

# ORTAKÖY-ŞAPINUVA

by

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In the heartland of the Hitite Empire, near Ortaköy, Çorum, lies the city of Sapişnuva. It was the capital of the Hittite state for a period. At the beginnings of 14th century BC, Tuthaliya III- Taduhepa royal couple ruled in Şapinuva.

There are more than four thousand tablets and tablet fragments from this city written in different languages such as, hittite, hurrian, hattian, akkadian. These tablets belonged to the royal archive which contains information on many subjects such as, administration, religion and oracle and various others. It is known from the documents that the city of Şapinuva was also an important centre during the reign of Murşili II.

The city is located on a plateau descending from northwest to southeast direction. When the Hittites came to this region, they did not settle to the existing villages, instead they built this great city by terracing and straightening the land. The trade route in the east-west direction along the Kelkit-Yeşilırmak valley reaches the Central Anatolia through this city therefore the city had a really significant role in trade.

The city of Şapinuva has been a capital for many years where the Great King resided. The state has been ruled from Şapinuva. The most important characteristic of this city is that it was a significant religious centre for people who wanted to purify themselves from their sins. This makes Şapinuva a unique example in the ancient world. The city of Şapinuva has had a very important place in the religious life of the Hitite people because it supplied holy water and special purifying rituals during ceremonies which were conducted to please the gods and goddesses who were believed to seriously affect people's lives. This city was not only a capital of the state but also a religious capital of the state. Just like today's Mecca or Jerusalem.

The excavation works conducted in two separate areas: Tepelerarası and Ağılönü. In Tepelerarası, building "A" was unearthed at the highest point of the researched area. In the

foundations of this structure limestone and sandstone huge blocks were used. Surrounding walls were detected on the north and south of this building whose ground plan covers 2500 m<sup>2</sup>.

Large numbers of ceramics fragments and hole vessels of massive earthenware used for food and drink were recovered in another important structure, the building 'B'. The building covers an area of 1200 m<sup>2</sup>. It is estimated that about 1-1.5 tonnes of commodities can be stored in this building. More than 70 large pithoi were found. This building was not only a storage but it was also lived in. The buildings C and D are important religious structures. There are two orthostats facing each other at the entrance of building 'D'. The left orthostat more likely belonged to god Teşup. The relief shows the god armed, leaning on a spear with his left hand, and greeting those who are entering the building. In addition, workshops and findings discovered in the Tepelerarası provide all new information for the scientific world on the production system of the Hitite state.

Ağılönü region was used for ritual purposes. In this area, a “Stone Pavement” with a size close to 2000 m<sup>2</sup> has been unearthed. This structure is one of the most important and monumental buildings in Anatolia in these early ages. Located just in front of the “Stone Pavement” there are sacrificial pits, one of the most important archaeological discoveries for the Hitite period. According to cuneiform texts, during some ceremonies, these pits were dug and accepted as the doorways which lead to the underworld. Animals like bird, lamb, sheep, cattle, pig were sacrificed into these pits. These pits are the archaeological evidence of the ceremonies mentioned in the cuneiform texts.

In addition to the architectural remnants, metal, ceramics, and many rare findings were unearthed during the Ortaköy-Şapinuva excavations.