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THE TOMBS OF WARRIORS, ACCORDING TO THE DATA OF THE CEMETERY OF BARDZRIAL (LATE II MILLENNIUM – FIRST QUARTER OF I MILLENNIUM BC)

Key words: Bardzrial, cemetery, Iron Age, warrior, dagger, spear, sword.

Introduction

The cemetery of Bardzrial is located 1.5 km west of Teghut village, Lori region, in the basin of the Shnogh river, tributary of the Debed, in the upper part of Lorut lands, on a vertical slope. Approximately 400 meters southwest of the site, on the top of the forested rock, the Chapel of Bardzrial (Bartzrel) is situated. In 2012–2017, the archaeological expedition of Teghut excavated 107 Iron Age tombs in this cemetery¹.

Some of the tombs were burials without human remains inside (so-called “cenotaph burials”)². Among those the most important ones are the “burials” containing only weapons. The rest of the tombs are presented by regular graves containing human remains. The selection of the tombs for investigation is based on the similarity of the items revealed from the burials – weapons, armor components, luxury artefacts and other objects, directly referring to the warfare.

The main goal of the research is to reveal the social structure and demographic pattern of the former population of Bardzrial through the materials found in similar tombs.

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¹ The excavations were held in 2012–13 and 2017. We would like to express our gratitude to the head of the expedition, Dr. S. Hobosyan, for the material kindly provided for the publication.

² Թումանյան 2007, 143:

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Tomb Construction

The cemetery is located on the territory with an inclination about 10 degrees, where the average thickness of the topsoil in the western part of the cemetery, due to the local cultivation of the area, reaches 30 cm. The tombs are regular "cists" in the plan, facing east-west (Tab. 1, 2). These are constructed and covered mainly with the following types of stones: granodiorite (about 80%), greenish dacite (5–10%), and local basalt. The latter is mainly used as cover slabs³.

The Memorial Tombs

66 out of 107 excavated tombs of Bardzrial tumulus are cenotaph burials without human remains. In this regard, tombs № 2, № 3, № 20, № 71 are most notable (see tab. 2). Excavations of tomb № 20 revealed a dagger, and the other three burials contained spearheads placed in the south-western corner, pointing to the west. Their direction was probably related to the location of the enemy or the place where the warrior was killed. According to the peculiarities of these burials, we can assume that they are memorial tombs. Even these bodiless burials have preserved the social status of the deceased within the community. The presence of weapons in these tombs suggests that they belonged to the warriors.

Assortment and Composition of the Inventory

A. Armor

The collection of armor components is quite limited⁴. The bronze belt found in Tomb № 9 (Tab. 4, fig. 14) is of special importance. Numerous stylized bronze belts are known today from different archaeological sites of Armenia, both unadorned, or bearing simple geometric ornaments, and decorated with complicated motifs, where the depicted war scenes provide rich information on the components of the warfare⁵.

³ For more information on the geological composition of the territory See: Նալիվալկո 2021, 31.

⁴ One of the possible reasons is that in the period from the Late Bronze to Early Iron Age, those were mostly made of leather, wood, and mainly haven't been preserved, Մարտիրոսյան 1969, 30.

⁵ Есаян 1986, 50–51; Ավետիսյան, Ավետիսյան 2009, 261, աղ. 65; Եսայան 1979, 279 (նկ.1).

Unlike the finds from the other synchronous sites of this region, the items from Bardzrial have simple imagery⁶. The belt is made of 67.5 cm long and 8 cm wide thin bronze sheet, both edges are rounded. The belt is decorated with linear compositions combined with a small triangular ornament all the way around. There is a horizontal ornamented band coming across the center, which joins two sets of triangles of decreasing size placed one inside another on both sides and divides the belt into two parts.

This triangle ornament placed on the edge definitely repeats the decoration on the left side of the bronze belt found in Odzun⁷ and the decorative motifs of the belts from Kazakh region⁸. The whole decorative composition of the belt from Bardzrial repeats the ornament of the belt found in tomb N 25 in Beshtashen, which dates back to the VIII-VII centuries BC⁹.

The decoration of the belt from Bardzrial is accomplished with delicate and skillful treatment, and applied with a sharp and thin engraver. As mentioned in the professional literature, this way of decoration of belts is typical of the culture of the late II – early I millennia BC of Armenia and the Southern Caucasus¹⁰. Bronze belts, both in the Early Iron Age and in later period, have always been considered objects of high-art and attracted the researchers' attention.

Academician B. Piotrovski has paid a special attention to the bronze belts of the Southern Caucasus, in particular, to their manufacturing technique and functions. He notes that the bronze belts made of thin sheet metal were designed to be attached to the leather surface of clothing and must have belonged to warriors¹¹. Referring to the same topic, H. Martirosyan notes that in the context of Caucasian archaeology they are being undoubtedly found in "warriors' tombs", and the functional purposes of the belt may change depending on the decoration. In particular, belts decorated with rich imagery were mostly used for ritual purposes. However, it is an indisputable fact that even when used in military uniforms, those had a protective-magical function¹².

⁶ Ավետյան 1984, 73–77:

⁷ Եսայան, Ավետյան 1981, 316:

⁸ Вайдов, Нариманов 1967, 58; Avsarova 2007, 137.

⁹ Narimanishvili et al., 2015, 116.

¹⁰ Եսայան, Ավետյան 1984, 316–317; Ավետյան 1984, 89; Esayan 1984, 143–198:

¹¹ Пиотровский 1962, 73.

¹² Мартиросян 1964, 136–140.

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The fact of using the belt as part of military uniform is also evidenced in the new type of depiction of warriors established at the beginning of the 1st millennium BC, where the belt is a component of the armor of warriors¹³.

Among the items found in the tombs there are the mace heads, which point to the higher social position of the warriors. Those are four. All are presented by expressive design and occur from tombs № 9, № 41, № 42, and № 107 (see Tab. 3 fig.1, Tab. 4 fig. 3, Tab. 7, fig. 7, Tab. 9, fig. 1). According to the wood residues preserved in them, it can be assumed that these were fixed to a wooden shaft (Tab. 4, fig. 3, Tab. 9, fig. 1). Similar findings are known from Mingechaur¹⁴, Georgia¹⁵, Talin¹⁶, № 1 tomb of Norabak¹⁷, etc.

B. Weapons

A large number of metal objects, including weapons, were discovered during the excavations, suggesting that metallurgy was on the rise in the Early Iron Age. In general, the progress of metallurgy occurred due to the fact that the area is rich in metals¹⁸, which is very important in the case of Bardzrial. As S.Yesayan notes, based on the results of the analysis of military inventory, it can be assumed that the soldiers were armed according to the priority of their position in the army¹⁹. The presence of various weapons in the tombs speaks not only of the technical progress in the field of metallurgy, but also confirms the above-mentioned fact. The range of weapons found in the mentioned tombs is presented in the following categories:

Daggers

The weapons of this group are made of iron, some of them are quite deteriorated, but the well-preserved specimens look like an elongated triangle with a wide base and are rhombus-shaped in section. The handle extending from the center of the base widens again at the edge. There are traces of annealing on

¹³ **Есаян** 1980, табл. 56, рис. 2, 7; **Есаян** 1976, табл. 148, рис. 2, 3.

¹⁴ **Асланов** и др. 1959, таб. XVII, рис. 1–19.

¹⁵ **Менадзе, Давлианидзе** 1968, таб. V, рис. 225.

¹⁶ **Badalyan, Avetisyan** 2007, 263, pic. 7.

¹⁷ **Ամիրյան, Սիմոնյան** 2013, 6: According to the C 14 data for this tomb we can say, that this kind of subjects were in use till the VIII–VI centuries BC inclusively; **Մարտիրոսյան**, 1969, տախտակ XXIV:

¹⁸ **Ալալյան** 2002, 210–216:

¹⁹ **Есаян** 1986, 6.

the handle. Similar daggers are widespread at the Iron Age sites (See Tab. 6, figs. 12, 13, 15)²⁰.

Spearheads

These monolithic cast iron spearheads have a wide blade, and tubular shaft (Tab. 3, fig. 17, Tab. 7, fig. 9, Tab. 9, fig. 3, 5). Holes are sometimes drilled in the shaft to fix it. Parallels are known from many Iron Age sites in Armenia²¹.

Swords

The iron swords found in the tombs № 5, № 11 № № 107 are very interesting. In one case the sword possesses a bronze handle, in other cases, the handle is decorated with bronze ornaments (see Tab. 3, fig. 16, Tab. 6, fig. 11, Tab. 9, fig. 4). An iron sword, partially deteriorated, found in tomb № 107 had traces of a bronze ornament on the handle.

After the restoration, it was about one meter long. The swords from the tombs № 5 and № 11 are more impressive, as, despite their poor preservation, they have a rich decoration.

There are geometric ornaments on the edges of the bronze handle of the sword. Similar swords are found at the sites of the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages and known from Kirovakan, Aygedzor, Mingechaur, and other archaeological sites²². These belong to the early stage of the Iron Age, XII-XI centuries BC.

Iron knives

Iron knives make a large group among the material found from the tombs. These are also poorly preserved. Iron knives are found both with a straight blade and a curved blade (Tab. 4, fig. 12, Tab. 6, figs. 10, 14, Tab. 9, figs. 2, 6). These types of knives are found in all stages of the Iron Age – from the Early to the Late periods²³. These are known from Berd, Astghadzor, Khrtanots, and other sites²⁴.

C. Luxury artefacts

Ornaments found from the Bardzrial cemetery are made of bronze, and presented in several groups: rings, earrings, buttons, beads, bracelets, and pendants.

²⁰ See, for example, **Есаян** 1976, 214, табл. 140; **Փիլիպոսյան** 1999, աղ. 68, նկ. 2.

²¹ See, for example, **Есаян** 1976, 220, табл. 144; **Քալանթարյան, Հրոսյան** 2009, 257.

²² **Есаян** 1966, 89.

²³ **Тирациян** 1988, 45.

²⁴ **Тирациян** 1988, рис. 13.

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Bracelets

According to the morphological features, bracelets can be conditionally divided into 3 types:

1. Thin wire bracelets with overlapping terminals completing the circle (Tab. 3, fig. 11, Tab. 7, figs. 4, 5);
2. Massive penannular bracelets with terminals facing each other but not joined (Tab. 3, figs. 12–15, Tab. 4, figs. 9, 10, Tab. 9, figs. 8, 9).
3. Bracelets of a third type, or armlets, are wide and made of thin bronze plate, the terminals are back coiled. The external surface is decorated by incised wavy lines and dots, and the convex band coming across the center divides the body into two equal parts (Tab. 9, fig. 12).

Bells

Hollow bells found among metal objects are quite interesting. These are plain but decorated with cut-out triangles on the surface (Tab. 7, figs. 1–3)²⁵. A similar bell with triangular perforations was seen among materials from Mingechaur²⁶. Such bells are very typical for the Iron Age sites. A large number of these remarkable charms bells were found in the tomb № 7 in Elar²⁷. Such are known both from the Early Iron Age sites of Armenia and from the synchronous sites of the Ancient East²⁸.

Rings, Hoops

The number of rings is not large, but they are presented with a rich assortment and are made with quite interesting techniques. They are made of thin bronze wire and flat sheet (Tab. 3, figs. 8, 9, 10, Tab. 4, figs. 4–7) and presented by simple penannular ones with terminals facing each other, double-twisted and spiral-like examples formed by thin bronze wires. Such spiral rings were widespread in the early Iron Age²⁹. As for the bronze hoops, they were probably intended for attaching to the leather parts of clothing (Tab. 3, fig. 7, Tab. 9, fig. 7).

²⁵ **Асланов** и др. 1959, таб. XVIII, рис. 10, 11.

²⁶ Similar bells without decorations were found from the territory of Azerbaijan, See, for example, **Avşarova** 2007, 119.

²⁷ **Խանգաղյան** 1979, 105, նկ. 135:

²⁸ **Ասրյան** 1984, 98; **Մարտիրոսյան** 1969, տախտակ XXXII, նկ. 27; **Есаян** 1976, таб. 110, рис. 5, 6, таб. 132, рис. 9.

²⁹ **Хнкикян** 2002, plate XLII, pic. 3–4, plate XL, pic. 8–9; **Мартиросян** 1956, 70, рис. 9; **Խանգաղյան** և այլք 1973, plate XLIII, նկ. 5:

Beads

Another group of ornaments consists of beads made of bronze, paste, carnelian, which are present in almost all the tombs (Tab. 4, fig. 8, Tab. 5, fig. 1, Tab. 7, fig. 6, Tab. 8, fig. 3). A large number of bronze hemispherical buttons with circular rods preserved inside are quite remarkable. These were probably sewn to the clothes or armor (Tab. 9, fig. 11, Tab. 6, figs. 2-8)³⁰. In general, bronze buttons of different sizes were wide-spread in the Late Bronze – Early Iron Age, and are known from various archaeological sites in Armenia³¹. Another type of bronze button is the one discovered from tomb №11 (Tab. 6, fig. 1). It bears a wavy linear incision on its surface. A similar button is known from Kirovabad³². Bronze nails also were probably used on clothing (Tab. 6, fig. 9). The identical nails are known from tomb № 2 in Lori Berd. According to S. Devejian, they had been probably used as decorations, both on wooden objects and on fabric³³. There are a large number of beads made of paste and carnelian. Similar beads are known from different archaeological sites of different periods of Armenia³⁴.

The star-shaped bronze objects are also of interest. Based on the existence of holes in the center, we can assume, they also were intended for fastening clothes (Tab. 3, figs. 2–6).

D. Ceramics

Ceramic assemblage forms a large group of materials found in the cemetery of Bardzrial. The pottery from the tombs is mainly presented by kitchen and tableware samples, among those are single-handle cups and jars, phiale, and bowls.

Cups

Cups of Bardzrial make a distinctive group. In one case, the cup has a slightly black-burnished external surface, a globular body, and a flat bottom (Tab. 8, fig. 4). The upper part of the vessel is tapered and decorated with vertical grooves. It possesses a vertical ring handle, which blends into the rim. The second cup is not burnished, it has a brick color. The vertical handle is placed almost in the center of the body. The convex part of the body is decorated with incised vertical stripes

³⁰ Մարտիրոսյան 1969, 30, տախ. 28, նկ 5, 6:

³¹ Деведжян 1981, 46, таб. XIII, рис. 11–14.

³² Есаян 1976, 117, таб. 93, рис. 23.

³³ Деведжян 1981, 34, таб. VIII, рис. 1–19.

³⁴ Хачатрян 1975, 243, рис. 155.

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(Tab. 5, fig. 2). The third type of cups has a rounded body, an everted rim, a wide and flat bottom. The vertical handle is placed in the upper half of the body. The shoulder of the cup all around is decorated with a horizontal row of notches. The upper and lower halves of the vessel are decorated with vertical grooved stripes (Tab. 5, fig. 4). These types of cups are well-known from the Early Iron Age sites of Armenia and the Southern Caucasus³⁵.

Single-handled Jars

Jars are presented in different assortments (Tab. 3, fig. 18, Tab. 5, fig. 3, Tab. 7, fig. 8, Tab. 8, figs. 2, 5, 6). The first type is presented by a high-quality black-burnished spherical vessel with a narrow neck in the shape of a hyperboloid (Tab. 3, fig. 18). The peculiar (horned) handle is placed vertically on the shoulder and blends into the rim. This jar bears rich ornamentation. Both halves of the body all around are decorated with vertical grooves. The grooves of the upper part are wide, and in the lower part, these are presented by separated groups of 5–6 narrow stripes. The central part of the body and the shoulder bear parallel lines. Similar jars were found at the synchronous sites of Mingechaur and Georgia and date back to the Early Iron Age (XI–IX centuries BC)³⁶. The second group of the vessels is presented by jars of medium size of worse quality. Morphologically these are almost similar: rounded body, narrow neck expanding to the rim, vertical C-shaped handle joining the shoulder and the rim, and the flat bottom (Tab. 5, fig. 3, Tab. 8, figs. 5, 6). These bear different variations of grooved decorations: parallel vertical stripes and horizontal lines covering the body and/or the lower part. A jar of a small size (Tab. 8, fig. 2) can also be included in this group. Despite the size, morphologically it is identical. Another difference shows grooved lines decorating the neck.

The third group is presented by a fragmented pear-shaped jar of medium size with a high neck (Tab. 7, fig. 8). The body (wavy in profile) is decorated by 4 horizontal convex rows decorated with seed-like impressions running across the entire diameter. The shoulder–neck, and neck–rim transitions are emphasized. The bow-like handle of the jar, unlike the ones from the first and second groups, is placed vertically on the shoulder and the neck.

³⁵ **Хачатрян** 1975, 250, рис. 160; **Петросян** 1989, таб. 59, рис. 6; **Хнкікян** 2002, plate XLIX, pic. 6.

³⁶ **Асланов** и др. 1959, таб. XLII, рис. 6; See: Georgian national museum, pad, artifact number 21.2014–1.

Phiale and Bowl

The phiale has a black-burnished surface, an everted rim, and a wide and flat base. That is not decorated (Tab. 8, fig. 1). The bowl is brown-burnished. It has a rounded body and everted rim. The shoulder is decorated with a horizontal row of notches (Tab. 5, fig. 5).

Despite the fact that the ceramic assemblage revealed from the cemetery of Bardzrial has some morphological similarities with the synchronous pottery spread in some regions of Armenia, it should be noted that it has certain local features that are closer to the synchronous materials of the regions of Georgia³⁷.

E. Anthropological Data

The anthropological material of the cemetery of Bardzrial has been studied completely³⁸. According to the data of the anthropological study, the “tombs of warriors” belonged to males aged 20 to 50 (№ 5, № 9, № 42, № 107)³⁹.

It is also important to note that in some cases, because of the poor preservation of remains, it is impossible to determine the sex (№2, №3, № 11, №20, 41, № 71). Burial № 9 is of special interest. The skull is bearing a surgical pit and seems to have belonged to an adult male (40–50 years old)⁴⁰. This example is not unique, there are several cases of such surgery in the cemetery of Bagheri Jala located in the territory of Teghut Mine⁴¹.

Discussion

Thus, the study of the material from the above-mentioned cemetery related to warfare once again shows the importance of the role of soldiers in the social structure of the Iron Age society. This is proved especially by the fact of the stable production of armor and weapons.

According to the artistic treatment of the artefacts, we can say that the class of warriors had a social stratification, which speaks of the existing regular military unit. During the study, it became clear, that the large-scale metal production in

³⁷ **Абрамишвили** 1978, 125.

³⁸ **Худавердян** и др. 2015, 47–60.

³⁹ Tomb № 5 - aged 25-30, tomb № 9 – aged 20–30, tomb № 42 – aged 35–40, tomb № 107 - aged 40-50. Anthropological identification by A. Khudaverdyan.

⁴⁰ **Худавердян** и др. 2015, 115-127.

⁴¹ The cemetery is located south-west of Shnogh, on the high cape of the left bank of the Shnogh river Karatanots Jur tributary; **Худавердян, Обосян** 2018, 197–198.

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the Early Iron Age was related to the fact that the community of Bardzrial was warlike, as well as the expression of new artistic perceptions of metalworkers.

The new artistic approaches are mostly expressed in the engraved decorations of the bronze belt, metal ornaments, and even incised pottery, which reflect the cosmological views of those people about the earth, the sky, and the universe. Thus, the technical and social changes that took place in the Early Iron Age society, where great importance was attached to the productive forces, led to the formation of a new type of society, which had stable relations with other parts of the highlands.

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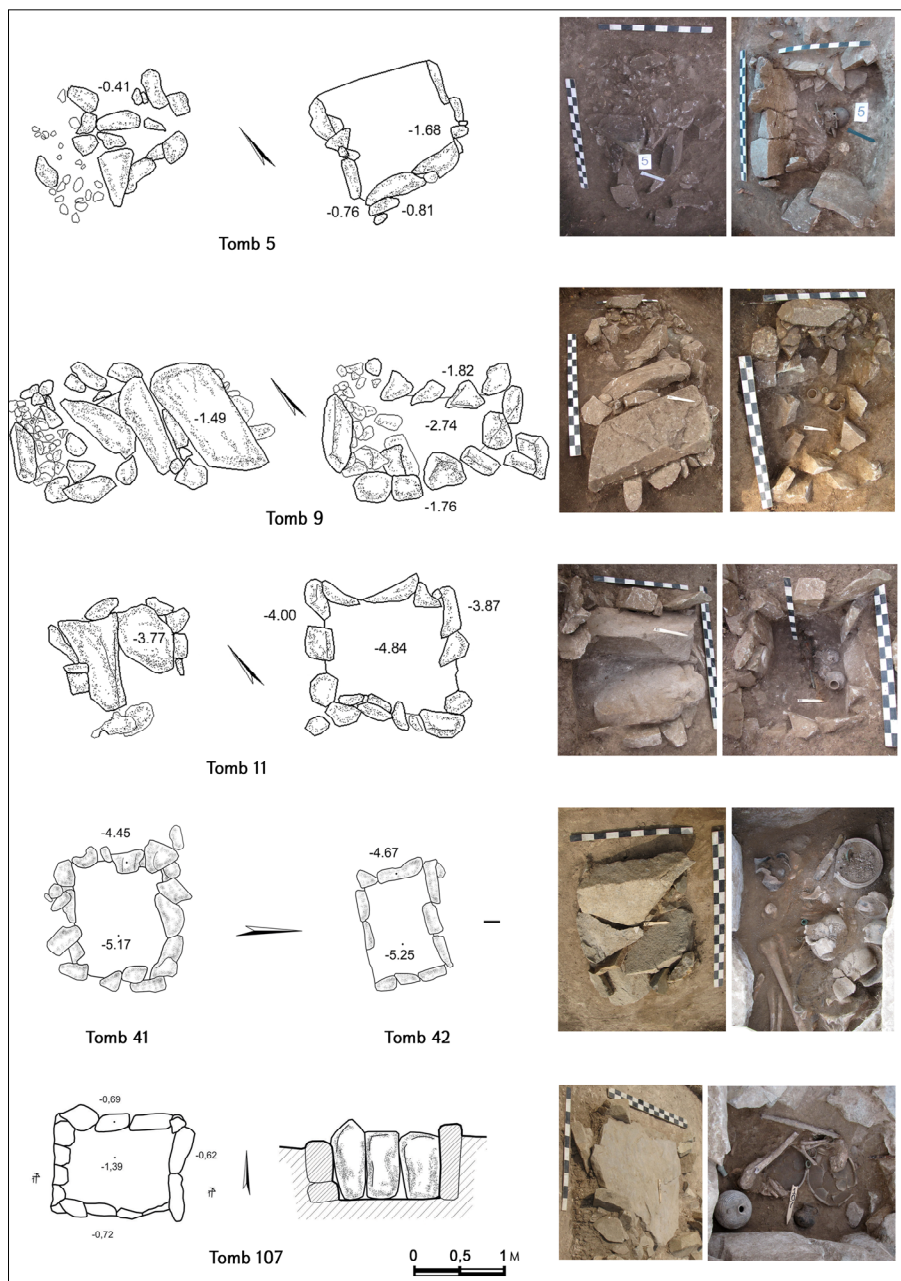
ՍԱՐԱՏԻԿՅԱՆ Ա.

Ամփոփում

Բանալի բաներ Բարձրյալ, դամբարանադաշտ, երկաթի դար, զինվոր, դաշույն, նիզակ, թուր:

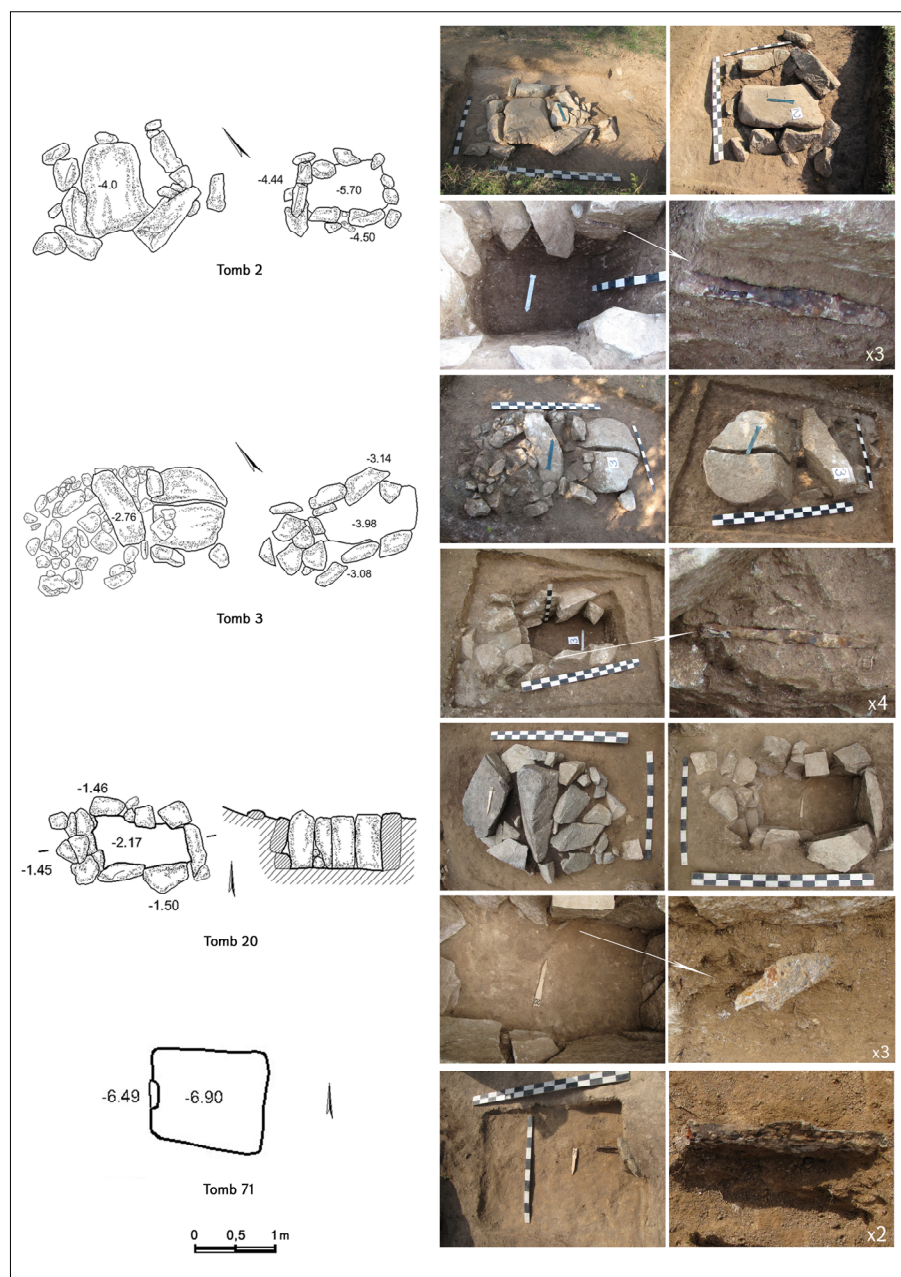
Հայկական լեռնաշխարհի հյուսիս-արևելքում պեղված բազմաթիվ հուշարձանների տվյալները վկայում են տարածաշրջանում ռազմականացման և «կանոնավոր ռազմական միավորների» ձևավորման աննախադեպ ծավալների մասին: Մասնագիտական գրականության մեջ բազմիցս է շեշտվել, որ հասարակության սոցիալական կազմում մ.թ.ա. II հազ. վերջերից կայուն տեղ է զբաղեցրել արհեստավարժ զինվորների խավը: Այս գործընթացների հնագիտական փաստագրման կարևոր վկայությունն են նաև տարբեր դամբարանադաշտերում բացված «ռազմիկի դամբարանները»: Այս տվյալները ենթարկելով ներխմբային վերլուծության՝ հնարավորություն ենք ստանում պատկե-

Table 1



The sketches, the external and internal views of the burials
Measurements by Lilit Ter-Minasyan

Table 2



The sketches, the external and internal views of the burials
Measurements by Lilit Ter-Minasyan



Table 3
Tomb 5, figs. 2-18, Tomb 41, fig. 1

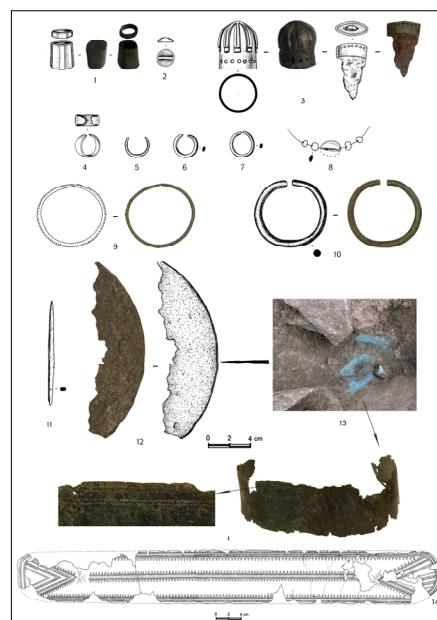


Table 4
Tomb 9



Table 5
Tomb 11

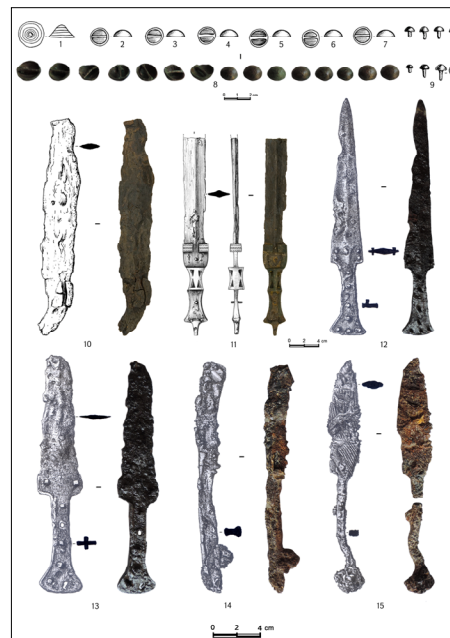


Table 6
Tomb 11



Table 7
Tomb 42

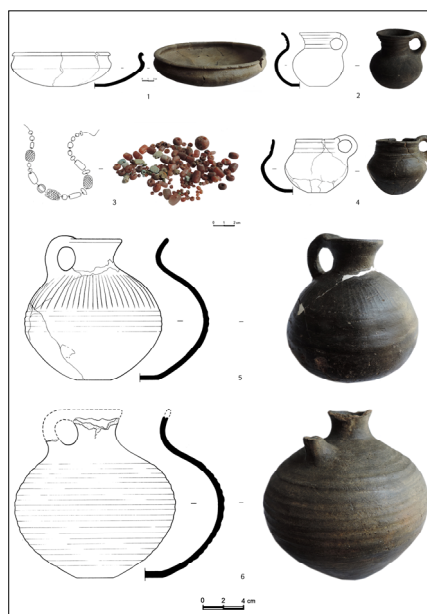


Table 8
Tomb 107



Table 9
Tomb 107

րացում կազմելու հնագույն հանրության սոցիալական կազմի ու կառուցվածքի վերաբերյալ՝ մեկ կոնկրետ համայնքի կամ տարածաշրջանի համար:

**«ГРОБНИЦЫ ВОИНОВ» СОГЛАСНО ДАННЫМ
МОГИЛЬНИКА БАРДЗРИАЛ
(КОНЕЦ II ТЫСЯЧЕЛЕТИЯ ДО Н.Э. – ПЕРВАЯ ЧЕТВЕРТЬ I
ТЫСЯЧЕЛЕТИЯ ДО Н.Э.)**

САРАТИКЯН А.

Резюме

Ключевые слова: Бардзриал, могильник, железный век, воин, кинжал, копье, меч.

Данные многих памятников, раскопанных на северо-востоке Армянского нагорья, свидетельствуют о беспрецедентном масштабе милитаризации и формировании в регионе «регулярных воинских частей». В научной литературе подчеркивается, что уже в конце II тыс. до н.э. в социальном составе общества группа профессиональных солдат занимала стабильное место. На это указывает наличие «воинских гробниц». В статье представлены археологические данные и классификация материала, а также дается сравнительный анализ антропологических данных могильника Бардзриал, которые позволяют составить представление о социальном составе и структуре древнего общества.