

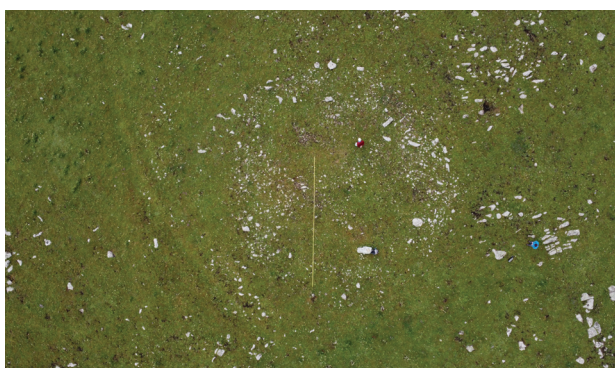
*Mount Chikiani Obsidian Sources (Lesser Caucasus, Georgia)*  
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The scope of the surveys carried out during the last week of July and the first ten days of August 2023 was to improve our knowledge of the presence of knapped obsidian artefacts in the high-altitude stone-walled Bronze Age villages and *kurgans* located within a radius of some 50 km from the obsidian mines located on the Eastern slopes of Mt. Chikiani, and to improve our knowledge of the circulation and trade of this important knappable raw material.

During the 2023 season a Garmin GPS and a non-professional drone (DJI Mini 2) were systematically employed to locate and photograph the archaeological structures. Among them are dozens of *kurgans*, some of which were discovered on the Western slopes of Mt. Paravani at c. 2500 m a.s.l. (fig. 1). Artefacts knapped from obsidian obtained from both Mt. Chikiani and the Armenian source of Ashotsk were found in this area.

Among other important discoveries are the presence of many flake fragments and small obsidian blocks spread all over the surface of two *kurgans* located near the village of Kavta, close to Trialeti (fig. 2), and along the Eastern slope of Mt. Shaori, just West of Lake Paravani, at an altitude of c. 2300 m a.s.l. These two important discoveries show that at least in the Javakheti Plateau, obsidian did not only have a functional use. In fact, it was also employed during ritual practices about which we know very little. Moreover, it has been possible to document the presence of obsidian artefacts in many areas of the highland zone between Mt. Chikiani (2417 m a.s.l.), the village of Trialeti and the Tsalka Reservoir (c. 1520 m a.s.l.).

The characterization of some obsidian artefacts discovered during the 2023 season will be completed by the spring of 2024 under the supervision of Professor Bernard Gratuze of the Institute for Research on Archaeological Materials of the University of Orléans (France).



A group of *kurgans* discovered along the Western upper slope of Mount Paravani (up) and a *kurgan* near Kavta whose surface yielded many obsidian flakes and small blocks (right).