

Introduction

Located in Akhisar, Manisa, in the northwestern part of Anatolia, Dağdeviren Höyük was inhabited by human populations spanning the Early, Middle, and Late Bronze Ages, as well as the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine periods. The region, which had served as a crossroads between cultures since prehistoric times, consistently held its significance. The limited extent of scholarly exploration into the early cultures of this region called for fresh investigations to enhance our grasp of Western Anatolia's archaeology. Consequently, the excavation of Dağdeviren Höyük has not only unveiled novel insights but has also played a pivotal role in resolving longstanding inquiries.

Dağdeviren Höyük, originally intended to make its mark in the realm of science as an Early Bronze Age (EBA) settlement, first came to light during the meticulous surveys led by D. H. French across Balıkesir and Akhisar, Manisa, in the years 1959–60. Scrutiny of the ceramics scattered across the Mound's surface unveiled evidence of its EBA habitation. A fresh assessment of the Höyük took place as part of surveys conducted by E. Akdeniz in 2009, revealing not only artefacts from the Late Chalcolithic Age (LCA) but also shedding light on its Early Bronze Age past. Throughout these investigations, the Mound's significance within the realm of Western Anatolian archaeology was underscored, prompting endeavours toward a scholarly excavation. Unfortunately, these efforts were stymied due to the presence of a farmhouse atop of the Mound, its proprietors refusing consent for excavation. In 2007, a turning point was reached as part of the Akhisar Çevre Yolu Projesi carried out by the Ministry of Transport, Maritime Affairs and Communications. Here, a year-long salvage excavation, helmed by experts from the Museum of Manisa and a team of dedicated archaeologists, was carried out at the foothill of the Mound. This archaeological intervention seamlessly coincided with the northern stage works aimed at connecting the Akhisar-Gölmarmara-Manisa intersection. The Museum of Manisa conducted excavations on the eastern part of Dağdeviren Höyük, specifically within the parcel located in Dağdeviren Farm in the Akhisar district. The excavations extended along the entire line. The excavations at Dağdeviren Höyük yielded various artefacts from EBA, such as pottery, small objects, graves, and human remains interred within the graves. The area in question encompasses the expansion zone and incline of the mound. The pottery unearthed in this area includes over 10,000 sherds. The majority of these sherds belong to the settlement. The Early Bronze Age sherds were discovered along the excavation line, having been displaced by agricultural activities, the loose soil structure, and erosion. The area has been fundamentally turned upside down. Pottery, small finds, and graves associated with the settlement were discovered together. Consequently, the finds recovered from the surface to the excavation level

during the soundings, along with the chronological data of these finds, are detailed in tables.

The artefacts unearthed from the Mound have imparted fresh and pivotal insights into the formation of the Dağdeviren culture, its developmental stages, as well as its intricate relations and interaction with the neighbouring cultures. The endeavours undertaken at Dağdeviren Höyük, distinguished as a significant EBA cemetery within the Western Anatolian archaeology, located approximately 30 km distant from Yortan – an area acknowledged for its diffusion into other cultural areas across Anatolia during that period – have engendered substantial advancements for the Western Anatolian archaeology.

The primary objective of this study is to comprehensively grasp the multifaceted dimensions encompassing the economic, social, and cultural aspects of Dağdeviren Höyük, thereby providing a substantial enrichment to the broader archaeological narrative of the region. A distinctive hallmark of this endeavour lies in the corpus of EBA finds unearthed at Dağdeviren Höyük, characterized by their inherent novelty and hitherto unpublished character.

The comprehensive excavations conducted across the northern, eastern, and south-eastern sectors of the mound are driven by the overarching objective of unveiling both the myriad finds in the cemetery and in the settlement. These finds collectively stand poised to significantly contribute to the scholarly narrative of Western Anatolian archaeology. A salient aspect of Dağdeviren Höyük's significance lies in its status as a novel settlement excavated within the Yortan Cultural Area. The distinctive and pivotal nature of the artefacts unearthed lends significance to this settlement, as they wield an influence in delineating the chronological contours of the region. Dağdeviren Höyük's location along historical crossroads substantiates its role as a nexus of cultural transition since prehistoric times, housing diverse human populations and their corresponding cultures across time. Through meticulous analysis of ceramics, small finds, and the cemetery excavated in Dağdeviren Höyük, this study undertakes a comprehensive and detailed examination of the innovative insights that these artefacts promise to bestow upon the narrative of Western Anatolian archaeology.

The Akhisar/Manisa Cultural Area, home to Dağdeviren Höyük, along with its immediate environs, boasts distinctive geographical attributes. Together with the region's research legacy, prior surveys, and excavations, as well as its connection to other Early Bronze Age centres, they collectively yield vital insights into the Mound and the populations that once inhabited it. The statistical outcomes derived from the artefacts unearthed

in the Mound excavations are meticulously presented in tables for thorough analysis. Ceramics are subjected to in-depth scrutiny, while other small finds crafted from terracotta, stone, bone, and metal are comprehensively assessed. The necropolis precinct of the Mound, its burial customs, and an exhaustive anthropological examination of the inhabitants of Dağdeviren Mound are also subject to meticulous evaluation.

This study encompasses an analysis of the artefacts unearthed through 38 excavations conducted in the northern, eastern, and southeastern sectors of Dağdeviren Höyük in the year 2017. The initial phase involved the classification of ceramics, terracotta items, stones, bones, and metal finds, all of which date back to the Early Bronze Age (EBA). Subsequently, a detailed process was employed to date, compare, and scrutinize these artefacts. In this context, the research delves into various facets, including ceramic categories, production techniques, tell-tale signs of pottery craftsmanship, an array of terracotta artefacts, advanced and expert stonework, weaving tools, bone and metal items, the burial customs observed, and a ground-breaking anthropological analysis of the individuals interred in these graves.

Situated within the Akhisar/Manisa Cultural Area, Dağdeviren Höyük formed an integral part of the broader Troy-Yortan Cultural Area, encompassing Northwestern Anatolia and the Northeastern Aegean islands. Consequently, the study's focus was naturally confined to these specific geographical parameters. This research entailed an in-depth exploration of the dynamics, interactions, and relationships that Dağdeviren Höyük maintained with other cultural entities in Western Anatolia during the Early Bronze Age, including the Greater Meander-Upper Porsuk Cultural Area, the Phrygian Cultural Area, and the Lycian-Pisidian Cultural Area.

In the initial phase of this research, a comprehensive analysis was conducted on the artefacts recovered during the rescue excavation and subsequently transferred to the Akhisar Museum. From the Early Bronze Age ceramics and various other small finds, those that were deemed

insufficient in quality to yield substantial information were systematically excluded. Approximately 3,000 remaining artefacts were subjected to thorough assessment. These artefacts comprised items found in the Early Bronze Age cultural stratum, as well as those recovered from the vicinity of Early Bronze Age graves. Following the categorization of these artefacts, they underwent meticulous cataloguing, sketching, and photographic documentation. Previous research was also leveraged in the examination of the graves and the classification of small finds and ceramics.

To facilitate this research, archival records from the Museum of Manisa, encompassing excavation reports and photographs taken during the excavation, were meticulously accessed. Furthermore, I collaborated with my advisor, Prof. Dr. Engin Akdeniz, to conduct an in-depth examination and classification of Dağdeviren Höyük artefacts within the museum's inventory. The artefact catalogue was systematically organized using the Microsoft Excel program, and the artefacts themselves were meticulously transcribed into digital format using Macromedia FreeHand MXa software following the completion of sketches. In the course of this study, ceramic forms underwent a comprehensive typological analysis, involving the classification of both primary and subsidiary forms. Factors including the forming technique, colour, paste composition, and surface treatments were meticulously considered during the ceramic classification process. Statistical outcomes were adeptly visualized in tables and graphs, offering valuable insights into the data. Drawing upon the insights garnered from these artefacts, this research delved into an evaluation of the distinctions, similarities, and innovative aspects observed throughout the successive stages of the Early Bronze Age. Moreover, bone and tooth specimens extracted from human remains within the Dağdeviren cemetery were subjected to analysis via the Carbon-14 method, facilitated by TÜBİTAK. The results of this analysis were judiciously interpreted. It is imperative to acknowledge that the salvage excavations conducted at Dağdeviren Höyük, as well as the meticulous documentation of excavation findings, were executed under the meticulous guidance of experts hailing from the Museum of Manisa.