



Between the states: Iron Age interaction in southwestern Anatolia



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ABSTRACT

This paper explores how Iron Age Anatolian communities constructed their identities within the fluid political and economic landscape of the Eastern Mediterranean after the Late Bronze Age collapse. Our study focuses on archaeological survey ceramics from sixteen sites in the Konya-Beyşehir region (KBR), south central Anatolia, a contested zone between the Phrygian and Neo-Assyrian polities. We use a combined stylistic and geochemical analysis to address political/economic interaction within this landscape. Comparing KBR site ceramic decorative styles with those of inland and coastal Anatolian sites allows us to identify local patterns of emulation. We differentiate emulation from actual exchange using geochemical elemental characterization. Together these techniques allow us to evaluate how local communities used emulation and exchange to construct their identities. Our results reveal that Iron Age KBR communities operated within a complex regional exchange sphere, and beyond this showed greatest affinity with Phrygian ceramic styles.

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1. Introduction

Following the collapse of the Hittite empire in Central Anatolia at the end of the Late Bronze Age (LBA), new Iron Age societies rapidly emerged within a novel political and economic arena that extended from the Balkans to Mesopotamia. Later Assyrian texts (D'Alfonso, 2012) provide a valuable window on this region and period showing it to be politically dynamic, with a large number of competing elites. The best known of these are the Phrygians in the west, the Urartians in the east (Sams, 2011), and Tabal, thought to be located in the general area of northwestern Cappadocia (D'Alfonso, 2012). However, our understanding of the scale and extent of EIA social, political and economic transformations is linked to a small number of archaeological sites (e.g., Gordion, Kamankale, Ayanis, and Boğazköy). Beyond these, the Anatolian Iron Age remains a poorly understood phenomenon. In the Konya-Beyşehir region (KBR) of southwestern Anatolia, archaeological surveys of a ca. 4000 km² area have produced important evidence for a potentially substantial Iron Age occupation (Bahar, 1999, 2001, 2004). In this paper, we analyze ceramics from these surveys to identify the scale and extent of interaction of Iron Age KBR communities. These data enable us to move beyond excavated sites to develop a more geographically extensive understanding of Iron Age cultural and political dynamics in central Anatolia.

Our focus here is on using ceramic decorative styles to understand the formation of local and regional identities, and to evaluate the extent

and direction of stylistic emulation. Geochemical characterization is then used to differentiate shared styles (emulation) from actual exchange. We assess the balance of exchange vs. emulation through a program of geochemical characterization of these survey ceramics (Neutron Activation Analysis — NAA), as part of a wider study by the Anatolian Iron Age Ceramics (AIA) project (e.g., Grave et al., 2008; Kealhofer et al., 2009). While the ceramic sample of the KBR surveys is relatively modest, largely focused on the three larger sites, and lacking stratigraphic control, we extend these results by making direct comparisons with other excavated Iron Age sites across central Anatolia using the large AIA NAA dataset (17 sites, 8000 analyses). Utilizing the AIA database of NAA from sites across central and western Turkey also enables a “few to many” comparison for identification of compositional groups that might not be otherwise evident in the KBR dataset (e.g., Grave and McNiven 2013).

The aims of this study are: 1) to define the geochemical and stylistic range of the ceramic survey assemblage; 2) to distinguish locally produced ceramics from non-local ceramics; and 3) to compare local geochemical profiles and ceramic types with other excavated Iron Age assemblages in the AIA sample (e.g., Gordion, Sardis, Kinet Höyük, and Kamankale Höyük) in order to identify patterns of emulation and exchange within Iron Age polities in southwestern Anatolia.

2. Background

A key feature of LBA economies of the Eastern Mediterranean was their high degree of political and economic connectivity, identified by some scholars as one of the earliest “World Systems” (Frank, 1993;

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Sherratt, 1993). The breakdown of this system at the end of the LBA (early 12th c. BCE) was followed by the emergence of a wide range of regionally idiosyncratic and independent polities (Cline, 2014; Sherratt and Sherratt, 1993). In Anatolia, the gap left by the collapse of the Hittite Empire was rapidly filled by a range of local groups, identified in Assyrian sources (D'Alfonso, 2012). On either side of the "Land of Tabal," thought to be in modern Cappadocia, were major polities: the Phrygian polity to the west (identified with the "Muški" of later Assyrian texts) and the Urartian polity in the east. Excavations at Phrygian and Urartian centers have provided the most tangible evidence for societal transformation in this era (Fig. 1) (Sams, 2011; Zimansky, 2011).

However, while the historical evidence from these polities is limited, it is clear that Phrygian and Urartian societies interacted in a larger political universe, which included much of the Near East, northern Mesopotamia, Iran and the Aegean. Given the scale and extent of these interactions, it seems likely that communities in interstitial areas, between these more prominent historically known polities, must have played an important role in defining these larger networks of political and economic ties. Beyond individual monuments in the landscape (French, 1972; Mellaart, 1954), we lack critical evidence for the scale and extent of the Iron Age footprint within these interstitial regions (see Harmanşah, 2005, 2012).

Iron Age elites in Central Anatolia have largely been identified epigraphically from native Luwian hieroglyphs, preserved in monumental carvings and inscriptions, as well as in Neo Hittite and Assyrian texts (Giusfredi, 2010; Hawkins, 2010). Typically, while such sources are highly specific chronologically, they do not distinguish territories from political entities (D'Alfonso, 2012). The territorial or political composition of entities, such as 'Tabal' (e.g., Weeden, 2010), remain largely speculative due to the sparse character of other independent lines of evidence.

Archaeology, on the other hand, is territorially very specific, but typically anonymous and often chronologically less absolute. Our

understanding of Iron Age dynamics is reliant on the small number of archaeological sites with substantial Iron Age components. Attempts to establish the chronology and spatial range of Iron Age horizons between sites are hampered by a lack of regionally accepted chronological phases, further complicated by the distances between sites and a radio-carbon plateau that extends over several centuries of the 1st millennium BCE (Kealhofer and Grave, 2011). As a result, reconstructions of the dynamics or political geography of Iron Age polities in central Anatolia through a combination of epigraphic sources and archaeological evidence remain chronologically and geographically ill-defined.

Surveys in the region between Konya and Beyşehir (KBR) over the last few decades have identified a number of substantial mounds with Iron Age components (Bahar, 2005; French, 1972). While ceramic stylistic evidence suggests strong links to Gordion (Bahar, 1999), little is known of KBR inter- and intra- regional interaction patterns. Here, we undertake a preliminary geochemical and typological analysis of ceramics collected by this series of archaeological surveys (Bahar, 1999, 2001, 2004) to begin to address the gap in our understanding of both local and wider regional dynamics in this period. Elsewhere, this approach to survey ceramics has proven effective for defining regional scales of interaction (Grave et al., 2012).

Establishing the extent to which ceramic stylistic parallels represent direct exchange rather than emulation is a necessary first step in understanding the nature of the political and economic negotiations between interstitial groups in KBR and the larger polities of Phrygia and the Neo-Hittites and Assyrians of upper Mesopotamia. Stylistic similarities between two locales can indicate one of two types of cultural connections: either as evidence of the movement of goods between regions; or, in the case of stylistic emulation, evidence for the movement of ideas between regions. Distinguishing these two is dependent on multiple lines of evidence. For this reason, we combine stylistic analysis with geochemical characterization. Elsewhere, we have developed a methodology for interpreting analysis of ceramic and sediment geochemistry

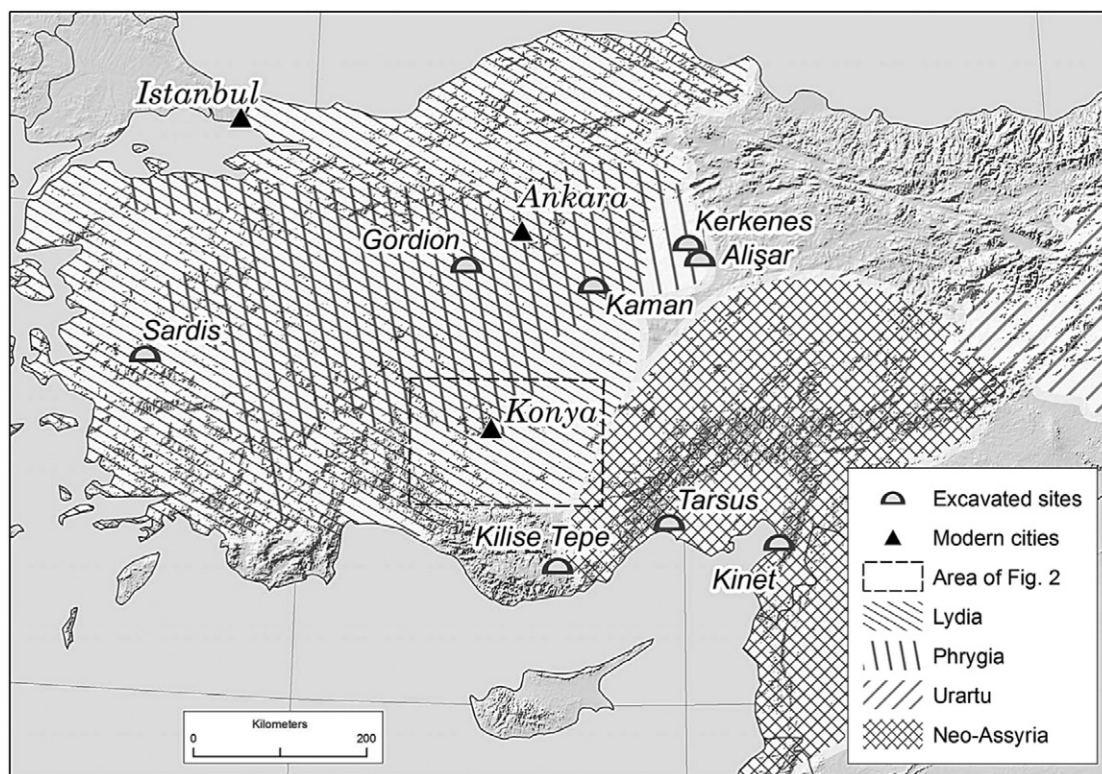


Fig. 1. Map of Central and Western Turkey showing approximate extents of the Iron Age polities of Phrygia, Urartu, and Neo-Assyria (modern cities marked with triangles). Study area around Konya indicated.

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