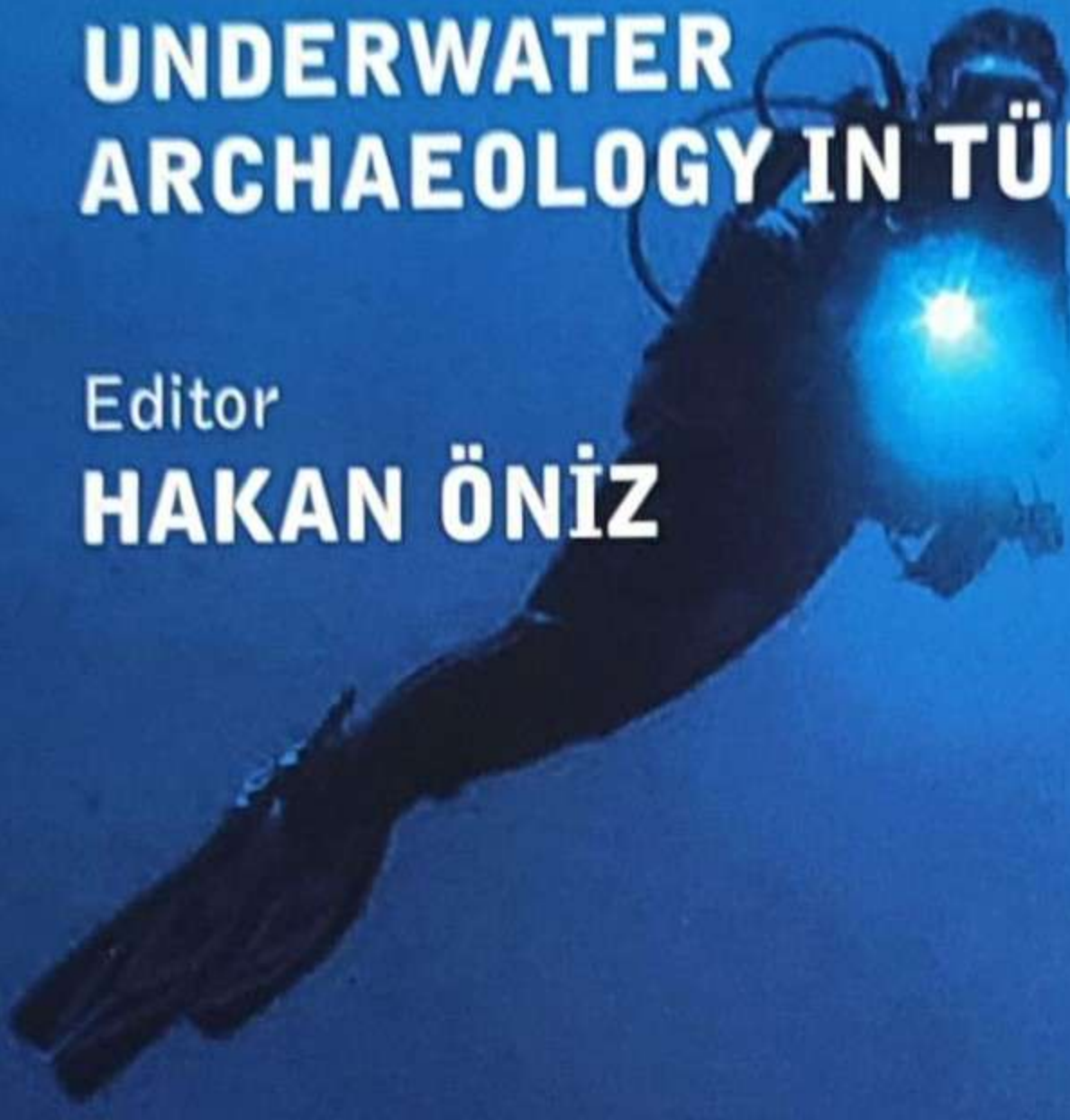


UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGY IN TÜRKİYE

Editor

HAKAN ÖNİZ



TÜRK
ARKEOLOJİ
VE
KÜLTÜREL
MİRAS
ENSTİTÜSÜ



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Discovering the Ancient Ports in West Istanbul

Şengül Aydıngün, Hakan Öniz, Haldun Aydıngün

Since 2007, through the land and underwater surveys carried out on the west side of the city under our directorship within the scope of Istanbul Prehistorical Research (ITA) project, research on ancient port settlements on the coasts of Marmara and the Black Sea has begun. In these studies, the localizations of many prehistoric port settlements as well as many others mentioned by ancient writers were determined for the first time by the ITA project teams. The localized port settlements (Fig. 1) are Bathonea Ancient Harbour Settlement in Küçükçekmece Lagoon Lake on the shores of Marmara, Athyra Harbour and Episkopeia Castle ruins in Büyükçekmece Lagoon Lake, Angurina Harbour and Shipyard on the shores of Beylikdüzü, and Silivri Selimpaşa Mound Bronze Age Harbour, and the ancient Philea harbour in Karaburun on the Black Sea coast. In this article the settlements identified in the archaeological excavations and underwater surveys and discussed in detail in our publications, are briefly touched upon.



Fig. 1: Istanbul ancient harbors.

Küçükçekmece Lake Studies

Bathonea Harbour Settlement

Bathonea (Bathynias?), (Region: Thrace, Greek: Θράκη) is a port settlement located to the west of Küçükçekmece Lake on the European side of Istanbul, within the borders of Firüzköy neighbourhood, where traces of humanity from the Lower Paleolithic Age to the Late Ottoman period were encountered, and data revealing the existence of maritime trade in the majority of these periods were discovered.

According to ancient writers, it is thought that the region is called Bathynias/Bathonea by virtue of the ancient Bathynias (Sazlıdere) river flowing into the lake from the north, and that it was a *phyle* of Byzantium. In some inscriptions it is mentioned as Bathonea/Bathys-Ryax. The name of the region is assumed to have changed after Antiquity and stayed within Rregion in the Middle Age.

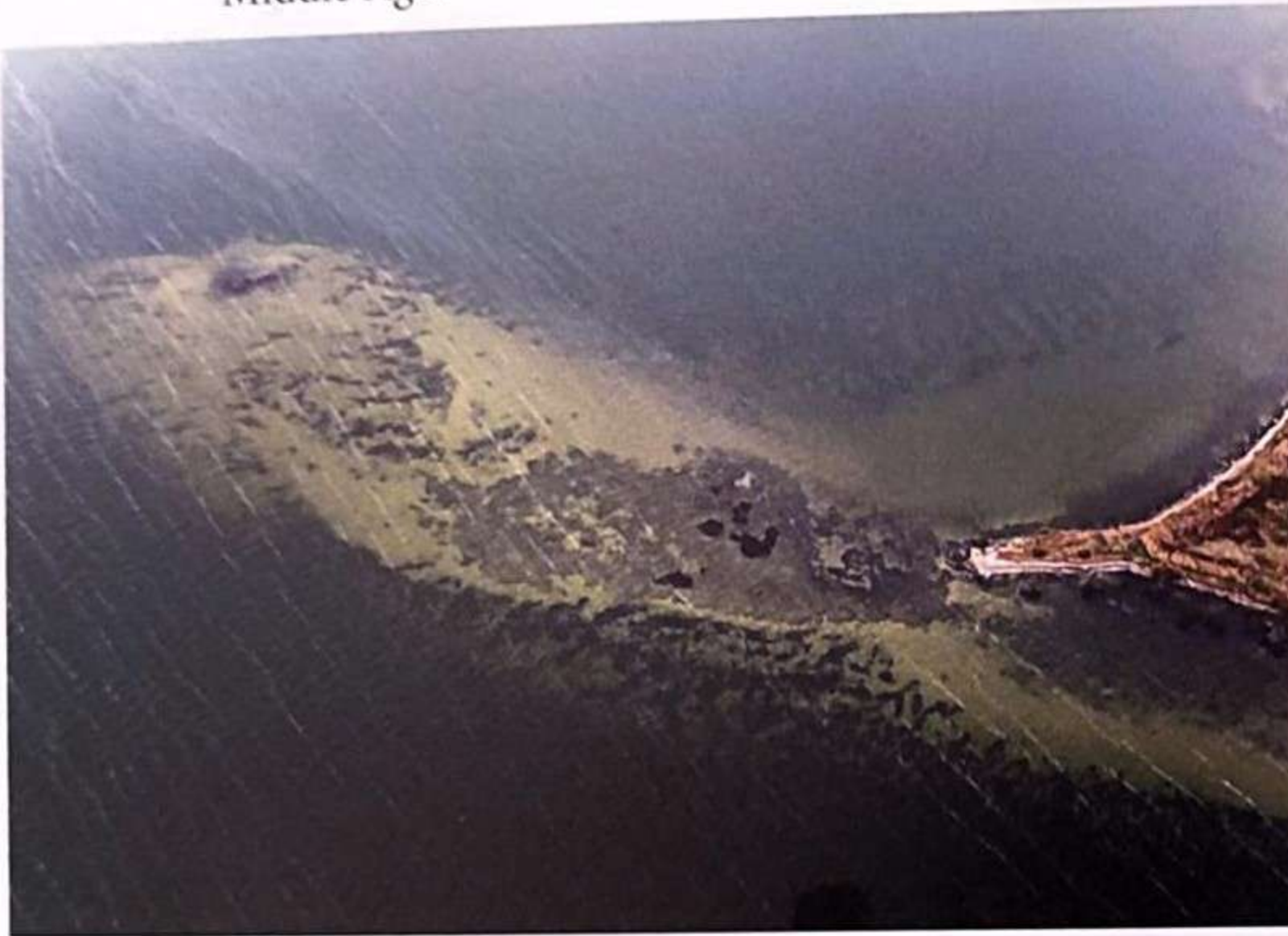


Fig. 2: Remains of the great harbor and possible lighthouse.



Fig. 3: Remains of possible sunken Lighthouse.

In the excavation site, which is located on a peninsula within Küçükçekmece Lake, excavations are carried out simultaneously in three different areas: Big Harbour (Fig. 2, 3) Area, Small Harbour Area (Fig. 4, 5) and Walled Inner City Structures. In these areas building artifacts from the Late Antiquity have been unearthed as well as remains from the Epipalaeolithic, Pre-Pottery and Pot-



Fig. 4: Small harbor road.



Fig. 5: Terrace walls.



Fig. 6: 2nd millennium BC Hittite pottery.

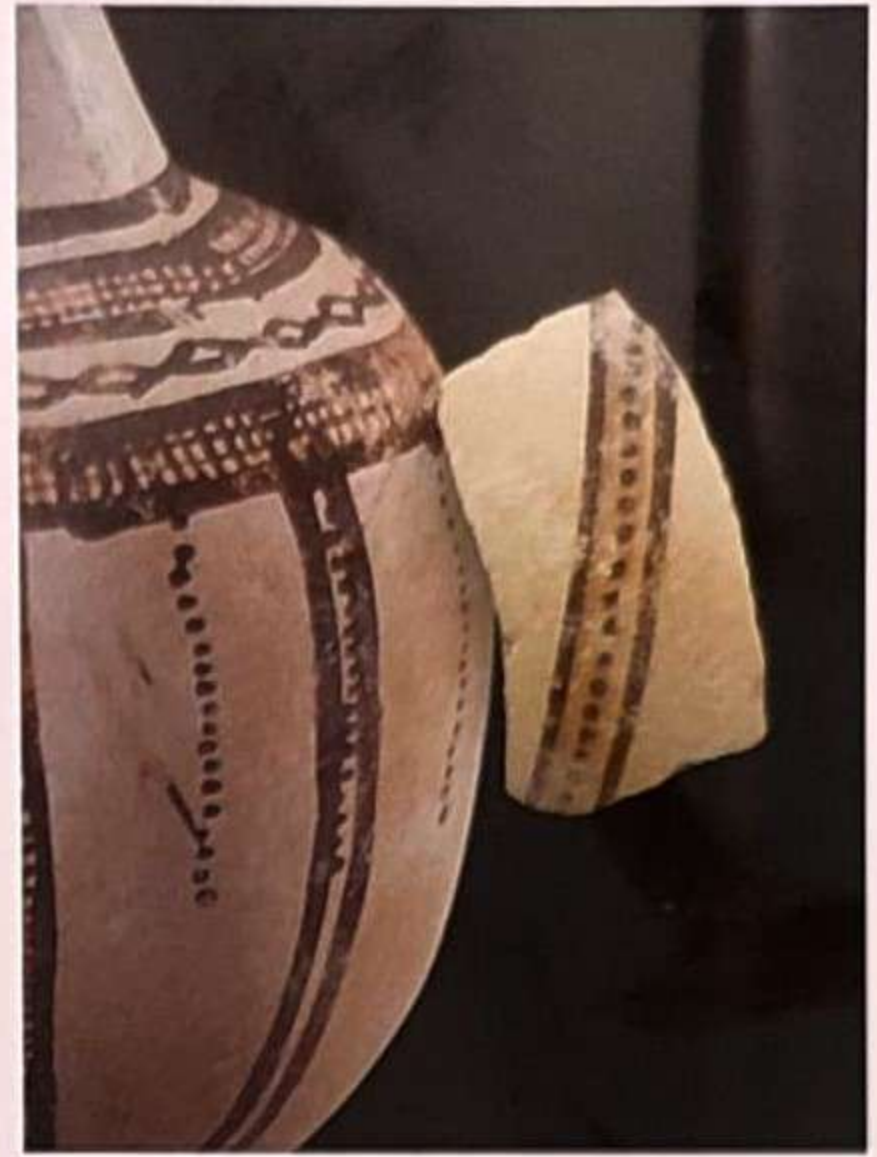


Fig. 7: 2nd millennium BC Cyprus pottery.

tery Neolithic Ages, Bronze Age, Hellenistic, and Roman Imperial Periods. The discovery of Hittite (Fig. 6), Mycenaean, Cypriot (Fig. 7) and Balkan artifacts dating to the 2nd millennium BCE for the first time in the history of Istanbul has been particularly remarkable. Although the excavations are still ongoing and hence the findings are not conclusive, the presence of a Basilical Planned Apse and Martyrion structure which may be a Palace-Monastery complex suggests that the area was planned as a sacred settlement. Medical instruments found during the excavations, thousands of terracotta medicine bottles, mortars, and pestles used for making medicine point to *Daphnision*, which was mentioned as a medicine production centre in the area in Late Antiquity. Due to the sheltered nature of the lagoon lake, it is assumed to have served the navy during the Ottoman Empire as well. Since the Küçükçekmece Lagoon Lake has been constantly connected to the Marmara Sea from past to present, it seems to have been used as an inner harbour with multiple sheltered piers.

Büyükçekmece Lake Studies

Athyra Harbour Settlement

One of the districts located in the Thrace region to the west of Istanbul, Büyükçekmece takes its current name from a lagoon lake within the borders of the district. The first known name of Büyükçekmece from written sources is Athyras, which is the name of the great stream pouring into the lake from the north. In the north of the region which ancient writers define as Athyras River (Strabo VII, 54; Pliny IV, xi; Ptolemy III, XI), the rivers Melas and Athyras converge. The dense assemblages of archaeological materials on the eastern shores of Büyükçekmece Lake show the traces of life in the region since the prehistoric period (Fig. 8), as well as suggesting that it was a harbour settlement in Hellenistic and Roman periods. The ancient geographer Strabon reports that as one travels from Selymbria (Silivri) towards Byzantion, one comes across the



Fig. 8: Prehistoric stone axes.

Athyras River on the way. It is said that a small Greek port colony named Athyra (Ἀθύρα) was established in the bay where Athyras River meets Propontis (Marmara Sea). Procopius, the famous historian of the Justinian period of Roman Empire, writes "After Rhegion (Küçükçekmece) there is a town called Athyras. Since the people of this town suffered from drought, the emperor had a large water tank built," and briefly mentions the region. Medieval writer Simeon the Metaphrast mentions that a fortified trading harbour was built in the region called Athyra in Early and Middle Ages. In the land and underwater surveys carried out by our teams, archaeological traces thought to belong to the remains of Athyra were detected in the lake and its shores (Aydingün et al., 2015).

Episkopeia Castle



Fig. 9: Episkopeia Fortress –
Buyukcekmece Lake

Most of the castle ruins, located on the wide and fertile plain to the north of Büyükçekmece Lake where the two rivers meet, are submerged inside the dam lake. The castle is located 8 km northwest of the road from the mouth of Büyükçekmece Lake towards Çatalca. Today the ruins (Fig. 9) of the castle can be easily seen from the D100 international highway connecting Istanbul to Europe. In the past this was the main road connecting the two roads called *Via Egnatia* (Külzer, 2011). Built near the *Via Egnatia*, this castle was undoubtedly planned both for the safety of passengers and to protect the fertile alluvial plain to the northwest of the lake.

Ahmediye Castle must have been one of the fortresses built during the period when Emperor Justinian (527-565) embarked on public improvements to protect the lands on the west of the capital, after battling with the Thracians, Avars and Bulgarians. In the book *De Aedificiis* (On Buildings) which is estimated to have been written by Procopius before 558, it is told that 700 cities and castles were equipped with fortresses, some of them built from scratch and some of them restored. In the section about Büyükçekmece and its vicinity Procopius wrote:

Beyond Athyras is a certain place that the inhabitants call Episkopeia. Emperor Justinian discerned that the place was exposed to the attacks of the enemy, and the large plots of land behind it were not sufficiently guarded since there were no fortresses anywhere in the surroundings. He then built towers there in a usual way, such that buildings were erected from the city wall at regular intervals. At first the wall was very narrow, but gradually grew wider. Towers were built on these walls, at short distances apart from one another. Thus, it became impossible for the enemy to approach the wall from anywhere, for when they came into an unsafe position between towers they

were easily targeted and shot down by the guards. Nor did they place the gates in its usual position (i.e. between the towers), but rather in the narrow side of the wall with an angle which enemies would not be able to see. Theodore, a very intelligent silentary, was in the service of the emperor. So, these fortifications were built in the direction of the long wall. (Procopius, IV.3: 19-56)

The description of the Episkopeia Castle by Procopius is an exact match with the castle in Ahmediye according to our initial surveys.

The remains of the walls in the southwest and northeast wings of the castle remain in place today, located to the northwest of Büyükçekmece Lake which has been turned into a dam. Many parts of the castle have been submerged in the dam lake. It is seen that the fortification wall of the castle extends into the lake in northeast and southeast directions. The remaining parts which are on land are the southwest and northwest wings. Most of the remains in these directions have been buried under the ground or demolished over time. Through underwater sonar surveys the submerged ruins of the castle were identified and its plan was drawn out (Aydingün et al., 2019: 43-56).

Beylikdüzü Shores

Angurina Harbour and Shipyard



Fig. 10: Angurina wall remnant - Beylikdüzü

Some building remains which are thought to belong to a harbour were found on the promontory located in the south of the peninsula between Büyükçekmece and Küçükçekmece lakes, 6 km away from the centre of Beylikdüzü province in Istanbul. Within the scope of the “Istanbul Prehistoric Studies” project, underwater research was conducted, and the structure was dated. Based on the small group of finds unearthed around the building and in the water, it was likely in use between 4th century BCE and 10th century CE, it was restored twice after its initial construction, and rebuilt once on top of the old building. To the south of the area where the remains were found, there are also ruins in the sea and around the coast, thought to belong to the harbour (Fig. 10).

The general looks of the ancient structure on the Beylikdüzü coast resembles some granariums. Spacious adjacent rooms used for grain storage are the hallmark of the building. It is known that the temperature and humidity ratio in which the grain is stored is essential for a granarium (Rickman 1971:1), however it is not known at this time whether the building provides favourable conditions. The said structure is similar to the granarium in Andriake, one of the most important ports of Lycia which is in the Demre district of Antalya province. The building's entrance is protected by a breakwater. It was built during the reign of the Emperor Hadrian (117-118 BCE) in the harbour and has survived quite well through time (Pehlivaner et al., 2004: 28, 30; Fouache et al., 199: 305). There are reliefs depicting Isis-Serapis and Pluton, a Griphon and an inscription on the middle door of the granarium which is 65x32 metres in size and consists of eight rooms in total (Çevik et al., 2009: 57). Another example of a granarium is located in Patara, another important Lycian port. It is also known that the Theodosius Harbour in Yenikapı was used between the 4th-7th centuries to import grain from Egypt and Crimea (Asal, 2010: 154). It is thought that this structure may have been used for the storage of grain from Egypt in the same period.

The form of the buildings is also similar to the closed shipyard structures used from the Roman period to the Seljuk period. The Roman period shipyard structure, which was unearthed in Rome's port Portus in 2011 also has a similar form (Keay, 2013: 1). This structure in the Portus Harbour which was used between 27 BCE-565 CE is 145 metres long and 60 metres wide, therefore it is larger than the structure in question. A similar structure is also found in Alanya. Located in Alanya harbour on the shore, this structure was built during the Seljuk period on the remains of the foundation from earlier periods. The location of the said shipyard in Beylikdüzü is one of the most suitable places on the shores of Istanbul for the supply of timber required for shipbuilding. Büyükçekmece Lake is near the Longoz Forests in the Western Black Sea, and Küçükçekmece Lake is very close to the road to Sazlıdere (Ancient Bathynias) and the forests currently called Belgrade Forest. It is possible to transport timber from these forests to the shipyard via the lakes (Öniz et al., 2014).

Silivri Shores

Selimpaşa Mound Bronze Age Harbour

Located within the borders of Silivri district in the Thrace region of Istanbul, Selimpaşa Mound appears in the form of an elevation in the west of the point where Kavaklıdere flows from the north and empties into the Marmara Sea. The beach lying in front of the mound was formed by the alluvial sediments brought by Kavaklıdere and Kocadere which pours into the Marmara Sea 800 metres to the east. The mound bears significance by virtue of being the last surviving great mound in the Thrace region in the west of Istanbul.

The fact that Selimpaşa Mound, which was understood to be a Late Chalcolithic-Bronze Age (3500-2000 BCE) settlement in our land and underwater surveys, was established as open to the sea on the side of a river flowing into the Marmara, shows that the region was specifically selected for ancient maritime trade. The earliest pottery fragments collected on the mound belong to the Late Chalcolithic-EBA I, and the latest ones belong to the Hellenistic period. The pottery grouped as the prehistoric period is divided into two groups. Selimpaşa's position as a safe harbour/shelter, transit point for marine traders who wanted to sail to the Black Sea during the Bronze Ages makes the mound a key settlement of this period. Selimpaşa Mound must have played an important role among the regions for sailors trading between the Black Sea and the Aegean through the Straits,

as well as serving as a junction between the regions where the land trade from Southeast Europe and Thrace meets the sea routes.

It is suggested that Selimpaşa Mound may have been the port connecting Kırklareli-Kanlıgeçit to the Balkans and Thrace as well as Anatolia and the Near East during the Bronze Ages (Özdoğan and Parzinger, 2012; Özdoğan, 2011: 220-221). It is widely believed that raw materials such as copper, iron, gold and silver extracted from the Strandzha Mountains are transported from Kanlıgeçit to Selimpaşa by land and river, and from there to Troy via sea (Aydingün et al., 2014; Heyd, 2016).

Arnavutköy

Karaburun/ Philea Harbour



Fig. 11: Karaburun, east direction.

Philea Harbour is located within the borders of Arnavutköy district on the Black Sea coast of Istanbul. The cape known as Karaburun (Fig. 11) must have been frequently used throughout history with its position as the sole promontory on the Black Sea coasts of Istanbul. Since a modern harbour was built to the east of Karaburun it wasn't possible to conduct a research. However, the presence (Fig. 12) of well-cut stone blocks under water on the west side bears traces of the old port. In addition, many ceramic fragments unearthed on the coast and in the sea prove that this natural promontory was used as a harbour since the end of 2000 BCE. Karaburun is marked as *Philea* on the maps of ancient geographers (Külzer, 2010: 430).



Fig. 12: Stone construction in Karaburun.

Sarıyer

Mauro Molos/Hieron Byzantion Harbour

Fig. 13: Mauro Molos Hieron breakwater - Sarıyer.

This harbour is within the borders of the old Karamendirek Village on the Bosphorus shore of Sarıyer district. The breakwater was built parallel to the shore with the purpose of controlling the boats coming from the Black Sea in the city state of Byzantion. The ruins of the structure built with large smooth cut stones on the shore of a slope descending perpendicularly to the Bosphorus are still visible. These harbours were built *tete-a-tete* in the north of Bosphorus. Harbour on the Anatolian side was called Zeus Hieron (Yoros Castle), and the one on the European side, Mauro Molos (Fig. 13). Unlike the port on the Anatolian coast, Mouro Molos did not have a natural bay. Thanks to the chain stretched between the hierons on the two sides, the unauthorized entry and exit of ships to and from the strait was prevented. Fishing, trade of goods and slaves, which were main sources of Byzantion's wealth, were carried out over the Black Sea. Ancient writers called the place the key or gates of the Black Sea, as there was nothing to block the view of the Black Sea which is covered with two protruding capes on both sides at this point of the Bosphorus. It is stated that the port is located a little bit inside the Black Sea entrance of the Bosphorus (Gyllius, 2000: 145, 193, 194, 202). With the side scan sonar survey conducted on the Sarıyer shores of the Bosphorus in 2016, some traces and remains of a breakwater were identified underwater.

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