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YAYIN HAYATINA BAŞLAYAN YENİ BİR ARKEOLOJİ DERGİSİ:

Aras Türkiye Eski Yakınođu Arařtırmaları Dergisi

Turkish Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Studies

Iđdır Üniversitesi 2008 yılında kurulmuş, Türkiye'nin oldukça yeni üniversitelerinden biridir. Akademik açıdan hızlı bir biçimde büyümeyi hedefleyen üniversite; Azerbaycan, Ermenistan, Nahçıvan ve Gürcistan'ın da yer aldığı Güney Transkafkasya ülkelerinin yanısıra İran'ın da bulunduğu coğrafyanın oldukça köklü bir geçmişe sahip zengin kültürlerinin araştırılması ve incelenmesi noktasında da istekli davranarak 2017 yılından itibaren Arkeoloji Bölümü'nü aktif hale getirmiştir. Bölümün aktif hale getirilmesinin yanısıra ülkemizde de büyük bir eksiklik olduğu görülen ve özellikle Türkiye ile kültürel ilişki içerisinde olan Güney Kafkasya, Kuzeybatı İran ve Kuzey Mezopotamya'da gerçekleştirilen arkeolojik kazı ve arařtırmaların yayınlanabileceđi yeni bir dergi yayınlamayı da üstlenmiştir.

Derginin ismi, öncelikle Iđdır ilinin de yer aldığı geniş bir kültürel bölgeyi kapsayan Aras Nehri'nin içinden aktığı geniş bir coğrafyayı temsil etmesi açısından Aras olarak seçilmiştir. Bilindiđi üzere ülkemiz sınırları içerisinde Bingöl Dađları'ndan doğan Aras Nehri; sırasıyla Erzurum, Kars ve Iđdır illerinden geçtikten sonra ülkemiz sınırları dışında Hazar Denizi'ne dökülür. Oldukça geniş ve bereketli bir alana sahip Aras Havzası'nda yapılan arařtırmalar bölgenin Pre-historik dönemlerden itibaren yerleşim gördüğünü ortaya koymuştur. Kalkolitik ve Tunç Çađlarına ait merkezlerin varlığı kültürel sürekliliđi ortaya koymuş ve Demir Çađında Van Gölü Havzası'nda kurulan Urartu Krallığı'nın egemenlik alanına girmiştir. Sadece ülkemizin deđil Yakın Dođu'nun da çatısı olarak adlandırılan görkemli Ađrı Dađı'nı da bünyesinde barındıran Aras Havzası; Güney Kafkasya, İran ve Anadolu arasındaki kültürel ilişkilerin merkezinde yer alan ve tarih boyunca önemini koruyan bir bölge olmuştur.

Iđdır Üniversitesi, Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi, Arkeoloji Bölümü bünyesinde "Aras, Türkiye Eski Yakın Dođu Arařtırmaları Dergisi/Turkish Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Studies" ismiyle yayınladığımız derginin ilk sayısı ile özellikle arkeoloji, tarih ve dilbilim okurlarının karşısına çıkmaktan dolayı büyük bir mutluluk duymaktayız. Derginin kurulması aşamasında bizi cesaretlendiren ve her aşamada destek veren Iđdır Üniversitesi Rektörü Prof. Dr. Mehmet Hakkı Alma'ya çok teşekkür ediyoruz. Bunun yanısıra ilk sayımızı hem Dođu Anadolu Bölgesi'nde hem de Güney Kafkasya'da önemli arkeolojik çalışmalar gerçekleřtirmiş Antonio Sagona'ya ithaf ederek anısını yaşatacak olmaktan dolayı da büyük bir mutluluk duymaktayız.

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Rıfat KUVANÇ

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Bilcan GÖKCE

EDİTÖRLER

1 A. Sagona'nın biyografisi için bakınız: Ronald T. Ridley, "Antonio Giuseppe Sagona (1956-2017)", *Ancient Near Eastern Studies*, 55, 2018, 1-8.



Prof. Dr. Antonio (Tony) Sagona
(1956 - 2017)

Saygıyla anıyoruz...
In memoriam...

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RECENTLY DISCOVERED ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN THE DOSTAN AREA, SALMAS REGION, IRAN



Behrouz Khanmohammadi * - Roberto Dan ** - Keomars Hajji Mohammadi ***

Abstract

This article describes a group of archaeological sites recently identified in the area around Dostan village, located in Western Azerbaijan Province, Iran. These sites consist of six cyclopean structures located on the top of several hills. The text discusses the possible function and chronology of the buildings. The complex of buildings described here may be considered to belong to the category known as “Giants’ Houses”, a wide-ranging group of enigmatic cyclopean structures of uncertain date and function.

Keywords: Cyclopean Architecture, Giants’ Houses, Iran, Orumiyeh, Bronze Age, Iron Age.

İran’ın Salmas Şehri, Dostan Bölgesi’nde Yeni Keşfedilmiş Arkeolojik Yerleşimler

Öz

Bu makalede, yakın zamanda İran’ın Batı Azerbaycan Eyaleti’nde bulunan Dostan Köyü çevresindeki bölgede tespit edilen bir grup arkeolojik alan anlatılmaktadır. Bu yerleşimler birkaç tepenin üstünde yer alan altı kiklopik yapıdan oluşur. Metin, söz konusu yapıların olası tarihini ve işlevini tartışmaktadır. Burada değerlendirilen yapı gruplarının, tarihi ve işlevi tam olarak bilinmeyen, geniş bir alanda uzanan gizemli bir kiklopik yapı grubu olan ve “Devler Evleri” olarak bilinen kategoriye ait olduğu düşünülebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kiklopik Mimari, Dev Evleri, İran, Urmiye, Tunç Çağ, Demir Çağ.

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Introduction

This article¹ describes a group of archaeological sites recently identified in the area around Dostan village, located in the Shepiran rural district, which is part of the Kuhsar district of Salmas County, Western Azerbaijan Province, Iran (Fig. 1). It lies 40 km south-east of the city of Salmas and about 70 km north-west of Orumiyeh. The village has valuable historical monuments, which mostly date to the first millennium BC. The sites presented in this paper were identified by the authors during an extensive investigation programme mainly related to the study of Urartian period sites (9th-7th centuries BCE) in the region in August 2018². The archaeological monuments are located in two distinct areas (Fig. 2). The first lies 200 metres east of the village of Dostan, and is locally known as Malkofri, which literally means ‘pagan house’. The second area is located about 300 metres south of the village, and is locally known as Zerrin Dol, which means ‘Golden Valley’. The entire area of the village and the surrounding fields seems to contain the remains of ancient buildings, unfortunately severely damaged, if not completely destroyed by intense agricultural work.



Figure 1- Satellite picture with the position of Dostan.

1 The content of this article is the work of all the authors. Specifically, B.K. Mohammadi wrote ‘The Malkofri Complex’ and ‘Zerrin Dol-1’, R. Dan wrote ‘Zerrin Dol-2’ and ‘Some Remarks on the Chronology and functions of the buildings’ and K.H. Mohamaddi wrote ‘Zerrin Dol Towers 3, 4 and 5’. The introduction and conclusions were written jointly by all the authors.

2 In this regard, the authors would like to thank Mr Saied Haghighi for having informed us about the existence of these sites and for his help. We would also like to thank the prefect of Kuhsar District Dr Aref Khederlo for having provided us with the necessary facilities to visit the localities and to work there.



Figure 2- Satellite Picture with the position of the sites mentioned in the text.

Previous Investigations in the Area

Wolfram Kleiss briefly surveyed the area in which the sites presented in this text are located in 1977³ (Kleiss - Kroll 1978: 34, 62, pl. 8; Kleiss 1989: 257-262). In the area surrounding the villages of Asbeshan (Asbeshah)⁴ and Shinnetal (Shinatal)⁵, about 20 km north-east of Dustan, several cyclopean structures with characteristics very similar to those discussed in this text were found. In Asbeshah both single and multi-roomed structures were identified (average size 15 x 10 metres), built with drystone cyclopean masonry, while in Shinatal the buildings - more than a dozen, again with an average size of 15 x 10 metres - were all single-roomed and built using the same technique as the previous ones (Kleiss 1989: 259; Kroll 1994). In the structures located north of Asbeshah a little pottery was collected (15 sherds), which raises the possibility, according to Kroll, that the building dates to the Iron Age. The pottery discovered near the Shinatal buildings (about 30 sherds) was very recent and not useful for dating the complex (Kleiss - Kroll 1978: 62, pl. 8). Based on the architecture and the scarce potsherds, an early Iron Age date was proposed (Kleiss 1989: 259).

3 In the publication is written that the sites were visited 18 April 1977 (Kleiss - Kroll 1978: 34).

4 Coordinates: 38° 5'16.79"N 44°33'27.95"E; Elevation: 1720 m.

5 Coordinates: 38° 5'12.26"N 44°30'46.69"E; Elevation: 2000 m.

More recently Kroll has reported the presence in both sites of red-brown pottery (Rot-Braunen Ware), which may be classified as ancient, probably prehistoric (Kroll 1994).

The Malkofri Complex

The first site, known as the Malkofri Tower, is located about 200 metres east of the last house of Dostan village. The site is situated on the top of a hill, overlooking the main road that leads to the village⁶. It consists of two buildings: the main tower, which is rectangular in shape, and just north of it, the ruins of another wall, curved in plan (Fig. 3). The rectangular tower measures 15 metres long by 10.30 metres wide. No gates are visible, so presumably the interior was accessible by means of a removable wooden ramp. The average height of the walls is between 0.80 and 2 metres; the eastern side is best preserved, where the wall is more than 2 metres high (Fig. 5). The walls were built using big, quite

rough stones assembled without mortar. The fill is composed of soil and small stones; the latter are also inserted in the junctions between the bigger blocks to reinforce the whole building. The walls are preserved for four or five courses of stones, and taper slightly upwards to guarantee greater seismic stability. The presence of a large quantity of debris make the exact width of the walls unclear, but it is between 1.10 and 1.30 metres. The walls do not show any particular features, such as the presence of towers or buttresses. The inner part of the entire building is entirely covered by debris from the collapsed upper part of the structure, so it is completely impossible to understand whether there are inner subdivisions, with partition walls. In the lower part of the north wall, one of the worst preserved of the entire building, there is a rectangular opening, presumably used to drain water, or a small postern buried by debris (Fig. 6). It was built using a long stone about 1 metre in length as a lintel, and measures 0.60 metres wide, 0.40 metres high and about 1.20 metres deep. As

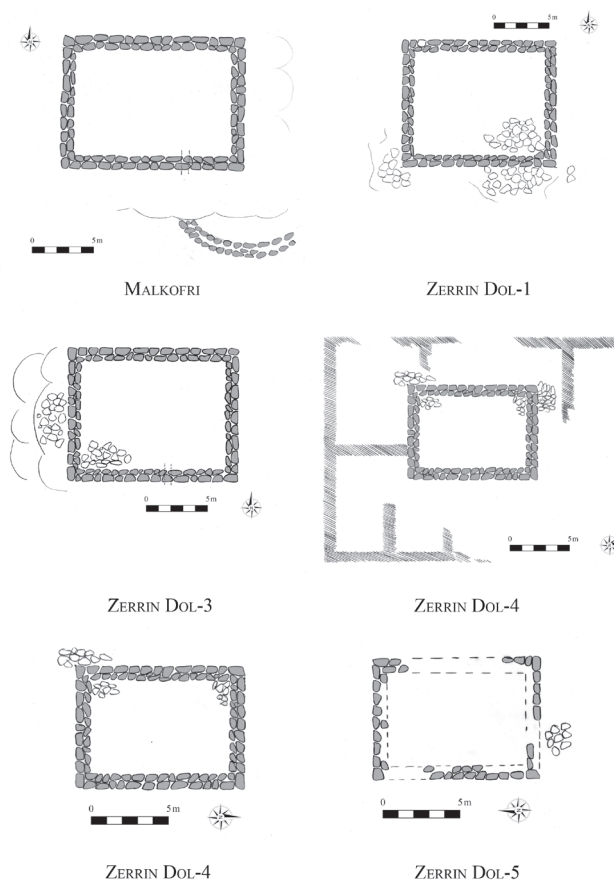


Figure 3- Plans of the structures described in the text.

⁶ Coordinates: 37°56'8.77"N 44°26'34.24"E; Elevation: 2206 m.

mentioned before, just few metres north-west of the tower on a relatively steep rocky slope there are the remains of a curved wall about 6 metres long, 4 metres wide and about 1 metre high (Fig. 7). It is attached on the natural rock terrace on which the tower was built. The best preserved part of this wall has a height of 2 metres. The stones used for its construction are smaller and less regular than those used for the tower. The wall seems to end to the west, and presumably other parts have been destroyed by human activity. Other sporadic portions of this seemingly defensive wall are visible on other parts of the hill, but are scarcely comprehensible. Two non-diagnostic sherds of red polished pottery were collected from the surface of the site. In general, the architecture of the tower resemble the region's typical Iron Age architecture. The presence of possible fragments of red pottery that could well be of Urartian date would reinforce this chronological proposal. We are not able to propose a chronology for the curved fortification wall that could be contemporary with or later than the tower. On the basis of its shape and location, it seems likely that the main rectangular building was a watchtower.

The Zerrin Dol Complex

As mentioned above, this complex of ancient buildings is located about 300 metres south of Dostan village and covers a large area measuring approximately 500 x 150 metres. The mostly incomprehensible remnants of old structures are scattered throughout this area. Among them a group of six buildings is better preserved; they seem again to be watchtowers. These buildings have been studied; they were numbered 1 to 6, from south to north.

Zerrin Dol Tower-1

This is the southernmost of the buildings discussed here (Figs. 3-4)⁷. It is rectangular in plan with dimensions of 14 metres in length by 11.50 metres wide. The strongest and best preserved side of the building is the northern one, where the wall is more than 2 metres high (Figs. 8-9). This is a drystone wall of which four quite regular courses are preserved. Some sections of the eastern and western walls, and almost the entire southern wall, have collapsed due to the horizontal thrust caused by the weight of the wall, due the action of atmospheric agents, and probably as a result of human action. One corner of the structure is preserved for 5 courses of stones, with a height of more than 2 metres. Remnants of the stones pertaining to the collapsed walls are scattered all around the tower. The structure seems to have been subdivided internally, but the situation is unclear. In general, the presence of huge amount of debris makes precise measurement of the thickness of the walls impossible, but their dimensions suggest that the tower was originally very tall. Unfortunately, it cannot be established whether there was originally an upper portion made of mudbricks. At the bottom of this tower, the remains of another small building are visible, but it is almost completely destroyed and only scattered stones are visible. In any case, this building appears to have been connected with Zerrin Dol Tower-1.

⁷ Coordinates: 37°55'34.75"N 44°26'13.42"E; Elevation: 2176 m.



Figure 4- Satellite picture of the southern part of the Zerrin Dol Complex with three of the structures clearly visible on the ground.



Figure 5- View of the Malkofri structure from the East.



Figure 6- View of the opening in the north wall of the Malkofri structure.



Figure 7- View of the structure located just northwest of the main Malkofri building.



Figure 8- View of the Zerrin Dol-1 structure from the north.

Zerrin Dol Tower-2

This tower is located about 70 metres west of Tower-1, on the top of a steep slope⁸. It is one of the best preserved structures among those discussed here. All four sides are well preserved and clearly discernible. The tower is rectangular in shape and measures 14 x 11 metres. The northeastern corner is the best preserved part, with a surviving wall height of about 4 metres (Fig. 10). The type of stones used here is slightly different from Tower-1; in general, the stones are better worked and assembled with greater care (Fig. 11). The thickness of the walls, where measurable, is between 1.20 and 1.40 metres. As for the previous one, this tower too has drystone walls made of large stones; the spaces between them were filled with smaller stones to strengthen the building. In the southern wall, there is a small gap which could be a water drainage channel. However, given the poor state of conservation at this point we cannot be sure of the situation. Unfortunately the inner part of the building is concealed by a huge amount of debris. In any case, the presence of internal subdivision into rooms seems highly possible. The tower was clearly built to overlook the western side of the hill.

Zerrin Dol Tower-3

The building is located about 100 metres north of Tower-1 and Tower-2⁹. The shape of this tower, like the previous ones, is rectangular. It is smaller than those described above, with dimensions of between 11 and 8 metres. The degree of destruction of this tower is greater than the others. The best preserved wall is the western one, with a height of about 2 metres (Fig. 12). The southern one has almost completely collapsed. The eastern and northern walls of the tower are preserved for two courses. The most intriguing difference between this tower and the others is the presence of the remains of an extensive complex around it. On all four sides of the tower there are remnants of buildings with walls 1.10 to 1.20 metres thick on average, in general preserved for only for one course of stones. Some of these walls are attached to the walls of the tower and were clearly built in a second architectural phase. These rooms are mostly rectangular and square in plan. 50 metres west of the tower, on the steep west slope of the hill, there are the ruins of another building, partly carved out of the bedrock, but very poorly preserved. This tower and the attached building could perhaps be considered the core of the complex described here, due to its central position with respect to the other towers and because of its greater structural complexity. It is clear that future studies and excavations will be required to establish with certainty the chronology of these complexes and their possible contemporaneity.

8 Coordinates: 37°55'35.73"N 44°26'10.18"E; Elevation: 2173 m.

9 Coordinates: 37°55'38.29"N 44°26'13.12"E; Elevation: 2181 m.



Figure 9- View of the Zerrin Dol-1 structure from the north-east.



Figure 10- View of the Zerrin Dol-2 structure from the north-east.



Figure 11- View of the Zerrin Dol-2 structure from the South.



Figure 12- View of the Zerrin Dol-3 structure from the north-west.

Zerrin Dol Tower-4

The tower is located about 150 metres north of the central Tower-3¹⁰. Although this tower is much less well preserved than the other towers, the dimensions of the remaining parts may be measured (Fig. 13). The tower is rectangular in plan, like the others, with measurements approximately the same as the central tower, 11 x 8 metres. The thickness of the walls is from 1.20 to 1.40 metres (Fig. 14). According to the local informant, most of the stones that made up this monument were taken from the site and reused for the construction of modern buildings in the village. No traces of other structures are visible around the tower.

Zerrin Dol Tower-5

This is the northernmost tower in the Zerrin Dol complex and the closest to the modern village¹¹. It is located 100 metres north of Tower-4. Unfortunately, the tower has been almost completely destroyed and at most just one course of stones survives (Fig. 15). Significant portions of the west and east walls are completely missing. Nevertheless, the ruins show that it had the same rectangular shape as all the previous towers, with measurements of 11 x 8 metres, like Tower-3 and Tower-4. About 50 metres north-west of the tower there are other scattered wall remains, unfortunately greatly disturbed, in part by illegal excavations. The degree of preservation of these remnants is so poor that it is impossible to establish whether they constituted another tower or not.

Zerrin Dol Tower-6

Unfortunately, it was impossible for us to visit the sixth tower, identified only by means of remote sensing. The structure is located 55 metres north-east of Tower-5, and seems to be composed of a central rectangular structure measuring about 10 x 7 metres, surrounded by a possible perimeter wall 123 metres long, enclosing a total area of 0.11 hectares. Further investigation is needed.

Some Remarks on the Buildings' Chronology and Function

The complex of buildings described in this paper exhibits interesting and unusual features. It is a group of six towers, generally with similar architectural characteristics although clearly changes were made in periods after their construction. All the structures are located in a strategic position on two hilltops. They clearly functioned as defensive structures, probably watch-towers. When and by whom these structures were built is impossible to establish at present. These towers are very similar in size and shape to the so-called "Giants' Houses"¹² well attested in south-eastern Turkey, especially in the southern part of Lake Van, and perhaps in Armenia¹³.

10 Coordinates: 37°55'43.15"N 44°26'12.59"E; Elevation: 2186 m.

11 Coordinates: 37°55'46.82"N 44°26'13.34"E; Elevation: 2188 m.

12 This kind of building is called 'Dev evleri' or 'Dihreler' in Turkish. This name is related to the local beliefs that, given the huge size of the stones used for their construction, these buildings were made in ancient times by 'giants' (Belli 2001:350).

13 On these buildings see Belli 1993: 261-265 and Belli 1997: 42.

O. Belli and M. Özdoğan in particular have studied these rectangular or square buildings. According to Belli, these structures were built in groups close to each other, exactly like the buildings described in this paper. They were built using cyclopean technique, and measured from 8 x 8 metres to 11 x 11 metres, with wall thicknesses from 1.30 to 1.80 metres. These buildings have been considered to be the products of a centralized state, given their characteristics and quantity (Belli 2001: 350-351). The first state attested in the area was that of Urartu, but in this regard it must be emphasized that neither the structures presented in this article, nor those studied in Turkey, possess any architectural features that can be unequivocally ascribed to Urartu, such as the use of double-faced walls or buttresses. These structures have long been considered Urartian buildings, because they are indicated as such in the ‘Topographische Karte von Urartu’, based on a personal communication on the part of Mehmet Özdoğan to Harald Hauptmann (Kleiss-Hauptmann 1976, 22). Recently Özdoğan has reconsidered the question, putting this attribution in doubt, and underlining that this type of structure, at the current state of research, may not be dated with any precision (Özdoğan 2009: 431).



Figure 13- View of the Zerrin Dol-4 structure from the north.



Figure 14- View of the Masonry of the south wall of Zerrin Dol-4 structure.



Figure 15- View of some wall remnants of the Zerrin Dol-5 structure from the south.

Conclusions

Although it is not possible to provide a precise dates for these structures, given the absence of excavations and surface pottery, some considerations may nevertheless be made. It is highly probable that the towers presented in this paper were built in the late Bronze Age or early Iron Age, given that they do not show any structural features that can be directly linked to Urartian architecture, while instead they show characteristics compatible with the local architectural traditions of the pre-Urartian period. It is likely that cyclopic structures of this type, due to their size and strategic positioning, would have been reused in subsequent eras, by the Urartians and by the political entities that followed them. In any case, a Urartian date cannot be excluded, given the buildings' regular plans and certain features of the stone working. The area of Dostan is a mountainous zone geographically similar to parts of south-eastern Turkey that correspond to the modern regions of Hakkâri, Yüksekova and Başkale. We can therefore consider the complex of buildings described here as part of the category known as "Giant's Houses", a wide-ranging group of enigmatic cyclopean structures of uncertain chronology and function. Not all of these can in fact be interpreted as watchtowers, since not all have a prominent topographical location. It remains difficult to explain, precisely due to the apparent contemporaneity of the structures of Malkofri and Zerrin Dol, why seven watchtowers would have been built so close together, a circumstance that leaves open the possibility that they had other functions, impossible to determine without conducting archaeological excavations.

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