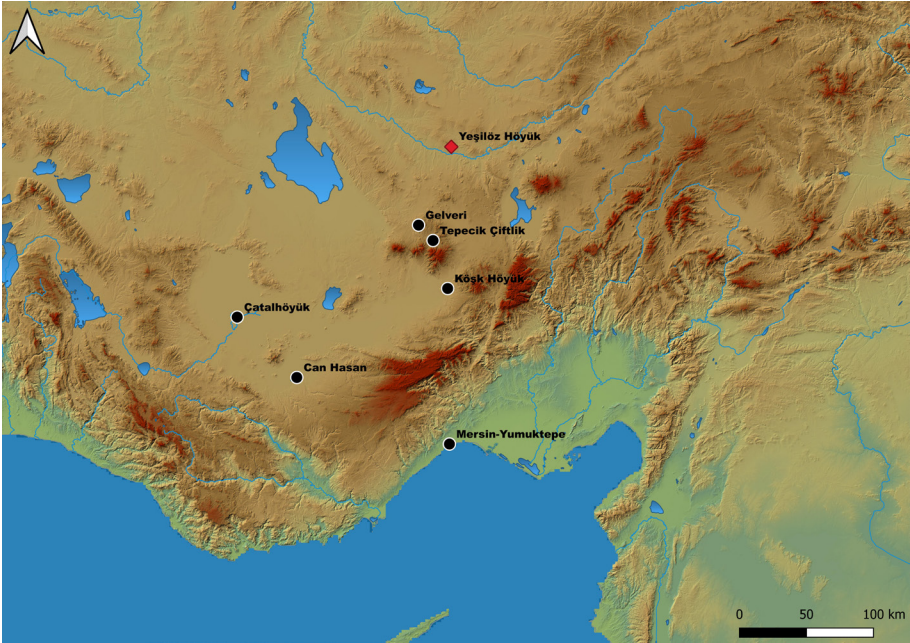


Fig.1. Sites mentioned in the text



Fig. 2. The location of Yeşilöz Höyük in Nevşehir



Fig. 3. Yeşilöz Höyük

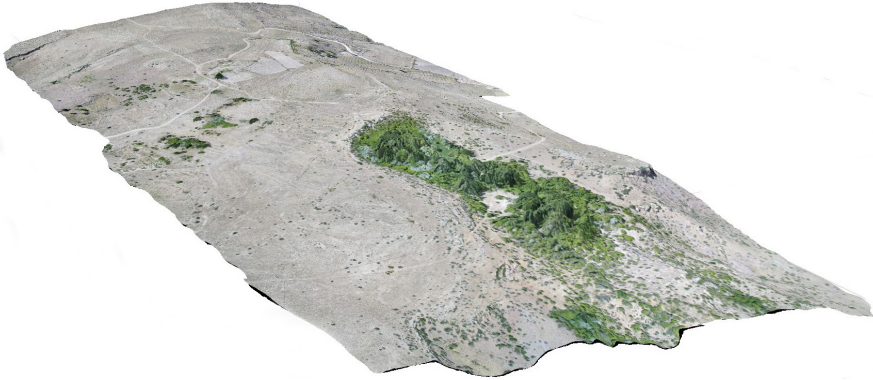


Fig. 4. A Cross-Section of the Three-Dimensional Model of Yeşilöz Mound and its Surrounding Geography



Fig. 5. Nenesu Project Study Areas based on the Orthophoto of Yeşilöz Mound

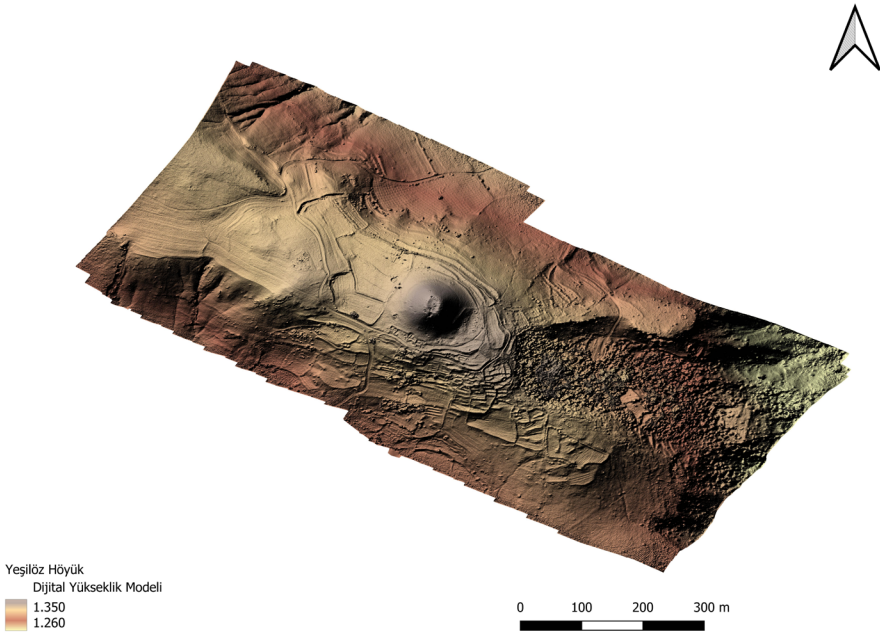


Fig. 6. Yeşilöz Höyük Digital Elevation Model

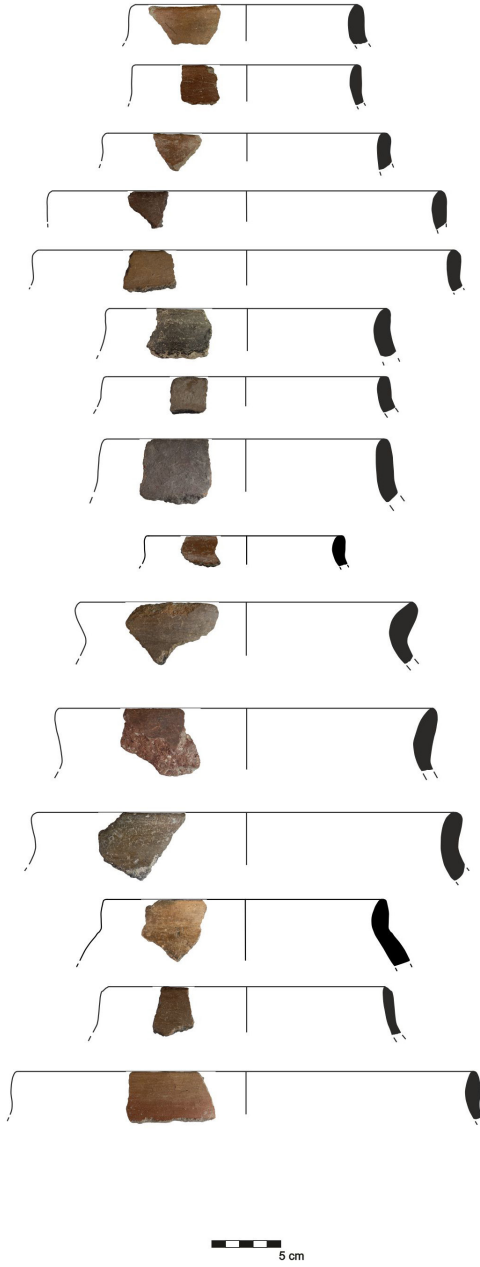


Fig. 7. Yeşilöz Höyük, Necked Jars

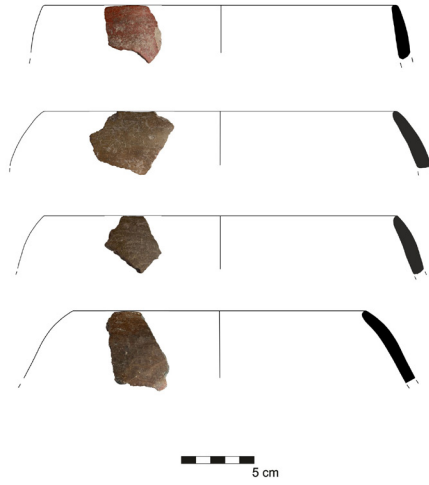


Fig. 8. Yeşilöz Höyük, Hole-Mounth Jars



Fig. 9. Yeşilöz Höyük, Straight Walled Bowls

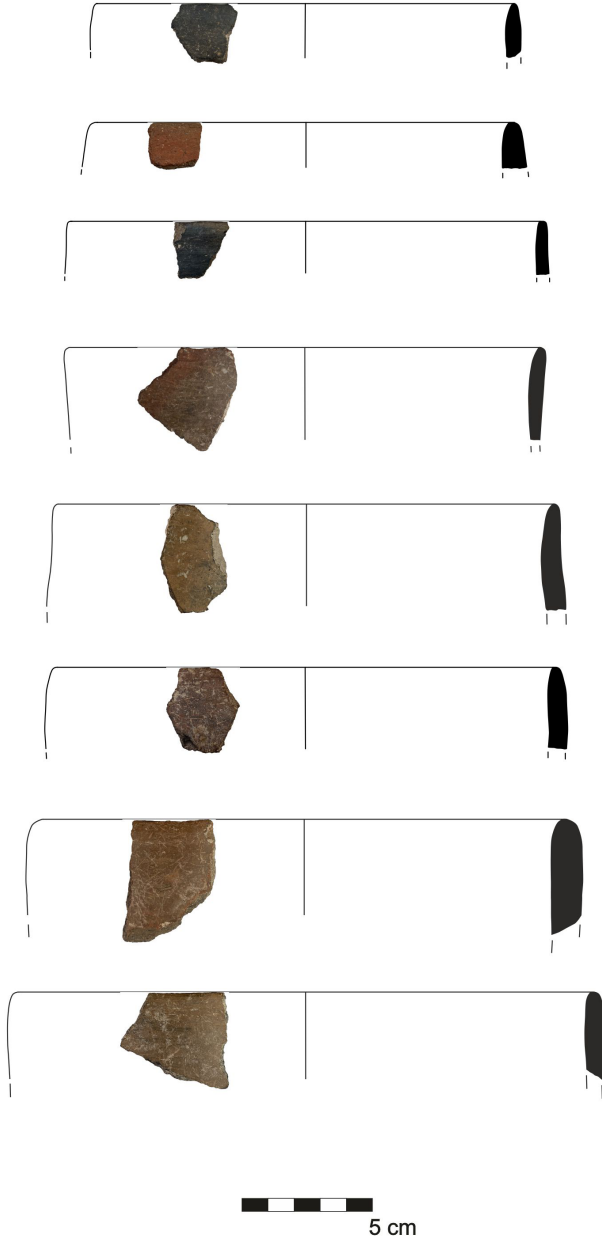


Fig. 10. Yeşilöz Höyük, Straight Walled Bowls

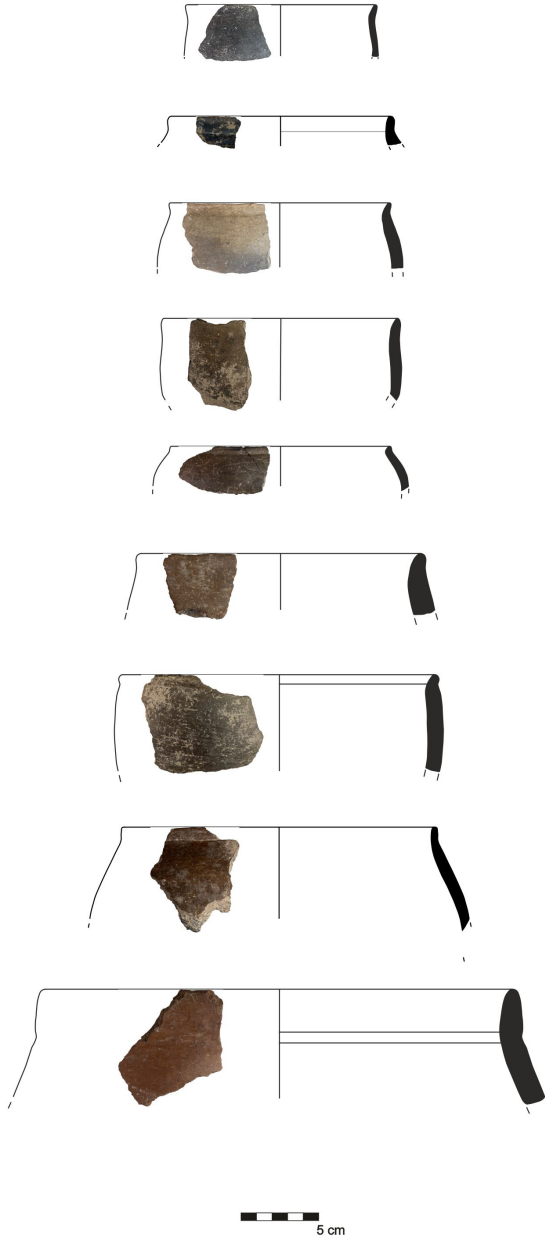


Fig. 11. Yeşilöz Höyük, "S" Profiled Bowls



Fig. 12. Yeşilöz Höyük, Straight Wallet Round Bowls.

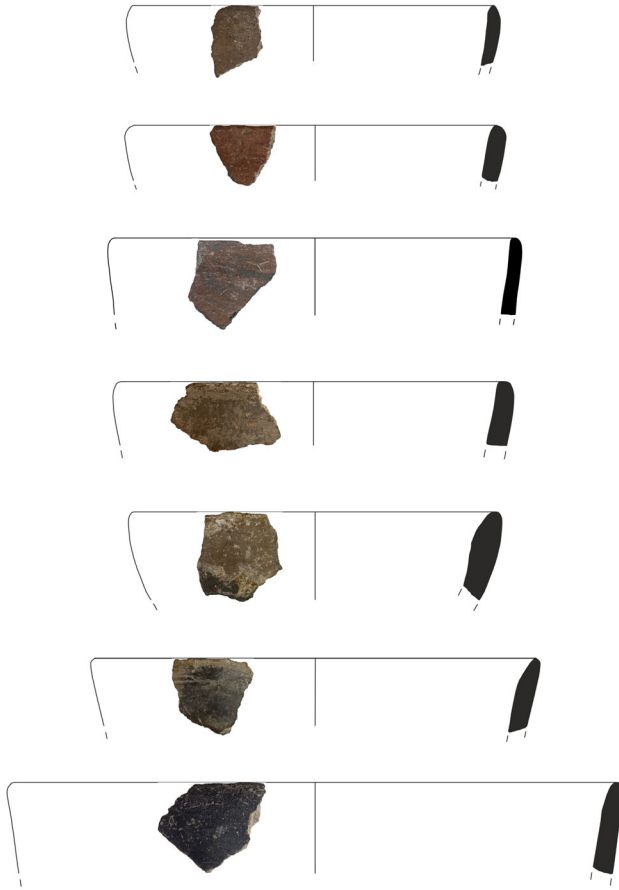


Fig. 13. Yeşilöz Höyük, Open Jars



Fig. 14. Yeşilöz Höyük, Basket Mould Traces on a Sherd



Fig. 15. Yeşilöz Höyük, Mat Traces on a Prehistoric Sherd

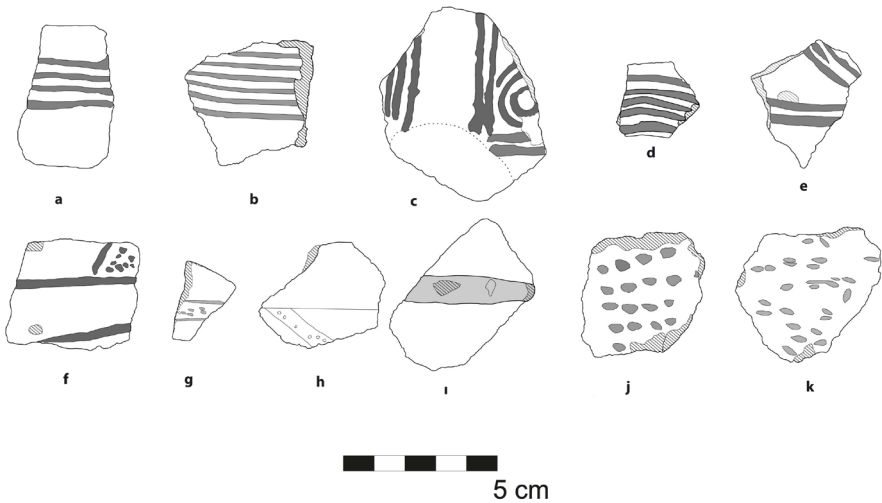


Fig. 16. Yeşilöz Höyük, Decorated Sherds

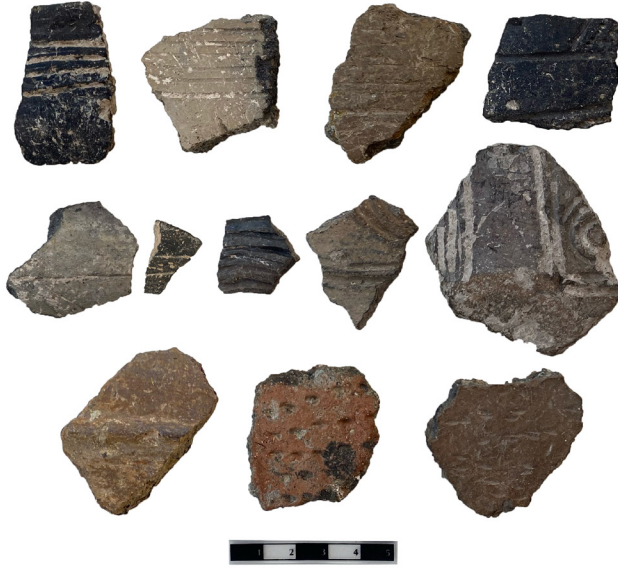


Fig. 17. Yeşilöz Höyük, Decorated Sherds



Fig. 18. Yeşilöz Höyük, Obsidian Points