

Systemizing the Past

Papers in Near Eastern and Caucasian
Archaeology Dedicated to Pavel S. Avetisyan on
the Occasion of His 65th Birthday

edited by

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ARCHAEOPRESS ARCHAEOLOGY



ARCHAEOPRESS PUBLISHING LTD
Summertown Pavilion
18-24 Middle Way
Summertown
Oxford OX2 7LG
www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978-1-80327-392-1
ISBN 978-1-80327-393-8 (e-Pdf)

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Cover: Front cover illustration: Bird pendant of bronze, ca. 1400-1300 BCE,
Late Bronze Age tomb no. 613, Karashamb Cemetery (in the background), Armenia.

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Avetisyan Pavel

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Foreword

Pavel Avetisyan, a modern leading Armenian archaeologist, a specialist with wide international recognition, was born in Tbilisi, Georgia, but spent his childhood and youth in Talin, a town in Aragatsotn Region of the Republic of Armenia. After graduating from Yerevan State University in 1980, the paths of his life was connected mostly with archaeology. As a researcher Pavel Avetisyan began his scholarly career at the 'Erebuni' Museum of History of Yerevan, continued his scientific research at the Chair of Archaeology and Ethnography and Scientific Research Laboratory of Archaeology at the Yerevan State University. Since 1993, he has been a member of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia, the main scientific research centre for Armenian archaeology. As a result of his extensive publication record, practical field experience, proven ability to develop local and external collaborations, as well as deliver research of international excellence he was appointed as Director of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography, a role he has been serviced since 2006.

The scientific legacy of Pavel Avetisyan, represented by several books and more than a hundred articles, can conditionally be divided into two main categories. The first category is comprised of published field and laboratory reports covering the vast number of ancient cemeteries and settlements he excavated during the last 30 years. Pavel's field projects were focused on the study of Bronze and Iron Age sites of Armenia (c. 3500-500 BC) and represent the main sphere of his scientific interests. The first excavations directed by Pavel were carried out in 1980s at the Mastara and Talin necropoleis located on the slopes of mount Aragats. In fact, these excavations formed an integral part of his scientific worldview. Another important stage was the excavations of Agarak, a Bronze and Iron Age multilayer settlement which was excavated under Pavel's directorship in 2000s. The excavations of this rock-cut settlement and sanctuary significantly contributed the field of landscape archaeology in Armenia. Pavel's contribution is essential to the works of the Armenian-American project 'ArAGATS', which began in the early 2000s. For the first time in the history of Armenian archaeology 'ArAGATS' realized regular intensive and extensive research projects, including the excavations of several important settlements and surrounding burial mounds in the Tsaghkahovit plain in northern Armenia. Among the numerous projects directed by Pavel, the excavations carried out at the Early Bronze Age high altitude settlement Tsaghkasar and the expansive excavations in the Middle and Late Bronze Age cemetery of Karashamb are of particular importance. These endeavours provide a fundamental basis for understanding the socio-political developments during the Bronze Age in Armenia.

Pavel Avetisyan's contribution to the study of Neolithic and Chalcolithic period sites (c. 6000-3500 BC), such as the agro-pastoral settlement of Aratashen in the Ararat Plain, has also been significant. Since 2004, Pavel has co-directed the Armenian-French joint expedition at Godedzor, a semi-permanent settlement located in southern Armenia. Research at Godedzor has revealed phases dated to the transition from the end of the Chalcolithic and the beginning of the Early Bronze Ages and has provided additional evidence on the question of the local origin of the Kura-Araxes cultural phenomenon. At the same time, it has clearly demonstrated the relations and connections that existed during the end of the Chalcolithic phase between Armenia, the Iranian Plateau, and other regions of the Near East. Research conducted at these settlements has greatly advanced our understanding of the establishment and development of early agricultural societies in the Armenian Highland.

The above-mentioned projects, particularly ones focused on the Bronze and Iron Age sites, formed the bases of Pavel's theoretical framework. Problems concerning the chronology and periodization of Armenian archaeological cultures is especially worthy of a mention. Until the end of 1980s the Armenian archaeological periodization was guided by the famous work of Harutyun Martirosyan based on the Bronze and Iron Ages of Armenia and published in 1964. It was only in the 1990s that Armenian archaeologists, among them Pavel, began to re-examine both the available data and enrich the existing record with new researches bringing the investigation of periodization into a higher theoretical level. The results of this work were summarized in his Ph.D. and Habilitation theses entitled 'Chronology and Periodization of the Middle Bronze Age of Armenia' and 'The Armenian Highland during the 24-9th Centuries BC: The Dynamics of Socio-Cultural Transformations, according to the Archaeological Data'.

In contradiction to other scholars investigating the problems of chronology and periodization, Pavel formed his theories on the basis of a great number of radiocarbon data and by creating a corresponding theoretical and methodological background. For the first time, he introduced the problem under consideration in context of common developments of the corresponding periods, transformation of social environments and culture sequences, which naturally made his theories towards chronology and periodization more probable. Instead of basic evolutionary

theory he argues for the use of modern sociological methods, which infer not only logical sequences of cultural developments but also their coexistence and crossings in various niveaus of time and space.

Pavel Avetisyan's research contributions to the fundamental archaeological problems of Ancient Armenia gradually shifted the accent to meta-archaeological levels. So, for clarifying the position of the Armenian Highland in context of the Ancient World and the Ancient Near East, in particular, Pavel recurs to the 'World-System' theory and its main concepts (such as borderland, marginal zone, and frontier).

His theoretical interests also touch problems concerning the formation and development of complex societies in the Armenian Highland, demonstrating the features typical to regional shifts within the common Near Eastern context.

Pavel has also investigated and written about various topics dealing with ceramic typology, burial rites, palaeodemography, sacred landscape, and others.

Pavel's contributions are notable by the integration of present-day theoretical approaches, the application of scientific methodology, and the multidisciplinary nature of his research. And it is also in this regard that Pavel Avetisyan's research stands out by its scientific value and rises Armenian archaeology to an international level. Hundreds of references of his publications both in Armenian and international scientific circles are testament to the undeniable value of his academic contributions.

Pavel's archaeological activities coincided with the recreation of the Armenian statehood and along with this the radical change of direction of scientific relations and worldviews. In this sense, Pavel Avetisyan's name undoubtedly lies at the basis of new archaeological school of Armenia.

We would like to thank all participants of this volume, our colleagues and friends from all over the world, as this publication would not have been possible without their valuable contributions.

We express our sincere gratitude to David Davison from Archaeopress, who kindly met us in realising this publication.

Finally, we would also thank Kristine Martirosyan-Olshansky for her kind help during the process of edition of this book.

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Yerevan July 2021