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Iron Age *fibulae* in the museum of Şanlıurfa

Abstract

In this brief article five bronze *fibulae*, being exposed in the museum of Şanlıurfa and belonging to the Iron Age, will be presented. At least two of these five were found at Lidar Höyük.

Keywords

Fibula, Iron Age, museum of Şanlıurfa, Lidar Höyük, southeastern Anatolia, bronze finds.

Özet

Şanlıurfa Müzesi'ndeki Demir Çağı Fibulaları: Bu kısa makalede Şanlıurfa Müzesi'nde sergilenmekte olan ve Demir Çağı'na ait beş adet bronz fibula tanıtılacaktır. Bu fibulalardan en az ikisi Lidar Höyük'te bulunmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Fibula, Demir Çağı, Şanlıurfa Müzesi, Lidar Höyük, Güneydoğu Anadolu Bölgesi, bronz buluntular.

In memoriam Klaus Schmidt (1953–†2014)

In the museum of Şanlıurfa a minor collection of bronze *fibulae* of the Iron Age is being exposed which consists of only five pieces and only two of which were published in the museum's catalogue recently,¹ but not in greater extend. According to the museum's catalogue and inventory books three of these *fibulae*, i.e. nos. 1–2 and 5, are said to be originated from Lidar Höyük (**fig. 1**)

¹ Karul, Kozbe and Yavuzkır 2017, 320 (our cat. no. 5) and 347 (our cat. no. 2).

which was situated on the east bank of the Fırat river, about 50 km northwest of Şanlıurfa where excavations were carried out between 1979 and 1987 by a team from the *Ruprecht-Karls-Universität Heidelberg*. Since 1988 this höyük site has been flooded by the waters of the Atatürk Dam Basin where the layers of Late Chalcolithic, Early Bronze Age, Middle Bronze Age, Late Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman/Byzantine and Islamic periods were discovered; however, no *fibula* is known in its publications.² The other two *fibulae* in the museum of Şanlıurfa, *i.e.* nos. 3–4, were supposedly purchased by the museum and therefore one cannot tell their provenance with certainty. Date of three pieces were wrongly indicated as “Late Roman”. These two groups are being displayed in two different display cases in different halls of the new museum in Şanlıurfa. The present article does not cover the *fibulae* in the depot of the museum.

A *fibula* is a brooch or pin for fastening garments and it developed in a variety of shapes, but all of these shapes were based on the safety-pin principle. Technically, the Latin term, *fibulae*, refers to Roman brooches; however, it is widely used to refer to brooches from the entire ancient and early medieval eastern Mediterranean. Beginning in the late second millennium B.C. they were in widespread use throughout the ancient Anatolia and Mesopotamia. During the Iron Age they were one of the most characteristic finds in the höyük sites and *tumuli* in most parts of Asia Minor. During the Iron Age *fibulae* in the southeastern Anatolia and northern Mesopotamia have a triangular arch, although the characteristic shape of *fibulae* in the central and western parts of Anatolia is a simple arch. In both cases the bow can be beaded and moulded.

The pioneering volume of Ertuğrul Caner on Anatolian *fibulae* deals with the central-western part of present-day Turkey³ and examples found in the southeastern part of Turkey are not covered by this work.⁴ Caner himself complains that there does not exist a systematic research on *fibulae* from the northern Syria and southeastern Anatolia⁵. Some examples present at Gordium, especially imported ones, are known, but a complete map of their presence in Mesopotamia is lacking. It is therefore important to present these five well-preserved examples from Şanlıurfa in a brief article, as Iron Age *fibulae* of the northern Syrian-southeastern Turkish areas are not very well known in the archaeological literature. During the Iron Age, roughly between 12th and sixth centuries B.C., all these areas

² Both in the phases of Bronze and Iron Ages some graves were excavated at Lidar Höyük where Iron Age structures were found mainly in a large trench called Q, R, S 44–45 with an unbroken stratigraphy from the 12th to the sixth-fifth century B.C.: Müller 1999, 123; and Hauptmann 2017, 247–249. The material of these rescue excavations were brought to the museum of Şanlıurfa. According to our knowledge, neither in the main publication for the Iron Age of the site (Müller 1999), nor in the excavation reports or later assessments (Hauptmann 2017), no *fibula* has been published.

³ Only volume one is published in 1983, but this never followed by a subsequent one.

⁴ For some recent *fibula* studies in Anatolia *cf.* Laflı and Buora 2006 as well as 2012.

⁵ Caner 1983, 177.

shared a material culture of its own, with common features with eastern Cilicia and northern Syria. In the art of *fibulae* of these regions we can also see some influences by the Anatolian *fibulae* of the Iron Age. This is particularly evident in the *fibula* no. 1 of our catalogue below. Local characteristic features are also observed in some Iron Age *fibulae* preserved in the museum of Şanlıurfa most of which belong to the vast group of so-called “Kneefibeln” or elbow *fibulae*, the most popular type in the Near East, spread from Egypt – through Palestine and Syria – to Cyprus and Persia. They correspond to Stronach’s type III. Some examples are found in the Palestinian tombs of the eighth century B.C.⁶ The type had begun to spread eastwards before the end of the eighth century B.C., as demonstrated by a find in the tomb of Assyrian king Sargon II, reigned between 721–705 B.C.⁷ They always had a catchplate in the form of a hand and their bow section was cast, probably using a lost-wax technique.

Catalogue

No. 1 (figs. 2a–b): Length: *c.* 70 mm; thickness: *c.* 8 mm; provenance: Lidar Höyük. Straight pin is missing. Smooth brown patina.

Fibula with an archer bow with a collared bead and varied ribbed. As pointed out by David Stronach this type is a sort of link between the western arched *fibulae* and the oriental, triangular *fibulae*. It appears late in Mesopotamia and remains to be very rare. The shape recalls that of an unstratified *fibula* found at Nimrud.⁸ Dating: Starting from the ninth century B.C.

No. 2 (figs. 3a–c): Type Stronach 1959 III, 4; and type Giesen XII (“Sonderform”). Accession no.: Lİ.84.48; length: 80 mm; thickness: 5 mm; provenance: from the excavations in Lidar Höyük in 1984. Straight pin is missing. Smooth brown patina.

Dating: Mid eighth-seventh century B.C. This date is also confirmed by Katharine Giesen, which does not exclude an earlier appearance and a continuation at least until the entire sixth century B.C.

The only specimen found in Asia Minor originates from the layer three of the *höyük* site of Gordium. It was lost at the beginning of the third century B.C. which does not affect its dating. Giesen notes that during the Iron Age similar *fibulae* were often exported by sea or traveled with sailors and sometimes reached sanctuaries, such as those located on Cyprus.

Reference: Karul, Kozbe and Yavuzkır 2017, 347, fig. top, right. Its date is roughly given as “1200–330 B.C.”.

⁶ Stronach 1959, 193.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Stronach 1959, pl. I, no. 5.

No. 3 (figs. 4a–b): Length: *c.* 80 mm; thickness: *c.* 6 mm; provenance: Unknown, as it is an acquisition. Straight pin is missing. Smooth brown patina.

Triangular *fibula* with ribbed and beaded mouldings as well as multiple incised collars; *cf.* Blinkenberg Type XII 121, exported also at Delos.⁹ Type Stronach III and group I of Caner.¹⁰

Dating: During the seventh century B.C. the distribution of this type appears to have stretched from the delta of Nile to western Persia.¹¹ In the various regions, several variants of local manufacture are known. In the display case of the museum its date is given as “Late Roman”.

No. 4 (figs. 5a–b): Length: *c.* 50 mm; thickness: *c.* 8 mm; provenance: Unknown, as it is an acquisition. Straight pin is missing. Smooth brown patina.

Type van der Osten I a and group 2 of Caner¹². Incised decoration of encircling lines on the whole surface.

Dating: From the middle of the eighth century to the end of the seventh B.C. In the display case of the museum its date is given as “Late Roman”.

No. 5 (figs. 6a–c): Accession no.: LI.85.5;¹³ length: 40 mm; width: 27 mm; thickness: 10 mm; provenance: excavations in Lidar Höyük in 1985. Smooth brown patina.

Multi-ribbed *fibula* with an accentuated apex.

Dating: Type Stronach IV, group 2 of Caner. According to Stronach¹⁴ it is attested at Zincirli, Nimrud and Susa, mainly in the seventh century B.C., but perhaps later in use, too. In the display case of the museum its date is given as “Late Roman”.

Reference: Karul, Kozbe and Yavuzkır 2017, 320, fig. top, right. In this publication its date is given as “Middle Bronze Age” (*i.e.* “2000–1600 B.C.”).

Conclusion

If our analysis is correct, in the museum of Şanlıurfa we would have only one example of an Early Iron Age *fibula*, dated probably just after 900 B.C. In this collection the triangular type of *fibula* is the angular equivalent of semicircular form with equally varied mouldings. It is the most attested and reaches at least until the end of the seventh century B.C.

⁹ Blinkenberg 1926, 245, fig. 293; and Sapouna-Sakellarakis 1978, 132, no. 1711 (type XII B c).

¹⁰ Caner 1983, no. 1197.

¹¹ Stronach 1959, 197.

¹² Caner 1983, 183, no. 1200.

¹³ In the display case of the museum it is given that this piece is an acquisition, but it was published in the catalogue of the museum with a provenance as “Lidar Höyük”: Karul, Kozbe and Yavuzkır 2017, 320, fig. top, right.

¹⁴ Stronach 1959, 203.

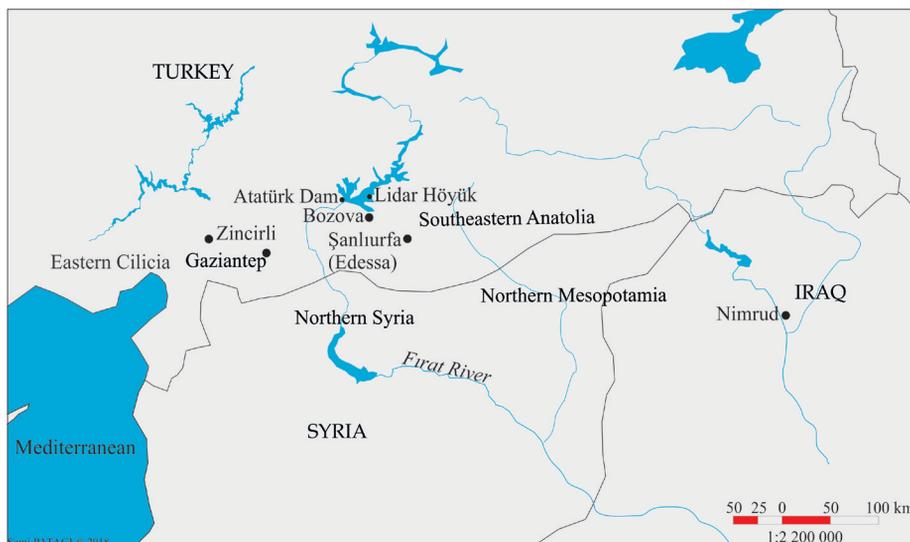


Figure 1. Places in southeastern Anatolia and northern Mesopotamia referred to in the text (by S. Patacı, 2016).



Figure 2a–b. An Iron Age *fibula* from Lidar Höyük in the museum of Şanlıurfa; cat.-no. 1; accession no.: Lİ.84.48 (by Gülseren Kan Şahin, 2004).



Figure 3a–c. An Iron Age *fibula* from Lidar Höyük in the museum of Şanlıurfa; cat.-no. 2 (by Gülseren Kan Şahin, 2004).



Figure 4a–b. An Iron Age *fibula* in the museum of Şanlıurfa; cat.-no. 3 (by Gülseren Kan Şahin, 2004).



Figure 5a–b. An Iron Age *fibula* in the museum of Şanlıurfa; cat.-no. 4 (by Gülseren Kan Şahin, 2004).



Figure 6a–c. An Iron Age *fibula* from Lidar Höyük in the museum of Şanlıurfa; cat.-no. 5; accession no.: Lİ.85.5 (by Gülseren Kan Şahin, 2004).

Notes and acknowledgements

This collection was studied with the authorizations granted by the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Directorate of the Monuments and Museums on July 9, 2001 and enumerated as B.16.0.AMG.0.10.00.01/707.1(9), on February 13, 2002 and enumerated as B.16.0.AMG.0.10.00.01/707.1-2 and on December 2, 2004 and enumerated as B.16.0.AMG.0.10.00.01/707.1/14. The necessary documentation was assembled during December 2004. Figures were taken by Dr Gülseren Kan Şahin (Sinop) in 2004 and fig. 1 was arranged by Dr Sami Patacı (Ardahan) in 2018 to whom we would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation.

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