The Urartian Fortress at Ömerağa-Gölyüzü on the southern slope of Mt. Ağrı (Bozkurt Settlement Complex), in the city of Minuahinili (Karakoyunlu)[1]

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Keywords: Urartu, Minuahinili, Ömerağa-Gölyüzü, Bozkurt, Doğubayazıt plain, Mt Ağrı

Campaigns of Urartian started to the region of Mt Ağrı in the earlier stage of the kingdom in the reigns of Ishpuini (830-810 BC) and Minua (810-785/780 BC). The region became part of Urartian land when the Early Iron Age kingdom of Eriqua captured and the foundation of the new fortress-city at Minuahinili by King Minua. Major fortresses and fortified cities of Late Bronze-Early Iron Age (pre-Urartu) and Middle Iron Age (Urartu) were mostly located in settlement complexes in the highland of eastern Anatolia. They can be considered as urban and administrative centers of small independent polities of pre-Urartian and Urartians. Settlement complexes at Mt Ağrı, Melekli and Karakoyunlu (Iğdır plain-south of the Araxes valley) on the northern slope were localized respectively as Luhiuni, the capital of Early Iron Age kingdom of Eriqua and Minuahinili, the fortress-city of Urartu. Bozkurt settlement complex (Doğubayazıt plain) on the southern slope must be within the borders of these cities. Urartian settlement at Bozkurt contains a central fortress (Ömerağa-Gölyüzü) and an outpost - road station (Bozkurt Fortress 2). The Urartian fortress at Ömerağa-Gölyüzü can be suggest that it was the primary administrative center on the southwestern slope of Mt Ağrı interconnected with Minuahinili.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Urartu, Minuahinili, Ömerağa-Gölyüzü, Bozkurt, Doğubayazıt Ovası, Ağrı Dağı

Ağrı Dağı bölgesine ilk Urartu seferleri krallığın erken evresinde, kral İşpuini (MÖ 830-810) ve Minua (MÖ 810-785/780) dönemlerinde başlamıştır. Bölge, Kral Minua tarafından Erken Demir Çağ krallığı Eriqua ülkesinin başkenti Luhiuni'nin fethi ve yeni kale kent Minuahinili'nin kuruluşuyla Urartu ülkesinin parçası haline gelmiştir. Doğu Anadolu yüksek yaylasında Son Tunç-Erken Demir Çağ (pre-Urartu) ve Orta Demir Çağ (Urartu) dönemlerine ait merkezi kaleler ya da kale kentler büyük çoğunlukla yerleşim kompleksleri içinde yer alırlar. Bu kentler pre-Urartu döneminin küçük bağımsız krallıkları ve sonrasında Urartu Krallığı'nın büyük kentleri ya da yönetim merkezleri olarak kabul edilebilirler.

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Mt. Ağrı haused remarkable settlements in the highland of eastern Anatolia because of its fertile land and to its location on the crossroads of the main routes. The mountain is surrounded by Iğdır plain-south of the Araxes valley and route into southern Caucasia in the north, and Doğubayazıt plain and routes into northwestern Iran, Upper Euphrates valley in the west and Lake Van basin reaching to the capital at Tushpa in the south. Iğdır plain is also important because of the richest agricultural land of eastern Anatolia while Doğubayazıt plain is only suitable for animal husbandary as in the rest of eastern Anatolia.

The Urartian conquest of Mt Ağrı region began the earlier stage of the kingdom, campaigns of Urartian started to the region of Mt Ağrı in the reigns of Ishpuini (830-810 BC) and Minua (810-785/780 BC). Their military campaigns of expansion reached to the shore of Lake Sevan in the north, to the western shore of Lake Urmia in the east, to the Upper Euphrates River in the west. In spite of existence in the north of the Araxes valley since the reign of king Ishpuini, the Urartians did not occupy southern Caucasia until the reign of King Argishti I (785/80-756 BC). The region integrated as a province of empire with the foundation of Argishtihinili fortress-city in northern part of the Araxes river (Ararat plain, Land of Aza) by military conquests of King Argishti I. On the contrary, the south of the Araxes valley or the region of Mt. Ağrı became part of Urartian land when the Early Iron Age kingdom of Eriqua captured and the foundation of the fortress-city at Minuahinili by king Minua. By this way, the region of Mt Ağrı-the south of the Araxes valley were included to Urartian territory and dominated the gateway to the southern Caucasia and northwestern Iran. Probably, the consolidation of Minuahinili with structures continued during the foundation of Argishtihinili (Armavir) and construction of the northern bank of the Araxes river as a province of Urartu by Argishti I, and it seems to have been completed by Rusa, the son of Argishti II (c. 675's BC), during the foundation of the new political center Teishebaini (Karmir Blur), and the reorganization in Aza.

Major fortresses and fortified-cities of Late Bronze-Early Iron Age (LBA-EIA) and Middle Iron Age (MIA-Urartu) were mostly located to be part of in large settlement complexes in the region[1]. They can be considered as urban centers of small independent

[1] Settlement complexes and a large number of LBA-EIA well preserved fortresses and their cemeteries located on the foothills and highlands of the region of Mt Ağrı and Lake Van basin have been recorded in our survey which is also the case in southern Caucasia and northwestern Iran, see. Baxşeliyev 2002; Bakhshaliyev - Marro 2009; Badalyan-Avetisyan 2007; Badaljan et al. 1997; Biscione 2002; 2003; 2009; Biscione et al 2012; Hammer 2014; Khanzadyan et al 1973; Khanzadyan 1979; Kerimov 2003; Kroll 2005; Narimanishvili 2012; Ristvet et al 2013; Shanshashvili - Narimanishvili 2013; Reinhold 2016; Rasuloglu 1993; Smith 1999; 2003; 2012; Smith et al 2009. They were major sites in the region where located in central geographical areas contain agricultural lands, pastures, highland routes, trade routes etc. Each of them covers separate units related to each other such as mounds, cemeteries, lower cities and fortresses, spreading over a wide area with a horizontal stratigraphy covering a long chronological sequence, from the Late Chalcolithic Period to the Middle Iron Age (Urartu) or the Late Iron Age (Achaemenid), except for an interruption corresponding to the Middle Bronze Age (MBA). Actually, this settlement pattern which was characteristic for the highland of eastern Anatolia, southern Transcaucasia and northwestern Iran demonstrate a quite different model in contradistinction to those of the central area of Near East. It seems that, settlement system of Caucasia needs to be discussed and redefined as shown by recent work in the region.



Fig. 1: *Iron Age Sites and Settlement Complexes of Mt Ağrı*



Fig. 2: *Bozkurt Settlement Complex*

polities of pre-Urartian and Urartians. It looks that the areas they controlled were mostly limited with geographical units like a valley or a plain which was isolated with mountains controlling both the fertile plains and strategic trade routes. Considering the epigraphic sources and archaeological datas, fortress-cities of LBA-EIA which are parts of the settlement complexes are suggested to be political centers or capital of small kingdoms in pre-Urartian lands under the names of Uruatri and Nairi, with the establishment of Urartian kingdom, these sites were transformed into provincial cities or major fortresses of Urartu. Settlement complexes of Mt Ağrı, Melekli and Karakoyunlu (Iğdır plain-south of the Araxes valley) on the northern slope were localized respectively as Luhiuni, the capital of EIA kingdom of Eriqua and Minuahinili, the fortress-city of Urartu (Fig. 1). As a result of conquest of Minua, the Urartian fortress of Minuahinili (Karakoyunlu Fortress II) established on the southern bank of the Araxes river adjecent to the capital of Luhiuni, kingdom of Eriqua (Özfirat 2005; Özfirat 2016; 2017a; 2017b; In press Sevin 2005). In this manner, the territory of Mt Ağrı was included into the Urartian province system. Bozkurt settlement complex (Doğubayazıt plain) on the southern slope must be within the borders of these cities. Urartian settlement at Bozkurt contains a central fortress (Ömerağa-Gölyüzü) and an outpost-road station (Bozkurt Fortress 2).

Inscriptions of the Eriqua campaign of King Minua which contain the capture of the royal city of Luhiuni and establishment of the new Urartian fortress of Minuahinili were found in the fortresses at Karakoyunlu and Bulakbaşı in the Iğdır plain-south of the Araxes valley (Nikol'skij 1896; Payne 2006; Salvini 2006; 2008). The earliest excavations and works on the find spots of these three inscriptions of Minua were made by A. A. Ivanovskij and M. V. Nikol'skij in 1893-1894, during their investigations in eastern Anatolia on behalf of the Moskva Archaeological Society. They did not publish any findings from the Karakoyunlu and Bulakbaşı excavations and survey, and since the photographs are extremely limited, we do not have enough information about the dating, architectural features, functions etc. of the structures. But the informations of inscriptions are more clear, by reason of the research area including Karakoyunlu and Bulakbaşı villages were within the boundaries of Taşburun town (Iğdır province) in the mentioned date, fortresses and inscriptions were named as Taşburun. Confusion about these inscription in the literature apart from the name issue, is related with the find spots. Actually, except from the rock-cut inscription found on the slope of the fortresses at Karakoyunlu, the location of other two which is known as Bulakbaşı is uncertain. Because of this uncertainty (see footenotes 2-4), we preferred to use name of Taşburun which is the numbers and locations given by Ivanovskij and Nikol'skij[2]:

[2] Nikol'skij 1896: 14-30; Lehmann-Haupt 1910: 169-171; Ivanovskiy 1911: 36-59. Two fortresses are mentioned in Karakoyunlu, and three in the surrounding area of Lake Bulakbaşı. For this reason, Karakoyunlu and Bulakbaşı fortresses was frequently recorded as Taşburun, and as Tsolakert, Solagert, Zolakert and Çölegert in other versions. Taşburun is connected to Karakoyunlu district today, but before it was the opposite, Karakoyunlu was connected to Taşburun. Fortress at Karakoyunlu II is also named as

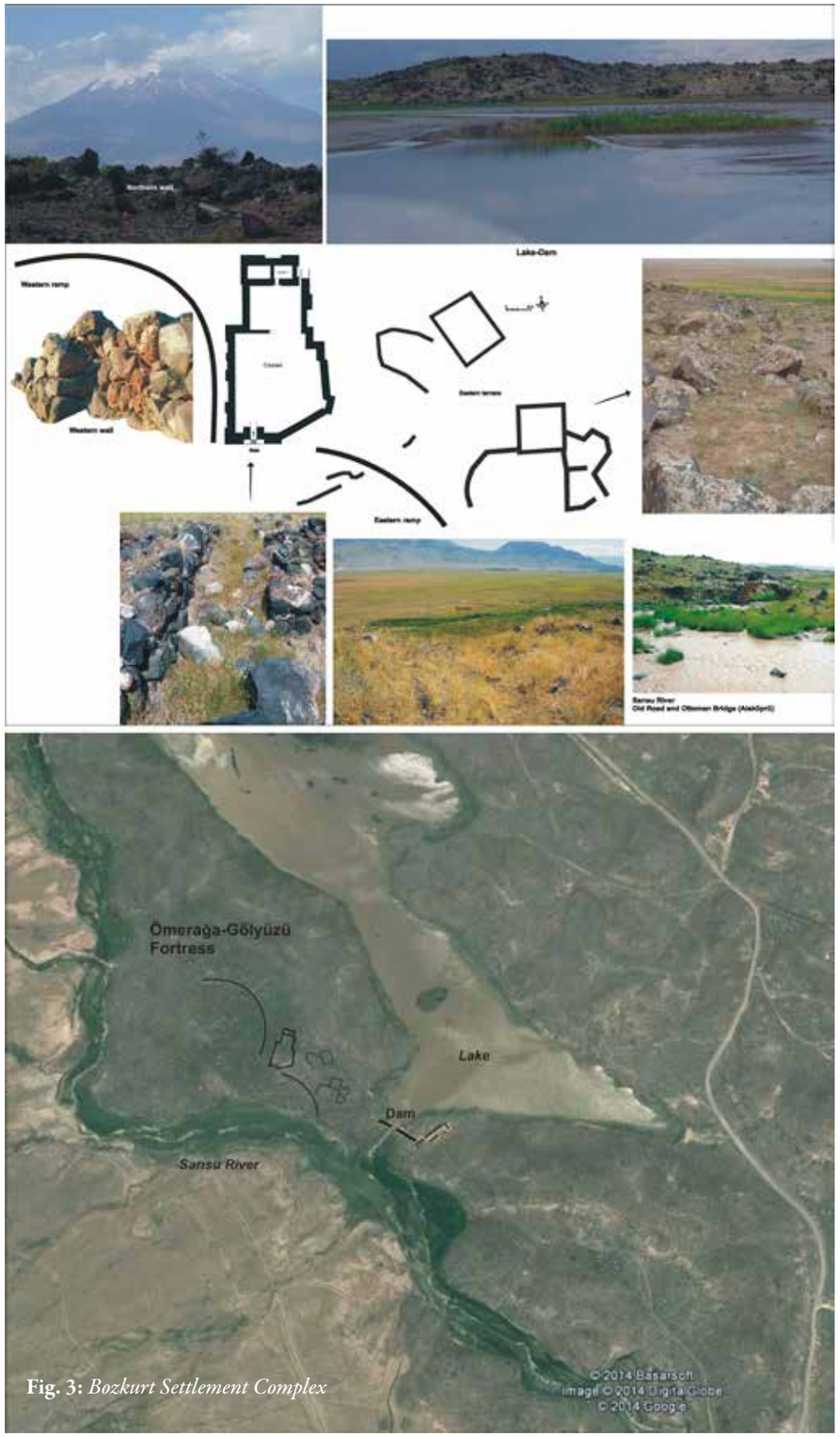


Fig. 3: *Bozkurt Settlement Complex*

Taşburun No II[3]

"*With the might of the god Haldi, Minua established this place, the land of Irkua of Minua ( ). He built a Haldi gate and a fortress in a perfect style.*

Minua said: I established ... I built ..."

Taşburun No III[4]

"Minua, son of Ishpuini, established this building in a perfect style, and built a fortress to the god Haldi in a perfect style. He named (this place) as 'Minuahinili'. Minua, son of Ishpuini, the mighty king, is the hero of the City of Tushpa, and the king of the Biainili land, with the greatness of the god Haldi."

Fortress

The Urartian Fortress at Ömerağa-Gölyüzü is located in the Bozkurt settlement complex on the southern slope of Mt Ağrı (Doğubayazıt plain), (Özfırat 2016; 2017a; 2017b; In press), (Figs. 1-4). The sites of Bozkurt settlement complex located around small lakes Saz and Şeyhli at the edge of the plain on the slope of Mt Ağrı, since the plain is swampy and full of bulrushes of lakes. Bozkurt settlement complex with its uninterrupted occupation from the Late Chalcolithic to the Urartian Kingdom, includes more than one site in the Doğubayazıt plain (Figs. 1-2): Sağlıksuyu mound (Late Chalcolithic LC-EIA); Dertek Kurgan Cemetery; Hasanbey-Bardaklı Fortress and Cemetery (EIA II); Bozkurt-Melecami mound (LC-EBA-Kura-Araxes), Cemeteries (MBA-EIA) and Fortresses (EIA I and Urartu); Ömerağa-Gölyüzü Fortress (Urartu). Urartian settlement at Bozkurt complex contains a central fortress (Ömerağa-Gölyüzü) and an outpost - road station (Bozkurt Fortress 2), (Özfırat 2016).

Mağaralar Mevkii due to Urartian Rock-cut tomb there, so we used this name in our first reports. In the same way, Bulakbaşı village is used as Başbulak.

The conquest of Eriqua is mentioned in the inscription No. I found in the fortresses at Karakoyunlu-Taşburun (Fig. 1). Nikol'skij 1896: No I, 16, 22-27, Tafel III-IV; Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin, the rock-cut inscription at the point where the Karakoyunlu fortresses connect with the plain. According to the Nikol'skij photographs, this inscription is on the foot of the fortress what we call Karakoyunlu III and on the rocks overlooking the valley. The findspot of this inscription is recorded as Solagert fortress in Payne 2006: 5.1.3; Tsolakert-Taşburun (Iğdır) in Salvini 2008 (CTU): A5-1.

[3] Nikol'skij 1896: No II, 17-18, 28-29, Tafel V; *History Museum* of *Armenia*, Yerevan, this inscription is on a stone block, found at the home of a hard ware store owner in Taşburun town. The exact findspot is unknown, the villagers stated that they found this inscription from the medieval city on the plain east of the lake near the Urartian fortresses at Bulakbaşı on the slopes of Mt Ağrı and shores of Lake Bulakbaşı (Fig. 1). Although Ivanovsky made extensive excavations here in 1893-1894, he did not find any evidence of earlier periods. The findspot of this inscription is recorded as Solakert Fortress (Eçmiazin) in Payne 2006: 5.3.12; Tsolakert-Taşburun and Mağaralar Mevkii (Iğdır) in Salvini 2008 (CTU): A5-27.

[4] Nikol'skij 1896: 16-17, 29-30, No III, this inscription couldn't be found. Nikol'skij studied this inscription from a photograph found in Archbishop Mesrop in Taşburun town. The findspot of this insciption is recorded as Başbulak in Payne 2006: 5.3.13; Başbulak-Bulakbaşı (Taşburun, Iğdır) in Salvini 2008 (CTU): A5-26.



Fig. 4: *Ömerağa-Gölyüzü Fortress*



Fig. 5: *View from east: Citadel, Eastern terrace buildings and Lake-Dam*

The Urartian fortress at Ömerağa-Gölyüzü is situated on a hill of the Mt Ağrı stretching towards the southeastern edge of the Doğubayazıt plain (Figs. 1-5). The Sarısu river which is spring from lake Şeyhli flows parallel to the İranian road in front of it and, a small lake lies to the east of it (Figs. 3, 5; 8-9, 12). There are remains of a dam on the southwestern end of lake in the direction of the plain and the Sarısu river.

The citadel plan of fortress is rectangular, with 73 m length and 40 m width. The walls were built with semi-ashler stones, had a thickness of 2.60 m which were regularly buttressed (Figs. 3, 11-13). There are traces of architecture inside, possibly, a temple located at the highest point of northern end. The northern part of the citadel is higher and looks like a separate unit. The remains of two rooms surrounding the courtyard likely composed a complex for those associated with the temple, although the limited data. The room with a square plan (5.20 x 4.20 m) on the eastern end can be thought as a cella ? due to its special entrance and plan (Fig. 12). Citadel has 2.30 m wide gate with stepped on the southern side (Fig. 3, 6, 10, 12), two ramparts extends along the western and eastern slopes of the hill towards the gate from the main road on the plain (Figs. 3-9). Some architectural remains or graves lies on the western slope of the citadel and below the rampart, but they



Fig. 6: *View from west: Citadel and Western ramp*

are not clear due to the late remains of a *yayla* on it (Fig. 7). North of the eastern rampart, large square and rectangular structures lie on the eastern terrace of the citadel overlooking to lake (Fig. 3, 9).

The fortress has classical and luxurious (Palace or Biainili ware) Urartian ware (Figs. 14-15) except for a plenty of red-brown, black and buff wares which is uncommon for the region. As a whole, MIA pottery of eastern Anatolia shows local character, classical Urartian pottery was found only in the administrative or major sites outside of the central part of the kingdom (Lake Van basin). In the same way, Minuahinili (Karakoyunlu Fortress II), Melekli-Kültepe, Bozkurt Fortress II and Ömerağa have classical Urartian pottery in the Mt Ağrı region.

Conclusion

The political developments of the area to the north of Mt. Ağrı (Iğdır plain-south of the Araxes valley) are partially known from the inscriptions of King Minua which mentioned EIA kingdom of Eriqua and Minuahinili, but the situation of the south of Mt. Ağrı (Doğubayazıt plain) during the EIA-MIA is not clear due to lack of written sources. Our investigations indicated that the plain and the surrounding mountainous area was densely inhabited during both periods as in the whole region. However, its archaeological evidence is not supported by epigraphic sources. The southern slope of Mt Ağrı must have retained its importance by the pre-Urartians and Urartians. It can be suggest that the fortresses at Bozkurt settlement complex respectively the central cities of the kingdom of Erikua and Minuahinili in the southern slope of mountain (Doğubayazıt plain). As a consequence of



Fig. 7: *Western ramp and Doğubayazıt plain*



Fig. 8: *Eastern ramp, Dam, Doğubayazıt plain , Sarısu river and northwestern Iran road*

its location, extension, long-term inhabitation (LC-MIA), presence of large cemeteries of the MBA-LBA-EIA, as well as of its large fortresses (LBA-EIA-MIA), settlement complex at Bozkurt seems to occupy a central position on the southern slope of Mt Ağrı. Ömerağa-Gölyüzü, the primary Urartian fortress in the plain, is a part of Bozkurt settlement. The importance of the region for the Urartian Kingdom can be understand when its location between highland and lowland, on the mountain passes and on the main routes leading to the cities in southern Caucasia and northwestern Iran from the central area of the kingdom, as well as providing access to the Upper Euphrates valley via Murat River valley to the west and to the basin of lake Van in the south (Figs 1-2).

Provincial or administrative centers of Urartu were usually built near former local capitals or pre-Urartian fortresses continued into the Urartian period with some changes, as in



Fig. 9: *Eastern terrace buildings and Lake-Dam*

Gavar-Khaldi, Tsovinar-Teishebaini,Tsovak, Lchashen, Arghuyti Dash, Horom, Aramus, Seqindel (Libluini) and Shisheh (Biscione 2002; 2003; Hmayakyan 2002; Khanzaq et al 2001; Kleiss - Kroll 1980; Kohl - Kroll 1999). One such center was Minuahinili (Karakoyunlu Fortress II), the new fortress founded by King Minua nearby it when he captured the royal city of Luhiuni (Melekli-Kasımtığı), the capital of the Kingdom of Erikua which are located neighbouring settlement complexes at Melekli and Karakoyunlu on the northern slope of Mt Ağrı. The Urartian fortress at Ömerağa-Gölyüzü next to the LBA-EIA fortresses at Bozkurt is comparable to Melekli and Karakoyunlu. It dominates its surroundings, existence of the classical Urartian pottery , its architecture and location relative to the other sites suggests that fortress at Ömerağa-Gölyüzü was the primary administrative center in the Doğubayazıt plain-southern slope of Mt Ağrı connected with Minuahinili. The area was also controlled an outpost-route station at Bozkurt (Fortress 2) which is located on a very high hill dominating the plain, *c.* 4 km to the north of Omerağa-Gölyüzü fortress (Figs. 1-2). Both fortresses must have been built during the establishment of the Minuahinili. It is difficult to make dating since we haven't done any excavation. But, the presence of some early pottery at Ömerağa-Gölyüzü, its architectural features and its location suggests that the fortress built during the first campaigns.

Urartians settled to the region of Mt Ağrı - south bank of the Araxes river with the earliest campaigns by Minua. The Bozkurt settlement complex must also be considered in this frame. In addition to the fortress-city of Minuaihinili (Karakoyunlu), King Minua established the Bulakbaşı fortress 2 or 4 on the northern slope which was located at a closer point further east to Araxes valley according to inscriptions. Construction of the new province must have been supported other sites, it seems that, Mt Ağrı western pass



Fig. 10: *Northern wall of citadel and gate*



Fig. 11: *Eastern wall of citadel, Sarısu river, Doğubayazıt Iran road*

was controlled from both sides by the Melekli and Bozkurt outposts-route stations and the central fortress at Ömerağa-Gölyüzü on the southern slope which was located at a closer point further east to northwestern Iran such as Bulakbaşı in the north (Figs. 1-2, 11). The fortress at Ömerağa-Gölyüzü has a special location in terms of the location on the main road to the capital of kingdom (Tushpa) and Urmia Lake where the earliest provinces of the kingdom are existed. Fortresses at Gavur Kale and Verahram in the Araxes valley to the north, Livar to the northeast, Rusai URU.TUR (Bastam) to the north, Qale İsmail Agha, Haftavan III to the west of Lake Urmia, Mesta (Hasanlu IIIb) and Qalatgah to its south are the important Urartian settlements, among many others (Biscione 2012; Kroll 2011, 2012; Salvini 2006). Northwestern Iran was among the leading areas where the kingdom undertook intensive constructions. The first Urartian fortresses in Lake Urmia region



Cella ? and northern part of citadel



Eastern wall of citadel



Eastern Terrace buildings, Lake-Dam, Sarısu river, Doğubayazıt plain and northwestern Iran road.
Fig. 12



Fig. 13: *Western wall of citadel*

were set up at the beginning of kingdom. In spite of existence in the northwestern Iran since the reign of King Ishpuini, the Urartians did not occupy north of the Araxes river until the reign of King Argishti I (785/80-756 BC). With the foundation of the Minuai-hinili, Urartian kingdom became the sole political authority on the south of the Araxes river and Mt Ağrı region, and was dominated the gateway to the southern Caucasia and northwestern Iran and also rather fertile Igdır plain. It seems that, thus, the infrastructure for the future campaigns of southern Caucasia and northwestern Iran was completed.

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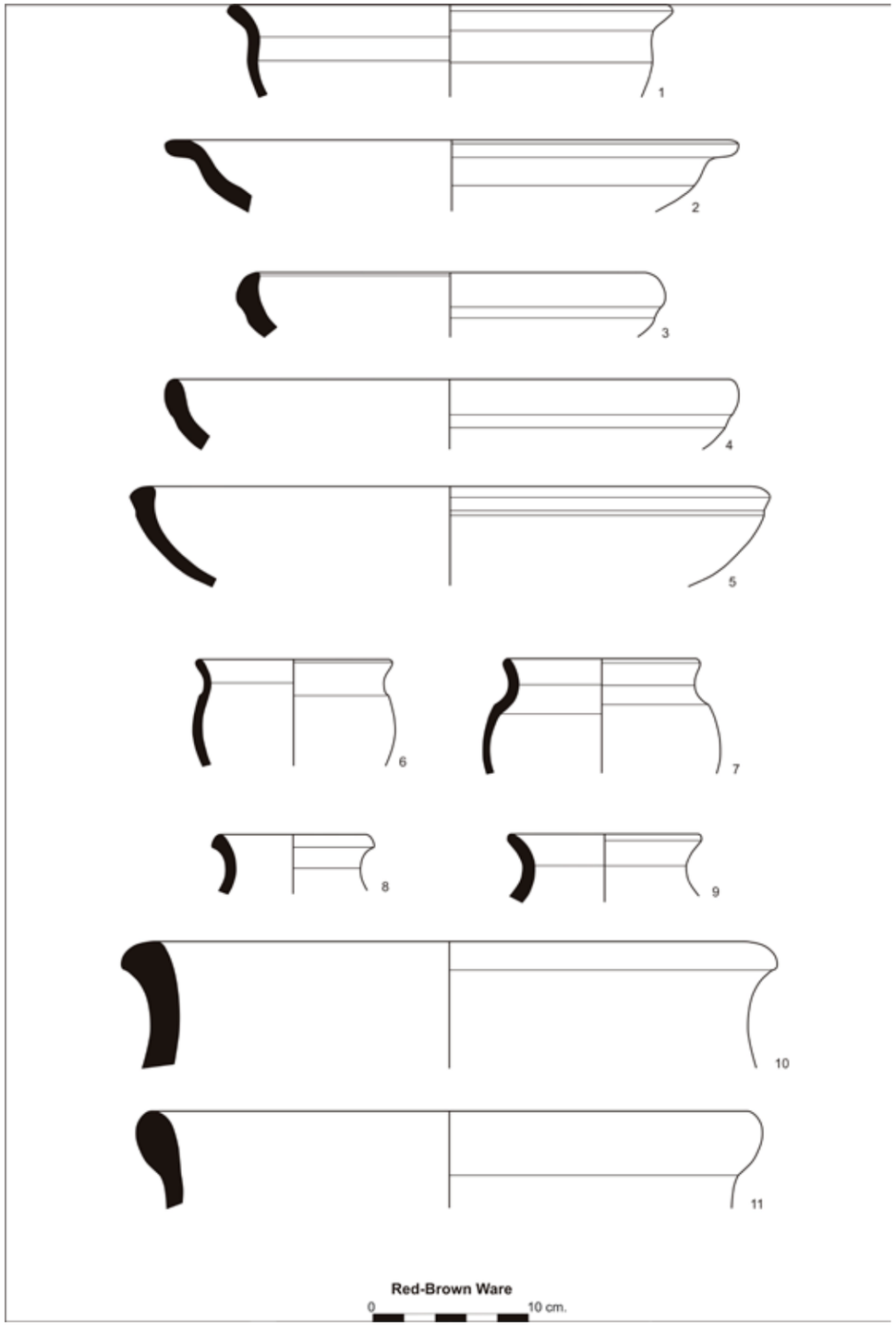


Fig. 14: *Urartian pottery of Ömerağa-Gölyüzü Fortress*

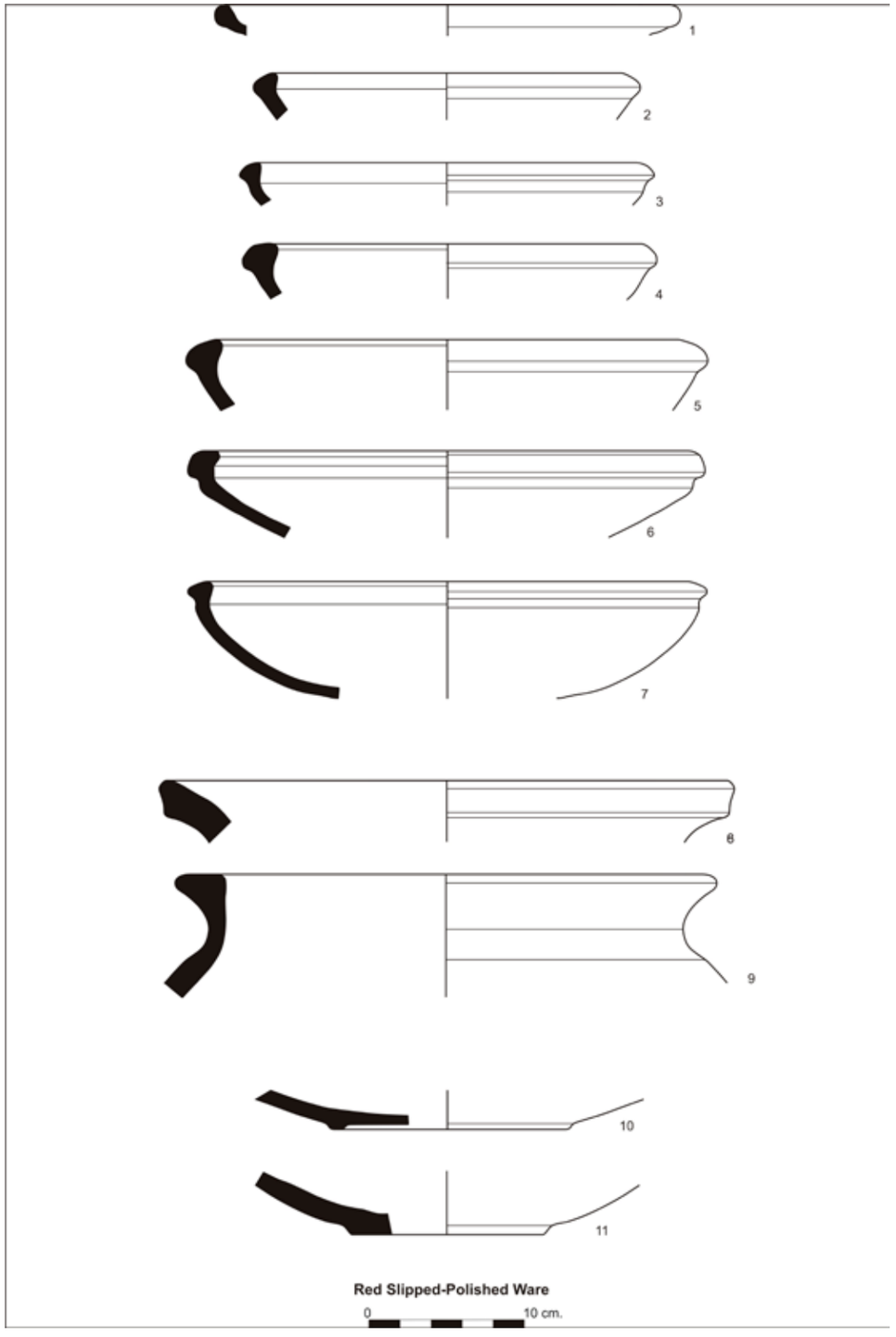


Fig. 15: *Urartian pottery of Ömerağa-Gölyüzü Fortress*

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