



Pichvnari, Ajarian AR, Georgia 2000

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The third season of the joint British-Georgian Pichvnari Expedition, organised on the Georgian side from the Batumi Archaeological Museum and the Batumi Research Institute, and on the British from the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford took place in the month of July 2000. Reports on the two previous seasons' work appeared in *Anatolian Archaeology* 1998, 15 (and cf. the informal account in *The Ashmolean* 36 [1999] 3-5), and *Anatolian Archaeology* 1999, 15-16. Pichvnari lies a kilometre or so inland from the Black Sea at the junction of the Choloki and Ochkhauri rivers to the north of Kobuleti. Pichvnari was a major settlement from the late Bronze Age, but became more obviously wealthy during the period of Greek colonization, to which it was a late-comer, Phasis to the north, and Trapezous and Bathys Limen to the south having been founded a century or more earlier. An area between the Choloki and the sea was used for burials by the native Colchian population and immigrant Greeks; at first in separate cemeteries, but by the Hellenistic period together. In 2000, the cemeteries continued to be investigated, and soundings were made in the settlement near where some work had been done in 1964 (A. Kakhidze, *Vostochnoye Prichernomoriye v antichnuju epokhu* [*The Eastern Black Sea Coast in Antiquity*] [Batumi, 1981]). G.R. Tsetskhladze's *Pichvnari and its Environs* (Besançon, 1999) now provides a useful guide to work by other Georgian scholars.

The co-directors of the 2000 season were again Dr Amiran Kakhidze, Director of the Batumi Archaeological Museum, and Dr Michael Vickers, Reader in Archaeology in the University of Oxford, and Curator of Greek and Roman antiquities at the Ashmolean Museum; Dr Gia Tavamaishvili was Deputy Director, and other Georgian participants included Dr Irakli Iashvili; (numismatist), Dr Manana Odisheli, (archaeologist), Anzor Javelidze (architect and surveyor), and Zurab Varshanidze (draughtsman). The following students participated: Lasha Arslanishvili (Batumi University), Ana Reisinger (Somerville College, Oxford), Matthew Earwicker (St John's College, Oxford), Natalia Makharadze and Lika Sekhniashvili (Tbilisi University), Mattijs Wijker (University of Amsterdam), Sofie Debryune and Marie Anne Bru (University of Ghent). Guliko Tsiskaradze once again ensured that our table was full of good things, and Guram Svanidze, our driver and mechanic ensured that we were regularly supplied with food and wine. The 2000 season was supported financially by the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, the Oxford Craven Committee, a Jesus College Major Research Grant, and the Department of Antiquities at the Ashmolean, as well as a subvention from the Batumi Archaeological Museum. In 2000, three principal areas were investigated: earlier excavations in

the earlier classical Greek cemetery were extended to the west, part of the later classical Greek cemetery was examined, and the trench that had been opened up in the settlement in 1999, but which it had not been possible to continue due to adverse weather conditions, was deepened.

Forty burials were investigated in the earlier classical Greek cemetery. They lay a metre or so below the present ground level, and were dug into light sand, an environment which had contributed to the total disappearance of any organic remains. Perhaps the most interesting burial was No. 195, which, typically, was aligned with the head to the east, and contained a rich assemblage of grave goods. To the right of the head was an Attic red-figure owl-skyphos with a horizontal and a vertical handle. Near the right hand, a plain Attic lekythos, a silver bracelet and numerous turquoise and yellow glass beads which must once have been made up into a bangle. Near the left hand was another Attic lekythos, two silver bracelets, a terracotta statuette of Demeter seated (beneath which was a polychrome glass amphoriskos), and an Attic black-figure trefoil lipped oinochoe decorated with a scene of an oriental archer leading a horse. The assemblage may be dated to the middle of the 5th century BC. Finds elsewhere included several more Attic lekythoi, one of them in red-figure (a woman at an altar); a St Valentin Class kantharos, decorated with black, white and red lozenges, a black-figure alabastron, decorated with palmettes; a white glass alabastron with blue and yellow marvered horizontal stripes; two glass amphiriskoi with a more conventional colour scheme; and a variety of Colchian pottery (including jugs with spouted handles-most known 5th century specimens of which come from Pichvnari). There were several "votive platforms" made up of hard-packed, burnt earth where there had been ritual meals in antiquity, and where the participants had discarded broken pottery, mostly amphora fragments. The later classical Greek cemetery contained no surprises, but the seven burials examined produced relatively simple grave goods: Colchian pottery vessels and imported squat lekythoi.

In 1999, a trench 8 x 16 metres was begun in the area of the settlement itself. Hellenistic levels were reached (indicated by many fragments of Colchian amphoras), before work was suspended on account of torrential rain. This year work continued to lower levels, eventually reaching wooden house foundations laid in the early Iron Age. The characteristic debris consisted of misshapen lumps of terracotta: the result of wattle and daub walls having been burnt in fires over the centuries. Identifiable finds were extremely fragmentary, but included Attic black-gloss pottery. (Colleagues working on an emergency excavation at the new oil terminal at Kulevi, just north of Poti, were simultaneously finding similar material [and had conducted experimental fires with modern structures to see quite how wattle and daub behaved under such circumstances]).

Post-excavation research has included the preparation for publication of the results of the second season. To this end, Professor Kakhidze and Dr Tavamaishvili visited Oxford in March 2000 with the aid of a British Academy International Joint Activity Grant, and a travel grant from the BIAA. An article on Greek silver coins from Black Sea coastal cities by A. Kakhidze, I. Iashvili and M. Vickers is forthcoming in *Numismatic Chronicle*. Iron nails from the earlier classical Greek cemetery were discussed by Mrs Judith Broadgate in her Oxford Diploma in Applied Archaeology Dissertation, (*A Study of Iron Coffin Fittings of the Fifth and Fourth Centuries BC from Pichvnari, Georgia, Caucasus*). Electron-probe micro-analysis showed that the iron used was exceedingly pure, and iron corrosion products on the nails revealed that the planking was between 2.6cm and 5cm in thickness, and that the wood came from a conifer, most probably *pinus sylvestris*, specimens of which are still to be found in the neighbourhood of Pichvnari.