

**ANATOLIA ANTIQUA
ESKİ ANADOLU**

XXVII



**INSTITUT FRANÇAIS D'ÉTUDES ANATOLIENNES GEORGES-DUMEZIL
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**ANATOLIA ANTIQUA
ESKİ ANADOLU
XXVII**

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TABLE DES MATIERES

PRÉFACE	V
PREFACE	VII
IN MEMORIAM	1
Burçin ERDOĞU et Özlem ÇEVİK	
A Comparative Study of the Sixth Millennium BC Marble Bracelets from Ulucak and Uğurlu	29
Martin GODON et Ozan ÖZBUDAK	
Early Chalcolithic Pottery from Tepecik-Çiftlik and Gelveri, Central Anatolia: From Local to Supra-Regional Ceramic Style	33
Vladimir SHELESTIN	
On the Origin of Küçükçekmece Iron Figurines	51
Akın ERSOY et Ludovic LAUGIER	
Sculptures grecques et romaines de Smyrne, découvertes récentes	57
Élisabeth GOUSSARD, Raphaëlle CHEVALLIER, Olivier HENRY et Christophe BOST	
Labraunda 2018, Étude d'un poids décoré et d'une couronne : les apports de la conservation-restauration	77
Isabelle HASSELIN ROUS	
Les figurines en terre cuite de Tarse en Cilicie à l'époque romaine impériale	89
İnci TÜRKOĞLU	
Early Byzantine Structure at Gerenkuyu Mevkii of Yalı-Bodrum	109
Anca DAN, Sait BAŞARAN, Helmut BRÜCKNER, Ercan ERKUL, Anna PINT, Wolfgang RABELL, Lyudmila SHUMILOVSKIKH, Dennis WILKEN and Tina WUNDERLICH	
Ainos in Thrace: Research Perspectives in Historical Geography and Geoarchaeology	127
Hülya ATAŞCIOĞLU AYKUL, M. Bahar TANMAN, Miguel Ángel ESCOBAR-CLARÓS	
A Note on the Turkish Lot III / 1891 from the Bab el-Gasus Cache (Egypt), kept at the Istanbul Archaeology Museums / Ancient Orient Museum	145

CHRONIQUES DES TRAVAUX ARCHEOLOGIQUES EN TURQUIE 2018

Kenan İŞIK, Bülent GENÇ, Vedat TİMUR et Rıfat KUVANÇ	
Two Column Bases From Mawan in the Hakkâri Province (Southeast Corner of Turkey): A New Achaemenid Center?	155

Çiğdem MANER

Preliminary Report on the Sixth Season of the Konya Ereğli, Karapınar, Halkapınar and Emircazi Survey Project (KEYAR) 2018 161

Erkan KONYAR, Bülent GENÇ, Can AVCI et Armağan TAN

Excavations at the Old City, Fortress, and Mound of Van: Work in 2018 169

Olivier HENRY et J. BLID, Chr. BOST, N. CARLESS-UNWIN, R. CHEVALLIER, G. ÇİMEN,
A. EYİGÖR, A. FREJMAN, E. GOUSSARD, V. LUNGU, A. SITZ, A. MUSAT-STREINU,
B. VERGNAUD

Labraunda 2018 185

M. SEYER, A. DOLEA, P. M. BES, D. Zs. SCHWARCZ, S. BAYBO, A. K. L. LEUNG,
U. QUATEMBER, M. WÖRRLE, H. BRÜCKNER, F. STOCK, A. SYMANCZYK, G. STANZL,
K. KUGLER, B. YENER-MARKSTEINER

The Excavation at Limyra/Lycia 2018: Preliminary Report 233

Alessandra RICCI

The Küçükyalı Arkeopark (Istanbul), 2016-2018: Excavation, Conservation, Cultural Heritage
and Public Archaeology 255

Nergis GÜNSENİN

A Günserin IV Amphora from Küçükyalı 279

Martin GODON and Ozan ÖZBUDAK*

EARLY CHALCOLITHIC POTTERY FROM TEPECİK-ÇİFTLİK AND GELVERİ, CENTRAL ANATOLIA: FROM LOCAL TO SUPRA-REGIONAL CERAMIC STYLE

ABSTRACT

We intend to decipher both a chronological and a cultural problematic raised by the sudden appearance of geometric incised decorations on Anatolian pottery, seemingly at the beginning of the sixth millennium cal B.C. Frequently designated as ‘Gelveri type’ in reference to the Gelveri-Güzelyurt Cappadocian pottery assemblage, the lack of a reliable chronology based on a good stratigraphy at the site made it difficult to cope with the nature of the development of such pottery style. Excavations at Tepecik-Çiftlik as well as recent archaeological work at Gelveri have provided us with new stratigraphic and decoration-related technological evidence. Hence, we have the possibility to analyse the emergence and the development of such pottery styles within a reliable archaeological context. Seen on such a large geographical scale, covering at least the entire Anatolian plateau, the nature of this pottery style development cannot be considered as a pottery phenomenon in itself only. It is necessary to investigate the cultural interactions at play, enabling stylistic patterns to be shared within different cultural areas.

INTRODUCTION

For over fifty years, changes that occurred in Cappadocia in the seventh and sixth millennium B.C. were exemplified by the Gelveri pottery corpus even though, due to a lack of thorough investigations at the site, no archaeological contexts or chronological evidence could be linked to the specific geometric incised decorations that defined the Gelveri pottery as a style type for so long. Over the years, the site has been interpreted as belonging to the late third millennium cal B.C. (Makkay 1993) or, interestingly, part of an ‘Anatolian-Balkan cultural zone’ close to the Balkan Final Neolithic and the Pre-Cucuteni cultural complex (Esin 1993; Özdoğan 1993 and 1994) or to Karanovo III (Yakar 1991). Since a decade, the chronological evidence has clearly pushed back the dating of the site and its singular pottery to the sixth millennium cal B.C., though its

cultural nature and geographical extent are yet to be investigated.

Based on evidence from Tepecik-Çiftlik’s upper levels as well as from recent archaeological work and pottery analyses at Gelveri, one can approach the chronological issue and the cultural development in Cappadocia through the still unclear events marking the sixth millennium B.C. in Anatolia. In this paper, we intend to underscore the major changes in terms of style and pottery technology that appear suddenly after a rather gradual development of the Tepecik-Çiftlik sequence. The new evidence from Gelveri will be discussed in order to arrive at a preliminary assessment of its chronology that well might be divided between two occupations: a first one at the rise of the sixth millennium and a later one during the fifth millennium cal B.C.

A second analytic step will aim at assembling evidence of cultural stability on the Anatolian plateau

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This article is based on a communication given by the authors at the Times of Change international conference at the Free University Berlin, TOPOI-Building, November 24-26, 2011 (Biehl & Rosenstock 2011).

within what can be seen as a tremendous shift from close regional interactions to large-scale ones: Even though the pottery technological repertory does show important typological and stylistic improvements, some specific ceramic *chaînes opératoires* remain unchanged.

1. THE GELVERİ DECORATED POTTERY ASSEMBLAGE REVISITED

1.1. Gelveri-Güzelyurt: two settlement phases towards a new relative chronology

The eponym site of Gelveri (Güzelyurt), as to this date archaeology speaks only of the Gelveri style and not of the Gelveri culture, is located on a small natural rocky outcrop overlooking the Melendiz River gorge at its exit from the Melendiz Plain, topped by a 19th century church now in ruins, giving it the name of Yüksek Kilise in the TAY archaeological sites

database (Harmankaya *et al.* 1998) (Fig. 1). Gelveri has been famous since the 1950s (Tezcan 1958) for its abundant decorated pottery assemblage recovered from the surface over numerous surveys lacking detailed publications but wisely used by Turkish scholars (Esin 1993; Gülcür 1997; Harmankaya *et al.* 1998). This in particular, certainly due to the nature of the archaeological deposit more than the quantity of the decorated pottery, launched Gelveri into the top-ten most famous Anatolian protohistoric sites until the last two decades.

Even though the Gelveri incised decorated pottery attained certain renown among scholars eager to decipher pre-Bronze Age cultural processes, its chronology and stratigraphy as well as its material lacked thorough investigations. After the first and very limited archaeological excavations by Ufuk Esin in the early 1990s (Esin 1993), Sevil Gülcür continued on a larger scale during the summer of 2007, opening four small trenches (A1 to A4) on the eastern slope of the rocky outcrop (Gülcür 2008; Gülcür

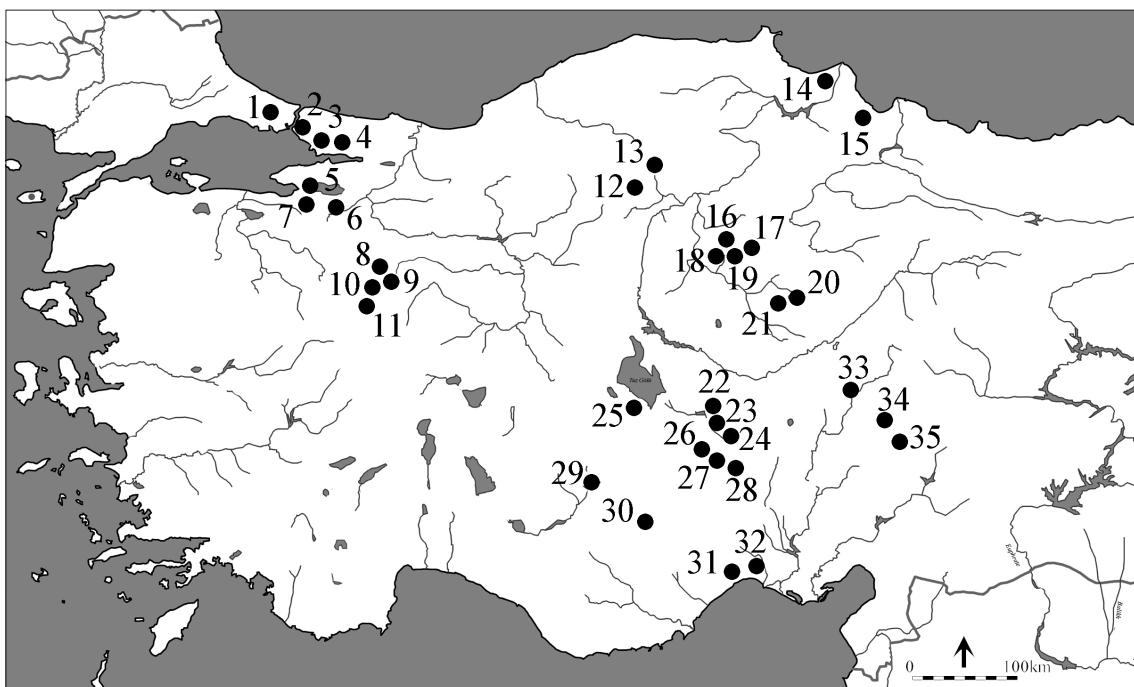


Fig. 1: Sites discussed in the text. 1 Yarımburgaz, 2 Fikirtepe, 3 Pendik, 4 Tuzla, 5 İlipinar, 6 Barçın Höyük, 7 Aktopraklı, 8 Orman Fidanlığı, 9 Kes Kaya, 10 Kanlıtaş, 11 Asmainler, 12 Salur Höyük, 13 Turba Mevkii, 14 İkiztepe, 15 Dündartepe, 16 Büyük Güllücek, 17 Büyükkaya, 18 Alaca Höyük, 19 Çamlıbel Tarlası, 20 Alişar, 21 Çadır Höyük, 22 Güvercinkayası, 23 Gelveri Güzelyurt, 24 Tepecik-Çiftlik, 25 Sapmaz Köy, 26 Kabakulak, 27 Pınarbaşı Bor, 28 Köşk Höyük, 29 Çatal Höyük, 30 Can Hasan I, 31 Mersin Yumuktepe, 32 Tarsus Gözlükule, 33 Küçük Til Höyük, 34 Yallak, 35 Göksun (DAO: M. Godon).

and Kiper 2009). Despite natural and anthropogenic erosion, as well as the short amount of time devoted to Gülcür's diagnostic excavations, the project's goals were fulfilled as Gelveri can now be securely embedded in the chronology of the sixth millennium cal B.C.

Firstly, it was demonstrated that Gelveri is made up of several successive layers of settlement that do not, however, form a *tell* or *höyük* as the stratigraphy is horizontal rather than vertical. The sloping topography of the area as well as settlement re-locations through time created specific post-depositional dynamics that are not yet entirely understood. Remains of stone buildings were preserved, constructed directly on the bedrock, which also featured post-hole-like carved-out depressions (Gülcür and Kiper 2009; Özbudak 2010). The archaeological material related to the stone structures, and those found in the sediments filling the structures, clearly belong to two chronological stages. Even if a continuity of style can be observed in pottery decoration, the development of decoration methods and stylistic improvements attest a process of maturation. Furthermore, the discontinuity seen in the stratigraphy, with one architectural phase followed by a depositional infilling, suggests abandonment followed by a relocation of the settlement on a higher location. These upper trenches (A1 and A4) revealed a strong erosive process that drained archaeological materials and sediments downward, covering the older archaeological deposits with a very thick layer of infill containing an important amount of archaeological material. The site topography, a natural rocky hill, was a major contributing factor to the erosion dynamic, and the chances of recovering this later settlement phase in its original context are little.

The study of the Gelveri pottery assemblage from the 2007 excavation confirmed what the stratigraphy was suggesting. Two pottery corpuses can be distinguished: The first one, named 'Archaic,' belongs to the settlement's Early Phase and comprises a small amount of pottery sherds recovered in relation to the structures or the bed-rock. The second, named 'Classic' or Late Phase was part of the filling-up brought by erosion drainage into the Early Phase structures. Of some 3000 pottery pieces from the Late Phase, about 12 % were decorated (Özbudak 2010).

1.2. Gelveri decorated pottery: the Early Phase

Gelveri Early Phase decorated pottery is divided into two technological types: incised and applied-relief. Incision is a technological action intended to cut through the surface of the pottery and open up the clay by slitting it with a sharp tool. The incision does not remove or move clay particles on purpose. The result is a narrow and shallow incised line, developing itself according to the motion of the tool in a linear or curvilinear path with deep and sharp leading edges. Eventually, a micro-padding of thin clay can be identified on the edges of the incision (Figs. 2, 8), (Roux and Courty 2016: 143, Godon 2018: 14-17).

This method of decoration is related to geometric patterns, generally triangular and curvilinear, describing repetitive waves on pottery bodies (Fig. 2). Variations are frequent, the lines forming triangles can be combined or loose, triangles and waves can fit into square or rectangles delimited by incised lines. The geometric patterns can be punctuated with small dots made with a very thin awl or bone needle, vertically pricked in the paste. Other dots are larger, resulting from a cone-shaped awl, tangentially applied in the paste. Remains of white coating seemingly made of limestone or perlite, can be seen inside some of those dots or even partly covering some incisions, showing that at least in some cases the white coat was the primary intended decor, while the incisions were used to hold the coat in place.

The vessels are generally carinated bowls or pots, made of organic tempered clay (Özbudak 2010 and 2012). Surfaces are dominantly burnished; the burnishing process started while the paste was leather hard, after a thorough smoothing on wet paste (Binder *et al.* 1994). The smooth work surfaces of the burnishing tool (for instance a pebble), while following a to-and-fro motion, produce a pressure leading to the recession of the coarse tempers within the paste, allowing the thin fraction of the clay to get compressed

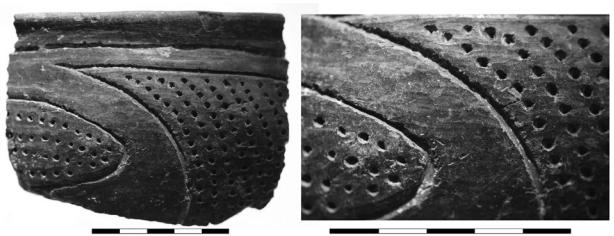


Fig. 2: Gelveri, Earlier Phase: Incised decorations
(Drawing: Ebru Pamukçu Şimşek).

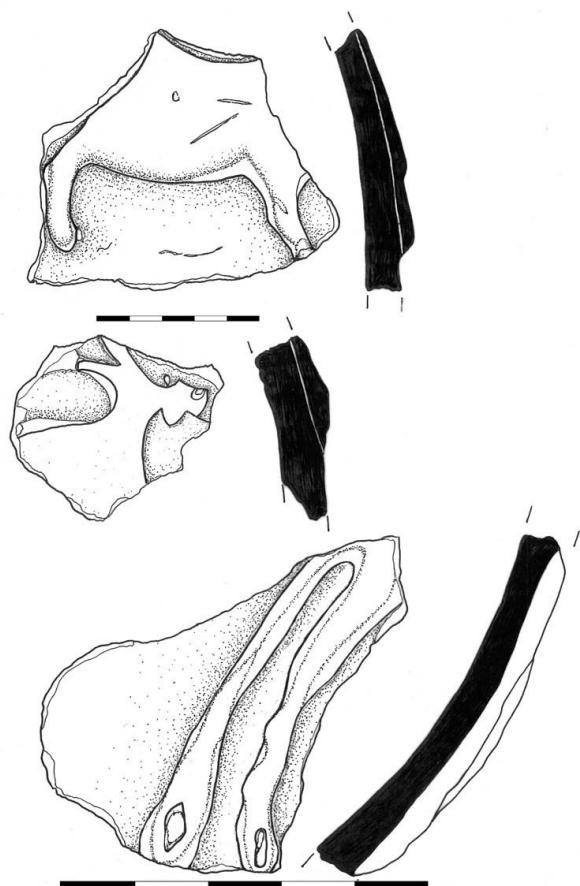


Fig. 3: Gelveri, Earlier Phase: Figurative relief decorations (Drawing: Ebru Pamukçu Şimşek).

on the pottery surfaces. As a result, the burnished surface represents a thin and hard layer of clay, the compression process being easily visible by observing a sherd in section. Unlike the kind of glaze induced by polishing, the burnished surface is not prone to surface shedding, a kind of flaky peeling appearing when the hardened surface is not sufficiently bond to the pottery core.

This Early Phase pottery production, while showing strong technological skills dedicated to decoration techniques, surface treatments, and reductive atmosphere firing, still has a high level of variability in the final quality of the products.

A second type of decoration characterizing Gelveri Early Phase is applied-relief (Fig. 3). Very few pieces were recovered, but they are of importance as they are chrono-cultural markers directly connected to relief decorations on pottery from well-investigated archaeological sequences of settlements in the vicinity, Tepecik-Çiftlik (Bıçakçı *et al.* 2007, 2012, 2017)

and Köşk Höyük (Öztan 2003, 2012). It consists of zoomorphic ornamentations made by applying clay on the surface, shaped into figurative cattle or goats. Poorly preserved unlike Tepecik-Çiftlik and Köşk's ones, the few recovered pieces are definitely not enough to make further technological comments or cultural interpretations.

1.3. Gelveri decorated pottery: the Late Phase

It has already been stated that the Late Phase is only known from disturbed archaeological layers, probably resulting from the erosion of a settlement located up-slope and not from a successive stratigraphic development. Even so, the pottery assemblage is quite homogeneous and attests the chronological coherency one can assume for this filling level. The most important fact highlighted by the Late Phase's pottery analyses lie in a radical shift in decoration techniques and an improvement in surface treatments.

The decoration patterns, dominated by geometric curvilinear shapes and triangles, are in continuity with the Early Phase (Figs. 4, 5). However, the decorations are no longer restricted to just the body, but rims become ornamented as well, with surrounding rows of chevrons or leaf-like patterns being frequent. Moreover, incision techniques are replaced by grooving. The consequence of this change is not only a question of technological skills. The visual impact of the decoration is emphasized with the vessel becoming more a part of the decoration than an ornamented container. To accomplish this, the constitutive lines are two or three times wider than before, defining a channel through the surface of the pottery (Fig. 5). Technologically, such a result cannot be reached by incision; clay needs to be removed from the surface of the pottery by gouging with a tool. Two different methods of gouging were applied, resulting in different visual effects: The first one is a linear continuous grooving of the pottery surface (Fig. 5 upper right), while the second is generally called 'stab and drag' effect (Fig. 5 upper left). The latter needs to be done on pliable clay; by breaking-down the tool's motion into several episodes of pressure. The result is a corrugated kind of grooved channel, with small clay edges delimiting the intervals between the stab and drag motions.

Unlike the incised decorations, the grooved ones do not carry any traces of white coating, which could

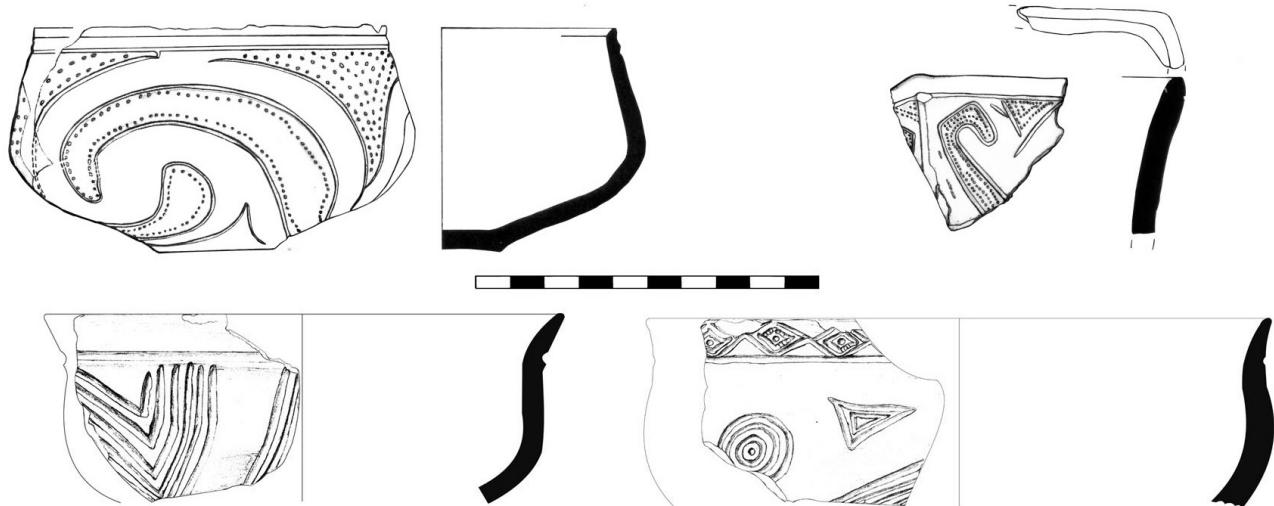


Fig. 4: Gelveri: From Earlier Phase incised decorations (upper) to Later Phase grooved decorations (lower) (Drawing: İşıl Demirtaş).

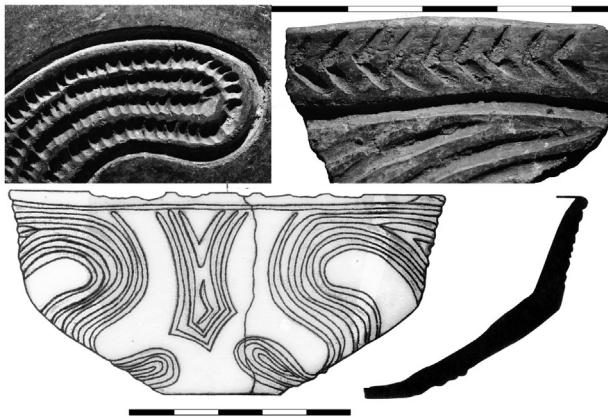


Fig. 5: Gelveri, Later Phase: Grooved decorations
(Drawing: İşıl Demirtaş).

imply that the decoration was in fact intended to be perceived as white patterns, with the incisions to keep the coating in place. The grooved decorations, while carrying on the geometric pattern tradition, would then represent a major stylistic change from the appearance of white painting to a much more plastic one, emphasized by a lighting effect whereby sharp black shadows are observed inside the grooves even when ambient light is low. This relationship between the decorated pottery and light is intensified by surface treatment and firing process improvements. The burnishing is close to perfection; burnished surfaces are very homogeneous, without visible traces of tools. Additionally, the firing process in a reductive atmosphere is perfectly mastered, resulting in a complete

reduction of the paste, delivering homogeneous shiny black surfaces.

The second observation related to this Late Phase of decorated pottery at Gelveri is the lack of applied relief decorations. This cannot be the result of inadequate sample size, as the amount of pottery from this 'filling-up' phase is larger than the Early Phase assemblage. Insofar as such anthropomorphic and zoomorphic decorations are pertinent chrono-cultural marks, their absence among the Late Phase assemblage may bring useful chronological information.

2. MOCKING ON BORDERS: GEOMETRIC INCISED DECORATIONS AS PART OF THE ENTIRE ANATOLIAN POTTERY REPERTORY

Focusing on the yet undefined and unclear era encompassing the sixth and fifth millennium cal B.C., the main characteristic shared by Anatolian sites is incised or grooved decorations on pottery, in geometric, curvilinear or triangular patterns. A glance at the literature, from the TAY settlements database (Harmankaya *et al.* 1998) to the work of Ulf Schoop (2005a) and earlier symposiums dedicated to Late Neolithic-Chalcolithic Anatolia (Gérard and Thissen 2002; Licher 2005), shows the dichotomy between a rather good understanding of the Neolithic chrono-cultural sequences and the very scanty archaeological evidence from the Chalcolithic period.

Reasons for this sidelining of pre-Bronze Age sequences are numerous, from research focused on large settlements, Mesopotamian-centred archaeology, to mere geological reasons including erosion and burying of sites. However, archaeological work carried out throughout Anatolia during the last decade opened the way for some chronological clarification, as well as a clearer picture of material cultures. In this respect, the appearance of incised and grooved geometric decoration plays an important role as the number of sites delivering pottery with grooved or incised geometric decorations is increasing survey after survey, underlining the need for further archaeological contexts and chronologies.

Without trying to be exhaustive, a fair number of settlements with Gelveri-like decorated pottery can be examined, from old surveys and more recent excavations (Fig. 1). We start this summarization beginning in the western part of Anatolia, in order to balance out the general tendency of a Near Eastern tropism. Due to the lack of dating and clear stratigraphy, it is rather difficult to propose a straight chronological evaluation for most of these sites. The same should be stressed for the material at hands, especially concerning the survey materials, rarely analysed and described in publications.

2.1. The Marmara region

The Marmara region is not void of incised geometric decorations on pots, early surveys in Western Anatolia, although unaware of its Neolithic and Chalcolithic nature, pointed out already the presence of incised decorated pottery (Bittel and Otto 1939; French 1955, 1965, 1967, 1969; Mellaart 1955, 1961). If we look at the Fikirtepe complex, where the notion of a coherent ‘Fikirtepe culture’ (Bittel 1969/1970; French 1967) can be limited to eastern Marmara, with the Bursa region being at the crossroads of several cultural spheres, it is only around 6000 cal B.C. that incised decorations appear within the Archaic and Classic Fikirtepe type of pottery from Fikirtepe, Pendik and Tuzla (Özdoğan 1985, 1999, 2005) as well as İlipinar Phase X and Basal Menteşe, thus between 6400 and 6000 cal BC (Roodenberg *et al.* 1989; 2003, 2013). Yet, the geometric grid patterns or quartering layout displayed on them cannot be linked to both the triangular and curvilinear patterns defining the Gelveri type decoration. Later, between 6000 and 5700 cal BC, pottery at

Yarimburgaz begins to display a very large range of geometric patterns realized by incision or grooving (Özdoğan 1999, 2007), much more diversified than the Gelveri types yet lacking the typical curvilinear patterns.

More similar to the curvilinear decorations seen at Gelveri, examples of geometric incised or grooved decoration on pottery are identified in İlipinar Level VA and VB, around 5500 cal BC. (Thissen 2008), Aktopraklı B post-dating Aktopraklı C and its Fikirtepe type of pottery and probably established just after 6000 cal BC. (Karul 2007, 2017; Karul and Avcı 2011, 2013), and eventually at Barçın Höyük Neolithic Phase, probably related to the latest levels close to 6000 cal BC (Özbal and Gerritsen 2011; Gerritsen *et al.* 2013).

2.2. Northern Anatolia

Further eastward, where the Sakarya River surrounds the Eskişehir Plain, surveyed settlements like Kanlıtaş, Kes Kaya, Asemainler (Efe 1989; French 1967, 1969), along with the excavation of Orman Fidanlığı (Efe 1990, 1996, 2001, 2005), feature distinctive incised pottery decorations quite similar in style to the Gelveri Early Phase ones.

Interestingly, north from the Kızılırmak River, towards the Pontic Mountains up to the Black Sea shore (İkiztepe, Dündartepe), grooved curvilinear decorations similar in style and techniques to the Gelveri Late Phase ones, have been known since the late 1930s, from Alişar (Gorny 1995; Von der Osten 1937), Alaca Höyük (Arik 1937) or Büyük Güllücek (Koşay 1963; Koşay and Akok 1948). No straight archaeological contexts neither dating can be related to the pottery coming, decades ago, from deep soundings in sites supposedly dating back to the Bronze Age. Excavations at Büyükkaya (Bittel 1953; Schoop 2005a, 2005b) and Çadır Höyük (Paley 2006) recovering similar pottery in their earlier levels, dated the first settlement phase in Northern Anatolia much earlier than expected, probably between 5200 and 4500 cal B.C. Recent surveys and excavations at Çamlıbel Tarlası (Schoop and Schoop 2011) confirmed this earlier stage of human occupation in northern Anatolia. Yet, the chance of finding archaeological sequences predating the Chalcolithic seems unlikely, as was already underlined by earlier surveys (Branting 1996; Marro *et al.* 1996; Matthews *et al.* 1998), with only two settlements in the Çankırı

area, Salur Höyük and Turba Mevkii, delivering potential fifth millennium sequences (Matthews *et al.* 1998). It thus seems that toward the Pontic Mountains, the first stage of settlements go along with geometric grooved decoration on pottery, mainly curvilinear ones. It indicates, at least, a very good pottery craftsmanship and deep stylistic traditions from the very beginning of these sites dating back to early 5000 cal BC.

2.3. Central Anatolia

In the Konya Plain, incised decorations on pots similar to the Gelveri Early Phase ones are already attested by the beginning of Çatal Höyük East Level II (ca. 6370 to ca. 6090 cal B.C., see Cessford 2005; pottery analysis see Franz 2007; Yalman and Özöl 2003), becoming more frequent at Çatal Höyük West (ca. 6300–5600 cal B.C.), alongside painted pottery (Franz 2007, 2010; Mellaart 1965).

In the Ereğli Plain, the site of Can Hasan I featured incised decorated pots from the earliest Level 7 to Level 2B–A (French 2005; dated to ca. 5700 cal B.C. by Thissen 2002). As at Çatal Höyük, painted pottery appear after the first incised decorations, materializing alongside scored wares, the main pottery development of the sequence at Levels 2B–A. The Scored Ware, present deeply scraped external surfaces, showing linear and parallel scratches, sometimes overlapping each other. This surface treatment seems to be made by moving a large and sharp tool, following an upward motion from the base to the top while the paste is still wet.

The Tuz Gölü (Salt Lake) area was also settled during the Neolithic and Chalcolithic, as James Mellaart and Ian Todd revealed through surveying of the region in the 1950s and 1960s (Mellaart 1958; Todd 1966, 1980). Yet, settlements around the Tuz Gölü are seemingly closer to the Neolithic than the Chalcolithic, as for example evidenced by the İlıcınar lithic industry (Mellaart 1958). However, different surface investigations at Sapmaz Köy deliver a fair amount of incised decorated pottery similar to those found at Gelveri (Erdoğan and Kayacan 2004; Omura 1991).

Following the İhlara Valley and entering the Melendiz Plain, incised decorated pottery is identified in lower amounts at Güvercinkayaşı, dating between 5100–4800 cal BC (Gülçür 2004), Gelveri-Güzelıyurt and Tepecik-Çiftlik Level II.

South from the Melendiz Mountains, in the Niğde and Bor Plains, Kabakulak (Summers 1991; Todd 1967), Pınarbaşı-Bor (Siliştreli 1983, 1984), and Köşk Höyük from level III to II, sometime between 6200–6000 cal BC (Öztan 2007, 2012; Öztan and Özkan 2003; Siliştreli 1985) have all delivered incised decorated pottery similar to the Gelveri Early Phase ones and, in fewer amounts, to the grooved ones from Gelveri Late Phase. Numerous small Cappadocian sites, requiring further investigation, could probably deliver the same pottery and contribute to the research of those post-Neolithic developments (Gülçür 2002).

2.4. Taurus and Cilicia

Little is known about prehistoric settlements throughout the Taurus Mountains. Scarce surveys in the Göksu Valley (French 1965), from Karaman south to Silifke show the potential of well-established Neolithic and Chalcolithic communities in an area supposedly connecting Cilicia to the Anatolian plateau. However, this connection is far more developed in the Anti-Taurus from at least the Chalcolithic and throughout the Bronze Age. Settlement distribution follows the narrow alluvial plains provided by the Seyhan River and especially the Ceyhan River (Seton-Williams 1954), cutting through the Anti-Taurus and opening onto the Kayseri Plain, the upper Euphrates Valley and the Amuq by the Kahramanmaraş Plain. Even if the evidence is still scanty and the documentation rather scarce, most of the surveys (oriented towards Bronze Age problematics) show that incised/grooved geometric decoration is part of the Anti-Taurus assemblages, see for example at Yalak, Göksun and Küçük Til Höyük (Brown 1967). These survey materials would need larger samples and much more detailed analyses in order to determine serious dating. The fact that pre-Bronze Age sites were not the focus of those surveys didn't help in characterizing pottery out of the Bronze Age typology. The tremendous alluvial dynamic in the Çukurova certainly hides some pre-Bronze Age sequences under sediments, but both Mersin-Yumuktepe (Caneva 2012; Caneva and Koroğlu 2008; Caneva and Sevin 2004; Garstang 1953) and Tarsus Gözlükule (Goldman 1956) are delivering incised decorations on pottery with patterns similar to the Gelveri Early Phase ones. The well excavated stratigraphy of Mersin-Yumuktepe

places them from Levels XXV to XVI (Middle and Late Neolithic, ca. 6000–5600 cal B.C.) but their amount is so minor that a definitive chronological statement about their appearance is hard to seek. Tarsus-Gözlükule's Neolithic and Chalcolithic pottery was recovered in two small trenches without reliable stratigraphy to provide any pertinent relative chronology.

2.5. Disparities of incised pottery distribution and technologies

If a large part of Anatolia presents archaeological sites where incised decorated pottery can be found, one should stress the lack of such a trend among Aegean pottery assemblages. Whether incised pottery appears all of a sudden or not, it seems that its distribution may reflect some cultural borders or independent development dynamics which may in the future help to unravel cultural processes behind what currently looks like a stylistic trend. But at this point, without waiting for new fieldwork gathering chronological and material evidences, we need to rely on evidence currently available. Up until now, geometric decorations displaying curvilinear or triangular patterns, made up of tiny dots sometimes filled with white coat, were considered part of a single cultural characteristic, implying a unique chronological period. One cannot help but notice the very large time span during which such a pottery trend might have prevailed. From Level II of Çatal Höyük East to at least the earlier northern Anatolian sequences, more than a millennium passed. Consequently, it is necessary to break through the subjective homogeneity of those decorations by trying to define the context in which they appeared and to distinguish their chronological development. In the absence of extensive research at Gelveri itself, the large-scale excavation at nearby Tepecik-Çiftlik provides a layout of sixth millennium cultural development in the region. Located some twelve kilometres south-east from Gelveri, with a main geographical connection by the Melendiz gorges, its closeness makes it a very good reference site to connect Gelveri to a broader chrono-cultural scheme.

3. TEPECİK-ÇİFTLİK: CULTURAL STABILITY THROUGHOUT SHIFTING SOCIAL AND REGIONAL INTERACTIONS¹

3.1. Rise of regional interaction in central Anatolia in the wake of the westward Neolithic drive

If major cultural changes or developments need to be underlined around 6000 cal B.C., their roots may be traced back to around 6400 cal B.C., as far as central Anatolia is concerned, to the time when neolithization spread towards western Anatolia. And if the popping-up of Gelveri geometric decorations all around continental Anatolia seems striking, one needs to place it in a cultural and chronological context.

The Tepecik-Çiftlik sequence from the center of the Melendiz Plain (Fig. 1) provides evidence of cultural stability from the early Pottery Neolithic to the Early Chalcolithic, i.e. from ca. 7000 to some 6000 cal B.C. (Bıçakçı *et al.* 2007, 2012; 2017 Godon 2012). While other excavated Cappadocian settlements present sequences beginning around 6000 cal B.C., Tepecik-Çiftlik fills the gap between Pre-Pottery Neolithic in Cappadocia and the Pottery Neolithic period.

The earlier Tepecik-Çiftlik levels up to level III show a clear regional identity, distinct from the Konya Plain as exemplified by the thoroughly investigated Pottery Neolithic sequence of Çatal Höyük East (Hodder 2006; Mellaart 1967). Neither the agglutinating earth architecture nor the building successions are seen at Tepecik-Çiftlik (Çakan 2014). For the pottery, the earliest Tepecik-Çiftlik assemblage is not similar to that of Çatal Höyük East (Last 2005), but closer to Mesopotamian influences (Bıçakçı *et al.* 2012; Godon 2012). It is around 6400–6300 cal B.C., at the turn between Levels IV and III that major typological, technological and decoration-related developments are seen in Tepecik-Çiftlik. It includes new vessel creation methods (Godon 2010, Godon 2018; Çilingiroğlu and Godon 2018) such as the use of baskets as pottery moulds and the beating method; new vessel types such as jars; increasing use of red slip along diversification in firing methods; and the

1) The Tepecik-Çiftlik excavations are directed by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Erhan Bıçakçı (Istanbul University Prehistory Department) and supported by the General Directorate for Cultural Heritage and Museums, Istanbul University Research Project (BAP) number 25460 and IFEA “Melendiz Préhistorique” research programme.

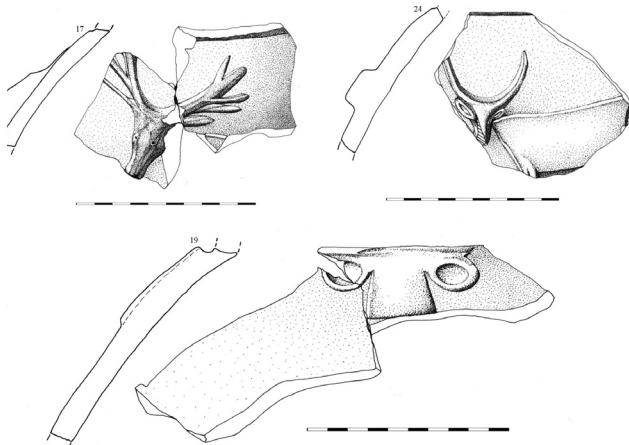


Fig. 6: Tepecik-Çiftlik: Relief decorations, from figurative to more stylized ones (deer, cow and goat or billy goat)
(Drawing: M. Godon).

development of applied zoomorphic and anthropomorphic decorations (Fig. 6).

This coincides with rapid development at Çatal Höyük in the short time-span comprising the beginning of Mellaart Level VI and Level II, between ca. 6550 and 6370 cal B.C. (Cessford 2005; Thissen 2002). Here also, vessel types and sizes become more varied with the rise of storage jars, hole-mouth pots or carinated pots. Red-slipped wares appear as well, foreshadowing the painted decorations that emerged at the dawn of Çatal Höyük East, from level II to 0, probably contemporary with the emergence of the West mound occupation. But this very specific stage from the Çatal East Level II to Çatal West still needs further investigation. Available ¹⁴C dates for the levels II spread out on almost three centuries, from ca. 6370 to ca. 6090 cal BC. Such a time span, correlated to the stratigraphy, seems unlikely and we would rather consider Çatal East Level I and basal West mound close to 6300 cal BC instead of succeeding a very late Level II date around 6000 cal BC. Even though the Tepecik-Çiftlik and Çatal Höyük sequences underwent important changes around 6400 cal B.C., a relation between these two phenomena does not seem apparent. However, changes in acquisition strategies of Cappadocian obsidian at Çatal Höyük, as well as a possible relation of a realistic style expressed on wall paintings at Çatal Höyük and relief decorations on pottery in Cappadocia, argue in favour of new cultural ties between Cappadocia and the Konya Plain (Bıçakçı *et al.* 2012, 2017). Furthermore, one

should stress that realistic wall paintings were already common in Çatal Höyük East at least from Level VII from Mellaart's excavations, meaning around ca. 6700 cal BC, some two centuries before the first realistic pottery decorations at Tepecik-Çiftlik. Even if differences between the pottery assemblages and, more generally, overall layout of the two sites are evident, the general dynamic characterizing them seems to converge towards a more global economic interaction, a new type of subsistence economy involving more storage facilities, a diversification of animal protein sources and hypothetically a change in cooking habits, forming a more integrated cultural area (Atalay 2005; Copley *et al.* 2005; Hodder 2005; Last 2005).

3.2. Tepecik-Çiftlik's geometric incised decors: a sudden appearance during a local stability

At Tepecik-Çiftlik, incised geometric decorations appear only in Level II, this being the last prehistoric level with before Level I, a badly eroded horizon covering the surface of the mound, displaying Chalcolithic archaeological materials mixed with Byzantine ones. At this stage of research, some 50 very fragmented sherds bear incised geometric decorations, out of a corpus of some 1760 identified vessels. Consequently, the number of such eye-catching sherds is a mere 4% of the Level II pottery production. Even if this percentage may vary in the future due to archaeological context's mere coincidence, it probably may not reach a significant amount as to make it a common, standard type of product.

A majority of the recovered vessels presenting incised decorations are tiny sherds, complete profiles being quite infrequent (Fig. 7). Yet, one can state that the majority of those sherds were portions of vessels with small volumes. Measures taken on pottery bodies or rims show a variation between 13 and 17cm in diameter. When recognizable, profiles indicate carinated shapes, with the inflexion close to the base (Fig. 7).

Half of the corpus displays burnishing of the surfaces, followed by reductive firing (Figs. 8, 9). As observed on the Gelveri Early Phase incised pottery, burnishing and firing are not homogeneous but reveal variability in time investment for the burnishing, or reductive atmosphere control for the firing. And again, like during Gelveri's Early Phase, white coating is

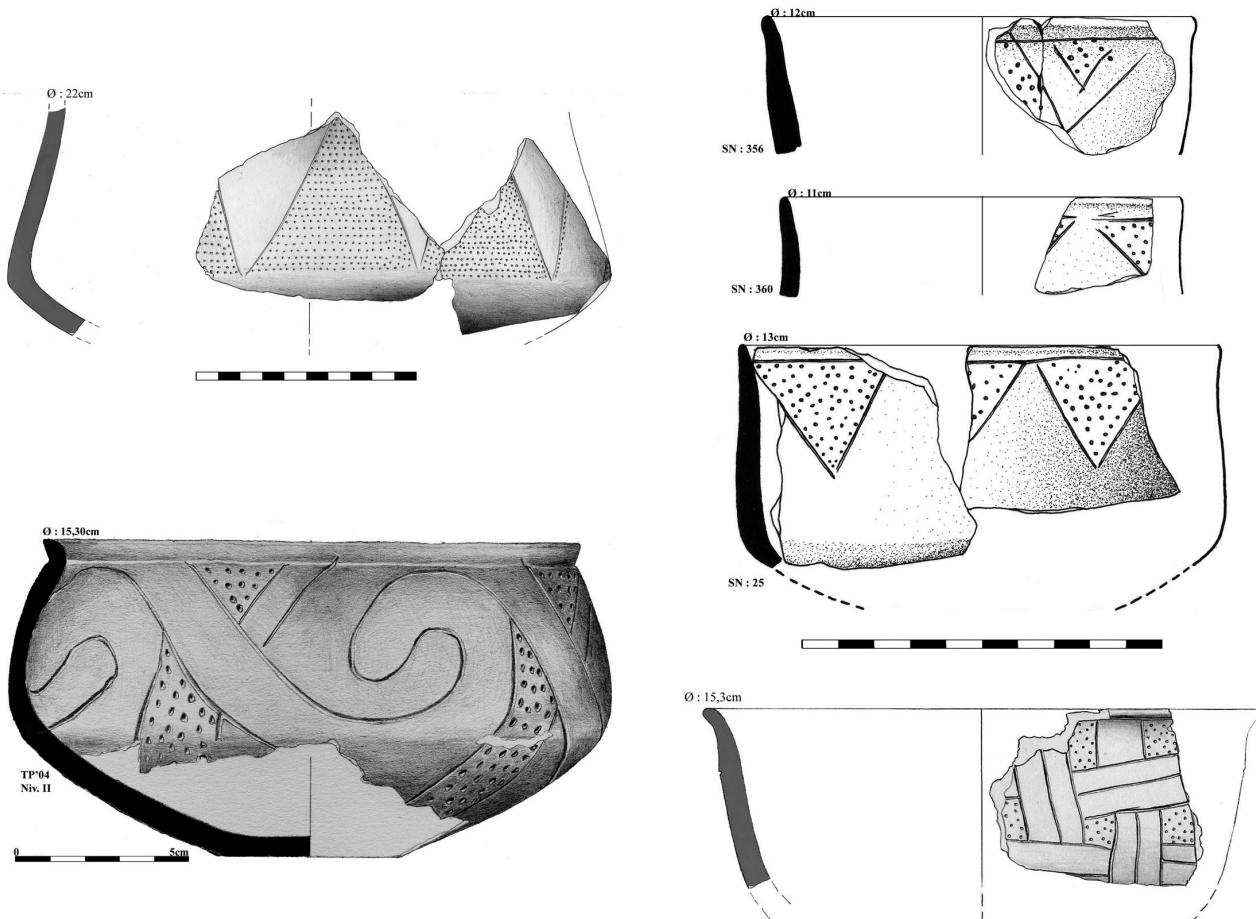


Fig. 7: Tepecik-Çiftlik: Geometric pattern variability of incised decorations (Drawing: M. Godon).

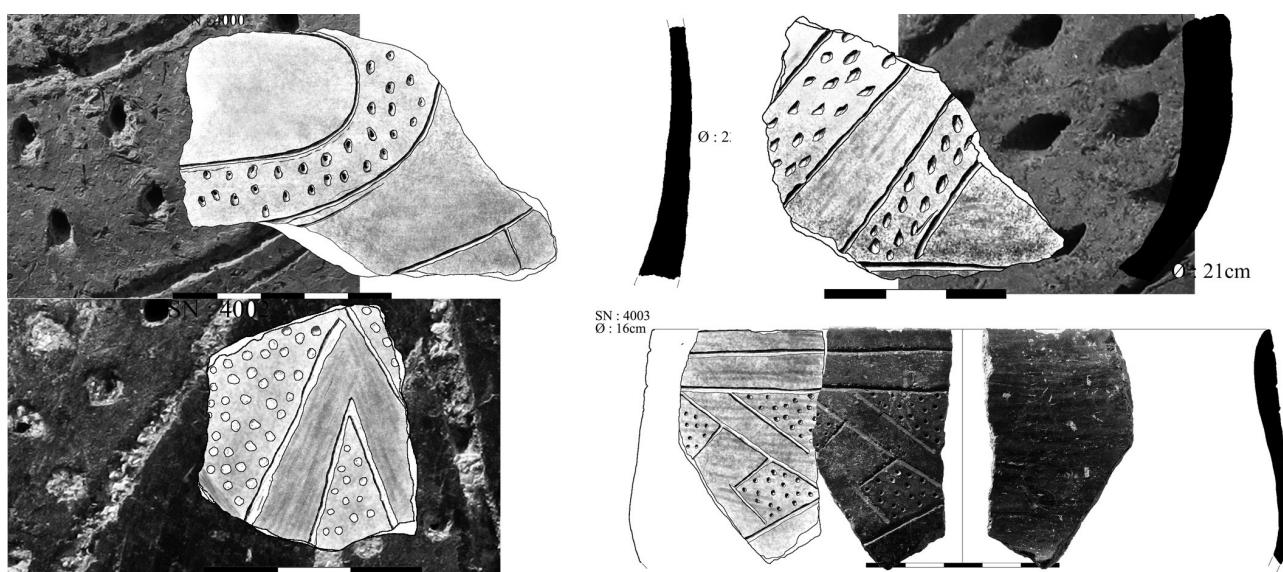


Fig. 8: Tepecik-Çiftlik: Details of incisions (Drawing: M. Godon).

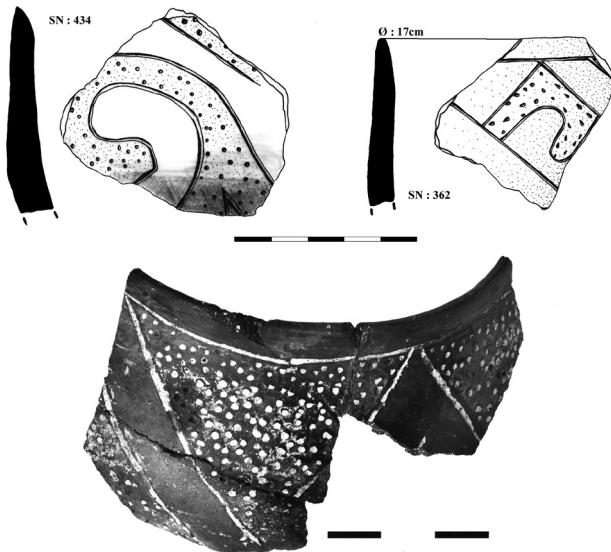


Fig. 9: Tepecik-Çiftlik: Curvilinear patterns and one with white coated triangles
(Drawing: M. Godon).

frequently identified, stuck inside incisions or dots (Fig. 9).

With a few exceptions, the incised decorations are applied on bowls, a majority being carinated ones. Among this corpus, there is a clear differentiation between pottery fired in oxidizing atmosphere and the ones in reductive atmosphere. The latter is always presenting a burnished surface, showing the relationship between the shiny burnishing effect and the dark or black surface resulting from a reductive firing.

Grooved decorations are very infrequent in the Tepecik-Çiftlik pottery assemblage. Only five badly broken pieces were found so far, coming from disturbed contexts close to the surface of the mound.

At Tepecik-Çiftlik, one can say without doubt that incised decorations appear in the sequence suddenly, but do not evidence a major cultural change as the rest of the pottery production is marked by continuity between Level III and Level II. From this continuum in stratigraphy and dating of Level III, dating from 6400 to 6100 cal B.C., the appearance of the incised decorations at the beginning of Level II makes sense. Super-regional bonds within central Anatolia increased seemingly at the beginning of the sixth millennium cal B.C., with Tepecik-Çiftlik and a series of other sites presenting pottery with

decorations similar to the ones characterizing the Gelveri Early Phase.

4. SUMMARY: CHRONO-CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SIXTH MILLENNIUM CENTRAL ANATOLIA

After the first development around 6400–6100 cal B.C. characterizing Tepecik-Çiftlik Level III with large volumes and appearance of jars, Level II delivers strong evidence of cultural stability as well as traces of new developments in pottery technology with mastered reductive firing atmosphere, high burnishing, and style with the appearance of incised decorations. In details, the earliest architectural phase of Level II disclose the first relief decorated pottery *in situ*, already presenting a striking level of craftsmanship. Evidences of relief decorated sherds in Level III open spaces seem to indicate an early stage of such decoration method. However, complete pottery found *in situ* would be welcomed to confirm this. Then, following the appearance of relief decorated pottery, incised decorations appear during the second architectural phase of Level II, up to the top of it. The same development scheme is evidenced at Köşk Höyük, with the earlier Levels IV and III dated around 6000 cal B.C. presenting figurative relief decorations (Öztan 2002, 2007), and later Level II, between 6000 and 5500 cal B.C., introducing diversity in shapes and volumes as well as geometric incised decorations. At Tepecik-Çiftlik, the stability is marked by continuity in lithic production (Bıçakçı *et al.* 2012; Vinet and Guilbeau 2018), in pottery technology and typology (Godon 2010), and applied-relief decorations among the cited developments. Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic decorations on pottery are still present during all Level II, even if there is a tendency towards stylization of the figurative decorations, focusing on cattle or goat horns in the two upper layers of Level II (Fig. 6). This development is fully accomplished in Köşk Höyük Level I around 5000 cal BC as well as Güvercinkayası, where this transformation of animal figures towards more stylistic and symbolic attributes is also achieved around 5000 cal B.C. while incised decorations are scanty and grooved ones absent (Gülçur 2004). Looking at Tepecik-Çiftlik, Köşk Höyük and Güvercinkayası's dating only, one can already see that a very large time-span is separating

the first appearance of incised geometric decorations, ca. 6000 cal BC, and their last appearance around 5000 cal BC.

Leaving Cappadocia for the Ereğli and Konya Plain, the appearance of incised geometric decorations is documented at Can Hasan I 2B/A (French 2005) and a few sherds are found in Çatal Höyük East Level II, before becoming more common in Çatal Höyük West (Franz 2007, 2010). The absolute chronology of Can Hasan would date the appearance of incised geometric decorations around ca. 5700 cal B.C. (Thissen 2002), while at Çatal Höyük East, despite (or because of) the quantity of ¹⁴C dates, Level's II dating is still unclear, ranging from ca. 6370 to ca. 6090 cal B.C. (Cessford 2005).

Despite the insufficiency of available absolute dating, it seems clear from Tepecik-Çiftlik Level II, Köşk Höyük Level II, Çatal Höyük East (Level II–I), Çatal Höyük West and Can Hasan I Level 2B/A that incised decorated pottery appeared somehow suddenly, with this very rapid process beginning around or slightly after 6000 cal B.C. in central Anatolia.

Concerning the Gelveri pottery corpus, both technological characteristics as well as the presence of relief decorated pottery link the Early Phase to Tepecik-Çiftlik Level II and Köşk Höyük Level II. Consequently, Gelveri can be considered as part of the first expression of incised geometric decorations in central Anatolia. Ironically, the most famous Gelveri pottery, about which much has been written so far, belong to the Late Phase and represent grooved decorations on well-burnished and elaborately reductive fired pottery.

To give an exact chronology for this Late Phase pottery is rather difficult but a body of evidence is pointing towards the end of the sixth millennium cal B.C., or maybe even a bit later.

Looking at northern Anatolia, where grooved decorations similar to Gelveri Late Phase are found, the earlier ¹⁴C dates point towards a time-span ranging from 5000 cal B.C. to 4500 cal B.C. (Paley 2006; Schoop 2005a). Considering Güvercinkayası, where pottery assemblages ranging from ca. 5140 to ca. 4765 cal B.C. (Thissen 2002) disclose similarities with Köşk Höyük Level I and display a kind of continuity from Tepecik-Çiftlik Level II, it is interesting to note that Gelveri Late Phase grooved geometric decorations are completely absent.

Instead of looking at Gelveri as a single settlement, one should assume that Gelveri Early Phase

and Gelveri Late Phase were possibly two distinct settlements, separated by a *hiatus*, the first one occupied around 6000 cal B.C., the second between 5000–4500 cal B.C., unless we find archaeological evidences of such a long duration and cultural development at Gelveri. A second hypothesis would be that our lack of well stratified and dated contexts in Central Anatolia between 5600 and 5000 cal BC blurred our vision of a complete cultural development from Tepecik-Çiftlik Level II, Köşk Höyük Level II, Çatal West and Gelveri Early Phase, all most probably dated around 6000–5700 cal BC, and sequences like Güvercinkayası or Köşk Höyük level I, ca. 5000–4800 cal BC. This scenario would emphasize a Central Anatolian core and development from incised geometric patterns towards grooved ones, the latter following a spread of sedentarization towards the Pontic Mountains after 5000 cal BC.

5. CONCLUSIVE REMAKRS: INCREASE IN REGIONAL NETWORKS AND CRAFT SPECIALIZATION

If part of the mystery clouding the Gelveri chronology could be unravelled with the evidence presented in this paper, some questions would remain unsolved. The fast appearance of such decorations among the pottery assemblages, and the lack of technological or stylistic predecessors within earlier assemblages will need further investigations to be deciphered.

What can be stressed for central Anatolia is the regional opening-up starting around 6400 cal B.C., resulting in the increase of ties between Cappadocia and the Konya Plain. The reasons for such intensification of regional interaction could be manifold, and may be found in changes concerning obsidian acquisition and production strategies. However, whatever happened around 6000 cal B.C. cannot be understood at a regional scale only, even at such a large one as central Anatolia. One should be aware of the major changes brought about by the neolithization of both the Aegean region and western Anatolia, where the neolithization climax is reached between 6400 and 6200 cal B.C., bringing with it at the turn of the sixth millennium B.C. a completely new socio-economical balance, more complex, broader, including new resources and new cultural networks. The deep cultural impact of those changes are yet to

be understood and the lack of excavated settlements covering the sixth millennium cal B.C. in Anatolia is not of any help in this task. Yet, some particularities in the development of pottery production are worth mentioning, as they reveal changes beyond the ceramic technological field.

Already before the appearance of incised geometric decorations at Tepecik-Çiftlik, the translation of figurative human and animal figures into a decoration on pottery raises the question of the importance of the painting surfaces themselves. Such figurative scenes were also identified in Çatal Höyük East wall paintings. Then, around 6200–6000 cal B.C., similar scenes following the same representation style are applied and modelled on pottery in Cappadocia (Bıçakçı *et al.* 2012). Thus, one should recognize the supremacy of the decoration over the support's surface, this latter possibly being a wall like at Çatal East, a leather sheet, a woven cloth, or a pot. So, the sudden appearance of incised geometric decoration on pottery is probably only a new way of presenting decorations that had been around during earlier times. Eventually, the wide spread of clay and stone stamps with recurrent geometric designs all over Anatolia as early as 6400 cal B.C. (Lichter 2005), is clear evidence of mutual symbol recognition within different cultural areas.

The decorations are more important than the pottery that they are applied to, the latter being only a physical support, or part of the decoration itself, when its nature, when mastered over some specific surface treatments like burnishing and firing methods like complete reduction, can be used to increase the decorative visual effects. Physical supports like pottery can be used to combine different purposes. A pot is a transportable item, able to contain substances, to hold liquids. In the case of decorated pottery, they are meant to be seen, whether they contain fresh air or fresh drinks. Some relief decorations represent action through scenes that would only become fully visible when the pot was looked at from all sides. If these pots were not produced to be static like storage jars, they were not fit for long journeys, neither for frequent in site relocations. Furthermore, pots with relief decorations were not produced to be useful as a daily container, the production process being roughly executed, the care being focused only on the execution of the decoration (Godon 2010). They were designed to show off. The question remains what they were showing off? Symbols, good fortune and wealth, or maybe hardship?

To find some answers, one should consider the amount of decorated pottery in the assemblages and the level of skill involved in their realization. First, as seen at Gelveri, Tepecik-Çiftlik, Köşk Höyük, Can Hasan I, Çatal Höyük West and later at Güvercinkayaşı incised decorated sherds as well as relief decorated ones represent a very small percentage of the complete ceramic assemblage. This means that such decorated pottery was not common, not on display in every courtyard or household. Their rarity may be already seen as a sign for their material value.

Secondly, as shown by the Gelveri assemblage, the increase of technological control necessary for the production of decorated pottery, and the time investment required to produce them, indicate a shift towards a specialization of the production. Acquisition of the required skills to design and execute perfect geometric decorations, to reach such a high degree of burnishing and to master the firing process in order to achieve a full reduction and obtain black pottery involved learning processes and practices. This practice cannot have been reached by everybody as the frequency of such pottery is far too low for them to have been casual household productions.

Beyond the chronological marks they represent, beyond the stylistic and symbolic aspect of their decorations, the Gelveri pottery assemblage and its regional avatars highlight the rise of social complexity among communities, and the development of craftsmanship resulting in the use of manufactured items whose interests lie in their rarity and possibly their trade over time and places. As for their geographical extent, spread on almost the whole Anatolian plateau except the Aegean littoral, one should consider the five centuries span between the first neolithization of western Anatolia and the first appearance of Gelveri type decorations among Central Anatolian pottery productions. Then, this trend spread northward and south-eastwards with its latest evidences found around 5000 cal BC in the Pontic region. As seen with the certainly vital obsidian network between Cappadocia and the Konya Plain, intensification of craftsmanship, its need for sustainable and specific raw material supplies could be, among others, a key to understand regional then cultural complex interactions, leading to larger cultural homogeneity.

M.G. and O.Ö.

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