

Diyarbakir excavation reveals ancient tomb of young lovers

Today's Zaman, 08.10.2007

Archaeologists discovered the tomb of a young couple locked in an embrace during their work in Hakemi Use in the Bismil district of the southeastern province of Diyarbakır on Saturday.

The young couple, archaeological history's oldest buried lovers, was discovered by excavations in Bismil; they were still embracing one another. Archaeologists assert that the couple, who presumably died some 8,000 years ago, is likely to set a record as the oldest embracing couple in the history of archaeology. Diyarbakır was witness to an extraordinary discovery when archaeologists revealed the tomb of the couple near the township of Tepe in the district of Bismil. The shroud of mystery over the couple will be removed after anthropologists examine the skeletons.

The site at Hakemi Use, 70 kilometers east of Diyarbakır on the south bank of Tigris River, has been under excavation since 2001 by a team of archaeologists led by Halil Tekin of Hacettepe University. The team's objective is to rescue artifacts at the site before the area is flooded by the Ilisu Dam. Salvage efforts were launched with the initiative of the government after the dam project was introduced in the region. The main site of excavation at Hakemi Use is a mound of 120 meters in diameter and four meters high dating from the Late Neolithic period.

The discovery of the tomb of the two lovers has sparked a wave of excitement among the team of archaeologists. Halil Tekin, head of the team, has indicated that the tomb is at least 1,000 years older than the one found last year in Verona, Italy. "The excavation work at the Hakemi Use site has been underway since 2001 with a group of archaeologists from Hacettepe University under the lead of the Diyarbakır Archeology and Ethnography Department. We have recently discovered a tomb bearing the skeletons of a 30-year-old man and a 20-year-old woman. The way they were buried signifies that they were lovers. An illness or even a crime of love may have been the cause of their death. We will learn much more about them after anthropologists in our university complete their examinations on the skeletons," Tekin was quoted as saying by the state-run Anatolia news agency.