

Report on the Results of the Excavations at Yenice Yani, June 15-30, 2002
By Sarah Costello
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Introduction

The project made possible through IREX was the pilot excavation season at a small archaeological site in southeastern Turkey. The site, Yenice Yani, had been discovered by Dr. Guillermo Algaze in the course of his surveys in the Bismil-Batman region of Turkey, along the Tigris River. He assigned to it the Chalcolithic period. This period is not well-known in this region of Turkey, and was therefore of interest to the excavators. The excavators (myself, and Dr. Reinhard Bernbeck of Binghamton University) visited the site briefly in 2001 and found Chalcolithic pottery and what appeared to be a thick layer of ash near the base of the mound, suggesting the possibility of a destruction layer that might yield *in situ* evidence.

Yenice Yani is a small site, ca. 80 x 150 m, or 1.2 ha. It is located on the eastern bank of the Seyhan Çay, or stream, which flows roughly from south to north towards the Tigris River. There is a spring directly at the edge of the stream, in close proximity to the site.

The goals of this first trial excavation at Yenice Yani were to establish the stratigraphy of the site and to get a rough sense of its size. We wished to determine the potential for future work there, as well as to develop a detailed plan for further excavation, on the basis of a series of test trenches. According, three excavation units were opened, Units A, B and C. A and B were 5 x 2 m units aligned so that they formed a step trench running down the northern slope of the höyük. These were intended to establish the stratigraphic sequence of the mound. Unit C was located not far from the present edge of the mound in the fields, towards the Seyhan Çay. It had a size of 2 x 2 m, but was later enlarged to 2 x 4 m. Unit C was intended to investigate the size of the ancient settlement(s), i.e. if it extended beyond the edge of the mound, toward the spring.

Stratigraphy and Dating

The step trench fulfilled its purpose. We found a sequence that begins with Late to Terminal Ubaid ceramics (late 5th millennium B.C., calibrated) at the base of Unit A, and extended to Late Chalcolithic ceramics (early 4th millennium B.C., calibrated) at the top of Unit B. The Late Ubaid layers in Unit A and at the base of Unit B were characterized by painted, open bowls with slightly S-shaped walls. Another typical shape was the round-walled, small closed pot, also often painted. The pottery of this period is both painted and unpainted, with a relatively high percentage of small fineware serving vessels. This horizon is chronologically parallel to "Kuranian" in Syria, Hammam IV B and C; that is, ca. 4300 to 4000 B.C. At the base of Unit A, we reached the level of ash that we had seen in 2001. It turned out to be a very extensive burn layer, covering at least the entire 5 x 2 m unit. We were not able to dig further this season due to time and budget constraints; there are very likely earlier layers in Unit A which may be discovered in future work at the site.

In Unit B, the lowermost levels are similar to the upper ones from Unit A, characterized by a small percentage of the Late Ubaid period painted open bowls. In contrast, the upper levels of Unit B

produced almost no painted sherds, instead revealing primarily what we call "Coarse Brittle Ware." These coarse sherds are tempered with a large amount of sand and small gravel, very coarsely finished, and have a red to black appearance. Of the two main shapes of this ware, it is particularly "casseroles" that occur in the upper levels of Unit B. These may be parallel to Hacinebi Phase A, that is, the earliest part of the fourth millennium B.C.

In Unit C, a mix of Iron Age and Chalcolithic sherds were found, with no loci producing clear, undisturbed evidence from either period. This is in part the result of animal burrows which were particularly problematic in this part of the site. Secondly, there were two large pits, probably from the Iron Age, that mixed layers thoroughly down to sterile soil, which was encountered at ca. 1.80 below present surface. Thirdly, the mixture of Iron Age plus Chalcolithic sherds may be due to slope wash. An Iron Age occupation on top of the mound may have been entirely washed down into the periphery of the present hill, mixing up further material from different periods. Unit C did provide important information regarding the date of the site, however, establishing the presence of a significant Iron Age settlement at Yenice Yani.

Architecture and Other Finds

In Unit A, the most clear remains of a building were found. These were the lower courses of a round structure, made of 40 x 40 cm mud bricks and mortar. They were lining a feature that is likely to have been a large pit, and judging by the pottery that was encountered in association with the mud bricks and the pit, this feature dates to the Iron Age. Unit A also produced a series of surfaces with sherds lying flat on them; the number of joins between sherds from different surface loci is suggestive of the fact that these sherds remained in situ and the surfaces represented exterior living surfaces.

In Unit B, the remains of several pisé walls were found, as well as several surfaces with sherds and a pebble surface. In addition, three burials were excavated. One, a child burial, was encountered in the remains of a wall. Another was in a simple earth pit, an adult who died at a relatively early age. Finally, directly under the modern surface in Unit B, a stone setting was encountered which contained the jaw of a human skeleton, but no other remains. It is likely that most other parts of Yenice Yani have similar burials under the surface. It is at present impossible to assure their dating.

Preliminary Conclusions/Areas for Future Research

Yenice Yani proved to be a multi-period site with at least two meters deep of habitation layers. It dates to the Chalcolithic period, as suspected, but also to the Iron Age. The changes in pottery from the earlier part of the Chalcolithic to the later not only indicates a temporal change, but is suggestive of different patterns of consumption, with a shift from fancy, small bowls to utilitarian, large cooking/serving dishes. This shift in consumption patterns would be an interesting area for future research.

While Yenice Yani did not provide a lot of well-preserved artifacts or plant/animal remains, there is enough to learn from at least a second season at the site. Local development at this site can be usefully compared to the sequences at other sites, where supraregional influences are thought to be of major importance already in the Chalcolithic period. For next year, we will concentrate on the sequence on the

mound, and maybe do a small sounding on the Eastern side to see whether settlement is just as confined there as on the western side.