10.56653/18290361-2025.16-21

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AUTHORITY THROUGH WRITING: CONSIDERATIONS ON A SEAL FROM THE YEGHEGNADZOR HOARD*

Keywords: Urartu, Yeghegnadzor Hoard, pseudo-writing, cuneiform, Iron Age Armenia

Introduction

In 1989, during construction works in Yeghegnadzor, a number of objects, primarily in metal, were discovered under unclear circumstances and were initially interpreted as Urartian grave goods.[1] Among these artifacts, two bronze belts have attracted the most attention in scholarly literature, while other objects were perceived as less significant. The first publication detailing this discovery appeared in 1990, authored by S.A. Yesayan and O.S. Xnkikyan, under the title "Nakhodki biayniskikh izdeliy v Yeghegnadzore". Published in Russian, this article focused entirely on describing the material;

* Ստացվել է 25.09.2025թ., ուղարկվել է գրախոսության՝ 27.09.2025թ., ընդունվել է տպագրության՝ 09.12.2025թ:

1 The authors of this contribution would like to thank Boris Gasparyan and Artur Petrosyan for their assistance in the creation of this study, which was conducted on the original materials between 2018 and 2019 as part of the activities of the Vayots Dzor Project, an Armenian-Italian archaeological mission. Another acknowledgment goes to the President of ISMEO, Adriano V. Rossi, for his constant support of our research activities, as well as to the Italian ambassadors to Armenia over the years, particularly Vincenzo del Monaco and Alfonso di Riso. Special thanks also go to Karen Azatyan, director of the Yeghegnadzor Regional Museum, not only for granting us permission to study the materials but also for actively supporting us in their documentation, together with Artavazd Khachatryan. The archaeological activities in Vayots Dzor were made possible thanks to the financial support of ISMEO (through the "Progetto MUR quinquennale. Storia, lingue e culture dei paesi asiatici e africani: ricerca scientifica, promozione e divulgazione"), MAECI, IAE NAS RA, and the Gfoeller Renaissance Foundation. The content of this article has been developed jointly by both authors. Specifically, A.S. Bonfanti authored "The Yeghegnadzor seal" and "Cuneiform writing on the Yeghegnadzor seal?", while R. Dan wrote the section "The role of monumental epigraphy in Urartian culture and the imitation of writing" and "A Urartian seal? Some concluding remarks on the Urartian economy". The "Introduction" and "The Archaeological Context of the Yeghegnadzor Hoard" were written collaboratively. All illustrations and drawings were prepared by R. Dan.

the only subsequent publication on the subject was by O.S. Xnkikyan in 2002, where the finds were discussed in the context of the Iron Age in Syunik (Xnkikyan 2002, 94–96, pls. XCIV–XCVI).

In 2018, as part of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia (IAE NAS RA), the Yeghegnadzor Regional Museum, and ISMEO – the International Association for Mediterranean and Oriental Studies, a comprehensive research project was initiated to study the materials held in the Yeghegnadzor Regional Museum. This was part of the joint Armenian-Italian "Vayots Dzor Project" (VDP). The discovery site was revisited on July 13th, 2018, and catalogued under the code VDP059 (Gasparyan et al. 2016, 149, 160). A total of fifty-eight objects were unearthed, fifty-five of which are made of metal (bronze and iron), while the remaining three items included a carnelian seal and two potsherds. The collection of materials has recently been the subject of a comprehensive study, published in a monograph (Dan et al. 2025). This contribution is focused specifically on the morphology and significance of the carnelian seal and its iconography. Indeed, this object is particularly important both in terms of interpretation of the context as a metal hoard, and for reasons related to the symbolic role of writing in the society under the Urartian rule. The seal is decorated with what, at first glance, appears to be a cuneiform sign, which, upon closer analysis, it has been revealed to rather be a possible imitation of cuneiform. This circumstance has prompted a reflection on the imitation of writing in the Urartian period as a possible result of the widespread dissemination of monumental epigraphy produced by the Urartian royal chancellery among presumably vast segments of the illiterate population. Moreover, it has led to a broader consideration of the role of glyptic in Urartu, and which specimens should be regarded as true Urartian seals.

The archaeological context of the Yeghegnadzor hoard

The objects uncovered during the construction works were subsequently transferred to the Yeghegnadzor Regional Museum, which was at the time known as the Provincial Museum of Yeghegnadzor (Xnkikyan 2002, 94). According to Yesayan and Xnkikyan, the artifacts were found buried inside a pithos, of which only a small fragment of the rim survives. The scholars suggested that this burial practice was characteristic of both the Urartian and post-Urartian periods (Yesayan, Xnkikyan 1990, 44). However, there are several inconsistencies in their report that warrant reconsideration. One issue concerns the description of the pithos, which is said to have originally contained the objects. The vessel is described as "small", yet it seems unlikely that it could have contained a total of fifty-eight artifacts (today fifty-six, after the loss of two vessel fragments). Furthermore, the assertion that pithos burials were typical of Urartian culture can no longer be entirely supported (see, for example, the pithos burial in Armavir, published by Tiratsyan 2010).

Given these discrepancies, the materials found in Yeghegnadzor may be better interpreted as a hoard of objects, rather than items associated with a burial. There is no

mention of human remains in the discovery, though it is possible that the site could have been the location of a cremation burial. More critically, the type and diversity of the objects found, along with their large number, do not align with typical grave goods. The sheer volume and range of items suggest that this discovery is more accurately categorized as a hoard rather than a burial. Consequently, this find should be added to the list of metal hoards discovered across the Armenian Highlands, alongside the well-known examples of Zakim (OAK 1907, 131, figs. 239–243; Piotrovskij 1959, 249, 253, fig. 85) and Guşçi (Hanfmann 1956; Hamilton 1965; Haji Mohammadi et al. 2019, 96–98, figs. 2–3). The characteristics of the Yeghegnadzor material suggest, moreover, that the hoard had a functional purpose, and may have been a collection of metal materials intentionally gathered to be melted down or reused at a later time. The majority of the items are metal objects, with the exception of the seal. Whether the metals were hoarded for future remelting or simply deposited with the intention of being recovered later, it is plausible that the seal had a specific function, rather than being included in the group purely by chance. The seal likely served as a means of ensuring that the hoard belonged to its rightful owner, who, upon reopening the hoard, could prove their identity through the seal. The exact nature of the deposit remains unclear, though two speculative scenarios can be considered. The first hypothesis, given the fragmentary state of the items, is that the objects were stored for future metallurgical use. In this case, they would have been intentionally deposited in a broken and non-functional state, as they were not meant for reuse, but rather for melting down. The heterogeneity of the finds, which do not appear to share any other common attributes except for the material, supports this interpretation. The second hypothesis is that the deposit functioned as a treasure hoard, possibly containing family possessions, which may or may not have been fragmented at the time of deposition.

The combination of metal objects and a seal is a particularly interesting aspect of this discovery and should prompt a re-examination of other contexts that may have been hastily interpreted. A comparative context for this hypothesis can be found in the significant funerary site of the Yerevan Columbarium, one of the most important examples of Urartian funerary practices (Yesayan et al. 1991; Biscione 1994). In addition to the structural remains and urns found in situ in the niches, the discovery of three “caches” – storerooms located under the floor slabs – adds to the significance of the site. The materials found in these storerooms are diverse, though repetitive, with a predominance of bronze and iron objects (Biscione 1994, 116). Also of interest is the presence of a seal, indicating that depositing a seal alongside an accumulation of metal objects was, possibly, a recognized practice.

While the Yerevan Columbarium likely had a funerary function, with a cultic or ritual purpose tied to death and the afterlife, the Yeghegnadzor hoard does not provide evidence for any associated burials. Thus, while the Yerevan Columbarium’s hoard may have had ritual meanings related to funerary practices, the Yeghegnadzor hoard seems to have served a more utilitarian purpose. The key element linking both contexts is the practice of placing a seal to signify the closure of the hoard.

The Yeghegnadzor Seal

The carnelian seal has a parallelepiped-like shape, wider at the base, with a suspension loop (pic. 1–2). The wider sides and the base bear incised motifs that can be defined as phytomorphic. The decorations on the narrow sides (pic. 3) are not adequately preserved, so that only a summary description can be provided. A. Piliposyan proposed the idea that one of the sides would report the cuneiform sign *giš* (Piliposyan 1998, pl. 64.4): in particular, citing Ayvazian (Ayvazian 2006, 882), "in the opinion of Piliposian, the facets of this seal may be put together to read 'Argishti', if one reads the first facet with the depiction of a tree as GIŠ". This would be based on the reading of the Sumerogram sign for "tree" as GIŠ, which, however, looks extremely unlikely, as it would imply a diffusion of Sumerian language knowledge in the lower levels of a society living in not-so-close proximity with the Urartian highest classes. However, it should be noted that, while the rebus writing of the name Argišti employing the actual depiction of a tree is both never attested and highly questionable, the carvings on the narrow sides of the seal may be actually seen as an imitation of writing, which could have been appropriated (without full understanding) by members of the local elite or by individuals seeking to distinguish themselves within the community. Such a scenario raises interesting questions regarding the role of writing and glyptic art in Urartu, and it suggests that the deposit belonged to a local community member who had repurposed an object typical of the Near Eastern world – potentially brought to the region by the Urartians.

This seal (classified by Ayvazian 2006, 881–882, fig. 3.11, as NP07) belongs to the category defined as "four-faceted seals", which includes several other specimens (Ayvazian 2006, 22; AR 05; ER 06; KB 02; KB 76; KB 77; KB 78; NP36; pic. 4). The shape of these seals is said to "occupy a place between cylinder seals and stamp seals" (Ayvazian 2006, 52), as they bear images both on the sides and on the bottom. In particular, the Yeghegnadzor seal appears to bear a similar decoration to three faceted seals found in Karmir-blur (Ayvazian 2006, KB76-78), especially with regard to the images on the narrow sides and the base, which show abstract phytomorphic motifs, possibly depicting a tree; on the wider sides, the seals from Karmir-blur report the image of griffins or hybrid creatures, while on the bottom there is the representation of a stylized tree (even though Ayvazian 2006, 78, hypothesizes that the base may be occupied by a hieroglyphic notation).

Cuneiform writing on the Yeghegnadzor seal?

The use of cuneiform in Urartu was inextricably tied to the uppermost levels of society, particularly the royal dynasty, who utilized writing as a tool to express and legitimize their authority (Zimansky 2006). In Urartu, the concept of kingship is particularly articulated through the use of writing: unlike other contemporary states, where writing served a wide range of functions including administrative, economic, and literary purposes, Urartian cuneiform was a royal prerogative, primarily employed by the kings themselves. This selective use of writing as a symbol of power is exemplified by monumental inscriptions carved on stone and rock surfaces, and incised inscriptions on metal and clay objects. These inscriptions were not intended for bureaucratic record-keeping

or practical communication; rather, they served as public declarations of royal power, triumphs, and divine favour. As such, writing in Urartu functioned as an instrument of royal display, reinforcing the status and authority of the monarch (see Bonfanti–Dan 2024). In this context, the Urartian use of cuneiform could be defined as a "performative" act, emphasizing the symbolic and ceremonial roles of writing. Writing, in this sense, was not a mere tool for communication but a visible symbol of the king's power, used to impress both the elite and the broader populace.

The seal from Yeghegnadzor provides the opportunity to explore the influence of the royal strategy of using cuneiform script as a tool for prestige. If individuals from the lower strata of society – those wealthy enough to own a hoard of metal objects and a carnelian seal – attempted to mark their possessions with an imitation of cuneiform writing, it suggests that writing was perceived by the broader society as a symbol of prestige, status, and authority. Even if these individuals were not directly affiliated with the royal court, they may have sought to appropriate the royal symbol of writing to elevate their own status within the local community. The prestige associated with the idea of writing was thus clear, especially in a culture of highly restricted literacy, where the elites had the advantage of keeping writing an arcane system (Gelb 1963, 185). In this case, the owner of the seal was not interested in inscribing an actual sign with its attached meaning; rather, the mere act of imitating a cuneiform sign was enough for them to signal that they held, or aspired to, a prestigious position in a local setting.

Seals, as a rule, typically feature carved images that identify their owner or signal a particular function or identity (see Collon 1987). In Urartu, writing was an element traditionally reserved for the seals of the royal court (Dan, Bonfanti 2023): the presence of an imitation of cuneiform script on the Yeghegnadzor seal, especially in an unusual position at the centre of the seal's short faces, indicates a departure from conventional practice. Rather than using the seal's decorative space to depict a personal emblem or divine image, the imitation of writing appears to have replaced the usual identifying images. The position of writing on this seal may reflect also a broader trend in Urartian art and epigraphy, where writing was often employed not just as a functional tool but as a decorative, performative element, designed to convey the prestige of the individual or institution associated with it. The shape of the seal, moreover, is unusual in the courtly Urartian context, as it is a four-sided faceted seal with a stamp on the base. Unfortunately, we do not know what the impressions of these seals looked like, particularly whether a specific face was stamped onto the clay, as no impressions of this type have been preserved (Ayvazian 2006, 45). Faceted seals usually bore religious imagery, suggesting a connection to the ritual sphere, making this specimen the only known exception to that trend. In sum, the seal represents an intriguing deviation from every norm attested in and around Urartu.

The imitation of cuneiform script on the seal from Yeghegnadzor likely functioned as a visible signal of status, appropriating the royal signifier of writing and using it as a form of social capital. This suggests that the members of the local elite – or individuals aspiring to such status – viewed writing, even in its imitative form, as a way to align

themselves with the power and prestige associated with the king. The seal also suggests broader questions about the relationship between local elites and the royal court in Urartu. The imitation of royal symbols, such as cuneiform writing, may have been a way for these elites to reinforce their power within the local community, signalling that they had access to or command over symbols of authority typically reserved for the king. The seal, in this sense, becomes an indicator of a larger social process in which elite members of society attempted to appropriate elite symbolism to assert their own status.

The role of monumental epigraphy in Urartian culture and the imitation of writing

As previously mentioned, in Urartu writing played a crucial role in the manifestation of royal authority and the consolidation of power. Urartian kings, much like their Near Eastern counterparts, used inscriptions as a means of legitimizing their rule, asserting divine favour, and communicating their military and administrative achievements. Royal inscriptions, often carved in cuneiform on stone stelae, rock faces, and the walls of fortresses and temples, proclaimed the king's conquests, construction projects, and devotion to the god Ḫaldi, the chief deity of the Urartian pantheon. These texts reinforced the notion of the king as both a warrior and a divinely sanctioned ruler, whose duty was to expand and protect the kingdom while ensuring religious and economic prosperity. The widespread presence of monumental inscriptions across Urartian territories and sites not only demonstrated the reach of royal authority but also contributed to the cultural and political cohesion of the state. In this way, writing in Urartu was an essential instrument in the articulation and perpetuation of kingship, linking royal power to divine will and the material landscape of the realm. The use of cuneiform writing by the Urartians had a dual significance (Dan 2019, 230–231). On one hand, its introduction was certainly linked to the administrative needs of the state, while on the other, it held an important symbolic value. Writing in Urartu was an exogenous element; it did not follow an internal developmental trajectory that can be reconstructed but instead appeared fully defined in its essential features. It represented a complete discontinuity from previous periods and was the earliest known tool employed by Urartian kings for legitimizing and administering the state. The precise details of the adoption process remain unknown. However, we do know that the introduction of writing, attested in Assyrian script and language, began during the reign of Sarduri, son of Lutipri (second half of the 9th century BCE), the first Urartian ruler for whom inscriptions are known. Over time, this borrowed writing system was also employed to transcribe the native Urartian language, marking a process that began with the adoption of both the Assyrian writing system and the language, followed by a phase of adaptation of the script to the Urartian language. In Urartu, this assumption is based on a series of copies of the same inscription, written in Assyrian, yet signed by the first known Urartian king, Sarduri, son of Lutipri (CTU A 1-1). However, a relatively recent proposition, grounded in palaeographical and morphological evidence, suggests that the first Urartian king may have also engraved an inscription in Urartian on a bronze bowl, as marked by the morpheme of Urartian genitive

present in the short epigraph (Dan, Bonfanti 2023a). Even more striking is the fact that just a few years later, Sarduri's son, Išpuini (c. 830–820 BCE), was able to commission entire inscriptions in Assyrian ductus now perfectly adapted to the Urartian language, spoken at least by some of the populations of Nairi and Urartu. Unfortunately, no documents have been discovered that directly attest to the shift from one language to the other, leaving the adaptation process largely unobserved; however, this phenomenon indicates a desire to distance Urartu from the Assyrian model while retaining certain key features. The function of writing in Urartu also diverged significantly from its Assyrian counterpart. In Assyria, writing was largely an internal element of palace administration, as demonstrated by cuneiform tablet archives and extensive annalistic inscriptions adorning royal palace walls. In contrast, Urartian writing adopted a more outward-facing dimension. Urartian inscriptions were primarily rock cut, strategically placed in highly visible locations, serving a dual purpose: to communicate content accessible only to a select group within the royal court and to function as a symbolic instrument that conveyed a state message comprehensible to the wider population. The meticulous execution of Urartian rock inscriptions and the careful selection of their locations suggest that Urartian epigraphy carried a highly symbolic and propagandistic value, likely comparable to the role of inscribed and decorated orthostats in Assyria.

The seal of Yeghegnadzor, in this context, represents a rare example of the phenomenon of the imitation of writing for decorative purposes. As previously introduced, this seal features a face adorned with what appears to be a cuneiform sign, which, upon closer examination, does not form coherent text and lacks lexical structure. Instead, it may well represent an artistic appropriation of writing, likely intended to evoke the prestige and authority associated with literacy and official inscriptions. This practice of pseudo-writing suggests that cuneiform script, beyond its administrative and monumental functions, held symbolic power in Urartu. Even for individuals who may not have been literate, the visual appearance of writing could serve as a marker of status, legitimacy, or even magical protection. The deliberate imitation of cuneiform on a seal – an object typically linked to administration, identity, and ownership – further underscores the cultural value attached to script-like imagery. Such artefacts reflect how writing, even when functionally absent, could be visually integrated into material culture to reinforce social and political hierarchies.

The imitation of writing in the ancient world is a complex phenomenon that often reflects not only an aesthetic or functional interest, but also a process of cultural assimilation. In this context, it is interesting to mention another object, the bone clasp from Podgorodnoye, Ukraine, discovered alongside an assemblage of Early Scythian arrowheads. This object is decorated with elements resembling the wedges composing cuneiform signs (Daragan, Didenko 2021, fig. 15). The use of symbols that recall the cuneiform script could be interpreted as an attempt to emulate a system of communication and power, without a true understanding of the linguistic meaning. This reflects the broader phenomenon where cultures adopt and adapt symbols of prestige from more powerful neighbours, incorporating them into their own material culture even if the original

meanings are not fully understood. This imitation may suggest a process of cultural prestige, in which nomadic societies adopted visual and symbolic forms associated with Near Eastern cultures, such as the Assyrian and Urartian, to legitimize their own status, or align with a shared language of power and authority. Writing, in particular, can be seen as a sign of sophistication and control, and its imitation, while lacking real communicative functionality, reflected its symbolic value. The phenomenon of pseudo-writing may have been part of a broader strategy of cultural integration, also evident in the interactions between Urartians and Scythians in the 7th century BCE (see the materials in the kurgan of Kelermes, Galanina 1997). The ability to imitate and reinterpret symbols, like cuneiform signs, shows how ancient cultures influenced each other, not only in terms of art and style, but also in codes of power and communication. The adoption of cuneiform elements in decorations, for example, may suggest that the nomadic societies sought to gain prestige in the Near East by assimilating distinctive features of cultures perceived as powerful, like the Urartian one, but without fully adopting the writing system, making it symbolic rather than functional. This process of borrowing and imitation may fit into a broader context of complex and prolonged political relations between state entities and nomadic or local communities that go far beyond simple military conflict and domination. Urartian influences are evident in certain objects from the Kelermes Kurgan and other sites, further supporting the idea of a cultural exchange between these groups (Metdepenninghen 1997). This exchange reflects a deeper interaction that involved not just warfare, but also trade, diplomacy, and the transfer of artistic and symbolic ideas. This circumstance is also reflected in the hoard of Yeghegnadzor, where, alongside Urartian materials or those from the same period, materials of Scythian origin coexist, such as, for example, a trilobate arrowhead.

A Urartian seal? Concluding remarks on Urartian economy

The Yeghegnadzor Hoard seal is a valuable find, as it provides a series of reflections not only on the object itself, but also on its context of discovery. As already stated in this text, the deposition of the seal can be interpreted as a common practice of associating seals, likely belonging to the owner of the deposited materials, within hoards during the Urartian or immediately post-Urartian periods. Chronologically, the seal has been dated to the 8th century BCE (Ayvazian 2006, 881), or to a broader period between the 8th and 6th centuries BCE (Yesayan, Xnkikyan 1990, 44). Given the nature and variety of the hoard's materials, a 7^{th}–6^{th} century BCE dating seems more plausible (Dan et al. 2025). The Yeghegnadzor seal also prompts a broader reflection on seals during the Urartian period. The general trend is to label all seals found in Urartian archaeological contexts with the general and misleading term "Urartian seals." This terminology seems to suggest that all these seals, which are highly varied in terms of morphology and decorative elements, should be considered representative of the Urartian royal culture. This assumption is reinforced by the common belief that the economic management of Urartu was entirely in the hands of the state and, as a direct consequence, seals should have been produced by the royal palace. However, the situation is much more complex than

it has been described so far. The seals suggest that a wealthier segment of the population, who evidently owned land and livestock, interacted with the Urartian royal palaces using their own seals. Therefore, we can divide the production of Urartian seals into at least two major groups: palace seals, used by high-ranking officials or even personally owned by the king, characterized by specific iconography and often featuring short inscriptions, sometimes abbreviated (Dan, Bonfanti 2023); and "common" seals, which include the Yeghegnadzor seal. These common seals were used by local elites operating within the Urartian state, though we do not know whether they had any significant degree of autonomy. Seals, used by local communities at least since the Bronze Age, during the Urartian period, present iconographic motifs influenced by palace art and iconography, but they are clearly distinguishable from those of the palace. The process of iconographic assimilation of elements we might define as Assyro-Urartian, which also concerns the local production of seals, is comparable to the production of bronze belts in the Armenian Highlands (Dan, Bonfanti 2022). These are classes of materials already attested in pre-Urartian times and characterized by iconographic motifs, which, during the Urartian period, were reinterpreted in iconographic terms and adapted to the tastes of the time, the result of deep and prolonged processes of Assyrianization in those territories. In this sense, the Yeghegnadzor seal is a crucial element in supporting the existence of a dual economic component in the territories controlled by Urartu: both a royal and a more locally-oriented component. The seal features morphologies and decorative elements related to types attested in the Urartian period, but the presence of a pseudo inscription undoubtedly makes it the result of a process of imitation of royal stylistic elements, in this case embodied by the epigraphic aspect. Furthermore, the study of seals like the Yeghegnadzor example contributes to a broader understanding of the role of symbolism in the Urartian economy. Seals were not merely administrative tools; they were also symbols of power, identity, and authority. The adoption of royal motifs in local seals reflects the intertwining of local and royal interests, highlighting the dynamic and multifaceted nature of the Urartian economy. The Yeghegnadzor seal is not just a simple artefact: it is a key to understanding the complexity of the Urartian economy. By examining such items, we gain a clearer picture of how different sectors of society interacted with the state and how economic practices were negotiated between the centre and the periphery, underscoring the importance of state authority and local autonomy in shaping the economic landscape of Urartu.

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Աննաարիտա Ս. Բոնֆանտի

Միջերկրածովյան և Արևելքի երկրների ուսումնասիրության միջազգային ասոցիացիա
Հին աշխարհի ուսումնասիրությունների ինստիտուտ / Նյու Յորքի համալսարան

Ռոբերտո Դան

Միջերկրածովյան և Արևելքի երկրների ուսումնասիրության միջազգային ասոցիացիա
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ՀԵՂԻՆԱԿՈՒԹՅՈՒՆ ԳՐԻ ՄԻՋՈՑՈՎ. ՆԿԱՏԱՌՈՒՄՆԵՐ ԵՂԵԳՆԱՁՈՐԻ ԳԱՆՁԱՐԱՆԻ ԿՆԻՔԻ ՎԵՐԱԲԵՐՅԱԼ

Հիմնաբառեր. Ուրարտու, Եղեգնաձորի գանձարան, կեղծ-գրություն, սեպագիր, երկաթի դար, Հայաստան

Այս հոդվածը ուսումնասիրում է Եղեգնաձորի գանձարանում հայտնաբերված սարդիոնե կնիքը: Գանձարանը երկաթե դարի հավաքածու է՝ բաղկացած հիմնականում մետաղյա առարկաներից, որոնք հայտնաբերվել են 1989 թ. Հայաստանի Եղեգնաձոր քաղաքում:

Նախորդ գիտական ուսումնասիրությունները հիմնականում կենտրոնացել են գանձարանի բրոնզե և երկաթե առարկաների վրա, սակայն կնիքի առկայությունը կարևոր հարցեր է առաջացնում ուրարտական մշակութային միջավայրում գլիպտիկ արվեստի, գրի և սոցիալական ինքնության դերի վերաբերյալ:

Կնիքը կրում է սեպագիր նշանի նման փորագրված մոտիվ, սակայն ավելի մանրակրկիտ վերլուծությունը ցույց է տալիս, որ այն ավելի շուտ իմիտացիա է, քան գործնական արձանագրություն:

Այս կեղծ-գրության երևույթը արժեքավոր պատկերացում է տալիս տեղական էլիտաների շրջանում սեպագրի ընկալման մասին՝ որպես հեղինակության խորհրդանիշ ուրարտական իշխանության ներքո:

Եղեգնաձորի կնիքը տեղադրելով ուրարտական էպիգրաֆիկայի, կնիքների արտադրության և թագավորական պատկերագրության յուրացման ավելի լայն քննարկումների համատեքստում, այս հոդվածը ուսումնասիրում է, թե ինչպես է գիրը որպես խորհրդանիշ արդյունավետորեն ծառայել թագավորական ընտանիքին չպատկանող անձանց:

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АВТОРИТЕТ ЧЕРЕЗ ПИСЬМЕНА. СООБРАЖЕНИЯ ПО ПОВОДУ ПЕЧАТИ КАЗНАЧЕЙСТВА ЕХЕГНАДЗОРА

Ключевые слова. Урарту, сокровищница Ехегнадзора, фальшивые письмена, клинопись, Железный век, Армения

В данной статье рассматривается сардионовая печать, найденная в сокровищнице Ехегнадзора. Сокровищница представляет собой коллекцию железного века, состоящую в основном из металлических предметов, обнаруженных в 1989 году. В городе Ехегнадзор, Армения. Предыдущие научные исследования были сосредоточены в основном на бронзовых и железных предметах из сокровищницы, но наличие печати поднимает важные вопросы о роли глиптического искусства, письменности и социальной идентичности в урартской культурной среде. На печати выгравирован мотив, похожий на клинописный знак, но более тщательный анализ показывает, что это скорее имитация, чем практическая запись. Это явление псевдописи дает ценную информацию о восприятии клинописи местными элитами как символа авторитета при урартской власти. Помещая печать Ехегнадзора в контекст более широких дискуссий об урартской эпиграфике, изготовлении печатей и овладении королевской иконографией, в этой статье исследуется, как письменность эффективно служила символом для лиц, не принадлежащих к королевской семье.