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ISBN 978-88-6719-181-9
ISSN 1824-6109

UNIOR
D.A.A.M.
Series Minor
LXXXVI

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Dipartimento Asia, Africa e Mediterraneo

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NEAR EAST, IRAN AND CENTRAL ASIA

edited by
Bruno Genito and Giulio Maresca

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Università degli Studi di Napoli "L'Orientale"
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ISMEO
ASSOCIAZIONE INTERNAZIONALE DI STUDI
SUL MEDITERRANEO E L'ORIENTE
Serie Orientale Roma
14

Orientalia Romana
1

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This volume has been published with a grant from the Italian Ministery of University and Scientific Research (MIUR) Project "Studi e ricerche sulle culture dell'Asia e dell'Africa: tradizione e continuità, rivitalizzazione e divulgazione"

The essays published in this volume have undergone a double-blind peer review.

This publication has been funded by: Dipartimento Asia, Africa e Mediterraneo.

ISSN 1824-6109
ISBN 978-88-6719-181-9

<www.unior.it>

Distributed by:
Dipartimento Asia, Africa e Mediterraneo
e-mail: <daam@unior.it>

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Some Remarks on Achaemenid Era Pottery Assemblages from Transcaucasia

Manuel Castelluccia
(Associazione ISMEO, Roma)

Abstract

The present paper aims to evaluate the ceramic evidence dated to the Achaemenid period coming from the land south of the main Caucasus range and thought to belonging to the satrapy of Arminia. Unfortunately few sites have yielded complete and well defined (or published) ceramic sequences for the Late Iron Age, as well as few sites have provided clear traces of Achaemenid presence. Apart for the typical Urartian Biainili pottery and the Early Iron Age types of the so-called "Metsamor-Lchashen" culture, there are few ceramic typological groups that are clearly recognizable for specific periods and this lack is particularly remarkable for the Achaemenid period. It is however possible to establish that several local pottery types continued to be produced for long periods without significant changes; during the Late Iron Age several pottery types that had been used in preceding centuries were still the same, while other types continued into the subsequent Hellenistic period.

Textual and archaeological information does not give clear indications for establishing the boundary of old Persian authority in Transcaucasia and many different opinions have been voiced. There is currently some disagreement between scholars concerning the real extent of Achaemenid control in the Caucasus area.

Except for Herodotus' claim (*Histories* 3.97) that the empire's border was formed by the Caucasus, nothing is known about the system of satrapies, or their extension and borders. Moreover, it is widely accepted that the organization of the Achaemenid satrapies as proposed by Herodotus (*Histories* 3.90-94) has many problems of interpretation (Jacobs 1994; Tuplin 1987; Armayor 1978; Briant 2002, 741; Sagona 2004), although some scholars have used it to reconstruct an Achaemenid administrative division in the Caucasus (Hewsen 1983, 125ff.; Ter-Martirosov 2000, 244, fig. 1, 246-250).

The most significant indicator of the (possible) Persian presence is the existence of architectural features clearly related to analogous elements found on the Iranian Plateau. Complete plans of such buildings are, unfortunately, not often available since few of them have been entirely excavated or published, but some distinctive architectural components, especially column bases and capitals found in a number of sites in Transcaucasia, could be interpreted as tangible signs of Achaemenid architectural practices.

Hewsen was of the opinion that Achaemenid authority did not extend beyond the Armenian plateau (Hewsen 1983, 128). Lordkipanidze thought that Kachetia may have belonged to the Persian empire, but not the lands north of the Kura River (Lordkipanidze 2000, 9-11). Both Gagoshidze (1996, 125) and Knauss (1999, 220) proposed that most of modern Georgia belonged to the Achaemenid empire, perhaps as an autonomous region.

We know that the Armenian highland is said to have been organized as a satrapy (old Persian *dahyu*-). In the Bisutun inscription are present both the citation of a place *Armina* and the ethnonym *Arminiya*. The origins of such terms are however uncertain (Lecoq 1997, 139) since they are not Armenian words; the Armenians call their country *Hayastan*. In the Babylonian version, though, this area is indicated by the name ^{KUR}ú-ra-aš-tu, thus using the Akkadian for the kingdom of Urartu, which had collapsed more than one century before that time.

However, highlighting the archaeological evidence in favour of an Achaemenid Transcaucasia, and thus reconstructing the tangible signs of imperial authority, faces several problems of interpretation. The first is rooted in the peculiar organization of the Persian Empire, that depends on the political nature of the empire – of which our understanding, on the basis of the available historical sources, is limited.

Another problem consists of variation in modes of acquisition of controlled territories. The Caucasian area, as with most of the lands belonging to the empire, was peacefully most probably acquired; no traces of destruction have been identified in the scarce – and at times imperfectly attributable – stratigraphic sequences of the sites. Traces of the violent conquest of a site are however often attested in Transcaucasia for the last phases of the Middle Iron Age (about 9th-6th century BCE) but they are mainly related to the Scythian penetration (Techov 1980; Esajan and Pogrebova 1985; Mehnert 2008), as is clearly shown by the frequent occurrence of Scythian-related objects.

Moreover, once their authority was established, the Achaemenids did not mark their presence with an extensive and easily recognizable architectural policy, such as (for example) that undertaken by the Urartian kingdom which was, on the contrary, characterized by an intensive programme of building fortresses, military posts and carved inscriptions.

On the basis of these incomplete sources, it is not possible to establish the real limit of Achaemenid authority in the Caucasus. Achaemenid and Iranian influence in Transcaucasia has often been considered as having been a short and elusive transitional phase leading to the Classical and Hellenistic periods, with the emergence of the kingdoms of Colchis and Iberia in Georgia, as well as the Orontid dynasty in Armenia, and so no detailed studies have been dedicated to the Achaemenid period itself. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rebirth of western institutions' interest in Transcaucasian antiquity, the study of Achaemenid cultural remains in the Caucasus has drawn the attention of various distinguished western scholars, as well as attracting the renewed enthusiasm of local researchers. This favourable new situation, which has also allowed the resumption of field activities, has had a very positive impact on our understanding of the ancient Iranian presence in the Caucasus.

The newly enriched archaeological literature, most notably the works of S. Kroll (2003), B. Jacobs (2000), A. Bill (2010), F. Knauss (2005; 2006) and F. Ter-Martirosov (1998; 2000), has clearly highlighted features of Achaemenid/Iranian origin in the Caucasus. These elements mostly comprise luxury objects in Achaemenid style found in various sites in Transcaucasia, as well as evident Achaemenid influences on the local architecture (Fig. 1).

The Achaemenid presence in the Caucasus area can be tracked on the basis of both historical and archaeological records although these are unfortunately often limited.

Textual sources are quite scarce and tend to be very general in their references to Persian presence. In Classical sources referring to the Achaemenid period, the Caucasus region is widely neglected (Lordkipanidze 2000, 4-7).

Although the first references date to the reign of Darius I, it is highly possible that the Armenian highland was already under Persian control at the time of Cyrus the Great's campaign in Anatolia. It is certain that Achaemenid rule in the Caucasus region was established, at the latest, in the course of the Scythian campaign of Darius I in 513-512 BCE.

The archaeological record relative to the Achaemenid Empire in the Caucasus is not abundant and consists largely of a series of remarkable objects, rather than any clear evidence of political authority. The most important of these objects are luxury items of Persian manufacture or influence (Knauss 2006; Treister 2007). However, this evidence does not necessarily indicate the presence of Achaemenid political authority since they might have been diplomatic gifts or the fruits of commercial relations.

The main problem concerning a proper reconstruction of the Achaemenid period history of the Caucasus is due to the substantial lack of stratified archaeological layers attributable to it. Few sites have been dated to the 6th-4th century period and often have not been fully published. It is thus very difficult to recognize Achaemenid-time features with certainty. This lack is reflected in vague dating terminology: imprecise chronological terms such as "Achaemenid", "Early Classic Period", "Post-Urartian", "Late Iron Age", etc. are all used to tentatively define the 6th-4th century BCE.

The problem is particularly evident in the study of specific pottery types, considering also that the ceramic assemblage from the Persian heartland is not well represented.

For many decades, the best available data for 6th-5th century pottery came from excavated sites located far away from each other, none of them in Transcaucasia: Hasanlu II/IIIa (in Iranian Azerbaijan), Altıntepe (province of Erzincan) and Godin tepe (Hamadan region). These sites have all yielded layers dating to the Median/Achaemenid period and can help in identifying similar material in Transcaucasian.

One of the most distinctive ceramic types of the Late Iron Age is so-called "Triangle Ware", pottery decorated with a triangle pattern which has been found in several sites in Iran and eastern Turkey (Swiny 1975; Summers 1993). Although it was initially considered to date to the Urartian period (von der Osten l952), further study changed this view. Kroll was the first to suggest a later date (Kroll 1975), and in 1991 Sevin proposed to consider it a product of Median culture (Sevin 1991). A few years later both Summers and Köroglu concluded that Triangle Ware cannot date to before the Achaemenid period (Summers 1993, 86; Köroglu 1995, 30), a position confirmed by recent work by Tarhan, Sevin and others in the Van region (Tarhan 1989; Tarhan and Sevin 1990; 1991). S. Kroll has again recently demonstrated that "Triangle-ware" does not occur in the Urartian layers and for this reason should be considered as typical of the Achaemenid period (Kroll 2000, 131).

There is, however, a clear division within the "Triangle Ware", already noted by Swiny (Swiny 1975, 91-93). This distinction was further highlighted by Dyson, on the basis of the study of the material from the Hasanlu Project.

Dyson has clearly divided this pottery assemblage into two main groups (Dyson 1999b), defined as "Classic Triangle Ware" (referring to a specific type of pottery, with a particular manufacturing technique and decorative style), as opposed to non-"Classic Triangle Ware", which denotes only a decorative style.

"Classic Triangle Ware" may thus be defined primarily by a combination of manufacturing technique, together with a few specific forms and a decorative style using hanging triangles. It has a fine, smooth fabric with no visible inclusions, a highly polished surface, a thin rim (commonly 0,3 centimetres thick), and a basic color of tan or buff (with some specimens fired to orange). Frequently the interior of flared jar-rims and the exterior of jar bodies, and rarely the interior of flared bowl-rims, are painted with designs of hatched or cross-hatched triangles.

The majority of the sherds are monochrome, but bichrome examples – red and black – also occur.

The non-"Classic Triangle Ware" is characterized by patterns featuring groups of radial lines, zigzags or rows of triangles. Paint is usually dark brown or red. It is widespread in eastern Turkey; several sherds found in Altıntepe (Özgüç 1969) are now dated to the Achaemenid period (Summers 1993, 86), and others come from Van Kale (Tarhan 1989; Tarhan and Sevin 1990; 1991). Apart from Hasanlu, it is also widespread in other sites in the Iranian plateau, such as Pish-i Kuh and Mahi Dasht (Goff Meade 1968, fig. 11 nos. 11, 12, 20, 23), Jameh Shuran (Levine 1987, 239-240) and Pasargadae (Stronach 1978a, fig. 111 no. 5; 1978b, 155; Levine 1987, 239-240). They are dated to the Achaemenid or post-Achaemenid periods (Seleucid and Parthian periods).

Potherds of both Classic and non-"Classic Triangle Ware" have been discovered in several sites in Transcaucasia are discussed further below. However, this brief review of Achaemenid era pottery must begin with the few indisputably Achaemenid sites in the South Caucasus, a handful of sites where distinctive Achaemenid architectural features have been unearthed. These are Sari Tepe, Gumbati, Benjamin and Karachamirli.

Benjamin is located in Armenia, in Shirak province, and was investigated by Ter-Martirosov (Ter-Martirosov *et alii* 2012). Four stages of occupation dating from the 5th to 1st centuries BCE were identified, of which two –

Periods Ia and Ib – date to the Achaemenid epoch. The site is composed of an Achaemenid-era palace on a hill and a Hellenistic lower settlement (Fig. 2a). Deposits from the first period of use, dated to early Achaemenid occupation, have yielded few remains since they were not extensively excavated and the pottery assemblage has not been published.

The most important evidence regarding Achaemenid presence in the Caucasus comes from the site of Karachamirli, located in north-western Azerbaijan. An international Azeri-Georgian-German team has investigated the site since 2006 (Babaev *et alii* 2007; 2009; Babaev and Knauss 2010; Knauss *et alii* 2010; 2013), unearthing a series of monumental buildings with clearly Achaemenid architectural features (Fig. 2c). According to the excavators the complex was erected during the late 6th century BCE. The ceramic assemblage is dated from the mid-5th to the early 4th century BCE (Fig. 3). The pottery belonging to this phase is painted prevalently red, as well as with the white parallel lines that were characteristic of Georgia in the 4th century BCE. This is the first time that this type of painted pottery has been found in the territory of Azerbaijan (Babaev *et alii* 2007, 41). The complex does not show any evidence of destruction and appears to have been abandoned at the end of the Achaemenid period, although the presence of several hearths testifies to some subsequent reoccupation.

Similar remains have also been found in Gumbati, located in Eastern Georgia, where the remains of a palace and Achaemenid-type bell-shaped pottery vessel bases have also been discovered (Fig. 2b). The pottery is of local provenance but some bowls copy Achaemenid metal prototypes (Furtwängler 1996, 180-185; Furtwängler and Knauß 1997, 169-170; Ludwig 2005; Knauss 2006, 91). The ceramic material from the "palace" level dates to the later 5th or early 4th century BCE (Fig. 4). According to Lordkipanidze, however, most features seem to date to the 4th-3rd century BCE, and to a later period (Lordkipanidze 2000, 9).

Sari Tepe is located in western Azerbaijan in the outskirts of the modern town of Kazakh in the Kura Valley, where part of a complex structure was brought to light (Fig. 2d). It was investigated by I. Narimanov in the late 1950s, but the results have been only partially published (Narimanov 1960, 162-164; Chalilov 1985, 44, pl. I; Knauss 2006, 96-97).

In addition to these palaces, other sites in Transcaucasia contain features that may date to the 6th-4th century BCE.

In present-day Armenia, the Late Iron Age is characterized by the collapse of Urartian authority (Hellwag 2012) which is archaeologically quite well documented. In general, the majority of Middle Iron Age settlements were abandoned or destroyed. However, later remains are often hard to identify properly, since it may not be possible to separate Late Iron Age evidence from the evidence belonging to the Urartian period. Moreover, it is also hard to identify a precise lower chronological limit for post-Urartian evidence.

The most important feature is the continuation of the Urartian pottery tradition after the collapse of the Urartian dominion; alterations of the old forms may be seen (Stronach *et alii* 2009, 192). The most detailed review of post-Urartian pottery has been published recently by S. Kroll (Kroll 2014; 2015), who highlighted several important features: the ceramic assemblage is characterized by fine brown and buff colours, whereas red polished ware was still used widely, thus continuing the Urartian pottery tradition. Bowls generally have a wider flaring lip (Fig. 5), compared to the rounded lips (bead rims) of the Urartian period (Kroll 2014, 205), whereas other types of bowl have small horizontal handles. Slim, fine double-handled jars are considered typical of the period (Fig. 6) and small spouts reappear. Kroll underlined three elements – the vertical spout, the single handed bowl and the slim double-handled jar – that can be considered as typical features of the post-Urartian period, since they have not been found in the destruction levels of several Urartian sites, but are present, instead, in post-Urartian layers (Kroll 2014, 205).

The double-handled jar is of particular interest. This form has two handles attached to the shoulder and the rim, an oval-shaped body which can be more or less elongated, and a flattened bottom. Specimens have been found in an occupation level at Bastam well above the final Urartian horizon (Kroll 1979, 231, fig. 2) and in Van, in a burial cut into the Urartian deposits (Tarhan 1994, fig. 17). These jars have been found elsewhere in Armenia. A red-painted exemplar was found in a pithos burial in Nor Armavir which belonged to the post-Urartian period (Tirazyan 2010). Pithos burials are generally dated from the 6th century BCE onwards; several of them have been excavated in Garni (Chačatrjan 1976, 19-20, figs. 3-4) and Mingečaur (Kaziev 1960, pl. 4). Khatchadourian too considers this type of burial as dating to the Achaemenid period (Khatchadourian 2008, 512, 515). Further specimens of double-handled jar have been found in Late Iron Age layers in

Karmir blur, Erebuni, Karčachpiur (Karapetjan 2003, pl. 19), Astchi-blur (Esajan 1976, pl. 27), Tsaghkahovit (Khatchadourian 2008, 512) and Mingečaur (Aslanov *et alii* 1959, pl. 1).

Similar to the double-handled jars are the twin-spouted amphora-rythons, which have been found on many sites throughout the Near East and studied in detail by Haerinck (1980). They have a slender neck, two handles attached to the shoulder and the neck or the rim, rounded shoulders, an oval or pear-shaped body and a rounded or flattened bottom with two small, slightly everted tubular spouts. The pottery amphora-rhytons are dated from the 5th–4th century BCE to the Sasanian period, although it seems likely that the majority belong to the Achaemenian and Parthian periods. Several items have been found in Mingečaur (Kaziev 1960, pl. 26), where some also have distinctive zoomorphic handles (Fig. 7).

The preservation of forms typical of the Urartian period is observable also in the well-known site of Erebuni, located in the outskirts of Yerevan, and in the fortress of Horom, in Shirak province.

In Erebuni recent archaeological investigations carried out by Armenian, American and French expeditions have found clear signs of human occupation of the site during the 6th-5th century BCE (Deschamps *et alii* 2011; Ter-Martirosv 2012b, 170). The case for Achaemenid-time occupation of the site is further strengthened by the discovery of three decorated silver *rhyta* in a hoard of objects found during building work on the foothill of the Erebuni citadel in 1968 (Treister 2015).

The Achaemenid period deposits contained a large amount of sherds. The pottery surface of these is un-slipped, but covered with red paint. New forms are present, especially phials with a brown surface. Brown-red coloured ceramics with a polished surface are typical, as well as ceramics with a greenish surface.

In Horom the fortified citadel seems to have been abandoned at the end of 7th century BCE and no traces of destruction have been found (Kohl and Kroll 1999). Local grey wares were still in use after the Urartian collapse and new pottery types testify to a post-Urartian occupation phase (Fig. 8). An Achaemenid occupation of this site is also indicated by the Persian seal found by a local peasant in 1997 (Kohl and Kroll 1999, 258, fig. 7).

The American-Armenian expedition to Tsaghakovit has brought to light interesting Late Iron Age material that has been described by Khatchadourian (Khatchadourian 2008, 461-525). Along with the double-

handled jar previously mentioned, sherds of spouted jugs are also typical of the period (*Ibid.*, 461-515). Similar spouted jugs are known from other sites in Armenia (Fig. 9), such as Armavir, Karmir Vank, Karčachpiur, and Džararat (Karapetjan 2003, pl. 27).

Of Late Iron Age are date also jugs with trefoil opening (Khatchadourian 2008, 514) and a deep, half-egg-shaped bowl (Khatchadourian 2008, 488).

A small but important collection of pottery and metal objects dating to the 6th-5th century BCE was found in a cist-grave in the village of Džararat, in the outskirts of Hrazdan, central Armenia (Tirazjan 1964).

The grave goods consisted of various typical forms. There were three one-handled jars with long neck and oval-shaped body; the neck was decorated with grooved parallel horizontal lines (Fig. 10a). Similar pottery has been found in Astchi-blur (Karapetjan 2003, pl. 14, no. 2) and Idževan (*Ibid.*, pl. 16, no. 5). There was also a group of deep bowls (Fig. 10b) that resembled items recovered in Berd, Atarbekjan and Erebuni (*Ibid.*, pl. 26).

Triangle ware sherds have also been found in the site of Yervandasht (Ter-Martirosov 2012a, 187), which seems, however, to be of early Hellenistic date.

The lack of clearly Late Iron Age sites is particularly evident in the territory of present-day Georgia. As Lordkipanidze has pointed out, most of the settlements in central and eastern Georgia were in decline or had simply ceased to exist by the 6th century BCE (Lordkipanidze 2000, 8). Many sites show signs of destruction and the presence of Scythian-related objects (arrowheads, akinakes), which suggest that their ruin was due to the Scythian penetration. For example, in the large, well-known sites of Samtavro and Treligoberi, graves and buildings almost totally disappear from the 6th century onwards, to reappear only from the late Hellenistic period. The same situation is observable in the large cemetery of Tli, in Ossetia, as well as in some burial grounds in present-day Abkhazia.

However, some cemeteries have yielded pottery assemblages which can be dated to the Achaemenid period. They have been studied especially by Narimanišvili and Licheli (Narimanišvili 2000; Narimanišvili and Shatberashvili 2004; Licheli 2015), who had identified a triangle-style pottery as dating to the Achaemenid period. This is characterized by triangle motifs coating the polished or slipped surface of the vase (Fig. 11). The triangles have flat bases with apices pointing up or down, at times in two rows. Some vessels have also other designs, such as herringbone, zig-zag

and oblique-line patterns. A large collection of painted pottery with triangle design has been recently found in the site of Grakliani, in Central Georgia, where both a settlement and a necropolis have been found, with layers and features dating also to the Achaemenid period (Licheli 2011).

Other forms can be attributed to the Achaemenid period. Jugs with tubular spouts from the cemetery of Beshtasheni, Kiketi and Akhalsopeli with light-coloured fabrics and sometimes painted red (Davlianidze 1983, 16-20, pl. 4,1-6; Lordkipanidze 2000, 10). Phialai with everted rims were recovered at these burial grounds (Narimanišvili 1991, 57-58, nos. 515-520). Similar sherds were also found in the Khovlegora settlement (Muskhelishvili 1978, 50-56) and Tsikhiagora (Lordkipanidze 2000, 10).

Abundant material comes from the graves of western Georgia, the Colchis where locally-made jugs often imitate the patterns of the Classical Triangle Ware (Fig. 12a).

The most important site is Vani, where both a settlement and a necropolis have been investigated (Lordkipanidze 1991). It is located in the western outskirts of the modern town, on a low hill of approximately 8.5 hectares, where four principal phases of development were identified: (1) ca. 800-600 BCE, (2) ca. 600-350 BCE, (3) ca. 350-250 BCE, and (4) ca. 250-47 BCE. The second phase saw a strong development, marked also by the spread of Greek imports. Pottery generally continues the tradition of the first period but new forms emerge: pithoi and jars, jugs with biconic body and vertical tubular handle, cylindrical or high-stemmed goblets, and basins with flat bottoms and slanting walls (Fig. 13). It is usually of black (occasionally polished) or gray surface decorated with polished vertical lines, rhomboid patterns, wavy lines, spirals, incised concentric circles and triangle patterns. At the end of the period red painted pottery with various motifs (chevrons, geometric pattern) penetrated from Iberia and Armenia and spread in the Colchis too.

Vani's finds represent one of the best assortment of Colchian pottery, which is widespread along the whole coastiline and the mountains regions of the inland (Lordkipanidze 1979, 77 ff.). Other important sites where Achaemenid-time features were recovered are Sairkhe and Itkhvisi.

Additional evidences of the period came from the cemetery of Takhtidsiri, mainly dated to the 4th century BCE, were Triangle Ware was found. Here an amphora-rhyton (Fig. 12b) was also discovered. According to some scholars it was probably inspired by prototypes from Persia (Gagošidze 2000; Knauss 2006, 85).

In the lands of present-day Azerbaijan – apart from in the north-western corner – the Late Iron Age is much more elusive. Only at the important site of Mingečaur, where both burial grounds and settlement remains have been excavated, is worthy of note. Unfortunately the site was not fully published and it is not possible to separate with certainty Achaemenid-time remains from those of the Hellenistic period.

An important source of information, however, is the fortress of Oğlan Qala in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, which has been well published in the recent years (Bachšaliev 1994, 106-120; Ristvet *et alii* 2009; 2011; 2012).

Although evidence of destruction has not yet been found, it seems that Oğlan Qala was briefly abandoned after the 7th century BCE, with the subsequent occupation level dating to around the end of the 5th century BCE, when several structures were built over preceding ones, among which a columned hall with 29 column parts including bases and capitals built over the previous courtyard.

According to the excavators, Period III should correspond to the Achaemenid period (Ristvet *et alii* 2012, 324, table 1); fortunately they have published a detailed description of the pottery assemblage, from which the information presented below are taken (*Ibid.*, 346-350), which includes some specific material, generally with a pink-buff fabric and a light red to pink-buff slip.

Some sherds of carinated bowls of a relatively fine, pink-buff burnished ware were found which might date to Period III, although their precise date remains unclear. Shallow bowls with out-turned and in-turned rims (Fig. 14a-b) are also characteristic of Achaemenid-time assemblages (Khatchadourian 2008, 481-482; Gopnik and Rothman 2011, 7.56-7.57; Ristvet *et alii* 2012, 348).

Upturned-rim bowls (Fig. 14c-d) are also typical of the period, but continued also in the following Period II. Similar pottery was also reported from the Achaemenid assemblage at Tsaghkahovit in Armenia (Khatchadourian 2008, 480).

To Period III might also belong some jars with applied decoration (Fig. 15a-b). Two of these jars have handles with molded ledges and bosses (Fig. 15b-c), which present some parallels with handles from Tsaghkahovit (Khatchadourian 2008, 520-521) and from the region of Kartli, in Georgia (Narimanišvili 2000, 228, fig. 1.4).

A zoomorphic handle made of a finely smoothed clay, with a highly burnished, intensely dark red slip was also considered as belonging to Period III (Ristvet *et alii* 2012, 349, fig. 23, no. 10).

Moreover, sherds of Triangle Ware painted-rim bowls were recovered quite frequently on the surface of the site (Ristvet *et alii* 2012, 351, fig. 24), but only a single very small sherd of this type was found during excavation. No painted-rim sherds were found in the citadel excavations or in the Period II houses. However, the citadel excavations did turn up three sherds from flaring-rim carinated bowls with interior characterised by painted geometric motifs in dark red/brown.

Along with Triangle ware, another characteristic assemblage for the last century of the 1st millennium is the so-called Ardabil pottery (Haerinck 1978). The main pottery group dates to the 5th/4th-1st centuries BCE. It is known primarily from clandestine excavations but does occur together with Triangle Ware at the site of Yanik Tepe, east of Lake Urmia. Red or reddish brown painting is usually applied on a buff or cream slip. The most characteristic forms of Ardabil ware are shallow plates with everted rims, bowls with carinated or slightly carinated profiles, jugs with vertical handles and upright trefoil spouts, single- or double-spouted amphorae, and theriomorphic vessels. Decoration consists mainly of simple geometric designs, though some stylized representation of animals appears.

A deep bowl decorated with diamonds and triangles and other painted pottery were found by de Morgan within a grave in Djönü, in the Talish region (Fig. 16), whereas other vessels decorated with red-painted geometric and animal designs were found in Mingečaur (Fig. 17). A precise date for these finds cannot be established, since these burial objects may be attributed to the Achaemenid or a later period.

In conclusion, drawing a reliable picture of Achaemenid era pottery in Transcaucasia is not an easy task, due to the lack of well-stratified archaeological contexts. Fortunately, there are several ongoing projects in Transcaucasia which could soon enrich our understanding of the Late Iron Age. Further studies should be devoted in particular to clearly defining the distinguishing features of the 6th-5th century BCE and separating them from the much richer corpus of the Middle Iron Age and Hellenistic period.

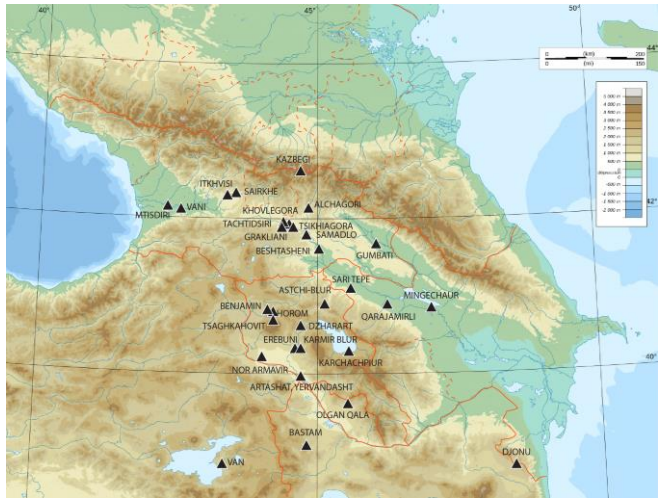

Fig. 1 - Location of major sites with Achaemenid-time features

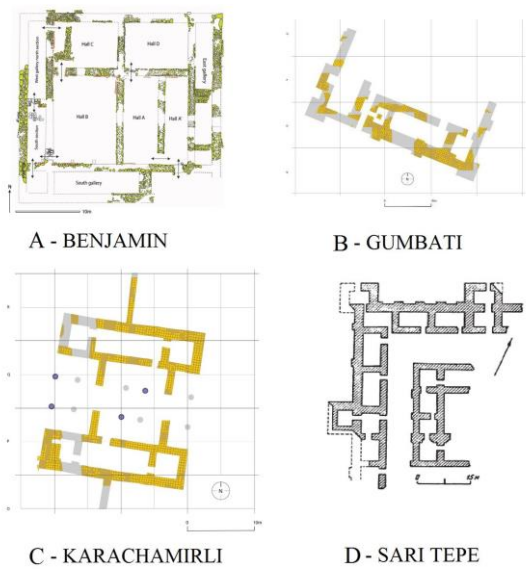

Fig. 2 - Plans of Achaemenid palaces: A. Benjamin (after Ter-Martirosov *et alii* 2012, 203, fig. 4); B. Gumbati (after Knauss *et alii* 2013, fig. 3); C. Karachamirli (after Knauss *et alii* 2013, fig. 11); D. Sari Tepe (after Narimanov 1960, 163, fig. 1)

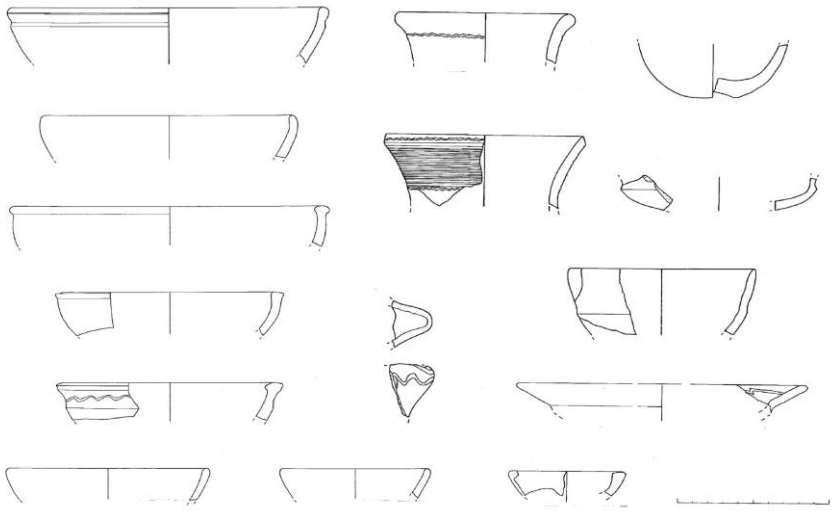

Fig. 3 - Pottery from Karachamirli (after Babaev and Knauss 2007: figs. 11-12)

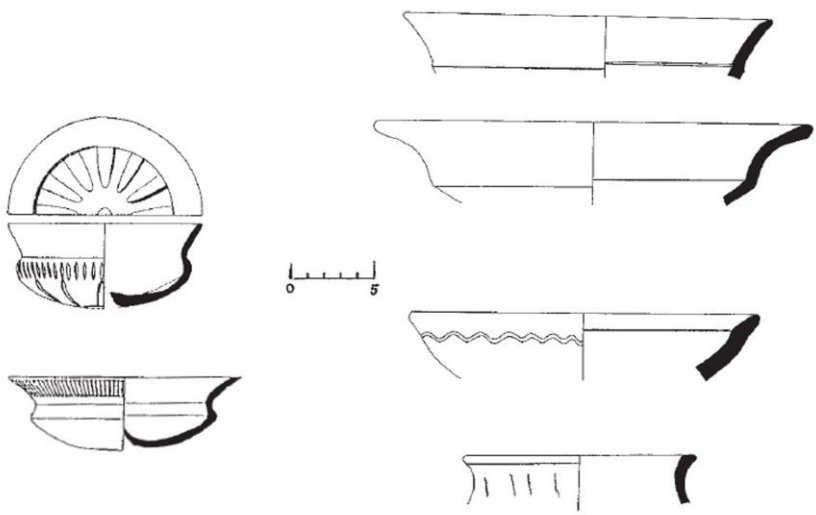

Fig. 4 - Pottery from Gumbati (after Knauss 2006, 91, fig. 12)

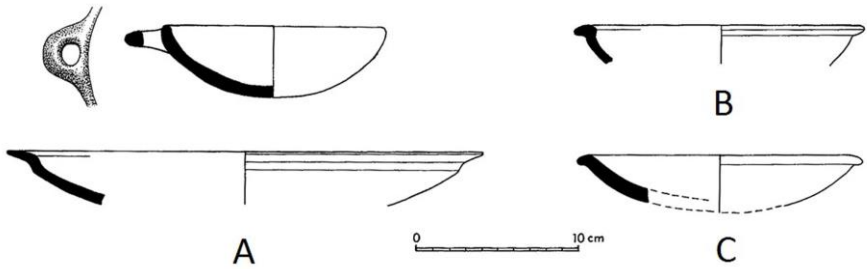

Fig. 5 - Bowls with flaring lips: A. Bastam; B. Horom; C. Van Kalesi (after Kroll 2014, figs. 2-4)

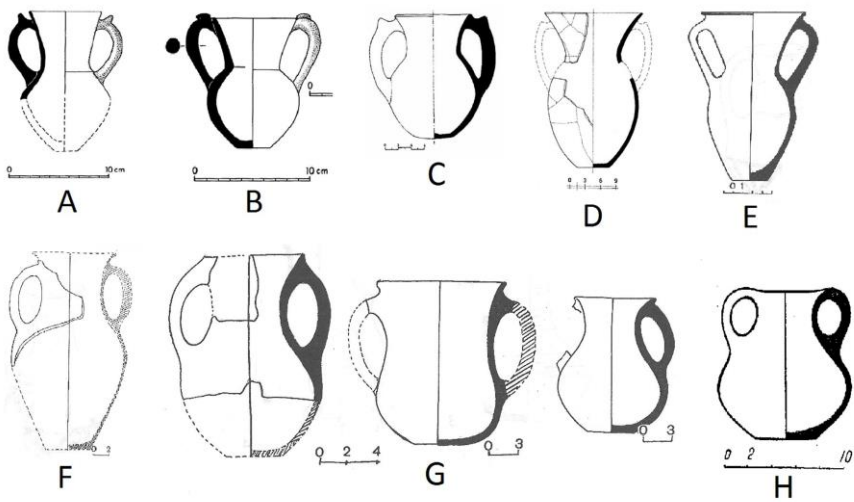

Fig. 6 - Double-handled jars: A. Bastam (after Kroll 1979, 231, fig. 2); B. Van Kalesi (after Tarhan 1994, fig. 17); C. Nor Armavir (after Tirazyan 2010); D. Tsaghkahovit (after Khatchadourian 2008, 512); E. Karmir blur (after Karapetjan 2003, pl. 19 no. 1); F. Erebuni (after Karapetjan 2003, pl. 19 no. 2); G. Karčachpiur (after Karapetjan 2003, pl. 19 nos. 3-5); H. Astchi-blur (after Esajan 1976, pl. 27)

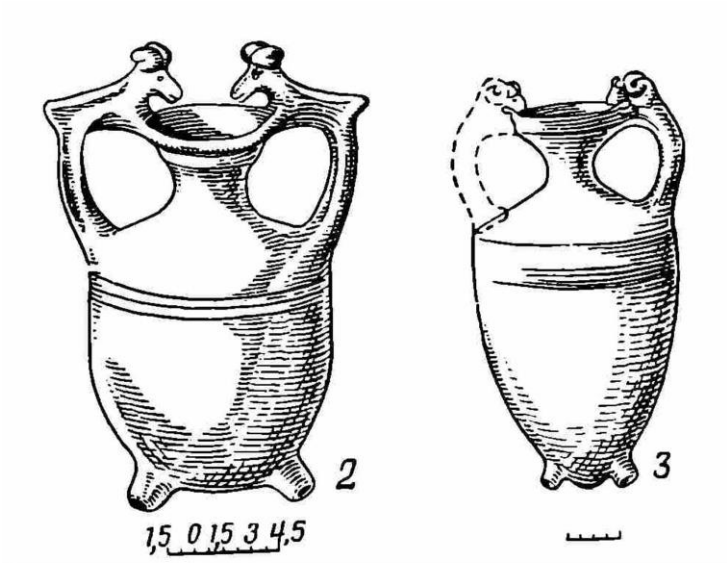

Fig. 7 - Pottery amphora-rhytons with zoomorphic handles (after Tirazjan 1964, 68, fig. 6 nos. 2-3)

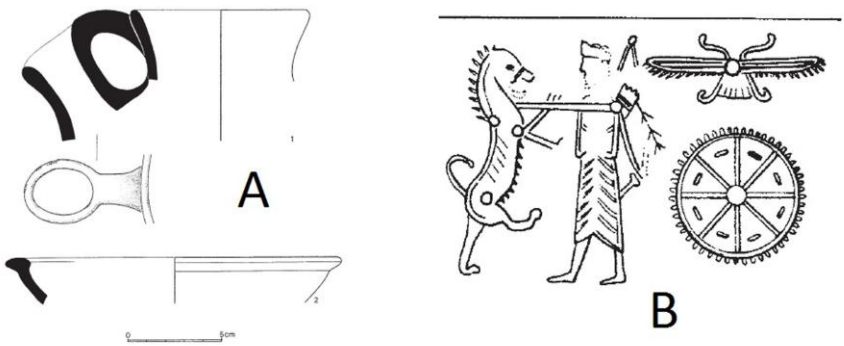

Fig. 8 - Horom: A. Post-Urartian pottery; B. Sketch of a Persian seal (after Kohl and Kroll 1999, 257, fig. 6 and 258, fig. 7)

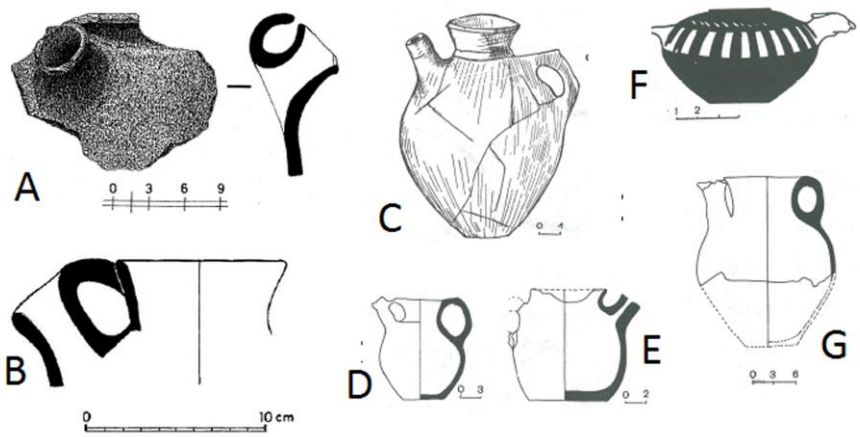

Fig. 9 - Spouted jugs: A. Tsaghkahovit (after Khatchadourian 2008, 515); B. Horom (after Kohl, Kroll 1999, 257, fig. 6); C. Armavir (after Karapetjan 2003, pl. 27 no. 1); D. Karčachpiur (after Karapetjan 2003, pl. 27 no. 3) E. Džararat (after Karapetjan 2003, pl. 27 no. 5); F. Karmir Vank (after Karapetjan 2003, pl. 27 no. 2); G. Karčachpiur (after Karapetjan 2003, pl. 27 no. 4)

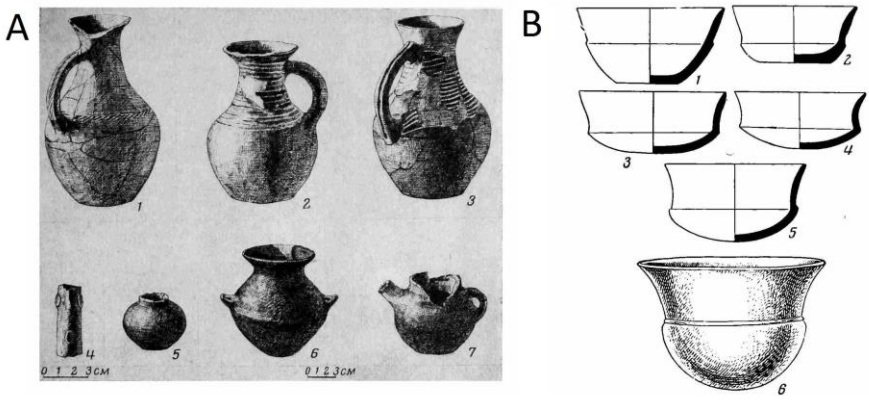

Fig. 10 - Pottery from Džararat (after Tirazjan 1964, 67, figs. 4-5)

Fig. 11 - Triangle-Style pottery from Georgia (after Narimanishvili, Shatberashvili 2004, figs. 1-5)

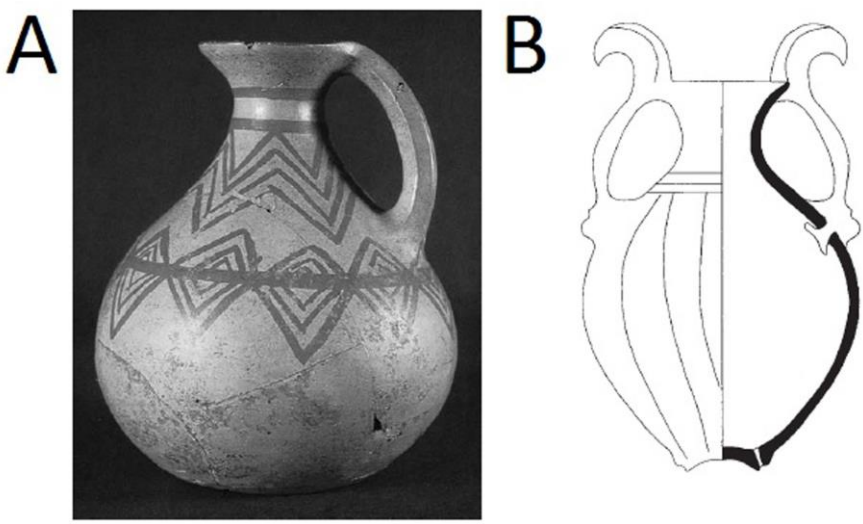

Fig. 12 - A. Jugs from Itkhvisi (after Knauss 2006, 86, fig. 5); B: Amphora-rhyton from Takhtidsiri (after Knauss 2006, 86, fig. 6)

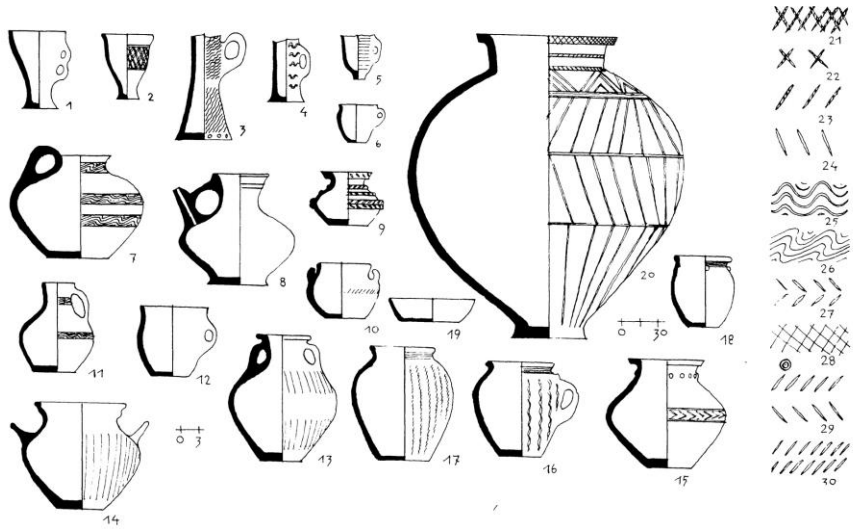

Fig. 13 - Pottery from Vani (after Lordkipanidze 1991, 162, fig. 3)

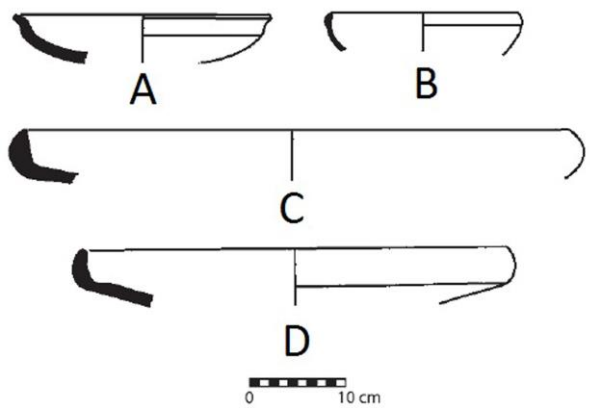

Fig. 14 - Bowls from Oğlan Qala (after Ristvet *et alii* 2012, fig. 20 nos. 8-9, 16, 18)

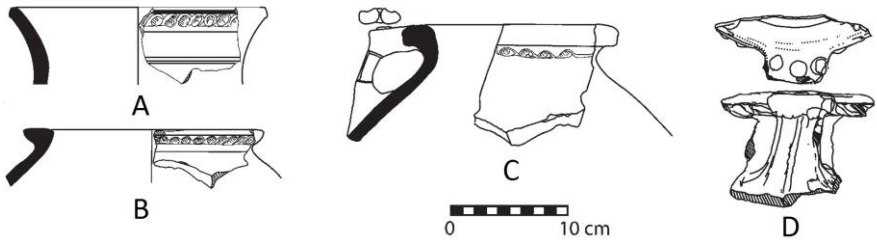

Fig. 15 - Jars and handles from Oğlan Qala (after Ristvet *et alii* 2012, fig. 21, nos. 2, 4, 6, 7)

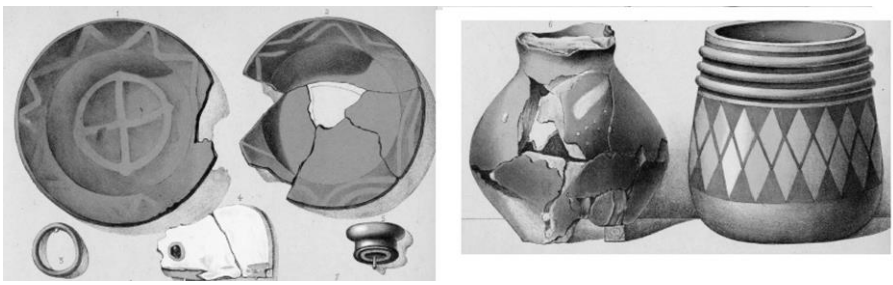

Fig. 16 - Pottery from Djönü (after de Morgan 1896, 111, pl. 5)

Fig. 17 - Pottery from Mingečaur (after Kaziev 1960, pl.

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Università degli studi di Napoli "L'Orientale"
Finito di stampare nel mese di Aprile 2019