

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL APPROACH TO DELINEATE THE COURSE OF THE ACHAEMENID ROYAL ROAD IN ANATOLIA

Mahnaz SADEGHIPOUR and Farshid Iravani GHADIM*

Abstract

The Achaemenid Royal Road was one of the crucial aspects of the Achaemenid imperial governance through which the affairs of this great empire were carried out. This major thoroughfare which on account of Herodotus' reference extended from Sardis to Susa, was only one component of a more extended route network and allowed the Achaemenids to access and control conquered cities. Anatolia by the greatest number of the satrapies has played an important role in the center of this dominion. So far, determination of the actual course of the "Royal Road" has been subject to much discussion due to ambiguities and discrepancies of historical explanations. Moreover, there has been little focus for archaeological research about the course of the "Royal Road" in Anatolia. The purpose of this article is to reappraise and delineate the course of the "Royal Road" in Anatolia during 550-330 BC concentrating mainly on the archaeological sites. To introduce a model for designating this road, the approach assumes that successive Achaemenid settlements are associated with this road. Therefore, the itinerary is retraced by recording the Achaemenid settlements based on the gamut of archaeological evidence, geographical features, diverse precursors to the "Royal Road", and historical records where available. A new prospect is proposed, according to which the Achaemenid Royal Road extends more westward than what has been assumed before. An appreciation of this trunk line presents not only an invaluable opportunity to identify Achaemenid political and administrative might but also a proper understanding of the Achaemenid settlements in Anatolia.

* Author: Mahnaz Sadeghipour, Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Conservation, Art University of Isfahan, msadeghipour67@gmail.com; corresponding author: Farshid Iravani Ghadim, Associate Professor, Department of Archaeology, Faculty of Conservation, Art University of Isfahan, iravanline@au.ac.ir.

INTRODUCTION

Literature review

Anatolia – the land that equates to most of modern Turkey in Asia – is a peninsula that is encircled by seas on three sides and separated from the rest of the Near East by high mountains. Intricate geological phenomena have created regional individualities suitable for living. Therefore, Anatolia has been taken into consideration from ancient times on account of rich natural resources, strategic places, fertile soil and easy access to riparian boundaries and water bodies. According to classical sources the ethnic groups inhabited Anatolia were varied during the first millennium BC and equally at the time of Cyrus' arrival in 546 BC. The major traditional regions were Lydia, Phrygia, Cappadocia, Cilicia, Pamphylia, Pisidia, Lycia, Caria, Ionia, Mysia, Paphlagonia, and Pontus (Steadman and McMahon 2011: 16).

Based on the geographical and administrative units of the Achaemenid Empire called satrapies, referring to the Behistun inscription (Sharp 2009) and the carvings on the eastern staircase of the Apadana at Persepolis, and historical texts, in particular Herodotus' list of provinces (Hdt. 3.90-94), Anatolia was one of the most dominated landmass in the second half of the first millennium BC at the latest phase of the Late Iron Age. When Anatolia was incorporated to the Achaemenid Empire, it was divided to satrapies in order to be administrated more aptly. The whole empire was more integrated through regional formations interlinked by trans-regional and interregional relations. Therefore, the network of roads was required to accelerate royal communication. The "Royal Road" appears to have been a designated thoroughfare for couriers between main centers.

As it is well known, the only historical text which has directly introduced the "Royal Road" is *Histories*. Herodotus quoted that it was a well-equipped road which traversed prosperous places and was measured on the quantitative scale of 'parasang'¹. In detail he described only one of the roads which connected Ephesus and Sardis with Susa at 90 days' distance and 450 'parasangs'; Ctesias in the lost close of his Persian history gave similar details for the road to Bactria and India (Nichols 2008: 109). The "Royal Road" passed from Sardis (ancient capital of Lydia) to reach the Halys River (modern Kızılırmak), then passed through the Cilician Gates, thence ran eastwards to the Euphrates River and continued towards Susa (the Achaemenid administrative official capital). There were 110 posting stations and inns at intervals of about four 'parasangs'; and at certain strategic points there were garrisons: of these Herodotus mentions four between Sardis and Susa – one at the Halys, and two on the borders of Cilicia. The larger rivers which were not bridged were crossed by pontoons (Hdt. 5.52-54). At posting stations along the routes couriers mounted on swift horses stood always in readiness to carry forward the king's

¹ Greek authors often gave distances in terms of 'parasangs' when describing distances within the Persian Empire. Herodotus regards the 'parasang' as a unit of road measurement, and states the equation 1 'parasang' = 30 'stades'. Many believe 'parasang' represents the distance covered in an hour, which would vary according to topography and season (Tuplin 1997: 404).

decrees, and whereas travelers normally took nearly three months from Sardis to Susa, the king's dispatches may have passed over the same road in a week (Hdt. 8.98).

Two major hypotheses of alternative routes have been proposed for intrinsic ambiguities in Herodotus' description which are northern and southern hypotheses. The possible reasons for the discrepancies are as follows; few topographical details, meager toponyms, disputable river passes, the long distance between the Cilician Gates and the Euphrates River, disproportion of the recapitulated total and detailed list of the number of royal stations and intervals, and nebulous concept of measurement unit. Ordinarily, the knowledge of the topography and historical records relevant to this road have been used to delineate the course of the road. In addition, as the intervals have been recorded, the succession of the earlier or later routes has also been considered.

The "northern hypothesis" suggests that the "Royal Road" should pass through arable northern area of the Tuz Gölü, the salt lake located in the central Anatolian region, rather than southern area of barren salt-steppe. Earlier Assyrian and Hittite routes are also mentioned as substructures of the "Royal Road". The general itinerary continues northeast of Sardis before crossing the Halys River; however, two alternative routes are suggested afterwards. The first one runs southeast through the highland of Kayseri or Mazaca, and the other one goes directly southwards crossing the Cilician Gates and then crossing over the Euphrates at Zeugma (Kiepert 1857; Ramsay 1890; Hogart 1895; Dillemann 1962; Young 1963; Landle 1987; Graf 1994; Muller 1994; Debord 1995) (Fig. 1).

The "southern hypothesis" concentrates on the shortest way due to the administrative purpose of the "Royal Road". The Halys River assumed as an ornamental touch is overlooked (Ramsay 1920: 90). The itinerary is delineated either by reference to Cyrus' march eastwards from Sardis in 401 BC (Xen. An. 1.2), which was identified entirely with the "Royal Road" (Calder 1925), or the later Roman road described by Strabo (14.2.29), which postulated to overlay on the Achaemenid Royal Road (French 1998) (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Map of alternative routes for the "northern hypothesis" (authors).



Fig. 2. Map of alternative routes for the “southern hypothesis” (authors).

Although, some archaeological researches have been carried out in particular with limited scopes, the identified routes have been either secondary roads or not placed in Anatolia. For instance, those successive sites identified as royal stations in Iran (Wright and Neely 2010; Askari Chaverdi *et al.* 2010), the settlement pattern classified as major and secondary administrative cores in Palestine (Roll and Tal 2008), hieroglyphic graffiti used during the reign of Darius the Great in Upper Egypt (Di Cerbo and Jasnow 1996), and the hollow ways identified as roads dated to the Neo-Assyrian period in northern Mesopotamia (Wilkinson *et al.* 2005) show signs of the route network under Achaemenid authority.

Factual evidence that supports the course of the road

The disintegration of Anatolian political units did not mean the complete elimination of all roads. Moreover, the Achaemenid administrators never seemed to have had enough time and laborers to construct the whole course of a new road by their own due to a somewhat rapid transition of political power. Forasmuch as a road is principally defined a communication way between two or more centers of human activities, its information can be gleaned from the surrounding terrains. Those sites which witness prolonged period of settlement occupation may be considered not only as major network cores for economic, political and religious influence but also the main centers to control significant roads. If the sites have been occupied constantly, it is viable to presume that the course of the roads linking them may have remained fairly steady.

Generally speaking, a relatively earlier presence of strong administrative and economic interactions and military conflicts suggest the presence of older routes. On this account, the “Royal Road” could have relied on earlier routes which have linked significant former

trading, religious or power centers. Moreover, enclosed or fortified areas act as attractors, and corresponding unstable points act as repellers. It is very probable, however, that the Achaemenids used those routes, which covered the outmost inchoate satrapies, to control divergent regions. Meanwhile appointing Satraps, who were normally chosen amongst elites, resulted in ensured administrative activities which facilitated the crossroad services. The so-called royal stations and post guards supposedly once stood inside the settlements or between them along the roadway.

Tumuli may point to the existence of settlements situated in peripheral zones (Roosevelt 2006: 71). Therefore, it is conceivable that tumuli consisting either Achaemenid style objects or architectural characteristics, specify a nearby Achaemenid settlement. Furthermore, looking at how topographic barriers funneled movement, the presence of a stable network of successive settlements may have demarcated the course of the “Royal Road” in Anatolia.

However, enjoying a hardheaded archaeological approach, it is indispensable to indicate the substantial evidence supporting the Achaemenid presence in the regions under discussion. Pottery remains are invaluable for ascertaining the occupation of the region by Achaemenid communities, with prevalent clay cups without handles and with flaring rims, which were found all across the satrapies and grouped as shallow or deep bowls or as the “Achaemenid bowl”, being in direct connection with the Achaemenid settlements (Dusinberre 1999: 76, 101, 103). Besides and accompanying “Achaemenid bowls”, further evidence such as the objects, seals, and seal impressions which reflect imperial Achaemenid iconography, small monuments such as fire altars, and the architectural style and stone cutting techniques which characterize this period, give exclusive access to the settlements as residencies or fortresses (Sumner 1986: 4, 7; Dusinberre 2003: 75-76; Dusinberre 2010: 333, 328-329).

Up until now, no cultural material that can be clearly defined as Achaemenid have been found in the upper Tigris region. However, this may not be indicating their lack of presence in this area but the complexities of the Achaemenids’ political outlook with little interest in this area or a probable use of available local ceramics. The spread of the “Triangle Ware”, which is considered to be a mark of the “Post Assyrian” period in the upper Tigris region (Matney *et al.* 2007: 43; Laneri 2016: 103), overly supports this assumption. As a consequence, the Achaemenids probably controlled and followed the road of communication but not the areas far apart from the Tigris River (Sagona 2004: 89).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The method, which we have applied to determine the course of the road, concentrates on identification of major successive Achaemenid settlements which are assumed to be link to each other by a road. The information and location of the sites have been drawn from the published archaeological research, historical records, and certain visual cartographic materials, including the topographical map of modern Turkey, and also using remote sensing methods.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Daskylion

Location: 2 km west of Ergili village near Manyas Lake on the district of Bandırma. It is equates with Hisar Tepe.

Periods occupied: From the eight century BC to the Byzantine period.

Daskylion identified as the satrapy of “Tayaiy Drayahya” was mentioned on inscriptions DB, 6; DPe, 2; XPh, 3, from which access to Sakae over the sea was probable (Schmitt 1972: 526). The city was the center of the Persian satrapy, from which the demesne of Hellespontine Phrygia was ruled over (Xen. Hell. 4.1.15).

Hundreds of seal impressions (the corpus of bullae) (Fig. 3) strengthen the presence of an Achaemenid administrative archive (Kaptan 2007: 281, 287-288). The mortuary stelae (Hanfmann 1966: 10) (Fig. 4), bronze arrows, lead bullets, and harnesses which resemble those at Persepolis, infrastructure of a great edifice as the satrap’s residence inside the settlement surrounded by fortification walls, the sanctuary place with a Persian style fire altar (Bakir 2003: 1-12), one segment of northwestern-southeastern road interpreted as a cult way of a 19 m length and a 6 m width under the Hellenistic layer (Coşkun 2005: 64) (Fig. 5), an Achaemenid bowl found in the burnt layer before Alexander invasion (Coşkun 2006: 53) attest Daskylion as a fortified Achaemenid period settlement.

Conclusive archaeological evidence shows that Daskylion has been a multicultural city for the trade activities during both the Lydian and Achaemenid periods and connection with Lydia has continued without interruption (Bakir 1995: 273). A cylinder seal in the name of Artimas, a Lydian satrap, found in Daskylion (Abe 2012: 8) could have increased the interaction through the possible extension of the mentioned excavated road. Although Herodotus proposed Ephesus as the other terminal by three days walk from Sardis, it seems as if he remarked that part of the road which directly concerned him.

The geographical location of Daskylion adjacent to the Sea of Marmara and Bosphorus strait also makes it a communicative gateway towards the western part of Anatolia.

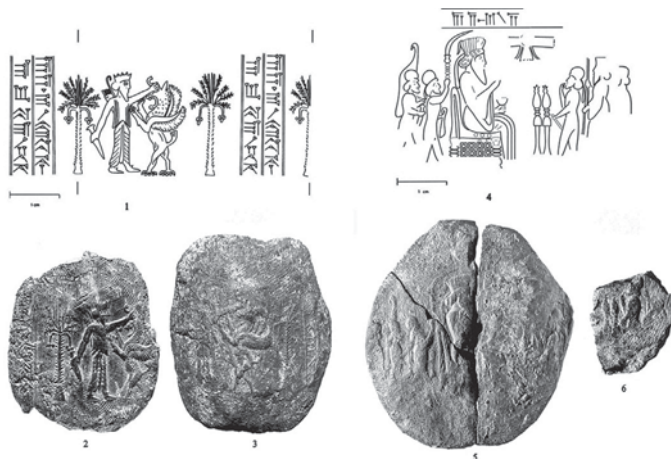


Fig. 3. Daskylion seal impressions. 1: Composite drawing of DS 3; 2, 3: DS 3; 4: Composite drawing of DS 4; 5, 6: DS 4, “the enthroned king” (Kaptan 2007: 287-288).



Fig. 4. Fragmentary stone relief from Daskylion (Abe 2012: 17).

Flourishing over so long a period, Daskylion could have reasonably been considered as a pivotal station along the Royal Road not only for communication with eastern part of Anatolia but also for further connection to western areas. In all probability, those western Achaemenid period settlements relevant to Granicus tumuli such as Dedetepe, Kızöldün and Çan (Brian Rose 2013: 127) could have been connected with Daskylion via a secondary route where the Thracians as a courtesy to Xerxes' army avoided cultivating (Hdt. 7.115).

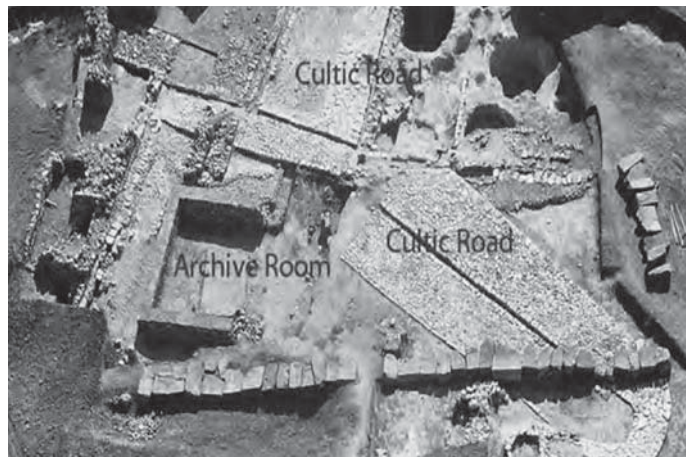


Fig. 5. Cultic road in Daskylion (İren 2010: 259).

Şahankaya

Location: in the high basin of the district of Gördes in the western Turkey.

Periods occupied: From the Achaemenid period to the Byzantine period.

The fortification site of Şahankaya situates on a section between the two peaks of a rock in a relatively uninhabited basin. It predominates the landscape in northern Lydia by its height and provides a visual catchment of the entire surrounding. Its panorama with Sardis and many other areas makes it a very strategic place. A peculiar cubic pedestal, propping a rounded stone projection topped by a shallow tub on the top of the stronghold has been known as a Persian-style fire altar (Fig. 6) (Dusinberre 2013: 85, 103). Roughly similar stone depressions have been observed around Rahmat Mountain in the province of Fars in Iran (Malekzade 1971: 19). These may have applied to be used as braziers for



Fig. 6. Fire bowl at Şahankaya (Dusinberre 2013: 103).

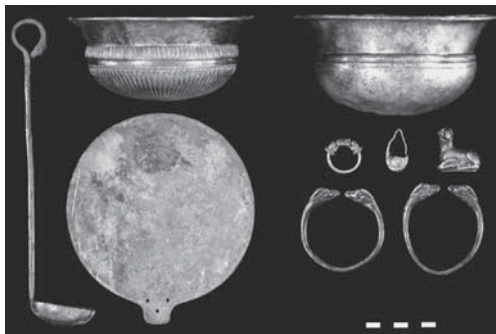


Fig. 7. Selected items from Gökçeler tumulus. MM 4611-16, 5288-90 (Dusinberre 2013: 151).



Fig. 8. Lead sling bullet of Tissaphernes with inscription (Foss 1975: Pl. 5).

visual communication. In conformity with Behiston inscription (DB 6), Darius laid emphasis on carrying out his orders day and night (Sharp 2009). He indicates obliquely on broadcasting service in the depth of night.

The Persian style objects of the deceased from Gökçeler tumulus (Fig. 7) at the base of the stronghold signify the Achaemenid presence in this location (Dusinberre 2013: 150-151). The appropriate situation of Şahankaya at 20 km east of Gördes (ancient Julia Gordus), where a lead sling bullet inscribed in Latin with the name of Tissaphernes as the satrap of Achaemenid Empire was found (Fig. 8) (Foss 1975: 30, Pl. 5), increases the protective function of this watchtower via the mountain route as a part of the “Royal Road” from Daskylion to Sardis.

Lale Tepe

Location: The tumulus is one of 17 tumuli around the modern city of Ahmetli, 11 km west of Sardis.

Periods occupied: Achaemenid period, perhaps in the early 5th century BC.

In spite that the tumulus has been plundered, the composition and general construction are similar to Bin Tepe tumuli of the 6th and 5th century BC. The technical and decorative details relevant to Klinai, together with ceramics and bones from 7 contexts attest this Achaemenid tomb as a family mausoleum with burial ceremonies were repeatedly conducted (Roosevelt 2008: 1-2, 12-15). Taking the road from Daskylion to Sardis into consideration, an Achaemenid period settlement relevant to Lale Tepe can be highly expected around west of Sardis.

Sardis

Location: At the foothills of the Mount Tmolus about 90 km east of Izmir and 4 km from Hermus River (modern Gediz).

Periods occupied: From the Early Bronze Age to the Roman Period.

Bilingual inscriptions (Lydian/Aramic-Lydian/Greek) show that Lydian, Achaemenid, and west Aegean dignitaries have settled in this multi period site. Moreover, the locally produced Achaemenid bowls (Fig. 9) from eight separate deposits between the Hellenistic and Lydian levels near the east of the city wall (Dusinberre 1999: 74-75, 78, 103), affluent stamp and cylinder seals (Fig. 10) made of gold and chalcedony reveal an important Achaemenid occupation where cohesion of the Achaemenid elites between the satrapal and central capitals could be possible (Dusinberre 2010: 323).

Fortification tablets of Persepolis (PFT 1321/1401) (Dusinberre 1999: 73) and historical documents mention travel from Sardis to Susa and vice versa. Two Achaemenid kings, Darius the Great and Xerxes, sojourned at Sardis, and two satraps, Artaphernes and Cyrus the younger, were kings' brothers (Steadman and McMahon 2011: 1121). In all probability, a major communication route may have linked Sardis and Hattusha/Boğazköy (the capital of the Hittite empire) as both centers had been old capitals and crucial trading centers (Garstang 1943: 41). The mentioned route could have been a part of the “Royal Road” during Achaemenid period (Starr 1963: 632).

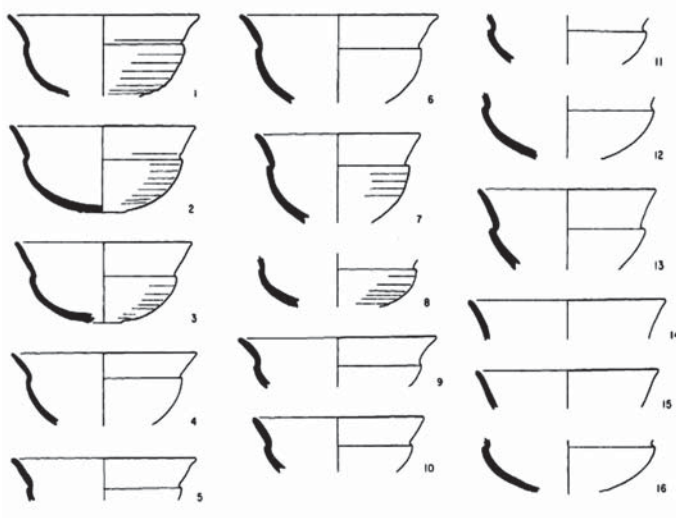


Fig. 9. Drawings of Achaemenid bowls from deposit 1, Sardis (Dusinberre 1999: 103).



Fig. 10. Signet seal from Sardis. IAM 4523, lion and bull combat (Dusinberre 2003: 278).

The Tumuli at Uşak-Güre

Location: 25 km west of Uşak and 100 km east of Sardis.

Periods occupied: 6th century BC.

Recovered items from four looted tumuli bear the stamp of the Achaemenid art (Özgen and Öztürk 1996: 48-53). The finds comprise mostly jewelry from Top Tepe (*ibid.* 52), metal artifacts (*ibid.* 88-89), and the seals from İnkiz Tepe (Dusinberre 2013: 72), the paintings of the kline of Ak Tepe (Baughan 2008: 30), and a metal vessel from Basmacı (Akbiyikoğlu 1991: 22), which support routine or administrative activities in the area. The tumuli might have overlooked the nobles' estates and nearby settlement along the "Royal Road" whereas they are arranged in a linear way adjacent to the Hermus River on the cusp of Lydia and Phrygia (Roosevelt 2006: 72). Furthermore, they would be noted as landmarks along a route for communication at the night.

Seyitömer Höyük

Location: 25 km northwest of Kütahya.

Periods occupied: From the Early Bronze to the late Roman period.

Excavations reveal that an early fortification system had been constantly used over during the later periods. The Achaemenid bowl shreds (both deep and shallow types) (Fig. 11) (Coşkun 2011: 65, 79) and four clay tags with Achaemenid seal impressions found at two contexts at the third layer of Seyitömer Höyük (Bilgen *et al.* 2009: 342-343) (Fig. 12) attest an Achaemenid period settlement on the mound. Fifteen storage jars had been excavated earlier at the same place where the seal impressions were found.

The seal impressions are believed to be tokens for service provision at a warehouse (Kaptan 2005: 362-364). The approximately equal distance of the mound to both satrapal centers of Daskylion and Sardis, increases the presence of a significant midway station along the “Royal Road” and a possible secondary road from Daskylion.

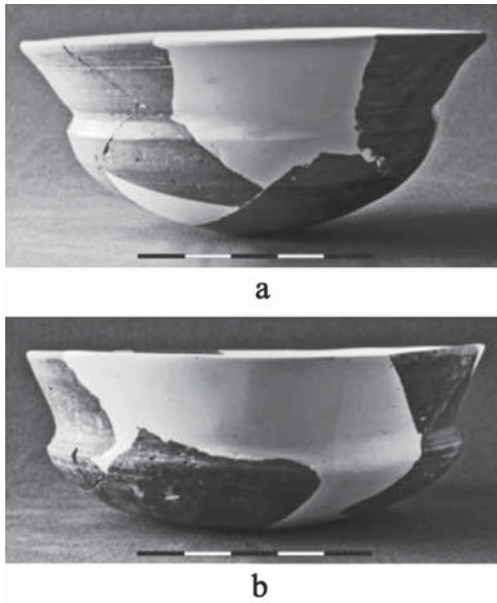


Fig. 11. Achaemenid bowls from Seyitömer Höyük (Coşkun 2011: 79).



Fig. 12. Cylinder seal impressions from Seyitömer Höyük, Kütahya Museum.
a: SHS 3.1 on Kt 9401; b: SHS 3. 2 on Kt 9401 (Kaptan 2005: 363-364).

Gordion

Location: 100 km southwest of Ankara and 10 km northwest of Polatlı.

Periods occupied: From the Middle Bronze Age to the Medieval period (Steadman and McMahon 2011: 1074).

The form and size of the mound is typical for long-term settlements, consisting of the monumental fortifications protecting a citadel, a lower town beside it, an outer town to the west and a scattering of tumulus mounds to the north and east (*ibid.* 1069-1070).

Gordion may have founded on an Anatolian military road which possibly functioned already during both in the 3rd millennium BC, according to the Assyrian annals (Young 1963: 351), and during the time of the Hittite Empire (Birmingham 1961: 185-195). Historical texts also represent Gordion as a significant stop along the Royal Road. Pharnabazos, the satrap of Hellespontine Phrygia, wintered at Gordion in 407 BC (Xen. Hell. 1.4), Agesilaos besieged the city unsuccessfully in 395 BC (McKechnie and Kern 1988: 16.6), and Alexander the Great cut the Gordion knot while following the “Royal Road” in 333 BC (Arrian Anab. 2.3.1-8).

The findings from excavations indicate that Gordion was an important center during Achaemenid Period as well. The Achaemenid bowls (Toteva 2009: 380), the seal and seal impressions (Fig. 13), two splendid administrative constructions adjacent to a drainage (Dusinberre 2010: 328-333), the glass vessels which seem to imitate the ceramic prototypes (Fig. 14) (Kealhofer 2005: 108-113), and the track winding round Phrygian tumuli, which is attributed to the Achaemenid period (Young 1963: 350) (Fig. 15), are linked to an Achaemenid period settlement along a well-frequented road.



Fig. 13. Left: Gordion, cylinder seal 100, “Achaemenid hegemonic”. Right: Seal impression 100 (Dusinberre 2010: 329-331).



Fig. 14. Molded glass phial with petal decoration (Kealhofer 2005: 108).



Fig. 15. Gordion, ancient road (Young 1957: Pl. 87).

Büklükale

Location: 60 km southeast of Ankara opposite the modern village of Köprüköy in Karakeçili, exactly on the left bank of the Halys River.

Periods occupied: From the Early Bronze Age to the Ottoman period (Matsumura 2016: 58-60).

As rivers have been often impediments for communication, the geographical location of Büklükale at the narrowest part of the Kızılırmak makes it an important place. The oldest information about crossing the Halys explains that King Croesus wended his way to Pteria through a road that was followed subsequently by Cyrus the Great in his pursuit (Hdt. 1.75).

There are grounds for supposing that the “Royal Road” may have passed through this place. The section of a cobbled road on the western side of the site, which runs toward the remnants of a Roman bridge beside a Seljuk one, some synthetic holes in the rock along the river that could have been applied to support a type of mechanism for crossing the river (Matsumura 2016: 59-60), and a construction with military function dated to the Late Iron Age (Matsumura 2010: 412), which could have been the post guard mentioned by Herodotus, highly attest the extension of the Gordion track towards the Halys River, which was the natural border of Phrygia in the east.

Oluz Höyük

Location: 2 km northwest of the village of Gözlek and 3 km of the Amasya-Çorum highway in north central Turkey.

Periods occupied: From the Early Bronze Age to 14th century AD (Dönmez 2013: 363-364).

The systematic archaeological excavations confirmed the existence of an Achaemenid period settlement including the remains of a roughly quadrangular structure in the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th layers of the Late Iron Age (Dönmez 2014: 61), abundant Achaemenid bowls (Fig. 16), a hollow shaped structure defined as a fire altar, the part of a SW-NE paved road (Fig. 17) (Dönmez and Yurtsever Beyazıt 2014: 124), and lead slings and ingots which reflect the martial prowess of the settlement (Dönmez and Yurtsever Beyazıt 2013: 192).



Fig. 16. An Achaemenid bowl, Oluz Höyük (Dönmez 2014: 63).



Fig. 17. South of the Persian Road extension, 2B architecture layer, Trench A, Oluz Höyük (Dönmez and Yurtsever Beyazıt 2014: 124).

The favorable environment of Oluz Höyük near the fertile Geldingen plain and a tributary of the Yeşilırmak, the Çekerek (Zuliya in Hittite texts), carries implications of considerable interest (Dönmez 2014: 63). The area is not only suitable for an Achaemenid garden, a 'Paradise', but also to deploy and purvey huge groups of people. It may be speculated that Oluz Höyük played an important role in Xerxes' campaign of 480 BC towards Phrygia after recruiting at Critalla (Hdt. 7.26). The archaeological finds of the later period also indicate the military significance of the road in the Roman times (Winfield 1977: 153), when the army was dispatched against the Mithridatic Kingdom of Pontus. The proximity and the accessibility of Oluz Höyük to the temple of Zela (modern Zile) is noteworthy for religious affiliation. The Achaemenids built a temple in Zela for the goddess Anahita in memory of their victory over Scythians who invaded Zela (Strabo 11, 8, 4). A similar temple and fire altar existed in Amasya and were depicted on a Roman bronze coin (Fig. 18) (Dönmez 2007: 109, 114). Moreover, the Achaemenid settlement sites situated on the Black Sea Basin (Beikzadeh and Iravani Ghadim 2017: 144) could have been connected with Oluz Höyük via Erzincan through bypass roads. By the same token secondary roads probably passed further northwest of Oluz Höyük to Paphlagonia through the Terme and Eldivan plains to connect the Achaemenid sites in the area (Johnson 2010: 368).



Fig. 18. Depiction of the fire altar in Amasya on the reverse of a Roman coin (Dönmez 2007: 114).

Uşaklı Höyük

Location: On the southern bank of the Eğri Öz Dere, northwest of the Kerkenes Dağ.
Periods occupied: From the Late Chalcolithic to the Byzantine period.

A long sequence of occupation at Uşaklı Höyük reveals its strategic importance in the area to the east of Yozgat. On the one hand, it is a proper candidate for Zippalanda, the Hittite ceremonial center; on the other hand it lays on the way connecting Bronze Age sites of Alişar Höyük and Kültepe. Today it is situated on a pivotal communication place on the Ankara-Sivas road (Mazzoni *et al.* 2011: 317-318).

Geophysical surveys have revealed the plan of an enormous structure under the ground that is consisted of a courtyard surrounded by small rooms, and which reflects similarities with the Achaemenid architecture known from Tille Höyük in eastern Turkey (*ibid.* 326). The Achaemenid bowls served as a key element to reveal that the major Hittite period of occupation, which included a citadel fortification, was followed by later occupations including the one during the Achaemenid period (Mazzoni *et al.* 2010: 118, 121, 158).

Tilkigediği Tepe

Location: On the northeastern arm of Kerkenes Dağ, and west of the junction of the Şahmuratlı Köy road with the Mehmetbeyli-Sorgun road.

Periods occupied: Late Iron Age.

Nearly all pottery found on Tilkigediği Tepe belong to Achaemenid bowls that restrict the occupation to the Achaemenid period. The mound seems to be circumvallated by the remnants of stone glacis on the northwestern side (Summers *et al.* 1995: 46). The dimension of stones, their gradient and the orderliness of fit are similar to those known from Sümerin Sivri Hisar, the paved slope of Göz Baba tumulus near the Tilkigediği Tepe (Summers 2001: 50) (Summers *et al.* 1995: 53), and Çeşka Kale in the heights around the city of Yozgat, where it looks down on the ancient road to Tavium.

These sites may be representing a regional integrated system of defense, and in fact, Tilkigediği Tepe may be a royal station or a guard post from which the nearby road was controlled (*ibid.* 46). The trajectory of the visible route stretching from the east of the village of Şahmuratlı to Keykavus Kale on Kerkenes Dağ (Summers 2001: 48) supports this view.

Çadır Höyük

Location: 16 km south of Sorgun in the Yozgat province of north-central Turkey, near the village of Peyniryemez in the Kanak Su Basin (Steadman and McMahon 2015: 69).

Periods occupied: From the Middle Chalcolithic Age to the 12th century CE (Steadman *et al.* 2019: 371, 374).

Cultural material, together with architectural and ceramic evidence from the Chalcolithic to Byzantine periods reveal a lengthy occupational sequence at Çadır Höyük (Steadman *et al.* 2017). Similarities in terms of material culture with Alişar Höyük signify an uninterrupted relationship with this settlement (Gorny *et al.* 2002: 121-122); which points to the presence of a route between them. A fortification system from the second millennium BC seem to suggest the substantial Hittite presence at the site dating to this period (Steadman *et al.* 2017: 224). The fortification walls from the Byzantine Period provide a much stronger chronology of occupation for this period (Steadman *et al.* 2015: 106). Most of the Late Iron Age levels at the site are associated with the workspaces perhaps for textile manufacturing (Steadman and McMahon 2015: 76). The Achaemenid bowls found near the probable gate of the fortification wall (Gorny 2004: 21) are an indication of the presence of an Achaemenid period settlement with an economic function probably located along the “Royal Road”.

Kınık Höyük

Location: In the province of Niğde at the foothill of Melendiz Mountain at the eastern edge of the Konya Plain (Steadman and McMahon, 2015: 98).

Periods occupied: From the Early Bronze Age to the Ottoman Period (*ibid.* 103).

Kınık Höyük is the largest identified site on the Bor-Ereğli plain with significant surface ceramics (*ibid.* 99). Southern Cappadocia had played an important role since ancient times in the control of the congested road via the Cilician Gates. The main roads passing through the area were disrupted by environmental changes occurring over the centuries as some regional water resources decreased (*ibid.* 123).

However, a continuity of occupation at Kınık Höyük reveals the long-lasting prominence of the location of this site along a well-trodden route which connected central Anatolia to southern Cilicia. An Achaemenid period settlement is attested at Kınık Höyük in conformity with the Achaemenid bowl sherds, kitchenware, terracotta animal figurines, zoomorphic vessels in the citadel fortification and in the intramural occupation (*ibid.* 101-106).

Zeyve Höyük (Porsuk)

Location: North of the Taurus Mountains near the town of Ulukışla adjacent to the Cilician Gates (Beyer 2010: 47).

Periods occupied: From the Late Bronze Age to the Late Roman period (Beyer *et al.* 2013: 201).

The site, which probably corresponds to the Assyrian city of Tunna, is situated nearby both the Cilician Gates and the silver and lead mines of the Taurus Mountains (Beyer 2010: 47). The strategic position of this mountainous passage as a crossroads on the way, through which the central Anatolian plateau connects to the Cilician plain, has always been worthy of remarks. According to Herodotus' description the "Royal Road" passed through the Cilician Gates.

Excavations revealed the existence of a compartmental fortification system that functioned throughout the Hittite period which was reconstructed during the Iron Age (*ibid.* 50-51).

A good illustration of archaeological finds is a stamped ceramic sherd found immediately under the Hellenistic strata at the northeast part of the mound (Beyer *et al.* 2006: 219). Two bearded men both wearing trousers and cowls (Bashlyk) and one of them hanging a dagger (Akinakes) on his left side are depicted face to face near the rim (Fig. 19).

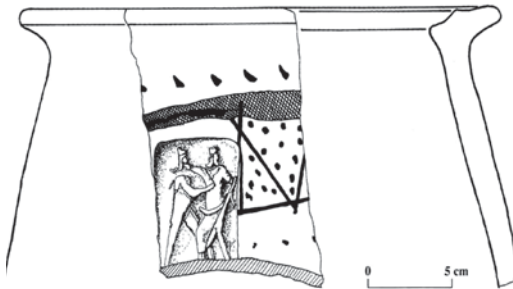


Fig. 19. Zeyve Höyük, drawing on pot sherd with painted and stamped decoration (Beyer *et al.* 2006: 228).

The iconography, fabric, and slip are concomitant with Achaemenid period examples (Casabonne 2007: 68). Although no other Achaemenid evidence has been found, it may well be accepted that the stamped ceramic sherd yields some information about royal communication. Accepting Zeyve Höyük to be a reference point at the entrance of the major corridor through the Taurus Mountain, the presence of a demolished royal station is feasible.

Tatarlı Höyük

Location: 85 km east of the provincial capital of Adana and about 10 km west of Toprakkale in the fertile plain of Ceyhan in Cilicia.

Periods occupied: From the Chalcolithic to the Byzantine periods (Girginer *et al.* 2014: 433-437).

The long duration of settlement attests to the strategic role of the site near the Belen Pass on the Amanus Mountain and in middle of trading routes. Based on finds uncovered, Tatarlı Höyük is speculated to be Luhuzatia or the city of seven spring waters, which was a Hittite sanctuary site in Kizzuwatna (Girginer and Cevher 2014: 38). An uncovered cobbled road, which the excavator defines at the Hittite caravan route, was in use all through the first millennium BC. The Iron Age architecture around the periphery of the road has been severely destroyed during the Hellenistic period.

A broken piece of a relief, which depicts Achaemenid guard's foot wearing a garment, and a fire altar can be seen south of the road (Girginer *et al.* 2014: 434-436). An Achaemenid period settlement was decisively attested after Achaemenid bowls were found at the third layer of the mound (Novak 2017: 175). Prior and recent surface surveys in the Cilician plain have determined the presence of a stable network of sites enjoying the Achaemenid bowls. Yeşil Höyük (Seton Williams 1954: 172), Ada Tepe 2 (*ibid.* 147), Sirkeli (*ibid.* 168), Aşar, Çatal Höyük, Mustafalı, Taşıl Höyük 1, and Taşıl Höyük 2 (Tülek and Ögüt 2013: 60, 66-67) are all situated along the west-east axis of the plain and may be coherent within a substantial network of roads, not least the "Royal Road".

Zincirli Höyük

Location: 100 km west of the Euphrates River. It is surrounded on the north by the Taurus Mountains, on the west by the Amanus range, and on the east by Kurt Dağ hills.

Periods occupied: From the Early Bronze to the Late Iron Age.

The site is located in a narrow rift valley, which varies 10 km to 20 km in width and forms a natural aisle. As this geographical area separates regions of north Syria from the Mediterranean Sea and the Cilician plain, it has been considered to be a crucial passageway of travel from the ancient times onwards. The coniferous trees in the Amanus Mountains near the site were the major source of timber and resin which were transported to Mesopotamia.

Archaeological findings, Assyrian texts, and local inscriptions indicate that the area surrounding Zincirli was a part of the Neo-Assyrian Empire throughout the 9th and 8th centuries BC. A royal citadel, an enormous gate, and two circular outer walls around

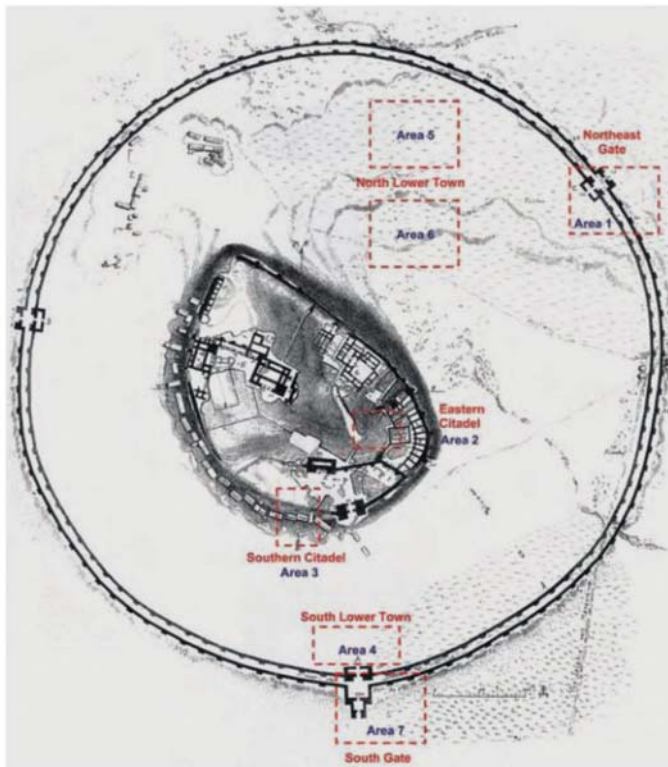


Fig. 20. Plan of Zincirli Höyük (Schloen and Fink 2009: 208).

the site (Fig. 20) from the late 9th century BC confirm the importance of the settlement along a route. The Achaemenid pottery and some artifacts found in the southern citadel and in the highest part of the eastern citadel, which may be a royal seat or a small fortress, reveal the Achaemenid occupation of the site (Schloen and Fink 2009: 204-212).

Dülük Baba Tepesi

Location: 10 km north of Gazientep, between the Euphrates River and the Taurus Mountains, and nearby the ancient city of Doliche (Blomer and Winter 2006: 185).

Periods occupied: From the Early First Millennium BC to the massive destruction in AD 253-236 by the Persian King Shapur I.

Outstanding finds such as small Syro-Phoenician grotesque figures, amulets, and pearl beads consecrations, Levantine scarabs, stone and glass cylinder or stamp seals with Neo-Babylonian and Achaemenid motifs, and fragments of black figure Attic ceramics reflect the cosmopolitan nature and importance of Dülük Baba Tepesi as a holy place with a multitude of cultural material. As the votive offerings fill the historical lacunae between the rituals of the Late Bronze and the Iron Ages gods Teshub-Hadad and that of god Jupiter Dolichenus in the Roman times, the site seems to be a communication gateway close to the intersections of important roads that connected Dülük Baba Tepesi with other destinations in Mesopotamia, Syria, Persia, Greece, and Rome (Blomer and Winter 2013: 365).



Fig. 21. Dülük Baba Tepesi, Achaemenid period bull head capital (Blomer and Winter 2006: 189).

The Late Iron Age level is marked by a stone capital in the shape of a bull's head (Fig. 21) similar to examples at Persepolis (Blomer and Winter 2006: 189) and a defensive wall section with the Achaemenid architectural technique in the east area of the hill (Blomer and Winter 2013: 362). Therefore, it can be suggested that high ranking persons or elites lived at Dülük Baba Tepesi for administrative connectivity and social networking as they were hospitable to the practices of other people and their beliefs due to the policy of tolerance for cultural diversity.

Şaraga Höyük

Location: 10 km east of Karkamış, and 800m east of the village of Keleklioğlu in the province of Gaziantep on the west bank of Euphrates River (Sertok *et al.* 2004: 282).

Periods occupied: From the Late Uruk to the 13th century CE (Greaves and Helwing 2003: 85).

The late Hittite inscriptions found around the mound and the forged limestone molds and pottery kilns indicate the political and cultural importance of the place particularly in connection with Carchemish during the Iron Age. The pottery kiln from the Achaemenid period shows the continuity of pottery activities over centuries. The parts of a road from periods preceding the Achaemenid period continued to be used after being refurbished (Sertok *et al.* 2004: 282-284), and as a consequence, it may well be the extension of the "Royal Road" towards the Euphrates River. The 'Anahita' gypsum tablets, like the ones from Tilbeş Höyük (Briant and Boucharlat 2013: 304), appear to confirm the presence of an Achaemenid settlement at the final geographical point before crossing the river.

Mezraa Teleilat

Location: 5 km south of Birecik on the east bank of the Euphrates River, and west of the village of Mezra (Özdoğan *et al.* 2000: 166).

Periods occupied: From the Neolithic to 3000 BC, and during the Iron Age (Karul *et al.* 2001: 68).

An Assyrian governor's residence or an administrative building, which consists of a central courtyard surrounded by numerous magazines with storage jars (Karul *et al.* 2002: 160), affirms geographical significance of the site along the earlier Assyrian road to Carchemish. Subsequently, Neo-Babylonian tablets recovered from the floor of the structure attest the incorporation of the region to the Neo-Babylonian Kingdom after Nebuchadnezzar's assault in 605 BC (Özdoğan *et al.* 2004: 239).

Excavations revealed that Assyrian complex ruined by the Achaemenid invasion was occupied after being refurbished. Although the Achaemenid layer has not been well-preserved due to the effects of tillage, the remains of a building and a stone wall which display Achaemenid architecture techniques, together with figurines of clay horses and heads of riders ascribed to the Achaemenid period (Karul *et al.* 2001: 68) clearly attest the presence of an Achaemenid period settlement along an earlier well-trodden route.

Sur Tepe

Location: 4 km northwest of modern city of Birecik, and at the east bank of the Euphrates River near the Syrian border.

Periods occupied: Late Chalcolithic, Early Bronze Age, and Late Iron Age (Greaves and Helwing 2003: 84).

The Achaemenid pottery, royal style glass seals, a stone tablet inscribed in Aramaic from the time period between 5th and 4th centuries BC, large storage jars imprinted with the royal symbol, the 'Farvahr', and horse bones excavated from the Assyrian large-scale administrative structure, which corresponds with the monumental building at Mezraa Teleilat, witness the reoccupation of the site during the Achaemenid period (Fuensanta and Civelli 2010: 67-69). Sur Tepe may have come to be regarded as a settlement enjoying a food storage depot located on the "Royal Road" to supply the nearby Achaemenid garrison at Hacinebi Tepe (Stein 2014: 284), which is approximately 2 km away, through a secondary road.

Tilbeş Höyük

Location: 22 km north of the modern city of Birecik on the left bank of the Euphrates River's bend (Fuensanta and Mısır 1998: 228).

Periods occupied: From the late Chalcolithic to the Islamic period (Fuensanta *et al.* 1999: 156).

The location of the site overlooking the fertile lands near the Euphrates River is quite remarkable and the rich cultural sequence makes Tilbeş Höyük a likely important site. Considering the discovered materials dated to earlier periods, a high population density in is estimated for the region. In addition to this, ancient seals verify that Assyrian trade routes passed through Tilbeş Höyük (*ibid.* 161)

Achaemenid findings consist of storage silos, a fire altar, and 'Anahita' molded plaquettes, which are evidence for the use of the site both as a storage place and a sacred location. Furthermore, most of the grave goods show consistencies with the corresponding women and riders figurines found at Hacinebi Tepe, Mezraa Teleilat, and Deve Höyük (*ibid.* 160).

Küllük Tepe (site 5)

Location: 2 km of southwest of Kurban Höyük (now flooded) at the south bank of the Euphrates River. The catchment of Küllük Tepe is shared by the Yaslıca district 1 km southwest, both lie within the Urfa-Gaziantep plateau (Wilkinson 1990: 5-6, 151).

Periods occupied: First Millennium BC.

The site (now flooded) was situated upon a colluvium and abutted the slopes surrounding the tributaries of the Euphrates. Distinguished by the plentiful supply of limestone fragments representing eroded stone foundations, Küllük Tepe could have been originally a defensive site overlooking one of the narrowest spots of the Euphrates River Valley (*ibid.* 151-152).

The Achaemenid pottery assemblage suggests a mid-first millennium BC date for the site (*ibid.* 113). There are two ancient routes on the Urfa-Gaziantep plateau, one of which runs southeast towards the Harran plain and eventually into Mesopotamia, the second one leads southwest towards the Mediterranean coast. The latter is attested by a road that linked Birecik and Samsat via the Roman Severan fortlet at Eski Hisar and a watchtower at Uzunburç (*ibid.* 8). Since Küllük Tepe is situated in area with Roman roads (*ibid.* 6, 111), the routes may have been developed earlier through interplays between Samsat and the İncesu corridor during the Achaemenid period.

Lidar Höyük

Location: 5 km north of Samsat in the province of Adıyaman at the east bank of the Euphrates River.

Periods occupied: From the Late Bronze Age to the 13th century CE.

The Late Iron Age was identified through 9 layers of the now flooded site of Lidar Höyük. Level 6A was dated to 600-500 B.C. on the basis of the pottery assemblage and a large official structure (Muller 1999: 123). A cist burial similar to those found at Deve Höyük and Hacınebi Tepe, containing an oval bronze bathtub coffin and the skeleton of an adult male, has been discovered at level 6A. The grave goods consist of a gold signet ring, a bronze candlestick embellished with a statuette of a man wearing the Persian style clothing (conceivably a scepter depicting a Magus), pilgrim flasks, and perfume bottles. (Stein 2014: 279). On the opposite side, across the Euphrates River, Gritille, which is now flooded, was a significant way station along the Urfa-Malatya road during later periods (Redford 1986: 106-108). Therefore, in all probability, Lidar Höyük, which was a larger twin settlement at this crossing point, could have been situated along a road existing in earlier period.

Tille Höyük

Location: 50 km north of Samsat in the province of Adıyaman at the west bank of the Euphrates River (Blaylock 2009: 1).

Periods occupied: From the Late Bronze Age to the 13th century AD (*ibid.* 17).

The Iron Age period, which was composed of 10 layers, was a prolonged period of settlement occupation at Tille Höyük (now flooded). This was a significant settlement



Fig. 22. Tille Höyük, block plan of level 10 (Blaylock 2009: 182).

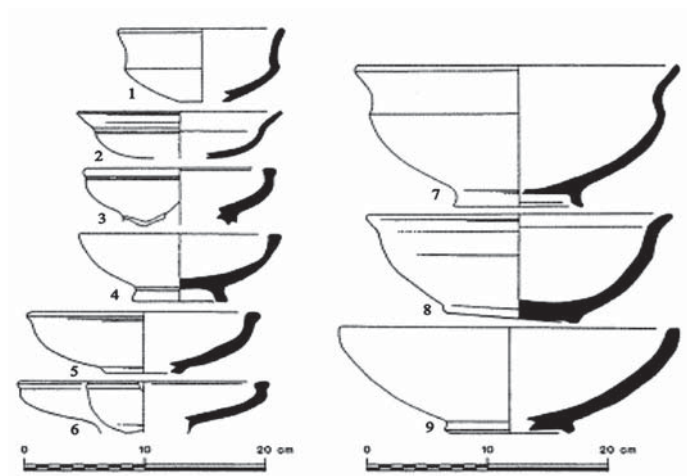


Fig. 23. Tille Höyük, drawings of Achaemenid bowls from level 10 (Blaylock 1999: 286).

during the Middle Iron Age when the Neo Hittite Kingdom of Kummuh was incorporated to the Neo-Assyrian Empire based on the discovered reliefs (Blaylock 1999: 264). The palatial construction and courtyard dating to the Neo-Assyrian period must have been rehabilitated at later times (Blaylock 2009: 23-35). The Achaemenid period settlement was identified on the basis of the presence of a structure, which finds close parallel in Persepolis (French 1986: 205) (Fig. 22), but also with the help of Achaemenid bowls and jars (Fig. 23) (Blaylock 1999: 271, 286).

Ziyaret Tepe

Location: 60 km east of Diyarbakir at the south bank of the Tigris River (Matney and Bauer 2000: 120).

Periods occupied: From the Late Bronze Age to the Islamic period (Matney *et al.* 2007: 301).

The mound is strategically situated in a fertile area that controls the east-west traffic on the Tigris River. Based on historical geography and details provided in Assyrian annals, Ziyaret Tepe was equated with Tushan, which was an Assyrian fortress that guarded the borderline of the empire near the Tigris River during the late second and first millennia BC (Matney and Bauer 2000: 121). The results of the excavations demonstrated the significance of the site all through Neo-Assyrian period. A remarkable administrative construction with wide-spreading courtyards and a gate, large pithoi, perhaps attesting to additional storage in the area, and contemporary tablets for administrative accounts, which mainly belonged to the late 7th century BC, have been revealed during the excavations.

The segments of cobbled roads have been identified at the lower town by geophysical investigation (Yıldırım and Gates 2007: 302). The third layer of the citadel mound (pit level) was defined as “Post-Assyrian” due to the existence of Triangle Ware pottery represented with handled jars, and painted or undecorated inverted rim bowls. The pottery dates to the same period with the drainage channels and a structure with two rooms containing tandoors (Matney *et al.* 2007: 43). As the excavations revealed that Ziyaret Tepe was one of the important Middle and Neo-Assyrian border military and administrative centers on the bank of the Tigris River between Diyarbakır and Batman, it is possible to claim that the route, which was extended there, was also being used during the “Post-Assyrian” period by the Achaemenids.

Hirbemerdon Tepe

Location: 40 km east of Bismil in the Ilisu Dam area at the west bank of the Tigris River.

Periods occupied: From the Late Chalcolithic to the Ottoman period (Laneri 2016: 11).

The late third millennium BC to the Middle Iron Age levels consisted of pottery examples corresponding to those known from northern Mesopotamia and the Khabur valley in Syria, showing signs of increasing trans-regional linkages between Mesopotamia and other political entities of the upper Tigris River region (Laneri 2004: 65-67). Assyrian annals have recorded that Shamshi-Adad’s sons had traversed towards north to cross the Tur ‘Abdin Mountains in the second millennium BC (Laneri *et al.* 2009: 215). Moreover, with the intention of oppressing local powers and creating a new political legacy, several Assyrian kings launched campaigns towards the land of Nairi near the upper Tigris River all through the first millennium BC (*ibid.* 216).

The fifth layer, which was occupied during 600-300 BC, has been ascribed to the Late Iron Age. This phase follows the succeeding Late Assyrian level and precedes the Hellenistic layers. The archaeological remains uncovered from numerous pits consist of sherds belonging to Triangle Ware pottery in the forms of storage jars, and many examples of craniate bowls similar to those found at Ziyaret Tepe were found (Laneri 2016: 103-104). The excavator calls this level “Post-Assyrian” and places it under the period of Achaemenid hegemony (*ibid.* 105). Therefore, Hirbemerdon Tepe can be assumed to be the next sequential transit settlement on the route during the Achaemenid period along the west bank of the Tigris River.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Utilizing the map of Turkey and online database of remote sensing data, an epitome of geographical characteristics of 26 successive Achaemenid settlements and approximate distances that were created is given in table 1. The locations of the successive settlements currently recorded within the study as fortified or residencies are plotted on the map to predict the course of the Achaemenid Royal Road (Fig. 3). The fortified nature of recorded long-life settlements invigorates their strategic roles along a linear sequential way.

Analysis through study reveals two settlements pertaining to the vicinity of tumuli, Lale Tepe and the tumuli at Uşak-Güre, which may be the residences of Achaemenid period high rank occupants. Moreover, the settlement associated with Gökçeler tumulus might have served as the domicile of the settlor for the isolated watchtower of Şahankaya over the mountainous way.

Among evidence supporting the existence of a thoroughfare are six discernible sections of cobbled road discovered at Daskylion, Gordion, Büklükale, Oluz Höyük, Tatarlı Höyük, and Ziyaret Tepe, which we identified as possible parts of the “Royal Road”. Whereas cobbled paths would seem to lead down inside the settlements, unpaved sections of the “Royal Road” move along the intervals.

The only single period settlement, Tilkigediği Tepe, accompanied by Çeşka Kale and Sümerin Sivri Hisar represent a regional integrated system of defense along the “Royal Road”. Fortified sites revealing the Achaemenid presence are Daskylion, Sardis, Seyitömer Höyük, Gordion, Uşaklı Höyük, Tilkigediği Tepe, Çadır Höyük, Zeyve Höyük, Tatarlı Höyük, Zincirli Höyük, Dülük Baba Tepesi, Ziyaret Tepe, and Küllük Tepe.

A more detailed description in this paper represents that the “Royal Road” presumably started from Daskylion, which was a pivotal administrative terminus at the northwest corner of Anatolia. The road continues towards Şahankaya and Lale Tepe in the Aegean region, and passes Sardis, which was the satrapal center of Lydia. Then it turns its course to the northeast towards the tumuli at Uşak-Güre and Seyitomer Höyük, in which the presence of a royal station is assumed.

However, addressing many Achaemenid material remains from Gordion, the satrapal center of Phrygia, the “Royal Road” must have continued towards Büklükale, where the military outpost mentioned by Herodotus is proposed to have existed at a location near the Halys River crossing. The road then bends northwards towards Oluz Höyük, which is equated with Critalla, and provides communication with the most distant regions. Stretches of the “Royal Road” across the Uşaklı Höyük, Çadır Höyük, Kınık Höyük, Zeyve Höyük, Tatarlı Höyük, Zincirli Höyük, and Dülük Baba Tepesi seem to be coincident with major earlier routes. The road reaches Şaraga Höyük, which was an Achaemenid settlement at the last point before crossing the Euphrates River, after it proceeds on a west-east axis through the Cilician plain, intervening sites such as Yeşil Höyük, Ada Tepe 2, and Sirkeli.

From Şaraga Höyük onwards, the course of the “Royal Road”, more or less follows the alignment of the Euphrates River, passing through Mezraa Teleilat, Sur Tepe, Tilbeş Höyük, Küllük Tepe, Lidar Höyük, and Tille Höyük. It must have been practicable in the Achaemenid period to stay on the eastern side of the Euphrates to avoid excess crossing

but recent reservoirs have changed the face of the region which makes it harder to make an assumption. Thence, the road connects the settlements of Ziyaret Tepe and Hirbemerdon Tepe at the south bank of the upper Tigris River, which were border defensive sites during the preceding Assyrian period. It could be reasonably assumed that for the rest of the route, the Achaemenid Royal Road continued along the west bank of the Tigris River, following the line of the earlier Assyrian roads going into Mesopotamia.

It seems that the proposed direction of the road starting from the Aegean region and going east to the central plateau, the Black Sea basin, the Mediterranean region, and southeastern Anatolia reinforces the idea of the existence of a second alternative route for the northern route hypothesis. The result of the calculations suggests that the journey from Daskylion to Hirbemerdon has a length of some 2,451 kilometers and shows that the road may not be the shortest or the easiest path as what frequently invoked in history, but cover progressively a more extensive area, providing easier access. However, accurate historical comparison of distances not only demands clear implication of 'parasang', which would require considering an additional distance between Daskylion and Sardis, but is also beyond purview of this article.

The Achaemenid Royal Road facilitated several crucial aspects of Achaemenid imperial governance, including communication, trade, and military movement. Archaeological materials and certain documents like the Persepolis Fortification tablets sometimes contain information about these functions. However, although this study mainly focuses on the course of the “Royal Road”, it should be added that archaeological findings from a few settlements including Daskylion, Gordion, and Çadır Höyük provide evidence of trade, whereas some sites like Daskylion, Şahankaya, Sardis, Seyitömer Höyük, Gordion, Zeyve Höyük, Dülük Baba Tepesi, Sur Tepe, and Lidar Höyük indicate that the function of the “Royal Road” were of the widest in administrative activities. Sites including Daskylion, Şahankaya, Gordion, Büklükale, Oluz Höyük, and Tilkigedigi Tepe reveal that the function of the road was wide also in martial matters.



Fig. 24. Map of the proposed course of the Achaemenid Royal Road (authors).

Table 1. Geographical characteristics of the settlements (authors).

(A: Starting point, B: Destination)	Distance (km)	Geographical Coordinates (UTM)		Region	Province
A: Daskylion	186	40.135116 N	28.065633 E	Marmara	Bursa
B: Şahankaya					
A: Şahankaya	59	38.855437 N	28.087024 E	Aegean	Manisa
B: Lale Tepe					
A: Lale Tepe	11	38.516085 N	27.937738 E	Aegean	Manisa
B: Sardis					
A: Sardis	109	38.493592 N	28.044204 E	Aegean	Manisa
B: Uşak-Güre tumuli					
A: Uşak-Güre tumuli	152	38.649374 N	29.153080 E	Central Anatolia	Uşak
B: Seyitomer Höyük					
A: Seyitomer Höyük	220	39.617720 N	29.884972E	Central Anatolia	Kutahya
B: Gordion					
A: Gordion	148	39.653575 N	31.995578 E	Central Anatolia	Ankara
B: Büklükale					
A: Büklükale	251	39.587705 E	33.428178 E	Central Anatolia	Kırıkkale
B: Oluz Höyük					
A: Oluz Höyük	164	40.556092 N	35.598585 E	Black Sea	Amasya
B: Uşaklı Höyük (via Çeşka Kale)					
A: Uşaklı Höyük	18	39.800885 N	35.027722 E	Central Anatolia	Yozgat
B: Tilikgediği Tepe					
A: Tilikgediği Tepe	10	39.762315 N	35.108168 E	Central Anatolia	Yozgat
B: Çadır Höyük					
A: Çadır Höyük	230	39.690903 N	35.141081 E	Central Anatolia	Yozgat
B: Kinik Höyük (via Sümerin Sivri Hisar, Göz Baba)					
A: Kinik Höyük	68	37.997944 N	34.371146 E	Central Anatolia	Niğde
B: Zeyve Höyük					
A: Zeyve Höyük	200	37.533469 N	34.565466 E	Mediterranean	Niğde
B: Tatarlı Höyük (via Yeşil Höyük, Sirkeli, Ada Tepe 2)					
A: Tatarlı Höyük	90	37.124368 N	36.052726 E	Mediterranean	Adana
B: Zincirli Höyük					
A: Zincirli Höyük	73	37.103336 N	36.682377 E	Southeastern Anatolia	Gaziantep
B: Dülük Baba Tepesi					
A: Dülük Baba Tepesi	79	37.162577 N	37.357958 E	Southeastern Anatolia	Gaziantep
B: Şaraga Höyük					

(A: Starting point, B: Destination)	Distance (km)	Geographical Coordinates (UTM)		Region	Province
A: Şaraga Höyük	12	36.919509 N	38.001012 E	Southeastern Anatolia	Gaziantep
B: Mezraa Teleilat					
A: Mezraa Teleilat	11	36.984404 N	37.982747 E	Southeastern Anatolia	Şanlıurfa
B: Sur Tepe					
A: Sur Tepe	10	37.055323 N	37.948186 E	Southeastern Anatolia	Şanlıurfa
B: Tilbeş Höyük					
A: Tilbeş Höyük	68	37.100458 N	37.895209 E	Southeastern Anatolia	Şanlıurfa
B: Küllük Tepe					
A: Küllük Tepe	23	37.466363 N	38.411831 E	Southeastern Anatolia	Şanlıurfa
B: Lidar Höyük					
A: Lidar Höyük	54	37.591030 N	38.566616 E	Southeastern Anatolia	Adıyaman
B: Tille Höyük					
A: Tille Höyük	179	37.719324 N	38.921269 E	Southeastern Anatolia	Adıyaman
B: Ziyaret Tepe					
A: Ziyaret Tepe	26	37.801527 N	40.794194 E	Southeastern Anatolia	Diyarbakır
B: Hirbemerdon Tepe		37.773988 N	41.015658 E	Southeastern Anatolia	Diyarbakır
	2451				

CONCLUSIONS

The current study is concerned with the delineation of the course of the relevant part of the Achaemenid Royal Road located in Anatolia. Exploration of ancient roads, if sometimes perplexing, provides an integrated perspective for spatial patterns of movement which could emerge consequential contacts amongst people. The Achaemenid Royal Road, which is described as a major line of communication between crucial cores, could conceivably pass through those places which had been occupied earlier, and later by the Achaemenid occupants during 550-330 B.C. In Anatolia, most of these sites experienced high degrees of settlement continuity; hence it is feasible to assume that also the path of the main road connecting them may have remained relatively stable. Therefore, in the light of the Achaemenid archaeological evidence, historical texts, and geographical constraints, invaluable information can be gleaned to build a linear sequential model of settlements.

The archaeological evidence would seem to suggest that the presence of Achaemenid bowls, Achaemenid style seals and impressions, architectural constructions and small monuments that are attributed to Achaemenids can be used to identify Achaemenid presence at fortified settlements or at peripheral zones around tumuli. On the basis of our present work, it is clear that archaeological sites include one stronghold, 2 tumuli, and 23 settlements, which in 6 of them sections of the road were discovered.

The Achaemenid Royal Road, which was the main artery of a network that traversed along the mentioned sites, permeated the empire not only to serve the royal dispatches and used for the movement of the royal troops, but also for trade. As the research has demonstrated the Achaemenid Royal Road, which at one time was one of the longest roads connecting the Achaemenid territories, overlaid former roads such as the ones built by the Assyrians and Hittites in Anatolia and inspired later Roman roads.

To conclude, as the proposed course of the “Royal Road” relatively corresponds to the “northern hypothesis”, it commences from the center of the north-westernmost satrapy in Anatolia, namely Daskylion.

The importance of this study is that the delineation of the proposed course for the “Royal Road” has a focus of arrangement based on the locations of Achaemenid settlements in Anatolia for the first time. Moreover, Daskylion has been introduced as a pivotal terminal along the Achaemenid Royal Road. Admittedly, further excavations will bring new evidence; but the locations of a succession of excavated settlements make it feasible to reassess the picture of the course of this thoroughfare. However, delineation of the extension of the “Royal Road”, which is not discussed in this paper, should also be proffered for further studies.

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