

*Urbanism at a Crossroad: Trade, Settlement, and Society in Early Bronze Age Anatolia*

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Throughout its history, Anatolia was a crossroad of people, ideas, and goods. This land bridge between Asia and Europe is more than a transit zone; it also supported the emergence of distinctive local cultures by cultivating interaction between neighboring groups and homegrown traditions.

In the Early Bronze Age (ca. 2500-2000 BC), a trend toward urbanism developed in western Anatolia, leading to the rise of a new kind of settlement, ranging in size from 3-10 hectares, with tightly packed rowhouses that were, in certain instances, arranged around a central public space. While these centers are relatively modest in size, they display signs of centralized planning and architectural elaboration, and suggest the emergence of an elite social class.

As urbanization took hold, a network of local and long-distance exchange, fueled by a nascent metals trade drove commerce between Anatolia and its neighbors. An overland route stretched from the Syro-Mesopotamian heartland to Northwest Anatolia, and a maritime route circulated throughout the Aegean islands reaching the western Anatolian coastline. The maritime route was disrupted around 2200 BC when the Aegean island cultures fell into decline, but the overland route remained vital, and urbanization continued to thrive across the Anatolian plateau well into the second millennium BC, culminating in the rise of the Hittite Empire.

This paper considers the reciprocal relationship between urbanism and inter-regional trade by examining archaeological data from the site of Seyitömer Höyük, in the Kütahya region of western Anatolia, during the final centuries of the third millennium BC. Although this region is often ignored or erroneously considered a cultural backwater, it was actually an important crossroad that maintained ties with the Aegean and Mesopotamian worlds. The analysis focuses on the distinctive style of architecture and urbanism at Seyitömer Höyük, its relationship to the broader tradition of urbanism in the region, and the ways in which patterns of mutual exchange allowed this site to sustain itself amidst changing inter-regional dynamics.