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A PIECE OF MANZIKERT'S HISTORY: THE 2023 AFŞİN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

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Abstract

The Detection, History and Archaeological Survey of the Manzikert Battlefield is one of the most extensive projects that has been done in the field of war archeology in Türkiye. The project's fundamental objectives include revealing the historical identity of the city of Manzikert through concrete archeological data and understanding the multi-level cultural structure of the region throughout history, in addition to determining the geographical borders of the battlefield through scientific methods. In this framework, the first intensive field survey was conducted in the region in 2023, after skeletal remains dating to the 11th century surfaced in the Afşin neighborhood of the Manzikert district. Field surveys uncovered evidence of temporary settlements from different periods, found in caves, cemeteries, architectural remnants, and foundations. These recorded findings indicate that Manzikert was not only important in the context of the war fought in the 11th century, but it also held significance as a key settlement site throughout history.

Keywords: *Manzikert, Afşin, Battlefield Archaeology, Seljuks, Byzantine*

Öz

Malazgirt Tarihinden Bir Parça: Afşin Arkeolojik Yüzey Araştırması 2023

Malazgirt Savaş Alanının Tespiti, Tarihi ve Arkeolojik Yüzey Araştırması, Türkiye'de savaş arkeolojisi alanında devam eden en kapsamlı projelerden biri olarak kabul edilmektedir. Projenin temel amaçları, savaş alanının coğrafi sınırlarını bilimsel yöntemlerle belirlemenin yanı sıra, Malazgirt şehrinin tarihsel kimliğini somut arkeolojik verilerle ortaya koymak ve bölgenin tarihsel süreç içerisindeki çok katmanlı kültürel yapısını anlamaktır. Bu çerçevede, ilçeye bağlı Afşin Mahallesi ve çevresinde 11. yüzyıla tarihlenen iskelet kalıntılarının tespit edilmesini takiben, 2023 yılında bölgedeki ilk yoğunlaştırılmış yüzey araştırması gerçekleştirilmiştir. Saha çalışmalarında,

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farklı dönemlere ait geçici yerleşim izleri, mağaralar, mezarlık alanları, mimari yapı kalıntıları ve yapı taşları tespit edilmiştir. Kayıt altına alınan buluntular, Malazgirt'in sadece 11. yüzyıldaki savaş bağlamında değil, tarih boyunca önemli bir yerleşim alanı olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır.
Anahtar Kelimeler: *Malazgirt, Afşin, Savaş Alanı Arkeolojisi, Selçuklular, Bizans*

Introduction: The Historical Background of Manzikert and Its Surroundings

Archaeological excavations in the Manzikert district have revealed that the region functioned as a densely populated settlement and a cultural area throughout different periods of history. Evidence suggests that the city's origins trace back to the Late Chalcolithic Age. Pottery fragments from the Late Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age have been uncovered across many of the mounds in Manzikert. Notably, artifacts from this era, particularly sherds associated with the Karaz Culture, stand out. Distinctive double-colored sherds unique to this culture, and other items in brown, grey, and black, are commonly found. All ceramics were handcrafted, typically featuring smooth and well-burnished surface. Mounds such as Nurettin, Adaksu, Çad, Bahçe, Konakkuran, and Adalar 2 within Manzikert preserve evidence of the Early Transcaucasian/Karaz Culture. On the other hand, findings from the Middle Bronze Age are quite limited. To date, only a few polychrome sherds from this period have been discovered in the Nurettin and Güzelbaba Mounds in Manzikert. The mounds, forts, and graves found in Manzikert indicate that the region was an important settlement center throughout the Iron Age. Among the pottery recovered are Early Iron Age sherds with incised and grooved decorations on the rims and shoulders. In addition, sherds dating to the Middle Iron Age with brick-red slip, well-burnished surfaces, and glossy Bianili ceramics are particularly noteworthy. Specifically, mounds such as Dolabaş, Güleç, İyi Komşu, Aktuzla, Uyanık, and Abo (Gele Abo) contain abundant archeological artefacts from the Iron Age. Apart from the mounds, Bostankaya Fortress stands out as one of the administrative centers of the region in the Kingdom of Urartu. The well-burnished and Bianili ceramics recovered there also support this. Moreover, pottery fragments from the Urartian Period were also found in Tıkızlı, Hazintepe, Yeniköy, Dereboğaz, and Kılıççı forts. Additionally, the presence of necropolises and graves further attests to the density of the population and extent of settlement activities in the region. In addition to the architectural characteristics and surrounding pottery, structures such as underground masonry graves and rock-cut tombs provide great insight into the cultural and social structure of the Urartian Kingdom. Another example of this is the structure of the graves in the Afşin (Kıfrî) neighborhood. All of these findings indicate that Manzikert was a strategically, economically, and culturally significant center connected to the West during the Iron Age, especially in the Kingdom of Urartu.[1]

In the Antiquity and especially the Late Antiquity, Manzikert was considered a part of Armenia, and the Armenian dynasties that ruled there were mostly overshadowed by the Roman-Sasanian struggle. This has hindered a complete understanding of the

[1] Biber 2015a, p. 171-182; 2015b, p. 335-360; 2016, p. 3501-3520; Biber et al. 2012, p. 86-98; Işıklı 2011, p. 50-66; Özfirat 2000, p. 123-124; Burney 1957, p. 51-52; Burney, 1958, p. 161; Sevin 2004, p. 355-386.

borders in the region. Since Manzikert constituted the transition line between the Roman and Sasanian empires, it became the scene of a prolonged struggle of domination and, therefore, frequently changed hands between the two parties. The Roman Empire established stability in Mesopotamia in 363 with a treaty; however, this agreement did not resolve the sovereignty over the Armenian region in the north. The struggle between the Roman and Sasanian empires caused the Armenian communities in the region to sometimes support the Romans and at other times support the Sasanians. After the provocative policies adopted by the Sasanian Emperor Shapur II, the Romans advanced toward the Sasanians with a large army and achieved several brief victories. Following these successes, a treaty was signed between the Romans and the Sasanians in 387, during the reign of Roman Emperor Theodosius I. According to this treaty, two-thirds of the Armenian region was granted to the Sasanians, and the remaining one-third was granted to the Romans. The Romans took over the Christianized lands due to the religious structure in the region and consolidated their political influence. As a result of this treaty, the eastern borders of the Roman Empire expanded, and this territorial growth continued to accelerate from that point onward. In 591, Khosrow II, who was overthrown in the civil unrest in the Sasanian Empire, sought refuge in the Byzantine Empire and asked for help from Emperor Maurice. Khosrow, who was aided in his takeover of the throne by the Byzantine Empire, agreed to give vast lands in the Armenian region to the emperor in exchange. Hence, the Empire took over the lands to the east of the Batman Stream and the Tigris River, once again. This treaty was the last major border agreement between the Roman Empire and the Sasanians. However, after the death of Emperor Maurice, the eastern borders of the Roman Empire were thrown into chaos, and the Sasanian armies began raiding the Byzantine Empire. These developments led to extensive border changes, which helped Manzikert and its surrounding region to be annexed to the Roman Empire.[2]

In the middle of the 7th century, the Sasanian Empire collapsed, and Muslim Arabs became the new rival of the Byzantine Empire in the east. As a result, Muslims advanced into the Armenian region. After the exploration expedition conducted during the reign of Caliph Umar, Ḥabīb ibn Maslama was appointed to conquer the Armenia region by the order of Mu'awiya, the governor of Syria during the reign of Caliph Uthman. In 653, Ḥabīb advanced as far as Kalîkalâ (Erzurum), managed to defeat the Byzantine forces, captured some land around Lake Van, including Ahlat, and advanced into Dvin and captured the city as well. After Muslims became a prominent political power in the region, the Armenia region became a battlefield between the Muslims and the Byzantine Empire, and the cities, especially those closer to the border, changed hands many times between the two sides. Finally, during the Umayyad period, Armenia became a province under the province of al-Jazira, but later it was separated, became independent, and became known by this name to Muslims.[3] However, unlike the Upper Tigris Basin, an intensive Arab settlement policy was not pursued in this region. Although it is known that small groups

[2] Dodgeon and Lieu 1991, p. 16-17; Maksymiuk 2015, p. 29-32; Blockley 1992, p. 6; Dignas and Winter 2007, p. 90-94.
[3] Streck 1988, p. 317-326; Bonner 1992, p. 5-31.

of Arabic tribes occasionally settled in the Armenian region, these populations were ruled by the local Armenian princes, under the command of a governor assigned by the Umayyad. Following the fall of the Umayyad, the policies that seemed to continue in the Abbasid period went on until the revolt of the Armenian princes in 771. However, after Abbasids brutally suppressed the revolt led by the Mamikoneans from the Armenian principalities, a large Arab population settled in Armenia. Qays Arabs, who are known to belong to the Banu Sulaym tribe, influenced the region at this period and, by taking advantage of the political circumstances of the time, they managed to establish an emirate based in Manzikert, which lasted for one and a half centuries, until the Hamdanid period.[4]

The presence of the Hamdanids in Manzikert and its surrounding areas were brief; Georgian and Byzantine activities helped the Byzantine Empire to re-take the region. In 966, following the occupation of Taron and fortification of the city of Karin in 1018, the Byzantine Empire was more active in the borders of Armenia at the beginning of the 11th century. After the establishment of the *Theme of Iberia* following the successful campaigns of Basil II against the Georgians, King Hovhannes-Smbat of Ani grew alarmed. Fearing that his lands might be seized by the Byzantine Empire, he sent a letter to Constantinople in early 1022, offering the keys of Ani to the emperor. They signed a treaty in which Basil granted the Georgian king the right to control his kingdom until his death and demanded a written treaty stating that following his death, the kingdom would be annexed to the Byzantine Empire. Indeed, this was what happened. Following the death of King Hovhannes-Smbat of Ani in 1025, the Byzantine Empire annexed the Taron region, the *Theme* of *Iberia*, the Apahunik region based in Manzikert, and the other cities on the northern side of Lake Van and occupied Vaspurakan.[5]

Turks became the new rivals of the Byzantine Empire in the east, and Manzikert rose as a border between the two parties for the last time since the 11th century. Seljuk Turks, who achieved state status with their victory against the Ghaznevids in 1040, turned their attention westward and set out for Anatolia to establish it as their new home. Since the beginning of the 11th century, Turkish commanders conducted regular campaigns in Anatolia and thus gained important victories, and, benefiting from the political distress the Byzantine Empire was in, the Turks took the upper hand in the region. In the Battle of Basiani, fought in 1048, the Turks severely defeated the Empire and besieged Manzikert for three months in 1054. The two most significant key points holding the eastern border of the Byzantine Empire were Ani and Manzikert. After losing Ani in 1064, Manzikert became more important for the empire. However, although the Empire displayed its full resistance, its severe defeat in 1071 opened the gates of Anatolia to the Turks.[6]

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[4] Porphyrogenitus 2020, p. 119-122; Drasxanakertcʿi 1987, p. 116; Ter-Ghevondyan 1976, p. 34; Theophanes 1997, p. 447; Vardan 1989, p. 182; Grousset 2005, p. 318-319; Canard 1948, p. 77-94.

[5] Honigmann 1970, p. 166; Dedeyan 2015, p. 235; Shepard 1975-6, p. 292-295; Holmes 2005, p. 101; Uzun 2023, p. 98.

[6] Çevik 2024 p. 49-68; Sütcü 2024, p. 187-218; Uzun 2021, p. 202-210; Ayönü 2014, p. 38-55.

Manzikert, which was a developed garrison until the Turkish conquest,[7] was known as *"Manavazakerte, Manavazkert"* in Armenian records and as *"Manazcird"* in Arabic records.[8] Manzikert, which stood out due to its military and strategic significance in Roman-Persian, Byzantine-Arabic, and lastly Byzantine-Turk conflicts, lost its reputation after the Turks reached western Anatolia, and could not regain its previous significance. The city, which was later ruled by the Anatolian Seljuks, Ilkhanids, Qara Qoyunlus, Aq Qoyunlus, and Safavids, respectively, finally became a part of the Ottoman Empire.[9] Although the Ottomans defeated the Safavids in 1514 and controlled a large portion of today's Eastern Anatolia, Manzikert was only captured by Suleiman the Magnificent between 1533 and 1535 during his Iraqain campaign. With the transformation of Erzurum into a province, Melazgird took its place in the administrative division as a sub-district of Hınıs Sanjak.[10] Later, Manzikert became an independent sanjak of Erzurum province in 1560. Until the 17th century, Manzikert was governed by administrators appointed by the central authority; from then onward, it was under the control of prominent local tribes and beys (lords) under the *"yurtluk-ocaklık"* land tenure system. Manzikert, which was part of Erzurum until the 19th century, continued to be an administrative unit of Muş, Bitlis, and even Van provinces after the 19th century. Manzikert, which was under Bitlis province until the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, turned into a kaza (sub-province administrative unit) of this province, and has remained unchanged until today.[11]

The Methodology of Survey

The Battle of Manzikert was fought between the Byzantine Emperor Romanos IV Diogenes and the Seljuk Sultan Alparslan on 26 August 1071, and it concluded with an absolute victory for the Seljuks, which led to a critical turning point in the Turkification process of Anatolia. Historically speaking, although this battle was defined as *"the war that opened the gates of Anatolia to Turks"*, academic research has mainly focused on the political consequences of this event, and sufficient archaeological and anthropological research has not been conducted on the geography of the battle and its tactical development. To fill in this gap in the literature, the project titled *"The Detection, History and Archaeological Survey of the Manzikert"* was initiated in 2020 with the support of the Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Culture and Tourism General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums, the presidency of the Ahlat Museum Directorate and the scientific consultancy of Prof. Dr. Adnan Çevik. The project aims to identify the area where the battle took place, clarify its geographical borders, and support the historical process with concrete data. This project, which stands out as one of the most extensive battlefield archeological studies, embodies the cooperation of specialists from different fields, aims to unearth the historical identity of Manzikert, and reveal the spatial traces of the battle

[7] Sütcü 2022, p. 313-330.
[8] Büchner and Darkot 1970, p. 239-241; Hillenbrand 1991, p. 243-244.
[9] Arık 2016, p.249-275.
[10] BOA, MAD, d. 22171, p. 15.
[11] Teşkîlât-ı Mülkiyye 1928, p. 430; Kütükoğlu 2012, p. 147.

through scientific methods. In this context, it focuses on material proof of human loss and metal findings through surveys and archeological excavations.

First, the historical sources and modern literature were examined, then the site where the battle took place and conflicting regions, deployment areas of the armies, possible headquarters, areas suitable for ambush, and water resources that might have impacted the course of the battle were determined, and locals were questioned to confirm the collected information. Remote sensing techniques and geophysical methods were simultaneously used on a 150 km^2 field, and a database integrated into the geographical information systems (CBS) was created. Moreover, unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) imagery was used to map and detail areas exhibiting the traces of war, and prioritized survey areas were identified.

During these surveys, the first of which began in Ziyaret Tepe, located on the east side of the Manzikert Plateau and known as Grebido in 2020, Muslim graves were discovered, and similar masonry graves were seen in the Afşin neighborhood in 2021 as well. This location, situated 7 km southeast of Manzikert, is important for a couple of reasons in terms of the archeological field survey. Afşin, which appears to have been an ancient Armenian settlement, is located right in the middle of the site, which is considered to be the battlefield. This settlement, which appears to have a rich cultural background, is known locally as *"Kıfrî"* and continues to be referred to by this name in Kurdish. Probably, the name of this settlement was derived from the word *"küfr-kafir-kefere"* (infidel), referring to non-Muslim Armenians, later transformed into Kıfrî. Although there were many old chamber tombs, rock-cut graves, and stones with cross engravings from various periods, there were also numerous burials that seemed to be *"Muslim graves"*, similar to the examples in Grebido, which is contradictory to its name. This possibility is further strengthened by the fact that local people reported finding *"stones inscribed in Arabic"* in the region. Another element that makes this settlement important is that there was no information about the region in historical records. The village called *"Selçûk Viran"* (سلجوق ويران), which is mentioned in the *"Mufassal"* and *"İcmâl"* books of Manzikert sanjak, dated 1566–1574, whose location is unknown today, can be related to this settlement. The fact that no records refer to this village among Armenian settlements also supports the concept that *Kıfri* and *Selçûk Viran* may be the same place. Furthermore, it is highly likely that the body of water mentioned both in the narration of Attaleiates,[12] who was the only witness of the war, and in the Islamic sources,[13] is Kıfrî Stream, which flows through the southern part of the region. It should also be noted that the stream is located in the direction of historical Ahlat-Patnos-Manzikert.

With the field survey conducted in the Afşin neighborhood, it was aimed to determine the connections between the region and war, search for traces of the community that used the Afşin cemetery between the 11th and 12th centuries, and record the numerous cultural materials from different periods. The Afşin surface survey conducted in line with these objectives, consisted of three steps: planning, application, and evaluation. Mapping the topography of the survey field, supplying the required equipment

[12] Attaleiates 2018, p. 287
[13] al-Isfahānī 2019, p. 218-219; Ibn al-ʿAdīm 1996, p. 176-180.

and expert researchers, and determining the most suitable time frame for the field survey were the essential elements of the planning process.

The cemetery area in the Afşin neighborhood, where excavations are still going, is located at 39°4′50.93″ N, 42°35′36.53″ E coordinates. First, the area to be surveyed was defined by setting boundaries at a distance of 1 km to the east, west, north, and south directions, with the cemetery in the center. While determining the geographical borders of the survey, *"MipaTek"* software was used, and the margin of error was minimized by precisely determining coordinates on the corners of the border. Then, the survey area was separated into grid squares according to the grid system in compliance with the intensive field survey. These four equal-sized points, named A, B, C, and D, were separated into 25 m of lines walked at 5 m intervals. Prior to beginning the survey, the General Directorate of Mapping (HGM) Küre software was utilized both in the creation of the grid system and in determining the details of the research area. The indices were examined, and the location names were determined from 1/25,000 maps. In the planning process, in addition to the topographic map of the region, suitable orthophotography prints were obtained for the field survey using Agisoft Metashape software on the aerial images captured via UAVs. A unique survey form was generated for the Afşin neighborhood field survey, considering the unique conditions of the region (See Apx 1). Settlements and findings uncovered during the survey were recorded with the number: Afs-Srv-(Plan square X)No, and the obtained data were added to the QGIS software. A Garmin Etrex 32x GPS device was used throughout the research to obtain coordinates from the determined points. Versatile visuals of these points and areas to be documented were recorded using cameras and UAVs. After preparing the necessary equipment and infrastructure, the survey was conducted with an expert team and two local guides from the village (See Apx 2).

Discussion

During the Afşin neighborhood field surveys, a total of 27 forms, four for area A, three for area B, two for area C, and eighteen for the findings or settlements inside the village, were filled out. Cultural materials, settlements, caves, and cemeteries found in the area that refer to different historical periods were documented. Research began at grid square A, situated on the left side at the entrance to the Afşin neighborhood from the Manzikert direction, and then continued at grid square B, situated on the northern part of the cemetery site. Area C, which is topographically situated higher compared to the other areas of the field survey, was located in the southeast of the Afşin cemetery area. The field survey conducted with prior knowledge obtained via orthophotography showed that the location was not quite suitable for settlements. More than half of grid square D, which constituted the final area of the Afşin neighborhood field survey, was inside a settlement area. No settlements or cultural materials were found in the field survey conducted on the designated boundaries. In this study, which utilized detailed field survey methods, the data obtained from separate studies conducted on four different areas were evaluated within the framework of Afşin neighborhood's cultural past as a whole. Throughout the study, cultural entities, such as settlements, cemeteries, architectural structures, stone works, and caves, were recorded (See Apx 3).

1. Settlements

1.1. Afs-Srv-A-04

Coordinates: 39°4′5849″ N, 42°35′16.38″E

The settlement area in the Afşin neighborhood developed along Kıfrî Stream, the region's sole water source. Temporary settlements found around the stream clearly indicate the importance of Kıfrî Stream for the region, and for the first time, this could be documented with the field survey conducted in this study. In this context, as shown in grid square A, three temporary settlements were discovered in areas by Kıfrî Stream. The first temporary settlement, coded as Afs-Srv-A-04, is located on the right bank of Kıfrî Stream according to the water's flowing direction. In different sections of this 100 × 100 m area, which did not have any architectural elements and is used as a field today, pottery fragments were discovered, which were mostly used to carry liquids. These findings were documented in the field and left in the same area again. Sherds found in the area consisted of three handle pieces, one rim revealing a partial profile of the item, and ten other amorphous materials. All of the ceramics appear to have been made on a fast-spinning pottery wheel, using beige clay. Linear and triangular printed motifs embellished the top of one of these pieces. According to preliminary assessments, these ceramics have been dated to the 1st millennium BCE, although this is not definitive. Although the other two settlement sites have size and characteristics similar to Afs-Srv-A-04, the pottery pieces here were so small in number that dating could not be done.



Fig 1. Drone image of the temporary settlement area and its surroundings (The Manzikert Project Archive 2023)



Fig 2. Pottery fragments recovered from the temporary settlement (The Manzikert Project Archive 2023)

1.2. Afs-Srv-B-02

Coordinates: 39°5′8.90″ N, 42°35′47.49″ E

One of the settlements found in grid square B of the field survey is the area named *"Hacı Yakup Tarlası"* and coded as Afs-Srv-B-02, which is situated on the left side of the road entering the Afşin neighborhood from the direction of Manzikert. This area, which is used as a field today, had barely any architectural elements. Here, small architectural stones were encountered, scattered, and did not display any discernible arrangement. In the settlement site, a few red-surfaced sherds, a glazed sherd, and a sherd of a vessel with horizontal-vertical incision decoration were found. According to preliminary observations, a green-glazed sherd with vertical stripes was dated to the Seljuk period and later. Considering its proximity to the cemetery area, it is clear that the Hacı Yakup Tarlası settlement is worth a more detailed examination.



Fig 3. Aerial view of Afşin from the Hacı Yakup settlement (The Manzikert Project Archive 2023)



Fig 4. Pottery fragments including glazed Seljuk ceramics (The Manzikert Project Archive 2023)

1.3. Afs-Srv-B-03 (Rızda Tepe)

Coordinates: 39°5′8.08″ N, 42°36′11.86″ E

A settlement area called *"Rızda Tepe"* on the northeast of the Afşin neighborhood, neighboring the Gülkoru neighborhood, was coded as Afs-Srv-B-03. The word *"Rızda(h)"*, which gives the settlement in grid square B its name, means *"ten stacked stones"* or *"lock"* among the locals. Rızda Tepe, which is approximately 10 m higher than the plateau and consists of other areas scattered around it, is situated on the road between Gülkoru and Afşin villages, overlooking both places. Stacked stones were found in the southwest and northern slopes of the hill, and this area almost seems like it is serving as a watcher area, checking those entering and exiting the Afşin neighborhood. The circumference of the cliff, which can be considered as a temporary outpost or a checkpoint, stretches 100 m in the north-south direction and 50 m in the east-west direction. Several areas that give the impression of grave structures have been identified on the surface at the base of the rocky outcrop, where head and footstones are visible. The settlement area of Rızda Tepe and its surroundings is noteworthy as it is located on an important route that provides passage between the Afşin and Gülkoru neighborhoods.



Fig 5. General view of the Rızda Tepe settlement (The Manzikert Project Archive 2023)

1.4. Afs-Srv-Ki-08 (Mound)

Coordinates: 39°4′35.95″ N, 42°35′32.05″ E

A 100 × 200 m settlement was found inside the garden of Mr. Mehmet Sıddık Arslan, which is inside the current borders of the Afşin neighborhood. Studies conducted

in the area showed many potteries, architectural structure elements, and architectural settlement objects, which were later recorded. The pottery consists of amorphous pieces containing common minerals. A 45 cm stone mortar, believed to have been used in the settlement, was discovered during the field survey. The object is used as a spoila by the owner of the property. Additionally, another architectural colon fragment, 45 cm high and 50 cm wide, is used as spoila.



Fig 6. A basalt mortar or pestle (on the left) a basalt architectural element (on the right) (The Manzikert Project Archive 2023)

2. Graves and Cemeteries

2.1. Afs-Srv-C-01 (Afşin Rock-cut Masonry Chamber Tomb 1)

Coordinates*:* 39°4′34.55″ N, 42°35′49.22″ E

Under the work conducted in grid square C, a structure created by shaving down natural rocks at an altitude of 1690 m and identified as a rock-cut tomb, was named *"Afşin Rock-cut Masonry Chamber Tomb 1"*, and coded as Afs-Srv-C-01. This structure, located approximately 500 m southeast of the Afşin neighborhood cemetery excavation area and within the borders of the neighborhood, was also documented by another group during a field survey in 2010.[14] The façade of the chamber tomb, which is damaged by illegal excavation activities, is accessible through a 5 m long and 1.5 m wide *dromos*. The entrance of the chamber tomb is located in a northwest-southeast direction. The depth of the shaved rock on the façade is approximately 80 cm, and it is estimated to stretch as

[14] Biber 2016, p. 3501-3520.

much as 2 m downward. A dense dirt filling accumulated in the entrance over time. Pottery fragments were discovered in the examinations conducted around the tomb. These findings show similarities to previous research, and this rock-cut tomb can be dated back to the Urartian period, considering its construction technique and the presence of ceramics inside. No other graves or settlements were found except for the rock-cut tomb in the field survey of area C.



Fig 7. A rock-cut chamber tomb thought to have been disturbed or looted multiple times (The Manzikert Project Archive 2023)

2.2. Afs-Srv-Ki-04 (Underground Chamber Grave)

Coordinates: 39°4′34.71″ N, 42°35′26.78″ E

A structure located right next to a mill and known as a grave by the locals in the Afşin neighborhood was discovered. This underground structure with stone masonry on the left and right walls appears to be a vaulted chamber tomb, which is covered with two rows of cover slabs. The grave, located underground at the Ada site of Afşin neighborhood, on the left bank of the Kıfrî Stream (relative to the flow direction), measures 3 m east-west and 130 cm north-south internally, and was destroyed by illegal excavations. There are other similar grave structures adjacent to the chamber grave coded as Afs-Srv-Ki-04, which is visible from ground level and various points across the village. No cultural materials were found around the grave, and it is thought to belong to the Roman period due to its building technique and typological features.



Fig 8. A basalt-built underground chamber tomb within the village, thought to have been damaged several times (The Manzikert Project Archive 2023)

2.3. Afs-Srv-Ki-13 (Single Grave)

Coordinates: 39°4′50.89″ N, 42°35′29.98″ E

In the Afşin neighborhood, which appeared to have a long history of settlements, judging by the cultural materials discovered, another structure known as the *"Single Grave"*, which is outside the cemetery area and is visited by the locals, was recorded. This grave, which is close to the mosque 50 m west of the neighborhood center and is located in the garden of a house, is 2 × 3 meters in size and is surrounded by seven stones. This grave is known as the *"single martyr grave"* both on the map and by the locals.



Fig 9. A grave surrounded by stones to form a circular shape, believed by locals to belong to a Muslim martyr (The Manzikert Project Archive 2023)

2.4. Afs-Srv-Ki-06 (Cemetery Site)

Coordinates: 39°4′33.57″ N, 42°35′37.93″ E

It was found that an area of 100 × 100 m in size inside a house's garden in the eastern border of the Afşin neighborhood was used as a cemetery. The presence of a basalt monolithic grave capstone and other flat stones, as well as human skeletal remains in the garden, indicates that the area in question was used as a cemetery. Moreover, the house owner stated that they found many human bones during the construction of the house and that they collected and buried them elsewhere. Although no absolute data can be found regarding the date of this grave by evaluating the grave's capstones, one of the burial traditions found in the area is thought to have come from the chest tomb tradition.

2.5. Afs-Srv-Ki-09 (Pithos Grave)

Coordinates: 39°4′39.51″ N, 42°35′31.55″ E

Another ancient cemetery area discovered within the neighborhood's borders during the field survey was located inside Mr. Mehmet Sıddık Arslan's garden. In this area, which is found on sloping land measuring 70 × 100 m, an example of *pithos* grave tradition was found in line with the information provided by the landowner and observations. Thick-walled *pithos* sherds with dense mineral tempering were found in the area. This area, as one of the earliest cemeteries in the region, is probably related to the settlement coded as Afs-Srv-Ki-08, which is very close in distance and belongs to the same landowner.

2.6. Afs-Srv-Ki-14 (Cemetery Site)

Coordinates: 39°4′54.60″ N, 42°35′31.03″ E

The other cemetery site found in the Afşin neighborhood is situated on the right side of the road while entering the neighborhood from the Manzikert direction, on a relatively rocky and stony ground. The majority of the graves, which are surrounded by small and medium-sized stones, stretch in the east-west direction. This area is approximately 150 × 150 m in size and is used for husbandry today. The direction of the graves, the building technique used, and the information gathered from local sources indicate that the area is an old Armenian cemetery.

2.7. Afs-Srv-Ki-02 (Cemetery Site)

Coordinates: 39°4′29.39″ N, 42°35′29.53″ E

Another cemetery used today within the borders of the neighborhood is the Bozarslan Cemetery. This cemetery, which is approximately 40 years old, measures 15 × 20 m and is enclosed by stones. This area, where members of the Bozarslan family are buried, has been documented as a secondary cemetery, in addition to the existing village graveyard adjacent to the Afşin excavation site.

3. Architectural Structure and Building Blocks

3.1. Afs-Srv-Ki-17 (Architectural Structure)

Coordinates: 39°4′46.30″ N, 42°35′37.81″ E

An architectural structure just to the south of the Afşin Cemetery Excavation Area, beside the old Ahlat road, located on a relatively high and rocky terrain, was recorded. This building, which is used as a hayloft by the villagers, is approximately 20 × 25 m in size, and its foundations are visible. The fact that it is located on the edge of the Old Ahlat road (also known as the Russian road) passing through the village, the statements of local sources, and the basic features of the building support the view that it was used as an inn. However, due to the changes in the structure over time, it is not possible to conclude with certainty that it was used as an inn in the past.

3.2. Afs-Srv-Ki-01

Coordinates: 39°4′20.02″ N, 42°35′34.59″ E

There is a rocky surface in the southeast of the Afşin neighborhood, on the old Russian road, which is also used today, on the natural rocky area, 2 m high and 1.20 m wide. A faint double-cross engraving is visible on the surface of this shaved rock, whose side facing the village road has been flattened. The size of the cross above it is 20 × 25 cm and is forked from both the right and left, and the one below it is 10 × 10 cm and is connected to it. By the first impression, it is safe to say that this type of cross is used by Orthodox Christians.

3.3. Afs-Srv-Ki-10 (Architectural Building Blocks)

Coordinates: 39°4′42.27″ N, 42°35′33.75″ E

It is noteworthy that there are basalt block stones with motifs at different points of the Afşin neighborhood center. One of which was found next to the base station at the center of the settlement. This stone, which is not *in situ*, must have been carried here from somewhere else. It is seen that a cross motif measuring 20 × 40 cm in size was engraved on a 130-cm-high and 40-cm-wide basalt block.

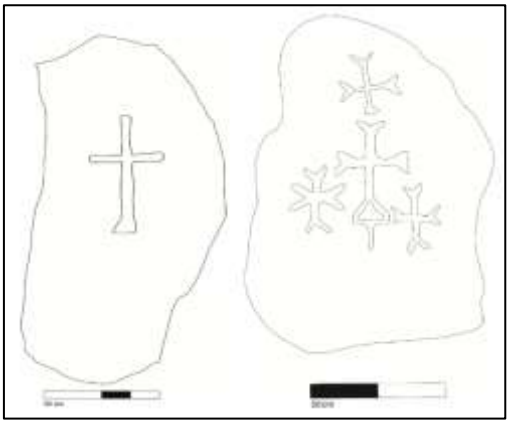


Fig 10. Drawings of architectural elements decorated with various cross motifs (The Manzikert Project Archive 2023)

3.4. Afs-Srv-Ki-11

Coordinates: 39°4′42.19″ N, 42°35′33.79″ E

In the same location as the stone artifact coded as Afs-Srv-Ki-10, right next to the base station, another basalt block that was not in its original position was discovered. 160 cm long, 90 cm wide, and 30 cm thick, this basalt block has a 30 × 70 cm cross motif with forked ends on its flattened surface.

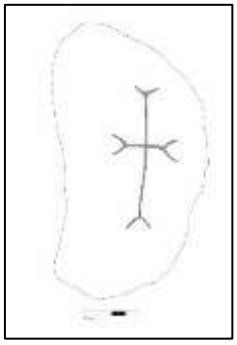


Fig 11. Drawing of an architectural element featuring a single engraved cross (The Manzikert Project Archive 2023)

3.5. Afs-Srv-Ki-15

Coordinates: 39°4′52.16″ N, 42°35′27.56″ E

Three architectural objects; one found on the right side of the neighborhood mosque, one found adjacent to the structure, known as "*single martyr grave"*, and one used as a spoila in the garden wall, were discovered. The first of which is a 40 × 40 cm embellishment area on the 160 × 170 cm basalt stone at the bottom of the wall. At the lower section of this area is a motif representing an architectural structure, and right on top is a finely engraved cross. Another stone, used in the same wall, is 70 × 100 cm in size. There is another 50 × 30 cm embezzlement area on the rock's surface, in the middle of this rock is a large cross and two smaller crosses on both sides. There are tulips or candelabra-like adornments on the ends of the crosses. The third and last spoila used on the same wall is 70 × 130 cm. Three crosses, 15 × 30 cm in size, were engraved on the surface of basalt stone.

Other than the three basalt stones, there are four other decorated basalt cover slabs scattered around different areas of the same region. The first of which is 40 × 80 cm in size and 30 cm thick. On the flat surface of the stone, there is a large 25 × 45 cm cross engraving. A 7 × 7 cm square motif was carved on the end of this cross. The ends of the cross are forked, and smaller crosses, 6 cm in size, were engraved on the left and right of the larger cross. The second one is 60 × 90 cm wide and 30 cm thick. On the flat surface of the basalt stone, 25 × 30 cm cross motifs were engraved with forked ends. The third architectural element's size is 60 × 65 cm, and its thickness is 20 cm. A cross motif measuring 18 × 20 cm, with flared arms, was carved onto the surface of the basalt stone. The last architectural element consists of engraved 50 × 80 cm motifs engraved on a 40 cm wide basalt rock. There are four cross motifs engraved on the stone. Their mean size is 10 × 15 cm, and all are forked at the ends. There is a 6 cm incision adjacent to the lower wing of the cross motif in the center of the stone, resembling a handle. The find, which was discovered as an isolated fragment among the architectural building stones, was used as spolia at the corner point of the stone building, which is currently used as a cellar, in the private property area in the center of the neighborhood. There is a 30 × 50 cm engraving area on the basalt stone inside the wall. There is a circular motif at the ends of this engraving.

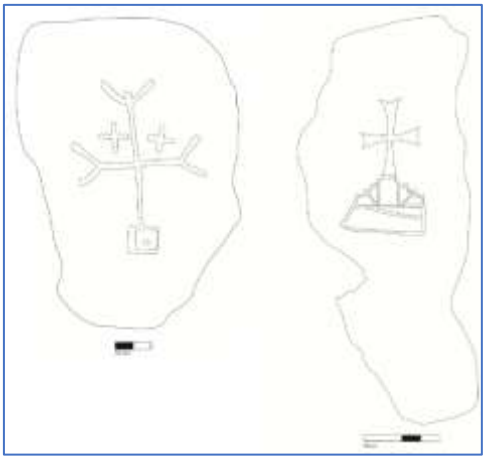


Fig 12: Architectural elements with a cross motif (The Manzikert Project Archive 2023)



Fig 13: A basalt stone currently used as a spolia architectural element, featuring a distinct cross motif (The Manzikert Project Archive 2023)

3.6. Afs-Srv-Ki-03 (Old Mill)

Coordinates: 39°4′29.75″ N, 42°35′23.64″ E

A mill was found in the grid built on a parent rock in plan D. The foundation level and the water channels of this building, which are located on the left side according to the flow direction of the Kıfrî Stream, can be clearly observed. A barricade is built on one side of the stream to carry water, and a 40 m long concave and sloping waterway was created by carving the parent rock. Graining points are located inside this waterway. A

small amount of amorphous ceramic fragments was also found in the area. The discovery of an old mill in the Afşin neighborhood provides clues about the history of agricultural production and economic activities in the region.

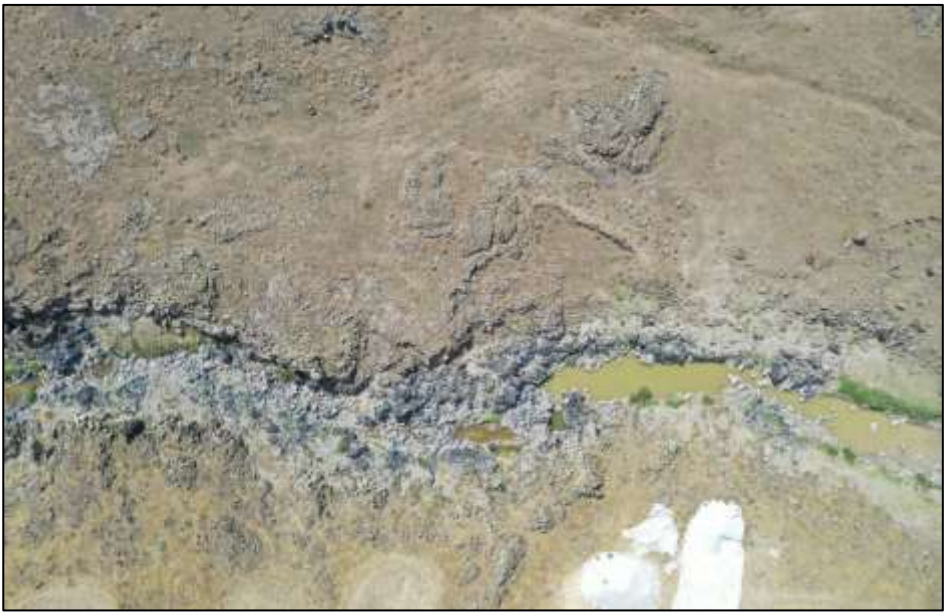


Fig 14. Drone image of the old mill located within the village, positioned west of the Kıfrî Stream (The Manzikert Project Archive 2023)

4. Caves

4.1. Afs-Srv-A-01

Coordinates*:* 39°5′18.61″ N, 42°35′18.18″ E

In the surveys conducted on grid square A, a cave was found situated in the area where Kıfrî Stream creates a wide delta, on the right side of the water flow. This cave is located approximately 200 m to the west of the road that leads to the Afşin neighborhood from Manzikert. The cave's entrance faces north, at an altitude of 1645 m. The width at the entrance is 4.30 m and the height is 2.20 m. It was not possible to enter the cave due to dense dirt accumulation; however, according to measurements done with a laser meter, the internal dimensions of the cave were calculated as approximately 10 × 10 m. It was stated by the locals that there used to be a figure on the parent rock located in the cave entrance; however, this figure was destroyed over time.



Fig 15. Cave structure located along the entrance road to Afşin neighborhood (The Manzikert Project Archive 2023)

4.2. Afs-Srv-Ki-12

Coordinates: 39°4′43.55″ N, 42°35′32.45″ E

The second cave found in the field survey is located in one of the highest points of the Afşin neighborhood, on the northwest slope of the rocky crest where the base station is placed. It was observed that the cave entrance and the path leading to the entrance were destroyed and used as a garbage dump. The path leading to the cave is approximately 10 m long, and the entrance appears to be vaulted. According to information obtained from local sources, the interior of the cave entrance contains structures divided into multiple chambers. In front of the cave, the fragments of architectural elements formed by the processing of basalt stones, which are currently not in use, further support this information. Considering the cultural history of the region, the cave is thought to have a connection to a belief-based structure. However, inside could not be examined due to intense damage and dense dirt accumulation.



Fig 16. Cave structure located in the center of the neighborhood, featuring a wide entrance (The Manzikert Project Archive 2023)

5. Small Findings

5.1. Afs-Srv-B-01 (Metal Find)

Coordinates: 39°5′22.78″ N, 42°35′37.27″ E

Guide square B contains a portion of the historical Adilcevaz-Ahlat road. During the field survey, two iron fragments made by forging were discovered in the area. While these pieces are still being analyzed, the said findings show characteristics that can be associated with carriages or harnesses. These pieces, which are known to have historical value in terms of their building techniques, were documented as the primary archeological proof that the historical road was used.



Fig 17. Metal object found along the historical Ahlat–Malazgirt road route, believed to be part of a harness (The Manzikert Project Archive 2023)

5.2. Afs-Srv-C-02 (Obsidian Tool)

Coordinates: 39°4′27.64″ N, 42°36′3.84″ E

In guide square C, an obsidian tool was found isolated at an altitude of 1680 m on a stony field. It was understood that this 3 cm long obsidian fragment with rough workmanship was used as a tip of another tool. Mount Süphan, the most significant volcanic formation in the region, is a natural resource for obsidian supply. The raw material of the said tool can be associated with this mountain.



Img 18. Retouched flake (broken) (The Manzikert Project Archive 2023)

Evaluation and Conclusion

Within the scope of the Manzikert Project, studies conducted since 2020 have yielded general data on the geographical and cultural history of the region, as well as findings related to the battlefield, including traces of the combat zone and human casualties. Archaeological information gathered from the excavations conducted in the cemetery in the Afşin neighborhood is exceptionally important among the other data. Since the graves of people who were buried here according to Islamic burial traditions dating back to the time of the war and immediately after, surveys concentrated more on Afşin and its surrounding region. By evaluating the data gathered from the excavations specific to the region, the main goals of the field surveys were to identify the relations between the cemetery and its surrounding area, primarily in the 11th and 12th centuries, and create a detailed cultural inventory of the region. In this respect, a research methodology in compliance with the requirements of the region's unique conditions and war archeology was adopted based on the fundamental principles of archeology. The related surveys were conducted with the participation of people from different disciplines and the support of modern methods and technologies. The equipment and documentation methods to be used were determined, and with the aid of previously prepared maps and orthophotos, a 1 km area in each direction was designated for detailed survey, with the cemetery area positioned at the center. The survey area was divided into four equal parts on the grid system, and the documentation and classification processes began. In the planning of the field survey, seasonal conditions and time frames were considered to identify the most efficient time possible. Late July, when agricultural activities in the

region are at a minimum, and the time with the best visibility is preferred as the time frame. Forms unique to this field survey, recorded interviews from local sources, and imagery taken from cameras and UAVs constituted the fundamental elements of the field survey documentation process. The obtained information and documents were transferred to the digital medium using suitable software.

Various material cultural elements, including temporary and permanent settlements from different periods, single graves and cemetery sites, caves, mills, architectural structures, and building blocks, were discovered during the Afşin neighborhood field survey, which is the most extensive field survey conducted in the region thus far. Among these, three settlements that are thought to have been used under agricultural activities were situated around Kıfrî Stream, which is the largest water source of the survey site. The fact that there were no architectural elements in its vicinity, being situated outside of a flood plain, and the pottery fragments with handles used to carry liquids indicate the *temporary* use of this area. Among these, the temporary settlement coded as Afs-Srv-A-04 stands out due to its organic-tempered beige pottery fragments dating to the 1st millennium BCE. The presence of many settlements and materials dating to this period in this region is also confirmed by other surveys.

One of the most outstanding sites encountered in the field survey was the settlement named Rızda Tepe, which is located at the border of Afşin-Gülkoru. This settlement, sitting on a natural rocky cliff and scattered around its slopes, is situated on a location overlooking the west, north, and south of the Manzikert Plateau at an altitude of 1700 m. Due to intense destruction, the architectural elements of the settlement are barely visible from the ground. However, only some of the grave structures located on the slopes could be discovered. Although no particular period appears dominant within the limited ceramic assemblage, the presence of a few sherds representative of the Iron Age and the 1st millennium CE has been observed. The settlement coded as Afs-Srv-B-02, located north of the Afşin cemetery site, covered approximately 0.202 ha of land. In various parts of the said site, many pottery fragments dating especially to the 1st millennium CE were discovered. The presence of glazed sherds referring to the Seljuk period and their closeness to the cemetery site suggests that this site might be the only settlement that was contemporary to the Afşin cemetery. Since the settlement area is used as a field today, various architectural elements might have been damaged over time. Future surveys can shed light on the relationship between the people buried in the Afşin cemetery site and the findings collected from this site. As can be seen in the Afs-Srv-Ki-08 example, settlements in the inhabited area were subjected to intense damage. In addition to the materials such as stone mortars that were used in daily activities, using architectural colon fragments as spoila by today's inhabitants reflects the extent of the said destruction.

Many locations that were utilized as single graves or areas used as cemetery sites were discovered during the field survey. Among these, the earliest example is the *"Afşin Rock-Cut Masonry Tomb"*, coded as Afs-Srv-C-01, which was also documented in previous research. Walls and *dromos* created by shaving the parent rock were partially visible due to intense destruction. The entrance to the grave was heavily damaged, and today, entry to the chambers is impossible. Pottery fragments found around the tomb and the architectural technique date back to the Urartian Period, as stated by previous surveys.

These findings raise important questions about the tomb, the individual buried there, and his/her social status. In surveys conducted inside the villages, a grave site that represents *pithos* grave tradition, especially from the 3rd and 2nd millennium BCE, was discovered. This shows that people had inhabited the area of the Afşin neighborhood since very early periods. Furthermore, the presence of underground vaulted masonry tombs dating back to the 1st millennium CE also indicates that the region had rich burial traditions. For thousands of years, burial grounds and settlement ruins from different periods and various burial traditions reveal that the Afşin neighborhood was inhabited by various cultural groups as a living space.

The small-scale structure, which is located about 100 m south of the Afşin cemetery excavation area on the old Ahlat road line, is considered to be one of the last settlement points before reaching Manzikert city center. This structure, which is used for different purposes by the locals today, was damaged over time and mostly lost its unique form. Many rocks with various symbols and engraved architectural building stones were documented in the survey conducted inside the village. The common characteristic of these stones, which are used by the locals as a part of the walls, or for mineral lick for animals scattered around, is that they have engraved surfaces and distinct lines. Considering their size and processing characteristics, it is understood that a large portion of these stones used to be a part of a larger architectural structure. These stone blocks adorned with various types of crosses and candelabra motifs indicate a possible religious structure nearby.

In addition to the settlements and cemetery sites, traces of a building that is thought to have been used as a mill and built on a natural rock by Kıfrî Stream were discovered during the surveys conducted inside the village. This find provides important data on the historical continuity of the agricultural activities in the Afşin neighborhood and the scale of development in the region's socioeconomic structure. Since the limited number of sherds collected around the mill is out of stratigraphical context, we cannot make a certain chronological determination about the structure.

Moreover, two caves were documented in the field survey; however, due to unfavorable physical conditions, a detailed survey could not be conducted inside these caves. On the other hand, cultural materials located in the entry section of the structure, representing human activities, were discovered. Many processed basalt stones discovered near the entry to the cave coded as Afs-Srv-Ki-12 and oral narrations gathered from the locals clearly show that this area was subject to human activities. It is known for a fact that closed natural structures, such as caves, have been used frequently for religious rituals throughout history. It is thought that this cave, located inside the village, had the same characteristics. Future detailed cleaning and archeological surveys will assist in gathering more concrete information about the purpose of this cave and reveal if the cave served as a place of accommodation, production, storage, or rituals.

The studies carried out to document the cultural inventory of the Afşin region within the scope of the Manzikert Project have achieved the objectives of the research in general terms. Under this scope, significant historical and archeological data were put forward regarding the settlements, burial traditions, and belief systems of the region since the 3rd millennium BCE. The presence of *pithos* graves, chamber tombs from the Urartian

period, underground vaulted chamber graves with characteristics of the Roman period, and architectural structure elements with Christian belief symbols display this historical variety. Furthermore, the cemetery site dating back to the 11th and 12th centuries, pottery of the same period, and structures such as a single martyr shed light on the cultural past of the region. This project, which is the most extensive field survey conducted in the region, has documented essential materials about the Battle of Manzikert and the general history of the region in light of the data collected, and has provided new scientific questions for future studies. These findings contribute to both bringing a more in-depth understanding of the region and directing future research.

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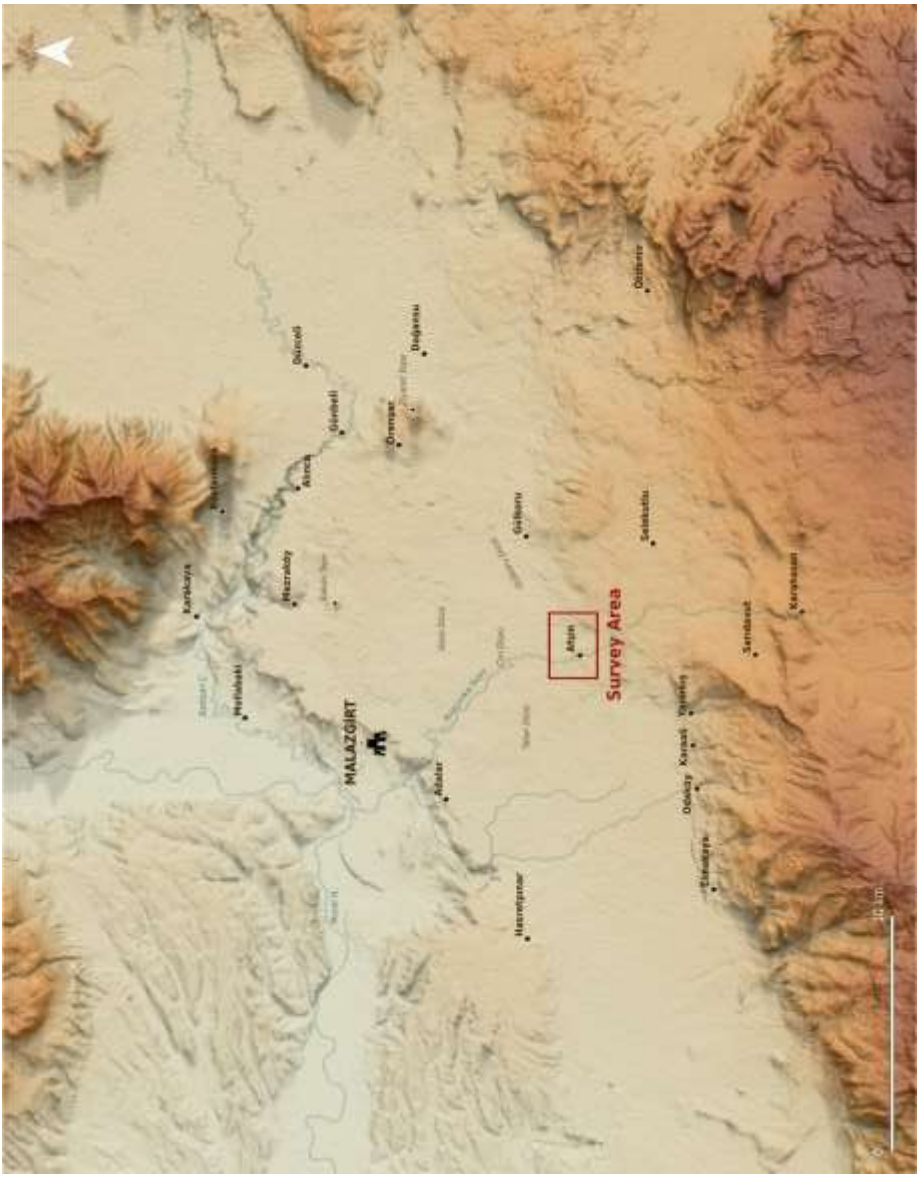
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APPENDICES

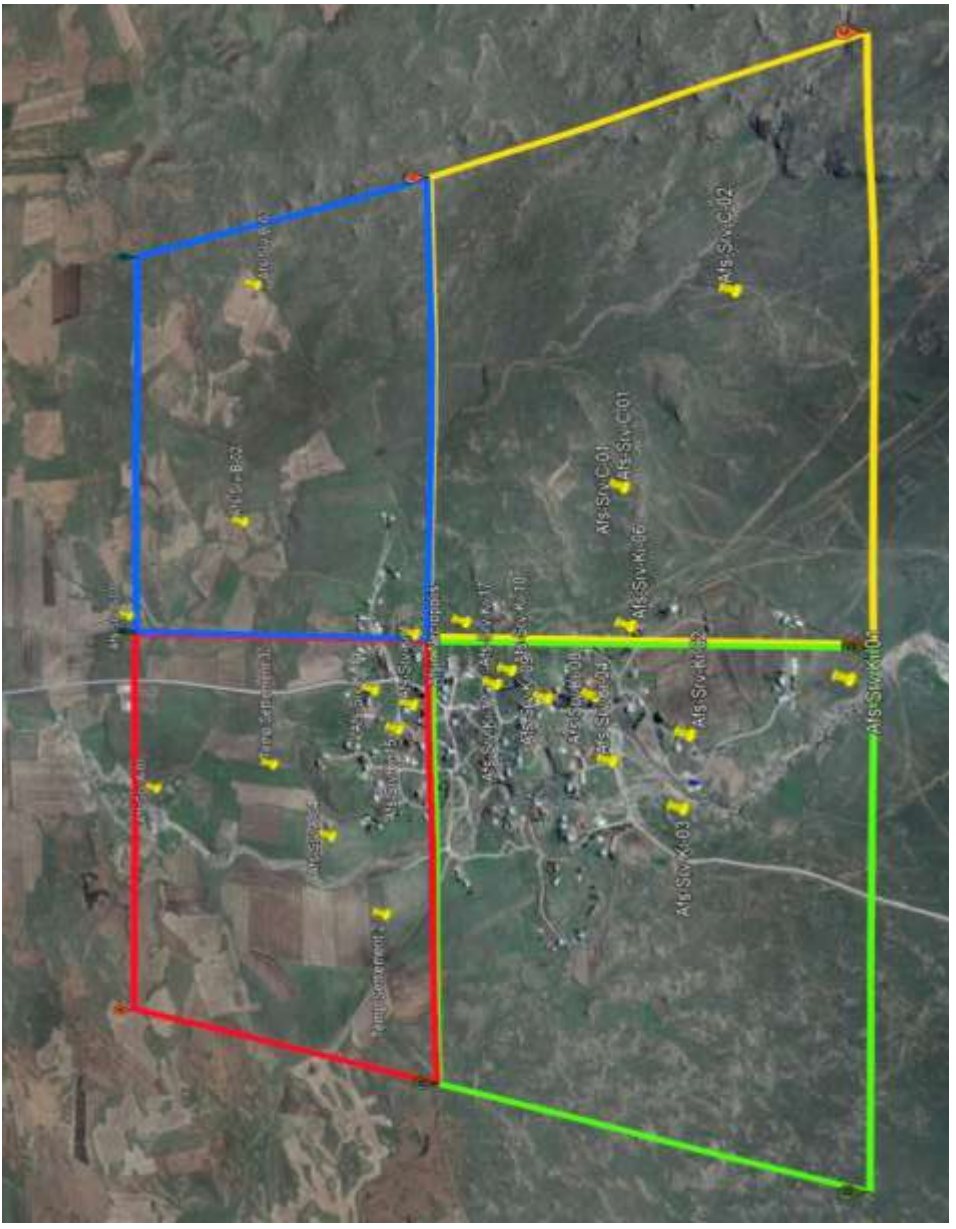
Apx 1. Survey Form Sample (The Manzikert Project Archive 2023)

The Manzikert Project
Afşin Neighborhood Survey 2023

Date:	**Survey Grid:**		**Drone Image No:**	
Coordinates:				**Altitude:**
Type of Settlement:	**Mound**	**Ruins**		**Cemetery**
	Fort	**Sacred Area**		**Single Grave**
	Other:			
Settlement Coordinates:		**Settlement Name:**		
Structures:	**Architectural**	**Wall**	**Burial**	**Single Structure**
	Other:			
Settlement Description, Characteristics, and Dimensions:				
Finds:	**Ceramic**	**Obsidian**	**Bone**	
	Metal	**Glass**	**Other:**	
Coordinates:			**Find Number:**	
Description and Characteristics of the Find:				
Field Observation:	**Field**	**Pasture**	**Rocky**	**Stony Area**	**Other:**
Status of Illicit Damage:	**Yes**			**No**
Oral History Audio Record No:				



Apx 2. Excavation and Archaeological Survey Areas (The Manzikert Project Archive 2023 – Arda Ürün).



Apx 3. Density map of Afşin Survey Area (The Manzikert Project Archive 2023 - Çağrı Sarıkaya)