



## Diauehi and Urartian Tribal Centers in the Context of the Urartian Administration System

### Urartu Krallığı'nın İdari Sistemi Bağlamında Diauehi ve Urartu Aşiret Merkezleri

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#### ABSTRACT

The Diauehi region, located in the northwest border of Urartian Kingdom, is called the Upper Aras basin nowadays. The Urartian remains in the Upper Aras basin have been found in the Hasankale/Pasinler, Marifet and Yoğunhasan fortresses. Apart from these settlements, to the east of the basin are the Hamamlı and Hasankale inscriptions, to the south are the Avnik, Delibaba and Yazılıtaş inscriptions, and the Süngütaş inscription is located on the route to the north. From its early years onwards, the Urartian Kingdom tried to transform the Diauehi region through military campaigns and administrative arrangements. However, this transformation appears to have been different from the center of the kingdom, the Lake Van Basin, where the majority of the royal cities we are located. Instead of building new cities in the region, the kingdom's strategy was focused on conducting military campaigns to weaken the existing tribes and allying with the powerful ones. During the military campaigns dating to the early years of the kingdom, the tribe leaders who were also named as kings paid a tribute and accepted the authority of Urartians.

**Keywords:** Diauehi, Diauehe, Urartian Kingdom, Hasankale, Urartian tribal centers

#### ÖZ

Urartu Krallığı'nın kuzeybatı sınırını oluşturan Diauehi bölgesi günümüzde coğrafi olarak Yukarı Aras havzası olarak adlandırılır. Yukarı Aras havzasında Urartu dönemine tarihlenebilecek kalıntılar Hasankale/Pasinler, Marifet ve Yoğunhasan kaleleridir. Bu kaleler dışında havzanın doğusunda Hamamlı ve Hasankale yazıtları, güneyde Avnik, Delibaba, Yazılıtaş, kuzeye ulaşan yol güzergâhı üzerinde ise Süngütaş yazıtları bulunmaktadır. Urartu Krallığı kuruluşunun ilk yıllarından itibaren Diauehi bölgesini planlı seferler ve idari düzenlemelerle dönüştürmeye çalışmıştır. Fakat bu dönüşüm krallığın merkezi bölgesi olan ve krali kentlerin çoğunlukta bulunduğu Van Gölü havzasından farklıdır. Krallık Diauehi bölgesinde yeni kentler inşa etmek yerine bölgede var olan aşiretler üzerine seferler yaparak, onları zayıflatma ve güçlü olanları kendi yanına çekmeye çalışmıştır. Krallığın ilk yıllarına tarihlenen seferlerde kral olarak adlandırılan aşiret reislerinden haraç alınmış ve böylece bu aşiretler krallığın himayesine kabul edilmiştir.

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## Introduction

The region of Diauehi is comprised of a large area extending from the Erzurum-Pasinler Plain to the Çoruh Valley in the north.<sup>1</sup> This area named the Upper Aras basin is characterized by a volcanic lava hill formed by the Aras River and other small streams, creating the Erzurum-Kars plateau. The basin is approximately 2000 m above sea level. High mountain ranges extend towards the north and south of the basin. Between these mountain ranges are shallow plains and high plateaus (Fig. 1). The Pasinler Plain on the western border of the basin is the largest plain of the region. To the east of the Pasinler Plain, plateaus on the northern and southern parts of the Aras River stand out. These plateaus have an approximate height of 1600-1800 m. Despite the humified soil structure of these lands, the elevation from the sea level and the continental climate properties make agricultural activities difficult here. Due to the rainfall during the summer months, these plateaus are commonly used as pastures.

The Urartian remains in the Upper Aras basin were found in Hasankale/Pasinler, where a short-term excavation was conducted, and the Marifet and Yoğunhasan fortresses (Ceylan, 2008, 104-106, 109, 115-119) which were identified during survey research in the region. Apart from these settlements, to the east of the basin are the Hamamlı and Hasankale inscriptions, to the south are the Avnik, Delibaba and Yazılıtaş inscriptions, and the Süngütaş inscription is located on the route to the north (Fig. 1).

Recent studies on the locations and sizes of the settlements in areas that were under the authority of the Urartian Kingdom, as well as various finds from these settlements dating to the Urartian period, allow a classification of three distinct groups that characterized the administration model of the Urartian Kingdom: the royal cities, provincial centers, and the tribal centers (Danışmaz, 2018; 2020; Köroğlu, 2020). In this study, this classification will be the basis of our evaluation of the Diauehi province and its borders, as well as the authority of the Urartian Kingdom in this region. This assessment will be conducted through the written records dating to this period, as well as archaeological material culture remains in the region.

## The Importance of the Region

The Upper Aras basin is located in a strategically important position on the routes north and northwest from the Lake Van basin, the center of the Urartian Kingdom. The kingdom's access from Van Fortress, the capital, to the Altın-tepe province was through the Upper Aras basin.

<sup>1</sup> There are some uncertainties regarding the borders of the Diauehi land. Burney locates Diauehi between Aşkale-Tercan, including Erzurum and the Hasankale Plain (Burney & Lang, 1971). However, if one considers the locations of the inscriptions that incorporate the name of Diauehi, it is possible that the land corresponded to a larger area including the Upper Aras Basin and the Pasinler Plain in the west, and extending towards the Çoruh Valley in the north (Diakonoff & Kashkai, 1981; Köroğlu, 2001).

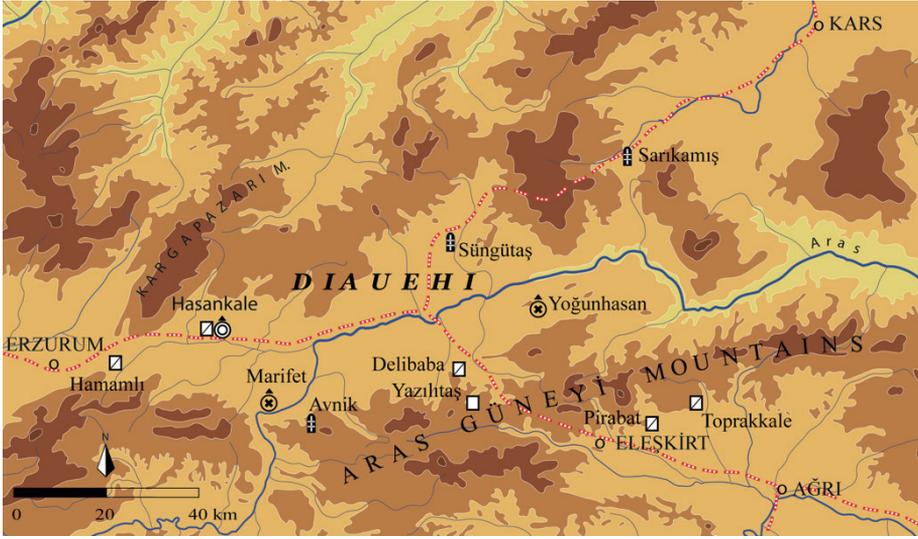


Figure 1. Upper Aras Basin in the Middle Iron Age.

Considering the geographical conditions of Eastern Anatolia, there are three possible routes from Van Fortress/Tuşpa to Altintepe. The first route passes the Southern Aras Mountains through Ağrı-Eleşkirt-Horasan, reaching towards the Upper Aras Basin, and converges towards the west through Erzurum to reach the Karasu Basin. The second route follows the river valley of the Aras River to the north of the Bingöl Mountains and reaches the Pasinler Plain. From there, one can move towards the west to reach the Karasu Basin through Erzurum. From the Bingöl Mountains to the Pasinler Plain, this route is comprised of geographically rough areas and narrow valleys. The third route follows Kayalidere to pass the south of the Bingöl Mountains, from where one can reach the Elâzığ-Tunceli area. From this area, the Munzur Mountains can be passed through the Pülümür Valley. This route is rough and tiring, even considering today's conditions, especially around the Munzur Mountains. Snow cover duration in the Pülümür Valley is quite long, making it difficult to follow this route through the valley, particularly during winter seasons. Even today, during winter months, the valley can be passed only by the snow/avalanche galleries.

Comparing the three routes, the inscriptions and stelae on the route reaching Altintepe through Ağrı-Eleşkirt-Horasan are noteworthy as they suggest that this route might have been preferred during the Urartian period. Indeed, it is known that the Eleşkirt-Horasan gate was used during the Urartian military campaigns to the Diauehi land and northern areas (Köroğlu, 2001, 720-721).

## The provincial center: Hasankale/Pasinler

Hasankale is located on a rocky hill on the southern extent of the Hasanbaba Mountain, on the northern edge of the Pasinler plain, which is the largest flatland in the Upper Aras Basin. The location and size of the settlement and the material culture evidence classifies the site as a provincial center within the Urartian administrative model (Table 1).

Hasankale was built in a strategically important location, similar to other Urartian provincial centers of Palu, Verahram, Altıntepe, and Kayalidere. The fortress is located on the edge of the Pasinler plain, the largest plain of the region, at a high altitude overlooking the plain. It is accessible through the route passing by the plain (Fig 1). In fact, the accounts of Medieval travellers mention the strategic importance of the fortress.<sup>2</sup>

The overall extent of Urartian occupation at the rock outcrop where Hasankale is located is unknown. Archaeological research at the Inner Fortress of Hasankale revealed wall remains dating to the Urartian period. These walls were built without mortar in parallel to the Medieval fortification walls in the east-west direction. They are about 1.40 m in thickness with a preserved height of 8 rows (Erkmen & Ceylan 2003, 22). The wall foundations were built on the bedrock, similar to the majority of the known Urartian structures elsewhere. At Hasankale, wall beds carved into the bedrock in the northwestern part of the fortress indicate that the citadel was surrounded by walls similar to other provincial centers of Altıntepe and Verahram. Based on a calculation of the Urartian fortification wall unearthed by excavations and the wall bed traces on the bedrock, it could be suggested that the citadel was part of the provincial center covering an area of approximately 2 ha.

The importance of Hasankale's location resulted in its continuous occupation throughout historical periods. A building phase dating to the Medieval period at Hasankale is still visible today. The Inner Fortress, the fortification walls surrounding the fortress, and several architectural features can be dated to the post-Urartian periods. A water channel from the upper part of the fortress to the base was previously dated to the Urartian period (Kleiss & Hauptmann, 1976, 15; Von Gall, 1967, 516). However, it is understood that this channel was built at a later date, similar to other cascaded rock channels built with mortar (Köroğlu & Danışmaz 2018). It could, therefore, be concluded that the Urartian architectural remains at Hasankale were destroyed during the post-Urartian periods, and were eventually buried during the Medieval occupation layer. A similar case is also known from Palu, the westernmost provincial center of the kingdom. The Urartian remains at Palu were found buried underneath

2 During his visits to the Middle East between 1631-1663, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier stays in Hasankale and records that the fortress charged for each camel of each caravan passing through this route (Tavernier, 2006: 63). Evliya Çelebi recounts that looking down from the Inner Fortress of Hasankale was terrifying and that the fortress was built with durable stones, also mentioning that the outskirts of the fortress measure one thousand steps (Dağlı & Kahraman, 2008: 253).

the Medieval remains. Thus, at Hasankale and Palu, the Urartian occupation is represented mainly by rock-cut tombs and niches.

Table 1. Provincial centres and Urartian period criteria

	Citadel	Rock-cut Tomb	Fortification/Wall	Inscription/Inscribed Object	Temple	Palace	Red Slipped Pottery	Storage Building	Drainage System	Lower Town	Rock Signs
Altın-tepe	+	+	+	+	+	+?	+	+	+		
Pasinler	+	+	+	+							
Palu	+	+	+	+			+?				+
Kayalı-dere	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+		
Wera-chram	+	+	+	+	+	+	+			+	

The Hasankale rock-cut tomb is located in the steep southeastern part of the citadel, about 20-25 m above the plain. Similar to other Urartian rock-cut tombs, the tomb is accessible only from inside the citadel. The rock-cut tomb has two chambers and a small platform is located at the entrance. The first chamber, accessed through the main door, is rectangular in plan (4.30 x 6.15 x 2.30 m). Through a door on the western wall of the main chamber, one can reach the second chamber. This room has a roughly square plan (3.34 x 4.35 x 2.30 m) with a vault-shaped ceiling. About 40-50 m to the west of the rock-cut tomb, a rock niche was carved, measuring 1-1.50 x 1.50 m (Özgül, 2011, Fig. 26-28). The depth of the niche differs from other examples found in the Palu and Kaleköy/Mazgirt Fortresses. Thus, although its function is unknown, the niche at Hasankale resembles more of an open front chamber.

Similar rock-cut tombs have been found in provincial and tribal centers outside the capital. These tombs have multiple chambers, and it appears that their construction adhered to the rock-cut tombs at the Van Fortress. These tombs were built for non-royal Urartian governors, politically powerful tribe leaders, and their families in areas where they held authority. Requiring specialized labor and great costs, these tombs aptly illustrate the cultural influence of the Urartian Kingdom outside the capital, in remote areas.

An inscription on a stone block that is said to have been found at Hasankale attributes a fortress construction to king Menua (*CTUI*, A 5-41B). The same expression was also used in the Delibaba inscription (*CTUI*, A 5-41A) in the same region, about 50 km to the southeast of Hasankale, and in the inscription on a stone block found in Pirabat (*CTUI*, A 5-40A-40B) to the south of the Southern Aras Mountains. All of these are construction inscriptions of Menua; they were not found *in situ*, and therefore, one should consider that the Hasankale inscription

could have been brought from somewhere else. Indeed, construction inscriptions of temples and silo structures were found in the royal cities of the Urartian Kingdom; however, similar examples have not been found in provincial centers such as Altıntepe and Kayalıdere, which have been subjected to excavation and research for a long period. The lack of construction inscriptions in the provincial centers is one of the most striking differences between the Urartian provincial centers and royal cities.

### **The Tribal Centers: Yoğunhasan and Marifet**

Apart from the provincial center of Hasankale, the Yoğunhasan and Marifet fortresses are among other centers in the Upper Aras Basin that appear to have been influenced by Urartian culture. These fortresses can be classified as tribal centers within the model of Urartian administrative settlement types as they differ from the royal cities and provincial centers of Urartu with their sizes, locations, as well as their architectural remains.

The Yoğunhasan Fortress was built on a rock cliff at the northern extension of the Southern Aras Mountains. It is located at about 1800 m elevation, away from the main route, at the edge of the pastures reaching southwards. The fortress is located about 2 km to the south of the route through the Aras River Valley and has no connection to the main route. Only a small part of the route of 100 m between two hills to the north is visible from the fortress.



Figure 2. Yoğunhasan tribal centre and its surrounding area.

The Marifet Fortress is located to the south of the Upper Aras Basin, about 300 m from the valley and the route passing through the valley. The route through the valley connects the Bingöl-Muş area to Erzurum. However, it is uncertain whether this route was in use during the Urartian period or not. As mentioned above, during their military campaigns to the north, the Urartian Kingdom used the Ağrı, Eleşkirt-Horasan route to the east where Urartian stelae and inscriptions were found. There are no flatlands for agricultural activities around the fortress that is located at 1800 m elevation; however, the northern hills of the Southern Aras Mountains around the fortress are suitable for pasture (Fig. 2).

The Yoğunhasan Fortress measures 27 x 36 m, while the Marifet Fortress—although it could not be measured precisely—measures 60 x 45 m according to the rock outcrop it is located on. The extent of both fortresses is larger than Hasankale (2 ha). These fortresses do not incorporate architectural units such as temples, palaces, or large storage units which have been discovered in the royal cities and provincial centers. The topography of their locations does not allow such structures to be built.



Figure 3. The view to Aras valley from Marifet tribal centre.

The clearest example of Urartian influence in the Yoğunhasan and Marifet tribal centers is the presence of multi-chambered rock-cut tombs. The Yoğunhasan rock-cut tomb is located on the steep eastern section of the rock outcrop. The tomb consists of a main hall (4.40 x 5.00 m) and two side chambers, one to the north of the main hall (3.20 x 2.10 m) and the other to the south (2.30 x 2.80 m). At the entrance of the tomb, a platform,

measuring about 80 cm in width, was carved into the bedrock. Similar tomb entrances are known from the Pekerîç and Tatvan rock-cut tombs. Apart from the rock-cut tomb, the southern and southwestern parts of the fortification wall that was built without mortar and with andesite blocks, measuring about 3 m in width, constitute another architectural feature at the fortress that survived until today. Several lines of the continuation of that fortification wall towards the north is preserved as well.

The Marifet rock-cut tomb is located in the secluded southern part of the rock cliff facing the steep valley where the Aras River flows. The tomb consists of a chamber in a north-south orientation (2.65 x 2.95 m) and another chamber to the west of this one (3.20 x 3.90 m).

## Discussion

Since its establishment until its collapse, the Urartian Kingdom put great efforts into construction activities to achieve political and economic transformations in areas under its authority. The planning and construction of royal cities by the kingdom itself aimed to reflect its power and authority. Apart from the royal cities, provincial centers in remote areas separated from each other by natural borders of mountains and rivers were also established. Tribes residing in areas surrounding these provincial centers held political power and authority and maintained relations with the kingdom as well.

From its early years onwards, the Urartian Kingdom tried transforming the Diauehi region, located in a strategic area on the routes to the north and northwest, through military campaigns and administrative arrangements. However, this transformation appears to have been different from the center of the kingdom, the Lake Van Basin, where the majority of the royal cities we are located. Instead of building new cities in the region, the kingdom's strategy was focused on conducting military campaigns to weaken the existing tribes and allying with the powerful ones. During the military campaigns dating to the early years of the kingdom, the tribe leaders who were also named as kings paid tributes and were accepted under the authority of the kingdom (CTU I, A 5-3, A 5-4). The Urartian dominance in the region increased over time as the kingdom gained power.

The Diauehi region was incorporated within the Urartian administrative system during the reign of Argishti I. During this period, governors (LUEN.NAM) were assigned to the region (CTU I, A 8-11 d, A 18-12 Vo). The name of Diauehi was no longer mentioned after this development. The region was now possibly governed from the provincial center of Hasankale, near the Pasinler plain, which is the largest flatland in the region. Thus, the Diauehi region was no longer an area that paid tribute and faced military campaigns; they

started paying taxes and became a part of the administrative system of the Urartian Kingdom.<sup>3</sup>

Due to its location and size, Hasankale differs from the settlement type of tribal centers as an important provincial center of the kingdom. It covers an area of about 2 ha, similar to other provincial centers of Palu, Verahram, Altıntepe, and Kayalıdere. It is larger than the Marifet and Yoğunhasan Fortresses in the same region. Also distinct from the tribal centers, it is located in an easily accessible area near a large plain.

After the establishment of the provincial center in Hasankale, the tribes in the region that paid tribute to the kingdom maintained their presence. This is understood from the inscriptions found in the region dating to this period, as well as the earlier ones. In addition to the Hasankale provincial center, archaeological data from the Upper Aras basin also point to the relationship of the Yoğunhasan and Marifet fortresses with the Urartian culture. The most prominent examples of Urartian culture in these fortresses is the presence of multi-chambered rock-cut tombs. These tombs were built in a similar way to the large and monumental rock-cut tombs in the capital Van Fortress.

The comparatively small sizes and architectural aspects of the Yoğunhasan and Marifet fortresses indicate that they were not royal investments. Unlike the provincial centers and royal cities, there is a lack of available land for agriculture in the vicinity of both of these fortresses (Fig. 2-3). Similar to other tribal centers, these fortresses possibly belonged to semi-nomad and herder tribes. Indeed, the Urartian written sources incorporating lists of tributes indicate that a significant number of sheep, goat, and cattle were taken from the region (CTU I, A 8-11 d, A 18-12 Vo). The Yoğunhasan and Marifet tribal centers were a part of an administrative system of the kingdom that held political power and influence in the region. This was best illustrated in the rock-cut tombs of the tribe leaders and their families that adhered closely to the monumental examples from the Van Fortress.

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## Abbreviation

CTU I: M. Salvini, *Corpus dei testi Urartei I: Le iscrizioni su pietra e roccia* (Rome 2008).

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3 The Avnik stele located 14 km to the west of the Marifet Fortress indicates that the kingdom's efforts to regulate the region continued. The inscription on the stele is not completely preserved, however, it is mentioned that somebody was estranged by the king (CTU I, A 9-39). This may suggest that Sarduri II made some administrative arrangements in the region. It is known that Sarduri II made some arrangements in the provincial system of the Lower Murat Basin as well (Sevin, 2005).

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