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Murat Höyük 2019 Excavation: A Preliminary Report

2019 Yılı Murat Höyük Kazısı: Bir Ön Değerlendirme

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Abstract

This report presents the preliminary results of salvage excavations carried out at Murat Höyük in 2019. Excavations at Murat Höyük (and nearby Murat Tepe) constitute the first scientific archaeological excavations conducted within the boundaries of Bingöl province. Murat Höyük is located on the bank of the Murat River in Solhan district of modern Bingöl province in Eastern Anatolia. Because the höyük remained within the water reservoir of Aşağı Kaleköy hydroelectric dam, Murat Höyük was registered among threatened archaeological sites by Erzurum Regional Board of Cultural Heritage Preservation in 2018. Subsequently, salvage excavations were initiated at the site by a team of specialists under the directorship of Elazığ Museum, which lasted for one intensive field season in 2019 prior to the inundation of the höyük. Four main cultural periods were documented during excavations (from top to bottom): Phase I: Medieval Period, Phase II: Middle Iron Age, Phase III: Early Iron Age, and Phase IV: Early Bronze Age. The earliest habitation of the mound dates to Early Bronze III (2500-2200 BC) in regional chronology. Until the initiation of salvage excavations at the nearby site of Murat Tepe in 2018, archaeological investigations in Bingöl province had remained limited to surface surveys. As such, our knowledge about the cultural sequence of the region from the Bronze Ages to the Medieval Period was restricted to surface finds. Murat Höyük and Murat Tepe excavations have thus begun to fill this lacuna in our knowledge by providing archaeological finds from secure contexts in a stratified sequence. Further interpretations of our findings from especially the multi-period mound of Murat Höyük will undoubtedly contribute greatly to the archaeology of the region and neighboring.

Key Words: *Eastern Anatolia, Early Bronze Age, Iron Age, Medieval, Murat Höyük*

Öz

Bu çalışma Bingöl'ün ilk bilimsel kazı projesi olma özelliği gösteren 2019 yılı Murat Höyük kurtarma kazısına ait ön değerlendirmeleri sunmaktadır. Murat Höyük, Doğu Anadolu Bölgesi, Bingöl İli Solhan İlçesi, Murat Nehri kenarında konumlanmıştır. Höyük, Aşağı Kaleköy Barajı su tutma havzası içerisinde yer aldığı için, Erzurum Kültür Varlıklarını Koruma Bölge Kurulu tarafından 2018 yılında tescillenmiştir. Höyükteki kazı çalışmaları Elazığ Müzesi Müdürlüğü kazı başkanlığında ve bilimsel bir heyet tarafından 2019 yılında yapılarak tamamlanmıştır. Murat Höyük'teki kazı çalışmaları sonucunda dört ana kültür evresi (I-IV) tespit edilmiştir: I. Tabaka Orta Çağ'a, II. Tabaka Orta Demir Çağı'na, III. Tabaka Erken Demir Çağı'na ve IV. Tabaka Erken Tunç Çağı'na aittir. Murat Höyük'ün en erken tabakası olan Erken Tunç Çağı, Doğu Anadolu kronolojisine göre Erken Tunç Çağı III'e (MÖ 2500-2200) tarihlenmektedir. 2018 yılında yapılan Murat Tepe kazılarına kadar Bingöl'deki arkeolojik çalışmalar yüzey araştırmalarıyla sınırlıydı. Bölgede Tunç Çağı'ndan Orta Çağ'a kadar olan dönemler konusundaki arkeolojik bilgilerimiz yüzey araştırmalarından elde edilen malzemelere dayanmaktaydı. Bölgenin ilk bilimsel kazıları olan Murat Höyük ve Murat Tepe kazıları öncülüğünde elde edilen kazı stratigrafisi bölge arkeolojisine önemli katkılar sunacaktır. Özellikle Murat Höyük kazılarıyla elde edilen yeni arkeolojik verilerin, Doğu Anadolu Bölgesi'nde arkeolojik olarak önemli bir boşluğu dolduracağı kanısındayız.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Doğu Anadolu, Erken Tunç Çağı, Demir Çağı, Orta Çağ, Murat Höyük*

Introduction

Eastern Anatolia has been inhabited by various culture groups from early prehistoric periods into the Iron Age. First systematic archaeological surveys and excavations in the Upper Euphrates region, where Bingöl is located, were initiated in 1968 as part of Keban Project in the western part of the region. Particularly, the results of salvage excavations at Pulur, Kalaycık-Ağın, Norşuntepe, Tepecik, and Korucutepe[1] made significant contributions to the archaeology of Eastern Anatolia. In the following

[1] Özdoğan 2006, 13-18.

decades, many archaeological sites were documented by regional surveys under the directorship of V. Sevin in 1985-1987 in Tunceli and Bingöl provinces, keeping light on the ancient history of the eastern part of the region.[2] Despite these decades-old survey projects, no archaeological excavations were conducted in Bingöl province until the initiation of our excavations at Murat Tepe and Murat Höyük. During the Urartian Period, Bingöl was a major hub along the main route that connected the core of the kingdom in Van - Muş area to settlements in the Elazığ - Malatya basins. At this point, the western section of the Urartian road network would have split in two major routes, one crossing the Bingöl Mountains towards Malatya - Elazığ, the other following the Murat River valley towards Palu.[3] Located on the bank of the Murat River, the settlements at the twin-sites of Murat Tepe and Murat Höyük must have served as a way station during the reign of the Urartian Kingdom.

The modern province of Bingöl lies in the eastern part of the Upper Euphrates region in Eastern Anatolia. The construction of Aşağı Kaleköy hydroelectric dam within the regional capacity building program of hydroelectric power plants (HES) has necessitated renewed archaeological reconnaissance and salvage efforts in Bingöl. Subsequently, salvage excavations were conducted at Murat Tepe in 2018 and at Murat Höyük in 2019, which are the first systematic excavations in the history of archaeological research in Bingöl. Two habitation phases (I and II, from top to bottom) were documented at Murat Tepe. Traces of a Medieval Period settlement were encountered on the surface (Phase I); and a rectangular, multi-room structure with reinforced corners, built on bedrock, was revealed by horizontal excavations. This structure dates to the Middle Iron Age / Urartian Period (Phase II) and can be identified as an administrative building serving the functions of a 'Way Station'.[4] Located 50 m southeast of Murat Tepe, Murat Höyük is a multi-period mound, where four main habitation phases were documented by excavations (Phase I – IV, from top to bottom). The earliest settlement at the mound, Phase IV, dates to the Early Bronze Age; Phase III dates to the Early Iron Age, Phase II dates to the Middle Iron Age; and Phase I consists of the traces of a Medieval Period settlement just below the surface of the mound. This article presents a preliminary evaluation of results from Murat Höyük excavations.

Murat Höyük Stratigraphy and Excavations

Murat Höyük is situated on the bank of the Murat River, about 230 m south of Murat village in Solhan district of modern Bingöl province in Eastern Anatolia (Fig. 1). The site is located about 40 km east of Bingöl province center and about 12 km southwest of Solhan district center. Named after the nearby village and the river, Murat Höyük lies at 1088 m above sea level and measures 140x120 m along the northwest–southeast axis. The mound is shaped like a rectangle with rounded corners and lies on top of a natural hill, about 15 m higher than the level of the plain (Fig. 2). The archaeological site of Murat Tepe, where salvage excavations were conducted in 2018, lies 50 m southwest of Murat Höyük.[5]

Because the mound remained within the water reservoir of Aşağı Kaleköy hydroelectric dam, constructed by Kalehan Genç Energy Generation Corp. within their regional capacity building program for hydroelectric power plants (HES) in Bingöl, Murat Höyük was registered as a threatened archaeological site in 2018. After the completion of salvage excavations at Murat Tepe, excavations were initiated at Murat Höyük on May 2nd, 2019. In order to document as much information as possible with systematic excavation, recording, and analysis, the field season continued uninterruptedly until October 31st, 2019 with a large crew and a dedicated team of archaeologists. Registration, conservation, and restoration work at Elazığ Museum begun immediately after the completion of excavations, and

[2] for details see Sevin 1987; Sevin 1988; Sevin 1989a; Köroğlu 1996.
[3] Sevin 1989b, 49-51.
[4] Özdemir 2019; Özdemir *et al.* 2019; Özdemir *et al.* 2020.
[5] Özdemir 2019; Özdemir *et al.* 2020.

continued between November 1st and December 31st, 2019. For planned excavations, a 10x10m-square grid was laid out on the mound (Fig. 3). Salvage excavations were carried out in forty-one 10x10m trenches, exposing about 70 % of the entire site in horizontal excavations (Fig. 4). The remaining portion of the site was left unexcavated for possible future work.

Four main stratigraphic phases were documented in systematic excavations at Murat Höyük. Accordingly, Phase I dates to the Medieval Period, Phase II to Middle Iron Age, Phase III to Early Iron Age and Phase IV to Early Bronze Age (Table 1). The Early Bronze Age level lies directly on bedrock and marks the first habitation phase of the mound. Medieval Period remains, which lie directly below topsoil, have been damaged as a result of agricultural activity. This phase is represented mostly by small finds and ceramics, while architectural remains are poorly preserved.

Table 1. Murat Höyük stratigraphy and chronology.

Phase	Habitation Period	Cultural Period
Phase I	9th-10th centuries AD	Medieval Period
Phase II	8th-6th centuries BC	Middle Iron Age – Urartu
Phase III	12th-10th centuries BC	Early Iron Age
Phase IV	2500-2200 BC	Early Bronze Age (EBA III)

Apart from observations based on material culture remains that have allowed us to attribute cultural periods to architectural phases revealed by excavations, chronological periods represented by each phase at Murat Höyük have also been assessed by absolute chronology methods. Carbon-14 samples collected from primary architectural contexts, including carbonized grains found in *in situ* ceramic vessels, and charcoal samples from floor deposits and hearths, were analyzed. Contexts of samples, analysis results and calibrated C-14 dates are reported in Table 2[6].

Table 2. Conventional and calibrated radiocarbon dates from Murat Höyük samples.

Phase	Lab Analysis Number	Sample Type	Context	Conventional radiocarbon age	Calibrated C-14 Date (cal. 2σ)
Murat Höyük I	**Tubitak-0679**	Charcoal	Outdoors area	1146±26 BP	801-974 AD
Murat Höyük II	**Tubitak-0835**	Carbonized grain/seed	Room context, inside *in situ* jar	2528±28 BP	650-544 BC
Murat Höyük III	**Tubitak-0836**	Charcoal	Room context, above floor	2884±28 BP	1131-976 BC

[6] C-14 analysis of all carbonized samples (bone, charcoal, and seeds) collected from archaeological contexts were analyzed at TUBİTAK MAM laboratories.

Murat Höyük IV	**Tubitak-0834**	Carbonized grain/seed	Room 4, inside *in situ* jar	3812±30 BP	2348-2189 BC
Murat Höyük IV	**Tubitak-0842**	Charcoal	Room 3, inside hearth	3951±27 BP	2499-2396 BC

Phase I: Medieval Period

Traces of Phase I architectural remains dating to the Medieval Period are encountered all across the mound, the northern portion of the mound showing the highest intensity of remains. Because this phase lies just below surface soil, its architectural remains have been severely damaged as a result of plowing. At the same time, the Middle Iron Age level architecture below (Phase II) is disturbed by Phase I structures, especially because the Medieval architects have intended to use the remains of Phase II walls as foundations for their buildings. Phase I buildings are constructed from rubble stones and buildings feature many bread ovens (*tandır*) and kneading troughs. A contemporary Medieval Period habitation phase is also encountered at Murat Tepe (Phase I), which lies 50 m northwest of Murat Höyük. Likewise, building remains from this level at Murat Tepe are severely damaged and do not allow us to reconstruct an architectural plan. Nevertheless, these contexts have yielded samples for C-14 analysis (Table 2). According to the results from Tübitak MAM Laboratories (Tubitak-0679: 1146±26 BP), the calibrated radiocarbon date range for the analyzed sample is 801 – 974 AD (2α). As such, the Medieval Period settlement of Murat Höyük is datable to the 9th – 10th centuries AD.

A large number of amorphous body sherds were found in the excavated contexts of Phase I. Diagnostic sherds predominantly belong to bowls, jars, storage jars, *pithoi*, jugs, and dishes. The most striking characteristic of this assemblage is the high mica inclusions of the fabric and light yellowish surface colors. The great majority of pottery from this phase consists of local, unglazed wares.

Notable finds from this level include ceramic jars (Fig. 5), lids (Fig. 12), oil lamps (Fig. 13), mugs, pitchers, one- and two-handled jars, baked clay spindle whorls; crosses made of bronze; arrowheads, spearheads, and coins made of iron; and mortars and grinding stones. Typological study of finds from Phase I confirm a date range within the 9th–10th centuries AD.

Phase II: Middle Iron Age – Urartian Period

Phase II is characterized by a monumental structure and its subsidiary rooms that date to the Middle Iron Age / Urartian Kingdom period. This structure has two building phases and spreads across the general extent of the mound. Its sturdy foundations trench in as deep as the architectural levels of the Early Bronze Age. The structure is orientated North-South, and its main entrance is located on its south wall. The main entrance is followed by two steps and a flagstone-paved corridor, which leads into the main hall/courtyard. Subsidiary rooms and storage rooms are accessed from this central courtyard that has a packed earth floor. This Middle Iron Age structure is entirely built of roughly dressed, large stone blocks, and wall thickness reaches 2m in certain sections. The main building's ground floor level is almost completely preserved, and its still-standing walls spread across almost the entire expanse of the mound. In a storage room located among the subsidiary rooms north of the main structure, carbonized grains were found inside an *in situ* ceramic pot. C-14 analysis (Tubitak-0835: 2528±28 BP in Table 2) of these grains yielded a calibrated radiocarbon date range of 650 – 544 cal. BC (2α). Charred grains inside this pot were identified as durum wheat (*Triticum aestivum*) by preliminary archaeobotanical analysis. Phase II at Murat Höyük is contemporary with Middle Iron Age settlements in the core region of the Urartian Kingdom (8th – 7th c. BC) in Lake Van basin.

The great majority of Phase II ceramics from Murat Höyük are locally produced (Fig. 6). Fabrics vary from black/dark gray and grayish tones to buff, light brown and dark brown. Additionally, a few sherds of imported red burnished Urartian pottery and sherds with stamped marks have also been found at the site. In general, fabric is medium-coarse to coarse with fine and medium-sized pebble inclusions; and vessels are thick-walled and mostly well-fired. There are both hand-made and wheel-thrown examples in the assemblage of local wares. Vessels fired at high temperatures have no cores, while those fired at medium temperatures have a dark gray core. Surfaces are not highly burnished, but generally smooth, and in most cases, wet-slipped with the same clay as the paste. Frequently attested forms in the typological repertoire of local pottery at Murat Höyük consists of bowls, dishes, jars, small jars, cups, trefoil-mouth pitchers, and storage jars (*pithoi*). Both horizontal and vertical handles are present, and vessels predominantly have a flat, a rounded or a ring base. Phase II ceramics share common characteristics with the 1st millennium BC assemblages known from Eastern Anatolian sites. Particularly, striking similarities with Urartian and Neo-Assyrian ceramic forms suggest that local potters imitated these contemporaneous pottery traditions.

A holistic program of scientific analyses was initiated for investigating various aspects of ceramics from the site, for which a total of 15 samples from all ware groups were selected for preliminary analysis. As part of this archaeometry project, thin sections of samples were prepared for petrographic analysis by optical microscopy, and pellets were prepared for chemical characterization by PED-XRF spectrometry[7]. Accordingly, preliminary results of analysis on Phase II samples are as follows: In petrographic analysis, the structure of clay particles in the fabric has shown that the vessels were fired at a temperature of 800–950 °C. The results of chemical composition analysis show that, based on differences in the relative abundance of essential chemical elements in samples, the wares split into two groups. Accordingly, analytical results indicate that clay was procured from at least two distinct sources located in zones with similar geological characteristics. In general, vessels are not stress-resistant and can be said to reflect a moderate to low-quality manufacturing technique. Additionally, detailed archaeo-metallurgical analyses were also initiated for investigating various aspects of metal artifacts from Urartian Period contexts. Metal finds from the site including inventoried artifacts and fragments stored as study collection materials were scanned by a portable XRF spectrometer[8]. Preliminary results show that all metal finds from this phase are made of high copper content bronze and some alloys also contain a high amount of brass.

Apart from ceramics, Phase II contexts at Murat Höyük have also yielded a variety of fired clay objects including plain and decorated examples of round lids with handles, oil lamps with handles, biconical loom weights, and biconical, conical, and semi-spherical spindle whorls. Other notable finds from this phase include bronze objects, such as toggle pins, bracelets with terminations shaped as stylized dragon and snake heads, earrings, rings, burins, and one ‘Scythian’-type barbed arrowhead, as well as grinding stones and mortars, and one decorative pin made of bone.

Phase III: Early Iron Age

Phase III dates to the Early Iron Age. This phase is represented mostly in the western and central sectors of the mound and consists of two building levels. The architecture of this period is characterized by simple, rectilinear structures constructed from medium-sized river cobbles. Intact examples of diagnostic grooved ware ceramics that are characteristic of the Early Iron Age in the region were

[7] Ceramic finds from all four cultural periods of Murat Höyük are the subject of a comprehensive program of analysis utilizing multiple archaeometry methods led by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ali Akın AKYOL at MAKLAB Laboratories. Various analyses on ceramics are ongoing.
[8] All metal finds from Murat Höyük excavations are the subject of a detailed investigation utilizing multiple analytical methods led by Asst. Prof. Dr. Ümit GÜDER at COBILTUM Archaeometry Laboratories. Analyses are ongoing.

discovered *in situ* in these architectural contexts (Fig. 7). Additionally, ceramic vessels for daily use, storage jars, grinding stones, and mortars were found *in situ* in the buildings, as well as an *in situ* ceramic tray on top of a hearth installed next to a stone paved bench. Notable small finds from this phase include two bronze toggle pins with semi-spherical heads. This phase has come to an end with an intense fire. C-14 analysis (Tubitak-0836: 2884±28 BP) of carbonized wood remains found on the floor of a rectangular structure in grid-square U16 has yielded a calibrated radiocarbon date of 1131-976 cal. BC (2α). As such, Phase III at Murat Höyük is datable to the 12th – 10th centuries BC (Table 1 and 2).

Phase IV: Early Bronze Age III

The earliest habitation level at Murat Höyük, Phase IV, is represented by rectangular, single-room structures built from mudbrick on stone foundations, which have also come to an end with an intense fire. Foundations consist of one or two rows of rubble stones built in dry wall technique and the floors are made of hard-packed earth. Phase IV settlement is founded just along the bank of the river, across the southern and south-eastern portions of the mound. C-14 analysis (Tubitak-0842: 3951±27 BP) of carbonized wood remains from a building of this level has yielded a calibrated radiocarbon date of 2499-2396 cal. BC (2α). C-14 analysis (Tubitak-0834: 3812±30 BP) was also conducted on carbonized grains from an *in situ* jar found in Room 4, yielding a calibrated radiocarbon date of 2348-2189 cal. BC (2α). Accordingly, Phase IV at Murat Höyük was inhabited between 2500 – 2200 BC, which corresponds to the Early Bronze III period in the cultural sequence of Eastern Anatolia (Table 1 and 2). The fire that brought an end to this settlement had transpired around 2200 BC, after which the site was abandoned until the Iron Age.

Ceramic finds from Phase IV consist predominantly of local wares, although fewer examples of the characteristic Early Bronze Age Karaz (Kura Araxes) pottery are attested as well (Fig. 8). Excavations revealed that the Early Bronze Age settlement was founded directly on bedrock on top of a natural outcrop by the river, and buildings were constructed in a northeast-southwest orientation. This location must have been chosen by its first settlers for its advantageous position vis-à-vis the river. Architectural remains uncovered by excavations are characterized by rectangular, single-room structures, built from mudbrick above stone foundations, and an open courtyard area. An *in situ* stone-paved bench and grinding stones placed nearby found in this courtyard demonstrate that everyday tasks related with food production and preparation were carried out here. Furthermore, a mud-lined hearth fixture with an *in situ* portable hearth (andiron) placed on top, found in the courtyard suggests that this area was used for food preparation and food consumption collectively by the community. Other notable finds from the courtyard and outdoor areas at the site are stone molds for metal tools and a stone bowl used for casting metal, which suggest that not only food production and consumption, but craft production activities were carried out as a community at the settlement, as well.

The *in situ* carbonized seeds from Room 4, which were analyzed for C-14 dating, were primarily assessed for species identification. According to preliminary results, grains are identified as *Triticum aestivum* / durum (bread wheat) and *Hordeum vulgare* (hulled barley)[9]. Carbonized wood remains from the Courtyard and Room 3 were sampled for xylological analysis, which involves an in-depth study of the gross and minute structure of wood remains. Identification of tree species through ongoing archaeobotanical and dendrochronological analysis of samples from this phase is particularly significant

[9] Archaeobotanical finds from Murat Höyük are analyzed by Prof. Dr. Emel OYBAK DÖNMEZ at Hacettepe University Archaeobotany Laboratory. Analysis of carbonized grains and seeds is ongoing.

for shedding light on the regional ecology of the Early Bronze Age, as well as informing us about how the settlers utilized forest resources for timber and firewood[10].

Analyses for identification of obsidian sources were also initiated at the site and its vicinity. Obsidian cores and tools (arrowheads, blades, etc.) from Early Bronze Age contexts were scanned by a portable XRF for provenance analysis. Within this research program, all known obsidian sources within the boundaries of Bingöl province were visited and portable XRF readings were recorded at extant source areas. Procurement strategies and the relationship between the settlement and sources were evaluated based on emerging patterns from empirical chemical composition data and relative source-to-site distance[11]. Preliminary results indicate that obsidian for tool production at Murat Höyük was procured predominantly from the geographically closest source deposits at Bingöl-Yukarıçavuşlar, Cemalan and Sarıbaşak localities (Bingöl A). Fewer obsidian finds from the site were identified as having come from the farthest obsidian sources at Bingöl-Alatepe and Karlıova-Göynük (Bingöl B).

Apart from the well-preserved architectural remains of Murat Höyük Phase IV settlement, the rich material culture repertoire of this phase includes local ceramics and Karaz (Kura-Araxes) ware ceramics; portable hearths and andirons (Fig 9), *'çeç'*-type stamp seals (Fig. 10), anthropomorphic figurines (Fig. 11), zoomorphic figurines, discs/wheels, spoons, spindle whorls, lids (Fig. 12), and oil lamps (Fig. 13) made of fired clay; axes, spindle whorls, and weights made of stone; a metal figurine, stone molds for casting metal, grinding stones, mortars, bone tools, and obsidian arrowheads and blades. Material culture remains from this phase also corroborate the attribution of this level to the Early Bronze III period in regional chronology of Eastern Anatolia.

Discussion and Conclusions

Eastern Anatolia is a highland region surrounded by high mountain ranges, characterized by a rugged topography and harsh climatic conditions. The region has been inhabited from early prehistory into the Iron Age by various cultural groups. Regional surveys conducted in the water reservoir areas of Keban and Karakaya dams have documented an intensive settlement pattern throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages in these basins in the western reaches of Eastern Anatolia. Especially excavations at Early Bronze Age sites have yielded particularly interesting results reflecting the cultural diversity of the region. This diversity is reflected in the rich pottery repertoire of the Elazığ-Malatya region, where a local tradition of painted ceramics (Elazığ-Malatya painted ware), red-black burnished ceramics (Karaz / Kura-Araxes ware), and wheel-made, buff wares of Mesopotamian origin are attested contemporaneously. In the same period, the ceramic repertoire of the eastern part of Eastern Anatolia, including Erzincan, Erzurum, and Muş plains and Erzurum-Kars area, consists mainly of Karaz / Kura-Araxes wares affiliated with the contemporaneous cultures of the Caucasus. Early Bronze I period is represented at many archaeological sites in the region, including Karaz, Erzurum Pulur, Güzelova, Sos Höyük, Elazığ Pulur Sakyol, Tepecik, Norşuntepe, Korucutepe, Tülintepe, Taşkun Mevkii, Malatya Arslantepe, and Pirot Höyük. Among the well-documented Early Bronze Age II sites in the region, we may mention Malatya Gelinciktepe, Norşuntepe, and Lidar Höyük. Karaz pottery continues to be used widely across Eastern Anatolia throughout the Early Bronze III period. Notable Early Bronze Age III settlements in the region are Arslantepe, Tepecik, Korucutepe, and Norşuntepe. Surveys and excavations at sites in the eastern part of the region, in Bingöl, Muş, Bitlis and Van basins, have also made significant contributions to our understanding of ancient historical periods in the region. Among these settlement basins, investigations

[10] Xylological analysis of carbonized wood remains from Murat Höyük is conducted by Prof. Dr. Barbaros YAMAN at Bartın University, Faculty of Forestry, Wood Anatomy and Dendrochronology Laboratory.
[11] Field research on obsidian sources with P-XRF was conducted by Asst. Prof. Dr. Abdulkadir Özdemir and Tolga Özak (PhD Candidate). Analytical results were evaluated by Asst. Prof. Dr. Ümit GÜDER.

in Bingöl province had remained restricted to surveys[12] until the initiation of archaeological excavations at Murat Tepe in 2018, followed by Murat Höyük excavations in 2019.

To reiterate, salvage excavations were conducted at Murat Höyük because the mound remained within the water reservoir of Aşağı Kaleköy hydroelectric dam, constructed by Kalehan Genç Energy Generation Corp. as part of regional capacity building efforts for hydroelectric power plants (HES). Excavations revealed settlements from four cultural phases, all of which yielded samples for C-14 dating of excavated contexts. Accordingly, Phase I dates to the Medieval Period (9th-10th c. AD). Architectural remains of this settlement level lie just below the surface soil and have been badly damaged by agricultural activity on the mound. Architectural installations related with daily food preparation, such as kneading troughs, bread ovens (*tandir*), and hearths, as well as intact ceramic vessels and many amorphous body sherds have been found in between wall segments that do not allow architectural plans to be reconstructed. Phase II dates to the first half of the 1st millennium BC, which corresponds to the Middle Iron Age / Urartian Kingdom Period in regional chronology. Architectural features, diagnostic ceramics, and typological, decorative, and technical aspects of bronze finds from this level attest to the cultural influence of the Urartu. Phase III dates to the Early Iron Age, which is a relatively obscure period in the region, represented mostly by graves and distinct mortuary customs. Although little is known about the habitation sites of this period, stone-built architecture and grooved ware ceramics are its diagnostic elements, represented also at Murat Höyük. Phase IV dates to the Early Bronze III period, characterized by Karaz (Kura-Araxes) pottery in Eastern Anatolia[13]. Local ceramics are predominant in this phase, which has also yielded a metal figurine, baked-clay anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines, wheels/discs, and lids, obsidian arrowheads, *çeç*-type stamp seals, and andirons.

It is particularly significant that close parallels of ceramics and baked clay and bronze objects found at Phase II are known from sites associated with the Urartian Kingdom in Eastern Anatolia. This phase is contemporary with Phase II of nearby Murat Tepe.[14] As such, salvage excavations conducted at Murat Tepe in 2018 and at Murat Höyük in 2019 have provided new evidence for the historical geography of the region during the reign of the Urartian Kingdom.

Although the mountainous topography and harsh climate of Bingöl region may seem an impediment for establishment of permanent settlements in the region, obsidian and metal resources, fresh water sources, fertile agricultural soils of the Murat River valley, mountain passes, and road networks have attracted human communities to settle in duly strategic locations in the region since prehistoric periods. Archaeological settlement phases revealed at Murat Tepe and Murat Höyük, the first excavation projects ever carried out in Bingöl, have provided empirical evidence from secure archaeological contexts for the first time for the Medieval Period, Middle Iron Age / Urartian Period, Early Iron Age, and Early Bronze Age settlers of the region. We hope that our salvage excavations at Murat Tepe and Murat Höyük will mark the beginning of a new and vibrant era in archaeological field research in Bingöl province and its districts, which will continue to shed light on the long settlement history of the region.

[12] Sevin 1987, 1-45; Sevin 1989b, 47-56; Köroğlu 1996, 29.

[13] For a detailed analysis of the archaeological assemblages, key settlements, and distribution map of Early Transcaucasian Culture in Eastern Anatolia Region, known mainly on the basis of Karaz (Kura-Araxes) type ceramics, see Işıklı 2005 and Işıklı 2011.

[14] Özdemir 2019; Özdemir *et al.* 2020.

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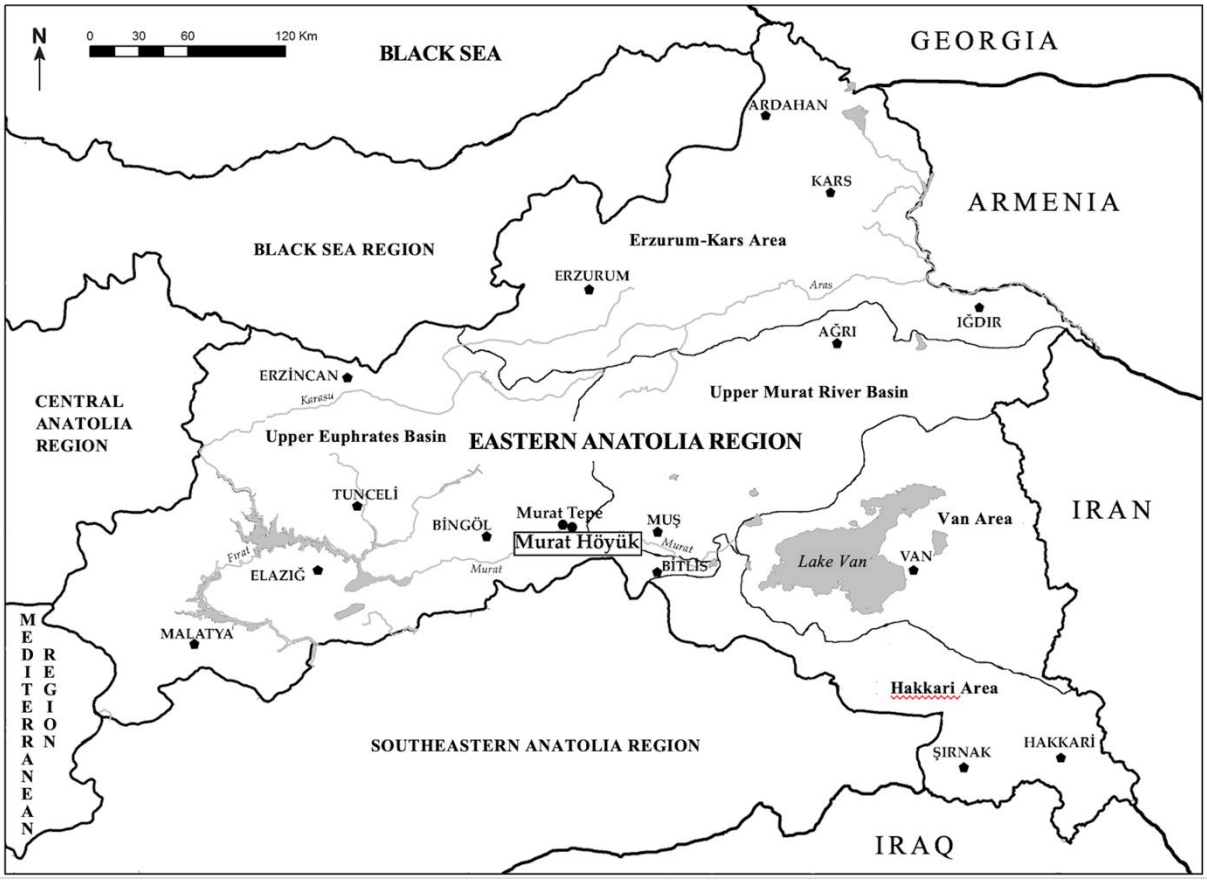

Figure 1: Map of Upper Euphrates Region in East Anatolia, showing the location of Murat Höyük.

Figure 2: Aerial view of Murat Tepe (right) and Murat Höyük (left) on the bank of the Murat River.

Figure 3: Aerial view of Murat Höyük before excavations.

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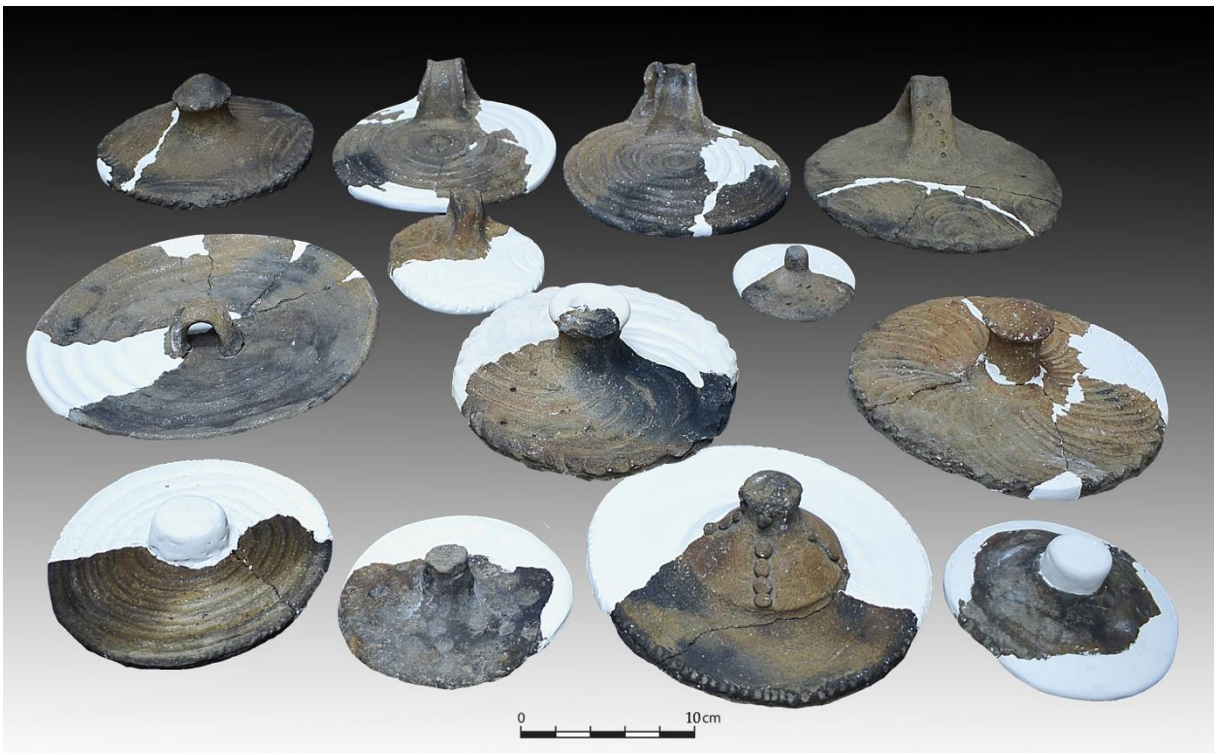

Figure 12: Ceramic lids for pots, found at Murat Höyük excavations.

Figure 13: Terracotta oil lamps found at Murat Höyük excavations.