

The Effort to Understand with Göbeklitepe Excavation the Social Structure and Religion in Southeastern Anatolia in the Early or the Pre-Pottery Neolithic Period



(Image: Mehmet Özdoğan, Nezih Başgelen, and Peter Kuniholm. The Neolithic in Turkey. İstanbul: 2011, p.83)

Orhun Yalçın

Maria Eliades

March 14, 2016

ENGL 112.01

Although the Neolithic period is explained with the “simple agricultural communities”¹, in previous years by excavating of Göbeklitepe, Çayönü, and Nevalı Çori; the period got started to be defined as more complicated and developed phases because scientists found monumental buildings in Göbeklitepe which cause that agriculture system-settlement-religion-temples chronological order, was accepted by all scientist, turned into settlement-religion-temples-agricultural system array. Moreover, these structures that are totally different and specially built in nature which can be considered as temples, so archaeologist Prof. Dr. Klaus Schmidt assert that there was a faith system adopted by their people.² These cult structures involve T shape stones, which were claimed that they spread from Göbeklitepe to Nevalı Çori, were called ritualistic process material in human form with animal and other seems meaningless symbols.³ From this point forth, archaeologists advocate that hunter-gatherers of the South East Anatolia had intellectual, hierarchical, religious, and cooperative patterns. They, also, advocate that becoming sedentary life and domestication of animals which led to domestication of plants means agricultural life can consist in the belief system and the faith of the pre-pottery period which might have had institutional life system.⁴ In other words, according to archaeological evidence found thus far related to religion in Göbeklitepe, the settlement life and religious systems formed before agricultural life. Thus, discovery of the first temple in Göbeklitepe indicates that, settlement and religion were established before an agricultural system, because its artefacts demonstrate complicated ceremonial and cult traditions.

HUMAN-BEINGS WERE STILL HUNTER-GATHERERS

¹ The gradual transition from wild harvesting to deliberate cultivation of plants also happened independently in several areas around the globe during the three first milleniums after ice-age. (The Development of Agriculture. *National Geographic*. April 22, 2013)

² Klaus Schmidt, *Göbekli Tepe*. (İstanbul: Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları, 2007, 13-18).

³ See Appendix A

⁴ Schmidt, 13-18.

Göbeklitepe's peoples mostly traveled fished hunted and gathered food, but did not produce any. Namely, animal husbandry and agriculture were not practiced in Göbeklitepe in regard to researching animal's bone fragments from the bulk of the organic material. These animals were wild creatures. In other words, they were not domesticated yet.⁵ Remains of ungulates predominate with over 90% of the total sample.⁶ The archaeological finds in the settlement which include arrowhead, scrapers, and burins, also support that. Byblos, Helwan and Nemrik points are distinctive types.⁷ Starting with hunters-gatherers, before settlement, agriculture and livestock farming, this new information brought to existence such an architectural feat leads people to review everything for scientists. In spite of the fact that there are structures at Göbeklitepe, these structures cannot be qualified as domestic houses or settlement figure; they are places of worship. Professor Klaus Schmidt, archaeologist and head of the excavation of Göbeklitepe, interprets these structures as a hill sanctuary.⁸ From this point, if these structures are absolutely sanctuary, it will revolutionize historiography in terms of balance and array of settlement-religious-agriculture and cities. That is to say, based on Göbeklitepe's period, we can claim that religious exist earlier than agriculture and it should be emphasized that these people were still hunter-gatherers so it would probably have affected processes of adopting agricultural life. Dr. Brian Hayden express this situation in this way:

Göbekli Tepe must have placed stress on the economic production of hunter-gatherer groups. Maybe in response to the demand, new food sources and processing techniques were explored. In this scenario, religious beliefs and practices may have

⁵ Mehmet Özdoğan, Nezih Başgelen, and Peter Kuniholm, *The Neolithic in Turkey New Excavations & New Research V.2*. (İstanbul: Archaeology and Art Publications, 2011, 41-43).

⁶ Nezih Başgelen et al. 41.

⁷ Nezih Başgelen et al. 42.

See Appendix B

⁸ Clemens Lichter, "Temples in the Neolithic and Copper Age in Southeast Europe," *Documenta Praehistorica* XLI (2014): 119-123.

been a key factor in the adoption of intensive cultivation and the transition to agriculture.⁹

Wild wheat or other wild plants in the storage rooms of Göbeklitepe prove the importance of these hunter-gatherer group because even though they did not make agricultural activities, they collected food which helped their daily lives. In other words, since they were able to store food and likely every plant had their own bartering values in an economic system, they are also capable of being interested in other activities such as religion. This thought is very current in the history world because it is advocated according to new evidence having excavated from Göbeklitepe and these artefacts which leads to the idea that religion and settlement exist before agriculture will be talked next main bodies in detailed about.

THE WORLD'S FIRST TEMPLE and MYSTERY of the T SHAPED PILLARS

The essence of the story goes back 12,000 years, Göbeklitepe excavation can introduce to people the first temple in the world. Was there a “faith system” adopted by these people? According to Schmidt, who has excavated with his team since 1995, this place is temple area is not ordinary settlement place like Çayönü or Nevalı Çori, so yes there was.¹⁰ In other words, the structures uncovered are not for residential purposes because they have symbolic order and ritualistic figures. Archaeologist Oliver Dietrich, Manfred Heun, Martin Zarnkow, and Jens Notroff's statements corroborate his opinion as well:

Göbeklitepe is characterized by an early layer III dating to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic A (PPNA) which produced monumental architecture with huge, T shaped pillars arranged in circle-like enclosures around two even taller central pillars.¹¹ The pillars are interconnected by walls and stone benches and decorated with varied animal motifs, including foxes, snakes, scorpions, boars, aurochs, gazelle, wild ass and birds, as well as, in some cases, arms and hands, showing that they are sculptures representing stylized human-like individuals.¹²

⁹ Dietrich Oliver, Heun Manfred, Notroff Jens, Schmidt Klaus, and Zarnkow Martin, “The role of cult and feasting in the emergence of Neolithic communities. New evidence from Göbekli Tepe, south-eastern Turkey,” *Antiquity* 86 (2012): 692.

¹⁰ Schmidt, 114-128.

¹¹ See Appendix C

¹² Oliver Dietrich et al. 677.

There are high stone walls, niches, and mobile wall built with pillars, and terraces along the walls where possibly people were able to sit and watch the ceremony.¹³ “The base is made of waterproof material such as terraces, sand and stone.”¹⁴ Thus, archaeologists deduct that; a ritual was being performed with liquid. Libation which is a ritual shedding a liquid as an offering to God is example for liquid ritual in Göbeklitepe. It was, generally, made with wine.¹⁵ Namely, people drank wine or another alcohol and poured it to floor for God or spirit or humans who have died.

Same as in Nevali Çori or Göbeklitepe, there are animal sculptures, reliefs, and paintings open to all kind of interpretations. What this is about deep symbolism, stylized art, paintings, and sculptures. According to archaeologist Özdoğan and Schmidt these cannot hacked or scribbled by an ordinary person, but created by an expert craftsman in this field. Özdoğan interprets this with the statement that “apparently, there was a well-defined hierarchy in society which requires a long history”¹⁶ since if there is no hierarchy, there will not be able to be order system and if there is not order system, they probably will not construct these monumental structures. When they obey orders in order to construct them, they used specific tools for sculpture and carve. Well then, what tools did the builders of Göbeklitepe Temple use to erect and carve such monumental structures? Actually, main tool is limestones which are common the field are used by the Stone Age people. Making sculptures and carving is easy with using them. If we investigate the pillars’ physical features, we can understand exist of order system and solidarity. “Carving colossal blocks of limestone -40 tones each- with simple utensils considering that these mono-blocks of rock the T shaped pillars vary between 4 to 6 meters in height. Furthermore, the quarry they got these blocks

¹³ See Appendix D

¹⁴ Tapınakalar, Göbeklitepe, <<http://gobeklitepe.com/gobeklitepe-tapinaklar.html>>

¹⁵ Serap Özdöl, “Çanak Çömleksiz Neolitik Dönemde Güneydoğu Anadolu’da Din ve Sosyal Yapı,” *Tarih İncelemeri Dergisi* 1 (2011): 181-182.

¹⁶ Dünyanın İlk Tapınağı Documentary

from, is about 2km away. Cutting, carrying and erecting them must have been a difficult task.”¹⁷ Recording in Indonesia had resemblance to carrying stones in Göbeklitepe.

Schröder (1917) noted that 525 men hauled a megalith of 4m³ over a distance of 3km to its final location in three days using a wooden sledge. At Göbekli Tepe, the distances between the quarries and the enclosures are smaller, but the megaliths transported are much larger (up to 7m long weighing 50 metric tons with a volume of 20m³).¹⁸

The archaeologists who are excavating at Göbeklitepe advocate that people had solidarity and order which could be religious because according to them, only religious authority can perform this order.¹⁹

Nevertheless, temples unearthed at Göbeklitepe, show three different styles of form. They have been categorized B, C and D with all different patterns.²⁰ For example, while the pillars at C form a spiral, the same at D have an elliptical pattern.²¹ Moreover, the surrounding pillars vary in numbers from place to place and enclosure to enclosure at excavation at Göbeklitepe but the only similarity between them is the twin T pillars at the center. Although these two at center are the most important, the other T shaped pillars also can be center of the general story about Göbeklitepe because some of them symbolize human beings. By description of arms and fingers are evidence for the assertion.²² Gathering of this T shaped humans, maybe laid the foundation of unknown history occurred at Göbeklitepe. Then, what do these pillars represent?

Foxes, snakes, wild boars, cranes, wild ducks are most common. Most of these were carved into the flat surfaces of these pillars. Then again, we also come across some three-dimensional sculptures, in shape of a predator depicting a lion, descending on the side of a T-pillar.²³

¹⁷ Dünyanın İlk Tapınağı, Göbeklitepe, <www.gobeklitepe.com>

¹⁸ Oliver Dietrich et al. 691.

¹⁹ Göbeklitepe Documentary, Boğaziçi University History 105, <<https://hist105fall2015.wordpress.com/page/5/>>

²⁰ Mehmet Özdoğan and Nezih Başgelen, *Anadolu'da Uygarlığın Doğuşu ve Avrupa'ya Yayılımı Türkiye'de Neolitik Dönem Yeni Kazılar, Yeni Bulgular*. (İstanbul: Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları, 2007, 116).

See Appendix E

²¹ See Appendix F

²² See Appendix G

²³ Home, Göbeklitepe, <<http://gobeklitepe.info/>>

See Appendix H

Constructors of the buildings in Göbeklitepe aimed greatness, wideness, and monumentality. According to Head of excavation Schmidt these people wanted to show and narrate communities what they can do because they may have connected other peoples on near environment. By these buildings they might have showed their precedence to others.²⁴

Moreover, they should have had complicated and complex systems and deep culture which can include even communication since they have many symbols and these complex symbols cannot be without community and cult traditions.

They are part of a system of symbolic communication that preceded writing as an essential method of storing cultural knowledge. These people must have had a highly complicated mythology, including a capacity for abstraction.²⁵

Despite to the fact that Göbeklitepe's people were hunter gatherers, they had collective lives and complicated accumulation about abstract knowledge like human beings having permanent settlement life with agriculture. So with excavation of Göbeklitepe, science world changed its state of affairs of scientific analysis about array of farming-settlement-religion-temples-cities. Namely, Scientists claimed that when human beings started farming, they started living settlement life and after settlement they find religions and then they construct temples. Finally, cities were existed, but this array changed with archaeological remains at Göbeklitepe. Current array is this way: Settlement-Religion-Temples-Farming-Cities.²⁶ Göbeklitepe has temples so its peoples should have had religious for worshipping. Also if they find time for worshipping, they should have found store means settlement house system although they did not make agriculture.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, by excavating of Çayönü, Nevalı Çori, and especially Göbeklitepe, scientists found monumental structures like that they were constructed in later periods in the

²⁴ Schmidt, 137.

²⁵ Oliver Dietrich et al. 684.

²⁶ Klaus Schmidt, "Göbeklitepe-Yuvarlak Yapılar ve Kabartmalar", *12.000 Yıl Önce Anadolu, İnsanlığın En Eski Anıtları* Stuttgart: Theiss Verlag, (2007): 440-448.

teeth of the Neolithic Period explained by the simple agricultural communities. Moreover, unearthed artefacts by Göbeklitepe excavation leads to be queried old knowledge by science world since founding claims old's reverse. In other words, according to old information religion comes and settlement comes after agriculture phase in the human chronology, but with new evidence we can assert that religion and settlement comes before agriculture. This advocating derived from the monumental structures and T-shaped pillars at Göbeklitepe as the pillars have special symbols and orders which can impact on the other neighbor sides and cultures. Furthermore, these monumental constructions show us, there were collective lives because solely this way these limestones could carried. There were, also, order system, which might have been religious orders- it is still question of debate, namely it was not proved.-, and cult traditions because even today human beings explain complex symbols with just complicated culture history and cult traditions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Başgelen, Nezih and Mehmet Özdoğan. *Anadolu'da Uygarlığın Doğuşu ve Avrupa'ya Yayılımı Türkiye'de Neolitik Dönem*. İstanbul: Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları. 2007.

Clemens Lichter, "Temples in the Neolithic and Copper Age in Southeast Europe," *Documenta Praehistorica* XLI (2014): 119-131.

Dünyanın İlk Tapınağı, Göbeklitepe, <www.gobeklitepe.com>

Göbeklitepe Documentary, Boğaziçi University History 105, <<https://hist105fall2015.wordpress.com/page/5/>>

Home, Göbeklitepe the Oldest Temple, <<http://gobeklitepe.info/>>

Klaus Schmidt, "Göbeklitepe-Yuvarlak Yapılar ve Kabartmalar", *12.000 Yıl Önce Anadolu, İnsanlığın En Eski Anıtları* Stuttgart: Theiss Verlag, (2007): 440-448.

Kuijt, Ian. *Life in Neolithic Farming Communities*, New York: Kluwer Academic/ Plenum Publishers. 2000.

Oliver Dietrich, et al, "The role of cult and feasting in the emergence of Neolithic communities. New evidence from Göbekli Tepe, south-eastern Turkey," *Antiquity* 86 (2012): 674-695.

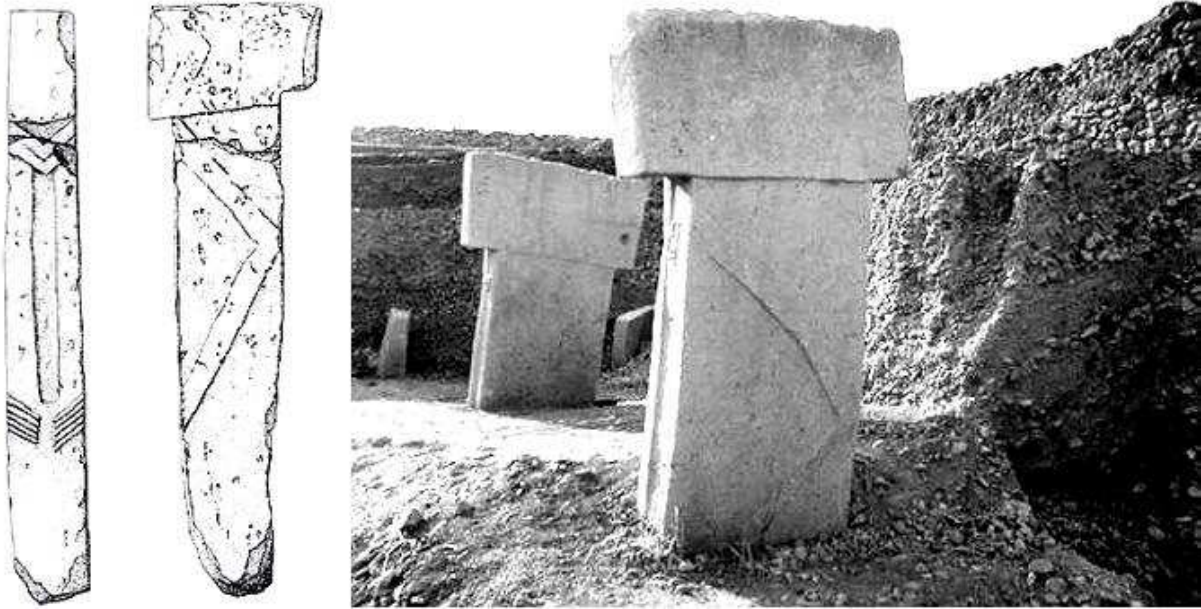
Özdoğan, Mehmet et al. *The Neolithic in Turkey New Excavations& New Research V.1*. İstanbul: Archaeology and Art Publications. 2011.

Özdoğan, Mehmet et al. *The Neolithic in Turkey New Excavations& New Research V.2*. İstanbul: Archaeology and Art Publications. 2011.

Schmidt, Klaus. *Taş Çağı Avcılarının Gizemli Kutsal Alanı Göbekli Tepe*. İstanbul: Arkeoloji ve Sanat Yayınları. 2007.

Serap Özdöl, "Çanak Çömleksiz Neolitik Dönemde Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Din ve Sosyal Yapı," *Tarih İncelemeri Dergisi* 1 (2011): 173-199.

Tapınaklar, Göbeklitepe, <<http://gobeklitepe.com>>



Appendix A, Pillars having human arms in the Nevalı Chori and Göbeklitepe.²⁷



Appendix B- Projectile Point of the El-Khiam, Byblos, Nemrik, and Helwan type found at Göbeklitepe.²⁸

²⁷ Özdöl, Serap, *Çanak Çömleksiz Neolitik Dönemde Güneydoğu Anadolu'da Din ve Sosyal Yapı*, Ege Üniversitesi, p.183.

²⁸ Nezih Başgelen and et al, 61.

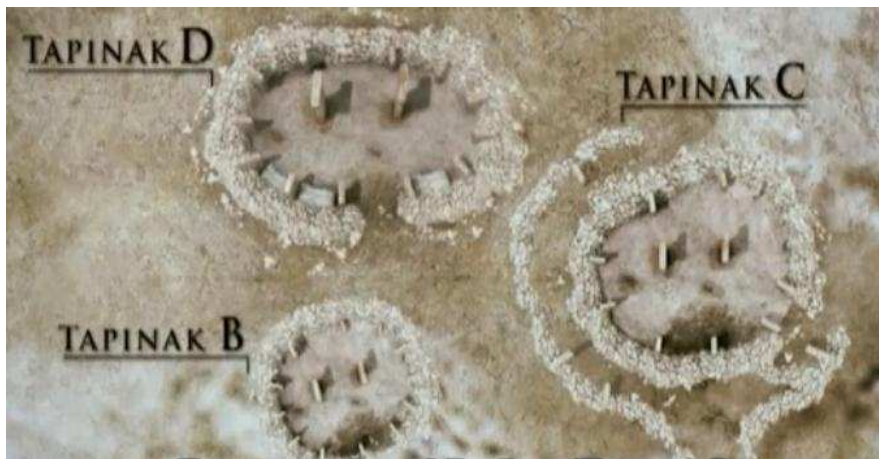


Appendix C Göbeklitepe: overhead view of the main excavation area (photograph: N. Becker, _c DAI).



Appendix D ceremony place²⁹

²⁹ [http:// gobeklitepe.com/gallery.html](http://gobeklitepe.com/gallery.html)



Appendix E, Categorized Temples B, C, and D at excavation of Göbeklitepe.³⁰



Appendix F Left one is elliptical pattern and right one is form a spiral³¹

³⁰ [http:// göbeklitepe.com/galery.html](http://göbeklitepe.com/galery.html)

³¹ [http:// göbeklitepe.com/galery.html](http://göbeklitepe.com/galery.html)



Appendix G a T shaped pillar having fingers and arms figure³²



Appendix H³³

³² [http:// gobeklitepe.com/gallery.html](http://gobeklitepe.com/gallery.html)

³³ Home, Göbeklitepe, <<http://gobeklitepe.info/>>