

## EARLY CYCLADIC PRESENCE IN CENTRAL – WESTERN ANATOLIA: EVIDENCE OF STONE BOWLS

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### Abstract

Bu çalışma Orta-Batı Anadolu'da Manisa yöresinde rastlantı sonucu ele geçen Erken Kiklad II dönemine ait iki ithal mermer kabı göz önüne alarak bu dönemde Batı Anadolu ve Kiklad adaları arasında oluşan karşılıklı ilişkileri değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışmada tanıtılan, dört adet çıkıntı tutamaklı iki mermer kabın Eski Tunç Çağı II döneminde Kiklad adalarında yoğun olarak ele geçmesi ve bu kap formunun Batı Anadolu'ya yabancı olması bunların ithal edilmiş olduğunu düşündürmektedir. Bu dönemde Batı Anadolu'da yerel mermer kap üretiminin mevcut olmasına rağmen Kiklad üretimi eserleri edinme olgusu bize Eski Tunç Çağı II dönemi Batı Anadolu'sunda özel niteliklere sahip ithal eserleri elde etme gücüne sahip bir sosyal sınıfın varolduğu göstermektedir. Bu iki mermer kabın zengin metal grubuyla birlikte bir küp mezar içinde bulunması, bunların sosyal ve ekonomik açıdan önemli bir refah düzeyine sahip bir kişi tarafından elde edildiğini gösterir. Mermer buluntular açısından bakıldığında Batı Anadolu ve Ege adalarının zamanla yönü değişmekle birlikte sürekli olarak ticaret vasıtasıyla kültürel iletişim içinde olduğu bilinmektedir. Eski Tunç Çağı II döneminde Batı Anadolu'nun kültürel anlamda doğuya bakmasına rağmen coğrafyası gereği, zaman zaman komşusu Kiklad kültürleri ile de ticari ilişkiler içinde bulunduğu görülmektedir.

The nature of cultural interactions and exchange between Western Anatolia and the Cycladic islands during the Early Bronze II period is one of the most curious issues of Aegean archaeology. This is in part due to the fact that this period represents a new stage in the Aegean cultural history<sup>1</sup>. Seafaring and seaborne trade within the Aegean gained a new impetus paralleling the rise of wealth and social hierarchy. The rising ruling class of this period demanded prestige items or status symbols of an exotic nature in order to differentiate themselves from the rest of the society in which they resided. In western Anatolia, the ruling class occasionally looked westwards to the Cyclades for the purpose of obtaining specially fashioned items that could be used

in socially significant contexts. Among the exchanged artifacts, stone vessels constituted a special class that was highly valued and widely exchanged within the Aegean.

This paper is primarily concerned with two marble bowls with strong Cycladic affinities found near the town of Balıca in Western Anatolia (Fig. 1). A closer examination of these artifacts (Figs. 2-3) will serve to compliment our knowledge of Early Bronze II period contact between Western Anatolia and the Cycladic islands. It will also expand our understanding of the motivation behind the exchange of stone vessels. These two marble bowls were accidentally discovered during the opening up of a water-well by a villager in an area, 3 km. south of the town of Balıca in Manisa province. The area, in which these distinctive marble bowls

<sup>1</sup> Renfrew 1972, 370; Cosmopoulos 1995, 24.

came, was cleared by archaeologists from the Manisa Museum. These marble bowls were found to have been originally deposited in a pithos burial dating to the Early Bronze II. In addition, six copper-based metal artifacts (a crescentic axe-head, a dagger, a spearhead, a knife, a flat axe, and an awl), a silver mirror preserved in fragments, and a juglet were recovered. The two Ballica bowls are unusually shallow with four oblong lugs slightly projecting from the rim. The bowls have a slightly recessed base that renders them quite unstable on a flat surface. The larger example is 2.4 cm high and measures 18.3 cm in diameter at its rim (Fig. 2). It is carved out of a moderately fine grained creamy-white marble. It has been partially reconstructed from four pieces. There is a pair of holes drilled below one of the lugs. The lugs are roughly symmetrical, but not mathematically accurate. The smaller example, on the other hand, is only 1.2 cm high and measures 12.5 cm in diameter at its rim (Fig. 3). This bowl was also partially reconstructed from four pieces. It was apparently carved out of the same fine-grained, creamy-white marble, it is presumed, by the same craftsman. A pair of holes was drilled below the rim between two of the lugs, perhaps for a cord to secure the bowl or otherwise suspend it from the wall, when not in use.

The question of whether these bowls were imported from the Cyclades or manufactured locally somewhere in Western Anatolia needs to be addressed to better understand their use and significance. Identifying the source of an artifact is fundamental to establishing both the existence and the extent of prehistoric exchange. The primary objective in identifying the source of artifacts is to prove the assumed connection between the artifact and the proposed source<sup>2</sup>. Stylistic analysis is

the most inexpensive approach adopted in sourcing studies. Criteria such as artifact form and manufacturing techniques are often used to identify the place of origin for an imported artifact. One drawback to this approach is that local imitations cause confusion in detecting the source of finished artifacts.

The stone vessels found at Ballica display strong similarities with those produced at Cyclades in terms of style and manufacturing techniques. Those Cycladic bowls with ledge lugs constitute a distinct group, which make it possible to carry out comparisons with an existing, discrete corpus. At first glance, the lack of comparable marble ledge-lug bowls in Western Anatolia and their widespread presence in the Cycladic islands leads me to view these Ballica examples as actual imports. These ledge-lug bowls from Ballica can provisionally be dated to the advanced phases of Early Bronze II period, since stylistically comparable examples are found dating to the Early Cycladic II sequence, which is roughly contemporary with Early Bronze II sequence of Western Anatolia. More than fifty-five ledge-lug bowls have been reported from sites throughout the Cycladic islands, including Syros, Naxos, Siphnos, Keros, Delos, Antiparos, and Amorgos<sup>3</sup>. The majority of these bowls were found in excavations in the cemetery of Chalandriani on Syros dating to the Early Cycladic II. Unusually shallow ledge-lug bowls, similar to the Ballica examples, are however, rare in the Cycladic repertoire, which tend to be deeper. The closest Cycladic parallel for the shallow Ballica bowls is unfortunately unproven<sup>4</sup>. There are also strong similarities among the Ballica bowls and the Cycladic examples in terms of manufacturing techniques. Getz-

<sup>2</sup> Earle 1982, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Getz-Gentle 1996, Pls. 65-67; Thimme 1977, Pls. 150-151.

<sup>4</sup> Getz-Gentle 1996, G 34, Pl. 65 e.

Gentle categorizes this type of four ledged-lug Cycladic bowl into three types, based upon the differentiation of lugs<sup>5</sup>. The Ballica bowls fall into Getz-Gentle's Style C. Close parallels for suspension holes on the Ballica marble bowls with ledge lugs are to be found among the Cycladic examples. The Cycladic evidence also compliments our understanding of the way why the marble ledge-lug bowls were very shallow. Several ledge-lug bowls from the Cyclades appear to have been used in conjunction with ritual paint as they preserve the residues of pigment on their interiors<sup>6</sup>.

Assuming that these two bowls are, in fact, Cycladic in origin, they probably reached the İzmir Bay area through a seaborne trade route and then proceeded to the Ballica area through an overland route along the Hermos River. Sites such as Liman Tepe and Panaz Tepe in the Bay of İzmir might have played key roles in this exchange system. The systematic archaeological excavations carried out at these two sites, as well as at the inland site of Bakla Tepe, located nearby, have already enhanced our understanding of the connections between Western Anatolia and the Cyclades during the Early Bronze Age. Although marble bowls with ledge lugs are yet to be found in this intermediary area between the Cyclades and the Manisa Region, there is evidence that Cycladic stone vessels made their way to Western Anatolian shores. For instance, a fragment of a stone sauce bowl peculiar to Cyclades was found in the so-called Corridor House of Early Bronze II date at Liman Tepe<sup>7</sup>. The Corridor House is generally agreed to have served as the residence for the ruler of an Early Helladic II settlement in Greece<sup>8</sup>. Its presence in Liman Tepe indicates that a central authority also

emerged in this part of the Aegean world. The recovery of this fragment of a stone vessel in a distinctive type of monumental structure confirms that there was a ruling class with the ability and power to obtain valuable artifacts of an exotic nature in this region during the Early Bronze II period.

There is additional evidence showing the introduction of Cycladic marble artifacts into other parts of coastal Western Anatolia. A fragment of a Dokathismata type figurine of Early Cycladic II date has recently been discovered at Miletus<sup>9</sup>, while Cycladic marble figurines have been reported from Cape Krio in the Halicarnassus Peninsula decades ago<sup>10</sup>. It would appear that Cycladic marble artifacts made their way to the shores of Western Anatolia prior to the Early Bronze Age II period. Several cist graves in the Iasos cemetery, in coastal Southwestern Anatolia, yielded exotic marble vessels peculiar to the Grotta-Pelos phase<sup>11</sup>. These are two flat-based marble beaker found respectively in graves 19 and 81. There is in addition a marble bowl with vertical handle of a Cycladic type found in grave 28. In terms of mortuary evidence, there are strong similarities between the cist graves of Iasos and those of Cycladic islands<sup>12</sup>.

The recovery of Cycladic marble artifacts in the coastal sites of Western Anatolia is not a coincidence as both Miletus and Iasos were located on strategically very important points, former being on the mouth of the Menderes River. Due to its geography, it would not have also been a surprise to find Cycladic artifacts at Cape Krio. The lack of information about the discovery context of the Cycladic figurines from Cape Krio prevents us from going far in explaining their significance for the assumed connection between the two sub-regions of the Aegean.

<sup>5</sup> Getz-Gentle 1996, Fig. 61.

<sup>6</sup> Getz-Gentle 1996, 115, note 240.

<sup>7</sup> Erkanal-Günel 1995, 313.

<sup>8</sup> Shaw 1987, 56; Wiencke 1989, 503.

<sup>9</sup> Von Graeve 1998, Fig. 11.

<sup>10</sup> Vermeule 1964, 249.

<sup>11</sup> Levi 1965/66, Figs. 170-171; Pecorella 1984, Fig. 10.

<sup>12</sup> Wheeler 1974.



One rim fragment of a marble beaker was also unearthed at Demircihöyük in the Eskişehir Region<sup>13</sup>. Whether it belonged to a flat-based or a conical beaker is problematical. If this fragment came from a flat-based beaker comparable to those found in the Iasos cemetery, its occurrence in phase L of Early Bronze date is not a coincidence, implying that the flat-based beaker to which this fragment belonged arrived into the Eskişehir region through long distance trade. If this rim fragment came from a conical beaker, it must have been a stray find from an earlier, pre-Bronze Age settlement. The Early Bronze Age inhabitants of Demircihöyük evidently re-used earth from an earlier settlement when constructing their dwellings. The reused earth contained pre-Bronze Age material remains. Then, this marble conical beaker to which this rim fragment belonged might have been a product of a Western Anatolian workshop, since such a workshop of pre-Bronze Age date is known to us from the Manisa region. Indeed, conical marble beakers were very common in Chalcolithic Western Anatolia, although comparable beakers are also known to us from the Balkans and the Aegean during the succeeding centuries<sup>14</sup>. Thus, the uncontextual beaker fragment from Demircihöyük poses a problem of interpretation as it does not help much to our interpretation of the connection between Western Anatolia and the Cycladic islands during the Early Bronze Age.

The presence of these imported marble vessels in Early Bronze Age Western Anatolia does not mean that the production of stone vessels was particular to the Cycladic islands during this period. Western Anatolia was also rich in metamorphic rock sources and the craftsmen living in the region could have taken advantage of this resource. Colin Renfrew decades ago rightly argued

that “the use of marble vessels is often taken as a particularly Cycladic trait, but it need not necessarily be so, for the newly discovered bowls of the Yortan culture are totally un-Cycladic. Indeed with the wealth of marble in Western Anatolia is not surprising that such an industry should flourish”<sup>15</sup>. When discussing the presence of those finely polished marble bowls reported from the Ovabayındır cemetery in the Yortan culture area, James Mellaart maintained a similar view, proposing the existence of “a workshop of stone carvers in some city as yet unidentified”<sup>16</sup>. It seems that both Western Anatolia and the Cycladic islands independently developed marble working industries, albeit in different scales. Marble vessels were concomitant of prehistoric Western Anatolian communities as early as the late Neolithic period. With the increasing archaeological excavations and surveys in Western Anatolia, the number of marble vessels yearly increases. Although stone vessel making became a specialized craft activity or produced for exchange during the Chalcolithic period<sup>17</sup>, the scale of stone vessel production in Early Bronze Age Western Anatolia declined in comparison to the preceding period.

It is reasonable to infer from the foregoing discussion that these two Ballica marble bowls were imported from the Cyclades by a ruling elite living in the Manisa region. The motivation behind the pattern of local evolution towards the rise of an ruling class in this part of Western Anatolia may be internal. Manisa region provided good agricultural due to the alluvial plain created by the Gediz River. It is possible for subsistence economy fell into control of social group in this period. In Western Anatolia, the differentiation of individuals on the basis of wealth is best evidenced in the mortuary data during the

<sup>13</sup> Efe 1988, 79, Pl. 37; Seeher 1987, Figs. 1-2.

<sup>14</sup> Weishaar 1982, 324; Höckmann 1987, 73.

<sup>15</sup> Renfrew 1972, 166.

<sup>16</sup> Mellaart 1971, 377.

<sup>17</sup> Takaoğlu 2002.

Early Bronze II period. Distinction between rich and poor graves becomes more apparent than in the previous periods. The Ballica burial is a good material manifestation of this phenomenon. The recovery of two marble bowls along with a metal hoard at Ballica appears to represent an accumulation of wealth in a stratified society. It is clear from the burial that a certain number of valuables went out of use at a time when they were very difficult to obtain, making them relatively precious commodities. Artifacts brought from distant regions, used in socially important contexts, or manufactured out of valuable raw materials are often classified as valuables or prestige items. In this sense, the deposition of marble vessels with their owners after death probably owes to the fact that they were the valuables of the deceased during life. Marble vessels were very special objects and were not used in mundane tasks associated with everyday life. Because they were often used in the socially important context, they may be classified as high status objects that helped to differentiate their owners. The costs of production and transportation probably made them accessible to wealthy individuals or to those that served religious roles within the households or communities. The tradition of depositing the personal possessions of the deceased artifacts or the objects of funerary use in burials was a common burial custom in the Early Bronze Age Aegean, implying that they served some kind of symbolic or social function. In addition to the mortuary use of stone vessels, two shallow stone bowls found at Early Bronze Age I Beycesultan demonstrates that they also had cultic/religious significance. These shallow marble bowls were found in the so-called priest's room (Room 2) in the temple of the level XVIIb along with a group of marble figurines. Their recovery with pestles seems to indicate that they were used for some kind of crushing action<sup>18</sup>.

The deposition of the two marble vessels in the Ballica burial suggests an elite component that employed exotic goods to display their wealth and social status. It also indicates that this elite component not only had the means and inclination to acquire these valuable items in the first place, but had means and inclination enough to taking these precious commodities out of circulation by depositing them in a burial. The fact that Cycladic imports occur in coastal Western Anatolian sites does not mean that the culture contact was unidirectional. The technology or the knowledge of stone vessel making was known to the communities of Western Anatolia, especially in the region in which Ballica was located. The reason for the preference of Cycladic stone artifacts had probably something to do with the importance given to the exotic artifacts.

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<sup>18</sup> Lloyd-Mellaart 1962, 33, 276, Pl. 22.7-8.

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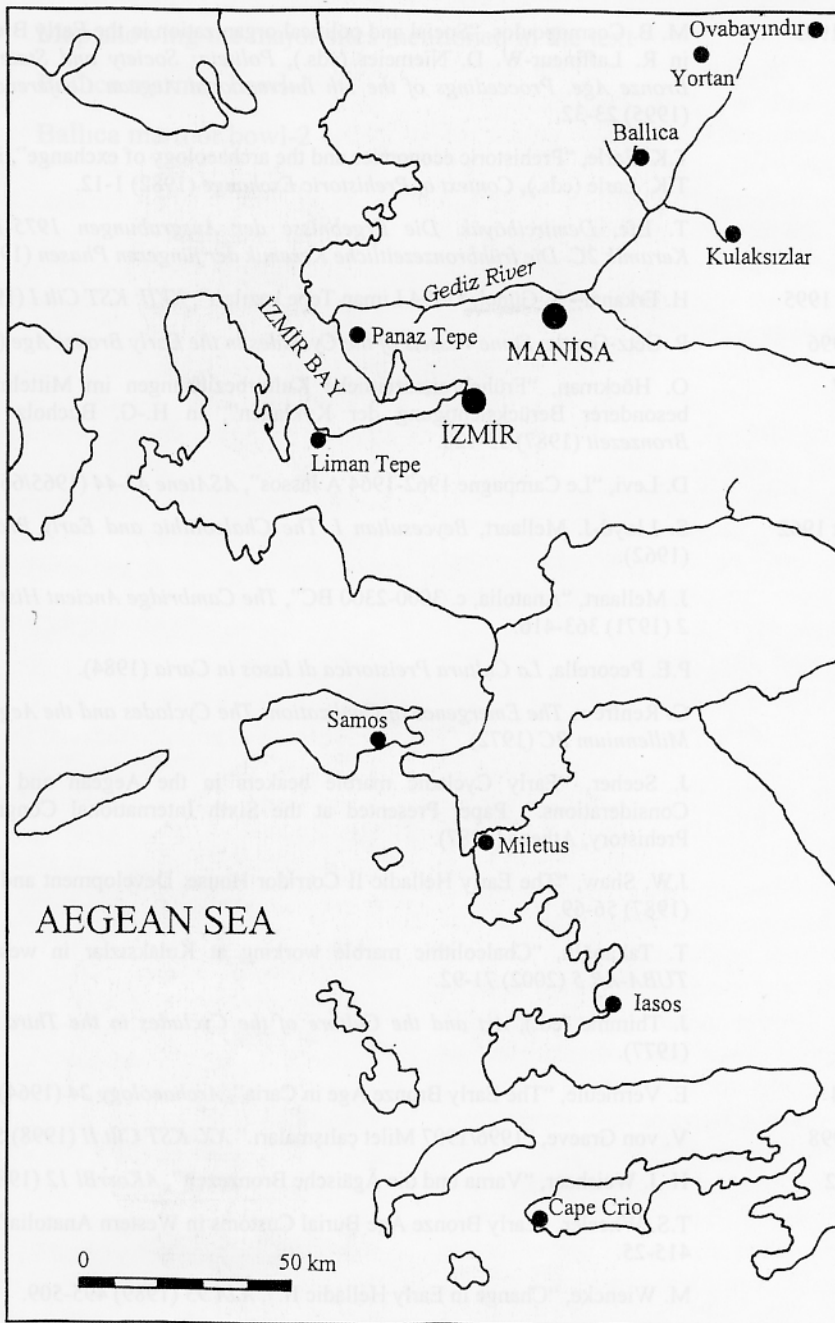


Figure 1. Map showing the major sites mentioned in the text



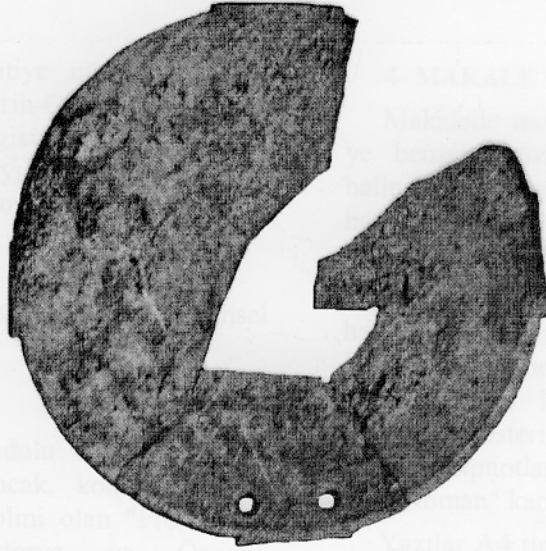


Figure 2

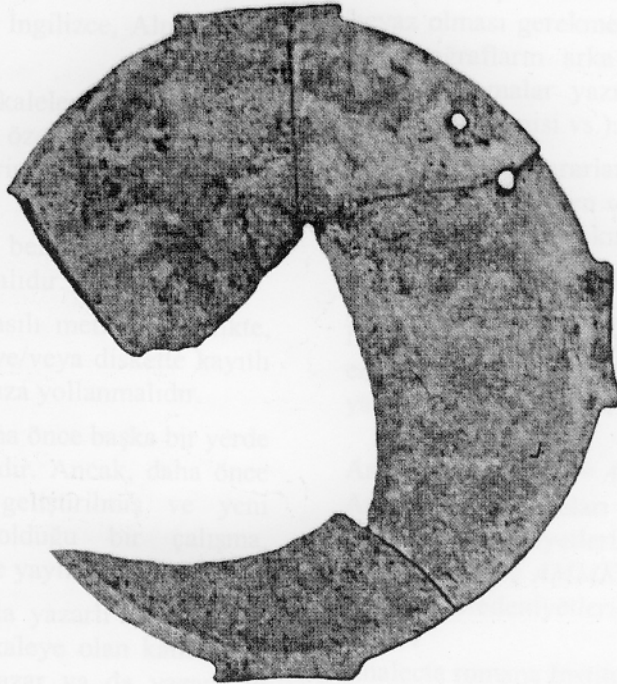


Figure 3