

An Attempt at Dating the Starting Point of the Kura- Araxes Culture

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- The dating of the first obvious signs of the Kura-Araxes culture found *in situ* in the layers of local cultures of the Middle East represented the *terminus ante quem* for similar and antedating archaeological artifacts of Transcaucasian Kura-Araxes culture. The dates obtained for the archaeological material of the Kura-Araxes origin detected in the Near Eastern cultural layers, by correlation with the evidence of historical sources of Mesopotamia and Egypt, constitute an important argument *per se* to demonstrate the necessity of considerably shifting back of the accepted dating of the Transcaucasian Kura-Araxes culture, as the latter belongs to the period earlier than the Near Eastern “Kura-Araxes” materials; therefore, this could be done even without using the calibrated radiocarbon dates.

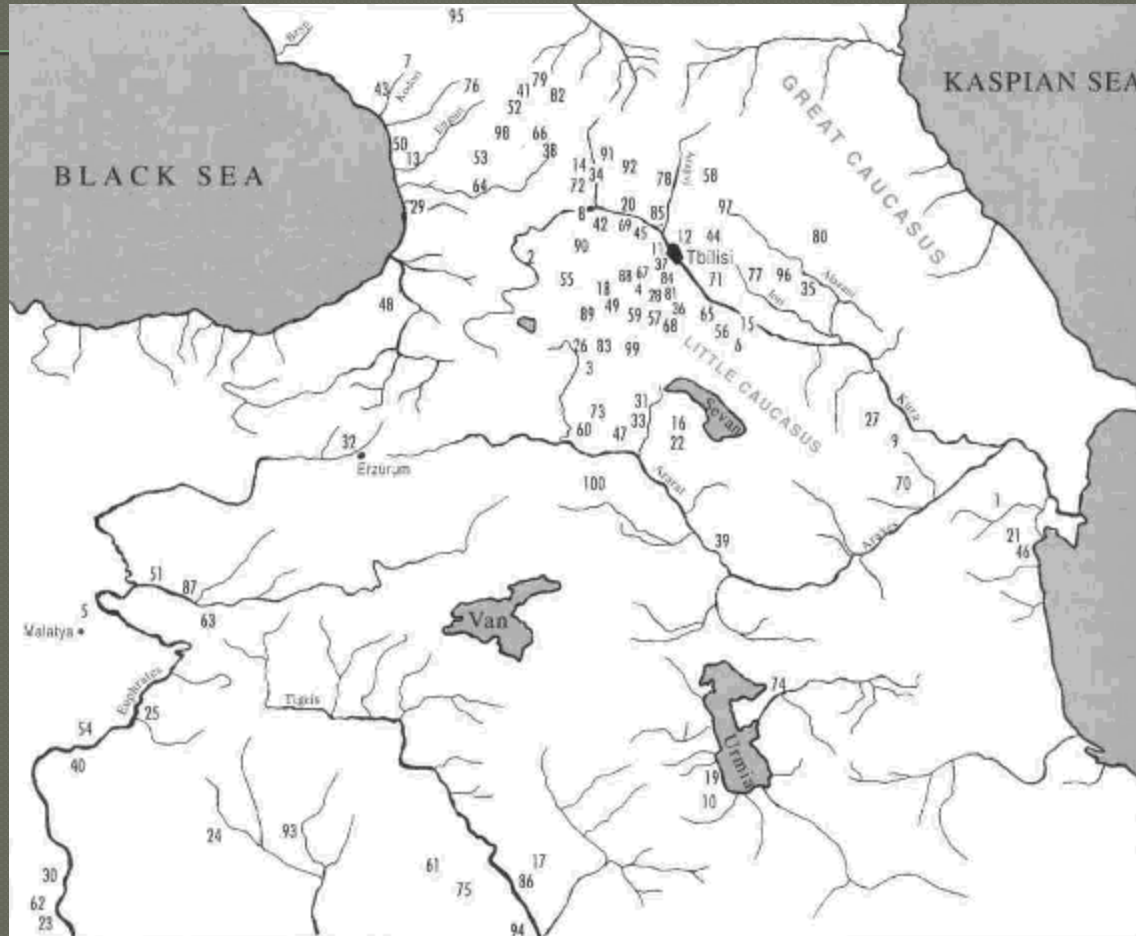


Plate I. Map of Transcaucasia and adjacent regions.

- We have now a much wider set of the dates received by the ^{14}C technique; secondly, new indications on the overlapping in time of the Kura-Araxes and Uruk cultures, which have been revealed in last years with much more intensity than earlier, poses not only the problem of relation between these cultures but gives possibility to reconsider the character of cultural and social developments between the highly civilized societies of the core area of the Near East and its Northern Frontier and the regions located beyond of the latter.

- ① The overview of evidence from chronologically relevant layers containing some archaeological signs of the Kura-Araxes culture allows us to put the starting date of this culture in Transcaucasia somewhere during the Middle Uruk period, at least.
- ② In the middle and the second half of the 4th millennium nearly simultaneously on the northern periphery of the Middle East the activity of the Uruk colonists and the bearers of the Kura-Araxes culture can be traced.

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- ◎ We should have in mind the fact, that the red-black type pottery of the Kura-Araxes cultures is a sign not of earlier, but of the developed stage of this culture.

◎ If we intend to date the starting point of the Kura-Araxes culture, one of the first tasks should be the determination of the end of the preceding Chalcolithic culture of the Caucasus. To this period of time belongs the still unsolved problem of interrelation between the Caucasian Chalcolithic and Uruk cultures.

◎ Basing themselves on G. Algaze's theory, about the underdevelopment of northern societies and the dominance of southern city-states who obtain desired goods from the periphery through a kind of economic colonial system, whole range of new archaeological publications appeared about the so-called Late Uruk expansion in the Caucasus.

- If Uruk colonies, as a rule, are distinguishable from the indigenous settlements around them by a complex of material culture: pottery and other artifacts, architecture and graves, in the Caucasus we have, quite different situation. More and more sites belonging to the culture of Leilatepe are detected every year in southern Transcaucasia and therefore to speak only about of some outposts of Uruk colonists becomes quite irrelevant. As it has been expected some archaeologists already began to speak about the penetration of large masses of people of a quite new migrants for this region – bearers of Mesopotamian, Uruk tradition into the Caucasus in the middle of the 4th millennium, who settled down in every region of the Caucasus.

- The Late Uruk expansion to the Upper Euphrates area, as recently has become clear, can't be used to explain Mesopotamian-Caucasian connections even from pure chronological reasons. This is quite obvious – Late Uruk expansion is in reality much later phenomenon than above-mentioned Mesopotamian ties of Caucasian archaeological material.

◎ The Transcaucasian sites with import or imitation of Ubaid pottery are quite impossible to fit with the era of expansion of the Uruk culture outside its Mesopotamian homeland. We ought to take into account also the above-mentioned fact of discovery of Kura-Araxes pottery of the advanced stage in the layers of late Middle and Late Uruk colonies along the Upper Euphrates. These facts are obvious indications on the discrepancy of chronological character.

◎ In my book published in 1981, I tried for the determination of the age of Toghut and the sites of its circle, to pay attention to the problem of origin of Gawra XIA cultural complex, which in my opinion had some traits typical for Toghut. I supposed that first of all the admixture of new population ought to be main reason of such a change in the culture. The archaeological material of Tepe Gawra XIA reveals some hereditary ties, though perhaps not a direct, with the material typical of Toghut.

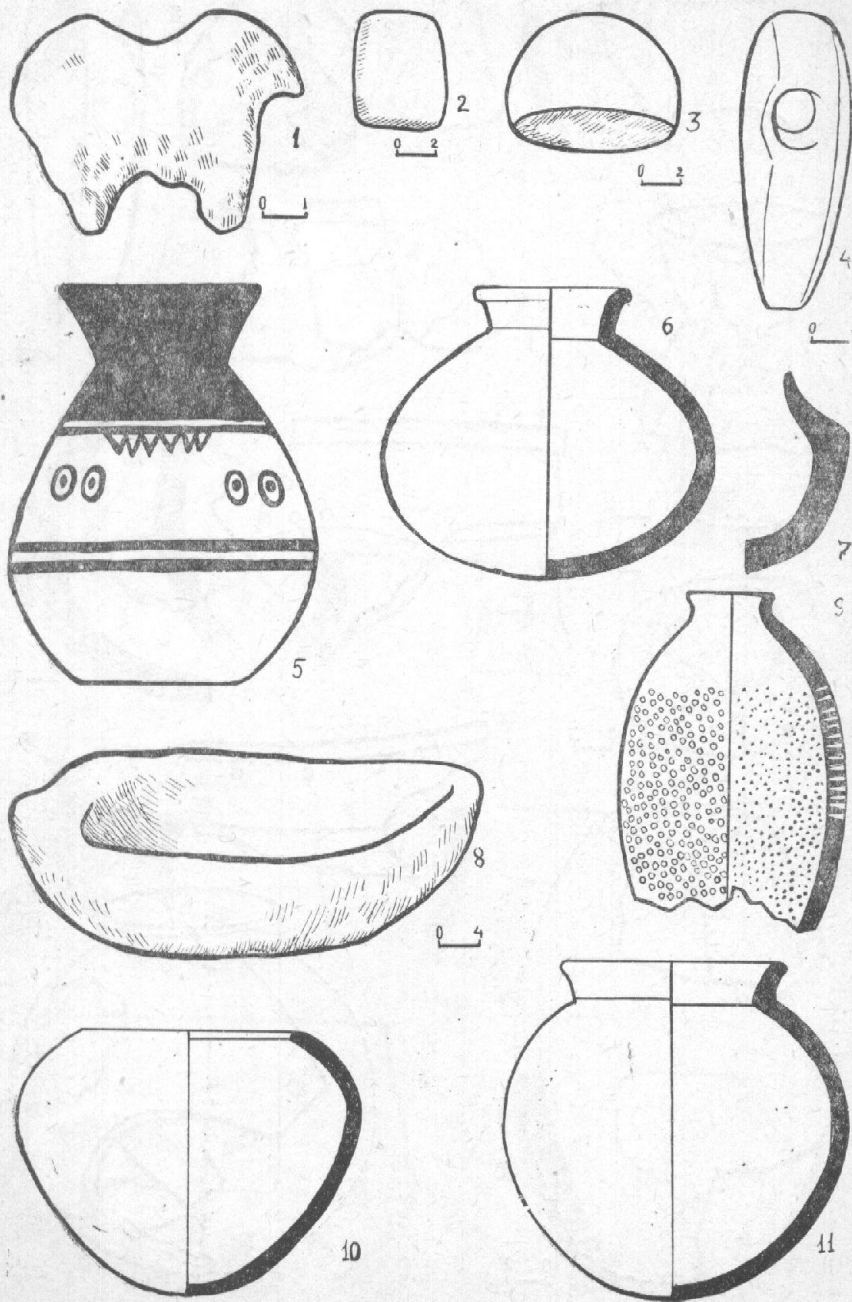


Plate IV. Level
XI A of Tepe
Gawra.
Clay and stone
objects.

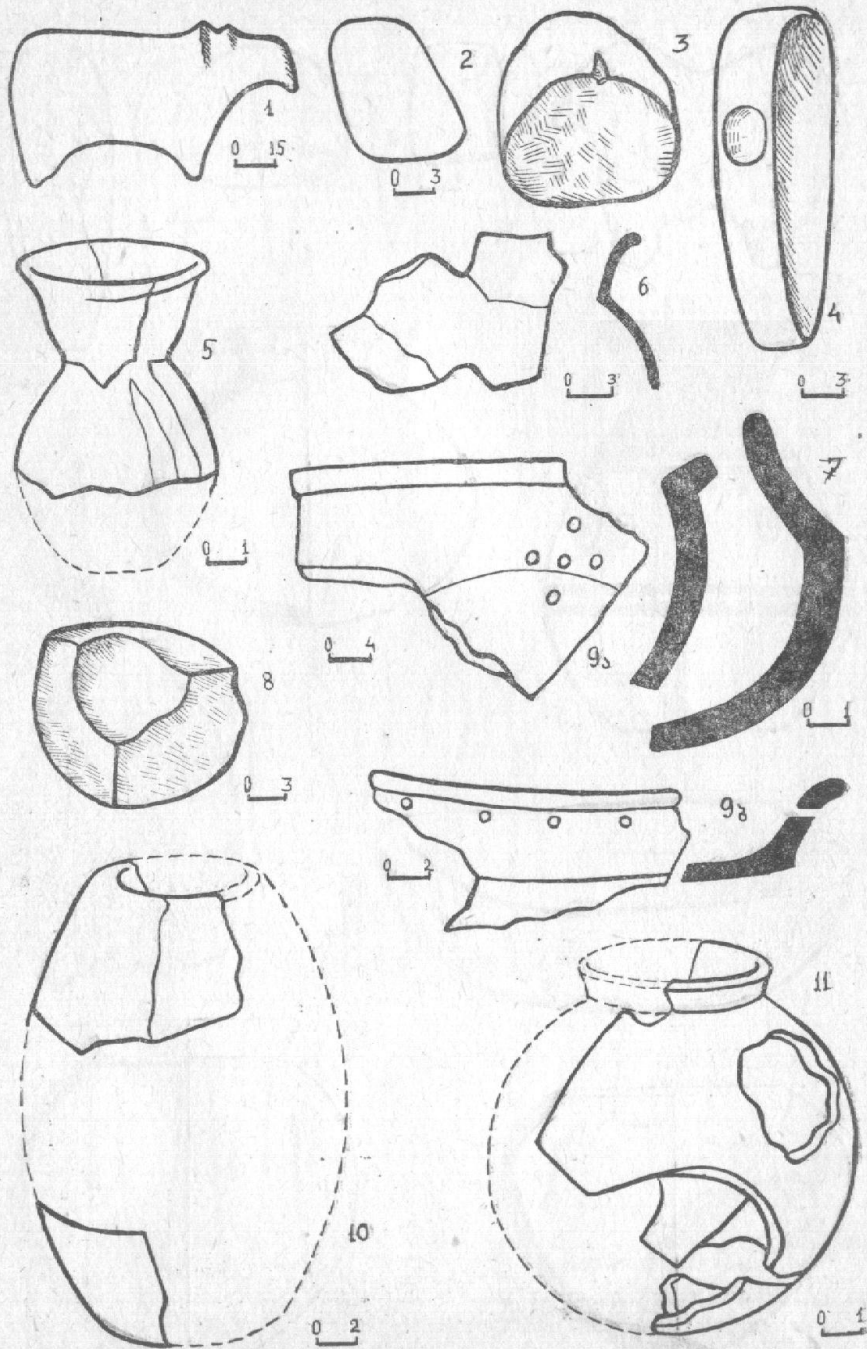


Plate III. Teghut.
Clay and stone
objects.

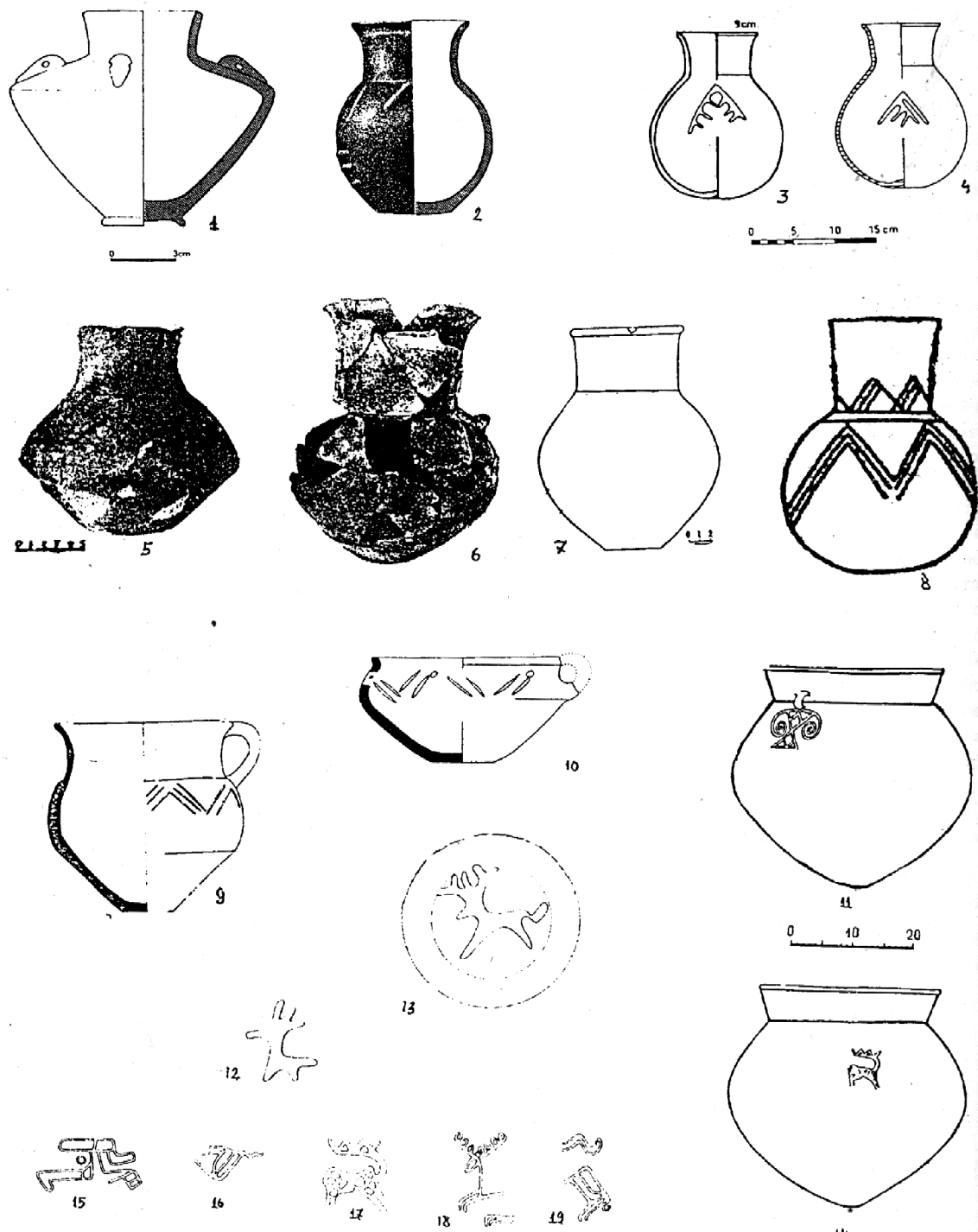


Plate II: Hassek Höyük (Hoh 1984: Fig. 12, 4); 2 - Hassek Höyük (ibid.:Fig. 12, 5); 3 - Tepecik (Esin1979: 61, Fig. 12); 4 -Tepecik (Esin 1982: 74, Fig. 11); 5 - Amiranis Gora (Chubinishvili 1971: Table XVII, 2); 6 - Nakhidrebis Chala (ibid.: Table XV, 5); 7 -Keti, grave 5 (Petrosyan 1989: Table 30, 4); 8 - Amiranis Gora, Level III (Kushnareva & Chubinishvili 1970: Fig. 21, 6); 9 -Kvatskhelebi (Sagona1984: Fig. 1, 3); 10 - Samshvide (southern part of Eastern Georgia) (ibid.: Fig. 40, 2); 11 - Geoy TepeK 1 (Chubinishvili 1971: Table XII, 6); 12 - Kvatskhelebi (ibid.: Fig. 105, 1); 14 - Geoy Tepe K 1 (Chubinishvili 1971: Table XII, 7); 15 - Pulur (Sakyol) (Sagona 1984: Fig. 122, 242); 16 - Pulur(Sakyol) (ibid.: Fig. 122, 243); Geoy Tepe (ibid.: Fig. 122, 244); 18 - Pulur (Sakyol) (ibid.: Fig. 122,245); 19 - Pulur (Sakyol)(ibid.: 122, 246)

◎ B. Peasnell and M. S. Rothman found reasons to challenge G Algabe's above-mentioned theory and proved that economic specialization and political elaboration (complexity) in the north were developing before intensified interaction with the south.

- The distance-parity interaction model characteristic of the Uruk colonies better explains the organization and long-term effects of cultural contact between complex societies and less developed neighboring polities than the hegemonic control by the core area as postulated in the alternative G. Algaze's world system theory. The leveling effects of distance give rise to a highly variable social landscape in which the smaller, less complex polities of the "periphery" could and did play an active role in structuring networks of interregional interaction (Stein 1998). If with increasing distance it becomes difficult for Mesopotamians to dominate local communities e.g. in south-eastern Anatolia etc. retaining economic autonomy in the Uruk enclaves there, it would have been even more difficult to retain such dominance in the Caucasus.