



## **Pichvnari, Ajarian AR, Georgia 1999**

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(from *Anatolian Archaeology* 5 [1999] 11-12)

The second 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 August 1999. The nature of the site was briefly described in the account of the first season's activities in *Anatolian Archaeology* 1998 15 (and cf. the informal account in *The Ashmolean* 36 [1999] 3-5): 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 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 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, "The interpretation of Pichvnari", *Dialogues d'Histoire Ancienne* 20 [1994] 127-45).

The co-directors of the 1999 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 1999 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.

In the area of the Colchian cemetery some thirty graves were investigated. They typically contained a Colchian jug, an imported Attic squat lekythos, glass beads and locally made jewellery of bronze or iron (and occasionally silver). A characteristic feature was the presence of small silver coins in the mouths of the deceased: the “Charon’s obol” principle. Pichvnari is the only site in the Black Sea area where this practice occurred, but there is a very good reason why this might have been the case: the cemeteries were situated across the river which divides them from the settlement. The Greek cemetery produced evidence of burials in wooden coffins (of which only the nails survive. Again, there was a mixture of local and imported pottery. Several Attic black-gloss drinking vessels (including a primitive cup made from the cut-down foot of another vessel [inscribed with the graffito “TO”] which had itself been broken and mended in antiquity) were found in the votive platforms: the places where ceremonial funerary banquets were held. Part of the Greek cemetery was reused in the late Roman period, and further 4<sup>th</sup> century AD graves were found. Work on part of the Hellenistic cemetery had to come to an end through adverse weather conditions.

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 the torrential rain which fell over the last few days: the same weather front which beset the unfortunate survivors of the Turkish earthquake. Work will continue here next year.

Post-excavation research has included the preparation for publication of the results of the first season. Professor Kakhidze and Dr Tavamaishvili visited Oxford in February with the aid of a British Academy International Joint Activity Grant. An article on Greek silver coins by A. Kakhidze, I. Iashvili and M. Vickers is in preparation. In Oxford, some of the iron nails from the Greek cemetery are being analysed by Mrs Judith Broadgate under the supervision of Dr Esther Cameron of the Institute of Archaeology. Dr Cameron is currently examining some textile fragments found in Greek and Roman contexts.