
BURÇIN ERDOĞU,  TANER KORKUT,  TURAN TAKAOĞLU,  NEJAT YÜCEL, 
UYGAR OZAN USANMAZ  AND YASIN CEMRE DERICI 

SPECIAL BUILDINGS AT NEOLITHIC GIRMELER, NEAR TLOS IN SOUTH-WEST ANATOLIA

Summary. Special buildings, or communal buildings, were ubiquitous in most Neolithic settlements in the Levant, Upper Mesopotamia, and Anatolia. Recently, remains of three special buildings with terrazzo floors dating to the early seventh millennium BC representing the Initial Neolithic period in west Anatolian chronology were unearthed in the basal layers of the mound located in front of the Girmeler cave in south-west Anatolia. The terrazzo floors in these three special buildings feature traces of red-painted linear and geometric decorations, while one also contains human burials. These special buildings may enhance our understanding of the symbolic and ritual behaviours of the Neolithic communities living on the south-west fringes of Anatolia. They may have been gathering places for ritual activities that helped create social memories and define group identities, as well as strengthen intra- and inter-societal relations among Neolithic groups. It is argued that the location of these special buildings adjacent to a natural hot spring before a cave with an impressive façade may have been one of the factors that eventually led Neolithic groups to form a gathering pattern here.

INTRODUCTION

The term ‘special building’ was first used by W. Schirmer in 1983 to refer to buildings that stand out from others uncovered at the pre-pottery Neolithic site of Çayönü in south-east Anatolia (Schirmer 1983). Most researchers who worked in several northern Mesopotamia pre-pottery Neolithic sites, however, generally preferred to use the term ‘communal building’, whose architectural features and construction techniques are different from other buildings. These communal buildings served a common purpose or were associated with unusual deposits with artistic and symbolic content (e.g. Richter *et al.* 2021). The term ‘cult building’ is also preferred by certain scholars (e.g. Özdoğan and Özdoğan 1998; Kornienko 2009). Referring to them as special, communal, or cult buildings does not alter the fact that they were an integral and important component of the first west Anatolian agricultural communities.