FORTRESSES OF SOLITUDE? INVESTIGATING IRON AGE DEFENSIVE

NETWORKS IN SOUTHWESTERN CAUCASIA

by

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of
The University of Utah
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Middle East Studies: History

Department of Languages and Literature

The University of Utah

December 2012

The University of Utah Graduate School

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ABSTRACT

The archaeology of southwestern Caucasia has for centuries been overshadowed by the classical Ancient Near Eastern civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. This paper consists of an archaeologically-driven surface survey of the Sharur Plain, in Naxçıvan, Azerbaijan. This survey was undertaken to investigate local Iron-Age civilizations separately from their Near Eastern counterparts in the effort to contribute data towards a discussion of emergent social complexity in this region. Several Iron Age fortresses were located as a result of this survey. Their data have been compiled and examined through a socio-economic approach and through the lens of landscape archaeology.

To the Charybdis

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Studies of literate civilizations in the Ancient Near East provide some of the earliest evidence pertaining to the "rise of civilization," a concept often linked to the advent of political institutions such as the City and the State, the development of writing and monetary economics, and the development of Empire. The urbane civilizations of Egypt, Babylon, and Assyria immediately come to mind when one thinks of Near Eastern civilizations. However, the region was also populated by other, perhaps less-well-known, independent civilizations. These had significant socio-economic impacts throughout history upon the region, shaping the Near East and civilizations within it. Many of these civilizations located on the frontiers of greater Mesopotamia have been examined as pale reflections of or weak copies emulating the Ancient Near East superpowers, rather than investigated in their own right (Badalyan, Smith, and Avetisyan 2003, 146).

Discussions of emergent sociopolitical complexity on the fringes of the Near East, such as western Asia and Transcaucasia, must be undertaken. Caucasia and the highlands of western Asia embodied the nexus of Near Eastern and Eurasian steppe land connections, and represent "a point of cultural

articulation that provides a critical archaeological setting for examining the constitution of sociopolitical boundaries and the endurance of long-distance economic ties" (Badalyan, Smith, and Avetisyan 2003, 165). Examination of these societies in their own right allows us to obtain a less-reductive, more independent understanding of sociocultural dynamics along and within the Near East's borderlands. One such civilization rose from relative obscurity in the northern and eastern borderlands of Assyria, in the mountainous terrain around Lakes Van, Sevan, and Urmia, to a major political and global force which rivaled the reputation of Assyria. We know this civilization, the Vannic Kingdom of the Early and Middle Iron Age, as Urartu.

During the field season of 2009, a team of archaeologists from the University of Utah undertook a systematic survey of fortifications and settlements located in the greater Arpaçay River Valley, in the autonomous republic of Naxçıvan, a political exclave of modern Azerbaijan. This project was undertaken in conjunction with the Naxçıvan Archaeological Project, an excavation funded by the University of Pennsylvania, the National Science Foundation, and the Azerbaijani Academy of Sciences. The purpose of this survey was to supplement the data collected from the excavation of an ancient hilltop settlement, Oğlanqala, to assess the site's importance within the region and the region's role in antiquity. The data collected from the survey component of the project did not yield the kinds of settlements that NAPS expected; however, a number of Early Transcaucasian sites and a number of Iron Age hilltop fortresses were located and mapped as a result of this survey.

In this paper, I argue that the Iron Age fortresses surveyed in Naxçıvan presented here are physical manifestations of behaviors consistent with complex state formation. This paper attempts to define the local scale of sociopolitical integration of these fortresses within the landscape, and seeks to answer the following questions: At what level was sovereignty organized? Do these fortresses represent independent polities, or do they fit into a network of interlinking fortresses associated with a larger ruling polity? If the latter, is this pattern of networks consistent with Urartian settlement patterns, and can it be attributed to the Urartian state?

In order to answer these questions, I will investigate fortress data from a critical socio-economic standpoint. I argue that the existences of fortresses in this region, like royal inscriptions, are direct indicators of state control. By examining them, strategic, locational, and settlement patterns emerge that are useful in determining whether these fortresses were affiliated with the existence of the Urartian state in Western Naxçıvan during the Middle Iron Age. I incorporate my own landscape data and spatial analysis to examine the collected data against a modified settlement model based on defensive network models proposed by Badalyan, Smith, and Avetisyan in their article, *The Emergence of Sociopolitical Complexity in Southern Caucasia: An Interim Report on the Research of Project ArAGATS*, and Raffaele Biscione's model utilized in his article: *Pre-Urartian and Urartian Settlement Patterns in the Caucasus, Two Case Studies: The Urmia Plain, Iran, and the Sevan Basin, Armenia.* I will also incorporate Biscione's data from the Urmia Plain and the Sevan Basin (two different areas located north and

south of my project area) with other known spatial data (pulled mostly from Paul Zimansky's *Ecology and Empire: the Structure of the Urartian State*) to show where and how it fit into the overarching Urartian Kingdom in modern-day western Azerbaijan. I propose that these fortresses are likely interconnected facets of an overarching Urartian network. I also address Lauren Ristvet's interpretation of the same data and from it draw my own independent conclusions.

Archaeology in this region of the world suffers much from a lack of conclusive evidence. Though the archaeology itself is extensive and spans many centuries, the data that have been published comes largely from poorly excavated sites. These investigations were conducted by Soviet archaeologists who focused almost exclusively upon large Urartian castles and fortresses.[1] Many smaller settlements in this region have been overlooked and subsequently lost to history as a result of extensive landscape and agricultural modifications.[2] Only within the last thirty years have archaeological data concerning Southern Caucasia become available to outside researchers. The data presented in this study have the potential to further knowledge of archaeology and history in this region of the world.

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[1] Larger hilltop settlements are generally located on high mountain ledges that are difficult to access, thereby they are less likely to have been disturbed by the extensive modifications to the landscape that took place during the Soviet regime (Ristvet et al. 2011, 3). As a result, these fortresses, though difficult to access, are more visible than the smaller, more ephemeral settlements in the lowland plains, and have been more thoroughly investigated by researchers.
[2] Smaller settlements were also most likely inhabited by transient pastoral-nomadic societies that seasonally inhabited these sites (Rothman 2012). Pastoral nomadic sites tend to be very ephemeral in appearance, and thus, more difficult to locate than the robust architecture of fortifications.

The study region lies on the north-eastern frontier of Greater Mesopotamia, making it a crucial crossroads for the study of the ancient world. Studying this region and its inhabitants will yield further knowledge regarding steppe/nomadic societies, indigenous village societies, external empires, and the beginnings of political power in the Caucasus region (Ristvet et al. 2012, 321).

This study will enrich contemporary studies of ancient socio-economic institutions because archaeology in this region has not yet been sufficiently connected to a larger context in the Ancient Near East, especially in the instance of external empires. This region had potential in the past to act as a frontier, breadbasket, and a crossroads for the many empires interacting with it. Modern-day studies of it have the potential to add to a larger discussion of political identity and how current archaeology (and its integrity) is vulnerable to political pressures. This discussion is critical to undertake for archaeologists, effects on a visceral level how archaeologists operate as independent, objective researchers abroad, and has vast implications for how to successfully undertake field research in areas with delicate pasts.

The sites introduced here represent the physical reflections of human behavior upon a landscape unique in its geographical history. This landscape has played a large role in the development of societies and lifeways. These societies had to adapt to a unique set of geographical and political circumstances in order to survive. It is with this notion in mind that I attempt to understand the nature of the sites recorded in this area, and what behaviors they represent historically. In order to understand the nature of these sites and their behavioral

meanings, it is crucial to pay close attention to their unique positioning on the landscape itself. For these purposes, it is first necessary to understand the landscape in which they have appeared.

The Land of Naxçıvan

The autonomous republic of Naxçıvan is a small exclave of the nation of Azerbaijan nestled between northern Iran, Armenia, and eastern Turkey (a region known as Southern Caucasia). The total area of Naxçıvan is roughly 5500 square kilometers. It is located on the southern part of the Transcaucasian Plateau, bordered to the south by the Araxes River and to the north by the lesser foothills of the Caucasus Mountains (Ristvet et al. 2012, 324). The landscape of the republic is characterized by steep, mountainous terrain interspersed with plains in the regions to the west and southwest, which have played a large role throughout history as trade and communication routes between Asia and the Mediterranean. Naxçıvan's northern and eastern borders are shared with Armenia and dominated by the Zəngəzur and Dərəlyəz mountains. The Araxes River represents Naxçıvan's southern and eastern borders, shared with Iran and Turkey (Ristvet et al. 2012, 324). Naxçıvan's irrigable plains are utilized today for intense irrigation-based cultivation, and the highland areas are utilized as pastures for livestock. The topography of southern Caucasia has been shaped by volcanic activity, severing pockets of arable land from each other with jagged mountain peaks. Severe winters often close mountain passes, isolating valleys

from each other, and the populations that dwelled within them (Zimansky 1985, 1).

The region is relatively dry, and is characterized by hot summers and cold winters. The plains to the mountainous western region receive less than 500 mm of precipitation each year, which contributes to the steppe-like vegetation prominent there (Ristvet et al. 2012, 324). The average precipitation in Naxçıvan falls between 200 and 800 mm per year. The Araxes plains receive between 200 to 300 mm per year, while the mountainous regions receive about 500-800 mm per year (Ristvet et al. 2012, 324). Precipitation falls and accumulates in the form of snow during the winter and spring months, but is virtually absent during the summer months, which are characterized by hot and dry temperatures (Ristvet et al. 2012, 325). Vegetation located within the elevated mountainous terrain consists of mountainous steppe flora, such as Iberian maple and dwarf oak. The flora and fauna inhabiting the region of Naxçıvan as a whole represent the most diverse in the Middle East, due to the ecotonal nature of the environment which stems from various microclimates produced by sudden changes in the elevation of terrain (Ristvet et al. 2012, 325).

Though climactically dry, the region is fed by roughly 400 variously sized *wadi*'s flowing through its territory. The most important rivers in the region are the Araxes River, the Arpaçay River, and the Naxçıvançay River. The latter two are located in western and central Naxçıvan, and contribute much to the largest irrigable areas (Ristvet et al. 2012, 325). Despite numerous ground-water and river resources, agriculture is difficult to cultivate in much of the area, as it is

hindered by the characteristically steep inclines of the region and weak soils. The most important modern agricultural area is located on the Şerur plain, formed by the Arpaçay River in western Naxçivan, where 41,200 hectares of land can be cultivated (Ristvet et al. 2012, 325).

History of Excavations and Chronological Limitations

Naxçivan is a region with which many Western archaeologists are unfamiliar, due in part to its lack of documentation. Research has been performed there since the 19th century. The majority of archaeological research conducted in this region was done by a handful of Azerbaijani and Russian archaeologists. As a result, much of the data are unpublished or the publications are difficult to access for Western researchers (Parker, 2011).

Late nineteenth and early twentieth century research of southern Caucasia was undertaken in many forms, beginning with the surveys of A. Kalantar (1925), T. Toramanyan (1942), N. Marr (1974), Petroysan (1989), Kafadarian (1996), and Khanzadian (1995), to name a few (Badalyan, Smith, and Avetisyan 2003, 153). Much of the research history carried out in the area hinges upon the arrival of the Vannic Kingdom, Bianili (a polity known to the Assyrians as Urartu). More recently, however, many archaeological investigations have focused on the lengthy periods of occupation within the Caucasus Mountains, reaching as far back as the Chalcolithic period.[3]

Modern research of this area has traditionally focused on the polities located along the borders of the Caucasian highlands---Assyrians, Mittanians,

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[3] For more information, see Harutyunyan 2012; Areshian and Avetisyan 2012.

Hittites, Mannaeans, Cimmerians, and Scythians—rather than the societies within them (Badalyan, Smith, and Avetisyan 2003, 144). This has resulted in a tendency of outside researchers to view social complexity as an import from outside the highlands. This view is a pitfall that must be avoided, and comes at the expense of more accurate, regional/local accounts of the rise of political and social complexity and transformation. Conversely, straying too far into isolationist interpretations is ineffective, as it removes the wider context from the investigation. This area is one that must be understood within context, as it certainly played a role as a crossroads for high-traffic trade and exchange of ideas and materials throughout history, and was, to many degrees, influenced by the regions beyond it.

Much of what is known about Late Bronze and Early Iron Age fortresses located in Southern Caucasia comes from unsystematic archaeological and architectural surveys undertaken in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Badalyan, Smith, and Avetisyan 2003, 152). For the most part, the goal of these surveys intended to establish the settlement history of the region. Badalyan, Smith, and Avetisyan, among others, note that only a handful of the larger fortresses identified in these surveys have been the focus of intense research. Additionally, smaller, unfortified settlements are largely absent from the region, and those identified have not been extensively studied.[4] Much of the material culture and chronologies for the area have been extracted from mortuary

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[4] The lack of archaeological site integrity in this area is partly to blame for this, as many sites located on irrigable landscapes have been destroyed or developed as a result of invasive modern technological innovations.

complexes such as Lchasen, Artik, Horom, and Keti (Badalyan, Smith, and Avetisyan 2003, 153).

Southern Caucasian archaeological chronologies are different for the Early Iron and Late Bronze Ages, due to significant constraints in the data (Badalyan, Smith, and Avetisyan 2003, 153). It is somewhat difficult to differentiate between the two periods due to some unfortunate constraints. Badalyan et al. outline these constraints as follows. First, a lack of stratified Late Bronze/Early Iron Age occupation layers exists.[5] Second, the understanding of material culture is somewhat underdeveloped: ceramic and decorative forms are highly variable but some constitute a small amount of characteristic anomalies.[6] Third, periodization suffers from a lack of anchored dates (Badalyan, Smith, and Avetisyan 2003, 153). Taken altogether, these constraints make it very difficult to pinpoint exact periods for the archaeology in the region. While these problems have been recently readdressed and redefined, they continue to inhibit contemporary research.

Despite these restrictions, some temporal distinctions can be made. Differences between the Late Bronze Age and Early Iron Age include shifts in architectural styles, an increasing number and area of cemeteries, shifts in metallurgy from bronze to iron, and shifts in the aesthetics and morphology of artifacts (Badalyan, Smith, and Avetisyan 2003, 154). One in particular is crucial

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[5] This is perhaps partially due to the extreme amounts of volcanic activities and geographic processes of the area that wreak havoc upon the nature of the stratigraphy. Additionally, extensive agricultural cultivation of many areas has unfortunately also played a part in the disturbance of much of the regional stratigraphy, especially in the project area, Naxçıvan.
[6] Like Toprakkale ware, an elite Urartian red-burnished ceramic ware: for an in-depth discussion of these, see Zimansky 1985.

for this study: the emergence of massive cyclopean architecture at the end of the Late Bronze Age. Charles Burney, in his early works, argues that the Early Iron Age can be distinguished from the Late Bronze Age by the appearance of "cyclopean" architecture, a type of fortified style associated with the emergence of the Urartian Kingdom, and very commonly seen in fortified settlements (Badalyan, Smith, and Avetisyan, 2003; Burney 1957; Zimansky 1985, 1995).

Cyclopean fortifications occur often as elements of massive sites, characterized by fortification walls, constructed from (often roughly) hewn stone, using little or no mortar (Burney 1957 40). These fortifications were usually built with basalt boulders, and each course of masonry can range anywhere from 50 cm to 1 meter tall, and 3 to 4 m thick (Burney, 1957, 40). A significant feature of this architecture is that cyclopean walls are often built with two blocks that serve as the inner and outer faces of the wall, and filled with rubble, also known as Case-mate construction (Burney, 1957, 40). Another feature of cyclopean architecture is the occurrence of buttresses and the incorporation of towers at regular intervals. This architecture is famously depicted by an Assyrian relief from Khorsabad, of the sack of Musasir, an Urartian fortress, by the Assyrian King Sargon II in the eighth century BC (Burney 1957, 41).

Recent investigations of Late Bronze and Early Iron Age fortresses reveal, however, that the emergence of cyclopean architecture is not as clear cut as once thought. Hilltop fortresses exhibiting cyclopean architecture[7] within some parts of modern-day Armenia have been dated to the Late Bronze Age,

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[7] Such as Tsaghkahovit fortress, and Gegharot fortress, Armenia (Lindsay 2012; Lyon and Smith 2012).

suggesting that the longstanding tradition of fortress construction, and thus the emergence of social complexity, is older than first thought. In his most recent presentation at the Society for American Archaeology in Memphis in 2012, Gregory Areshian discusses the presence of massive stone architecture and fortifications that existed within the Chalcolithic period in Armenia[8] (Areshian and Avetisyan 2012). Another paper given at the same location by Alan Greene briefly mentions the existence of cyclopean architecture incorporated into Late Bronze Age Fortresses (Greene 2012).

It appears from the literature that cyclopean architecture and the exact period in which it emerged has yet to be sufficiently established. Though it is a hallmark of Urartian architecture, it apparently extends further back into history than Urartu itself, and therefore may represent the adoption of it by the Urartians. Cyclopean architecture is inherently strong, well-made, and simple to construct. Perhaps its persistence within the Iron Age can be explained by the Urartian adoption of very longstanding traditions inherent within the Caucasus. [9] Cyclopean architecture itself is one example of the complex problems facing archaeologists when attempting to assign specific dates to sites within this abstruse region.

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[8] These buildings were multicomponent fortifications, including wattle and daub architecture alongside large stone cyclopean superstructures within the building plans (Areshian and Avetisyan 2012).
[9] Greene suggests in his paper that Late Bronze Age fortresses played a role in agro-pastoral societies as a means of constructing political allegiances and in order to control seasonal residence within a given area (Greene 2012).

Urartian History: A Brief Introduction

> Current models of emergent sociopolitical complexity in southern
> Caucasia hinge upon the origins of the Urartian Kingdom and its
> defeat of local 'tribes' north of the Araxes River, and it is important
> that we briefly reflect upon the extant accounts of Urartian origins in
> order to open both historical and theoretical space for a discussion
> of complexity in the Late Bronze and Early Iron Age. (Badalyan,
> Smith, and Avetisyan 2003, 147)

The unique landscape of the tri-lake area (Lakes Sevan, Van, Urmia) in

the southern Caucasus contributed much to the development of social complexity

and state formation in the region. One state, Urartu, was particularly well-adapted

to the challenges posed by the difficult landscape and became the most powerful

player in the region during the 9th-7th centuries B.C., rivaling the empire of

Assyria, one of its contemporaries (Figure 1).

Urartu (also known as *Bianili*, *Nairi*) emerged in ancient history

somewhere during the mid-ninth century B.C., and was a major political player on

the historic scene until the empire's demise in the second half of the seventh

century B.C. (Zimansky 1985, 1). Urartu is first known to historians under two

different terms given to the populations of the Armenian highlands from the 2nd

millennium B.C.: Uruatri and Nairi. The lands of Urartu, Uruatri, and Nairi, first

appear in Assyrian royal inscriptions as a coalition or alliance of loose kingdoms

and tribes, who were habitually raided by, and forced to pay tribute to, Assyrian

kings.

Exact Urartian territorial boundaries are problematic,[10] partly because

these were in constant flux throughout the kingdom's history. However, the

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[10] These play an integral part in the main argument of this thesis, and will be examined later in
this paper.

Urartian "heartland" is known to have existed around the vicinity of Lakes Sevan, Urmia, and Van, located in modern-day eastern Turkey. The massive citadel and Urartian capital, Tushpa, was established on the southern shore of Lake Van.[11] Urartu flourished for two and a half centuries as a major political power in the ancient world, collapsing at the beginning of the sixth century B.C., when it subsequently vanished almost completely from historical records (Zimansky 1985, 1).

The Kingdom of Urartu developed vast defensive and economic networks that stretched across the expanse of the kingdom. These corridors were integral for trade and high-demand resources throughout the Iron Age, and as such, Urartu was a major player in the international politics of the time. Urartu is particularly well known from Assyrian sources as a strong rival kingdom and coalition of allied tribes located vaguely to the east and north, where they are portrayed as a powerful rival inhabiting the mountainous regions somewhere beyond the borders of Assyria. The relationship between Assyria and Urartu was perhaps more complicated than the Assyrian annals first suggest, as they interacted closely with one another over the course of history, shared overlapping territories and a writing system – but not an alphabet nor language. Both also rose and fell within a century of each other (Zimanksy 1985, 1).

Adam Smith divides the history of the Urartian state into three periods: the formative period, the imperial period, and the reconstructive period (Smith 1999,

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[11] Paul Zimansky argues that Urartu likely had no one ultimate capital, but rather excelled at having many locations of central authority that could act as flexible capitals if other capitals of a particular area were under threat, as was generally the case during the Iron Age (Zimansky 1985, 32).

49). He notes, like Paul Zimansky, that there is not enough information to extensively reconstruct the circumstances of the formation of the state of Urartu, but succinctly summarizes the imperial and reconstructive periods. He argues that Urartian imperial expansion began between the mid-ninth and late eighth centuries B.C. (Smith 1999, 48). Urartian kings during this period conquered rivals across a vast expanse of land, "from the headwaters of the Euphrates to the south shore of Lake Urmia" (Smith 1999, 48). Urartu did not come to rule southern Transcaucasia until the eighth century B.C., when the Urartian King Arghistsi I began constructing military fortresses after his conquest of the Ararat Plain. The imperial period also saw the incorporation of the Sevan Basin and the southern Shirak Plain into Urartian territory (Smith 1999, 49).

A sequence of Assyrian conquests during the latter part of the eighth century B.C. put an end to the Urartian imperial period. The Assyrian king Sargon II reacted to Urartian incursions into the southern Urmia basin by leading a series of campaigns against them in order to re-establish an Assyrian presence within the region. Sargon II's campaigning resulted in the defeat of the Urartian army led by the Urartian King Rusa I (Smith 1999, 49). During the same time as Sargon II's victory over Rusa, Urartu was also under attack from the Cimmerians. This Cimmerian attack did much to spur an Urartian rebellion within the royal court, which was secretly observed by Assyrian spies and reported to the Assyrian King.[12] Despite these difficulties, Rusa I managed to quell the Urartian

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[12] It is clear from Sargon II's correspondence that Assyria employed extensive intelligence networks to observe Urartian political, diplomatic, and military endeavors. For more information, see Parpola, S. *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part I: Letters from Assyria and the*

insurgency within his own court and preserve his dynasty. However, the re-emergent Assyrian presence in Transcaucasia in the south and the new presence of the Cimmerians in the north brought the Urartian imperial period to an end (Smith 1999, 49).

Smith argues that much of the history concerning the reconstruction period is inferred from the archaeological record. During this period, a reconsolidation of Urartian territory as a result of Urartian resolve to challenge Assyrian holdings, and thus reconsolidation of Urartian royal power, is seen (Smith 1999, 49). However, the Urartian state never operated on the level it had during the imperial period again.

Definitions of Urartu: Territory vs. Ethnicity

The terms Uruatri and Bianili were briefly presented earlier. The term Urartu came to replace both of these terms when referring to the unified Vannic Kingdom that emerged in the 9th century B.C. However, others have pointed out that these lexigraphic terms are vague, perhaps purposefully so. This section will discuss the varied meanings of the term Urartu throughout history.

Perhaps the most imperative definition that this investigation calls for is a better understanding of the term "Urartu." Urartu has many ancient implications, specifically for those who originally coined the term. The term Urartu, even for the

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West. Helsinki University Press, Helsinki, Finland. 1987.; Lanfranchi, G. B., Parpola, S. *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part II: Letters from the Northern and Northeastern Provinces.* Helsinki University Press. 1990.; Lanfranchi, G. B., *"Some New Texts about a Revolt against the Urartian King Rusa I."* OrA 22: 123-36. 1983

Assyrians, had more than one meaning (Zimansky 1985, 4). Originally utilized as a geographic name for a land that contained numerous independent polities, the term "Urartu" came to represent the Assyrian name of the unified state of Bianili, the Vannic Kingdom (Zimansky 1985, 4). In its literal translation, Uruatri, or Urartu, referred to the groups of peoples inhabiting the "mountainous territory" at the borders of Assyria.

The term Urartu has trickled into modern-day usage and holds an implied territorial and ethnic meaning for modern-day nations. Unfortunately, the term "Urartu," within the majority of communities living in Azerbaijan and Naxçıvan, is immediately associated with Armenian heritage, which is problematic for the multi-ethnic inhabitants of post-Soviet Azerbaijan and Armenia and archaeologists attempting to work in these areas, to a lesser degree.

Urartu According to Assyria

Much of what historians know about the Kingdom of Urartu comes directly from the annals of Assyrian kings. This genre of texts functioned as royal propaganda intended to glorify the deeds of Assyrian kings to the Assyrian population. As such, the credibility of much of the information conveyed in these Assyrian annals is questionable. They very likely do not accurately reflect the entire reality of events that took place, and one must keep in mind that they are all written from an Assyrian standpoint and intended to exaggerate the deeds of the reigning Assyrian king (Zimanksy 1985, 5). Nevertheless, the Assyrian annals

do provide us with some evidence of the beginnings of the centralized state known as Urartu.

The term Ur(u)atri (Urartu) first appears within the royal inscriptions of Shalmaneser I (1274-1245 B.C.) in the second millennium B.C. Annalists used these to refer to a loose federation of tribes against which Shalmaneser I led one of his first campaigns (Belli and Sevin 1999). Shalmaneser's annals located the eight "countries" (Akkadian *mātum*) of Uruatri within a mountainous region situated to the southeast of Lake Van, but do not record the territorial extents of the Uruatri (Piotrovsky, http://rbedrosian.com/Ref/Piot/uh2.htm accessed June 2, 2012; Barnett 1982). Indeed, the name given to these peoples by the Assyrians appears to be a vague geographical term referring to the mountainous country in which they lived.

Later inscriptions, such as those of Shalmaneser I's son, Tukulti-Ninurta (1244-1208 B.C.), provide historians with another collective term referring to the tribes of the eastern highlands: Nairi. In the annals of Tukulti-Ninurta, 43 kings from the lands of Nairi rose against the Assyrian King and were ultimately defeated. Tribute was exacted from these lands of Nairi, and the new honorary epithet "king of all the lands of Nairi" was added to the official title of the Assyrian King.

The lands of Nairi were attacked frequently and consistently by Assyrian Kings throughout the Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian periods. Tilgath-Pileser (1116-1090 B.C.) penetrated 300 miles into Nairi territory and campaigned

against the whole of the western Armenian highlands, located north of Assyria.

This campaign is recorded in great detail in his royal inscriptions:

> The god Ashur, my lord and master, sent me against the lands of the distant kings who dwell on the shore of the Upper Sea (i.e., the Black Sea), owning no master; and thither I went. By toilsome paths and arduous passes, through which no king before me had gone, by hidden tracks and unmade roads I led my armies... Where the going was easy I travelled in my chariot; where it was difficult I advanced with the help of brazen axes (i.e., clearing a path).... Twenty-three kings of the lands of Nairi gathered together chariots and warriors in their countries and rose up against me in war and strife. I advanced against them with all the fury of my dread armament and, like Adad's flood, annihilated their great army... Sixty kings of the lands of Nairi, together with those who came to their aid, did I drive with my spear as far as the Upper Sea. I captured their great cities, I carried off their riches and their spoils, I gave their dwellings to the flames.... All the kings of the lands of Nairi did I capture alive. But to all these kings I showed mercy, granting them their lives in the sight of Shamash, my lord and master, and freeing them from the bonds of captivity. Then I caused them to swear on oath to my great gods that they would serve me and obey me in all time to come; and their sons, the heirs to their royal houses, I took as hostages to their word. Then I exacted tribute from them, twelve hundred horses and two thousand head of cattle, and let them return to their own countries... (Piotrovsky, http://rbedrosian.com/Ref/Piot/uh2.htm accessed June 2, 2012).

Here, Tilgath-Pileser expended some energy not only to defeat the coalition of tribes in the lands of the Nairi, but the application of the king's mercy shows us that he also desired to strengthen Assyrian power and influence within these lands during the 12th century B.C. This displays the heterogeneous nature of the makeup of the pre-Urartian and Urartian state. It was, essentially, made from various and diverse groups of people who operated under the umbrella of an ancient state.

Coinciding with the Urartian imperial period, the Assyrian King Sargon II undertook a series of campaigns into the Urartian heartland. The inscriptions and

correspondence from Sargon II's campaigns against Urartu also lend us valuable

information regarding extensive defensive networks of fortified hilltops

settlements located in Urartian territory.

Urartu: A Political Territory

> The distinction between a people, an artifactual assemblage, and a
> political entity is all too often blurred or ignored in archaeological literature.
> For example, "Urartian" territory might be construed as the area in which
> the Urartian language was spoken, or the expanse over which pottery and
> architecture of a specific type were distributed. (Zimanksy 1985, 9)

Defining boundaries within archaeology is typically very problematic, and

defining the political landscape of ancient Urartu is no different. The rigid, linear

borders that surround the territory of modern nation-states are relatively recent

societal constructs (Smith 2005, 834). In contrast, most territory within much of

the ancient world did not have exact boundaries (Smith 2005, 1; Parker 2006,

79).[13] Parker argues in his article, *Toward an Understanding of Borderland*

Processes, that different kinds of boundaries existed, but did not always

represent definitive edges of territories (Parker 2006, 79). Instead the perimeters

of many ancient territories existed as porous frontiers and borderlands, where

many intercultural interactions took place. In the case of Urartian territory, this

was certainly the case. These "borderlands" are defined as regions around and

between political entities in which geographic, political, demographic, cultural,

and economic processes interact (Parker 2006, 80).

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[13] Exceptions to this generality exist. For example, the Hittite Tarhuntassa treaty delineates and divides specific Hittite territories in relation to a specific line. For more information, see G. Beckman *Hittite Diplomatic Texts,* Writings from the Ancient World 7 (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 1996) 102-118.

In order to define the extent of Urartian territory, its borders must be estimated. According to Parker, borders and frontiers are composed of different types of boundaries: geographic, political, economic, and so on (Parker 2006, 79). The landscape of Urartu is not a good indicator of distinct territory. As mentioned before, the land is dominated by mountainous terrain that incorporates many highland passes and valleys, frequently fragmenting the landscape itself at irregular intervals. Fortunately at least one type of marker delimitating Urartian political boundaries does exist, in the form of royal inscriptions.

The territory which the Urartian state controlled was constantly in flux as a result not only of aggressive Assyrian campaigns, but due to variation within the tribes of Urartu itself. Urartu first emerged as a coalition of various tribes, who much later assembled to form a distinctive historical imprint. The imperial superstructure of Urartu incorporated many diverse and previously autonomous groups, and thus the makeup of the Urartian state was diverse.[14] Many of these groups were mobile agro-pastoralists, and as such, boundaries and territories must have fluctuated frequently. The diverse groups from which Urartu sprouted have contributed considerable variability into the archaeological record.

Zimansky points out that in the case of Urartu, royal inscriptions are direct indicators of state control (Zimansky 1985, 10). These inscriptions were carved into either semiportable building blocks, or carved into living rock (nonportable)

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[14] Paul Zimansky investigates this and refers to this phenomenon as an archaeological problem and anomaly (Zimansky 1995).

and both show evidence of Urartian presence.[15] Urartian inscriptions are

scattered across Urartian territory, and possibly even exist outside of it.[16]

Liminal inscriptions at the edges of a state's territory often served as a

marker for how far the reigning king and his armies had come, presumably

conquering and exacting tribute from local populations along the way (Smith

2005, 836). Inscriptions located in the heartland of Urartu do not simply represent

the limits of Urartian power, but instead are preoccupied with controlling and

influencing the physical and mental geography of Urartian "citizens." Presumably,

the distinction can be seen in the presence of portable and nonportable

inscriptions. Portable inscriptions have been understood by archaeologists to

represent those located at the edges of the empire, while nonportable

inscriptions represent those more centrally located within it[17] (Figure 2).

Zimansky notes that Urartian inscriptions fall into two distinct categories

(Zimansky 1985, 6). The first includes inscriptions boasting of Urartian

conquests. These generally provide a date at which the territory surrounding the

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[15] The distinctions between nonportable inscriptions and semiportable inscriptions are somewhat complicated. In many cases, semiportable inscriptions are carved onto large, heavy boulders that would have been relatively difficult to transit across vast distances of mountainous terrain. However, it would have been possible for Urartian armies to utilize communal strength and resources to achieve this.

[16] It is therefore prudent when estimating Urartian territorial and political boundaries to add a limited buffer zone around the areas that exhibit Urartian influence.

[17] This is somewhat problematic and exceptions must be addressed. It is likely that Urartu considered and planned according to the geographical resources surrounding the location of inscriptions. Importing and transferring large stone to a given location required planning and resources from large-scale, highly stratified societies. The action of importing implies a certain level of power and control over an area. Therefore, portable inscriptions cannot always be assumed to represent the limits of Urartu. At the same time, if there is a pre-existing living rock face at the extent of the empire, it would be reasonable to utilize that convenient resource. These theoretical exceptions must be kept in mind when conducting archaeological investigations, as humans are and always have been, to some degree or another, simultaneously opportunistic and surprisingly capable of executing difficult labor on a large scale.

inscription was incorporated into the Urartian Empire.[18] These inscriptions are

carved into living rock and into semiportable blocks or boulders, which could

have been moved given a strong enough force. Inscriptions carved into living

rock were nonportable, suggesting that the areas in which they are found must

have been more securely held by the Urartian Empire, who would have protected

the text from being vandalized, and perhaps even actively maintained it

(Zimansky 1985, 6).

The second category of inscriptions tells either of peaceful building

projects undertaken by Urartian kings, or of cultic activity. These inscriptions

represent the substantial resource commitments of the Urartian state in an

attempt to control territory (Zimansky 1985, 6). Examples of these include

Kevenli Kale, Keşişgol dam (Rusa Dam),[19] and most famously, Menua's Canal.

The Urartian king Menua (c. 810-786 BC) constructed a canal that brought

water 51 kilometers from the Hoşap Valley to the Urartian capital, Tushpa (Belli

1999, 15). This canal is still in use today, and is hailed as "a masterpiece of water

engineering by Anatolian and world standards" (Belli 1999, 15). Fifteen

nonportable royal inscriptions are located along and incorporated into Menua's

canal, recounting the deeds of Menua, and making this canal an inscription

monument. The inscriptions have roughly the same content. They state the name

of the canal (thus attributing it to Menua) and warn against vandalism, asking the

gods to punish vandals or anyone falsely claiming to have built the canal (Belli

1999, 16). His successors later added their own additions and inscriptions to the

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[18] …or at least influenced by it or "put under Urartian sway" (Zimansky 1985, 6).
[19] For more information about Urartian irrigation networks, see Belli 1999.

canal, solidifying Urartian ownership of irrigation networks and thus, controlling

the mental and geographic landscape, or Urartian territory. This canal is one of

many examples of how Urartian rulers utilized state resources to control and

influence a given area.

The locations and functions of Urartian fortresses are similar to royal

inscriptions in that they also represent the power of a state, and are meant to

bind groups of people together into an alliance that is controlled regionally.

Zimansky suggests that Urartian defensive networks played other roles besides

defense, which one automatically associates with fortresses. In addition to

defense, fortresses were:

> ...organized in such a way as to protect the population of the arable lands,
> rather than prevent invaders from securing specific resources. Although
> some minor sites were set up along routes of communication, they served
> more to watch these than block them. The entire state was protected by a
> system which compelled hostile armies to face continuous resistance
> when they passed through it. (Zimansky 1985, 46)

I would like to take Zimansky's theory one step further and discuss the

control that these fortresses exacted upon the minds of individuals who relied on

and encountered them. I theorize that fortresses acted much as inscriptions did,

not only on the physical and geographical landscape to confirm and boast of

Urartian control, but also within the mental landscape of various ancient peoples

inhabiting or travelling through the region. Fortresses stood watch over, passively

defended, and controlled regions and transit routes within and at the peripheries

of the Urartian Kingdom (Zimansky 1985). I submit that they also existed to be

seen by those utilizing transit routes (armies and populations of Urartian and

non-Urartian allegiance), thereby dominating not only the geographical terrain,

but subtly asserting subliminal control and impressing the might of Urartian authority upon the minds of the people around it.

Depending on the traveler, an Urartian fortress could have represented sanctuary against famine and war for Urartian peasants and Urartu's allies or, on the other hand, Urartian fortresses may have represented longstanding and threatening opposition to Assyrian raiders. Though the fortresses could withstand siege and battle, the messages relayed from them to Urartian authorities posed a larger threat to Assyrian interests than the fortresses themselves. Messages sent from sentinel fortresses along a network to the majority of the Urartian army concerning Assyrian whereabouts could have unfortunate ramifications for the armies of Assyria, resulting in heavy losses and humiliation or loss of pride for Assyrian kings.[20]

When traveling through the area today, the presence of fortress remnants still serves as a marker of ancient territories and control. These impart a significant message upon the mind of the observer: *you are being watched.* This message was very likely well understood by all in the area throughout antiquity, Assyrians and Urartians alike.

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[20] For more detailed information regarding Urartian and Assyrian campaign interactions in Urartu, see Lanfranchi, G. B., *"Some New Texts about a Revolt against the Urartian King Rusa I."* OrA 22: 123-36. 1983; Lanfranchi, G. B., Parpola, S., *The Correspondence of Sargon II, Part II: Letters from the Northern and Northeastern Provinces.* Helsinki University Press. 1990. Methods of message relay are also discussed briefly in Chapter 2.

<u>Urartu: The Formation of a Centralized State</u>

The circumstances surrounding the rise of the Urartian state, though extensively investigated, continue to be relatively unknown. Underlying causes or reasons surrounding the centralization of the state can only be hypothesized. One hypothesis, in particular, is well-suited to this specific study. Paul Zimanksy surmises in his research that the Urartian state came into being as a result of many different factors, not the least of which was Urartu's proximity to the neighboring state of Assyria, whose military power was unsurpassed (Zimansky 1985, 3). He argues that Urartu centralized into a state as an active defensive reaction to the habitual raids of Assyrian armies. He notes that the kingdom of Urartu emerged at a time when Assyrian pressures on Urartian territory were substantial, and that Urartu managed to survive and thrive in "the heyday of Assyria's dominance of the Near East" (Zimansky 1985, 1). Many have adopted Zimansky's theory regarding Urartian origins, and it is generally understood that Urartu formalized into a state as a reaction to Assyrian aggression.

Zimansky points to the unique geography of the mountainous highlands to the north and east of Assyrian territory as another crucial reason for the formation of a centralized Urartian state. At first glance, the landscape of Urartu seems too formidable and harsh to be conducive to the formation of a well-structured state. The Assyrians themselves described the region as harsh, mountainous terrain dominated by narrow passes. Rather than serving as a deterrent against the formation of a state, however, the landscape may have influenced the formation of the Urartian state (Zimansky 1985, 3). Zimansky

suggests that Urartians recognized the potential for natural defenses allotted by

the environment[21] and utilized them in their resistance of Assyrian invasions.

These natural defenses, most notably steep mountain passes, Zimanksy points

out, could be quickly and easily blockaded by small military forces when they

were not closed by the heavy snowfall of winter (Zimansky 1985, 15). The

landscape itself helped structure the Urartian state as a kingdom that was

resilient, somewhat mobile, and resistant to conquest (though it could not

completely halt enemy raids or invasions altogether).

These two adaptations played a larger role in the formation of a political

unification of tribes that were "characterized by resilience, rather than

inelasticity." (Zimansky 1985, 3):

> Far from being detrimental to the development of a strong state in
> Urartu, these factors were what made one possible….Offensive
> military activities of the Urartian king periodically provided
> expendable manpower which was used to create an internal network
> of defensive fortifications manned by modest numbers of soldiers.
> Bureaucratic mechanisms were designed to minimize the danger of
> political fragmentation without concentrating the administrative
> apparatus at a site which could be attacked. The specificity of its
> adaptive response explains both Urartu's success in its homeland
> and its failure to expand outside its mountainous zone. Without the
> environmental factors that shaped its unique equilibrium between
> centralization and decentralization, Urartu could neither hold together
> nor command the necessary manpower and resources to compete
> with more populous states. (Zimanksy 1985, 3)

The territory of Urartu was inherently decentralized and geographically

widespread (McConchie 2004, 153). The dispersive nature of Urartu's territory

supported a significant lack of political centrality within the empire. Though the

Urartians maintained a "capital" named Tushpa on the southern shore of Lake

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[21] I.e., steep, mountainous terrain interspersed with irrigable isolated valleys. This type of terrain
is naturally very defensible from a tactical standpoint and likely inhibited invaders to some degree.

Van, they could easily move the location of the governing court administration in times of danger or need. This facilitated and maintained the life and longevity of the empire (Zimansky 1985, 3).

Urartian fortress sites lay on the landscape like a net, controlling negative space through the strategic placement of fortresses. Therefore, a network model is the most useful method of visualizing this complicated ancient state:

> A network model of ancient states enables us to examine more accurately the mechanisms developed to manage the inherent economic, social, and political challenges to the imposition of state authority. As their name implies, networks are structures for interaction that include component parts linked not only to a single central point but also to each other. In a network, nodes and connectors are dependent upon each other, with a large potential number of combinations that enable those links to be sustained in a robust but flexible manner. (Smith 2005, 838)

In the following section, I show that the Naxçıvan fortresses composed a multifunctional network of interaction. Fortresses served by diffusing imperial control and ideology through physical nodes that protected its people against invasion. These nodes were intrinsically multifunctional, serving both as imperial centers of administration and trade, and defensive strongholds that monitored movements of armies, withstood siege, and protected Urartian populations.

Figure 1: Locations of Urartian inscriptions at the eastern extent of the Urartian Empire.

CHAPTER 2

THE DATA: IRON AGE FORTRESSES

In this section, NAPS fortress data from the 2009 field season are

introduced and discussed. As a member of the Naxçıvan Archaeological Project

Survey expedition, I assisted Dr. Bradley Parker and Dr. Kathleen Nicoll

(University of Utah) in conjunction with another soon-to-be University of Utah

graduate student, Alex Headman, with data collection from four hilltop fortresses,

dating to the Azerbaijani Middle Iron Age (ca. 850 – 600 B.C.).[22]

Methodology

The methodology employed by the Naxçıvan Archaeological Project

Survey (NAPS) was conceptualized by Dr. Parker with contributions from myself

and the entirety of the NAPS team.[23] I contributed to logistical planning, survey

strategies, drafting and conception of site forms, developing data collection

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[22] This period coincides with the Urartian period in eastern Asia, but the association between the two is a hot topic, particularly because Armenian heritage has assumed the mantle of stemming from Urartian origins. This is a point of contention for the Azerbaijanis, who also inhabit part of a region that was previously under Urartian control. Sensitive politics here present challenges to archaeologists and their interpretations of material culture between the borders of Armenia and Azerbaijan, as many Armenians and Azerbaijanis still feel ripples from recent ethnic conflicts in the area. Construction of an imagined heritage often plays a large role in defining the territory of a nation, and Armenian association with Urartian origins would theoretically claim not only Azerbaijan's current holdings, but also parts of Turkey and Iran for the modern Armenian nation.

[23] Dr. Kathleen Nicoll and Alex Headman, Department of Geography; Emily Johnson, Department of History, University of Utah.

instructions and methodology for manual and technological collection of data,

and took part in the action of data collection itself. In short, much of the

methodology reflected in the NAPS team's data stemmed from my involvement in

the project from its inception, under the supervision of Dr. Parker. The NAPS

team worked in tandem with the Naxçıvan Archaeological Project, headed by

Lauren Ristvet (UPENN) with assistance from the Azerbaijani Academy of

Sciences.

The NAPS survey team undertook terrestrial survey of 18 sites within the

Arpaçay River Valley immediately surrounding the site of Oğlanqala (17 sites

located in Şərur Province, 1 site located in Sederek Province), Azerbaijan

(Figures 3, 4). Survey was dedicated to locating and recording settlement sites

near Oğlanqala, to help illuminate settlement strategies of agro-pastoralist

societies and sociopolitical integration throughout antiquity. Due to political and

geographical constraints, the survey was only conducted on the western bank of

the Arpaçay River, Azerbaijan. Any sites located beyond the western bank of the

river are located in modern-day Iran.

The survey area itself encompassed large portions of agricultural land,

66% of which lay under seed at the time that the survey was conducted in 2009.

Efforts were made by the NAPS team to avoid negatively impacting local crops.

Land that lay under developing crops at the time was not surveyed in order to

ensure this. The remaining 33% of fallow land was systematically transected and

surveyed. Transects consisted of 4 participants surveying fallow land at 10-15

meter intervals. As per our methodology, when diagnostic material culture was

observed at sites, these artifacts were collected as a component of surface survey and analyzed.

A significant component of this survey was aided by the knowledge of the Azerbaijani locals, who informed us where many hilltop fortified settlements, or "*kale*," (plural: *kaleler.* lit: castles) were located. Local history suggests that these castles, located mostly on high mountain spurs overlooking mountain passes or river corridors, were repurposed throughout history, first as part of a network of defensive structures, and most recently as "foxholes" by the Russian troops of Czar Nicholas II during the first World War. [24] This Azerbaijani version of "gumshoe archaeology" was instrumental in the success of the survey team's findings.

The data collected fall into roughly two categories: Early Trans Caucasian sites and Iron Age sites. The first category includes sites that date to or have been associated with the Early Trans Caucasian culture (hereafter referred to as ETC), which is thought to have wholly or partially originated in this area (Parker 2011, 3). From our dataset, these sites include Early Bronze Age Kurgans, a commonly found type of burial mound (NAPS 8, 9) ; as well as a number of locally known sites, including NAPS 10 (Maxta), NAPS 11 (Surtepe), NAPS 12 (Arabyenigaah), NAPS 13 (Khalac), and NAPS 16 (Asagi Dasarx).

The second category, upon which the entirety of this thesis rests, includes sites that date to the Early and Middle Iron Age. Dates were determined by the systematic surface collection and identification, conducted by myself and Bradley

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[24] Findings from the 2009 excavations from Oğlanqala support this lore; World War I munitions, modern period ceramics, and a brass button of a WWI Russian uniform were discovered in the Modern Period stratigraphic layers of Oğlanqala (Ristvet et al. 2012, 340).

Parker, etc., of on-site ceramic sherds. I mapped all these presented sites[25] by means of a total station, under the supervision of Bradley Parker. I have since geo-referenced these maps on Google Earth to establish a regional, geographical, and spatial context for these Iron Age sites (Figure 5). Four total Iron Age fortresses were located by NAPS within the vicinity of the Şərur Plain.[26] These include for the most part large-scale hilltop fortifications; however, a small scatter site and a casemate wall were also located and have also been dated to this period. These sites are: NAPS 3 (a hilltop fortress known as Qizqala 1); NAPS 4 (a casemate wall); NAPS 6 (a small scatter site); NAPS 7 (a hilltop fortress Qizqala 2), NAPS 14 (a massive hilltop fortification center known as Sederekqala); and NAPS 15 (a hilltop fortress known as Karasuqala) (Figures 6, 7, 8, 9). Before describing these sites, it is helpful to understand their context from the site of Oğlanqala, as it plays a central geographic and temporal role in regards to these four sites.

<u>Oğlanqala</u>

The Naxçıvan Archaeological Project (2006-2009)[27] focused on excavations at the site of Oğlanqala,[28] a multiperiod fortified site located on the 130 m high Karatepe hill, in the northern Şərur plain (Risvet et al. 2012, 324). Built during the Iron Age, the fortress of Oğlanqala appears to have been rebuilt by the Achaemenid Empire in the Late Iron Age, and remodeled into a

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[25] With assistance from Alex Headman and Kathleen Nicoll, University of Utah.
[26] Two members of NAPS also assisted in excavations at the massive multiperiod hilltop fortress of Oğlanqala.
[27] Participants from the NAPS team, Reilly Jensen and Alex Headman, assisted in excavations and data collection during 2009.
[28] Lit. "boy's castle"

ceremonial center, complete with columned hall. Excavations at Oğlanqala found

that the site has seen many successive, temporary occupations during its

existence. As a result, much of the material culture has been disturbed or

obliterated again and again throughout these time periods. Its history as a

defensive structure seems to be consistent throughout time.

Oğlanqala is strategically positioned on the Şərur plain overlooking the

Arpaçay River. Lauren Ristvet suggests that this fortress overlooked a segment

of a major Iron Age transit route from Lake Sevan to Lake Urmia (Risvet 2012)

(Figures 10, 11). This transit route would have played a large role in the military

logistics and defense of the Urartian Empire, as well as acting as a water-

highway for trade and travel between the two regions through the Şərur plain,

which represents the most fertile and easily irrigable land in modern-day

Naxçıvan.[29] Successive occupiers likely noticed the strategic location of

Oğlanqala and reoccupied it for its defensive and sentinel attributes.[30]

Though the stratigraphy at the site of Oğlanqala has been heavily

disturbed, the surviving remains are sufficiently distinct to confirm that it was an

important hilltop fortress for most of its occupation. The site consists of curtained

cyclopean walls, massive buildings and pavilions, and an Achaemenid columned

hall. Oğlanqala's Iron Age material culture is particularly important to this paper,

and consists of cyclopean architecture, large pithoi fragments with cuneiform

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[29] Temporal environmental change in Naxçıvan has been minimal, and it is likely that this area would have been valuable property for irrigation and farming during the Iron Age, as it remains today.
[30] Oğlanqala was reoccupied during the Achaemenid Period and the modern period throughout the 19th century, where the site was utilized as a military foxhole for Czar Nicholas II's troops during World War I (Ristvet, 2012).

inscriptions (Figure 12), and a number of Iron Age ceramic fragments (Figure 13).[31]

Beyond the Şərur plain in the steppe-like foothills of nearby mountains, lies a network of fortresses that contribute to an Iron Age landscape (Ristvet 2012). These fortresses contain material from the Middle and Late Iron Age, suggesting that they existed temporally alongside Oğlanqala. From Oğlanqala proper, two fortresses can be seen. To the north-east, guarding the Arpaçay River route is Qizqala 1. To the northwest lies Sederekqala, guarding a mountain pass. Yet more fortresses can be visually established from these two fortresses. Qizqala 1 overlooks Qizqala 2 and Oğlanqala. Qizqala 2 overlooks Qizqala 1 and Karasuqala. Sederekqala overlooks Oğlanqala, and presumably another one located nearby, which we were unable to locate due to modern political boundaries (Figures 14-19).

Visibility seems to play a role in the location of and relationship between fortresses. The fact that Oğlanqala overlooks the Şərur plain and has visual control over two fortresses suggests that it is a dominant/centrally located hub on the geographical and political landscape, and is simultaneously a link in a fortress-based defensive network that extends throughout the area with very high potential return for resources and transit (Risvet et al. 2012, 356). Yet more fortresses can be visually established from the fortresses surrounding Oğlanqala, which will be further discussed in this section.

The visual link between these fortresses was probably very useful for defending, controlling, and monitoring groups of people travelling through natural

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[31] This will be revisited in-depth later on in the paper.

transit routes (Figures 14, 15). Visual Messages could theoretically be sent instantly along a network, to alert and warn of incoming or departing invaders and visitors. This subject was often alluded to in the correspondence of Sargon II, in SAA V 12, where the Assyrians relay to Sargon II that Urartian spies are sending fire signals to warn of Assyria's presence within Urartian territory (Lanfranchi and Parpola 1990, SAA V 86). Other correspondence illuminates the pre-occupation of Urartu with protecting against potential invasions, by raising levies and keeping armies in readiness.[32] This corpus of correspondence strengthens the argument that Urartian fortresses were located within line-of-sight of one another, constructing a network of defense across a vast landscape of internal and external frontiers.

Qizqala 1

The first of the Iron Age fortresses to be surveyed by NAPS is locally known as Qizqala 1.[33] Qizqala 1 is located 200 meters above the Arpaçay River Valley, one kilometer north of Oğlanqala, on a sheer limestone cliff overlooking the river canyon below. Qizqala 1's strategic location affords it a magnificent view of the surrounding valley, peeking northward into the canyon towards yet more fortresses which can be seen from Qizqala 1, and southward overlooking the valley itself (Figure 6).

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[32] SAA V 86, Lanfranchi, G. B., Parpola, S., 1990.
[33] lit. Maiden's Castle, ascribed the numeric modifier (1) because another fortress with the same name (Qizqala 2) is located nearby. This site, to reduce redundancies, was given the survey site title: NAPS 3.

Qizqala 1 is approximately 80 x 30 m in area, and consists of two massive circuit walls, an eastern gate, two large guard towers, a rock lined cistern, and segmented square buildings. To the east and northeast, the site is naturally protected by a sheer cliff that faces the river valley below. The eastern extent of the site is further protected by a gate, flanked by two large rounded guard towers that keep watch over a possible switchback road that descends westward almost 600 m to the alluvial plain below. The architecture at the site, particularly the circuit walls, defensive towers, and the rock lined cistern, are indicative of an outpost site. The circuit walls separate the site vertically in space, separating the lower site enclosure from an inner "citadel" or site center located higher in elevation than the rest of the site. In this "citadel" area, the remains of a rock-lined cistern are still visible (Figure 20). From the location of this cistern, and presumably, from atop the once higher walls and towers of the fortress, another Iron Age fortress, Qizqala 2, can be seen to the northeast of Qizqala 1 (Figure 18). Perhaps in the Iron Age, when the buildings were more complete, visual communication was considerably facilitated between networked fortresses.

The material culture observed at Qizqala 1 indicates that it is a multiperiod site (Figures 21, 22, 23, 24). Urartian style ceramic types, i.e., characteristically red-burnished bowls, resembling those from other known Urartian sites in Turkey and Armenia, were observed and collected onsite. Other observed ceramics include forms and styles dating to the Late Iron Age, suggesting this site was at least utilized and likely reoccupied during the Late Iron Age. Modern period ceramics were also observed onsite, lending weight to local accounts that many

hilltop fortresses were reoccupied and utilized during World War I. Ceramic materials found at Qizqala parallel those found in excavation at Oğlanqala, suggesting contemporaneity of the two sites in time. Due to limitations of dating chronology in this area, and keeping in mind that many Middle Iron Age ceramic forms continue being made well into the Late Iron Age, precise dating of this site is unobtainable. However, period-wise, it is clear from diagnostic ceramics that Qizqala 1 was occupied throughout the Iron Age. Qizqala 1 represents only one in a series of fortified sites perched on elevated ground guarding the Arpaçay River Valley and its surrounding environs.

Qizqala 2

Located roughly one kilometer north of Qizqala 1 is another fortified hilltop site, also known as Qizqala.[34] Qizqala 2 appears morphologically consistent with Qizqala 1. It occupies a tall peak overlooking the Arpaçay River Valley, bounded to the east, north, and west by sheer cliffs, and is protected and supported to the south by a large wall. The site is snugly built into and up from the surrounding environment, taking advantage of the natural defenses offered by the terrain (Figure 7).

The area of this site measures approximately 20 x 65 meters. Bradley Parker identified an entrance gate and a multiroomed rectangular building located within the site boundary. Like Qizqala 1, Qizqala 2 is also separated into two areas, consisting of an outer curtain wall and an inner enclosure surrounded

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[34] To reduce redundancies, the numerical qualifier (2) was assigned to this site, also known as NAPS #7.

by another wall (Figure 25). The outer area is accessed through the entrance gate, located on the eastern edge of the site, and is situated downhill from the inner "citadel" of the site, which has been constructed up from the mountain, creating a flat platformed surface located upslope and northwest of the entrance gate. Dr. Parker speculates that this flat area likely served as support for long-since collapsed construction and buildings (Parker 2011, 4).

Though little ceramic material was observed onsite, Middle Iron Age period (Urartian period) and (possible) Late Iron Age period (Achaemenid period) wares were present and recovered as a result of this survey. This suggests that the site was occupied during this time period, and was contemporaneous with both Qizqala 1 and Oğlanqala.

Karasuqala

Karasuqala[35] is the third site in our line of citadels, located roughly one kilometer north of Qizqala 2, but on the opposite (east) side of the river, south of the Arpaçay Reservoir Dam. Karasuqala is the only Iron Age site on the east side of the Arpaçay River surveyed by NAPS. Like the others, Karasuqala is located on a high limestone precipice with exceedingly steep colluvial slopes on all sides (Figure 9). The approach to this site is considerably steeper and the site is harder to access than either of the Qizqala fortresses, though the total area of the site is considerably smaller at 25 x 5 m.

The site consists of a now collapsed retention wall (no doubt highly impacted by the colluvial and erosive nature of the terrain), which likely created a

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[35] (lit. Blackwater Castle; also NAPS #15)

flat, supportive surface for the buildings atop the apex of the site. These buildings consisted of three small towers that would have been accompanied by one or two small buildings (Parker 2011, 191). A possible ancient road leads up to the site location along the western spine of a mountain slope, though this road has suffered heavily from impact agents such as erosion and modern development projects related to the construction of the Arpaçay Reservoir Dam. Much of the site has suffered the same fate: architectural debris has collapsed down much of the western slope, scattered as far as 50 meters from the original site location (Figure 26). Though erosion has played a role in the degree of debris scatter, it is likely that over time, the site simply collapsed on its own.

Like the others, Karasuqala yielded ceramic evidence of several periods of occupation (Figure 27). These included the Middle and Late Iron Ages as well as a few Modern period ceramic fragments. The ceramics observed onsite suggest occupation and perhaps reoccupation during these and the later periods.

This small area of Karasuqala is potentially significant, as Biscione suggests that smaller fortresses served not as multifunctional centers of power, but as outposts that served to control and observe the landscape surrounding it (Biscione, 2003). If taken into consideration with the other fortresses, perhaps with Oğlanqala or Sederekqala serving as a central functioning fortress through which Urartu governed the area, the distance from these sites and the overall size of it suggest that it functioned as such an outpost.

Sederekqala

The last and most impressive site our team surveyed was the site of Sederekqala, a massive fortified hilltop settlement located on the mountains to the southwest of Oğlanqala (Figure 28). Sederekqala consists of a 40 hectare fortified settlement: complete with towers, gates, multiroomed buildings, and cisterns (Figure 29). This massive site sits atop a horseshoe shaped ridgeline, overlooking the Araxes River valley and guarding a mountain pass trending to the northwest. A modern road has been constructed through this natural pass, leading to the junction of the modern political border between Turkey and Naxçıvan. Sederekqala's proximity to modern political borders has negatively influenced its study by others. Nevertheless, this remains a significant site for the purposes of our study. Its location (i.e., proximity to modern political borders) and difficulty of site access only makes it more interesting.

Like the other sites discussed above, Sederekqala has been sectioned by walls into an outer courtyard, enclosed by a curtain wall, and an inner courtyard or citadel area, also enclosed by a curtain wall and located considerably higher in elevation. Sederekqala's walls have been constructed from massive limestone boulders that rest upon natural rock faces, emphasizing the outlying cliff faces to the south and west, while also heavily fortifying western and southern approaches to the site (Figures 30, 31).

The outer curtain wall (located to the west, facing a modern road) appears to be a retaining wall that defends and supports the structures within it. It stretches 600 meters from the western extent of the site around the southern to

the eastern extent. The wall abruptly ends in the east where a modern quarry has destroyed it.

The valley that lies immediately to the northeast of the site is framed by another massive inner stone wall. This second wall likely helped to defend a controlled approach to the site from the valley below. It stretches 300 meters from the western extent to the eastern extent of the site, and contains two gates flanked by towers. Each gate is approached by the remnants of ancient roads (Figure 32).

Now that I have described these sites in detail, I would like to shift into my interpretation of these data. I am foremost interested in examining the functions of these fortresses, and whether they are morphologically and temporally consistent with known Urartian fortresses elsewhere.

The data I collected as part of the NAPS appear to emanate from the Middle Iron Age. However, dating large structures from survey alone is problematic and depends entirely upon the successful collection of diagnostic artifacts found on the surface. Even then, monumental structures such as walls and citadels may outlast the artifacts preserved nearby or within the ruins themselves. For these reasons, unless a diagnostic artifact itself is somehow encased within the construction of the structure itself, the dates of large structures may elude field surveyors. Fortunately, the material culture observed onsite at nearly all of the investigated fortresses suggests that these sites were inhabited at the same time, dating as far back as the early and Middle Iron Age.

Unless excavations are undertaken to determine the entire history of a site, the age of the site foundations can only be hypothesized.

The region in which the data were collected has a painful and recent history of long-standing war, spurred on by religious and ethnic differences that became especially apparent upon the collapse of the Soviet Republic. Particularly with Armenia and Azerbaijan, these ethnic differences are much engrained upon respective political identities and have roots that delve deeply into ancient history. Interpretation of these data, one way or another, has the potential to incite even more resentment and animosity between these two conspicuous political enemies, resulting in counter productivity towards future amity between them.

Regardless of modern political pressures, these data have the potential to contribute much to the study of ancient socio-economic patterns, and particularly have potential to uncover aspects of citadel-hinterland relationships within a new frontier of the ancient Near East. These data hold the priceless potential to expand our knowledge of the inner mechanisms of the ancient world and how they operated on the peripheries, in the wake of so-called mighty empires and civilizations. Inasmuch as these data are potentially groundbreaking, the positive ramifications for the archaeologists cannot compare to those that lay in wait for the people inhabiting the region of the data's origin. Interpreting the data in a way that is cognizant of potential political ramifications without being unduly afraid of them is paramount, and thus archaeologists must take pains to ensure they do not become catalysts who incite further disharmony. The knowledge to be gained

from this analysis, uncoupled from current conflicts, could yield a significant

increase in our collective understanding of the behaviors of ancient populations
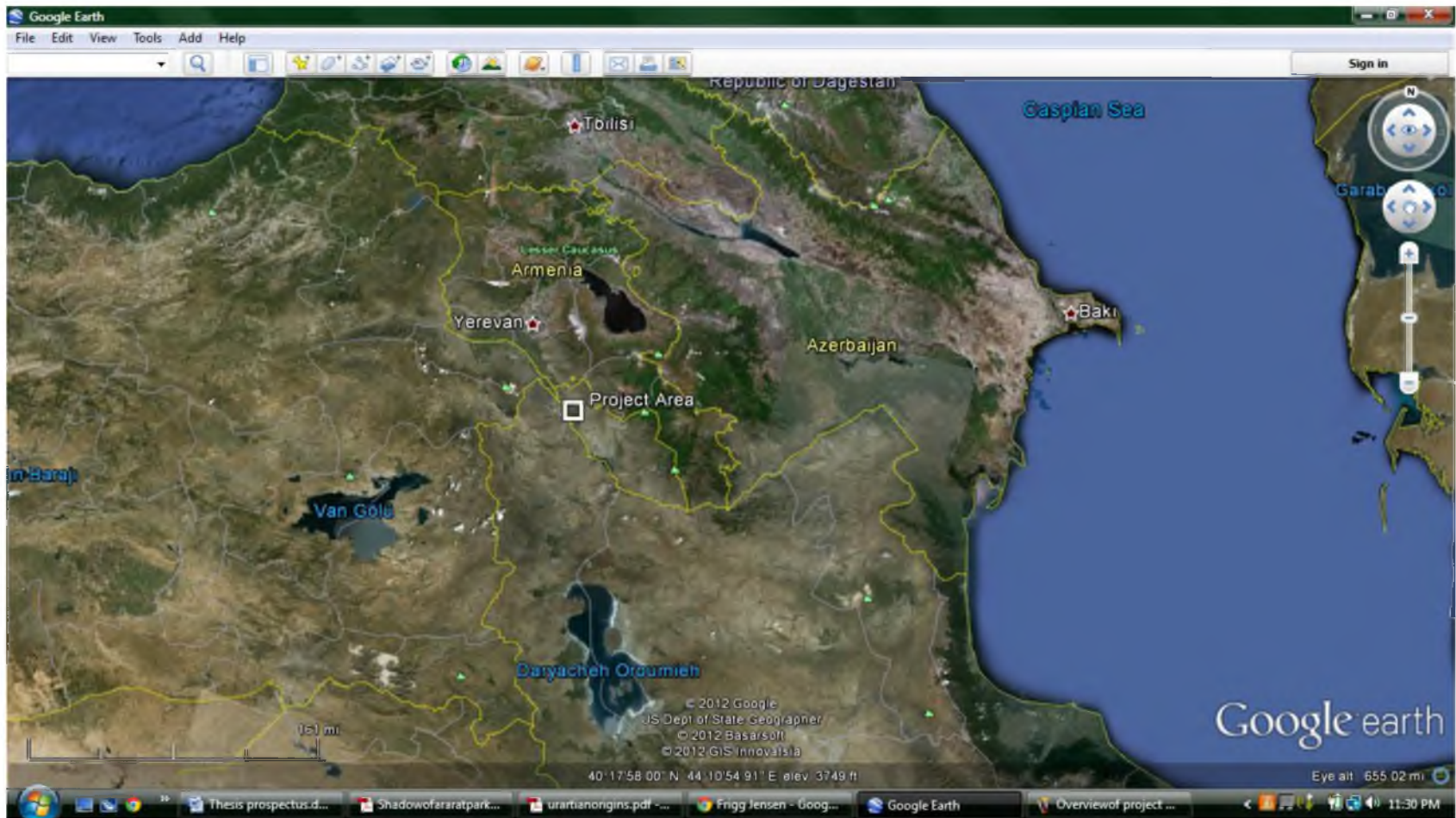
inhabiting this landscape.

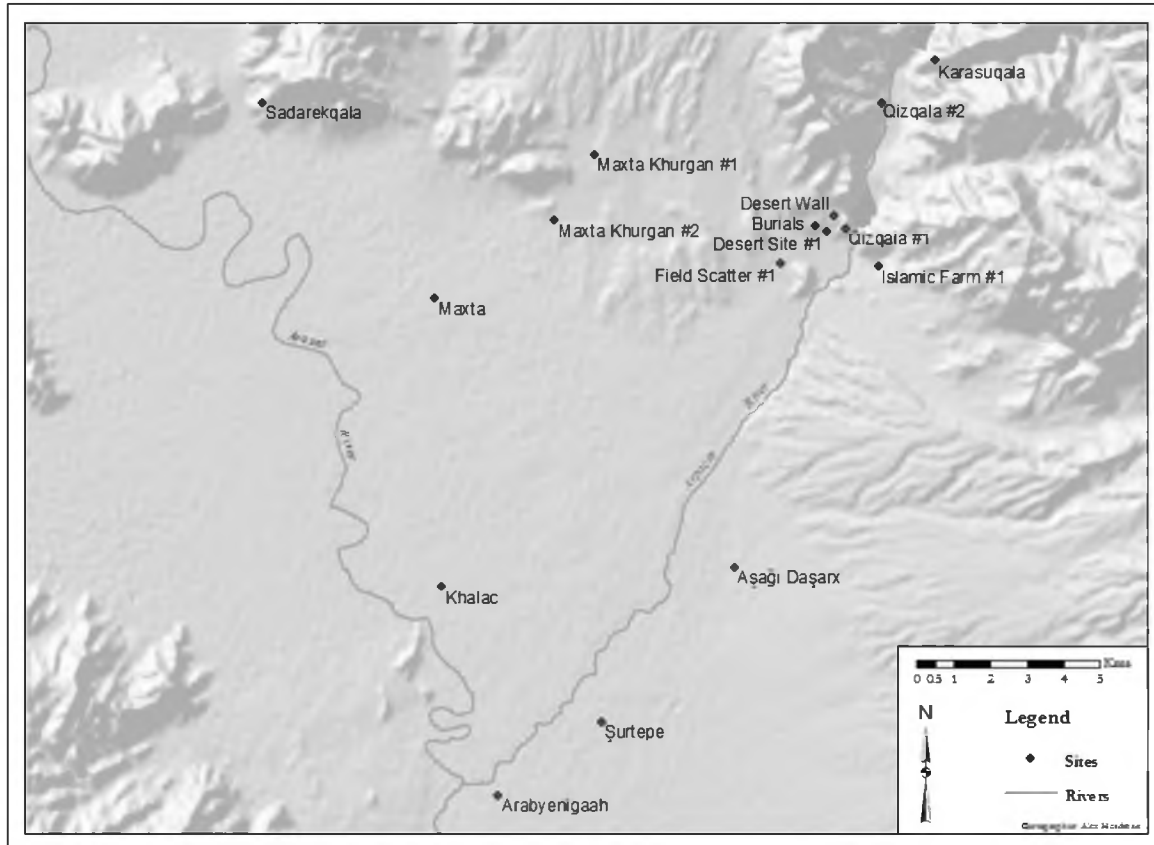Figure 2: Overview of NAPS Project Area

Figure 3: Map of NAPS sites surveyed in 2009.

Figure 4: Map of Iron Age Fortresses.

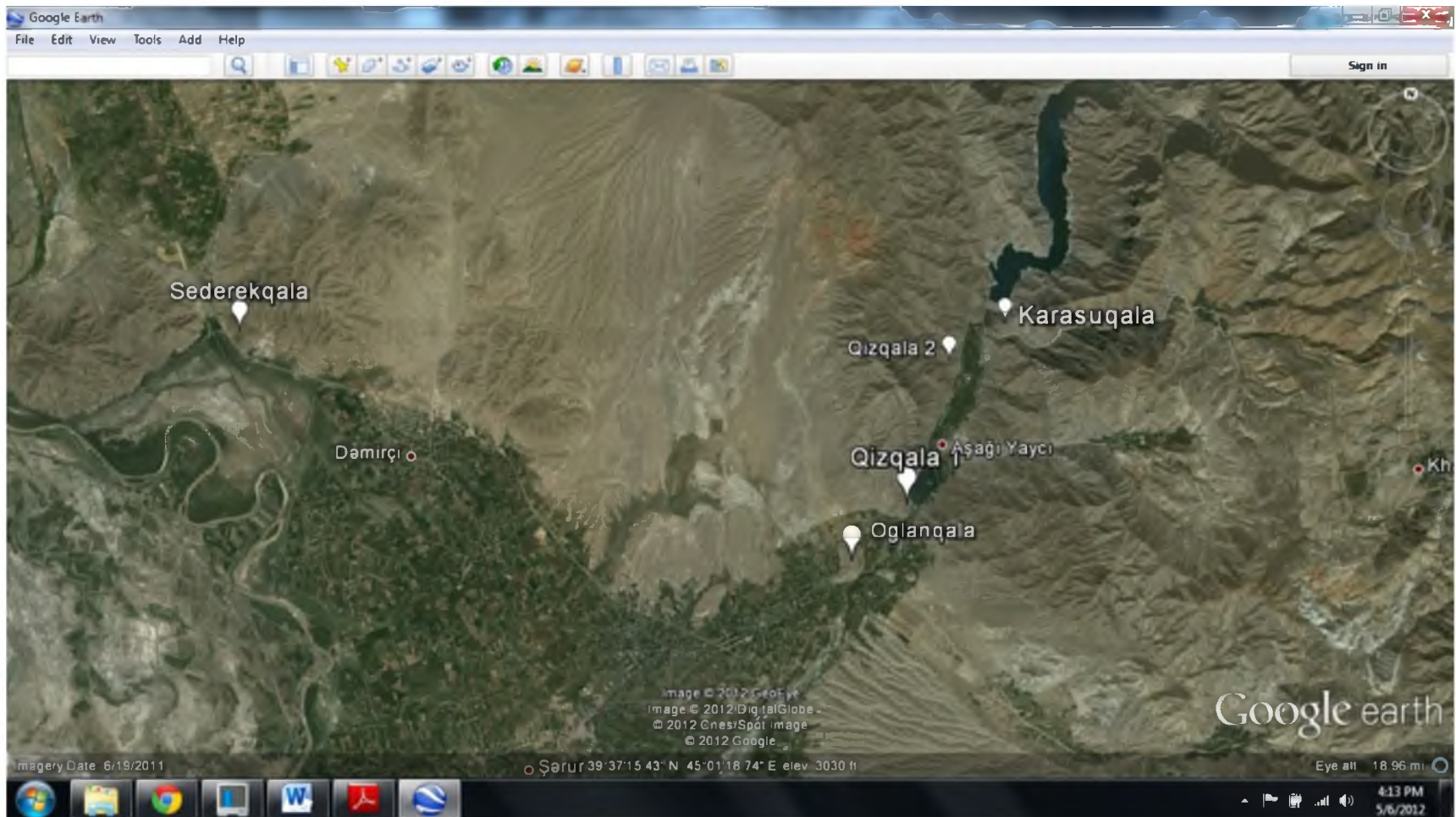48

Figure 5: Overview of Qizqala 1 facing north-west.

Figure 6: Overview of Qizqala 2.

Figure 7: Overview of Sederekqala.

Figure 8: View of Karasuqala.

Figure 9: View of Oğlanqala.
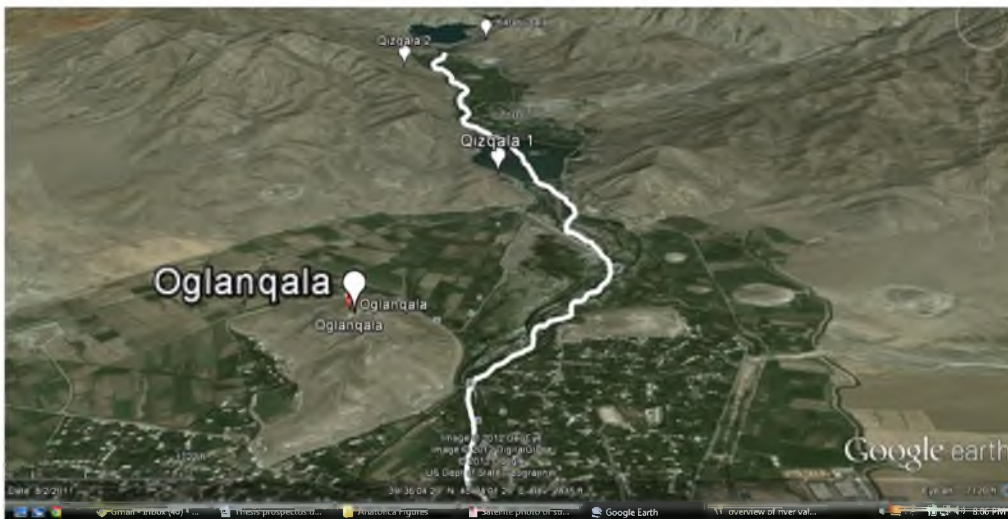
Figure 10: Map showing location of Oğlanqala and Arpaçay River (shown in white).

Figure 11: Iron Age pithoi fragments found at Oğlanqala.

Figure 12: Iron Age "Urartian" ceramic ware found at Oğlanqala.
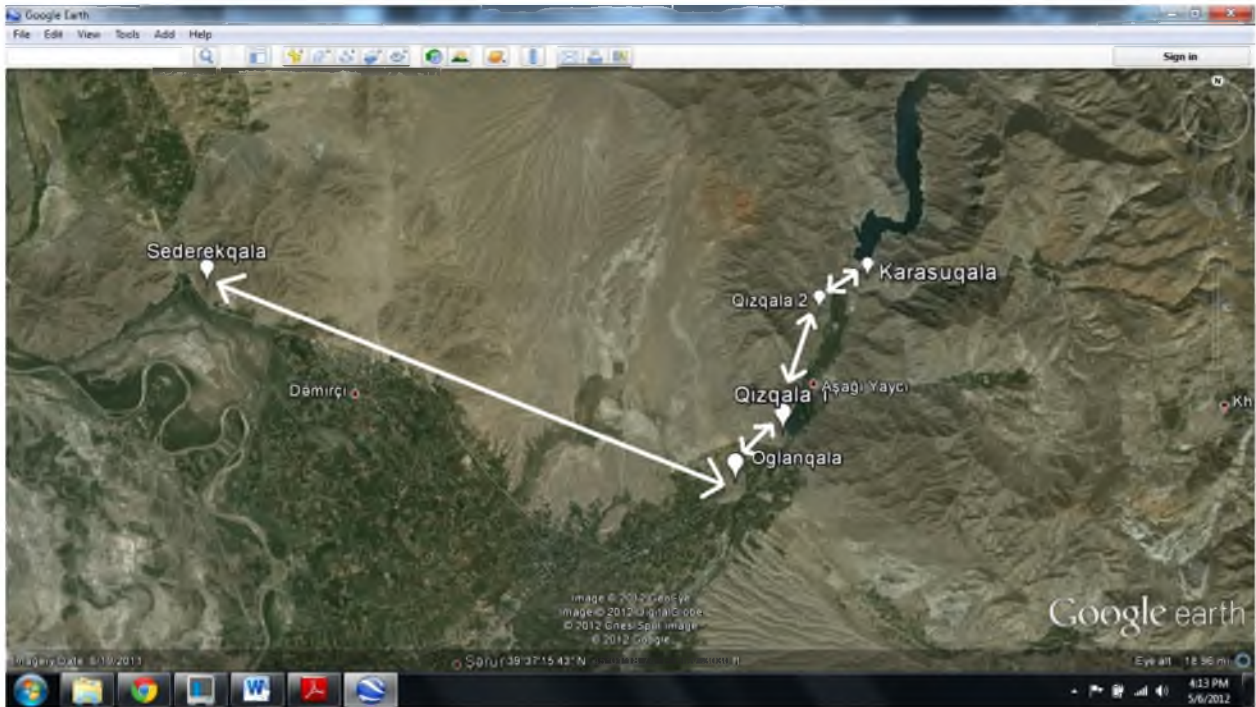
Figure 13: Overview of visual directionality of fortresses (shown with white arrows).
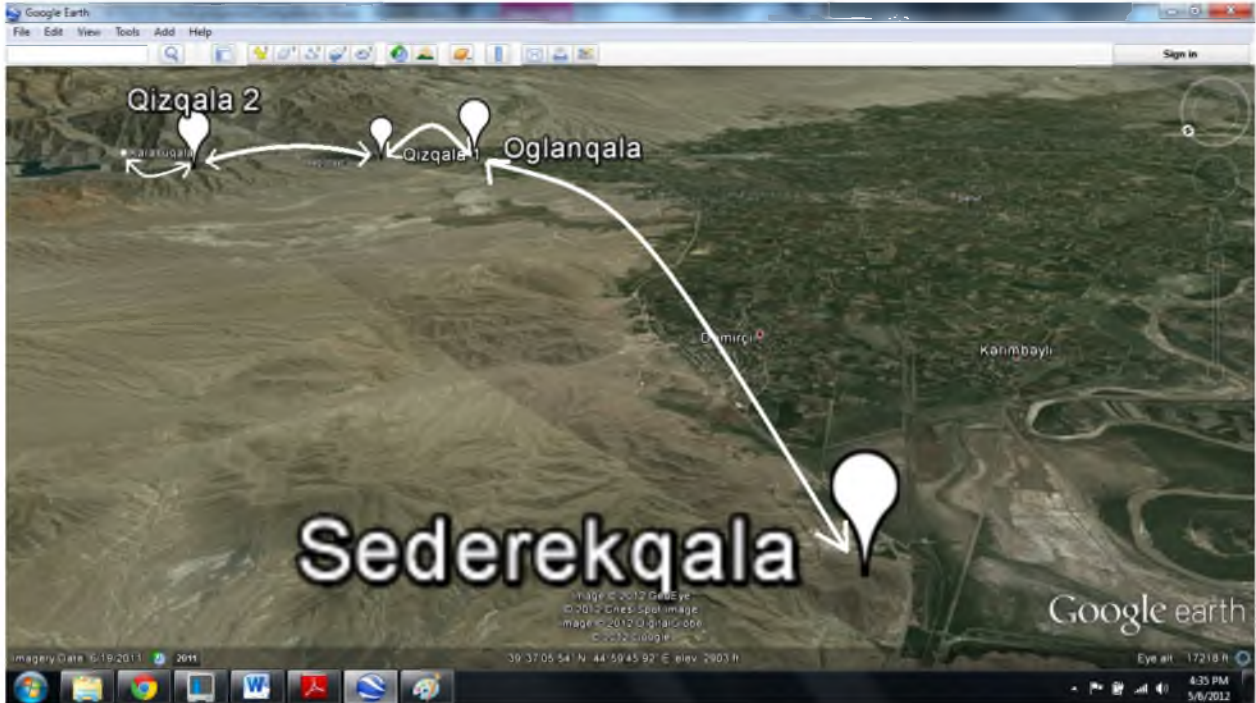
Figure 14: Overview of visional directionality of fortresses from Sederekqala (shown with white arrows).

Figure 15: View of Oğlanqala from the site of Qizqala 1.

Figure 16: View of Qizqala 1 from the site of Oğlanqala.

Figure 17: View of Qizqala 2 from the site of Qizqala 1.

Figure 18: View of Karasuqala from the site of Qizqala 2.

Figure 19: Rock-lined cistern at Qizqala 1.

Figure 20: Early Iron Age ceramic ware from Qizqala 1.

Figure 21: Middle Iron Age ceramic ware from Qizqala 1.

Figure 22: Artifacts at Qizqala 1 (from left to right): Early Trans-Caucasian ceramic fragment, Obsidian fragment, Middle Iron Age ceramic fragment.

Figure 23: Middle Iron Age ceramic ware from Qizqala 1.

Figure 24: Example of fortification wall at Qizqala 2.

Figure 25: Overview of architecture and debris collapse at Karasuqala.

Figure 26: Middle Iron Age ceramic fragments from Karasuqala.

Figure 27: View of Sederekqala.

Figure 28: Map of structures at Sederekqala.

Figure 29: Example of fortification wall at Sederekqala.

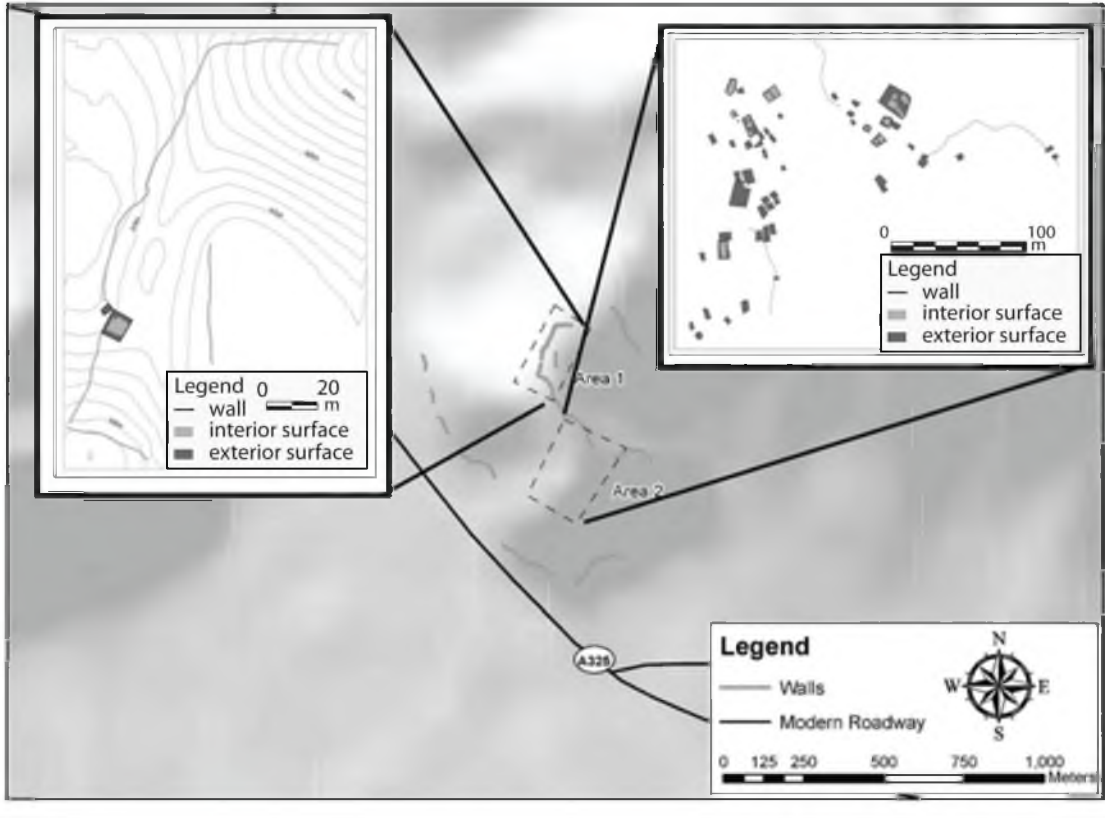Figure 30: Detail of a cyclopean style fortification wall at Sederekqala.

Figure 31: Example of the remains of a gate at Sederekqala.

CHAPTER 3

INTERPRETATIONS

In this section, I interpret NAPS data from a sociopolitical standpoint, utilizing maps to illustrate how these fortresses may have fit into an Urartian network. I offer my own interpretations of the data as an alternative to an interpretation by Lauren Ristvet.[36] I begin with an annotated interpretation of Ristvet's work, and through utilization of a comparative case study by Biscione argue that these fortresses fulfilled the qualifications necessary to fall under the style/jurisdiction/requirements of the Urartian Empire.

The Independent Polity Interpretation

My interpretation of Qizqala 1, Qizqala 2, Karasuqala, and Sederekqala, hinges upon understanding the site of Oğlanqala. These sites are connected spatially across the landscape and it is likely that they were constructed or inhabited within the same time period, as all have yielded cultural material evidence dating to the Middle Iron Age. Each fortress in the Şərur Plain of Naxçıvan represents a facet of a network constructed by a complex state that was able to devote resources to their creation. In order to understand these

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[36] University of Pennsylvania, without whose assistance and support I could not have collected my dataset.

facets and how and if they connected, they must be thoroughly investigated. This investigation must manifest as two parts. First, these sites must be examined separately in their own rights. Second, they should be placed within context of one another to understand the interaction that must have taken place between them. I reported the results of my investigations of the fortress sites around Oğlanqala in the previous chapter. I now turn to the examination of one last fortress, Oğlanqala, because it must be understood in its own terms and also because my interpretation of the Iron Age fortresses found in Naxçıvan is contingent upon the interpretation of Oğlanqala itself. Understanding this site may illuminate socio-political integration in the region.

It is important to first determine the time and space in which Oğlanqala was constructed. The fortress at Oğlanqala overlooks the Şerur plain and is visually connected to two other fortresses nearby,[37] suggesting that these fortresses were at one time connected into a network (Figures 14, 15). The interpretation of Oğlanqala's functionality, and specifically whether the site is indicative of Urartian presence in Naxçıvan, is particularly important for my dataset, so I shall spend some time presenting ongoing research at Oğlanqala.

In her most recent paper given at the 2012 conference for the Society for American Archaeology, Ristvet argues that Oğlanqala was not part of an Urartian network. She declares that it was a fortified settlement established sometime during the Middle Iron Age (Ristvet 2012). Her argument is that Oğlanqala was an independent outpost under the control of a yet-unidentified polity that resisted the authority of the Urartian state during the Iron Age.

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[37] Qizqala 1, and Sederekqala

Ristvet argues that the cultural material found at Oğlanqala is not consistent with the characteristics usually associated with Urartu, and therefore the site does not reflect an Urartian political identity of the inhabitants at Oğlanqala during the Mid- to Late Iron Age. Oğlanqala, she contends, is quintessentially a border site, where the people inhabiting it manipulated the surrounding imperialistic hierarchy to their own ends (Ristvet 2012). She argues that Oğlanqala represents an outlier in Urartian territory that actively resisted Urartian influence while manipulating and transfusing it, and in some instances even mimicking it (Ristvet 2012).

This interpretation is problematic for a number of reasons. First of all, Oğlanqala is located within a transitional zone, truly on the edge of what we traditionally understand to be Urartian territory. The site itself stretches roughly 50 hectares, and rests atop the 130 meter high Karatepe mountain. It is enclosed by massive cyclopean stone walls that follow the natural topography of the tepe, which itself is a focal point within the flat lowlands of Arpaçay River Valley landscape. Although reoccupied and incorporated into the Achaemenid empire in the Late Iron Age, Oğlanqala clearly exhibits Urartian characteristics such as cyclopean architecture, elite red-burnished Urartian ware (Toprakkale ware), large storage pithoi, and cuneiform inscriptions (Ristvet 2012; Risvet et al. 2012, 344).

Within transitional zones, archaeology and material culture become intermixed and a new synthesis of materials, ideology, and ideas is often the result (Parker 2006, 88). Therefore, the material culture in Naxçıvan may have

been influenced by other polities or groups besides or beyond Urartu, without actually resisting it. Synthesis of local décor with Urartian material culture is exactly what one would expect to find in Urartian borderland fortresses. This complicates the interpretation of Oğlanqala, which Ristvet and Gopnik argue is already "maddeningly resistant to typology" (Gopnik 2012). Let us systematically examine, step-by-step, the material culture of Oğlanqala that is problematic for Ristvet's interpretation. The pertinent material culture that exists at Oğlanqala consists of the following: architecture, ceramics, storage capacity, and Urartian writing.

The walls surrounding Oğlanqala follow and respect the natural topography of Karatepe. They do not, Ristvet points out, appear morphologically consistent with other walls surrounding Urartian fortresses (Ristvet 2012; Ristvet et al. 2012, 356). Additionally, the ramparts on the walls at Oğlanqala are irregularly spaced. Ristvet argues that Urartian walls: 1) dominate the landscape (i.e., they are carved into bedrock regardless of topographic difficulties), and 2) exhibit regularly spaced buttresses. These walls, easily seen at the fortresses of Van or Ayanis, for example, have all been carved into the bedrock of the site itself. The fortress at Van has extensive carved bedrock tunnels that served as passages to underwater wells, helping Urartians withstand long and arduous siege from enemies (Burney 1957, Plate III).

Oğlanqala's walls, Ristvet argues, are inherently different from those found elsewhere in the Urartian empire (see Figures 33, 34). As seen from Figures 33 and 34, however, the construction of these is not so divergent.

Though it is peculiar that these walls are not built down into the bedrock of the site itself, the overall style and construction of the walls are reminiscent of the Urartian style. Ristvet suggests that Oğlanqala's walls are more indicative of Bronze Age architecture (Ristvet et al. 2012, 356). If this is true, it is not unreasonable to postulate that Urartu incorporated this potentially pre-existing fortress into its territory, as Zimansky has established that Urartians conquered and incorporated otherwise pre-existing sites into their empire (Zimansky 1985, 37).

While this architectural disparity may at first appear significant, I suggest that it may exist at Oğlanqala specifically because the Şərur plain on which it is located rests at the periphery of the Urartian territorial expanse. It is not hard to imagine that the difference in architecture at Oğlanqala was simply a reaction and adaptation to one or more factors at the time it was constructed, including but not limited to Urartian cultural integration.

Perhaps the walls follow the topography of Karatepe because carving into the bedrock was not conducive to the needs of the site itself. Temporal limitations or resource constraints could also be factors concerning the construction of the walls, and reasons for the peculiar differences exhibited at Oğlanqala. Theoretically, there could be a myriad of reasons why Urartians constructed the site this specific way. Additional research must be conducted on the frontier fortresses of Urartu before the walls of Oğlanqala can be discounted as Urartian or not-Urartian. While the construction of Oğlanqala's walls appears distinctly different to Ristvet, there is not enough evidence to reject them outright. The

evidence that is available to researchers, however, does seem to be stacked in favor of an Urartian interpretation.

In addition to architecture, Urartian material culture exists at Oğlanqala. Ristvet attests that there "is a significant difference in material culture" exhibited at Oğlanqala (Ristvet 2012). Much of this material difference can be attributed to the accumulation of vast amounts of material culture that permeate throughout time in Karatepe. Oğlanqala was reoccupied at various times throughout history and antiquity, and the integrity of the site was destroyed as a result of these sporadic reoccupations. This is problematic for interpretations of Oğlanqala as a site. However, slim evidence of Urartian occupation has been found in the lower excavated levels.

The material evidence of Urartian occupation at Oğlanqala takes the form of Urartian "Red Burnished" ware, also known as Toprakkale ware. This ware is easily identifiable, and is characteristically described as fine, red, and highly burnished. Some of the ceramics salvaged from Oğlanqala are morphologically consistent with traditional Toprakkale ware, and follow characteristically Iron Age forms (see Figure 35). One Iron Age ceramic fragment in particular consists of a jug handle that has been inscribed with cuneiform signs. It is surprisingly similar in morphology and appearance with another jug fragment from Bastam, an Urartian Iron Age fortress located 82 km to the south of Oğlanqala (Figure 36, 37). The corpus of Toprakkale ware found at Oğlanqala is very small, a point which Ristvet does not ignore. She argues that the low frequency of Urartian

ware at Oğlanqala suggests that the independent polity inhabiting Iron Age Oğlanqala traded with Urartu, but were independent from it (Ristvet 2012).

This interpretation of the ceramic ware seems far-fetched. It is instead much more likely that the frequency of Urartian Toprakkale ware found at Oğlanqala has been substantially reduced due to the destructive processes involved in the reoccupation of a site. Oğlanqala's Middle Iron Age stratigraphy was mostly destroyed by the construction of a columned hall during the Late Iron Age by the Achaemenid Empire. The construction itself is more than likely responsible for the alarmingly low frequency of Toprakkale ware at Oğlanqala (see Figure 38).

Fragments of large storage jars, called pithoi, were also found at Oğlanqala. These massive jars are traditionally found dug into the earth within Urartian fortresses (Figure 39). They fulfilled an ever-important strategic function within Urartian lifeways, as they stored large amounts of food and water within fortresses themselves, helping Urartians withstand long sieges. The presence of these jars at Oğlanqala suggests a similar strategy executed at this site and thus the activities of the Urartian state.

Ristvet points out that the pithoi fragments found at Oğlanqala are different from any Urartian forms she has seen (see Figure 40). One in particular exhibits a braiding pattern along the rim of the jar, a pattern that Ristvet argues is a marker of individuality and is distinctly not Urartian (Ristvet 2012). This same pithoi fragment, in addition to four more fragments, exhibits cuneiform writing.

Cuneiform was adopted by the Urartians and utilized in official inscriptions and for general writing and administrative purposes (Zimansky 1985, 6). It is therefore a strong, distinctive indicator of the Urartian state. Cuneiform script was used to convey the literary tradition of the Urartian language by the *Urartians*. The presence of cuneiform script on this pithoi fragment in what once was Urartian territory is an obvious marker of evidence for the Urartian administration at Oğlanqala. The fact that more than one fragment from this site exhibits cuneiform writing only strengthens this interpretation.

Ristvet suggests that the cuneiform writing on these fragments is evidence of an independent polity mimicking the writing, and therefore mimicking the administrative power associated with writing, of the Urartians (Ristvet 2012). She suggests that it existed as a form of "pseudo-writing." If this is indeed the case as she suggests, what other evidence is there for an independent, yet contemporary, literary tradition in this area? What circumstances would have to transpire for an independent polity to adopt the writing and language of the culture they supposedly actively resist? As of the writing of this paper, there exists no other evidence for such a literary tradition.

It is impossible to discern the exact message of the cuneiform on these pithoi fragments because they no longer exist as whole jars. However, the cuneiform on the fragments that do remain for us to scrutinize appears to indicate numbers, which usually are understood to specify the storage and volume capacity of the vessel (Avetisian 2000, 294). In this sense, then, because the cuneiform is meaningful and conveys a message, it cannot be considered "pseudo-writing."

Thus, Ristvet's interpretation of the pithoi fragments is perhaps a misinterpretation. Despite the existence of these fragments, Ristvet attests that there is "no epigraphic evidence in Naxçıvan for the foundation of Urartu" (Ristvet 2012).

Contrary to Ristvet's belief, there is indeed epigraphic evidence of Urartian control in Naxçıvan. However, this evidence has been unfortunately obscured by the passage of time and is poorly preserved. Located not far from the site of Oğlanqala is a well-weathered Urartian inscription called Ilandağ[38] (Ristvet 2012). There is also another Urartian inscription called Farhad Evi, near a medieval caravanserai (Risvet et al. 2012). The following discussion of these inscriptions is found on the Oğlanqala Project's website[39]:

> The inscription at Farhad Evi is sadly illegible, but in the Ilandağ inscription, the Urartian coregents Ispuini and Menua, record their victories in the region during a military campaign that took place between 820 and 810 BC. In their meter long inscription, Ispuini and Menua boast that they have conquered the lands of Arsinie and Ania, erected an inscription in Puluada and instituted sacrifices in honor of the Urartian military god Haldi there. Despite their bombast, it seems that Urartu never annexed this area, as there is no epigraphic or archaeological evidence for Urartian fortresses here.

This inscription clearly indicates that Urartian campaigns were undertaken nearby the Şərur plain. Another problem that must be addressed in order to determine whether Oğlanqala was indeed Urartian is to establish how far the Urartian military penetrated into the periphery of their own territory. Urartian royal inscriptions are, as stated before, excellent indicators of political boundaries (Zimansky 1985, 10). This is because such inscriptions were carved at the ends

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[38] Lit. Snake Mountain

[39] 2009 Field Season, "2009 Field Season." The Naxçıvan Archaeological Project http://oglanqala.net/home.php?lang=english&page=2009 (accessed 5/20/2012).

of foreign campaigns, in territory that the Urartians conquered (Figures 41, 42,

43). It is therefore important to securely locate Urartian inscriptions near to the

Şərur Plain.

Lauren Ristvet locates the Ilandağ inscription some 75 km southeast of

Oğlanqala, but fails to provide a map of this inscription in relation to other

inscription or fortress locations. However, according to a map of inscription

locations in Paul Zimansky's book *Ecology and Empire: The Structure of the

Urartian State*, on page 12 there exists another inscription some 95 km to the

east of Oğlanqala (Zimansky 1995, 12). Though this inscription is probably not

Ilandağ, its existence is a significant affirmation of archaeological and epigraphic

evidence of Urartian presence in the area. The location of this inscription extends

the territorial boundary of Urartu to incorporate the fortresses in Naxçıvan

(Figures 41, 42, 43). Anything within the boundary outlined by the inscription is

located within the political boundaries of Urartu, and it is therefore reasonable to

assume that it was also incorporated into Urartian territorial networks. It is

possible that the local culture of the Şərur Plain continued mostly undisturbed

underneath Urartian hegemony. Biscione wisely ascertains that:

> Urartians, like almost all conquerors in mountain lands, left the highland
> people alone, looking only to control the main roads, the richest areas,
> and the most important natural resources. (Biscione 2003, 182)

Ristvet herself has suggested that these fortresses guard a major ancient route

from Lake Sevan to Lake Urmia (Risvet 2012). It is unlikely that, given the

potential for agricultural resources in the Şərur Plain, Urartu would overlook or

disregard or let fall into non-Urartian hands this area, which could function both

as a breadbasket and a frontier, and through which ran a major transit route to other very important regions of the empire.[40]

The fortresses surrounding Oğlanqala (Qizqala 1 and 2, Karasuqala, and Sederekqala) are thought to have existed temporally alongside it, and represent a complex defensive network and a high level of social complexity. Though Ristvet argues that the fortress network in the Şərur Plain, on the fringes of the Urartian border, represents the material culture of an independent polity, much of the archaeology suggests that these fortresses functioned under the auspices of the Urartian Empire.

The subject of how these fortresses functioned within the empire presents yet another question. I have established that these fortresses, more likely than not, represented nodes within a network of the overarching Urartian state. Now, using a case study from Biscione's article from 2003, I attempt to employ a comparative model to illuminate the function of these fortresses within an existing Urartian framework.

Case Studies in Comparative Borderland Models

In his article entitled *Pre-Urartian and Urartian Settlement Patterns in the Caucasus, Two Case Studies: The Urmia Plain, Iran, and the Sevan Basin, Armenia*, Biscione investigates Urartian expansion and settlement organization by examining segments of Urartian fortress networks in the Urmia plain and the Sevan Basin. These areas were selected because they served different

[40] Paul Zimansky was even aware of the potential for this region to have been incorporated into Urartian territory, but pronounced the area "*terra incognita*," at the writing of his book in 1985 (Zimansky 1985, 23).

ecological and economical purposes within the framework of the Urartian Empire. The Urmia plain was securely situated within Urartian territory and was a major Urartian breadbasket. Because of its location towards the interior of the empire, the Urmia plain was less heavily fortified and had more "open settlements" than the Sevan Basin, which was located on the frontier of the empire and also had significantly more fortifications.

One conventional approach to determine the importance of sites involves estimating population density through calculation of a site area (Biscione 2003, 174). This approach is not suitable for observing the importance of fortresses, because they are generally limited by the constraints of practicality, strategic location, and defensive positioning (i.e., "significant strategic, tactical, and locational constraints") (Biscione 2003, 174). Biscione employs a different method to gauge the importance of Urartian fortresses in his study. He estimates the size and rank of a site by calculating the perimeter of the fortress in question, and takes into account the presence or absence of important architectural features, such as roads, gates, cisterns, towers, or inscriptions. This method, he suggests, is a "reasonable index of the amount of labor invested in a fortress and therefore the importance of the fortress itself" (Biscione 2003, 174). Fortresses are indicators of administrative and state control. Biscione points out that Urartian state decision-making activities took place within the fortresses themselves, and therefore Urartian authority is closely associated with fortresses:

> ...the Urartian state had at least four hierarchical levels of fortifications, a number coinciding with the four levels of the settlements indicative of the presence of a state. This is not casual because... administrative and decisional functions of the Urartian state took place not in cities and in

villages but in fortresses and forts. Therefore the four decision-making levels of a state are reflected not in Urartian settlements but in fortifications. (Biscione 2003, 176)

Based on the ranking categories provided by Kleiss (1988), Biscione separates his sites into categories according to their calculated size. From these sizes, Biscione can draw or reconstruct Urartian fortress networks and determine the importance of certain sites within them (Biscione 2003,174). The approach utilized here by Biscione can easily be used for Urartian fortresses located elsewhere:

> The correlation fortification-settlement should logically be true also for other areas of Transcaucasia and eastern Anatolia where administration was located in fortifications and not in settlements. Of course further study of other polities is required in order to draw a definite conclusion....the large extension of the Urartian state could require a fortification hierarchy larger than that of a subregional state. (Biscione 2003, 176)

Using this approach, let us determine the ranking for NAPS' data, the Naxçıvan fortresses, to see if the sizes of these fortresses are indicative of the presence of a large state such as Urartu. First, the perimeter of sites must be calculated. This number is supplemented by the presence of important site features, such as towers, gates, and cisterns. These features are important markers of sociopolitical complexity, and larger features tend to be indicative of larger, more complex societies. Then, the calculated number must be plugged into Biscione's ranking system. From this number, site importance can be better determined. A large number suggests that the site is a larger center of power, while a smaller number reveals the presence of a smaller outpost.

One problem exists to complicate the calculation of this number, and thus hinder accurate interpretation of these sites. Because all of the fortresses except

Oğlanqala were surveyed only, and not excavated, any subsurface architectural elements that would factor in to the calculation of this approach would not have been recorded. Therefore, the implications of my data investigation have the potential to radically change in the event that any of these sites are excavated in the future. As it is, I estimate the importance of these sites based on their visible, supra-surface architectural elements. This means that the calculated rank-sizes of these fortresses only reflect the minimum calculated perimeter of the site.

As seen from Figures 44, 45, and 46, Qizqala 1 and Qizqala 2 fall into the small size category. The perimeter of Karasuqala could not be calculated due to the scattered and dispersed nature of the site itself. However, it is unlikely that the site extended beyond the cliff on which it was located, and therefore, Karasuqala likely was contained by a smaller perimeter. Fortresses in the small size category likely operated as small frontier outposts, rather than as main trade or administrative centers (Biscione 2003, 174). These outposts are consistent with the locational patterns of other small outpost fortifications in that they are situated along a primary access and trade route (in this instance, the Arpaçay River), and are highly inaccessible because they are located on the promontories of high mountains.

Badalyan et al. suggest that frontier posts such as these were dedicated to the "defense and protection" of trade routes (Badalyan, Smith, and Avetisyan 2003, 162). However, I suggest that it was unlikely that armies were stationed at these frontier posts, as the sites themselves are rather small and were likely incapable of hosting large numbers of people for any amount of time. Rather, I

submit that these posts defended the area by watching it and reporting movements of groups of people through the corridors guarded by the fortresses.

Larger sites that exhibit extensive fortress architectural features, usually located in the center of plains, would have likely functioned as sociopolitical centers. These centers housed diverse activities that took place within the empire (Badalyan, Smith, and Avetisyan 2003, 163). These centers were called E.GAL[41] within the Urartian Kingdom, and they are known to have housed administrative and militaristic activities (Biscione 2003, 174). Biscione argues that Urartian settlement patterns were complex and these patterns reflect the existence of more than one hierarchy within the Urartian state (Biscione 2003, 174). These hierarchies can be identified by separating sites by their sizes.

The two larger sites from the NAPS dataset are Sederekqala and Oğlanqala. Both of these sites have large perimeters and sufficiently large architectural features indicative of a large center of some kind. It is difficult to calculate the overall length of the perimeter of the Iron Age walls, due to devastatingly low site integrity. Much of Oğlanqala's Iron Age architecture has been destroyed or re-used by others occupying the site later in time. However, the overall perimeter of this site is substantial and can be reasonably estimated by examining concentrations of Iron Age ceramics and juxtaposing those data with the existing walls. This estimation yields a perimeter of roughly 1150 m, placing Oğlanqala in the medium size category provided by Biscione (Biscione 2003, 178).

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[41] Lit. "Big House." The Urartian counterpart of E.GAL means a "fortress with palace and administrative center, in contrast to Mesopotamia, where the same word means 'palace'" (Biscione 2003, 174).

Ristvet attests that Oğlanqala's steep slopes and massive stone fortifications "emphasize the defensive character of this site and express a potent message of strength and power" (Ristvet, http://oglanqala.net/home.php?lang=english&page=2009_sub_palace , accessed 5/20/2012). Though many original site features no longer remain intact, the fact that the site itself was reutilized by other empires later in history suggests that it was an important and perpetual symbol of social and political power. Due to its location and proximity to the other fortresses nearby, Oğlanqala probably functioned as a dominant facet in a smaller segment of the overarching Urartian defensive network of the Şərur Plain. It was possibly a center of strong administrative control or an E.GAL administering to or benefitting from the smaller sites of Qizqala 1, Qizqala 2, and Karasuqala.

Oğlanqala's perimeter is substantially smaller than the perimeter of nearby Sederekqala. The perimeter of Sederekqala is massive and extends some 2600 meters around the entire topography of a mountain spur. This immense size alone suggests that Sederekqala was a site of some importance. Two courses of thick cyclopean style walls enclose the site, separating the layout between an inner citadel and an outer enclosure. Large gates guard the entrances to the site and to the inner citadel area, suggesting that security and control of the inhabitants of the site was an important issue. Building foundations and collapsed walls are scattered across the entirety of the site. These buildings are possibly the remains of dwellings within the fortress walls themselves, which is hitherto unexpected of, though not exactly out of place within, Urartian fortresses. If these

are in fact dwelling remnants, a closer examination of them would yield much in terms of Iron Age lifeways:

> Dwellings were evidently located inside the fortresses and nothing or very little was outside. It is obviously possible that open, scattered settlements also existed, but none have been found to date. (Biscione 2003, 178)

A substantial cistern located inside the walls would have sustained a medium to large population, which surely must have participated in the construction and maintenance of the fortress. Sederekqala has, at least on the surface, all of the predictable elements of an Urartian E.GAL. Subsurface investigation would be an ideal undertaking with Sederekqala in order to understand exactly what role it played in antiquity and how it interacted with other sites nearby, in particular, how it relates to Oğlanqala.

Using Biscione's parameters, Oğlanqala is large enough to have acted as a capital of the fortress network on the Şərur Plain and Arpaçay River. Its location on the central-northern extent of the Şərur Plain is also indicative of a capital. Qizqala 1, Qizqala 2, and Karasuqala are all very small in comparison. They are visually connected along a line of sight and are located at an average roughly 1 km from each other along a river corridor.[42] I therefore hypothesize that they functioned as outpost forts within a network dominated by Oğlanqala.

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[42] It would be interesting to calculate average distances between smaller fortresses to investigate whether there is a consistent distance or location plan imposed by the Urartians when constructing their fortresses. Zimansky contends that the opportunistic Urartians settled their territory by simply claiming older fortresses and added new sites as needed (Zimansky 1985, 37). A conspicuously "Urartian" settlement pattern would be very difficult to identify, as a result of this. Adam Smith touches on this briefly and brilliantly in his discussion of Urartian architectonics, which is a sophisticated approach to predicting, by means of an idealized model, potential locations of Urartian fortresses (Smith 1999). Smith takes into account landscape, regional roles and functionality within the empire, and nearby nodes of imperial control.

More information is needed to understand how Sederekqala fit into this existing network in antiquity. It is larger and presumably more important than Oğlanqala when size is taken into account. It directly controls a mountain pass that trends northwards and maintains visual control over the Şərur plain. Perhaps this mountain pass was very valuable in antiquity, and the site of Sederekqala was established to fulfill one or more of the following roles: it could have functioned as 1) an important trade way station where taxes or tolls were exacted from travelers, 2) a large administrative center that governed Oğlanqala, or 3) a last bastion of Urartian hegemony that influenced the surrounding territories. As of the writing of this paper, not enough information exists on Sederekqala to know for sure.

Figure 32: Example of a cyclopean style fortification wall at Bastam.

Figure 33: Example of a cyclopean-style fortification wall at Oğlanqala.
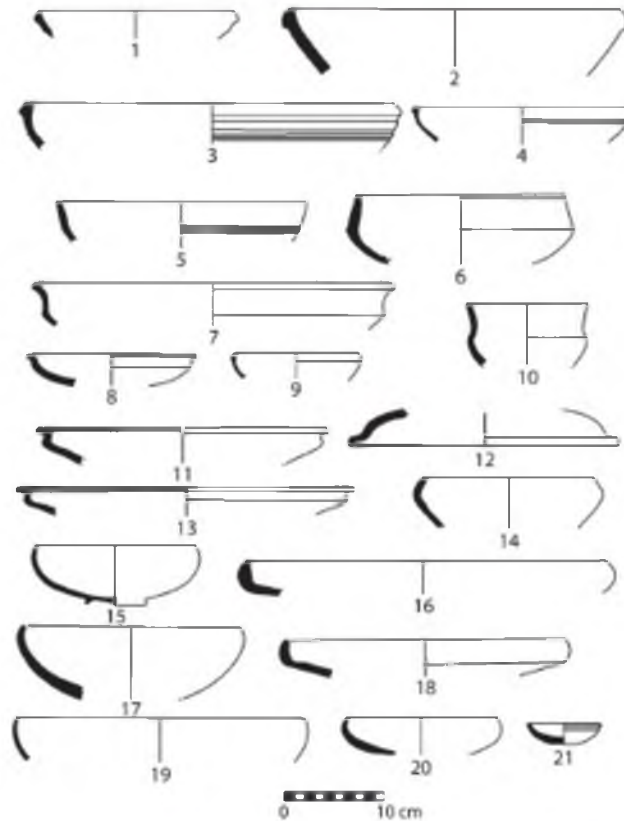
Fig. 20. Bowl types, Oğlanqala periods II–IV. Fine mineral temper and burnished unless otherwise noted: *1*, gray slip exterior and interior; *2*, gray slip exterior and interior; *3*, red slip exterior and interior, very highly burnished, grooved lines below rim; *4*, dark red slip exterior and interior, highly burnished, two ridges below rim; *5*, medium mineral temper, pink slip exterior and interior, grooved lines below rim; *6*, dark brown-gray slip exterior and interior, highly burnished; *7*, brown-gray slip exterior and interior, very highly burnished; *8*, medium mineral temper, pink-buff slip exterior and interior; *9*, pink-buff slip exterior and interior; *10*, dark brown-gray slip exterior and interior, highly burnished; *11*, red slip exterior and interior, highly burnished; *12*, red slip exterior and interior; *13*, red slip exterior and interior; *14*, pink buff slip exterior and interior; *15*, light red slip exterior and interior; *16*, red slip exterior and interior, highly burnished exterior; *17*, red slip exterior and interior; *18*, red slip exterior and interior, highly burnished exterior; *19*, mottled brown slip exterior, buff slip interior, highly burnished exterior; *20*, red-orange slip exterior and interior, highly burnished; *21*, miniature bowl, medium mineral temper, light red slip exterior and interior, highly burnished.

Figure 34: Period II-IV ceramic forms found at Oğlanqala.

Figure 35: Iron Age jar fragment with an inscribed handle, found at Oğlanqala.

Figure 36: Middle Iron Age inscribed jar from Bastam.

Figure 37: Column plinths found at Oğlanqala.

Figure 38: Example of in-situ pithoi storage jars at Altintepe.

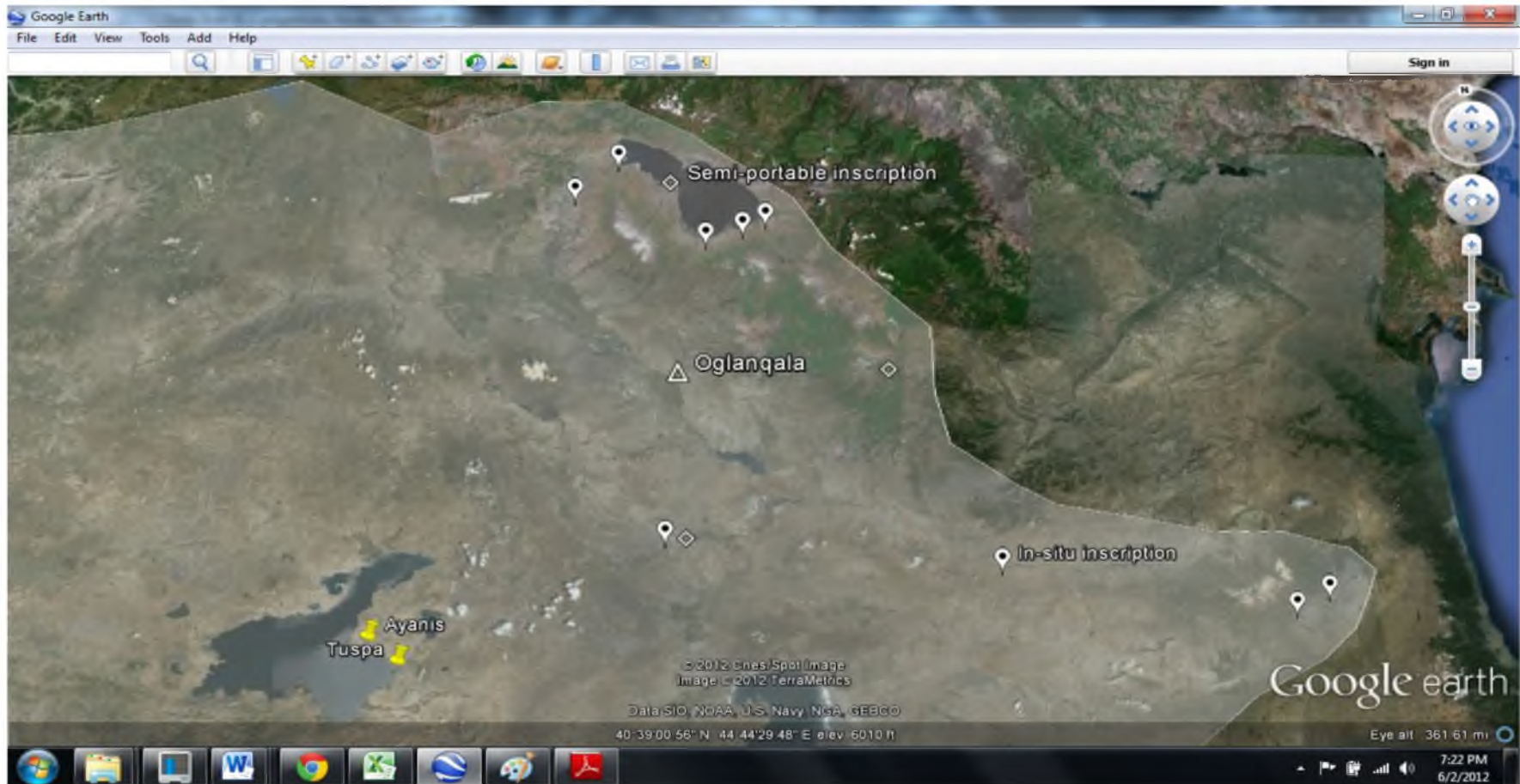Figure 39: Inscribed Iron Age pithoi jar fragments found at Oğlanqala.

Figure 40: Map showing locations of Urartian inscriptions and an approximation of Urartian boundaries. Note that this boundary extends past the location of Oğlanqala and the other fortresses in Naxçıvan.
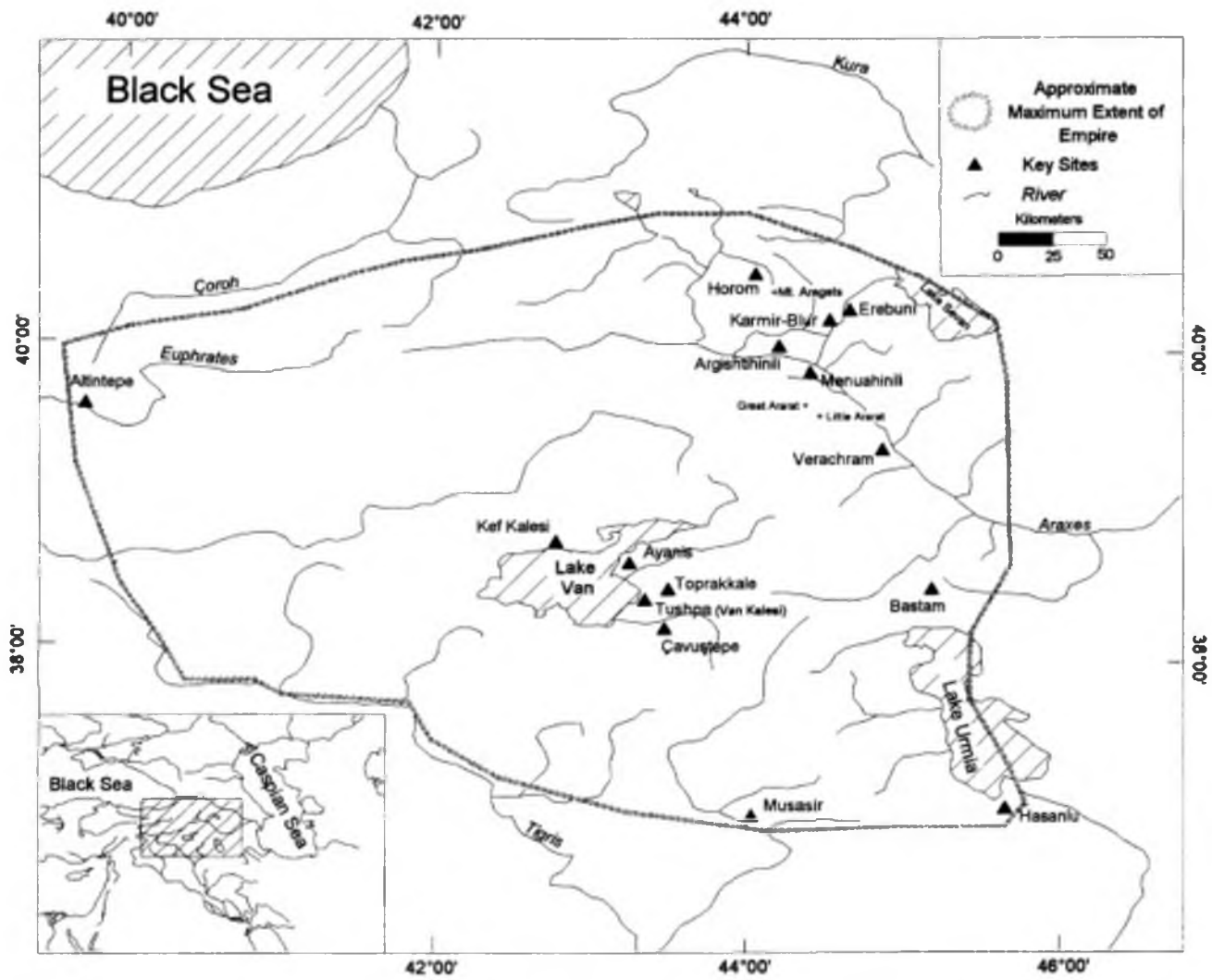
Figure 41: Approximate maximum extent of the Urartian Empire (Smith 1999, 51).

Figure 42: Map depicting Ristvet's interpretation of Urartian territorial boundaries. Note that Oğlanqala is located outside of these boundaries, which cut out the entire portion of modern day Naxçıvan.
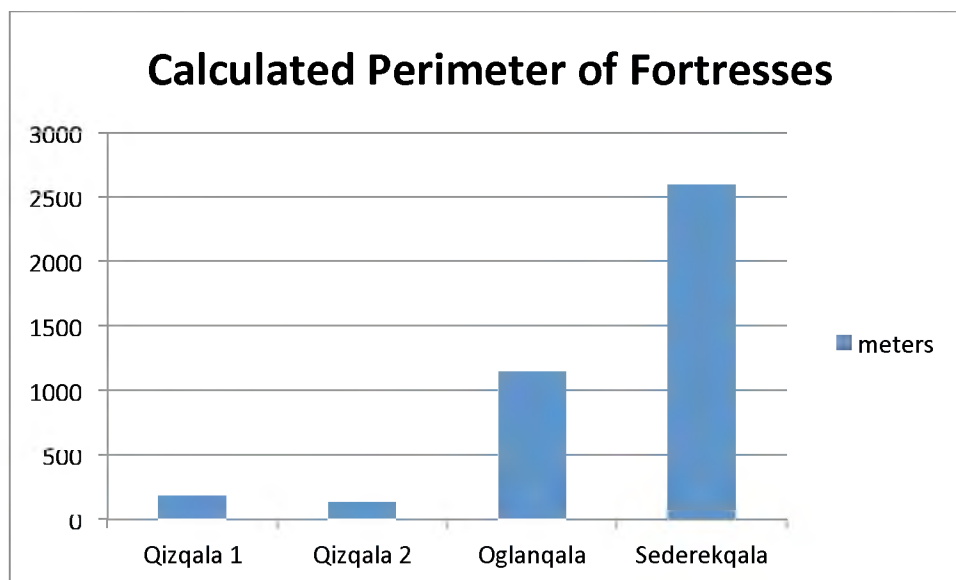
Figure 43: Chart showing the calculated perimeters of Iron Age fortresses in Naxçıvan.

Table 1: Table showing fortresses and their correlating size category according to Biscione's parameters.

Fortress Name	Size Category
Qizqala 1	Small
Qizqala 2	Small
Karasuqala	Small
Oglanqala	Medium
Sederekqala	Large

Table 2: Presence/Absence list of typical Urartian hallmarks.

Fortress Name	Presence of gate	Presence of cistern	Presence of tower	Presence of inscription
Qizqala 1	yes		yes	
Qizqala 2	yes	yes	yes	
Karasuqala	yes		yes	
Oğlanqala	yes			yes
Sederekqala	yes	yes	yes	yes

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The data presented in this paper show that the fortresses of Naxçıvan, Azerbaijan are indicative of a complex state that is morphologically and temporally consistent with the archaeology of Urartu. I have utilized Lauren Ristvet's recent interpretation of the area to draw my own, differing, conclusion concerning these data. I have also utilized a model from R. Biscione to determine site importance and have found that 3 levels of political and social integration are evident on the landscape. These range from small fortified outposts to large administrative centers, and indicate the presence of a state. All fortresses appear to have been established in and occupied throughout the Iron Age, a time period that is generally dominated by the presence of Urartu in the western Caucasus.

The interpretations discussed in this paper could benefit from further investigations into and around this region. Our understanding of the defensive network identified on the Şərur Plain has much to gain from conducting additional surveys just beyond the modern national borders of Naxçıvan, in Iran and Armenia. Systematic sampling and excavation of the fortresses within Naxçıvan, especially at Sederekqala, would aid and supplement the preliminary interpretation of this dataset I have just presented. Although the interpretation discussed here (that Urartu was a key player in Naxçıvan during the Iron Age and maintained defensive networks within it) is only one of several possible

interpretations of these data, I feel it has provided new insight into the field and hope that it stimulates new discussions of archaeology in this significant part of the world.

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