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FINDS OF THE CLASSICAL PERIOD AT OGLANKALA

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ABSTRACT

Studies show that the settlement of Oglankala, located in the north-east of the Sharur region of Azerbaijan, was inhabited in different periods of history. The strata of this settlement reflect various periods of the Iron Age. Despite the fact that research on the territory of Nakhchivan revealed finds relating to various periods of the Iron Age, however, the classical period has been studied very little. In this regard, architectural remains and other finds of the classical period, revealed by excavations of the Oglankala settlement, are of importance. Archaeological excavations carried out by the Azerbaijan-USA joint expedition in 2008-2011 showed that the citadel and its environs were inhabited in the Oglankala settlement in the classical period. The finds found in Oglankala show that a center for local authority was built here, and after the campaign of the Alexander Great, great construction work was carried out on the settlement. During the excavations, remains of architectural remains, and especially the remains of a columned hall and pottery belonging to various stages of the classical period, were revealed. Cultural strata of Oglankala dating back to the 4th-1st centuries BC are important for studying the history of the Middle East, the South Caucasus, including Nakhchivan.

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Introduction.

Oglankala settlement (Pic. 1) is located on the Karatepe mountain in the north-east of Oglankala village of Şerur district (Бахшалиев, 1994, vol. 106-120; Ristvet et al 2012, p.321-362). A significant part of the findings unearthed during the research conducted in Oglankala, which became one of the largest castle-type settlements of the Southern Caucasus in the Iron Age, belong to the Classical Period. During the research conducted in 2008-2011, it became clear that the Oglankala citadel and the area surrounding the citadel were settled in the Classical Period. The Classical Period in Oglankala is defined as the III Period and the II Period.

Discussion. Oglankala's Iron Age citadel was damaged and abandoned in the 7th century BC. C 14 analysis of carbon samples taken from the foundations of the walls shows that the citadel was relocated in 400-250 BC. During this period, people who settled in the castle tried to repair the large reception hall from the Iron Age. The hall of the III Period repeated the same planned architecture of the Middle Iron Age. Unlike the previous phase, the architecture of the III Period was built using small-sized, roughly smoothed stone blocks. However, in addition to the new construction, the walls from the Middle Iron Age in the north, south and east parts of the hall were used and brickwork was added to these walls.



Pic. 1. Oglangala settlement.

The reception hall of the III Period consists of small-sized rooms added to the inner courtyard. The size of the moon is 27 X 33 meters. Small-sized unhewn stones and mud were used as reinforcement in the construction of the rooms, and the passage from the rooms to each other was made. Although the rooms attached to the reception hall are numerous, they are small in size (Pic. 2). The width of the walls varies between 1 meter and 2 meters. Halls with columns from the Achaemenid period are evident from the Near East and the South Caucasus. Oglangala's hall is similar in size to the Achaemenid halls of Erebuni (29 x 33 m) and Altıntepe (44.0 x 25.3 m). Altıntepe and Erebuni most likely became satrapy centers (Özgüç, 1966; Ter-Martirossov, Felix, 2001, p. 155-164; Summers, 1993, p. 85-108). However, Oglangala hall is smaller than Altıntepe and Erebuni halls and may belong to the local government.

Archaeological research has determined that the cultural ruins of the IV Period were destroyed during the construction of the palace building of the III Period, and some walls were built directly on the cultural layer of the IV Period. Although the architecture of this period differed from the previous period with its slightly rougher construction, it had a very beautiful appearance. During the research, it became clear that some parts of the walls were built from hewn stones. While the local marble stone of Oglangala was generally given importance in the construction of the palace, carved travertine stones brought from outside were also used in some parts of the walls. Such white-coloured quarries are rare in Nakhchivan.



Pic 2. Plan of the columned hall (Robert Bryant).

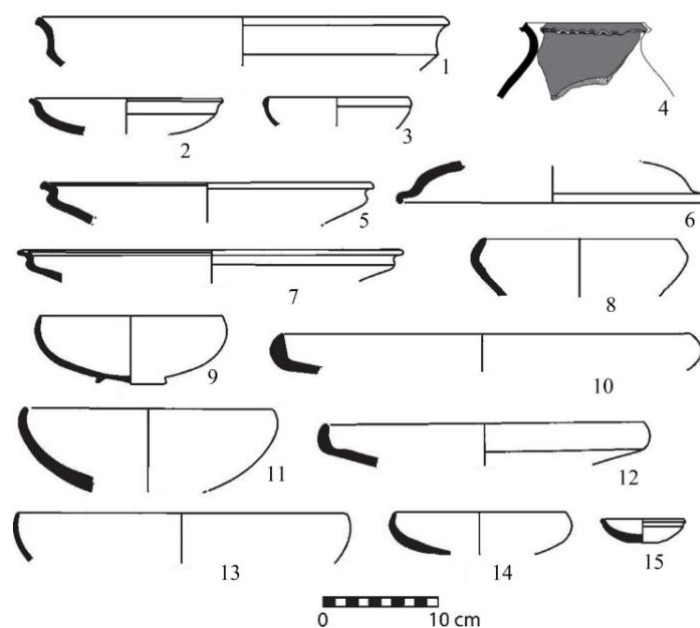
Column bases, column bodies and rectangular stone pillows in this hall indicate that efforts were made to build the hall with columns in the III Period (Pic. 3). The two column bases, which can be dated to the IV-III centuries BC, have good workmanship and a beautiful decorative appearance. It is very difficult to find similar column bases. However, these bases can be compared with the examples found during the excavations of Garajemirli, Saritepe, Qumbati and Bencamin (Babaev, Gagoshidze, Knauss, 2007, p. 31-45; Knauss, 2005, p. 197-220). However, these rules are not sufficient for the construction of Apadanas, which are characteristic of the Achaemenid period. Column elements, especially similar ones to uncarved column bodies, are found in the II century contexts of the Seleucids in Iran (Nahavend) and Afghanistan (Greece-Bactria, Lunar-Xenum) (Guillaume, 1983; Rahbar, Alibaigi, 2009, p. 322). Moreover, even though the colonnades covered the entire area of the palace building, the columns were not completed. In this respect, researchers have come to the conclusion that the hall with columns was not completed. Analysis of carbon samples taken from the ash deposits under the walls and columns of the III Period allows dating these construction activities to the IV-III centuries BC. Most likely, the construction of the columned hall started in the IV-III centuries BC, but this construction was left unfinished due to unknown events, and it was decided to rebuild the columned hall in the II century BC. However, architectural ruins from this period were not recovered in a healthy way in the citadel. The numerous pits found in the citadel show that there was life and construction during this period. In addition, the discovery of architectural ruins from the II Period outside the citadel during the excavations carried out in 2019 proves this. Considering the Postahamenite contexts, the column bodies were placed on top of each other, and the upper part of the columns were completed with capitals. However, the fact that the column elements were not fully recovered shows that wooden and adobe columns placed on stone bases were also used in Ahemenite centers.



Pic 3. Oglangala's columned hall (Photo by Veli Bahshaliyev, Lauren Ristvet).

The columned hall of Oglangala has different features from Garajemilli, Gumbati and Benjamin, where the Achaemenid people lived in the South Caucasus. We can say that the columned hall of Oglangala became the symbol of the local power and was built in the local style. Most likely, the locals' aim to build a local administrative center was not successful and the project was left unfinished. The numerous arrowheads and slingstones found in the hall show that the castle was subjected to strong pressure. The influence of the Achaemenid culture on the Caucasus and the Near East during the Postachamenite period is evident from the excavations of Kolxida in Georgia (Lordkipanidze, 2000, p. 3-20).

Most of the finds recovered during the research conducted in Oglangala consist of pottery. There are very few similar ceramics from the III Period. Although contexts from this period are well dated by carbon analysis, pottery from the Achaemenid period is few in number and generally dates back to the last 50 years of the Achaemenid State. Pottery from this period was made of gilt with fine sand and fired in various shades of red. Some pottery pieces were coated with red color from the outside and some from the outside and inside, and were thoroughly burnished. This type of pottery was also produced in the Çeşme II Period. However, some pottery sherds date back to the last period of the Achaemenid existence. Bowls with a smooth profile from this period were widely used from Pakistan, which was included within the borders of the Achaemenid empire, to Eastern Anatolia. The rim of some bowls is turned inward, while others are turned outward. The jugs found among the pottery have handles that connect to the body from the rim. Some zoomorphic handled jugs were considered as imported goods (Gopnik, Rothman, 2011, fig.7.56-7.57). Triangular rimmed jugs and painted pottery examples are evident from the Late Iron Age settlements of Iran and the Southern Caucasus. This type of ceramics was used in the II Period as well as the III Period (Figure 4). Painted pottery was recovered from certain contexts of buildings belonging to Period III and Period II in the citadel. This type of pottery is also frequently encountered among the surface finds.



Pic 4. Classical period pottery of Oglangala (Veli Bahshaliyev, Lauren Ristvet).

Even though it is possible to examine certain stratigraphic contexts of the II Period (b.c. 200 - c.e. 100) in terms of typology, especially the pottery recovered from the pits and structures in the citadel, the use of pots from the previous period and their lack of protection make our research difficult. The pottery recovered from the kitchen pits of the II Period in the Citadel was not suitable for dating because it was used for a long time. On the other hand, the use of pottery forms in both periods creates difficulties for dating. However, it was possible to determine some forms belonging to the last settlement period of Oglangala. We can say that the fragments of ring-based bowls covered with red and pink colors were most likely used more extensively in the II Period (Pic. 4, 9). The ring-bottomed bottoms of these bowls are not characteristic of the settlements of Parfiya and Iranian Azerbaijan. However, some examples are evident from Pasargat, other settlements in Iran and the layers of Artashat (Levine, 1978, fig.109: 5–15; Хачатрян, 1981, pl. 13) belonging to this period. Bowls with everted rims and groove decoration are among the characteristic vessels of this period (Pic. 4, 5, 7). These types of examples, which are rarely found among surface finds, can be dated to Period II. Storage jars with rims turned outwards are evident from the transition layers from the Achaemenid period to the Parthia period in Southwest and Western Iran. These types of jars are characteristic of the Oglangala II Period (Pic. 4, 4).

Conclusion. The findings uncovered in Oglangala show that a center belonging to the local authority was built here and that there was a structure in this region after the march of Alexander of Macedon. During the excavations, architectural remains, especially the ruins of the columned hall, and pottery from various phases of the Classical Period were discovered. The layers of Oglangala, dating back to the IV-I centuries BC, shed light on the history of the Near East, the South Caucasus, and the ordinary Nakhchivan Region of this period.

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