

Arkeolojiyle Geçen Bir Yaşam İçin Yazılar
Veli Sevin'e Armağan

SCRIPTA

Essays in Honour of Veli Sevin
A Life Immersed in Archaeology



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SUNUŞ

Scripta arkeolojik ve entelektüel birikimini yazıya dökmekten, derslerinde ve arazi çalışmalarında aktarmaktan hiç bıkmayan birisini, Prof. Dr. Veli Sevin'i, en iyi anlatan sözcüklerden biri, belki de en iyisi. Kendisine yöneltilen bir soru ya da anlatma gereksinimi duyduğu bir konu, saatler süren bir arkeoloji sohbetinin içinde kendinizi bulmanızın en sade yolu. Yıl 1966, Van-Çavuştepe kazısı, öğrencidir, ilk kazısıdır; kırk yedi yıl aralıksız ve ilk günkü heyecanı ile sürdürülecek çok sayıda Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu kazı ve araştırma çalışmalarının başlangıcı.

Yirmi sekiz yıl boyunca şahit olduğum mesleğine karşı duyduğu sınırsız heyecan; bütün gün kazı alanındaki açmalarda işçilerle toz-toprak içinde, gün sonunda kazı evinde ve nihayet fakültede aralıksız çalışma, kazıya yeni gelen öğrencileri ve herkesi şaşırtan ve sonra da onun hızına yetişme telaşı sardırان. Kazı boyunca ekiple, köylülerle ve işçilerle kurduğu sevecen ama profesyonel ilişki yalnızca arkeolojiyi öğrenmenizi değil, kendi insanımızı tanımanızı, hiç bilmediğiniz bir coğrafyayı kolaylıkla benimsemenizi, daha da ötesi sevmenizi ve gelecek yazı sabırsızlıkla beklemenizi sağlar. Bu liste uzayabilir. Prof. Dr. Veli Sevin'in hoşgörüsü, sınırsız sabrı, nezaketi ve engin bilgisi bizleri yetiştirdi, bugüne getirdi.

İlk karşılaşmamız Anadolu'nun Tarihi Coğrafyası dersindeydi. O ders, bugüne uzanan akademik yaşamımdaki en keskin yol ayrımı oldu. 1985 yılında aldığım bu ders, bana halen kullandığım ilk temel bilgileri verdiği gibi, hayatımın yönünü de değiştirdi. İstanbul Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi'nin en üst katında, iç avluya bakan 416 no'lu derslikte başlayan arkeoloji yolculuğum, hemen ardından Veli hocanın başkanı olduğu Fırat kıyısındaki İmikuşığı höyüğü kazısıyla benim için vazgeçilmez hale dönüştü. O günden bu yana Prof. Dr. Veli Sevin'le hemen her projede birlikte çalıştık; bilgisini, desteğini ve dostluğunu hiç esirgemedi. Başarılarımıza bizden çok sevindi, hep yazmamızı, üretmemizi istedi. Öyle ki; ilk kazı başkanlığımı yine o düşündü, teşvik etti, sonra da yalnız bırakmadı.

Anadolu arkeolojisine katkılarıyla, yetiştirdiği öğrencileriyle alkışlanan bir yaşam. Sevgili hocamıza teşekkür etmenin yetersiz olduğunu düşündüm hep, elinizdeki kitabın bir parça da olsa Prof. Dr. Veli Sevin'e şükranlarımızı ifade etmesini umarım.

Kitabın hazırlanma ve düzeltme sürecindeki katkılarından dolayı Prof. Dr. Necla Arslan Sevin ve Yrd. Doç. Dr. Nilgün Coşkun'a, yardımlarından dolayı Yrd. Doç. Dr. Hatice Kalkan ve Doç. Dr. Şevket Dönmez'e içtenlikle teşekkür ederim. Kitaba katkı sağlayan yazarlar hiç kuşkusuz en özel teşekkürleri fazlasıyla hak ediyorlar.

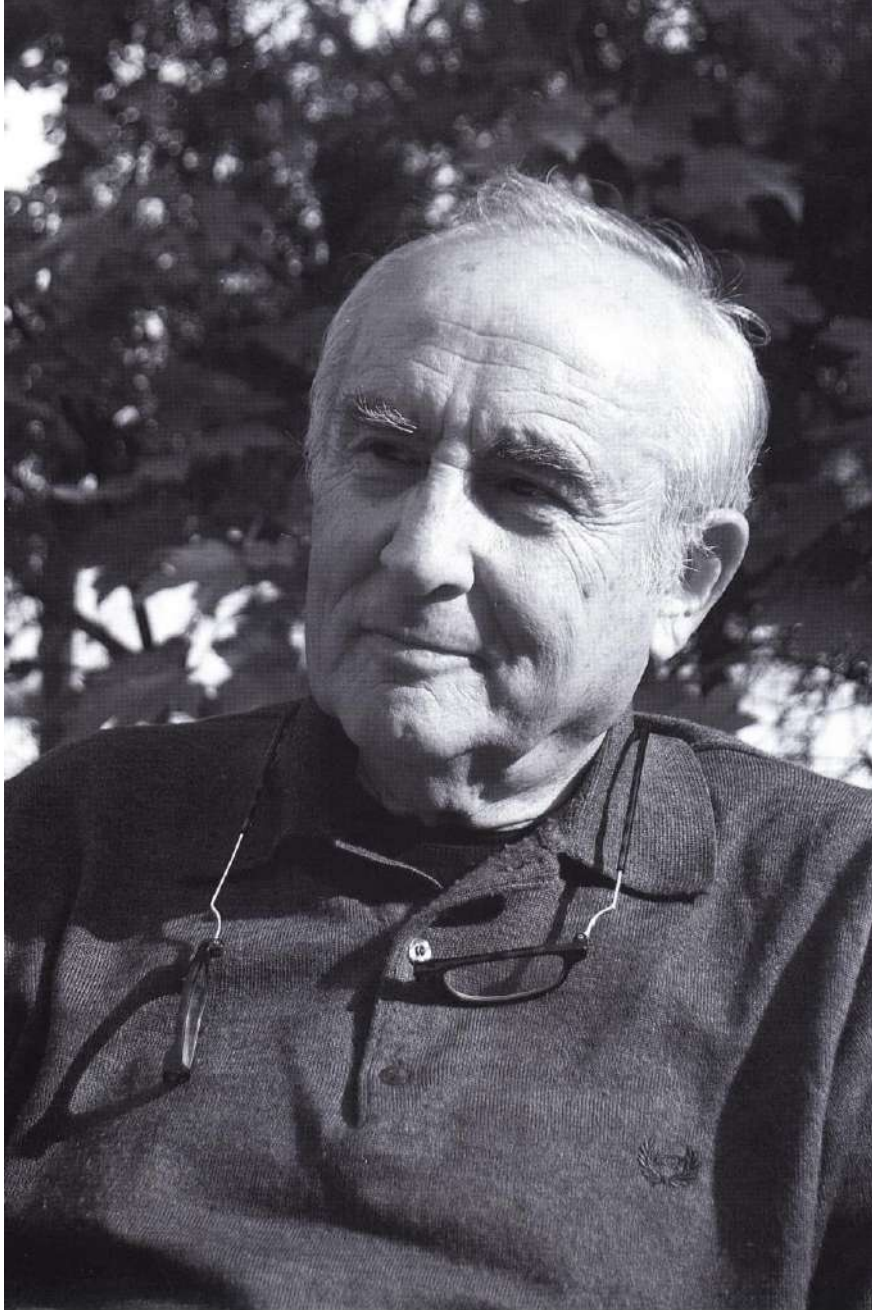
Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi Rektörü Sayın Prof. Dr. Hüsnü Salih Güder Arkeoloji Bölümü'nün tüm çalışmalarında olduğu gibi, destek ve yardımlarını esirgemedi. Kendisine içtenlikle teşekkürler.

Son olarak, Prof. Dr. Veli Sevin Armağan Kitabı'na gösterdiği özen ve Türkiye arkeolojisine yaptığı önemli katkılar için Ege Yayınları'na ve pek tabii Ahmet Boratav'a şükranlarımı sunarım. Baskı süresince oldukça özverili ve itinalı çalışan Hülya Tokmak'a ve Ege Yayınları'nın diğer çalışanlarına da çok teşekkürler.

Sözcüklerin yetersiz kaldığı sevgili hocamız, Prof. Dr. Veli Sevin'e içten saygılarımla.

Prof. Dr. Aynur Özfirat

Antakya-2013



Prof. Dr. Veli Sevin

TRANSCAUCASIA AND THE PROBLEM OF THE URUK CULTURAL PHENOMENON

Giorgi L. KAVTARADZE*

Abstract

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-mentioned 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 formation of 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.

One of the most important aims, for the archaeologists working on problems of archaeology of the northern periphery of Near East and basing themselves on recent researches in the Caucasus of the 4th millennium B.C., is to establish the links between the cultural and social developments of the Caucasus and distinct regions of the Near East (*i.e.* eastern Anatolia, the Levant, Mesopotamia and western Iran) within the context of the Uruk cultural phenomenon. 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.

Well known fact, that South Mesopotamian merchants of the late period of the Middle Uruk and Late Uruk, hungry for semi-precious stones, timber and metal ores, established a whole range of trading-outposts along the routes going to the mountains of Zagros and Taurus and the Caucasus. 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 (Algaze 1993 *passim*), whole range of archaeological publications appeared about the so-called Late Uruk expansion, most of which were linked with the supposed

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unbalanced relations between a main centre (southern Mesopotamia with its growing cities and administration) and a less developed periphery (Anatolia and northern Mesopotamia): colonisation, search for land, escape from pressure, search for raw materials, *etc.* (cf. Lyonnet 2010: 358).

Though the culture of Uruk or Uruk civilization was distributed over a wide area from the Levant to Central Iran by local traders and colonists, causing the emergence of new colonies with local economies, the problem of its origin is controversial. The researchers initially tied it to the migration of the new settlers from the west, from Anatolia and even beyond (Hutchinson 1935: 211-222). We should also take into account that by the old, traditional viewpoint expressed by A. J. Tobler, Braidwoods *etc.* the Gawra XIA cultural complex belonged to the newcomers in northern Mesopotamia and the Amuq valley (Braidwood and Braidwood, 1960: 513; Tobler 1950: 24-26). Later became a popular concept according to which the formation of 'Uruk civilization' is seen as a result of a gradual transition from domestically produced on a slow wheel painted pottery to a mass-produced by craftsmen on a fast wheel unpainted pottery. But data of Transcaucasian archaeological material, in my opinion, contradict to the point of view of pure technological explanation of the derivation of Uruk pottery and its subsequent distribution from Mesopotamia to 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, we have in the Caucasus quite different situation. More and more sites belonging to the culture of Leilatepe are detected every year in southern Transcaucasia (see Almamedov 2012) 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 in the middle of the 4th millennium, who settled down in every region of the Caucasus, in the mountains and flatlands, fundamentally changing the character of area and directing the economic and social development of the host society along a radically new and progressive path. In Transcaucasia, they have allegedly developed culture of Leilatepe tradition. Afterwards they penetrated the North Caucasus as well in large masses and rather intensively and took participation in the creation of the northern Caucasian Maikop cultural tradition, covering the entire territory of the Caucasus. They consider that Uruk migrants had learned in the north how to build this type of burial mounds and brought the acquired tradition back to the South Caucasus (Pitskhelauri 2012: 154-157; Akhundov 2010). Rather complicated picture, isn't it?

This problem emerged in the consequence of study of the recently excavated kurgans at Soyuq Bulaq in western Azerbaijan which are dating to the beginning of the 4th millennium. Similar kurgans have been excavated in Kavtiskhevi village in central Georgia. It seems that this type of burial construction in Transcaucasia started nearly 1500 year earlier than traditionally was accepted. These kurgans belong to the so-called Leilatepe culture which is considered as connected with the Uruk tradition. Archaeologists came to conclusion that the practice of kurgan burial had been already well established in the southern Caucasus during the Late Chalcolithic, the pottery from burials shows affiliation with Late Chalcolithic 2-3 pottery from northern Mesopotamia (Lyonnet, Akhundov, Almamedov *et al.*, 2008: 27-44; Museyibli 2008: 22). In their opinion, the Leilatepe culture tribes afterwards migrated to the north in the mid-fourth millennium and played an important part in the rise of the Maikop culture of the northern Caucasus (Museyibli 2008: 22).

However, this very complex and controversial issue – the origin and spread of burials with the kurgan tradition – requires a full and comprehensive study of archaeological data of the vast areas of the Eurasian steppes, where they are so typical and even dictated by the environment that it is difficult to imagine how they could have their origin in any other place, and a much broader scope of research integrity as well than we have at our disposal today.

New generation of archaeologists unlike their predecessors, does not consider anymore the bearers of Ubaid culture as the founders of so-called Leilatepe culture, but to the Mesopotamian Uruk or Ubaid-Uruk tradition

migrated to Transcaucasia. In their opinion, the fact that the founders of culture Leilatepe were migrants from Mesopotamia now is without a doubt, but problem is a more precise definition of the time of this migration (Almamedov 2008: 21-22).

The above-mentioned concept – “Ubaid-Uruk” of course means the time of Ubaid/Uruk transition, the cultural period in northern Mesopotamia during which S. Lloyd has seen the crucial indicator of new era, unprecedented increase of metal objects (Lloyd 1978: 75). Recently, C. Marro, who had connected chaff-faced wares collected in the eastern Lake Van district with Caucasian Chalcolithic pottery and had related these to similar Amuq E/F wares found south of the Taurus mountains in northern Mesopotamia, interpreted these resemblances as a sign of an intrusion of north Mesopotamian immigrants into the Caucasus prior to the well-known Uruk “expansion” to the north along the Upper Euphrates (Marro 2000; see Kohl 2007a: 167). B. Lyonnet places the Caucasus within the ‘pre-Uruk expansion’ phenomenon, the nature of which, in her words, is still to be understood (Lyonnet 2010: 358) and which now needs to be transported earlier (beginning of the Uruk period) and farther north (the Caucasus). The ‘center and periphery’ explanation seems her far too simple solution, as influences were reciprocal and more indicating on the ‘equal’ relations between the two areas, borrowing something from each other (Lyonnet 2007; Lyonnet 2010: 359).

The name of this period – *pre-Uruk* was quite logically created to distinguish it from the Late Uruk expansion towards the Upper Euphrates area, because the latter, 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.

But such a dichotomy – Late Uruk vs. *pre-Uruk* – seems worth-less, there is no real need to invent new terms to overcome a chronological discrepancy. If earlier it was thought, that the wave of migrants from Mesopotamia to the Caucasus belonged to the representatives of Ubaid culture and this view was generally accepted. In the 80’s of the last century was believed that so-called Leilatepe culture emerged as a result of the migration of the bearers of the Ubaid culture from Mesopotamia to Transcaucasia (*cf.*, Narimanov 1991: 32.). Though, nowadays, this wave is determined as belonging to a later, Uruk period, when the Mesopotamian culture spread wider in the western and north-eastern direction. The term – “Ubaid expansion” was replaced by the concept – “Uruk expansion”, to denote, one and the same phenomenon – Mesopotamian ties of Caucasian cultures.

At the same time, whole range of southern Transcaucasian sites, among them quite recently excavated, reveal signs of Ubaid culture. In the second horizon of Areni-cave in the Vayots Dzor region of Southern Armenia, the pottery reveals the co-existence of sites of the Areni cultural traditions with the sites of Leilatepe – Teghut – Berikldeebi group, on the one hand, and with Tilkitepe I (in eastern Anatolia, near the Van Lake). Some designs of the painted pottery of Areni reveal similarity with the material of the Mesopotamian type from Mentesh-tepe (Zardaryan and Gasparian 2012: 48) where recent researches prove ties with the Mesopotamian cultures during the Terminal Ubaid and the transitional phase to the Late Chalcolithic, especially in its pottery (Lyonnet 2010a).

In Nerkin Godedzor, Vorotan river canyon (Syunik, Armenia) large quantity of painted pottery of the Ubaid culture has been recovered. Godedzor probably represents one of the northernmost settlement discovered so far, which indicates a clear North Ubaid-related ceramic horizon. Its ceramic assemblage helps us to define more precisely the northern borders of an area (including Iranian Azerbaijan) culturally related to the Ubaid developments taking place in southern and northern Mesopotamia. The site was possibly located on the edges of a region that was within the interaction sphere of the Ubaid-related communities of northwest Iran. To the north, that is in the Lesser Caucasus and the Ararat Plain regions, the local communities were developing at a totally different and autonomous pace (Sioni complex) (Chataigner *et al.* 2010: 391).

The fact that the archaeological material of Sioni-Tsopi group of Georgia could be dated as synchronous with North Ubaid period is proved by the findings of Sioni-type pottery with “combed patterns” in Alikemektepe together with North Ubaid type pottery (Kavtaradze 1983: 58). The pottery of the North Ubaid type was found at the Armenian site Teghut, as well (Munchaev 1975: 120). At the same time, in the layers of Abdal-aziztepe, the layers of Ilanlitepe-Alikemektepe type were overlapped by the material characteristic for sites of Leilatepe group (Aliev and Narimanov 2001).

In the opinion of Azerbaijanian archaeologists painted designs on the Mughan steppe pottery (Alikemektepe *etc.*) only imitates the 5th millennium North Ubaid painted tradition and is more roughly made and technologically inferior, therefore there is no need to explain their appearance in the south-eastern Transcaucasia by the migration of the population with the Ubaid cultural tradition (Almamedov 2008: 17, 19-20). Perhaps the explanation of above fact, we can get by the remark of G. Stein, that the culture of Ubaid type has spread gradually outside of its ‘core area’ and was selectively appropriated by the communities located there, who transformed and used the distinctive elements of above culture in ways that were fundamentally different from superficially similar sites with Ubaid culture in southern Mesopotamia. These local regional identities persisted in parallel with Ubaid identities, but seem to have been expressed in different social and cultural context (Stein and Özbal 2007; Stein 2010).

But 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. As noted above, 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.

If we intend to date the Late Chalcolithic culture of the Caucasus and its hypothetical contacts with the “Urukians”, it is necessary to pay due attention to the dating of starting point of the Kura-Araxes culture and simultaneously determine to which period of time belongs the still unsolved problem of interrelation between the Caucasian Chalcolithic and Uruk cultures. For this one of the first tasks should be the definition of the time of penetration of the Kura-Araxes culture in the Middle East.

I have had in mind the fact of the Transcaucasian origin of the Kura-Araxes culture and its later spread to the Middle East, where archaeological strata were more accurately dated than in Transcaucasia – these circumstances were giving us a favorable opportunity to determine the starting date of this culture in Transcaucasia. This culture covers a much larger area than the land between the two rivers in Transcaucasia, the Kura and the Araxes; indeed it covers an important part of the Middle East *i.e.* eastern Anatolia, the Levant and north-western Iran. However, 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 calibrated radiocarbon dates.

In the north-western part of the Middle East in the Late Uruk period a remarkable phenomenon took place – the destruction of the sites with traits typical of Late Uruk period, and appearance of some signs of the so-called Kura-Araxes culture of the northern origin. The Kura-Araxes pottery of the advanced stage has been discovered in the layers of Late Uruk colonies along the Upper Euphrates. It seems that economical importance of the Late Uruk enclaves and outposts, such as Arslantepe VIA, Hassek Höyük 5, Habuba Kabira-Tell Qanas, Jebel Aruda, Tepecik 3 as well as of Godin Tepe V in western-central Iran, attracted the attention of these invaders - characterized by the red-black, hand-made burnished pottery, the high-arsenic copper metallurgy and certain types of metal artifacts,

the “wattle and daub” houses and the particular type of hearths. The intrusive character of the Kura-Araxes culture in this area became obvious after the exposure of the stratigraphical sequence, documented at Arslantepe, where level VIB1 containing the material of this culture interrupted the preceding (level VIA) and following development (level VIB2) of local horizons (*cf.*, *e.g.*, Kavtaradze 1999: 78f.; Kavtaradze 2004: 543-546).

But earlier, already during Arslantepe VII layer, there were found sherds of the red-black, hand-made, but of the high technological level burnished pottery, supposedly of the “Kura-Araxes” origin. They appear gradually at Arslantepe in period VII, overlapping with chaff-faced buff or red-slipped wares that are generally linked to the northern Syria-Mesopotamian environment. In the opinion of M. Frangipane, this finding clearly points to the fact that even at the end of period VII in Arslantepe local population was in contact with the communities of the Kura-Araxes cultural traditions (Frangipane 2000: 443, 444), the circumstance which permits us to propose the existence of the bearers of the latter traditions already at that time, *i.e.* during the Middle Uruk period. At the same time, 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.

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.

Most recent discoveries from Areni-1 put the bar even higher, demonstrating that the origin of the distinctive Kura-Araxes cultural artifact assemblage lies in the Late Chalcolithic of the late 5th to early 4th millennia (Wilkinson *et al.* 2012: 20). In the opinion of the members of excavating team, Areni-1 can be placed in the putative hiatus between the Late Chalcolithic Sioni and the fully developed Kura-Araxes culture (Wilkinson *et al.* 2012: 30, *cf.*, Kohl 2007: 69, 70). But how all this could be reconciled with the supposed contacts of the pre-“Kura-Araxian” population of the Caucasus with “Urukians”?

It is timely remark made by P. Kohl, that the well-known Uruk expansion has its predecessor, though it have left far less footprints for their presence in the Caucasus and therefore “no Habuba Kabira has been uncovered in the Caucasus region, and its discovery would be most unlikely” (Kohl 2007a: 168). But who was this predecessor? “That’s question!”

Already in the mid-70’s, some Russian archaeologists (R. Munchaev and M. Andreeva) noticed among Mesopotamian artifacts of the 4th millennium, especially in ceramics, pottery similar to the early period of Maikop and proposed formation of the Maikop culture of the north-western Caucasus in consequence of the infiltration of the Near Eastern/Mesopotamian groups of the population into the northern Caucasus (*cf.* Munchaev 1975: 328-334, 375-377; Andreeva 1977: 56). Nowadays, some archaeologists are connecting to the migration of the Uruk colonists not only the emergence of the Maikop culture, but as well, and primarily, of the Transcaucasian Chalcolithic culture which afterwards have been spread from there into the northern Caucasus (*e.g.* Museyibli 2008: 22).

In my book published in 1981, I tried for the determination of the age of Teghut (in the Ararat valley, Armenia) 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 Teghut (Kavtaradze 1981). 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 until painted pottery regains popularity in the latest Uruk/early Jamdat Nasr levels (Falconer 1981: 54, 59, 60).

Then I supposed and I still support this idea 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 (Kavtaradze 1981: pl. III, IV; Kavtaradze 1983: 56). For example, some similarities can be observed between the pottery and figurines of Tepe Gawra XI A and Toghut. In regards to architecture, if rectangular houses were characteristic of Tepe Gawra XII, in the subsequent level, Gawra XIA, round houses (Tobler 1950: pls VI, VIII) appeared, that are typical of the early farming communities of Transcaucasia. It is interesting that the people of Tepe Gawra XII and XIA used various types of copper ores; however, copper of the later level differs in the high content of arsenic (Tobler 1950: 212; Kavtaradze 1983: 56, n.144, n.146; Kavtaradze 1999: 73). It should be noted as well that the sharp and full difference is noticeable between the pottery of Gawra XII and XIA levels (Perkins 1949: 165-167; Porada 1965: 146). The Gawra XIA pottery is of a very low quality compared to its predecessor (Perkins 1949: 166). I would like to remind once again that according to old, traditional viewpoint expressed by A. J. Tobler, Braidwoods *etc.*, the Gawra XIA-Amuq F cultural complex belongs to the newcomers in northern Mesopotamia and the Amuq valley (Tobler 1950: 24-26).

In connection with the problem of Mesopotamian-Caucasian interrelation, especially actual and stimulating seem B. Lyonnet's observations. B. Lyonnet emphasizes the importance the Caucasus area played in the formation of the Uruk culture in Mesopotamia (Lyonnet 2010: 363). In the opinion of B. Lyonnet to consider Transcaucasia only as a periphery providing raw materials does not fit well with what we know of its level of development reached during the Neolithic, and with the complexity of the burials and their wealth during the Chalcolithic, some signs of metal production; even more, several innovations that appear at that time in Mesopotamia seem to have been borrowed from the Caucasus area because of their long tradition there, like the use of firing in a reducing atmosphere, the polishing on ceramics, the combed decoration, the so-called 'Cananean' blades or the introduction of sheep-breeding for the production of wool (Lyonnet 2007; Lyonnet 2010: 362-363).

R. Munchaev and Sh. Amirov recently proposed an idea about the shaping of the Halaf culture of Mesopotamia by the cultural influence coming from Transcaucasia (Munchaev and Amirov 2009: 45). But only one thing we can say with certainty, the north was not a backward periphery of the south. B. Peasnell and M. S. Rothman, studying scrupulously the Tepe Gawra excavation reports in the funds of Pennsylvania Museum and not only that, found reasons to challenge G. Algaze's above-mentioned theory and proved that economic specialization and political elaboration (complexity) in the north were developing before intensified interaction with the south (Peasnell and Rothman 2003: 38).

Now it is admitted that the Mesopotamians did not dominate the people of distant peripheries. Comparisons of local context and Uruk show that peaceful interaction between them, which lasted for 300-400 years, seems to have been in the form of symmetric economic and political relations rather than colonialist dominance (Stein 2002). The recent discoveries made in northern Mesopotamia at Brak and Hamoukar, added to those made long ago at Gawra, showed that, already in the beginning of the 4th millennium, the region was far more developed than expected (Lyonnet 2010: 358, 359).

The distance-parity interaction model characteristic of the Uruk colonies proposed by G. Stein (Stein 1998: 220-255) 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: 220, 246-247). If with increasing distance it becomes difficult for Mesopotamians to dominate local communities *e.g.* in south-eastern Anatolia *etc.* and retaining economic autonomy in the Uruk enclaves there, it would have been even more difficult to retain such dominance in the Caucasus.

It is now clear that the later stage of Middle Uruk and the Late Uruk period is contemporary with the Kura-Araxes culture of the advanced stage and that it is impossible to date by the Late (or even Middle) Uruk period the

archaeological material comparable with the culture of Uruk and found at the Caucasian so-called Chalcolithic sites of the 'pre-Kura-Araxes' time. Therefore, the conclusion can only be one: the aforementioned parallels of the pre-Kura-Araxes period relate mainly to the Early Uruk or better to say to the 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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