

# Selected passages from the history of the Armenian Architecture I. – Prehistoric Era, Antiquity

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## Abstract

*This posthumously published article was the beginning of a comprehensive summary of the history of the Armenian architecture. Unfortunately the work could not be completed.*

## Keywords

Armenian architecture · antiquity

Hayastan, the historical Armenia, is deservedly placed among “biblical regions and bible lands”. Even the first book of the Bible mentions Mount Ararat, the mountain dominating its territory, when describing the flood: “*At the end of the hundred and fifty days the water had gone down, and on the seventeenth day of the seventh month the ark came to rest on the mountains of Ararat.*” (Genesis 8:4). As tradition has it, *Moses Khorenatsi* (Moses of Khoren), a historian from the fifth century (his life is presumably dated to a later period), believed that the ancestor of the Armenians is Haik, a great-grandson of Noah, and that his son, the great-great-grandson, was called Aram: both became eponyms of the nation. Although analysing such philology-based genesis does not belong to the duties of a historian of architecture, some thoughts still deserve to be mentioned here.

The genesis-teachings of the Bible grew to become familiar with the Christianized people: “*These are the clans of Noah’s sons, according to their lines of descent, within their nations. From these the nations spread out over the earth after the flood*” (Genesis 10:32). Hence each nation endeavoured to see its founding forefather as a descendant of Noah. We would mention the presentation of the Hungarian Genesis edited by Anonymus of the twelfth- or thirteenth century, which Genesis says that the forefather of the Hungarian was Magog, son of Japheth (Anonymus, 1.). The first Armenian translation of the Holy Scriptures was finished by the end of the fourth century A.D. (Sachak, c. 400), therefore fifth-century historians may have had a good knowledge of the quoted passage. This fact would have motivated and influenced the genesis. Surprisingly, the flood itself, and the landing of Noah on Mount Ararat left less evidence in Armenian tradition than the legend of Haik. Hardly any drawings of the matter can be found among the illustrations of medieval scripts while the subject matter was better-known and more preferred in the West: Noah’s ark often appears on codex sheets as a typical Viking ‘longship’ (for example Code Savigny, c. 1110). Western records often call the Armenians as the ‘Nation of Ararat’. Every 8-10 years, sensational archaeological news is revealed in press that Noah’s ark was found in the side of Mount Ararat. More than ten so-called Noah’s arks have been found so far: prehistoric boat-remnants fossilized in

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deposits at improbably high altitudes above sea-level.

The history of architecture has a relatively small role in the research of the formation, the genesis. Related sciences (geography, anthropology, linguistics, ethnography, primitive archaeology, etc.) are left to add the decisive word. So far it has been stated that the area of Mount Aragats was inhabited circa 40,000 years ago (Neanderthal culture). Agricultural and animal breeding culture can be proved in the area from circa 10,000 BC and by the beginning of the Copper Age (7-5000 BC), traces of obsidian trade can also be found (Kuro-Arax culture). The first tangible evidence of architecture survives from the fourth millennium BC. These megalithic 'buildings' or primitive traces of settlements cannot be bound to a specific ethnic group; they are rather the concomitants of a specific level of development independent of geographical place. What might be remarkable here is that such megaliths are known by literature mainly in Western Europe or perhaps in Asia Minor. An extension of the study towards the East can provide valuable data in the future.

The most primitive form of prehistoric building activities was when the material (stone) found in situ was simply moved, shifted into a position counter to its natural state, or when a number of similar stones were put together in some order. First and foremost, cultic function was dominant in each case, the offering of human effort and activity for the sake of a supernatural power. Primarily, everyday-related function can hardly be supposed in any of the stone structures. Archaeology and the history of architecture recognize three basic types of megaliths: menhirs (standing-stones), dolmens (table-stones) and cromlechs (stones arranged in circles). We can find examples of each type in the area of historic Hayastan.

*Menhirs* (standing stones) can be regarded as the simplest form of prehistoric monument-building. The block of stone found in situ was erected without any dressing or with little carving. Primitive carvings appeared on late menhirs (e.g. St-Severin, France). Based on this fact, some consider menhirs to be prefigurations to monumental sculpture. Even the Bible mentions the ancient tradition of erecting stones for cultic purposes. As the description of Jacob's dream says: "Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it.", and later: "...this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house..." (Genesis 28:18 and 22.). But there is also reference to erecting stone-posts as tombs. At the time of Rachel's death, "over her tomb Jacob set up a pillar" (Genesis 35:20). Armenian menhirs are undressed stones found in groups, colonially (Samiram, Zorakar), and their height varies from 1 to 5 metres. No archaeological data supports their tomb-function. As products of the Kuro-Arax culture, they can be dated to circa 4000 BC. They can be found sporadically one by one, or in groups of 4-5, near Lake Sevan. It is an interesting fact that after Christianity had become widespread, a part of the stones was 'redefined': either crosses were scratched in their surfaces or they were provided with a simple cross-carving. Prefigurations of khatchkars

(carved stone crosses), which became established from the 6-7th centuries, might originate from these?

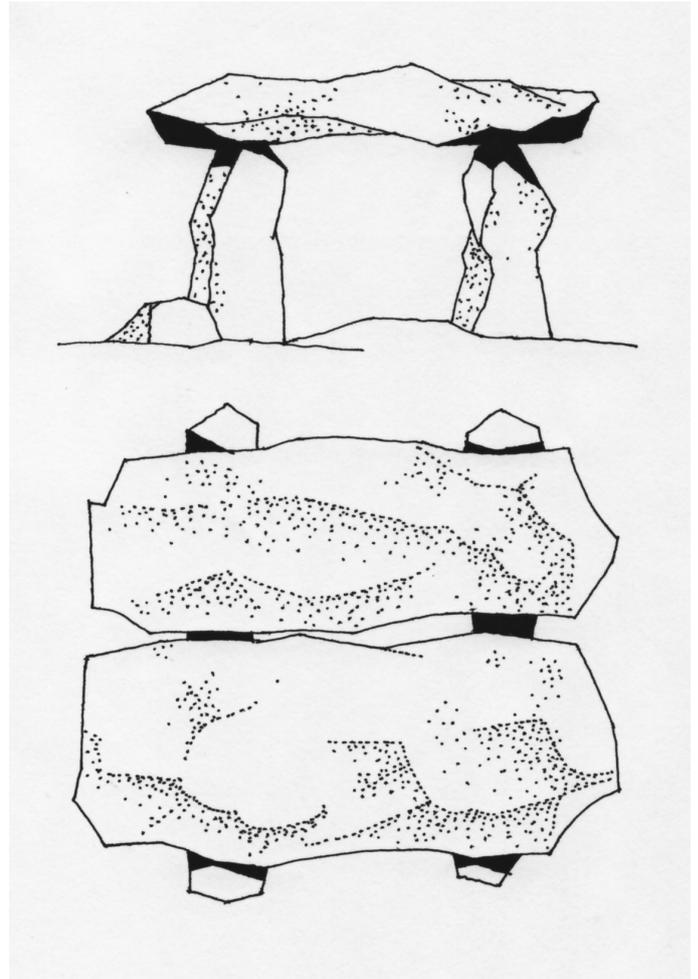
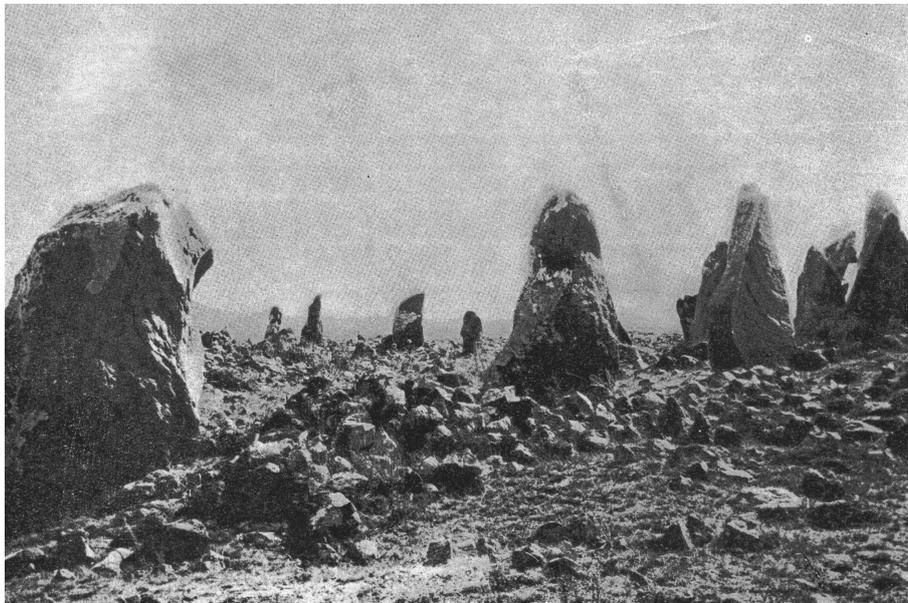


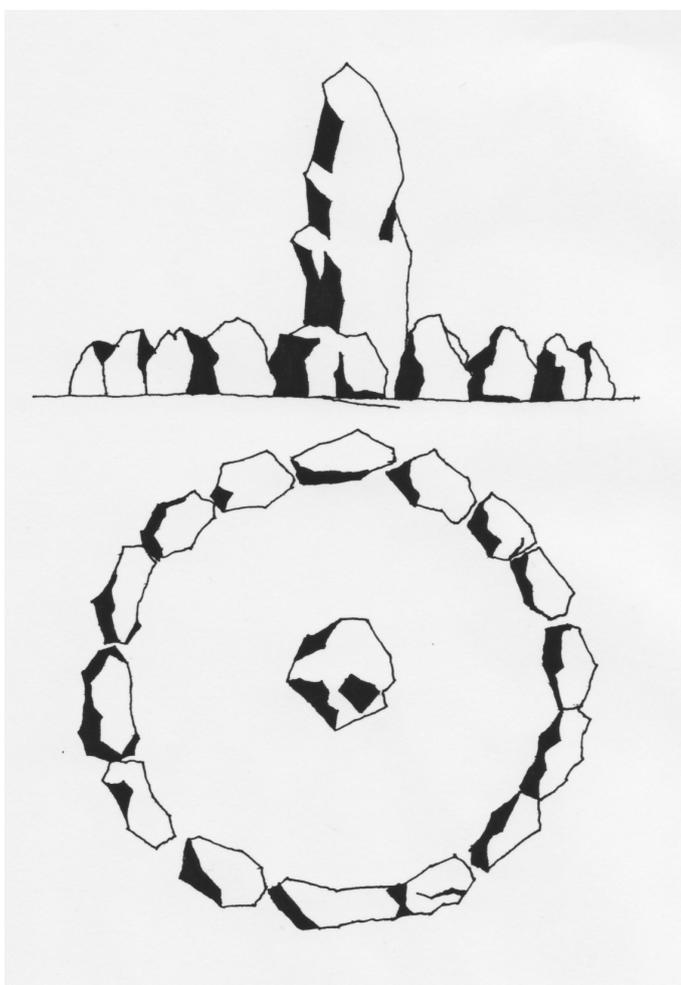
Fig. 2. Sissan, dolmen (c. 3500 BC).

Dolmens (table-stones) represent a more developed type of megalithic structures: two or three stones set on edge are covered with another. Sometimes this structure is repeated in a linear arrangement to form a passage-like space (e.g. Bagneu, France, c. 5000 BC). Researchers usually relate these often 3-5 metre high structures (single tombs or passage graves) to the cult of the dead and to funerals. Even simultaneous connection of dolmens to everyday living-function and to the cult of the dead can occur. We have data on such 'double dolmens', the front part of which was used for living and the back part was a kind of sanctum, a burial chamber (e.g. Bowlinemone, Ireland, c. 4000 BC). Such structures were not unknown to the area of Caucasus in 4000-2000 BC. Dolmens (usually together with menhirs) were found in the area of Calka, Trialeti and Hulo in Georgia. A relatively unharmed dolmen was found near Sissan, in the eastern part of Armenia. Basically, it is a one-unit-long, short passage, covered with two blocks. Its dead cultic function is only presumed.

The most developed forms of megaliths are the *cromlechs* (stones arranged circularly). The ideological urge is clearly realized in it: to sacrifice a significant amount of work not for material purposes, but in service to the specific idea. Regarding



**Fig. 1.** Mehir-field, Hosun-Dash (fourth millennium BC). (V. M. Arutunian – S. A. Safarian: Pamiatniki armianskovo zodsststva. Moscow, 1951. pict.1)



**Fig. 3.** Sissan, dolmen (c. 2500 BC).

their structure, these are menhirs (sometimes with dolmen-like horizontal lintels) arranged circularly, in one or more concentric rows. In the middle of the large (sometimes 30-50 metres in diameter) courtyard, which is formed in this way, one or more bigger menhirs stand. This formation is generally connected with

sun worship, fertility or phallic symbols but some researchers, blessed with more imagination, appear to see a kind of ‘solar observatory’ or ‘astronomical observatory’ in it. Others try to draw conclusions on the builders’ system of numbers or on their notions of the cosmos, out of the number or rhythm of the stones arranged in the circle. The most well-know example of this building-type is Stonehenge in England (near Salisbury). The place of the altar here, filling the middle of the circle, already indicates that later on we might find a prefiguration of the ‘sacred districts’ (temenos) in this building-type. The cromlech near Aruch in Armenia does not lead us to large functional conclusions with its humbler size and stone-division of 15+1. It merely indicates that the megalithic forms present in prehistoric cultures were also present in the area of historic Hayastan.

Pit-houses (pit-graves) near Zorakar (Khosun-Das) can be compared to this circle only in a wider sense, based mainly on structural similarities. The shaping of the entrances – on a smaller scale – repeats the structure of dolmens, sometimes by the use of a discharging corbel vault. Regarding their age, they can also be considered as products of Kuro-Arax culture. Their function is not obvious: it cannot be determined whether the small and irregular-shaped places, mainly excavated in soil, were houses or were connected to the cult of the dead. Much later examples are known in the area for both functions.

The tombs of Alaça Huyuk (c. 2200 BC) or the burial niches of the third and fourth century (e.g. Ach’c, tomb of the Arshakids, AD 363.) can be regarded as a survival of the cult of the dead. Living areas, excavated in soil (stone), can be found in Tushpa (9th century BC).

Together with the first conscious building activity, the first attempts of the visual arts appeared worldwide. We deliberately do not use the definition ‘decorative art’ because, in the first place, these images were provably not made with the intention of decorating. The most important characters (animals) and

events (hunting) of the community's life were represented in the dark corners of caves or on rock walls, with the magical aim of reaching the desired goal. It can be observed that while animals have remarkably accurate anatomical depictions, human characters of the scenes are rather rough shaped. Many times they almost resemble the symbol-like line-drawings of children.

In Armenia, Neolithic rock carvings were found in Mount Aragats. Their subject is hunting for mountain animals. The character of the animals (mouflon, mountain goat, etc.) is well recognizable, the shape and movement of the hunters, shooting arrows, is expressive. Such depictions can be found in the mountains of Sahara but direct analogy is also known with Spanish rock carving (Valltorta).

Special monuments from observing nature and depicting animals are *vishaps* in the Armenian Highland, especially near lakes. These are the 3-4 metres long, fish-shaped stones lying on the ground, which make worth mentioning the special mixture of ancient beliefs and their decorative 'product'.

For a long time, *vishaps* were considered totems, fish-shape sculptures, or simply menhirs, which had fallen down in the course of time. But it is provable that these stones have never been in a standing position, therefore they have never been menhirs. However, these metres long fish-sculptures are there, lying in the grass near the Armenian lakes (Van, Sevan, Urmia). Some conclusions can be drawn, even from these, on the ancient religious beliefs of the area. We cannot know exactly the religious ideas of people as early as 4000 BC, the time of formation of the *vishaps*, but the various and still common-origin traditions, connected to *vishaps* in later periods, lead to the conclusion that their identical role in the religious syncretism - later - indicates a much earlier proto-function. The earliest and traceable layer of Armenian religious belief is closely related to the Old Persian-Iranian religious notions, and later this same – already "Iranified" – pantheon was recorded by chronicle-writers. The Armenian chief god, *Ormizd* (the equivalent of Persian Ahura Mazda) is figured as father and creator of the universe – albeit rarely. The cult of his daughter, *Anahit* (deity of fertility and sustenance), originating from Eriza, was very popular, her shrines were present in Astisat or Artasat. The third member of the Persian-origin triad of deities was *Vahagn* (Persian Vrthraghna) who, being the deity of war, might have been the most popular. *Vahagn*, 'bringer of thunders', was closest to the supernatural deity-idea which originated in the nature-worship of people. The ancient hymn recording his birth, reflecting the naivety of folk-poetry, is only partly known:

*In travail were heaven and earth,  
In travail, too, the purple sea!  
The travail held in the sea the small red reed.  
Through the hollow of the stalk came forth smoke,  
Through the hollow of the stalk came forth flame,  
And out of the flame a youth ran!  
Fiery hair had he,*

*Ay, too, he had flaming beard,  
And his eyes, they were as suns!*

*Vahagn*, as a deity, defeated the natural forces and demons, called *vishaps*, which harmed people, and in this way fell to the earth, hardening into stone. Therefore - according to an interpretation – the enormous stone-fishes lying on the ground were monuments of *Vahagn*'s victory. We will soon return to a different interpretation which is also connected to prehistoric everyday life. In the province of Nakhichevan, there is a unique example of the *vishap*-cult on Mount Vishapasar (Mount Odzasar). The odd-shaped stone-formation, steeply protuberating from its surroundings, was itself the subject and place of the *vishap*-cult. It has no built parts, but a cultural layer, related to the period of 4000-3000 BC, can be found in its area.

Later on in Hellenism, the chief deity was succeeded by Zeus (called Jupiter in Roman times), and *Anahit* was identified with *Artemis*. *Vahagn* became identified with *Apollo* or later *Heracles*. In the legends of *Vahagn* (*Heracles*), who grips, defeats and throws thunderbolts down to earth, the definition of *vishaps* survived and broadened. The defeated thunders thrown down to earth also provided protection against further natural disasters. So *Vahagn*, killing the *vishaps*, became one with the Hellenistic legend of *Heracles*, killing the dragon: the original fish became defeated dragons in the course of time! As a matter of curiosity, we might note that similar transformations can also be observed in other early cultures. In Egypt, *Horus*, killing *Seth*, gained a similar meaning over time, and later in Christianity, he entered the new ideology as *St Menas*, killing the dragon. This way, *St George* killing the dragon became a subject of distinguished adoration in areas of Asia Minor, Syria and later Georgia. Christian Armenia also had such a transformation: *Vahagn*, killing the *vishaps*, turned to *St Theodore*, killing the dragon. Even in depictions of the latter (e.g. *Aght'amar*, 9th century), the defeated dragon basically kept the form of a fish or snake.

At the time of the formation of *vishaps*, in the third millennium BC, the above mentioned explanations cannot be assumed (especially not the Hellenistic or the Christian variation). When analysing function, an aspect, connected to everyday life, is to be noted. For hunting and fishing people and tribes, a perished animal, or a fish driven ashore means 'net profit': nature saved them from considerable work and danger. It is demonstrable in some cases, that they wanted to secure the success in hunting even magically, therefore it was acted out in front of the picture of the animal. The animal paintings, covered with red paint or scratched with spears (e.g. bison-pictures in Altamira cave, Spain), imply that these were ritual accessories of a magical hunt 'rehearsed' and acted out. The *vishaps* can be found in the surroundings of cultures that existed alongside the lakes. The enormous fish, driven ashore and lying in the grass, embodies the desire of the fishing tribe – without any further symbolic reinterpretation. It is also about a defeated 'enemy', but at the same time it also means the victory of the human and the



**Fig. 4.** Vishap near Lake Van (around 2000 BC). (S. Mnakazanian – S. Stapanian: *Pamiatniki arhitekturi v sivietskoj Armenii*. Leningrad, 1971. pict.2.)

tribe over the giant fish, which secured their subsistence. These cultures did not depict conceptualized dragons, but fish, which they knew from food-gathering and their everyday lives (e.g. sturgeon). The characteristic formation of the head of the fish (vishaps) represents well this observational skill. So it can also be assumed, that these large stone-fish were originally products of magic, which served fishing and subsistence, and which were reinterpreted as symbols of the defeated and evil dragons and thunders hurled down from the skies only later in the dualistic belief of mazdakism.

In 3000-1000 BC, there were settlements showing developed organization in the area. Evolution of the processing industry and trade helped the development of tribal connections and confederations of tribes. The Caucasus is rich in resources, therefore bronze work, raw material and product trade was highly developed. Archaeological findings show that bronze casting and processing was a regular activity in the area of *Dilijan*, in *Dvin*, *Lechashen* and *Shengavit*, etc. There is also evidence on appearance of iron work around 1800 BC: the following four or five centuries are called the Developed Iron Age. The migration of Hurrian tribes, the repeated attacks of peoples of the 'Land Between the Rivers' on the Armenian Highland, and fights of different tribes against each other, further strengthened tribal unity and the forming of tribal federations. So settlements also served a defensive function: large parts of the inhabited areas known in the era, had natural or even artificial fortification (*Ghulali*, *Berdi-Glukh*, *Lechashen*).

The appearance and first federation of proto-Armenian tribes in the area can be dated to the middle of the second millennium. This is identified as the province of *Hayassa-Azzi*, where we assume the ancestors of modern Armenians came from as a result of the Phrygian immigration in the 15-13th centuries BC. The area of *Arme-Supria*, at the same time, has proto-Armenian

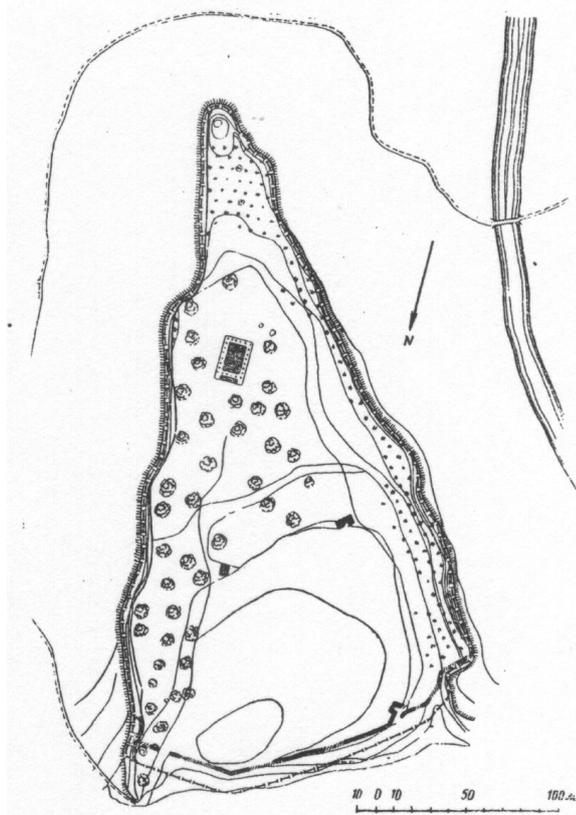
components of other ethnicities. Hittite inscriptions of the period (second millennium BC) tell about the highland's inhabitants as unified peoples (federation of tribes). First, this *Hayassa* state was independent from the still forming Urartu and had to defend itself partly from the Hittites and partly from the Assyrians. However, the *Nairi* (Land of Rivers) confederation of tribes, which existed between the 12th and 9th centuries BC, with its 60 kingdoms shows the improving influence and unifying intention of Urartu. Before treating later periods of historic development, it is worth familiarizing ourselves with some settlements of Hayastan in the Developed Bronze Age.

A significant settlement of the Bronze Age was successfully excavated near Yerevan, on Hill Metsamor in the 1960s: the village of Shengavit. Its origin can be dated back to 2500 BC, and it was a centre of bronze work and processing. The settlement itself was placed on a small hill flanked by a river on two sides, defence was thus provided by nature. Traces of smaller ramparts are only perceptible on the northern side.

Residential-units form a loose fabric in the city, clustered bush-like at some points. Extended family can be assumed in the case of a living block, as the single central area is surrounded by more rooms. The circular central area might have been the place of the fire, and occasionally it fulfilled the function of cultic place for the family. Houses were partly excavated in the ground, with stone walls laid roughly. The bronze processing unit, mentioned before, was situated south of the living area, in one detached unit. The place of the melting furnace and remnants of slag were found.

An example of the settlements in the Developed Bronze Age is the fortified city of Ghulali (c. 2500 BC) which is more organized and primarily established for defence. The city has a double structure, it consists of a residential-unit and a citadel. The whole area is surrounded by a rampart-system utilizing the land-

scape to best effect; the defensive- and residential-unit, called 'citadel' is in the northern part of the settlement, fortified by separate ramparts. The units of the living area are quadratic, they indicate a planned establishment. The site was excavated around 1950.



**Fig. 5.** Garni, fortified settlement (3000-1000 BC), site plan of the citadel. (V. M. Arutunian – S. A. Safarian: *Pamiatniki armianskovo zodsstestva*. Moscow, 1951. p.34.)

A relatively independent, highly developed Bronze Age culture, many settlements of which are known, prospered in 3000-1000 BC in the territory of Lake Sevan. The fortified city of Berdi-Glugh near Kamo was discovered as of a recent but only partial excavation. It was established on a vast triangular plan, with the residential-unit in the north and the 'citadel' in the tapered southern corner. The whole area was surrounded by ramparts; the fort also had a separate defensive system. The few excavated living-units that remained, were one- or two-roomed, rectangular buildings.

The most significant and best-organized settlement of the Bronze Age was perhaps Lechashen, also situated near Lake Sevan. The city comprised a residential-unit and a citadel, traces of former bronze work were also found. The artefacts, which were discovered as a result of the drop in level of Lake Sevan, date the prosperous period of the city to the 20-12th centuries BC. The citadel utilized the natural landscape of a hill with an inner oval rampart-system, having a northeast-southwest axis. Inside, the quadratically repeated residential-units were directly attached to the wall of the rampart. The building in the centre of the courtyard might have been a sanctum.

The royal graves excavated in the territory are rich in findings: bronze everyday objects, clay vessels, jewellery made of precious metals, weapons and carriages. Stylized figures of animals known from rock carvings also appear among the geometric rectilinear patterns in the decoration of bronze and clay surfaces. Evidence shows that the prospering economic and political life of the city ended during the Urartian confederation. The settlement did not play an important role in later periods.

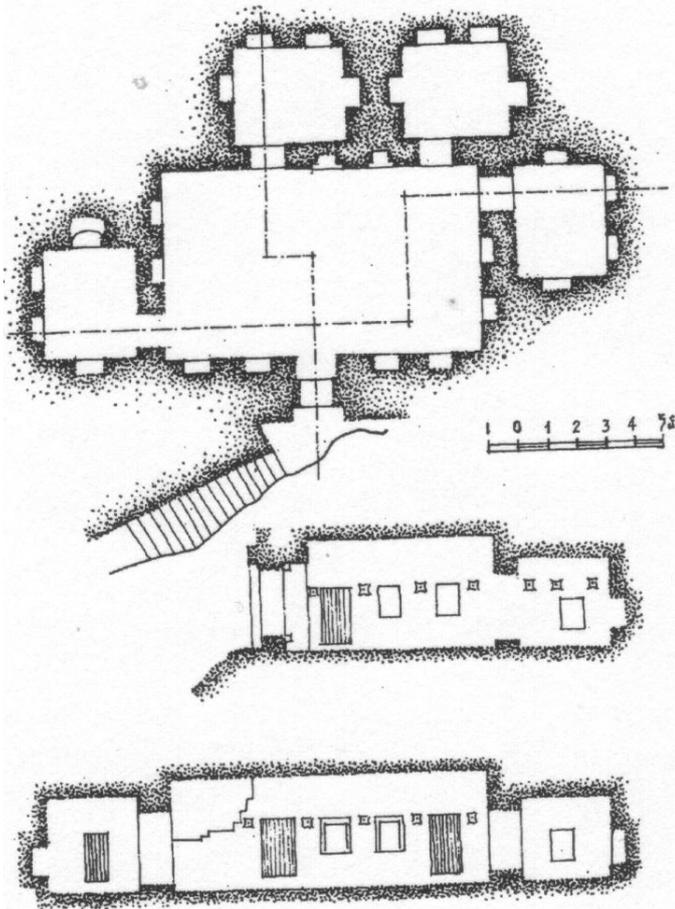
The loose federation known as Urartu gained importance in the history of the Ancient East, and therefore also in the history of the Caucasian area, from the 9th century BC. In the beginning (880-844 BC), it was under Assyrian control, the first heyday of its independence was under the rule of *Sarduri I* (844-828 BC). The federation of Nairi tribes became a significant part of Urartu while under Assyrian control (875 BC). The fall of the federation between Urartu and Nairi, which had a developed economic life and architecture, was caused as a result of the conquest by the Medes in 585 BC.

The first centre of the Urartu-Nairi federation was Tushpa near Lake Van. It cannot have been an accident, since developed prehistoric settlements had already existed along the lake in the earlier centuries (millennia). Tushpa kept its leading role throughout, though in the 8th century the political centre was placed farther north (Erebuni, Teishebaini, Argistehinili, etc).

There had also been a prehistoric settlement in the area of Tushpa, as in many places near Lake Van. The city was prospering in the 9th century BC, when it was capital of the Urartu-Nairi federation. The defensive structure of the city, still used in the Middle Ages, was built during this period. In 735 BC, Tushpa was attacked by the Assyrians but it remained the capital under the reign of *Rusa I* (735-713 BC). Today the city and the citadel show a structure of the Middle Ages, the citadel and residential part of the Urartian capital is hidden under it. The other section of the defensive structure was north of the residential part, and it is only known by a partial excavation. The defensive structure tried to utilize the potentials of the landscape as much as possible. The loose-knit residential city was situated south of the two defensive structures.

An extensive rock settlement existed in the side of the 'castle hills', as early as prehistoric times, and later in the Urartu-Nairi period. These cave-houses continued to be used in the Middle Ages, therefore the exact time of their formation is difficult to determine. The row of rooms and niches organized around a central area follows the house-patterns, which were common in the 9th century BC. Other rock settlements of similar origin (and afterlife) are known in Cappadocia (e.g. Goreme Valley, Turkey).

Peoples of the Armenian Highland, *Arme-Supria* also entered the federation of Urartu in the 8th century BC. Under the reign of *Argiste I* (785-753 BC), a new centre was established in the northern area: Erebuni, ancestor of modern Yerevan. Arin Berd, the fortification of the city was built between 782-780 BC. The remains had been excavated continuously from 1939, and the



**Fig. 6.** Tushpa, living-units of the cave settlement (floor plan, section) near the citadel. (Moreno Piccolotto – Sarkis Shahinian: Armenien. ETH Zürich, 1995. p.107. pict.1.)

valuable artefacts were taken to the Yerevan Museum. The area of the remains was preserved, now it serves as an open-air museum.

The fort of Erebuni, called Arin Berd, with the palace complex in it, stands on a hill near modern Yerevan. The rooms of the palace were organized around two courtyards: in the centre of one courtyard stood the royal reception hall, in the other the Sushi temple. The walls were built of cyclopic stone and brick, timber floors were supported by wooden posts embedded in stone foundations. Both the floor arrangement of the complex, and the decoration covering the walls indicate Assyrian influence, analogous to the Assyrian royal palace of Dur Sharrukin. Statues of winged beings with lion-body and human-head (lamassus) stand at the entrance of the ceremony hall in Erebuni also. However, the gate-defender ‘monsters’ of Erebuni look milder than the lamassus of Dur Sharrukin: one has an attractive, smiling female face, while the other has the head of a bird on its lion-body. Walls of the ceremonial halls were decorated with frescoes. The procession of gods and realistic depiction of different animals (bull, lion, leopard) can be seen in these, in a geometric framework and horizontal composition. The figure of the founder Argiste I also appears on the wall, standing on a lion. Frequently used colours were ochre, vivid red and blue.

The figures are flat and no shading was applied.

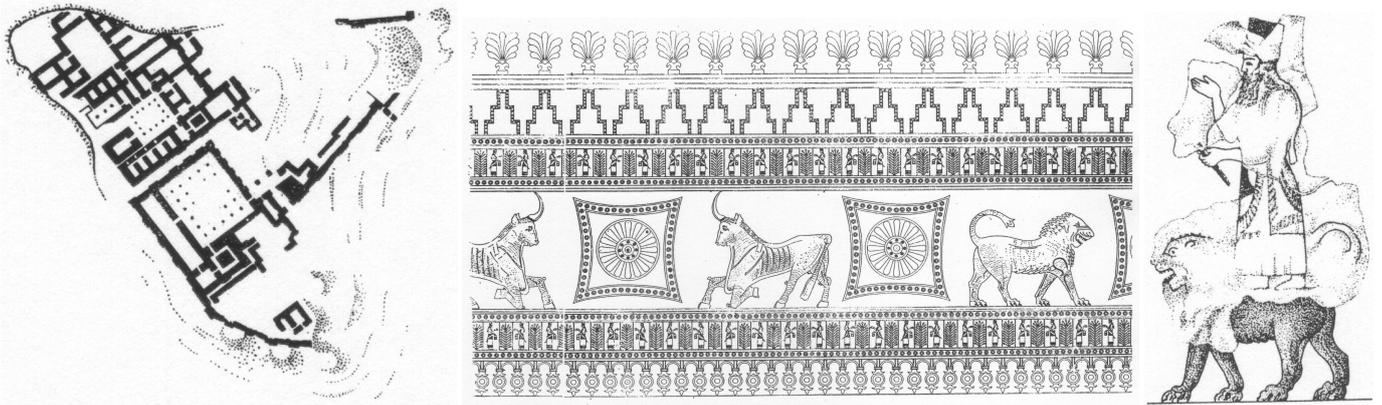
The most elaborate part of the palace complex was the royal reception hall with its peristyl main hall and tower-like fortifications at the corners. Literature on the topic calls this part “Chaldean palace” referring to the Mesopotamian origin and use of the type. Based on the excavated remains, K. L. Oganesian planned the theoretical reconstruction, according to which a part of the palace was reconstructed. The central building of the other courtyard was the Sushi temple, which is only known from its foundations. It was a simple rectangular cell with an entrance to the north. A fire temple was also built in the palace – based on a Persian example. The facing of the meters high and thick walls, giving protection for the palace complex, was of roughly dressed stones while clay and rubble were used in the middle of the wall. A part of the walls was also reconstructed.

Soon after establishing Erebuni and building Arin Berd, a following ruler, *Argiste II* (713-680 BC) strengthened the chain of defences in Urartu with a new fortified settlement, the city of Teishebaini and its citadel, *Karmirblur*. The name of the city represents Teisheba, (a) god of war and thunder – who is not identified with the earlier Vahagn, the god who destroyed thunder. The name of the hill Karmirblur (red hill), elevated on the side of the River Rasdan, reflects the reddish coloured stone also used as building material. Excavations were carried out here from 1939, both in the area of the settlement and the citadel. Theoretical reconstructions were made of many details but no didactic reconstruction was carried out. The rich findings (pottery, bronze, precious metals) were taken to the Yerevan Museum.

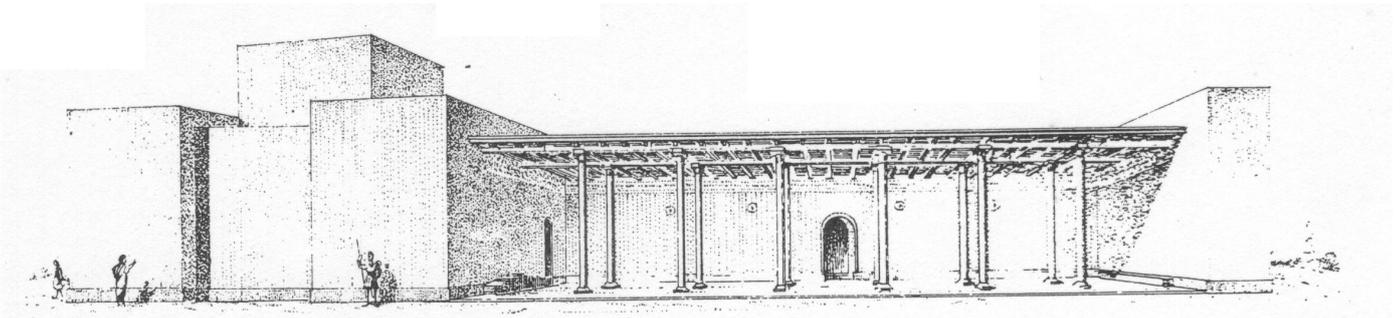
Teishebaini was headquarters of the Urartian governor with a significant garrison in the fort. Because of its advantageous geographical position, it also controlled trade routes, besides having a strategic importance. The settlement had a double structure: it comprised a fortified palace complex and a residential unit, which was also surrounded by walls. The building and prospering of the residential part can be dated to the 7th century BC. The arrangement and repetition of the residential houses represent the high organization of the settlement while indicating a differentiation of inhabitants based on wealth and profession.

In a smart and economical way, the simpler residential houses were established in units, following the same floor plan. Each had a small inner courtyard. The arrangement is reminiscent of the ‘northern type of housing’ of Assyrian architecture (e.g. Red House, Assur). Wealthier citizens or craftsmen even built ‘L-shaped’ houses on their sites (analogy: Arslan-Tas, palace, Assyria). Wealthier houses had larger inner courtyards, covered street-like aisles and separate storage rooms. The material of the houses was brick or stone walls and wooden posts on stone foundations, with timber floors (with closely placed joists or beams). Based on the excavated details and remains, K. L. Oganesian planned more theoretical reconstructions.

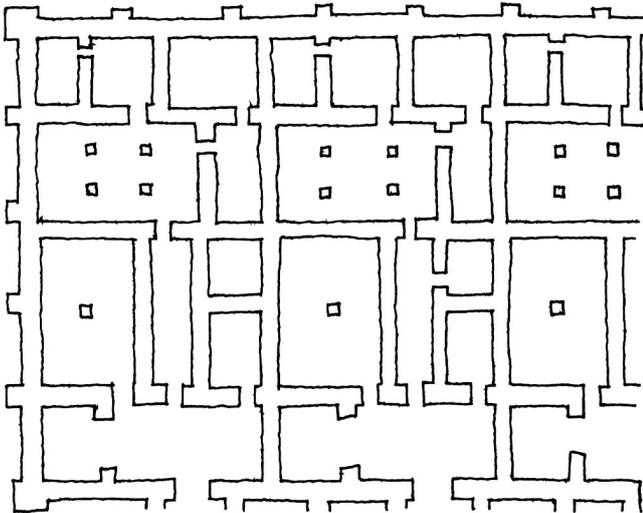
The citadel of Teishebaini, Karmirblur, stood on the hill north of the city, and basically, it was a fortified palace complex. The



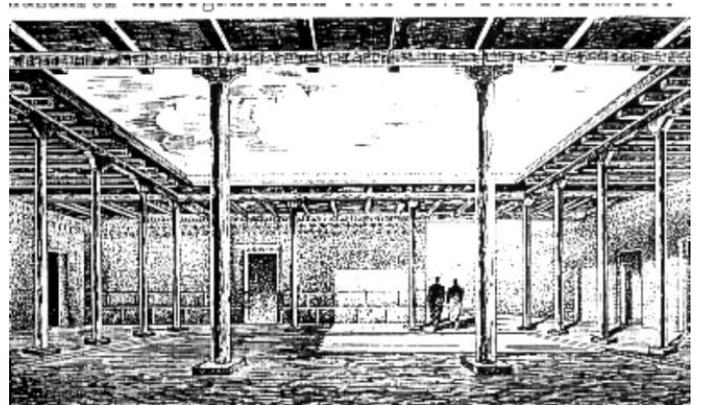
**Fig. 7.** Erebuni (Yerevan), Arin Berd, fortified palace and city: (a) Site plan (S. G. Vardanian: *The capitals of Armenia*, p.191., Z. T. Bashinian: *Arhitektura v sovietskoi Armenii*. Moscow, 1951. p.43.)



**Fig. 8.** Erebuni, ceremonial reception hall (Chaldean palace), reconstruction (S. G. Vardanian: *The capitals of Armenia*. Ierevan, 1995. p.191.).



**Fig. 9.** Teishebaini, detached house of a craftsman and a repeated residential house, floor plans.



**Fig. 10.** Teishebaini, theoretical reconstruction of residential house with central courtyard (by K. L. Oganesian).

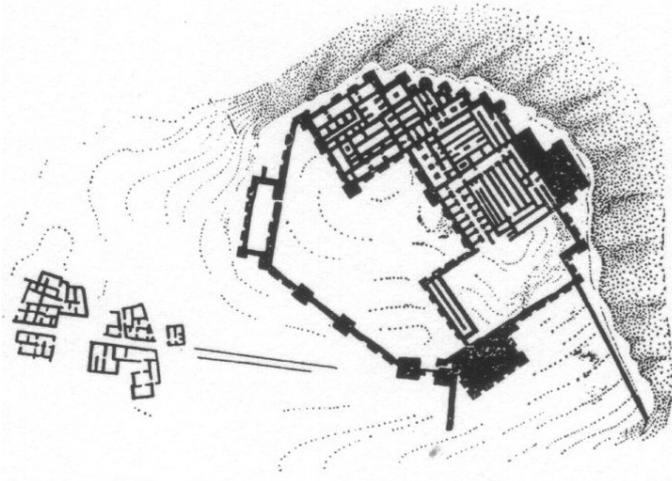
three parts of the palace were organized in a 'U-shape' and were mainly of the same arrangement: a loose fabric of passage-like rooms enclosed in solid walls. The outer walls of the palace with antae and battlement also served as the northern and eastern walls of the fort..

The gate of the fort, with a double tower-like structure, opened at the southern corner of the palace. There were no rooms in the southern and western side of the fort, and only thick walls protected the courtyard.

A little farther away from the fort and the residential unit,

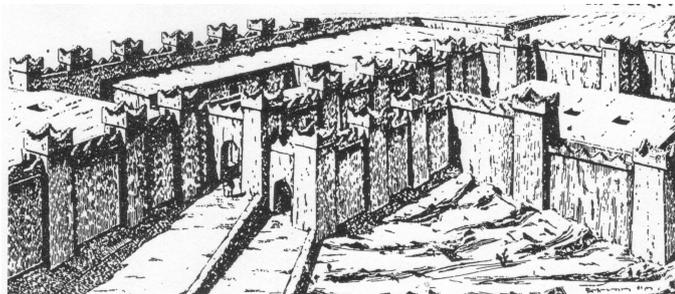
foundations of some detached and more complex houses were also found. Traces show that these were workshops or houses of craftsmen and were connected with bronze work. They were rebuilt or built on each other over several periods, and traces indicate they were operated or were inhabited until the 3rd century.

At the same time of the establishment of Teishebaini-Karmirblur, the establishment of another settlement, Argistehinili is also associated with the name of *King Argiste II*. The city here also has a double structure. The citadel and the palace stood on the western side of the hill, while the residential part occupied the eastern side of the hill. It was partially excavated in 1962, and K. K. Kafadarjan mapped a theoretical reconstruction



**Fig. 11.** Teyshebaini, site plan. (Z. T. Bashinian: *Arhitektura v sovietskoj Armenii*. Moscow, 1951. p.44.)

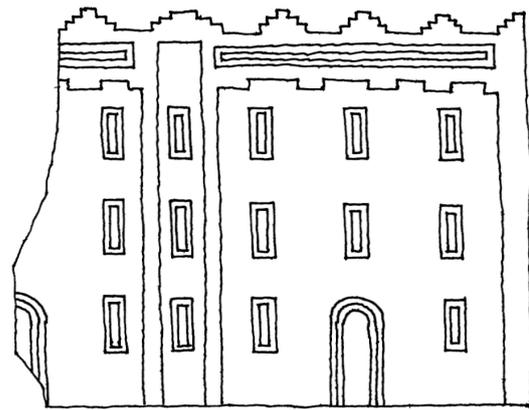
of the palace. No reconstruction was carried out here either.



**Fig. 12.** Argistehinili, theoretical reconstruction of the citadel (by K. K. Kafadarjan).

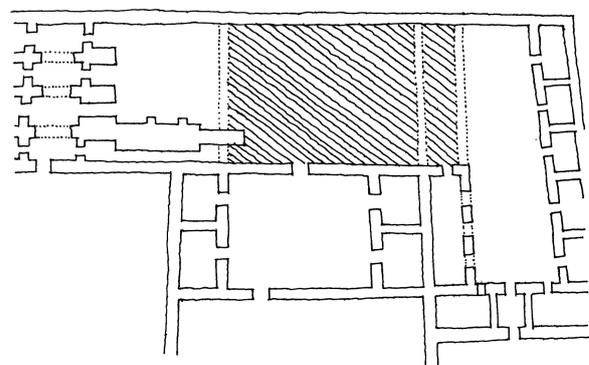
The already known western Asian types of housing can be found in the residential part with craftsmen's houses suitable for bronze work. The fortified palace was a net, made of a loose connection of the three units. The entrance opened on the eastern side of the central unit. Based on the floor arrangement and the details found, the style of its architectural forerunners, the Chaldean-Neo-Babylonian palaces can be seen. The architect planning the reconstruction obviously used elements of the Babylonian Processional Way and of the façade of the Ishtar Gate (Berlin, Museum of Anterior Asia) as analogy. Other remains also give support for the consistent use of the analogy. The establishing and building of another city, Toprah-Kaleh can also be dated to the same period (around 714 BC). We have no data for an excavation of the site (it was probably not carried out) but pieces of pottery and bronze depicting buildings were found in the area. The stylised depictions of well-known Babylonian buildings with towers and battlement can be recognized in these.

When reviewing prehistoric and Urartian settlements, the surviving and known prehistoric and ancient settlements and forts of the province of Nakhicsevan should be noted. The area had a significant fort-system from the 3rd millennium (*Berdik, Arbat, Azat, Nahajir, Surmalik, Gagh, Giran* etc). In the beginning, the natural land-formations, mainly projecting rock-plateaus, were 'modified' to defensive needs by small ramparts, and from the



**Fig. 13.** Toprah-Kaleh, piece of bronze depicting building.

middle of the 2nd millennium these 'citadels' also had significant built details (*Arbat, Jahuk, Giran and Jugha*). The city, the defensive structure and the palace of Yernzak was built around 1000 BC. The valley of the river and the rock-plateau above it provided a natural protection for the settlement, and traces of the residential part can be found lower down the hill, between the river and the rock. The rock-roof with steep walls was also artificially fortified; its considerable walls of stone and brick can still be seen. The palace was in the centre of the defensive ring: with passage-like spaces arranged around several courtyards.



**Fig. 14.** Yernzak, palace, excavated floor plan)

Significant pieces of decorative art of the same age were found in Nakhicsevan forts and their surroundings. The earliest layer is represented by rock-carvings near *Navasar*: mainly geometric signs or abstract forms so far without any interpretation. However, the tradition of signs carved into stone survived in this very area even in Hellenism, and traces can be found even at the beginning of Armenian writing (carvings similar to Greek and Armenian letters). The signs of the prehistoric layer are considerably simpler than rock carvings near Mount Aragats. Assyrian and Persian influence is represented by the developed figural

statues (*Mohrablur*, bull statue; *Astapat*, human figure and portrays; *Babonk*, statues of human heads, etc). Though the siren or bull figures of *Alishar* or the griffin-figure of *Zavachri* indicate the mixing of local and Hellenistic traditions in sculpture, it cannot be connected to individual settlements, but the appearance of life trees (palmettes) can be dated to this same period, the 7th century BC. Some elements of these can be found in Armenian decorations of the Middle Ages, as well in the repertory of shapes of the peoples of the Great Migrations (e.g. Hungarians).

The Mede-Persian conquest ended the rule of Urartu in 585 BC, and the capital, *Tushpa* was also destroyed. However, a part of the former Nairi federation survived and a province, *Proto-Armenia* was formed under Mede control. The beginning of the Yervanduni dynasty and the existence of the first Armenian state started with the reign of *Yervand I* in 570 BC. *Armavir* (east of Argistehinili) became the new capital. In fact, this city prospered later in Hellenism. The forming Armenian society continued its development under *Achaemenid* control from 550 BC.