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New Middle Paleolithic Finds from the Lake District

Ralf BECKS – Betül FINDIK*

Abstract

Recent surveys in different parts of the Lake District in southwestern Anatolia have revealed a number of lithic finds that were prepared with the Levallois technique and thus can be assigned to the Middle Paleolithic period. In the Bucak-Korkuteli region, single finds were encountered at two sites. Two other sites in the same area have revealed flint nodules and artifacts indicating their use as atelier sites for the procurement of raw material and the preparation of tools on the spot. At a newly discovered cave site near Gelendost, a Mousterian point was revealed. The high density of Middle Paleolithic find spots, especially in the Bucak-Korkuteli region, is probably to be connected with the cave site of Karain, which lies in close proximity and was the major habitation site of this period in this region. It can be assumed that Neanderthal men repeatedly visited the highlands of the Taurus Mountains and especially the region of the Lake District for the exploitation and extraction of natural resources.

Keywords: Lake District, Middle Paleolithic, Mousterian, Levallois, Silex Resources

Öz

Güneybatı Anadolu'da, Göller Bölgesi'nin farklı yerlerinde yapılan son araştırmalarla, Orta Paleolitik Dönem'e atfedilebilecek, *levallois* tekniğiyle hazırlanmış çok sayıda yontmataş buluntu elde edilmiştir. Bucak-Korkuteli bölgesindeki iki buluntu alanında da Orta Paleolitik Dönem'e tarihlenen bazı tekil buluntulara rastlanmıştır. Aynı bölgedeki diğer iki buluntu alanından elde edilen çakmaktaşı yumruları ve yontmataş buluntular, söz konusu buluntu alanlarının hammadde temini ve yongalama işleminin gerçekleştirilmesi için atölye olarak kullanılmış olabileceğini göstermektedir. Bununla birlikte, Isparta-Gelendost yakınlarında yeni keşfedilen bir mağarada da bir adet *Moustérien* uç bulunmuştur. Özellikle Bucak-Korkuteli bölgesindeki Orta Paleolitik buluntuların yoğunluğu, bu bölgenin, yakınlarda bulunan ve Paleolitik Çağ'ın bölgedeki en önemli yerleşim yeri olan Karain Mağarası ile bağlantılı olabileceğini göstermektedir. Neanderthal insanların, doğal kaynaklardan faydalanmak için Toros Dağları'nın yaylalarını ve özellikle Göller Bölgesi'ni zaman zaman ziyaret ettiği varsayılabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Göller Bölgesi, Orta Paleolitik, *Moustérien*, *Levallois*, Çakmaktaşı Hammadde Kaynakları

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Introduction and Previous Works

With its many pluvial lakes and basins in the intra-mountainous region on the northern side of the Taurus, the Lake District of southwestern Anatolia offered good natural preconditions for human occupation, especially during warmer climatic phases. During the glacial phases of the Pleistocene, the highland regions were very cold and rather unattractive to humans.¹ Apart from the limited geomorphological and paleo-climatic research into the Paleolithic period of this region, archaeological research still lags behind. The first Paleolithic site was discovered in 1937 by H. Louis, who collected microliths from the surface of a low sandy mound named Baradiz near Gönen, Isparta. This open-air site was briefly excavated in 1944 by Ş.A. Kansu, who revealed more microliths and dated them to the Mesolithic period.² According to M. Kartal, in the 1940s the use of the designations Mesolithic, Epi-Paleolithic, and also Upper Paleolithic was rather imprecise. Moreover, the findings from Baradiz—which are kept in the study collection of the Department of Prehistory at the Faculty of Language, History and Geography at Ankara University—have been studied by M. Kartal, who identified only one microlith in the material. The other findings from Baradiz are lost and thus indeterminable.³ Another site discovered by Kansu near Isparta is the cave site of Kapalıin. The finds retrieved from the brief excavations here were assigned by Kansu to the Aurignacien, thus dating this site to the Upper Paleolithic period.⁴

In 1995, S. Mitchell and his team discovered some silex artifacts in the course of their survey at the village of Boğazköy in the province of Burdur (fig. 1). Amongst the finds is one flake which could be a Levallois flake of Middle Paleolithic date, and a few more which could belong to the same period.⁵ Another important prehistoric study carried out within the province of Burdur was the excavations at the cave of Dereköy Karain. The cave site is located about 13 km southeast of Ağlasun. The findings retrieved from the excavations conducted here in 1997 have been assigned to the Late Pleistocene/Tardiglacial.⁶ They are said to be contemporary with the sites of Karain, Öküzini, and Beldibi further to the south in the province of Antalya. Since the Dereköy Karain material did not include the characteristic tools and microliths known from the other cave sites, the chronological connection with Karain and Öküzini is based on rather weak grounds. Nonetheless, the presence of some pyramidal cores—which appear to be similar to those from Öküzini, Strata IV-II—suggest a date in the 13th to 12th millennia BC.⁷

After the excavations at Dereköy Karain, about 20 years went by until new findings from the Paleolithic period were discovered in the Burdur region. In 2016, in the course of the Sagalassos Archaeological Survey Project, quite a large number of silex artifacts were found at a site about 3.5 km southwest of the Dereköy Karain cave (fig. 1).⁸ The artifacts were assigned to the Middle Paleolithic period and consist mainly of flakes and a few tools like scrapers and blades, as well as one core, all of which were prepared with the Levallois

¹ For an overview of the natural preconditions of this part of southwestern Anatolia during the Pleistocene and the limitations of paleo-climatic reconstructions due to restricted research, see Vanhaverbeke and Waelkens 1998.

² Kansu 1945, 280.

³ Kartal 2003, 37.

⁴ Kansu 1945, 283.

⁵ Aydal, Mitchell, Robinson and Vandeput 1997, 143, fig. 2.1–3.

⁶ Waelkens et al. 1999, 284.

⁷ Vermeersch et al. 2000. For the datings of the strata at Öküzini Cave, see Otte et al. 2003.

⁸ Vandam, Willet and Poblome 2017, 227–29, fig. 2.

technique.⁹ So far, 11 Paleolithic sites have been discovered in the research area, including previous works. The silex artifacts assigned to the Middle Paleolithic period consist mainly of single finds. The described Middle Paleolithic artifacts generally show the characteristics of the Levallois preparation technique and consist mainly of blades.

The closest Paleolithic site that has produced Middle Paleolithic finds from stratified contexts is the cave site of Karain near Antalya (fig. 1). This is also the only site that has produced skeletal remains of Neanderthal men in Anatolia.¹⁰ The Middle Paleolithic deposits consist of two sub-periods: Mousterian and Charentien. The Karain Mousterian period contains artifacts produced with the Levallois technique and has been dated to between 160/200 ka. and 60 ka. BP.¹¹ The deposits of the Charentien period have no findings made with the Levallois technique and have been dated to between 350 ka. and 300 ka. BP.¹² Surveys in the surroundings of Karain have produced some open-air sites with Middle Paleolithic material. At the site of Kocapınar near Elmalı (fig. 1), some Mousterian artifacts were discovered that show some elements of the Levallois technique.¹³ The hill of Arapburnu Tepesi and the area around the fossil lake near Karain have produced Middle Paleolithic finds.¹⁴

Due to prehistoric surveys in west-central Anatolia, the number of Middle Paleolithic sites has greatly increased in recent years. In 2014, a new survey project was started to the north of Burdur in the province of Denizli. During the course of this prehistoric survey, finds characteristic of the Middle Paleolithic period, including some Levallois cores, were found.¹⁵ In 2016, rescue excavations at the site of Banaz-Sürmecik in the province of Uşak produced a large quantity of Middle Paleolithic artifacts.¹⁶ In 2012, during the course of a survey within the territory of the antique city of Aizanoi near Kütahya, an open-air tool production site containing many artifacts produced with the Levallois technique was discovered on the ridge of Omartepe south of Çavdarhisar.¹⁷ In 2013 and 2014, 22 Middle Paleolithic find spots of a total of 24 Paleolithic sites were discovered there.¹⁸ In 2014, in the course of a prehistoric survey in Kütahya in the vicinity of the Kureyşler Dam Reservoir, altogether 21 Middle Paleolithic sites were discovered. In this area, located about 24 km south of Aizanoi, the Levallois technique was less frequently used and thus differs from the former area.¹⁹

New Middle Paleolithic Finds from the Lake District

The chipped stone assemblage that was collected in 2017 in the course of the Şeref Höyük/Komama and Environs Survey shows mainly techno-typological characteristics of the Holocene period. The only exceptions of Pleistocene date are a Levallois flake found at Kör Höyük and a flake with Middle Paleolithic characteristics from Büyükköy Höyük.

⁹ Vandam, Willet and Poblome 2017, 227–28, fig. 3.

¹⁰ Taşkiran 2015, 116.

¹¹ Yalçinkaya 1995, 10; Yalçinkaya et al. 1997, 3; Yalçinkaya and Özçelik 2012, 4; Yaman 2015, 5–6, fig. 22.

¹² Yalçinkaya et al. 1997, 3; Yalçinkaya and Özçelik 2012, 4; Yaman 2015, 5–6.

¹³ Minzoni-Déroche 1987, 363.

¹⁴ Yalçinkaya 1986, 435; Yalçinkaya and Özçelik 2012, 2.

¹⁵ Özçelik, Kartal and Fındık 2016, 381–83.

¹⁶ Özçelik 2017, 530; Polat 2018, 315–16.

¹⁷ Dinçer, Türkcan and Erikan 2014, 4.

¹⁸ Dinçer 2016, 51.

¹⁹ Dinçer 2016, 51.

Kör Höyük is located in the plain about 1 km south of the village of Ürkütlü in the district of Bucak (fig. 1). The low mound measures about 100 m in diameter and 2 m in height (fig. 3). A large number of artifacts made of flint and obsidian were collected here in 2017.²⁰ Additionally, ceramic sherds belonging to the Early Bronze Age and burnt mudbrick fragments have been encountered at the top of the mound. The majority of the stone artifacts show features characteristic of the Late Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age, as also revealed at other sites in this region, like Bademağacı and Kuruçay.

The Levallois flake from Kör Höyük is made of reddish-brown radiolarite (fig. 2.1). The butt of the flake was prepared with small removals as a faceted type. In the process of flaking, and due to the heavy percussion, bulbar scars are clearly visible on the bulb. On the dorsal face, traces of the preparation of the Levallois core in the form of centripetal removals are visible. The Levallois flake was chipped off as a large part or completely from the dorsal face of the prepared core. The left side of the flake shows a semi-abrupt retouch, which is not regular and continuous. The retouched sides are reduced and worn off from use.

Despite being a surface find, the flake was not much displaced. Except for some small breaks on the ventral face and the border of the butt, the form of the flake and its making have not been altered. Since there are no obvious differences of the patina, these small breaks could well have occurred during use. The flake measures 47 mm in length, 45 mm in width, and 7 mm in thickness.

The other artifact discovered during the survey of 2017 is also a flake bearing Middle Paleolithic characteristics. It was found on the mound of Büyükköy Höyük, which lies about 1 km east of Büyükköy village in the district of Korkuteli (fig. 1). The mound is in fact a natural hill that was terraced for settlement on the top (fig. 4). The collected ceramics mainly date to Archaic and Late Hellenistic times. The distal end of the flake is broken, but there are some use marks visible on the break (fig. 2.2). There are alternating retouches on both sides of the flake. The flake has a large bulb of percussion and its butt is wide and plain. The flake was taken from greenish-yellow flint, and the thick patina displays a strong loss of water. In its broken state the flake measures 43 mm in length, 30 mm in width, and 9 mm in thickness.

The continued work of the Şeref Höyük/Komama and Environs Survey Project in 2018 revealed flint artifacts of the Paleolithic period from two more sites in the district of Korkuteli. The site of Güneyköy lies about 3 km northeast of Bozova (fig. 1). On the western foothills of the Babain Tepe are located several rock-shelters facing west and southwest (fig. 5). The rather shallow rock-shelters did not contain any cultural deposits, but on the slopes in front of them many silex artifacts were discovered. The calcareous rock contains thin layers of flint. The artifact scatter indicates that this site was used for extraction of the raw flint and the preparation of tools on the spot. Amongst the artifacts is a recurrent Levallois core made of radiolarite (fig. 2.3). The core was prepared with few removals, and the cortex is partly preserved on the flaking surface. The negatives of two flakes struck from the same direction and one struck diagonally are visible on the core. One of the striking platforms was prepared plain, the other natural. The core measures 33 mm in length, 35 mm in width, and 21 mm in thickness.

The other site discovered in 2018 is located about 4 km southwest of Küçükköy on the eastern slope of Gürbelen Tepe (fig. 1), where Middle Paleolithic cores and tools are abundant. The raw material consists exclusively of flint. The artifacts are thickly covered with a white

²⁰ Findık, Becks and Polat Becks 2019.

and cream-coloured patina. As a result, the colour of the flint is hard to define, but apparently brownish tones prevail. Amongst the finds are 21 cores. Four examples are lineal and five are recurrent Levallois cores (fig. 2.4–5). Other artifacts include two prismatic blade cores and one bladelet core; three unipolar, one bipolar, and one centripetal flake core; and four amorphous cores. The other finds consist mainly of flakes with different techno-typological features.

At the site of Gürbelen Tepe, a large scatter of smaller and larger nodules was encountered all over the hill (fig. 6). The actual artifacts, however, were concentrated on the eastern flank of the hill, covering an area of about 100 x 150 m. It appears to be an atelier site that was visited and used at various times, as the techno-typological differences among the artifacts indicate.

In the course of another survey in the northern part of the Lake District in the province of Isparta, a Mousterian point was discovered at the cave site of Kabız İni, located about 3 km east of the village of Balcı in the district of Gelendost (fig. 1).²¹ The cave is situated on the eastern side of a deep gorge and is largely filled with debris (figs. 7–8). The point is made of flint (fig. 2.6), and the surface is partly covered with a white patina. It has a plain butt and the bulb of percussion is visible. Both sides are prepared with a stepped retouch, and the distal end of the point is slightly broken. The artifact measures 44 mm in length and 27 mm in width.

Results and Discussion

An increase in archaeological research, including investigations of the Paleolithic periods, has revealed several new sites in the area of the Lake District, thereby filling the void of Paleolithic find spots in southwestern Anatolia. The majority of finds discovered in the course of various surveys in different parts of the Lake District consist of artifacts prepared with the Levallois technique and dating to the Middle Paleolithic period. It can hardly be a coincidence that this period is one of the major habitation periods at Karain. With its long stratigraphical sequence covering nearly all Paleolithic periods, along with its well-established chronology of early human history, the cave site of Karain serves as a reference site for Paleolithic research in this region. With the new findings of Middle Paleolithic artifacts, the presence of Neanderthal men has been attested in several parts of the Lake District. The types of find spots include both isolated artifacts and atelier sites where the raw material silex was extracted and tools were prepared on the spot. The density of Middle Paleolithic find spots encountered in the Bucak-Korkuteli region is not surprising, owing to their close proximity to the long-term habitation site of Karain (fig. 1). In fact, many more sites in the vicinity around Karain and especially in the highland areas are to be expected. The geographic situation of the two atelier sites of Güneyköy and Gürbelen Tepe on the flanks of the hills confirms the hypothesis about the locations of Paleolithic sites as proposed by Vanhaverbeke and Waelkens for this region.²² In addition to the single find spots and raw material extraction sites, the Kabız İni cave with its high accumulation of debris bears potential as a possible site for a long-term Paleolithic habitation site. The finds presented here demonstrate that the Lake District clearly has the potential for further Paleolithic research.

²¹ We would like to thank Prof. Dr. M. Özhanlı for his kind permission to study and publish this find.

²² Vanhaverbeke and Waelkens 1998, 14.

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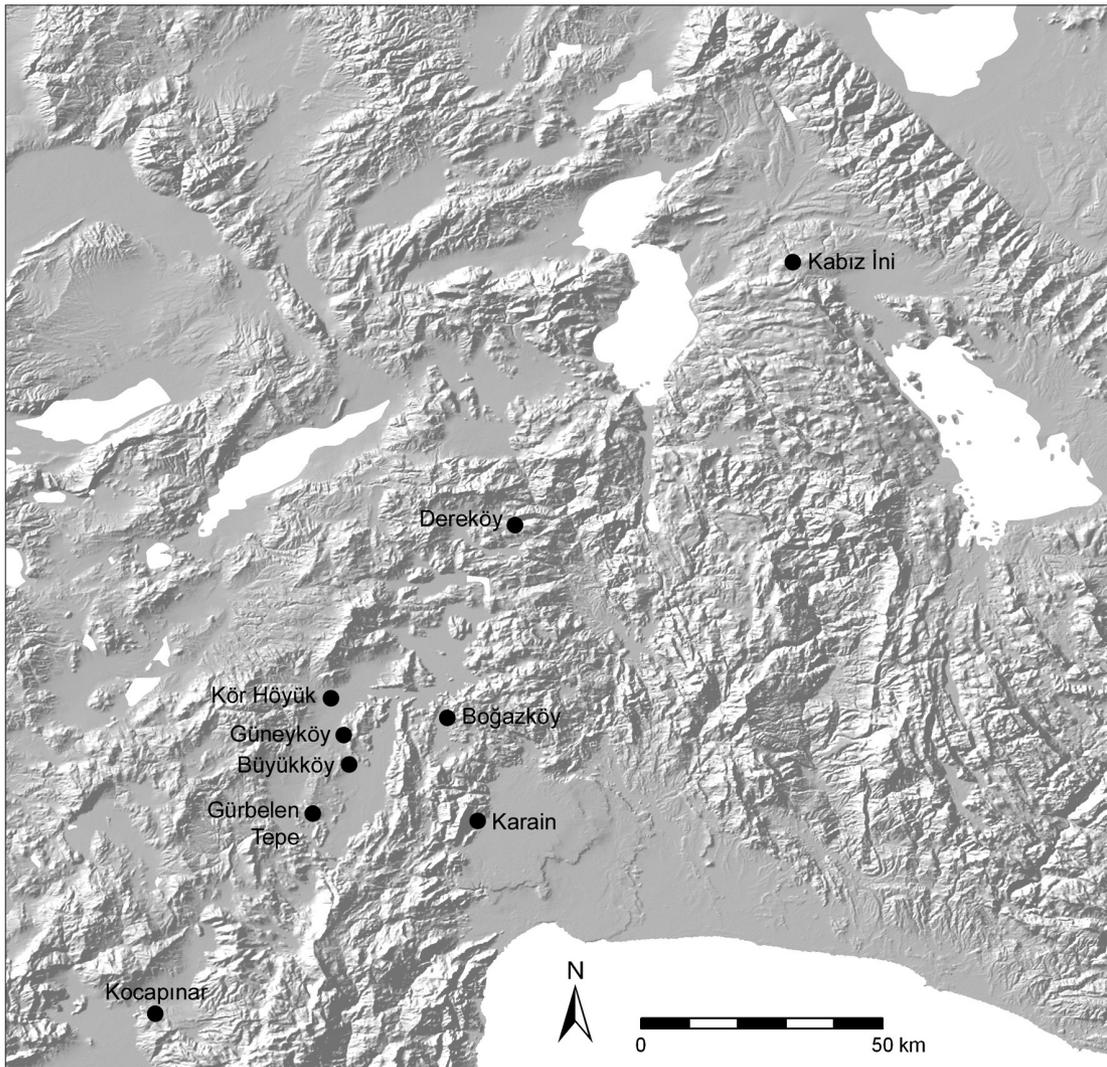


Fig. 1 Middle Paleolithic sites and find spots in the Lake District and Antalya region.

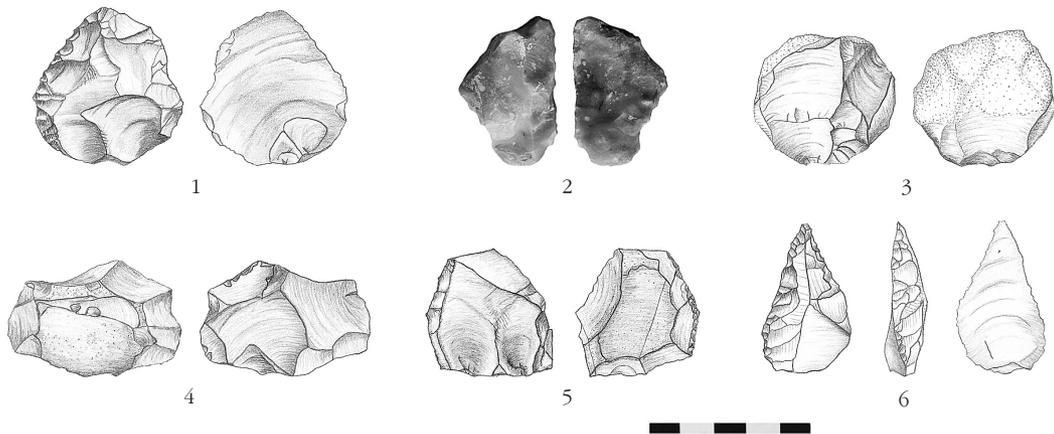


Fig. 2 Middle Paleolithic artifacts: 1 Kör Höyük, 2 Büyükköy Höyük, 3 Güneyköy, 4-5 Gürbelen Tepe, 6 Kabız İni.



Fig. 3
Kör Höyük,
view from northeast.



Fig. 4
Büyükköy Höyük,
view from north.



Fig. 5
Güneyköy,
view from south.



Fig. 6
Gürbelen Tepe,
view towards
north.



Fig. 7
Börü Delik
Gorge with the
cave of Kabız
İni to the left,
view from
northwest.



Fig. 8
Kabız İni cave,
view from west.