

2ND INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM OF GEORGIAN CULTURE



The International Symposium of Georgian Culture

The Caucasus: Georgia on the Crossroads

CULTURAL EXCHANGES ACROSS
THE EUROPE AND BEYOND

Proceedings

November 2-9, 2009
Florence, Italy



2ND INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM OF GEORGIAN CULTURE

NOVEMBER 2-9, 2009, FLORENCE, ITALY

*The Caucasus: Georgia on the Crossroads.
Cultural exchanges across the Europe and Beyond*

PROCEEDINGS

TBILISI 2011

PUBLISHED BY

Georgian Arts and Culture Center through
International Initiative for Georgian Cultural Studies

7, Niko-Nikoladze str.,

Tbilisi, 0108, Georgia

E-mail: info@symposiumgeorgia.org; gacc@gaccgeorgia.org

www.gaccgeorgia.org; www.symposiumgeorgia.org

With financial support of:

National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia

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PHOTOGRAPHY ON THE COVER:

Gergeti Sameba Church, Archil Kikodze

Samtavisi Church Façade Detail, Molly Topuridze

ISBN 978-9941-0-3311-7

ISSN 1987-829X

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UDC (793.7)(479.22)+008.1(479.22:100)

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The Proceedings of the 2nd international Symposium of Georgian Culture “The Caucasus - Georgia on the Crossroads” are dedicated with great respect to the memory of Professor Nino Kaukhchishvili, noted Georgian scholar.



I am very thankful to all organizers of this informational conference, which I consider the continuation of the conferences we organized in 1974 for the first time. Later there were further conferences every three years one in Georgia and one in Italy: in Bari, Lecce, in Pavia and in Northern Italy – there was also a photo exhibition of Georgian architecture which we presented in different Italian towns with a roundtable talk on Georgian History, Art and Literature. I do hope that this is the beginning of revive of Georgian culture in Italy and other European countries.

*With thousand thanks,
Gratitude*

Nino Kaukhchishvili
Florence , November 7, 2009

ნინო კაუხჩიშვილი

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The Symposium was organized by Georgian Arts and Culture Center (GACC) through International Initiative for Georgian Cultural Studies in cooperation with Fondazione Romualdo Del Bianco (Florence) under the patronage of Tbilisi City Hall and Florence City Hall.

Co-organizers: *George Chubinashvili National Research Center for Georgian Art History and heritage Preservation; Ilia Chavchavadze State University, Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University; Tbilisi State Academy of Arts.*

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Made possible by:

Administration of the President of Georgia

Tbilisi City Hall

National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia

Open Society Georgia Foundation / Open Society Institute Budapest

Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation

European Cultural Foundation / STEP Beyond Mobility Fund

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CULTURAL RELATIONS IN CENTRAL TRANSCAUCASIA

Cultural Relations in Central Transcaucasia

The Grakliani Hill settlement and necropolis are located in Central Transcaucasia, in Georgia (pl. 1), in the territory of Igoeti village, on a hill that rises between two small rivers and the Lekhura and the Tortla. In 2008 road works began and the excavations that took place on the southern slope resulted in interesting discoveries. The lower level of the hill is located at 680 meters above sea level; though the unexcavated upper terraces and hill surface – rather open ground – are at the 720- to 723-meter level (pl.I). This article is a preliminary report on the archaeological excavations.

The excavations of the settlement on the hill's eastern slope and the necropolis on the southwestern part of the hill suggest that the site had been occupied between the Chalcolithic Age and the Late Hellenistic Period.

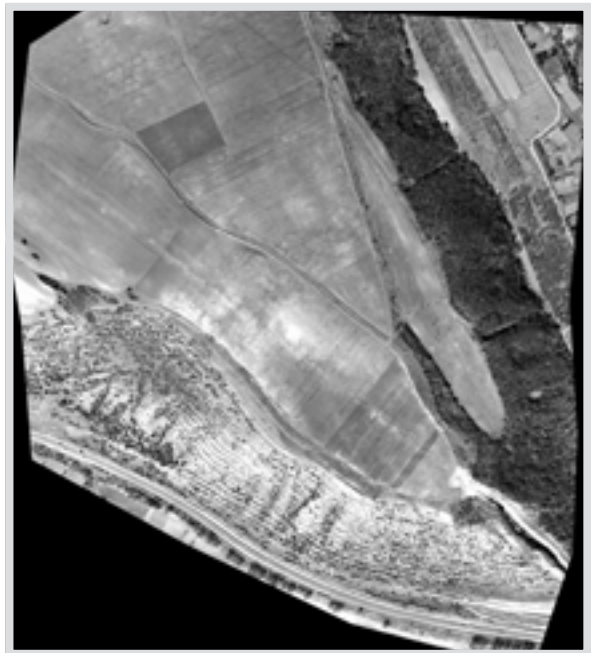
Analyses of imported (or imitated import) artifacts, and the directions of cultural and commercial relations.

Mesopotamia

The Mesopotamian seals discovered at the Grakliani Hill site are unique for this region. In a pot, used in a sacrifice in the monumental sanctuary(pl.II), a cylinder seal was found: 5.2 cm in height; lower diameter 2.8.cm, and upper surface diameter 1.6 cm. The seal's iconography is identical to that of cylinder seals from the first stage of glyptic art – the so-called Uruk and Jemdet-Nasr stage, developed during the transition from the 4th to the 3rd millennium B.C. in Mesopotamia, from where it spread throughout Asia. Mesopotamian seals of this period have been discovered in Southern Mesopotamia, the Dyala region of Syria, and in different regions of Persia and Anatolia. It should be noted that Uruk stamp seals usually were discovered during excavations on the territory of temples.

Stamp seals (pl.III) are thought to have been used as sacrifices to the temple, as items of worship rather

than as stamp seals. The iconography of the Grakliani Hill stamp seal corresponds totally with ornamented samples of the first stage of glyptic art (3000-2800 B.C). The stamp seal's shape (cylinder, with conic sign – slightly narrowing upwards) and the material (fired clay) presuppose an earlier date (possibly Middle Uruk period). The fourth group of Mesopotamian seals includes stamp seals with ornaments. Icons on the seal discovered on Grakliani Hill are close to the "chevron" group. Images on the Grakliani Hill limestone cone-shaped seal represent mythological motifs of ancient Mesopotamia. They depict the "House of God" – the Temple – which, according to



Grakliani Hill: aerial photo

Mesopotamian mythology, was irradiated, and its icons depicted rays. The temple representation on the Grakliani Hill seal contains two items, presumably fish, or two vases of different sizes related to ancient gods of water. Similarly, they could be images of a bird or other living being, which were prevalent motifs on conical or cylinder seals.

The Grakliani Hill conical seal is a typical example of a prehistoric Mesopotamian conical seal of the 4th millennium B.C. This identification is supported by the form, material and images on the seal. It is noteworthy that a large number of seals with different decorations dated to Late Bronze–Early Iron Age have been discovered on the territory of the settlement.

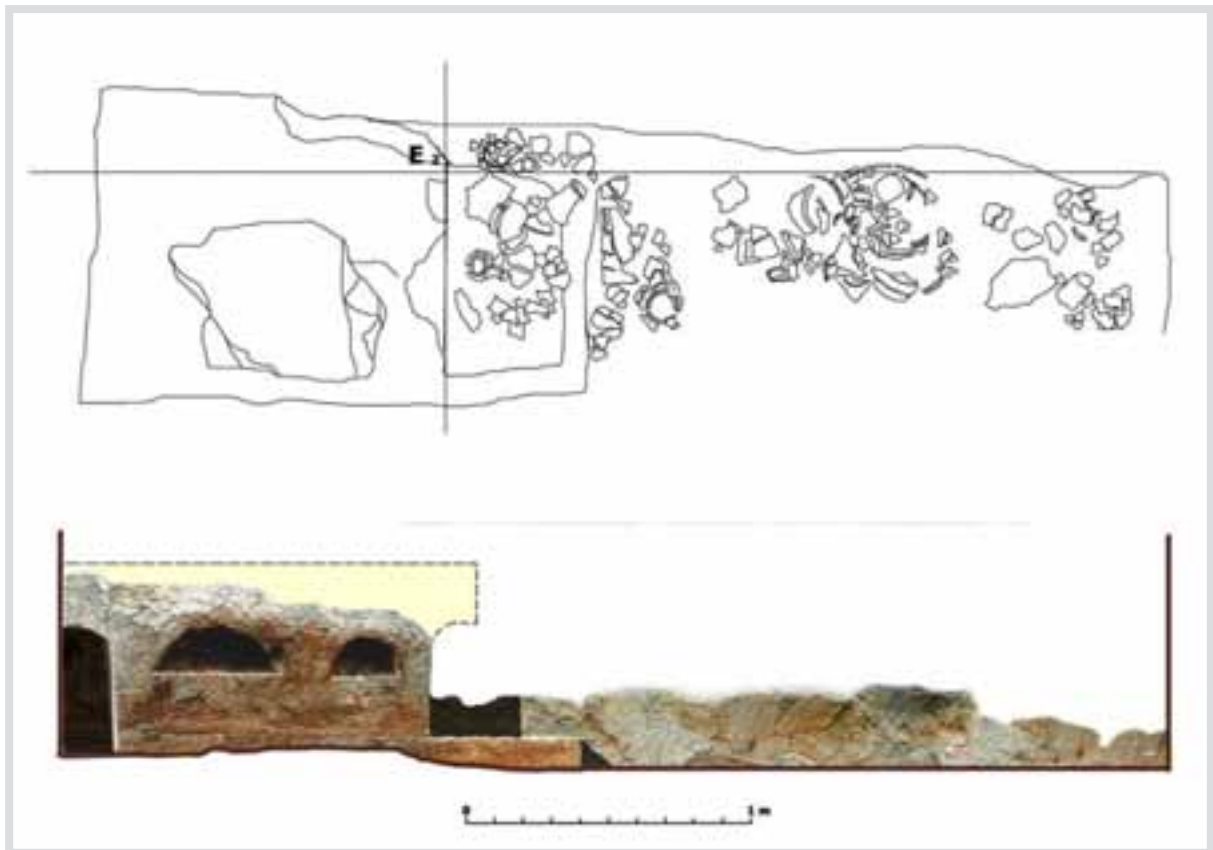
The Colchian Area

(a) Chronologically, the next stage of relations between Central Transcaucasus and adjacent areas was the 8th to 7th centuries B.C. A terracotta figurine of a horse's head has clear parallels in Western Georgia. Colchian collective graves contain large numbers of deceased; in fact the recently excavated grave near Tsaishi village contained 1000 individuals. In one such grave a bronze statuette of a mounted woman was found. Such representations are common in the Colchian and Aegean worlds, but in Colchis were always accompanied by bronze statues of different animals, mostly bulls, as well as a rather large number of gold items. A statue of a mounted woman, found on the island Samos, is considered to be a possible Colchian production. But in the East, beyond the borders of Colchis, in the Caucasian-Anatolian region, no statues of Colchian mounted women have been found; We might consider that the appearance of this figure on the island Samos is the result of some relation with Colchis – even though contact might have

taken place only once.

However, in the case of the Grakliani Hill seal, what should be explained is the thematic identity with the same kind of statues discovered in mainland Greece. But it is absolutely obvious that the figures of the mounted women were produced in different regional workshops. In this respect I have to mention the painted terracotta figurine of mounted woman in Heraklion Museum (1450-1100 BC; Hall X), which seems to be earliest among such type of representation. I think that the Grakliani Hill terracotta figurine of a mounted woman is the only such terracotta replica of a Colchian i mounted woman n Transcaucasia.

(b) More intensive relations of Central Transcaucasus with Colchis are obvious in the Classical and early Hellenistic periods. I will give only a few examples from the Grakliani Hill excavations, first of all, silver pendants. Such material is typical on Colchian grave goods of the 5th to the 3rd centuries B.C. As usual, in Colchis they are made of gold. Most typical among Colchian jewelry of 5th-4th cc BC are temple- pendants with rays.



Monumental Altar (1100 – 900 B).

Gold pendants of this type have been found only on the territory of Western Georgia, and they are always accompanied by very rich material such as Achaemenid-style cups or different types of temple pendants.

The richness of Colchian gold treasures has been clearly confirmed by the excavations at Vani. We can note the results of the excavation of grave No. 24, in which the principal deceased person was buried with 4 servants or slaves. The great diversity of gold items is clear evidence of the Colchis' richness in terms of gold, as has been described in Greek literary sources. In grave No. 24 there were gold tubular decorations, a head-dress ornament, a gold pin-brooch, gold appliqué, triangular and temple pendants, etc. Most items bore the typical granulation as a decorative finish.

The Achaemenid World

Achaemenid activity is clear in the establishment of important administrative centers, the remnants of which have been discovered in Gumbati, Qarajamirli, Sari-Tepe, Draskhanakerti, Arin-Berdi, and Ervandashat. There is an assumption that the builders of Gumbati and other Achaemenid palaces were supposedly invited to these places from Persia or Anatolia.

The exported items from Achaemenid Persia were rich, diverse and included jewelry. In the end of 5th c BC and 4th c BC Achaemenid type painted pottery was the primary category (pl. IV). At the same time Achaemenid glass kohl-tubes were rare in Transcaucasia. Most kohl-tube type of vessels (44 of 47) published by Dan Barag were found outside of archaeological context. The date of the Pichvnari kohl-tube (Barag's Group I) is the second quarter of the 5th century B.C. The same type of vessel from Vani was dated to the 5th century BC. According to Barag's classification, the Vani vessel dates to the 5th or early 4th century B.C. Other vessels found on the territory of Georgia (Enagheti, Takhtidziri) generally are dated to the 5th or early 4th century B.C. According to its similarities of shape the Grakliani Hill kohl-tube dates to the 5th or the very beginning of the 4th century B.C. Rod-formed glass vessels of this type are thought to be of Persian provenance on the ground of their geographical diffusion.

Rather strong Achaemenid influence was

observed near the Grakliani Hill site, on the Tsikhia-gora site, which is located on the small hill on the right bank of the River Mtkvari. Inside the fortification wall several structures were found, among them a temple built of stone and mud brick. There is a rather long building behind the main temple (length 18 m, width 4.5 m), on which the representation of bulls has been found. Of the other buildings on this site, a wine store with 48 pithoi and 30 hand-mills should be mentioned. Similar influence – on a rather small scale – is observed in East Colchis during this period. During the Vani excavations a monumental wall dating from the 4th to the 3rd century B.C. was found, and supports this presumption. It is to be supposed that



Mesopotamian Seals (4th mill. BC). Bronze finger ring (4th c BC). Iron knife (5th -4th cc BC).

in Vani architecture of the 4th and 3rd centuries B.C. still dominates Achaemenid cultural tradition. The synthesis of these two cultures is obvious in the 5th and 4th centuries B.C.

In respect to Achaemenid cultural influence, the fragment of a limestone frieze found at

Ancient History & Archaeology

Vani may be important. It preserves the image of charioteer and a part of chariot in relief. The wheel of the chariot has rim-studs similar to those found in the Achaemenid world; e.g., the chariot wheels with rim-studs incised on the seal rings of Darius. One of the chariots of the gold treasure (in the British Museum) has similar wheels, and in one of the Apadana reliefs, a chariot drawn by two ponies, has similar wheels. Thus, Vani architectural detail, presumably part of the frieze of a monumental structure, is evidence that in Vani Achaemenid influence survived until the beginning of Hellenistic period. This part of the frieze is a remarkable example of the synthesis of Greek and Achaemenid elements. Therefore, the frieze and the monumental wall indicate the existence of Achaemenid traditions in Vani during the 4th to the 3rd centuries B.C. Further excavations evidence this viewpoint: a double-protome capital was discovered on Vani's central terrace.

The graves of Grakliani Hill contain gold, silver and bronze discs with Achaemenid-style decoration, similar to the decoration of the bases of Achaemenid cups from the Akhlagori Hoard of the 4th century B.C. and from different areas of the Black Sea littoral and Western Anatolia.

Greco/Phrygian Imports.

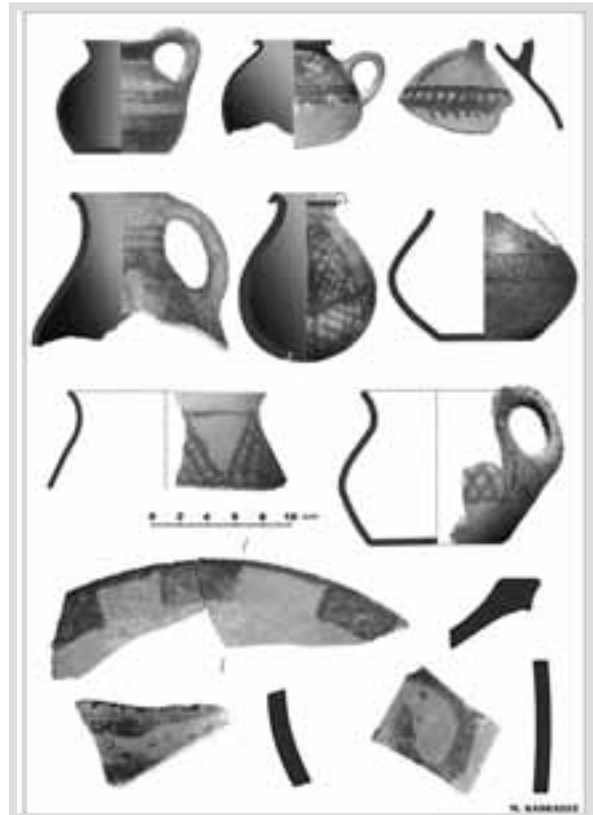
The fourth direction of trade/cultural connections from Grakliani Hill was to the southwest –to Anatolia. Early connections with this region have been confirmed by different archaeological finds, including bronze fibulae and statue dating to the 8th to 7th centuries B.C. A grave excavated on Grakliani Hill yielded a finger ring with a representation of Pan(pl.III).

Egyptian item.

An Egyptian scarab found in Grakliani grave No. 217 appears to be reasonably explicable: it seems that in the 5th - 4th cc BC scarabs were used as one type of bead – in all cases scarabs were found with beads, near the breast or on the hand.

Phoenician items.

Eye-beads, probably imported from the Phoenician area after the 4th century B.C., seem to have been one of the most popular type of beads, appearing throughout Georgian territory as a result of Greek commercial operations



“Achaemenid” and “Samado” type pottery(4th -3rd cc BC)