

# Over the Mountains and Far Away

Studies in Near Eastern history  
and archaeology

presented to Mirjo Salvini on the occasion  
of his 80th birthday

edited by

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and

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## Editorial

It is hard to quantify the enormous weight of Prof. Mirjo (Miroslavo) Salvini's scientific contribution to Near Eastern studies, and especially to the history, philology and culture of the Urartian civilization. In over 50 years of unceasing research activity, he has contributed in many different fields, but mostly to Urartological studies, helped by his multilingual and multicultural education. Mirjo was inspired to understand Urartu thanks to an intuition of Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli, one of his teachers, who motivated him to take an interest in that distant culture – regarding which, in that period, the first connections were established with Mediterranean cultures, in particular the Greeks and Etruscans. He is one of the few philologists to have understood the necessary relationship between philological data, landscape studies and archaeological knowledge.

This is clearly reflected in his enormous academic production, in which philological information and historical reconstruction are always flanked by the careful and perceptive observation of the archaeological contexts. The desire to know and understand the history and culture of Urartu led him to travel continuously in the areas where Urartu once spread, in Armenia, Turkey, Iran and Iraq. In the 1960s he established direct relations with, among others, Boris Borisovich Piotrovskij (head of Karmir-blur excavations), Nikolay Harutyunyan (philologist and Urartologist), Igor' Michajlovič D'jakonov (orientalist and linguist), Konstantin Hovhannisyán (head of Arin-berd excavations), and Afif Erzen (head of Çavuştepe and Toprakkale excavations), visiting the sites and collecting valuable information. He also collaborated with the excavation of Bastam, in northeastern Iran, again studying epigraphic material.

During these travels he was able to discover dozens of unpublished Urartian inscriptions, and very often contributed directly to saving these ancient texts, assisting local institutions, such as the Van Museum, to rescue them. Mirjo has spent almost his entire research career working for the National Research Council in the 'Institute for Mycenaean, Aegean and Anatolian Studies' (ISMEA, 1968-2001), founded by Giovanni Pugliese Carratelli, Piero Meriggi, Carlo Gallavotti and Doro Levi and based on a previous study centre at the University of Rome. Later the name of the institute was changed to 'Institute of Aegean and Near Eastern Studies' (ICEVO, 2001-2013), before being involved in a series of mergers between different CNR institutes that have interrupted the long tradition of studies and research activities. After these events, Mirjo and its collaborators continued the research as members of the ISMEO - International Association of Mediterranean and Oriental Studies. Mirjo directed ISMEA/ICEVO for a long time contributing in those years to the enlargement of the institute's library, considered at its peak as one of the best in the world for Anatolian and Mycenaean studies. During this period, there were many research activities related to Urartian studies most of which directed by Mirjo. Fundamental among these were the survey and excavations on the western shore of Lake Orumiyeh in Iran that led to the publication in 1984 of the book 'Tra lo Zagros e l'Urmia' co-edited by Mirjo and Paolo Emilio Pecorella, which is still today one of the essential works on that region. During the time of his ICEVO direction important archaeological work was started and continued in Armenia, aimed at studying the borders of the state of Urartu and its impact on local communities in the Lake Sevan area. Also important was his collaboration, and that of the institute, in the excavations of the fortress of Ayanis, on the eastern shore of Lake Van – one of the most important Urartian sites ever excavated, where Mirjo was for a period vice-director and responsible for the study of inscriptions.

However, there is no doubt that his main contribution to Urartological studies was his 'Corpus of Urartian Texts' (CTU), the work of a lifetime, which represents the sum of his entire career. Those lucky enough to assist him and accompany him on research trips in the East cannot fail to remember the red cover copy of his corpus, which he took everywhere in a constant effort to perfect the work. His burning passion for research drove his incessant visits to examine Urartian inscriptions still in situ – regardless of the harshness of their sites of conservation – as well as those kept in museums.

Among the many places visited, that to which he is most attached is the Fortress of Van. On the top of that dramatically beautiful rock spur, he loved to read at dusk, to a lucky few, extracts from the 'History of the Armenians' by Movses Khorenatsi, especially the passages concerning the mythical foundation of the capital of Urartu by Queen Semiramis. While we certainly do not want to limit Mirjo's importance to the study of Urartu, given that he is also a scholar of primary importance in fields such as Hurritology and Hittitology, there is no doubt that his contribution to the civilization of Urartu is the most prominent, and that in which he invested most of his energy. We hope that this Festschrift presented to Mirjo by his friends, colleagues, collaborators and students, will serve as an appropriate tribute to this outstanding individual and scholar. Most of all, this book should be read as a sign of our gratitude for Mirjo's indefatigable enthusiasm in promoting Near Eastern studies, especially of Urartu.

We would like to thank all the contributors that have decided to participate to this work and the people that have helped us in the different stages of the process of realization, especially Kristine Martirosyan-Olshansky, Priscilla Vitolo, Nshan Tomas Kesecker, and Onofrio Gasparro.

Pavel Avetisyan, Roberto Dan, Yervand Grekyan

Yerevan – Rome, 14 May 2018

## Foreword

The present volume represents an excellent opportunity to celebrate the career of an outstanding scholar and personal friend, active over the years in many fields of Oriental research.

Mirjo was one of the first researchers to embrace the aims of the new ISMEO re-founded in 2012 – and the Association itself has, since the beginning, welcomed the carrying on of Mirjo's scientific heritage, sponsoring many of the research lines he had been working for decades within the ICEVO framework.

We must remember Mirjo's creation of the Italian (now ISMEO) 'Uratu program', as part of which a series of investigations were conducted in the field, and linked to research activities that led over time to the publication of important reference works in Urartology. The main purpose of that project was to develop convergence between historical-philological and archaeological research work in the field; it reached its apex with the publication of the Corpus of Urartian Texts in five volumes, in which all known Urartian inscriptions are gathered together, translated and commented upon. As part of this research, important missions were started in Armenia and Iran.

ISMEO, since 2013, has taken charge of this rich scientific heritage, continuing archaeological and philological research into the Urartian civilization; in this context an extensive research program was launched and archaeological investigations have been started in the Southern Caucasus, in Armenia (since 2013) and in southern Georgia (since 2017), now incorporated into the ISMEO Archaeological Mission to South Caucasus. The main targets of these activities – developed in selected areas of particular relevance – include: (1) the investigation of protohistoric phases (Late Bronze/Early Iron Age), (2) close study of the birth of the Urartu state, its territorial organization, and the relations between the state and local communities (Middle Iron Age), (3) the cultural heritage left by the Urartu state after its decline in the territories that it occupied, in the 'Median' and Achaemenid periods (Late Iron Age). Precisely the question of the relations between Urartu and the Achaemenid world, in which Mirjo made important contributions, was the basis of a volume recently published by ISMEO. From the perspective of Achaemenid studies, Urartu's exact role is still debated and still presents many obscure points that only the progress of research will help to clarify.

All ISMEO members and friends are very glad to contribute with the present tribute to Mirjo's human qualities and scientific expertise.

Adriano Rossi, President, ISMEO

Rome, 17 June 2018