Armenia: wild boar in all issues

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Abstract: *The results of osteological material are discussed by the study of archaeological sites of Holocene period. The mythology and ornamentation problems are touched upon in respect of wild boar.*

Rezumat: *În acest articol sunt discutate rezultatele studiului materialului arheologic din situri din perioada Holocenă. Problemele legate de mitologie și obiecte de ornament sunt atinse în legătură cu mistrețul.*

Keywords: *Armenia, wild boar, legends, myths.*

Cuvinte cheie: *Armenia, mistreț, legende, mituri.*

The wild boar bone remains are often met in osteological collections out of archaeological excavations in the Armenian sites. Since Neolithic (Khatunarkh) they are represented by single mandible wreckages, cutting teeth and molars, while the bone remains of extremities are seldom found. Skeletal remains and their state of preservation are poor. In spite of finding bone remains of wild pigs almost in all the studied settlements, they cannot be considered as numerous and in the monuments from Bronze and Early Iron Ages. The contents of bone remains (mainly fragments of upper and lower denture) and the state of their preservation are alike the ones from the earlier periods. Particularly there is no possibility for osteometric characteristics. In the settlements of the first millennium BC the majority of findings appeared to be the wreckages of young animals.

It should be indicated that the skeleton fragments of were discovered in 33 out of 48 studied settlements and burials of various chronological period. It is worth to be mentioned that the general feature for the whole material is: on one hand the existence of skull wreckages, upper and lower denture, separate teeth fallen out of alveoli; and on the other hand the absence of bones belonging to the lower and upper extremities, such as metapodia and phalanges.

Measurements of animal bones from archaeological sites can be valuable for the distinction of taxa, morphological types, sexes and also age groups. The fragments of upper and lower jaw dated back to the 5-3 millennium BC (Khatunarkh, Kelanlu, Mokhrablur, Shengavit etc.) are characterized by the following sizes (tab.1; tab. 2. Measurements via the protocols von den Driesch (A. von den Driesch 1976).

The contemporary Caucasian wild boars that belong to the large form of species have the length of the M_3 equal to 37-50 mm (on average it is 42.8 mm); the length of the M^3 equal to 35-45 mm (on average it is 39.5 mm). These data correspond to the collection measurements made in the Moscow University). Similar data are obtained when studying the collection of the Institute of Zoology of NAS RA: the length of the M_3 is 34-44 mm, (on average it is 41.3 mm); and the M^3 is 36-41 mm (on average it is 38.7 mm) (N. Manaseryan 2007). It is easy to observe that the sizes of the third molar at wild boars of the ancient Armenia vary in these limits. Meanwhile, to make identification between the domestic and wild forms only by the indicated feature is insufficient.

In spite of finding the wild pigs bone remains almost in all the studied settlements, they cannot be considered as numerous in the monuments out of Bronze and Early Iron periods. The contents of bone remains and the state of their preservation are alike the ones from the earlier periods, except the issue out of Lchashen burials around Lake Sevan basin. The materials allow us to conduct a detailed morphometric analysis of the skulls which on its whole outline, inclined to wild boar of the "western" form, have similarity with domestic pigs (N. Manaseryan 1997a).

In the settlements of the first millennium BC; Antique and Medieval periods the majority of findings appeared to be the wreckages of young animals. Their tubular bones lack of epiphysis and the mandible has the last milk molar (single samples of low denture with M_3 belong to domestic species) (N. Manaseryan 1997 b).

Totally over 2000 samples of that species were subjected to diagnostic study. In morphological respect the osteological material is not sufficient for the wider identifications. It is necessary to note that in the materials from the synchronic monuments of the neighboring regions

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(Georgia, Dagestan, and North Assetian Republic) remains of pigs have not been revealed completely or they have been presented by fragments not available for studying.

About the number and widely spreading of boars in Armenia we can resume by hunting scenes on rock carvings made on Synik and Gheghama mountains as well as by the art subjects and literary sources. Rock carvings on boars, mainly hunting scenes, are frequently met on Synik Mountains. A composition, in which the boar is among other animals, mainly bezoar goats, where hunters are accompanied with dogs, deserves interest (G. Karakhanian, P. Safian 1970). There are scenes where hunters attach the animals with bare hands, ropes or bludgeons using various traps for taming of the animal, catching it alive. We are prone to think that the necessary condition to support the vital capacity of domestic cattle has been its constant crossing with its wild ancestor.

Movses Khorenatsi narrates the royal hunting on boars at Araks river valley done by kings from Arshakides dynasty in the 1-2 centuries of AD (it goes back to the ancient Roman period). In description of king Artavazd period and war with the Romans (book 2, chapter 22, p.73) it is written: "He abandoned himself to victuals and drinking; wandered and strolled about the bogs, in the depths of canes, and steep slopes hunting on onagers and boars". In another part (book 3, chapter 55) it is written: "Next time they had to hunt on boars in burning canes" (M. Khorenatsi, 1893).

The scenes with boars and hunting on them exist in the art of Armenia, Transcaucasia, Anatolian upland region and Iran along the 3rd and 2nd millennium of BC (V. Hovhanessian 1988). Among the oldest scenes of hunting on boars it should be indicated the one made on the upper frieze of a silver cup found in Karashamb burial (2nd millennium BC): the archer took aim at a large boar with an inclined head and curved tusks, an arrow was in the boar's left shoulder, a lion touched its (boar's) withers, and a leopard grasped the croup. It is of no less interest a depiction of a boar on the Southern wall of Akhtamar temple and its huge figure just at the entrance to the royal couch. By the way the Arshakidian kings approved their decrees by applying a seal with a boar on it (I. Orbeli 1968). It is worth to note numerous indications about the boar in the Armenian legends and myths. It is known a legend about Artavazd-Shidar, where the hero is going to hunt on a boar, but being wounded with evil forces, falls into one of Masis mountain holes with his hunting dogs. This legend about Artavazd-Shidar resulted in a depiction of "fighting with a boar" made on Atskha royal tomb.

By another legend at fest Tigran the Second, the son of Artashes, insists on the captives to eat boar meat. It is known that in the Ancient East by the existing custom at the ceremonies devoted to the New Year or at other celebrations they used to eat boar meat. Sometimes a whole boar carcass was put on table as a symbol of fighting and victory. So, the captives refused to eat, but the king requested and they had to obey: "They agreed to eat king's sacrifice, boar's meat, though they did not make sacrifices and worships themselves".

Boar figure was reflected in the Armenian Christian legends such as: about Grigor the Enlightener and king Trdat who turned into a boar. It is obvious that in the above mentioned legends boar represents the evil forces, bellicosity and victory. While it should be indicated that in the cultures of Iran-Middle Asia the boar image refers to various origins including fertility (V. Hovhanessian 1988).

We will not consider all the interpretations of boar image, as that work needs to be done in more details.

While your attention should be drawn to a fact of pigs utilization (wild and domestic) in folk medicine. It is of some interest a description of pig's fat and burnt bones application for cosmetics. If "a young pig's fat (kept for a while) to apply to eyes", the latter will shine. Its old fat helps at couching of wall-eyed state and relieves ear pain. Or "its bone ash is useful for teeth and makes them white". Another one: "its burnt bone makes a drying effect, such as, if to burn the bone and apply the ash to the wound, it will get dried" and "bile with honey and pepper promote hair growth" as well "will recover intestine ulcer". It helps also at spleen tumor and scorpion bite. "It helps also at burns, if to cover the wound with boar fat". So, here is an incomplete list of drug remedies based on organs of the studied object (A. Amasiatsi, 1990).

Resuming the above mentioned and not going into the details, we have represented at least one tenth of the known issue. Meanwhile, even the data given here let us note that the importance of the boar goes back to ancient times. Its origin should be searched in primitive period when a human at hunting could observe that wild and strong animal.

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Early Bronze Age	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**
Shengavit 10	-	72	47	-	-	-	-	-
Shengavit 43	119	71	47	36	19	-	-	-
Shengavit 22	120	-	-	33	17	-	-	-
Shengavit 47	117	70	39	33	18	12	-	
Shengavit 90	109	70	46	33	18	-	-	-
Shengavit 91	108	70	48	34	18	-	-	-
Mokhrablur 72	-	59	-	26	20	-	-	-
Middle Bronze Age								
Tsamakaberd 20	-	57	-	27	14	-	36	22
Tsamakaberd 65	-	-	36	-	-	-	39	22

Tab. 1. Measurement skull fragments and maxillary of pigs. Measurements: 1. Length of the cheektooth row. 2. Length of the molar row. 3. Length of the premolar row. 4. Length of M^3. 5. Breadth of M^3. 6. Height of $M^{3.}$ 7. Upper length of the lachrymal. 8. Height of the lachrymal. 9. Greatest inner length of the orbit.

Age/Site	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Neolithic											
Khatunarkh	-	-	-	44	-	-	-	-	-		
Bronze Age											
Mokhrablur	101	-	64	32	14	50	-	41	-	11.5	37
Mokhrablur	124	58	85	44	17	57	40	-	-	-	-
Mokhrablur	99	-	64	34	14	48	41	41	12	-	-
Mokhrablur	-	-	-	42	18	48	-	-	13	-	-
Mokhrablur	-	-	-	42	18	48	-	-	13	-	
Kelanlu	-	-	-	52	19	57	-	-	-	-	-
Dzhogaz	-	-	64	32	14	-	-	-	12	-	-
Tsamakaberd	-	-	65	31	14	-	-	-	12	-	-
Ayrivan	127	-	60	-	-	44	42	-		12	27
Tsakaeksi	-	-	64	34	16	42	42	-	13	-	-
Sevkar	94	-	63	33	14	45	41	44	13	15	32

Tab. 2. Measurement of fragments of mandible of pigs. Measurements: 1.Length of the cheektooth row. 2. Length of the diastem. 3. Length of the molar row. 4. Length of M_3. 5. Breadth of M_3. 6. Height of the mandible behind M_3. 7. Height of the mandible in front of M_1. 8. Height of the mandible in front of P_1. 9. Height of M_3. 10. Greatest diameter of the canine alveolus. 11. Length of premolar row (P_2-P_4).