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THE EARLY BRONZE AGE ON TENEDOS/BOZCAADA

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines some Early Bronze II period remains from the island of Tenedos/Bozcaada in the northeastern Aegean. A close examination of the mortuary remains and associated artifacts, as well as a rectangular mud-brick building recovered during the rescue excavations, provides information on the cultural affiliation of the island in its regional setting. The practice of inhumation in cist graves documented at the site was a common burial procedure in western Anatolia and the Cycladic islands during this period. The artifacts deposited in the burials appear to have close affinities with those in the cultural zone of northwestern Anatolia. It is therefore argued that the geographic position of the island between northwestern Anatolia and the Cycladic islands played an important role in the shaping of the island's Early Bronze II period culture.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Dieser Beitrag untersucht einige Überreste der Frühen Bronzezeit II von der Insel Tenedos/Bozcaada in der nordwestlichen Ägäis. Eine nähere Untersuchung der sterblichen Überreste und der Beigaben als auch eines rechteckigen Gebäudes aus Lehmziegeln, die während der Rettungsgrabung gefunden wurden, liefert Informationen über die kulturelle Zugehörigkeit der Insel in ihrem regionalen Umfeld. Beerdigungen in Kistengräbern, wie sie hier vorgefunden wurden, waren der allgemeine Brauch in Westanatolien und den Kykladen während dieser Epoche. Die Beigaben der Gräber zeigen offenbar große Verwandschaft mit denen der Kulturprovinz des nordwestlichen Anatolien. Daher legt dieser Beitrag dar, daß die geografische Lage der Insel zwischen Nordwestanatolien und den Kykladen eine wichtige Rolle spielte bei der Entwicklung ihrer frühbronzezeitlichen Kultur.

Introduction

The rescue excavations carried out by the Museum of Archaeology in Çanakkale in 1992 and 1993 at Tenedos/Bozcaada, a small island located just west of Troia's coastline in northwestern Anatolia, present valuable information concerning the Early Bronze Age history of the island (Fig. 1). Before these excavations, little was known about the cultural history of the islands prior to the Iron Age. Our only source was Homer, who provided limited and vague information about the late Bronze or Iron Age occupation on the island in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.[1] The coincidental discovery of Early Bronze Age remains on the island now presents an opportunity to examine earlier settlements. The principal objective of the rescue excavations was to obtain as much information as possible about the cemetery area, which contains graves dating from Archaic to Hellenistic times. However, we found that a cluster of graves of Early Bronze Age II date had been cut into the remains of a rectangular mud-brick building in the northeast part of the excavated area (Fig. 2). The site is located nearly one kilometer west of the harbor area, on slightly sloping ground at an elevation of fourteen meters above sea level. At present, the extent of the area with Early Bronze Age remains has not yet been defined, but there are indications that the prehistoric area follows the slope toward the north.

The available archaeological evidence from the site points to a small social group with no apparent differentiation. The very shallow layer of cultural deposits overlying virgin soil suggests that the settlement was short lived. Despite the poorly preserved stratigraphy, the prehistoric remains revealed at Tenedos/Bozcaada can be dated to the Early Bronze II period, which is parallel to Troia I (*ca.* 2920–2350 BCE). The remains can be subdivided into two main phases based on the available evidence. The rectangular mud-brick building with rounded corners represents the earlier phase, while the graves belong to a subsequent phase when the rectangular building was already out of use. The thickness of the layer between the remains of the rectangular building and the graves seems to indicate that the chron-

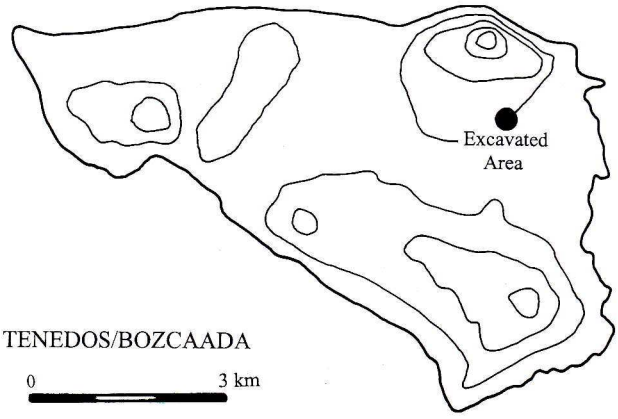


Fig. 1. Map showing the location of the excavated area.

ological gap between the two phases might not have been greater than a generation, and perhaps less.

The rectangular building, which was built on virgin soil, yielded no artifactual evidence suggesting a particular date. However, the graves placed over its remains can easily be dated to the Early Bronze II period on the basis of the associated artifacts, which are described below. The practice of inhumation in a cist grave formed of upright slabs in a rectangular arrangement was a typical custom in western Anatolia during the Early Bronze II period. Cist graves have been discovered at several Early Bronze Age sites in western Anatolia, including Iasos, Bakla Tepe, Babaköy, and Kusura.[2] Our graves from Tenedos/Bozcaada can therefore be placed provisionally in the second period of the Early Bronze Age. The dating of the artifacts found in these graves from Tenedos/Bozcaada is in accord with the one suggested for the graves.

Architecture

One free-standing rectangular building lying in a roughly north-south direction was identified from the barely discernible remains of 20 cm wide mud-brick walls. This 3.60 m long rectangular building was divided by partition walls into three rooms. The eastern half of the building was destroyed when the area was reused as a cemetery during the Classical period, and it is therefore impossible to determine the width of the building with certainty; but it probably did not exceed 2.30 m. No door to the building was discernible on the preserved wall, and the floor of the southernmost room was paved with small and irregular stones. The building yielded no evidence associated with everyday tasks, such as pottery or food processing implements. It is not clear that the building functioned as a house, judging by its small size and flimsy construction, but if it was used as a single-family dwelling, it probably could not have contained more than 2 to 3 persons. Free-standing rectangular buildings constructed of mud-brick with stone foundations are common at Troia and on the northeastern Aegean islands, but no structure in the Aegean identical to our example from Tenedos/Bozcaada is known to us,[3] with one exception, that is a building with round corners which came to light on the Beşiktepe, Areal Q12 and belongs to the Troia I-period.[4]

The traces of another mud-brick wall of a different structure running in a northwest-southeast direction were also encountered to the east of this rectangular building.

Because this wall was also laid on virgin soil at the same level as the rectangular building, the two might have been contemporary. In addition to these mud-brick walls, the remains of wooden posts and planks were, surprisingly, found in the northern part of the trench, nearly a meter north of the rectangular building. It is difficult to judge whether or not these remains of wooden posts and planks originally formed a *pisé* wall. Again, the destruction that occurred in classical antiquity prevents us from going further in our interpretation of the Early Bronze Age architectural evidence from the island.

Mortuary Remains

Four graves were uncovered at the site, and they were named A, B, C, and D by the present authors. Graves A, B, and C are trapezoidal cist graves; the poorly preserved Grave D was apparently a simple inhumation. Grave A, which lay adjacent to the southern wall, was found during the course of the 1992 excavation, while the remaining three graves were recovered in 1993. Although the number of graves is too small for general inference, there seems to be a consistency in the orientation. The bodies appear to have been laid with the heads roughly at the west. Grave A, which was found adjacent to the southern wall of the rectangular building, was a trapezoidal cist grave measuring 1.60 m x 0.90 m. The southern wall of the rectangular building was first destroyed, and virgin soil was then removed to a depth of 45 cm below ground level before the cist was formed. Large flat stones set vertically occur at the narrow ends, while the longer sides are formed of several stones. The cist was probably disturbed in Classical antiquity, since no capstones were found in place. This grave contains the skeleton of a person placed along a northwest-southeast axis.[5] The middle portion of the skeleton, including ribs and arms, was not preserved. The position of the leg bones suggests that the deceased was originally laid on its left side in a semi-contracted position. The grave included a spiral headed copper pin found above the head (Cat. No. 2), a pyxis-like small jar with lid (Cat. No. 1) and a spindle whorl

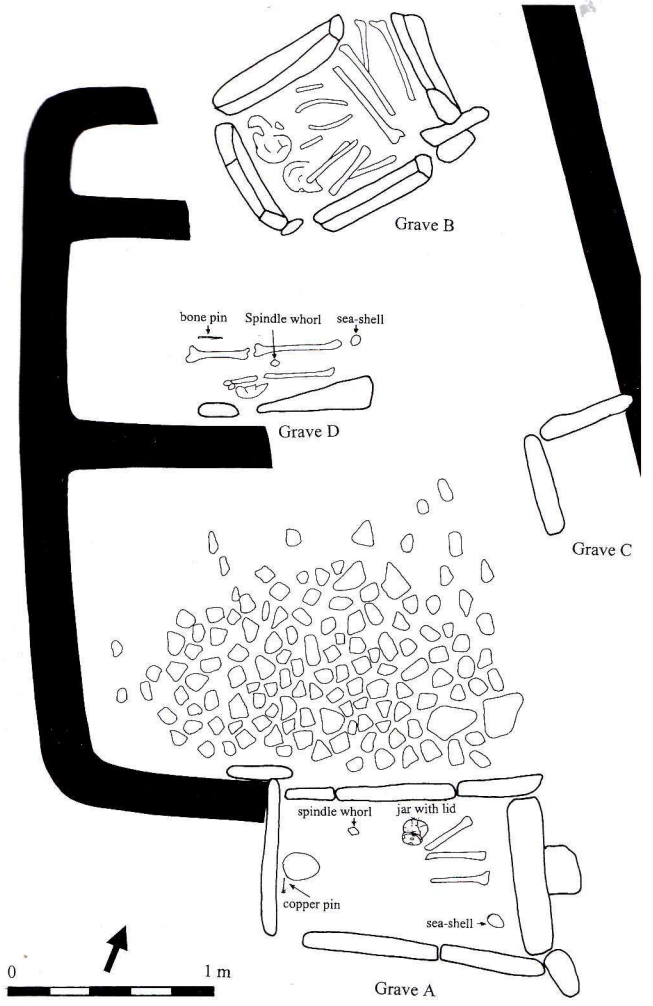


Fig. 2. Plan of the excavated area with Early Bronze Age remains.

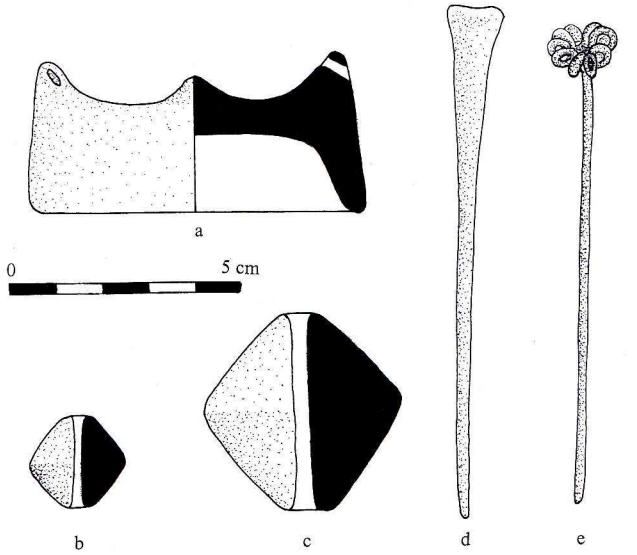


Fig. 3. Artifacts found in the Graves B and D.

(Cat. No. 4), both of which were placed in front of the chest, as well as a sea-shell (Cat. No. 3) at the feet.

The state of preservation of the skeleton, which was nearly impossible to remove, prevents us from determining the gender of the deceased, and it was left in place for future study. The range of artifacts, however, may be indicative of the deceased's gender, and they would be especially appropriate for a woman. The shell could have been related to the preparation of cosmetics, although no traces of pigment were documented in the interior of the grave. There is evidence from the prehistoric Aegean that sea-shells were occasionally deposited in burials,[6] perhaps for such reasons.

Grave B was found above the northern room of the rectangular building.[7] It was a cist grave of rectangular shape, measuring 1.10 m x 0.90 m, which was formed of flat, irregular, upright stone slabs (Fig. 2). Two persons facing opposing directions were placed in a contracted position along a roughly north-south axis. The heads were slightly pushed back, the knees were drawn up onto the stomach, and the bent arms were placed in front of the chest. The practice of multiple burials in this grave may have resulted from the simultaneous death of these two adults. The grave was filled with earth during the leveling of this area in Classical antiquity, and this may explain the lack of capstones covering the cist grave. The grave yielded no artifactual evidence that would indicate a relative date or suggest the social status of the deceased. However, this grave can be dated to the second period of the Early Bronze Age, since the stratigraphic level in which it was found yielded two other graves of that date.

Due to the destruction caused by the re-use of the area in Classical antiquity, grave C is also not well preserved. Only two upright stone slabs from the western part of the grave were recovered in their original positions. This cist grave was placed in a roughly northeast-southwest direction, implying that its orientation is consistent with the other graves. Grave D, on the other hand, differs from the other three examples in that it contains a single inhumation. It was laid directly over the remains of the rectangular building, nearly one meter southeast of Grave B. Excluding the two irregular stones that delineate the grave from the south, no surrounding stone slabs were found. Due to the disruption, the upper portion of the skeleton is missing. The remaining leg bones suggest that the deceased was not buried in a contracted position, a practice that can also be found during the Early Bronze II period. Several grave goods were discovered around the preserved part of the skeleton, including a bone implement lying near the waist (Cat. No. 6), a spindle whorl found between the legs (Cat. No. 5), and a sea-shell placed at the feet (Cat. No. 7).

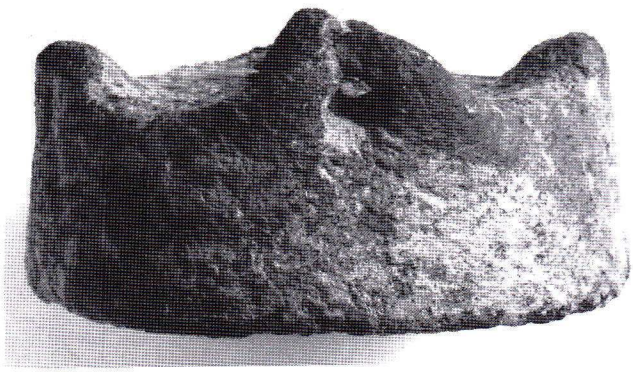


Fig. 4. Lid of a jar from Grave A (Cat. No. 1).

Discussion of the Evidence

With the exception of the copper pin in Grave A (Fig. 3e, Cat. No. 2), most of the grave goods do not appear to be artifacts specially fashioned as funerary goods. Instead, they appear to have been possessions of the deceased that were used during life and subsequently deposited with him or her after death. This is not surprising in view of the fact that the Early Bronze II period cist graves of western Anatolia and the Cycladic islands were poorly furnished, although rich graves occasionally occur. The number and quality of grave goods are generally an index of the wealth of the owner; our burials from Tenedos/Bozcaada do not fall into the category of rich graves, and common people were probably buried in them. This area seems to have been occupied by a small group whose grave goods reveal no signs of social stratification. The simplicity of the rectangular building, above which this cluster of graves was found, also points to a group with no significant wealth.

We can infer from the available archaeological evidence that the society of the island had much in common with those of northwestern Anatolia and the northeastern Aegean islands. This is not astonishing, but nevertheless good to know. The geographical position of the island facilitated the arrival of ideas and artifacts from neighboring cultures. In terms of small finds, the impact of the Troad was far greater than that of any other site in the Aegean. For instance, a lid of a pyxis-like jar (Fig. 3a, 4) found in Grave B can be compared stylistically to those from Troia I, Kumtepe 1c, and Beşik-Yassıtepe in the Troad, although they also resemble examples from Thermi town I–III, Emporio IV, and Poliochni Blue and Green periods.[8] Likewise, two biconical clay spindle whorls found in the graves B and C (Fig. 3b–c) find their closest stylistic parallels at sites in the Troad, including Troia I and Kumtepe 1c.[9] Moreover, the type of bone implement (Fig. 3d) found in Grave C was also very common at Troia as well as sites in the northeastern Aegean islands, such as Yenibademli Höyük on Imbros/Gökçeada, and Thermi on Lesbos.[10] The copper pin with spiral head (Cat. No. 2) can also be paralleled within the northeastern Aegean. Although not identical, comparable copper pins at Thermi and Troia feature loops formed by the bending of the end of the shaft, which fall in Type III in Branigan's classification.[11] These stylistically comparable examples from the Troad and the northeastern Aegean islands help to establish the cultural and chronological affiliation of our artifacts, implying that the island was an integral part of the northeastern Aegean cultural zone.

The information derived from the analysis of the artifacts is not easily reconciled with the mortuary evidence, the study of which is potentially very significant for the recognition of ethno-cultural traits and the social status of the deceased. A variety of burial types are in evidence in western Anatolia during the Early Bronze Age, as indicated by the material uncovered at Bakla Tepe, Karataş, Iasos, and Demircihüyük, but cist graves and pithos graves were the two most common burial forms. Although the artifacts found in the graves of Tenedos/Bozcaada have close affinities with those discovered at sites in the Troad and the northeastern Aegean islands, the practice of inhumation in cist graves does not appear to be a common phenomenon in this part of the Aegean and the Troad during the Early Bronze Age. Cist graves were more common in the Cycladic islands than in northwestern Anatolia; Early Bronze II period cist graves in western Anatolia are found primarily outside the Troad and the northeastern Aegean. Only one example of this type has been found in the Troad so far, which is grave 201 from Troia.[12]

A parallel evolution of this grave type in both western Anatolia and the Cycladic islands is possible. The recovery of cist graves of pre-Bronze Age date at Kephala on Keos may indicate that Early Bronze Age cist graves have their roots in the Final Neolithic of the Cyclades.[13] The evidence from the Iasos cemetery in coastal southwestern Anatolia suggests that this burial custom may have had some Cycladic affiliation, and this proposition is fortified by the minimal number of such graves in the Troad and the northeastern Aegean islands. This is obviously at variance with the fact that the artifacts found in Early Bronze Age Tenedos/Bozcaada display great similarities with those from sites in the Troad and the northeastern Aegean islands, such as Thermi, Poliochni, and Yenibademli Höyük, rather than those of the Cycladic islands.

In the future we plan to carry out a systematic investigation of prehistoric occupation on the island. We hope to initiate a magnetic field gradient survey of the area where we expect to find further remains of the Early Bronze Age habitation. In addition to the discovery of

more mortuary and architectural evidence, we hope to obtain information regarding the subsistence and economy of the island's Early Bronze Age society by conducting archaeobotanical research. In particular, the analysis of wood remains can provide information on the island's vegetation during the sites occupation. The execution of these plans should yield a better picture of Early Bronze Age life on the island.

Catalogue

Grave A

1) Pyxis-like jar with lid [D. 7.2 cm, H. 3 cm] Fig. 3a and 4.
Hand-made with brown clay. Globular in shape with a flat base. Due to its poorly fired condition, it was impossible to remove the actual jar. However, the lid is in a better condition than the jar to which it belonged. The lid has a central wart and four perforated lugs round the edge.

2) Copper pin [L. 10.2 cm], Fig. 3e. The end of the shaft is curled up to form a spiral. Its surface is partially corroded.

3) Sea-shell (Ostrea edulis) [L. 11.5 cm, W. 10.4 cm].
Oyster shell, traces of saw marks on its one side.

4) Clay spindle whorl [H. 3.9 cm, R. 4.2 cm] Fig. 3c.
Biconical in form and crudely shaped from red clay.

Grave D

5) Clay spindle whorl [H. 1.8 cm, D. 2.2. cm]. Fig. 3b.
Biconical in form and crudely shaped from buff clay. It is smaller in size than the one found in Grave B.

6) Bone pin [L. 11.2 cm]. Fig. 3d.
This tapering bone implement was found in fragmentary condition and mended from pieces. It falls in Type 8 in Blegen's classification of bone implements from Troia.

7) Sea-shell (Ostrea edulis).
Fragment of an oyster shell.

Notes

[1] For preliminary reports see Sevinç; 1994 and 1995. Tenedos is mentioned in *Iliad* I.38, 452, XI.625, XIII.33; *Odyssey* III.159. Additional discussion of Tenedos in the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods can be found in Erdogu 2003, 19, and Davis 2001, 86–87.

[2] Levi 1967, 535; Pecorella 1977, fig. 1; Erkanal – Özkan 1999a, 340, fig. 8; 1999b, fig. 26; 2000, 269, fig. 9; Bittel 1941; Lamb 1937, fig. 18.18.

[3] Sinos 1970, 26.

[4] Korfmann 1988, Abb. 1, Beşik-Yassıtepe 1986. Übersichtsplan Troja I-Bebauung.

[5] Sevinç 1994, 314, fig. 10.

[6] Karali 1999.

[7] Sevinç 1995, 114, Fig. 2

[8] Blegen *et al.* 1950, fig. 231, no. 33 162; Korfmann 1985, fig. 8, R12 246; Özdoğan 1970, pl. 44e; Bernabò Brea 1964, 645; Lamb 1936, pls. 8, 25, no. 196; Hood 1981, fig. 102.

[9] Blegen *et al.* 1950, fig. 221; Özdoğan 1970, pl. 73a–b; Sperling 1976, pl. 71.

[10] Blegen *et al.* 1950, fig. 126; Lamb 1936, pl. 27, no. 23.

[11] Branigan 1974, 35, pl. 18.

[12] Blegen *et al.* 1950, 255, figs. 282 and 284.

[13] Coleman 1977.

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