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Selin Elizabeth Nugent April 9, 2012

# A Death in the Imperial Frontier: A biocultural analysis of mobility and origins of a foreigner buried at Oğlanqala, Azerbaijan.

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Abstract

A Death in the Imperial Frontier: A biocultural analysis of mobility and origins of a foreigner buried at Oğlanqala, Azerbaijan.

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During the late 1st c. BCE and early 1st c. CE, the Caucasus became a focus of attention for the Roman and Parthian Empires as tension rose between the powers over political influence in the region. Yet, archaeological evidence, particularly human remains, of their physical involvement in the Caucasus is sparse. At the site of Oğlanqala in Naxçivan, Azerbaijan, a pithos burial found containing an individual buried with artifacts of the Roman cultural sphere from the period may be a representative of the foreign presence attested by texts. In this project, I aim to assess the mobility and origins of the individual found buried in a pithos at Oğlanqala in a two-fold approach to the biological and material remains of an individual preserved in the archaeological record. Biochemical techniques are the primary methods used to determine locality as well as narrow the possible regions of origin. These results are then supported and elaborated though discussion of burial artifacts and textual history of the Caucasus. I hypothesize that the individual's skeletal remains and burial artifacts are of European origin and suggest possible reasons for his or her presence in the region.

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## Introduction

It is not often that researchers have the chance to delve deeply into the life of an individual of common society in antiquity. In an effort to reveal a broader history, individual identities and roles within the context of ancient society are muffled. Frequently, they are lost within the data of a large cemetery population, their physical remains disassociated from their burial goods, and/or they are overlooked by a textual history that focuses on the lives of major figures. A single, isolated pithos burial from the 1st century BCE- 1st century CE at the site of Oğlanqala presented the perfect opportunity to study a burial comprehensively. The practice of burial in a pithos is a local tradition, but the artifacts in the burial are characteristically Roman. The unique find raised the question of the origin and identity of the buried individual as well as the implications for the position of Oğlanqala in the period. In order to address this question, I aim to assess the mobility and origins of the individual found buried in a pithos at Oğlanqala in a two-fold approach that draws attention to the often overlooked single agent as preserved in the archaeological record. Biochemical techniques are the primary methods used to determine local or non-local status as well as narrow the possible regions of origin. These results are then supported and elaborated though discussion of burial artifacts and textual history of the Caucasus. The combination of bioarchaeological, archaeological and textual evidence is used to develop a microhistory of the individual's life and mobility which in turn begins to inform a broader context of Roman influence and involvement at Oğlanqala and the Caucasus.

Oğlanqala is the focus of the Naxçivan Archaeological Project, which is the first American-Azerbaijani cooperative program of archaeological survey and excavation. The site

itself occupies an ideal position in the region. Oğlanqala is located on a large hill adjacent to the Arpaçay River in the fertile Sharur plain of Naxçivan, an exclave of Azerbaijan bordered by Turkey to the west, Armenia to the east and Iran to the south. The site encompasses an area of 12 hectares. In antiquity, Oğlanqala was situated along one of the major north-south passes through the Caucasus, which may have contributed to its power in the region (Ristvet, et al 2012).

Initial excavations at Oğlanqala by an Azerbaijani team began in 1988. The


**Image 1.1** Map of the Caucasus and Oğlanqala

archaeologists suggested that there were four phases of occupation reflecting a time period between 1200 and 100 B.C.E. (Bakhshaliyev 1994). In 2006, the American-Azerbaijani team began work at the site. The initially established chronology was shifted and divided into four phases: Period IV (c. 800-600 BCE) consisting primarily of a large Urartian-period fortress, Period III (c. 400-200 BCE) comprising an Achaemenid or Post-Achaemenid rebuilding of the fortress, Period II (c. 100 BCE-100CE) primarily consisting of rubbish pits and a few small structures, and Period I is a 20th century occupation associated primarily with WWI activity. The goal of the research was to explore the political and economic structure of the Iron Age state formed on the site in the 9th to 7th centuries B.C.E. as well as the extent and effect of imperialism on the region under the Achaemenid Empire between 550 and 330 B.C.E. Archaeologists collected evidence through excavation, geophysical survey, satellite imagery, surface survey, archaeobotony, zooarchaeology, soil analysis, ceramic analysis and 3D geographic information system (Ristvet et al. 2012). A limited number of human skeletal remains were found during the past three seasons of excavation. Most of the burials were modern, dating from around the period of World War I.

The pithos burial was found in the 2011 season just outside of the western wall. Unlike similar pithos burials in the region, it was isolated and not part of a cemetery. Four Roman coins of Emperor Augustus, depicting his adopted sons Caius and Lucius Caesars, found with the skeleton dated the burial to between 2 BCE and the early 1st century CE. Other burial artifacts included seven Roman-style finger rings, three Roman glass *aryballoi*, and one Phoenician-like horned glass bead. The skeleton itself suffered greatly from destructive taphonomic processes. However, well-preserved dentition allowed for age and biochemical analysis.

Dental enamel was collected from the first molars to perform oxygen ($\delta^{18}O$) isotope analysis for mobility patterns. Archaeological faunal enamel samples from rat teeth were also collected from nearby on the site and served as a representative of local $\delta^{18}O$ signatures. The comparison of local faunal values to the human values should indicate whether the individual was a local inhabitant or a non-local immigrant. If non-local, the human values could then be analyzed in comparison to similar published studies to determine possible regions of origin.

Bioarchaeological data will form the foundational biological identity, which the archaeological data will supplement. The analysis of the skeleton and dentition provide first image of the individual's identity; the age, pathologies, and patterns of movement in the person's life. The archaeological data then represents the cultural aspects of identity as shaped by the possession of certain artifacts. Then, by looking at these details within the broader context of the Caucasus in the late 1$^{st}$ century BCE- early 1$^{st}$ century CE, it will be possible to not only assess who the individual was and why he or she was buried at Oğlanqala, but also learn about how the site functioned in the period and investigate the influences of the Roman Empire in the region.

## 2. Historical Background

Between the mid-1st century B.C.E. and the early 1st century C.E., Oğlanqala was near the border of the Media Atropatene and Kingdom of Armenia, two states that became a focus of political tensions and a theater of war for conflicts between the Roman Empire to the west and the Parthian Empire to the east. Neighboring regions included Cappadocia and Commagene to the west, Colchis, Iberia, and Albania to the north, Media Atropatene to the south and east, and Syria and Parthia to the south. The insular geographical nature of the Caucasus facilitated the development of the distinct role it played in the region. Nearly 90% of the region is more than 1,000 meters above sea-level, as reflected in its many plateaus and unique conical mountains (Isaac 1992). In contrast, the deep valleys of the Kara, Murat, and Araxes rivers cut through the mountainous landscape, providing narrow corridors accessible for settlement and travel across the region (Cooley 2009). As a result, in part, of its complex geography, the region remained fairly independent and isolated from the direct rule of either the Parthian or the Roman Empires, serving as a political and cultural middle ground (Buchan 1947). However, the position as a wedge between two expanding empires soon cast Media Atropatene and Armenia at the center of hostilities in the region.

The history of the Caucasus during this period of mounting tensions between Rome and Parthia is fairly well documented as are several individual events and personalities. Despite the emphasis placed on these interactions in antiquity, the literary sources available are almost exclusively from the Roman perspective. Literary sources from Parthia and the Caucasus are rare. However, this is not to say that they would not have had documentation of the events transpiring in the Caucasus. Parthian kings would have likely accumulated a wealth of

knowledge about the Roman presence in the Caucasus through Parthian and Roman envoy reports, imperial letters, and the experiences of travelers and merchants (Kennedy 1996b). These records have simply not been discovered or do not survive. Thus, the current understanding of Roman and Parthian interaction is lopsidedly narrated from a single side with its own agendas and biases (Pollard 2007). These sources are not uninformative, but should be treated with due caution.

Caesar Augustus' epigraphic autobiography, *Res Gestae divi Augusti*, provides the most thorough account of Roman involvement with the Caucasus in the late 1st century B.C.E and the early 1st century C.E. The text is the first person recollection of Augustus describing his political accomplishments during his reign (Rose 2005). Naturally, descriptions are occasionally skewed to support the positive portrayal of the emperor. For example, Augustus confidently states that "although, I could have made Greater Armenia a province, on the assassination of Artaxes, its king, I preferred, in accordance with the example set by our ancestors to hand this kingdom over to Tigranes, son of Artavasdes *(Res Gestae* 27.2)." Considering the brutal defeats previously experienced by Rome in its attempt to capture Armenia, it was highly unlikely that Augustus would have attempted such a dangerous move. Rather, the statement supports his controversial choice to approach Armenia diplomatically to a Roman public expecting military victory. Other authors who discuss the Roman-Parthian interactions include Roman historians Tacitus, Cassius Dio, Plutarch, and Velleius Paterculus. The ancient authors recount the history of Roman involvement in the Caucasus along the same lines as the *Res Gestae* , but also elaborate upon details that Augustus omits such as the events leading to the death of Caius Caesar. Of the group, Velleius Paterculus, while a state historian, serves as a trusted source because he also served under Caius Caesar on campaign in the Caucasus and describes his experiences in detail.

Finally, in addition to the primary ancient sources, secondary sources by translators and scholars of the ancient texts will also be relied upon to account for various differing interpretations of the texts.

**2.1 War, Revenge and Defeat: Early Roman involvement in the East**

Official Roman relations with the region began in 96 B.C.E. when the proconsul Lucius Cornelius Sulla met with Parthian ambassador Orobazus and created an *amicitia* treaty. The treaty was an agreement that Rome and Parthia would recognize the Euphrates as a natural border between the two powers (Ferguson 2005). During the Third Mithradic War, in 69 B.C.E., the expanding Kingdom of Armenia, led by Tigranes the Great, posed a threat to the borders of the Roman world. In an effort to halt expansionary actions, Roman Consul Lucius Licinius Lucullus gathered his military forces and, without declaring war, laid siege to the Armenian city of Tigranocerta. The attacks took the Armenians wholly by surprise and resulted in their eventual defeat (Plutarch 2.25.5). However, as Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus succeeded Lucullus in commanding affairs in the east, Tigranes the Great reassumed his throne (Plutarch 2.35.2). In response, Pompey promised Parthian king Phraates II the lands captured by Lucullus in Mesopotamia in exchange for military support in Armenia (Dio 45.3;Plutarch 5.30.1; Yakobsen 2009). Meanwhile, Roman forces were distracted by Mithridates in Pontos. The Parthians agreed, attacked Artaxata to no avail and retreated. Then, in 67 B.C.E. Pompey began advancing toward Armenia with the goal of capturing Artaxata (Dio 51.2). The Armenian forces had been heavily taxed by the recent Parthian hostilities and Tigranes agreed to a treaty with Pompey rather than risking defeat (Dio 52.4). Pompey's treaty constricted the borders of Armenia and made it a client kingdom with the title, "friend and ally of Rome (Cooley 2009)." As such,

Armenia would have control over its daily internal affairs, but was required to seek the permission of Rome for foreign affairs and for the accession of rulers. However, the treaty offered the greatest blow to Parthia, who could not regain the land that Pompey had originally offered, beginning a long history of resentment and hostility toward Rome (Mommsen 1886).

Following the formation of the first triumvirate, Crassus decided to expand his holdings in Syria by waging war against the Parthian Empire in 56 B.C.E. The new successor to the Armenian throne, Artavasdes II, offered 6,000 of his cavalrymen despite being engaged with the Parthians in Armenia already (Plutarch 3.19.1). However, as Parthia continued to exert pressure on Armenia, Artavasdes II withdrew his troops and signed a treaty with Parthia forsaking the southern regions of his kingdom (Plutarch 3. 22.2). Crassus' campaign also met ruin after the subsequent loss at the Battle of Carrhae in which he famously lost many Roman Standards and 20,000 men (Vell. Pat. 46.3; Rose 2005). The result was a blow to Roman confidence as Parthia emerged a powerful and formidable opponent. Soon after, Rome fell into internal political turmoil and Parthia and Armenia were left to be dealt with later.

The Battle of Carrhae was etched in Roman national memory as an outstanding moment of shame. Contemporary Roman literature vividly reflects the severity of the event, and the famed poets of the time used the Parthian defeats as a common theme (Buchan 1947). Horace, one such poet, wrote of the event, stating, "The soldier fears the arrows and swift flight of the Parthian (*Odes* 2.13.17-18)." In response to mounting desires to reaffirm Rome's supremacy in the face of the Parthians, Marcus Antonius decided to reengage Parthia in 40 B.C.E. in order to reclaim the standards. Antony crossed the Euphrates with nearly 100,000 soldiers gathered from the Roman army as well as those of Armenia and Pontos. The Parthians, led by King Phraates IV, met him with 50,000 soldiers, 40,000 of whom were cavalry (Plutarch 9.37.4; Vell.Pat 82.1).

Due to the growing intensity of tensions with Octavian in Rome, Antony decided to run a swift campaign, rather than a gradual advance, and then quickly return to Roman internal affairs. While the soldiers advanced directly on foot, he had siege equipment transported through the Araxes valley. The Parthians, with half the manpower, avoided direct conflict in battle and focused on sporadic attacks. They intercepted the equipment transport, destroyed all equipment, and left Antony's troops empty-handed and with a constant barrage of cavalry attacks (Plutarch 9.50.2; Craven 1920). Antony sent two legates, L. Decidius Saxa and Oppius Statianus to capture the lost standards of Crassus. Both failed and lost their own standards (Plutarch 9.38.2; Rose 2005; Vell. Pat. 82.2). With a harsh winter approaching, Antony withdrew into Armenia, west of the Araxes River with approximately 20,000 casualties, utter failure at hand and the impending confrontation with Octavian (Vell.Pat. 82.4; Craven 1920).

Antony soon came to blame the disastrous result on a betrayal by Armenian king Artavades II and prepared a new campaign to invade and annex Armenia in 34 B.C.E (Vell.Pat. 82.4; Cooley 2009). He marched to Artaxata, captured the royal family and held them in Alexandria. He also placed his son born of Cleopatra, Alexander, on the Armenian throne. However, the Armenians revolted and immediately removed Alexander from power (Dio 49.39; Plutarch 9.54.4). Artaxes II, eldest son of Artavasdes II, had managed to escape capture and took shelter with the Parthians until they returned him to Armenia as the successor to the throne. He promptly executed all Romans in Armenia Major in revenge for Antony's deeds (Dio 49.39; Chahin 2001; Firth 1902). Antony did not reengage in the east due to his preoccupation with Octavian and his subsequent defeat.

**2.2 Diplomacy and Bargaining: Rome and the East under Caesar Augustus**

When Octavian emerged the victor and ascended to power as Caesar Augustus, he chose to approach eastern affairs in a decidedly diplomatic fashion rather than the rash militaristic method of Antony (Cooley 2009; Mommsen 1886). The Parthians had proven that they should not be underestimated and Augustus took advantage of his bargaining capabilities instead (Kennedy 1996b). He transported the brothers of Artaxes II, Tigranes III and Artavasdes III, to Rome and held them for the crimes of their brother against Roman citizens (Cooley 2009).

Meanwhile, Parthia was in turmoil as Tigranes II of Parthia and King Phrates IV were contending for power. Tigranes II supported Roman interests, and when he kidnapped the son of the Parthian king in 23 B.C.E., he sent him as a gift to Augustus. Augustus accepted the gift, but did not further relations with Tigranes II *(Res Gestae* 27.113). Phraates IV immediately requested that his son be returned. Augustus agreed to do so on the condition that the Roman standards lost by Crassus and Antony be returned and that any remaining Roman prisoners be released (Vell. Pat. 91. 204;  Romer 1979). Agrippa may have been responsible for direct negotiations with the Parthians while he was at Mytilene in the same year (Debevoise 1938).

The following year, Augustus travelled to Syria to await the completion of the deal when Tiberius would collect that which he requested. On May 23rd, 20 B.C.E., Tiberius received over 100 standards and thousands of prisoners *(Res Gestae* 29.2; Rose 2005). The return of the standards of three armies was a momentous occasion for Rome and the ultimate legitimizing factor of Augustus as Emperor. In celebration of his self-proclaimed greatest achievement, he commissioned a Triumphal Arch and placed the standards in the heart of the Temple of Mars Ultor (Debevoise 1938). Augustus also famously had himself portrayed in the Prima Porta with

the depiction of a kneeling Parthian presenting him the Roman standards in the center of his cuirass (Schneider 2007). The image of the kneeling Parthian would remain popular iconography in Rome for many years.

Nearly simultaneously with the return of the standards, pro-Roman Armenian aristocrats also began a revolt and requested that Augustus free Prince Tigranes III and install him as successor to the throne (Mommsen 1886). Augustus agreed and had his stepson, Tiberius, escort Tigranes III and forcibly remove Artaxes II *(Res Gestae* 27.2). However, by the time he arrived, Artaxes II had been murdered by his relatives and Tiberius simply crowned Tigranes III as the new king (Debevoise 1938).

As a gift to Phraates IV for the deal, Augustus sent him the Italian slave girl Musa. It is uncertain whether he may have sent her simply as a gift or to also serve as an informant or a voice for the Roman platform. Either way, she started as a concubine and became a highly influential wife who bore the chosen heir Phraataces (Debevoise 1938). In 10 B.C.E., Phraates IV entrusted Augustus with the care of his four legitimate sons, Saraspadanes, Phodaspes, Vonones and Phraates V *(Res Gestae* 32.1;Rose 2005). Augustus interpreted it as an act of good will and a proclamation of Roman-Parthian friendship (Cooley 2009; Debevoise 1938). However, it is likely this was a precautionary measure by Phraates IV to prevent his sons from murdering him for the Parthian throne, a popular method of royal succession, which Phraates IV had used on his own father. This would potentially prevent internal revolt and secure the throne for Phraataces. However, Phraataces murdered his father instead , married his mother Musa, and ruled jointly with her in 2 B.C.E. (Debevoise 1938).

Meanwhile in the Kingdom of Armenia, Tigranes III remained a Roman ally for many years, but eventually reverted to being a Parthian supporter. When he died in 6 B.C.E., he was

succeeded by his son Tigranes IV who ruled jointly with his wife and stepsister Erato (Tacitus 2.4.13). They were supported by Parthia, but Augustus did not recognize them as rightful heirs. Instead, he sent the captive brother of Tigranes III and uncle of Tigranes IV Artavasdes III from Rome to take the throne in 5 B.C.E. Displeased with the replacement, Phraataces immediately removed Artavasdes III from power and once again replaced Tigranes IV and Erato in 2 B.C.E (Debevoise 1938). The two rulers had developed a pro-Roman stance during the period of their replacement, which angered the generally pro-Parthian Armenians. Within three years of their reappointment, Tigranes IV was assassinated and Erato abdicated (Tacitus 2.4.14; Cooley 2009). Before further action could be taken by either the Parthians or the Armenians to choose a replacement, Augustus chose to send a Roman representative to settle affairs in Rome's favor.

Augustus used the continued retention of Phraataces' step brothers in Rome as a scheme to prevent, or at least delay, Parthian involvement in Armenia. Then, he decided to unite Armenia Major with Media Atropatene by offering the rule of Armenia to Ariobarzanes, King of Media Atropatene *(Res Gestae* 33; Dabrowa 1989). He requested that Tiberius, once again, crown the new Armenian king. On unclear grounds, Tiberius declined the offer and retired to Rhodes (Romer 1979). Instead, Augustus chose his eldest grandson, adopted son and heir Caius Caesar, age 19, to be commander of the East and thus, resolve the Armenian issue *(Res Gestae* 4.11). Augustus sent with him prominent Roman figures including general Marcus Lollius as an advisor, Isidore of Charax to gather intelligence, and King Juba of Mauretania as a Greek educator (Suetonius 12.2; Mommsen 1886). Augustus wished Caius, "the integrity of Pompey, the courage of Alexander and his own good luck (Buchan 1947)." He then departed Rome to take a grand tour of the provinces followed by deployment to Syria (Romer 1979).

Upon reaching Syria, he gathered his troops and proceeded to meet Phraataces at the Euphrates. The two met at an island situated in the middle of the river where Phraataces agreed not to be involved in Armenia as long as Romans did not settle there permanently. Then each man dined with the forces of the other. Caius dined with the forces of Phraataces on the eastern bank on the first night and Phraataces with the forces of Caius on western bank on the second (Vell. Pat 2. 101). During these interactions, Phraataces informed Caius that his advisor, Marcus Lollius, had been bribed to support local Armenian leaders. Lollius was dismissed and his corpse was found a few days later in Armenia. It was uncertain whether the death was suicide or accidental (Vell, Pat. 2.102). Lollius was replaced by Quinius, a skilled soldier and a friend of Tiberius (Vell.Pat. 2.167; Buchan 1947). In 2 CE, Caius received the news that his younger brother Lucius had died of illness in Marseilles on his way to Spain. Despite the news, he proceeded to Artaxata where he installed Ariobarzanes II as the joint ruler of Armenia and Media Atropatene (*Res Gestae* 29.7). Ariobarzanes II died soon after and Caius installed his son Artavasdes II (Cooley 2009). The action created an uproar among Armenian aristocrats who began to revolt. Caius decided that it would be necessary to subdue the rebels. He marched to the rebel stronghold of Artageira. On September 9, 3 CE, Caius met with leader, Addon. Addon distracted Caius supposedly with information on the location of Parthian treasures and with the opportunity at hand, he stabbed Caius. With Caius wounded, Roman troops engaged Artageira fully and captured it (Dio 10a.6). Caius' wound left him weak and in a declining mental state. He returned to Syria to prepare for the Parthian War with Seneca, but soon chose to return to Rome *(*Debevoise 1938). Caius died during the journey on February 21$^{st}$, 4 CE in Limyra, Lycia (Swain and Davies 2010). A cenotaph was erected there in his honor (Dio 10a.6).

After the death of the heir to the Roman Empire, Roman involvement in the Caucasus waned (Tacitus Annals 1.3.4). Armenia fell into a state of anarchy. Artavasdes III was killed and his successor removed. Local leaders, persuaded by the influences of various foreign neighbors, battled each other constantly. King Phraataces of Parthia was also killed in 4CE and Augustus delivered his step brother Vonones to replace him (*Res Gestae* 33). He was later removed in 9CE and replaced by Artabanus III of Media Atropatene. Only after Augustus Caesar had died did Emperor Tiberius turn his attention to the East once again (Debevoise 1938). In 18 CE, King Artabanus III of Parthia sent his son Orodes to appoint an Armenian ruler. In response, Tiberius gave his nephew and adopted son, Germanicus, full authority over the eastern provinces. He travelled to Artaxata and crowned Zeno who allowed the Caucasus to finally enjoy peace for the 32 years of his reign (Sheldon 2010).

**Conclusions**

Neither Rome nor Parthia saw the Caucasus as an object of conquest throughout much of the 1st century B.C.E. to the 1st century CE. Rather, Media Atropatene and Armenia served as a platform for extending the sphere of influence of either side. Both powers experienced an ebb and flow of political influence in the Caucasus which were reflected in the constant flux of the foreign favoritism of the Armenian rulers. In some respects, the Caucasus became a litmus test for Roman success in the East. This function explains a century of repeated Roman involvement in the region. These distinct and well documented cases of Roman campaigns in and around the Caucasus provide the initial clue in understanding origins, movement and identity of the late1st century B.C.E. - early 1st century C.E. individual buried in a pithos on Oğlanqala.

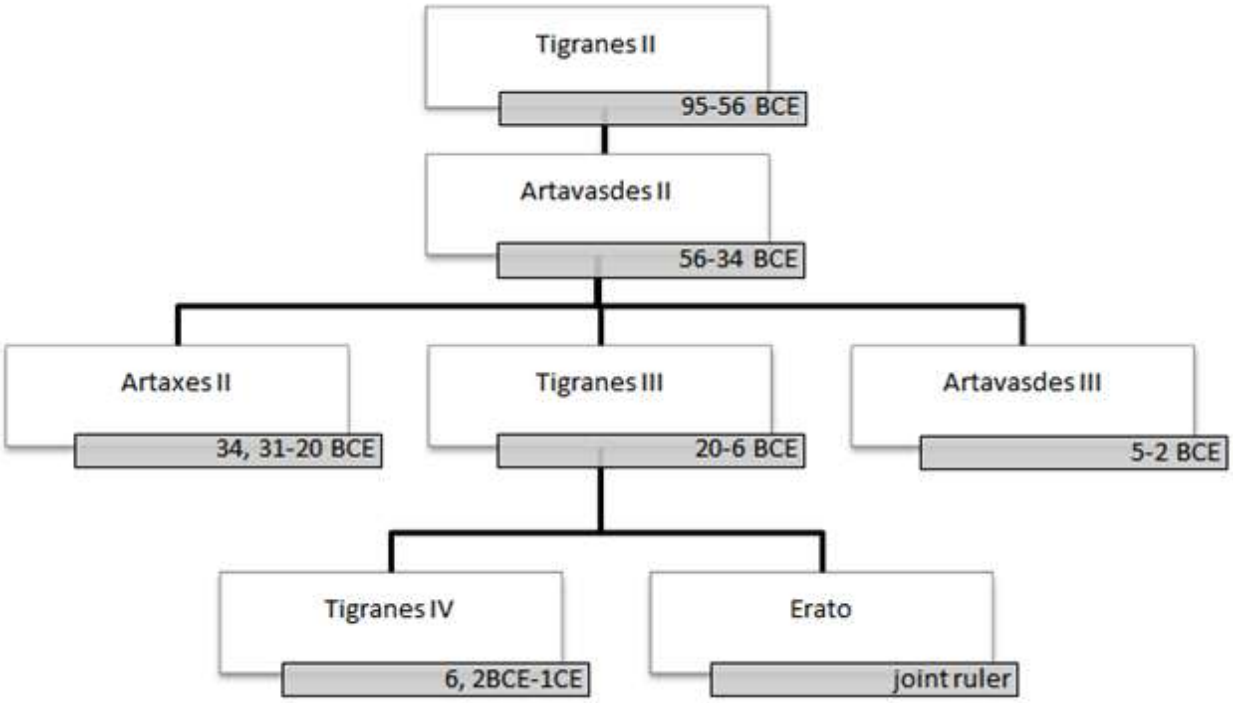


**Figure 2.1** Armenia Major royal succession

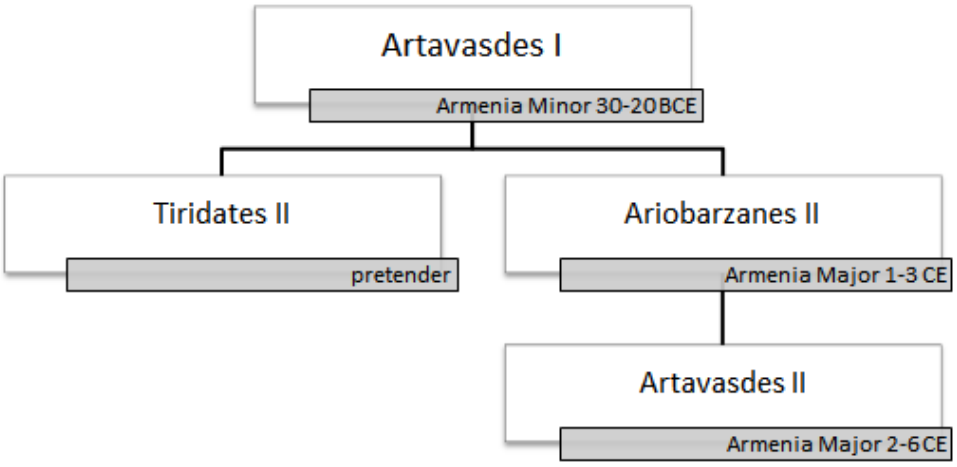


**Figure 1.2** Media Atropatene royal succession in conjunction with Armenia Major

## 3. Assessing Movement in the Ancient Caucasus

In the current world of automobiles and airplanes, long distance movement is commonplace. Yet, these modern innovations have only simplified and accelerated the mobility inherent to humans. Theorists often use three categories to discuss mobility on the basis of duration of time spent at the intended destination. Movement that results in permanent or near permanent relocation is defined as *migration.* In contrast, isolated events of movement in which the goal is a transient stay is considered *travel* or *visitation. Mobility* falls between these extremes, constituting many degrees of semi-permanence in which the stay may be extended or reoccurring (Killgrove 2010).

Within the imperial setting of the 1st century BCE and 1st century CE, all three forms of movement were necessary to support the sprawling Roman and Parthian Empires, spanning from Spain to India. All roads may have led to Rome, but those same roads took travelers to the furthest expanses of the Empire. Movement from the rural areas into urban centers supported economic progress while movement out to the frontiers ensured the security and expansion of the borders. As a region situated between its imperial neighbors to the east and west, the Caucasus would seem a natural crossroads for the traffic moving from Anatolia to the Mesopotamia and the Iranian plateau. However, the mountainous landscape served as a barrier to travel. Travelers would have been funneled through the accessible river valleys which formed three major routes through the Caucasus, one from Cappadocia to the west, one from Media Atropatene to the east and one from Trapenzus to the North (Isaac 1992).

The types of people who would have passed through the Caucasus are uncertain, but general identities can be assumed and extrapolated from literary accounts. Traders and merchants who

travelled to nearly every corner of the Mediterranean and Near East would have likely found their way to the Caucasus to sell their merchandise. During the period of mounting tensions with Rome, messengers and envoys would have travelled frequently to and from Rome, Parthia, and various local administrative centers in the surrounding region to deliver messages and engage in diplomatic affairs. More secretive envoys on reconnaissance missions would have also likely dwelled in the environs of the Caucasus. Augustan poet Sextus Propertius tells the story of a Roman named Lycotas, who gathered intelligence in the Caucasus, stating in first person, "I teach myself where the Araxes flows, that river you must conquer, and inquire as to the mileage of Parthian horses, between waterholes, and I study the world as laid out on maps (4.3)." However, the thousands of soldiers marching on campaign would have been responsible for the most substantial movement within the Caucasus at the time.

In considering the military, it is necessary to also consider the composition of ancient armies of the time. As fairly small states, in comparison to their neighbors, Media Atropatene and Armenia would have drawn soldiers primarily from the Caucasus and possibly from some of the surrounding regions. Conversely, Rome and Parthia had control over sprawling conquered lands and their inhabitants. While the record is unclear for Parthia, Rome recruited soldiers from the furthest reaches of the Empire (Dabrowa 1989; Isaac 1992). Rome also engaged in hiring mercenaries whenever they were needed. Similarly, these soldiers would be expected to venture into Roman frontier territories and station along borders to ensure security of the Empire's limits, as evidenced by Roman camps discovered across Europe and Britain (Kennedy 1996a). Parthia did not have a standing army, but relied upon the soldiers of client leaders and local authorities as representatives of Parthia (Mommsen 1886; Pollard 2007; Sheldon 2010). As a result, troops

would have had diverse backgrounds and a history of migration and/or mobility in addition to the mobility required of them on missions and campaigns.

### 3.1 Methods of Assessing Movement in Antiquity

The three forms of movement, the select geographic origins of the people moving and the limited purposes for movement in the Caucuses will be a source for explanation of the results of the biochemical and archaeological analysis of the individual's movement while also narrowing the options when determining regions of origin. In this project, I aim to assess the mobility and origins of the individual found buried in a pithos at Oğlanqala in an approach that relies on the analysis of identity reflected in the biological and material remains within the broader archaeological and historical context. Biochemical techniques are the primary methods used to determine local or non-local status as well as narrow the possible regions of origin. These results are then supported and elaborated though discussion of burial artifacts and textual history of the Caucasus.

#### *Movement and Archaeology*

The principle that different groups of people produce material goods that function uniquely within their cultural and temporal parameters is an underlying premise in the categorization of ancient artifacts in archaeology (Preucel and Hodder 1996). Based on their stylistic attributes, artifacts can sometimes be traced to their culture areas and the site of their manufacture if the comparative data is available. However, distinguishing a foreigner from the local population using artifacts affiliated with them is significantly more problematic. Migration and mobility are complex social processes that require the consideration of many factors including reasons for

moving, persons affected, effects on the point of origin, effects on the destination, migratory behavior and subsequent acculturation (Brettell 2008; Killgrove 2010) Much caution needs to be taken in the material-based approach so as to avoid oversimplification.

Migration theories in archaeology originally began with a heavy focus on macro-scale migration patterns. Studies centered on the reason for migration and pattern of acculturation for groups of migrants. The caution against oversimplifying the complex social processes of migration, which had delayed the development of theory also inhibits application on an individual-scale. Burmeister states:

> Neither individual migratory movement nor personal supraregional networks of relationships can be traced or reconstructed archaeologically; in fact, most often not even the exact regions of origin or destination can be localized archaeologically (2000).

However, the personal adornments that the individual was wearing when buried may inform of the individual's social/cultural identity and thereby lend evidence to the origins of the artifacts. In archaeology, personal adornment is often studied within the context of social stratification and wealth (Aizpurúa and McAnany 1999). While, there is certainly an affiliation, burial items of a personal nature can also represent the individual's perceptions of beauty as well as the perceptions of the survivors involved in the processes of burial. Assuming conscious use of adornments, the visibility of objects such as the rings, bead and aryballoi display and perpetuate an embodied and/or socially applied identity (Lee 2000). As such, the concept that the adornments can not only assert identity of the deceased, but the identity of the group involved with burial has been widely discussed in contemporary archaeology (Joyce 2005).

Naturally, caution must be taken. Within the complex and highly developed network of connections across the Mediterranean and the Near East, it would be rash to suggest any region

was wholly isolated from the material culture of its distant neighbors. Yet, in moving forward, attempts must be made to study migration as well as mobility on a micro-scale in order to understand the experiences of the individuals as well as their place within a culture and time period.

*Movement and Bioarchaeology*

The study of migration and mobility of the individual is well suited to bioarchaeological study. Physical traits and chemical composition of osteological remains provide insight into life experiences of the individual and lend evidence to migration and mobility over a lifetime. These results can, in turn, be elaborated on with evidence from archaeological and literary sources.

An earlier method used in identifying outsiders is the study of nonmetric skeletal traits. Every skeleton has distinct traits and features that make it distinguishable from others. Most variation is attributable to differences in sex, age and pathology. However, many other features, when viewed within the context of a large population, provide evidence for ancestry. These features are termed discontinuous morphological traits and can be found on crania, dentition, and the postcranial bones. Certain features present themselves commonly in distinct groups or in certain geographical regions, which allows for a general identification of ancestry. This method requires the use of a substantial comparative population in order to establish patterns, distinguish common features from uncommon ones, and determine whether an individual may be an outsider.

For a little over a decade, migration has been studied through the use of oxygen, strontium, and lead isotope analysis of dental enamel (Keenleyside 2011). Isotopes are the variants of an element and maintain the same number of protons as the original while differing in the number

of neutrons. There are two types of isotopes: radioactive and stable. Radioactive isotopes, such as $C^{14}$, undergo radioactive decay over time at a fixed exponential rate, a process that suits dating studies. In contrast, stable isotopes do not show evidence of readily observable decay. Oxygen, strontium and lead have stable isotopes that are present in groundwater in ratios that are unique to certain geographical locations. Consumption of food and water during childhood incorporates these isotopes in the same ratios into the bone and dental enamel. A significant difference between local isotope ratios and those in the individual thus indicate that the individual spent the initial years of development elsewhere.

The extremely poor preservation of the bones of the individual from the pithos burial as well as the lack of a comparative population is unsuitable for the use of nonmetric variant analysis. However, the good preservation of the dental enamel is ideal for stable isotope analysis. This study will focus solely on oxygen isotope analysis.

### 3.2 Oxygen Isotopes as Evidence for Locality

Oxygen isotopes occur naturally in 3 forms: $^{16}O$, $^{17}O$, and $^{18}O$. $^{16}O$ and $^{18}O$ are most abundant and are measured in an isotope ratio mass spectrometer (IRMS). These values are then presented as an $^{18}O/^{16}O$ ratio in the following delta notion expressed per mil (‰):

$$\delta^{18}O(\%) = \left( \frac{\frac{^{18}O}{^{16}O sample} - \frac{^{18}O}{^{16}O\ standard}}{^{18}O/^{16}O} \right) X\ 1000$$

The use of oxygen isotopes in studying mobility in skeletal remains is based on the premise that meteoric precipitation—and the drinking water it produces—has ratios of oxygen isotopes that vary geographically due to differences in elevation, temperature, and distance from the sea (Eckardt 2009). The oxygen is then absorbed by the body through the consumption of food and water as well through inhalation of air. The isotopic signature is then incorporated into the hydroxyapatite, the mineral component, of bone during formation. These ratios are not wholly unique to a single location, but reflect a specific climate and geography that may be shared by a number of locations. Thus, it is not possible to determine a definitive point of origin, but the technique certainly narrows the possibilities.

Dental enamel and bone develop differently, an additional factor that must be considered in assessing movement. Dental enamel forms during childhood, is not replaced, and does not take in minerals during the lifetime. Each tooth develops at a different age, ranging from 3–4 months old for incisors to 10 years old for 3$^{rd}$ molars (Keenleyside 2011). The oxygen isotope signatures thus reflect the location of the individual while the enamel was forming at a certain age in childhood. However, bones continually regenerate and are fully replaced every 10–20 years, reflecting the isotope signatures of the final two decades before death.

Samples may be collected from bone to determine if the place of death was different from that of childhood. However, unlike hard, impermeable dental enamel, bone is softer and porous and highly prone to diagenesis. Well preserved bones may be a viable sample for isotopic study, but there is always a risk that they have the oxygen signature of the surrounding soil and any water they may have been exposed to over the years of burial. Local oxygen isotope ratios may also be determined through the use of local faunal dental enamel samples. However, caution must be taken to choose fauna that are not mobile beyond a few miles of the location of interest.

## 3.3 Materials and Methods

*Sample Selection*

Only dental enamel samples were collected from the pithos burial. The bones were severely deteriorated and were not deemed suitable for isotopic analysis. The teeth were well preserved and samples were collected from both the left and right permanent upper 1st molars (M1). Both samples were taken to ensure results were not affected by diagenesis. The M1 begins formation around birth and the crown is complete around 3 years of age (Anderson, et al 1976). Dental enamel from the molars of two rats was collected from the Oğlanqala citadel as indicators of the local oxygen isotope ratios. Rats were chosen as the best candidates to represent local signatures because unless they are transported by humans, they will generally not venture beyond an approximately 2 mile radius of their burrow (Eilam 1988).

*Sample preparation*

The human and rat teeth were first cleaned and lightly abraded with a Dremel tool to remove the outermost diagenic layers that could possibly contaminate the enamel sample. Then, approximately 10 mg of enamel was removed from each cusp using a diamond-tipped Dremel tool. The enamel was then soaked in a 2% sodium hypochlorite (bleach) solution for approximately 24 hours, at which point they were rinsed with distilled water and centrifuged multiple times to eliminate the sodium hypochlorite. Then, the samples were set in a 0.1 M acetic acid bath for 8 hours and rinsed with distilled water and centrifuged multiple times once again. The samples were then placed in a fume hood to dry for 3 days and also placed in a drying oven overnight to further ensure all moisture had been removed. Once the preparation of the samples

was complete, they were sent to the University of Florida to be analyzed in an isotope ratio mass spectrometer.

# 4. Bioarchaeological Analysis

## 4.1 Bone

Preservation of the pithos contents was not ideal and had grim implications for the skeletal remains. The poor preservation is the result of the pithos fracturing and collapsing which allowed for the dense mudbrick eroding from the exterior of the western wall to enter and degrade the bone. The result was very small fragments (≤ 3mm) of cortical bone held together by the soil. Despite the destructive quality of the soil, its density also held the bone fragments in nearly the original location, preserving the shape of each bone in its original outline. This fortunate taphonomic phenomenon revealed that the individual was seated in a crouched position and was hunched over the legs with arms wrapping around the head.

A total of 12 structurally sound and identifiable bones remain. Of these bones, 10 are the phalanges of the right hand consisting of: 2 distal, 4 intermediate and 4 proximal. These bones were in a state of good preservation with clear, identifiable features. The epiphyseal plates were fully fused, indicating the individual was at least 14-16 years of age (Baker, et al. 2005). These bones did not show any evidence of pathology or excessive wear.

The hyoid was recovered in good condition, but missing part of the distal ends of the greater horns. The horns and body were fully fused. The hyoid may or may not fuse within a lifetime, but when it does, it usually occurs between 30 and 50 years of age (Gupta, et al. 2008). Examples of fusion as early as the 20-25 years of age have also been documented in modern populations (O'Halloran and Lundy 1987). Considering the inconsistency in fusion age, the hyoid will not be considered in determining the age of the individual. There are no signs of pathology or signs of trauma to the hyoid.

Finally, a 4cm x 3 cm fragment of the left innominate was also recovered. The fragment was identified by the presence of the ischial spine as well as by tracing the outline of the innominate bones with the remaining cortical bone. Analysis of nonmetric traits for age and sex were not feasible due to the size and condition of the fragment.

**4.2 Dentition**

The individual's dentition was in far better condition because the enamel served as an impermeable protective layer against the effects of the soil and water. All the teeth remain with the exception of the 4 third molars, the upper left first incisor and the lower left first incisor. These teeth either did not exist at the time of burial or were destroyed by taphonomic processes over time. However, the complete lack of third molars may be an indication of age rather than poor preservation. The individual's second molars had erupted fully and already show signs of wear by attrition, an indicator that they had fully erupted for a considerable amount of time. Second molars complete development and eruption at 15 (± 3) years of age (Gustafson and Koch 1974). Third molars, colloquially referred to as wisdom teeth, fully develop and erupt at 21 years of age (Anderson, et al. 1976). Teeth that have not fully developed are generally more prone to degradation, a possible explanation for why they did not remain. This would place the age of the individual between 15 and 21 years old.

This result becomes complicated by the severe wear observed on the enamel. Thirteen of the teeth on the right side of the mouth show wear attributable to attrition, nine of which are so severe that the dentin is significantly exposed. When compared to the dental wear patterns of the Libben population, this degree of wear in a standard lifetime is observable in the incisors and premolars between 24 and 30 years of age and between ages 40 and 50 in the molars. Generally

an individual between 15 and 21 should not have accumulated this degree of wear, particularly to the second molars which emerge later (Lovejoy 1985; White and Folkens 2005). Imperial Roman populations tend to exhibit relatively low levels of severe dental wear until much later in life (Bonfiglioi, et al. 2003). However the pattern of wear is only on the right side of the mouth which indicates the individual was chewing almost exclusively on that side. If the individual had been alternating the sides of the mouth used for chewing, wear should be distributed evenly over the dental enamel (Lovejoy 1985). By focusing all the chewing stress to the right side, the wear to the right side would have doubled. The process of wear could have also been exacerbated if the individual had a diet consisting of foods that were hard or contained many impurities. Pliny the Elder and Cato state that the diet of soliders on campaign consisted of *panis militaris*, bacon/lard and sour wine. The *panis militaris* was a stale, unrefined hard tack that was made quickly and often contained many impurities. Sometimes, officers would have had the luxury of more refined and softer bread (Davies 1971). Similarly, such excessive wear is also consistent with patterns of wear associated with bruxism, a reaction to stress, diet, and/or imbalanced bite that involves clenching and grinding of teeth (Xhonga 1977). If the individual had been missing his upper and lower left first incisors, imbalanced bite could have been a concern. Additionally, stress and anxiety resulting in bruxism supports the suggestion that the individual was involved in a military campaign, a situation of high stress which results in similar patterns of enamel wear even in current day soldiers (Longinelli, et al. 2006; Lucena, et al. 2009; Lurie, et al. 2007).

| # | Tooth | Position | Upper/Lower | Right/Left | Wear | Pathology |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | Incisor | 1 | Upper | Right | Worn to dentin on lingual | |
| **2** | Incisor | 1 | Lower | Right | Worn to dentin on mesial | |
| **3** | Incisor | 2 | Upper | Right | Worn to dentin on lingual | |
| **4** | Incisor | 2 | Upper | Left | | Caries |
| **5** | Incisor | 2 | Lower | Right | | |
| **6** | Incisor | 2 | Lower | Left | | |
| **7** | Canine | n/a | Upper | Left | | |
| **8** | Canine | n/a | Upper | Right | | |
| **9** | Canine | n/a | Lower | Left | | |
| **10** | Canine | n/a | Lower | Right | | |
| **11** | Premolar | 1 | Upper | Left | | |
| **12** | Premolar | 1 | Upper | Right | Worn to dentin on mesial | |
| **13** | Premolar | 2 | Upper | Left | | |
| **14** | Premolar | 2 | Upper | Right | Worn to dentin on occusal | |
| **15** | Premolar | 1 | Lower | Left | | |
| **16** | Premolar | 1 | Lower | Right | Slight wear on occusal | |
| **17** | Premolar | 2 | Lower | Left | | |
| **18** | Premolar | 2 | Lower | Right | Slight wear on occusal | |
| **19** | Molar | 1 | Upper | Left | | |
| **20** | Molar | 1 | Upper | Right | Crown worn flat to dentin | |
| **21** | Molar | 2 | Upper | Left | | |
| **22** | Molar | 2 | Upper | Right | Crown worn flat to dentin | |
| **23** | Molar | 1 | Lower | Left | | Caries |
| **24** | Molar | 1 | Lower | Right | Crown worn flat to dentin | Caries |
| **25** | Molar | 2 | Lower | Left | | |
| **26** | Molar | 2 | Lower | Right | Crown worn flat to dentin | |

**Table 4.1** Oğlanqala WWE.7.1 associated dentition

Oxygen isotope analysis based on the principle that the varying climates and elevations across geographic locations create a unique chemical signature that is reflected in the chemical composition of water. As water is consumed by an organism, this oxygen isotope signature is also incorporated into the mineral component of bone and dental enamel. The overview and methodology in performing oxygen isotope analysis was presented in chapter 3. This section will present the results of oxygen isotope analysis on the dental enamel of the individual buried in the

pithos at Oğlanqala and the dental enamel of the archaeological rodents collected from nearby locations on the site.

Results of the oxygen isotope analysis of the human teeth as well as the local rodent teeth are presented in Table 2. Analysis of the human left and right first molars yielded the $\delta^{18}O$ values of -6.12 and -6.03‰ VPDB, differing by the small margin of 0.07. The difference, though slight, may reflect differences in sample preparation and analysis and/or variation in the formation and development of the left and right first molars.

In order to reconstruct a history of mobility of this individual, it is necessary to define values consistent with the local signatures. Ideally, local values should be determined within the context of the human population within a certain time period. The interpretation of local or non-local origins for this study is based on comparison with local fauna that reflect local oxygen isotope signatures. It should be noted that faunal comparisons are taken with caution because faunal diets generally differ from humans. However, since this was the only burial from antiquity at this location, no viable human comparisons were available. Consequently, enamel collected from archaeological rat remains were considered a suitable alternative because rats living in human settlements will often scavenge human food waste. Also, unless they accompany humans on ships and similar methods of transport, a rat will generally not leave a two mile perimeter of its burrow (Eilam and Golani 1988). In order to reduce the risk that a comparative rodent was transported to Oğlanqala from elsewhere, two rats were chosen for analysis from two different locations within the citadel.

Oxygen isotope analysis results for the rodent molar enamel yielded -3.72 and -3.26‰ VPDB, a difference of 0.46‰. The difference is not large enough to suggest that either rat may have travelled a large distance to Oğlanqala. Rather, these values are close enough to suggest

that they are representative of the oxygen isotope levels associated water consumed from the Arpaçay River basin.

| Sample Name | Type | Teeth | Collected | Location found | $\delta^{13}C$ (‰ VPDB ) | $\delta^{18}O$ (‰ VPDB ) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Pithos Sample 1** | Human | M1 (UR) | Enamel | WWE.7 | -8.24 | -6.03 |
| **Pithos Sample 2** | Human | M1 (UL) | Enamel | WWE.7 | -5.60 | -6.12 |
| **Local rodent 1** | Rodent | M | Enamel | CC051 | -6.88 | -3.72 |
| **Local rodent 2** | Rodent | M | Enamel | OPA84 | -5.60 | -3.26 |

**Table 4.2** Human and rodent δ18O values from dental enamel

*Establishing Local/ Non-Local Status*

The oxygen isotope analysis of the human dental enamel from the pithos and the comparative rodent enamel yielded $\delta^{18}O$ values with a mean difference of - 2.58‰. Oxygen values can vary within a range of less than -2‰ between individuals living in a certain location depending on what the $\delta^{18}O$ content of the food they consumed in addition to drinking water. Thus, the difference of -2.58‰ from the local signature suggests that the individual buried in the pithos was likely not a local to the area around Oğlanqala. In particular, the individual did not live in the area when his or her first molars were developing around the age of 3 years.

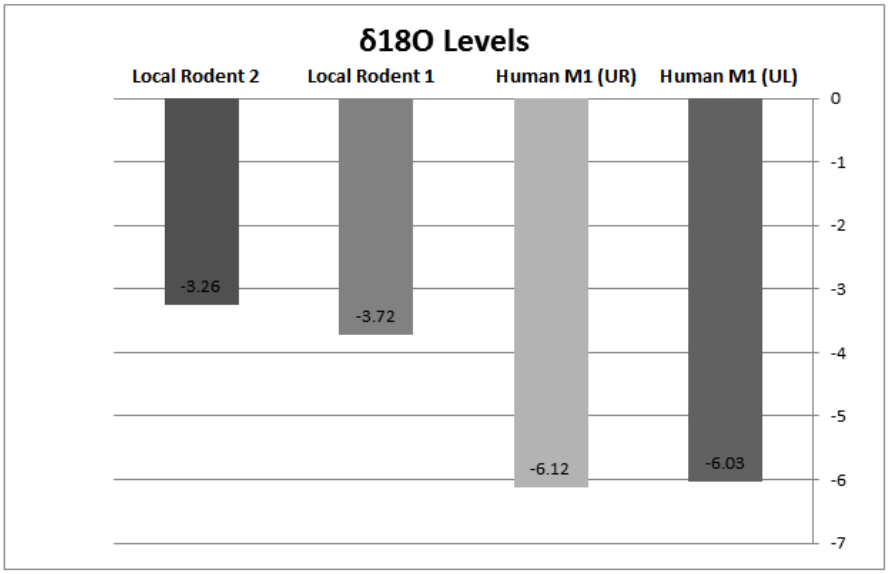


**Figure 4.3** Comparative human and rodent δ18O values

*Establishing Origins*

While stable isotope analysis for oxygen in bone and enamel has given insight into patterns of mobility in ancient populations, the methodology is not intended to and is not accurate enough determine a specific location of origin. Oxygen isotope ratios of an area are distinct but are not wholly unique. Various areas around the world that share similar geology and climate may also share similar oxygen signatures in the water source. However, it is possible to suggest various areas with published ratios that are similar to those of the individual.

Oxygen isotope values increase with increasing temperature, decreasing humidity/precipitation and decreasing altitude (Killgrove 2010). Regions encompassed by Parthia to the east and south of Oğlanqala have climates that are generally warmer and more arid. These locations are expected to have $\delta^{18}O$ levels equal to or higher than those at Oğlanqala. In contrast, the individual's $\delta^{18}O$ values are more negative than those at Oğlanqala. Possible

locations should thus have a cooler, wetter climate with higher altitude. Values around -6‰ have been documented in western Anatolia, the northwestern Black Sea, coastal and central Italy, Sicily, Sardinia and central France (Bowen and Revenaugh 2003; Eckardt, et al. 2009; Keenleyside, et al. 2011; Longinelli, et al. 2006). Despite the wide range of possible locations of origin for the individual, it is possible to conclude that his or her childhood was likely spent in the northern Mediterranean, within the boundaries of the Roman Empire.

**Conclusions**

Bioarchaeological data collected from the Oğlanqala pithos burial begins to unveil the identity and mobility of the deceased. The individual was an adolescent or young adult between 15 and 21 years old and unknown biological sex. He or she suffered from severe dental wear by attrition on the right side, possibly attributable to bruxism. Finally, oxygen isotope analysis of the dentition reveals a non-local status with likely origins in the northern Mediterranean regions of the Roman Empire. These results will provide the invaluable window into the biological identity of the deceased which will be superimposed with his or her perceived personal and/or social identity presented though the archaeological materials found in the burial.

## 5. Archaeological Data

There are four phases of occupation at Oğlanqala: Period IV (c. 800-600 BCE) consists primarily of a large Urartian-period fortress, Period III (c. 400-200 BCE) comprises an Achaemenid or Post-Achaemenid rebuilding of this citadel, Period II (c. 100 BCE-100CE) is made up of a number of rubbish pits and perhaps one two room building in the citadel area and some small houses in other areas around the site, and Period I is a 20th century occupation probably associated primarily with WWI activity. The artifacts associated with the pithos burial place it firmly in Period II. The Period II pits may be an important piece of evidence when considering the function of Oğlanqala during this period.

The pithos burial was discovered just outside of the outermost western wall of the Oğlanqala Iron Age citadel. The focus of excavations in this area was clearing away the accumulation of soil and exposing the wall face. There were no initial indications of use for burial. Rather, much of the area contained mixed ceramic sherds that may have washed down the slopes of the citadel or were thrown outside of the wall as refuse. The presence of hard clay soil along the wall suggests that the wall has a mudbrick superstructure which had collapsed, a feature that had serious implications for the preservation of bone in the pithos as discussed in the previous chapter.

The burial included 14 material artifacts: ceramics, coins, jewelry and glassware. The characteristics and history of each artifact contributes to the narrative of the individual's life. Collectively, they provide evidence for where the individual originated and how he or she moved through the ancient world.

## 5.1 Ceramics

*Pithos*

The pithos holding the deceased was found on its side with the opening facing west. It is made of coarse pink clay painted with a coat of plaster on the exterior. While the vessel was shattered, the fragments were pieced together to reveal an approximate height of one meter. The rim has a scalloped pattern. An additional rim fragment was found adjacent to the true rim with a similar scalloped pattern, but thicker and composed of a different ware. The body has multiple thin twisted rope-like rings and the bottom is flat.

Burial in a vessel was uncommon for Romans who would usually use urns in funerary practice to hold cremated remains (Reece and Collis 1977). Uncremated urn burial was practiced more commonly in the east. Similar pithoi were found in the Germi region of Iranian Azerbaijan

**Figure 5.1** Temporary reconstruction of the pithos in profile

by the Archaeological Service of Iran as well as in Armavir, Dvin, and Beniamin (Abdi 2000; Fard 1995; Zardarian and Akopian 1995). These pithoi were found in multiples with similar dimensions and with nearly identical exterior decoration. Occasionally, pithoi had a rock slab placed at the opening and were covered with protective plaster (Abdi 2000). This pattern suggests that the additional rim fragment may have been used in lieu of rock to cover the top. However, material contents of the burials were overwhelmingly attributable to the eastern styles of Media Atropatene, Armenia, and Parthia, unlike the Roman style artifacts found in the burial at Oğlanqala.

*Accessory vessel*

A smaller ceramic vessel was found directly adjacent to the southern side of the pithos. This vessel is approximately 23 cm wide and 22 cm high and made of light red clay. It has a round bottom, two small handles on the body and a short neck. The rim is broken.

**Figure 5.2** Ceramic accessory vessel

The vessel is an accessory to the pithos and possibly held a liquid offering to the deceased. The contents of the vessel were floated and analyzed, but only contained the exoskeletons of insects and the bones of a young mouse. The vessel is likely locally manufactured. Accessory vessels were also found adjacent to pithos burials in Armenia and Northern Iran. However, the majority are single handled pouring vessels or anthropomorphic rhytons (Abdi 2000; Fard 1988; Zardarian 1995). The globular double-handled form from the pithos burial at Oğlanqala is not documented elsewhere.

### 5.2 Coins

The bottom of the pithos yielded four silver Roman *denarii*. All four were of the same type, but one was found intact while the remaining three appeared to have been intentionally halved prior to burial. The obverse depicts a laureate Caesar Augustus with the title *pater patriae.* The reverse depicts the standing togate figures of Caius and Lucius Caesars holding spears and round shields. By Caius floats the *simpulum,* a vessel that symbolized the office of the *pontifex,* a title bestowed upon Caius in 6 BCE. By Lucius floats the lituus, a spiral staff


**Figure 5.3** Four Augustan CL Caesars type *denarii*

representative of an *augur*, a title given to him in 3 BCE (Cooley 2009; Mousheghian and Depeyrot 1999). The legend is written in abbreviations and reads C L CAESARES AVGVSTI F COS DESIG PRINC IVVENT (Caius and Lucius Caesars, sons of Augustus, consuls designate, leaders of youth).

Minting of these coins was believed to have begun around 2 BCE at the earliest in order to celebrate the priesthoods bestowed upon both Caius and Lucius who received their titles in 6 and 2 BCE respectively. The title of "leader of youths" was also given to them in 5 BCE (Cooley 2009; Romer 1979; Swain and Davies 2010). The dates that minting ceased are debatable with suggestions beginning between 2 and 4 CE as well as between 11 and 14 CE. Issues may have ceased being produced following the deaths of either Lucius in 2 CE or Caius in 4 CE (Mousheghian and Depeyrot 1999). However, mourning for the deceased heirs of the empire continued for many years with their shields and spears set on display in the *curia* while public sacrifices were made yearly in honor of Caius and Lucius (Ganzert 1984). Extended dates have thus been suggested to allow for the possibility that issues may have continued until the final years of Augustus' reign in order to commemorate the boys' death.

Determining the mint(s) where the CL Caesars *denarii* type was produced is somewhat problematic. Because gold coins stamped with the same image were produced at the Lugdunum mint near modern Lyons, France, the silver *denarii* were also attributed to the same mint (Cooley 2009). As such, it is expected that the distribution of the coins would decrease as distance from the mint increased. However, 468 *denarii* were discovered in Western Europe, 363 of which came from Spain. Four dies found near Calahorra suggest that an additional mint was producing issues in Spain, explaining the volume in the region. Central and eastern Europe had few to no discoveries of the coins (Mousheghian and Depeyrot 1999). Yet, 160 *denarii* were discovered in

the Caucasus. No additional discoveries were made further east until India where hoards of poorly made forgeries were discovered. The Caucasian finds were initially thought to have been brought by Romans to the region, obtained through trade, or were forgeries (Dahmen 2010). Mousheghian and Depeyrot note that the quality of the Transcaucasian issues are equal to those from Lugdunum and were not likely to be forgeries. Rather, they suggest that Caius may have ordered the use of the Artaxata mint to produce coins to pay his soldiers while on campaign (Mousheghian and Depeyrot 1999). The *denarius* under the rule of Augustus typically contained approximately 3.9 grams of silver, which would have had very little value (Adkins 1994). However, most of the purchasing power of the *denarius* derived from Imperial backing of the coin. In the first century CE, one *denarius* was the daily wage of a common soldier (Smith 1875). Therefore, this individual either carried or was given four days salary in death. Evidence of Roman adaptation of the mint has not been found, but the high volume of the *denarii* in the region as well as the corresponding campaign of Caius in the region support the theory.

Additionally, the breaking of three of the four coins may also lend evidence to ethnic identity as a manifestation of burial ritual. However, there have not been conclusive theories for the breaking of coins in the early Roman Imperial period. Coin halving is more frequently documented in earlier Greek burials and is often associated with a symbolic parallelism with death (Buttrey 2003). Breaking the coin destroys its value and just like the deceased, its spirit is released and dies. Similarly, it has been suggested that by killing the coin, it too could travel with the deceased into death and possibly serve as payment for the ferryman, Charon (Crawford 1972). In more practical terms, two additional suggestions are that halving was an act of defiance by defacing the image of Augustus or was an effort made by the people burying the deceased to devalue the coins so that the burial would not be plundered (Buttrey 1972). It is not certain

which of the theories or if any are the reason for breaking three of the four *denarii* in the burial. Nonetheless, it is clear that the coins were halved intentionally for burial.

### 5.3 Finger Rings

*Ring 1*

Ring 1 is a bronze band set with a circular glass paste intaglio. The back of the band does not survive due to corrosion. The profiles of Isis and Serapis are carved into the glass paste and inlaid with gold. Serapis is in the foreground and is recognizable by the *modius* hat on his head, his long beard and long, wavy locks pulled back (Alvar 2008). Barely recognizable in the background is the profile of Isis who is identifiable by her softer feminine features and the partial remains of her feather-like headdress.


**Figure 5.4** Bronze ring with glass paste intaglio of Isis and Serapis

Isis and Serapis are often depicted separately, but are shown together on votive inscriptions and on lamps (Alvar 2008). This depiction of the two gods increased in popularity in the Hellenistic period and remained popular through imperial Rome (Spier 1992). Similar rings have been found across Europe, including Britain, France, Croatia and Turkey (Önal 2010; Tomorad 2005). Lack of material evidence relating to ritual activity in the cults of Isis and Serapis make it difficult to connect this ring directly to cult activity. Temples housed workshops for sculptors, potters and jewelry makers who would have sold their cult related products, which may have included such rings, to the visitors as gifts to offer to the gods or for personal adornment to display affiliation with the cult (Alvar 2008).

*Ring 2*

Ring 2 is a highly corroded iron band set with a scaraboid carnelian intaglio. The back of the band does not survive due to corrosion. The intaglio depicts the profile of a bull inlaid with gold. The bull's full abdomen and thin, stylized legs combined with the scaraboid shape suggest


**Figure 5.5** Iron ring with carnelian intaglio of a bull

the gem is Graeco-Persian from the 3rd-4th century BCE (Spier 1992). It is likely the gem was removed from its original setting and reset in a Roman band.

*Ring 3*

Ring 3 is a bronze band set with an oval carnelian intaglio. The back of the band does not survive due to corrosion. The surface of the gem is partially covered in a layer of calcification rendering the subject of the image on the intaglio not completely distinguishable. There appears to be a long rectangular platform topped with a square with a small oval shape directly above the square.


**Figure 5.6** Bronze ring with carnelian intaglio

*Ring 4*

Ring 4 is a highly corroded iron band set with an oval carnelian intaglio. The back of the band does not remain due to corrosion. The surface of the gem is extremely fractured and

chipped making the image indistinguishable. Whatever the subject, it is depicted through a series of adjacent short strokes inlaid with gold.

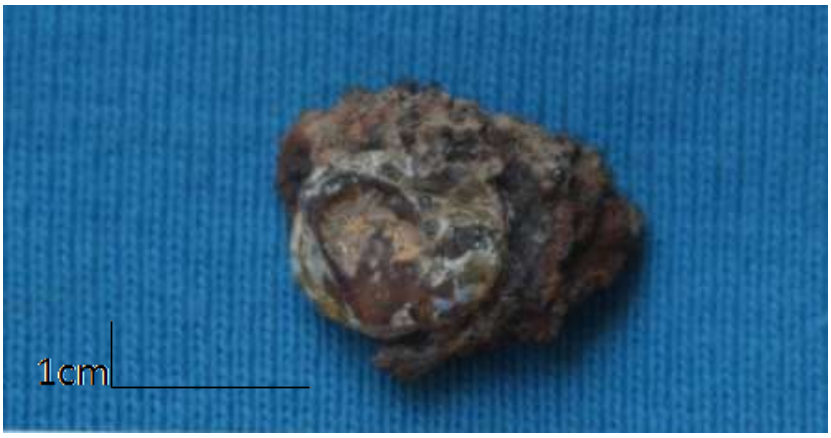


**Figure 5.7** Iron ring with carnelian intaglio

*Rings 5*

Ring 5 is a bronze band with an oval setting. The back of the band does not survive due to corrosion. The setting first appears to be a bezel for a gem like the previous rings. However, upon closer inspection, the bronze surface appears to bear inscriptions of letters or geometric forms. The degree of corrosion makes it difficult to identify the inscriptions with any certainty.


**Figure 5.8** Bronze ring

*Ring 6*

Ring 6 is a thin bronze band set with an oval opaque white quartz-like stone. The back of the band does not survive due to corrosion.


**Figure 5.9** Bronze ring set with white stone

*Ring 7*

Ring 7 is half of an iron setting which is highly corroded, but still preserves the shape of an oval bezel. Small, white fragments on the edges of the bezel suggest it may have held glass paste resembling Ring 1.


**Figure 5.10** Iron ring bezel fragment

The finger rings are a quantity not matched in any other Parthian pithos in the region. Rather, wearing rings in multiples was a trend among wealthier Romans, especially men, as adornments that reflected their wealth (Schmitz 1875). Rings, particularly those set with the precious gem, carnelian that has been finely drilled with an image and inlaid with gold, were expensive personal adornments, suggesting that the individual had substantial expendable wealth that could be used toward appearance. Beyond financial status, the intaglio is particularly telling of personal identity. Intaglio not only has an aesthetic value but also served a practical purpose for self-identification in sealing objects and documents (Adkins 1994). In the Roman military, intaglio rings would be worn to show association with the unit or legion of service. Known examples include rings given to the Praetorean guard in the 1$^{st}$-3$^{rd}$ century CE that are set with carnelian intaglios depicting the bust of a Praetorian guardsman (Rankov 1994). Intaglio rings associated with certain legions are frequently inscribed with the name of the legion and are usually found in the provinces (Adkins 1994). Additionally, the metal used also speaks to identity. While bronze is a common setting for free Romans, the use of iron is an ancient Roman custom that was readopted in the late Republic as a way to hearken the simplicity of the early years of Rome (Schmitz 1875). Therefore, wearing and intaglio ring and using it to seal is an act of deliberate symboling that displays certain aspects of identity that the wearer wishes to present to others.

## 5.4 Glass

*Aryballoi*

Three Roman glass *aryballoi*, small perfume or oil containing vessels, were discovered near the location of the pelvis at the bottom of the pithos. The location and clustering of the *aryballoi* suggests that they may have been tied to the waist, a common way of carrying the vessels. All three are made of thinly-blown blue glass shaped into a pomegranate-like form with vertical ribs on the body, a long narrow neck and a lipped rim. The largest is 5 cm in width in the body and 7.5 cm in height. The second *aryballos* has a 3.5cm wide body and is 5cm in height. The third *aryballos* was severely fractured, but appeared to have been the same size as the second *aryballos*.

The technique of blowing glass originated in the 1st century BCE in the Eastern Mediterranean and is often attributed to Syria (Luckner 1994; Walker 2008). The efficiency and the cost effectiveness of the technique allowed for rapid spread through the Roman Empire which readily traded the glass creations from the east and imported artisans to start new workshops in the west. By the 1st century CE, blown glass are found across the empire, often in burials, with high concentrations of finds in the major production centers in Syria and Gaul (Grossmann 2002). Arybolloi found in associated with a Roman trading center at the site of Dibba in the United Arab Emirates yielded 1st-2nd century BCE light blue glass *aryballoi* with vertical ribbing (Jasim 2006). These are the most similar examples to the Oğlanqala pithos with documented provenance in the East.


**Figure 5.11** Two blown-glass *aryballoi*

*Bead*

A single glass bead was also found near the *aryballoi*. The bead is approximately 1.5 cm wide. It is mostly dark teal and has 10 raised eyes made with alternating white and dark teal glass. This form closely resembles Phoenician crafted horned beads (Moscati and Palazzo Grassi. 1988). It may very well be from the Levant or it may have been made elsewhere in Phoenician style. This was a very popular bead for personal decoration and a similar example was also found in a pithos burial at the site of Germi in Iranian Azerbaijan (Abdi 2000; Fard 1995).


**Figure 5.12** Phoenician-style horned glass bead in dark teal and white

**Conclusions**

The outer appearance of the burial with locally produced pottery initially lends the impression that the burial is of a native resident of the area around Oğlanqala, but the burial contents overwhelmingly suggest Roman cultural connections. Every artifact in the pithos is characteristic of materials produced in Europe and around the Mediterranean. As mentioned earlier, caution must be taken when evaluating ethnic or cultural identity of an individual using archaeological evidence. Objects travelled around the ancient world just as freely as people through diffusion and trade. There is a possibility that this individual was a wealthy local who collected personal objects exclusively from within the realm of the Roman Empire. However, similar burials at Germi and in Armenia revealed that local burials had distinctly eastern material contents such as local coins and jewelry, pottery and textiles with eastern motifs (Abdi 2000; Fard 1995; Zardarian and Akopian 1995). Ancient authors furthermore emphasize that despite Rome's advances in political influence in the Caucasus, the people maintained traditional customs which were nearly identical to those of Parthia (Ferguson 2005; Kennedy 1996b; Mommsen 1886).

Historical evidence of Caius Caesar's campaign in the early 1st century CE would place thousands of Romans from across the empire within the Caucasus. This event increases the possible presence of many foreigners. The presence of four identical *denarii* fits well with the theory that Caius had Roman currency locally minted to distribute to his soldiers while on campaign (Mousheghian and Depeyrot 1999). The depiction of Isis and Serapis on Ring 1 also resonates with military involvement since the cult, much like Mithraism, had a strong following among Roman soldiers (Moore 1900).

The individual buried in the Oğlanqala pithos burial could have died for a variety of reasons including injury or illness. If he or she was not a local inhabitant of the area, local resources, such as the pithos and accessory vessel, could have been used expediently for the burial process. The archaeological evidence strongly suggests the burial of an individual identified themselves with the Roman cultural sphere, but who was buried according to local tradition. This information has important supplemental value to the results of the proceeding bioarchaeological data.

## 6. Synthesis & Conclusions

In this study, bioarchaeological data that establishes the biological identity of the individual constitutes the framework around which archaeological data can inform cultural identity while historical context assigns significance to the burial within the region and time period. While sex could not be determined, analyses of the epiphyses of the phalanges as well as the dentition suggest the individual was between the ages of 15 and 21. He or she had severe dental wear by attrition, exposing dentin, solely on the right side of the mouth. Patterns of wear suggest the severity may have been the result of misaligned bite, a diet of hard foods and/or bruxism due to stress. Oxygen isotope analysis also suggests the he or she was not originally raised near Oğlanqala. Rather, the individual had ratios similar to populations hailing from regions in the northern Mediterranean.

The ceramics associated with the burial, the pithos and the accessory vessel, are locally produced. The scalloped rim and twisted rope pattern on the body of the pithos with the capstone and plastering is a form and preparation also discovered in great numbers to the north and southeast of the site on similar hills throughout the Caucasus. This form of burial appears to be common in the Caucasus from the early through the late 1$^{st}$ century CE (Abdi 2000; Fard 1995). Considering all known examples were found on the sides of mountains, pithos burial may have been an efficient method for disposing of the dead on the rocky terrain where digging deeply may have been difficult (Abdi 2000; Zardarian and Akopian 1995). Yet, despite the many comparative examples of pithoi in the region, the burial at Oğlanqala remains unique because the burial goods diverge so greatly in ethnic origin from those of its Caucasian counterparts.

The four identical Augustan *denarii* not only date the burial to between 2BCE and the early 1$^{st}$ century CE, they also provide a clue to why the individual arrived at Oğlanqala from the

Northern Mediterranean. The high number of similar good quality coins in the Caucasus versus other European regions excluding Spain and France suggests local production using a professional mint with authentic Roman dies. The only known functioning mint in the region was at Artaxata, about 50 km northwest from Oğlanqala along the Araxes river valley (Dahmen 2010; Mousheghian and Depeyrot 1999). The only recorded major Roman presence in the region at the time was the campaign of Caius Caesar who was also recorded to have stationed his troops at Artaxata (Romer 1979). It is likely that he commissioned coins to be stamped with the image of his father and of himself and his brother to pay his soldiers. The likelihood that someone not involved in Caius' campaign collected 4 identical *denarii* cannot be dismissed. However, the results of the oxygen isotope analysis as well as the remainder of the burial goods, suggest that this individual may well have been at Oğlanqala as a result of the Roman campaign in the region.

The individual wore seven rings on his or her fingers, a quantity that is not found frequently. In comparison, other pithoi in the region do not contain more than one or two finger rings. Rings, particularly set with precious gems like carnelian and inlaid with gold, were expensive personal adornments. These seven rings probably represent a significant accumulation of wealth. Wearing multiple rings in antiquity was a display of power. Plato affirms this when he complains that Aristotle wear too many rings on his fingers in an effort to impress his students (Kunz 1917). The poor condition of most of the rings means that they cannot provide significant information about the wearer's self-identification beyond the economic value of the materials of which they are composed. However, the glass paste intaglio of Isis and Serapis is particularly telling. The cult of Isis and Serapis was an oriental cult that began in Egypt and was Romanized by Augustus and adopted into the Roman world with temples in Italy and Asia Minor. Evidence of worship also extends into military camps, fortifications and Roman colonies in Northern

Europe (Alvar 2008). Much like Mithraism, the cult of Isis and Serapis was particularly prevalent among members of the Roman military who were often responsible for spreading belief across the empire (Moore 1900). Cult-related personal adornments were sold in the private market of the cult temples (Alvar 2008). An intaglio sealing ring is a publically legible display of identity since it would not only be visible as adornment but also in documentation affiliated with the wearer. If it is assumed that the individual chose to wear it intentionally or it was placed on the fingers by the survivors intentionally, then it is likely that the adornment was a conscious display of affiliation with the cult as a component of the deceased's identity (Aizpurúa and McAnany 1999). If the theory of personal adornment serving as a window to personal and group identity is considered, then the remaining six rings not only represent the affluent status of the individual, but also the additional components of his or her identity on display (Joyce 2005).

Since the glass horned bead is found in regular numbers across the Mediterranean, Caucasus and Near East, it does not help narrow our search (Fard 1995). However, the three blown-glass *aryballoi* are of typical Roman manufacture (Luckner 1994; Walker 1994). As with the rings, it appears the individual enjoyed abundance. Even though it is unclear whether the *aryballoi* were used to hold perfume, oil or some other liquid, it was important enough for the individual to have three tied to his or her waist. This may also be a sign of affluence.

Finally, the site may also hold clues to why the individual was buried at Oğlanqala. There are many pits in the citadel that contained eating and drinking vessels, a large amount of sheep and goat bone, and charcoal (C14 dated to between the 1$^{st}$ century BCE and 1$^{st}$ century CE). These pits seem to represent episodes of communal consumption of food. Excavations of citadels further north have found evidence of small settlements within the ruins of Urartian period citadels during this period. However, the pits at Oğlanqala do not seem to be associated with

permanent local residence. In fact, little else besides the pits and pithos burial has been associated with the 1st century BCE-1st century CE activity in the citadel area. Rather, the evidence points to short-term encampment at the summit of the site. If the pithos burial is evidence for Roman presence in the region, then the pits may represent a temporary camp for the Roman soldiers of Caius as they campaigned along the Araxes river valley. Identification as a Roman military camp would be made simpler had there been similar sites to compare to in the regions. However, David Kennedy states, "Although we can plot scores of camps across northern/ western Europe from the campaigns of Agricola, Severus and others in Scotland, we cannot in like fashion follow the routes of Lucullus, Pompey, Antony, Tiberius, Caius, Corbulo, Trajan and many others in Armenia and Media (The Roman Army in the East 1996)." Yet, Oğlanqala may be evidence for why. The citadel of Oğlanqala is at the very top of a hill that holds a commanding view of the Sharur valley. There would have been minimal or no need to create additional fortifications because the Iron Age structure was well fortified with strong stone walls. The site had all of the features that would have been desirable for a secure military camp. Had a death occurred, the most convenient burial would take place outside of the citadel walls where the pithos was found.

The data available to date suggests these findings for the identity and origins of the individual buried in the pithos at Oğlanqala. However, there is also room for further investigation. Admittedly, the sample size for oxygen isotope analysis was small. If more ancient burials are discovered near and around the citadel, it would provide the opportunity to collect more comparative $\delta O^{18}$ values. While there was confidence in the faunal comparisons, a substantial human comparison would be ideal. Also, it would be of interest to further investigate

archaeological material relating to the period of the pithos across the site to see if there is additional information surrounding a settlement at the site.

In this regard, exploring the pithos burial at Oğlanqala is not simply an inquiry into the intimate details of an individual in antiquity who greeted death too young and far from home. The burial is also an initial step into discovering the physical remains of Roman influence and involvement in the Caucasus as well as a consideration of the possible role that Oğlanqala played in the region during the period.

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