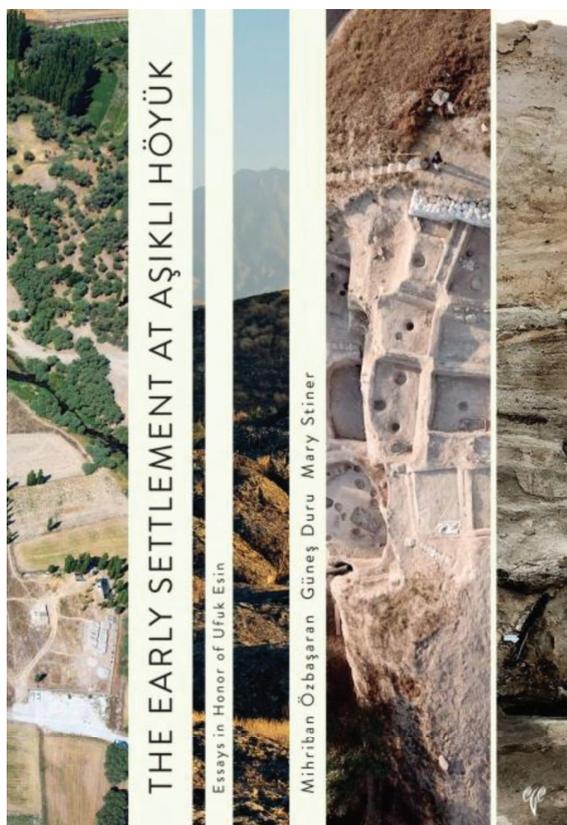


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Review of Mihriban Özbaşaran, Güneş Duru, and Mary C. Stiner, 2018. *The Early Settlement at Aşıklı Höyük. Essays in Honor of Ufuk Esin*. Istanbul: Ege Yayınları. ISBN: 978-2-271-08740-9.



“We began organizing a new program of investigation at the site in 2006, and we commenced new excavations in 2010 with the aim of pursuing a more detailed understanding of trends first identified by Prof. Esin and exploring more deeply what remained to be learned about Aşıklı. We attempted to understand the individual actions and ‘snapshots’ from the daily life of the inhabitants with our revised approach and methodology [...] The revival of the project has also allowed younger generations to be trained in many aspects of archaeology.”

These sentences at the beginning, at the end of the second paragraph of the preface summarise the aim of the international, third-term excavations and studies at Aşıklı Höyük under the direction of Mihriban Özbaşaran. (Our friend and colleague Prof. Ç. Nur Balkan-Atlı, former director of the second-term Aşıklı Höyük excavations, passed away on 10th, April 2019. We are deeply sorry.)

The monograph starts with a broad introduction to the Aşıklı Höyük Project and is followed by fifteen essays on different areas of research. A comprehensive conclusion and a rich bibliography are completing the volume.

The volume contains the results of scientific investigations by international teams on the site’s

geomorphological setting, ¹⁴C dating, architecture, micromorphology, multi-element characterization, phytolith analysis, archaeobotany, zooarchaeology, chipped stone industry, beads (ornament materials), and physical anthropology. As attested by the team members, Aşıklı Höyük seems to be “one of the most intensively studied early Pre-Pottery Neolithic sites in Southwest Asia” (437 and back cover).

- M. Özbaşaran and G. Duru, “Introduction to the Aşıklı Höyük Project” (1-14) is divided, after a short introduction, into three sub-titles as: History of Research; The Core Team and Participants; Support for the Aşıklı Höyük Project.

- C. Kuzucuoğlu and her team, J.-P. Dumoulin, and S. Saulnier-Copard present the “Geomorphological and Paleoenvironmental Setting of Aşıklı Höyük” (15-42). The essay on this long-term study increases our knowledge about the formation of the Melendiz River valley during the Late Quaternary, and the impact of the river system and the surroundings on Aşıklı Höyük’s early Pre-Pottery settlement.

- J. Quade, M.C. Stiner, A. Copeland, E.E. Clark and M. Özbaşaran’s “Summary of Carbon-14 Dating of the Cultural Levels of Aşıklı Höyük” (43-56) deals with earlier and newly obtained 77 radiocarbon dates, mostly from the deep soundings of Area 4GH and from the west face Area 2JK. As a result of these dates, the duration of the early Pre-Pottery occupation of the site (Levels 2-4) has been fixed from 8350 to 7350 calBCE.

- M. Özbaşaran, G. Duru, and M. Uzduzum, “Architecture of the Early Settlement and Trends Through the Cultural Sequence” (57-103): The aim of Aşıklı Höyük’s third term investigations (2010-2017) is summarized as: “The new program of fieldwork and research, begun in 2010, seeks to understand the whole developmental process at Aşıklı, gathering as much information as possible about the early habitation levels while ensuring data comparability to the Level 2 settlement” (57). Under “Methods” a discussion of the excavation system of Prof. Ufuk Esin is presented, followed by the explanation of modified excavation and recording methods and strategies applied by the new program’s team. The stratigraphical and chronological discussion concentrates mostly on the architectural and contextual formation of Aşıklı’s early Levels 5-4 subterranean buildings, external and extramural activity areas at the deep soundings in Area 4GH, and on the west face of step trench Area 2JK. Beside the deep sounding and the step trench on the west side, elsewhere on the mound, the early levels of the habitation are buried under the accumulation of Levels 3-2 (59, Fig.1). For the reader’s better understanding, this chapter is divided into sub-chapters: Area 4GH architectural characteristics in Levels 5, 4, and 3; Level 5 in Area 4GH; Level 3 in Area 4GH; Area 2JK architectural characteristics: “Lower Early Habitation” levels in Area 2JK; “Upper Early Habitation” levels in Area 2JK; discussion and concluding remarks.

There are three innovative archaeometrical studies in this volume:

- “Micromorphological Analyses of Anthropogenic Materials and Insights into Tell Formation Processes at Aşıklı Höyük, 2008-2012 Field Seasons” by S.M. Mentzer (105-128): “*Micromorphology is a well-established technique for investigating anthropogenic sediments and materials, as well as their depositional processes and post-depositional transformations*” (105).

- “Multi-Element Characterization of Floors at Aşıklı Höyük: Contribution to the Identification of Activities and Activity Areas” by F. Kalkan and R. Özbal (129-145): “*...the research conducted here as part of the chemical characterisation of floor sediments contributes to a growing picture of how spaces may have been used by the Aşıklı inhabitants*” (129).

- “The Microscopic Record of Aşıklı Höyük: Phytolith Analysis of Material from the 2012-2016 Field Seasons” by G. Tsartsidou (147-189): “*Phytoliths are microscopic mineral particles composed of amorphous silica (opal), which developed in the cellular system of living plants (Piperno 2006). Opal impregnates the cell walls, intercellular spaces, or even whole cells of the plants and replicates the cell morphology. When the organic material is lost, this mineral replica constitutes an invaluable record of the plants used at a site*” (147).

An essay by M. Ergun, M. Tengberk, G. Willcox and C. Douche, “Plants of Aşıklı Höyük and Changes through Time: First Archaeobotanical Results from the 2010-2014 Excavation Seasons” (191-217) throws light not only on the early form of plant, respectively cereal and pulse domestication, but also on the collection of wild plants like fruits and nuts which were supplementary to the daily diet.

“Phytolith analysis” and “Plants of Aşıklı Höyük” are complementary papers and assist a better understanding and modelling of the PPN surroundings/natural setting of Aşıklı Höyük.

For the site’s early PPN socio-economy, the understanding of plant and animal domestication is crucial. In this volume, four principal papers by four teams concern zooarchaeological studies:

- M.C. Stiner, K.S. Bailey, N.D. Munro and R. Christidou, “Spatial and Zooarchaeological Evidence of Human-Animal Interactions in the PPN Settlement at Aşıklı Höyük” (219-257). The best summary of this research is given in the sentence: “*A holistic consideration of human–animal interactions based on taphonomic, ecological, zooarchaeological, and spatial data provides unique information on how human alterations to the domestic environment set the stage for a complex future of biotic interactions with a wide range of animal species*” (220).

- K.S. Bailey, “The Taphonomic Context of the Aşıklı Höyük Microfaunal Assemblage: Emergence of Pest-Host and Commensal Relationships” (259-280). Bailey summarizes the goal of her research as: “*My research investigates the distribution and taphonomic context of small rodent and amphibian remains in a formative village setting. The goal is to inform our understanding of changes in human subsistence practices, from*

predominantly wild to cultivated resources, and changes in the human-built environment during the Pre-Pottery Neolithic” (260).

- H. Buitenhuis, J. Peters, N. Pöllath, M.C. Stiner, N.D. Munro and Ö. Sarıtaş, “The Faunal Remains from Levels 3 and 2 of Aşıklı Höyük: Evidence for Emerging Management Practices” (281-323): “*In conclusion the Aşıklı faunal record testifies to the development of a stable long-term exploitation pattern of sheep and goat that qualifies as intentional management. Although some of the data suggest that sheep and goats at Aşıklı were on the way to being domesticated [...]*” (322).

- J. Peters, F. Neuberger, I. Wiechmann, M. Zimmermann, M. Balasse and N. Pöllath, “Shaping the Sheep: Human Management and Decision-making at Aşıklı Höyük, Central Anatolia” (325-344). The interim result of the investigation is summarized as: “*In sum, with its possibility of statistical hypothesis testing using single osteological as well as biomolecular markers or combinations thereof, the large well-dated caprine bone assemblage excavated at Aşıklı Höyük is destined to become a cornerstone for ungulate domestication research in general and for the cultural history of sheep and goat domestication in Central Anatolia in particular. Further work is needed to confirm or refuse our model that the early Neolithic inhabitants of Central Anatolia paved the way for successful husbandry of caprines in western and north-western Anatolia and ultimately in Europe as well*” (343-344).

Two contributions are concerned with obsidian studies:

- L. Astruc presented “Obsidian Use during Level 4 Occupations at Aşıklı Höyük” (345-362).

- N. Kayacan and Ç. Altınbilek Algül present “Aşıklı Höyük Obsidian Studies: Production, Use and Diachronic Changes” (363-382).

Both papers discuss the recourses, tool production practices, typology, and use ware. Kayacan and Altınbilek–Algül also direct special attention to “The new program of obsidian studies” at Aşıklı Höyük (365-366).

- “The Beads from Aşıklı Höyük” by S. Yelözer (383-404) is another important paper about use of organic and mineral raw materials. The author explains the aim of the study as: “*The present paper summarizes evidence on the raw materials, colours and types of beads, and it discusses the implications of changes in ornamentation through time at Aşıklı Höyük*” (383).

The last two papers of the volume are on physical anthropology:

- Ö.D. Erdal, “Lifestyle and Health Conditions of the Neolithic People of Aşıklı Höyük” (405-423);

- B. Hassett, “Childhood Growth Disruptions at Aşıklı Höyük” (425-436).

Aşıklı Höyük is very rich in intramural burials. Formal burials, human skeletal remains and burial gifts provide principal insights for demography and other fields. Reflections on sedentism, change of lifestyle, increase of population, and new nutrition habits are presented and discussed in these papers.

- M.C. Stiner, M. Özbaşaran and G. Duru, "Conclusion" (437-443) - Bibliography (445-484).

Where and when Neolithisation started remain recurrent questions of the Near East/ Southwest Asian Prehistory. Did it really begin, as many archaeologists claim, in the "Fertile Crescent" and expanded from there westwards as a colonisation? Was Central Anatolia a secondary nucleus of this movement, a bridge on the way to Europe? Without giving a clear answer, the studies of Mihriban Özbaşaran and her team at Aşıklı Höyük add new aspects to these questions. They can rely on a long tradition of pioneers who set major milestones for the Neolithic research in Turkey.

Beside national and international research in conventional archaeology, in 1963 the Department of Prehistory with the Joint Project between the Istanbul University (H. Çambel), and Chicago Oriental Institute (R. J. Braidwood) (Surveys and Çayönü Excavation) combined not only the natural sciences with archaeology but opened the door for the PPN studies in a greater frame (Çambel *et al.* 1980).

Starting in 1989, the large scale excavations at Aşıklı Höyük under the direction of Ufuk Esin threw light on the Central Anatolian PPN with solid archaeological results for the first time. With her early works on archaeometallurgy and Neolithisation, Esin is also one of the pioneers on these subjects in Turkey.

During her own excavations at Niğde Kömürcü Kaletepe and at Aşıklı Höyük, Nur Balkan, who directed the second term excavations at Aşıklı Höyük, trained many young students like N. Kayacan and Ç. Altınbilek-Algül, partly with the help of her French colleagues on chipped stone industries. During the

early years of the excavations, Güneş Duru came as a young student to Aşıklı and became later member of the research team. Many young students (M. Ergün, Ö. Sarıtaş, S. Yelözer) have also been supported during the third term Aşıklı excavations. The new publication continues this tradition of long-term researches which made Aşıklı Höyük one of the key-sites for the Neolithisation in Turkey and in the Near East.

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