

Zarna Fortified Temple

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Abstract

Article had been dedicated one of the early medieval fortifications of Azerbaijan Zarna fortification. Fortified temple which situated in the north part of Cambsena province of Caucasian Albania was built at the territory which named Lay-Shirin in the left bank of Zarna river. As a result of the archaeological excavations which had been led by Oghuz-Gakh archaeological expedition Zarna fortification were studied. Plans of Zarna fortification were prepared by us. Pottery samples which had been unearthed during archaeological excavation in the fortified temple complex concerned to Early Medieval period. Our research at Zarna Castle suggests that there are various building remains, water and food storage in the area of about 1 ha. Inside the castle, two parts of the long-standing remains of the north-south wall are traced. One of the important buildings of the Zarna castle is the Albanian temple, located at the south-west corner of the fort. The Lay-Shirin temple, located inside the Zarna Castle, was built with brick mortar from rock and river stones. Nearby there are tandem sites, construction debris and ponds. The diameter of the pool is 6 m. The available depth is 4 m. The inside was waterproof. The walls were destroyed because of natural process or earthquake through the outside and fell inside. There were three large wall remnants there. It extends to a wall 5 m long and 1 m wide. The general plan of the Zarna fortified temple is also reflected in the peculiarities of the fortifications built by relief. One of the key issues during archeological research at the Zarna castle was the refinement of the fortifications. First of all, we checked the measurements using primitive measurements for the purpose of the test, and then we made the point with GPS. As a result, it was concluded that the fortified settlement, built on the left bank of the Zarna river, at the center of high mountains on the side of the river, 600 meters above sea level, was built to provide relief and strategically important protection. The fortress walls, which extend from north-east to south-west, are 120x63 m.

Keywords: Caucasian Albania, Gakh, Zarna, Azerbaijan, archaeology

Зарнийський храм-фортеця

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Анотація

Стаття присвячена одному з ранньосередньовічних укріплень Азербайджану Зарнийському храму-фортеці. Укріплений храм, який розташований у північній частині провінції Камбісена Кавказької Албанії, був побудований на території під назвою Лай-Шірін на лівому березі річки Зарна. В результаті археологічних розкопок, якими керувала Огуз-Гахська археологічна експедиція, було вивчено Зарнийське укріплення. Нами були виготовлені плани укріплення Зарни. До періоду раннього середньовіччя відносяться зразки кераміки, знайдені під час археологічних розкопок в укріпленому храмовому комплексі. Наші дослідження замку Зарна свідчать про те, що на площі близько 1 га. є різні будівельні залишки, сховища води та їжі. Всередині замку простежено дві частини давніх залишків північно-південної стіни. Однією з важливих будівель замку Зарна є албанський храм, розташований у південно-західному куті форту. Храм Лай-Шірін, розташований всередині замку Зарна, був побудований цегляним розчином зі скель і річкових каменів. Поруч є тандемні майданчики, будівельне сміття та ставки. Діаметр басейну 6 м. Доступна глибина 4 м. Внутрішня частина була водонепроникною. Стіни були зруйновані через природний процес або землетрус ззовні та впали всередину. Там було три великі залишки стіни. Він тягнеться до стіни довжиною 5 м і шириною 1 м. Загальний план Зарнийського укріпленого храму відображено і в особливостях рельєфу укріплень. Одним із ключових питань під час археологічних досліджень Зарнийського замку було удосконалення укріплень. Перш за все, ми перевірили вимірювання за допомогою простих вимірювань для цілей тесту, а потім зробили висновок за допомогою GPS. У результаті було зроблено висновок, що укріплене поселення, зведене на лівому березі річки Зарна, в центрі високих гір на березі річки, на висоті 600 метрів над рівнем моря, було зведене для забезпечення рельєфу та стратегічно важливого захисту. Фортечні стіни, витягнуті з північного сходу на південний захід, мають розміри 120x63 м.

Ключові слова: Кавказька Албанія, Гах, Зарна, Азербайджан, археологія

Introduction.

There are a number of fortresses, fortifications, dwellings and Christian temples in the historic territory of the Cambysena province of Caucasian Albania (Kartlis Tskhovreva, tr. 2014, p. 211; Mammadova, 2006, p. 291; Minorsky, 1958; Minorsky, 1953). One of them is Zarna fortification. The monument is located in the area called Lai-Shirin in the north of Zarna village of Gakh region (Azerbaijan Republic). In 2012, N. A. Alishov carried out archaeological survey in the fortification and prepared the preliminary plan of the Albanian Temple located there (Alishov, 2013, p. 98). An initial plan for the protective walls of the Zarna castle was prepared during the archaeological excavations carried out by us in 2018 (Alishov, 2013, p. 98-99). Oguz-Gakh Archaeological Expedition (chief of Archaeological Expedition Taleh Aliyev) excavated in 2019 at the fortified temple complex. Research carried out by us has enabled us to prepare a comprehensive plan of the early medieval monument (Aliyev, 2019) (Figure 1; Figure 2).

Discussion. The entrance to the castle passes through a single and quite dense road from the north (Figure 4). Only one rider can get there. This is typical for mountain fortresses (Figure 3). Located in the north-east corner of the fort, the defense was built in a convenient location for the guard. The 6-meter-wide semi-tower was used to protect the only entrance and surroundings of the castle (Figure 5). During the attack to the fort, it was easy to defend against the enemy by spears, stones and arrows. The entrance to the tower and the direction to the east are partly high. This is natural. In that section, the fortress walls were built more closely as they were close to the entrance. It is no coincidence that at the present time the surviving part of the fortress walls is also there (Figure 6). The rear of the fort to the south and west is the part of the village of Zarna and towards the Zarnachay (Zarna River) valley. From there, there are strategic points to see the danger far away and to follow what is happening in the plains, including the Zarnachay valley. The part of that section towards the castle is the abyss of Zarnachay. From there it is impossible to attack to the castle. Seeing the danger away from the area mentioned the guards at the entrance to the castle and the towers could easily be informed and properly prepared for the attack. Another factor that increases the strategic importance of the fort is the location of the mountain on which it is located. Thus, the Zarna castle was built on the mountain in the central part of the mountains on either side of the river, on the left bank of the river, just below the mountains. This is a kind of insurance against the attack from those other two mountains. The attack on the riverbed was almost unavoidable. The only place for attack was the entrance to the castle, which, as we said above, was perfectly protected. Consequently, the inhabitants of the Zarna castle were capable of defensive work with great skill.

As it rises to the top of this magnificent fortress of Caucasian Albania, the left turn leads to the only entrance

of the fort. The wall is 3x4 m at the entrance to the Zarna Castle, located at the top of the mountain on the left bank of the Zarna River. It's in flight (Figure 4). The width of the wall varies between 2-3 meters. Made with river stones and lashing solutions. On the other side of the entrance is a wall about 2 m wide.

Our research at Zarna Castle suggests that there are various building remains, water and food storage in the area of about 1 ha. Inside the castle, two parts of the long-standing remains of the north-south wall are traced. One of the important buildings of the Zarna castle is the Albanian temple, located at the south-west corner of the fort (Aliyev, 2018; 2019) (Figure 8).

The height of the remaining part of the walls at the entrance to the Zarna tower is 2 m. The sizes of building stones are 50x30x10 cm, 40x25x10 cm, 20x15x20 cm and 30x30x15 cm. The tower N 1 of the castle built to control the entrance to the tower and its anticipated major hazard is seen as the steep climb to the fortress (Figure 5). The diameter of the tower N 1 is 6 m. It is surrounded by a magnificent wall 1.5 m wide. A 4.5 m diameter section in the center is designed for the guard and control of the guard. After the tower sign, the tower wall opposite the entrance to the fortress is 2 m long, 90 degrees outside after 6 m. The guards stationed in the guard band could easily hold the attacking enemy from the top with arrow and spear. It was difficult to enter to the tower alone. The narrow path where only one rider could come out facilitated the work of the defenders. From the aforementioned 2 m section, it was possible to help the guards standing on the tower. In the entrance was also to help the tower defenders from the nearby wall. Thus, the entrance of the tower was completely secure. After the tower, a 6 m wall extends towards the tower. The room was located exactly where the tower guards were to alternate.

The Albanian Temple, located inside the Zarna Castle, was built with brick mortar from rock and river stones (Figure 8). Nearby there are tandem sites, construction debris and ponds. The diameter of the pool is 6 m. The available depth is 4 m. The inside was waterproof. The walls were destroyed because of natural process or earthquake through the outside and fell inside. There were three large wall remnants there. It extends to a wall 5 m long and 1 m wide.

The general plan of the Zarna fortified temple is also reflected in the peculiarities of the fortifications built by relief (Figure 1). One of the key issues during archeological research at the Zarna castle was the refinement of the fortifications. First of all, we checked the measurements using primitive measurements for the purpose of the test, and then we made the point with GPS. As a result, it was concluded that the fortified settlement, built on the left bank of the Zarna river, at the center of high mountains on the side of the river, 600 meters above sea level, was built to provide relief and strategically important protection (Aliyev, 2019, p. 20-21).

The fortress walls, which extend from north-east to south-west, are 120x63 m. The entrance is from the north. From the entrance to the left, the brick wall next to the tower, the auxiliary part, then the long wall, and the wall remains until the relief reaches the corner. Then, in a clockwise direction, the rear of the fortress adjoins the relief to the point where the Albanian temple is located, with a wall adjacent to the water reservoir near the temple. After the reservoir, the relief form of the fortress that runs through the back of the hedgehog wells ends with a wall remnant on the right side of the entrance.

The Albanian temple in the fortress was built in a secure area in the southern part of the fort. The lower floor is built deep and the next layer is laid. This is a kind of building block. The construction of the temple built by brick from the nearby brick wells is perfect. In the outer part of the north-west corner of the temple, the seat of the mid-sized pitcher was discovered during excavation. Next to the north wall were found ceramic tile parts used for the building of the temple's ceiling. There are also pieces of pottery water tubes used for laying the water line. Parts of pottery were also revealed from that section. Behind the temple, at the west end, there is a pool and a remnant of wall above. Recently, remnants of hedgehogs were recorded in the north-western part.

As a result of archeological excavations in the Albanian temple in Zarna Castle, the interior of the monument was revealed (Figure 11). The Albanian temple was built with river lime mortar. The total dimensions are 13x9 m (12.95x8.85 m). The thickness of the wall is 90 cm and 80 cm. The size of river stones used during construction varies between 30x20x10 cm and 35x25x10 cm. After removing the soil at a depth of 0.5-0.7 m, the floor was unearthed (Figure 10). The doors of the temple were unearthed; the walls of the rooms were exposed and cleaned. The survived part has been opened. The exterior of the shrine is situated at high altitude, and the exposed arched structure is cleared. Its archetype is built in accordance with the symmetry of the altar of the temple. The lounge floor is better than any other place. It was found out that the lower lash was poured out and flat stones were laid on it. So, the floor was flat and neat. The destructive effect of tree roots completely destroyed the top of the floor. Only a small part of it remained in the form of scrap. Only the central lounge and the lower floor in the entrance to the hall between the pastofory and the hall remained neatly (Figure 9). The surviving part of the south-west corner of the hall was also completely cleaned. This part of the soil that was underground was excavated (Aliyev, 2019, p. 22-23).

The common entrance to the temple is from the west. Once inside, there is a front hall entrance. To the south, after the corridor-shaped passage to the east, there is a direction towards the pasture. At first glance, the reminiscent of the narthex actually acts as a corridor for comfortable movement to the hall and pastofory. Interestingly, the southern wall of the temple also has

access to the mentioned section. It is also possible to enter the hall from the south. On the south side of the main wall facing the south entrance of the hall is another entrance adjacent to the previous entrance. From the intersection of those entrances, it is possible to climb into the pastofory and enter the lobby, complete with a small altar. Unlike the main altar, the western portion of the lodge's apartments is straightened. In the east, a semi-circular apex complements the temple. The southern wall of the temple also collapsed as a result of an earthquake or other natural disaster. The part was also cleared, and the remains of the wall were revealed. The west and south walls of the temple also cleared and reached the floor inside. Pastofory flooring has been destroyed by the devastating effects of tree roots, with the exception of niche. There the soil layer was opened. However, the entrance to the pastofory and the lower lash beyond the walls give reason to think of its floor. While the floor portion of the small altar, completed in the east, remained intact. The corridor-shaped south-western part has also been affected by the devastating effects of hardwood and shrub vegetation in some places, and in some parts, the hedgehog layer survives. Archaeological excavations have revealed chairs, mouths and locks on pottery near the temple, lounge, pastofory and entrance (Figure 11). There were also ceramic tiles covering the temple's ceiling and pottery tubes that provided water to the temple. Researches give evidence that the water line in the temple came from a nearby area. It is also based on our opinion that a 6 m diameter deep water pool, located at the end of the castle on the south-west corner of the Albanian Temple. The same structure was constructed in a circular form with lime sludge from the river stone and plastered inside. Above it is the remains of the fortress wall to the south. The pottery products obtained from archaeological excavations date back to the 5th and 9th centuries. Our research indicates that the fortress and the Albanian temple belonged to the Early Middle Ages (Figure 7).

Conclusions. The temple, built during the flourishing of Caucasian Albanian architecture (V-VII centuries), was restored in the VIII-IX centuries. Small bricks were also used during the reconstruction. Thus, both the specifics and the plan, the materials found suggest that the Zarna castle and the Albanian temple belong to the V-IX centuries [Aliyev, 2019, p. 55]. Early medieval Takhtali Albanian Christian temple in Zarna village also was found and prepared plan of the monument by us (Figure 12). Thus, the early medieval Zarna fortified temple, located in the village of Zarna in Gakh region (Azerbaijan Republic), is known for its unique architectural style and importance as a castle and temple complex. Archaeological research suggests that the fortification is one of the most important strategic points for Caucasian Albania. The village of Zarna, one of the significant points of Cambysena province of the Caucasus Albania, and the monuments on the coast

of Zarnachay occupy a special place in early medieval architecture. Such signs are typical for the north-western

region of Azerbaijan. Archaeological investigations give us strong reasons to believe this.

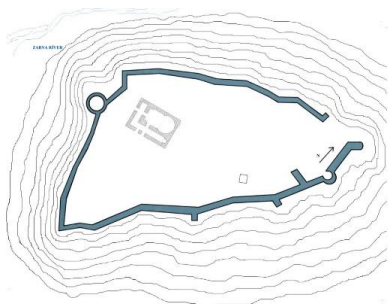


Figure 1. Plan of Zarna fortified temple (1:20 m) (Taleh Aliyev)

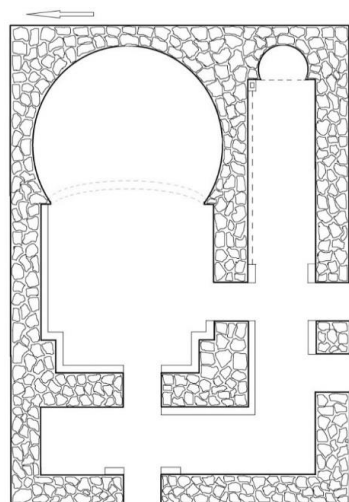


Figure 2. Plan of Zarna albanian temple (1:20) (Taleh Aliyev)



Figure 3. 3D photo of Zarna village (Taleh Aliyev)



Figure 4. Enter part wall remains of Zarna fortification



Figure 5. Tower N 1 of Zarna fortification



Figure 6. Defensive wall remains of Zarna fortification



Figure 7. Plan drawing process in Zarna albanian temple (Taleh Aliyev)



Figure 8. View of Zarna albanian temple



Figure 9. View of Zarna albanian temple's hall



Figure 10. Hall's floor of Zarna albanian temple

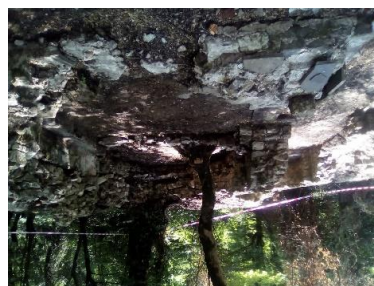


Figure 11. View after archaeological excavation in Zarna albanian temple

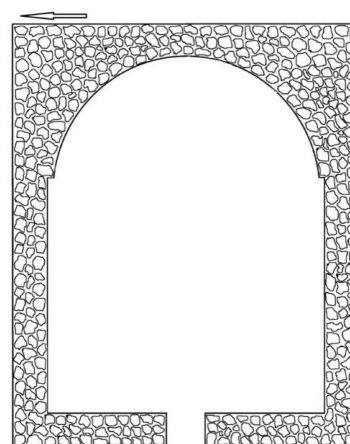


Figure 12. Plan of Takhtali albanian temple (1:20) (Taleh Aliyev)

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