LYKIARKHISSA

Festschrift für Havva İşkan

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YAYINLARI

Havva İşkan'a Armağan

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ISBN 978-605-9680-26-4

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Yayıncı Sertifika No / Publisher Certificate No: 14641

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Oksijen Basım ve Matbaacılık San. Tic. Ltd. Şti.

100. Yıl Mah. Matbaacılar Sit. 2. Cad. No: 202/A Bağcılar - İstanbul
Tel: +90 (212) 325 71 25 Fax: +90 (212) 325 61 99

Sertifika No / Certificate No: 29487

Yapım ve Dağıtım / Production and Distribution

Zero Prod. San. Ltd. Şti.

Abdullah Sokak, No. 17, Taksim
34433 Istanbul - Turkey
Tel: +90 (212) 244 7521 Fax: +90 (212) 244 3209
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On the Modes of Exchange in Prehistoric Lycia

Turan TAKAOĞLU*

Özet

Bu çalışma mevcut arkeolojik veriler ışığında prehistorik dönemlerde Likya bölgesi toplumlarının komşu coğrafyalarla ne tür yollarla ticari ilişkiler içinde bulunduğunu ve ne tür objelere ihtiyaç duyduklarını irdelemeyi amaçlar. Son dönemlerde Tlos kenti merkezi ve çevresinde yürütülen arkeolojik araştırmalar Likya bölgesine Neolitik dönemin başlarından itibaren bölgeye dışından ticari malların ulaştığına işaret eder. Özellikle Girmeler Mağarası buluntuları arasında hem Orta Anadolu hem de Melos adası kökenli obsidyen aletlerin ele geçmesi ve benzer durumun da Tunç Çağı boyunca Tlos kenti merkezinde stadyum çevresinde yapılan çalışmalardan anlaşılması prehistorik ticaret sistemi içinde Eşen (Ksanthos) Nehir havzasına dayalı bir ticaret yolunun önemini vurgular. Orta Kalkolitik döneme ait Tavabaşı Mağarası buluntuları ve Elmalı Ovası Aşağı Bağbaşı yerleşimi buluntuları da bölgenin bu dönemde dışa kapanık olmadığına tanıklık eder. Neolitik ve Kalkolitik dönem boyunca Likya bölgesinde var olmuş olabilecek bir tür pastoralist veya aracı tüccar modelinin yerini Erken Tunç Çağı başlarından itibaren yavaş yavaş bir bey veya şef kontrolünde daha organize bir ticarete bıraktığı özellikle Elmalı-Karataş kazılarında ele geçen metal buluntuları ışığında söylenebilir. Mevcut veriler Erken Tunç Çağı'nın özellikle II geç - IIIA evresinde daha çok dışadönük bir ticaret yaygın iken izleyen IIIB evresi - Orta Tunç Çağı I evresi ile birlikte Likya bölgesinin ticarette daha çok içe kapanmaya başladığını düşündürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Prehistorik, ticaret, obsidyen, metal, mermer figürinler*

The ways in which prehistoric Lycian societies maintained exchange relationships with neighboring regions has been an intriguing issue, since available archaeological evidence does not allow us to go far in making explicit statements (**Fig. 1**). The vagueness of information regarding the prehistoric exchange activities in Lycia is clearly related to the limited number of prehistoric sites that could easily be identified through the surface investigations in the region. The mountainous landscape of Lycia led archaeologists to search for other types of settlements such as cave sites and short-term occupied sites that were not represented by mound formations. For instance, J. Yakar previously pointed out that the Early Bronze Age settlements may have been occupied by the semi-sedentary segment of a farming community in certain areas such as the Elmalı Plain[1]. According to this theory, the mountainous environment led the societies of this region to engage in a subsistence strategy that involved farming, horticulture and animal herding, sometimes supplemented by such activities as hunting and fishing[2]. Hence, it is difficult to identify archaeologically such sites that adopted a pattern of multi-resource exploitation that required a certain degree of mobility in prehistoric times. This is probably one of the reasons why archaeologists fail to identify prehistoric settlements in areas other than fertile plains or at watersides. Excavating a site with remains displaying mobility

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1 Yakar 1998.

2 Yakar 1998, 815

patterns would have definitely been fascinating in demonstrating the role of exchange involved in semi-sedentary groups. This argument is valid because anthropological studies carried out on various aspects of the relationship between pastoralists and their settled neighbors in the Middle East demonstrated the prerequisite of exchange in the survival of pastoralism[3]. Examining the kinds of options available to pastoralists for accessing non-pastoral goods is an important tool for archaeologists studying this subject, since pastoral traders depend upon sources external to their mode of production. In this system, pastoralists herding their animals over long distances had to develop exchange relationships with the people of the settled communities to improve the conditions of their survival and to develop social relationships with societies in areas foreign to them.

Based on this premise, it is argued in this modest essay that mobility may have been a part of prehistoric life in Lycia and the pastoral trade model may have been one mode of exchange that may have taken place in the periods stretching from the Neolithic to the end of the Early Bronze Age. Pastoral traders in this sense may have been responsible for the prehistoric Lycian societies acquainting themselves with the material remains coming from other regions of western Anatolia and the Aegean through both overseas and hinterland contacts.

There were two main areas where the activities of pastoral traders may have taken place in the early periods. The Elmalı Plain, which contains numerous mound and low village settlements dating from as early as the Middle Chalcolithic to the Early Bronze Age, has so far provided the highest density of prehistoric settlements in Lycia[4]. Due to its geographic location in inner Lycia, all possible routes connecting the coastal zones with the hinterland through the uplands in one way or another may have intersected in the Elmalı Plain. The Eşen (Xanthus) River Basin is another area where prehistoric settlements existed in high numbers from as early as the initial Neolithic to the Early Bronze Age. The Eşen (Xanthus) River Basin starting with Patara at its mouth and moving inward through the area of the ancient city of Tlos was probably one of the most feasible natural routes of main communication between the societies of the Lycian littoral and those of the inner regions, including the Elmalı Plain.

In this context, an evaluation of any available exotic artifacts found in prehistoric sites located both in the Elmalı Plain and along the Eşen (Xanthus) River Basin and its immediate surroundings may provide clues to the possible pastoralism-based exchange mechanisms responsible for the distribution of movable small exotic objects, including obsidian artifacts, copper tools, marble figurines, and marine shells. Perishable commodities such as textiles, wooden objects, and salt might also have been exchanged in prehistoric Lycia, although they have left no trace in the archaeological record. The presence of casual exotic finds at certain prehistoric Lycian sites also raises the question of who was responsible for their movement through the mountainous landscape of the region using land- and/or river-based routes. It must be mentioned at the onset that the amount of exotic artifacts recovered in prehistoric Lycia is also too low to argue that the societies of this region invested a great amount of time and energy in a regular direct long-distance trade. The existing pattern of uneven distribution of prestige or exotic objects such as obsidian, copper, marine shells, and marble appears to correspond to that associated with the indirect trade model characterized by pastoral traders or even the middleman trade.

The earliest archaeological evidence on the exchange relations of prehistoric Lycian societies can be established by examining the imported obsidian artifacts, since this material does not occur locally in the region. Recent archaeological investigations conducted at the site of the Girmeler Cave near the ancient city of Tlos by a team led by T. Korkut from Akdeniz University demonstrated that the Neolithic settlers of the Girmeler Cave managed to obtain obsidian artefacts both from the Aegean island of Melos and the central Anatolian sources of Nenezi and Göllüdağ[5]. It is likely that most western Anatolian Neolithic societies acquired the Melian obsidian artefacts

3 Barth 1961; Dyson-Hudson 1972; Bates – Lees 1977.

4 Eslick 1992; Warner 1994.

5 Korkut – Takaoğlu forthcoming.

directly from specialist knappers arriving by boat with their load of obsidian in the Neolithic period. It was discussed elsewhere that some coastal villages in this system of exchange were able to benefit from maritime trade by serving as nodes of exchange in the redistribution of exotic artefacts such as the Melian obsidian[6]. This is because the Melian obsidian was not only valued for its physical appearance but also because of its exotic status. Beside the Girmeler Cave, the soundings contacted at the stadium area of Tlos also demonstrate that the Melian obsidian continued to be valued in the 3rd millennium BC along with other obsidian artefacts originating in major central Anatolian sources[7]. The preponderance of obsidian from two different sources at Early Bronze Age Tlos points to the settlement's suitable location on the land-based route which tied the west coast of Anatolia with the hinterland through the Seki Plateau and/or the Elmalı Plain.

It can be deduced from the geomorphological investigations conducted in the Eşen (Xanthus) River Basin that the Neolithic settlement once existed in the form of a mound in front of the two main galleries of the Girmeler Cave, close to the shoreline of a navigable natural embayment[8]. Thus, it is possible that Melian obsidian artefacts were brought to the sites located along the Eşen (Xanthus) River Basin by traders arriving by sea. Another possibility is that certain pastoralists transported small artefacts as obsidian artefacts in their bags and later exchanged them. Upon examining the finds from the Girmeler Cave, D. French once proposed that a pattern of transhumance might have existed between lowland and highland areas in the 6th millennium BC Lycia, in which sites such as the Girmeler Cave could have served as a station for transhumants[9]. In such a form of pastoralism, exotic artifacts such as those made from Melian obsidian could have well been items of exchange in this period. Such small prestige objects as marble Kilia figurines could be transported in the bags of these pastoralist traders acting as middlemen, although such a mode of exchange still needs further archaeological demonstration.

Besides obsidian, the external exchange relations of prehistoric Lycian societies, albeit on a small scale, can also be demonstrated archaeologically via the analyses of previously published categories of objects representing the Middle Chalcolithic period. Western Anatolia was already part of a regional and intra-regional exchange system in the Middle Chalcolithic period, as evidenced in the distribution of marble objects such as figurines, vessels and bracelets. The upland site of Kozağacı was probably one of those places where over a century ago two distinctive marble figurines were said to be found[10]. These two figurines were later placed into the category of the so-called Kilia figurines[11]. Having taken their name from the Bay of Kilia (ancient Koila) on the southern shore of the Gallipoli Peninsula where the first example of this type was found, the Kilia figurines have been noted for their very fine craftsmanship and elegance (**Fig. 2a**). They are basically characterized by broad backward-tilting heads, which contrast with a thin flat body. They have a narrow cylindrical neck and broad shoulders which slope in graceful curves ending abruptly at the elbows. The arms are sharply bent at the elbows and point upwards. These bent arms are separated from the torso by oblique incisions. The feet are also separated either by a slender cleft or by a superficial incision. The pubic triangle is occasionally marked by an incision in certain examples. Facial features such as eyes, nose, and ears are often marked by raised projections[12]. The distribution of schematic Kilia figurines, which is mainly restricted to western Anatolia, are commonly dated to the mid-5th millennium BC, although they occasionally turn up at sites of later periods probably as heirlooms. The marble workshop identified at Kulaksızlar near

6 Perlès – Takaoğlu – Gratuze 2011.

7 Korkut – Takaoğlu forthcoming.

8 Öner 1998, 207–220.

9 French 2008, 197.

10 Woodward – Ormerod 1909/1910, 105 pl. 7. 18. 19.

11 Seeher 1992, nos. 10. 11.

12 Seeher 1992; Takaoğlu 2002.

Akhisar Town in Central-Western Anatolia was probably one place where the Kilia figurines originated in this period[13]. The Kilia figurines from Kozağacı unfortunately are missing their heads (**Fig. 2b–c**). The recovery of these two examples at Kozağacı clearly indicates that there was a form of long-distance exchange mechanism responsible for the distribution of the Kilia figurines in the mid-5th millennium BC. The close proximity of Kozağacı to the Elmalı Plain may explain one of the possible routes for how the marble Kilia figurines originating in the Akhisar/Manisa Plain in Central-Western Anatolia made their way here in the 5th millennium BC. This is not striking in view of the fact that the Middle Chalcolithic pottery assemblage contemporary with the Kilia figurines from Kozağacı are also in existence at the site of the Lower Bağbaşı in the Elmalı Plain[14]. The recovery of Kilia figurines at Malkayası Cave in the Latmos Mountains and Çine-Tepecik and prehistoric Aphrodisias in the Meander River Basin area prove that such marble figurines were also in demand in 5th millennium BC in Caria, in a way that they were valued in the Lycian uplands during this same period. The presence of two marble Kilia figurines at Kozağacı in this sense may also have resulted from the activities of pastoralist traders.

We will apparently know much when the analyses of the Middle Chalcolithic finds from the Girmeler Cave and the nearby Tavabaşı Cave will be completed. However, the preliminary examination of pottery from the Middle Chalcolithic level dating between 4800 and 4500 BC on the basis of radiocarbon dating at lower cave at Tavabaşı proves that the site was already a part of the culture *koine* of this period that covered most parts of the western Anatolian littoral from the Troad to the Lycia[15]. Furthermore, the rock paintings documented on the façade of the lower cave at Tavabaşı display close links to the tradition attested at many caves identified at the Latmos Mountains area to the north[16]. The middle Chalcolithic was clearly a dynamic period when there was a rise in the level of cultural interactions and exchange and Lycia was definitely a part of this system.

There is also evidence of exchange during the later stages of the Late Chalcolithic site of Bağbaşı in the Elmalı Plain. A single obsidian blade found at Bağbaşı is supposed to derive from outside the region[17]. Bağbaşı also yielded other forms of exotic artifacts, including a green-stone axe, a pendant made from a Mediterranean marine shell (*Donax trunculus*), and three copper objects[18]. Because all these materials are not locally available in the Elmalı region, they may also have been introduced. Those three copper tools identified at Bağbaşı could also be viewed as exotic items, since the rarity of copper artifacts and the cost involved in their production classify them as valuables. Because the Elmalı Plain lacked local copper resources, there might have been a mechanism by which the finished product arrived in this period, though the idea that the technology (e.g. itinerant metalsmiths and resources) arrived could also be taken into consideration. It is reasonable to argue in this sense that those tools made of copper at Late Chalcolithic levels at Bağbaşı may have been introduced in the form of finished artifacts by pastoralists. Utilizing a series of analyses, Ch. Eslick also demonstrated that at least a single pot was introduced into the Late Chalcolithic pottery assemblage of the site[19].

The archaeological evidence we possess for pre-Bronze Age exchange in Lycia implies that small movable objects may have moved on a sporadic basis following the previously established routes. Nevertheless, there seems to have occurred significant changes in the modes of exchange following the later stages of the Early Bronze I period in Lycia, as the major site of Karataş in the Elmalı Plain clearly demonstrates. Archaeological excavations initiated at the site of Karataş-Semayük in 1963 by M. J. Mellink from Bryn Mawr College brought to light an important Early

13 Takaoğlu 2002.

14 Eslick 1988.

15 Korkut – Işın – Takaoğlu forthcoming

16 Korkut et al. 2015.

17 Eslick 1992, 37, no. 277.

18 Eslick 1988, 50, nos. 313. 329. 322–324.

19 Eslick 1992, 93.

Bronze Age settlement[20], which could be regarded as a chiefdom. According to Ch. Eslick, the level I-II (Early Bronze I period) settlement dominated by a centrally-placed large communal building of economic character with an exceptional storage capacity may have been a redistribution center and its occupant sufficiently distinguished from the rest of the community to have been a chief[21]. The exceptional form of burial and wealth of the deceased in grave AQ, contemporary of the large house, have also been linked to this household, confirming the existence of social differentiation among the members of the community[22]. Certain elites controlling the wealth might have managed to acquire objects of status expression to differentiate themselves from the rest of the society. Thus, elites needed exotic high-value items to maintain their wealth and prestige (*e.g.,* **Fig. 4**). Although the graves belonging to the period to which this large communal building of economic character belonged yielded gold, silver and copper-based tools and jewelry, the settlement with the large building did not yield enough evidence to show the extent of the exchange network that prevailed in this period, due to a great extent of harm made to the building by later period activities. However, there is no reason not to argue that there may have been a well-organized exchange mechanism involving metal artifacts taking place on a regular basis during this period.

The late Early Bronze II/Early Bronze IIIA in the Aegean marked the development of seafaring trade both in finished products and raw materials. Based on the exchange of Melian obsidian, metal objects and Cycladic pottery, Ourania Kouka argued that the societies of the eastern Aegean and Western Anatolian littoral demonstrate a strong extroversion in the Early Bronze I to Early Bronze II period and this extroversion became more intense in the late Early Bronze II to Early Bronze IIIA period[23]. Regarding Lycia of this period, the nature of exchange relationships can be scrutinized by using the Melian obsidian artifacts which arrived through overseas contacts. The inland city of Tlos was part of a network of Early Bronze Age exchange, as the obsidians recovered from the soundings in the stadium area near the acropolis indicate. The Melian obsidian artifacts apparently moved towards the Lycian hinterland through a land-based route starting from Patara, located in a natural bay on the mouth of the Eşen (Xanthus) River Basin. This natural bay was most likely utilized opportunistically by the Early Bronze Age coastal settlers of Patara to engage with the outside world in this period. With its suitable natural harbor[24], Patara was probably one of the major centers in the seaborne trade that involved the Lycian coast during the 3rd millennium BC, since The Lycian coastline is characteristically rugged, with few broad coastal plains. The strategic location of Patara here can best be compared with Troy and Miletus, both also located on wide, natural bays at river deltas. At present, relatively little is known about the exact locations of the Bronze Age harbor at Patara. The ships of modest sizes in this period probably had the choice of either landing on the sandy shores of Patara or anchoring on the sides of Tepecik where soundings identified Early Bronze Age sherds. As F. Işık has previously rightly argued[25], no seaborne trade activity involving the Lycian coast could have existed without the harbor of Patara. The suitable location of Patara as one of the most likely Bronze Age harbor sites could explain one of the most likely routes through which the Melian obsidians reached Tlos. However, the island of Melos was not the only source on which the Early Bronze Age settlers of Tlos depended, since obsidian from both the Central Anatolian sources of Nenezi and Göllüdağ have also been attested at Tlos. Now one can take into the account the land-based route coming probably from the Lake District region. Although we will have detailed information about this issue when the analyses of obsidian artifacts from prehistoric levels at Tlos is completed, it can still be pondered that there might have been a regular exchange involving obsidian artifacts in the Early Bronze Age.

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20 Mellink 1964, 269–278; Mellink 1965, 241–251; Mellink 1972, 257–269; Mellink 1973, 293–307.

21 Eslick 1988, 37.

22 Eslick 1988, 34.

23 Kouka 2013, 578.

24 Öner 1998.

25 Işık 2007, 230; Işık 2011, 16.

In contrast to the late EB II/early EB IIIA periods, the Early Bronze IIIB demonstrates an introversion and decline in exchange activities with other regions in the eastern Aegean and Western Anatolian littoral[26]. There is also a marked continuation from the Early Bronze IIIB to Middle Bronze I period. The promising sites of Patara and Tlos will probably be one of those sites where this transitional period will most likely best be observed. At this stage of research, we also have to wait for the initiation of excavations at such sites as Eceler in the Seki Plateau and Çaltılar in the upper reaches of the Xanthus (Eşen) River Basin[27] to make better inferences regarding the external relations of the prehistoric Lycian societies.

26 Kouka 2013, 577.

27 Aksoy – Köse 2005; Momigliano et al. 2011; Momigliano – Aksoy 2015.

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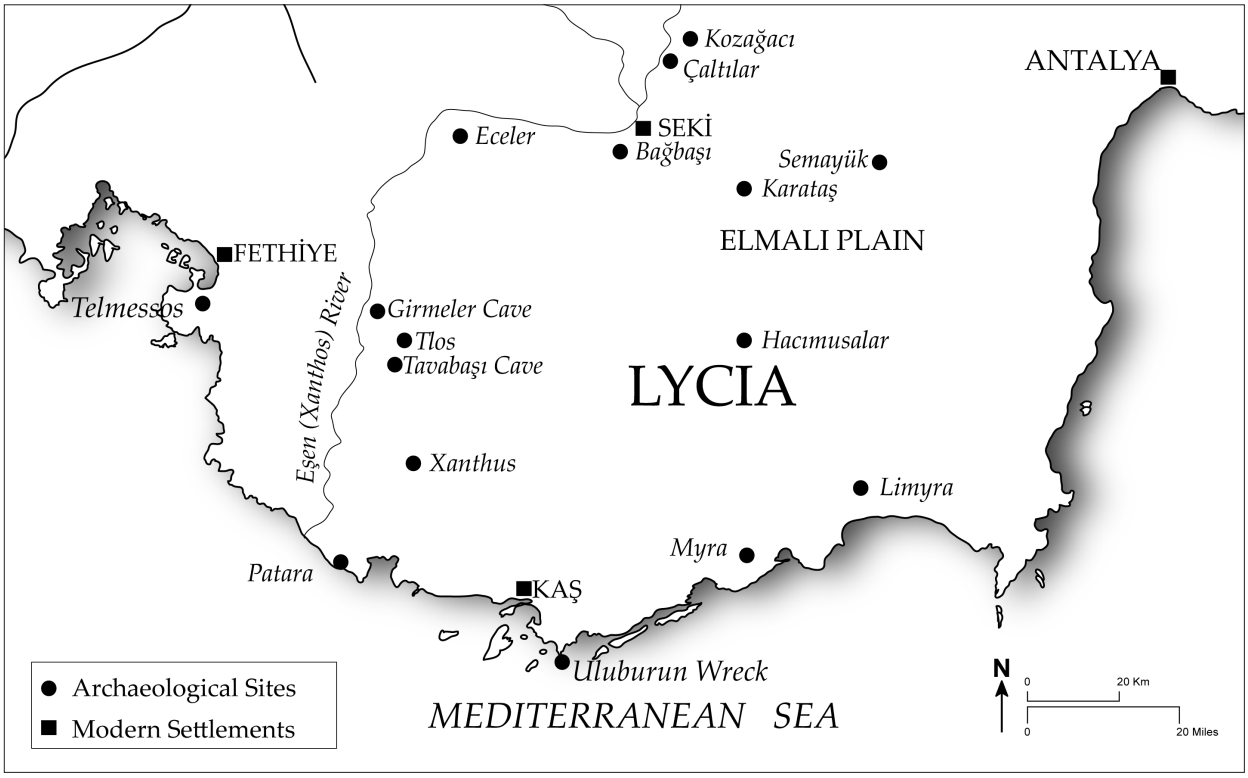


Fig. 1 Map locating major sites in the text

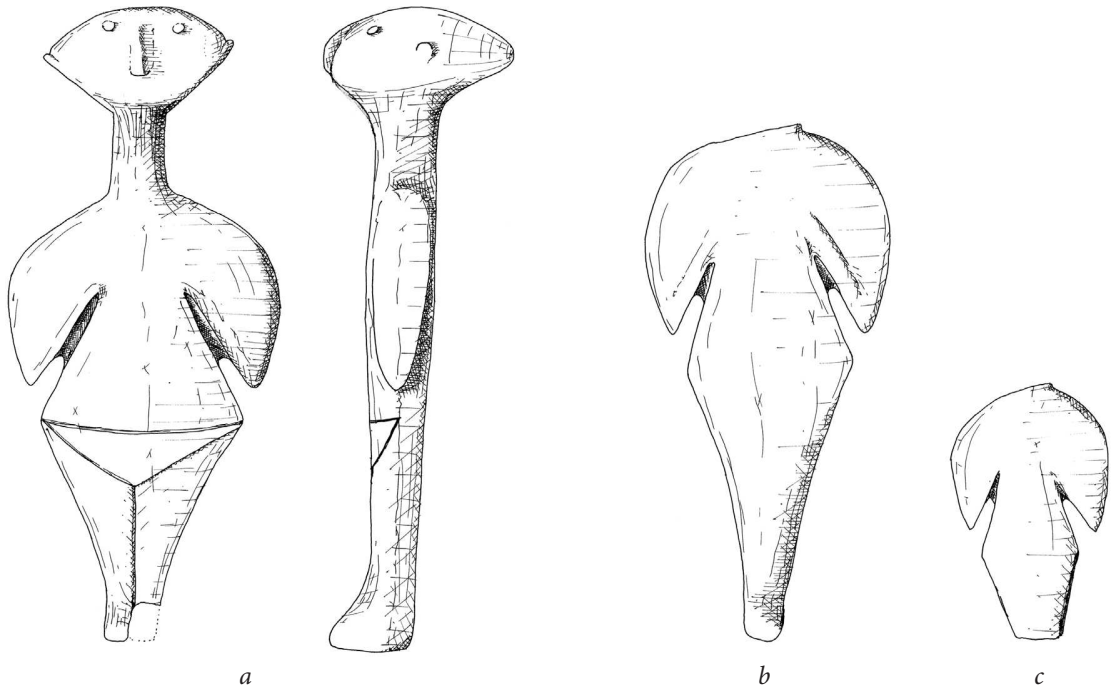


Fig. 2 a) Line drawing of a typical Kilia figurine, which was most likely manufactured at the 5th millennium BC Kulaksızlar Workshop in the Akhisar/Manisa region in central western Anatolia;
b–c) Line drawings of Kilia figurines reportedly originated in Kozağacı in the Elmalı Plain

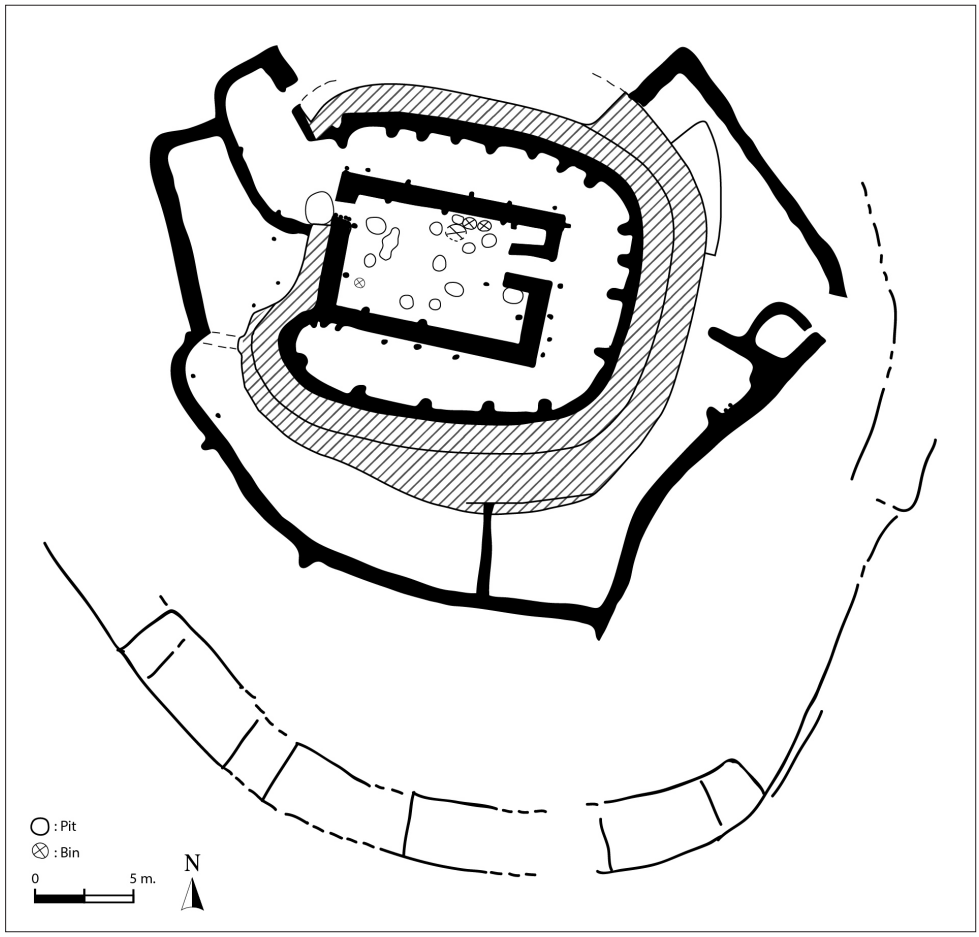


Fig. 3 Early Bronze Age site of Karataş with a special function communal building with economic character in the center (Re-drawn after Eslick 1988, fig. 3.12)

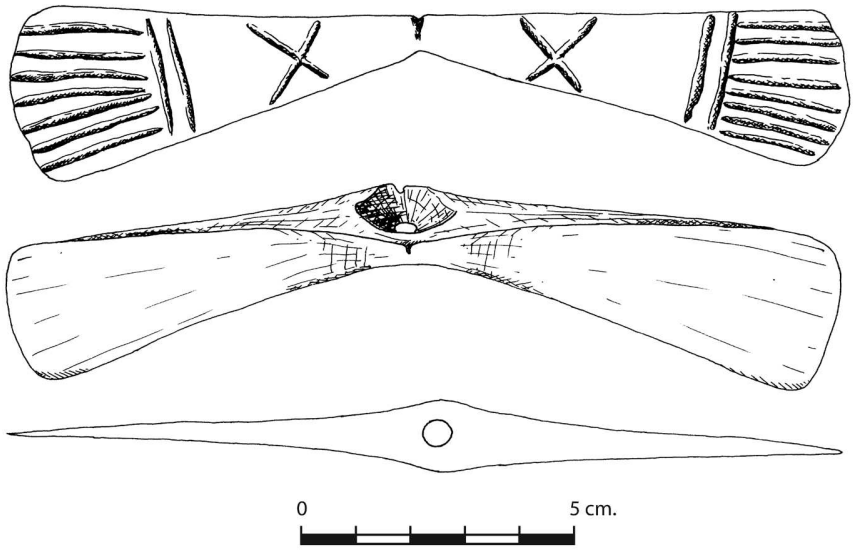


Fig. 4 A silver double axe with incised decoration from Early Bronze Age Karataş (Level V), which was most likely a high-value item of social display (Re-drawn after Mellink 1967, pl. 84 fig. 50a)