The Colossal Confusion that is the Pottery Neolithic

(also known as the Late Neolithic)
The Pottery Neolithic

• Appearance of pottery
  – Cooking pots and beverage servers
  – Decoration conveys society and ideology

• Economy depends heavily in fully domesticated livestock and plants

• Shift in settlement to accommodate new economy – smaller, more dispersed hamlets
Pottery Neolithic Sites

Figure 3.1 Map of the Levant, Mesopotamia and Western Iran with some prehistoric, protohistoric and historical sites
Source: Maisels 1993a
## Chronology

<table>
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<th>Pottery Neolithic Cultures</th>
<th>Dates (BP)</th>
<th>Type Site</th>
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<td>Byblos:</td>
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<tr>
<td>néolithique ancien</td>
<td>ca. 7600-7100</td>
<td>Byblos</td>
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<td>néolithique moyen</td>
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<td>néolithique récent</td>
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<td>Yarmoukian</td>
<td>ca. 7500-7000</td>
<td>Sha’ar HaGolan</td>
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<td>Jericho IX</td>
<td>ca. 7400-6800?</td>
<td>Jericho (level IX)</td>
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<td>Wadi Rabah &amp; variants</td>
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<td>Wadi Rabah</td>
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<td>Zagros: Pottery Neolithic</td>
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<td>Ganj Dareh D &amp; Tepe Sarab</td>
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<td>Mesopotamia: Pottery Neolithic</td>
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<td>Proto-Hassunan and Sottoan</td>
<td>ca. 8200-7900</td>
<td>Umm Dabaghiya, Tell Sotto</td>
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<td>Hassunan</td>
<td>ca. 7900-7200</td>
<td>Tell Hassuna</td>
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<td>Samarran</td>
<td>ca. 7500-6500</td>
<td>Tell as-Sawwan</td>
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<td>Halafian</td>
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<td>Tell Halaf &amp; Arpachiya</td>
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<td>Çatal Höyük, Can Hassan</td>
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# The Pottery Neolithic of the Levant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Radiocarbon Years BP</th>
<th>Complexes</th>
<th>Industries</th>
<th>Facies</th>
<th>Selected Assemblages</th>
<th>Calibrated Years BCE</th>
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<td>6000</td>
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<td>Ghassulian</td>
<td>Qatifian</td>
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<td>Wadi Rabah</td>
<td>Ziqlab</td>
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<td>Coastal Neolithic</td>
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<td>‘Ain Ghazal</td>
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<td>Eastern Desert</td>
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<td>LPPNB Aswadian</td>
<td>Beidha II</td>
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<td>Harifian Mushabian</td>
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The Pottery Neolithic

- Begins ~8000 BP with the appearance of pottery and ends ~6000 BP with the beginning of the Chalcolithic (copper) Period
- Terminology
  - Yarmoukian (ca. 7500-7000 BP)
  - Jericho IX (aka Lodian) (ca. 7400-6800 BP)
  - Wadi Rabah and other variants (ca. 6800-6200 BP)
- “Origins” of Pottery
- Major shifts in social organization and settlement patterns
  - Villages, hamlets, and farmsteads
  - Household economies
Northern Levant

- Most of Lebanon and Syria
- “Everything” starts earlier in the north
- Earliest pottery at Tell al-Kerkh in Balikh Valley (Syria)
- DFBW
- Also early pottery at Amuq
Byblos, Lebanon

- Strategic position for regional interaction
- Pottery:
  - DFBW resembles Amuq sites to north,
  - Red painted pottery like Wadi Rabah and Yarmoukian to south,
  - Other pottery distinctive (shell-impressed)
- Three main levels (néolithique ancien, moyen, récent)
- Scattered, small rectangular houses, single-room, plastered floors

Figure 8. Rectangular rooms around a courtyard at Late Neolithic Byblos (after Durand 1973). Grey indicates conjectural reconstruction.
The Yarmoukian Culture

• Earliest pottery in southern Levant
• Dates to mid-late 8th millennium
  – between 7500-7000 BP
• First excavated at Megiddo, but not identified until Sha’ar HaGolan figurines
• Type site: Sha’ar HaGolan
• Stratigraphically above PPN and below Wadi Rabah or similar cultures
The Yarmoukian (7500-7000 BP)

- Sha’ar HaGolan (type site)
- Megiddo
- Munhata 2B
- ‘Ain Ghazal
- Jebel Abu Thawwab
- ‘Ain Rahub
- Wadi Shu’eib
- Nahal Qanah Cave
- Nahal Zehora II
- Rehov Habashan
- Tell as-Saidiyeh
Yarmoukian Sites

- **Site Location**
  - Dense occupation of both sides of JV
  - Moderate occupation of Jezreel Valley, Central Hills, Coastal Plain, Jordanian highlands
  - No sites in Negev and Sinai
  - Focussed in narrow E-W band across central Israel and Jordan, spanning variety topographic units
  - Byblos néolithique ancien – different ceramic tradition
- **Large farming villages** (Sha’ar HaGolan and ‘Ain Ghazal)
- **Hamlets** - small, multi-family sites
- **Farmsteads** – small, single-family sites
Yarmoukian Architecture

- Circular and rectilinear buildings, single and multi-roomed houses
- Courtyards, paved streets, storage facilities
- Stone foundations, *huwwar* surfaces, wide variety of pits in and outside houses
- Sha’ar HaGolan – hints at modern NE houses with living and storage rooms opening to large courtyard, houses separated by paved streets and alleys
Sha’ar HaGolan

Plan of a portion of a LPPNB courtyard house from Basta (above) contrasted with a house compound at the Yarmoukian site of Sha’ar Hagolan, Israel (right). After Nissen et al. (1991: 16) and Garfinkel and Miller (2002: 35).

View of the Yarmoukian house compound at Sha’ar Hagolan, Israel. Courtesy of Y. Garfinkel.
‘Ain Ghazal

Large, rectangular and apsidal stone houses
Yarmoukian Lithics

Flake-dominated, blades still present

Main Innovation: Distinct subtypes of Byblos and Amuq points, appearance of small Haparsa & Herzliya point

Coarsely denticulated, bifacially retouched sickle blades

Bifacial knives, proto-tabular scrapers
Yarmoukian Pottery

- Necked jars with handles on shoulder
- Deep bowls with handles on rim

Nahal Qanah Cave (7500 BP)
Yarmoukian Pottery

• Forms:
  – Short-pedestalled bowls, chalices, platter-basins, necked jars, hole-mouth jars

• Decoration:
  – Distinctive triangular, red-painted fields separated by reserve bands delimited by two incised lines
  – Incised herringbone pattern

• Flat or pedestalled bases

• Handles: knobs, ledges, small loop between rim and shoulder
Yarmoukian Pottery
Burial Customs

- Burials rare
- Sha’ar HaGolan single adult under cairn
- Munhata 2B single adult in pit
- Wadi Shu’eib two burials but unclear if belong to Yarmoukian or Jericho IX:
  - Child, flexed, lacking cranium found in stone circle below mud floor
  - Secondary burial of adult and child also lacking craniums
- Byblos NA – infants buried in ceramic jars, children buried flexed in cradle devices with pottery and bone tools, adults flexed on sides in single graces with no grave goods, cache of adult skulls in rectangular basin
Figurines and Art Objects

Very rich industry

“Coffee-Bean Eye” Figurines

Representations of the sexes?

Pebble Figurines

Fertility Figurines
Economy

• Little fauna recovered, mostly from ‘Ain Ghazal
  – 70% domestic sheep/goat
  – 9% cattle
  – 11% pig
  – 6% gazelle

• Herd management or pastoralism

• Wide array plant remains:
  – Wheat, barley, lentils, peas, pistachio
Summary

• Sites: 1) large, dense villages, 2) dispersed villages, 3) single-household sites, 4) cave sites
• Pottery decorated by incised herringbone pattern
• Bifacially retouched sickle blades with coarse denticulations
• Rich assemblage of art objects, especially pebble figurines at Sha’ar HaGolan and Munhata – new perceptions of humans and animals?
Jericho IX Culture

- Overlaps with end of Yarmoukian and continues afterwards
  - Earlier than Wadi Rabah, usually (but not always) later than Yarmoukian
- Also known as Lodian and PNA
- ca. 7400 – 6800 BP
- More southerly occupation of Levant
- First identified at Jericho (level IX) as first pottery culture at site with red painted and burnished decoration and unique handles and bases
- Argument over validity of Jericho IX as separate pottery Neolithic “culture”
  - “distinct” painted and burnished brown and red bands found in secure Yarmoukian and Wadi Rabah contexts
Jericho IX Sites

- Jericho IX (type site)
- Teluliot Batashi layer IV
- Lod
- Wadi Rabah
- Tell Ali
- Abu Zureiq
- Megiddo
- Nizzanim
- Givat Haparsa
- Herzliya
- Tell Lachish
- Wadi Shu’eib
- Dhra’
- Khirbet Dhariya
- Nahal Zehora II
- Horvat Usa
Jericho IX

• Yarmoukian and Jericho IX both occur at several sites, but partially contemporary?
• Throughout southern parts of coastal plain
• Rare sherds in north of Israel/Jordan
• Jericho, Dhra’ only known sites in JV
• Wide range ecological zones and local tradition (not throughout NE)
• More southerly located than Yarmoukian, but overlap in central Israel and Jordan
 Jericho IX Lithics

• Lack of information on unretouched debitage
• Bipolar cores absent
• Flakes dominate (blades overrepresented as tools)
• Same tool classes as Yarmoukian, but change in arrowhead types – Haparsa, Nizzanim, Herzliya, and transversal arrowheads
• Sickle blades thicker, wider, and curved or trapezoidal in shape
• Tabular scrapers
Jericho IX Pottery

• Different from Yarmoukian by:
  – Innovative use of red slip, paint and burnish
  – Different pre-firing technology
  – Different decorative elements and motifs
  – Different vessel shapes (mainly jars and bowls, with platters and pedestalled bowls absent)
Jericho IX Pottery

- **Crude Ware**: coarse, porous, straw-tempered, hand-made pottery of light creamy colour with burnished red slipped decoration, uneven surfaces
  - Upright bowls, hole-mouth jars with inverted rims, necked jars, loop and knob and lug handles, flat pedestalled and ring bases
- **Fine Ware**: wide, open bowls, small jars and cups of fine buff pottery with mineral temper, decorated with geometric pattern of burnished dark brown or red paint with horizontal band and chevron and with unpainted lattice reserve areas
Jericcho IX Architecture

- Only evidence is isolated stone walls and plastered pits bordered by low walls
- Lots of pits, shallow depressions, and hearths
- Round sunken mudbrick structures from Lod
Jericho IX Burials, Economy, and Figurines

- **Economy**
  - Only faunal data from Nizzanim (sheep/goat, cattle, pigs common with gazelle and fish)

- **Burials**
  - Fragments of adults and a child below floor at Nizzanim
  - Two adults in primary interments in shallow pits, contracted position with skulls

- **Figurines**
  - Anthropomorphic figurine from Givat Haparsa
  - Clay fragment of animal from Teluliot Batashi IV
  - Typical Yarmoukian pebble and clay figurines absent
The Wadi Rabah Culture

• Identified by Kaplan (1958) from Tel Aviv area at site of Wadi Rabah by specific pottery assemblage
• “Normative” WR and Variants
• Dates to first half of 7th millennium
  – between 6800-6200 BP
• Stratigraphically always above Yarmoukian or Jericho IX and always below Ghassulian (Chalcolithic)
• Large (1-2 ha) villages and small farmstead
Wadi Rabah Sites

- Wadi Rabah
- Teluliot Batashi IV
- ‘Ain al-Jarbo
- Tel Ali
- Abu Zureiq
- Munhata 2A
- Kabri
- Jericho VIII
- Beth Shean XVIII
- Tell Farah north
- Nahal Zehora I and II
- Byblos NM?
Wadi Rabah Lithics

- Flake dominated (>2:1)
- High densities ofdebitage, cores, and CTE’s – on-site production
- Single-platform, irregular cores (not naviform)
- Almost complete lack arrowheads
- Sickle blades rectangular, backed and double-truncated
- Burins either very rare (Munhata) or very common (Nahal Zehora I)
Wadi Rabah Pottery

- Hand-made
- Coil construction
- Variety fabric compositions (tempers)
- Forms:
  - Variety of bowls, rounded, straight upright, carinated, V-shaped
- Decoration: plain smoothed, slipped, slipped and burnished, various incised, impressed, combed, painted, applied plastic motifs, red painted band around inside and outside of rim
Wadi Rabah Pottery

• DFBW
  – small, thin, highly fired, carinated bowl of grit-free fabric, usually slipped and burnished a deep, glossy red or black
• Typical jar has bow rim and appears in all assemblages
• Handles: loop with splayed attachments, lugs, small pierced handles
• Hole-mouth jars common and pithoi
• Bases: flat, ring, convex
Wadi Rabah Pottery

- Bow rims
- Carinations
- Criss-cross combing, punctates, impressed
Wadi Rabah Architecture

- Broad-Room houses
  - Rectangular dwellings with field-stone foundations, some with internal subdivisions, terre pisé floors
- Mudbrick walls, pits of various sizes and forms – burrow pits for mud
- Rounded, paved, lined pits
- Circular basins lined with plaster sunk into floors
- Small, irregular shaped paved areas found outside walls – outdoor activity areas
Burials, Figurines, Economy

- **Burials**
  - ‘Ain al-Jarba three individuals under house floor with skulls
  - Infant burial in jar from Nahal Zehora II, Tel Dan, Tell Teo
  - Cist graves of adults and children with whole pots in Wadi Ziqlab

- **Figurines**
  - Carinated hole-mouth jar with applied image of human figure dancing (‘Ain al-Jarba)
  - Clay animal figurines

- **Economy**
  - Dominance sheep/goat, rare wild species and fish
  - Spindle whorls, loom weights, other weaving equipment suggest use of animal products
  - Proto-type of churn – dairy use
  - Appearance of olives on coastal plain sites
Wadi Rabah Variants

- Ceramics different, but dating unclear
- Jericho layer VIII (PNB) unique
- Fazael/Farah region
- Beth Shean/Tel Tsaf “bichrome painted”
- Huleh Valley (Tel Teo, Tel Dan, Hagoshrim) earlier and like Lebanon sites
- Qatifian in southern Israel and Jordan
  - Jars with high, everted necks, handles on shoulder, scalloped hole-mouth jars with handles on belly
Wadi Rabah Summary

- Sites spread over wide area if include variants, throughout middle and northern Israel and Jordan (not south) – rural?
- Normative sites focussed around Jezreel
- Small hamlets (ca. 1 ha in size) and farmsteads
- By end of period, relied fully on domesticated plants and animals, olives in use, and churns indicate use of animals products
- Establishment of rural society!
Issues in Pottery Neolithic

• Chronology
• Excavation methods: selection of indicative pottery and discard of all else, focus on “fossil directeur”
  – Cannot quantify
  – Cannot interpret “variant” sites because we select what to keep before we know what’s important
The Pottery Neolithic of Anatolia: Çatal Höyük
Çatal Höyük

- Local Anatolian tradition
- Irrigation farmers
- Cattle-breeding
  - Importance of cattle
- Obsidian traders
- Early pottery (crude burnished wares)
- Ritual centre
Standardized rectangular plan: living and storage rooms, roof entry

No alleyways or streets
The Pottery Neolithic of the Zagros

Figure 3.1 Map of the Levant, Mesopotamia and Western Iran with some prehistoric, protohistoric and historical sites

Source: Maisels 1993a
Ganj Dareh, western Iran
Ganj Dareh D

- Small village occupied second half 8th millennium (Yarmoukian), mudbrick architecture, several destructions by fire ending ca. 7000 BP

- Small, rectangular rooms of plano-convex bricks, some two-storey buildings with basement storage

- Niche with two wild ram skulls (earlier than Çatal Höyük)

- Earliest pottery in Near East – lightly fired chaff-tempered coarse ware forming large vessels (80 cm) and small mini-vessels (5 cm)

- Fired-clay human figurines with tall stalk-like heads and pointy breasts of “Tepe Sarab” style

- Infant burials below floors in cubicles, adults variable with grave goods (polished pendant)
Tepe Guran (Luristan)

• Pottery spread from Ganj Dareh
• Occupied ca. 6500-5500 BC
  – Semi-permanent goat herding camp replaced at 6200 BC with mudbrick, permanent houses and appearance of farming tools
• Then, appearance pottery (PN) in lowest three levels
  – Burnished greyish-brown coarse ware of thick-sided bowls
  – Finer, plain buff ware with straw temper (“archaic ware”) and red/orange paint on buff slip with geometric designs (bowls and beakers)
• Farmers with “painted Jarmo ware” (red patterns, oblique lines)
• “Sarab Ware” (carinated bowls, bands and lozenges, chevrons, triangles on rim)
Tepe Sarab, western Iran

• Entire sequence of permanent sheep/goat herders and farmers
• No mudbrick structures (wood)
• Fine, red burnished and painted pottery (Sarab Ware)
• Female figurines – tall necks, no face, big breasts and thighs, nail impressed
• Wild boar figurines
Pottery Neolithic Sites

• Jarmo Levels 4-5
  – Pottery decorated with obliquely strung rows of dashes and blobs, stone houses, domestic pig

• Ali Kosh
  – Pottery introduced in last phase (Muhammed Jafar) phase
The Pottery Neolithic of Mesopotamia

Figure 3.1 Map of the Levant, Mesopotamia and Western Iran with some prehistoric, protohistoric and historical sites

Source: Maisels 1993a
Chronology

Figure 3.14 Interdigitation and succession of prehistoric and protohistoric Mesopotamian cultures, showing descent of Sumerian Culture from Samarra through Ubaid. Uruk is a period named from the city.
Proto-Hassunan and Sottoan (8200-7900 BP)

- Umm Dabaghiya (Jazira at Jebel Sinjar)
  - Contemporary to end PPNB and into PN in Levant and very similar
  - Large, pueblo-like buildings with 4 building periods, 1 cultural entity – shows shift from oval pit-dwellings to permanent clay slab structures (mostly for storage)
  - IV largest and contains plain and painted (fine burnished and red on cream) pottery
  - Fine marble vessels, onager hunters
Hassuna (7900-7200 BP)

- First fully-fledged Neolithic society known from Tell Hassuna, excavated 1945
- Rectilinear farmhouses that demo spread of villages and farms with mixed economy
- Pottery: standard painted wares, standard incised and painted-and-incised ware (Hassuna trademark)
- Husking trays for baking bread
- Economy based on rainfall and groundwater agriculture
Hassunanan Pottery
Hassunan Figurines
Samarra (7500-6500 BP)

- Partly contemporary with Hassunan, but spread to south plains (colonization lowlands by irrigation farmers (canals))
- Highly decorated pottery
- Precursors to Ubaid – Uruk – Sumerian civilization
Tell as-Sawwan (type site)

- One of most completely excavated sites
- First nucleated settlement in Mesopotamia
- Early phase – Tripartite buildings for extended or polygamous buildings
- Later – T-shaped houses with two storeys (stairwells) surrounded by enclosing wall with gates
- Social interactions: social “areas” within enclosure, inaccessible parts, doorways of houses suggest related families
- T-houses later converted to granaries and walls unused – redistribution and chiefdoms
- Figurines similar to Yarmoukian ones
Tell as-Sawwan

Level I: coarse, poorly fired bowls, tripartite buildings (Hassunan)
Level II: appearance Samarra ware, reconstruction of tripartite buildings
Level III: fortifications and T-shaped buildings
Level IV extensions on T-shaped buildings, plaster-walled granaries
Level V: Halafian
T-Houses and Tripartite buildings

Plates of “T-houses” from Level Illa at Tell al-Sawwan (top), and “triptartite” buildings from the earlier Tell al-Sawwan Level I (bottom).

like Çayönü, while, in the Samarran of Iraq, we find, especially at Tell as-Sawwan, tripartite buildings and “T-houses” dominate. At Abu Hurriya, the houses have a standard plan based on pairings of long rectangles.

Such consistency of plan within some sites required no architects, as adherence to standard plans is quite typical of “primitive” architecture, which the inhabitants build themselves, and “vernacular” architecture, whose inhabitants, along with specialists and neighbors, participate in.
Samarran Pottery

Highly decorated pottery
Bowls and jars common
Geometric and animal motifs
Samarra

Painted “Face Pots”

Figure 3.22 Naturalistic and geometric designs from the classic trio: Halaf, Samarra and Ubaid

Source: Mallowan and Rose 1955:fig. 77