

Early Places Without Metals:

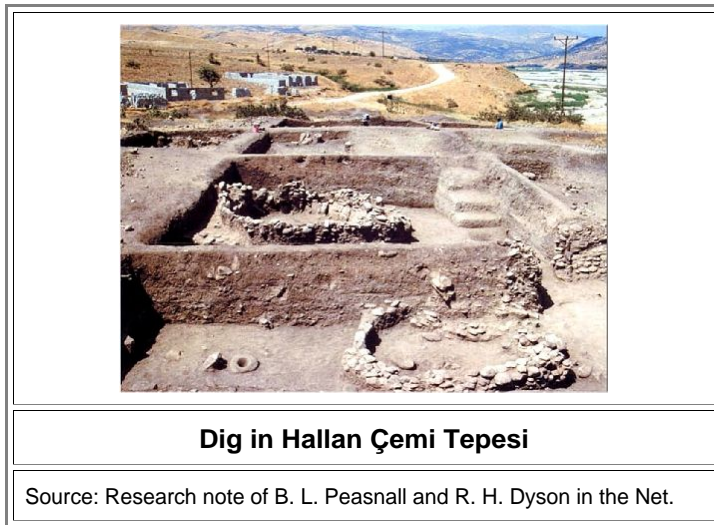
Hallan Çemi Tepesi

Advanced

Hallan Çemi was discovered in 1989 and is seen as the oldest pre-pottery neolithic site in Anatolia (or perhaps in the world?), dating from about 10 200 BC to 9 200 BC. What's left is not very exciting, see below. It seems that the people living there were still hunters and gatherers but no longer roaming about the countryside but sedentary. However, they were not yet agricultural, raising, e.g., barley for making beer. They thus mark the very start of the [neolithic revolution](#).

The village was made up from small wattle-and-daub huts on stone foundations but there were also a few larger huts, possibly for ritual or social functions.

- The Hallan Çemi people, while not sowing and reaping, were among the first ones who started to domesticate and breed animals. There are some indications that those animal were pigs and not, as usually assumed for "firsts", sheep and goats. Otherwise the people at Hallan Cemi gathered nuts and seeds, and hunted wild sheep, deer and whatever else they could get.



Relatively large amounts of obsidian was found, plus some green malachite, Mediterranean shells and other "exotic" stuff. Since these materials are not available locally, some kind of trade network must have existed. Similar findings have been made in other early neolithic towns, giving rise to the speculation that these people were into colorful things, using them for adornments or - the classic - rituals (including coveting and seducing thy neighbors wife, I guess). We might assume that copper or gold, if known somewhere else within the reach of this network, would have been traded, too. The absence of metals in Hallan Çemi thus might indicate that nobody in the general area used them.

Some stone buildings larger than the typical family dwelling (build in the later stage), decorated stone bowls, and other artifacts indicate that the Hallan Çemi people were organized in a surprisingly complex society, with some division of labor ("specialists") and some hierarchies.

- This is still pretty boring so let's get to the juicy part: The Hallan Çemi site is challenging the good old view that the earliest settlers were the *Natufians*, the guys in the Jordan Valley with [Jericho](#) as center. "I'm really starting to doubt the Natufians were the originators of the farming revolution. More so, in the light that the farmers of the Neolithic expansion didn't seem to look like them (Natufians were part Negroid), they seem to resemble to Anatolians more. Also, the temple at [Göbekli Tepe](#) predates farming in most of the Natufian Levant by a few hundred, years, and that kind of stone temple building is not entry level civilisation 11,500 years ago". writes one Mathilda, an anthropology student, in her (very good) blog. Being a mere student she can still afford plain language; her superiors will need to use far more unintelligible words to say the same thing.
- Some Anatolian Turkish Yokels are supposed to have beaten sophisticated early Israelis? That's great or can't possibly be true, depending on your personal bias! I have [stated elsewhere](#) that archeometallurgists come in two factions: adherents to the "single discovery and spreading hypothesis" or the "independent discovery" hypothesis. You might be more inclined to the first view if the discovery was made by your ancestors and vice versa. Being a Suebian myself I can afford to be completely neutral, secure in the knowledge that everything good came from Suebia, after all.

More sites like Hallan Cemi have been discovered, and more discoveries are bound to happen in the future. That is good because Hallan Cemi now is flooded due to the new Batman Dam on the Tigris River. Less than 10 % of the area it covered had been investigated by then.