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URARTIAN ROCK-CUT TOMBS:
A DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

SUMMARY

Studying the structural features of the Urartian rock-cut tombs discovered on the Armenian Highland, in the means of the cultural and religious aspects and considering the opinions over this theme, the author comes to the following conclusions.

1. Although not all, but at least the representatives of the Urartian high class took care for their afterlife and built magnificent tombs. There existed specific rules to build tombs on the basis of the accepted Urartian burial customs. The builders were aware also to keep the tombs untouched.

2. Before building the tomb, the place was carefully chosen. The builders took care of the following circumstances. 1) The rock as the ideal medium for permanent monumental works 2) The hewed tombs in rock cliffs reserved the use of agricultural and easily fortified land for the living. 3) And, finally, they considered the owner's will. So it is as likely as not that most of the king's and his family's tombs were constructed far from the capital.

3. The Urartians buried their deceased in two common burial practices a) inhumation b) cremation. Since inhumation was accepted as a common burial practice, we shall not be surprised at the use of the platforms for sarcophagi. It is likely that the sidespread niches were intended to house cremations contained in urns, because the cremation in urns was also an Urartian burial custom.

4. In most cases on the scheme's basis of the Urartian

rock-cut tombs lay rectangular rooms on horizontal vertical axis, associated to the main hall, which were the largest and best lit rooms.

5. The architecture of the Urartian tombs is directly connected with the tradition of the overground structures and as Boris Piotrovski noted, by studying the tombs, we can have an idea about some overground buildings in detail. Thus we can suggest, that some of them had vaulted ceilings.

6. Approximately, we can estimate the «man day», spent on an available tomb. And there is even the possibility to compare the results with similar structures and come to certain conclusions. This method of approach, as exception, enables to form an idea about the Urartian kings economic and political power.

7. The Urartian rock-cut tombs have no previous examples on the Armenian Highland though, having in view the local geological traditions, the unique characteristics of the tombs, the various stone working techniques and basic trends in Urartian architecture a search for local origins makes the study of great promise.

8. The earliest similar example of the Urartian rock-cut tomb is known from Achaemenid Iran.

9. The Urartian rock cut tombs are treated as a part of the monuments built during ages on the Armenian Highland. So, the relevant study and information, derived from the analysis of the tombs, may set new light on the origin and history of the people who created that culture.

