

MIGRATION, MINORITIES & REGIONAL IDENTITIES

Turkey and the Black Sea region are situated within a range of different geographical and political areas: Europe and the Balkans, the former constituents of the Soviet Union, the Caucasus, Central Asia, Iran and the Middle East. This location inevitably has constituted them as a physical bridge and placed them at the crossroads of different historical forces and empires. This was as much a feature in prehistoric as in historic and contemporary times, when cross-boundary migration remains an important domestic and international concern. The interplay between geographical factors, diverse political entities and patterns of migration has been a significant factor in shaping the domestic and social make-up of Turkey and the Black Sea region. It has played an important role in forming cultural identities, whether at individual, regional, national or supra-national level. Simultaneously, these processes in relation to migrant communities have also influenced neighbouring areas. This strategic research initiative aims to promote research across different academic disciplines that relate to the themes of migration, minorities and regional identities in Turkey and the Black Sea region.

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Peaks and troughs: archaeological science and the ‘new normal’

Benjamin Irvine | British Institute at Ankara

The past year, as I’m sure everyone is all too aware, has been one full of disruption and associated compromise and pragmatism. Cancelled or postponed conferences, lab time, fieldwork and research trips have resulted in many, myself included, adjusting to a ‘new normal’ of how we conduct and complete academic research, and maintain discussion and dissemination of information.

A research trip to Tokyo, which I had originally scheduled for late June, has been postponed indefinitely. The visit would have enabled me to analyse the stable isotope ratios ($\delta^{13}\text{C}$ and $\delta^{15}\text{N}$) of individual amino acids extracted from the bulk collagen samples I obtained during my doctoral research into the dietary habits of Early Bronze Age Anatolian populations. This would have provided a finer scale of analysis, which would have, in turn, enabled a clearer understanding of individual and population dietary habits, significantly developing and enhancing our current knowledge. Hopefully this research trip will be permissible at some point next year.

Additionally, the development of the (stable) isotope facility at TÜBİTAK-MAM (TÜBİTAK Marmara Araştırma Merkezi; i.e. the TÜBİTAK Marmara Research Centre) has experienced pandemic-related delays, but, all going well, it should be ready to receive samples for analysis in the very near future. This lab, when fully operational, will be a wonderful and exciting addition to the archaeological sciences in Turkey and to Turkish archaeological research.

Closer to home in Ankara, my co-organisers (Yılmaz Selim Erdal of Hacettepe University and the Institute’s Director, Lutgarde Vandepuit) and I took the difficult but sensible decision to postpone our symposium on the bioarchaeology of prehistoric Anatolia that was originally planned for late October 2020. The symposium would have brought together a range of domestic and foreign specialists whose research is based on the plants, animals and humans of the Anatolian peninsula. We were all very excited about this event, which would have been of great benefit to the bioarchaeological and wider archaeological communities of Turkey-focused and Turkish-based research. Whilst we have no timescale for the de-mothballing of this symposium, we hope that it will be in the not too distant future.

Despite these negatives, there have also been many positives to focus on and celebrate. The ‘Physical Anthropology in Anatolia’ workshop, hosted at the British Institute at Ankara in November 2019, was a wonderful success, with the Wolfson Foundation conference room packed throughout the day. All of the presenters are currently hard at work transforming their interesting talks into contributions to the edited volume of papers. This will be published as an Institute Monograph, and, all going well, we hope that it will be published by the end of 2021. Currently, no such volume or monograph exists for the field of physical anthropology in Turkey. Thus, this publication will be the first of its kind, devoted specifically to physical and



A full house for the ‘Physical Anthropology in Anatolia’ workshop at the BIAA, 8 November 2019.

bioanthropological research in Turkey. The edited volume will be published initially in English, but also in Turkish as an e-book, ensuring wide accessibility. The Turkish-language version will be particularly important for domestic students as they will form the next generation of physical anthropologists working in Turkey on Turkish material, and it is only right that they should be able to gain easy access to this type of information and knowledge.

I am also delighted to announce that I have received a BIAA Research Grant for a project related to, and enhancing, my postdoctoral research. This project will develop a database collating all bioarchaeological isotope data from the greater Near East and construct a website to make the database available as an open-access resource. This website (BioIsoAne – A Repository of Bioarchaeological Isotope Analyses in the Greater Ancient Near East) will provide an invaluable research tool for archaeologists and specialists in bioarchaeological sub-disciplines. It will also increase the visibility of bioarchaeological research and promote awareness of the utility of isotopic analyses to answer socio-historical questions within the broader research community working in Anatolia and its adjacent regions (i.e. the region from the Balkans to the Caucasus). Additionally, the website will provide a platform to encourage robust standards of data reporting, something which, unfortunately, is still lacking in published research from the region. The website will be beneficial for archaeology students all around the world who are seeking to gain expertise in isotopic analyses, including those for whom resources may not be easily available. For researchers specialised in isotope analysis, a freely available online resource will greatly increase the dataset and knowledge availability, permitting increased opportunities

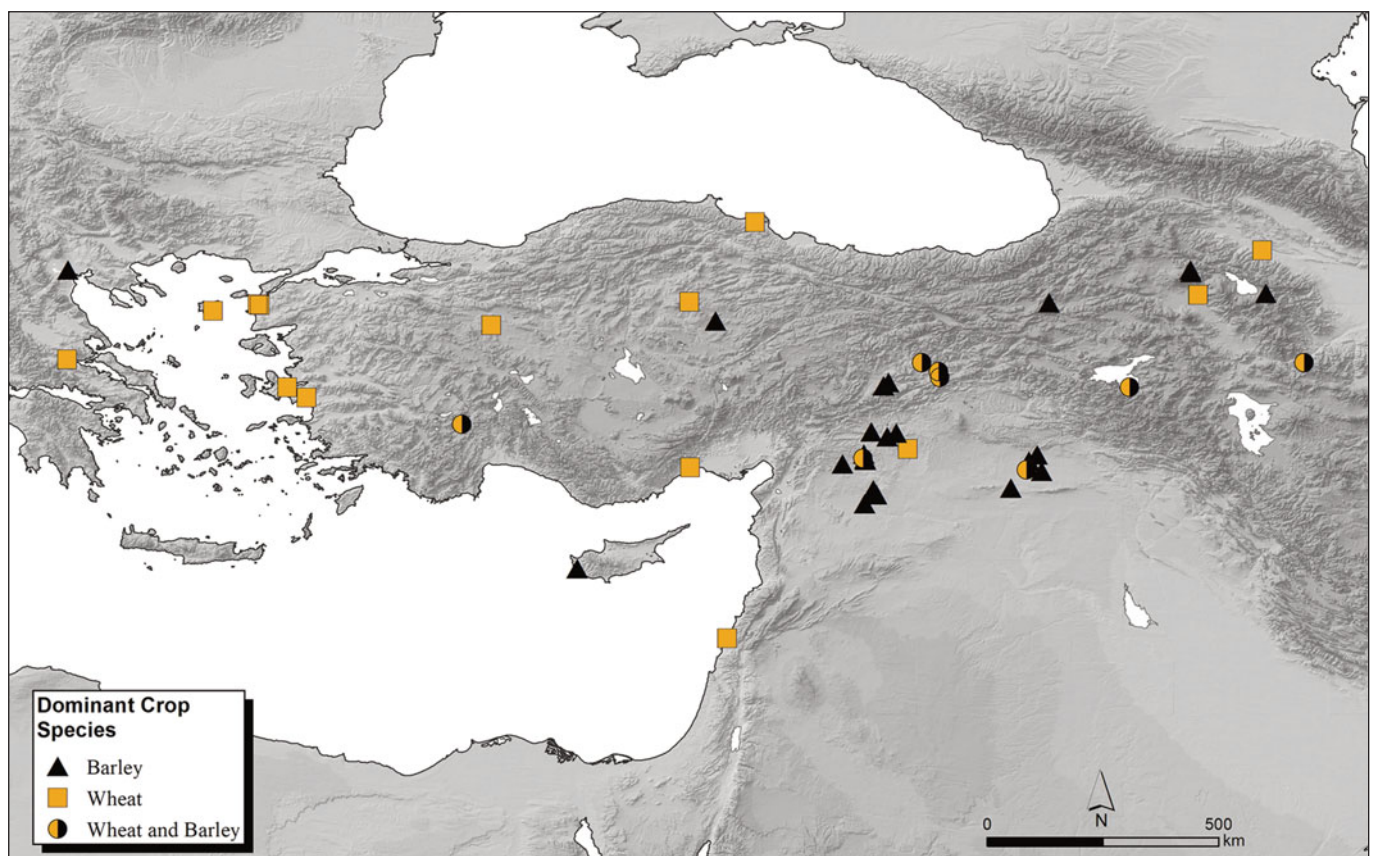
for collaboration and project development. This new programme is being conducted in collaboration with Bike Yazıcıoğlu-Santamaria (Simon Fraser University, Canada), and with the financial and logistical support of the BIAA it will further increase the Institute’s reputation as a source and hotbed of high-quality research with an international impact. The website project was instigated by the establishment and activities of AIRG (Archaeological Isotopes Research Group), which comprises a multidisciplinary and international group of researchers, including myself and Dr Yazıcıoğlu-Santamaria as key founding members. This working group provides a platform for researchers using biogeochemical methods in the region to discuss their own research as well as current trends in the field and how research standards can be improved. Work on this project is ongoing; we look forward to sharing more information about it shortly and hope to have the website up and running by summer 2021.

One of the most exciting aspects of my postdoctoral research project in the last year has been studying human-environment interactions in a pan-regional and diachronic manner by examining dietary habits, subsistence practices and agricultural strategies from the Neolithic to Byzantine periods of the greater Near East. By utilising a large-scale, ‘big-data’ and holistic approach through the examination of human stable isotope data, as well as archaeozoological and archaeobotanical data, I have been able to analyse diachronic changes and patterns across the region. Whilst a succession of forthcoming articles will analyse these findings in greater detail, I will briefly summarise some of them here. The human stable isotope values for the three main chronological epochs (Neolithic, Early to Middle Bronze Age and Classical

to Byzantine period) are distinct from one another. This, whilst interesting in itself by providing potential isotopic markers/ranges for the time periods, is particularly useful and stimulating as an indicator of changing and distinctive subsistence and agricultural strategies. For example, the adoption and exploitation of C_4 plants (in the case of the greater Near East, millet and sorghum) in the arable repertoire of the historical periods is clearly seen in the stable isotope data with a shift to more positive $\delta^{13}C$ values. In the Early to Middle Bronze Age there is a relatively (compared to other time periods) narrow range of $\delta^{13}C$ values, which suggests a relatively narrow range in the stable isotope values of consumed plant protein (either directly or via an animal vector); this, in turn, is indicative of a narrow range of plant food resources and standardised growing conditions. This conclusion is supported in the archaeobotanical and archaeozoological records for the period, which note a monoculture of wheat and/or barley as key crops cultivated in a standardised extensive agricultural system around settlements. The human stable isotope data from Anatolia very clearly demonstrates this shift in agricultural strategy from the Neolithic/Early Chalcolithic into the end of the Chalcolithic and the beginning of the Early Bronze Age (around the end of the fourth millennium BC), with an increased homogeneity in $\delta^{13}C$ and $\delta^{15}N$ values. Furthermore, the human $\delta^{15}N$ values for the Anatolian Early Bronze Age

are lower than in the periods before or after, clearly highlighting the move to an extensive agricultural system. This is combined with an intensification in the exploitation of animals' ante-mortem products and animals being viewed no longer just as a food resource, but as commodities themselves. These two aspects are the main components of what I have been referring to as a subsistence model of staple finance for the time period. The Early to Middle Bronze Age human stable isotope data for regions beyond Anatolia and northern Mesopotamia/the Upper Khabur and Jazira do not demonstrate such a degree of homogeneity, and one possible explanation for this is that there were core and periphery regions for this subsistence model. This suggestion can be tested in the future with further data and analysis.

So, as my tenure as Postdoctoral Fellow of the British Institute at Ankara comes to an end, I would like to thank sincerely and extend my gratitude to everyone at the Institute, in particular its wonderfully kind and supportive Director, Lutgarde Vandepuit. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time in Ankara, and it has been an extremely beneficial and productive two years for my own research and career development. I cannot rate the BIAA highly enough as a centre of research, and, when a sense of normality returns to the world, I look forward to attending many tea breaks at the Institute and discussing my work with current, past and future members of the BIAA family.



Sites of the late fourth to second millennium and the dominant crop species in their respective archaeobotanical assemblages (map created by M. Massa).