

ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE OF ARMENIA



YEREVAN
2012



Ministry of Culture of the Republic Armenia
Historical–Cultural Heritage Scientific Research Centre



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In the hospitable land of Italy at this splendid exhibition dedicated to the archaeological heritage of the Mediterranean eventually for the first time the Armenian culture since prehistoric times to the 14th century is being represented. This is an unprecedented event allowing the international community to apprehend the history and culture of the Biblical

land, the unique and immense archaeological heritage created by our people. This is a culture that reflects also phenomena characteristic only to the Armenian arts as Vishap monuments, Khachkars and others. The bonds of Armenia with Italy were testified since prehistoric times, and on the ancient map exposed in one of the squares of its eternal capital Rome the name of Armenia is written in the list of the important countries of the world. Symbolically this event is realized exactly in Italy where Armenia is present as 2012 honored guest.

We hope that getting acquainted to the archaeological heritage of our country many visitors will be willing to arrive to Armenia. They will be able to apprehend our rich archeological and architectural heritage, admire the grandeur of Biblical Ararat and perceive the taste of Armenian peculiar cuisine and fruits, feel the charm of the hospitable country.

I express my best wishes and success to the exhibition works and Welcome to Armenia!

Hasmik Poghosyan

Minister of Culture of the Republic of Armenia



Zorats Karer (Karabundj), III-II mill. BCE



Hakob Simonyan

INTRODUCTION

The Armenian Highland is a complete physical–geographical unit with over 40 000 km² surface around 1700 m above sea level. It extends between the Iranian and Asia Minor – Anatolian plateaus. In the north it is bordered with the Black Sea and the Kura River, and in the south with Mesopotamian plains. It encircles the whole territory of the modern Republic of Armenia, regions of Georgia and Azerbaijan southern from the Kura River, and western regions of Turkey and Iran. In the 19th century German famous scientist Hermann von Abich investigating the regions southern from the Greater Caucasus, assumed that a high mountainous country is spread southern from the Kura River, which is clearly distinguished from the neighboring regions by its physical–geographical, climatic and geological conditions. By the ethnonym of the main people inhabiting at the epoch this mountainous island he called it Armenian Highland. This term was commonly accepted and was largely used. Later, in 1915 after the Genocide organized on the governmental level, Turkey started to fight for eliminating by all means any reference related to the name Armenian. Under its pressure instead of the “Armenian Highland” the artificial “Eastern Anatolia” term started to be used, which literally translated means “Eastern East”.

The Armenian Highland is the cradle of the Armenian people. Thousands of years inhabiting this territory the Armenian tribes were formed as a nation, established their kingdoms, ancient civilizations, created unique and bright culture. Rich archaeological heritage of the Armenian Highland encompasses around 2 million years. Successive specific cultures represent the image of this historical–cultural united region, and testify the important role played by Armenia in the context of the Near Eastern cultures.



Gregory E. Areshian

University of California at Los Angeles

Cotsen Institute of Archaeology

NEOLITHIC AND CHALCOLITHIC (AENEOLITHIC) PERIODS IN ARMENIA



Aknashen, Neolithic



Aratashen, Neolithic

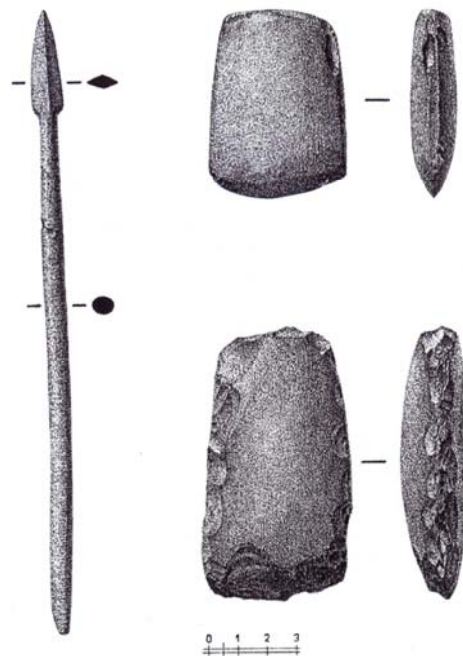
After the melting of ice sheets of the earth's last glacial age about 12,000 years ago, the rise of human civilization began in southwestern Asia. Along the coast of the Eastern Mediterranean, i.e. in the Levant, and in the foothills of the southern slopes of the Eastern Taurus Mountains along the northern edge of Mesopotamia (modern southeastern Turkey), bands of hunters–gatherers built their first permanent settlements in areas especially rich in wild plants and game. Within a millennium or so they started experimenting with the domestication of plants and wild animals during the period conventionally known as the New Stone Age, or the Neolithic. The natural environment to the north of the Eastern Taurus Mountains was quite different. Here, all the way to the mountain chain of the Greater Caucasus that separates the Near East from the steppes of what is now southern Russia, the terrain is fragmented by chains of high mountains and characterized by sharp fluctuations in altitudinal zonality. This created multiple isolated niches inhabited by communities that had ample



opportunities to continue their hunter-gatherer lifeways, but also to experiment with domestication, driven by necessity or curiosity. Hunter-gatherer economy in such an environment still dominated some regions of Armenia throughout most of the Neolithic. Altitudinal zonality had stimulated mobility of communities, which, in turn, would have intensified different kinds of intraregional interactions. Another important factor characterizing the Neolithic of Armenia was an exceptional richness of its highlands in obsidian sources. Obsidian from Mounts Arteni, Hatis, Nemrut, the Vorotan cluster and other sources was transmitted over different routes of exchange all over southwestern Asia and was used to manufacture broad arrays of artifacts, from agricultural tools to ritual paraphernalia and ornaments. The control and exchange of valuable natural resources led to differentiation in wealth and power between communities and larger social units. This resulted in the formation of larger settlements in the most environmentally beneficial areas. Clusters of such settlements, appearing around 6000 years BCE, on the bottom of the Ararat Plain are explored by international archaeological projects along the left tributaries of Arax River at the sites of Aratashen, Masis-Blur, and Aknashen. These Late Neolithic villages consisted of densely built agglomerations of houses and other structures that had predominantly round or



Masis-Blur, Neolithic



Aratashen, Neolithic



Masis-Blur, Neolithic





Masis-Blur, Neolithic



*Historical Museum of Armenia,
Neolithic, nucleus*



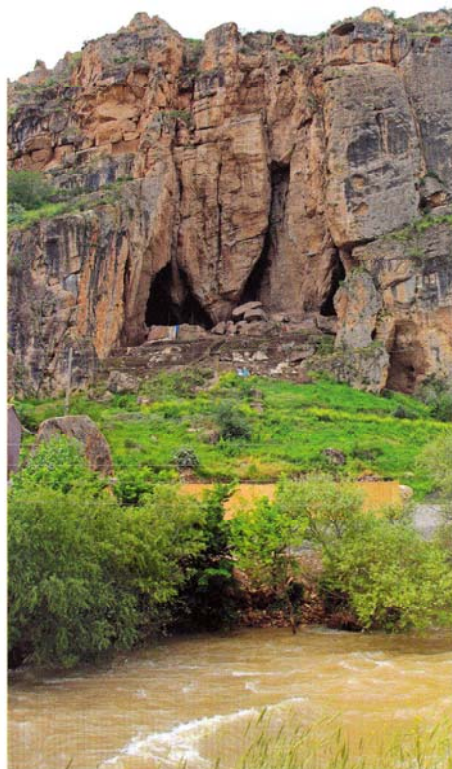
Masis-Blur, Neolithic

elliptic ground plans with walls built of packed clay or unbaked mudbricks. Their inhabitants cultivated several species of wheat, barley, and lentils, herded sheep, goats, and some cattle, and actively engaged in hunting and fishing. Skillfully made artifacts of obsidian, groundstone, bone, antler, and shell are found at the mentioned settlements in large quantities. Tools used in woodwork, skin processing, and leather tailoring leave little doubt that during the sixth millennium BCE the inhabitants of Armenia had achieved a substantial level of sophistication in the crafts related to processing organic materials. The two most important innovations introduced during the Late Neolithic of Armenia were pottery making and the beginning of the manipulation of copper ores, which was the first metal used by humankind. Locally made coarse wares dominate the ceramic production at these settlements but a few high-quality painted vessels, attributed to the Halaf-style manufacturing of Northern Mesopotamia, are found in the same contexts of the first half of the sixth millennium BCE. The first copper artifacts are represented by ornaments, mostly by beads. The appearance of both-copper artifacts and fine ceramic tableware-ushered the beginning of a new kind of long-distance trade, one in which centers of specialized craft production had become as important as areas supplying raw materials. This strengthening of long-



distance interactions across southwestern Asia and southeastern Europe was one of the most salient features of the subsequent period of the Chalcolithic.

The Chalcolithic Period (also known as the Aeneolithic or the Copper Age) began in southwestern Asia between 5500 and 5200 BCE and lasted for about two millennia, until 3500–3200 BCE. It was characterized by the spread of copper metallurgy and exchange, however, stone tools still played a dominant role in the economy. During the last four decades, a substantial number of Chalcolithic sites have been identified across the territory of modern Armenia. Four of those—Adablur and Teghut in the Ararat Plain, Areni-1 in the Vayots-Dzor province, and Godedzor in Syunik region—have been explored to some extent. All four represent the second half of the Chalcolithic, dating approximately between 4500 and 3400 BCE. Remarkably, each of the four represents a different type of site. Teghut was a small village composed of semi-subterranean round huts, possibly inhabited by semi-nomadic pastoralists who, nevertheless, used high-quality pottery imported from other sites, as were copper implements. Adablur was a substantially larger settlement occupied by large, multi-room architectural complexes aligned along a street, in which remains of artisan workshops and fragments of large clay sculptures were



Areni-1, Chalcolithic





discovered. Located in the canyon of the Arpa River, the Areni-1 cave complex was occupied during that same period for ritual purposes related to mortuary activities. The dry environment of the cave, together with a stable temperature, provided excellent conditions for the preservation of organic materials. Desiccated grains, fruits, textiles, leather, and even grass, which usually are not found at other sites, open a window onto an unknown world of perishable artifacts produced and used by Chalcolithic civilizations. Especially noteworthy is the discovery, deep in the cave, of the world's oldest presently known wine pressing installation, dating back to around 4000 BCE, and of the world's oldest leather shoe, dated approximately to 3600 BCE. Godedzor, located high in the mountains at the edge of Alpine summer pastures, was an important transit hub for mobile pastoralists and a center of exchange that also redistributed obsidian brought from the major deposits at a distance of one to three walking days. Seal impressions on clay sealings found at Godedzor indicate an existence of some kind of private, most likely familial, property. Excavations at these sites clearly reveal the rise of social complexity in Armenia during the Chalcolithic, accelerated by multiple technological discoveries and innovations, and transcontinental connections established across the Near East six thousand years ago.

Godedzor, Chalcolithic



SIGNIFICANT ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL MONUMENTS IN THE ARMENIAN HIGHLAND



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