

# On the Road to Mannea, the Archaeological Sites of Taštepe, Iran

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**Abstract** The purpose of this article is to make a re-evaluation of the site of Taštepe-1 and to introduce a newly discovered site called Taštepe-2. These are located on the southern shore of Lake Orumiyeh in Iran. Taštepe-1 consisted of a small outpost and a settlement. The most important feature is the Urartian inscription by King Minua. Taštepe-2 is a settlement. The archaeology of both sites is discussed, as is the presentation of pottery collected from the surface. Finally, the sites are discussed from the perspective of the historical events that characterised part of the first half of the first millennium BCE, i.e. the war between Urartu and Mannea.

**Keywords** Taštepe-1. Taštepe-2. Urartu. Urartian Inscription. Minua. Mannea. Hasanlu. Mešta.

**Summary** 1 Geographical Location. – 2 History of Studies. – 3 The Inscription of Minua (CTU A5-10). – 4 The Archaeological Site of Taštepe-1. – 4.1 The Pottery and the Chronology of Taštepe-1. – 5 The Archaeological Site of Taštepe-2. – 5.1 The Pottery and Chronology of Taštepe-2. – 6 The Historical Context of Taštepe: The Urartian Advance in the Lake Orumiyeh Basin and the War with Mannea. – 7 The Problem of the Localization of the City of Mešta. – 8 Urartu and Mannea: The Architectural Koinè, Assyrianization Processes, and the Problem of the Borders.



**Figure 1** Satellite picture of the southern shore of Lake Orumiyeh, showing the sites referred to in the text. Satellite picture after Google Earth

This article aims to make known to the academic community a new study on an important site called Taštepe which is located in the southern part of the Lake Orumiyeh basin and is particularly important for the reconstruction of the region's historical geography [fig. 1].<sup>1</sup> Indeed in Taštepe, that is located in a strategic point not far from the border between Urartu and Mannea, an inscription by king Minua was identified. Following a number of visits conducted by the authors between 2013 and 2020, a new archaeological analysis of the site and a reconstruction of the historical context of the main phases of its occupation have been developed. Moreover, not far from the main site of Taštepe-1, a new site that has been called Taštepe-2 was discovered.

**1** The authors of this article want to thank Stephan Kroll for having shared important information on the site here called Taštepe-1. The content of this text has been developed by all authors. The Introduction was written jointly, while specifically Behrouz Khanmohammadi wrote 'Geographical Location', 'History of Studies', 'The Archaeological site of Taštepe-1' and 'The Archaeological site of Taštepe-2'; Priscilla Vitolo wrote 'The Pottery and the Chronology of Taštepe-1' and 'The Pottery and the Chronology of Taštepe-2', while Roberto Dan wrote 'The Inscription of Minua', 'The Historical Context of Taštepe: The Urartian Advance in the Lake Orumiyeh Basin and the War with Mannea', 'The Problem of the Localization of the City of Mešta' and 'Urartu and Mannea: the architectural koinè, Assyrianization processes, and the problem of the borders'. All the pictures in the article have been produced by the authors, except where otherwise indicated.



**Figure 2** Satellite picture (2011) showing positions of the sites of Taštepe-1 and 2 and the closest modern villages. Satellite picture after Google Earth

The plain of Miandoab where both sites are located, as well as those of Naqadeh/Solduz and Ušnaviyeh, was a very important interface area in the Middle Iron Age, starting from the end of the 9th century BCE, between Urartians and Mannaeans. The frontier between these two states that bordered one other at least until Sargon II's 8th campaign of 714 BCE was extremely mobile. This mobility is mainly shown by the relative scarcity of fully Urartian archaeological sites, a symptom that the region was never totally pacified, at least not for long periods. The reconstruction of the border between Urartu and Mannea is complicated from an archaeological perspective also by the fact that Urartu and Mannea shared multiple architectural features, which makes it difficult to attribute many of the sites found in this area. It must be borne in mind that Taštepe is in connection with the courses of the rivers Zarineh and Simineh, which are the 'doors' leading to what is generally believed to have been the Mannean core area. The sites are therefore located in a zone that was probably under the control of each political ent in different periods, in line with dynamics that involved other sites such as, for example, Goyje Qal'eh, located about 60 km north-east of Taštepe, in the narrow valley of one of the tributaries of the Zarineh-Rud (Naseri Someeh et al. 2021).

## 1 Geographical Location

The site of Taštepe-1, also known as Dāsh Tappeh<sup>2</sup> which literally means ‘stone hill’ and is the name of the nearby village, is located in the Western Azerbaijan Province of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is located in the Marhemetabad-e Jonubi Rural District of Miandoab County on the south shore of Lake Orumiyeh, at an elevation of 1294 m a.s.l., 13 km north-west of Miandoab city, about 800 m north-east of the modern village of Dāsh Tappeh and 1.2 km west of Malekabad village [fig. 2]. The site stands on a limestone outcrop in the middle of an alluvial plain. The area is crossed by several canals fed by the River Simineh that is located about 2 km to the south. The site of Taštepe-2 is situated 1 km south of Taštepe-1, 300 m south-east of the modern village, on a very low hill that rises just a few metres above the level of the plain. As said, both sites are situated in the southern shore of Lake Orumiyeh, a territory with an average altitude of less than 1500 m a.s.l. and characterised by the presence of saline soils (Fisher 1968, 8, fig. 4). The land is relatively fertile when irrigated and there are abundant spring grasses for grazing sheep and goats (Zimansky 1985, 20).

## 2 History of Studies

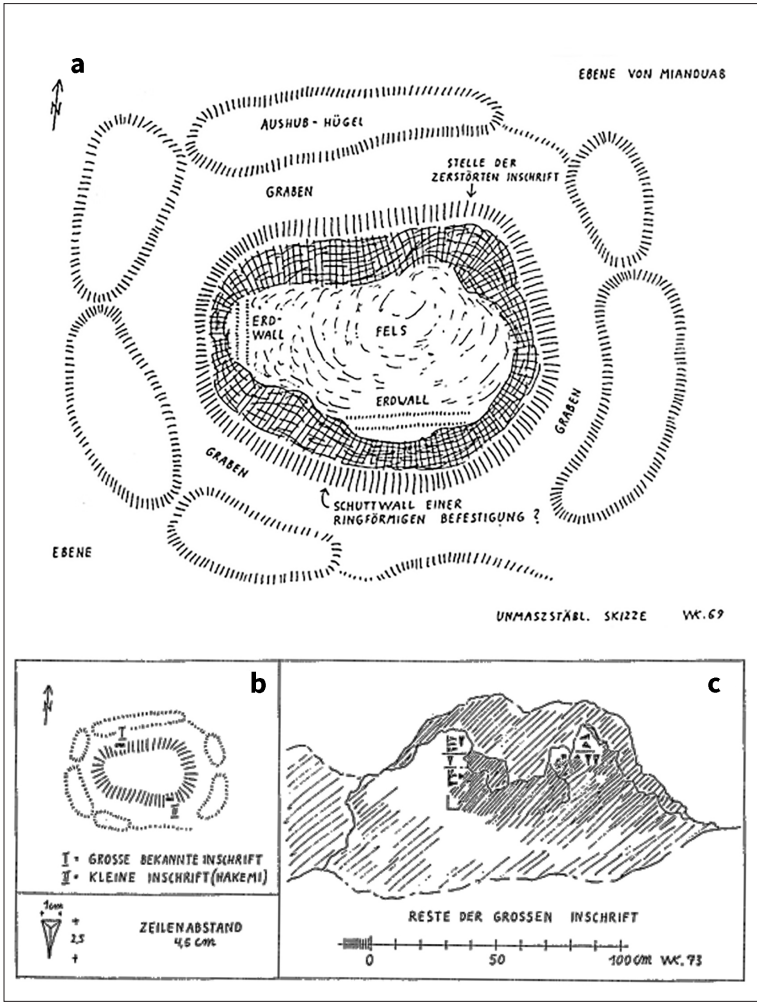
The site of Taštepe-1 was first described in 1838 by Major Rawlinson, who visited it on October 20th during a journey from Tabriz to Takht-e Suleiman. The reason for the visit was that Rawlinson had been informed about the existence of a cuneiform inscription located in a place called ‘Ṭāsh Teppeh’, that was copied<sup>3</sup> – although unfortunately it was already severely damaged according to the account. Apart from an incorrect interpretation of the inscription as being of Median origin and of religious content, a circumstance which suggested the presence of a fire temple on the top of the limestone spur, the following information was reported:

There is, at present, a little mud enclosure upon the summit of the *teppesh*, which has been used as a place of defense; and within this is a mound of earth, the relic of some ancient building; but neither brick, nor glazed pottery, nor any other evidence of antiquity is to be found; and were it not for the inscription cut upon the rock,

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**2** The site is also known locally as Kaver Tappeh or Bard Tappeh, both Kurdish names with the same meaning of ‘stone hill’.

**3** The information of the copy of the inscription, apparently unpublished and maybe now lost, was explicitly mentioned by the scholar (Rawlinson 1841, 13), unlike what D.T. Potts has claimed (2018, 240). On Rawlinson’s visit to Taštepe see also Ritter 1840, 1014-15.



**Figure 3a-c** a) Sketch plan of the Taštepe-1 site. © Kleiss 1970, fig. 7; b) Position of the possible second inscription indicated by A. Hakemi; c) Remnants of Minua's inscription still visible in 1973. © Kleiss 1974, fig. 24

there would be nothing whatever to awaken curiosity. Below the *teppeh* are a few broken mounds which seem to mark the site of a village. (Rawlinson 1841, 12-13)

Later in 1857 the site was also seen by Otto Blau, who made a tracing of the inscription (1859, 259).<sup>4</sup> Taštepe-1 was then visited by Rev. S.G. Wilson in 1880 (and called Dash-Tapa), who reported:

A small circular hill rising out of the level plain. One side of the rock is smoothed off, and a space about five feet by three is inscribed with the arrow-headed characters. At the top of the hill are the ruins of a fort, and the ground about gives back a hollow sound, as if there were a cavity below. (Wilson 1896, 105)

In 1896 Pastor Wilhelm Faber probably blew up the Urartian inscription with dynamite, then donating the only surviving fragments to the British Museum (Lehmann-Haupt 1910, 220; Salvini 1984b, 65). In 1898 the site (Tasch-tápä) was visited by C.F. Lehmann-Haupt who, in addition to ascertaining the almost complete destruction of the inscription, of which only a few signs remained of the two lower corners of the text, reported the following information:

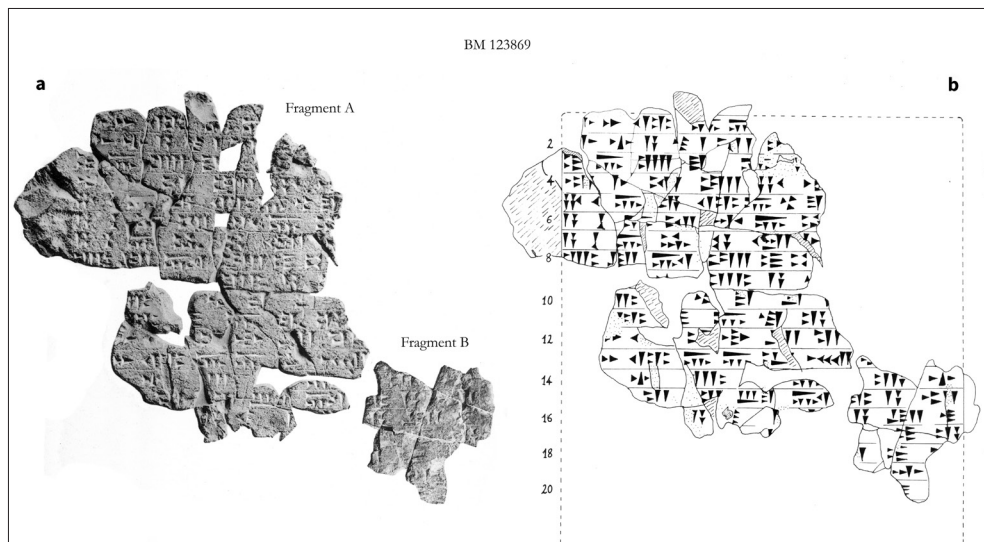
In der Mitte der Kuppe liegt Lehm Boden, als Überreste eines antiken Gebäudes aus Lehmziegeln. Hier hat der von Menuas angelegte ‚Palast‘ – wie so häufig ein recht bescheidenes Gebäude – gestanden. Wie oft er schon in keilinschriftlicher Zeit den Besitzer gewechselt, wie oft er restauriert worden ist, lässt sich nicht sagen. (Lehmann-Haupt 1910, 221)

Then, in an unspecified year before 1954, Roman Ghirshman passed by Taštepe-1, and reported to have found Iron Age I grey ware, similar to that from Tepe Giyan, on the surface (Ghirshman 1954, 61-2).<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately this pottery was not published, although this statement may be considered realistic because Early Iron Age pottery has actually been found on the site (Kroll 2005, 76, fig. 9). Some years later, in 1969, Taštepe-1 was surveyed by Wolfram Kleiss as part of the activities of the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (DAI) and a sketch plan of the site was prepared (Kleiss 1970, fig. 7) [fig. 3a]. A second visit by Wolfram Kleiss and Stephan Kroll was undertaken in 1973, to verify the state of the inscription and to check Ali Hakemi's account concerning the possible existence of a second smaller inscription on the side

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<sup>4</sup> On the tracing of the Taštepe inscription, see Sayce 1882, 386. It was partly translated in 1894 by Waldemar Belck (481-2).

<sup>5</sup> See also Dyson 1965, 196; Muscarella 1974, 50; Kroll 2005, 76.



**Figure 4** Fragments of the rock-cut Urartian inscription of Minua from Taštepe-1. British Museum (BM 123869): a) Photograph © Lehmann-Haupt 1928-35, 20, pl. XII; b) Copy of the inscription. © Salvini 1984b, fig. 8

opposite to the main inscription of Minua (Kleiss 1974, 102-3, fig. 24) [figs 3b-c].<sup>6</sup> At the time of these visits (1973) the inscription, located on the north-eastern side of the rock-spur,<sup>7</sup> was already almost completely destroyed (Kleiss, Hauptmann 1976, 32),<sup>8</sup> and the rest of the site was used as a stone quarry. Kleiss provided some interesting archaeological information that is discussed below (Kleiss 1970, 119-20, abb. 9, tab. 58, 1; 1974, 102-3, abb. 24). A further confirmation of the destruction of the inscription was provided in 1976 during the activities carried out by the Italian expedition to the Orumiyeh area led by Paolo Emilio Pecorella and Mirjo Salvini (Salvini 1984b, 65-6). In 1976 the site was evaluated as an Urartian period site due to the inscription of Minua in the *Topographische Karte von Urartu* and described as a

vorurartäische kleine Burganlage, 21 km nordwestlich von Miandoab mit Felsinschrift Menua (um 800 v. Chr.). (Kleiss-Hauptmann 1976, 32)

<sup>6</sup> Salvini was doubtful about the existence of a second inscription (1984a, 66) as was Stephan Kroll.

<sup>7</sup> But represented on the north-west side in Kleiss 1974, abb. 24.

<sup>8</sup> A few fragments of the inscription were still *in situ* [fig. 3c], fragments C and D indicated by Lehmann-Haupt (Salvini 1984b, fig. 7).

Taštepe-1 is listed with the acronym MY2 in the general catalogue of the sites proposed by Kroll (1994; 2005, 76).

### 3 The Inscription of Minua (CTU A 5-10)

Before discussing the sites of Taštepe from an archaeological perspective, we would like to briefly discuss the destroyed inscription of Minua [fig. 4]. The most recent edition of the text is that first published by Mirjo Salvini in 1984 (1984b, 65-9) and later inserted in his recent corpus of Urartian inscriptions and listed with the code CTU A 5-10 (Salvini 2008, 200-1; 2018, 117-18). What has survived of the inscription is now kept in British Museum (BM115632),<sup>9</sup> but is not on display. The inscription is composed of 23 lines; it has been hypothesized that its original size would have been about 95 cm high and 85 cm wide. The text contained fundamental information for the reconstruction of the region's historical geography during the Middle Iron Age:<sup>10</sup>

[Through the protection] of the god Իaldi Minua, son of Išpu[ini], created this fortress [in the land (?)] of the city Mešta. Furthermore he conquered [the territory of] the land Ma[na], he settled there [garrisons], he settled infantry [and cavalry (?)]. [The god Իaldi marched (ahead). Minua [says]: I [conquered] the land] Mana Furthermore I se[tt up there] a stele of the god Իaldi. Through the greatness of the god Իaldi (I am) [Mi]nua, strong [king], [lor]d of Դušpa-City. Minua says: (As for the one) who [damages this [inscription], (as for the one) wh[o makes] anyone else do [these things], may [the god Իaldi, the Weather-God], and the [Sun]-god anni[hilate] him under [the sun]...(rest untranslatable).<sup>11</sup>

It is clear that the text refers to events related to the clash between Urartu and Mannea, which had already started at the time of Išpuini and Minua. Particularly relevant are the passages mentioning the construction in that place of a fortress, in the territory of the city of Mešta. Both the presence of an Urartian fortress and the attribution of the city of Mešta have long been debated by scholars. These questions, as well as the different interpretations proposed, are analysed

<sup>9</sup> For a reconstruction of the four fragments of the inscription as presented by Lehmann-Haupt, see Salvini 1984a, fig. 7. The code is reported as BM123869 in Salvini 1984a, fig. 8 and in following publications (2008, 117, 200). An old catalogue of the British Museum contains the entry: "Fragments of a cuneiform inscription found in the village of Sarab, between Urmî and Sûâsh-Bûlâk, Armenia. Presented by Pastor W. Faber, 1896" (Budge 1922, 80).

<sup>10</sup> For an analysis of the toponyms present in this text, see Dan 2020, 55-7, 152.

<sup>11</sup> CTU A 5-10. English translation available at <http://oracc.org/ecut/corpus/>.



in detail in a specific section of this article. We must take into account a proposal by Kleiss that it is possible that the lake shore was closer to Taštepe at the time the inscription was created (Kleiss 1970, 119).<sup>12</sup>

#### 4 The Archaeological Site of Taštepe-1

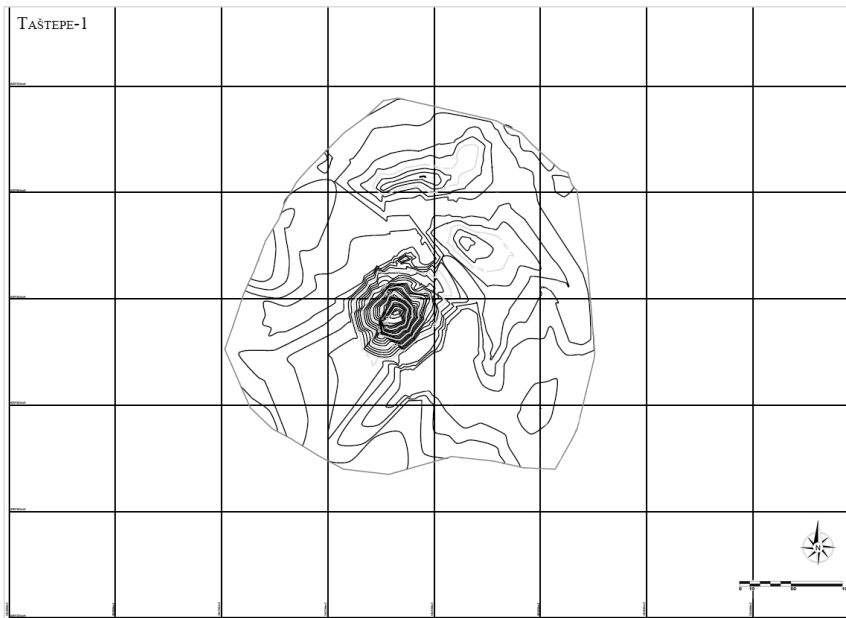
As mentioned, the site called Taštepe-1, which literally means ‘hill of stone’, is located about 800 m north of the homonymous village.<sup>13</sup> The site was composed of a small fort on a rocky hill and an inscription, both completely destroyed, and an extensive settlement [figs 5-6]. The latter appears as a series of very low hills with an average height of 1 m above the level of the plain. In the middle there is the rock outcrop which dominates the landscape; it has a maximum height of about 15 m, but originally was certainly higher [fig. 7]. The rock outcrop has an elliptical shape, measuring approximately 108 × 94 m and covers a surface of about 0.80 ha. The settlement at its base spread over an area of about 400 × 300 m, with an area of about 9.5 ha. As already stated, the rock spur was completely destroyed because it was used for a long time as a stone quarry. At the time of Kleiss and Kroll’s visits to the site, very few features were still visible there. The scholars reported that the rock-spur was surrounded by an artificial moat. Between the moat and the rock spur there were the remnants of a ring-shaped fortification.<sup>14</sup> Two earth walls were visible on the top of the rock spur, one on the south and one on the west side, considered to belong to more recent times. The absence of typical rock-cut foundations, common for Urartian and Mannean architectures, was noted. The conclusion drawn from these observations was that if there was once a fort on the top of the spur, it must have been very small (Kleiss 1970, 119-20; Kroll 1994). Wide sections of the lower settlement have been destroyed by intense agricultural activity. Its original size must have been much larger. The entire settlement area has been severely damaged by dozens of illegal excavations [fig. 8], some of which have exposed remnants of stone structures. Unfortunately the destruction of the site seems to have increased in recent years.

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<sup>12</sup> On the inscription, see also Dara 2017, 65-8. For a critical review of this work, see Delshad 2018.

<sup>13</sup> Coordinates: 37°1'11.44"N 45°56'8.06"E; elevation: 1294 m a.s.l.

<sup>14</sup> This fortification was compared by Kleiss to the circular fortification of Zendan-i Suleiman (Kleiss 1970, 120).



**Figure 5** Satellite picture (2018) of the Taštepe-1 site with indication of the main features. Satellite picture after Google Earth

**Figure 6** Topographical plan of the site of Taštepe-1



**Figure 7** The Taštepe-1 rock outcrop from the south-west

**Figure 8** Illegal excavations in the settlement of Taštepe-1

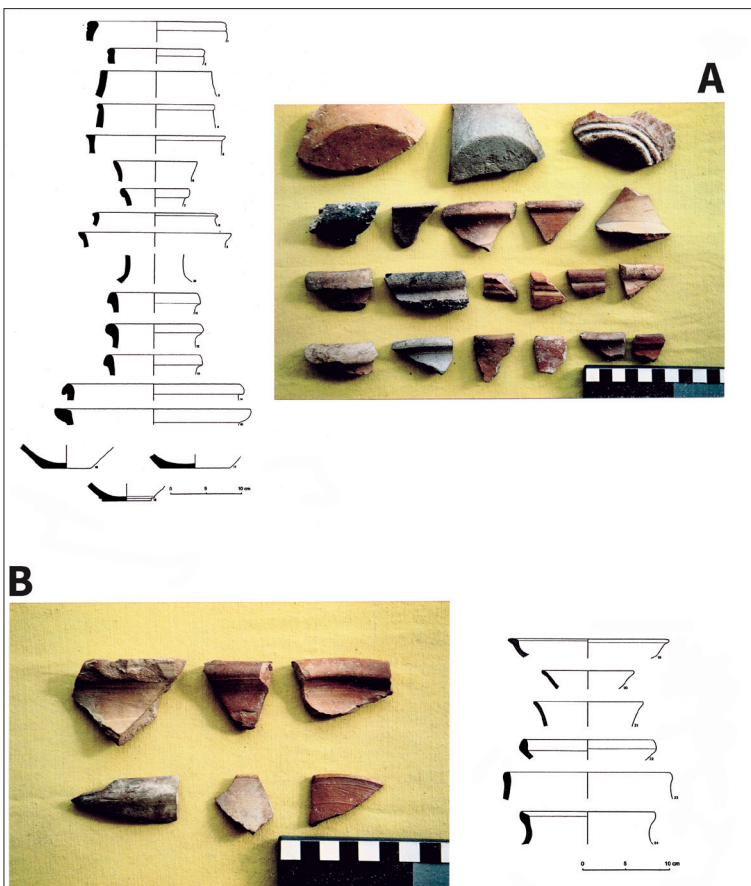
#### 4.1 The Pottery and the Chronology of Taštepe-1

According to Wolfram Kleiss, there was a considerable amount of pottery on the rock spur that he generally dated to the 1st millennium BCE (Kleiss 1970, 119). Study of the sherds discovered on the site led Stephan Kroll to divide the finds into two chronologically distinguishable groups. The oldest of these belonged to the Early Iron Age [fig. 9a], also observed by Ghirshman (1954, 61-2), and was characterised by the presence of 'Grey Ware', 'Grooved Ware' and 'red-polished pottery'. This constituted the majority of the finds, in which the absence of the main forms of the Early Iron Age was underlined. Kroll also noted the absence of pottery that could have been directly associated with the existence of an Urartian period occupation of the site.

Early Iron Age pottery as described by Kroll (1994, pl. 130) [fig. 9a].

1. Bowl, medium-fine, light brown colour, finely smoothed, two horizontal grooves under the rim.
2. Bowl, medium-fine, light brown colour, finely smoothed, single horizontal groove under the rim.
3. Bowl, medium coarse, medium-brown colour, finely smoothed.
4. Bowl, medium-fine, light brown colour, finely smoothed.
5. Bowl, medium coarse, dark brown colour, finely smoothed.
6. Jar, medium-fine, light brown colour, red slip, finely smoothed.
7. Jar, medium-fine, light reddish-brown colour, slightly smoothed.
8. Pot, medium-fine, medium-brown colour, smoothed.
9. Pot, medium-fine, light brown colour, light-dark red slip, roughly polished.
10. Jar, fine, light brown colour, finely smoothed.
11. Jar, medium-fine, light grey colour, slightly smoothed.
12. Jar, fine, reddish-light brown colour, finely smoothed.
13. Jar, medium-fine, medium brown colour, unsmoothed.
14. Pot, medium-fine, medium brown colour, slightly smoothed.
15. Pot, medium-coarse, dark grey colour, smoothed.
16. Pot, medium-fine, light grey colour, outer finely smoothed, base.
17. Pot, medium-fine, light brown colour, outer finely smoothed, base.
18. Pot, medium-coarse, grey-brownish colour, outer light red slipped, finely smoothed, base with two grooves.

The second group may be chronologically attributed to the Achaemenid-Parthian period [fig. 9b]. The 'Grooved Ware' stands out due to its much finer fabric. Grooved decoration made on a fast-wheel can be observed on almost all pieces and the wall thickness is generally thinner than that of Early Iron Age ceramics. Some fragments have to be identified as Parthian due to their shape and manufacturing technique (Kroll 1994; 2005, 76). Parthian period pottery as described by Kroll (1994, pl. 131) [fig. 9b].



**Figure 9** Taštepe-1: a) Early Iron Age pottery: red-brown and grey wares; b) Parthian period pottery (adapted after Kroll 1994, pls. 130-1)

1. Bowl, fine, reddish-light brown colour, finely smoothed, firing at high temperature.
2. Bowl, fine, reddish-light brown colour, finely smoothed, firing at high temperature.
3. Bowl, fine, inner reddish-light brown colour, outer yellow-brown colour, finely smoothed, firing at high temperature.
4. Bowl, fine, yellow-brown colour, light smoothed, firing at high temperature.
5. Bowl, fine, red-brown colour, unsmoothed, firing at high temperature.
6. Pot, fine, yellow-brown colour, light smoothed, firing at high temperature.

According to Wolfram Kleiss (1970, 119-20) the site was pre-Urartian, used by the Manneans and later also by the Urartians.<sup>15</sup> He later revised this judgement, considering the fort to be only pre-Urartian (Kleiss, Hauptmann 1976, 32). According to Stephan Kroll, the surface finds from Taštepe-1 show that there was a small settlement here in the Early Iron Age (Kroll 1994; 2005, 76, fig. 9). It is difficult to judge whether this settlement was fortified. The very limited size of Taštepe-1 makes it seem unlikely that this was a prominent centre that may have been the target of an Urartian campaign. Rather, it was probably the striking location of the small rock in the wide alluvial plain that prompted the Urartian kings to inscribe a victory inscription here (Kroll 1994). It was later proposed, on the basis of the content of the inscription, that the rock-spur hosted a small Urartian fortification (Bashash Khanzaq et al. 2001, 35). In general the dating proposed by Kroll on the basis of the surface finds collected and studied by him comprises the Early and Middle Iron Ages and the Parthian period (Kroll 1994).

During our activity on the site in early 2020, seven diagnostic pottery fragments were collected on the surface of Taštepe-1 [fig. 10], six rim fragments and one base. The material that we found on the surface indicates the site's possible occupation from the Iron Age to the Achaemenid period. The pottery discovered shows a certain variability with regard to functions and forms; of interest is the presence of deep bowls with high carination that have close parallels over a wide area, including in Mannean territories. The discovery of these forms in distant places can be attributed to the local imitation and reinterpretation of Neo-Assyrian table-ware productions, whereas the carinated bowls may be found in Mannea, Urartu and neighbouring areas. Still, these kinds of carinated bowls, present also in Urartian sites such as Bastam, are evidence of occupation during the Iron Age III. Lastly, a small fragment of painted ware testifies to human presence also during the Achaemenid period. In conclusion, the site of Taštepe-1 was occupied during the Iron Age II, III and IV, in addition to (as reported by prior investigations) during Parthian period.

1. Medium sized jar with flared neck, c. 4 cm high. A portion of the rim and the neck are preserved. The rim is oval in section, with a rounded lip. There is evidence of a fairly visible raised band on the fracture in the joint between neck and shoulder. Smoothed outer surface. Brown-reddish external colour. Common Ware. Diameter c. 14 cm. The small fragment preserved cannot be precisely evaluated or dated; the flaring neck of a small closed form lacks a characteristic portion such as the base, an important feature for distinguish-

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<sup>15</sup> Of the same opinion is Biscione 2009, 139.



Figure 10 The surface pottery collected in Taštepe-1

ing the pottery of earlier periods. It is still possible to place it between the Late Bronze and Iron Age, most likely the latter on the basis of the following similarities. Following the typology developed from the Hasanlu material, the form corresponds to Jar Type 1a (Danti 2013, 275, fig. 4.64) and shows a long life span starting from rare miniaturistic examples in the Middle Bronze III (Dinkha III-IV, parallel to Period VIa of Hasanlu)<sup>16</sup> with a wider diffusion during the Late Bronze Age (Hasanlu V)<sup>17</sup> and there is evidence of continuity at least during the Iron III, as shown by specimens from the Ura-rian area (Qalatgah I) (Kroll 1976, 96, abb. 40.1). Very interesting comparisons can also be made with the pottery from Zendan-i Suleiman (Thomalsky 2006, abb. 14.9, form B21) and from Mannean Qalaichi (Iron III) in the specific group of Common Reddish Buff Ware (Mollazadeh 2008, pls. 10.15-20) and more from more distant Godin Tepe II<sup>18</sup> and the Gorgān Plain to the east.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> This and following references to the periodization of the Hasanlu site are taken from the table in Danti 2013, 30, fig. 2.2.

<sup>17</sup> All the specimens proposed as parallels from Hasanlu are of Monochrome Burnished Ware (Danti 2013, 220, fig. 4.35a, e, g).

<sup>18</sup> This piece resembles the Late buff-ware tradition of Godin Tepe II (Gopnik 2000, pl. 2.34).

<sup>19</sup> It resembles various specimens included by the scholar in classes HARC.C and HARC.R, Type J5 (Priestman 2013, fig. 18.27).

2. Storage holemouth pithos. A portion of the rim and the shoulder are preserved. The vessel is wide-mouthed, with thick walls, and a short neck. The rim is thickened externally, flattened on the upper surface, and trapezoidal in section. Part of an expanded shoulder is visible. The outer surface is orange-brownish in colour and roughly smoothed. Storage Ware. Diameter c. 21 cm. Thanks to the classification work conducted on the material from Hasanlu, it is possible to define its earlier appearance in the Late Period V (Iron Age I),<sup>20</sup> inserted in the class recorded by the scholars as HM 5. An interesting parallel can be proposed (Danti 2013, 218, fig. 4.34b).<sup>21</sup> Storage vessels of this form had a certain continuity also in later periods as attested by the example from Bastam's Medieval Castle (Kleiss 1979, 251, abb. 20.8), but is quite possible that the present specimen dates to the Iron Age.
3. Small thin-walled cup. A portion of the rim is preserved. The rim is in continuity with the incurving walls, and rounded upwards. Finely smoothed surface, with creamy coloured slip and dark reddish painting. Triangle Ware. Diameter c. 7.50 cm. On the basis of its decoration and surface treatment, this specimen may be identified with confidence as Achaemenid period Triangle Ware, and dated to the 6th-5th century BCE. In the site of Anaqizli Tepe multiple examples were found during recent investigations (Heinsch et al. 2019, figs 8.2, 9.4, 10.5). It is however difficult to reconstruct the form, which features a rare wall with inverted orientation.<sup>22</sup>
4. Deep carinated bowl/vat with everted rim and sinuous profile. Quite a large sherd is preserved, comprising the rim, the carination and part of the body. The light carination is visible just 2 cm under the rim; below this the body has a conical profile. The surface is burnished and a light brownish-orange colour. Fine Ware. Diameter c. 25.50 cm. Various kinds of carinated bowls were widespread during the Iron Age II-III over a wide area,<sup>23</sup> perhaps imitations of the finer Neo-Assyrian productions.<sup>24</sup> Some specimens have been found in Zendan-i Sulei-

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**20** On this topic, see Danti 2013, 274, fig. 4.63.

**21** Hasanlu Late Period V.

**22** Similar pieces may be found in Qalaichi (Mollazadeh 2008, pls. 11.1, 12.8), but only with regard to form. These are coarse productions, quite different from the fine specimen from Taštepe.

**23** For example see some specimens from Godin Tepe and related parallels (Gopnik 2000, pls. 4.67, 7.100).

**24** See similar pieces from Nippur and Sharqat in Anastasio 2010, pls. 46.17-18 (both dated by the scholar to IA II-III) and pl. 53.1 (dated IA II).



- man (Thomalsky 2006, abb. 4.10, form A11) and in the Urartian area, such as those from Qal'eh Oğlu (Kroll 1976, 45, abb. 14.5) and Bastam (Kleiss 1979, 207, abb. 2.7; 230, abb. 1.7).<sup>25</sup> A lifespan for the form is attested by Achaemenid period pottery, such as the example retrieved in Hasanlu (Dyson 1999, fig. 8b).
5. Deep bowl/vat, barely carinated on the upper part. Quite a large fragment is preserved, with portions of the rim, carination and body. The rim is thickened outwards and oval in section. Starting from 2.3 cm under the rim there is a light carination, with the wall tapering quite straight towards the base (not preserved). The body has a conical shape. The outer surface is burnished, with visible horizontal traces, and light grey in colour. Simple Ware. Diameter c. 29.50 cm. Similar examples can again be found in the Urartian area, e.g. at Bastam (Kleiss 1979, abb. 1.15, 4.8), Duçgagi and Livar (Kroll 1976, 47, abb. 15.2; 67, abb. 24.15). Different specimens are also present in Period IVc-Period IVb from Hasanlu (Danti 2013, 240, pl. 4.45P; 260, pl. 4.55A), included as variants of Type 3a (Danti 2013, 272, pl. 4.61) and in the nearby site of Guringan (Sorkhabı, Salimi 2019, pl. 1.4) where the Iron II-III pottery assemblage shows close parallels with the one from Taštepe. Similar pieces are also found in the Mannean area, from the site of Qalaichi (Mollazadeh 2008, pls. 7.6, 8.19), and again some distant examples testify to the wide distribution of these forms.<sup>26</sup>
  6. Cup/pot with lug. Unfortunately just a small portion of the rim is preserved and the diameter is unreliable. Probably a small form with an oval body. The rim is in continuity with the wall, and is rounded above. At 2.7 cm under the rim there is a horizontal lug, which extends just 1.7 cm from the wall, oval-shaped, and slightly upwards oriented. The outer surface is coarse, and buff in colour. Kitchen Ware. The presence of lugs is quite rare but the closest parallel can be found in the Kitchen Ware of Qalaichi,<sup>27</sup> that has a different orientation of the rim and consequently a different profile, but similarly positioned and shaped lugs and in Zendan-i Suleiman (Thomalsky 2006, abb. 4.2, form A11). It should be remembered that studies on the Kitchen Ware productions of the Orumiyeh area for all periods are scarce.

<sup>25</sup> The last samples come from an Urartian period floor that has been dated to the first half of the 8th century BCE.

<sup>26</sup> From Godin Tepe and related parallels see Gopnik 2000, pls. 7.93, 8.111.

<sup>27</sup> For example, see Mollazadeh 2008, pl. 12.4.

7. Base of vessel with a closed form. It is smoothed, dark grey in colour, with a quite visible abundance of calcareous inclusions. Simple flat bases are common in this production. Grey Ware.

No.	Shape	Preservation	Colour	Surface Treatment	Inclusions	Diameter (cm)	Technology	Chronology (proposed)
1	Jar	Rim, neck	Brown-reddish	Smoothed	Medium grained	14	Wheelmade	Iron III
2	Pithos	Rim, shoulder	Orange-brownish	Smoothed	Coarse grained	21	Handmade	Iron I-III
3	Cup	Rim	Creamy	Painted (dark red)	Medium grained	7.50	Wheelmade	6th-5th
4	Bowl/vat	Rim, body	Light brownish-orange	Burnished	Medium grained	25.50	Handmade	Iron II-III
5	Bowl/vat	Rim, body	Light grey	Burnished	Medium grained	29.50	Wheelmade	Iron II-III
6	Cup/pot	Rim, lug	Buff	Roughly smoothed	Fine grained	-	Handmade?	Iron III?
7	Closed form	Base	Dark grey	Smoothed	Fine grained	-	Wheelmade	Iron I-III

## 5 The Archaeological Site of Taštepe-2

The site called Taštepe-2 is located about 300 m south-east of the modern village of Dāsh Tappeh [fig. 2].<sup>28</sup> It measures about 220 × 150 m, with a surface area of about 2.4 ha [fig. 11]. As said, the site rises only slightly higher than the level of the plain, on average just 1 metre, and it looks absolutely similar from a morphological perspective to the settlement area of Taštepe-1. The surface of the site has an approximate area of 2.34 ha, but originally could have been much larger. Indeed, the site is completely surrounded and partly covered by agricultural fields, a circumstance that has led to its partial destruction. Unfortunately, a large part of the western side of the site has been turned into agricultural land and has been completely destroyed. On the east side, the area leads to an apple orchard. Illegal excavations are visible on various parts of the hill. No architectural features may be seen on top of the site.

<sup>28</sup> Coordinates: 37° 0'22.45"N 45°56'4.52"E; elevation: 1280 m a.s.l.



Figure 11 View of the low, damaged remains of the Taštepe-2 site. © A. Binandeh

## 5.1 The Pottery and Chronology of Taštepe-2

During our visit to the site we noticed a general lack of surface pottery. Eight fragments were collected, four rims and four walls [fig. 12]. These document the presence of red burnished ware and grey ware/MBW<sup>29</sup> of the Iron Age I and III, suggesting that the site was occupied at least in these periods. The red burnished ware found during the survey unfortunately consists of just small sherds that not allow definition of the exact shape or, in the case of fragment no. 3, certainty that it is Urartian Ware. It seems however likely that the site of Taštepe-2 shows a certain contemporaneity during the Iron Age with Taštepe-1.

1. Deep bowl. A portion of the rim and the body are preserved. The outer rim is everted and triangular in section. There is a subtle carination just 2.3 cm below the rim. The body has an ovoid shape. The surface is smoothed and red coloured. Common Ware. Diameter c. 17 cm. This kind of rim is known from Iron Age II-III specimens: there is a bigger example from Qalatgah I (Kroll 1976, 95, abb. 39.12) and once again from

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<sup>29</sup> Monochrome Burnished Ware, as defined at Hasanlu.

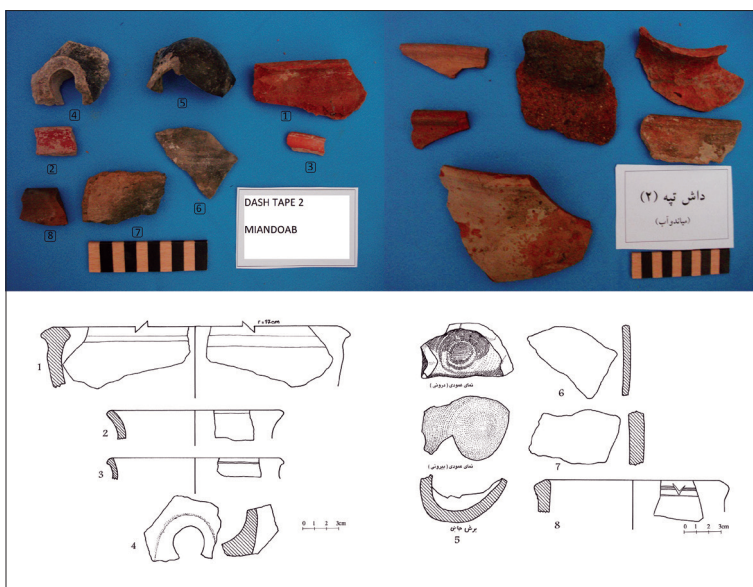


Figure 12 The surface pottery collected in Taštepe-2

the site of Qalaichi in the Mannean area (Mollazadeh 2008, pl. 10.5). This type of rim occurs in many uncarinated specimens, e.g. one from Verahram (Kroll 1976, 33, abb. 6.32).

2. Portion of a rim, form unidentified. A small part of the rim is preserved. The rim is slightly rounded on the upper part and the neck is flared. Parallels suggest that could be part of a jar. The surface is treated with dark red slip and roughly polished. Simple Ware. Diameter c. 13 cm. It resembles Typ 57 of Kroll's Urartian Ware classification. Other parallels may be found from Qalatgah II (Kroll 1976, 97, abb. 41.23) and Qalaichi (Mollazadeh 2008, pl. 10.16); it shows some similarity to the sherd no. 1 from Taštepe 1.
3. Portion of a rim, form unidentified. A small part of the rim is preserved. The rim expands outwards just in the upper part and is trapezoidal in section. Parallels suggest that it is part of a jar. The surface is covered with red slip and polished. Fine Ware. Diameter c. 13.5 cm. It is similar to Typ 59 of Kroll's Urartian Ware classification. Other parallels may be found at Bastam (Kleiss 1979, 214, pl. 9.17) and Qalaichi (Mollazadeh 2008, pl. 10.15).
4. Portion of a spout, perhaps part of a spouted jar or teapot, which were widespread during Iron Age II in the area. Half

- of the spout is preserved; it is ovoid in section. The surface is black and polished. Grey Ware/MBW. Simple Ware.
5. Body sherd. Part of a curved miniaturistic form, perhaps of a small globular beaker. The surface is black and polished. Grey Ware/MBW. Simple Ware.
  6. Body sherd. Part of an unidentifiable closed form. The surface is grey burnished, with visible horizontal traces. Grey Ware/MBW. Simple Ware.
  7. Body sherd. Part of an unidentifiable closed form. Traces of burning on the outer surface, buff colour. Common Ware.
  8. Rim sherd. The form is unidentifiable, has no parallels during the Iron Ages and could be more recent. The rim is thickened outwards and trapezoidal in section, with the flattened upper part sloping outwards. Just under the rim are incised a 'V' sign and - nearby but a different distances from it - three parallel lines. The outer surface is smoothed and dark brown. Common Ware. Diameter c. 14 cm.

No.	Shape	Preservation	Colour	Surface treatment	Inclusions	Diameter (cm)	Technology	Chronology (proposed)
1	Bowl	Rim, body	Red	Smoothed	Fine grained	17	Wheelmade	Iron II-III
2	Jar?	Rim	Dark red	Slip-polished	Fine grained	13	Wheelmade	Iron III
3	Jar?	Rim	Red	Slip-polished	Fine grained	13.5	Wheelmade	Iron III
4	Spouted vessel	Spout	Black	Polished	Fine grained	-	Handmade	Iron I-III
5	Beaker?	Body	Black	Polished	Medium grained	-	Wheelmade	Iron I-III
6	Closed form	Body	Grey	Roughly burnished	Fine grained	-	Wheelmade	Iron I-III
7	Closed form	Body	Buff colour	Smoothed	Fine grained	-	Wheelmade	-
8	-	Rim	Dark brown	Smoothed	Medium grained	14	Handmade	-

## 6 The Historical Context of Taštepe: The Urartian Advance in the Lake Orumiyeh Basin and the War with Mannea

We will now retrace the fundamental stages of the Urartian advance in the region and try to understand the role of Taštepe in the context of the clash between Urartu and Mannea.<sup>30</sup> This is not the place to analyse in detail the causes of the Urartian advance along the western and southern shores of Lake Orumiyeh. Suffice it to recall the two main reasons, one historically and archaeologically ascertained. The first was the possible establishment of Urartian protection on the international sanctuary of ̄aldi in Mušašir, the achievement of which required stable control of the road that from Salmas or Khoy descended through the plains of Orumiyeh and Ušnaviyeh to then penetrate the Zagros. The second motivation may be found, according to Salvini, in the will of the first monarchs to reoccupy the places where the Urartian *ethnos* originated (Salvini 1984a, 30). Our interest, however, is concentrated in the southern area of Lake Orumiyeh, where there are fundamental historical documents that allow us to reconstruct, albeit partially, the events that affected this region after the end of the 9th century BCE. The oldest historical documents from the Urartian period date to the years of Išpuini and Minua's co-regency (c. 830-20 BCE).<sup>31</sup> These inscriptions are that of Qalatgah (CTU A 3-10), presumably identified in the area of the homonymous fortress built by the Urartians at the eastern end of the Ušnaviyeh plain, and the inscription of Taragheh,<sup>32</sup> located 23 km west of Bukan, 3.5 km north-west of the Taragheh village (Muscarella 2012, 267; Kroll et al. 2012a, 13; Muscarella 2013, 526; Salvini, Dara 2019, 69-81). The Qalatgah inscription is particularly important because it reports the construction of two fortified complexes. The first of these was built at the time of the co-regency between Išpuini and Minua, as the inscription recounts:

Through the protection of the god [̄al]di, the Wea[ther-God... Išpuini], son of Sarduri, king of the Bia lands [... (and) Minua], son of Išpuini, when the land Zašgau-x [...] they conquered [the territory?], they built both a... and [a gate?] of the god ̄al[di... gave it the name(?)] "Garrison of the god ̄aldi". The city Uiše, the land × [...] to... (and) to the trees... [...].<sup>33</sup>

**30** See Salvini 1984 for a detailed historical reconstruction of the Orumiyeh region during the Urartian era.

**31** Chronological references relating to the Urartian kings are taken from Salvini 2018, 18.

**32** Coordinates: 36°33'18.02"N 45°57'21.59"E.

**33** CTU A 3-10. English translation available at <http://oracc.org/ecut/corpus/>.

This stronghold called the 'Garrison of Ḫaldi' could be identified with the Urartian fortress of Qalatgah located on the north-eastern margin of the Ušnaviyeh plain. This fort was particularly important because it was the first outpost created to control and exploit the northern part of the plain of Ušnaviyeh,<sup>34</sup> with the function of controlling the upper part of Ušnaviyeh plain and coordinating a series of smaller outposts intended to protect the Urartian border on this side and the road to Mušašir (as the name of the fort seems to suggest) that started on the western margin of Ušnaviyeh plain. Moreover this fortress was clearly intended as a powerful base for future expansion in the area. Indeed, it was probably from this fortress that the military expeditions which penetrated into Mannean territory celebrated in the Taragheh rock-cut inscription started out. This inscription, unfortunately now completely destroyed, is particularly important, because, despite its fragmentary content, it constitutes a fundamental point for the reconstruction of the area's historical geography. In fact, it was made in an isolated location on the top of the spur in the heart of Mannean territory and it is probable that it referred precisely to this victorious expedition. The remote place where it was built testifies to the immediate Urartian retreat from such a distant territory and to the awareness that the text would have been destroyed shortly after they returned to their land. The only way the Urartians could have reached the site of inscription is by descending the River Simineh valley. This means that to reach this area the Urartians entered the southern part of the territory controlled by Hasanlu, which they destroyed either during the outward journey or returning from the military expedition.<sup>35</sup> The Karagündüz stele (CTU A 3-9) informs us that the destruction of Mešta definitely happened in the time of the co-regency between Išpuini and Minua, during an expedition against Paršua. It is highly probable that the expedition into Mannean territory was organized after the Qalatgah fortress had already been built as a bridgehead to support these military activities in areas so far from the core of the Urartian state. A second stronghold in the area, not yet identified on the ground, was celebrated in another inscription carved during the reign of Minua (CTU A 5-61 + A 5-97) and al-

**34** On the role of Qalatgah for the control of Ušnaviyeh plain and on the lack of Urartian fortresses in Solduz plain, see Burney 1977, 3; 1994, 32.

**35** The hypothesis that Hasanlu IVb was destroyed by the Urartians is generally accepted (see, for example, Muscarella 2012, 279). On the different theories regarding the Urartian sovereign that destroyed Hasanlu – Išpuini and Minua, Minua or Argišti (I), see Potts 2018, 238. A different perspective on the destruction of Hasanlu IVb has been offered by Magee 2008, later criticised by Muscarella (2012, 278-9). Medvedskaya argued in a series of articles that some of the material found in the IVb settlement cannot be dated to the 9th century BC and proposing that Hasanlu was probably destroyed by Sargon during his eighth campaign in 714 BCE (Medvedskaya 1988, 1991). On the destruction of Hasanlu IVb, see also Curtis 2019.

legedly believed to have come from the Qalatgah fortress (Muscarella 1971, 47-8; van Loon 1975, 201; Zimansky 1985, 63; Salvini 2018, 163):

Through the pro[tection] of the god Ḫaldi, Minua, son of Iṣpuini, built this *barzudibiduni* building. 'barzudibiduni of Minua' is (its) name. He (also) built a fortress to perfection. Through the greatness of the god Ḫaldi (I am) Minua, son of Iṣpuini, strong king, great king, king of the Bia lands, lor[d of the Tuṣpa-City].<sup>36</sup>

The construction of the fortress celebrated in the inscription could have been connected to a series of military activities against Mannea conducted by Minua in this area. In this context the pre-Urartian Taštepe settlement, clearly still untouched at the time of his expeditions during the co-regency with his father Iṣpuini, was destroyed and the rock-cut inscription carved. There is no way to verify the existence of the rock of Taštepe of the small Urartian structure celebrated in Minua's inscription. Unfortunately, as already stated, the site was damaged by locals before the beginning of the German investigations in the area. The substantial lack of any Urartian potsherds suggests two possible scenarios.<sup>37</sup> The first is related to the possibility that the inscription referred to some construction in the area around Taštepe, which has not been identified archaeologically. The second hypothesis is that only a small garrison was stationed here, in a small building located on the rock outcrop, whose archaeological traces are now destroyed. However, this second circumstance could justify the lack of Urartian red-polished ware, since it probably hosted a small contingent of soldiers in charge of controlling the road to Mannea, in a zone already beyond the margins of Urartian political control, which must have been in the Uṣnaviyeh area. In this context it is interesting note the substantial lack of real Urartian sites in this region. In fact, if we exclude Qalatgah and the small outposts of Taštepe-1 (only the inscription), and Agrab Tepe, there is no decisive evidence of an Urartian presence in the region. This Urartian invisibility in the area cannot be justified as being due to the similarity of Urartian architecture with that of Mannea, which we will discuss in the next section, because the distinctive traces of the Urartian civilization, especially red-polished pottery, are very scarce in this area.<sup>38</sup> This means that the Urartians controlled more

<sup>36</sup> CTU A 5-61 + A 5-97. English translation available at <http://oracc.org/ecut/corpus/>.

<sup>37</sup> In any case, we must take into account the relatively low percentage of red-polished Urartian pottery even in sites located in much more central areas. For this reason it is not possible to be sure that there was no Urartian presence without conducting excavations.

<sup>38</sup> For many different reasons Hasanlu represents an exception, see footnote 40 of this article.



or less permanently only the plain of Ušnaviyeh – with the evident intent, as already stated, of monitoring the road leading to Mušašir, which passed through here, to keep it open and safe. The Urartian presence in the Naqadeh and Miandoab area was absolutely sporadic and characterized by small outposts (such as Taštepe-1) which were used to control the borders and give support to expeditions against Mannea, but whose life was probably short, due to the border's instability. The last textual document useful for the reconstruction of events in this region in the Urartian era is the rock inscription of Javankaleh, made by Argišti (I), son of Minua, on a rock outcrop in a secondary valley near Ajabšir (CTU A 8-13):

The god Ḫaldi set off [with his] weap[on]. He defeated the terr[itory?] of the land Mana, he defeated [the territory of th]e 'Ar[sita], he subjected it [to] Argišti. Argiš[ti] says: I conquered (?) the city Šimerḫadi[rni, royal city(?)]. (I am) Argišti, stro[ng] king, [lord of Tušp]a-Ci[ty]. Argišti says: [(as for the one) who] destroys this inscription, may the god Ḫaldi annihilate him under the sun (or, resp. the Sun-God)... [rest of the curse formula untranslatable]<sup>39</sup>

This text, which reports a successful expedition in Mannean territory, must probably be equated with that of Taragheh, as it was made outside the territory under Urartian control, in a sheltered area that has in fact allowed its preservation. As has been suggested, this inscription refers to the direction of an expedition against Mannea and not necessarily to its geographical location (Muscarella 2013, 526). Basically, with regard to texts, the information relating to Urartian presence south of Lake Orumiyeh dates to Išpuini and Minua, Minua, and Argišti, a period covering the end of the 9th and first half of the 8th century BCE, i.e. about fifty years. Although the Urartian sources are silent, thanks to Assyrian documents we know of the Urartian retreat from the region following the above-mentioned expeditions of Sargon II at the end of the 8th century BCE,<sup>40</sup> when Rusa (I) son of Sarduri, was king, and of the final attempt to re-occupy the area by Rusa (II), son of Argišti. The latter began an impressive building programme in Hasanlu<sup>41</sup> that remained incomplete, due first to the pro-

<sup>39</sup> CTU A 8-13. English translation available at <http://oracc.org/ecut/corpus/>.

<sup>40</sup> Regarding the historical geography of this region in connection with the 8th campaign of Sargon II (Hasanlu = Gilzanu; position of Armarili), see Muscarella 2013, 526-8.

<sup>41</sup> The site was clearly abandoned after the destruction wreaked by Išpuini and Minua for quite clear reasons: it was a large settlement but was not located on a hill that could be well defended. The Urartians would never have established an administrative centre in an important city-state located in the middle of a vast plain. However, something happened towards the end of the kingdom of Urartu, when they decided to re-use the abandoned ruins of the site. Indeed, as R. Biscione first showed (1972, 13), and lat-

gressive retreat from this area, and later to the gradual disappearance of the Urartian state in the second half of the 7th century BCE.

## 7 The Problem of the Localization of the City of Mešta

The main problem related to the site of Taštepe-1 and its inscription, which has long been debated, concerns the identification on the ground of the city of Mešta, in whose area it was located. Different theories have been advanced. Initially, Kroll tentatively identified it with the large fortress of Arslan Qal'eh (Kleiss 1973, 28; Kroll 1976, 99; 2005, 76) in the area of Mahabad, an interesting and possible hypothesis, since this site is located just 6.5 km north-east of Taštepe. The scholar also suggested that Mešta must have been situated not far from the inscription (Kroll 1976, 99). Salvini has long proposed that the city of Mešta should be identified with Tappeh Hasanlu,<sup>42</sup> apparently the most important site in the area. This suggested identification thesis has been opposed by Dyson and Muscarella, who affirm that numerous other Iron Age sites are located in the Solduz plain and possess suitable characteristics to be identified as Mešta, for example the big site in the area of Nagadeh city (Dyson, Muscarella 1989, 25). Hasanlu is objectively one of the most important sites in the region, however we must bear in mind that its linear distance from Taštepe is 42 km. Later it was also proposed that Mešta might have been Taštepe itself, a circumstance that seems unlikely, not so much for the unimpressive size of the site (Diakonoff 1985, 69), but because the text explicitly states that Taštepe was in the territory of the city of Mešta, so clearly the latter must have been elsewhere. Recently Kroll resolutely re-proposed Arslan/Aslan Qal'eh's candidacy, without excluding the possibility that Mešta might actually have been Taštepe (Kroll 2020, 203-7). In the absence of further archaeological investigations and without the discovery of further epigraphic sources, the question is likely to remain unresolved. In this regard, Muscarella has stated:

I have no opinion whether Hasanlu IVb was or was not Mešta (97), and its identification as such is an interpretation, not a fact.  
(Muscarella 2012, 279)

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er S. Kroll (2010), the unfinished Urartian fortifications on the top of the Hasanlu site appear to date to the time of Rusa (II), son of Argišti (first half of the 7th century BC), since they are very similar to those of Karmir-blur/Teišebei URU. This can be explained by Rusa's wish to partially change the organisational structure of the territory, a circumstance that must have determined the position of Karmir-blur itself. It is the only known administrative centre built not on a large hill, but on the plain (like Hasanlu).

<sup>42</sup> Salvini 1979, 177; 1982, 390-2; Pecorella, Salvini 1982, 11; Salvini 1984a, 19-20; 1995, 41; 2006, 472.

## 8 **Urartu and Mannea: The Architectural *Koinè*, Assyrianization Processes, and the Problem of the Borders**

The Taštepe sites, considered by some scholars as marking the limit of Urartian presence in the region (Muscarella 1974, 82),<sup>43</sup> raise a series of complex problems which are difficult to solve in the absence of further scientific data. First of all, the question of defining the territorial limits of the Mannean state,<sup>44</sup> that would allow the unproblematic recognition of Mannean sites and the consequent definition of the specific characteristics of their architecture and material culture. This difficulty is shared by both Mannean and Median archaeology; in both cases a likely distribution area of sites is assumed and sites probably belonging to these civilizations are known, but epigraphic certainty is lacking. For Mannea the situation is perhaps even more complex, because while sites traditionally considered Median – think of Nush-i Jan, Godin Tappeh and Gunespan – undoubtedly share similar cultural elements, from architecture to ceramics, the archaeological nature of alleged Mannean sites is definitely more heterogeneous. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that what is considered to be Mannean features mainly derivative elements, assimilated largely through contacts with the Assyrians, but also with the Urartians. However, although the elements result from Neo-Assyrian influence, in line with a process of Assyrianization well known in these areas,<sup>45</sup> concern the slavish imitation of an exogenous model, apparently transposed without filters and less subject to reinterpretation compared to what happened in Urartu, the similarities with Urartian culture are of a different nature. In fact the close resemblance, especially between the two architectures, was probably not really due to influence, but rather to a common response to settlement problems in mountain areas – to such an extent that, even with the necessary differences, we can speak of an architectural *koinè* between the two states. This architecture consists generally of medium or small citadels built on rocky spurs located in strategic places, in which the most conspicuous common element is certainly the skillful way in which the rock outcrops were exploited. The Urartian and Mannean fortresses both feature walls built directly on the bedrock, carefully prepared with classic steps, stairs, terraces and rock-cut

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**43** In this regard, Kleiss said that Taštepe “was the easternmost witness of Urartian presence” (1980, 304).

**44** On this, see Dan 2020, 55-7.

**45** Which seems to have affected the Mannean sites much more than Hasanlu, as recently proposed (Cifarelli 2018). On this topic see also Baş 2019.

cisterns. For example, the site of Qal'eh Bardineh<sup>46</sup> would have been attributed to the work of the Urartians if it had been built in an area more stably under their control. The citadel of Ziwiyeh, due to the way it was built on one side of a large elongated rock outcrop, despite the obvious differences in architecture and dimensions, might not have looked so different from Bastam fortress. This is not the place to go into details and systematically compare these two cultures; an extensive review of Mannean archaeology, also in relation to the contemporary Assyrian and Urartian remains, will be the subject of future contributions. What we want to underline is that this situation leads irremediably to currently insurmountable difficulties in trying to define the boundary lines between Urartu and Mannea. Sites in the plains of Ušnaviyeh, Naqadeh and Miandoab, especially in their southern portions, are often characterized by rock-cut features, think for example of the site of Sheitanabad (Bard Conteh). This initially led an expert scholar like Kleiss to consider many of them as Urartian, a perception subsequently revised in part by Kroll, who rightly noted the absence of Urartian pottery in these sites and the presence of poorly recognised features that could pertain to much later periods. What appears evident is the current impossibility of tracing the boundaries between the two states, even though most of what can be attributed to Iron III south of a theoretical line that passes through the towns of Naqadeh and Miandoab cannot now be considered Urartian, but rather, perhaps, Mannean. Regarding the problem of the localization of the northern border of Mannea, Taštepe is again a fundamental point for the reconstruction of the area's historical geography. Thanks to the content of the inscription, which was considered by many scholars to be in Mannean territory,<sup>47</sup> is clear that the expedition against Mannea marked a step on the road to Mannea and that the site was not located inside the territory of Mannea (Pecorella, Salvini 1982, 12; Salvini 2001, 350).<sup>48</sup> This element is also fundamental to the attempt to define the cultural horizon of Hasanlu in pre-Urartian times, and indicates that Hasanlu IVb was in all likelihood a local centre independent of Mannean control, which is also reflected by the cultural dynamics ('Hasanlu local style')<sup>49</sup> reflected in their art and architecture, that are different from those associated with Mannea. Taštepe was presumably intended to host a

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<sup>46</sup> On these rock-cut works, see Hassanzadeh 2009, 271-3, figs 7-15.

<sup>47</sup> For a glance at the different theories, see Potts 2018, 242-3.

<sup>48</sup> However Taštepe, where we are not certain even of an Urartian presence, cannot be considered the starting point of the expeditions against Mannea, but as step on the penetration of Mannean territory. It is highly probable that the expeditions started from Qalatgah.

<sup>49</sup> For two different perspectives on the 'Hasanlu local style' see Winter 1977 and Cifarelli 2018.

very small outpost (that indicated by the inscription) strategically placed on the road to Mannea, with the aim of controlling the road and giving logistic support to the troops that were directed along the valleys of Simineh and Zarineh Rud. We can hypothesize that the small outpost of Agrab Tepe, was certainly not built 4 km south of Hasanlu by chance, which was in a more sheltered position, along the road towards Miandoab from the Ušnaviyeh plain. Agrab Tepe is indeed located at a distance of about 25 km east of Qalatgah, a distance that can be covered in a single day of walking. Agrab Tepe is about 45 km from Taštepe, which is situated further west. Probably Agrab Tepe, whose dating is debated (Muscarella 1973; 2012, 269),<sup>50</sup> and Taštepe were part of the same road-control system that was built between the years of Išpuini and Minua's co-regency and those of Minua alone. The great distance between Agrab Tepe and Taštepe might be explained by the existence of an additional small Urartian fort, not yet identified in the field. This is probable if we consider the regularity of the positioning of the road control stations built by the Urartians in other parts of the kingdom.<sup>51</sup> The location of this site must be sought approximately halfway between Agrab Tepe and Taštepe, in correspondence to some rock reliefs located in the area of the modern village of Mamyand. We can conclude with the words of Robert Dyson Jr. reported by Charles A. Burney, who identified the Ušnaviyeh valley as the frontier district between Urartu and the area of Assyrian influence (Burney 1977, 3), which mainly involved Mannea, while Hasanlu remained more on the margin of the Assyrianization process. The archaeological and epigraphic documents at our disposal testify that systematic Urartian control never went beyond the Ušnaviyeh area, control of which was necessary to block access to the more northerly areas under their control and to allow the Muşaşir sanctuary to be reached. The attempt by Rusa (II), son of

**50** In this context we can hypothesize the construction of Agrab Tepe by Išpuini and Minua or just by Minua, in the late 9th or early 8th century BC, in any case after the destruction of Hasanlu IVb and before the construction of Hasanlu IIIb. Three destructions have been recorded in Agrab Tepe (Muscarella 2012, 275). The first one presumably happened during the military clashes between Urartu and Mannea. The second one could be related to the passage of Sargon II in the area during his famous 8th campaign of 714 BC, followed by the temporary Urartian retreat from the area. The subsequent reconstruction of Agrab Tepe occurred in the reign of Rusa (II), son of Arğišti, probably in connection with the new building program at an unspecified time during the second half of the 7th century BCE (Muscarella 2012, 276).

**51** On the Urartian road system and road stations, see Dan 2017; 2018. The regularity of the Urartian road system allowed the identification of the Urartian fortress of Solak-1/Varsak, in Armenia, through the use of remote sensing and GIS. This fortress was built to control the road which led from the Ararat valley to the north-western shore of Lake Sevan, and was part of a series of regularly spaced sites built or reused by the Urartians. The site is indeed placed halfway between the sites of Aramus and Dovri to the south and Lcašen to the north. On this, see for example Dan 2018 and Petrosyan et al. 2019.

Argišti, during the 7th century to establish permanent control over the Solduz plain failed due to the impossibility of guaranteeing political stability in areas so far from the centre of the kingdom. Proof of this is an unfinished project to build a large fortress over the buried ruins of Hasanlu IVb, destroyed over a century earlier, presumably by the Urartian themselves.<sup>52</sup> We may hypothesize that Taštepe, like Hasanlu, was not part of Mannean possessions in pre-Urartian times.<sup>53</sup> The Urartians never permanently controlled the southern coast of the Orumiyeh basin and the limits of their rule must realistically be identified as the Ušnaviyeh plain. This does not mean that before the 7th century there were no Urartian sites in the area, as evidenced mainly by the case of Agrab Tepe, but these testify to an Urartian interest in the area more for strategic reasons (access to Mannea) than to establish a real hegemony (which perhaps they would not have been able to maintain anyway). The construction of a large fortified outpost on the ruins of Hasanlu IVb in the 7th century, as well as the contemporary restoration of Agrab Tepe, are indicators of a change in strategy by the Urartian kings, probably starting with Rusa (II), son of Argišti, a clear attempt to establish an effective hegemony in the area which was not developed further due to their sudden withdrawal from the area that was certainly the prelude to the definitive disappearance of the reigning dynasty. Between the late 9th and end of the 8th century (from the time of the co-regency of Išpuini and Minua until Sargon II's 8th campaign) much of the southern part of the Orumiyeh basin was the arena of diplomatic and military interactions between Urartu and Mannea. It was probably an extremely mobile frontier whose exact limits are difficult, if not impossible, to trace. In conclusion, the two sites of Taštepe-1 and 2 appear particularly important for understanding the protohistoric and historical dynamics of the southern Orumiyeh basin area, and further investigations for a better comprehension of their periods of occupation would be desirable. For now we can underline that Taštepe-2 appears to have been occupied initially in Iron I and later in Iron III, while Taštepe-1 seems slightly later, as the oldest pottery is attributable to Iron II. The sites were contemporary in Iron III, but while Taštepe-2 appears to have been abandoned after this epoch, Taštepe-1 would appear to have been occupied during Iron IV and later in the Parthian epoch.

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**52** Kroll has shown that the Urartian walls of Hasanlu IIIb are directly set on the burnt level of Period IVb; he maintains that Period IVa, defined by Dyson as a 'squatter occupation' does not exist. The scholar has also preliminarily demonstrated the undeniable relationships between Hasanlu IVb and early Urartu (Kroll 2010, 22). On the relations between Hasanlu and Urartu, see also Muscarella 2012.

**53** For a summary of the different theories related to this topic, see Potts 2018, 242-3.

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