

GIORGI LEON KAVTARADZE

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE
CAUCASUS AND THE MIDDLE EAST
DURING THE "PRE-KURA-ARAXES"
PERIOD

International Archeological
Symposium

Problems of Maykop Culture in the
Context

of Caucasian-Anatolian Relations

Tbilisi - 2013

Middle East

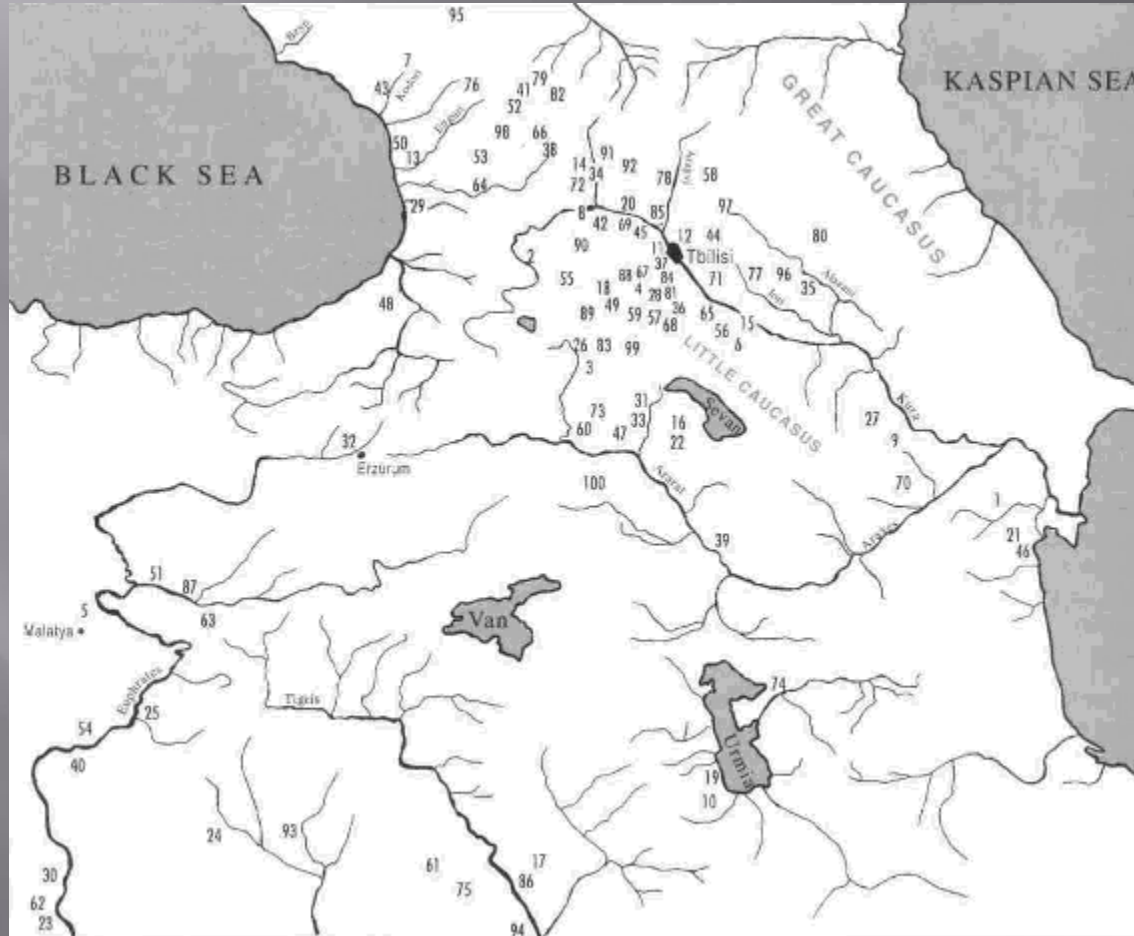


New indications on the overlapping in time of the Kura-Araxes and Uruk cultures, which have been revealed in last years with much more intensity than earlier, poses not only the problem of relation between these cultures but gives possibility to reconsider the character of cultural and social developments between the highly civilized societies of the core area of the Near East and its northern periphery and the regions located beyond of the latter.

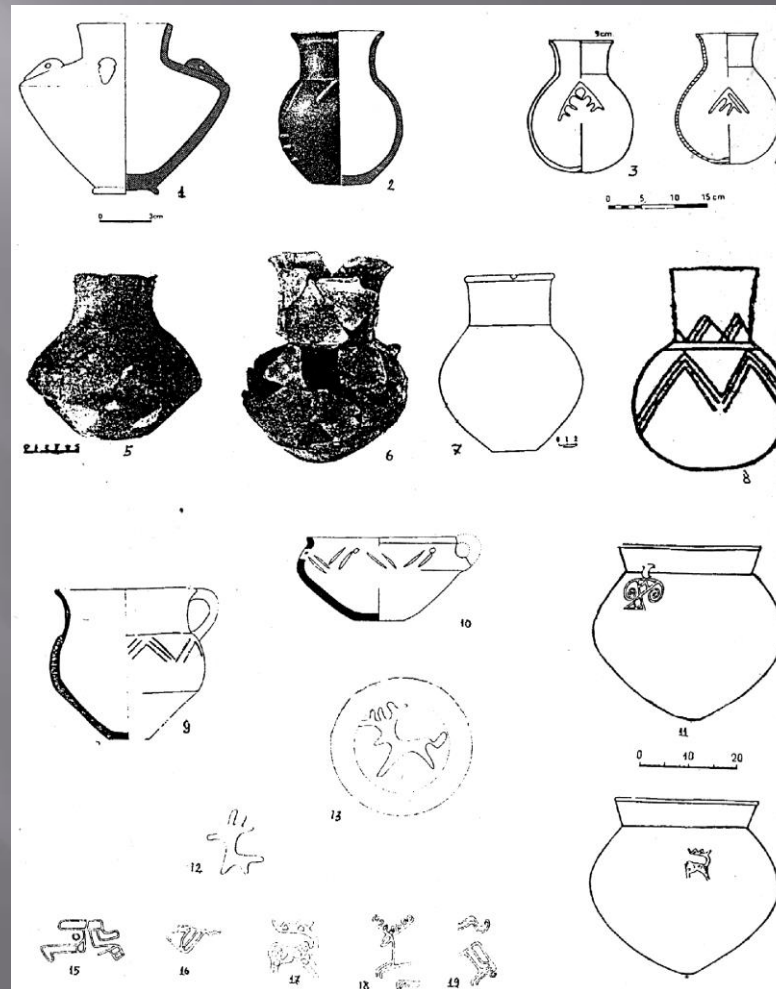
Transcaucasian sites with import or imitation of Ubaid pottery are quite impossible to fit with the era of expansion of the Uruk culture outside its Mesopotamian homeland; it is quite impossible either to imagine that the resettlement of Uruk colonists in the Caucasus, reliably assigned to pre-“Kura-Araxes” times, took place in the Late Uruk period. These facts are obvious indications on the discrepancy of chronological character.

Transcaucasia is generally accepted to represent the core area of the initial formation of the Kura-Araxes culture. 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; consequently, this could be done even without using the cal. 14C dates.

Map of Transcaucasia and adjacent regions



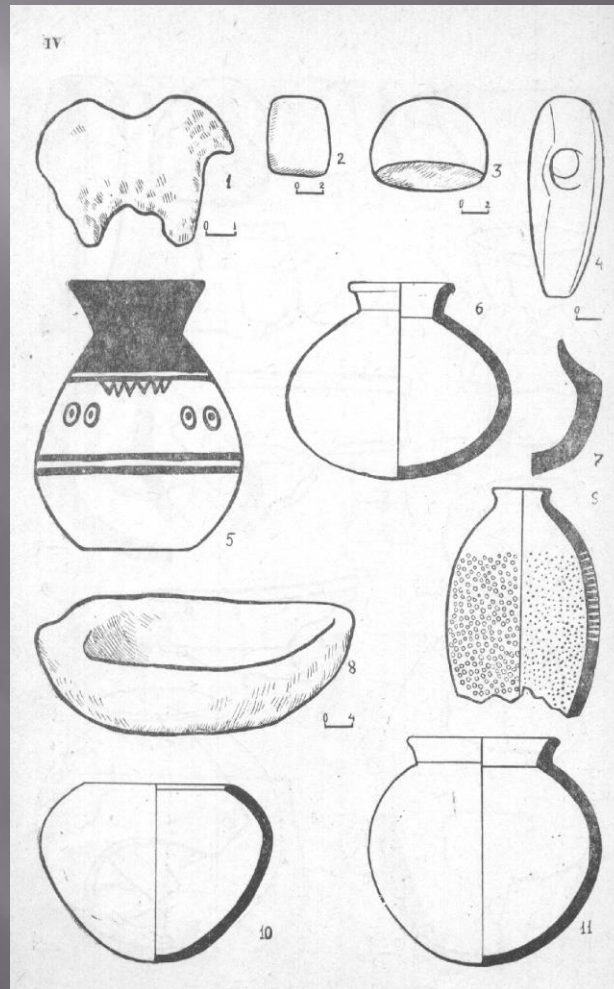
Hassek Höyük (Hoh 1984: Fig. 12, 4); 2 - Hassek Höyük (ibid.:Fig. 12, 5); 3 - Tepecik (Esin1979: 61, Fig. 12); 4 -
 Tepecik (Esin 1982: 74, Fig. 11); 5 - Amiranis Gora (Chubinishvili 1971: Table XVII, 2); 6 Nakhidrebis Chala (ibid.:
 Table XV, 5); 7 -Ketí, grave 5 (Petrosyan 1989: Table 30, 4); 8 -Amiranis Gora, Level III (Kushnareva & Chubinishvili
 1970: Fig. 21, 6); 9 -Kvatskhelebi (Sagona1984: Fig. 1, 3); 10 - Samshvilde (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 - Pulus (Sakyol) (Sagona 1984: Fig. 122, 242); 16 - Pulus(Sakyol) (ibid.: Fig.
 122, 243); Geoy Tepe (ibid.: Fig. 122, 244); 18 - Pulus (Sakyol) (ibid.: Fig. 122,245); 19 - Pulus (Sakyol)(ibid.: 122, 246.



The overview of evidence from chronologically relevant layers containing some archaeological signs of the Kura-Araxes culture allows us at the present stage of our knowledge to put the starting date of this culture in Transcaucasia somewhere during the Middle Uruk period, at least. In the following time, in 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.

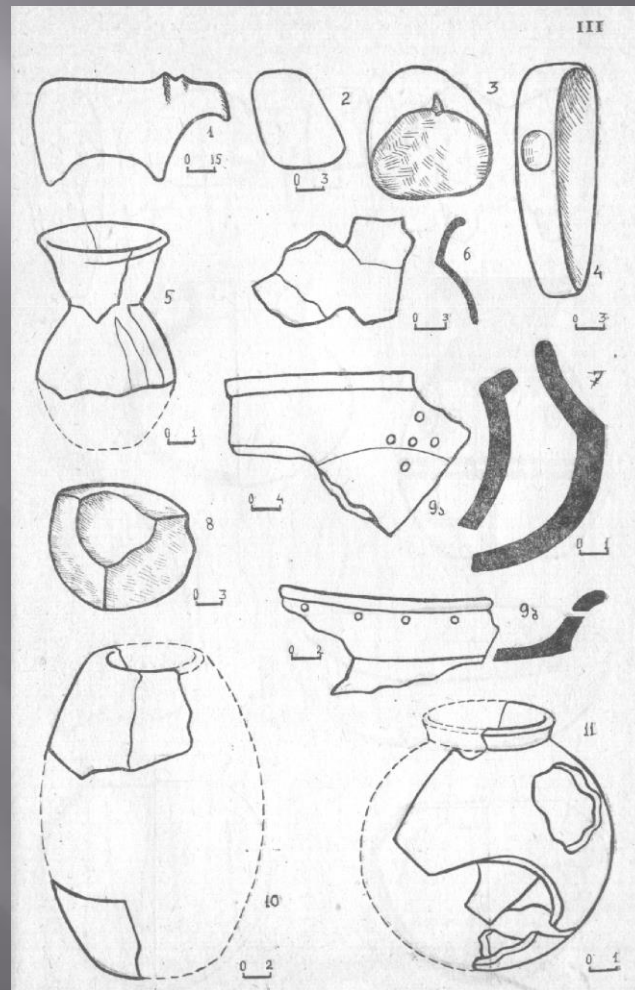
In my book published in 1981, I tried for the determination of the age of Toghut and the sites of its circle, to pay attention to the problem of origin of Gawra XIA cultural complex, which in my opinion had some traits typical for Toghut. Well known fact, that in Tepe Gawra the transformation or change from Ubaid to Uruk is very well visible. It was declared that a study of ceramic change in the Ubaid and Uruk periods of Mesopotamia illustrates how "degeneration" can be correlated with the development of complex societies in the region. Between the Ubaid and Uruk layers is visible obvious and sudden change in shapes and fabric becomes "decidedly inferior", shapes - crude, profiles - irregular; almost all distinctive late 'Ubaid forms disappear, in strata XIA tournette used less often than in XII. Painting ceases and no other ornamentation takes its place.

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



Teghut.

Clay and stone objects



If G. Algaze's theory based on the supposed unbalanced relations between a main centre (southern Mesopotamia with city-states) and a less developed periphery (northern Mesopotamia, Iran, Anatolia and beyond) led to the emergence of a number of archaeological publications about the Late Uruk economic colonial system and its expansion at one time, now when B. Peasnell and M. S. Rothman found reasons to challenge above theory and proved that economic and political complexity in the north were developing before intensified interaction with the south, the time has come for the appearance of the new outlook with a more balanced view on the problem of the relationship between the south and the north.

As the later stage of Middle Uruk and the Late Uruk period is contemporary with the Kura-Araxes culture of the advanced stage, it is impossible to date the archaeological material comparable with the culture of Uruk and found at the Caucasian so-called Chalcolithic sites of the “pre-Kura-Araxes” time by the Late (or even Middle) Uruk period. Therefore, the conclusion can only be one: the aforementioned parallels of the pre-Kura-Araxes period relate mainly to the Early Uruk or pre-Uruk/Ubaid period, if we assume that in shaping of the Mesopotamian Uruk culture attended cultural influx of Caucasian origin.

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This web site is recommended to scholars working in the humanitarian sciences, as well as to the general public interested in the history and culture of the Caucasus and Anatolia. This region is