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The main entrance to the fortress was located at the more gently sloped southeastern site of the hill. It led to the central yard of the citadel. Ceremonies held by the personal guards of Argishti I and guards of the fortress garrison were held here. In the southwest portion of the yard was a temple of the god Khaldi.



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In the southwest portion of the yard was a temple of the god Khaldi. The temple had a large oblong plan with a staircase that led to the roof of a [ziggurat](#) type tower and a side room on the lower floor. Surrounding the hall was a double-rowed twelve-column open portico with benches along the walls. An [alt](#)

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for sacrifices was located at the left wall. The walls were decorated with colorful

[frescoes](#)

depicting representations of human figures, gods, geometric and floral designs. One of the frescoes uncovered depicts the god Khaldi standing on a lion with a warder in his left hand and a horned crown upon his head. It is typical of other representations of Khaldi found at other sites. The floor of the temple contrasted greatly from the rest of the complex in that it had wood floors composed of small planks, compared to the clay-coated adobe floors that were faced with stone slabs found in the rest of the citadel's rooms.

Early excavations began during the nineteenth century while more systematic excavations were carried out at Erebuni in 1952, under the joint sponsorship of the [Armenian Academy of Sciences](#) ' Institute of

Archaeology and Ethnography and the

[Pushkin Museum](#)

's Board for the Preservation and Restoration of Architectural Monuments. The team was led by Konstantine Hovhannisyán and

[Boris Piotrovsky](#)

, who served as an on-site adviser.

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In the course of the early stage of the excavations (1950–1968), Argishti's palace, the royal assembly hall, temples and over a 100 rooms were excavated. Dozens of Urartian and Achaemenian artifacts, such as pottery, earthenware, belt-buckles, bracelets, beads, drinking vessels, helmets, arrows and silver coins, were also uncovered.

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The fragments of murals that were uncovered were found to be decorated with important religious themes, including "processions of gods, sacred animals, and trees of life", as well as scenes of everyday life, displaying scenes of "hunting, cattle breeding, and agriculture.