

# ARMENIAN MEDIEVAL WINEPRESSES AND THE TRADITION OF WINEMAKING

## ՀԱՅԿԱԿԱՆ ՄԻՋՆԱԴԱՐՅԱՆ ՀՆՁԱՆՆԵՐՆ ՈՒ ԳԻՆԵԳՈՐԾԱԿԱՆ ԱՎԱՆԴՈՒՅԹԸ

## СРЕДНЕВЕКОВАЯ АРМЯНСКАЯ ДАВИЛЬНЯ И ВИНОДЕЛЬЧЕСКАЯ ТРАДИЦИЯ

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**Abstract** – Armenia is one of the oldest centers of grape domestication and wine production. The winepress discovered in Areni-1 cave in Vayots Dzor region is the oldest in the world, testifying to the 6,000-year-old tradition of winemaking. Two types of winepresses from different eras have been discovered in all grape-growing zones of Armenia. The first type of production structure is widespread throughout Armenia. Their prototypes date back to the Early Bronze Age and, having undergone certain changes in subsequent centuries, were preserved until the mid of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. All types of black and white wine grapes were processed in these winepresses, and the main components of production were the grape crushing part: the sail (*aragast*), the well (*gub*) and the pit (*hor*). The second type of wine-

presses date back to the 10<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries and were discovered in the north-eastern grape-growing regions of Armenia, near the village of Shnogh in Lori province and in the medieval Igahat archaeological site near the Kobayr monastery complex. They are completely different in structure and technological features from the first type: they have a lime-plastered basin, small grape-crushing platform, press and jugs. In winepresses with a basin, black grapes were processed. The crushed mass remained in the basin until the enzymes contained in the skins passed into the juice. This method was probably related to the local climate and the quality of the grapes: due to the autumn frosts, the ripening of the wine was slow, so to speed up the process, the layer of liquid mass was reduced, as a result, metabolism took place faster. In fact, as early as the 12<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries, winemakers had found this effective method.

*Ամփոփում* – Հայաստանը խաղողի մշակության և գինու արտադրության հնագույն կենտրոններից մեկն է: Վայոց ձորի մարզի Արենի-1 քարանձավում հայտնաբերված հնձանը համարվում է աշխարհում ամենահինը և վկայում է գինեգործության շուրջ 6000-ամյա ավանդույթի մասին: Հայաստանի գինեգործական շրջաններում արձանագրվել է հնձանների երկու տիպ, որոնք վերաբերում են տարբեր պատմական ժամանակաշրջանների: Առաջին տիպի արտադրական կառույցները տարածված են Հայաստանի ամբողջ տարածքում: Դրանցից վաղագույնները վերաբերում են վաղ բրոնզի դարաշրջանին և, հետագա ժամանակներում ենթարկվելով որոշակի փոփոխությունների, օգտագործվել են մինչև XX դարի կեսերը: Այս հնձաններում մշակվել են խաղողի բոլոր տեսակները՝ ինչպես սև, այնպես էլ սպիտակ: Հիմնական արտադրամասերն էին խաղողը ճզմելու հարթակը, գուբը (փոս, ուր հոսում և մասամբ ֆիլտրվում էր խաղողի հյութը) և հիմնական տարան՝ տաքարը, որտեղ հավաքվում էր մաքրված հյութը: Երկրորդ տիպի հնձանները վերաբերում են X–XIV դարերին և հայտնաբերվել են Հայաստանի հյուսիսարևելյան գինեգործական շրջաններում՝ Լոռու մարզի Շնող գյուղի մերձակայքում և Քոբայր վանական համալիրի հարևանությամբ գտնվող Իգահատ միջնադարյան բնակավայրում: Այս հնձանները կառուցվածքային և տեխնոլոգիական առանձնահատկություններով ամբողջովին տարբերվում են առաջին տիպից: Դրանք ունեն կրաշաղախով պատված ավազան, խաղողը ճզմելու փոքր հարթակ, տաքար և կարասներ: Սև խաղողի մշակումը կատարվում էր ավազան ունեցող հնձաններում, որտեղ մանրացված զանգվածը մնում էր այնքան ժամանակ, մինչև խաղողի կեղևում պարունակվող ֆերմենտները անցնեին հյութի մեջ: Այս մեթոդի կիրառումը, հավանաբար, պայմանավորված էր տեղական կլիմայական պայմաններով և խաղողի որակով: Աշնանային ցրտերի պատճառով գինու հասունացման գործընթացը դանդաղ էր ընթանում, և դրա արագացման նպատակով հեղուկ զանգվածի շերտը փոքրացվում էր՝ նպաստելով կենսաքիմիական ռեակցիաների ավելի արագ ընթացքին: Փաստորեն, հայ գինեգործները արդեն XII–XIII դարերում կիրառել են այս արդյունավետ մեթոդը:

*Аннотация* – Армения является одним из древнейших центров окультуривания винограда и производства вина. Давильня, выявленная в пещере Арени-1 в регионе Вайоц дзор, является самой древней в мире и свидетельствует о 6000-летней традиции виноделия. В виноградарских районах Армении обнаружены два типа давилен, относящихся к разным историческим периодам. Первый тип производственных сооружений распространён по всей Армении. Эти конструкции, относящиеся к раннему бронзовому веку, подвергались модификациям в последующие периоды и использовались до середины XX века. На этих давилях перерабатывались все виды винограда – как чёрный, так и

белый. Основными отделами производства были зона дробления винограда, *губ* (яма, куда выливалось и частично фильтровалось виноградное сусло) и основная ёмкость – *такар*, куда сливается чистый сок. Второй тип относится к X–XIV векам и обнаружен в северо-восточных районах Армении, вблизи села Шнох в Лорийской области и рядом с монастырём Кобайр, в средневековом поселении Игаат. Эти давальни полностью отличаются от первого типа по конструкции и технологическим особенностям. Они имеют бассейн, оштукатуренный известковым раствором, небольшую платформу для дробления винограда, *такар* и *карасы*. Чёрный виноград обрабатывали в давальнях с бассейном, измельчённая масса оставалась в бассейне до тех пор, пока содержащиеся в кожуре ферменты перейдут в сусло. Этот метод, вероятно, был связан с местным климатом и качеством винограда. Из-за осенних холодов процесс созревания вина происходил медленно. Для ускорения процесса слой жидкой массы уменьшался, что приводило к более быстрому протеканию биохимических реакций. Фактически, армянскими виноделами уже в XII–XIII веках был открыт этот эффективный метод.

Keywords – culture, grape, wine, winepress, karas.

Հիմնարարներ – մշակույթ, խաղող, գինի, հնձան, կարաս:

Ключевые слова – культура, виноград, вино, давальня, карас.

### Introduction

The favorable climatic conditions of the Armenian Highland and the presence of wild grapevines contributed to the emergence and development of viticulture and winemaking. Wild grapes still grow today in the foothills of the Araks River valley and in the basin of the Debed River in northeastern Armenia (Лисыцина, Прищепенко 1977, 19). After the domestication of the wild forest grape (*Vitis vinifera silvestris*), the grapevine underwent a long process of development. As a result of centuries of selection, about 500 indigenous grape varieties have been obtained, unique to Armenia (Негруль 1938, 585–588; Հարությանի և Վրթ 2005, 14; Арзуманян 1964, 113–152; Арутюнян 2007, 12). The synthesis of archaeological excavation results shows that the Armenian Highland is one of the most ancient centers of grape domestication, the homeland of both grapes and wine, where viticulture and winemaking were already developing in the Neolithic period (Вавилов 1967, 225–247; McGovern et al. 1997, 3–21). This is confirmed by the winepress discovered during excavations of the Areni-1 cave, which is the oldest in the world and attests to a 6,000-year-old winemaking tradition (Barnard et al. 2011, 977–984).

### Archaeological context of winepresses

Rock-cut cultic structures were uncovered in proximity to the wine presses excavated at the archaeological site of Agarak in the Aragatsotn region of Armenia. These findings suggest that, during the Classical period, winemaking was sanctified and predominantly conducted within sanctuaries and temples. This tradition appears to have persisted into the Middle Ages, when Armenian monastic complexes and

churches maintained meticulously tended vineyards alongside substantial, architecturally significant winepresses (Հարությունյան և այլք 2005, 32; Avetisyan 2008, 39–50).

Already during the Urartian period (9th–6th centuries BC), viticulture was one of the most important branches of agricultural production. Excavations at the fortress city of Teishebaini (Karmir Blur) revealed eight wine cellars containing large jars and vessels, with a total capacity of approximately 50,000 decaliters across 480 jars. Producing this volume of wine would have required roughly 350–400 hectares of vineyards (Арутюнян 2007, 22–23). The vineyards of Dalma, which spread around Karmir Blur, covered approximately 700–800 hectares (Հովհաննիսյան և այլք 2017, 47). The significance of this branch of the economy is further evidenced by the fact that the viticultural landscape in the lowland and midland regions of Armenia encompassed the surroundings of villages and cities. One of the most notable features of Armenian cities was the presence of horticultural zones. This was particularly characteristic of the Urartian kingdom and became a key element of Armenian ethnic identity in the Hellenistic period (Манандян 1954, 279–280). Hellenistic cities in Armenia—Van, Yervandakert, Armavir, Artashat, Tigranakert, Dvin, and Vagharshapat—were surrounded by agricultural lands, including vineyards equipped with wine presses. The Greek historian Xenophon (5<sup>th</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC) provided detailed eyewitness accounts of the types of wine, its storage, and its consumption among Armenians, while Strabo described Armenia as "a country rich in gardens and fond of wine" (Քսենոփոն 1970, 88; Ստրաբոն 1940, 13, 55). Ancient wine production facilities have been uncovered in the basements of both residential and palace buildings, including a 3rd-century palace excavated adjacent to the pagan temple of Garni (Առաքելյան 1964, 151–155). Evidence of "wine archaeology" in the Middle Ages is provided by production facilities discovered throughout Armenia; comparable wine presses are present in all traditional Armenian winemaking regions (Fig. 9). Even during the Middle Ages, when Armenians had lost their statehood, grapes and wine retained a central role within the Armenian economic tradition. The exceptional importance of viticulture and winemaking is further underscored by the fact that, by the late 19th century, the Erivan Governorate—then part of the Russian Empire—hosted 1,150 operating wineries in the Yerevan district alone.

### **Types of wine presses (*hənjən*)**

Traditional Armenian winemaking and processing facilities are known by various names, including *hənjən*, *č'araz*, *širaton*, *salk'*, among others. The term *hənjən* is likely derived from the word *hunj* ("berk" harvest) (Ջահուկյան 2010, 464), which generally denotes the "grape harvest" (Նոր բառգիրք հայկազնան լեզուի 1981, 108). Ethnographic sources indicate that, until the mid-19th century, *hənjəns* were typically situated within gardens. They often included a residential area where members of the garden owner's family would reside during the spring and summer months (Տեր-Վարապետյան 2003, 252). To preserve arable land,

wineries were constructed in the portions of the garden less suitable for cultivation. Despite some regional variations in design, the first type of wineries is remarkably consistent across Armenia, reflecting the long-term development of this economic form and, consequently, the emergence of a distinctive national economic and cultural style. In terms of layout, these wineries were largely indistinguishable from other medieval economic buildings, yet they exhibited certain adaptations to local climatic conditions. The typical Armenian winery, found in all winemaking regions, consisted of a production building with a platform for pressing grapes—a wine treading floor (*aragast*). To maintain a stable interior temperature, small, low entrances and the absence of windows were standard features. The buildings had flat earthen roofs, slightly sloped to one side to facilitate water drainage. Traditionally, in accordance with local construction techniques, the walls of the press were sometimes lined with stones up to 1 meter in length and reinforced with earthen mortar. Wall thickness ranged from 1 to 1.5 meters, with a height of 2 to 2.5 meters; the flat roof was supported by pillars. Grape presses located within gardens included openings either in the wall along the wine treading floor or in the roof, through which grapes could be poured into the building (Հոբոսյան և Վլք 2021, 69). Typical examples of medieval wine presses are the production facilities uncovered at two major horticultural centers within Armenian viticultural zones: one near the city of Ashtarak in the Aragatsotn region, and the other in the village of Ashnak. Across an area of approximately 300 hectares surrounding Ashnak, hundreds of wine press ruins dating from the 12th to 14th centuries have been identified, situated within former gardens enclosed by stone walls. These semi-subterranean structures combined production and residential spaces, with the central feature being a well lined with lime-plastered walls, into which grape must drained (Асатрян 2005, 104). In the vicinity of Ashtarak, five wine presses referring to the 10th to 14th centuries were excavated within the grounds of former gardens. One of these buildings had a rectangular plan measuring 11×10 meters. The walls, constructed from large and medium-sized basalt stones, reached a thickness of 1.5 meters. The interior was divided into production and residential areas by a partition 0.5–0.8 meters high. The western, winemaking section was elevated approximately 0.6 meters above the floor. The platform had a slight slope toward the center of the structure (9×3.75 meters), with small channels cut into its surface to regulate the flow of grape must. Both the platform and the adjacent wall were fully plastered with lime mortar (Թումանյան 1993, 140).

Wine, depending on the grape variety, exhibits two primary colors—white and red—as well as numerous intermediate shades, including scarlet, pink-red, light red, yellowish, and orange. The main distinction between white and red wine production lies in the processing: white wine is made only from grape juice (must), whereas red wine is produced by fermenting both the pressed pulp and grape must. Accordingly, across all winemaking regions of Armenia, wine presses from various periods have

been discovered, which, depending on the grape varieties and specific processing techniques, can be classified into two types.

#### 4 Structure of the first type of wine press

The first type of wine press was designed for processing all varieties of red and white grapes and was widespread across all winemaking regions of Armenia. Grapes were crushed, the must was separated, and wine was collected in specialized containers. The main components of this press include the grape-crushing section: the *wine treading floor* (*aṛagast*), the wine vat (*gub*), and the large jar (*tak'ar*) (Fig. 1).

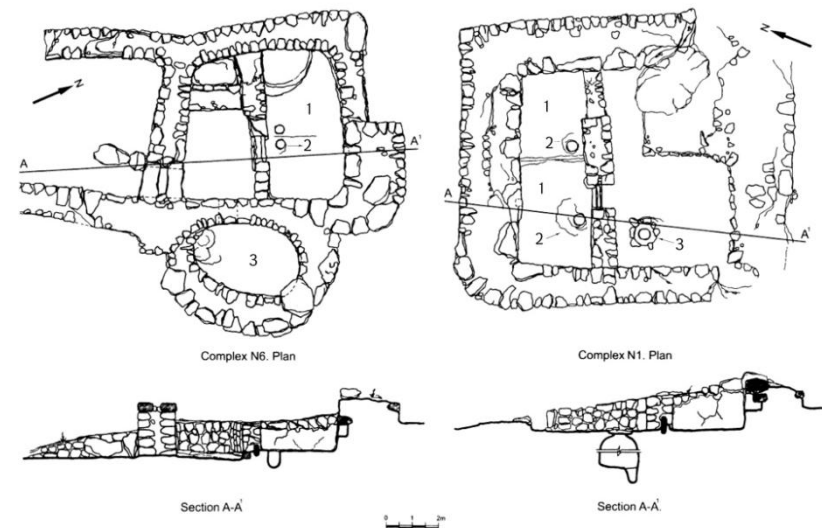


Fig. 1. Aragatsotn, village of Ashnak, 11th–14th cc., plan of medieval winepresses (Harutyunyan S. et al., *Wine in Traditional Armenian Culture*, 2005, p. 29)

#### Wine treading floor (*aṛagast*)

Notably, the Armenian word *aṛagast* is associated with weddings (*amunakan aṛagast*, "wedding parus"), navigation (*navi aṛagast*, "sail must"), and winemaking, where men would tread grapes barefoot (Տեր-Մանուէլեան 1911, 14). According to the rules of the Armenian Apostolic Church, during the baptism of children, boys' feet and girls' hands were anointed with myrrh, thereby sanctifying both winemaking and bread baking (Harutyunyan et al. 2005, 97). The wine treading floor consisted of a stone vault with low walls, elevated above the floor of the building and slightly sloped. The grape must flowed through a clay pipe or channel and filled a vat, and from there into the large jars (*karas*) or special pits (*tak'ar*) (Fig. 1–1). To prevent the loss of grape must during crushing, the walls and floor of the wine press were coated with a lime plaster. Archaeological and ethnographic studies indicate that the lime plaster was periodically renewed every 15–20 years, with a new

layer 1.5–2 cm thick applied over the old one. Typically, the old layer was not removed but served as a foundation for the new coating.

In the forested regions of Armenia, such as Tavush and Lori, grapes were crushed in vats measuring 3–6 meters in length, hewn from a single log and known in Armenian as *nav*, *nov*, or *gur*. Grape must was drained through a spigot located at the bottom into a *tak'ar* or *karas*.

*Wine vat (gub)* – The *gub* was a circular, lime-coated pit 0.7–1.0 meters deep with a capacity of 50–100 liters, located at the edge of the platform in its lowest section, where the pressed grape juice flowed by gravity. Here, solid particles settled, while the juice was filtered from the upper layers and drained into a *tak'ar* or *karas*. At the bottom of the vat, a small pit called a *got* was made to collect sediment (Մալխասեանց 1944, 118) (Fig. 1–2).

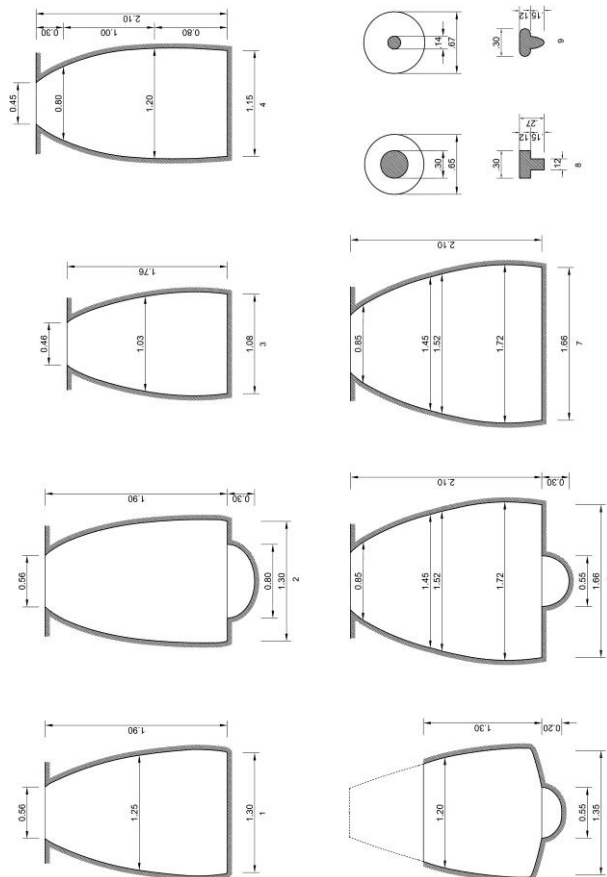


Fig. 2. Sections of medieval winepress *tak'ars*, Garni (B. Arakelyan, G. Karakhanyan, 1962, reconstruction by S. Aghayan) (Hovhannisyan S. et al., *The Armenian Culture of Grapes and Wine*, Yerevan, 2021, p. 290)

*Plastered underground pit (tak'ar)* – A distinctive element of the Armenian wine production complex is the pit used for storing filtered wine, known in Armenian as *tak'ar*. Such pits were discovered in the ruins of Zvartnots, one of which had a capacity of about 5,500 liters (Առաքելյան 1964, 151–155). In the northeastern corner of the residential part of the first winepress at Ashnak (7.75×4.45 m), a 3 m deep plastered pit measuring 0.5 m in mouth diameter and a capacity of about 4,000–5,000 liters was uncovered (Асатрян 2005, 103–104) (рис. 1–3, 2). Part of the residential-production complexes of the 12th–14th centuries excavated on the territory of the Garni fortress and village were winepresses. The presence of two *tak'ars* and 3–8 *karases* within a single residential complex indicates the commercial character of viticulture (Պենոսյան 1988, 107–108).

Depending on the terrain and the size of the building, *tak'ars* were constructed either inside or outside the winepress. They were dug into the ground, sometimes into rocky surfaces, fitting into natural fissures between stones, which often resulted in irregular shapes. The *tak'ar* of Zvartnots had a rectangular form, which in later centuries gradually gave way to a circular one. Evidently, through long experience people had realized that circular constructions were stronger and more resistant to earthquakes, which are characteristic of the Armenian Highlands. Medieval *tak'ars* had the shape of a *karas* with a wide mouth up to 0.5 m in diameter and a body gradually widening towards the center, where the width could reach two meters or more. Their capacity ranged from several hundred to 5,000 liters. The *tak'ar* of large wine-making establishments had broad bases, the diameter of which reached 3 m. Such winepresses also contained a depression for the settling of grape juice. This tradition continued later, and by the late 19th century winepresses were equipped with *tak'ars* of 50–300 buckets in capacity (one bucket = 12 liters), from which the wine was transferred into *karases*. The use of *tak'ars* persisted until the 1930s. The walls of the pits were lined with small stones and plastered with lime mortar. The use of small stones helped avoid large flat surfaces and ensured better adhesion of the plaster. Egg white was commonly added to the mortar to increase its strength. In the construction of large pits, longitudinal stones were laid into the walls at intervals of about one step; the protruding parts of these stones formed a stepped ledge that allowed people to descend into the pit for cleaning and repairs (Fig. 3). The advantages of *tak'ar* pits lay not only in their large capacity but also in the fact that, under stable temperature conditions, the grape must matured in them faster and better than in small jars. The *tak'ar* was not filled completely; to enrich the wine with aroma and color, crushed black grapes were added and left to ferment together with the must (Մելիք-Շահնազարեանց 1885, 18–19). In the wine cellars of production complexes, *tak'ars* were also constructed for wine storage. This was due to the risk of accidents: sometimes *karases* installed along the walls could burst under the pressure of fermenting wine. This phenomenon was so well known that a proverb

even stated: "Strong wine will split its own *karas*". In such cases, the contents of the *karas* drained into the *tak'ar* through small channels cut into the plastered floor.



Fig. 3. Kotayk, village of Ptghni, ruined winepress *tak'ar*. Photo by B. Gasparyan

Traditionally, the crushed mass of black grapes and the must were left in the *tak'ar* without filling it completely, leaving a free space above where a horizontal wooden partition was placed. A weight was then laid on top of this partition, pressing the grape mass so that it remained immersed in the must (Մելիք-Շահնազարեանց 1885, 18–19; Խալիփախյան 1961, 8, 18–19, 31). The finished wine was stored in *karases* buried in the ground or placed above ground along the cellar walls, their mouths sealed with stone lids and then plastered with clay.

### Structure of the Second Type of Winepress

The second type of medieval winepress is characteristic only of the northeastern winemaking zone of Armenia. Complexes of this type, dating to the 12th–13th centuries, were uncovered during archaeological excavations in the vicinity of the village of Shnokh in the Lori region, as well as near the monastic complex of Kobayr. These installations differ entirely in construction and technological features from the first type of winepress (Հոբոսյան, Սարատիկյան 2019, 256–267) (Fig. 4, 5, 8). They consist of a lime-plastered basin, a small platform for grape treading, a *tak'ar*, and *karases*.



Fig. 4. Aygehat, winepress. Photo by S. Aghayan

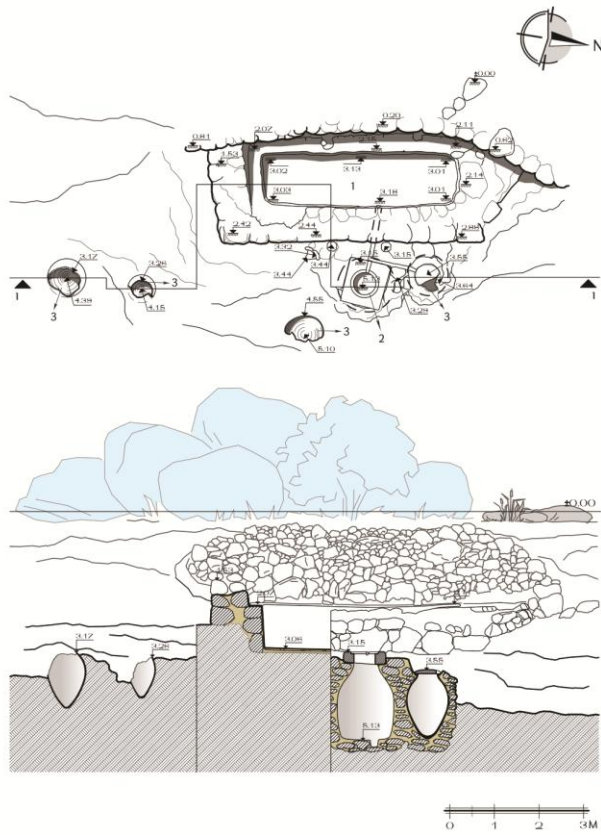


Fig. 5. Aygehat, winepress. Drawing by A. Hakhverdyan

*Basin.* The basin of the first winepress excavated at Shnokh measured 4.90×1.35×1.18 m. Its walls, 0.8–1.0 m thick and built with the use of lime mortar, were faced with medium-sized fragments of grey granite and andesite, while the floor and walls were plastered on the inside with lime mortar. Beneath the floor a clay pipe was found, through which the must drained from the basin. Grapes were crushed both directly inside the basin and on a small limestone platform at its western edge (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Lori, Shnogh village, winepress. Photo by S. Hobosyan



Fig. 7. Lori, Shnogh village, lid of winepress *tak'ar*. Photo by S. Hobosyan

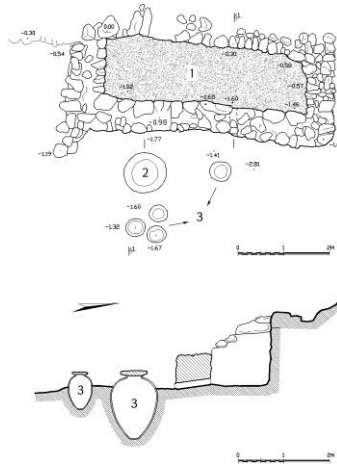


Fig. 8. Lori, Shnogh village, winepress. Drawing by L. Ter-Minasyan

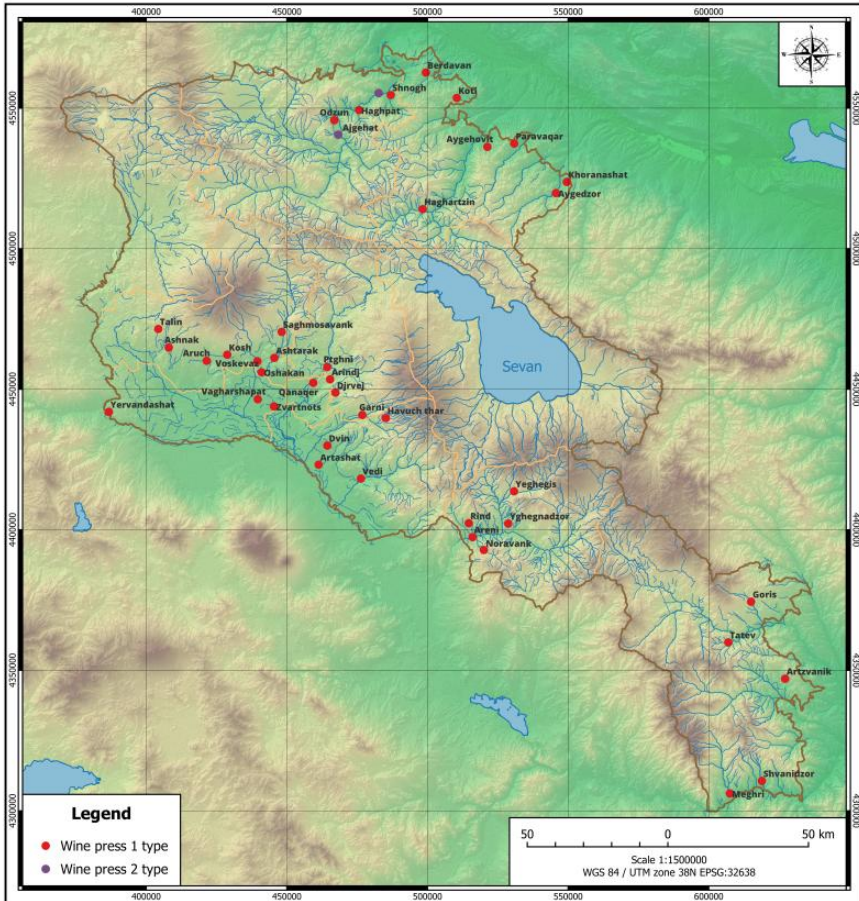


Fig. 9. Republic of Armenia, distribution of wine presses. Map by R. Gabrielyan

**Tak'ar.** Along the eastern wall of the basin, a *tak'ar* was uncovered, built of small stones set in lime mortar. It was covered with a round andesite lid (Fig. 7). The mouth of the *tak'ar* measured 0.5 m in diameter, its depth was 1.42 m, and its capacity was about 500 liters. Since the basin itself had a volume of approximately 6.5 cubic meters, while only one *tak'ar* with a capacity of 500 liters was associated with it, the wine was probably stored in a nearby cellar. Four out of five winepress houses excavated in this area belong to this type of production facility. Near the Kobayr monastery, on the left bank of the Debed River—where vineyards once covered about 20 hectares—the remains of winepresses and dwellings built of large basalt fragments are still visible (Fig. 116). The must from the excavated basin of the winepress (4.20×1.15×0.95 m) flowed through a pipe and channels cut into a lime slab into a *tak'ar* and five *karases* placed nearby (Հոբոսյան, Սարառիկյան 2019, 260). In such winepresses, black grape varieties were evidently processed, with the crushed grape mass left in the basin so that enzymes from the grape skins could infuse the juice (Հոբոսյան 2011, 199–211). The history of such production facilities extends over about seven centuries, meaning that this winemaking method was in use for at least that long. In both traditional and modern winemaking technologies, a certain amount of crushed grape mass is added to the clarified grape must, separated in different containers. The size of the winepress was determined by the grape variety and by the desired taste and color of the wine. This type of winepress was probably also linked to the quality of the grapes. The Kobayr vineyards were situated on an east-facing slope, which received direct sunlight only from morning until noon. The basalt walls of the garden terraces, which absorbed solar heat, may also have served as an additional source of warmth for grape ripening. This method of winemaking is particularly noteworthy, since in a relatively large basin with an almost one-meter layer of crushed grape mass, biochemical processes during fermentation could proceed more rapidly. The production facility evidently had a wooden roof and modular walls that could be extended as the cold intensified. The presence of a hearth in the production unit of the Aygehat winepress suggests that the building was heated to accelerate the fermentation of wine. Winepresses with basins were evidently used for processing black grape varieties. In Lori, especially after the autumn harvest, fermentation in vats several meters deep proceeded more slowly due to cold weather. There were several reasons for this. First, the annual sum of active temperatures in the northeastern viticultural zone is significantly lower—3,083–3,538°—than in the Ararat Valley, where it reaches 4,000–4,200° (Արշումյան 1964, 116–145). Given this difference, the grape varieties cultivated in these areas must also have been different.

### **Winery production in Armenia**

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, due to changes in wine production volumes and agricultural practices, large community wineries began to appear, eventually transforming into factories. In 1887, N. Tairyan established the first industrial

plant for the production of fruit vodka within the territory of the Yerevan Fortress, marking the beginning of Armenian cognac production. Shortly thereafter, K. Afrikyan (1892), G. Gyozyan (1893), D. Sarajev (1894), and others founded their own enterprises. These facilities were later acquired by the Russian industrialist N. Shustov, a leading figure in the field, who expanded production to include Sherry, Port, Madeira, Muscat, and other high-quality fortified and dessert wines (Հովհաննիսյան և այլք 2017, 205). Today, winemaking remains one of the most significant sectors of the Armenian economy. The country hosts more than 160 enterprises, equipped with modern technological infrastructure and highly competitive in the global market. Some companies successfully combine contemporary technologies with traditional practices, producing wines of exceptional quality.

### Conclusions

Archaeological and ethnographic evidence demonstrates that winemaking is a cornerstone of Armenia's economic and cultural identity. The abundance of medieval wine presses highlights the long-standing importance of viticulture and winemaking traditions. Traditional Armenian wine presses embody the continuity of viticulture practices. Their architectural and technological features were well adapted to the natural and climatic conditions of the region. Traditional Armenian cellars ensured stable temperatures for wine storage, preserving quality and supporting long-term maturation. Even today, winemaking continues at the household level using folk methods. Homemade wine is especially valued during family celebrations. In regions such as Vayots Dzor, Aragatsotn, Tavush, Syunik, and others, domestic wine production persists in a competitive environment, where traditional skills are harmonized with modern technologies.

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