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Patrycja Filipowicz

The Late Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic Imagery in South- Central Anatolia

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Patrycja Filipowicz

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Patrycja Filipowicz
Faculty of Archaeology
Adam Mickiewicz University
Poznań, Poland

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Preface

The departure point for this book is the work at the Neolithic site of Çatalhöyük, where I have excavated since 2005 as a member of the Polish team led by Arkadiusz Marciniak from Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, in 2001–2008 also by Lech Czerniak from the University of Gdańsk.

I have always been interested in religion, symbols, and myths, and working at this great Neolithic site, famous for its astonishing art and imagery, has further deepened my interest. Prehistoric imagery affects minds of people worldwide in various, sometimes surprising ways. A good example can be the adoption of Neolithic female figurines by modern Goddess worshippers. In the twenty-first century, the so-called Mother Goddess image stands as a peaceful symbol for a lack of violence and social inequality in prehistory. Replicas of ancient clay figurines are held in the temples as cult objects recalling a peaceful and just past. I first encountered these Goddess worshipping groups on their pilgrimage at Çatalhöyük in 2005. Struck by their interpretation and usage of the past, I decided to investigate this phenomenon closely for my Master's thesis defended in 2009 (Filipowicz 2009. Reception of the idea of matriarchy and female deity in archaeology and society. An example of Çatalhöyük. In Polish. Unpublished MA Thesis, Adam Mickiewicz University).

The fascination with Neolithic symbolism and art pursued me to choose carefully the subject of my doctoral dissertation. There was not much written on the imagery of the late seventh and sixth millennium Anatolia, in contrast to very spectacular images from the Early Neolithic period. Our excavations at Çatalhöyük brought into light new evidence of changes in different domains in the latest phases of the mound occupation. Motifs known from “classic” Çatalhöyük were reported appearing at the same time in other sites, regions, and contexts.

I turned my attention to the area southwest of Çatalhöyük: namely the Lake District, because the similarities between certain motifs have been observed, but never systematically explored. The region, with four intensively excavated sites, seemed potentially a promising area of study. The thesis, defended in 2019 (Filipowicz 2019. The transformative character of imagery of South-Central Anatolian communities in the period 6500–5500 BC. Unpublished doctoral

dissertation, Adam Mickiewicz University), was well received and I subsequently decided to explore the subject further, investigating the world of the Late Neolithic and Chalcolithic imagery.

As a result, this book intends to offer a synthesis of the Late Neolithic/Early Chalcolithic imagery from the region, with a particular focus on the relationship with Çatalhöyük, in light of research of the Polish team (2001–2017; the research is ongoing; therefore the results of excavations from the newly opened area since 2018 until present are not included in this book). I was amazed by the longevity and popularity of some motifs, the fact that people preferred certain images over others, made them, and suddenly stopped or used them in a different way. I was curious what stories or meanings are hidden behind images. That is the question that we will probably never answer, but the attempts alone are exciting. This curiosity accompanied me during some field visits and comparative studies. A particularly memorable experience was visiting the Taş Tepeler sites in November 2024, where richness of prehistoric imagery is striking.

I have awareness that the studies on prehistoric imagery are not very safe ground. Since the images are open to various readings and their original context is lost, it is very easy to make unwarranted or simplistic interpretations and speculations. I believe the problem does not lie with that, but rather with the lack of this awareness.

It seems that nowadays there is a shift from the questions what objects mean to how they mean. I find this shift toward meaning-making important; I believe, however, that we should not avoid speaking about meaning. The common reluctance to address meaning is perhaps due to the fear of being proven wrong. But, as Robert Preucel encouraged me to go ahead and offer my own interpretation, this is exactly what science is about—testing and retesting ideas within the community of practitioners. I would take that risk and offer some possible interpretations of the changes within the Neolithic imagery.

Encouraged once by my supervisor, as a theoretical background I employed semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce and became fascinated by the great research possibilities it offers. However, the Peirce semiotics application in archaeology is still not very common and non-existent on the Polish ground. This semiotic theory has also never been applied to materials from the Neolithic Anatolia. It is my intention to make a small contribution to the discussion not only on imagery, but to inter-regional cultural relationships in the late seventh millennium BC.

Poznań, Poland

Patrycja Filipowicz

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First and foremost, I would like to thank Prof. Arkadiusz Marciniak for his guidance and patience over the years. I am thankful for involving me in the Çatalhöyük excavation in 2005 and later for encouraging me to engage with the Peirce semiotics. The progress of the work on this book would not be possible without his engagement and priceless comments and remarks.

I am indebted to the Çatalhöyük Research Project for enabling me more than fifteen years of work at this great archaeological site, which became an important part of my life. I thank in particular the director Ian Hodder and members: excavators, specialists, students, and staff who have created a friendly environment, especially colleagues from the TP and TPC Teams. I also thank all those who shared their time, knowledge, and materials: Lech Czerniak, Lynn Meskell, Peter Biehl, Eva Rosenstock, Ingmar Franz, Lillian Dogiama, Ceren Kabukçu, Duygu Tarkan, Elizabeth Stroud, Aroa Garcia- Suarez, and Serap Özdol.

I would like to express my gratitude to Koç University Research Center for Anatolian Civilization in Istanbul for granting me the 9-month fellowship. The fellowship at RCAC contributed much to the development of my project as many of my ideas have been shaped in Turkey. I am truly grateful for this great experience. I thank in particular Scott Redford, Esra Erol, Duygu Paçalı, and the fellows, especially Mara Horowitz, Ömür Harmanşah, and Zsolt Simon for their helpful advice and critical comments.

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Outside of Turkey, my sincere thanks go to Robert Preucel for encouraging me to explore the Peircean semiotics and to Alex Bauer and Zoe Crossland for inviting me to the American Anthropological Association meeting in 2013 and helping with this difficult subject. I also thank Rosemary Joyce, Ulf-Dietrich Schoop, Carl Knappett, Robin Skeates, Dragos Gheorghiu, Goce Naumov, Alexandra Fletcher, Elizabeth Mertz, and Richard Parmentier for sharing their time, resources, and precious advice. I am truly grateful to Ianir Milevsky and Thomas E. Levy for giving me an opportunity to present my work at ICAANE conference in Warsaw in 2012 and for inviting me to publish my paper in their book.

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About the Author

Patrycja Filipowicz is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Archaeology at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, a position she has held since 2020. She has participated in various international research projects such as DOVTA, NEARCH, ALIGNED, and CARE. Since 2005, she has been a member of an archaeological expedition to the UNESCO World Heritage List site of Çatalhöyük, directed by Arkadiusz Marciniak. Her scientific interests include the Neolithic and Chalcolithic Near East and Anatolia, theory and methods in archaeology, semiotics, prehistoric ritual, religion and art, big data, and e-learning in archaeology. She has also been involved in public and community archaeology activities, with the aim of promoting archaeological science among non-professionals. Correspondence to: patfil@amu.edu.pl

Chapter 1

Introduction



Abstract This chapter will introduce the reader to the primary research objectives of the book, laying the groundwork for the study by detailing the key questions and aims that drive the investigation. It will provide an in-depth look at the geographical setting of the research, focusing on South-Central Anatolia, a region rich in archaeological significance and interest. The chapter will also outline the chronological scope of the study, covering the period from 6500 to 5500 BC, an important era that witnessed significant developments in human civilization. By establishing the context and framework of the research, this chapter will set the stage for the detailed analysis and discussions that follow in subsequent chapters.

Keywords Late Neolithic · Chalcolithic · Imagery · Lake District · South-Central Anatolia

1.1 Framing the Research Problem

This book aims to explore the character of transformations and continuities in imagery during the period between 6500–5500 BC in South-Central Anatolia. Its main objective is to investigate the character of the 6500–5500 BC period in the Central Anatolia, with a focus on the transformations of Neolithic imagery.

The departure point is my work at the Neolithic site of Çatalhöyük, where I have been involved since 2005 as a member of the Adam Mickiewicz University team led by Arkadiusz Marciniak. This work was conducted in the framework of Çatalhöyük Research Project (1993–2017), directed by Ian Hodder. Our research at the site

enabled us to recognize the late levels of occupation and has significantly contributed to the discussion on the Late Neolithic in Anatolia.

In the Late Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic periods, significant and dynamic changes occurred in different parts of Central Anatolia and neighboring regions (Marciniak and Czerniak 2007; Marciniak 2019). These transformations are well attested at Çatalhöyük and encompass transformations of settlement patterns, internal spatial organization, funeral practices, exploitation of resources, ceramic technology and imagery (often referred to as ‘symbolism’).

However, in research on Anatolian prehistory, the end of the Neolithic and the Chalcolithic periods have often been neglected. The nature of the multi-dimensional transition between these two periods is weakly recognized and the emphasis has been mostly put on the recognition of the Early Neolithic.¹

The basic assumption here is that the change that occurred around 6500 BC was profound and led to the gradual transformations of Neolithic communities and the emergence of societies that we call ‘Chalcolithic’. Furthermore, the period around 6500 BC preceded the mass migration of agricultural communities across wide areas of Western Anatolia, the Balkans and eventually, other parts of Europe. Therefore, the recognition of those significant changes appears to be of crucial importance.

It seems that there is no sharp break between the Neolithic and Chalcolithic, and that the Chalcolithic actually has its firm roots in the Late Neolithic. Therefore, our attention should be paid not so much to the Neolithic/Chalcolithic transition, but to the Late Neolithic as a period when numerous changes had already begun.

Transformations are especially clearly visible at the upper levels of the Late Neolithic Çatalhöyük East. Therefore, evidence from the site of Çatalhöyük will be the point of departure for this book.

The aim is to focus particularly on the changes in Neolithic imagery, which could be defined as a system or set made of individual anthropomorphic, zoomorphic or geometric images. In the Early Neolithic, art was predominantly expressed inside the houses, on walls, whereas in the Late Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic periods, it transitioned onto mobile objects. These periods are marked by the gradual disappearance of wall paintings and installations, and occurrence of painted pottery and stamp seals, thus making imagery more mobile. Another significant change is observed in figurine assemblages: while male figurines clearly decline, there is an increase in female imagery.

I will try to address the question what happened to the repertoire of motifs in the upper levels of Çatalhöyük and after its abandonment, and what circumstances might have been related to this transformation. Therefore, the main focus of the research will be on the diachronic dimension, examining changes over time in the

¹The following books address the matter: (1) *Concluding the Neolithic: The Near East in the Second Half of the Seventh Millennium BCE*, Arkadiusz Marciniak (ed.). Lockwood Press, 2019. This volume aims to reassess Late Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic developments across different regions of the Near East from a comparative perspective. (2) *6000 BC: transformation and change in the Near East and Europe*, Peter F. Biehl and Eva Rosenstock (ed.) published in 2022 by Cambridge University Press. This volume provides a comprehensive exploration of the important period of transition from a pan-regional perspective.

context of other significant developments such as changes in architecture, burial practices, and other relevant factors.

This book also attempts to situate the imagery of Çatalhöyük in a broader context by investigating imagery in the 6500–5500 BC period in the Lake District. During the period of ca 6500–6000 BC where many changes seem to have occurred in the Late Neolithic of Central Anatolia, Neolithic way of life expanded out of Central Anatolia. Around 6500 BC, we have the earliest good evidence for settlements in the Lake District (Thissen 2010). After approximately a thousand years of existence during the Neolithic in Central Anatolia, the clustered neighborhoods of Çatalhöyük East disintegrated and were finally abandoned around 6000 BC (Marciniak et al. 2015). The local community must have gradually moved to the other places. Around that time, a number of small villages sites emerged in almost entire area of Central Anatolia and the Lake District.

Bleda Düring once posed a question regarding the nature of the Early Ceramic Neolithic-Late Neolithic transition (ca. 6500 BC): ‘perhaps a little later than these changes at Çatalhöyük a number of new settlements were founded that continued to be inhabited in the Early Chalcolithic period. These new settlements are generally characterised by non-agglutinative architecture (except for Canhasan I). Could it be their social organisation is related to that which developed in the upper levels at Çatalhöyük? If that is the case, the transition between the ECN-LCN might have been a very profound one’ (Düring 2002, 227).

In reference to the question above, one could argue that social organization of Lake District communities is indeed related to the developments in the upper levels at Çatalhöyük. The transformation observed across Central Anatolia and neighboring regions around 6500 BC was profound and significant. This transformation, occurring within a broad regional context and clearly visible at the Late Neolithic Çatalhöyük, led to the emergence of communities that we now label as ‘Chalcolithic’. In this sense, we could perhaps speak about Lake District culture as some sort of ‘offshoot’ of the Late Neolithic and Chalcolithic of Central Anatolia, rather than the ‘Classical’ (Early) Neolithic. The roots of elements characteristic of the Early Chalcolithic may indeed lie in the preceding Neolithic period, as indicated by the gradual changes observed at Çatalhöyük.

When we examine imagery, we can observe a continuity of certain forms of motifs that were known from Neolithic wall paintings and reliefs. Neolithic sites like Çatalhöyük feature a wide range of motifs and themes that were used and reproduced over time. Some of these motifs have been ‘inherited’ by Chalcolithic communities, but it appears that their meanings were transformed and modified. In other words, I see Çatalhöyük as arguably the place of origin of Late Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic imagery in the South-Central Anatolian Neolithic.

My research involves identifying motifs in the Lake District area, investigating their presence on different media and in various contexts. It will attempt to answer the question of how many forms of Neolithic motifs and themes survived into the Chalcolithic period.

It is worth drawing attention to the Chalcolithic imagery, which remains a neglected area of research. Despite the numerous interpretations of Anatolian Neolithic art and symbolism, comparatively little research has been conducted on

Chalcolithic imagery in contrast to the Neolithic's spectacular wall paintings, sculptures and reliefs. There have been some general, surface—touching articles of Erdoğan 2009; Yakar 2005 (see references). Furthermore, unlike the contemporary Halaf horizon, renowned for its high-quality painted pottery, Chalcolithic imagery in the rest of Anatolia has been largely overlooked and has never been studied in a systematic manner (for more information on Halaf imagery see especially Campbell 2010, and on painted pottery: Nieuwenhuys 2007).

Within the Çatalhöyük Research Project, for many years the imagery of the settlement was treated in isolation. Studies were concentrated on the site itself, with little attention given to its larger context. However, later in the project's timeline, a new trend has appeared, departing from this isolative perspective and attempting to situate the site in a broader regional context (Hodder 2007; Hodder and Meskell 2011).

In particular, scholars have sought parallels between Çatalhöyük and Göbekli Tepe in Southeast Turkey, dated to the ninth millennium BC, due to their comparable concentrations of symbolism (Hodder and Meskell 2011). Despite significant differences in architecture and economy, the striking similarities of motifs persist across great temporal and spatial distances.

In this book, instead of searching for parallels in preceding periods, I will focus on the period that followed 'classical' (Early Neolithic) Çatalhöyük, starting from 6500 BC. The end of the Neolithic clearly does not mark the demise of Neolithic imagery, which survived in different parts of Central Anatolia, such as the Konya Plain, Cappadocia and the Lake District. Although the similarity between *Çatalhöyük* imagery and imagery of the Chalcolithic sites has been noted (Bıçakçı et al. 2012, 104; Öztan 2012, 40), there has been no further investigation of this relationship.

This book aims to discuss why and how some of the Neolithic imagery survived into the Chalcolithic period in the Lake District in South-West Turkey, a region where several sites have been intensively excavated. Thorough analyses of a wide range of material culture could provide an additional line of evidence to help to explain the character and dynamics of social and cultural changes in this fascinating period in human history.

Moreover, there is a need to reinterpret the old categories in which imagery has been explained. There is a need for new interpretations that go beyond concepts such as 'shrines', 'symbolism' and 'mother goddess' etc., which is still strongly present in the literature concerning Anatolia (for example see: Duru 2008). Furthermore, I would like to elaborate on some theoretical aspects concerning approaches to prehistoric imagery. I wish to stress the active role of imagery, as it is not merely a reflection of some abstract ideas or beliefs, but has the potential to be used to create and enforce social relations. Thus, research on prehistoric imagery is as important as research on any other aspects of prehistoric societies.

This book aims to demonstrate that Charles S. Peirce's semiotics offers a useful framework for archaeological explanations and holds particular value for research on prehistoric imagery. The theoretical background of this study is the semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), an American philosopher, logician and founder of pragmatism. Peirce's semiotics holds great potential as a useful interpretative framework for archaeological analyses. This potential has been explored and advocated by Robert W. Preucel (2006), who has emphasized the advantage of

Peirce's ideas over common notion of semiotics advocated by Ferdinand de Saussure's school.

Following Preucel's lead, I would postulate a shift from symbolic to semiotic and pragmatic archaeology, grounded in Peirce's semiotics. The idea that underpins semiotic and pragmatic archaeology is the view of things as mediating social relations. Material culture does not simply reflect but actively participates in society. Objects, such as figurines, should be understood as practical components of reality, rather than abstract ideas detached from daily life and practice.

The book seeks to reformulate some traditional, common notion of symbols and meaning. In archaeology, terms 'symbol' or 'symbolic sphere' are often overused. It is important to recognize that symbolism is just one type of semiotic relation, and the others should not be ignored. Meaning is multilayered and under constant change, depending on context: time, place and people. Moreover, I believe that symbolic meaning cannot be fully discovered; in archaeological explanations, symbolic meanings might be demonstrated rather than imposed.

This book aims to demonstrate how a semiotic perspective can be applied to the analyses of Late Neolithic/ Chalcolithic material culture of the Lake District. Using Peircean semiotics as an interpretive framework, I evaluate three categories of decorated objects—painted pottery, stamps and figurines—in order to address changes and continuities.

The first part of the book (this chapter) situates the research within its geographical and chronological framework. From there, I move into the Early Neolithic imagery, placing special emphasis on clay as a meaningful material (Chap. 2). I argue that clay 'was not a passive player in symbolic, social and cognitive transformations, but integral participant' (Boivin and Owoc 2004, 182). Next, I will present the site of Çatalhöyük in different stages of its occupation. Given the extensive scholarly discourse on this site, I will provide a brief overview. Before discussing the Early Neolithic (around 7100–6500 BC) repertoire of imagery at Çatalhöyük itself, I will also show its longevity by referring to the Near East. Finally, I will briefly review the state of the art and some previous interpretations.

This sets the stage for a broader examination of the Lake District sites chosen as case studies for my research: Hacılar, Kuruçay, Höyücek and Bademağacı (Chap. 3). I will report on each site's stratigraphy, architecture, burial practices, and material culture, to familiarize the readers with the context in which the imagery appears.

Next Chap. 4 is devoted to reviewing the existing concepts relating to the Central Anatolia in period 6500–5500 BC, marked by a rapid and profound multifaceted change. In this chapter, some issues relating the westward expansion of the Neolithic will be tackled, which is relevant to understanding the emergence of the Lake District Neolithic. I will focus on Konya Plain and Burdur Area respectively, presenting the scholarly debate on their interrelationships. I would like to draw special attention to a model proposed by Mehmet Özdoğan (Istanbul University), which presents the dispersal of Neolithic groups as a continuous process, reverse to still persuasive view of Gordon Childe, who has pictured out the Neolithic expansion from the Near East to Europe as a mass, single event.

Chapter 5 presents the theoretical background of this study: the semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce. It will advocate its significant heuristic potential, which remains largely underestimated in archaeology. A lot has been said about the meaning of material culture and it is not my intention to deal with it here. It is enough to say that I do not intend to look for a singular meaning, as I believe that meaning does not reside solely within the object, rather than within the human-nonhuman networks in which it is entangled.

Chapter 6 extensively describes the empirical evidence: Late Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic imagery from South-Central Anatolia, as well as the specific theoretical model based on Ch. Peirce's semiotics, and finally the methods employed in analyzing the data.

Chapter 7 will be the most crucial for the study, where particular motifs and Neolithic imagery will be analyzed. The focus will be on temporal dimension: how motifs change through time and how many of the Neolithic motifs survived into later periods. The analyses have been divided into two subsequent phases: Late Neolithic (6500–6000 BC) and Early Chalcolithic (6000–5500 BC), during which motifs have been sorted into anthropomorphic, zoomorphic and abstract/geometric categories.

Chapter 8 is devoted to discussing the results of the completed analysis. It will also attempt to demonstrate some possible interpretations regarding the persistence of certain forms and motifs. I will address questions pertaining to memory and how 'Chalcolithic' societies remembered the Neolithic. I will try to answer the question about the connections of Lake District and Central Anatolia in the late seventh millennium BC. I will also situate imagery in broader regional context.

The final Chap. 9 summarizes the outcomes and emphasizes the most important thoughts and ideas. It will also make an attempt to discuss potential prospects, and directions for the future research.

1.2 The South-Central Anatolia: The Geographical Setting

The geographical area considered here is South-Central Anatolia, which constitutes the southern part of the Anatolian Plateau. The Anatolian Plateau is a large highland region consisting of a variety of landscapes at an average elevation of ca. 1000 m above sea level at the heart of the peninsula. It is situated between the Pontus mountains in the north and the Taurus range in the south. Generally, the southern part of Anatolian Plateau itself is not a uniform unit but consists of highly diverse landscapes. It includes large, arid basins such as the Konya Plain and Tuz Gölü basin, Cappadocia with volcanic landscape to the east, and finally Beyşehir Plain and the karstic area of the Lake District to the west.

The term ‘South–Central Anatolia’ is not a well-established concept in the literature, but rather a conceptual and heuristic tool that loosely defines the southern–central part of the Anatolian Plateau, characterized by the richness of the prehistoric finds. This contrasts with the northern part of the plateau, where prehistoric data is notably scarce (Düring 2008).

In this book, the term South-Central Anatolia is used to encompass the broader areas of the Lake District, Beyşehir Plain and Konya Plain. The first Geography Congress held in Ankara in 1941 divided Turkey into seven regions, taking into account their location, climate, topography, flora, fauna etc. According to this division, Konya province is in the Central Anatolia region and the western part of the Lake District (i.e. province of Burdur) belongs to the Mediterranean region. In publications, the Lake District is treated as belonging to South-Western Anatolia. For the purpose of this study, it is more useful to embrace both Konya Plain and the entire Lake District with one geographical term: South-Central Anatolia. This broader sense of the term was also used by Harold Cohen in his investigation of the paleoecology of the region (see: Cohen 1970).

While the Lake District, with four key Neolithic sites: Haçılar, Kuruçay, Höyücek and Bademağacı, is the primary focus on my work, the Konya Plain (Çatalhöyük) serves as an important point of reference. The terms “Lake District”, “Lakes Region” and “Burdur Region/Area” are used interchangeably, although Burdur area covers only part of the broader Lake District.

The Lake District (known as Göller Bölgesi in Turkish), with a surface of ca. 25,000 km² is a highly distinctive geographical region (Fig. 1.1). It is limited by the

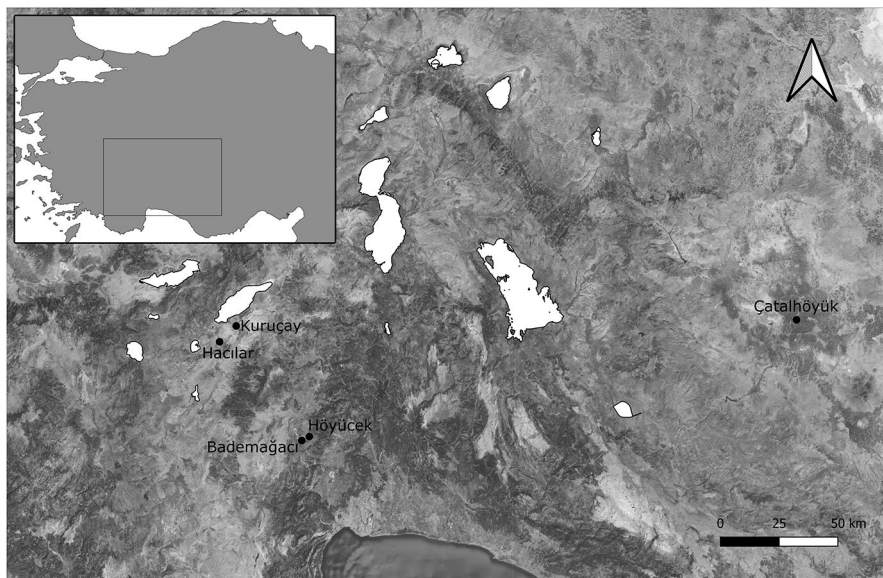


Fig. 1.1 South-Central Anatolia: Lake District with main excavated sites (author: Jędrzej Hordecki)

Taurus Mountains from the south, while its western boundaries are defined by Lakes Salda and Acıgöl. Lake Eber marks the northern boundary and finally, lakes Beyşehir and Suğla, along with the Sultandağları range, mark its eastern border.

The region is situated at an altitude of ca. 850–1000 m above sea level and it is internally filled up by mountain ranges of varying heights. These include the Ağlasun Mountains, located between the cities Burdur and Isparta, with peaks rising up to 2000 m, culminating in Akdağ (2271 m), Söğüt Dağı-NW of Burdur Lake or Karakuş Dağları-North of Eğirdir Lake. However, the most prominent range that closes off the Lake District from the south is the Western Taurus, forming the western wing of the Taurus belt. It consists of northwest-southeast oriented mountain ranges between the city of Taşkent in the southeast and Lake Eğirdir and the Isparta bend in the NW (Dedegöl Dağları), as well as the so-called Lycian Taurus located to the west. The Western Taurus was formed during the Alpine orogeny and is mainly composed of allochthonous limestone of Cretaceous age, with minor parts composed of ophiolites and radiolarites (after Paulissen et al. 1993).

The present topography of the region is closely related to the tectonic movements that occurred in the Early Miocene, playing a significant role in shaping the area. The Burdur-Isparta region is situated at the northeastern extremity of the Fethiye-Burdur fault zone and has been classified as the first-degree seismic hazard zone. Mineral water and hot springs are found along the fault lines around Lake Burdur (Similox-Tohon et al. 2008). During the first tectonic phase (the Alpine orogeny), some parts of the Western Taurus were uplifted by tectonics, while other areas such as Akşehir, Eber, Beyşehir, Burdur, Kaşıkara, Kovada, and Eğirdir (Kahraman 2005, 73, 2010, 226) were depressed becoming basins. These tectonic basins later became filled up with water, thus forming lakes. The presence of both larger and smaller lakes (in total 65) of a tectonic and karstic origin is a characteristic feature of the area. The largest lakes include the saline Lake Burdur and freshwater lakes Beyşehir and Eğirdir, which are the two largest freshwater lakes in Turkey.

Lake Burdur has been affected by both climatic changes during the last glacial and Holocene periods and tectonic movements in the Upper Pliocene (Kahraman 2005, 73; for the detailed description of geomorphology, tectonics and the evolution of the Lake Burdur Basin see: Kahraman 2005; Cohen 1970). Features such as old cliffs and numerous terraces indicate changes in lake levels. The lake level was raised during the last glacial period, but measurements show that it has been continuously decreasing (Kahraman 2005, 75).

From the northwest, Lake Burdur is flanked by forested mountains (Söğüt Dağı), while the rest is surrounded by alluvial flats and deposits suitable for agriculture. Moreover, the lacustrine environment provided a broad spectrum of resources that could have been exploited. Additionally, areas further east of the Lake, i.e. the intramontane valleys of Çanaklı, Ağlasun and Dereköy around the city of Isparta, create particularly favorable conditions for habitation.

The water reservoirs of the Lake District include a number of rivers and minor tributaries. The three major river basins of the Lake District are the Aksu (ancient Cestrus), Koca Çay (Eurymedon) and Manavgat Çay (Melas), separated from each

other by mountain chains. In the winter, these river basins are strongly supplied by snow reservoirs of the Taurus Mountains.

The mild climate of the Lake District region has been classified as Mesomediterranean, characterized by 75–100 dry days during the dry period and no very cold months. Precipitation varies between 400 and 600 mm per year (Kuzucuoğlu 2002). Pollen cores have shown that around 10,000 BC the conditions were drier and the temperatures were two degrees lower than they are nowadays (van Zeist and Bottema 1991, 85).

The region is relatively rich in forest cover, although it was much denser in the past. The forests include species such as oak, juniper, pine, apple trees, and almond. Van Zeist and Bottema (1991, Fig. 29) prepared a vegetation map of the region around 6000 BC, based on pollen records. According to these records, the coastal region (modern Antalya surroundings) between 0 and 800 m above the sea level—was characterized by Eumediterranean vegetation as nowadays with evergreen oak, pine and deciduous oak. The typical species for the zone between 800 and 2000 a.s.l. were pine, cedar and juniper. Towards the interior—woodland type of cover dominated, comprising oak, pine, juniper and pistachio. Further inland, at the northern fringes of the Lake District, the woodland merged with treeless steppe vegetation, best represented by dwarf shrubland (for more information on the vegetation cover in the past see Yakar 2011, 147; van Zeist and Bottema 1991; Van Zeist et al. 1975).

In terms of administration, the Lake District covers the area of ancient Roman province of Pisidia, which corresponds to the modern provinces of Burdur and Isparta, partially Antalya and Konya provinces. The main cities are the capital cities of the provinces: Burdur, situated next to the shore of Lake Burdur, and Isparta. The Lake District is bordered by Afyon province to the north, Denizli to the west, Konya to the east and Antalya to the south.

The Lake District is a relatively isolated region, separated from neighboring areas by mountains. The natural frontier zone between the Lakes Region and Konya Plain located to the east, is the Sultandağları Mountain range, with the main pass being the modern Isparta-Akşehir road.

Directly to the southeast lies the Beyşehir-Suğla basin, which is a distinct region in itself and lies in between the Konya Plain and the Lakes Region. While some scholars include it into the Lake District area, due to its distinctiveness I have chosen to treat it as a separate unit. This region has been perceived as a geographical corridor between the two regions; in many instances, it can be considered transitional, as its geography is affected by both regions (for example, in terms of climate with precipitation around 400 mm per year, less than in the Lake District but more than in Konya Plain). The region is particularly suitable for agriculture.

The Beyşehir Plain is separated from the Lake District by two ranges: Dedegöl Dağları (more to the east) and Kuyucak Dağı (more to the west). Directly to the east lies the Konya Plain, separated from Beyşehir-Suğla basin only by the low range of Erenler Dağı in the north and the volcanic Mount Alacadağ in the southern part.

The diversified landscape of the Lake District can be contrasted with vast areas of the Konya Plain. The Konya Plain is an inland plateau covering a relatively large area, situated at an average altitude of 1000 m. above sea level. The plain is covered