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KAZI SONUÇLARI TOPLANTISI 1. CİLT



T.C.

KÜLTÜR VE TURİZM BAKANLIĞI

Kültür Varlıkları ve Müzeler Genel Müdürlüğü



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PRELIMINARY REPORT ON THE 2018 EXCAVATION SEASON AT UŞAKLI HÖYÜK (YOZGAT)

Anacleto D'AGOSTINO
Valentina ORSI*

THE SITE

In 2018 the eleventh season of work was carried out at Uşaklı Höyük, in the NorthCentral Anatolian plateau¹. Uşaklı is located 20 km east of Yozgat, in a small valley bordered by hills of different altitude and crossed by two small streams, the larger of which is the Eğri Öz Dere that runs west to east. The site is ten hectares, of ovoid shape and can be seen from all the surrounding heights and from the bottom of the eastern part of the valley, over a relatively long distance. There is a central mound surrounded on its west, north and east sides by a ten-meter-high terrace with gently descending slopes; the difference in height between the terrace and the top of the mound with steeper slopes is eighteen meters. The results of the surface survey (2008-2012) and excavations (2013-2018) allow us to reconstruct the history of occupation, in

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¹ Our thanks go to the the Ministry of Culture and Tourism that granted the permit of excavations, its representative, Özcan Şimşek from Istanbul Archaeological Museum, and to Hasan Şenyurt, director of the Yozgat Museum, for their support and precious advice. The 2018 excavation season was possible thanks to financial support granted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Italian Republic, the Foundation OrMe - Oriente Mediterraneo and University of Florence. The collaboration with the University Bozok of Yozgat was active and productive, involving directly the professors D. Taşkan and A. Kaharaman Çinar in the activity of the expedition. Archaeologists, specialists and students from University of Florence, Pisa, Siena, Yozgat, Çorum and Kırşehir, directed by prof. Stefania Mazzoni (M. Kibaroglu deputy director), contributed to the excavations and topographic activities and work on the pottery analysis. Some students (İ. Erdal, C. Baran, U. Atik, G. Özkan, M. Büyükkurt, V. Bayar, Y. Canbolat from Bozok University, T. Harun from Ankara Üniversitesi) took part in a formative stage of work on the history and archaeology of the site and its region, the methodology of the archaeological research, the functioning of the technical procedures of data acquisition, and the registration and elaboration of data. From this year Prof. Yılmaz Selim Erdal from Ankara Hacettepe University is the official anthropologist of the expedition. This report is the product of teamwork in which the efforts and dedication of all team members and workers came together: our gratitude goes to all of them.

broad terms for some periods and in more detail for others². A part from some sherds dating doubtfully to the Late Chalcolithic/Early Bronze Age and others to the Ottoman period, the main evidence relates to the time range from the late Early Bronze Age to the first centuries of the Common Era³. The earliest phase of occupation, dating to the late 3rd millennium and the beginning of 2nd, is documented only by pottery sherds in secondary contexts and on the surface, and the coeval layers have not yet been reached in the excavation trenches, probably because they were removed by the later building activities of Hittite date. The Late Bronze and Iron Ages are better documented with the finding of portions of large buildings and the remains of houses, in stratigraphic sequence. The more recent phases, dating to the Roman period, are documented by houses, exposed on the lower terrace, and, in all probability, the largest architectural structures identified by the geophysical prospection. Within this sequence we are not able to recognize if breaks in continuity happened but if so, apparently they were not substantial.

The 2018 excavations in Area D produced meaningful evidence of the earliest phases of the Iron Age and the change of settlement at the turn of 1st millennium BC (Fig. 1); in Area A other portions of the large Building II have been exposed, adding other details to reconstruct its layout. The way the settlement changed after the fall of the Hittite state remains still obscure but some elements suggest that at least in this part of the site a new form of occupation arose.

AREA D

This area, located halfway up the southern hillside of the höyük, yielded the external wing of Building III, dating to the Hittite period. It occupies a prominent topographical position and can be a potential candidate for an official and administrative building. Between 2015 and 2017, excavations documented two rows of east-west-oriented rooms of which the floors and the lower part of the walls are preserved, with traces of a severe fire that caused its destruction. The southern limit of the building, which is terraced and adapted to the shape of the mound, is marked by a wall of large granite boulders, downslope from the room floors. Unfortunately no objects have

² Mazzoni and Pecchioli 2015; Mazzoni, D'Agostino, Orsi 2019.

³ D'Agostino and Orsi 2015, 166-182.

been found on the floors, which suggests that the building was abandoned before its final destruction.

The target of the 2018 season of work in Area D was to understand the development of the occupation following the abandonment and destruction of Building III. For this reason, we focused digging operations on the north of the room 433 exposed in 2017, in order to secure of an area not covered by the Iron Age stone glacis, here only partially preserved, the construction of which disturbed the earlier layers in other sectors of Area D. Here, as in the central and western portions of excavation area, the burnt remains of the Hittite Building III were leveled and the area resettled. The area object of excavations is very limited in size, partially eroded, and does not give us any clear idea of the typology of houses and quality of occupation but provide a good sequence of at least five architectonic phases that follow one another without gaps and characterized by similar features of soil compositions and quality of constructions. However some general and preliminary remark can be made. The earliest structures consists of round pits and relics of dwellings, with some floors in beaten earth (Fig. 2). In the course of the time the settled area grew and in recent layers the constructions are more dense, leaving little room to open-air spaces (Fig. 3). Some retaining small walls are intended to strengthen the slope of the ancient mound and allow passage along its edge, connecting the different houses (Fig. 4). The Iron Age layers have been disturbed by the building activities of Late Iron Age date and mainly by the movements of soil necessary to build the large stone glacis surrounding the upper part of the mound, intended to reinforce the slope and make the top of the mound more suitable for a planned resettlement. We don't know if the glacis, exposed only in its external and eroded surface, also had a defensive purpose and was part of a more large structured device including a citadel wall on its top.

The first preliminary results of radiocarbon determinations of samples of a wooden post found *in situ* in room 433 of Building III gave us dates consistent with the preliminary observations of the ceramic repertoire associated with the foundations and the layers filling the rooms. Although the time span is still large, we can however confirm a date around the 16th and 13th centuries for construction and use of this structure. Further research on other contextual samples currently in progress and the dendrochronological analysis will allow specialists to be more precise in dating, restricting the range of possibility.

The results we obtained in the last season of work are productive in terms of stratigraphic sequence and associated materials (Fig. 5). The preliminary analysis allows us to identify an Early Iron Age pottery production, both hand-made and painted. The Middle Iron Age assemblage is well-articulated and comprises various shapes and technological characteristics that have been grouped in distinct wares, and in some case could be considered good markers of relative chronology. As for the hand-made painted assemblage, more types have been identified and the repertoire of shapes and finishing technique is growing, suggesting a greater importance of the local active contribution to the renovation of the pottery horizon at the beginning of the Iron Age (Fig. 6). Of particular interest is also the identification of different stylistic variants within the so-called Silhouette or Alişar IV ceramic repertoire of Middle Iron Age date, giving us information about the relative chronology (Fig. 7). Also the Late Iron Age repertoire of sherds has been object of deep analysis and we are starting to understand more about its articulation and composition.

AREA A

The excavations carried out between 2013 and 2017 in Area A exposed architectural remains pertaining to a large building (Building II) that shows a complex layout with different units (Fig. 8). Only the groundwork built in large granite boulders and the sub-foundation structures in middle-sized stones have been preserved a few centimeters below the topsoil. This superficial position of the massive remains left from the collapse of the enormous building, which has kept them visible, is due to the reuse of mudbricks and stones for building materials over the course of centuries, starting from the Iron Age onwards and recently the tampering caused by ploughs and tractors for agricultural activities.

Even though the elevation of the wall is not preserved and only the foundation structures are, in two cases portions of the room floors have been found and consist of beaten earth with loose tiny gravel. In the last season another interesting feature related to the floor of an external space was discovered, individuating the ground level. A portion of the large court which develops east of the central body of Building II is paved with a mosaic cobbled floor made of pieces of stones arranged in groups by color (white, black or dark blue and red, two yellow pieces) and following alternating triangular patterns (Fig. 9). The floor is partially preserved and covers an area of 7.19x3

m, with the orientation of the long side NNE-SSW. This is a unique finding of its kind⁴. In fact we know that mosaic floors made of small river pebbles are typical features of Phrygian and Syro-Hittite and Neo-Assyrian architecture⁵ in the Iron Age but until now no specimen of Late Bronze Age had been known in the Ancient Near East. The mosaic floor of Uşaklı is characterized by the use of larger pieces of stones compared to the small river pebbles of other later sites and the arrangement of geometrically disposed triangular motifs also represents a distinctive trait, as the Phrygian mosaic floors show more complex asymmetric patterns and the other Near-Eastern specimens are dominated by the checkerboard motif. This raises new questions about the models that inspired the Iron Age mosaic floors and moves back in time the first appearance of a variant of this decorative technique in central Anatolia of Late Bronze Age alongside the Greek and Aegean specimens⁶.

A large foundation wall, WNW-ESE oriented, not well preserved, departs from the southeastern corner of the building that excavations have exposed so far (Figs 10 and 11). The limits of the wall towards the slope of the terrace lay on a probable outcrop of virgin soil or, alternatively, a base formed by virgin soil that can suggest the building was erected in prominent position in relation to the rest of the lower town and evidently the surrounding fields. This evidence, together with the traces of some preparatory work revealed in the 2013 season in a small sounding on the north-eastern side of the structure, indicate that extensive leveling of the irregularities of the ground was needed to prepare the site where the building was planned to be constructed.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The finding of the mosaic stone floor confirms the peculiarity of Building II, on the lower terrace, and documents an interesting experimentation in architectural features that characterized the Late Bronze Age at Uşaklı. It is an unusual solution to decorate a floor not attested elsewhere in Hittite architecture, even though pebbles and flagstones in relations to open spaces, rooms, street and passages have been used in sites such as Kuşaklı, Ortaköy and Boğazköy, for example. In our case the finding context, namely the court of a building that could be interpreted as a temple and – if the suggested identification of the site with the city of Zippalanda is confirmed by future research

⁴ D'Agostino, forthcoming.

⁵ Young 1965; Bunnens 2016.

⁶ Podzuweit and Salzmann 1977; Salzmann 1982.

– may be the temple of the Storm God mentioned in the written sources, provides a peculiar background for an unconventional work.

The change of quality and dimension of structures and contextually the appearance of a new pottery production on the mound is a marker of a general settlement reorganization. The destruction of Building III probably meant the end of an important monumental architectural phase linked to the urban shape that the Hittites gave to the site and its organization. This urban conception with its massive public structures started to be deeply modified, in part compromised and drastically reduced in dimension and significance, marking the beginning of a crisis period. From an archaeological point of view the crisis period experienced by the settlement is materialized by the destruction of the Hittite building and its lack of reconstruction and the new phase is identified by a clear change in the quality of constructions and function, in the layers covering the Building III remains, showing the features of a village. This of course marks the period after the collapse of the Hittite state organization, inaugurating the beginning of the Iron Age.

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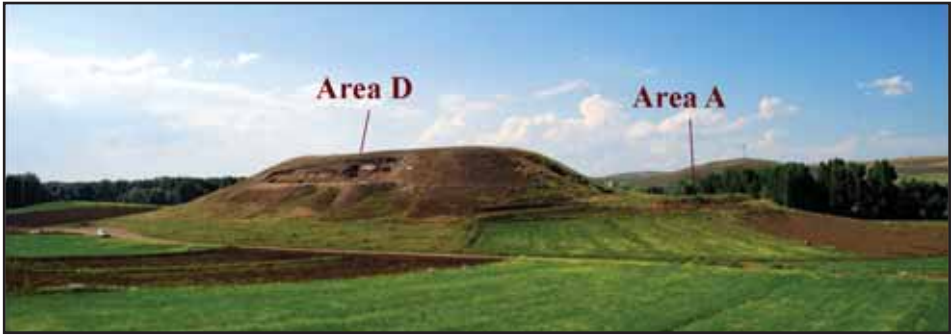


Fig. 1: Uşaklı Höyük and the excavation areas. From south-east.



Fig. 2: Area D, Middle Iron Age floor and walls. From east.



Fig. 3: Area D, Middle Iron Age walls. From south-west.



Fig. 4: Area D, Middle Iron Age walls and floors. From west.



Fig. 5: Area D, Middle Iron Age kitchen pot.



Fig. 6: Area D, Early Iron Age hand-made painted pottery.



Fig. 7: Area D, Middle Iron Age painted pottery (Silhouette or Alişar IV style) from 2016-2019 seasons.



Fig. 8: Area A, Building II. General view at the beginning of the excavation season. The workers mark the limit of the 2018 trench. From east.



Fig. 9: Area A, Building II. The mosaic stone floor. From south-east.



Fig. 10: Area A, Building II. The foundation wall exposed in 2018. From south-east.



Fig. 11: Area A, Building II. The foundation wall exposed in 2018. From west-north-west.