



# INTERDISCIPLINARIA ARCHAEOLOGICA

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A look at the region

## The Story of the International Scientific Commission of the UISPP for Archaeometry of Pre- and Protohistoric Inorganic Artifacts, Materials and Technologies

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### ABSTRACT

The International Union of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences (UISPP), an organisation with over 90 years of history, includes all the fields and disciplines that contribute to the development of prehistory and protohistory. To achieve their goals, the UISPP organises periodically a world congress on prehistoric and protohistoric sciences. Based on proposals received, the general assembly decides on the creation of scientific commissions, following the advice of the executive committee of the UISPP. The main objective of these commissions is to promote and coordinate international research in a specific or specialised domain of the prehistoric and protohistoric sciences between each world congress. Based on the success and interest shown in a session of the 17<sup>th</sup> UISPP Congress, the need has arisen to create a new scientific commission in the field of archaeometry. This brief text describes the creation of this commission and its scientific activities to date. The commission aims at discussing and transmitting the archaeometric approaches to technologies in Prehistory and Protohistory concerning lithic technology, metallurgy, ceramics and glass making; gathering and organising the results, conclusions and circumstances of archaeometric case studies of artifacts; paying particular attention to production, procurement and characterisation of raw materials, and fabrication technologies; and discussing relevant interdisciplinary investigation methods and techniques.

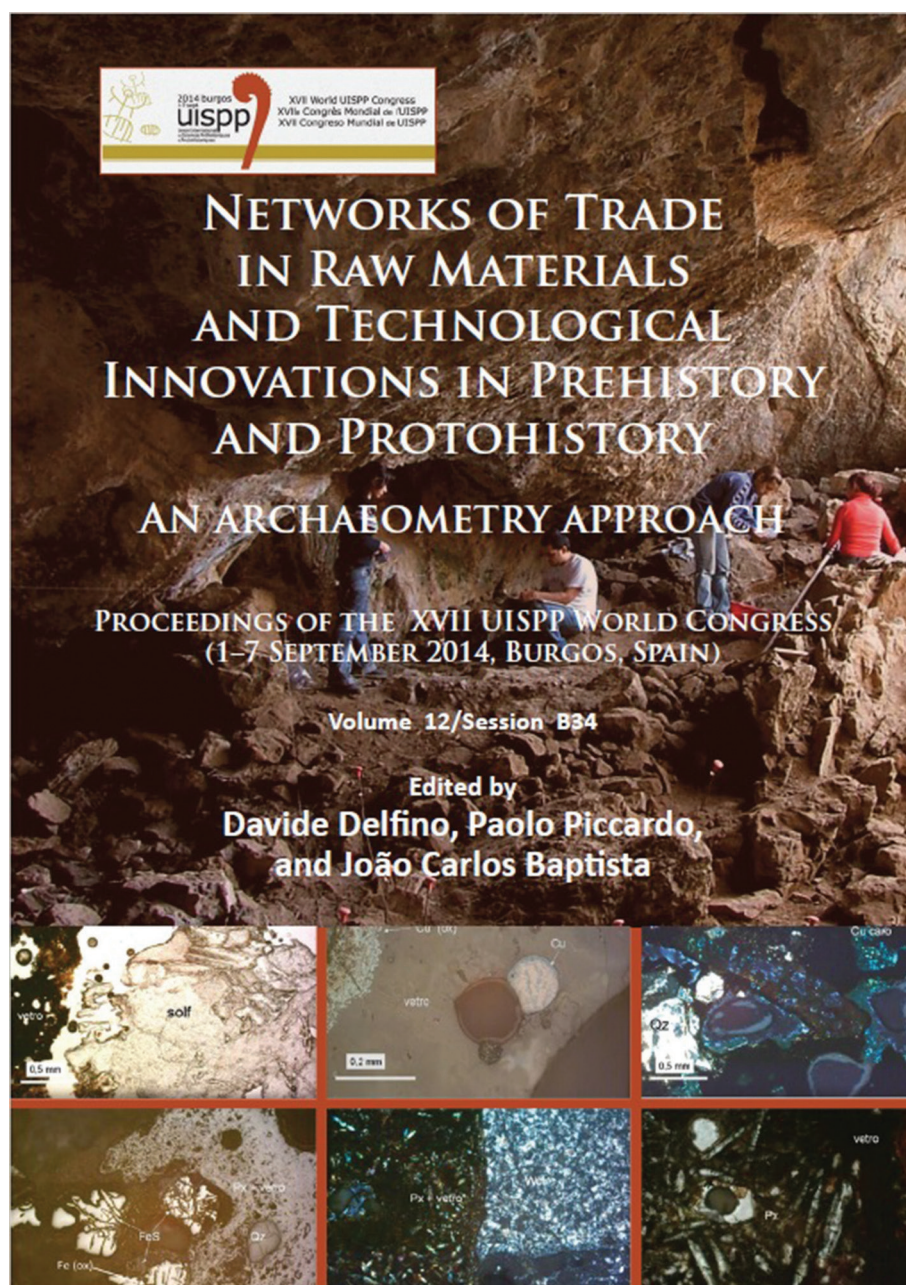
### 1. Introduction – about the UISPP

The International Union of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences (UISPP) is an international association of scholars, stating that the universality of science is the basis of all its activities. Its aims are the collaboration of scholars from all countries in activities that contribute to the advancement of pre- and protohistoric sciences. The UISPP declares its total commitment to academic freedom. The history of the UISPP started in 1865, when the International Palaeoethnological Congress (IPC) was held at the University of La Sapienza, and a few years later, in 1867, with the International Congress of Prehistoric Anthropology and Archaeology (ICPAA), as the direct forerunner, before its official foundation in 1931 in Bern, as the International Congress of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences (ICPPS). In 1955, the association

became a member of the International Council of Philosophy and Human Sciences (ICPHS), part of UNESCO. This affiliation to the ICPHS made it necessary to change the title of the organisation to the name it still bears today (Nenquin *et al.*, 2017).

The study of mechanisms of adaptation and the behavioural dynamics of human societies is the core of the scientific interest of the UISPP. In order to achieve these goals, the UISPP organises periodically a world congress on prehistoric and protohistoric sciences, in order to develop the progress of knowledge and to define common research objectives. For this purpose, the UISPP installs scientific commissions dedicated to specific research themes. The UISPP promotes prehistoric and protohistoric studies through multidisciplinary collaboration within the mentioned scientific commissions and affiliated organisations, be it regional or thematic, but sharing the same goals, and other scientific institutions.

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**Figure 1.** The cover of the volume of proceedings of the Session B34 of the 17<sup>th</sup> UISPP Congress.

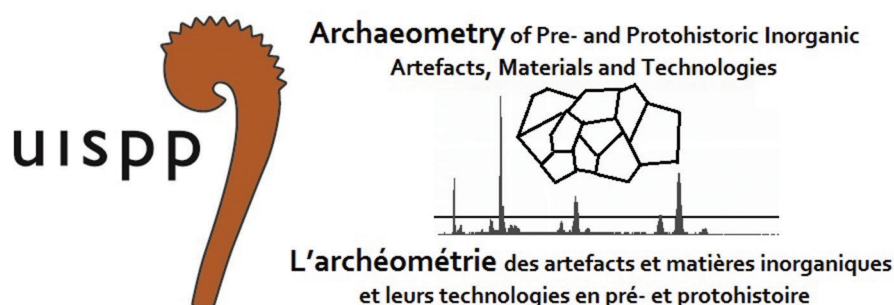
More than thirty scientific commissions make up UISPP, representing a worldwide network of scholars of Prehistory and Protohistory. The commissions cover all aspects of archaeology: historiography, archaeological methods, and theory; material culture by period and by continent; palaeoenvironment and palaeoclimatology, but also archaeology in specific environments; archaeometry; art and culture; technology and economy; biological anthropology; funerary archaeology; and archaeology and societies. The commissions are grouped into six larger domains: Historiography, Methods and Theory; Technology and Economy; Culture, Economy and Environments; Archaeology in a Specific Environment; Art and Culture; Archaeology and Society.

## 2. The creation of the UISPP commission for archaeometry and its objectives

In 2014, on the 17<sup>th</sup> UISPP World Congress in Burgos, new statutes were approved, and a new bureau elected: Jean Bourgeois (president), Luiz Oosterbeek (secretary general) and François Djindjian (treasurer). Because of the success and interest shown for a session of the mentioned congress titled “Archaeometry Approaches Regard The Study Of Networks of Trade in Raw Materials and Technological Innovations in Prehistory and Protohistory” (Figure 1) the decision to create a new scientific commission in the field of archaeometry was taken.

In June 2015, Béla Török, speaker of the opening lecture of the mentioned session, after discussions with the secretary

**Figure 2.** Logo of the UISPP Commission for Archaeometry of Pre- and Protohistoric Inorganic Artifacts, Materials and Technologies.

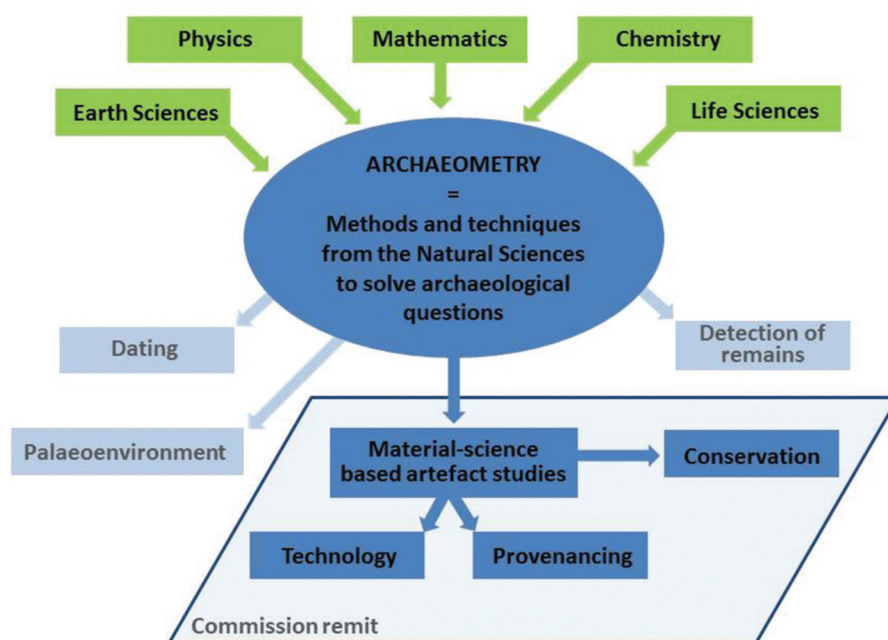


general of the UISPP and some lecturers of the session, submitted a proposal to the Executive Committee of the UISPP, based on the positive feedback, aimed at establishing a new international commission named “Archaeometry of ancient artifacts, materials and technologies”. At the time, the founding members consisted of 15 persons from 13 countries and 3 continents. During the EC-meeting of the UISPP held in Brussels, the proposal was provisionally accepted. After the clarification of the title and the detailed aims, the commission was officially established under the name “Archaeometry of Pre- and Protohistoric Inorganic Artifacts, Materials and Technologies” (Figure 2). The new commission was eventually classified in the domain “Technology and Economy”. To widen the field of materials and technologies, the invitation of new members was recommended. After votes and discussions among the founders of the commission, eight specialists were invited to join as new members of the commission, as well as the UISPP, in the second half of 2015. In 2021, the commission had 21 members from 16 countries (Béla Török – Hungary; Alessandra Giumlia-Mair and Maria Pia Riccardi – Italy; Michał Krueger – Poland, Ignacio Montero Ruiz – Spain;

Peter Bray and Chloë N. Duckworth – England; Marianne Mödler – France; Ana Ávila Melo and Raquel Vilaça – Portugal; Bianca Nessel – Germany; Dirk Brandherm – Northern Ireland; Jiří Hošek – Czech Republic; Erez Ben-Yosef – Israel; Mohammadamin Emami – Iran; Susan Ferrence, Jerolyn E. Morrison and Mark Golitko – USA; Yi-Xian Lin – China; Manako Tanaka – Japan; and Jairo Arturo Escobar – Colombia) as one of the largest UISPP commissions. The commission’s founder and (re)elected president is Béla Török and its secretary since its inception is Alessandra Giumlia-Mair.

The commission provides a platform for scholarly discussion aimed at furthering the dissemination of new approaches and discoveries, and at promoting best practice in archaeometric research on metallurgy, glass making, lithic and ceramic technologies in prehistory and protohistory. One of the chief objectives is offering access to analytical data, results, and conclusions from the broadest possible range of archaeometric projects and case studies relating to prehistoric and protohistoric artefacts made from metal, ceramic, glass and stone, with a particular focus on the characterisation of raw materials and on production technologies. By making

**Figure 3.** The commission’s remit in the complex field of archaeometry.





relevant data accessible to the wider scientific community and formulating standards for scientific databases, we wish to promote the integration between archaeometric research and other archaeological approaches. Commission members also strive to formulate standards for the publication of archaeological scientific data, chemical standards and material structures, and to create protocols for the archiving and dissemination of existing or “legacy” datasets, which would otherwise be vulnerable to being lost or overlooked. By discussing relevant interdisciplinary research methods and techniques, the members also wish to promote work across academic disciplines and to investigate the relationships and overlaps between ancient technologies. A fundamental objective is to organise a commission meeting once a year, and it is intended to hold a special session on the occasion of the triennial UISPP World Congress.

### 3. Events and activities of the commission

The members of the committee maintain contact with each other in various ways. They try to organise annual meetings, always at a different location, where they also hold a professional conference with scheduled presentations, in addition to discussing current research projects and opportunities for collaboration. The presentations, whose authors are not only members of the commission, can of course also be attended by local visitors (professionals, students, researchers). The committee’s main task is to organise a session on archaeometry as broad as possible

at each UISPP World Congress and to publish the papers of the presentations in a single volume (special issue) of a professional journal. During the year, the members of the commission inform each other about their current research and publications via the internet.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> October 2016, the first internal colloquium of the commission and a scientific meeting titled “Latest Results and Examination Methodologies of Pre- and Protohistoric Metals and Other Inorganic Materials” was held in Miskolc, with the local coordination undertaken by Béla Török, president of the commission. Ten scientific papers were presented by members of the Commission. The papers were published in the UISPP Journal (Volume 2, Issue 1, 2019).

In 2017, after the meeting of the Executive Committee of the UISPP in March in Paris, where the activity and the management of our commission were mentioned as a positive example to be followed, the second internal meeting and scientific conference of the commission was held in June in Pavia, organised by Alessandra Giumlia-Mair and Maria Pia Riccardi (Figure 4). At this conference, twelve papers were presented by members of the commission and other invited archaeometry experts.

The 18<sup>th</sup> UISPP World Congress took place in Paris, at the Sorbonne University, from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 9<sup>th</sup> June 2018. More than 1,650 participants, 119 sessions, 1,800 communications and posters came from five continents and all countries of the world. The commission for archaeometry submitted a proposal for a session covering all aspects of analytical approaches to the studies of archaeological finds made of



**Figure 4.** Commission members participating at Pavia meeting (from left to right): J. Hošek, M. P. Riccardi, D. Brandherm, M. Krueger, A. Giumlia-Mair, B. Nessel, M. Mödler, E. Ben-Yosef, I. Montero Ruiz, M. Emami, B. Constantinescu (†) and B. Török.



**Figure 5.** Some commission members after the archaeometry session at the UISPP Congress in Paris (2018). Top row from left: S. Ferrence, M. Tanaka, M. Emami, P. Bray, M. Krueger, M. P. Riccardi. Bottom row from left: J. E. Morrison, A. Giumlia-Mair, B. Török and B. Constantinescu (†).

stone, metal, ceramics, and glass. Materials of all periods from Prehistory to Medieval protohistoric cultures and civilisations were taken into consideration. Special attention was given to the quality of analytical performances. Finally, a very successful session, one of the largest sessions of the congress, with 20 oral communications and 7 poster presentations was organised by Béla Török, Alessandra Giumlia-Mair and Susan Ferrence (Figure 5). During an internal meeting, held after the session, the board of the commission was re-elected by a unanimous vote. Selected papers of the presentations of the Paris session and a few others from the Pavia meeting mentioned above were published in a special issue of the *Materials and Manufacturing Processes* (Volume 35, Issue 13, 2020) (Giumlia-Mair and Török, 2020).

In 2019, there was a good opportunity for a commission meeting in conjunction with the 5<sup>th</sup> international conference “Archaeometallurgy in Europe (AiE)”, which was held between the 19<sup>th</sup> and the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 2019 at Miskolc, since

the president of the commission was also the main organiser of the conference. Twelve commission members submitted a proposal for this conference and ten held a presentation.

Among many other things, the global epidemic situation also had a serious impact on the scientific activity of the commission in 2020 and 2021. Nevertheless, members of the commission kept in touch as much as possible, the commission’s proceedings were published, and we had an archaeometry session at the 19<sup>th</sup> UISPP Congress as well.

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