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Preface

Als das Zentrum für Archäologie und Kulturgeschichte des Schwarzmeerraumes (ZAKS e.V.) im Mai 2000 in Halle gegründet wurde, richtete sich der Fokus seiner Gründungsmitglieder auf die Erforschung einer wissenschaftlich faszinierenden Region, die noch bis in die 1990er Jahre hinein aufgrund der jahrzehntelangen geopolitischen Blockstaatenbildung nur Teilen der internationalen Forschung zugänglich war. Über die Grenzen nationalstaatlicher Archäologien hinaus sollten demgegenüber nun einerseits interdisziplinäre Untersuchungen zur (Kultur-) Geschichte der Anrainerstaaten entlang der Schwarzmeerküsten im Vordergrund stehen, andererseits aber auch die entfernteren Regionen des Südkaukasus sowie der nördlichen Ägäis aufgrund vielfältiger kulturhistorischer Querverbindungen berücksichtigt werden. Das Schwarzmeergebiet wurde somit nicht mehr – wie lange Zeit geschehen – isoliert betrachtet, sondern als ein integraler Bestandteil der (prä-)historischen Welt verstanden. Dieser so definierte geographische Raum und die damit einhergehende, chronologisch große Spannweite historisch-archäologischer Quellen umfassen dabei die Betätigungsfelder der unterschiedlichen, im ZAKS mittlerweile vertretenen Disziplinen der Vor- und Frühgeschichte, Vorderasiatischen sowie Klassischen Archäologie – eine wissenschaftliche Diversität, die in besonderem Maße auch in der Schriftenreihe des Forschungszentrums zum Ausdruck kommt, welche 2001 mit einem ersten Konferenzband zu Karasura im heutigen Bulgarien ins Leben gerufen wurde.

Der hier nun vorliegende 28. Band „*Current Research on South Caucasian Antiquity*“ fügt sich harmonisch in diese Tradition ein und widmet sich der Vorgeschichte einer Region, die im Rahmen der Reihe bislang nur in einer Studie von 2012 (Band 22) zum Austausch und Kulturkontakt in der Spätbronze- und Früheisenzeit Beachtung gefunden hat und folgerichtig einer weiteren Bearbeitung auf aktuellem Kenntnisstand dringend be-

durfte. Anhand neuester Forschungen, die sowohl auf der Neubetrachtung bereits durchgeführter Ausgrabungen basieren als auch die Präsentation aktuell laufender Untersuchungen mit raumanalytischen, siedlungstopographischen sowie metallurgischen Schwerpunkten umfassen, zeichnen die Autorinnen und Autoren des vorliegenden Bandes ein hochinteressantes Bild der Vorgeschichte des Südkaukasus, dessen enorme Bedeutung als ‚Scharnier‘ zwischen den fortschrittlichen Zivilisationen im Süden und dem pontischen Raum außer Zweifel steht. Im Nachgang zu einer internationalen Konferenz an der Staatlichen Ilia-Universität in Tbilisi im Juni 2022 ist es den beiden Betreuerinnen des vorliegenden Bandes – Simone Arnhold und Nino Doborjginidze – dabei hervorragend gelungen, Forschungsbeiträge international ausgewiesener Spezialistinnen und Spezialisten zusammenzuführen und durch die spezifische Themenwahl insgesamt eine beeindruckende Studie zu erstellen, die gerade auch den besonderen Wert multinationaler Forschungen zum Ausdruck bringt. Aus Hallescher Perspektive seien an dieser Stelle nur exemplarisch das Ushkani-Projekt in Armenien und das Nazralebi-Projekt in Georgien genannt, die von Seiten der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg gemeinsam mit dem Institut für Archäologie und Ethnologie der Nationalakademie der Wissenschaften der Republik Armenien bzw. der Staatlichen Ilia-Universität in Tbilisi in den vergangenen Jahren durchgeführt wurden. Beide Kooperationsprojekte konnten neuartige Funde und Befunde zutage fördern, die unser Verständnis über kulturhistorische Prozesse und die Genese eines wichtigen (prä-)historischen Kommunikationsraumes östlich des Schwarzen Meeres beachtlich erweitern und die im vorliegenden Band ausführlich vorgestellt werden.

Die Herausgeber danken Simone Arnhold und Nino Doborjginidze sehr für ihre Entscheidung, die Ergebnisse der von ihnen durchgeführten Konferenz in Tbilisi als Band der ZAKS-Reihe zu

veröffentlichen und auf diese Weise dazu beizutragen, dass das wissenschaftliche Spektrum der Reihe auch für die Region östlich des Schwarzen Meeres qualitativ eine wesentliche Bereicherung erfährt. Gerade in geopolitisch bewegten Zeiten ist es unbedingt wünschenswert, dass kulturhistorisch bedeutende Regionen trotz aller Schwierigkeiten auch weiterhin ihre verdiente Aufmerksamkeit erfahren. Für die Region des Südkaukasus in vorgeschichtlicher Zeit haben die beiden Herausgeberinnen des Konferenzbandes diese Herausforderung mit der vorliegenden Publikation in jedem Fall eindrucksvoll gemeistert.

Halle, im Juni 2024
Die Herausgeber der ZAKS-Reihe

Excavations on the Artanish Peninsula, Armenia: Preliminary Results of the Ushkiani Project Field Work, 2019–2021

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Abstract

The Artanish Peninsula forms the eastern section of the Sevan basin (1900–2300 m a.s.l.). The region is abundant in prehistorical and historical archaeological sites, which have not yet undergone comprehensive research. In 2015, 2016, and 2019, the Armenian-German expedition conducted an archaeological survey in the region as part of the ‘Ushkiani-Project’. During this effort, 53 sites were surveyed, 39 of which were previously undiscovered. In 2019, subsequently systematic excavations were conducted at Artanish sites 9, 23, and 29.

These archaeological results indicate that the north-eastern basin of Lake Sevan has been inhabited at least since the Early Bronze Age. The settlement Artanish 9 materials suggest that local characteristics are visible within the Early Bronze Age Kura-Araxes culture. The excavations at Artanish 23 and 29 cemeteries present evidence of additional settlement periods in the area, from the end of the Late Bronze Age until the Late Iron Age. The artefacts retrieved from the burial sites display identifiable elements of the Lchashen-Metsamor culture.

Introduction

The Artanish Peninsula forms the eastern part of the Sevan basin (1900–2300 m a.s.l.). Currently, the Peninsula covers an area of 25 km², with Mount Artanish being its highest point at an elevation of

2461 m a.s.l.¹ The region has been referenced since the Urartian period² until the late Middle Ages,³ and subsequently in the notes of travellers.⁴

The region boasts numerous pre-historical and historical archaeological sites. However, these sites have not been thoroughly investigated, and excavations were almost non-existent until recently, which caused the area to be considered a scientific terra incognita. One contributing factor to this had been difficult accessibility and the area’s marginal/island nature.

This article will present the key findings from excavations carried out between 2019 and 2021 (partly 2022) by ‘Ushkiani-Project’ (Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia (IAE NASRA) and the Seminar for Oriental Archaeology and Art History of the Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg).⁵

Research history

Prehistoric archaeological sites in the Artanish region were first mentioned at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century. A cyclopean fortress on the Artanish peninsula (Adatapa) is mentioned by A. Ivanovsky.⁶ E. E. Lalayan also mentions some fortresses⁷ and carried out excavations

1 Nazaryan 1976, 134; Hakobyan et al. 1986, 491.

2 Salvini 2008, 496.

3 Arakel Davrizhetsi 1990, 106, 114.

4 Smbatyants 1895, 634–636; Alishan 1893, 65, 76–77.

5 Investigations have been carried out in Artanish as part of the ‘Ushkiani’ project: ‘The Importance of Armenian Gold for Cultural Development in Bronze Age Caucasia’ funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (Project number 410373002).

6 Ivanovsky 1911, 28.

7 Lalayan 1910, 31–34.



Fig. 1. Map of Artanish peninsula with the mentioned archaeological sites (Base map: SRTM by courtesy of the USGS and the NASA, public domain; water bodies: extracted from GADM, CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 US [A. Swieder, Halle (Saale)])

in the necropolis near the village of Nadezhdino/Shorzha (now Shoghakat), between the village and the Artanish peninsula on the northern shore of the lake: a small grave was unearthed here, surrounded by groups of other graves.⁸

From 1926 to 1928, when the exploration of Lake Sevan itself began,⁹ the Committee for the Preservation of Antiquities in Armenia, headed by A. Kalantar, carried out works around the lake and on the Artanish peninsula.¹⁰ In the 1920s, the Armenian writer and traveller Atrpet described the sites in the region under discussion. He wrote about the antiquities of Sotk, Vardanabak, Basargechar, Mazra, Shorzha and Artanish (fortresses, tombs, dolmens).¹¹ In the 1960s, G. Mikayelyan and S. Yesayan conducted

separate surveys and documented the fortresses of Dashti-ler and Artanish, including a corresponding topographical map.¹² From 2004 to 2005, the joint Armenian-Italian archaeological expedition conducted surveys in the area surrounding the Artanish Peninsula. The results obtained from the surveys were used to compile a preliminary report on the fortresses of the Artanish Peninsula and Shorzha/Shoghakat.¹³

There have been no systematic excavations in the region. The only evidence is the above-mentioned grave excavated by E. Lalayan near the village of Nadezhdino/Shorzha, and nothing is known about its contents or dating. Occasionally, the scientific literature mentions accidental finds (e.g., materials from the Kura-Araxes culture of the Early Bronze Age,¹⁴ the Trialeti-Vanadzor cul-

8 Lalayan 1931, 67; Tumyan 1937, 25.

9 Petrosyan 2015, 57–58, 153.

10 Kalantar 1994, 6; 47; 49; 2007, 21; 242; cf. Karakhanyan 2003, ill. XXII.

11 Atrpet 1924, 32; 45 ff.

12 Mikayelyan, Esayan 1968, 293–294; Mikayelyan 1968, 45–46. Topomap.

13 Hmayakyan et al. 2008, 155–156.

14 Petrosyan 2018, 13.

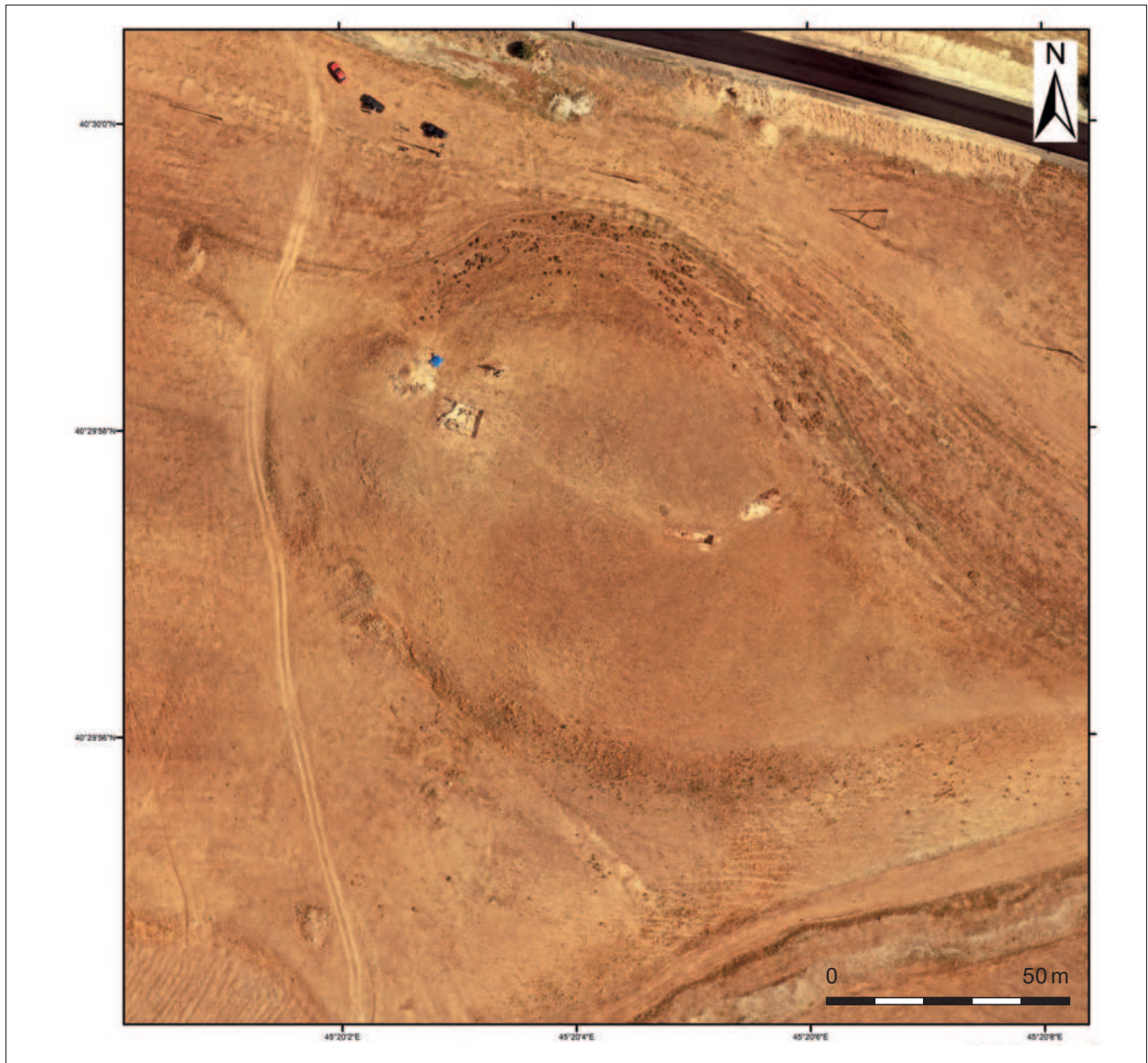


Fig. 2. Artanish 9, airview, 2021 (photo: A. Mkrtchyan)

ture of the Middle Bronze Age,¹⁵ or the basalt anchor/weight stone found at Shorzha/Shoghakat¹⁶).

In 2015–2016, and 2019, within the framework of the Ushkiani project, the Armenian-German Sotk Expedition carried out archaeological surveys in the region: 53 sites were surveyed, of which 39 sites were new discoveries. In 2019, J. Fassbinder and his team had boosted the surveys at three archaeological sites by carrying out magnetometer surveys (Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München), after which systematic excavations started there: Artanish 9, 23 and 29 (fig. 1).¹⁷

Excavations

Artanish 9 is situated between the villages of Artanish and Shoghakat (N 40.49904°, E 045.33517°, 1942 m a.s.l.). The site features rectangular and oval layout structures on the western surface of the hill. In the northeastern part of the area, there are tombs, while the southern part of the hill shows a visible section of a wall (see fig. 2, 3). The site first gained attention in 2015 after the Ushkiani project conducted a survey and collected Early Bronze Age pottery sherds and obsidian flakes from the hill's surface. In 2020–2021, excavations took place in Trench A (western part of the hill) and Trench B (eastern part).

A site was selected for Trench A due to the presence of stone deposits on the surface, which were believed to be a component of an Early Bronze Age

15 Piliposyan / Mkrtchyan 2001, 5.

16 Petrosyan 2015, 17 pl. III–IV.

17 Bobokhyan / Kunze 2021, 500–510.

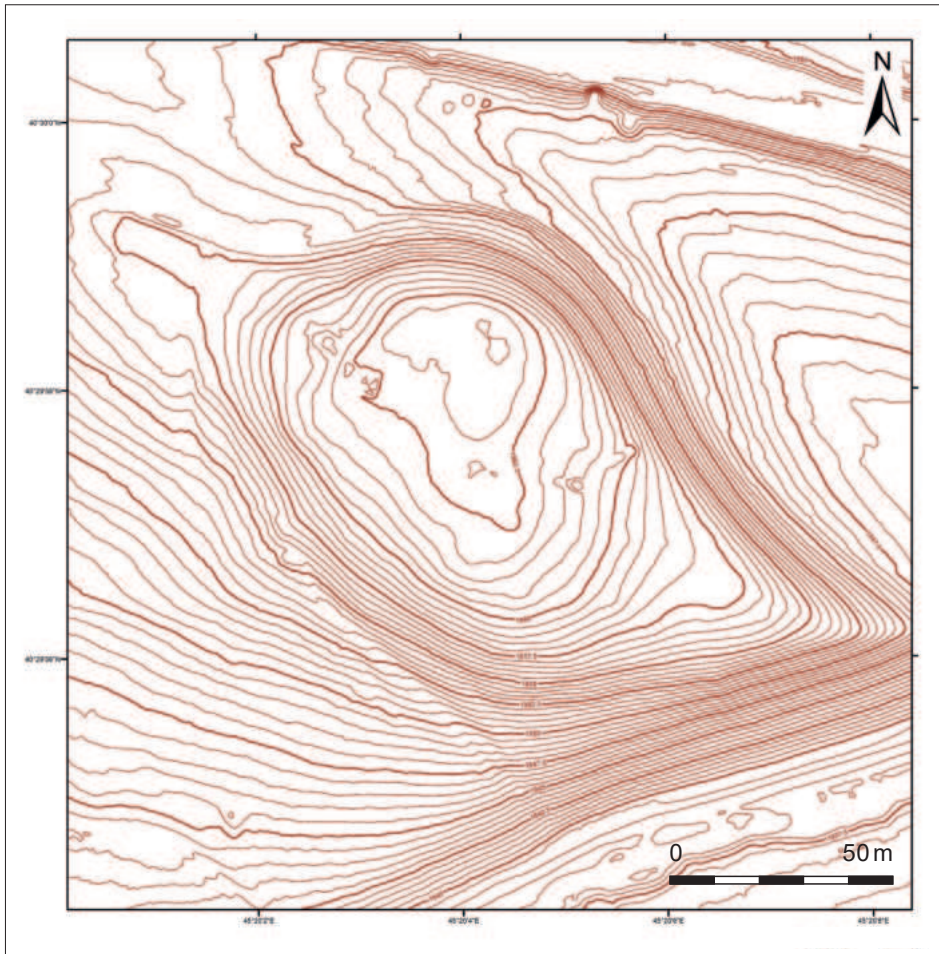


Fig. 3. Artanish 9, topographic map, 2021 (A. Mkrtchyan)

structure. However, subsequent excavations revealed that they actually belong to the Late Medieval and recent period (Layer 0) (see figs. 4 and 5). The structures are oval, and are either arranged in three rows or a single row, with a west-east orientation.

The aforementioned structures are immediately followed by a cultural layer of the Early Bronze Age (Layer 1, 1a) (figs. 4–6). The excavations revealed walls of two structures (a third is not very prominent). The first, Structure 5, extends from the north-east of the ditch to the south-west, defining the area to the east of the ditch. It is lined with large stones and has a filling (30–40 cm thick). The interior of the building was completely filled with stones that had fallen from the wall. In addition to stones, sherds of pottery and animal bones were found. The floor of the building was not well fixed due to lack of space. It is still difficult to say what the function of Structure 5 might have been. The dimensions and construction techniques allow us to define it as an enclosure (figs. 4, 6–8).

East of Structure 5 lies Structure 8, a circular dwelling with a diameter of approximately 4 m. Excavation of Structure 8 is currently ongoing, but

a single wall of the structure is visible showing a construction of medium-sized stones coated with a clay plaster. It measures up to 80 cm in height and 20–25 cm in thickness. In the centre of the dwelling, a clay hearth, consistent with the Kura-Araxes culture, was discovered *in situ* (see figs. 6, 8). Few artifacts were found at this location, including sherds, fragments of a hearth, two groundstones, animal bones, and obsidian flakes.

In Trench A, there exists an unoccupied area between Structure 5 and Structure 8, referred to as a ‘corridor’ conditionally (figs. 6, 9). In contrast to the dwelling, this area is full of sherds (including incomplete vessels), animal bones, beads, and fragments of hearths as well as stones, bones, and flint tools (figs. 25, 26).

Trench B is located on the eastern part of the hill where surface stones were scarcely visible. A round plan structure (ca. 6 m diameter) was documented there (Structure 1). The one-row wall of the building is again lined with stones, the wall is plastered with clay, and, unlike Structure 8 of Trench A, it is lined with larger stones (fig. 10). A pit was fixed inside the dwelling (figs. 10, 11).



Fig. 4. Artanish 9, Trench A, 2021 (photo: A. Mkrtchyan)



Fig. 5. Artanish 9, Trench A, Structure 1, Eastern profile (photo: Ushkiani project)