

NEW FOUNDATIONS IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST:
PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF FIELDWORK AT URARTIAN SITES
IN THE LAKE VAN BASIN, EASTERN TURKEY.

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1. Introduction:

Landscapes and the historical problem concerning new urban foundations

Hannah Arendt wrote in her book *Human Condition*, that if the thinker wants the world to know “the content” of his thoughts, he must first stop thinking and remember his thoughts. “Remembering prepares the intangible for its eventual materialization.”¹ So I want thank you to all, those who have encouraged me to prepare this talk, I tried my best to stop thinking and to remember.

Inquiries of human landscapes, has become one of the dominant discourses in archaeology, architectural history and other disciplines that have come to be interested in the production of space, its processes of transformation, and its mental constructs in the social consciousness of human societies. Landscapes are now extensively discussed not only in terms of the physical human interventions to the environment and the material assemblage that is continuously deposited *in it* throughout history; but also with reference to the structure of social practices that lends that very spatial structure its meaning and coherence. In a recent article on Urartian Transcaucasia, Adam Smith suggested that “while terms such as region, area, and site generally denote purely physical dimensions of

¹ Hannah Arendt, *The human condition*, Chicago 1958: 90.

space, landscape refers less to a geometrically contiguous zone than to a socially constituted set of interlinked places”².

In the context of Ancient Near Eastern history however, mostly due to the nature of our evidence and current state of discourse, production of landscapes is attributed to political authority. Near Eastern landscapes are understood to be ordered, transformed, or ideologically constructed and imposed upon populations by the imperial practices of the ruling elite. Such creation of an intended spatial order was either through new building projects [Göllüdağ] or demarcations of the territory in various ways like erecting monuments in the strategic locations in the countryside [Ivriz], forced movement of populations across the territory [*forced migration depicted in Sennacherib-Assurbanipal reliefs*], opening new areas to cultivation by supplying irrigation [*Sennacherib’s aqueduct at Jerwan*]. The society at large is rarely credited for such achievements.

Contrary to the ideological claims of the triumphant kings, apparently what was intended to be ruled by the most prominent “territorial” empires was not the actual physical space of conquered landscapes, but actually the network of communications inherent in them; and the movement of resources through this network, just like what P. Horden and N. Purcell has recently suggested for the maritime space of the Mediterranean world³. The territorial expansion of a particular polity, I believe could be understood in a way only through exploring the complex patterns of the movement of peoples and things across the landscape.

This is obviously one important component of the power dynamics exercised on human landscapes: the projects for the creation of *new “definite places”* of commercial exchange and social interaction; *new regional centers* to take part in the interregional network of communications. Such initiative then forms *new poles* to attract the productive energies of craft groups and non-settled communities of the countryside.

² Adam T. Smith; “The making of an Urartian landscape in Southern Transcaucasia: A study of political architectonics” *AJA* 103 (1999) 45-71; cf. p. 45-6.

³ Peregrine Horden and Nicholas Purcell; *The corrupting sea: A study of the Mediterranean history*, Blackwell: Oxford 2000: 25.

These *new centers*, often become symbolically-charged centers of attention *and* theaters of ideological display through festivals and erection of monuments.

To make the long story short; this outstanding phenomenon of the foundation and refoundation of cities, new urban centers involving massive building projects forms the core of the historical problem that I am trying to address. My dissertation really focuses on the Iron Age societies of the larger geographical zone that encompasses the contemporaneous Assyrian and Urartian Empires, and what is known as the Syro-Hittite sphere of Luwian, Aramean and Phoenician city states. I believe the Assyrians, Urartians and the Syro-Hittites formed some type of *koiné* of material culture and shared among other things, the idea of new foundations, as part of what Fernand Braudel calls the *mentalité*, or the mental-framework of the time period. However, “the region is not the framework of research”, to quote again Braudel, “the framework of research is the *problem*, selected with full independence and responsibility of mind...” as he was describing his mentor Lucien Febvre’s theory of the *histoire probléme*, “the problem-oriented history”⁴. So bearing the weight of this heavy burden of Braudelian responsibility, I ventured to explore this phenomenon, especially flourishing in the last phases of the Late Bronze Age when new imperial foundations as (a) *the displaced royal seat of government* and (b) *newly established cultic center* becomes a widespread practice shared by all major imperial polities like Hittites, Middle Assyrians, Middle Elamites, Egyptians and Kassites. Then the question how such idea is transformed into a frequently used tool in the hands of Assyrian, Urartian and the Syro-Hittite rulers to demarcate and transform the Iron age landscapes will be explored in the core part of the dissertation.

2. Reading a miniature: non-perspectival perspectives on the new foundations

There are various ways to look at the practice of new foundations, some of which I have already mentioned. They may be seen as major centers of ceremonial function, as it was extensively the case for the Late Bronze Age new cities, as I will hypothesize in the

⁴ Fernand Braudel (*Annales*, 1949); quoted in J. H. Hexter, “Fernand Braudel and the *Monde Braudellien...*,” *Journal of Modern History* 44 (1972) 480-539: p. 510.

dissertation, especially for the Upper City at Imperial Hittite Hattuša in the Central Anatolian plateau; the Middle Elamite Untaş-Napiriša's city at modern Choga Zanbil or Middle Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I's Kar Tukulti Ninurta at Tulul ul Aqar. The cultic topography of the imperial hinterland is introduced a central domain at the new cultic center, urban festivals that encompassed variety of population groups, housing several vernacular cults.

Or the new cities can be studied as ideological constructs of the ruling class, especially through the monumental inscriptions, building accounts and royal annals, which do record in great detail various phases, conditions and aspects of the foundation. The general literary *topos* of these accounts is shared especially in the Assyrian, Urartian and Luwian inscriptions, where:

- (a) the king takes over an uncultivated, untouched landscape, a wilderness; or a former settlement which is in ruins and state of dilapidation;
- (b) builds it with corvée labour and precious building materials most of which he had attained from conquered lands; builds it complete with its temples, palace and the fortifications; and
- (c) cultivates the surrounding landscape by initiating massive irrigation projects and plantation of vineyards and orchards; and
- (d) settles the deported populations *in it*; and
- (e) celebrates it with a feast for all.

Obviously, a new foundation, in whatever period of history it happened to be, is a risky venture on the behalf of the idealist king who is full of positivist thoughts about altering landscapes with concerns of political legitimacy. As Paul Wheatley has recently pointed out for the early Islamic new foundations of the same geography: "A princely foundation, once established, inevitably developed its own evolutionary dynamic, which often diverged markedly from it's founder's intent... a 'created' city was likely to lose the ideological imprint of its founder relatively quickly and ultimately become indistinguishable from a spontaneously generated city"⁵. In the opposite case, several such cities are destined to fail; and get abandoned immediately after the political pressure that

⁵ Paul Wheatley; *The places where men pray together: Cities in Islamic lands, seventh through tenth centuries*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2001: p. 40.

holds its very existence disappears. Late Assyrian king Sargon II's new royal foundation at Khorsabad, named *Dur Šarrukīn* was apparently never completed and it was abandoned by his heir Sennacherib after the king's death. The Hittite king Muwatalli II's brilliant idea of moving the Hittite capital from Hattuša away from the activities of the evil Kaška peoples to a new royal city in the Lower Land called Tarhuntašša, was also apparently unsuccessful and not appreciated. One possible way out of this was perhaps allowing a social initiation, in which all parties that take part in the festivity celebrates the occasion in such a way that a collective memory of the social event may be formed and operated for the benefit of territorial unity.

On opposite end, considering the consequences of a particular urban establishment on the microecology, an environmental perspective is also quite relevant; the study of the aftermath of the foundation in and various aspects of the transformation of a particular landscape, its immediate hinterland. One can mention Adam Smith's dissertation here in which he studied the transformation of the countryside in the Ararat and Shirak plains of Southern Transcaucasus in the aftermath of Urartian new foundations⁶. A current survey project is in the Upper Tigris area, run by Bradley Parker in the hinterland of the Assyrian provincial center Tušan-Ziyarettepe; and their preliminary conclusions suggest an agricultural colonization with the foundation of Tušan, and a complex set of relations between the colonizer Assyrians, forced colonists and the local populations⁷.

3. Building campaign as celebration; a milieu for craft production and the formation of a tectonic culture

⁶ Adam T. Smith; *Imperial archipelago: The making of an Urartian landscape in Southern Transcaucasia*, unpubl. diss. University of Arizona 1996.

⁷ cf. Bradley J. Parker, *The mechanics of empire: The Northern frontier of Assyria as a case study In Imperial dynamics*, The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Helsinki; forthcoming (2001?). Also cf. <http://www.hum.utah.edu/history/utarp>; where one can download his recent article "The colonizer, the colonized... and the colonists: Empire and settlement on Assyria's Anatolian frontier" (March 2001); as well as reports of the Upper Tigris Archaeological Regional Survey Project reports. The excavation reports of Ziyarettepe-Tušan appeared in *Anatolica* 1998-1999.

Apart from a synthesis of all these avenues of discourse, my interests lay in a slightly different standpoint, perhaps to suggest a slightly more architecture/art-historical approach, which will hopefully tie my discussion to the results of the fieldwork.

In a recent article on an aesthetic reconsideration of the use of architectural materials, Myriam Blais argued that architectural building activity should be imagined as a celebration, a festivity⁸. In a wider perspective, *festivity* can be viewed as an end-product of any kind of prosperous economic production and perhaps as an essential function of the social processes. Building activity, as one type of festive activity, not only brings the society together in an intensive productive undertaking but also becomes a context for exchange of ideas, technological innovation and exploitation of natural resources. Through a variety of craft production, what is celebrated then is the materials, the acquired natural resources, which are oftentimes the precious and rare, therefore prestige goods *par excellence*, and because of their story of acquisition, they are symbolically charged.

In the case for architectural technology, the choice of distinct building materials, whether acquired from local resources or imported, and the reshaping of this raw material through the skill of the craftsman into a particular architectonic substance brings us to the very notion of *construction aesthetics*. The skill of the craftsman was challenged by the limits of the material, ecological constraints, societal norms and the ideological demands of his patrons, all of which he had to reconcile. The *aesthetics of construction*, as a making manifest of the intrinsic qualities/virtues and potentials of the raw material, points us the relation between the technology and the appearance of the building. Therefore one can well argue for a symbolically charged *tectonic expression*, which is not dissociated from its making, and derives its symbolism from the very act of its making. If one were to accept that the urban image of the Ancient Near Eastern city depended heavily upon this “appearance”, eminent from such tectonic culture and its own aesthetics of construction, it would be relevant to bring the construction techniques into the discussions of urban form and its display culture.

⁸ Myriam Blais; “Invention as a celebration of materials”. In *Chora 3: Intervals in the philosophy of architecture*, Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Stephen Parcell (eds.). McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal, 1999: 1-24: p.3.

Therefore I tend to see the phenomenon of new foundation, as a *festival*, a significant social event that lasts for several years, an event very affective on the reproduction, and recreation of social structure; and also acts as a stage of artisanal innovation and a medium for exchange for the circulation of craftly knowledge among artisanal groups. If what the Near eastern kings boast in their royal building inscriptions is true and that they were employing foreign craftsmen in the construction of their new royal cities, artisanal knowledge must have moved rather easily from region to region. This very point is one of the objectives for my fieldwork to be completed next summer; whether one can actually see the traces of a shared building technology in the *koiné* of the Iron age societies.

4. Brief historical overview of Urartian city-building activity

Let me turn now to Urartu, and tell you about the fieldwork I have done in the Urartian sites in the Lake Van basin. I was intending to present the work from 3 sites but it became clear to me this would be too long of a discussion. So I will only tell you about my work at Ayanis, which date to the last century of the Urartian Empire, 7th c. BC, in particular associated with one rigorous ruler, Rusa II, who ruled in the first half of 7th c., and initiated at least the foundation of 5 cities so far known, and also other building projects in other major Urartian sites. Before going into the site, let me give you a quick overview over the chart of Urartian expansion and building policy.

Urartian history is more or less outlined mostly by the help of Urartian and Assyrian documents. At the time of Aššurnasirpal II, the Lake Van basin is still thinly settled presumably by a confederation of late-Hurrian tribes; but the establishment of the dynasty on firm grounds in the Lake Van Basin seems to be with the foundation of Tušpa in near modern Van on high natural fortress, one-mile long rock. In his 6 monumental inscriptions in cuneiform from the walls of the famous Sardursburg, or Sardur's fortress, Sarduri used an Assyrian dialect of Akkadian instead of Urartian. His son Išpuini adopted the cuneiform to write in Urartian. What is also ascribed to Išpuini is the exaltation of the cult of Haldi, formerly a local fertility god around Musasir, to be the national warrior god of the Urartians to be venerated in almost every city in temples dedicated to him, in the

expanding empire; possibly comparable to the role of Aššur in Late Assyrian empire. Especially with Menua and Argišti I in the first half 8th c. BC, Urartu has already expanded its military power over to the fertile Ararat and Shirak plains of Southern Transcaucasia, Lake Urmia in Iranian Azarbaijan behind the Zagros all the way to Musasir; Upper Euphrates in the West all the way near Malatya probably aiming at the Iron sources of the Keban region. Menua is especially credited with building a series of fortresses and military posts in the newly conquered territories and in the Lake Van basin. He is also the builder of the famous Menua canal that supplied water from Hoşap valley to Tuşpa. The immense building activities of Menua across a really wide geography, was accompanied by mass deportations. His grandson Argišti's reign however was more towards establishment of administrative control over the provinces, esp. with the two massive economic centers new foundations of Argištihinili at Armavir and Irpuini at Arin-berd controlled both the agricultural production in the area and acted as ports of trade where nomadic caravans could bring in their goods, standing as strongholds against roaming Scythians. Sarduri II founds a new urban center in the Hoşap valley at Çavuştepe, one of the other sites I studied last summer; but most of the architectural remains on the surface are associated with Rusa II's massive building project later in 7th c. There is a short hiatus when Sargon II of Assyria leads his famous campaign to Urartu, which was recorded in detail in his annals.

The period after Sargon's long campaign is often referred to as Reconstruction period in the scholarship, pointing out to the massive construction projects initiated by Rusa II, contemporary of Esarhaddon and the consolidation of Urtian power in the provinces. Rusa II founds at least 5 cities: He moves his royal seat from Tuşpa to Toprakkale, names it after himself. He establishes a major urban center at Karmir Blur in the Ararat Plain, which coincides with the abandonment of Irpuini-Erebuni; a great state assemblage of royal artifacts labeled with previous kings' names were brought to this fortress. He establishes a massive fortress as a royal residence and cultic center and lower town settlement at Bastam in Iranian Azarbaijan, controlling the rich Qara Ziyaeddin plain and almost jokingly he names this enormous city *Rusai-URU.TUR*, "Rusa's small city". Finally his two other establishments are in the Lake Van basin, one is Ayanis,

located some 40 km N of Tuşpa by the lake Van and the other Kef Kalesi in the N shore of the lake by the great volcanic Süphan mountain, Mt. Eiduru. Two maps Kleiss and Belli.

5. Ayanis: introduction

Ayanis is located about 35 km North of Tuşpa, the long standing Urartian royal seat and cult center; at an altitude of 1886 m. above sea level by the coast of Lake Van but on a very prominent rocky spur, almost impenetrable from the Lake side. The citadel is built on this very elongated spur, typical of Urartian urban planning. Citadel is not very large, extending only 400x150 m on the top, only about 5-6 ha; while there is a respectively large lower town settlement of at least 80 ha, probably completely fortified, extending especially towards Pınarbaşı where is an abundant spring, Güneytepe to the Eastern hill slopes and to the South where the modern village of Ayanis is located. The immediate hinterland of the town in today's landscape is not suggestive of an intensive agricultural production.

Excavations and survey has been going on since 1989, by a joint Turkish-American team, Aegean University of Izmir, led by Altan Çilingirođlu is working on the excavation of the citadel mound, while the American team led by Paul Zimansky of Boston University and Elizabeth Stone of University of New York at Stony Brook carries on an intensive survey of the Lower town settlement with a variety of techniques including shovel testing, magnetometry and test excavations, which provides a unique opportunity to study the overall urban layout of a Late Urartian imperial settlement not being confined to the citadel. The preliminary conclusions of the work in the Lower town suggest a very diverse, internally differentiated urban setting, with some monumental structures around the spring area, a distinguishable hierarchy in different neighborhoods both in terms of material culture and architecture. In the summer of 2001, I was able to join the work at Ayanis for a month, working with both teams, supplying some architectural drafting labor whenever needed, and carrying on my own work mostly on the stone masonry and other building techniques at the Ayanis citadel.

Ever since the discovery and publication of the inscription, found right in front of the only citadel gate, which turned out to be the foundation inscription of the whole city; [Gate inscription], we know that the city is one of the new foundations of Rusa II, son of Argišti; named after the king “Rusahinili Eiduru-kai” *The city of Rusa in Front of the Eiduru Mountain.*

“Through the greatness of Haldi, Rusa, the son of Argišti, has built this fortress (É.GAL) to perfection in front of the mountain Eiduru (^{KUR}Eiduru=kai). Rusa says: the rock was <untouched>, nothing was built here (before). I built a shrine (É.BARA) as well as a fortress (É.GAL), perfectly. I set new vineyards and orchards and founded a new town (settlement) (URU šú-ú-hi) here. Mightily (?) these accomplishments I made here. I imposed the name Rusahinili. Through the greatness of Haldi (I am) Rusa, the son of Argišti, mighty king, great king, king of Biainili, lord of the Tušpa-city (a-lu-si ^{URU}Tušpa-e-URU). Rusa says: whoever my name erases (and) puts his (own) name may Haldi and the Storm God (^dIM) and the Sun God (^dUTU) annihilate him.”⁹

This is a very interesting inscription which summarizes the project; which Rusa associates with the construction of the citadel, planting vineyards and orchards, at an originally uncultivated location. The massive volcanic mountain of Süphan Dağ is associated w/ this Eiduru Mt. by the Çilingiroğlu and Salvini.

Ayanis excavations on the citadel have so far accomplished work on the fortifications especially to the East and South of the citadel and the Monumental Gate where the two met. A series of storerooms to the Western end of the citadel. And what is ongoing intensively today is the Temple complex, which covers the top of the citadel. I will first talk on the fortifications then move to the Temple complex.

6. Ayanis fortifications and the citadel gate

The Western and Northern slopes of the citadel are extremely steep as I mentioned before and impenetrable. The most gentle approach to the citadel is from the South Eastern slope, from the direction of the village. That is exactly where the archaeologists expected to find the gate to the citadel and indeed they did. The gate is conveniently designed at the intersection of the two sets of wall; the gate structure itself is

⁹ Mirjo Salvini, "Inscriptions of Ayanis: Cuneiform and hieroglyphic" In *Ayanis I: Ten Years' Excavations at Rusahinili Eiduru-kai 1989-1998*, A. Çilingiroğlu & M. Salvini (eds.); CNR Istituto per gli Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici, Roma 2001: 251-319.

well recessed at the junction of the two walls so that a well-defined urban space is created right in front of the gate structure. The gate is guarded by two massive towers on each side.

The Eastern fortifications and the Southern; and the two sections of the wall are clearly differentiated with their stone masonry and the types of stone that were used. Southern façade of the citadel is built with fine black andasite, with a quite innovative surface treatment with finely dressed surfaces and perfectly fit joints; while the foundations of the Eastern fortifications, and possibly the North as well were built of limestone with roughly worked surfaces. They also varied in the height of the foundations; the Eastern wall limestone base rises up to about 2 m with ca 3-4 courses of massive blocks; while also due to the topography Southern wall rises up to 4 m. in height in certain places with 5 or more courses of stone. The variety in technique and material between the two walls was also accompanied by the general design of the fortress.

The limestone façade of the Eastern fortification wall is built directly on shaped bedrock, which is one of the most distinctive features of Urartian architecture. The bedrock is carefully worked as a series of steps, not creating a flat surface but a stepped one for the stone base of the fortifications to be set upon. This actually has allowed archaeologist identify location of several Urartian sites, where the building stone is robbed and only these steps survive. [Körzüt Kalesi, a minor citadel built at the edge of Muradiye plain NE of the lake]. The stones are roughly hewn and there is very little trace of working on them, and the blocks are fitted within the wall by means of smaller stones. The corners of the buttresses are carefully handled with larger stones by header and stretcher technique; but also recessing each course a few cm back. The general design of the Eastern wall brought a very regular alternation of buttresses and recesses; which must have created an extremely dynamic view of the citadel, if one can also imagine the several meters high superstructure in mudbrick. One is always tempted to remember the Urartian representation of the fortresses on bronze artifacts. Obviously we should be imagining a variety of material, the two rows of slate stones above the stone base, leufer stones, then the mudbrick superstructure which is horizontally divided by timber tie-beams, and finally

the alternating height of the towers and the wall; with crenellations crowning all. The fortifications are reported also provide terraces for building structures right on top of them, some evidence of which was reported by Altan Bey.

The gate itself, as mentioned before is strategically located. It has a peculiar multi room structure constructed of mudbrick on the inner walls. Due to massive debris on it, it could not be excavated completely. Preliminary results of the excavation show that the arrangement of the inner spaces have been altered quite a few times including the blocking of the main thoroughfare. Some detail of the façade which included the display of foundation inscription. Details from the gate, one of the door socket, finely dressed.

The Southern wall in its tectonic qualities however is particularly outstanding, due to the extraordinary quality of stone dressing techniques and complexity of wall technique; advanced by the Urartians by the time of Rusa II, and I will come back to this point in a minute. The south fortification walls are built of black andasite, a much easier stone to work than the local limestone probably, and it is a better quality than the widely used basalt, which is a more porous igneous stone. Altan Çilingiroğlu suggested a quarry site for Ayanis, some 40 km North of Ayanis at a village called Tımar, were a quarrying site has been detected not far from the water. In the geological map you can see the andasite source areas. They were roughly shaped at the quarry and finely dressed at the site probably after they were placed on the wall, since andasite dust have been found below the wall.

The stones are finely worked using a variety of tools including chisels, pointed tools, and even abrasives, identifiable from the tool marks on the stones. The circular marks point out to the use of curved chisels and the fine surfaces have traces of fine pointed tools. Achaemenid masonry tools from Nylander's study of Achaemenid monuments at Pasargadae¹⁰ are helpful considering the fact that much of the Urartian stone masonry tradition was eventually handed over to the Achaemenids and Urartians

¹⁰ Nylander, Carl; 1970. *Ionians in Pasargadae*, Uppsala: 22-28. For reference to Urartian origins of Achaemenid masonry: pp. 59-62.

probably used the same tools. Both the front and side edges are drafted so as to perfectly fit the courses. This clearly can be seen a very developed form of *anathyrosis*.

The blocks that formed the outer skin of the wall was most spectacularly finished so as to create a very dramatic effect of light and shade in different times of the day; the outer surfaces a fine embossing, with an exaggerated bulging out of the central part of the stone, especially exaggerated at the lowest courses. This bulging then is additionally used to secure and lock each course at the joints. The joints are further secured by means of small shifts in the lines of the courses, which were probably due to the topography of the bedrock on which the wall is resting. At a number of places in the southern fortification wall, the lowest course stones had to remain roughly worked either as adequate leveling elements or mouth of the drainage outlets. The drainage canals swing within varying parts behind this façade collecting and draining the rainwater on the fortifications and the building terraces above them.

If we look at the overall system of the wall apart from the outer skin, we see a variety of other curiosities: In the southern fortifications we see a second layer of this time roughly worked or sometimes discarded andasite courses, not finely finished. This was the state how all these blocks were brought from quarry presumably. The transition from the stone base to the mudbrick superstructure is provided by 2 rows of leufer stones of ca 5 cm thick, mostly gray slate plates. The mudbricks that they used were massive. 50x35x12 cm. Due to the steepness of the citadel they had to be strong presumably they were acting ac terrace walls.

7. Temple complex

The temple complex, the next major project of the excavation team, still ongoing; occupies the highest point in the citadel. Its discovery was spectacular, first some of the piers of the courtyard was excavated and the space is identified as pillared hall, and but even from the very first excavation season they were aware that it was a cultic establishment, from the inscribed prestige weaponry, inscribed with dedications to the god Haldi, found below the piers, upon which they were originally hung and displayed. Eventually they located the temple, and the cella, ever best preserved so far among all

excavated Urartian temples complete with its interior decoration and the inscription, and mudbrick walls preserved up to 4-5 m. Currently Altan Bey's team has turned their attention to the storerooms discovered on the S edge of the complex, where hoards of decorated and undecorated bronze and iron weaponry are being excavated.

Among the Urartian temple complexes, the *susi* temple of Haldi at Ayanis incorporates a pillared courtyard with the tower temple, a temple type known from several Urartian sites. The half piers abutting the walls of the temple walls are unique. Several charred timber beams were recovered from the floor, suggesting the existence of a second story of the courtyard. The central part of the colonnade is believed to be open. Two entrances detected on from the NW and one from NE. The walls that delimit the complex are massive up to 5 m in thickness. The remains of plaster from the walls suggest that they were painted blue up to dado level and white on top.

The temple is paved with mudbrick and beaten clay, but it only partially sits on bedrock. A mudbrick platform is created to the South. Below this platform, they were able to accommodate storage rooms for the offerings dedicated the warrior state god Haldi: a structurally very difficult task indeed. Looking at the piers, one can possibly hypothesize a massive earthquake that destroyed the complex. The masonry technique of the pier bases are a bit different from what I have shown at the fortifications: their surfaces are extremely finely finished probably with abrasives, iron dust or sand; and without any embossing but definitely with *anathyrosis* on the edges. The blocks were a slight V-shape with tapering toward the bottom, to create probably a visual effect of the widening of the pier towards the top.

When we look at the temple itself: To remind as usual, I want to present the depiction of the Haldi temple in Musasir in the reliefs of Sargon's palace at Khorsabad/Dur Šarrukīn, where shields dedicated to Haldi are depicted to be attached on the walls; and at Ayanis several such shields and other prestige armory were found laying on the floor in various places. The foundations of the temple is several courses of roughly worked ashlar blocks which were not visible, under the beaten clay floor. The entrance to the cella is flanked on either side by the monumental inscription, one of the longest texts

ever recovered from Urartu very finely carved. A small section from this long text I want to take your attention to the lands that Rusa claims to have deported peoples and settled at Ayanis.

The cella itself is spectacular even though I did not have much chance to study since it was restricted for preservation purposes, all the interior decoration elements are being kept within the cella, the access to it is very confined. The cella and the entrance way floors are paved with 94 greenish alabaster slabs, with a curved on their top, lower on the borders to give a 3 dimensional effect. The alabaster, which give a luminous effect to the atmosphere of the interior must have been brought from quite some distance for this specific purpose. I have not heard yet a suggestion for the provenience of the alabaster. Below the alabaster slabs on bedrock, a layer of mudbrick was laid and then a layer of sandstone upon which the alabaster blocks were laid. In the axis of the entrance and to the Eastern wall of the cella, a cult podium is located, which also has a decorated alabaster top. It is beautifully incised with figures of human headed winged lions, winged lions, and winged griffons. The overall design is shaped by the help of an intertwined structure of sacred trees bearing cones. As incised decoration on precious stones, it reminded me this stone frieze fragment depicting a bull from Toprakkale, Rusa II's royal seat.

The walls on the other hand bear 3 and 2 rows of andasite block orthostates. The orthostates exhibit a decorative scheme that is extremely rare in terms of technique in Urartu or elsewhere, and non-paralleled in its overall design. Each block has a representation of a mythical animal, god, a sacred plant, a swastika or a rosette motif, which was carved out of the block and inlaid with a softer whitish stone, incised and painted; sometimes referred to as intaglio, but in a very monumental scale. The inlay was often made up of a number of pieces and fitted carefully together. After the incision pieces are located, molten lead as used to stabilize the pieces. The technique is only known from Toprakkale from where these black basalt slabs inlaid with marble and white limestone rings are known, which are in British Museum. Very similar decorative rings are also recovered from the Ayanis Haldi temple cella.

8. Conclusion

It seems clear to me that the case of the Rusa II's new foundation at Ayanis offers a valuable insight into a multi-faceted social phenomenon; a monumental building project, which brought together *in a festive gathering*, willingly or unwillingly, a variety of craft groups, stone masons, relief artists, metal-workers, and the like, possibly originating from a variety of regions; to serve for such social undertaking. It also gives hints that a series of artisanal innovations were under way, which gained ever-greater momentum in the very context of the building of new cities. On top of this, the architectural monuments exhibit such elaboration in the construction techniques, choice of material, and sophistication in overall design helps to detect the long term traditions and short-term changes in the tectonic culture of the Urartian urban landscape. The treatment of the architectural surfaces of the urban space move beyond the environmentally protective function for its interior structure and venture into the domain of symbolically charged tectonic expression. The monumental walls of the southern fortifications and the piers of the temple courtyard don't simply stand by themselves in structural solitude but also impose a haptic, tactile experience upon the viewer.

I want to remind you that Rusa II was also credited with the introduction of architectural relief sculpture to the Urartian townscape. Some of the fascinating examples of Rusa II's workshop of relief carving comes from Adilcevaz-Kef Kalesi vicinity. Kef Kalesi which is another Rusa II foundation, is located in the Northern coastlands of the Lake Van, at the tip of a small valley, that gets interrupted with a volcanic hill, a well guarded rocky promontory. A series of columned courtyards have been excavated from the citadel of Kef Kalesi, which exhibits very similar stone carving techniques at Ayanis. The famous Adilcevaz Teişeba relief, which is now in Van Museum was discovered at the castle of Adilcevaz, spoliated in a medieval wall. The relief depicts the god Teişeba, Urartian version of Tešup of the Hurrians, standing on a bull. From the extant pieces, Ursula Seidl offered a reconstruction of the relief to flank the entrance of a rabbetted

monumental building¹¹. Based on the association of the monument with Kef Kalesi, it is dated to the time of Rusa II, as were all stone reliefs, so far known. A series massive basalt column basis with a repeated symmetrical pictorial representation are brought to light from Kef Kalesi, which bear inscriptions of Rusa II of his dedication of a building to Haldi. This extraordinary relief also gives us important hints about the look of Urartian citadels. From other inscriptions we know that Rusa II named this city Haldiei URU^{KUR}Ziuquni, the city of Haldi in the land of *Ziuquni*.

It is clear that a much sophisticated stone carving workshop was established in the first half of 7th c. in Urartu, which managed to challenge the urban image of the new Urartian towns quite a bit. In further fieldwork I also hope to see whether such tectonic culture can be conceptualized in the greater *koiné* of North Mesopotamian-Eastern Mediterranean architectural traditions. The transfer of craftly knowledge across the ancient landscapes, I believe, was possible not only because of the itinerant nature of craftsmen and the merchant, but also under the aegis of significant celebratory events of construction. Let me finish with a preposition by a sixteenth century architect, Phillibert de l'Orme who said that “buildings would be worth constructing if the constituted places for exchange”¹².

¹¹ Ursula Seidl; “Urartäische Bauskulpturen,”; in *Aspects of Art and Iconography: Anatolia and Its Neighbors. Studies in Honor of N. Özgüç*, M.J. Mellink, E. Porada, T. Özgüç (eds.); Ankara 1993: 557-564; pl. 98-100.

¹² quoted In Blais 1999 (supra no:8): 3.