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Early Bronze Age Idol and Figurines from Panaztepe

ÜMİT ÇAYIR TIĞLI*

Abstract

Figurines and idols, in varying proportions, have been found in almost every excavated center in the Western Anatolia region. The question of their function and the role they played in the social structure has been a subject of scholarly inquiry since the 19th century, drawing attention not only in archaeology but also in various fields of science and art. This study examines the idols and figurines unearthed during the Panaztepe excavations, specifically from the early phase of the Early Bronze Age 2, found in street and domestic contexts that reflect the characteristics of the Aegean Settlement Model. The architectural layout and ceramic tradition of the Panaztepe settlement demonstrate affinities with both the Western Anatolian coastal zone and the Eastern Aegean Islands. Accordingly, this paper aims to document the idols and figurines from Panaztepe, compare them with those from contemporary cultures and discuss theoretical approaches related to their interpretation.

Keywords: Early Bronze Age, figurine, idol, Western Anatolia, Panaztepe

Öz

Batı Anadolu Bölgesi'nde kazısı yapılmış hemen her merkezde, oranları değişmekle birlikte figürin ve idoller bulunmaktadır. Bu eser grubunun kullanım amaçları ve içinde buldukları sosyal yapıda hangi amaca hizmet ettikleri sorusu, 19. yy.'ın başlarından günümüze kadar hem arkeoloji hem de çeşitli bilim ve sanat dallarında dikkat çekici konulardan biri olmuştur. Bu makale, Panaztepe Kazısı Erken Tunç Çağı 2'nin erken evresinde, Ege Yerleşim Modeli özellikleri gösteren sokak ve evlerin içerisinde bulunmuş olan idol ve figürinleri sunmaktadır. Panaztepe Erken Tunç Çağı yerleşiminin hem idol / figürin özelinde hem de mimari düzenleme ve seramik geleneğinde, Batı Anadolu sahil kesimi ve doğu Ege adalarıyla benzer özellikler sergilemektedir. Bu çalışmada Panaztepe idol ve figürinlerinin tanıtılması ve çağdaş kültürlerle buluntuların karşılaştırmasının yanı sıra konu üzerindeki teorik yaklaşımlara da değinilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Erken Tunç Çağı, figürin, idol, Batı Anadolu Bölgesi, Panaztepe

Introduction

This study presents two figurines and one idol unearthed from the Early Bronze Age 2 (EBA 2) layer during the ongoing excavations in the area we define as the Panaztepe New Excavation Area. This stratum represents the earliest phase identified so far at Panaztepe in terms of architectural units. The ongoing research conducted over the past five years in the New Excavation Area has revealed that the settlement layout is consistent with the Aegean Settlement Model observed in contemporary coastal settlements of Western Anatolia during the EBA. Investigations in this area have shown evidence of uninterrupted occupation from the beginning to the end

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of the EBA.¹ During the 2024 campaign, the architectural unit defined as the “Burnt House” was unearthed within the EBA 1 layer. This unit, attributed to the EBA 2 phase, was uncovered in the form of architectural units aligned side by side along a street and identified as a long house. The figurines and idol discussed in this study were recovered from the upper layers of this building. The mentioned finds demonstrate a typological resemblance to contemporary contexts and provide a basis for comparison.

The EBA idols and figurines from Panaztepe have been evaluated and compared in terms of their typology, chronology, and archaeological contexts. However, the lack of detailed contextual information in published reports and in earlier excavation documents concerning similar finds from the older phases complicates a comprehensive evaluation. Based on the information provided in the publications, a comparison and evaluation of similar examples have been carried out, and a table has been prepared.

The number of excavated or ongoing settlement sites containing EBA layers in both the coastal and inland regions of Western Anatolia remains limited. However, recent excavation efforts have slightly increased this number. In this context, the intensification of research focused on the EBA in the region will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the period and of the cultural history of the region.

This study examines the idol and figurines unearthed at Panaztepe and briefly presents new data concerning the EBA 2 settlement in which these examples were found. First, the stylistic assessment of the Panaztepe idol and figurines has been conducted and compared with similar examples from contemporary settlements. In addition, interpretations regarding the functions and meanings of EBA idol and figurines from past to present have been reviewed, and the Panaztepe finds have been evaluated within this framework. In summary, there is no doubt that the Panaztepe examples, within the scope of the aforementioned issues, will provide new contributions to the EBA layers of Western Anatolia.

Panaztepe New Excavation Area

Panaztepe is located within the borders of Izmir Province, in the district of Menemen, between the neighborhoods of Maltepe and Kesik. It lies on a natural hill and on its slopes at the northeastern end of the area known as Yeditepeliler (fig. 1). The main area of Panaztepe, which can be defined as the core settlement, is situated on and around the acropolis (fig. 2) and contains cultural layers spanning from the EBA to the Ottoman period. Undoubtedly, the strategic location of Panaztepe—situated in the Gediz River delta, one of the largest coastal plains in Western Anatolia—made it a favorable settlement and burial site over a long period. The New Excavation Area of Panaztepe lies approximately 2 km west of the acropolis, in the plain area (fig. 3). Excavations have been continuously carried out on the acropolis and its slopes since 1985, and since 2020, archaeological work has also been conducted on the New Excavation Area of Panaztepe.² The discovery of a pithos in this area during an illicit excavation prompted the initiation of formal investigations, highlighting the site’s archaeological potential. The data obtained from this area have confirmed the presence of rich and diverse cultural layers, including settlement and burial contexts. Our current research in the New Excavation Area of Panaztepe continues within the planned timeframe, aiming to achieve a

¹ Çayır-Tıĝlı 2025, 363.

² Çayır 2023, 347.

more detailed and comprehensive understanding of these cultural deposits, particularly those dating to the EBA.

As a result of five years of continuous excavations in the New Excavation Area of Panaztepe, the characteristics of the EBA settlement have become increasingly evident. The archaeological and geoarchaeological data retrieved from the EBA layers of the New Excavation Area at Panaztepe suggest that we may be dealing with a harbor settlement. The excavations conducted between 2020 and 2024 have revealed the presence of stratified layers dating to the Roman period, Archaic period, Iron Age, the 2nd millennium BCE, and distinct architectural phases within the EBA 1 and EBA 2 levels. In the cultural layer dated to the early phase of EBA 2, a settlement layout and architectural types consistent with those found along the Western Anatolian coastline have been identified (figs. 4-5). Within this layout, elongated buildings with shared side walls exceeding 10 meters in length, opening directly onto streets or alleys, are observed.³ These houses typically feature a single main room or a narrower antechamber, and in some instances, internal subdivisions are also present.

Parallels of the Aegean Settlement Model and its architectural layout have been identified at numerous sites along the Western Anatolian coast and the Eastern Aegean Islands.⁴ Among these sites are Liman Tepe,⁵ Bakla Tepe,⁶ and Çeşme-Bağlararası⁷ in and around İzmir; Çukuriçi Höyük⁸ and Yassitepe;⁹ Troy¹⁰ in northwestern Anatolia; Beşik-Tepe;¹¹ Lesbos-Thermi¹² and Samos-Heraion¹³ in the Eastern Aegean Islands; and Gökçeada-Yenibademli Höyük.¹⁴ Panaztepe also features a settlement layer dated to the beginning of the EBA 2, which demonstrates the Aegean Settlement Model. In this model, longhouses are arranged along a northeast-southwest oriented street, placed perpendicularly along both sides of the street in an east-west direction. The layout closely resembles that of the Lesbos-Thermi¹⁵ settlement. Beneath the cultural layer of EBA 2 at Panaztepe, there exists an earlier settlement phase. Despite being excavated only in a limited area, it has been determined that both the layout of the settlement and the orientation of the houses differ in this phase.

Clay Figurine 1

Small-scale human representations in the form of figurines are classified into two distinct groups due to their pronounced morphological differences. Figurines are three-dimensional forms, naturalistic or near-natural in appearance, and in some examples include bodily details. Idols, on the other hand, possess a schematic structure, characterized by flat surfaces and shaping

³ Gündoğan 2024b, 654.

⁴ Gündoğan 2020, 39.

⁵ Erkanal and Şahoğlu 2016, 158, fig. 3.

⁶ Gündoğan et al. 2019, 1097, figs. 8-10.

⁷ Şahoğlu et al. 2018, 376, figs. 3, 7-8, 16.

⁸ Schwall and Horejs 2017, 56, figs. 3.3, 3.4.

⁹ Derin 2020, 4, figs. 3-4.

¹⁰ Ivanova 2016, 42, fig. 4.

¹¹ Korfmann 1987, 132-33.

¹² Lamb 1936, 8, tables 1-5.

¹³ Kouka and Menelaou 2018, 124, 128, 130, fig. 2.

¹⁴ Hüryılmaz 2013, 171, fig. 4.

¹⁵ Lamb 1936, tables 1-5.

primarily along the external contours. While figurines were generally produced from clay, idols were predominantly made of stone. Figurines range between 2–20 cm in size, whereas idols are usually smaller, portable miniature sculptures. Within this classification framework, two clay figurines and one limestone idol were recovered from the EBA 2 settlement context of New Excavation Area at Panaztepe, the details of which are briefly presented above.

The first of these figurines was unearthed during the 2023 excavation season from an area identified as a street within the EBA 2 settlement layout (fig. 6). The standing figurine, found in two fragments, was broken at shoulder level but has been restored, although one of its arms is missing. The figurine, which has been roughly shaped, exhibits a flat appearance. The head is shaped like a disk, and the eyes are represented as small dots placed symmetrically on either side of the head. One of the eye sockets contains two adjacent perforations, which are shallower than the corresponding socket on the opposite side (fig. 7). Faint brow ridges are indicated above the eyes, sloping gently downward along the sides. Very fine traces above the brows suggest that the figurine was impressed with a grass-like material while still damp and malleable. The depiction of brows in this manner is rather uncommon. Apart from the eyes and brows, no other facial features are indicated.¹⁶ The neck is broad and flat, with its sides roughly smoothed. The arms, which begin just below shoulder height, are rendered as small protrusions with blunt, unfinished ends. The arms slope inward from the sides toward the torso, and the overall shape of the body is flat and rectangular. The lower part of the figurine has likely been flattened to allow it to stand upright, and no separation of the legs is indicated. Figurines of this type are also described as having a columnar-shaped body form. Since the chest is not depicted, the figurine may be interpreted as male.

Figurine 1 is technically coarse in texture and shares the same characteristics as the clay fabric used in kitchen wares. A large quantity of medium and coarse inclusions, which can be described as temper, are also visible on the surface. Although the clay fabric is light brown in color, mottled light and dark gray tones have appeared on the surface due to firing, indicating that it was fired at a relatively low temperature. The clay figurine from Panaztepe shows close similarities in form and typological features particularly with the examples from Lesbos-Thermi.¹⁷ In addition, similar examples are known from the settlements of Yenibademli Höyük,¹⁸ Seyitömer,¹⁹ and Demircihüyük.²⁰ When evaluated in terms of chronology and find context, the examples from these settlements have been recovered from various phases of the EBA (table 1).²¹ The majority of these figurines were recovered from interior spaces. The Yenibademli Höyük figurine was found within a destruction pit, among stone debris.²² In the figurines from Panaztepe and those used for comparison, minor differences are observed in the details as a result of local adaptations; however, they are shaped according to the same visual scheme.

¹⁶ Especially in stylized figurines, no limbs other than the eyes are depicted. It is thought that the eyes are emphasized because they are the organs of visual perception and therefore were considered significant (Baykal-Seeher and Obladen-Kauder 1996, 259).

¹⁷ Lamb 1936, 152, table 22:31-27, 30-11.

¹⁸ Hürüylmaz 2002a, 355, fig. 5.

¹⁹ Bilgen et al. 2015, 178, fig. 193c.

²⁰ Baykal-Seeher and Obladen-Kauder 1996, table 111.2.

²¹ The Panaztepe idol and figurines are illustrated in the table. Except for the Panaztepe examples, the photographs and drawings used in the table were taken from publications, and the references are provided in the main text.

²² Hürüylmaz 2002a, 355, 5.

Clay Figurin 2

The second figurine, made of clay, was also discovered in 2023. It was recovered from a space identified as Y-016 in the Panaztepe excavation documentation, a context partially uncovered and dated to the EBA 2 (fig. 8). Within the space where the figurine was found, collapsed mudbrick blocks, fragments of mudbrick covering the floor, and beam sockets were observed. In addition to these architectural remains, scattered hearth base fragments and localized burnt and ashy areas were identified throughout the space. An in situ oval-shaped oven was found near the northern wall of Space Y-016, and the figurine in question was located just east of this oven (fig. 9). A bronze chisel and a bone tool were recovered in the same context as the figurine, just to its south. In addition to these finds, the ceramic samples recovered from within the building exhibit characteristics typical of the early phase of the EBA 2. Unfortunately, the head and body portions of the figurine were recovered in a broken state. When evaluated in terms of typology, the body exhibits the same characteristics as the figurine recovered from the street area. The only distinction between the second figurine and the first is that it represents a female figure with a prominent breast protrusion. As in the first figurine, the neck is shaped in a wide and flat manner.

As in the first example, the arms are shaped as small protrusions, remaining the same thickness as the torso and tapering slightly toward the ends, where they are finished with a blunt tip. One of the arms was found intact, while the other was broken at the tip. Aligned with both arms, there are raised breast protrusions with pointed ends located at the upper central part of the torso. Of the nipple-like breast protrusions, one is smaller and more pointed compared to the other. The torso narrows slightly downward from the arms. Although the lower part is broken and the feet cannot be clearly identified, it is assumed that the figurine stood upright, as in comparable examples. Although it shares the same features as the other figurine, this one exhibits smoother surface treatment and appears to have been made with greater care. The surface texture and form of this figurine are comparatively flatter, and light smoothing marks can be seen on its surface. Temper inclusions are visible both in the clay fabric and on the surface of this coarse-quality figurine. The fabric and surface are gray in color, and it appears to have been fired more thoroughly than the first figurine.

The closest parallels to the second figurine are found at the sites of Bakla Tepe,²³ Demircihöyük,²⁴ Gökçeada-Yenibademli Höyük,²⁵ and Thermi on Lesbos (table 1).²⁶ Apart from the arm sections, another comparable example can be associated with the figurine found at İkiştepe,²⁷ located at a greater distance. Chronologically, the figurine from Bakla Tepe is dated to EBA 1, while the one from Yenibademli Höyük belongs to the EBA 2 layer; it was recovered from the northern side of a fortification wall associated with that architectural phase. At the İkiştepe settlement, it was retrieved from the debris of an architectural layer belonging to the Late Chalcolithic Age. At Thermi on Lesbos, one of the comparable examples was recovered from a street area in the sector designated as Area K, and is dated to EBA 2 (table 1). As noted above, the figurine from Panaztepe was recovered near a hearth within the architectural space.

²³ Erkanal and Özkan 1999, 338, fig. 3.

²⁴ Baykal-Seheer and Obladen-Kauder 1996, table 113.5-11.

²⁵ Hüryılmaz 2002b, 32, 43, fig. 12; 2002a, 356, fig. 6; 357, fig. 7.

²⁶ Lamb 1936, 152, table 22:31-37, 30-28, 31-46.

²⁷ Bilgi 1986, 133, fig. 14; 2012, 159, fig. 357.

Limestone Idol

Following the discovery of two clay figurines at Panaztepe in 2023, a limestone idol was uncovered during the 2024 fieldwork. The idol was found in another space dated to the EBA 2, located in the northern part of the New Excavation Area at Panaztepe, which exhibits features of the Aegean Settlement Model (figs. 10-11). In the eastern section of the longhouse we designated as Y-016, there is a front room with at least two distinct occupational phases. Only the southern wall of the main room has been preserved to date. An interesting feature of this wall, which preserves ten courses of stones, is that it has shifted southward. This displacement is interpreted as evidence of an earthquake that occurred during the period under consideration. The idol was found in close proximity to this wall. The idol, abstractly shaped and made of limestone, has a square-shaped body form; its head is smaller than the body and has a flat top. The head is distinguished by a narrow and sharply defined neck indentation. The opposite edge of the head is broken, and the flattening on this surface suggests that the break occurred during the production phase. The idol may have been left incomplete due to a technical flaw that occurred during the production process. The square-shaped body tapers toward the base and has been relatively sharpened at the edges.

With this appearance, it falls under the category of Troy Type or 8-shaped figurines in the literature, and is classified as Type 2 in the Troy typological system.²⁸ The minor differences observed in material selection and details are interpreted as the result of local adaptations. Similar examples are known from numerous centers, particularly from Troy (Troy I-II).²⁹ The closest formal parallel is seen at Liman Tepe (table 1).³⁰ Beyond this, examples produced with the same conceptual approach are known from many other centers such as Bakla Tepe (EBA 2),³¹ Yassitepe,³² Milet,³³ Elmalı-Karataş,³⁴ Samos,³⁵ Kusura,³⁶ Küllüoba,³⁷ Aphrodisias,³⁸ Harmanören-Göndürle,³⁹ Seyitömer⁴⁰ and Tavşanlı Höyük.⁴¹ Among the associated finds are a clay spindle whorl and typical EBA 2 ceramics. Idol examples of this type have been documented in the EBA 1-3 layers at Troy and are generally recovered from within architectural contexts.⁴² Additionally, from the structure referred to as the Central Building at Liman Tepe, dated to EBA 2, from the EBA 2 layer at Bakla Tepe, within the ditch fill surrounding the EBA 1 settlement, and from Space 6 at the Yassitepe Mound, dated to EBA 1, similar examples have been recovered. At the Kusura settlement, it is dated to EBA 2, although no information

²⁸ Blegen et al. 1950, 27, fig. 127.

²⁹ Blegen et al. 1951, 48, figs. 34.405, 33.216, 33.274.

³⁰ Erkanal 1998, 383-84, fig. 2; Tuncel and Şahoǧlu 2019, 254, 257, fig. 28.7.

³¹ Özkan and Erkanal 1999, 20, fig. 19; see also Tuncel and Şahoǧlu 2019, 254, 256, figs. 28.3-6.

³² Derin 2020, 18, fig. 13.4.

³³ Kouka 2019, 243, fig. 27.1.

³⁴ Warner 1994, 90, fig. 197b; Mellink 1967, 254, fig. 15.

³⁵ Milojcic 1961, 55, 78, table 34.4.

³⁶ Lamb 1937, 30, table 6, fig. 11.7.

³⁷ Türkteki et al. 2021, 116, fig. 13.

³⁸ Joukowsky 1986, 205, fig. 199, 202, 206.

³⁹ Özsait 2003, 89, 99, fig. 7.

⁴⁰ Bilgen et al. 2015, figs. 193b, 193c. In the settlement, numerous figurines and idols of various types were recovered alongside Type 8-shaped idols.

⁴¹ Fidan et al. 2024, 408, fig. 7.

⁴² Blegen et al. 1951, 48, figs. 34.405, 33.216.

is available regarding its findspot. Additionally, examples of this type of idol were recovered from the EBA 3 layer at Küllüoba, as grave goods from the end of EBA 2 to the beginning of EBA 3 at Aphrodisias and Harmanören-Göndürle, and from a pit dated to the end of EBA 3 at Tavşanlı Höyük. The Panaztepe idol was recovered from the base of a wall within Space Y-018, belonging to the EBA 2 layer. No remains have been found to suggest that this architectural unit had a special function. When compared chronologically with similar examples, it is evident that this type of idol was in use from EBA 1 to the late phases of EBA 3. Regarding their contexts, it is understood that they have been identified in a variety of spatial settings.

Idols and Figurines in the Early Bronze Age

Figurines began to emerge across Anatolia from the Neolithic Age onward, exhibiting widespread distribution with varying densities among different settlement contexts. As the process continued, a decline is observed during the Chalcolithic Age⁴³; however, in the EBA a renewed increase in figurines and idols is evident, paralleling broader cultural and social transformations.

In the EBA, figurines were produced with flatter or more slender bodies compared to those of the Neolithic Age. It is thought that figurines of this period were produced more in human form than as representations of goddesses.⁴⁴ This can be explained by the changing social structure and interregional cultural development and interaction brought on by new dynamics.

In Anatolia, the production of idols made of stone or marble in various forms, particularly at Troy, began in EBA 1 and continued throughout the period.⁴⁵ Marble and stone idols widespread in both coastal and inland areas of Western Anatolia show a somewhat different development at Lesbos-Thermi. At this settlement, stone idols used in Levels I and II were replaced by clay figurines in Levels III and IV.⁴⁶ It is noted that the production of stone / marble idols ceased during Phase III at Thermi (ca. 2700 BC), while clay figurines appeared for the first time and were found in considerable numbers.⁴⁷ No other contemporary settlement has yielded figurines in such quantity.⁴⁸ A similar situation to that observed at Lesbos-Thermi is also seen at Yenibademli Höyük. At this site, during the EBA 2, the majority of the figurines are made of clay, while stone idols are represented by only a few examples.⁴⁹ The figurines from Panaztepe bear their closest resemblance to those from Thermi; they appear relatively naturalistic due to features such as the detailing of the arms, the occasional depiction of separate legs, as well as the inclusion of breast protrusions and eye details.

During the EBA 2, there is an observable increase in the number of figurines and idols across Anatolia. In Western Anatolia, Troy-type or figure-eight-shaped idols began to appear in EBA 1 and continued to be present through to the end of the period. This type of idol has been identified in settlements located within the area defined as the Troy-Yortan cultural

⁴³ Excavations pertaining to the Chalcolithic Age in Anatolia are limited. For this reason, the fact that it is a relatively poorly understood period represent an important issue that should not be overlooked in related studies.

⁴⁴ Aydınçın 2006, 34.

⁴⁵ Efe and Türkteki 2011.

⁴⁶ Lamb 1936, 146.

⁴⁷ Lamb 1936, 208.

⁴⁸ Philaniotou 2019, 146-47.

⁴⁹ Bülbül-Akyol 2006, 203.

region, as well as in the vicinity of Izmir.⁵⁰ These idols, one example of which was also found at Panaztepe, are small in size and highly schematic, represented solely by a head and torso. Variations can be observed in the shaping of the head and torso. The head is shaped either rounded, flat, or triangular, while the body may be round, spherical, or rectangular as seen in the Panaztepe example.

Although there is no definitive evidence regarding their origin, it has been suggested that Troy-type idols originated in Troy and Northwestern Anatolia.⁵¹ This form has been identified at numerous settlements across a wide geographical area, extending from the coastal zone of Northwestern Anatolia into the interior, and from the Eastern Aegean islands to the Cyclades and Crete. These idols, which exhibit a broad distribution with minor local adaptations and variations in detail, can be said to reflect a shared conceptual tradition.

During the EBA 3, a period marked by intensified exchange between near and distant regions and referred to as the “Anatolian Trade Network”⁵² or the “Great Caravan Route,”⁵³ marble idols continued to appear in Western Anatolia. It is understood that these idols, along with certain pottery forms of the period, extended their distribution as far as Central Anatolia. Owl-faced idols, a variation of Troy-type idols characterized by facial detailing, are also known from certain centers in Western Anatolia during this period.⁵⁴ Among these centers are settlements such as Seyitömer and Küllüoba. These idols have been uncovered in various phases of EBA 3 at Küllüoba.⁵⁵ Owl-faced idols are observed with greater frequency during EBA 3 compared to other periods.⁵⁶ These idols continued with diminishing frequency after EBA 3 and have been recovered from Panaztepe⁵⁷ and Troy⁵⁸ in the Middle Bronze Age, and from Maydos-Kilise Tepe⁵⁹ in the Late Bronze Age.

Since the beginning of the shaping of human representations for specific purposes, clay has been the primary material employed. The widespread use of clay, one of the principal raw materials, is largely due to its accessibility and ease of shaping. Throughout EBA, figurines made of clay have been recovered from across Anatolia. Differences in manufacturing techniques can be observed depending on cultural regions and local adaptations in settlements. Some researchers have drawn attention to the presence of different cultural groups in Western Anatolia during the EBA. The distribution of local ceramic production zones is particularly emphasized in explaining this diversity. In defining these cultural zones, the primary criterion has been ceramic production; however, certain architectural features as well as small finds such as figurines and idols, have also been taken into account.⁶⁰

⁵⁰ Sarı 2021, 101.

⁵¹ Philaniotou 2019, 147.

⁵² Şahoǧlu 2005, 339-40.

⁵³ Efe 2007, 49.

⁵⁴ Sarı 2021, 105-6.

⁵⁵ Efe and Türkteki 2011, 231, tables 387-89.

⁵⁶ Türkteki 2021, 136.

⁵⁷ Erkanal-Öktü and Çınardalı-Karaaslan 2012, 425; MBA 2 among the numerous finds recovered from the debris of a structure dated to this building phase, there is an example of a stone idol of the owl-faced type.

⁵⁸ Schlieman 1881, 377, fig. 205.

⁵⁹ Yılmaz 2016, 370.

⁶⁰ Sarı 2021, 97.

The clay figurines from Panaztepe exhibit affinities with those of Northwestern Anatolia and the Northeastern Aegean Islands, and similar examples, albeit in smaller numbers, can also be observed in coastal and inland sites of Western Anatolia. Throughout the EBA, this type of figurine is predominantly found in Northwestern Anatolia, the Northeastern Aegean Islands—particularly at Lesbos-Thermi—the Izmir region, and sporadically in the southern and inland areas of Western Anatolia. In addition, similar figurines have also been identified among the wide variety of figurine types discovered at İköztepe (Samsun), a site located at a greater distance, during the EBA.⁶¹

Excavations carried out over many years have demonstrated that EBA settlements in Western Anatolia underwent a cultural development shaped by their own internal dynamics. Moreover, assessments based particularly on ceramic assemblages have confirmed the existence of cultural zones within a broader regional unity. EBA ceramics from the coastal region of Western Anatolia indicate interaction with the Aegean Islands and, at times, with the inner regions of Western Anatolia. Shared cultural traits originating in the Chalcolithic Age and beginning to take form in EBA 1 continued into EBA 2, during which regional distinctions became increasingly pronounced. The similarities observed in ceramic assemblages from Western Anatolia and the Eastern Aegean Islands likely delineate a cultural framework shaped by the spheres of influence of political or ethnic groups. The elements contributing to cultural cohesion are not limited solely to ceramic groups. This cohesion is also evident in settlement patterns, architectural types, and small finds. The EBA 1 and 2 settlements at Panaztepe, revealed for the first time through their architectural remains, exhibit developments parallel to contemporary sites and contribute new insights to Western Anatolian EBA cultures. The idols and figurines described above also represent key components of this cultural coherence.

Remarks on the Purpose of the Production and Use of Figurines and Idols

Figurines and idols should be evaluated beyond their function as objects produced and used to meet everyday needs. This significant category of finds can be interpreted as an expression of the belief system, social structure, and patterns of both collective and individual behavior within a given culture. In other words, they may be understood as the material embodiment of abstract concepts. Figurines and idols, which should also be regarded as artistic creations, not only reflect the belief systems of the societies in which they were produced but also offer insights into their social and economic structures.

Various interpretations concerning the function of figurines and idols have been proposed since antiquity, and continue to be debated today, without reaching a single consensus. The most prominent among these interpretations, as previously mentioned, is that they symbolically express the belief systems of the society and represent the cult of the Mother Goddess. It has been suggested that anthropomorphic representations may have served as depictions of the invisible deity, functioning as indispensable elements of offerings or ritual practices.⁶² In general terms, although figurines representing both sexes were produced throughout different periods, it is widely held that female figurines appear in greater numbers than male representations. Attributes such as a woman's inherent capacity to bring forth life, ensure the continuity of existence, and embody fertility and productivity have undoubtedly led to her being ascribed sacred meanings within society. For a long time, and even today, female figurines have been

⁶¹ Bilgi 2012, 30.

⁶² Aydıngün 2006, 39.

interpreted as representations of the Mother Goddess, indicating a matriarchal social order and reflecting the power of the goddess in religious rituals.⁶³ Accordingly, the dominant view is that figurines and idols were generally associated with belief systems and were used as ritual objects in religious practices.⁶⁴ For this reason, it is widely accepted that figurines and idols were objects used in religious rituals associated with belief systems and reflected a matriarchal social structure. However, although female figurines are more prevalent than other forms, it is not entirely clear whether some forms represent variations of the female body or directly symbolize a phallic image.⁶⁵ Therefore, the question of whether the female and male figurines held equal significance within society remains a matter of debate. In recent years, studies conducted especially at Neolithic settlements have prompted a reevaluation of the concept of gender in figurines. For instance, the abundance of phallic depictions at centers such as Göbekli Tepe and Karahan Tepe, and the fact that female representations comprise less than 5% of the entire figurine assemblage at Çatalhöyük, have highlighted the need to reconsider long-standing interpretations.⁶⁶

From another perspective, figurines are also interpreted as representations of status and social roles within the society. However, clear evidence demonstrating status differences based on gender has not yet been identified.⁶⁷ Assertions suggesting that one gender held a more valued position within society than the other also remain open to debate.

According to the find contexts of the figurines, one of the interpretations regarding their purpose of use is their association with household hearths, as they are frequently found near fireplaces, thus linking them to domestic prosperity. Another interpretation suggests that they were used as personal protective items, possibly as amulets against evil, or served as intermediary objects. It is believed that figurines offered as votive objects or symbolic sacrifices to divine powers may have been deliberately broken or discarded after fulfilling their purpose.⁶⁸ In relation to intentional breakage, interpretations based on the Demircihüyük examples suggest that the deliberate breaking of the head was associated with the creation myths of the period.⁶⁹ At the same time, this phenomenon corresponds to the ancestor cult or skull cult observed in burial practices at various Neolithic settlements.⁷⁰ The head portion of Figurine No. 1 from Panaztepe was also recovered in a broken state. Whether this artifact was deliberately broken and discarded after fulfilling its function or whether it should be interpreted within the context of the skull cult remains open to scholarly debate.

Less likely, some interpretations suggest that they may have been produced simply as toys or self-representations. From another perspective, it has been suggested that the different variations of figurines may reflect the various stages of human life.⁷¹ As can be understood from the brief discussion above regarding the function of figurines, it is possible to state that they were

⁶³ For interpretations and evaluations concerning the ratio of female and male representations and their implications for reconstructing of social structure during the Neolithic Age, see Atakuman 2019, 86-8.

⁶⁴ Bilgi 2012, 174.

⁶⁵ Atakuman 2017, 87-8.

⁶⁶ Atakuman 2017, 87.

⁶⁷ Atakuman 2017, 87-8.

⁶⁸ Hodder 2006a, 9.

⁶⁹ Atakuman 2019, 89.

⁷⁰ Atakuman 2019, 89.

⁷¹ Atakuman 2019, 85.

not produced with a single purpose in mind, but were used for different functions depending on the context in which they were found. Therefore, they should be evaluated according to the context of the locations in which they were discovered.⁷² Although figurines or idols are generally found inside houses, they may also occasionally be encountered in streets or open spaces. One of the best-documented centers for this phenomenon is Troy. In this settlement, figurines have been discovered both inside houses and in the streets outside them; they are more frequently found in streets outside houses that contain figurines.⁷³ At Panaztepe, one of the clay figurines (fig. 2) was found inside the house, while the other was found in the street area immediately adjacent to the house, near a wall. What is particularly noteworthy in this case is that the Panaztepe figurine appears to have been broken during the period of its use, suggesting that it may have been deliberately broken and discarded after fulfilling its function or purpose.

It has been observed that figurines found inside houses were generally recovered from areas near the hearths.⁷⁴ It is difficult to determine whether this is a coincidental or deliberate situation. In order to interpret this accurately, it depends on various factors, such as the need to evaluate the context of the artifact with all related data and to investigate it in a broader area where all houses of the settlement have been excavated. As previously mentioned, the second of the clay figurines found inside the house at Panaztepe was recovered from immediately beside the hearth. However, the entire house has not yet been excavated. Therefore, in order to properly interpret the bronze chisel and bone tool found together with the figurine, it is crucial that the entire space be fully excavated. Moreover, the fact that fragments of hearth planks were identified throughout the excavated portion of the structure supports the interpretations regarding the hearth-figurine / idol context. In this respect, it may be inferred that such findings symbolized the desire for productive, prosperous activities.

Another context in which such artifacts have been found is within sacred structures that are imbued with religious or spiritual meaning. Kusura is one of the best examples of this.⁷⁵ This group of artifacts has also been encountered in the sacred or cultic structures of settlements such as Yassitepe⁷⁶ and Beycesultan.⁷⁷ Figurines have also been found in graves, apart from structures identified as temples. It is also difficult to determine whether the artifacts found in graves were intended to accompany the deceased or were merely personal belongings.

Another context in which figurines and idols have been recovered is refuse pits or those of a ritual character. In ritual pits, along with other finds, idols or figurines are known from many sites across Anatolia,⁷⁸ the Aegean world,⁷⁹ and the Balkans.⁸⁰ Among the proposed

⁷² Unfortunately, there is a significant lack of information on this subject. The limited data available in publications related to earlier excavations, the discovery of these finds through surface surveys, or their acquisition via illicit means complicate our ability to comprehend the contextual associations of many figurines and idols, and hinders meaningful comparative analysis.

⁷³ Marangou 1996, 660.

⁷⁴ Marangou 1996, 660, 663.

⁷⁵ Marangou 1996, 660.

⁷⁶ Derin 2021, 254.

⁷⁷ Lloyd and Mellaart 1962, 269.

⁷⁸ Gündoğan 2024a, 110.

⁷⁹ Renfrew et al. 2012, 145.

⁸⁰ Greenfield and Jongsma-Greenfield 2018, 118-19.

interpretations is the view that figurines or idols found in refuse pits or streets, due to their small size, may have been used for a short period and discarded after fulfilling their function.⁸¹

Despite minor variations in local adaptations, the presence of these objects—shaped in a similar fashion and sharing common features—across a wide geographical distribution network indicates interaction in terms of shared knowledge, ideas, and ideology during their production. The production of identical or similar types of figurines across a broad geographical area, although it complicates the understanding of their origins, is one of the key indicators of intercultural interaction.

In Western Anatolia, the EBA reveals that similarities in settlement patterns, architectural forms, and ceramic traditions are also paralleled in the development of figurine and idol production, highlighting the degree of cultural interaction.

Conclusion

The EBA in Western Anatolia reveals parallel developments in settlement layout, architectural types, and ceramic traditions among contemporary centers, as well as in the production of figurines and idols, thereby demonstrating the extent of cultural interactions. The interactions between regions and cultures—whose boundaries cannot be precisely defined—appear to have facilitated the adoption of shared or similar elements within contemporary settlements. Such interaction extended beyond the exchange of raw material, encompassing both material culture and social or ideological contexts as evidenced by the finds. The widespread distribution of these objects—shaped in similar ways despite minor local adaptations and displaying shared features—points to interaction in terms of shared ideas and ideologies, possibly suggesting a common cognitive framework in their production.

One of the ongoing debates concerns the origins of figurines. Based on currently available data, it remains difficult to determine the precise origins of figurines and idols. Some scholars propose that the typological roots of Western Anatolian figurines may be linked to those observed in the Aegean and Balkan regions during the final phases of the Chalcolithic Age. However, the parallels drawn from figurines recovered in Neolithic–Chalcolithic layers of Anatolia and Mesopotamia suggest that arguments linking their origins to the Aegean and the Balkans may lack firm foundation.⁸²

Although the question of origin remains debatable, similar elements that allow for comparative analysis are crucial for understanding interregional interaction. In this respect, each new piece of data contributes momentum to our understanding of the EBA in Western Anatolia when integrated with existing knowledge. Figurines and idols, as highly specific categories of finds, represent valuable materials for comprehensively elucidating the period. In this context, the idols and figurines from Panaztepe emerge as key material evidence from a settlement that will significantly contribute to the interpretation and understanding of the period. Undoubtedly, further research into each new site and excavation area from this period will provide new data and facilitate the development of fresh perspectives.

⁸¹ Hodder 2006b, 194.

⁸² Atakuman 2019, 83.

Catalog

Figurine 1: (figs. 5-6).

Excavation Inv. no. PZ 2023/1
Findspot: Street
Material: Clay
Height: 8.4 cm
Width: 4.2 cm
Thickness: 1.6 cm
Color: 7.5 YR 6/4 (light brown), 7.5 YR 4/1 (dark gray)
Period: Beginning of EBA 2

Figurine 2: (figs. 7-8).

Excavation Inv. no. PZ 2023/27
Findspot: Y-016 House
Material: Clay
Height: 5.35 cm
Width: 3.2 cm, including arms: 6.4 cm
Thickness: Body: 1.9 cm, including breasts: 2.3 cm
Color: 7.5 YR 5/3 (brown), 7.5 YR 2.5/1 (black)
Period: Beginning of EBA 2.

Idol: (figs. 9-10).

Excavation Inv. no. PZ 2024/04
Findspot: Y-018 House
Material: Limestone.
Height: 4.7 cm.
Width: 3.2 cm.
Thickness: 0.5 cm.
Color: White.
Period: Beginning of EBA 2.

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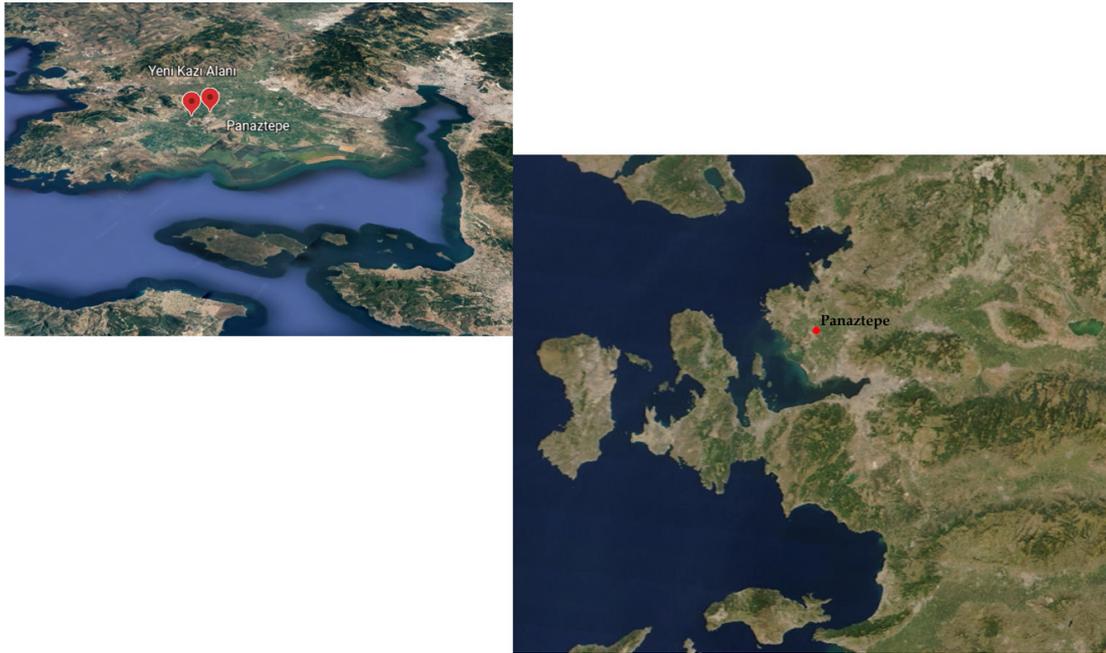


FIG. 1 Location of Panaztepe (Panaztepe Excavation Archive).



FIG. 2 The Acropolis of Panaztepe and other excavated areas (Panaztepe Excavation Archive).



FIG. 3 The location of the Acropolis and the New Excavation Area at Panaztepe (Panaztepe Excavation Archive).



FIG. 4 Street and architectural remains of Panaztepe dating to the beginning of the Early Bronze Age II (Aegean Settlement Model), and the contexts in which the idol and figurines were found.

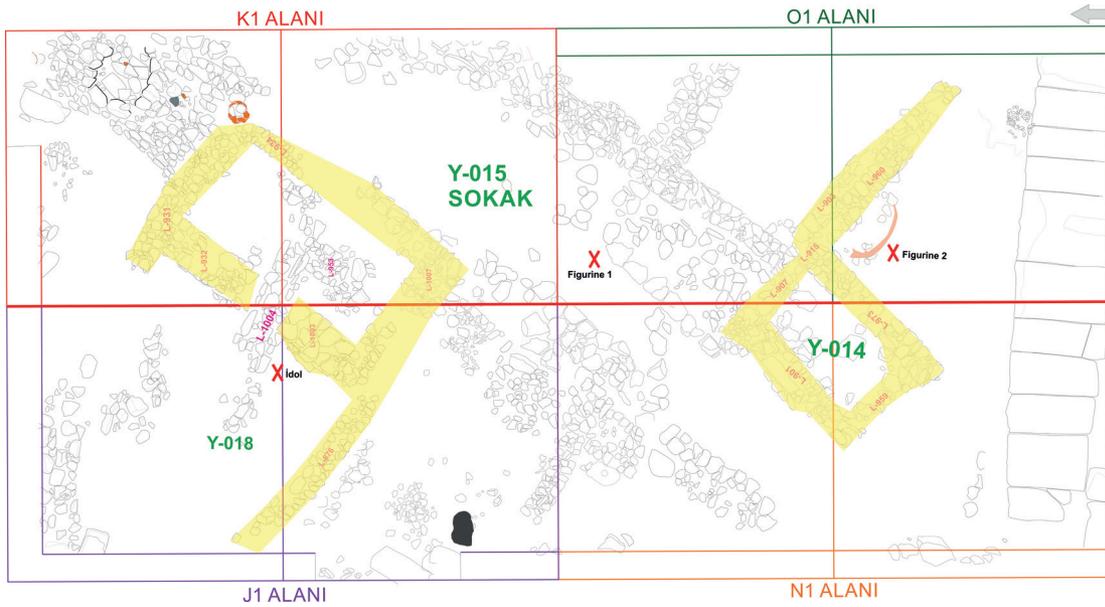


FIG. 5 Early Bronze Age II Settlement Pattern and architectural contexts of the finds.



FIG. 6 Clay figurine no. 1 grinding stone, bone awl, and pottery sherds found in Street context (Panaztepe Excavation Archive).



FIG. 7 Different views of figurine no. 1 (Panaztepe Excavation Archive).



FIG. 8 Architectural context of figurine no. 2, and bone tool, bronze chisel and pottery sherds (Panaztepe Excavation Archive).



FIG. 9 Front, side, and back views of figurine no. 2 (Panaztepe Excavation Archive).

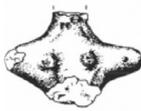


FIG. 10 Context of the limestone idol, ceramics, spindle whorls, and weights (Panaztepe Excavation Archive).



FIG. 11 Front and back views of the limestone idol (Panaztepe Excavation Archive).

TABLE 1

| | Panaztepe | Yenibademli Höyük | Kusura | Lesbos-Thermi | İkiztepe | Troya | |
|-------------------|--|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| Figurine 1 |  EBA II |  EBA |  EBA II-III |  EBA II | | | |
| Figurine 2 |  EBA II |  EBA II | |  EBA II |  EBA II | | |
| Idol |  EBA II | |  EBA II | | |  EBA II | |
| | | | | | |  EBA II | |

| Liman Tepe | Bakla Tepe | Yassitepe | Demircihöyük | Küllüoba | Seytömer | Samos-Heraion |
|---|---|--|---|--|---|--|
| |  <p>EBA I</p> | |  <p>EBA II</p> | |  <p>EBA III</p> | |
| | | |  <p>EBA II</p> | | | |
|  <p>EBA II</p> |  <p>EBA II</p> |  <p>EBA I</p> | |  <p>EBA III</p> |  <p>EBA III</p> |  <p>EBA</p> |
|  <p>EBA II</p> |  <p>EBA II</p> | | | | | |

