



**Provenancing of Lightweight Volcanic Stones Used in
Ancient Roman Concrete Vaulting: Evidence from Turkey
and Tunisia**



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Provenancing of Lightweight Volcanic Stones Used in Ancient Roman Concrete

Vaulting: Evidence from Turkey and Tunisia

The mastery of the use of lightweight rocks in concrete as a means of controlling the thrusts of large scale vaults was among the most important contributions of the Roman builders to the development of vaulted architecture. The string of volcanoes along the Tyrrhenian coast of Italy produced a variety of lightweight rocks, which allowed the builders in Rome to develop highly sophisticated ways of manipulating form and mass to create stable structures. The use of lighter rocks in vaults and heavier in foundations occurs from the mid first century B.C. in Rome, but the systematic use of imported lightweight rocks only began in the early second century A.D. under Trajan (Lancaster 2005, 59-64). Soon thereafter the technique of using lightweight stones to build large vaults spread throughout the empire, usually to areas that had a local source of lightweight volcanic material. However, there was also a seaborne trade in lightweight rocks to areas that did not have local sources of such material. The intention of our analysis is to determine as precisely as possible the provenance of the lightweight stones used in vaulting of two areas of the Mediterranean, modern Turkey (ancient Cilicia) and Tunisia (ancient Africa Proconsularis), and thus to provide a better understanding of the nature of this trade.

THE STRUCTURES AND THEIR CONTEXT

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8 The first sample (01 Anaz) comes from a bath building at Anazarbos in Smooth Cilicia
9 (Cilicia Pedias) (Fig. 1), where a number of scoria cones lie along the fault running
10 between Ceyhan and Osmaniye parallel to the axis of the Gulf of Issus (Fig. 2). M. Spanu
11 (2003, 25) has recently noted the presence of scoria in the vaults of a number of bath
12 buildings in Smooth Cilicia. In addition to our sample at Anazarbos, similar looking dark
13 gray vesicular scoria occurs in bath buildings at Tarsus and Hieropolis Castabala. There
14 are no clear dates for any of the buildings, but second/third century A.D. is generally
15 assumed.
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32 The second sample (025 ElSeb) comes from the Reticulate Baths at Elaeussa Sebaste in
33 Rough Cilicia (Cilicia Tracheia), which lies about 150 km southwest of the Ceyhan-
34 Osmaniye volcanic district. This building was once considered Augustan, but Spanu
35 (1999, 112-13) has recently argued convincingly for a date in the first half of the second
36 century A.D. The scoria is visually similar to the scoria found in the structures from
37 Smooth Cilicia closer to the scoria cones (Fig. 3).
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51 Our goal in analyzing these samples is to verify that the scoria used in vaults at
52 Anazarbos, which lies near the Ceyhan-Osmaniye volcanic district, is in fact compatible
53 with material produced by this system and to provide a control for the sample from
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3 Elaeussa Sebaste, which is much further from the volcanic district and must have arrived
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6 at the site by sea.
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12 The other two samples come from structures in Tunisia, part of the ancient province of
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14 Africa Proconsularis, which does not have a local source for volcanic rocks; therefore,
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16 any lightweight volcanic stones found in the vaulting of structures there necessarily must
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18 have been imported, thus making it an excellent subject for the study of trade in this area.
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27 The first Tunisian sample (03 AntBaths) comes from the Antonine Baths at Carthage
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29 (146-162 A.D.), the largest of the baths in North Africa. The structure is a well known
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31 example of the use of lightweight stones in vaulting; its use here in the domes was
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33 documented as early as the 11th-century by the geographer Al Bakri (Lézine 1969, 30).
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35 Presently most of the visible standing vaulting belongs to the substructures of the baths,
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37 which do not employ lightweight stones, but at the north end of the complex there is one
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39 piece of fallen vaulting from the superstructure, which contains a dark olive to reddish
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41 brown vesicular scoria (Fig. 4). Similar looking material occurs nearby in the fallen
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43 vaulting of the so called Baths of Gargilius (today signed as "l'édifice à colonnes"). In
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45 1861, C. Beule suggested a provenance for the scoria of Sardinia or Sicily, but more
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47 recently Lézine (1969, 30 n. 4) suggested Sicily; however, neither suggestion was based
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49 on scientific evidence. Presumably Lézine's attribution of Sicily in part was based on
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3 Vitruvius's (*De Arch* 2.6.2-3) mention of Etna as a source of sponge stone (*spongia*),
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5 which he likens to the *pumex pompeianus* of Vesuvius.
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12 The second sample (04 Lepti) from Tunisia is light gray/brown pumice from the fallen
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14 frigidarium vault of the East Baths (late second-early third century A.D.) at Leptiminus
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16 (Fig. 5). Initial speculation was that it came from the Aeolian Islands because Pliny the
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18 Elder (*HN* 36.154) mentions them as the source of very lightweight, white colored
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20 pumice (Dodge 1992, 157).
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29 The two samples from Tunisia are clearly very different rocks occurring in very different
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31 contexts. The Antonine Baths represent the premier bath complex of one of the most
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33 important trading centers in the Mediterranean whereas the East Baths at Leptiminus
34
35 occur on the east coast of Tunisia away from the major ports (Fig. 6). In both cases, the
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37 origin of the stones has significant implications for the nature of the trade in this central
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39 zone of the Mediterranean, particularly because the stone is not likely to be a primary
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41 product of the shipping route (as marble would be) but rather a secondary if not tertiary
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3 Given the different geographical contexts in which these four samples are found, they
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5 should provide some insight into the different types of trade patterns that existed for
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7 building materials in central and eastern Mediterranean.
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10 11 12 13 14 15 PETROGRAPHIC AND GEOCHEMICAL FEATURES 16

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22 The collected samples have been analyzed using thin section for the detection of the
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24 mineral phases and textural features. Selected samples have been also analyzed by X-Ray
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26 Fluorescence Spectroscopy (XRF) and laser ablation inductively coupled plasma mass
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28 spectrometry (LS-ICO-MS) to determine the concentration of major and selected trace
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30 elements. Wet chemical techniques were used to measure the loss on ignition (LOI).
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34 International rock standards have been used for curve calibration. Precision is better than
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36 5% for Rb and Sr, better than 10% for Ni, Zr, Nb, Ba, Ce and La and better than 15% for
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38 the other elements. As will be specified in the following sections, we will not use some
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40 major elements (e.g. Na, K, Fe) to classify the samples with microscopic (e.g. zeolites) or
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42 geochemical (e.g. high LOI) evidence of alteration because the concentration of these
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44 elements may significantly change during weathering (Duzgoren-Aydin et al. 2002). We
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46 will use trace elements (e.g., Nb, Zr, Y, Ti, V) whose concentration does not vary during
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48 water-dominated and/or low metamorphism processes (Floyd and Winchester 1978).
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52 Therefore, on the basis of the above considerations, classical classification and/or
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3 discrimination diagrams (e.g. SiO_2 vs. $\text{Na}_2\text{O}+\text{K}_2\text{O}$; Le Bas et al. 1986) cannot be used for
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5 altered and/or contaminated volcanic rocks.
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13 01-Anazarbos (Anaz) and 025-Reticulate Baths Elaiussa Sebaste, Turkey (ElSeb)
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20 The samples 01 (Anaz) and 025 (ElSeb) are oxidized scorias. The sample 01 (Anaz) is
21 dark gray (10YR 4/1) and characterized by 50 vol. % of phenocrysts and 30 vol.% of
22 vesicles with a density of 1235 kg/m^3 . The size and shape of vesicles is heterogeneous:
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24 large, 4 to 6 mm vesicles are elongated whereas the smaller (0.1-0.5 mm) vesicles are
25 subrounded. The mineral phases of the sample 01 (Anaz) are: Fe-Ti oxides, olivine, and
26 clinopyroxene. Plagioclase occurs in the groundmass along with some crystals of apatite.
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28 Olivine is altered in iddingsite, which consists of a mixture of clay minerals, iron oxides
29 and ferrihydrides, thus suggesting that the sample was affected by weathering. About 1
30 vol.% of calcite has been recognized. This mineral probably represents the remnants of
31 some plaster or mortar material. The sample 025 (ElSeb) is black (5Y 2.5/2) and has 35
32 vol.% of crystals and about 60 vol.% of vesicles with a density of 1250 kg/m^3 . The
33 mineral phases are Fe-Ti oxides, olivine, and minor clinopyroxene. Plagioclase is
34 confined in the groundmass and apatite is an accessory phase. Olivine is altered to
35 iddingsite and the groundmass is heavily oxidized. Therefore, alteration processes
36 affected this sample.
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6 Despite the evidence of alteration, the mineral association of the samples 01 (Anaz) and
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8 025 (ElSeb), as well as their low SiO₂ (44.84-45.59 wt.%) and high MgO (7.07-8.02
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10 wt.%) contents, indicate that the scorias are of basaltic composition. In addition, a
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12 distinctive feature of these samples is the high TiO₂ contents (2.55-2.56 wt.%) (Table 1).
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14 These values are well above those of the basaltic rocks from the Plio-Quaternary Italian
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16 volcanoes (e.g. Etna and Ustica, etc.), which have TiO₂<2 wt.% (Peccerillo 2005), and
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18 from the 'Levant' (Israel) and Libyan areas, characterized by TiO₂<2.2 wt.% (e.g.,
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20 Antonelli et al. 2005). In the Mediterranean area, basalts with TiO₂ values consistent with
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22 those of the samples 01 (Anaz) and 025 (ElSeb) outcrop in Sardinia, eastern Sicily
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24 (Hyblea) and western Turkey. We exclude the Sardinia basalts because these rocks have
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26 V ≥ 200 ppm for SiO₂ ≤ 48 wt.% (Peccerillo 2005) and the samples 01 (Anaz) and 025
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28 (ElSeb) show values of V ≤ 186 ppm at SiO₂ < 46 wt.%. Therefore, two possible source
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30 areas can be proposed for the samples 01 (Anaz) and 025 (ElSeb): Turkey and Hyblea.
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32 However, both samples have been collected in an area of southern Turkey where the
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34 Ceyhan-Osmaniye Quaternary basalts diffusely outcrop (Polat et al. 1997). In particular,
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36 the sample 01 (Anaz) has been collected in a zone where at least three volcanic centers
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38 (Gertepe, Topprakale and Delihalil Tepe) occur within a radius of 20-40 km from the
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40 sampling site. The scorias from these centers have the same mineralogical association
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42 and TiO₂ content of the samples 01 (Anaz) and 025 (ElSeb) (Yurtmen et al. 2000).
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44 Therefore, we suggest that these samples come from a center of the Ceyhan-Osmaniye
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46 basaltic province.
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03-Antonine Baths, Carthage, Tunisia (AntBaths)

Sample 03 (AntBaths) is a dark olive (5Y 2.5/2) to reddish brown (5YR 4/3) scoria with a density of 1220 kg/m^3 . It is characterized by 18 vol.% of crystals and 65 vol.% of coalescing vesicles that are 0.5 to 0.8 mm in size; a few 4 to 5 mm large vesicles are also present. The mineral phases are plagioclase, Fe-Ti oxides, clinopyroxene. Olivine is an accessory phase. The groundmass is highly oxidized. The SiO_2 content (44.61 wt.%) and the mineral association indicate that the rock is of basaltic composition (Table 1). The occurrence of plagioclase as main crystal phase and the lack of apatite as an accessory phase exclude that the source area of this sample is Turkey (see the features of the Turkish basaltic rocks in the previous section). TiO_2 content is high ($\text{TiO}_2=3.02$) thus excluding a provenance from the Plio-Quaternary Italian volcanoes (e.g. Etna and Ustica, etc.), 'Levant' (Israel), and Libyan areas which have $\text{TiO}_2 < 2.0-2.2$ wt.% (Antonelli et al. 2005; Peccerillo 2005). Therefore, two main source areas can be proposed, both characterized by $\text{TiO}_2 > 2.5$: Hyblea and Sardinia. However, the Nb content of sample 03 (AntBaths) is significantly lower (Nb=32 ppm) than that of the Hyblea basalts, which range between 52 and 170 ppm (Peccerillo 2005), whereas it falls within the range of the Sardinia basalts, which is between 28 and 107 ppm. The vanadium content ($V=212$ ppm) of sample 03 (AntBaths), is also consistent with that of the Sardinia basalts ($V \geq 200$ ppm for $\text{SiO}_2 < 48$ wt.%; see above) Therefore, we conclude that the source sample 03

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3 (AntBaths) is from Sardinia, even if we cannot further isolate the precise location on the
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5 island.
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13 04-Leptiminus, Tunisia (Lepti)
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20 Sample 04 (Lepti) is a very pale brown (10YR 8/2) subaphyric pumice with a density of
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22 600 kg/m^3 and a crystal content not exceeding 5 vol.%. The glass is fresh, colourless and
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24 the vesicle content is 65-70 vol.%. Vesicles are coalescing and stretched; their size varies
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26 from 0.1-0.2 mm to 1 mm. Crystals show a maximum size of 1 mm. The mineral phases
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28 are: anorthoclase, alkali-amphibole, aenigmatite, quartz with embayment, Fe-Ti oxides,
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30 and apatite (Fig. 7). Anorthoclase and quartz are, in some cases, in intergrowth
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32 association suggesting the cotectic crystallization of the two phases. The petrographic
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34 features of the sample are consistent with pumiceous lapilli related to an explosive event.
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36 The mineral association, and, in particular, the occurrence of alkali-amphibole and
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38 aenigmatite indicate that the rock may be classified as peralkaline rhyolite. In the
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40 Mediterranean area such rocks outcrop on Pantelleria Island (Sicily Channel; Civetta et al.
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42 1998; Ferla and Meli 2006) and southwestern Sardinia (San Pietro Island). However, the
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44 peralkaline rhyolites from Sardinia are characterized by the occurrence of sanidine,
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46 whereas those from Pantelleria Island have anorthoclase as a ubiquitous phase. Therefore,
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48 on the basis of the mineralogy of the sample 04 (Lepti), the source area of this pumice is
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50 Pantelleria, whose volcanism developed between 324 ka BP to 4 ka BP.
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CONCLUSIONS

The geochemical results have shown that the scorias from Anazarbos and Elaeussa Sebaste originated from one of the Ceyhan-Osmaniye volcanoes: Delihalil Tepe, Uçtepel, or Gertepe. The use of the scoria in Smooth Cilicia is clearly a regional phenomenon surrounding the scoria cones. Tarsus is further away from cones than Anazarbos and Hierapolis Castabala, but it was reachable by boat via the inland port of Rhegnum and the river Cydnus (Ramsey 1903, 364-65; Strabo 14.5.10, 14.5.12), thus reducing overland transport required.

More unusual is the presence of this basaltic scoria in the walls and vaults of the so-called Reticulate Baths at Elaeussa Sebaste in Rough Cilicia. Unlike the previous examples from Smooth Cilicia in which the scoria is used as caementa for the entire vault, the scoria at the Reticulate Baths is used very sparingly for some blocks of the reticulate in the opus mixtum walls and along the line of the crown of some of the vaults (Fig. 3). In this case it is not used in a systematic manner nor is it used in large enough quantities to have had any structural effect on the building. Its use here is likely explained by the practice of cabotage, which was certainly occurring along the southern coast of Turkey ((Hohlfelder and Vann 2000; Arnaud 2005, 207-36). Such activity would accord with X.

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3 Nieto's (1997, 154-58) proposal of a maritime distribution model utilizing primary and
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5 secondary ports. The large long-haul ships transported goods to primary ports that had the
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7 infrastructure available for large draft ships and for unloading heavy cargoes. These
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9 goods were then redistributed to secondary ports by small coastal vessels carrying a
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11 mixed cargo to small ports that could not receive the larger ships.
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20 Given the sporadic application of the scoria in the Reticulate Baths, it does not seem to
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22 have been specially acquired as was the case for the examples at Tarsus, Anazarbos, and
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24 Hieropolis Castabala nor would it have made effective ballast. However, recent analysis
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26 of finds on board Ship B (Augustan) excavated at Pisa shows that stones could also be
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28 used as stowage material to stabilize cargo, and this is perhaps a more likely explanation.
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30 The pointed ends of the amphorae on board Ship B were packed in volcanic lapilli and
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32 scoria from the Naples area. The amphorae themselves were being reused and some
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34 (Laboglia 2) contained sand that was identified as probably from Campania based on the
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36 sanidine and augite content. The ballast on the ship was identified as coming from
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38 various places along the Tyrrhenian coast. The small size of the ship (capacity of 70-80
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40 tons) and its heterogeneous cargo show that it was involved in cabotage stopping at a
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42 major port in the Bay of Naples and then making its way north along the Tyrrhenian coast
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44 to Pisa (Pecchioni et al. 2007, 18; Bruni 2000, 42-43). Similarly one can imagine the
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46 scoria in the Reticulate Baths having been loaded at a major port closer to the scoria
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48 cones possibly as stowage material and then unloaded at Elaeussa Sebaste, where it was
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50 used in a rather haphazard manner in this one structure.
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8 The samples from Tunisia provide a somewhat different scenario for the trade in the
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10 central area of the Mediterranean. The geochemical results isolated the provenance of the
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12 dark scoria from the Antonine Baths at Carthage to Sardinia, thus eliminating Sicily as a
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14 source. The lava of Sardinian volcanoes was also quarried for grain mills, and Sardinia
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16 was apparently one of the major suppliers of grain mills for Carthage (Williams-Thorpe
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18 1988, 284-88; Williams-Thorpe and Thorpe 1989). The scoria, therefore, was likely
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20 arriving at Carthage as a secondary product along with the mills. Given the quantity that
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22 would be needed for the vaults of such a large structure, the material was probably
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24 specially ordered, but the fact that there was an established shipping route for the grain
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26 mills and presumably land transport from the various quarries on the island would have
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28 made such orders economically feasible.
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39 The source of Sardinia as opposed to Sicily is also enlightening from a navigational
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41 perspective. Eastern Sicily had its own source of volcanic scoria from the Etna and
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43 Hyblea volcanoes, which were presumably the sources of the scoria in the vaults at the
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45 theater at Taormina (Belvedere 1988, 365 n. 129, tav. 6-7), the odeum at Catania
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47 (Belvedere 1988, 367 n. 144, tav. 11, 13), and the “Gymnasium” at Syracuse (Cavallari
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49 and Holm 1883, 399). However, the use of a port along the eastern coast of Sicily would
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51 require ships on a north-south course to pass through the Strait of Messina, which could
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53 at times be treacherous due to winds and difficult currents (Arnaud 2005, 24-25, 175). On
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3 the other hand, the Sardinian ports of ancient Tharros or Carralis, both of which are near
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5 volcanic districts on the island, provided a direct and easy voyage to Carthage, thus
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7 making the Sardinian scoria a more attractive product.
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15 The provenance of the pumice in the vaults of the East Baths at Leptiminius was
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17 established as Pantelleria from a thin section analysis of the minerals phases. Its origin is
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19 clear due to a rare mineral assemblage that characterizes some of the products of that
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21 volcano, particularly the presence of the mineral aenigmatite, or cossyrite, which takes its
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23 name from the ancient name of the island, Cossyra. The result was somewhat surprising
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25 but ultimately logical from the standpoint of trade routes. The anticipated source of the
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27 Aeolian Islands, which were mentioned by Pliny (*NH* 36.154) as a source of pumice,
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29 would again have required passage through the sometimes treacherous Strait of Messina,
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31 whereas Pantelleria was a major navigational hub in the Sicily Channel and had a
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33 particularly important role in the transshipment of goods to and from North Africa
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35 (Arnaud 2005, 163). Though we know of no other recorded examples of Pantellerian
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37 pumice in other vaults, there are examples of exported basaltic mill stones from
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39 Pantelleria found at Carthage, Utica, Thuburbo Maius, Celibia, and El Makloubia in
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41 Tunisia (Williams-Thorpe 1988, 296-305) and more recently at Cyrenaica in Libya
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43 (Antonelli et al. 2005, 140-42). The island had little to offer in terms of agricultural
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45 surplus and therefore took advantage of its role as port of call to develop an export trade
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47 in the local volcanic stones and a locally fabricated cookware, Pantellerian Ware (Mosca
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49 1998, 1147-48). The distribution of the millstones from Pantelleria indicates that they
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3 were shipped only southwards (Williams-Thorpe 1988, 286), as opposed to Pantellerian
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5 Ware which is found throughout the western Mediterranean (Montana et al. 2007). Thus,
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7 as with the Sardinian scoria from Carthage, the pumice in the vaults of the East Baths at
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9 Leptiminus can be explained as part of a regional trading network, in this case emanating
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11 from the navigational hub of Pantelleria.
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20 Ultimately, the samples from both the islands of Sardinia (03 AntBaths) and Pantelleria
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22 (04 Lepti) come from important shipping points in the western Mediterranean and are
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24 associated with the export of mill stones, which were no doubt in much greater demand
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26 than the scoria and pumice. In both cases the lightweight rocks seem to have been a
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28 secondary product both in terms of quarrying and of shipping. The samples from Cilicia,
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30 on the other hand, have a much smaller distribution, largely local to the source area.
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32 However, the example from Elaeussa Sebaste provides a glimpse into the smaller scale
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34 transport system based on cabotage to secondary ports along the southern coast of Asia
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FIGURE CAPTIONS

Table 1. Chemical analysis of selected samples.

Fig. 1: Baths at Anazarbos with scoria in vaults. (Photo: L.C. Lancaster)

Fig. 2: Map of Cilicia showing Ceyhan-Osmaniye volcanic district. (Drawing: L.C. Lancaster)

Fig. 3: Reticulate Baths at Elaeussa Sebaste (second century A.D.) with scoria as caementa of vaults and blocks of reticulate. (Photo: L.C. Lancaster)

Fig. 4: Antonine Baths at Carthage (146-162 A.D.). Fallen vault of superstructure with caementa of scoria. (Photo: L.C. Lancaster)

Fig. 5. East Baths at Leptiminus (late second/early third century A.D.). Fallen vault with caementa of pumice and limestone. (Photo: L.C. Lancaster)

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8 Fig. 6. Map of western Mediterranean. Navigational routes based on Arnaud 2005, Fig.
9 154-155 (Drawing: L.C. Lancaster)
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17 Fig. 7. Thin sections of Leptiminus pumice sample (04 Lepti) showing main mineral
18 phases. (Photos: G. Ventura)
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Sample	01 (Anaz)	025 ElSeb)	03 (AntBaths)
	(wt.%)		
SiO ₂	44.84	45.59	44.61
TiO ₂	2.55	2.56	3.02
Al ₂ O ₃	15.18	15.91	13.81
Fe ₂ O ₃	11.01	11.18	13.2
MnO	0.17	0.17	0.19
MgO	7.07	8.02	5.82
CaO	8.54	7.46	10.61
Na ₂ O	4.49	4.72	3.12
K ₂ O	1.3	2.39	1.05
P ₂ O ₅	0.92	0.69	0.55
LOI (%)	3.71	1.1	3.88
Totals	96.07	98.69	95.98
	(ppm)		
Ni	-	143	-
Cu	-	36	-
Zn	-	71	-
Rb	62	25	20
Sr	881	829	415
Zr	306	335	185
Ba	362.5	276.24	279.33
La	51.12	43.73	38.1
Ce	82.7	74.42	52.27
Pr	9.66	9.22	8.47
Nd	38.17	36.3	36.67
Sm	7.48	7.62	8.13
Eu	2.3	2.17	2.46
Gd	7.05	6.26	7.89
Tb	0.94	0.9	1.08
Y	30.41	29.01	40.89
Dy	5.21	5.2	6.44
Ho	0.93	1.03	1.15
Er	2.56	2.63	3.11
Yb	2.22	2.44	2.69
Lu	0.32	0.36	0.39
V	142.19	186.08	212.43
Cr	133.58	144.45	81.39
Nb	50.19	56.18	32.06
Hf	6.61	6.9	4.53
Ta	3.71	4.1	2.35
Pb	6.48	2.72	10.19
Th	6.85	5.44	3.59
U	1.48	1.41	0.77



Fig. 1. Baths at Anazarbos with scoria in vaults.
150x95mm (300 x 300 DPI)

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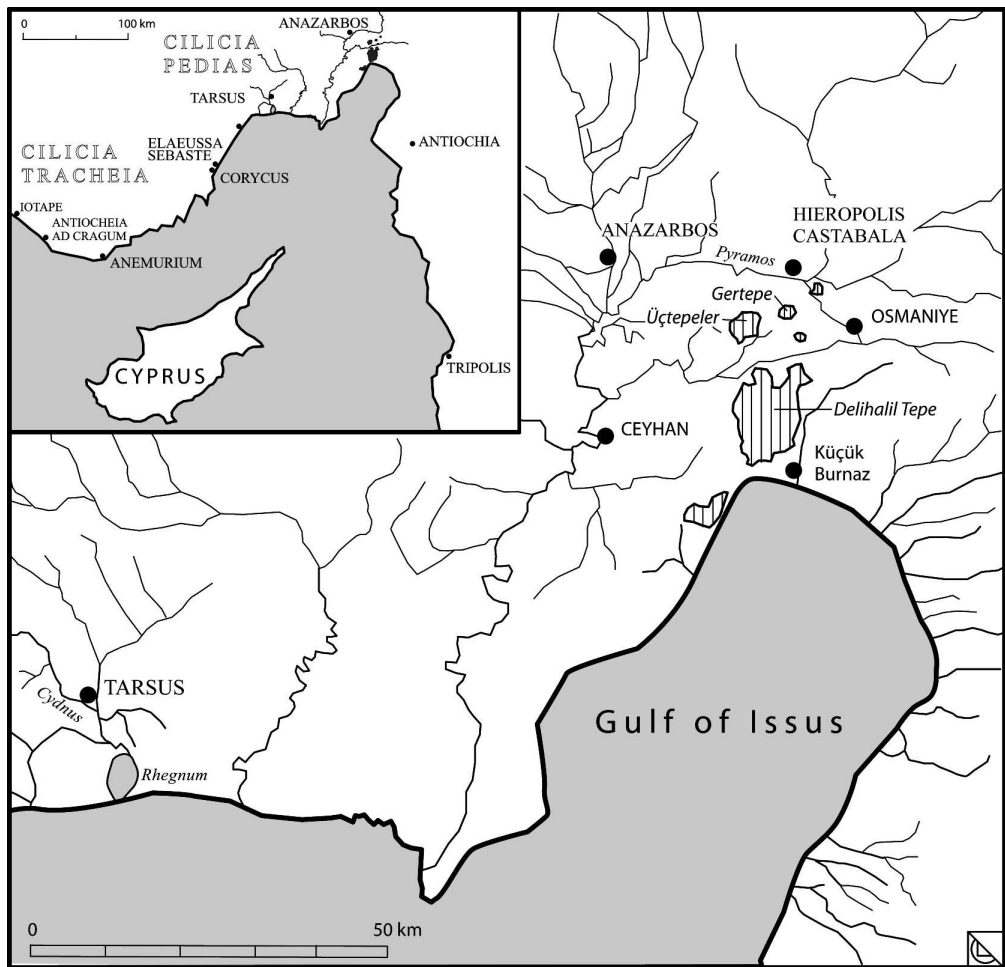


Fig. 2. Map of Cilicia showing Ceyhan-Osmaniye volcanic district.
141x135mm (600 x 600 DPI)



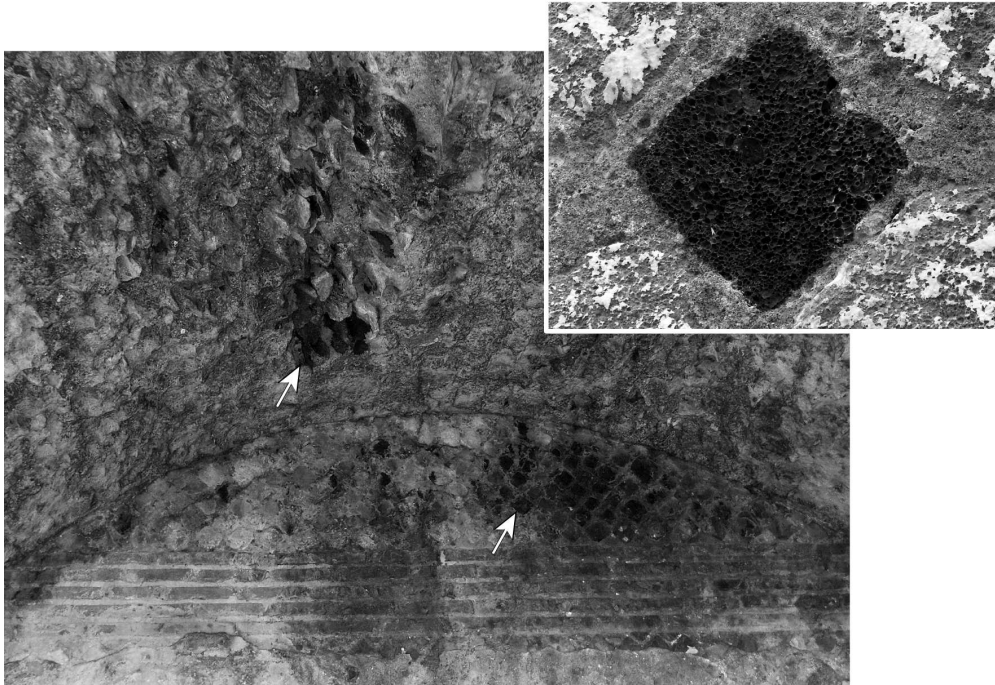


Fig. 3. Reticulate Baths at Elaeussa Sebaste (second century A.D.) with scoria as caementa of vaults and blocks of reticulate.
150x103mm (300 x 300 DPI)

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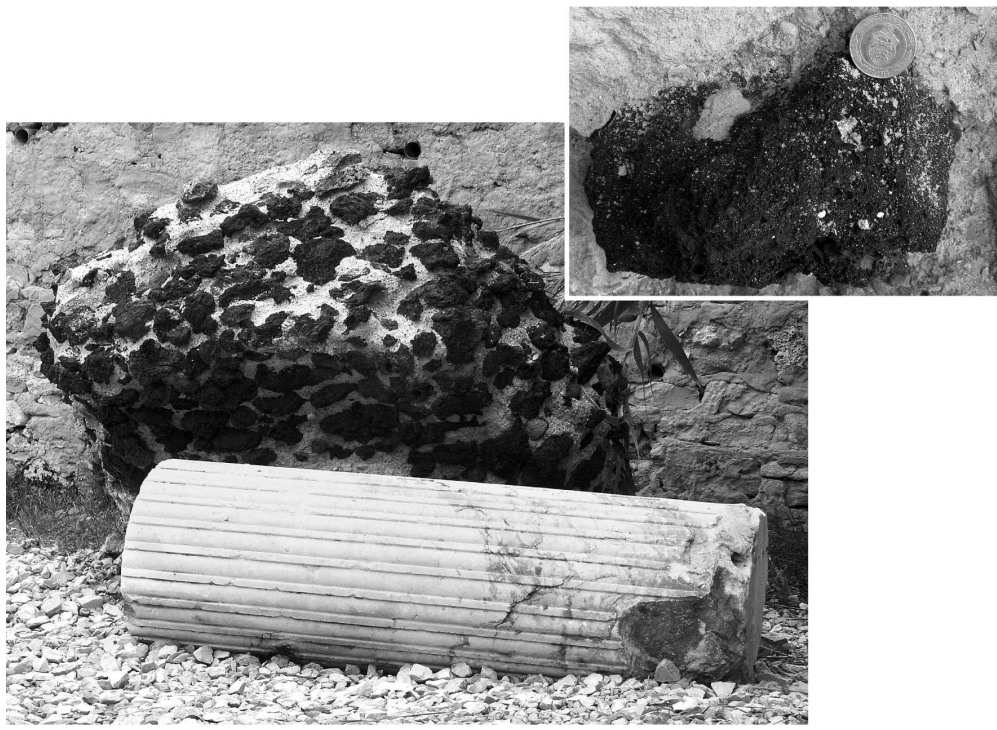


Fig. 4. Antonine Baths at Carthage (146-162 A.D.). Fallen vault of superstructure with caementa of scoria.
150x108mm (300 x 300 DPI)

review



Fig. 5. East Baths at Leptiminus (late second/early third century A.D.). Fallen vault with caementa of pumice and limestone.
150x104mm (300 x 300 DPI)

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Fig. 6. Map of western Mediterranean. Navigational routes based on Arnaud 2005, Fig. 154-155. 147x141mm (600 x 600 DPI)



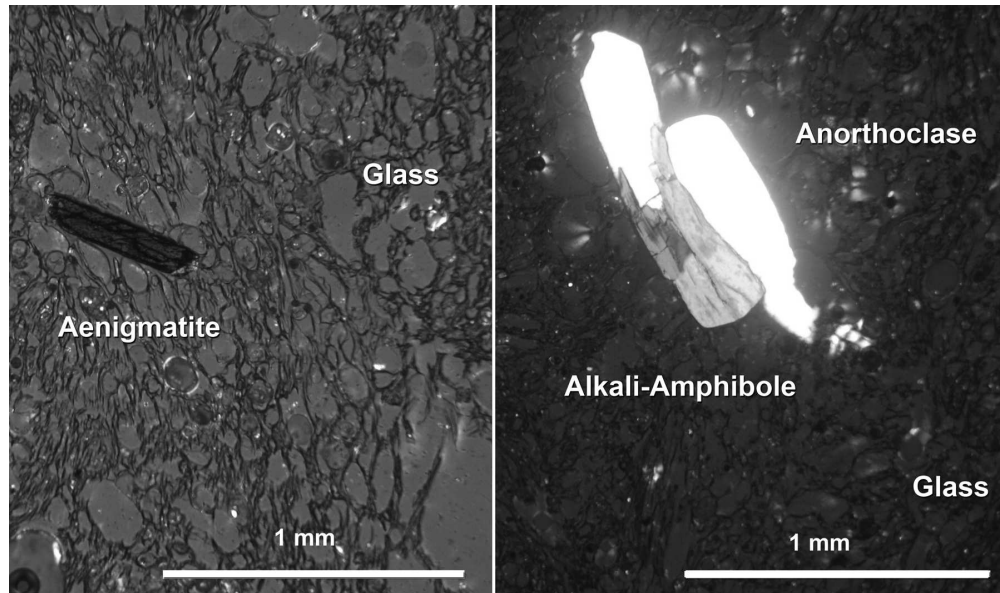


Fig. 7. Thin sections of Leptiminus pumice sample (04 Lepti) showing main mineral phases.
152x90mm (300 x 300 DPI)

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