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Vinicultur in Urartu Civilitation Faruk ALAEDDINOGLU, Nuray TURKER

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This paper examines the viticulture in Urartu Civilization which was ruled over 3 centuries in the eastern of Anatolia, Turkey. In this paper the data obtained from field survey, literature, and interviews with local people, grape producers, and archeologists are presented. This paper also attempted to determine the importance of viticulture in the eastern Anatolia in the context of Urartu civilization.

Archeological excavations prove that viticulture in Anatolia dates back to 6000-5000 BC. Urartu civilization which was located near Van region had remarkable competence about viticulture and wine production. Urartians whose culture and civilizations based on agriculture and trade left numerous artifacts of which are still functional. The most important ones that made the Urartu civilization unique are the irrigation canals. In Urartu period the agriculture was heavily based on irrigation system. One of the most important projects, even today considered important was the Şamran (Menua, Semiramis) Canal that is 51 km long which was built for the irrigation of vineyards. The importance of grape cultivation and viticulture for Urartians can be understood when the length of the canal is taken into consideration. The canal which has been in service for 2800 years is still in function. Findings obtained from Ayanis, Ercis (Çelebibağ mound 3000 BC), and Cavustepe excavations showed that wine has been consumed by Urartians widespread. Inscriptions and wine cellars emerged from the excavations prove this issue. Viticulture prevailed in Urartu civilization was inherited from Mesopotamia. After the demolition of Urartu civilization Armenians had sustained the viticulture and wine production. Data obtained from field survey from the interviews with people of Armenian origin suggested that the grapevine was brought to France for viticulture and today still wine have been produced from these varieties.

Grape varieties in Van region have different color, shape, size and flavor. For instance while grapes that are cultivated in Erciş town are generally black, tart, adherent, round and with a rough texture, grapes of Van are white, soft, and more sweet. *Ercis* grape is the only grape vines that survived from the past in the region. Today during the harvest time between September and October some festivities are organized traditionally. Viticulture in the region in the past so prevalent that many settlements were given names of the vineyards. For example Beyüzümü District, Çelebibağ sub-district, Şah Bağı Village. Observations in the area and interviews with local people, grape producers, and archeologists in the excavation areas present the importance of the area in terms of viticulture and its great potential for the future.

Keywords: Van region, Menua Canal, Urartu civilization, Viticulture, Wine