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PROTECTING THE CAPITAL. THE URARTIAN FORTRESS OF ÇORAVANIS/KAVUNCU AND THE DEFENCE OF VAN/ՏՄՏՔԱ*

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Introduction

This article examines the archaeological site of Çoravanis/Kavuncu, a significant fortress dating back to the period of the Kingdom of Urartu, one of the major states of the ancient Near East¹. Urartu, which emerged between the second half of the 9th century BCE and the second half of the 7th century BCE², represents a complex and fascinating civilization that extended across what is now eastern Turkey, Armenia, and northwestern Iran, with its capital situated at the famous rock of Van, known in antiquity as ՏՄՏՔԱ. Kavuncu, located in the province of Van, 8.5 km east of the modern city bearing the same name, is part of a dense system of fortifications designed to protect and strategically control the Van plain, a crucial area for the Urartian capital (Pic. 1). Despite the importance of Kavuncu for understanding the Urartian defensive system and territorial control, this site has remained relatively understudied. Although mentioned in ancient sources and visited by pioneers of 19th-century archaeology, Kavuncu received little attention during the initial phases of archaeological investigations in the region. Explorers like Hormuzd Rassam and C.F. Lehmann-Haupt provided early descriptions of the fortress, highlighting rock-cut structures, foundations, and fragments of inscriptions found in local dwellings. However, it was only later, through studies conducted by archaeologists such as Oktay Belli in the 1980s and Aynur Özfirat more recently, that the site began to attract more scholarly attention, particularly regarding its attribution to the reign of King Rusa (II), son of Argišti, during the first half of the 7th century BCE. Epigraphic surveys conducted by the CNR-ICEVO under the direction of Prof. Mirjo Salvini be-

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¹ I would like to thank Prof. Mirjo Salvini, with whom I had the pleasure and honour of visiting the Van region multiple times, including the site discussed in this text. All images in this contribution were produced by the author of this article, except where specifically indicated. The photographs of the site and inscriptions of Kavuncu were taken in 2008 and 2009.

² For a general outline of Urartian history, see Salvini 1995, 18–121 and Salvini 2006, 459–503.

tween 2008 and 2010 provided new evidence, including a significant inscription from King Minua, confirming the foundation of the site in an earlier period, around the late 9th–beginning of the 8th century BCE. Specifically, the author of this contribution had the opportunity to visit the site on two separate occasions, on July 31, 2008, and August 11, 2009, during which the materials discussed in the text were collected. The site of Kavuncu presents a unique opportunity to deepen our understanding of the complex Urartian defensive network and the strategic role of peripheral fortresses in protecting the capital. Its location on a rocky spur overlooking a river valley, along with monumental structures such as rock-cut foundations and the rock-carved entrance gate, underscores its importance both militarily and symbolically. Furthermore, the widespread distribution of Urartian ceramics and the discovery of a stele base suggest that Kavuncu was not only a defensive post but also a significant administrative centre. In the broader context of Urartian territorial control, Kavuncu fits into a ring of fortresses that surrounded the capital, Դժքա, designed to control strategic passages and defend against enemy incursions, particularly from the Assyrians. This study aims to analyse the site in detail, exploring its architectural features, epigraphic and material findings, and the role it played within the larger scheme of defence and exploitation of the natural and agricultural resources of the Van region. The discovery of Minua’s inscription and the attribution of the site to a premeditated fortification complex suggest a highly advanced level of military and territorial planning for the time, reflecting the ambitions and needs of a kingdom focused on consolidating its power over a rich but contested territory.

History of Studies

A brief account of the initial excavations can be found in the work of Hormuzd Rassam (Rassam 1897, 378–379) in the context of early investigations at Van/Դժքա, the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Urartu. This text also mentions a brief excavation near a site located six miles east of Van, referred to by Hormuzd Rassam as Chooroovans³, likely corresponding to modern Զրավանք/Kavuncu, a fortified citadel from the reign of Minua that, along with other fortifications, protected access to the Van plain: “*I tried also another mound called Chooroovans, about six miles to the east of Wan, because I had seen some inscribed stone pillars in an Armenian house, which I was told had been found in that locality; but I saw nothing to encourage me to carry on more than three or four days’ operations in it. I asked Captain Clayton, however, to try it once more after my departure, because when I was there, I had some difficulty in finding workmen on account of the harvest. Fragments of inscribed black basalt slabs were to be seen in different houses and churches, built into walls or thrown about*” (...) “*There are a large number of ancient sites in the Pashalic of Wan, which ought to be thoroughly explored; the most important, I think, are the ruins near the village of Tirmait, about fifteen miles to the southeast of Moosh; and also at the mound of Chooroovans, which I have already mentioned*” (Rassam 1897, 378–379).

³ The name of the site has also been spelled in various ways, including Զրավանք/Zirvandanis or also Tsorowants/ Tschorowank/Tsorovank/Tschorovanz/Zoravants/Joravanc’, and Joravank’.

The first detailed information on the site dates back to the late 19th century when C.F. Lehmann-Haupt visited Kavuncu, describing it as a fortress located on a rocky promontory known locally as Tsorowants⁴, where rock-cut features such as terraced foundations and a carved passage were discernible: “*Am rechten Ufer des von Kochbanths kommenden Zernabad-su entlang reitend und dann den Keschischgöl-su durchreitend, gelangte ich zu dem Dorfe Tsorowants, das unmittelbar am rechten Steilufer des Keschischgöl-Abflusses belegen ist und von einem Felsplateau überragt wird, das eine durch folgende Merkwürdigkeit ausgezeichnete alte Chalderburg trägt. Ein ständiges Merkmal der Chalderburgen ist der Durchhau, durch den die die Burg tragende Felskuppe von dem übrigen Teil des Felsrückens künstlich getrennt wird, um die Feste schwerer zugänglich und besser verteidigungsfähig zu machen. Oft genug mag es sich nur um eine Vertiefung und Verbreiterung eines vorhandenen Einschnittes handeln. Diesem Zwecke entsprechend befindet sich der Einschnitt regelmäig am Rande der eigentlichen Felsenfestung und reicht tief unter ihr Niveau herab. Die Buranlage von Tsorowants aber wird durch einen breiten, aus dem Felsen gehauenen Einschnitt durchzogen, der nur als eine Art Felsenstrae bezeichnet werden kann*” (Lehmann-Haupt 1926, 52). Later, in 1983, the site was investigated by Oktay Belli as part of a research project aimed at surveying Urartian sites in the Van plain from 1982 to 1984 (Belli 2001, 14). Belli attributed the foundation of Kavuncu, dating it correctly to the Urartian period, to the reign of Rusa (II), son of Argišti (first half of the 7th century BCE)⁵, based on a section of “rusticated” masonry found on the western side of the site (Belli 1985, 167; Belli – Salvini 2004, 155)⁶, but it was probably only an incomplete stage of stone processing. Aynur Özfirat also visited the site during her survey of the region, and it was classified by the scholar under the code O70/10. Local Iron Age ceramics were found, but no red-burnished ware typical of Urartian pottery was reported (Özfirat 2006, 181, 194, 197; Özfirat 2008, 204, 213). The author of this article has offered further observations based on visits conducted in 2008 and 2009 (Dan 2010, 56, 58–59).

The Archaeological Site of Kavuncu

The site is located on an oval-shaped rocky promontory, measuring approximately 200 meters in length from north to south and 150 meters from east to west (On the site of Kavuncu; Dan 2017) (Pics. 2–3). The strategic location of the fortress controls one of the eastern access points to the Van plain via a small valley crossed by the Zernabad River. The original walls encircling the promontory have been completely dismantled by villagers, who reused the stones for their homes, and these blocks can now be seen throughout the settlement. The removal of the walls over time has exposed the charac-

⁴ This is a name about which Lehmann-Haupt himself showed some uncertainty (Lehmann-Haupt 1926: 2*) and which can cause confusion with an Armenian monastery known as Dzorovank, located near Muradiye on the northeastern shore of Lake Van.

⁵ The chronological references for the Urartian kings are taken from Salvini 2008, 23; Salvini 2018, 18.

⁶ During the years of our visits to the site, no trace of this wall was visible, likely dismantled for the reuse of its blocks. For information on Urartian rustication, see Dan 2015a and Dan 2015b.

teristic rock-cut stepped foundations on which the walls once stood, now heavily eroded by both weather and human activity (Pic. 4). Most of the remaining fortifications are visible on the western side of the promontory, where larger rock outcrops occur. Here, remnants of megalithic dry-stone fortification walls, preserved up to four courses of blocks, were identified (Pic. 5). The stones, made of limestone, were moderately well-finished, and the fortifications skilfully exploited the natural contours of the rock outcrop. The main gate, carved into the rock and located on the western side, consisted of a rock-cut corridor approximately 1.5 to 2 meters wide and 10 meters long (Pics. 6–7) (Lehmann-Haupt 1926, 52). This entrance is quite similar to the one found in the Urartian fortress of Upper Anzaf, located on the northeastern edge of the same plain (On this rock-cut corridor, see Belli 1999, 25, pl. 31). Just outside the gate, a large circular stone, partially preserved, was identified, measuring 1.20 by 0.68 meters, with a height of 24 cm. Another interesting stone block, found at the top of the site, was a large basalt base, finely worked but partially cracked. It was tapered toward the bottom, though the block was clearly overturned, and measured 1.30 meters on its lower side, 1.50 meters on its upper side, with a depth of 1.07 meters and a height of 0.50 meters (Pic. 8) (It is likely one of the blocks also described by Lehmann-Haupt 1926, 52). A damaged rock-cut feature resembling the base of a stele was also found (Pic. 9). Ceramic remains, including large fragments of *pithoi* used for storing foodstuffs, were scattered across the surface, clearly attributable to the Urartian period. In 2009, excavation for the construction of a new building on part of the hill uncovered archaeological remains of an ancient structure, consisting of a stone foundation with two rows of blocks and a mudbrick superstructure of at least two meters in height. The clay-based mortar used between the mudbricks was still visible. Numerous ceramic fragments, including small jars, were found in the earth removed during the excavation (Pics. 10–11). To the northeast of the fortress, on a high hill overlooking the plain, a limestone quarry was identified, from which blocks used in the fortress walls were likely extracted (Belli 1985, 167).

The Inscriptions of Minua (CTU A 5-53B, A 5-54)

During a visit on 31 July 2008, the author of this contribution, together with Mirjo Salvini, discovered an unpublished Urartian inscription on a broken column base in two fragments (CTU A 5-54A Fragment-2 and 3; Pics. 12–13) at the top of the site. This base, split into two fragments, was later connected by Mirjo Salvini to another fragment of a column base held at the Van Archaeological Museum (CTU A 5-54 Fragment-1). The fragment currently stored in the museum (N° Inv. 9.1.87) was acquired on 19 October 1987 by Mr. Ali Bayram, who discovered it in the same village of Kavuncu (Işık 2019, 298–299). These fragments, clearly from the same base, were published in the recent *Corpus dei testi Urartei* (all the three fragments as CTU A 5–54)⁷. The base has a diameter of 0.72 meters and a height ranging from 0.34 to 0.36 meters (Salvini 2008, 238; Salvini 2012, 261; Salvini 2018, 156) (The diameter is 0.74 according to Işık 2019, 298). The three

⁷ For all these fragments, see also Salvini 2010a, 279–282, pic. 1–5; Salvini 2010b, 32.

lines of writing are separated by a space of 2.8–3 cm. The height of the three inscribed lines is 13 cm. It is highly likely that the fragments of column bases, referred to as ‘inscribed stone pillars’ by Hormuzd Rassam (Rassam 1897, 378.), are the very ones we have found or, at the very least, belonged to the same building. The reconstructed inscription, dating to the reign of King Minua (circa 810–785/780 BCE), consists of three lines repeating the following text:

^Dḥal-di-i-n[i-n]i uš-ma-a-ši-ni ^mmī-nu-[ú-a-]se ^miš-p[u-ú-i]-ni-e-ḥi-ni-še i-ni É za-a-du-ni
By the power of [Ḥaldi], Minua, the son of Išpuini, built this structure.⁸

An additional inscribed fragment was discovered by us on 11 August 2009 during a second visit to the site (CTU A 5-53B). This fragment is a column base in very fragmentary condition, which constitutes a duplicate of CTU A 5-53, a lost inscription, of which only a copy made by Lehmann-Haupt has been preserved (Lehmann-Haupt 1928–1935, pl. 55 (CICH 72)), and was perhaps part of the same building constructed by Minua (Salvini 2012, 262; Salvini 2018, 156). The already known stone, classified with the code CTU A 5-53, was recorded as originating from a private house in Van, belonging to a certain Mešem Agha (König 1955–1957, 11 (HchI 52)). It is likely that this stone, too, originally came from Çoravanis/Kavuncu (Salvini 2012, 262). On 30 May 2012, the fragments we discovered were brought to the Van Museum. Beyond the content, which simply records the construction of a building (É), these fragments confirm the site’s Urartian origins and provide a precise dating for its construction. Numerous other inscriptions attributed to King Minua have been found in the vicinity of Kavuncu, including six inscriptions from Kohbants (CTU A5-47, A 5-48, A 5-60)⁹, Değirmenköy (CTU A 5-64), Sihke (CTU A 5-91)¹⁰ and Vosgepag (CTU A 5-55A), located between 1 and 7.5 kilometres from Kavuncu. If this circumstance is proven, the site should contain a *susi* temple, a gate dedicated to the god Ḥaldi, and a *barzudibiduni* building—structures mentioned in these inscriptions, the existence of which can only be verified through future archaeological investigations. The discovery of the inscription of Minua and the subsequent dating of the site has allowed for some considerations on the control system of the Van Plain, where the capital of Urartu, Դušpa, identified with Van Kalesi (Van Fortress), was located. On August 11, 2009, an additional fragment of an inscription on a column base (CTU IV A 5-53B) was recorded, which turned out to be a duplicate of another inscription of King Minua on a column base, discovered in a house in the old city of Van around 1800 and now lost (CTU A 5-53). This discovery has allowed for the attribution of this lost inscription to the Kavuncu site as well. Therefore, at least three column bases inscribed by King

⁸ English translation of CTU A 5-54 (Salvini 2008, 238; Salvini 2018, 156).

⁹ Also known as Kopanis/Kobanis. For the Armenian monastery of St. Gregory, now in ruins, see Cuneo 1988, 536–537. The monastery, from which the Urartian inscriptions come, is located about 2 km from Kavuncu.

¹⁰ This text related to an equestrian record, found walled in the church of the village (König 1955–1957, 14), may also have originated from the fortress of Upper Anzaf, located 6 km north-east of Sihke.

Minua are currently known (CTU A 5-53, CTU IV A 5-53B, and CTU A 5-54). A final reflection must be made regarding these inscribed column bases from Kavuncu, namely CTU A 5-53B, CTU A 5-54, and possibly A 5-53. Recently, Salvini proposed a division of Minua's royal inscriptions—the most numerous among those produced on stone and rock by Urartian kings—into five chronological phases based on palaeographic analysis. According to this division, the inscriptions from Kavuncu would belong to the so-called intermediate period, likely dating to the middle of Minua's reign (Salvini 2012, 318). However, the most intriguing aspect concerns the relative chronology of its construction in relation to other sites that form the ring of fortifications surrounding the capital. This chronological aspect will be discussed in the next paragraph of this text.

The Fortification Ring Around the Capital of Urartu

The plain of Van was an ideal location for establishing the capital of a kingdom that faced the pressures of the Neo-Assyrian Empire (Lynch 1901, 59; Zimansky 1985, 18). The protection offered by the surrounding mountains and the region's general isolation, combined with the ease of controlling all access points through strategically placed outposts, significantly enhanced the appeal of the Van area¹¹. The presence of a vast plain, enriched by abundant water resources and further improved by numerous hydraulic works constructed throughout the kingdom's existence,¹² created a protected and privileged ecological niche. Spanning approximately 13,000 hectares of fertile arable land at an elevation of 1,650 meters above sea level, this plain is not the largest in the kingdom, especially when compared to the 160,000 hectares of the Ararat Depression, which fell under Urartian control from the 8th century BCE. Additionally, it is important to consider the fluctuations of Lake Van, whose water level has significantly risen in recent times compared to its extent during the Urartian era. Estimates suggest that the ancient shoreline may have extended up to 20 kilometres farther west than its current position (Trémouille - Dan 2022). This premise is essential because the reduction of the flat area and the potential submersion of other settlements, likely of a military nature, would partially affect the analysis of the settlement pattern in the region. The area is characterized by the entire Lake Van basin, which experiences a humid continental climate influenced by Mediterranean patterns. Winters are severe, with temperatures typically ranging from -3° to -13° Celsius, occasionally dropping as low as -30° . From an orographic perspective, several notable mountain ranges provide protection to the area. To the south lies Artos Dağ (3,475 meters), while the southeastern side features the Vaviran Dağları, including Sudiz Dağı (Çat) at 3,150 meters. The entire eastern side is distinguished by Ereğ Dağı, where the prominent Ereğ mount (3,250 meters) stands out¹³ as one of the

¹¹ For further discussion on the control of the Van Plain during the Urartian period, see also Dan - Salaris 2022.

¹² There are epigraphic evidences of them in this area from the time of Minua (Semiramis Canal - CTU A 5-12, A 5-15) to that of Rusa (III), son of Erimeña. (Keşiş Göl CTU A 14-1, A 14-2).

¹³ See Harta Genel Müdürlüğü, 1:200,000, pages for Van, Başkale, Malazgirt, and Muradiye (Bargiri).

most significant mountains in the kingdom of Urartu.¹⁴ The northern side was the most exposed, lacking significant reliefs. At the centre of the plain, isolated and imposing, stand the calcareous formations of the Van rock and Zimzim Dağ. Between these mountains, several valuable mineral deposits can be found, including marble and limestone quarries, some of which were exploited in ancient times.¹⁵

The main water resources consist of numerous springs along an arc in the eastern foothills and seasonal streams that descend from these mountains, fed by snowmelt and high-ground sources. The primary waterways are the Kurubaş Deresi (Doni Çayı) and the Engusner Çayı (Akköprü Deresi – Göl Deresi – Alaini Deresi), which flow from the Ereğ Dağ and traverse the Van Plain from east to west before emptying into Lake Van. The waters of the lake, one of the largest endorheic basins in the world, have a high degree of salinity (Huguet et al. 2011, 1289), rendering them unsuitable for agricultural use. The kingdom's water supply was ensured through the construction of massive hydraulic works. Over the years, several scholars have noted the existence of a series of fortresses built to defend Դժքա, the capital of the Kingdom of Urartu: Carl Friedrich Lehmann-Haupt in 1909 (Lehmann-Haupt 1909, 262–263) and 1926 (Lehmann-Haupt 1926, 38), Charles Allen Burney in 1957 (Burney 1957, 40), Boris Borisovich Piotrovskij in 1959 (Piotrovskij 1959: 63), Mirjo Salvini in 1995 (Salvini 1995, 133–134) and more recently the author of this same contribution (Dan 2014; Dan 2017). Initially, it was assumed that this system of fortresses was conceived by King Minua. In this regard Piotrovsky wrote: “*In addition to fortifying the capital's citadel, fortresses were also erected to protect the approaches to Tushpa. Inscriptions tell of the construction of fortresses on the northeastern shore of Lake Van (UKN, No. 65–67¹⁶). A fortress of powerful cyclopean masonry was erected on a high hill near the village of Anzav (10 km northeast of Van), from where two cuneiform inscriptions of Menua (UKN, No. 71¹⁷ and 88¹⁸) about construction work originate*”¹⁹. The scholar was referring to the fortresses of Upper Anzaf and Körzüt,²⁰ whose construction is attributed to Minua. Charles A. Burney, in the report of his pioneering survey around Lake Van in 1957, correctly observed that some forts located around Van fortress were built specifically to defend the Urartian capital and added the sites of Lower Anzaf and Zivistan to this “ring of fortifications” (Burney 1957, 40). These original intuitions have been confirmed and strengthened by significant advances in epigraphic and archaeological knowledge of the area. It is now possible to assert the existence not only of several outposts protecting the capital but also of a comprehensive complex of

¹⁴ On the symbolic role of the mountain in Urartu, see Dan 2019: 237.

¹⁵ See Maden Tektik ve Arama Genel Müdürlüğü, table for Van.

¹⁶ CTU A 5-33, A 5-35, A 5-36 da Köşk e Körzüt.

¹⁷ CTU A 5-42b from the Upper Anzaf temple.

¹⁸ CTU A 5-62 discovered in the Anzaf village and presumably originally located in Upper Anzaf.

¹⁹ Translated from Russian after Piotrovskij 1959, 63.

²⁰ This fortress is located much further north, in the Muradiye plain, and does not directly concern the topic of this contribution.

fortresses that stemmed from a unified project aimed at systematically controlling all potential access points to the plain of Van²¹. This network of fortifications (Pic. 14) represented the culmination of an ambitious and enduring strategy for the defence and exploitation of the area, leading to a profound transformation of the territory. The landscape was further altered by the construction of numerous hydraulic works aimed at enhancing agricultural productivity, thereby ensuring the autonomous subsistence of various centres in addition to supplying the capital. It was Išpuini who initiated the plan to block all possible access to the centre of the region while simultaneously intensifying the agricultural potential offered by the fertile volcanic soil. Išpuini commenced the construction of the defensive complex with the erection of the fortresses of Kalecik (CTU A 2-1), Lower Anzaf (CTU A 2-6A-C), and Zivistan (CTU A 2-2), the latter later completed by his son Minua²². During the reign of his son Minua, the construction of fortresses continued. The important chronological information reconstructed through the study of the palaeographic evolution of cuneiform signs allows us to establish that Upper Anzaf and Kevenli were the first to be built, likely at the initiative of Minua while Išpuini was still king. This is plausible given the absence of royal titulature in the inscriptions of Minua found at these sites. Kavuncu was the last of the fortifications in the capital's protective ring to be founded, as indicated by palaeographic analysis. However, the last architectural intervention that can be confidently attributed is the completion of the Zivistan fortress. As previously mentioned, Minua completed the site by inscribing texts in his father's name (Salvini 2018, 321–322). Additionally, two more Urartian fortresses, Kiz Kalesi and Kiratli, were likely integral to this defensive system; however, regrettably, no inscriptions have yet been identified at either site²³. A total of eight fortresses have been identified, spaced approximately 10 to 13 kilometres apart. The exception is the fortress of Kalecik, located only about 5 kilometres from the capital due to the geomorphological characteristics of the region. Recent studies of the Urartian settlement system have enabled the classification of these fortifications into four categories, based on the length of the fortification walls and the manpower employed in their construction.²⁴ The Van fortress is classified as a first-level site, while Upper Anzaf stands out as the largest second-level fortress in eastern Turkey. Additionally, several fourth-level fortresses have been identified. However, there is insufficient information regarding the extents of the fortifications at Kiratli, Kiz Kalesi, and Kavuncu, as their walls have been largely dismantled due to the repurposing of stone blocks in the construction of modern houses. During

²¹ On the control and exploitation of the Van plain, see Dan – Salaris 2022.

²² Recently, based on the analysis of the ductus, it has been hypothesized that the epigraphs of the fortress of Zivistan, apparently built by Išpuini, would have actually been made by Minua but dedicated in the name of his father. The fortress would have been devoid of inscriptions, perhaps due to the premature death of Išpuini (Salvini 2012, 321–322).

²³ In the site of Kiz Kalesi a very small fragment of cuneiform inscription was discovered, but it does not provide any relevant information since only a few signs are preserved. On this fragment, not included in the CTU, see Belli 1982, pl. XI.2.

²⁴ On the Urartian fortifications in Urartu, see Biscione - Dan 2014, 121–136.

the 8th and 7th century BCE, three additional fortresses, not directly part of the primary fortification system, were constructed in the Van Plain. These include Toprakkale, and two smaller outposts known as Keklik Bulađı I and Keklik Bulađı II (Belli 1985, 168–170, pics. 1, 20–22)²⁵. These outposts were likely designed primarily for the defence of Toprakkale, which may have served as the capital of Urartu for a brief period. All fortresses with inscriptions also functioned as religious centres and contained a tower-temple, except for Kalecik and Lower Anzaf, which were smaller sites. Due to the presence of natural obstacles, there were no direct lines of sight among these defensive fortifications. Nonetheless, they were strategically positioned to maintain direct visual contact with the capital, Դuֆpa, with the exception of the Anzaf fortresses. This excellent visibility between Դuֆpa and most of these fortresses facilitated the rapid transmission of signals—likely through fire—indicating danger or the arrival of caravans and merchant delegations, even during adverse weather conditions that might have impeded mounted messengers. Consequently, all potential access routes were systematically blocked.

Chronology of the Foundation of the Fortified Centres Protecting the Capital of Urartu

Site name	King	Inscriptions (CTU)	Palaeography ²⁶	Fort position in respect to Van
Kalecik	Iֆpuini	A 2-1, A 8-41	Archaic	North
Lower Anzaf	Iֆpuini	A 2-6A-C, A 2-7A-B, A 2-8	Archaic	North-east
Zivistan	Iֆpuini, completed by Minua	A 2-2A-G, A 2-3a-d, A 2-4	V. phase canonical	South
Upper Anzaf	Minua	A 5-42A-C, A 5-43	I. Very early phase	North-east
Kevenli	Minua	A 5-34?, A5-44, 45, 46; A 5-87, 88, 89	I. Very early phase	East
Kavuncu	Minua	A 5-53?, A 5-53B, A 5-54	III. Intermediate phase	East
Kiz Kalesi	?			South-west
Kiratli	?			East

Conclusions

In conclusion, the site of Kavuncu emerges as an important element in comprehending the strategic and administrative frameworks of Urartian culture. The site is connected to the early phases of archaeological research related to Urartu, as its excavation was the first, alongside that near the capital, conducted by Hormuzd Rassam. Despite the poor state of preservation of the structures, which are constantly threatened by the presence of the village covering them, the site has been securely dated thanks to the

²⁵ These sites are uncertain in both morphology and chronology.

²⁶ According to Salvini 2012: 312–313, 318–322.

cuneiform inscriptions, the architecture (rock-cut features), and the ceramics (Urartian *pithoi*). The site, built by king Minua between the end of the 9th and the beginning of the 8th century BCE, likely remained in use until the 7th century BCE, a period to which some architectural refurbishments might be dated. Based on the current state of our knowledge, it does not appear to have been reused during the Orontid period. Positioned within a carefully orchestrated defensive network encircling the capital Tušpa, Kavuncu's strategic placement underscores its significant role in controlling and safeguarding the crucial access routes to the Van plain—a region that served as a linchpin of Urartian political and agricultural life. This network of fortifications reflects a sophisticated understanding of territorial defence, designed to counteract the pressures from external threats, particularly those posed by the Neo-Assyrian Empire. The archaeological and historical evidence from Kavuncu reveals much about the Urartian approach to military fortification and regional management. Despite the challenges posed by the modern reuse of construction materials, which have obscured some details of the original structure, the remaining evidence continues to offer invaluable insights. The construction techniques and strategic layout of Kavuncu contribute to a deeper understanding of how the Urartians designed their fortifications to create a seamless defensive system. This system not only fortified their capital but also ensured the control and utilization of the fertile lands of the Van plain, which were integral to the kingdom's economic stability. The importance of Kavuncu extends beyond its military function. As part of a larger network, Kavuncu facilitated the effective management of the Van plain, integrating defence with economic and administrative needs, as most of the other fortresses of this system²⁷. This multifaceted role of Kavuncu highlights the complexity of Urartian planning and the kingdom's capability to implement extensive and effective defence mechanisms while simultaneously promoting regional development. Furthermore, the ongoing research and future excavations at Kavuncu promise to shed light on additional aspects of Urartian civilization. The site's strategic and operational significance within the defensive network will likely enhance our understanding of the broader socio-political and military strategies employed by the Urartians. As scholars continue to uncover and analyse the remains, Kavuncu is expected to provide further insights into the intricate balance the Urartians maintained between defence, resource management, and regional control. This continued exploration will contribute to a richer, more nuanced portrayal of Urartian history, underscoring the kingdom's strategic acumen and its enduring legacy in the Armenian Highlands.

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²⁷ See the recent and still unpublished excavations of the Kevenli fortress, initiated in 2024.

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Ռոբերտո Դան

Միջերկրածովյան և Արևելքի երկրների ուսումնասիրության միջազգային ասոցիացիա
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ՄԱՅՐԱՔԱՂԱՔԻ ՊԱՇՏՊԱՆՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ. ՉՈՐԱՎԱՆԻՍ/ՔԱՎՈՒՆՁՈՒ ՈՒՐԱՐՏԱԿԱՆ ԱՄՐՈՑԸ ԵՎ ՎԱՆԻ/ՏՈՒԵՊԱՅԻ ՊԱՇՏՊԱՆՈՒԹՅՈՒՆԸ

Հիմնաբառեր. ուրարտական ամրոցներ, ռազմական ճարտարապետություն, պաշտպանական համակարգ, Վանի դաշտ, արձանագրություններ

Չորավանիս/Քավունջու բնակավայրը Ուրարտական թագավորության կողմից իր տարածքը պաշտպանելու և կառավարելու համար ստեղծված ամրությունների բարդ ցանցի կարևորագույն տարրն է: Ավելին, այս վայրը Ուրարտուի մայրաքաղաքի հետ միասին առաջիններից մեկն էր, որ հնագիտական ուսումնասիրության ենթարկվեց 19-րդ դարի վերջին: Վանի հարթավայրում ռազմավարական դիրք ունեցող Քավունջուի ճարտարապետական և ռազմավարական առանձնահատկությունները վկայում են ուրարտական հասարակության պաշտպանական և վարչական համակարգերում նրա դերի մասին: Մենուա արքայի կողմից հիմնադրված այս վայրը, ինչպես վկայում են վերջերս հայտնաբերված սեպագիր արձանագրությունները, ամրությունների օղակի մի մասն է, որը նախատեսված է պաշտպանելու Ուրարտուի մայրաքաղաքը՝ Վանի ամրոցը, հին Տուշպան: Այս հոդվածը ուսումնասիրում է Քավունջուի պատմական, հնագիտական և ռազմավարական նշանա-

կությունը, համատեղում է նոր գտածոները առկա հետազոտությունների հետ՝ ապահովելու նրա գործառույթների համապարփակ ըմբռնումը Ուրարտական ամրաշինական ռազմավարությունների ավելի լայն համատեքստում:

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ОБОРОНА СТОЛИЦЫ: УРАРТСКАЯ КРЕПОСТЬ ЧОРАВАНИС/КАВУНЧУ И ОБОРОНА ВАНА/ТУШПЫ

Ключевые слова: урартские крепости, военная архитектура, оборонная система, Ванское поле, надпись

Городище Чораванис/Кавунчу представляет собой важнейший элемент сложной сети укреплений, созданных Урартским царством для защиты своей территории и управления ею. Более того, это место было одним из первых, наряду со столицей Урарту, подвергшихся археологическому исследованию в конце 19 века. Архитектурные и стратегические особенности Кавунчу, стратегически расположенного на Ванской равнине, свидетельствуют о его роли в оборонной и административной системах урартского общества. Это место, основанное царем Мэнуа, о чем свидетельствуют недавно обнаруженные эпиграфические документы, является частью кольца укреплений, предназначенных для защиты столицы Урарту, крепости Ван, древней Тушпы. В этой статье рассматривается историческое, археологическое и стратегическое значение Кавунчу, объединяются новые находки с существующими исследованиями, чтобы обеспечить всестороннее понимание его функций в более широком контексте урартских фортификационных стратегий.