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Ancient Hyssos Port and Its Associated Historical Road Networks: An Analysis Based on Archaeological Surveys and Written Sources¹

Antik Hyssos Limanı ve Bağlantılı Tarihi Yol Ağları: Arkeolojik Yüzey Araştırmaları ve Yazılı Kaynaklar Işığında Bir Değerlendirme

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Abstract

This study focuses on Hyssos (Old Port of Araklı), one of the strategically important ports of the Pontos Region during the Roman Empire, and the historical road networks connecting it to the interior of Anatolia. Located about 30 km east of the modern Trabzon Port, at the point where the Karadere River flows into the Black Sea, this port offered strategic advantages throughout history thanks to its bay structure and the natural shelter it provided, especially against westerly winds. For this reason, the port became an important military and commercial centre from the 2nd century AD, hosted a Roman auxiliary unit, and served as a critical base for military expeditions under the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius. While the existing scholarly literature focuses on the port itself, the ancient routes connecting Hyssos to the interior, especially to Satala (Sadak), an important Roman garrison, have so far not been studied in sufficient depth.

Based on extensive surveys conducted in 2022 and an analysis of historical sources, this paper aims to document connected the Hyssos port with the interior the two main historical routes (Araklı-Aydintepe-Bayburt and Araklı-Yağmurdere-Satala): Archaeological evidence, such as settlements and fortresses along these routes, will be highlighted to illuminate the role of Hyssos as a critical logistical and strategic link connecting the Black Sea coast with the Anatolian interior throughout Antiquity and the Middle Ages. To this end, data on the port of Hyssos from ancient Roman texts and modern research will first be analysed, and then these findings will be compared with Byzantine and Ottoman sources. Finally, the Port of Hyssos will be evaluated together with the data obtained from the field studies conducted by us; the routes and remains of the historical roads connecting the port to the inland regions, especially Satala, will be identified, and the strategic importance of the port in the historical process will be comprehensively revealed.

Keywords: Trapezous, Port of Hyssos, Araklı, Satala, Route.

Öz

Bu çalışma, Roma İmparatorluğu döneminde Pontos Bölgesi'nin stratejik açıdan önemli limanlarından biri olan Hyssos'u (Eski Araklı Limanı) ve onu Anadolu'nun iç kesimlerine bağlayan tarihi yol ağlarını mercek altına almaktadır. Modern Trabzon Limanı'nın yaklaşık 30 km doğusunda, Karadere'nin Karadeniz'e döküldüğü noktada konumlanan bu liman, sahip olduğu körfez yapısı ve bilhassa batı rüzgârlarına karşı sağladığı doğal korunaklılık sayesinde tarihsel süreçte stratejik avantajlar sunmaktaydı. Bu nedenle liman MS II. Yüzyıldan itibaren önemli bir askerî ve ticari merkez kimliği kazanmış, bir Roma yardımcı birliğine ev sahipliği yapmış ve Bizans İmparatoru Herakleios tarafından askerî seferler için kritik bir üs olarak kullanılmıştır. Mevcut akademik literatür limanın kendisine odaklansa da Hyssos'u iç bölgelere, özellikle de önemli bir Roma garnizonu olan Satala'ya (Sadak) bağlayan antik güzergâhlar şimdiye dek yeterince derinlemesine incelenmemiştir.

Bu makale, 2022 yılında gerçekleştirilen kapsamlı yüzey araştırmaları ve tarihsel kaynakların analizi temelinde, Hyssos Limanı'nı çevreleyen tahkimatları ve limandan iç bölgelere uzanan iki ana tarihi rotayı (Araklı-Aydıntepe-Bayburt ve Araklı-Yağmurdere-Satala) belgelemeyi hedeflemektedir. Bu güzergâhlar üzerindeki yerleşimler ve kaleler gibi arkeolojik kanıtlar vurgulanarak, Hyssos'un Antik ve Orta Çağ boyunca Karadeniz kıyısını Anadolu'nun iç kesimleriyle buluşturan kritik bir lojistik ve stratejik bağlantı noktası olarak oynadığı rol aydınlatılacaktır. Bu doğrultuda, öncelikle Roma dönemine ait antik metinler ve modern araştırmalardaki Hyssos Limanı'na dair veriler incelenecek, ardından bu bulgular Bizans ve Osmanlı dönemlerine ait kaynaklarla karşılaştırılacaktır. Son olarak, Hyssos Limanı, tarafımızca yürütülen saha çalışmalarından elde edilen verilerle birlikte değerlendirilecek; limanı başta Satala olmak üzere iç bölgelere bağlayan tarihi yolların güzergâhları ve kalıntıları tespit edilerek, limanın tarihsel süreçteki stratejik ehemmiyeti kapsamlı bir şekilde ortaya konulacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Trapezous, Hyssos Limanı, Araklı, Satala, Rota.

Extended Abstract

Within the strategic coastal infrastructure of Pontus in the Roman period, Hyssos Port (Araklı/Sürmene) stands out as a key node, located where the Karadere (Hyssos River) reaches the Black Sea, approximately 30 km east of the Port of Trabzon. Ancient sources clearly attest to the continuity in the port's naming and status. From the 2nd century CE onward, Hyssos and Trapezous emerged as the two most functional ports along the Pontos coast, serving as starting points for both military and commercial traffic and as the coastal termini of routes extending into the interior of Anatolia. Notably, the presence of a fortress and the stationing of auxiliary units at Hyssos suggest that the port functioned not merely as a port of call but also as an advanced control and supply point. Nevertheless, studies addressing the historical continuity of the road networks connecting Hyssos to the interior regions remain limited. The reports by Bryer-Winfield and Crow-Bryer, along with the study by Erüz-Peşman-Köse on the port's historical framework and maritime traditions, provide important yet fragmented evidence. Aiming to reduce this gap, the present study re-evaluates Hyssos's hinterland connections and their continuity from antiquity through the medieval and Ottoman periods in a holistic manner, drawing on written and archaeological evidence. The main finding is that Hyssos was not merely an alternative shelter port to Trapezous, but rather a long-term nodal point in the logistics of Pontus's interior, linked via two principal road axes extending toward Satala and the Bayburt corridor.

The study adopts three principal methodological approaches. First, ancient and medieval written sources (Pseudo-Scylax, Arrian, the *Notitia Dignitatum*, and Procopius; as well as Nikephoros and Moses of Daskhurants'i in the context of the campaigns of Heraclius) are read comparatively, and the port's various designations, its military status, and its relationship to campaign routes are placed within a chronological framework. Second, modern scholarship and travel accounts -particularly nineteenth-century observations -are employed to discuss the practical implications of Hyssos's geographical and meteorological advantages. The third and decisive stage consists of fieldwork conducted in June 2022 under the TÜBİTAK 2519-COST Working Group Support Program. These investigations involved on-site examination of defensive structures around the former port and the tracing of historic road alignments leading toward the interior; structural elements along these routes, such as forts and cisterns, as well as the chronological implications of surface finds (especially ceramics and slag), were systematically evaluated. By testing text-based inferences against field observations, this methodology seeks to demonstrate that these road networks functioned not merely as Ottoman-period caravan routes but as transit corridors dating back to much earlier periods.

In conclusion, the study repositions the historical function of Hyssos by moving beyond the narrow interpretation of it as merely "an alternative shelter port to Trapezous". Instead, it identifies it as a long-term military and commercial logistical hub. The field research, supported by architectural remains and surface finds identified along the road routes, indicates that the use of these corridors may extend far earlier than the Ottoman period; this, in turn, strengthens the conclusion that the principal passage corridors linking the coast to the interior in the Eastern Black Sea region may have preserved their basic outlines to a large extent.

throughout history. At the same time, the absence of systematic excavations at any of the fortifications around the port or the structures along the routes currently limits the precise dating of the earliest phases. For this reason, future stratigraphic excavations at the defensive structures surrounding Hyssos, and especially at critical nodal points along the two main road axes, will be essential for establishing more robust evidence concerning both the spatial organization of the Roman-period military presence and the chronology of Hyssos's hinterland networks.

Introduction

Hyssos Port, also known as Araklı or Sürmene Port, located 30 km east of the modern Trabzon Port, was one of the major Pontos ports during the Roman period (Talbert, 2000, p. 1232)². Pseudo-Scylax (Periplus, 85), who provides the earliest written information about the port, refers to this port as being located between Rhizeous (Rize) and Trapezous (Trabzon) as “*Psaron*”. At the same time, a Roman military report dated to AD 407, the “*Notitia Dignitatum*” (Or. XXXVIII. 34), refers to the port as “*Ysi Porto*”. From the 5th century onward, the port of Hyssos was generally known as “*Susurmaena*” or “*Sousourmaina*” (Procop. Bell. VIII. II.3-5)³.

From the 2nd century AD onwards, the ports of Hyssos and Trapezous emerged as the two most important ports in the Pontos region. These two ports were at the beginning of important military and commercial routes that enabled armies and caravans to reach the interior of Anatolia from Pontus (Tozlu, 2002, pp. 179; Köse, 2012, pp. 360-361; Doğanç, 2020, pp. 139-140; Erüz & Erbaş, 2020, pp. 26; Emir, 2020, pp. 12). Although Trapezous Port⁴ was the city's preferred and main port historically, Hyssos Port is more advantageous than Trapezous Port in two respects. Firstly, the Port of Hyssos is one of the few ports along the Pontos coast that possesses a natural bay. Secondly, this port has a natural shelter against the westerly winds, which was one of the most significant problems faced by those who sailed to Pontus. The port of Trapezous was vulnerable to strong westerly winds during the winter months and posed a danger to ships that wanted to approach the port (Arr. Periplus. M. Eux. IV. 2; XVI. 6; İnan, 2018, p. 171). On the other hand, the port of Hyssos is protected from the westerly winds by the natural cape (Cape Araklı) extending into the sea to the west. Therefore, when ships arriving at Trapezous could not enter Trapezous Port during the winter, when strong waves and winds were intense, they usually preferred Hyssos Port. In this regard, Fontanier (2005, p. 269), one of the French travelers of the 19th century, emphasized that Hyssos Port was one of the safest ports in the Black Sea and that it was a haven against the westerly winds, which were the only winds to be feared on this side of the Black Sea. Similar statements were made by Bijişkyan (1969, p. 7), who visited Trabzon in the 19th century, and he cited Hyssos Port, with its large bay, as more reliable than Trabzon Port⁵. The natural shelter and geographical advantages of the Hyssos Port made it an attractive point for the ancient powers. Therefore, during the Roman period, a Roman fortress and a military unit were stationed in the Hyssos Port (Arr. Periplus. M. Eux. III.1; Not. Dign. Or. XXXVIII. 34). Probably due to the advantageous situation mentioned above, Rome established its military base in Pontus, not at the Port of Trapezous, but at the Port of Hyssos. There are also essential roads connecting this port to the interior. One of these roads leads to Satala (Gümüşhane/Sadak), one of Rome's eastern garrisons.

² Although the Buzluca settlement, formerly known as “*Canayer*”, 30 km east of Trabzon, was claimed to be the Hyssos Port, and the castle here was the one where Arrianus trained the Roman armies, recent studies suggest that this location is Araklı Castle (Crow & Bryer, 1997, pp. 283-284).

³ In addition to the above-mentioned names for the port of Hyssos, we also encounter different names, such as “*Isulyne*”, “*Nyssilime*”, “*Ysilime*”, and “*Ysulime*”, in various sources (Treidler, 1962, p. 81). The name Heraklia/Araklı, which has been used from the Middle Ages to the Present, is thought to be attributed to the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius (610-641), who led an expedition to Pontus between 622 and 625 (Bryer & Winfield, 2020, pp. 648-649).

⁴ On the historical and strategic importance of the Port of Trapezous, see. Çiğdem 2007, pp. 133-155.

⁵ Evliya Çelebi (p. 55), a 17th-century traveler who lived during the Ottoman period, stated that the port of Hyssos, known as Sürmene Port in his time, was much more protected than the other ports of Trabzon.

Despite the strategic importance of the port of Hyssos, especially during the Roman Imperial Period, there are very few studies in the existing literature on the port and the roads connecting it to the interior. Among these limited studies, A. Bryer and D. Winfield's "The Byzantine Monuments and Topography of the Pontus, I-II" is particularly noteworthy. The work contains brief information about the port of Hyssos and the surrounding castles. Another study on the port of Hyssos is the report, "Survey in Trabzon and Gümüşhane Vilayets (provinces), Turkey, 1992-1994", prepared by J. Crow and A. Bryer. In this study, Crow and Bryer provided brief information on the ancient port of Araklı and the fortresses surrounding it. One of the most significant recent studies on Hyssos Port is "Trabzon, Hyssus Port (Sürmene-Araklı) and the Temporal Change of the Paraskalmion (Çapar) Boat" by Ç. Erüz, E. Peşman and E. Köse. In this study, Erüz and his colleagues provide a brief historical overview of Hyssos Port and then present essential details about the boats produced there since the Ottoman Period.

Although existing research provides some information on the Port of Hyssos, there is a notable lack of data on the historical routes connecting this strategic point to the interior and on their use over time. It is obvious that the origins of these roads, which were particularly active during the Ottoman period (18th and 19th centuries), go much further back. To illuminate this historical depth and continuity, the archaeological and written evidence for the port and its surroundings must be analysed holistically, incorporating later-period sources.

1. Hyssos Port and its Surroundings

The most detailed information about Hyssos Port was provided by Arrianus, who served as the governor of the Roman province of Cappadocia between 131 and 137 AD. (Emir, 2020, pp. 12-13). Arrianus also mentioned the old Araklı Port during his inspection tour of the Roman border fortresses established on the Black Sea coast from Trapezous to Sebastopolis (Sukhumi). Arrianus (Peripl. M. Eux. III.1) stated that "after sailing from Trapezous, they arrived at the Port of Hyssos and trained the soldiers on foot there". Arrianus (Peripl. M. Eux. III.1) described this place as a military checkpoint. They noted that this port, which he called "Hyssos" was garrisoned by a cohort (auxiliary unit) of infantry and a cavalry unit of 20 men. The fact that this auxiliary troop is mentioned in the "Notitia dignitatum" (or. XXXVIII. 34), which is estimated to have been written approximately three centuries after Arrianus⁶, and that the sixth-century historian Procopius (Bell. VIII. II. 16) also mentions this auxiliary troop, indicates that the troop and the port maintained their importance here for a very long time. In addition, the port maintained its strategic importance during the reign of Heraclius (610-641). In the works of Nicephorus (XII.7-14) and Moses Daskhurantsi (I.78), two critical sources providing information about the period, it is stated that Heraclius used the sea route when he moved to the Lazika Region against the Sassanids in 628 and that he moved to the region via Hyssos, which he considered relatively more accessible and safer route before encountering enemies. Evaluating this information in the ancient sources, Howard-Johnston (1999, p. 23; 2021, pp. 298-299) states that the port of Hyssos, located at a relatively safe distance from Lazica, where the enemy's military forces were active, was a suitable forward base point. Heraclius regrouped on this coastal plain east of Trapezous and prepared to move⁷. The eastern coast of Pontus

⁶ According to the "Notitia Dignitatum" (or. XXXVIII. 34), it is reported that there was a cohort, "Apuleia civium Romanorum", in the fortress next to the port.

⁷ For similar views, see. Oikonomidēs, 1975, pp. 1-10; Bryer, 1980, pp. 28-30; Bryer & Mitford, 2020, p. 648.

and the port of Hyssus were the most strategic and reliable locations for Heraclius' campaigns against the Sassanids in 622 and 623, with Satala serving as a forward base.

This port, which constituted the second pillar of the border defence system in the Pontos Region after Satala, also had essential roads originating from its hinterland and extending into the interior, especially to Satala (Bryer & Winfield, 2022, pp. 97-98; Emir, 2020, pp. 12-14). There are five important castles built at different times to ensure the security of the roads leading to Araklı Port, which provides direct access to the sea from Bayburt and the Çoruh Valley. This historically significant route is approximately 100 km shorter than the modern Trabzon-Bayburt highway (Zigana Road)⁸.

To analyse the historical routes stretching from Trabzon toward the inland regions, a series of field surveys was conducted between 2022 and 2024. This research focused on the old Araklı Port and its surroundings, as well as the historical roads connecting this port to the interior. The town of Araklı, where Araklı Port is located, is now situated approximately 1 km inland due to the alluvial deposits carried by the Karadere River. (Map 1). Today, this area, known as Araklı Bazaar, is entirely inhabited, and almost no trace of the historical port remains. However, Arrianus (*Peripl. M. Eux. III.1*), while providing information about the old Araklı Port, mentioned the castle where a Roman auxiliary unit was stationed. Considering the location of the old port and the road route from the port to the village of Sadak, where Satala is situated, this fortress should be the Araklı Fortress, located just above the old Araklı Port, as the castle is one of the five important castles surrounding the port (Bilgin, 1990, pp. 31-35). Similar views are shared by Crow (1994, p. 81) and Gregory (1996, p. 30), who identify Araklı Castle as the most plausible candidate for the Hyssos fortress mentioned by Arrianus⁹.

Araklı Fortress is a medium-sized fortress, measuring 138 m north-south and 130 m east-west. The structure was built of mortared rubble and covered with 1.2 x 0.75 m smoothly cut blocks. According to the report by Crow and Bryer, who conducted research here between 1992 and 1994, the eastern wall reached a height of 2.5 m during those years (Crow & Bryer, 1997, p. 283)¹⁰. Crow and Bryer (1997, pp. 284 ff) mentioned that traces of a tower entrance and stairs were found on the inward-facing section of the west wall of the castle. However, in this area, now used as a hazelnut orchard, it was discovered that the stones used in the construction of the existing wall had been dismantled and reused to build the garden's boundary wall, and that the remains of the castle ramparts or walls have almost disappeared.

Araklı Castle is very close to the part where the Karadere River, where the Hyssos Port was built, flows into the Black Sea. Therefore, the castle is the strongest candidate for the structure protecting the Hyssos Port mentioned by Arrianus. Researchers also believe that Araklı Castle was a Roman Castle used between the 1st and 7th centuries as a continuation of Hadrian's Port and was inhabited in the Middle Ages (Crow, 1994, p. 81; Gregory, 1996, p. 30).

⁸ Four important castles around the old Araklı port: Zavzaga Castle, Hyssos-Susurmanian Port and Castle, Buzluca/Canayer Castle, Kalecik Castle, Sürmene /Hamurgan Castle (Eriüz & Erbaş, 2020, p. 48).

⁹ Ancient Hyssos fortification, Bryer and Winfield (2020, p. 652) associate the site with the current Canayer Castle, which occupies the same location

¹⁰ Like the Old Araklı Fortress, the fortresses of Pityus and Apsarus on the west coast of Georgia. For a similar view, see. Braund, 1994, pp. 182-185.

Another castle located around the Old Port of Araklı is Kalecik Castle. This castle is situated 3 km west of Araklı, on a cliff overlooking the road and the coast (Map 1). Bryer and Winfield state that the castle replaced the Canayer Castle, located just up the hill, in the Middle Ages (Bryer & Winfield, 2020, p. 651). During surveys conducted in 1993, sherds of medieval pottery were collected from the castle, where portions of the walls are still standing (Çilingiroğlu & Derin, 1995, p. 346).

The third castle built around the old port is Canayer (Buzluca) Castle (Sinclair, 1990, p. 151; Crow & Bryer, 1997, pp. 283 et seq.; Bryer, 1980, p. 328). Canayer Castle is a significant point of arrival, well documented in historical sources. Located approximately 1.5 km inland from the sea, the castle is situated on the ridge of Buzluca Village, dominating the sea and port (Map 1). The examination of Canayer Castle revealed that the structure was built as an ideal medieval castle. The castle is situated on a naturally fortified, flat hill with an elevation of approximately 700 meters above sea level. Entrance is also located in the south. It was observed that the castle, measuring approximately 200 x 200 m, is surrounded by walls exceeding 3 m in height in some places. It is also estimated that towers surrounded the castle on all four sides. It is understood that the castle, which spreads over a large area, was positioned facing the sea, and its connection to the Black Sea coast was provided through Kalecik Castle. During the surveys conducted by Çilingiroğlu and Derin in 1993, it was stated that the pottery samples collected from the castle and its surroundings do not date back to the Byzantine Period (Çilingiroğlu & Derin, 1995, p. 346). The artistry and additions suggest that the first phase of the building dates back to the 6th century or later (Crow, 1994, p. 81; Gregory, 1996, p. 30).

The fourth castle is Zavzaga (Ago) Castle, situated near the Old Port of Araklı and along the historical road route (Map 1) (Bilgin, 1990, p. 34; Sinclair, 1990, p. 468; Bryer & Winfield, 2020, p. 652). This castle was built on a very steep hill just above the stream in Ortamahalle, approximately 4 km south of Araklı. Its defences consist of two cliffs and numerous natural obstacles. Its strategic location suggests that it was a late Roman or Byzantine outpost or fortress for regular communication and protection against attacks from the south. Because the castle is currently located adjacent to an active quarry, a significant portion of it has been destroyed. Bryer and Winfield (2020, p. 652) state that there is a cistern in the upper citadel and a chapel in the northeast corner.

The fifth castle around Hyssos Port is Sürmene (Hamurgan) Castle. It is located on a rocky hill about 1 km southwest of Sürmene, Sürmene Castle is located within the borders of Ortamahalle (Zaruha). Because the Hamurgan River flows along its western side, the castle is also known as “*Hamurgan Castle*”. (Bilgin, 1990, p. 19 et al.). Bryer and Winfield (2020, p. 652) emphasized that the castle is a significant structure, considering its size and location. However, almost all of the castle is obscured by dense vegetation. Although the castle appears to be medieval in architecture, no excavations have been conducted within it to date. However, during surveys conducted by Çilingiroğlu and his team in 1993, numerous pottery sherds were found, some characteristic of the Early Byzantine Period (Çilingiroğlu & Derin, 1995, pp. 345-346).

None of these fortresses around the port of Hyssos has been subjected to any archaeological excavation. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the precise date of the earliest use of the fortresses. However, based on surveys conducted in these fortresses to date, it is possible to say that all of these defence structures were used from the Middle Ages onward, and that Araklı Castle dates back to the Roman period. The high concentration of fortresses in the region clearly indicates that Hyssos Port and the surrounding area are strategically important.

Considering that ancient ports in the Central Eastern Black Sea region were often established at the junctions of commercial and natural routes, it is evident that important road networks must have extended inland from the Port of Hyssos, in addition to the existing historical structures (Fontanier, 1829, pp. 289-300; Çelebi, 2018, p. 116).

2. Historical Roads to the Port of Hyssos

Two noteworthy roads provided access to the interior via the historical Port of Hyssos. The first of these roads is the Araklı-Aydıntepe road. Starting from the old Port of Araklı, the road passes through Çavuşlu-Kava-Ağaçbaşı- Madur Mountain-Aşot Pass, and Limonsuyu Inns before reaching Aydıntepe (Bayburt) (Map 1-2). The most important feature of this road is that it was the shortest and easiest summer route from Trabzon to Bayburt (Erüz et al., 2015, p. 544; Emir et al., 2024, pp. 50-51). Based on monastic and church records, Bryer and Winfield (2020, p. 643) note that the rent-collecting monks of Eugenios in Trabzon transported the produce and income from their estates, especially in Paipertes/Paipurth (modern Bayburt), via caravans using this route.

In Ottoman sources, Evliya Çelebi (2018, p. 116) noted that travellers from Trabzon to Bayburt generally preferred this route, but it had only a single crossing point. On the other hand, Fontanier (1829, pp. 289-300), a 19th-century traveller, noted that this historical caravan route was still in active use at the time. A report was prepared in 1914 on this route, which was planned as an alternative to the Trabzon-Erzurum-Kars Road during World War I due to its strategic location. The report investigated whether the road was suitable for military use (Figure 1). According to periodic reports, this road is actively used and suitable for military operation (BOA, DH.UMVM, nr. 74-30/3). This road, which was a major transportation artery until the 1970s, remains a vehicular route today (Erüz & Erbaş, 2020, p. 70).

The present course of this route, which starts from the old Araklı Port, continues along the Karadere Valley and reaches Çavuşlu. Çavuşlu is the first intersection where the roads from “Yomra” in the west and from the “Of” district in the east converge. After Çavuşlu, the route reaches Madur Mountain via Kava Plain and then Ağaçbaşı Inns (Emir, 2020, pp. 12-13). Madur Mountain is one of the highest crossing points in the region, located on the provincial border between Bayburt and Trabzon. In addition, this mountain is among the possible locations of Mount Thekhes, where Xenophon and the ten thousand mercenaries accompanying him saw the Black Sea in 401 BCE. (Bilgin, 2000, p. 18; Zehiroğlu, 2000, p. 14). After Madur Mountain, the road reaches Aydıntepe via Aşot Pass and Liman Water Inns (Map 1).

According to current archaeological data, Aydıntepe and its surroundings have been continuously inhabited since the Bronze Age. The most important evidence for this continuity is the three mounds (Map 1) located at the eastern entrance of the Aydıntepe Plain in Taşkesenler Village, which dominates the plain. Previous surveys in the region yielded Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman, and Late Period ceramics on and around the mound surfaces (Sagona & Sagona, 2004, pp. 118-119). The mounds on both sides of the road indicate that the road and the surrounding area were significant transit routes and settlement areas (Figure 2)¹¹. Following the historical road route north-westward from the mounds toward the old Port of Araklı, one reaches the centre

¹¹ For more information on these mounds, see. Çiğdem et al., 2020, pp. 88-89.

Figure 2: Taşkesenler Mounds

Reference: Created by the Authors.

A significant portion of the structures and materials recovered in and around Aydıntepe Castle are dated to the Late Antique period (Çiğdem, 2013, pp. 67-68). Additionally, the findings from the grave excavations conducted in the region between 1989 and 1991 also reveal traces of Late Antiquity (Özkorucuklu, 1995, pp. 103-127). All these data show that Aydıntepe has a strategic location and is a historical settlement. Another important aspect of Aydıntepe is its identification with “*Gymnias*” mentioned in Xenophon's *Anabasis* (Mitford, 2000, p. 127; Bilgin, 2000, pp. 16-17; Çiğdem et al., 2020, p. 20). In addition to the written documents and archaeological remains found in the region, if we accept the Aydıntepe-Gymnias mapping as correct, then this road, which connects the region to the Old Araklı Port, has been used much longer than previously thought.

The second road leading inland from the Hyssos Port first reaches Kelkit. Then it continues to Sadak via Aho (Ayvadere), Çankaya (Dağbaşı, Haruksa), Çatak, Yağmurdere, the Kostan Mountains, Sobran (Arzular), and Tekke following the Karadere Valley from the Old Araklı Port (Map 1). This road is also known as the “*Satala Road*” in modern studies, as it leads to the Sadak Village, where Satala, one of the Roman garrisons, is situated (Bryer & Winfield, 2020, pp. 97-98; Erüz & Erbaş, 2020, p. 70). Recent studies have indicated that this road was actively used since the Ottoman period (Janssens, 1969, p. 20). Field surveys and travelers' reports show that this route, which began at the old Araklı Port, continued southwest toward Araklı Castle and then Zavzaga Castle (Map 1).

The road, which follows the Karadere Valley from the Port of Hyssos, begins to rise after Taşgeçit Village and continues to Çankaya, then to Çatak (Map 1). Çatak stands out as the first intersection point of the ancillary road routes running north to south. After Çatak, the road continues southwest, reaching Şaphane Village via Akocak and Yağmurdere¹². This village is also connected to the historical Galyan Road, which leads

¹² In 1835, the French traveler Marius Outrey, who visited Trabzon, gave the following information about the village of Şaphane: “After a ten-hour walk, I arrived at a village called “Şebhane, named after the alum mine in the vicinity. There are no settlements along this entire road. Located at the end of Kazıklı Mountain, Şebhane Village has 25 Turkish houses and 40 stables. The inhabitants produce cheese and

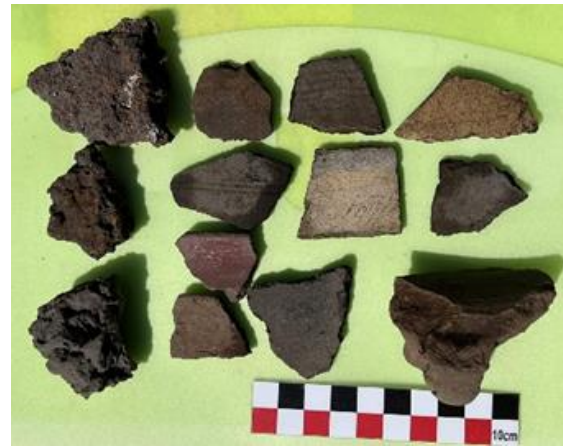
from Trabzon to Bayburt¹³. After Şaphane Village, the road connects to the Koston Mountains, one of the notable passes separating Bayburt and Trabzon. After the Koston Mountain Pass, the road is divided into two branches. The first road reaches Bayburt via the Koston Mountains through Akhisar (Akşar), Sarıççek, Pamuktaş, and then Hadrak (Balkaynak) (Map 1). There is also an important castle structure in Akhisar on this route (Figure 3). This castle, called Akhisar Castle, is characteristic of a sheltered settlement rather than a direct defensive structure, as it spans a vast area and is situated at a low elevation relative to the surrounding hills. During surveys conducted in the area, numerous ceramic sherds and mining slags were discovered. Some of the ceramics are similar to those of the Eastern Anatolian Early Iron Age (Figure 4). Although no precise dating can be established for the site, it is believed that the area was inhabited until the Early Iron Age. These findings also demonstrate that the road route was open to settlement and has been in use since ancient times. After Akhisar, the road route continues to Pamuktaş Village in Bayburt Province. This area is noteworthy as both a strategic and historical site. Pamuktaş Village is situated at the intersection of roads connecting Erzincan and Bayburt. An important castle structure was also identified during our research in the village. This castle is located just northwest of the village at an altitude of approximately 700 m. The castle measures approximately 325 m in the northwest-southeast direction and approximately 90 m in the east-west direction (Figures 5 and 6). The fortification walls were built of rubble stone masonry filled with Horasan mortar. Çiğdem and his team identified Iron Age and Medieval ceramic samples, as well as three iron slags, during their surveys of the castle and its surroundings (Çiğdem et al., 2020, pp. 142-143). The findings indicate active human traffic and dense settlement in the region¹⁴. The road route following Pamuktaş Village leads to Bayburt.

Figure 3: Akçahisar Castle



Reference: Created by the Authors.

Figure 4: Akçahisar Ceramics



Reference: Created by the Authors.

butter for sale in Trabzon. All these houses are like the ones we encountered in Armenia, that is, they are made of mud and covered with earth. It is therefore difficult to distinguish these villages as one passes through. In winter, they can only be distinguished by the smoke coming out of their chimneys". (Yılmaz, 2016, pp. 155-156).

¹³ The Galyan road was a route frequently used by travelers wishing to reach Bayburt or Erzurum from Trabzon, especially in the 19th century (Tozer, 1881, pp. 440-443; Lynch, 1901, pp. 239-240; Deyrolle, 1997, pp. 47-48).

¹⁴ İlhan (2019, p. 57) stated that Pamuktaş Castle can be identified with the structures described by Procopius (Aed. III.6.15-18) as Tzanika castles due to its structure and location.

A second route branching off from the Kostan Mountains runs south-westerly and reaches Sadak via Yayladere (Veyserni), Arzular/Kabaköy, Tekke, and Kelkit (Map 1). The Tekke site along this route is critical, as it is one of the last stops before reaching the Satala garrison. Moreover, Tekke is not only situated on this secondary route but also lies at the intersection with the main road leading from the historic Trabzon Port (Map 1). This makes Tekke a remarkable crossroads where both summer and winter routes to Satala converge.

Figure 5: Pamuktaş Castle



Reference: Created by the Authors.

Figure 6: Pamuktaş Castle



Reference: Created by the Authors.

The hill at Tekke, which dominates the historic road, bears traces of an ancient settlement. At the summit of the hill, the remains of a castle built using a mortarless (dry-wall) technique are visible. Only a small portion of the fortification wall has survived to the present day (Figure 7). Mitford (2018, p. 360) states that the remains of this structure are similar to those of the Justinian walls at Satala. Located directly on the old road and commanding a view of it, the castle must have been built to protect a strategically vital crossing point. During investigations on the same hill, four cisterns were identified, one of which is approximately 8 m wide and 3 m deep (Figure 8).

Figure 7: Tekke Castle



Reference: Created by the Author

Figure 8: Tekke Cistern



Reference: Created by the Author

In addition to the historical and archaeological remains, Tekke is situated at a crossroads where the Gümüşhane-Erzincan Road intersects with the Satala route (modern Sadak Village). Owing to this location, the Tekke region is situated at a central point, roughly midway between the Zigana, Karakaban¹⁵, and Satala roads (Map 1). The historical structures identified in the Tekke region, along with the region's strategic location, underscore the significance of the Hyssos-Satala Road in a broader historical context.

The Hyssos-Satala Road also connects to the main road leading from Trabzon Port. It is noteworthy that the route is close to the Hyssos Port and castle, where Roman military units were stationed. There are also various historical buildings along the road. Considering all these factors, it is believed that the road in question served as an alternative route to reach the garrison of Satala during the Roman period. In this regard, Bryer, drawing on monastic records, states that the road from the Port of Hyssos to Satala was extensively used in the Middle Ages (Bryer, 1980, p. 26; Bryer & Winfield, 2020, pp. 643-644). Future archaeological studies on this route will undoubtedly provide more detailed information.

Conclusion

This study presents a comprehensive evaluation of the port of Hyssos and the historical roads that led to it, drawing on ancient sources, modern literature, and field research. Hyssos, which stood out as a strategic port during the Roman, Byzantine, and Ottoman periods, had significant economic, military, and commercial importance due to its road networks connecting it to inland regions and its status as a safe port on the Pontos coast. It is believed to have served as an alternative transit point to the Port of Trapezous, particularly during the Roman period, and to have been one of the region's important centres of military activity.

The identification of the routes connecting Hyssos Port to the interior contributes to a better understanding of the region's past commercial and military functions. Field surveys reveal that the roads from Hyssos Port to Sadak (Satala) and Bayburt were in active use. Especially during the Ottoman period, these roads remained busy, used not only for military purposes but also for economic activities. Additionally, the fortresses around the port are crucial to the port's security and control of the surrounding roads. The density of these fortresses indicates that the roads were strategically valuable. The structures found along the road routes during the field surveys, along with the pottery samples discovered around them, reveal two significant conclusions. First, the use of these routes' dates back to well before the Middle Ages. Second, the road routes in the Eastern Black Sea Region have remained essentially unchanged over a long period.

It is understood that the roads extending from the port of Hyssos to the interior were influential in determining the region's position within the geopolitical and commercial network. The comparative analysis of ancient sources and field research findings has provided an opportunity to reevaluate the port's function within the historical process. In future studies, systematic excavations of the archaeological remains in the region will enable a more comprehensive evaluation of the port of Hyssos and its transportation networks.

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¹⁵ The Karakaban Road, which runs from Trabzon Port to Maçka and from there to Gümüşhane or Bayburt by crossing the Hoca Mezarı Plateau, is a route of historical importance. Especially in the 18th and 19th centuries, it was a frequently used alternative during the Ottoman Period, as it was much shorter than the Zigana Road and served as a summer route. This road is also related to the Trapezous-Satala route marked on the 4th-century Roman road map *Tabula Peutingeriana*. (Emir, 2020, pp. 5-8; see also Mitford, 2000, p. 128; Doğanç, 2020, p. 143).

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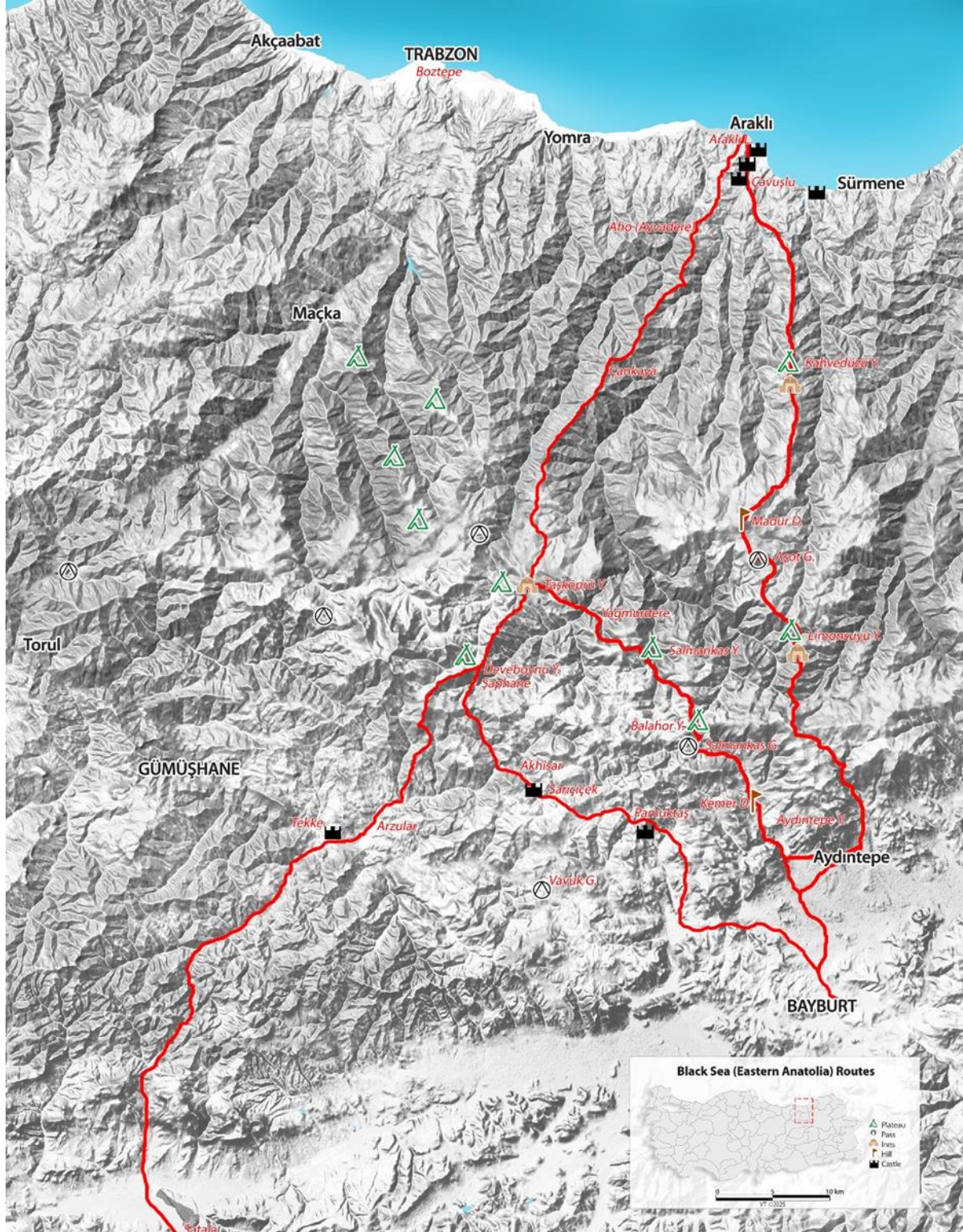
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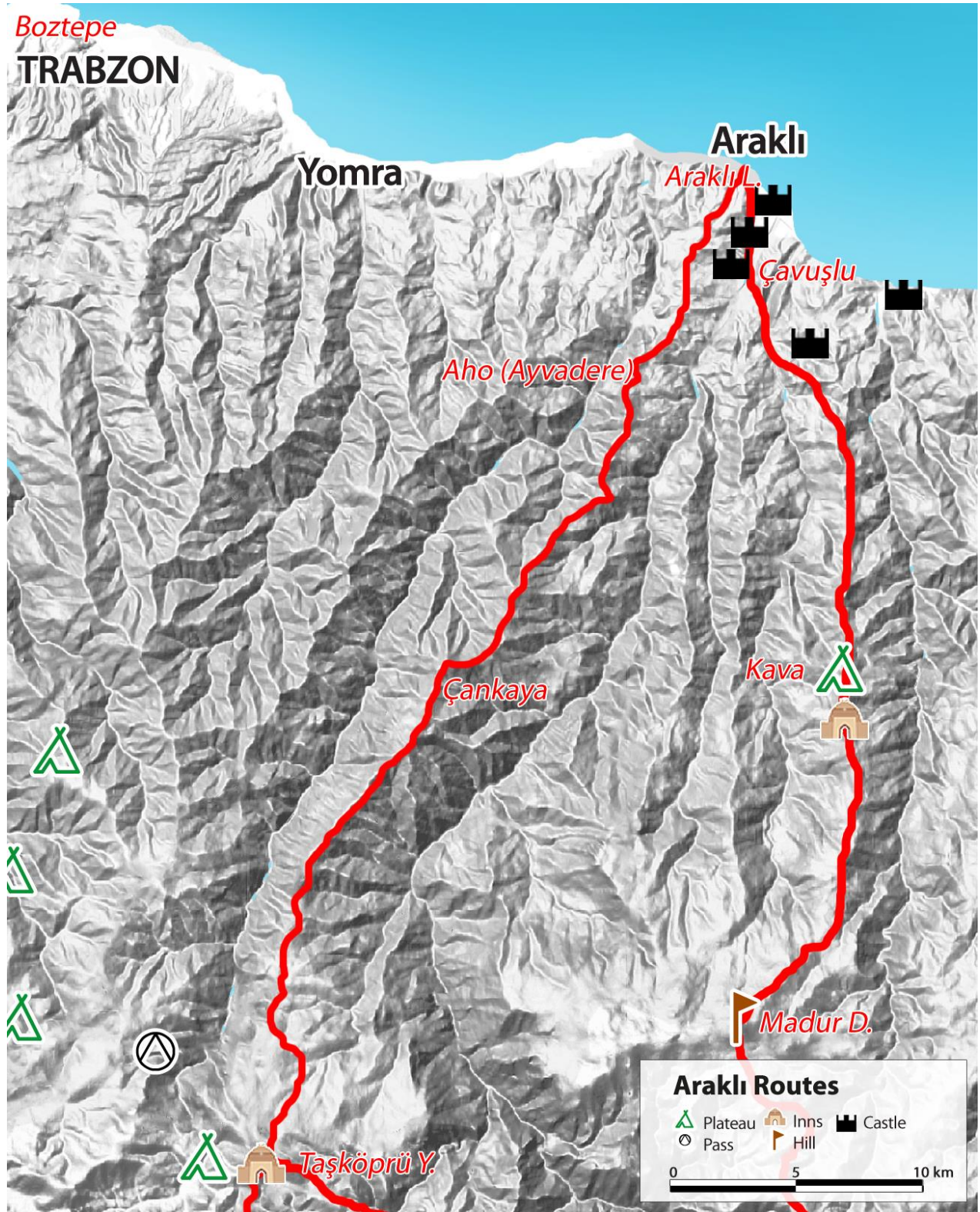
APPENDICES

Map 1: The Ancient Roads Leading to the Port of Hyssos



Reference: Created by the Authors.

Map 2: Araklı Routes



Reference: Created by the Authors.