

## NEW PRE-POTTERY NEOLITHIC SETTLEMENTS FROM VİRANŞEHİR DISTRICT

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*Keywords: Round Planned Buildings • “T” Shaped Pillar • Sefer Tepe • Kocanizam • Başaran Höyük  
• Herzo Tepe • Pre-Pottery Neolithic Period.*

**Abstract:** In the present study, the Neolithic Period settlements at Başaran Höyük, Başaran-Herzo Tepe and Kocanizam Tepe located within the provincial borders of Şanlıurfa province Viranşehir district. The properties of all settlements pertaining to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period are unearthened and significant findings are encountered as regards the civil architecture of that era. Arranged in the north-south direction and founded with 3-5 km intervals, such settlements revealed a unique property never encountered in the region before. Sefer Tepe settlement, which is already discovered and possessing identical properties with the Pre-Pottery Neolithic Period settlements, such as Nevali Çori, Göbekli Tepe and Karahan Tepe, containing “T” shaped pillars, is further examined under the scope of the present study. Başaran Höyük, Başaran-Herzo Tepesi and Kocanizam Tepe are discovered recently during the cultural inventory studies conducted in 2011.

### VİRANŞEHİR İLÇESİNDEN YENİ ÇANAK ÇÖMLEKSİZ NEOLİTİK DÖNEM YERLEŞİMLERİ

*Anabtar Kelimeler: Yuvarlak Planlı Yapılar • “T” Şeklinde Dikmetaş • Sefer Tepe • Kocanizam  
• Başaran Höyük • Herzo Tepe • Çanak Çömlüksüz Neolitik Dönem.*

**Özet:** Bu çalışmada, Şanlıurfa ili Viranşehir ilçesi sınırları içerisinde yer alan Başaran Höyük, Başaran-Herzo Tepesi ve Kocanizam Tepesi’nde bulunan Neolitik dönem yerleşimleri incelenmiştir. Yerleşimlerin tümünün Çanak Çömlüksüz Neolitik döneme ait özellikleri ortaya çıkartılmış ve dönemin sivil mimarisi hakkında önemli bulgulara rastlanmıştır. Kuzey-güney yönünde dizilmiş ve 3-5 km aralıklarla kurulmuş olan bu yerleşimler bölgede benzeri görülmemeyen bir özelliği ortaya çıkarmıştır. Daha önce tespit edilmiş olan ve içinde “T” şeklinde dikmetaşların yer aldığı Nevali Çori, Göbekli Tepe ve Karahan Tepe gibi Çanak Çömlüksüz Neolitik döneme ait merkezlerle benzer özelliklere sahip Sefer Tepe yerleşimi de bu araştırma kapsamında tekrar incelenmiştir. Başaran Höyük, Başaran-Herzo Tepesi ve Kocanizam Tepesi, 2011 yılında yapılan kültürel envanter çalışmaları sırasında ilk kez keşfedilmiştir.

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## Introduction

Viranşehir is a district of Şanlıurfa province located 91 km east of the province. The sole mountain of the region, *Karacadağ* with an altitude of 1957 m, is located at the northern border. When we consider the geological formation of the region, we see that the northern section of the region presents a structure formed by basaltic rocks while the southern and south-eastern sections presents a carstic structure. Other areas in the region, on the other hand, comprise of meadows and low plateaus.

There are more areas with water at Viranşehir region compared to other regions of Şanlıurfa province. *Aşağı Cırcıp* and *Yukarı Cırcıp* creeks rising from *Karacadağ* and flowing in the north-south direction are considered amongst the significant water sources of Viranşehir region. Apart from these creeks, there is abundant number of water springs at the southern mountainside of *Karacadağ* at the northern sections of the region. Starting from spring, the drought starts to prevail in Viranşehir region accommodating wide fields serving as pastureland.

Sefer Tepe (Yukarı Darik Harabesi) settlement from Pre-Pottery Neolithic period was discovered during the inventory studies carried out at Viranşehir district in 2003<sup>1</sup>. During the in-

ventory studies<sup>2</sup> carried out throughout the region in 2011, on the other hand, three other Pre-Pottery Neolithic period settlements are also discovered in addition to this settlement (Map 1). Furthermore, another Neolithic settlement site in the vicinity of Başbük village of Siverek district, approximately 27 km northwest of Sefer Tepe settlement, is also examined under the scope of this project<sup>3</sup>.

## Başaran Höyük

Başaran Höyük is located inside Başaran village, 30 km southwest of Viranşehir (Fig. 1). Sefer Tepe (Yukarı Darik Harabesi)<sup>4</sup>, which was discovered before and dated for Pre-Pottery Neolithic period, is located 5 km south of the settlement. Located at 652 m altitude above sea level, the mound is an elevated and conical mound created on a calcareous hill and the cemetery of the village, which is currently in use, is present on the mound. The mound covers approximately 20 decare area. With the village settlement located south, the mound is surrounded with natural caves and caves constructed in the Byzantium period. The closest water source to the settlement site is 5.5 km north of the settlement. The closest basalt source, on the other hand, is located approximately 6 km north of the settlement.

<sup>1</sup> The Project Executive of the inventory study: Prof. Dr. Abdüsselam Uluçam, Name of the Project: Project for Social and Cultural History of Turkey, Project for Inventory of the Cultural Assets in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia Regions. Institutions Supporting the Project: State Planning Organization, Turkish Historical Society, Project Duration: 1996-2007.

<sup>2</sup> These studies were conducted under the scope of TÜBİTAK (No. 110K533) project entitled "Determination, Inventory and Assessment of the Immovable Cultural Assets in Şanlıurfa Province and Districts of the Province." We hereby present our acknowledgements to Mr. Celalettin Güvenç, the Governor of Şanlıurfa, Mr. Muhammed Lütfi Kotan, the District Governor of Viranşehir.

<sup>3</sup> Çelik et al.2011, 225-236.

<sup>4</sup> Kürkçüoğlu – Karahan Kara 2005, 62-63; Çelik 2006a, 23-25.

During the studies conducted at Başaran Höyük, ceramics from Bronze Age, Iron Age and Byzantium periods are also discovered in addition to the findings from Pre-Pottery Neolithic period. The findings from Pre-Pottery Neolithic period rather comprise of blades, flakes and waste productions made of flint. The flints are principally light and dark brown, beige and gray in color. Arrowheads, scrapers, perforators and crested blades are the lithic tools discovered from this period (Draw. 1, a-i). Apart from the foregoing, blade pieces made of obsidian are also encountered, although scarcely (Draw. 1, j).

In particular, cut-outs in groups with approximately 10-15 cm diameter and 10 cm depth are determined on the bedrock located around the mound (Fig. 2). Counterparts of such cut-outs chiseled at the bedrock present identical properties with the cut-outs already known from Göbekli Tepe<sup>5</sup>, Hamzan Tepe<sup>6</sup>, and Karahan Tepe<sup>7</sup> settlements and employed for pool construction technique.

The arrowheads discovered at Başaran Höyük share a great similarity with the arrowheads discovered at Karahan Tepe<sup>8</sup> and Sefer Tepe<sup>9</sup> both in terms of size and form. Such type of small-sized arrowheads is the arrowheads also

known as *Nemrik*<sup>10</sup> and Byblos type arrowheads<sup>11</sup> and dated to the early Pre-Pottery Neolithic period<sup>12</sup>.

Presence of cut-out groups chiseled on the bedrocks surrounding the mound and used for pool construction technique and the *Nemrik* and *Byblos* arrowheads indicates that Başaran Höyük settlement is most probably inhabited at the end of late Pre-Pottery Neolithic A Period (*LPPNA*) and early Pre-Pottery Neolithic B period (*EPPNB*).

### **Başaran- Herzo Tepe**

Herzo Tepe is located 28 km southeast of Viranşehir, 2 km north of Başaran village and 3.5 km south of Sefer Tepe. The settlement site founded on a calcareous hill covers approximately 5 decare surface area. The settlement presents a low and ample structure (Fig. 3). The closest water source to the settlement site is 4 km north of the settlement. The closest basalt source, on the other hand, is located approximately 4.5 km north of the settlement.

A large proportion of the settlement is destroyed due to agricultural activities and construction of rock-cut tombs from early Byzantium period. The studies conducted on the surface revealed pottery from early Byzantium period as well as hand-made straw tempered ceramic pieces and findings from Pre-Pottery Neolithic

<sup>5</sup> Beile-Bohn et al. 1998, 47-50, Abb. 20; Hauptmann 1999, Fig. 32.

<sup>6</sup> Çelik 2004, 3, Fig. 2-3; Çelik 2006b, 222, Fig. 3-4; Çelik 2010, 259, Fig. 6.

<sup>7</sup> Çelik 2000b, 7; Çelik 2011, 259, Fig. 18-21.

<sup>8</sup> Çelik 2011, 244-245, Fig. 18/4-9, Fig. 19/1-8.

<sup>9</sup> Çelik 2006a, 24, Fig. 4 b-d.

<sup>10</sup> Göbekli Tepe, Schmidt 2001, 52, Fig. 10/4, 6; Chiekh Hassan, Abbes 1993, Fig. 8.10; Mureybet IVb, Cauvin 1994, Fig. 24.1, 3; Iraq-Nemric, Kozłowski – Szymczak 1989, 32, Fig 2.

<sup>11</sup> Cafer Höyük, Cauvin 1994, Fig. 26.3; Nevalı Çori, Schmidt 1988, 171-174, Abb. 11/1-6, Abb. 12/1-3.

<sup>12</sup> Cauvin 1994, 78-79, Fig. 24.2.

period. Such findings rather comprise of blades, flakes, waste productions, unipolar and bipolar cores, all made of flint. The flints are principally light and dark brown, beige and gray in color. Arrowheads, scrapers, perforators, crested blades and blades with silica sheen are the lithic tools discovered from this period (Draw. 2, c-d, f-g; 3, a-f). Apart from the foregoing, blade pieces made of obsidian are also encountered, although scarcely (Draw. 2, e). When discovered lithic tools are examined, small-size *Nemrik* arrowheads (Draw. 3, b-f) are rather seen, except for one *Byblos* type arrowhead (Draw. 3, a). Furthermore, grinding stones and pestle pieces made of basalt are also observed at the settlement.

The ruin of a round planned building is encountered at the area located east of the settlement (Fig. 4). This structure is formed by erecting large flat stones in a perpendicular manner. The diameter of this structure is around 5 m. The most identical resemblance of this round-planned structure is well-known from Hamzan Tepe<sup>13</sup>. The round-planned building discovered at Hamzan Tepe settlement is also constructed likewise, by erection of large flat stones in a perpendicular manner. Other round-planned buildings in the region bearing the properties of civil architecture from same age are well-known from Çayönü<sup>14</sup>,

Hallan Çemi<sup>15</sup>, Gusir Höyük<sup>16</sup> and Körtük Tepe<sup>17</sup> settlements<sup>18</sup>.

The round-planned building located at Herzo Tepe and the *Nemrik* type arrowheads discovered at the surface of this structure necessitates dating of the settlement to the end of Pre-Pottery Neolithic Period A (*LPPNA*) and early Pre-Pottery Neolithic Period B (*EPPNB*).

### Kocanizam Tepe

Kocanizam Tepe is located inside Kocanizam village, 27 km west of Viranşehir and 3 km north of Sefer Tepe. The settlement site dated to the Pre-Pottery Neolithic period and early Byzantium period is beneath Kocanizam village (Fig. 5). Kocanizam settlement is founded on a calcareous rocky hill and is at approximately 653 m. altitude above sea level and covers approximately 10 decare surface area. The closest water source to the settlement site is 1.5 km east of the settlement. The closest basalt source, on the other hand, is located approximately 1 km east of the settlement.

During the studies conducted at the settlement site, ceramics and architectural ruins from early Byzantium age as well as blades, flakes and waste production made of flint and unipolar and bipolar cores that can be dated back to Pre-Pottery Neolithic period discovered (Draw. 4, a-b). The flints are principally light and dark brown, beige and gray in color. The most significant lithic artifacts are the *Nemrik* type ar-

<sup>13</sup> Çelik 2010, 259, Fig. 3-4.

<sup>14</sup> Erim-Özdoğan 2011, 191-193, Fig. 6, 9.

<sup>15</sup> Rosenberg 2011, 61-63, Fig. 2-6.

<sup>16</sup> Karul 2011, 2-4, Fig. 4, 5, 11.

<sup>17</sup> Özkaya and Coşkun 2011, 90-93, Fig. 2-5.

<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, for more detailed information please see Sicker-Akman 2001, 389-394.



rowheads, scrapers, blades with silica sheen and backed blade pieces (Draw. 5, a-d; 4, c-e). Furthermore, blade pieces made of obsidian are also encountered (Draw. 4, f-g). Moreover, grinding stones and pestle pieces made of basalt are also observed at the settlement.

A calcareous stone estimated to be the body of a “T” shaped pillar is unearthed at an illegal excavation site made at the center of the settlement area. The stone is flat and chiseled to rectangular shape with both short edges in broken condition (Fig. 6).

The Neolithic settlement located inside Kocanizam village must most probably be dated to the end of Pre-Pottery Neolithic A Period (*LPPNA*) and early Pre-Pottery Neolithic B Period (*EPPNB*) to the *Nemrik* arrowheads discovered at the surface and the calcareous stone estimated to be a part of a “T” shaped pillar.

### Sefer Tepe (Yukarı Darik Harabesi)

Sefer Tepe is a small sized broad and shallow mound located 25 km west of Viranşehir, approximately 72 km east of Şanlıurfa, within the modern province borders of Viranşehir (Fig. 7). The mound is located at 600 m altitude above sea level and covers approximately 7 decare surface area. Only one country house is present at the southeastern corner of the settlement. The closest water source to the settlement site is *Yukarı Cırcıp* creek, located 1.5 km east. The geological structure of the settlement site is calcareous and the closest basalt source is 1 km east of the settlement.

The most intriguing aspect of Sefer Tepe settlement site is the discovery of 16 *in situ* “T” shaped pillars at the settlement<sup>19</sup>. Majority of the pillars is buried to the ground and placed side-by-side in conjugate formation (Fig. 8). The upper sections of such pillars above the surface are approximately 50 cm long and 20 cm wide. The pillars are placed in conjugate formation with approximately 1.5 up to 2 m intervals. With this positioning, the pillars share great similarity with the monolithic *in-situ* pillars at Göbekli Tepe<sup>20</sup> Layer II architecture and the pillars located at the surface of Karahan Tepe<sup>21</sup>. Moreover, there is one further pillar revealed during construction of the country house located at southeastern corner of the settlement. This pillar is secured as intact (Fig. 9). The approximate length of the pillar is 198 cm; the width of the head section is 72 cm, and the width of the body section is 54 cm and the thickness is 25 cm. The head section of this stele with no relief or engraving is extremely flattened. This unearthed pillar possesses identical features with the pillars discovered at Nevalı Çori, Göbekli Tepe, Karahan Tepe, Hamzan Tepe and Taşlı Tepe.

No ceramic findings are discovered at Sefer Tepe settlement site and the findings rather comprise of flint and obsidian. Flint is seven times more numerous than obsidian. Arrowheads, perforators, end scrapers and blades with silica sheen are discovered amongst lithic tools. Among obsidian finds, only one scraper could be

<sup>19</sup> Çelik 2006a, 23-25.

<sup>20</sup> Schmidt 2002, 8, Fig. 7. Stele positions at excavations no L 10-71, L 9-80, L 9-55 and L 9-56.

<sup>21</sup> Çelik 2000b, 6-7; Çelik 2011, 241-242, Fig. 7.

identified while others are blade fragments and flakes. The flint items reflect the properties of Pre-Pottery Neolithic implement typology. When we examine the arrowheads made of flint in particular, we observe Byblos type arrowheads and unidentified arrowheads, only distal and proximal sections of which are well-preserved<sup>22</sup>. It is possible to encounter identical arrowheads at Göbekli Tepe<sup>23</sup>, Nevalı Çori<sup>24</sup>, Şanlıurfa-Yeni Mahalle<sup>25</sup> and Karahan Tepe<sup>26</sup>.

A meadow known as Viranşehir plain extends to the north and east of Sefer Tepe settlement. Sefer Tepe settlement is located approximately 20 km to Karahan Tepe, 28 km to Taşlı Tepe, approximately 50 km to Göbekli Tepe, and approximately 63 km to Şanlıurfa-Yeni Mahalle and Hamzan Tepe<sup>27</sup>. Sefer Tepe settlement must most probably be dated to early Pre-Pottery Neolithic Period B (*EPPNB*) as it presents identical features with Layer II of Göbekli Tepe.

### Conclusion

The distance between Başaran Höyük, Herzo Tepe, Kocanizam Tepe and Sefer Tepe settlements varies in the range of 2 to 8 km. Furthermore, all four settlements align in succession in north-south direction. Sefer Tepe settlement accommodating “T” shaped pillars is in

the middle of other settlements with distance to the settlements varying in the range of 3 to 5 km. This situation points out to a settlement style not encountered before at Pre-Pottery Neolithic period settlements.

The settlements from early stages of Pre-Pottery Neolithic period are generally founded on or at the slope of high plateaus in the region. Likewise, Başaran Höyük, Herzo Tepe and Kocanizam Tepe settlements are settlements founded on high plateaus and on the bedrock. This style of settlement tradition is already known in the region from Sefer Tepe, Taşlı Tepe, Karahan Tepe, Göbekli Tepe, Şanlıurfa-Yeni Mahalle and Hamzan Tepe Pre-Pottery Neolithic settlements.

Round-planned civil architecture buildings are not yet discovered at any of the settlements in the region characterized with “T” shaped pillars. Presence of round-planned structures constructed for civil purposes encountered at Herzo Tepe and Hamzan Tepe is important as it illustrates that two different architectural traditions were used in the region during Pre-Pottery Neolithic period. Existence of settlements featuring the properties of cult centers, such as Göbekli Tepe, Karahan Tepe, Taşlı Tepe and Sefer Tepe, discovered during the studies conducted to the present day suggests that civil settlements must also be present in the region. Başaran Höyük, Kocanizam Tepe and Herzo Tepe might be Pre-Pottery Neolithic settlements which are founded very close to each other and featuring the properties of civil architecture. Sefer Tepe settlement, which features the properties of the cult center, on the other hand is

<sup>22</sup> Çelik 2006a, 25, Fig. 4; Çelik 2005, 171-189, Lev.92-93.

<sup>23</sup> Beile-Bohn et al. 1998, Abb. 23/3; Schmidt 2001, 52, Fig. 10/3, Fig. 11/5.

<sup>24</sup> Schmidt 1988, Abb. 8/5.

<sup>25</sup> Çelik 2000a, Fig. 5/2.

<sup>26</sup> Çelik 2000b, Fig. 4a.

<sup>27</sup> These distances are calculated as the crow flies. The distance between the settlements via modern highway network is longer.

founded at the center of these settlements. By virtue of the systematic research studies, it would be possible to encounter and discover many settlements in the region representing the civil architecture tradition as well as the settlements featuring the properties of a cult center.

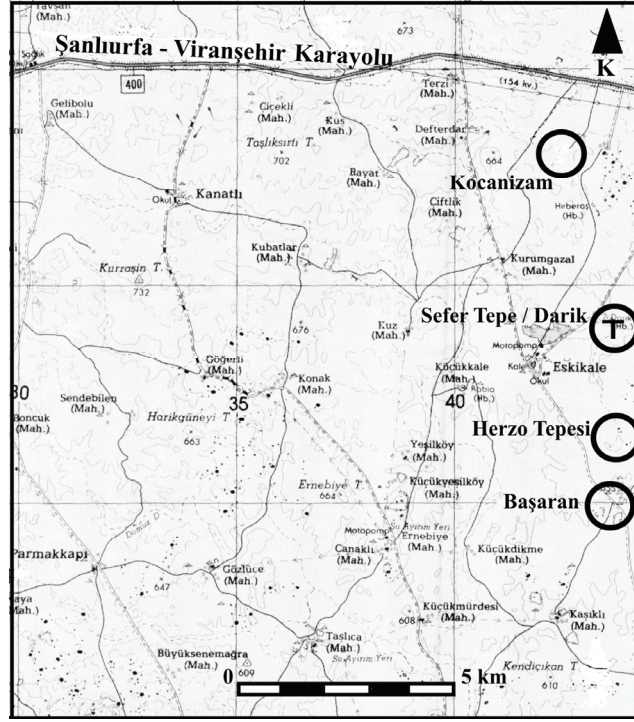
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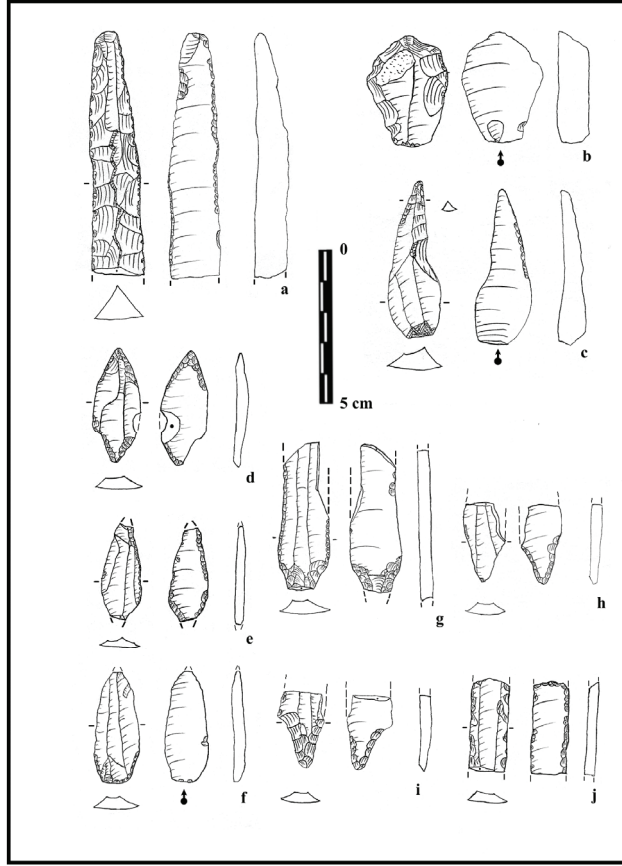


Harita / Map 1

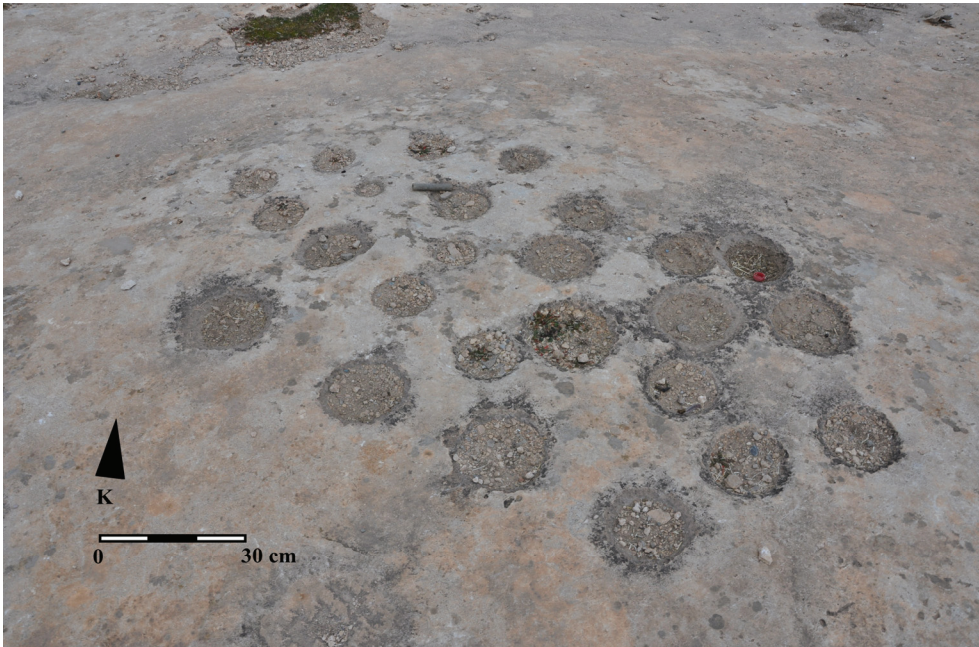


Resim / Figure 1





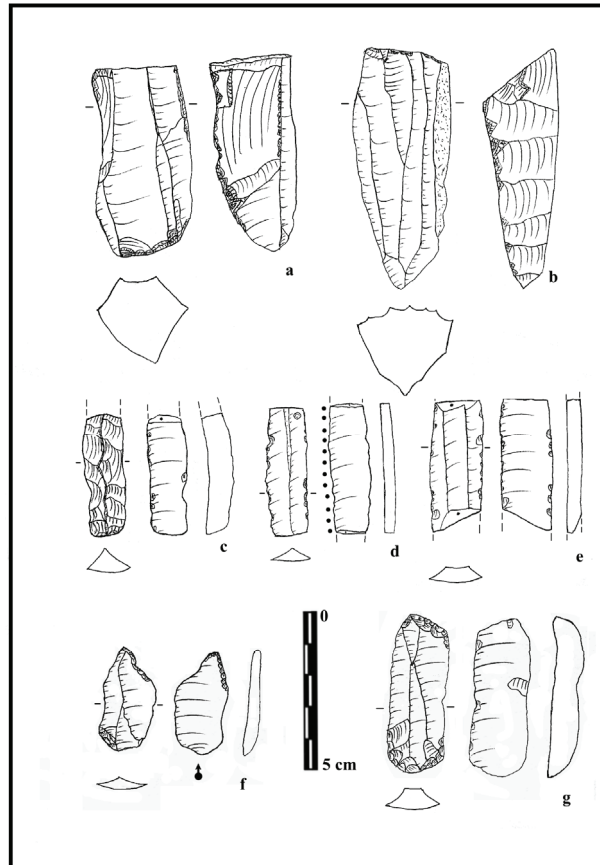
Çizim / Drawing 1



Resim / Figure 2

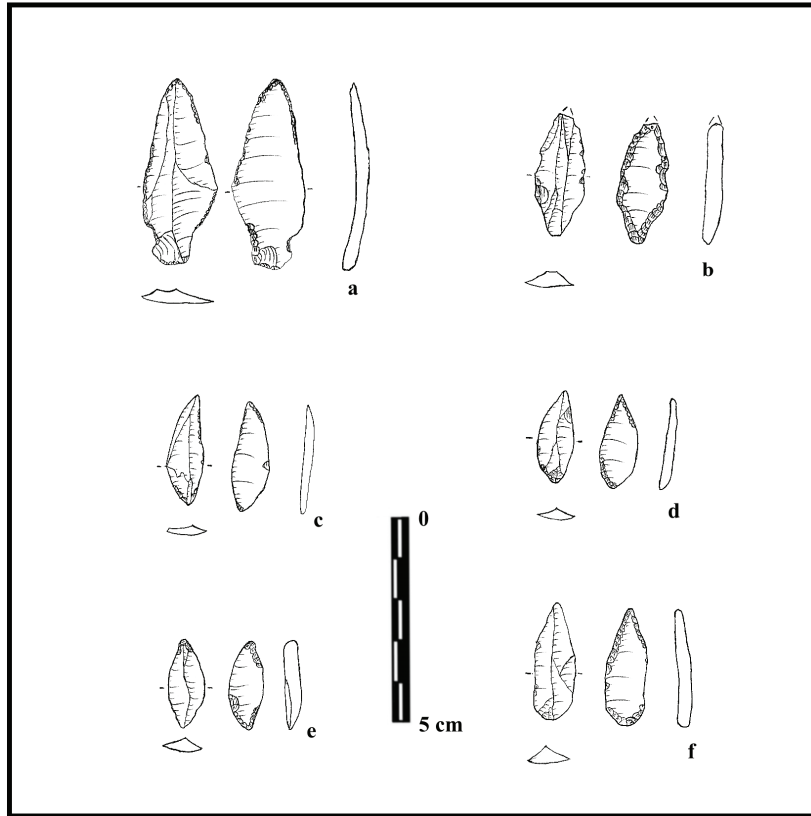


Resim / Figure 3



Çizim / Drawing 2





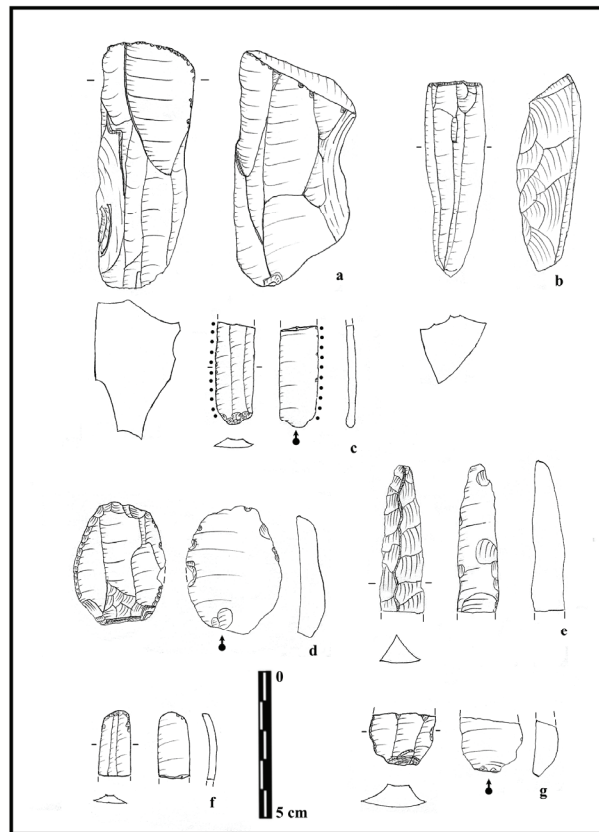
Çizim/ Drawing 3



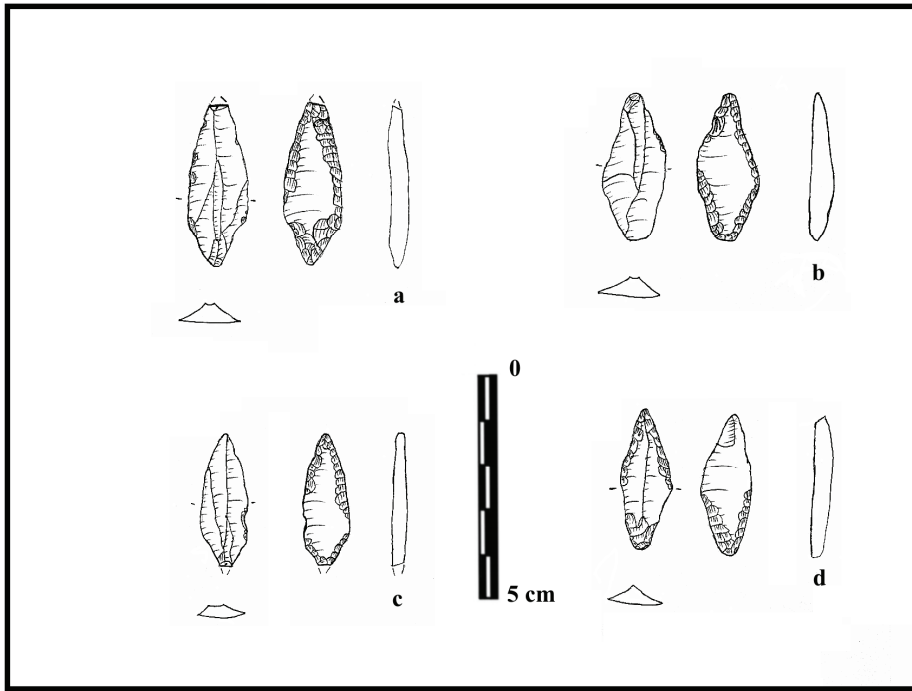
Resim / Figure 4



Resim / Figure 5



Çizim / Drawing 4



Çizim / Drawing 5



Resim / Figure 6





Resim / Figure 7



Resim / Figure 8



Resim / Figure 9