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# Some Remarkable Prehistoric Finds at Istanbul-Kucukcekmece

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Küçükçekmece Lake is situated 20 km west of Bosphorus. Although it is called a lake these days, it is actually a lagoon. The lake is rather shallow with depths ranging between 5 and 20 meters. In the historical times, the lake was a bay. The sand, slowly filling the mouth of the bay, became a lagoon after many years. Despite this and other geological changes, its shores offered the perfect condition for the settlement of humans.

During the geological times when Marmara Sea was land locked and the sea level was much lower than today, there were deep valleys of rivers in the place of Küçükçekmece Lake. When the last glacial period ended the increasing sea level all around the globe forced itself through Dardanelles and Bosphorus. The waters filled Marmara and the sea levels increased by 90 to 120 meters, thus converting the deep valleys into rias or drowned estuaries.

At the north side, there are small rivers feeding the lake. The two most important ones are Sazlidere and Eskinoz. The banks of these rivers which are closest to the lake had to be the most probable settlement places.

The existence of such a convenient place so close to a favorable geographical area as Küçükçekmece Lake, moved us to search for possible prehistoric settlements around the shores. In the other past surveys, the search for prehistoric villages resulted in finding no evidence. Our survey was arguably the most extensive one ever carried out on this region. And we were very lucky thanks to the extreme drought of the summer in 2007.

The West Bank of Küçükçekmece Lake remains within the boundaries of the town Avcılar. Our investigations brought us very important findings for the scientific world. In Avcılar's Firuzkoy district, 100 meters up from where Eskinoz River meets the lake, local villagers; in order to irrigate their vegetable gardens, had dig two water wells. The removed earth was containing pottery fragments unseen yet anywhere near Küçükçekmece. They were hand made from grey-black mud containing different minerals and they were poorly fired. The lack of straw in their texture made us think that these pieces might belong to a time predating agriculture. Further analyses of the walls of the wells showed that they were coming from a cultural level at the depth of 4 meters. The uppermost layer which is 1.5 meters deep is rather mixed and originates from land slides. There, Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine amphora, marble column parts and glass parts were found.

The second irrigation well is approximately 80 meters to the north of the first one. It is much wider than the first

and in it, the same layers are more clearly observed. The lowest layer of the second well is formed by a 2 to 2.5 meters of rough sand. In some places there are small pebbles and sea fossils. The layer above this level is formed by a 50-60 cm, grey colored sandy clay material. The bottom of this layer has a 20 cm wide zone of ostrea. This ostrea zone is partial. Above the ostrea zone it's possible to find smaller sea shells. Most probably the grey clay from this layer was used for pottery. The best proof of this is the abundance of the hand made, grey and blackish, poorly fired pieces of ceramics.

The grey color of the clay makes us think of a marshy environment. Up higher, there is another 50 cm layer with a color of beige and light brown, sandy clay stones. There are small sea shells in that level too. The upper most layers are about 1.25 m of agricultural soil. In the bottom side there is yellow colored clay which contains human artifacts.

According to the Geologist Prof. Dr Sukru Ersoy from Yıldız Technical University and Associate Prof Dr Timur Ustaomer from Istanbul University, the existence of ostrea just above the water level shows the effects of the sea. Our observations showed us that potteries and some tools are coming from a mud layer just above the ostrea. Above them there is a layer with pebbles from rivers sediments. These pebbles are generally in the form of cherty, flint, agate and chalcedony. Sometimes they are rounded pebbles from silica gels or rounded volcanic pebbles. According to these findings this point coincides with the Eskinoz River's ancient bed and a bending point in the ancient course. It seems that the river has shifted its course by at least 15-20 meters. It is understood that the sea had once filled the river valley and later had retreated back to leave it to the river.

The opposite bank of the river is on a peninsula which came into existence later. In the west side of this peninsula, many stone tools were recovered. These tools can be weights, grinding and cutting tools which were similar to those coming from the Paleolithic Period of Yarimburgaz Cave. These findings may show us that the dwellers of Yarimburgaz were visiting lake's shore for hunting which is only six km's from the cave. Here they might have been hunting, skinning animals, treating the skin and sharpening their bone tools. In short, this area might have been a big workshop. This is our assumption which we will try to prove in the coming years, as our survey continues.

Some of the flint stone tools and naviform cores recovered from west side of Küçükçekmece Lake's and the other side of the Eşkinoz river were examined and

categorized by Prof. Dr. Mehmet Ozdogan and Prof. Dr. Nur Balkan Atlı from Istanbul University's Prehistory Department. Ozdogan dated these artifacts to the end of Pre-Pottery Neolithic B and these are the first ever finds from that period in Istanbul, Thrace and Europe.

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Figure 1: Küçükçekmece from the satellite



Figure 2: Lower and Middle Paleolithic Stone tools

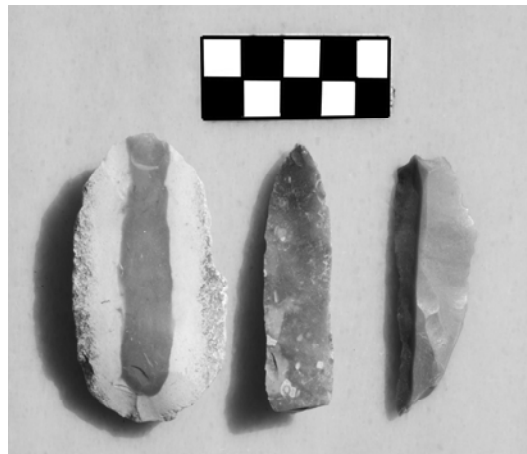


Figure 3: PPNB- Naviform Cores and Stone tools

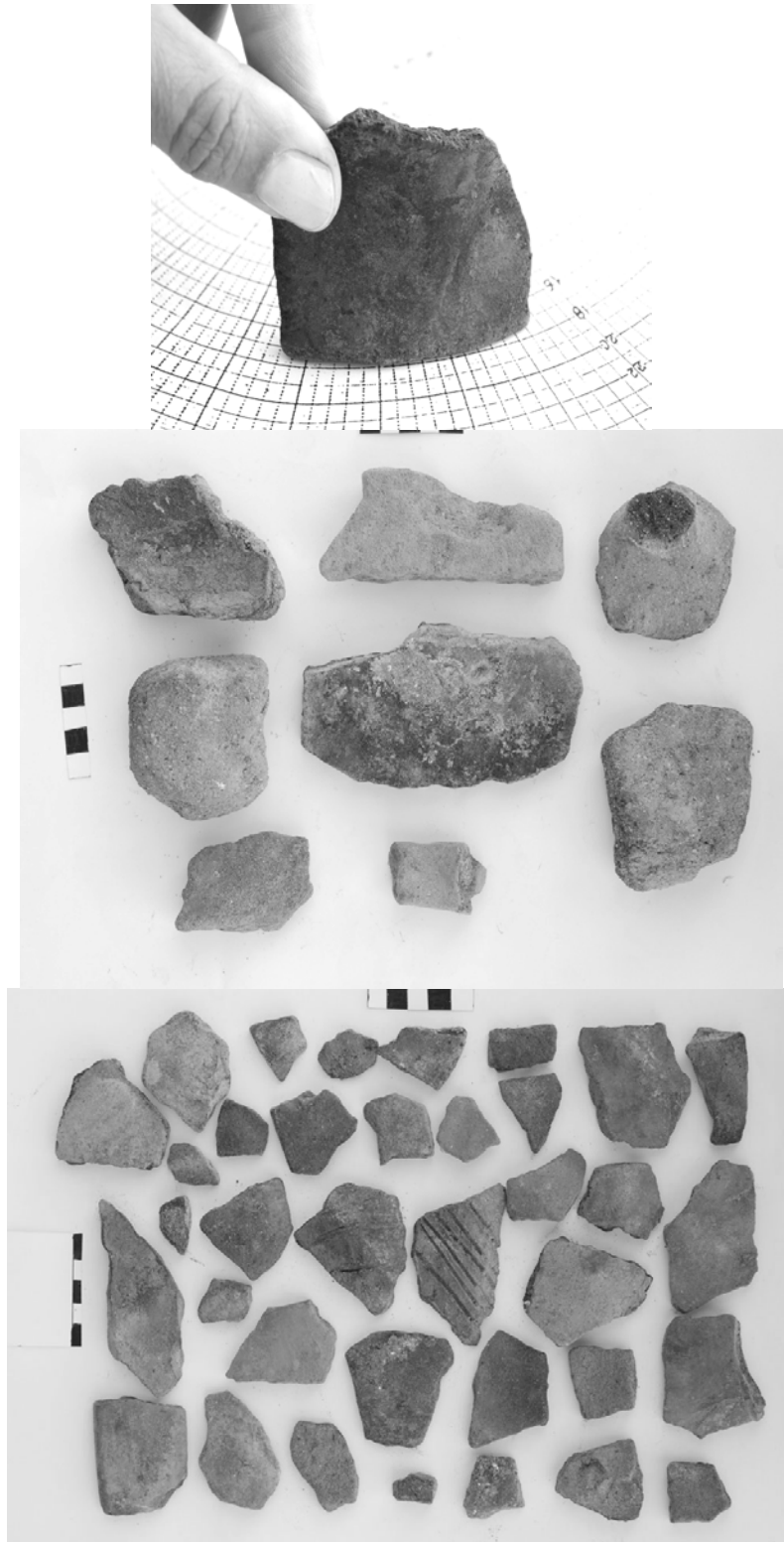


Figure 4 : Neolithic Potteries