Önder Bilgi

IKIZTEPE
An Early Bronze Age Site by the Central Black Sea Coast in Turkey

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION

Ikiztepe is one of the few mound type settlements of Prehistoric times and the largest one that has been excavated in the Black Sea Region of Turkey. Ikiztepe was discovered in 1941 by a team of archaeologists excavating at Dundartepe near Samsun. Excavations were begun by the University of Istanbul in 1974, under the direction of the late Prof. Dr. U. Bahadır Alkım. Since 1981, excavations have been directed by Prof. Dr. Onder Bilgi. It lies ca 55 km northwest of Samsun, 7 km northwest of Bafra, and within the boundary of the village of Ikiztepe. It stands ca 20 m above sea level, on a ridge that forms part of the western boundary of the Bafra plain, which was the ancient estuary of the Kızılırmak (ancient Halys) river. Geological data indicate that the site was at the mouth of the river when it was first settled. As a result of alluviation, Ikiztepe is now 7 km inland from the coast and 2 km distant from the river. Since Ikiztepe lies on the Halys, it has been identified by some scholars as the city of Zalpa of the Assyrian Colony Period. Yet in the absence of written documents, seals or bullae, this identification seems unlikely.

STRATIFICATION

Although Ikiztepe means twin mounds in Turkish, the site actually incorporates two large and two small mounds, which together cover an area ca 375 x 175 m.

Through to the 2002 season, excavations have concentrated on Mounds I, II and III. Virgin soil has reached on them, and it has been possible to gain a well defined stratigraphic sequence for each mound. Mound I was inhabited during the Early Bronze Age I, II and III periods and the first phase of the Middle Bronze Age, roughly 3200-1700 BC, each phase being represented by several building levels. Mound II saw occupation from Late Chalcolithic times through Early Bronze Age II, roughly 4200-2400 BC, again with several building levels representing each period. Mound III has Early Bronze Age II and III, Middle Bronze Age, Late Iron Age and Hellenistic occupations, roughly 2800-1700 BC and 650-100 BC, and Mound IV has only a trace of Middle Bronze Age, roughly 1900-1700 BC.

Ikiztepe appears to have been abandoned at the end of the first phase of the Middle Bronze Age until 7th Century BC when a settlement contemporary with the Late Iron Age of Central Anatolian character was established as the painted pot sherds indicate.

In the Hellenistic period, a tomb of ashlar construction with two rooms and a dromos was built into Mound I; a gold coin of Lysimachos offers a date between 281 and 250 BC.

ARCHITECTURE

The buildings at Ikiztepe were constructed of wood, without the use of mudbrick or stone. For this reason, the numerous building levels of individual periods had to be isolated according to successions of trodden earthen floors. Fragments of burnt plaster containing traces of logs and carbonized in-situ wood indicate that unworked or worked tree trunks were the principal architectural material used in construction. The preserved earthen floors indicate that the dwellings had rectangular plans consisting of one or more rooms. Sometimes the buildings had well-constructed wooden floors covered by clay plaster. The dwellings may have had courtyards enclosed by walls that were also built of plastered tree trunks. These dwellings most probably did not have flat roofs. Within the courtyards or next to the dwellings are monumental ovens with working earthen platforms, the domes of which were constructed of bent branches covered by a thick layer of clay plaster.

Other monumental ovens with flat tops, enclosed by plastered wooden walls, may have belonged to communal ateliers. In some buildings of the Late Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age I periods occur well plastered circular platforms with wooden underpinnings, perhaps for cult purposes.

POTTERY

Ikiztepe is important for shedding light on the ceramic development of the Central Black Sea coast from Late Chalcolithic times into the Middle Bronze Age, i.e. from ca 4300 BC to ca 1700 BC. The well stratified building levels, with abundant complete pots, give a good picture of the development in tecnique and form. Before the Middle Bronze Age, the pottery is dark surfaced

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and handmade; the clay contains mineral inclusions and sometimes shells or chopped straw. Except for cooking pots, vessels are usually well slipped and polished. The principal shapes are bowls in a variety of sizes and jars with or without necks; fruitstands and pithoi also occur. Bowls are sometimes one colour on the exterior, another on the interior. Horned lugs, simple lugs and horned or loop handles are characteristic features. In Late Chalcolithic and Early Bronze I and II vessels may be decorated with white paint usually outside. From Early Bronze Age II onward, such vessels may be decorated with incised or grooved lines or in a reserved technique. Patterns in all periods are geometric. Examples of relief decoration also occur. A few vessels are decorated with animal heads, with a nude, standing women with upstretched arms or the sign of ¨W¨or ¨+¨.

The pottery of the Middle Bronze Age shows light-coloured slips, including varying shades of red or buff. The vessels were made on a fast wheel; none is decorated. Shapes include beakers with flat or long pointed bases, bowls with bead rims and horizontal, triangular-shaped handles, beak-spouted pitchers, ewers, spoons and ladles, jars and pithoi with large bosses. The parallels are to be found in Central Anatolia.

ECONOMY

It is known that the people of the Black Sea Region, which even today is covered with dense vegetation, made their living from hunting or animal husbandary and fishing due to animal and fish bones uncovered in abudance during the excavations.

It is clear from the existence of shaft-hole axes, hammers and mallets, piercers or borers made of horns or bones that skins obtained from the hunted or breeded animals were used for clothing. A fossilized piece of fur skin from an animal, found on a dagger of an Early Bronze Age II date, is evidence of its use as a leather sheath. The textile industry of the region was well-developed from the good quality textile pieces found in fossilized form on the metal objects and preserved to the present day. However, it is surprising that the thread used is not from animals but plants. It is apparent that the materials were weaved on wooden looms as the large number of baked clay conical weights with a round or flat base or crescent-shaped weights of varying size and loom combs indicate. It is also clear from the large number of baked clay or bone spindle whorls and clay brush handles that animal fur and hairs were used in the production of thread.

Over 1000 metal objects, uncovered primarily from graves, attest the high standart of metallurgy at Ikiztepe. The objects constitute four main groups. The first consist of weapons, including spearheads, arrowheads, daggers and flat axes. The second group incorporates tools and a few miscellaneous items: blades, harpoons, awls, piercers, chisels, hooks, hooked needles, spatulae, handles, needles, wire and a simple omphalos bowl. Jewelry constitutes the third group, including bracelets, earrings, hairpins, bobby pins, open clips, buttons, beads, necklaces, rings, hair spirals, pins and pendants. Twin or quadruple spiral plaques and stylized horns form the fourth group, that of presumed emblems. In addition there are also developed type pins, needles and sickle blades from the Middle Bronze Age.

These metal findings were uncovered in the graves of the EBA II and III as well as on the floors of the bildings in groups in EBA II. In EBAIII they show more variety in types than the EBA II examples.

Compositional analysis reveals that %99 of the metal objects are made of arsenical copper. Since no objects within a type are identical they would have been produced either by casting and then forging or shaped by forging a cast bar (ingot). Lost wax casting with sand moulds instead of clay may have been practiced, thus leaving no trace of casting. The silvery appearance of a few objects indicates the practice of arsenical segregation. Metallurgy at İkiztepe began in the Late Chalcolithic Period. Before Early Bronze Age II, mostly pure copper was used in production. The smiths may have got the raw material as an alloy of arsenical copper. The closest copper ore deposits lie in the Bakırçay valley of Tavşan Dag, north of Merzifon; arsenic deposits also occur at Peynirçay on Tavşan Dağ and especially near Durağan south of Sinop by the Kızılırmak River.

İkiztepe people before beginning to use metal, used flintstones in various colours in the production of their weapons and tools as in the other regions of Anatolia. Especially before EBA II, blades, scrapers, arrowheads, spearheads were manufactured also by pressure flaking applied one or two sides of the objects as the uncovered examples have shown.

TRADE

Trade is indicated by imported gold used for pendants and earrings in Early Bronze Age II and III. Trade is more conspicuous in Early Bronze Age III, when beads of imported agate and frit occur in necklaces that consist primarily of arsenical copper beads. Silver and lead, also used in the production of jewelry, were probably brought from Gümüşhacıköy west of Merzifon.

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

The anthropomorphic representations all in baked clay and uncovered from the Late Chalcolithic to the Middle Bronze Age are items that reflect the religious beliefs of the people of the Central Black Sea Region, who give the impression of having developed a fairly settled life-style. It is understood from these representations displaying styles varying from an idol, a figurine to a statuette form, along with the animal representations of baked clay, most probably depicting a bull, that these people were interested in with the cult of the bull and the mother or fertility goddess of Anatolian tradition. Although it is not know how the rites of these cults were performed, there are examples from the Late Chalcolithic Period onwards which show that circular or semi-circular altars were used. A religious cult place uncovered on Mound III and surrounded by post-holes arranged at certain intervals to form a kind of porch. The general appearance of this structure is like a proto-type of a Greek temple. The 18 baked clay female representations are the clear evidence that this structure served as a religious centre for the settlement.

Besides being representations of the mother or fertility goddess of Anatolian tradition, they may shed light on identifying the presence of the Sun Cult here from the figures rendered in relief on metal spearheads. These spearheads are decorated with a female figure on one side and a male figure on the other side with a disc-shaped symbol over their heads. They are produced out of arsenical copper by double moulding technique and uncovered in two simple earthen graves of different periods belonging most probably to the chieftains of Ikiztepe people. These figures with a disc above their heads should represent the Hattian Sun God ESHTAN and Sun Goddess WURUSHEMU as mentioned in the Hittite texts of the following period in Anatolia.

In the remains of a log building of the Early Bronze Age III was uncovered a tall pot with two W motifs in relief on its upper body. The W motif, which is most probably developed from bull's horns and later became the ideogram of the Hittite Storm God TESHUP, indicates that the Hattian Storm God TARU was also worshipped at Ikiztepe. This means that Hittite TESHUP and TARU are the same storm god in the beginning.

BURIAL CUSTOMS

Early Bronze Age III on Mound I is also represented by a graveyard. A total of 665 earthen simple graves, with 720 individuals and accompanying burial goods, were unearthed. Althogh the graves show no common orientation, the dead generally were buried in an outstretched position on their backs, with the arms beside the body. In a few cases, skeletons were lying on one side, with one or both legs slightly contracted. In some 70 graves, two or three skeletons were found together, all having been interred at the same time. These multiple burials can consist of all men or all women, or be mixed. Mound I used as a graveyard by the people dwelling on Mound III contains different levels of the burials, within a 3 m range. This indicates that this graveyard was in use for several succeeding generations. There are also burials occasionally occur in habitation levels, including pot burials containing dead embroyos, infant or baby skeletons dating from the Late Chalcolithic to the Middle Bronze Age. An important aspect of the Ikiztepe graveyard is that the burials include 13 trepanations, that is skulls that have been operated on. These operations have been carried out using 2 methods: The first is chipping, and the other is removing a piece after marking the area concerned.

RACE

Study of skeletal material has shown that the people of Ikiztepe do not share the general characteristic features of Proto-Mediterraneans, thus differing from Near Eastern and also from Central Anatolian people. The Ikiztepe skeletons have mesocranial type of skull and a robust build. In this respect, they fall into the same physical category as people who lived along the Northern Black Sea coast. Furthermore, they show similarities with the people buried in ochre-graves of south Russia. Eleven graves at Ikiztepe in fact contained skeletons bearing red colouration. Ikiztepe people later on in the Middle Bronze Age using the so-called Hittite type of

pottery, horned plaques and the W motif, which is the ideogram of the Hittite Storm God Teshup, was most probably a member of the Proto Indo-Europeans. The existence of high standard of metal objects which for a few exceptions have no parallels elsewhere, that no people group came to Central Black Sea Region through migration. Consequently, this would indicate that the Central Black Sea Region in Anatolia was also part of the homeland of Indo-Europeans in the Early Bronze Age.

In fact, almost two decades ago Eastern and Western scholars have independently come to the conclusion, as the result of their research, that the Indo-Europeans did not come from outside but were from the beginning, at least from the time of the Neolithic Revolution, in Anatolia, and in parallel with the development and spread of agriculture they gradually migrated as far as Europe via the Straits. Georgian T.V.Gamkrelidze and Russian V.V.Ivanov suggested, on the basis of linguistic evidence, that the Proto Indo-Europeans' homeland was in Eastern Anatolia, that is the area which was to become the land of the Urartians in the First Millennium BC. Basing on the names of plants, agricultural tools and animals of the Proto Indo-Europeans' language they said that their original homeland was a hilly and mountainous region as their language covering vocabulary such as barley, wheat, flax; apples, cherries and their trees; blackberries and their bushes and grapes and vineyards, as well as words for tools used in sowing and harvesting, indicate a life style not known in Northerneastern Europe before the 2nd Millennium BC. As a result, they suggested the homeland of the Indo-Europeans was outside Europe, and that the terrain described as the homeland is south of the Black Sea coastal region, that is the large peninsula stretching from the Aegean Sea to the mountainous region of the Caucasus. However, they also said that this suggestion needed to be confirmed by archaeological research.

British archaeologist C. Burney opposed the linguists' suggestion on the basis of geographical and archaeological evidence and said that Eastern Anatolia was the land of the Hurrians, who spoke an Asiatic language.

On the other hand, on this subject, British archaeologist C. Renfrew also said the homeland of the Indo-Europeans was Anatolia, and that this people did not suddenly move west in waves of migration, but rather moved gradually and peacefully parallel with the spread of agriculture.