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EARLY TOMBS IN THE HALIKARNASSIAN REGION: REFLECTIONS ON CULTURAL MIXTURE

INTRODUCTION

This contribution on the cultural landscape of the Early Iron Age in the Halikarnassian region springs from my Ph.D. dissertation from 1999¹. It focuses on two important sites on the peninsula west of Halikarnassos, Assarlık in the south and Dirmil or Gökçebel in the north-west (Fig. 1), and it strives to answer the question on what a particular archaeological material may let us understand and perceive of the people of that region in the Early Iron Age? Where did they come from, what was their horizon, their cultural frame?

THE DISCOVERY OF ANTIQUITY IN KARIA

Among the first antiquarians discovering the antiquity of the Halikarnassos peninsula was the two British classicists, W.R. Paton and J.L. Myres. They travelled around Karia in the early 1890s and their work was presented in a report on a topographical survey of Karia in 1896². Their point of departure in these travels of discoveries was provided – according to the perfect antiquarian tradition – by the literary sources, in particular the works of Strabo and Pliny, but also the Athenian tribute list from the 5th century B.C.³. Site names mentioned in these sources were related to the ancient settlements in order to produce a historic overview of the Halikarnassos peninsula.

This approach, the academic game of *toponym bingo*, was also followed by the investigations carried out in the early 1950s by G.E. Bean and J.M. Cook⁴. In a series of three articles a full discussion of all written sources available including a body of epi-

graphic material were presented: like their predecessors Bean and Cook were preoccupied with the identification of the settlements in Karia according to ancient written sources⁵.

Much of this antiquarian work was done with only limited source critical approach. Often the archaeological investigations were carried out in the footsteps of Strabo, based on his description of the local peoples of Karia; the Lelegians and the Karians⁶. These descriptions fuelled the archaeological research to focus on the “Lelegian question”: where were their cities situated and how did their tombs and settlements look?⁷ An internal version of the historical “truth” was established on the basis of the ambiguous literary sources that the Lelegians were a special local people with their own distinctive material culture living on the Halikarnassos peninsula (the land between Myndos and Bargylia), that they were subordinate to the Karians, and that the Greeks lived organized and civilized lives in the Greek city-states on the Mediterranean coastline.

Karia thus received the epithet of a cultural backwater zone, an isolated landscape, and the Karians and Lelegians somehow lower beings, without the sophistication and intellectual capacity of the Greeks. What became the focus of the archaeological investigations was to explore how there Barbarians got civilized through Hellenization. Culture merged into the Karian hinterlands from the centre of the Greek poleis to the periphery of rural and remote Karian village life.

Banal as it may seem to the people of Karia the landscape was always sited in the middle. Between the Aegean and Anatolia, at a busy sail route between

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1) A full discussion on the early tombs on the Halikarnassos peninsula may be found in Carstens 2008.

2) Paton - Myres 1896: 242-264.

3) Paton - Myres 1896: 205; Flensted-Jensen - Carstens 2004.

4) Bean - Cook 1955.

5) See Flensted-Jensen - Carstens 2004.

6) Flensted-Jensen - Carstens 2004: 111.

7) Flensted-Jensen - Carstens 2004: 112-113.

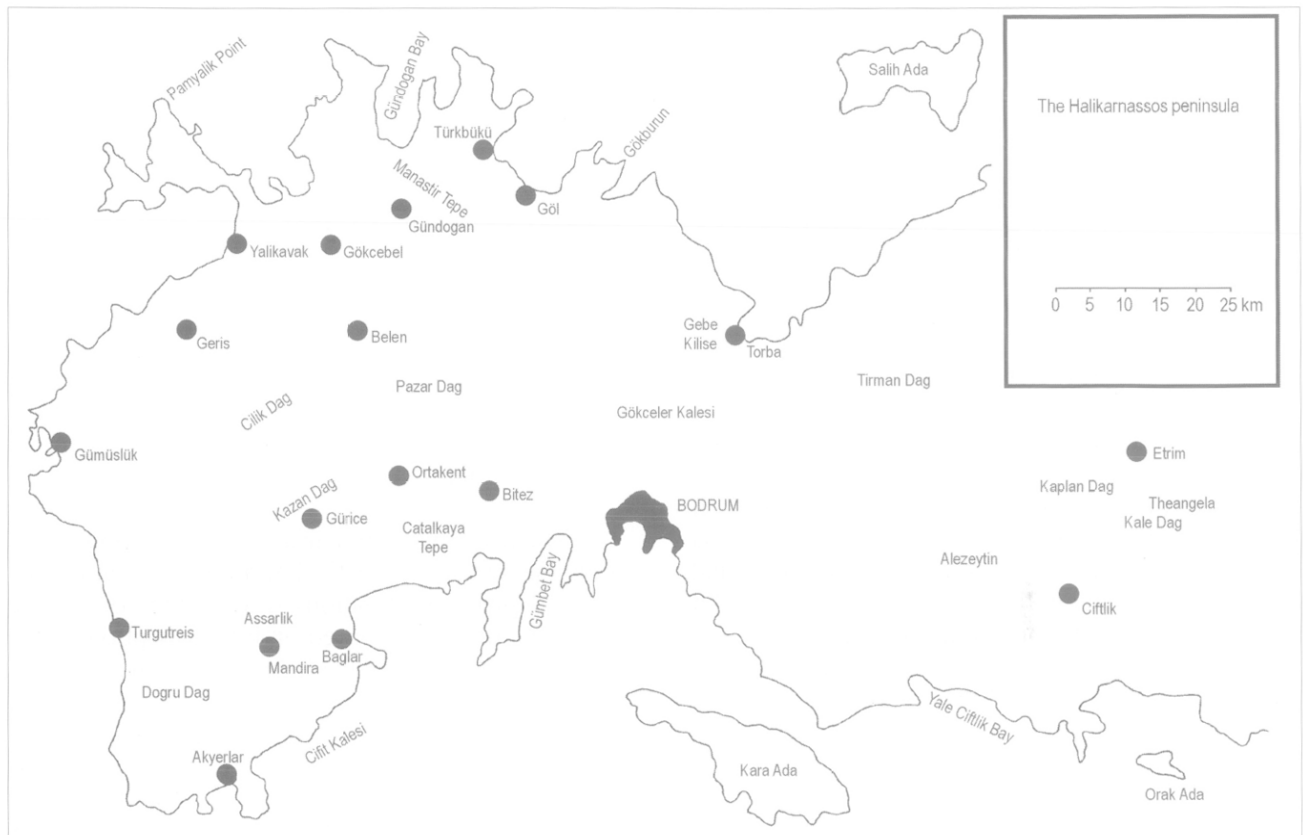


Fig. 1 : Map of the Halikarnassos peninsula (AMC).

the Levant and the Aegean, the Marmara and even the Black Sea. From a very early date relations to the surrounding world is excellently illustrated via archaeological material.

THE PROTOGEOMETRIC NECROPOLIS AT ASSARLIK

Situated on a steep mountaintop in the southern part of the peninsula, the ancient site of Assarlık offers a perfect view of the coast towards both east and west, while to the south this prospect is in the shadow of the hills between Akyerlar and Assarlık. The most prominent remains of the ancient settlement are the still very well preserved gate and the rather long stretch of the fortification wall that once surrounded the hill (Fig. 2)⁸.

Newton's tombs

C.T. Newton visited Assarlık with Lieutenant Smith in the autumn of 1857⁹. They came from the west coast and at Turgutreis¹⁰, they proceeded southeast towards the hill of Assarlık and here they

discovered three chamber tombs. Newton and Smith climbed the hill and described the ruins on the plateau. Descending from the summit they found three more tombs.

It appears from Newton's description that at least some of the tombs were built of carefully drafted ashlar in isodomous masonry, whereas other tombs may have been less precise. The chambers seem to have been covered by corbelled vaults, either including on all four sides, or on only two, resulting in a pyramid roof or a barrel vault respectively (Fig. 3).

Paton's tombs

In 1886 the necropolis at Assarlık was examined and partly excavated by W.R. Paton¹¹. Paton excavated two tumulus-tombs (Paton A-B) and several "circular and rectangular enclosures" (Paton C-O). The topographic descriptions are somewhat confusing and no sketch of the necropolis has ever been published. I have tried several times to locate the tombs, hitherto without success.

8) Bean - Cook 1955: 116-118.

9) Newton 1862-1863: 583-591.

10) Kara Toprak, Newton 1862-1863: 580.

11) Paton 1887.



Fig. 2 : The city gate at Assarlık (AMC).

The tombs excavated by Paton in 1886 yielded both pottery and metal finds, but they also provided more detailed information on the architecture and not least the construction of the roofs.

Tomb A was published with a plan and section, and described in detail (Fig. 4). The tomb consisted of a dromos, roofed with slabs and an entrance/door-frame constructed of four large rectangular blocks. The chamber had incurving sidewalls, but the short walls also curved although “less sensibly”¹². Two large blocks covered the top of the roof. A krepis wall preserved to a height of two courses and built of “irregular shaped stones”¹³, surrounded the tomb and kept a rubble tumulus in position.

Paton found at least seven circular and four rectangular “enclosures”. He noted that each of the rather poorly preserved circles contained a chamber covered by two or three large blocks. Paton interpreted the circular enclosures as the remains of krepis walls for tumuli raised above the chambers. These tombs may very well have been constructed as Tomb A, covered by corbelled vaults.

Three of the rectangular enclosures, or tomb terraces (Tombs M, N and O) were examined and some of their architectural details were described. Tomb N consisted of two long enclosures, built together and containing five small cists and two other



Fig. 3 : Chamber tomb at Assarlık.
(Photo by the courtesy of Jan Zahle).

12) Paton 1887: 68.

13) Paton 1887: 67.

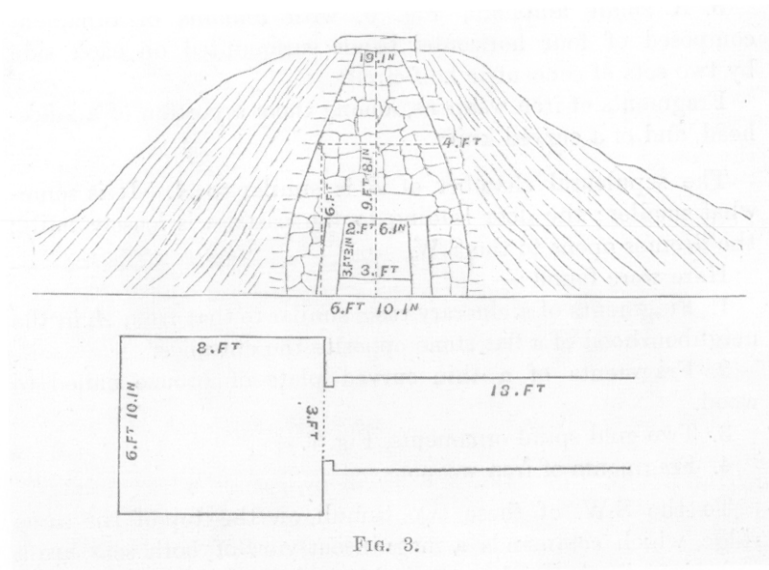


Fig. 4 : Assarlık, Paton Tomb A (Paton 1887, fig. 3).

larger cists. In one of the small cists the ashes were placed in a large vase¹⁴.

Paton and Myres included a survey of Karian tombs in their report on travels made in 1893 and 1894¹⁵. Here the Assarlık material was more clearly presented.

The roofing system of the tumulus tombs was described as “(a) simple device of bracketing out the last few courses of the wall and laying the roof slabs across the narrower opening which is thus left”¹⁶. Thus, all four walls were inclined and they must have formed a pyramid vault, in some cases with courses that turned from angular to rounded ones. This kind of vault was also used in the stone tumulus tombs at Gökçeler north of Halikarnassos, a technical correspondence that Paton and Myres also observed¹⁷.

Paton and Myres considered Newton Tomb 1 and 3 a more sophisticated version of the same tomb type. This was especially true of the presence of a doorway, constructed of large blocks, forming a threshold and lintel, and the flat covering stones of the dromos in Newton 1, but also the “superior

finish” of the masonry. Those led Paton and Myres to suggest a date in the 7th or 6th century B.C., which is somewhat later than the tombs excavated by Paton himself, which were in use from the 12th to the 8th century B.C.¹⁸.

The burials

It seems that both cremation and inhumation were practiced in the Assarlık tombs. Whether this reflected a development through time, from early cremation to later inhumation, is impossible to state; the material is limited and the datings are imprecise.

The finds

The pottery and other finds yielded during the excavation in 1886 were brought to the British Museum (Fig. 5)¹⁹. The metal finds included iron weapons, among these knives and spearheads²⁰.

The bronze finds were mostly fibulae, but also included a pair of tweezers and a curved plate. According to E. Caner’s work on Anatolian fibulae from 1983 the ones from Assarlık were probably produced in Karia, as they represent a variant known

14) Paton 1887: 73.

15) Paton - Myres 1896: 242-264.

16) Paton - Myres 1896: 245.

17) Paton - Myres 1896: 245-246. Ghiuk Chalar = Gökçeler. The tombs at Gökçeler, see Radt 1970, 215-236, and below.

18) Paton - Myres 1896: 246.

19) The pottery: Forsdyke 1925, the bronzes: Walters 1899; the jewellery: Marshall 1911.

20) However, the metal finds do not appear in the catalogues of the British Museum and Paton did not provide any specific description of the weapons, other than that two of the knives were curved and one was small. With the publication of the Knossos North Cemetery (Coldstream - Catling 1996) the number of early Iron Age weapons has increased. The material shows a striking homogeneity combined with an apparent conservatism. The changes in typology through time seem very limited. This combined with the very summary descriptions by Paton does not allow for any speculation regarding style or date on the basis of weapon finds.

Tomb	Pottery	Iron	Bronze	Gold
A	A1103 spouted bowl A1104 amphora A large urn	Weapons, incl. 1 spearhead and 1 knife		
B	A large urn	Weapons	Thin bronze plate	1214-1215 hair spirals
C	A1105 skyphos A1106 jug A1107 amphora A1109-2 lid A1109-3 lip A1110 TC sarcophagus	Weapons, incl. 1 spear and 2 knives	Fibulae, Caner type II d (Caner 8; 8a, and 9)	1212 disk 1213 plaque 1216 tapered hoop ring
D	A1108-1 large vessels Sherds: thin kylix, black glazed	Weapon, incl. 1 knife		
E	A1109-1 incised ware			
F			117 pair of tweezers Fibulae Caner type Va (Caner 98a-b)	
G			Fibula Caner type II b (Caner 5)	
M			Fibula Caner type II d (Caner 11)	
N	A pithos; a large vase; a bowl with concentric circles		Fibula Caner II d (Caner 12)	
O	A1101 stirrup jar A1102 askos Sherds of a large closed vessel		Fibula Caner type II a (Caner 3)	
Tombs SW of A+B	A1111-1116 TC sarcophagi		115 two spiral armlets 116 two armlets	
÷ context			Fibula Caner type II d (Caner 10)	

Fig. 5 : Assarlık, contextual overview of finds (AMC).



Fig. 6 : Assarlık, the gold finds (Marshall 1911).

neither on the Aegean islands nor on Cyprus, although they seem related to these²¹.

Jewellery was found in three or four tombs in the form of bracelets, pendants and rings (Fig. 6). The golden (1212) found in Tomb C may represent a Rhodian type of pendant of Syrian inspiration²², while the ring (1216) from the same tomb is less distinctive. The gold band with a simple zigzag decoration (1213) is likewise difficult to identify, but the sparse ornamentation may confirm a date in the Geometric period as suggested by the pottery finds²³.

The fact that the pottery from the Assarlık tombs were brought to the British Museum after the excavation and published both in the following year and in the catalogue of prehistoric Aegean pottery in 1925²⁴, made the finds accessible and much easier to study than for instance material from the excavations at Miletos (Fig. 7)²⁵.

Desborough in his *Protogeometric Pottery* (1952), emphasized that the frequent use of circular decoration was seldom present in the local Dodekanese style²⁶. Based on the rather limited material he suggested

that the pottery finds reflected a migration, that settlers at Assarlık had emigrated from Athens by the time of the transition to the Protogeometric period. They then brought with them both the practice of cremation and their own pottery style²⁷.

In 1971 Snodgrass, however, concluded that probably all the Assarlık pottery was made locally, though the earliest finds might be imports²⁸. In his discussion on "The Advent of Protogeometric" he reiterated that conclusion already drawn by Desborough: "... among these new schools is that of the Greek settlements on the western coast of Asia Minor: the finds at Militus, Assarlık and elsewhere suggest an early dispersal of pottery, and probably of actual migrants carrying it, beginning in the first half of the eleventh century. This is perhaps our material testimony for the beginning of the Ionian migration"²⁹.

Coldstream placed the pottery of Tomb C in the Dodekanese group of the East Greek Middle Geometric pottery³⁰. This group was characterized by a composite style, which combined Attic, Cypriot, and indigenous elements³¹.

21) Caner 1983: 30.

22) Higgins 1980: 119.

23) Higgins 1980: 118.

24) Forsdyke 1925.

25) Desborough could in 1952 only write: "The preliminary report on this site claims continuity of settlement from Mycenaean to Protogeometric. Until fuller publications one must defer judgment on the nature of this settlement". Desborough 1952: 221.

26) Desborough 1952: 220.

27) Desborough 1952: 220-222.

28) Snodgrass 1971: 67.

29) Snodgrass 1971: 328-329. He obviously found that the material from the tomb at Dirmil spoke in favour of this theory. Snodgrass 1971: 158.

30) Coldstream 1968: 268.

31) Coldstream 1968: 265.



Fig. 297 = A 1103.

Fig. 7 : Assarlık, Geometric amphora A1103, Tomb A (Forsdyke 1925, fig. 297).

Özgünel later subscribed to the theory of a close Attic influence in the Middle Geometric period, and he even suggested that the amphora 1107 was an Attic import (Fig. 8)³². The close affiliations with Attic Geometric pottery in western Anatolia present a quite marked distance from the Dodekanese Geometric style, which may be surprising, not least in this southwestern corner of Karia.

THE PROTOGEOMETRIC TOMB AT DİRMİL/GÖKÇEBEL

Gökçebel is the modern name of a village in the northwestern part of the peninsula (Fig. 1). South of the village on a hilltop is a hill fort, first described by Paton and Myres in 1896 and later visited by Bean and Cook in the 1950s³³.

G.E. Bass first discovered a Protogeometric chamber tomb in 1962, when he visited the site to-

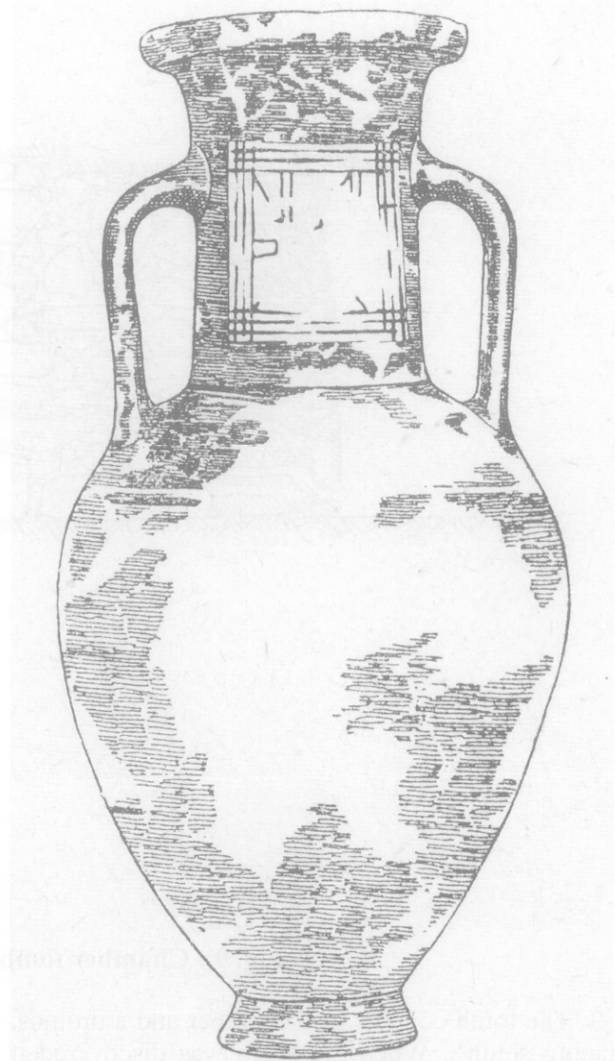


Fig. 299 = A 1107.

Fig. 8 : Assarlık, Geometric amphora A1107, Tomb C (Forsdyke 1925, fig. 299).

gether with H. Elbe of the Bodrum Museum. Before that, a local captain that worked for the American underwater excavations at Yassı Ada had shown him some pottery from the tomb. A local farmer had found the tomb on the southern slope of the hill³⁴. In 1963 Bass published the finds and a sketch plan of the tomb³⁵. The same year E. Akurgal excavated it³⁶.

32) Özgünel 1979: 76-78.

33) Paton - Myres 1896: 207. Bean - Cook 1955: 130.

34) I visited Dirmil in 1996 and tried to find the chamber tombs. A close survey of the entire southern slope of the hill did not reveal the tomb.

35) Bass 1963: 357-361.

36) Boysal 1967: 44-45. The investigations also included a small survey in the vicinity of the tomb. Özgünel (1976) published the results. Özgünel published pottery found during these investigations in his monograph on Carian Geometric Pottery. Özgünel 1979.

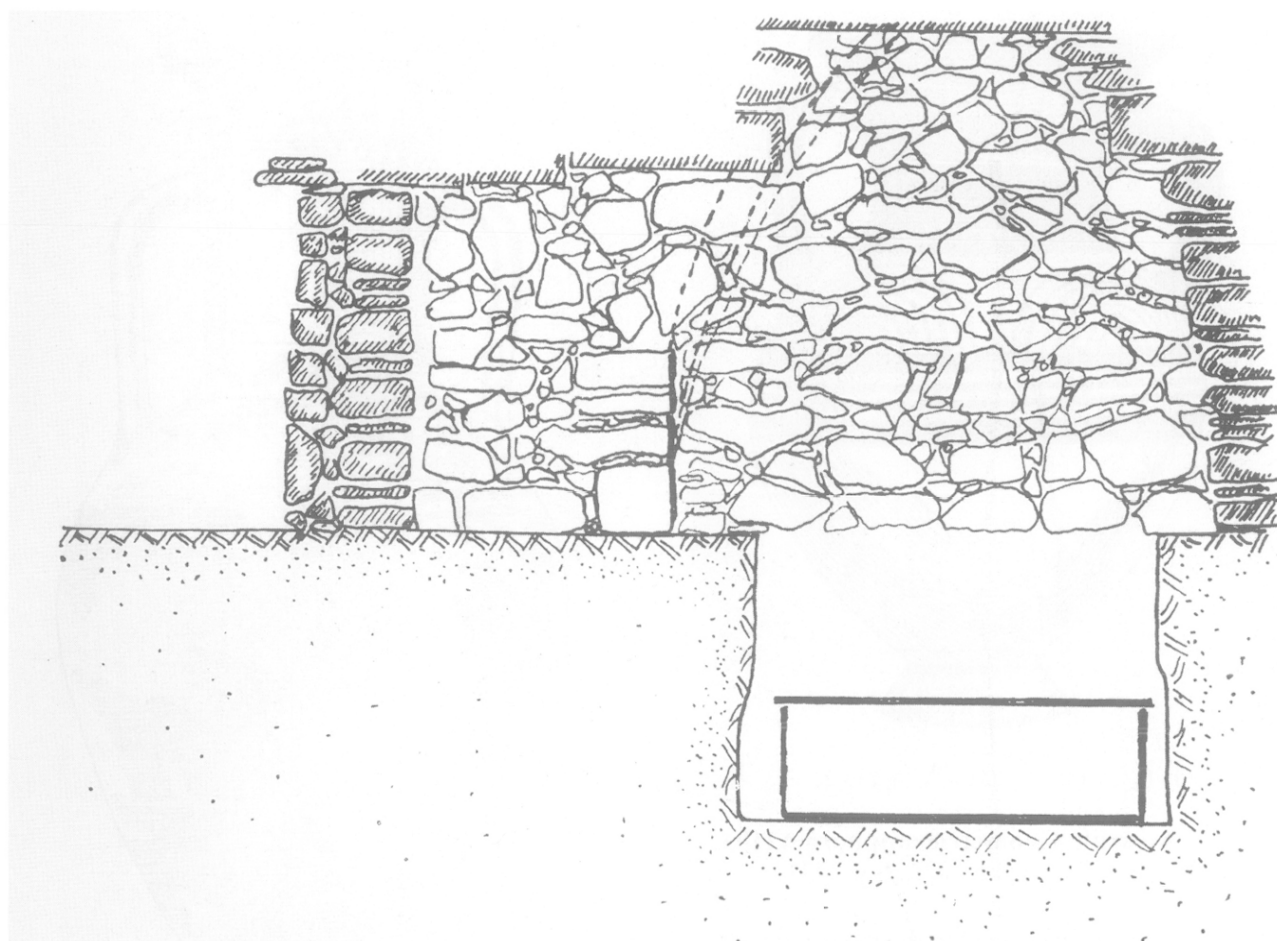


Fig. 9 : Chamber tomb at Gökçebel (Boysal 1967).

The tomb consists of a chamber and a dromos, facing south³⁷. When the tomb was discovered it was completely hidden in the slope, and Bass' team entered the chamber through a hole in the roof. The tomb was built in polygonal masonry of un-worked stones, with the best masonry in the lower courses of the dromos.

The chamber is roughly rectangular in plan, but already at the second course the walls begin to incline and the corners disappear into a circle (Fig. 9). During Akurgal's excavations a rectangular pit cut into the rock floor was found³⁸. A terracotta sarcophagus was discovered inside the pit. Apparently a skyphos was found in this pit, while the rest of the

finds must have been placed in the tomb chamber itself. It is not clear how the pit was covered.

The person buried in the sarcophagus was a tall male, *ca.* 65 years old³⁹. He was placed in dorsal position and near his feet a separate pit contained the contracted burial of a woman *ca.* 30-35 years old⁴⁰. There was no indication of cremation.

Bass published the first pottery finds from the tomb in 1963. Later Akurgal reported that the burial gifts included a bronze fibula⁴¹. Boysal included the pottery from the Dirmil tomb in the catalogue of the Bodrum Museum published in 1969⁴². The finds comprised two skyphoi, one krater, two amphorae and two oinochoe.

37) Boysal 1967: 44-45. The investigations also included a small survey in the vicinity of the tomb. Özgünel (1976) published the results. Özgünel published pottery found during these investigations in his monograph on Carian Geometric Pottery. Özgünel 1979.

38) Boysal 1967: 44. note 13: "The tomb was built by carving three meters into the rock".

39) Tunakan 1964.

40) This pit was not described in Boysal 1967.

41) Bass 1963. Akurgal in Mellink 1964: 161. The fibula was to my knowledge not published, and it was not included in Caner 1983.

42) Boysal 1969: 31-32. I have not seen the sarcophagus in the Bodrum Museum. It was not described in Boysal 1967 or in Boysal 1969.

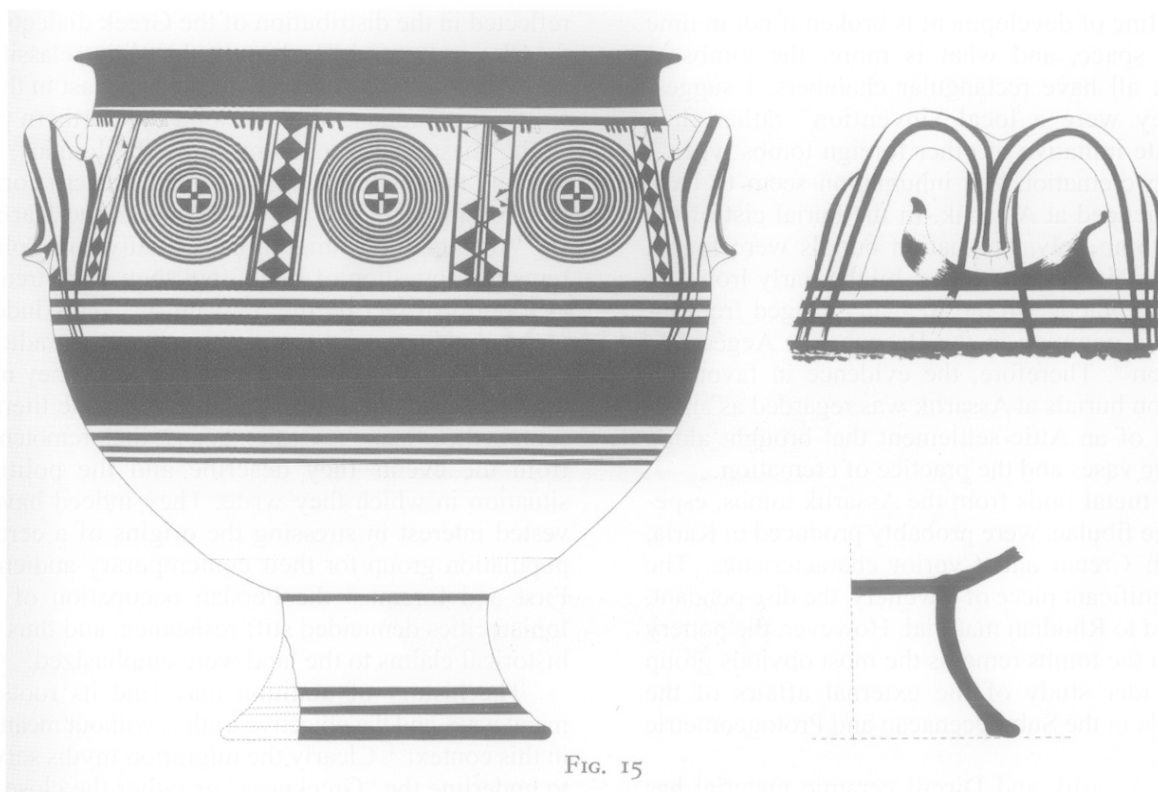


FIG. 15

Fig. 10 : Krater from the chamber tomb at Gökçebel/Dirmil (Bass 1963, fig. 15).

Coldstream placed the Dirmil pottery in his East Greek Late Protogeometric group, which is characterized by three ancillary ornaments (Fig 10): a) groups of pendant tongues or simple strokes; b) one or more vertical rows of dots; and c) one or more wavy scribbles, either vertical or horizontal; if horizontal they link as sets of concentric circles⁴³. He found all these ornaments illustrated in the pottery from the tomb, although he stressed their similarity to “Attic prototypes”⁴⁴.

In Özgünel’s monograph on Karian Geometric Pottery from 1979 the pottery from the Dirmil tomb was reconsidered according to both shape and decoration in an analysis of Attic, Dodekanese and Ionic Geometric pottery. Although Özgünel agreed on the Attic influence he was able to point to specific elements of shape and decorations, which made him conclude that the pottery was most likely local Karian ware. Indeed he characterised the Karian Protogeometric style by its combination of different

schools: “In the Carian region, we see the interwoven influences of different places”⁴⁵. How this later developed in the Geometric period is illustrated by the unique snake-handled kantharos which also derive from a tomb at Gökçebel / Dirmil, excavated in the early 1970s.

The krater had already been compared by Bass to the kraters from Marmariani in Thessaly⁴⁶. And Özgünel emphasized that the connection with Marmariani as indicated by only this one krater should be used with care⁴⁷.

ASSARLIK AND DIRMİL BASIC CONCLUSIONS

The tumulus tombs built at Assarlık have been considered in relation to the prehistoric tholos tombs, which survived into the Protogeometric period in both Thessaly and on Crete⁴⁸. These might, of course, have influenced the sepulchral architecture in Assarlık.

43) Coldstream 1968: 265.

44) Bass apparently showed the pottery material to Desborough shortly after the finds were made. He quoted Desborough’s impression that the pottery was “much closer to the Attic series than those found in the cist tombs on Cos”. Bass 1963: 361.

45) Özgünel 1979: 70.

46) Bass 1963: 359.

47) Özgünel 1979: 69.

48) Pelon 1976: 416-417, 419.

But the line of development is broken if not in time then in space, and what is more, the tombs at Assarlık all have rectangular chambers. I suggest that they were a local "invention" rather than deliberate imitative of other foreign tombs types⁴⁹.

Both cremation and inhumation seem to have been practiced at Assarlık. In the burial cist of the Dirmil tomb only inhumation burials were found. In general, it is believed that by the Early Iron Age the burial practice in the Aegean changed from inhumation, common in the Bronze Age Aegean, to cremation⁵⁰. Therefore, the evidence in favour of cremation burials at Assarlık was regarded as an indication of an Attic settlement that brought along two Attic vases and the practice of cremation.

The metal finds from the Assarlık tombs, especially the fibulae, were probably produced in Karia, but with Cretan and Cypriot characteristics. The most significant piece of jewellery, the disc pendant, is related to Rhodian material. However, the pottery found in the tombs remains the most obvious group for a wider study of the external affairs of the peninsula in the Submycenaean and Protogeometric periods.

The Assarlık and Dirmil ceramic material has been the subject of debate. But, with the possible exception of the stirrup jar and the Askos from Tomb O in Assarlık, this material may have been produced locally.

The pottery from the Middle Geometric Tomb C at Assarlık was influenced by the Attic Geometric styles both regarding shape and decoration, and Özgünel suggested that the amphora might be an Attic import.

CONTINUITY?

The most crucial problem encountered in the Submycenaean to Protogeometric period, is the matter of continuity from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age. Here we come up against the tradition of various migrations in the Early Iron Age. The traditional view of the migration theories implies an invasion of a Greek-speaking people from the north (Thessaly), the Dorians, forcing the Ionians living in Achaea to leave their land. The Ionians came to Athens and from here they later settled in Ionia⁵¹. These movements of peoples may (or may not) be

reflected in the distribution of the Greek dialects by the Classical period. The historical tradition classified the colonization of the Anatolian west coast in three tempi, the Aeolians as starters on the northern part of the coast, and then followed by the Ionians, occupying the middle and in the southwestern corner the Dorians settled in the Dodekanese and Karia⁵².

Whether these migrations actually took place remains a question of belief, but they were treated as a political fact by the 5th century⁵³. This indeed may tell us more of the societies where the tradition was established than of the historical fact they may or may not represent. Characteristic for the literary sources describing these migrations is their remoteness from the events they describe and the political situation in which they write. They indeed have a vested interest in stressing the origins of a certain population group for their contemporary audience. First and foremost the Persian occupation of the Ionian cities demanded stiff resistance, and thus the historical claims to the land were emphasized.

The history of tradition may find its roots in many ways and the objective truth is without meaning in this context⁵⁴. Clearly the migration myths served to underline the "Greekness" or rather the close relations between the Attic people and the people living on the Anatolian west coast.

In the archaeological discussion of the Early Iron Age migrations, it is especially the finds at Assarlık which have been used as evidence, confirming the theory. This implied that the cremation burials as well as the Submycenaean / Protogeometric pottery were brought to the site by newcomers, settlers from Athens. The Dirmil tomb, discovered later, was also used in this argument, and a hypothesis of a cremation burial here was put forward in 1963 before the actual burials were excavated in the following season⁵⁵. As already shown the material evidence is extremely sparse, and hardly to be interpreted as clear evidence of a new Attic settlement, nor a ramification of an early Bronze Age one, although the earliest Tomb O at Assarlık, with the stirrup jar and the askos, may hint at a transitional phase. Yet, widening the geographical scope, it is safe to say that the increasing amount of archaeological evidence from the Early Iron Age in southwestern Anatolia illustrates that the Bronze Age break-down was

49) See e.g. Pelon 1976: 423.

50) Snodgrass 1971, Chapter 4: 140-197.

51) Bury - Meiggs 1987: 53-57.

52) Boardman 1980: 26-33.

53) Hooker 1976: 213-222.

54) Osborne 1996: 1-18.

55) Desborough 1964: 254.

neither as profound nor as long-lasting as hitherto believed. The idea of continued habitation has in the past decennium gained foothold.

It is possible that, for a generation or more, life was modest and unpretentious, settlement patterns may have altered from lowland to hilltops, and by the beginning of the Geometric period we see the beginning of a local style not only in pottery, but also in the sepulchral architecture.

Instead of arguing for a connection between the late tholos tombs on the Messaro or in Thessaly, I suggest an interpretation implying local innovation. The tumulus tombs are constructed on fairly simple principles, and the roofing technique, either the pyramid vault or the two-faced vault presents a simple principle depending on weight and gravity,

which makes it possible to cover larger rooms than could be done with a flat roof. The earthen or stone tumulus above the built structure kept it all in place, and made outer facing of the built structure unnecessary. All in all, this was a good straightforward solution, which would need no outer influence to develop.

But who were the people living and dying on the Halikarnassos peninsula? Migrating Dorians, left-over Mycenaeans, Anatolian-rooted Karians? Well, I prefer to name them Karians, simply because they lived in Karia and right from the beginning they show a particular faculty of cultural mixture.

A.M.C.

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