



2980-2806

Dorlion Journal

Academic Social Studies / Akademik Sosyal Arařtırmalar

Vol./Cilt: 3 / Issue/Sayı: 2, December/Aralık 2025, pp./ss. 311-326.

Mercimektepe Höyük: An Overlooked Early Bronze Age Settlement in Central Anatolia

Orta Anadolu'nun Gözden Kaçmış Erken Tunç Çağı Yerleşimi: Mercimektepe Höyük



Arařtırma Makalesi / Research Article

Geliř Tarihi / Arrival Date
27.09.2025

Kabul Tarihi / Accepted Date
20.12.2025

Son Revizyon Tarihi / Last Revision Date
28.12.2025

Yayın Tarihi / Publication Date
31.12.2025

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Abstract

Yozgat possesses numerous untapped historical and archaeological sites awaiting exploration, one of which is Mercimektepe Höyük. One such archaeological site is Mercimektepe Höyük. Listed in the Ministry of Culture and Tourism's register of certified archaeological sites, Mercimektepe Höyük covers an area of approximately 14 acres and is located on the left side of the Yozgat-Sivas Highway, in the Esentepe district. The land has been damaged by years of farming, and the water reservoir built directly on top of it has further exacerbated this damage. Mercimektepe Höyük served as a settlement site at the end of the 3rd millennium BCE and then in the 2nd millennium during the Hittite period. Research has revealed that this site belongs to a culture contemporary with the Alishar culture. This study will provide information about the drilling studies, rescue excavations, and excavation studies conducted on Mercimektepe Höyük to date. This study aims to present the artefacts..." veya "The objective of this study is to document the artefacts found in the excavations at the mound with original photographs, to contribute to the gap in the literature, and to be one of the first studies on the subject.

Keywords: History, Early Bronze Age, Old Hittite Period, Central Anatolia, Yozgat, Mercimektepe Höyük.

Citation Information/Kaynakça Bilgisi

Çınar, Aslı Kahraman. "Mercimektepe Höyük: An Overlooked Early Bronze Age Settlement in Central Anatolia". *Uluslararası Dorlion Akademik Sosyal Arařtırmalar Dergisi (DASAD)* 3/2 (Aralık 2025), 311-326. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18071488>

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Öz

Yozgat, henüz araştırılmamış ve keşfedilmeyi bekleyen tarihî ve arkeolojik alanlara ve kalıntılara sahiptir. Bu arkeolojik alanlardan biri de Mercimektepe Höyük'tür. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı'nın tescilli arkeolojik sit alanları envanterinde yer alan Mercimektepe Höyük, yaklaşık 14 dönümlük bir alan kaplamakta olup Yozgat-Sivas Karayolu'nun sol tarafında, Esentepe mevkinde bulunmaktadır. Alan, uzun yıllar süren tarımsal faaliyetler nedeniyle tahrip olmuş; üzerine doğrudan inşa edilen su deposu bu tahribatı daha da artırmıştır. Mercimektepe Höyük, M.Ö. 3. binyılın sonlarında ve daha sonra M.Ö. 2. binyılda Hitit döneminde yerleşim yeri olarak kullanılmıştır. Yapılan araştırmalar, höyüğün Alişar kültürü ile çağdaş bir kültüre ait olduğunu göstermiştir. Bu çalışma, Mercimektepe Höyük'te gerçekleştirilen sondaj çalışmaları, kurtarma kazıları ve sistematik kazılar hakkında bilgi sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca kazılarda ele geçen buluntuların özgün fotoğraflarıyla birlikte tanıtılması, literatürdeki boşluğun doldurulmasına katkı sağlanması ve konu üzerine yapılan ilk çalışmalardan biri olma niteliği taşıması hedeflenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tarih, Erken Tunç Çağı, Geç Hitit Dönemi, Orta Anadolu, Yozgat, Mercimektepe Höyük.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Palaeolithic period is the longest period of prehistory. The most important data from this period are stone tools. No data from this period has been found in surface surveys conducted in Yozgat.¹ The city's first prehistoric settlements date back to the Late Neolithic period. One of the two archaeological sites where these first settlements were found is the Rıdvan Castle Mound.² The other settlement is the Karakaya Tepe settlements between the villages of Ocaklı and Aşağıkarahacılı in the district of Sorgun. The density of mound-type settlements in the region, spanning from the end of the Late Neolithic Age to the Early Chalcolithic Age, is noteworthy. Yozgat Province, which includes centres such as Alişar, Uşaklıhöyük (Zippalanda), Kerkenes, and Tavium, is known as the core region of the Hittites, who became an important political and military power in the middle of the 2nd millennium BCE.³ The region became acquainted with writing during the Assyrian Trade Colonies Period (1772-1718 BCE).⁴ The first written documents in Yozgat date back to this historical period. A large part of Central Anatolia, including Yozgat, has been known as the 'Hatti Land' since ancient times. This name dates back to a letter written by the Akkadian king Naram-Sin (2254-2218 BCE) describing his struggle with the king of Kaniş, Zipani. In addition, Yozgat is considered one of the central regions of the Hittites because some Hittite cities are located within the province's borders. Surface surveys conducted in Yozgat province have identified sixty mounds in the region. Pottery, vessels and materials from different periods, such as the Early Bronze Age, Middle and Late Bronze Age, Colonial Age, Hittite Period, Iron Age, Hellenistic Period, Roman Period and Byzantine Period, have been found in these mounds.⁵

¹ Ozan Özbudak, "Tarih Öncesi Dönemde Yozgat", *Yozgat Arkeoloji ve Sanat Tarihi* (Ankara: Akçağ, 2023), 1/3-4.

² Serkan Erdoğan, S. Güngör Uyak, "Arkeolojik Araştırmalar ve Yazılı Belgeler Işığında Eski Çağ'da Yozgat", *Kültür Araştırmaları Dergisi* 14 (2022), 286.

³ Hacer Sancaktar, "Yeni Araştırmalar Işığında Yozgat ve Çevresinin Arkeolojisi", *Yozgat Arkeoloji ve Sanat Tarihi* (Ankara: Akçağ, 2023), 1/57.

⁴ Gojko Barjamovic, *Ups and Downs at Kanesh: Chronology, History and Society in the Old Assyrian, Period* (Leiden: Nederlands Instituut vor Het Nabije Oosten, 2012), 3.

⁵ Turgut Yiğit, "Akkadlar Devrinde Anadolu'nun Siyasal Yapısı", *Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi* 40/3-4 (2000), 23.

The first concrete evidence of the Neolithic Period (7500-6000 BCE) was found during surface surveys conducted by Associate Professor Hacer Sancaktar and her team at the Rıdvan Kalesi Höyük in the village of Kazankaya in Aydıncık.⁶ When it comes to the Chalcolithic Period (6000-3500 BCE), the first settlements from this period are exemplified by centres such as Söğütçükpınarı in Yerköy district, Kayalıboğaz in Yenifakılı district, Dabaniyanık in Aydıncı district, and Çomuağıl in Boğazlıyan district.⁷

One of the most important mounds from the Hittite period is Alishar Höyük. Located in the village of Alishar in the district of Sorgun, the mound is situated between Boğazköy/Hattuşa and Kültepe/Kaniş, two major centres of Anatolian Bronze Age culture, and is one of the largest settlements in the basin.⁸ The first traces of life at Alishar Höyük date back to the Chalcolithic Age.⁹ Excavations were carried out at the mound between 1927 and 1932 under the leadership of Von der Osten and between 1993 and 1994 under the leadership of Ronald L. Gorny. It is one of the rare settlements in Anatolia that has been inhabited in every period from the Late Chalcolithic Age to the present day.¹⁰ One of the Hittite settlements in the region is Uşaklı Höyük. Archaeological, geomorphological and geophysical research has been ongoing since 2013 at Uşaklı Höyük, located in the village of Büyük Taşlık in the Sorgun district of Yozgat, and its surroundings.¹¹ Due to its strategic location and favourable environmental conditions, the mound has seen continuous settlement spanning the Late Chalcolithic, Bronze, and Iron Ages, as well as the Roman-Byzantine period. This mound is accepted as the city of Zippalanda, one of the centres where the Hittite kings carried out their cult pilgrimages.¹² Çadır Höyük is located near the village of Peyniriyemez in the Sorgun district of Yozgat province. Since the 1990s, both surface research and excavation work have been carried out at Çadır Höyük. Studies have determined that the earliest settlement of the mound dates back to the Early Chalcolithic Age. The settlement that began in the Early Chalcolithic Age continued uninterrupted until the Byzantine period.¹³ Another ancient settlement, Yassı Höyük, is located near the village of Yassihüyük, which is affiliated with the centre of Yozgat. The first studies here were conducted in 2004 by a team led by Prof. D. Mario Fales. Strobel and Gerber first visited the site in 2001-2002 and conducted some research. In general, remains from the Hittite period and the Iron

⁶ Hacer Sancaktar, Kudret Sezgin, "Yozgat İli Geç Demir Çağından Geç Antik Döneme Kadar Kale Yerleşimleri ve Savunma Yapıları", *MASROP e-dergi* 1-2 (2020), 1-2.

⁷ Achro Omura, "1990 Yılı Orta Anadolu'da Yürütülen Yüzey Araştırmaları", *Araştırma Sonuçları Toplantısı* (Ankara, 1992), IX/543.

⁸ Önder İpek, Semih Gerçek, "Hitit Döneminde Yozgat", *Yozgat Arkeoloji ve Sanat Tarihi* (Ankara: Akçağ, 2023), 1/10.

⁹ Celal Tuna, *Mağaradan Kente Anadolu'nun Eski Yerleşim Yerleri* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2000), 1/133.

¹⁰ Ronald L. Gorny, "The Alishar Regional Project (1993-1994)", *The Biblical Archaeologist* 58/1 (1995), 52.

¹¹ Stefania Mazzoni, F. Pecchol Daddi, *The Uşaklı Höyük Survey Project (2008-2012), A Final Report* (Firenze: Firenze University Press, 2015), 22.

¹² Aslı Kahraman Çınar, Tolgahan Arun, "Hitit Antik Şehri Zippalanda'nın Yozgat Turizmi Açısından Değeri", *II. Uluslararası Bozok Sempozyumu Bildiri Kitabı* (Yozgat, 2017), 1/91.

¹³ Ronald L. Gorny, "2002-2005 Arasındaki Çadır Höyük'te Düzenlenen Arkeolojik Kazı Çalışmaları İkinci Bin Yerleşimleri", *İDOL Arkeologlar Derneği Dergisi* 8/30 (2006), 8.

Age are excavated from different parts of the mound. Based on festival texts describing the cult journeys of Hittite kings, it is thought that this was the Hittite city of Tahirpa.¹⁴

Mercimektepe Höyük is one of the settlements dating back to the Early Bronze Age. Musa Özcan, the first director of the Mercimektepe excavations, describes the location of the mound in his 1986 report as follows. “It is located 500 m. east of the city centre and north of Yozgat Sivas highway. Mercimektepe Höyük, which rises from the road and descends to Yozgat Stream with a steep slope in the north, has a dominant position in Yozgat and covers an area of approximately 14 acres and measures 100x140 m2. Agricultural works and other factors over time have caused the cultural layers in the mound to be destroyed to a great extent.”¹⁵ Thirty years have passed since these statements and today Mercimektepe Höyük remains in the centre of Yozgat city. It falls just behind the bazaar connected to the settlement called Yimpaş Tokiler opposite the Governor’s building. When it is described via Sivas Street, which is an intercity road and probably the road used by the Hittite kings, it is located diagonally across the Novada shopping centre. This situation can be considered as a disadvantage rather than an advantage for Mercimektepe Höyük, which is so far inside the city today.

In the TAY (Archaeological Structures of Turkey) reports, the altitude of the mound is given as 1335 m. and the period as ITC III. Its location and environmental features are described in the TAY as the Yozgat-Sivas motorway passes through the area between Mercimektepe and Çengeltepe opposite Mercimektepe. The fact that both mounds are contemporaneous suggests that there may have been a large settlement with a double core.¹⁶

There is a water reservoir on the mound. Thousands of people pass by and see the mound every day. However, there is no sign or signboard on or around it indicating that it is an archaeological site. Even when walking on it, it is absolutely not understood that this is an archaeological site because the inside of the pits from the excavations carried out twenty years ago and the surroundings of the mound are covered with weeds. At the same time, this area has been used as a field for years and the artefacts and the mound, which are very close to the surface, have been destroyed. The findings obtained from Mercimektepe excavations have not been studied and published in detail until today. For this reason, Yozgat remains one of the least known regions of Central Anatolia for the Early Bronze Age.¹⁷ It is understood that the first settlement in Mercimektepe was made between 2600-2000 BCE.¹⁸ Another ancient settlement in the region is Mercimektepe Höyük, which is now located within the city centre of Yozgat and is the subject of this study.

¹⁴ F. M. Fales et al., “Austro-Italian ARchaeological Investigations in the Reigon of Yozgat (Turkey), Central-North Anatolia in the Hittite Period-new Perspecitves in Light of Recent Research.”, *Acts of th eInternational Conference Hled at the Univerity of Florence, Studia Asiana*, 5 (Florence, 2007), 34.

¹⁵ Kültür Envanteri, Arkeolojik Sit Alanları “Mercimektepe Höyüğü”, 16 May 2025.

¹⁶ TAY Project “Mercimektepe Höyüğü”, 15 May 2025.

¹⁷ Middle East Technical University Open Coruse Ware, 15 May, 2025.

¹⁸ From the Museum's excavation evaluation report for 1986.

This study is based on a comprehensive evaluation of archival excavation reports, museum inventory records, and original photographic documentation related to the rescue excavations conducted at Mercimektepe Höyük between 1986 and 1994. Unpublished excavation reports housed in the Yozgat Museum archives were systematically reviewed to reconstruct the excavation process, stratigraphic observations, and contextual information of the finds. Museum inventory books were examined to identify, classify, and cross-check the artefacts according to their findspots, levels, and material characteristics. In addition, original photographs taken during the excavations and of the artefacts currently preserved in the museum storerooms were analysed to support typological assessments and to ensure visual documentation of the material culture. The archaeological data obtained from these sources were then comparatively evaluated with contemporary sites in Central Anatolia, particularly Alişar, Alacahöyük, and Boğazköy, in order to determine the cultural and chronological position of Mercimektepe Höyük.

Ethical Statement: This study was conducted in full compliance with all applicable ethical standards. The information and findings presented in this article have been reported in accordance with the principles of honesty and transparency. Scientific integrity and objectivity were maintained throughout all stages of the research. Furthermore, all sources used in the study have been properly cited. Since the research is based on a literature review and document analysis, ethical committee approval was not required.

Furthermore, this study made use of unpublished rescue excavation reports (1986, 1987, 1991, 1992 and the 1993) General Evaluation Report related to the Mercimektepe Höyük excavations, as well as museum inventory books dating to the years 1986, 1987, 1991, 1992, and 1993, all preserved in the archives of the Yozgat Museum. The necessary permission to examine and use these archival documents for scientific purposes was obtained from the Yozgat Museum through an official authorization letter dated 17 March 2016 and numbered 16080153-150/419.

2. MERCİMEKTEPE HÖYÜK DRILLING AND EXCAVATION WORKS

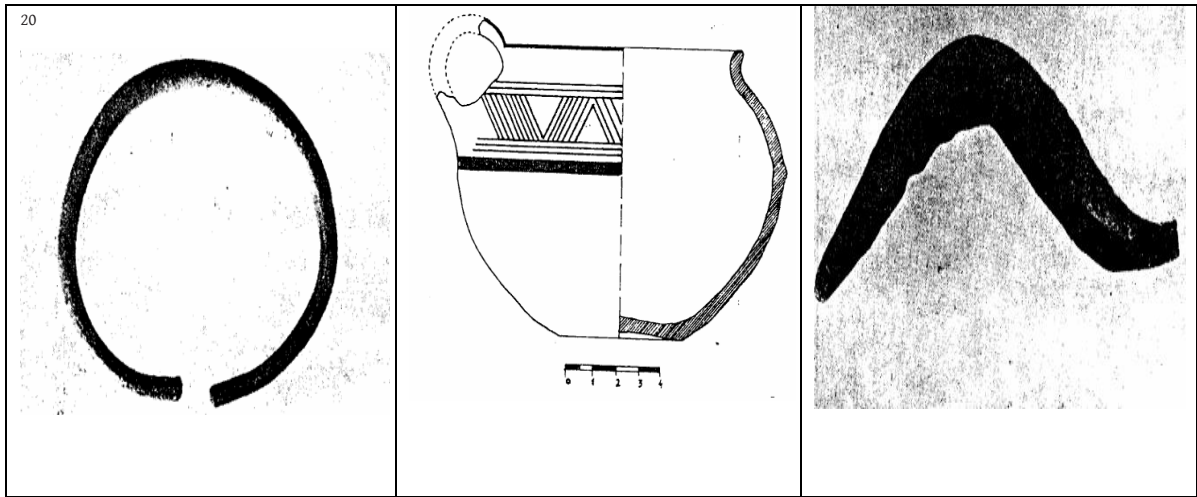
Mercimektepe was inhabited at the end of the 3rd millennium and is one of the small settlements around the Hittite capital Hattusa in the 2nd millennium, perhaps surrounded by a simple protection wall. Mercimektepe, which is 40 kilometres from Hattusa and has a position to control the road to the capital, especially from the south and west, may also have been an important accommodation site. Longer and deeper studies on this mound are required to clarify these assumptions. Levent Zoroğlu and his team carried out a joint project at Mercimektepe Höyük in July 1975 with the Anatolian Civilisations Museum and the Kayseri Museum. Four trenches and one cleaning pit were opened during this drilling. Archaeological materials were found even very close to the surface. Roman artefacts were unearthed in the first one and a half metres. It is seen that the bones of a human skeleton found in this trench up to the waist are scattered. These bones are exhibited in Yozgat Museum. Some fragments of plates, fragments of

Alisar type painted vessels as well as 1 m. tall mudbrick walls were found. A broken jar (Figure 2) and a bronze bracelet (Figure 1) were found in Trench A. Old Hittite pottery and a bronze sickle (Figure 3) were found in Trench B. Hittite pottery was recovered from Trench C. A teapot, a fincan and a grinding stone were found in the cleaning pit. The materials recovered from these trenches are handmade and have very fine workmanship. There are also sherds of pots and pans, finjal, hollow bowls and plates, jars and beak-mouthed jugs among the sherds. These sherds have close similarities with the samples from centres such as Alisar, Alaca Höyük and Boğazköy.¹⁹ These similarities indicate that the ceramic assemblage of Mercimektepe Höyük fits well within the established typological framework of the Alışar-Alacahöyük cultural horizon of Central Anatolia.

Figure 1: A bronze bracelet

Figure 2: Broken jar

Figure 3: A bronze sickle



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The first excavations started in 1986 under the direction of Musa Özcan, the museum director of the period. In the rescue excavation reports written by Musa Özcan, the similarities of the mound with the previously excavated Alisar Hüyük were mentioned.

During the 1986-1987 excavations at the mound, scattered rubble was found in the I. cultural layer and movable and immovable cultural assets estimated to belong to the II. cultural layer were unearthed. When 1.70 m. deeper, a fire layer, which is a distinctive feature of the Early Bronze Age, was encountered. This fire layer can be considered within the broader context of widespread destruction horizons observed at several contemporary Early Bronze Age settlements in Central Anatolia, suggesting a regional pattern rather than an isolated event. After this layer, a regular architecture with thick stone foundations, which is thought to belong to cultural layer II, was unearthed. In the following days of the excavation, painted and unpainted Early Bronze Age ceramics and some animal figurines were unearthed. These

¹⁹ Levent Zoroğlu, "Yozgat Mercimek Tepe Sondajı", *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi* 41 (1977), 197.

²⁰ The photographs were taken during excavations carried out in 1975.

²¹ Levent Zoroğlu, "Mercimektepe Sondajı", 200-212.

artefacts were found in a condition to be exhibited in the museum. It was observed that they were contemporary with the artefacts unearthed in Alacahöyük and Alisar.²²

3.1986 RESCUE EXCAVATION REPORT

In the report published this year, it is stated that in Trench A opened during the excavations, architectural elements, terracotta spindle whorls, various ceramic samples, small stamp seals with foot, oval and square shaped stamp faces and pendants were unearthed on the fire debris of the Early Bronze Age. On the 2nd level, a metal vessel with inlaid motifs, grinding stones and a pithos grave with a skeleton lying in hoker form were found. It is estimated that the skeleton belongs to an adult male and a bronze ring was found in the jar. Trench B yielded pots, knapping stones, ceramics, weights, stone spindle whorls, bone shuttle, and a female skeleton lying in a hoker-shaped pithos. As a result of these trenches, the excavation team concluded that the first settlement at Mercimektepe Höyük was made between 2600-2000 BCE. It was observed that the mudbrick masonry wall technique was used on a stone foundation. The occupation of the mound ended with a great fire. This fire is similar to the fires in other mounds in Anatolia.²³ The presence of stamp seals and hoker-type pithos burials reflects social and ritual practices that are consistent with known Early Bronze Age burial traditions and administrative symbolism in Central Anatolia.

Figure 4: Bronze bracelet recovered during 1986 excavations. Diameter 7.8 cm. It was recovered from the pithos grave in Trench B.²⁴

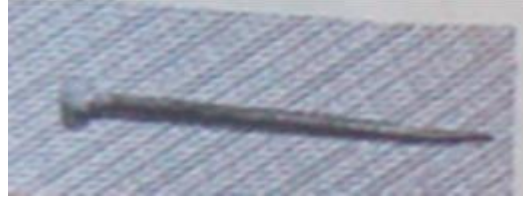


²² Unpublished excavation rescue report from 1986.

²³ Unpublished excavation rescue report from 1986.

²⁴ Mercimektepe Höyük Excavation, 1986; Inventory Book No. not assigned; Excavation Inventory No. 22/86.

Figure 5: Bronze bracelet recovered during the 1986 excavations. Diameter 7.8 cm. It was recovered from the pithos grave in Trench B.²⁵



4. 1987 PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE 1987 RESCUE EXCAVATION

The 1987 excavations lasted thirteen days in total. In addition to various pithoi in the same area, graves buried in the form of hokers and lying on their backs were unearthed. Spindle whorls belonging to the Old Hittite period, terracotta foot shapes which are believed to have been used as hearths, ceramic samples and a vase were found. In the trenches, artefacts started to be recovered in the first 15-20 cm of the surface. This means that there are artefacts almost on the surface. The room walls encountered in the trenches and two hoker shaped pithos graves and graves buried in the soil and covered with stones were illuminated. A small bronze axe was found in one of the graves and two bronze bracelets and a hair pin with a bun were found in the other. It was understood that one of these graves was male and the other was female. In the same trench, terracotta ceramics and spindle whorls, weights and weaving hangers made of stone and terracotta, a horseshoe-shaped hearth fragment, large pithos fragments, beak-mouthed jug, spindle whorl stamp seal were recovered. Four stamp seals decorated with swastika, which are estimated to belong to the Old Hittite period, and materials with prints or seals without suspension holes are among the interesting artefacts.²⁶

No rescue excavations were carried out in 1988-1989, but with a petition submitted in 89, it was requested to continue excavations in 90.

Figure 6: 1987 excavated idol. It belongs to the Early Bronze Age and its height is 9.5 cm. It was recovered from Trench B. It was made of camel hair coloured paste and some parts of it turned black due to fire.²⁷



²⁵ Mercimektepe Höyük Excavation, 1986; Inventory Book No. not assigned; Excavation Inventory No.22/86.

²⁶ Unpublished excavation rescue report from 1987.

²⁷ Mercimektepe Höyük Excavation, 1987; Inventory Book No. not assigned; Excavation Inventory No.82/87.

Figure 7: Excavated during the 1987 excavations. It is made of stone-bronze material and belongs to the Old Hittite Period. The necklace is 32 cm long. It was found as slag at the bottom of the wall in Trench A.²⁸



Figure 8: 1987 excavation of a human skeleton in hoker condition.²⁹



5. 1991 RESCUE EXCAVATION REPORT

During the excavations resumed in 1991 after a short break, intertwined painted ceramics were unearthed in Trench A. A jar grave containing a hoker-shaped female skeleton was found. Colourful kitchen utensils were also found. An area of 275 square metres was excavated and 124 inventory and museum artefacts were unearthed. The finds of grinding stones, weaving tools and kitchen utensils indicate that the inhabitants of Mercimektepe in the Early Bronze Age were engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry.³⁰

²⁸ Mercimektepe Höyük Excavation, 1987; Inventory Book No. not assigned; Excavation Inventory No.84/87.

²⁹ From the Museum inventory book of 1987.

³⁰ Musa Özcan, "Yozgat Mercimektepe Höyüğü 1991 Yılı Kurtarma Kazısı", III. Müze Kurtarma Kazıları Semineri 27-30 Nisan 1992 Efes (Ankara: Ankara Üniversitesi Yayınevi, 1993), 378.

Figure 9: Excavated in 1991, the beak rimmed jug belongs to the Hittite period and measures 9.5 cm in height. It was found in Trench A, Level II. It is made of camel hair-coloured paste and burnished in the same colour.³¹



Figure 10: The cup unearthed during the 1991 excavations dates from the Copper Bronze Period. The height is 3.2 cm and it belongs to Level I of Trench B.³²



6. 1992 PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE 1992 RESCUE EXCAVATION

The 1992 report states that a total area of 1052 square metres was opened. As the years progressed, the excavation area, which became intertwined with the city, became a children's playground and was destroyed due to heavy winter conditions, which was a very difficult situation for the excavation team. The fact that the archaeological site is surrounded by houses makes excavation difficult. During the 1992 excavations, large and small spaces were unearthed. Many burnt and blackened objects were found in the fire layer. In the light of the data recovered during these excavations, experts estimate that the fire was the result of an invasion or a spontaneous fire. This year's excavations lasted for twenty-two days and a total of 154 artefacts

³¹ Mercimektepe Höyük Excavation, 1991; Inventory Book No. 856; Museum inventory no:1/91.

³² Mercimektepe Höyük Excavation, 1991; Inventory Book No. 865; Museum inventory no: 10/91.

were brought to the museum. An animal figurine and a horn symbol made of bone are among the artefacts recovered.³³

Figure 11: Excavated in 1992, the animal figurine is made of stone and belongs to the Early Bronze Age. Height 5.4 cm and belongs to Level I in Trench B. It is made of blackish polished stone, has a bulky body and sharp stripes on its back.³⁴



Figure 12: A bone symbol recovered during the 1992 excavations has a height of 9.5 cm. It belongs to the Early Bronze Age and was found in Level I. It is blue in colour due to the fire and was formed by gluing the broken pieces.³⁵



7. GENERAL EVALUATION OF THE MUSEUM IN 1993

In 1993, generally fewer number of artefacts (56) were found for inventory and museum purposes. During the excavations in excavation pits A and B on the northern slope of the mound, many movable and immovable artefacts belonging to the Early Bronze Age were unearthed. During this year's excavations, jar fragments decorated with thick black bands on red slip were found for the first time. After twenty days of work, kitchen utensils, weaving

³³ Unpublished excavation rescue report from 1992.

³⁴ Mercimektepe Höyük Excavation, 1992; Inventory Book No. not assigned; Excavation Inventory No. 10/92

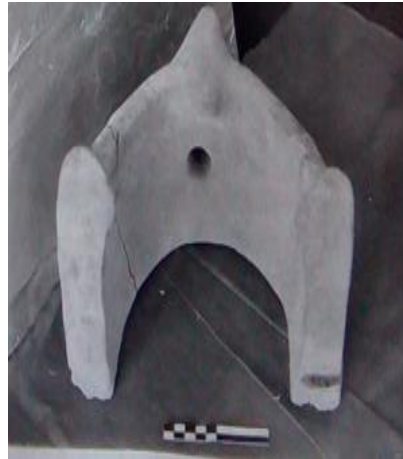
³⁵ Mercimektepe Höyük Excavation, 1992; Inventory Book No. not assigned; Excavation Inventory No.154/92.

hangers, spindle whorls, weights, hearths and jar artefacts were unearthed. In addition to the kitchen utensils unearthed here, a large number of spindle whorls, hangers and weights indicate that the inhabitants of Mercimektepe were engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry.³⁶

Figure 13: The 1993 excavations yielded a spouted vessel dating to the Early Bronze Age and recovered from Level I. The tile-coloured paste is painted in the same colour. The rim, the band on the body and the fish net motif on it are painted black.³⁷



Figure 14: One of the 1993 excavated hearths. The hearth is dated to the Early Bronze Period. Height 17.5 cm. It was found in Level II. It has tile-coloured paste and same coloured slip. It is shaped like a half circle. Both open ends of the hearth are shaped like the soles of the feet, the centre of the hearth is protruding and there is a ventilation with smooth holes under this protrusion.³⁸



³⁶ From the 1993 museum evaluation report.

³⁷ Mercimektepe Höyük Excavation, 1993; Inventory Book No. 1279; Excavation Inventory No. 1/93.

³⁸ Mercimektepe Höyük Excavation, 1993; Inventory Book No. 1316; Excavation Inventory No. 38/93.

2025 Yozgat Museum Director Cihat Çakır used the following statements for Mercimektepe Höyük: “Mercimektepe Höyük excavations in Yozgat started for the first time in 1986 under the Directorate of Yozgat Museum Directorate and continued until 1994. Currently, there are between 900 and 1000 artefacts found and exhibited in the warehouses of Mercimektepe in our museum. These artefacts were excavated from the first 25 cm to 1.5 metres trenches on the mound. It is estimated that there are layers of culture belonging to older periods as we descend to lower layers. Between 1986 and 1992, the museum director and museum archaeologists formed an excavation team. The mound yielded artefacts from the Early Bronze Age and a very small amount of artefacts from the early Hittite period. We expect more artefacts to be recovered from here. The fact that there are no tablets on the land does not mean that it will not be excavated, there is a large area that has not yet been excavated. Mercimektepe was included in the Ministry’s list of priority archaeological sites to be excavated in 2012.” He stated.³⁹

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aims to draw attention to the archaeological significance and excavation history of Mercimektepe Höyük, located in the city centre of Yozgat in northern Central Anatolia, and to highlight the broader historical importance of the region. The available archaeological evidence demonstrates that Mercimektepe Höyük was continuously occupied from the late third millennium BCE and developed into a settlement that gained cultural importance under Hittite influence during the second millennium BCE. The architectural remains, ceramic assemblages, metal artefacts, and burial finds recovered during the rescue excavations conducted between 1986 and 1994 indicate that the mound functioned not merely as a habitation area but as a centre where economic activities, craft production, and social practices were concentrated.

The fire layer identified during the excavations constitutes one of the most significant stratigraphic features of the site, pointing to a sudden interruption in settlement continuity. When evaluated in comparison with similar destruction horizons observed at other Bronze Age settlements in Central Anatolia, this layer suggests that Mercimektepe Höyük may have been affected by broader regional processes rather than an isolated local event. In this respect, the site contributes valuable data to discussions concerning settlement disruption and transformation during the Early Bronze Age.

Furthermore, the presence of stamp seals, jewellery, animal figurines, and hoker-type pithos burials provides important insights into the social organisation, ritual practices, and symbolic expressions of the community inhabiting Mercimektepe Höyük. These finds show close parallels with contemporary centres such as Alişar, Alacahöyük, and Boğazköy, reinforcing the interpretation that Mercimektepe Höyük was integrated into the wider cultural

³⁹ Aslı Kahraman Çınar, “Yozgat Şehir Merkezinde Antik Bir Kent Mercimektepe Höyük”, *1. Uluslararası Bozok Sempozyumu Bildiri Kitabı* (Yozgat: Bozok Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2016), 1/74.

and administrative networks of Central Anatolia rather than functioning as an isolated rural settlement.

Despite its archaeological potential, Mercimektepe Höyük is currently under severe pressure due to urbanisation and insufficient protective measures. The construction of a water reservoir on the mound, the absence of informative signage, and ongoing environmental degradation pose serious threats to both its scientific value and cultural heritage significance. Therefore, future research should prioritise systematic and long-term excavations, alongside conservation-oriented management strategies, in order to preserve the site and to further clarify its role within the prehistoric and early historic settlement networks of Central Anatolia. With such efforts, Mercimektepe Höyük has the potential to become a key reference point not only for the archaeology of Yozgat but also for broader studies of Bronze Age Anatolia.

Authorship Contribution

The research was conducted as a single author and there is no conflict of interest with other individuals, institutions and organizations.

Ethics Committee Declaration

This article has been produced within the scope of studies in the field, related readings and literature reviews. Since the research is based on document analysis, ethics committee approval is not required.

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