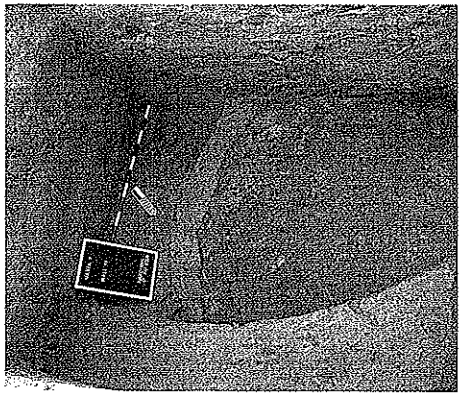

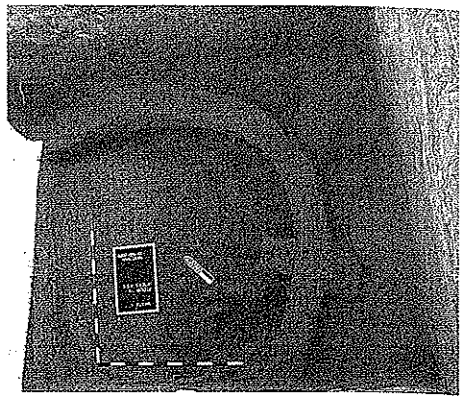

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The Chronology of Kura-Araxes Sites: 2006 Excavations at Kültepe II and Maxta I

Veli Bakhshaliyev, Naxçıvan, Lauren Ristvet, Philadelphia,
and Safar Ashurov, Baku

The study of Kura-Araxes settlements in Naxçıvan is significant for the establishment of the chronology of the Eneolithic and Early Bronze Age in the Caucasus and Greater Near East. Specifically, excavations at Kültepe II have indicated the important place and role this region played during this period in the southern Caucasus. EBA settlements in Naxçıvan include the multi-period sites Kültepe I and II, Shahtaxtı, Ovçulartepesi, as well as the single-period sites of Maxta I and Ašagı. Naxçıvan's position between the steppes of Inner Asia and the Near East makes it a focal point for studies of economic and cultural exchange between pastoralists and sedentary society from the fifth to second millennia BC. The banks of Naxçıvan's rivers (the Araxes, and its tributaries the Arpaçay, Gilançay, Naxçıvançay, and Caxrıçay) were probably densely populated during the Early Bronze Age. The excavations and surveys that have been carried out in Naxçıvan have helped to define local Kura-Araxes culture and have established its close connection with that well-known in neighboring countries. In 2006, joint Azerbaijani-American excavations at Kültepe II and Maxta sought to refine the chronology of the Early Bronze Age in Naxçıvan by studying changes in material culture, particularly architecture and ceramics, and linking them to an absolute chronology defined by high-resolution C-14 dates.

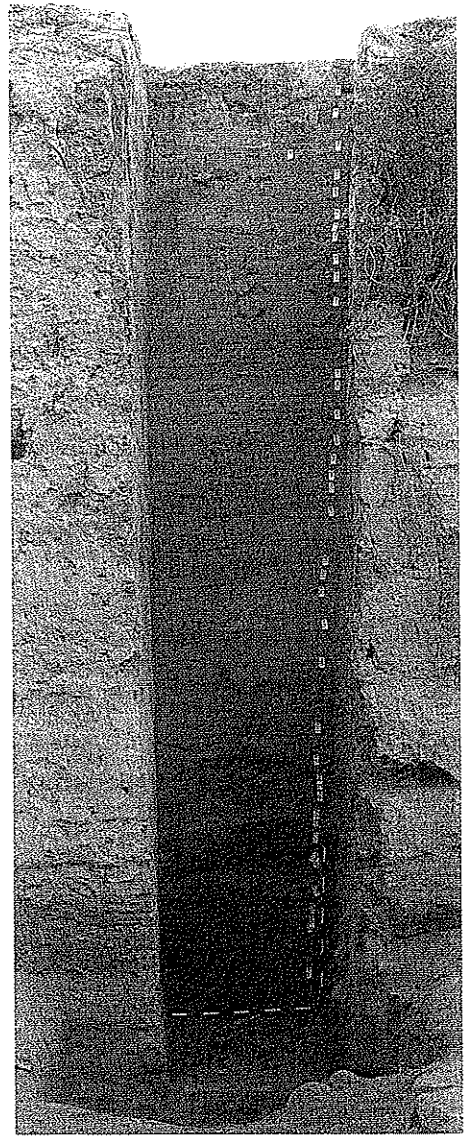
The elevation of Kültepe II is 965 m above sea level, while its coordinates are 39º.19"13,03" N and 45º.26"49,14 E. It is located along the Caxrı river 12 km north of Naxçıvan city, near the villages of Yuxarı, Uzunob and Didivar in Babek rayon. Kültepe II is approximately 4-5 km north of Kültepe I.

Work at Kültepe II began by creating a topographic plan of this 10 ha site and collecting material from the surface to estimate settlement extent during the Early Bronze Age. In addition, we cleaned and re-excavated mud-brick walls of round houses that had originally been uncovered in 1986. This allowed us to establish that the mudbricks used to build these houses were 20 x 40 x 10 cm. The focus of our work at Kültepe II was the excavation of a 1.5 x 1.5 meter trench along the eastern baulk of the old excavation area. We encountered cultural deposits in this sounding to a depth of 6.8 m and were able to delineate 44 stratigraphic layers, based on differences in color, consistency and building remains.

The layers contained pottery sherds, mudbrick debris, ash, animal bones, hearths, andirons and other material. As part of our sampling strategy, 10-20 liters of soil from each occupation layer was floated in order to retrieve paleobotanical samples and micro-archaeological material. The upper levels contained no built architecture, perhaps due to differential rates of destruction. In the lower levels, however, we found fragmentary remains of round houses, built around portable hearths. Thick ash layers and other indications of burning were also found in these lower levels. All of the excavated layers belong to the Kura-Araxes period.

Maxta I is located 803 meters above sea level and has the coordinates 39º.35"23,61" N and 44º.56"21,95 E. This EBA settlement is located 2 kilometers from the Araxes. It is a low mound, only rising 1.5-2 m above the surrounding plain and is situated to the west of the village of the same name in Sharur rayon. Although the mound itself on measures 0.78 ha, EBA material can be found over an area of 3 ha. The first archaeological excavations at Maxta were carried out in 1988 by the Naxçıvan archaeological expedition. In recent years, bulldozer activity has damaged much of the site, creating a cut through the center of the mound. When we arrived in 2006, we saw that this section contained clear evidence of super-imposed structures and floors, while objects including whole vessels, nearly-complete portable andirons and large quantities of animal bones and pottery sherds had been scattered over the site by the bulldozer. As a result of this, we decided to clean the section and put in a small salvage excavation.

We encountered architectural remains from in occupation levels 11-16. In these layers, we discovered multiple rounded pisé walls, ca. 70 cm thick and preserved to a height of 10-15 cm associated with hearths, andirons, and other domestic material. At 2.6 m, we hit ground water and were unable to continue the excavation—although there is no reason to believe that we are close to sterile soil. Associated with this round houses we found two basalt grinding stones and large quantities of pottery sherds. Closed pots predominate,



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but there are also the remains of large pots or vats and cups. The vessels were grayish-black and were sometimes decorated with a series of indentations and incising. The animal bones belonged to many different animals and were all unworked, with the exception of two horns upon which concentric circles had been incised.

Despite decades of investigations of the Kura-

Araxes, the most wide-spread material cultural phenomenon known in the Near East before the rise of Islam, extending from the North Caucasus to Syria-Palestine, we still know little about this phenomenon. Perhaps the most important questions have to do with the chronology of this culture, the area of its appearance and its earliest dissemination.

Based on similar remains from Geoytepe near Urmia, and Karaz near Erzurum, Iessen hypothesized that this culture could be dated to the third millennium BC (2800-2100 BC; Иессен 1965, 16). Kushnareva and Chubinishvili proposed a date of 3000-2000 BC (Кушнарева/ Чубинишвили 1970, 179), while Ismaylov suggested 3200-2300 BC (Исмаилов 1983, 31-32). Recent studies have led some researchers to propose that the earliest stages occurred during the fourth millennium BC (Кушнарева 1993; Кавтарадзе 1983).

The radiocarbon dates from Kültepe II and Maxta can allow us to revise this chronology. The latest date we retrieved came from carbonized bread wheat seeds from a fire-pit in the second occupation layer, and provided a calibrated date of 2561-2346 BC at two standard deviations. The earliest C-14 sample, from layer 43, of carbonized grain retrieved from within a portable hearth, gave us a calibrated date of 3335-3093 BC at two standard deviations. An AM dated from carbonized barley seeds from the hearth in the level 13 house at Maxta matches up nicely with the earlier Kültepe II determinate, providing a calibrated date of 3316-2931 at two standard deviations. It is important to take into account the fact that cultural remains at Maxta were found below this level, indicating that the lower EBA layers at this site probably formed during the first half of the fourth millennium BC.

Analyzing analogous material from Kültepe I, Ovçulartepesi, and Xalaç in Naxçıvan makes it possible to trace the connections between the preceding Eneolithic period and the Early Bronze Age. On the basis of these materials, it is also possible to argue for the emergence of the Kura-Araxes culture in Naxçıvan during the first half of the fourth millennium BC.

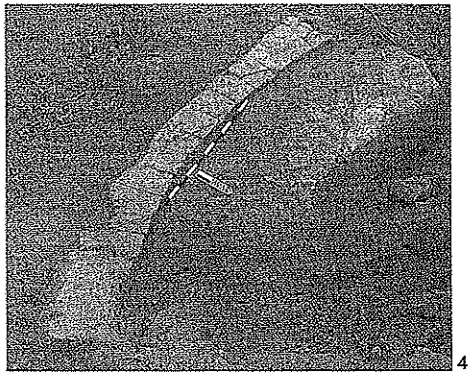
There is also much debate in the literature about where Kura-Araxes first appeared and spread. Thus Iessen indicated that the Kura-Araxes heartland is located in the territory of East Anatolia, South Georgia and Western Armenia (Иессен 1965), Japardize highlights the area between the Kura and the Araxes (more precisely, Kvemo-Kartli; Джапаридзе 1964), Khanzadyan the Armenian upland, Burton-Brown (1951) Azerbaijan and Georgia, Burney (1958) the Elazığ region in Turkey, Ismaylov, Aliev and Narimanov Azerbaijan (Исмаилов 1987, 74; Ялийев 1979, 54; Нариманов 1965, 51). The recent archaeological excavations carried out at Ovçulartepesi, Ašagı Daşarx, Maxta, Kültepe II in Naxçivan, as well as the discoveries made at the site of Gerger in the Alamdar mudflow near Julfa in Iran, make it possible to advance new hypotheses related to the historical framework, area or appearance and early spread of the Kura-Araxes culture.

First of all the great depth of the EBA cultural layers in Naxçıvan attract attention. Thus the cultural layer belonging to this period at Kültepe is 9.5 m thick, Kültepe II, 6.8 m, Ašagı Daşarx, 7 m, Maxta, 4.6 m, Karaz, 9 m, Yanıktepe, 8 m, Geoytepe, 6 m, Gerger-Alemdar, 7 m. This combined with the evidence of ceramic continuity between the Eneolithic and EBA period in Naxçıvan may indicate that this is the zone of the early emergence and formation of the Kura-Araxes culture.

1. Maxta I. Architecture
2. Maxta I. Circular building
3. Kultepe II. Stratigraphic sounding
4. Kultepe II. Mudbrick wall
5. Kultepe II. Coarse vessels found in situ
6. Kultepe II. Kura Araxes jar in situ

К хронологии куро-аракских памятников (по раскопкам Кюльтепе II и Махта I в 2006 году)

Вели Бахшалиев, Нахичеван, Лаурен Риствет, Филадельфия,
и Сафар Ашуров, Баку



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Изучение древних поселений на территории Нахичевана играет важную роль в создании хронологической шкалы древних культур эпохи энеолита и бронзы Кавказа. Именно после первичных исследований на поселении Кюльтепе II стало возможным определить место и роль куро-аракской культуры в истории Южного Кавказа. Многослойные памятники Нахичевана Кюльтепе I и II, Шахтахты, Овчулар Тепеси, а также однослойные поселения эпохи ранней бронзы Махта I и II, Ашагы Ташарх играли большую роль в экономических и культурных связях между племенами Передней Азии и Южного Кавказа 5-2 тыс. до н.э. Бассейны реки Аракс и ее притоков Арпачай, Гиланчай, Нахичеваньчай, Джахричай, были плотно заселены древними земледельческо-скотоводческими племенами. Археологическими исследованиями, проведенными на территории Нахичевана, было установлено существование здесь локальных археологических культур и подтверждена тесная связь между культурами этих племен и сопредельными странами. Изучение памятников эпохи ранней бронзы, а также материальной культуры, строительных особенностей и составление хронологической шкалы памятников эпохи ранней бронзы Нахичевана, дополненной результатами радиоуглеродного метода датировки являлось основной целью исследований, проведенных в 2006 году на территории Нахичевана совместной экспедицией Азербайджана и США. Исследования были проведены в основном на памятниках Кюльтепе II и Махта I.

Кюльтепе II расположен на высоте 965 м над уровнем моря; координаты: 390.19"13,03" С и 450.26"49,14 В. Кюльтепе II находится в 12 км к северу от города Нахичеван, вблизи сел Юхары Узуноба и Дидивар Бабекского района, на берегу реки Джахри, в 4-5 км к северу от памятника Кюльтепе I.

На памятнике Кюльтепе II было исследовано поселение, площадью в 10га и снят его топоплан. На участке были расчищены стены жилища круглого плана, раскопки которого были проведены еще в 1986 году. Размеры сырцовых кирпичей, использованных во время строительства этого жилища составляли 20x40x10 см. Для исследования был выбран участок в размере 1,5x1,5 м, вдоль восточной бровки старого раскопа и раскопан до материка. Толщина культурного слоя достигала 6,80 м. Здесь было прослежено 44 слоя, отличающихся друг от друга по цвету, по расположению материально-культурных остатков и по строительным остаткам.

В каждом слое обнаружены керамические черепки, сырцовые кирпичи, зольные и остеологические останки, очажные места, мангалы и другие материально-культурные образцы. Было просеяно 10-20кг земли из каждого слоя для добычи материала, необходимого для палеоботанических анализов. Было установлено, что нижние слои сравнительно меньше были подвергнуты разрушению, чем верхние. В нижних слоях целиком сохранились круглые дома с мангалами внутри. Однако, именно в нижних слоях наблюдаются следы сильного