

AŞVAN EXCAVATIONS 1968

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The large mound on the outskirts of Aşvan village was allocated, in the spring of 1968, to the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara for excavation as part of the wider programme of rescue operations on sites to be flooded by the Keban dam. It might be recorded here that both the Institute and I are privileged to have been invited to take part in, and make some active contribution to, the Keban project.

Location and Topography

The site is recorded by the M.E.T.U. survey under the number N 52/4 "Aşvan". The mound itself is situated on the western edge of the village which lies 34 km. NW of Elazığ on the southern bank of the Murat.

A contour survey was completed in the summer of 1968 by Bay Mustafa Muratoğlu. According to this survey the probable base of the mound lies at *ca.* 730 m. above sea level and the highest point at *ca.* 759 m. The total height of settlement deposits, therefore, is *ca.* 29 m. The lowest levels appear to have been built up on a shelf of conglomerate, overlooking the river-plain of the Murat. The dimensions of the site are *ca.* 125 m. north to south and *ca.* 100 m. east to west.

Chronology of the Site.

It seems, on the basis of sherd-material collected from the surface, that the whole of the Early Bronze Age and the Second Millennium are to be found on the site; in addition, the First Millennium B.C., the Roman and early Medieval periods are also present. Thus the probable time-

span represented on the site is *ca.* 4,500 years. Such a sequence, if complete and continuous, would be most important to the interpretation of the whole Keban project.

Programme

The site was considered to be too large to excavate every possible level *totally*. I therefore divided the programme of excavation into three parts:

1. The first aim was to investigate the complete stratigraphic sequence of the mound.
2. The second aim was to recover and to keep for study all materials, *everything*, from the stratigraphic sequence.
3. When the first two parts of the programme were completed, the third aim would be to excavate the whole of the Medieval (and possibly the Roman) settlements on the top of the mound.

The 1968 season

Excavation took place between August 20 and September 25. In addition two weeks were spent in preparation beforehand and afterwards three further weeks were given to the completion of section drawing and of the sieving programme. Messrs. I. Davidson, R. Dennell, and A. McNicoll were trench supervisors; Miss C. Room was in charge of conservation and acted as house supervisor; Mrs J. Beeley and Bayanlar Sevinç Turkyay and Nermin Ünsel of Istanbul University were house and site assistants. Bayan Oya Kozaman from the Bursa Museum represented the Turkish government.

Four trenches were opened, *ca.* 64 square metres in all, on the northern edge of the mound. The position of these trenches was planned both to take advantage of the steep slope of the mound and at the same time to shield three profiles at least and part of the trench from the worst effects of a sotherly exposure which would cause excessive desiccation of the soil.

MEDIEVAL

Architecture: All four trenches produced remains of this medieval period. The maximum depth of deposit appears (in trench G. 4.b) to be *ca.* 3 m. There is a certain amount of evidence for terracing - a constructional feature which would be necessary if the site, in the medieval period, was as steep-sided as it is today. There has been considerable erosion on this (the northern) slope, and walls and the northern edges of floors have suffered. Erosion combined with stone robbing has probably caused the loss of the northeastern side of a wall (no. 3) of some substantial structure in trench G. 4. b; the edge has, thus, been lost down to the level of the floor. The higher (inner) floors, on the southern side of wall 3, are well preserved but these, at present, remain unexcavated. The wall (no. 3) in G. 4.b was almost certainly an outside wall; it was substantial, being *ca.* 1.20 m. wide. The superstructure is lost; it was probably mud-brick. The inside walls were of mud-brick, laid without stone foundations. Floors were of hard clay.

Pottery: This category of material is not, on the whole, abundant but a pit in trench G. 4.b produced a few pieces of glazed ware. Otherwise, the pottery is plain, sometimes patterned with a matt red wash.

Other materials: This category, too, was not abundant although amorphous lumps of iron were fairly common. Fragments of glass, and shell were also fairly common. Non-artifactual materials were

represented by a meagre collection of seed and grain and of animal bone. The latter, however, were very small and fragmentary. Large, well-preserved bone fragments were, on the whole, rare.

"ROMAN"

Architecture: Several puzzling features in trench G.3.d may be resolved in another season; tentatively they may be interpreted as rather massive terracing to support structures on the south side. A section of one structure was found in trench G.4.b, immediately to the south of trench G.3.d; this was a pisé/mudbrick wall on a stone foundation. Associated with this wall there are a series of clay floors which extend northwards into trench G.3.d.

Pottery: Finds were, on the whole, meagre, being, for the most part, plain wares. Fine wares are best represented by a large fragment of a "Samian" (?) plate with stamped and rouletted decoration. This plate will, it is hoped, provide a fairly secure date to the structure and floors; for the moment, this one find provides the best evidence that the phase of occupation represented by these floors may tentatively be assigned to Roman times.

Other materials: As with pottery, both artifactual and non-artifactual materials were meagre. One of the most immediate aims of the 1969 season will be to recover adequate samples from this phase of occupation on the site.

? EARLY FIRST MILLENNIUM

In trench G.3.d, below the floors (mentioned above) of the "Roman" phase, pottery which may perhaps belong to the earlier centuries of the 1st Millennium B.C. came to light in fair quantity. No structures were found although pits and surfaces (including a hearth (?)) were observed. It was noticeable that the fragments of animal bone from this phase are both more numerous and better preserved.

Summary

The deposits so far excavated can perhaps be reduced to three main phases: early Medieval (*fl.* 12th century A.D.), "Roman" (1st century B.C. - 1st century A.D.), early First Millennium (1,000 B.C. - 500 B.C.). It remains to be seen whether or not the intervening centuries are represented on the site. Much more evidence is required not only artifacts from such as coins but also from non-artifactual remains. These latter are needed in order to complete the second part of our prog-

ramme. It is satisfactory that a procedure for the dry-sieving of *all* the excavated soil has been successfully inaugurated (with local labour) and that the results of this procedure promise to fulfil the second part of the excavation's intention, to provide a total sample (of all materials) recovered by mechanical processes and therefore not subject to arbitrary or haphazard choice, yet which can, furthermore, be precisely dated on stratigraphic grounds.