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A BRONZE SCULPTURE FROM ARAMUS

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The joint expedition of Yerevan State University (Department of Archaeology) and Innsbruck University (directed by H.G. Avetisyan and W. Allinger-Csollich) continued in 2006-2007 its investigations in the territory of Aramus fortress in the Kotayk' district of Armenia. Within last year in the northern section of the eastern edge of the fortress, up to the first terrace, an area of 250 m² was excavated. Continuing the former works the expedition aimed to verify the fortress's construction phases, in order to define more precisely chronological, stratigraphical sequences etc[1]. For these purposes the excavation area was broadened mainly to the north-east in the direction of the acropolis[2].

During the excavations the expedition cleaned the northern tower by the eastern entrance of the acropolis, as well as the first line of fortification walls. Almost completely was unearthed one of the buildings of the acropolis. The investigations of other constructions of the fortress also were continued.

Greater clarity was established during investigations of the fortress-walls. The remains of a wall discovered in across-section of a trench excavated on terrace M 6 is especially noteworthy. This wall very likely belonged to the Pre-Urartian period and was part of an earlier cyclopean fortress. To the south of this wall, on the terrace, we opened a later line of a wall dating to the period of the Van kingdom, which in the eastern section of the acropolis joins with the remains of a large tower. With its unique construction, this wall echoes similar Urartian structures. Our investigations show that the last line of wall surrounding the acropolis was built sometime after the Urartian era, and continued to exist as late as the early medieval period. In addition to clarifying the construction sequence of fortification structures at the site, we have also uncovered other structures within the acropolis (Tab. I/1).

In the process of excavations a large quantity of archaeological materials has been unearthed. Of particular note amongst these are the materials of the Van kingdom period, including ceramics that allow us to reconstruct Urartian pottery manufacture at Aramus. Vessels of different types and sizes from the site have been used for storing of agricultural and cattle-breeding goods. Certain pottery forms relate both with everyday life and with ritual activities. The collection of Urartian pottery can be classified into two main groups: a) Red to yellowish and black-grey slipped examples of high quality, and b) Black, rude examples with matt surface. It is of note that 90 % of this pottery

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[1] Avetisyan 2005a: 97ff.
[2] Avetisyan 2005b: 151ff.

is made on potter's wheel. The pottery groups under consideration are dated into the VIII-VI centuries BC[1].

Also metal objects (different rings, bracelets, needles, fibulae of bronze and iron) were found, which date mainly to Urartian period[2] and find broad parallels among the materials from Karmir Blur, Erebuni, Argishtiḫinili, Ayanis and other contemporary sites. These artefacts have been made of bronze and in both production and style are typical for Urartian applied arts. Amongst the interesting finds is a fragment of a bronze belt decorated with linear ornamentation.
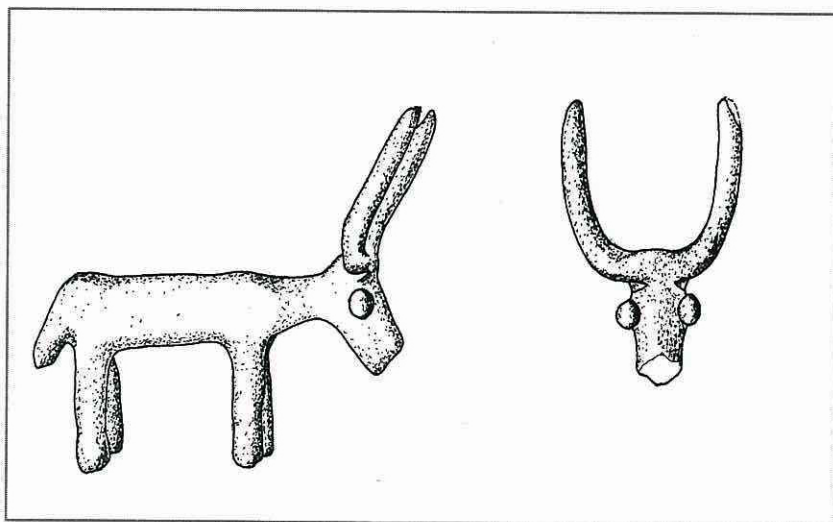

Fig. 1

During the 2007 excavation season, a high quality bronze sculpture of a bull also came to light (Fig. 1, Tab. I/2, II/1-2). It has emphasized horns, rounded-spherical eyes, a short tail, a stretched body and comparatively short legs. With its stylistic characteristics it could be defined as a distinctive example of Urartian sculpture and according to stratigraphical disposition can be dated into the VIII-VI centuries BC. However the tradition of bull statues made on this or similar manner go back to the Bronze Age Anatolian-Caucasian cultural world – in particular to the mid and second half of the III millennium BC (Early Bronze Age sites of Alaca Höyük-Horoztepe-Maikop type)[3] or to the second half of the II millennium BC (i.e. Late

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[1] Avetisyan and Avetisyan 2006: 129-131.
[2] Avetisyan, Allinger-Csollich 2006: 105ff.
[3] Mansfeld 2001.

Bronze and partly Early Iron Age sites of Lchashen-Metsamor/Tsiteligorebi[1], as well as of Colkhis-Coban[2] cultures). The mythological background of such sculptures is clearly discernable in Hattic, Hittite and Hurrian traditions (cf. e. g. the mythological images of twin bulls Hurri and Šeri connected with the cult of Thunder-God and attested also archaeologically)[3].

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[1] Arutyunyan 1987.
[2] Domanskiy 1984.
[3] Cf. Schmidt 2002: 97-98.

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