

COMMUNITIES IN TRANSITION

THE CIRCUM-AEGEAN AREA DURING THE 5TH AND 4TH MILLENNIA BC

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Front cover: Ships carved into a rock from the site of Strophilas on Andros (photograph from the personal archive of C. Televantou); drawing of a rock carving from the main bastion on the wall at the site of Strophilas on Andros representing a procession of ships (drawing by C. Televantou).

The Chalcolithic period at Yeşilova Höyük

Zafer Derin and Tayfun Caymaz

Introduction

The prehistoric settlement at Yeşilova, covering an area roughly 800 metres in diameter in the middle of the Bornova Plain (Figs 51.1, 51.2), has been accepted as one of the earliest loci of settlement in the area of İzmir in Central-Western Anatolia.¹ Discovered in 2003, Yeşilova Höyük is situated just south of the Manda River in the Karacaoğlan Quarter, which is within the metropolitan district of Bornova in İzmir. The settlement area is 4 km from the present-day coastline. The Bornova Plain, which had similar geographical boundaries in the prehistoric era, became home to the first settlers in the İzmir region. Besides Yeşilova, two other prehistoric settlements have been identified near the mound, since prehistoric occupation began to expand continuously towards nearby Yassitepe and İpeklikuyu following the end of the Neolithic period. The settlement consists of a 3–4 m layer composed of three cultural levels on top of a fine alluvial mound: level IV represents the Neolithic period, level III represents a stage in the Chalcolithic period, and level I–II has multiple phases from the EBA to the Late Roman era.

Neolithic settlement, level III

The first habitation at the mound dates back to the Neolithic period, at least 8000–9000 years before the present. This period is represented by 10 superimposed architectural layers.² The most important elements that characterise the Neolithic period are pottery and small finds.

Bronze Age settlement (Yassitepe), level II

The Early Bronze Age settlement at Yeşilova can be defined as the continuation of the Chalcolithic settlement. In addition to similarities in pottery, the stone foundations

of large buildings point to an important development. These architectural remains together with a graveyard were found in the centre of the mound. The EBA settlement, similar to the oldest layer of Troy, is made up of long, narrow, rectangular planned megaron-like structures with high stone walls.³ The destruction of the walls suggests that this 5000-year-old settlement ended with an earthquake in 2850 BC on the basis of radiocarbon dating.

Chalcolithic settlement, level III

The Neolithic settlement spread to the north, all the way to Yassitepe, and was completely abandoned after a huge fire around 5800 BC. We know that Yeşilova was invaded 1300 years later by a completely different society. After arriving at the abandoned Late Neolithic settlement, the newcomers built structures comprising simple round huts. Level III, representing the Chalcolithic period at Yeşilova, has preserved deposits only in a limited area. Level III appears to have represented two different phases in the Chalcolithic settlement, extending across the whole mound. In the centre of the settlement, architectural remains have been attested along with associated pottery. These structures are characterised by pit floors dug directly into the soil (Fig. 51.3). The edges of the structures, which had been first dug in the Neolithic levels, descend with a slight slope and reach a depth of 1 m in the centre and are at least 6–8 m in diameter.

The building's floor, the edges of which appeared to be damaged, continued in the northern cross-section. The floor of the hut was formed of mud plaster around 3 cm in thickness under which was a paving made of pieces of broken pottery placed in quite a few places while the mud was still wet. A fireplace was also placed on this floor. In the lower levels under the floor, heaps of debris were found approximately 16.1 m in thickness consisting of stones of



Figure 51.1. Map locating Yeşilova in Central-Western Anatolia.

various sizes, pieces of burned mud and pots belonging to the second level of the Chalcolithic period. Some whole pots and other finds were found *in situ* on top of this floor (Fig. 51.4).

The pottery of level III at Yeşilova is homogeneous in character in terms of both paste and surface features. The pottery of phases A and B does not show great variation. Among the surface colours, 65% are grey and greyish brown and 25% are shades of brown. Burnished pottery somewhat outnumbers simple pottery. However, burnishing was generally performed lightly and carelessly (Fig. 51.5). The Chalcolithic pottery was generally roughly-made. The paste was tempered with small stones and mica, varying in size according to the size of the pots. Some of the pieces of larger vessels were plant-tempered. The firing of the small and medium-sized pots was good to average, while firing of the larger pots was average or poor.⁴

The Chalcolithic pottery is aesthetically inferior when compared to the Neolithic pottery. Burnish is more important than slip in the surface treatment. On the surface, shades of grey and brown are common (Figs 51.6–7).⁵ The most characteristic shape (40%) of the level III pottery is the carinated bowl. About 20% of these bowls have high handles which are attached to the space between the rim and the shoulder on the interior and exterior. They are of two types; namely basket-handles and mushroom-shaped handles. Small knobs are frequently seen on their lower back.⁶

Carinated bowls with high handles are the foremost distinctive element of the pottery of the Middle Chalcolithic period. Such bowls were found at Gülpınar in North-Western Anatolia, Çakmak Tepe, Liman Tepe VI, Kulaksızlar, Demirli Cave, Yoğurtçu Kale Cave in Central-Western Anatolia, Beçin Fortress and Karain Cave in South-Western Anatolia, and Kuruçay 11 in the Lake District, as well as Emporio X–VIII on Chios and Tigani II–III on Samos in the Eastern Aegean islands.⁷

At Yeşilova, jars constitute the second most common (40%) shape. Necked jars predominate. Some jars are either short-necked or without necks. The jars are of various height, and the quantity of short jars is also noteworthy. All jar handles are vertical, and some of them are horned. Such handles are seen in almost all of the above-mentioned settlements. On the other hand, the back is crescent-shaped in some vertical handles, and their interior is decorated with knobbed rows. We encounter the closest analogues of such handles at Liman Tepe VII.⁸ Both pierced and unpierced lugs are also seen on the jars, along with vertical handles. The vertical-handled jars without necks are a characteristic shape. In these jars with a light and simple surface, the handles mostly rise from the rim and are attached to the belly, and are generally horned. Analogous jars are also present in the settlements of Liman Tepe VII and Orman Fidanlığı VII.⁹



Figure 51.2. View of the Bornova Plain showing location of Yeşilova (photo by I. Kayan).

The ratio of open bowls is around 10% among the pottery of level III at Yeşilova. They vary in height, and their sides can be either convex or straight. Various types of handles and lugs are seen on them. On the interior of one group of bowls are symmetrical knob-shaped lugs. Analogues of such bowls are encountered at Liman Tepe VII and Orman Fidanlığı VII.¹⁰

The quantity of pottery that is generally misnamed cheese-pot (?) in the archaeological literature is about 6–7%. It is hard to determine the shape of these pots since they have not been obtained in complete form. Existing specimens indicate that the pottery was mostly made as portable “bread-baking pots” (Fig. 51.8), because their front face was open and their sides were pierced for the fermentation and baking of dough, while the coarse exterior of the pottery was darkened by fire. These pots are present in the majority of settlements which are contemporary to the pottery of level III.¹¹

Of the characteristic elements, pattern-burnished decoration is represented by a small number at Yeşilova.

Such decoration was also added to the interior of some carinated bowls. It is understood that pattern-burnished decoration was more common at Gülpınar and Beçin Fortress.¹² Some carinated bowls at Tigani II and III also display pattern-burnished decoration.

Bowls with low bellies, bowls with inward-leaning rims, bowls with inward-thickened rims, conical beakers, and vessels that might have been used as lids are present, but are uncommon within the shapes of level III. The bases are mostly simple; either concave or flat whereas some are slightly higher. Decorated sherds are few (1%). Besides pattern-burnished decoration, other styles of decoration such as incised, *pointillé*, notch, and impressed are also present on these sherds.

Ceramics similar to the Middle Chalcolithic pottery of Yeşilova was present in an area extending from North-Western Anatolia to the coast of Antalya. Of the Aegean islands, Chios and Samos are also included in the same cultural area. Furthermore, elements akin to this cultural tradition are encountered in layer VII of Orman Fidanlığı.

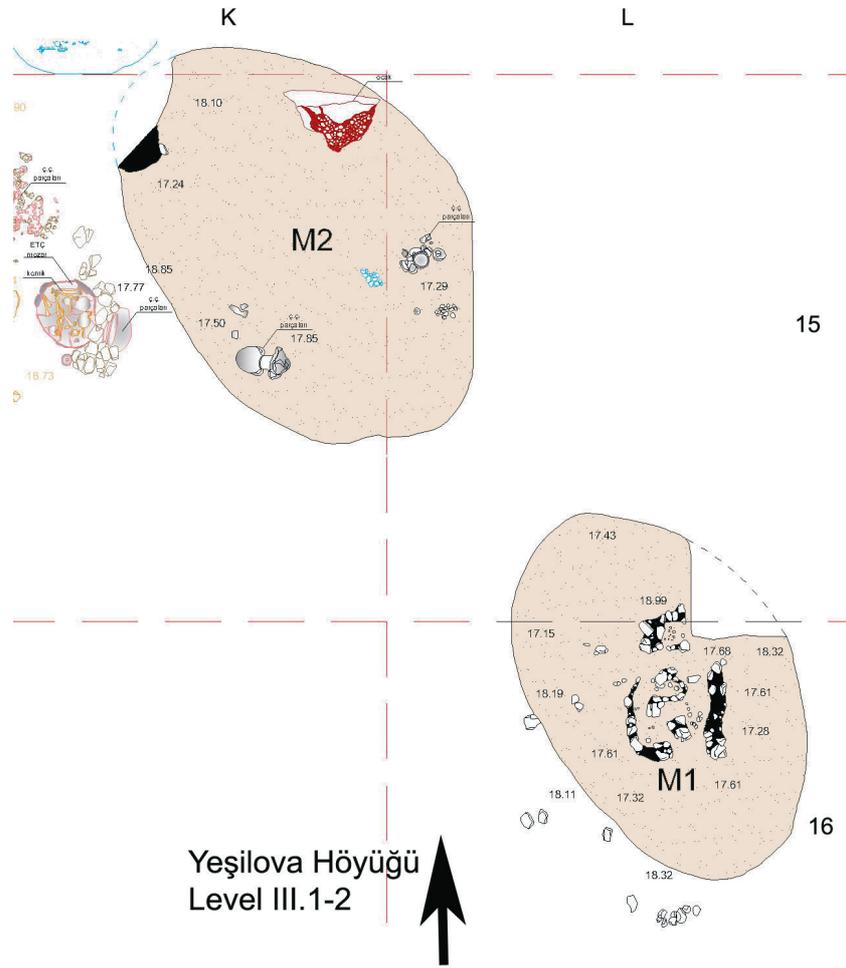


Figure 51.3. Chalcolithic Level III at Yeşilova.



Figure 51.4. Chalcolithic vessels during excavation of level III.

The settlement of level III at Yeşilova reflects an advanced phase of the Middle Chalcolithic period. Gülpınar in North-Western Anatolia seems to belong to an earlier stage. Some parallels of the Yeşilova pottery found in the pottery of sites such as Kum Tepe IA form the basis of this inference.¹³ Footed bowls are a characteristic example of this. The final phase of the process is observed at the settlement of Liman Tepe VII, where white-painted decoration characterises the ceramic assemblage. This decoration was applied to both carinated bowls with high handles¹⁴ and newly-occurring bowls with inward-thickened rims.¹⁵ There is a group of carinated bowls with high handles in the early layer of the Late Chalcolithic settlement at Bakla Tepe 4.¹⁶ It is seen that this typical shape of the Middle Chalcolithic period disappeared, then bowls with inward-thickened rims, some of which had white-painted decoration, and their derivatives,



Figure 51.5. Complete Chalcolithic vessels, level III.



Figure 51.6. Chalcolithic pot sherds, level III.



Figure 51.7. Chalcolithic pot sherds, level III.



Figure 51.8. Fragments of a cheese pot (?) and suggested use in baking bread.

became widespread in the following phase.¹⁷ White-painted decoration is seen at Emporio starting from the earliest phase (X), and it increases later in phase VIII.¹⁸ Furthermore, white-painted decoration seen on some vessels in Tigani became widespread in the next period (IV).¹⁹

Conclusion

According to what has been described in the previous paragraphs and comparing the radiocarbon dates from Beşik-Sivritepe (4800–4500 BC) as well as those from Kumtepe IA (4800–4370 BC) with those coming from level III of Yeşilova (4340–4230 BC),²⁰ it is possible to securely place the Middle Chalcolithic horizon of the latter site, generally extending from Gülpınar to Bakla Tepe (Late Chalcolithic 4), to the second half of the 5th millennium BC.²¹

Notes

- 1 Derin 2011, 95; Derin 2012, 177, www.yesilova.ege.edu.tr.
- 2 Derin 2012, 179.
- 3 Derin and Caymaz 2013, 125–6.
- 4 Derin 2011, 103, fig. 13.
- 5 Most of the pots were grey and blackish grey in color (10YR 5/1 grey; 10YR 4/1 dark grey; 10YR 3/1 dark grey), sometimes in tones of brown and brownish red (10YR 5/3 brown; 10YR 5/2 greyish brown; 7.5YR 6/4 light brown; 10YR 7/4 very light brown; 10YR 5/4 yellowish brown). Burnishing marks are seen on some of them.
- 6 Derin *et al.* 2009, fig. 14; Derin 2011, 103, fig. 13.7,12.
- 7 *cf.* Gülpınar (Takaoğlu 2006, fig. 6–7; Özgünel and Kaplan 2009, 410); Çakmak Tepe (Caymaz 2010, 115, fig. 81.5–7, fig. 14.5–7); Liman Tepe (Caymaz 2010, 125, fig. 82); Kulaksızlar (Dinç 1996a, fig. 5.124–6, 128–33; 6.159–67; Takaoğlu 2001, 161, fig. 5); Demirli Cave (Bostancı 2002, pls LIII.1–3; LVIII.4); Yoğurtçu Kale Cave (Derin and Caymaz 2013, 128, fig. 2); Beçin (Yıldız 2008); Karain Cave (Kökten 1955, pl. II.1–2, 6–9; 3); Kuruçay (Duru 1994, pl. 67.5–6); Emporio (Hood 1981, 280, fig. 134; Hood 1982, 629, fig. 185.22); Tigani (Felsch 1988, pls 80.47.2–43, 5–8; 83.UP 24).
- 8 Caymaz 2010, fig. 87.7–10.
- 9 Caymaz 2010, fig. 86.1; Efe 2001, fig. 18.281–3.
- 10 Caymaz 2010, fig. 84.4; Efe 2001, fig. 19.287.
- 11 Caymaz 2010, fig. 81.3–4; 88.1–5; Derin *et al.* 2009, 10, fig. 15; Felsch 1988, pl. 99. 223a; Hood 1981, fig. 119; Takaoğlu 2006, fig. 11.30–3; Yıldız 2008.
- 12 Özgünel and Kaplan 2009, fig. 3; Takaoğlu 2006, fig. 10.24–9; Yıldız 2008.
- 13 Özgünel and Kaplan 2009, 410; Seeher 1987a, Abb. 3.2, Abb. 5.6; Takaoğlu 2006, 297, fig. 9.221–3.
- 14 Caymaz 2010, fig. 82.9–10.
- 15 Caymaz 2010, fig. 83.7–12.
- 16 Caymaz 2010, fig. 89.
- 17 Caymaz 2010, 153–6.
- 18 Hood 1981, 290–1, 294.
- 19 Felsch 1988, 46.
- 20 Derin *et al.* 2009, 7.
- 21 Derin 2012, 179; Hood 1981, 165; Kaplan *et al.* 2013, 393; Krömer *et al.* 2003, 43–54; Sperling 1976, figs 9–11.