PREHISTORIC POTTERY OF OSMANIYE PROVINCE IN EAST CILICIA: A HOLISTIC APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Osmaniye, one of the two major cities in the eastern part of ancient Cilicia, encompasses the north-eastern part of the Çukurova Plain. Today, broad areas of the plain are used intensively for grain production. Osmaniye is famous for growing peanuts, ranking as the top producer in the country. The planting of olive groves has been encouraged recently, to re-establish the olive oil production that was the major ancient agricultural industry. Irrigation channels built during the last decade to distribute water from the Ceyhan River, the ancient Pyramus River, cover the entire plain like a spider web. Levelling land for irrigation and illicit digs pose a serious danger to unprotected archaeological sites and monuments. Since 2005, the Osmaniye Archaeological Survey undertaken by Kocaeli University has made it a principal goal to document the present state of known archaeological sites, as well as recording and registering newly-discovered archaeological sites and monuments before their destruction.

The area of Osmaniye, which extends between Northern Syria, upper Mesopotamia, in the south-east, the Mediterranean coast in the south, the Anatolian Highlands in the north-west, and the coastal road to Europe in the west, is an area that was of high interest not only in ancient times. Many different impacts are known from archaeological investigations, such as the first hints of human occupation before the Aceramic Neolithic period. Historical records from Hittite to Assyrian, Hellenistic, Roman and medieval sources can also be traced for this area.

To date, the Osmaniye Archaeological Survey has documented more than a hundred archaeological sites, 40 of which are attested as prehistoric mounds, 27 of them containing an astonishingly large quantity and variety of pottery from prehistoric times. The pottery that has been found covers a time span from the Neolithic/Chalcolithic periods to the late Iron Age, as well as the middle Hellenistic and Roman imperial periods. Some of the mounds and sites have a considerable amount of pottery dated to the Early Islamic, Medieval Byzantine, and also Crusader periods.[3]

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3 Initial results of the pottery study for the first five documented prehistoric mounds were presented in 2008, see Tülek *et al*. 2010

Among the many settlements, four prehistoric mounds are presented here in detail: Menetler Çiftliği, Devletsiz, Toprakkale and Tülek 2.

Menetler Çiftliği

A mound located in the town of Toprakkale, situated 5-7 km west of Tülek 2 and northwest of the Toprakkale mounds. It is also some10 km south of Tatarlı and 20 km east of the Sirkeli prehistoric mounds.

The ceramics collected from Menetler Çiftliği are from a wide chronological range, covering periods from the Chalcolithic to the Iron Age (Fig. 1). The earliest pieces in the collection date to the Chalcolithic period. The pottery is tempered with a very high amount of chaff, and often with little pieces of chalk. Predominantly plain fabric is found, but there are also some pieces of painted pottery. The straight shape, as seen particularly in Menetler I, is reminiscent of the Coba bowls, named after the place where they were first found, Coba Höyük, better known as Sakçegözü (du Plat Taylor *et al*., 1950: 95-96). These bowls were a widely distributed ware, especially in the regions of south-eastern Turkey and northern and western Syria along the Euphrates basin. Examples are found at many sites, from Arslantepe (Balossi Restelli, 2008: 24-25) to Hammam et-Turkman (Akkermans, 1988: 305). Eastern types of this pottery were even found in Tepe Gawra (Rothman, 2002: 55) in northern Iraq, and dated within the Ubaid/Uruk periods (Mellart, 1981: fig. 202).

A rare piece is represented in Menetler V: it is very small in dimension, but nevertheless some motifs can be seen in part, indicating curved and radial lines. This is an important find because it hints at Mycenaean pottery and the connection to the Mediterranean Sea (i.e. from Tarsus: Mountjoy 2005: fig. 11, 269; or from Cyprus: Karageorghis, 1990: 26), which can then be dated to the early 14th century BC. Some other painted pottery points to a local painted ware, but due to the small fragments, it is not possible to classify the exact shape and motif.

The finds indicate that the main occupation of Menetler began in the Late Bronze Age. During this period the pottery changed to a more homogeneous ware with a uniform appearance (Menetler III and IV). Parallels in shape can be seen in Hittite pottery (Müller-Karpe 1988: fig. 29, S1 a-b). This is not uncommon for this area, and is comparable to other Bronze Age Settlements in the vicinity, such as Tarsus, Kilisetepe, and Yumuktepe.

In the Iron Age, local Cilician painted pottery occurs often, especially the concentric circle motifs (Menetler VI) that are seen on several pieces (Arslan 2010: fig. 16, 165-167). A few examples of Black-On-Red-ware have also been identified, probably proving connections to Cyprus. A unique find was a bottom part (Menetler VII) in the shape of a Neo-Assyrian type (i.e. from Kavuşan Höyük: Kozbe 2008: fig. 7,6), indicating a connection to the provincial Assyrian range.

Devletsiz

A prehistoric mound, which has also yielded obsidian blade-like utensils, is situated 5 km east of the famous medieval castle of Anazarbus in the western-most part of East Cilicia.

A very large quantity of burnished pottery indicates that there was an intensive settlement phase during the Neolithic/Chalcolithic period, probably until the Early Bronze Age. Almost all the pottery was handmade (Fig. 2). The surfaces are red, as in Devletsiz I and II (Mellink 1956: 73), or burnished brown and black, as can be seen in Devletsiz III, IV and V (Mellink 1956: 76). Similar examples from Amuq are dated to the Neolithic and Chalcolithic period, giving indications for dating the oldest settlement in Devletsiz Höyük.

One distinctive example (see VI), which has a parallel in the Tarsus Cilician Black-On-Red (Hanfmann 1963: 50, fig. 194), can be dated to the Early Bronze Age and is one of the few finds from this period. The main period of occupation seems to have been between the Neolithic/Chalcolithic and the Bronze Age. Afterwards the settlement was probably abandoned.

Toprakkale

A prehistoric mound is partially surmounted by a medieval castle, and it was long debated whether the castle was situated on a volcanic cone or a prehistoric mound. The mound and the castle are situated on the *Amanikai Pylai* – at present the Kısık Pass, providing access to the south, to the Mediterranean Sea. A surprising discovery came to light from the survey in Toprakkale: below the castle, mainly on the northern and western slopes, unusual pottery could be collected (Fig. 3).

From this mound, we were able to identify pottery belonging to the Late Bronze Age (Toprakkale I-IV), mostly bowls with a thickened rim on the inner side. Comparable examples are from the Hittite pottery assemblages (Müller-Karpe 1988: fig. 42, Te 1a-b) from Hattuša itself and the settlements in the vicinity. However, the red slip on some shards can be identified as examples used mainly in the early centuries of the Hittite empire, even comparable to Karum pottery. There are also a few examples with no wash (Toprakkale III), or a cream wash as in Toprakkale IV (Müller-Karpe 1988: fig. 29, S1 a-b), in the repertoire of Toprakkale. These finds point to a strong influence from the Old Hittite period, and there is a definite connection to the Imperial period, suggesting a possible Hittite outpost.

In the following Iron Age, the few finds, mainly some painted pottery as in Toprakkale V and VI, are presumably to be dated to the later phases, like the examples from Cilicia (Arslan 2010: fig. 46, 289-293 or Arslan 2010: fig. 48, 314-315).

The pottery finds from this mound allow a dating of the main settlement to the Middle/Late Bronze Age, and a possible following hiatus. This can be seen in con-

nection with the Hittite capital. In the later periods of the Iron Age, there are traces of resettlement, but definitely much smaller, according to the finds from this period. Finds from the middle Hellenistic period and terra sigillata pieces from the Roman Imperial period denote another settlement sequence at the site, as does the considerable amount of green glazed fine sgrafiatto pieces from the medieval period.

Tülek 2

A prehistoric mound situated to the northeast of the Toprakkale mound, right on the hills where the modern Toprakkale town lies. The mound was first recorded in 2008, and was registered as an archaeological site in 2012.

A very large amount of Pre-Hellenistic pottery can be collected from Tülek Höyük 2 (Fig. 4), starting from the Chalcolithic period (Tülek 2 I) with its typical Chaff-Faced ware, which is common in the Cilician area (Braidwood and Braidwood 1960: 232 ff. dated these to Amuq F). Distinctive examples of Red Lustrous Wheel-made ware (Tülek 2 II and III) (Eriksson 1993) can be added to the assemblages from this period. Some polished examples (Tülek 2 IV with an incised decoration in the lower part) presumably belong to the Early Bronze Age (i.e. bowls from Oylum Höyük: Özgen and Helwing 2003), whereas others can be dated to the Late Bronze Age (Tülek 2 V). However, according to the amount of the pottery, the heyday of the settlement in Tülek 2 must have been during the Chalcolithic period, maybe continuing to the Bronze Age, while we found no pottery belonging to the (later) Iron Age.

On-going studies are using a holistic approach to evaluate the prehistoric pottery of the province, and are attempting to contextualize the pottery finds in relation to the neighbouring cultures. Since there is no complete master sequence that is equally reliable for all periods within this region, the earlier and present excavations provide a broad chronological framework for provisional dating. Thus, the investigation was based on comparative analysis of established ceramic sequences from other sites in this region, which supports the attempt to define settlements with a more local character. Similarities were found with examples from Cilicia and several pieces of the Amuq assemblage. Likewise there are also parallels with ceramics from the Levant, Cyprus or Northern Syria, showing lively regional and also trans-regional interaction, with the region of Osmaniye as a hub for different crossroads. The pottery from these four mounds produces the impression that the orientation of the material outcomes of this region changes in the different periods. Following the low frequency of finds of Neolithic/Chalcolithic material, in the Bronze Age there is a noticeable Anatolian predominance, while in the Iron Age genuine local pottery occurs with a Mediterranean affinity.

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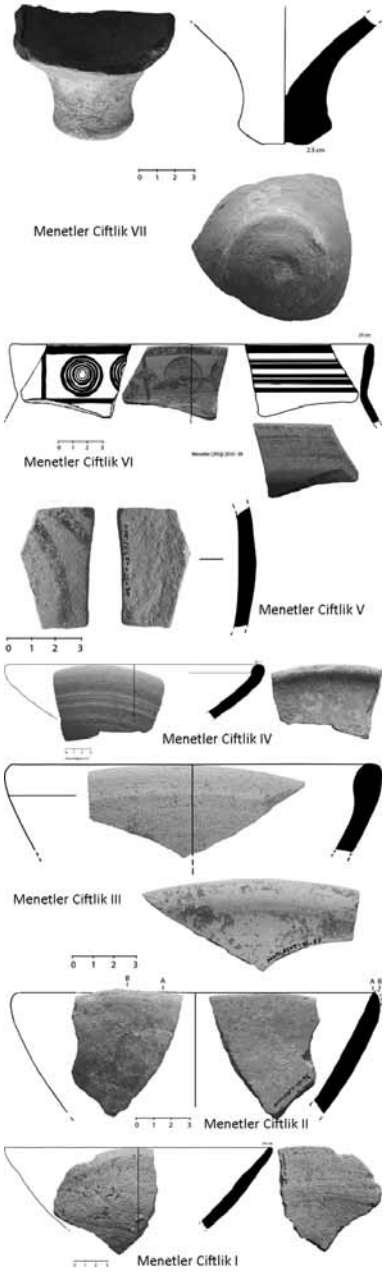


Fig. 1: East Plain Cilicia, Osmaniye, prehistoric pottery from the Menetler Çiftlik mound

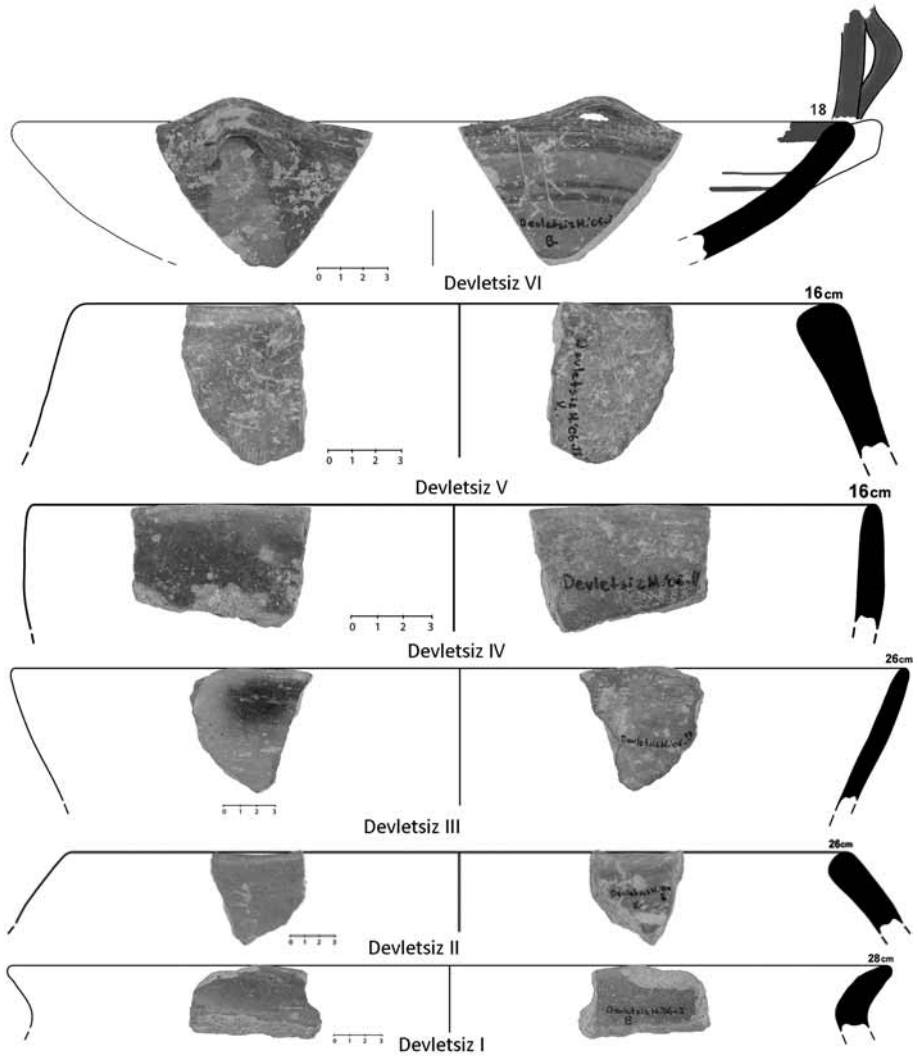


Fig. 2: East Plain Cilicia, Osmaniye, prehistoric pottery from the Devletsiz mound.

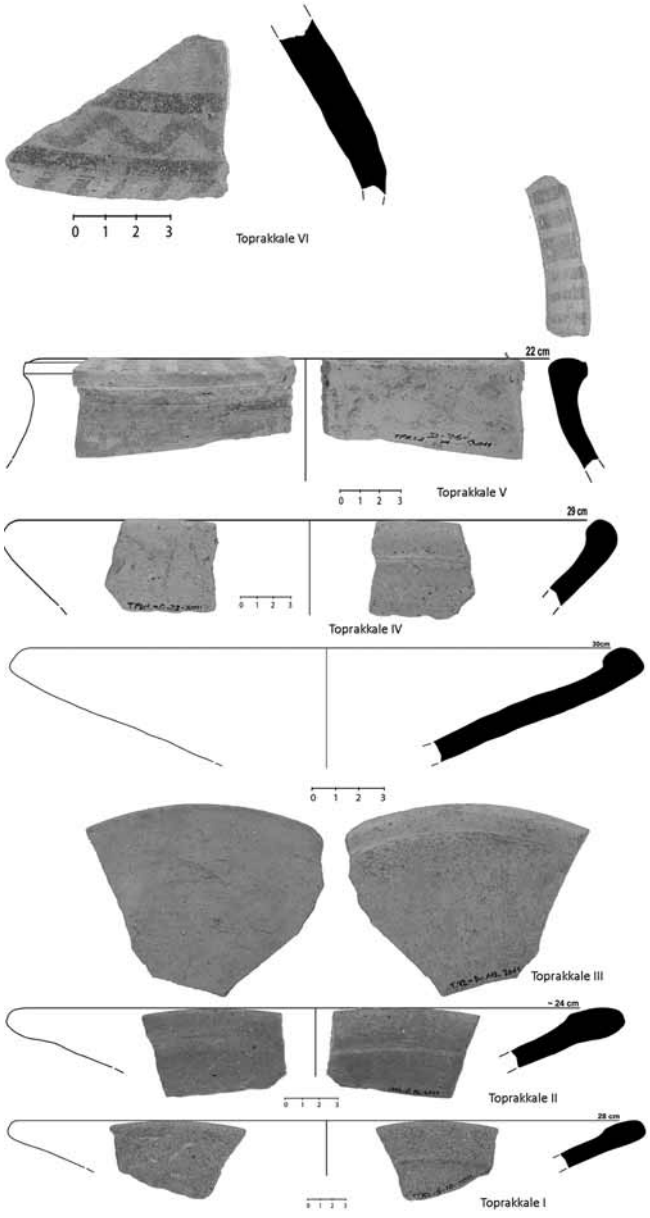


Fig. 3: East Plain Cilicia, Osmaniye, prehistoric pottery from the Toprakkale mound.

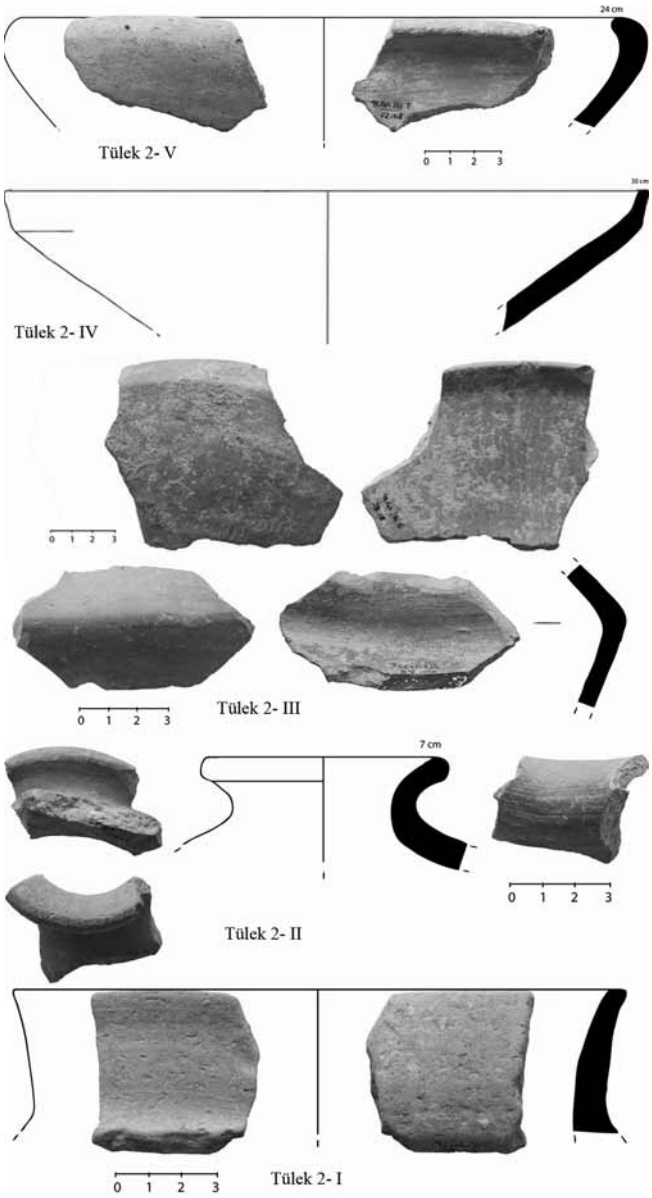


Fig. 4: East Plain Cilicia, Osmaniye, prehistoric pottery from the Tülek 2 mound.