

NOTIZIARIO

Armenian-italian archaeological expedition. Field season 2005

The 2005 season took place between 23rd June and 18th July and field activity between 28th June and 13th July. The activities, like in the previous years, followed two different but strictly related lines of research: archaeological survey and geoarchaeological studies. The two groups had their respective bases in Gavar and in Sevan.

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

The aims of the 2005 field season were completing the survey of the former Sevan *rayon*, which began in 2004, and studying the north-eastern shore of the lake, i.e. the part of the former *rayon* of Krasnoselsk (now Chambarak) included in the Sevan lake basin.

In the former Sevan *rayon* were identified a fortified settlement of the Early Bronze Age, Arevakogh 2; a large fort again dating back to the Early Bronze Age, Arevakogh 3 (both of them not included in the register of the monuments of the Organization for the Cultural Heritage); a complex of walls, Sangar 2; seven necropolises formed by graves surrounded by circles of large stones or by *kurgans*. These necropolises cannot be easily dated because of the lack of surface pottery, but they should go back to the 2nd – 1st millennia B.C. The walls of both Early Bronze fortifications, Arevakogh 2 and 3, are 2.5 m thick and were built with enormous unworked basaltic stones, measuring 1 cu. m. and more.

Probably the complex of Sangar 2 (also known as Vigon) is the most interesting monument found in this campaign. It lies at a height of about 2200 m. and is a large complex formed by four walls between 2.5 and 1.8 m thick, with external faces of very large stones and a filling of smaller ones (fig. 1). The walls, preserved to a maximum height of 2.20 m, have a total length of 6 km at least (fig. 2) and join in what was probably the centre of the complex. There were found also large quadrangular structures (fig. 3). No pottery was found on the surface so a precise dating of the structure is not possible, but the architectural characters of the walls indicate that they probably go back to the Early Iron Age. The function of the complex is not yet known, but the enormous amount of work needed for the building and its presence at such a high altitude indicate clearly both the prosperity of the region in the Early Iron age and the skill in accumulating and redistributing wealth and in the organization of labour of the pre-Urartian polities of the area.

The archaeological survey of the north-eastern shore of the lake was undertaken and almost finished. On this side of the Sevan basin the mountains of the Sevan range have a precipitous slope towards the lake, therefore the surface available for agricultural purposes or for stock-raising is much smaller than on the other shores. As a result the number of fortifications and settlements is also smaller and they are concentrated in the favourable areas around the Artanish peninsula.

Three fortifications already known in the literature were studied. They date back to the Late Bronze – Early Iron Age and one of them, located near the town of Artanish, is much larger than previously thought. It covers a surface of about 10 hectares and must have been the capital of the region (fig. 4). Another fortress, localized on one of the south-western

caples of the Artanish peninsula, is not mentioned in the literature but it is included in the lists of the Organization for the Cultural Heritage. Here again no pottery was found on the surface and the archaeological deposit is very thin. This suggests that the fortress was a *Fluchtburg*. The semicircular towers of the walls indicate that it should be dated to the Roman period (figs. 5-6-7).

A previously unknown fort was discovered on a hill overlooking the town of Shorzha. It was heavily destroyed, so the remains were scarcely visible (fig. 8). At a first cursory examination surface pottery can be dated to the Early Iron Age and to the Hellenistic period.

A previously unknown Early Bronze Age settlement was discovered on the top of a hill near the village of Tsapatagh. No traces of defence work were found, so it is possible that the site was not defended. If so, this is the second undefended settlement discovered in the Sevan lake basin.

Two necropolises and one very large *kurgan* were also found. The necropolises can be dated back to the 2nd-1st millennia B.C., the *kurgan*, about 2.5 m high and with an approximate diameter of 17 m, probably goes back to the Early Bronze Age.

The main part of the exploration of the north-eastern shore of Lake Sevan was basically carried out in the 2005 field season. In 2006 the expedition will complete fieldwork.

GEOARCHAEOLOGY OF THE SEVAN LAKE

The area chosen for the stratigraphical study of the Lchashen necropolis lies west of the one excavated in 2004 (fig. 9). In the previous field season excavations were carried out in the late Bronze Age part of the necropolis, at the foot of the south-eastern corner of the fortress. The area was submerged by the waters when the Sevan lake reached the maximum level and it marked the highest point of the transgression.

At the beginning of 2004 two graves (nos. 224 and 225) were excavated, which lay along the shoreline edges, 1913 m a.s.l.. After the surface was cleaned it was possible to observe that the filling of the graves concreted because of the backwash of the lake waters.

Other two graves were chosen, about 100 m south of them, at an elevation between 1908 and 1910 m a.s.l. These two graves (nos. 226-227) were fully excavated and the skeletons of two individuals and their grave-goods were unearthed (SMEA XLVI, 2004, 288-295).

Also in 2005 fieldwork was carried out in collaboration with Levon Petrosyan, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Armenian Academy of Sciences, and architect Koryun Kafadaryan took care of the graphical documentation.

The excavation area of this year lies south of the previous one, is rich in graves and *kurgans*, was submerged for a long time and was excavated in the past, although not systematically. The results of these excavations show that graves and *kurgans* date back to 18th century B.C. The whole area was mapped and all the burials, both excavated and unexcavated, were documented (fig. 10).

This year was picked out for excavation *kurgan* n. 228, located 1984 m a.s.l. After surface vegetation was taken away, it was found that a part of the basis was hidden from sight and the diameter was about 15.70 m, while the height at the top was about 1.20 m (fig. 11, 13).

The surface layer, formed by very soft soil containing much sand, shells and medium-size stones, was taken away and the nucleus of the grave was exposed (figs. 12, 14). After documentation the large andesite blocks which covered the deposition were taken away.

The pit, which was oriented east-west, was 3.50 m long, 1 m wide in the central part and about 1 m deep. After the filling, a brown soil with few intrusions and some small sand pockets, was taken away, was brought to light the skeleton of a very tall young man, with the face towards southwest. At his feet were animal bones and 10 vases, with remarkable typological variations (figs. 14, 15).

The skeleton was crouched and a dagger, with a very poorly preserved sheath, rested on the left arm, near a miniature clay vase. Near the forehead there were two small arrowheads of transparent obsidian and some beads were on the neck. Among the animal bones, presently under study, were identified caprids and parts of a large animal. Another obsidian arrowhead was found at the edge of the northern part of the pit, in the area between the animal bones and the first vase.

The grave, on the basis of its characters, body position and typology of the abundant grave-goods, can be dated to the Middle Bronze Age (18th century B.C.)

NEDA PARMEGIANI, RAFFAELE BISCIONE



Fig. 1 – Sangar 1. The outer face of one of the walls. The large stones are only partially dressed.



Fig. 2 – Sangar 1. Partial view of the upper wall. The arrow indicates the farthest point of visibility of the wall, that descends over the edge of the hill. The structure continues on the opposite direction.



Fig. 3 – Sangar 1. The regular structures forming the centre of the wall complex.



Fig. 4 – The location of the large fortress overlooking the village of Artanish. The structures are on the top of the hill, on the visible slope and continue on the saddle beyond the edge of the hill.



Fig. 5 – Fortress on the Artanish peninsula. The walls can be seen on the top and on the edge of the hill, among the bushes.



Fig. 6 – Fortress on the Artanish peninsula. A closer view of the walls of the fortress on the inland side.



Fig. 7 – Fortress on the Artanish peninsula. The structure of the wall, formed by two outer faces of large, regular stones and a filling of smaller ones.



Fig. 8 – The fort overlooking the town of Shorzha. One of the faces of a thick perimetral wall is clearly visible.



Fig. 9 – Lchashen, view of the necropolis. The area excavated in 2004 is on the left and the one excavated in 2005 on the right.

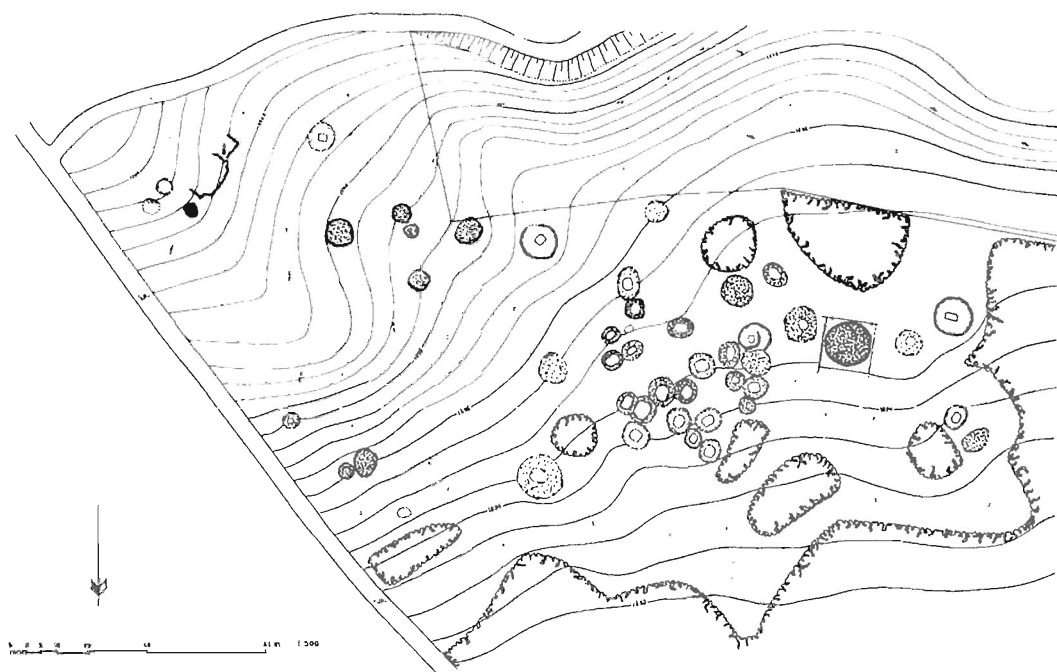


Fig. 10 – Necropolis of Lchashen: map of the area of the necropolis studied in 2005, with *kurgan* 228.



Fig. 11 – Lchashen. The beginning of the excavation of *kurgan* 228.



Fig. 12 – Lchashen. *Kurgan* 228 after the removal of the mound.
The funerary circle and the stone cover of the chamber are fully visible.

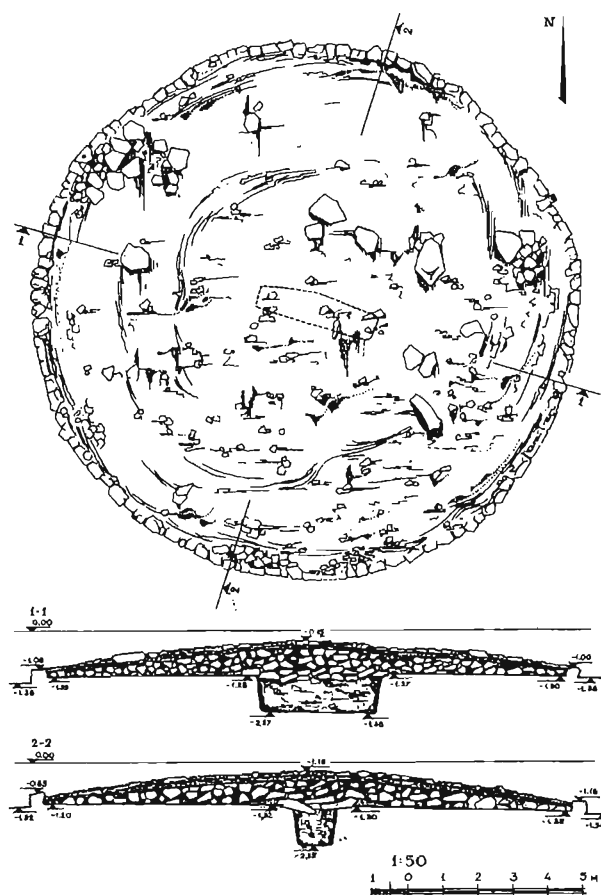


Fig. 13 – Lchashen. Plan of *kurgan* 228 after the cleaning and sections.

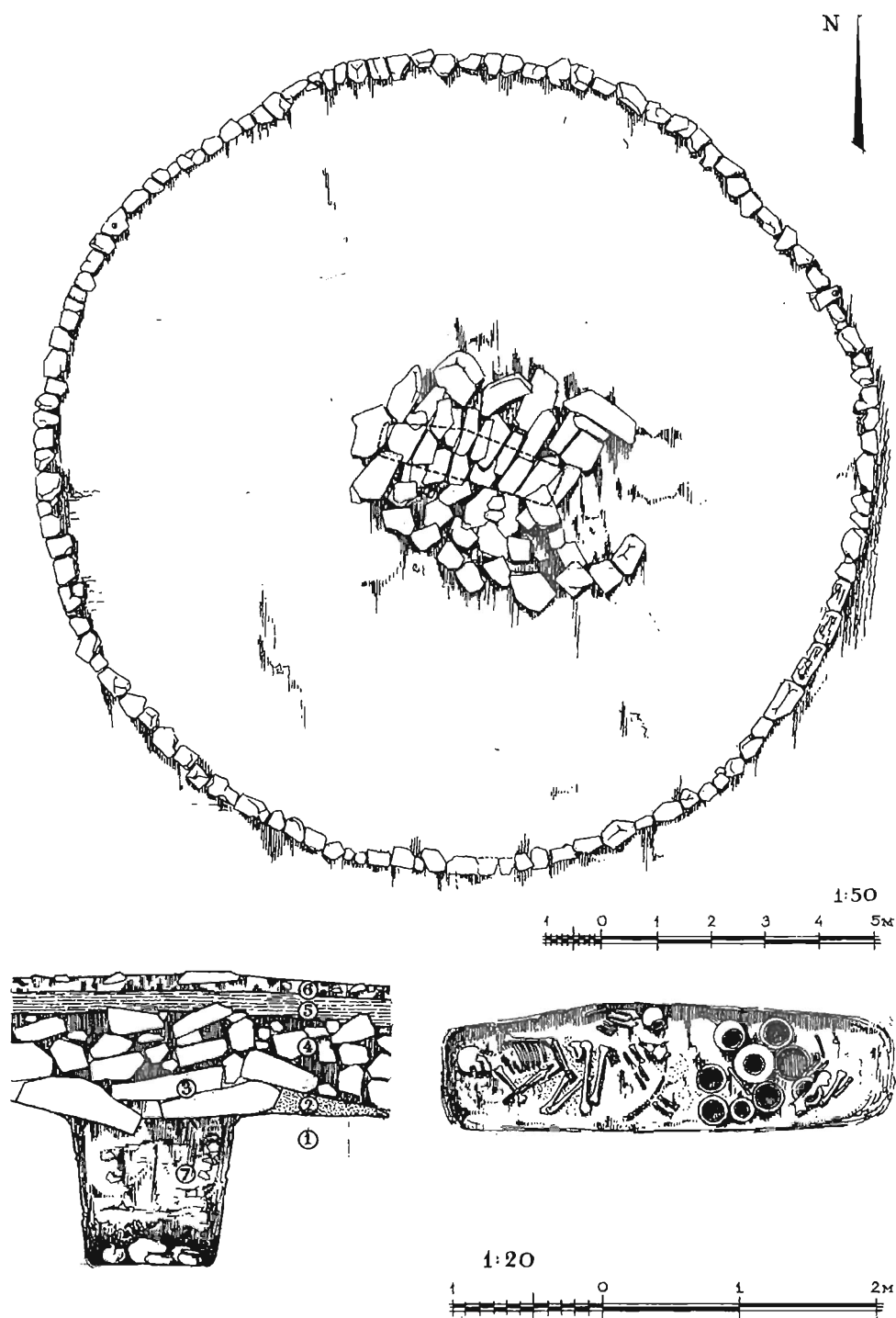


Fig. 14 – Lchashen. Plan of *kurgan* 228 after the removal of the earth mound and sections of the funerary chamber.



Fig. 15 – Lchashen. The chamber of *kurgan* 228 with skeleton and grave-goods.



Fig. 16 – Lchashen. The end of the excavation of *kurgan* 228.