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on the Archaeology
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Volume 1
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The Archaeology of Consumption & Disposal
Landscape, Transport & Communication

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FOREWORD OF THE EDITORS

It is with great pleasure that we present the Proceedings of the 7th International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East, held in London jointly at the British Museum and UCL, on 12-16 April 2010 (<http://7icaane.org/>). 7ICAANE hosted an unprecedented number of ancient Near Eastern specialists and students, with an ambitious programme of papers across five major themes, plus sessions on Islamic archaeology, fieldwork, and posters. In addition, we hosted a total of ten workshops, significantly more than in previous ICAANE meetings. As with previous ICAANEs, individual workshop organisers are responsible for publication of their own proceedings, separate from these volumes.

It would not have been possible to organise 7ICAANE without help and funding support from a wide range of people and institutions, to all of whom we express our sincerest gratitude. Funding assistance was generously provided by the British Academy (Worldwide Congress Grant), the British Museum, UCL, the Iran Heritage Foundation, the British Institute of Persian Studies, the British Institute for the Study of Iraq, the Council for British Research in the Levant, the British Institute at Ankara, the British Association for Near Eastern Archaeology, and the London Centre for the Ancient Near East. We thank all the congress participants for making the occasion such a success, and we also offer our sincere thanks to the student helpers who, expertly supervised by Helen Taylor, made the congress run so smoothly.

Publication of the proceedings has been overseen by the congress organisers as editors, with much-appreciated expert assistance from Amy Richardson. Finally, we thank our colleagues at Harrassowitz in Wiesbaden, who have accepted these papers for publication.

Please note that colour versions of the figures for the Colour and Light theme papers (Volume 2) can be found on the included CD.

The Editors

T-SHAPED PILLAR SITES IN THE LANDSCAPE AROUND URFA

FEVZI KEMAL MOETZ,¹ BAHATTIN ÇELİK²

ABSTRACT

The excavations of Nevalı Çori and Göbekli Tepe revealed architecture containing T-shaped pillars dating to the earliest Pre-Pottery Neolithic (approximately 11,000 years ago). Over the last decade, the discovery of several more sites with T-shaped pillars in the Urfa region suggests that the geographical extent of this cultural phenomenon is much broader than previously thought. Most of the sites with T-shaped pillars are located near or in the foothills of mountain ranges, and on limestone plateaus overlooking fertile plains. Protected from alluviation and later settlement activities, these sites have remained visible in the landscape. Sites located in the plains such as Nevalı Çori, the recently discovered site of Sefer Tepe in the Viranşehir plain as well as the Kilisik pillar near the Yarpuzlu stream, however, tend to be found only during intensive field survey. It is, thus, highly likely that additional T-shaped pillar sites are buried under the alluvium and later settlement layers of the Harran Plain. In this paper, we examine the characteristics and spatial distribution of sites with T-shaped pillars, and discuss how geological processes such as alluviation and research history have impacted on our understanding of this remarkable phenomenon.

INTRODUCTION

The discovery of Nevalı Çori and Göbekli Tepe dramatically changed our understanding of hunter-gather and early horticultural societies. The excavations of these sites revealed architecture containing monolithic T-shaped limestone pillars decorated with reliefs. Recent work has revealed the existence of multiple sites featuring T-shaped pillars similar to those from Göbekli Tepe and Nevalı Çori in the province of Urfa, southeast Turkey. In this paper, we analyze the location of these sites in the landscape,

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and discuss reasons for why particular positions were preferred over others. Access to resources such as limestone and silex seems to have played a major role in site location preferences, as did topographic considerations. A series of smaller sites located in valleys and plains, however, demonstrate that T-shaped pillar sites also existed in lowland locations, which today are difficult to detect due to alluviation and modern settlement.

A SHORT HISTORY OF RESEARCH

In 1962, when Halet Çambel and Robert Braidwood began surveys and excavations in south eastern Anatolia (Çambel and Braidwood 1980), the early Neolithic of the region was entirely unknown. Although Göbekli Tepe was discovered during the course of this survey, its importance had not yet been recognized. Later, during surveys around the Atatürk dam, Nevalı Çori (Fig. 1) was discovered by Gebel in 1979, who carried out an intensive pedestrian survey near the German excavations at Lidar Höyük. The ancient settlement of Nevalı Çori, which consists of domestic structures as well as the so-called 'Cult Building' dating to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic B (henceforth PPN), was discovered and excavated between 1983 and 1991 (Hauptmann 1993). Two monolithic limestone pillars with a T-shaped head, surrounded by 13 smaller limestone pillars, were discovered in the middle of the 'Cult Building' (Hauptmann 1999: 42-43, fig. 7-9). Along with the T-shaped heads, the central pillars displayed reliefs of arms representing stylized humanoid creatures (Hauptmann 1993: 56, fig. 16). In the interior of the structure, benches and a 15 cm thick terrazzo floor were uncovered. Large-scale anthropomorphic and theriomorphic sculptures were also documented in secondary use inside the building. There are abundant flint sources in the vicinity of the site (Hauptmann 2007: 86). Now flooded, Nevalı Çori was situated in the valley of the Kantara river close to the limestone hill of Yagintepe. The primary limestone resources for the main architectural elements of Nevalı Çori, however, seem to derive from the Bedirdikmen mountains at some 5 km distance from the site (Marzolf 1994).

At Göbekli Tepe, excavations conducted by a German team since 1994, have revealed four round structures dating to the PPNA, which were also characterized by two central T-shaped pillars surrounded by smaller pillars (Schmidt 2006: 168, fig. 76). Like those of Nevalı Çori, the central pillars bear reliefs of arms and hands and can reach up to a height of 5.5 metres. For the floors, terrazzo and bedrock have been documented. Geomagnetic prospections indicate that there are at least 15 more round structures still to be uncovered (Schmidt 2005: 14). In the later PPNB, T-shaped pillars are still in use, but now they are inside rectangular structures and they are smaller in size. On the pillars, reliefs of animals, pictograms and other symbols have been documented (Peters and Schmidt 2004; Schmidt 2004).

It is of crucial importance to emphasize the geography of Göbekli Tepe. The

site is located on a limestone plateau and built directly on the bedrock, with springs situated at the southern foot of the limestone ridge. This limestone plateau, which also served as a quarry for T-shaped pillars, is situated at the highest point of the 15 km long, east-west running Geriş mountain range, which frames the northern edge of the Harran plain (Fig. 2). From the top of the site one is afforded an all-round view of the surrounding landscape, especially the Harran plain.

PPN T-SHAPED PILLAR SITES IN THE MOUNTAINS AROUND URFA

The sites of Nevalı Çori and Göbekli Tepe have provided us with an entirely new understanding of the PPN of south eastern Anatolia and dramatically modified perceptions of hunter-gather and early agricultural societies more generally. The discovery of Göbekli Tepe, moreover, has directed archaeological interest towards the mountains and at least partially away from the lowland areas that had been the focus of research since large-scale hydraulic dam constructions commenced across south eastern Turkey. A focus on upland areas has led to the discovery of two further sites with T-shaped pillars towards the end of the 1990s, namely Karahan Tepe and Hamzan Tepe (Fig. 1).

Karahan Tepe, located in the Tektek mountains, was discovered in 1997 and is situated 7 km from the eastern edge of the Harran plain. The site displays many similarities with Göbekli Tepe. Its geographical situation is comparable: it is located on the high peak of a mountain range, built directly on the limestone bedrock (Fig. 2). The limestone hill has a dimension of 500 by 250 metres, with architectural remains concentrating on the northern and eastern slope. As many as 266 T-shaped pillars have been recorded at Karahan Tepe (Çelik 2000b: 6). Some of these pillars protrude from the surface up to about half a meter. Whilst most visible surfaces are badly weathered, reliefs of animals, whose iconography compares well with those at Göbekli Tepe (Fig. 3), have been recorded on a number of pillars. The dimensions of the Karahan pillars are broadly comparable to examples from Göbekli Phase II A, which is dated to the MPPNB (Pustovoytov *et al.* 2007). The lithic material collected from the surface indicates a similar date (Çelik 2005: 221). There are several flint sources near the site. Oval structures, possibly pools, also known from Göbekli Tepe (Hauptmann 1999: 54, fig. 32), are also found at Karahan Tepe. Unfinished T-shaped pillars, partly cut out of the bedrock (Fig. 4) form another parallel with Göbekli (Schmidt 2006: 103, fig. 33). Importantly, the nearest basalt source is 15 km to the north, an old wadi stream is situated 5 kilometres to the northwest and a paleo-channel 500 metres to the east of the site.

Hamzan Tepe is located on a high point of the Fatik mountain range (Fig. 2). It is situated next to the Urfa garbage dump, just 7.5 km south of the city centre. Again the 0.5 hectare site is built directly on a limestone outcrop. Flint and basalt sources are located close by. Lithic material from the Lower Palaeolithic and the PPNB were

collected from the surface. The fragment of a limestone pillar was also discovered at the site (Çelik 2004: 4) (Fig. 5). Illicit excavations had uncovered part of a stone wall belonging to a round structure (Fig. 6). Fifty metres southwest of this round structure, oval recesses of varying dimensions were found carved into the limestone bedrock. All these features have parallels at Göbekli and Karahan Tepe. The nearest possible water source is a paleo-channel 1.5 km southwest of Hamzan Tepe.

PPN T-SHAPED PILLAR SITES IN THE PLAINS

From the late 1990s until 2005, most of the research on T-shaped pillar sites has focused on upland sites. In the late 1990s, however, other discoveries had been made, and whilst not acknowledged at the time, these discoveries, such as Nevalı Çori, showed that PPN T-shaped pillar sites did not only exist in the mountains. For instance, in 1997, the site of Urfa Yeni Yol/Yeni Mahalle was discovered through road works. This revealed that the old centre of Urfa was actually built above a Neolithic site. The road cut revealed a 15 m long profile with four terrazzo floors and associated lithics dating to the PPNA and early PPNB (Çelik 2000a: 5). C^{14} dates taken from this profile indicate a similar date (Çelik 2007). A 1.93 m tall anthropomorphic limestone statue (Çelik 2000a: 4, fig. 2) had been discovered just 200 meter east of the terrazzo floors several years previously (Hauptmann 2003: 627). Since then, a pillar fragment has been found close to where the terrazzo floors have been uncovered (Fig. 7). Heavy building activities in the centre of Urfa unfortunately preclude further research at this site. The geographical situation of Urfa Yeni Yol/Yeni Mahalle on the north-western edge of the Harran plain and at the foot of the Fatik Mountains is radically different from those of Göbekli Tepe, Hamzan Tepe and Karahan Tepe (Fig. 2). Notably, there are important ancient water resources nearby.

Two recent discoveries turn the spotlight into another direction. In 1965, an 80 cm T-shaped pillar was acquired near the town of Kilisik. Its importance, however, was not recognized or understood until the excavations of Göbekli Tepe many years later (Hauptmann 2000). An anthropomorphic representation with arms in relief on its sides (Hauptmann 2000: 8, fig. 8-9), this pillar is likely to have come from yet another – and as yet undiscovered – site belonging to the T-shaped pillar tradition. Interviews with elderly inhabitants in the area round Kilisik by Bahattin Çelik revealed the location from which the Kilisik T-shaped pillar was acquired by B. Baroness v. Freytag-Löringhof in 1965. A riding hour north-west of the Severan Bridge near the ancient city Arsameia, it was possible to find inhabitants who still remembered the events that occurred 45 years ago at a farm at the Yarpuzlu Çay 1.5 km northeast from Dilektepe (Figs 1 and 8). The statue apparently had been originally discovered on the slope of a hill in the middle of a valley dominated by the Gendere Çay and Yarpuzlu Çay and surrounded by limestone hills. Topographically, then, this location is similar to that of Nevalı Çori and an intensive survey in this area would seem very promising.

The second recent discovery is the site of Sefer Tepe, located in the western Viranşehir plain (Figs 1 and 9). To the west of the site, the Tektek mountains rise gently, to its north and east stretches the Viranşehir plain, and to the south a landscape of gentle, undulating limestone hills allows access to the Mesopotamian steppe. The site itself is 0.1 ha in size and the 6 m high mound is again set directly on limestone bedrock. It was discovered in the course of the Şanlıurfa Region Culture Inventory Project, with villagers using the T-shaped pillars as spolia. According to the surface material, Sefer Tepe possibly dates to the Early or Middle PPNB (Çelik 2006: 24). At the site, 18 T-shaped pillars have been discovered (Fig. 10), and just as at Karahan and Göbekli Tepe, the majority of pillars are buried. The nearest basalt sources are located 2 km to the north of the site, but Sefer Tepe has easy access to the Doğu Cırıp and Taşlık rivers, both tributaries of the Habur. To date, no nearby flint source has been discovered.

EXPLORING PPN SITE PREFERENCES

The above overview of T-shaped pillar sites discovered thus far in south east Anatolia provides several insights into preferred site locations as well as the range of natural resources typically associated with T-shaped pillar sites. The majority of sites are situated on the edge of the Harran plain (Göbekli Tepe, Karahan Tepe, Hamzan Tepe, Urfa Yeni Yol/Yeni Mahalle), either on limestone peaks (Göbekli Tepe, Karahan Tepe, Hamzan Tepe) or at the junction of two limestone ranges (Urfa Yeni Yol/Yeni Mahalle). However the examples of Nevalı Çori, Sefer Tepe and very likely Kilisik indicate that T-shaped pillar sites are not restricted to mountainous environments.

Silex was an important resource for lithic tool manufacture (Göbekli Tepe, Karahan Tepe, Hamzan Tepe, Nevalı Çori) and limestone was used for the production of stone artefacts and T-shaped pillars (Göbekli Tepe, Karahan Tepe, Hamzan Tepe, Urfa Yeni Yol/Yeni Mahalle, Nevalı Çori, Sefer Tepe). It would appear that there is a tight relationship between the distribution of limestone resources and T-shaped pillar sites (Fig. 1). The accessibility of water appears to have been a further variable in the choice of site location, although most of the palaeo-channels in the vicinity of these sites remain undated.

DISCUSSION

Strategic access to resources seems to have played an important role in the choice of site locations, especially with regard to primary building materials and raw materials for tool production – i.e. limestone and silex. The limestone bedrock itself was not only used for the extraction of building materials, it was used in situ to shape the landscape of these sites by cutting and drilling into it to create pools, cut marks and

architectural spaces such as Building E at Göbekli Tepe (Schmidt 2006: 107, fig. 35). Further, it is clear that the choice of site location on mountain peaks has something to do with the visibility of ritual buildings in the landscape (Schmidt 2005: 13). Numerous cross-cultural comparisons may be drawn for this PPN practice. Notably, T-shaped pillar sites appear on the edge of the Harran plain, yet not a single site yielding a T-shaped pillar has been found in the plain itself. However outside the Harran plain, the discoveries of Kilisik (though the site from where the pillar originates still remains unknown), Sefer Tepe, Urfa Yeni Yol/Yeni Mahalle, in addition to the well-known site of Nevalı Çori, demonstrate that the T-shaped pillar phenomenon was not restricted to mountainous locations, but that such sites also existed in valleys and plains. The question remains as to whether this is due to a lack of archaeological work, the poor visibility of such sites in the alluvial plain, or whether we are indeed looking at a real pattern in PPN site preferences on or near topographical high points and with particular resource requirements. If we consider the location of Neolithic sites more broadly, we find that four PPN sites have been discovered on the fringes of the Harran plain (Fig. 2), and only one, Gürcütepe which yielded PPN and PN levels (Beile-Bohn *et al.* 1998), is located in a more central location in the Harran plain. The Harran plain has been surveyed intensively for years (Yardimci 2004), and until now only Gürcütepe and five further PN settlements have been discovered compared to at least 130 Chalcolithic and 115 Early Bronze Age sites (Çelik 2008; Harmankaya and Erdogu 2002; Harmankaya *et al.* 1997, 1998; Yardimci 2004).

Alluviation and extensive settlement best explain the lack of PPN sites in the central parts of the Harran plain and other similar settings. Geomorphological investigations at Kazane Höyük (Section G-18), for instance, recorded one meter of alluviation during the Pottery Neolithic alone (Rosen 1998: fig. 10.5).³ At other sections (GS VIII and GS XI) up to 1.5 m of alluvial deposits were attested for the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age (Rosen 1998: fig. 10.6). The plains of south east Anatolia, moreover, have seen continuous settlement for millennia and any Pre-Pottery Neolithic sites would now be either buried by alluvium or overlain by later occupation. Urfa Yeni Yol/Yeni Mahalle, which lies underneath the modern city of Urfa, is a good case in point here, whilst Sefer Tepe has suffered much damage from modern agricultural activity. Moreover, the practice of burying special buildings in the Neolithic, while protecting them from the effects of weathering, makes it harder to detect these sites. In short, we think it highly possible that more PPN sites are buried under the alluvium and settlement layers of the Harran plain and around Urfa in the vicinity of limestone sources.

3 Rosen (1998: 229) notes that 'this particular fill has been preserved only at this one location and therefore cannot be used to sustain a broad interpretation'.

CONCLUSION

The presence of multiple PPN sites yielding T-shaped pillars strongly suggests that we are dealing with an extensive cultural complex. It appears that this complex tracks the natural resources needed to build T-shaped pillars i.e. the band of exposed Miocene limestone ridges that extends from the southeast in Ceylanpinar, and is bordered by the basalt plateau of Viranşehir in the northeast, to the Harran Plain in the west (Fig. 1). It also extends to the northwest to include the Urfa region and reaches as far as the Adyaman and Kahta plain. Given the distribution of known sites and their spatial relationship to limestone resources, we argue that additional sites yielding T-shaped pillars must be situated along this band and in the adjacent plains.

Our preliminary results moreover indicate that there appears to be a difference in the function of sites depending on their geographic situation. Göbekli Tepe and Karahan Tepe, both located in the mountains and of much larger extent than the lowland sites, are characterized by a higher number of special-purpose buildings with T-shaped pillars. So far, domestic structures at Göbekli Tepe are restricted to the east part of the excavations (Schmidt 2006: 168, fig. 76: L9-79, L9-88, L9-89, L9-97, L9-98, L9-99). The density of T-shaped pillars at Karahan Tepe is similarly high. In contrast, Nevalı Çori revealed only one special-purpose building containing T-shaped pillars at the edge of the settlement. It would be interesting to see, whether T-shaped pillars show a similar spatial pattern in other lowland sites such as at Sefer Tepe. While it remains to be seen whether there is a chronological element contributing to these differences between highland and lowland sites, the preliminary observations presented in this paper are provocative and future excavations at these sites would without doubt provide important further insights.

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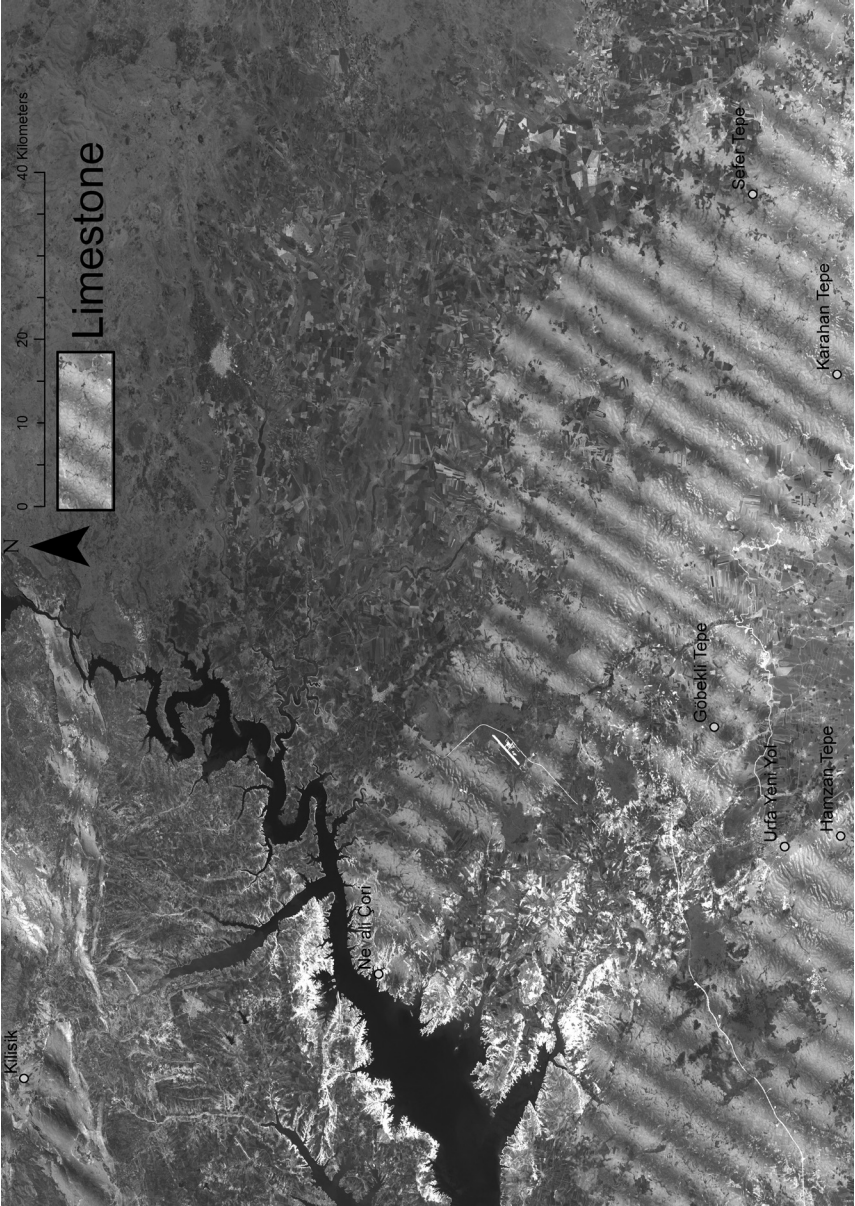


Fig. 1. T-shaped pillar sites in the landscape around Urfa.

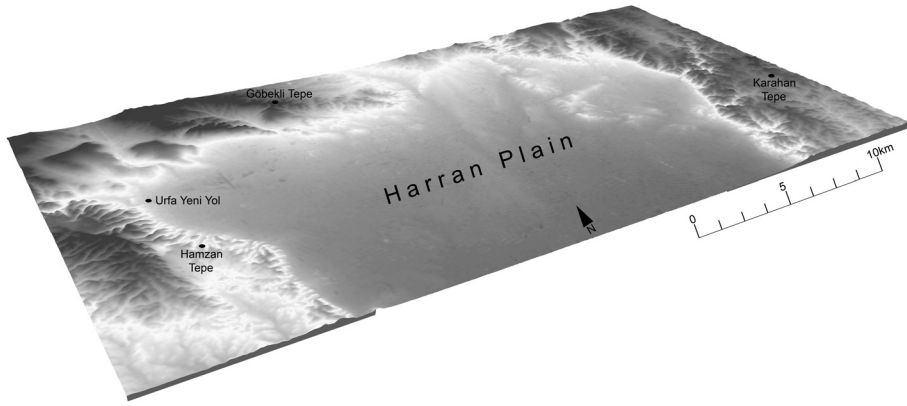


Fig. 2: T-shaped pillar sites in the landscape around the Harran Plain.



Fig. 3: Pillar with snake in relief, Karahan Tepe.
(Photo: Çelik)



Fig. 4: Unfinished T-shaped pillar at Karahan Tepe.

(Photo: Çelik)



Fig. 5: Part of a pillar at Hamzan Tepe.

(Photo: Çelik)



Fig. 6: Parts of a stone wall at Hamzan Tepe.

(Photo: Çelik)



Fig. 7: Part of a Pillar from Urfa.

(Photo: Çelik)

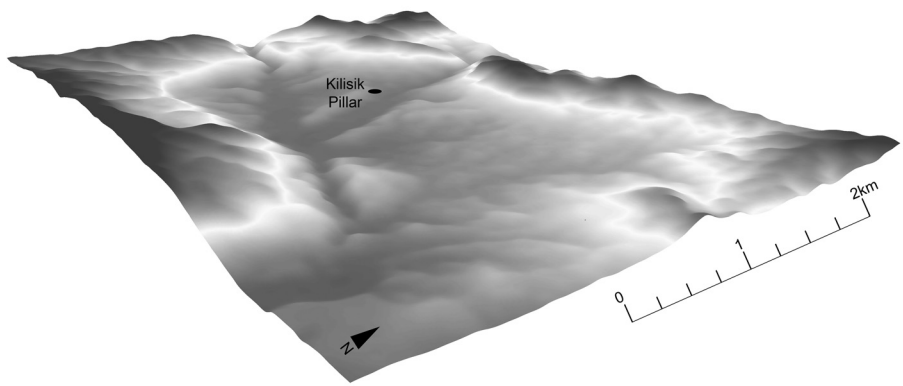


Fig. 8: Topography of the area where the Kilisk pillar was bought.

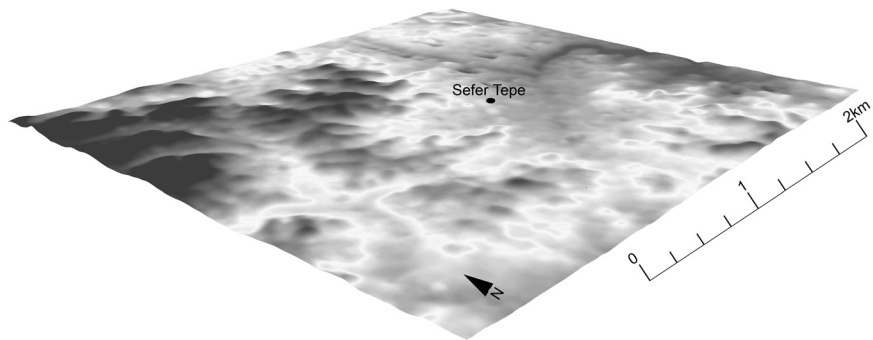


Fig. 9: Topography of the Sefer Tepe area.

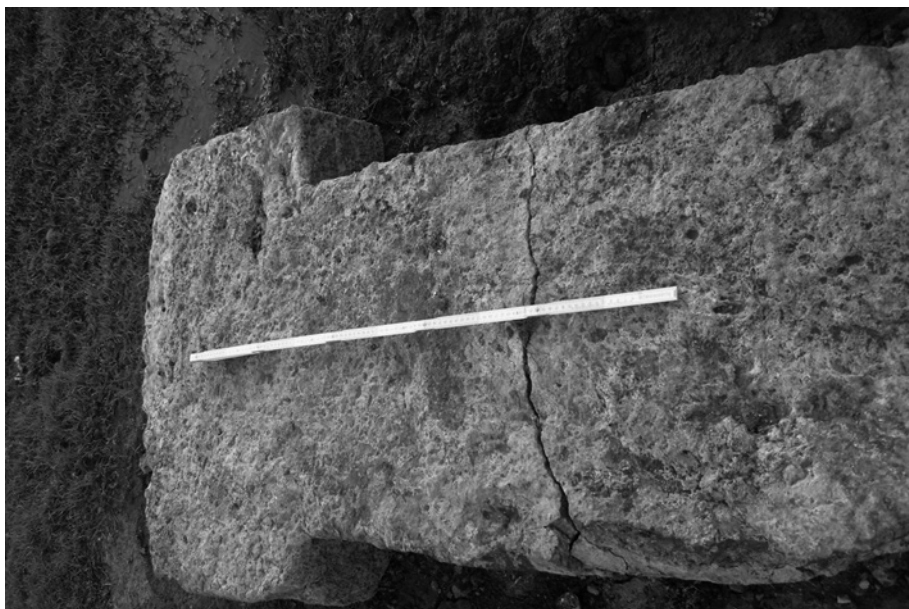


Fig. 10: T-shaped pillar at Sefer Tepe.
(Photo: Moetz)