

## Early Bronze Age I-III shrines and burial rites at Tilbes Höyük, Southeastern Turkey

### *Santuarios del Bronce Antiguo I-III y ritos de enterramiento en Tilbes Höyük, Sureste de Turquía*

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#### Abstract

In the late 1990s when salvage Archaeological Excavations took place in the Birecik Dam Area (Birecik, Urfa, South Eastern Turkey), huge deposits of the whole Early Bronze Age phases (I-IV) were discovered at Tilbes Höyük, a settlement of 3 ha on the left bank of the Euphrates river. The site yielded during the years 1998-99 remains of a religious Early Bronze Age III burnt building and other shrines dated in previous phases (EB I and II).

The earliest shrine, from the Early Bronze Age I, located in the center of the tell, was on a mudbrick platform and presents a possible access from the East, the sunrise. The building had stone walls and a clay horn altar during the Early Bronze Age I, 3025 (2900) 2875 BC. Another shrine above the same spot was also documented, worse preserved, during the Early Bronze Age II. This religious space suffered a fire at the end of the later shrine, dated on Early Bronze Age III, 2675 (2550-2500) 2450 BC, and the building is better preserved. It has a narrow entrance from the West, the sunset, to a small room with stone pavement that gives access to the main room. It is a mudbrick pillar, a rectangular hearth and two small clay-horned structures, one of them near the pillar. In the phase of the Early Bronze Age II, two stone cists with infant burials appear in the interior of the Tilbes Höyük sanctuary. But later on the former shrines area of Tilbes Höyük, although no longer built, in the Early Bronze Age III are mainly composed of newborns, between 7 and 9 months, deposited in pits outside the building, perhaps linked to a cult of rebirth and fertility.

These discoveries of the third millennium do not appear to be restricted to a local phenomenon of the time in southeastern Turkey, but are present in other regions with a similar date. The best parallels are the Temple B of Arslantepe VIB, Early Bronze Age I, 3000-2800 BC, with two mudbrick pillars and a rectangular hearth, and the shrine of Level XIV of Beycesultan, West Anatolian Early Bronze Age II, 2500-2400 BC, with two other mudbrick pillars and a large structure of horns.

#### Key words:

*Northern Mesopotamia, Southeastern Turkey, Early Bronze Age, Tilbes Hoyuk, shrines, infant burials.*

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## Resumen

A fines de la década de 1990, cuando se llevaron a cabo excavaciones arqueológicas de salvamento en el área de la presa de Biredyik (Urfa, sureste de Turquía), se descubrieron enormes depósitos de todas las fases del Bronce Antiguo (I-IV) en Tilbes Höyük, un asentamiento de 3 ha, en la orilla izquierda del río Éufrates. En el yacimiento se documentó entre los años 1998-1999 los restos de un edificio religioso incendiado del Bronce Antiguo III y los restos de otros santuarios de fases anteriores (BA I y II).

El primer santuario, del Bronce Antiguo I, situado en el centro del tell, estaba sobre una plataforma de adobes y presenta un posible acceso desde el Este, la salida del sol. El edificio tiene paredes de piedras y un altar de cuernos en adobe durante el Bronce Antiguo I, 3025 (2900) 2875 AC. Otro santuario sobre el mismo lugar también fue documentado, peor preservado, durante el Bronce Antiguo II. Este espacio religioso sufrió un incendio al final del siguiente santuario del Bronce Antiguo III, 2675 (2550-2500) 2450 AC, y se conserva mejor el edificio. Presenta una estrecha entrada desde el Oeste, la puesta de sol, a una pequeña habitación con pavimento de piedra que da acceso a la habitación principal. En ella se encuentra un pilar de adobe, un hogar rectangular y dos pequeñas estructuras de cuernos en arcilla, una de ellas próxima al pilar. En una segunda fase del Bronce Antiguo II aparecen en el interior del santuario de Tilbes Höyük dos cistas de piedra con enterramientos infantiles, que en el Bronce Inicial III son principalmente enterramientos de neonatos, entre 7 y 9 meses, depositados en pozos al exterior del santuario, quizás vinculados a un culto de renacimiento y fertilidad.

Esos descubrimientos del III milenio no parecen estar restringidos a un fenómeno local de la época en el sureste de Turquía, sino que están presentes en otras regiones con similar fecha. Los mejores paralelos son el templo B de Arslantepe VIB, Bronce Antiguo I, 3000-2800 AC, con dos pilares de adobe y un hogar rectangular, y el santuario del nivel XIV de Beycesultan, Bronce Antiguo II de Anatolia Occidental, 2500-2400 AC, con otros dos pilares de adobe y una gran estructura de cuernos.

## Palabras clave:

*Norte de Mesopotamia, Sureste de Turquía, Bronce Antiguo, Tilbes Hoyuk, santuarios, enterramientos infantiles.*

## РЕЗЮМЕ

В конце 1990-х годов, когда в районе плотины Биредык (Урфа, юго-восточная Турция) были проведены археологические раскопки, в Тильбесе были обнаружены огромные залежи всех фаз Древняя бронза (I-IV). Хойюк, на левом берегу реки Евфрат. Все в последовательности в одном и том же месте, с соответствующими свидетельствами покойничких и определенного типа культа, связанного с «плодородием». Судебно-медицинская экспертиза Лаборатории судебной археологии Автономного университета Мадрида (LafUAM) предоставила альтернативные подсказки и гипотезы о захоронениях детей, возможно, связанные с определенными практиками религиозного плодородия в святилищах Древняя бронза II-III Тильбеса Хоюка.

Первое святилище, EBI, расположенный в центре сказать, был на платформе adobes и представляет возможный доступ с Востока, восход солнца. Здание имеет каменные стены и алтарь рога adobe во время первоначально бронзового I, 3025 (2900) 2875 до н.э.

Еще одна святыня над тем же местом была также задокументирована, еще хуже сохранилась, во время Первоначальной Бронзы II. Это религиозное пространство пострадало от пожара в конце поздней святыни, Первоначальной Бронза III, 2675 (2550-2500) 2450 г. до н.э., и здание лучше сохранилось. Он имеет узкий вход с запада, закат, в небольшую комнату с каменным тротуаром, который дает доступ к главной комнате. Представляет собой глиняный столб, прямоугольный дом и две небольшие глиняные рогатые конструкции, одна из которых возле столба.

На втором этапе Первоначальной Бронзы II, две каменные корзины с детскими захоронениями появляются внутри святилища Тилбес Хейюк, которые в первоначальной бронзы III в основном неконейные захоронения, между 7 и 9 месяцев, на хранение в колодцах на вне святилища, возможно, связано с культом перерождения и плодородия.

Эти открытия Третьего тысячелетия, по-видимому, не ограничиваются локальным явлением того времени на юго-востоке Турции, но присутствуют в других регионах с аналогичной датой

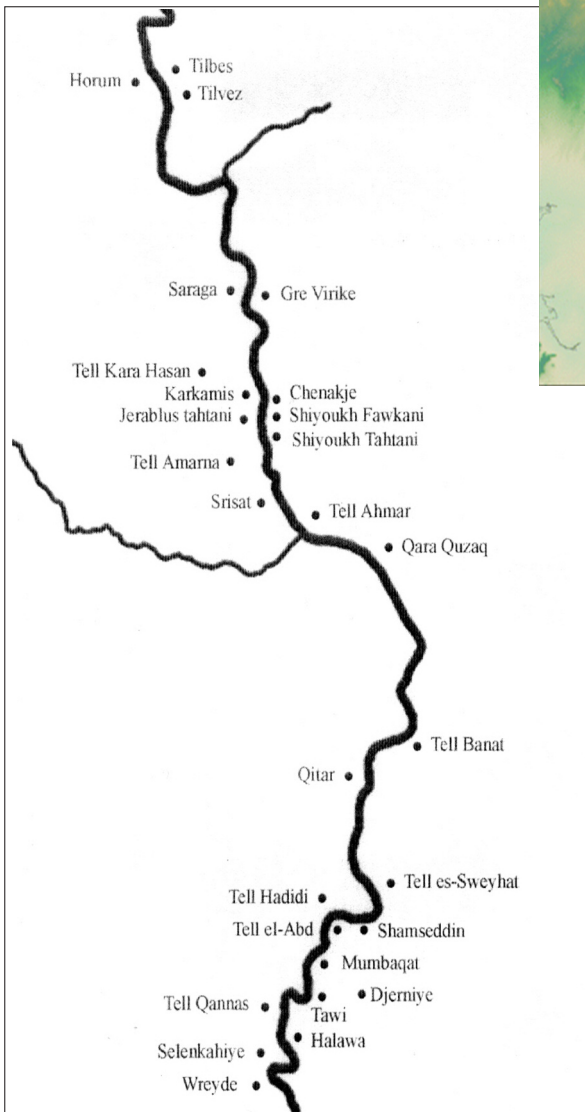
Лучшими параллелями являются Храм В Арслантепе VIB, Начальная бронза I, 3000-2800 до н.э., с двумя самососудами и прямоугольным домом, и святилище уровня XIV Бейцесултана, Начальная бронза II, 2500-2400 до н.э., с двумя другими столпами и большой структурой рогов.

## КЛЮЧЕВЫЕ СЛОВА:

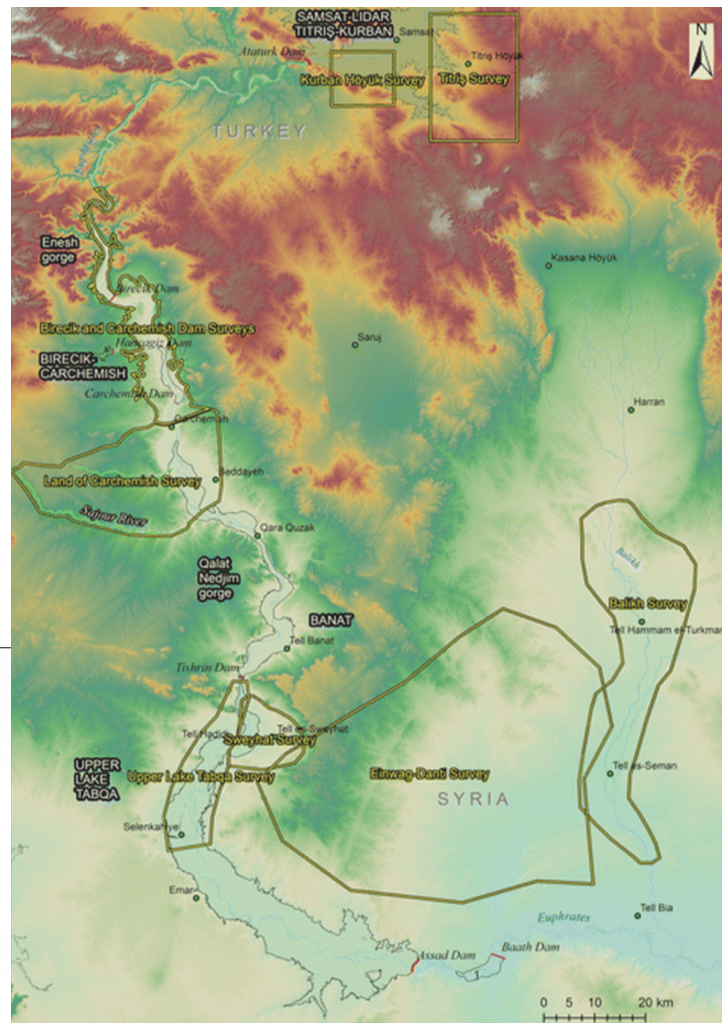
*Биредыйк (Урфа). Ранний бронзовый век Месопотамия Севера. Тильбес Хоюк. Суртепе. Святилища Предыстории. Новорожденные захоронения.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The third millennium BC did not present much specificity in the archaeological stratigraphies north of Karkemish until the mid-1990s; especially the periods Early Bronze (EB) I to EB III. In the Karababa area (near Samsat), more than 100 kilometers upstream, we know an archaeological sequence that served as a base in the Turkish Euphrates area (Algaze *et al.*, 1994) since the 1980s. Until the late 1990s, it was difficult to distinguish EBA I-IV levels, just by the compact ceramic technology of the Middle Euphrates, but it is true that subtle changes in the techno-ceramic bulk as



**Figure 1b.** Map of the main sites in the Birecik-Carchemish Dam surveys in the Middle Euphrates (Okse, 2007: 141 fig. 2).



**Figure 1a.** Map of the Middle Euphrates with the surveys and major Early Bronze Age sites (Wilkinson *et al.*, 2012: 141 fig. 1).

well as certain shapes that act as fossil directors, can serve as indicators for the distinction between the four main phases of the EB in the Middle and Upper Euphrates in accordance with the North Mesopotamian (Syro-Turkish Middle Euphrates) chronology (Deckers *et al.*, 2015; Schwartz, 2017) (Fig. 1a-1b).

During the last decade of the 20th century various Archaeological projects that covered aspects of the local civilizations of the Early Bronze Age were carried out on the Turkish and Syrian Euphrates. A pioneering work from the early-mid-1980s in Hassek Hoyuk (Urfa), more than 100 km upstream, did provide levels of the EB I, but with subsequent discontinuity (Gerber, 2005). On the Syrian side of the Euphrates, south of Carchemish, there was an agglomeration of EB III-IV sites with notable contributions to the stratigraphy of the period. Among them we would





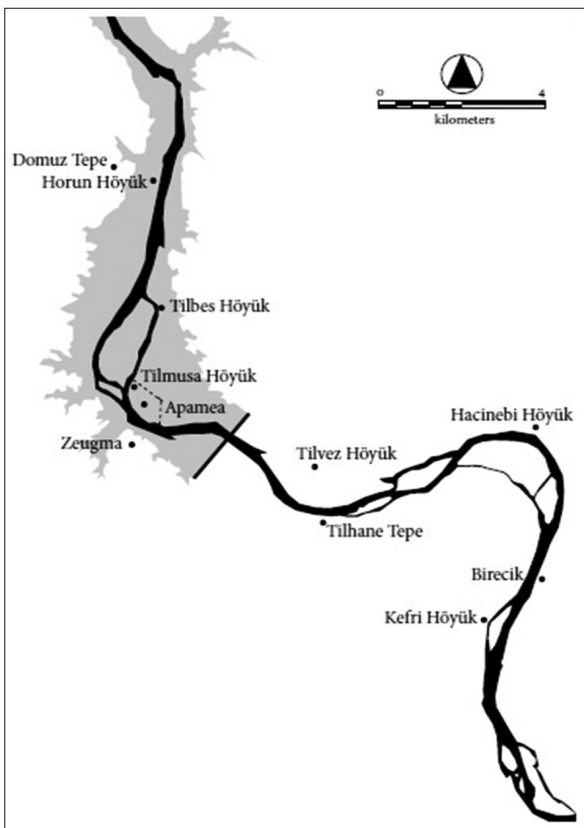


Figure 3a. Main sites in the Birecik Dam (Aylward, 2013: 3 fig. 4).

Fuensanta and Mederos, 2014: 194). The geological data proved that the Tilbes main conical mound was half cut by the Euphrates river sometime in the Late Antiquity, perhaps at the end of the Roman Period; in such way the excavated areas close to the river bank, they must be more central located at the time of its use, thus the EBA period (Fig. 3).

Excavations conducted by J. Gil Fuensanta on the mound and its vicinity in years 1996-2000 were part of a joint project with Sanliurfa Museum (Turkey) and several universities, including Alicante (Spain), Prague/Pilsen (Czech Republic) and Widener (USA) (Gil Fuensanta, Rothman and Bucak, 1999; Gil Fuensanta, 2007).

The cultural deposit of Tilbes Höyük was revealed to be at least of 14.5 m thick. The slopes were like stepped terraces; and the western slope facing the Euphrates was steeper than the others. The Euphrates was flowing through a wide basin right below the mound; therefore, it can be suggested that this site was a pathway for pedestrians. As a result of excavations, it has been revealed that the mound of Tilbes Höyük was occupied from the Chalcolithic Age with a stratigraphy of 1.5 m deep of Late Ubaid 4, and

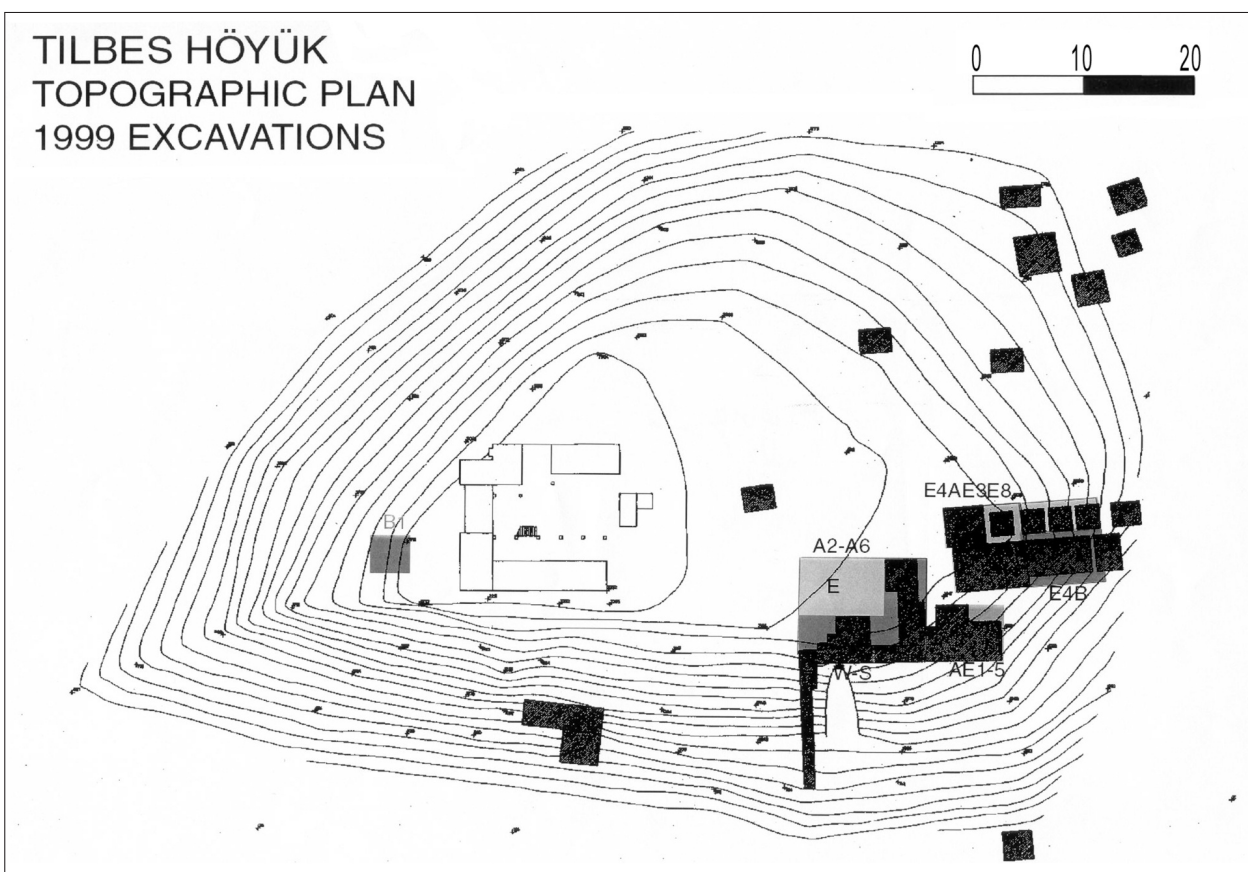


Figure 3b. Tilbes Höyük topographic plan, 1996-1999.

was covered by thick river silt of 2 m. After a hiatus of occupation, had been settled again from the EB I until the Middle Bronze II. It was abandoned for a while after the Middle Bronze Age. During the Late Iron Age, Roman and Middle Ages had also sporadic occupation.

Tilbes Höyük stood at a strategic point where the Euphrates river flows out of the mountainous tracts of Eastern Anatolia into the alluvial plains of the south, and the importance of which was enhanced by the existence of an important ford at this spot. The ford made Tilbes Höyük a key site for monitoring and controlling traffic along the river's course and especially wholesale deliveries of bulk materials of which the southern civilizations demanded more and more. Ever since the beginning of the third millennium B.C., Tilbes Höyük is likely to have seen continuous supplies of Anatolian metal, stone and wood to consumers both along the twin rivers of Mesopotamia and in and around the mountains and plains along the East coast of the Mediterranean. In the last century of the third millennium BC, the generalized movement of mountain populations towards the south is well discernible archaeologically (Charvát in press and pers. com.). At Tilbes Höyük, it could well account both for the presence of Northern Mesopotamian and Anatolian elements of material culture and for the intensification of the local settlement, visible in the proliferation of habitation structures.

Tilvez Höyük, modern Eski Meteler, 4.2 km south Tilbes Höyük, was occupied during the EBA I, EBA III and the Roman period, when it was part of Apamea, in the dipolis of Zeugma. It had an extensive occupation (up to 3 ha) during the EB III, and in addition there abound the tombs of EB III date in a depositional level after the buildings, as we found in another sector of the place. The EB III remains there have evidence of having been submerged after the EB period. There was discovered a building (warehouse?) with still



**Figure 4a.** *Tilbes Höyük 1999, EB I Building, square E4A-E3-E8.*



**Figure 4b.** *Tilbes Höyük 1999, EB I Building, square E4A-E3-E8.*



**Figure 4c.** *Tilbes Höyük 1999, EB I Building, late phase, square E4A-E3-E8.*



complete or fragmented high quality “metallic ware” of late EB III date. And near them human remains of an adult individual, with a fragmented jar stamp of a cylinder-seal at his side.

Surtepe Höyük, two kilometers upstream from Tilvez, is the largest place in the area north of Carchemish (McClellan, 1999: 413; Falsone and Sconzo, 2007; Marchetti ed., 2014) with 42 ha in the Classical Period, and Samsat Höyük (Özdoğan, 1977: 122) with 20 ha, reduced to 10-17.5 ha by Wilkinson *et al.* (2012: 144 table 2). The place has a very relevant archaeological deposits during the Halaf, Late Chalcolithic and EBA I period. We recall that in Surtepe no fossil director of EB II or conclusive of an EB III settlement have been found. But still more data were needed to determine the cause of the importance of the area north of Carchemish in the Early Bronze Age, and that leads to agglomeration of settlements of the period around Surtepe. Interestingly, the local officials of the Ministry of Agriculture insist on the existence of the best farmland of the whole Birecik-Carchemish district in Surtepe and surroundings.

## 2. THE EARLY BRONZE AGE I SHRINE OF TILBES HÖYÜK

A sequence of possible EBA shrines was found in the same place at Tilbes Höyük squares E4a-E3-E8. The fact of finding a continuous sequence of buildings of a religious nature that imply continued use and a whole pattern over several centuries, allows us to better test the local impact on the beliefs of the different cultures that lived in the Birecik-Carchemish area.

The oldest discovered building in the sequence was in use during the most recent phase of the EB I. And it is important to point out that is the only excavated building of EB I date on the site in which whole stone walls were used. It was abandoned and sealed with rubble from the same building, after a prolonged period of use. In its interior a mudbrick altar of horns was found. In addition, no burials or human remains were found inside or in the surrounding area. With a short survey, and specially because the underlying stratigraphy, we determined that there was no similar building underneath (fig. 4a-4c).

This presumed religious sanctuary reveals that it was only a portion of a much larger building, and with a precise orientation in the W-E axis. We have only excavated its easternmost portion, and it could have a bipartite internal division,

depending on its central dividing wall (locus 8626) near the southern external stone wall (locus 8618) which was originally built in mudbrick during a first phase of construction (wall 8618). There are still portions of the eastern wall (locus 8622) where its original width exceeds one and a half meters. And for the remains discovered around the building, we have clear that it was raised on an artificial mudbrick platform or podium. The northern wall of the building (locus 8583) demonstrates the solidity and height of the same and for centuries it was not altered. We also remember that the same excavation area E4a E8 E3 corresponded to the original center of the site, and therefore the sanctuary of EB I occupied a centralized topography in the Tilbes Höyük of the period and not peripheral as when excavated in the second half of the 1990s.

The EB I is a phase in Tilbes that demonstrates a wide sequence of occupation, and begins from the floor of the building, locus 1119, square E4b E2 E7, AA 35.826, 4540±50 BP 3374-3090 BC; mudbrick area, locus 5027, square E4b E2 E7, AA 35.824, 4320±50 BP 3037-2877 BC and one EB I burial, locus 5023, square E4b E2 E7, AA 35.827, 4450±50 BP 3330-3005 BC, all charcoal samples (Gil Fuensanta *et al.*, 2002: 135; Gil Fuensanta, 2007: 146 table 9.4), 3300-2800 BC; and EB, as it is suggestion of Mellink (1992: table 2-3), Early Bronze IA, 3400-3000 and EB IB 3000-2700 BC. The Tilbes EB I shrine dates circa 3025-2875 BC.

The EB I yielded a long uninterrupted sequence on Tilbes Höyük and although the ceramic does not present substantial changes, we favor the differentiation of two main phases of occupation according to an use of one sector or another of the settlement. Among the pottery, very fragmented, of the period found in the building there are two main traditions of elaboration, one of simple grit plain type and another coarser one consisting of jars and closed types, with the appearance of kitchen or conservation ceramics, but polished, and with a predominance of light orange tones, similar to the western types of EB. There is no dominion of either tradition over the percentage of the total ensemble of the building. Half of the pottery bulk is composed by large common ware of the grit plain simple type. We have also the so-called chalices proper of the North Mesopotamian EB I of the Euphrates, and that sometimes were associated with incensaries. Also, a clay single-horn of similar date was discovered in closer Squares AE1-5.



**Figure 5a.** *Tilbes Höyük 1998, EB II building, first phase, square E4A- E3-E8.*

### 3. THE EARLY BRONZE AGE II SHRINE

The inhabitants of the EB II period on the site did not act on a “tabula rasa”, so primary blank, premise regarding the previous building. It is noted that the northern wall of the EB I shrine (locus 8583) was respected and included within the planimetry of the supposed sanctuary of EB II. This diminished its dimensions and could perfectly “fit” into the building of EB I. The orientation of the EB II building continued that of the previous period in relation with sunrise-East or sunset-West. Like its precedent of EB I date, this building continued farther west of the archaeological dig. The building was abandoned and filled with mudbrick debris in order to seal it (fig. 5a).

The construction of a small step wall seems to obey not a constructive need but a desire to limit or isolate the burials found within two cists with children in a very bad state of preservation delimited by rectangular slabs of stones prepared for the occasion. We appreciate the existence of an organized ritual of burial. In addition, a hole typical of a post reveals the existence of a mobile structure originally contained in the middle of the two burials. The tombs were deposited during the EB II, and they are not therefore an intrusion after the construction of the external walls of this building. Controlled combustion was carried out in this sector of the building, possibly due to a funerary ritual (fig. 5b).

At the EB II building, the two children tombs seem not to have been realized in the initial plan of construction of the building, and in fact we differentiate two moments of construction in its prolonged use. The burials belong to the most recent phase, pre-EB III, since fragments of black



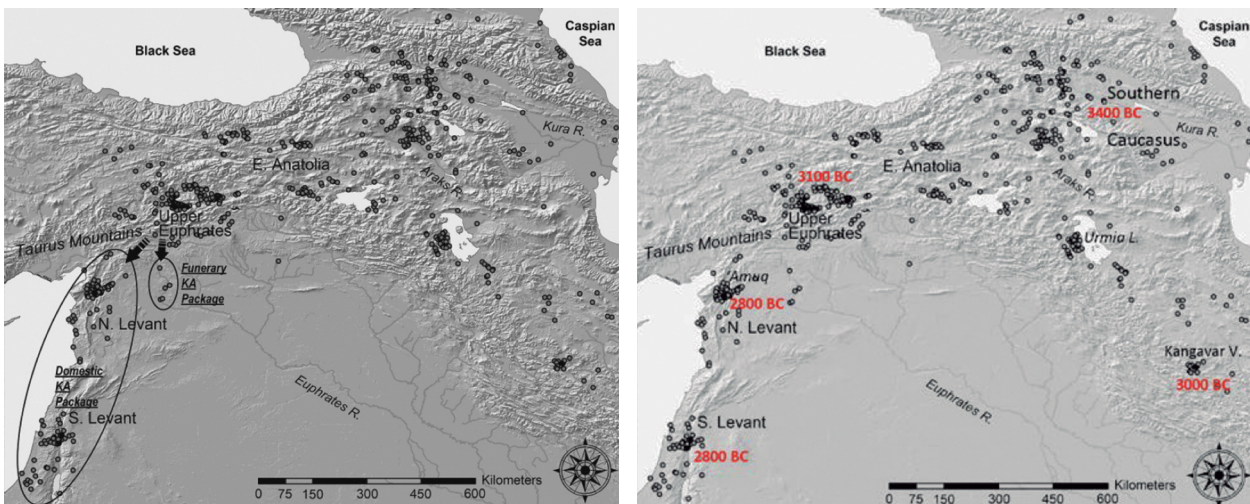
**Figure 5b.** *Tilbes Höyük 1999, EB II building, second phase, with two EB II burial cists, square E4A- E3-E8.*

Transcaucasian, so-called “Kura-Araxes” (Palumbi, 2008; Nigro, 2009; Batiuk, 2013; Greenberg *et al.*, 2014; Greenberg and Palumbi, 2015), ceramics were discovered at this level (as in the first phase of use), with ca. 20 % of the total bulk (fig. 6a-6b).

### 4. THE EARLY BRONZE AGE III “BURNT BUILDING”

The most recent shrine is from the EB III: the so-called “Burnt Building” in squares E4a E3 E8. No other later building or “shrine-like” was found in that same spot of the site, despite the presence of buildings with stone walls dated EB IV in the nearby excavation squares AE1-5 and E4b E2 E7. A constructive change is evident during the post-EB III period in that sector of the site. There was a portion of a building that underwent a fire. This building was unusable after the fire, and we do not know with precision if it was a burnt ritual, although it does not look like that way on the





**Figure 6a-6b.** Expansion of the Caucasian pottery in Upper and Middle Euphrates and the Levant (Greenberg and Palumbi, 2015: 118 fig. 7.3; Palumbi, 2018: 107 fig. 6).

archaeological record obtained. It was not due in appearance to any earthquake or similar environmental disaster (fig. 7a-7c).

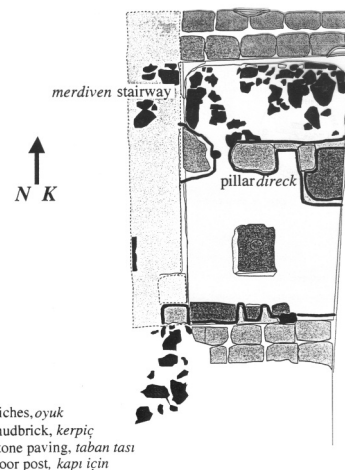
This building, in comparison with the older sanctuaries (EB I and EBII) at the spot, had a very careful internal preparation with a plaster, of a crimson-light brown color, in its interior and very careful in the larger room (the southern one). The pisé (rammed earth) technique on wall construction was more used than previously.

The excavated building had two rooms, and the bigger one contains a niche and a hearth. Between the two rooms, there was a door. Restricted number of goat horns and pieces of clay horns recovered from the burnt building indicates, probably, that a religious ceremony was held here. Charred barley seeds were found on the niche and hearth uncovered in the main room of the burnt building at EBA III (Fuensanta, Rothman and Bucak, 1999: 159) (fig. 8a-8c).



7a.

**Tilbes Höyük, 1998**  
**Square E4aE3E8**



**Burned Building**  
**Yanmış Binası**

0 1 2 m

**Figure 7a.** Tilbes Höyük 1998, EB III Burnt Building, square E4A-E3-E8.

**Figure 7b.** Tilbes Höyük 1998, EB III Burnt Building, square E4A-E3-E8 (Gil Fuensanta, Rothman and Bucak, 1999: 164 fig. 5).





**Figure 8a-8b.** Tilbes Höyük 1998. Clay horns. EB III  
Burnt Building, square E4A- E3-E8.

**Figure 8c.** Tell Brak (Syria). Clay horn.  
Eye Temple (Rutter, 1969: 169 fig. 28).

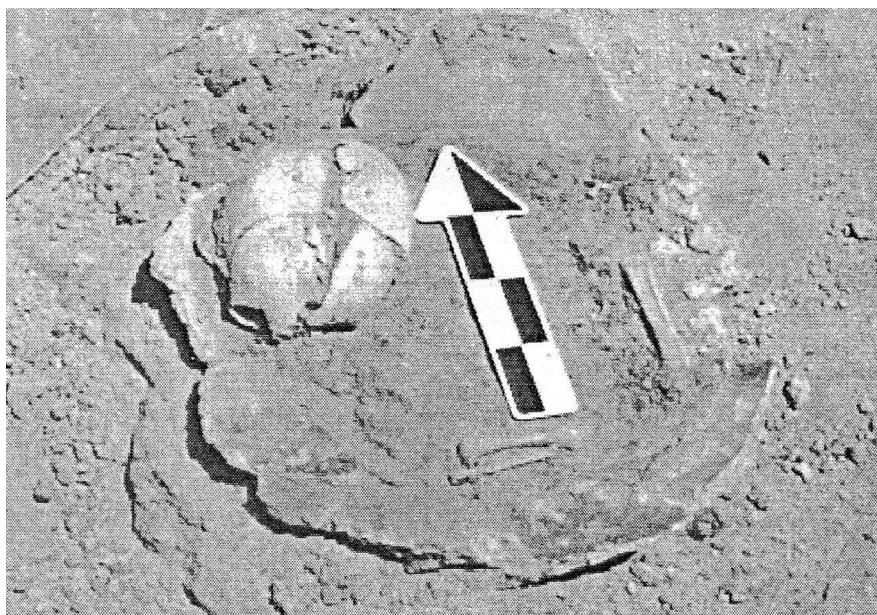
The filling of the second phase of the EB II building was carried out by people of the EB III judging by the ceramic fragments of the period. There are two traditions in its elaboration, one of them typical of EB of the Middle-North Euphrates. We see the prominence in certain sectors of gray simple grit plain ceramic filling. The other ceramic tradition is more evident in the fragments of large ware, closed types, such as jars, with the appearance of “local conservation or cooking pottery”. Only 10% of the total of the EB II building filling is polished, predominantly gray, reddish or brown. Two recognizable fragments of the base of an altar of baked clay horns were found between the sealing of the EB II building; smaller fragments of the tip of the antlers were not appreciated. A ritual that was not precipitated in any case. It is striking that during the sealing, fragmented ceramic jars were used almost exclusively to the detriment of the lithic tools. The lithic tools bulk is very abundant throughout other contexts of the EB of Tilbes Höyük.

The presence of metallic ware, in most cases, in a fragmentary state, is another element of judgment to date the “Burnt Building” of Tilbes Höyük after the EB II phase. Samples of simple plain ware and goblet-like cups were found.

The presence of painted ware of Karababa (a tradition of Upper Euphrates and Tigris region and rooted in Transcaucasia) was reported at EBA III/IV levels. EBA III/IV levels also yielded goddess figurines in terra cotta.

The striking thing is that in the destruction of the “Burnt Building” at Tilbes Höyük we did not find lithic tools like the usual ones of the period, those proper of a violent context of war, such as arrowheads or blades. Our preliminary interpretation is that we only have a limited context exposed in extension of this EB III phase at Tilbes Höyük and therefore we do not know if further east of sector E4a-E3-E8 of the archaeological site we had evidence similar.

During the EBA III, the “Burnt-building” layers have shown evidence of a mixed culture with both local Anatolian and North Mesopotamian elements. Two C14 specimens obtained from the EBA III layers were taken from the “Burnt building”, as follows: locus 869, square E4b E3 E8, AA 35.882, 4180±45 BP 2892 (2866-2710) 2628 BC, with 73 % 2823-2628 BC, and locus 853, square E4b E3 E8, AA 35.824 4020±45 BP 2678 (2564-2497) 2459 BC, all charcoal samples (Gil Fuensanta *et al.*, 2002: 134;



**Figure 9.** *Burnt Building of Tilbes Hoyuk, EB III. Tilbes Höyük 1998, Sector E4A- E3-E8. Detail of the jar burial on the northern room.*

Gil Fuensanta, 2007: 148 table 9.5) which gives a very early start date of the EBA III in the Birecik-Carchemish area, close to the proposal of Schwartz (2017: 88 table 5.1), 2700-2500 BC. Although they came from wooden beams, and maybe the first date, 2825-2625 BC came from a recycling wood beam of the EB II temple. In any case, the dates are before the mid-late EB of Wilkinson *et al.* (2012: 144), 2500-1950 BC, but also before the EB III according Ökse (2011: 270), 2400-2100 BC.

During the EB III temple it is curious that the ceramic pot containing the pithos burial of a young was deposited on the northern room with stone paving, almost exactly at the point where previous centuries had deposited the oldest cist burial, locus 8589, of the EB II building (fig. 9).

## 5. THE INFANT BURIAL PITS

The buildings of EB I and II date had very precise pits of the EB III-IV at their north and south outer limits, but they never destroyed the walls that we consider external in our excavation. These pits contained burials of small children or neonates, but without grave goods.

It was during the EB II period when deceased children or infants began to be buried inside or near the building's entrances. A practice that is not interrupted after the destruction of the so-called "Burnt Building" of the EB III. The deceased newborn children of Tilbes Höyük,

mostly between 7 and 9 months (A. Fuentes, pers. com.), around the presumed shrines of EB II-III, denote a religious ritual focused on the idea of children rebirth. Among the faunal remains, plenty of kid bones were recovered from EBA III/IV phases without formal deposition.

It is striking that the presence of Transcaucasian culture represents a local cultural disruption and an apparent change in the religious practices of Birecik's EB II, both in the composition of the buildings (as well as in the ritual practiced in them), a phenomenon that may have been related to another

place, Arslantepe VIB, during EB I, 3000-2800 BC. The best reference could be the temple B (Frangipane, 1997: 53, 54-55 fig. 5a-b, 58 fig. 7; D'Anna, 2015: 110-112) with a lateral and small door, a rectangular hearth slightly sunken in the floor in the center, together with two clay pillars, called "podiums", coated in white plaster (fig. 10a-10b).

Those discoveries of III millennium date seems not to be restricted to local EBA of Southeastern Turkey, but present in other regions with a similar or later date, i.e. Tell Hibermedon in the Mardin province of Turkey (S. Valentini, pers. com.; Lanieri *et al.*, 2009; Lanieri eds., 2016) or Tell Arbid in the Syrian Khabur (Z. Wagnarska, pers. com.; Soltysiak and Kolinski, 2012; Kolinski, 2013), tributary of the Euphrates, where have been found remains of unborn or neonates, similar to that of Tilbes Höyük, but in specific contexts of the Middle Bronze Age.

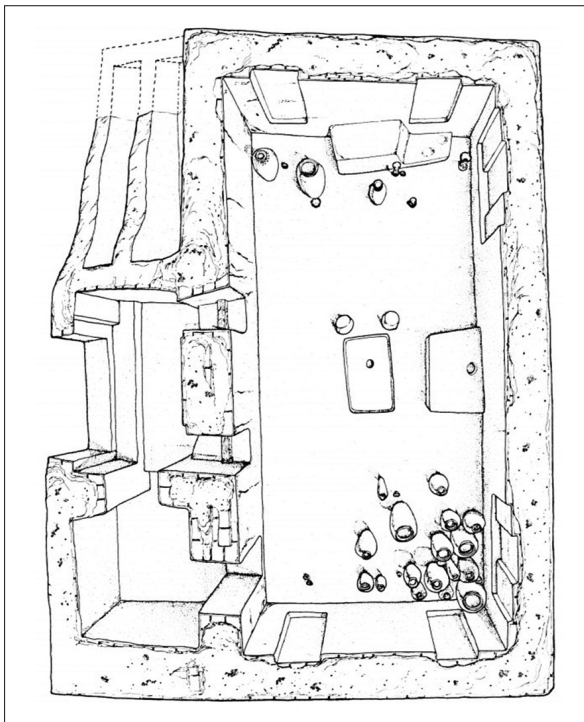
## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The Middle Euphrates region experienced a strong cultural impact during the expansion of Uruk, Late Chalcolithic 4-5, with 20 new settlements of a total of 37 sites, 15 between Birecik-Carchemish. Usually they are settlements of less than 3 ha, and 14 of them were paired in both shores, controlling fords for river crossing the Euphrates in East-West direction every 3 or 5 km (Wilkinson *et al.*, 2012: 159-160, 171, 161 fig. 16).





**Figure 10a.** Arslantepe level VIB, temple B, destruction level with rectangular hearth and two clay pillars (Frangipane, 1997: 55 fig. 5b).



**Figure 10b.** Arslantepe level VIB, temple B, reconstruction of the plan and pottery distribution (Frangipane, 1997: 55 fig. 5b).

The phases of the EB I-III presented a remarkable continuity with the previous Late Chalcolithic one, maintaining the primacy of small settlements of less than 3 ha, as Tilbes Höyük, although the paried sites in both shores are reduced of 14 to only 6 (Wilkinson *et al.*, 2012: 161-162 fig. 17). Samsat shall be the largest site in the Northern part of the Middle Euphrates with 5 ha (Wilkinson *et al.*, 2012: 171 table 7), but also Tiriş Höyük with 6 ha and defensive walls (Algaze, 1990: 547-548), Surtepe with ca. 8 ha in the Birecik Dam with at least EB I and III/IV and Carchemish with less of 40 ha, controlled the metal trade route come down the Euphrates river (fig. 11a).

During the late EB II, an increase in the size of the settlements continued as Tiriş Höyük which reach 35 ha (Algaze, 1999: 548) in the Northern part of the Middle Euphrates and Tilbeshar grow up to 30 ha (Kepinski, 2007: 154) with a a citadel and a lower town. This process of urban agglomeration peaked during the EB III with 43 ha in Tiriş Höyük (Algaze, 1999: 548-549), ca. 12 ha in Surtepe or 56 ha in Tilbeshar (Kepinski, 2007: 154) (fig. 11b).

At Tilbes Höyük the first shrine was built during the EB I, 3025-2875 BC, over an artificial mudbrick platform in the center of the tell following an East-West axis, with a possible entrance from the East, the sunrise. It was excavated only in the eastern sector, with a stone wall of 3.20 m in the East side without door, and 2.85 m in the North and South stone walls, 2.40 m inside de shrine. The main ritual element was a mudbrick altar of horns, prior to a possible religious influx of Transcaucasian origin. In the sealing of the EB II building appeared also two fragments of the base of an altar of baked clay horns.

The EB III “Burnt Building” collapsed circa 2675-2450 BC. The shrine had mudbrick walls in the Northern and Southern ends, delimiting an area of 7.25 m including the walls, and 5.5 m in the internal space. The sector excavated had two rooms, the small one with 1.60 x 3.40 m with a stone paving, and a stairway from the West, and the main room with 3.40 x 3.40 m, including a post hole for an isolated wooden beam beside the South wall, a rectangular hearth of 1.10 x 0.80 m and a baked clay central pillar of 1 x 0.65 m. Two clay horns were recovered, one close to the baked clay pillar and another next to the South wall.







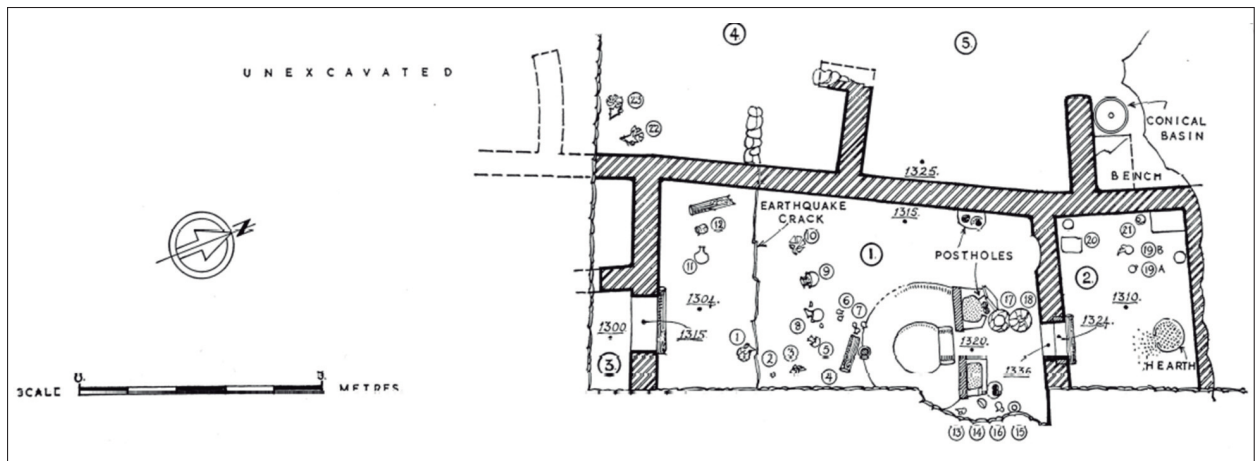


Figure 12a. Shrine plan, Beycesultan, level XIV (Lloyd and Mellaart, 1962: fig. 17).



Figure 12b. Beycesultan, shrine level XIV, after it is excavation in 1957 (Lloyd and Mellaart, 1958: pl. 20a).

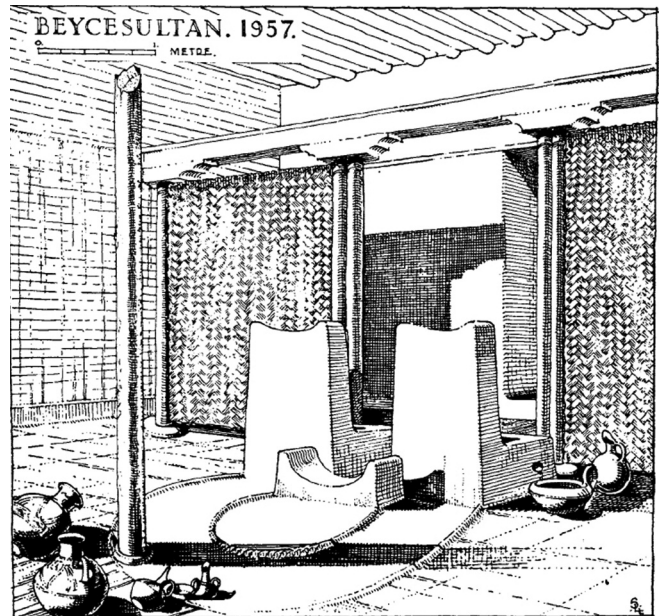


Figure 12c. Beycesultan, shrine level XIV, reconstruction of the horn structure, cult pillars and clay curbs (Lloyd and Mellaart, 1958: 107 fig. 5).

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