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## Urban Development in Central Transcaucasia in Anatolian Context: New Data

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### Abstract

The settlement and necropolis of Grakliani Hill are located in Central Transcaucasia, Georgia. Excavations of the settlement on the eastern slope and the necropolis on the south-western part of the hill demonstrated that the site had been occupied between the Chalcolithic and the Late Hellenistic periods. The most interesting remains of buildings belong to 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC. Several sanctuaries of this period were excavated. A monumental altar was discovered in the eastern part of the settlement. The altar was located in the north-western corner of a building. On its eastern side there was an ash pit with a platform along the northern wall. The platform was used for placing offerings, including a South Mesopotamian seal. An architectural complex of the following period (450-350 B.C) was discovered in the western part of the lower terrace. It consisted of three main rooms and three store-rooms. Burials of various periods were discovered in the western part of the hill's southern slope. The earliest one is a pit-burial dating to the Early Bronze Age, the latest one belongs to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. After analyses of the finds several directions of cultural and commercial links were identified: Colchis, Persia, Phoenicia, Mesopotamia, Egypt, Asia Minor.

### Key words

Georgia, settlement, necropolis, altars, podium, Mesopotamia, Achaemenid import.

The settlement and necropolis of Grakliani Hill are located in Central Transcaucasia, Georgia, within the territory of Samtavisi-Igoeti village, on a hill, which overlooks two small rivers – the Lekhura and Tortla (Fig. 1). The lower part of the hill lies 680 m above sea level, while the upper unexcavated terraces and the surface of the hill – rather open areas – are situated somewhat higher, at about 720-723 m. In 2008 due to the extension of roadworks rescue excavations were carried out on the southern slope, resulting in interesting discoveries. This excavation produced new results concerning the process of urban development, which are important not only for this region, but also for the

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Fig. 1. Grakliani Hill. Areal photo.

Southern Caucasus as a whole and for the reconstruction of its relations with Anatolia and Iran.

### Settlement

Excavations of the settlement on the eastern slope and the necropolis on the south-western part of the hill demonstrated that the site had been occupied between the Chalcolithic and the Late Hellenistic periods.

The *Chalcolithic period* (7<sup>th</sup> millennium BC) is represented only by a stone hand axe, flint spearheads, sickle parts, bone awls and several fragments of grey-fabric pottery typical for this period.

The next period is the *Late Bronze and beginning of the Early Iron Age*. This period dating from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> centuries BC is much better represented in both the settlement and the necropolis. Several sanctuaries of this period were excavated. Firstly a monumental altar was discovered in the eastern part of the settlement. Only the northern section of the building has survived (Fig. 2, 1). Traces of wooden beams arranged against each other horizontally have survived. The walls had been plastered with thick clay. Similarly, the floor had a trampled clay layer. Work of this kind was not observed in other instances. The altar was located in the north-western corner of the building. The same location appears to be standard for bread ovens in houses – for purposes of comparison we can cite excavations on Tbilisi's Treli hill,<sup>1</sup> and in Narekvavi.<sup>2</sup> On its eastern side there was an ash pit with a platform along the northern wall. The platform was used for placing offerings, including vessels of light fabric (which is unusual for Eastern Georgia) of different sizes; among them there was a brown-fabric vessel with a single handle, which is typical for Central Transcaucasian graves dated to the 11<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.<sup>3</sup> One of these vessels for offerings contained a Mesopotamian cylinder seal.

Another unique altar was excavated in the same eastern sector of the settlement site: there was a fired clay circle with a border 9,7 cm in height, and with a diameter of 36 cm, with a double protome of a ram on the western side. The figure is supported on three protruding 'horns'. Altars with three 'horns' have also been found at other sites,<sup>4</sup> but none of them has been seen to have a double protome in the shape of a ram. This altar had been arranged in the western corner of a small temple. The temple itself faces east, as does the altar. Vessels for offerings had been laid out in front of the altar. As far as the depictions of the double ram protome dating back to the 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC are concerned, opinions vary as regards their origin. This figure found in Grakliani probably dates from the 13<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.

The material from the *Iron Age* (8<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC) is very rich. The burials of this period are located in the western part of the settlement. Despite the fact that only a small area was excavated, several houses were discovered. House No. 3 was discovered in the extreme western part of the settlement. It is partly sunk (to a depth of 1 m) into the earth, as it is built

<sup>1</sup> Abramishvili 1978, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Nikolaishvili & Gavasheli 2007, 6-28.

<sup>3</sup> Pitskhelauri 1973, 65-68.

<sup>4</sup> Nikolaishvili & Gavasheli 2007, 6-28.

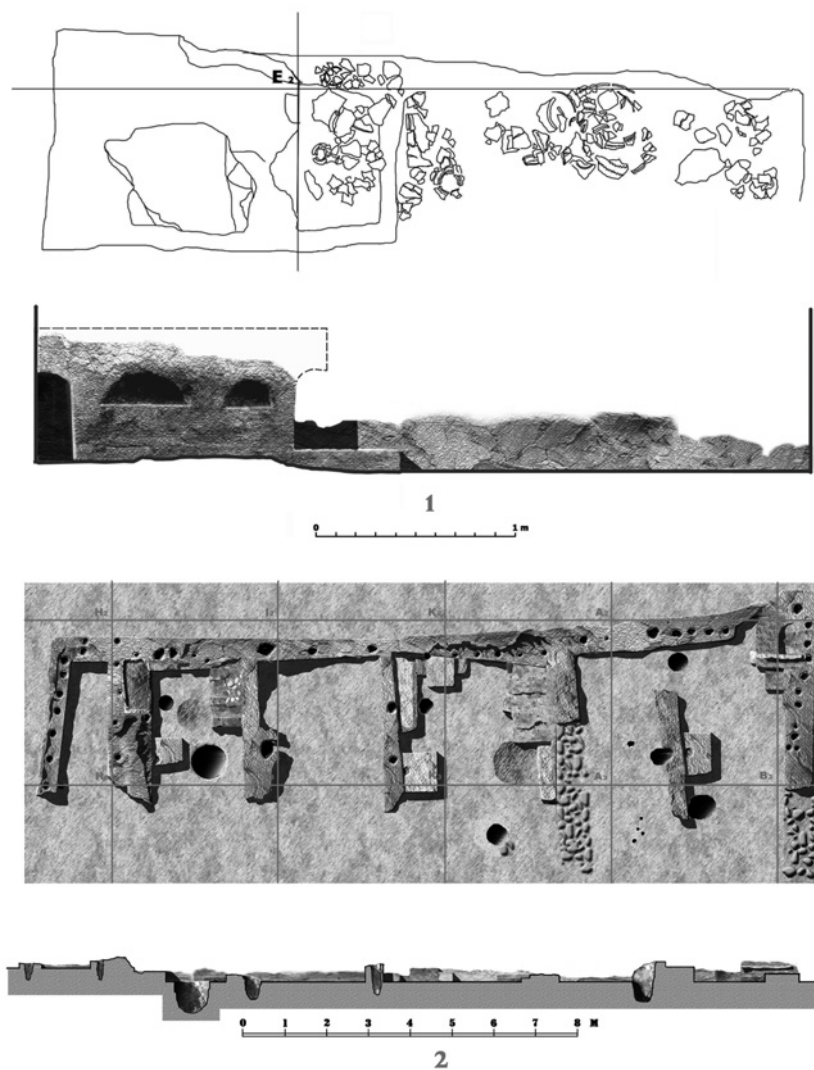


Fig. 2. 1. Monumental altar; 2. "Western Temple". Plan and section.

on the slope – the houses were arranged so as to take account of the topography of the hill of that time; its northern wall is up against the slope. The house faces south. The house plan is typical for that period: quadrangular, with a bread oven in the north-west corner, two ash pits – the larger one in the south and the smaller one in the east, a platform-shelf in the east, *i.e.* across the northern wall, contained intact clay vessels (a small tray upside-down and a bi-conical single-handled beaker).

An architectural complex of the following period (450-350 BC) was discovered in the western part of the lower terrace. It consisted of three main rooms and three store-rooms (Fig. 2, 2). Post-holes surrounding the whole complex have survived. These rooms shared a common roof and constitute a group of elements involving complex planning and various functions. The buildings open southwards, which indicates a correct appreciation of environmental conditions and air humidity. It is a unique example of the planning and construction of religious buildings in the ancient architecture of Central Transcaucasia. The plans, types and interior space of the individual rooms of the complex were designed in detail. The interior plan includes: 1. Podium; 2. Quadrangular table coated with clay and attached or installed close to the podium (table for offerings); 3. Ritual hearth – a circular pit dug in the floor. A round flat stone had been placed at the bottom of the pit; 4. Bread oven of a size appropriate in relation to the dimensions of the building as a whole.

There now follows a description of one of the rooms, No. 3, as an example. Its dimensions are 4.70 x 2.30 m. Like the first two rooms it has a podium up against the western wall, which measures 100 x 70 x 30 cm. The podium has a space for offerings on it to accommodate vessels in the west central part (diameter 25 cm) ending with a stone 'pillow'. A table with borders, presumably one for offerings, has survived in the northern part of the podium – an altar. About 25 cm away from it, up against the northern wall of the store room, a ritual hearth was discovered with a stone "pillow" at the bottom. Its diameter measured 30 cm and depth 25 cm. An oven discovered at the north-eastern wall of the room is better preserved in comparison with the other ovens at the site. On the basis of this site it can be concluded that all three buildings should contain one type of oven with three sections (for fire, for ash and the oven itself). Unlike ovens at other sites, these ovens are equipped with a mechanism for temperature regulation – mud slabs for covering over the fire and baking sections. In the centre of the room there are vessels, which broke when a roof collapsed and which had contained cereals. This set of buildings constitutes a very special site in Transcaucasia. As mentioned above, at the left side of the entrance in the western wall there was a clay-coated podium with a small circular pit in the middle. It had a precisely chosen location and a flat

stone had been placed at the bottom. This preparation may imply complex construction, but Section II also contained a small jug with the same diameter installed in a pit; this clearly indicates the cultic nature of the podium. It is noticeable that these types of podia functioned in a similar way in the Ubaid-period temples of Eridu (Southern Mesopotamia); they too are attached to a wall and constitute an integral detail of the interior.<sup>5</sup> Although these parallels are, of course, from different periods and geographical locations, they nevertheless provide an explanation for the function of the podia.

### Necropolis

*Early Bronze Age (end of the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC).* Burials of various periods were discovered in the western part of the hill's southern slope. The earliest one is a pit-burial dating to the Early Bronze Age. This burial contained the remains of two individuals with a northerly orientation and with long-necked grey-fabric vessels near their heads. No other items were recorded.

*Burials of the 13<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.* A burial (No. 6-08) was excavated on the lower terrace of the necropolis. It was a pit-burial oval in plan and with an EW orientation. Two males aged 65-69 and 55-59 were interred in it with their heads side by side, with flexed limbs, on the right side. The grave goods included: three items found behind the heads of the deceased – a bronze spear-head, a bronze pin, and the bronze handle of a bimetallic dagger (11<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries BC). A small pot had been placed near the neck of the deceased on the right and a large tray under his back: a two-handled pot tapering towards its base had been let into the earth under the feet of the deceased and east of the tray. In Section III, a grave with a dagger dating from the 13<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries BC was discovered (Fig. 3).

*Burials of the 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC* Pit-burial No. 9 was found in a gravel layer, 3 m above Burial No. 6: an infant had been interred in it as well as an adult. The burial only contained pottery – 11 vessels (pots, a salt-cellar) dating from the 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.

*Burials dating from 450 – 370 BC.* One of the most interesting burials of this period is No. 217 (Fig. 4, 1) in the western part of the necropolis. The pit of this quadrangular burial had been dug in sandy soil. The burial was surrounded with a brown line of stains. It took up the whole floor space during the excavation. The deceased had been buried in a wooden (or leather) coffin. The deceased woman, 25-30 years of age, had been laid out in a sharply flexed

<sup>5</sup> Francfort & Davies 1971, 76.

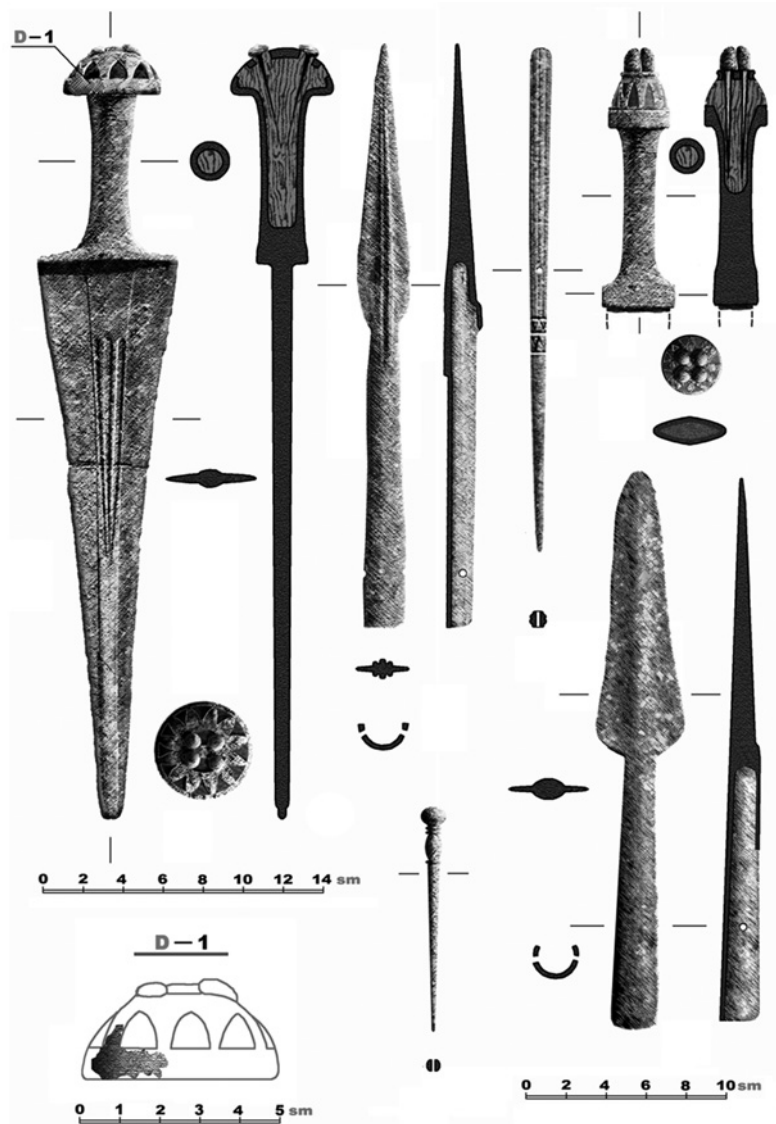


Fig. 3. Material from Bronze Age graves (13<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries BC).

position, on her left side and with her head pointing west. The fingers of both hands had been placed in front of the face, the legs bent up in a foetal position. The skull was seriously damaged but the skeleton bones were well preserved. In the western part of the burial, behind the skull, 5 pottery vessels were found.<sup>6</sup> Next to the vessels, there was a funeral feast (remains of a cow). A massive silver bracelet (Fig. 4, 6) with a wide band, with a stylized depiction of snakes was discovered on the bones of both wrists. A bronze disc with decoration (Fig. 4, 3) on one part of it was found in the area of the neck near the lower jaw. It had two details of fastenings at its lower end. Sixty-nine golden beads were found around the disc. Iron bracelets had been placed on the lower bone of the arms. Forty-seven paste beads were discovered in the chest area (Fig. 4, 4). A kohl-tube (Fig. 4, 2), filled with three painted quadrangular plates was found at the side of the head. Among the other items, we should mention two silver rings on the phalanges of the left hand, two bronze rings in the chest area, a broken bronze pin, a roe deer's horn in the south-western part of the burial, two bronze earrings (under the skull, close to the temporal bone), a scarab (Fig. 4, 5), used as part of a bracelet (in the area of the right hand), eighteen beads, including nine eye beads, three pieces of cornelian, one black, remains of iron items under the disc and a piece of a bronze object.

### **Imported objects and their imitations: directions of cultural and commercial links**

The earliest such objects, which are unique for this region, are Mesopotamian seals (Fig. 5). A cylinder seal was found in the pot, which was used as a sacrifice in the sanctuary, mentioned above. The cylinder seal is 5.2 cm in height, its diameter at the bottom is 2.8 cm and 1.6 cm on its upper surface. Its iconography is identical to that of cylinder seals from the first stage of glyptic art – the so-called Uruk and Jemdet-Nasr stage – which developed at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC in Mesopotamia, after which cylinder seals spread throughout Asia. Mesopotamian seals of this period were discovered in Southern Mesopotamia and the Diyala region of Syria, various parts of Iran and Anatolia. It should be mentioned that Uruk stamp seals were generally discovered during excavations within the territory

<sup>6</sup> 1. A red-clay tripod basin, forming a slightly elongated circle; 2. A black-grey jug, with a narrow neck and broken mouth had been placed south of the basin; 3. A jug, with brown fabric visible in the fracture and a broken handle had been placed next to the first jug; 4. A grey-clay jug stained black in places with a broken handle had been placed in the south-western corner; 5. A Colchian tubular pitcher of grey-brown fabric, below the tripod basin.



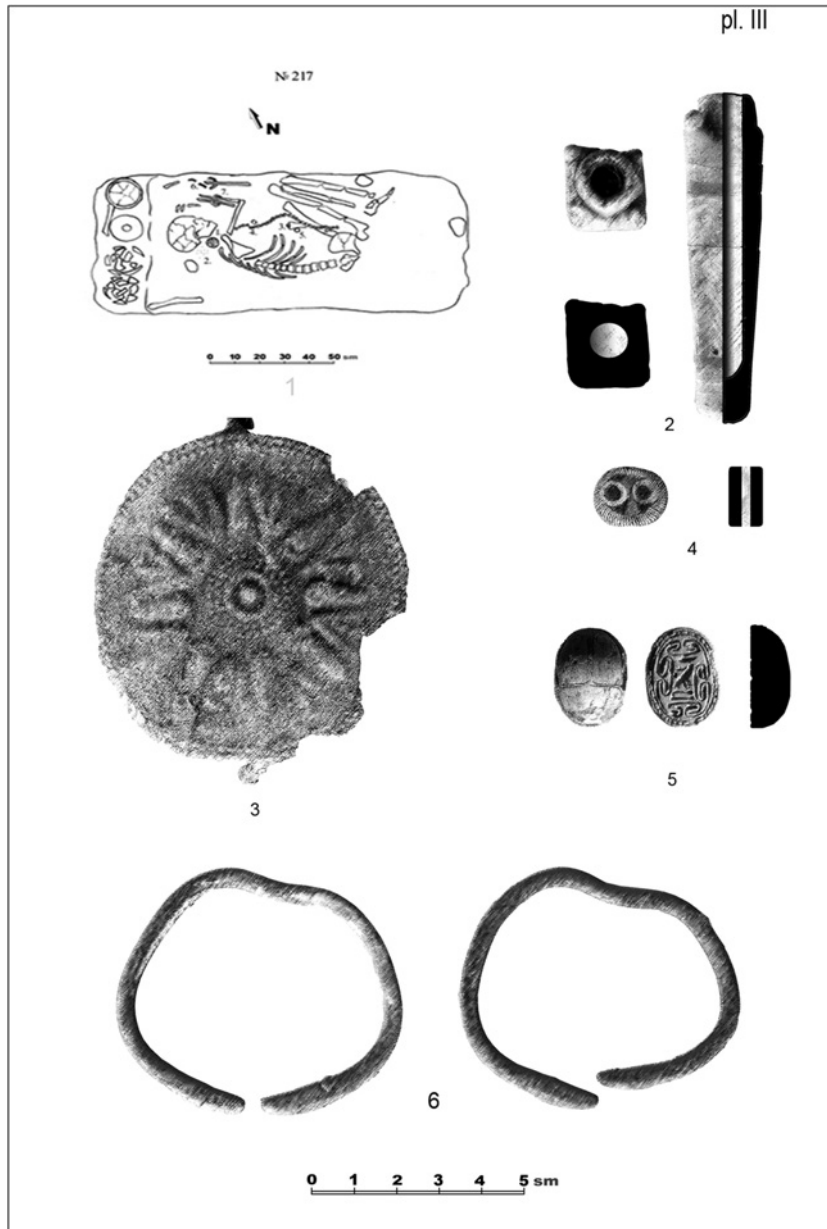


Fig. 4. Grave No. 217. 1. Plan; 2. Glass vessel (kohl-tube); 3. Disc with decoration; 4. Paste bead; 5. Scarab; 6. Silver bracelets.



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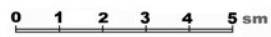


Fig. 5. Mesopotamian seals.

of temples.<sup>7</sup> Supposedly the stamp seal was sacrificed to the temple and used rather as an object of worship than as a stamp seal. The iconography of the seal corresponds precisely to specimens from the first stage of Glyptic art (3000-2800 BC). The stamp seal shape (cylindrical, tapering slightly towards the top) and the material (terracotta) would suggest an earlier date (possibly the Middle Uruk period). The fourth group of Mesopotamian seals includes stamp seals with decoration. Images on the seal discovered on Grakliani Hill are similar to those of the “Chevron” group.<sup>8</sup> Images on another, limestone cone-shaped seal, found in the central part of the settlement on Grakliani Hill reproduce mythological motifs of Ancient Mesopotamia. A “House of God” or temple is depicted<sup>9</sup> which, according to Mesopotamian mythology, was radiant and its icons depicted rays. The temple contains two objects, presumably fishes or two vases of different sizes relating to ancient gods of water. It could also be an image of a bird or other living creature that was a prevalent motif on both the cone-shaped and the cylinder seals of Mesopotamia. The Grakliani conical seal is a typical example of pre-historic Mesopotamian conical seals dating from the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC. It is noteworthy that large numbers of seals with various types of decoration dating from the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age have been discovered in the territory of the settlement in the same levels as this very early seal.

The next stage of relations with the outside world is that of the 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. A terracotta figurine of a horse’s head (Fig. 6, 1) has clear and close parallels in Colchis (Western Georgia). Bronze figurines of horsewomen are often found in Colchian multiple burials containing large numbers of deceased (in a grave near the village of Tsaishi 1.000 individuals were identified).<sup>10</sup> Such depictions, which are common in Colchis and the Aegean World, were in Colchis always accompanied by bronze figurines of animals in Colchis, mostly bulls, as well as quite numerous gold items. A figure of a horsewoman, found on the island of Samos, is considered possibly to have been of Colchian production.<sup>11</sup> Yet in the Caucasus-Anatolia region, beyond the borders of Colchis, figurines of this type are almost unknown: this means that we could regard the appearance of this figurine on Samos as the result of contacts with Colchis (though such contact might have taken place only once). What should be explained, however, is that similar figurines discovered in continental Greece depict identical subjects. In any case, it is absolutely

<sup>7</sup> Samsonia 2008, 30-46.

<sup>8</sup> Collon 1987, 13-220; Samsonia 2008, 37.

<sup>9</sup> Amiet 1980, 386-390.

<sup>10</sup> Papuashvili 1998, 4-19.

<sup>11</sup> Lordkipanidze 2002, 188-193.

clear that the figures of horsewomen were produced in a variety of regional workshops. In this respect we should mention the painted terracotta figurine of a horsewoman in the Heraklion Museum (1450-1100 BC),<sup>12</sup> which appears to be the earliest depiction of this type. We would suggest that the Grakliani terracotta figurine of a horse is a terracotta depiction of a Colchian horsewoman. Other terracotta figurines are typical for this area (Fig. 6, 2-3).

More intensive contacts with Colchis can be observed in the Classical and Early Hellenistic periods. It is worth noting the silver pendants from the Grakliani excavations as an example of these contacts. Such objects are typical for the grave goods of the 5<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC in Colchis. In Colchis they are usually made of gold. The most typical items of Colchian jewellery are the radiate temple-rings. Golden pendants of this type were found only in the territory of Western Georgia and they are always accompanied with very rich material, such as Achaemenid-type cups or various types of temple pendants.<sup>13</sup> Attention has often been drawn to the abundance of gold in Colchis since the Vani excavations. Suffice it to mention the finds from the excavation of grave No. 24, where the principal deceased was buried with four servants or slaves: the grave-goods found in this burial included tubular gold jewellery, ornamental head-dress, a gold pin-brooch, gold appliqués, triangular and temple pendants *etc.* Most of them were decorated with granulation.<sup>14</sup> This great diversity of gold items is clear evidence of how rich in gold Colchis was, something that is mentioned in Greek written sources.

Some data testify to the interest of Achaemenid Persia in Transcaucasia. Herodotus (Hdt. 3. 94) mentions that the tribes of Transcaucasia formed one satrapy. Achaemenid activity is also clearly indicated by the establishment of important administrative centres, the remains of which have been discovered in Gumbati,<sup>15</sup> Qarajamirli,<sup>16</sup> Sari-Tepe, Draskhanakert, Arin-Berd and Ervandashat.<sup>17</sup> It is possible that the builders of Gumbati and other Achaemenid palaces were invited from Iran or Anatolia.<sup>18</sup> Exports from Achaemenid Iran are well represented in the Southern Caucasus: first of all by the painted pottery (Fig. 7, 1), but also by jewellery and other commodities.<sup>19</sup> Iranian glass

<sup>12</sup> This terracotta figurine is included in the display at the Heraklion Museum, Hall X.

<sup>13</sup> Lordkipanidze 1972, 7-41.

<sup>14</sup> Lordkipanidze 1972, 10-38.

<sup>15</sup> Knauss 2001, 125-143.

<sup>16</sup> Babaiev, Gagoshidze & Knauss 2007, 31-47.

<sup>17</sup> Ter-Martirossov 2001, 155-165; Kanetsyan 2001, 145-153.

<sup>18</sup> Knauss 2001, 125-143.

<sup>19</sup> Lordkipanidze 2001, 28-71.

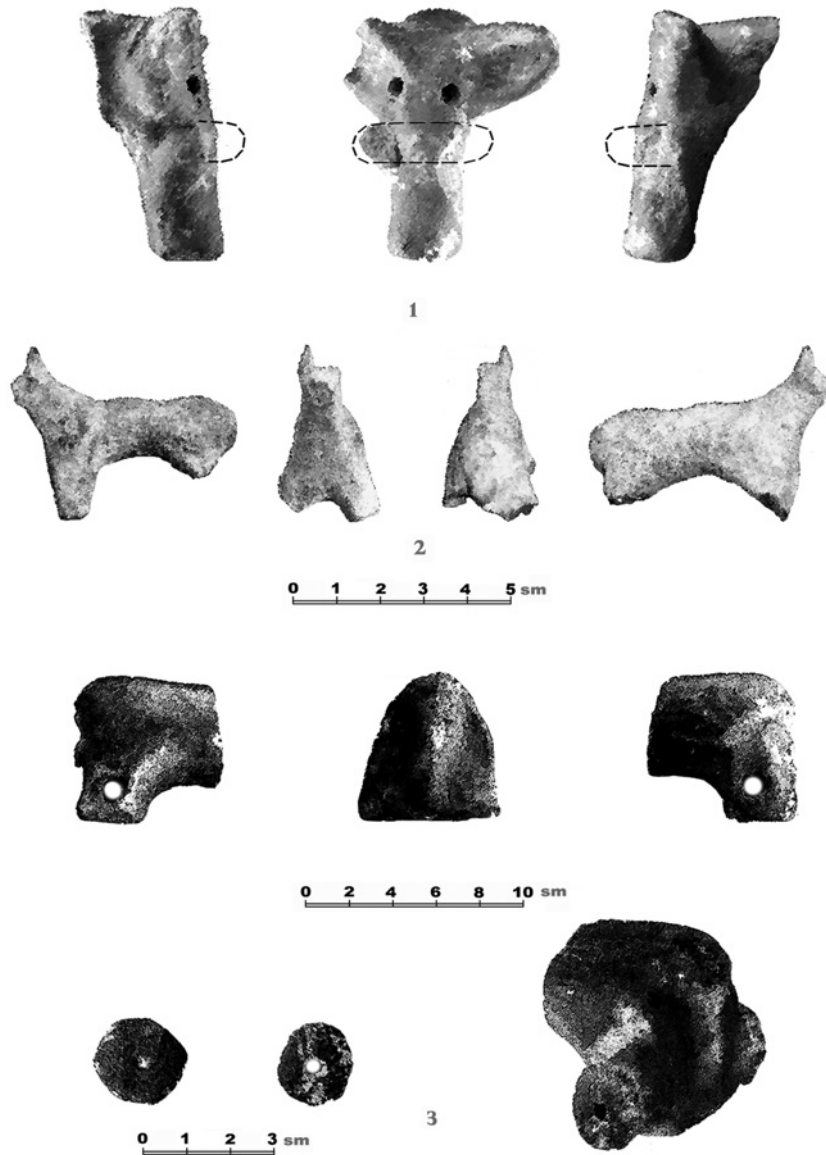


Fig. 6. Terracotta figurines.



kohl-tubes are rare in Transcaucasia. Most of the kohl-tube type vessels (44 of 7) published by Dan Barag, were found outside archaeological contexts.<sup>20</sup> The Pichvnari kohl-tube (Barag's Group I) dates from the second quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>21</sup> A vessel of the same type from Vani was also dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>22</sup> The Vani vessel dates back to the 5<sup>th</sup> or the early 4<sup>th</sup> century BC (according to the dates provided by M. Pirtskhalava).<sup>23</sup> Other vessels found in the territory of Georgia (Enagheti, Takhtidziri) were generally dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> or early 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.<sup>24</sup> On the basis of its similarity in shape, the Grakliani kohl-tube has been dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Rod-shaped glass vessels of this type are thought to be of Iranian provenance on the basis of their geographical distribution. Quite strong Achaemenid influence was to be observed near the Grakliani hill, at the Tsikhia-gora site, which is located on a small hill on the right bank of the Mtkvari-Cyros river.<sup>25</sup> Inside the fortified wall, several structures were found, among them a temple, built of stone and mud-brick and quite a long building behind the main temple (length 18, width 4.5 m), where a double-protome Achaemenid type of limestone capital with a depiction of bulls was found. A wine store with 48 pithoi and 30 quernstones was also excavated at this site. A similar influence, but of a smaller scale, is to be observed in East Colchis from this period. During excavations at Vani, a monumental wall dating from the 4<sup>th</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC was discovered, which may reflect these influences. It is assumed that local and Achaemenid cultural traditions still predominated in Vani architecture of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC. The synthesis of these two cultures is obvious in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. We can cite as an example the fragment of a limestone frieze found in Vani, on which the image of a charioteer and part of a chariot in relief have survived (Fig. 8).<sup>26</sup> The wheel of the chariot is with "bottoms", similar to the wheels of chariots in Achaemenid depictions, *e.g.* on the seal ring of Darius,<sup>27</sup> on the golden chariot held in the British Museum<sup>28</sup> or in the Apadana reliefs.<sup>29</sup> Thus, the architectural detail from Vani, which we can assume to have been part of a frieze for a monumental building (it was painted and traces of dye have survived), testifies to the fact that Achaemenid

<sup>20</sup> Barag 1975, 26-28.

<sup>21</sup> Kakhidze 2007, 109-117.

<sup>22</sup> Phuturidze, Khoshtaria & Chkonia 1972, 111-135.

<sup>23</sup> Pirtskhalava 1983, 79-86.

<sup>24</sup> Kakhidze 2007, 112-114.

<sup>25</sup> Tskitishvili 2002, 11-22.

<sup>26</sup> Lordkipanidze 2002, 232-233.

<sup>27</sup> Licheli 2001, 39.

<sup>28</sup> Boardman 2003, 191-238.

<sup>29</sup> Littauer & Crouwel 1979, 144-149.



Fig. 8. Limestone frieze from Vani.



influence was still to be felt in this city, which continued to function as the administrative and religious centre of Colchis over centuries, until the beginning of the Hellenistic period. This frieze fragment is a remarkable example of a synthesis of Greek and Achaemenid elements. Thus the frieze and monumental wall would indicate the existence of Achaemenid traditions in Vani in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC.

Graves on Grakliani Gora contain gold, silver and bronze discs bearing Achaemenid-type decoration, similar to decoration on the bases of Achaemenid cups from the 4<sup>th</sup>-century BC "Akhalgori Hoard"<sup>30</sup> and from various parts of the Black Sea littoral and Western Anatolia.<sup>31</sup>

Other links maintained by the population of Grakliani Gora are those to the south-west, *i.e.* Anatolia. Early connections with this region are indicated by various archaeological finds, including bronze fibulae and a figurine of the 8<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> century BC (see below). A later stage of these relations is probably indicated by a finger ring found in one of the graves on Grakliani Hill (as well as "Samadlo" type pottery, Fig. 7, 2). It bears what is possibly a depiction of Marsyas, which is similar to the representation of Marsyas on the coins of Phrygian Apamea, but also has very close parallels among depictions of "Pan musician" (Fig. 9).<sup>32</sup> Among other imported objects, we should mention an Egyptian scarab found in Burial No. 217 (Fig. 4, 5). Scarabs at this time appear to have been used as a kind of bead; in the Grakliani necropolis the scarab was found with beads, in the chest area and on the hands of the deceased. Eye beads, probably imported from the Phoenician region, appear to be one of the most popular types of beads after the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC; they were probably imported into Georgian territory via Greek mediation.

### **Anatolia and the Achaemenid world – links with Central Transcaucasia**

The question as to whether or not the Georgian tribes of Moskhians/Meskhians can be identified with the Biblical tribes of Meshech has often been discussed by scholars ever since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and until today.<sup>33</sup> According to Assyrian written sources, a powerful new kingdom appeared in Central Anatolia in the last quarter of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC, which was populated by Moskho-Meskhian-Musqians at its eastern edge. The Assyrians called them *Mushku*,

<sup>30</sup> Lordkipanidze 2001, 28-71.

<sup>31</sup> Treister 2007, 84-91.

<sup>32</sup> Irmscher 1985, 405.

<sup>33</sup> Khazaradze 2001, 321-348.

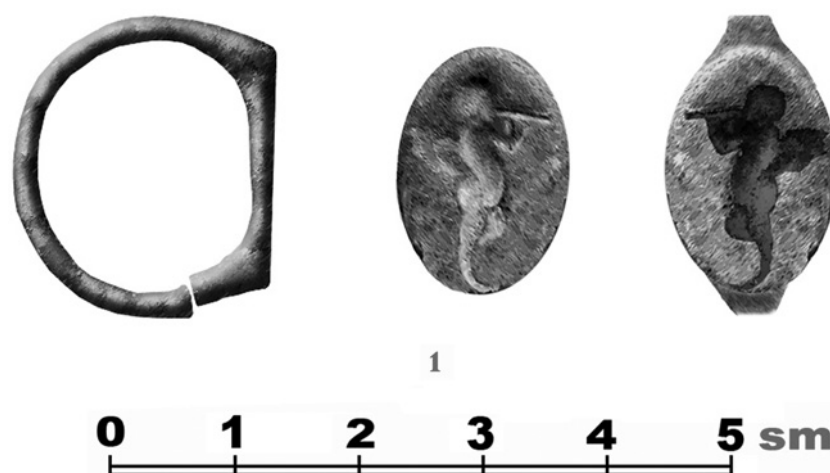


Fig. 9. Finger Ring with a depiction of Marsyas or “Pan musician”.

the Greeks referred to them as Phrygians.<sup>34</sup> The king of this country “Mita” (Assyrian version) or “Midas” (Greek version) seems to have been the organizer of an anti-Assyrian coalition. He was able to conclude alliances with Urartu and Tabal.<sup>35</sup> The invasion of the Cimmerians put an end to the might of Phrygia. Subsequently that movement of the Mushku-Meskhian tribes towards the north-east was noted. Data from Herodotus (Hdt. 1. 72; 3. 90) show that by this time the Moskhoi/Meskhians occupied territories to the east of the tribes located in the basin of the Halys river (mod. Kızılırmak), in the region of modern Tokat – Karahisar – Gümüşhane. It should be emphasized that these references do not allow us to assume that there was any strong political unity between the groups of Meskhians during this period. Hecataeus considers the Moskhoi as Colchian tribes (*FGrHist* 1 F 288), which indicates that in the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC the Moskhoi came under the kingdom of Colchis. During the reign of the Achaemenid kings Darius I and Xerxes, they were incorporated into the 19<sup>th</sup> Satrapy together with other Georgian tribes; the satrapy was obliged to pay tribute of 300 talents. In the last quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC the Meskhians created a strong and united political force within the territory of South-western Georgia bordering on Erzinjan in the south.<sup>36</sup> They are thought to have founded Mtskheta, the first capital of

<sup>34</sup> Khazaradze 2001, 321-348.

<sup>35</sup> Khazaradze 1988, 16-20.

<sup>36</sup> Khazaradze 2001, 173.

the East-Georgian state, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>37</sup> Analysis of later sources<sup>38</sup> reveals the decline of the political unity of the Meskhians.<sup>39</sup> The Meskhians would appear to have been residing in Transcaucasia for a long time by the end of the Hellenistic period and their territories were ruled over by Colchians, Armenians and Iberians (Strabo 11. 2. 17).

We should like to add some remarks about the possible route from Anatolia to the Caucasus: we believe that the appearance of bronze fibulae in the Caucasus would indicate the existence of a Transcaucasian route, though some scholars consider that the fibulae came to the Caucasus in the 9<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> century BC via the Black Sea.<sup>40</sup> Yet the fact is that regular navigation in the Black Sea started later than that and coincided with the early stage of Greek colonization. At any rate, it is recognized that the earliest Greek colonies in the Black Sea region did not appear before the mid-7<sup>th</sup> century BC<sup>41</sup> and, supposedly, from this period on we can assume there was more or less regular navigation in the Black Sea. Thus, one of the routes for the spreading of the bronze fibulae could be from Asia Minor through Phrygia to the Caucasus. This assumption is supported by two silver fibulae discovered in Gordion, which are similar to Colchian ones and also very similar to those discovered in the territory of Armenia – they could only have come to the Southern Caucasus through Phrygia and to Armenia by land.<sup>42</sup> Such types of fibulae are thought to be 'Urartian'. The fibulae discovered in Georgia fall into two categories: one with a carved part of round cross-section and the other with a flattish curve.<sup>43</sup> They were dated to the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. These fibulae, which partly imitate those of Phrygia, and partly Anatolian ones, are known as 'Urartian' only conditionally: native Urartian fibulae are of a different shape. They are more likely to be linked with Phrygia and appeared in Urartu from Phrygia in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC. A bronze figurine discovered in Meskheti, in Borjomi Gorge,<sup>44</sup> supports the hypothesis concerning this route. It is an ithyphallic figure of a man with a Phrygian hat or *pilos*. This discovery supports the view that the migration route of the Meskhians was in the direction of modern Meskheti (Southern Georgia). This migration was a rather long process, which possibly started at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC and continued until the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC.

<sup>37</sup> Melikishvili 1989, 245-260.

<sup>38</sup> Khazaradze 1988, 16-35.

<sup>39</sup> Khazaradze 1988a, 172-177.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. especially Sulava 2006 supporting this point of view.

<sup>41</sup> Cf., for example, Ivantchik 2007, 95-101.

<sup>42</sup> Licheli 1999, 33-41.

<sup>43</sup> Sulava 2001, 56-62.

<sup>44</sup> Gambaschidze *et al.* ii 2001, 364, pl. 301.

It seems that the period after the “Achaemenid Palace Time” (5<sup>th</sup>-early 4<sup>th</sup> century BC) and the “Achaemenid Cult Building Time” (end of the 4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> century BC) there was a period of decline in local culture. In this period, *i.e.* in the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, the character of the local culture changed as a result of Alexander the Great’s invasion to the east and the establishment of the Hellenistic states, although Alexander’s Macedonians did not campaign in the Southern Caucasus and Iberia (Kartli), which were never part of his empire. According to ~~Old~~-Georgian historical sources, Iberia (Eastern Georgia) was a vassal of ~~Achaemenid Iran~~ (*Assurastan* according to the Georgian historical tradition).<sup>45</sup> In the 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC, the building activities of the Iberian kings resulted in the development of Hellenistic architecture there, as in Colchis. Yet the existence of the 1<sup>st</sup>-century Dedoplis Mindori Temple<sup>46</sup> reflects a strong eastern influence.

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<sup>45</sup> Licheli 2001, 34.

<sup>46</sup> Gagoshidze 2001, 259-285.

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## Abbreviations

CAH *Cambridge Ancient History*.