

## The Van Tuşpa excavations 2015-2016

Erkan Konyar, Bülent Genç, Can Avcı and Armağan Tan

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**CHRONIQUES DES TRAVAUX ARCHEOLOGIQUES  
EN TURQUIE  
2016**

Erkan KONYAR, Bülent GENÇ, Can AVCI and Armağan TAN\*

## THE VAN TUŞPA EXCAVATIONS 2015-2016<sup>1</sup>

The Tuşpa/Van Fortress, the capital of Urartu, is located on the eastern shore of Lake Van. In 2015 and 2016, our excavations focused mainly on three different areas: The Mound, the Old City of Van, and Sardur's Burg.

The Mound in its north, extending in the same direction as the Old city of Van to the south, covers an area roughly of 46 hectares and has a settlement history sprawling from the Early Bronze Age up to the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century (Fig. 1). The Mound excavations were conducted in 17 trenches located in Area A (Fig. 2), which yielded important evidence regarding the period known as the post-Urartian/Late Iron Age, especially in trench M25 (Fig. 3). We restored the profile damage caused by a road passing through the north in trench N22, converting it into drilling work. Hence, some evidence regarding the earlier strata of the Mound was obtained. This year, passive protection and restoration works continued in the Urartian layers excavated in previous years in trenches N18 and N19. In other areas, apart from the Mound, only cleaning and restoration works were undertaken. In the Old City of Van, all mudbrick walls previously unearthed in the trenches were reinforced, plastered, and faithfully restored along with conservation work. Illustration and cleaning work was done in and around Sardur's Burg, the oldest known structure of the capital Tuşpa, which also bears the oldest inscriptions. Harmful plant roots between the blocks of the structure and the reed bed in the swamp on its eastern side were cleaned; consequently, the inscriptions on the eastern side were uncovered and documented.

### VAN FORTRESS MOUND

#### AREA A EASTERN TRENCHES

The previous campaigns in the eastern parts of Area A, revealed important evidence about the post-Urartian period, Urartian and Early Bronze Age strata. In this area, examples of Urartian architecture with standard plans were revealed in trenches M26, M25 and N25, where post-Urartian architectural remains and findings were also discovered.

#### Late Iron Age/Post-Urartian Strata

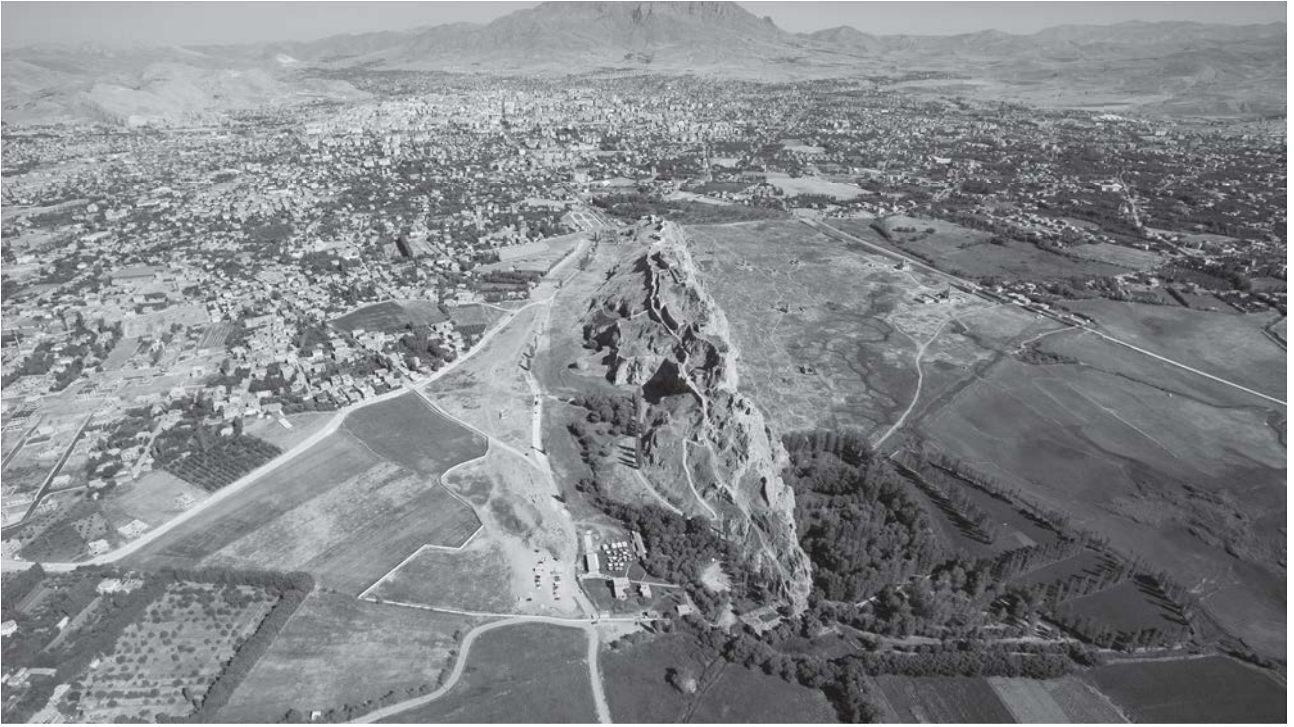
In the 2015 and 2016 campaigns on the Mound of Van Fortress, post-Urartian and Urartian structures were uncovered in trenches M25, N21, N25 and L26 (Fig. 4). As is known, *in situ* remains had been discovered belonging to this structure level in Area A western trenches (N20, N21) and Area A eastern trenches (trenches M25, M26 and M27) in previous years. In the 2014-2015 campaigns, a thick orange mudbrick filling, which was apparently right on top of the Urartian strata and observable from the sections at the end of the second phase bases belonging to the medieval era, was discovered.

This architectural level on top of the Urartian strata gives important data on the Late Iron Age or post-Urartian strata, which, although the evidence was thin, we occasionally came across and knew of, throughout the Mound. At the southern section of trench M25, walls made of mudbrick blocks measuring 45 x 45 cm were excavated. Similar ones were encountered in trench M26, found in double rows

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**Fig. 1 : Van Fortress from the west. The citadel and the lower city surrounding it.**



**Fig. 2 : Area A, general view of Urartian architecture.**

roughly in north-south directions. Although it does not give a clear plan, the fire layer can be tracked within these sides or walls, leaning and ending there. In 2016 excavations, new wall remains and floors belonging to this mudbrick structure were uncovered.

A 2 m long part in the direction of trench M26 of a 1 m thick double row mudbrick wall made with blocks measuring 50 x 50 cm and 50 x 25 cm that

was discovered on the southern section of trench L26 was exposed. This wall section, which is in relatively better condition than other wall remains, also has stratigraphic importance as it leans towards Urartian structures. Remains of this mudbrick wall and a related floor with two phases can clearly be traced in trenches M25, M26, M27, L26 and N25 located on the eastern section of Area A which lay on top of the *in situ* findings and the Urartian strata.

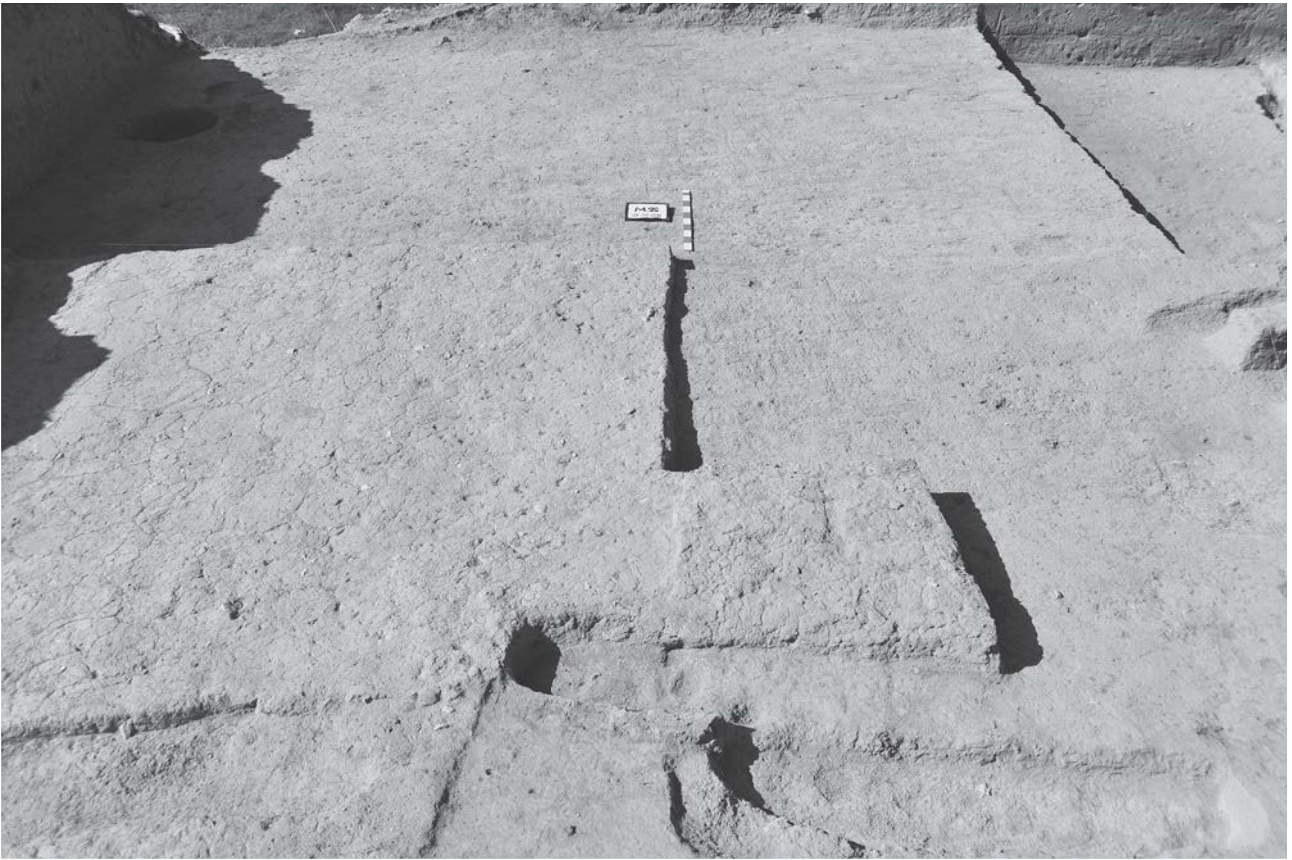


Fig. 3 : Area A, post-Urartian/Late Iron Age layer.

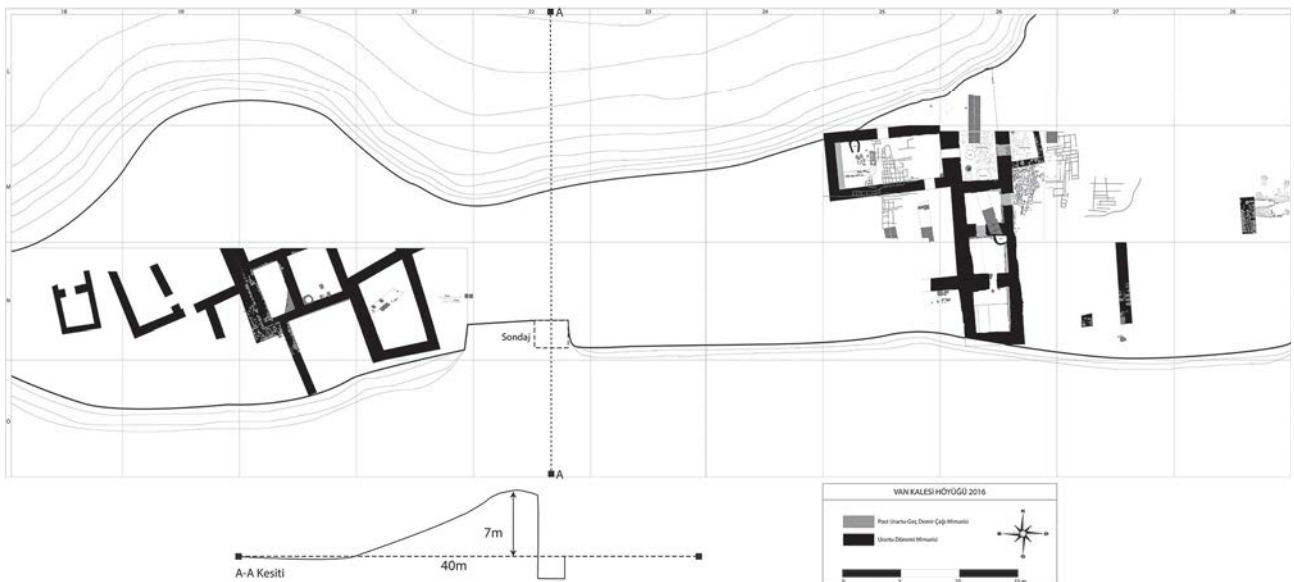


Fig. 4 : Area A, plan of the Urartian and post-Urartian architecture.

These architectural remains and the floor uncovered in 2016 made the layer, the *in situ* finding group found in the ashy area studied in 2015 more comprehensible, particularly the determined floor in the areas defined by mudbrick walls in trenches M26,

M25 and L26 which have two phases. Although its relation with the mudbrick wall is not satisfactorily identified, the range of the floor of the earlier phase points strongly suggest that it is likely associated with this feature. Placing mudbrick blocks in a cer-





Fig. 5 : Area A, Trench M25, findings from post-Urartian layer.

tain layout forms the floor. The joints do not always follow a proper course. In some areas, partitions made of compacted mud are used instead, in order to create the impression of mudbrick blocks. This substantially weak layer can be observed extensively in the aforementioned trenches with the same character. On top of this floor, there is another one made of compacted mud limited by the same mudbrick wall. It is directly related to post-Urartian architecture. In 2015 and 2016, many decorative objects and pottery were found on the ashen/conflagrated areas of the floor. The changing forms of pottery and product classes in particular are forerunners of a new culture.

On a locally preserved floor of stone chips, there is a dense *in situ* group of intact or restorable findings belonging to a post-Urartian period (Fig. 5). There are many remarkable bronze artifacts such as various beads, needles, tweezers, buttons and *fibulae*. Also recovered are beads and pendants made of

glass, carnelian and marble, and alabaster seals. Bone and terracotta amulets with various creature designs were discovered. Many cylindrical bronze beads, hand-shaped pendants, and an almost intact miniature vessel with a cream slip are among the important finds. The vessel uncovered in 2012 in trench M26 *in situ*, which has a single vertical handle and a mountain goat depiction on it, is another important object that could be associated with these strata. Especially in terms of typology and ornaments, this unique and almost intact vessel, has parallels in Northwestern Iran.

It is understood that the Triangle-Festoon Wares with linings of cream color found in these strata, which date to Late Iron Age, make up a very small part of the entire materials. It can be stated that in these strata, which we think dates to Post-Urartian/Late Iron Age, there are five different wares.



## Uartian Strata

As a result of the campaign to unearth the remaining southern sections of the Uartian structures previously excavated in trench M26, a new structure was uncovered, which mostly lies in the trench N26 (Fig. 6). At the central section of the southern wall of the room 2015M26-2, a 0.95 m wide doorway was discovered. The thickness of the northern wall, where the doorway of this newly discovered room is located, is 0.95 m. The eastern wall is 0.75 m. Its east-west interior width measures 3 m, while its north-south length reaches up to 3.2 m. At the north-eastern corner of this newly uncovered structure, a unit with dimensions of 0.75 m in the east-west direction and 1 m in the north-south direction and walls of mud, which is thought to be a granary, was identified. While part of it lies in trench M26, the rest resides in trench N26. Preserved about 0.80 m above floor level, no finds were discovered in the granary. Here, the late phase floor with number 2015N26-51 locus was encountered first. Weak in terms of material, this floor must be contemporaneous with the granary to the northeast and the dividing walls to the south. This late phase floor ends ascending towards the granary in the northeast.

On the southern wall of this room, another doorway of 0.65 m wide opening southwards was identified. Leading to a second room, the eastern dividing wall of this southern doorway is 1.20 m, while the western one is 1.45 m. This room, uncovered at the southernmost section, has two floor phases – early and late like the northern room. There are traces of mudbrick continuing southwards under the early phase floor with dimensions of 3 m (east-west) x 3.50 m (north-south), suggesting the existence of an even earlier floor. While the southern wall of this second structure in the south is an unelaborate construction made of small stones, the eastern wall features better craftsmanship and is made of flagstone. The western wall of the room seems to have collapsed eastwards, i.e. inside. We can say that the Uartian structures uncovered this year in this area have at least two construction / restoration phases. At the point where the southern and eastern walls of the northern room of 2015N26-40 meet, the southern wall can be seen. This less elaborate and eclectic dividing wall must have been constructed at a later time in order to divide the rectangular and bigger room in the north-south direction into two.

When the uncovered Uartian rooms in trench N26 this year are taken into consideration, it became clear that the Uartian structures in trench M26

continue southwards. Of the four rooms in total, the three at the south are connected to each other via doorways (Fig. 7). Although the plans of all these rooms overlap substantially in early and late architectural levels, the central axis in late architectural level was constructed with an inclination of 5 degrees in the northwest-southeast direction.

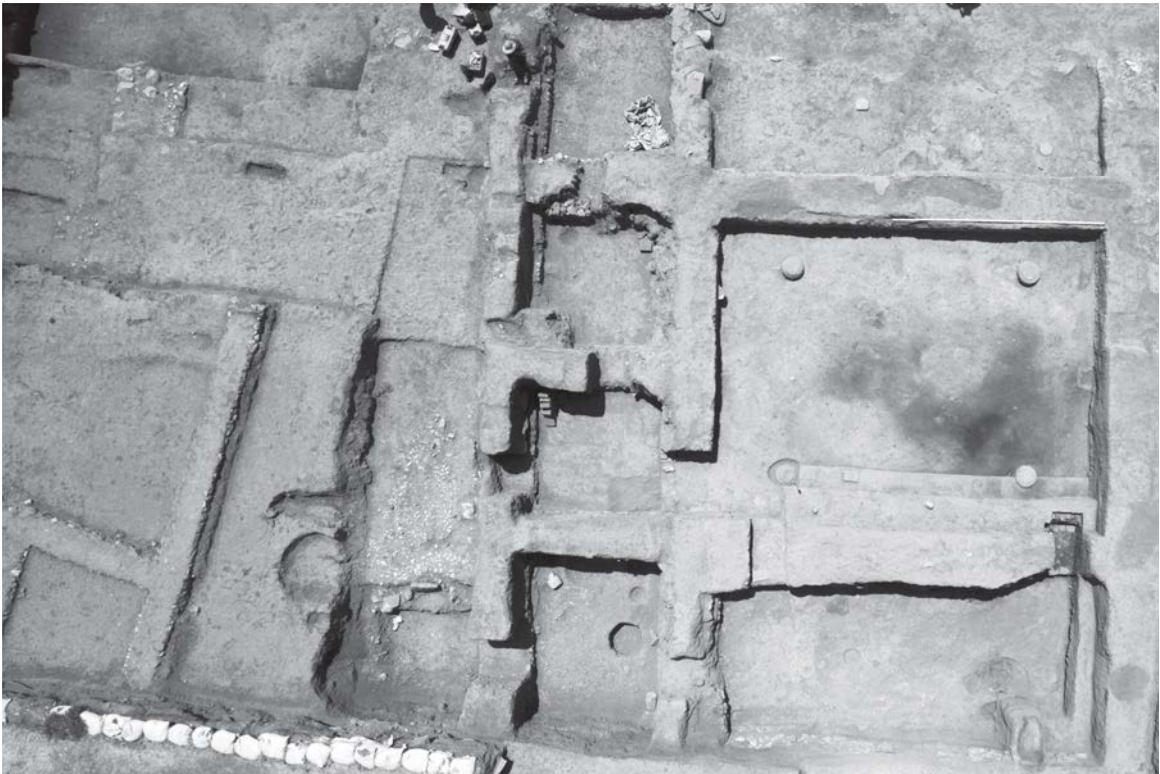
In the 2016 campaigns, the remaining western part of the northernmost room in trench M26 that was excavated in the previous years and where a cuneiform tablet was recovered, was uncovered in trench M25. Work on Uartian structure levels after lifting the post-Uartian strata where mudbrick lines are present, began in trench M25. The latest Uartian structure level with dense Uartian pottery reached right under the post-Uartian strata. At this level, a room of 9 m long and 4 m wide in the east-west direction that lies on the northern side of trench M25 and belonging to the Late Uartian structure level was uncovered. The northern wall of this room is a mudbrick structure with a foundation of 4 rows of stone and the preserved section is about 0.70-1.20 m in height. On this wall, there is a 0.95 m wide doorway looking northwards. The southern wall is a mudbrick structure with a foundation of 3 rows of stone. The foundation of this wall becomes a double row of stone and the height of the preserved section is about 0.70-1 m. Starting from the eastern corner of the wall, following 0.70 m westward, is a doorway of 0.90 m wide. The eastern wall of this room is made of mudbrick on a foundation of 2 rows of stone and the preserved section is about a meter high. Also on this 3.70 m long eastern wall in the north-south direction, there is a 0.90 m wide doorway. During the studies conducted on this doorway, cream-colored, thin-walled Assyrian type vessel pieces were found. There are partial collapses on the walls of this room with a stone base foundation.

In this room, artifacts broken and scattered around densely in an area of 4 x 4 m (Fig. 8), including pieces of Uartian pottery and stone vessels, about seven shattered *pithoi* with a height of about 60-65 cm, whose mouthpiece diameters are about 40-42 cm, egg-shaped lank storing vessels with 1-3 holes on their bases and 2 ground and 4 grinding stones were uncovered. Among these pottery pieces, a terracotta seal with a depiction of a stylized winged horse on its bell shaped stamp section was also discovered.

The presence of pieces of the same vessel scattered throughout the room indicates that they were deliberately broken and spread around. Correspondingly, the existence of opposing holes on some of these vessels, like some redlined plate pieces and



**Fig. 6 : Area A, Trench N26, rooms of Urartian layer.**



**Fig. 7 : Area A, eastern trenches, general view of Urartian architecture.**





**Fig. 8 : Area A, Trench M25, Late Urartian layer.**

vessels of daily use give information about their restoration. Some bronze pieces, including ring shaped ones and others with various dimensions are also found with these vessels. The discovery of various vessels with seals in this area indicate the importance of this room as a storeroom.

In the filling of the Late Urartian structure level, many findings such as mixed cattle and ovine bones, seals, various bronze pieces, bronze objects, beads and a lank bronze piece, which we think might have been used as a handle, were unearthed (Fig. 9). Among the pottery, large and small roundish stones were also found. Especially, during the excavations on the eastern side of the room, a conical Urartian seal was found in the filling. The ornament on the

seal is a winged solar disk. Similar seals were also discovered in the Urartian structure during the 2015 campaign in trenches M26 in 2014 and N21. Similar examples are also known in Karmir Blur<sup>2</sup>, Bastam<sup>3</sup> and Armavir<sup>4</sup>. The winged solar disk impression on the seal is also encountered in some bullas in Bastam<sup>5</sup>, Karmir Blur<sup>6</sup> and Arin Berd<sup>7</sup>. The winged solar disk impression on a bulla in Ayani is also noteworthy<sup>8</sup>.

A mudbrick oven was also uncovered in the northwestern corner of the same room. The “U” shaped oven is attached to the northern wall. From inside the oven and its periphery, especially in the cinereous area on its west and south, approximately 250 mushroom headed bronze nails that might either

2) Piotrovsky 1969: 42.

3) Kleiss 1979: Tafel 39.

4) Ayvazian 2006: 434.

5) Ayvazian 2006: 516, 518, 520, 522, 524, 552, 560, 566, 568.

6) Ayvazian 2006: 691, 693, 771, 783.

7) Ayvazian 2006: 875.

8) Salvini 2001: 281.





of this early structure level is relatively denser than in the Late Urartian structure level. On the following part of the division wall, which connects to the western wall of the late phase of the early structure level and surrounds the furnace by making a turn northwards, a hollowed stone where the doorway bottom sill was placed was found. The occasionally dense burnt layer observed at this structure level is striking. There are various scattered vessel pieces in the late phase level filling. In the west of the area, remains of a furnace was encountered with a diameter of 50 cm, an interior wall of 5 cm and a preserved height of 25 cm. The wall surrounding this furnace from the east and the south has a stone foundation of 1 m long and 0.50 m wide. This wall, which is in north-south direction, was built with mudbrick on the 1 m high stone foundation, and continues southwards and turns west. The ashes, layer of debris, and the pieces of blue plaster are all related to the filling of the Early Phase. We can say that the walls were built for tandoor.

The excavations have also yielded grinding and ground stones belonging to late phase of the Early Structure Level. A deep groove under one of the ground stones shows that it was converted from a stone vessel or another object. Two iron spearheads and two bronze arrowheads are the findings of this phase. A 0.65 m high *pithos* with a 0.40 m wide mouth was found intact at the southeast corner of the eastern wall surrounding the furnace. The far end of the southern wall and the section, which extends 0.40 m northwards, were uncovered. The *pithos* belongs to the late phase of the Early Urartian architectural level. It was buried in a pit opening to the base and placed compressed with covering its surrounding with stones. The two grinding stones placed around the *pithos*, one of which is broken, must be from the early phase of the Early Architectural Level.

Scattered flagstones related to the floor of the late phase of the Early Structure Level, which were almost at the same level, were excavated. Various pottery shards also scattered over the floor in the same level were recovered.

Flagstones belonging to the late phase of the Early Urartian Structure Level were lifted to reach the early phase beneath it. In the filling of the early phase of the Early Structure Level, numerous ground and grinding stones, some of which were broken, and various Urartian vessels were encountered scattered on the floor. The layer shows sporadic traces of dense ash layers and fire. Related to the floor of the early phase, a furnace with a 0.50 m wide mouth was uncovered. Part of it is in the section at the bot-

tom of the foundations of the southern wall of the Late Urartian structure.

During excavations conducted in the filling of the early floor of the Early Urartian architectural level, various animal bones and pottery shards were revealed. After the removal of the filling, a yellowish earth layer forming the floor began to emerge beginning from the western section of the area, where ash pits are observed in particular. The floor produced various finds such as small bronze buttons, beads made of sea shells, iron pieces, cubic stones, and stone vessel shards.

In the lower sections of the Late Urartian Structure Level stone foundations, located at the northeast, a part of the stone foundations belonging to the Early Urartian Structure Level, was uncovered. This wall is 2 m long, 0.30 m high and has a stone foundation of two rows. This wall in east-west direction with a stone foundation belonging to the early phase of the Early Structure Level, is located 0.20-0.30 m beneath the northern wall of the room of Late Urartian Structure Level. A 0.20-0.30 m thick debris between the two stone walls and the filling formed by the burnt layer belong to the debris of Early Structure Level. As is seen in the section between the Early and Late Structure Level walls, there is a layer of debris mixed with a burnt layer. Two iron arrowheads were recovered on the floor belonging to the early phase of the Early Structure Level. Pebbles along with various shards dating to the Bronze Age were recovered mostly from the filling.

During the excavations conducted north of trench M25, the existence of two structure levels was identified – Early and Late, the former being composed of two phases. In both phases of the early structure level, burnt and ash layers were encountered. Storage vessels, grinding and ground stones and furnaces found in both levels indicate the continuing use of this area. Stratigraphically, these levels match with the architectural levels in the trenches N20 and N21 that are located at the western side of the mound. The reasons for the existence of two levels and the destruction of the Early Structure Level, whether due to a disaster or a fire, are not clear for the moment. Like the northern, southern, and western walls of the room in trench M25, walls of both architectural levels come on top of each other, presenting the structuring in this section.

This year, work on trench N27 resumed. Starting from the northern border of the trench, excavations were conducted southwards in the stair-shaped 3.50 m wide area. Excavated for the first time in 2010, the northern section of the 5 m long and 1 m wide Urartian wall of double row of stones, which

is located at the southeast of trench, was uncovered. As a result of the conducted campaigns, after the 5<sup>th</sup> meter of the said wall's part in the north-south direction and continuing towards the section in the north, the continuing 2 m long and 0.40 m high mudbrick section of the wall is unearthed. To the east of this wall, in the section with the Urartian debris, thin plates of little bronze pieces were encountered apart from the Urartian pottery. A sandstone floor that blocks the wall, which we keep track of from the section, continues westward from the trench. Although a structure is yet to be encountered related to this floor, it could be argued that it belongs to a period after the early phase Urartian structures.

### AREA A WESTERN TRENCHES

Our team has been conducting excavations since 2010 in the eastern part of the area that had been excavated in 1989-1991 on the western point of the Area A of the Mound. Studies on the identification of the range of the Urartian structures unearthed in previous years were continued and the excavation area was expanded eastwards in that regard.

#### Late Iron Age/Post-Urartian Strata

In trench N21, we identified the post-Urartian strata, which are right on top of where the Urartian strata commenced. The aim was to understand the post-Urartian architectural levels in the Mound and to have a better understanding of the post-Urartian era with the available data. Accordingly, we started to excavate the filling strata mixed with the mudbrick debris located on the northern section of the trench. Two floors emerged here together with the one we uncovered. It can be surmised that these floors collapsed during their use and the collapsed sections were repaired thrice. On the eastern side of the trench, a wall was encountered. From the mudbrick wall fragments exposed in this stratum, which are about 0.40 m long, it was understood that settlement in the Mound continued in the post-Urartian era.

At the southwest section of the trench, another mudbrick structure located at the walls foundation level was come upon. It extends in the northeast-southwest direction and is 1 m wide with a length over 2 m. An evaluation of this wall in the Urartian structure level with other findings in the area, points to a post-Urartian date.

It became evident that the floor uncovered during the earlier campaigns in the east of this wall belongs to a room related to it. The Late Iron Age

painted vessel found here in 2013 is an *in situ* find of this stratum and is very important piece of evidence for dating this level. Judging from this wall, the related floor and the Late Iron Age painted pottery shards, it is safe to say that we now have important evidence for the existence of post-Urartian architecture.

During the removal of the post-Urartian layer in this area, Late Iron Age pottery shards were encountered together with Urartian plain and painted pottery. At the northern side of the trench, in the area with the mudbrick debris, no wall remains were identified. As the Mound was used as a cemetery beginning with the medieval era, the Late Iron Age strata were heavily damaged and destroyed by burial pits. As a result, the traces of Late Iron Age architecture are weak and fragmentary. In this stratum, formed by mudbrick ruins, bronze buttons were found with bone pieces. During the work in the stratum with mudbrick ruins, an ornate lid dating from the Late Iron Age was found, which fitted a vessel found in the previous years.

#### Urartian Strata

The excavations were conducted in trench N20 belonging to Early Urartian Structure Level. Excavations at this section of the mound were conducted with aim of identifying the Urartian structures here. Hence, a drilling campaign began in 2013 within the Urartian room with a northern wall of 5.50 m and eastern and western walls of 8 m long, whose southern wall was heavily damaged by a big pit. With a foundation of one row stone, it is understood from the collapse on its northern wall that these structures were built upon a ruin.

During the work at the southeastern part of the trench, a debris layer that cuts the mound from the south was identified. Excavations in the big pit that destroyed the southern wall of this structure, allowed to bring to light the southern section of the western wall. In the west of it and on the related floor, the bottom part of a storage vessel was found *in situ*. Beneath it were little stones that were placed as paving.

The floor of this structure, as mentioned above, had been removed in 2013 and a test drill was conducted here. Filling layer with mudbrick remains, bone fragments, and ceramic pieces were discovered in this area. Some of the bones bear traces of consumption. Urartian ceramics were also found together with Early Bronze Age vessels. The pit yielded Urartian and Early Bronze Age pottery mixed with ash. We can also say that the frit beads found here are similar to those found in

Karagündüz<sup>11</sup>. Apart from the mudbrick blocks in the destruction layer, which is approximately 2 m deep, mixed Urartian and Bronze Age ceramics are important for predicting the strata on which the early phase of the Urartian Structure Level constructed over.

After the removal of the Late Iron Age filling in trench N21, work on the debris belonging to the Urartian Structure Level beneath began. During the excavations, a mudbrick wall of 0.90 m wide built upon a foundation of single course of stone was uncovered. This wall also forms the eastern wall of the 5.50 m wide room belonging to the early phase of the Urartian Structure Level in southeast of trench N20. Here a conical Urartian seal with a mixed creature figure was found. Similar seals are known from other Urartian centers like Karmir Blur<sup>12</sup> and Bastam<sup>13</sup>. The creature on the Bastam seal in particular resembles the one on the seal from the trench N21<sup>14</sup>. In the Urartian period debris, where this seal was found, an obsidian arrowhead was dug up, which was probably mixed with the Bronze Age stratum beneath it. In the filling of this structure various findings like pottery shards, bone fragments, grinding stone, bronze pieces, obsidian, and beads were found.

To the east of this wall, in the north-south direction and the intersecting wall in the east-west direction, there is a mudbrick wall of 0.90 m wide and 5 m long. On the northwestern side of the trench, a 3 m high and 0.90 m wide wall was identified. That room is 5 m wide and 9 m long and is parallel to the room to its west and an extension of these structures. West, east, and north of this room are marked by a mudbrick wall resting on foundation of one row of stone. The room produced Early Bronze Age and Iron Age potteries, animal bone fragments, which we think are result of consumption, and a bronze bead mixed with Urartian debris. Also at the northwestern corner an intact dog skeleton, probably dating from the Late Iron Age was discovered. To the north of this room and trench, a southern section of another Urartian room was partially uncovered.

Work at the eastern side of the eastern wall of this room brought another room into light, which is an extension of these structures and half of which was uncovered within the eastern section of the trench. That wall also forms the western wall of this room. It contains pottery shards and bone fragments in mixed state. At the southeastern corner of the trench, two drop-shaped bullas were found mixed with ashes in this Urartian layer. Moreover, found in

this area together with numerous shards and bone fragments, is a piece of dye, known in the literature as “Egyptian Blue”.

Ground level was reached in the Urartian room located on the northern side of the other Urartian room, which is part of the same architectural structure. Most of it extends into the northern section. Here, various vessels dating to the Urartian period, bronze pieces and animal bones, and remains of consumption, were encountered. On the floor were *in situ* stone beads, bone fragments, fragments of bronze objects, a bronze needle, a leaf shaped bronze bead, round bronze beads, bronze rings, bronze earrings, bronze circles, two stone pendants, a bracelet with a snake head, and earrings and needles.

At the southern section of the trench N22 due to damage caused by the asphalt road running through it a 10 m long section was cleared (Fig. 10). During this cleaning work, a piece of iron, clinker pieces, and a piece of burned timber were found mixed with obsidian pieces. We have also come across a sterile layer, where obsidian, shells and a shard (Halaf?) were found.

A graveled floor was also discovered on the ground of the western section. The floor, which might belong to the Urartian structure levels of earlier stratum, was left high, and a step was created. Traces of mudbrick rubble were observed here. Immediately to the east of this step, a drill with the dimensions of 2.60 x 3.20 m was opened. It is remarkable to find Early Bronze Age ceramics together with modern rubbish pieces during our campaigns conducted here. Humidity in the soil rises in this area, making it more difficult to conduct excavation and flattening works. From here came a large quantity of Early Bronze Age ceramics, mudbrick rubble, burnt timber, and animal bone fragments. Also, a terracotta object (a wheel, which might belong to a model cart), a bronze arrowhead (whose tip and handle are broken), obsidian pieces, and a stone object thought to be a perforated bead were found.

No architectural element was encountered in the drilling hole, and the stones infrequently happened upon were removed after documentation. The pottery belongs to the Early Bronze Age and their numbers decreased as the drilling continued. Water was found approximately at 1681.60 m above sea level, 7 m deeper than the highest point of the mound. It is remarkable to find pottery at this level, even though no architectural elements were encountered.

11) Sevin and Kavaklı 1996: 41-44.

12) Piotrovsky 1969: 42.

13) Kleiss 1979: Tafel 39.

14) Kleiss 1979: Tafel 38,7-9.72/3=D3.





**Fig. 10 : Area A, Trench N22, south section.**

## VAN CITADEL

### Area J-BG 90 Underground Rock-cut Tomb

During the surveys and investigations carried out in the section described as the Eastern Ditch of the Van Citadel in previous years, the existence of some clear-cut floors and architectural traces had been noticed. In the areas, east of the Eastern Ditch, the existence of rooms cut into the bedrock like the rock-cut tombs known as Analıkız and Doğu Odaları, and the foundation beds carved into the bedrock, whose range are sometimes extensive, were already known. Surveys conducted 35 m south of the niche with Assyrian inscription uncovered a room carved into the bedrock with an orderly plan. Up until present, no excavation campaign was undertaken in this area, coinciding with the Area J and trench BG 90 and there is no data about its structuring. Excavation works started in order to investigate and uncover some of the rock-cut traces that were visible on the surface of citadel on this section.

During the excavation, a *dromos* shaped anterior room in the east-west direction, which was carved into the bedrock and dug into the underground, was encountered (Fig. 11). The wall between this rectangular anterior room with the dimensions of 2.78 x 2.15 m, whose corners were rounded, and the main

chamber with the dimensions of 5.80 x 3.15 m, where there is also a door, has the measurement of 1.20 m. Hence, the length of the rock-cut tomb becomes about 9 m (Fig. 12).

On the eastern side of this “anterior room”, a 1.08 m high and 0.76 m wide doorway opens to a façade of 1.60 m high, 1.30 m wide and 0.32 m deep. The depth of the doorway is 0.70-0.75 m and carved into the bedrock to place the 0.72 m long and 0.20 m wide doorway bottom sill. The depth of this doorway bottom sill, located in the east-west direction, starting from the ground, reaches to 0.11-0.12 m in the east. According to the bearings on and under the door, the height of the doorway bottom sill should be about 1.74 m.

There is an elevation difference of 0.18 m between the floor of the anterior room and the door. This anterior room directly opens to the main chamber, which is reached via a step of 0.90 m long, 0.30 m wide and 0.28 m high from the door. The height of the anterior room varies between 2.20 and 2.50 m. Like in the main chamber in the east, in the filling mixed with stones and soil of the anterior room, various animal bone fragments, glazed-unglazed ceramic pieces, and brick pieces were discovered. Also, from this filling, two pieces of bone and one spearhead were recovered. Especially in the anterior room, right in front of the doorway, the broken and





**Fig. 11 : Area J, Trench BG90, *dromos* shaped anterior room.**



**Fig. 12 : Area J, Trench BG90, underground rock-cut tomb.**

scattered medieval ceramics point to the rock-cut tomb's utilization phases. From this filling, medieval ceramics were uncovered, including two jug-shaped vessels, one of which is intact, while the other is shattered.

From the anterior room, the main chamber that is carved into the bedrock and in the east-west direction, whose north-south and east-west walls we uncovered, was reached. It has a rectangular plan with rounded corners measuring 5.80 x 3.15 m. There is an uninterrupted 12 m long and 0.50 m wide niche that covers all of the southern and eastern walls and half of the northern wall. This belt of niche is located 1 m above ground level. After rising about 0.40 m and carved in 0.70 m high, the niche belt is corrected towards the ceiling with an inclination and connected to an 0.80 m long surface. The height of the main chamber from the straightened floor varies between 2.65 m to 2.80 m depending on the upper limit of the walls. The cover coat of the burial chamber is

entirely destroyed. The Medieval materials found on the floor suggest that the main chamber was used during that period (Fig. 13). The presence of a dog skeleton is especially remarkable. Right on top of the floor, a heavily damaged bronze bowl with a rose ornament was uncovered.

In the main chamber's filling, there are stones of various size. These stones are of the same material as the rock tomb was carved in. Some of them must have broken off from the burial chamber's plaster. Glazed and unglazed medieval shards, mudbrick and brick fragments, animal bones and pieces of bronze too were encountered in this filling. A preserved furnace 0.60 m in diameter and about 0.15-0.20 m in height was uncovered on the south corner of the main chamber door. This furnace shows that the main chamber was used as a furnace house during medieval times.

This rock-cut tomb carved into the bedrock and opened underground, which we discovered in the



**Fig. 13 : Area J, Trench BG90, rock-cut tomb used during medieval times.**

section known as the Eastern Ditch of Van Citadel, is different from the rock-cut tombs known since the earlier times. Although the tombs of Neft Kuyu, İç Kale, Argishti I and Doğu Odaları have multiple rooms, they only have one façade. The newly uncovered BG90 rock-cut tomb however was carved underground and is composed of a *dromos* shaped anterior room and a main chamber at the back. In that regard, it differs from the other tombs constructed in the citadel and sets an example of a tomb of this type. Underground rock-cut tombs, in terms of planning, are widespread in Urartian geography. Although the tombs like Karagündüz<sup>15</sup> and Altintepe<sup>16</sup> with *dromos*, resemble the BG90 tomb in terms of plan, tombs in Karagündüz were built underground with stones. A tomb carved into the bedrock in the citadel similar to those tombs, which are also defined as public tombs, is important. As a result, a new type of Urartian royal tomb was added to the list of types of tombs.

15) Sevin and Kavaklı 1996: 14-21.

16) Sevin 2012: 111-127.

## OLD CITY OF VAN

The 2013 and 2014 campaigns were conducted near the southern walls of the Old City of Van, which was surrounded by the walls lying in the south of Van Citadel, the area between Kaya Çelebi and New Gate/Palace Gate. With a series of trenches opened in the east-west and north-south directions, architectural elements that were last used in 19<sup>th</sup> century were uncovered (Fig. 14). On both sides of the stone road from Kaya Çelebi Mosque to New Gate/Palace Gate, the foundation remains of structures, thought to be aligned at intervals, have two storeys and a courtyard in the middle, with mudbrick walls on top of a stone foundation form the main characteristic of this structure. The plans and sizes of these structures and the images from the 19<sup>th</sup> century or information from travelers indicate that they were public buildings. Archaeological finds support this claim. This road, which is east-west in direction, and another





**Fig. 14 : Excavation areas in Old City of Van.**

road going northward, whose route is defined with the architectural pattern, reach the city center. On both sides of the road, there are examples of civil architecture with mudbrick garden walls surrounding the residences. Located south of this area, flanked by public buildings, despite the orderly pattern, a stone road with a channel in the middle move toward a less orderly area and indicates a complicated architectural pattern; reflecting the general characteristics of eastern cities.

During the excavation season of 2015-2016 passive protection and restoration work was carried out in the areas uncovered in previous seasons. In the areas north of the stone road going between Kaya Çelebi and New Gate/Palace Gate in the east-west direction and the intersecting stone road with a channel in middle going northward and the civilian architecture adjacent to them were the areas of application. In that regard, like in the previous years, mudbrick blocks of 27 x 27 cm and 27 x 13 cm with

10 cm in thickness, which were identified to be used in the structures, were produced. Passive protection applied on the stone walls uncovered and restored in the excavation season of 2013-2014, by placing mudbrick blocks in three rows on it. During this process, the bonding timber system, which was used in the original wall pattern and used between the stone wall and mudbrick body and, at times, in the mudbrick body itself, was also applied. Between the newly produced mudbricks, 10 x 10 cm bonding timbers were used and moved to the mudbrick body.

During our campaign of 2015-2016, the local wall collapses and rubble in the aforementioned structures was completed using the stones that came from that location and the same application techniques and materials. Other mudbrick collapses due to many reasons were restored using the newly produced mudbrick blocks.

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