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Syunik'  
During the Bronze  
and Iron Ages

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# Transliteration Key

		<u>As in</u>			<u>As in</u>
U u	A a	<u>Bar</u>	ᚱ ᚲ	Y y	<u>Day</u>
F f	B b	<u>Bar</u>	ᚿ ᚾ	N n	<u>Noon</u>
ᚼ ᚻ	G g	<u>Guard</u>	ᚷ ᚶ	Š š	<u>Shugar</u>
ᚦ ᚥ	D d	<u>Door</u>	ᚰ ᚱ	O o	<u>Home</u>
ᚢ ᚡ	E e	<u>Hen</u>	ᚲ ᚳ	Č č	<u>Church</u>
ᚔ ᚓ	Z z	<u>Zone</u>	ᚹ ᚸ	P p	<u>Pile</u>
ᚦ ᚥ	Ē ē	<u>Pen</u>	ᚰ ᚱ	J j	<u>Badge</u>
ᚢ ᚡ	Ě ě	<u>Earn</u>	ᚱ ᚲ	Ř ř	<u>Rythm</u>
ᚦ ᚥ	Ť ť	<u>Think</u>	U u	S s	<u>Sad</u>
ᚦ ᚥ	Ž ž	<u>J'ai (French)</u>	ᚷ ᚶ	V v	<u>Vail</u>
ᚦ ᚥ	I i	<u>Inn</u>	S s	T t	<u>Titan</u>
ᚢ ᚡ	L l	<u>Lamb</u>	ᚱ ᚲ	R r	<u>Door</u>
ᚢ ᚡ	X x	<u>Kharkov</u>	ᚱ ᚲ	C c	<u>Its</u>
ᚦ ᚥ	Ç ç	<u>Ads</u>	ᚱ ᚲ	Ć ć	<u>Pulp</u>
ᚢ ᚡ	K k	<u>Cat</u>	ᚱ ᚲ	Ć ć	<u>Kick</u>
ᚢ ᚡ	H h	<u>Hat</u>	O o	Ō ō	<u>Cone</u>
ᚢ ᚡ	Z z	<u>Adz</u>	ᚱ ᚲ	F f	<u>Fish</u>
ᚢ ᚡ	Ǧ ǧ	<u>Yataghan</u>			
ᚦ ᚥ	Č č	<u>Age</u>	u	ev	<u>Ever</u>
U u	M m	<u>Man</u>	m	u	<u>Loop</u>

# Introduction

During the last four or five decades, great achievements have been made in the study of the Armenian culture during the Bronze and Stone Ages, in both practical and theoretical works. Nevertheless, considerable shortcomings in some of the work complicate the clarification of certain issues. The foremost shortcoming was that all the monuments were not studied with equal attention. Until recently, the southeastern territory of Armenia, which constitutes the core of historic Syunik, was a “white spot” on the archaeological map.

Although rich with diverse monuments that include the representation of all phases of social progress, Syunik was not subjected to serious archaeological study. Previous studies of various researchers were casual in nature. Solutions to fundamental issues were not pursued, and therefore the issues raised in these studies remained limited to their particular findings. In addition, many objects uncovered in the region were presented without adequate description and expository materials; thus their scientific significance was devalued. Examples of this phenomenon will become clear during the discussion of these previous studies.

In 1898, in the vicinity of the village Teḡ in the region of Goris, E. A. Reusler excavated eight graves containing stone cists. According to Reusler, three of the eight had been robbed. Bronze daggers, ornaments, and various ceramic vessels were found in the remaining five. The cists were covered with mounds of soil filling, with large stones placed on top (229, p. 166–168). These artifacts uncovered by Reusler are kept at the State Historic Museum of Moscow and listed in chart I, inventory No. 39941 (this and forthcoming drawings were provided by the author). The artifacts are similar to ones found in the monuments of the 10<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.E. After E. Reusler did his work, excavations in Syunik were interrupted until 1931, when ethnographer St. Lisicyan, while gathering ethnographic materials in the regions of Sisian and

Goris, found archaeological objects that belonged to various eras—pottery, ornaments, and bronze and iron weapons. Unfortunately, these objects are not presented in his study. (33, p. 10. These materials are kept at the National Museum of Armenia—NMA hereafter—inventory No. 962/1–12.) However, Lisicyan did present an elaborate description of the monument called Zorakarer (formerly known also as Ķošuntaš), located not far from Sisian. He also offered his opinion on this ancient site (198, p. 709), which we will discuss in the corresponding chapter of this study.

Previous to this study is a relatively complete sketch of M. S. Hasrafiyan’s excavations in the Sisian region (Sisian, Axlafyan, Lor, Angeḡakoḡ) done in 1950–1952. There, Hasrafiyan uncovered materials belonging to various phases of the Bronze and Stone Ages. He paid particular attention to “Smith’s tomb,” which he excavated near the village of Akhlafyan, at a site called Jaḡaci Glux. Along with other objects from the Iron Age, molds and ladles for pouring metals were found there. Hasrafiyan also uncovered similar objects at Angeḡakoḡ and in the excavations of graveyards he found along the road leading from Sisian to Aḡitu (61, pp. 166–208). When speaking of Hasrafiyan’s work, we would like to highlight the colorful vessels he uncovered at Jaḡaci Glux. These vessels are “similar to the samples found in Karmir Vank” (the findings are kept at NMA, inventory No. 2522–2526, 2528/266). In this instance also the materials were presented without professional research, but unlike the previous researchers discussed, along with his finds, Hasrafiyan presented charts of the grave complexes, which greatly increased their scientific significance. Hasrafiyan, however, did not date the materials, and, in the final analysis, the study cannot be considered thorough.

Also of particular interest are the artifacts found by S. A. Esayan and A. N. Šahinyan at the site called Šakarajur, located 5 kilometers to the west of Goris. Uncovered at this monument, which was unfortunately

destroyed during the construction of the Goris-Šinuhayr road, were a quern, a mortar and pestle, a stone miniature of a wheel, and a stone thresher, which is considered an important find. The authors dated the thresher back to the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C.E. (157, pp. 199–208).

The rock drawings of Çxuk, Uxtasar, and Kaputjuř are invaluable in terms of examining the different aspects of life during the period under study. They also add to our understanding of the animal world of Syunik (52:10, pp. 45–54). Also noteworthy is G. H. Karaxyan's find of a fragment of a stone mold that had a circular handle for casting daggers. Karaxyan uncovered this fragment from the territory destroyed during the construction of the Kapan-Kajaran road (174, pp. 75–77).

Artifacts pertinent to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennia B.C.E. were uncovered from the destroyed tomb located in the village of Tolors in the Sisian region. Along with various weapons and five skeletons, pottery, implements, and gold ornaments were found in the cist that belonged to the tribal leader (217, pp. 99–105). Artifacts dating to the same period were found also in the half-destroyed graves of the town of Davit-Bek and the village of Lçen of the Kajaran and Sisian regions.

The five-faced idol uncovered in the village of Haržis in the region of Goris was one of the finds accidentally discovered by L. A. Barseřyan. He dated it as belonging to the 13<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> centuries B.C.E. (13, p. 258), whereas H. A. Martirosyan dated these finds as belonging to the 13<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, after the high-reliefs of Kyavur-Kala and Yazil-Ka (204, p. 180, il. 74). S. A. Esayan found Martirosyan's suggestion for the date more probable. Nevertheless, he suggested that conclusive dating of these pieces would occur in the future, because high-reliefs in the Armenian plateau were common in Urartian art, but the practice of creating reliefs in general was maintained until the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium (154, p. 270).

In 1951, a bronze statuette of a lion was also found by accident in the village of Sznak in the Kapan region (weight: 5,175 g., il. 1). It is a sample of Urartian art (159, p. 69). The cuneiform inscription of Rusa I (713–658 B.C.E.), son of Argiřti II, that was uncovered at the monastery of Tanahat, not far from the village of Arevis in the Sisian region, proves that the Urartians had invaded Syunik. The inscription says that Argiřti II conquered the cities of Irdua and Amuřa of the Çuluku (Çxuk in Armenian) country (59, pp. 93–104).

In conclusion, we would like to mention the two graves excavated by H. R. Israyelyan near the city of Moz and the two others excavated by R. M. Torosyan

at the edge of the village of Geřanuř. The results of these finds are not yet published.

The scarcity of materials can cause complications when one tries to generalize. This is evident when one tries to examine and compare the various opinions on the subject. According to A. A. Yessen, Armenia and western Azerbaijan (that is, Arcax or Āarabař), except for Talish, were one unified cultural territory during the Late Bronze and Early Iron Ages (164, p. 596; 165, pp. 116, 151). Meanwhile, B. A. Kuftin suggests the presence of the archaeological cultures of Gançak-Āarabař and Ēriax (mid-Araxes) in the same territory. Kuftin does not exclude, however, the existence of an extended unit of cognate tribes throughout Central Transcaucasus (183, pp. 2–4). B. B. Piotrovski divides the same territory only into metalworking hearths. According to him, such hearths included: (1) Central Transcaucasus (Armenia); (2) Western Azerbaijan; (3) the converging point of the Rivers Kur and Araxes; (4) Syunik and Taliř; and (5) the basin of Lake Sevan, located near the Azerbaijani border (237, pp. 54–55). K. K. Kuřnaryova has a different opinion. He concludes that at the dawn of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C.E., Getabek-Āarabař and Zangezur (that is, Syunik) constituted one local hearth, and that the plain of Muřan, together with Taliř, made up another (188, pp. 160–163). Finally, H. A. Martirosyan views Zangezur as a hearth within the boundaries of the pan-Armenian culture (204, pp. 147–150, 159).

As a result of these studies and the opinions expressed, we concluded the following. Because Syunik was not researched previously, it did not offer these researchers the opportunity to follow the cultural progress of its territory and to discover its peculiarities; therefore, by now considering it, the findings at Syunik highlight the disagreement between the earlier studies with regard not only to the boundaries of the local hearth formed in Syunik during the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennia B.C.E., but also to the role it played within the sphere of pan-Armenian culture. Therefore, the fact that Syunik was not explored before this study, negatively affected the research of the pan-Armenian culture. Conclusions with regard to the pan-Armenian culture should not be completed based on scattered and scarce publications that lack scientific coordination and suffer from many shortcomings. Naturally, one cannot discuss the relationship Armenia had with neighboring countries without clarifying the boundaries of a given culture and the changes it underwent over time. In this study we examine the ancient culture of Syunik as a link in the chain of Armenian history. Examining Syunik in this way means emerging from narrow local circles and examining the

neighboring territories (the basin of Sevan and Vayk'). This study, which includes the excavations of gravesites and other monuments of various eras in Syunik', Vayk', and the southwestern basin of Sevan during 1970 to 1991, intends to fill in the gap of knowledge to a certain extent. Hence, the goal of this study is:

- a. to establish a chronological table based on the classification and division into periods of the archaeological finds and, through examination of these finds, to clarify as much as possible the relationship between the cultures of the different ages and the changes these cultures underwent;
- b. to specify the significance and the role of the culture in the territory through the comparison of materials uncovered in Armenia and neigh-

boring countries from the same period and to outline the peculiarities, boundaries, period of formation, and cognate relationships;

- c. to examine, as much as possible, the progression of trades, such as metalwork, pottery, stone cutting, and woodwork and to try to penetrate deep into socioeconomic issues;
- d. to better understand ancient beliefs through examination of graves and ritual artifacts.

Not all the theories we plan to suggest in this study will be supported sufficiently; the current state of data does not allow us to do so. Some of the theories that we will present should be regarded as working hypotheses that future studies may confirm or dismiss. The author will be satisfied if this study—the first to examine the culture of Syunik' in the Bronze and Iron Ages—serves to promote future work in the field.

# The Nature and Climate of Syunik

According to the world map, Syunik, the ninth district of Armenia Major, was located between Erasx and Arcax, in the territory to the east of Ayrarat, comprising the provinces of Geḫarkunik and Sofk (79, p. 295). The same territorial boundaries are mentioned by Stepanos Orbelyan, the historian of the House of Syunik (87, pp.70–71). Xorenaci, the father of Armenian history, noted that Syunik had a boundary “[extending] from the sea unto a plain to the east, where Erasx, cutting through the steep mountains and the long and narrow gorges, pours into it with great ado” (41, p. 42). Claudius Ptolemy, the geographer of the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries, considered the eastern boundary of Syunik (Siraken) to be a border of Kaspik (40, p. 208).

Today, Syunik comprises the southeastern section of the Republic of Armenia. The current study, however, covers the territory that extends unto the mountain ranges of Vardenis (3,000–3,500 m) and Gndasar (2,947 m) to the north and west. The mountain range of Vayk divides the Rivers Arpa and Naxijevan. It contains the longest mountain branch (3,120 m) of the northwestern mountain range of Syunik. To the south, the boundary, through the Araxes riverbed, reaches the mountain range of Syunik. This range extends for 130 kilometers from north to south then turns north and then west again through the mountain range of Vayk. To the southeast of Syunik, from the mountain range of Vardenis to the peak of Great Iḫxanasar (3,552 m) is the vast mountain shield of Arcaḫ. Therefore, the study includes the historic-ethnographic regions of Vayk and Syunik, or the regions of Eḫegnazor, Vayk, Sisian, Goris, Kapan, and Meḫri (see map).

The fundamental geography of the area most likely began to form during the Alpine era and continued until the fourth era, undergoing a long process of formation.

The mountain ranges, which extend north-south and east-west give the landscape of Syunik a unique

charm that is both rigid and sublime. It is a territory surrounded by mountains and studded with mountain passes, declivities, and concavities. Vayk is a mountainous region surrounded by the mountain ranges of Vardenis in the north, Hayoc Zor in the south, and Syunik in the east. This territory is connected with Ararat’s concavity by the mountain pass of Zovašen, which cuts across the many mountain branches affiliated with the Gndasar and Urç ranges (57, p. 63). It also communicates with the basin of Sevan and the territory of Naxijevan through the mountain pass of Sulema (2,410 m) and the gorge of Arpa, respectively. The territory has the vertical zoning characteristics of mountainous countries; its physical-geographical features are represented by low (up to 1,400 m), middle (1,400–2,800 m), and high (2,800 m and up) zones. The lower region (to Vayk) is distinguished by the mountainous chestnut-brown soil of dry steppe. (The plowlands in Eḫegnazor occupy 11,615 acres and cover 15,200 acres in Vayk region.) Vayk is linked to the Čḫuk district through the Orotan mountain pass (2,344 m). The landscape at this elevation consists of sub-Alpine mountainous meadowland (pastures cover 102,200 acres). Woods soften the rocky and stony areas (which occupy 65% of the territory) and cover 8,764 acres (56, Vol. I, pp. 116–117; Vol. III, pp. 501–502).

The landscape of the eastern section of the region is different. The difference in terrain is noticeable once one arrives at the Syunik mountain range, which separates Vayk from Syunik. This range is one of the highest in Armenia. The height of the peak of Kaputjuḫ, second only to Aragaç, is 3,906 m. The northern part of the mountain range (from Ayrisar to Kaputjuḫ) is lower than the southern part (average height 2,800 m), and the passes connecting Vayk to Syunik and Syunik to Naxijevan (Sisian mountain pass, 2,345 m) are easy to cross. The mountain passes found in the southern half, which connect the river valleys of the Oḫji and

the Gilyan (Kaputjuř pass) and Meřri with Agulis and Ordubad (Bařakar pass), are harder to cross because of the steepness of the slopes in that region. The Tařtun pass (2,480 m high) located on the mountain range of Meřri and Arevik (59 km long) is of great importance, linking the regions of Meřri and Kapan. The other pass is Girafař, which links the southern and northern parts of the Barguřat mountain range. Beginning with the Geřakar summit (3,343 m) of the Syunik mountain ranges, the mountain range of Barguřat extends eastward, rising occasionally to a height above 3,000 meters (Aramazd 3,392 m; Āarkatar 3,270 m; Erkařasar 3,327 m); the peak known as Xustuř is distinguished among these (3,214 m), with its rocky summit and steep cliffs giving the Barguřat mountain range a unique charm and grandeur.

The landscape of the northeastern portion of Syunik is also different. Pyramidal rocks of the fractional stones of volcanic cement form high peaks near Goris. Distinguished among these are the summits of Āřuk (3,581 m), Great Iřxanasar (3,546 m), and Glux Zageřorin (3,252 m).

Containing a complex of mountain ranges rising in different directions, volcanic tablelands, and deep gorges and chasms, Syunik, with regard to its geological and physical-geographical features, is divided into two sections along the River Orotan: a) the Syunik mountain range with its branches (in the south and west), and b) the volcanic tableland of Syunik or Arcař (in the northeast). The latter, rather than being covered by the forest of the former, has a mountainous steppe-like landscape (6, p. 7). The mountain ranges of Meřri and Barguřat extend from west to east and divide the territory of Syunik into three declivities, all surrounded by high mountains (the river valley of the Orotan in the north, the river valleys of the Ořji and the Cav in the center, and the left bank of the Araxes in the south).

The mountainous landscape and the cold Arctic weather that tends to come down through the Caucasian mountain ranges and penetrate the region from the northeast bring diversity to the climate. The plant and animal kingdoms, like the climate, are subject to the law of vertical zoning in Syunik, which creates favorable conditions for the development of agriculture and animal breeding. Thus, the foothills of Meřri and the regions of the lower branches of the Orotan, the Ořji, and the Cav are distinguished by a dry, subtropical climate and corresponding vegetation (pomegranate, fig, chestnut, ground-nut, etc.). The Syunik mountain range, at an elevation of 3,200 to 3,900 meters, and on the Arcař plateau (2,400–2,800 m), which lies to the south, is composed of huge volcanic masses (3,200–3,500 m); the climate is cold, and

the vegetation is distinguished by sub-Alpine species at elevations of 2,300 to 3,200 meters. This landscape, with its continental climate, gradually retreats before mountainous meadows and magnificent pastures that are favorable for animal breeding. In the Sisian region, pastures make up 42% of the area, in Goris 27%, in Kapan 17%, and in Meřri 11%. In the Meřri region, the meadowlands are usually found on the slopes of the mountains. These slopes are conducive to dairy cattle breeding. In January, the temperature averages 0°C in Meřri. It reaches –2°C in the eastern part of the region. Temperatures drop to –10°C in the Syunik mountain range. During summer, in July, the average temperature in Meřri is 26°C, and 20°C in its eastern part. The temperature drops to 10°C to 12°C toward the west and north. In Vayk, the average temperature in January is from –4°C (in the Arřa valley) to –10°C (at the northeastern border's edge), while in July it is 26°C (in the Arřa valley), dropping to 12°C in the mountains (57, p. 179).

The mountains, rocks, and deep gorges that characterize the landscape of Syunik limit the availability of plowlands. Plowlands make up only 5.1% of the territory: 15.9% in Sisian, 24.8% in Goris, and 3.2% in Meřri. Woods and shrubbery cover the rest of the land—approximately 89,275 acres (6, pp. 95–97). Georgian and eastern oaks, brooms, and yews make up the wooded area, which is particularly large in Kapan (35.6% of the territory). There are also various fruit-bearing trees and shrubs—wild pear, fig, pomegranate, chestnut, cornelian cherry, apple, plum, etc. Blackberries, raspberries, and sweetbriars grow between the trees. Scattered patches of wild grapes make the area difficult to pass through. This unique landscape is completed by the presence of řaki Fall (Sisian region, il. 2) and Satan's Bridge on the River Orotan, not far from Tařev. Satan's Bridge is a natural wonder, 30 meters long and 50 to 60 meters wide. It derives its charm from the stalactites of travertine and limestone, which shine with the colors of the rainbow. The mineral springs surrounding the bridge are famous for their healing properties.

There are also a variety of species of animals. Particularly in the southern parts of Meřri and in the foothills adjacent to the plain of Kur-Araxes, animals similar to those found in regions of Iran are common. Animal populations sometimes reach as far as the river valleys of Orotan and Ořji, and Goris. Particularly abundant are the Syrian bear, hyena, wild boar, and a species of venomous snake, all of which, except for the hyena, are also found in Vayk. In the higher zone, and in the northern regions of Syunik and the high mountainous zone, these animals are replaced by the wild

sheep, stag, bearded goat, wild cat, mountain turkey, lynx, panther, wolf, fox, rabbit, and gopher. The animal kingdom of Syunik was richer during the period of our study. Proof of this can be seen in the rock drawings of the Syunik mountains. The drawings depict bearded goats, mouflons, stags, horses, dogs, wolves, bears, panthers, and lions (52, pp. 11, 40).

The landscape in Syunik is enriched by fast-flowing rivers that originate in the mountains, descending from an elevation of 2,000–3,000 meters. They play a significant role in irrigation, because precipitation in the region is limited.

The annual rainfall in Sisian is 366 millimeters, in Kapan-Goris 600–800 millimeters, and in Meñri 250–270 millimeters. The climate of Meñri is dry (6, pp. 17, 30–38). Vayk also has a dry climate, and so its major river Arpa and the water from its rivulets Ekekis, Glazor, and others are of extreme importance. In Syunik, the important rivers are Meñri (32 km), Švanizor, and, particularly, Orotan (179 km) and Oñji (88 km) with their Vararak, Šamb, Lořazor, Geñi, and other rivulets. Almost 30 small mountainous lakes and reservoirs pocket the region, generating considerable humidity.

The territory of Syunik is rich in minerals, many of which were used as early as the Aeneolithic period. There were copper mines in Kapan that occupied 65–70 square kilometers. In Cav, Šikahoñ, Kajaran, Agarak, and Kajaran, the oxidized layer is 50 meters thick. Dastakert in Sisian, Ličk, the displays in Arçvaberd, and the mineral fields of Aygezor are also rich with copper mines. Vayk also has copper mines (the mineral field of Vayoc Zor, the group of mineral veins of Vardenis, the mineral field of Ptoši Berd, the mineral veins of Ėlpin, etc.).

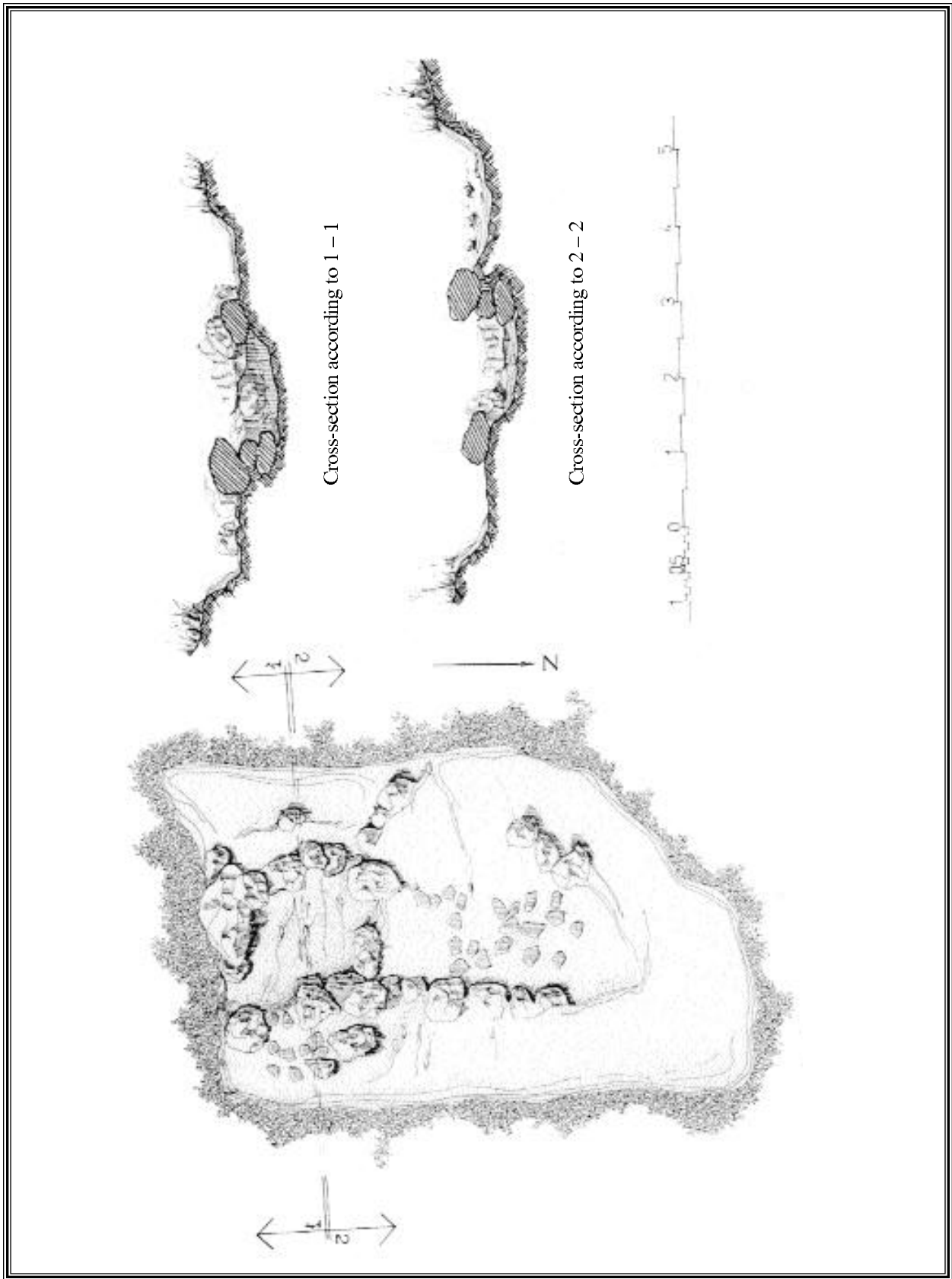
In addition, the territory is rich with iron mines.

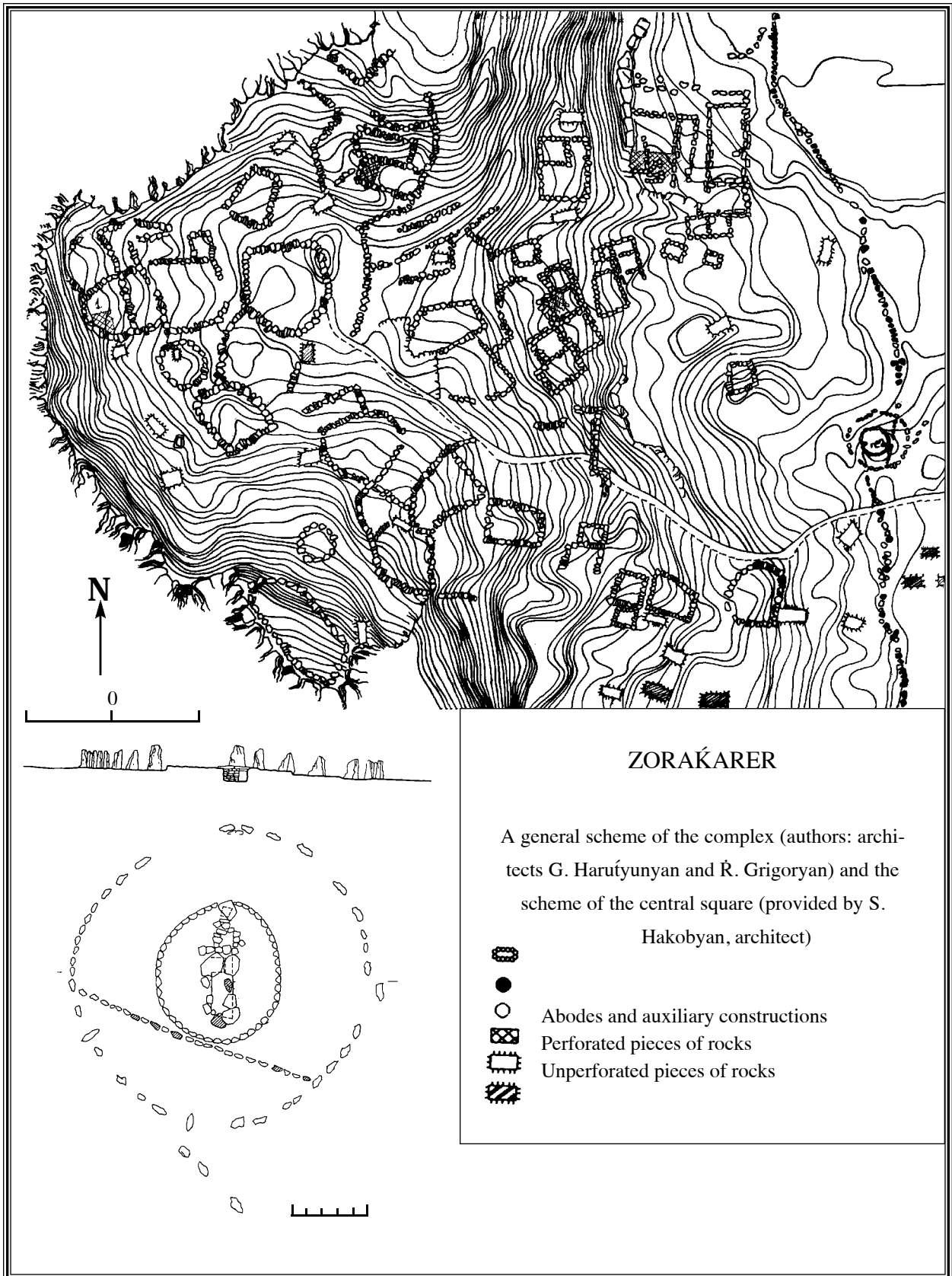
Particularly significant are the fields of Svaranc and Meñri.

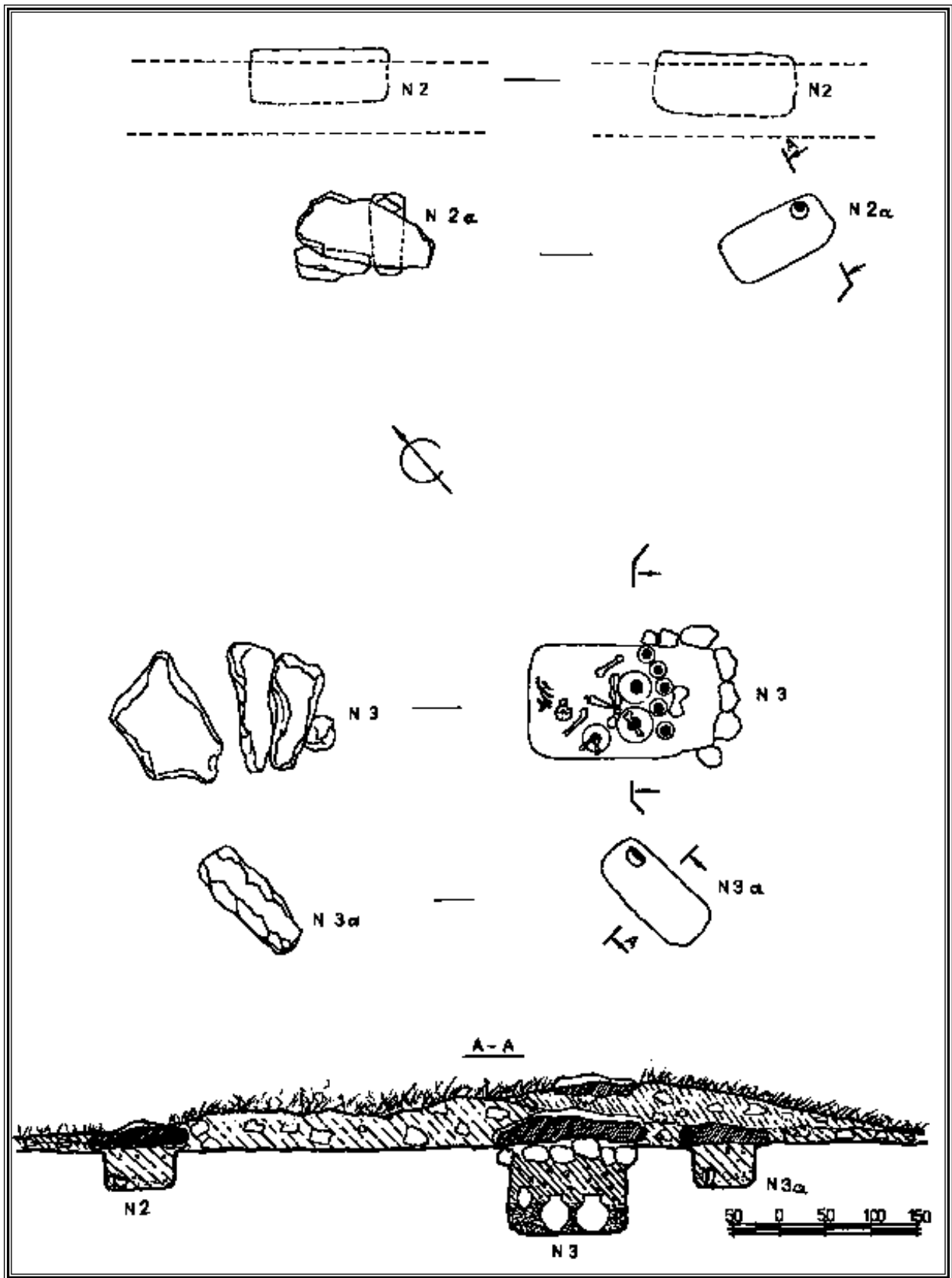
Of particular importance to the metalworkers of the period under study was the presence of arsenic. Of the numerous arsenic (As) ores of industrial significance arsenopyrite ( $\text{FeAsS}$ , which consists of 46% As); löllingite ( $\text{FeAs}_2$ , As=72%); realgar ( $\text{As}_2\text{S}_2$ , As=70.1%); arsenic-sulfate ( $\text{As}_2\text{S}_3$ , As=61%); and enargite ( $\text{Cu}_3\text{AsS}_4$ , As=19.1%) are found in the region. These were mined from the Pirzamin mine of the Meñri region, located about 1.5 kilometers south of the village of Ťaxamir (As here makes up 10% of the pyrite and arsenopyrite mines) and from the Salvartin mine located close to the Salvartin river in the region of Sisian where the red pigmented realgar shows up together with cinnabar and antimony. The smaller mixtures of enargite and tennantite are common to the pyretic mines in Kapan and the copper-molybdenum mines in Kajaran.

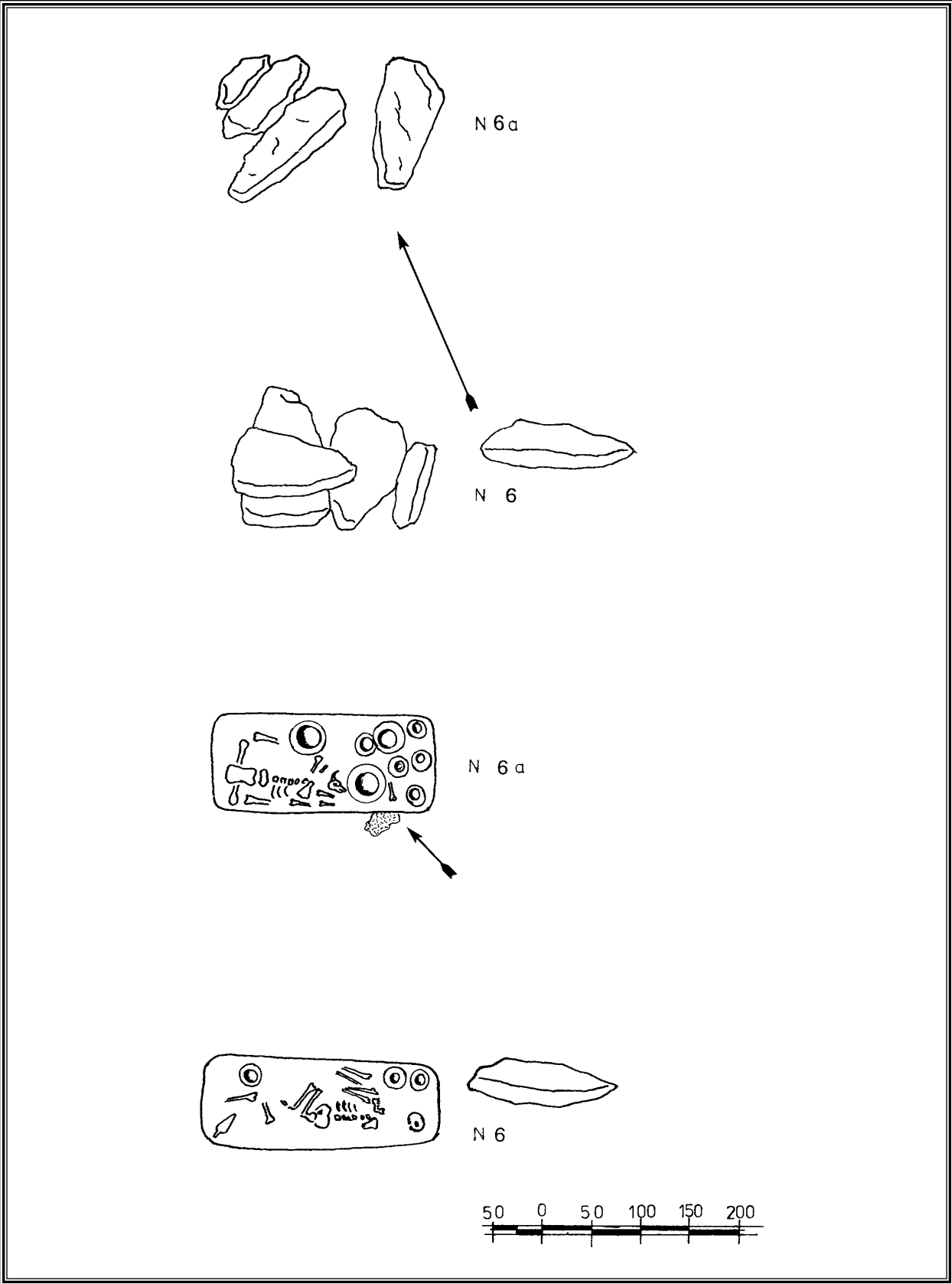
There are deposits of lead, gold, and antimony in the territory, none of which had industrial significance in the prehistoric era. In the mines of Šikahoñ, gold is 10–20 grams per ton, and 0.4–14 g/ton in the veins of Kaputsar. Silver is found at 2–82 g/ton. In the Azateg mines, which predominately contain lead and antimony, gold is 5–17 and silver 400–500 g/ton. (122, pp. 156–180, 203–223, 296–299, 316–330, 452–485). With the wide variety of stones and trees available, whose significance is invaluable in terms of the progress of various trades and particularly of construction, the lack of these basic materials was never a problem in this mountainous land.

Thus is the natural environment of Syunik, where, from the most ancient times, creative people left us monuments that represent all stages of human development.

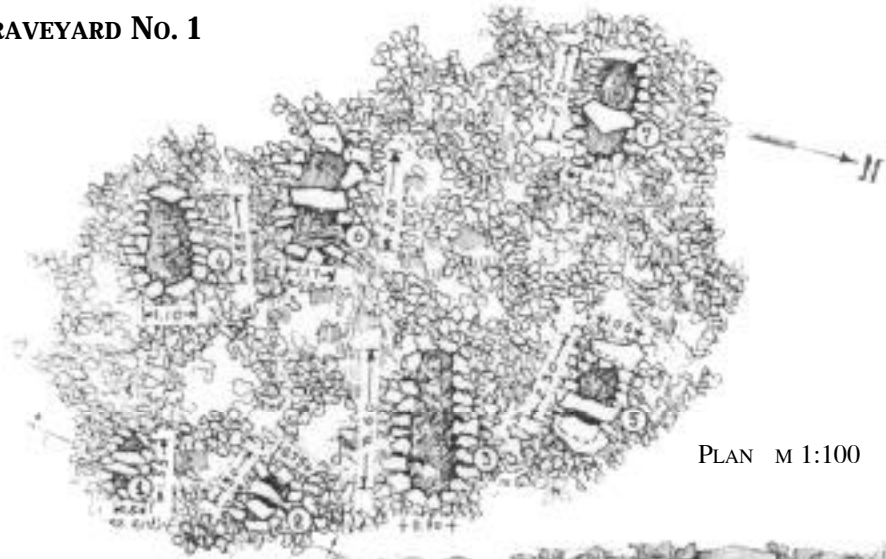






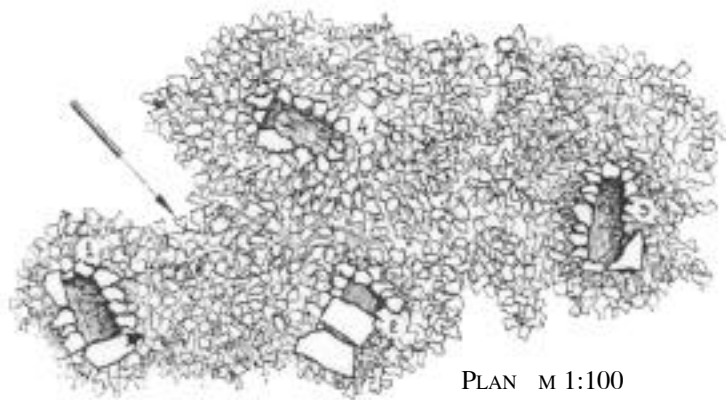


**MOZ - GRAVEYARD No. 1**

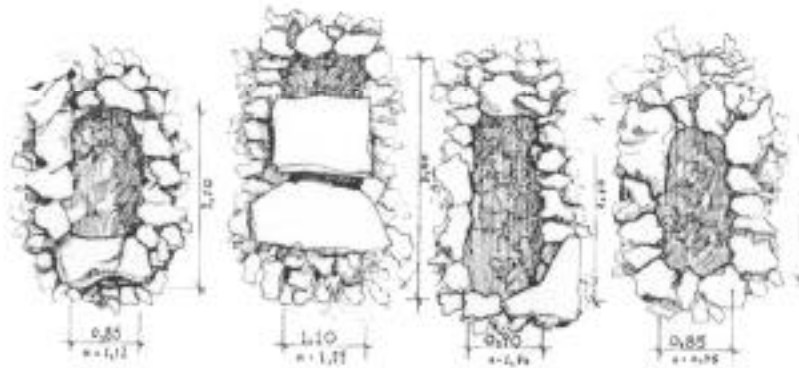


PLAN M 1:100

CROSS-SECTION A-A M 1:50



PLAN M 1:100



Tomb No. 1 H=1.10 Tomb No. 2 H=1.25 Tomb No. 3 H=1.05 M 1:50

