

The concept of "Neolithic package": considering its meaning and applicability

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ABSTRACT – *In this paper, one of the most frequently used terms in Neolithic studies, e.g. the so-called "Neolithic package", will be discussed. Apart from providing a brief historical background of the term and how it was used since the 80's, the text will concentrate on a plausible definition and the possible contents of the package which can be observed as a common set of objects in Southwest Asia, Anatolia and Southeast Europe. It will be argued that the use of this concept has both advantages and disadvantages. Although the term provides a macro level look to the large geography mentioned above, that was obviously closely interconnected in the course of 7th and 6th millennia BC, the term should be implemented cautiously at regions where the elements of the package do not seem to be fully integrated into the life of the groups.*

IZVLEČEK – *V članku razpravljamo o enem izmed najbolj pogostih terminov v neolitskih študijah, tako imenovanem "neolitskem paketu". Opisali bomo kratko zgodovinsko ozadje in uporabo izraza do 80-ih, skoncentrirali se bomo tudi na verjetno definicijo in možne vsebine »paketa«, ki jih lahko opazujemo kot običajen zbir predmetov v Jugozahodni Aziji, Anatoliji in Jugovzhodni Evropi. Dokazali bomo, da ima uporaba tega koncepta tako prednosti, kot pomanjkljivosti. Čeprav termin na med-regionalnem nivoju omogoča pregled na širokem geografskem območju, ki je bilo tesno medsebojno povezano v času sedmega in šestega tisočletja pr.n.št., ga je potrebno previdno dopolniti na območjih, kjer elementi »paketa« niso bili popolnoma vključeni v življenje prebivalcev.*

KEY WORDS – *Neolithic; terminology; Anatolia; Southeast Europe; Neolithic package*

INTRODUCTION

The definition of the term "Neolithic" and the nature of Neolithization are among the most debated issues among prehistorians who work in SW Asia and Europe¹. The word "Neolithic", first employed as a technological term, has become oriented towards subsistence, which is considered by some scholars as inadequate, because these approaches undermined the assumption that the technological as well as economic developments that took place during the Neolithic were socially constructed. As Thomas puts it,

"what is important is not what is produced, so much as how it is produced" (Thomas 1991:11). Today there is more recognition that the word "Neolithic" implies more than technological developments, the appearance of domesticated plants and animals, or sedentarism (Hodder 1990; Thomas 1991; Whittle 1996; Zvelebil 1998; Özdoğan 2001; Perlès 2001). Now the term is generally accepted to encompass technological, economic, social and ideological aspects as a whole, thus "the Neolithic way of life".

¹ Throughout the paper, I have tried to omit the use of chronological terms like Early Neolithic, Late Neolithic or Early Chalcolithic. One reason for this is that it would make the text difficult to read, due to different chronological systems that are implemented in the regions that are discussed in the text. Secondly, because these terms have hardly any definitions and are mostly arbitrary. However, when it was necessary, a footnote is included to make it clear to which chronology is referred.

Parallel to the changing parameters of the “Neolithic”, Neolithization models also became less simplistic and reductionist. Among scholars, however, the impact of diffusionist and anti-diffusionist models are strongly felt, a viewpoint which, unfortunately, only limits our understanding of the period and the questions it raises.

Within these discussions, a frequently mentioned concept is the so-called “Neolithic package”, which is used to refer the material culture of the period as a whole, since Neolithic assemblages from South-west Asia, Anatolia² and South-east Europe yielded almost identical finds, and these objects tend to occur together repeatedly in this vast geographical region. Yet there is no consensus about what this term means and how it could be used. Moreover, the contents of this “package” are not clearly defined. The aim of this paper is to try to promote a common understanding of the term and discuss whether it has anything to offer for researchers working on the SW Asian, Anatolian and SE European Neolithic. Our own perception and interpretations are also included in the text with regards to the possible usages and implications of the term.

THE USE OF THE TERM

The tendency to group Neolithic assemblages as one entity in order to distinguish them from other periods can be observed since the late 19th century, and in more obvious form in the writings of Childe (*Plucienik 1998; Price 2000.4*; see for example *Childe 1929*). However, the term “Neolithic package” sees its early use among British archaeologists in the early 70's, at a time when archaeology “lost its innocence” (*Clarke 1973*), but gained systemic approaches. The term was originally applied in order to oppose the idea that certain Neolithic features such as domesticated animals or monumental architecture arrived in prehistoric Britain as independent elements, emphasising their functional relatedness³.



Fig. 1. Sites mentioned in text.

The concept was heavily criticised in the early 90s by Thomas in ‘Rethinking the Neolithic’ (*Thomas 1991*) on the ground that the term prevent obscures the diversity within the Neolithic⁴. Outside the discussion circles of the British Neolithic, the term has been used and/or criticised occasionally since the 80's (*Whitehouse 1986; Zvelebil 1989; Chapman and Müller 1990*) but primarily since the second half of the 90s (see for example *Plucienik 1998; Budja 1999; Price 2000; Tringham 2000; Zvelebil and Lillie 2000; Kotsakis 2001; Gehlen and Schön 2003*). Despite its frequent usage (which is mainly verbal), there is no clear definition offered for this term, probably because it is self-explanatory. But is it really? An exception appears at Whitehouse's article (1986) where the term is defined to be “farming economy, village settlement, pottery, ground stone and obsidian” whereas Zvelebil described it as “pottery, cultigens and domesticates” (*Zvelebil 1989.380*). An internet search revealed, apart from package tours to Turkey, that this term has been used of Beaker Culture, LBK settlements, Mediterranean Early Neolithic, Egyptian Neolithic, Irish Neolithic, Southeast European Early Neolithic, even for Southeast Asian Neolithic (apparently exported there by Western archaeologists), since certain common elements could be found in these areas. Despite all the critiques and changing perspectives in archaeological thought, the continuing use of this term indicates that there is actually a need for such a concept to enable prehistorians to evaluate and contextualise Neolithic assemblages as related components

² In this paper, “Anatolia” refers to Central, Western and Northwestern Anatolia, excluding Southeastern, Eastern and Northern parts.

³ I am grateful to Prof. A. Sherratt for explaining to me how and why the term came into use.

⁴ A discussion on “British Neolithic package” has been recently re-opened (see *Schulting 2000 and Thomas 2003*).

without isolating or overemphasising some of the find groups. It would also promote a view that sees the Neolithic phenomena as a whole, in order not to let the strong tendency towards regionalization and specialization blur the “big picture”. However, as we will see, the use of the term entails some weaknesses which make us question if this set of traits was really a “package” in the strict sense of the word, or if we should consider a more flexible concept.

THE “NEOLITHIC PACKAGES” OF SOUTHWEST ASIA, ANATOLIA AND SOUTHEAST EUROPE

Although the concept of “Neolithic package” to most people implies only domesticates, in this paper we concentrate on artefacts, which are usually treated in the small finds sections. We argue that these objects constitute parts of a meaningful whole, e.g. the material culture of a certain period and geography, and for this reason, are found repeatedly in the same contexts.

What elements repeatedly occur within Neolithic contexts? Although they are very well known, for clarity, they must be enumerated named here. Three categories are obtained if the objects are divided according to raw materials. *Clay* objects comprise steatopygous and cylindrical female figurines, male figurines, animal figurines, red slipped and/or painted pottery and “offering tables”. Objects made of *various types of stone* comprise M-shaped amulets, marble/stone bracelets, well-made beads, celts and well-made stone bowls, all of which are usually manufactured with a special sort of stone such as nephrite, serpentine or marble. Other stone objects are phalli, grooved stones and chipped discs. Among the *bone* objects there are polishers, “belt hooks” and spatulae. Pintaderas and sling missiles are either of stone or clay whereas “ear plugs” could be made from stone, bone or clay.

Another classification of these objects would be according to their function. However, in most cases this is unclear. Even the function of sling missiles is open to debate (see *Perlès 2001.228–231*), not to mention the pintaderas, “offering tables”, or figurines (see for example *Makkay 1984; Sherratt 1997 [1991]; Talalay 1993*). Nevertheless, these elements can be tentatively divided into several functional categories as technological, prestigious, prestigious/technological, and symbolic items. For example, chipped discs or grooved stones could be used purely as tools, whereas celts or decorated bone spatulae

would be used as tools which implicitly reflect social status within a group. Prestigious items would include marble bracelets and well-made beads, since their raw materials would have been brought from a certain distance and/or were made by a specialised craftsman. Pintaderas or M-shaped amulets are also considered to reflect social status or group identity; however they could well have been used in rituals, or simply as decorative elements (*Makkay 1984; Hansen 2003*). Phallic symbols, figurines and “offering tables” are elements that can be associated with rituals, although contextual and ethnographic data present many contradictory cases (*Talalay 1993; Schwarzberg 2003*).

It is important to mention here is that these elements are not all-inclusive. There is no ultimate list for the “Neolithic package”. Certain repeated architectural elements or chipped stones can be added, if they can be found in these regions. As *Perlès* suggests, “selectivity” is also another issue that should be studied in detail in order to find certain routes of some objects, or choices that different groups made (*Perlès 2001*).

As to the so-called “agricultural package” – emmer wheat, einkorn wheat, hulled barley, lentil, chick pea, bitter vetch and flax, which have been labeled as “founder crops” should be added, since they too seem to occur together in this vast region (*Zohary and Hopf 1993*). These earliest domesticated plants are known from PPNA and Early PPNB sites from the Levantine Corridor and SE Anatolia, and were brought to Central Anatolia and Cyprus in their domesticated forms in PPN (*Asouti and Fairbairn 2002; Colledge et. al. 2004*). As for animals, domesticated sheep and goats are good candidates for the “package”, which again seem to have been domesticated either in SE Anatolia or in Levantine Corridor (*Martin et. al. 2002*). However, it should be emphasised that the assumption that all these domesticates co-occurred is a very generalised statement. It is apparent that subsistence strategies are affected both by environmental conditions and group preferences, which led many settlements under discussion to reveal various combinations of subsistence strategies, not only in comparison to other sites, but also within the sequence of a site itself.

Having named regularly occurring objects and mentioned the “agricultural package”, it seems now possible to define the term as “the sum of traits that appear repeatedly in the Neolithic assemblages of SW Asia, Anatolia and SE Europe”.

There is no need to say that the existence of repeating traits in these areas was not a coincidence. The East-West orientation of this geographical region, which offered similar climatic and environmental conditions, is probably one of the main factors that caused “Neolithic way of life” to occur more or less in the same form⁵. This is not to imply that SW Asia, Anatolia and SE Europe consisted of homogeneous cultures, but one should remember that outside this “world” elements of the “Neolithic package” are not seen at all, or are found sporadically. For this reason, the existence of pintaderas in the Iberian peninsula, or female figurines at LBK settlements, does not mean that this particular “package” was there. For instance, the Mediterranean Neolithic seems to consist of a different set of repeated features which point towards different conditions and ways in which the Neolithic way of life occurred and developed (Korfmann 1988; Budja 1999). The significant issue about each package that can be defined is that the contents belong to a certain period and space, as can be observed in the archaeological record. A detailed examination of the material remains with this viewpoint would offer new insights into problems related to Neolithization processes. However, there are three main factors which prevent schol-

ars from attempting to investigate this issue. Firstly, SW Asia, Anatolia and SE Europe cover such enormous areas that few scholars can fully master them. Secondly, in these regions archaeology as a discipline was constructed on considerably different understandings and objectives (Trigger 1989; Özdoğan 1995; 1996). Cultural and chronological synchronizations between SW Asia and SE Europe especially are still in their beginnings because of limited communication between scholars. The low number of problem-oriented prehistoric investigations in Anatolia (particularly in Western Anatolia) is another significant factor that retards the opening of communications. Thus, in this part of the world, the “Neolithic package” and its broad distribution is either not recognised or considered oversimplified.

It should also be noted that it is not the intention here to suggest that Neolithic was a package. Within the “Neolithic way of life”, “Neolithic package” should be perceived as a material reflection of the Neolithic mentality, rather than “the Neolithic” itself; something to begin with, not something to conclude on. In other words, the Neolithic package would be the medium with which one can approach the spirit of the period, depending on the assump-

App. cal. Dates	10 000- 9000	9000-7500	7500-7000	7000-6500	6500-6000
Objects/ Period	PPNA	PPNB	Late PPNB	Early PN	Late PN
Female Figurines	X				
Male Figurines	X				
Marble/Stone Bracelets	X				
Well-made beads	X*				
Imported Shells	X				
Well-made Stone Bowls	X				
Bone “belt hooks”	X*				
Bone Spatulae	X				
Celts	X*				
Grooved Stones	X				
Pintaderas		X(?)			
Animal Figurines			X*		
Bone polishers			X		
Chipped Discs			X		
Phalli			X		
“Offering Tables”				X	
“Ear Plugs”				X	
Sling Missiles					X
Red slipped/Painted Pottery					X
“M” Shaped Amulettes				X(?)	

Tab. 1. Table showing the earliest occurrences of “Neolithic package” elements in SW Asia. [*] means that these elements appear in Central Anatolia also in the PPN period. It should be noted that the “offering tables” are not seen in SW Asia, but in Anatolia and SE Europe.

5 An inspiring chapter on the orientation of the continents and its consequences can be found in Diamond (1997).

tion that the mentality found its reflection in material culture.

TRACING THE “PACKAGE”

A brief survey of Pre-Pottery Neolithic (PPN) sites in SW Asia and Central Anatolia would reveal that most of the elements of the Neolithic package were present since PPNA and PPNB (see Tab. 1). 14 of the 21 elements enumerated above seem to have occurred already in PPN, a period of “intensive foragers” in SE Anatolia, rather than agro-pastoral societies (*Sherratt 2004*), whereas the rest occur firstly in the Pottery Neolithic (PN) period. Female figurines, male figurines, well-made beads, grooved stones, bone spatulae, celts, well-made stone bowls and bone “belt hooks” are among the elements that existed in PPNA levels of Çayönü, Hallan Çemi, Jericho and Mureybet III, which are dated around 10 000–9500 cal. BC (*Özdoğan A. 1999; Rosenberg 1999*). These elements are also known from PPNB sites such as Göbeklitepe and Nevalı Çori where, for example, hundreds of male and female figurines have been uncovered (*Hauptmann 1999*). Similarly, animal figurines, bone polishers, chipped discs, and phalli first appeared in the late PPNB period, as can be observed from sites at Çayönü, D’jade, Nemrik, Mezraa Teleilat, and Gritille (*Özdoğan A. 1999; Coqueugniot 2000; Kozłowski 1989; Karul et. al. 2000; Voigt 1988 respectively*). These elements continue to be seen in the same area at PN settlements at Hacı Firuz, Umm Dabaghiyah, Tell Sotto or Tell Sabi Abyad.

A number of “Neolithic package” elements occurred in Central Anatolia also during the PPN, c. between 8500–7500 cal. BC, where the site of Aşıklı yielded animal figurines, well-made beads, bone “belt hooks” and celts (*Esin and Harmankaya 1999*). On the other hand, the earliest figurines from Central Anatolia are known from Çatalhöyük X, which is dated around 7000 cal. BC, whereas pintaderas, sling missiles and marble/stone bracelets occur only from level VI onwards, ca. 6600 cal. BC, at the same site (*Mellaart, 1967; Ünlüsoy 2002*). Bone spatulae, chipped discs, and bone polishers also appear in Central Anatolia with the PN period, and continue into the Early Chalcolithic, as evidenced from sites at Çatalhöyük, Köşk Höyük, Tepecik-Çiftlik, and Musular

(*Mellaart 1967; Öztan 2003; Bıçakçı 2001; Özbaşaran 2000*). These indicate that NP elements occurred in Central Anatolia at least a thousand year after than they occurred in SW Asia.

Outside these areas, e.g. Levant, Northern Syria, Northern Iraq, SE Anatolia and Central Anatolia, during the 10th, 9th and 8th millennia BC, as far as it is known there were scantily distributed semi-sedentary or mobile hunter-gatherer groups with a completely different material culture. This leaves us with (at least) two regions in which the earliest NP elements are identified. These are the so-called “Fertile Crescent” on the one hand, and Central Anatolia on the other, both of which have been designated as “core regions” (*Özdoğan 1997*) in which the Neolithic way of life and its mentality were structured. The Neolithic package occurs outside these areas c. from 7100 BC onwards (as can be observed in early levels of Bademağacı) in Western Anatolia and Thessaly, as well as in Bulgaria, at least from 6500 BC onwards and in Northwestern Anatolia probably from 6100 BC onwards or slightly earlier (*Duru 2003; Özdoğan 1998; Perlés 2001; Todorova 1995; Özdoğan 1999; Roodenberg 1999 respectively*).

The increase in the number of settlements in West Anatolia and Southeastern Europe in the course of the 7th and 6th millennia BC can hardly be explained only by population increase, where few Mesolithic settlements were identified and fewer have uninterrupted sequences from the Mesolithic to Neolithic⁶. Newly founded sites between 6500–6000 BC, like Tepecik-Çiftlik and Köşk Höyük in the Niğde area, Höyücek, Hacılar and Kuruçay in the Lake District, Ilıpınar in the İznik area, Hoca Çeşme and Aşağıpınar in Turkish Thrace are only a few instances where fully-developed villages with a Neolithic package are attested. The packages that occur in the Neolithic sites of Western Anatolia and Turkish Thrace are almost identical to those in SW Asia and Central Anatolia, suggesting that interaction mechanisms such as trade or exchanges of ideas are insufficient to cause this high degree of similarity. The fact that the some elements of the “package” (not all) appeared from the earliest levels of most of the settlements suggests that there were movements of people, rather than random movements of goods and ideas.

⁶ We are well aware of the fact that in several locations in Anatolia and Southeast Europe, including Thessaly, Mesolithic settlements have been identified. Although they prove existence of Mesolithic groups in these areas, they either lack the transitional phase between Mesolithic and Neolithic or these phases present no gradual development (*Perlés 1986; Thissen 2000; Gkiasta et. al., 2003*).

THE SAME “PACKAGE” EVERYWHERE AND AT THE SAME TIME?

On the other hand, it should be noted that the “package” cannot be (and should not be) identified everywhere intact and in the same form. Female figurines from SE Europe and Central Anatolia look unquestionably different. The motifs on the pintaderas of North Syria, Anatolia and Balkans differ (*Makkay 1984*); the so-called “offering tables” come in many regional variations, depending on their forms and decoration; moreover, they are absent from the “Fertile Crescent” (*Schwarzberg 2005.255–273*). M-shaped amulets are mainly seen in Western Anatolia, Thrace, Thessaly and Western Bulgaria⁷, and never in the northern parts of the Balkans (*Hansen 2003.348*). The bone spoons of the Starčevo-Criş-Körös cultures from sites at Donja Branjevina or Starčevo look different from the Anatolian specimens. The quality

and quantity of pottery and their forms show certain differences between SE Asia, different parts of Anatolia and Southeast Europe, and so on. But do we actually need to find identical packages over such a large area in order to appreciate the existence of a cultural formation which had its roots in the SW Asian and Central Anatolian PPN? If we consider each and every group in these regions with a potential (perhaps a desire⁸), to transform their (material) culture, but without independence from their time and space, then it would be easier to view the re-formed elements as autochthonous developments on the one hand, and on the other as contributions of these units to the overall cultural formation at the macro level. This is very well illustrated with the earliest NP elements from core regions and the “package” seen during the PN period in West Anatolia and Southeast Europe. By the PN period the “package” is not only much more widespread, but also

Sites/ cal. BC Dates	Çatalhöyük East	Bademağacı	Hacılar	Hoca Çeşme	Ulucak Höyük
5000					III
5500			I IIB/ pintaderas	I II/ pintaderas, bone spatulae, “M” shaped amulettes	III
6000	I II	I 3-2/ sling missiles, figurines, pintadera	VI/ sling missiles, figurines IX/ bone spatulae		...BREAK... IV/figurines, pintaderas V/sling missiles, bone spatulae
6500				IV/ sling missiles ...Virgin Soil...	↓
7000	VIB/ sling missiles, figurines, pintaderas XII/ bone spatulae	9-8/ bone spatulae ...Virgin Soil...			
7500	↓		...BREAK... “Aceramic” ↓		

Tab. 2. Early appearances of “Neolithic package” elements within Anatolian sites. The dates are taken from Thissen (2002), Duru (2003) and Çilingiroğlu et. al. (2004).

⁷ There is also a good possibility that many “M” shaped amulettes could not be identified in many excavations due to their tiny sizes.
⁸ Perlès mentions how the Neolithic in the Aegean islands is dissimilar to the ones that are known from mainlands, although they represent clear cases of colonization: “...as though the colonization of new regions by small groups led to a ‘founding effect’ and a complete break and reorganization of tradition” (*Perlès 2001.58*).

	SW Asia	Central Anatolia	Western Anatolia	NW Anatolia	Greece	Bulgaria	Balkans
5000		MC	MC	Chal.	LN	LN/Vinča	Vinča B
5500	Ubaid				MN		Vinča A
6000	Halaf	EC	EC	PN	EN	EN	Starčevo proto-Starčevo Monochrome Phase
6500	Late PN		LN		PPN(?)	Mono- chrome Phase	
7000	Early PN	PN	"EN"	PPN(?)	Mesolithic	Mesolithic	Mesolithic
7500	Late PPNB			Mesolithic	↓	↓	↓
8000			PPN(?)	?			
8500		PPN	↓				
9000	PPNB	↓	?				
9500		?					
10000	PPNA						

Tab. 3. A simplified table showing the approximate dates of appearance of the "Neolithic package" in different regions, with regional chronologies. The dates are calibrated and taken from *Thissen (2002), Özdoğan (1999), Gallis (1996), Todorova (1995) and Schubert (1999)*. Thin lines indicate the early phases of the package; thicker lines represent the developed phase of the package.

subject to changes in appearance (probably in some cases in function and meaning), and for this reason, it is naturally more diverse and differentiated.

Another question is whether all of the elements of the package appeared together at the same time. The evidence from Anatolian sites shows that some of the elements indeed occurred later and were added to the material culture later in the sequence (see Tab. 2). At the site of Bademağacı, where so-called "Early Neolithic" levels have been identified as EN 9-1, sling missiles, figurines and pintaderas do not occur before EN 3-2, while bone spatulae are present from the EN 9-8 levels (*Duru and Umurtak 2003.323*). Bone spatulae were also present both at Hacilar and Kuruçay from the lowest level upwards (*Mellaart 1970.162; Duru 1994*), but at Hacilar before level VI there are neither female figurines (except two fragmentary figures from level IX) nor sling missiles. At Çatalhöyük the earliest sling missiles,

steatopygous female figurines and pintaderas are found from VI B onwards (*Mellaart 1967.217*), whereas at Hacilar the earliest pintaderas are found in level II B (*Mellaart 1970.164-166*). This also holds true for the sites situated in Western Anatolia and Thessaly. In fact, at Hoca Çeşme the earliest pintaderas, bone spatulae and M-shaped amulettes are known from Phase II, whereas female figurines, sling missiles and red-slip pottery are present from phase IV, which is dated between 6500-6200 BC (*Özdoğan 1998*). As reported by Perlès, the earliest Neolithic accumulations (the so-called "pre-pottery Neolithic" levels) in Greece at sites like Sesklo, Argissa or Achilleion, yielded bone spatulae, bone "belt hooks", celts and "ear plugs" (*Perlès 2001*), and in the following phase, e.g. in the EN, other elements such as female and male figurines, pintaderas, marble/stone bracelets, well-made stone bowls, celts etc. would either appear for the first time or in clearly increased quantities. A comparable case is known for the

sling missiles which appeared in Southwest Asia only towards the end of PN period⁹ (Özdoğan 2002: 438). It is worth noting that, as is mentioned above, at the early sites of Çatalhöyük and Bademağacı sling missiles were not found at the deepest levels which points towards their late occurrence in these regions, and at later sites from Turkish Thrace, Bulgaria or Thessaly sling missiles are present from the earliest deposits upwards (Vutirooulos 1991). It is at this point that very word “package” is called into question. The examples above clearly illustrate that it was not the case that once the “package” was “packed”, it was carried along with all of its components. It would be better to choose a more flexible term to allow for a constantly developing and diversifying set of objects, since the “package” apparently continued to develop until it reached a “high point” in the late 7th- early 6th millennium BC, and with the end of this phase the strong ties seem somehow to loosen.

By the second half of the 7th millennium, SW Asia and Central Anatolia had ceased to be the origins of new or changing elements. The core regions became part of an augmented cultural formation until the Middle Chalcolithic period, when Central and Western Anatolia cultures came increasingly the under influence of Southeast European cultures until the beginning of the Early Bronze Age, implied or denoted by a number of scholars as a “Balkano-Anatolian cultural zone” (Childe 1956; Garašanin 1979; Todorova 1991; Esin 1993; Özdoğan 1993). Meanwhile, on the Eastern side, after the phase of pre-Halaf painted wares, connections between Southeast Anatolia and rest of Anatolia seem to have loosened. Together with Northern Syria and Iraq, Southeast Anatolia, with a decreasing attachment to Central and Western Anatolian cultures, would become one of the key regions where Halaf, Ubaid and Uruk cultures are identified. This is to imply that the “Fertile Crescent” developed in another direction from that of Anatolia and the Balkans from the Middle Chalcolithic onwards, and was no longer a part of this “cultural zone”.

Within these developments, what happens to the “Neolithic package”? It seems that it loses its homogeneity. The elements become increasingly diversified and regional boundaries are becoming more

apparent. Despite these developments many elements” continue into the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Ages, both in Anatolia and in SE Europe, but as we have mentioned before, it can no longer be found as a single entity. One can probably speak of a “Chalcolithic package” for Anatolia and SE Europe, but with the current level of data on the Middle and Late Chalcolithic periods¹⁰ this does not seem feasible.

LIMITS OF THE TERM: THE EXAMPLE OF FIKIRTEPE CULTURE

The question remains, however: does the existence of a similar material culture mean that they were perceived in the same way by the people who used it? Until now, it has been pointed out that the existence of the “Neolithic package” reflects one macro-cultural zone with shared dynamics sustained by constant interaction. Nevertheless, it should once again be underlined that this zone consists of many smaller cultural units with varying cultural traditions and perceptions, even though the material culture (e.g. their common use of the Neolithic “package”) implies otherwise. In order to demonstrate this point and test the limits of the term, Fikirtepe culture is outlined below as an example.

The Neolithic culture of Northwest Anatolia which is known as “Fikirtepe culture” is defined by its round, wattle and daub structures, dark, incised pottery, and microlithic tools from sites such as Fikirtepe, Pendik and Yarımburgaz Cave (Özdoğan 1999). Moreover, the groups which inhabited these settlements relied primarily on fishing, mollusc collecting, and hunting and gathering, rather than on farming (Buitenhuis 1995). However, their material culture consists of Neolithic package elements such as bone spatulae, bone polishers, chipped disks, female figurines (although rare), “offering tables” and red-slip pottery. Since these objects did not exist in the area during the Mesolithic and PPN periods¹¹, the sudden appearance of the Neolithic package in the PN period can only be explained by movements into the area, as suggested by Özdoğan (1999) which is also evident from the site of Ilıpınar where, from the earliest level upwards, “a farming community” has been identified (Roodenberg 1999). However, with

⁹ In SW Asian terms.

¹⁰ In Anatolian terms.

¹¹ The evidence from these periods comes from extensive surveys that were carried out in the region during the 80˘s - early 90˘s and were identified as Ağaçlı and Çalca Groups. For details see, Gatsov and Özdoğan (1994), Özdoğan and Gatsov (1998).

a mixed economy, microlithic tools and round huts, Fikirtepe culture is not representative of “typical” Neolithic culture, but is more like a peripheral development. Unfortunately, the emergence of Fikirtepe culture and its relation to local cultures is not well-understood. Nevertheless, it seems highly likely that in addition to the newcomers, local groups in the area adopted the “Neolithic package” while retaining their traditional architecture, subsistence strategy and tools, which makes the Neolithic of North-west Anatolia very peculiar and unlike those known from Central or Western Anatolia¹². As an answer to the question above, the evidence from the Fikirtepe sites helps demonstrate that the existence of NP elements at a given site or region does not necessarily point towards identical cultural formations. For this reason, in the case of Fikirtepe culture, where the dissimilarities outweigh the similarities, or where the Neolithic package is not fully integrated into the group’s life, the term loses its applicability. A comparison of Fikirtepe culture with other Neolithic cultures only depending on the Neolithic package would be, needless to say, misleading and inadequate. However it must be also said that Fikirtepe culture, as a peripheral Neolithic culture with its own peculiarities, still belongs to the cultural formation mentioned above. It cannot be evaluated or studied without comprehending the Neolithic cultures of SW Asia, Anatolia, and SE Europe.

THE EXISTENCE OF “NEOLITHIC PACKAGE” IN WESTERN ANATOLIA

Western Anatolia, on the other hand, shows different characteristics. The Mesolithic background of the area is virtually unknown. The massive alluvial silting and rise of the coastline prevent archaeologists from locating prehistoric sites, although surveys have identified over 30 Neolithic sites (*French 1965; Seeher 1990; Meriç 1993; Efe 1995; Lichter 2002*). The Neolithic settlements in the area are identified by means of red-slip pottery that appears usually with “S” profiles and vertical tubular lugs. The sites that are investigated have mainly red-slip pottery and the rest of the “Neolithic Package” that occurs with them. Pre-red-slip pottery sites are either absent from Western Anatolia or have not been discovered.

Early cultural deposits at sites such as Ulucak Höyük near İzmir and others must be exposed, at least in order to approach the problem of the initial Neolithic in the area¹³. The latest information from Ulucak levels V and IV, dated around 6100–5900 cal. BC, point to a fully developed village layout with wattle and daub architecture followed by mud-brick architecture in the upper level. Level IV at the site has Neolithic package elements such as red-slip pottery, sling missiles, celts, pintaderas, female and male figurines, animal figurines, stone/marble bracelets, and well-made stone bowls (*Çilingiroğlu et al. 2004*). One of the pintaderas with concentric circles from the site is almost identical to those found at Bademağacı and Nea Nikomedeia¹⁴. Although it is too early to draw conclusions, Western Anatolia seems to have been a region where demic diffusion can be suggested for the appearance of communities with the “Neolithic package”. The fact that the source of obsidian was Central Anatolia (*Çilingiroğlu et al. 2004:52*), not Melos, for the tools uncovered at Ulucak might also be an indication with regards to the Anatolian origin of this group. Whether a Mesolithic or PPN population existed in the area and whether they had any contacts with the newcomers remain to be investigated. It can be stated, although with reservations, that the West Anatolian Neolithic, unlike the NW Anatolian, contains no elements that can be traced back to the Mesolithic.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As mentioned in the introduction, there is neither a clear definition for the concept of the “Neolithic package”, nor an explicit use of it. As is the case with many undefined but frequently used terms in archaeological literature, lack of definition causes only confusion. For this reason, it seemed to be useful to discuss this term and its implications in the hope that this would promote common understanding and grounds for discussion. It was not the intention here to discuss the Neolithization of Anatolia or Southeast Europe; however, since the term is embedded within these discussions, it was impossible to avoid references to these issues. Another critical point is that the finds mentioned are admittedly largely decontextualised and not discussed in depth.

¹² Besides, the rarity of female figurines in the Fikirtepe culture might also point out to a reluctance in adopting a belief system by the local people (if the female figurines are to be associated with a belief system).

¹³ According to paleogeographical analyses that were carried out at the site by Prof. Kayan and his team, the cultural deposits continue as deep as 3 meters below the present plain level of Nif Çayı (for details see *Çilingiroğlu et al. 2004*).

¹⁴ With the current information from the region, it is not possible to suggest a development sequence for Neolithic package.

There is no doubt that such a study would provide valuable information. However, the main interest was to evaluate the term's applicability and see whether it can offer anything new. By doing so, we have attempted to trace the origins of some elements from the "Neolithic package" back to the PPN period, and in relation to that, tried to present how the package became widespread and diversified during the PN period. It was also the aim here to point to a "greater" Neolithic world within which numerous cultural regions are defined and studied as isolated entities. I have also tried to discuss the term's limits within the framework of Fikirtepe culture. It is definitely not a "magical" term that guarantees an explanation of everything, but it does have important methodological implications for future research in terms of integrating all the find groups in order to achieve a synthetic approach.

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