

THE TWO-HANDLED DRINKING VESSELS AS AN INDICATOR FOR POSSIBLE EXPANSION OF THE MEDES INTO CENTRAL ANATOLIA

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Abstract

The Medes, whose presence has not been conclusively identified yet in the archaeological record, are documented in ancient Greek historiography as having influenced a vast region stretching from the Iranian Plateau in the east to the Kızılırmak Bend in the west. However, their political organization and short governance over this vast region remain poorly understood. Additionally, the possible archaeological materials related to the political and cultural aspects of the expansion of the Medes have unfortunately not been expanded. This paper intends to investigate the form of a two-handled drinking vessel ("tankard") dated to the Middle-Late Iron Ages, which seems to demonstrate significant potential for understanding the expansion of the Medes, in the context of the changing border and political structure of the expansion. By analyzing 'tankards' found in the Kızılırmak Bend, which are

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considered to have descended from the East, alongside written sources and other archaeological evidence, we suggest that the Delice River, rather than Kızılırmak River, marks the westernmost extent of Median political and cultural expansion into Central Anatolia.

Keywords: Two-Handled Drinking Vessels, the Medes, the Lydians, Late Iron Age, Central Anatolia.

Orta Anadolu'daki Olası Med Yayılımının Bir Göstergesi Olarak Çift Kulplu İçki Kapları

Öz

Arkeolojik anlamda herkesi ikna edecek düzeyde kimlik kazandırılmayan Medler, Eski Yunan tarihçiliğinden gelen bilgilere göre doğuda İran platosundan batıda Kızılırmak kavsine değin uzanan geniş coğrafyada söz sahibi olmuşlardır. Ancak, bu geniş coğrafya üzerindeki kısa süreli egemenlikleri ve egemenliklerinin şekli detaylı ve eksiksiz tanımlanabilmiş değildir. Dahası Med yayılımının politik ve kültürel boyutunu tartışabileceğimiz olası arkeolojik malzeme grupları genişletilememiştir. Bu çalışma, yayılımın anlaşılması adına güçlü bir yan taşıyan Orta-Geç Demir Çağlarına tarihli iki kulplu bir içki kap formunu ('tankard') yayılımın değişen sınırları ve politik yapısı bağlamında incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Tarihi kaynaklar ve diğer arkeolojik kanıtlarla birlikte, Kızılırmak kavsinde bulunan ancak ilk kez kavsin doğusunda ortaya çıktığı anlaşılan 'tankard' kap grubunu ortaya koyarak, Medlerin Orta Anadolu'ya doğru ilerlettikleri politik ve kültürel yayılımın en batı ucunu Kızılırmak yerine onun bir kolu olan Delice Irmağı'nın çizdiğini önermekteyiz.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Çift Kulplu İçki Kapları, Medler, Lidyalılar, Geç Demir Çağı, Orta Anadolu.

Historical Background

Archaeological studies in Northwestern Iran and the surrounding regions have not yet provided solid evidence for identifying the Medes. Some pre-Achaemenid settlements suggest a 'new' culture emerged in the region during the eighth to seventh centuries BC, but a distinct material culture group representing Median identity remains elusive. Nevertheless, ancient Greek historiography places the westernmost extent of the 'Median Empire' at the Kızılırmak River and the bend formed by the same river. Besides, the transition between the fall of the Neo-Assyrian Empire and the emergence of the Achaemenid Empire (612-550 BC) remains poorly understood, except for Southern Mesopotamia, under Babylonian control, due to its archives and available archaeological evidence. However, in the

north, northeast, and northwest, the loss or absence of archival material and damaged archaeological layers obscure historical understanding.

Nineveh was sacked by the alliance between the Medes and Babylonians in 612 BC¹. Unfortunately, the Babylonian chronicles do not detail how the alliance captured Nineveh. However, a late ancient source, *Diodoros Sikeliotes*, provides some accounts². Although there is a general approach that *Diodoros Sikeliotes* derives mainly from *Ctesias*, one can recognize him as an original written source because of supplementing *Ctesias* through other sources³. Moreover, while this event is widely seen as Neo-Assyrian Empire's fall, some scholars argue that its history continued until Harran's fall in 609 BC⁴.

Written sources such as Herodotus⁵, the Babylonian Chronicles⁶, and the Assyrian State Archives frequently refer to the Medes, with the latter already doing so from the second half of the ninth century BC⁷. It is widely accepted that Ekbatana (modern Hamadan), in Northwestern Iran, served as the central point for the Median tribes, which were referred to by various names such as the *Strong Medes*, the *Medes on the borders of Mount Bikni*, and the *Distant Medes*⁸. However, the current approach suggests that the Median lands are roughly compatible with the modern Iranian provinces of Qazvin, Alborz, Tehran, Markazi, and Qom, parts of Zanjan, Hamadan, and probably Isfahan⁹.

Excavations in the 1960s and 1970s at key settlements located near Hamadan, Baba Jan¹⁰, Nush-i Jan Tepe¹¹, and Godin Tepe¹², revealed monumental structures, including columned halls, suggesting a rapidly progressing trend in urbanization and governance development. However, these settlements declined in the early sixth century BC, leading some scholars to suggest that the political structures sustaining these settlements originated outside Northwestern Iran¹³. The

¹ Albert K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, New York 1975, s. 90–6.

² Jo A. Scurlock, “The Euphrates Flood and the Ashes of Nineveh (Diod. II 27. 1-28.7)”, *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, 39, (1990).

³ Charles E. Muntz, “Diodorus Siculus and Megasthenes: A Reappraisal”, *Classical Philology*, 107, (2012), s. 36.

⁴ Simo Parpola, “Assyrians after Assyria”, *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies*, 13, (1999).

⁵ Htd. I. 95, 103, 106, 185 (translated by Alfred A. Godley 1975).

⁶ BM 21901, 24–28, 38–46 (translated by Albert K. Grayson 1975).

⁷ LAR I. 784, 795, 812; LAR II. 54, 79, 96, 566 (translated by Daniel D. Luckenbill 1927).

⁸ Igor Diakonoff, “Media”, *The Cambridge History of Iran: 2*, London 1985, s. 41, 48.

⁹ Andreas Fuchs, “The Medes and the Kingdom of Mannea”, *The Oxford History of the Ancient Near East*, Oxford 2023.

¹⁰ Clare Goff, “Excavation at Baba Jan 1967: Second Preliminary Report”, *Iran*, 7, (1969), “Excavation at Baba Jan, the Architecture of the East Mound, Levels II and III”, *Iran*, 15, (1977).

¹¹ David Stronach, “Excavations at Tepe Nush-i Jan: 1967”, *Iran*, 7, (1969).

¹² Cuyler Young-Louis D. Levine, *Excavations of Godin Project: Second Progress Report*, Toronto 1974.

¹³ Stuart C. Brown, “Media and Secondary State Formation in the Neo-Assyrian Zagros: an Anthropological Approach to an Assyriological Problem”. *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, 38, (1986);

earlier surge of urbanization is attributed to the Neo-Assyrian Empire's integration of the region into its trade network, while its decline coincides with the empire's fall. Some scholars also argue that the Median tax system and its associated ideology were not yet established¹⁴. The idea that Median political presence faded before becoming an empire, persisted in Western and Iranian literature¹⁵. Although the exact nature of Median governance remains unclear, its rise is widely linked to the trade networks¹⁶.

Central Anatolia is significant in Median history, particularly in ancient Greek historiographical accounts. The prolonged conflicts with *Lydia* are the most notable¹⁷. While these conflicts likely extended across a broad region, the precise location of the final conflict—concluded by a solar eclipse—remains uncertain. Some scholars suggest it occurred southeast or southwest of the Kızılırmak Bend¹⁸.

Herodotus also mentions *Pteria*¹⁹, a region with a presumed capital and home to the *Leucosyroi*. Late Iron Age fortress at Kerkenes Dağ once proposed as *Pteria*²⁰ and its inhabitants Median²¹, has since been reclassified as *Phrygian*²². A pivotal event altering the course of the conflict between Croesus and Cyrus the Great occurred in *Pteria*, on the east bank of Kızılırmak River²³. Croesus crossed the river and plundered the region, enslaving its inhabitants despite their neutrality. While their allegiance is unclear, Cyrus the Great reinforced his army with local troops from the territories on the route, suggesting Median rule functioned as a flexible confederation rather than a strict empire. Sparse archaeological evidence in

Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, "Was There ever a Median Empire?", *Achaemenid History III: Methods and Theory*, Leiden 1988.

¹⁴ Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, "Medes and Persians in Early States?", *The Dynamics of the Early State Paradigm*, Utrecht 1995.

¹⁵ Mohamad T. Imampour, "The Medes and Persians: Were the Persians ever ruled by Medes?", *Name-ye Iran-e Bastan*, 2, (2003); 2003; Robert Rollinger, "The Medes of the 7th and the 6th c. BCE: A Short-term Empire or Rather Shorted Term Confederacy?", *Short-term Empires in the World History*, Wiesbaden 2020.

¹⁶ Karen Radner, "An Assyrian View on Medes", *Continuity of Empire (?) Assyria, Media, Persia*, Padova 2003.

¹⁷ Hdt. I. 74 (translated by Alfred A. Godley 1975).

¹⁸ Georges Radet, *La Lydie et le Monde Grec au Temps des Mermnades*, Paris 1893; Geoffrey Summers, "Medes, Lydians, the "Battle of Eclipse" and the Historicity of Herodotus", <http://kerkenes.metu.edu.tr/kerk1/12pub/wpaper/eclbygds/index.html> accessed 18 July 2024.11 (1999); Christopher Roosevelt, *The Archaeology of Lydia, from Gyges to Alexander*, Cambridge 2009.

¹⁹ Hdt. I. 76 (translated by Alfred A. Godley 1975).

²⁰ Geoffrey Summers, "The Identification of the Iron Age City on Kerkenes Dağ in Central Anatolia", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 52, (1997).

²¹ Geoffrey Summers, "The Median Empire Reconsidered: A view from Kerkenes Dağ", *Anatolian Studies*, 50, (2000), s. 70.

²² Geoffrey Summers, "Phrygians East of the Red River: Phrygianisation, Migration and Desertion", *Anatolian Studies*, 68, (2018).

²³ Hdt. I. 76 (translated by Alfred A. Godley 1975).

Central Anatolia and Northwestern Iran, along with Kerkenes Dağ's *Phrygian* traits, further challenges the notion of a Median imperial expansion²⁴. However, although those make it very challenging to determine an imperial entity for the Medes, some scholars insist on the possibility of 'Median Empire'²⁵.

Two-handed Drinking Vessel – 'Tankard'

The paper examines a distinctive drinking vessel, featuring two vertical handles, a wide mouth, and no painted decoration. First identified at Alişar²⁶, its size varies in height and diameter. The vessel (henceforth 'tankard') mainly comes from Middle to Late Iron Age layers of settlements in North-Central Anatolia but it is not widely distributed, nor is it present in significant quantities in pottery assemblages of the relevant settlements. North-Central Anatolia corresponds to the north and east of the Delice River, which divides the Kızılırmak Bend in two, roughly in the northwest-southeast direction. Apart from one unique example at Kırşehir Yassihöyük²⁷, all known examples come from North-Central Anatolia settlements of Alişar²⁸, Kayapınar²⁹, Boğazköy³⁰, and Alacahöyük (fig. 1–3)³¹.

²⁴ Okan Sezer, "Central Anatolia in the 6th Century BC: Transitional Period of Achaemenid Persian Empire", *Central and Eastern Anatolia Late Iron Age: Post-Urartu, Median and Achaemenid Empires*, İstanbul 2019, s. 139–40.

²⁵ Christopher Tuplin, "The Medes in Anatolia: a return visit", *From Midas to Cyrus and Other Stories: Papers on Iron Age Anatolia in Honour of Geoffrey and Françoise Summers*, London 2023, s. 326.

²⁶ Hans H. Von der Osten, *The Alishar Hüyük: Seasons of 1930-32*, Chicago 1937a, s. 361, 381, fig. 430/e 1286.

²⁷ Masako Omura, "Yassihöyük Kazıları", *KST*, 37/3, (2016), fig. 10.

²⁸ Hans H. Von der Osten, *The Alishar Hüyük: Seasons of 1930-32*, Chicago 1937b, s. 361, 381, fig. 430/e 1286, 1937b, fig. 47/d 1155, 48/e 876, 2429.

²⁹ Raci Temizer, "Kayapınar Höyüğü Buluntuları", *Belleten*, 71, (1954), fig. 9/b.

³⁰ Eva-Marie Bossert, *Die Keramik Phrygischer Zeit von Boğazköy*, Mainz 2000, pl. 60.619.

³¹ Aykut Çınaroğlu, "Alacahöyük 2008 Kazı Raporu", unpublished report for the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Türkiye, (2008). Tayfun Yıldırım, the current head of Alacahöyük excavation project, inform us about this vessel.

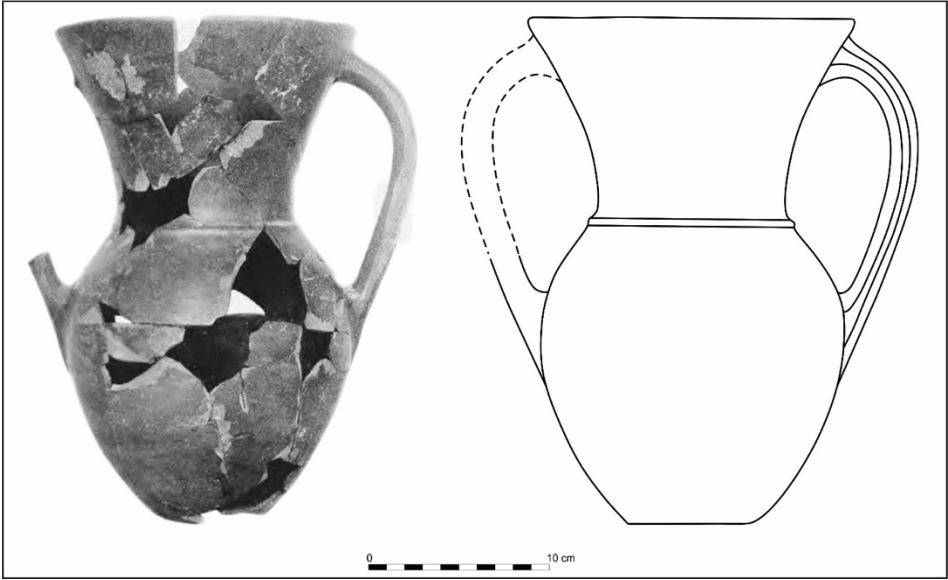


Figure 1. Alişar 'tankard' (Redrawn by the authors after Hans H. Von der Osten, 1937b: fig. 47/d 1155; Eva-Maria Bossert, 2000, abb. 35/b).



Figure 2. Kayapınar 'tankard' (Redrawn by the authors after Raci Temizer, 1954, fig. 9/b; Eva-Maria Bossert, 2000, abb. 35/f).

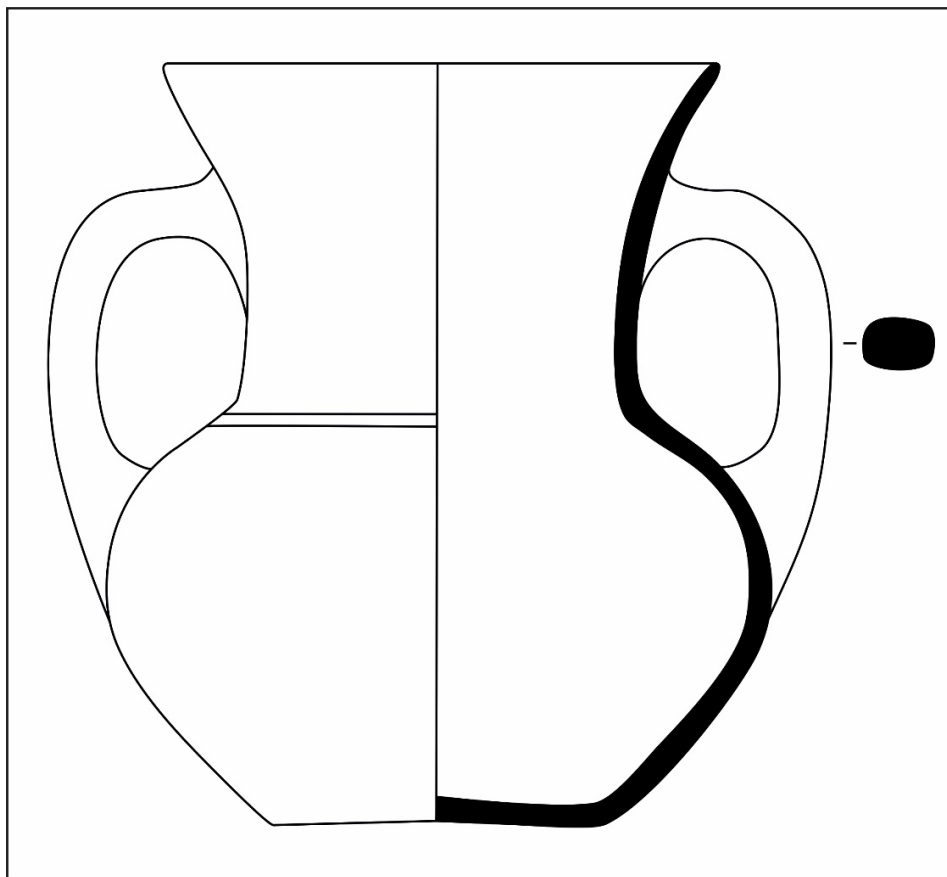


Figure 3. Boğazköy ‘tankard’ (Not to scale, redrawn by the authors after Eva-Maria Bossert, 2000, pl. 60.619).

Seeking Possible precursors

A precursor candidate of the ‘tankard’ is a Hittite ‘kantharos’ from the second millennium BC, referred as such after an example found at Boğazköy³² (fig. 4), featuring two vertical handles, a high foot, a wide-bellied body, and a wide mouth with four semi-circular parts (and/or trefoil), crafted on the wheel³³. This

³² Kurt Bittel-Hans G. Güterbock, Vorläufiger Bericht über die dritte Grabung in Bogazköy, Berlin 1933.

³³ Kutlu Emre, “The Pottery of the Assyrian Colony Period According to the Building Levels of Kaniş Karum”, *Anatolia*, 7, (1963), fig. 12/kt.g/k 72.

form was widespread across various contexts and Hittite pottery assemblages³⁴ but fell out of use during the Late Bronze Age³⁵. There is no written record of its original name and function. Nevertheless, its use as a burial gift³⁶ suggests it carried special meaning. Upon examining the well investigated pottery assemblages of the Iron Age from Central Anatolia³⁷, it becomes clear that no pottery form can be considered a direct successor to the ‘kantharos’, nor any can be claimed to have directly evolved from it. The only connection that could be established between them is having vertical handles and other traits of drinking vessels. Apart from those, the chronological gap also prevents establishing the predecessor-successor relationship between them.

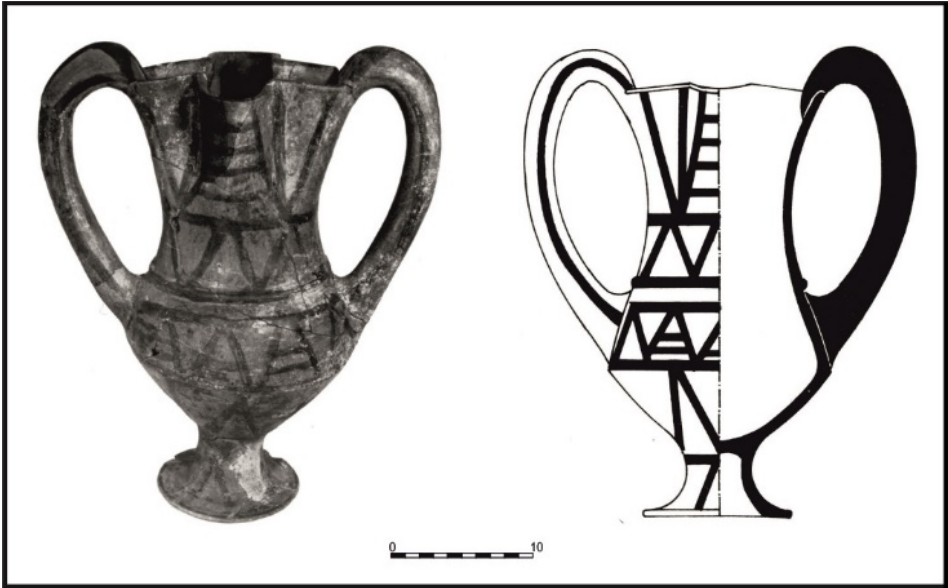


Figure 4. Precursor candidate of the ‘tankard’; İnandıktepe ‘kantharos’ (Reorganized by the authors after Dirk P. Mielke, 2022, fig. 13/1a-1b).

³⁴ Kutlu Emre, *Acemhöyük Seramiği*, Ankara 1968, “Kantharoi from Kültepe/Kanish”, *Essays on Ancient Anatolia in Second Millennium BC*, Wiesbaden 1996; Tahsin Özgüç, İnandıktepe: Eski Hitit Çağında Önemli bir Kült Merkezi, Ankara 1988.

³⁵ Ibid. 81.

³⁶ Hans H. Von der Osten, *The Alishar Hüyük: Seasons of 1930-32*, Chicago 1937a, s. 160, fig. 201/c 2734; Kutlu Emre, “Kantharoi from Kültepe/Kanish”, *Essays on Ancient Anatolia in Second Millennium BC*, Wiesbaden 1996.

³⁷ Eva-Maria Bossert, *Die Keramik Phrygischer Zeit von Boğazköy*, Mainz 2000; Kimiyoshi Matsumura, *Die Eisenzeitliche Keramik in Zentralanatolien aufgrund der Keramik in Kaman-Kalehöyük* (text und tafeln), Freie Universität, Berlin 2005.

Another candidate form tankard, first identified in third millennium BC Western Anatolia (fig. 5), became a defining feature of the region as the research progressed³⁸. This form also shares some basic similarities with ‘tankard’ and while various classifications have been proposed based on their features of form, it can be fundamentally categorized into single-handled and two-handled types. Over time, two-handled tankards appeared outside Western Anatolia, including Kültepe and Acemhöyük in Central Anatolia. The excavator suggests that the Kültepe examples, discovered in the 13-12th layers, were imported from Western Anatolia³⁹. Similarly, a small group of tankards, fewer than 20 intact or fragmented pieces, found in Early Bronze Age II-III layers at Acemhöyük also allows the interpretation of Western Anatolian origins⁴⁰.

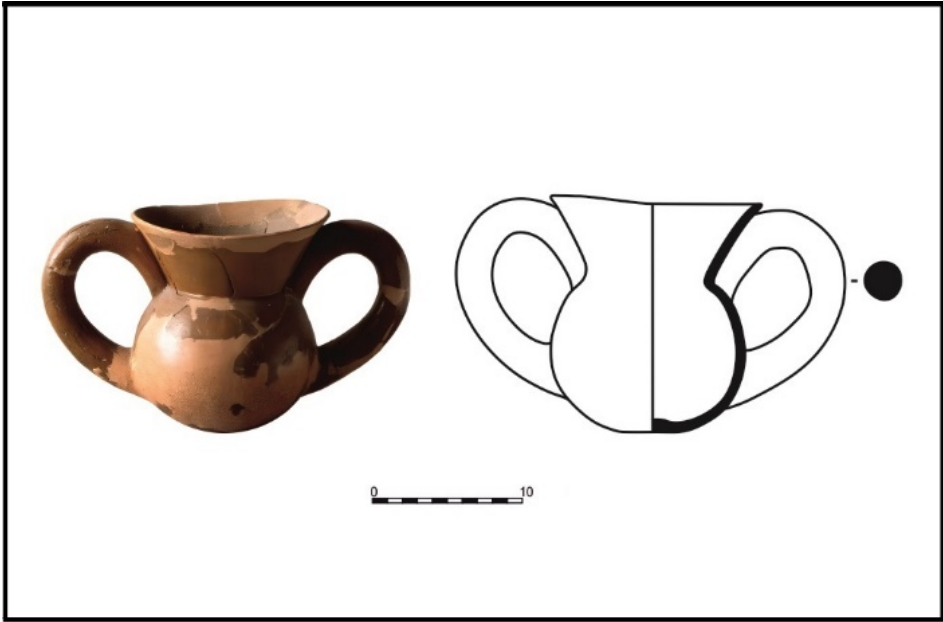


Figure 5. Precursor candidate of the ‘tankard’; Karataş-Semayük tankard (Redrawn and reorganized by the authors after Christine Eslick, 2009, pl. 52/KA160; Vasıf Şahoğlu-Panagiota Sotirakopoulou, 2011, kat. no. 500).

³⁸ Carl W. Blegen et al., *Troy: General Introduction, The First and Second Settlements, Volume I, Part 2: Plates*, Princeton 1950, fig. 370a/A43; Machteld Mellink, “Excavations at Karataş-Semayük in Lycia, 1966”, *American Journal of Archaeology*, 71, (1967), fig. 83; Turan Kâmil, *Yortan Cemetery in the Early Bronze Age of Western Anatolia*, Oxford 1982, fig. 79, 269, 271.

³⁹ Tahsin Özgüç, “New Observations on the Relationship of Kültepe with Southeast Anatolia and North Syria during the Third Millennium BC”, *Ancient Anatolia Aspects of Changes and Cultural Development, Essays in Honor of Machteld J. Mellink*, Wisconsin 1986, fig. 3.31–3.

⁴⁰ Yalçın Kamlı, *Acemhöyük Erken Tunç Çağı Seramiği*, Ankara University, Ankara 2012, s. 105.

Central Anatolia was heavily influenced by a painted ware referred to as Alişar III (sometimes called Cappadocian Ware) during Early Bronze Age II-III, with some evidence suggesting its persistence into Middle Bronze Age, before declining during the Hittite Period⁴¹. It was eventually replaced by Plain Ware (sometimes called Drab Ware), as the characteristic Hittite Pottery, known for its wheel-made, limited surface treatment, and light-coloured paste⁴². Recent studies, along with the resulting publications⁴³ demonstrate clearly that the Bronze Age pottery traditions in Central Anatolia did not arise and disappear in a straightforward manner or within rigid boundaries. Instead, groups of painted wares survived in peripheral regions during the Hittite Period. Some of these wares resemble Alişar III of Early Bronze Age II-III and, more significantly, some of them are believed to be direct predecessors of Iron Age painted wares⁴⁴. It appears that the suggestion of the predecessor-successor relationships between the pottery assemblages of Bronze Age and Iron Age, particularly from settlements in the Kızıllırmak Bend, proposed by some scholars is partially validated. They have examined the pottery assemblages of Early Bronze Age and Iron Age from Central and Western Anatolia, focusing on form and decorative features⁴⁵.

While tankards from Early Bronze Age II-III and 'kantharos' from Hittite period share some basic similarities with later forms, it appears more reasonable that the 'tankard' likely originated outside of the Central Anatolia. Some scholars suggest that a drinking cup group of Late Iron Age, in which certain 'tankards' samples can be included, was introduced rather than developed locally⁴⁶. Accordingly, the Iranian pottery tradition has started to be seen in the west of the Kızıllırmak River after the seventh century BC⁴⁷. Given the low representation of 'tankard' in pottery assemblages, it was probably not a regular trade item but arrived through limited diffusion rather than large-scale and sustained import.

⁴¹ Kutlu Emre, "The Pottery of the Assyrian Colony Period According to the Building Levels of Kaniş Karum", *Anatolia*, 7, (1963), s. 87, "Pottery of Levels III and IV at the Karum of Kanesh", *Anatolia and the Ancient Near East: Studies in Honor of Tahsin Özgüç*, Ankara 1989, s. 112.

⁴² Ulf-Dietrich Schoop, "Hittite Pottery: A Summary", *Insights into Hittite History and Archaeology*, Leuven 2011.

⁴³ Federico Manuelli-Dirk P. Mielke eds, Late Bronze Age Painted Pottery Traditions at the Margins of the Hittite State, Papers Presented at a Workshop Held at the 11th ICAANE (München 4 April 2018) and Additional Contributions, Oxford 2022.

⁴⁴ Dirk P. Mielke, "Geometric Painted Pottery of the 2nd Millennium BC in the Central Black Sea Region. A Contribution to the Archaeology of Kaška", *Late Bronze Age Painted Pottery Traditions at the Margins of the Hittite State, Papers Presented at a Workshop Held at the 11th ICAANE (München 4 April 2018) and Additional Contributions*, Oxford 2022, s. 50–1.

⁴⁵ Hermann Genz, Büyükkaya I: Die Keramik der Eisenzeit, Mainz 2004, "Thoughts on the Origin of the Iron Age Pottery Traditions in Central Anatolia", *Anatolian Iron Age 5*, Ankara 2005, s. 77, fig. 1, s. 79, fig. 2, s. 80, fig. 3, s. 81, fig. 4.

⁴⁶ Stavros Paspalas, "A Persianizing Cup from Lydia", *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 19, (2000).

⁴⁷ Ibid. 159.

Contemporary Vessels

The excellent vessel examples that can be compared to ‘tankard’ are found in post-Urartu layers of key settlements in Eastern Anatolia, Armenia, and Northwestern Iran. One example, recovered from burial no.140 at Van Kalesi Höyüğü in the early 1990s (fig. 6), is classified as a drinking vessel⁴⁸. It closely resembles the ‘tankards’ from Alişar⁴⁹, with the main difference being protrusions at the upper part of the handles.

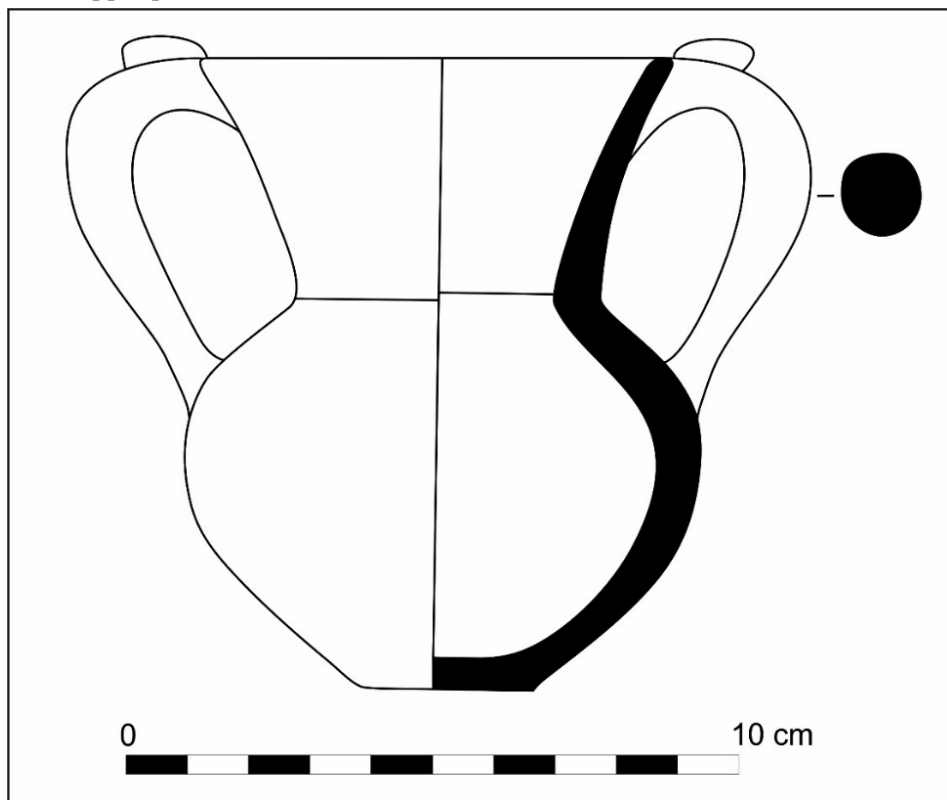


Figure 6. Van Kalesi Höyüğü vessel (Redrawn by the authors after Taner Tarhan, 1994, fig. 17.3).

⁴⁸ Taner Tarhan, “Recent Research at the Urartian capital Tushpa”, *Tel Aviv*, 21, (1994), fig. 17.3.

⁴⁹ Hans H. Von der Osten, *The Alişar Höyük: Seasons of 1930-32*, Chicago 1937a, s. 381, fig. 430/e 1286, 1937b, 40, 48/e 876.

Another example from Çavuştepe⁵⁰ is slightly similar in terms of the upper section of the body with those from Alişar and Kayapınar. Its paste is buff-coloured, features a thin wall and light burnishing, suggesting it could be an imitation of a metal vessel⁵¹. Despite variations in height and diameter, these vessels share key features, including splayed mouths, and the placement of vertical handles, with the primary distinction being the handle protrusions seen at Van Kalesi Höyüğü.

Over the last three decades, archaeological studies have revealed vessel examples that closely resemble those from Van Kalesi Höyüğü and Çavuştepe in post-Urartu and sometimes pre-Achaemenid layers. These examples appear at Nor Armavir⁵², Karmir Blur, Bastam, Moush Tepe⁵³, and Godin Tepe⁵⁴, distinguished from their counterparts in Central Anatolia almost only by the handle protrusions (fig. 7–8). Following the archaeological studies at Bastam, it was suggested that they could be associated with the Medes⁵⁵ and later finds in Eastern Anatolia suggested a connection to Median expansion westward⁵⁶. However, some scholars argue their users may not have been Medes, based on other archaeological findings in Eastern Anatolia, especially in Çavuştepe⁵⁷.

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- ⁵⁰ Veli Sevin, “Van Bölgesinde Post-Urartu Dönemi: Yıkıntılar Üzerinde Yeni Bir Yaşam”, *Belleten*, 76, (2012), fig. 5.10.
- ⁵¹ Ibid. 358.
- ⁵² Nora Tiratsyan, “An Urartian Jar Burial from Nor Armavir”, *Urartu and Its Neighbours: Festschrift in Honour of Nicolay Harutyunyan in Occasion of his 90th Birthday*, Yerevan 2010.
- ⁵³ Stephan Kroll, “Notes on Post-Urartian (Median) Horizon of NW Iran and Armenia”, *Arkeolojiyle Geçen Bir Yaşam için Yazılar: Veli Sevin’e Armağan*, İstanbul 2014.
- ⁵⁴ Hilary Gopnik, “The Median Citadel of Godin Period II”, *On the High Road: The History of Godin Tepe*, Toronto 2011.
- ⁵⁵ Stephan Kroll, “XI. Meder in Bastam, Bastam I. Ausgrabungen in den Urartaischen Anlagen 1972-1975”, *Teheraner Forschungen* 5, Berlin 1979, s. 232.
- ⁵⁶ Stephan Kroll, “Archaeology between Urartu and the Achaemenids”, *International Symposium on East Anatolia South Caucasus Cultures: Proceedings II*, Cambridge 2015, s. 111.
- ⁵⁷ Veli Sevin, “Van Bölgesinde Post-Urartu Dönemi: Yıkıntılar Üzerinde Yeni Bir Yaşam”, *Belleten*, 76, (2012), s. 359.



Figure 7. Contemporary drinking vessel; Nor Armavir vessel (Redrawn by the authors after Stephan Kroll, 2015, fig. 8).

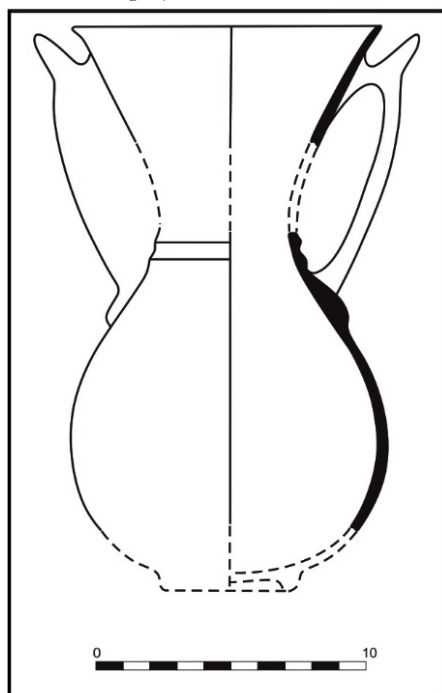


Figure 8. Contemporary drinking vessel; Godin Tepe vessel (Redrawn by the authors after Stephan Kroll, 2015, fig. 4).

Potential descendants–Achaemenid metal vessels

By the mid-sixth century BC, the Achaemenid Persian Empire had expanded into Anatolia, asserting control over Western Anatolia and shaping regional material culture. A key transformation in vessel traditions during this period suggests that the ‘tankard’ may have influenced later Achaemenid metal vessels. While the ‘tankard’ remained a pottery form, its aesthetic and structural elements, especially its vertical handles and wide mouth, persist in Achaemenid elite metalware. Visual representations of two-handled metal vessels in Achaemenid art provide crucial evidence for this transition. The Apadana reliefs at Persepolis depict delegations presenting two-handled metal vessels: the *Lydian* delegation’s vessel has vertical grooves, hatched relief bands, and sculpted winged creatures on the handles, resembling the basic form of a ‘tankard’ but in a more elaborate metal medium (fig. 9)⁵⁸, while the *Armina* delegation’s vessel shares the same form but lacks grooved decoration and hatched bands⁵⁹.

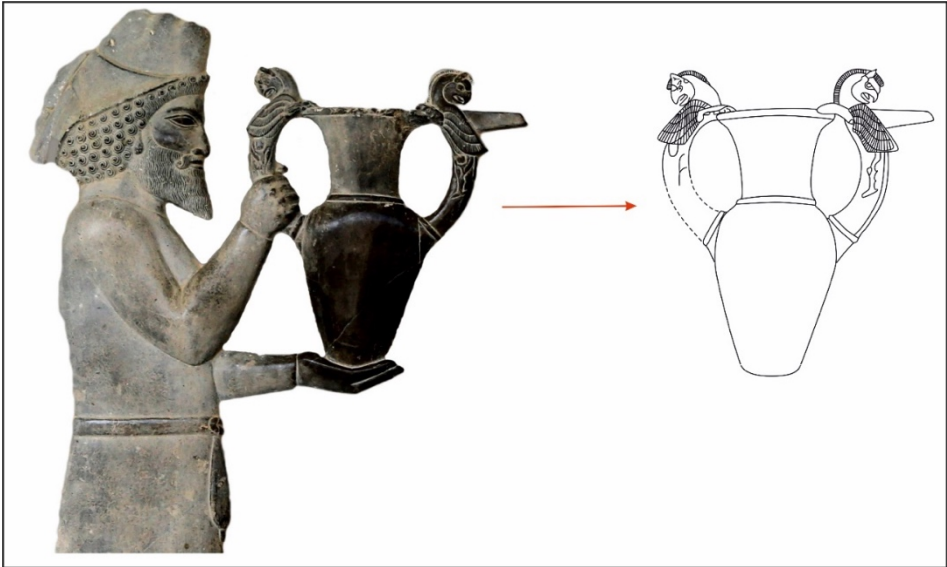


Figure 9. Armina delegation member and two-handled vessel (Redrawn by the authors after Eva-Maria Bossert, 2000, abb. 36/b).

Another significant representation of a two-handled vessel appears in the wall paintings of the Karaburun II, dated back to the early fifth century BC, in *Lydia*, one of the westernmost edges of the Achaemenid Empire. Excavated in the

⁵⁸ Erich Schmidt, *Persepolis I: Structures, Reliefs, Inscriptions*, Chicago 1953, VI, pl. 32. Although Erich Schmidt defines the delegation as *Syrian*, it is now widely accepted as *Lydian*. See Michael Roaf, *Sculptures and Sculptors at Persepolis*, London 1983, s. 52–3.

⁵⁹ Erich Schmidt 1953, *Persepolis I: Structures, Reliefs, Inscriptions*, Chicago 1953, III, pl. 29.

1970s near Bayındır Village in Antalya Province, it features a banquet scene that includes a vessel with two vertical handles adorned with relief decorations (fig. 10), prominently held in a manner similar to its depiction in the Apadana reliefs. The wall paintings exhibit Persian and Greco-Persian iconographic features, suggesting that its owner was a local ruler under the influence of the Achaemenid Persian Empire who had adopted Persian customs while maintaining elements of local culture⁶⁰. The depicted vessel, identified as a drinking cup or goblet by the excavator, share characteristics with Achaemenid-style metalware. The way the carrier holds the vessel obscures its lower part, hindering a precise classification⁶¹.



Figure 10. Karaburun II two-handled vessel (Reorganized by the authors after Machteld Mellink, 1972, fig. 19).

⁶⁰ Machteld Mellink, "Excavations at Karataş-Semayük and Elmalı, Lycia, 1971", *American Journal of Archaeology*, 76, (1972), s. 265; Stellag Miller, "Two Painted Chamber Tombs of Northern Lycia at Kizilbel and Karaburun", *The Return of Colours*, Istanbul 2010, s. 329.

⁶¹ Machteld Mellink, "Excavations at Karataş-Semayük and Elmalı, Lycia, 1971", *American Journal of Archaeology*, 76, (1972).

These visual parallels emphasize a shared artistic influence between *Lycia* and *Persepolis*. Metal vessels, as depicted in wall paintings and reliefs, emerged during the late Achaemenid period, reflecting the empire's political and cultural expansion. Now housed in various collections⁶², their original context and locations remain unclear. Believed to have been used as drinking cups without additional vessels, they lack any known and direct predecessor. Scholars classify them as Achaemenid amphorae⁶³.

Discussion and Concluding Remarks

Determining the origins of 'tankards' remains central to this study. Tankards appeared in Western and Central Anatolia during Early Bronze Age II-III, potentially serving as possible precursor candidates of 'tankard'. This perspective arises from comparisons of Early to Middle Bronze Age forms, decoration features, and suggestions concerning the origins of Central Anatolia's Iron Age painted pottery tradition. The two vertical handles and outward mouth create a notable resemblance to 'tankard', though key differences exist. Nevertheless, the disappearance of tankard before Middle Bronze Age prevents a clear chronological link. This theoretical connection aligns with the idea that Early Bronze Age II-III and Middle Bronze Age vessel forms and their decorative features vanished from Hittite centers because of mass pottery production but persisted in peripheral areas, later reappearing in former Hittite centers in later periods. However, this vessel form is still far from being a strong candidate as a precursor to 'tankard'.

A clearer picture emerges when comparing the distribution of 'tankards' (excluding the Kırşehir-Yasshöyük example), regional archaeological findings, and ancient Greek historiography. If 'tankards' are linked to vessels from Eastern Anatolia, Armenia and Northwestern Iran—associated with Median influence or identity—this suggests an Eastern cultural presence in North-Central Anatolia. This region, later known as *Pontica Cappadocia*, experienced Eastern influences from the Middle to Late Iron Age through the Roman period, while Greek and Roman cultural impact remained limited beyond the Black Sea littoral⁶⁴.

⁶² Pierre Amandry, "Truly Royal Persian Gold: Some Recently Found Masterpieces", *The Illustrated London News*, 27, (1958), s. 25-6, fig. 9-11; Stavros Paspalas, "A Persianizing Cup from Lydia", *Oxford Journal of Archaeology*, 19, (2000), s. 141, fig. 2, s. 142, fig. 3; Leonid T. Yablonsky, "New Excavations of the Early Nomadic Burial Ground at Filippovka (Southern Ural Region, Russia)", *American Journal of Archaeology*, 114, (2010), S. 139, fig. 18; Athanasios Sideris, "A Lydian Silver Amphora with Zoomorphic Handles", *Studia Herynia*, 20, (2016), s. 174, pl. 2/1, 2/2, s. 176, pl. 2/9, 2/10, s. 177, pl. 2/12.

⁶³ Ellen Rehm, "The Classification of the Objects from the Black Sea Region Made or Influenced by the Achaemenids", *Achaemenid Impact in the Black Sea*, Aarhus 2010, s. 168.

⁶⁴ Olivier Casabonne, "The Formation of Cappadocia: Iranian Populations and Achaemenid Influence", *The Achaemenid Impact on Local Populations and Cultures in Anatolia (Sixth-Fourth Centuries B.C.)*, İstanbul (2007), s. 105-6.

Kaman-Kalehöyük serves as a key reference point for understanding ‘tankards’. Middle to Late Iron Age pottery assemblage shows increasing in Western (*Phrygian/Lydian*) influences. Although Gray Ware declines in the eighth century BC (Kaman-Kalehöyük IIb), it rebounded to 35 percent of the assemblage in the early seventh century BC (Kaman-Kalehöyük IIa)⁶⁵. Reduced firing techniques became predominant⁶⁶, and Fine Black Burnished Ware⁶⁷, likely imitating Lustrous Black Fine Ware⁶⁸, was introduced. Another reference point is the lack⁶⁹ of ‘tankart’-like forms from the pottery assemblages of the settlements in Central Anatolia, which lay on the political and cultural periphery of Neo-Assyrian Empire.

Ancient Greek historiography describes conflicts between the Medes and Lydians at the end of the Middle Iron Age, positioning Central Anatolia as a buffer zone. The evolving pottery traditions from Middle to Late Iron Age Kaman-Kalehöyük, south-southwest of the Kızılırmak Bend, and the absence of ‘tankards’; indicate that this vessel form is more closely linked to Eastern traditions, reinforcing its possible connection to the political and cultural expansion of the Medes. Kaman-Kalehöyük likely fell under the Lydian control shortly before or during the early reign of *Croesus*⁷⁰.

Ancient Greek sources mention *Croesus* assembled his forces and led them across the Kızılırmak River, generally interpreted as referring to the crossing of the Kızılırmak River itself, leading to the speculation that *Pteria* could be located anywhere within the Kızılırmak Bend. However, archaeological evidence from Kaman-Kalehöyük and Kerkenes Dağ suggests *Pteria*’s location can be narrowed to the north-northeast of the Delice River. It is also possible that ancient Greek historiography referred to the Kızılırmak River and its tributaries, such as the Delice River, collectively as *Halys*.

Drinking vessels with two vertical handles, roughly contemporary with ‘tankard’, have been found in post-Urartu layers in Eastern Anatolia, Armenia, and Northwestern Iran. Given their similar form, these vessels are strong candidates to

⁶⁵ Kimiyoshi Matsumura, “On the Manufacturing Techniques of Iron Age Ceramics from Kaman-Kalehöyük (II): The Cultural Influence of Phrygia at Kaman-Kalehöyük”, *Anatolian Archaeological Studies*, 10, (2001), s. 102.

⁶⁶ Ibid. 103.

⁶⁷ Peter Grave-Lisa Kealhofer, “Investigating Iron Age Trade Ceramics at Kaman-Kalehöyük”, *Anatolian Archaeological Studies*, 15, (2006), s. 144.

⁶⁸ Robert C. Henrickson et al., “Lustrous Black Fine Ware at Gordion, Turkey: A Distinctive Sintered Slip Technology”, *Materials Research Society*, 712, (2011).

⁶⁹ Emine Köker Gökçe, “Neo-Assyrian and Persian Periods in the Tabal / Cappadocia Region in the Light of the Topaklı Höyük Finds”, *OANNES*, 7/2, (2025), s. 204–24

⁷⁰ Okan Sezer, “Central Anatolia in the 6th Century BC: Transitional Period of Achaemenid Persian Empire”, *Central and Eastern Anatolia Late Iron Age: Post-Urartu, Median and Achaemenid Empires*, İstanbul 2019, s. 141.

‘tankard’ origins. The main distinction is the presence of handle protrusions, which vary in size, shape, and sharpness. In later Achaemenid metal versions, these protrusions evolve into animal or fantastic creature-shaped reliefs. Apart from one unique example from Alacahöyük, ‘tankard’ lacks such protrusions. The Alacahöyük example features a small lug on its handles, marking a potential transition and/or connection between this vessel form and ‘tankard’. However, there is no conclusive evidence of a sequential relationship or their simultaneous presence. On the other hand, based on pottery technology skills, it is reasonable to suggest that plain handles preceded those with functional or symbolic protrusions, which later developed into the elaborate relief designs seen in metal vessels of the late period.

A master’s thesis on Late Iron Age pottery from Kaman-Kalehöyük notes the absence of ‘tankards’⁷¹, and the prevalence of Gray Ware during Late Iron Age 3 (ca. 600–500 BCE)⁷², aligning with previous research. This supports the idea that Kaman-Kalehöyük was influenced by *Phrygian/Lydian* entity⁷³, contrasting with the stronger Eastern influences evident north of the Delice River.

Considering the growing influence of the West (*Phrygia/Lydia*) at Kaman-Kalehöyük during Late Iron Age (seventh–sixth centuries BC) the well-documented *Phrygian/Lydian* presence at Kerkenes Dağ⁷⁴, and the distribution map of ‘tankards’ or their density in north-northeast of the Delice River, several insights emerge, supported by ancient Greek sources:

- a) Herodotus states that the *Phrygians* were under *Lydian* rule⁷⁵, and the account of *Adrastos*, a grandson of *Midas*⁷⁶, highlights *Lydian* political dominance in the region. This suggests that the *Phrygian* cultural elements found at Kaman-Kalehöyük may indicate indirect *Lydian* expansion into Central Anatolia. Kaman-Kalehöyük may have come under *Lydian* control either just before or during the early reign of *Croesus*.
- b) If we accept this *Lydian* expansion, Kerkenes Dağ could be another result of it, despite previous excavator describing it as an independent local

⁷¹ Zeynep Akkuzu, *The Late Iron Age Pottery from Kaman-Kalehöyük*, Bilkent University, Ankara 2018, s. 175, fig. 126.

⁷² Ibid. 111, pl. 16.

⁷³ Kimiyoshi Matsumura, “On the Manufacturing Techniques of Iron Age Ceramics from Kaman-Kalehöyük (II): The Cultural Influence of Phrygia at Kaman-Kalehöyük”, *Anatolian Archaeological Studies*, 10, (2001).

⁷⁴ Geoffrey Summers, “Phrygians East of the Red River: Phrygianisation, Migration and Desertion”, *Anatolian Studies*, 68, (2018), “Resizing Phrygia: Migration, State and Kingdom”, *Altorientalische Forschungen*, 50, (2023).

⁷⁵ Hdt. I. 28 (translated by Alfred A. Godley 1975).

⁷⁶ Hdt. I. 35 (translated by Alfred A. Godley 1975).

Phrygian kingdom⁷⁷. The fortress-like settlement, dated to the late seventh-mid-sixth century BC⁷⁸, was reportedly destroyed and abandoned around the time of the Battle of *Pteria*⁷⁹. Given its planned construction and military-style layout, establishing an independent kingdom in such a volatile region, where conflicts between the West (*Lydia*) and the East (*Media/Persia*) are escalating, seems neither logical nor suitable. The absence of evidence for a gradual formation process, along with the high construction costs of a fortress-like settlement as huge as Kerkenes Dağ, weakens the independent-local kingdom theory for Kerkenes Dağ. Instead, it seems more reasonable that *Lydia* established it as an outpost to support its expansion policy into Central Anatolia.

- c) The strategic location of Kerkenes Dağ aligns with the region where ‘tankard’ density observed, specifically north-northeast of the Delice River (*Pontica Cappadocia*). Kerkenes Dağ, situated on elevated terrain just north of the eastern sources of the Delice River, and adjacent to the ‘tankard’ density, may have monitored or controlled settlements that were either anti-*Lydian* or pro-*Median*. Its placement suggests a logistical and military function in a contested zone between *Lydia* and *Media*. Given the possible connections of ‘tankard’ with the Medes and/or the East, an alternative interpretation emerges: the river crossed by Croesus, identified by ancient Greek historiography as the boundary, may have been the Delice River rather than the Kızılırmak River (fig. 11). Ancient sources may not have distinguished between the main river and its tributaries, referring to them collectively as *Halys*. If Kaman-Kalehöyük was already under *Lydian* influence, this suggests that *Croesus* had crossed the Kızılırmak River, shifting the historical interpretation of the Lydian frontier. This reinterpretation aligns with Herodotus’s statement: *Croesus subdued well-nigh all the nations west of the Halys and held them in subjection*⁸⁰, supporting the idea of a changing border.

⁷⁷ Geoffrey Summers, “Phrygians East of the Red River: Phrygianisation, Migration and Desertion”, *Anatolian Studies*, 68, (2018), “Resizing Phrygia: Migration, State and Kingdom”, *Altorientalische Forschungen*, 50, (2023).

⁷⁸ Geoffrey Summers, *Kerkenes Final Reports 1: Excavations at the Cappadocia Gate*, Chicago 2021, s. 5–6.

⁷⁹ Geoffrey Summers, “Resizing Phrygia: Migration, State and Kingdom”, *Altorientalische Forschungen*, 50, (2023), s. 115.

⁸⁰ Hdt. I. 28 (translated by Alfred A. Godley 1975).

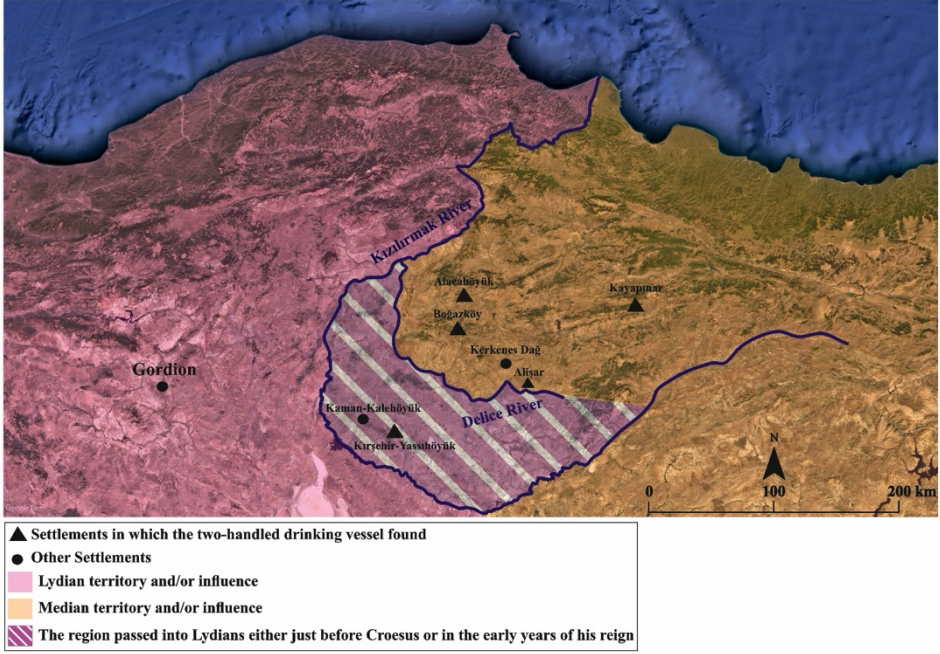


Figure 11. Map of settlements and the territories mentioned in the text.

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