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A Sasanian coin of Khosrow I and an Abbasid coin of Al-Manşur from the Areni-1 Cave, Armenia

*Armine Zohrabyan, Boris Gasparyan and Roberto Dan**

This article concerns the presentation of two unpublished coins discovered in the cave of Areni-1 (the Birds' Cave). The Areni-1 cave is a particularly important site (Figure 1) mainly thanks to its very well preserved Late Chalcolithic sequence (4.300–3.400 Cal BC). In addition, important medieval (4th–18th centuries AD) occupations were found.¹

The coins were discovered in July 2010, during the fifth season of excavations, inside the cave in Trench 2A in Gallery no. 1, in the lower level of the Late Medieval pit area (Figure 2).² The coins were probably part of a hoard disturbed by excavation activities in the Late Medieval period. One coin dates to the Sasanian period and may be attributed to Khosrow I Anōšīravān. The beginning of the Sasanian domination of the Armenian highlands started in 428 AD with the investiture of Veh Mihr Shapur (428–442 AD) as *marzbān* by Bahrām V Gōr (406–438 AD). These years correspond to the earlier phase of the Early Medieval period in the regional chronology, a period of important socio-economic and cultural changes for Armenia.³ The second coin is of the Abbasid Caliph Abū Jaʿfar Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Manşūr. In this period Armenia, then called Arminiya or the Emirate of Armenia, was part of the Abbasid Caliphate. During this time, al-Manşūr revoked the privileges and subsidies of the local rulers (*naxarar*) and imposed harsh taxation. This situation led to a major rebellion in 774 AD. The revolt was suppressed by the Battle of Bagrevand in 25 April 775 AD.⁴

The silver coin of Khosrow I Anōšīravān (501–579 AD, reign 531–579 AD)

The Sasanian coin, discovered in 6 July 2010, is strongly corroded, especially on the obverse, and broken into four fragments (Figure 3). It is a silver *drachma* with a weight

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¹ Smith *et al.* 2014: 233.

² Excavations in Trench 2A were directed by L. Stapleton and K. Martirosyan-Olshansky (Cotsen Institute of Archaeology at UCLA). Authors would like to express their deepest thanks to both colleagues.

³ Kalantaryan 2009: 63.

⁴ Ter-Ghevondyan 1976: 21.

of 4.57 grams and a diameter of 30.0 mm. Die axis is three o'clock. A bust of the king facing right, with a three-toothed crown and a crescent in front, is present on the obverse of the coin. On the right side of the king is visible the name Khosrow, that is Khosrow I Anōšīravān.⁵ On the left side is written in Sasanian-Pahlavi 'may his glory/splendour increase'.

On the reverse, in the centre, there is a fire-altar, narrow in the middle and broadening downwards and upwards by three steps. The narrow part is decorated with a ribbon whose ends point upwards. On the fire-altar, there is a blazing fire, to the left of which there is a six-pointed star, and to the right a crescent. On both sides of the fire-altar there are attendants standing facing forwards, with their hands resting on their swords. Above each guard's shoulder, the end of a ribbon can be seen, close to the rim. This is a classic iconography that remained in use until the fall of the dynasty. A pointed rim borders the limits of the figuration. On the right side is indicated the mint, that is 'DA', Darabgird; on the left, between the guard and the rim the date of reign is written. Unfortunately, only part of the date is legible: '2?'; due to corrosion of the metal it is impossible to read the second part of the date. Coins of Khosrow I in Armenia have been discovered in many hoards located in Sisian, Dvin, Aghrija, Koghb, Yerevan, Vardenis, Nor Bayazet, Shamlugh, Pemzashen, Hrazdan gorge, P'okr Parni, Shamshadin, Garni and Gyumri.⁶

The coin of Abū Ja'far Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Manşūr (712-775 AD, reign 754-775 AD)

The Abbasid coin, discovered in 27 July 2010, is better preserved than the Sasanian one (Figure 4). As mentioned, the coin can be dated to the time of Caliph Abū Ja'far Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Manşūr, and was produced in Kufa during the 142th year of the Hijra, at a date corresponding to 760 AD. It is a silver *dirham* with a weight of 2.59 grams and a diameter of 25.3 mm. Die axis is 6 o'clock. On the obverse of the coin is written, in the middle 'There is no god except Allah, he has no equal', while in the external legend 'This dirham was minted in al-Kufa, in the year two and forty and one hundred (142)'. On the reverse of the coin is written, in the middle 'Muhammad the Messenger of Allah', while in the external legend 'He (is) the One Who has sent His Messenger (Muhammad) with the guidance and the religion (of) [the] truth, to manifest it over all religions. Even if dislike (it) the polytheists'.⁷ The coin was minted just two years before the construction of Madīnat as-Salām (Baghdad), to where the mints were then moved from al-Kūfa, the first Abbasid capital.

⁵ On Sasanian coins of Khosrow I, see Göbl 1971: 80, Tab. 11, Pl. 12.

⁶ Khurshudian, Zohrabian 2002: 67-75, Pls XXVIII-XXXIV.

⁷ Quran Sūrat at-Tawbah IX.33.

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Figure 1. Areni-1 . General view of the cave (photo by Dmitri Arakelyan).

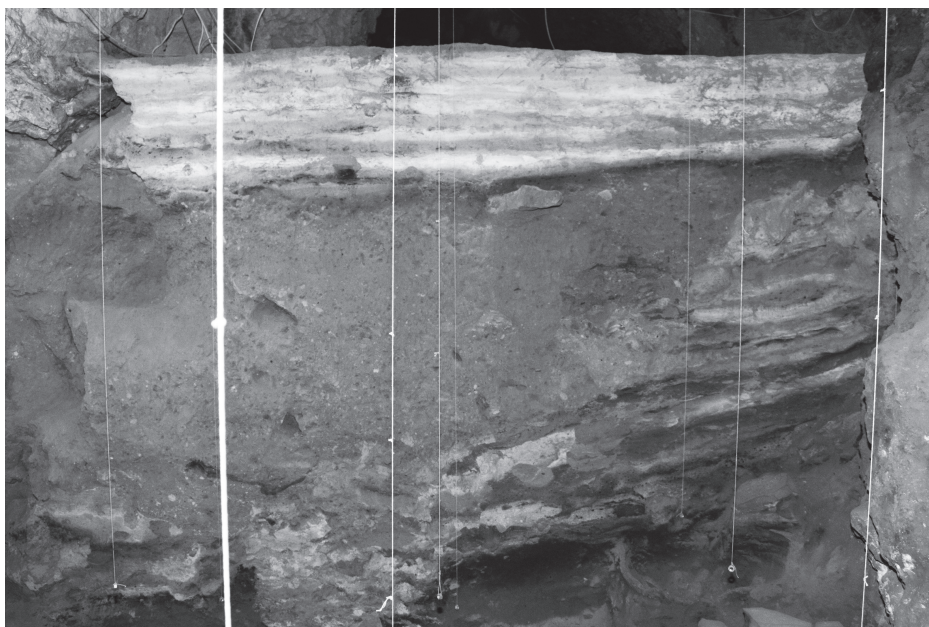


Figure 2. Areni-1. Transverse section of Trench 2A inside Gallery no. 1, where the coins were discovered (photo by Dmitri Arakelyan).

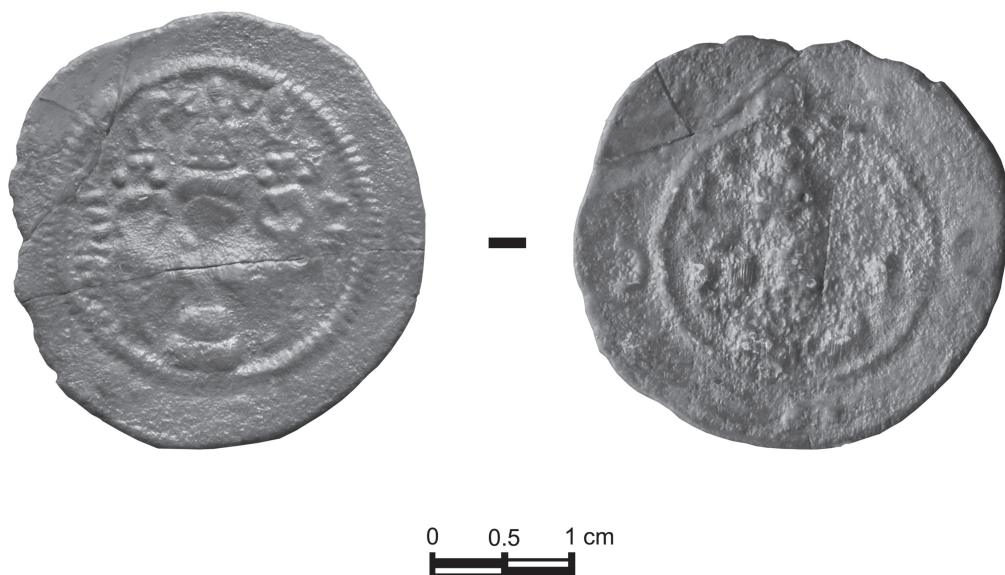


Figure 3. Areni-1 . The coin of Khosrow I, obverse and reverse
(photo by Dmitri Arakelyan and Boris Gasparyan).



Figure 4. Areni-1 . The coin of al-Manşūr, obverse and reverse
(photo by Dmitri Arakelyan and Boris Gasparyan).

ԽՈՍՐՈՎ Ի-Ի ՍԱՍԱՆՅԱՆ ԵՎ ԱԼ-ՄԱՆՍՈՒՐԻ ԱՔԲԱՍՅԱՆ ԴՐԱՄՆԵՐ ԱՐԵՆԻ-1 ՔԱՐԱՆՁԱՎԻՑ, ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆ

ԱՐՄԻՆԵ ՋՈՀՐԱՐՅԱՆ, ԲՈՐԻՍ ԳԱՍՊԱՐՅԱՆ, ՌՈԲԵՐՏՈ ՂԱՆ

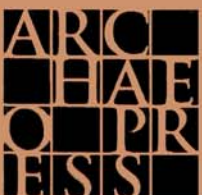
Սույն հոդվածը ներկայացնում է Հայաստանի Հանրապետության տարածքում գտնվող Արենի-1 քարանձավի կանոնավոր պեղումների ընթացքում հայտնաբերված երկու դրամների հրատարակությունը: Դրամները հայտնաբերվել են 2010 թ-ի հուլիսին և, հավանաբար, մաս են կազմել այն դրամական գանձի, որը պեղվել և հանվել է դեռևս ուշ միջնադարում:

Դրամներից մեկը հատվել է սասանյան շրջանում և պատկանում է Սասանյան արքայից արքա Խոսրով I Անուշիրվանին: Հայկական լեռնաշխարհում սասանյան տիրապետությունը սկսվում է 428 թ-ին՝ Վահրամ V Գոռի կողմից Վեհմիհր Շապուհին Հայաստանի մարզպան նշանակելով: Այդ տարիները համապատասխանում են վաղ միջնադարի սկզբնական փուլին, որը Հայաստանի համար հանդիսացել է մշակութային և սոցիալ-տնտեսական կարևոր փոփոխությունների շրջան:

Երկրորդ դրամը հատվել է արբասյան խալիֆ Աբու Ջաֆար Աբդալլահ իբն Մուհամմադ ալ-Մանսուրի օրոք: Այդ շրջանում Հայաստանը, որն արաբական աղբյուրներում անվանվում էր Արմինիյա, Արբասյան խալիֆայության մաս էր կազմում: Ալ-Մանսուրի իշխանության օրոք Հայաստանում սահմանափակվում էին տեղի իշխանները իրավունքները և հաստատվում ծանր հարկեր: Ստեղծված իրավիճակը 774 թ-ին հանգեցրեց խոշոր ապստամբության, որը ճնշվեց 775 թ-ի ապրիլի 25-ին Բագրևանդում տեղի ունեցած ճակատամարտից հետո:

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