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THE DISTRIBUTION OF BIFACES IN ANATOLIA

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Abstract. There are two aims of this paper. First, we will concentrate on the distribution of bifaces which have been found in Anatolia until present. The second aim, in the sense of the distribution of bifaces, is to attempt to describe the situation of Anatolia in the world. Recently, there is a new hypothesis that the tradition of biface-making migrated from Africa to the Near East (Levant), and to southeast Anatolia, then toward Europe by crossing the Caucasus mountains and from the north of the Black Sea Region. This hypothesis depends on the finding of bifaces which are rare or unknown west of Anatolia, Greece and the Balkans. We believe that the geographic position of Anatolia will make this hypothesis much clearer, because Anatolia has always had a crucial position between Eurasia and Africa.

Anatolia occupies a crucial geographic position on the crossroads between Africa and Eurasia. It is therefore important to find out, during each prehistoric period, such as the Lower, Middle, or Upper Paleolithic, how prehistoric discoveries can shed light on the relationships between these vast continents.

This paper examines the distribution of bifaces in Anatolia. Needless to say, this is a critically important aspect in understanding cultural processes during the Lower Paleolithic.

Two Acheulean provinces have already been recognized by various scholars. One is the Acheulean of Western Europe and the other province is limited to the Near East. While the connections of the first one with Africa are poorly known, the Near Eastern province extends from the African Acheulian.

The geographic conditions of Anatolia are not worse than any other region. It has areas with Mediterranean and temperate climates, water sources and plenty of raw material. It is therefore not surprising that bifaces were discovered in Anatolia since the onset of Paleolithic research some 100 years ago (Taşkiran 1990).

The map (Fig. 1) indicates the distribution of findspots where bifaces were collected. It is clear that the density of localities differs from region to region.

An overall study of a large sample of bifaces (including 123 pieces) from different find spots (Taşkiran 1990), using the Bordesian type-list, indicates that 88% fall into known categories while 12% are indeterminable (Fig. 2). The highest frequency is that of amygdaloids (Fig. 3). It should be stressed that 98% of the bifaces were made from flint. The remaining 2%

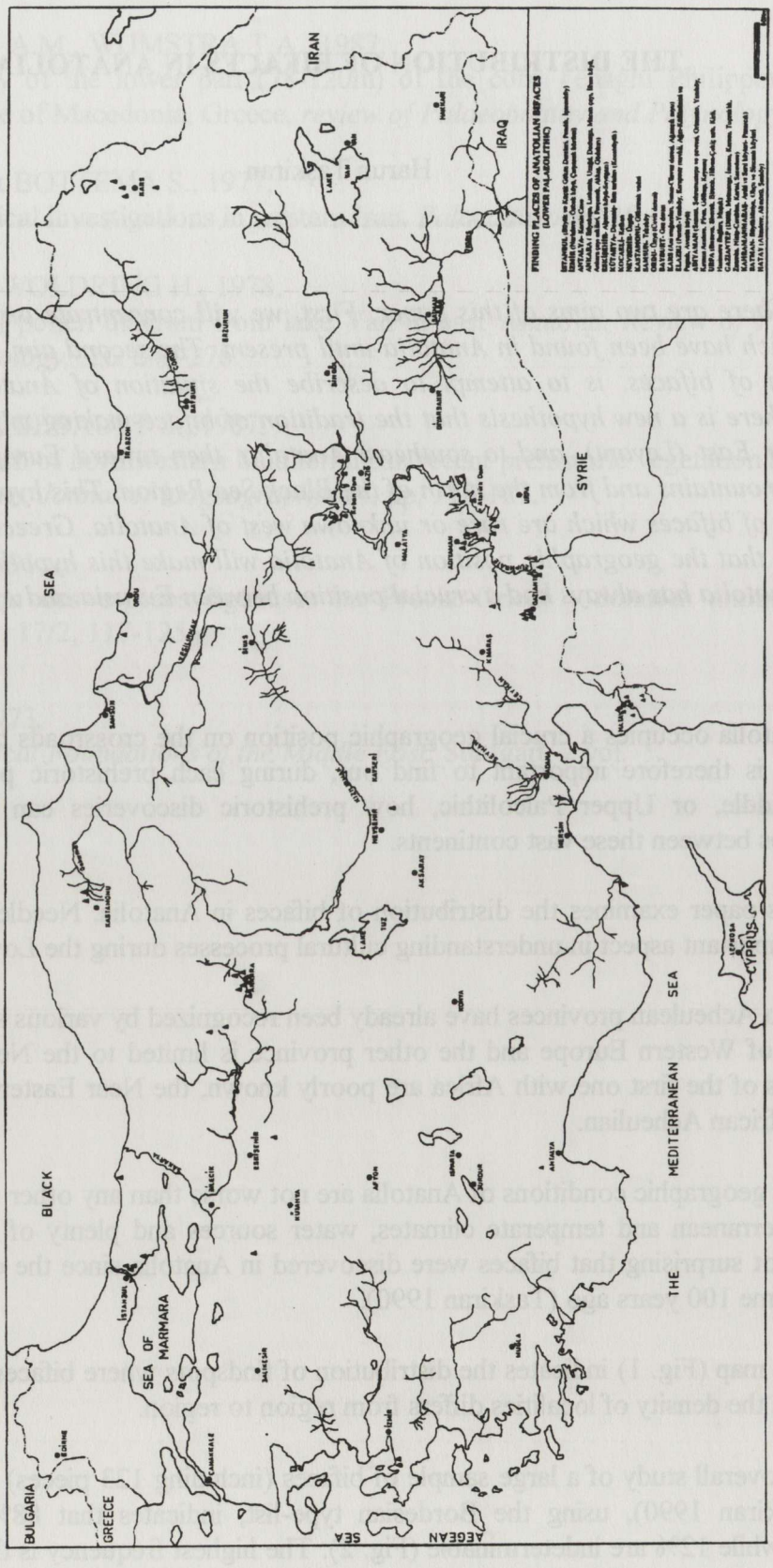

Fig. 1. Distribution of findspots of bifaces in Anatolia.

were shaped from other raw materials. Bifaces made from basalt were found near Trabzon and Kars in northeastern Anatolia (Plate 1).

Until now, most of the bifaces had been collected in southeastern and central Anatolia. Many were found in the vicinity of cities such as Gaziantep, Adiyaman, Sanliurfa and Ankara (Plate 2). One may hypothesize that the reasons such a distribution could be as follows:

1) Paleolithic research was carried out only at these locations;
2) In these areas there is an abundance of suitable raw material;
3) Past ecological conditions in these places attracted humans during the Lower Paleolithic.

When the rich findings from the Euphrates River valley were once compared to the Tigris River valley, the conclusion was that only the first was inhabited by the bearers of handaxes. However, recent surveys along the Tigris changed the picture when bifaces were found (Algaze 1990:392; Algaze and Rosenberg 1991:141-142; Rosenberg 1992:449).

This is probably a good example that more field research is needed. In most of the Anatolian regions, the recording of bifaces is only sporadic. Such are the cases of Kastamonu in the northeast (Bostancı 1952:139; Table II, Fig.1a, 1b and Table III, Fig.2a, 2b), Ünye-Ordu (Kökten 1963:276; Table I) and Bayburt in the center of the Karadeniz (Black Sea) region (Gündüzalp 1986:50; Tables 10 and 11, Figs. 5-7); the findings from Kars (Kökten 1942:119; 1943:602-603; 1948:197-198; 1953:196) and Elazig (Kökten 1971:15-16; 1974:1; 1976:2) in the east; Ankara (Kökten 1953:186), and a few findings mentioned in the Marmara region. Systematic surveys around the Sea of Marmara by M. Özdoğan recovered Paleolithic localities but the collections are still under study (Özdoğan 1984:67; 1986:411, 416; 1988:158; 1989:576; 1990:447).

I would also like to remark that only one Lower Paleolithic find spot is known in western Anatolia, in the Aegean region. The two doubtful handaxes were discovered in Izmir Bay in 1963 and 1964 by Yüksel Emekli (Kansu 1963:486, Figs. 2-5; 1969:79, Figs. 1-3).

Lower Paleolithic localities with bifaces were found by Turan Efe during systematic surveys in 1988, near Kütahya, Bilecik and Eskişehir, in the region of northwestern Anatolia. Especially I would like to mention the findings in *Kocahöyük* and *Batı Tarlasi* (Plate 3), located between Domaniç and Kütahya (Efe 1990:406-407). This means that with every new survey that is done according to modern field techniques, we are able to increase the information concerning Lower Paleolithic sites in Anatolia.

Most of the bifaces which were found in open-air sites are considered as markers of the Acheulean Industrial Tradition; Karain is the only cave where bifaces were found in the excavation. Kökten mentioned a few examples (Kökten 1949:822; 1955:272-273). Unfortunately, the exact context of these findings is unknown.

The open-air find spots where bifaces were collected do not provide the kind of evidence that we expect from an open-air site. This is probably due to insufficient systematic

research and the lack of controlled surface collections (Yalçınkaya 1985:396). Most localities are river terraces, slopes and plateaus. It is often difficult to determine, due to the nature of the geological context (conglomerates or sandy deposits), if the artifacts were *in situ* or as most often is the case, in derived position.

The very fragmentary information that we have today, concerning both Acheulean and non-biface industries in Anatolia, indicates that like neighboring regions, Anatolia was frequented by humans during the Lower Paleolithic (Taşkiran, 1990:52). It is as yet unknown if during certain periods, such as the glacial cycles, conditions on the Anatolian plateau restricted human occupations. Only detailed Quaternary sequences will be enable us to answer this question. The few finds to date clearly indicate that the geographic position of Anatolia played an important role at the crossroads between Africa and Eurasia. The Acheulean is known to have emerged in Africa some 1.7-1.4 Million years ago. The dispersal of bifaces, which are the characteristic stone tool of the Acheulean, mark the advent of certain *Homo erectus* that came out of Africa. Recent summaries suggest that this movement took place along the Levantine Corridor (Bar-Yosef 1994; Otte, in press). It is unclear what path was taken by the Acheuleans once they inhabited eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus. They could have gone on to western Europe by moving around the Black Sea but the evidence for this is not conclusive. On the other hand, western Europe could have been inhabited by the bearers of the bifaces who crossed the Mediterranean Sea through Sicily to Italy or via the Gibraltar Strait to the Iberian peninsula. Undoubtedly, the terrestrial path from the Levant into Anatolia was a safer way and therefore we need to know more about the distribution of the Acheulean sites in Anatolia.

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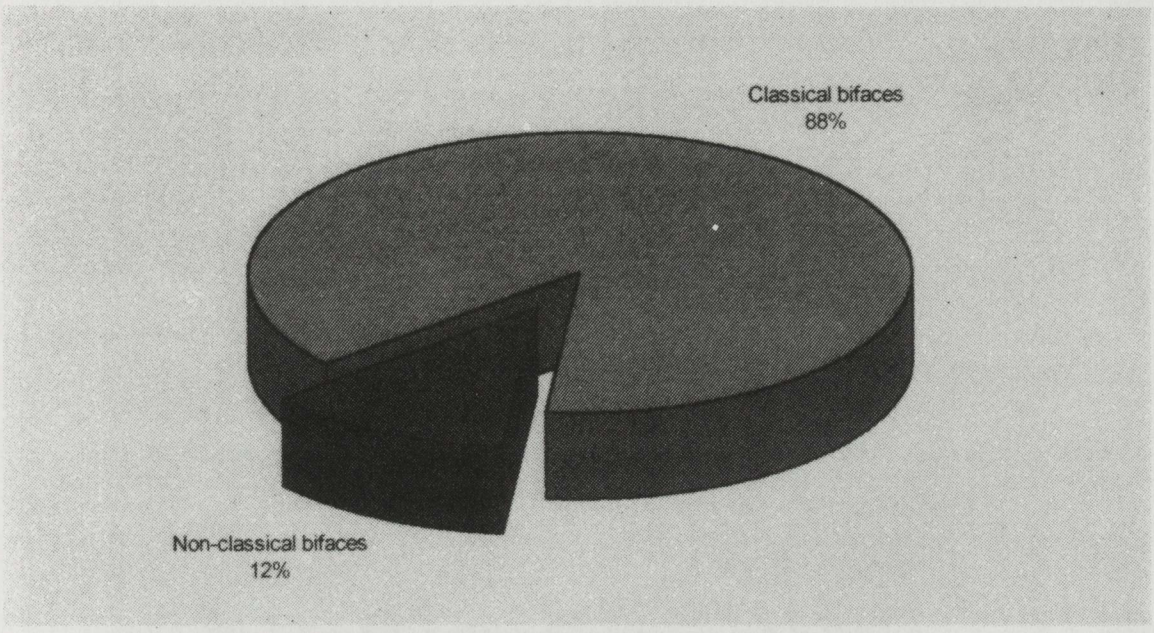

Fig.2: Main typological distribution of Anatolian bifaces.

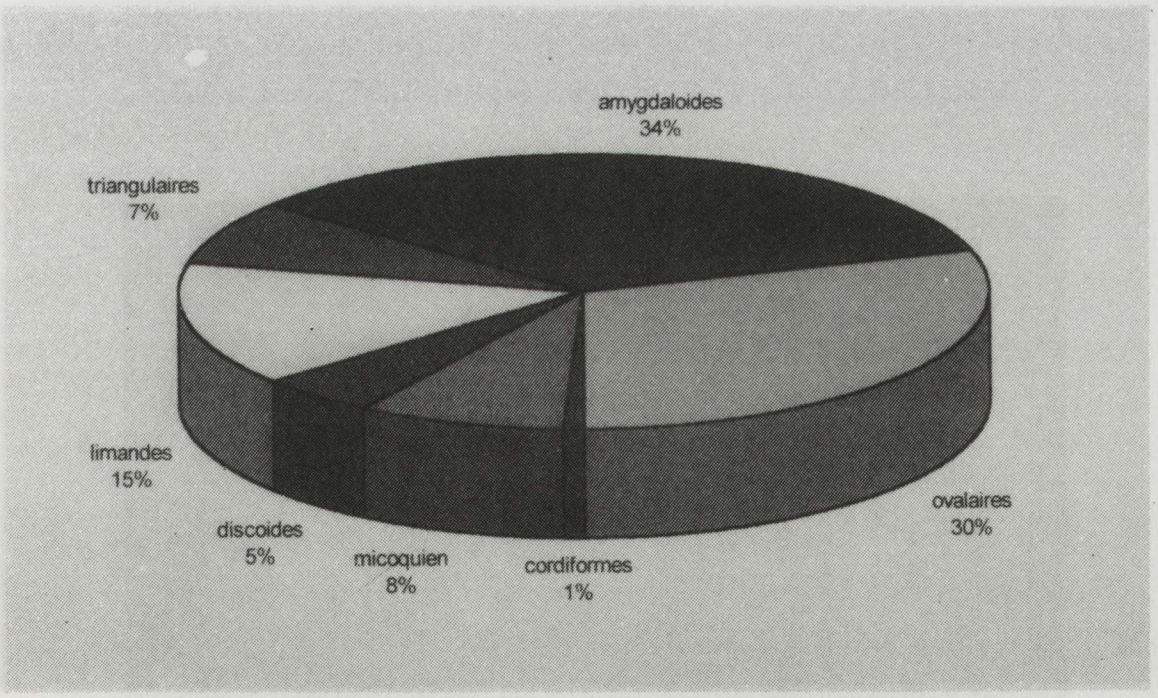

Fig.3: Sub-typological distribution of Anatolian bifaces.

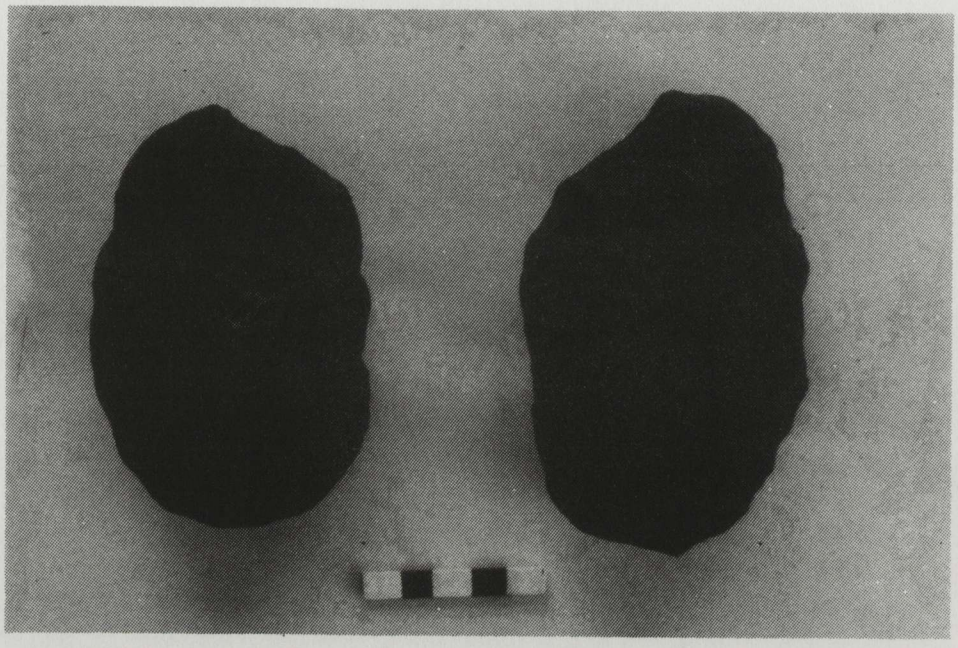

Plate 1. Basalt bifaces found near Trabzon and Kars in northeastern Anatolia.

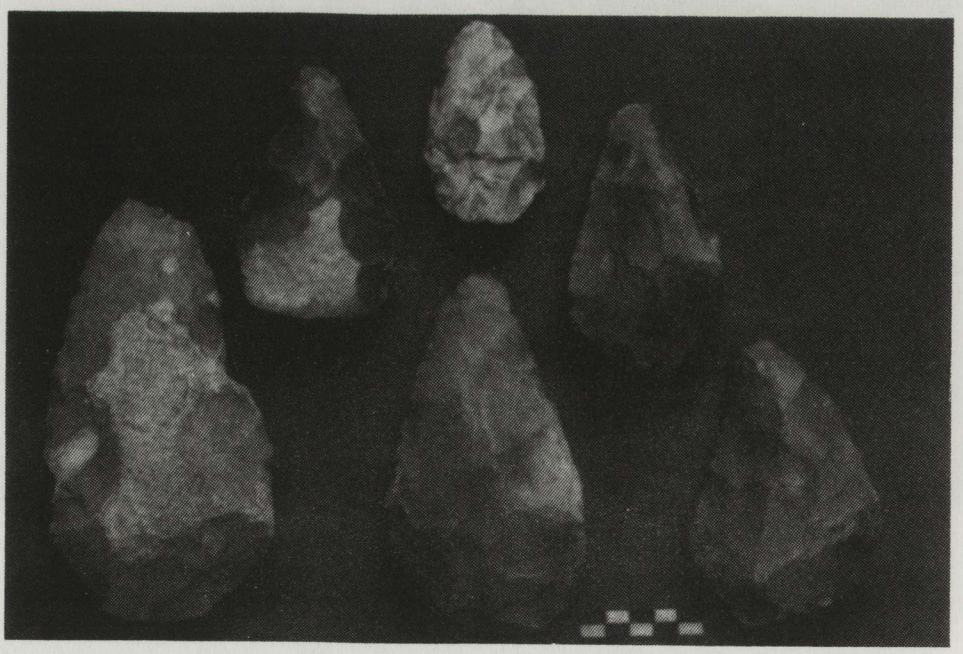

Plate 2. Bifaces collected in southeastern Anatolia.

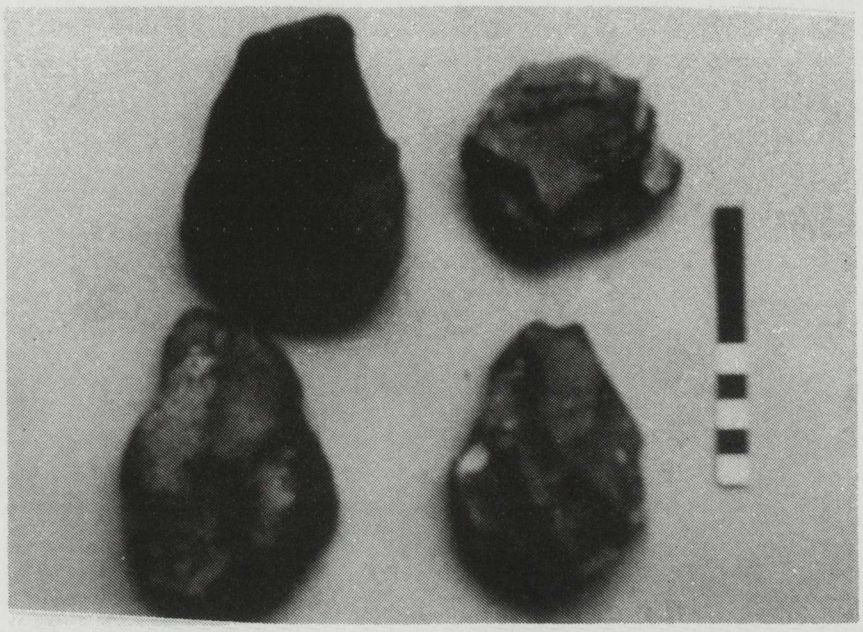

Plate 3. Bifaces collected in northwestern Anatolia at Kocahöyük and Batı Tarlası.