HIGHLAND FORTRESSES-CEMETERIES AND SETTLEMENT COMPLEXES OF MT SÜPHAN-MUŞ PLAINS IN THE LAKE VAN BASIN: FROM THE MIDDLE BRONZE TO THE MIDDLE IRON AGE (URARTU)

VAN GÖLÜ HAVZASI SÜPHAN DAĞI-MUŞ OVALARI YÜKSEK YAYLA KALELERİ-MEZARLIKLARI VE YERLEŞİM KOMPLEKSLERİ: ORTA TUNÇ ÇAĞI'NDAN ORTA DEMİR ÇAĞI'NA (URARTU)

Aynur ÖZFIRAT *

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ABSTRACT

Fortresses-cemeteries and settlement complexes situated in the high plateau on the western slope of Mt Süphan which were studied in the basin of Lake Van survey is discussed in this article. In many archaeological sites located on Mt Süphan and the surrounding foothills in the Murat Valley-Muş Plains, fortresses and cemeteries, situated on the western slope of the mountain, are in large quantities. The most remarkable sites of our survey are settlement complexes. It seems that highlands, which had been very limitedly used in Early Bronze Age-Kura Araxes, were highly densely populated from Middle Bronze to the Early Iron Age. The cemeteries of Middle Bronze Age, found widespread on the highlands of Mt Süphan, imply the existence of a considerable population, no related settlements is observed. Settlement pattern again changed in the Late Bronze-Early Iron Age, as shown by the highland fortresses-cemeteries. The increase in the number of fortresses in this period is striking in the whole region.

* Prof. Dr., Mardin Artuklu Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi, Arkeoloji Bölümü, Kampüs Yerleşkesi, Diyarbakır Yolu 5. km, Artuklu-Mardin
E-mail: aynurozfirat@gmail.com

Assyrian and Urartian epigraphic sources give information about these local pre-Urartian polities of eastern Anatolia starting from 13th century BC, which are mentioned under the names of Uruatri and Nairi lands. Fortresses-cemeteries located in highlands, which were understood to be used extensively by these Early Iron Age (pre-Urartian) polities. Middle Iron Age-Urartian pottery were seen, though smaller in numbers compared to the Early Iron Age. It seems that, some of the local fortresses and seasonal settlements for animal husbandry have been used in Middle Iron Age-Urartu. Basically, Urartian constructions were built on a strategic location in the lower areas compared to the Early Iron Age.

ÖZET

Süphan Dağı'nın batı eteğindeki yüksek yaylada yer alan kaleler ve mezarlıklar ile yerleşim kompleksleri makalenin konusunu oluşturur. Van Gölü Havzası yüzey araştırmamız çerçevesinde incelenen bu yüksek yayla ile onu çevreleyen Van Gölü ve Murat Vadisi-Muş Ovalarına bakan eteklerinde yer alan kale ve mezarlıklar oldukça fazladır. Yerleşim Kompleksleri bu alanlar içinde ayrıcalıklı konuma sahiptir. İlk Tunç Çağ-Kura Araxes dönemine ait birkaç parça çanak çömlek otlakların-yaylaların bu dönemde kısmen kullanılmış olduğunu gösterse de çok sayıdaki bulgu Orta Tunç ve Son Tunç-Erken Demir çağlarında yüksek yaylaların oldukça yoğun bir şekilde kullanıldığını gösterir. Orta Tunç Çağı'na ait yerleşim izine rastlanmamıştır, bu döneme ait yalnızca geniş alanlara yayılmış mezarlıklar bulunmuştur. Son Tunç-Erken Demir Çağ'ında yerleşim sistemi yeniden değişmiştir, tüm bölgede yüksek alanlarda ve ovaları-vadileri çevreleyen dağ eteklerinde çok sayıda kale ve mezarlık karşımıza çıkar.

Assur kaynaklarında MÖ 13. yüzyıldan başlayarak Uruatri ve Nairi adlarıyla karşımız çıkan ve Urartu Krallığı öncesinde bölgeyi küçük coğrafi birimler çerçevesinde yöneten Erken Demir Çağ (pre-Urartu) beyleri ya da yerel krallıkları tarafından yoğun olarak kullanıldığı anlaşılan bu kale ve mezarlıklarda Orta Demir Çağ-Urartu Dönemi'ne ilişkin çanak çömleklere daha az sayıda olmak üzere rastlanmıştır. Bu durum, Urartu tarafından çok daha alçak alanlarda kurulan yeni kaleler dışında, eskinin yüksek yaylalarda ve dağ eteklerindeki yerel kalelerinin kullanımının hayvancılık ve yayla faaliyetleri nedeniyle devam etmesiyle açıklanabilir.

INTRODUCTION

Fortresses-cemeteries and settlement complexes situated in the high plateau on the western slope of Mt Süphan which were studied in the basin of Lake Van survey is discussed in this article. More than 290 sites have been listed, most of which date to the Early-Middle Iron Age (MIA-Urartu, c. 900-600 BC); their occupation span seems to extend from the Late Chalcolithic (LC, c. 3750-3400 BC) to the Late Iron Age (LIA-Achaemenid, c. 600-334 BC), (Fig. 1). Other than a large workshop which can be dated to the Paleolithic-Neolithic-Chalcolithic ages, uncovered in the Meydan Yaylası Crater (M69/3) on the southern slope of the Mt Aladağ, which is on the north of Lake (Fig. 1)[1], no earlier evidence was found.

Lake Van Basin is important not only for its exceptional geography in the eastern Anatolia and its location between Near East and Caucasus but also for it's being the central region of the Urartian Kingdom. Lake Van is a depression basin surrounded by volcanos and mountains[2]. Volcanism starting at the east of the Upper Euphrates Valley with the Bingöl Mountains continues towards northeast with Mt Ağrı by surrounding Lake Van with Mt Nemrut and Mt Süphan to the west, and Mt Aladağ and Mt Tendürek to the north. Other than these volcanic mountain ranges surrounding the west and north of the basin, its south and east sides are bordered by Mt Southeastern Taurus (Fig. 1). High plateau plains, river valleys and the fertile pastures on the highlands have been the living spaces between these high mountain ranges.

As in whole eastern Anatolian high plateau, the land suitable for the agriculture is quite rare in the basin of Lake Van, where, however, is suitable for the animal husbandry. In the basin, which was rich of the pastures, the economy of animal husbandry and the pastures connected to the pastoral life has an important socio-economic role in the region. These pastures situated on the highlands are also rich for archaeology. As well as the archaeological sites concentrated in the lowlands which include river valleys and plains, the settlements situated on the surrounding mountain slopes and highland pastures comprise the entire settlement system of the

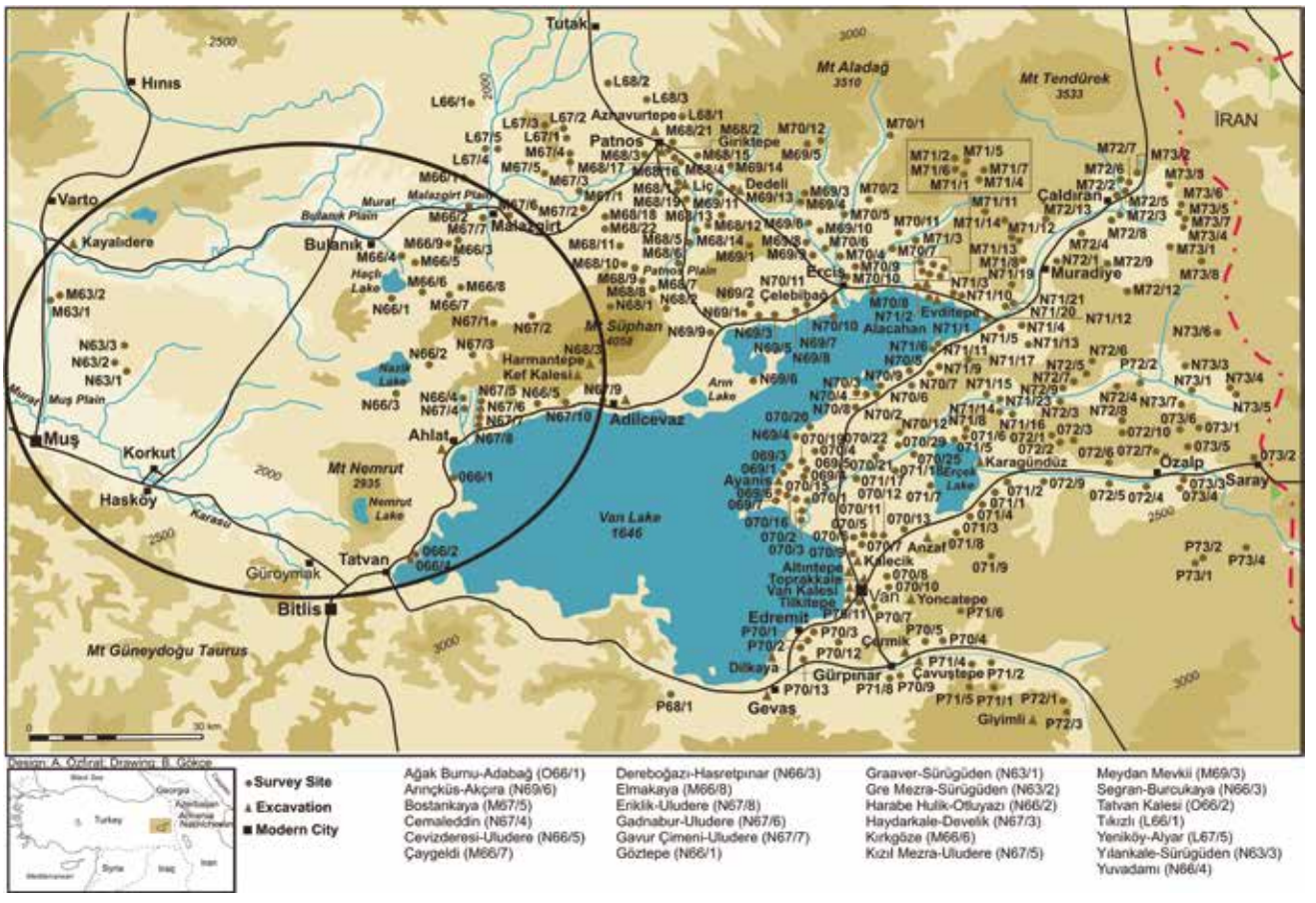


Figure 1: Lake Van Basin Survey / *Van Gölü Havzası Yüzey Araştırması*

[1] Marro/Özfırat 2004; Özfırat 2014a.

[2] Saraçoğlu 1989.

eastern Anatolian high plateau. Even if our knowledge on the functions of highlands settlements are insufficient, seasonal settling, transhumance and nomadism, which are parts of pastoral life, might have been practiced in the region where animal husbandry was prevalent in the past just as today.

Nemrut and Süphan volcanoes, which surround the western side of Lake Van, are important for the region with their widespread grass-rich plateaus. Many large and small volcanic lakes within these pastures form the wetlands. Both mountains that are surrounded by Lake Van and Murat River, the second largest branch of the Euphrates, and valleys-plains of its smaller branches: Patnos Plain[3], situated between Mt Süphan and Mt Aladağ and watered by the Bağdişan River to the north; and Malazgirt and Bulanık plains where Murat River runs through; and the Muş Plain, which was watered by Karasu, starting from Mt Nemrut and converges with Murat River, are the fertile plains of the region. In fact, Malazgirt, Bulanık and Muş plains in the Murat Valley and within the administrative borders of the Muş Province are also called Muş Plains. Karasu-Murat Valley is the main route between Lake Van and Upper Euphrates on the western direction, and it is also important to reach the south of Mt Southeastern Taurus. In the east, small plains in Ahlat, Adilcevaz and Tatvan on the shore of Lake Van are also important for the region.

In many archaeological sites located on Mt Süphan and the surrounding Murat Valley-Muş Plains and on the eastern shore of Lake Van, Middle Bronze Age (MBA, c. 2300/2200-1400/1300 BC) and Late Bronze-Early Iron Age (LBA-EIA, c. 1400/1300-900 BC) fortresses and cemeteries, located on the western slope of the mountain, are in large quantities. The most remarkable sites of our survey in the basin of Lake Van and Mt Ağrı region are settlement complexes, each of which covers separate units in a vast area within a long time, related to each other[4]. These settlement complexes include mounds, cemeteries, lower cities and fortresses that lie from Late Chalcolithic to MIA-Urartu or Late Iron Age-Achaemenid. Their huge expanse is because of horizontal stratigraphy. They were located in the central area of geographical units, where were convenient localizations, such as, agricultural activities, pastures, highland and primary routes. Settlement complexes of western slope of Mt Süphan are Elmakaya, Sürügüden and Sütey Yaylası.

FORTRESSES AND CEMETERIES

Investigated fortresses and cemeteries were on the highland of western slope of Mt Süphan, most of which date to the MBA-LBA-EIA and partly to MIA-Urartu. The sites of Mt Süphan are concentrated within the MBA-EIA timespan, though a few Early Bronze Age-Kura-Araxes (EBA) sherds were collected only from the cemeteries of Yuvadamı (N66/4) and Harabe Hulik-Otluyazı (N66/2), which is in Sütey Yaylası (Fig. 1)[5]. Substantially, the great majority of MBA evidences were found from the large cemeteries; however, EIA-MIA sites are generally consisted of a fortress flanked by cemeteries on their slopes.

MIDDLE BRONZE AGE

MBA remains were uncovered only in the cemeteries of Sütey Yaylası and Elmakaya complexes together with LBA-MIA material. Actually, they are not so far from each other; both complexes are situated on the same high plateau which is also connected to the ancient route of the Ahlat-Adilcevaz-Malazgirt, between Lake Van and Murat Valley through the western slope of Mt Süphan (Fig. 1, 8, 13).

Elmakaya settlement complex extends over a large sloping area located at the northwestern slope of the Mt Süphan overlooking to Murat Valley-Bulanık Plain and a small lake (Haçlı-Bulanık), (Figs. 1-3; 13). These foothills are also the largest pasture-yayla in area. Elmakaya settlement complex contains related sites of Kırkgöze (M66/6)[6], Çaygeldi (M66/7) and Elmakaya (M66/8) villages[7]. Mounds, fortresses and cemeteries which are situated in an incredibly large area, rises towards the mountain starting from lower slopes in the villages (Figs. 2-3). The pottery collected in this area where many graves were located, date to MBA-EIA, except for e few MIA. There is no evidence of a fortresses which situated on the rocky hills near the cemeteries, which were large enough to sustain the population of these large cemeteries, and we haven't found any substantial architectural remains. Mounds located in the villages are covered by the modern villages, and therefore, it is difficult to define their dimensions and to find any evidence.

Sütey Yaylası located in a wide area at the southwestern slope of the mountain overlooking to Lake Van. It

[3] For the settlements and fortresses-cemeteries of Patnos Plain, see Özfırat 2009.

[4] Özfırat 2014a; Özfırat 2016; Özfırat (In press b).

[5] Özfırat 1994; Özfırat 1999.

[6] Burney 1958; Russell 1980; Özfırat 2001b; Özfırat 2008; Biber / Çavuşoğlu/Erdoğan 2012.

[7] Rothman 1993; 1995; Özfırat 1999; 2005a; 2008; Biber/Çavuşoğlu 2011; Biber, 2013.

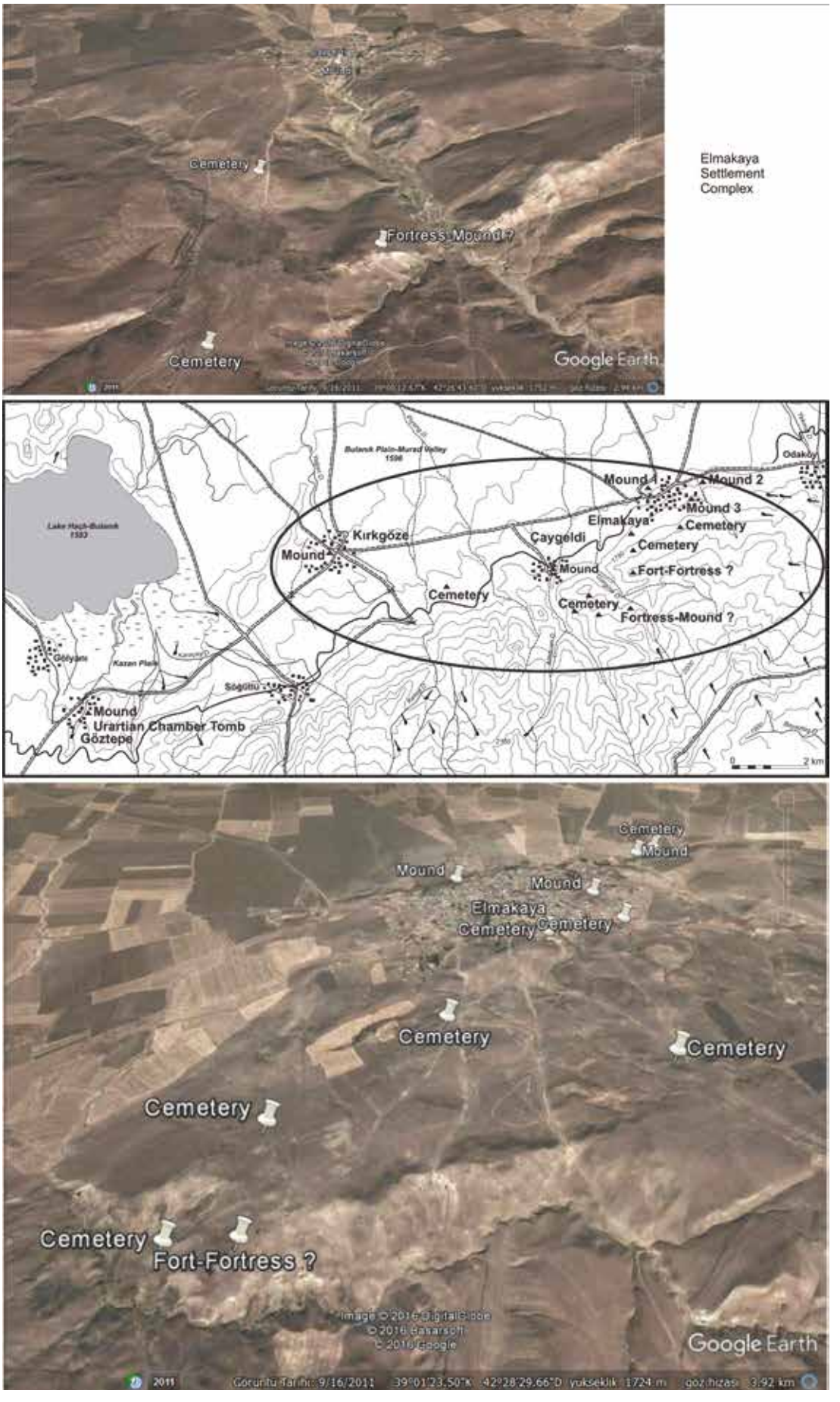


Figure 2: Elmakaya Settlement Complex / *Elmakaya Yerleşim Kompleksi*

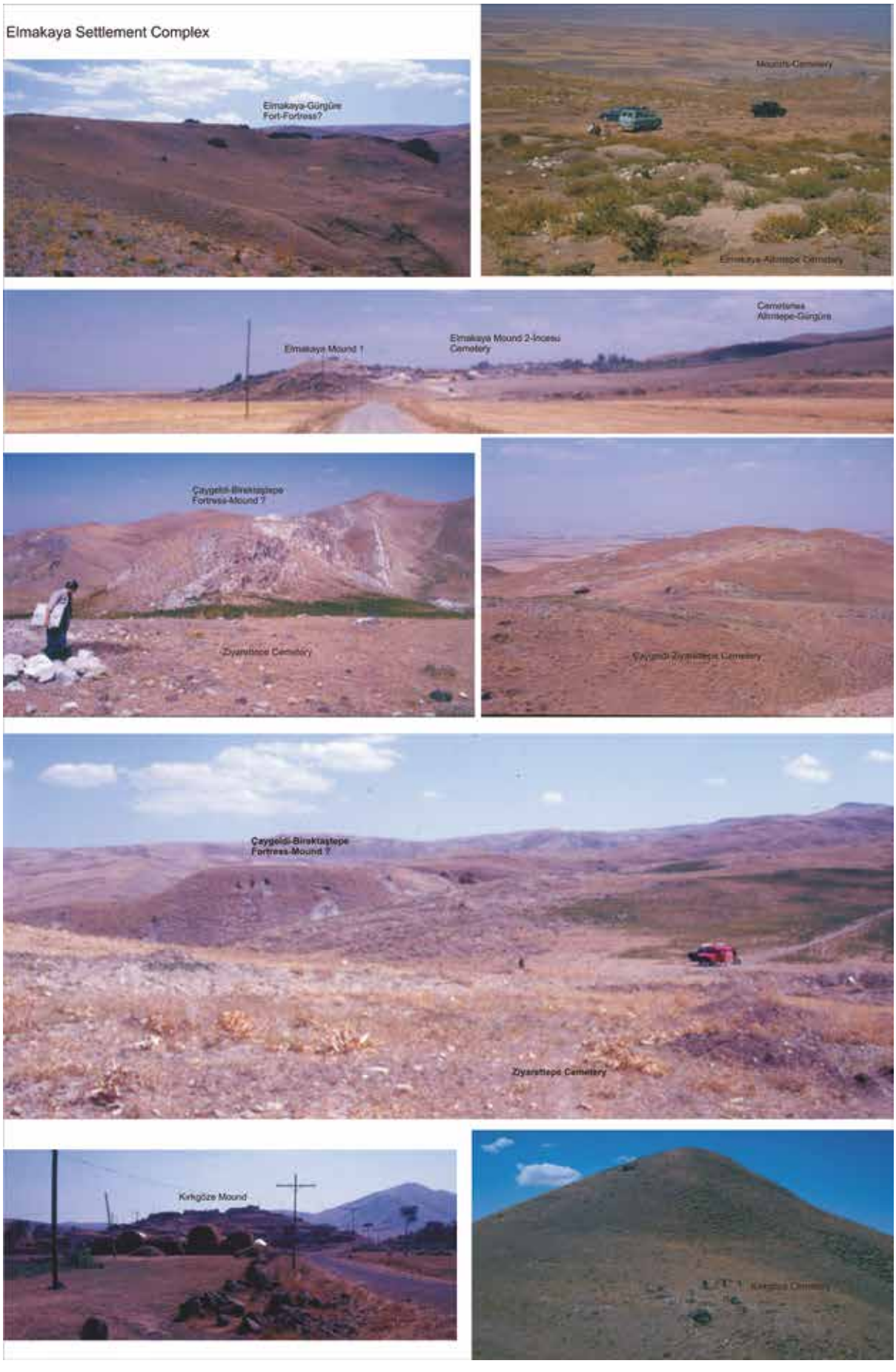


Figure 3: Elmakaya Settlement Complex / *Elmakaya Yerleşim Kompleksi*

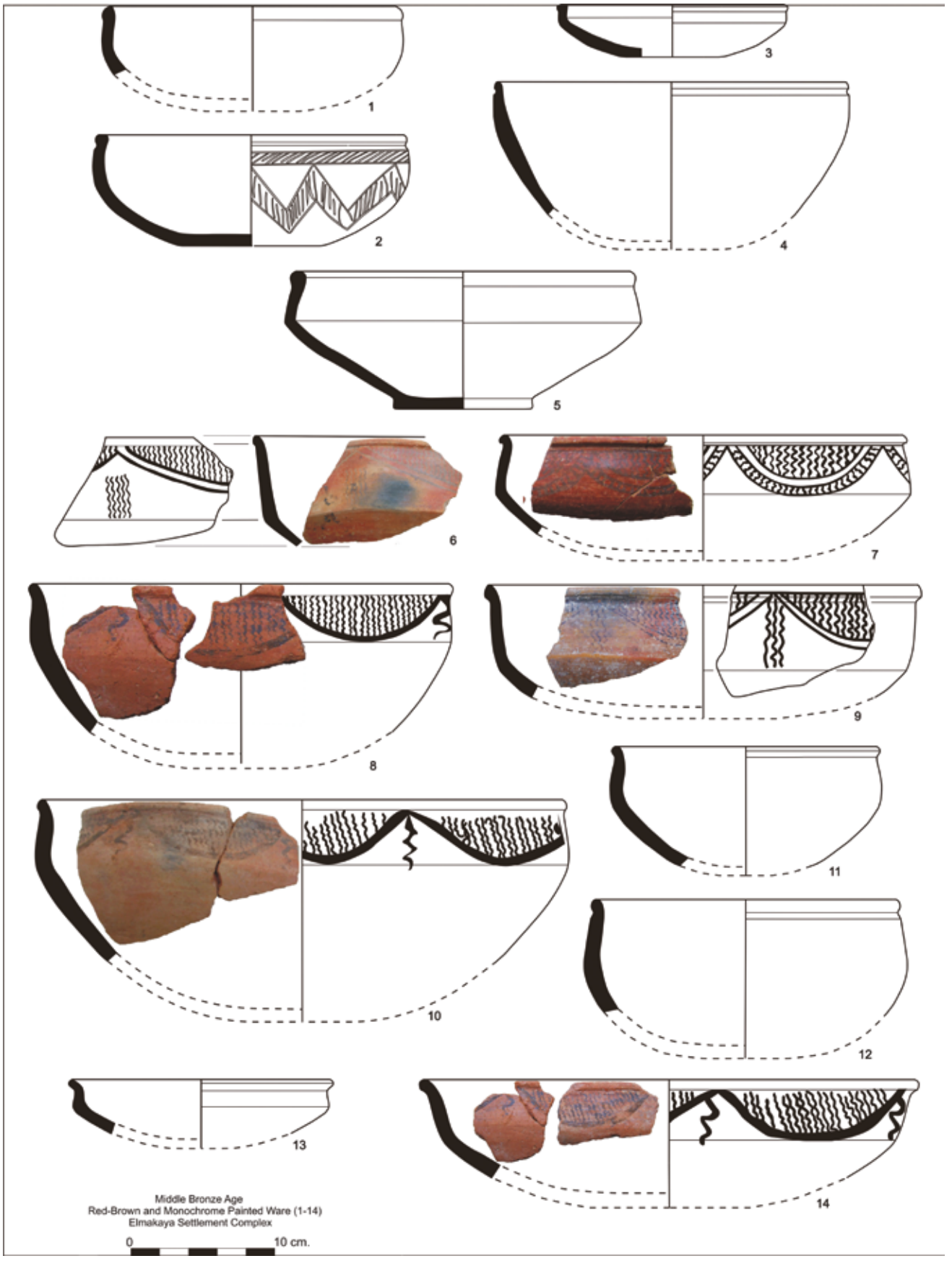


Figure 4: Elmakaya Settlement Complex / *Elmakaya Yerleşim Kompleksi*

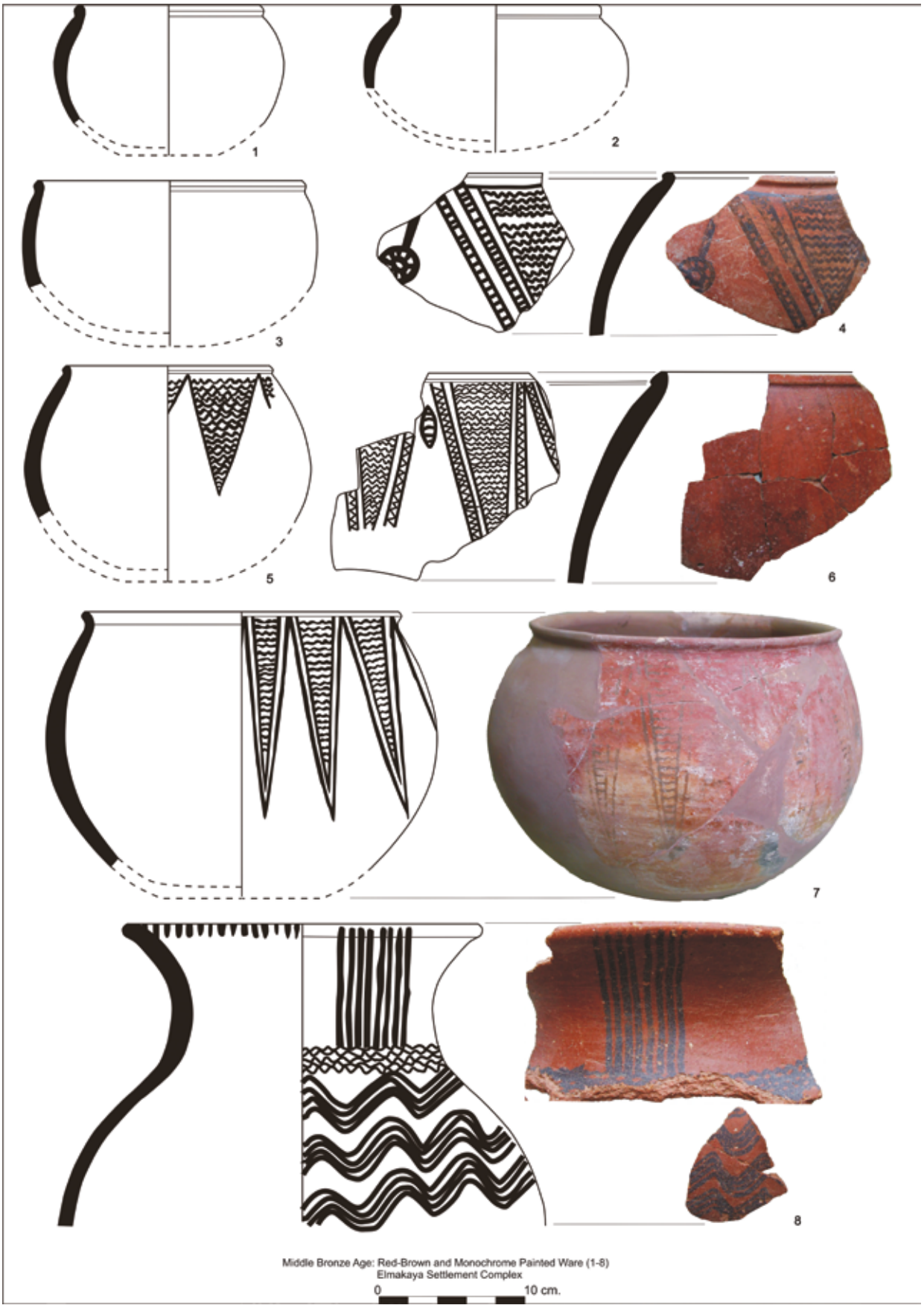


Figure 5: Elmakaya Settlement Complex / *Elmakaya Yerleşim Kompleksi*

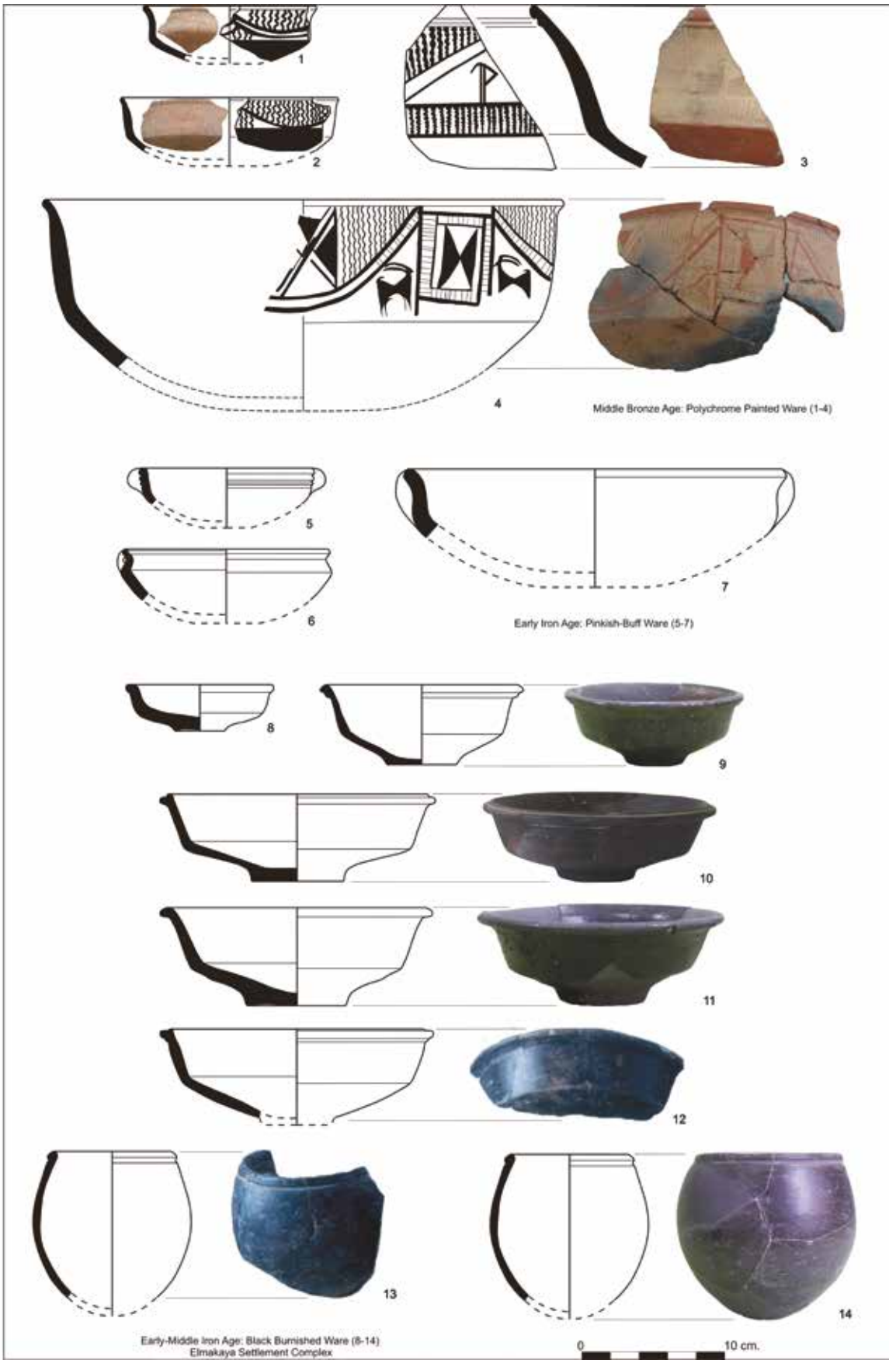


Figure 6: Elmakaya Settlement Complex / *Elmakaya Yerleşim Kompleksi*

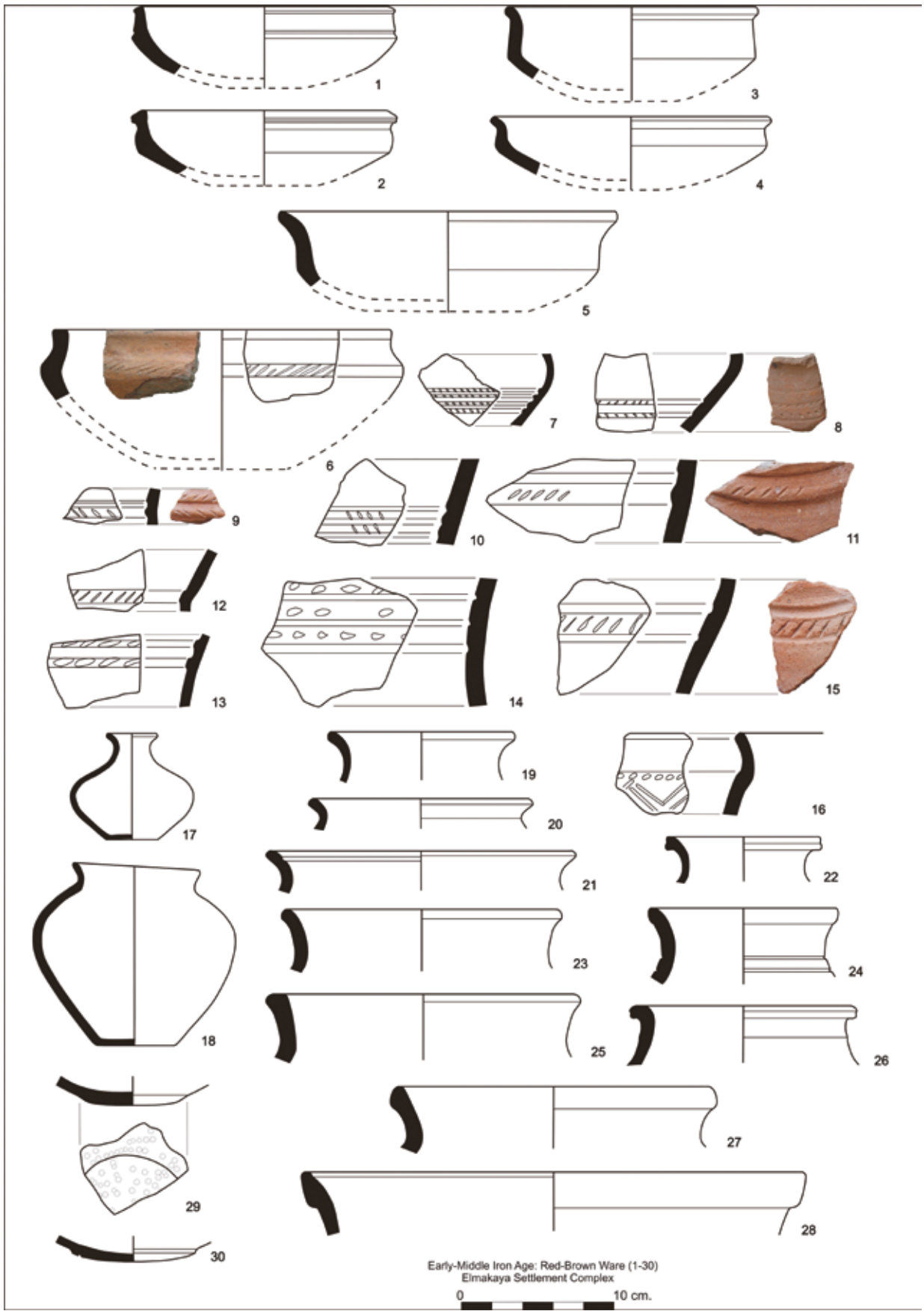


Figure 7: Elmakaya Settlement Complex / *Elmakaya Yerleşim Kompleksi*

includes EBA-MIA cemeteries of Yuvadamı (N66/4), Cemaleddin (N67/4), Kızıl Mezra-Uludere (N67/5), Gadnabur-Uludere (N67/6), Gavur Çimeni-Uludere (N67/7) and Eriklik-Uludere (N67/8), which lie in the valleys flowing into Lake Van, next to Ahlat (Figs. 1; 8; 13). Yuvadamı Cemetery, which dates to EBA-MIA, is located on both slopes overlooking the Gaban Stream; each slope appears to have been used in a separate period (Figs. 8-9 - 13). Other cemeteries situated on Uludere Valley, as in the case of Yuvadamı, are located on the slopes overlooking the stream, and they have all been used in different periods. Sütey Yaylası is the most important pasture-yayla in the region even today. The materials found from MBA are Yuvadamı, Cemaleddin and Eriklik in the Sütey Yaylası cemeteries (Fig. 8-9)[8].

It is difficult to define grave type owing to the material came from survey and because the great majority of the cemeteries were pillaged. We can distinguish mainly simple or stone-lined pits and very low burial mounds (low kurgan) in Yuvadamı, which had very low, topped with earth over the stone-lined pits made of unworked stones or pit graves (Fig. 9). Actually, Van Basin is outside of principal kurgan zone, except for a few examples on the northern part of lake. Mt Aladağ and Mt Tendürek, which surround the northern side of the lake and geographically and archaeologically separate the region with Mt Ağrı, are also the border for the kurgan zone. To the north, around Mt Ağrı and northeastern Anatolia, kurgans are clearly dominant[9].

Cemeteries, which are not related to any settlement, appear on the high pastures of mountain slope. Some of the MBA sherds from fortresses of Yılankale-Sürügüden Complex (N63/3), (Fig. 14)[10], Haydarkale-Develik (N67/3), (Fig. 13)[11] and Çaygeldi (M66/7)-Elmakaya Complex (Figs. 2-3) seem very low in density in comparison to the data gathered from the cemeteries. In addition, these fortresses strongly settled in the EIA, partly in the MIA-Urartu.

Pottery of MBA is represented by "Van-Urmia" tradition, which is one the style of "Araxes painted ware" related with southern part of Southern Transcaucasia (Nakhichevan, Araxes Valley in Iranian Azerbaijan) and western side of Lake Urmia[12]. The pottery is quite homogeneous and probably reflects that all the sherds come from graves. It is mostly red-brown with its variations of unpainted ware (Figs. 4: 1-5, 11-13; 5: 1-3; 10; 5-7; 11: 1-12), monochrome (Figs. 4: 6-10, 14; 5: 4-8; 10: 1-2; 15: 1-4) and polychrome (Figs. 6: 1-4; 10: 3-4; 15: 5) painted. Black burnished ware, which constitutes the second largest group of this period, have not been found in the basin of Lake Van. The black burnished ware constitutes the largest group of northeastern Anatolia (Mt Ağrı-Erzurum-Kars), northern part of Southern Transcaucasia, throughout the MBA.

LATE BRONZE-EARLY IRON AGE

Fortresses-cemeteries were gathered in Elmakaya, Sütey Yaylası and Sürügüden complexes.

Segran-Burcukaya (N66/3) and Haydarkale-Develik (N67/3) fortresses are situated in Sütey Yaylası (Fig. 1; 13). Segran Fortress located on a high cliff hill overlooking to Lake Nazik (Fig. 13)[13]. It has in a roughly rectangular-oval plan, shaped by the topography, and is in 175 x 115 meters dimensions. There are two gates on the same axis in east-west, and large rooms built into the walls. Fortification walls built with cyclopean stones are 3 meters thick. No potsherds were discovered, but, it can be dated to LBA by the cyclopean stone masonry. Haydarkale is located almost at the highest point of the Sütey Yaylası, on a steep cliff (Fig. 13)[14]. Architectural remains are not very distinctive. Though the large unworked blocks on the fortress with an approximate area of 300 x 200 meters make us think of the presence of thick fortification wall. There is no evidence that can provide us with a plan, but it looks that the fortress was shaped by the topography. Some MBA and mainly LBA-EIA-MIA potsherds were uncovered in the fortress.

Sürügüden settlement complex includes Yılankale (N63/3), Gre Mezra (N63/2) and Graaver (N63/1), which is within the borders of the Sürügüden Village; they are defined as settlement complex with their apparent relationship with each other in both pottery and location (Figs. 1; 14)[15]. It is situated to the west of Mt Süphan and Mt Nemrut, on the range of Mt Otluk-Handris, which surrounds Muş Plain from the north. The settlements are located on the southwestern slope of the mountain overlooking to Muş Plain-Murat Valley, on the road of Sarıdal Yaylası.

[8] Özfırat 2001a; Özfırat 2005a; Özfırat 2008.
[9] Özfırat 2014a; Özfırat 2014b.
[10] Özfırat 1999; Özfırat 2005a; Biber 2016.
[11] Özfırat 2000; Özfırat 2005a.
[12] Özfırat 2001a; Özfırat 2008.
[13] Özfırat 1999.
[14] Özfırat 2000.
[15] Özfırat 1999.

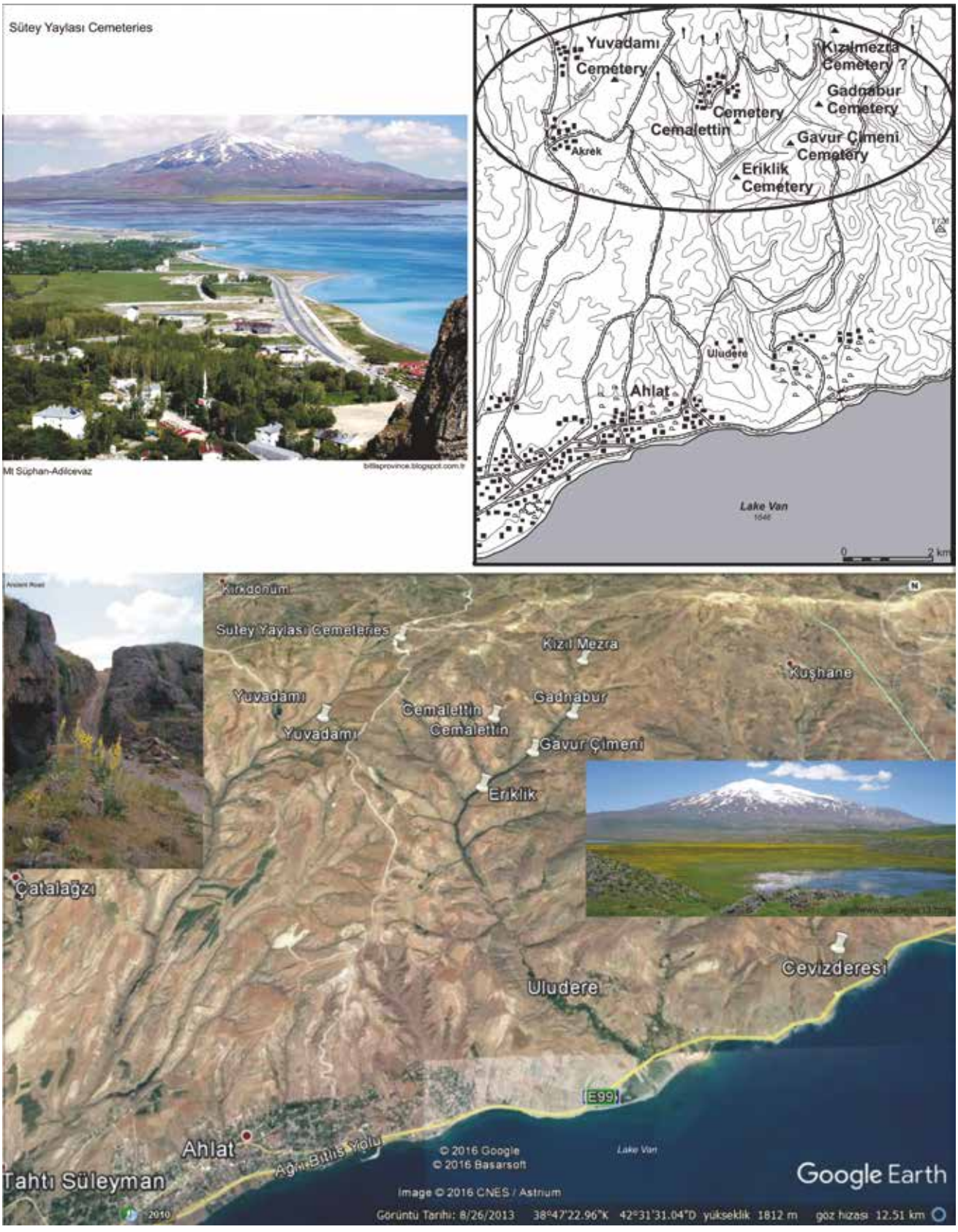


Figure 8: Sütey Yaylası Cemeteries / *Sütey Yaylası Mezarlıkları*

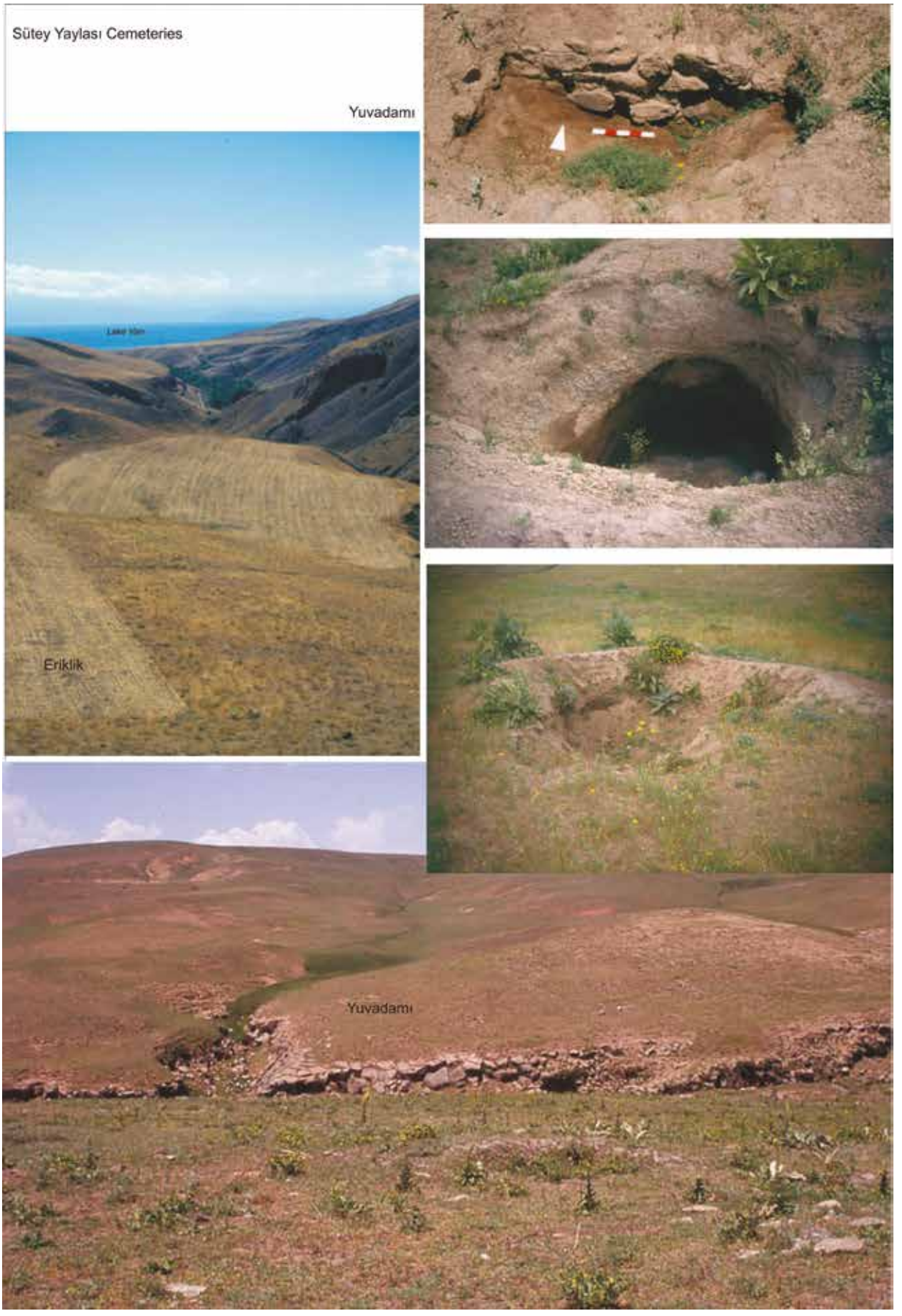


Figure 9: Sütey Yaylası Cemeteries / *Sütey Yaylası Mezarlıkları*

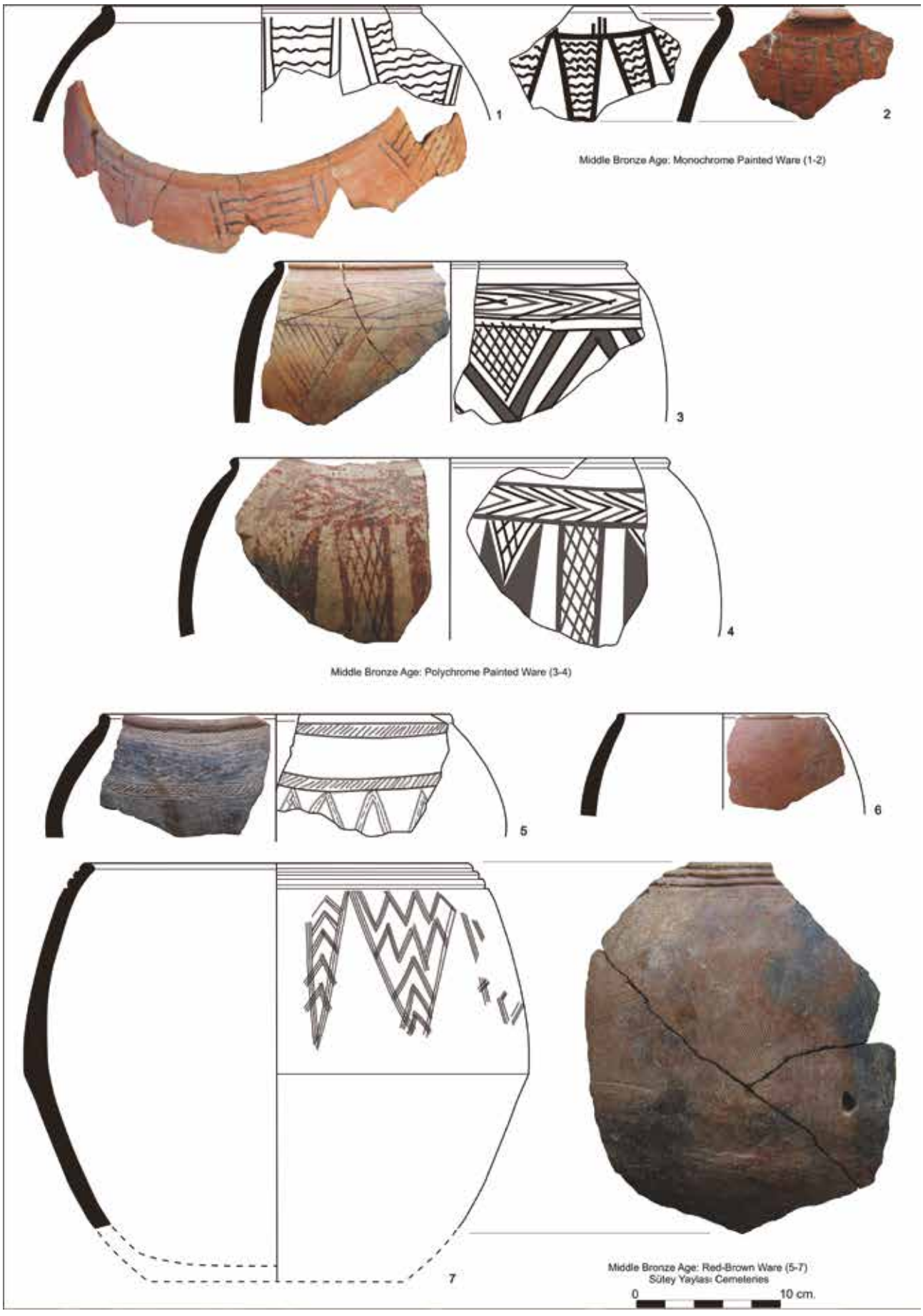


Figure 10: Sütey Yaylası Cemeteries / *Sütey Yaylası Mezarlıkları*

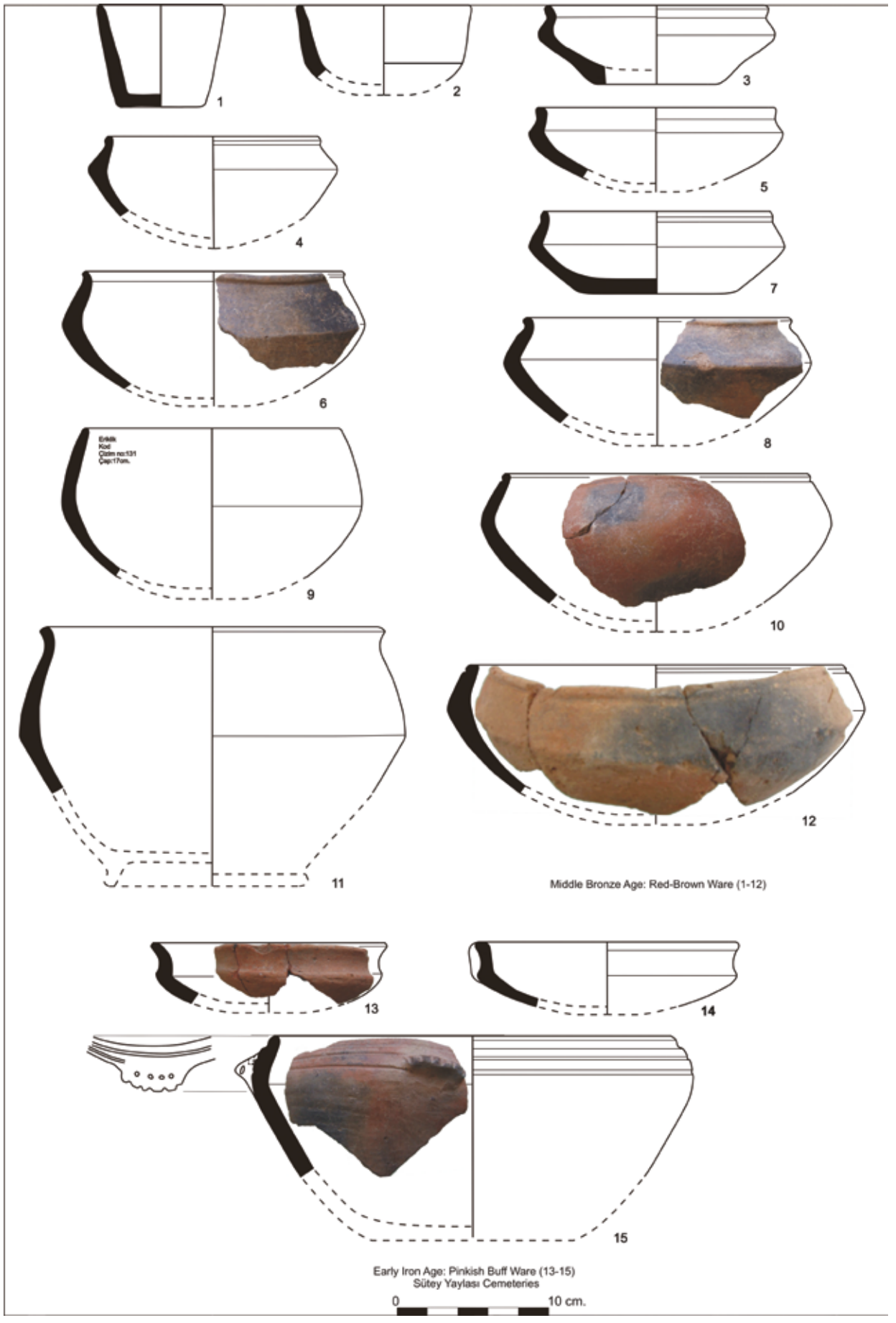
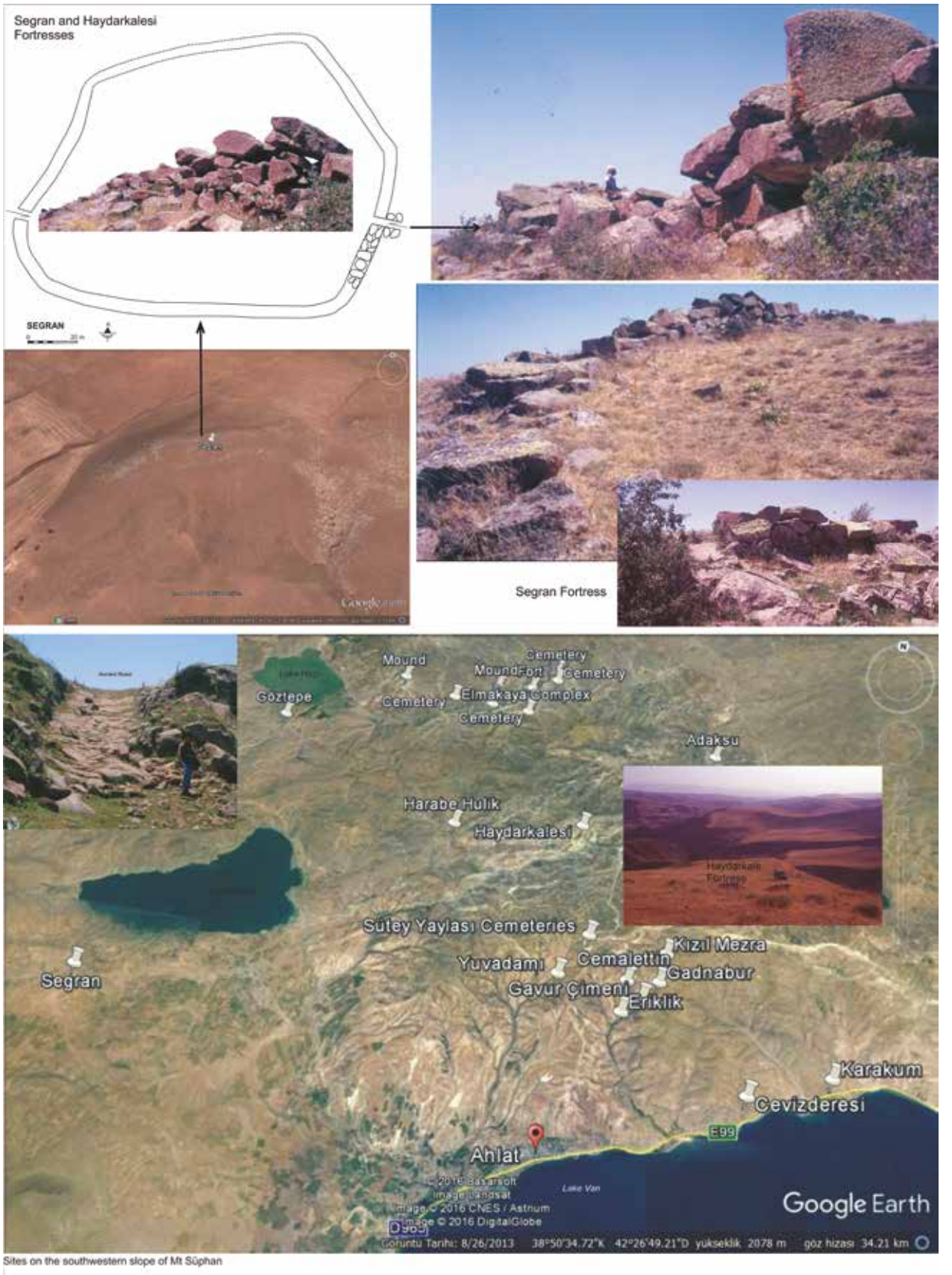


Figure 11: Sütey Yaylası Cemeteries / *Sütey Yaylası Mezarlıkları*



Figure 12: Sütey Yaylası Cemeteries / *Sütey Yaylası Mezarlıkları*



Sites on the southwestern slope of Mt Süphan

Figure 13: Segran and Haydarkalesi Fortresses; Sites on the Southwestern Side of Mt Süphan / *Segran ve Haydarkalesi Kaleleri; Süphan Dağı Güneybatı Etek Yerleşimleri*

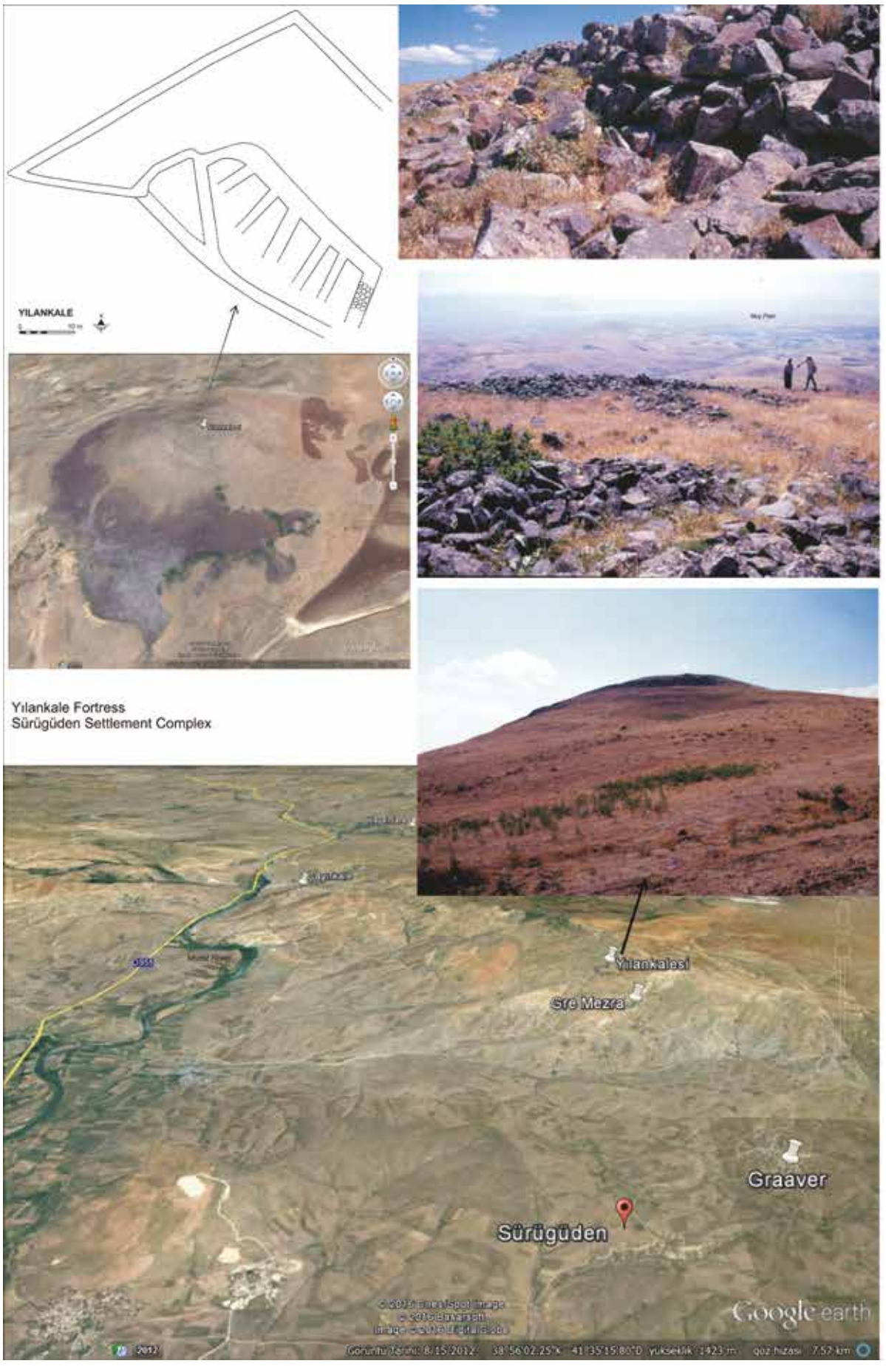


Figure 14: Yılankale Fortress-Sürügüden Settlement Complex / *Yılankale Kalesi-Sürügüden Yerleşim Kompleksi*

Yılankale situated at the Sarıdal Yaylası, the highest point in a place overlooking both Muş Plain and the entire Murat Valley that reaches to the plain from the north. It stands on a rocky cliff; a rectangular plan of its 80 x 65 m. part can be traced (Fig. 14). Its fortification walls, built with unworked stones, are 2 meters thick, although plans of the walls towards east cannot be determined. Towards the west, there are walls on a terrace. There are rooms inside the fortification walls; of these the rectangular ones, which were built towards south-west, adjacent to the fortification wall were determined. The fortress was shaped by the topography rather than a systematic plan. Some MBA and many LBA-EIA-MIA pottery were found. The other two sites in Sürügüden Complex, Graaver and Gre Mezra are located on the road to the Yılankale fortress from the Muş plain. LBA-EIA-MIA potsherds were recovered with the same group of Yılankale.

Fortresses-cemeteries of Elmakaya settlement complex which are next to each other revealed MBA-LBA-EIA pottery and a lesser amount of MIA[16]. We haven't encountered distinctive architectural evidence in Gürgüre and Çaygeldi fortresses (Figs. 2-3). Since these fortresses are located together with the cemeteries and due to their undefined architecture, it is harder to distinguish their date. Secondly, their size is problematic when the expanse of cemeteries and the density of the finds are considered.

Sütey Yaylası Cemeteries, dating to EBA-MIA, have been recovered in pottery of Yuvadamı EBA-MIA, Kızıl Mezra-Uludere MIA, Gadnabur MIA, Gavur Çimeni MIA (Figs. 8; 13)[17].

The most difficult problem concerning the cemeteries yielding MBA-MIA material is to understand the architectural distinction between them (see MBA cemeteries).

The most striking features of the LBA-EIA fortresses are cyclopean or unworked stone masonry, irregular plan, which depended on topography, being placed on the high hill and inaccessibility. Haydarkale and Yılankale differs from the other highland fortresses with their long timespan in such a high altitude, as being situated on very high and steep rocky hills and with the density of pottery. Haydarkale located on the pastureland-Sütey Yaylası and ancient road between the Lake Van and Murat-Euphrates Valley (Bulanık-Malazgirt plains). Yılankale was on the way of pastureland-Sarıdal Yaylası which lies towards northern part of Muş Plain and at the point where the entire Muş Plain and Murat Valley are dominant.

Pottery of the region in the LBA-EIA were seen from Van Basin tradition[18], even though there are some variations and special groups collected from some of the sites. It seems that the pottery of LBA is represented by polychrome painted ware which is late phase of the 'Araxes painted ware'. Composition of late phase of polychrome painted ware and EIA shapes occur together within early phase of LBA-EIA in the Van Basin. EIA pottery is quite different from the Araxes painted ware. One of the most obvious changes in the region in the EIA is reflected in the pottery of the eastern Anatolia. The pottery tradition of the EIA, in the western and northern sides of Lake Van which is extensively used in the region during the MIA-Urartu, is monochrome with variations of red-brown ware that has a homogeneous character. Red-brown ware is mainly found in the north and west of the basin (Figs. 7; 12; 15: 10-23; 16). Indeed, to discriminate, no stratigraphic evidence from mounds or fortresses were found. Therefore, it is difficult to distinguish between the red-brown ware of EIA and MIA other than through some forms and decorations.

Red-brown ware has also chaff faced ware group. Red-brown (Fig. 17: 3-29) and cream (Fig. 17: 1-2) chaff faced wares do not occur in the rest of Lake Van Basin; they are found extensively in Sürügüden Complex. Close similarities of red-brown chaff faced ware with incised decoration, unburnished or slightly burnished are found mainly in the eastern part of Upper Euphrates Valley-Mt Bingöl which date to MIA-Urartu[19]. Another group of chaff faced is burnished, cream chaff faced, and some of the red-brown chaff faced with burnished also have close similarities to those of LBA levels of Upper Tigris[20]. Pinkish-buff ware (Figs. 6: 5-7; 11: 13-15) and red slipped ware which are quite a lot in the eastern shore of lake in EIA, are a few in the western and northern parts. Black burnished ware is a few which is a unique group for the region. (Figs. 6: 8-14; 15: 6-9).

CONCLUSION

Investigations on Muş Plains-Mt Süphan Muş Plains-Mt Süphan shows that there was a change of settlement system of lowlands and highlands between periods. Mounds which were intensively settled during the EBA-Kura-Araxes and MIA-Urartu in Murat Valley-Muş Plains[21]. This space suggests that the fertile lands, agricultural valleys or lowlands were not densely

[16] Özfırat 1999.

[17] Özfırat 1999.

[18] Sevin 1996; Özfırat 1999; Özfırat 2005; Özfırat (In press a).

[19] Sevin 1986; Sevin 1987; Sevin 1989.

[20] Özfırat 2005b.

[21] Burney 1958; Russell 1980; Kozbe 1995; Rothman / Kozbe 1997; Rothman 2000; Rothman 2003; Rothman 2004; Biber / Çavuşoğlu 2013; Biber 2016.

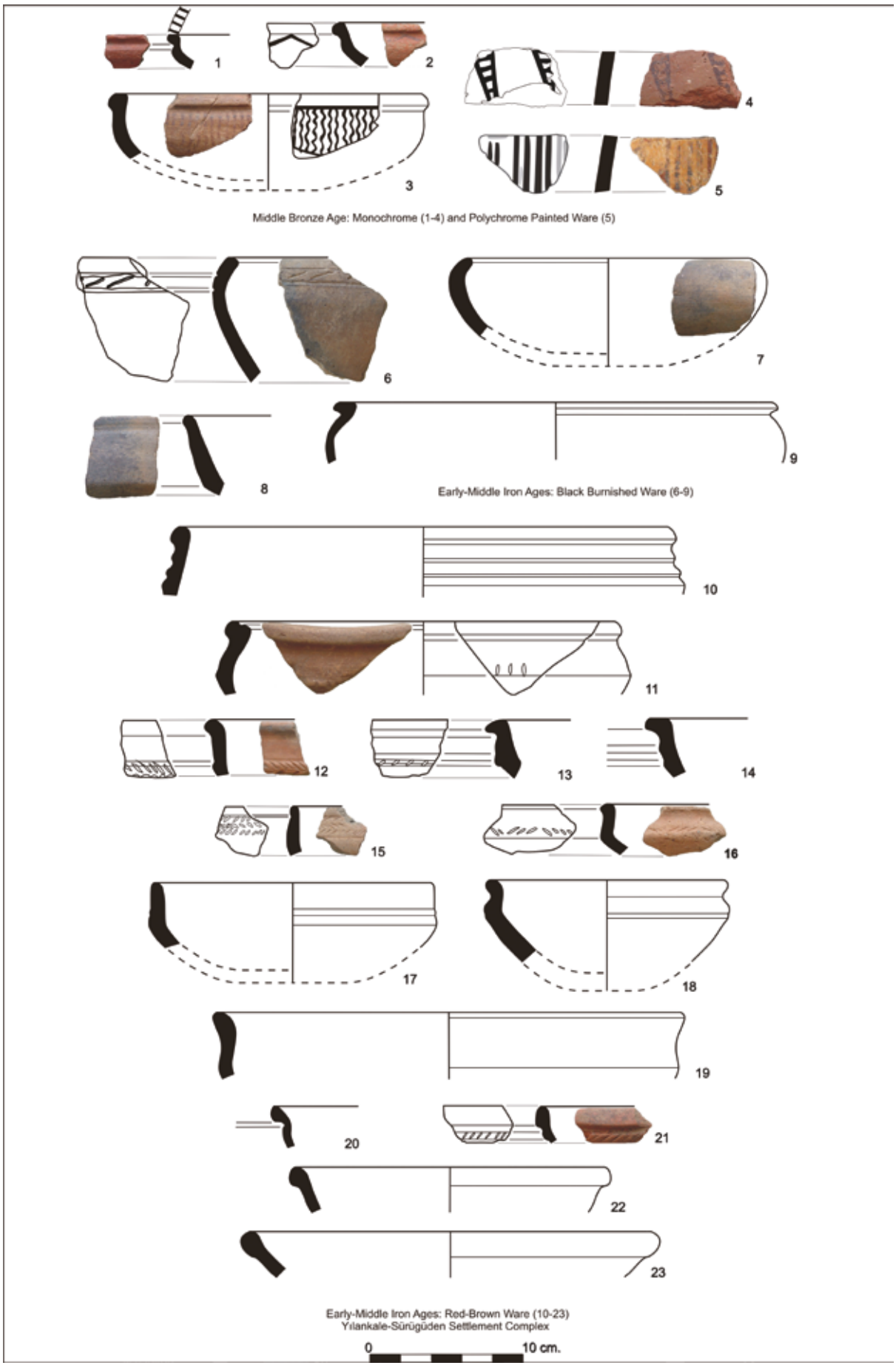


Figure 15: YılankaleFortress-Sürügüden Settlement Complex / *Yılankale Kalesi-Sürügüden Yerleşim Kompleksi*

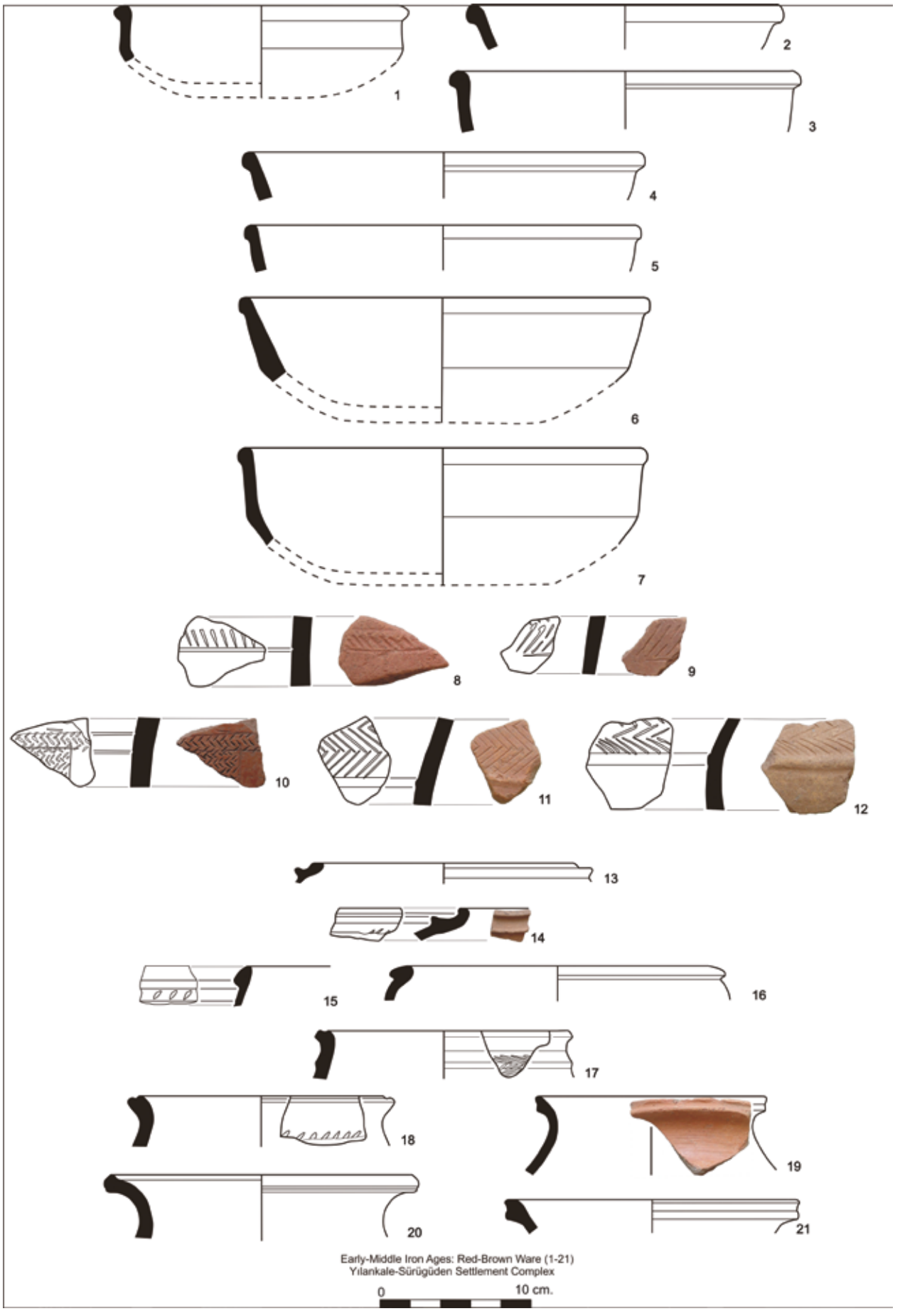


Figure 16: YılankaleFortress-Sürügüden Settlement Complex / *Yılankale Kalesi-Sürügüden Yerleşim Kompleksi*

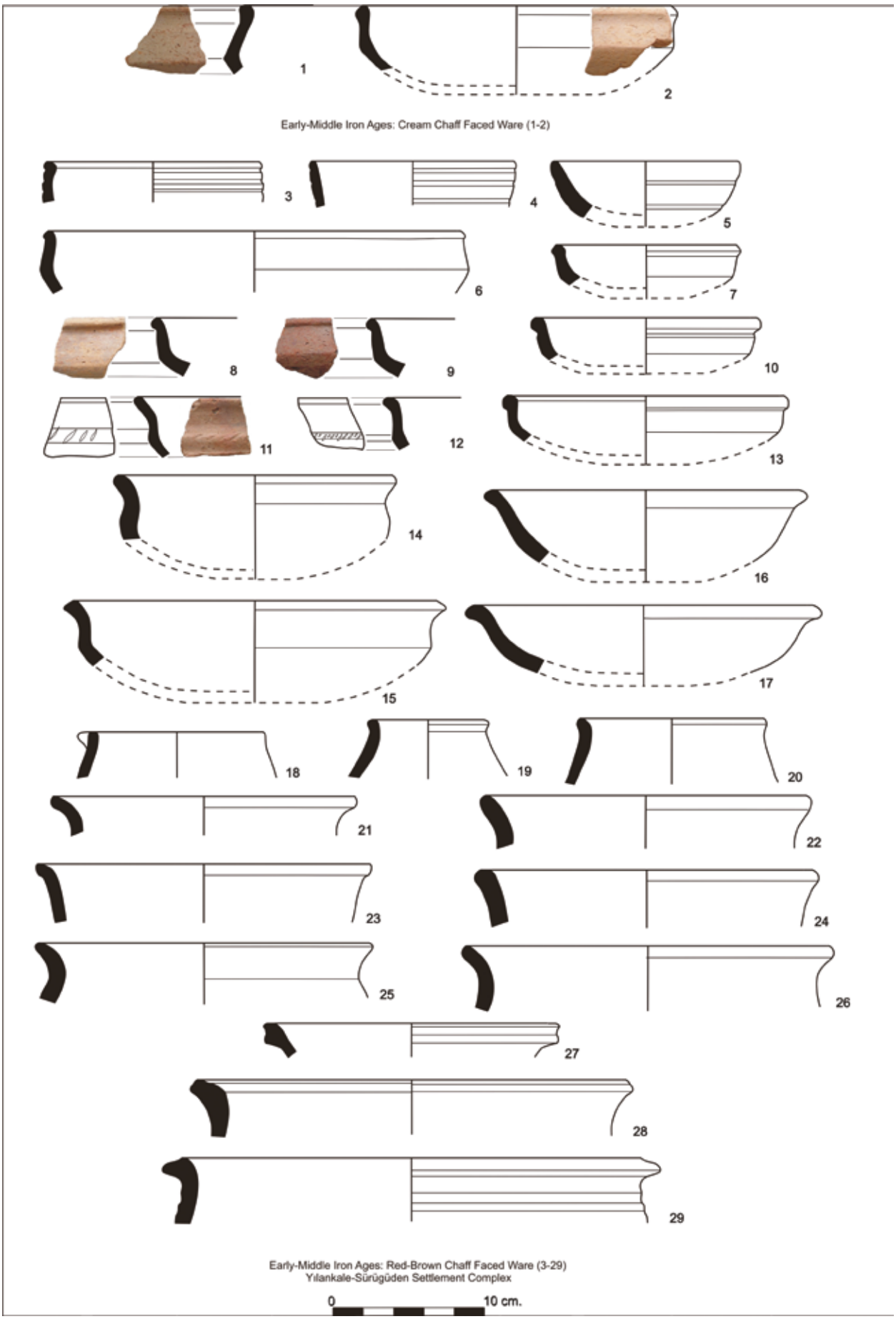


Figure 17: YılankaleFortress-Sürügüden Settlement Complex / *Yılankale Kalesi-Sürügüden Yerleşim Kompleksi*

populated in the MBA-EIA. On the contrary, the cemeteries of MBA, found widespread on the highlands of Mt Süphan, imply the existence of a considerable population. LBA-EIA of the region were characterized by a great number of fortresses-cemeteries, located in the foothills and highlands[22]. A clear change in the settlement pattern appears throughout the region after the EBA-Kura-Araxes, as sedentary life seems to be abandoned until the MIA-Urartu.

Apparently, a dramatic decrease in the number of settlements can be stated in the Highland of eastern Anatolia, Iranian Azerbaijan and southern Transcaucasia in the MBA, except for some settlements in the Araxes Valley and western of Lake Urmia[23]. The existence of large cemeteries in high pastures, while at the same time no related settlements, is observed. Western slope of Mt Süphan is also characterized by cemeteries; this point suggest to the presence of a different social organization to nomadism or semi-nomadism with seasonal settling, probably for animal husbandry. Transhumance and nomadism, which were part of pastoral life, might have been effective in the region, as it was in entire highland of eastern Anatolia. Even though the MBA pottery is found in Yılankale (Sürügüden Complex) and Haydarkalesi-Develik fortresses, these are limited to a couple of sherds. Actually, a great number of LBA-EIA and a lesser number of MIA pottery were collected from these fortresses. Additionally, their localization and architecture are typical to LBA-EIA. The presence of MBA pottery, though in small numbers, points out that these fortresses, with a weaker architecture, might have been used in MBA or there was a small permanent or temporary settlement. It is hard to reach a clear conclusion as the evidence is inadequate but, it is certain that there were no permanent and large settlements compared to the MBA cemeteries with enormous sizes where we have investigated.

Settlement pattern again changed in LBA-EIA, while the pastoral system was still used as shown by the highland fortresses-cemeteries. The increase in the number of fortresses from the LBA-EIA is striking in the whole region as in İranian Azerbaijan and southern Transcaucasia. Fortresses and their cemeteries lie on the foothills surrounding the plains-valleys and highlands with a few exceptions, such as cemeteries of Evdi Tepe-Ernis (Ünseli, N71/1)[24] on the northern shore of Lake Van and Karagündüz[25] on the eastern shore of Lake Erçek (Fig. 1). It seems that population slowly began to gather around organizational and economic centers with the rise of the fortresses, in contrast with MBA[26]. Highlands of eastern Anatolia, northwestern southern Transcaucasia and northwestern Iran and northwestern Iran were divided among a great number of local polities in the LBA-EIA. Assyrian and Urartian epigraphic sources give information about these local polities of highland starting from 13th century BC, which are mentioned under the names of Uruatri and Nairi lands. In general, this vast area which is the pre-Urartian landscape, appears to have shared a common culture and by numerous polities, which could be named as fortress-state, small kingdom, chiefdom or regional confederacies in tribal structure. Political intensification of these highland state formation marked by the appearance of local states centered in fortresses or fortress-settlements with urban character, which are mainly part of settlement complexes. These central or major fortresses were also formed with some permanent and seasonal settlements and smaller fortresses in various size and function around them. Later, these local polities or local fortress-states of EIA became provinces of Urartian state.

Settlement pattern of the basin of Lake Van clearly reached to an incredible density during the EIA-MIA, is unmatched in both earlier and later periods. Remains dating to these periods have been seen in almost all sites. Rocky hills on foothills or highlands have clearly played a special role in the construction of landscape at that time. No other period, as perceived through the settlement pattern, produces the same impression of territory planning and control. EIA-MIA sites generally consist of a fortress flanked by cemeteries on their slopes: the construction technique of the fortresses and the graves, together with the material collected, share strong similarities, except for the built by Urartian Kingdom. Many Iron Age fortresses with the local characteristics have the finds from EIA and MIA. In these fortresses-cemeteries located in highlands, which were understood to be used extensively by pre-Urartian polities, MIA pottery were seen, though smaller in numbers compared to the EIA. It seems that, some of the local fortresses and seasonal settlements have been used in MIA-Urartu. Within these fortresses, Tıkızlı (L66/1), which stands to the northwest part of Murat Valley, even though its location in the highland and its distance to the main routes, is important with small number of Urartian pottery (Fig. 1)[27].

[22] Özfırat 2009; Özfırat 2013; Özfırat 2014a; Özfırat 2014b; Özfırat 2015; Özfırat 2016; Özfırat (In press b); Sevin 2003; Sevin 2004; Sevin 2014; Belli / Konyar 2003; Ceylan 2008; 2015; Biber 2013; Biber 2016.

[23] Özfırat 2001a; Özfırat 2005a; Özfırat 2008.

[24] Sevin 1996; Sevin 2014.

[25] Sevin 2003; Sevin 2004; Sevin/Kavaklı 1996.

[26] Özfırat 2001a; Özfırat 2005a; Sevin 2003; Sevin 2004; Sevin 2014.

[27] Koçhan 1990; Özfırat 2001b; Biber 2015.

In Urartian period (MIA), every type of terrain was used and settlements with various functions were systematically arranged: valleys and plains in the lowlands, pasturelands, mountain slopes and highlands. Settlement pattern have been developed and centralized to characterize that of the Urartian state. Urartian constructions were built on a strategic location in the lower areas compared to EIA. Fortresses, roadstations and settlements in various functions were built on a lower hill stretching on the plains, valleys or at the shore of lake, except for the thick Urartian layers of mounds.

Classical Urartian architecture and pottery were found in a small number of fortresses in the western side of Mt Süphan and Mt Nemrut (Fig 1): Fortresses of Yeniköy-Alyar[28] (L67/5), Bostankaya[29] (M67/5) and Dereboğazı-Hasretpınar (N6673)[30] in the Murat Valley-Malazgirt Plain; Urartian chamber grave in Göztepe Mound which is in the Bulanık Plain next to Elmakaya Complex (Fig. 2)[31]; Şahmiran Fortress[32] in the Murat Valley-Bulanık Plain; Kayalıdere-Varto[33] to the west on the Murat River with a strategic location overlooking to Muş Plain; Kepenek[34] located on a hill overlooking to Muş Plain-Karasu Valley; Tatvan (066/2)[35], Ağak Burnu-Adabağ (066/1)[36], Cevizderesi-Uludere (N66/5)[37] and Arınçküs-Akçıra (N69/6)[38] fortresses are located on the shore of lake. Kef-Adilcevaz Fortress is an extraordinary site with its very high location on southeastern slope of Mt Süphan, which is overlooking to Lake Van. It differs from the other Urartian settlements with the sanctuary of Haldi built by King Rusa II.

Fortresses, large cemeteries and settlement complexes of Mt Süphan are the most prominent archaeological sites for MBA-LBA-EIA in the region. It seems that highlands, which had been very limitedly used in EBA-Kura Araxes, were highly densely populated in MBA. Even though the pastoral life continued in LBA-EIA, a more organized social set up and socio-economic structure were evidenced by many fortresses on foothills and high plateaus. The existence of the remarkable sites of Mt Süphan highland can be explained with their most fertile pastures of the region and with their being surrounded by the large Murat-Euphrates River, which is one of the greatest river of the eastern Anatolia.

[28] Koçhan 1990; Çevik 2000; Özfırat 2001b; Biber 2015.
[29] Burney 1957; Russell 1980; Rothman 1995; Özfırat 2001b, Biber 2015.
[30] Özfırat 2001b; Biber / Çavuşoğlu / Erdoğan 2012.
[31] Özfırat 2001b.
[32] Biber 2013; Biber 2015 .
[33] Burney 1966.
[34] Koçhan/Sur 2003; Koçhan/Salvini 2000; Biber 2016.
[35] Burney 1957; Russell 1980; Erzen / Bilgiç / Boysal / Öğün 1960; Özfırat 2002.
[36] Burney 1957 (Burun Harabesi); Russell 1980 (Burun Harabesi); Özfırat 1999.
[37] Özfırat 2002.
[38] Burney 1957; Russell 1980; Bilgiç 1984; Özfırat 1999.

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