



Pichvnari, Ajarian AR, Georgia 2002

Michael Vickers and Amiran Kakhidze

(from *Anatolian Archaeology* 8 [2002] 15)

The fifth season of the Oxford-Batumi Pichvnari excavation took place in August 2002. The areas selected for investigation were chosen with a view to improving our knowledge of the precise extent of the necropolis, which extends for an indefinite distance beneath a disused tea-plantation. One trench 16 x 8 m was dug towards the north of the area (within the NW 46 section), and was found to contain an amphora burial, and other smaller burials, as well as “funerary platforms”—burnt patches which often contained broken pottery left over from graveside meals. One grave contained an amphora, imported Attic black-gloss and Ionic pottery, a silver bracelet and a glass alabastron. It was clear that the necropolis extended further to the north, and it is proposed to investigate further during the 2003 season.

The main area of research, however, was a trench 20 x 12 m (in the NW 53 section) dug within the compound of the excavation headquarters in advance of the construction of an extension to our dig house (generously funded by the Seven Pillars of Wisdom Trust; building will take place during the winter 2002-3). As expected, we found evidence that this area was in use during the 4th century BC. Some of the burials were in wooden coffins, and although all organic material has perished, due to the acidic nature of the sandy soil, many iron nails are still in situ. Others were simply cut into the soil. There were the remains of funerary feasts dotted about the area. With one exception, the graves here were oriented E-W in the canonical Greek fashion; the exception was aligned N-S and contained a single iron object. It may reveal the influence of local Colchian burial traditions. Three of the graves to the west of the trench contained exceptionally wide coffins (2 m), and comparatively rich grave-goods: one or two imported wine-amphoras, Attic black-gloss pottery, occasional Colchian pottery, silver coins, gold, silver and bronze jewellery, and glass beads and pendants.

Part of the Hellenistic cemetery (in the SW 62 section) was also investigated. Five of the nineteen graves found in a 20 x 12 m trench were excavated. Rain fell constantly for much of the last week of the season; we propose to excavate the remaining graves next year. Here too, there were the remains of funerary feasts; one platform was packed with fragments of Colchian amphoras.

The co-directors of the 2002 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, Dr Tamar Sikharalidze was in charge of the storeroom and served as “collections manager”; other Georgian participants included Dr Irakli Iashvili; (numismatist), Dr Manana Odisheli, Ms Nino Dzeladze (archaeologists), Anzor Javelidze (architect and surveyor), and Ms Eka Beitrishvili (draughtswoman). The following students participated: Taniel Ebralidze, Merab Khalvashi, Nino Shushanidze and Miranda Turmanidze (Batumi University), Duncan Carnegie (Jesus College, Oxford), Victoria Kwee (Jesus College, Oxford), Natalia Makharadze and Lika Sekhniashvili (Tbilisi University), Mattijs Wijker (University of Amsterdam), Julia Gräf (Lichtenstern Gymnasium Großsachsenheim), (Cathrin Daniel [Jesus College Oxford] and Eugenia Lao [Wadham College, Oxford] took part in earlier excavations at Gonio Apsaurus). Guliko Tsiskaradze again excelled herself in the kitchen, and Guram Svanidze our driver and mechanic ensured that we were regularly supplied with local food and vintages (Georgian wine is justly famous). The 2002 season was supported financially by the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, the Oxford Craven Committee, a Jesus College Research Grant, and the Department of Antiquities at the Ashmolean, as well as a subvention from the Batumi Archaeological Museum.