Dynamics of vegetation cover and exploitation of wood resources in Central Anatolia during the early Neolithic period: anthracological study of Aşıklı Höyük (Cappadocia, Turkey)

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Introduction

The Anatolia, which form a bridge between Europe and Middle East, is a rich and complex territory for its geography, its environment and as well as for its human history. Aşıklı Höyük (IXTH-VIIIth mil. cal. BC.), which is the first sedentary settlement known in Central Anatolia, is a major archaeological site for the understanding of the neolithisation of the region, as long as for the way of life and the environment of this community.

Material and methods

Samples came from three archaeological levels and 37 different contexts: occupational floors, activity areas, burnt areas, pits, hearth... and were extracted from the sediment by the flotation method. Two types of studies were conducted on them:

- **Taxonomic identification**
  The wood essences have been identified through the microscopic anatomy of the charcoal. The observation of more than 2600 fragments has revealed the presence of nine taxa.

- **Dendro-anthracological study**
  Several anatomical and morphological features have been observed. The estimation of the curvature and width of rings growth have been carried out on a hundred of oak fragments by a trigonometric tool.

Results

**Vegetation cover**

**Exploitation and use of firewood**

**Conclusion**

The Aşıklı community has mainly exploited one specific plant formation for the gathering of firewood: a woodland composed by pistachios, almonds and deciduous oak, which is not currently found in Cappadocia. Furthermore, a small exploitation of a riparian forest was also observed. Pistachio wood was the main fuel used. The preferential burning of small diameters (twigs, branches and young trunks) and the occasional use of decade wood have also been shown thanks to this study.

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