

Field surveys in Ardahan in 2016

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**CHRONIQUES DES TRAVAUX ARCHEOLOGIQUES
EN TURQUIE
2016**

Sami PATACI* et Ergün LAFLI**

FIELD SURVEYS IN ARDAHAN IN 2016

In 2016 archaeological field surveys were carried out in the districts of Çıldır, Göle and central townships of Ardahan (Map 1). The investigated archaeological sites were the archaeological site on the island of Akçakale in Çıldır, fortified seasonal settlement of Senger Tepe (Fig. 1), fortified seasonal settlement of Semiha Şakir (Fig. 2), fortress at Kalecik Tepesi near Ölçek Köy (Fig. 3), small fortress of Gölgeli (Fig. 4-5), high plateau site of Gölgeli, site of Samanbeyli (fortress or tower?; Fig. 6), high plateau site of Hasköy (Fig. 7), watchtower of Hasköy (Fig. 8-9), omega-shaped fortress at Kayaaltı in Göle (Fig. 10-11) and high plateau site of Köprülü (Fig. 12). In this brief field report on the 2016 campaign the concentration will be given to the ruins on the island of Akçakale and the fortress at Senger Tepe in Çıldır which are the most important finds of the project.

ISLAND OF AKÇAKALE IN ÇILDİR

The island of Akçakale is located on the northeastern coast of Çıldır lake, just west of Akçakale village and 18 km southeast of Çıldır district center (Map 1). The ruins at the island Akçakale are the most important archaeological finds in the province of Ardahan (Fig. 13). The architectural heritage on the island consist of a monumental tomb in form of *kurgan*, cromlechs, a fortress, a tower, a medieval chapel and a residential area covering almost half of the island (Fig. 14). All archaeological finds except the medieval chapel should be dated to the Middle Bronze Age and Early Iron Age. The round tower on the southern side of the island was probably built in second millennium B.C. and continued to be used in the middle ages (Fig. 15).

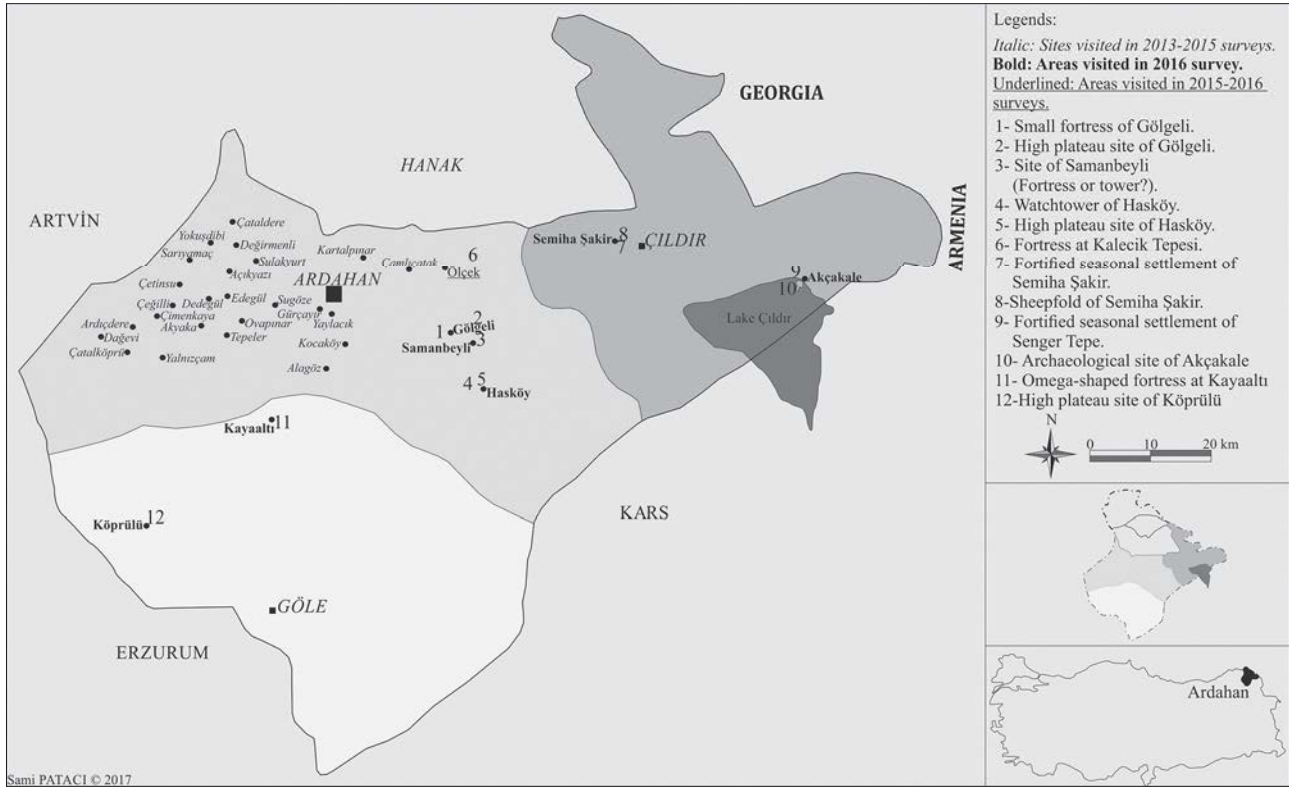
On the northeastern side of the island there is a monumental tomb in form of a *kurgan* which was entirely made by local stone and the base of which is 3 m below the ground level (Fig. 16). “*Kurgan*” is a monumental type of grave in Caucasia and central Asia, mainly in the second millennium B.C. which was basically consisted of a burial mound. *Kurgans* in eastern Anatolia have generally a more simple circular plan compared to the *kurgans* in other regions. This monumental tomb in Akçakale has a size of 6,50 x 3,50 m. The entrance to the tomb’s chamber is rectangular and located on the eastern edge of the structure. On this entrance there is a large stone architrave which is understood to be used as a headstall (Fig. 16). In front of the entrance there is a corridor (*dromos*) which is a few meters long and makes a transition to the burial chamber. At the center of the grave chamber there is a cyclopean stone pillar bearing the whole weight of the ceiling (Fig. 17). The ceiling stones in the grave chamber are of cyclopean nature as well.

Further tombs in form of *kurgan* were found in Kurtkale in the district of Çıldır and in Beşiktaş in the central district of Ardahan. Geographically *kurgans* of Trialeti and Mesheti in Georgia are one of the closest parallels to the *kurgan* discovered on Akçakale¹. The *kurgan* tradition in Transcaucasia began towards the end of the Kura-Araxes or in the early Transcaucasian culture that existed between 3400 B.C. and 2000 B.C. in the Transcaucasia, eastern Anatolia and northwestern Iran. As the monumental *kurgans* were popular during the Middle Bronze Age, the *kurgan* on Akçakale should probably be dated to the Middle Bronze Age at the earliest.

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1) Köroğlu 2000: 6-7.



Map 1: Map of surveyed sites in 2016 (S. Pataci, 2017).

According to the results of surveys carried out in the past years, remains of so-called “cromlechs” are determined at the northeastern end of the island (Fig. 18). At this find spot three or four circular or nearly circular cromlechs were protected which were built in rows with large stones (Fig. 19). Since no archaeological excavations were carried out at this point, the function of cromlechs in Akçakale could not be identified in detail. However, some examples of underground burials beneath of a circular stone line were excavated in the Republic of Armenia which are typologically similar to the cromlechs discovered on Akçakale². Therefore, it could be assumed that the cromlechs of Akçakale were actually *kurgan*-like-graves. These structures probably belong to the Middle Bronze Age, but at the present it is not possible to suggest a more precise date without excavations.

On the northwest side of the island a fortification is located which is triangular in shape and measures 65 x 41 x 50 m (Fig. 20-21). It was built with small and medium-sized stones with irregular shapes in dry wall technique. It is observed that some rooms were built in the inner side of the citadel’s walls.

Only through the architectural features it could be assumed that this citadel was first built in second millennium B.C., but was used during the Iron Age.

Just 20 m east of the fortress there is a medieval chapel with a single nave which measures 4 x 7 m and was built with filling wall technique (Fig. 22). The stones used on the walls of the structure consist of smoothly cut stones such as the ones used in medieval Georgian chapels in the Turkish provinces of Artvin and Ardahan. Mortar and rubble stones were used in the construction of its walls. The southern wall of the chapel is almost completely destroyed. The apse on the east side of the building which gives a half-rounded profile in the inner space, is delimited by a straight wall from the outside. On the other hand, some architectural remains that may be related to the structure can be observed at the ground level and about 20-25 m south of the chapel.

At the southern end of the island there is also a tower with a round plan (Fig. 15). The maximum height of the protected walls of this structure is around 3 m and it has maximal diameter of 10.15 m. The wall structure and cyclopean stones of the tower indicate that it was built in Iron Age, but the mortar

2) Köroğlu 2000: 8; and Badaljan *et al.* 1993: 8.

remains observed on the structure indicate its usage in the middle ages. However, it cannot be argued that there could be a medieval settlement on the island, as there is no other ruins that can be dated to the middle ages, except for the chapel and the tower.

Perhaps the most important archaeological finds on the island of Akçakale are the residential areas of the site that occupy 700 x 500 m, *i.e.* almost half of the island (Fig. 13-14 and 23-24). During the 2016 field campaign the architectural plan of these areas could be completed. According to this plan, it is understood that there are about 40 houses in this area which were built with small and medium sized stones in dry wall technique and were badly preserved (Fig. 23-24). The walls of some structures in the south is preserved up to 1.5-2 m. These residential complexes had four to ten living spaces. Another important architectural part of these complexes is sheepfolds, built next to almost every living units. These sheepfolds vary in square, rectangular or round in shape. The remains of the northwest part of the site consist mostly of sheepfolds. It could be assumed that inhabitants of the archaeological site on Akçakale – consisting of a few hundred people – earned their keep with animal husbandry.

For the time being it is not possible to date the site on Akçakale more precisely. The architectural technique of the houses is similar to the fortification in triangular shape, located on the northwest edge of the island. Considering only the architectural features, these living spaces were probably first built in the second millennium B.C. Only two ceramic sherds were, however, found during our field surveys on the island of Akçakale and they are unfortunately not helpful in dating of this site.

FORTIFIED SEASONAL SETTLEMENT OF SENER TEPE

A fortified seasonal settlement was discovered at the summit of Senger Tepe with 2135 m in altitude, 2 km north of the Akçakale village of Çıldır (Fig. 1). The island of Akçakale can be easily ob-

served from this hill site. There is a fortification wall and at least two terraces on top of the hill and the walls were built in dry wall technique. There are two entrances of the archaeological site. Architectural surface remains belonging to a large number of rooms with square and rectangular plans can be observed at their foundation level (Fig. 25). These remains indicate that the archaeological site was occupied during the Bronze and Iron Ages. The archaeological site covers an area of 90-100 m in the east-west direction and a maximum of 150 m in the north-south direction. Unfortunately it is not possible to determine the exact number of the rooms. Almost all the architectural units are positioned adjacent to each other due to the limited field surrounded by the fortification walls (Fig. 25-26). Nevertheless, as a result of the detailed examination of the architectural plan which is prepared by us, it is understood that there are about 60 small-sized rooms with square and rectangular plans.

Pottery finds observed at the site are dated to Bronze and Iron Ages³ and apart from the ceramics there are also obsidian fragments. The lower terrace in the south and west of the site is suitable for animal husbandry activities. The western and southern borders of the site are restricted by a simpler constructed wall which is highly damaged and could not be preserved well enough for any reconstruction.

Between the sites Senger Tepe and Akçakale there must be a direct connection; perhaps the site on the island of Akçakale was founded by a Bronze or Iron Age community, and they used Senger Tepe as a seasonal settlement for animal husbandry purposes during the summertimes.

A note and acknowledgement

All the maps and photos were made by S. Patacı in 2016 and 2017. We also would like to express our deepest gratitude to Mr Aksel Tibet (Istanbul) for accepting this report to *Anatolia Antiqua*.

S.P. and E.L.

ABBREVIATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Köroğlu, K., 2000: "Çıldır Kurganları / The kurgans of Çıldır", *Arkeoloji ve Sanat* 96: 2-11.

3) For similar sherds cf. Laflı and Kan Şahin 2016: 19-45.



Fig. 1 : Aerial photo of the fortified seasonal settlement of Senger Tepe (S. Patacı, 2016).



Fig. 2 : Aerial photo of the fortified seasonal settlement of Semiha Şakir (S. Patacı, 2016).



Fig. 3 : Aerial photo of the fortress of Kalecik Tepesi (S. Patacı, 2016).

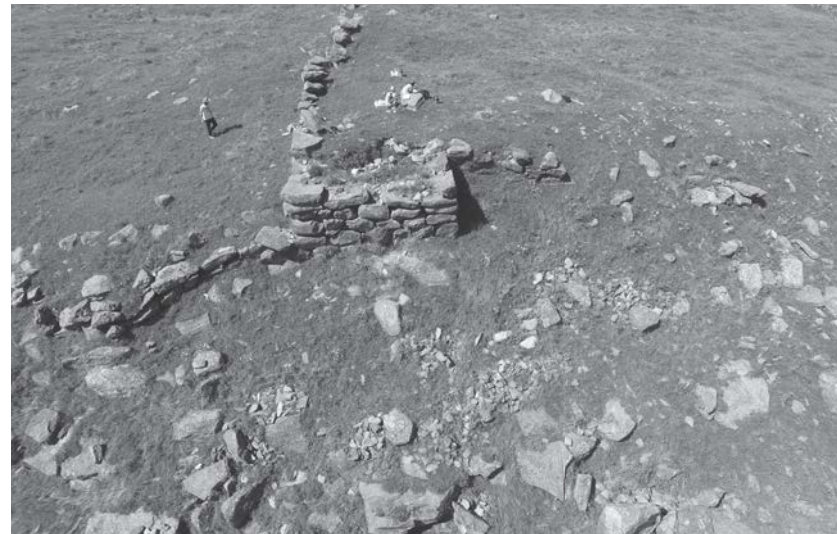


Fig. 4 : Aerial photo of the fortress of Gölgeli (S. Patacı, 2016).

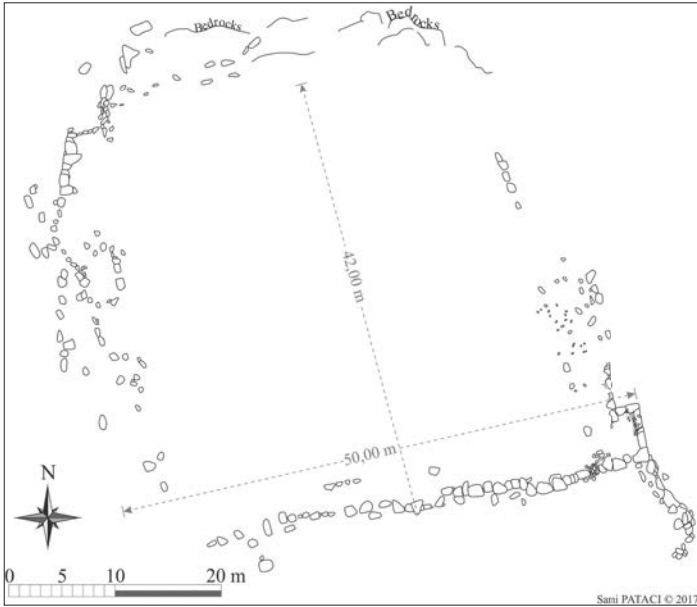


Fig. 5 : Plan of the fortress of Gölgeli (S. Patacı, 2017).



Fig. 6 : Archaeological site of Samanbeyli (S. Patacı, 2016).



Fig. 7 : High plateau site of Hasköy (S. Patacı, 2016).



Fig. 8 : Aerial photo of the watchtower of Hasköy (S. Patacı, 2016).

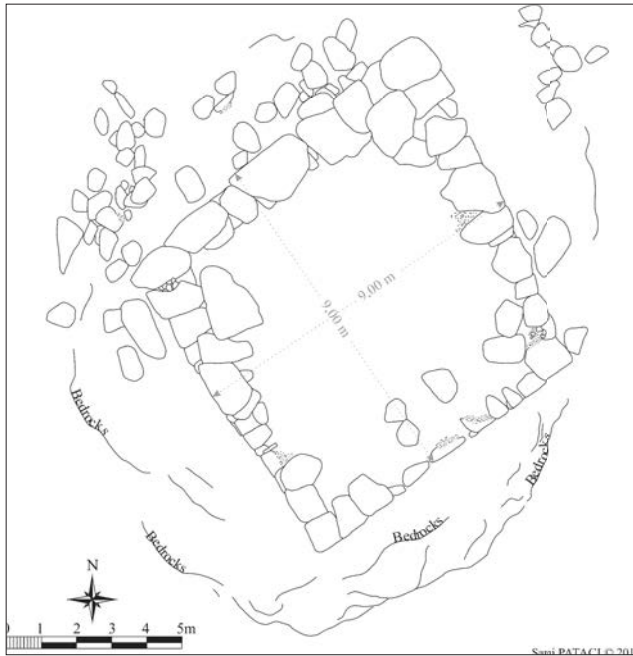


Fig. 9 : Plan of the watchtower of Hasköy (S. Pataci, 2017).



Fig. 10 : Aerial photo of the omega-shaped fortress at Kayaalti (S. Pataci, 2016).



Fig. 11 : Aerial photo of the omega-shaped fortress at Kayaalti (S. Pataci, 2016).



Fig. 12 : High plateau site of Köprülü (S. Pataci, 2016).



Fig. 13 : Aerial photo of the settlement area on the island of Akçakale (S. Patacı, 2016).

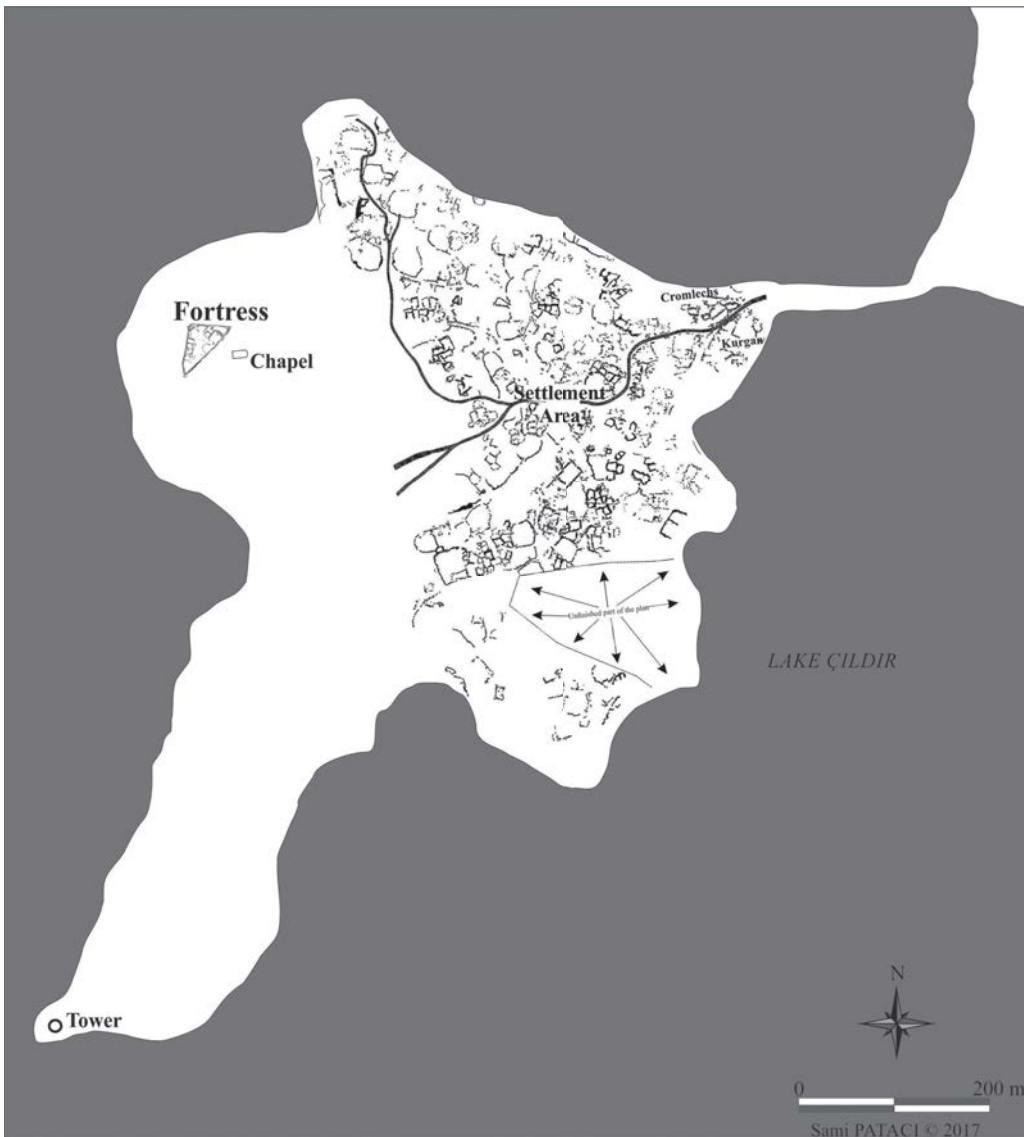


Fig. 14 : Archaeological plan of the island of Akçakale (S. Patacı, 2017).



Fig. 15 : The round tower on the island of Akçakale (S. Patacı, 2016).



Fig. 16 : The entrance of the *kurgan* of Akçakale (S. Patacı, 2016).



Fig. 17 : A cyclopean stone inside the *kurgan* of Akçakale (S. Patacı, 2016).

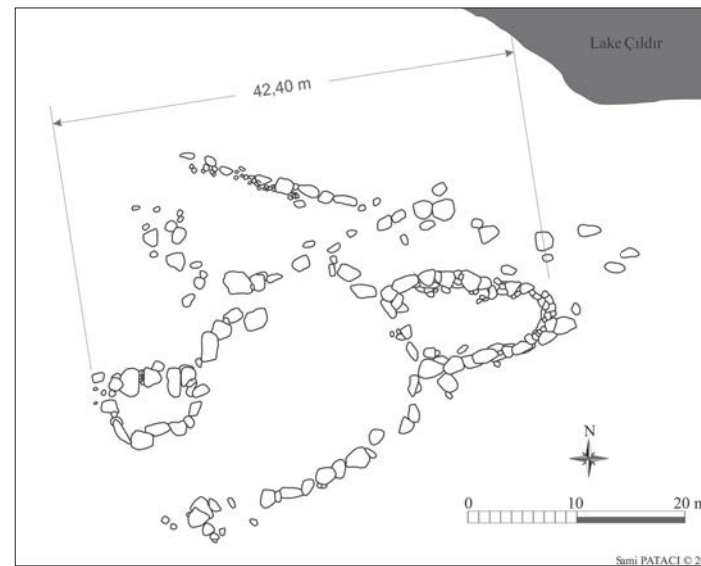


Fig. 18 : Plan of the cromlechs on the island of Akçakale (S. Patacı, 2017).



Fig. 19 : A cromlech from the island of Akçakale (S. Patacı, 2016).

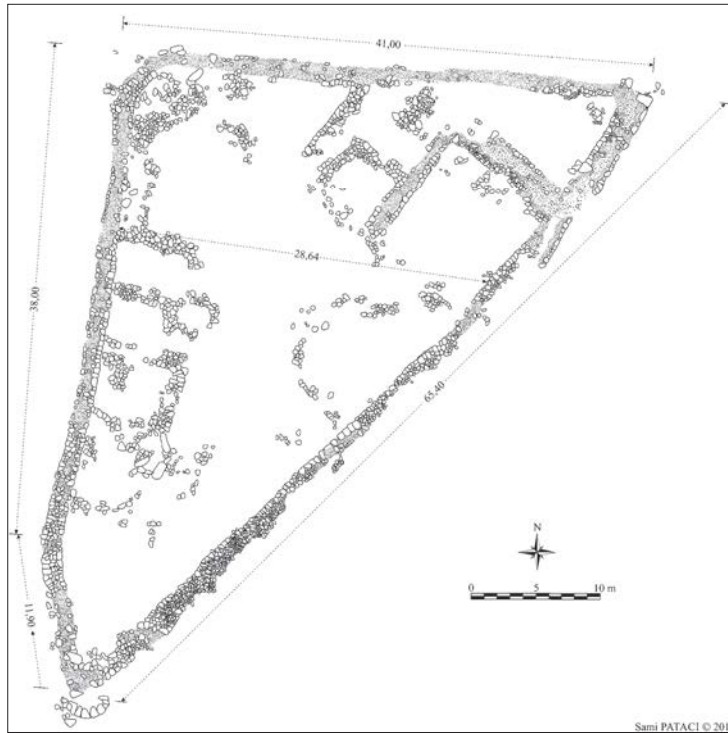


Fig. 21 : Plan of the fortress of Akçakale (S. Patacı, 2017).



Fig. 20 : Aerial photo of the fortress of Akçakale (S. Patacı, 2016).



Fig. 22 : A medieval chapel on the island of Akçakale (S. Pataçı, 2016).



Fig. 23 : Plan of the northern settlement area of Akçakale (S. Pataçı, 2016).

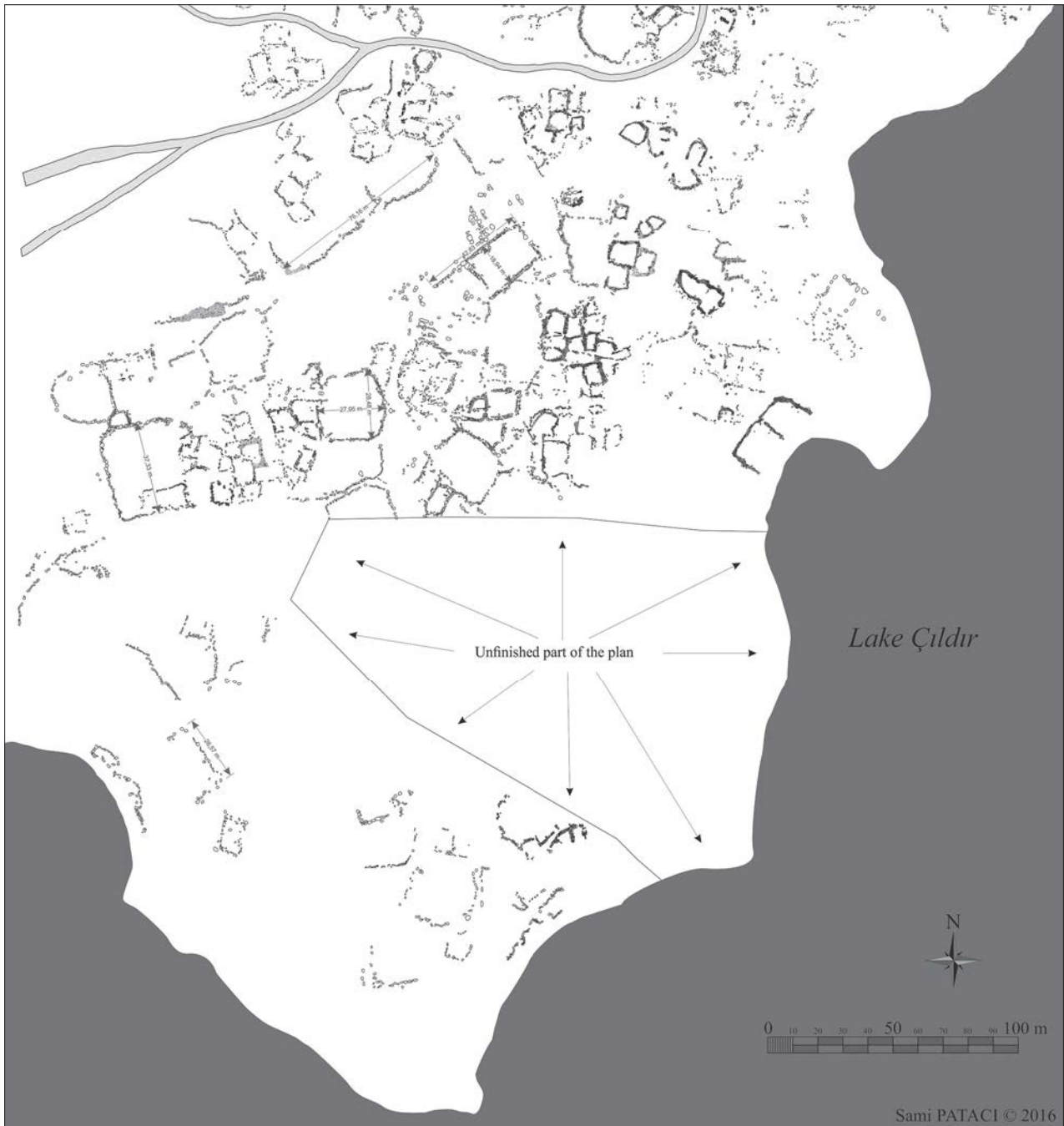


Fig. 24 : Plan of the southern settlement area of Akçakale (S. Patacı, 2016).



Fig. 25 : Plan of the fortified seasonal settlement of Senger Tepe (S. Pataci, 2017).



Fig. 26 : Architectural remains inside the fortification walls of Senger Tepe (S. Pataci, 2016).