



## Analyzing the Morphological Development of a Settlement within the Existing Pattern: Emergence of Sivrice

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### Keywords

Elazığ, Sivrice, urban form, urban morphology, urban pattern.

### Abstract

Sivrice district of Elazığ was established on the west coast of Hazar lake in 1938. While the district has a high potential regarding tourism, the Sivrice-Elazığ earthquake in January 2020 caused the district center to become heavily damaged. To rebuild the damaged center and help Sivrice develop as a touristic region, researches from different perspectives and topics on the district are being made. Apart from identifying the existing features and potentials of the region, researching on how Sivrice emerged as a district can provide a deeper perspective regarding the identity and structure of Sivrice. Field of urban morphology focuses on discovering how settlements came to be by using tools like geographical analysis and chronological investigation of cultural, social, or political events in order to tell the story of a settlement. This article aims to use urban morphology to investigate how Sivrice district emerged on its current location starting from 12th century to its establishment in 1938. The research process focuses on analyzing the existing route structure and morphological patterns supported by published literature and maps retrieved from Ottoman archives.

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## Bir Yerleşim Yerinin Morfolojik Gelişiminin Mevcut Dokuda İncelenmesi: Sivrice'nin Ortaya Çıkışı

### Anahtar Kelimeler

Elazığ, Sivrice, kent formu, kent morfolojisi, kent dokusu.

### Özet

Elazığ'ın Sivrice ilçesi, 1938 yılında Hazar Gölü'nün batı kıyısında kurulmuştur. İlçe turizm açısından yüksek bir potansiyele sahipken, 2020 yılının Ocak ayında meydana gelen Sivrice-Elazığ depremi, ilçe merkezinin ağır hasar görmesine sebep olmuştur. Hasar gören merkezin yeniden inşası ve Sivrice'nin turistik bir bölge olarak gelişmesine katkı sağlamak amacıyla ilçeye ilişkin farklı bakış açıları ve konularda araştırmalar yapılmaktadır. Yapılan çalışmalar ile bölgenin mevcut özelliklerini ve potansiyellerini tespit etmenin yanı sıra Sivrice'nin nasıl ilçe olduğunu araştırmak Sivrice'nin kimliğine ve yapısına dair daha derin bir bakış açısı sağlayabilir. Kent morfolojisi çalışma alanı olarak coğrafi analiz ve kültürel, sosyal veya politik olayların kronolojik olarak incelenmesi gibi araçları kullanarak yerleşim yerlerinin nasıl ortaya çıktığını keşfetmeye odaklanır. Bu makalenin amacı

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## Makale Geçmişi

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kentsel morfoloji araştırma yöntemleri ile Sivrice ilçesinin 12. yüzyıldan başlayarak 1938 yılındaki kuruluşuna kadar bugünkü konumunda nasıl ortaya çıktığını araştırmaktır. Araştırma süreci, mevcut güzergah yapısını ve ilçenin morfolojik örüntülerini yayınlanmış literatür ve Osmanlı arşivlerinden alınan haritalarla destekleyerek analiz etmeye odaklanmaktadır.

## 1. Introduction

Sivrice was established as a district of Elazığ in 1938, within the new governance system of Turkish Republic. While Sivrice center is located on the west coast of Hazar lake, the district includes half of Hazar lake along with Hazerbaba mountain which are touristic areas during both summer and winter seasons. After the Sivrice-Elazığ earthquake, which occurred in January 2020, most of the structures in Sivrice center were damaged. While these structures are being rebuilt, Sivrice is also being planned to be developed as a center for tourism. During the process of this development, Sivrice is also being researched upon various topics regarding its history, vernacularity, touristic potentials, etc. This research article aims to make contributions to the research on emergence of Sivrice as a district from a morphological perspective.

Urban morphology is a study field which provides tools to discover how a settlement emerged within time in a specific area or region. While identifying the existing features of a region for development is important, finding out about the elements and factors leading up to its formation from a morphological perspective can give deeper perspective on how to make contributions on the development phase.

This research focuses on a geographical analysis of the region surrounding Sivrice district center, supported with literature documents and travelogues starting from 12<sup>th</sup> century until the district's establishment in 1938. Apart from the physical analysis of the region, social, cultural, and political events are analyzed to create an all-around approach to the research.

## 2. Urban Morphology and Analysis Methods

Settlements appear through time since the existence of humanity as a physical reflection of the human's relationship with the environment. Initially the human seems to be the sole actor shaping his surroundings, but the whole process is consisted of a reciprocal action. While the human modifies the environment according to his needs, the environment also influences his choices based on the existing natural sources and events, creating a continuous interaction between the human and the environment. The built environment comes out as a result of this interaction during the creation of a settlement. Even though the origin of any built environment is based on its natural surroundings, the parts creating it are consisted of components formed by the human, like routes, plots, structures, which eventually create an urban pattern (Kropf, 2017).

Urban morphology is a study field which focuses on how these settlements and the built environment formed and changed during time from different aspects. It can be practiced based on different scales and topics by professionals from various

disciplines, like geographers, urban planners, or architects. In the case of analyzing a settlement like a town or a city, the study of urban morphology does not only benefit from the changes of the environment, but it also feeds from cultural and social changes, along with political and historical events. Hence, making this research field a versatile study source for researchers (Kropf, 2017; Ünlü, 2018).

The study of urban morphology offers different tools and methods for the researchers based on their disciplines and the scale they are working on. The historico-geographical approach in urban morphology focuses on analyzing and finding answers to how a certain built environment formed within time, based on its existing pattern and structure, supported with maps and documents about the settlement. The main idea of this approach targets the analysis of an urban pattern, which creates the sum or part of a designated settlement. Following up on a hierarchical order, the study can start from analyzing the urban tissue of a city from a bigger scale to the analysis of certain materials used in a settlement on a much smaller scale. Limiting the scale of the study should be defined by the researchers based on their fields and research scopes. Building a chronological order of events is a must in this approach in order to create a broader frame for the morphological process, which helps to understand the possible transformations. Apart from the obvious analysis of physical changes, it is important to find out about the cultural and social events surrounding the settlement. These events indirectly form the environment through affecting the lives of its inhabitants and provide clues about the process of the outcome (Kropf, 2017).

This article aims to research on the morphological changes and transformations happened in the west part of Hazar Lake starting from 12th century to the establishment of Sivrice as a district in 1938. Using the historico-geographical approach in this study requires focusing on the area from a bigger scale, which can help analyze the composition of the elements creating the district, as well as the natural sources and components effecting the settlement. The physical analysis of such a study is based on two main subjects: the existing routes and the urban pattern. Throughout time, humans created and defined travelling routes according to their habits, needs and most importantly based on the general principle of least effort. Since routes are created with the intention of least effort, they tend to survive hundreds of years, making ancient routes still existent in modern times. New roads and streets created within time tend to connect to the main routes, forming a continuous travelling pattern. This continuity provides solid clues about the formation of a settlement. The existing urban pattern is generally formed like a palimpsest around these routes. While the routes and streets have a higher chance to stay as they were first defined, plots and built structures may change frequently. Though, the analysis of these elements provides important information on the process of morphological transformation (Kropf, 2017).

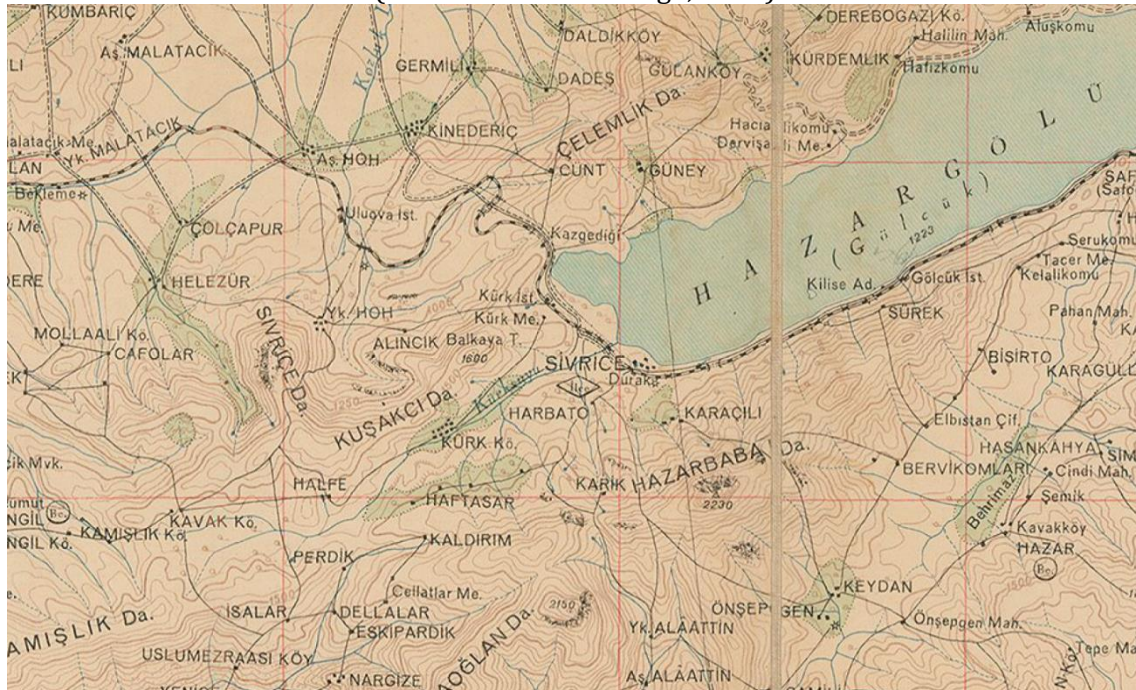
The research period on the morphological structure of Sivrice includes the analysis of the natural environment, route structures, the growth and transformation patterns of the existing settlements including villages, social and cultural events effecting movements and behaviors of inhabitants, and the existing built environment. The analysis benefits from various maps retrieved from the archives and published literature, including Ottoman Archives, along with village records

and traveler's logs. The research is structured in a chronological order to present the flow of certain events and transformations.

### 3. Morphological Analysis of Sivrice

Sivrice is a district of Elazığ city, in Turkey, and it is located on the west side of Hazar Lake, 22 km south of the Elazığ city center. Sivrice was first established as a village of Elazığ, where Yukarı Huh village (today Dedeyolu village) was located, but then relocated to its current place in 1938, becoming a district. The district got its name from the nearby Sivrice mountain (Yiğit, 1994). Sivrice district can be seen on the 1948 published map of Elazığ, which was prepared with revised roads and names in 1946 by General Directorate of Mapping (Harita Genel Müdürlüğü, 1948) (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Elazığ Map, updated in 1946, published in 1948  
(Harita Genel Müdürlüğü, 1948)

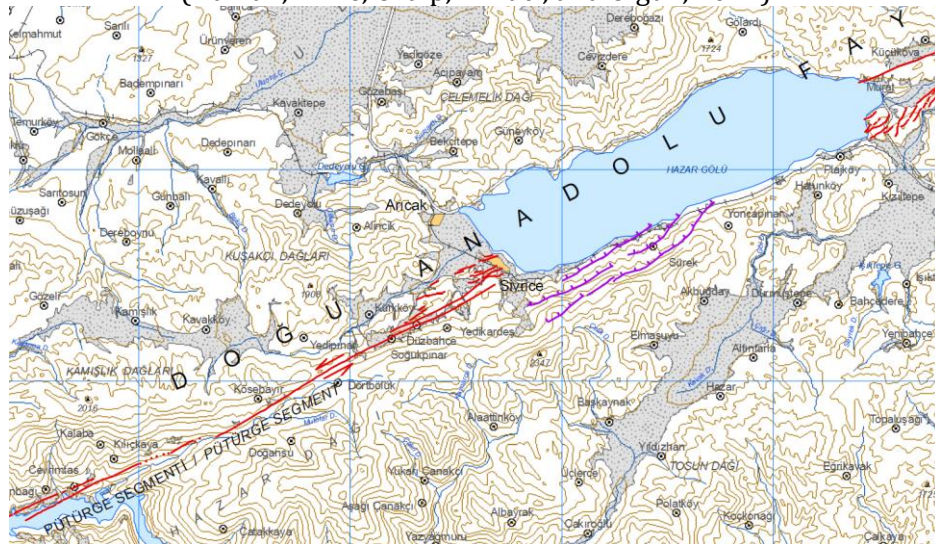


Geographical analysis of the current terrain surrounding Sivrice and Hazar lake shows that the lake is located on a basin surrounded by mountains and hills. These mountains are, Çelemelik mountain on the north, Hazar mountain on the south and Sivrice mountain on the west (Yiğit & Hayli, 1995). While plains are mostly formed around the lake, due to the steep nature of the surrounding mountains, it is possible to see a scattered settlement pattern in the region. Sivrice is settled on one of the plains on the west side of the lake, but villages can be found on different areas and at different altitudes where farming and agriculture are possible (Yiğit, 1988).

Sivrice is also located right above the East Anatolian Fault Line (Figure 3), making it one of the risky areas in terms of possible earthquakes. The center of the earthquake which happened in Elazığ, January 2020, had a magnitude of 6.5 and caused great deal of damage in the district (Boğaziçi Üniversitesi, 2020). Formation of Hazar lake could highly be the result of continuous earthquakes

happening throughout centuries on the East Anatolian Fault Line (Yiğit, 1994). The lake is also thought to be much smaller than its current state, indicating the idea that earthquakes might have caused collapses on the lake bottom, increasing both its depth and surface area (Özkan Aygün, 2019).

**Figure 3.** Map showing the East Anatolian Fault Line passing under Sivrice (Duman, Emre, Özalp, Elmacı, and Olgun, 2012)



In order to understand factors leading to Sivrice becoming a district, routes around the area are analyzed chronologically, along with settlements and cultural events affecting them. Hazar lake used to be on a Roman route between Melitene (Malatya) and Amida (Diyarbakır). This route can be seen on Tabula Peutingeriana (Figure 4), which is thought to be showing the routes of Roman Empire from the first century (Özkan Aygün, 2019).

**Figure 4.** Tabula Peutingeriana, showing the route from Melitene to Amida (Özkan, 2017)



The earliest information gathered regarding the region is about the Castle of Dzvok. The castle used to be located on its own island inside the Hazar lake, which was previously known as Gölcük lake. Around 1115-1125, an Armenian Patriarchal Seat was set up in the castle's church by Grigor III Pahlavuni. However, the seat was relocated from the Castle of Dzvok to Rumkale around 1147-1149. Castle of

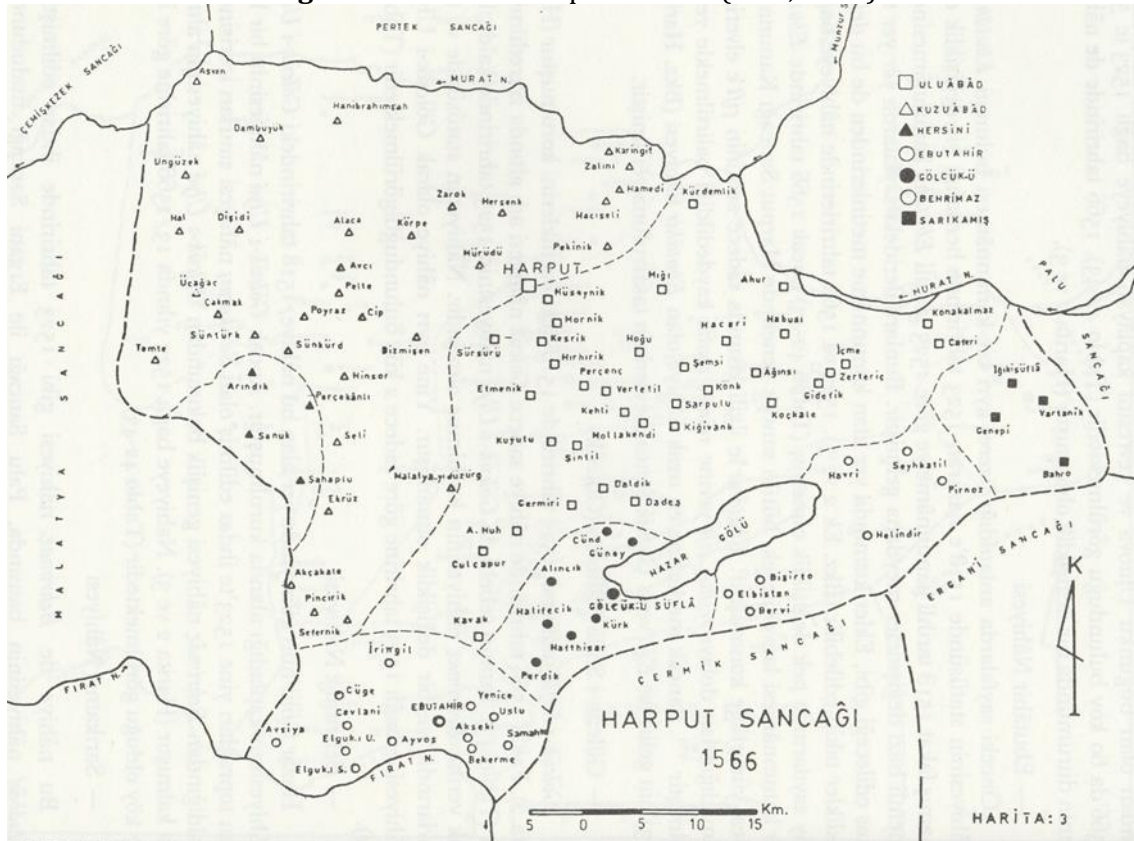
Dzovk and its establishment is also mentioned in French academic Antoine-Jean Saint-Martin's book, *Mémoires historiques et géographiques sur l'Arménie* (King, 1940; Özkan Ayyün, 2019). After the relocation of the patriarchal seat, the church is thought to be kept because of its sanctity (Yiğit, 1995). Harput, which is the current center of Elazığ city, was conquered by the Ottoman forces in 1516 and was declared as a sancak with surrounding villages under the jurisdiction of Diyarbekir state. One of the reasons for Harput to become a sancak and to be developed as a center was based on its strategic location, being situated along the trade routes to Ankara, Bingöl, Van or Bağdat. The listing of all settlements under the Harput sancak was completed in 1518. During the period from 1518 to 1566, the current day Sivrice was in the borders of Gölcük-i Süfla nahiye (quarter/neighborhood). Gölcük-i Süfla was located on south-western part of the Gölcük Lake, with 10 villages. Its center was located near the current day Sivrice center (Ünal, 1989) (Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Sancak of Harput in 1518 (Ünal, 1989)**



After 1523, Gölcük-i Süfla nahiye is mentioned in the records only as Gölcük. Its neighbor Gölcük-i Ulya's name was changed to Behrimaz (Figure 6). At the time, the plots around the Gölcük lake had the utmost importance in terms of settlement due to their proximity to water, hence making some parts of the land suitable for agriculture. Higher parts of the area were mostly used for farming (Ünal, 1989).

**Figure 6. Sancak of Harput in 1566 (Ünal, 1989)**



Simeon of Poland, who was an Armenian traveler, mentions about the Gölcük lake in his travelogues, dated from 1608 to 1619. The traveler wrote about the existence of a masonry church and an Armenian village inside the lake, where he managed to visit it by a crossing the lake with a boat and participating in the evening mass (Andreasyan, 2013). The Ottoman traveler, Evliya Çelebi, also mentions about Gölcük lake, but under the name of Harput lake in his travelogues. Evliya Çelebi came across the lake during his travels across Sivas and Diyarbakir in 1649. He wrote about an island inside the lake and the Armenian village situated on it along with the church (Kahraman & Dağlı, 2006).

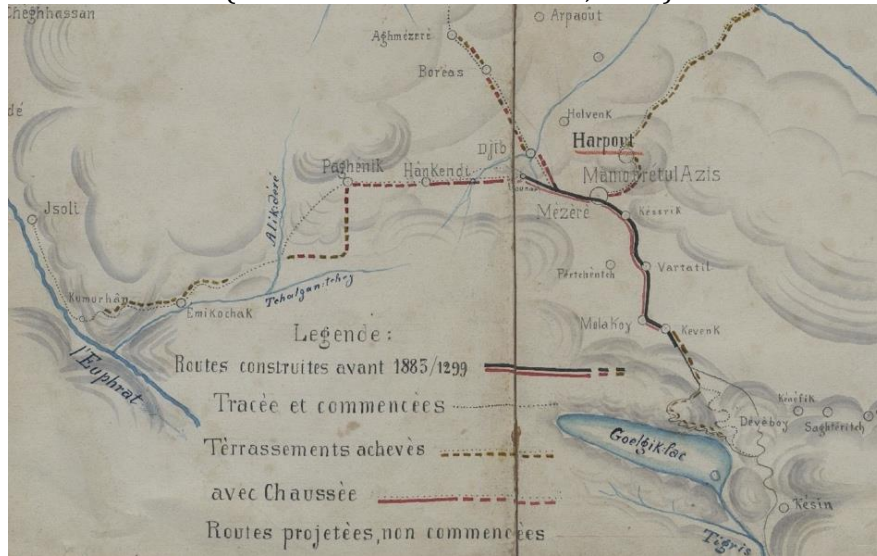
In 218 numbered Harput Şer'iyye Sicili, which is consisted of the records kept by the qadi in charge of Harput sancak, a petition written by residents of Gölcük village, in 1834, is found to be mentioning about their village becoming flooded due to the rising water level of the lake. From the description, it is understood that, at the time, the village on the island was named as Gölcük, after the lake. The petition also mentions that because of the rising water level, agricultural activities were prohibited in the island, causing the villagers to have a hard time to support themselves. Another statement from the petition is about the relocation of some of the villagers to Huh village, starting from 1795, because of these circumstances (Aksın, 1990; Yiğit 1995). French geographer Xavier Hommaire de Hell also mentions about an island with church ruins and an uninhabited, flooded village on Gölcük lake, during his travels in the region around 1847 (Yiğit 1995). Çiğdem Özkan Aygün explains that initially Gölcük lake had connections to Dicle and Murat Rivers through smaller streams. Due to the earthquakes happening in the region,

the connections were cut off, leading to the inevitable rising of the lake water level (Aygün Özkan, 2019). It is concluded that the rising of the water flooded the entire church and the village on the island by 1830s, causing its inhabitants to relocate all together.

In 1864, with the enactment of the Vilayet Law, regional administrative system changed in the Ottoman Empire. While the system kept the existing subdivision of regions like sancak, kaza or nahiye, the current states were turned into vilayets (provinces). After the implementation of this law, new provinces were created by dividing existing states for easier governance. Mamuretül Aziz was first established as a sancak, replacing sancak of Harput in 1864, under the Diyarbekir province. Later, around 1878-1879, Mamuretül Aziz was declared a province, including parts of Erzurum and Diyarbekir provinces in its borders (Karpas, 1985; Talip, 2006). It is possible to find Mamuretül Aziz province under the name of Harput province in the records.

The 1883 dated map of Harput province, prepared by Gen. W. Fischbach shows the route from Sivas to Erzincan passing through Harput center (Figure 7). Gölcük lake is shown on the map, along with the route passing through its northeastern part. Indications regarding the region of current day Sivrice is not existent on the map (Ottoman Turkish Document, 1883).

**Figure 7.** Harput province map, prepared by Gen. W. Fischbach in 1883 (Ottoman Turkish Document, 1883)



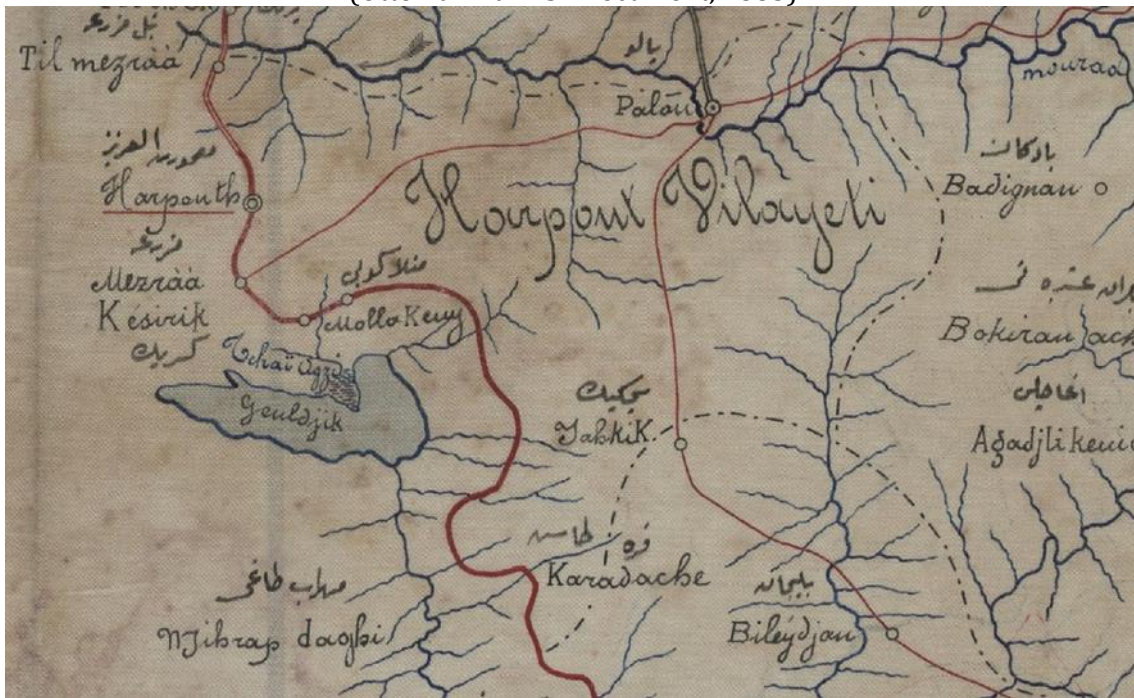
The records, dated 1883-1884, in Mamuretül Aziz Salnamesi, which is an annual for keeping yearly events of the province, mentions the Gölcük lake for being much smaller than it was at the time, and the rising of the water level in the last 40-50 years have caused the Gölcük village to be entirely flooded (Yiğit, 1994). This record confirms when and how Gölcük village was completely sunken. However, in the record dated 1895, Gölcük village is mentioned with a population of 459. It is thought that remaining inhabitants of the flooded village was relocated to the mainland, near current day Sürek village at the time (Yiğit, 1995).

A road map, prepared by a French cartographer in 1887, shows both completed routes and the ones under construction in Harput, Bitlis, Diyarbekir and Erzurum



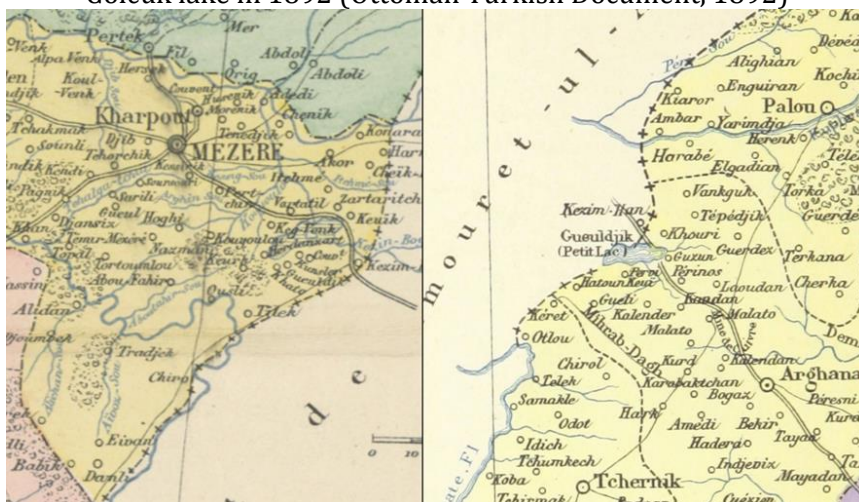
provinces (Figure 8). The map shows Gölcük lake along the completed route from Harput to Diyarbekir, which passes from northeastern part of the lake. In this map, the lake is drawn much bigger than it is today, which may be due to the rising of the water level during these years, or an inaccuracy in drawing.

**Figure 8.** Harput, Bitlis, Diyarbekir and Erzurum provinces road map, prepared in 1887 (Ottoman Turkish Document, 1883)



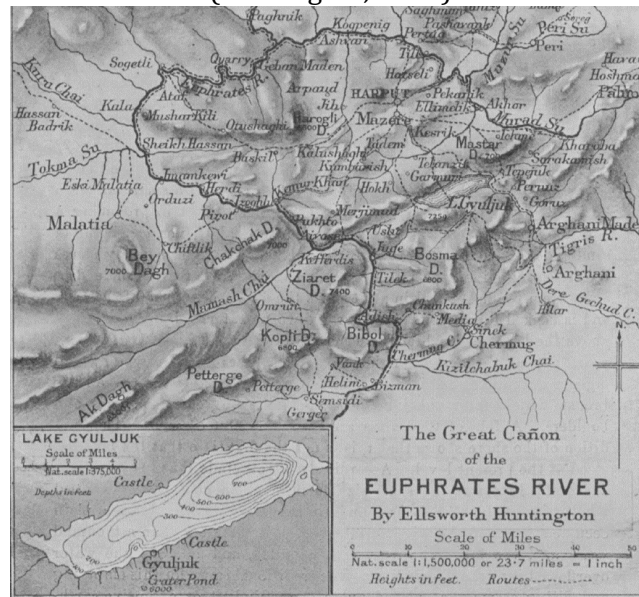
In Mamuretül Aziz and Diyarbekir province maps, prepared by French researcher Vital Cuinet in 1892, the lake is shown as Gueuldjik, Petit Lac (Figure 9). Again, the main route between Harput and Diyarbekir are shown in the map (Ottoman Turkish Document, 1892).

**Figure 9.** Harput (left) and Diyarbekir (right) province maps prepared by Cuinet, showing Gölcük lake in 1892 (Ottoman Turkish Document, 1892)



Ellsworth Huntington, an American geography professor, worked as a geography teacher in Fırat Koleji, located in Harput, from 1897 to 1901. In 1899, the professor worked on mapping the lake, which he refers as Gyuljuk (Figure 10). Huntington published his findings and the map in an article in 1902. In the article, Huntington wrote about his exploration of the area and the information he got regarding the flooded village. He mentions hearing stories from the locals about the island in the lake, and how it used to be connected to the mainland but within time the water level rose, eventually flooding the island. He also wrote about the visible remains of a church on the sunken island (Huntington, 1902). In the map, besides the lake, close villages like Huh village can be located.

**Figure 10.** Ellsworth Huntington's map of Lake Gyuljuk and its surroundings in 1899 (Huntington, 1902)



In his book, Mehmet Ali Ünal states that during the period from 1518 to 1566, the regions consisted of Gölcük-i Süfla and Gölcük-i Ulya nahiyes were varied in terms of religion. They contained muslim villages along with non-muslim and mixed ones. While Gölcük-i Ulya was mainly non-muslim, Gölcük-i Süfla was mostly mixed (Ünal, 1989). Also, the village on the island is mentioned be an Armenian village almost in all references. Tacy Atkinson, an American missionary who lived in Harput from 1910 to 1915, mentions the existence of non-muslim villages in the region, in her diaries (Sakaoğlu, 2013). With the impact of World War I in 1994 and later with the relocation of non-muslims in the region, most of the villages surrounding Gölcük lake were deserted. The population density in the area had decreased drastically at that time (Yiğit, 1994), which had likely led to a lot of settlements to be abandoned.

**Figure 11.** Map of Harput, showing Gölcük lake along with Gölcük and Sürek villages (Ottoman Turkish Document, 1916)



The map, prepared in 1916 confirms that the Gölcük village had indeed moved to the mainland, close to Sürek village. This map also marks the church on the flooded island, along with Yukarı Huh village and Sivrice mountain (Figure 11). The road map from Diyarbekir to Harput shows that the main route passing from the northeastern part of Gölcük lake kept its importance after the fall of the Ottoman Empire (Figure 12). Another road map from Diyarbekir to Hekimhan shows villages from northwestern part of Gölcük lake. Yukarı Huh village, which used to be where initially Sivrice was established as a village in 1936 can be seen on this map (Figure 13).

After the establishment of Republic of Turkey in 1923, Turkish immigrants were gradually brought from other countries like Russia, Yugoslavia, and Romania. Mamuretül Aziz, also known as Harput, became a city and was named as Elazığ after the establishment of the republic. The immigrants brought to the country during the period from 1938 to 1940 were mainly relocated to Elazığ and its villages. Sivrice was first established as a village for these immigrants in 1936, where İringil and Yukarı Huh villages were located. Two years later in 1938, Sivrice was moved to its current location on the west of Gölcük lake and became a district (Sarıbeyoğlu, 1951; Yiğit, 1988; Yiğit, 1994).

**Figure 12.** Diyarbekir-Harput road map, dated 1923  
(Ottoman Turkish Document, 1923a)



**Figure 13.** Diyarbekir-Hekimhan road map, dated 1923  
(Ottoman Turkish Document, 1923b)



#### 4. Conclusion

The research to understand the morphological changes happening up to the establishment of Sivrice as a district has focused on analyzing both geographical changes and various events occurring in the region. Being the distinctive element of the region's geography, most of the information collected within this research includes the Hazar lake and the changes happened to it. Being located over the East Anatolian Fault Line, the lake is thought to be formed as a result of many earthquakes happening over centuries. Joined with the information about the

rising of the lake's water level is another suggestion that the lake is still affected from the possible earthquakes.

Almost in all the maps analyzed for this research, the road connecting Elazığ city center, Harput, to the direction of Diyarbakır can be seen. Considering the consistency of this road, it might be part of the ancient route drawn in Tabula Peutingeriana, from Melitene (Malatya) and Amida (Diyarbakır) (Figure 4). It is almost impossible to find a distinct route passing from the area of current day Sivrice in Ottoman maps. However, in the Elazığ Map from 1948, it is possible to see the railway passing from Sivrice center, following the western and southern coast of Hazar lake. This might suggest that southwestern area of the lake developed after Sivrice became a district in 1938.

While the human factor is an important aspect in the morphological development of a region, the World War I and relocation of non-muslim inhabitants around 1914-1915 have caused a cultural and demographic rift. These events are observed to break the connection of the environment with its longtime inhabitants in the region.

The findings of the research suggest that Sivrice formed with the effect of a political event, rather than a natural morphological cycle of habitation. While inhabitable areas in the region have been used by locals throughout centuries, any evidence regarding the past of current day Sivrice's location cannot be found. After Sivrice was formed in 1936 around the Yukarı Huh village, where today it is known as Dedeyolu), it was moved to the west coast of Hazar lake. The factors leading to the selection of this area must have been due to the proximity to water along with the area being located on a plain. Another factor could be the railway passing from the western and southern part of Hazar lake (Figure 1), which must have been completed as part of Yolçatı-Maden train line in 1935 (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Devlet Demiryolları, n.d.). This way, the district would be able to develop in its current place with proper transportation support from the railway.

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