

Ernis (Ünseli) Settlement Complex on the northern shore of Lake Van: From the Early Bronze Age (Kura-Araxes) to the Late Iron Age (Achaemenid)

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Abstract

This article discusses the settlement complex at Ernis (Ünseli) located on the northern shoreline of Lake Van and studied in our survey and previous works. The first investigation in the settlement was an excavation at the Evditepe cemetery (Varşak Tepe-Ernis) by N. J. Marr during the First World War; K. and S. Lake made a short visit in 1938. A. Erzen and E. Bilgiç made excavations at the cemeteries of Evditepe and Alacahan (Ernis) in 1962-1964. Ch. Burney investigated the station at Aşağı Keçikıran during his survey in 1956. Lastly, V. Sevin and this author conducted an intensive survey in this area (1997, 2002-2008). The complex at Ernis contains settlements from the Early Bronze Age (Kura-Araxes) to the Late Iron Age (Achaemenid) timespan except for an interruption in the Middle Bronze Age. These include the Kura-Araxes settlement at Evditepe, the Early Iron Age (pre-Urartian) fortresses-cemeteries at Evditepe and Alacahan, the Urartian Road station (?) and a cult building at Yukarı Keçikıran, and the Late Iron Age (Achaemenid) station at Aşağı Keçikıran.

Keywords: Ernis, Kura-Araxes, Early Iron Age, Urartu, Late Iron Age

Van Gölü'nün Kuzey Kıyısında Ernis (Ünseli) Yerleşim Kompleksi: Erken Tunç Çağ (Kura-Aras) - Geç Demir Çağ (Akhaimenid)

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Öz

Makalede, Van Gölü'nün kuzey kıyısında yer alan Ernis (Ünseli) yerleşim kompleksinde yaptığımız yüzey araştırması ve daha önceden yapılmış çalışmaların sonuçları birlikte değerlendirilmiştir. Yerleşimde ilk çalışma Birinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında N. J. Marr tarafından yapılan Evditepe Mezarlığı (Varşak Tepe-Ernis) kazısıdır. K. ve S. Lake 1938 yılında alana kısa bir ziyaret gerçekleştirmiştir. 1962-1964 yılları arasında A. Erzen ve E. Bilgiç tarafından Evditepe ve Alacahan (Ernis) mezarlıklarında kazı yapılmıştır. Ch. Burney 1956 yılındaki yüzey araştırması sırasında Aşağı Keçikıran istasyonunu incelemiştir. Son olarak alanda V. Sevin ve tarafımızdan sistemli bir yüzey araştırması yapılmıştır (1997, 2002-2008). Ernis yerleşim kompleksi Orta Tunç Çağı'ndaki kesinti dışında, Erken Tunç Çağı'ndan (Kura-Aras) Geç Demir Çağı'na (Akhaimenid) değin uzanan bir süreç içindeki yerleşimleri kapsar. Bunlar, Evditepe Kura-Aras yerleşimi; Evditepe ve Alacahan Erken Demir Çağ (pre-Urartu) kaleleri ve mezarlıkları; Yukarı Keçikıran Urartu kült yapısı ve yol istasyonu (?), ve Aşağı Keçikıran Geç Demir Çağ (Akhaimenid) istasyonu'dur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ernis, Kura-Araxes, Erken Demir Çağ, Urartu, Geç Demir Çağ

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Introduction

The Ernis (Ünseli) settlement complex is situated in a small coastal plain on the northern shore of Lake Van (**Figs. 1-3**). It borders the modern town of Ünseli (former Ernis) in the Muradiye district of Van province. The former name of the site is used in the article because the sites of Ünseli are known by the name Ernis in the literature. This small coastal plain (former Kanikan), located between the plains of Muradiye and Erciş, is a sheltered area bordered on the south by Lake Van and on the north by Mt Esruk.

The northern shore of Lake Van is the most fertile area of the basin in terms of pastures and agricultural lands. It is surrounded by the volcanoes of Süphan to the west and Aladağ and Tendürek to the north. These also function as a major barrier separating the Lake Van basin and Mt Ağrı and northeastern Anatolia. The plains of Muradiye, Erciş and Patnos, and the large rivers going through them like Bağdişan-Murat, Ilıca (Zilan), Deliçay and Bendimahi, lie within this great range of volcanoes. The limited agricultural lands in the Lake Van basin are situated in these plains and river valleys. The largest and richest pastures of the basin are located on the slopes of the Süphan, Aladağ and Tendürek volcanoes. The northeastern shore of the lake is the crossroad of the main routes from the Van plain northwards to the Araxes valley, Mt Ağrı and northeastern Anatolia, southern Transcaucasia, northwestern Iran, and then westwards to the upper Euphrates valley and western part of northeastern Anatolia.

A large number of sites are located in the Muradiye, Erciş and Patnos plains-river valleys, and on the highlands and foothills surrounding the Süphan, Aladağ and Tendürek mountains including the northern shore of Lake Van. Recorded in our survey, most date to the Early Iron Age (EIA, *c.* 1300/1200-850 BC) and Middle Iron Age (MIA, Urartu, *c.* 850-600 BC). Settlement complexes were major sites in the region, which is also the case in the rest of eastern Anatolia. Our survey and excavations in the Lake Van basin and Mt Ağrı region have revealed that settlement complexes contain primary administrative or political centers of the region. Such complexes were central regional sites that controlled both the main trade and transhumant routes and fertile plains. The areas that they controlled were mostly limited to geographical units. They were located in central geographical areas of lowlands adjacent to foothills, which were favorable for agriculture, pastures, highlands and main routes across mountainous terrain. Another common feature was locations rich in water, such as fertile plains in the main river valleys and lake basins surrounded by mountains. The settlements are the component parts of a single site containing separate units related to each other such as mounds, cemeteries, lower cities and fortresses. These spread over a wide area with horizontal stratigraphy covering a long chronological sequence. The earliest evidence in our research starts from the Middle-Late Chalcolithic Period or Early Bronze Age (Kura-Araxes Culture) to the Middle Iron Age (Urartu) or the Late Iron Age (Achaemenid), except for an interruption in the Middle Bronze Age (Araxes Painted Ware Culture). These major sites also were connected to some permanent and seasonal settlements or fortresses with varying sizes and functions supplying highland and lowland resources. Actually, this settlement pattern was characteristic for the highlands of eastern Anatolia, southern Transcaucasia and north-western Iran and demonstrates a different model in contradistinction to those of the central area of the Near East. It seems that the settlement system of Caucasia needs to be discussed and redefined as shown by recent works in the region.

The first investigation in the area of Ernis (Ünseli) occurred at the beginning of the century. The excavation at Evditepe (Varşak Tepe) cemetery was undertaken during the First World War by N. J. Marr. Afterwards, K. and S. Lake made a short visit in 1938 to the Ernis sites. Later, Ch. Burney surveyed the basin of Lake Van in 1956 and investigated the station Aşağı Keçikıran. A.

Erzen and E. Bilgiç made excavations at the cemeteries of Evditepe and Alacahan between 1962 and 1964, both of which were named Ernis. Lastly, V. Sevin in 1997 and this author in 2002-2008 conducted intensive surveys. This article presents the results of the previous works and investigations carried out by Sevin and myself.

Ernis settlement complex

The settlement complex at Ernis is located in a *c.* 6 km² area in the coastal plain formerly called Kanikan (**Figs. 1-3**). This small and sheltered plain is surrounded by mountains and lake and suitable for settlement because of its favorable climatic condition. It contains a settlement and a fortress-cemetery at Evditepe, a fortress-cemetery at Alacahan, two buildings at Yukarı Keçikıran, and a station at Aşağı Keçikıran.

Information on the cemeteries at Evditepe and Alacahan, both excavated by A. Erzen and E. Bilgiç, is limited to a few published excavation reports. The records of their excavations and findings are in the Van Museum and in the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara. These, together with material from survey work, were studied by V. Sevin². Yet the number of the graves and their finds, detail locations, and types of the graves are largely unknown. Finds from eight or nine graves from Evditepe and four graves from Alacahan are mentioned in the records of the Van Museum; however, more graves were excavated. Besides, since the finds in the Anatolian Civilizations Museum were largely recorded as Ernis, it is impossible to separate the two different cemeteries.

Evditepe settlement and fortress-cemetery (N71/1) is located on the southern edge of the plain and on the shore of the lake (**Figs. 2-4**) (Marro and Özfirat 2004; Özfirat 2009; Özfirat 2013; Özfirat 2018b: 152-160; Sevin 1987; Sevin 1996a; Sevin 2003; Sevin 2004b; Sevin 2014). On a low rocky outcrop (formerly Varşak Tepe) there is an Early Bronze Age (EBA, Kura-Araxes, *c.* 3400-2300/2200) settlement and a fortress of EIA surrounded by a contemporary cemetery. The pottery consists of EBA-Kura Araxes, much of it EIA, and a few LIA-Achaemenid.

The Kura-Araxes settlement in Evditepe, located on the low rocky, has no visible architectural remains because of the EIA fortress. It should be the höyük described in Lake's notes as 'Near its southern end is a large low hüyük with sherds of the Bronze and Copper Ages'. Even though the Kura-Araxes settlement under the EIA fortress is evident, the findspot of the EBA pottery, published by Burney and in the name of Ernis in the Van Museum, is problematic as he also reported. There is no exact evidence on the findspot of around 61 vessels brought to the Van Museum. This acquisition was claimed to have been found accidentally in a stone-cist grave near Ernis in 1935 (Dönmez and Brice 1949: 52; Burney 1958; Korfmann 1982: 188-189; Sevin 1996a: 439)³. In the cemetery surrounding the Evditepe where the Kura-Araxes settlement was situated, no evidence dated to EBA was found in the excavation and surveys⁴.

²His study is based on the excavation reports given to him by A. Erzen and the finds in the Van Museum and Anatolian Civilizations Museum in Ankara with survey material.

³ The reason for the excavation in Ernis by A. Erzen and E. Bilgiç is these vessels. Even though the year of arrival of the Ernis pottery to the Van Museum is documented at 1937, they were in fact brought to the museum in 1935. Other than the problem of location, the number and origin of these vessels from only one tomb is also problematic. As Burney reported (1958: Fn 92) that the vessels belonged to three different period (EBaII, MBA? and Urartian), 'it is hardly likely that they all come from one cist grave'. Dönmez and Brice published initially that of the some 30 vessels, 20 were defined as entirely wheel made (1949: Pl. XXXI). They were dated to the Bronze or EBA and divided into three groups: black burnished (Figs. 1-8), red ware (Figs. 10-16), and red slip ware (Figs. 17-20). On the other hand, Burney dates most of the 46 pieces of vessels (Figs. 77-123) to EBaII and probably of a second millennium B.C. date (five of them are featured as Figs. 111-115). This confusion has probably been caused by the different groups from Ernis being studied together or the vessels of the same group being dated differently.

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The Kura-Araxes pottery collected on the Evditepe can be roughly classified into two wares: black-gray burnished and red-brown burnished. In fact an exact distinction for both is difficult because they are only fragments (**Fig. 5**). All the pottery is handmade, rough or medium grit tempered, and poorly fired. Red-brown burnished ware has been separated into neck and mouth parts of pots with its black appearance being a different color, either in red or in cream. In general, both wares formally consist of long-necked or closed mouths and round-bodied jars, simple-open mouths round bodied bowls, simple-open mouths, or everted rims with round bodies bowls. Triangle and nakhichevan lugs are dominant.

The fortress at Evditepe, built of uncut or roughly shaped stones, shows an irregular plan based on topography (**Fig. 4**). Its plan is roughly rectangular, 100.00 m in length and 70.00 m in width. It assumes a triangular form at the northern end, and square and rectangular interior rooms are on the southwestern side on the contour of terrace. The walls without buttresses had a thickness of 2.50 m.

The fortress at Evditepe is wrongly named Keçikıran by Erzen. Sevin explains this confusion (Sevin 2014: Fn 4.): ‘Erzen (1964, 571), probably quoting Burney, defines this fortress mistakenly as Keçikıran’. Burney (1957: 49, Fig. 9, No 223) mentions a fortress located to the right of a small stream which he named ‘Keçikıran fortress’ that measures 30 x 25 m. It seems impossible to correspond with the remains of Evditepe. Instead, a LIA fortress at Aşağı Keçikıran – 3.5 km east of Evditepe on the northern side of Erciş-Muradiye highway on a low hill – has a plan and size similar to this. We found only ‘triangle ware’ on the surface of Aşağı Keçikıran located to the south of Keçikıran village (modern Muradiye district). According to Russel (1980: No. 223) who published the material collected by Burney, ‘the Keçikıran fortress is located 3 km west of the Karahan village’. So the Keçikıran fortress studied by Burney must have been the LIA station at Aşağı Keçikıran east of the fortress of Evditepe which was studied by Sevin and myself (see here).

The cemetery of Evditepe lies on the plain that surrounds the fortress. Its northern part is separated by the Van-Erciş highway today, even though it originally reached the outskirts of the high hill upon which sat the Urartian buildings at Yukarı Keçikıran (**Figs. 2-3, 14.2**). This large cemetery covers an area of approximately 0.5 km. K. and S. Lake, who gave information on the first excavation at the cemetery of Evditepe-Varşak Tepe by Marr, reported that more than five hundred graves were excavated. Unfortunately, no information can be obtained from the Marr excavation except for this short note. Later, in the excavations of Erzen and Bilgiç twenty graves were excavated out of the one hundred found around the fortress at Evditepe (Erzen 1963: 542;

Çilingiroğlu (1983) has also studied a group of pottery of Ernis origin in the Van Museum. It is unclear whether the group was brought to the museum in 1935. Çilingiroğlu suggests that the vessels are the unpainted versions of painted ware of the 2nd Millennium BC. Even though no drawings or photographs were given for the pottery, their descriptions of ware and form in the text suggests that we date them as EIA. This study of Ernis pottery continues to be problematic and open to discussion. Neither painted nor unpainted MBA-Araxes painted ware was found either in the Erzen and Bilgiç excavations. Nor was the research done by Sevin and myself dated to the 2nd Millennium BC, which Çilingiroğlu pointed out. Finally, according to our study, the total number of Ernis vessels in the Van Museum is 71 (EBA 49, EIA 15, Urartu 6, Medieval Age 1). It is clear that the vessels were collected from different locations and that their location from a single tomb is impossible. In fact, their provenance in Ernis is also questionable since they arrived at the museum by purchase.

⁴ Sevin (1996a: Fn 1) defines the problem of the EBA pottery reported to have been found in the excavation of Erzen and Bilgiç and discussed by Çilingiroğlu: ‘Contrary to the reports of Çilingiroğlu (1983: 28), in the excavations by Erzen and Bilgiç no Early Transcaucasian II pottery was found in these tombs. Even though it was mentioned «Urartian and Karaz type 2nd millennium pottery has been found above ground», in Erzen *et al.* 1962 [1964]: 20 and Erzen 1963: 542, we haven’t found any pottery in our study in the Van Museum. Besides, it is not clear which type of pottery were aimed with the definition of «Karaz type 2nd millennium pottery».

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Erzen 1964: 570-572; Erzen *et al.* 1962 (1964): 20; Erzen *et al.* 1963 (1965): 34)⁵. The excavation of Marr at Varşak Tepe was only reported in Lake's record. The other settlements on the Ernis plain are also reported in a short note of Lake's (Korfmann 1982: 188-189): 'Now the road ran out again onto a small plain, which apparently goes by the name of the chief town in it, Arrish, covered with ancient remains. Near its southern end is a large low hüyük with sherds of the Bronze and Copper Ages. In the northern section is Varshak Tepe, the Urartain citadel which we had examined the night before. Between them are at least two other small hüyük and hundreds of tombs. These tombs appear as low flat bulges in the surface of the ground. When the earth is removed, they are found to be stone boxes of considerable size formed of megaliths. The cover stone averages 2.^{1/2} x 1.^{1/2} meters and 1/2 meter in thickness. Over 500 of these were opened by the Russians during the World War under the direction of Prof. Marr. Due to the difficulty of moving the stones, they generally broke a small opening through at one corner and removed all gold and other objects of immediate value. None of these tombs has ever been properly excavated and, as I have said before, it is not known to what civilization they belong. The character of the gold ornaments is said to suggest Scythian and it is possible that the tombs are to be linked with the ruins of the plateau city of Zurnaki Tepe.'

The Evditepe graves are divided into three groups according to those excavated by Erzen and Bilgiç and surveyed by Sevin: Stone-lined graves, chamber graves (**Fig. 9**) and graves with kromlech (**Fig. 7.2**). The graves share several common features: They were built roughly or in a regular rectangular plan with uncut stones; their outline is oval at the floor level and narrowing at its edges (**Figs. 6-7.1, 9**); the walls are built into a false arch; the roof was covered by heavy roof stones with some been covered by pebble stones at the top (**Fig. 6.2**); and all of them have multiple burials. The relation between the burial tradition, the small finds, and the pottery cannot be determined because of the lack of systematic excavation records. Stone-lined and chamber graves were found in large numbers, graves with kromlech were examined only two.

Stone-lined graves are the most common ones and comprise the first group (**Fig. 9**). The entrance to the graves was provided by removing one of the cover stones. But in one of the graves (No 7 and possibly No 6), there is an entrance space on one of the narrow sides. Additionally, a step led to the inside of grave 6. The skeletons were found superimposed one upon another and separated by layers of earth. In one of the graves (No 8) forty to fifty pieces of pottery were found, in two of them over thirty pieces, and in another around eighty pieces. The dimensions of the graves in Evditepe are: No 6 (3.85 x 1.25 m, at the ends 0.70 m); No 7 (width 1.70 m, at the ends 0.65 m); No 8 (1.30 m height); No 3 (1.10 x 0.65 m).

Chamber graves constitute the second group (**Figs. 6; 7.1**). They show differences in planning and burial tradition from the first group. Chamber graves can be classified into two types: with a dromos or with a simple entrance. They are longer and higher than stone-lined tombs. The entrance to the chambers is through a low door on the narrow sides. Some have a simple shaft dromos, and in one example (No 4) the burial chamber is reached by steps. The bodies were gathered on a pile on the floor by the back wall. Again, different from the first group, no iron objects were found in these graves. One tomb (Evditepe No 4) had fifteen pieces of pottery while a second (Evditepe No 5) had sixteen. The dimensions of the graves are: No 4 (4.50 x 1.30 m, at the ends 0.70 m, height 1.25) and No 5 (4.20 x 1.10 m, at the ends 0.50 m). The dimensions of some other graves investigated in the survey are: M2 (4,60 x 1,20 x 1.00 m); M15 (4,60 x 1,50 x 1.00 m, height of dromos 0.60 m, (**Fig 6: 1**); M20 (3,70 x 1,40 x 1.40 m, height of dromos 0.50 m). The original height of both the chambers and the dromoi were not determined.

⁵ For detailed information for the cemetery see Sevin 1987; Sevin 1996a; Sevin 2004b; Sevin 2014.

Graves with cromlech constitute the third group. These are located on the northern edge of the cemetery (**Fig. 7.2**). In one with an approximately 12.00 m wide cromlech, there are two graves in a north-south direction. One grave is partially covered with two heavy cover stones. Because they were only investigated in the survey, we have no information about their goods.

Alacahan fortress-cemetery (N71/2) is located on the northwestern edge of the plain and on a rocky hill extending to the lake (**Figs. 2-3, 8**) (Bilgiç 1964: 20; Erzen 1964: 570-572; Erzen *et al.* 1963 (1965): 34; Sevin 2014; Marro and Özfırat 2004; Özfırat 2013). There is a spring on its southern slope. The fortress overlooks the plain and the lake, and the cemetery is located at the western and southwestern slopes.

The fortress is rectangular, 100.00 m in length and 40.00 m in width. Although the northern and western walls are unclear, a rough plan is traceable (**Fig. 8.1**). The walls were built with uncut or roughly shaped stones with a thickness of 2.50 m. The remains of adjacent interior rooms in the rectangular plan are visible on the eastern part.

Stone-lined and chamber graves which is similar to Evditepe were excavated and we studied in the survey in the cemetery (**Fig. 8.2-3**). Six tombs were excavated by Erzen and Bilgiç at Alacahan, but they gave only information for four tombs (Erzen 1963; 1964; Erzen *et al.* 1963 (1965); Sevin 1987; Sevin 2004b; Sevin 2014). The tombs can be divided into two groups: Stone-lined and chamber graves with dromos. The stone-lined graves at Alacahan are found in two types. The first group comprises three tombs with one being rectangular and measuring approximately 1.00 x 1.50 x 1.50 m. No iron objects were recovered, and only ten pieces of pottery were found. No information was obtained about the skeletons in the graves. The second type of stone-lined graves are square and 0.50-0.60 m in height. These could possibly be children's graves.

The second group is chamber graves with dromos. One has a rectangular plan measuring 6.60 x 3.25 x 2.80 m (**Fig. 8.2**), and this large burial chamber has a stepped entrance. The roof was built with a false arch and heavy stones and covered by pebble stones in a herringbone pattern. The dimensions of some of the chamber graves investigated in the survey are: M2 (2.50 x 1.20 x 1.00 m); M3 (3.20 x 1.20 x 1.30 m); M4 (3.30 x 1.80 x 1.90 m). Their original height and whether they have a dromos was not determined.

The burial finds of Evditepe-Alacahan consists of around three hundred sherds of pottery, around thirty ceremonial weapons like iron daggers, mace heads and axes as well as jewelry like bracelets, needles, rings and beads (**Fig. 9.5**)⁶. The only bronze pieces are a ring-circle and a bracelet⁷.

The citadels at Evditepe and Alacahan have irregular plans which are dependent on the terrain. They consist of dry masonry, uncut or roughly shaped stones and have no

⁶There is a confusion regarding the Ernis iron artefacts. The bronze-hilted iron sword published by Belli and Konyar in the EIA finds of Evditepe cemetery is a typical Late Urartian (7th century BC) weapon (Belli 2001: 148, Fig. 6; Belli and Konyar 2003a: cover photo, upper left, 111, Fig. 38/3; pl. 25; 2003b: 187-189, Figs. 22: 3, 23). Besides, the origin of this is not Ernis. Its findspot, provided to us during the excavation of the Van-Altıntepe (Tuşpa) Urartian cemetery, was mentioned as Kalecik (070/9) near Van; see Marro and Özfırat 2004: Fn 6; Sevin 2014: Fn 12. For the Ernis metals see Sevin 1987; Sevin 2003; Sevin 2004b. Besides, some of the iron artefacts with origins defined as Evditepe by Belli and Konyar (Belli 2001: 148, Figs. 6-9; Belli and Konyar 2003a: 110-112, Figs. 36-39, pl. 23-26; Belli and Konyar 2003b: 179-194, Figs. 17-27) were brought to the Van Museum by purchase or grant. Therefore, the argument that they originated from Ernis is baseless; see Marro and Özfırat 2004: Fn 6; Sevin 2004b: Fn 6-7.

⁷ Sevin (2004b: 362) suggests that bronze was scarcely used at the beginning of EIA. Even so this situation is quite interesting, for it may be because some of the bronze objects had not been recorded in the excavation documents. Bronze objects are reportedly much fewer than the iron ones; see Erzen *et al.* 1963 (1965): 34; Bilgiç 1964: 22.

projections on the walls (**Fig. 8.1**). These contrast with the regular layout and the buttresses or towers, ashlar or semi-ashlar masonry used in the construction of later fortresses in the MIA-Urartu. The fortresses of the EIA do not have buttresses or towers on the walls except for a few irregularly shaped ones in the later phase. The layout of Alacahan fortress is more regular because of its construction on a flat rocky hill. Even so, it can be suggested that the fortress at Alacahan represents a later phase of EIA (II) in the basin by its regular plan and its chamber graves. However, it is difficult to make a distinction due to the lack of stratigraphic data in the region.

The stratigraphic evidence of the EIA cemeteries at Evditepe and Alacahan has been defined by excavations at the cemeteries of Karagündüz and Hakkari in the basin⁸. The EIA is divided by Sevin into two phases in the basin of Lake Van: c. 1300-1100 BC (EIA I) and 1100-850/800 (EIA II). Stone-lined graves and chamber graves respectively represent an earlier tradition (EIA I) where iron ceremonial weapons and ornaments and pinkish-buff were intensively found. Chamber graves seem as a transitional type between stone-lined and chamber graves with a dromos. On the other hand, in chamber graves with a dromos, red slipped ware, bowls with thick rims, jars with ribbed shoulder, and jugs with trefoil rims appear first. The usage of bronze increases when cremation appears. The height of chamber graves increased and wide niches on the walls appeared. These new features belonging to EIA II are evidence that the characteristics of the kingdom of Urartu started to appear extensively. Graves with kromlechs are not typical for the Lake Van basin, since they belong to the LBA-EIA cultures of northeastern Anatolia and southern Caucasus where black-grey pottery and kurgans are dominant. The kromlechs at Evditepe are the southernmost examples of this culture.

The pottery from the excavations and survey at the Evditepe and Alacahan fortresses-cemeteries have contemporaneous aspects. However, the inadequacy of the excavation documents and the recording of some pottery under the name of Ernis makes it hard to separate the evidence⁹. EIA is the largest group among the pottery we collected on the fortress at Evditepe, contemporary with the cemetery. While no pottery was found on the fortress at Alacahan, some EIA sherds were only found in the cemetery. The wheel-made pottery of the EIA can be divided in three groups¹⁰: Pinkish buff ware (**Fig. 10**), red slipped ware (**Fig. 12**) and red-brown ware (**Fig. 11**). The forms mostly seen are spherical and carinated bowls with a simple rim and closed mouth, and small jars with low necks and round bodies. String-hole lugs and triangular ledge handles are frequently seen on the bowls, as are nipples on the shoulders of the jars. The decoration is uniform; horizontal grooves, triangles, wavy lines, dots and notches made with incision technique are mainly used. Horizontal grooves below the rim are seen mainly on the bowls. Grooves inside or outside the rims of the jars are typical. Red slipped ware has two subgroups, one of which dates earlier. Red-brown ware continues through the EIA with some changes in the late phase.

⁸ Sevin 1999; Sevin 2003; Sevin 2004a; Sevin 2004b; Sevin 2015; Özfirat 2018a; Özfirat 2018b. A calibrated C14 sample from one of the earlier chamber tombs (K6) of Karagündüz gives a date of 1250-1120 BC for the beginning of the cemetery. Another calibrated C14 sample from the EIA level of Karagündüz mound 5 gives a date of 1092-956 BC. The Hakkari M1 grave is located at the outskirts of Hakkari fortress and 19 m north of the EIA stelae. It was in use for a long period of time, from the end of first quarter or beginning of second quarter to the end of second millennium BC, as shown by the Araxes painted ware, the Khabur ware of MBA-LBA, and the grooved ware of the EIA. Radiocarbon analysis on the human bones of this grave gives the dates of 1885-1745, 1995-1690, 1950-1835 and 2030-1780 BC, which provides a *terminus post quem* for the grave.

⁹ 270 sherds pottery were studied by Sevin from the Erzen and Bilgiç excavations, 236 of them are in the Van Museum and 30 in the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations; see Sevin 1996a; Sevin 1996b; Sevin 2004a; Sevin 2004b; Sevin 2014: 357.

¹⁰ For the pottery from the survey, see Marro and Özfirat 2004; Sevin 2004a; Sevin 2004b.

Ernis (Ünseli) Settlement Complex on the northern shore of Lake Van: From the Early Bronze Age (Kura-Araxes) to the Late Iron Age (Achaemenid)

Pinkish buff ware is typical for the EIA I in the eastern shoreline of the basin, but it can be seen more or less together with red-brown ware in the rest of basin throughout the period. Red slipped ware represents the transition phase (EIA II) from the Early to Middle Iron Age in the Lake Van basin. It can be compared with prototypes known from the classical Urartian red polished ware (Palace Ware, Biainili Ware). Thus, Erzen and Bilgiç, who dated the cemetery to the 2nd millennium BC, believe that it continued until the establishment of the kingdom because of the red slipped ware found that resembles Urartian red polished ware (Bilgiç 1964: 22; Erzen *et al.* 1963 (1965): 34; Erzen 1964: 571; Çilingiroğlu 1983: 27). Classical Urartian pottery and its most typical example, red slipped or red polished ware, were not found among the Ernis pottery. Nevertheless, earlier characteristics continue in this phase, and some changes leading to Urartian can be seen. The forms are round-bodied bowls with thick rims or carinated bowls with simple or everted rims, jugs with trefoil rims and ribbed on the shoulders.

Yukarı Keçikıran cultic building and road station ? (N71/3) is located on the eastern edge of the plain on a high rocky hill reaching towards the lake (Figs. 2-3, 13; 14.2; 15.1)¹¹. There are two Urartian structures on top of a hill overlooking the plain and the northern shores of lake, one at the summit and the other at the western side, 66.00 m apart (Fig. 14.2).

The structure complex on the summit is surrounded by a rectangular wall measuring 63.00 x 42.00 m (Figs. 13; 14.1). This wall, 2.70 m thick, has no buttresses other than a corner risalite on the southeastern side. The building was reached by a 5.20 m wide ramp on the eastern side; however, no gateway has been found. Inside, the traces of some corridor-like rooms; a terrace on the north; and a hall with two stone pillars (2.70 x 3.60 m and 2.80 x 4.00 m) were found. The walls of these rooms are 1.70 m to 3.10 m thick, and some blocks are 3.10 m long while others reach 1.50 m. At the highest point of the structure and at its middle, a small part of another building constructed with cleanly cut basalt blocks. These masterfully crafted blocks belonged to an entrance 1.60 m wide and 2.10 m deep and oriented in a north-south direction. The block faces have not been made smooth. An unfinished prismatic basalt block and some limestone slabs were found near them. 1.30 m east of this entrance is a shallow niche made of three unfinished basalt blocks measuring 1.70 m. Such basalt blocks were found scattered on the hill west of the structure complex.

The other building lying at the western end has been built in a north-south direction (Figs. 3, 14.2-3). It is rectangular in plan with dimensions of 78.00 x 16.00 m and a long-narrow form. The building with a 4.00 m outer wall has buttresses on the western side because of tectonic reasons. Inside, there are two large rectangular halls – one in the north (16.20 x 7.00) and one in south (24.30 x 7.00 m) – and an anteroom (9.30 x 7.00 m) in the middle with two narrow rooms-entrance halls on both sides. The interior walls are all 2.30 m thick except the one measuring 2.60 m. There are no traces of the building's gate, although it is possible that it was designed to be entered through a gateway on the east side, possibly in the middle via the anteroom. Also, the halls in the north and south would have been reached through the entrance halls. Even though the building with fairly thick walls is thought to have had a second floor, no exact evidence proves it.

In neither of the buildings was mud brick used in the construction of these walls with foundations built by semi-ashlar stones. This wall construction does not seem to be complete. Also, pottery is scarce, and other than a sherd of 'bianili ware', no diagnostics are available. Sevin suggest that the construction complex was abandoned before the end. These buildings that show

¹¹ Marro and Özfırat 2004; Sevin 2006. The citadel reported by Lake as 'In the northern section is Varshak Tepe, the Urartain citadel' should be here. No more information is recorded by Lake, however.

characteristic elements of the same project undoubtedly reveal a Urartian character¹². But it is hard to answer the questions like why and when the construction started and why the project was left unfinished. It is suggested that the structure complex on the summit is closer to the last period of the Urartian kingdom when its architecture is considered. The masonry, characterized by the color contrast with basalt blocks and limestone slabs, is unique. It resembles the usage of basalt in front and limestone in side walls of Urartian temples. In the Haldi temple at Ayanis a form of contrast was tried by using greenish marble in the entrance threshold of the cella and light-colored marble on the floor. Particularly, the resemblance of the small basalt blocks and limestone slabs used in this Haldi cella and the stone pillar at the Kef fortress as well as the similarity of the unwallled site at Toprakkale and its location at the summit easily be seen from the vicinity suggest it was a religious structure (**Figs. 2-3, 13-14, 15.1**). The western building compares with Urartian road stations, but it is difficult to understand its function¹³. Sevin also suggested that it can be compared to the multi-purpose rectangular structures that emerged in the late 7th century BC. The Urartian road stations generally shows similar topographical locations and layouts. Most were constructed on low roadside hills, although some were built level with the road or on a higher hill such as Yukarı Keçikıran. Except for the layout of the Yukarı Keçikıran road station, its location on the main road and its distance between the fortress at Körzüt 20-30 km away support this function. To build on a high hill with an adjoining cult building suggests more functions such as a small military garrison and territorial control.

Aşağı Keçikıran station (N71/10) is located behind a low ridge on the eastern end of the plain and on a low and small rocky hill directly under Yukarı Keçikıran (**Figs. 2-3, 15.1**) (Özfirat 2009; Özfirat 2019b: 286; Sevin 2014: Fn 4.). It lies to the right side of a small stream. This small building, named Keçikıran by Burney and recorded as a Urartian fortress, has towers on its walls and a gateway at the southeastern edge¹⁴.

The station at Aşağı Keçikıran has a square plan: northern wall of 38.00 m, southern wall of 45.00 m, eastern wall of 44.00 m, and western wall of 45.00 m (**Fig. 15.1**). The walls that are 2.50 m thick have half semi-ashlar stones. We have not seen any architectural elements that can be interpreted as towers, and a gateway recorded by Burney seems to have disappeared over time.

The pottery was identified by Burney as ‘probably of Late Bronze Age date, though perhaps as late as the beginning of Urartian times’ and by Russel as ‘Decorated Early Transcaucasian ware (M) (Russel 1980: No. 223.). In our and the Sevin surveys only LIA-Achaemenid pottery was collected, which includes ‘triangle ware’ (**Fig. 15.2**). These sherds are red-brown ware, red slipped ware and cream slipped ware. Fine painted decorated sherds are mostly seen in cream slipped ware, which is typical ‘triangle ware’. Carinated bowls with simple rims and open mouths (tulip bowls); round bodied bowls with simple rims and open mouths; jars with low-necked and round bodies are dominant. The decoration includes mainly triangles, festoons, bands applied with red and black paint.

¹² We did not find any traces of the EIA fortress at Yukarı Keçikıran which Belli and Konyar refer to (2003a: 113, 127). Yukarı Keçikıran named as Keçikıran in this publication.

¹³ The most regular Urartian road system in eastern Anatolia from the central area of the kingdom to its western border (Upper Euphrates) was investigated by Sevin (1988; 1991). Both buildings of Yukarı Keçikıran are classified as road stations of Keçikıran 1 and 2 by Dan (2017).

¹⁴ Burney 1957: 49, No 223, Fig. 9. Regarding the confusion on the location, dating and name of the station see here Evditepe. In addition, the LIA station at Aşağı Keçikıran is dated to the Urartian period by Salvini based on Burney’s record and an inscription of king Minua found in a house in Keçikıran. See Salvini 2005: 262-263; Salvini 2008: A 5-84.

Conclusion

The settlement complex at Ernis is a central site on the northern shore of Lake Van because of its location between the lowland and highland with the fertile plains of Muradiye and Erciş and by its location on the lake shore which facilitates transportation¹⁵. Essentially, the northern part of Lake Van was densely populated and covered a long chronological sequence together with the eastern shoreline. This contrasts with the rest of basin, by its land use with the most agricultural and pasture lands in the region and as a crossroads westward to the upper Euphrates valley, north and east towards the northeastern Anatolia, southern Transcaucasia and northwestern Iran. The settlement complex of Ernis contains settlements from the EBA (Kura-Araxes) to the LIA (Achaemenid) except for an interruption in the MBA. These include: Kura-Araxes settlement at Evditepe; EIA (pre-Urartian) fortresses-cemeteries at Evditepe and Alacahan; Urartian road station (?), and a cult building at Yukarı Keçikıran; LIA (Achaemenid) station at Aşağı Keçikıran.

It is difficult to determine the characteristics of the Kura-Araxes settlement at Evditepe because of the EIA fortress-cemetery situated on top of it. EBA settlements mainly have been found in mounds up to the present, but the fortresses of the EBA on foothills were found beside the mounds in the plains and river valleys of the Lake Van basin in our survey (Özfirat 2021). Evditepe must be a settlement on the plain. The mounds of Çelebibağ (N70/11)¹⁶ and Tepe Şurki (M70/4) situated in the Erciş plain-Zilan valley to the west, Üzerliktepe (N71/5) in the Muradiye plain-Bendimahi valley to the east, and Yaylıyaka (N70/3) on the eastern shore are significant Kura-Araxes settlements located on the northern shore of the lake together with Evditepe¹⁷ (**Fig. 1**). However, due to the rise of the water level in Lake Van through the ages, it is possible that sites may have had to be originally situated far from the shore. Possibly there might be other settlements on the shore under the lake (Kempe *et al.* 1978). Thus, the data of the settlements on the coastal plains is insufficient.

The pre-Urartian settlements of Ernis include the fortresses-cemeteries at Evditepe and Alacahan. They show characteristics of the EIA by their building technique and irregular plan based on the topography. These also include uncut or roughly shaped stones, remains of an extensive cemetery, and pottery. The settlement pattern of the LBA-EIA (c. 1500/1400-850 BC) is defined by the highland fortresses-cemeteries in the highland of eastern Anatolia. The fortresses-cemeteries are located on rocky hills in the plains or mainly on the slopes of mountains and highlands. They clearly reached an incredible density during the EIA-MIA, not like in either earlier or later periods. The rocky hills on the foothills and highlands have clearly played a special role in the construction of the landscape at that time by providing territorial planning and control. It seems that the nomadic population of the MBA began to gather around social and economic centers. Although the increase in the number of highland fortresses is striking in the whole region, there are also fortresses-cemeteries in lowlands, in addition to Evditepe-Alacahan, such as those on the Patnos and Erciş plains (Özfirat 2009; Özfirat 2013), fortress-cemetery of Aliler (N70/7), cemeteries of (Dilkaya Çilingiroğlu 1991; Çilingiroğlu 2012; Özfirat 2108b: 169-172) and Karagündüz¹⁸ in the eastern part of lake, and Okçuhan (M66/2) in the Malazgirt plain-Murat valley (Özfirat 2001: 124). It seems that the transition from pastoralism to a sedentary life started from

¹⁵ Ünseli (Ernis) had a pier and a shipyard by the 1900s (see here **Figs. 2-3**), Saraçoğlu 1989: 46.

¹⁶ Çelebibağ could be a larger settlement, but excavations there were conducted in a limited area; see Marro and Özfirat 2004: 233-234.

¹⁷ Marro and Özfirat 2004; Marro and Özfirat 2005. Çelebibağ (N70/11) and Üzerliktepe (N71/5) are located at the confluence of the river and the lake.

¹⁸ For Aliler and Karagündüz see Sevin 2003; Sevin 2004a; Sevin 2004b; Sevin and Kavaklı 1996; Özfirat 2108b: 160-168.

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the beginning of the LBA on into the EIA with the population slowly spreading to lower areas. At the same time, the pastoralist settlement system of the MBA appears to have continued into the EIA.

Assyrian and Urartian epigraphic sources give information about local polities of the highland starting from the 13th century BC. These are mentioned as the lands of Uruatri and Nairi. According to these records, the highlands of eastern Anatolia, southern Transcaucasia and northwestern Iran were divided among a great number of local polities in the LBA-EIA. In general, this vast area, which is the pre-Urartian landscape, appears to have shared a common culture. Its numerous polities could be named fortress-state, small kingdom, chiefdom or regional confederacies in tribal structure. The political intensification of this highland state formation was marked by the appearance of local states centered in fortresses or fortress-settlements with an urban character. These were mainly part of settlement complexes. The central fortresses along with the citadels, lower cities, cemeteries and mounds such as Ernis were mainly located in settlement complexes that cover long time periods. This suggests that the region was divided into numerous small units ruled by a central city. Taking into account the archaeological evidence and written sources of the region, this administrative system was compatible with the Nairi and Uruatri lands of the pre-Urartians. The EIA is also accepted as the time when small kingdoms in the region established the foundations of the Urartian Kingdom. Later, these local polities or local fortress-states of the EIA became provinces or major cities of Urartu. Our knowledge about the territories of these local states or small kingdoms in eastern Anatolia is extremely limited because of insufficient epigraphic data and the lack of stratigraphic excavations. It is only possible to localize some of them under general terms. The areas they controlled were mostly limited by topographical features like a valley or a plain which was isolated with mountains. The central or major fortresses were also formed with some permanent or seasonal settlements and fortresses of various size and function around them¹⁹.

The fortresses-cemeteries at Evditepe and Alacahan (Ernis) are suggested to be the part of the same settlement due to their closeness and being contemporaneous fortress-cemeteries. A large citadel and a lower city at Evditepe-Alacahan that would support the population of the cemeteries were not found. However, Ernis, dated to EIA, is the most populated settlement on the northern shore of lake when the cemetery enclosing a large area is considered. Even though there are many EIA fortresses on foothills and highlands on the northern shore of lake, we have not found a cemetery larger than Ernis or a larger fortress other than the fortress-cemetery at Zinarizer (N69/8) to the west of Ernis. The fortress of Zinarizer was built on a hilltop overlooking the lake and does not seem to have been settled by permanent communities. If the citadels at Ernis are accepted as the central fortress-city, the fortresses and some cemeteries located on the surrounding foothills and highlands at Tırmıklı (M71/3), Zirçlitaş (M71/6), Bakırtaş (M71/5), Teketaş (M71/7), Toptepe (M69/9), Kengerkor (M70/6), İt Kalesi (M70/2), In Mevkii (M70/1), Şekerbulak (M70/12), Meydan (M69/4) and Mino (N69/7) can be considered as seasonal or permanent fortresses built for territorial control of the pastures and agricultural lands (**Fig. 1**). The fortress at Zinarizer on the western coast and the fortresses at Çolpan (N71/6) and Aliler (N70/7) on the eastern coast can be considered as frontier city-outposts of Ernis (**Figs. 1; 8.1**).

¹⁹ A great number of Iron Age fortresses with local characteristics used extensively by pre-Urartian polities have finds from the EIA and MIA. It seems that some of the local fortresses and seasonal settlements were used into the MIA-Urartu. Marro and Özfirat 2004; Marro and Özfirat 2005; Özfirat 2006; Özfirat 2010; Özfirat 2013; Özfirat 2017a; Özfirat 2017b; Özfirat 2017c; Özfirat 2017d. Some have a long sequence such as Evditepe and Aliler. The fortress at Aliler (N70/7) is of special interest since its occupation spans from the EBA-Kura Araxes until the MIA-Urartu with an interruption in the MBA. Its architecture is pre-Urartu and Urartu; see Marro and Özfirat 2005. For detailed information of Aliler see Sevin 2004a; Sevin 2004b.

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Fortified cities or major fortresses of the small independent polities of pre-Urartu and Urartu were mostly situated as part of the large settlement complexes in continuity, such as the adjacent settlement complexes at Melekli, Karakoyunlu-Bulakbaşı (I73/1, I73/3, I73/7, I74/3) and Bozkurt (K73/6) in the Mt Ağrı. These are pre-Urartian and Urartian urban centers are located respectively as Luhiuni, the royal city of Eriqua and, Minuahinili, the new fortress-city of new Urartian political center of the region (Özfirat 2017a; Özfirat 2017b; Özfirat 2017c; Özfirat 2017d). The Urartian major fortresses were mainly established on the next hill and situated on the fortresses of pre-Urartu or a former one. These continued into the Urartu period, in some cases with minor changes such as Shisheh and Seqindel-Libliuni in northwestern İnan, Gavar-Khaldi, Tsovinar-Teishebaini, Tsovak, Lchashen, Arghuyti Dash, Horom and Aramus in southern Transcaucasia²⁰, Melekli, Karakoyunlu-Bulakbaşı, Bozkurt and Seregele-Tutumlu (Suluçem, K72/22, K72/9) on the slopes Mt Ağrı, Aliler on the eastern shore of lake Van in the highland of eastern Anatolia. Ernis (Evditepe and Alacahan) can be considered a central fortress-city of a small local polity on the northern shore of basin in Uruatri lands from its remarkable fortresses-cemeteries of pre-Urartu and remarkable Urartian structures on the neighboring hill (Yukarı Keçikıran) and by its location.

The Urartian structure complex at Yukarı Keçikıran seems unfinished. Probably, it was a part of the intensive and expensive construction projects of King Rusa, son of Argishti II (c. 675 BC). For their architectural features compare to Rusahinili Qilbanikai (Toprakkale), Rusahinili Eudurukai (Ayanis) and Haldiei URU (Kef Kalesi), according to Sevin (**Fig. 1**). These constructions of Rusa related to the cult of Haldi was quite expensive, elaborate and luxurious. Yukarı Keçikıran is totally different from the military structures by design. The top of the rocky was encircled by a massive temenos wall, and probably a cella was built on the highest point as shown by the basalt blocks and limestone slabs. The lack of a defensive wall surrounding the building, similar to Toprakkale, also points to its religious character. Sevin suggests that the cult building and the road station (?) of the structure complex at Yukarı Keçikıran was a part of the great projects of Rusa, but was never finished.

The remarkable Urartian fortresses on the northeastern part of lake are as follows (**Fig. 1**): Deliçay (M70/8)²¹ and Aşağı Karaçay (M70/7)²² on the bank of Deliçay river; Urartian inscriptions at Karataş (Salvini 2008: Karataş A 9-10, A 9-11; Dan 2010: 71) and Karahan (N71/12)²³; fortresses and inscriptions of Minua at Körzüt (N71/13)²⁴ and Muradiye (N72/1)²⁵; and the building at Aliler (N70/7)²⁶. The Urartian sites on the northeastern shore probably connected with the fortress at Körzüt, a provincial or administrative center at the most strategic point of the

²⁰ Badalyan *et al.* 1997; Badalyan *et al.* 2016; Badalyan *et al.* 2017; Biscione 2002; Biscione 2003; Biscione *et al.* 2012; Hammer 2014; Heinsch *et al.* 2012; Hmayakyan 2010; Khanzaq *et al.* 2001; Kleiss and Kroll 1980; Kohl and Kroll 1999; Ristvet *et al.* 2013; Salvini 2002; Sanamyan 2002; Smith 1999; 2003; 2012.

²¹ The fortress is situated on the left bank of the Deliçay River and at the confluence of the river and the lake. Due to the rise of the water level in Lake Van throughout time, it is possible that sites were originally situated far from the lakeshore. Burney 1957: 49, No: 210; Burney and Lawson 1960: 185; Russell 1980: No: 210. It was also visited in our survey.

²² The fortress is situated on the upper valley of Deliçay River; Marro and Özfirat 2004; Özfirat 2013.

²³ Dinçol and Kavaklı 1978; Salvini 2006: 58, 63-64, 135, 181-183; Salvini 2008: 112; Işık *et al.* 2019. Karahan is recorded as an Urartian town by Burney 1957: 53, No: 222; Russell 1980: No: 222; Salvini 2008: 112. The small settlement at Karahan (N71/12) sat the confluence of the Bendimahi River and the lake was visited in our survey. There are a few untypical EIA-MIA sherds were found. There are no remains here of a large Urartian fortress or town; also the location of inscriptions is unclear.

²⁴ Burney 1957: 47-48, No: 212; Tarhan and Sevin 1976-1977: 276-286; Russell 1980: No: 212; Salvini 2006: 63-64, 135, 146-147, 180, 215-217; Özfirat 2010: 227-228; Dan and Vitolo 2016.

²⁵ Burney 1957: 48, No: 211; Burney and Lawson 1960: 183-185; Russell 1980: No: 211; Salvini 2006: 135; Özfirat 2007: 117.

²⁶ See here fn 29.

basin. The cult building and the road station (?) at Yukarı Keçikıran can be considered a religious center in this frame.

The Achaemenid (LIA) settlement at Ernis is represented as a station at Aşağı Keçikıran, and some potsherds in Evditepe are probably related it (Sevin 2004a: Fig. 2: 8). The surface finds of Aşağı Keçikıran were pottery sherds of 'Triangle-Festoon Ware' dating only to the Late Achaemenid Period²⁷. Aşağı Keçikıran has close similarities to the LIA station at Aşağı Elmalık (P70/2), with its location on a low plain and being a single layer LIA station, with the Urartian structure complex on the adjacent hill at Yukarı Keçikıran and the Urartian inscriptions at Karataş which is located nearby. Aşağı Elmalık is located on the southeastern shore of the lake where also only 'triangle ware' were found. Here on the hill adjacent to it stands the Urartian Fortress at Yukarı Elmalık (P70/1) and the Urartian inscription at Hazine Piri Kapısı (**Fig. 1**)²⁸.

Even though settlements in the basin are quite few compared to the Urartian period, as in the rest of eastern Anatolia, Achaemenid sites are important by the evidence for a period that we have little knowledge about (Özfirat 2019b). Nevertheless, it is clear that the eastern shoreline of Lake Van or the central part of Urartu was more densely settled than the rest of basin in the LIA. Settlements and stations of the LIA were generally found on the main routes and fertile plains-valleys. The small fort-like structures such as Komtepe (M73/8), Aşağı Keçikıran, Tuzla (N70/5), Sivritepe-Sazlıkıyanı (070/6-070/7) and Aşağı Elmalık (P70/2) appeared on the main route between Mt Ağrı and Lake Van, into the Van plain where the former Urartian capital of Van Fortress (Tuşpa) was located. These would have been stations which functioned as outposts and road stations between the regional centers (**Fig. 1**). 'Triangle-Festoon Ware', seen in the Late Achaemenid Period (450/400-330 BC) in the basin, was found at these stations and at some former Urartian fortresses and mounds such as Karagündüz 3, the Van Fortress Mound IIa2, and a few at Çavuştepe II and Ayanıs outer town. Unfortunately, no architectural remains were found at these. This picture indicates that the local traditions outside the administrative and military centers continued as before. There are also no strong architectural evidence and finds that indicate Persian authority in the region.

²⁷ Late Iron Age (c. MÖ 600-334 BC) of the Lake Van basin distinguishes two phases: Post-Urartu (Med) and Pers (Achaemenid); see Sevin 1998; Sevin 2002; Sevin 2004b; Sevin 2012; Sevin 2019; Özfirat 2019a; Özfirat 2019b.

²⁸ For the Urartian fortress at Yukarı Elmalık (Zivistan) see Burney 1957: 45, No: 202; Burney and Lawson 1960: 177-178; Russell 1980: No: 202; Özfirat 2007: 117; Özfirat 2009: 354-355. For the rock-cut inscription of Hazine Piri Kapısı see Salvini 2008: A 2-5. The Urartian fortress at Yukarı Elmalık-Zivistan is mistakenly named Aşağı Zivistan by Dan 2010: 53-56. The former name of the village Elmalık is Zivistan. As we mentioned above, there are two fortresses and a rock-cut inscription near the village. The Urartian fortress at Yukarı Elmalık (P70/1) and the LIA-Achaemenid station at Aşağı Elmalık were studied by us in 2005; see Özfirat 2009: 354-355; Özfirat 2019b: 287.

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Figure Captions

- 1- Survey sites and excavations in the basin of Lake Van; Sites mentioned in the text
- 2- Topography and sites of settlement complex at Ernis-Ünseli (Sevin Archive)
- 3- Sites of settlement complex at Ernis
- 4- Evditepe settlement and fortress (Sevin Archive)
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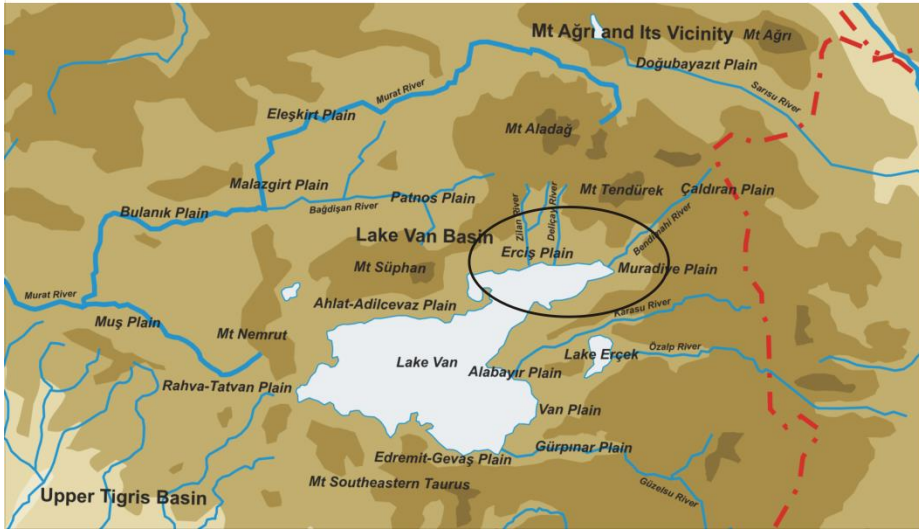
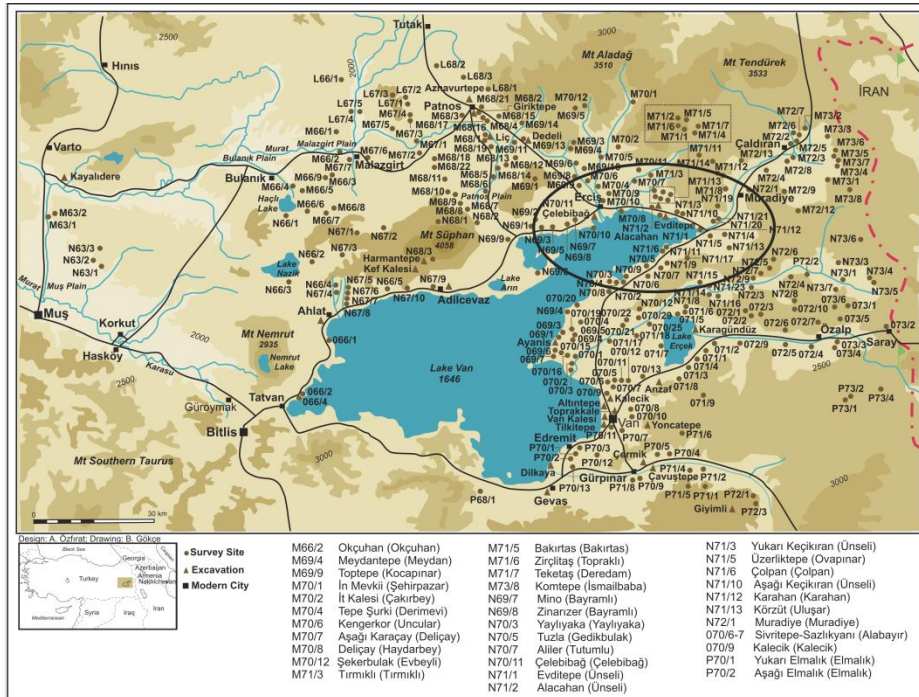
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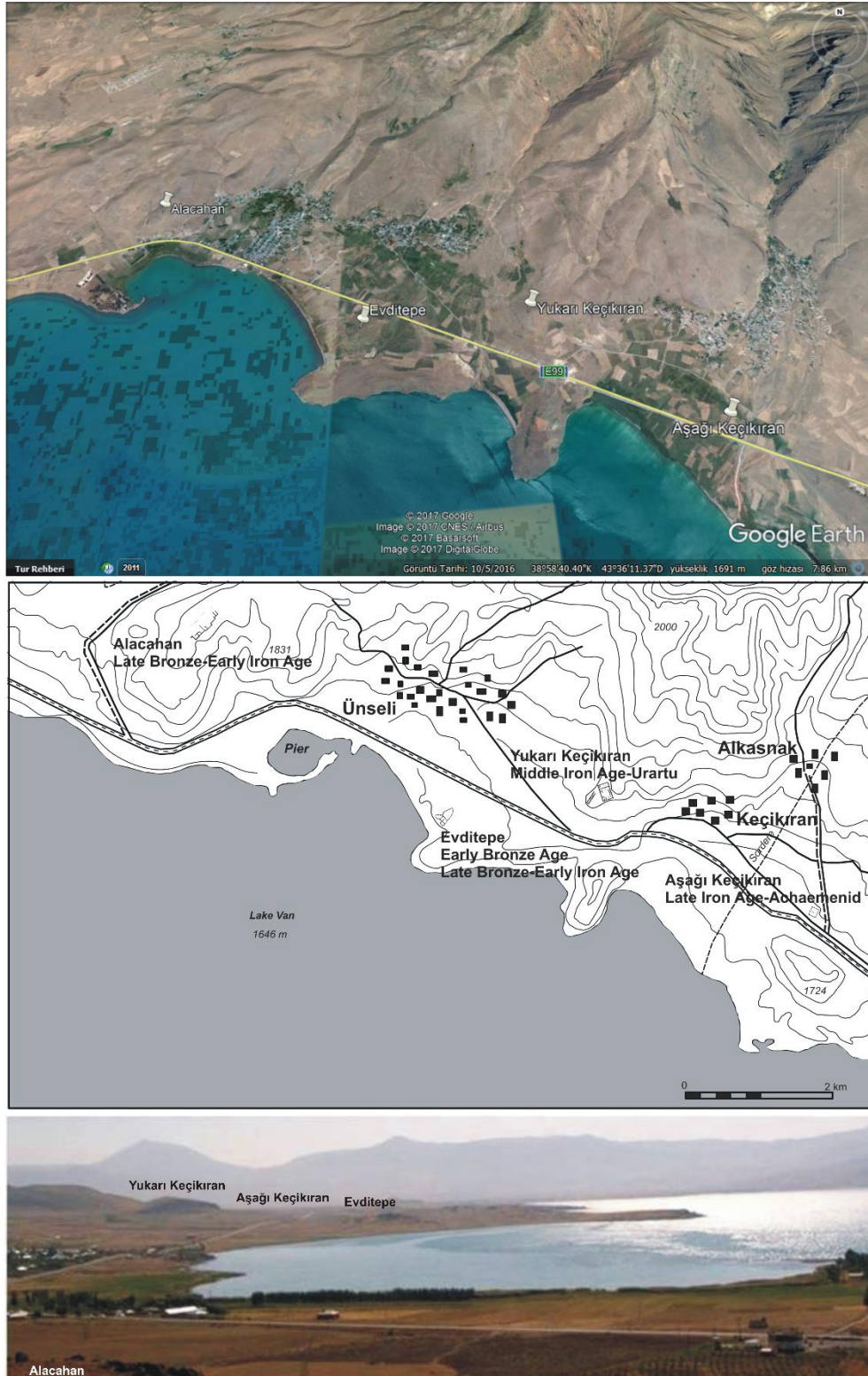
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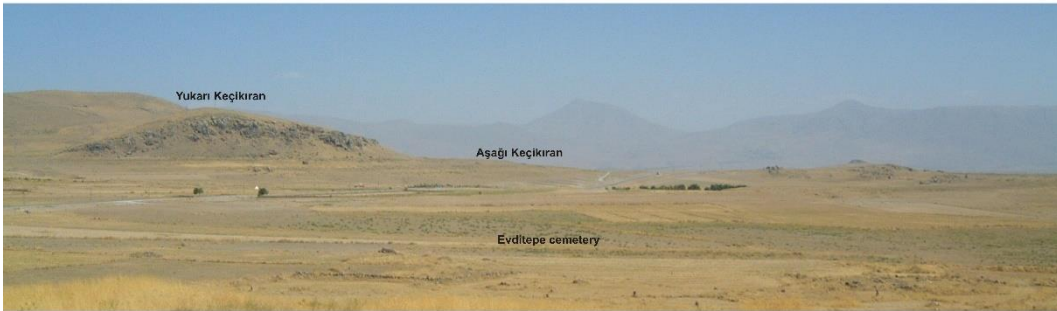
1- Survey sites and excavations in the basin of Lake Van; Sites mentioned in the text

Ernis (Ünseli) Settlement Complex on the northern shore of Lake Van: From the Early Bronze Age (Kura-Araxes) to the Late Iron Age (Achaemenid)



2- Topography and sites of settlement complex at Ernis-Ünseli (Sevin Archive)

A. ÖZFIRAT



BC	Ünseli-Ernis Settlement Complex			
	Eviditepe Yerleşim Settlement Kale Fortress Mazarlık Cemetery	Alacahan Kale Fortress Mazarlık Cemetery	Yukarı Keçikıran Yol İstasyonu Road Station Dini Yapı Cult Building	Aşağı Keçikıran İstasyon Station
400				
500				
600				
700	Hiatus			
800				
900				
1000				
1100	Kale Fortress Mazarlık Cemetery			
1200				
1300				
1400	Hiatus			

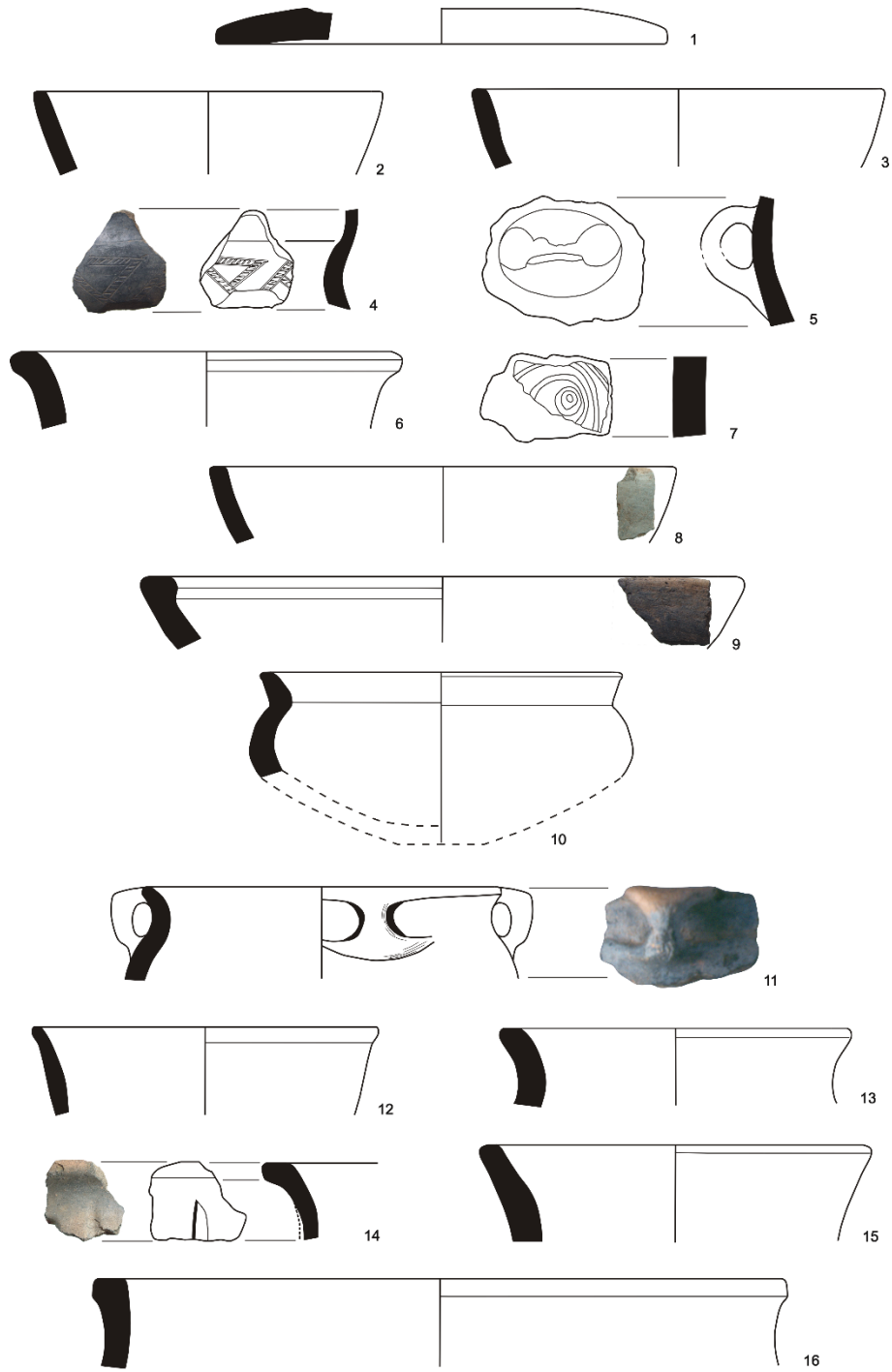
3- Sites of settlement complex at Ernis

Ernis (Ünseli) Settlement Complex on the northern shore of Lake Van: From the Early Bronze Age (Kura-Araxes) to the Late Iron Age (Achaemenid)



4- Evditepe settlement and fortress (Sevin Archive)

A. ÖZFIRAT

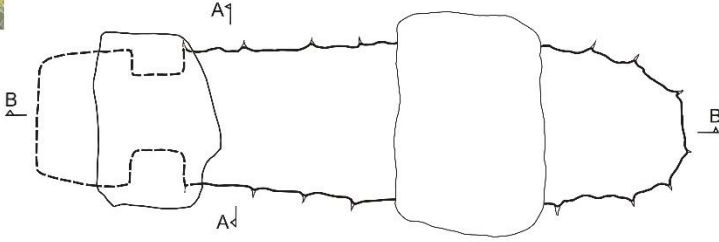
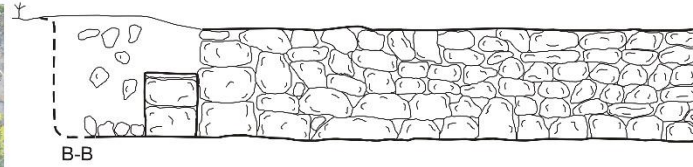
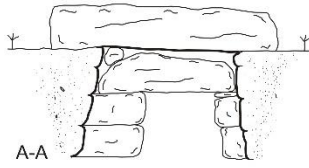


Evditepe Early Bronze Age, Kura Araxes
Survey: Black-gray burnished ware 1-7; Red-brown burnished ware 8-16

0 10 cm.

5- Evditepe Early Bronze Age-Kura Araxes pottery

Ernis (Ünseli) Settlement Complex on the northern shore of Lake Van: From the Early Bronze Age (Kura-Araxes) to the Late Iron Age (Achaemenid)



Grave 15

0 1 m

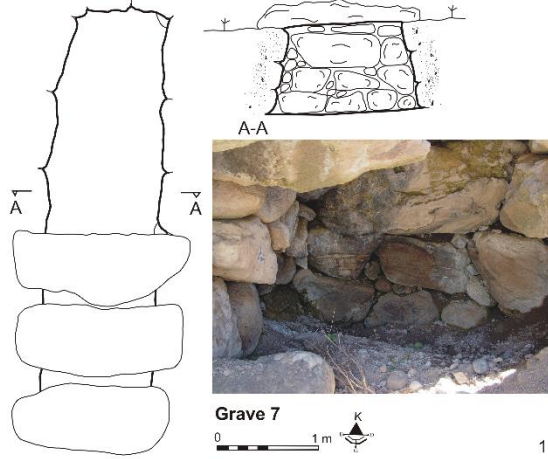


1



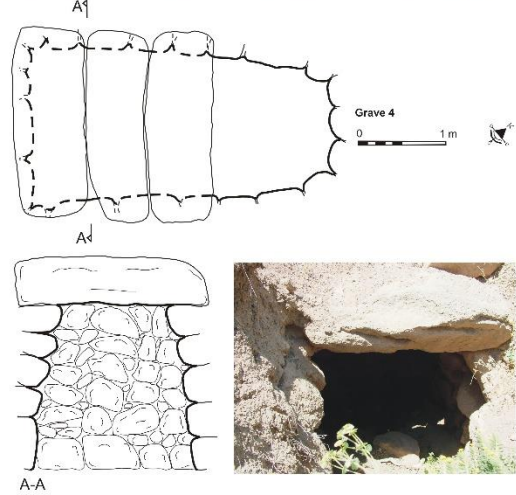
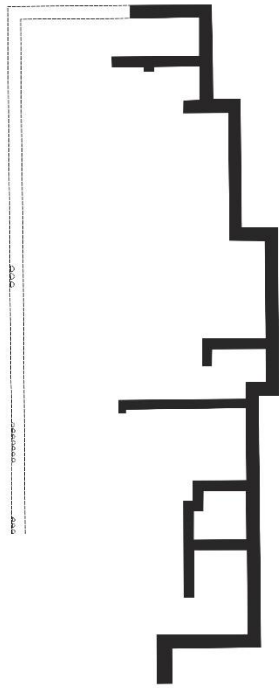
6- Evditepe cemetery (Sevin Archive)

A. ÖZFIRAT



7- Evditepe cemetery (Sevin Archive)

Ernis (Ünseli) Settlement Complex on the northern shore of Lake Van: From the Early Bronze Age (Kura-Araxes) to the Late Iron Age (Achaemenid)



8- Alacahan fortress-cemetery (Sevin Archive)

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1. Stone lined grave



2. Stone lined grave, No 7 ?



3. Stone lined grave



4. Stone lined grave



5. Iron objects



9- Ernis excavation, A. Erzen and E. Bilgiç (Sevin 1987; 1996a; 2004a)

Ernis (Ünseli) Settlement Complex on the northern shore of Lake Van: From the Early Bronze Age (Kura-Araxes) to the Late Iron Age (Achaemenid)

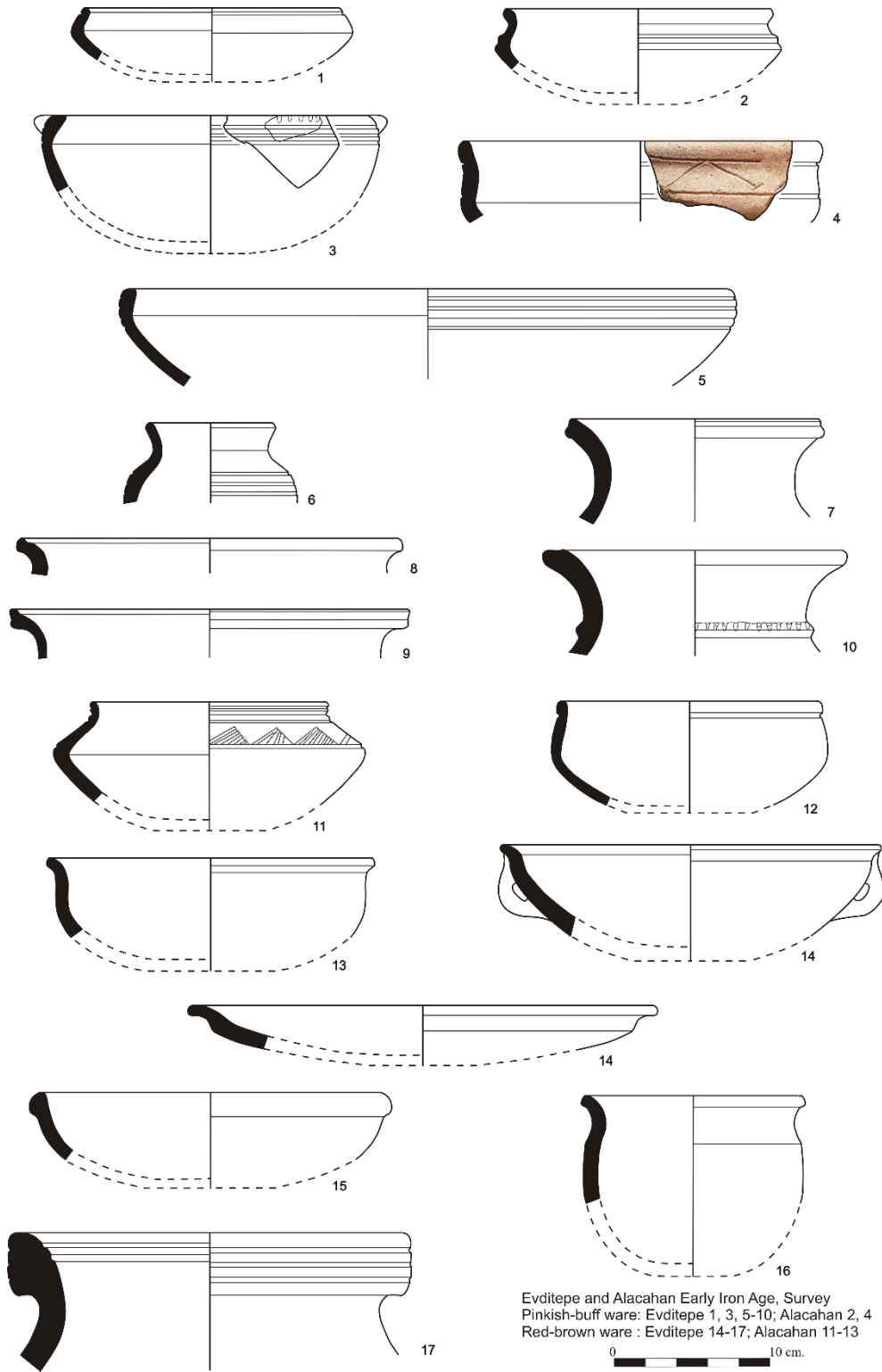


Evditepe and Alacahan Early Iron Age, Pinkish-buff ware
Erzen and Bilgiç excavation: 1-15 (Sevin 1996a; 1996b and Erzen archive)

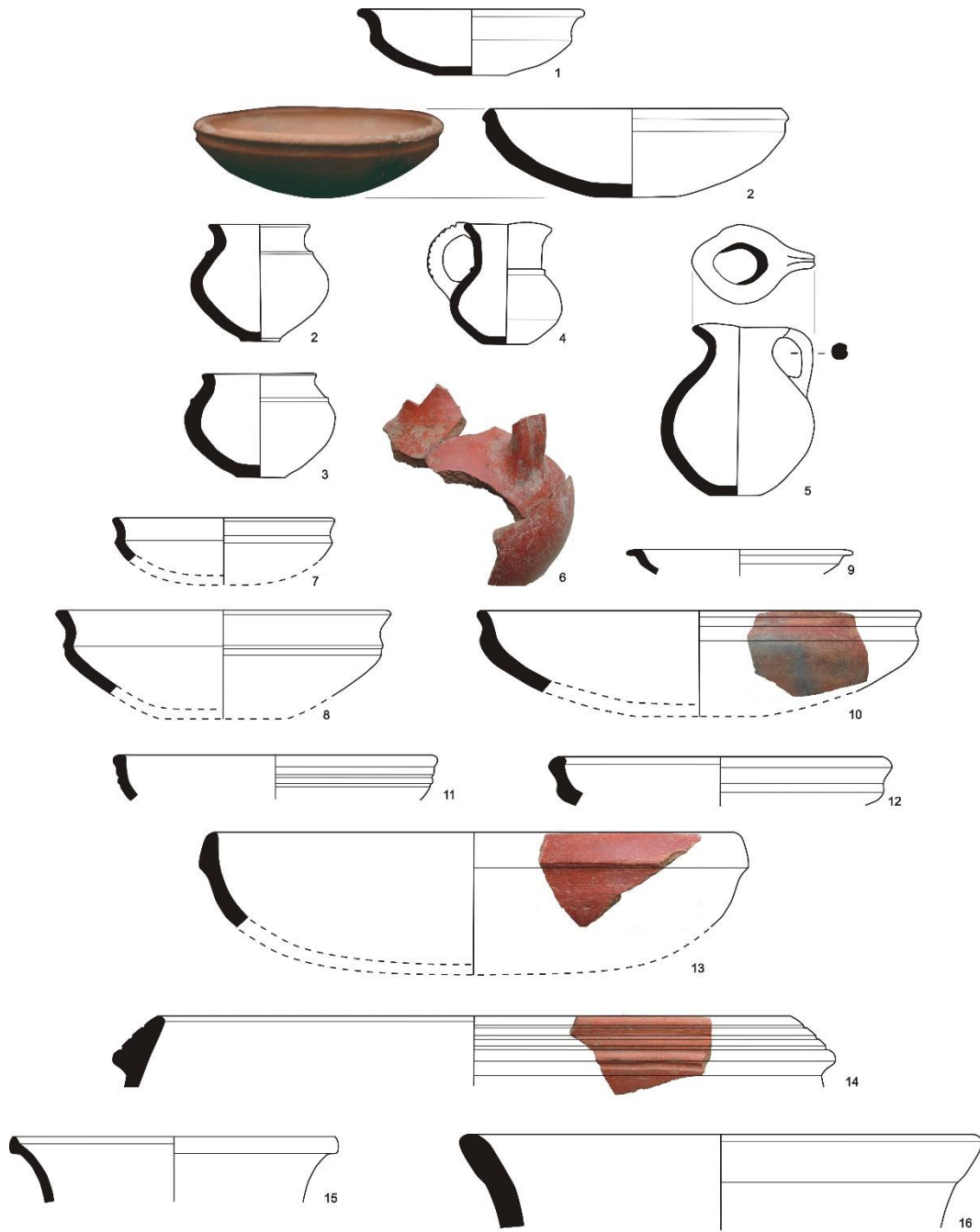
0 10 cm.

10- Ernis (Evditepe-Alacahan) Early Iron Age pottery

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Ernis (Ünseli) Settlement Complex on the northern shore of Lake Van: From the Early Bronze Age (Kura-Araxes) to the Late Iron Age (Achaemenid)

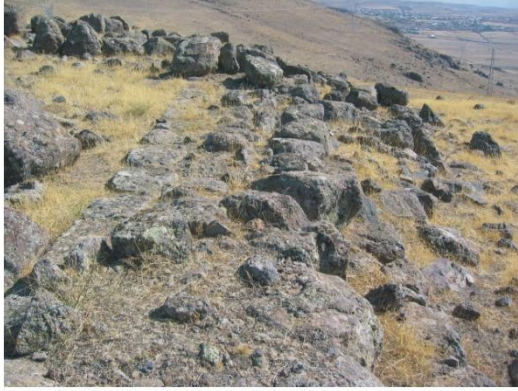


Evditepe and Alacahan Early Iron Age, Red slipped ware
Erzen and Bilgiç excavation: 1-5 (Sevin 1996a; 1996b; 2004b)
Survey: Evditepe 6-8, 11, 13, 14-15; Alacahan 9, 10, 12, 16

0 10 cm.

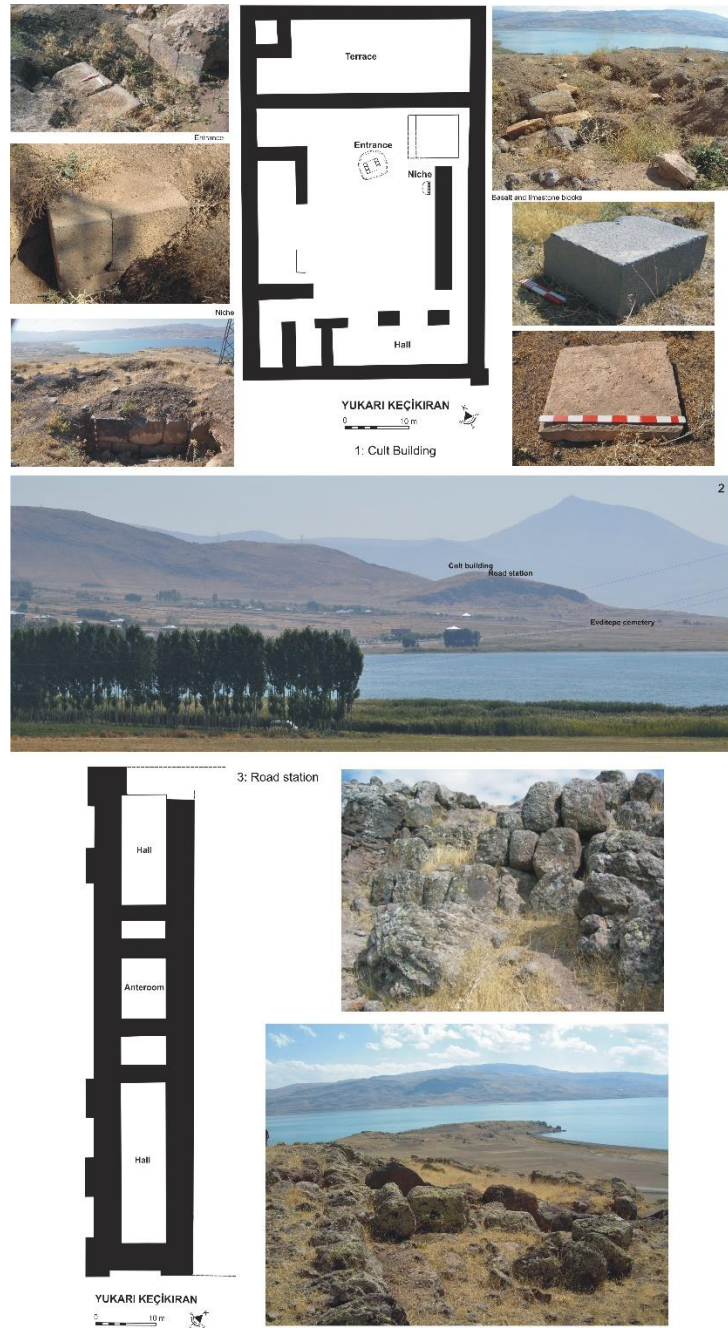
12- Evditepe-Alacahan Early Iron Age pottery

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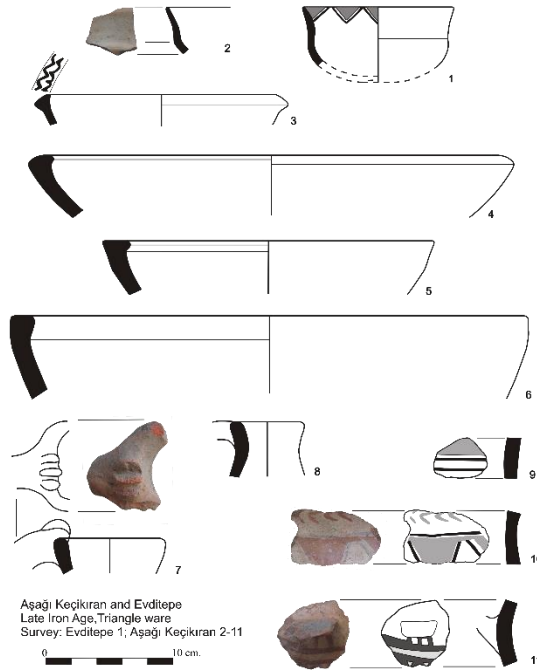
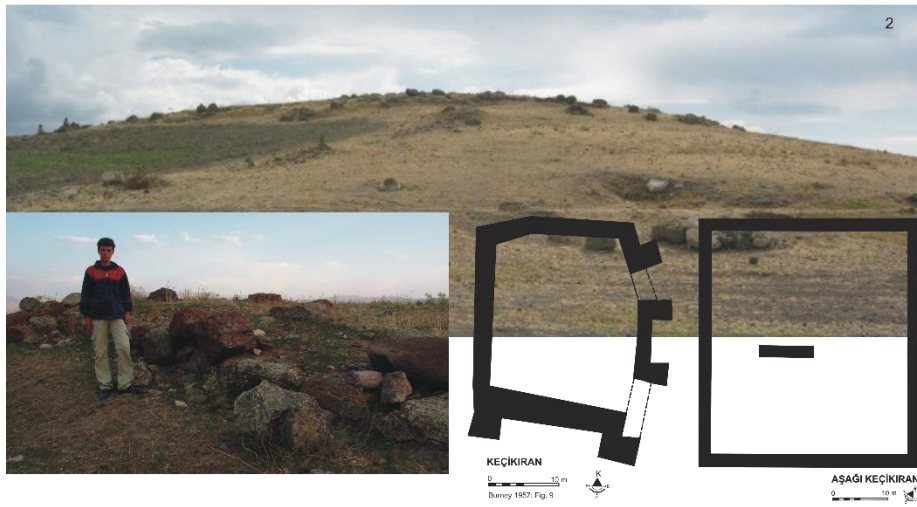
13- Yukarı Keçikıran cult building

Ernis (Ünseli) Settlement Complex on the northern shore of Lake Van: From the Early Bronze Age (Kura-Araxes) to the Late Iron Age (Achaemenid)



14- Yukarı Keçikıran cult building and road station (Sevin Archive)

A. ÖZFIRAT



15- Aşağı Keçikıran and Late Iron Age pottery (Sevin Archive)