



Pichvnari, Ajarian AR, Georgia 2003

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The sixth 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 between mid-July and mid-August 2003. The nature of the site was briefly described in the account of the first season's activities in *Anatolian Studies* 51 (2001) 65-90 (and cf. the accounts in successive issues of *Anatolian Archaeology* since 1998). Lying at the junction of the Choloki and Ochkhauri rivers to the north of Kobuleti, and a kilometre or so inland, Pichvnari was a major settlement from the late Bronze Age, but became more obviously wealthy during the period of Greek colonization. An area between the Choloki and the sea was used for burials ostensibly by the native Colchian population and immigrant Greeks; at first in separate cemeteries, but by the Hellenistic period together. The cemeteries continued to be investigated, and soundings were made in the new part of the settlement.

The co-directors of the 2003 season were again Amiran Kakhidze, Director of the Batumi Archaeological Museum, and Michael Vickers, Professor of 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, Dr Irakli Chevleishvili, Ms Nino Dzeladze (archaeologists), Anzor Javelidze (architect and surveyor), Reso Mikeladze (draughtsman) Zurab Varshanidze (laboratory assistant). The following students participated: Edward Dalbey (University College, Oxford), Nicola Ingber (Somerville College, Oxford), Lika Sekhniashvili (Tbilisi State University), Marketa Sochorova (University of West Bohemia, Pilsen), James Vickers (University of Sussex). Guliko Tsiskaradze performed miracles in the kitchen, and Guram Svanidze our driver and mechanic ensured that we never went short of supplies. The 2003 season was supported financially by the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, the Oxford Craven Committee, the Oxford Marjory Wardrop Committee, the Department of Antiquities at the Ashmolean Museum, Somerville College, Oxford, the Seven Pillars of Wisdom Trust, as well as a subvention from the Batumi Archaeological Museum.

2003 was treated as a study season. A little excavation was undertaken on the western edge of the necropolis, at the point where the fourth century "Greek" cemetery merges into the Hellenistic. Graves uncovered in 2002 were cleaned and photographed, but work was infrequent

owing to the torrential rain that fell throughout most of our stay at Pichvnari. Chakvi, a township just down the road, used to have the highest rainfall in the whole of the Soviet Union; things have not changed much. A noteworthy find was a pair of gold spiral earrings with lions' head finials.

An area within the excavation headquarters compound had been studied and cleared in 2002 with a view to its becoming the site of a new building. Through the generosity of the Seven Pillars of Wisdom Trust we constructed a two-storey wooden house, with three bedrooms downstairs and a large workroom above. The view from the balcony takes in the tea plantation that overlies a large part of the ancient necropolis, and the settlement beyond the river Choloki in the distance. The building was ready by the end of July and a plaque (reading, in Georgian and English: "This building was constructed with the aid of the Seven Pillars of Wisdom Trust in memory of T.E. Lawrence") was unveiled by HM Ambassador to Tbilisi, Mrs Deborah Barnes-Jones, who was accompanied by Tim Storer, the Assistant Military Attaché, and Mrs Storer. The archaeologist Kakha Khimshiashvili was also a member of the party. The afternoon was completed with a banquet, at which many toasts were drunk to British-Georgian friendship, to our benefactors, and to archaeological science.

The addition of the new building has greatly enhanced our resources. The upper floor quickly became the centre of activity, not least because we were working hard on a monograph dealing with the first five years' work of the joint British-Georgian Pichvnari Expedition between 1998 and 2002. One notable feature of this bilingual publication is the section devoted to the prolific Colchian finds, a class of material that has hitherto suffered from relative neglect, but which can now be much better understood thanks to imported goods found in crucial assemblages. Another is the elucidation of the settlement site, and its role in the economy of the Black Sea. The compilation of the bibliography has presented many challenges. Thanks, however, to the possibilities presented by computer type-setting, it has been decided to have Georgian and Russian works in their respective alphabets, with everything translated into English in a combined bibliography with cross-references where necessary. Publication is planned for early in 2004.

During the first week of our stay, we entertained Dr Andrew Shortland of the Oxford Research Laboratory for Archaeology and the History of Art. He came in order to take samples from the numerous core-made polychrome glass vessels found at Pichvnari over the past few years. Despite its ubiquity, this is a class of material that has been relatively little analysed, largely because museum curators have been reluctant to allow samples to be taken from complete vessels. Dr Shortland has, however, devised a non-destructive means of sampling which he was able to employ in the Batumi Archaeological Museum. The source of polychrome glass in the Black Sea has long been a puzzle; preliminary results suggest that it came from Rhodes.