

# The building complex on the Tepecik acropolis at Patara

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## Abstract

The ongoing excavations initiated in 2003 on the Tepecik acropolis at Patara have brought to light many noteworthy results concerning the somewhat obscure history and archaeology of Archaic Patara. The very rich pottery finds confirming the Archaic dating of the building complex are particularly important. The building complex, which was not used during the late Hellenistic, Roman or Byzantine periods, presents a good example of Archaic planning with its well preserved foundations. In this study, the excavation work conducted on this building complex is introduced together with the associated finds.

## Özet

Patara'da Tepecik Akropolis'nde 2003 yılında başlatılmış ve halen devam etmekte olan kazılar kentin kısmen karanlıkta kalmış Arkaik Dönemi'ne ilişkin önemli sonuçlar ortaya koymaya başlamıştır. Zengin çeşitlilikteki seramik buluntularla Arkaik Dönem'e tarihlenen yapı kompleksinin ayrı bir önem taşıdığı anlaşılmıştır. Geç Hellenistik Roma ve Bizans Dönemleri'nde kullanılmadığı anlaşılan yapının bu iyi korunmuş temeli arkaik mimariye iyi bir örnek oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmada açığa çıkartılmış olan bu yapı kompleksi buluntular ışığında mimari ve tarihsel bütünlüğü içinde tanıtılmaktadır.

The subject of this study mainly concerns a building complex on the Tepecik acropolis, which is located to the north of the city centre of Patara. From the top of the Tepecik hill, the geopolitical importance of this building's location can easily be recognised, with its position overlooking both the inner harbour and the mainland entrance to the city (figs 1 and 2).

Excavations were initiated in 2003 on the Tepecik acropolis in order to contextualise the intended publication of the pottery finds that were unearthed in a small pit, dug on the southeast edge of the peak, and turned over to the Antalya Museum by F.J Tritsch and A. Dönmez in 1952 (Tritsch 1953: 448–50). This group of pottery was examined and published with the permission of the museum directorate (Işın 2004: 341–42). During the 2003 excavation season of the Tritsch and Dönmez pit, in addition to fine-walled pottery, samples of coarse kitchenware, that were not among the earlier finds, were also found (Işın 2007c: 137–51; 2008: 157–72). The team continued the excavation in the same area in 2004 and brought to light a 'cistern-like depot' with several

substantial finds, such as an Achaemenid stamp seal (Işın 2007a), terracotta figurines (Işın 2007b: 12), a lead pot, etc. The structure measures 4.65m by 2.50m by 3.00m and is oriented on an east-west axis. The eastern wall is concave and is distinguished by a bench-like step close to the floor. As its walls and the floor were sealed with three layers of high-quality plaster, it was termed a 'cistern' (Işın 2005: 61–62). However, when the related walls were unearthed in the 2006 and 2007 excavation campaigns (Işın, Işık 2008: 59–60), the function of this structure was understood to be a 'grain-cellar or depot'. Horizontal 10cm-wide projections, encircling the three sides, are located at about halfway up the height of the structure and probably served as the principal supports to seat a wooden platform, used to make the storage orderly (fig. 3). Later, most probably when the entire building had lost its main function for an unknown reason at the end of the third century BC, the cellar was used as a bothros and was filled with the group of pottery. No stratigraphic evidence was obtainable from the cellar. During the restoration of the ceramic fragments it was

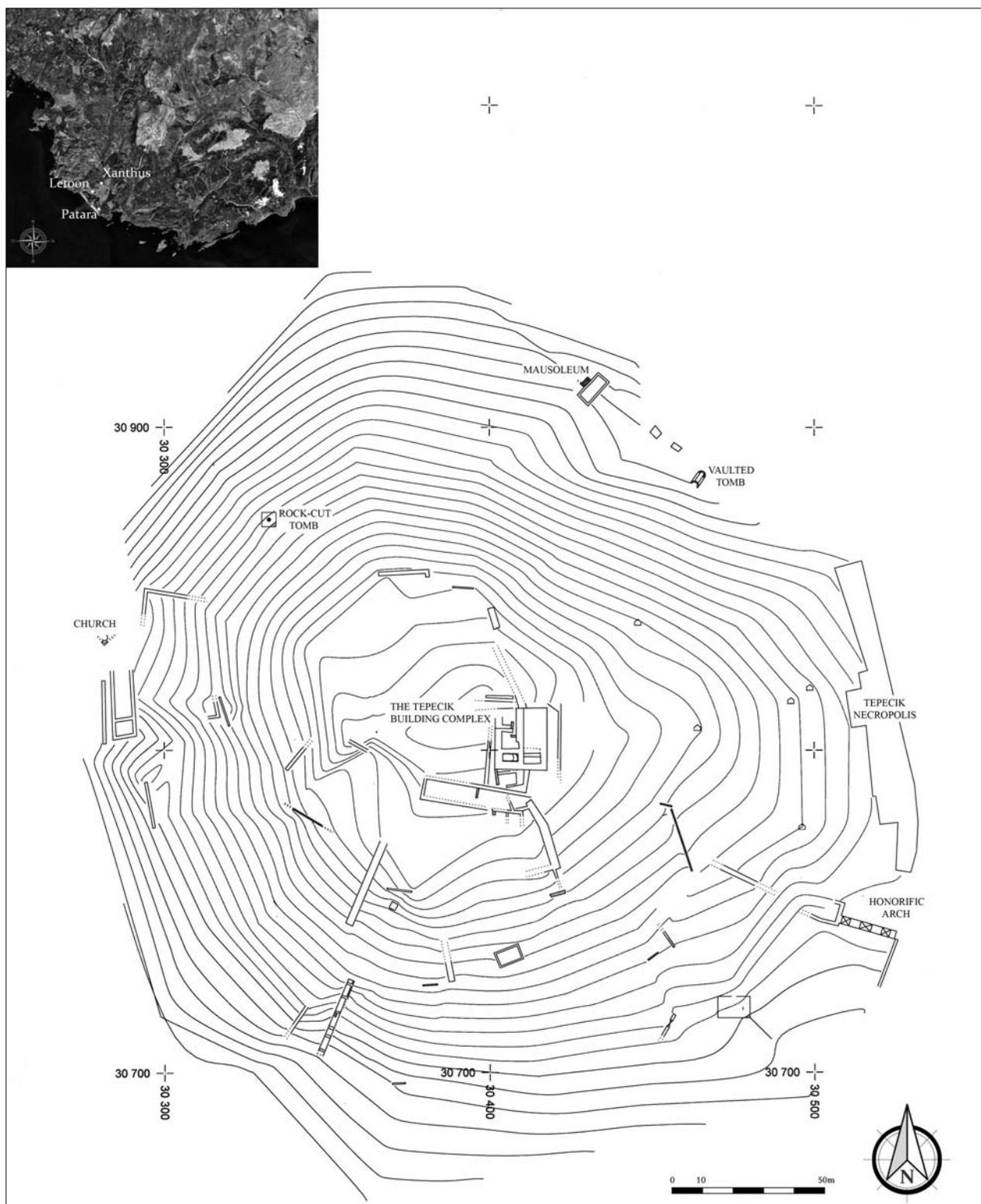


Fig. 1. Location map and topographic map of Tepecik hill at Patara

very clearly seen that fragments excavated from the upper level could be matched with those from the lower level. As an example, three different pieces from the same terracotta figurine were found at the 0.40m, 2.10m and 2.80m levels (İşin 2007b: 12, K23, K32, K54, K55).

In total, about 3,000 pottery sherds were recovered from inside the cellar. Among them, tableware products, such as kantharos, skyphos, echinus cup, plate, lamp and guttus (fig. 4), and quite a number of household and kitchenware fragments, such as from a mortar, lopas,



Fig. 2. An aerial view of Tepecik hill

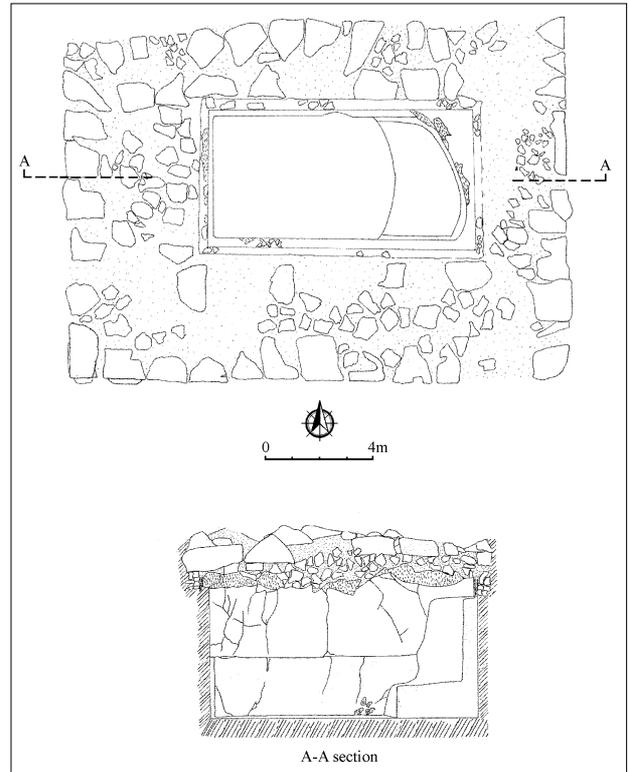


Fig. 3. The grain cellar or depot of the building complex



Fig. 4. The late fourth-century tableware products from the grain cellar

lompadion, lasana and chytra, were discovered (fig. 5). In addition to these, various trade amphora forms were the other very important group of finds from this deposit. The unearthened amphorae are dated to between the early fifth century BC and the early third century BC. Amongst the fifth-century BC amphora groups, examples from Cos, Corinth, Mende and Thasos were found, of the fourth century BC there were examples from Rhodes, Cnidus, Samos and Lesbos, and from the early third century BC examples from Cnidus and Cypriote were found. The whole context of the cellar deposit will be published as a forthcoming volume of the *Patara Studies* series (*Patara IV.2*).

Amongst the earliest objects, a small quantity of pottery fragments from the cellar can be assigned to the late seventh (fig. 6a–c) and early sixth centuries BC (fig. 6d–e). The rest of the material may, for the most part, be roughly dated to the period from the late Archaic to the end of the early Hellenistic period. The very few examples of Attic black-figure fragments and the amphorae finds support this proposed dating. The majority belongs to the years between ca. 320–220 BC (Işın 2005: 61–62). Two coins of Alexander from the late fourth century support the dating of this group of finds (fig. 7).

The architectural context of the cellar was revealed during the 2006 and 2007 excavation campaigns of the Tepecik hill (fig. 8). As a result, the western cyclopic wall, which was built just before the construction of the Tepecik building complex at the upper terrace, the cellar, two almost square in plan adjacent chambers (A and B) with part of a early terrace wall and the southern wall (phase Ia), a southern annex (phase Ib), a later terrace wall (phase II) and the juxtaposed walls adjoined to the later terrace wall (phase III) were unearthened (fig. 9).

The wall of the upper terrace, which was only followed for a distance of 12m, was constructed as an infill level with the western quarter of the area just before the Tepecik building complex was built. The masonry of the wall presents the typical Archaic cyclopic masonry of Lycia, known from sites such as Xanthus, Avşar Tepesi and Limyra (Marksteiner 1997: 132–33), and from the southern side of the Tepecik hill at Patara (Işık 2000: 77). When the western wall of the complex was built, it was located only about 2m east of the cyclopean masonry wall, and then a useless aisle-like cavity was formed and this was filled with rubble and crushed stone up to the ground-floor level. Among the finds just in front of the southwest side of this cyclopic wall there were pottery fragments of Bird Bowls and the so-called local geometric ware of southwestern Asia Minor dated to the Late Geometric period. This group of finds is more or less similar to the groups mentioned below (figs 10 and

11). A remarkable find, for the region of Lycia, the upper part of a limestone kouros statuette holding a lotus (which will be published in detail by Professor Fahri Işık) was found together with these pottery sherds (Işın, Işık 2008: 59–60).

During phases Ia and b, the walls of the Tepecik building complex were built from rubble in the dry-wall technique. While stronger and larger stones were chosen to form the outer and sometimes the inner face, smaller and weaker ones were used to fill the gaps. The first chamber adjoining the cellar was termed A, and that to the north termed B (figs 8 and 9).

Chamber A measures 4m by 4.60m and B measures 4m by 5.20m. The dimension of the whole building complex including the cellar is 9m by 19m. What is astonishing is the thickness of the outer walls; a width of approximately 2.20m on the west and east, and 2.40m on the south. According to our present knowledge, the thickness of the Patara walls is exceptional amongst the dynastic settlements of Lycia (Thomsen 2002). These thick walls of the ground floor should support a second floor of rubble masonry, and the 30 truckloads of rubble stones, which were unearthened inside the building, confirm the suggested masonry construction technique of the building. This kind of dry-rubble masonry, supported with horizontal wooden beams, is still in use in the traditional house architecture around Lycia and in central Anatolia (Yakar 2007: 303–04).

On the southeast corner of the Tepecik building complex a 2.70m-wide wall extending 13m downwards to the south of the hill was also discovered. Since the strong character which would remind us of a ‘city wall’ is mostly destroyed and it is still not completely excavated, it seems early to identify it with confidence. However, the thickness and the similarities in the masonry techniques employed lead us to think that it was built during phase Ia.

The most important finds helping to date the first phase of the Tepecik building complex were discovered from the ground level of chambers A and B. They were mostly dated to between the Late Geometric and the Archaic periods. Very fragmented pieces, mostly of Aegean and west Anatolian wares in Bird Bowl (fig. 10a and b), Wild Goat and Fikellura styles (fig. 10c–e), were found. Furthermore, Cypriote Black on Red Ware, which was formerly known only from Lycia with the Xanthian examples (Yener, Marksteiner 2007: 85), was also discovered (fig. 10h and i). In addition to these, Cypriote wares remarkable for Lycia, such as White on Red Ware and Bichrome Ware, were unearthened as well (fig. 10f and g). Among the pottery found in these two chambers, the so-called ‘local ware’, with a decoration of concentric circles and/or wavy lines, is the most problematic group



Fig. 5. The late fourth-century coarse kitchenware samples from the grain cellar



Fig. 7. Coins of Alexander from the cellar

Fig. 6. Late seventh- to early sixth-century pottery fragments from the grain cellar



Fig. 8. General view of the building complex from the east

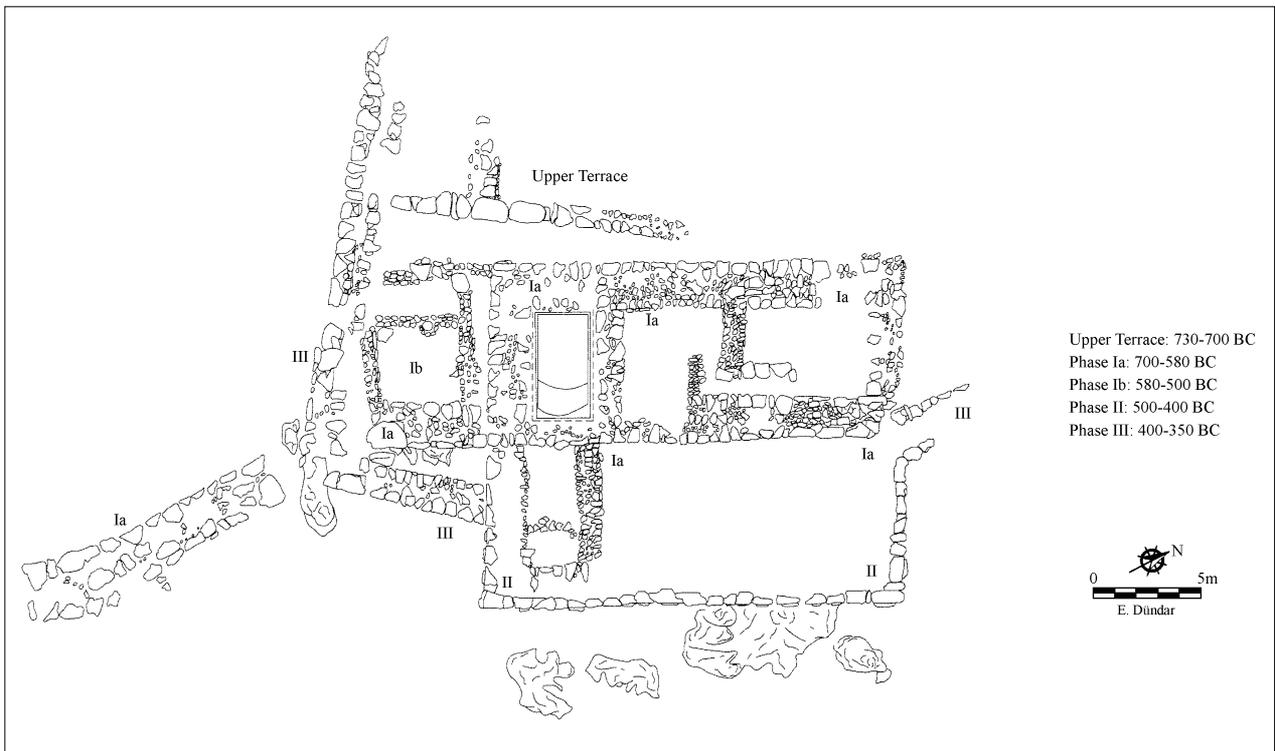


Fig. 9. Plan of the building complex indicating the building phases

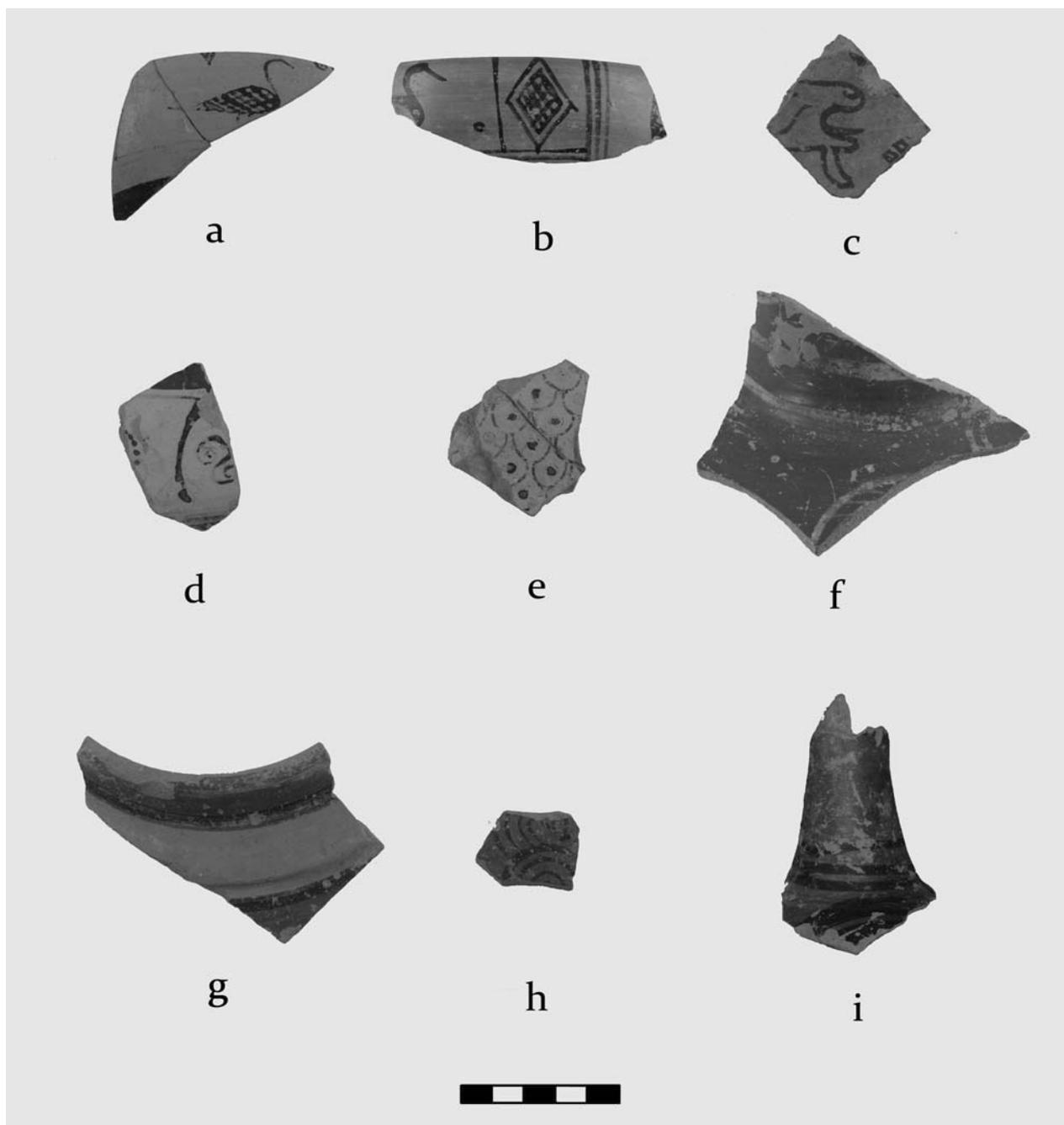


Fig. 10. Ionian and Cypriote ware examples dated mostly to the seventh century BC from the soil strata of chamber A

in respect to the dating (fig. 11). The various examples of this 'local ware', which is actually 'local' to southwestern Asia Minor, are known in Lycia from Xanthus (Yener, Marksteiner 2007: 87), Kyaneai (Rückert 2003a: 149, fig. 51.5; 2003b: 16, n. 18) and Limyra (Gebauer 2007: 48–52; Rückert 2007: 31–33) and from the neighbourhood of Perge (Eschbach 2003b: 87–103) and also Caunus (Schmaltz 2003: 37–43). Most of the finds that were found at these sites are basically classified into two different categories. The first group is matt brown/black, sometimes reddish-brown, painted over a pale or pinkish

brown surface and the colour of the fabric changes from orange to pinkish brown. The second group, on the other hand, varies only with its greenish-buff grey fabric. On the basis of their decoration they are dated to the Late Protogeometric or Early Geometric in Attica, the Aegean coast and islands. However, the same decoration is dated to between the Late Geometric and the late sixth century in southwestern Asia Minor (Kahya 2002: 35–59; Eschbach 2003a: 25, figs 15 AK, 03). The problem of dating will hopefully be solved with new systematic excavations in the area.

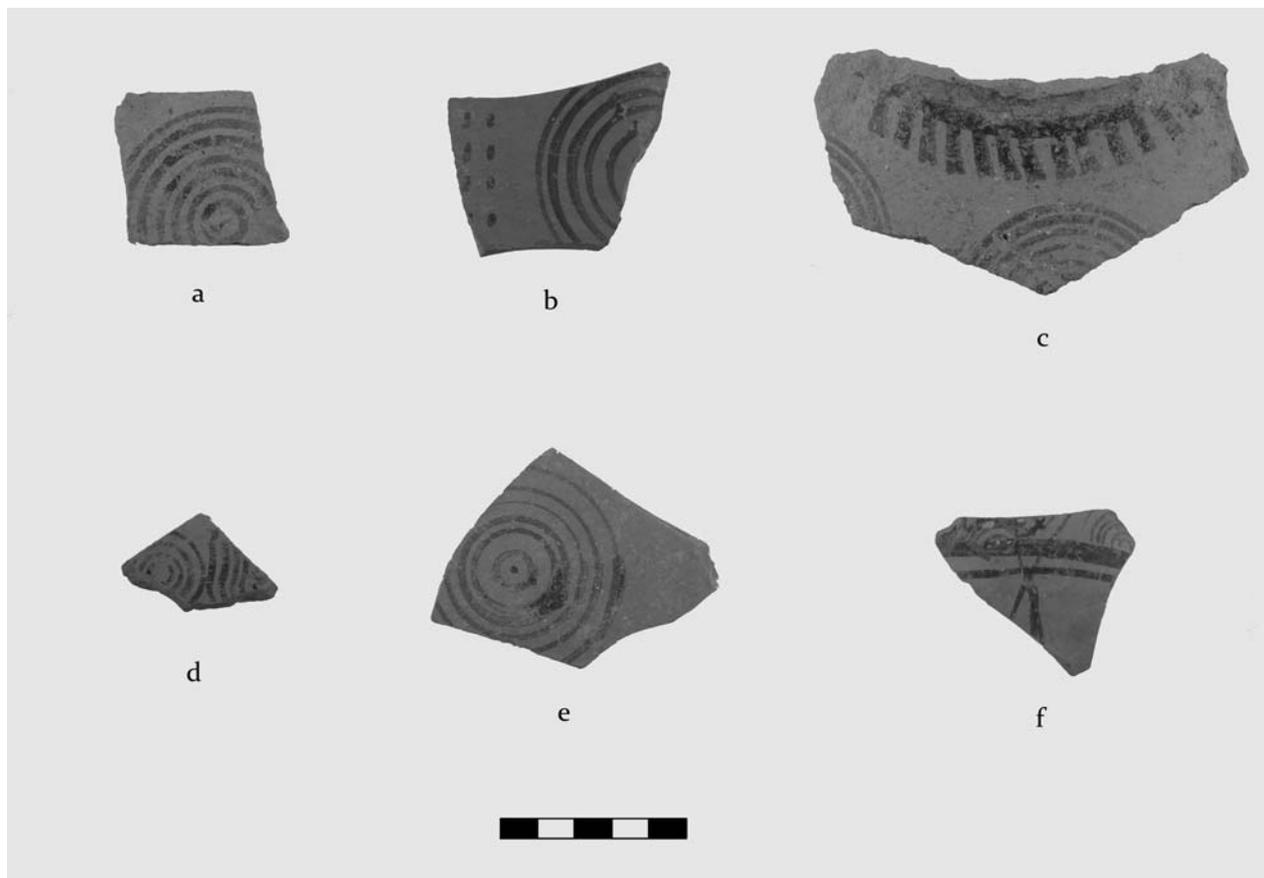


Fig. 11. The so-called 'local ware' from southwestern Asia Minor decorated in geometric style

The only exceptional find came from the north side of chamber B. This was the closed context of a dump. The large numbers of pottery fragments mostly take the same forms, such as one-handed jugs, cylindrical tubs, bowls and kraters, either of red slip or plain buff wares, and quantities of amorphous pieces of these forms lead us to interpret this dump to be that of a pottery workshop. The kiln which was discovered on the eastern slope of the Tepecik hill in 1999 supports this idea (Işkan et al. 2001: 79–80). This pottery group has been studied in a chapter of a PhD thesis and has been dated to mostly the first and early second centuries AD (Uygun 2009: 7, 171–93, 198) (fig. 12).

From the ground level of the exploratory trench which was dug right in front of the cellar on the southeast of the Tepecik building complex, part of the early terrace wall extending east to west was found (figs 8, 9, 13 and 14). It is understood that this terrace wall, which was built in the same dry-rubble masonry technique as the main building, was planned together with it during phase Ia (fig. 9). As the dating of the finds from the exploratory trench proves, when the terrace area became inadequate the terrace was enlarged, and the encircling second and stronger terrace wall was built during phase II. Thus, the

main plan of phase Ia of the Tepecik building complex becomes clear with its three rows of chambers, the cellar, chambers A and B, and also the early terrace.

On the south end of the Tepecik building complex an annex was uncovered. The south wall of the annex, running diagonally east to west, is a narrow irregular rubble wall. When the intersecting walls are also followed, the plan can be identified as a secondary structure having two small chambers. So this annex was most probably built during phase Ib and employed as a covered balcony (figs 8 and 9). On the basis of the finds from this annex, including hundreds of mostly Attic or perhaps Attic imitation black-figured kylix, lekythos, lekane, amphora, krater and olpe fragments unearthed at ground level, it can be concluded that this annex was chiefly used after the first quarter of the sixth century BC (fig. 15). Among the kylix fragments, particularly Droop, Littlemaster and Band Cups were found in great numbers (fig. 15a, b and f). According to the preliminary results of the pottery studies, some sherds can be related to the Leafless Group, Rycroft Painter, Villa Giulia 3559 and Rhodes Group of 12264. These early results of the pottery study, while indicating Attic-Lycia trading activity, also bring a new perspective to Rhodes-Lycia connections.

The later terrace wall belonging to phase II measures 7.60m by 19m, and the masonry is of the pulvinated irregular polygonal type, enriched by trapezoidal blocks, particularly at the corners. The stones are of worked polygonal form close to their natural shape and were carefully joined together (fig. 14). The wall is of a considerable thickness, 2.30m. The outer surface consists of hewn and carefully composed stones. However, the inner surface and the space between the surfaces were filled with small stones and rubble. The terrace wall was constructed in an artistic manner that emphasised its strength and monumentality (fig. 14). This typical polygonal masonry of Lycia may well be exemplified with examples from western and central Lycia; the wall of the first north tower of Xanthus or some other walls at Pinara, Kyaneai and Hoyran are good examples of this masonry (Marksteiner 1997: 122). However, concerning the dating of the masonry, the best results come from excavated sites such as Xanthus and Patara.

Apart from the very few potsherds found in the upper layers dating from the early Roman period, the rest of the objects are dated to between the mid seventh and mid fifth centuries BC; late Classical and Hellenistic material was not found in this trench. Red-figured vase fragments dated to the mid fifth century BC provide a *terminus post quem* for this deposit. Thus, on the basis of the pottery evidence, the latest date for the building of the terrace should be the late fifth century.

The juxtaposed walls adjoined to the later terrace wall during phase III (fig. 9), extending both on the south and north, are interpreted differently, because of the variation in the masonry techniques. While the wall on the south can be interpreted as a periphery wall, the northern wall, which is interruptedly followed to the north end of the Tepecik hill, functioned both as a periphery wall and later may have served as a defensive wall. It can also be understood within the defensive system of the northern Tepecik hill, which was partly exposed in 1998 (Işık 2000: 81–

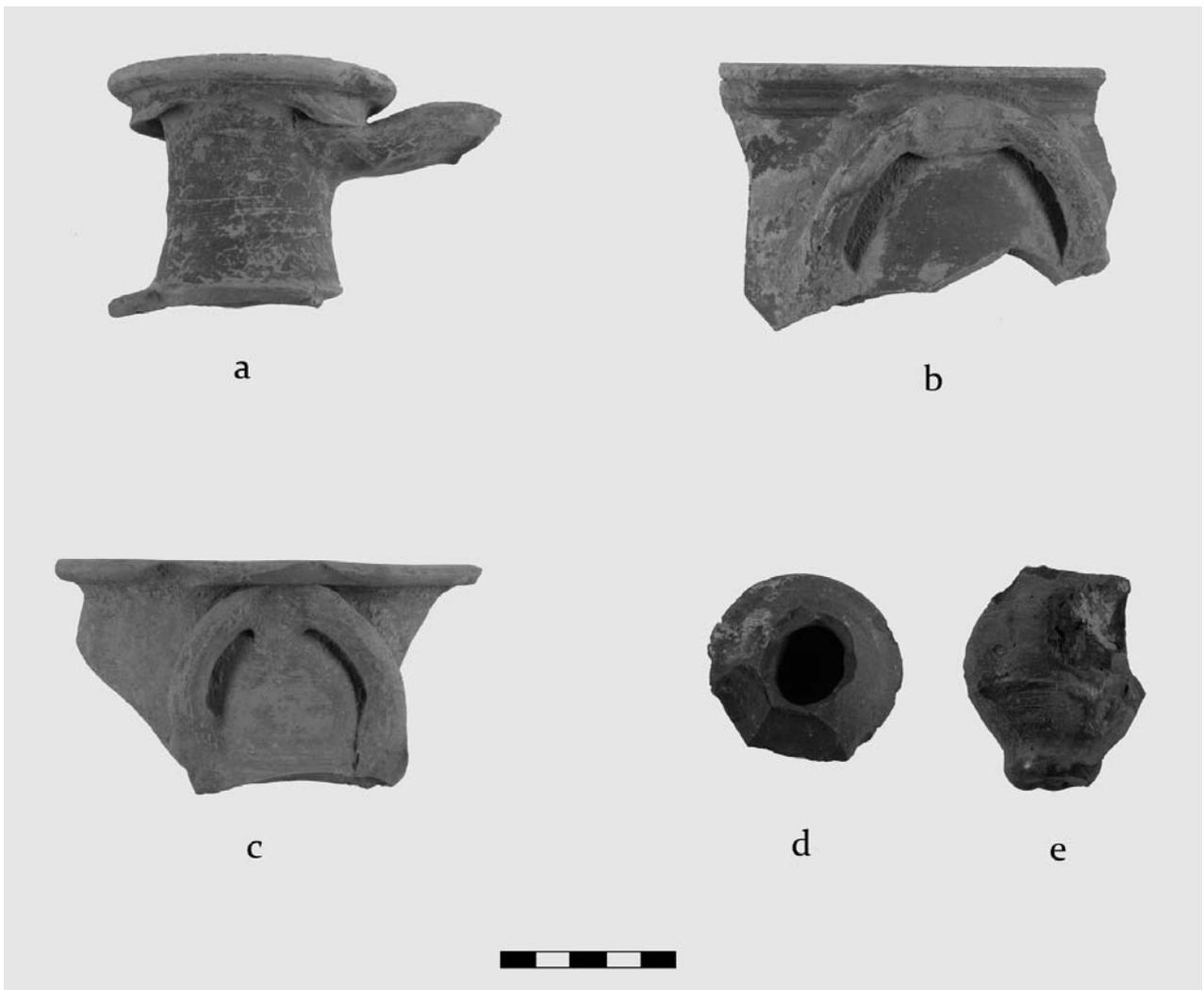


Fig. 12. The pottery workshop dump dated to the first and second centuries AD from the north of chamber B

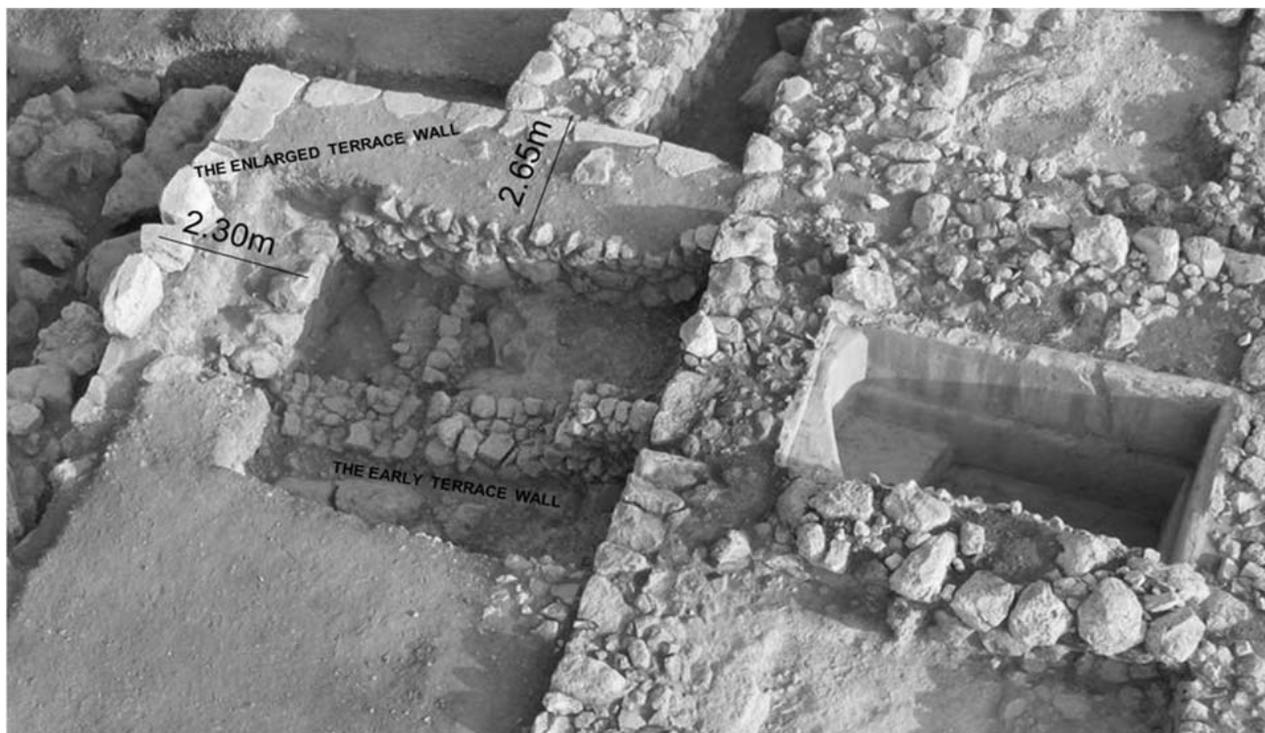


Fig. 13. The east-west extending wall indicating the first phase of the terrace

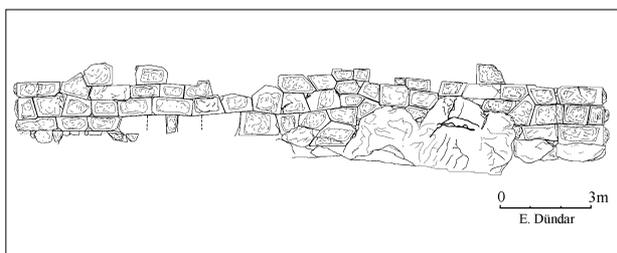


Fig. 14. The eastern elevation of the terrace building

82). Although the wisdom of dating this defensive system before the completion of the excavation is debatable, in respect of the comparative material from Antiphellus and Sidyma (Marksteiner 1997: 163–64) it may perhaps be dated to the late Classical or the early Hellenistic period.

Three badly-preserved skeletons placed just in front of the north extending wall, dated from pottery finds to the second century BC, support this suggestion. As mentioned above, neither in the context of the cellar nor in the entire building and terrace, was any piece of pottery dated to after the second century or to the late Hellenistic period found. Accordingly, the only finds dated to this period in the area are the pottery found with the skeletons. The buried bodies confirm that this area had lost its previous ‘residential’ function during the late Hellenistic period. The main building plan of the Tepecik complex, with its three rows of chambers and the terrace, is very common for house architecture of Lycia

during the sixth and fifth centuries BC (Thomsen 2002: 277–86). The types of pottery finds also equate very well to a residential context of this period.

In summary, from the evaluation of the pottery finds and the architectural evidence, the Tepecik building complex can be referred to as a house which was first settled in the seventh century BC. Apart from some small additions, such as the annex, the main plan remained basically the same until the fifth century BC. In terms of development requirements, the building was enlarged with a monumental and imposing terrace wall during the course of the fifth century BC.

#### Concluding remarks

Historically, the construction of the late terrace wall reminds us of some of the very important matters in Lycia and Patara at this time. According to Herodotus (3.90.1), Lycia was included in the first satrapy, together with Ionia, Caria, Milyas and Pamphylia, in the fifth century BC. Lycians participated in the expedition of Xerxes in 481–479 (Diodorus 11.2.2) and provided 50 ships (Herodotus 7.92). It has been suggested that this entire fleet was based at Patara or Pttara, as is known from the Xanthian inscribed pillar (Bryce, Zahle 1986: 204). Also in the fifth century BC, Lycia was the richest Achaemenian coin-minting non-Greek area in Anatolia (Markholm, Zahle 1972: 59). A large number of local dynasts is known to have struck coins from about 480–360 BC (Markholm, Zahle 1972: 112).

A recent numismatic study presents the city of Patara or Pttara as a mint centre of the dynasts (Wakhseppddimi) Wekhessere I and II. It is known that Wekhessere I ruled between 460–430 BC (or 450–425 BC) and Wekhessere II between 430–400 BC (Özüdoğru 2007: 31–42). Wekhessere I was a ruler under the influence of the Xanthian dynast Kuprilli, and his main mint was at Patara. He extended his area of influence when Kuprilli weakened or died and he seems to have struck coins in Tlos and even at Xanthus (Vismara 1989: 18). Later, the dynast Wekhessere II also struck coins at Patara in addition to minting at Tlos and Phellus (or Antiphellus). A coin, which appeared in a numismatic auction in 2004, carrying the name of the dynast Wekhessere with the name of the city Pttara in Lycian script, confirms that Patara was the mint and the administrative centre (Özüdoğru 2007: 31–42). These facts from numismatic studies enable us to understand better the importance of the city at this time.

As a result, although it is early to propose a concrete argument, the building complex at Tepecik probably was the ‘ruler’s house’ or a dynastic settlement on the acropolis of Patara. The location of the building,

overlooking both the inner harbour and the mainland entrance to the city, and numerous precious ceramic finds support this suggestion. Thus, the building activities during phase III can be related to the dynasts Wekhessere I and II at Tepecik in the fifth century BC. On the other hand, despite the numerous archaeological finds, due to the absence of epigraphic or further numismatic information, the historical identity of the seventh and sixth centuries of the building complex of the Tepecik acropolis at Patara remains in the dark for the present.

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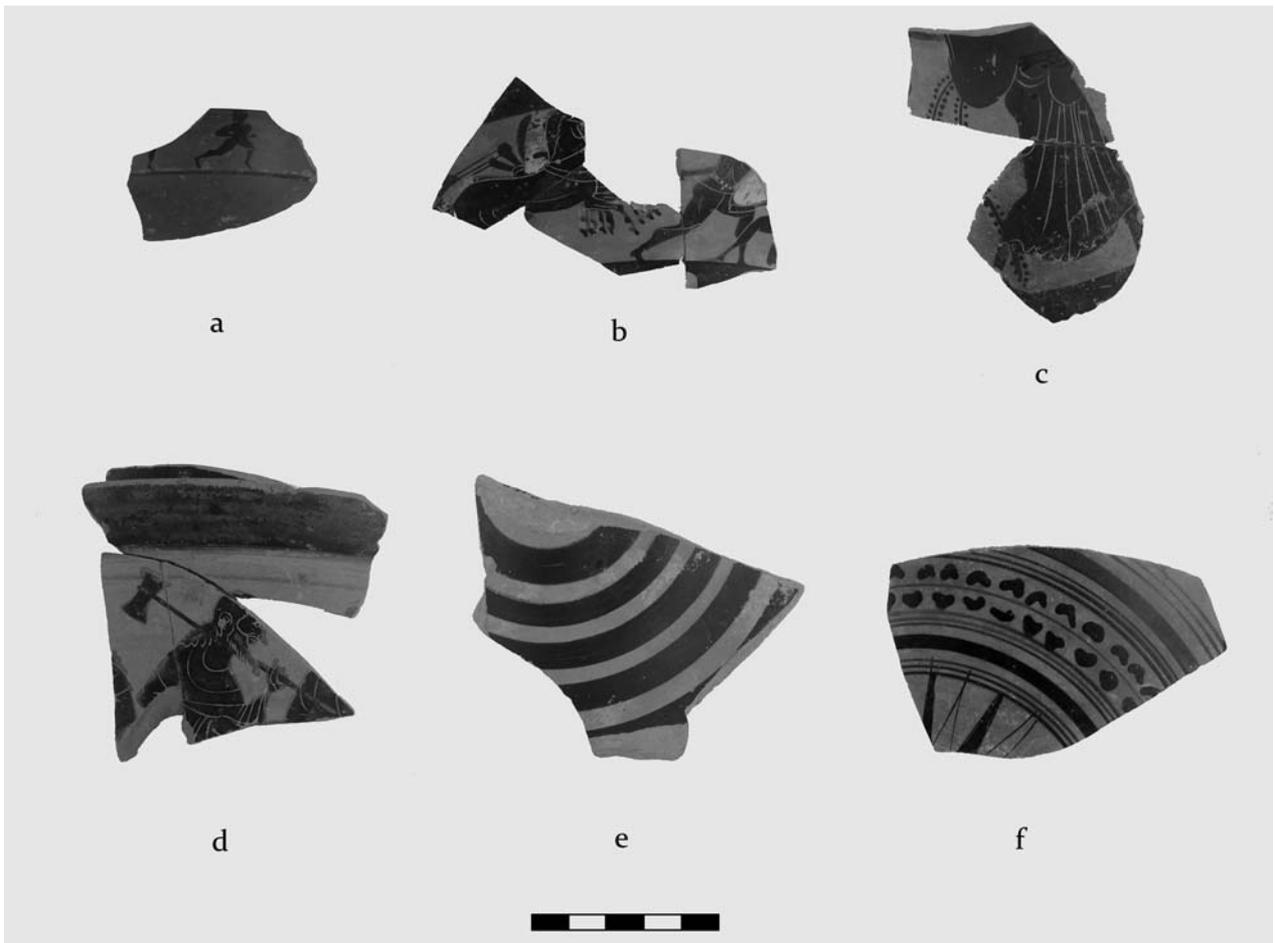


Fig. 15. Attic black-figured pottery fragments from the annex

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