

The Role of the Urartian Epigraphy: Argišti I's Newly Found Disc in Varzaqan

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Introduction

The Urartians ruled over the regions between and in the shores of Lake Van (East of Turkey), Gökçe (or Sevan) Lake (Armenia), Lake Urmia (North West of Iran),¹ and Çıldır Lake (North East of Turkey).² Kleiss and Hauptmann commented that Urartu extended in an east-west direction from the upper Euphrates in Turkey to the area of Ardabil in Iran, and in a north-south direction from Çıldır Lake in northeastern Turkey and Gyumri or Leninakan in northwestern Armenia to Rowanduz in northeastern Iraq.³ Not everyone, however, would agree with this spatial definition of Urartu. Belli mentioned that Urartu kingdom reached South Caucasus in north, North West of Iran in east, and Euphrates in west.⁴ According to Biscione, Urartu was developed between Tigris and Iranian Plateau.⁵ Kleiss commented that South West, North West and some regions in the east of Lake Urmia were among Urartian kingdom from about 800 BC.⁶ In fact, the findings from Urartians were discovered roughly from west to Euphrates, from east to west of Ardebil, from north to shores of Çıldır and Gyumri (Leninakan in northwest of Armenia) and from south to Taurus Mountains⁷ and Rowanduz in north east of Iraq.

The Urartians benefited from the high knowledge and talent in the metalworking⁸ and especially the production of the bronze artifacts. They produced different weapons, vessels, furniture, and other objects⁹ - sometimes inscribed. Sargon mentioned the huge number of metal booties- mainly bronze artifacts-from Muşasir temple after his triumph in 714 BC¹⁰. Of course, most of the inscribed metal objects have been confiscated and not systematically excavated and discovered *in*

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¹ Zimansky 1985, 12.

² Barnett 2008, 322.

³ Kleiss – Hauptmann 1976.

⁴ Belli 2003-2004, 13.

⁵ Biscione 2009, 2.

⁶ Kleiss 2009, 27.

⁷ Köroğlu 2011, 12.

⁸ Ruder – Merhav 1991, 334.

⁹ Belli 1991; Wartke 1991, 324.

¹⁰ Mayer 2013, § 24, 329, 362-364, 369, 392, 403, 406.

situ through the legal excavations¹¹. The names of the kings on the artifacts could be of help to recognize the approximate duration of a metal object production¹². The Urartian inscribed objects have been discovered from Išpuini to Rusa III's reign but no inscribed metal object from Sarduri I is discovered¹³.

According to Dezső *et al.*¹⁴, there are several discs with the same characteristics of 9th to 7th centuries BC that are discovered or reported from sites or museums as Nimrud (in British Museum)¹⁵, Zincirli¹⁶, War-i Kabūd, Luristan¹⁷, Baba Jan, Iran¹⁸, Hasanlu IV, The Metropolitan Museum of Art¹⁹, Ziyiye²⁰, Tabriz Museum²¹, north west of Iran (in Van Museum)²², Alişar, The State Hermitage Museum²³, Karmir Blur (in The State Hermitage Museum²⁴ and Yerevan History Museum)²⁵, Lori Berd necropolis²⁶, Yerevan Columbarium²⁷, Eastern Anatolia (in University Museum of Philadelphia²⁸, a Private collection²⁹, Ebnöther Collection³⁰ and Van Museum)³¹, Altintepe Karaosmanoğlu³², Kayalidere (in Ankara Museum)³³, Giyimli (in Van Museum)³⁴, Doğubayazıt

¹¹ Zimansky 1998, 168.

¹² Işık – Kuvanç 2018, 226-227.

¹³ Belli 1991, 44-45.

¹⁴ Dezső *et al.* 2021.

¹⁵ Curtis 2013, 94-96, 182.

¹⁶ von Luschan – Andrae 1943.

¹⁷ Haerinck – Overlaet 2004, 98.

¹⁸ Goff 1969, 123.

¹⁹ Muscarella 2008, 111.

²⁰ Godard 1950.

²¹ Dara 2015; Dara 2017; Dara 2021.

²² Belli 1976-1977.

²³ Piotrovskij 1967, fig. 60; Özgen 1984, 104.

²⁴ Piotrovskij 1955, fig. 36.

²⁵ Salvini 2012, 41, B 8-25X.

²⁶ Castelluccia – Dan 2019, fig.9.

²⁷ Esaân *et al.* 1995.

²⁸ Özgen 1984.

²⁹ Van den Berghe – De Meyer 1982, no. 48; Özgen 1984, 105.

³⁰ Özgen 1984; Seidl 1991.

³¹ Belli 1976-1977.

³² Karaosmanoğlu 2008; Karaosmanoğlu 2011, 70.

³³ Özgen 1984, 105.

³⁴ Erzen, 1974, fig. 24.

(in Ahmet K rođlu Collection)³⁵, Dizginkale (in Van Museum)³⁶, Iđdır³⁷, the collections in New York and Israel Museum³⁸, Karlsruhe collection³⁹ and H luk Perk Collection⁴⁰.

Several contributions of the scholars are published as Azarpay⁴¹, Belli⁴²,  zgen⁴³, Seidl⁴⁴,  avuŐođlu⁴⁵, Karaosmanođlu⁴⁶, Salvini⁴⁷, Dezs  *et al.*⁴⁸ and Dara⁴⁹ regarding the interpretation of the Urartian disc.

There is a newly discovered Urartian disc with a one-line cuneiform inscription and a hieroglyphic sign discovered in Qala Dađı fortification of Varzaqan, Iran. Therefore, it was the aim of the authors to study the disc, recognize the name of the king and compare it with the other Urartian discs of the same king or same region. This research is based on filed and library studies.

The Urartian discs

The Urartian bronze discs, roundels or *umbos* are mostly not discovered *in situ*. Therefore, it is difficult to recognize the exact function of them. They are sometimes inscribed and/or decorated.

The discs are depicted on some of the horse cheek strap, nose band, cheek strap and head stall (the bands fastening the poll-crest to the head of the horse) in the Assyrian art. According to Azarpay, discs are discovered in Phrygia, Caucasia, Northwest of Iran and other regions as buttons on the clothing and armors or horse harness (*phalerae*) if they are bigger in size⁵⁰.  zgen suggested that the Urartian discs could have been cymbals, decorative and/or defensive fittings of belts, shields, clothes and armors or could be the horse harness decorations⁵¹.  zgen referred furthermore to the possibility that the chariot side panels were decorated with small roundels; however, he dismissed this possibility, since the studs with a bent-backwards stem indicate that these pieces were sewn on to the leather or felt rather than nailed on to the wood⁵². He reminded furthermore of the plain roundels represented as worn by Urartian horsemen on the bronze

³⁵ Kuvan  – G kce 2018, fig. 38-61.

³⁶  zgen 1984, 104.

³⁷  zgen 1984, 108.

³⁸  zgen 1984, 106; Seidl 1991, no. 45.

³⁹ Seidl 1991, 91, n. 50 a-b.

⁴⁰  avuŐođlu 2005, 72.

⁴¹ Azarpay 1968.

⁴² Belli 1976-1977; Belli 1991.

⁴³  zgen 1984.

⁴⁴ Seidl 1991; Seidl 2004.

⁴⁵  avuŐođlu 2005.

⁴⁶ Karaosmanođlu 2008; Karaosmanođlu 2011.

⁴⁷ Salvini 2012.

⁴⁸ Dezs  *et al.* 2021.

⁴⁹ Dara 2015; Dara 2021.

⁵⁰ Azarpay 1968, 14.

⁵¹  zgen 1984, 104.

⁵²  zgen 1984, 106.

plaque from Çavuştepe⁵³ and however, such roundels would have decorated not so much the junctures of the horse's headgear, but much more the browband or neck straps. There also are smaller discs that are thought to be the decorations of the outfits, belts or the chariots. In all, Özgen commented that the discs were used as cymbal or ornament on the belts, shields, chariots or outfits or could have been the horse harnesses⁵⁴. Taşyürek compered the Urartian discs with Hittites⁵⁵ and according to Akurgal it was possible to produce bigger discs of about 16 cm for the chariots⁵⁶. According to Seidl, the Urartian discs were installed over the horse harness on the horse cheek⁵⁷. These discs had usually been fixed over a soft tissue with the help of the holes around or at the middle. The best source of pictorial evidence of the horse harness roundels is the representations of horses on the Assyrian palace reliefs and accordingly Dezső *et al.* some of them are discovered in the horse burials⁵⁸. Therefore, it seems plausible to suppose that these discs decorated the leather straps of the headgear of horses. These discs most probably covered the intersection points, where the different leather straps (cheek strap or nose band) of the headgear of the horse joined to each other on the cheek and on the temple of the horses. This is the reason it can safely be supposed that these objects were 'cheek bosses' of the horse's headgear. According to Curtis, the discs of the horse harness were such a cultural *Gemeingut*, which are known and were used in a wide stretch of different regions of the ancient Near East and beyond⁵⁹.

There were 18 bronze discs recovered from the looted hoard in Hungry from Turkey. These pieces constitute nine pairs, which makes it clear that they were used in pairs⁶⁰.

The convex discs are mostly between 6 to 9 cm⁶¹ and are sometimes with a knob in the middle. They are also sometimes decorated with a rosette with different number of petals, bud-and-garland, zig-zag/sawtooth, concentric rows of dots or circles or could be produced plain and simple without the decoration⁶².

There are different types of the discs according to their forms. Dezső *et al.* commented based on Özgen's basic typology that Type 1 has a relatively flat but convex form with a slightly curving dome and a top surmounted by a rounded knob/stud⁶³. Type 2 is characterized by a high conical form with a flat knob on top. Within these two basic types there are further variants (subtypes) (fig. 1). The framework of the subtypes within the two basic forms is based on minor differences of their decorations.

⁵³ Özgen 1984, 107.

⁵⁴ Özgen 1984, 104-106.

⁵⁵ Taşyürek 1975, 153.

⁵⁶ Akurgal 1962, Plate 124.

⁵⁷ Seidl 1991, 79, 83, 91.

⁵⁸ Dezső *et al.* 2021, 241-248.

⁵⁹ Curtis 2013, 94-96.

⁶⁰ Dezső *et al.* 2021.

⁶¹ Seidl 1991, 83, 91.

⁶² Dezső *et al.* 2021, 241-248.

⁶³ Dezső *et al.* 2021, 28.

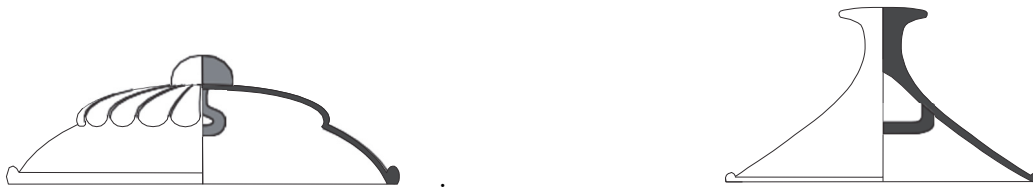


Fig. 1) The typology of bronze roundels (Dezső et al. 2021, fig. 34)

The authors agree with Type 1 as the slightly-convex discs mostly without but sometimes with the decorations (fig. 2) but the other type which was regarded as a subtype of the discs with raised omphalos in the middle of the roundel could be regarded as an independent type rather than a subtype (fig. 3). Following are the examples.



Fig. 2) Argišti's discs in Van Museum



Fig. 3) An uninscribed Urartian disc (Seidl 1991, 88 n. 45)

The Urartian discs are sometimes inscribed with mostly a one-line inscription written around the central convex or the central hole containing the name of the king or the king's *ú-ri-iš-ḫi* (the property)⁶⁴. *uri=šḫe* (*NIG* or *ŠA*) includes a root and a suffix⁶⁵ and is not observed on the inscribed ceramic, tablet, seal, and seal impression but rarely on the stone and rock inscriptions⁶⁶. Salvini translated *ú-ri-iš-ḫi* as the “gift”, “offering”, “army”,⁶⁷ “property” or “weapon”⁶⁸ depending on the text of the inscriptions. Belli,⁶⁹ Zimansky⁷⁰ and Dara⁷¹ prefer “property”. Zimansky also thinks sometimes it can be translated as “warehouse”⁷². Wilhelm translated *ú-ri-iš-ḫi* as “weapon” or “a part of the weapon”.⁷³ Ghirshman chose “object, treasure, property or weapon”⁷⁴. Melikishvili and later Bashash Kanzaq translated *ú-ri-iš-ḫi* based on the inscriptions of Karmir Blur. They used the probable translation “the object or property of Argišti (’s cemetery)” or “Argišti’s armory”.

⁶⁴ Dara 2015, p. 78; 2021, 4-6.

⁶⁵ Wilhelm 2002, 125.

⁶⁶ Dara 2021.

⁶⁷ Salvini 2008, 141, A 7-9 Ro.

⁶⁸ Salvini 2012, 28, B5-1.

⁶⁹ Belli 1991, 46.

⁷⁰ Zimansky 1995, 109.

⁷¹ Dara 2021, 7-8.

⁷² Zimansky 1995, 109.

⁷³ Wilhelm 2002, 125.

⁷⁴ Ghirshman 1964, 55.

Also, the hieroglyphic sign of the lion head, bull head or eagle head are observed where the two ends of the cuneiform inscription meet or outside the cuneiform inscription along the edge of the disc. Some scholars recognize the head of the lion sign as *Ḫaldi*, the Supreme God⁷⁵. Movsisyan suggested this sign is used over the artifacts in the temples or the offerings to *Ḫaldi*⁷⁶. Barnett recognized that it as the royal sign⁷⁷. According to Calmeyer, the head of the lion is the proof of offered objects⁷⁸. The author suggests this sign as the sign of king's power and belongings. Therefore, when it comes with the name of the king it describes that the artifact was king's or his fort belongings. In whole, somehow this sign shows that the artifact is a royal one from the court⁷⁹. Finkel and Reade proposed "king" as a noun and "to give" as a verb for the bull body sign in Mesopotamia⁸⁰. Barnett traced this sign in several inscriptions⁸¹ and Payne mentioned several examples of the bull head hieroglyph sign along with the cuneiform inscriptions.⁸² Movsisyan mentioned this sign as *Teišeba*, Weather God, as it is observed over an armor.⁸³ Dara suggests that this sign could be regarded as "cattle or bull" on the local inscriptions and "*Teišeba*" on the royal inscriptions. *Teišeba* had the minor role in the people's life but the cattle and bull had an essential role in their life⁸⁴. According to Movsisyan the head of the eagle has the value of king's power⁸⁵.

Newly found disc from Qala Dağı, Varzaqan

An Urartian disc have been recently discovered (fig. 4) from Qala Dağı fortification, Kiqal village, in North of Varzaqan, Iranian Azerbaijan (fig. 5). This village has been studied systematically in 2017⁸⁶ and according to Naseri Someeh there is a developed central fortification, a settlement and three cemeteries from the 1st and 2nd millennium BC⁸⁷. The large fortification of Qala Dağı is among a few large forts possibly from the Iron Age or pre-Urartian era. Its position and the special plan are remarkable in the region.⁸⁸ It is possible that these fortifications were destroyed by the Urartians according to Seqindel inscription by Sarduri II (ca. 756 to 730 BC) in Varzaqan⁸⁹.

Qala Dağı fortification and the other forts of the region from the 1st and 2nd millennium BC are built with Cyclopean method most of which plans are in accordance with the topographic situation. They are constructed in the heights and over the steep slopes with the defendable walls

⁷⁵ Calmeyer 1979.

⁷⁶ Movsisyan 2006, 103.

⁷⁷ Barnett 1974, 48, fig. 2.

⁷⁸ Calmeyer 1979.

⁷⁹ Dara 2018, 44.

⁸⁰ Finkel – Reade 1996, 249.

⁸¹ Barnett 1974, 49, fig. 3.

⁸² Payne 2005, 320, M. Aa. 18-20.

⁸³ Movsisyan 2006, 119.

⁸⁴ Dara 2018, 45.

⁸⁵ Movsisyan 2006, 129.

⁸⁶ Hejabri Nobari 2017.

⁸⁷ Naseri Someeh 2020, 257.

⁸⁸ Naseri Someeh 2020, 257.

⁸⁹ Dara 2017, 81.

around. The multi-room Qala Daği fortification was constructed over the summit of a single mountain with less accessibility and high dominance of the region. It is as developed as 120 to 100 meters with an egg-shaped wall (fig. 5c). The bottom of the egg-shaped wall is to the north and the upper part is to the south. There are a number of stone constructions out of the fortification walls and over the hillsides. It is possible that another outer wall defended these less developed constructions. Additionally, there are three terribly destructed and illegally excavated rectangular stone graves at the southern hillside of the fortification. Basically, the cemeteries of the 1st and 2nd millennium BC of the region are built as Kurgan, Cromlech and the rectangular stone graves are sometimes along with the steles⁹⁰.

The newly found bronze disc from Qala Daği fortification of Varzaqan, has the diameter of 7 cm and the middle convex is 3 cm. There is a one-line Urartian cuneiform inscription around its central convex. A hieroglyphic sign of the bull head is engraved where the two ends of the cuneiform inscription meet. There is an embossed border in 0.3 cm from the edges on the disc and several holes around the edge were drilled in order for the disc to be fixed on a soft tissue. There is a fracture in front of the bull head which is 1.8 cm. This disc could be used on the horse-harness, outfit, chariot or shield. But, its size meets the standard size of the horse-harness discs and can belong to the earlier proposed type by the authors.

The one-line inscription is as following: 𐎠𐎵𐎲𐎠𐎧𐎺𐎠𐎧𐎺𐎠𐎧𐎺𐎠𐎧𐎺𐎠 (Argišti's property). The disc presented in this paper is the third one by Argišti I discovered inside the borders of Iran. The main difference between the recent disc and the other two is the convex in the middle. The epigraphy of all three inscriptions belongs most probably to Argišti I's era. This type of the signs is used from Minua's (ca. 810 to 785/780 BC) era to Sarduri II's (ca. 756 to 730 BC)⁹¹. One may assume that these discs were written in the Argišti II's reign as the inscriptions in Razliq⁹², Nashteban⁹³, Sarab⁹⁴ and Shishel⁹⁵ in Eastern Azerbaijan have been all written in the reign of the Argišti II. But Sarduri II, son of Argišti I, has ordered his inscription in Seqindel⁹⁶. Therefore, it is possible that this artifact belonged to the reign of his father, Argišti I, and was transported to the region later. Other examples are several bronze objects from Karmir Blur that were recognized as Rusa II's. But they belonged to the reign of Argišti I and were transported from Erebuni to Karmir Blur later. Therefore, it seems that it was possible for the artifacts of different rulers to be transported elsewhere in the antiquity⁹⁷.

⁹⁰ Naseri Someeh 2020, 259.

⁹¹ Salvini 2012, 321-322.

⁹² Dara 2017, 106-110.

⁹³ Dara 2017, 111-116.

⁹⁴ Dara, forthcoming, 54-56

⁹⁵ Dara 2017, 117-122.

⁹⁶ Dara 2017, 80-82.

⁹⁷ Salvini 1991, 11.



Fig. 4a) Obverse of Qala Dağı, Varzaqan disc



Fig. 4b) Reverse of Qala Dağı, Varzaqan disc



Fig. 5a) Location of Qala Dağı, Kiqal, Varzaqan



Fig. 5b) Qala Dağı eastern view
(Naseri Someeh 2020, 314)



Fig. 5c) Aerial photo of Qala Dağı Fortification
(Naseri Someeh 2020, 314)

The comparison between the disc of Qala Dağı and other similar inscribed discs

There are several discs with the similar form discovered in the Urartian sites. But, the authors compared the newly found disc with the similar ones in the form or inscription, specifically with the inscription of Argišti.

There were two discovered discs from Iran which are not similar in form but inscription to the newly found disc. There is a disc in Van Museum which is mentioned to be discovered inside the borders of Iran which was the property of Argišti II according to Belli⁹⁸ but the epigraphy resembles the other discs of Argišti I's reign (fig. 2). Belli commented that this slightly-convex bronze disc is possibly discovered from a cemetery in North West of Iran but is transported to Van Museum⁹⁹. It has the diameter of 9.2 cm¹⁰⁰ with a hole in the center and the one-line Argišti's cuneiform inscription¹⁰¹. There also is a hieroglyphic sign of an eagle head where the two ends of the cuneiform inscription meet. Payne¹⁰² studied this disc as well.

Another bronze disc is dedicated to The Archeological Museum of Tabriz by a villager from Varzaqan about thirty years ago¹⁰³. It is safeguarded in the museum with number 7563 and is in the permanent exhibition. There is a one-line cuneiform inscription around the central hole of this slightly-convex disc and according to its epigraphy it belongs to Argišti I (fig. 6). The diameter is 9 cm and the central hole has a 0.8 cm diameter.

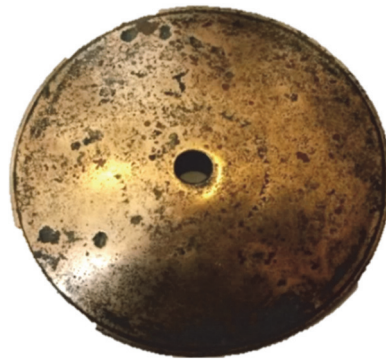


Fig. 6) The disc of Azerbaijan Archaeology Museum in Tabriz ((Naseri Someeh 2020, 78)

There also are central convex discs similar to the newly found one. An Urartian disc is discovered with the name of Išpuini, which is undecorated with an omphalos and the holes pierced around in Van Museum (fig. 7). Its diameter is 7.4 cm and the knob is 4 cm¹⁰⁴. There is a one-line Urartian cuneiform inscription outside the convex center includes *m-iš-pu-ú-i-ni-e-i ú-ri-iš-ḫi* (The property of Išpuini). But, the epigraphy looks like the one from Minua's reign not Išpuini's. Therefore, it is possible that it is produced in the reign of Minua with the name of his father. Additionally, one

⁹⁸ Belli 1976-1977, 185.

⁹⁹ Belli 1976-1977, 184.

¹⁰⁰ Belli 1976-1977, 183-184.

¹⁰¹ Belli 1976-1977.

¹⁰² Payne 2006, 280, 11.3.2.

¹⁰³ Dara 2015, 66-71.

¹⁰⁴ Belli 1976-1977, 178.

can observe a hieroglyphic sign of a bull head outside the inscription on the edge where the holes around the disc were made. The definite findspot of the disc is not distinguished.



Fig. 7a) *Işpuni's disc in Van Museum*

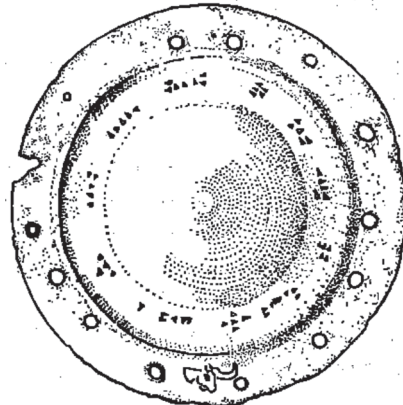


Fig. 7b) *The reconstruction of the disc (Belli 1976-1977, fig. 1)*

A damaged disc of Minua with a central knob perhaps from eastern Anatolia is exhibited in Van museum (fig. 8). The diameters are 5 and 2.6 cm. There is the hieroglyphic sign of a lion head where the two ends of a one-line cuneiform inscription meet¹⁰⁵. The epigraphy of the cuneiform inscription belongs to Minua's reign.

Another similar disc with a central omphalos and Minua's inscription is discovered over a disc from Karmir Blur. The center of the disc is pierced for a stud. It is now in The State Hermitage Museum¹⁰⁶.



Fig. 8a) *Minua's disc in Van Museum*

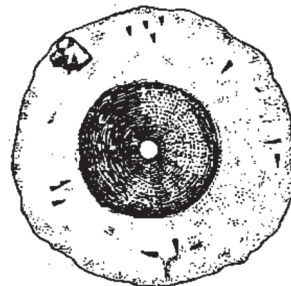


Fig. 8b) *The reconstruction of the disc (Belli 1976-1977, fig. 2)*

Most of the similar discs bear the name of Argišti as following.

There is an undecorated disc with a central omphalos and a stud with a bent tip in Van Museum which has holes pierced around the edge¹⁰⁷ (fig. 9). The inscription includes Argišti and the diameters are 5.3 and 2.8 cm. The epigraphy belongs to the era of Argišti I. Additionally, there is the hieroglyphic sign of a bull head where the two ends of the cuneiform inscription meet. The disc is discovered *in situ*¹⁰⁸.

¹⁰⁵ Belli 1976-1977, 180-181.

¹⁰⁶ Piotrovskij 1955, fig. 44.

¹⁰⁷ Piotrovskij 1955, 181.

¹⁰⁸ Piotrovskij 1955.



Fig. 9a) The disc of Argišti in Van Museum

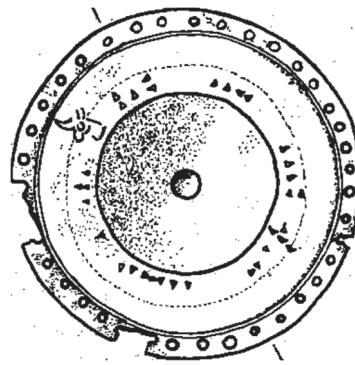


Fig. 9b) The reconstruction of the disc (Belli 1976-1977, 181 fig. 3)

Another disc in Van Museum, with the diameters of 4.5 and 2.6 cm, and the inscription of Argišti (fig. 10) is mentioned by Belli as the disc of Argišti II¹⁰⁹ but the epigraphy is exactly similar to those of Argišti I. Seidl also mentioned this disc as Argišti I's¹¹⁰. There also is the hieroglyphic sign of an eagle head where the two ends of the cuneiform inscription meet.



Fig 10a) Argišti's disc in Van Museum

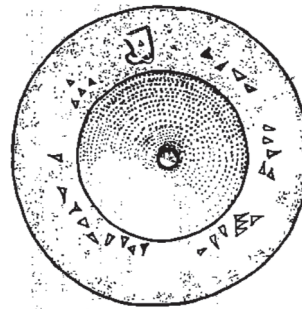


Fig 10b) The reconstruction of the disc (Belli 1976-1977, fig. 4)

A disc from Hâluk Perk Collection¹¹¹ (fig. 11) has to be mentioned with the cuneiform inscription of Argišti that seems to be inscribed with the same epigraphy of other discs of Argišti I. Çavuşoğlu also suggested it is the property of Argišti I due to the huge number of metal artifacts produced in his reign. He did not mention the epigraphy. The diameters of the disc are 4.5 and 2.5 cm and there is a hieroglyphic sign of a lion head outside the cuneiform inscription line at the edge of the disc.

There also is a discovered Argišti's disc from Karmir Blur (K-635) in The State Hermitage Museum which according to Belli was used on an armor¹¹² and is inscribed on the obverse and reverse (fig. 12) and Piotrovskij also mentioned it could be used on an armor or belt¹¹³. Additionally, Seidl published this disc as Argišti I's which is offered to Haldi by the king¹¹⁴. Azarpay called this artifact a button on the armor dedicated to Haldi that is decorated with a rosette with a double ring of petals¹¹⁵.

¹⁰⁹ Piotrovskij 1955, 182.

¹¹⁰ Seidl 2004, 78, Abb. 39.d.

¹¹¹ Çavuşoğlu 2005, 72, no. 4461/d.

¹¹² Belli 1976-1977, 188.

¹¹³ Piotrovskij 1955, fig. 25.

¹¹⁴ Seidl 2004, Abb. 38.

¹¹⁵ Azarpay 1968, 24.

According to Salvini, there are several inscribed discs of Arğišti discovered in Karmir Blur in Yerevan History Museum. It seems that they all have the inscription of *m ar-gi-iš-ti-e ú-ri-iš-ḫi* with the similar epigraphy.¹¹⁶



Fig. 11) Arğišti's disc in Hâluk Perk Collection
(Çavuşođlu 2005, Çizim 1)

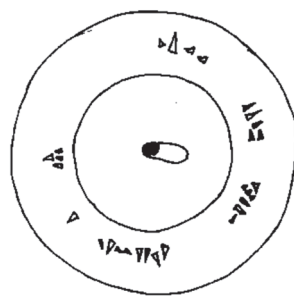


Fig. 12a) Arğišti's disc from Karmir Blur
(The photo is sent by The State Hermitage Museum)



Fig. 12b) The reconstruction of the disc inscription
(Belli 1976-1977, Lev IV, 15)

There also is an undecorated bronze disc from Karmir Blur with the stud in the middle from Sarduri II (K. 396) in The State Hermitage Museum¹¹⁷ with the similar epigraphy (Fig. 13).



Fig. 13) Sarduri's disc from Karmir Blur (The photo is sent by The State Hermitage Museum)

¹¹⁶ Salvini 2012, p. 41, B 8-25X.

¹¹⁷ Piotrovskij 1970, fig. 56, 79.

Discussions

There are three discovered Urartian discs of Argišti I in Iran. The latest is convex in the middle but the other two (in Tabriz and Van Museums) are slightly convex and without a knob. The one in Tabriz Museum and the recently found disc are both discovered in Varzaqan region. But the later was the first to be reported *in situ*.

Most of the discs similar to the recently discovered disc in Iran are safeguarded in Van Museum and others are in Hâluk Perk Collection, State Hermitage Museum (from Karmir Blur) and Yerevan History Museum (from Karmir Blur).

The discs with the inscription of Argišti are inscribed with the epigraphy of Minua's reign (Argišti I's father) onwards. As mentioned before, this epigraphy was used for roughly one century during the reign of Minua to Sarduri II. This epigraphy is also observed on the Işpuini's discs which could be the result it is inscribed during the reign of Minua in the name of his father. Therefore, these discs are not inscribed in the reign of Işpuini nor Işpuini and Minua's co-regency. After Sarduri II's reign the epigraphy was again similar to the first years of Urartian cuneiform epigraphy with longer and sharper signs¹¹⁸.

In Sraduri I's reign¹¹⁹ and Işpuini and Minua's co-regency¹²⁰ the cuneiform signs were needle-like. Although, in Minua's reign both old¹²¹ and new¹²² epigraphy on the metal artifacts are discovered which means it took time for the new epigraphy to be used widely.

The slightly convex discs were not mentioned in this paper except for the ones from Argišti I or the discs from Iran. Also, the discs of Altintepe were not studied. The medallion-shaped bronze discs of Altintepe were discovered in the holes on the foundation stones at the four corners of the temple¹²³ which are parallels to the 'offering discs' revealed in the slots carved in the basic rock foundation of New Palace (Yeni Saray) in Van¹²⁴. It seems that they all could have had the religious purpose and not the armor of the horses nor buttons¹²⁵.

In all, it is most probable that the discs with the name if Argišti are produced during Argišti I's reign or his son, Sarduri II, rather than Argišti II that the epigraphy is different and needle-like. Some rock inscriptions in Eastern Azerbaijan were written in Argišti II's reign including Razliq, Nashteban, Sarab, and also Shisheh inscriptions. This was the reason some scholars supposed the disc in Tabriz Museum belongs to the same era. But, there are pieces of evidence to prove artifacts were transported during the Urartian kings' reign or afterwards to the different sites. Several bronze artifacts in Karmir Blur belong to the reign of Rusa II that were thought to be produced in Karmir Blur but they belong to the reign of Argišti and were brought to Karmir Blur from Erebuni. Therefore, it is possible that objects could be transported to another location in the reign of

¹¹⁸ Salvini 2012, 321-322.

¹¹⁹ Salvini 2012, 12-22.

¹²⁰ Salvini 2012, 23-27.

¹²¹ Salvini 2012, 30, B 5-5 A1.

¹²² Salvini 2012, 31-32, B 5-7l, B 5-9.

¹²³ Karaosmanoğlu 2008.

¹²⁴ Tarhan – Sevin 1990, 356ff., fig. 10-11.

¹²⁵ Karaosmanoğlu 2008, 70.

different kings of Urartu¹²⁶. Additionally, Sarduri II, son of Argišti I, has a rock inscription in Seqindel, Varzaqan. Therefore, it is possible that this artifact belonged to the reign of his father and was transported to the region later. It seems possible that the artifacts of different rulers were transported elsewhere in antiquity.

It seems that the cuneiform inscriptions on the discs were also inscribed with a hieroglyphic sign of the head of a lion, bull or eagle. As there are only a few examples of the inscribed discs it seems difficult to conclude the exact aim of these signs and different hieroglyphic signs were used on one king's reign.

It seems that the inscribed discs with the convex in the middle are rarely decorated. Also, a significant number of discs with the inscription of Argišti I have been discovered in the Urartian sites¹²⁷ that supports the possibility of mass production of such artifact at the reign of this Urartian king. This could be the result of his several campaigns and the Urartians' requirement of the mass production of horse armors and harnesses. But it is also possible that they were produced in the reign of his son, Sarduri II, similar to Minua's inscribed discs for his father.

Conclusion

The newly discovered convex in the middle disc of Argišti I from Qala Daği, Kiqal Varzaqan and the disc in Tabriz Museum are both from Varzaqan region but they are different in the form. The newly found disc is the only discovered disc *in situ* in Iran. The other similar discs are studied in Van Museum, Hâluk Perk Collection, State Hermitage Museum (from Karmir Blur) and Yerevan History Museum (from Karmir Blur).

The discs with the inscription of Argišti bear the same epigraphy of Minua's reign onwards. The same epigraphy is observed on Işpuini's and Inuşıpua's discs which could be inscribed during the reign of Minua. It is possible that the discs of Argišti are produced during Argišti I's reign or his son, Sarduri II, rather than Argišti II due to the epigraphy.

Most of the inscribed discs are also inscribed by one hieroglyphic of the head of a lion, bull or eagle but the real meaning of these signs is still challenging as there are a few numbers of these signs on the discs and additionally they are different and diverse over the discs of a king.

The inscribed discs with the convex in the middle are usually without decoration and mostly are discovered with the name of Argišti, most probably Argišti I, which could be due to his several campaigns and need of the mass production of the horse armors. Additionally, it is possible that they were produced in the reign of his son, Sarduri II, similar to Minua's disc for his father.

The authors agree with Type 1 discs as the slightly-convex discs mostly without and sometimes with the decorations. But the discs with a central knob could be regarded as an independent type and not a sub-type.

Also, the authors agree with Azarpay's comment on that the smaller discs could be attached to the armor or clothing and the bigger ones could be regarded as horse harness discs.

¹²⁶ Salvini 1991, 11.

¹²⁷ Salvini 2012, B 8-25 A-X.

There are also several uninscribed discs from Altintepe and Yeni Saray in Van that seem to have the religious purpose and not the armor of the horses nor the buttons.

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Urartu Epigrafisinin Rolü: I. Arğişti'nin Verzeqan Kentinde Bulunan Yeni Diski

Özet

Urartular, yaklaşık MÖ 9. ile 7. yüzyıllar arasında, Van, Çıldır, Gökçe (Sevan) ve Urmiye gölleri çevresindeki bölgeleri yönetmişlerdir. Urartu yerleşim yerlerinde çok az sayıda metal eser *insitu* olarak keşfedilmiştir. Metal eserlerin aralarında hafif dışbükey veya ortada dışbükey olan tunç diskler vardır. İran'ın Verzeqan ilçesinde, Kiğal köyünün Qala Dağı isminde olan bir kalede I. Arğişti'ye ait olan yeni bir disk bulunmuştur. Disk yazıtı açısından bir zamanlar yine Verzeqan'da bulunan ve şimdi Tebriz Müzesi'nde olan bir diske ve form açısından Van Müzesi'ndeki disklerle benzetilmektedir. Diskin üzerinde olan bir hiyeroglif işareti diğer benzer disklerde de görülmektedir. Söz konusu disk üzerindeki çivi yazıtı Urartu Krallığı'nda Minua'nın saltanatından II. Sarduri'ye kadar yaygın olarak kullanılmıştır. Makalenin amacı, yeni keşfedilen bu eseri tanıtmak ve at koşum takımı, zırh veya giysi düğmesi olarak kullanılabilen disklerin işlev ve formlarını gözden geçirmektir. Ayrıca, yazarlar I. Arğişti disklerini epigrafi ve form açısından karşılaştırmayı amaçlamışlardır. Yazarlar, Minua'nın saltanatından II. Sarduri Dönemi'ne kadar kullanılan yazıtların, Minua'nın babası İşpuini ve Minua'nın hiç hüküm sürmemiş olan oğlu İnışpua'nın adlarının yazılı olduğu disklerde de kullanıldığını belirlemişlerdir. Bu nedenle, yeni bulunan disklin I. Arğişti'ye ait olmayıp oğlu Sarduri'nin hükümdarlığı dönemine ait olması mümkündür. Fakat bulunan disklerin çoğunun I. Arğişti'nin adını taşımaları ve disklerin seri üretim eseri olmaları nedeniyle disklin daha sonra Sarduri Dönemi'nde Doğu Azerbaycan Eyaleti'ne getirilmiş olması mümkündür.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Urartu, disk, I. Argišti, epigrafi, Verzeqan, at koşum takımları.

The role of the Urartian epigraphy: Argišti I's newly found disc in Varzaqan

Abstract

The Urartians ruled over the regions mainly around Lake Van, Gökçe (or Sevan) Lake, Lake Urmia, and Çıldır Lake from about 9th to 7th centuries BC and several metal artifacts are discovered in the Urartian sites. Among them are bronze discs which are slightly convex or convex in the middle. There is a newly found convex in the middle disc of Argišti I from Qala Dağı, Kiqal, Varzaqan, Iran which has similar inscription with the disc in Tabriz Museum, also from Varzaqan, and is also similar in form to the disc in Van Museum. There also is a hieroglyphic sign over the disc which was common on the Urartian discs. The epigraphy of the cuneiform inscription on the disc of Qala Dağı was used widely in the Urartian kingdom since Minua's reign until Sarduri II's. It is the aim of this paper to introduce this newly discovered artifact and to review the function and forms of the Urartian discs which could be used as horse harness or buttons of the armors or clothing. Additionally, the authors try to compare the discs of Argišti I in the epigraphy and form. The authors recognized that the epigraphy of Minua's reign until Sarduri II's were also used on the discs inscribed with the name of King Işpuini, Minua's father, and Inuşıpua, Minua's son, who never ruled. Therefore, it is possible that the newly found disc is not inscribed during Argišti I's reign but his son Sarduri's but as most of the discovered discs bear the name of Argišti it is possible that there was a mass production of the discs during his reign and was brought to Eastern Azerbaijan Province after his reign.

Keywords: Urartu, Disc, Argišti I, Epigraphy, Varzaqan, Horse harness.