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The Early Bronze Age in Southwest Anatolia: A Preliminary Report of the Studies on Materials from Local Museums

H. Levent Keskin

Assistant Professor, Department of Protohistory and Near Eastern Archaeology,
Ankara University, Sıhhiye, Ankara, Turkey

Mehmet Yıldız

Archaeologist, Bodrum Underwater Archaeological Museum,
Bodrum Kalesi, Bodrum-Muğla, Turkey

Abstract:

In terms of prehistoric cultures, Southwest Anatolia represents almost a terra incognita. The limited number of research carried out in the region is far from reflecting the full archaeological potential of the early periods. However, ever-increasing number of recent excavations and surveys conducted both in coastal areas and inland zones proved the existence of strong prehistoric cultures in Western Anatolia and their intense relations with neighbouring areas from the Neolithic period onwards.

In order to fill the above-mentioned gap, a project was initiated to study and evaluate the whole inventory of the Early Bronze Age material kept in the museums of Muğla province and its districts in order to reveal the unique character and cultural development of Southwest Anatolia within the context of Anatolian and Aegean cultures during the Early Bronze Age. Preliminary studies on this material already proved its potential on reflecting the general inventory of the region for this particular period, but also on the content and extent of cultural interactions with different cultural zones. Thus, this paper aims to summarize the available data with an up-to-date research history of the region and form a basis for future studies and problems.

Keywords: Early bronze age, south western Anatolia, Caria, pottery, Damlıboğaz (Hydai)

1. Introduction

The period denominated as Early Bronze Age (henceforward EBA) in Anatolia corresponding approximately to the millennial period between 3000-2000 B.C. represents a significant period with some major turning points in the history of the mankind. Beside radical changes observed in cultural, social, economical and political structures this period is characterized by a series of events such as the appearance of large, fortified settlements reflecting the central authority, the development of different crafts, innovations and developments in the field of metallurgy, the appearance and wide distribution of different pottery types and long-distance trade activities (Şahoğlu, 2005:339). The increasing need on raw materials and the efforts on gaining ascendancy over trade routes triggered the conflicts between different political entities.

If we consider Anatolia as a single landmass, it is not possible to mention a homogenous structure during any period throughout the history. The topographic structures, geographical features and climatic conditions shaped on such features resulted in the formation of distinct regions delineated with natural geographical barriers and the appearance of divergent cultures with different characteristics flourished in such cultural zones. The cultures that evolved in distinct regions of Anatolia in the 3rd Millennium B.C. not only reflect unique characteristics, but also presented close relations and interactions with the adjacent cultural zones. The impressions of such mutually developing interactions can be observed on all archaeological materials, from architecture to pottery, from burial traditions to the small finds.

Although the developments and advancements experienced during this period can be observed throughout Anatolia comprehensively, Western Anatolia has been represented with limited number of centres for many years. Yet the excavations at Troia, started at an early date in 1870s, laid the foundations of Prehistoric Aegean Archaeology, it remained as an isolated centre for many years regarding the Anatolian coast, while this region rather came into prominence with the splendour and monumental remains of the cities of Classical periods. Beside the limited number of researches, the magnificence of the powerful Classical cultures in the region and the notion that the region lacked strong preceding cultures and that its actual potential emerged and advanced through the migrations in the 1st Millennium B.C. further influenced this view. In spite of this, the excavations and researches conducted at the other side of the Aegean and at the islands continued with an increasing pace. Starting from 1980s, however, the ever increasing number of excavations and studies initiated throughout Western Anatolia, both at the coastline and inland zones, started to reveal the cultural development

and potential of the region in the prehistoric and protohistoric periods conspicuously¹. Data compiled from such studies propounded the existence of strong cultures that emerge in the Neolithic period and survived uninterruptedly embracing the entire region, and close relations of such cultures with the adjacent cultural zones. Parallel to these developments, studies were initiated at the prehistoric layers of the Classical cities in an ever-growing interest, and it has been proven that robust foundations of this culture attributed to the Western Aegean migrations were long-existed in Western Anatolia.

Despite all these advancements, the southwest part of the region is currently the least investigated section of Western Anatolia in terms of prehistoric and protohistoric periods. In addition to limited number of excavations with isolated characteristics, the finds that were either discovered coincidentally or recovered from salvage excavations with limited scope were not yet evaluated coherently. In fact, Southwest Anatolia acts as an extremely important bridge between Anatolian and Aegean cultures due to its geographical position, and presents crucial potential regarding these periods. The present data from succeeding periods further endorse this notion.

A large group of materials present in the museums in Muğla and its districts, which we accidentally became aware of, present the potential to fill the gap in this respect, even to some extent. The finds from 3rd Millennium B.C., currently preserved at the museums in Muğla and its districts, acquired either through purchases or recovered from salvage excavations constitute the starting point of a new project entitled “Early Bronze Age Culture in Southwest Anatolia” initiated in line with this purpose². Thus, the project aims to reflect the unique characteristics of Southwest Anatolia region, which almost remained *aterra incognita* in terms of prehistoric and protohistoric cultures, and to propound its place in a wider context of Anatolian and Aegean cultures.

2. Geographical Settings

Southwest region of Anatolia including Muğla province virtually corresponds to the region called as Caria in ancient times. Caria region covers the area delineated with Aegean Sea to west and south; with BüyükMenderes River (Meander) to north; with Babadağ(Salbakos) Mountain to northeast; with Kızıllhisar-Acıpayam Plain to east; and with Dalaman (Indos) Stream to southeast. In terms of modern borders, the region environs the entire Muğla province excluding Dalaman and Fethiye districts and some parts of Aydın and Denizli provinces. During ancient times, the Dodecanese islands located immediately offshore of the southwestern coastline and included in the same *koine* during prehistoric periods were also considered to be a part of Caria (Baldoni *et al.*, 2004:14). As the geographical conditions and landforms of Caria made it difficult to establish contacts with the inland zones during early periods, the region rather embraced the Aegean world by means of sea trade; in this sense, it is very natural to expect intensive relations with the Dodecanese islands where access was extremely easy (Melas, 1988 :109). Although the fact that relations between both regions existed since Neolithic period and particularly intensified starting from EBA onwards is uttered and scrutinized for many years (ibid:109, 117), the limited number and inadequate nature of the studies at the Anatolian side resulted in addressing of this matter rather by an Aegean perspective from the other coast. The connection between the Dodecanese and Anatolia during EBA could be established in the light of materials discovered in the islands such as Rhodes and Kos. The material culture reflects close similarities with East Aegean islands as well as the inland centres in Anatolia such as Beycesultan and Aphrodisias (Marketou, 2010b:777). The similarities observed on burial traditions, on the other hand, are not only limited with the coastal settlements such as Iasos, but also present features that resemble inland centres such as Yortan and Karataş-Semayük (Marketou, 2010a:763).

As a matter of fact, it wouldn't be surprising to contemplate that the finds that illustrate such relations will expand as the number of studies at the Anatolian side increase; yet indirect evidences associated with the existence of seafaring activities in the Aegeanbasin dates back to 8-9th Millennium B.C. (Papageorgiou, 2008:199) The maritime activities that was initiated in EarlyHolocene, even in Late Pleistocene period, notably based on Melian obsidian, has become the most important anchorage for the cultural interactions and exchanges especially for the Aegean region during the later periods with escalating intensity and characteristics (Horejs *et al.*, 2015:293). One of the most important sea-routes in the prehistoric Aegean was the one that involved Southwest Anatolia (Caria) and the off shore islands (Papageorgiou, 2008:215). This route allowed access to the Anatolian mainland, especially over Crete, and further to the inland zones and upper shorelines. This testifies the fact that the potential of Caria region during prehistoric periods is far greater than what is reflected by the available data.

3. Previous Studies at Neighbouring Areas

The excavations undertaken in the past years, of which some are still in progress, within the borders of this region provided significant data on the development of the area during prehistoric periods. Despite being less investigated compared to other regions in a wider Anatolian perspective, Denizli and Aydın provinces still precede Muğla in this respect. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to summarize the data derived from these two adjacent provinces prior to proceeding to the prehistory of Muğla.

3.1. Denizli Province

The excavations at Beycesultan that represent one of the most important centres in Anatolian archaeology and located in Çivril district of Denizli has constituted one of the rare references in terms of Western Anatolia prehistory in conjunction with Troia for many years, and offered important data that would provide an insight on the cultural development of the region by virtue of its uninterrupted stratification sequence that extends from the Late Chalcolithic to the end of the Late Bronze Age (Lloyd and Mellaart, 1962, 1965; Lloyd, 1972; Mellaart and Murray, 1995). The recent excavations resumed on the mound under supervision of E. Abay in 2007, notably focusing on the Middle and Late Bronze Age layers, present a significant potential to reveal important outcomes in this respect (Abay and Dedeoğlu, 2012). The recent excavations conducted within the borders of ancient city Laodicea also concentrate on the investigation of prehistoric layers and a cemetery (Oğuzhanoğlu, 2014 and 2015). Comprehensive assessment of such studies conducted at different localities of the ancient city will deliver important data in comprehending the archaeological potential and the

characteristics of the region. Unfortunately, the short-term salvage excavations conducted in the past in the same province (Duru, 1999; Duman and Konakçı, 2006:85) proves to be inadequate in terms of neither the scope nor publications. Large number of sites identified during surveys, especially conducted by J. Mellaart in the past unfolds the available archaeological potential of this area (Mellaart, 1954); therefore similar efforts in the region conducted recently with more extensive and novel approaches also have great importance in this respect (Duman and Konakçı, 2006; Dedeoğlu, 2008 and 2014).

3.2. Aydın Province

One of the major centres within the borders of Aydın, another city in Caria region, is Aphrodisias. The excavations undertaken at three different areas, the Acropolis, Pekmez Tepe and Kuşkalesi, within the borders of this ancient city that virtually forms the easternmost border of Caria, revealed prehistoric layers that extend from Late Neolithic Period to the Middle Bronze Age (Joukowsky, 1986:160ff, 175, Table 5). Moreover, large number of prehistoric settlements was discovered during the surveys conducted in line with the excavations (Tül, 1986). Short-term salvage excavations were also conducted at Karahisar mound in close proximity, after prehistoric materials has come to light by illicit excavations. In light of the finds reverted to the museum and those recovered from excavations the site reflects a material culture representing the whole of the EBA, but more intensively EBA II period (Yaylılı and Akdeniz, 2002). Another site currently excavated in Aydın province is Çine-Tepecik Höyük. During the excavations initiated in 2004, a stratigraphic sequence that extends from Middle Chalcolithic Period to the end of the Late Bronze Age was identified (Günel, 2006:23, 2014). The data from both the excavations and surveys conducted by S. Günel, director of excavations, in the previous years produced important outcomes on the cultural development of the region and the settlement patterns during the prehistoric periods (Günel, 2003, 2004 and 2005). Another important centre in Aydın province is Miletus, which lies just at the border between Caria and Ionia regions. The prehistoric layers and related materials discovered at this major ancient city since the beginnings of the 20th century provide important data about the cultural relations of this site, thus the region, notably throughout the Bronze Ages. The EBA layers in Miletus were unearthed during the excavations conducted at the area of the Temple of Athena (Greaves, 2003:65). Beside the pottery discovered at this area, the head of a Dokathismata type Cycladic figurine from a well-defined context is very important as it reflects the relations with the Cyclades, since this artefact represents the sole specimen discovered outside the islands (Niemeier, 2000:Abb. 5). Although geological and geomorphological alterations and gradual changes of the coastline throughout history and formation of very deep alluvial deposits complicate the determination of prehistoric sites, a significant number of centres determined in the immediate vicinity verifies that the region had a robust settlement pattern during the prehistoric periods (Greaves, 2003:60ff; Akdeniz, 1997:2, fn. 2-8).

4. The Prehistory of Muğla in the Light of Previous Studies

Within the borders of Muğla, which represent the starting point of the project, the researches regarding the prehistoric periods are very limited and the information that would enlighten these periods are rather obtained from accidental finds or some studies at very limited level. The only site in which the prehistoric layers were investigated by systematic excavations is the ancient city of Iasos, located at Kıyıkışlacık village. The Italian excavations initiated by D. Levi in 1960s continued until 2000s under the direction of C. Laviosa and F. Berti (Baldoni *et al.*, 2004:47). Large number of finds from prehistoric periods was discovered during the excavations conducted at different areas of the city between 1960 and 1987³. The architectural remains and finds from Middle and Late Bronze Ages unearthed as a result of the excavations at the Agora area elucidate the relations notably with the Minoan culture. The earliest traces of habitation in the settlement dates back to Chalcolithic/EBA (Momigliano, 2012:37). During the excavations in 1960-61, 96 tombs were excavated in the extra-mural cemetery at the outskirts of the city, where Roman villas stood (Pecorella, 1984:13 ff.). The tombs, all except one in the type of stone-cist graves, are generally dated to EBA II by the excavators and reflect close relations with the Cyclades in terms of their forms and several finds discovered therein (ibid:101). In addition, several practices and the details in the grave forms point out to a robust local culture (Wheeler, 1974:419), and the circular, divided graves known from Kültepe and Kalinkaya-Toptaş Tepe from Central Anatolia (Özgüç, 1963:33; Zimmermann, 2007 and 2008) further suggest connections with the inland regions.

Three more stone-cist graves were unearthed during the excavations conducted at the Artemis Astias Stoa area in 1968. The finds here did not allow exact identification of whether both cemeteries were used concurrently. However, it is also possible that two different cemeteries might be present at Iasos EBA settlement or such two cemeteries might belong to two different settlements (one located on the mainland, the other on the island), of which one still awaiting discovery (Momigliano, 2012:10).

The majority of the pottery from the period that forms the earliest inhabitation of the settlement and dated to Chalcolithic/early EBA were discovered at the Agora area. The sherds in this inventory comprising of several hundred pieces mostly present coarse, micaceous fabrics and are characterized by abundant chuff. It is not possible to gather detailed information on the surface treatments as the sherds are often water-worn, but some kind of a pattern-burnished decoration is observed in one specimen. Furthermore, the vessel forms cannot be reconstructed due to the size of the fragments, but cheese-pot fragments are exceptional in this respect (ibid:44, Fig. 146 b).

Reviewing the Iasos material during his recent studies, C. Gerber suggests that the inhabitation in the settlement might date back to the Neolithic period and states that the cemetery should be dated to the latest phase of Chalcolithic period within a settlement sequence that extends from Late Neolithic to EBA (Gerber, 2014:113-14).

If we put aside several sporadic finds, the rock paintings recently discovered at Latmos (Beşparmak) Mountains located at the shores of Bafa Lake and the materials unearthed in relation with such paintings represent the earliest data for Muğla province in terms of prehistoric periods. Discovered for the first time in 1994 (Peschlow, 1996:214), majority of the rock paintings, represented with more than hundred examples, are discovered at the southern and eastern foothills of Latmos Mountains and partially remains inside the

borders of both Aydın and Muğla provinces (Peschlow-Bindokat, 2003:19). However, two more examples are discovered far eastwards, at Yazılıtaş (Peschlow, 2002:255) and Çobanlar (Peschlow, 2003:261) localities to north of Yatağan district in Muğla, and the fact that these areas to east are not yet studied adequately leaves the question open for now, whether any more drawings are present in this region.

Since their first discovery the dating of the paintings is a still on-going debate. In light of the lithic tools discovered in the area a wide dating range from Epi-paleolithic to Late Chalcolithic seems possible; however, based on the similarities observed on the figures depicted on the paintings, the female figures and some of the decoration patterns in particular, with the motifs on Hacilar pottery, it seems more plausible to date the majority of the paintings to the Early-Middle Chalcolithic period (Peschlow-Bindokat, 2003:75). The materials unearthed during the small-scale excavations conducted in the region further support such dating (Gerber, 2003:84).

The rock paintings at Tavabaşı locality in Fethiye district can also be considered within the same context with Latmos examples. Two different caves located in the vicinity of Arsaköy south of the ancient city of Tlos offers significant data on the early settlement history of the region (Korkut *et al.*, 2015:38). Although the remains discovered inside and around the Upper Cave dates back to Early Neolithic period, it is comprehended that both caves were inhabited especially during the Middle Chalcolithic period, for 300 hundred years at minimum. The rock drawings discovered on the exterior surface of the Lower Cave also display iconographical characteristics similar to Latmos examples (ibid:43).

The materials unearthed – from both inside and from the mound formation in front of it – at Girmeler Cave located 5 km northwest of Tlos also offers important data in terms of prehistoric periods. The materials gathered during the survey conducted by Fethiye Museum in 1985 due to destruction of the area indicate a sequence that extent from Early Chalcolithic to EBA (Köktürk, 1997). The recent excavations at the area revealed materials, which verify that the cave and the mound were inhabited from Late Epi-paleolithic to the midst of the EBA, yet no uninterrupted sequence can be claimed (Takaoğlu *et al.*, 2014; Becks and Polat-Becks, 2013).

Although these sites remain inside the borders of adjacent Lycia region that reflects a different settlement pattern and cultural characteristics, they are important with regard to addressing Muğla province as a whole. In this respect, the recent studies conducted at Çaltılar Höyük that represent one of the inland settlements in Fethiye district also provided important data. Comprehensive surveys carried out on the mound indicate a settlement history that dates back to the Late Chalcolithic Age and continuing in to the Iron Age. The Late Chalcolithic and EBA sherds represent a significant proportion with 42% out of all finds collected from the settlement (Momigliano *et al.*, 2011:73). Although there are no finds that could certainly be dated to the earliest phases of EBA, it is stated that EBA II and III sherds constitute an intensive group, in the light of similar finds from Karataş-Semayük material in particular (ibid:114). Comprehensive excavations to be carried out at this site has significant potential in terms of reflecting the characteristics of the settlements of the region peculiar to EBA, especially of the mountainous characteristics at the inland zones.

Turning back to the other parts of Muğla that remain within Cariaregion, we encounter that numerous single and isolated find spots have been discovered during various surveys since 19th century onwards and new sites are constantly added to this number as a result of recent salvage excavations. In this respect, notably Bodrum and Yatağan districts, and recently Milas came into prominence. The small-scale excavations carried out by Bodrum Archaeological Museum in collaboration with B. Alpagut and I. Yalçinkaya from Ankara University in early 1990s at Peynir Çiçeği Cave located at Bodrum Gündoğan yielded finds from EBA (Yaylalı, 2006:6). A. Diler and his team, who visited the site in recent years, also gathered some sherds dating to the Chalcolithic and EBA periods (Diler, 2003:12, Res. 1). To the south of Müsgebi, which yielded a significant number of Mycenaean graves with a rich inventory (Boysal, 1967a and 1967b), EBA vessels and additional sherds were acquired from private wells owned by local individuals during a survey campaign in 1963 (Vermeule, 1964). The material is interpreted as coarse, handmade forms and most probably dated to the second half of the 3. Millennium B.C., while representing similarities with materials from Crete and the Cyclades (ibid). Recently, EB Apithos graves were discovered at Gümüşlük during some construction work and Bodrum Museum has undertaken salvage excavations, which are still in progress.

Information delivered by the researchers who visited the region in the 19th century provides an insight, though in limited manner, on inhabitation of Bodrum peninsula during the prehistoric periods. Paton and Myres mention pottery fragments they contemplate to be from early periods in the vicinity of the ancient city of Myndos (Paton and Myres, 1896:204). Similar data are also known from the studies conducted during 1950s. Although G. E. Bean *et al.* report that the whole area seems to be singularly poor in remains of prehistoric occupation; they also mention several spots where materials that might be dated to these periods were discovered (1955:94, 118ff). Likewise, Bent mentions about some tombs that became exposed due to erosion of rain waters at Capo Krio (Deveboynu), at the tip of Reşadiye Peninsula (1888:82); although he offers no information on the type of such tombs, the finds he mentions to be in the type of Cyclades figurines suggest that such tombs might be stone-cist graves similar to the ones in Cyclades. One of the marble figurines he mentioned depicts a figure sitting on a chair and playing harp; the other depicts a female figurine with a crescent above her head; although such finds were never discovered or seen again, Renfrew considers them to be included in Keros-Syros group (Renfrew, 1969:13-14).

The recent surveys conducted at Marmaris district also revealed materials from prehistoric periods and probable find spots. C. Gerber conducted studies intended for the discovery of prehistoric settlements and finds spots in the region during Loryma surveys directed by W. Held and his team (Held, 2003:289). The pottery and obsidian fragments discovered at the area of Loryma acropolis are an indication for the existence of a prehistoric settlement at this area (Gerber, 2014:107). Moreover, pottery and obsidian finds from Chalcolithic period were also encountered on and at the slopes of Oyuklu Tepe under the scope of Bybassos surveys conducted by the same team. At the southern slope of the hill, fragments of a marble vessel, pottery fragments and remains of a wall from this period have been identified inside the destruction deposit caused by the operation of construction machinery (Held *et al.*, 2008:367-68, Res. 5).

Large number of finds was unearthed from the EBA graves discovered at Yarbaşı locality as a result of the salvage excavations conducted during 1960s and 70s at Yatağan-Turgut by Y. Boysal and the Bodrum Museum (Boysal, 1979). Since this material was not subject to a comprehensive publication⁴, it represents one of the significant groups that are intended to be assessed within the frame of our project. Further EBA graves were also unearthed during the salvage excavations conducted at Yatağan and Milas districts, some of which are still in progress. An EBA cemetery comprising of 99 graves was excavated within the frame of Börükçü-Kumyeri excavations conducted by Lagina excavation team (Büyüközer, 2011:385). Seven potterykilns unearthed at the same area are also striking, but their relation with the cemetery could not be identified completely. Despite offering the most comprehensive material until today, in terms of both the burial traditions and the material culture of the region, unfortunately no detailed publication has been issued for this excavation⁵. Other cemeteries and probable settlement spots identified at the area also awaits more comprehensive assessment (Oğuzhanoğlu, 2012:408ff; Yaylalı, 2007; Kazıl, 2004:13ff).

The recent finds, mostly discovered accidentally, within the borders of Milas district provides information that would alter and enrich the settlement history of the region. The pottery fragments recovered from illegal excavations at Gökçeler Cave in Uyku Valley in 2015 and probably dating to Late Neolithic-Early Chalcolithic period are extremely important. The salvage excavations planned by Milas Museum at this site will elucidate the early periods of the region. The finds discovered at Beçin Castle in the town centre also reflects parallel developments. During the soundings in 2007, carried out to replace the flagpole, an amphora type grave and other finds came to light. The salvage excavations at the site, initiated immediately after the discovery, yielded additional prehistoric material. The preliminary studies suggest an at least two-layered stratigraphy, which probably dates back to the Middle Chalcolithic period (from an unpublished report by M. Yıldız). G. E. Bean also points out to the existence of a probable prehistoric settlement at this location based on an obsidian blade-core he collected from the surface during his visit in 1968 (1980:30). Pottery fragments from EBA were also identified during the surface surveys carried out at Pilavtepe (Diler, 2007:484), a location recognized with a grave and its rich inventory of the Mycenaean period. These fragments, first discovered in 2005, were observed at the cross-sections of the illegal excavation trenches and similar sherds were also identified during the survey visits at this area in the later years (Diler *et al.*, 2015; Diler and Gümüş, 2016). Unfortunately, the entire area is destroyed gradually due to illegal excavation activities and loses its archaeological potential.

EBA graves were discovered also at Çakıralan Village-Belentepe and Hüsamlar Village-Mengefe localities during the salvage excavations carried out at the coal mining areas by Milas Museum, which are currently in progress. The number of EBA graves first discovered in 2008 (Gider, 2008:516) continues to increase with on-going and new excavations (Özbey, 2015:236-37; Savran and Ertürk, 2016:540). The pithos graves and finds associated with them as a result of on-going studies present significant information on the burial traditions of the region and the material culture of that period.

5. Museum Studies

The material group that represents one of the starting points of the project is formed by the artefacts purchased by the local museums as originating from Damlıboğaz village located 8 km. west of Milas. The ancient city of Hydai located at this area is situated within the borders of Damlıboğaz village and is founded around the bed of Sarıçay River. It is a long known fact that the cemetery area here was used during a long time period starting from the EBA and extending to the later periods (Akarca and Akarca, 1954:130, Lev. 60). The finds from this area as a result of illicit excavations have been sold and dispersed to museums and private collections, both national and foreign, for many years. Some of the artefacts purchased by Bodrum Museum, the first museum founded in the region, were then forwarded to other museums founded in other districts and the purchasing process perpetuated. The cemetery area identified by A. Diler and his team during the surveys conducted at the region and a tripod vessel unearthed at this spot assisted in verifying the fact that the place of origin for these artefacts was Damlıboğaz (Diler, 2002:225, 229). Today, such artefacts are preserved mainly at Bodrum, Marmaris and Milas museums. Seventy of the artefacts preserved in Milas Museum were studied within the frame of a Master's Thesis at Muğla University (Gülseven, 2002). In addition, a rich group of pottery said to be originated from Damlıboğaz and gathered by a private collector were purchased by Sadberk Hanım Museum in 2000 (Anlağan, 2005). The objects of this large collection comprising 292 vessels represent a wide chronological interval from the EBA to the Orientalising and Geometric periods. Beside the well-known forms from other settlements and cemeteries from Western Anatolia, more authentic forms in this collection are striking and possibly reflect unique forms that were produced specifically for the graves. Apart from the artefacts presented at the exhibition "Sadberk Hanım Museum Caria Collection", no scientific study has been conducted on the finds that are preserved at other museums.

Within the scope of the project we aim to evaluate two main groups; one consist of the artefacts purchased by the museums and most probably originated from Damlıboğaz; the second group includes the finds recovered from salvage excavations conducted by the museums. Based on a general assumption, which can be said to imply some truth, it could not be quite possible to pass any definitive or explanatory conclusions on the culture of a region for a particular period based on the isolated museum materials from unidentified contexts. However, considering the potential of the region due to the advantages of its geographical position and the limited number of studies so far, this material group has a significant promising value to fill a major gap in this field. Moreover, the materials that seem to be isolated at the first glance reflect certain distinctive groups within themselves. Detailed analyses of these identified groups and comparisons with other sites have the potential to reveal a certain cultural development. The findings and outcomes to be concluded as a result of this study where more than three hundred vessels as well as about fifty characteristic small finds will be collated with the results obtained so far (although limited), and enable us to define unique characteristics of Southwest Anatolia during the 3rd Millennium B.C. with reference to Muğla province and the relations of the region with other cultural zones, and to comprehend the dynamics of such relations.

6. Conclusion

The preliminary outcomes from studies conducted on the material – as prepared for a more comprehensive publication – clearly reveals and clarifies close relations and interactions with East Aegean islands, Western Aegean and different regions of Anatolia. Notably, the single-handled bowls and beak-spouted jugs with some local features represent the largest group amongst the pottery forms, which are also well-known from other sites in Western Anatolia. When considered with respect to the fabric and form characteristics, it can be observed that the majority of the material can be dated to the second half of 3rd Millennium B.C. However, materials that could be from earlier phases of the EBA are also present. Forms such as depas and tankard and some decoration patterns, which offer more distinct information in chronological respect, are also important as they reflect the inter-regional relations. The outcome of the on-going detailed studies on the artefacts will help us better understand the extent and characteristics of such relations and propound the characteristics of the region during the EBA. It is contemplated that the outcomes to be obtained from these studies will not only reveal the archaeological potential of the region with respect to the prehistoric periods, but will also provide an acceleration for excavations and surveys to be conducted in the near future. Comprehensive surveys to be planned in accordance with the geographical and geological studies will enable both restudying of previously known find spots and will lead to discovery of new ones. In particular, combining the outcomes of the surveys to be executed at relatively less studied regions and the available data will enable us to better understand the settlement pattern of the region in the prehistoric periods and form robust basis for the studies intended to solve probable chronological problems.

7. Notes

1. For a recent assessment on the research history of Western Anatolian prehistory see Fidan *et al.*, 2015.
2. The first stage of the project includes the on-going studies on the material from Muğla, Milas, Marmaris, Fethiye and Bodrum museums. The next stage will be undertaken on a wider regional context in Aydın, Milet, Aphrodisias and Denizli museums.
3. For a recent and detailed study on the materials from early excavations see Momigliano, 2012, 6ff.
4. The finds were listed in a publication by A. Tırpan with general characteristics, but lack a comprehensive evaluation, see Tırpan, 1997, 79ff.
5. Only ten of the graves with their inventory were studied within the frames of a dissertation submitted to Selçuk University; see Kara, 2013.

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