

Muş Excavation

In 1956 and 1957, Charles Burney conducted survey work on Urartian sites in the Van area, planning and surveying fortresses, castles, and mounds. Largely on the basis of Burney's discoveries there, Seton Lloyd sought permission as early as 1960 to excavate in the region. This was granted provisionally in 1964, on the terms that a suitable site be discovered. A survey was thus undertaken by driving across most of Muş Province, until 25 Urartian sites had been located; they then created a shortlist of sites, finally deciding on one and applying for a permit in January 1965.

The permit was granted, and 23 July to 10 September 1965 was spent preparing equipment in Ankara. On 13 July the first group departed, and were joined by the second group on 21 July. Sixty workmen were employed locally to help excavate, and together they were successful in exposing a large part of the upper fortress at Kayalidere Kalesi, revealing a series of terraced rooms and a substantial amount of bronze and iron objects. A complex of rock-cut tombs at the base of the site were also discovered and planned. During the second half of the season, a temple structure was excavated.

The team hoped to continue work beginning 15 July 1966, but had not yet received permission to excavate by late June. The Burneys went ahead to prepare the site in anticipation of receiving the permit shortly. A minor earthquake occurred while they were there, but no damage was done to the site. By 6 August still no information was received regarding the permit. A very large earthquake occurred on 19 August, which damaged the site and destroyed much of Kayalidere village. It is likely that had the team been at work, some could have been injured or killed. The stores were luckily undamaged and moved elsewhere.

No future seasons occurred, though there had been interest in continuing the excavation work at Kayalidere.