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## ESKI DOGUBAYAZIT - A TOMB OR A SANCTUARY?

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The Eski Dogubayazit tomb is one of the best-known Urartian monumental pieces of art. The most important element, which merits academic attention, is a relief engraved on the rock face by the tomb's entrance. That object is situated near a mountain peak above the ruins of an Urartian fortress located a few kilometers away from the border city Dogubayazit. The place where the Eski Dogubayazit rock relief is located is also famous for the Ishak Pasha Palace or castle built at the foot of the mountain where the discussed tomb was incised. A nearby modern town stretches a few kilometers west from the Turkish-Iranian border.

The object has been known since Texier described it for the first time in 1834.<sup>2</sup> Since that time the object has been subject to scientific research. Huff's excellent analysis of the iconography of the object from 1968 helped determine precise dating of the monument for 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>3</sup> The subject matter of this paper will be other aspects of the object.

As it was mentioned above that object is defined as a tomb in the scientific literature. On the left side of the relief we can find a human beardless figure standing on a kind of a socle, who is wearing a tunic up to ankles (Fig. 1). He is raising his hands in a gesture of benediction. In front of that figure, almost above the entrance, a goat was engraved. Undoubtedly, the animal should be associated with the said human figure. Probably the animal should have been situated lower, but the doorway to the tomb made it impossible. On the other side of the entrance another person was engraved. That figure, similar to the one that has been mentioned above, was also located on a socle. As the protruding fragment of the rock formed a kind of a pedestal, the socle is much more conspicuous than that one located under the feet of the former figure. The latter beardless person is wearing a conical helmet with an element whose purpose is to protect the nape. The person is dressed in a long tunic and an overcoat. In his left hand, he is holding a ball-finished rod, probably a symbol of power or authority.

The tomb is a two level construction. On the first upper level, a chamber with two niches and two natural skylights were found. On the lower level three smaller chambers were cut. Both levels were connected by rectangle shaft in the western part of the tomb.

The tomb compared to other tombs known in Urartu is not a typical one. None of the other tombs was adorned with a relief decoration. Even royal tombs made of Tushpa, for example, the tomb of Argishti (Fig. 2) or the royal tomb of Neftkuyu (Fig. 3), which were to be most splendid and grand in the whole kingdom, were not decorated in so elaborate a manner.<sup>4</sup> The only "ornaments", which could be associated with royal tombs, were cuneiform inscriptions etched in the rock surface and smoothed by the tombs entrances. It can be then said that the decorations engraved on the discussed object are more ornate than the ones on royal tombs. If so, we are faced with a question on the identity of the individual buried at Eski Dogubayazit. Another feature that makes Eski Dogubayazit uncommon is the direction in which the entrance was located. The gateways to all those other known tombs were on the southern side. Apart from those in Tushpa, tombs discovered at Umudun (Fig. 4), Kayalidare (Fig.

1 Krzysztof Jakubiak, Institute of Archaeology, Warsaw University.

2 Ch. Texier, *Description de l'Arménie, la Perse et la Mésopotamie*, 1842/52, 152, Pl. 34.

3 D. Huff, *Das Felsgrab von Eski Doğubayazit*, *Ist. Mitt.* 18, 1968, 58-86.

4 R. Wartke, *Urartu Das Reich am Aparat*, Mainz am Rhein 1993, 145; T. Forbes, *Urartian Architecture*, B.A.R. Int. Series 170, 1983, 99; F. Işik, *Das Felsgrab von Köseoğlu and Totentempel Urartus*, *AMI* 28, 1995/96, 233.

5) and Kasdoğan (Fig. 6) can be serve as examples.<sup>5</sup> Such localization of tombs' entrances seems to be a regularity. However, the entrance to Eski Dogubayazit is on the southeastern side. Given the differences, a question arises if the Eski Dogubayazit construction was really a tomb. It can be the case that the purpose of the object should be reconsidered. If the assumption is right, that the edifice was not a tomb, then it has to account for its function. Can the relief, the construction of the chamber, and the entrance location tell us anything about the purpose of the object? Let start the analysis interpreting the iconography of the relief.

The first human figure wearing a tunic up to ankles is performing what can be interpreted as a gesture of benediction or a gesture of protection. The other human figure is standing before him, looking in the same direction. Therefore, the composition of the relief seems to be a scene of presentation or introduction. This being a decoration of a tomb, one would rather expect the persons to be shown in antithetical positions and protecting the entrance to the burial place. It was natural that the entrance to the tomb had to be protected if not with a magical incantation, sealed and closed by a rock door, then by persons depicted near the entrance. However, here in Eski Dogubayazit we have a presentation scene, with most probably a deity of the lower rank depicted, and an introduced petitioner. If the interpretation is correct, both persons should have to be depicted in front of the main god, or deity of a higher rank than the god who introduces the petitioner. As Huff noticed in his outstanding article, the whole composition seems to be unfinished. His argument was, the space in front of the figure in conical helmet was only partly smoothed, which looks like a surface prepared for further work. If my claim that in fact it was a presentation scene is correct, a question arises who the deity of the higher rank was. In order to resolve this query we have to take a closer look at the goat. Namely, which on of the gods from the Urartian gods had the goat as an attribute?

The identification of the deity was based on the bronze shield of Anzaf Kale, discovered by Belli in the ruins of the fortress.<sup>6</sup> On that object, almost the entire Urartian pantheon was depicted. Belli tried to associate the depicted gods with the inscription from Mehr Kapisi listing the gods according to their ranks. The result was that the order on the shield was the same as on the inscription, that is, according to their position in the pantheon. This helped identify some gods presented on the shield. The fifth position on the shield belonged to a god riding a mythical creature, which had some features of a goat. The discussed god was Turani (Fig. 7).<sup>7</sup> It seems possible that the fifth most important god would introduce a petitioner in the presentation scene. In this case, Turani would accompany a king, a prince, or a priest, in his procession in front of a more important deity. Before I make an attempt determining who the more important god was let me focus on Turani himself and his sacred animal.

Turani's iconography is quite abundant in depictions of the god with a goat. There are many votive plaques showing the deity with a goat, as the sacred animal. For instance those from Karmir Blur (Fig. 8),<sup>8</sup> and Giyimili? (Fig. 9-10) need to be mentioned.<sup>9</sup> The association of Turani with a goat could bring new aspects in our interpretation of the relief.

5 *Ibidem*, 219; C.A. Burney, *A First Season of Excavations at the Urartian Citadel of Kayalidere*, An. St. 16, 1966, 101-103, fig. 22 ; F. Işık, *op. cit.*, 223.

6 O. Belli, *The Anzaf Fortresses and the Gods of Urartu*, Istanbul 1999.

7 *Ibidem*, 49-52.

8 *Urartu - A Metalworking Center in the First Millennium B. C. E.*, Jerusalem 1991, 286.

9 *Ibidem*, 286, 292-293.

The symbolism of a goat should be connected with shepherds. There is no evidence in the literature supporting that Turani could be associated with shepherds. However, in the Mesopotamian religion there was a shepherds' god called Dumuzi. Simultaneously, Dumuzi had a strong connotation with the netherworld half a year he would spend in the underworld.<sup>10</sup> Because Dumuzi was a shepherd, a goat could have been the sacred animal, which belonged to him. That is why we can associate the iconography of the goat climbing a sacred tree, as a symbol of affirmation, adoration and protection of a new life springing from the underworld. Consequently, the goat would have to be a symbol of a connection between our world with the world of the dead. Obviously, it is not certain that the goat was as the sacred animal of Dumuzi. The only fact we know is that in the Achaemenid period the god Tumuzi was sometimes depicted with a ram as a sacred animal. At that time the fact that the goat be the sacred animal of Dumuzi, as in the case of Turani also cannot be precluded. If the association is right, we could compare Turani with Dumuzi, the outcome being that Turani was the deity of life and power of nature. Given this, if Turani was similar to Dumuzi, except the elements of vegetation/life in his cult, also chthonic elements should appear.

The name of Turani in the Urartian language would be derived from the word *tur* – what means destroy, destroyed or destroyer.<sup>11</sup> The Urartian name of the deity, if the analogy with Dumuzi is correct, could mean that although he dies, that is, destroys himself as a deity, in the end he will prevail over death and will be born anew to a new life thus destroying death.

Riemschneider, who postulated a connection of the Turani's name with the Hittite name *tarhuntaš*, proposed another possibility of the understanding of the name Turani.<sup>12</sup> It is derived from the Hittite word *tarh-* which means: to win, to have power. The correct inflection of *tarh* in first person singular of the past tense should read *tarhun* and thus can be interpreted as the past aspect of winning.<sup>13</sup> Thus, Turani can mean the one who has won. Therefore, both etymological explanations are comparable.

As it has been described above, both engraved figures face east. If we assume that this is not a coincidence then it is fair to say that the main deity should have solar aspects.

In the Urartian pantheon, we find two such deities. The first one, Haldi was the highest from the Urartian gods (Fig. 11). He was god of the Sun, usually depicted with a bull as his sacred animal. The second god of the Sun was Šuini and at the same time, he was the third deity in the pantheon. Similarly, to Haldi, he was depicted with a bull as his sacred animal. On the shield from Anzaf Kale Šuini was shown as a beardless silhouette in a conical helmet wearing a long overcoat and riding on a bull (Fig. 12).<sup>14</sup> The god's torso was presented in a winged solar disc. This testifies to his solar countenance known from the Mehr Kapisi inscription, which calls him a god of the Sun.<sup>15</sup> If so we are faced with yet another dilemma, namely which one of the two solar deities could the author of the relief had in mind when planning to complete this piece.

It could be assumed that the rituals, which had to be performed there consisted in greeting of the rising Sun. If so, it would be rather unlikely that Haldi could be depicted in as-

10 J. Black, A. Green, *Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia*, Londyn 1992, 72-73.

11 I. M. Diakonow, *Urartskie pisma i dokumenty*, Moskwa 1963, 91.

12 M. Riemschneider, *Die urartäischen Gottheiten*, Orientalia NS 32, 1963, 154-155.

13 J. Friedrich, *Hethitisches Wörterbuch*, Heidelberg 1952, 213.

14 O. Belli, *op. cit.*, 45-47.

15 F. W. König, *Handbuch der chaldischen Inschriften*, Graz 1955/1957, no. 10.

sociation with Turani. Šuini seems to be a more suitable deity given the ritual, as he was of a higher rank than Turani, and was the deity, who watched the human world each day as the rising Sun. The Mesopotamian religion and mythology we can find defines the Sun and the god Išum called *rābisu* of the great Dead Gods within the Netherworld.<sup>16</sup> The word *rābisu* can be translated as a messenger, an ambassador or even a gods' spy. What is probably important, his duty was to provide the deities in the Netherworld with fresh water. By analogy, at Eski Dogubayazit we experience rather that aspect of the solar deity than the adoration or veneration of the main god in the pantheon.

This being true, the Eski Dogubayazit site would show the Sun as an *rābisu* of the Dead Gods, symbolically, each day crossing the sky and collecting information about people and their deeds, for example, how they worship the gods and if their actions are right and just. Each day Šuini would report the situation in the world. That report was presented to the netherworld god Turani, who was depicted on the western side of the relief. Consequently, the scene could show the moment of entering the underworld by Šuini, the moment, which would happen each evening.

It is possible that ecstatic rituals at Eski Dogubayazit were organized. As it was mentioned by Huff, on the slope near the entrance to the rock chambers many pieces of Urartian pottery were found.<sup>17</sup> If the object was in fact a tomb, that pottery would be used for the rituals of ancestors i.e. giving the gifts to the dead. For example, special sacrifice basins should have been located near the entrance as it was in Tushpa (Fig. 13) or Altin Tepe (Fig. 14).<sup>18</sup> At Eski Dogubayazit no such element existed. The potsherds found at that site rather indicate that vessels had been broken deliberately. It could also imply that the vessels having been used were just left in front of the chamber.

To support the thesis about ecstatic forms of rituals we should mention that among many Urartian objects known nowadays drinking tubes with goat figures located in upper parts deserve our special attention (Fig. 15-16).<sup>19</sup> Here, the goat seems to have a strong chthonic/infernal connotation. It means that the person who was taking part in the ceremony could drink stupefying and bemusing substances, which could bring him or her to the edge between the world and the netherworld. If so, the goat depicted on the tubes could play a significant role as a symbol of this process, giving the possibility of looking at the border between the netherworld and the world.

Last but not least attention should be given to the structure of rock chambers. As it has been described above, from the Eski Dogubayazit edifice was a two-storey construction (Fig. 17-18). The upper floor where the entrance was located consisted of one big chamber with two niches: one placed in the western wall, the other in the southern one. In the northeastern corner of that chamber two natural skylights were found. That one located in the eastern wall is of utmost interest. The rays of the Sun, which beamed through to the chamber made the western wall brighter. In a symbolic way, they radiated in the lower level, where two narrow chambers were situated, through the rectangular shaft located near the western wall. On the lower level, east from the narrow chambers, an almost round room was engraved. It is conceivable, as Huff noticed that this room would have never been finished. If so, it is also

16 L. Oppenheim, *The Eyes of the Lord*, JAOS 88, 1, 1968, 179.

17 D. Huff, *op. cit.*, 59.

18 T. B. Forbes, *op. cit.*, 85; T. Özgüç, *Altintepe II: Tombs, Storehouses and Ivories*,

19 *Urartu - A Metalworking Center in the First Millennium B. C. E.*, *op. cit.*, 279.

possible that the whole structure could play an important role as a sanctuary. It was probably important especially in the solstice time, when spring began. Therefore, we cannot talk about the object in term of a rock tomb, but a sanctuary connected with life and all associated rituals at Eski Dogubayazit. Such an interpretation seems to be justified as that region is not especially fertile, and in antiquity, the situation was probably no better. In such barren land, people needed divine intervention, so they performed vegetative rituals, which were supposed to ensure successful harvests.

To conclude, the Anzaf Kale shield discovered by Belli several years ago, offered a new interpretation of the Eski Dogubayazit rock relief and rock structure. In my opinion, it is highly possible that the object was not any tomb but rather a sanctuary focused on chthonic aspects of the religion as well as the elements of life existing in the Urartian beliefs. A strong and clear association of Turani with both mentioned elements – chthonic and vegetative was brought forth, which allowed us to interpret Turani as the deity of vegetation.

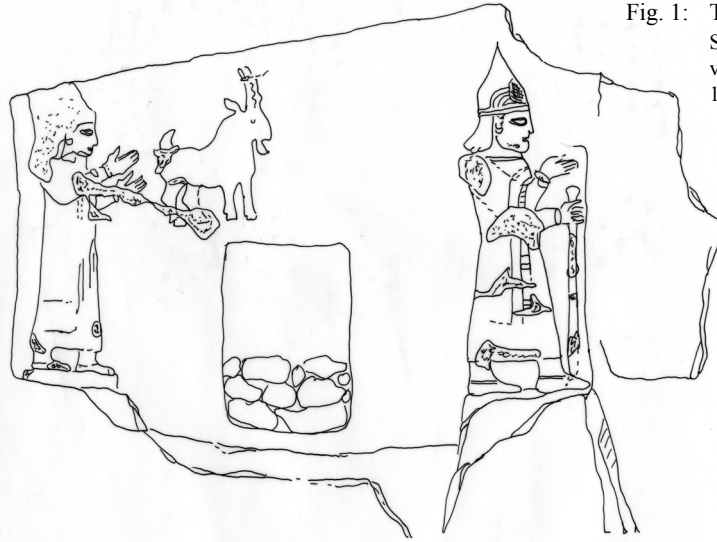


Fig. 1: The Eski Dogubayazit relief  
 Source: D. Huff, *Das Felsgrab von Eski Doğubayazit*, *Ist. Mitt.* 18, 1968, 58-86

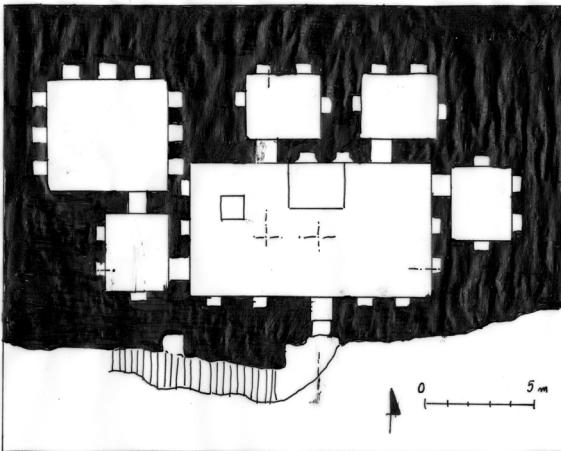


Fig. 2 The Argishti's Tomb from Van  
 Source: according to: R. Wartke, *Urartu Das Reich am Aparat*, Mainz am Rhein 1993, 145

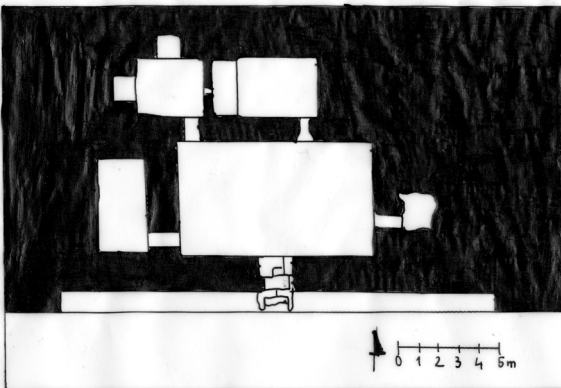


Fig. 3 Neftkuju Tomb from Van  
 Source: F. Işik, *Das Felsgrab von Köseoğlu and Totentempel Urartus*, *AMI* 28, 1995/96, 233

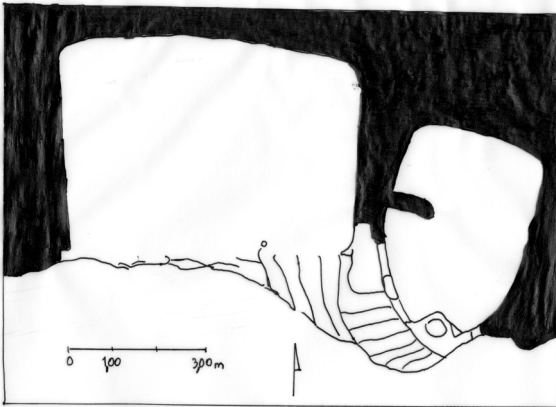


Fig. 4 Umudum Tomb  
 Source: F. Işık, *Das Felsgrab von Köseoğlu and Totentempel Urartus*, AMI 28, 1995/96, 219

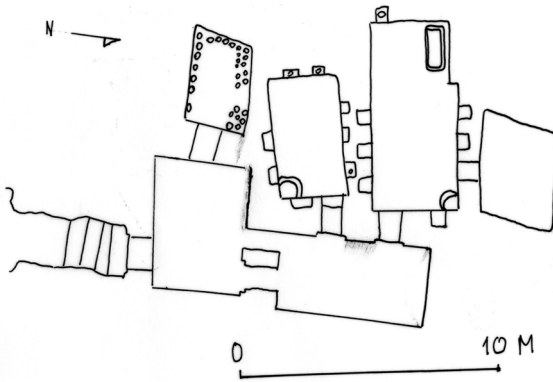


Fig. 5 The Rock Tomb from Kayalidare  
 Source: C.A. Burney, *A First Season of Excavations at the Urartian Citadel of Kayalidere*, An. St. 16, 1966, 101-103, fig. 22

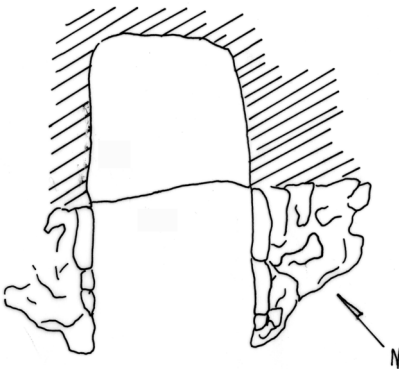


Fig. 6 The Kasağan Rock Chamber  
 Source: F. Işık, *Das Felsgrab von Köseoğlu and Totentempel Urartus*, AMI 28, 1995/96, 223



Fig. 7 Turani from the Shield from Anzaf Kale  
 Source: O. Belli, *The Anzaf Fortresses and the Gods of Urartu*, Istanbul 1999, 49-52





Fig. 8 Turani from the votive plaque discovered in Karmir Blur  
Source: *Urartu - A Metalworking Center in the First Millennium B. C. E.*, Jerusalem 1991, 286



Fig. 9 Turani on the votive plaque from Giymili  
Source: Turani from the votive plaque discovered in Karmir Blur, according to: *Urartu - A Metalworking Center in the First Millennium B. C. E.*, Jerusalem 1991, 292

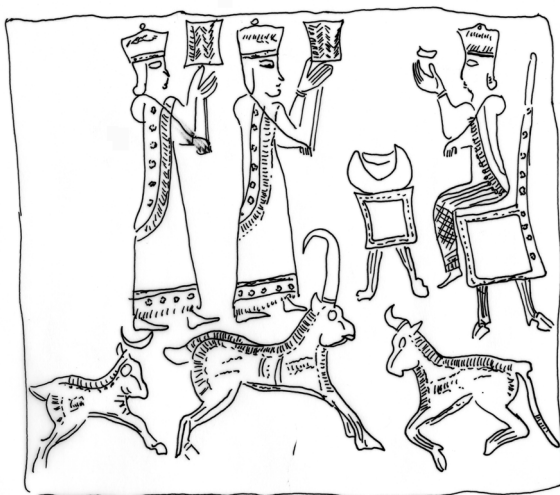


Fig. 10 Turani on a goat, votive plaque from Giymili  
Source: Turani from the votive plaque discovered in Karmir Blur, according to: *Urartu - A Metalworking Center in the First Millennium B. C. E.*, Jerusalem 1991, 293

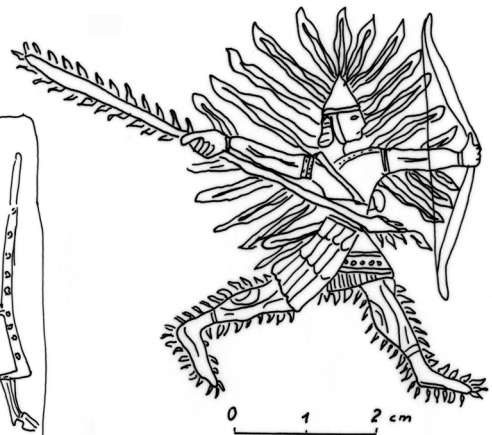


Fig. 11 God Haldi  
Source: O. Belli, *The Anzaf Fortresses and the Gods of Urartu*, Istanbul 1999, 50



Fig. 12 God Šuini

Source: O. Belli, *The Anzaf Fortresses and the Gods of Urartu*, Istanbul 1999, 46

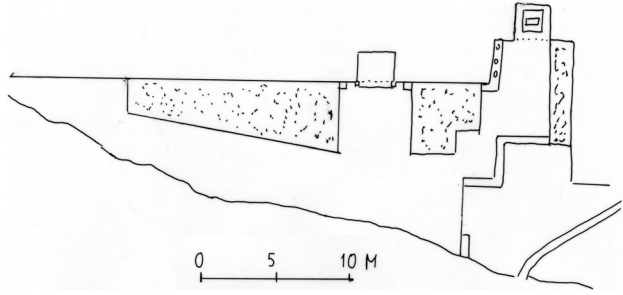


Fig. 13 The Rock Tomb from Tušpa

Source: T. Forbes, *Urartian Architecture*, B.A.R. Int. Series 170, 1983, 85

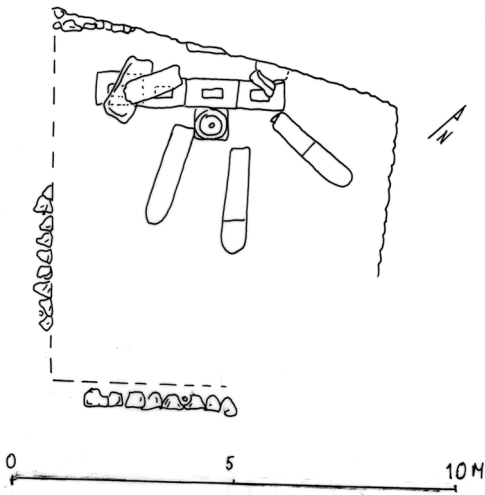


Fig. 14 The Santruary from Altin Tepe

Source: T. Forbes, *Urartian Architecture*, B.A.R. Int. Series 170, 1983, 86

Fig. 15 The Urartian drinking tube

Source: *Urartu - A Metalworking Center in the First Millennium B. C. E.*, Jesusalem 1991, 279

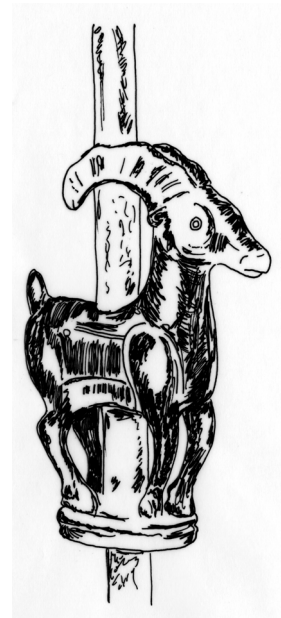


Fig. 16 The Urartian drinking tube detail

Source: *Urartu - A Metalworking Center in the First Millennium B. C. E.*, Jesusalem 1991, 279

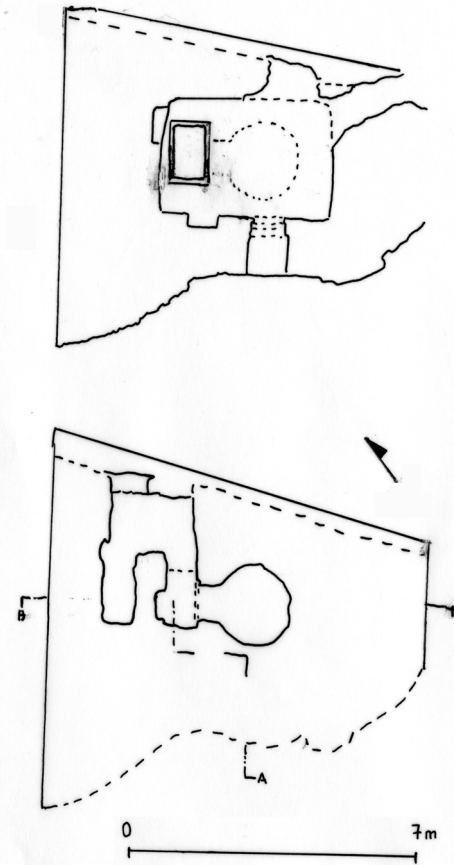


Fig. 17 Plan of the Eski Dogubayazit chambers  
 Source: D. Huff, *Das Felsgrab von Eski Doğubayazit*, Ist. Mitt. 18, 1968, 58-86

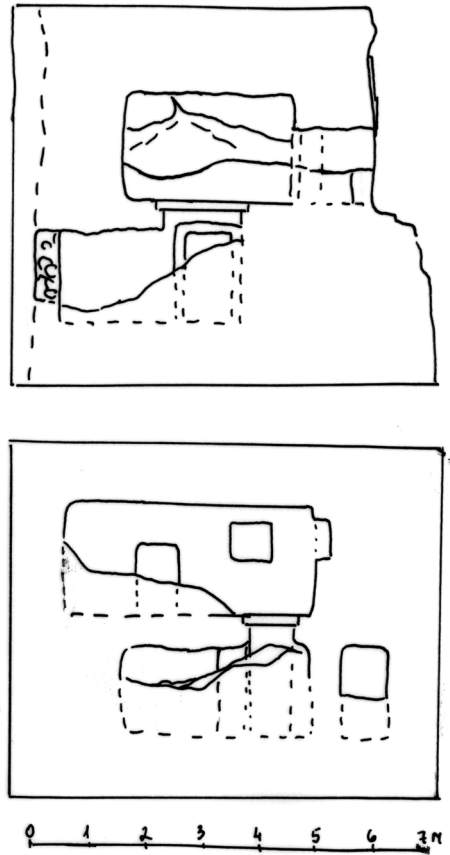


Fig. 18 Section of the Ski Dogubayazit chambers  
 Source: D. Huff, *Das Felsgrab von Eski Doğubayazit*, Ist. Mitt. 18, 1968, 58-86