

## THE URARTIAN ROCK INSCRIPTION OF DAMLA KÖY (ERCİŞ)

by RAFET ÇAVUŞOĞLU and MIRJO SALVINI

During an archaeological survey in the region of Erciş, north of Lake Van, an Urartian rock inscription was discovered. The niche with the inscription is located near the village of Damla, in the district of Patnos, province of Ağrı. The village of Damla is situated at the 33 km point on the Erciş-Patnos highway, turning to NE from the junction to the village. The inscription lies 5 km NE of the road (see the map in Fig. 1). It is situated on the eastern side of the rocky hill within the village, which was called by the villagers "Treasure Hill". Illegal excavations were conducted below the inscription, which is placed in a 1 m wide and 1.10 m high rock niche. The inscription covers a rectangular area in relief within the niche, measuring 50 × 80 cm (Figs. 2-6). This feature represents an unicum among Urartian rock inscriptions.

Previous research conducted within the region, for exemple in the villages of Dedeli, Yukarı Göçmez and Liç, indicates that there were dense Urartian settlements in the area<sup>1</sup>. The inscription celebrates the construction of a canal (*pili*) by Sarduri II. In fact, below the rock bearing the niche can be seen traces of an ancient canal, which runs parallel to the road passing through the villages. The canal is in part abandoned and in part still in use by the villagers, and probably derived from the Padişah stream which flows through the valley (Fig. 1). It is a well known fact that the Urartians took great care over their gardens and orchards, and this canal was certainly used for their irrigation<sup>2</sup>.

Moreover, this new text has to be connected with the two rock inscriptions by Sarduri II in Karataş, 2 km east of Erciş, which were among the first Urartian texts published by F.-E. Schulz, and which celebrate the plantation of vineyards<sup>3</sup>. All these documents, the two Karataş niches and the new Damla text testify to the intense agricultural works carried out by Sarduri II in that region.

---

<sup>1</sup> B. Ögün, Die urartäischen Gräber in der Gegend von Adilcevaz und Patnos, "The Proceedings of the Xth international Congress of Classical Archaeology", IX/1, Ankara 1973, p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> V. Sevin, Urartu bahçeleri/Urartian Gardens, "Belleten", CLXIV/240, p. 395-414 (9 figs.), Ankara 2000.

<sup>3</sup> See the new edition by M. Salvini, Le iscrizioni di Sarduri II a Karataş, "Orientalia" 62 (1993), p. 71-79 (Tab. I-II) with previous literature.

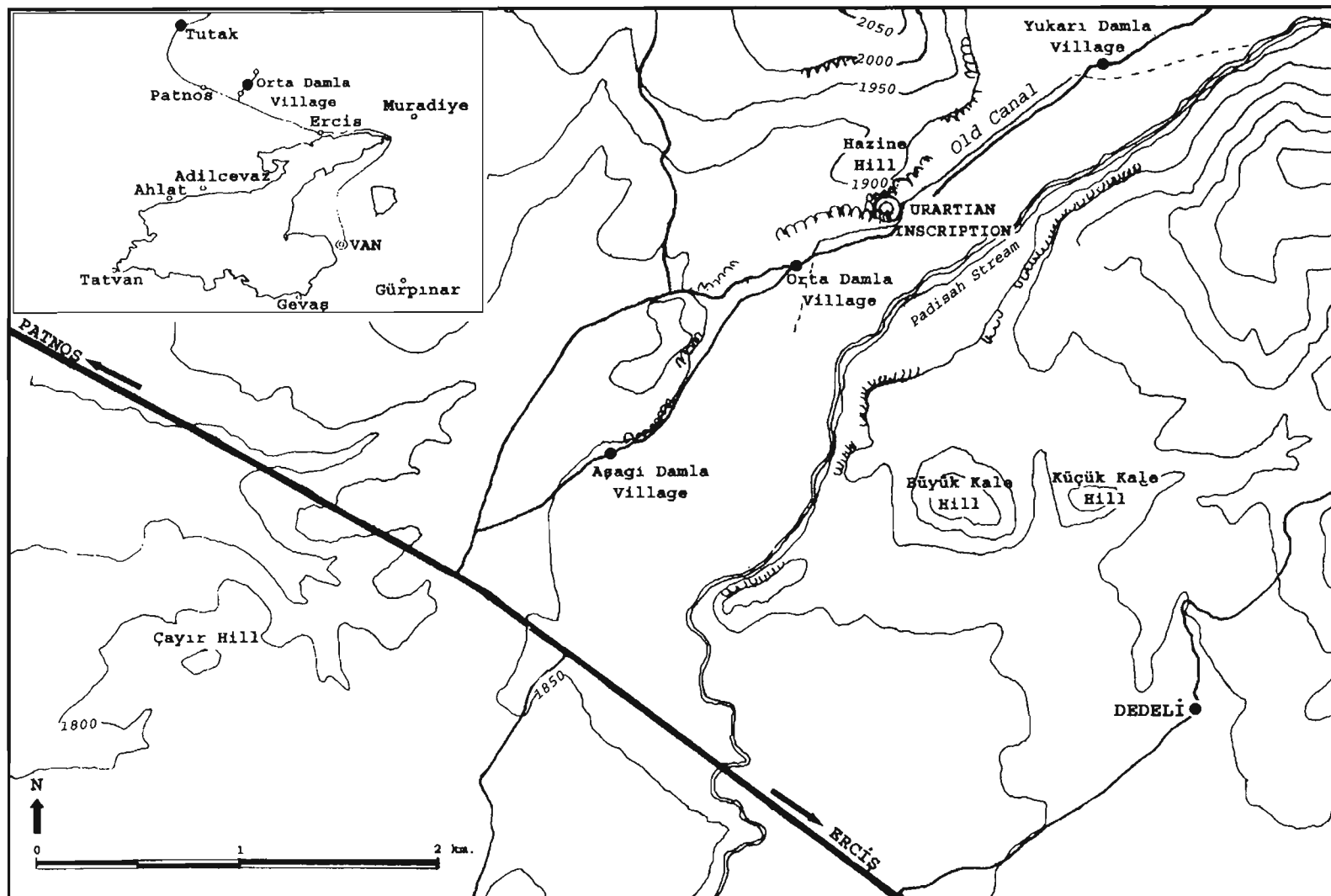


Fig. 1 – Position of the Damla village.

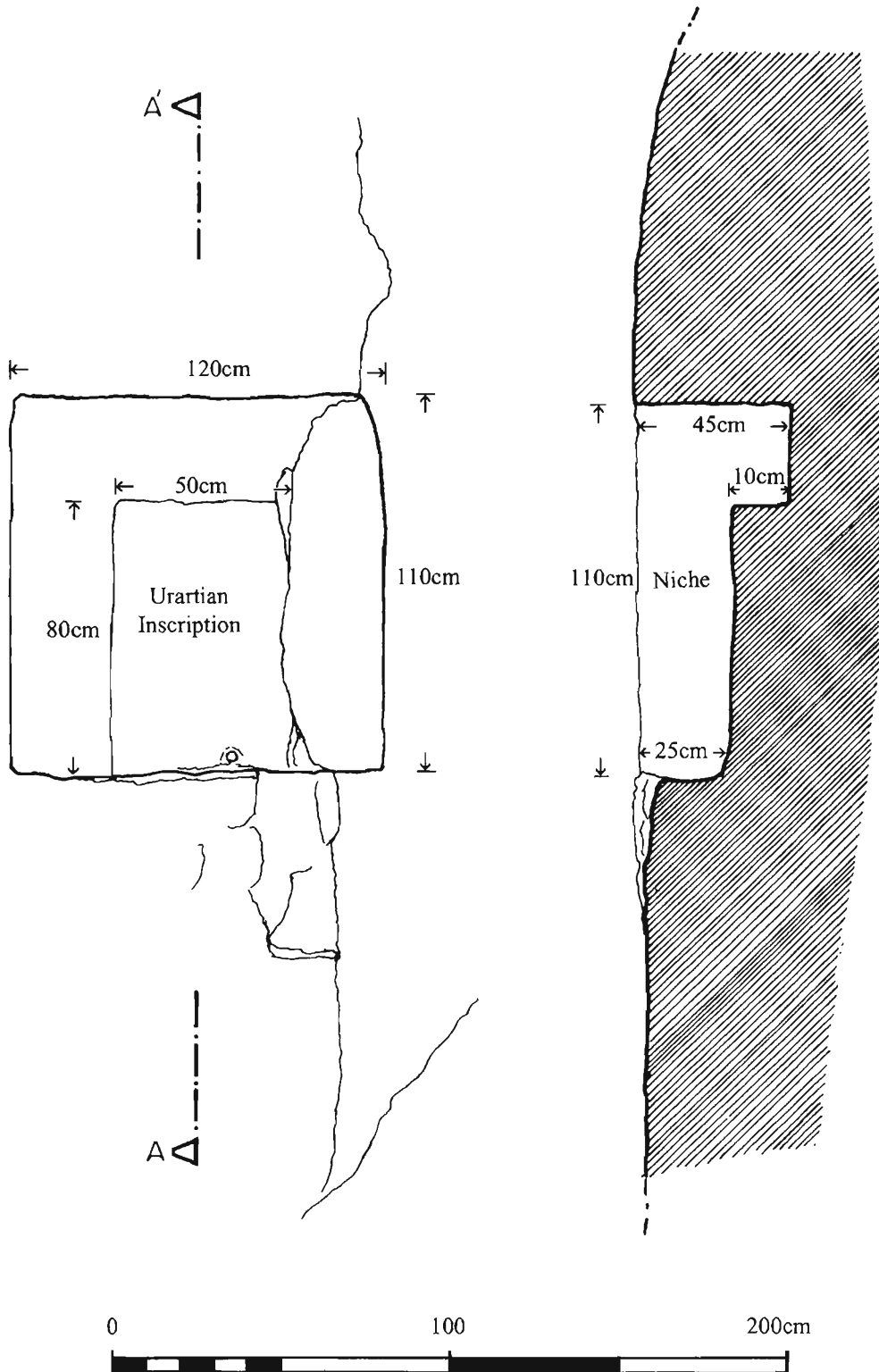


Fig. 2 – Skech plan of the rock niche with the Urartian inscription.



Figs. 3-4 – The rock niche of Damla with the inscription by Sarduri II.

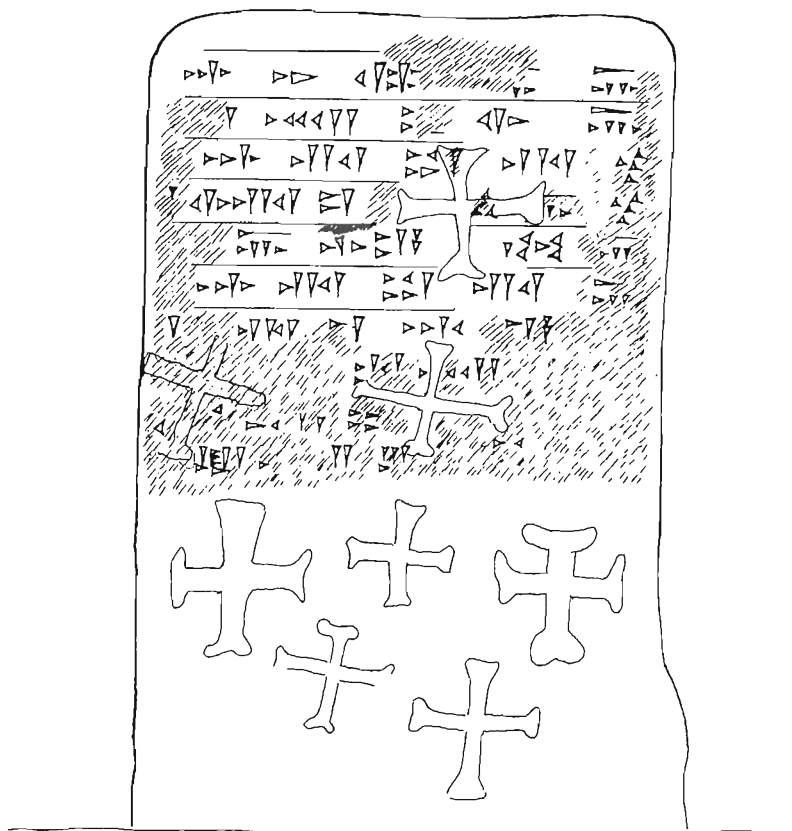


Fig. 5 – Copy of the Damla inscription.



Fig. 6 – Rock inscription of Damla.

## Transcription and translation

- |    |   |                                       |
|----|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1  | <sup>u</sup> ḫal-di-[n]i-ni                                     |                                       |
| 2  | [a]l-su- <sup>r</sup> i <sup>1</sup> -ši-ni                     | “(1-2) Through the greatness of Haldi |
| 3  | <sup>l(m)</sup> ḏsar <sub>5</sub> -du-ri-še                     |                                       |
| 4  | <sup>l(m)</sup> ar-giš-[ti]-ḫi-ni-še                            | (3-4) Sarduri, son of Argišti,        |
| 5  | i-ni PA <sub>5</sub> [a]-gu-ni                                  | traced this canal.                    |
| 6  | <sup>l(m)</sup> ḏsar <sub>5</sub> -du-ri-ni                     |                                       |
| 7  | <sup>m</sup> a[r-g]iš-ti-e-[ḫi]                                 | (6-7) (I am) Sarduri, son of Argišti, |
| 8  | [LUGÁL DAN-NU LUGÁL] a[l-s]u-[i-ni]                             | powerful king, great king,            |
| 9  | <sup>r</sup> LUGÁL <sup>KUR</sup> bi-a-i <sup>1</sup> -[na-ú-e] | king of Biainili,                     |
| 10 | [a]-lu-s[i <sup>UR</sup> ]u <sup>t</sup> [u-u]š-[pa URU]        | lord of the city of Ṭušpa”.           |

Rafet Çavuşoğlu  
 Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi  
 Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi  
 Arkeoloji Bölümü,  
 65080 Zeve Kampüsü  
 Van/Türkiye

Mirjo Salvini  
 Istituto di Studi sulle Civiltà  
 dell'Egeo e del Vicino Oriente (CNR)  
 Via Giano della Bella, 18  
 I – 00162 Roma