

Old Hittite Presence in the East of the Euphrates in the Light of the Stratigraphical Data from İmikuşağı (Elazığ)

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Abstract

İmikuşağı is one of the centres where cultural change in the east of the river Euphrates during the second millennium can be observed most clearly. The mound comprehends the Assyrian Colonies Period, represented by Habur ware of the beginning of the second millennium, and the Old Hittite culture, reflected by monumental city walls and in situ finds beneath a Hittite Empire Period settlement.

The Hittite settlement, which was built upon a flood layer covering the Assyrian Colonies Period remains, consists of a strong stone-based mud-brick city wall, square rooms with ovens in the west and storage structures relating to them further in the south. Viewing the typology and decoration of the pottery vessels found there in situ as a whole, they obviously display features of the Central Hittite area.

Not being able to specify the time when Old Hittite influence reached the region exactly, Habur ware is an important benchmark for defining the chronology of this cultural change. İmikuşağı is the mound with the most Habur material in the region. This material is evidently found in situ in the rooms below the flood layer. Level 10 (the Old Hittite settlement), however, is situated above this layer.

Central Anatolian Hittite influence beginning in Level 10 continues in Levels 9–7. Nevertheless, changes in architecture and pottery from Layer 9 onward indicate that the Old Hittite Period is probably limited to Layer 10.

The mound of Elazığ-İmikuşağı is located at the easternmost corner of the central Hittite region (fig. 1). Although it is a remote settlement, geographically it bears characteristics familiar to the Hittite settlements in Central Anatolia. The Euphrates and the lands to the

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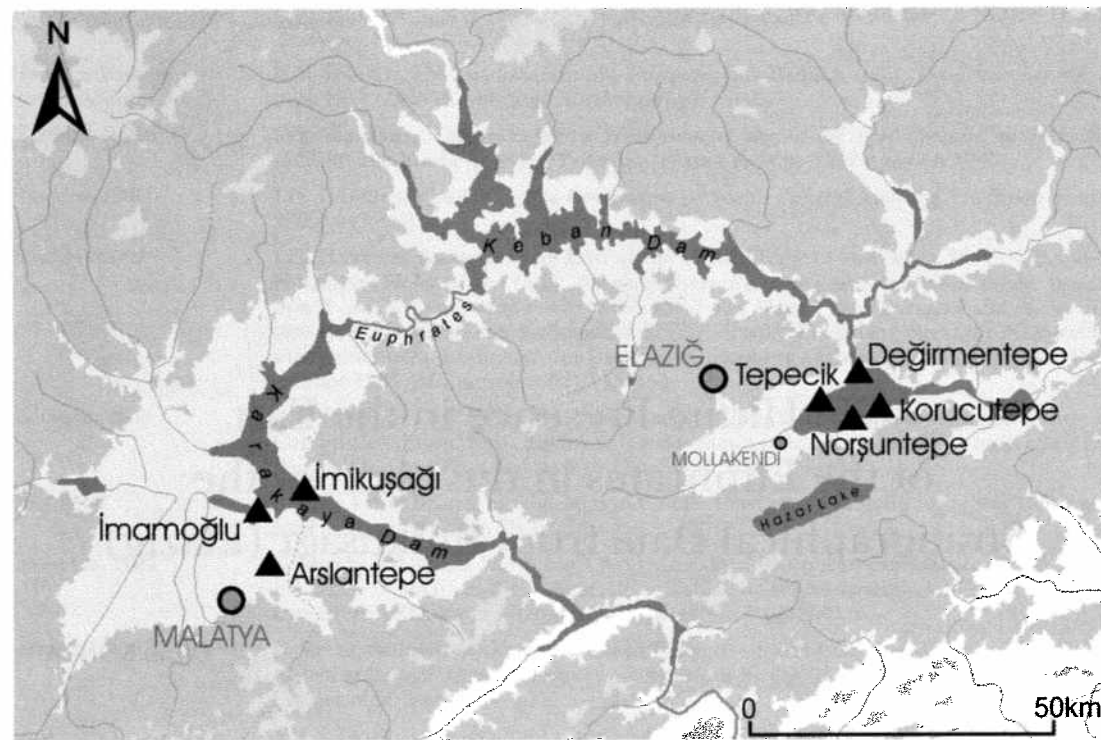


Fig. 1 Old Hittite Centers in Elazığ-Malatya region.

east, where the mountains rise like a barrier, present a difficult terrain to command. Here, I will discuss the date of appearance of the Old Hittite culture and its typical features as well as to what extent they represent the Hittites.

In the period when the Old Hittite Kingdom began to form, this part of Eastern Anatolia appears in some written sources. In a text dated to the reign of Hattušili I (1650–1620 BC), the king says that he crossed the Euphrates on foot and destroyed the cities in the region. The place where Hattušili I crossed the river and the location of the cities are still contended, but the Elazığ-Malatya region is generally the most favoured candidate. Instead of dealing with the written sources and localizations of the above-mentioned cities, I will mention the archaeological material from the Hittite centres, İmikuşağı being the first, Korucutepe, Tepecik, Norşuntepe and Arslantepe.

İmikuşağı is one of the centres where we can observe the cultural changes in the east of the river Euphrates during the second millennium BC. Located opposite the point where the Tohma creek flows into the Euphrates, the mound measures 150 × 200 m and is 38 m above the river bed (Sevin 1995, 1). The excavations were carried out by Veli Sevin between 1981 and 1986, and 14 architectural levels from the second millennium BC up to the Middle Ages were brought to light (Sevin 1995, 7 pp). Above the Assyrian Colonies Period, characterized by the presence of Habur ware, and the Old Hittite level with monumental defence walls and *in situ* finds, settlements of the Hittite Empire Period appear.

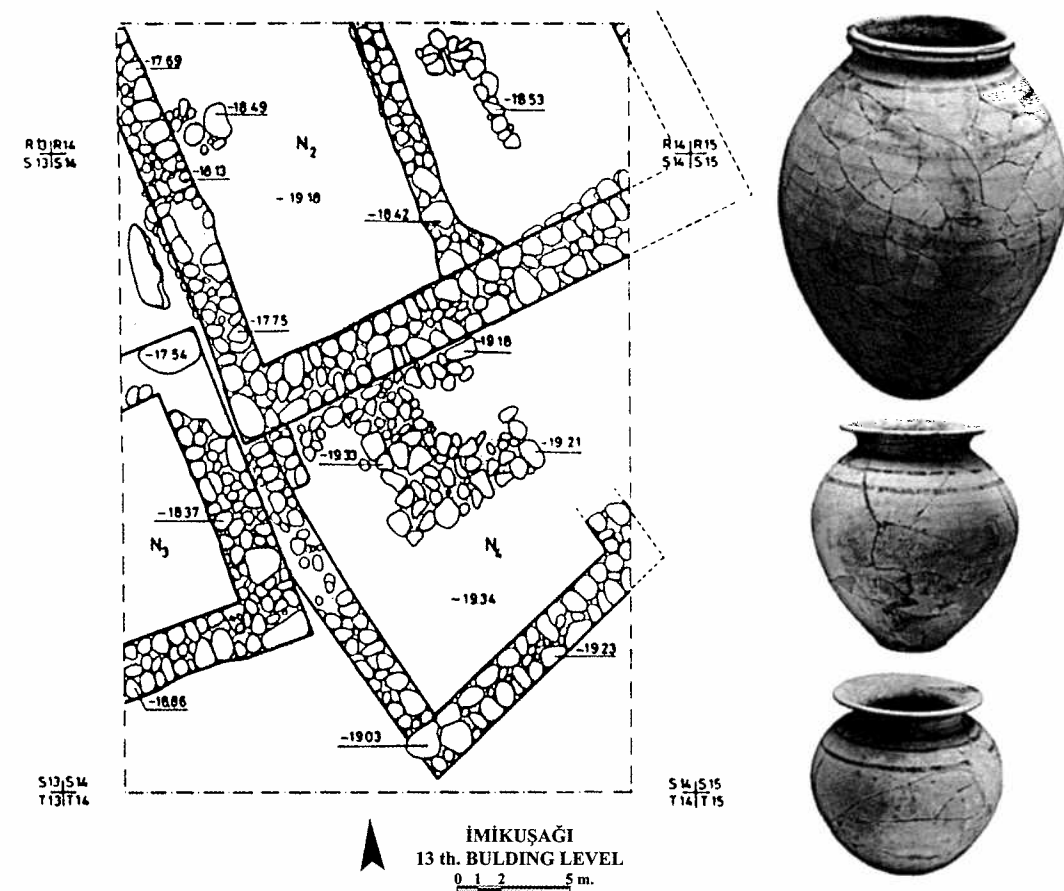


Fig. 2 The architecture and vessels of the 13th level (Habur) in İmikuşağı (after Sevin 1987, Res. 23).

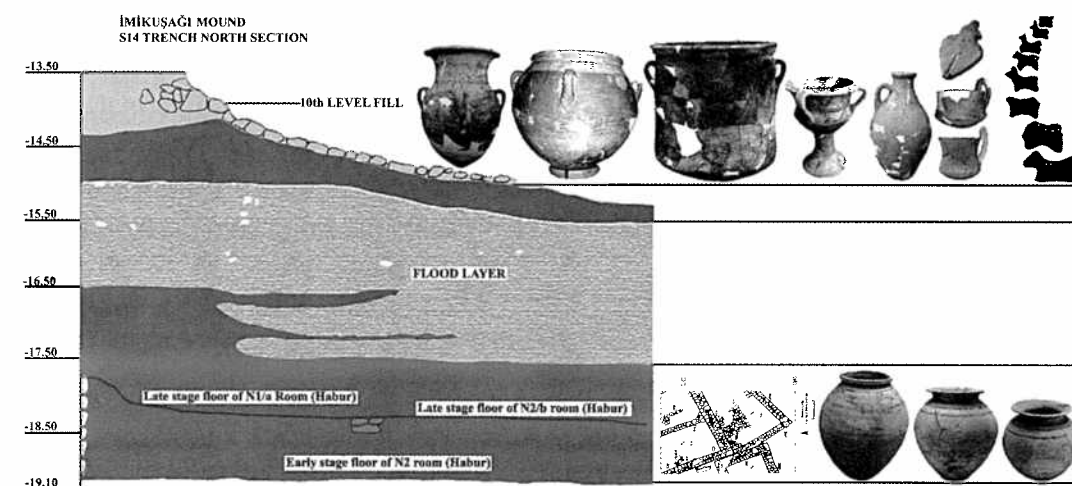


Fig. 3 Section of Trench S 14. The flood layer that separates the Old Hittite and Habur levels is clearly visible.

The existence of a culture with Mesopotamian influences at the beginning of the second millennium BC is evident (Sevin 1988, 383). The terraced settlement in the S 14 trench lies under a flood layer of 2.50 m thickness (fig. 2). The houses are quite large; their walls,

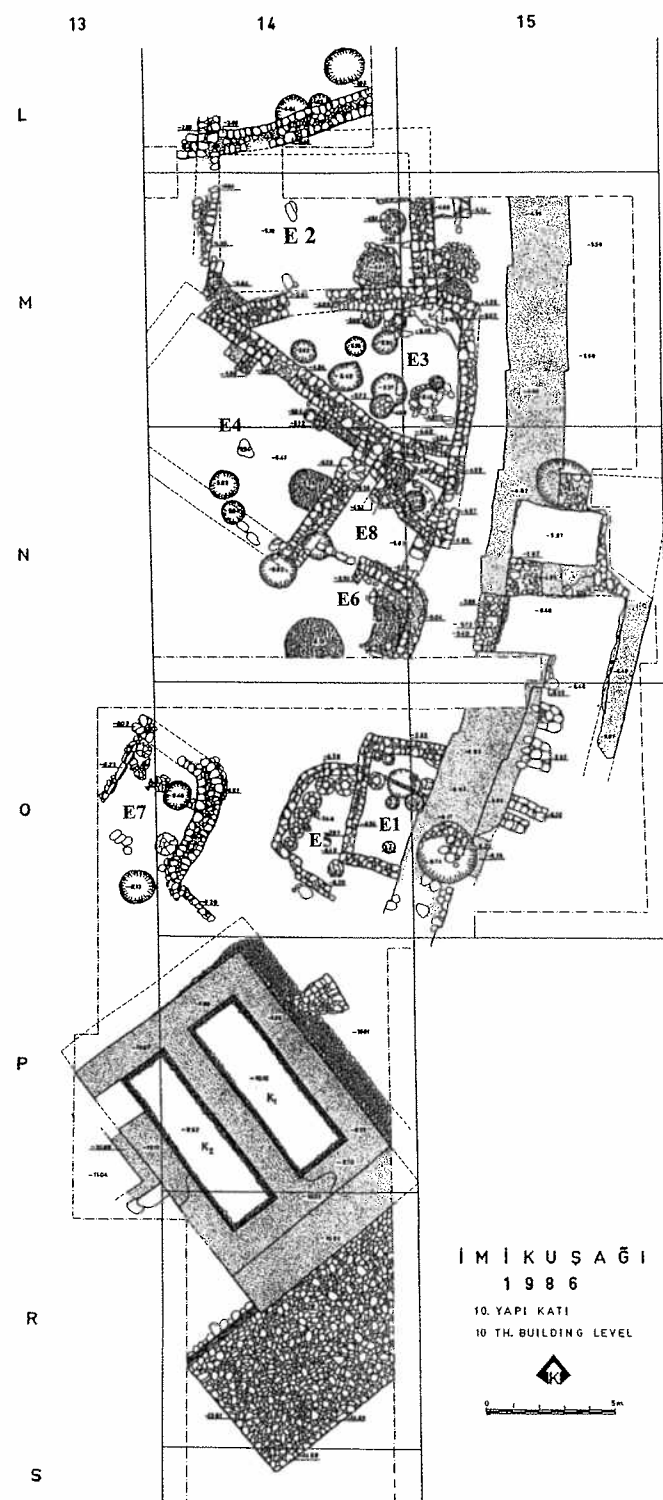


Fig. 4 Old Hittite architecture in İmikuşağı (after Sevin 1987, Res. 3).

plastered both inside and outside, were built with mud-brick on strong stone foundations (Sevin/Derin 1986, 190 pp; Sevin 1987, 310). About 95 % of the ceramics are of the Habur type. The vessels, most of which are intact, are entirely wheel-made and mass produced, with squat necks, broad shoulders and ring bases. Purple bands running parallel to the rim are often observed (Sevin 1988, 383 with res. 3; Kozbe 1993, 72 pp). The absence of Central Anatolian material in the assemblage underlines the homogeneous character of the settlement, and indicates that Central Anatolian influences have not yet reached the region at that time. Although few in number, Habur wares were also found at the İmamoğlu mound on the western bank of the Euphrates, facing İmikuşağı (Uzunoğlu 1985; Uzunoğlu 1986).

After the destruction of this settlement, a flood layer a few metres thick that points to a great water flood in the Euphrates basin covered the buildings. There are similar indications for a flood at Değirmentepe, although its stratigraphy is not fully understood yet (Köroğlu 2001). The flood layer at İmikuşağı marks a change of culture at the site; the Mesopotamian-affected culture entirely transforms into a new culture of Central Anatolian origin (fig. 3). Determining the beginnings of this culture can give İmikuşağı a key role in Old Hittite chronology.

The new settlement above the flood layer consists of a strong mud-brick wall with stone foundations (fig. 4), rectangular buildings with ovens to the west and storerooms related to them further to the south (Sevin/Derin 1986; Sevin 1987). The wall is 2.35 m thick and has 10 cm set-offs placed inside and outside, at 3–4 m intervals. A wooden frame was used at the point where the stone foundation meets the mud-brick superstructure.

There are two magazines to the south of the wall, which have mud-brick walls on stone foundations, reaching up to 3 m in height. They measure 9.60 × 7.80 m and their building technique and positions indicate that these were planned to be built together with the walls. Although it is suggested that they originally belonged to Level 12 and were in use throughout Level 10, here we can speak of phases of a single level judging from the architectural remains.

The buildings inside the walls were built entirely of stone. The earliest phase of the building group in the north is represented by the large E2 hall (7.50 × 5.35 m), rectangular in plan. Its walls are plastered inside and outside and are 1 m thick. In the subsequent phase a second hall with a hearth (E4), again rectangular in plan and in the same size, was built next to the earlier one. An entrance complex (E8), measuring 3.00 × 3.75 m, was added at the front of this hall, which has a hearth at its northeast corner, 1.50 m in diameter. In the third phase (10b), the area in the east, between the halls E2 and E4, was enclosed with a wall, with the result that a new triangular room (E3) emerged. Surrounded with thick walls, it is clear that these halls were not planned for daily purposes, as their architectural features and *in situ* finds indicate.

The buildings at the northern part of the mound have attached storerooms in the south (Sevin 1987, 301 pp). They were entirely of stone as the northern buildings and among these, E1 (4.50 × 2.50 m) meets with the mud-brick wall in the east. Immediately to the west, adjacent to E1, is E5. At the far end of the western wall of E5, storage jars buried down to the shoulder and ovoid jugs around them, portable altars and mugs were unearthed. The storeroom E7, situated a few meters to the west of the above-mentioned storerooms, however, is an independent building.

The rich 10th level vessels given here, mostly found *in situ*, come from the storerooms and halls further to the north.¹ They are the best candidates for understanding and dating the settlement and need special treatment since they reflect the Early Hittite vessel types in the region. Orange and buff slipped vessels form two thirds of the wares. They are all wheel-made and a thin slip was applied on the surface. Burnished examples are rare. Vessels with greenish grey paste and slip were also widely-used. Thin-walled metallic wares and kitchen wares form the other sub-groups.

Thick-walled large bowls with rims thickened on the inside were found scattered in the level, not *in situ*. Thin-walled and carinated spherical bowls with rims thickened on the outside collected from the floor, however, are typical for this level (fig. 5).

¹ Sevin/Derin 1986; Sevin 1987; Konyar 1998; Konyar 2002.

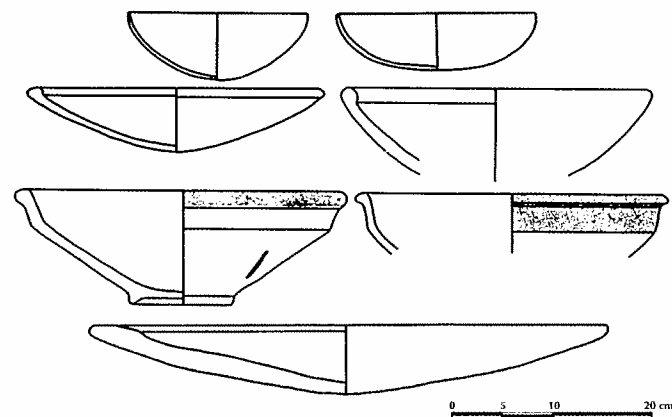


Fig. 5 Old Hittite bowl types from İmikuşağı.

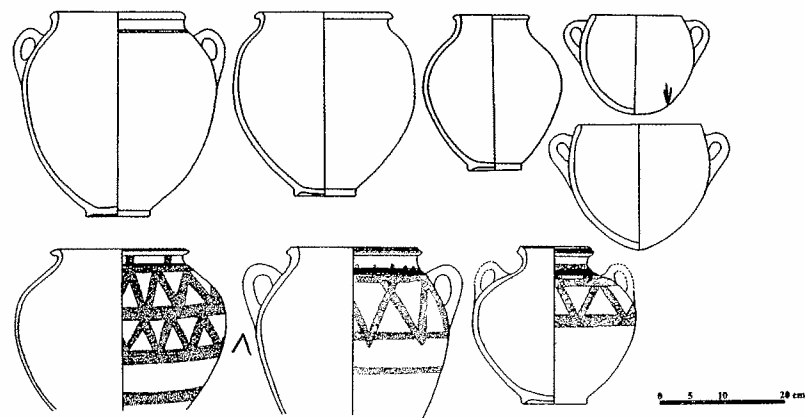


Fig. 6 Old Hittite pot types from İmikuşağı.

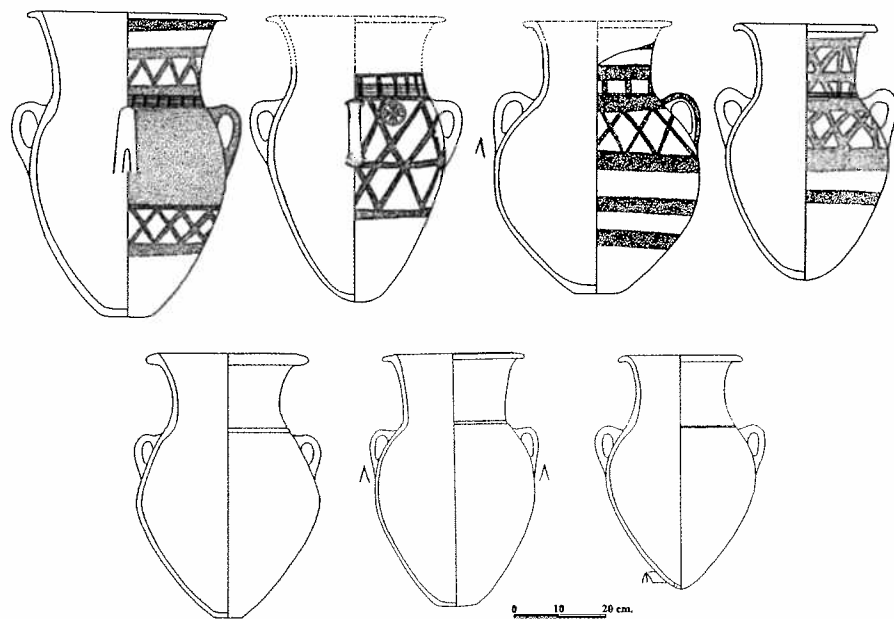


Fig. 7 Old Hittite large vases from İmikuşağı.

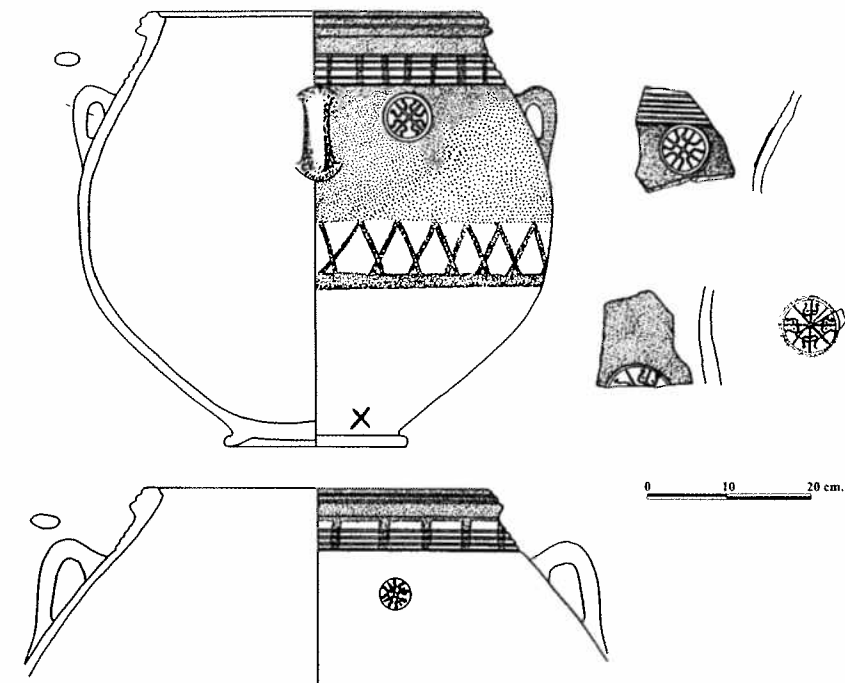


Fig. 8 Old Hittite storage vessels from İmikuşağı bearing Signe Royal stamps.

High-bodied jars with cylindrical necks and flaring rims thickened on the outside are frequent. Painted decorations especially on the neck and shoulder, sometimes spreading to the body, were encountered. Squat-necked or neckless examples with rolled and grooved rims were also found. These, too, bear painted decoration. This abundance of grooved and painted wares is a feature peculiar to İmikuşağı (fig. 6).

Large vases are the most characteristic assemblage of Level 10 (fig. 7). They are high-necked vessels with bodies tapering towards the bottom. They have two or four vertical handles running from the shoulder to the body. There are a few hundred examples, 70–80 cm in height and 40 cm in diameter. Most of them have bands with a thick layer of paint; zigzags and hatches were placed between them. Some examples bear parallel grooves on the point where the shoulder meets the body.

Another vessel type that can be placed in the same group of larger vases consists of pithoi. These have four vertical handles placed on the four sides. The most characteristic feature of these vessels, often carrying painted bands of purple colour, is the fact that they have stamps on their shoulders, 10 cm in diameter (fig. 8). Stamp signs of this kind have been reported on vessels from the Assyrian colonies in Anatolia and from the Old Hittite centres, especially in Kültepe in the central Hittite realm; they are thought to reflect a royal character.

Mugs are vessels with mostly concave, sometimes straight or rolled-in rims and single vertical handles exceeding the lip plane (fig. 9a). There are examples with tripods and sieves, some decorated with incised or incised geometric and floral patterns. Squat or high-necked ovoid pitchers with rounded bases vary in shape and have a single vertical handle

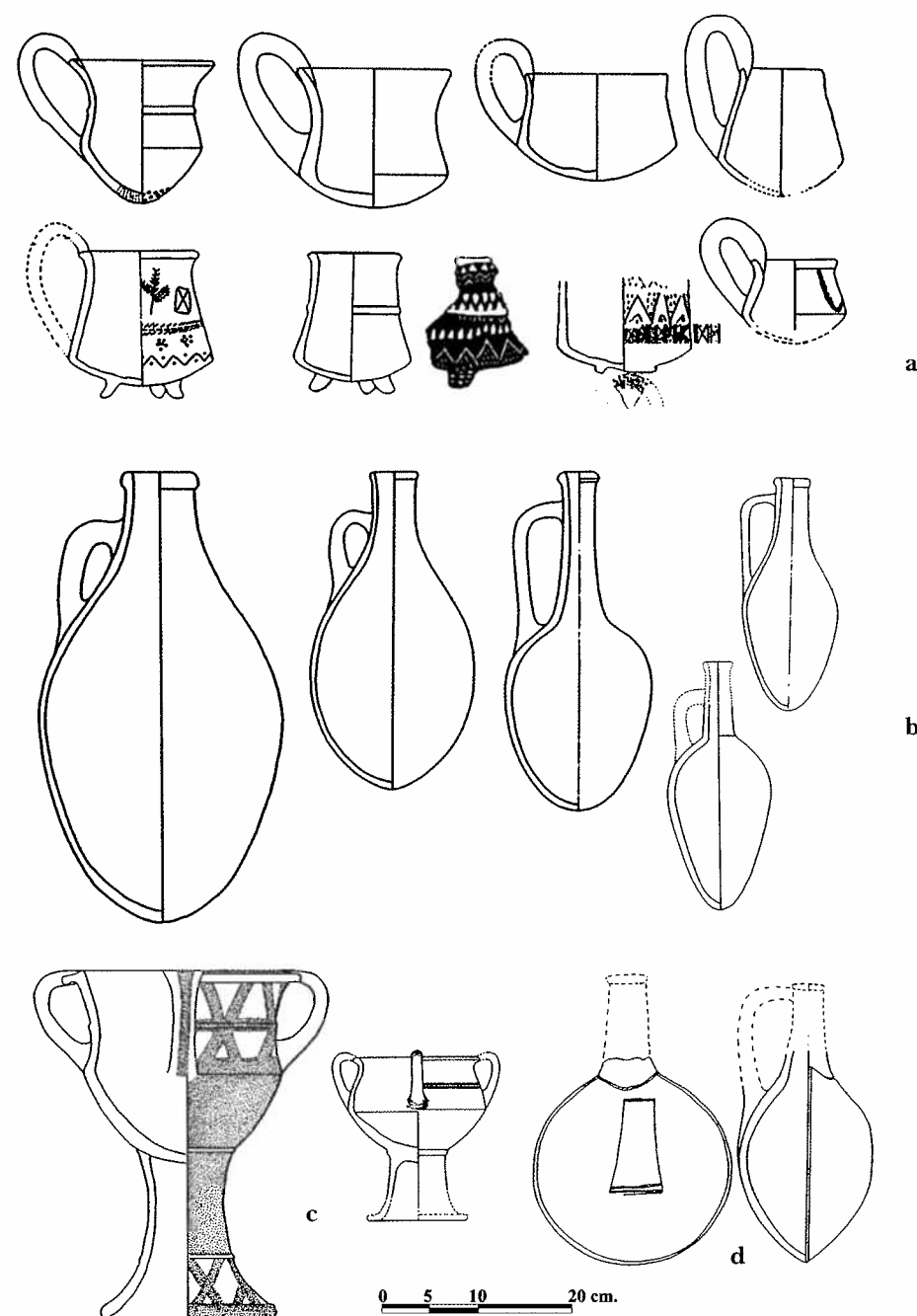


Fig. 9 Examples of Old Hittite flasks, jugs, pitchers and portable altars from İmikuşağı.

(fig. 9b). Two fruit stands/altars with four vertical handles were found *in situ* in the store-rooms (fig. 9c). One of them has hatches between the bands as decoration. The other is smaller and plain. İmikuşağı has yielded only one identifiable flask (fig. 9d). Level 10 also yielded finds such as rhytons and figurines presumably connected with cult activity rather than daily use.

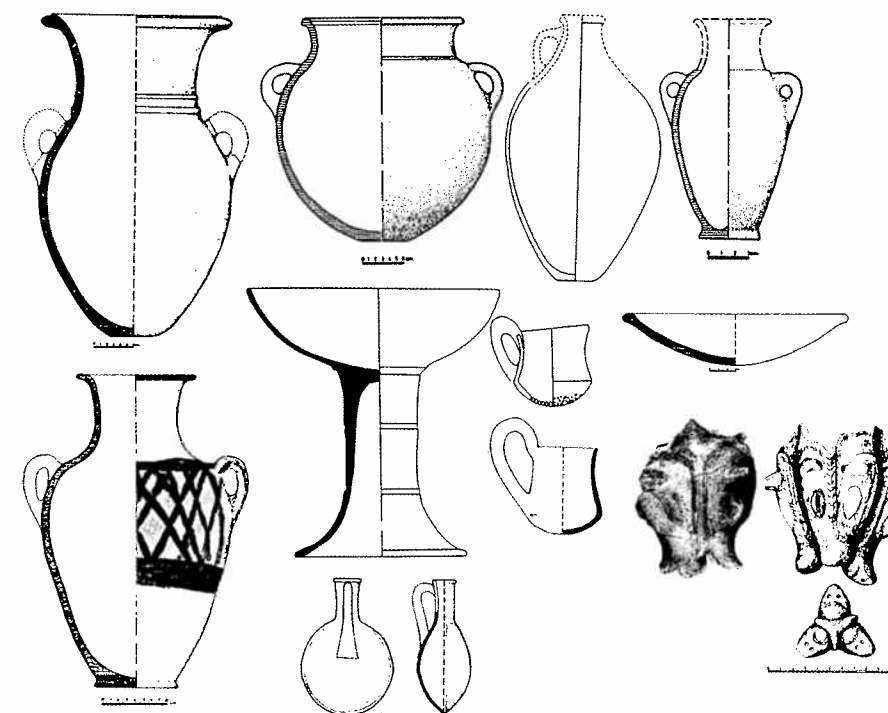


Fig. 10 Vessels from the 3rd level of Tepecik (after Dilgöl 1977; Esin 1971).

In the Levels 9, 8 and 7 above Level 10, the Hittite culture is still dominant. From Level 9 on, however, clear changes in architecture and pottery are visible (Sevin/Köroğlu 1985, 167 pp; Sevin/Derin 1986, 182 pp). The defence wall disappears, and multi-roomed buildings grouped together were built with mud-bricks on stone foundations. Generally, there are houses consisting of rooms located around or at the back of a courtyard. After Level 10, some forms disappear while others become standardised. There is a decrease in the use of larger vessels as well as of painted vessels. Flat bowls or vessels in the form of wide trays begin to appear. Pitchers with pointed bases are only seen above Level 10.

Korucutepe in the Elazığ-Malatya region, Tepecik and Norşuntepe have yielded roughly comparable finds with those of Level 10 at İmikuşağı. The Early Hittite culture exists in levels 3a–b at Tepecik. In the Middle Bronze Age, a new building activity is observed. A new settlement appears on the northern and western terraces of the Early Bronze Age site. These areas show a continuous stratigraphy until the Middle Ages (Esin 1972, 141). The early Hittite period in Tepecik is represented by Levels 3a and 3b. Level 3 is below the foundations of the Hittite Empire Period Level 2 and covered with thick debris. It includes houses, built with mud-brick walls on stone foundations; some of them have courtyards. They were usually formed by a few rooms (Esin 1970). The houses of the earlier Level 3b were also used in 3a (Esin 1971, 113). The buildings were situated in northeast-southwest direction on the terrace walls (Esin 1971, 112). In some rooms the hearths rest against the walls. Finds of daily use are dominant in the rooms and courtyards (Esin 1972, 142). A large rectangular room with a large hearth having two panels was unearthed in Level 3a. Levels 3a and 3b are separated from each other by a thick layer of debris resulting from

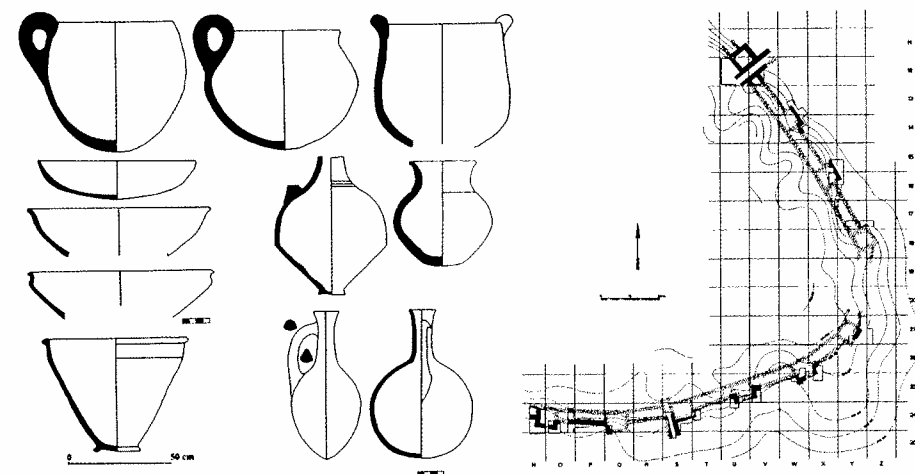


Fig. 11 Architecture and pottery assemblage of level H in Korucutepe (after van Loon 1978; Bear 1978; Griffin 1980).

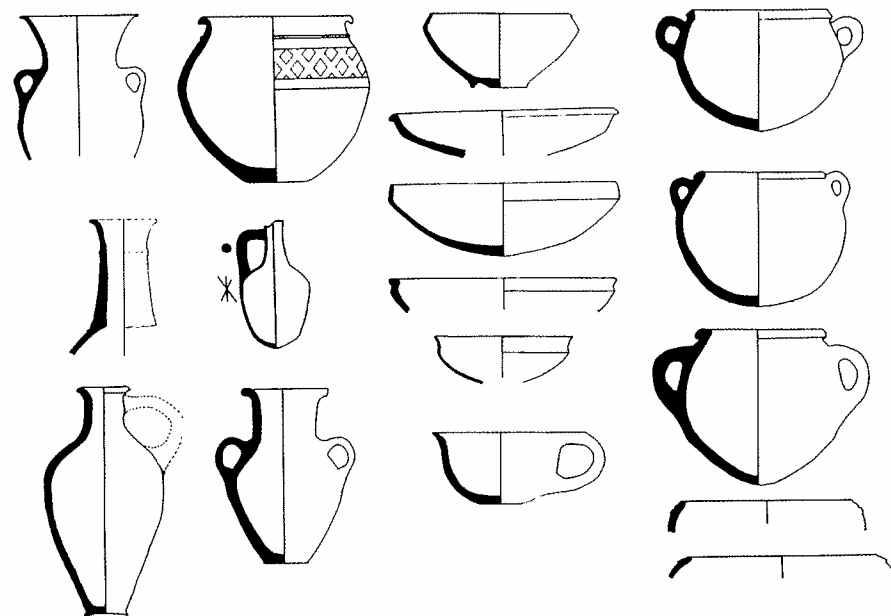


Fig. 12 Level I vessels from Korucutepe (after Griffin 1980).

destruction by fire (Esin 1979, 82). The architectural features of level 3a and level 3b are similar, though we now observe a stronger construction. The thick terrace walls are monumental in appearance and the stones used are much larger (Esin 1974, 114). Neatly paved floors are observed and the walls were plastered and painted with red ochre. Hittite influence continues in Level 2b above the heavily destroyed Level 3. A number of the Level 3 houses, some reduced in size, were still used in 2b, showing minor repairs.

The vessels from Level 3 houses resemble Old Hittite examples from the central Hittite realm and the Keban region in respect to both typology and decoration. Wide plates and bowls with rims thickened on the inside; large vases, pithoi, mugs and pilgrim flasks are characteristic for this level (fig. 10) (Dilgöl 1977).

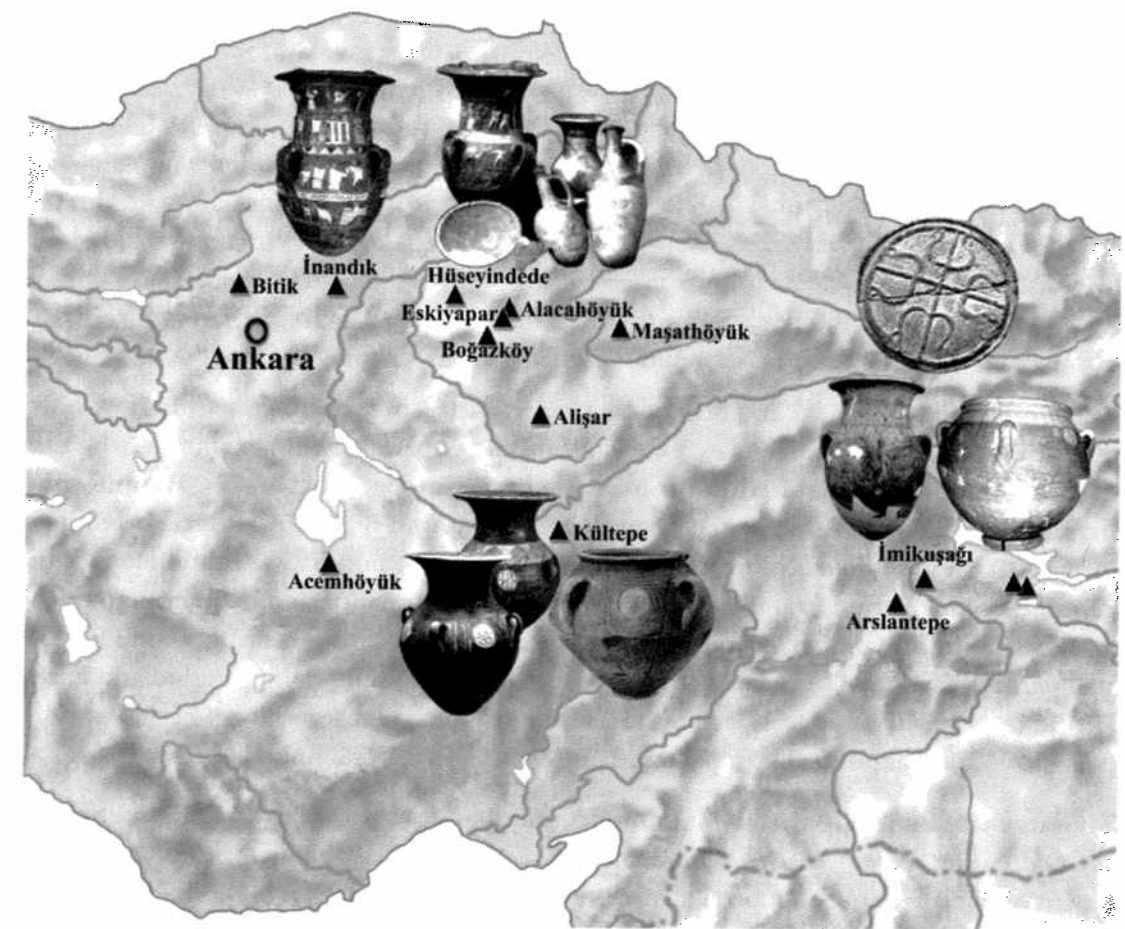


Fig. 13 Principal centres of the Old Hittite period.

At Korucutepe, in the architectural level H, a wall with double stone foundation exists (van Loon 1978, 27 pp; Bier 1978, 47 pp). The mud-brick walls rise on stone foundations which have a thickness of 5.50 m and a height of 2.20 m. Square towers were built at regular intervals along the wall. Radiocarbon analyses give a date in the 17th–16th centuries BC. There are no traces, however, of a settlement inside the walls (Bier 1978, 50). The wares found in this architectural level cannot be evaluated, since they do not have any connection with a stratum. The vessel types and decorations, it seems, differ from the İmikuşagi examples (fig. 11) (Griffin 1980, 14 pp).

Level H comes to an end with a fire. The next level (I) is dated to the 16th cent. BC (1598 ± 59 BC) (Bier 1978, 53). In the earliest stages of Level I, houses were unearthed (van Loon 1978, 30 pp). The vessels have connections with pottery from the Hittite centres in Central Anatolia and the Elazığ-Malatya region (Griffin 1980, 23 pp). The repertoire broadens; high-necked large vases, large jars with two handles and mugs appear. This architectural level, in my opinion, does possess material comparable with Level 10 of İmikuşagi (fig. 12). As is the case in İmikuşagi, Hittite culture continues in Level J.

There are two Hittite levels in Norşuntepe (Hauptmann 1971, 72 pp). The Early Hittite culture is seen in Level IV, above the Assyrian colonies level (Level V). Level IV was subject to much destruction and repair, and includes houses consisting of a few rooms with hearths. Hittite culture continues in Level III above, evidently with a more developed architecture.²

Although Arslantepe on the western bank of the Euphrates, İmamoğlu and Pirot have Old Hittite levels, they are poor in architectural and ceramic remains.³ At Arslantepe, a mud-brick tower on stone foundations and a mud-brick defence system related to it have been excavated. It bears close resemblance to Level H at Korucutepe and Level 10 at İmikuşağı.

In general, the typological and decorative characteristics of level 10 vessels undoubtedly display Central Anatolian features. One can find direct parallels with examples from the Assyrian colonies and Old Hittite centres such as Kültepe, Alacahöyük, Maşathöyük, İnandıktepe, Yanarlar, Acemhöyük, Alishar, Hüseyindede and Boğazköy.⁴ It is reported that in some of these settlements, unlike İmikuşağı, this type of pottery was found along with genuine Colony Period examples. Solid evidence for the relationship between İmikuşağı and the Central Anatolian assemblages are large vases and pithoi bearing "Signe Royal" stamps. Large stamped vases and pithoi were encountered in the Colony Period and Early Hittite levels of Kültepe Ib, Alishar and Alacahöyük.⁵ Large vases with relief decoration come from İnandık, Bitik, Eskiypar and Hüseyindede in Central Anatolia (fig. 13).

The large vases at İmikuşağı, a few hundred in number, are the characteristic vessel type of the Old Hittite settlement. From Level 9 onward, they gradually disappear and are totally absent in the late levels. Stamped examples in particular are not seen in this level or in the subsequent Hittite levels.

In the two early stages (10 d-c) of Level 10, the E4 and E2 halls, the defence wall and its monumental entrance to the east, as well as the finds, suggest that this building complex might have had official and religious functions. Both the rhytons and figurines, and vessels found *in situ* in the halls and storerooms indicate that the settlement was not planned for daily purposes. The settlement may also have served as a storing centre, judging from hundreds of large vases, some stamped and painted, found in the large independent halls and storerooms. Architecturally, the Old Hittite settlement of İmikuşağı differs from other Hittite centres in the region. Large independent halls surrounded by a defence wall are peculiar to the site.

As I mentioned above, the wide repertory of wares in Level 10 narrows from Level 9 on, and the standardized forms known from the Empire Period levels begin to appear. Although we cannot be sure when Hittite influence reached the region, the Habur ware is an essential reference point for the chronology of this cultural transformation. İmikuşağı has yielded much more Habur ware than the other sites in the region, and it is quite clear that this material came *in situ* from the rooms immediately below the flood layer (fig.3). Level 10, i.e. the Old Hittite settlement, was established on this layer. Thus, Habur ware and the flood deposit provide a *terminus post quem* for the Hittite presence in the region. There is no dominant Mesopotamian influence in this new level; it is rather connected to the Old Hittite culture. Central Anatolian Hittite influences continue in Levels 9-7, but it may be that the Old Hittite period proper is limited to Level 10, as is indicated by the changes in architecture and pottery in Level 9 and the subsequent strata.

Fırat'ın Doğusunda Eski Hitit Varlığı: İmikuşağı Höyüğü'nden (Elazığ) Stratigrafik Veriler Işığında

Fırat'ın doğusunda, II. binyıl boyunca meydana gelen kültürel değişimleri açık bir biçimde izleyebileceğimiz merkezlerin başında İmikuşağı gelmektedir. Höyükte II. binyılın başlarına ait Habur çanak çömleği ile temsil edilen Koloni Çağı, anıtsal surlar ve *in situ* buluntuları ile Eski Hitit kültürünü yansıtan tabakalar ve bunların üzerinde de Hitit imparatorluk çağı yerleşmeleri yer almaktadır.

Koloni Çağı yerleşmesi ve üzerinde yer alan sel tabakasından sonra kurulan Hitit yerleşmesi taş temelli güçlü bir kerpiç sur ile batısında ocaklı dikdörtgen mekânlar ve bunlarla ilişkili daha güneydeki depolardan oluşur. Bu alanlardan *in situ* olarak toplanan çanak çömleklerin tipolojik ve bezeme özelliklerine bütün olarak bakıldığında, Merkezi Hitit Bölgesi karakterini taşıdıkları görülür.

Bölgeye eski Hitit etkisinin ne zaman ulaştığını tam olarak saptayamamakla birlikte, bu kültürel değişimin kronolojisinin belirlenmesinde Habur çanak çömlekleri önemli referans noktasıdır. İmikuşağı bölgesinde en yoğun Habur malzemesini barındıran höyüktür ve bu malzemenin kalın bir sel tabakasının altından, odaların içinden *in situ* durumda geldiği açık bir şekilde ortadadır. Eski Hitit olarak tanımladığımız 10. yapı katı ise bu sel tabakası üzerine oturmuştur.

İmikuşağı'nda 10. yapı katında başlayan Orta Anadolu Hitit etkili süreç 9-8 ve 7. yapı katlarında devam etmiştir. Ancak 9. yapı katından itibaren mimari ve çanak çömlekte gözlenen değişiklik eski Hitit sürecinin 10. yapı katı ile sınırlı olabileceğine işaret etmektedir.

² Hauptmann 1971, 72 pp; Hauptmann 1972, 95; Korbelt 1985.

³ Palmieri 1972; Palmieri 1973; Frangipane 1993-1997 (Arslantepe). - Uzunoglu 1984, 237 (İmamoğlu). - Akdeniz/Karaca 2004 (Pirot).

⁴ Özgüç 2003 (Kültepe). - Koşay 1938; Koşay 1951; Koşay 1965; Koşay/Akok 1973; Koşay/Akok 1966 (Alacahöyük). - Özgüç 1978; Özgüç 1982; Özgüç 1988 (Maşathöyük). - Özgüç 1988 (İnandık). - Emre 1978 (Yanarlar). - Emre 1966 (Acemhöyük). - von der Osten 1937 (Alishar). - Fischer 1963; Müller-Karpe 1988 (Boğazköy).

⁵ Özgüç 2003, 106, 138-139, 145, 177, 179 (Kültepe). - von der Osten 1937 fig. 257 (Alishar). - Koşay 1951, lev. LXXVII, XLIX.1; Koşay 1965, şek. 30, 51, 65-66; Koşay/Akok 1966, lev. 22 Al.g 149, Al.e 72 (Alaca).

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