



# METSAMOR

The ruins of Metsamor, a Bronze Age fortified city and cemetery, sit on and around a volcanic hill within sight of Mount Ararat. The site seems also to have been an ancient astronomical observatory. For over 40 years, until 2007, the ruins were excavated by an Armenian team directed by Emma Hanzadyan and Koryun Mkrtchyan. Archaeologists explored the ruins of a fortress from the second half of the 2nd millennium BC, uncovering also evidence of older occupation in the form of round houses from the 3rd millennium BC. The team also discovered a metallurgical center comprising workshops and storehouses that occupied the site by the end of the 2nd millennium and two temples that were built slightly later, in the early 1st millennium BC. Investigations of the cemetery yielded over a hundred richly equipped graves from the Bronze and Iron Ages.

Metsamor today is an archaeological reserve with its own museum opened in 1970, housing the finds from the finds from the site.



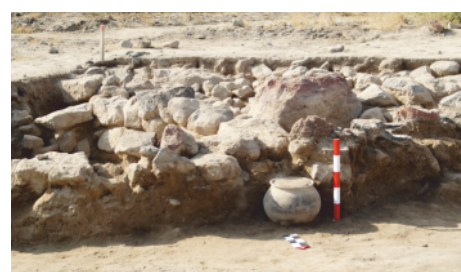
## Armenian-Polish project

In 2013 the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology and the Institute of Archaeology of the University of Warsaw embarked on a joint archaeological project with the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of Armenia and the Ministry of Culture of Armenia. It is the first Polish archaeological project in Armenia.

The team focused on a large settlement from the transition from the Bronze Age to the Iron Age located on a northern hill terrace. Four different buildings were uncovered, the most interesting being an oval structure with large storage vessels still in place alongside a hearth. Buried here under a thick layer of ash — remains of the roof wasted by fire — were a few small objects, including a stone casting mould. The conflagration may illustrate a historical event: the invasion of king Argishti I of Urartu, whose army swept through the Ararat Valley in the beginning of the 8th century BC.

The excavations also revealed evidence for another violent conquest, this time of the Urartian settlement from the early 6th century BC. Two headless skeletons of men killed in the fighting were unearthed, as well as many iron knives and slingshot pellets. The town never fully recovered from the disaster. A number of graves from the 1st century AD that were dug into the ruins show that in time the abandoned area came to serve as a burial ground for the local inhabitants.

Three seasons of work by the Polish–Armenian team have yielded large quantities of pottery representing three millennia of occupation (from the 3rd millennium BC to the 1st century AD). Finds have also included obsidian arrow points, bone pins and awls, sardonyx and faience beads, bronze rings and decorated bone elements of horse harness.



Vessel in situ



Bone implements



Polish–Armenian archaeological cooperation also undertakes a public- and student-oriented program of information about the discoveries, from media coverage to scholarly articles. Two scientific conferences on the archaeology of Armenia were held at the University of Warsaw (in 2013 and 2015), and a conference on current research was organized in the Metsamor museum as was an exhibition showing an overview of University of Warsaw fieldwork abroad. Future work will concentrate on the extent and layout of the early Iron Age Lower City in Metsamor and on confirming the date of its foundation. Another objective is the investigation of the nearby cemetery in search of graves from the late Bronze/early Iron Ages which could shed some light on the elites ruling the city at the turn of the 15th century BC.

**Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw** coordinates Polish archaeological research in the Eastern Mediterranean since 1959 (since 1990 under the present name). In recent years it has broadened its scope of interest to include the Arabian Peninsula and the Caucasus. Currently it runs about 30 projects in Egypt, Sudan, Cyprus, Lebanon, Iraqi Kurdistan, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Armenia and Georgia. It also manages a Research Center in Cairo.

For more information on the PCMA UW go to: [www.pcma.uw.edu.pl/en/](http://www.pcma.uw.edu.pl/en/) ; [www.facebook.com/pcma.uw/](https://www.facebook.com/pcma.uw/)

**Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw** is the largest archaeological institute in Central Europe. Established in 1919, it now employs almost a hundred scholars of different specializations, educating specialists in the fields of archaeology, epigraphy, physical anthropology, archaeozoology, as well as remote sensing and field documentation techniques.

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