

# REFLECTIONS OF URARTIAN CITIES IN RURAL AREAS: POTTERS' MARKS AND RED BURNISHED WARES FROM MURAT HÖYÜK AND MURAT TEPE IN BİNGÖL, TURKEY

## URARTU KENTLERİ'NDEN KIRSALA YANSIMALAR: BİNGÖL- MURAT HÖYÜK VE MURAT TEPE'DEN ÇÖMLEKÇİ İŞARETLERİ VE KIRMIZI PERDAHLI ÇANAK ÇÖMLEKLER

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### ABSTARCT

This study discusses previously unpublished examples of Urartian red burnished pottery and potters' marks found during excavations at Murat Höyük and Murat Tepe in East Anatolia. Findings discussed in this study provide tangible evidence for the cultural influence of Urartian cities on rural areas.

Murat Höyük and Murat Tepe are located on the northeast bank of the Murat River, at the point where the river meanders east. The two adjacent sites derive their name from this river. Excavations at Murat Tepe revealed two settlement levels dating to the Medieval Period and the Iron Age. At nearby Murat Höyük, Medieval, Middle Iron Age, Early Iron Age and Early Bronze Age levels were documented. A few examples of potters' marks and red burnished ware sherds were found at both sites. In general, current research suggests that red burnished ware and ceramic vessels bearing potters' marks were used in elite and palatial contexts in Urartian cities. Therefore, the attestation of these assemblages at rural sites such as Murat Höyük and Murat Tepe in a remote region away from Urartian cities, provides significant information on the kingdom's cultural influence on rural areas.

**Keywords:** Urartu, Murat Höyük, Murat Tepe, Potters' marks, Red burnished pottery.

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## ÖZET

Bu çalışmada Doğu Anadolu bölgesindeki Murat Höyük ve Murat Tepe’de yapılan kazılarda elde edilmiş, daha önce yayınlanmamış kırmızı perdahlı Urartu çanak çömleği ile çömlekçi işaretleri değerlendirilmiştir. Bu sayede Urartu kentlerinden kırsal bölgelere olan kültürel etki hakkında daha tutarlı bilgiler edinilmiştir.

Murat Höyük ve Murat Tepe adını aldığı Murat Nehri’nin kuzeydoğu kıyısında nehrin doğuya doğru menderes yaptığı noktada yer alır. Burada iki yerleşme yan yana bulunmaktadır. Murat Tepe’de yapılan kazılarda Ortaçağ ve Orta Demir Çağı’na tarihlenen iki yapı katı ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Bitişindeki Murat Höyükte ise Ortaçağ, Orta Demir, Erken Demir ve İlk Tunç Çağı’na tarihlenen tabakalar belgelenmiştir. Her iki yerleşmede az miktarda çömlekçi işaretleri ve kırmızı perdahlı çanak çömlek malzemesi ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Araştırmalar çömlekçi işaretleri ve kırmızı perdahlı çanak çömleğin çoğunlukla Urartu kentlerindeki elit/saraylı kısım tarafından kullanıldığını ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Benzer malzemenin Urartu kentlerinin uzağında kırsal bir bölgede yer alan Murat Höyük ve Murat Tepe’de ortaya çıkarılması, krallığın kültürel etkisi hakkında önemli bilgi sağlamaktadır.

**Keywords:** Urartu, Murat Höyük, Murat Tepe, Çömlekçi işaretleri, Kırmızı perdahlı çanak çömlek.

## INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study is a group of ceramic finds consisting of three sherds bearing potters' marks and five sherds of Urartian red burnished ware, which were excavated at Murat Tepe and Murat Höyük, located in Solhan district of modern Bingöl province. The archaeological sites of Murat Tepe and Murat Höyük are situated side by side on the northeast bank of the Murat River (Figs. 1-2). Both sites were inundated in 2020 by Aşağı Kaleköy hydroelectric dam. Prior to the completion of the dam, salvage excavations were conducted at Murat Tepe in 2018 and at adjacent Murat Höyük in 2019 under the auspices of Elâzığ Museum.

Solhan district, where Murat Tepe and Murat Höyük are located, has a particularly rough and rugged topography. Şerafettin mountain range with its two peaks at Şahintepe (2675m) and Esentepe (2388m) marks the northern boundary of Solhan region. On the south, the region is bordered by the Southeast Taurus range. The Murat River flows between these two high mountain ranges from Muş plain towards Solhan. Flat terrains within the boundaries of the district are restricted to the Solhan plateau, where the district centre is located, and a few locations on the banks of the river (Fig. 1).

Lake Van basin, where the capital city of the Urartian Kingdom, Van Kalesi, and other Urartian royal cities are located, lies east of the region. In the west, the region is

bordered by modern Elâzığ province, where the Urartian province centre of Palu is located. As such, Solhan region is strategically positioned as a conduit between two important settlement basins.

Possible remains of an ancient road that begins nearby Solhan district centre and continues along the skirts of Bingöl mountains were identified during early archaeological surveys in the region. An 80–90km stretch of this Urartian period road can be seen running parallel to the modern highway that crosses the Bingöl mountains at an altitude of 2000m. Additionally, fortress sites such as Cankurtarantepe, Zülümtepe and Kaleönü located on this route are identified as part of this road system (Sevin, V., 1988; Çiççi, A. and Gökçe, B., 2020). Murat Höyük and Murat Tepe on the bank of the Murat River are situated 4km south of this road. Considering this distance, neither of the settlements appear to be in a position to have had any control over this road system.

The closest Urartian royal city to Murat Tepe and Murat Höyük is Aznavurtepe, which lies about 160km away from the two sites as the crow flies. The closest Urartian province centre is located approximately 55km away at Kayalidere, and another province centre is located at Palu, about 90km west of the two adjacent sites. Although Murat Tepe and Murat Höyük are located far away from Urartian cities, they are not situated in an isolated area. During early regional surveys in Solhan district, a fortress was identified at Cankurtarantepe nearby Solhan district centre, and two other settlements were discovered at

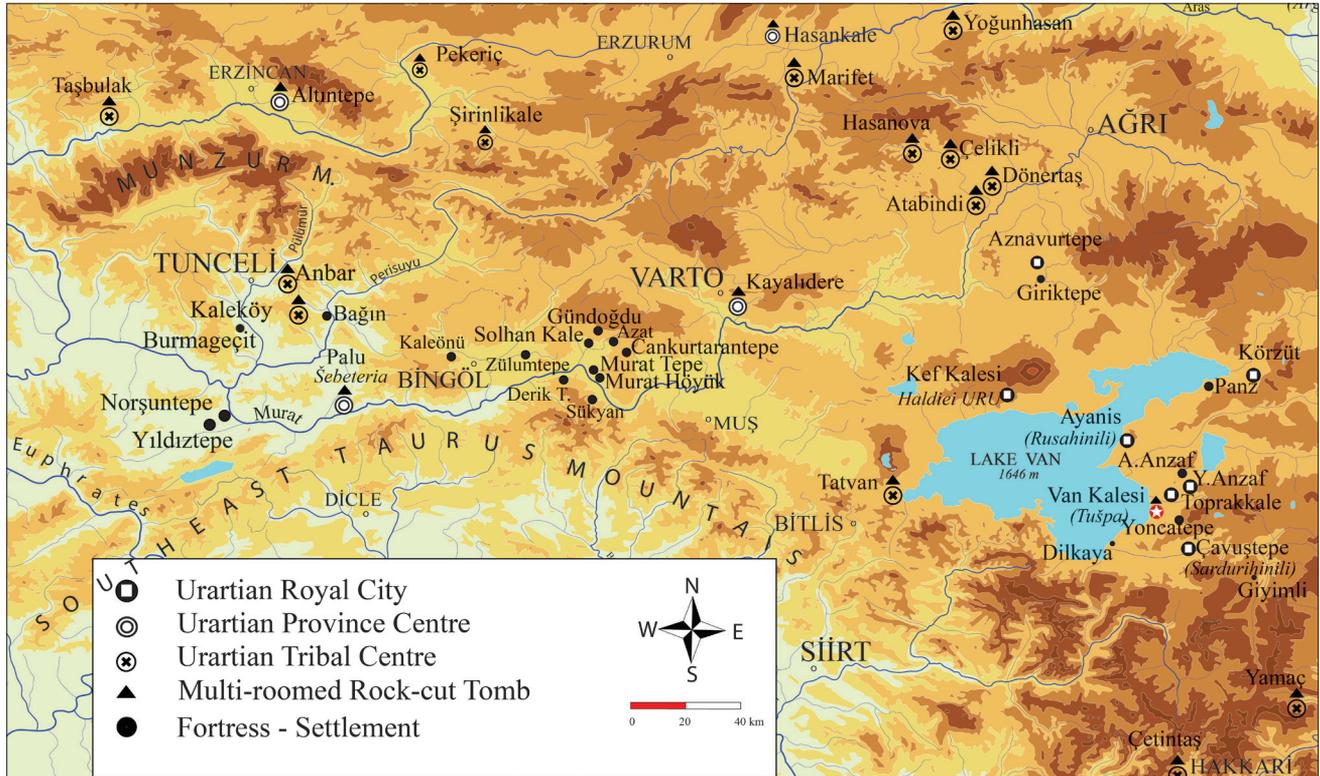


Figure 1: Map of Iron Age sites in East Anatolia, showing the location of Murat Tepe and Murat Höyük / *Doğu Anadolu'da Murat Tepe ve Murat Höyük'ün Konumu ve Demir Çağı'na Ait Bazı Merkezler*



Figure 2: Murat Tepe (right) and Murat Höyük (left) on the bank of the Murat River / *Murat Nehri'nin bitişiğinde yer alan Murat Tepe (sağda) ve Murat Höyük (solda)*

Zülümtepe and Kaleönü, which are located today within the central district of modern Bingöl province (Sevin, V., 1987). During more recent surveys conducted by our team in 2019, seven more Iron Age fortress/settlement sites were documented within the borders of modern Solhan district (Danışmaz, H. and Koroğlu, K., 2022, p. 68).

Red burnished wares and potters' marks are frequently attested at excavated Urartian cities. Because the official buildings of the Urartian Kingdom such as temples, palace complexes and administrative structures are located at urban centres, red burnished wares that are frequently found in cities can be regarded as the material culture correlates of an urban, elite and palatial tradition.

However, there is near to no information about the distribution of red burnished wares in the mountainous and isolated regions of East Anatolia, which remained outside the hegemony of the cities. One of the obvious reasons for this lack of information is that archaeological investigations on the Urartu have so far focused on Urartian cities located in Lake Van and Lake Sevan basins in the core region of the kingdom. Therefore, the tangible evidence for the influence of the kingdom on rural areas consists of masonry techniques of fortresses, multi-roomed rock-cut tombs, and ceramic sherds found in surface surveys. The group of ceramics discussed in this study, on the other hand, are excavated finds. In other words, these ceramics come from architectural contexts; and as such, they provide more reliable information about the influence of Urartian royal cities on rural areas.

## MURAT TEPE AND MURAT HÖYÜK

Murat Tepe is located in Solhan district of modern Bingöl province. The site is situated on the northeast bank of the Murat River at the point where the river meanders east. The settlement is founded on top of a natural outcrop that has an ovoid shape, measuring approximately 135x85m (Fig. 2). The rocky outcrop is about 18 m higher than the bottom of the valley. The entire settlement area was investigated by excavation during salvage excavations conducted at Murat Tepe. Two settlement phases were identified at the site. The topmost layer is represented by architectural ruins dating to the Medieval Period. Below these architectural remains, an earlier structure was identified with its foundations cut into the bedrock. This earlier structure has a roughly rectangular plan and covers an area of 29x19m. The remains of wall foundations suggest that the structure had at least five rooms. Based on diagnostic finds such as a stamp-decorated sherd found in this structure, and burial gifts including a belt fragment found in an associated grave (discussed below), we may conclude that these contexts are contemporary with the Urartian Kingdom (Özdemir et al. 2019; Özdemir, A., 2021).

The adjacent site of Murat Höyük is situated on the bank of the Murat River, just to the east of Murat Tepe. The settlement is orientated northeast–southwest, and it is flanked by the river on its southern and eastern sides. The site covers an area of approximately 1ha (Özdemir, A. and Özdemir, A., 2021).

Excavations have revealed four cultural periods at Murat Höyük:

Level	Period
I	Medieval Period (ninth-tenth centuries AD)
II	Middle Iron Age – Urartu (ninth-sixth centuries BC)
III	Early Iron Age (12th-10th centuries BC)
IV	Early Bronze Age III (2500-2200 BC)

The topmost level (Level I) at Murat Höyük dates to the Medieval Period (ninth-tenth centuries AD). In various sectors, foundations of the Medieval Period structures have disturbed the architectural remains of the Middle Iron Age settlement that lies directly below. Architectural remains of the Medieval Period settlement have also been disturbed to a large extent by modern agricultural activity. Prominent finds from this settlement level include bronze crosses, iron arrowheads and spearheads, coins and locally produced, unglazed ceramics. Similarly, the Middle Iron Age structure identified at Murat Tepe was also disturbed by Medieval Period architecture. Portable cooking pots (locally known as ‘pleki’) found in the topsoil above the Medieval Period structures, inform us about the latest period of inhabitation at Murat Höyük. These portable cooking pots were used by nomadic pastoralist groups in the region in recent historical periods. Similar examples of portable cooking pots known from Ziyaret Tepe excavations in Diyarbakır are still in use in present-day in mountainous areas of the eastern Black Sea region (Uzun, A. and Uzun, S., 2001).

The Middle Iron Age settlement (Level II) at Murat Höyük, which constitutes the focus of this study, lies directly below the Medieval Period level and is represented by a monumental structure with two building phases and associated structures. The foundations of this structure trench in as deep as the Early Bronze Age building level. This monumental structure is orientated north–south, and its main entrance is located on its south wall. The main entrance is followed by two steps and a flagstone-paved corridor, which leads into the main hall/courtyard. Subsidiary rooms and storage rooms are accessed from this central courtyard, which has a packed earth floor.

This Middle Iron Age structure is entirely built of roughly dressed, large stone blocks, and wall thickness reaches 2m in certain sections. The building’s ground floor level is almost completely preserved, and its still-standing walls spread across almost the entire expanse of the mound. Urartian red burnished ware ceramics and sherds with potters’ marks discussed in this study are some of the diagnostic finds that allow the chronological assessment of this building. A ‘Scythian’-type, barbed

arrowhead found between masonry blocks on the face of the walls marks the terminus ante quem for the building as seventh century BC (Çavuşoğlu et al. 2021, p. 267, 275, figs. 8, 12). Moreover, this date is confirmed by the burial goods found in a simple inhumation grave (Grave MH19) dug into the thick walls of the earlier phase of this monumental structure. Particularly significant finds from this burial are earrings, chain fragments, beads and bracelets, which reflect the influence of Urartian jewellery styles (Çavuşoğlu et al. 2021). Additionally, in a storage room located among the subsidiary rooms north of the main structure, charred wheat grains were found inside an in situ ceramic pot. C-14 analysis (Tübitak 0835) of these grains yielded a date range of 650 – 544 BC (2 sigma).

Level III at Murat Höyük dates to the Early Iron Age. This level and its two building phases are documented by excavations in an area measuring 30x40m in the western part of the mound. This level is represented by architectural remains with rectangular plans, built with undressed, medium-sized cobble stones. This settlement level has come to an end with an intense fire. C-14 analysis of carbonized wood remains from one of the burnt buildings yields a date range between 12th – 10th centuries BC. Intact, grooved ware found in situ inside this building are characteristic examples of this period’s ceramic repertoire, which also confirms this date range.

The earliest habitation level at Murat Höyük, Level IV, dates to the Early Bronze Age. This settlement period is represented by rectangular structures built with mudbrick on stone foundations, which have also come to an end with an intense fire. C-14 analysis of carbonized wood remains from this level indicate a habitation period between 2500 – 2200 BC. Ceramics constitute the most prominent find group from this level, consisting of predominantly local forms and fewer examples of Karaz ware.

## POTTERS’ MARKS FROM MURAT TEPE AND MURAT HÖYÜK

Potters’ marks are intentionally executed marks on ceramic vessels, consisting of symbols that are neither inscriptions nor decorative elements. These marks are considered distinct from symbols demarcating scale or volume that are often inscribed below the handle, after the vessel has been fired (Schuler, E., 1972; Klein J. J., 1974; Salvini, M., 1995; Dinçol, A., M. and Dinçol, B., 2011).

Potters’ marks were applied on wet clay before the pots were fired. Technically, potters’ marks are categorized in two groups: stamped marks and incised marks (Derin, Z., 1999; Erdem, A. Ü., 2013). The most common incised motifs are +, X, trident, tree, U, butterfly and circular



Figure 3: Stamped marks of Urartian potters on sherds from (1, 3) Murat Höyük and (2) Murat Tepe / *Murat Höyük (1,3) ve Murat Tepe'de (2) Ele Geçen Urartu Çömlekçi Ustasına Ait Damga Baskı İzleri*

motifs. Stamped marks may consist of a single motif such as a crescent, a four- or five-petal rosette, a mountain goat, a lion or an anthropomorphic figure, or they may depict figurative scenes involving hybrid creatures.

The use of potters' marks in Eastern Anatolia dates back to the pre-Iron Age (Glatz, C., 2012). Among the pottery dated to the Late Bronze Age layer of Arslantepe (Manuelli, F., 2013, pp. 209-212, 381-382) and Korucutepe (Umurtak, G., 1996, pp. 94-98), sherds marked with stamped and incised marks were found. Similarly, pottery marks are found on the bottom parts of the bowls in the Late Bronze Age building levels of Imikuşağı (Konyar, E., 2002, p. 385).

The purpose, function and the meaning of 'potters' marks' remain debated issues in scholarship (See for discussion: Zimansky, P., 2006, pp. 263-268). In his discussion of marks on ceramics found at Toprakkale, Van Loon categorises the marks below the handles as hieroglyphs that indicate vessel capacity and the marks on the bases as potters' marks. Van Loon (1966) also states that Toprakkale potters' marks, which consist of crescents and rosettes, were applied on ceramics before firing. Burney, on the other hand, refrains from identifying such marks on pithoi at Kayalidere as hieroglyphic inscriptions (Burney, C., 1966, p. 83). To the contrary, Barnett (1974) regards not only marks on ceramics, but also similar marks on metal items and in seal impressions as examples of a Urartian hieroglyphic script (Barnett, R. D., 1974). From a philological point of view, however, experts state that Urartian hieroglyphs had just emerged in the later phase of the kingdom and never had sufficient time to develop fully into a hieroglyphic script before the

collapse of the kingdom (Dinçol, A. M. and Dinçol, B., 2011).

Potters' marks have been identified on three sherds belonging to three individual pots found in excavations at Murat Tepe and Murat Höyük (Figs. 3-5). All three examples are stamped marks. The first example comes from Murat Höyük and belongs to a wheel-made, hard-fired, globular jar that is made of light red paste and is pink slipped on the exterior. The potter's mark is situated on the shoulder of the jar, where the neck joins the body. The stamped design consists of a bull's head with sharp pointed horns and an eight-spiked star above. The design is bordered by a band on each side that extends from the level of the tip of the horns all the way down to the bottom of the mark (Figs. 4.1, 5.1).

The second example is found at the adjacent site, Murat Tepe. The stamped sherd belongs to a wheel-made, hard-fired, short-necked, globular jar, like the other two examples. The rim diameter is 9cm. The jar is made of reddish-yellow coloured paste and is self-slipped. The stamped mark is situated on the neck and depicts a figure that resembles a mountain goat (Figs. 4.2, 5.2).

The last sherd bearing a potter's mark is found at Murat Höyük. The sherd belongs to a wheel-made jar, made of reddish-yellow coloured paste and is pale brown slipped. The rim diameter is 10cm and there are two grooves at the bottom of the neck. The potter's mark is situated in the lower part of the neck, as in the previous example. The stamped mark has a central motif that

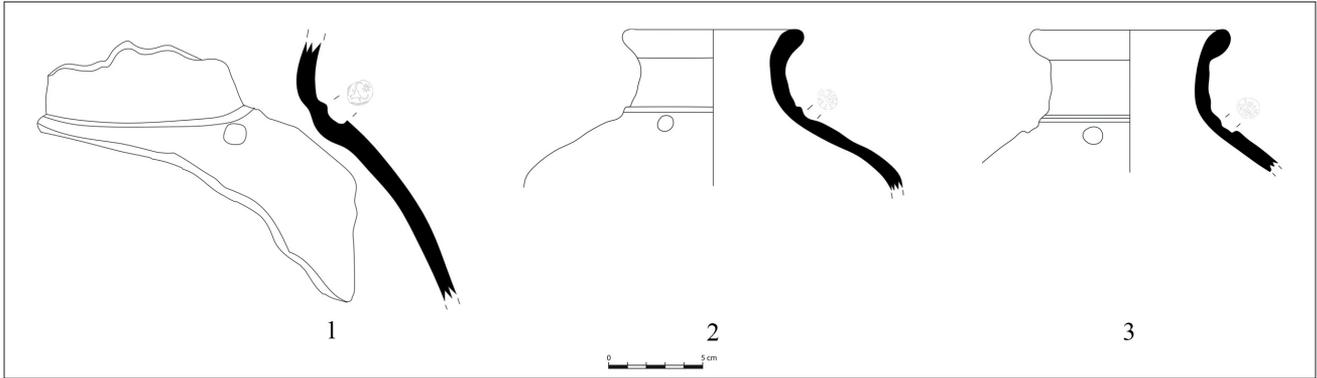


Figure 4: Forms of ceramic vessels bearing the Urartian potters' marks at (1, 3) Murat Höyük and (2) Murat Tepe / *Murat Höyük* (1,3) ve *Murat Tepe*'de (2) *Ele Geçen Urartu Çömlekçi Ustasına Ait Damga Baskı İzleri Formları*



Figure 5: Close-up view and illustration of stamped Urartian potters' marks on sherds from (1, 3) Murat Höyük and (2) Murat Tepe / *Murat Höyük* (1,3) ve *Murat Tepe*'de (2) *Ele Geçen Urartu Çömlekçi Ustasına Ait Damga Baskı İzleri*

resembles a dog. A small, outward-facing crescent is visible to the right of the central canine figure. Three more small figures are present surrounding the central figure, which (though cannot be easily identified) are likely to be representing mythical, hybrid creatures (Figs. 4.3, 5.3).

Exact parallels of potters' marks found at Murat Höyük and Murat Tepe are not present in the currently known repertoire of potters' marks. However, similar examples of crescent, star and bull figures are known from stamped potters' marks and seal impressions. The crescent motif appears frequently on pottery at Ayanis

(Derin, Z., 1999, figs. 4-5). The star is a common motif on some pottery from Van and Çavuştepe (Payne, M., 2005, Catalogue Bc. 1-5); however, these are incised marks unlike the examples discussed here. A Urartian red burnished ware sherd found at Toprakkale bears the bull motif (Lehmann-Haupt, C. F., 1931, p. 579).

In all three examples discussed here, potters' marks were stamped on wet clay, after the vessel was formed and before it was fired. Therefore, these marks are undoubtedly related with the process of ceramic production. That these marks were 'maker's marks' exclusive for high quality ceramics produced by



Figure 6: Urartian Red Burnished/Polished Ware sherds from Murat Höyük / *Murat Höyük, Urartu Kırmızı Perdahlı/Astarlı Seramik Parçaları*

workshops, which catered to the elite classes seems like a viable explanation (Erdem, A. Ü., 2013, p. 204). In fact, at least two pottery workshops were identified at Karmir Blur based on a comparative study of pottery forms and potters' marks (Van Loon, M. N., 1966). On the other hand, similar potters' marks were also found at many excavated sites in the region, namely Van citadel and mound, Toprakkale (Lehmann-Haupt, M. N., 1931, pp. 572-579), Y. Anzaf (Belli, O. and Salvini, M., 2006; Duyar, J., 2007), Ayanis (Erdem, A. Ü., 2013; Kozbe et al. 2001, pp. 102-105, Pl. VIII, XII, XVI, Tab. I), Çavuştepe (Erzen, A., 1976, p. 712; Sivi, Ü., 2018, pp. 52-53), Bastam (Kroll, S., 1979a), Karmir Blur (Piotrovsky, B. B., 1952, fig. 45), Erebuni (Ayvazian, A., 2006), Armavir (Martirosyan, A. A., 1974, figs. 77-80), Altintepe, Kayalidere (Burney, C., 1966, fig. 17), Dilkaya (Sağlamtimur, H., 1994, pl. 79) and Agrab Tepe (Muscarella, O. W., 2013, fig. 21). Although a few motifs (e.g. crescent, clover, star) are attested at multiple sites, the general repertoire of potters' marks encompasses hundreds of unique motifs. Therefore, it is not plausible to identify each individual potters' mark as the maker's mark of an individual pottery workshop.

## RED BURNISHED WARE FROM MURAT HÖYÜK

Red burnished ware is one of the most diagnostic traits of the Urartian Kingdom. In general, these ceramics are hard-fired and characterised by a thick slip in red or grey-black tones with a highly burnished, glossy finish. Researchers have variably labelled this ware group as 'Toprakkale ware' (Burney, C., 1957), 'Urartian red polished ware' (Burney, C., 1973), 'Palastware' (Kroll, S., 1976) and 'Bianili ware' (Tarhan, T. and Sevin, V., 1976-77).

Chronologically, red burnished pottery begins to appear in East Anatolia contemporaneously with the foundation of the Urartian Kingdom. This pottery group is widely attested at excavated royal cities such as Ayanis (Kozbe et al. 2001, pp. 86-87), Bastam (Kroll, S., 1979b, p. 203),

Karmir-Blur (Piotrovsky, B. B., 1952, pp. 33-34), Arinberd (Martirosyan, A. A., 1961, p. 116), Toprakkale (Erzen et al. 1962), Kef Kalesi (Bilgiç, E. and Ögün, B., 1968, p. 49) and Çavuştepe (Erzen, A., 1988, p. 40). In addition to royal cities, red burnished pottery has also been found at province centres such as Altintepe (Emre, K., 1969, pp. 281-284), Kayalidere (Burney, C., 1966, p. 357) which are located outside the core region of the kingdom.

Urartian red burnished pottery, which has its own standards, is the product of industrial production (Erdem, A. Ü., and Konyar, E., 2011, p. 272; Batmaz, A., 2019, pp. 38-40). Hence it is likely that it was produced in the central workshops affiliated with the monarch and was used by the members of higher social classes. For this reason, apart from royal cities, red burnished ware is also found in elite residences, such as private mansions and palaces of governors. Although most exquisite examples of red burnished ceramics were unearthed at Yoncatepe Palace excavations (Ayyıldız, N., 2006), only a few examples of red burnished ceramics were found in excavations at the nearby settlement site (Belli, O., 2011, p. 464). Likewise, at Ayanis, the concentration of red burnished pottery is much higher on the citadel than the lower town settlement (Erdem, A. Ü., and Konyar, E., 2011, p. 270). Therefore, the distribution pattern of red burnished ware shows a high concentration in cities and palaces, where the ruling elite and the higher social classes lived, and its attestations decrease considerably in surrounding rural areas.

Red burnished ware ceramics found at Murat Höyük excavations consist of base, body and handle sherds belonging to bowls and jars (Figs. 6-7). These are all high-quality ceramics made of a well-prepared and carefully refined paste with fine sand and grit inclusions. Vessels are wheel-made and hard-fired.

The first two sherds presented here are rim sherds that belong to two individual, wide bowls with thickened rim (Figs. 6.4-5; 7.4-5). Both bowls are similar in form and dimensions. Only one of the examples has a shallow

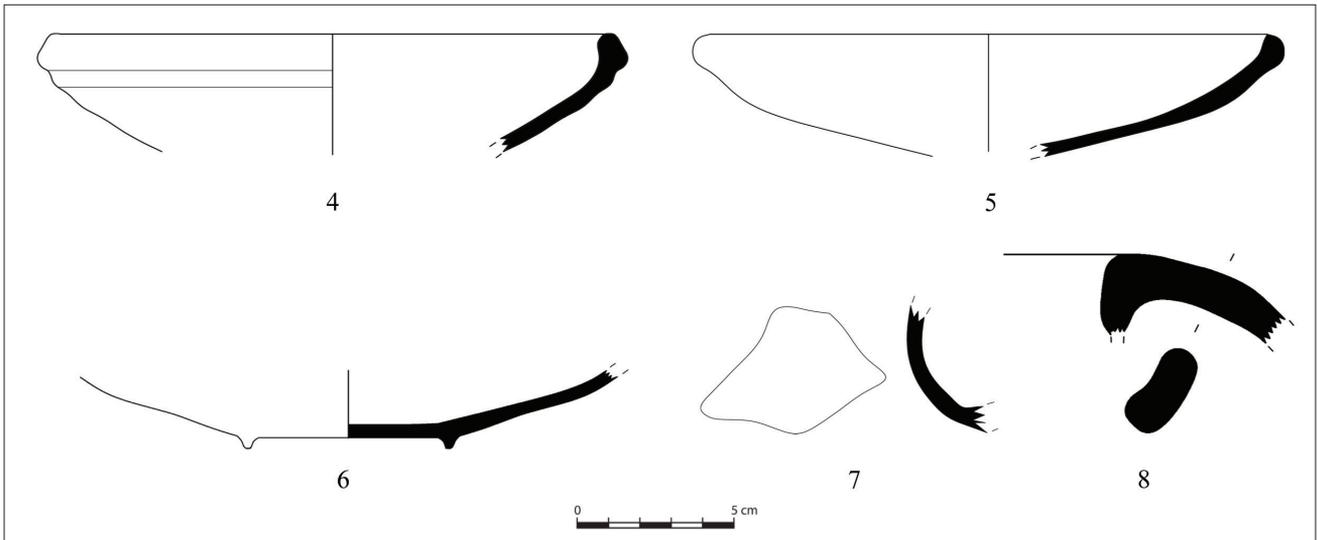


Figure 7: Urartian Red Burnished/Polished Ware forms at Murat Höyük / *Murat Höyük, Urartu Kırmızı Perdahlı/Astarlı Seramik Parçaları Formları*

groove below the rim (Figs. 6.4; 7.4). The only base sherd found at the mound belongs to a simple, ring-base bowl (Figs. 6.6; 7.6). Another red burnished ware sherd can be identified as belonging to the neck of a jar (Figs. 6.7; 7.7). Only one handle sherd was found during excavations, which belongs to a vertical strap handle (Figs. 6.8; 7.8). However, because the sherd belongs to the mid-section of the handle and is broken on both ends, it is not possible to identify the form of the vessel it was attached to.

Of the five red burnished ware sherds from Murat Höyük, three bowl sherds (Figs. 6.4-6; 7.4-6) and the jar sherd (Figs. 6.7; 7.7) were found in the kitchen and storage rooms of the monumental Middle Iron Age building, located close to the northeast edge of the mound. The handle sherd (Figs. 6.8; 7.8), on the other hand, was found in a different phase of the Middle Iron Age structure, east of the main entrance.

## DISCUSSION

East Anatolia was under Urartian hegemony from the mid-9th century to the late-7th century BC. At an average 2000m altitude from sea level, the region presents particular topographical and environmental challenges. High mountain ranges and river valleys constitute natural barriers between relatively flat intermontane plateaus and basins suitable for permanent settlements. Lake Van basin, where the capital city Tushpa (Van Kalesi) is located, was the core region of the Urartian Kingdom.

Most of our knowledge about the Urartian Kingdom is based on findings from excavations at royal centres (e.g. Van Kalesi, Ayanis, Kef Kalesi, Çavuştepe, Toprakkale and Y. Anzaf) and province centres (e.g. Altıntepe, Kayalıdere) in East Anatolia. The establishment of these cities was

directly financed by the Urartian state in a deliberate effort to encourage nomadic inhabitants of mountainous and rugged territories to permanently settle at central locations (Köroğlu, K., 2011, pp. 23-35). As a result, in addition to temples, palace complexes and storage buildings that abide by standard architectural plans, and advanced infrastructural works commissioned by the kingdom, the common attestation of red burnished wares at these cities indicates that pottery use followed official conventions, as well.

In addition to temples, palace complexes and large storage rooms, which constitute the characteristic architectural imprint of Urartian cities, characteristic elements of urban material culture include luxury items for elite consumption, such as silver, gold and bronze jewellery. In this regard, high-quality, red burnished ware can also be considered as part of the luxurious ensembles of material culture used by higher social classes.

As one goes further away from Urartian cities, the cultural influence of the kingdom becomes much less obvious in rural and mountainous areas. In these remote regions, the most tangible types of evidence for the kingdom's influence are made manifest in the dry masonry technique of fortress walls, stone-carving craftsmanship of multi-room rock-cut tombs and also rock signs. Additionally, archaeological excavations have also demonstrated the presence of Urartian settlements, where multi-room rock-cut tombs and rock signs are not present (Muscarella, O. W., 2013).

Murat Höyük and Murat Tepe, where the ceramic finds presented in this study were found, are archaeological sites located in Solhan district. In light of recent investigations, Solhan district appears to be a lively

region during the Iron Age, unlike previously thought. Many previously unrecognised settlements have been documented north of the Murat River in recent regional surveys (Fig. 1). We have no evidence for assessing how and to what extent these settlements were linked to the administrative centre of the kingdom. Nevertheless, red burnished ceramics and potters' marks found at Murat Höyük and Murat Tepe indicate that these sites were in some way connected with Urartian cities.

While red burnished ware ceramics are found in large quantities in Urartian cities, this ware is represented by very few examples at Murat Höyük. Although nearly 70% of the entire mound has been excavated, the total number of red burnished ware vessels represented by sherds found at the site is limited to five. Four of these sherds come from the kitchen and storage rooms of the monumental Middle Iron Age building close to the eastern sector of the mound. Additionally, charred wheat grains were found in a pithos in a storage room in this sector and C-14 analysis (Tübitak 0835) of these grains has yielded a date range between 650–544 BC (2 sigma).

Another line of evidence for the influence of Urartian pottery traditions at Murat Höyük and adjacent Murat Tepe is three jar sherds with stamped potters' marks on the shoulder, each belonging to a different vessel. In general, just like red burnished ware, stamped or incised potters' marks are known predominantly from Urartian cities. The attestation of only a few examples of red burnished ceramics and potters' marks at the remotely located sites of Murat Höyük and Murat Tepe indicates that (at least) red burnished ceramics (if not jars with potters' marks), which were social status-markers and items of elite consumption, must have come to the site from an external source, suggesting that these sites were in communication with Urartian cities.

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## APPENDIX: CATALOGUE OF SHERDS

**No. 1.** Jar fragment (MH19), reddish (7.5 R 6/8) paste, reddish pink (7.5 YR 7/4) slipped, fine sand and few grit inclusions, hard-fired, wheel-made (Figs. 3.1, 4.1, 5.1)

**No. 2.** Jar fragment (MT18), reddish yellow (5 YR 6/6) paste, lightly slipped in the same colour as paste, fine sand and grit tempered, hard-fired, wheel-made, rim: 9cm (Figs. 3.2, 4.2, 5.2)

**No. 3.** Jar fragment (MH19), reddish yellow (5 YR 7/6) paste, pale brown (10 YR 8/4) slipped, fine sand and few grit inclusions, hard-fired, wheel-made, rim: 10cm (Figs. 3.3, 4.3, 5.3)

**No. 4.** Rim fragment of a bowl (MH19), red (2.5 YR 4/8) paste, red (10 R 4/6) slipped, fine sand and grit tempered, hard-fired, wheel-made, rim: 18cm (Figs. 6.4, 7.4)

**No. 5.** Rim fragment of a bowl (MH19), red (2.5 YR 4/6) paste, red (10 R 4/8) slipped, fine sand and grit tempered, hard-fired, wheel-made, rim: 18cm (Figs. 6.5, 7.5)

**No. 6.** Ring-based bowl fragment (MH19), red (2.5 YR 4/6) paste, red (10 R 4/8) slipped, fine sand and grit tempered, hard-fired, wheel-made, rim: 8cm (Figs. 6.6, 7.6)

**No. 7.** Neck fragment of a jar (MH19), reddish yellow (5 YR 6/6) paste, red (10 R 4/8) slipped, fine sand tempered, hard-fired, wheel-made (Figs. 6.7, 7.7)

**No. 8.** Handle fragment (MH19), yellowish red (5 YR 5/6) paste, red (10 R 4/8) slipped, fine sand and few grit inclusions, hard-fired, wheel-made (Figs. 6.8, 7.8)

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