

# PCMA Seminar

## Pottery production, distribution and use during the Iron Age in Armenia

May 23rd, University of Warsaw, Old Library Building, room 105

### Conference program

- 12:30–12:50 Preliminary results of regional circulation of Urartian Red Burnished Ware in north-eastern part of the Urartian Kingdom**  
Mateusz Iskra, Barbara Woronko, Katarzyna Zalewska, Arshavir Hovhannisyan, Tomasz M. Kossowski
- 12:50–13:10 Problems of Iron Age Pottery Production and Distribution as seen from Eastern Shores of the Lake Sevan, Armenia**  
Arsen Bobokhyan, Mariam Amiryan, Rene Kunze
- 13:10–13:30 Jar burial from Metsamor. Results of the preliminary examination**  
Hasmik Simonyan
- 13:30–13:50 Private versus public. Comparative studies of the pottery distribution within the lower town area at Metsamor**  
Krzysztof Jakubiak, Mateusz Iskra
- 13:50–14:10 Distribution of pottery in Argištikhinili-Armavir during the Middle Iron Age. Preliminary results of geochemical analysis**  
Maciej Sobczak, Karen Pahlevanyan, Inessa Karapetyan, Michał Krueger, Mateusz Iskra
- 14.10–14.30 Early Iron Age pottery of Metsamor as an indicator for social reconstructions**  
Ashot Piliposyan
- 14.30–15.00 Discussion**



The workshop is organized as part of the project „The Urartian palace ware in Transcaucasia. The analysis of regional production, distribution and evolution of Urartian luxurious vessels, as well as their role in provincial society” funded by National Science Centre Poland, Preludium 20, 2021/41/N/HS3/02388



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From the perspective of ceramic studies conducted in the Republic of Armenia, the Iron Age (12<sup>th</sup>–4th century BCE) is considered as the most crucial period in the development of local pottery making. The internal division into Early, Middle and Late Iron Age reflects dynamic changes in the local ceramic tradition. The Early Iron age (12<sup>th</sup>–9th century BCE) is marked by a fully development of indigeneous black burnished pottery (Etiuni ware). In the Middle Iron Age (8<sup>th</sup>–6th century BCE), with the expansion of the Urartian Kingdom, a new ceramic tradition (Urartian Red Burnished Ware) was introduced alongside with innovations in technology and organisation of pottery production. The gradual intermingling of Etiuni and Urartian ceramic traditions eventually led to the development of a new ceramic assemblage in the Late Iron Age (6<sup>th</sup>–4th century BCE).

The aim of the workshop is to present to the broaden audience the latest results of research on Iron age pottery from Armenia conducted within a frame of traditional as well as interdisciplinary approaches.

## Abstracts

### **12:30–12:50 Preliminary results of regional circulation of Urartian Red Burnished Ware in north-eastern part of the Urartian Kingdom**

Mateusz Iskra<sup>1</sup>, Barbara Woronko<sup>2</sup>, Katarzyna Zalewska<sup>2</sup> Arshavir Hovhannisyan<sup>3</sup>, Tomasz M. Kossowski<sup>4</sup>

Thin-walled vessels covered with red glossy slip are treated as a hallmark of Urartian material culture in South Caucasian archaeological contexts, dating between the 8th and 6th century B. Jugs with a distinctive trefoil spout and small carinated bowls are seen as a product available to the elite of the kingdom. Most quoted hypothesis states that the production and distribution of red slip pottery were under strict control of the state. However recent archaeometric studies conducted on pottery samples from ten sites located in the Ararat Plain and on Lake Sevan, carried out within the framework of the NCN Preludium grant, contradicts this hypothesis, drawing a much more complex picture of the circulation of high-quality pottery in the Kingdom of Urartu. The lecture will present the preliminary results of the petrographic, geochemical, geological and statistical studies supported by remarks on the ceramological and archaeological findings.

### **12:50–13:10 Problems of Iron Age Pottery Production and Distribution as seen from Eastern Shores of the Lake Sevan, Armenia**

Arsen Bobokhyan<sup>5</sup>, Mariam Amiryanyan<sup>5</sup>, Rene Kunze<sup>6</sup>

The eastern shores of the Sevan basin (1900–2300 m a.s.l.) are mentioned since the Urartian period. The region is rich in both pre-historical and historical archaeological sites. However, these sites have not been thoroughly investigated, and the excavations were almost not carried out here, because of which the area until recently was regarded as kind of a scientific terra incognita. This, among other reasons, is also due to the “difficult access” and marginal nature of the area. The contribution will present the main results of 2019-2023 excavations conducted by “Ushkiani-Project” (Institute of Archaeology and



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Ethnography of the National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia and the Seminar for Oriental Archaeology and Art History of the Martin-Luther-University Halle-Wittenberg) with main stress on problems of Iron Age pottery production and distribution.

## 13:10–13:30 Jar burial from Metsamor. Results of the preliminary examination

Hasmik Simonyan<sup>5,7</sup>

Jar or karas burials are quite widespread in Ancient Armenia in the archaeological complexes dated back to 4th/3rd century BC–2nd/3rd century AD. They are known from the excavations of Sevan, Garni, Vagharshapat, Artashat, Dvin, Oshakan, Jrapı, Shirakavan, and other contemporary ancient sites. According to which there are several versions: 1. jar burials placed vertically in the pit, 2. upside-down jar burials, 3. jar burials placed on the side, 4. 2 jar burials placed side by side. There have been used big storage jars or even bowls (in the cases of infants) for making the burial. Sometimes it can be stated the secondary usage of the karases (storage jars) as a part of burial practice. From this point of view it's quite interesting the jar burial unearthed by Armenian-Polish joint archaeological team in 2022 who conducting scientific research project at the Metsamor archaeological site's urban quarters. The excavations in the urban area of Metsamor started in 2013. This research tries to bring up data to more fully understand the ritual practice of jar burials at the site. It revealed first evidence of jar burial practice in the Metsamor archaeological site dating to the 2-3rd centuries AD. The research confirms the use of the urban quarters as a burial area where some structures were used to create a burial space for some individuals (males, females, and children).

## 13:30–13:50 Private versus public. Comparative studies of the pottery distribution within the lower town area at Metsamor

Krzysztof Jakubiak<sup>8</sup>, Mateusz Iskra<sup>1</sup>

This study analyses the ceramic material discovered in two structures at the Metsamor site. The research presents the results of recent seasons of work, revealing two closed architectural contexts, each with a slightly different character. For the first time, it is possible to compare pottery from a residential building and a large building that most likely had a public function. The pottery collection covers the entire Iron Age period, making it possible to trace technological developments, changes in morphology and to identify similarities and differences in the use of vessels among the Early Iron Age inhabitants of Metasamor.



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## 13:50–14:10 Distribution of pottery in Arğištikhinili-Armavir during the Middle Iron age. Preliminary results of geochemical analysis

Maciej Sobczak<sup>9</sup>, Karen Pahlevanyan<sup>10,7</sup>, Inessa Karapetyan<sup>5</sup>, Michał Krueger<sup>11</sup>, Mateusz Iskra<sup>1</sup>

The aim of the presentation is to discuss the results of a pilot geochemical study, made by pXRF on a Middle Iron Age pottery assemblage from both hills of *Arğištikhinili*. One of the aims of this study is to determine whether the distribution of 'elite' pottery shows a common or different pattern for the two hills. This has important implications for further work on reconstructing the functioning of the entire centre during the period of the Urartian Kingdom.

## 14:10–14:30 Early Iron Age pottery of Metsamor as an indicator for social reconstructions Ashot Piliposyan<sup>7</sup>

## 14:30–15:00 Discussion

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