



Pichvnari, Ajarian AR, Georgia 2001

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The fourth 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 during the month of August 2001. Brief reports on the three previous seasons' work appeared in *Anatolian Archaeology* 1998, 15 (and *cf.* the informal account in *The Ashmolean* 36 [1999] 3-5), *Anatolian Archaeology* 1999, 11-12, and *Anatolian Archaeology* 2000, 13-14. A longer article on the 1998 season has appeared in *Anatolian Studies* 2001, and A. Kakhidze, M. Vickers and I. Iashvili, "Silver coins of Black Sea coastal cities from the fifth century BC necropolis at Pichvnari", *Numismatic Chronicle* 2000 is in press. Pichvnari (which means "Pine Trees" in Georgian—the ancient name is unknown) lies a kilometre or so inland from the Black Sea at the junction of the Choloki and Ochkhauri rivers to the north of Kobuleti. The Choloki forms the northern frontier of the Ajarian Autonomous Republic, a fact which was of immediate relevance when thanks to the vagaries of domestic Georgian politics Russian troops suddenly appeared towards the end of our season and camped on our doorstep. Thirsty soldiers would appear of an afternoon in search of cool water from the well in our compound, and of windfalls from our fruit trees; officers would invite us to impromptu picnics. But they left as suddenly as they came, after only a few days.

Pichvnari was a major settlement from the Bronze Age, but became more obviously wealthy during the period of Greek colonization, to which it was a late-comer. An area between the Choloki and the sea was used for burials by the native Colchian population and immigrant Greeks; at first—or so it would seem, in separate cemeteries but by the Hellenistic period together. In 2001, considerable progress was made in elucidating the settlement, and more of the vast area covered by the cemeteries was explored. For earlier work, see: A. Kakhidze, *Vostochnoye Prichernomoriye v antichnuju epokhu [The Eastern Black Sea Coast in Antiquity]* [Batumi, 1981]; G.R. Tsetskhladze, *Pichvnari and its Environs* (Besançon, 1999) (which provides a useful guide to work by other Georgian scholars).

The co-directors of the 2001 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 Irakli Chavleishvili, Dr Manana Odisheli, Dr Nineli Vashakidze, Nino Dzeladze (archaeologists), Anzor Javelidze (architect and surveyor), Vladimir Astakhov (photographer) and Revasi Mikeladze (draughtsman). The following students participated: Lasha Arslanishvili and Nargizi Surmanidze (Batumi University), Ana Reisinger (Somerville College, Oxford), Edward Rugman (Trinity College, Oxford), Natalia Makharadze and Lika Sekhniashvili

(Tbilisi University), James Wilkes (New College, Oxford), Kenneth Morgan (St Hugh's College, Oxford), Theowen Gilmour (Clare College, Cambridge), Marie Anne Bru (University of Ghent), and Zurab Varshanidze (Polytechnical Institute, Batumi). Naji Mamuladze and Sandro Sekhniashvili provided invaluable help. Guliko Tsiskaradze once more excelled herself in the kitchen and provided an exemplary Georgian table, and Guram Svanidze, our driver and mechanic, ensured that our larder and cellar were always full. The 2001 season was supported financially by the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, the Oxford Craven Committee, the British Academy, the Marjory Wardrop Fund, and the Department of Antiquities at the Ashmolean; a subvention was also received from the Batumi Archaeological Museum. Visitors included Professor and Mrs John Caldwell (of Jesus College, Oxford), Professor and Mrs Horst Sund (Konstanz University), Mr John Nippers (of Barwil Georgia), Shota Mamuladze (of the Gonio Expedition), Dr Dato Lomitashvili, Dr Nick Armour and Ian Colvin (of the Tbilisi Janashia Museum-Cambridge University Nokalakevi Expedition), and Dr Medea Nioradze (Dmanisi Expedition). We were interviewed for Ajarian television, Georgian radio and the Discovery Channel. Students were taken on excursions to Keda, Vani, Nokalakevi and Vardzia.

In 2001, five principal areas were investigated: part of the Colchian cemetery on Napurvala hill was examined (to the west of an area we looked at in 1999); a trench in the earlier classical Greek cemetery that was opened up in 2000 was extended to the south; the northern end of a trench in the middle of the Hellenistic cemetery also begun in 2000 was completed; soundings made to the west indicated that the Hellenistic cemetery stretched over a much wider area than hitherto expected; and the trench begun in the settlement in 1999, and continued in 2000, was deepened to Bronze Age levels until the heavy rains which occasionally beset us put a stop to our activities in this area.

30 burials were investigated in the Colchian cemetery. They lay a metre or so below the now redundant tea bushes which now cover much of the site of Pichvnari. They were dug into hard-packed but friable sandy earth; no organic remains survived. A typical burial might contain a Colchian jug near the head, a Colchian silver coin ("Charon's obol", but in fact a triobol) in the mouth, silver, bronze or iron bracelets at the wrists, and earrings and glass or amber beads in women's burials. Of particular interest this year were a pair of gold penannular earrings, one with stylised lion-head finials, the other with snakes' heads (cf. Tsetskhladze, *op cit.*, figs 53.2, 54-6). The finds of imported Attic pottery were especially rich. They included a red-figure St Valentin Class *kantharos*, a black-gloss Rheneia cup bearing the graffito *Phoin[-*, a black-gloss bolsal inscribed *Myrn[-*, and a Castulo cup. Among the Colchian pottery, a jug with three circular devices in relief on the shoulder was notable. In one of the graves, a silver drachm of Sinope of c.490-425 BC (*obv.* head of eagle + dolphin below; *rev.* incuse square) was used in lieu of the more common *kolkhidki* (cf. the specimen found in Burial 70 in 1967).

In 1999, a trench 8 x 16 metres had been begun in the area of the settlement itself. Hellenistic levels were reached before work was suspended on account of the weather. Work in 2000 and 2001 was similarly curtailed (when it rains in Ajaria during the summer, it can be torrential). Even so, Hellenistic, classical, Early Iron Age, Late and Middle Bronze Age horizons were noted. The "house foundations" first uncovered in 2000 turned out to be a wooden fence of the Early Iron Age.

Post-excavation research has included the preparation for publication of the results of the third season. Professor Kakhidze and Dr Tavamaishvili visited Oxford for two weeks in March 2001 under the British Academy-Georgian Academy of Sciences Exchange Scheme, and with the aid of a grant from the BIAA. Dr Irakli Iashvili spent a month at the Heberden Coin Room at the Ashmolean Museum, also with the support of the British Academy, working on the coinage of the Black Sea in general, and the coins found at Pichvnari in particular.