

## Changes and Transformations in The Elazığ–Malatya Region in The Early Bronze Age: An Assessment Through Public Buildings

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### Abstract

*In archaeological literature, public buildings generally refer to administrative and/or religious structures located within the monumental fortifications of large upper settlements, serving a class of rulers or ruling elite. Public buildings were constructed to serve administrative, religious, or other social functions such as meetings, banquets, ceremonies, festivals, or as symbols of power. While the Elâzığ–Malatya Region is considered part of Eastern Anatolia culturally and politically, it was also a region with its internal dynamics in the Early Bronze Age. This study aims to discuss the architecture of public buildings in the Elâzığ–Malatya Region, their use, the tendencies of the rising ruling class reflected in this architecture and the social dynamics of the region in the Early Bronze Age from a holistic perspective. The region’s settlement pattern is analyzed, and the study is illustrated with maps and drawings. The results indicate that in the first half of the Early Bronze Age, when mobile groups dominated the region, there was social chaos. Stabilization began in the second half of the period. The elites emerging towards the end of this period, who ruled the settlements from public buildings named palaces, are considered to have been instrumental in this stability.*

**Keywords:** Early Bronze Age, Public Building, Elâzığ–Malatya Region, Upper Euphrates Region, Anatolia.

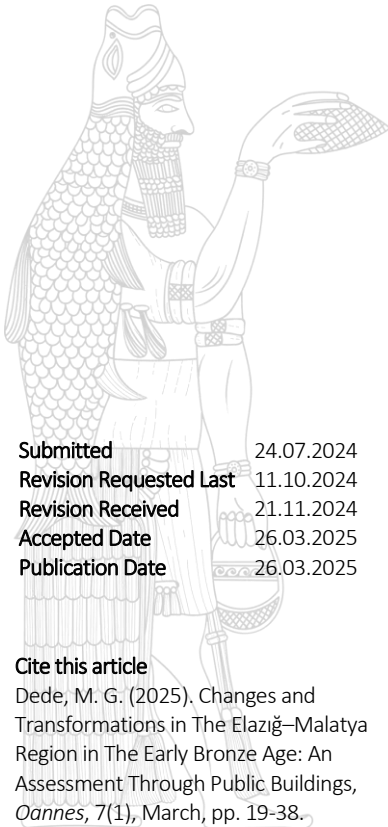
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## Genişletilmiş Özet

Arkeoloji ya da sosyal antropoloji yazınında karmaşık toplumlar veya erken devletlerin kökenlerini açıklamak için çeşitli modeller oluşturulmaya çalışılmış, tarihöncesi toplulukların olası yönetim biçimleri üzerine çeşitli sınıflandırmalar yapılmıştır. Bu sınıflandırmalar içerisinde toplumsal değişimin basamakları yorumlanırken yönetici sınıfın yönetim alanlarını oluşturan kamusal binalardaki çeşitli faaliyetler de değerlendirilmiştir. Bu bağlamda yöneticilere yani kamu yönetimini elinde bulunduran azınlığa ait binaların farklılaşma eğilimi göstermeye başladığı saptanmıştır. Kamu yönetimi bilgiyi tekelinde toplayan, üretimi kontrol eden ve pekiştiren yönetici sınıfın/seçkinlerin gücünün en önemli aracıdır ve tüm bu yönetsel işler kamusal yapılardan yürütülmektedir. Kamusal yapı kompleksleri gücün temsili; seçkinlerin yönetim ve iskân alanlarıdır. Kamusal yapılar bir yerleşimin merkezi gücüne işaret eder, dolayısıyla politik gücün temsili gösterir. Günümüzde kamu kelimesi ile akla ilk gelen devlet ve onunla ilintili resmî kurumlardır: Kamu görevlisi, kamu kuruluşları, kamu idaresi gibi...Günümüzde kamusal yapıları tanımlamak anlamlı içeriklerle sağlanabilir ancak Erken Tunç Çağı (ETÇ) kamusal yapıları için kısa, anlaşılır bir tanım yapabilmek ve bunu modern tanımlar ile eşleştirmek zordur. ETÇ kamusal binaları bir topluluğun idari, dini, sosyal ve ekonomik gereksinimlerini karşılamak üzere inşa edilmiş; özgün işlevi domestik olmayan yapı ya da yapılar bütünü olarak tanımlanabilir. Başka bir deyişle, idari ile yönetsel işlerin; dini ile ritüel, toplanma, şölen, tören gibi pratiklerin bu yapılardan yönetici elit ya da elitler tarafından yürütüldüğü anlamlarını kastettiğimizi belirtmeliyiz. Binaların kamusalılığı genellikle boyutları ve mimari olarak periferine göre merkezi bina olmalarından kaynaklanmaktadır. Temel tanımlayıcı özelliği, ölçeğinin ve detaylandırılmasının, bir binanın yerine getirmesi amaçlanan herhangi bir pratik işlevi aşmasıdır. Mimari ölçeği, iktidar ve seçkinlerin sosyal-politik kontrolüyle doğrudan ilişkili görmek kamusal yapı tanımında karşılaşılan en yaygın yorumlardan biridir. Binanın ölçeği, detayları ve birimleri hizmet edeceği nüfus sayısı ile doğru orantılı olabilir.

Elâzığ–Malatya– Bölgesi tarih öncesi dönemleri, baraj kurtarma kazıları ve uzun yıllardır devam eden Arslantepe verileri ile tanımlanmaktadır. Bölge'nin Geç Kalkolitik Dönem'den ETÇ sonuna kadar Erken Trans Kafkasya, Karaz ya da Kura–Aras olarak adlandırılan kültürün etkisi altında olduğu anlaşılmaktadır. Pastoral bir yaşam tarzını benimsemiş olan bu kültürün Trans Kafkasya, İran'ın kuzeyi, Doğu Anadolu Bölgesi ve Suriye–Levant Bölgesi'ne değin uzanan geniş bir coğrafi alana yayıldığı belirlenmiştir. Kura–Aras kültürünün kendine özgü mimarisi, insan yüzlü ocakları ve seramiği ETÇ'de bölgeye hâkim olmuştur. Bununla birlikte, ETÇ ortalarından itibaren yerel dinamiklerin de ortaya çıktığı; bölgeselleşmeye doğru giden değişikliklerin olduğu saptanmıştır.

Bu çalışma Elâzığ–Malatya Bölgesi'nde kamusal yapı mimarisi, kullanım amaçları, yükselen yönetici sınıfın bu mimariye yansıyan eğilimleri ve bölgenin ETÇ'de sosyal dinamiklerini bütüncül bir bakış açısı ile ele almayı amaçlamaktadır. Bununla birlikte MÖ 2. binyılda ortaya çıkacak olan yerel beyliklerin kökeninin ETÇ sonlarında oluşmaya başlayan siyasi istikrar ile ilişkisinin varlığını da sorgulamaktadır. Bu amaç doğrultusunda bölgenin yerleşim hiyerarşisi incelenmiş, haritalar ve çizimlerle çalışmanın daha anlaşılır hale gelmesi sağlanmıştır. Bu bağlamda Elâzığ–Malatya Bölgesi kültürünün ve kronolojisinin oluşturulmasında anahtar merkezler olan Arslantepe'de iki, İmamoğlu Höyük'te bir ve Norşuntepe'de birbiri üzerine inşa edilen üç kamusal yapı değerlendirilmiş, kullanım amaçlarına dair öneriler sunulmuştur. Ayrıca konunun diğer tamamlayıcı ayağı olan bölgenin yerleşim hiyerarşisi Geç Kalkolitik Dönem'den ETÇ sonuna kadar incelenmiştir.

Elâzığ–Malatya Bölgesi'ndeki kamusal yapılar Geç Kalkolitik Dönem'den sonra ETÇ'de yönetici / seçkinlerin ya da başka bir deyişle erkin biçim değiştirmesinin işaretleri olarak yorumlanabilir. Bölge'deki kamusal binalar yaşama, yönetim ve toplantı-tören ya da şölen binasından oluşmaktadır. Arslantepe'deki 'Şef' kulübesi ve Bina 36, gerek mimari özellikleri gerekse küçük buluntuları ile sosyal tabakalaşmayı yansıtmaktadır. Geç Kalkolitik Dönem'den itibaren aynı alanda kamusal yapıların sürekli inşa edilmesi ve bu binaların benzer işlevleri taşımaları Arslantepe'de bir kolektif belleğin varlığını göstermektedir. Aynı döneme ait olan kralî mezarın karmaşık gömme ritüel özellikleri ve buluntuları sembolik değerine işaret etmekte; bir elit veya topluluğun şefine ait olduğunu düşündürmektedir. İmamoğlu Höyük'teki 'Merdivenli Yapı', Mezopotamya mühür baskılı bulla parçalarının da kanıtlandığı gibi, uzak mesafeli ticaretle uğraşan yöneticilerle bağlantılı bir kamu binası olmalıdır. Uzmanlaşmış işgücü ve depolama kapasitesi İmamoğlu'nun çevre köylerden mal toplayan ve depolayan orta ölçekli bir yerleşim olduğunu göstermektedir. Norşuntepe'de, 8. ve 7. tabakalardan 6. tabakaya uzanan mimari süreklilik, istikrarlı bir idari varlığı yansıtmaktadır. Çok katlı anıtsal bir kompleks olan 6. tabaka sarayında atölyeler, mutfaklar ve depolar; tahıl depolama ölçeği, gelişmiş tarıma işaret etmekte olup ihtiyaç fazlası muhtemelen yöneticiler tarafından ticaret için ya da zor zamanlarda halkı desteklemek için kullanılmıştır. Çeç mühürler de tarımsal ürünlerin dağıtımını kolaylaştırmış olabilir. Verimli Altınova'da yer alan Norşuntepe, seramik, taş, kemik ve metalürji alanlarında vasıflı işgücüne sahip merkezi bir yerleşimdir. Tüm bu bilgilere dayanarak Elâzığ–Malatya Bölgesi'nde incelediğimiz kamusal yapıların yerleşimin en yüksek noktasında ve fiziksel olarak halkın geri kalanından kendilerini soyutlayacak biçimde inşa edildikleri görülmektedir. Merkezlerdeki kamusal mimari ve ele geçen nitelikli eşya ile kralî mezar, dikey hiyerarşinin varlığına da işaret etmektedir. Bu merkezlerde madencilik aktiviteleri (Arslantepe, Norşuntepe), kemik, taş (Norşuntepe) ve seramikte (İmamoğlu Höyük) uzmanlaşmış işgüçlerinin varlığına dair işaretler tespit edilmiştir. Bu durum, bu yerleşimlerin bölgede uzmanlaşmış üretim merkezleri olabileceklerini; bu üretim zincirinin de kamusal yapılardan merkezleri yöneten seçkin sınıfın denetiminde olabileceğini akla getirmiştir.

Elâzığ–Malatya Bölgesi bir bütün olarak da Yukarı Fırat Havzası Kalkolitik Çağ'da Mezopotamya ile ilişkili görünürken Havza'ya Kura–Aras kökenli toplulukların gelişi sosyoekonomik yapıyı değiştirmiş görünmektedir. ETÇ boyunca Elâzığ–Malatya Bölgesi de Kura–Aras kökenli yerleşimlere sahne olur ve bir önceki çağda yoğun olan Mezopotamya ile ilişkiler kesintiye uğrar. ETÇ'de kırsal karakterdeki yerleşim sayısındaki artış, bölgede popülasyonun da arttığının işaretidir. ETÇ I ve II'de yerleşim sayısındaki artış ve bunların geçici yerleşim karakterinde olmaları bu hareketli grupların varlığını göstermektedir. Bölgede bu dönemde mobilize grupların varlığı ile birlikte bir istikrarsızlık söz konusudur. ETÇ II'de bölge halen istikrarsızdır. ETÇ III ile birlikte yerleşimler daha kalıcı karakterdedir ve peyzajda merkezi yerleşimlerin ortaya çıktığı görülmektedir. Bölgede ETÇ'den Orta Tunç Çağı'na geçişte de kültürel bir kesinti olmadığı tespit edilmiştir. Bu durum, MÖ 2. binyılda bölgede ortaya çıkan yerel beyliklerin temelini ETÇ III'te sağlanmaya başlayan istikrar ile oluşmaya başladığını düşündürmüştür. Elazığ'da ortaya çıkartılan Harput Kabartması ve mimari bağlamı Orta Tunç Çağı başlarında bölgede siyasi otoritenin

*varlığına işaret etmekte ve yukarıdaki bilgiler ele alındığında bu merkezi otoritenin temelinin ETÇ sonlarında atılmaya başladığına işaret etmektedir.*

## Introduction

The categorization of human history into various stages of cultural and socio-economic development or the classification of the socio-economic and political structures of prehistoric societies has long been a topic of research in various disciplines. Numerous studies have been conducted on the emergence of complex societies, cities, and the first states (Fried, 1967; Service, 1971; Redman, 1978; Morgan, 1986; Childe, 1994; Rothman, 1994; Wason, 1994; Manzanilla, 1997; Algaze, 2001; Şenel, 2001; 2006; Frangipane, 2002; Flannery & Joyce, 2012; Renfrew & Bahn, 2018.). Scholars have attempted to develop different models to explain the origins of social complexity and investigated possible forms of governance in prehistoric societies. While interpreting the stages of social change within these classifications, various activities in public buildings, which constituted the administrative spaces of the ruling class, have also been evaluated. The meanings of the word 'public' significantly depend on the period to which it refers. Today, the term public is most commonly associated with the state and its official institutions, as in public officials, public organizations, and public administration.<sup>1</sup>

Today, it is possible to identify public buildings through meaningful contents, but looking at the public buildings of the Early Bronze Age (hereafter EBA) from the present, it seems difficult to make a brief and clear definition for them or even to relate them to modern definitions. Both clarity and ambiguity can result from such attempts. The EBA public buildings appear to have been constructed to meet the administrative, religious, social and economic needs of a community; they were buildings or building complexes with non-domestic original functions. In other words, administrative, governmental and economic affairs, and religious practices such as rituals, meetings, feasts and ceremonies were conducted from these buildings by the ruling elite or elites (Dede, 2024). The public nature of these buildings is typically identified by their large size and their central location relative to other buildings. Their main defining characteristic is their scale and detailing, which exceed the requirements for any practical function that a building may have. The scale of a building, its detailing and the number of people it will serve can be directly proportional to the number of units such as administration, living and storage. Viewing architectural scale as directly related to the socio-political control of power and elites is one of the most common interpretations of public buildings (Osborne, 2014, p. 5). The term usually emphasizes that a building is larger than typical in size and/or well-built compared to other ordinary buildings in its surroundings. Public buildings may be constructed for public purposes, such as administrative/governmental and/or religious purposes, or as meeting places, for banquets, ceremonies, celebrations or for demonstrating power (Dede, 2024).

The prehistoric periods of the Elazığ-Malatya Region are defined by findings from salvage excavations within dam construction areas and from the long-term excavations at Arslantepe. The region seems to have been under the influence of the Early Transcaucasian, the so-called Karaz or Kura-Araxes culture from the Late Chalcolithic Period until the end of the EBA (Sagona, 1998; Palumbi, 2008; Sagona & Zimansky, 2015; Işıklı & Ergürer, 2017). This culture, characterized by a pastoral lifestyle, primarily focused on livestock breeding and seasonal migrations, spread over a wide geographical area extending to Transcaucasia, northern Iran, eastern Anatolia and the Syrian-Levant Region (Işıklı, 2011; Işıklı & Ergürer, 2017, p. 44; Işıklı et al., 2019, p. 320). The unique architecture, human-faced hearths and ceramics of the Kura-Araxes culture dominated the region throughout the EBA. However, from the middle of the EBA onwards, local socio-political or economic dynamics emerged the region and changes towards regionalization can be observed, which is elaborated in subsequent sections.

This study aims to analyze the architecture of public buildings in the Elazığ-Malatya Region, their intended use, the tendencies of the emerging ruling class reflected in this architecture, and the social dynamics of the region during the EBA from a holistic perspective. For this purpose, the settlement patterns of the region have been analyzed, and the study has been illustrated with maps and drawings.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> According to J. Habermas (2003, pp. 57–58), the word 'public' in everyday language in modern times contains contradictory meanings. This confusion stems from the different historical phases of its use, which were simultaneously adapted to the conditions of bourgeois society. For this reason, it often has an ambiguous meaning in everyday use.

<sup>2</sup> This article is adapted from a chapter of the author's Ph.D. dissertation, entitled "Public Buildings in Early Bronze Age Anatolia", at Hacettepe University, Graduate School of Social Sciences, Department of Archaeology, under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Ayşegül Aykurt.

### The Elazig–Malatya Region in the Early Bronze Age: Transformations

Arslantepe and Norşuntepe, located on opposite banks of the Euphrates River, are key sites for defining the culture and chronology of the Elazig–Malatya Region (Fig. 6). The first monumental public buildings excavated at Arslantepe in phases 3–4 of the Late Chalcolithic Period according to regional chronology have been described as temples (Frangipane, 2019b). Thousands of mass-produced bowls and numerous *cretula* indicate that the main function of the building may have been the ceremonial distribution of food, and that this distribution was carried out under some kind of administrative control. The center of this administrative control were likely the tripartite planned temples of monumental sizes.<sup>3</sup> The palace complex in the Late Chalcolithic Period 5, covering an area of 3500 m<sup>2</sup> with its audience hall, throne, storerooms, temples and living areas, suggests that there were significant structural changes at this site. Thousands of *cretula*, mass-produced bowls, storage vessels, metal weapons and building units across the complex indicate that it was both an administrative and religious public building.

After the collapse of the Late Chalcolithic Period temple–palace complex at Arslantepe, Kura–Araxes culture seems to have become dominant in the EBA I. At the middle of this phase, public buildings were rebuilt on a smaller scale than before (Liberotti & Alvaro, 2018; Frangipane, 2019a). Towards the end of the EBA I, despite the monumental fortification, no significant public buildings have been identified within the walls, possibly suggesting a shift in settlement pattern (Frangipane, 2014, pp. 172–173). The EBA I can be considered as a phase in which Mesopotamian and Kura–Araxes characteristics were found together. From the beginning of the EBA I, radical changes in settlement patterns occurred also in Malatya. The number of settlements in the region increased, and at least 54% of them were located on natural hills. These settlements spread from the centre of the plain towards the foothills to the east; they were not stratified and reported to have been short-lived settlements (di Nocera, 2008, fig. 3d.) This settlement type suggests short-term occupations of mobile groups known from Kura–Araxes elements such as ceramics and architecture (Fig. 1).

Following the conflicts between nomadic and sedentary groups, turmoil and successive settlements, Malatya Plain was disconnected from Mesopotamian cultures in the EBA II, and only Kura–Araxes cultures and the local Gelincik Culture emerged (Frangipane, 2012, pp. 240 ff.). Alongside the geography of Northeastern Anatolia and the Southern Caucasus, this new culture displays unique characteristics as well as a regional cultural identity. Although nomadic groups dominated the cultural landscape, a clear settlement hierarchy remained difficult to establish, as evidenced by the ceramics and architecture, as well as the lack of distinction between the EBA I and II settlements (Fig.1), (di Nocera, 2008; Parliti & Caner, 2021).

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<sup>3</sup> With Ubaid culture (5800–4200 BC) that emerged from southern Mesopotamia, tripartite plan was commonly used in public and domestic architecture in the 5th and 4th millennia BC. From this period onwards same tripartite plan appears in buildings at other sites associated with Mesopotamia (Erarslan, 2010).

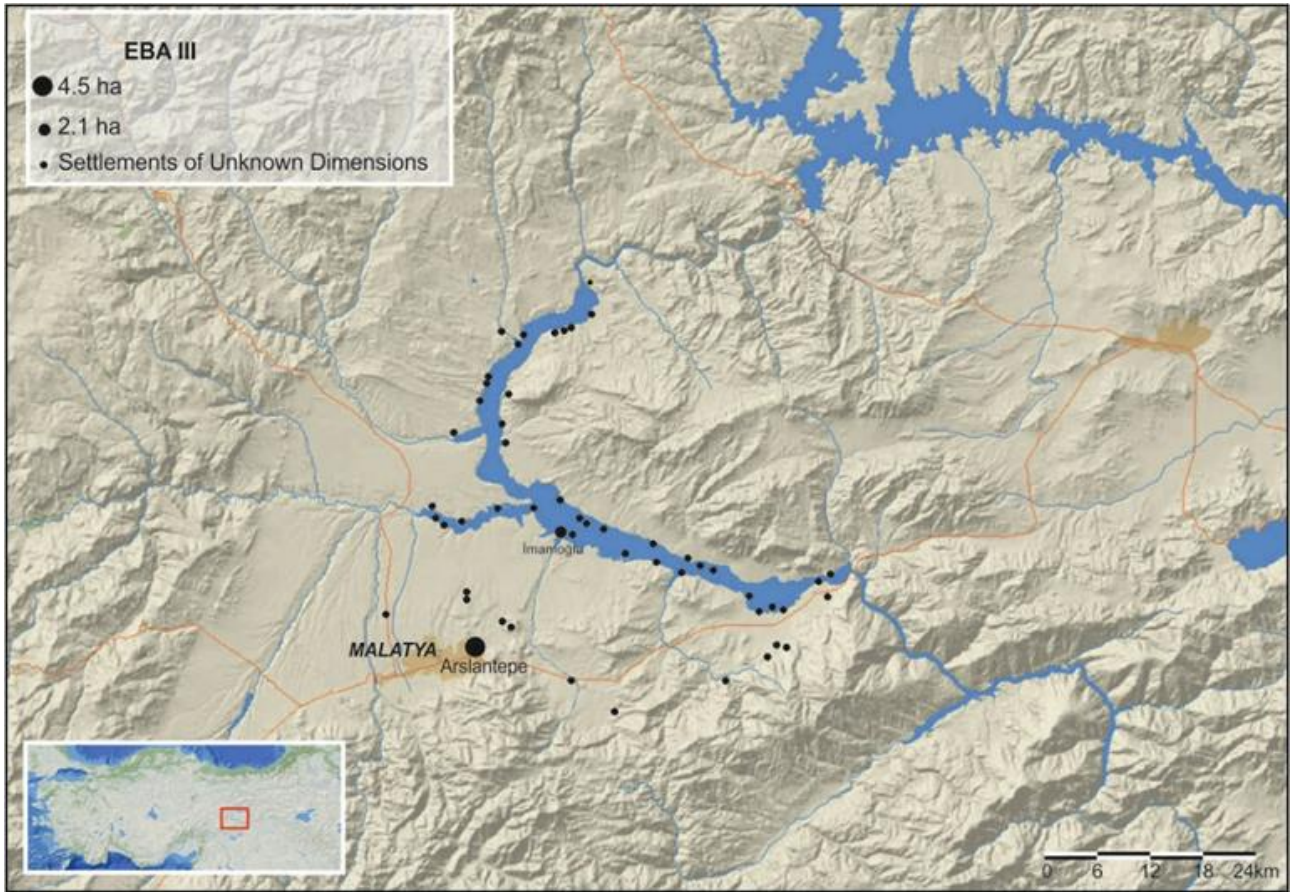


**Fig. 1:** The EBA I and II settlements identified in the in Malatya Plain and Karakaya Dam Reservoir Area (adopted by the author after di Nocera, 2008, p. 642, fig. 2a; Frangipane & di Nocera, 2012, p. 296, fig. 2b)

We can observe the Malatya Plain appears to have severed its traditional cultural ties with the Syro-Mesopotamian world towards the end of the 3rd millennium BC, re-establishing maintained limited trade or cultural relations with Central Anatolia. From 2500 BC onwards, the settlement expanded gradually, and the settlement planning continued until the mature phase of VID2 in ca. 2300 BC.<sup>4</sup> The compact and clearly defined settlement from the middle of the EBA III onwards is defined as 'urban'.

In the second half of the 3rd millennium BC, the number of settlements increased, especially along the Euphrates (Figure 2). By the end of the 3rd millennium BC, the population was concentrated in more stable areas and settlements became permanent rather than temporary. Settlements were characterized by permanent and planned architecture. In this context, several central settlements emerged and expanded across the region. Pirot, Köşkerbaba, İmamoğlu, Cantepe and Süleyman Tepe (Hasırcılar) along the Euphrates; Fırıncı Höyük, Bire Tepe, Galip Baba Tepe, İçmesu Tepe and Maltepe to the south of the Euphrates are among the sites of this type of settlements. While some of these sites were already settled, others were settled for the first time in the EBA III (di Nocera, 2008, p. 638; Frangipane & di Nocera, 2012). This phase can now, characterized by the emergence of local political structures typical of the Anatolian plateau, in which a new form of power emerged, based on small local leaders who dominated the conflicts and rivalries (di Nocera, 2008, pp. 636–638; Frangipane & di Nocera, 2012; Frangipane, 2012, fig. 12). Although we do not know whether Arslantepe was a central settlement in the EBA III, as it was in the 4th millennium BC, it was the largest site on the Malatya Plain. A distinctive local culture developed at Arslantepe during the EBA III, and along with this culture, the settlement expanded and steps towards centralization were taken.

<sup>4</sup> M. Frangipane (2012, pp. 257–258) emphasizes that she uses the term 'urban' in a sense that is different from the sense used for Mesopotamia, where it refers to "a large concentration of population in a vast and organic settlement comprising numerous specialised and interdependent social sectors".

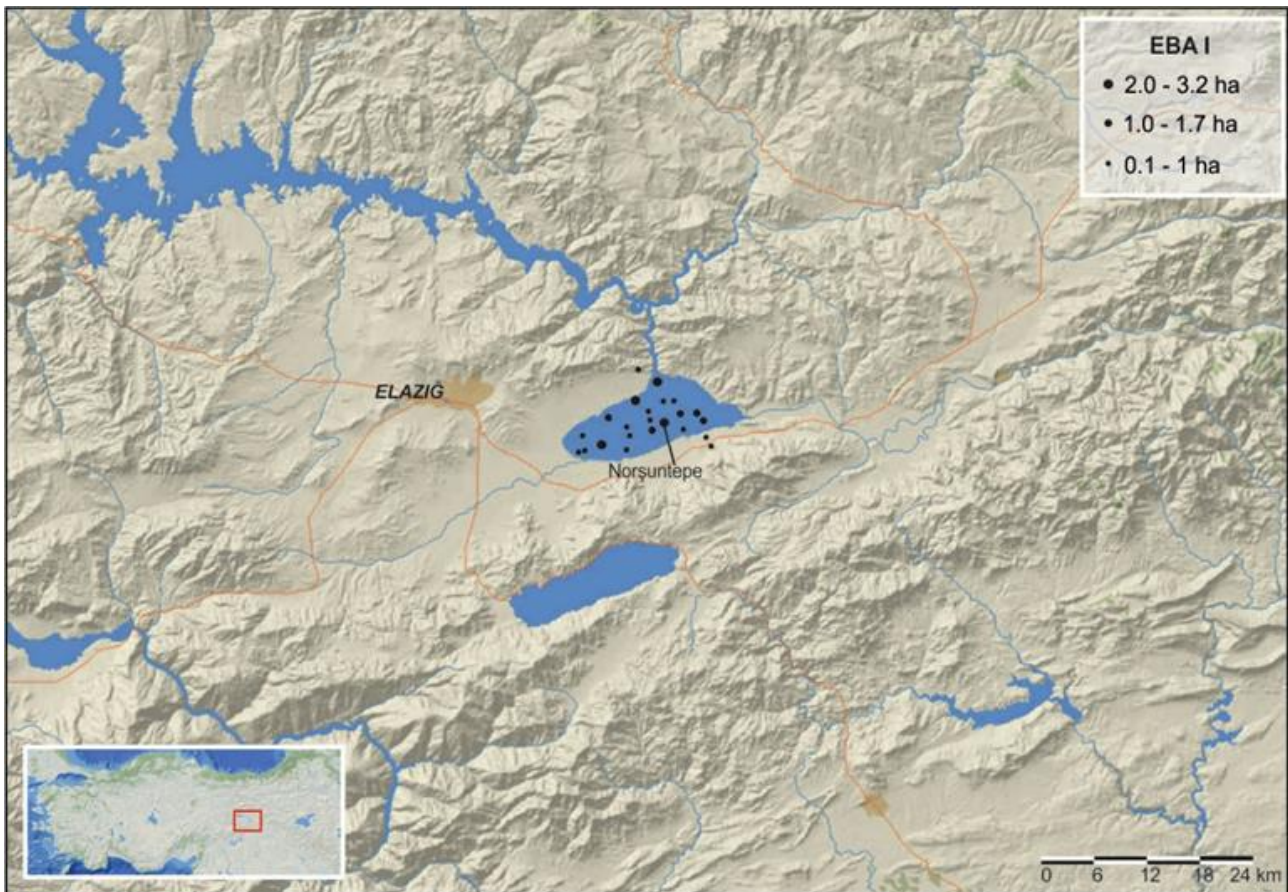


*Fig. 2: The EBA III settlements identified in Malatya Plain and Karakaya Dam Reservoir Area (adopted by the author after Özdoğan, 1977, lev. 6 and di Nocera, 2008, 642, fig. 2b)*

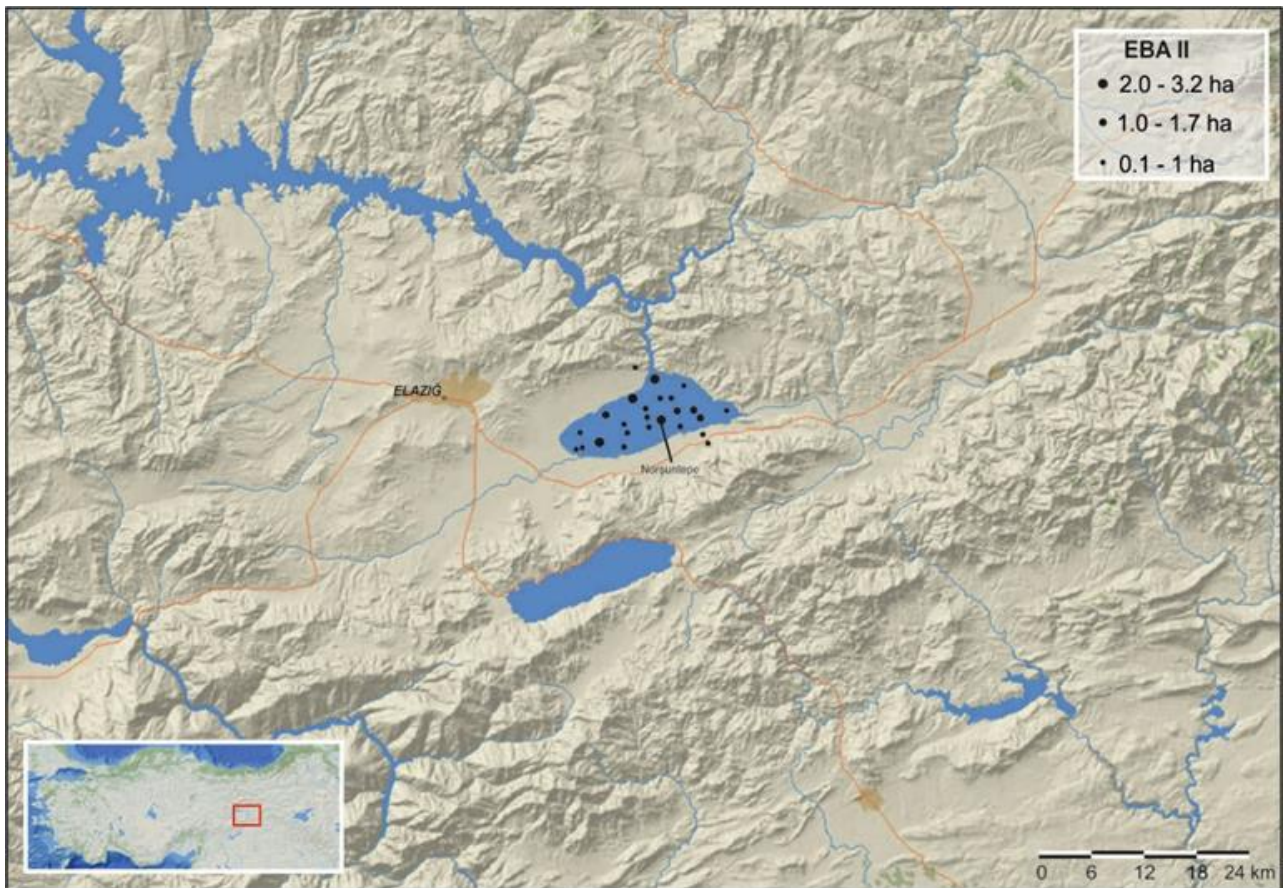
In the Late Chalcolithic Period, the situation in Elazığ seems to have been different from that in Malatya. In the Elazığ Region, no central settlements like Arslantepe existed region during this period. Analysis of pottery and other small finds indicates that Elâzığ was connected with Syria in this period. The data for the EBA I is weak, but the high proportion of Syrian pottery suggests that the region was still associated with Syria and, by extension, Mesopotamia. The number of settlements in Altınova increased during the EBA I (Fig. 3). With an area of 3.2 ha, Norşuntepe was the largest settlement at the center of the plain. A few settlements covered areas of 2.0–1.7 ha, and the rest of the settlements were 1 ha or less in area (Fig. 3), (Whallon, 1979, p. 281, tab. 13).

Similar settlements and settlement pattern continued in the EBA II (Fig. 4). The noticeable increase of Kura–Araxes pottery and wattle and daub architecture in the region during this period points to a change, characterized by the Kura–Araxes and local cultural elements appearing together (Yalçın, 2022). The sites smaller than 1 ha in area during the EBA I and II can point to mobile groups in the Elazığ Region, as also observed on the Malatya Plain (Fig. 3–4).

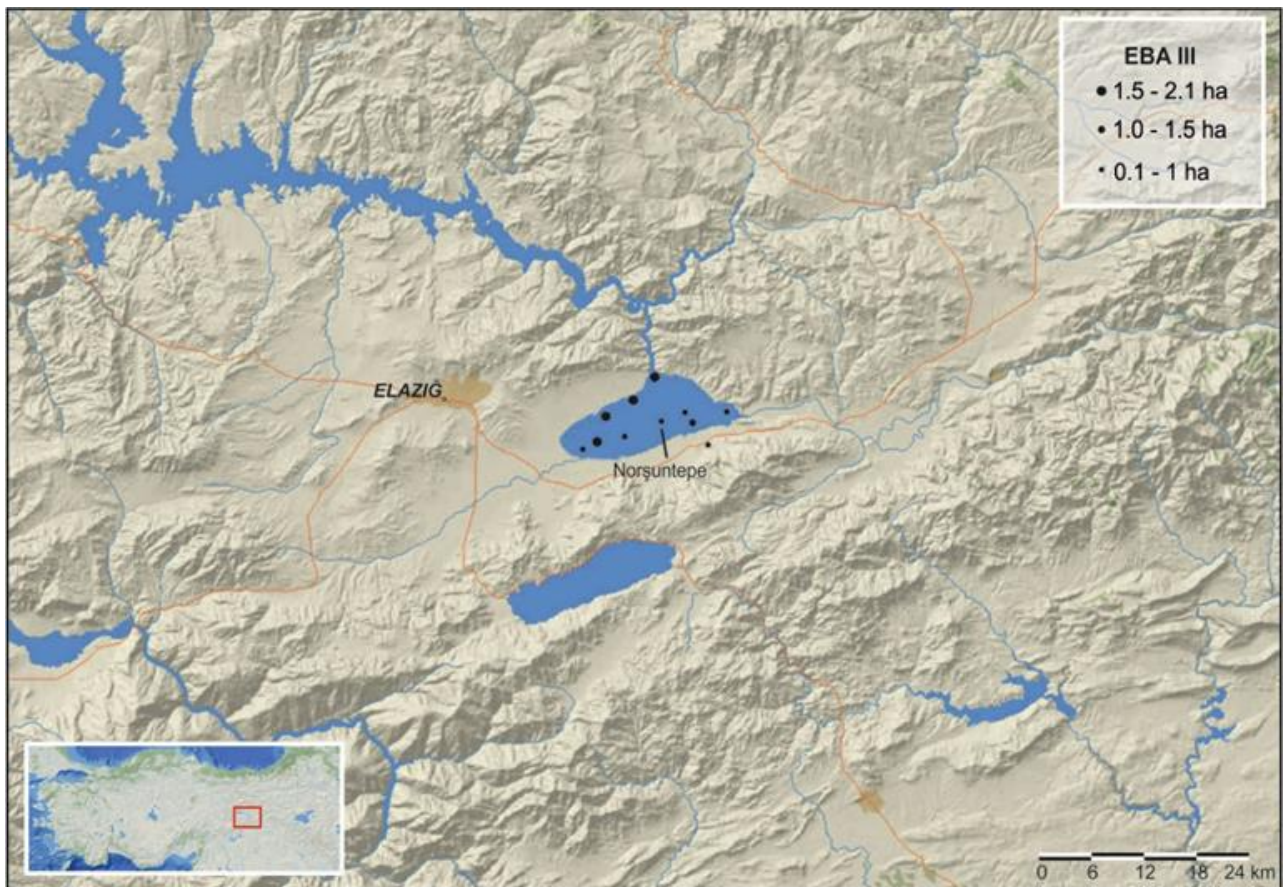
With the EBA III, while the number of sites decreased, the site sizes increased (Fig. 5). Apart from sites like Norşuntepe, Tepecik, Tülintepe, Değirmen-tepe and Korucutepe, all other sites cover areas of ca.1 ha or less (Whallon, 1979, p. 282, tab. 14–15). These central settlements in the landscape of the EBA III can be interpreted as an indicator of stabilization. The public buildings at Norşuntepe, now named as palaces, can also be interpreted as an indicator of stabilization. On the other hand, the defensive walls, which seem to have become a characteristic feature of the EBA III settlements, point to conflicts between independent and perhaps rival centers (Frangipane, 2012, pp. 257–258).



**Fig 3:** The EBA I settlements identified in Altınova, Elazığ (adopted by the author after Çevik, 2007, fig. 3)



**Fig. 4:** EBA II settlements identified in Altınova, Elazığ (adopted by the author after Çevik, 2007, fig. 3)



**Fig. 5:** EBA III settlements identified at Altınova, Elazığ (adopted by the author after Whallon, 1979; Conti & Persiani, 1993, map 3–4; Çevik, 2007, p.103, fig. 3)



According to conventional and absolute dating in the Elaziğ–Malatya Region, the EBA I is dated to 3200/3100–2750/2800; the EBA II to 2750/2800–2500; and the EBA III to 2500–2000 BC (Mellink, 1992, tab. 2–3; Sagona, 2000, pp. 333–335; di Nocera, 2000, pp. 73–93; Palumbi, 2008, p. 327, tab. 1; Marro, 2011, pp. 290–306; Yakar, 2011, pp. 70–71, tab. 4.5; Frangipane, 2019a, p. 93).

Centers	Layers	Dates (BC)	Absolute Dates (BC)	References
Arslantepe	VIB1–B2	3200–2800	3100–2800	Frangipane, 2019a, p. 93
	6		2000	
Norşuntepe	7		2150–100	Schmidt, 1996, p. 6; 2002, p. 3; Hauptmann, 2000, p. 428, abb. 1
	8		2300/2400	
İmamoğlu	V	2500–2000	–	Uzunoğlu, 1983, p. 132; 1985, p. 237

*Table 1: Stratigraphy and dating of public buildings analyzed in the study*

### Public Buildings in the Elaziğ–Malatya Region

In the region, public buildings have been recovered at Arslantepe, İmamoğlu and Norşuntepe (Fig. 6). These buildings are assumed to have been used by the rulers or ruling elites of these settlements for residing and for public purposes like administration, storage, meetings and ceremonies.

#### Arslantepe

Two the EBA I (Tab. 1) buildings from Arslantepe (Fig. 6) at the center of the Malatya Plain were investigated as public buildings.



*Fig 6: The EBA sites with public buildings in the Elâziğ–Malatya Region (by the author)*

#### 'Chief's' Hut

The 'Chief's' hut, of level VIB1, was built on the highest part of the mound, surrounded by a strong palisade to the south, and is much larger than the other huts (Fig. 7). The 'Chief's' hut, with at least three phases, was built in the same place in each renewal phase and was in use during level VIB1. Like the other domestic huts of this phase, it was built by wattle and daub technique (Frangipane, 2014, p. 173). In the first phase, the building was limited by a row of three rooms and another room or plastered outer area to the east (Fig. 7). According to its finds, this unit was a storage area. In the next phase, the building takes a rectangular form, maintaining its area of 42 m<sup>2</sup> as well

as keeping its isolated place (Frangipane, 2014, p. 173). According to its isolated location by the palisade that surrounded the hut to its south, to the multiple rebuilding processes of a single hut, the fact that its larger dimensions compared to the other huts in the settlement, and the associated finds, it can be suggested that this hut was the house of the community ruler (Frangipane, 2014, p.174). In the open area between the 'Chief's' hut and the palisade (Fig. 7), a large number of animal bones in piles found in all rebuilding phases appear to have been the remains of collective feasts or celebrations. Moreover, pottery assemblages associated with the Mesopotamian and Kura–Araxes cultures, as well as a stamp and a cylinder seal, were found in and around the building (Frangipane, 2014; Dede, 2024, figs. 19–20; Dede & Oğuzhanoglu, 2024, cat. nos. 1, 3, 4). Concluding, the deliberate separation of this area at the highest point of the site from the rest of the settlement suggests that the hut was used by the ruler (Frangipane, 2014, p.174).

### Building 36

Building 36, dated to the third phase of level VIB1, was built on the monumental audience hall of the palace complex of level VIA and at the highest elevation of the settlement (Fig. 7), (Frangipane, 2014, p. 173). In the first phase, the building was constructed of mud bricks on stone foundations, and had a rather large circular hearth, known from the Middle–Upper Euphrates Region, was located at the center of a large hall (Fig. 7). To the south of the room, there is a protruding section with symmetrical passages on its both sides that provided access to the room (Frangipane et al., 2014, p. 458; Palumbi et al., 2017, p. 91). In the early phase of the building, the main room was surrounded by a storage area, including pits and two rectangular areas dug in the ground (Fig. 7), (Frangipane, 2014, p. 175; Frangipane et al., 2015, pp. 179–180).

Building 36 became more complex and larger in its second phase (Fig. 7). New huts scattered on the slopes indicate that the settlement expanded also during this phase (Palumbi et al., 2017, p. 92). Building 36 consists of an interconnected long rectangular hall oriented in northwest–southeast directions covering an area of 120 m<sup>2</sup> and a square room takes place to the west (Palumbi et al., 2017, p. 91). Numerous burnt beams inside the building indicate the existence of a flat roof (Palumbi et al., 2017, p. 96, fig. 7). A large open area to the south of the building was probably used as an animal pen (Frangipane et al., 2015, p. 179). An imposing east–west palisade against the rear northern wall of the building separates Building 36 from the area to its west, and from the 'Chief's' hut. Accordingly, the palisade separates the northern area from the southern areas (Frangipane et al., 2015, p. 179; Palumbi et al., 2017, p. 92).

Building 36 was destroyed by a severe fire. As a result, a large number of *in situ* material was found on the floor (Frangipane, 2017). The material consists of Kura–Araxes and Mesopotamian–related vessels, metal ornaments, spears and rivets (Dede, 2024, fig. 20). Near the south–east corner of Building 36, a narrow, subterranean hut with wooden coating of the inner surface (Fig. 7) was found; this building may have been used for ritual ceremonies or symbolic activities (Frangipane et al., 2014, p. 458). Level VIB1, including both buildings, is dated to ca. 3100 BC (Tab. 1), (Palumbi et al., 2017, pp. 118–119, tab. 4, fig. 30).

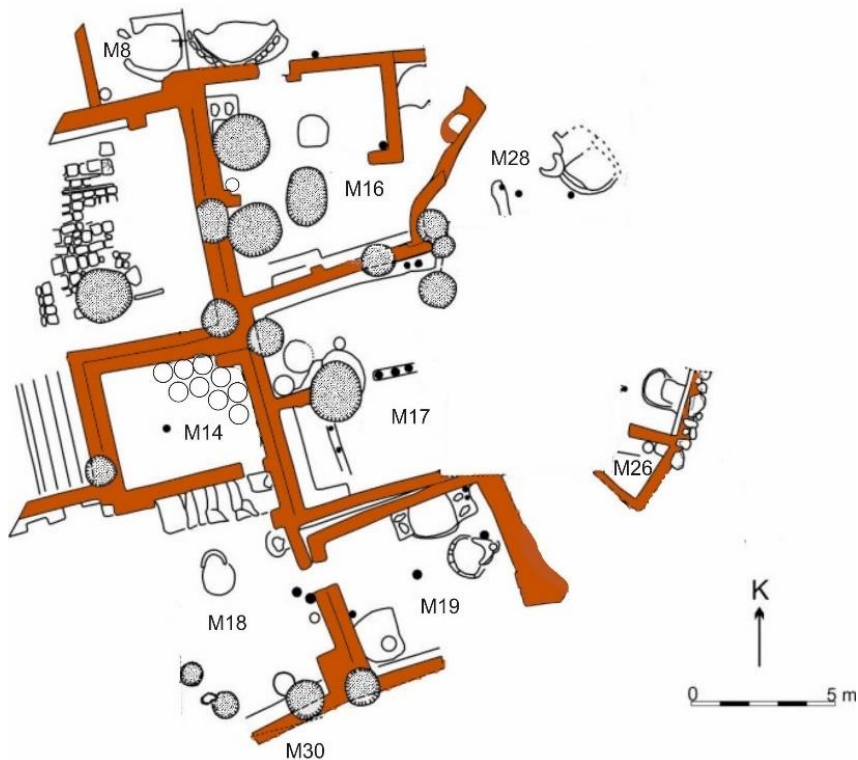
### İmamoğlu Hoyuk 'Merdivenli Yapı' (House with Stairs)

'Merdivenli Yapı' of the EBA III (Tab. 1) at İmamoğlu Hoyuk (Fig. 6), 15 km north–east of Malatya, is considered to have been a public building.

The building, which occupies an area of 690 m<sup>2</sup>, extending in an east–west direction, 'Merdivenli Yapı' (House with Stairs) by the researcher, basing on the steps recovered inside (Fig. 8). Although no data on the construction technique of the whole building is published, it is stated that one room was built with mudbrick foundations and walls. The post holes excavated in some of the rooms indicate the roof system of the building. The interior surfaces of the walls were plastered and whitewashed. The floor of the room was mud–plastered on compacted earth. An 11–stepped staircase was depicted in a drawing at the base of the seven–stepped staircase inside the building. This depiction seems to have been a plan of the mudbrick staircase drawn on the wall. Fixed installations in the rooms consist of various types of ovens, horseshoe–shaped hearths, and mud brick benches with mud–plastered surfaces. Fixed and portable finds from the complex suggest that it was used as a kitchen, storage and living area (Uzunoğlu, 1983; 1986; 1987; 1988; Dede, 2024).



Fig 7: Early and late phase plans of the 'Chief's' hut and Building 36 at Arslantepe (adopted by the author after Frangipane, 2014, p. 179, fig. 1 and Palumbi et al., 2017, p. 92, fig. 3)



**Fig. 8:** İmamoğlu Höyük 'Merdivenli Yapı' (redrawn by the author after Uzunoğlu, 1988, pln. 2; Özdemir, 2019, draw. 60)

Kura Araxes pottery, mostly *in situ*, and Elâzığ–Malatya painted pottery were found in almost all rooms of the building (Uzunoğlu, 1986, p.185; 1987, pp. 218–219; 1987, pp. 208–209; 1989, p. 73). Small finds are rarely mentioned in excavation reports. In a pit dug into the floor of a storeroom, two bullae with the impressions of the same cylinder seal were found (Uzunoğlu, 1986, pp.184; Dede, 2024, fig. 146). Traces of the sack to which the bullae were tied are preserved on the inner surface (Uzunoğlu, 1986, p. 184). According to relative chronology, 'Merdivenli Yapı' is dated to the EBA IIIB (Tab. 1), (Uzunoğlu, 1988, p. 210).

### Norşuntepe

At Norşuntepe (Fig. 6), 26 km southeast of Elazığ, now under the Keban Dam reservoir, three public buildings were determined, superimposed in successive levels dating to the EBA III (Tab. 1).

### Level 8 Public Building

The complex is located on the plane area on the top of the mound, between an east–west oriented street and a slope extending towards the plane area on the top of the mound (Fig. 9). The L-shaped building, constructed of mudbricks on stone foundations, without exact dimensions, occupies an area of ca. 660 m<sup>2</sup>. The complex consisted of rooms of similar sizes arranged side by side. Fixed and portable finds recovered from the rooms of the complex indicate that the building consisted of units such as living spaces, a kitchen, workshops and storage areas (Hauptmann, 1979b, p. 61). To the west of the L-shaped main building, there was a 20 m long courtyard. The complex's main entrance was located to the southeast, and the domestic buildings take place to the west (Fig. 9), (Hauptmann, 1979b, p. 61; 1982, p. 17). The white plastered walls of room 10 had been decorated with red painted geometric designs. The western street of the settlement had numerous paving's, indicating its long-term use (Hauptmann, 1976, p. 47). The building inventory consists of a large number and variety of vessels, as well as stone, bone and metal tools, finds related to mining and baked clay stamp seals named as *çeç*.<sup>5</sup>

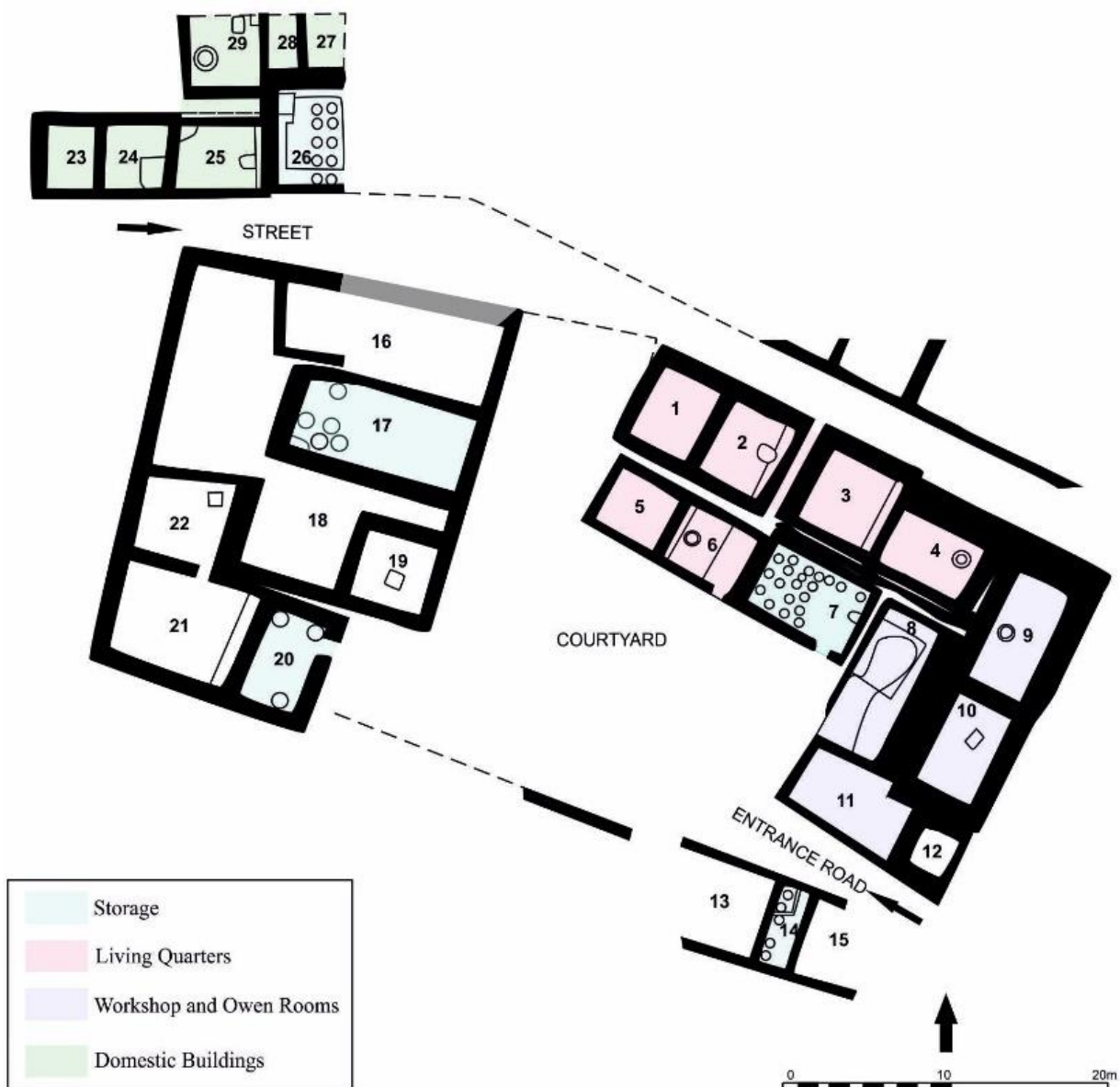


<sup>5</sup> Çeç stamp seals are interpreted as related to agricultural activities (For more information see: Kökten, 1945; Dede, 2014, cat. nos. 169, 171, 174; 2024, figs. 137–138; Tekin, 2017; Özdemir & Özdemir, 2020).

*Fig.9: Public building of Norşuntepe, level 8 (redrawn and renumbered by the author after Hauptmann, 1979b, fig. 23; 1982, pl. 29)*

### Level 7 Public Building

The building, which comprise four phases, consisted of a courtyard in the plane area on the top of the mound, and a group of rooms connected to the courtyard to the east and west (Hauptmann, 1974, p. 75). Constructed with mudbricks on stone foundations, the building is L-planned and occupies an area of 690 m<sup>2</sup> (Fig. 10), (Hauptmann, 1974, p. 75; 1982, p. 17). The complex, with its entrance to the southeast, consisted of living quarters, storerooms, kitchens and workshops. The rooms composing the public building of the previous level, level 8, were assumed to have been used also in level 7 with minor changes for similar functions (Hauptmann, 1976, p. 45). A street sloped up to provide access to the complex was closed by a wooden gate; charred remains of wood covered the entire street. The architecture bears a large number of Kura–Araxes and imported Syrian table and storage vessels, as well as ornaments, weapons and tools made of stone, bone and metal (Dede, 2024, figs. 139–140).



*Fig.10: Norşuntepe Level 7 public building (redrawn and renumbered by the author after Hauptmann, 1979, fig. 24; 1982, pl. 38)*

### Level 6 Public Building/Palace

The palace was constructed with extensive filling and terracing to the south and west. The building had at least two floors, and covered an area of 2700 m<sup>2</sup>. The palace was a monumental building consisting of living

quarters, storerooms, storehouses, workshops and kiln rooms around a central courtyard (Fig. 11). The complex is accessed via a south–easterly stone–paved street. The *Pithos Building* and the western storage building of the palace were constructed of mudbricks on strong, wide stone foundations, and were reinforced against the slope to the north and west (Hauptmann, 1972, p. 93). The walls of the rooms were white plastered, and the floors had been rebuilt several times. Some rooms were red painted (Hauptmann, 1976, p. 44). The fixed installations in the rooms comprise clay benches, various types of ovens, horseshoe–shaped hearths, and benches. In the *Pithos Building*, 25 pithoi in rows of 5x5 were found in each room, buried up to their necks in the white plastered floor (Fig. 11). Storage pithoi were also uncovered in the western storehouse (Fig. 11). The sloping entrance around the courtyard was approximately 2 x 15 m. The northern half of this street was paved with stone slabs, large potsherds and plastered with mud. A channel in the middle of the street was covered with large stone slabs to drain the water from the courtyard. The palace shows traces of heavy fire (Hauptmann, 1974, p. 74). The palace inventory consists of a large number of handmade Kura–Araxes ceramics, Elazığ–Malatya painted ceramics and a small number of wheels–made ceramics of Syrian origin, stamp seals named as *çeç*, stone, bone and metal ornaments, weapons and small finds indicating metallurgical activities (Dede, 2014, cat. nos. 151, 175; 2024, figs. 141–142).



Fig. 11: Norşuntepe Level 6 Public Building/Palace (redrawn and renumbered by the author after Hauptmann, 1979b, fig. 25).

### Overall Assessment and Conclusion

In complex societies or early states, 'rulers' or 'elites' buildings began to show a tendency toward differentiation (Frangipane, 2002; Çevik, 2005). Examples include temples from mid–4th millennium BC Mesopotamia, the palace–temple complex at Arslantepe, and the palaces that began to appear in the 3rd millennium BC (Crawford, 2015; van de Mieroop, 2018; Frangipane, 2019a; 2019b; 2022). Public

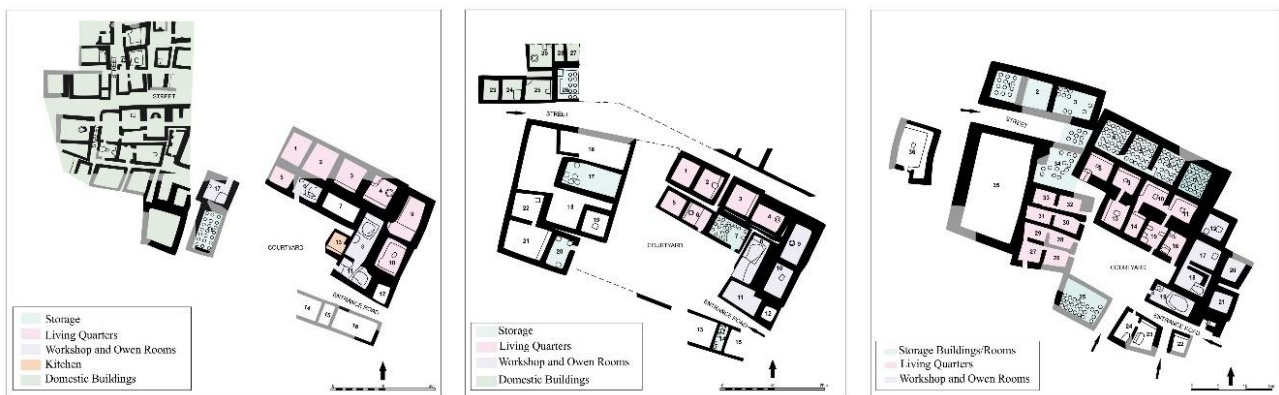
administration served as the primary tool of the ruling class or elites, who monopolized key knowledge, controlled production, and managed administrative affairs from public structures (Çevik, 2005). Public buildings represented elite power, management, and settlement organization (Byrd, 1994; Steadman, 2011). These structures, both monumental and smaller in scale, indicated centralized power and were often reserved for privileged individuals.

Arslantepe's public buildings, including the 'Chief's' hut and Building 36, reflect social stratification. No seal impressions directly indicating administrative use have been found, though Late Chalcolithic Period sealing practices are known (Frangipane, 2019a). Applying Occam's razor suggests that these seals likely served administrative purposes. Building 36, with its distinct construction methods, also served public purposes, likely for assembly, banquets, and storage. The repeated construction of public buildings in the same area since the Late Chalcolithic Period indicates a collective memory (Halbwachs, 2017; Palumbi, et al., 2017, p. 117, fig. 28).

The "royal tomb" suggests an elite burial, reflecting the symbolic value of such structures (Frangipane, 2014; 2019a). Artifacts such as zoomorphic rhyta and bone piles suggest feasting practices that align with Brian Hayden's (2001, pp. 23–64). criteria for identifying feast behavior (Dede, 2024, pp. 72):

- Recreational food and drinks (alcohol),
- Ritual vessels for the consumption/presentation of alcohol (zoomorphic rhyta),
- The presence of a large number of vessels
- Some elements that are larger than usual (circular hearth)
- Piles of bones
- Prestige objects (metal objects)

The 'Chief's' hut, building 36, and the Cult Area appear to form a public complex.



**Fig 12:** Plan showing the development/alterations of the public buildings of levels 8, 7 and 6 at Norşuntepe (redrawn and renumbered by the author after Hauptmann, 1979b, figs. 23 – 25)

At İmamoğlu Hoyuk, the 'Merdivenli Yapı' may have been a public building linked to administrators involved in long-distance trade, evidenced by Mesopotamian seal-impressed bulla fragments (Dede & Oğuzhanoğlu, 2024, cat. nos. 113-114). The specialized workforce suggests İmamoğlu was a medium-sized settlement that collected and stored goods from surrounding villages.

At Norşuntepe, the architectural continuity from levels 8 and 7 to level 6 reflects a stable administrative presence (Fig. 12). The palace at level 6, a monumental multi-story complex, housed workshops, kitchens, and extensive storage. The scale of cereal storage points to advanced agriculture, with the surplus likely used by rulers for trade or to support the populace in hard times. The stamp seals named as *çeç* may have facilitated the distribution of agricultural products (Dede, 2014, p. 86; 2024, p. 293). Norşuntepe, located in fertile Altınova, was a central settlement with skilled labor in ceramics, stone, bone, and metallurgy.

The public buildings in the Elazığ-Malatya Region were built at the highest point of the settlement and were physically isolated from the rest of the population. The public architecture of the settlements, the

quality of the objects recovered, and the 'royal tomb' at Arslantepe suggest the existence of a vertical hierarchy in these centers. No spatial arrangement indicating that religious rituals were performed directly inside the public buildings or units that could be interpreted as temples were found at any of the three sites. However, Arslantepe probably had a separate area for ritual activities (Fig. 7). There is evidence that these centers had a labor force specialized in mining (Arslantepe, Norşuntepe), bone, stone<sup>6</sup> (Norşuntepe) and pottery (İmamoğlu Hoyuk), (Dede, 2024). This suggests that these settlements may have been specialized production centers in the region, and that this production chain may have been under the control of the elite class, who ruled the settlements from public buildings.

The public buildings analyzed in the Elazığ–Malatya Region consist of residential, administrative, and ceremonial buildings. When the internal dynamics of the period and all the data discussed above are evaluated as a whole, it should be considered that the buildings defined as 'Chief's' hut or bey's mansion should be considered to have been used not only as dwellings, but also for administration, i.e., for public purposes. On the other hand, the buildings that were built successively and repeatedly, which show the stability of the rulers in Norşuntepe, were undoubtedly public buildings due to their size, equipment, and quality of furnishings. The building on level 6, which was converted into a palace, had a rich collection of artifacts. It should not be overlooked that these buildings may have been evacuated due to the intense fires, particularly at İmamoğlu Hoyuk and Norşuntepe where the remains of such fires were found. These public buildings in the Elazığ–Malatya Region can be interpreted as signs of transformation of the elite or the ruling elites, in other words, of power after the Late Chalcolithic Period and in the EBA.

While the Elazığ–Malatya Region as a whole, and the Upper Euphrates Basin seem to have been related to Mesopotamia during the Chalcolithic, the arrival of communities of Kura–Araxes origin in the basin seems to have changed the socio–economic structure (Coşkun, 2019a, p. 32; Parliti & Yücel, 2021, p. 100). During the EBA, the Elazığ–Malatya Region also witnessed settlements of Kura–Araxes origin, and the interruption of relations with Mesopotamia, which were intense in the previous period. The increase in the number of rural settlements during the EBA indicates that the population of the region also increased (Erarslan, 2006, p. 83; Coşkun, 2019a, p. 32). The increase in the number of settlements in the EBA I and II and their temporary settlement characteristics indicate the presence of these mobile groups. During this period, there is instability in the region due to the presence of mobile groups. However, by evaluating the public buildings excavated at Arslantepe and the settlement data, it can be suggested that Arslantepe may have been the central settlement of these small mobile groups (Fig. 2). No buildings that can be defined as public buildings in the region during the EBA II were found. The main reason for this can be explained by the spread of the Kura–Araxes culture throughout the region, the decline of Mesopotamian influences, and the constant moving of this nomadic community, suggesting that the region was still unstable.

By the EBA III, settlements became more permanent (di Nocera, 2008). In this context, several centralized settlements emerged and developed in the landscape. It can be defined as a more 'Anatolian' phase in which a new form of power emerged, based on small local lords who had to dominate the region in conflict and competition (Nocera, 2008, pp. 636–638; Frangipane & di Nocera, 2012; Frangipane, 2012b, fig. 12). İmamoğlu Hoyuk is classified as medium–sized among the mounds of the region, (Özdoğan, 1977, pp. 21, 38) and is one of the few sites excavated in the northeastern part of Malatya where data for the EBA III can be obtained (Fig. 3). İmamoğlu Hoyuk demonstrates the existence of a ruling class even in small settlements, and these rulers established their living and administrative areas at the highest point of the settlement, isolating themselves from the rest of the population. Similarly, on the other side of the Euphrates, in the Elazığ Region, settlements grew in the EBA III, and central settlements emerged. The presence of a building in Norşuntepe, which can now be defined as a palace, indicates that the region may have become centralized (Coşkun, 2019b). No cultural breaks were found in the transition from the EBA to the Middle Bronze Age in the region (Coşkun, 133, footnote 137). It is assumed that the stability achieved in the EBA III was the basis for its establishment in the region in the 2nd millennium BC. Unearthed in Elazığ, *Harput Relief*

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<sup>6</sup> 13 kg of obsidian found at the entrance to level 6 palace at Norşuntepe must have been taken to the palace workshop for processing (Hauptmann, 1979a, p. 479).



(Demir et al., 2016).<sup>7</sup> can be defined as a war and victory stele from the Middle Bronze Age, and together with its architectural context, it points out the existence of political authority in the region during the early phase of the Middle Bronze Age. The relief, considered with the discussion above, suggests that the foundations of this central authority may have been established in the late EBA.

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<sup>7</sup> The Harput Relief is characteristic of the Akkadian Period stylistically and technically, but it also contains elements of the Old Babylonian Period. It is thought to date to the Middle Bronze Age based on its context.

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