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Proceedings of the International Symposium

ARMS AND ARMOUR THROUGH THE AGES
(From the Bronze Age to the Late Antiquity)

Modra-Harmónia, 19th-22nd November 2005

CONTENS

Preface

ANODOS 4-5/2004-2005 contains 23 contributions in English, German and French presented at the international symposium "Arms and Armour through the Ages. From the Bronze Age to the Late Antiquity" in Modra-Harmónia on November 19-21, 2005. It was the 3rd event of this kind organized by the Department of Classical Archaeology of the University of Trnava. Two partner institutions from Turkey - Selçuk University, Konya and Uludağ University, Bursa - took part in the organization for the first time. The Slovak Archaeological Society at the Slovak Academy of Sciences cooperated as traditionally. Participants were scholars from 10 European countries and overseas (Turkey, Greece, Italy, Slovenia, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic, Germany, Great Britain and USA), graduate and post-graduate students from Trnava and Vienna, and other guests.

Ing. Vladimír Medlen, mayor of the town of Modra, welcomed the participants. At the end of the symposium, an excursion to the Archaeological Museum of the Slovak National Museum in Bratislava was arranged. Participants had opportunity to see contemporary exhibition "The Sword. The Beginnings of Swords in Slovakia" and permanent exhibitions of the museum.

The symposium was arranged with the support of the Slovak Grant Agency VEGA (Projects Nos. 1/0456/03 and 2/3172/23), The Nuclear Power Plant Research Institute (VÚJE Trnava), the town of Modra, Enterprise Baliarne obchodu a.s. Poprad and other sponsors.

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Editors

Trnava, December 1, 2006

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Early daggers in Anatolia – a necessary reappraisal

Thomas Zimmermann[1]

Keywords: daggers, function, Europe, Anatolia, Neolithic, Chalcolithic, İkiztepe

Abstract: *This paper aims to give a conspectus of the earliest double-edged stabbing weapons in Anatolia, precisely identifying them as daggers through a clear functional and technological definition. Early lithic daggers from Pre-Pottery Neolithic contexts are discussed, but the main focus is on a chronological re-evaluation of metal inventories from İkiztepe in Turkey, which are officially labeled as "Bronze Age", but are highly likely to be roughly 1,000 years older, fitting in well with the overall scheme of Anatolian -Balkan interactions in the 4th millennium BC.*

The dagger has quite a troublesome reputation. Paraphrased as a "coward's" weapon, easy to hide and to use for a stabbing attack, its history is frequently associated with the assassination of Gaius Julius Caesar, and it is given a prominent role in Shakespeare's tragedies. On the other hand, when used in fights, skirmishes or battles, the dagger symbolises an immediate "face to face" confrontation with a rival, giving such an encounter a new quality, since weapons like bows or slingshots can be used at a safer distance from the enemy. For that reason daggers are sometimes also interpreted as a sign of the emergence of a new warrior class, an item to characterise early elites[2]. Its function as not only a short stabbing weapon but also a symbol displaying status or prestige is consequently well attested in both Near Eastern and Eurasian prehistory.

In terms of definition, one can clearly distinguish between a knife, with only one sharpened edge used for cutting, and a dagger, which has two sharpened edges used for stabbing. But this opinion, which sounds logical, is not necessarily shared by other scholars: H. Seitz considers not so much the blade, but the shape of the handle as a key criterion to separate daggers from knives[3]. This uncertainty on how to label short sharpened blades is best illustrated with the well established hybrid expression "dagger-knife"[4]. And if the accurate typological grouping of metal blades already seems to cause some difficulty[5], then the confusion becomes even worse when defining blades made from lithic material[6]. Yet even agreeing on the fact that a dagger is a multifunctional tool, good enough not only to stab, but also to cut, scrape and peel, its primary use as a weapon is also convincingly proved in prehistory: The Copper Age daggers of metal from Pecica (Rumania) and "Hungary" both have wavy-shaped distorted blades, damage that derives most probably from a stab attack[7]; and an even more drastic example comes from the Chalcolithic burial cave of Trèves in France, with a short copper dagger being stuck in the fragment

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[1] This contribution is a much revised version of my paper "Is this a dagger I see before me? The earliest horizon of stabbing weapons in Anatolia and a re-evaluation of Anatolian-Eurasian relations in the Late 4th and 3rd millennium BC", given at the symposium "Arms and Armour Through the Ages" in Modra-Harmónia, Slovakia, November 19, 2005. I am indebted to the organisers, esp. *professores* Mária Novotná and Klára Kuzmová for their cordial hospitality, and to Dr. Julian Bennett for proofreading my manuscript.

[2] Cf. Anthony 1996; Fokkens 1998.

[3] Seitz 1965, 198.

[4] First attested with Thurnam 1871, 448; S. Gerloff (1975, 159) uses it as a *terminus technicus* to identify riveted blades shorter than 10 cms.

[5] Cf. J. Bill (1973, 18), who states that „Die Erfindung des Dolches als Form und seine Benutzung als zweischneidiges Messer [sic!] ist spätneolithisch." (the invention of the dagger as a shape and its use as a double edged knife [sic!] is Late Neolithic in date), or Vladár (1974, 1), who suggests the presence or absence of rivet holes as possible criteria to distinguish daggers from knives.

[6] Cf. Winiger 1999, 171-9.

[7] Vajsov 1993, 122-3; fig. 19: 1; Matuschik 1998, 215, 217, fig. 218: 15, 224, fig. 225: 4.

of a human spine (fig. 1)[8]. As for flint daggers, whose function as a weapon was doubted by some scholars, due to their coarseness[9], proof that they were efficient stabbing tools, is given by a horse skull with a dagger still stuck in it from Ullstorp in Sweden: the flint dagger penetrated the 3mm thick bone without any big problem[10].

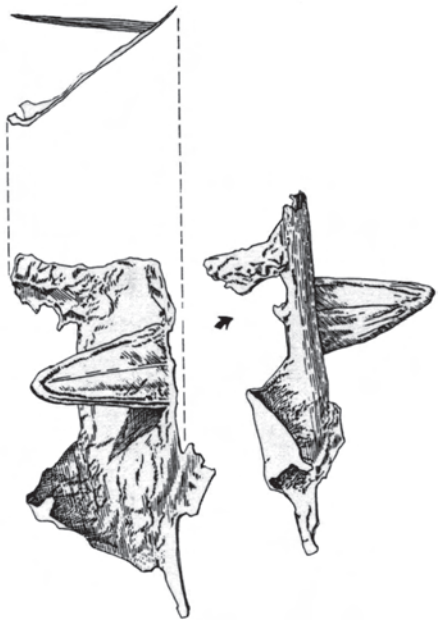

Fig. 1. *Trèves, France – Copper dagger stuck in fragment of a human spine (after Clottes 1981).*

However, whatever its primary use, in any case we should agree on describing a dagger as a symmetrically shaped blade with two sharpened cutting edges that can be used in both peaceful and violent behaviour.

The earliest Anatolian lithic items that match our definition come from Pre-Pottery Neolithic (PPN) contexts in East/South East Asia Minor, dating from the 10th to the 8th millennium BC (fig. 2). Early Neolithic communities in the Near East were still more mobile than sedentary, but the monumental, partly standardised architecture[11] they left in the East and Southeast of Anatolia already testifies to a complex society with a much deeper hierarchical stratigraphy that has been assumed for many decades[12]. Carefully retouched dagger-type flint blades are known from an intramural burial at Nevalı Çori (fig. 3: 3), and related objects stem from the ritual spot of Göbekli Tepe and the neighbouring settlement of Gürcütepe (figs. 3: 1, 2)[13]. To what degree the flint dagger could already be understood as a prestige item pronouncing social status remains uncertain due to the lack of better evidence, but its function as a high quality burial gift could point to that direction.

Two and a half millennia later, at the Neolithic settlement of Çatalhöyük in the Konya Plain of Western Central Anatolia, the situation seems to be more obvious. Besides other rhomboid-shaped flint and obsidian blades (figs. 4: 5-7)[14], two items display more clearly that they are more than simple lithic tools (figs. 4: 1, 2)[15], especially a fine flint dagger with a knapped ventral area, a polished lateral side and a bone handle carved in shape of a snake, for this belongs more clearly to the sphere of prestige items than to simple everyday equipment[16].

Yet these items still remain an isolated phenomenon, and there is nothing to link this specific tradition of producing fine ceremonial daggers at Çatalhöyük with later periods.

Concerning evidence for the earliest metal dagger blades, Anatolia and Mesopotamia have lost their primacy as research focus, which seems to be a little surprising, since technological innovations are traditionally linked to Near Eastern societies. Even so, the oldest metal daggers yet known are related to Southeast and East European Copper Age cultures (fig. 5). For example, small riveted

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[8] Gallay 1981, 32, No. 73, pl. 4: 73; Clottes 1981.
[9] Cf. Siemann 1997.
[10] Rydbeck 1934, 81-5, 210-11, figs. 17-19.
[11] Cf. the special "Bone House" or "Skull Building" to deposit excarnated human bones on shelves at Çayönü, East Turkey (Davis 1998, 257-66; Özdoğan 1999a, 35-63), or the monumental temple buildings with figural pillars at Nevalı Çori and Göbeklitepe (Schmidt 1998b; 2001).
[12] Özdoğan and Özdoğan 1998, 581-601; Hauptmann 1999, 70-86.
[13] Schmidt 1998a, 688-92 with figs.
[14] Bialor 1962, 76, 95-6, 75, fig. 2: 16; 94, fig. 9; 101-2, figs. 11-12; Conolly 1999, 41-2.
[15] Mellaart 1964, 94; 113, Abb. 52: 16; 94-5, 104, fig. 46, pl. 26: b-c.
[16] The item was found associated with a rich male burial, further equipped with two bone spatulae and a stone bowl; flint as a raw material might have also a higher value, since it was not available in the Konya Plain and had to be brought from elsewhere (Mellaart 1967, 248, 253).

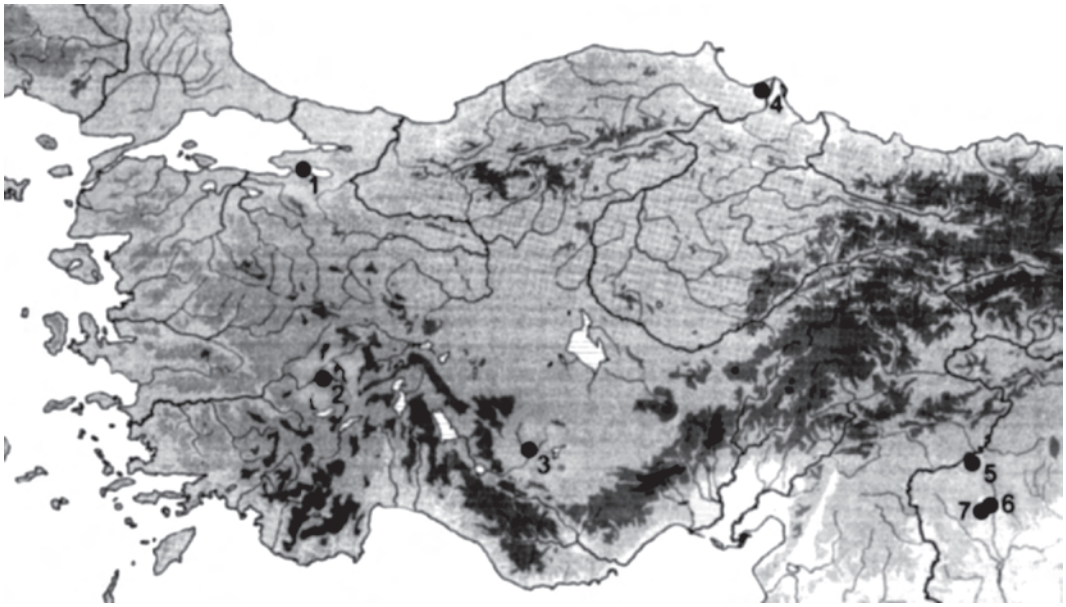

Fig. 2. *Map with Anatolian findspots mentioned in the text: 1 - Ilıpınar; 2 - Beycesultan; 3 - Çatalhöyük; 4 - İkiztepe; 5 - Nevalı Çori; 6 - Göbeklitepe; 7- Gürcütepe.*

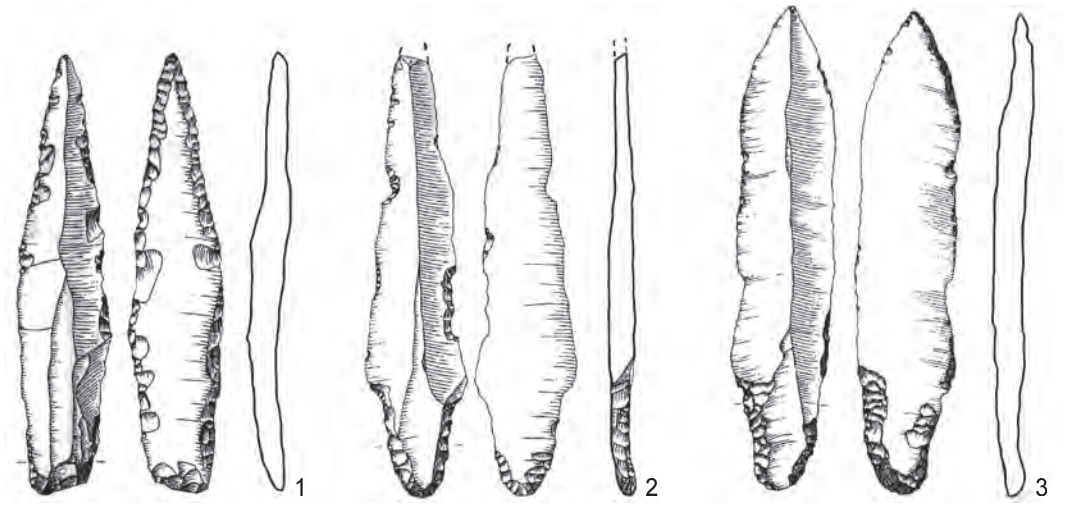

Fig. 3. *1- Flint daggers from Göbekli Tepe; 2 - Gürcutepe and Nevalı Çori, all Turkey (after Schmidt 1998) – not to scale.*

triangular blades are related to the late 5th/early 4th millennium Varna-Hamangia horizon[17], while slim rhombic examples from Tiszapolgár and Bodrogkeresztúr contexts, partly with triangular or trapezoid tongues, can be dated to the first quarter/ mid fourth millennium BC (fig. 6)[18]. Although unalloyed copper was used for these daggers, they were already being used as weapons (supra), and although only a few were recovered under reliable archaeological circumstances, as some are associated with inhumations suggests once more a function as a status marker[19].

[17] Vajsov 1993, 115, figs. 8-9, 120.

[18] Vajsov 1993, 127, fig. 24: 1, 2, 8; Matuschik 1998, 216, fig. 217 – for recent dates see Bankoff and Winter 1990; Raczky 1995; Lichter 2001, 155-60.

[19] Daggers from funerary contexts include Bodrogkeresztúr, grave 2 (Patay 1961, 10); Budapest-Rákoscsaba (Patay 1961, 18; pl. 9: 8); Fényeslitke, grave 45 and 52 (Patay 1968, 35, 37-8, pl. 7: 7-10; 8: 11-14); Konyár, grave 12 and 15 (János 1933, 95, 94, fig. 13,"12. sírból"; 97, fig. 15, "15. sírból"); Magyar-Dombegyháza (Banner 1928, 1-6); Pusztaistvánháza (Hillebrand 1929, 25, pl. 4) and Tiszapolgár-Basatanya, graves 44 and 105 (Bognár-Kutzián 1963, 99-100, pl. 52: 2; 54: 1-2, 5-6, 8; 179-81, pl. 95; 96: 1-3); Lichter 2001, 335; 344-6.

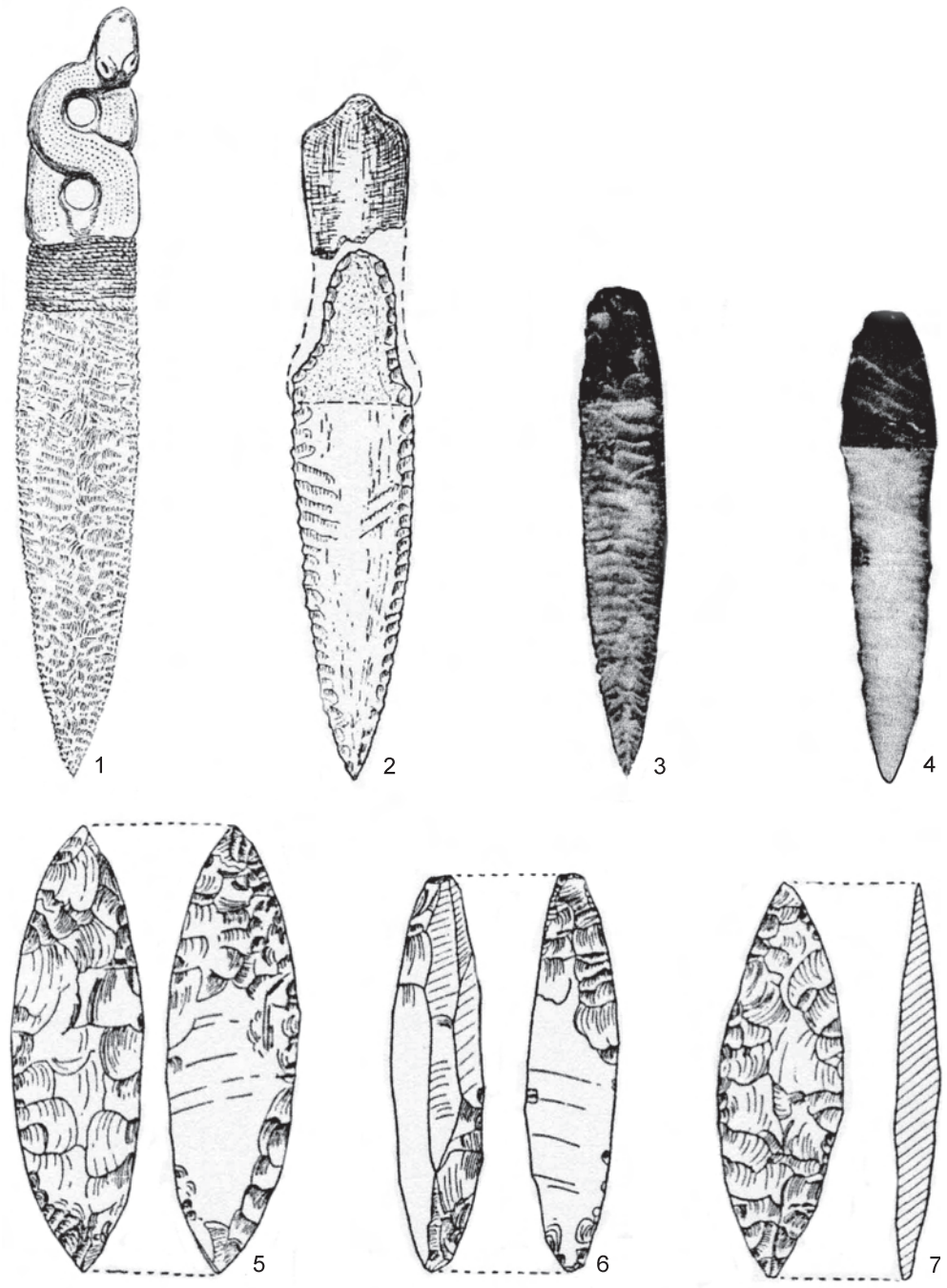

Fig. 4. *Lithic daggers from Çatalhöyük, Turkey (after Mellaart 1964 and Conolly 1999) – not to scale.*

In neighbouring Anatolia, metal dagger blades, while known of in large numbers from third millennium BC EBA contexts[20], are particularly rare in the 4th millennium BC. The richest evidence comes from the Late Chalcolithic cemetery over the Neolithic village site at Ilıpınar in Northwest Anatolia[21]. Given an absolute date of around mid 4th millennium BC[22], corresponding with the use of Copper Age "Balkan"-type pottery fabric and style, the technical-typological variety of the different blades is astonishing. Besides simple slim rhomboid blades of Southeast

[20] Cf. Stronach 1957, 89-103.
[21] Begemann et al. 1994; Roodenberg 2001.
[22] The 14C-dating of two skeletons from the necropolis yielded dates ranging from 3740-3720 cal. BC to 3575-3540 cal. BC (Roodenberg 2001, 354).

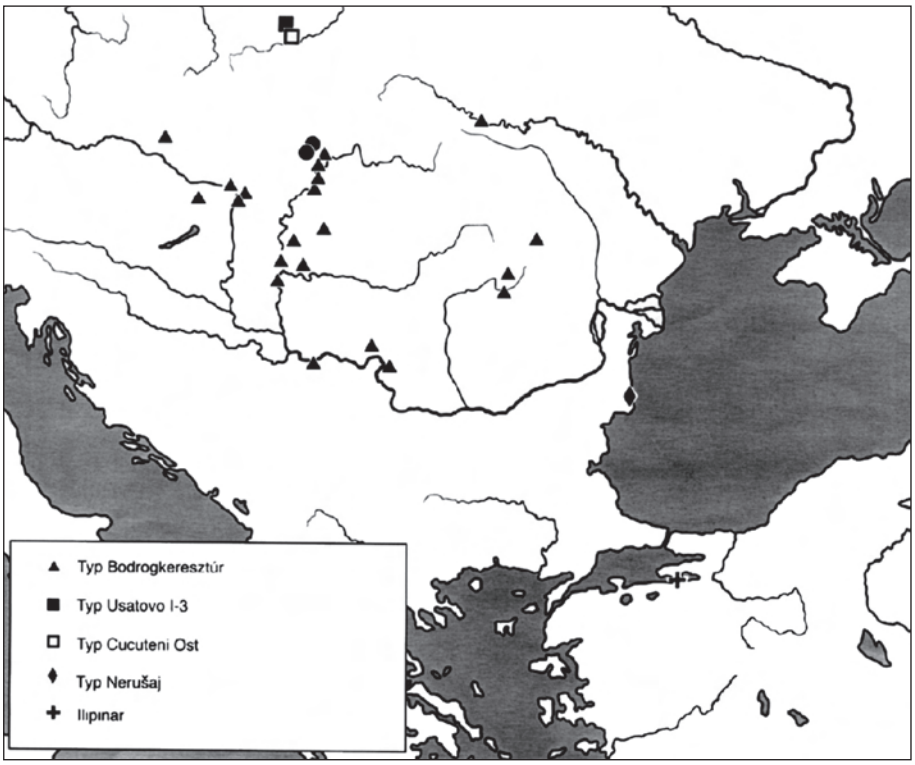

Fig. 5. *Distribution of earliest metal daggers in Southeast Europe and Northwest Anatolia.*

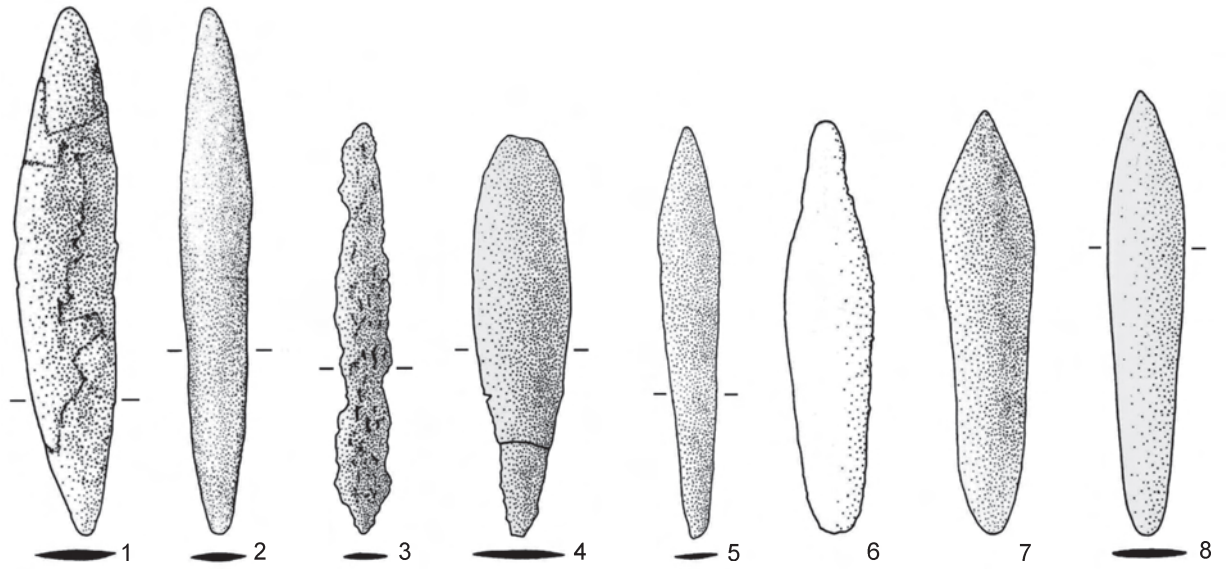

Fig. 6. *Selection of early copper daggers from East-/Southeast Europe: 1 - Ariuşd, Rumania; 2 - Konyár, Hungary; 3 - Fényeslitke, grave 45, Hungary; 4 - Magyartes, Hungary; 5 - Budapest-Rákoscsaba, Hungary; 6 - Szeged-Bilisics, Hungary; 7 - Tiszapolgár-Basatanya, grave 105, Hungary; 8 - Ostrovu-Corbului, Romania (after Matuschik 1998) – scale unknown.*

European/ Balkan type there are also more elaborate shapes, equipped with additional rivets and midribs to strengthen the blade (fig. 7).

The metallographical data is equally surprising, since the amount of arsenic the daggers were alloyed with is enormously high and cannot yet be correlated with products from neighbouring areas[23].

[23] Begemann et al. 1994, 205-10.

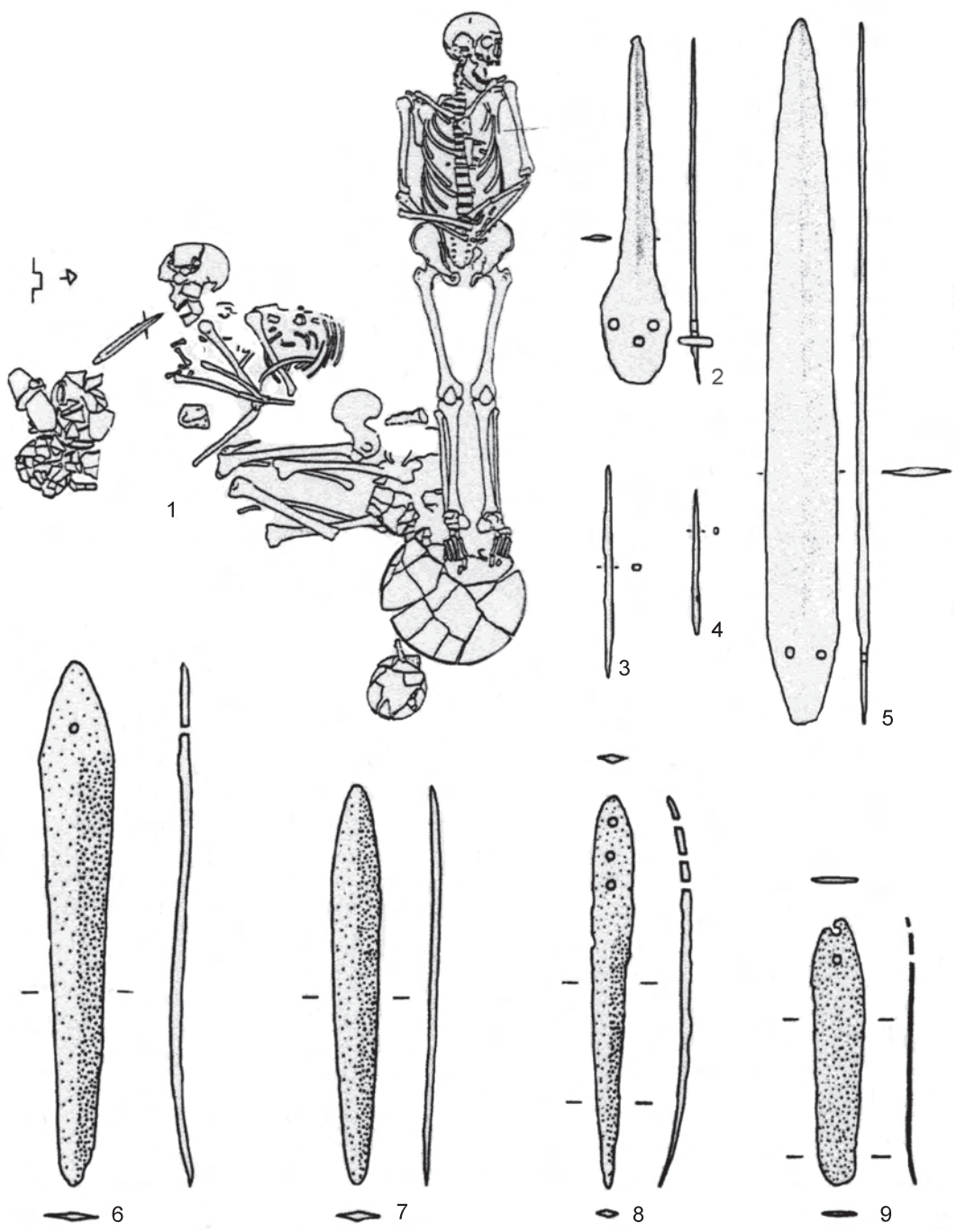

Fig. 7. *Ilıpınar, Turkey – Daggers from Late Chalcolithic burials (after Roodenberg 2001) – not to scale.*

The second findspot to yield Chalcolithic dagger blades is Beycesultan in Western Anatolia. From Chalcolithic layer 34 comes a hoard deliberately deposited in a clay jar, containing not only a selection of copper tools, such as chisels and awls, but also one of the earliest Anatolian silver items, a ring, and last but not least a badly worn fragment of a double edged copper blade[24]. After some disagreement regarding the date of this Chalcolithic level, thanks to different interpretations of the Radiocarbon data, one can now agree on a chronological period around 3.500-3.300 BC[25].

[24] Lloyd and Mellaart 1962, 280-1, fig. 8: 15.; Kohlmeyer 1991, 41; Zimmermann 2005, 194.
[25] Cf. Jak Yakar (1985, 115) with the most likely suggestion on how to calibrate the data that were originally pinned much too high by S. Lloyd and James Mellaart (1962, 19, 21, 112-3 Tab.); see also Zimmermann 2005, 198.

Considering the vivid interactions between several cultural entities of Southeast Europe and the Balkans with Anatolia that are suggested for the 5th and 4th millennium BC[26], one might expect to find more evidence for cultural features testifying to Occidental connections with the Orient and vice versa in the Copper Age, including archaeologically traceable evidence such as pottery styles, metal items and maybe even burial customs. The evidence presented so far seems to be rather meagre, although a large site on the Turkish Black Sea littoral seems to add fresh evidence for social, cultural and technological ties with Balkan Copper Age cultures.

This site is İkiztepe, located close to Bafra, and a large multiperiod site, used as a settlement and burial compound from the Chalcolithic through the Middle Bronze Age. Moreover, the occupation extends over four single summits, which in topographical terms makes this settlement one of the most unusual ones in Near Eastern prehistory[27]. Since it was already difficult enough for the excavators to correlate the cultural strata of the four different mounds, the presence of wooden architecture – at that time previously unknown in these Anatolian contexts – obviously confronted the researchers with a much more difficult task[28]. To what degree this task of carefully assigning building phases, horizons and other features to a reliable vertical stratigraphy was accomplished is not the topic of this paper, but the vivid discussions and opposing views that have arisen since the first results were published shows that the chronological order of settlement layers and connected features is not as clear as it should be. Objections to the official spatial-temporal interpretation of the stratigraphy, especially the dating of pottery, were made by Laurens Thissen[29], and Hermann Parzinger repeatedly doubted the late dates given to several features and objects by the excavators[30] – which brings us to the focal point of our contribution: the large İkiztepe necropolis, which yielded numerous burials with double edged weapons, both daggers and spearheads[31]. Its enormous maximum vertical stratigraphy of 6,7 ms can hardly be squeezed in the Late Early Bronze Age era (EBA II-III; roughly 2.650-2.100/1.900 BC), but exactly this is done by the excavators[32]. All of them are dated to the advanced and late third millennium BC[33]. Since a contextual account of the burial inventories is still not available, our knowledge has to stay rather limited[34], but a detailed investigation of selected items might shed some more light on our problem.

To begin with quite a few simple double-edged weapons that are dated to EBA II-III contexts by the excavators (cf. figs. 8: 1, 4-8), are likewise associated with or given the same date as artefacts like anthropomorphic figurines, quadruple spirals and ring-shaped idols (figs. 8: 9-12).

Yet the best stylistic counterparts of the humanoid shaped clay statuettes are from fourth-millennium domestic contexts in Southeast Europe[35], a fact that is even admitted by the present excavator[36]. The ornamental quadruple spirals, given a likewise late date in the third millennium BC[37], are difficult to pin down chronologically, but an earlier hoard find from Arslantepe, Southeast Turkey provides a reliable clue: associated with the famous arsenical copper swords with silver inlays was also a quadruple spiral of İkiztepe type (fig. 8: 13)[38], and these items were

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[26] Nikolov 1993; Steadman 1995; Özdoğan 1999b.
[27] Alkım et al. 1988; 2003; Bilgi 2000.
[28] Alkım 1983.
[29] Thissen 1993, 215-18.
[30] Parzinger 1993a, 237-8; 1993b, 219.
[31] Most of them were published seperately in two long essays (Bilgi 1984; 1990).
[32] In a general manner Parzinger 1993a, 237-8.
[33] Bilgi 1984, 96, fig. 19.
[34] Recent contributions by the present excavator (cf. Bilgi 2004) do not help to ease the chronological and typological contradicitons.
[35] Nikolov 2003, 35-8, pl. 20: 9; 81, fig. 38.
[36] Cf. Bilgi 1990, 165-9, also mentioning the presence of red ochre in some of the graves, which is likewise a very characteristic feature of Chalcolithic Eurasian burial practise (cf. Govedarica 2004). However the obvious chronological conclusions are not drawn by the excavator.
[37] Cf. Bilgi 1984, 95, fig. 18, 272-7.
[38] Palmieri 1981, 109-10; 107, fig. 3, 5.

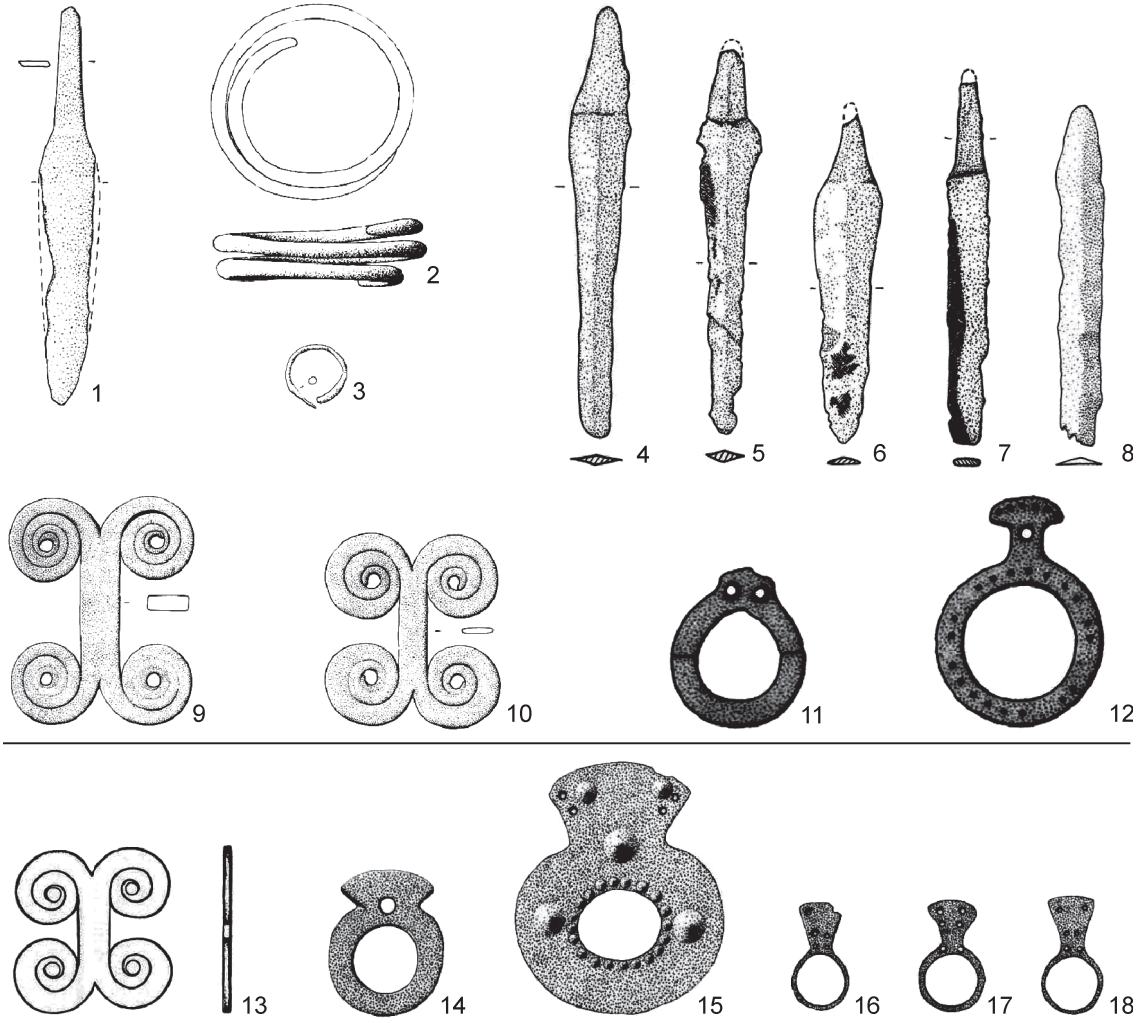

Fig. 8. *"Early Bronze Age" daggers and other metal items from domestic and funeral contexts at İkiztepe, Turkey: 1-12 - grave 116: 1-3; Chalcolithic metal artefacts: 13 - Arslantepe, Turkey; 14 - Gumelnița; 15 - Progar; 16, 18 - Jászladány; 17- Moigrad (after Bilgi 1984; Palmieri 1981 and Müller-Karpe 1974) – not to scale.*

all deposited under the floor of a house belonging to level VIA, which can be securely dated to the site's Late Uruk horizon (3.400-3.000 cal. BC)[39].

Finally, the distinctive ring-shaped amulets, a type which is well attested in East and Southeast Europe, where the oldest are known from Karanovo-Gumelnița-Kodzadermen contexts, with gold examples unearthed in the Varna necropolis on the Bulgarian Black Sea littoral[40]; which is now, after some initial confusion about its absolute chronology[41], securely dated to about 4.100-3.900 BC[42]. Ring-pendants are likewise attested in Bodrogkeresztúr horizons (figs. 8: 14-18)[43], but none are recorded in the following Boleráz/Cernavoda III-horizon of Eastern Europe, giving these amulets a maximum chronological range from 4.100/3.900 to 3.500 BC[44]. This distinctive pendant type has also surfaced in Anatolia, with İkiztepe as

[39] Kai Kohlmeyer (1994, 57) suggested a later date for the metal deposit, but as Alba Palmieri (1981) already stated and Andreas Müller-Karpe (1994, 431) approved, the circumstances of the deposit and the date of the horizon associated can hardly be dated later than the late 4th millennium BC.

[40] Ivanov and Avramova 2000, 38 ("grave"/ cenotaph 15); 41 ("grave"/ cenotaph 36); 51 (grave 48; "grave"/ cenotaph 97).

[41] See Joachim Weisshaar (1982) for an outdated correlation of Varna items with artefacts of the Aegean Early Bronze Age.

[42] Lichardus 1991; Todorova 1999, 245-6.

[43] Makkay 1976, 251-2; Jovanović 1996.

[44] Maran 2000, 185.

the crucial findspot where these items at least come from a documented archaeological excavation, but with no single piece there independently dated securely *after* 3.000 BC[45]. In other words there are no reasons to date this metal pendants late in the 3rd millennium BC[46].

To return to the stabbing weapons from İkiztepe, one has to admit that some of the items the simple rhomboid daggers were associated with do not testify to a late Early Bronze Age date, but they are by themselves also too insignificant to be assignet to the Late Chalcolithic (cf. figs. 8: 2, 3).

Nonetheless, any critical re-evaluation of the other items said to be of "Early Bronze Age II" or "III"-date, allegedly coming from the same spatial or stratigraphical contexts as our daggers, shows that they should not be placed in the advanced or even late 3rd millennium BC, but are roughly 1.000 years earlier.

The multiregional interactions in the 4th millennium BC, well traceable not only along the Black Sea coast, but also in the hinterland of both Europe and Asia Minor, allowing the flux of styles, ideas and technological innovations, certainly left its mark also on the technology of early metal stabbing weapons. It seems inevitable that a larger number of "Early Bronze Age" İkiztepe-items must be added to the few places with affirmed Chalcolithic metal daggers in Anatolia. Further critical reappraisals of officially "3rd millennium" inventories from contact regions like Thrace or the Turkish Pontic region should also add fresh evidence to the meagre present status quo, to highlight the development of daggers and swords in Anatolia in that crucial era stretching from the late 4th into the 3rd millennium BC, an age that still remains largely obscure.

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[45] Besides İkiztepe, Balkan type gold, silver and lead pendants are known from Sardis, Kalınkaya, Oymaağaç/Göller and the vicinity of Trabzon (cf. Zimmermann 2005, 193).

[46] Cf. also Höckmann 2003, 138-9, who is likewise proposing a much earlier yet Chalcolithic date for selected "EBA" İkiztepe items, while excluding the idols as being of "Bronze Age" date in Anatolia.

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