

# EARLY BRONZE AGE ELITES AND LONG DISTANCE RELATIONS

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## Introduction

In my paper I focus on Early Bronze Age, on particular, based on our understanding “rich” or “extraordinary” burials, (metal) artefacts and cultural contacts in Central-North Anatolia and beyond.

The examination of graves and hoards containing outstanding objects of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium BC (e.g. Troy, Alacahöyük, Horoztepe, Arslantepe) serves as a mirror to the development and complexity of societies during this time. It appears as if there was the need for exceptional grave forms, exotic grave goods and extravagant rituals in the urbanized and also centralized regions in EBA Anatolia<sup>1</sup>. But what we definitively see is that rare forms and precious materials in these tombs and deposits can be seen as indicators for long distance relations and intense communication.

In Neolithic and Chalcolithic it is more difficult to trace the changing of organizational structures, there are less arguments pointing to a more complex society, at least according to the current state of research.<sup>2</sup> Generally, graves reveal information on these issues. However, there are only a few excavated graveyards or single burials belonging to these earlier periods, therefore only limited statements on stratification of society can be made. Most of the discovered burials dating to the (late) 4<sup>th</sup> Millennium were intramural, i.e. in the settlements, for example Alişar Höyük (Özgüç, 1948, pp.10-11, 60-61). Mostly these are infant burials under the floors of houses, whereas adult burials are extremely rare and contain generally few grave goods. The general picture of early graves in Chalcolithic Anatolia shows jar burials containing mostly children and simple earthen pits with adult bodies in flexed position (Welton, 2010, pp.116-123). In fact we do not know where and how the majority of the population were buried in these times.

Nevertheless, the end of Chalcolithic and especially the Early Bronze Age are characterized by a shift in traditions and we recognize significant changes

concerning the socio-cultural, economic and technological situations (Yener, 2000, pp.44-70; Cevik, 2007, p.137). These changes are often, at least for South-East-Anatolia, marked by bigger, often fortified settlements and monumental buildings (Yener, 2000, pp.67-70). Arslantepe/Malatya is one of the examples for an early urbanised settlement (Yener, 2000, pp.48-57). Regarding burial customs we see the shift from intramural burials to more extensive, extramural cemeteries (Welton, 2010, p.124).

Moreover we observe an intensification of mining activities. Early copper exploitation is documented, for example in mining areas of Kozlu/Tokat (Wagner and Öztunalı, 2000, p.49), Murgul/Artvin (Wagner, et al., 1989, pp.653-658; Wagner and Öztunalı, 2000, p.46) and Derekutuğun/Çorum (Wagner and Öztunalı, 2000, p.50; Yalçın and İpek, 2011; Yalçın and İpek, 2012). Also for early silver production e.g. the lead-silver-deposits of the Central Taurus Mountains, Bolkardağ District, S-E-Anatolia (Yener, 1983, pp.8-9; Yener and Özbal, 1986, pp.314-318), are important.

In the following, I will discuss the distribution of precious objects<sup>3</sup> that describes cultural contacts in general but also the development and overtaking of ideas, concepts and a thinking that spread all over the Ancient Near East in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium BC.

## Diadems

The diadem or, more common, the hair-ribbon, is one early example for communication, interaction and long distance relations. For archaeologists these objects are first of all simply dressing items. Regarding objects made of metal, we know diadems since the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium onwards from several archaeological sites, most of the time out of funeral context.<sup>4</sup>

These kinds of jewellery are worn (and was mostly found) on the head, consists of gold, copper/bronze or silver and are sometimes attached by other pendants



Fig. 1: Alacahöyük Tomb A, Diadem: Photo DBM, Yalçın.

or other decorations. Diadems can be decorated with techniques of repoussé, engravings or open worked decorations. They are known from Arslantepe (Di Nocera, et al., 2004, p.130; see also Palumbi, 2004, pp.114-121), from Ur<sup>1</sup> (Wooley, 1934, Vol. II, Pl. 139, 146, 150) as well as from Alacahöyük (Fig 1: Arık, 1937, Pl. CCXLVI-CCXLVII, Al. 1030; Koşay, 1938, Pl. LXXXII, Nr. 33, Pl. XCII, Nr. 33; Koşay, 1951, Pl. CXXIX Res. 1 and Pl CXXXIV, Pl. CLXVII Res. 1, Pl. CXCVIII).

It seems that high position holders in the ranked society, such as certain chiefs or elites decorated themselves with special attributes or items. This might be a general phenomenon in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium BC all over the Ancient Near East. In the Early Bronze Age the diadem appears in Troy (e.g. Schliemann, 1881, p.559, Nr. 919; Tolstikow and Trejster, 1996, p.47), from Demircihüyük (Seeher, 2000, pp.61-62; e.g. Abb. 29-G.212b; Abb. 43-G.376b; Taf. 19, 5-8)<sup>5</sup> over Central Anatolia to Caucasus region (Kushnareva, 1997, pp.59-61, Fig. 22/33; Inanischwili, 2001, p.143)<sup>6</sup> and south to Syro-Mesopotamia. Even in the old kingdom of Egypt in the 5<sup>th</sup> dynasty, 2494-2345 BC (Shaw and Nicholson, 1995, p.310) a high official or the king himself is described as "Hüter des Diadems (...)" (Windus-Staginsky, 2006, p.98).

## Mace, club or sceptre

Another object that can be used for our purposes is the macehead. The mace, club or sceptre, whether it was used as weapon, tool or some kind of ceremonial object, has an extreme chronological depth. Early examples from the Neolithic context were not made mostly out of metal, for instance a macehead formed in stone is known from Aruchlo in Georgia (DAI – Homepage Aruchlo). One of the earliest examples



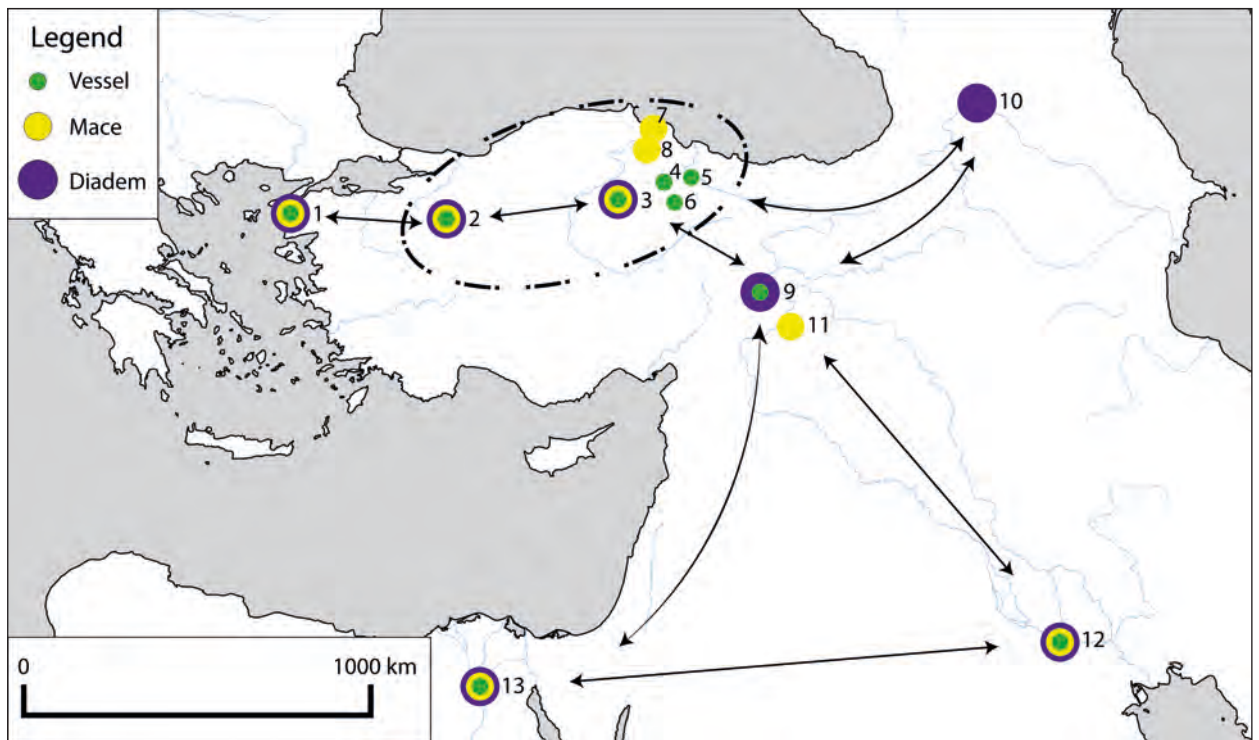
Fig. 2: Alacahöyük Tomb B, Macehead: Photo DBM, Yalçın.

of metal maceheads is a cast copper mace from Can Hasan in Anatolia (Yalçın, 2000, p.19, Tab. 2). The famous hoard of Nahal Mishmar, Israel, from the 4<sup>th</sup> Millennium contained literally hundreds of maces and mace-like objects (Bar-Adon, 1980, pp.116-131). Simple forms are round (ball-shaped) or slightly oval, additionally maces can be disk-shaped or the head has several protrusions.

However, a special kind of 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium metal maceheads which are called "Pilzknaufkeulen" (engl. translation "mushroom-pommel maceheads"), were, according to the appearance, perhaps ceremonial or representative objects. The form is often decorated with criss-cross incisions simulating strings and a number of globular or "mushroom" shaped protrusions (Zimmermann, 2007, p.66).

They form quite a unique group in Central and North Anatolia, for instance Demircihüyük-Sarıket (Seeher, 2000, pp.52-53; Abb. 25-G.132a + Taf. 16, 5; Abb. 40-G.335 b + Taf. 19,3; Abb. 38-G.316b + Taf. 19,4), Alaçam-Soğukçam (Bilgi, 2001, pp.29, 65; 97, Fig. 73), Oymaağac-Göller (Özgüç, 1980, p.470, Plate 6-7) and a golden specimen from Alacahöyük (Fig. 2: Arık, 1937, Tomb B, Al. 243, Pl. CLXXII-CLXXIII). In other areas we find different forms, like examples from the Royal Graves in Ur (Wooley, 1934, Vol. II, U. 12442, Pl. 153) or the example of Hassek Höyük from the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium (Behm-Blancke, 1984, pp.49-53, Abb. 7, 8). Zimmermann eventually compares a semi-finished macehead made out of diorite from Schliemann's Troy-finds with the "Pilzknaufkeulen" (Zimmermann, 2007, p.67, Fig. 1f, 68). It seems that this kind of macehead was some kind of prestigious good or status symbol, at least from the area of Central-West to Central-North-Anatolia.

In our concern, some of these objects may be related to leaders in society, elites or chiefs; in some cases



Map 1 - Distribution of "prestigious" metal artefacts in the Near East in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium (own graphic).

they also could be symbols for a foreigner, someone from another culture<sup>10</sup>. Unusual forms may have probably served as some kind of status symbol; they might show a ranked society and a differentiating communication among cultural groups.

### Beak-spouted jug/vessel

Vessels, jars and pots made out of burned clay are well known in archaeology and represent one of the most important categories of archaeological finds. They are known from settlement-, funeral- and hoard-context.

In the latest Chalcolithic and then in the Early Bronze Age metal vessels also appear. In the beginning, forms were bowl-shaped and produced in simple hammering techniques. Very early Anatolian examples of bowls were found in the late 4<sup>th</sup> Millennium BC Arslantepe (Palace and tomb: Frangipane, 2004, pp.66-67, 75; Di Nocera, et al., 2004, pp.115-119, 137). At the latest from around the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium BC onwards metal vessels in lots of different forms (bowls, jugs, goblets, tumblers...) are known from several archaeological sites, for instance from the Royal graves of Ur (Wooley, 1934, Vol. II, e.g. Pl. 160-164, Pl. 171-173) or from Treasure A of Troy (Tolstikow and Trejster, 1996, Schatz A 28-37, Schatz B 96-97)<sup>11</sup>. Archaeologists tend to relate them predominantly along with elites or local chiefs, because of the precious materials that are combined and the range

of techniques that is used. At least they are associated with extraordinary contexts.

Beak-spouted jugs are a widespread ceramic form found in the Ancient Near East. In the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium we find these beak-spouted jugs made of metal (Gold, Silver, Copper/Bronze often decorated with more or less fine grooved decoration) in Central Anatolia, where they form a unique group in a relatively small region. Several impressive metal jugs (besides other vessel types) are known out of graves of Alacahöyük (Fig. 3: Arik, 1937, Pl. CLXX-CLXXI (Tomb B – Al. 242); Koşay, 1938, Pl. LXXXVIII (Tomb A – MA 75); Koşay, 1951, Pl. CXXXII (Tomb H), Pl. CXLVII (Tomb D), Pl. CLXV (Tomb E), Pl. CLXXVI (Tomb K) and from Horoztepe (Tezcan, 1960, pp.30-31, Pl XV-XVI; see also Akurgal, 2001, p.10, Fig. 5.).

Most interestingly, these kinds of jugs were found also within other context. A fragment from Kayapınar (Temizer, 1954, pp.324-328, Res. 15-16) serves as a settlement (?) find and one example was found in the hoard of Mahmatlar (Koşay and Akok, 1950, pp.483-484, Pl. XXXVIII Res. 8-10). Here the golden jug was accompanied by a golden goblet, eight copper/bronze axes and 16 silver ingots (Koşay and Akok, 1950, pp.484-485, Pl. XXXIX-XLI).

Beak-spouted pitchers seemed to be an important type in Central Anatolia that is different from metal vessels in other areas; they were traded (because the finds of ingots and ingots-like axes in the hoard of Mahmatlar support such an interpretation) and used





Fig. 3: Alacahöyük Tomb B, Beak-spouted jug: Photo DBM, Yalçın.

in profane (settlement Kayapınar) but also religious context (grave goods). It gives somehow the impression that it was some kind of intentional demarcation using those metal jugs against other cultural groups.

## Conclusion

The basic argument of this paper is that by looking at the distribution of special artefacts made out of precious materials we can get insights in Communication-Phenomena that spread in the Early Bronze Age all over the Ancient Near East: these goods are indicators for a more stratified society but furthermore show the emergence of Elites and signal long-distance interactions between them. Maybe it was the contact of groups due to trade, war, migrating craftsmen (need for technologies, materials, resources...) that led to this situation.

The distribution of metal artefacts in discussion is shown on Map 1 (for archaeological sites mentioned in the text see Appendix). The dotted line indicates the region of Central-West-Anatolia to the Central-Northern part of modern Turkey that forms its own cultural group within the context of the Early Bronze Age. People in this area strongly interacted with each other which can be shown especially by the distribution of beak-spouted jugs and "Pilzknaufkeulen" (special kind of maceheads). The arrows explain long-dis-

tance relations and cultural contacts in all directions; phenomena that can be traced all over the Ancient Near East, from Egypt to Mesopotamia, from the Caucasus to Troy by looking at "prestigious" objects, produced in similar (or same) way.

It seems that one of the factors for these on-going changes in the Ancient Near East is linked with the resource metal. Written sources for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium are missing in Anatolia, though from Syria and Mesopotamia, for instance Palace G in Ebla, numerous cuneiform tablets inform us about the significance and enormous amount of metals that circulated<sup>14</sup>. The access and occupancy of rich metal deposits in North-East and South-East Anatolia could have favoured trade and contact with metal poor regions, e.g. Mesopotamia, and due to these interactions could have favoured also the emergence of elitist structures in the area of research. As Aslihan Yener (2000, p.45) states: "An increasingly powerful elite is reflected in the emergence of more substantial public structures, hierarchical burials, precious metals, and the adoption of various ritual symbols".

The objects presented above might indicate that contact of prehistoric peoples favoured the overtaking of ideas and thinking. Cultural groups in Central Anatolia absorbed the concepts of elitist behaviour; they developed and/or overtook an image of a "ruler" but formed their own style and kept their own metaphorical language consistent. They produced similar objects over large geographic spaces, however always with a particular expression. In the course of the Early Bronze Age it was possible to establish a certain cultural identity based on influences that were touching all the Ancient Near East and beyond simultaneously.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> For a comparison of urbanized and centralized regions in Early Bronze Age Anatolia see Çevik, 2007.
- <sup>2</sup> An exception represents South-East-Anatolia where the influence of Syro-Mesopotamian City-States is more apparent: Yener, 2000, pp.30-33.
- <sup>3</sup> I do not make any claim for completeness for the chosen objects. The aim is to show with selected artefacts communication and interaction of cultural groups in different regions in the Near East in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium BC.
- <sup>4</sup> Hair ribbons were used most probably since Neolithic or even earlier, but if they were of organic material it is so hard to find them.

- <sup>5</sup> Most interesting is the fact that in the EBA II graveyard of Demircihüyük-Sarıket diadems or parts of diadems in Gold and Silver were placed on the head of the deceased and act exclusively as grave goods because of their making. These are made of extremely thin metal sheets and seem to be an imitation of “ranking objects” of a more or less farmer’s population at least for the afterlife. Here the diadem is made merely for the burial, only symbolic, not functional.
- <sup>6</sup> Diadem made out of copper with geometric and zoomorphic decoration from Kwazchela (Schida Kartli), Burial no. 2 dating to 1st Half 3rd Millennium BC.
- <sup>7</sup> Another kind of mace was found in Tomb K, ball-shaped stone macehead with golden handle (Koşay, 1951, Pl. CLXXXII Res. 1).
- <sup>8</sup> Or a so called “Doubleaxe” with representative character (scepter-like) Pl. 156 (U. 10018), or another sceptre-like macehead, Pl. 224 (U. 9137).
- <sup>9</sup> Cist grave G 12 dating to EBI-EBII.
- <sup>10</sup> For example the finds from Demircihüyük, see Seeher, 2000, pp.52-53.
- <sup>11</sup> The golden bottle of the Troy’s Treasure A is an imitation of a Syrian Bottle, as are the lead bottles in Demircihüyük and the silver specimen from Eskiypar; most ceramic examples are known from the northern part of modern Syria and South-East-Anatolia (see Seeher, 2000, Taf. 18; Rahmstorf, 2006, pp.55-57, Abb. 5; Özgüç and Temizer, 1993, Plate 116, 1).
- <sup>12</sup> In German called „Schnabelkanne“.
- <sup>13</sup> For another beak-spouted jug out of the tomb of Horoztepe see Özgüç and Akok, 1958, p.10, Fig. 4; 43, Pl IV, 3.
- <sup>14</sup> Pettinato, 1981, pp.166-167; see also Bachhuber, 2011, p.165.

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## Appendix

### Map 1 - Distribution of “prestigious” metal artefacts in the Near East in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Millennium:

- 1 Troy (Schliemann, 1881, pp.510-511, 559; Tolstikow and Trejster, 1996, pp.28-37, 46-47.)
- 2 Demircihüyük (Seeher, 2000, pp.50-53, 61-62; Taf. 18-19.)
- 3 Alacahöyük (Arık, 1937; Koşay, 1938; Koşay, 1951.)
- 4 Mahmatlar (Koşay and Akok, 1950, pp.483-484, Pl. XXXVIII Res. 8-10.)
- 5 Horoztepe (Özgüç and Akok, 1958, p.10, Fig. 4; 43, Pl IV, 3.)
- 6 Kayapınar (Temizer, 1954, pp.324-328, Res. 15-16.)
- 7 Alaçam-Soğukçam (Bilgi, 2001, pp.29, 65; 97, Fig. 73.)
- 8 Oymağaç-Göller (Özgüç, 1980, p.470, Plate 6-7.)
- 9 Arslantepe (Frangipane, 2004, pp.66-67, 75; Di Nocera, et al., 2004, pp.115-119, 130, 137.)
- 10 Kwazchela (Kushnareva, 1997, pp.59-61, Fig. 22/33; Inanischwili, 2001, p.143.)
- 11 Hassek Höyük (Behm-Blancke, 1984, pp.49-53, Abb. 8.)
- 12 Ur (Wooley, 1934, Vol. II, Pl. 139, 146, 150; Pl. 153.; Pl. 160-164, Pl. 171-173.)
- 13 Giza/Saqqara/Egypt (Windus-Staginsky, 2006, p.98; Friedman, 2006, p.111, Fig. 2b.)

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