
Aşikli Höyük Pre-Pottery Neolithic site in central Anatolia (c. 10400-c. 9300 cal BP): what role played climate in the development of the site and, later, in Pottery Neolithic birth in the region ?

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Résumé

Located in central Anatolia, Aşikli Höyük is a very important site for studies about emergence of sedentary life in the Near East, as well as for the development of animal and plant exploitation during the Pre-Pottery Neolithic (PPN). The site is positioned in a river valley collecting water from > 3000 m highlands. Occupied during 1000 years from c. 8400 BC (c. 10400 yrs ago) on, it is the most long-lived PPN site excavated in Anatolia . Spanning 1000 years until it is abandoned c. 7300 BC (c. 7350 yrs ago), it is a very important key site for understanding not only the development of PPN societies in the Near East but also (2) the importance of local and regional scales in the relationships of these populations with their environments and the global climate, as well as (3) the time variability of these relationships. This case raises several questions: 1) How such a resilient society has been able to develop steadily ? 2) What happened c. 9300 years ago that made a thousand people population leave the site? 3) Where did they go, and why there?

Possible answers enlighten the role of climate change. A regional-scaled change is evidenced, which generated new environments -hence new resources at other locations than the valley occupied by Aşikli Höyük. Meanwhile, a cultural change may have occurred toward a "need for the society to change". A saturation point may have been reached in economic activities (specialization on sheep), while the physical capacity of the site to grow was limited for new practices and for population further expansion. Hypotheses presented are based on cores through the site and valley, and on comparisons with palaeoenvironmental records from other geographic areas where the foundation of Pottery Neolithic sites occurred c. 7000 BC (c. 9000 cal BP).

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