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MIDDLE CHALCOLITHIC FINDS FROM DAGDERE IN THE AKHISAR-MANISA REGION

Turan TAKAOĞLU *

Keywords: *Marble Kilia figurine • Conic Rhyton • Middle Chalcolithic Period • Prehistoric Exchange*

Abstract: This paper aims to examine a small assemblage of marble objects and related pot sherds identified on the surface of the prehistoric site of Dağdere lying about 500 m south of the homonymous village. These finds were collected from the site after the ground subsided due to the modern coal mining activity. The assemblage in general could broadly be dated to the mid fifth millennium BC in the Middle Chalcolithic period. Because all the fragments of marble Kilia figurines, conical rhyta and bowls found on the surface of Dağdere once belonged to finished objects, it may be assumed that they were actually imports from the region's well-known marble workshop site of Kulaksızlar, located nearly 30 km from the site. Considering the question of who the craftsmen of Kulaksızlar produced these marble figurines and vessels for, and why these objects appear at places far from their workshop, the Dağdere finds could be accepted as archaeological manifestation of intra-regional exchange between the settlers of Kulaksızlar and other settlements located around it in the Akhisar-Manisa region during the Middle Chalcolithic period. This data complements our knowledge of the existence of a developed network of inter-regional interaction involving the marble products of Kulaksızlar workshop.

AKHİSAR-MANİSA BÖLGESİNDE DAĞDERE YERLEŞİMİ ORTA KALKOLİTİK BULUNTULARI

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Mermer Kilya Heykelciği • Konik rhyton • Orta Kalkolitik Dönem • Prehistorik ticaret*

Özet: Bu çalışma Akhisar/Manisa yöresinde Dağdere Köyü'ne 500 metre güneyinde tespit edilen ve büyük oranda kömür ocağı faaliyetleri sebebiyle tahrip olan aynı adlı prehistorik yerleşimde tespit edilen mermer buluntuları ve onlarla beraber bulunan çanak çömlek buluntularını değerlendirir. Söz konusu Dağdere yüzey buluntuları genel anlamda Orta Kalkolitik dönem içinde M.Ö. 5. bin yıl ortalarına tarihlenebilir. Dağdere yerleşimi yüzeyinde ele geçen tüm Kilya heykelciği, konik rhyton ve kase parçalarının bitmiş ürünlere ait olması bu eserlerin yaklaşık olarak 30 km uzaklıkta bulunan bölgenin önemli mermer atölyelerinden Kulaksızlar ürünü olabileceklerini düşündürmektedir. Kulaksızlar mermer atölyesi zanaatkârlarının mermer heykelcik ve kapları kim için ürettiği ve bu ürünlerin neden üretim yerlerinden uzak yerleşimlerde el geçtiği konusu ilgi çekici olma özelliğini korurken Dağdere yerleşimi buluntuları bölge içinde Orta Kalkolitik dönemde Kulaksızlar ve onun çevresinde bulunan yerleşimler arasında bir tür iletişim ağı olduğuna işaret etmektedir. Bu veri bu bakımdan daha önce gösterilen Kulaksızlar mermer atölyesi ürünlerinin uzak mesafelere dağılımını sağlayan bir iletişim ağı dışında bölge içinde farklı bir iletişim ağının daha parçası olduğunu gösterir.

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A small assemblage of fourteen pieces of marble objects has recently been identified by archaeologists from Manisa Museum on the surface of the prehistoric site of Dağdere (meaning "Mountain River") near the town of Akhisar in Manisa Province in central-Western Anatolia (Map. 1). This small marble surface assemblage collected from the remaining part of the settlement comprises fragments of seven Kilia figurines, one schematic violin-shaped figurine, four conical rhyta, one open bowl, and one bracelet. These marble fragments were found on the surface of the site along with over a dozen pot sherds easily assignable to the Middle Chalcolithic period on the basis of comparable examples recovered from documented excavations.

The prehistoric site of Dağdere, deriving its name from the homonymous village about 500 m to the south, is basically a flat/extended settlement partly lost at present because of the ground subsidence due to modern coal mining carried out on adjacent land to the west (Fig. 1). It could be deduced from the collapsed ground that the thickness of the cultural deposits above the virgin soil once ranged between 20 cm and 180 cm, depending on the natural topography on which the settlement was founded.

The discovery of these diagnostic finds came to my notice when I was carrying out work as a member of the Regional Committee for the Protection of the Cultural Heritage of Izmir in the area in the summer of 2015. As an archaeologist who had undertaken a site survey at the Chalcolithic marble workshop of Kulaksızlar in the past, the discovery of these broken marble objects representing Kilia figurines, pointed rhyta, a bowl, and a bracelet collected from the surface of the Dağdere site, along with pottery dated to the Middle Chalcolithic revived my excitement regarding this site. I then immediately paid a visit to the site with archaeologists from Manisa Museum in order to a get a sense of how Dağdere relate to a possible exchange network that the settlers of this site may have developed with Kulaksızlar, located only 30 kilometers away. The reason is these these marble objects found at Dağdere might well have originated in Kulaksızlar, a mid fifth millennium BC workshop site that concentrated on the manufacture of objects such as Kilia figurines and conical rhyta, as well as other forms of vessels and figurines.[1] At present, there are still many problems surrounding the chronology and patterns of the production, distribution and consumption of Kulaksızlar products. These problems have been hampered by the fact that the workshop site of Kulaksızlar is still unexcavated.

In this context, I present here the marble objects found at Dağdere because of their relevance to Kulaksızlar products. One striking feature of Dağdere is that it is located on a plateau about 790 m. above sea level on the mountains that rise bordering the fertile Akhisar Plain to the east. This is because such a site has not been previously encountered in the region, as other sites were most often found often on alluvial plains or the lower slopes of hills surrounding them. Thus, it must have been an immense enterprise at that time to bring marble objects to Dağdere when one considers the moun-

1 Dinç 1996a; Dinç 1996b; Takaoğlu 2001; Takaoğlu 2002; Takaoğlu 2005.

tainous topography between that site and Kulaksızlar. The evidence from Dağdere overall may indicate that the carefully-made marble Kulaksızlar products, known by their canon of design and proportions, were deemed highly valued by the communities in which they were used, both in the Akhisar region in general and western Anatolia as a whole. It must also be mentioned here that sites with marble Kilia figurines and conical rhyta are known at other sites around Kulaksızlar within the Akhisar region. A thorough sourcing study would prove fruitful to demonstrate explicitly the presence of an intra-regional network of exchange involving the marble artifacts being made at Kulaksızlar.

Four broken pieces of marble were found at Dağdere belonging to the conical rhyton type, which is characterized by a body tapering to a point and two symmetrically opposed vertical lugs with horizontal perforation for suspension on the upper part just below the rim. All these four fragments belong to finished conical rhyta that were most likely introduced to the site from elsewhere. Metrical analysis indicates that they all belonged to different conical rhyta of varying sizes. Among these four examples, three represent pointed base fragments that all preserve slight traces of rotary marks from the hollowing out of their interiors, while their exterior surfaces are all finely worked as one might expect on finished marble objects (Fig. 2.1-3, Fig. 4.1-3). The last example is a body fragment near the pointed base, as the tapering body indicates (Fig. 2.4, Fig. 4.4).

It has already been demonstrated elsewhere that the conical rhyta was one of the most salient features of most fifth millennium BC sites in Western Anatolia and the Aegean islands.[2] Such a distinct type of vessel could not be related simply to the activities of daily life. They were clearly items of social and symbolic value. This is because at least one example turned out from most excavated western Anatolian sites that revealed archaeological evidence for occupation during the centuries around the middle of the fifth millennium BC. Sites where marble conical rhyton were found in western Anatolia include Liman Tepe, Çine-Tepecik, Kulaksızlar, Demirci-höyük Gülpınar, Kumtepe, Beşik-Sivritepe, and Bozköy-Hanaytepe.[3] Among these sites, Kulaksızlar remains to only place where the production of the conical marble rhyton type has been documented in western Anatolia. As is well known, the conical rhyton was one of the major products of Kulaksızlar marble workshop, along with so-called Kilia figurines and various bowl types, all documented through analysis of the manufacturing debris and related tools found there during systematic surface investigations.[4] The Kulaksızlar workshop has been dated broadly to the middle of the fifth millennium BC on the basis of homogeneous surface pottery recovered from the site.

Besides conical rhyta the small marble object assemblage from Dağdere also includes a single fragment from a bowl. It is a rim fragment representing a small

2 Takaoğlu – Bamyacı 2017.

3 As is well known, such conical rhyta were also common at the sites of the Aegean islands such as Tigani on Samos Kephala on Keos, and Koukonesi on Lemnos and Naxos (For a most recent evaluation, see Takaoğlu – Bamvacı 2017).

4 Dinç 1996a; Dinç 1996b; Takaoğlu 2001.

open bowl made of fine-grained creamy-white marble (Fig. 2.5, Fig. 4.5).

Another curious fragment identified at Dağdere belongs to a marble bracelet (Fig. 2.6). Current data do not allow us to argue in favor of a widespread use of marble bracelets during the Middle Chalcolithic. No evidence for a workshop that could be linked to the manufacture of marble bracelets dating to the Middle Chalcolithic period has been discovered anywhere in western Anatolia. Kulaksızlar is the only place where unfinished fragments of marble bracelets are attested, albeit in small numbers. Nonetheless, bracelets were apparently more valued in the Neolithic and Early Chalcolithic periods than they were in the Middle Chalcolithic, as the finds from Orman Fidanlığı and Kanlıtaş in the Eskişehir region and Ulucak Höyük in the Izmir region point out.[5]

A flat schematic violin-shaped figurine found at Dağdere also deserves special mention here, since such examples have so far rarely been documented in pre-Bronze Age contexts in western Anatolia. The figurine is of fine grained creamy-white marble (Fig. 3.7, Fig. 5.7). The most notable feature of this flat figurine is the arm stumps. The figurine is missing its head, as the preserved small part of the base of the neck indicates. The head was probably triangular in shape, tapering upward. At first glance, this figurine recalls typical Early Bronze Age western Anatolian or Aegean Grotta-Pelos phase violin shape figurines in terms of outline. This particular figurine probably belonged to a precursor category of flat schematic figurines that gave way to the violin figurines in the beginning of the Early Bronze Age. Marble violin-shaped figurines displaying analogies with the Dağdere example are common on the Cycladic islands of Saliagos near Antiparos and Andros, as well as at the Upper Cave of Ayio Gala on Chios.[6] The example from Saliagos belongs more-or-less to the same period as the one from Dağdere, while the second analogous violin-shaped figurine reported from the site of Strofilas on Andros dates from the Final Neolithic period in Greek chronology. The Dağdere example is important in this context as it verifies the co-presence of a precursor type to the Early Bronze Age violin-shaped flat marble figurines of western Anatolia. A comparable violin-shaped figurine recovered from Malkayası Cave in the Latmos Mountains region is another evidence to demonstrate the presence of this type in pre-Bronze Age western Anatolia, since most finds from the cave could temporally fall into the fifth millennium BC. [7] A similar violin-shaped figurine revealed at Çukuriçi Höyük was dated to the Early Bronze I period, although it was found in a filling layer.[8] This figurine could have belonged to the assemblages of the fifth or fourth millennium BC habitations of the settlements that were not identified in excavated areas. The recovery of a fragment of what appears to be a violin-shaped marble figurine at Kuruçay seems to indicate that the origins of this type

5 Efe 2001; Baysal ve diğ. 2015; Çevik 2017, fig. 8.

6 Evans – Renfrew 1968, 63, fig. 76.1; Renfrew 2017, 27, fig. 3.7; Televantou 2008, 45; Televantou 2017, 44, fig. 5.10; Hood 1981, 67, 69, fig. 44.39.

7 Peschlow-Bindokat – Gerber 2012, 74, fig. 41 (center).

8 Schwall – Horejs 2017, 55, fig. 3.2.

could date back to as early as the Early Chalcolithic period in western Anatolia.[9]

It is no surprise that fragments of marble Kilia figurines also turned up at Dağdere, as such artifacts are commonly found at settlements where marble conical rhyta are also found. A total of seven fragments of marble Kilia figurines were collected from the surface. The first example is a torso broken off at the base of the neck and at the waist (Fig. 3.8, Fig. 5.8). The head, neck, and lower part of the body are missing. It preserves part of the pubic triangle marked by a light incision. The arms, sharply bent at the elbows, are set off from the body by oblique cuts. The second torso, smaller in size than the first, is also broken off at the base of the neck and the waist (Fig. 3.9, Fig. 5.9). Its front preserves a certain degree of calcareous incrustation. The third example is a fragment of torso that preserves only the lower part of the cylindrical neck and one forearm sharply bent at the elbow (Fig. 3.10, Fig. 5.10). A diagonal cut sculpturally distinguishes the bent forearm from the body. The arm in this example is slightly raised. The fourth example is a waist fragment preserving the pubic triangle marked by incisions (Fig. 3.11, Fig. 5.11). The remaining three Kilia figurine fragments are heads broken off at the neck. The first head is noted for its sculpturally raised nose, eyes, and ears (Fig. 3.12, Fig. 5.12), while the second head has only its nose raised (Fig. 3.13, Fig. 5.13). The third head, which is three times larger than the first two heads, has no sculpturally raised ears, eyes or nose (Fig. 3.14, Fig. 5.14). This large head preserves part of the cylindrical neck. All of these six marble fragments contain a brown patina resulting from the dark brown soil in which they rested for millennia. As highly valued objects of symbolic use, Kilia figurines were also concomitant with other Middle Chalcolithic western Anatolian communities as they were found at many documented excavations such as Aphrodisias, Çine-Tepecik, Çukuriçi Höyük, Malkayası Cave, and Karain Cave.[10]

In addition to the marble objects, a small assemblage of pot sherds was also collected from the site in order to place the site in its temporal context in relative terms (Fig. 6). The pottery from Dağdere is handmade with a uniform fabric. The variation observed in surface color must have derived from the uncontrolled temperature of the firing. The closest parallels for the pottery from Dağdere come from the synchronous neighbor site of Kulaksızlar, where analogous pot sherds have also been identified during surveys. Among the pot sherds from Dağdere, two fragments represent bowls, with high upraised handles bearing knob-like projections near the base (Fig. 6.15-16). This type can be described as one of the characteristic pot shapes in Middle Chalcolithic. Another characteristic pot shape of this period is the type of bowl having an upraised mushroom-shaped handle, which is represented by a single fragment at Dağdere (Fig. 6.17). Two fragments of vertical strap handles, each surmounted by a wart, most likely belonged to shoulder-handled large jars typical of the period (Fig. 6.18-19). The third vertical strap

[9] Duru 2008, 105, fig. 188; Duru 2016, 151, fig. 546.

[10] Joukowsky 1986, figs. 207-208; Günel 2017, fig. 9; Schwall – Horejs 2017, 54, fig. 3.1; Peschlow-Bindokat 2012, fig. 41; Seeher 1988, fig. 3.2; Kartal – Yalçınkaya 2012, figs. 5-6.

handle fragment, again with a knob-like projection, was apparently part of a large belly-handled jar (Fig. 6.20). One body fragment with a vertical strap handle surmounted by a wart may have belonged to a large open jar (Fig. 6.21). The last pot sherd introduced here is the rim fragment of an open jar with vertical strap handle rising above the rim (Fig. 6.22).

Recent archaeological data from western Anatolia points to a proliferation of sites dating to the Middle Chalcolithic period, broadly between 4900/4800 BC and 4300 BC. One of the conclusions that could be drawn from the Dağdare finds is that archaeologists should not search only for settlements occupied in the Middle Chalcolithic in the form of mound-type archaeological sites. A substantial number of small Middle Chalcolithic sites could be expected to have existed on the lower slopes of the hills surrounding the fertile alluvial Akhisar Plain (e.g., Kulaksızlar). The Dağdere evidence now indicates that settlements may be found on high elevations far from the alluvial plains or the lower slopes of hills encircling the plains in the Middle Chalcolithic period. Moreover, recent investigations carried out in southwestern Anatolia proved that cave sites were also common during Middle Chalcolithic (e.g., Tavabaşı Cave, Malkayası Cave, Karain Cave). Thus, the recognition of Middle Chalcolithic finds at Dağdere holds promise that an excavation might be rewarding. Such an excavation might help to fill the gap in our knowledge of the pre-Bronze Age of the region before the archaeological record is irretrievably lost due to ongoing mining activities in the adjacent land.

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Map 1: Map showing Dağdere and other major Chalcolithic sites in central-western Anatolia.

Figure 1: View of remaining part of Dağdere after subsidence due to nearby coal mining activity.

Figure 2: Line drawings of fragments of conical marble rhyta (1-4), an open bowl (5) and a marble bracelet (6) from Dağdere.

Figure 3: Line drawings of schematic flat violin-shaped marble figurine with miss-ing head (7) and six marble Kilia figurine fragments from Dağdere (8-14).

Figure 4: Fragments of conical marble rhyta (1-4), an open bowl (5) and a mar-ble bracelet (6) from Dağdere.

Figure 5: A schematic flat violin-shaped marble figurine with missing head (7) and six marble Kilia figurine fragments from Dağdere (8-14).

Figure 6: Middle Chalcolithic pot sherds found on the surface of the site along with marble finds: (15) stump of a bowl with uprising handle, (16) handle frag-ment of a bowl with upraised handle, (17) mushroom-shaped handle from a bowl (?), (18-20) knobbed vertical strap han-dles, from large jars, (20) knobbed vertical handle from a belly-handled jar, 21) wall fragment with a knobbed vertical strap handle from a jar, (22) rim fragment of an open jar with knobbed strap handle rising above the rim. All of these pot sherds were found over the surface of the site along with marble object fragments.

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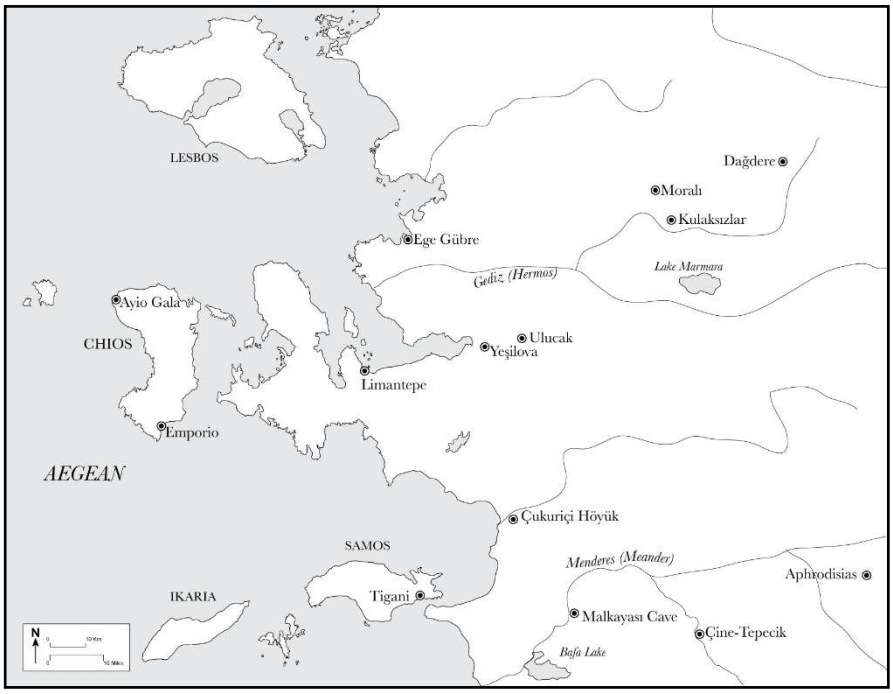
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Map 1



Figure 1

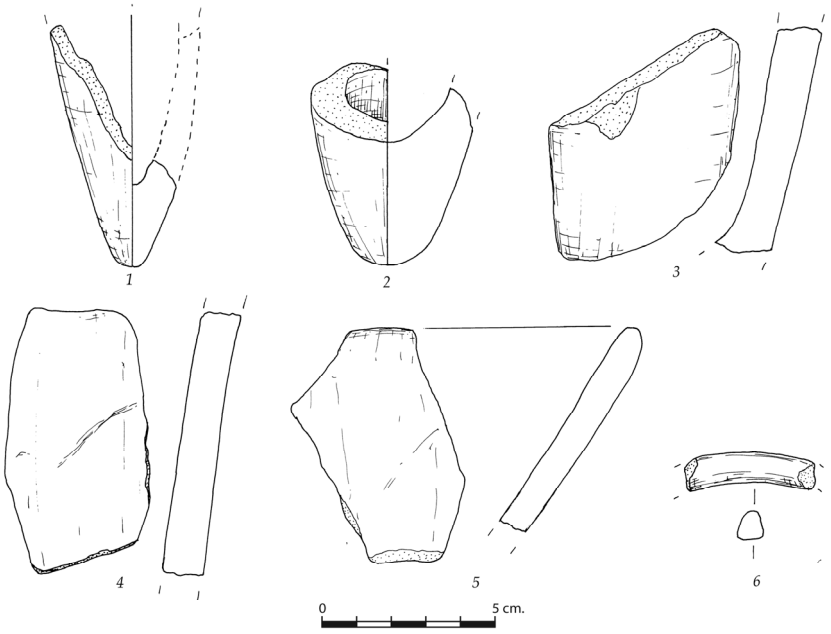


Figure 2

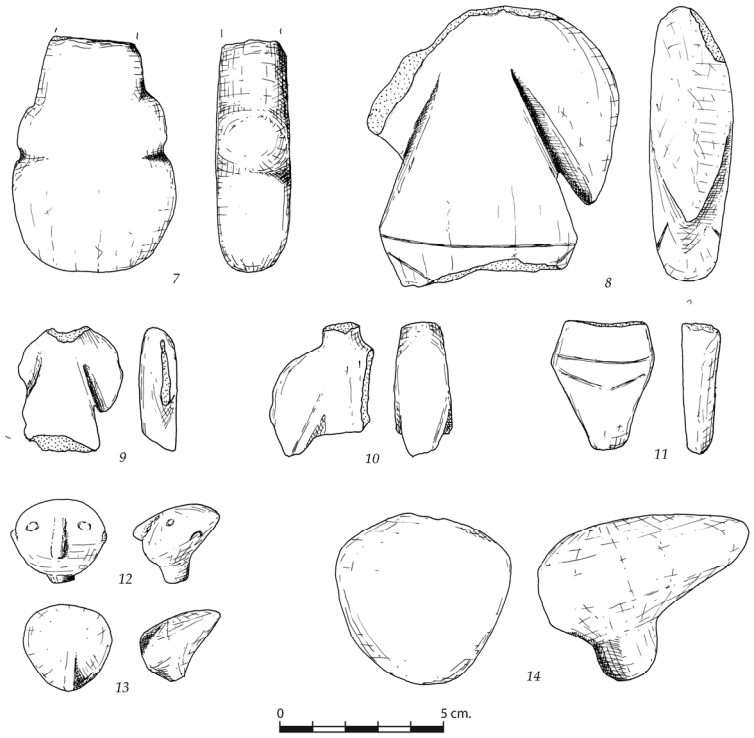


Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6