

THE DISCOVERY OF TWO MEDIEVAL HOUSES IN ANI

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The first excavations in Ani were made in the late 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century by N. Marr on behalf of the Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg. Today it is not possible to find any of the specific places where these excavations had been carried out.

The second excavation attempt was made by K. Balkan in 1964-65. Prof. Balkan is an expert on Urartian Art, and he discovered by accident, a bath at the centre of the town. During this excavation, inside a chunk of mortar, a coin was found, bearing the name of Melikşah on one side and that of Manuçehr on the other. The coin has enabled us to date the building of the reign of Manuçehr. Another implication of this finding is that the centre of the town during the reign of Manuçehr must have been in the area where the cathedral and the bath were located. One can expect to find there a commercial centre or a medrese for the education of the Muslims.

We started excavating in this area in 1991 with the hope that we would find a medrese. The first ditch was opened at the south-western edge of the remnants of stones which initially seemed to be the rooms of a medrese. On the north-east of the building, there was a hole, apparently opened for sheep and goats. Digging further on this hole, we found an underground corridor of about 15.10 m. in length and 2.80 m. wide, with five arched bays, covered by tunnel and flat vaults alternatively.

At the two sides of each flat vault, a pair of small windows (mazgal) were opened to enlighten the interior. The corridor has been built with large reddish tufa stones belonging to King Aşot's period in the 9th century. This may imply that this area might have been used as a graveyard during Aşot's rule. An arched bay was found on the eastern wall of the corridor. When this wall was opened and cleaned, an entrance which led to a room was

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discovered. During the excavation of this part, some pieces of the portal frame with post-Samarra decorations in the be-jewelled technique were found. A threshold stone about 1.5 m. to the west of the entrance was found lying on the ground. While digging the part next to the threshold in the north, a stairway with three steps extending from the underground corridor was found. At the end of the stairs the insitu part of the gateway was seen.

In 1992 the excavation continued when we discovered a second entrance to the building other than the entrance with stairs mentioned above. This entrance, which is at the northern part of the building gives way to a courtyard with two columns. In the southern side of the courtyard there is a square iwan which measures five meters on each side. The quality of masonry workmanship in the iwan is superior to those in other parts of the building.

The joints here are very close to each other and the joint-lines are well arranged. The gaps in between are very thin and clay has been used as mortar. This part is different from the rest of the building, in terms of masonry and technique. Greyish-brown tufa has been employed in the construction of the whole building. The size of the stone is variable and close to the size of the stones of Büyük Hamam (the Great Bath). Under the floor of the iwan, were found four square storage rooms for grain which have circular openings of about 65 cm. and which are capable of holding 4-5 tons of grain. The existence of grain storages of this size implies that the person residing there could be someone who dealt with grain-production. The south-eastern storage was found in a collapsed state the year after, in 1993 summer. Examining the stones of this storage, we found some similarities between them and the ones used in the Manuçehr Mosque. To the east of the courtyard, a corridor leading to a stair at the end of the building was found. From the corridor one could enter three major spaces. The south-eastern room had a fireplace at the centre of the south-eastern wall, two small, arched niches to the south of the fireplace, and a third one on the north-western wall. A continuous stone-seat in front of the south-eastern wall and a large stone (dibek) in front of the fireplace were found insitu. In this room, beneath the second niche of the eastern wall, sediments of linseed oil were found. Through a seven step stair, the corridor leads to a roof. To the west of the stair, a second sofa was found. In front of the north-western wall of this sofa, a stone-seat was also seen. The plan of the building

is quite clear. The stairs, the colonaded entrance courtyard, the iwan, the corridor and the rooms are easily traceable within the building. The storages and the underground corridor are easily noticeable too.

There are no traces of windows left in the building. The lack of windows in high walls from 2 m. to 2.40 m., might imply that lighting was perhaps provided through the roof or high slit windows might have existed. To the west of the colonaded court, at the same level with the iwan, the trace of a door was seen. This door was kept closed at the end of the excavation season in 1994. During the 1995 excavations the door was opened and a room containing an oven, glazed and unglazed ceramic pieces were found. The cleaning of the room could not be made because of the existence of a soil deposit of four meters. Probably the most interesting feature of the building is the short, dead-end street in front of it which is paved with stones. The street starts from the back entrance or from the southern door of the building and continues towards the west. Stone seats have been placed for the residents on either side of the street, both in the west and in the south. The houses adjoining the street have their entrances here, with three steps descending from the roof to the house.

Whose house or palace was it and who ruled Ani at that time? Presence of a portal frame decorated with the post-Samarra designs, resemblance of the colours of the stones to those of "Büyük Hamam" and the Manuçehr Mosque, location of the building between the bath and the cathedral indicates that it might have been built in the 11th century. The construction, had been carried out with small stones in square and rectangular shapes just as had been in previous constructions. N. Marr states that "Ubu'l-Garip Pehlivani's Palace was constructed with large grey stones in the first quarter of the 11th century, and that such stones were also used in the later restoration of St. Prikrit Church." It appears to be unlikely that King Gagik's (late 10th and the early 11th centuries) palace was built near the cathedral. One is therefore, inclined to believe that this palace indeed belonged to the Byzantine governor-general Aron during the first quarter of the 11th century. Since Aron built water-channels down to the citadel, it is most likely that he had resided there. The closeness of the palace building to the bath, and other situations indicate that this palace was first used by Manuçehr in the second half of the 11th century.

The second excavation site was at the palace which was located to one side of the main road that extended towards the citadel, opposite the Manuçeher Mosque. N. Marr had discovered houses also on the left side of the same road near the mosque, extending as far as the citadel and he published them. In his plan the houses are in the form of semi-detached rooms opening into one another. The plan is a valuable evidence, giving a good idea about the houses of Ani between the 11th and the 13th centuries. We therefore, concentrated our excavation on a place opposite the mosque, in order to discover a house which would be similar to those N. Marr had found.

At first, a room with a stone seat in the south and two jars on the western side, near the road were found. Later, a door on the western side of the room was discovered which gave access to another room. Such a situation led us to think that this house possessed a type of plan where there was a house within another, as described by N. Marr. However, the presence of an entrance from this room to a large courtyard was contrary to the statements made by N. Marr. At the end of the excavations it was observed that it was possible to pass through this paved courtyard with a large door, into a space in the form of a single iwan. Four columns facing one another were situated in the courtyard. Under the stone pavement of the iwan, were four grain storages as were seen in the previous building. They were given access through large circular openings on the pavement. The large door to the south of the courtyard gave way to the entrance hall, where, to the east was found a small room of about 1.00x1.50 m. This small room might have been used as a toilet. Access to a large divan or reception hall made through a second door on the eastern wall of the entrance hall. A niche with interlacing designs above, like the one in the 12th century place of Ani, is seen on the wall of the reception hall. The niche contains two circular hollows which must have been used to put oil in, for lighting. Many similar hollowed stones and niches were found in Ani during surface research. They surely must have been used as containers for burning linseed oil.

To the west of the entrance hall, in the first room, a long stone-seat, a fireplace and some short stone-seats on both sides of this fireplace were disclosed. Furthermore, during the excavation of this room, some interlacing designs on stones, a geometrically decorated chimney and decorated plaster pieces were uncovered. In the stone-seat, the existence of

re-cycled stones from the Greek period was noticed. Half of the large iwan was cleaned, and on its eastern wall a decorative chimney niche over the chimney was found. The other two rooms were accessible from the courtyard. The plan and the sections of the building are explained above. The photos from the minaret show the geography of this area.

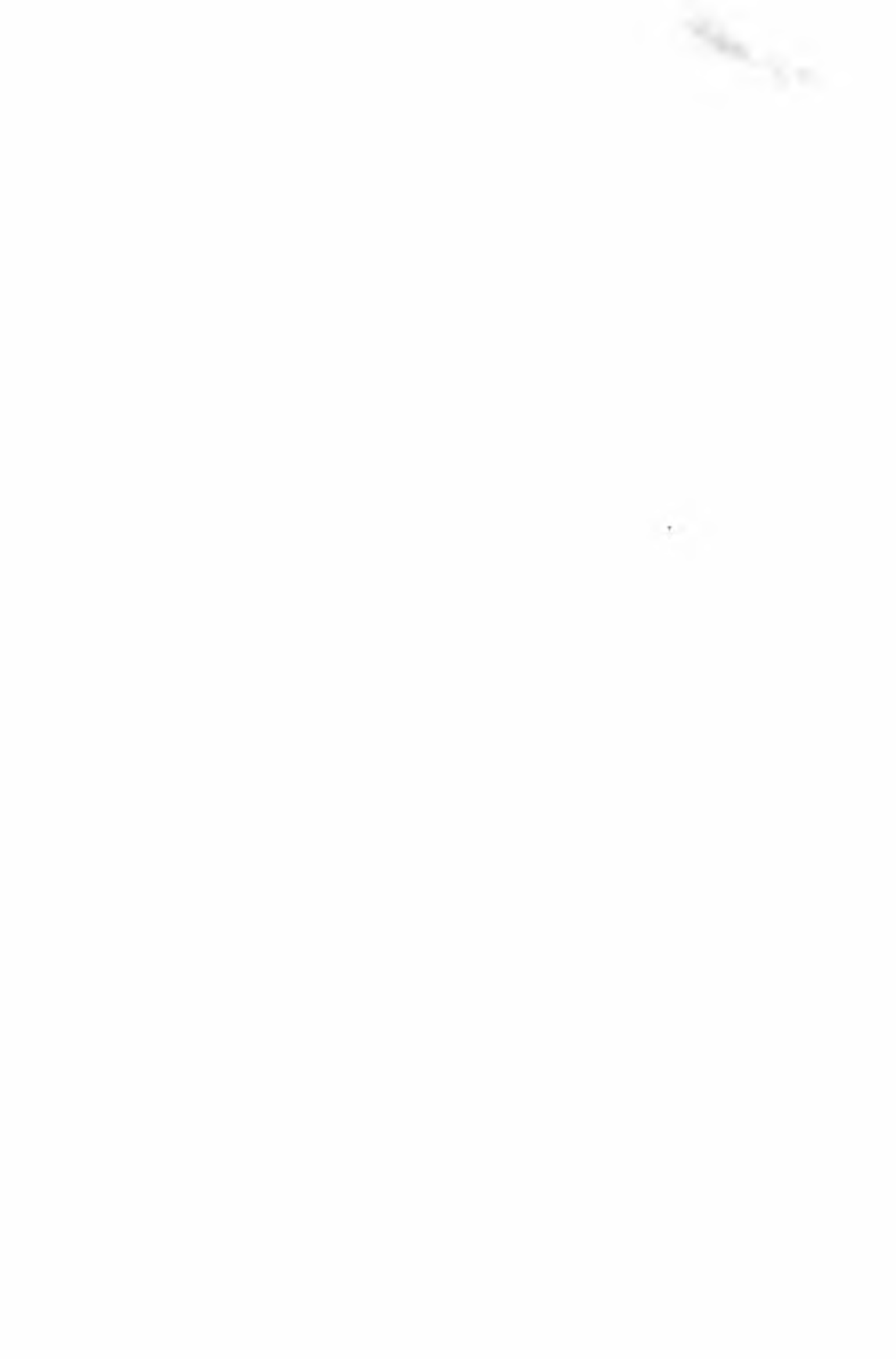
This building is located on a street inhabited mainly by Muslims as also was stated by N. Marr. It is necessary to clarify whether there were sufficient Muslim inhabitants to fill such a large mosque and to stay in such a large palace in Ani in the 11-13th centuries.

Burhaneddin Anevi, a scientist and a poet, was born in Ani who published a book entitled "Enisü'l-Kulub". He escaped with his family when he was 18 years old, because he witnessed the murder of Muslims by the Georgian King. This indicates that the Muslim population in the town was quite large during the 12th century.¹ The size and the construction quality of the building seems to suggest that it was a building very similar to a palace. The use of spolie stones by the Turks is often observed in their architecture. The foundations of the building are built with a grayish-white colored limestone, while the walls are built with grayish-red stone similar to those in the mosque. The proximity of the building to the mosque implies that the person who built it could be a Muslim. The building style and its location indicate that it was built sometime between the end of the 11th century and the end of the 12th century.

Both buildings contain a single iwan and a decorative portal. Both are built with a good quality of construction. Their plans are different from the palaces in Divin² too. However, there seems to be a great similarity between these palaces and the Anatolian Seljuk palace of Kubadabad. Hence, both of the buildings seem to have been influenced from the Turkish-Islamic architecture of an eastern origin.

¹ O. Turan, *Doğu Anadolu Türk Devletleri Tarihi*, İstanbul 1973, pp. 11-12, 72.

² A.A. Kalantarian, "Le Palais du VII^e Siècle de Divin", *Atti Del Quinto Simposio Di Arte Armena*, Venezia 1991, p. 215-224, fig. 1.



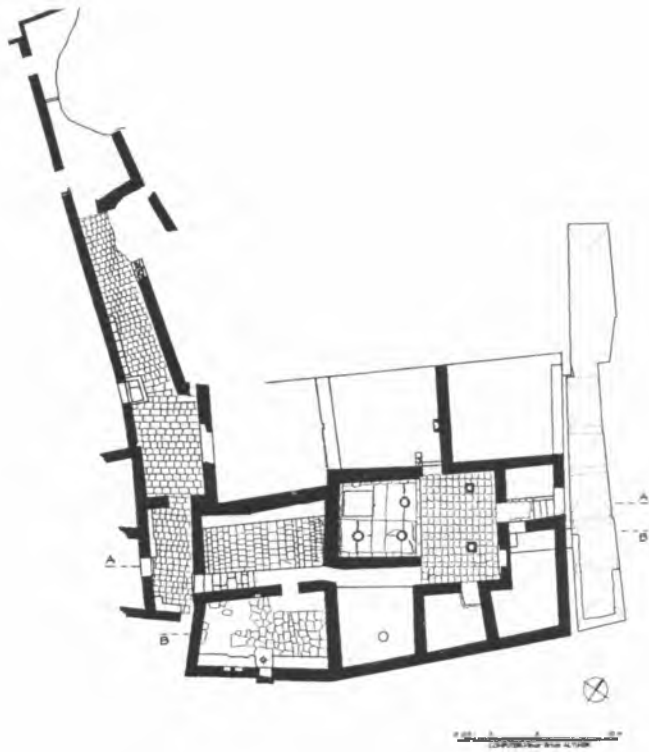


Fig. 1 - Plan of the House 1.



Fig. 2 - General view of House 1.

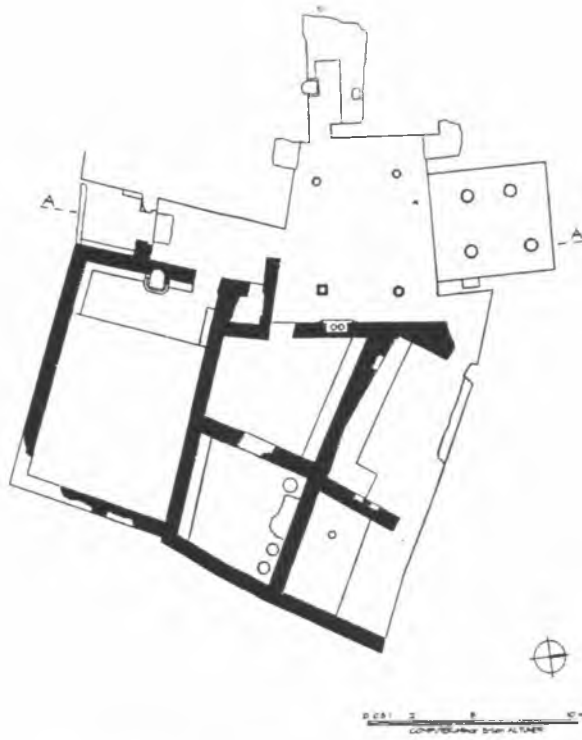


Fig. 3 - Plans of the House II.



Fig. 4 - General view of House II.

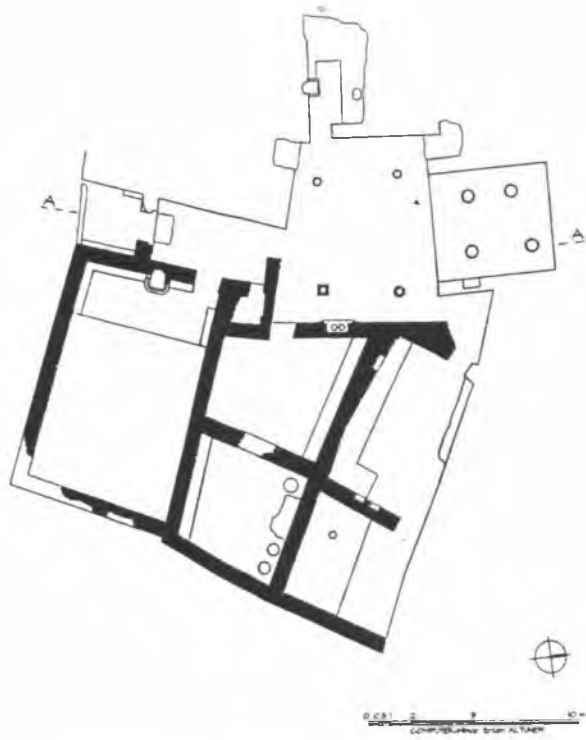


Fig. 3 - Plans of the House II.



Fig. 4 - General view of House II.