

HABITAT & SETTLEMENT

Anatolia has one of the best-defined long-term records of settlement during the Holocene and its study is central to a range of questions, from changing relationships with the environment, to the formation of large-scale settlements and the changing of urban-rural relationships. Developments in the Black Sea coastal region sometimes ran parallel to changes in Turkey, but followed a different course at other periods, creating interesting comparisons, parallels and alternatives. Of particular interest are people's attempts to live in as well as adapt to and change conditions set by the environment throughout time, and also the effect of human beings on their natural environment and landscape.

Roads and Routes in Anatolia: Pathways of Communication from Prehistoric to Seljuk Times

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On 20–22 March 2014 the BIAA will hold a conference in collaboration with Ankara University in an attempt to bring together philologists, ancient historians, epigraphers and archaeologists to compare diverse classes of data from past communication networks in Anatolia. The aim of the conference is to increase the still extremely fragmentary knowledge of routes and roads in Anatolia and to develop a diachronic perspective on their use from their beginnings to the end of the Seljuk period.

Movement has always been a necessity to enable interaction and communication between individuals, communities and societies. Moving focuses on specific paths that allow fast and easy connections, rather than occurring randomly in the landscape. Roads and routes are therefore essential for carrying materials and information from one location to another whereby landscape and cultural elements play defining roles. Landscape and cultural elements can be both promoting and constraining factors, and should therefore be taken into account whilst studying routes and roads.

There is substantial evidence that exchange networks already existed in Anatolia before the Neolithic period, with goods travelling over long distances. By the mid third millennium BC a long-distance network of connections between the Anatolian plateau and Upper Mesopotamia had been established, and this brought an intense exchange of goods, technologies and ideas. From the second millennium BC onwards, textual evidence adds substantially to our understanding of the routes travelled, the details of journeys and the locations of centres.

It is highly likely that later roads and routes overlie earlier ones, at least partially, but these palimpsests of roads remain largely to be studied. The Roman long-distance road

network can probably be considered the best-known system, mainly thanks to epigraphical research, but we have only a limited idea about local roads and pathways around individual sites. When and how these developed, what degree of sophistication existed in the infrastructure or even how these roads and pathways were embedded in their landscapes is even less well known. For the post-Roman period, Byzantine roads have also received detailed attention; the Seljuk road and route system, however, is surprisingly under-researched.

Equally largely unexplored is the relationship between roads, human landscapes and natural environments, and how these different elements affected each other through time. Only rarely has the role of natural routes through mountain passes or that of the rivers flowing through Anatolia been taken into account. Furthermore, sea routes and the onward journey of shipped goods after they reached land have not often been the topics of research. Natural routes complemented built roads and routes, and both systems should be considered together to reach an understanding of the networks of connectivity and their development through time.

In combining data from different disciplines, generated by a variety of methods, the conference aims to transcend the present fragmented state of knowledge and to create a new level of understanding of connecting road and route systems in Anatolia through time. Such an understanding will both clarify the mechanisms of exchange and the diffusion of cultural traits, as well as contribute to developing a human geography of Anatolia. Better understanding of these matters will also enable ancient sites to be studied within the context of their wider network of relations and as locations within a cultural landscape.

For the conference programme, please visit:

<http://pathwaysofcommunication.wordpress.com/>

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