

THE OXFORD-BATUMI PICHVNARI EXPEDITION, 1998

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Pichvnari lies on the Black Sea coast of Georgia, at the confluence of the Choloki and Ochkhamuri rivers, some 10 km to the north of the town of Kobuleti in the Ajarian Autonomous Republic. Major settlements began at Pichvnari in the Middle Bronze Age. At the end of the 2nd millennium BC iron working seems to have started at the Choloki-Ochkhamuri confluence, and in the pre-Classical period (8th-7th cent. B.C.) dune settlements appeared along the shore line to the west of the Pichvnari settlement (Fig. 1, VI), with occupation levels up to 6 or 7 metres deep.

Pichvnari became progressively more important from the Early Classical period, and in the Classical and Hellenistic periods it was one of the major urban centres of the eastern Black Sea littoral, with close trading, economic and cultural relations with other centres of the Classical world. The urban settlement (which may have been the Matium mentioned by Pliny [HN 6,12; cf. Plontke-Lüning 1999]) occupied an area of up to 100 hectares. Three major cemeteries, directly related to the urban settlement, have been brought to light. Lying to the west of the settlement site, these cemeteries occupy an area of up to 20 hectares. One is what has been called a "Colchian" necropolis of the 5th century BC (Fig. 1, III), the other a 5th-4th century BC "Greek" cemetery (Fig. 1, IV), and the third belongs to the Hellenistic period (Fig. 1, V).

The work of the Pichvnari Expedition, organised from the Batumi Archaeological Museum and the Batumi Research Institute, ceased at the time of the break-up of the Soviet Union, but it was possible to start again in 1998 with the collaboration of the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.¹ The season lasted for the months of July and August, when work was conducted in the areas of both the Colchian and Greek cemeteries.²

1 The co-directors were Amiran Kakhidze, Director of the Batumi Archaeological Museum, and Michael Vickers, Reader in Archaeology in the University of Oxford, and Curator of Greek and Roman antiquities at the Ashmolean Museum. The following also participated: the late D. Khakhutaishvili (consultant), G. Tavamaishvili (deputy director), scientific collaborators: N. Vashakidze, T. Sikharulidze, I. Iashvili, M. Odisheli, N. Dzneladze, M. Chijavadze; postgraduates: M. Khalvashi and T. Ebralidze (Batumi University); artist-architects: A. Javelidze and M. Khinkiladze; photographers: G. Nakhutsrishvili and G. Chigogidze; laboratory assistant: G. Tsiskaridze; deputy director for supplies: G. Svanidze; undergraduates: Victoria Kwee (Jesus College, Oxford) and Tom Welsford (St. John's College, Oxford); school pupils: James and Philip Vickers, Julia Gräf, and Lika and Sandro Sekhniashvili.

2 For a brief report of the 1998 season, see Vickers 1998; for a longer one, see Kakhidze and Vickers (in press).

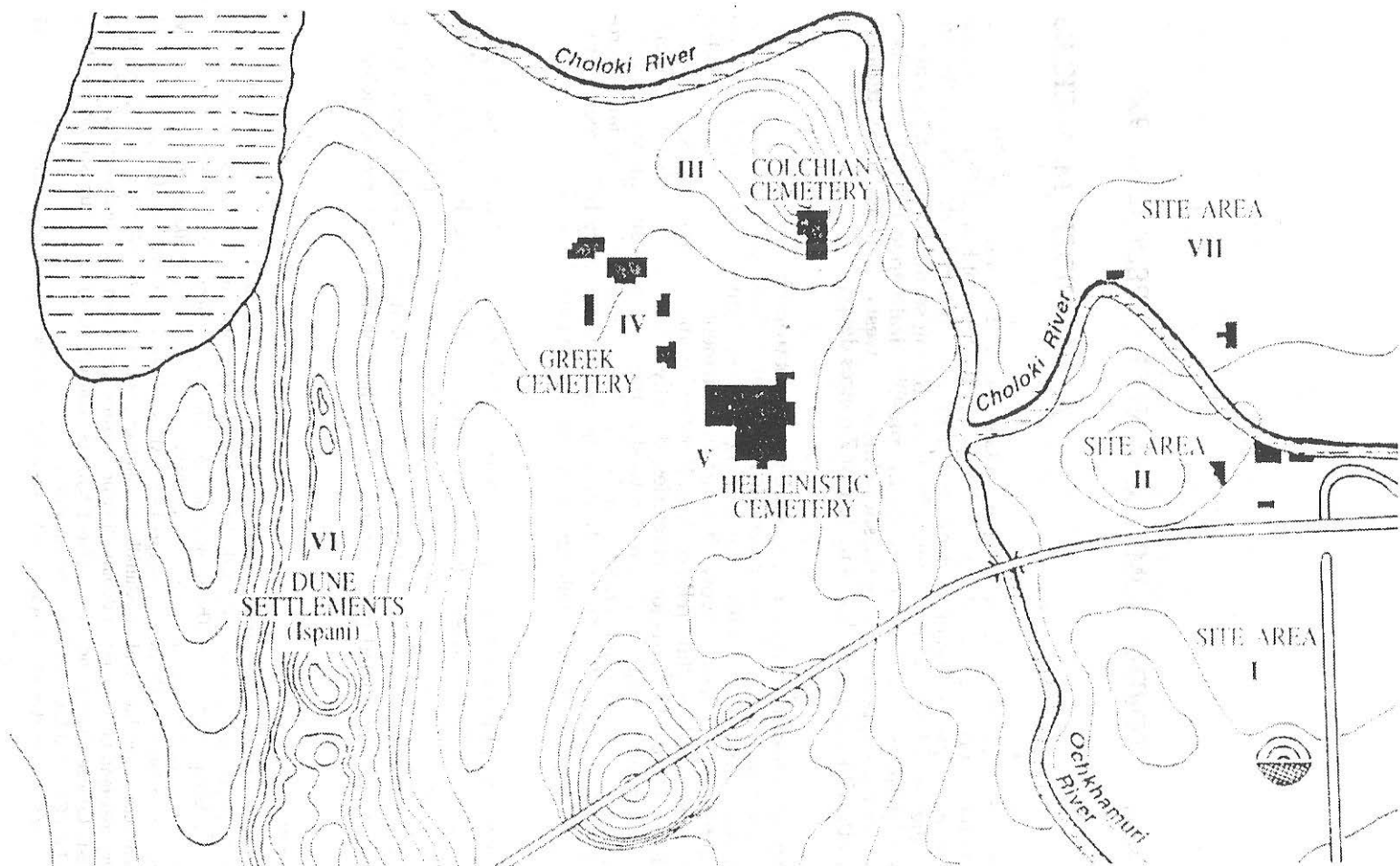


Fig. 1. Plan of Pichvnari

This, the first ever joint British-Georgian excavation, was generously supported by the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, the Seven Pillars of Wisdom Trust, the Oxford Craven Committee, a Jesus College Research Grant, the Department of Antiquities at the Ashmolean, and donations from Gerald and Suzanne Labiner of Los Angeles and Ted and Andrée Gorton of Paris. This report was prepared with the aid of a grant from the British Academy Joint Activities Fund.

The Colchian Cemetery

The "Colchian" cemetery is situated to the west of the Pichvnari settlement, on a natural elevation (Fig. 1, III; Fig 2), called "Napurvala" by the local residents, on the left bank of the Choloki. To its south lies a necropolis of the Hellenistic period. A sizeable area between these cemeteries is under a tea plantation, but it is hoped in future years to make exploratory soundings here. If the results prove positive, the cemetery area of Pichvnari will be truly vast, the like of which is unparalleled in the eastern Black Sea area. To the west of the 5th century BC "Colchian" cemetery lies a "Greek" necropolis of the 5th and 4th centuries BC. Again, it is hoped to make further soundings to establish its true dimensions. There is some disagreement as to whether the evident differences between the more or less contemporary cemeteries are the result of ethnic distinctions (Kakhidze 1981) or the result of socio-economic differentiation (Braund 1994: 114).



Fig. 2. View of the "Colchian" cemetery to west

The 5th century BC "Colchian" cemetery occupies a large area. The hill slopes from the south-east to the north-west. Burials are found almost everywhere. Intermittent field work has been carried on here since 1966, and 232 burials had been studied before 1998.³ The inventory of burial complexes constitutes the principal source for the study of Colchian history and culture of the Classical period; in particular evidence for trading links with Greek centres.

To date, a relatively small part of the "Colchian" cemetery has been excavated. In recent years the site has come under threat from local entrepreneurs extracting sand. Many burial complexes have consequently been destroyed and much valuable evidence lost to science. This was why we dug in areas where sand was likely to be quarried, salvaging up to 30 burial complexes in the process.

An area measuring 24 x 8 metres to the north of the earlier excavation (NE sector 27) was investigated. Several burials were found in a layer of loose sand which varied in thickness between 25 and 75 cm. Fragments of broken pots in the western section suggested there had once been a funeral feast here, but unlike the "Greek" cemeteries, where such features were frequent, there was no burnt layer. But evidence for funeral meals (which included fragments of a black-gloss *skyphos* and local vessels found on the top of one of the graves, and a single wine amphora found elsewhere) perhaps point either to the participation of Pichvnari Greeks in the burial ceremonies of Colchians, or to an exceptional bout of indulgence amongst the relatively poorer folk buried at Narpurvala.

Beneath the loose sand layer was hardened sandy soil into which the outlines of most of the burials cut into the natural earth could clearly be seen; most were in the eastern part of the trench. Thirty simple pit burials of apparently ordinary folk were discovered at the Napurvala necropolis. A very few burials seem to have had wooden roofs; two seem to have had wooden coffins (judging by the position of nails). The wooden coffin of burial 240 included two bronze nails as well as iron ones. The sizes of the burial pits are not large, the few burials of 2.76, 2.3, or 2.1m being exceptionally big. Burials of 1.7-1.5m or 1.3 and 1.1m in length were more frequent. Nine corpses faced north, four north-west and three north-east. Although there were some deviations, the north orientation (contrast the easterly orientation of the Greek cemeteries) seems to have been a local custom. The arrangement of the grave goods suggest that one burial had the head to the south-west, and another to the west. Three burials were oriented in an easterly direction, perhaps under Greek influence.

3 For material discovered before 1980, see: Kakhidze 1979a, 1979b, 1981. Small-scale field work was conducted at the Colchian necropolis, with the participation of students of Jena University: see Kakhidze and Plontke-Lüning 1992. On Pichvnari in general, see Braund 1994, 1909-117; Tsetskhladze 1994.

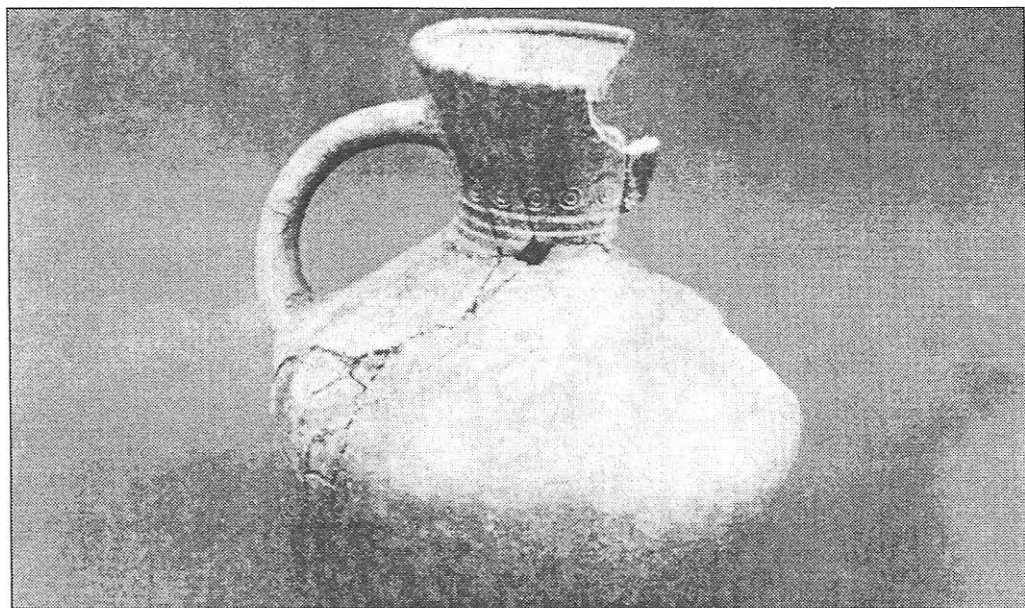


Fig. 3. Biconical Colchian jug from Pichvnari

Local pottery held pride of place among the grave goods, being mostly placed at the head. Thus fifteen graves contained Colchian pottery jugs, in twelve instances placed at the head, and in two at the feet. Most Colchian vessels are jugs with either conical, biconical (Fig. 3), or rounded (Fig. 4) bodies, a flat bottom and a conical or straight cylindrical neck. The decoration might consist of a series of small impressed circles or ovals, or incised almond or fern-shaped motifs. Occasionally there are vestigial rivets, which bespeak a metal origin for at least the forms concerned (cf. Vickers and Gill 1994: 108, 111, fig. 5.4). Jugs with spouted handles are also prominent in the Colchian ceramic repertoire. Most known 5th-century BC specimens come from Pichvnari, and are distinguished by their careful craftsmanship (Kakhidze 1979a: 101-102).

While imported wares are infrequent (an Attic black-gloss cup, an Attic one-handler, and one small Ionian vessel), they are of considerable importance as potential chronological markers. This is the first time that an Attic black-gloss one-handler has been found in the "Colchian" necropolis at Pichvnari (although they are quite frequent in the "Greek" cemetery). A parallel from the Athenian Agora has been placed in a context of the third quarter of the fifth century BC (Sparkes and Talcott 1970: fig. 8, No. 749). The stemless cup is an unusual type. The lipped foot is typical of that found on „Castulo cups“ (Shefton 1996). The contexts of examples from the Athenian Agora (Sparkes and Talcott 1970: fig. 5, pl. 22, Nos. 475, 481), and Aslaia in Cyrenaica (Vickers and Bazama 1971: pl. 30b) would suggest a date in the third quarter of the fifth century BC. They lead to the conclusion that the Colchians had begun using the place as a necropolis by the third quarter of the 5th century BC.

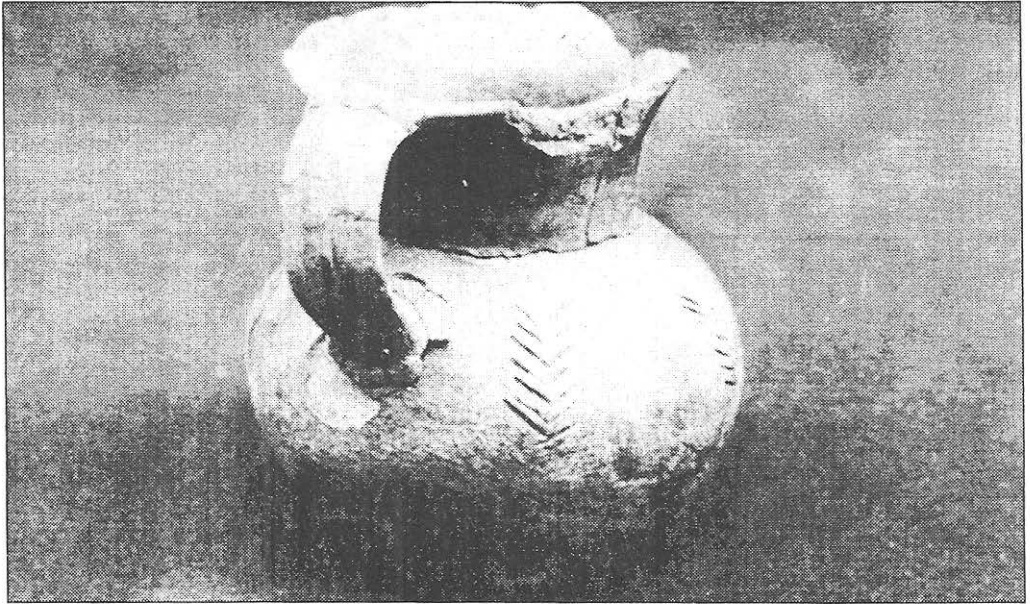


Fig. 4. Globular Colchian jug from Pichvnari

The grave goods of the Pichvnari Colchians often included local silver coins: „Kolkhidki”, triobols, with a human head on the obverse, and a bull’s head on the reverse; cf. Doundoua 1982; Braund 1994: 118-121). Seven burials yielded one coin each, and two burials had two specimens each. As a rule, such coins were found in the area of the mouth, although one was found near the hand. Occasionally, the reaction of the metal with the enamel of teeth caused the latter to be preserved. The practice of placing a coin in the mouth of the deceased (the so-called “Charon’s obol”) is unparalleled elsewhere in the Black Sea area, although it is a custom observed in both the Greek and Colchian cemeteries. The reason why the custom of Charon’s obol existed at Pichvnari is clear: the dead had to be ferried across a river from the settlement to the cemeteries. Its presence in the Colchian cemetery bespeaks a certain degree of hellenization on the part of late fifth century BC Colchians.

Beads figure large, occurring in fourteen burials, usually placed at the neck: occasionally by the hundred (Fig. 5), but more frequently just a few pieces. Among other adornments, there were iron bracelets (in five burials); bronze bracelets (in three burials), and bronze earrings (in four burials). Two burials contained silver earrings, and one fragments of a bronze chain.

Very few silver pieces of silver jewellery were found. The most interesting variety was radiate earrings of which two examples were found in the “Colchian” cemetery (in Burial 240). These consist of a penannular hoop with to which four wires adorned with granulated clusters are attached. This type of ornament seems to have been widespread both in Western and Eastern Georgia, but it is as yet unknown beyond (Lordkipanidze, 1972: 15ff.; Chqonia 1977; eadem 1981).

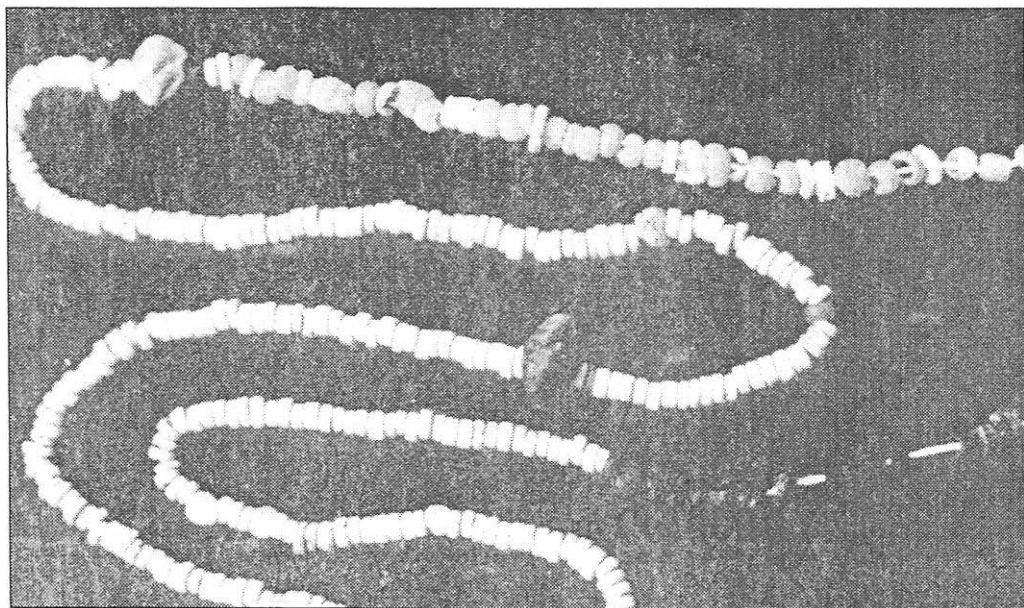


Fig. 5. Glass beads from Burial 249 in the "Colchian" cemetery

The earlier classical Greek necropolis

The "Greek" cemetery has a significance not just for Colchis, but for the eastern Black Sea and the Classical world in general, for no other necropolis of potentially Greek ethnicity is known in Transcaucasia. The individual burials and ritual platforms are very well preserved, allowing the accurate study of the burial customs employed. In what is a unique site anywhere on the Black Sea coast, the graves of indigenous peoples and Greek colonists occur close to each other; evidence of a close and peaceful relationship throughout the Classical period (or, if one prefers, allows for the observation of social differentiations within a society that was already multi-racial [Braund 1994: 114]). The Greek colonists seem to have chosen a sandy coastal zone for their cemetery⁴ and the earliest burials (of the mid-5th century BC) are here (Fig. 2, IV; Fig. 6). In the later 5th century BC the "Greek" necropolis extended eastward, towards the "Colchian" necropolis. The area was used intensively, but no cases of reuse of graves have been found. A great deal of archaeological material has been discovered in the burial complexes and on ritual platforms (or "areas for burial feasts"), constituting a valuable historical source for the study of the trading, economic and cultural contacts of ancient Colchis within the Classical world.⁵

4 In the 8th-7th century BC the line of the coast followed the sand dunes, which were occasionally battered by rough seas. Now the sea is some 300m away.

5 So far the results of the 1967 studies have not been published. See Kakhidze 1975. An extensive monograph, *The Classical World in South-Western Georgia* is in active preparation.

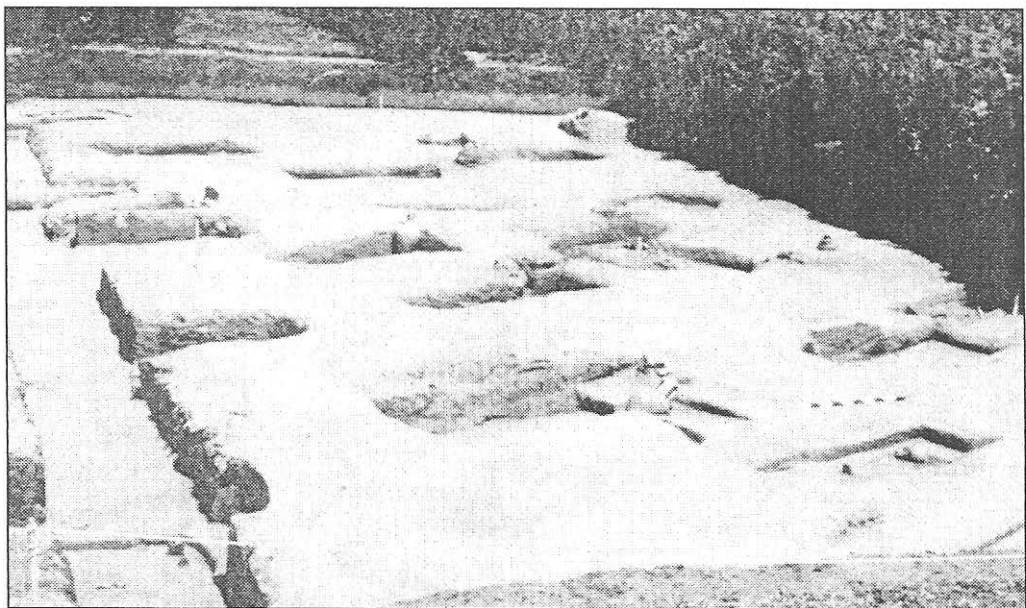


Fig. 6. View of the earlier classical "Greek" cemetery to north

The excavation of the 5th century BC "Greek" necropolis was extended eastwards by a 20 x 8m area. Fifteen squares were surveyed. The upper humus layer was removed. It yielded fragments of pottery, including amphorae, from the ritual platforms. Then came a loose sand layer, which was removed in layers of 10-12cm. Ritual platforms occur at this level; amphorae are used as hearths, and mouths of amphorae are placed in the grave. A fragmentary image of Demeter was found at a depth of 70cm, but otherwise without a context.

Only four ritual platforms were found. They had occurred in larger numbers among the richer burials found in earlier years to the west. This area appears to have been used for the burial of the relatively poor, thus lending some weight to Braund's hypothesis concerning social differentiation. It is in any case significant for the study of the composition and development of the controversial Greek colonization of Georgia's Black Sea littoral.

In the 5th-century BC "Greek" necropolis the loose sandy layer is followed by hardened sandy soil; nails and amphorae in the coffins were often the first things to appear. After recording, individual burials were studied to gain information about the burial customs followed.

The 1998 field exploration at the earlier classical Greek necropolis was particularly noteworthy. Firstly, definite social distinctions were identified. Secondly, for the first time at Pichvnari, 4th cent. AD burials appeared, with extensive grave goods. Twenty graves (15 from the 5th century B.C., and 5 from the 4th cent. AD.) were studied.

Most of the burials have the head to the east, in accordance with Greek custom; five or so were inclined slightly to the north. The dimensions of the graves tended to be between 2.10m and 2.20m long, and coffins in them between 1.50m and 1.70m. The dimensions of the coffins could be established, even though actual wood did not survive, thanks to the iron nails which were preserved in their hundreds. Nails were found overlying some burials, perhaps indicating a wooden roof of some kind.

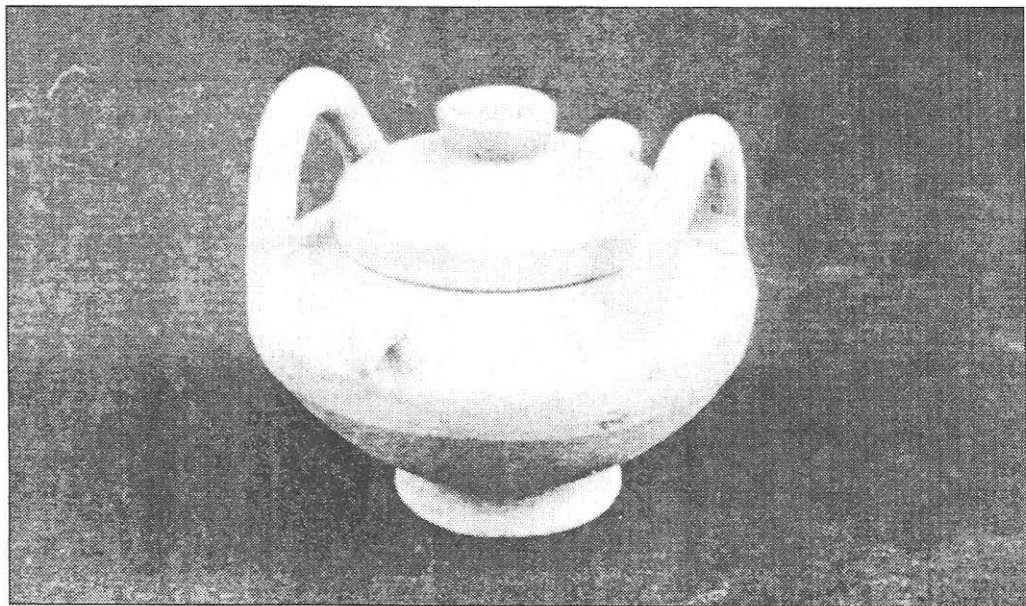


Fig. 7. Ionian pottery pyxis from Burial 171 in the earlier classical "Greek" cemetery

The arrangement of goods in the burials followed a regular pattern. Some objects (e.g. the Ionian jug) were placed on top of the burial, or else outside the coffin (e.g. the Thasian amphora, at the eastern end of its burial). Attic squat *lekythoi* were the most common item in the burials, placed at the feet, by the right hand or at the head. At the head might also be placed a coin, a local pottery jug, a bezelled bronze finger-ring, an Ionian *pyxis* (Fig. 7), or beads. By the left arm might be found an iron hoop; by the left hand, an *amphoriskos*, a Colchian tubular-handled jug, a core-made glass *amphoriskos* and a strigil; at the feet might be found a black-gloss bowl or a cup or even a bracelet.

The pottery included amphoras (Thasian being the commonest), Attic squat *lekythoi* (including a red-figured example,⁶ the rest being either plain black-gloss ware, or decorated with horizontal bands [Sparkes and Talcott 1970: 315ff., pl.38]). There was a black-gloss cup (from Burial 174) belonging to the "Delicate Class", and datable to perhaps 420-400 or even as late as 390 BC (Sparkes and Talcott 1970: fig. 5,

6 For the red-figure squat *lekythoi* from Pichvnari, see Sikharulidze 1987, with bibliographies.

no. 513; cf. Morgan 1999, 38-9, pl. 16a-b, No. 78), as often in both the Colchian and Greek cemeteries at Pichvnari, and especially on ritual platforms. Ritual platform 7 produced a light-walled black-gloss cup-*skyphos* datable to between 420 and 390 BC. Other types of Attic black-gloss pottery found on ritual platforms included *amphoriskoi*, *lekythoi*, bolsals, bowls, etc. An Ionian jug from Burial 169 had a fertility symbol incised on the shoulder. Other Ionian wares included a miniature pyxis, and a large plain *amphoriskos*, the first to be found in the earlier classical cemetery. Colchian pottery was also to be found in considerable quantity.

The fragmentary mould made terracotta statuette of Demeter was a stray find. She wears a stephanon and a veil over her shoulder. The clay is yellowish-light brown with traces of mica. It is perhaps of Attic manufacture and is datable to the first half of the 5th-century BC (Kruglikova 1970).

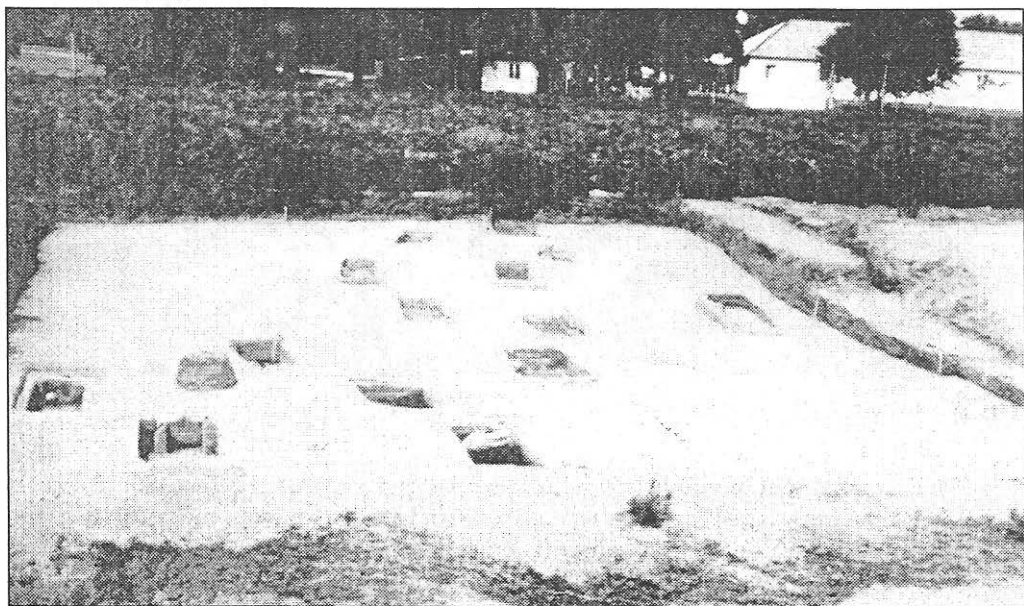


Fig. 8. View of the later classical "Greek" cemetery to west

The new finds provide interesting material for the study of trading relations between Pichvnari and the northern Black Sea area. Coins from Apollonia (Shelov 1956: pl. 2.14; 1978: pl. 1.14) and Theodosia (Shelov 1956: pl. 2.21; 1978: pl. 1.21), conventionally dated to the second and last quarters of the 5th century BC respectively, were discovered in burial 161. They can thus be added to the coins from Panticapaeum and Nymphaeum found in earlier seasons (Kakhidze 1974a).

Many polychrome core-formed glass vessels have been found over the years in the "Greek", "Colchian" and Hellenistic cemeteries. New finds include an *alabastron*, with a dark olive ground and spiralling blue decoration; an *amphoriskos* with an

opaque brown ground and opaque yellow and turquoise blue decoration (cf. Grose 1989: no. 104). Strigils were unknown in the eastern Black Sea area until they began to be found at Pichvnari. Subsequently iron strigils were found in 4th-3rd century burials Takhtidziri, Inner Kartli (Gagoshidze 1997: 16-17), and in 1998 another was found in the earlier classical cemetery at Pichvnari (Burial 174).

A few bronze and iron ornaments were found; among them were a bronze and an iron bezelled finger-ring, a bracelet round in cross-section and decorated with notches, and a fragmentary iron hoop. Among the few beads was one of grey stone; another of glass has six blue dots set in a turquoise core, with white, brownish, and white circles; and third consisted of three blue dots set in a turquoise core, surrounded by white circles.

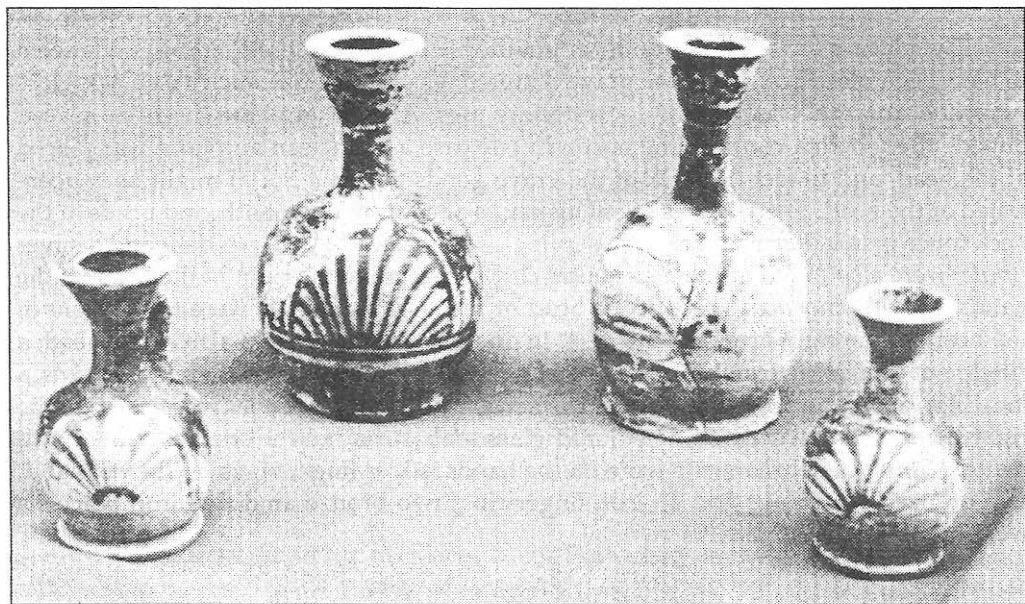


Fig. 9. Attic pottery squat lekythoi with palmette decoration from the later classical "Greek" cemetery

The later classical "Greek" cemetery

The later classical cemetery at Pichvnari abuts on the southern edge of the earlier classical "Greek" cemetery (Fig. 8). In the past, 36 burials and contiguous ritual platforms were studied (Kakhidze 1974a; 1979a). In 1998 the earlier excavation was extended. The upper levels contained fragments of i.a. an Ionian bowl, a black-gloss lekythos and a grey clay vessel. This section was less intensively for burials, and yielded a total of 36 graves (nos. 37-72).

All the burials were inhumations, and most have their heads to the east in accor-

dance with Greek custom. The arrangement of iron nails indicated that most were buried in wooden coffins, although some only had a wooden cover. Occasionally nails were totally absent, suggesting the absence of coffins. The sizes of the coffins vary in length (between 2m and 1.35m) as did the burial pits themselves (between 2.6m and 1.2m).

Some burials have a ritual platform of their own, occurring mostly to the north-east or east. The burnt and charred layers contain fragments of local pottery as well as Attic black-gloss cups, *skyphoi*, bolsals, bowls and „salt-cellars“, some bearing graffiti. The funeral meal seems to have been customary, and occasionally there was more pottery on a platform outside a grave—apparently ritually smashed—than there was in the nearby burial.

The placing of the grave goods within the burials is of interest. Some goods seem to have been placed on top of the grave within days of the burial, such as a black-gloss *oinochoe*, an *amphoriskos* and local pottery jugs. A wine amphora might be placed outside the wooden coffin to the north. In one case a Heracleian amphora was placed at the head, and in fact the bulk of the grave goods within a burial might be concentrated at the head. There were several instances of coins in the mouth, and beads at the neck (once on a left arm, apparently serving as a bracelet); a gold pendant and a silver *fibula* were also found at the neck. Local clay jugs were to the right of the head, at the hands or feet; *oinochoai* were at the head or feet. Grey-clay jugs were to the right of the head, at the right arm or at the feet. In one case a clay pot was also at the head; a single pot or an *amphoriskos* were at hand level. A black-gloss bowl, *amphoriskos*, a local clay pot and a lamp were at the left hand, while black-gloss *lekythoi* were at the right hand. There were also a coloured glass *alabastron* and a bronze voluted palmette. Many of the ornaments were on the hands: silver finger-rings on the left hand, two bronze finger-rings and an iron finger-ring; two bronze and two iron bracelets were on both arms.

Pottery was by far the major category of surviving material, and trade amphoras, including one stamped with the city-name Heraclea, figured large. Of fine wares, Attic predominated. Notable here was a red-figure cup-skyphos found in ritual platform 5. Heavy-walled, it shows pairs of youths on each side, and ivy leaves. Such cups date to the early 4th century BC (Ure 1944: 67-77; Peredolskaya 1963: 41-48), and have parallels elsewhere on the northern Black Sea littoral (Brashinski 1980: 56; Sazonova 1988: 183-188). Another red-figure skyphos of Type A) decorated with draped male figures comes from ritual platform 7, and likewise dates to the 4th century. Several red-figure squat *lekythoi*, decorated with palmettes (Fig. 9) or net patterns were found, of types well known from elsewhere in 4th century BC contexts, if not later.⁷ A squat *lekythos*

7 Palmette *lekythoi*: e.g. Robinson 1950: 150; Venedikov 1963: 104ff; Morgan 1999: 44, 46-8; net-*lekythoi*: Kakhidze 1982: 214 (with references); Morgan 1999: 43-4.

decorated with a long-necked bird was found in Burial 41, similar to examples found in the earlier classical cemetery (Sikharulidze 1987: 85-86).

Attic black-gloss pottery was found in both burials and on ritual platforms. They include cups, bolsals, lekythoi, askoi and bowls. Especially noteworthy is a bowl with stamped decoration dating to the first half of the 4th century, perhaps the second quarter (Fig. 10). Its most notable feature is a graffito reading *Dionusios Leodamantos*: Dionysios son of Leodamas. Mrs Elaine Matthews of the Oxford-based *Lexicon of Greek Personal Names* kindly notes that „The distribution of the name Leodamas is interesting. A sprinkling through the islands (LGPN I), but 10 at Thasos; 7 in Athens; none in IIIA and 1 in IIIB (Thessaly) i.e. basically none on the mainland or the west; 1 Thracian, but a group of 7 in Olbia; 5 in Miletos, 4 others scattered in Kyzikos, Kolophon.“

An Attic black-gloss miniature *oinochoe* from Burial 62 may be as early as 450-420 BC.⁸ More unglazed *amphoriskoi* were found, of an uncertain imported ware. Another unusual piece was an *oinochoe* decorated with broad curved brush-strokes to evoke fluting. Grey-ware jugs occur in both burials and ritual platforms in the later classical cemetery; typically, they bear horizontal bands on the neck. Similar wares have been found in both the northern and western Black Sea areas,⁹ but the centre in which they were manufactured is uncertain.

Local ceramic wares are also frequently found in the later classical cemetery. Colchian jugs with biconical bodies often have their necks decorated with horizontal grooves. A two-handled vessel appeared for the first time. The traditional forms of tubular-handled jugs recur, many of them decorated with crudely incised ornament.

Beads and pendants for necklaces occur more frequently now. Blue white and yellow glass predominate. Coins were found in 8 burials, all except one Colchian *kolkhidki* (the other being too badly preserved to attribute to a mint). For the first time, a coloured glass alabastron was found in the later classical necropolis (the extraordinary light-turquoise vessel, in Burial 47, accompanied by a bronze strigil). A small bronze palmette may have served as the handle of an object of as yet unknown type.

A silver fibula was found in Burial 49, its bow decorated with a herring-bone pattern. The only gold object found in 1998 was a small crescent pendant, from Burial 42. It has granulated ornament, and finds parallels in earlier finds at Pichvnari, at Sairkhe

8 For other black-gloss oinochoai, see Kakhidze 1974a: 68-69, pl. 2.3; 7.2.

9 Condurachi 1962: 231, pl. 83; Venedikov 1963: 162, pls. 86, 328; Kaposhina 1959: 137-138, fig. 46; Petrenko 1967: 24, 25, pl. 21.17; Onaiko 1960; idem 1970: 18, pl. 12.380 etc.

(Nadiradze 1990: 94), and at Vani (where they appear from the third quarter of the 4th century BC) (Chqonia 1981: 74, fig. 44). Finger rings of silver and bronze have bezels bearing representations of animals and birds. Bracelets tend to be thin and round in section.



Fig. 10. Attic black-gloss bowl from ritual platform 7 in the later classical "Greek" cemetery

Necropolis of the 4th century AD

An unexpected discovery was that part of the 5th century Greek cemetery had been reused in the Roman period. Five burials of the 4th century AD were found overlying 5th century Greek graves. Unlike them, they contained no iron nails; hence, presumably, they lacked coffins.

Most Pichvnari burials of the 4th century AD have the head to the west, with a slight north or south inclination. The burial pits are long and rectangular with rounded corners, and lie about a metre below the modern surface. A covered clay vessel seems to have been placed at the west end of the grave subsequent to internment. The arrangement of the grave goods within the burials followed a particular order: glass vessels were placed above the head and a flint whetstone near the right hand. Clay vessels lay above the head, or at the feet. Glass beads were worn at the neck. Coins were either in the mouth or in the right hand. Iron axes, iron knives, fibulae and decorated finger-rings might lie on either side. Iron spears were usually to the right of the body, and on one occasion to the left.

The pottery includes both traditional and new forms of oinochoe. The latter variety is tall, with a narrow neck and fluted handle. The base of the jug from Burial 5 (179) bears a cross in relief, but this may well carry no religious significance.¹⁰ Similar vessels are found in the burial complexes of Tsikhisdziri (Inaishvili 1993: 96-97), and especially at the contemporary Tsebelda complex (Trapsh 1971: 133, pl. 21.3; Gunba 1978: 68-69, pls 21.3, 27.2). Imported wares are represented by a thick-walled red-gloss plate from Burial 179, many parallels for which exist at Tsikhisdziri (Inaishvili 1993: fig. 32.2), Bichvinta and Sukhumi (Lordkipanidze 1962: 244-245, fig. 12), and on the north shore of the Black Sea (Chersonesus, Phanagoria, Cepi, Tyritake, Tanais, Cytaea, etc.).¹¹ The type is thought to come from Pergamum, and to have begun at the end of the 3rd or early 4th century AD. The majority of known examples are dated to the 4th century, although production seems to have continued into the 5th century.

The next most prominent category of grave goods is glassware. Three perfume bottles and three glasses were found; not only have similar wares been discovered in the Mediterranean, in Cyprus, Gaul, and the northern Black Sea area (Olbia, Chersonesus, Panticapaeum, etc.) but they have parallels in well-dated complexes,¹² and are thus of considerable importance for the dating of the Roman period burials.

Various types of beads were found in all burials. An earlier type of dark glass bead set with yellow and blue decoration continued in use. Other types included large, corrugated beads, plain emerald-coloured beads, and yellowish-white beads.

Coins were found in two burials, but one was so badly preserved it was unidentifiable. The other was a didrachm of Marcus Aurelius of AD 161-166.¹³ The coin, however, has little direct bearing on the date of the burials, since the red-gloss plate in Burial 5 is considerably later than the 2nd century AD. Early coins in later burials find parallels at Tsebelda (Voronov and Yushin 1979/1: 198) and Petra-Tsikhisdziri (Inaishvili 1993: 90).

Iron weapons and tools form a separate group in the burial complexes of the 4th cent. A.D. Iron spears were found in three burials. A similar spearhead was found in Burial 1 at Tsikhisdziri (Inaishvili 1993: 83, pl. 32.6), and several occurred in the male burials at Tsebelda, dated by the excavators to the 3rd-4th centuries AD (Trapsh 1971: 27, 54, 96-97, 150, pls 15.15, 26.7, 8; Gunba 1978, 80-81, pl. 5.5). Where there were spearheads, there were iron axes. One iron axe was found earlier as a casual find, but such axes also come from the burial complexes at Tsikhisdziri (Inaishvili 1993: 83-84, pl.

10 For possible evidence of early Christianity elsewhere on the Black Sea coast, see Zubar 1982.

11 Belyaev 1962: 32 fig. 1.4; Arsenyeva 1981, 45, fig. 1.5, with references.

12 Kozub 1986: 60 figs. 1, 3.2; Zubar 1982: 85, fig. 51.1-5; Kunina and Sorokina 1972: 166 figs. 10.18, 28, 31; Sorokina 1962: 226ff.

13 Obv. ΑΥΤΟΚΡ ΑΝΤΩΝΕΙΝΟC CEB Rev. ΥΓΑΤΟCΓ Mt Argaeus surmounted by Helios, globe in r., sceptre in l. Cf. Metcalf 1996: 130.

32.7), at Ureki (Khoshtaria 1955: 63), and (in large numbers) in the Tsebelda necropolis (Trapsh 1971: 84, 148, pl. 5.2). Iron knives were also used as grave goods, and again parallels exist (with minor variations) at Tsikhisdziri (Inaishvili 1993: 84) and Tsebelda (Trapsh 1971: 161-162, pl. 3,2, 5,3, 12,112, etc). In life, all these iron objects needed to be kept sharp, hence the presence of flint whetstones. Once again, these can be paralleled at nearby Tsikhisdziri.¹⁴

Such are the contents of the graves discovered in the 4th century AD necropolis at Pichvnari. This remarkable discovery clearly requires further research, and it is hoped to make further investigations in future seasons. (In fact, the relevant trench was extended a few metres to the south in 1999, and three more Roman graves were found). These new finds throw light on the period of Georgian history when the Kingdom of Lazica emerged in the eastern Black Sea area, a kingdom whose territory of reached at least as far as the mouth of the Chorokhi river. They were a people who, according to Agathias were "a powerful and valiant tribe, dominating over other powerful tribes; they took pride in the ancient name of Colchians and were arrogant beyond measure – perhaps not without some ground" (Agathias 3.5.1).

Such are the principal results of the first campaign of the Georgian-British joint archaeological expedition at Pichvnari. Remains of a rich and diverse material culture have been brought to light that will facilitate further study of a number of urgent problems of the history and culture of the eastern Black Sea region.

ABBREVIATIONS

DHA: *Dialogues d'Histoire Ancienne*

KSIA: *Kratkiye Soobslicheniya Instituta Arkheologii, Moskva*

MIA: *Materialyi Issledovaniya po Arkheologii SSSR*

NE: *Numismatica i Epigrafica*

SA: *Sovietskaya Arkheologiya*

SAI: *Arheologia SSSR. Svod arheologicheskikh istochnikov*

SDSDz: *Samkhret-Dasavlet Shavizgvispiretis Dzeglebi (Batumi)*

Trudy GE: *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha*

VDI: *Vestnik Drevnii Istorii*

¹⁴ Inaishvili 1993: 81; and note the two small flint tools found in a 2nd century AD burial at Tyritake: Gaidukevich 1959, 221 fig. 93.12.

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