Beyond Ethnicity: The Overlooked Diversity of Group Identities

Naoíse Mac Sweeney

Fitzwilliam College, University of Cambridge, Storey's Way, Cambridge CB3 0DG, UK
E-mail: nm277@cam.ac.uk

Abstract

This article challenges the current tendency in archaeology to assume an ethnic basis for group identity. Archaeology has rehabilitated the concept of ethnicity over the last decade, embracing a theoretically sensitive model of it as both socially constructed and socially constructing, as flexible, embodied and hybridised. The success of this model has been such that group identities are often assumed to be ethnic without investigation. Group identity, however, can relate to many types of perceived commonality and we must learn to look beyond ethnicity, viewing it as only one amongst many potentially salient social factors. This article advocates the active investigation of group identity and the complex social rationales that lie behind it. It takes as a case study the site of Beycesultan in western Anatolia, illustrating the dynamism of group identities in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages, and highlighting how group identity crystallised only at particular historical moments and around social rationales which were not primarily ethnic.

Introduction

Western Anatolia is a place 'in-between'. Historians and archaeologists alike characterise the region as being caught at the interface between east and west, Europe and Asia, the Greek world and the Orient. The societies that lived here are usually considered to be mixed and peripheral, and are often discussed in terms of hybridity and cultural encounter. This is especially true of the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages (hereafter LBA and EIA), when it is assumed that the region was pulled between two poles: the Mycenaean/ Greek Aegean to the west, and the Hittite/ Phrygian states of central Anatolia to the east (e.g. Bryce 2006: 77-86; Macqueen 1999: 39; Marchese 1986: 24; Mee 1998; Niemeier

1999). In general, LBA-EIA western Anatolia is seen as a patchwork of diverse but distinct groups, each with an ethno-cultural identity which can be plotted along a sliding scale somewhere between 'Greek' and 'Near Eastern'. This perspective does not take into account the diverse range of identities which these groups potentially may have had, nor does it consider that what initially appear to be social units may not have had any conscious group identity at all. The case of western Anatolia therefore highlights a serious problem with the way that archaeological theory currently approaches the issue of group identity—its narrow focus on ethnicity.

The study of past ethnicities is one of the pillars of contemporary theoretical archaeology, and a general consensus has been reached

concerning how ethnicity should be defined and approached (Diaz-Andreu *et al.* 2005; Gamble 2001; Insoll 2006). It is now widely accepted that ethnicity is related to notions of putative descent rather than 'facts' of biological descent; that it is actively constructed rather than naturally 'given', flexible rather than fixed, disparate rather than monolithic. This dynamic way of thinking about ethnicity has proved extremely fruitful for archaeology, and has been the basis for many important and innovative studies over the last decade (e.g. Dusinberre 2003; James 2001; van Dommelen 1998; 2002).

The current approach has proved so successful that ethnicity now dominates much thinking about group identity in archaeology. Just as rank and gender have become the most commonly cited forms of identity dividing social groups, ethnicity is the most frequently discussed form of identity that pulls social groups together (Diaz-Andreu *et al.* 2005: 6; Insoll 2006: 2). In fact, ethnicity has become such a compelling interpretive paradigm that recent overviews of archaeological theory have explicitly stated that other types of group identity *should* be considered under its broad banner (Hodos 2006: 17; Jones 2006: 44; Lucy 2005: 101; Meskell 2006: 25). At the moment, therefore, one sees a trend in archaeology whereby group identities are often assumed to be ethnic, even if there is no specific evidence to suggest this (e.g. Barber 1999; Bryce 1989; Marcus 2000). The case of western Anatolia is one example where this tendency is particularly common, but this is a trend that has also been identified and critiqued more broadly (Broodbank 2004; Shanks and Tilley 1987: 93-94).

The widespread prevalence of this ethnic assumption is unjustified, given comparanda from modern and historical societies. Contemporary experience tells us that groups can rally around an almost infinite range of factors, from professional occupation to political persuasion, from sporting allegiance to religious conviction, from sexuality to class. In short, ethnicity does not necessarily have to be invoked for a group identity to form. In archaeology, however, this variety of differing identities has been largely overlooked. It seems that while the revival of ethnicity in archaeology has clearly been a valuable development in itself, it may well have dampened our receptivity to other types of group identity.

In this study, I argue that it is not satisfactory simply to assume that group identities are ethnic in nature. Instead, we should set out to investigate the conceptual basis for each specific group identity, determining whether this might be religious, linguistic, ethnic or related to any other type of social criteria. In the following section, I examine the reasons why ethnicity has thus far eclipsed the study of other forms of group identity in archaeology, and then explore the diverse nature of group identities more generally and the way in which they are constructed. I then return to the case of LBA-EIA western Anatolia, exploring the fluid and changeable nature of group identities at the site of Beycesultan, and considering the diverse social rationales which may have informed them.

Beyond Ethnicity—Group Identities

Ethnicity and Archaeology

Ethnicity can be defined as a form of group identity where membership is determined by putative kinship and beliefs about shared descent. While not all definitions include this as an essential criterion, those which exclude it are unhelpfully vague, and fail to distinguish between ethnicity and other forms of group identity (Emberling 1997: 302-303; Hall 1997: 26-27). Given this basic definition, it is generally agreed that ethnicity is both constructed through the active use of cultural traits, and influenced by the normative effects of culture on the individual (Eriksen 1993;

Jones 1997; Weber 1978). This conception of ethnicity was developed in the late twentieth century as part of a wider movement in the social sciences that viewed identities as social constructs, and is now common across a wide range of disciplines, including archaeology (Jones 1997), anthropology (Eriksen 1993), literary studies (Bhabha 1994) and history (Pohl and Reimitz 1998).

As already noted, in archaeology it is frequently presumed that group identities are formed on a primarily ethnic basis. This assumption can be partly explained by the success of the archaeology of ethnicity as an interpretive model. The roots of this assumption, however, stretch further back into disciplinary history. Well before a coherent archaeology of ethnicity emerged, the term 'ethnicity' was explicitly being used as a general catch-all expression for a wide range of group identities articulated in material culture (Hegmon 1992: 527; Shennan 1989: 14; Sterner 1989). At the most basic level, this recurring tendency to privilege ethnicity over other forms of social identity stems from the fundamental sociological models espoused by archaeologists and other social scientists over the last two centuries (Smith 2006).

Until the mid-twentieth century a modernist model dominated social thinking, rooted in the ideas of race (Malik 1996), nation (Hobsbawm 1990) and environmental determinism (Peet 1985). The model promoted a view of human societies as naturally divided by biological race, with each racial group allotted a different primordial 'homeland'. The prevailing social thought of the time therefore asserted that identities of descent and geographical territories should map onto each other in a direct one-to-one relationship. These concepts were at their most influential during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when archaeology was first emerging, and so this geo-ethnic model of human societies made a deep imprint in the discipline

as part of the 'culture-historical' school (Diaz-Andreu 2007; Jones 1997; Trigger 1989; Watkins 2008).

This social paradigm was undermined in the mid- to late twentieth century, when issues of self-definition, identity and social meaning came to the fore. While these new models still divided human populations into descent-based units, they no longer presumed that descent was a natural 'given' but instead viewed it as socially constructed (Anderson 1983; Bhabha 1990). Homelands became viewed less as bounded geographical territories and more as imagined space (Appadurai 1996; Smith 1999). Cultural traits came to be seen as the means through which identities are constantly made and remade, and equally as the socialising influences acting upon the individual *habitus* (Bourdieu 1977). Overall, ethnicity came to be viewed as hybridised, fragmented, and dynamic, gaining meaning through encounter with others and relating flexibly to real and imagined space. This approach suggests that identities of place and descent are linked in a series of flexible many-to-many relationships, rather than in a simple one-to-one correlation. Archaeology caught up with these developments in social theory relatively late. It was not until 1997 that several important works were published which applied contemporary theory to the ancient world (e.g. Jones 1997; Emberling 1997; Hall 1997). Following on from these, the last decade has seen an exciting revival of ethnicity in archaeology, with much valuable and groundbreaking work being done (see above).

Within the western academic tradition, therefore, there is a deep-rooted sense of a connection between descent-based social units and geographic space. This is particularly true of archaeology, because it is by nature a spatial discipline. In archaeology therefore, there is a recurring tendency to assume the existence of a group identity from spatial variations in material culture, to presuppose

an ethnic basis for it, and then to use this as a starting position from which to investigate the ethnic dynamics of the past. There are two serious problems with this: first, inferring the existence of a conscious group identity from geographic clusters of similar cultural traits and, secondly, assuming this group identity relates to putative descent and ethnicity.

A new approach is needed to broaden this focus, allowing a wider variety of group identities to be explored through the archaeological record. Such an approach must establish first whether or not there is a conscious sense of collective identity within a given social group, and only then go on to consider what the basis for this sense of collectivity might be. In many archaeological studies of ethnicity, these two distinct operations—determining the existence of a group identity and interpreting its social meaning—are conflated into a single process. This is clearly not a problem in instances where an ethnic consciousness is already attested in texts, ethnography or through other media. In many archaeological contexts, however, no such ethnic consciousness can be presumed from the outset. In these cases, the two processes should be separated, and the social meaning of a group identity should only be interpreted after its presence has been properly established. It is time to unpack the idea of group identities and consider the full range of their overlooked diversity.

By explicitly considering group identity rather than ethnicity, the central focus of study necessarily shifts, moving from one particular type of social reasoning that can offer a basis for group identity to the dynamics of group identity itself. A group identity approach must take as its starting point the sense of collective 'us' which is the essential criterion for group identity, addressing the psychological and social processes involved in the ongoing creation and recreation of this sense of solidarity. Only once this is established can we turn our attention to the various social factors (of which ethnicity is one) that may inform group identity.

Group Identities and Archaeology

The essential logic of a group identity lies in a collective 'us-ness' in relation to or versus 'them' (Barth 1969; Buber 1947; Cohen 2002). This sense of communal 'us' crystallises around some kind of perceived commonality—something that 'we' share in common but which 'they' do not (Cohen 1985: 116). This perceived commonality is the 'social rationale' of group identity; it is the ideology on which group belonging is based, the social logic that determines membership or exclusion. It is therefore simultaneously inward- and outward-looking, concerned with both the commonality between group members and with their differences from non-members. Although the ideas of 'them' and 'us' are essentially two sides of the same coin, to date more scholarly attention has been paid to the former rather than the latter (e.g. Cohen 2000). There have been some moves towards correcting this imbalance in anthropology and sociology (Jenkins 2004: 108), yet the archaeological focus remains firmly on issues of boundary, distinction, and the sense of 'them' rather than the sense of 'us' (Knapp 2008: 34-35).

In archaeology recent theoretical trends have concentrated on identities that stress differentiation, including rank, gender, sexuality and status (e.g. Diaz-Andreu *et al.* 2005; Gamble 2007; Insoll 2006). The concepts of agency and phenomenology have contributed greatly to this discussion, highlighting in particular the ways in which personhood and the individual are constructed through social practice (Dobres and Robb 2000; Fowler 2004; Knapp and van Dommelen 2008; Tilley 1994). This work highlights how social identities can act to separate and distinguish, teasing out the way differences between people can be played up. In such cases, these social identities do not necessarily require any sense of collective 'us'

to be actively stressed, as they can be espoused singularly by individuals. The main determinant of identity here is the negotiation of difference, and the sense of 'them'.

Group identity, in contrast, necessarily involves a set of people, and cannot be espoused by lone individuals. It is a form of social identity that emphasises a sense of togetherness just as much as a sense of distinction, that relies on a feeling of 'us' just as much as a feeling of 'them'. While some scholars have used 'social identity' to refer to this sense of collective 'us', I would argue that this term is too broad. Frequently it is used to refer to the composite identities attached to individuals that incorporate diverse factors such as gender, status and ethnicity at the same time. I therefore use the term 'group identity' here. Investigating group identities requires an understanding of how broader social identities can be used to unite people, and how social differences can be played down strategically to create this sense of solidarity. Such collective identities are flexible and often fleeting social constructs; they become salient in specific historical situations for a specific set of social reasons. The moments in time at which a group identity crystallises, and then subsequently becomes less salient, are therefore of crucial interest. When and why does the idea of the group as a corporate whole come to the fore over the various different forms of identity that intersect it, such as rank, gender or age? What kind of circumstances lead to ideologies of communal togetherness trumping those of internal social division? And in what situations do individual identities and the desire for social differentiation return to being more salient than communal group identity?

Far from assuming the non-existence of individual identities and social differentiation, such an approach actively questions how and why these identities can be temporarily subsumed beneath a wider sense of communal togetherness. It also accepts that group iden-

tity can crystallise around a broad range of different social rationales. Ethnicity, religious inclination, political preference, economic capacity, linguistic similarity, occupational activity, or even a combination of these factors may be relevant. The potential diversity of group identities is almost infinite.

Investigating this diversity in the archaeological record presents some inevitable problems. A sense of collective identity does not automatically arise from the experience of kinship, co-residence, or frequent social interaction. Instead it is constructed in the dialogue between social practice and social experience. The idea of identity as a social construct has been discussed widely elsewhere (e.g. Barth 1969; Canuto and Yaeger 2000; Cohen 1985; Diaz-Andreu *et al.* 2005; Jones 1997; Knapp and van Dommelen 2008), and will not be treated in detail here.

Group identity (like other forms of social identity) is therefore a form of ideology that must be actively created, negotiated and ascribed to through social practice. Such practices both act to produce and simultaneously are the products of a sense of 'us', and it is only through the archaeological traces of these practices that a collective identity can be inferred. What Yaeger (2000: 125) calls 'practices of affiliation', however, can take many varied forms and can have many different levels of archaeological perceptibility. At one end of the scale, textual or epigraphic evidence sometimes preserves explicit verbal statements of group unity, as in the classical Greek world (Hall 1997). Slightly less easy to interpret is the evidence for highly symbolic, large-scale group activities, which can serve to promote a sense of corporate belonging through participation in socially significant events such as religious ritual or feasting (Wright 1994: 61; DeMarrais *et al.* 1996: 31). Harder again to unravel is the use of linguistic or material culture styles within and between groups. Such styles, when deliber-

ately deployed in specific social situations, can act as visual symbols marking the commonality between group members and articulating their difference from outsiders (Bennet and Davis 1999; Terrell 2001).

The precise form that such practices take necessarily varies with the needs and nature of the group in question. To promote the ideology of shared belonging, such practices must emphasise the social rationale of group identity, accentuating whatever perceived commonality lies at its root, and elevating it above the other social factors that might otherwise work to differentiate between members of the group. Investigating group identity, then, involves a close examination of 'practices of affiliation'. Only from these can we infer a conscious group identity, and only from these can we determine the social rationale that underpinned this identity. Adopting this approach avoids the current problem where group identities are unthinkingly ascribed to patterns in material culture, and where ethnicity is assumed to lie

at their root. As mentioned above, this problem is particularly notable in the case of LBA-EIA western Anatolia, where sites are often assigned to positions along a Greek-Oriental scale of ethnic identity. Western Anatolia is therefore an especially apt case from which to consider the both the changeability and the diversity of group identities.

Group Identities at Beycesultan in Western Anatolia

Beycesultan and Western Anatolia
LBA-EIA western Anatolia was populated by diverse, interrelated, and constantly shifting groups. Political groups made and broke alliances, ethnic groups expanded and contracted, and elite groups rose and fell. In contemporary Hittite documents, the region is portrayed as a fluid patchwork of independent polities, engaged in complex and ever-changing networks of trade, communication and diplomacy (Beckman 1996; Bryce 2003; 2006;

Figure 1.   Map of Anatolia and the Aegean.

Figure 2. Beycesultan viewed from the south.

Heinhold Kramer 1977; Hawkins 1998). The archaeological record largely supports this picture, as both material culture styles and cultural practices show dense micro-regional patterning (Basedow 2002; Bayne 2000; Mee 1998; Mountjoy 1998). Despite the conventional view that western Anatolia was caught between the Greek world and the Near East (see above), it seems that the politics of group identity was both complex and nuanced.

Against this colourful backdrop, the site of Beycesultan emerges as an independent and dynamic settlement, with a population that coalesced around various group identities at different times. The site is located on the Upper Maeander river valley along a major route between the Aegean coast and the central Anatolian plateau (Figure 1), in the midst of a rich archaeological landscape (Abay and Dedeoğlu 2007). Between 1954 and 1959, Beycesultan's twin mounds (*höyük*) were excavated to reveal a complex urban centre stretching back to the Chalcolithic period, where the LBA and EIA are represented by four architectural levels—Levels III, II, Ib and Ia (Figures 2 and 3). Recording conventions of the time meant that only a selection of the finds from these levels was documented. This selection was designed to include the full

range of material found rather than preserving relative quantities, and to focus primarily on the more eye-catching of the small finds and fine ware ceramics (Lloyd 1955; David and Lisa French pers. comm.). This study therefore relies heavily on unpublished material in the form of archived documents and finds in museum storage (see acknowledgments). Fortunately, the excavators' selection biases were constant in all phases. This permits comparison between different levels and an exploration of change over time, but not a full quantitative analysis of the assemblages.

In the following section, I shall discuss the four LBA-EIA levels in order, examining each for evidence of a conscious sense of collective group identity, and considering this evidence in its wider social and historical context to make inferences about the nature of any group identity identified.

Level III: The Late Bronze Age
The LBA at Beycesultan was a period of stability and prosperity, with a strong centralised authority at the site that organised central urban planning, and with extensive external contacts that brought in imports from across the eastern Mediterranean (Figure 4; Lloyd 1972; Mellaart and Murray 1995). There

Figure 3. Site plan of the 1954–59 Beycesultan excavations (Lloyd 1972, reproduced with the kind permission of the BIAA).

Figure 4. Plan of east mound Level III Beycesultan, adapted from Lloyd 1972.

is some evidence for deliberate practices of group affiliation at Beycesultan, especially in the form of communal dining.

Commensality can be inferred for two reasons. First, fine ware dining vessels constitute a conspicuously large proportion of the overall ceramic assemblage recovered (Table 1). Even allowing for the bias in recording, the ceramics from this phase include an unusually large number of shapes associated with drinking, serving and pouring. Secondly, these dining vessels were found concentrated in specific areas within the site, implying the substantial scale of the dining group. Most notably, almost half of all dining vessels were found within one of the six structures excavated, and in some of the structures no dining shapes at all were recorded (Table 2). Taken together, these two factors suggest that feasting or at least commensality was practiced in LBA Beycesultan.

Feasting, however, offers a potential venue not only for the expression of group solidarity but also for the competitive articulation of

Function	Level III		Level II		Level Ib		Level Ia	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Dining	111	87.4	158	71.2	108	78.8	38	77.6
Of which:								
service	44	34.6	51	23.0	55	40.1	23	46.9
comm. serv.	20	15.7	33	14.9	14	10.2	4	8.2
drinking	24	18.9	34	15.3	22	16.1	5	10.2
pouring	23	18.1	40	18.0	17	12.4	6	12.2
Storage	9	7.1	43	19.3	13	9.5	4	8.2
Of which:								
small	2	1.6	1	0.5	8	5.8	3	6.1
large scale	7	5.5	30	13.5	3	2.2	1	2.0
uncertain	-	-	13	5.9	2	1.5	-	-
Cooking	5	3.9	19	8.6	9	6.6	1	2.0
Ritual	1	0.8	-	-	2	1.5	1	2.0
Unclear	1	0.8	2	0.9	5	3.6	5	10.2
TOTAL	127	100%	222	100%	137	1000%	49	100%

Table 1.   Ceramic vessels by functional category.

individual identities (Dietler 1990; Treherne 1995). In this case, however, it appears that group solidarity rather than differentiation was emphasised. This is suggested by the high level of homogeneity within the dining assemblage, which not only conforms to a strictly standardised set of shapes (Figure 5; Mellaart and Murray 1995) but also to a very narrow range of decorative styles. Nearly 75% of all fine wares from this phase make use of warm-coloured decorative schemes (Types C1 and C2, see Table 3). It therefore seems that in LBA Beycesultan commensality brought together groups of people and stressed a sense of collective 'us' through standardised and homogeneous material culture features. In this way, the differences between group members would have been played down, and a sense of cohesion between them played up.

Thus we could argue that evidence exists at Beycesultan for some form of conscious group identity. Nonetheless there are also signs of social differentiation at the site, indicating that such a group identity was not open to all. A shrine building was in use during this period, which implies exclusivity in both its small size

Level III Structures	# of vessels	% of vessels
Structure A	2	1.8
Structure B	1	0.9
Structure C	28	25.2
Structure D	48	43.2
Structure E	0	0
Structure F	0	0
Not assoc. with any structure	32	28.8
TOTAL	111	99.9%

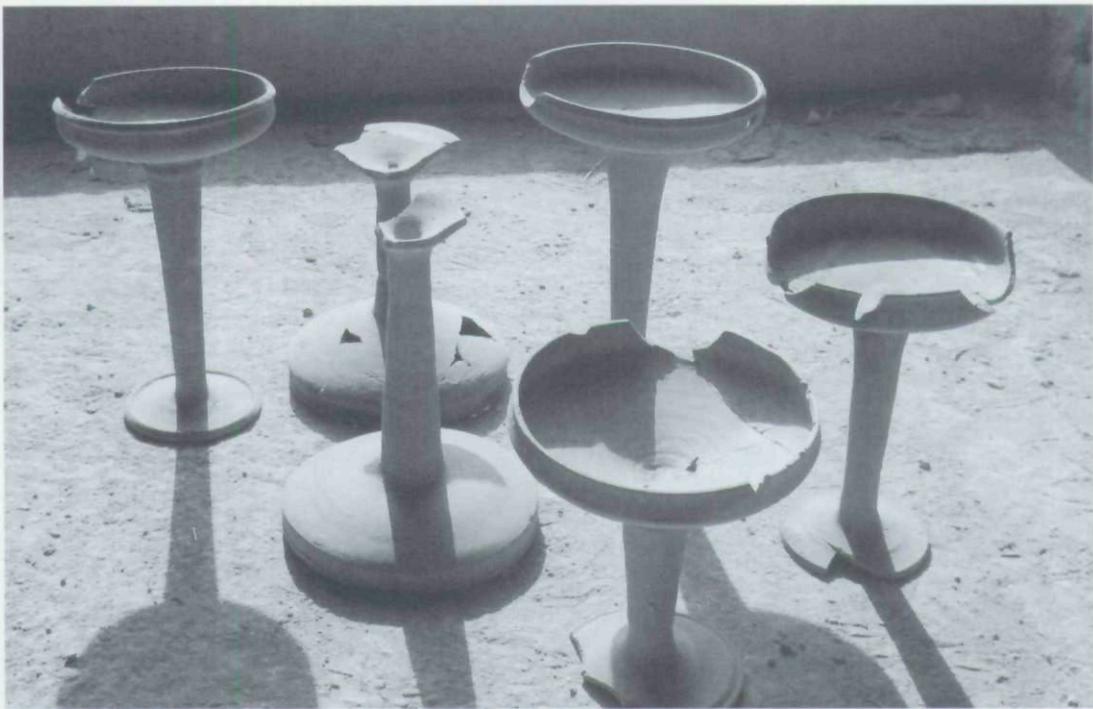**Table 2.**   Level III dining vessels by excavated structure.

Figure 5.   Collection of drinking vessels from Level III Beycesultan.

and narrow access route (Lloyd 1972). In addition, while the concentration of dining vessels point to commensality, the absolute number involved does not indicate that this commensality included the entire population of the site. It therefore seems that the group identity evident at LBA Beycesultan relates to an elite group, which demarcated itself from others through exclusive ritual practice and communal dining, and articulated an ideology of similarity between group members by encouraging a high degree of standardisation in the material culture used in these activities. It is also significant that the standardised material culture favoured by the group only used characteristically local styles, despite the presence at the site of several external pottery styles, including Mycenaean (Mellaart and Murray 1995). This situation suggests a deliberate rejection of external stylistic influences, and a strong identification with the immediate local area—the Upper Maeander river valley.

Such a phenomenon should be seen in its wider historical context. During the early years of the thirteenth century BC and around the time of the construction of Level III, parts of western Anatolia formed a political and military alliance known as the *Arzawa* confederacy (Figure 6). The Hittite king Mursili II attacked this alliance and subsumed it into the Hittite sphere as several separate vassal states (Beckman 1996: nos. 10-12). Although official Hittite accounts of Mursili's '*Arzawa* campaigns' cannot be taken at face value because they are pieces of imperial rhetoric, it seems that there was some Hittite military intervention around this time, and that afterwards several western Anatolian polities did enter into official alliances with the Hittite Empire. Hawkins (1998) has convincingly argued that the Upper Maeander region can be identified with one of these allied polities, *Kuwaliya*. While there is no certain way of confirming this argument, it is highly likely that Beycesultan, situated on a route between

Type	Level III		Level II		Level Ib		Level Ia	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
A1	4	3.1	17	7.7	15	10.9	-	-
A2	16	12.6	55	24.8	8	5.8	-	-
B1	-	-	-	-	5	3.6	1	2.0
B2	1	0.8	1	0.5	4	2.9	1	2.0
C1	72	56.7	52	23.4	13	9.5	15	30.6
C2	24	18.9	31	14.0	34	24.8	21	42.9
D	-	-	12	5.4	19	13.9	1	2.0
E	-	-	-	-	3	2.2	6	12.2
F	1	0.8	26	11.7	10	7.3	-	-
G	1	0.8	-	-	-	-	-	-
H	5	3.9	16	7.2	18	13.1	3	6.1
X	3	2.4	12	5.4	8	5.8	1	2.0
TOTAL	127	100%	222	100.1%	127	99.9%	49	99.9%

Key: A1: Silver and gold lustrous slipped wares; A2: Coppery-red lustrous slipped wares; B1: Linear painted decoration on a lustrous surface; B2: Linear painted decoration on a matt surface; C1: Warm-coloured burnished wares; C2: Warm-coloured slipped wares; D: Grey and black wares; E: White and pale-slipped wares; F: Plastic decoration or incision; G: Mycenaean; H: Undecorated; X: Unknown decoration.

Table 3. Ceramic vessels by decorative type.

the central Anatolian plateau and the Aegean coast, would have been one of the western Anatolian communities that now came under Hittite influence.

It is significant that at this time an elite group at Beycesultan was emphasising its internal cohesion and collective identity, and rejecting external influences in order to anchor this collective identity in the immediate locale. Although it is likely that Beycesultan came under Hittite political influence, Hittite material culture is almost unknown at Beycesultan. The Hittite language of power—the artistic motifs, visual styles and cult practices used in the imperial heartland on the Anatolian plateau—were adopted enthusiastically in southeast Anatolia and the Amuq as convenient expressions of elite status (Hawkins

1995; Gates 2001) but are conspicuously absent from Level III at Beycesultan. Instead, elite group identity is articulated only through items bearing specifically local associations.

Given this historical context, perhaps it is to be expected that links with central Anatolia were deliberately eschewed. What is surprising is that there are no clear signs of solidarity with other western Anatolian communities. After all, this was a time when the region was first politically united, and then forcibly partitioned. It is often argued that since Arzawans were mostly Luwian-speaking peoples, they would have shared a common ethnic identity that underpinned their political alliance (Bryce 2006: 77-86; Macqueen 1999: 39). Yet the fact that the Beycesultan group constructed a fiercely local identity precisely

Figure 6. Map showing a reconstruction of Hittite geography.

during the period of the *Arzawa* confederacy undermines this view. If anything, it suggests that that the alliance was based on calculated political expediency in the face of a powerful common enemy, rather than in a deeper sense of underlying ethnic commonality between western Anatolian groups.

Level II: The Bronze to Iron Age Transition
The following phase at Beycesultan spans the final decades of the LBA and the first few of the EIA, and was designated by the excavators as 'Level II' (Figure 7). The remains show signs of increased prosperity, as well as continuity in terms of overall urban layout and in the use of shrine building. Yet there is also a sharper sense of social differentiation and more centralisation in the control of resources (Lloyd 1972). Amongst the domestic buildings in particular, there is much more variation in both architectural elaboration and size than during the earlier Level III, with the

largest house occupying more than eight times the total floor space of the smallest (Table 4). While some houses had developed into ornate multi-room complexes with central 'public' rooms, courtyards and lustral areas, others continue to be built on the standard three-room model. This sense of hierarchy and elite differentiation is also evident in the reduction of the space given over to domestic buildings on the summit of the mounds, and the construction of a stabling complex for horses instead. The further centralisation of resources is also implied by the substantial storage facilities attached to one particular domestic unit on the east mound (the 'shops'—Lloyd and Mellaart 1955).

Deliberate expressions of group solidarity are not readily apparent in this more hierarchical and vertically structured social milieu. Although dining vessels still constitute a substantial proportion of the overall ceramic assemblage, this is not beyond the proportion

Figure 7. Plan of east mound Level II Beycesultan, adapted from Lloyd 1972.

that might be expected, given recording biases. Similarly, while some of these vessels have been found in clusters that suggest commensality, neither the absolute numbers nor the proportions suggest that such commensality extended beyond a very limited household group. Unlike the situation during the previous phase of occupation, therefore, there is no indication of large-scale group activities that

would have encouraged a sense of group solidarity or collective 'us-ness'. Supporting this overall picture, the ceramic assemblage of this phase was less standardised. The repertoire of vessel shapes remains more or less the same, but the decorative schemes on fine wares diversified. As well as the warm-coloured schemes that so dominated the previous phases (Types C1 and C2), lustrous schemes (Types

Level	Domestic Unit	Total floor area (m^2)
Level III	A	45
	B	62
	C	68.25
	D	uncertain
	E	55.25
	F	42
Level II	A	122.5
	B	313.75
	C	127.5 (min)
	D	35.75
	E	74.22
	F	65.31
Level Ib	A	35.75
	B	48.75
	C	40.37
	D	38.75
Level Ia	A	102 (megaron & court)

Table 4. Floor space of domestic units.

A1 and A2) also became popular (Table 3). Although this does not represent an especially wide range of different styles and still implies some level of conservatism, it is nonetheless significant that elite ceramics were no longer visually homogeneous. While Level III vessels encouraged a sense of similarity and standardisation, this levelling factor is absent from the Level II assemblage.

In Level II at Beycesultan, therefore, there no longer seems to be a coherent elite group, articulating its sense of collective identity vis-à-vis non-elites. Instead there seems to have been a much more structured social hierarchy, dividing individual households along a rising scale of status and wealth. Overall, it seems that people at this time were much more concerned with differentiating themselves from each other than with constructing a sense of a collective 'us'.

But why should the occupants of Level II Beycesultan be less concerned about banding together than they had been during the previous phase? The removal of external threats may go some way towards explaining this. During the LBA, the sense of corporate group identity at Beycesultan seems to have crystallised in response to Hittite imperial expansion from the east and the integrating pressures from the Arzawans to the west. In this Level II phase, however, when these powers were declining in influence or collapsing completely, there would have been less external impetus for solidarity at Beycesultan. The people at Beycesultan no longer needed to differentiate themselves from the 'other' without;

they could now turn their attentions to differentiating themselves from each other within. The complex multi-level hierarchy of Level II society shows how far Beycesultan went in abandoning the idea of collective solidarity.

Level Ib: The Early Iron Age

This impression strengthens as the EIA progresses. Level Ib occupation starts some time during the twelfth century BC, and shows evidence for continued economic prosperity and social continuity on the site as a whole (Figure 8; Lloyd 1972: 17-18). At this point, however, the similarity between Levels II and Ib ends. The entrenched social asymmetry of Level II seems to have been replaced by flexibility and instability in the social order. First, the domestic units of this phase are much more equal in terms of architectural elaboration and in the amount of space they occupy. Although a small sample, the four preserved houses are

all two-to-three room structures with a single main room for most household activities, and all cover a similar amount of total floor space (Table 4). Social hierarchy was no longer enshrined within the domestic built environment.

Hierarchy also seems to be absent from the non-domestic built environment. Significantly, in Level Ib there are no obvious public or central structures such as the shrine buildings or the stable complex, suggesting less centralisation and a less rigidly structured social organisation. Rather a large open area to the east of the domestic buildings was plastered over with a thick layer of white gypsum and appears to have been used for ritual purposes. The large-scale slaughter of animals seems to have been a feature of this ritual activity, as two circular pits have been found which were filled with broken up animal bones and covered with flat stone slabs (Lloyd 1972: 18).
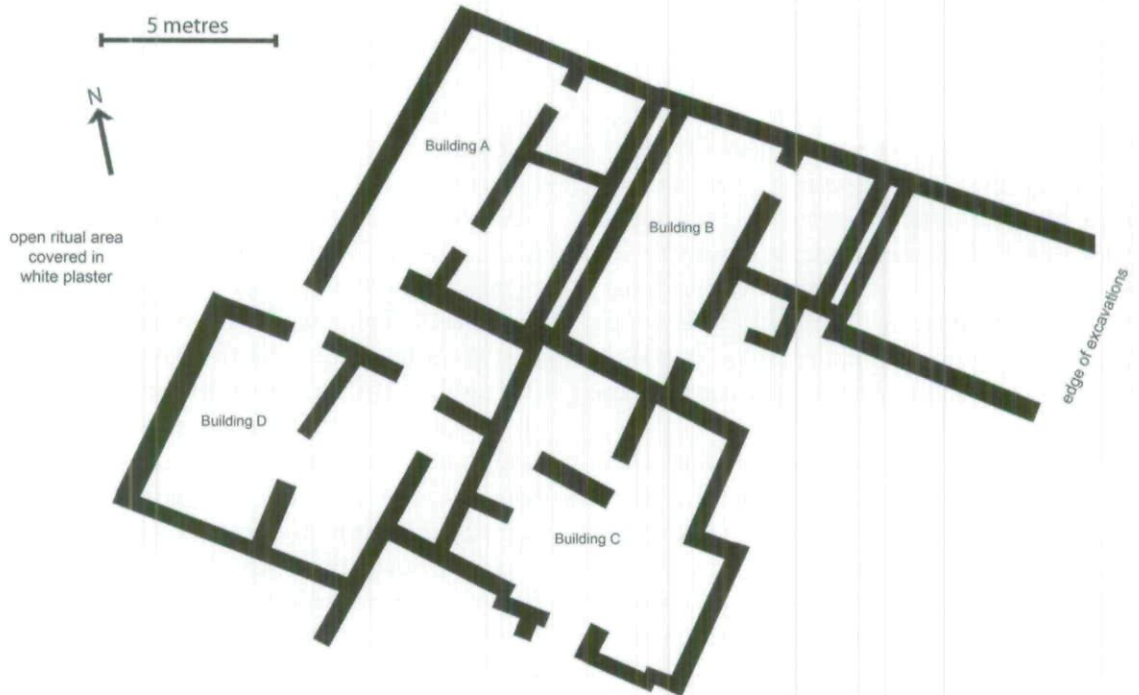

Figure 8.   Plan of east mound Level Ib Beycesultan, adapted from Lloyd 1972.

Ritual activities on this kind of scale, and in this kind of open space implies a very different set of social relations from those suggested by the shrine building of Levels III and II. A large open area such as this would encourage inclusivity and public display, as opposed to the confined shrines of earlier periods that imply exclusivity and selective control of participation (Wright 1994).

The lack of rigid social distinctions and hierarchy, however, does not necessarily imply that there was a sense of collective group identity or corporate solidarity. Instead it seems that social distinctions were just as important in Level Ib as in Level II—the difference, as implied by the lack of rigid distinctions, was that status was more flexible and open to negotiation. While the open ritual area mentioned above could possibly have been used for staging practices of group affiliation to foster a sense of collective 'us', it seems more likely in this case to have been the setting for social competition, public display and the active contestation of status.

There is a new emphasis on jewellery and bodily adornment in Level Ib, suggesting a greater focus on the body and personal status of the individual when compared to previous phases (Table 5). Not only can a greater proportion of small finds be classed as 'jewellery' in this phase than in any other, but it is also

the first time that such items seem to have been used for the bodily adornment of individuals within the community (Figure 9). In Levels III and II, all such objects were deposited as offerings within the shrine building. If 'jewellery' items had been present in domestic contexts in these phases, we would expect at least some of them to have been found *in situ*, given the sudden destruction of Level II. In Level Ib by contrast, while some ritual deposits have been discovered in the open plastered area, all 'jewellery' items come from domestic, rather than ritual contexts (Lloyd 1972). This interest in the body of the individual suggests a concern with the active creation and contestation of status within a more flexible and unstable social structure.

Status competition is also indicated in the ceramic record, as there is a sudden diversification of the decorative types in use (Table 3). Level Ib exhibits the greatest breadth in the ceramic repertoire of all the phases considered here. There seems to have been no established or dominant elite style; instead the wide variety of aesthetic schemes supports the idea of competitive display. The previously popular lustrous and warm-coloured decorative schemes are joined in this phase by greater numbers of linear painted vessels (Types B1 and B2), black and grey wares (Type D), and pale and white slipped wares (Type E). In

Function	Level III		Level II		Level Ib		Level Ia
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
Tools	36	51.4	35	38.5	31	50.0	2
Weapons	13	18.6	23	25.3	6	9.7	1
Admin	1	1.4	2	2.2	2	3.2	-
Jewellery	10	14.3	8	8.8	10	16.1	2
Ritual	2	2.9	7	7.7	2	3.2	1
Other	8	11.4	16	17.6	11	17.7	1
Total	70	1000%	91	100.1%	62	99.9%	7

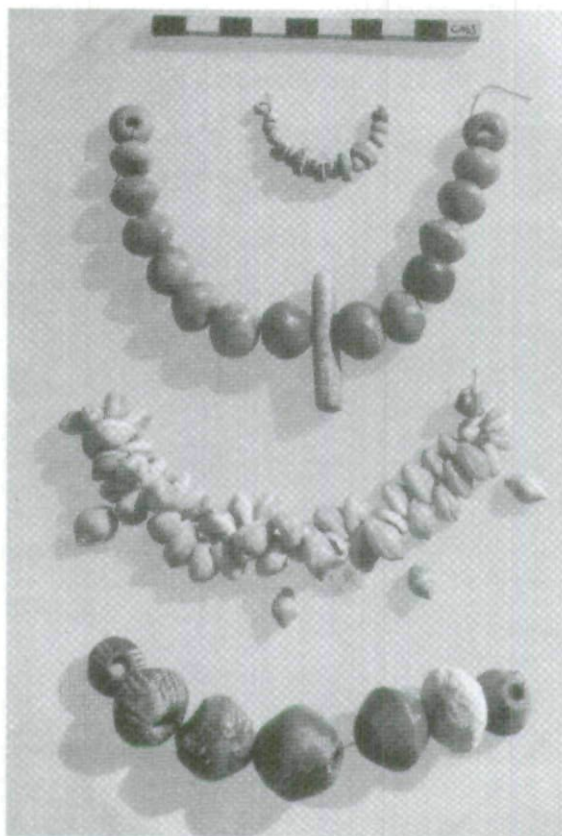**Table 5.** Small finds by functional category.

Figure 9. Jewellery items from the Level Ib houses (Mellaart and Murray 1995, reproduced with the kind permission of the BIAA).

addition, it also seems that the traditional Type C1 burnished wares themselves diversify in terms of colour, including what Mellaart evocatively described as 'chocolate brown', 'deep plum red', and 'rich camel-leather buff' (Mellaart and Murray 1995: 56).

While the excavators have assumed that Level Ib was a period of EIA 'decline' (Lloyd 1972: 5), this evidence suggests that it should perhaps better be understood as a time of transformation in the community's social structures, when old hierarchies were contested, reshaped and remodelled. Parallel developments elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean show a wide range of responses to this turbulent time (Bachhuber and Roberts 2008; Knapp 2008), but Beycesultan's development in the EIA is characteristically idiosyncratic. While not immediately affected adversely by the eco-

nomic collapses that occurred around 1200 BC, there seem to have been some delayed or long-term consequences of the LBA-EIA transition at the site, involving deeper changes in social structure and the fundamental concept of elite identity. The failure of centralised, rigidly hierarchical, and long-established social systems in other parts of the eastern Mediterranean might have encouraged a more gradual destabilisation of the same ideas at Beycesultan, offering an opportunity for status to be redefined and reformed in new and different ways. Any remaining vestiges of group identity or a collective 'us' seems to have been lost in this competitive quest for status.

Not only is there little sign of a sense of collective 'us' at Level Ib Beycesultan, but even had there been one it seems unlikely that it would have been informed by ethnicity.

Starkly contrasting with the localised prefer-
ences of Level III, the Level Ib assemblage
embraced a broad range of different exter-
nal influences, readily incorporating imported
goods and exotica from across the eastern
Mediterranean. Foreign styles and imported
items therefore seem to have been seen less as
indicators of ethnic affinity, and more as tools
in the competitive discourse of status negotia-
tion.

Level Ia: The Later Iron Age
Relatively little remains of Level Ia, the final
architectural phase before a gap in occupation
at Beycesultan. A single large megaron house
was found on the east mound, flanked by a
number of outbuildings set around a courtyard
to the west and a large circular baking oven to
the east (Figure 10). The excavators suggested

that the population had shrunk to very small
proportions, perhaps consisting of only one
extended family (Lloyd 1972: 6). This level,
however, was severely disturbed by later build-
ing and quarrying activity, and traces of other
domestic remains may have been completely
destroyed. The population of Level Ia may
therefore have been considerably larger than
suggested by the surviving remains. Indeed,
the forms of both the megaron house and the
baking oven suggest that this was so, and both
hint at the return of a sense of group identity
or collective 'us' which had been absent from
Levels II and Ib Beycesultan.

The building itself is large and well con-
structed, resembling the elaborate megaron
houses of Level II, and may have been a
central building for a modest community.
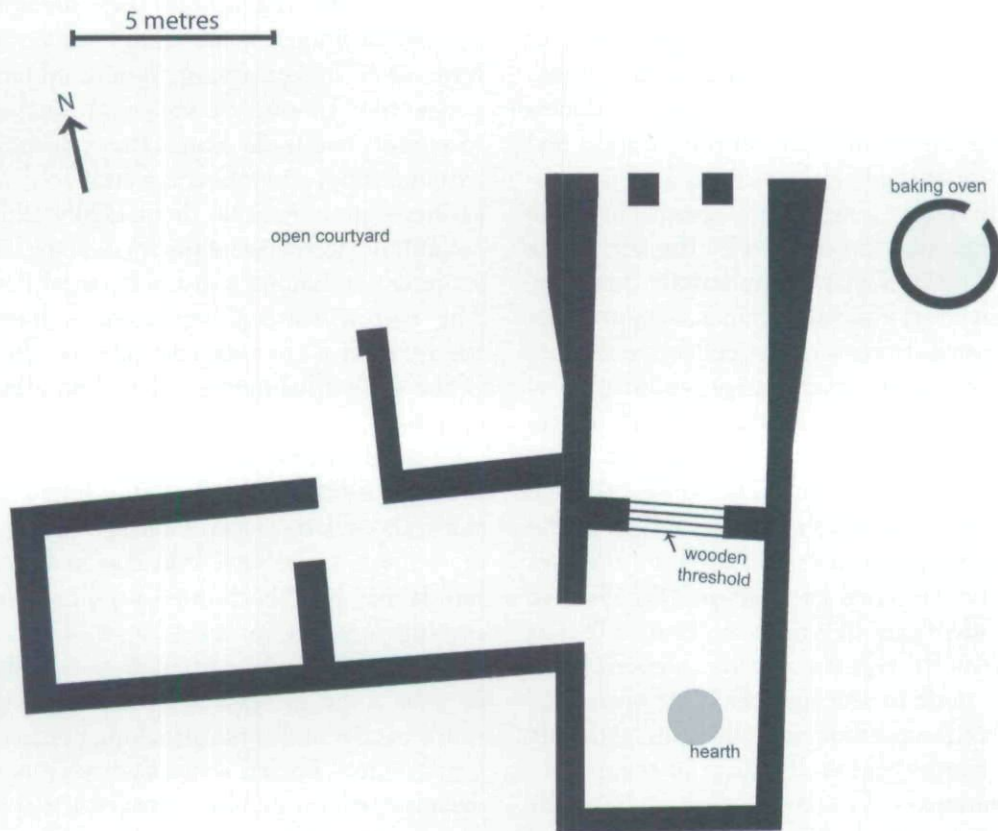Although 'monumental' would perhaps be an

Figure 10. Plan of Level Ia Beycesultan, adapted from Lloyd 1972.

exaggeration, the megaron is nonetheless a large and imposing building, and is more likely to be a central meeting place rather than the domestic quarters of an individual household. A fragment of a libation arm and a terracotta basin were also found inside the megaron, implying that some ritual activities may have taken place within the building. Indeed, the architecture of the megaron is deliberately designed to maximise inclusivity and access for a reasonably large group of people. The first chamber is not accessed through a doorway; instead, one whole wall takes the form of an open pillared porch. The doorway from the first into the second chamber is also wide—it occupies two-thirds of the overall wall space. The design of the megaron therefore betrays a concern with inclusivity and participation, rather than exclusivity and control of access. This indicates both a group using the building (even if not all of this group were resident at the site itself), and a deliberate concern with promoting collectivity and togetherness amongst this group. The central location and sheer size of the baking oven (c. 3 m in diameter) may also suggest the same. The scale of food production implied by the size of the oven is beyond that of the strictly domestic, and may even indicate commensality or at the very least a strong sense of collective interest based on shared subsistence provisions.

Both the megaron house and oven therefore hint at the existence of a coherent group identity at Beycesultan. The sense of group solidarity that emerges at Beycesultan in the later Iron Age, however, is harder to interpret than the presence or absence of collective group identities in previous phases. This is because of the relative lack of evidence for the period, both in the disturbed archaeological record of Beycesultan and also more generally in the history and archaeology of the eastern Mediterranean. This is the time traditionally characterised as the 'Dark Ages', when social complexity and interregional exchange are thought to have decreased, and when local communities are said to have slid into backwardness and insularity.

The remains of Level Ia Beycesultan belies the first of these characterisations. Social complexity is implied by the megaron—such a building could not have been constructed without the existence of some form of social organisation (involving authority and specialisation, if not necessarily hierarchy). Similarly, it appears that Beycesultan continued to have access to long-distance trade routes, as this allowed for the continued import of metals to the site. It seems clear that social complexity and interregional exchange did not disappear in the later Iron Age in this part of western Anatolia. Insularity, however, may indeed have been a feature of Beycesultan's society at this time. This is meant not in the sense of a lack of external contacts (as these are attested by the continued metals trade) but rather in terms of no longer having an outward-looking perspective. Despite the site's continued access to imports and trade routes, the wide range of external styles and influences embraced in the previous phase narrows dramatically in Level Ia, and the decorative schemes used for ceramics return to having a distinctly local flavour. The narrow material repertoire is therefore the result of a conscious decision on the part of the site's inhabitants, rather than a lack of options.

Given the lack of evidence about this period, it is impossible to come to any firm conclusions about why a conscious group identity crystallised in the later Iron Age at Beycesultan. It may have been due to the community coming together in the face of an external threat as had happened in previous phases, or it may be an expression of the population's insular and inward-looking perspective. Until more is known about the wider regional dynamics of this period, however, the specific social dynamics at Beycesultan will remain a mystery.

Conclusions

The most obvious conclusion that can be drawn from this consideration of the LBA and EIA site of Beycesultan in western Anatolia is that group identities were not a constant. There was no sense of collective 'us-ness' that consistently bound together the inhabitants of the site, or even certain portions of the overall population. During the LBA phase of occupation, there are signs that people at Beycesultan were keen to foster a sense of the collective 'us', downplaying differences between themselves to promote cohesion and community. At the time, external threats such as Hittite imperial expansion may have encouraged this strongly local sense of group identity. In the following two phases, however, this external pressure was relaxed, and it seems that the people of Beycesultan became less interested in maintaining group solidarity than in negotiating internal status distinctions. Any sense of a collective 'us' in the LBA-EIA transitional phases seems to have been eclipsed by a move towards greater social differentiation, first rigid and formalised and later flexible and contested. It was not until the later Iron Age that a sense of group identity seems to have re-emerged in Beycesultan, although it is not yet clear whether this should be related to the instability of the time or to an insular, inward-looking perspective on the part of the site's inhabitants. Given the sporadic emergence and dissolution of group identity at Beycesultan, it seems that a conscious sense of group identity only crystallises at certain times and for certain reasons.

This conclusion calls into question the common assumption in archaeology that sites, communities, or population groups can be treated as if they inherently embed coherent group identities. Part of the problem is the enduring concern in archaeology about constructions of the external 'them' in social identities—relatively little attention is paid to constructions of the collective 'us'. While it is frequently assumed that the former inevitably leads to the appearance of the latter, this is not necessarily always the case—after all, lone individuals can construct a sense of 'them' without any collective 'us' being present. We cannot therefore assume that any social group we distinguish from material culture patterning will necessarily have a conscious sense of 'us'. The Beycesultan example illustrates this vividly, showing that this sense of 'us' does not necessarily appear as a result of co-residence in a given settlement, comparable elite status, or even sharing the same forms of material culture. Instead, the social and historical circumstances play a major role in whether people consciously choose to see themselves more as a collective or more in terms of distinction and difference.

A second conclusion to be drawn from this case study is that even when conscious group identities do coalesce, they do not necessarily do so around ideas of shared descent or ethnicity. Conventional wisdom tells us that Beycesultan was ethnically related to its neighbours in the west, and that this ethnic affinity was translated into a political alliance in the LBA. The evidence from Level III Beycesultan, however, suggests otherwise. The people here seem to have rejected an ethnic-based sense of identity, celebrating instead a sense of group identity which was informed by a strong sense of geography and the immediate locale. Ethnic concerns do not seem to have played an important role in later phases either; the Level Ib inhabitants welcomed imports and styles hailing from all directions, and the occupants of the Level Ia phase reverted back to a closely local identity. In none of the four occupational levels does it appear that ethnicity was a determining factor in the social calculations of the people at Beycesultan. The social dynamics at the site were far more complex than an approach focused

purely on ethnicity would have detected. By considering group identities, however, it can be seen that the inhabitants of the site were actors in a constantly changing social system, where ethnicity may well have been an important factor but nonetheless did not dominate.

Thus we cannot assume that ethnicity lies at the root of all collective group identities. While the archaeology of ethnicity has offered many important insights over the last decade, it is only part of a much broader picture. From its inception, the proponents of an archaeology of ethnicity argued for a contextual viewpoint, and warned against abstracting ethnicity from the other identities that both cut across and intertwine with it (Emberling 1997: 319; Jones 1997: 133). In practice however, the last ten years have shown that this is easier said than done. Adopting an approach that explicitly considers group identity may be one way of moving towards this goal. This group identity approach recognises that while ethnicity may be one of the factors that frequently inform a sense of 'us', it does not always necessarily do so.

The third and final conclusion of this paper returns to LBA-EIA western Anatolia, and the theme of 'between-ness'. The case of Beycesultan shows that western Anatolia should not be considered as merely being 'between' or peripheral; rather it was home to societies of interest in their own right. In the LBA, Beycesultan seems to have exercised substantially more independence than is usually assumed— from both the Hittites and from its western neighbours. But along with this autonomy of action seems to have come an independence of outlook, a preference for keeping itself distinct and maintaining a kind of 'splendid isolation'. Similarly in the EIA, Beycesultan's experience following the LBA-EIA transition does not fit the accepted patterns. While 'peripheral' sites are assumed either to have declined (alongside the collapsing LBA states), or to

have enjoyed a post-collapse boom (stepping into vacant political and economic niches), it seems that Beycesultan did neither. Instead the transitions had little immediate impact, and it was only later in the EIA when gradual changes began to be felt on a more ideological level, in the shape of greater hierarchical flexibility and social mobility. The evidence from Beycesultan prompts us to reassess how we understand both the LBA and the EIA in Anatolia, and may have implications for contemporary developments elsewhere in the eastern Mediterranean. Neither peripheral nor 'between', neither Greek nor Near Eastern, western Anatolia emerges as a region of independent communities and autonomous groups. These groups espoused identities that were constantly crystallising, dissolving and changing, and while their identities may have owed something to ideas of ethnicity, they also went far beyond it.

Acknowledgments

About the Author

Naoise Mac Sweeney is a Research Fellow at Fitzwilliam College, University of Cambridge. Her main research interests are the Bronze and Iron Ages of Anatolia, and the dynamics of group identities including ethnicity, community identity, and migration and its rhetorical constructs. She currently works at the Kilise Tepe project (Turkey), and as a consultant for the International Labour Organisation and Donor Committee for Enterprise Development on contemporary ethnic conflict.

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