

EXCAVATION AT AHLATLI TEPECİK THE GYGEAN LAKE 1968

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The second season of test excavation at Ahlatlı Tepecik, on the southern shore of Mermere Gölü (Gygean Lake) took place between July 20 and August 20, 1968. Ahlatlı Tepecik, a small site with several occupation periods ranging from Early Bronze Age through Roman, had been discovered in 1966 and extensively explored during 1967; during 1968, the field in the eastern part of the site was examined through test squares, thanks to the kindness of the landlord. The site lies ca. 800 meters west of the village of Tekelioğlu Köyü (fig. 1).

The excavation staff consisted of the authors, who served as project director, and archaeologist and Commissioner for the Department of Antiquities and Museums respectively. David J. Finkel (Cornell) served as anthropologist and archaeologist. A driver, night watchman, foreman and twelve workmen completed the staff¹. A total of 246 square meters was excavated in twelve 5-meter square test trenches in the field, giving a much clearer sample of Lydian and Early Bronze Age occupa-

tion than had previously been obtained. Lydian fill was encountered throughout the top meter of earth. In addition to the characteristic black-on-red and streaked wares, with amphorae, hydriae, stemmed plates, prefoil oinochoai and skyphoi, like those found at Sardis in late seventh and sixth century B.C. levels, several datable fragments of imported Greek pottery were recovered. These included the upper part of an Early or Middle Corinthian "komast" aryballos (fig. 2), a rim sherd of an Attic band cup with palmette frieze of ca. 560-550 B.C. (fig. 3) and two sherds of thin-walled Chiot chalices. Two miniature two-handled vases were also recovered from this level (fig. 4). Fragments of pithoi were also common in Lydian fill; one of these, placed bottom down in the soil, was probably used for storage.

Part of a large Lydian structure, probably a house of at least four rooms, appeared ca. 0.30 m. below the surface level. The walls, of rubble, average 0.50-0.60 m. wide. The structure as excavated was of rather uneven rectangular plan, 0.67 m. east-west by 7.38 m. north-south (fig. 5). It is slightly terraced because of the gentle slope of the terrain north toward the lake. The largest room, in the northeastern part of the structure, may have been the principal living room; it had two floors. To the west of it lay a small corridor or hall which may have served as a small closet or storage magazine. The polygonal room to the west of this, with a short wall of an earlier period uncovered along its south side, may have been a kitchen or work room, since large quantities of Lydian coarse and painted

¹ The authors would like to express their gratitude to Bay Osman Aksoy, First Commissioner of the Sardis Expedition, for help and advice in every part of the excavation's work. Without the wholehearted and hospitable cooperation of the inhabitants of Tekelioğlu Köyü, especially the landlord of the site, Bay Mustafa Sezen, the excavation could not have been undertaken. We would also like to thank Bay Süleyman Sezen, and Bay Kerim Sezen, Muhtar of Tekelioğlu Köyü, for their help. Bay Emin Karabacak (Kapancı Köyü) served for the second season as foreman, Bay Mustafa Akkaya and Bay Sabit Bahar (Sart) were skilled pickmen, and Bay Beytullah Koşar (Salihli) was driver; the work of excavators was greatly aided by their hard work and devotion.

pottery were found here. No traces of mud brick or of baked terracotta roof tiles were found; no thresholds or door entrances were discovered. This house, possibly a small cottage or summer residence, appears to belong to a settlement of scattered Lydian houses, other examples of which were excavated by M. Tagtekin and R. Meriç in 1966, and part of a second structure farther south in 1968. GMA Hanfmann has suggested that this settlement may have been connected with the transportation of grave goods for the nearby Lydian royal cemetery of Bin Tepe.

Two objects of earlier occupation were found in the house: a ground stone cent or grooveless axe was found lying on top of the rubble wall at the northern margin of the house. A tiny lunate microlith of brown and white flint or chalcedony came from mixed Lydian fill. The latter object, characteristic of early hunting and gathering cultures, may well be the earliest man-made object so far found by the Sardis Expedition; its closest clear parallels come from the microlithic flaked stone industries of Beldibi and Karain Caves near Antalya.

Roman graves were encountered both close to the surface and in deep trenches. The former, AT 68 \neq 4, was an extended burial, perhaps that of a male individual of ca. 17-20 years of age, according to D. Finkel. The rubble heaped over the grave included a re-used limestone stele base of Lydian type, with a narrow slit in its upper surface for the insertion of an upright grave stele. The second burial, AT 68 \neq 9, was oriented east-west at a depth of nearly two meters below the surface. The skeleton was covered with scist slabs. With the burial was a small bronze coin, probably a local imperial issue of the first or second century A.D.; many of these coins, "Charon's obols," were recovered in 1967 from positions in or near the skull, suggesting that they had originally been placed in the mouths of the

corpses. An intact blue glass flask lay under the skull.

Beneath the Lydian level was reached occupation of Early Bronze Age character, consisting of large amounts of occupation debris and several burials. These included both cist and pithos inhumations, as well as inhumations covered with rocks. Two such burials, AT 68 \neq 3, and AT 68 \neq 6, of older women, are thought to have been crushed by the large rocks placed on top of them. A small one-handed hand-made brown ware jug lay at the head of one of these burials. AT 68 \neq 7 was a child's burial, in a small twohandled pithos, 0.45 m. long and 0.33 m. in diameter at the mouth. The vessel was oriented with mouth to the south, covered with a stone slab. The most important burial encountered was a large pithos burial, AT 68 \neq 8, 1.16 m. long by 0.85 m. max. diameter (figs. 6-7). The mouth was oriented to the east and covered with a large globular basin or bowl, 0.46 m. high and 0.63 m. in diameter. As did the four Early Bronze age pithoi excavated at Ahlatlı Tepecik in 1967, this pithos had four vertical loop handles around the neck. The pithos contained a single flexed burial, with head toward the east, identified as that of a man between 24 and 28 years old. Accompanying burial gifts included a one-handed, wide-mouthed red ware jug, placed next to the north wall of the pithos. A rectangular one-holed pendant of brown shale, one end broken, and a small copper pin (L: 0.035 m.) lay together in the lap of the skeleton. The pithos lay in a layer of soft, dark brown fill, which appeared to lie directly over yellow sterile clayey subsoil. This fill contained large numbers of hand-made, black burnished ware sherds, and numerous stone tools of flint and chert, as well as a small copper dagger and three puzzling hollow silver objects with knobbed ends. The best preserved object measured 0.04 m. in length and 0.024 m. in diameter. Although these were recovered in very fragmentary condition, they appear to have

fitted over the ends of rods. They are generally reminiscent of the fluted and grooved gold finials from Alaca Hüyük. A short rod of lead (L: 0.04 m., Th: 0.003 m.), square in section, was also recovered from this level. In the same area, the skeleton of an extremely large ruminant (*Bos*) was found in a bundle-like position in Early Bronze Age context.

The limited amount of test excavation done during the second season at Ahlatlı Tepecik has revealed a major phase of Lydian occupation of the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., overlying Early Bronze Age levels on subsoil. The Lydian settlement appears to be concentrated more towards the north, the lake shore, while the Early Bronze Age occupation underlies the entire tested area. The settlement to which the Early Bronze Age burials belongs has not yet been located, but may lie farther toward the east. Reasons for the gap of nearly 1500 years between Early Bronze Age and Lydian occupation on the site are not known at the present time.

The Early Bronze Age pottery from Ahlatlı Tepecik is largely hand-made, with the largest group of sherds coming from large black-burnished bowls with incurved, thickened rims and vertical or horizontal tubular lug handles. There were also very thin, highly burnished black ware juglets, some with fine bands of parallel white painted lines, red burnished juglets, and other forms, including much coarse utility ware. A number of cylindrical legs for tripod pots were found. Several brown and black ware spindle whorls were also recovered; a few of these were decorated with incised, white-filled designs. The closest parallels for the Ahlatlı Tepecik

Early Bronze Age pottery so far noticed by the writers are those of the Troy I pottery, roughly first half of the third millennium B.C. in date².

The abundant flaked stone tools from Ahlatlı Tepecik include both blade tools, many serrated and used as sickle teeth, and flake tools, such as scrapers. The many types of stone represented—flint, chert, jasper, chalcedony, quartz and a very small amount of obsidian—were probably obtained over a wide region; nearly every flake was utilized in some way as a tool.

The contents of a Lydian child's grave, encountered during cultivation of tobacco fields to the north of the village of Tekelioğlu Köyü³, were presented to the expedition; a delicately carved limestone offering table with three legs (S 68.11, 7723; H: 0.063 m., Diam., 0.147 m.; figs. 8-10). The table has three lions' paw feet, three lug handles in the shape of spools above the feet and three spool handles with palmette brackets between the legs. The style is late archaic, probably Lydian work in imitation of a prototype in metal, perhaps in bronze. The date is probably ca. 520-500 B.C. The contents also included a small streaked skyphos and a spouted wave.

It is hoped that work may continue at Ahlatlı Tepecik and at other sites along Mermere Gölü; the entire region has rich promise for revealing the prehistory of the Sardis region.

² C.W. Blegen, *Troy and the trojans*, London, 1963, 52, fig. 11; pl. 16.

³ The authors are indebted to Bay Ismet Şener (Tekelioğlu Köyü), the discoverer of the grave, for giving its contents to the expedition.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2

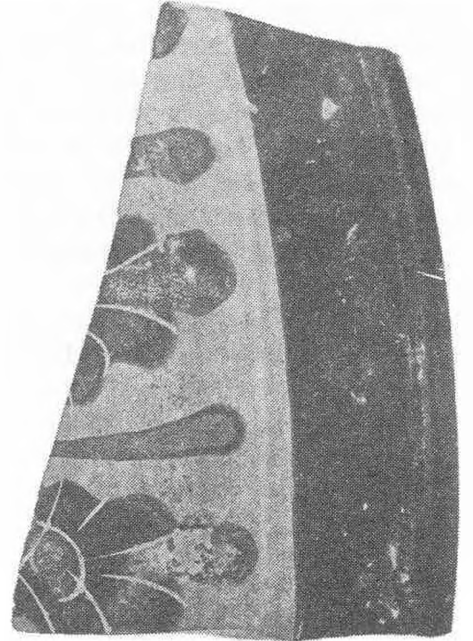


Fig. 3



Fig. 4

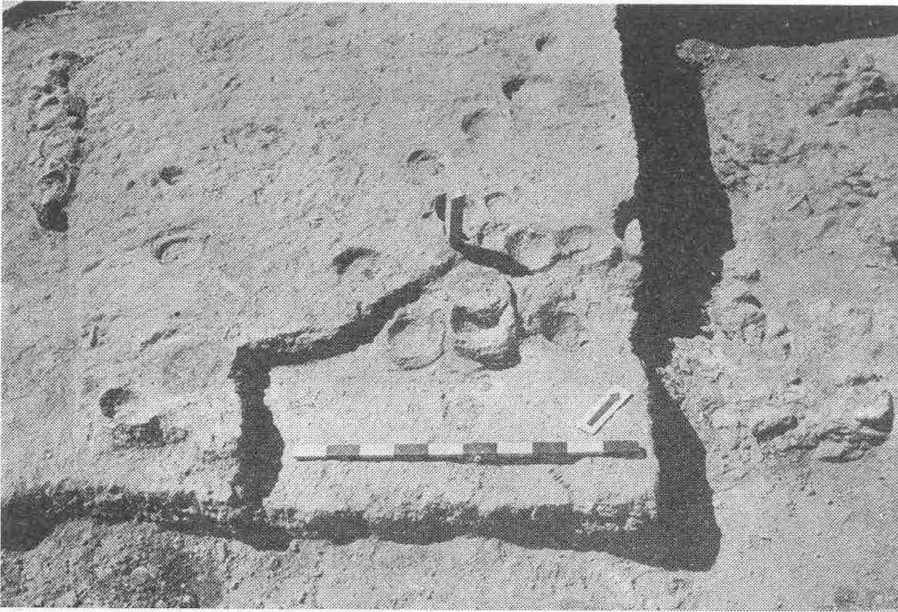


Fig. 5

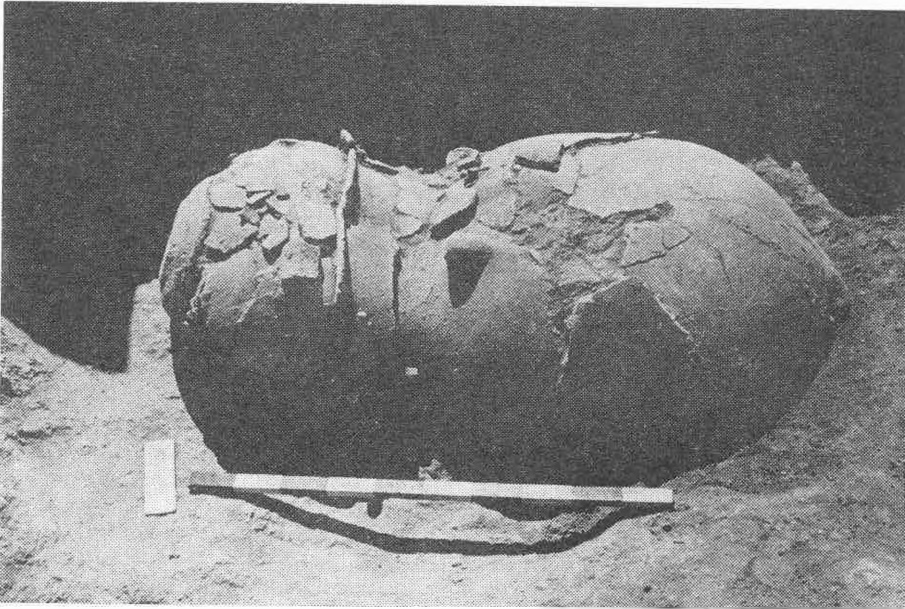


Fig. 6

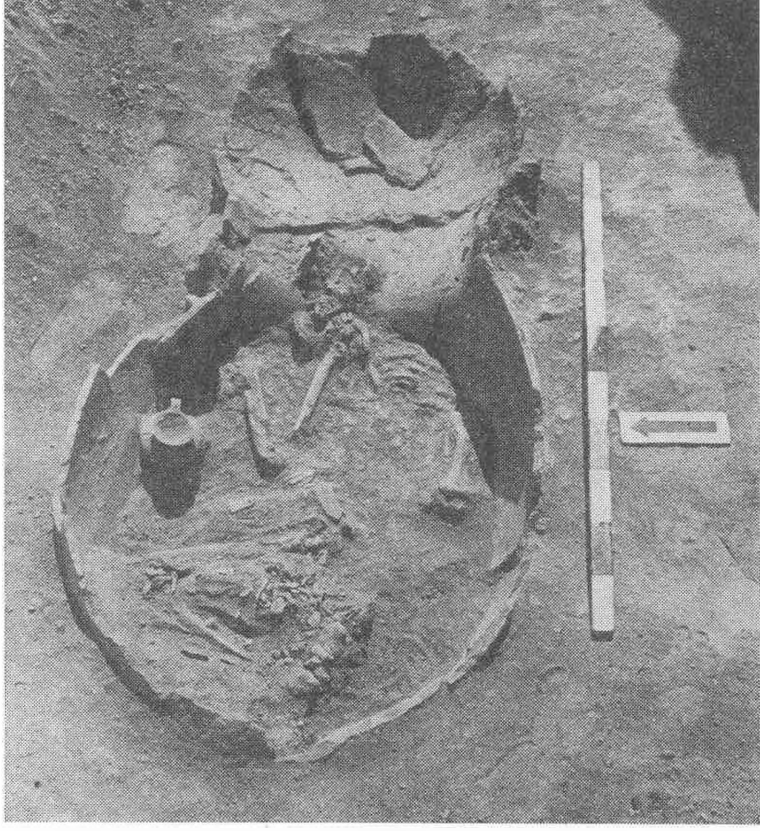


Fig. 7



Fig. 8

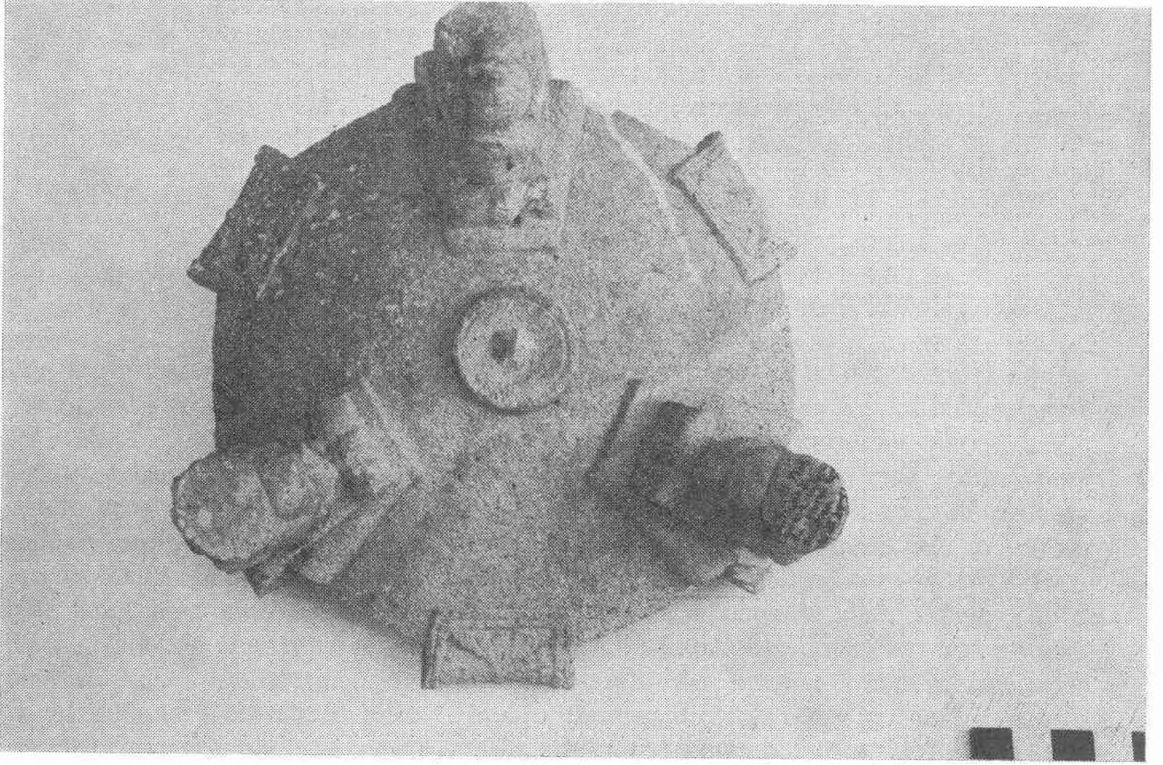


Fig 9

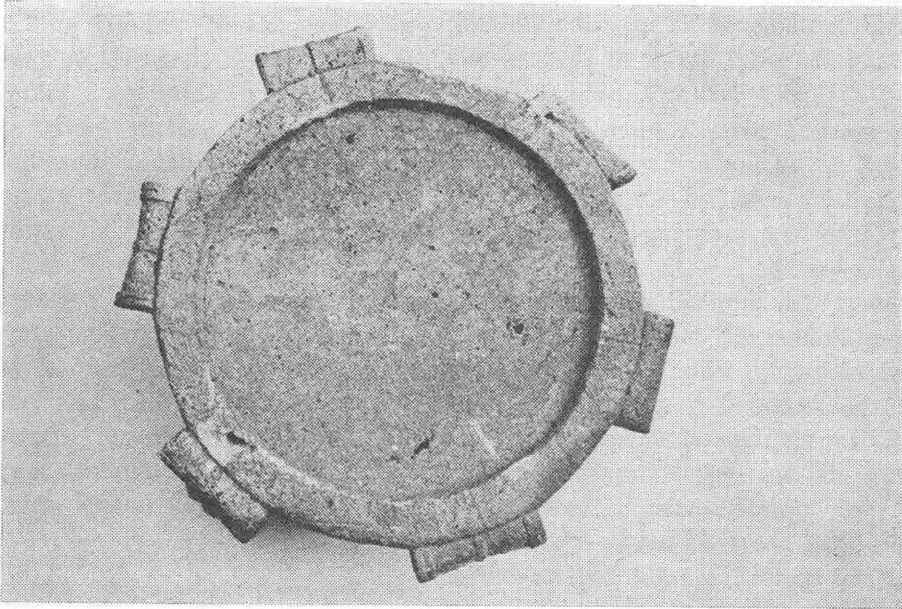


Fig. 10