

New Pre-Pottery Neolithic sites and cult centres in the Urfa Region

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ABSTRACT – *The present study assesses the sites and the corresponding artefacts that were recently discovered during cultural inventory studies in the Urfa region in south-eastern Turkey. The studies were conducted at PPN sites located at Herzo Tepe, Başaran Höyük and Kocanizam, Taşlı Tepe and İnanlı Tepe within the borders of Viranşehir and Siverek boroughs; the already known site at Sefer Tepe is also re-examined. The sites extend in a north-south direction and were founded within a 3–5km distance, and they exhibit unique characteristics for this region. Recently discovered sites are compared to already known PPN sites in the region to reveal similar features and characteristics. In particular, the article elaborates similarities and discrepancies between sites with T-shaped pillars and sites with circular structures. The recently discovered sites demonstrate that the pillar tradition is predominant in the region and that the settlements have a distinct layout.*

IZVLEČEK – *V študiji ovrednotimo najdišča in pripadajoče artefakte, ki so bili nedavno odkriti pri študijah kulturnih inventarjev v regiji Urfa na območju južno-vzhodne Turčije. Analize so bile opravljene na najdiščih predkeramičnega neolitika na območjih kot so Herzo Tepe, Başaran Höyük in Kocanizam, Taşlı Tepe in İnanlı Tepe znotraj mestnih okrajev Viranşehir in Siverek; ponovno smo preiskali tudi že znano najdišče Sefer Tepe. Najdišča se raztezajo v smeri sever-jug in so postavljena v razdalji od 3 do 5km, poleg tega pa izkazujejo edinstvene značilnosti za to območje. Nedavno odkrita najdišča primerjamo z že znanimi predkeramičnimi najdišči v regiji in na ta način ugotavljamo njihove podobnosti in značilnosti. V članku se podrobneje ukvarjamo s podobnostmi in razlikami med najdišči s stebri v obliki črke T in najdišči s krožnimi strukturami. Nedavno odkrita najdišča kažejo, da v tej regiji prevladuje tradicija stebrov in da imajo naselbine značilne prostorske ureditve.*

KEY WORDS – *Pre-Pottery Neolithic; T-shaped pillar; circular structures; Siverek; Viranşehir*

Introduction

Herzo Tepe, Başaran Höyük, Kocanizam Tepe, Sefer Tepe, Taşlı Tepe and İnanlı Tepe sites (Map 1), which are being investigated in the Şanlıurfa Province Cultural Inventory studies since 2011, are located within the borders of Şanlıurfa Province in southeastern Turkey. All sites are located within borders of today's Viranşehir and Siverek boroughs of Şanlıurfa (Urfa) Province.

The recently discovered sites extend in a north-south direction and were founded within a distance of 3–5km. Tools made from flint stone and obsidian were discovered during the field survey at these sites. The archaeological material from the sites features finds dating to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic Period. T-shaped pillars, known from locations such as Nevalı Çori, Göbekli Tepe, Sefer Tepe and Hamzan Tepe, were

also discovered at some of the sites. Moreover, architectural remains with a circular layout are also encountered at some sites. The other characteristics of these sites will be elaborated in this article according to the region where they were discovered.

Neolithic in Siverek region

Siverek is located in the borough in the north-eastern part of Şanlıurfa province. Karacadağ, the only dormant volcanic mountain in Şanlıurfa, with an altitude of 1938m, is located on the northeast border of the region. The geological formation of the mountain is dominated by basaltic rocks in the north, while the southern and south-western sections are made of calcareous rocks. The southern and south-western areas are in the form of plains and low plateaus.

Areas with water sources cover large parts of the Siverek region compared to other regions in Şanlıurfa province. Water sources arising from Karacadağ flow to the Habur stream in a north-south direction. The southern side of Karacadağ and the northern sections of the region have an abundance of water sources. The period of drought starts in Siverek region in the middle of the summer and encompass fields serving as pastureland. In general, the Siverek region is on average 3°C cooler than the Şanlıurfa city center.

No inventory studies have been conducted in the region, but are currently in progress in the region at the sites of Taşlı Tepe (Çelik et al. 2011b.225-236) and İnanlı Tepe dating to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period that were discovered during the studies since 2011. The site at İnanlı Tepe will be presented for the first time in the present article (Map 1).

Taşlı Tepe

The Taşlı Tepe site is located in the north-eastern part of the Şanlıurfa Province (Çelik et al. 2011). Located c. 740m above sea level, the site covers a surface area of c. 12 000m² (Map 1). The site extends c. 4m above the bedrock. Today, this location is used for agriculture (Fig. 1). Two dry stream beds extend in an east-west direction c. 300m to the north and 250m to the south of the site. The examination of the geological structure revealed that the region is formed by calcareous and basalt platforms. The closest source of basalt to the site is 2km to the south. Flint stone outcrops are encountered 2km southeast of the site. High plateaus with heights

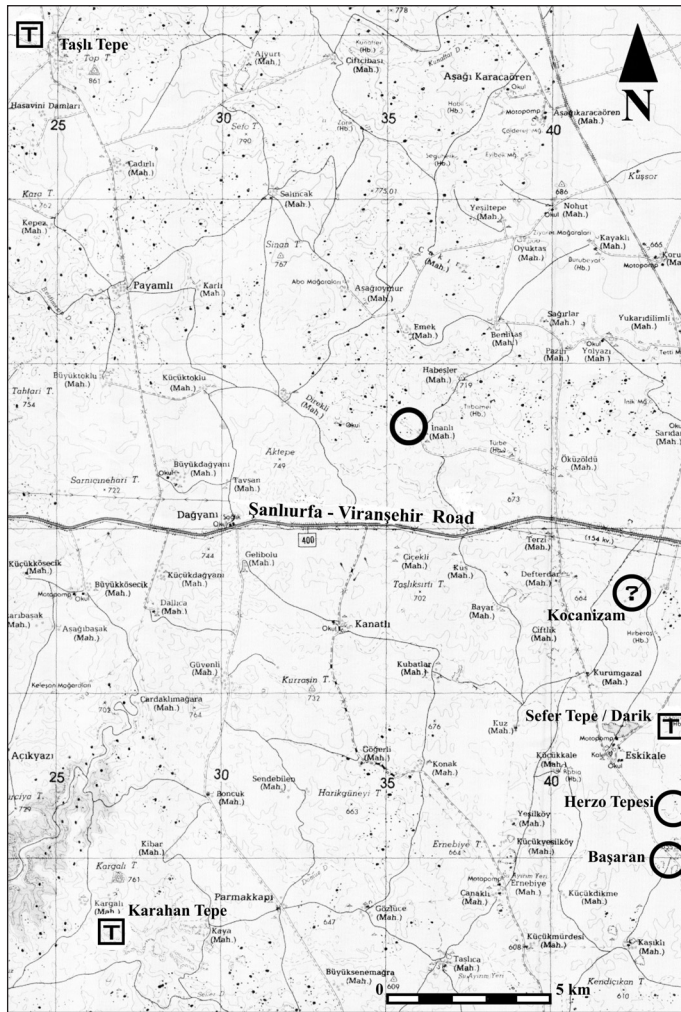
varying from 800 up to 850m are present in the southwest, east and north of Taşlı Tepe. The southern and western sides of the site, on the other hand, extend as partially plain terrain.

The Taşlı Tepe site was inhabited only during the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period. The archaeological finds have been divided into two categories: architectural elements and small finds. Accordingly, the small finds might be listed as tools made of flint stone, small flat axes made of river pebbles, stone beads, stoneware pottery pieces, grind stones and pestles. The finds comprise 6 small finds and 7 architectural elements. All the architectural elements are pieces of a T-shaped pillar. As a result of the examinations of the flint stone finds and architectural elements discovered at the site, it is understood that Taşlı Tepe settlement site was used as a cult centre during the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period.

Pre-Pottery Neolithic assemblage in Taşlı Tepe Architectural elements. The architectural remains at Taşlı Tepe were destroyed by agricultural activity. However, during an excavation carried out on the south-eastern slope of the site, fragments of T-shaped pillars were found in an area of 7 x 8m and 1m deep. All pillars are made of limestone. One of the fragmented pillars has been restored and reassembled; its apparent length is 152cm; the width of the capital section is 93cm, while the thickness is 22cm (Fig. 2). The dimensions of the T-shaped pillar pieces discovered at Taşlı Tepe site demonstrate a significant similarity with the Level II pillars at Göbekli Tepe (Schmidt 2002.8, Fig. 7)¹, the pillars of the temple building at Nevali Çori (Hauptmann 1991/1992.28, Abb. 21), and in-situ pillars located on the surface of Karahan Tepe (Çelik 2000b.6-7, Fig. 1) and Sefer Tepe (Çelik 2006a.23-25, Fig. 2). The Taşlı Tepe pillars had no preserved relief or engravings. A fragment of terrazzo floor was also discovered from the same excavation site (Fig. 3). Similar terrazzo floors were also discovered in Göbekli Tepe, Nevali Çori and the Şanlıurfa-Yeni Mahalle mound unearthed in the region (Çelik 2007.Fig. 16; Hauptmann 2007.142, Fig. 7-8a-b).

Small finds. A total of 16 small finds were collected from the Taşlı Tepe site. The finds comprise 7 flint tools (Fig. 4. 1-7), 1 small flat axe made of river pebble (Fig. 4.9) and 1 stone bead (Fig. 4.8). The other finds are 2 basalt pestles, 1 stone dish (Fig. 5), 3 upper parts of a grind stone and 1 lower part of a grind stone (Fig. 6), respectively. Flint finds are com-

1 Pillars at L10-71, L9-80, L9-55 and L9-56 trenches.



Map 1. Pre-Pottery Neolithic Period sites in Viranşehir and Siverek boroughs.

mon in the entire area. The number of flint tools discovered is around 12 per m².

The small finds at Taşlı Tepe are mostly flint and a small number of obsidian tools. The majority of the flint and obsidian tools are blades. High-quality flint stones were used as raw materials and the nearest flint deposits were found 2km southeast of the site. The flint tool assemblage comprises 4 arrowheads (Fig. 4.4–7) and 1 round end scraper (Fig. 4.3). Only one core was discovered at Taşlı Tepe, *i.e.* a naviform core, which appears to be bipolar (Fig. 4.1). Moreover, 1 piece of crested blade was also unearthed as a core renewal piece (Fig. 4.2). An examination of the colour distribution of all flint finds revealed 3 dark gray and 4 light and dark brown colours. The blade flaking of the bipolar cores varies from 1 to 1.5cm. One core is grey; cores of similar colour were also found at Göbekli Tepe (Beile-Bohn

et al. 1998:54) and Nevalı Çori (Schmidt 1988:162).

One intact flint arrowhead appears to be of the Byblos type (Fig. 4.4). Similar specimens of were found at Göbekli Tepe (Schmidt 1988:Fig. 8; 2001:52, Fig. 10/3–11/5; Beile-Bohn et al. 1998:Abb. 23.3), Şanlıurfa-Yeni Mahalle (Çelik 2000a:Fig. 5.1; 2007:Fig. 20/6) and Karahan Tepe (Çelik 2011b:Fig. 18.1 type D). Typologically, the types of tools from the Pre-Pottery Neolithic Period are observed when the flint tools are examined as a whole. The single shallow stone dish, which was discovered at Taşlı Tepe, is an interesting find since similar stone dishes were encountered in Level II at Göbekli Tepe (Schmidt 2007:Catalogue 129) and as a grave good at Körtik Tepe (Özkaya, Coşkun 2007:86–88, Catalogue 144). Another extraordinary artefact discovered at the site is a bead made of green river pebbles in the form of a bull's head (Fig. 4.8). Similar beads were found at Köşk Höyük from the Late Neolithic period (Öztañ 2012, Fig. 18b)².

The T-shaped pillars discovered at Taşlı Tepe greatly resemble the pillars discovered at Sefer Tepe, Karahan Tepe and Level II of Göbekli Tepe with respect to their dimensions. In the light of all these artefacts, Taşlı Tepe appears to be contemporaneous with the excavated sites at Göbekli Tepe (Level II) and at Nevalı Çori (Level III). Therefore, we can date the Taşlı Tepe site into the early PPNB period.

İnanlı Tepe

İnanlı Tepe is located *c.* 697m above sea level in the northern end of the İnanlı village, 64km east of Urfa, 80km south of Siverek and *c.* 12km north of Sefer Tepe (Map 1). Founded on a calcareous hill, the site covers an area of *c.* 15000m². The mound soil extends *c.* 2m high, starting from the bedrock. The site is comprised of two small, low hills presenting an ample structure (Fig. 7). The area, on which the site was founded, is currently used as pasture. A dried stream bed is located 700m to the south. The geological structure of the region is formed by calcareous plateaus. Such plateaus present an extremely low and frequent structure. The closest source

2 The red coloured bead at the middle is the bead with the shape of bull's head.

of basalt is *c.* 5km northwest of the site. Plain areas are present to the east and southeast, 7km from the site.

Flint stone artefacts could be collected over the entire area at İnanlı Tepe; the number of flint tools discovered is *c.* 7 per m² area. The results of the examinations on flint tools and architectural elements discovered at the site show that İnanlı Tepe was used as a settlement during the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period.

Pre-Pottery Neolithic assemblage at İnanlı Tepe

Architectural elements. The remains of three well-preserved circular structures were found in the area southeast of the site. The diameter of the structures varies from 2 to 2.5m. All three structures are formed by arranging the flat sides of the shaped stone slabs in a horizontal form (Fig. 8). Similar structures were identified at Hamzan Tepe (Çelik 2010.259, Fig. 3–4). Other circular structures in the region from the same period are known from settlements at Çayönü (Erim-Özdoğan 2011.191–193, Fig. 6, 9), Halan Çemi (Rosenberg 2011.61–63, Figs. 2–6), Hasankeyf Höyük (Miyake 2013.40, 43, 46, 47), Gusir Höyük (Karul 2011.2–4, Figs. 4–5, 11) and Körtik Tepe (Sicker-Akman 2001.389–394; Özkaya, Coşkun 2011.90–93, Figs. 2–5). Moreover, the dimensions of the circular structures at İnanlı Tepe are similar to two structures with terrazzo flooring discovered at Şanlıurfa-Yeni Mahalle (Çelik 2007.162, Fig. 16; 2011a. 142, Fig. 15–16).

Small finds. Lithics dating to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period were found during the field survey at the site. The assemblage is comprised of blades, flakes and flint by-products. The flint is mostly dark grey, light and dark brown. The flint tools consist of arrowheads, a scraper and silica flakes (Fig. 9.1–6). Rare flakes of obsidian are also present at İnanlı Tepe.

The circular structures discovered at İnanlı Tepe, pieces of Byblos and Nemrik arrowheads made of flint stone discovered on the surface, and unavailability of any Çayönü tools and Palmyra points most probably indicate that the settlement should be dated to the early PPNB period.

The Neolithic of the Viranşehir region

Viranşehir is a borough of the Şanlıurfa province, located in the eastern part of the province. The mountain of Karacadağ is located on the northeast border of the region and is dominated by basaltic rocks in the north and calcareous rocks in the south and south-west. The southern and south-western areas are in the form of plains and low plateaus.

Areas with water sources cover large parts of this region, similarly to the Siverek region in this province. The Aşağı Cırcıp and Yukarı Cırcıp streams rising from Karacadağ and flowing north-south to the Habur stream are the most significant water sources in the region. There is also a large number of springs on the southern side of Karacadağ and in the northern parts of the region. In spring the drought starts in the Viranşehir region which encompasses broad fields serving as pasture land.

The Sefer Tepe (Yukarı Darik Harabesi) site, which dates to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period, was discovered during inventory studies in 2003³. The Başaran Höyük, Herzo Tepe, and Kocanizam Pre-Pottery Neolithic period sites (Map 1) were discovered during the study⁴ in 2011 (Güler et al. 2012.169–191).

Başaran Höyük

Başaran Höyük is located inside the Başaran village, 62km east of Urfa and 26km southwest of Viranşehir (Map 1). Sefer Tepe (Çelik 2006a.23–25), discovered in 2003, is located at 652m altitude above sea level and 5km south of the settlement at Başaran Höyük. The mound is elevated and conical, and located on a calcareous hill; the village cemetery which is currently in use covers a part of the mound (Fig. 10). The mound soil is *c.* 10m high, measured from the bedrock. The mound covers an area of *c.* 20 000m². The geological structure of the region is formed by calcareous plateaus. A stream bed is located to the 5.5km north of the site. The closest source of basalt is *c.* 6km north and the area is used primarily as pasture land.

The flint artefacts discovered at Başaran Höyük site are not concentrated throughout the entire area; the

3 Project for Social and Cultural History of Turkey, Project for Inventory of the Cultural Assets in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia Regions.

4 These studies were conducted under the scope of TÜBİTAK project entitled 'Determination, Inventory and Assessment of the Immovable Cultural Assets in Şanlıurfa Province and Districts of the Province.' We hereby present our acknowledgements to Mr. Celallettin Güvenç, the Governor of Şanlıurfa, Mr. Muhammed Lütfi Kotan, the District Governor of Viranşehir.

number of flint tools discovered is 3 per m² area. The site was inhabited as a settlement during the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period as presented by the flint tools. However, it is difficult to estimate the actual size of the settlement during the PPN period, since the site was covered with remains of younger cultural periods.

Pre-Pottery Neolithic assemblage in Başaran Höyük

Architectural elements. No architectural elements were discovered at Başaran Höyük. The cultural levels from the Bronze Age, Iron Age and Byzantium period are probably compacted with the PPN levels. However, cut-outs in groups with diameters varying from c. 10–15cm in length and depths of 10cm were discovered in the rock floor where the mound cone ends (Fig. 11). These cut-outs chiselled in the bedrock have features identical to those at Göbekli Tepe, Hamzan Tepe, and Karahan Tepe (*Beile-Bohn et al. 1998.47–50, Abb. 20; Hauptmann 1999.Fig. 32; Çelik 2000b.7; 2004.3, Figs. 2–3; 2006b.222, Figs. 3–4; 2010.259, Fig. 6; 2011b.259, Figs. 18–21*).

Small finds. During the studies conducted at Başaran Höyük, pottery from the Bronze Age, Iron Age and Byzantine periods was discovered in addition to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic finds. The flint tools are comprised of flint blades, flakes and by-products. The flint is mainly light and dark brown, beige and grey. Arrowheads, scrapers, piercing tools and crested blade pieces from this period were discovered (Fig. 12.1–9). Also rare obsidian blade pieces were found at the site (Fig. 12.10).

The arrowheads discovered at Başaran Höyük are very similar to the arrowheads discovered at Karahan Tepe and Sefer Tepe both in terms of their size and form (*Çelik 2006a.24, Fig. 4 b–d; 2011.244–245, Figs. 18.4–9, 19.1–8*). This type of small arrowheads were also found at Nemrik (*Kozłowski, Szymczak 1989.32, Fig. 2; Abbes 1993.Fig. 8.10; Cauvin 1994.Fig. 24.1, 3; Schmidt 2001.52, Fig. 10.4, 6*) and Byblos (*Schmidt 1988.171–174, Abb. 11.1–6, 12.1–3; Cauvin 1994.Fig. 26.3*) and are dated to the early PPNB period (*Cauvin 1994.78–79, Fig. 24.2*).

The presence of cut-out groups chiselled on the bedrock surrounding the mound and used for pool construction technique, as well as the Nemrik and Byblos arrowheads indicates that Başaran Höyük was probably occupied at the end of the late PPNA and in the early PPNB period.

Herzo Tepe

Herzo Tepe is located 62km east of Urfa and 3.5km south of Sefer Tepe (Map 1) and is 574m above sea level. The geology of the region is formed by calcareous plateaus. Founded on a calcareous hill, the mound is a low and ample structure (Fig. 13). The mound soil is c. 3m above the bedrock and covers an area of c. 10 000m². The closest water source is 4km north of the site. The closest basalt source, on the other hand, is c. 4.5km north of the site. A large area of the settlement was destroyed due to the construction of rock-cut tombs in the early Byzantine period and modern agricultural activity.

The flint tools at Herzo Tepe site were discovered throughout the entire area, with a density of c. 20 per m². As a result of the examinations of the flint tools, it is understood that The site was inhabited as a settlement during the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period.

Pre-Pottery Neolithic assemblage at Herzo Tepe

Architectural elements. The remains of a circular building were encountered east of the settlement (Fig. 14), with an approximate diameter of 5m. The closest example of this structure is known from Hamzan Tepe (*Çelik 2004.3–5; 2010.259, Figs. 3–4*). Moreover, the diameter of the structure is identical with structures discovered at Hasankeyf Höyük (*Miyake 2013.40, 43, 46, 47*). Other similar structures are known in settlements at Çayönü (*Erim-Özdoğan 2011.191–193, Figs. 6, 9*), Hallan Çemi (*Rosenberg 2011.61–63, Figs. 2–6*), Hasankeyf Höyük (*Miyake 2013.40, 43, 46, 47*), Gusir Höyük (*Karul 2011.2–4, Figs. 4–5, 11*) and Körtik Tepe (*Özkaya, Coşkun 2011.90–93, Figs. 2–5*).

Small finds. The field survey revealed pottery from the early Byzantine period, as well as hand-made straw-tempered ceramic pieces and lithics from the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period. Flint tools are comprised of flint blades, flakes, production waste, unipolar and bipolar cores. The flint is principally light and dark brown, beige and grey. Arrowheads, scrapers, piercing tools, crested blades and blades with a silica sheen were discovered from this period (Fig. 15.1–4, 6, 7). In addition, rare obsidian blade pieces were also found (Fig. 15.5). The tools include small Nemrik arrowheads (Fig. 15.9–13) and one Byblos type arrowhead (Fig. 15.8). Basalt grind stones and pestle pieces were also found.

The circular building at Herzo Tepe and the Nemrik type arrowheads found in the surface survey indi-

cate that the site dates to the end of the PNA period and early PPNB period.

Kocanizam Tepe

Kocanizam Tepe is c. 653m above sea level and located in the Kocanizam village, 60km east of Urfa, 25km west of Viranşehir and 3km north of Sefer Tepe (Map 1). The region is formed by calcareous plateaus. Founded on a calcareous hill, the mound is low and ample (Fig. 16). The height of the mound soil is around 6m above the bedrock. Kocanizam Tepe covers a surface area of c. 15000m². The closest water source is 1.5km east of the settlement. The closest basalt source is c. 1km to the east of the site. A significant portion of the site was destroyed by later construction in the early Byzantine period.

The flint tools discovered at Kocanizam Tepe were spread over the entire area at a density of around 10 per m². As a result of the examinations of the flint tools discovered at the site, the site is dated to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period.

Pre-Pottery Neolithic assemblage at Kocanizam Tepe

Architectural elements. A calcareous stone believed to be the body of a T-shaped pillar was unearthed in an illegal excavation site at the centre of the settlement area. The stone is flat and chiselled into rectangular shape, with both short edges broken (Fig. 17).

Small finds. During the field survey, pottery and architectural remains from the early Byzantine period were discovered, as well as blades, flakes and waste production made of flint stone and unipolar and bipolar cores that could be dated to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period (Fig. 18.1-2). The flint is light and dark brown, beige and gray in colour. The most significant lithic artefacts are the Nemrik type arrowheads, scrapers, crested blades and blades with silica sheen (Fig. 18.4-5, 8-11). Furthermore, blade pieces made of obsidian are also encountered (Fig. 18.6-7) as well as grinding stones and pestle pieces made of basalt.

The Neolithic settlement located inside Kocanizam village should be dated to the end of the PPNA period (LPPNA) and early PPNB period (EPPNB) according to the Nemrik arrowheads discovered at the site and the presence of calcareous stone estimated to be a part of a T-shaped pillar.

Sefer Tepe (Yukarı Darik Harabesi)

Sefer Tepe is a small, broad and shallow mound (Fig. 19) located c. 72km east of Şanlıurfa, within the modern province borders of Viranşehir (Map 1). The mound is located at 600m altitude above sea level and covers a surface area of c. 7000m². A country house is located in the south-eastern corner of the site. The closest water source is Yukarı Cırcıp creek, 1.5km to the east. The geological foundation is of calcareous rock and the closest basalt source is located 1km to the east.

Pre-Pottery Neolithic Assemblage at Sefer Tepe (Yukarı Darik Harabesi)

Architectural elements. The most intriguing aspect of the Sefer Tepe site are the 16 in-situ T-shaped pillars (Kürkçüoğlu, Karahan Kara 2005.62-63; Çelik 2006a.23-25). Most of the pillars were buried and placed side-by-side in a conjugate formation at c. 1.5 up to 2m intervals (Fig. 20). The upper sections above the surface are c. 50cm long and 20cm wide. The positioning of the pillars is very similar to the architecture at Göbekli Tepe Level II (Schmidt 2002. 8, Fig. 7)⁵ and the monolithic in-situ pillars on the surface at Karahan Tepe (Çelik 2000b.6-7; 2011. 241-242, Fig. 7). Moreover, another pillar was revealed during the construction of the country house in the south-eastern corner of the site. This pillar was found intact (Fig. 21); its length is 198cm and the width of the head section is 72cm, the width of the body section 54cm and the thickness 25cm. The head section of this undecorated stele is extremely flattened; it has features identical with the pillars discovered at Nevalı Çori, Göbekli Tepe, Karahan Tepe, Hamzan Tepe and Taşlı Tepe.

Small finds. Only flint and obsidian tools were discovered at Sefer Tepe. The proportion of obsidian to flint tools is 1:7. Arrowheads, piercing tools, end scrapers and blades with a silica sheen were among the lithic artefacts. On the other hand, only one scraper piece and blade pieces were identified among the obsidian tools. Typologically, tools dating to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic were identified among the flint stone finds (Fig. 22.1-6). The flint arrowheads in particular are of the Byblos type with some unidentified types (Çelik 2006a.25, Fig. 4), where only the distal and proximal sections are well-preserved (Fig. 22.4-5). Identical arrowheads were found at Göbekli Tepe (Beile-Bohn et al. 1998.Abb. 23.3; Schmidt 2001.52, Figs. 10/3, 11/5), Nevalı Çori (Schmidt 1988.Abb.

5 Locations of the pillars at L10-71, L9-80, L9-55 and L9-56 trenches.

8.5), Şanlıurfa-Yeni Mahalle (Çelik 2000a. Fig. 5.2) and Karahan Tepe (Çelik 2000b. Fig. 4a). Moreover, one piece of a stone pot, similar to the ones discovered at Körtik Tepe (Özkaya, Coşkun 2011.90–93, Figs. 15–21, 26), was used as whetstone (Fig. 22.6).

The Viranşehir Plain extends to the north and east of Sefer Tepe; the site is located c. 20km from Karahan Tepe, 28km from Taşlı Tepe, 50km from Göbekli Tepe and 63km from Şanlıurfa-Yeni Mahalle and Hamzan Tepe⁶. The Sefer Tepe site dates to the early PPNB as it has features identical to Level II of Göbekli Tepe.

Concluding remarks

Circular structures were not discovered during the excavations of the Urfa region, except at Hamzan Tepe and Yeni Mahalle discovered in previous studies. We are used to observing such Early PPNB structures in the catchment area of the Tigris River. The circular structures here, on the other hand, are generally from the PPNA period that has different construction materials. The walls discovered at Hamzan Tepe, Herzo Tepe and İnanlı Tepe were built with large, partially dressed stone. The walls of the structures in the catchment area of the Tigris River, however, were built with small rubble. The flint tools from the surface at Herzo Tepe and İnanlı Tepe, that include circular structures, show that these sites date to the early PPNB period.

The cult/ritual structures recognised at Göbekli Tepe and Nevali Çori include T-shaped pillars with and without reliefs and statues. We acquired plenty of information on this type of buildings from the excavations at Göbekli Tepe. In particular, Level II, dated to the Early PPNB and contemporaneous with the cult structure at Nevali Çori, and Level III, dated to the PPNA period, offer new information on these cult structures. Thus far, no sites or cult centres from the PPNA period, which is contemporaneous with Level III of Göbekli Tepe, have been found.

All the new sites discovered in the Siverek and Viranşehir region are dated to the early PPNB period. Such dating is proven particularly by the resemblance of the pillars discovered at Taşlı Tepe and Sefer Tepe, characterised as cult centres, with pillars similar to Göbekli Tepe Level II in terms of dimensions. The same feature is also found in pillars in the cult structure at Nevali Çori Level III. The pillars here also date to the Early PPNB.

The most significant feature of Taşlı Tepe is the fact that it is the only example occupied in a single period, the Pre-Pottery Neolithic. Unfortunately, the architectural elements found on the surface were removed during levelling works by farming activities on the hill. Taşlı Tepe is characterised as a cult centre with T-shaped pillars. The contemporaneous sites are the Pre-Pottery Neolithic Sefer Tepe, 28km to the southeast, Karahan Tepe, 30km south, and Göbekli Tepe, 35km to the west. The fact that the distance between Taşlı Tepe and Sefer Tepe, Karahan Tepe and Göbekli Tepe is approximately identical indicates that the distance between the sites where T-shaped pillars are present was arranged to a certain pre-planned layout. The sites in the region are generally founded either on or immediately beside high plateaus (Özdoğan 2011.229). This fact might be used to designate the borders between the sites. Therefore, Taşlı Tepe is considered a site characterised by T-shaped pillars, such as Göbekli Tepe, Nevali Çori, Karahan Tepe, Sefer Tepe and Hamzan Tepe. The fact, that the number of sites increases gradually, means that they not only comprise cult centres in this period, but that they are also independent cult structures within the settlements as can be seen at Nevali Çori.

The absence of T-shaped pillars at Herzo Tepe and İnanlı Tepe and the presence of circular structures indicate that this type of sites were settlements not cult or ritual centres. The distances between Başaran Höyük, Herzo Tepe, Kocanizam Tepe and Sefer Tepe vary from 2 to 8km. Moreover, all four sites are aligned in a north-south direction. Sefer Tepe, which has T-shaped pillars, is located at the centre of the other four sites; the distance to the other settlements varies from 3 to 5km. This arrangement might indicate that Sefer Tepe was a cult centre for the other settlements. It is of particular importance with respect to presenting territorial areas in the region in the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period. This fact also suggests a settlement type we encountered at other PPN sites in the region.

Sites dating to the early periods of the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period were generally founded on, or on the hillside of, high plateaus in the region. Likewise, Başaran Höyük, Herzo Tepe and Kocanizam Tepe were founded on high plateaus and down bedrock. This type of settlement tradition is also seen at the Sefer Tepe, Taşlı Tepe, Karahan Tepe, Göbekli Tepe, Şanlıurfa-Yeni Mahalle and Hamzan Tepe Pre-Pottery Neolithic sites in the region.

⁶ Such distances are calculated as beeline distances. The distance between the settlements via modern highway network is longer.

The presence of circular structures constructed at Herzo Tepe and Hamzan Tepe settlements is important, as it demonstrates that two distinct architectural traditions were present in the region during the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period. The presence of sites characterised as cult or ritual centres, such as Göbekli Tepe, Karahan Tepe, Taşlı Tepe and Sefer Tepe, suggests that other settlements must have been present in the region. In the future, it might be possible to find other cult or ritual centres, settlements, or a combination of the two types in the region with systematic studies and excavations.

The absence of Palmyra points and Çayönü tools at Taşlı Tepe, İnanlı Tepe, Başaran Höyük, Herzo Tepe,

Kocanizam Tepe and Sefer Tepe, and the fact that these sites have features similar to those in Level II at Göbekli Tepe and Level III of Nevalı Çori, enable us to date such sites to the early PPNB.

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Fig. 1. Taşlı Tepe from the east.



Fig. 2. T-shaped pillar; front view.

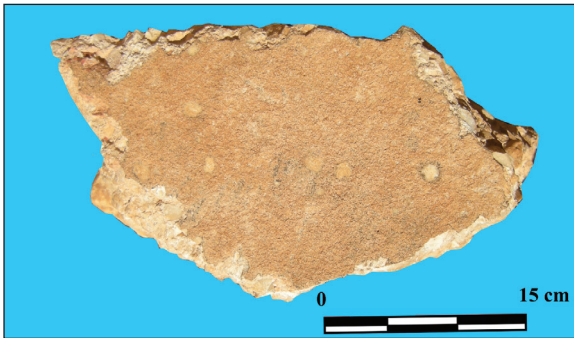


Fig. 3. Fragment of terrazzo floor.

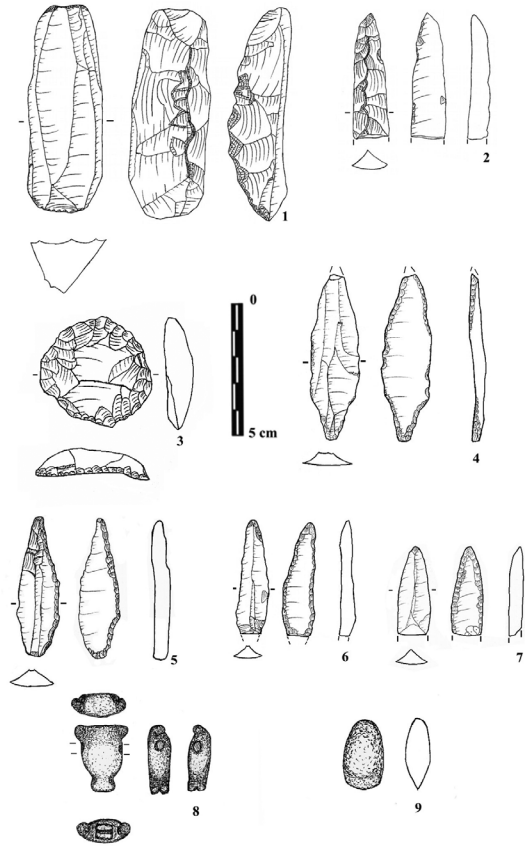


Fig. 4. Taşlı Tepe Neolithic finds.



Fig. 5. Stone dish or plate.



Fig. 6. Grind stone.



Fig. 7. İnanlı Tepe from the south.

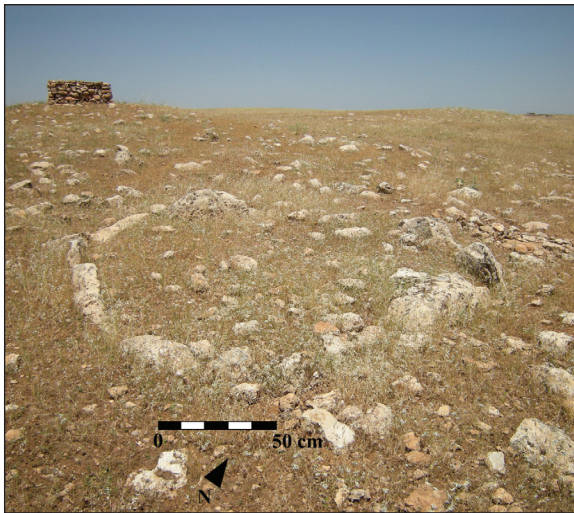


Fig. 8. Circular building at İnanlı Tepe.

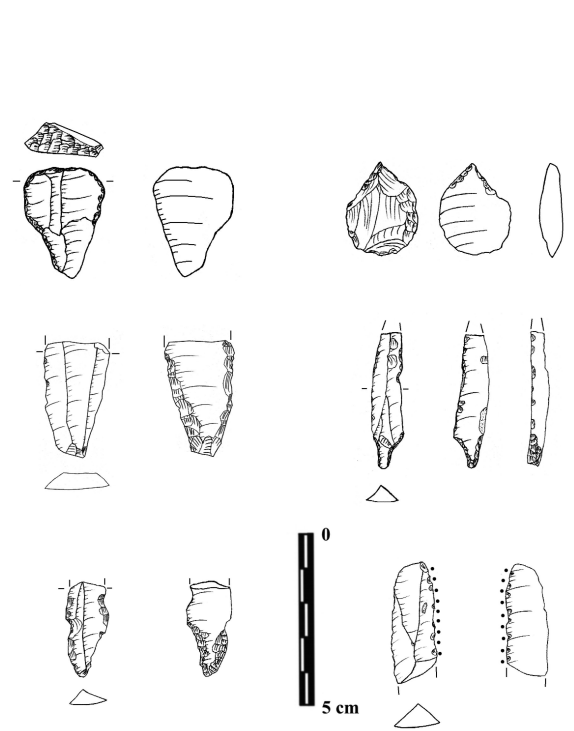


Fig. 9. İnanlı Tepe lithic tools.



Fig. 10. Başaran Höyük from the east.

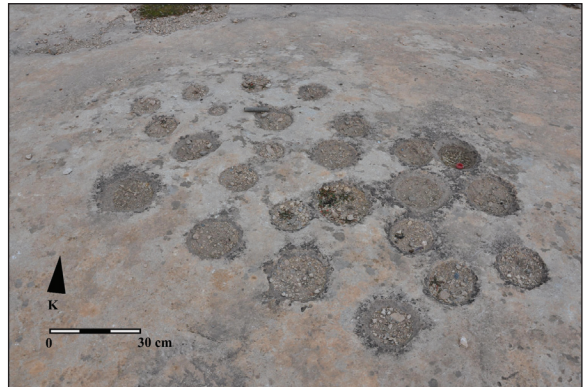


Fig. 11. Small cut-out groups cut into surrounding bedrock.

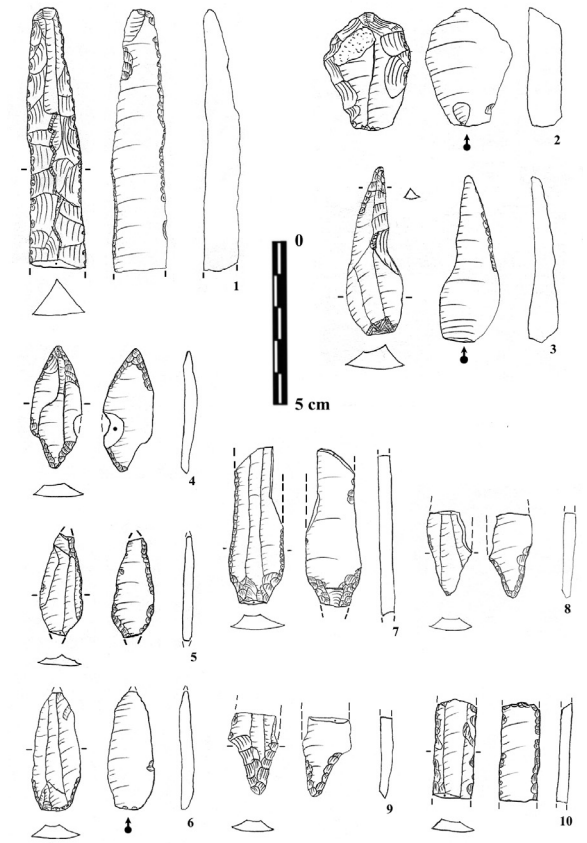


Fig. 12. Başaran Höyük Neolithic finds.



Fig. 13. Southwest view of Herzo Tepe.



Fig. 16. Kocanizam from the south.



Fig. 14. Circular building at Herzo Tepe.



Fig. 17. Kocanizam Tepe piece of T-shaped pillar.

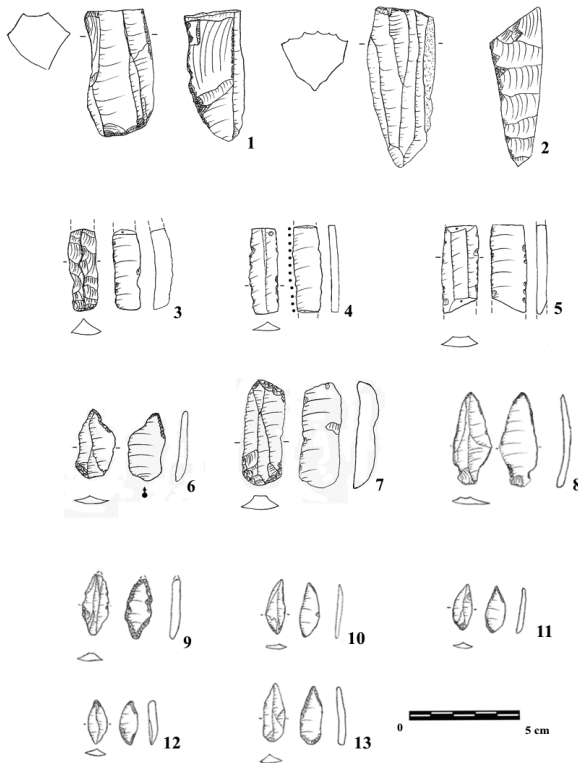


Fig. 15. Herzo Tepe Neolithic finds.

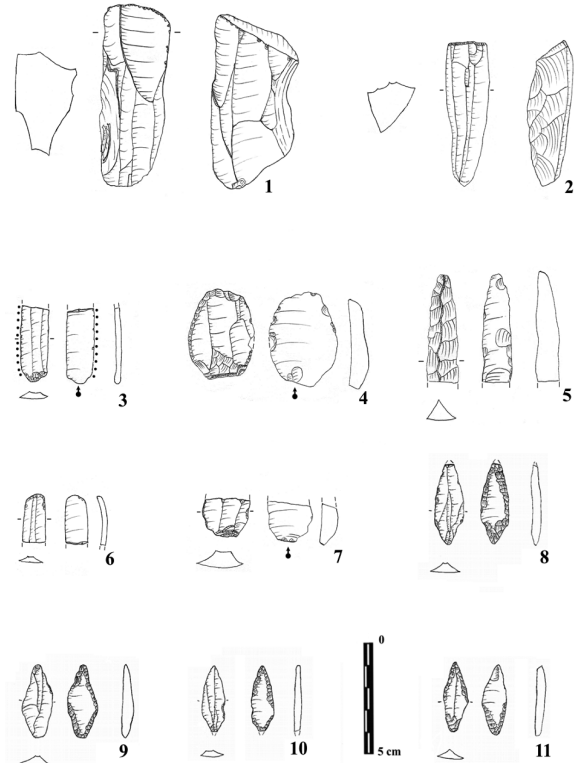


Fig. 18. Kocanizam Neolithic finds.



Fig. 19. Sefer Tepe from the north.



Fig. 20. Pillars at Sefer Tepe opposite each other.



Fig. 21. T-shaped pillar; front view.

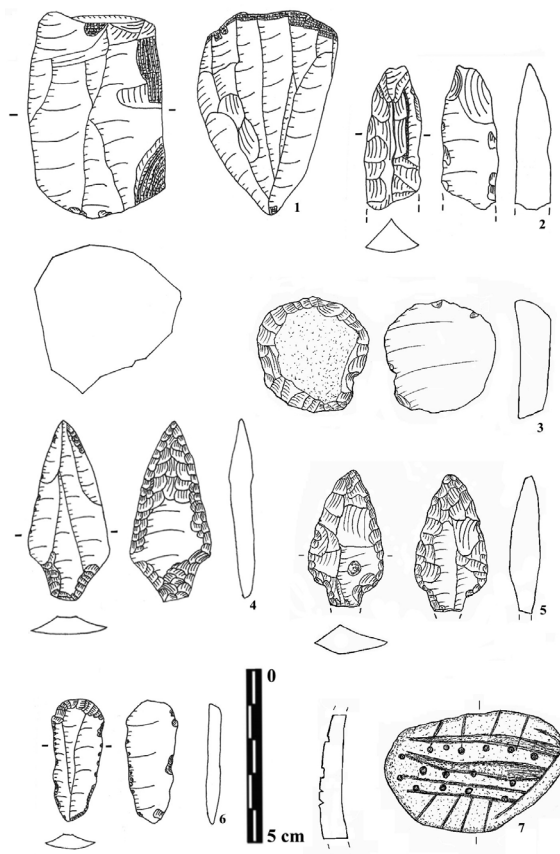


Fig. 22. Sefer Tepe Neolithic finds.