МЕЦАМОР
(Исследование по данным раскопок 1965—1966 гг.)
SUMMARY

The ancient settlement of Metsamor is dated close to the Middle Quaternary period (Acheulian Musterian), characterised by volcanic cones rising in the center of the fertile valley of the Ararat, located at the sources of the river Metsamor.

The fortified sector of the settlement has an area of about 30 hectares and is clearly delimited by the swampy banks of the river Metsamor and its left-side tributaries. The remains of an outer rampart and of ancient dwellings are located on the flat territories extending to the slopes of the hills. Two rows of mighty fortress walls inside of which industrial buildings (foundries, concentrating mills, etc.) are erected on the slopes of the Great Hill, and these can be traced along the inner perimeter of the oval, delineated by the river's beds. Buildings of a religious character are erected on the top of the Great Hill and on the Small Hill. Beyond the fortified area of the settlement, northward, the remains of various constructions can be seen. A burial ground which has existed since the beginning of the II millennium B.C. is found in the valley north of the settlement.

The stratigraphy of the settlement of Metsamor has been determined on the basis of cultural layers excavated in cross section over an area 100 m² and to a depth of 6 m (coloured plate II), based on the data furnished by the stratigraphic relationships of the cultural layers found in the excavated sectors of the citadel.

The excavations bear witness that the hill was inhabited from the beginning of the third millennium up to the VII century B.C. After a long interval Metsamor returned to life in the middle ages, approximately in the IX—XIII centuries A.D., which is confirmed by the traces of individual buildings, coins, pieces of ordinary and glazed pottery, ornaments etc.

Layers pertaining to the Early and Middle Bronze Age, to the Late Bronze and the Early Iron, as well as to the Urartian period have been brought to light through stratigraphic excavations.

The lower 2 m. thick Early Bronze layer, uncovered over a small area (25 m²), is characterized by numerous fragments of black-polished pottery (fig. 11-18, plates I-II), stonemade tools and weapons (fig. 5-10). Similar objects have been found on the Armenian highlands among the remnants dating back to the III millennium B.C.

Over the first layer, along the section of the stratigraphic pit, was discovered layer II (related to the Middle Bronze Age). Within it, two sublayers have been found containing implements (fig. 20), painted pottery (plates III-IV) and pieces of grayish and brown earthenware (fig. 19). Monochromatic pottery decorated with spiral ornaments and garlands of hatched thumbs are also present. They are concomitant with ceramic pottery decorated with pectinate designs. Polychrome pottery, the ornaments of which correspond to the motifs typical for the early period of the Late Bronze Age (fig. 26), are distinctive for the upper horizon, i.e. the Middle Bronze layer dating back to the XX—XIV centuries B.C.

The cultural layer belonging to the Late Bronze and Early Iron ages is represented by two sublayers at the stratigraphic excavations of Metsamor. The lower one can be divided,
in its turn, into two horizons correlated with the excavated materials and the coloration of the superficial fillings. The lower horizon is characterized by a limited quantity of fragments of ornamented and polished original pottery (plates VI—VII), the analogues of which are known from the relics of the XIV—XIII centuries B. C. (Lchashen, Guegharot, Artik). Whole specimens of pottery have also been found in the burial places of Metsamor (fig. 27). The pottery found in the burial No 2 (excavated by L. Barsghian in 1963), establishes a link between the Middle and Late Bronze ages (fig. 30—32), and it deserves particular attention. A dagger found in that burial place (on the left of fig. 22) is similar to the one found by J. Morgan in the dolmen of Shila Khan (Persian Talish) dated, according to F. Schaeffer, 1450—1350 B. C.

In the upper horizon at a sublayer depth of 0.4 m. stone tools (fig. 34), bone-made awls (fig. 35), buttons (fig 36), pottery decorated with concentric circles (fig. 41), flutes and curved ornaments (pl. IX) have been found, the analogues of which are known to us from the remnants dating back to the XII—XI centuries B. C. (Artik, Zovouni, Nor-Bayazet, Khorom, Kherkhi, etc.).

An intact specimen of a vessel decorated with curved ornaments (fig. 42, 43) has been found in burial place No 1 (1963) together with a dagger (fig. 44), the close analogues of which have been discovered in the burials dating from the XI—IX centuries B. C. (Kotaïk, Etchmiadzin, Loussadzor, Redkin-camp). In Georgia they are known as the "Colchidian daggers".

The upper sublayer pertaining to the Late Bronze and Early Iron ages may be conventionally designated as the layer "bearing the traces of fire". It is generally characterized by a greenish-yellow colour, calcined brows, sooty walls, decolourized fragments of earthenware and other objects. In the stratified pit and the structure presumably designated as "the premise of the hearths" (coloured plate II and plate XXIV) is covered with the clay floor of a large foundry pertaining to the Urartaean period.

The greatest quantity of material has been obtained from the "hearth premises" where the charred remains of cereals, a number of ash-filled original hearths, an earthen "bath" and many stone implements have been found. Among the latter which deserve particular attention are axe-shaped implements (fig. 145, pl. XII), a rectangular clay mold carved with the figure of a swastika (fig. 36), two tablet-like zoomorphic amulets, one of which bears letter shaped designs (Pl. XXIX, fig. 131, 132), pottery (fig. 48—57) and fireplaces for worship.

The pottery found in the above-mentioned layer is particularly interesting. Among them the big jars decorated with plait-like relief designs (fig. 48), the spherical ewers with the figures of sacred snakes (fig. 120—123), the pots decorated with motives filled with multiple rows of undulating lines, beautiful pitchers with their patterned handles and ornamented flutes bearing wheat-ear designs (fig. 125) are typical for that layer. A seven-woled "Kernos" should also be considered among the most interesting samples of art objects.

Analogous pottery are often encountered in the pre-Urartaean layers of the settlements found in the Ararat valley (Dvin, Karmebloor, Mouchkannat-têpê). They have also been found in Kirovakán, Makarashen, Redkin-camp, Tazakend and other settlements dating back to the X—IX centuries B. C.

Analogues of the above-mentioned pottery have been found among the Kirovabad—Khanlar sepulchral artifacts dating from the XI—IX centuries B. C., in the charred layer of the settlement of Saritpê (Kazakh), in Natsars-Gora (southern Ossetia) - in the layer pertaining to the end of the II and the beginning of the I millenia B. C., as well as in the burials of Tsintskaro (Trialeti) referring to the same period.

Besides Metsamor, layers displaying traces of fires have also been discovered in Dvin, Mouchkannat-têpê, the III horizon of the II excavation and the layer of the II layer of the No 3 excavation near the grove of Karmeebloor.

The chronology of the remnants of material culture and the stratigraphic data give reason to assert that the above mentioned pre-Urartaean settlements, including the settlement of Met-
samor, have been destroyed and burnt by the Urartaeans in the eighties of the VIII century B.C., during the campaigns of Argistis I. Thereby, the above-indicated pre-Urartaean layer of Metsamor should be ascribed to the X—VII centuries B.C.

The available data make it possible to assume that the Urartaeans extended their military operations far off to the north, conquered the valley of the river Agstel and captured the settlement of Sarlเทp. As attested by the Urartean inscriptions, the Ararat plain from Argistikhnili to Karmeer-bloor - was called at that time the country of Aza. It leaves no doubt that Metsamor was within its borders.

The cultural layer admittedly called by us „foundry layer“ stands forth as the upper one in the plots where there are no medieval remnants and is actually the most extended. It is characterized by its numerous foundries and auxiliary industrial constructions.

The stratigraphic section of that layer is equal to 1.80 m. in thickness. In that sector it shows the remains of the brick layers, of large foundries and their auxiliary premises (pl. XIX—XX).

On the north-eastern slope the thickness of the foundry layer is equal to 1.20 m. It contains cylindrical foundry molds (pl. XXII—XXIII). A great quantity of industrial wastes and drosses have been found in and around the foundries. A nozzle, fragments of trough-like and cylindrical pottery implements, square lids, glazed tiles and clay props, all of which have been used in the foundries, were also preserved. Among other interesting materials, a large quantity of briquettes prepared of a mixture of clay and ground bones has also been found.

The pottery found in the „foundry layer“ is diversified as to the shape and character of the ornamentations. Fragments of big jars, pottery pots, basinplates and vessels with short biconical bodies were also discovered (pl. XIX—XVII and fig. 68—78). All of them have their analogues among the remnants pertaining to the VIII—VII centuries B.C. - Ereboonli, Argistikhnili, Karmeer-bloor.

By means of special samplings of the hills, surface, as well as through the investigation of the components of metallurgical drosses and foundry wastes, half-finished and finished products, it has been possible to establish the over-all picture affording the peculiar „industrial“ aspect of the settlement.

Besides the great differentiation of the trades connected with the foundry works, the similarity in composition of a number of products (bronzes, pastes, glass, flux additions) bears witness to the considerable standardization and the high level of development of the technological schemes of production.

The excavations carried out during the years 1965—1966 have brought to light 24 smelting-furnaces which can be divided in two groups, brick-laid and quadratic in section or clay-made and cylindrical.

The diversity of the smelting products indicates that there probably existed other kinds of smelting furnaces. The dispersion of metallurgical drosses and other wastes of the foundry production throughout the whole territory of the settlement bears witness to the very large scale of production.

It is worthy of notice that the briquettes made of a mixture of ground bones and clay were used as flux in all kinds of meltings. Their production was carried out in large installations, the so-called concentrating mills, located on the northern slope of the Great Hill. It was based on the gravitational separation of the mixture from the water solution.

Of all the installations, the one which has been kept in the best condition dates back to the beginning of the I millennium B.C. The remains of two other rock-carved installations, analogous as to the principle scheme of production, although more archaic in their features, are related to the II and III milleniums B.C. respectively.

The smelting furnaces excavated in 1965—66 date from the beginning of the I millennium B.C.; however the remains of the smelting production as, for instance, the metallurgical drosses, the foundry wastes of the bronzite production the presence of cassiterite in all the cultural layers, etc., attest to the existence of traditional kinds of production related to the foundry works during all the epochs of the settlement’s existence.
The religious monuments of Metsamor deserve particular attention.

The very first investigations of the complex of the Small Hill of Metsamor have shown that besides its religious significance it had also an astronomical importance related to the most primitive observations of the celestial bodies. 200 meters away from the site of the excavations there is an assemblage of rocks. Three of them have artificial platforms. The first one, triangular in shape (fig. 146—147), has its smallest angle turned to the south. The bisector of that angle coincides with the north-to-south direction. On the eastern side of the triangle there is a rock-carved trapezium including four stellar figures (fig. 147, pl. XXXIII—1). There are also different symbols, the meaning of which is still unknown to us. The second platform is located 2.5 m. above the first one. It is also triangular in shape and in line with the meridian.

The third platform differs from the two others. The stairs leading to it from the north to the south are cut in the rock (fig. 148) and narrow at the top. A sign indicating the "north-south-east" direction (fig. 149) has been carved on the last step, which suggests that primitive astronomical observations were carried out here in antiquity.

We have tried to find out the designation of the first platform bearing the figure of a trapezium and stellar symbols. By measuring the azimuth of the trapezium and comparing it with the azimuth of the heavenly body rising in that same direction we were able to obtain an interesting result. The declination of the luminary is found in the interval 21°—22°. The Hawkins list of stellar positions affords to establish that the heavenly body which rose in that direction and drew the attention of the inhabitants of Metsamor was probably Sirius, the inclination of which was equal to the above-stated in the middle of the third millennium B.C. During the summer solstice it can be observed early in the morning. Thereby it can be assumed that the heavenly body which was observed and worshipped by the ancient inhabitants of Metsamor and the first emergence of which they could have related to the beginning of the year was Sirius.

The complex found on the Small Hill of Metsamor leaves no doubt that since remote antiquity the inhabitants of the Armenian Highlands were acquainted with astronomy—a fact which also bears witness to the high level of their culture. Metsamor is also rich in other rock-carved monuments located along the upper belt of the citadel and dedicated to the cult of rain and spring waters, and of the celestial bodies.

As a rule, together with the rock-made structures of Metsamor, separate symbols and whole groups of rock-carved inscriptions are also encountered (pl. pl. XXX—XXXIV).

A whole group of sanctuaries were erected at the end of the II and the beginning of the I millenia B.C. over the rocky platform located on the north-western slope of the citadel. The complex includes a few premises meant for domestic purposes, two sanctuaries and a stall for the sacrificial animals.

The sanctuaries have a rectangular outline, a little elongated from north to south and occupy, an area nearly equal to 40 square meters. Clay-made sacrificial altars stand in the center (pl. XXVI—XXVII) while several sections assigned for different purposes are found along the northern and southern walls. On the southern part of the first sanctuary there is a section which probably served as a place for libation and ablation; a section allotted to the offerings is found in its northern part (fig. 110). In the second sanctuary there are original clay structures which were probably allotted to the cereals used for ritual purposes (pl. XXVIII). A pan for baking bread (fig. 17), found in the hearth of the second sanctuary, and clay-made models of loaves left on the floor near the stove (fig. 116) attest to the performance of rites dedicated to the offerings of bread.

The eastern side of the main, elevated altar is furnished with three rows of carvings. The figures of the first row are column-shaped. The two following figures of the first sanctuary (fig. 110) remind of stylized anthropomorphic designs with lateral grooves and the hands raised towards the sky. Analogues of these figures have been found in the dwellings and religious hearths of the pre-Urartean layers of
Karmer-bloor, and at the excavations of Kho-via and Digomi (Georgia).

These figures are similar to those of neolithic goddesses carved on the walls of the sanctuary of Catal-Hayak, and represented, according to J. Mellart, as if they give birth to a bull (the embossed clay-made head of the bull is carved under the figure of the goddess).

The image of the goddess in conjunction with the bull is also typical of the culture of Tri-polit in the III millennium B.C. In Ancient Armenia, the goddess Anahid was considered as "keeper of bulls" and as attested by our historians, herds of sacred bulls were kept next to her temples to serve for sacrificial offerings.

From remotest times the bull was considered as the patron of agriculture, as a force which poured heavenly waters over the Earth. It was considered also as the symbol of the God of lightning and thunder by many ancient nations.

It is quite possible that the above-mentioned anthropomorphic figures found in the altars of Metsamor represented the goddess of vegetation and the sovereign mistress of animals, called upon to bear the God of fertility. It can also be assumed that they represented Father-Heaven and Mother-Earth, who were also urged to give birth to a new deity.

Thus the Metsamor complex of sanctuaries is a religious monument unique in its genre. At the time of the offerings a fire was probably burning in its discoid hearths, while in the small, hollow deepenings the priests solemnly poured fresh and cool water in order to captivate the waters of heaven.

Sanctuaries with clay-made altars and contemporary to those of Metsamor have also been excavated at Dvin, Saritpepe and Natsar-gora.

Metsamor is rich in religious vessels, implements and artifacts related to religious ceremonies.

Among these vessels the pypnos holds an important place. Its inflated trunk is decorated with the coiled body of a sacred snake carved in relief (fig. 120—123). Very often the figure of the snake is bordered, from above and below, with belts symbolizing wheat ears (fig. 123), which emphasizes the connection between the snake and fertility, for the safeguarding of ce- real wealth. In combination with the ornaments symbolizing the celestial, terrestrial and underground waters, the snake appears as the patron of the sacred, life-giving waters ensuring fertility, revival, eternity-endlessness.

Natural phenomena, such as the rainbow, lightning, rain, i.e. the attributes of the God-thunder, have also been reflected in the composition of a number of vessels.

There is no doubt that special implements were used during the religious ceremonies. That is attested by the seven-shafted keros, the singular lampad (fig. 129), the props (fig. 130), the mobile hearths (fig. 115), the pan used for baking ritual bread (fig. 117) and the patterns used for decorating bread (figs. 134, 135), which were found during the excavations.

The talisman-amulets, carved in the shape of a bull's head are also worthy of notice. On one of them there are unintelligible inscriptions probably indicating formulas of malediction (fig. 132, pl. XXIX).

Theuff-made idol with the image of the swastika on the ear (fig. 137, 138) is particularly interesting. It is remarkable for the stylization and primitivism of its features. The image of the swastika is also met with on the idols discovered at the excavations of Noyemberian, Karmer-bloop and St. Yalla (in the region of Sisstan). The lower part of the idol found at Metsamor is not flat; it is likely that once it stood on a pedestal. After it fell two holes were made at both ends for the purpose of attaching it to animals (fig. 139—141).

The earthenware statuette wearing a necklace, a breastcollar, long tresses and a dress decorated with ceramic figures probably represents the abstract image of a goddess patroness of fertility (fig. 142, 143).

The investigation of the funeral rites has also provided interesting data about the spiritual life of the inhabitants of Metsamor. The burial ground is found on the eastern and southeastern side of the citadel, at a distance of nearly one kilometer. It has been the permanent cemetery of the inhabitants of Metsamor since the II millennium, and into the VII century B. C.

Ordinary graves were found in the majority of the excavated stone cases dating
from that period, which are built of unpolished stones and covered with tuff plates. The pottery and adornments found in these burials (fig. 160—168, pl. pl. XXXV—XL1) have their analogues in the complexes of pre-Urartean interments: Karmeer-bloor, Tazakend, Elar, Nor-Bayazet, etc.

Among the excavated burial places No. 4 is of particular importance. A two-layered grave differing from the others by its funeral rituals and burial implements, has been discovered in it.

Apart from the objects reflecting exclusively the local treated-black-polished ornamented pottery (fig. 169), a necklace made of cornelian, agate and lead-glass beads (coloured fig. VII), original silver-made spiral locks set with half-crescents for adorning the hair (pl. XLIII), other objects characteristic of the culture of Urartu (kingdom of Van) have also been discovered. Among them we may notice a red-polished beautiful vessel (pl. XVII) and safety-pins with ornamented heads (pl. XLIII), the analogues of which have been found in the Urartean settlements and burials dating from the VII century B.C.

The bronze belt depicting hunting scenes is also very valuable. The three stripes composing it are decorated with the figures of bulls, lions, chariots, riders, horses, winged deities, rosettes and palmetos. Analogous belts have been found in the "colombarium" of Nor-Aresh (Ereboon), at Gousitchi, Altin-tépé, Kavalidır and the burial site No. 40 excavated at Tlis (Southern Ossetia).

The material investigated in 1965—66 witness almost uninterrupted development of the settlement of Metsamor from the beginning of the III to the beginning of the I millennium B.C. and serve as evidence that its inhabitants belonged to a single ethnic group of local population. A more thorough inquiry of the material obtained and further investigations at Metsamor will probably afford to comprehend more accurately the social problems of the ancient inhabitants of the Armenian Highlands.
şərq Səkkizdər

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Արդարացված խմբի կազմավորման մասին: Ընդգրկված տնօրինություն այս խմբի կազմավորման համար է կարծր մաս։

Արդարացված խմբի կազմավորման մասին:

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