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# **The Aegean in the Neolithic, Chalcolithic and the Early Bronze Age**

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## CONTENTS

Abbreviations .....	xi
Preface by the Editors .....	xiii
Opening speech by the Mayor, Bülent BARATALI .....	xxiii
Opening speech by Prof. Dr. Ekrem AKURGAL .....	xxv
Opening speech by Prof. Dr. Christos DOUMAS .....	xxvii
LILIAN ACHEILARA Myrina in Prehistoric Times .....	1
VASSILIKI ADRIMI – SISMANI Données Récentes Concernant Le Site Préhistorique De Dimini: La Continuité de l’Habitation Littorale depuis le Début du Néolithique Récent jusqu’à la Fin du Bronze Ancien .....	9
IOANNIS ASLANIS Frühe Fortifikationssysteme in Griechenland .....	35
PANAGIOTA AYGERINOÜ A Flaked-Stone Industry from Mytilene: A Preliminary Report .....	45
ANTHI BATZIOU – EFSTATHIOU Kastraki: A New Bronze Age Settlement in Achaea Phthiotis .....	73
MARIO BENZI A Forgotten Island: Kalymnos in the Late Neolithic Period .....	85
ÖNDER BİLGİ Relations between İkiztepe by the Black Sea Coast and the Aegean World before Iron Age .....	109
TRISTAN CARTER Cinnabar and the Cyclades: Body modification and Political Structure in the Late EB I Southern Cyclades .....	119
CHRISTOS DOUMAS The Aegean Islands and their Role in the Development of Civilisation .....	131
ANTHI DOVA Prehistoric Topography of Lemnos: The Early Bronze Age .....	141
NIKOS EFSTRATIOU The Neolithic of the Aegean Islands: A New Picture Emerging .....	159
HAYAT ERKANAL Die Neue Forschungen in Bakla Tepe bei İzmir .....	165
HAYAT ERKANAL Liman Tepe: A New Light on the Prehistoric Aegean Cultures .....	179
JEANNETTE FORSÉN The Asea Valley from the Neolithic Period to the Early Bronze Age .....	191
DAVID H. FRENCH Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age Pottery of Southwest Anatolia .....	197

NOEL GALE	
Metal Sources for Early Bronze Age Troy and the Aegean .....	203
BARTHEL HROUDA	
Zur Chronologie Südwestkleinasiens in der 2. Hälfte des 3. Jahrtausends v. Chr .....	223
HALİME HÜRYILMAZ	
1996 Rettungsgrabungen auf dem Yenibademli Höyük, Gökçeada / Imbros .....	229
ERGUN KAPTAN	
Metallurgical Residues from Late Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age Liman Tepe .....	243
ANNA KARABATSOLI and LIA KARIMALI	
Etude Comparative Des Industries Lithiques Taillées Du Néolithique Final Et Du Bronze Ancien Egéen : Le Cas De Pefkakia .....	251
NECMİ KARUL	
Flechtwerkgabäude aus Osttrakien .....	263
SİNAN KILIÇ	
The Early Bronze Age Pottery from Northwest Turkey in Light of Results of a Survey around the Marmara Sea .....	275
OURANIA KOUKA	
Zur Struktur der frühbronzezeitlichen insularen Gesellschaften der Nord- und Ostägäis: Ein neues Bild der sogenannten “Trojanischen Kultur” .....	285
NINA KYPARISSI – APOSTOLIKA	
Some Finds of Balkan (or Anatolian) Type in the Neolithic Deposit of Theopetra Cave, Thessaly .....	301
LAURA LABRIOLA	
First Impressions: A Preliminary Account of Matt Impressed Pottery in the Prehistoric Aegean .....	309
ROBERT LAFFINEUR	
Aspects of Early Bronze Age Jewellery in the Aegean .....	323
KYRIAKOS LAMBRIANIDES and NIGEL SPENCER	
The Early Bronze Age Sites of Lesbos and the Madra Çay Delta: New Light on a Discrete Regional Centre of Prehistoric Settlement and Society in the Northeast Aegean .....	333
YUNUS LENGERANLI	
Metallic Mineral Deposits and Occurrences of the Izmir District, Turkey .....	355
EFTALIA MAKRI – SKOTINIOTI and VASSILIKI ADRIMI – SISMANI	
Les Sites Du Néolithique Récent Dans Le Golfe Pagasetique : La Transformation Des Sites De L’age De Bronze En Sites Urbains (Le Cas De Dimini) .....	369
ELSA NIKOLAOU, VASSO RONDİRİ and LIA KARIMALI	
Magoula Orgozinos: A Neolithic Site in Western Thessaly, Greece .....	387
EMEL OYBAK and CAHİT DOĞAN	
Plant Remains from Liman Tepe and Bakla Tepe in the İzmir Region .....	399

DEMETRA PAPACONSTANTINOU Looking for ‘Texts’ in the Neolithic Aegean: Space, Place and the Study of Domestic Architecture (Poster summary) .....	407
ATHANASSIOS J. PAPADOPOULOS and SPYRIDOULA KONTORLI – PAPADOPOULOU Some thoughts on the Problem of Relations between the Aegean and Western Greece in the Early Bronze Age .....	411
STRATIS PAPADOPOULOS and DIMITRA MALAMIDOU Limenaria: A Neolithic and Early Bronze Age Settlement at Thasos .....	427
DANIEL J. PULLEN Connecting the Early Bronze I and II Periods in the Aegean .....	447
JEREMY B. RUTTER Anatolian Roots of Early Helladic III Drinking Behaviour .....	461
VASIF ŞAHOĞLU New Evidence for the Relations Between the Izmir Region, the Cyclades and the Greek Mainland during the Third Millennium BC .....	483
ADAMANTIOS SAMPSON From the Mesolithic to the Neolithic: New Data on Aegean Prehistory .....	503
EVANGELIA SKAFIDA Symbols from the Aegean World: The Case of Late Neolithic Figurines and House Models from Thessaly .....	517
PANAGIOTA SOTIRAKOPOULOU The Cyclades, The East Aegean Islands and the Western Asia Minor: Their Relations in the Aegean Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age .....	533
GEORGIA STRATOULI Soziale und ökonomische Aspekte des Chalkolithikums (spätneolithikum II) in der Ägäis aufgrund alter und neuer Angaben .....	559
GEORGE TOUFEXIS Recent Neolithic Research in the Eastern Thessalian Plain, Greece: A Preliminary Report .....	569
RIZA TUNCEL IRERP Survey Program: New Prehistoric Settlements in the Izmir Region .....	581
HANNELORE VANHAVERBEKE, PIERRE M. VERMEERSCH, INGRID BEULS, BEA de CUPERE and MARC WAEKENS People of the Höyüks versus People of the Mountains ? .....	593
KOSTAS VOUZAXAKIS An Alternative Suggestion in Archaeological Data Presentations: Neolithic Culture Through the Finds from Volos Archaeological Museum .....	607
Closing Remarks by Prof. Dr Machteld J. MELLINK .....	611
Symposium Programme .....	615
Memories from the Symposium .....	623



# Metallurgical Residues from Late Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age Liman Tepe

Ergun KAPTAN

The archaeometallurgical remains excavated in 1996 in Liman Tepe were studied in two main parts: 1- Pre-smelting processed ore finds; 2- Metallurgical remains.

## 1- Pre-smelting processed ore finds.

Atacamite, an oxidised copper mineral ( $\text{Cu}_2\text{Cl}(\text{OH})_3$ ) under the umbrella of pre-smelting processed ore finds. The other obtained three finds are mineral processing tools for ore dressing.

The x-ray determinations, the mineralogical studies and chemical analyses have been carried out on atacamite minerals. A green core is observed in the center of the mineral, then a gray coloured part covers this green core. Finally, again, a green part occupies the most outer part of the minerals. Ore microscopical studies show that the green parts are atacamite minerals while the gray parts are cuprites and limonites. The elements such as 36.5% Cu, 19.3 ppm. Au, 0.43% Pb, 0.02% Zn, 0.05% Ni, 0.24% Sn are determined in chemical analyses. However that elements such as Fe, Ag, Sb, As, Bi can't be detected. We can deduce that atacamite as a secondary mineral of copper, must have been carried from Buca Maden Tepe.

One of the ore dressing tools is a stalk handled ore grinding tool (L: 8cm). The other two materials are used for mineral grinding purposes. Used surfaces are circular shaped and caved in the center so as to grind ore. One of these tools is self stalk handled ore crushing tool (L. 8cm). Another one is a spherical shaped tool, but used surfaces are rather smooth with a grinding cave in its center (L. 7cm).

The ore dressing tools were used for comminution purposes such as grinding and crushing. That is, these tools reduce grain size of oxidized copper minerals to an optimum grain size for further metallurgical treatment.

## 2- Metallurgical remains:

The slags belonging to pre-smelting processed ore finds have been found in five different locations. One of these slags belongs to the Late Chalcolithic Age. The others belong to the Early Bronze Age. The mineralogical - petrographical determinations and optical spectrographical semi-quantitative analyses have been conducted on the slags.

It is observed that ceramic crucible fragments are adhering to the slags. These slags occurred during metallurgical processes of the oxidised copper minerals in a ceramic pot. The required process temperature must be from 300-700° C. The charcoal was put into the ceramic pot as a reducer to obtain the metallic copper.

## Introduction

A number of interesting new archaeometallurgical finds have been discovered at the Liman Tepe excavations in 1996. In addition to the metallurgical slag found at Liman Tepe, important clues to metallurgical processes were recovered in unprocessed ores found at the site. Ores are often not found on slag deposits near metallurgical centers in Anatolia<sup>1</sup>. Slag is generally found in small numbers at excavations on urban sites. However, an exception is Kelenderis, where a great quantity of slag has been found<sup>2</sup>.

Liman Tepe is a mound situated on a peninsula located in the Iskele neighbourhood

of Izmir-Urla. The east-west highway from Izmir to Cesmealti cuts Liman Tepe in half (Fig. 1). The rocky summit of the peninsula situated in the northern part of the mound, extends to the south to the site of Klazomenai. The excavations at Liman Tepe began in 1980–1981. The excavations which continue through 1992 have been directed by Professor Dr. H. Erkanal.

The finds from Liman Tepe indicate that metallurgical activities play an important role at the site. Previous finds include a great number of moulds dating to the Middle Bronze Age and lead rings dating to the Early Bronze Age. In addition, a baked clay multi-faced mould, slag, copper ores and hammerstones used in ore dressing point to well developed metallurgical activities (Fig. 1). These materials have been

<sup>1</sup> Topkaya 1962.

<sup>2</sup> Kaptan 1994.

classified as pre-processing and metallurgical residues. Finds relating to a pre-processing phase include a copper mineral, atacamite ( $\text{Cu}_2\text{Cl}(\text{OH})_3$ ), and the ore dressing device while metallurgical residues include slag.

### Atacamite ( $\text{Cu}_2\text{Cl}(\text{OH})_3$ )

One of the most important finds from the 1996 season include the secondary copper mineral, atacamite. These finds were found in Level V dated to the Early Bronze II period and measure 4.4 x 2.9 x 1.9 cm. One half has been analysed (photo 1). This is the first time atacamite has been found in Anatolia. Geological investigations in Turkey have not found atacamite either.

This mineral is named after the copper mineral found in the Atacama desert in Chili. Atacamite occurs as a result of the alteration of copper sulphide at oxidation zones in deserts<sup>3</sup>. In general this mineral occurs in North and South America, Australia, South Africa and Central Asia. In addition Sardinia's Nurra mines have similar alteration zones<sup>4</sup>. However, in Turkey, it had been thought that natural conditions that would create this mineral do not exist. However, some mineral specialists have suggested that such natural conditions do exist in copper deposits in Turkey. Despite the earlier lack of finds, the 1996 atacamite finds necessitates a more detailed investigation into the natural conditions that created it. Atacamite, or hydro copper chlorine occurs as a result of the alteration of copper sulphide at oxidation zones in deserts<sup>5</sup>. It occurs naturally as a secondary mineral in oxidation zones. One of its important characteristics is that atacamite changes to malachite ( $\text{CuCO}_2(\text{OH})_2$ ) and vice versa. This occurs under chlorine conditions in subsurface areas. Archaeometric analyses have noted the formation of atacamite on bronzes and copper when deposited in chlorine rich soils<sup>6</sup>. However the finds from Liman Tepe are not atacamite formed on the surface of bronzes and copper artifacts, but an ore.

Geologists from MTA specializing in mineralogy have noted that it is possible that occurrences of atacamite are possible under certain conditions in copper deposits. For example chlorine and fluorine containing ground waters will alter copper veins containing malachite. Chalcopyrite ( $\text{CuFeS}_2$ ) which undergoes alteration by iron and sulphides. Thus malachite, azurite and atacamite and in some areas, cuprite is formed. In some cases gold inclusions in chalcopyrite get retained in the secondary copper mineral<sup>7</sup>.

X-ray diffraction and chemical analyses of polished cross sections have been performed on Liman Tepe finds. Results of the x-ray diffraction indicate that the ore is atacamite ( $\text{Cu}_2\text{Cl}(\text{OH})_3$ ).

### Polished Cross Section Investigations with a Metallurgical Microscope<sup>8</sup>

The sample can be macroscopically defined as dull green in parts and, slightly red-gray with a metallic sheen. The other is slightly reddish gray in color with a metallic lustre. Limonite shows gray under parallel nicole, and yellowish brown, brownish red colors under a polarizing lens having a reflection that covers the whole surface of the mineral. Cuprite is light-bluish gray in color. Characteristics is a bluish gray-olive green anisotropy colors and blood-red internal reflection. Generally, cuprite is replaced by the others, especially atacamite. Atacamite is distinguished by showing reflection pleocroism and by its characteristic internal reflection. Cuprite minerals showing selection structures are observed in atacamite, which are mostly replaced by atacamite. Sometimes replaced cuprite is in acicular form. Under cross-nicole cuprite is observed as back stains in atacamite. Strong internal reflection of atacamite masks cuprite's color. Most probably grains of gold are observed in one or two

<sup>3</sup> Gümüş 1974.

<sup>4</sup> Mottana et al. 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Dud'a-Rejil 1990; Mottana et al. 1995.

<sup>6</sup> Doeringer et al. 1970.

<sup>7</sup> Pehlivan 1997.

<sup>8</sup> A summary of the metallurgical microscopic analyses is given. The complete report can be found at the MTA Museum report no.44 and the director of the Liman Tepe excavations Professor Dr. Hayat Erkanal. In addition one half of the sample is on display in the MTA Museum Mineralogical department. Photographs taken under the microscope have not been included in this article since they are in color.

localities showing foliated texture and high reflection. The thickness of these grains are about 2-3 micron.

### Chemical Analysis

Cu 26.5 % 0.43 % Pb 0.02 % Zn 0.05 % Ni  
0.24%Sn 19.3 ppm Au

Fe not detected Sb not detected Ag not detected  
As not detected

### Ore Dressing Device

Three ore dressing devices which were used for ore beneficiation were found in the 1996 Liman Tepe excavations. Two are similar and have stalk handles, the other is square in shape. The square shaped ore dressing device dates on the beginning of the Early Bronze I period and comes from Level VI (Fig. 1 and photo 2). The working surface has been flattened and there is a shallow hollow in the center. The hollow was used to crush ore to the required size. The device measures 7 cm high, the hollow is 2,7 cm in diameter and 0,5–0,7 cm deep. The artifact has been carefully crafted however, it was not used extensively.

The stalk handled ore crushing tool dates on the Early Bronze II period and was found in level V (Fig. 1). The tool was well made and used to prepare ore (photo 3.L8). The tool has a handle and the working surface is oval. It is possible that it was used in the first phase of ore preparation, although this is not known for sure since there are no traces of crushing on the surface. It is possible that it was made for ore crushing but only used infrequently or not at all (photo 3.L9). The tool measures 9,9 – 9,1 cm high, the handle diameter, 5,6 – 3,8 cm, and the diameter of the work surface 7,2 – 6,3 cm.

### Metallurgical Slag Finds

The slag finds from the 1996 season at Liman Tepe deserve special notice. These materials can determine the metallurgical activities at the site. These copper oxide slag samples were found inside a baked clay crucible which was used during mineral processing. Slag samples from Liman Tepe were found in different locations on the mound.

Four smaller samples of slag were probably as a result of casting the ingots. The other samples are ore metallurgical processing slags. In addition in 1996 a baked clay mold with three surfaces were probably used for casting ingots (Fig. 1, photo 4).

### Copper Slag (L.1)

Copper slag was found in Early Bronze II, level V (Figure 1.L.1). The slag sample measures 16–14,5 cm and it is only sample from 1996 that measures that size. The slag fragment was the result of smelting copper oxide minerals in order to obtain an ingot. The slag has a high level of silica which was used as a fluxing material. Baked clay fragments have adhered to the outer surface of the slag in a concave form. This is due to its being crucible slag, similar to the 16 cm example already found. When the slag was fractured, the interior is black and millimeter sized spaces. In addition there were charcoal bits measuring 0,5 – 0,3 cm in size in some parts of the slag sample as well as green colored copper oxide structures (photo: 5). The slag is light which suggests that the metal processing was successful at Liman Tepe. It is also important to note that a stalk handled hammerstone was found near the slag (Fig. 1, L.9)

### Results of the Optical Spectrographic Semi-Quantitative Analyses

Cu 0.0015 % Fe >1 % Si >10 %. The following are the detection limits for not detected elements: Pb 0.004 % Ag 0.0004 % Au 0.004 % Zn 0.1 % Ni 0.004 % Sb 0.1 % Sn 0.004 % As 0.4 %

### Copper Slag (L.2)

This sample is from Early Bronze III, level V. (Fig. 1, L.2). It measures 7–6,5 cm. When broken, the slag has similar spaces both internally and externally (photo 6). It resembles pumice and when mineralogical petrographic analysis was conducted, it was determined that it was metallic slag. The sample is very light in weight. The spaces measures 0,3 – 0,2 cm. No copper contamination was found from metallurgical processes.

### Semi Quantitative Optical Spectrography Analyses

Cu 0.003 % Fe>1 % Si> 10 %. Detection limits for the undetected elements are as follows: Pb 0.004% Ag 0.0004 % Au 0.004 % Zn 0.1 % Ni 0.004 % Sb 0.1 % Sn 0.004 % As 0.4 %

### Copper Slag (L.3)

This sample was found in Early Bronze II, level V. These are four small sized fragments measuring 2 – 1,5 cm. One of the slag samples has green copper oxide particles. These four small samples are matte black to gray in color and have millimeter sized spaces. Most probably these are the results of casting copper into ingot shape.

### Semi Quantitative Optical Spectrography Analyses

Cu 0.4 % Pb 0.007 % Fe>1 % Si 10 %. Detection limits for the undetected elements are as follows: Pb 0.004% Ag 0.0004 % Au 0.004 % Zn 0.1 % Ni 0.004 % Sb 0.1 % Sn 0.004% As 0.4 %

### Copper Slag (L.4)

This sample was found in Early Bronze Age level V (Fig. 1, L.4). Four samples measure between 2,5 – 1,5 cm. These slag pieces are matte black on the exterior, and when broken are shiny glassy black on the interior (photo 7). This is similar to other glassy slag samples found in slag deposits in Anatolia. The reason behind the glassy consistency of these samples from Liman Tepe is that a great deal of silica was used as a flux during processing. This is corroborated by x-ray diffraction and mineralogical-petrographic analyses. Malachite was also detected in the slag.

Results of the x-ray diffraction: trydymite (SiO<sub>2</sub>), Crystobalite (SiO<sub>2</sub>), Malachite (CuCO<sub>2</sub>Cu (OH)<sub>x</sub>). Mineralogical- petrographic determination: glassy slag. Microscopic analysis indicates that the glassy slag resulted from the presence of trydymite and crystobalite minerals.

### Copper slag (L.5)

This sample is from Late Chalcolithic I, level VII (Fig. 1, L.5). The analyzed samples measure 1.502 cm in size. It was found with a baked clay fragment adhering to the surface, which was probably a part of a crucible. It has a great many spaces and is a shiny black color, characteristically glassy.

### Semi Quantitative Optical Spectrographic Analyses

Cu 1 % Pb--1 % Ni 0.1 % Sn 0.2 % Fe>1 % As 0.4 % Si>10 % Detection limits for the undetected elements are as follows: Ag 0.0004 % Au 0.004 % Zn 0.1 Sb 0.1 %

On the basis of the analyses this copper ore comes from another source than the Early Bronze Age samples.

### Metal Sources near Liman Tepe

There are no copper workings that are in operation today in the state of Izmir and neighboring states. However, there are copper and lead deposits and veins which are not important for today, but do exist here (Fig. 2). A map showing the distribution of copper and lead sources in the Izmir area and which would be important to Liman Tepe has been prepared<sup>9</sup>. This map will be important for metallurgical residues from other settlements in the Izmir area as well.

Late Chalcolithic - Early Bronze Age miners had tapped into the surface gossan deposits. They obtained copper oxide ores from the cracks and faults of the gossan and brought to Liman Tepe. Copper ingots are easily made from copper oxide minerals (atacamite, malachite, cuprite). This is because high temperatures and furnaces are not necessarily to smelt these minerals. The closest copper-lead-zinc deposits and veins important to Liman Tepe are Buca Maden Tepe, Kemal Paşa Yeni Kurudere, Ovacık Yayla, Bayındır Sarıyurt-İlıcadere, Menderes Efen Çukuru and Gümüldür Gümüşi (Fig. 2). These are economically unimportant today.

<sup>9</sup> This map has been prepared by mineralogy engineer Yunus Lengeranlı, Assistant General Director of the MTA.

### Processing Copper Oxide Ores

It is important to note that before smelting processes with charcoal and wood, the Liman Tepe process started with a well designed ore preparation procedure. This is corroborated by the three ore dressing tools found at the 1996 excavations. After ore dressing, the copper oxide minerals (atacamite and malachite) would be placed inside a baked clay crucible with semi processed charcoal. Atacamite, malachite smelts at 300 °C and CO<sub>2</sub> is produced. The smelted material turns into copper oxide at 600–700 °C. Inside the crucible, after the heat has been achieved with the charcoal, the second phase of processing begins. This is the reduction of copper oxide to metallic copper (copper ingot) with the charcoal.

### Conclusions

The finds relating to ore dressing and metallurgical processing residues come from Late Chalcolithic I and Early Bronze Age I - III at Liman Tepe. It has been determined that copper smelting was practiced at Liman Tepe using copper oxide ores without the use of a furnace. This is because furnaces are used for high temperature sulphide smelting. The metallurgical processes at Liman Tepe used crucibles since copper oxide ores do not require high temperatures. In addition the Liman Tepe metallurgists used the charcoal knowingly for reduction of atacamite-malachite during the smelting of the ores.

The small quantities of slag are natural for crucible smelting processing of oxide ores of malachite and atacamite. In addition the analyses of the slags have indicated that the smelting process at Liman Tepe was a successful operation.

### Acknowledgments:

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Exploration  
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Ankara - TURKEY

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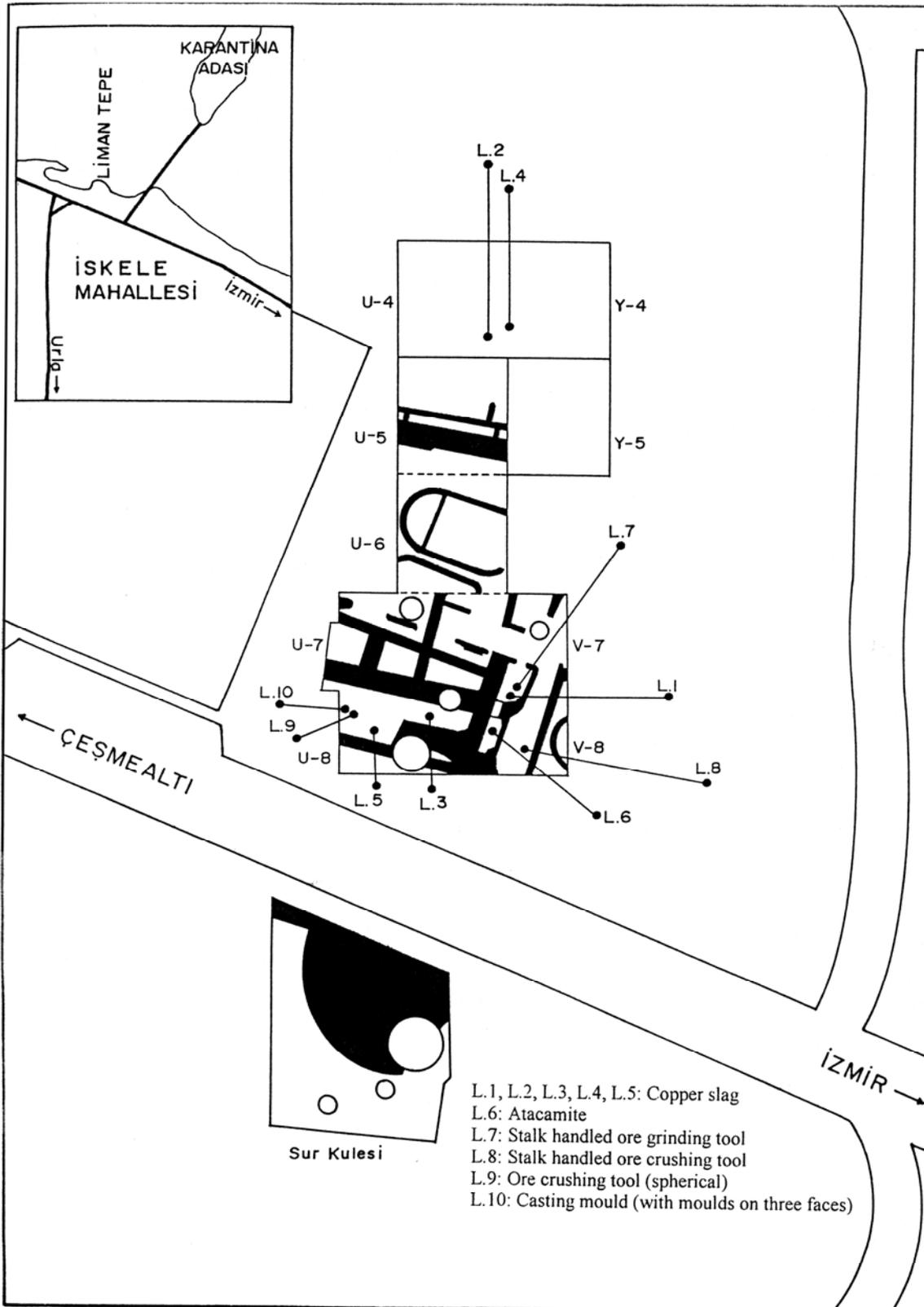


Fig. 1

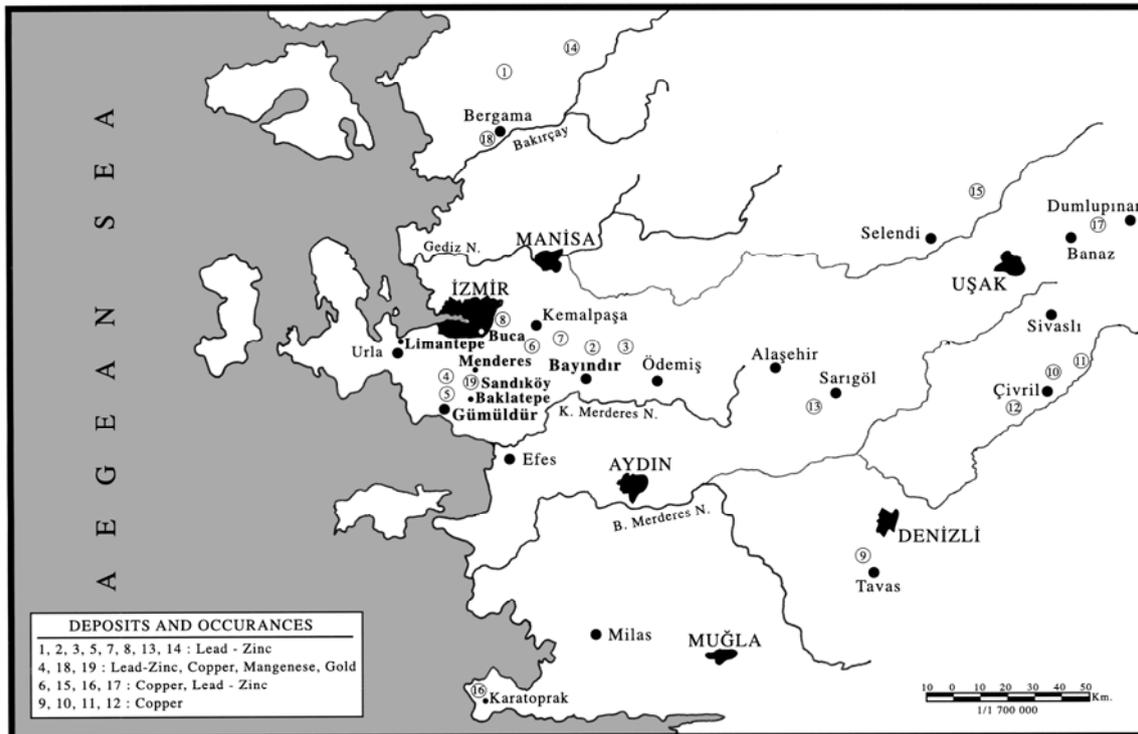


Fig. 2



Photo 1

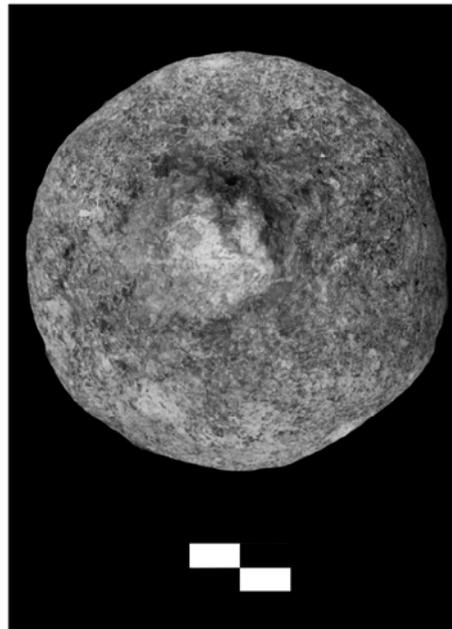


Photo 2

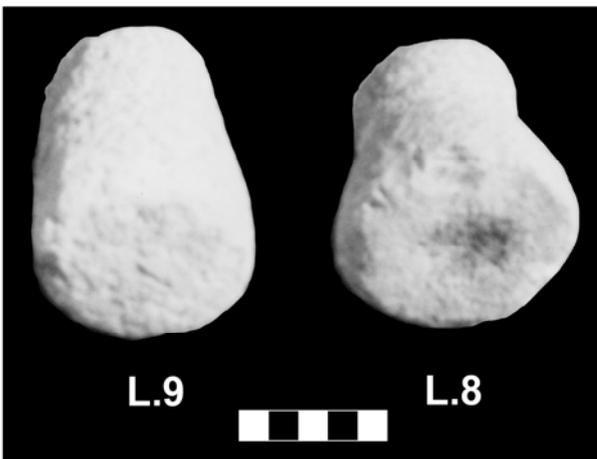


Photo 3

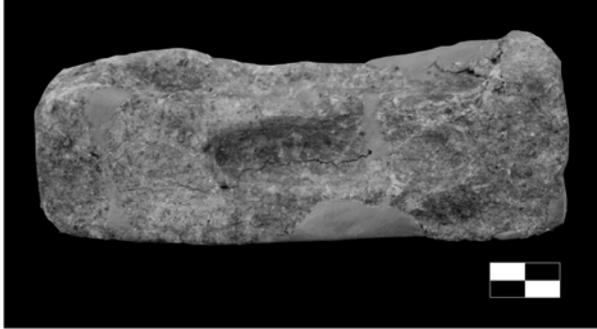


Photo 4

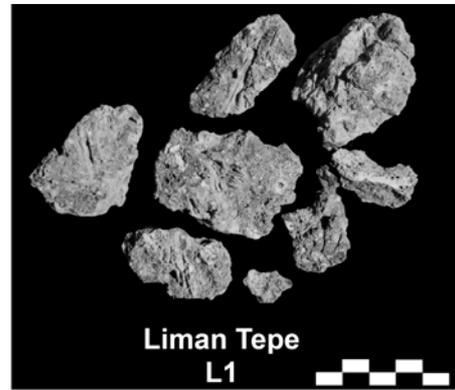


Photo 5

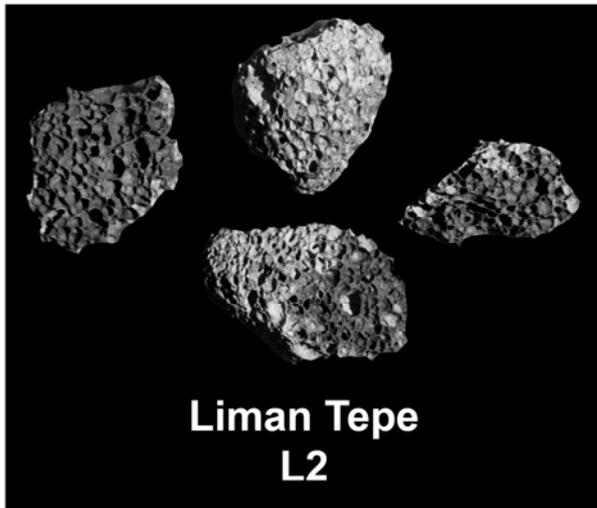


Photo 6



Photo 7

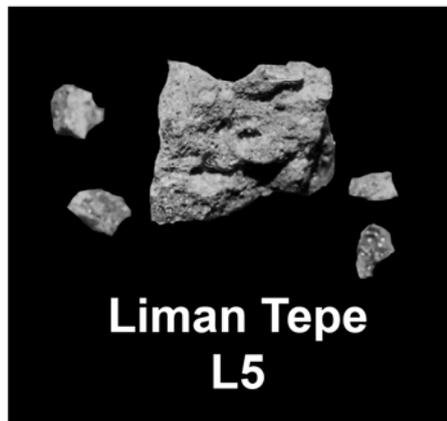


Photo 8