

GARNI



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“Service for the Protection of Historical Environment
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The following brochure presents a variety of issues that came up as a result of periodical excavations related to archeological monuments, material discoveries, and, in general, questions about the historical-cultural heritage of the site. The catalog is designed for professionals, humanities faculty lecturers, students, tourists, and those interested in the history and culture of ancient Armenia.

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The Garni Fortress is one of the unique oldest antique sites of Ancient Armenia and in the whole South Caucasus. Located 28 km east of Yerevan, in the homonymous village of Kotayk Marz of the Republic of Armenia, opposite Geghama Mountains, on the right bank of the Azat River, a triangular, sloping, 3,5 hectare area on a picturesque promontory with sides measuring 180 m x 330 m x 330 m. The geographical coordinates of the site are 40°07'10" north latitude and 44°43'23" east longitude. The monument includes the fortress wall, Temple of God Mihr, palace and secular structures, royal bath, dragon statue, winery, the VII century church, medieval bridge, chapel, khachkars (cross-stones) and other historical and cultural buildings and values. The protection zone is 5.1 hectares.

A 14th c. manuscript in Armenian, without mentioning the original source, reports that Garni was built in 2166 BC. Establishment of settlement, according to the 5th century historian Movses Khorenatsi, the ancient traditional talk links Gegham, grand-grandson of the founder (patriarch) of the Armenian nation Hayk, whose grandson Garnik's name was later given the fortress, i.e. Garni. However, the earliest and the most reliable ancient written record of this ancient site, under the name of Giarniani, has been preserved in the inscription of Argishti I, the ruler of the Van Kingdom (Urartu) found in the Fortress and dated to the first half of 8th c. BC.

The author of another earliest mention of the Garni Fortress is Roman historian Publius Cornelius Tacitus (about the years 50–120 AD) who called this settlement “Gornea” when describing the events in Armenia took place between 51 and 52 AD. The settlement is also mentioned in early Armenian medieval manuscripts. According to historian Pavstos Buzand, it was a stronghold of the royal fort, and according to Yeghishe (another famous Armenian historian), it was a city with its inaccessible fortress, and, finally, according to historian Sebeos, a military base.

Excavations at the castle confirm that the area was really inhabited since the last quarter of 43rd c. BC and, almost without a break, life here has continued until the late Middle Ages. Part of the settlement ruined in result of the 13-14th cc. recurrent invasions of Mongols, the Turkmen nomadic tribes, Persian and Turkish conquerors, and all the citadel structures were completely destroyed in 1679 during a devastating earthquake.

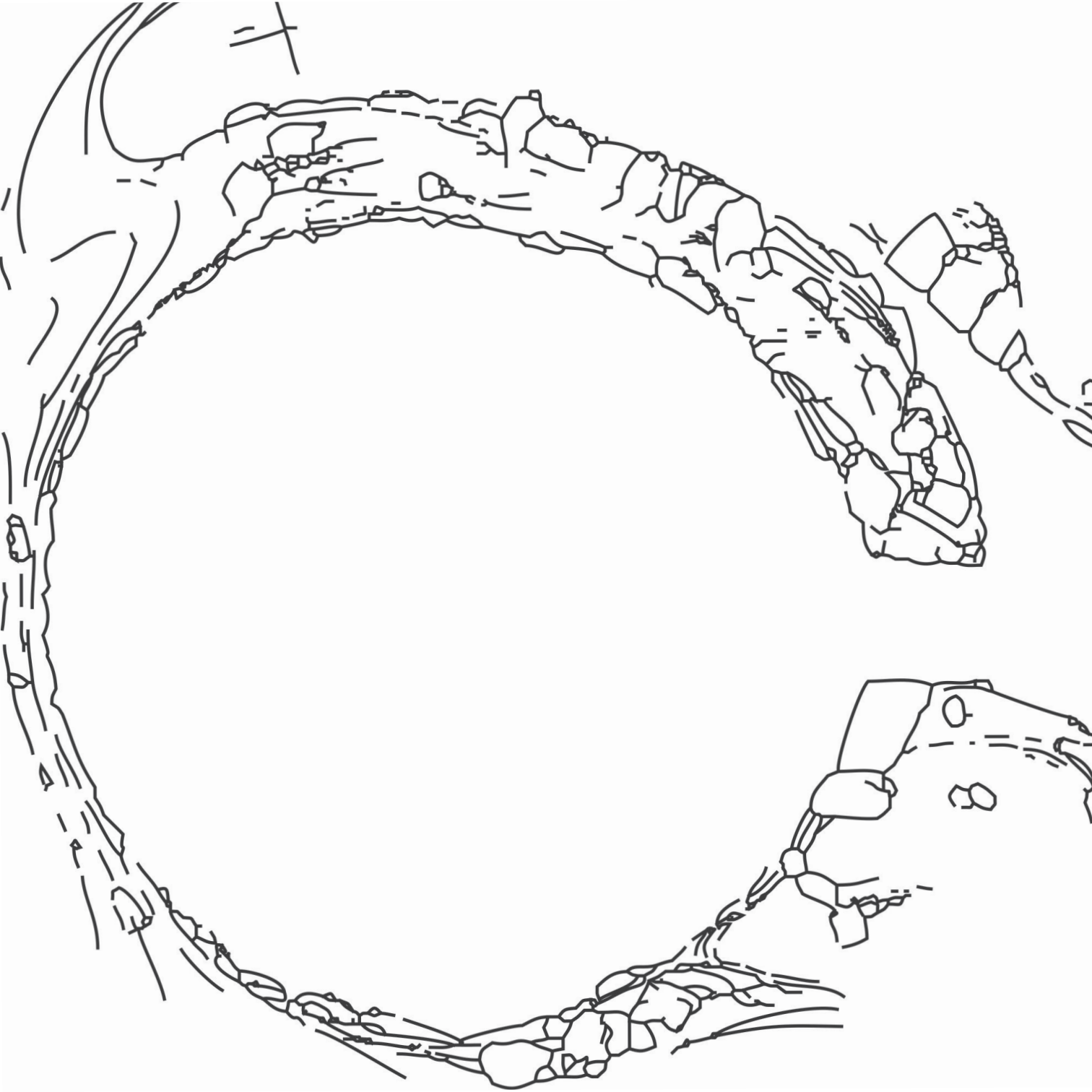
Only one and a half centuries later, after 1826-1828 Russian-Persian and 1828-1830 Russian-Turkish wars, a part of the Armenian population emigrated from the town of Maku in the Western Armenia and its suburbs, settled here and rebuilt the abandoned and ruined sacred homeland. The present Garni is a large, well built and prosperous settlement occupying 5,875 hectares and, according to the latest census, has about 8,000 inhabitants.









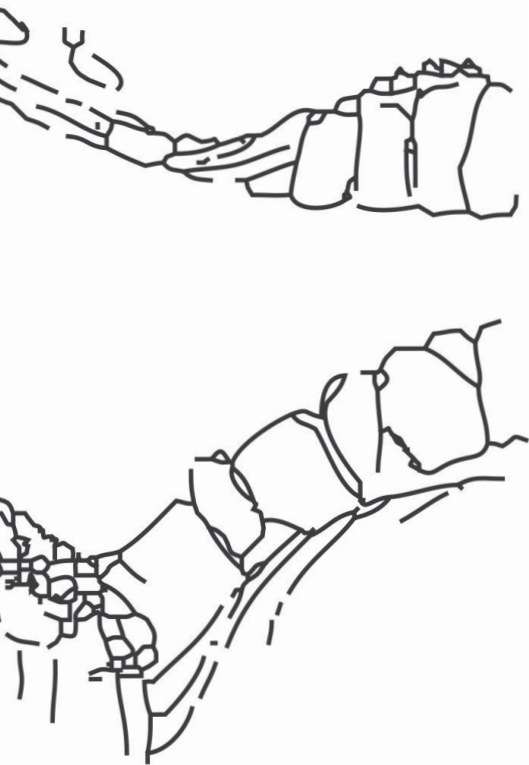


EARLY BRONZE AGE SETTLEMENT OF GARNI

Nikoghayos Marr of Russia made the first excavations of Garni Citadel in 1909-1911. The periodical excavations of the monument began after the Second World War, in 1949, under the leadership of renowned archeologist, academician Babken Arakelyan. As a part of this expedition, excavations at the Early Bronze Age site of Garni Fortress were done by archeologists Harutyun Martirosyan and Sandro Sardaryan in 1949-51. In 1960s these works were continued by archaeologist Emma Khanzadyan. Remnants of material culture related to the Early Bronze Age were found in the central part of the Garni Fortress, in the area adjacent to the temple, near the bath, under the enclosure and elsewhere.

Three archaeological levels belonging to the Kura-Arax culture of early agricultural period have been excavated, with remnants of stone-based and brick-top round housings and large and small rectangular auxiliary structures and economic wells adjacent to them. Circular clay hearths have been preserved in round housings. Numerous specimens typical for this period - of black-polished ceramics, stone idols, basalt stipes and millstones, fragments of anthropomorphic clay statuettes and fragments of a cart miniature, bronze ax molding mold's leaf, bronze sickle, various bone and obsidian tools, jewelry items, etc. have been excavated.

Remnants of plant and animal materials found in the Early Bronze Age settlement of Garni Fortress indicate that the natives were principally engaged in agriculture and cattle-breeding, cultivated gardens, sowed crops, kept cattle, birds, pigs, horses, donkeys, dogs etc. Like many areas of the central, northern, southern and eastern parts of the Armenian Highland, Garni's Early Bronze Age settlement was also influenced by ecological, social, presumed ethnic and other factors and from the second half of the 3rd mill. BC gradually abandoned and deserted.



*Drawing of a Kura-Arax period
round clay housings
(by E. Khanzadyan)*

GARNI IN THE MIDDLE BRONZE PERIOD

Excavations carried out inside the fortress and adjacent areas indicate that from the last quarter of the 3rd mill. BC until 19th -18th cc. BC this area has become a temporary habitation zone and pasture for mid-Bronze Age semi-nomadic breeding tribes. The materials of the kurgan complexes of the Middle Bronze Age Trialeti-Vanadzor culture evidence this. By the end of the Middle Bronze Age (18th -16th cc. BC), at the stage of the gradual spread of the Sevan-Artsakh and Karmirberd cultural groups, as in many parts of the Armenian Highland, here is also evident semi-nomadic breeding tribes' gradual transition to the settled lifestyle due to influence of ethnic carriers of new cultures. The actual evidence of this is the material remnants of the mid-Bronze Age proving socio-cultural realities of the last stage in and near the fortress.

The borders of the Middle Bronze Age settlement of Garni today are difficult to present accurately. At the base of the fortress wall, under the towers II, III and VI, about 4.5 meters deep, the fragments of colorful and ornamented with stamped black clay jars let's assume that the middle Bronze Age settlement occupied a larger area than an ancient fortress.





Drawings of Middle Bronze Period materials from Garni



Photo of Garni Late Bronze - Early Iron Period settlement

GARNI IN LATE BRONZE AND EARLY IRON PERIODS



The materials of this period are relatively few in the fortress area. The main settlement was located east of Garni Fortress, on a promontory at the Azat River valley, about 270 m long and 80 m wide. Two cyclopean fences in the north-south direction bound the surface of the promontory. The eastern fence was placed on the road leading to the upper part of the promontory and was designed to protect the entrance of the Late Bronze - Early Iron Age fortress during the attacks. The second fence was built in the narrowest part of the middle of the promontory and stretches from north to south. The Cyclopean wall is particularly well preserved at the entrance to the castle. The length of the stretch is 59.0 m, the width is 7.0 m. The settlement spreaded from the second wall to the west. The apartments are mostly semipermeable, have a rectangular structure, and are made of medium-sized crude stones. The fragments of pottery found inside the buildings indicate that the settlement was founded at the beginning of the Late Bronze Age (15th- 14th cc. BC).

Traces of the tomb field of the same times are visible on the slope stretched to northwest from the fortress. The preserved tombcelles are mainly spaces full of stones and contain late Bronze and Early Iron Periods materials. Most probably, the settlement survived without significant disruption until first quarter of 9th c. BC.



Garni's dragon-stone and cuneiform inscription

GARNI IN THE KINGDOM OF VAN (URARTU)

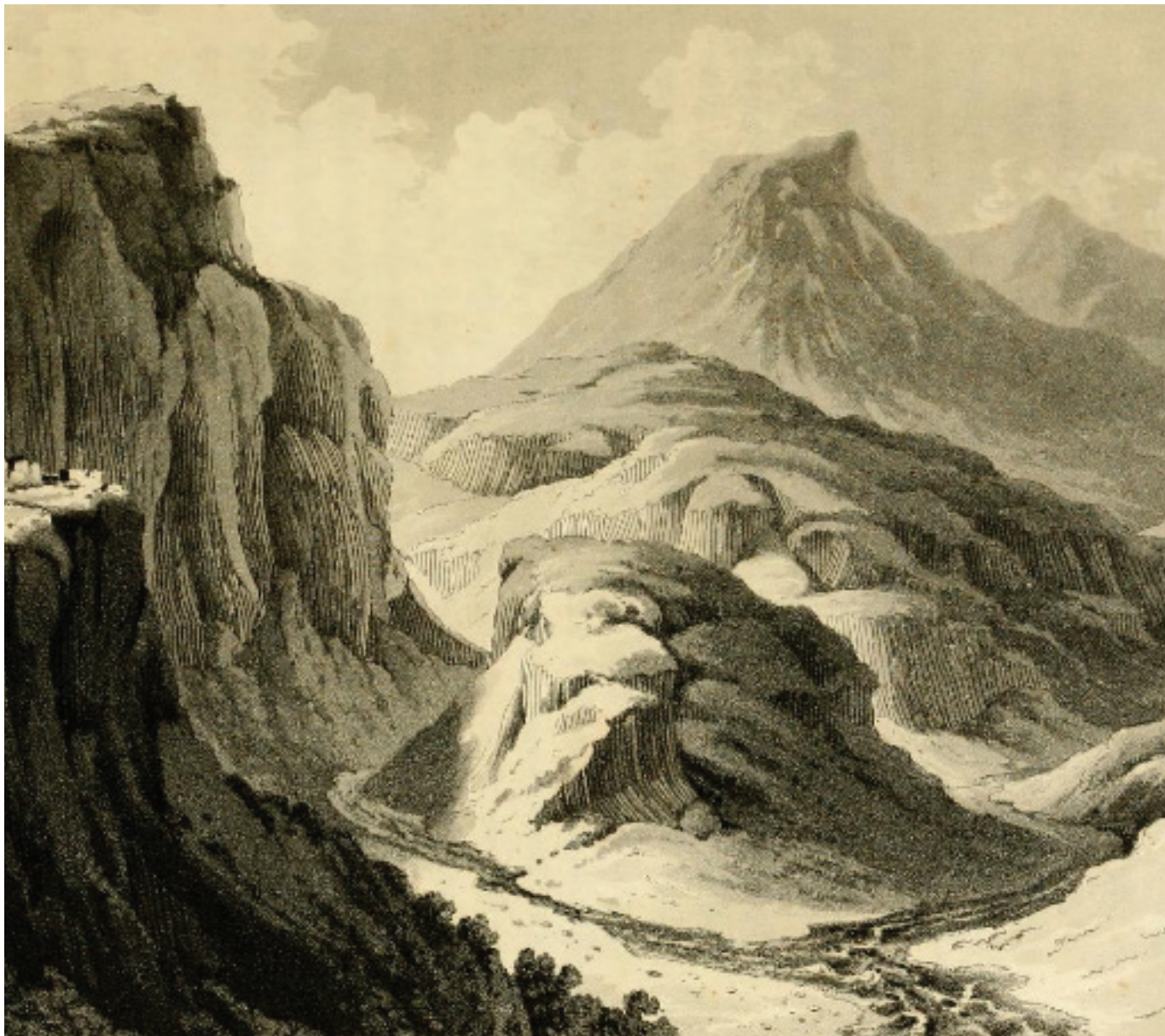
During the reign of Argishti I (786-764 BC), in the first quarter of 8th c. BC, the Shirak Plain, Ararat Valley and Lake Sevan basin were in the Kingdom of Van (Urartu). The Garni Iron Age settlement located on the southwestern slopes of the Geghama Mountains was also in a powerful power of that time.

During the excavations at the territory of the Fortress done in 1963, the lower half of the basalt dragon-stone was found inside the palace hall, not far from the antique temple, in the front part of which the Argishti I cuneiform was preserved. The text reports: "By power of god Khaldi Argishti says: I conquered (country) Giarniani, the country of (the king) Siluni. When I returned from hostile mountains, I drove men and women".

This is the variant mentioned in the Garni designation so far. The text also mentions the ruler of the country (king) Siluni, whose subjects, men and women, were exiled by the urartian king from their native lands. It is difficult to say for sure today what territories the Giarniani country (mentioned in the first half of 8th c. BC) included, but the fact that Argishti I instituted a special protocol on the subjugation of this country and captured the natives allows us to suppose that the country of Guiarniani played a certain strategic role from Mount Ararat to the Geghama Mountains, Gulf of Sevan and in general at the intersection of busy roads leading to north.

The presence of the Van Kingdom (Urartu) in Garni is also confirmed by other archaeological finds. Particularly pertinent to this region is the cylindrical seal discovered in the Early Iron Age settlement, whose engraving on the surface (a goat standing on a tree of life) has some parallels to the Red Hill (Teishebaini) findings in 8th - 7th cc, BC. A few materials found in the fortress indicate that life continued here in the post-urartian period, - during the reign of the Armenian Yervandides.



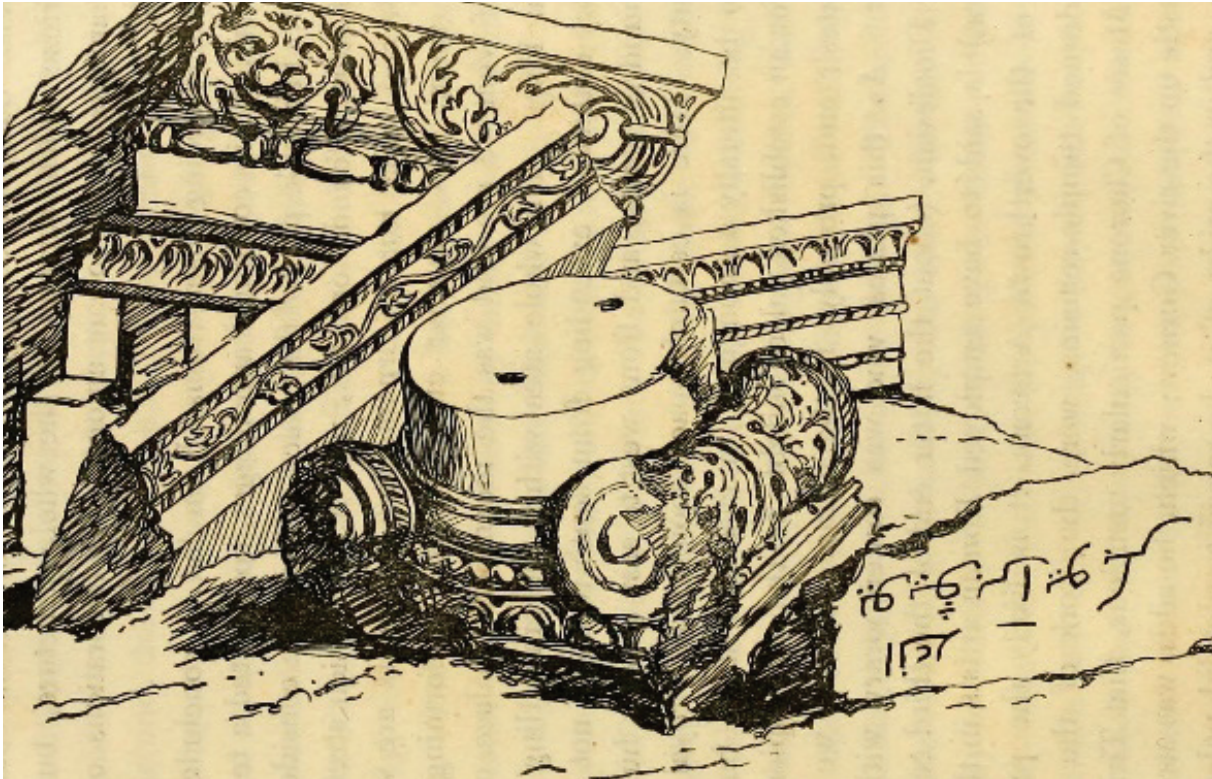


Garni valley (drawings by R. Ker-Porter)

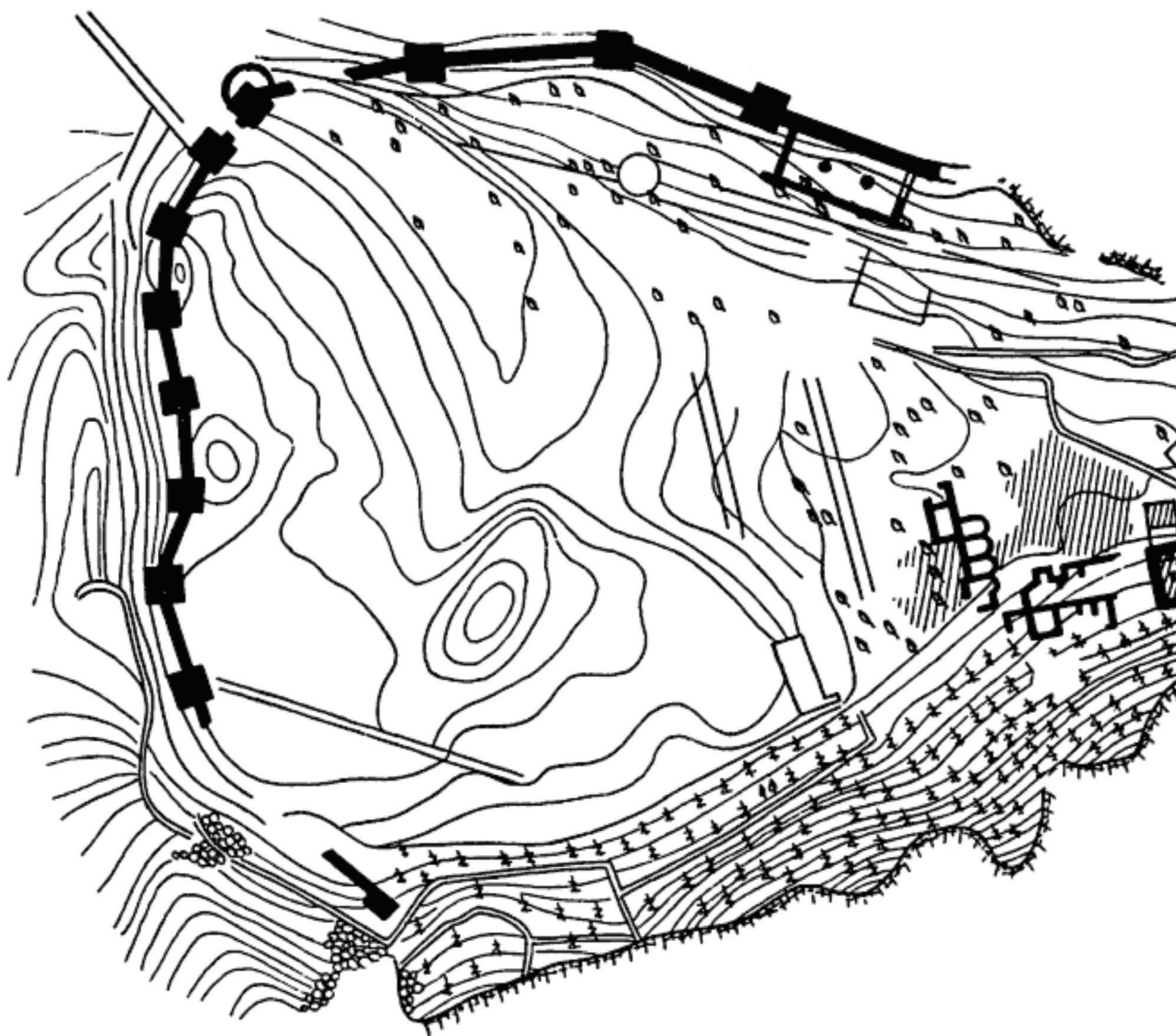
GARNI IN THE LATE ANTIQUE (ROMAN) PERIOD

Swiss archaeologist, traveler and naturalist Frederic Dubois de Monpere was in fact first who started to study the Garni Fortress yet in 1834, after what the complex was studied by a group of foreign and Armenian specialists in 19th -20th centuries.

Most of them believed that part of the palace buildings and fortifications (the wall) were built in 3rd -2nd cc. BC, and later the columned temple and the royal bathhouse were raised. Among these specialists were well-known English writer, painter, diplomat and traveler Robert Kerr-Porter. Being in Armenia in the first half of 19 c., he made some drawings on the ruins of Garni Fortress.



Garni ruins of pagan temple (drawings by R. Ker-Porter)

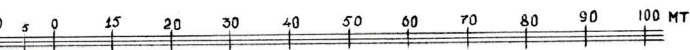
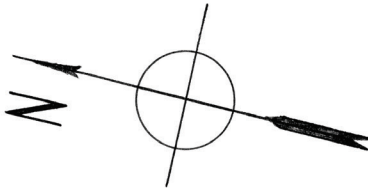
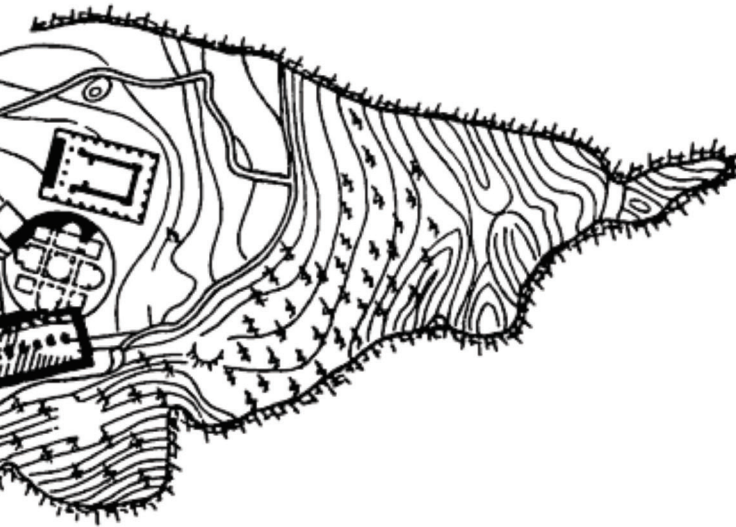


General layout of the Garni Fortress with fences (walls) and part of the royal structures

THE GARNI FOTRESS

The defensive fence surrounding the site is raised above the triangular promontary. It is surrounded by barren cliffs to the south, southwest, and partly to the east. The remaining 14 rectangular towers are next to each other and solid fences formed a powerful defensive system.

In the most inaccessible parts of the promontary where it was relatively push out enemy's aggression, the towers were built 25.0 - 32.0 m apart, and in relatively accessible areas they were placed closer together and extended 10-13.5 m inside. This mash-up trick created an arched section of a walled enclosure whose seemingly accessible middle ground made the invading enemy more vulnerable.







The plateau is protected by a powerful wall of 314 m. The fences are about 2.0 m wide and in some parts have been preserved 6.0-8.0 m high. There are five different construction time horizons for the temporary rebuilding of the castle wall. Both the fences and the towers are built of large size and regular form of local semi-cultivated blue basalt (quartz) with a weight of 4-5 t. The stones in the first two stages of construction are connected horizontally with iron bars, with lead being melted in their joints. The entrance is on the north side. In front of the citadel, there was also an urban settlement, the traces of which were covered by medieval and modern times.







It is extremely important to specify the sequence of historical development stages of the castle and the reconstruction of the castle by world-renowned artist Martiros Saryan. Greek inscription found in Garni village cemetery.

"Helios.... Tiridat the Great, the master of the Greater Armenia.... The Lord built the temple and fortress for the queen in the 11 years of this impregnable kingdom...."



The Greek inscription of Tiridat I

According to the above-mentioned text, King Tiridat I of the Greater Armenia, during his reign, in 77 AD, did construction and restoration work on the fortress. According to K.V.Treever, these works were carried out by Emperor Neron in Rome at the expense of funds allocated for the restoration of the City of Artashat of King Trdat I.





PAGAN TEMPLE

Based on bibliographic evidence, lithographic materials, structural features, and architectural style studies, the researchers concluded that the temple was actually built in the second half of the 1st century. It is a unique architectural monument of late antique (roman) era not only in Armenia but also in the whole region. The temple was built up with well-crafted local blue basalt up to 1.5m long, the walls were laid without mortar in a dry row. The stones were reinforced in horizontal as well as vertical directions with metal-steps, and the joints were fastened with molten lead.

The temple is a Greek peripteros, with its composition, standing on a Roman pedestal, with a plan of 5,05 m x 7,98 m, a rectangular hall of about 40 m², with six longitudinal squares on the outermost transverse facades.

It is assumed that these 24 pillars symbolize the 24 hours of the day. The decoration of the building is distinguished by its great artistic performance. The column caps are decorated with high-sculpted ova (oval motifs) and curls, cornices with lion's heads, palm trees and zigzag leaves.

The building is distinguished by its architectural details from the contemporary Westernminorasian and North Syrian monuments. One of the most important features is the richness and variety of ornaments that are not duplicated in the capitals and cornices. Armenian ornamental (grape, pomegranate, walnut leaves) and animal (lion's heads) ornaments and their plastic decoration, as well as basalt sculpture techniques show that mainly local masters participated in the construction of the temple.



There are 9 rows of 0.30m wide width of the whole facade of the building, which give the building solemnity and grandeur. They are lined with pedestals on both sides, with carved figures on one leg and arms raised, probably atlants. One of them looks to the east, the other to the west. It is believed that it was a time when the tables for sacrifice were put on that pedestals. The temple was dedicated to the God of the Sun Mihr (Mitra). Mihr, as a symbol of light, and truth, is often depicted in a battle against a bull (symbol of darkness). On the pedestal of the altar inside the temple was the statue of Mihr the God fighting against Bull.

The temple remained standing until the 17th century and destroyed due to devastating earthquake of 1679.

Unlike many examples of Armenian architecture, the detailed written description and picture of the Garni Temple were not preserved in medieval Armenian written sources, miniature paintings, frescos, and mosaics.



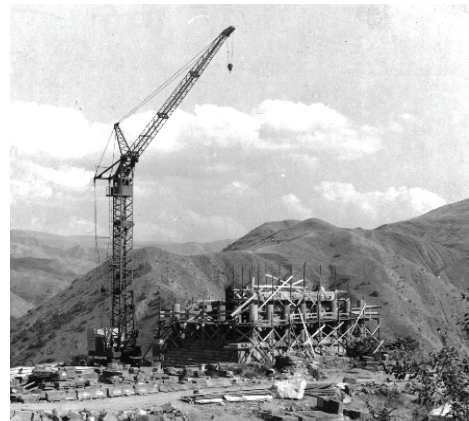
Sculptured details of gable, ceiling and frieze of the pagan temple



Ruins and restoration work of the pagan temple of Garni

About a century and a half after the destruction of the monument, only a Swiss scientist, Frédéric DuBois de Montperreux has attempted to recreate the original design of the temple and its first design. It was followed by reconstructions and projects by architect K. Romanov in 1912 and later renowned architect N. Buniatyan (1933). Based on the materials obtained from the studies, architect Al. Sahinyan in 1968 created a new project that stands out from its predecessors with its substantive justifications and bold architectural solutions. Carefully examining the remains of the temple and its figurative details, the architect came to the conclusion that the temple had a double roof. Just on the basis of this project, in 1968-1976, under Al. Sahinyan's day-to-day control the temple was restored.

It was done in exactly the same technical way as it was built in the 1st century. The stones of the masonry were again joined by metal nails and fixed by lead. Instead of missing architectural details, the new ones were laid out without sculptures, and just 1900 years after the Temple's founding, the structure was restored to its original look.





Remnants of the palace and secular structures



CHAMBER STRUCTURES

A few meters west of the Temple, on the edge of the promontory' vertical cliffs, were palace buildings. By now, excavations have uncovered the remains of a royal castle more than 40 meters long and 15 meters wide. In the southern part of the opening there is a large, 1: 2 a large arched hall, and in the other half numerous rooms of different size and use are opened.

The eastern and northern walls of the hall were preserved at 2.5–3.0 m and 1.0–2.0 m respectively. Most probably, the structure was two-storey. Inside a one of the chambers of the palace complex there are traces of dark pink paint, which is evidence of the rich decoration of the chambers and royal hall walls.

In this part there was also preserved a three-section wine cellar, where the grape was squeezed in a separate cell, and then the juice reached the second room by a clay pipe, and was poured into a large bowl. From the jar it flowed through the pipe to the second jar and, as it is further refined, flowed into the third jar.

Part of the remains of the palace building is at the base of St. Sion Armenian Church of the 7th c. that was built on a round plan, a four-storey, central dome, which confirms that in the 7th c. the Garni Fortress Palace Complex has already been completely destroyed.







ROYAL BATH

The most valuable building left of the palace complex is the royal bath. It is located about 50m northwest of the temple and was built with use of the same construction techniques and materials used for construction other palace buildings. Although the exact shape of the cover is unknown, nevertheless the fragments of the ceiling plaster found during the excavations show that it most likely had vaulted form. The bathroom has four consecutive rooms of the same direction, with a hypocaust system at the base. The walls of the rooms that looking to south-east are outwardly curved, and inside are semi-circular.

Under the double-ply floors of the bathrooms numerous small columns of disk-shaped bricks having 6.0-7.0 cm in thickness and 20.0-25.0 cm in diameter, were laid out in equal proportion. Large plates (6.0-7.0 cm thick, 60-70 sq. cm) were placed on the cums, then covered with a 5.0–8.0 cm thick slab of sand, calx and ground brick.

The hot air and smoke, passing through the columns, first warmed the bathroom for hot water, then went into the lounge for significantly less heat, and finally reached the cold water bath at a completely reduced temperature. Thus, the bath tubs were heated as needed, and no heat loss occurred.



Garni bath after excavations and its general look today



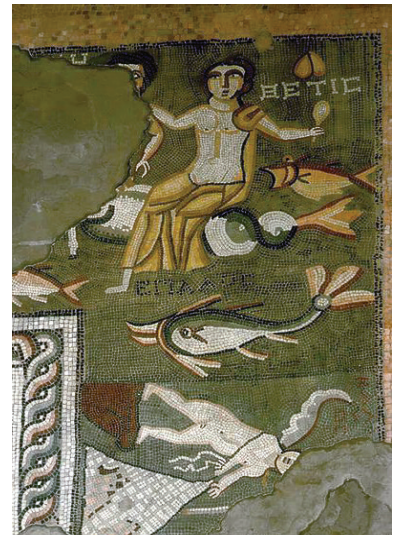
Of particular importance is the mosaic floor of the lobby. The mosaic floor of the lobby (dressing room) is of particular importance. Found in 1953. The mosaic has rich composition and is composed of 1.0-1.5 sq.cm of 15 colors natural stones of the Azat River. The overall essential of the composition is light green. In the center of the mosaic, a subtle combination of colors depicts a frame with a twisted ornamented belt inside of which multicolored small cubes masterfully represent human-like busts of the Ocean and the Sea; the first one is with curls, horns, the masculine, and the second one is like a beautiful woman with the crayfish claws.

At the top of the pair of images, following mysterious Greek inscription is laid out of wine-colored cube stones: "We worked without getting anything." In the middle of a spiral rectangular circle, Greek mythology depicts ichthyocentaurs, nereids, fishermen, fish, oysters, dolphin, human-like gods and so on. Each of these has Greek names (Oceanus, Talas, Glavcos, Thetis, Eros, Pito, Potos, Peleos, etc.).

The Greek words "the depth of sea", "serenity of sea", "beauty", "beach" are placed in different parts of the mosaic.

The Garni late Antique bathroom mosaic in sense of composition has some in common with the two structures excavated in the city of Zeugma excavated near historical Ayntap (territory of Turkey in present times - translator) and the mosaics excavated on the floors of Israel's Khirbet Hanut Antique settlement (IVc.).

The plot, style and color features of the Garni mosaic as well as its architectural forms and decoration let's dating it by the end of the III c.



Excerpts from the mosaic of the royal bath of Garni



Mosaics of Garni and Hirbet Hanut



Mosaics of Zeugma

THE GARNI FORTRESS AND THE SURROUNDING AREA IN THE MIDDLE AGES

After Christianity was proclaimed state religion in Armenia (301 AD), although the ancient fortresses and defense complexes remained retained in general, pagan worship monuments were completely destroyed. Only in certain places did some shrines adapt to the requirements of the new religion and were re-established as Christian shrines. The only exception is the Garni Temple. It was preserved as it was, was transformed into a secular structure and, according to (historian) Movses Khorenatsi, became a "summer residence" for King Tiridat III's sister Khosrovadukht. The followers of the new faith only ruined architectural ensemble of the God Mihr fighting against the bull that was placed at the altar of the Temple and threw it into gorge.



The fragment of the marble statue of a bull



The altar of the Temple of Mihr

Hundreds of years later, during excavations, a white marble bull sole was found near the temple, which, according to experts, was part of that bull statue. Two other fragments - the bull's marble head and part of the pedestal of the statue - were accidentally discovered in 2011 on the slope of a climbing rock ending a man-made platform.

Garni Fortress in the Middle Ages also retained its role and strategic importance. In the first half of 7th c. a Zvartnots-like church was built on a cross-base, with a round plan, with a central dome, St. Zion Church.

Judging from the preserved architectural details, the windows of the building had sculptured crowns. To the right of the entrance to the church Armenian Catholicos Mashtots Yeghvardetsi (833-898) is buried. In 13th c. a chapel was built on his tomb.

The Fortress was completely destroyed during the Arab invasions, but the same name village remained enlarging, and by the second half of the 9th c. it grew to become a rural town. By the beginning of the 10th c., during the reign of King Ashot II of Bagratuni, the Castle was also restored. The bridge over the Garni gorge is also likely to have been built in those times.

In the 10th -15th cc. Garni was one of the largest and most prominent town villages in Armenia. Remains of the early and advanced medieval architectural structures are preserved around the Fortress. Among them are Khumarach Church (4th -5th cc.), St. Astvatsatsin one nave church (12th -13th cc.), "Mashtots Patriarch" or "Sumpents Monastery" monastic complex (12th -13th cc.), St. Astvatsatsin three nave church (17th -19th cc.), chapels, khachkars, etc.



The Garni Medieval Bridge before and after renovation

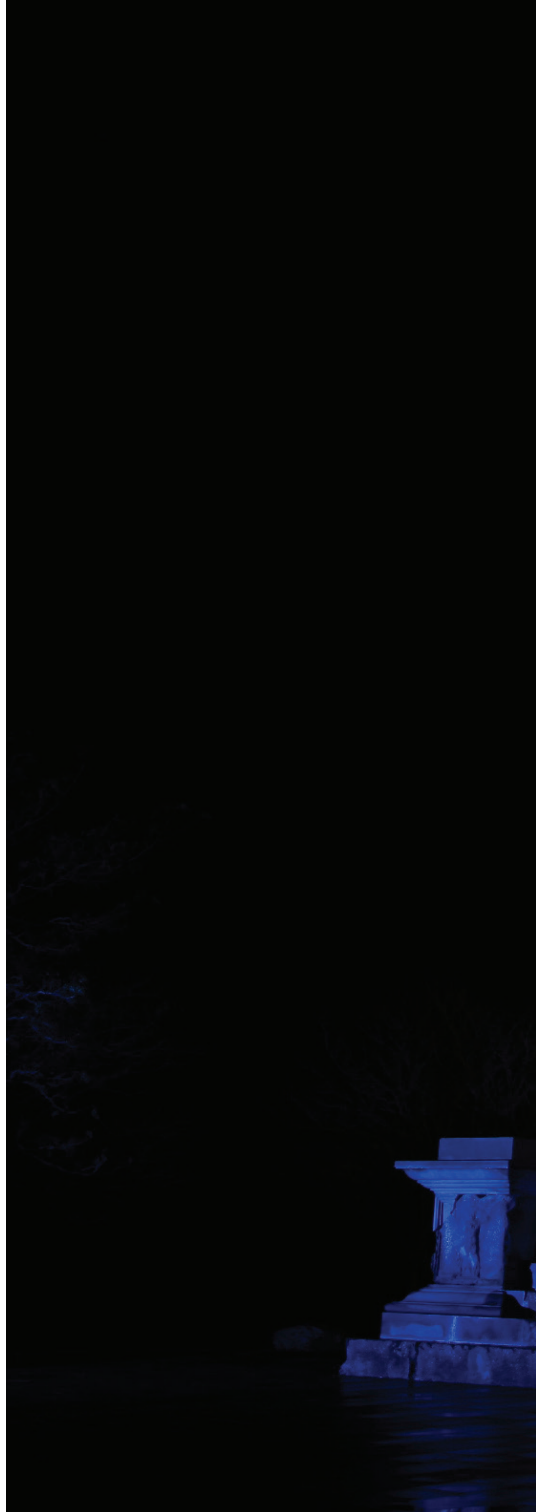


GARNI HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RESERVE MUSEUM TODAY

As a unique monument of the Armenian historical and cultural heritage, the Council of Ministers of the Armenian SSR with its June 14, 1988 №308 decision Garni Fortress was declared a State Reserve and handed over to the Joint Directorate of Historical Environment Protection and Historical and Cultural Reserve Museums, and with May 27, 2009 decision №09 of the Government of the Republic of Armenia was handed over "Service for the Protection of Historical Environment and Cultural Reserve Museums" SNCO of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Armenia (shortly "Service for Protection" SNCO) for timeless and free use as "Garni" Historical and Cultural Reserve Museum " branch.

In 2002-2003 significant restoration and improvement work was carried out at the "Garni" Historical and Cultural Reserve Museum with the support of the Lincy Foundation. The entrance of the fence, with two adjacent towers was partially restored, the antique bath was completely covered, dilapidated walls of the palace hall and adjacent buildings were rebuilt, the square in front of the temple was covered with tiles, passage ways and a viewpoint were built.

In 2009 at the whole area of the Reserve Museum a music system and a system of artistic lighting were installed around the Garni Temple, which allowed the Reserve Museum to work in the spring, summer and autumn months also in the evenings.





Today “Garni” Historical and Cultural Reserve Museum that is a Branch of “Service for the Protection of Historical Environment and Cultural Reserve Museums” SNCO of the Ministry of Science, Education, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia is an active and strong cultural center. Periodically scientific, cultural, educational programs and various events are organized here. During the year of 2017 around 35,0000 tourists, specialists and students from Yerevan, Marzes of the Republic, different countries of the world have visited the monument.

Taking all this into consideration, the “Service for the Protection of Historical Environment and Cultural Reserve Museums” SNCO has developed an up-to-date program for the further improvement of its “Garni” Historical and Cultural Reserve Museum branch activities, comprehensive study and construction of a new museum building which at the prestigious 2011 UNESCO-Greece Melina Mercouri International Prize for the Safeguarding and Management of Cultural Landscapes awarding was awarded the First Prize (financial) in a number of similar projects from dozens of countries.

Today the ancient Garni lives a full-fledged up-to-date life, and with its grandeur and uniqueness continues to captivate, fascinate and surprise all the visitors, having new, yet undiscovered numerous historical and cultural treasures the world to enjoy...

THE MINISRTY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE, CULTURE AND SPORT, RA
SERVICE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HISTORICAL ENVIRONMENT
AND CULTURAL MUSEUM-RESERVATIONS



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