

## IŞUWA TOWARDS THE END OF THE XIII CENTURY BC (ON THE PROBLEM OF THE GROOVED WARE)\*

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### **Abstract**

At the end of the XIII century BC archaeological excavations carried out in various regions of Eastern Turkey have revealed a complete cultural break, thus marking the end of the Late Bronze Age (LBA) and the rise of the Early Iron Age (EIA). The main peculiarity for the new culture is the appearance of the so-called "grooved ware" which was unearthed during the excavations at numerous sites on the territory of Işuwa, a political unit well attested by Hittite cuneiform texts. This same ware is known also from several sites located in different parts of Eastern Highlands (eastern Lake Van basin, *Tillehöyük*, *Lidarhöyük*, Erzurum, Iğdır, etc.). To date the causes of this phenomenon are not clear. Ch. Burney and V. Sevin were the first to assume that at least in the case of the Upper Euphrates basin the transition from LBA to EIA was the result of migration from Transcaucasia. Later this assumption was cast doubt on by other archaeologists. U. Müller suggested that the source for the grooved ware should be looked for in Işuwa, and that later some population of this region moved to the south and south-east.

For the solution to this problem the author refers to the movement of the population of the Kura-Araxes culture of Transcaucasia and neighboring regions to the south-west and south which happened about 2000 years before the end of the LBA, during the termination of the Early Bronze Age I in Transcaucasia (end of the IV millennium BC). Most probably, the causes of both migrations could be the result of the so-called 5.2 and 3.2 kiloyear climatic events. Strikingly, the routes of the Kura-Araxes I migrants coincide with that of the grooved ware people. Thus, the suggestion of Ch. Burney and V. Sevin seem more plausible than the proposals put forward by later authors. Most probably in both cases we deal with significant migrations of Transcaucasian population groups.

**Keywords:** Işuwa, Hittite Empire, LBA-EIA transition, Altnova, grooved ware, Kura-Araxes culture.

During the disintegration of the Hittite Empire at the end of the XIII century BC on the eastern regions of its political and cultural influence archaeological data indicates fundamental changes. In the Elazığ region located to the east of the Euphrates, as well as in Malatya, to the west of the river, archaeological excavations show the end of the once strong Hittite cultural influence and the rise of a previously unknown, new culture. However scanty the Hittite cuneiform texts in regard to

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the political situation in this region towards the end of the second half of the XIII century BC are, they allow us to assume that the local tribal units were dominated by the Hittite Empire. With the end of the Hittite Empire and its written tradition, because of the lack of sources, the understanding of the causes of the abovementioned changes is greatly complicated. And about one century later, from the late XIII century until the mid-XII century BC, Assyrian texts (Tiglathpileser I and Ashshurbelkala) contain very limited information about the territory of the kingdom of Işuwa which occupied a part of the Upper Euphrates region<sup>1</sup>.

According to the written sources and archaeological data, Işuwa was a heavily populated region at least from the Early Bronze Age (EBA), maybe even from the Chalcolithic period. In the article we shall not discuss the problem of the Late Bronze Age (LBA) population<sup>2</sup>, but rather focus on the demographic changes which happened here towards the end of LBA and the beginning of EIA.

### **Archaeological data**

For the study of the population of Işuwa, the number of settlements and their pattern are of utmost importance salvage archaeological excavations carried out in 1968-1970 which precedes the building of the Keban and Karakaya dams on Karasu and Muradsu<sup>3</sup>. These works have continued until now in the neighboring regions of both dams. In the course of excavations numerous sites were studied.

Further studies were carried in 2020 on the territory of Işuwa, particularly in the area which lies to the south and south-east of Elazığ (Uluova) within the frames of the “Elazığ Prehistoric Archaeological Survey” project [EPAS] aimed at the documentation of archaeological sites [29]. In the course of excavations, a total of 38 sites were investigated, among them 17 new ones. A significant number of sites show the existence of a multilayered occupation beginning from Neolithic up to Late Bronze Age (in some cases even from the Chalcolithic period). Some sites continue to function also in the succeeding periods (including the Middle Ages). If we add to these sites those which were studied before this project during the salvage excavations in 1968-1976 (now under the waters of Keban reservoir - *Korucutepe*, *Norşuntepe*, *Tepecik*, *Tülintepe*, *Değirmentepe* etc.)<sup>4</sup>, it becomes clear that this considerably small region was heavily populated during the Bronze Age.

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<sup>1</sup> For the study of northern campaigns of these kings directed against Nairi and Uruatri see [32: 48-61; 14: 29-57, etc.].

<sup>2</sup> Hittite texts contain the names of approximately 20 settlements located in Işuwa, which may probably be the same as those excavated in Altınova and its neighborhood. For the list of these settlements see [21].

<sup>3</sup> The results of archaeological excavations and surveys have been published in a considerable number of studies [15 (*Norşuntepe*) and further reports [36 (*Korucutepe*); 37; 10], and series of publication under the program of Keban Project Activities.

<sup>4</sup> Middle East Technical University. Keban Project Publications. Ankara. For the chronology and brief description of sites in the Malatya and Elazığ provinces see [10: 389-396] (including those which have Late Chalcolithic and Late Uruk remains).

Thus, on the territory of Išuwa of the Hittite sources numerous settlements have been identified; a considerable number of these show clear traces of habitation since the Early Bronze Age (some even from Late Chalcolithic)<sup>5</sup>. In the LBA I a significant increase in population was recorded [7: 405, Table 9]<sup>6</sup>. And already in LBA II the number of new settlements founded by the Kura-Araxes newcomers reaches 46, where approximately 4500 people live. About 54% percent of these settlements were located on mounds [11: 66; 3: 99]. The pottery inventory of these new settlements is exclusively Transcaucasian Kura-Araxes; local production is absent [4: 123]<sup>7</sup>. Only in Altınova (Kharberd plain of Armenian sources) 25 settlements were identified. All these settlements are small ones; among them three have 2 hectares of habitable area, five are medium-sized, and the rest cover even less space [11: 69]. During this period the local population continues to live in their original settlements but side by side with newcomers. It is worth mentioning that the dwellings of locals and newcomers are located close to each other [4: 122]<sup>8</sup>. This could speak in favor of the assumption that in this period between the two different cultures there already existed some integrity.

Much more complicated is the situation during the Middle Bronze Age. According to T. Şerifoğlu, in Altınova and its neighborhood a significant increase in population is also visible, although its impact on the region is not so clear like in the EBA [31: 103]<sup>9</sup>.

Regarding the LBA-EIA transition, one should state the following. In the EIA a significant increase in the settlements is visible<sup>10</sup>. In numerous sites of Altınova and Malatya plain (*Norşuntepe, Korucutepe, Tepecik, Değirmentepe, Imikuşağı, Tülintepe, Arslantepe*, etc.) fundamental changes were fixed, which points on the presence of a new population. The new culture which appears in the course of this transition is characterized by the next features:<sup>11</sup>

- 1) Significant decrease of the LBA sites and the number of population;
- 2) Traces of severe destructions in some sites (*Norşuntepe, Korucutepe* etc.);

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<sup>5</sup> For the list of sites and description of the Kura-Araxes material culture during the Bronze Age see [29: 181]. The Early Bronze Age I period is represented especially in those sites which are currently under the waters of reservoir and also after the studies in the frames of EPAS (*Tadım Höyük, Kilittepe, Dedepınarı, Körküyük Höyük, Könk, etc.*).

<sup>6</sup> The appearance of the characteristic Kura-Araxes black and red burnished ware marks the increase of the number of sites [4: 118].

<sup>7</sup> See the satellite map of sites which contain the Kura-Araxes pottery [4: 114].

<sup>8</sup> The study of the Early Bronze Age I Kura-Araxes pottery at *Tepecik* (now under the reservoir) comprises only 35 percent of total ceramics but in EBA II it reaches 60 percent not only here but in other sites of the region, and 90 percent in EBA III.

<sup>9</sup> The author thinks that it is difficult to state mass influx of alien population into Išuwa during MBA, although one could not rule out the arrival of some Hittite, Luwian, and Hurrian ethnic groups.

<sup>10</sup> Around 50 percent according to V. Sevin [33: 95]. See also [29: 182].

<sup>11</sup> For the description of new cultural traits see [33: 87-95; 39: 18-21; 1: 476ff., also in 19; 20: 160-162].

3) Increase in number of EIA settlements comparing with the previous period (about 50%);

4) Influx of new and primitive cultural traits, which speaks in favor of the existence of newcomers;

5) Distinctive features of the new culture - a) pottery mostly is made of low quality clay, without potter's wheel or slow wheel, limited repertory of wares [38: 155], b) primitive architecture (absence of planned building activities), the absence of administrative and cultic buildings (in *Norşuntepe*) [1: 476ff.]. Instead of "cities" of the Hittite period at *Norşuntepe* and *Korucutepe* we encounter small rural settlements [15: 105; 36: 56; 27:107-112]. And, on a final note, the transition shows cultural discontinuity.

For the study of the number of settlements and population estimates an important question arises: what the background of these changes described above was. One may wonder how the causes of this transition could be explained: whether it was a result of inner developments (for example, demographic blow), or we deal with impulses from outside (that is the influx of a significant portion of the alien population), remains unknown.

If we try to compare the impact of the Kura-Araxes population on the region under study (specific pottery, architecture, etc.) and the effect of the EBA-EIA transition on Işuwa, some similarities could be established.

The question is whether the EIA pottery could appear in Işuwa along with the people who made them. While the EBA migration into the region could not be doubted, as to the EIA, it still remains unsolved. The main peculiarity of the LBA-EIA transition rests on the appearance of large quantities of the so-called "grooved ware". Still Ch. Burney and V. Sevin pointed to the possibility that the source of this ware could be Transcaucasia [9; 33]. Let us mention that besides Işuwa, the grooved ware was found during the LBA-EIA transition and later, until the VIII century BC also in the Upper Tigris sites (*Uçtepe*, *Ziyarettepe*, etc.) [23: 129] and to the south (*Tillehöyük* [6], *Lidarhöyük* [27]), in the eastern basin of Lake Van (the cemetery near the village Karagündüz, Yoncatepe, the neighborhood of the Van citadel, *Evditepe*, *Alacahan*, *Dilkaya Höyük*, etc.) [34; 5: 195-200; 16; 13 (for the geography of the grooved ware and typological study of this ware unearthed from different sites)].

Taking into account the wide geography of this ware (besides the regions listed above it is fixed in Kars, Erzurum, the neighborhood of Ararat, Iğdır, many sites of Armenia), one may adhere to the proposal of the large-scaled migration (regardless of its duration - one-time mass population movement or gradual spread into different regions) which during the XII century BC probably should have covered extensive geographical areas.

After the studies by Ch. Burney and V. Sevin some archaeologists proposed to look for the original place of this ware exactly in Işuwa. According to U. Müller, the source of this ware should be looked for in the Upper Euphrates area (Işuwa) and its spread should be the outcome of the migration of some portion of its popu-

lation which had moved and settled down in the regions lying to the south-east [26: 142]. So, the proposal regarding the Mushku association of the grooved ware and its connection with the Transcaucasian location before migrations have been cast doubt on. G. D. Summers and some others find that the geography of the grooved ware does not coincide with the regions the Mushku tribes referred to by Assyrian sources used to inhabit [35: 246-247; 2: 398; 30: 119].

Under the light of available data, several remarks regarding the problem of the grooved ware could prove useful.

If we suppose that it is exactly from Išuwa that the outpour of population at the end of LBA took place, then two questions should be addressed:

1. What happened in Išuwa during the disintegration of the Hittite Empire which resulted in the migrations of its population and their resettlement in different parts of the Eastern Highlands. Taking into account the wide geography of the grooved ware and the possibility that the list of archaeological sites which contain this type of pottery could be significantly increased in the future, one could definitely speak of quite a large quantity of migrants.

Although the territory of Išuwa lies in the semi-arid climatic zone, the ratio of annual precipitation is quite high (500-600 mm). It is lower in the Malatya plain (around 400 mm), but to the north of Muradsu it reaches 1000 mm. [31: 103].

The plains of Malatya and Altınova stand out with good agricultural potential. For example, according to the memoirs of the British diplomat K. Brant who visited this part of the Ottoman Empire in the 1830s, in Altınova the wheat yields 1:16 [8: 207]. In this respect the plain of Malatya has more favorable conditions, since the climate is milder and the terrain is flat.

The territory of Išuwa and its neighborhood has rich deposits of natural resources, especially metals<sup>12</sup>. Along with agriculture, the deposits of different metals (copper in Erganimaden<sup>13</sup>, iron in Divriği and Hasançelebi<sup>14</sup>, tin in the Malatya plain, Keban, Altınova and Başkil [31: 103]) created favorable conditions for the development of crafts.

Geographically Išuwa lies at the crossroads of three neighboring regions. Through its territory major routes that connect Central Anatolia and Cilicia with the Eastern Highlands and Mesopotamia run. Towards the south the road runs through Elazığ and, bypassing Erganimaden, continues until Mesopotamia. Another road proceeds to the east and through Mush reaches the northern shores of Lake Van and further to Transcaucasia. The third road from Elazığ runs to the north-east and through Erzincan plain also to Transcaucasia. Thus, Išuwa could be regarded as a contact zone [22: 69-70]. This region comprises a natural corridor through which different migrations took place. In all likelihood, some groups of migrants

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<sup>12</sup> The map of Išuwa-Malatya see [7.II: Karte 4].

<sup>13</sup> Copper mines of Erganimaden were the richest deposits of the Middle East along with those of Cyprus and Sinai.

<sup>14</sup> The mines of Divriği and Hasançelebi which have not exhausted their resources yet.

may have settled down here. Probably, the existence of personal names representing different languages still in the Hittite texts could be regarded as a consequence of this special place of Išuwa [21]. The economic potential and constant political contacts with neighboring regions make the tribal units of Išuwa small but economically stable.

In the case of a significant outpour of local population at the beginning of the EIA one might expect to find the decrease of settlements, but the opposite situation is apparent. In the EIA we see a significant increase of settlements (about 50 percent, see above). Despite the fact that Išuwa was densely populated in the LBA, it could hardly be regarded as a starting point for such a large-scale outpour. Economic potential and abundant water resources definitely could not force the population to look for more favorable places of subsistence in other regions including Northern Mesopotamia and even Transcaucasia.

2. According to A. Erdem, the grooved ware unearthed in different locations is not homogeneous. Along with similarities, it also has several distinctive features (color and quality of clay, burnishing techniques) [13: 114]. Different features of this ware could be observed in various regions. This could testify in favor of the assumption that the makers of the grooved ware had arrived in their future habitats from a much wider geographical area than that of Išuwa. Otherwise the existence of such differences in this ware would be difficult to explain.

3. The next argument against the Išuwaeen starting point of this ware is the XIII century crisis which is fully attested in the Near East and Aegean basin and had a negative impact on contemporary states (Hittite Empire, Egypt, Assyria, etc.). In this context the developments to the east of the Euphrates might be fully explained. During the so-called 3.2 kiloyear event (the Late Bronze age collapse, late XIII-XI centuries BC) major droughts were attested in the Northern hemisphere which resulted in the collapse of Near Eastern and Mycenaean Late Bronze age civilizations<sup>15</sup>. One of the most distinctive features of this period was continuous deterioration of climatic situation, and as a consequence political instability, economic difficulties of states, the collapse of some (Hittite Empire, Mycenaean states, etc.) and decrease in political activity of others (Assyria, Egypt). The next peculiarity of the crisis could be seen in the migrations of large population groups (the "Sea-peoples", Aramaeans, Central Anatolians to the south, North Balkanic population into Asia Minor and others). Possibly, exactly in this context the spread of the grooved ware in the Eastern Highlands should be explained.

4. In regard to the proposed connection between the makers of the grooved ware and Mushku tribes referred to in the Middle Assyrian texts, it is necessary to mention the following. The texts of Tiglathpileser I tell that 50 years before his reign (in 1164 BC) some ethnic groups - Mushku, Kashku and Apishlu - had in-

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<sup>15</sup> For this period see [20 - with references on extant studies to that date]. See also most recent climatological studies where this period is thoroughly discussed in regard to different regions of Eastern Mediterranean [28; 17; 24; 18, etc.].

vaded and settled down in Alzi and later advanced into the south and reached Northern Mesopotamia. It should be remembered that "Nairi lands" figure still during Tukulti-Ninurta I (that is in the last quarter of the XIII century BC), against whom the Assyrian king had organized a campaign in the third year of his reign. Alzi itself was part of "Nairi" tribal union. If so, who were the Mushku and other ethnic groups? If the population of Nairi were the grooved ware people, they could not be identical with the Mushku. Not to mention Kashku who were the well-known population of north-eastern Asia Minor (Pontic zone) still from the mid-II millennium BC according to the Hittite texts, who had nothing to do with Išuwa. There is little chance to locate these tribes in Išuwa and Nairi slightly before the LBA system collapses.

### **Summary**

Based upon the arguments referred to above, one should suggest the next preliminary proposal in regard to the spread of the grooved ware during the LBA-EIA transition.

Despite the fact that the territory of Išuwa is definitely the region where the grooved ware is represented abundantly, the proposal of the spread of the part of its population at the close of the LBA lacks more decisive arguments. At the same time, the movements of the Kura-Araxes population at the close of the EBA I are strikingly comparable with that during the LBA-EIA transition. In the EIA the grooved ware was unearthed exactly in the same regions where the EBA I ceramics and architecture were present around 2000 years ago. It seems that this is not accidental. The routes of the Kura-Araxes I migrants coincide with that of the grooved ware people. In both cases, taking into account the 5.2 and 3.2 kiloyear events, one may find the suggestion of Ch. Burney and V. Sevin more plausible than the proposals put forward by later authors. Most probably in both cases we deal with significant migrations of Transcaucasian population groups.

As to these migrations, it would be premature to speak about one-time large advancement. The changes in the environment might have a different impact on the lifestyle of population groups who live in this extensive region. This is especially true if one deals with non-homogeneous territories and the absence of statehood in the former Kura-Araxes cultural zone. Probably Transcaucasia and its western neighboring regions until modern Erzurum were organized as tribal unions whose population practiced agriculture in lowlands and transhumance in the nearby mountainous areas. The proposed outpour of population should have covered a considerable time span. Probably such a solution to the problem could explain different typological features of the grooved ware in different regions where it was found.

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**ԻՍՈՒՎԱՆ Մ.Թ.Ա. XIII ԴԱՐԻ ՎԵՐՋԵՐԻՆ  
(ԱՎՈՍԱՎՈՐ ԽԵՑԵՂԵՆԻ ԽՆԴՐԻ ՇՈՒՐՋ)**

*Արամ Քոսյան*

**Քանալի բառեր՝** Իսուվա, Խեթական տերություն, Ուշբրոնզեդար-վաղերկաթեդար անցում, Ալթընսոլա, ակոսավոր խեցեղեն, Կուր-Արաքսյան մշակույթ:

Հնագիտական պեղումների շնորհիվ մ.թ.ա. XIII դարի վերջերին հստակ նկատվում է Հայկական լեռնաշխարհի արևմտյան շրջաններում Ուշբրոնզեդարյան մշակույթի կտրուկ ավարտ և նոր, պարզունակ մշակույթով բնորոշվող բնակչության ներկայություն: Այդ նոր մշակույթի վկայությունը այսպես կոչված

«ակոսավոր խեցեղենն է», որը մեծ քանակությամբ հայտնաբերվել է ինչպես Իսուվայում, այնպես էլ Լեռնաշխարհի մյուս շրջաններում: Նույն երևույթն առկա է նաև Իսուվայից հարավ՝ Հյուսիսային Միջագետքի մի շարք (*Թիլլեհյոյուք*, *Լիդարիյոյուք* և այլն), Վանա լճից արևելք ընկած հնավայրերում (*Քարագյունդյուզ*, *Էվրիթեփե*, *Ալաջահան* և այլն), ինչպես նաև Էրզրումի, Արարատ լեռան շրջակայքում և այլուր:

Անցումային փուլում Իսուվայի տարածքում պեղված մեծաքանակ հնավայրերում առկա է բնակավայրերի քանակական զգալի աճ, ինչը կարող է վկայել նոր բնակչության ներհոսքի մասին:

Իսուվայում և այլ շրջաններում վերոհիշյալ անցումային փուլում նոր մշակույթի կրողներին դեռևս Չ. Բըրնին և Վ. Սևինը առաջարկել էին դիտել որպես Այսրկովկասից եկած բնակչություն: Այդ տեսակետը ավելի ուշ կասկածի տակ առնվեց: Փոխարենն առաջարկվեց ակոսավոր խեցեղենի աղբյուրը տեսնել հենց Իսուվայում, որտեղից էլ սկսվել է դրանց տեղաշարժը այլ վայրեր:

Իսուվայում ակոսավոր խեցեղենի աղբյուրը և դրա ստեղծողների գալստյան պատճառը կարող է նոր լուծում ստանալ նշված իրադարձությունից շուրջ 2000 տարի առաջ Այսրկովկասից Կուր-Արաքսյան մշակույթի I փուլի ավարտին (մ.թ.ա. IV հազ. վերջ) դեպի Վերին Եփրատի ավազան և այլ վայրեր ընթացած բնակչության տեղաշարժի հետ Ուշբրոնզեդար-վաղերկաթեդար անցման համադրման միջոցով: Երկու դեպքում էլ առկա են հնավայրերի քանակական աճ և նոր մշակույթի ակնառու հետքեր: Երկրորդ դեպքում՝ ի տարբերություն առաջինի, նախորդող փուլի մշակույթն ուղղակի վերանում է:

Որպես վերոհիշյալ բնակչության տեղաշարժերի պատճառ կարելի է առաջարկել մ.թ.ա. IV հազ. վերջերին և Ուշբրոնզեդարի ավարտին Առաջավոր Ասիայի շրջակա միջավայրում տեղ գտած կլիմայական փոփոխությունները: