



The Karmir Blur archaeological site is situated on the banks of the Hrazdan River, in the south-western periphery of Yerevan. In the first quarter of the 7th century BC, during the reign of Urartian king Rusa II (685-645), the fortress Teishebaini was founded. The fortress was dedicated to the second-supreme Urartian god of war and thunder, Teisheba. Until the first half of the 20th century, there was no evidence Teishebaini had ever existed, except for the mention of a small chapel (later destroyed), called 'Kavakert', in the archive of the Holy See in Echmiadzin.

In 1936, during geological explorations for constructions in the Hrazdan canyon, Russian geologist A. Demiochin came across a piece of polished basalt, with some cuneiform inscriptions. Studies of the basalt showed it dated from the 7th century BC, and mentioned the name of Rusa II, son of the Urartian king, Argishti II. Regular excavations of Karmir Blur subsequently began in 1939, conducted jointly by the Academy of Sciences of Armenia and the Saint Petersburg State Hermitage.



The excavation of the citadel and surrounding settlement showed that the economically-prosperous and militarily-strong settlement of Teishebaini was founded by the mighty Urartian king, Rusa II. After the Assyrian king Sargon II's invasion and destruction of Urartu in 714 BC, Rusa II – following on from the work of his predecessor, Argishti II – did his best to restore the country's freedom and military might.

Kings Argishti and Rusa began their rebuilding with the construction of fortresses, cities, military bases and canals throughout the country. To try to build support in the context of the age-old struggle between Urartu and Assyria, they also sought out allies amongst the northern tribes.

But Teishebaini's existence was not a long one. After the final destruction of the capital of Assyria, Nineveh, in 605 BC, Urartu was attacked and destroyed by Median and Babylonian invasions.



Around 590 BC, Tushpa was finally destroyed by the Medians, and the central parts of Urartu were incorporated into the territory of Media. Teishebaini suffered a similar fate, with local tribes and Scythians taking part in its occupation and destruction.

The attack on Teishebaini began at night, with the invasion originating not at the city's central gates, but from the north-western part of the fortress, on the left bank of the Hrazdan River. Subsequent excavations discovered a large number of Scythian arrowheads in this area.

Following the destruction and arson of Teishebaini, life was not restored to the city. It gradually became desolate and deserted – as did many of Urartu's settlement fortresses – until the first strike of an archaeologist's pick, which resulted in the glorious history of Urartu – and the integral role of Teishebaini within it – being able to be told.