

HYPOTHETICAL APPROACH ON THE DEPICTION OF A MINOAN/MYCENAEAN CUP ON TISNA COINS

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Resumen

En este estudio, se examinará la representación de una copa poco ortodoxa en las monedas de Tisna. Se entiende que la copa, que primero fue producida por los Minoicos y luego adoptada por los Micénicos, tiene un significado religioso. Curiosamente, la representación de esta copa se ve en muchos objetos arqueológicos diferentes, no solo en Tisna, sino también en Kyme, la ciudad principal de la antigua Aeolis. Aunque esta situación se acepta como un reflejo de la hegemonía de Kyme sobre Tisna, la investigación arqueológica que comenzamos hace un tiempo en Tisna ha arrojado resultados que muestran que esta ciudad se estableció mucho antes que Kyme. Por ello, se ha sugerido que esta copa, que aparece en las monedas de ambas ciudades, podría ser un símbolo del pasado común de Tisna y Kyme.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Tisna, Eólida, Moneda, Minoico, Micénico, Copa de loza

Abstract

This study examines the depiction of an unorthodox cup on Tisna coins. First produced by the Minoans and later adopted by the Mycenaeans, the cup has religious significance. Interestingly, the depiction of this cup is found on many different archaeological objects, not only in Tisna but also in Kyme, the most important city of ancient Aeolis. Although this situation is thought to reflect the dominance of Kyme over Tisna, the archaeological investigations we began some time ago in Tisna have yielded results showing that this city was founded long before Kyme. Therefore, it is suggested that this cup, which appears on the coins of both cities, could symbolize the shared past of Tisna and Kyme.

KEYWORDS: Tisna, Aeolis, Coin, Minoan, Mycenaean, Faience Cup

1. Location

Tisna lies within the boundaries of the Aliğa district of Izmir province in Western Anatolia. The city, located in the valley of Güzelhisar Stream, was within the boundaries of Aeolis in the ancient period, and natural roads and passages led to Lydia in the east. The city is located between Myrina and Aigai and is situated on two separate hills, now called Kocakale Tepe and Sarıkale Tepe by the locals¹.

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¹ For the works about the city, see DER KLEINE PAULY: 1481; RUBINSTEIN, L. 2004: 1051. For trips to the city and scientific research See CHRONIQUE D'ORIENT 1885: 107-109 (5.72-3); SAYCE, A.H. 1882: 221; DIEST, W. 1889: 32-33; SCHUCHHARDT, C. 1887: 1213; SCHUCHHARDT, C. 1912: 102-103; CHRONIQUE D'ORIENT 1891, 20-23 (9.121-22); CONZE, A. 1910a; CONZE, A. 1910b; DOĞER, E. 2017: 78-79; Since 2018, systematic archeological research has been carried out by a team under the presidency of Emre Erdan in the ancient city of Tisna. For detailed information about the preliminary results, see ERDAN 2019.

2. Coins of Tisna

As mentioned in a previous study², the city minted four series of bronze coins, mainly in the 4th century BC (Fig. 1). On these coins, one of the legends of *TISNAI*, *TISNAIO*, *TISNAIOS*, and *TISNAION* can be read. The first series bears the head of the River God Tisnaios with horns on the front face to the left, a so-called *single-handled vessel* (Minoan Faience Cup) on the reverse³; the second series, Tisnaios head facing left on the obverse, spearhead on reverse⁴; the third series, Tisnaios head facing left on the obverse, akinakes on the reverse⁵; the fourth series, there is a young male head, possibly Ares, facing right on the obverse and the akinakes on the reverse⁶. As for the reverse of the first series of Tisna coins, this article's subject.

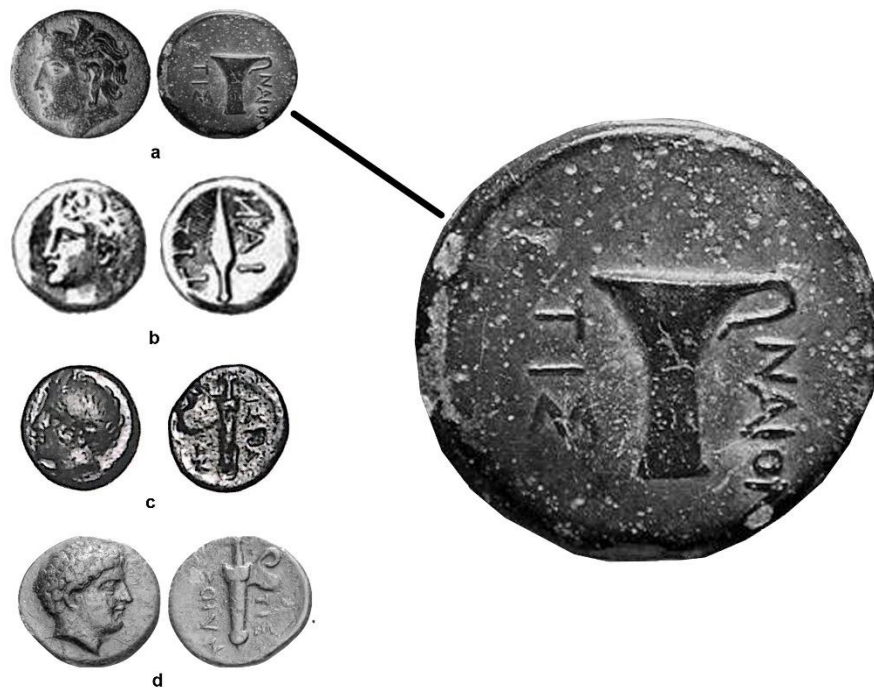


Figure 1. Series of Tisna coins: **a-** The head of the river God Tisnaios with horns on the forepart, a Minoan faience cup on the reverse (SNG München 641; SNG Cop. 283); **b-** Tisnaios head facing left on the obverse, spearhead on reverse (Imhoof-Blumer 1897, 284, XXIV); **c-** Tisnaios head facing left on the obverse, akinakes on the reverse (SNG von Aulock, 1981); **d-** Young male head (Ares) facing right on the obverse and the akinakes on the reverse (SNG Ashmolean, 1487).

3. The Shape of the Cup

Apart from the coins, scholars differ on the shape of the cup, which is also depicted on amphora seals, pinakions, and counterweights of Kyme (Fig. 2). Birch, who was the first to draw attention to the issue, also noted that the shape of the cup in

² ERDAN 2021.

³ Cup: IMHOOF BLUMER, F. 1883: 239-240; BMC 1; TRAITÉ 2075-2077; SNG MÜNCHEN 641; SNG COP. 283.

⁴ Spearhead: IMHOOF BLUMER, F. 1897: 284, XXIV; TRAITÉ 1181/1182, 2080.

⁵ Tisnaios / Akinakes: IMHOOF BLUMER, F. 1883: 241; TRAITÉ 2074 and 2078; SNG VON AULOCK, 1981; ERDAN, E. 2021: *passim*.

⁶ Ares / Akinakes: IMHOOF BLUMER, F. 1883: 242; TRAITÉ 1181, 2079; SNG ASHMOLEAN, 1487; ERDAN, E. 2021: *passim*.

question is rare, stating that “*this had constantly attracted attention from the peculiarity of its shape and reproduction, as a leading symbol*”⁷. However, Birch, who attempted to connect and tried to create a linguistic link between the cup with Kyme, said that “*κυμῖλλον*”, (kymillion), which means small vase, is the example described in Kyme coins, and this is the name similar to “*χενμα*” (cheyma), which he calls “*libatory vase*”⁸. Lagona evaluated the cup and its form in 1984, and she was the first scholar to cite the cup’s similarity to Minoan examples by saying: “*rather ventilate some Minoan form!*”⁹. Referring to the idea that the cup is probably small and metallic, Lagona evaluated the cup’s function as an olive oil measuring instrument¹⁰. A similar statement was expressed again recently¹¹.



Figure 2. Cup depictions from Kyme: **a-** Reverse of a Kyme coin (Caltabiano-Carroccio-Puglisi 2014, Fig. 11); **b-** Reverse of a tetradrachm from Kyme (Caltabiano-Carroccio-Puglisi 2014, Fig. 24); **c-** Amphora seal from Kyme (La Marca 2020, Fig. 9); **d-** Pinakion from Kyme (La Marca 2020, Fig. 10); **e-** Weight from Kyme (Carroccio 2020, Fig. 10).

Kovalenko attempted to establish a nominal connection between the cup and Kyme, similar to Birch. In his paper, he states that the cup on the Kyme coins may not be the mythical *kymillion* indicated by Birch, but the drinking cup known in ancient sources as *kymbe* or *kymbion* and points out its similarity to the name Kyme¹².

⁷ BIRCH, S. 1841: 93.

⁸ BIRCH, S. 1841.

⁹ LAGONA, S. 1984.

¹⁰ LAGONA, S. 1984.

¹¹ CACAMO CALTABIANO, M. & CARROCCIO, B. & PUGLISI, M. 2014: 153. “*one-handed cup (probably originally a unit of measurement)*”.

¹² KOVALENKO, S. A. 2015: 58-59.

Finally, La Marca defines the cup depicted on objects such as amphora handles, coins, and pinakions manufactured in Kyme as *kyathos*. La Marca also considers the cup as the symbol of Kyme and associates the presence of the cup with oil production, such as Lagona¹³.

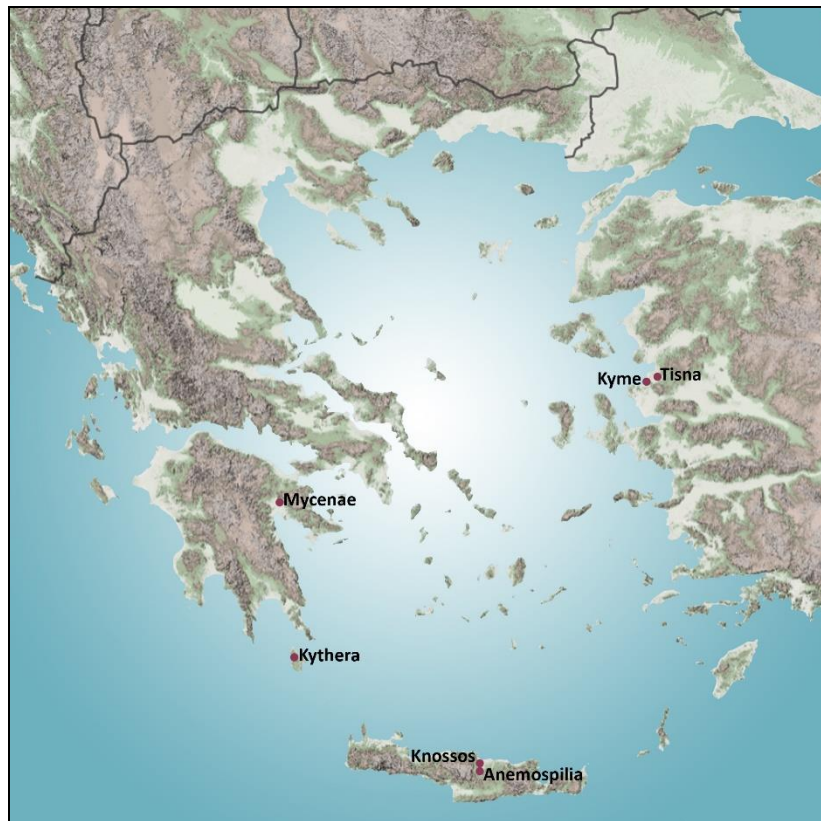


Figure 3. Map showing centers mentioned in the text.

Although there are different opinions about the shape of the cup depicted on the coins of Tisna and Kyme, it is clearly a ceremonial cult cup of Minoan origin. The similarity first pointed out by Lagona is so certain that it should not be called "maybe". For this reason, it is necessary to evaluate the genuine specimens of the cup depicted on the coins of Tisna and Kyme and examine the distribution of their sites.

It is known that Evans found two rare faience cups during the excavations at Knossos¹⁴. Apart from Knossos, similar cups were found only in Anemospilia¹⁵, Kythera,¹⁶ and Mycenae¹⁷ (Fig. 3). The others are made of faience except for the terracotta example from Anemospilia. The cups found in the area defined as the *Knossos Temple Repository* are about 8-9 cm tall¹⁸ (Fig. 4a-c). Evans describes these two cups as "*flowerpots*". In his extensive dissertation published in 1976, Foster evaluates the cups as "*chalice*"¹⁹. In subsequent years, Schiering, in his work on Minoan pottery, described the form as a "*goblet-shaped cup*"²⁰. Panagiotaki classified the cups

¹³ La MARCA, A. 2020: 21.

¹⁴ EVANS, A. 1903: 73-74, Fig. 53a-b; EVANS, A. 1930: 277-279, Fig. 187 A.

¹⁵ SAKELLARAKIS, Y. 1995: 107.

¹⁶ COLDSTREAM, J. N. 1972: 228, Plate 68, fig. 83.2.

¹⁷ FOSTER, K. P. 1976: 78, 121, figure 123.

¹⁸ SCHIERING, W. 1998: 158-159, Taf. 43.3.

¹⁹ FOSTER, K. P. 1976: 77-78, Pl. 3, Figure 8-9.

²⁰ SCHIERING, W. 1998: 158-159.

as "tall cups"²¹. Faience cups from Knossos were recently mentioned by Hatzaki and defined as "tall faience cup"²².



Figure 4. Faience Cups from Knossos: **a-** (Evans 1903, 92, Fig. 63); **b-** (Dimopoulou-Rethemiotaki 2005, 115); **c-** (Evans 1903, Fig. 53a-b; Evans 1930, Fig. 187 A).

It is believed that the cups found in Knossos, considered to be products of the same master, were modeled in pieces. The cups consist of the base, the cylindrical body, and the strap handle connected to the rim²³. Both cups are decorated with vegetal ornaments. While on one of the cups, there is a single spray of a three-branched plant, on the other, there are three individual plants (Fig. 4b-c)²⁴.

4. Function

As we have already mentioned, the production of the faience cups in this form, found at Knossos, Anemospilia, Kythera, and Mycenae, is mainly associated with religious activities. In particular, the presence of these cups at Knossos in the *Temple Repositories* suggests such cultic use in context²⁵. Evans claims that these cups were used to store flowers for altar decoration²⁶. Similarly, Hatzaki believes that these cups may be associated with some form of a feast²⁷. Foster questioned why many artifacts, including the cups we examined in *Knossos Temple Repositories*, were objects made of faience, stating that tiles should be sought in Mesopotamian and Egyptian magico-religious ideas²⁸. It is known that cups found outside Knossos are also related to

²¹ PANAGIOTAKI, M. 1999: 91.

²² HATZAKI, E. 2009: 26.

²³ PANAGIOTAKI, M. 1999: 91.

²⁴ EVANS, A. 1930: 277-279, Fig. 187 A.

²⁵ SCHIERING, W. 1998: 159.

²⁶ EVANS, A. 1903: 74.

²⁷ HATZAKI, E. 2009: 26.

²⁸ FOSTER, K. P. 2008: 179-183.

religious activities. In Anemospilia (Fig. 5a), the cup was found inside a temple and described by Sakellarakis as a "*cult utensil*"²⁹. Apart from this, both Mycenae and Kythera were found in tombs. The cup from Mycenae is associated with the first burial found in the tomb identified as *Grave Circle B Alpha*, which belonged to a woman (Fig. 5b). There is no information about the identity of the tomb owner in Kythera.



Figure 5. Other similar cups: **a-** Cup from Anemospilia (Sakellarakis 1995, 107);
b- Cup from Mycenae (Foster 1976, figure 123).

5. Conclusion

As already mentioned, there are many different opinions about the identity of the cup depicted on both the Kyme and Tisna coins. Birch believes the cup is linked to Amazon Kyme³⁰. Topalov supports this idea over Odrysian coinage counterparts and reports that this coinage is associated with the Great Mother Goddess cult of the Samothracian Deities in a religious and ritual context³¹. The cultic relationship of cups or their reflection of an aniconic image of a goddess is also a Mediterranean tradition, and examples are known between the 6th and 4th centuries BC, especially in Phoenicia³².

Earlier researchers were more interested in the shape of the cup than in its identity. As we mentioned, there are many opinions about the shape of the cup. Although there are suggestions about the shape of the cup, the cup can be simply defined as a "Minoan faience cup" because of its origin.

The idea that the cup is a "*unit of measure*" and associated with olive oil -one of the main economic inputs of the region- has long been suggested, especially by the Kyme team. On the other hand, the cup does not resemble any of the forms listed above. Some of the proposed forms are only imaginary/mythological products known from ancient written sources. However, taking the Minoan forms as a basis, it is unreasonable to use these very small cups as a unit of measurement. Therefore, previous interpretations of the shape of the cup do not go beyond an attempt to establish a forced linguistic connection with the name of Kyme. Words that also have the meaning of a "cup" in Akkadian "*Tišnu*", Ugaritic "*Tnt*", Egyptian "*Tšn*", Aramaic "*Ti-iš-nu*" are interestingly similar to the name of Tisna, also known as *Titne* or *Titanus*. To suggest a

²⁹ SAKELLARAKIS, Y. 1995: 107.

³⁰ BIRCH, S. 1840: 94.

³¹ TOPALOV, S. A. 2005: 19-22, 24-31, 35-37.

³² DOAK, B. R. 2015: 97-99.

linguistic connection between these words with cup and Tisna would be as compelling as it was previously indicated for Kyme.

Is this a coincidence? If we were dealing with a standard form of a cup here, we might be able to accept the possibility of coincidence and embrace the idea of a local imitation of a common form. On the other hand, the cup in question is remarkable in terms of its very unique shape and limited distribution area. However, it should be noted that today we do not have enough archaeological data to make a definitive interpretation of why a Minoan or Mycenaean cup was depicted on both Tisna and Kyme coins.

However, it should be noted that the data on the connections between Western Anatolia and the Minoans are much more extensive than was thought 30 years ago. The extent of the relations between the Western Anatolian coastal regions and Minoan is re-evaluated as the number of find centers in Western Anatolia increases³³. Perhaps this form, which originally belonged to Minoan, may not indicate a direct relationship between the two regions. It may also have been known through the Mycenaeans in Aeolis. The LBA data in the region is increasing day by day, and the number of settlements with Mycenaean finds is quite remarkable³⁴. The fact that known examples of the cup in question mainly were found in temples or tombs suggests a religious connection. Foster stated that the symbolic meaning of tiles in the Eastern and Egyptian world also indicates the scope of the subject.



Figure 6. Possible early fortification walls from Tisna
(Archive of Tisna Archaeological Survey Project).

Most of the studies conducted to date have interpreted the cup depicted on coins of both Kyme and Tisna through the archaeological finds from Kyme. The descriptions

³³ AYKURT, A. 2009: 35-38.

³⁴ GÜR, B. 2020: 120-121.

of this cup, which is also considered the *parasemon* of the city,³⁵ are encountered not only in coins but also in other objects in Kyme. It is seen that the presence of this cup on the coins of both cities is examined within the scope of an agreement between them or the hegemonies of Kyme on Tisna. On the other hand, while accepting the importance of the cup for Kyme, it should also be noted that considering the archaeological findings of both cities, the establishment of Tisna dates back to Kyme in the light of our new and current knowledge. The archaeological investigations we have been conducting in the city for some time have revealed that Tisna, based on some architectural remains (Fig. 6) and small finds, gives the impression that it was one of the important cities of the region in terms of the 2nd Millennium BC³⁶. It is also possible that Tisna is not a city founded by or an *apoike* of Kyme but might be the predecessor settlement of the later “mother” city. The Minoan faience cup depicted on the coins of both cities and its symbolic meaning may reflect the traces of Tisna and thus Kyme's common Aegean connections going back to the 2nd Millennium BC. This view, which can only be a hypothesis for today, is expected to be presented through more concrete data through the excavations we plan to carry out in the coming years.

6. Contribution

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³⁵ HEINLE, M. 2015: 40.

³⁶ ERDAN, E. 2019: 37-38; GÜR, B. 2020, *passim*.

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