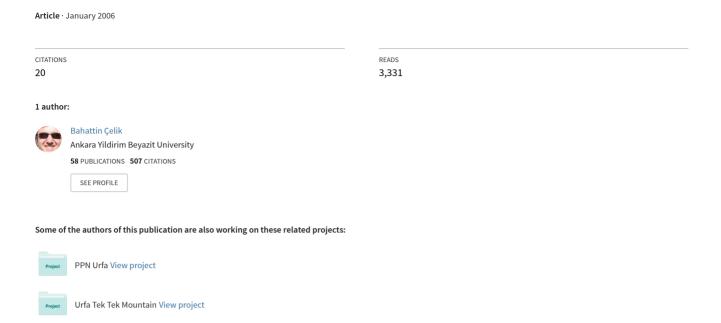
# Sefer Tepe: A New Pre-Pottery Neolithic Site in Southeastern Turkey.





## Field Reports

Hermansen, Thuesen, Jensen et al., Shkârat Msaied Al-Nahar, Tell Abu as-Sawwan Gebel, Hermansen & Kinzel, Ba'ja Rosenberg & Nativ, A PN Clay Surface from Lod Çelik, Sefer Tepe Bartl, Shir

#### Contributions

Barzilai & Garfinkel, Bidirectional Blade Technology Verhoeven, Understanding Tell Formation

Workshop Report
Verhoeven, Tokyo Symposium

Comments on Recent Publications

New Publications and Theses

# NEO-LITHICS 1/06

The Newsletter of
Southwest Asian Neolithic Research

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## Editorial

The temporal and geographic emphasis of *Neo-Lithics* has come to concentrate on the Early Neolithic of the Levant and Upper Mesopotamia, and while this focus has been informative, the editors always liked to see the scope of the newsletter to include all the Neolithic periods of all the Middle Eastern countries. Especially we would also like to stress more the importance of Pottery Neolithic trajectories, together with more information on new theses, lab reports and conferences. We appeal to all colleagues to help us to diversify *Neo-Lithics* by sending or encouraging such contributions to our newsletter.

With this issue Neo-Lithics introduces a new section: Comments on Recent Publications. It is aimed to provide the chance for discursive or critical comments on aspects or ideas brought up in recent publications. These contributions should not be traditional book reviews (as the first one in this issue may appear), but should provide an opportunity to enhance critical discussion among colleagues. Often the general and formal demands of an invited book review do not provide the framework for discursive comments to be published, for which we now would like to provide a forum.

Hans Georg K. Gebel and Gary O. Rollefson

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Field Report

## A New Pre-Pottery Neolithic Site in Southeastern Turkey: Sefer Tepe

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Fig. 1 General view of Sefer Tepe from NE.

Sefer Tepe is a small settlement located within the boundaries of Viranşehir township, c. 70 km to the east of Şanlıurfa (Fig. 1). The site was discovered by a team of three archaeologists (A. Cihat Kürkçüoğlu, Bahattin Çelik and Muharrem Oral from Harran University Archaeology Department) within the framework of the "Şanlıurfa Region Culture Inventory Project" between 2000-2003 (cf. Çelik 2005: 171-189; Kürkçüoğlu and Kara 2005: 62-63). The settlement extends over an area of approximately 1,000 square meters at an altitude of 700 meters. The settlement rises ca. 6 meters directly on bedrock just as the other Pre-Pottery Neolithic settlements in the region, including Karahan Tepe (ca. 15 km), Göbekli Tepe (ca. 50 km), Şanlıurfa-Yeni Mahalle and Hamzan

Tepe (both ca. 70 km). In the southeast corner of the settlement is a house occupied by villagers cultivating cotton in the fields along the south side of the site thanks to the artesian wells bored there. About 30 meters north of the site is another but smaller settlement, again directly on bedrock. To the north and east of Sefer Tepe extend the Viranşehir plains. To its south is partially flat land, while to the southwest and west rise the Tektek Mountains and their extension, the Çoban Deresi locale. The nearest water source is the Doğu Cırcıp stream, a tributary to the Habur River, ca. 500 meters east. The site is found in a calcareous area in regard to geology, while the nearest source of basalt is about 2 km north. Surveys around the site did not reveal any flint stone sources.

The most noteworthy feature of Sefer Tepe settlement are the 16 intact T-shaped pillars *in situ*. All of these pillars are of limestone and stand either side by side or opposite from each other. Dispersed over the entire settlement, these intact pillars are placed 1.50 to 2.00 meters apart and rise *ca*. 30-40 cm above the ground. In this regard, they exhibit close parallelism with the *in situ* and intact pillars on the surface of Karahan Tepe and the Layer II architecture of Göbekli Tepe (Schmidt 2002: 8, fig. 7. See the positions of the pillars in trenches L10-71,

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Fig. 2 A T-shaped pillar recovered intact at Sefer Tepe.

L9-80, L9-55 and L9-56; Çelik 2000b: 6-7). In addition, two more pillars were uncovered during the construction of the village house in the southeast corner of the site. One of these two pillars was recovered intact (Fig. 2) and measures 198 cm tall, 25 cm thick and its width at the top is 72 cm, while that of the body is 54 cm. Devoid of any engravings or reliefs, the head of the stele is rendered quite squat. The other pillar was recovered in two pieces and measures approximately the same as one of the central pillars from Nevalı Çori (Hauptmann 1991-92: 28, fig. 21): ca. 2 meters tall, 75 cm wide and 40 cm thick; we are of the opinion that a bucranium sketch is depicted on it (Fig. 3).

Very few small finds have been found at Sefer Tepe, and these include mainly flint and obsidian items but no pottery at all. Flint is seven times more numerous than obsidian finds. Flint artifacts include arrowheads, borers, endscrapers and sickles. Among obsidian finds, only one scraper could be identified while others are blade fragments and flakes. The flint items reflect the properties of Pre-Pottery Neolithic implement typology. The flint arrowheads include Byblos-type examples as well as others that consist only of tips and stems (Fig. 4). Parallels to these arrowheads can be found at Göbekli Tepe (Beile-Bohn *et al.* 1998: fig. 23.3; Schmidt 2001: 52, fig. 10/3,



Fig. 3 A pillar body fragment from Sefer Tepe.

fig. 11/5), Nevalı Çori (Schmidt 1988: fig. 8.5), Şanlıurfa-Yeni Mahalle (Çelik 2000a: fig. 5.2) and at Karahan Tepe (Çelik 2000b: fig. 4a).

The discovery of the Sefer Tepe settlement points to an important fact: the Pre-Pottery Neolithic settlements containing T-shaped pillars are found not only in Euphrates Valley and Harran Plain but can also be found to the east of Şanlıurfa. Sefer Tepe is a new member of the settlements characterised with an architectural tradition featuring T-shaped pillars that were discovered in the last 20 years. It is highly likely that future comprehensive and systematic surveys in the region will bring to light new settlements of this tradition. Due to the fact that Sefer Tepe displays parallelism with the Layer II architecture of Göbekli Tepe, it is plausible to date it to the Early or Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B Period.

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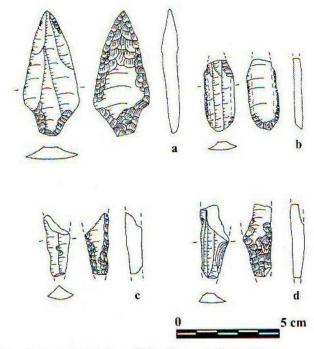


Fig. 4 Arrowheads from Sefer Tepe: a) Byblos-type, b-d) unidentified point fragments.

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Field Report

# Shir: A Neolithic Site in the Middle Orontes Region, Syria

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Since 2003, the middle Orontes region between the small town of ar-Rastan and Qal'at Shayzar in west Syria has been intensively surveyed by the German Archaeological Institute Damascus (DAI) in close cooperation with the Direction Générale des Antiquités et des Musées de la Syrie (DGAMS) In five field seasons, an area of ca. 600 km² was investigated resulting in the documentation of, so far, 175 sites that cover the entire time span from Lower Palaeolithic to Ottoman periods.

During the archaeological prospection of spring 2005, a large settlement was discovered, with surface material pointing to late PPNB and early PN. The site of Shir is situated about 10 km northwest of the provincial capital of Hama on the river Sarut, a tributary of the Orontes. It is located on one of the lime marl terraces, 30 m high, that flank the river in the north and in the south (Fig. 1). Today the entire region is intensively cultivated, and terracing or levelling has heavily altered the original relief of the landscape. The prehistoric settlement of Shir was affected by such measures: the

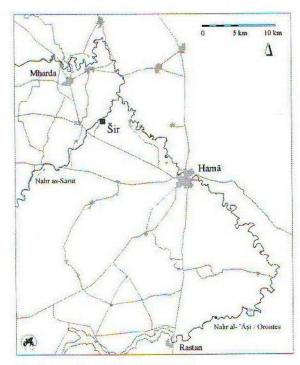


Fig. 1 Location of the site of Shir.