Copper objects from the Pre-Pottery Neolithic site of Aşıklı

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Introduction

The aim of this communication is to make available some of the new data about the beginning of "pyrotechnology" ten thousand years ago in Asia Minor.

During the salvage excavations at the aceramic neolithic site of Aşıklı in Central Anatolia, some copper objects have been recently discovered (Figs. 1-5; Plate I, Fig. 6-11; Esin 1993, 1995). They consist mainly of copper beads, a few pieces of ore and worked copper (op. cit.). Therefore, in order to understand better the beginning of "Early Copper Metallurgy" in this specific region, after a description of the site the copper objects of Aşıklı will be presented (Plate I, Figs. 6-11).

The Pre-Pottery Neolithic site of Aşıklı

Aşıklı is a middle-sized mound which is situated 25 km south-east of the city of Aksaray in Central Anatolia (Fig. 1). It lies directly on the shore of the Melendiz river which is a branch of Uluırmak (Fig. 1). This has its source between the volcanic ranges of the Hasandağ and Melendiz mountains which are located some 40 km south of Aşıklı (Emre 1991). They reach a height of 3000 m.

Tuff cones and other eruptive rocks are surrounding the vicinity of Aşıklı; they are characteristic for the geomorphology of the Cappadocian landscape (Emre 1991; Toprak et al. 1994). It was formed during the Miocene and throughout the Pliocene and Pleistocene, and there are also many obsidian occurrences in the neighbourhood of Aşıklı (Toprak et al. 1994). Today, a continental climate dominates the Aksaray region and the economic life is based on crops, gardening, wine and on the animal husbandry of sheep, goat and cattle.

The Aşikli mound stands on an elevation of 1119.45 m above sea level in the narrow Melendiz valley. It measures 230 m in east-west and 150/240 m in north-south directions. Due to sloping to the east and southwest the height of the mound varies between 15.35 m in the north and 13.16 m in the south. Almost 1/3 of the mound seems to have been eroded in the course of time due to many changes of the river bed of the Me-

lendiz during the Early Holocone caused by several climatic changes and thereafter due to much ploughing. The Mamasin-dam reservoir on the Uluirmak river in the neighbourhood of the site will raise the water level in coming years, so that the Aşıklı mound will be partly submerged (Esin et al. 1991). Therefore, rescue excavations have been undertaken at the Aşıklı mound by the Prehistory Section of the Faculty of Letters of the University of Istanbul since 1989. Several projects, initiated in collaboration with other Turkish and foreign scientific institutions are going on for dating, studying and analysing different kinds of excavated material.

In the course of time *ca.* 4000 square meters were unearthed at the aceramic neolithic site of Aşıklı (Figs. 1-2). On the other hand, a small part of an earlier settlement than that on the mound has been discovered directly on the shore of Melendiz river (Esin 1995: 63, 73, Fig. 3; 1996: 35, Fig. 9). It lies outside of the mound, to its south and continues even in the river-bed of Melendiz, underneath of an alluvial deposit of 1.5 m height which has probably been accumulated by a rapid flood of the river during the Early Holocene (*op. cit.*). It seems that the settlement has been abandoned after that flood. In this earlier settlement, a few houses together formed small living quarters which have been separated from each other by narrow corridors or small courtyards

Fig. 1: Air view of the Aşıklı mound and of the Melendiz valley seen from the west.



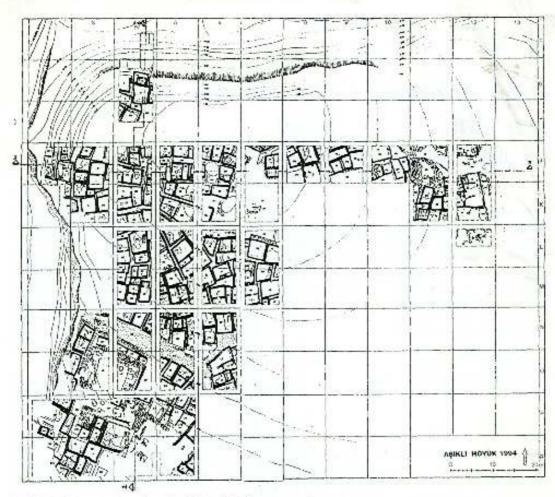


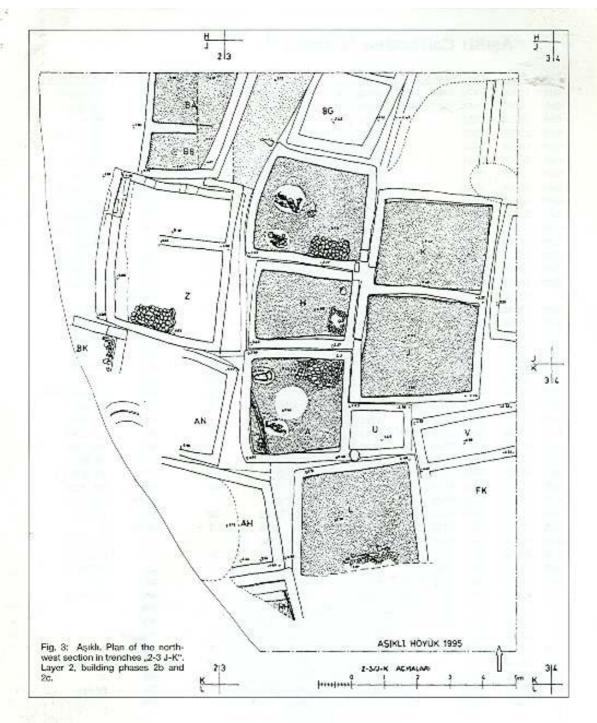
Fig. 2: Aşıklı, Schematic plan of layer 2 with its building phases.

measuring ca. 1 x 3.5 square meters. The burial customs soom to be intramural (Esin 1996; 35, Fig. 9). The subsistence economy was based mainly on hunting wild animals in the Melendiz valley and it is not known yet if the cultivation of wheat, barley and pulses has already started during this early settlement. The main industries consisted on the production of obsidian and bone/horn tools which were more oriented for preparing animal meat and hide-working, although a few ground and polished stone artefacts were found in situ on the floors of the houses with some deer-homs. It is not known yet, after the abandonment of the earlier settlement, when the reoccupation of the mound started. But it seems that the settlement-pattern of this earlier habitation became almost traditional throughout the later occupations on the mound.

So far excavated three cultural layers are revealed on the mound (Figs. 1-2). From top to the bottom only a few pieces of mud-brick walls, plastered floors, a channel and a small section of a dumping area could be found directly underneath the modern surface (Esin et al. 1991).

Cultural layer 2 has been exposed more extensively than the others. Also the copper objects of Aşıklı have been discovered in this layer, 10 building phases (subphases) belonging to the cultural layer 2 have been brought to light mainly in the northern step-trenches "4 F-H" of the mound (Figs. 1-2). The earliest sub-phase of layer 2 has been found directly overlying a working or dumping area which was reached very recently at a depth of ca 7.70 m from the modern surface. Therefore except for this dumping area no other remains of layer 3 have been unearthed yet.

It seems that during the last three building phases of layer 2 the settlement has been surrounded to the east in trenches "10-13 J-L" by a large town wall which has been built by large tuff and limestone blocks together



with mud-bricks. The enclosure wall consists of Scurved sections leaving a road-like space of 2 m width in between which has been paved by gravel and made narrow to the northwest (Esin 1996; 32, 33, 36, Figs. 4-6). The surrounding wall of Aşıklı is the oldest known example of the city walls in Anatolia (Esin 1996; 36, 41, footnote 25). Houses made of mud-brick walls and rectangular (sometime one of its walls rounded) or trapezoidal in plan seem to extend from the enclosure wall in three directions namely to the north, west and south (Fig. 2). The extended living quarters to the north-west lay directly above a large working/dumping area in trenches "6-7 J-L" which belonged to the building phase 2 of the cultural layer 2 (Fig. 2).

Lab.	#	Cal.	yr B.C		"C yr B.P.	Cal vr B.P.	Layer/Phase	Trench	Room/Grid
Orn	19366		7458		8400 ± 40	9429 9408		3P	MO 5/d-e
OrN	19365	7484	7451	7449	8420 ± 30	9434 9401		3P	HQ 2/e
mo	19114	7534			8515 ± 40	9484	2	5L	CY 6/e
mp	19868	7537			8530 ± 110	9487		7.3	JA,21,-0.95/
Phi	19358	7541			8550 ± 70	9491	2	421	58/d
mo	20355	7541			8550 ± 60	9491	8e	3R	NM9.70
MrD	19866	7543			8560 ± 40	9493		401	JV, 2/e
GrN	20356	7543			8560 ± 60	9493		14AB	NV14.63
nıc	19359	7545			8570 ± 70	9495	1	421	S10/e
MrD	20041	7546			8575 ± 20	9496		621	KY, 5-8/b-e
Orn.	19862	7547			8580 ± 50	9497		3P	HK, 1-3/b-c
MrD	19364	7548			8585 a 45	9498		3P	HK 2/d
Mic	19121	7549			8590 ± 80	9499	2	28	Art G under
GrN	19361	7570			8595 ± 60	9520	2	6J	0D 7/b
MIE	18619	7575			8610 ± 55	9525	1 b	28	AA 9/a-b
,	1239	7575			8611 r 108	9525		N Slope	
3rN	19362	7580			8630 ± 30	9530	2	63	GD 8-9/c
MIC	19867	7580			8630 ± 50	9530		28	LS, 7/g
MIC	19863	7583			8640 ± 20	9533		7L	JA, 5-6/b
GrM	19861	7612			8670 ± 60	9562		7J	JA, 3/g
DrN	20351	7612			8670 ± 40	9562	25	53	BI,-1.79
Pro	19363	7670	7623		8675 ± 25	9620 9573	25	471	C 1/g
nrf.	19360	7695			8695 ± 25	9645	2	4H	C 7 Fire plac
nıp	19115	7830	7700		8710 ± 100	9780 9650	2	4.1	EN 8/k
MnD	19117	7830	7700		8710 ± 130	9780 9650	2	2K	AN 10/c
Orly.	20354	7834	7828	7699	8710 ± 70	9784 9778	2a	4.1	EN,-2.47
GrM	18620	7845	7824	7702	8720 ± 55	9795 9774	2	33	AM 2/8-1
GrN	19860	7845	7824	7702	8720 ± 50	9795 9774		73	JA, 6/I
nn	19870	7845	7824	7702	8720 ± 80	9795 9774		6N	KY, 5-8/b-e
arm.	20352	7845	7824	7702	8720 ± 40	9795 9774	2c	4K	CK-3.25
OrN.	20684	7845	7824	7702	8720 ± 70	9795 9774		14AB	MV,-14.63
irM	18618	7850	7822	7703	8725 2 50	9800 9772	2b	3/	i 4-5/g
GrN .	18617	7857	7820	7705	8730 ± 45	9807 9770	2	4H-G	E
MnC.	19869	7870	7816	7707	8740 ± 70	9820 9766		60	LB, 6-7/b
arN	20353	7870	7816	7707	8740 ± 60	9820 9766	2e	40	MS4.92
MIC	19118	7885	7805	7730	8760 ± 45	9835 9755	2	216	AM 10/c
arn	19119	7885	7805	7730	8760 ± 40	9835 9755	2	2K	AN
nn.	19858	7892	7782	7765	8770 ± 90	9842 9732		411	JY, 7-9/c
,	1242	7896	7761	7739	8778 ± 128	9846 9711		NW	
	1241	7904	7754	7747	8793 ± 127	9854 9704		HW	
Second	1238	7912			8807 ± 128	9862		rt Slope	
3rM	19120	7916			8815 ± 70	9866	2	2K	AN 9/b
MrD	20349	7930			8840 ± 50	9880	2e	4H	M5,-4.68
Mr.C	19865	7952			8880 ± 70	9902		411	JY
MnD	19116	7973			8920 ± 50	9923	2	2.1	FP 6/b
?	1240	8015			8958 ± 130	9966		NW	

^(*) For calibration "CALIB rev. 3,0.3" has been used with calibration dataset 1 and calculation method. A: Intercept with curve. (M. Stuiver - P. Reimer: Quaternary Isotope Laboratory/University of Washington)

Fig. 4; Calibrated ¹⁴C assessments of layer 2 and its building phases.

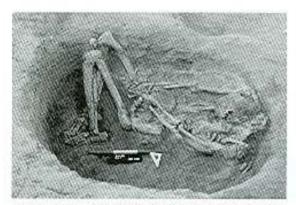


Fig. 5: Burial AH. 95 Sk.109 found in Room I in the trench "3 J",

On the other hand, a main road of 2-4 m width, named GA in trenches "3-8 N-O" and also paved with pubble stones, running almost in the middle of the settlements in each building phase, seems to be contemporary during its last building-phase with the large working/dumping area to the northeast mentioned above (Fig. 2; cf. Esin et al. 1991: 125; Esin 1996: 36). Small living quarters, consisting of a few mud-brick houses, rectangular or trapezoidal in plan have been placed also directly to the north and south-east of the same road (Figs. 1-2; Esin 1996: 36). The exterior walls of some houses are made of stone in order to strengthen the border between the road and living quarters of the inhabitants of Aşıklı (Esin 1995: 64, 70, Fig. 2).

To the south-west of the main road two large buildings have been placed which were connected with each other by large courtyards and additional rooms lying in trenches "2-4 N-R* (Fig. 2; Esin 1994: 125-128, Fig. 1, Pls. 9-10; 1996: 37). So far excavated three building phases have been unearthed. The latest building phase is also contemporary with the last phase of the main road. One of these buildings has been called "HV" and its north wall consisted of a chest-wall system which is the oldest known example of this kind of protection architecture (Fig. 2; op. cit.).

The other building called "T" has been badly damaged and seems to have had a religious function as temple (Fig. 2; *ibid*. 37; cf. Hauptmann 1993). To its north and east it has been framed by stone walls resembling of temonos walls (Fig. 2), Its floors and walls have been painted in red. During the third phase the floor has been restored and the restored part has been painted in yellow.

The living quarters of the inhabitants of Aşıklı consisted of a few mud-brick houses, separated from each other by narrow passages or small court-yards (Figs. 2-3). The entrances into the houses and quarters seem to be from the roof, door-ways have been left only between the rooms of the houses, but not into to passages or

court-yards (Figs. 2-3; Esin 1996; 36, Figs. 10-11). The houses had one or more rooms (Figs. 2-3; op. cit.).

The burial customs seem to be intramural throughout all building phases of cultural layer 2 (Fig. 3). The deceased were put in earthen pits which have been dug into the clay plastered floors of the rooms. They were buried mostly in hocker position and a few times they lay on one side of the body and legs were bent backwards (Figs. 3, 5; Plate I, Fig. 6). On the skull of a young woman a brain operation (trepanation) has been observed (Esin 1996; 38). The burial gifts were mainly necklaces or bracelets consisting of pierced beads made of semi-precious or simple stones, copper and of deer-teeth (Figs. 6-11, Plate I).

Because of a consistent series of ¹⁴C assessments belonging to the cultural layer 2, Aşıklı can be dated with calibration to the eighth millennium B.C. (Fig. 4).

The occupants of Aşıklı even knew how to prepare and use half-baked and baked clay objects or figurines which may point out also how they invented hot-working of copper (Esin 1995: 73, Figs. 6-7).

Although the domestication of game animals did not start yet and hunting continued throughout the building phases of cultural layer 2, a few cultivated cereals and legumes together with collected plants have been attested at the accramic site of Aşıklı (Buitenhuis 1996; van Zeist & de Roller 1995; Esin 1996; 34, 38, 39). Therefore the subsistence economy was mainly based on hunting and collecting of edible plants although carly agriculture seems to have been practised also.

The copper objects from Aşıklı

The copper objects from the accramic neolithic site of Aşıklı have been discovered either as grave-goods together with human burials or they have been unearthed in the fillings and on the floors of some rooms/houses which belong to the last four building-phases, but mainly to the third one of cultural layer 2 (Figs. 3, 5; Plate I, Figs. 6-11). They can be grouped as small beads, broken pieces of beads and ore fragments (Esin 1993: 181, 1995: 65-66).

By now only a few samples of copper finds from Aşıklı were analysed using different methods which are provided kindly by Professors F. Begemann and S. Schmitt-Strecker (Max-Planck-Institut für Chemie in Mainz, lead-isotope analysis), Emel Geçkinli (Technical University of Istanbul, X-ray diffraction and optical metallography), Hadi Özbal (Bogazici University at Istanbul, atomic absorption spectroscopy, AAS), Ernst Pernicka (Lehrstuhl für Archäometallurgie, Bergakademie Freiberg, neutron activation analyses, NAA) and Dr. Ünsal Yalçin (Deutsches Bergbau-Museum Bochum, Institut für Archäometallurgie, metallography).

I am very much indebted, therefore, to all these colleagues of mine for their kind help in understanding the beginning of copper metallurgy at Aşıklı.

The copper beads have been usually made by rolling very thin copper sheets and in one case probably made of massive copper (AH.94-343; Esin 1993: 131, Fig. 2, Pl. 85; 1995: 65-66, 73-74, Figs. 8,10). An X-ray analysis kindly provided by Professor Beril Tuğrul at the Technical University of Istanbul unfortunately could not be very satisfactory in determining whether it was made by a rolled sheet of copper or not (personal communication with Prof. Tuğrul in 1995).

Some of the beads and some broken pieces are green and badly corroded (Plate I, Figs. 6-11). They possibly consist of copper ore instead of metal. Hence, according to the results of a few analyses we assume that both native copper and copper ore (mostly malachite) were used to manufacture objects at Aşıklı (Esin 1995: 65-66, 77). Meanwhile, some more analyses were carried out by Dr. Ünsal Yalçin and Professor Emst Pernicka (Yalçin & Pernicka, this volume, page 45). The results are prosented below;

Sample AH.89-No.15 c. Copper ore (?).

Three small pieces of copper ere (?) two of which (no.15 a-b) were found in the fill and the third one (no. 15 c) on the floor of a room/house called "D" in the northern step-trench "4G" (Fig. 2). The sample 15 c was analysed by Goçkinli using X-ray fluorescence spectrometry. According to her the main element of the sample is copper and the trace elements are As, Cr, Mn, Zn, Fe, Al, Ca, K, Tl, V (Information kindly given by Prof. Geçkinli in 1995).

Sample AH.91-194a = HDM 1800.

A broken piece of a copper bead. It has been uncarthed together with other beads made of copper and chalk which altogether seemed to belong to a necklace (AH.91-194, Plate I, Fig. 8; Esin 1993: 181, Fig. 2. Pl. 35; 1995: 65-66, 72, 77, Figs. 5,13). They have been discovered around the rib bones of the chest near the nock of an adult, female burial ca. 35-40 years old (Özbek 1993: 203, no. 32-1/AH.91. sk. 22). She was buried in hocker position with her fetus in an earthen pit under the floor of a room called "GM" in the trench "4L" (Fig. 2; Esin op. cft.).

NAA of this sample has been undertaken by Pernicka and its lead-isotope analysis was made by Begemann and Schmitt-Strecker. According to the result of the NAA it has been made of native copper. The object has been worked at first to a thin sheet and was then rolled into a form of a bead (Esin 1995; 77, Fig. 13).

Sample AH.91-343 = TR-12/5 (HDM 1799 and HDM 3248).

This bead is slightly incomplete (Plate I, Fig. 9; Esin 1993; 181, Fig. 2). It was unearthed along with two other beads made of rolled copper sheets (AH.91-352, 353)

and another one made of rock-crystal (AH.91-355). They were distributed on the wrist of a female burial, 35-45 years old, who was covered with a reed-matt and her bones were slightly burnt (Özbek 1993; 202, no. 17-1/AH.91, sk. 27). She has been unearthed in an earthen pit dug under the floor of a room called "HB" in the trench "4M" together with two other burials (Fig. 2; Esin 1993; 181).

The bead was analysed twice by Pernicka (HDM 1799 and 3248). He assumes that the sample was made either of malachite or native copper, which has been worked as a sheet and thereafter rolled to a bead (Esin 1995; 67, 77).

Later, the same bead has been sampled again by Yalçin and was analysed metallographically (TR-12/5 see also Yalçin and Pernicka, this volume, page 45). The analysis proved that it was made of hot-worked (annealed) native copper.

Samples AH.92-105a = BU.93.206 and AH.92-105b-e = TR-12/4 a-d = HDM 3228-29, HDM 3246-47.

Five slightly broken beads made of rolled copper-sheet. They were discovered with other copper beads manufactured in the same way and with beads made of deer-teeth most probably belonging to a head-dress (Plate I, Figs. 10-11; Esin 1995; 65-66, 72, Figs. 5, 9-10,13).

They have been upperthed in the floor of group, KE" in

They have been unearthed in the floor of room "KE" in the trench "7M" on the fore-head of the skull of a female burial, lying in hocker position (AH.92. no. 2/ AH. 92. sk. 35 (13); personal comminication with Prof. Özbek; Esin 1995). The burial was highly damaged and bones were slightly burnt.

An AAS analysis of the first sample (AH.92-105a = BU.93.206) has been done by Özbal and its optical metallographic analysis made by Geçkinli (Plate I, Fig. 10; Esin 1995: 65-66, 77, Fig. 13). According to both analyses the sample was made of native copper (ibid.). But it is not clear yet if the copper sheet has been manufactured by cold or hot hammering (ibid.). The relatively high contents of trace elements such as tin and arsenic are remarkable of this native copper sample.

The other four additional samples were recently analysed using optical metallography and NAA by Yalçin and Pemicka. According to their results these four samples were made of native copper and annealed (Yalçin & Pernicka, this volume, page 47).

Samples AH.95-161a-d = TR-12/6-9 = HDM 3249-3252. Four beads made of rolled copper sheets (Plate I, Fig. 7). They have been found on the neck of an adult human burial (AH.95. sk. 109) that hardly fitted into an earthen pit dug under the floor of a room/house called I, belonging to the third building phase in the trench "3J" (Figs. 3, 5; Plate I, 6-7). The human burial seems to have been wrapped with a reed-matt as a shroud. Rests

of the matt could be observed even on the skull of the burial (Plate I, Fig. 6).

Optical metallographic and NAA analyses of these four samples are completed recently by the same scientists in Germany mentioned before. According to the results of their analyses it has been proven again that they were made of native copper and hot-worked (Yalçin & Pernicka, this volume, page 47).

Conclusions

As presented above, by now 14 analyses of copper samples using optical metallography, NAA, AAS and lead-isotope methods are completed which have been discovered mainly as grave-goods belonging to the second layer of the Pre-Pottery Neolithic site of Aşıklı in Central Anatolia, dated to the eighth millennium B.C. by calibrated ¹⁴C assessments (Figs. 1-5; Plate I, 6-11).

According to the results of these analyses two samples seem to be made of copper ore and the other 12 are identified as native copper. Because of the optical metallographic analyses, 11 samples are determined as hot-worked (annealed) native copper objects. They easily prove that "pyrotechnology" has been already invented and practised by the inhabitants of Aşıklı during the eighth millennium B.C. in Central Anatolia.

In central Anatolia there are copper occurrences at Mentese (near the township of Felahiyeh in the province of Kayseri), Bakirlik and Sizma (near the township of Sille in the province of Konya), Karakilise or Kizilkilise (near the township of Sütcüler in the province of Isparta) (Mineral Research and Exploration Institute of Turkoy (MTA) 1996: 100, 110, 113). These occurrences are at least 250 km away from Aşıklı. Recently, another copper occurence was explored by the MTA at "Bakircukuru" ("copper-pit") in the village of Dügüz, It is located south of the highway between Aksaray and Nevsehir and south of the Alay Han carawanserei (Kaptan & Yurttagül 1996: 67-70). Aşıklı is some 40 km southwest.

It is possible that the Aşıklı culture expanded during its latest sub-phases of layer 2 in different directions and reached the copper source of "Bakircukuru". We may not exclude that native copper and malachite were collected from this source. This possibility was already pointed out by Kaptan & Yurttagül (1996), and there is a Pre-Pottery Neolithic settlement called Agziyar next to the famous carawanserel at Agzikarahan, some 13 km north of Aşıklı, it was discovered by the Aşıklı excavation team in 1994 and is located close to the copper source of "Bakircukuru".

There are even further indication for such an expansion. During an archaeological survey of the Japanese excavation team at Kaman (Kirsehir), another accramic neolithic mound called "Hacibeyli" was found. It is located in the Yay-Gölü basin near to Yesilhisar (province of Kasperi) ca. 100 km east of Aşıklı Höyük (Ishikawa 1995; 131-132). However, the site is in the opposite direction of the copper source of Mentese.

No copper objects were found so far at these two sites, but it seems at least that the obsidian industries are related to Aşıklı during its latest sub-phases. Altogether, in a large sense we have a chronological and spatial context of the Pre-Pottery Neolithic culture and copper sources in this area.

What concerns "Bakircukuru", analytical investigations on copper samples are required using lead-isotope measurements, metallography, NAA and/or AAS to compare this material with that from Aşıklı, Additionally, geological surveys are necessary in this particular region to check if there exist further small-scaled occurrences of native copper which are not known yet.

In order to determine more definitely the provenance of the copper ore which may have been used at Aşıklı during the eighth millennium B.C. it will be useful to undertake a new archaeometallurgical project in western Cappadocia.

Acknowledgements

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A side-project is conducted by Prof. Dr. Bottema at the Biologisch – Archaeologisch Instituut, Rijksuniversität, Groningen for the archaeobotanical and archaeozoological remains and ¹⁴C assessments of Aşıklı, Prof. Dr. W. van Zeist, Dr. de Roller and Dr. H. Woldring are studying the plant and pollen remains, Dr. H. Buitenhuis makes the animal bone analyses and Prof. Dr. Ir. J. van der Pflicht at the Centrum voor Isotopen Ouderzoek at the same university in Groningen provides kindly the ¹⁴C measurements of Asıklı.

Another side-project has been undertaken by the Prehistory Section of the University of Istanbul together with the Palaecanthropology Department of the Hacettepe University at Ankara and with the Section Anthropology of the Facultat de Biologia at the Universitat Autonomia de Barcelona in Spain for studying the anthropological remains, making ¹³C and DNA analyses. The contributors in this project together with the writer are Prof. Dr. Metin Özbek, Dr. Josep Anfruns, Dr. Alejandro Pérèz Pérèz and Dr. Majo Ortin. Dr. Patricia Anderson from the CNRS, Institut de Préhistoire Orientale Jalés, (France) is making the micro-wear analysis of the obsidian tools of Asikli.

Dr. Arlene Rosenberg at the Tel Aviv University undertakes the phytolith analyses, Dr. Cathrine Kuzucuoğlu again from CNRS, in Paris is undertaking the geomorphological study at the Melendiz river-bed.

I am very much indebted to all these colleagues mentioned above for their valuable assistance and efforts in order to evaluate better the Asikli culture.

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