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Against the Current: From Maritime Potential to Regional Connectivity in the Bronze Age North Aegean

The North Aegean, which includes Thessaly, Macedonia, Thrace, Northwestern Anatolia, and the islands of the North Aegean, was diachronically an important zone of interaction between Aegean, Anatolian, and Balkan communities. The archaeological record reflects the interaction of these communities in a range of contexts, including settlement patterns, burial practices, material culture, and the circulation of objects throughout the region. Archaeological interpretations of mobility in the North Aegean have often relied on imported objects, stylistic similarities, or the presumed strategic location of coastal settlements (Horejs 2007; Girella and Pavúk 2015, 2016). However, such evidence does not necessarily indicate how maritime and terrestrial movement was organized or why some connections became more important than others. Environmental conditions may have shaped the range of possibilities for movement, but in some cases they cannot, by themselves, explain which connections became important to past communities and why. Thus, there are cases in which favourable conditions for movement may not correspond to strong archaeological evidence for interaction, and others in which communities appear to have maintained connections despite less favourable conditions. Such differences may suggest the role of local social, economic, cultural, or political strategies in shaping regional mobility.

This presentation, based on an early-stage doctoral project, aims to explore mobility and interaction in the North Aegean during the 2nd millennium BCE. In this project, maritime and terrestrial connectivity is viewed as the result of an interaction between environmental conditions and human choices. Geographic Information Systems (GIS), including Least Cost Path analysis and Circuit Theory, are used to model potential movement across the landscape and seascape (Brughmans 2010; McLean and Rubio-Campillo 2022). Factors such as topography, coastlines, winds, and sea currents are also taken into account. These modelled patterns are then compared with archaeological evidence, such as the distribution of settlements

and material culture, to examine how potential routes of movement relate to patterns of interaction documented in the archaeological record.

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