

# **New results and remarques about Pottery Neolithic in Central Anatolia: A view from Tepecik-Çiftlik**

Martin Godon

## **Introduction**

A couple of years ago, no excavated archaeological evidences of a Pottery Neolithic occupation in Cappadocia (Özdoğan, Başgelen (eds) 1999; Gérard, Thissen (eds), 2002) was known. Despite this lack of information, the potentialities offered by settlements like Köşk Höyük, Pınarbaşı Bor or Tepecik-Çiftlik were known but only discussed theoretically. Up to now and as it was already stressed by M. Özdoğan (Özdoğan 1999: 9-12; 2002: 253-261) discussions were mainly focused on the possible links between the aceramic site of Aşıklı which ended around 7400BC cal. and the emergence of the Pottery Neolithic site of Çatal Höyük East, in the Konya plain, with earlier known dates coinciding with the end of Aşıklı, without regards to the probable aceramic levels. The archaeological facts were not homogeneous enough in time and space: Eastern part of Central Anatolia documented for the aceramic neolithic, showing evidences of local developpments out of the Upper Mesopotamian major influences, and western part of Central Anatolia well documented for the Pottery Neolithic period to which one must add the excavated sites in the Lake District region, showing a developpment pattern based on farmers-like villages (Godon 2004.) Recents excavations at Tepecik-Çiftlik, in addition to the excavation at Köşk Höyük and Güvercinkayaşı, both located in the same micro region, start to fill the gap in terms of evidences we were faced with after the ending of Aşıklı (Fig. 1).

In this paper, we will briefly present some premilinary results about the archeological sequence already excavated at Tepecik-Çiftlik, as well as the frame of its pottery productions. On the basis of relative datations, will be presented a first proposal for the Tepecik-Çiftlik chronological sequence.

## I. The stratigraphy

Tepecik-Çiftlik, a höyük of 3,5 hectares first surveyed by I. Todd between 1964/1966 (Todd 1980), is located in the Melendiz Plain, next to the Göllü Dağ volcano and its obsidian sources and workshops from the Paleolithic (Slimak *et alii*. 2005: 287-294) up to the late Neolithic (Balkan-Atlı, Binder 2000: 199-214), with an extension in the surrounding plain of more or less 11 hectares (Bıçakçı 2004.) Excavated since 2000 by the University of Istanbul and Niğde Museum under the direction of Erhan Bıçakçı, further field works are still needed in order to reach the virgin soil and to catch the complete archaeological sequence.

The 2005 excavation provided us more information about the stratigraphy even if more cross-analyses results should be done to present it as a definitive one. However, we can already distinguish about five main levels from the top to the deepest excavated point, at four meters deep from the topographic field reference<sup>1</sup>.

The levels from the earliest one to the latest are presented below (Fig. 2).

**Level 5:** (4.00/2.70 meters.) Restricted to the sondage area and covering a superficies of more or less 27m<sup>2</sup>, this level shows the characteristics of an open place area. No architecture was found, due to the limited excavated area. Basically, the nature of the archaeological artifacts, according to highly broken pottery sherds, the sediments, the distribution of artifacts and the large firing place found at its bottom, lead us to interpret it as an open area. Distinction between micro levels is rather difficult, as shown by the fragmentation of the archaeological materials as well as its tri-dimensional distribution.

**Level 4:** Analyses of the pottery as well as preliminary studies about the faunal remains show changes at the end of the level five sequence. A large layer of dark ashes could be recovered, covering the top of this sequence on almost 64 m<sup>2</sup>. This can be distinguished as a transitional level, and the relationship between level five and the earlier layer of level 3 needs to be more investigated both in the field and with artifacts analyses in order to understand this transition.

**Level 3:** Here appear the first changes for on top and/or embedded into the thin level four and upper level five, six human burials were discovered in open area. So, from an open area (level five) used for external activities and as a discharge place, it became a much more symbolical place. Linked

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<sup>1</sup> For a presentation of the field work and architectural patterns, see Bıçakçı 2004.

to it in stratigraphy, is the first building layer 3.4, actually only excavated in trench 16K and presenting a long duration period according to the multi-layered floor and the adding and re-plastering of inner cells. Then, at levels 3.3 and 3.2, a main change in the architectural organization evidenced by the reorientation of the buildings appears while the building technics (basically stone walls fitted by mortar, with evidences of inner plasters) remains the same.

The level 3.1 is characterized by another important change, not only concerning the architectural pattern but also evidenced by a specific pottery production linked to a new kind of secondary burials, as will be discribed further. In the stratigraphy, as seen on trench 16J and partly 17J, the layers change their slope abruptly, which influences the sloping of the architectural remains. This can be due to a relocalisation of the building area in the north-western part of the mound.

From the base of the level 3 to its top, three main changes occure in the architectural planning. Can those changes be related to some cultural evolution? According to what we can ascertain and given that materials analyses and absolute datings are still in progress, the burial pattern shows also some modifications, going from open air burials to more complex redepositional ones, organized with kind of gift artifacts like unipolar cores, deer antlers, long animal bones and relief decorated potteries.

**Level 2:** Just under the top soil, this level still presents remains of architecture, mainly erroded, with materials in secondary position due to natural disturbances provoked by erosion but also human removing of the building stones and fields activities. The opening of two new trenches in what seems to be a more well conserved level in 2005 will help pick up more contextual informations from which seems to be an occupation culturaly similar to Gelveri and Köşk Höyük level II, as shown by the pottery production.

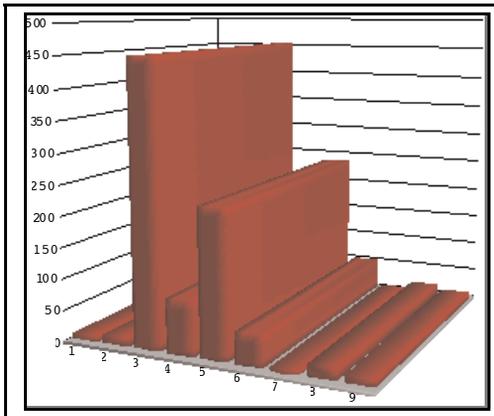
**Level 1:** Top soil including mixed materials from deeper levels as well as Roman and Byzantine material. No archtitectural remains, no *in situ* layers.

## II: Pottery productions

In comparison with the stratigraphy, one may try to analyse if the pottery production follows the evolutions outligned before. The aim is not to delivered here a detailed description of the different groups of pottery and the methodological backround inherent to their distinction but to expose a main framework leading us to envisage possible technological changes if not cultural ones.

To start from Tepecik-Çiftlik pottery production without disposing of any previously attested references in the region, especially for the earlier levels, requires an objective stance in front of the archaeological materials found. In other terms, the terminology which will be used in this study bears no references to others, except when indicated.

**Level 5:** Nature of the paste: Natural mineral inclusions are thin section ones, and big natural mineral inclusions appears sometimes in the thickest sherds where they are not systematically removed from the clay. Temper consist of grassy vegetal inclusions, thin sectionned and well shortened, representing more or less 20% of the paste. The amount, even if it increases the porosity of the paste, does not challenge its strenght that much and permits a good compacting of the clay during the building process. Pots from different shapes, volumes and for different purposes are made with the same kind of paste and the decrease of vegetal temper is significant when it may influenced specific surface treatments as the burnishing treatment. But even in this case, vegetal temper is still used even if in less amount. According to the physical aspects of the potteries, linked with their building process including cooking, nine mains groups can be distinguished, without considering typological features as shapes and volumes (Fig. 3).



*Fig. 3*  
Amount of sherds  
among the corpus

Group 3, the most common, is basically characterized by an final oxidizing process at the end of the cooking. Some variations may occur (groups 1 and 2) which may be due to variabilities during the firing process.

Group 5 is characterized by a cooking in a controlled reductive atmosphere, which results in a dark brown coloration of the surfaces.

Groupe 6 is what can be called a black burnished production, without tempting to link this definition to any broad cultural assesment. Is meant by black burnished ware poteries cooked in a reductive atmosphere in order to obtain a black coloration of its surfaces. Those surfaces should have been previously burnished, in the technological sens of this term and not the final aspect of them. Groupe 7 represents imported black burnished ware as well, without organic tempers in their paste and groups ten different kinds of imported potteries. It should be stressed that the amount is very low.

Groupe 4 and 9 represent respectively red slipped potteries and decorated ones.

Red slipped appears only at the top of the level five sequence, badly eroded and tiny sherds. This can be understood as a pollution from upper levels as their characteristics are similar to latest red-slipped from level 3. Decorated potteries appears also only in the upper layers of level 5 and are characterized by wipped-back chevrons decors. This decor pattern is present in upper levels but mainly incised and not in relief (Fig. 4).

**Level 4:** As seen previously, level four, being very thin, needs more field investigations to interpret its nature and context. The presence of burials digged in it is a taphonomic factor which might have disturbe primary position of the artifacts. Without a more reliable archaeological context and more amount of *in situ* materials, it seems prudent not to make more assesments about it.

**Level 3:** The change of context at level 3.4 has been explained. Changes in pottery production occur too: Increase of the amount of vegetal temper in the paste, up to 35/40% for most of the productions, except the burnished ones. Increase of the red slipped poteries and wipped-back chevrons decors, occuring on large poteries as well as small ones, red slipped or not. If the shapes were simple in level 5 (open volumes, holemouth, small bowls), shapes start to be much more diversified from the level 3.4, diversification which increases when the top layers of level 3 are reached. We note the presence of carinated bases, carinated walls and first occurence of jars, long and short necked ones. The main production is still cooked with a final oxidizing atmosphere but a less controlled one as evidenced by the variation in coloration noted on certain single pieces. Those facts should be described according to changes and main tendancies, factual ones, but especially for level 3.4, it would make no sens to compare the productions on a statistical basis given that the context is too specific: presence of burials and building areas which are known to be unrepresentative, in terme of amount, of the productions.

With the production of large jars, a new building method appears, as evidenced on the material found from level 3.2 to the level 2. This method consists to build and shape the lower part of the pottery in a concave mould, in our case a basket. The upper part of the walls (from the carene inclination until the shoulder) is built by slabbing portions of paste, sticking them together and then shaping them on the already made base by pinching. For the long necked jars, the neck is added at the shoulders enclosing point. In some cases, this upper part is moulded on a convex mould made of basket. The finishing process have a tendency to erase the negative traces of the mould so this method might have been more common than it can be seen among the whole corpus. Such negative basket traces are also present at Köşk Höyük and Gelveri (personal observation) as well as at Bogazköy-Büyükaya where similar negative traces were found at the bottom of some potteries from the Lower Plateau (Schoop 2005: 15-37) and interpreted as mat impressions (as far as no basket traces are found on the walls themselves or other technical traces undoubtedly linked to a moulding technic, traces on the bottom can be related to a mat rather than to a basket mould.) (Fig. 5).

As the diversity of shapes increases (cups, red-slipped footed cups) from level 3.4 to 3.1, another step is reached with the production, on basket moulded jars, of applied antropomorphic and faunal decors. This new kind of productions, made for the specific purpose of secondary sepultures found in level 3.1, is certainly the result of a specialized work made by craftsmen rather than by common potters. Skills involving obviously a learning of what can be called new artistic techniques and time investment were developed in order to make those decors while the building of the jars themselves were executed according to the same earlier method (Fig. 6).

**Level 2:** Among the mixed materials from the surface and scant informations about the archaeological context, a new kind of decorated potteries appears, still sharing the organic temper used in earlier levels but distinctively different by the pattern of the decors and the techniques of decoration. Decors basically consist on series of incised triangles or waves filled by small pips made with sharp tools. Mainly made on black burnished carinated bowls, it occurs as well on more simple pottery types (Fig.7).

## Conclusive remarks about the chronology

Without absolute dating to deliver yet, one can try to figure out a chronological frame for the already excavated sequence. As seen, top layer presents mixed materials from Roman, Byzance and materials from level 2. The level 2, according to the pottery, show similarities with Gelveri pottery and Köşk Höyük

level 2 (Öztan 2002: 57-72; Silistreli 1989), which is dated around 5500bc cal.<sup>2</sup>, a bit earlier than the earliest levels from Güvercinkayası. The fact that this incised pottery is not found deeper than level 2 can be due to a gap in the chronological sequence. This comment is supported by the presence of relief decorated potteries in level 3.1, similar to the ones from Köşk Höyük level 4, dated around 6500 BC cal<sup>3</sup>. No comparison are available for the earliest level and potteries do not share strong similarities with Çatal Höyük East or other Pottery Neolithic settlements from south-eastern or western Anatolia but still some elements can suggest chronological informations: A very few amount of imported black burnished ware, especially impresso decorated ones and related to the upper layers of level 5 are similar to Tarsus (Goldman 1956) and Mersin Yumuktepe (Caneva, Sevin (eds.) 2004; Garstang 1953), dated around 7000 BC cal. Level 5 present also bifacial obsidian tools which can be related to Çatal Höyük. Those found in Tepecik-Çiftlik may be related to already known ateliers on the Göllü Dağ. In those respects, it seems that Tepecik-Çiftlik archaeological sequence covers at least the Pottery Neolithic period. A minimum of four meters in the archaeological sequence still need to be excavated to capture the complete chronological sequence.

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Dr. Martin GODON  
Université Paris X, CNRS Céram  
Societas Anatolicas  
Paris/France  
mgodon@online.fr

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<sup>2</sup> Thissen 2002, and the Canew website which provide updated radiocarbon databases: <http://www.canew.org/>

<sup>3</sup> Öztan, 2005: "Köşk Höyük Kazılarının Öntarih Arkeolojisindeki Yeri ve Önemi" oral presentation held at the Niğde Symposium organized by Niğde İl Kültür ve Turizm Müdürü, Niğde, 25/27 May 2005.

## Özet

Tepecik-Çiftlik kazısında, çanak çömlek üretimi ve çanak çömlek gruplarının şu ana kadar kazılmış olan arkeolojik tabakalarla olan ilişkileri, M.Ö. 7000-5500 (cal.) arasındaki döneme tarihlendiklerini işaret etmektedir. Ayrıca, çanak çömlek üretimindeki hem biçimsel hem de teknolojik değişimler, M.Ö. 6. bin boyunca, Kapadokya Bölgesi'nde kültürel gelişimlerin ortaya çıkarılmasında ilk bulgular olabilir.

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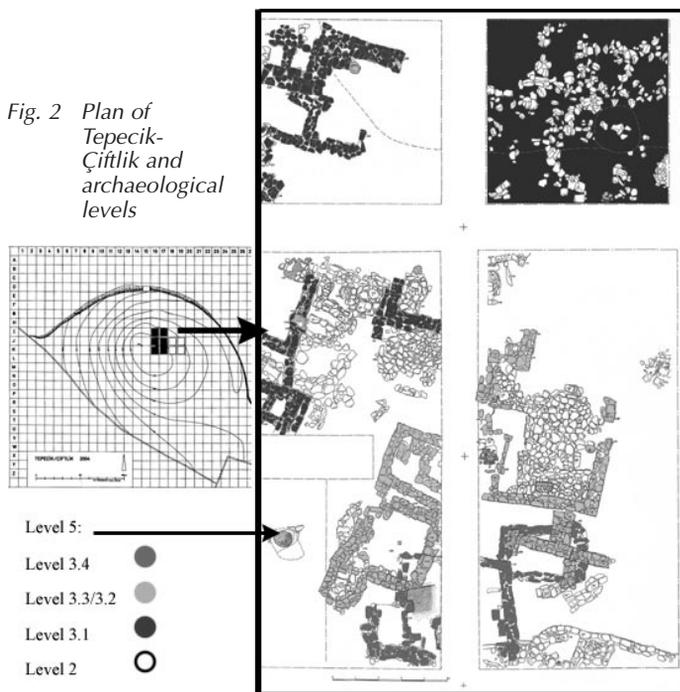
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Fig. 1 Localisation of Tepecik-Çiftlik in Cappadocia

Fig. 2 Plan of Tepecik-Çiftlik and archaeological levels



- Level 5: —
- Level 3.4: ●
- Level 3.3/3.2: ●
- Level 3.1: ●
- Level 2: ○

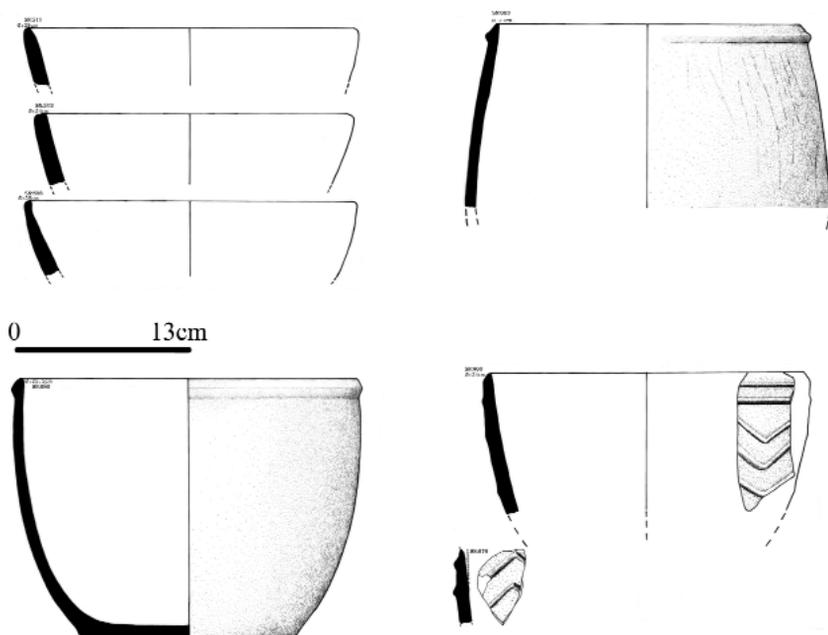


Fig. 4 Example of potteries from level 5

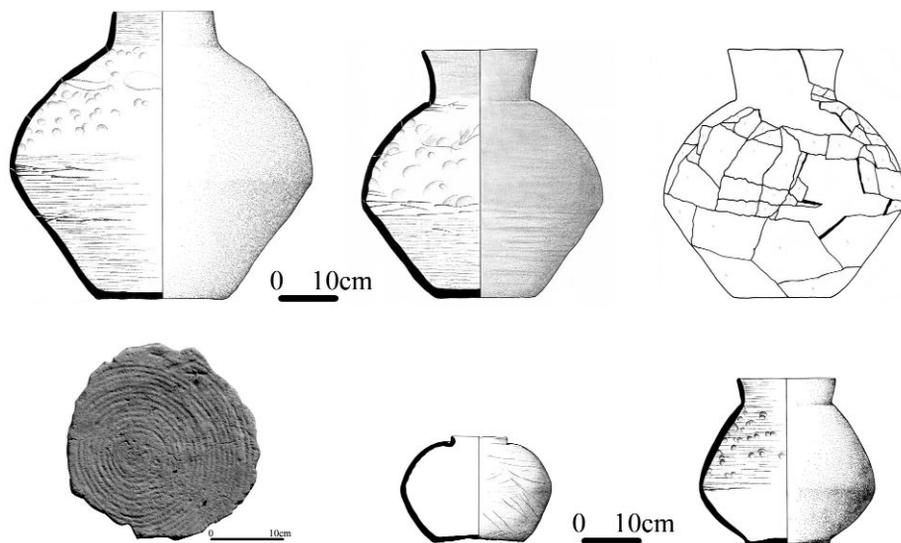


Fig. 5 Moulded potteries from level 3

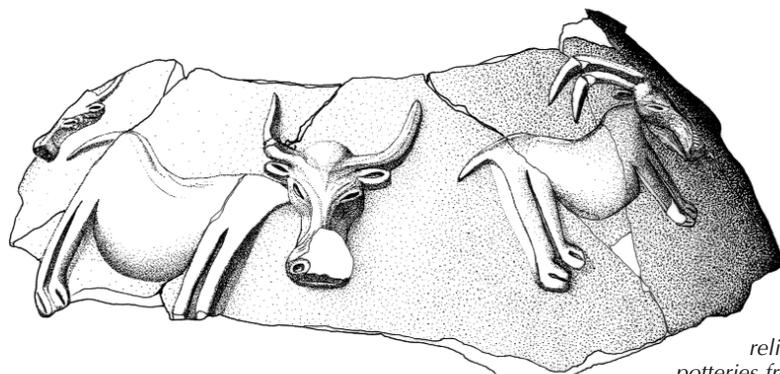
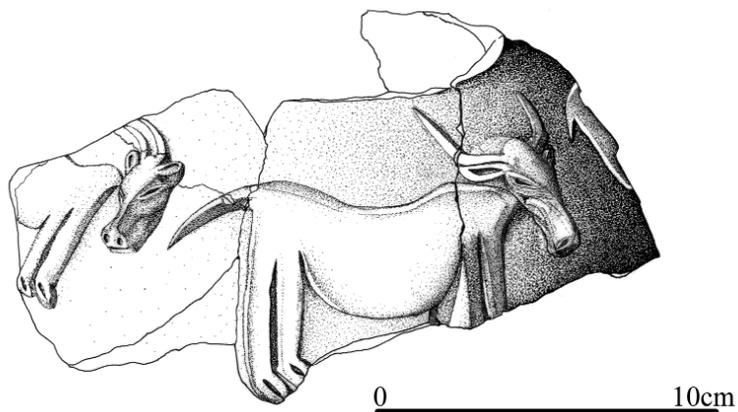


Fig. 6  
Exemple of  
relief decorated  
potteries from level 3.1

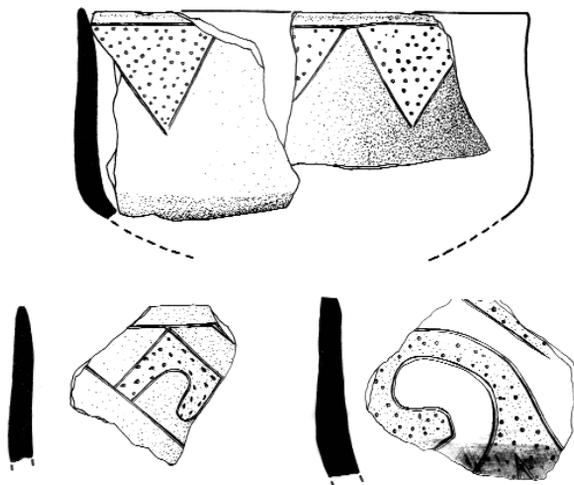


Fig. 7  
Decorated potteries  
from level 2