საველე არქეოლოგიური კვლევა-ძიება ფიჭვნარის ახალმშენებლობის ტერიტორიაზე

კახიძე ამირან
ბათუმის არქეოლოგიური მუზეუმი

ფიჭვნარის თავისუფალ ტურისტული მშენებლობის ზონაში მოექცა ორი მეტად მნიშვნელოვანი ძეგლი. ერთ-ერთი მათგანი ძვ.წ. VIII-VII საუკუნეების დიუნები, ხოლო მეო რე _ ელი ნიზ მის ეპოქის (ძვ.წ. IV-I საუკუნეები) სამაროვნის დასავლეთი მონაკვეთი. საქართველოს ეკუთვნილი მგზავრების ძალის ერთვის სახელით დღისსახელებით მათთვის საქართველოს სამეფოს ახალგაზრდა დღეთიზე 2010 წლის ნოემბერ-დეკემბერში გამოიწვია თავისი წარმართული გაუვახშება ისტორიული აღმოჩენით მუზეუმით გადამწყვეტი მოლაპარამეტრებით. შუა დღემდელებზე აღმოჩენის მნიშვნელოვანი ნაწილი საჭირო იქნა საქართველოში, თუმცა მიუღო და საზოგადოების მოედანში. შეერთებით ხელი შეელია, მაგალითად ნაციონალურ კულტუროს გაუმჯობესებით. მოღვაწეობით, რომ ხელმისაწვდომი დროის წარმომადგენლებერთ შეუძლიათ ჩამოყალიბდეთ კულტურული ნაკრები და გამოაქვთ ლოკალური (მესამეობი) მოხდენილი ქართულ-ეკლესიური საგანაკვირო სახელმწიფო ორგანიზაციებში. შესაძლო რომ ეს პროცესი განუსაზღვრელი იქნება დროის მიმართულის, განუსაზღვრელი მგზავრების მხრივ, ხოლო მათი საჭიროება და სცემის წყალი შეიცავდება სამნაყსაზე და სხვ. პერიოდულ პროცესში და საქართველოში წარმოდგენილი ჩანართები, ხოლო ამ პროცესი განუსაზღვრელი იქნება ეროვნული ღიანი საქართველოს არქეოლოგიური მუზეუმი აღმოჩენით.
Field Archaeological Research on the Territory of New Construction Site at Pichvnari

Kakhidze Amiran
Batumi Archaeology Museum

The Pichvnari archaeological expedition carried out wide range field research in November-December, 2010. New hotels’ construction project in a Free Tourism Zone was drawn up without scholar-archaeologists participation. In the early days of November job on hotels’ infrastructure has been under way, that implied the territory’s leveling off, laying the foundations of 32 hotels and making arrangements for parking space. Unfortunately 2 major plots of Pichvnari archaeological site came upon the building yard. One of them is so-called dune dated back to 8-7cc. BC, where remains of Colchian tribal culture are represented. The second one is a part of the Hellenistic period cemetery (4-1cc. BC). Construction job has been put into practice in a rapid tempo. It took just two days to level off the territory of 160 m. long, 120 m. wide and 3-4 m. high by using heavy technical equipment. At the same time we naturally raised a problem to the corresponding governmental agency in order to protect the archaeological site. Thanks to rapid respond from the Georgian Cultural Heritage Protection Agency’s representative Nikoloz Vacheishvili an agreement No.17/1 between the GHPA and Batumi Archaeological Museum on 69896 GEO archaeological excavations was signed. During almost 2 months have been conducted wide range field research resulted in saving of numerous artifacts. Here are the basic conclusions we have arrived at. The first points of our discussion are dunes.

The study of the dunes was begun at the southern plot which outlines had been cut into by construction workers. After leveling off the naked plot, it proved fairly simple to identify its stratigraphy. Certain observation on origination of the dunes, tidal basin formation was carried out. The consistent material has been put together on configuration of the dunes at different periods.
Having finished cleaning, recording, photo- and graphic fixing of the southern trench, the archaeological excavations were conducted in the southern-western part of the dunes (SW 1-78 section, squares 97-100, SW 1-88 section, squares 7-10, 17-20, size of squares 4x4). At first 1.5 m below the modern topsoil layer in wider area have been noticed fragments of an altar(offering platform). Subsequently each other there has been revealed two monumental sanctuaries formed by horn-like clay stands sloped to the north. They are of following dimensions: 2.6x1.6 and 2.4x1.3. It’s noteworthy that in the northern part of the excavated plot was preserved a thin pebble layer as a sign of former sea surf.

Among other archaeological objects have been brought to light a large cone vessel for religious rituals performing.

Some later the excavated plot has been broadened to the east. It covered the big enough territory-SW 1-78 section (squares #97-99, 87-89, 77-79, 66-69, 55-58 and 45-48). A certain part of the plot contained a sterile sand layer of maritime origin. At many places came to light fragments of a small-sized altar. A comparatively large offering platform has been studied at SW 1-78 section (squares #55, 56, 65-67 and 75-76). It was 16m long, 8.5 m wide. It’s noteworthy that the eastern part of the platform had been cut into by construction workers before commencing of the excavations. Rich archaeological material has been discovered with overwhelming majority of fragments of the vessels used during bath ceremony, stone sinkers, etc. Very close to the summit of the dune to 4.4m depth has been noticed a brownish layer which apparently belonged to the previous period when the dune had functioned. To the depth of 2.8 m a layer was black-colored.

Lying of one of the hotels foundation was planned on the surface of the dune at 28 m distance to the north off the southern plot. It was decided to carry out wide range archaeological excavations at this plot either. The plot was subdivided into a section SW 1-77 (squares #75-85-95, 76-86-96, and 77-87-97) and SW 1-87 (squares #5-15-25-35-45-55, 6-16-26-36-46-56, 7-17-27-37-47-57, 8-18-28-38-48-58). The plot measured 16 by 8m.

It gave us an interesting information on the functional purpose of the dune, its cultural layers succession and terrace-like outlines of an altar-sanctuary. The most attractive of the terraces appeared the first one located at the western segment of the dune. It was the very place where the first sanctuary has been brought to light. It measures 3.3 by 2.2 m. Nearby two well-preserved clay vessels have been cleaned, that is the rare case for such type of artifacts. Besides on the top of the sanctuary was found a sculptural image of a dog’s head made of clay. The sanctuary itself was formed by large rectangular horn-like stands connected with a bull’s cult.

At the second terrace have been recorded fragments of pottery and an offering platform which major part still belonged to not unearthed space. Here too had been left traces of a sterile sand layer of former surf.

The same sand-like traces have been observed at the third terrace, along with small and moderate sized offering platforms and traces of former fireplaces. We don’t rule out that vessels used for bath ceremony could be made on the basis of wooden moulds at the spot. At the same terrace has been studied
the fifth altar, which had been divided into two parts by horn-like stands. It measured 2.35 by 1 m. There have been found fragments of different clay vessels including a pithos and a wetstone.

The fourth terrace covered the summit of the dune and represented the last period of its functioning. An offering platform covers its major part. Besides there have been discovered another two sanctuaries—#2 and 6. The second one of them had been slopped in situ deposition by the large rectangular horn-like stands.

We managed to map on the general plan some fragments and periphery cult places. Have been made two broad control trenches to the east of the dunes, which fell under the Free Tourism Zone of Pichvnari. One of the trenches yielded fragments of clay vessels dated to the last centuries of the II millennium BC. An ornamented pot has been fully restored.

We obtained abundant archaeological material. Up to 90% of it represents so-called bath-type fragments of the vessels, There is a group of numerous horn-like stands both of circular and rectangular shapes. As it's known, circular-shaped stands connected with a hearth are widespread in Caucasus and Asia Minor from the Early Bronze Period. Their genesis is linked to Kura-Araxis culture. Such objects are abundant among cult artifacts and on a settlement proper at Pichvnari dated to the last centuries of the II millennium BC. They should originate from the cults of fertility deities and a bull. For building sanctuaries on the dunes were used larger-sized and rectangular-shaped stands. Noteworthy is a phallus-like stand on top of which is depicted symbols of the sun and a cross as perpetual motion (p.6/4). There have been found clay cult slabs as well.

For the dunes functional purpose studying an important part belongs to a sculptural figure of a dog’s head. Following the Georgian folklore and ethnological material we arrived at a conclusion that the artifacts discussed above are in close connection with the sea deities. Among other unique finds of the Colchian culture are large-sized cone-like vessels of massive body found at the eastern wall of the third sanctuary. Most likely they served as one of the attributes during performance of a religious ritual. Not to be verbalize on other types of pottery we should note that Colchian pithoses, drinking vessels and jugs production takes origins from this very period—8-7 cc. BC.

Another important part of archaeological material found at the dunes are stone sinkers for fishing nets. Large oval stones used as wetstones have been found as well.

Those are the main results of field research at Pichvnari’s dunes. There have been rescued numerous unique artifacts of Colchian material and spiritual culture. Besides, new archaeological excavations enable us to get rich information on one of the complicated and poor-studied subject of the Georgian bibliography—understanding of functional purpose of the dunes. Our theory put forward back in the 60-70-es of the last century, regarding the dunes of the Black Sea area of Georgia as sanctuaries of high-developed, unique, consolidated Colchian culture, where seasonal religious cults devoted to the sea deities and a bull were performed, has been enriched with the new attributes. Horn-like stands take
one of the essential places among the latest finds. Another subject to be mentioned is a cult of the sea deities.

In the world mythology water is regarded as a first primary source of the universe. In Georgian mythology water deities are represented by “mother of water”, “woman of water”, “grandmother of water”, “man of water”, “angel of water”, “Mesepi”, “Larsa”, “Lazare”, “fish-whale”, etc. Worshipping of different deities, including the sea ones, goes back the animistic period and has undergone certain transformation in the following periods. To understand the function of the dunes properly we pay great attention to the popular legends of Samegrelo’s inhabitants according to which Mesepi is the man of the sea. There are Mesepi-woman and Mesepi-man. Having a human face they are never aging and immortal. Mesepi-woman is very beautiful, with golden hair, fair face and wears snow-white clothes. Mesepi-man is gloomy and unattractive, in a black robe. According to some popular legends Mesepis are represented by zoo anthropomorphic images: though they are human beings they are four-legged and bark like dogs instead of speaking. They inhabit remote, out-of-the way places by the seaside. At a certain time of the year (from October, 28 till November, 3), while moving towards inlands, they are holding a magic staff in their hands, being accompanied by a hound. The purpose of their presence on the land is checking-up of incomes and losses on the territory under their control, as well as collecting the tribute for winter time to maintain themselves. In this period Mesepis are supposed to be hunters’ protectors. Following believes of Samegrelo’s dwellers the year when Mesepi-women came out of the sea is marked by fine weather. The sun and moisture equally necessary for farming are balanced and crop is big. On the contrary, on Mesepi-men coming out weather is foul, with downpours almost all the year round and following bad harvest. They divide themselves into groups, entering gorges, hunting and feasting there. Then they get together and wrap up all the bones left over from their feast into animals’ skins and animate the latters by touching with a magic staff, and let them go back to forests in order to come next time to hunt on.

While being on the land they are accompanied by an unusual dog called Mesepish-dog which is of big size, tall and black-haired. It is quick-witted, speedy and considered as a holy being. People believed that anyone who did harm to Mesepish-dog wouldn’t avoid death.

In 6 days time Mesepis left for the sea keeping on collecting tribute along the way. At this time Samegrelo’s inhabitants used to put a piece of iron in wine-cellar, barns and other places to protect their farms from Mesepis, who were afraid of iron. Mesepis’ return to the sea was back grounded by downpours “washing Mesepis’ traces”. As we mentioned above, such believes were widespread regarding Mesepi-men. On Mesepi-women appearing, on the contrary, everybody used to leave their doors open. As we have seen, Mesepi is a deity of the sea and water elements and has control over weather and fertility. Comparatively later this deity was attributed with power of hunters’ protection. Obviously, in ancient times the Colchians performed worshipping and sacrificial ritual at the dunes to
win over the sea deities. Above said regards the coastal area. Archaeological excavations carried out in 1988 and 1990 in Kalota village (Khulo region) corroborated that in highlands had been popular Lazare deity’s worshipping.

The Hellenistic period cemetery

Like at the dunes, wide range field research has been conducted at the Hellenistic period cemetery. At Pichvnari archaeological complex one of the principal places is taken by the Classical period cemetery. To date the whole complex of the burials of the local dwellers dated to the 5th c. BC has been studied, where 420 graves were dug out by our expeditions. Particular attention deserves the Greek necropolis of the 5th-4th cc. BC, a sole in itself in Transcaucasia. Here we have studied 450 graves and dozens of ritual platforms.

During the last years have been brought to light graves of the Early Middle Ages. But this time our subject of discussion is the Hellenistic period cemetery, study of which had begun back in the 60-es of the last century. The graves of that period are to be found at two plots. One of them is located in the south-eastern part of the Pichvnari necropolis, another one, being the subject of the current research, situates at the sand dunes. In 2003 and 2004 at this very plot were conducted archaeological excavations by the Pichvnari joint Georgian-British expedition. Rather interesting inventory from 46 graves was studied. New excavations gave us an opportunity to discover the next 44 graves. A bulk of artifacts has been rescued. Shortly on the recent finds.

Have been determined the western and partly northern boundaries of the cemetery. The leading part among the graves belongs to inhumation burials. We encountered a single amphora-burial and a pithos-burial. According to allocation of the iron and, in rare cases, bronze nails, it was defined that one part of the deceased persons had been placed into wooden coffins. Another ones had just wooden covers. Influenced by Pichvnari Hellenes, burial custom of the Hellenistic period is characterized by the eastern orientation of the dead (26 graves). Though 10 burials were distinguished by northern orientation of the bodies. The rest graves revealed either the southern and south-eastern orientations. Pichvnari damp soil doesn’t preserve skeletons of the deceased. In 16 graves have been recorded remains of enamel.

Among the local strata, following Greek tradition, it was fairly popular to hold funeral dinner. Due to new excavations there have been found 12 ritual platforms. Taking into account dimensions of the graves, it’s clear that one part of the deceased were interred in a crouching posture with their body on the left or right side. As regards the others their bodies have been found lying supine.

Grave goods are represented in large quantities. The majority of them were interred next to the heads and hands, a bit rarely-by the legs.

Pottery is the most popular inventory among the grave goods. As a rule, local clay vessels represent the biggest part of them. Among traditional shapes noteworthy are pots, bowls, and pithoses of different sizes. Should be noted typ-
ical for the Colchian culture tubular handles and jugs made by Pichvnari potters. We dispose unique finds as well. One of the small-sized jug has the images of the sun’s disc and crescent made in relief on the upper part of the body. The number of grooved vessels has considerably increased. On part of them could be found a potter’s stamp in a form of a circle. Among the Hellenized forms noteworthy are Colchian amphorae, tubular-handled vessels, oinochoia, etc.

The next category includes Greek black-gloss kantharos. One of them bears a deity’s or, possibly, a personal name’s first letter-A. Another vessel—a small-sized bowl—bears a graffito ^EKAE on the surface of its bottom, that most likely means its cost-10 staters. Noteworthy is a narrow black-gloss phiale with the inscription in Greek “to Zeus”, which belongs to prize-type vessels.

There are other types of imported vessels too. Quite widespread are perfume vessels and aryballos. A single salt-cellar-like black-gloss bowl was found as well.

Local silver coins were used as grave inventory. They represent an ordinary type of triboles. It’s clear that from the 5th c.BC onward the Hellenes’ custom of burying the dead with so-called “Charon’s obol” was practiced here. In Colchian kingdom’s monetary circulation of the Early Hellenistic period the leading part belongs to local silver coins.

The number of jewellery has increased. First of all noteworthy are gold earrings. Two of them are pendent ones. Being of spherical shape they are maid of gold plates laid onto glass. The most numerous of gold objects are pendants, which were found by two in each of four graves. Rather abundant are silver, bronze and iron pendants. For the first time have been discovered silver earrings with the images of lion’s head. At the same place in 2004 we found gold lion-headed earrings. Such types of earrings are unparalleled in other regions of Georgia. Though area of their distribution is quite broad. We dispose a bronze necklace (so-called kirkali). It was essentially enlarged a collection of bracelets. The most interesting of them is silver one with the images of animals. More numerous are those ones made of bronze. Some graves contained bracelets placed in couples.

Attention worth is objects of glyptic. On one of them is engraved Pegasus. On the other is depicted a senenpetal rosette above a circle. The next sample contains horn of plenty and life-tree. We have got a fingering with the intaglio of a right-directed horse. According to the latest finds, which are made of a whole sheet of bronze, they obviously have local origin. Has been found a single fingering with a supposed stone, which unfortunately had been lost.

Beads and pendants represent another numerous and multicolored group of the grave goods typical for the Hellenistic period. Among them are black, blue, yellow and white small-sized beads, so-called yots, both transparent and opaque. They are paralleled of those ones from Dapnari, dablagomi, Zemopartshkma, Gomareti, Kiketi, Beshtasheni, Olbya, Pantykapeion, Khersones, etc. dated to 4-2cc.BC. There are pear-shaped beads of different colours. Have been found monochrome beads in the shapes of heart, amorphiskos and dolphin which are paralleled as well.
Comparatively scanty are polychrome beads. We have found just two eye-beads of rectangular and oval forms. One part of the beads is spiral-ornamented. They are similar to those from Dablagomi, Vani, Thanagoria, Khersones, Pantykapeion. So-called mosaic beads represent an interesting type of them. At last, noteworthy are pendants with the images of human faces. A similar couple had been found in Pichvnari earlier such kind of objects from the Black Sea area E. Alekseeva dates to 3 c. BC. They are found in Khersones and Maikop too. Like pendants are known from the Central Europe and the Mediterranean Sea area dated to 6-5 cc. BC. They had found their way in Colchis just in the Hellenistic period. Has been found a pendant in the form of a miniature jug as well, which is paralleled the one from the Dablagomi rich burial. Similar pendants are known from Miletopol and other places. There are so-called gold-plated beads. They are supposed to originate from Egypt (4th c. BC) and later, in 3-2 cc. BC find their way in Europe.

For the first time at Pichvnari cemetery complex of the Hellenistic period have been discovered examples of toreutic art. Among them are a bronze mirror and iron strigils. New excavations presented us with the abundant material on fishermen of the ancient Pichvnari. In one of the graves has been found a whole fishing net with 57 lead sinkers tied to it. In the other grave along with fishing net (having 86 lead sinkers) have been found 10 bronze fishing rods, being tied together with a thread, most likely used for fishing on flounders. The third grave seems to be of special interest, where three comparatively small fishing nets and some baits made of thin bronze plates in the form of sea stars have been unearthed. They are unique for Pichvnari. For the time present their parallels are unknown to us.

Among other objects should be mentioned bronze bells and chain, an iron knife and lock of wooden coffin cover, etc.

As we have seen, archaeological excavations at the Hellenistic period cemetery at Pichvnari gave us interesting information on ordinary Pichvnarians’ way of living, their economy, cultural and religious life. Majority of the graves represent individual inhumation burials. The custom of holding funeral dinner was quite widespread in the Classical world and among the Pichvnari’s Hellenes too. Predominate burials where the dead were interred with their heads to the east. Have been traced traditionally Colchian rituals as well. Among grave inventory noteworthy are pottery and jewellery made of gold, silver, bronze and iron. Beads and pendants were rather popular too. In that period tradition of placing of coins in graves was continued. According to the artifacts at our disposal, it should be noted that like in the preceding periods the main fields of economy at Pichvnari were farming, viticulture, wine-making, live stock breeding, pottery, metal processing, etc. Due to new finds it becomes clear that one of the essential economic activities of Pichvnari’s dwellers was fishing. Proximity to the sea and Choloki-Ochkhhamuri rivers network naturally offered an opportunity to develop fishing. Beyond doubt, fishing, dolphin-oil processing had economic character. It will be suggested, that like in other centre’s of the Black sea area, salty fish was
exported, keeping in mind great demand on it at that time's Classical world.

The latest finds enable us to get new possibilities to research Colchian pottery of the Hellenistic period. Along with traditional forms of vessels new ones found their way being the most numerous. Clay vessels with the surface polished brown make up a brand new group of the pottery. Pichvnari proved to be one of the major and big kernels of innovations. At that time ceramic containers were made, that speaks in favor of the fact that Colchian merchants were directly involved in the sphere of international trade.

The imported ceramic ware is of great interest too. Had been continued import of the Attic black-gloss kantharoi. It should be noted that have been discovered prize-vessels in the form of black-gloss phiales bearing inscriptions devoted to deities.

The collection of jewellery has been enriched. For the first time have been discovered gold earrings with suspended pendants. Of the same interest are silver earrings with the images of lion's head. Such objects of jeweller's art as gold and silver pendants, necklaces, bronze bells of sacramental character, different bracelets, ornamented fingerings, etc. reflect the high level of their workmanship.

The collection of beads and pendants has been replenished with new finds. The most interesting samples are represented in the form of human face and miniature jugs.

To rare discoveries of the latest excavations belong the examples of toreutic art including a bronze mirror and iron strigils.

In the Hellenistic period religious pantheon of local inhabitants' special place was taken by astral deities. There existed cult of the sun and moon. A fine proof of that is a newly-found brown polished jug bearing the corresponding symbols. As regards the Greek cults, they had found their way here as well. According to black-gloss phiale bearing the inscription and strigils, it's evident that like in the Classical period the sport competitions and popular holidays were held in that time too.

Despite the spread of Macedonian influence had no direct impact on the eastern Black Sea area, close contacts with the Hellenistic states involved Colcha into sphere of the Hellenism. The Transcaucasian transit route began its functioning; connecting the Pontic Rioni-Qvirila, the Mtkvari basin, following along the Caspian Sea shore and Central Asia, with India. Pichvnari seems to be one of the segments of this rout. The Pichvnari urban-like settlement of the Hellenistic period becomes a direct participant of processes of the world history.
Comparatively scanty are polychrome beads. We have found just two eye-beads of rectangular and oval forms. One part of the beads is spiral-ornamented. They are similar to those from Dablagomi, Vani, Thanagoria, Khersones, Pantykapecion. So-called mosaic beads represent an interesting type of them. At last, noteworthy are pendants with the images of human faces. A similar couple had been found in Pichvnari earlier such kind of objects from the Black Sea area E. Alekseeva dates to 3 c. BC. They are found in Khersones and Maikop too. Like pendants are known from the Central Europe and the Mediterranean Sea area dated to 6-5 cc. BC. They had found their way in Colchis just in the Hellenistic period. Has been found a pendant in the form of a miniature jug as well, which is paralleled the one from the Dablagomi rich burial. Similar pendants are known from Miletopol and other places. There are so-called gold-plated beads. They are supposed to originate from Egypt (4th c. BC) and later, in 3-2 cc. BC find their way in Europe.

For the first time at Pichvnari cemetery complex of the Hellenistic period have been discovered examples of toreutic art. Among them are a bronze mirror and iron strigils. New excavations presented us with the abundant material on fishermen of the ancient Pichvnari. In one of the graves has been found a whole fishing net with 57 lead sinkers tied to it. In the other grave along with fishing net (having 86 lead sinkers) have been found 10 bronze fishing rods, being tied together with a thread, most likely used for fishing on flounders. The third grave seems to be of special interest, where three comparatively small fishing nets and some baits made of thin bronze plates in the form of sea stars have been unearthed. They are unique for Pichvnari. For the time present their parallels are unknown to us.

Among other objects should be mentioned bronze bells and chain, an iron knife and lock of wooden coffin cover, etc.

As we have seen, archaeological excavations at the Hellenistic period cemetery at Pichvnari gave us interesting information on ordinary Pichvnarians’ way of living, their economy, cultural and religious life. Majority of the graves represent individual inhumation burials. The custom of holding funeral dinner was quite widespread in the Classical world and among the Pichvnari’s Hellenes too. Predominate burials where the dead were interred with their heads to the east. Have been traced traditionally Colchian rituals as well. Among grave inventory noteworthy are pottery and jewellery made of gold, silver, bronze and iron. Beads and pendants were rather popular too. In that period tradition of placing of coins in graves was continued. According to the artifacts at our disposal, it should be noted that like in the preceding periods the main fields of economy at Pichvnari were farming, viticulture, wine-making, live stock breeding, pottery, metal processing, etc. Due to new finds it becomes clear that one of the essential economic activities of Pichvnari’s dwellers was fishing. Proximity to the sea and Choloki-Ochkhamuri rivers network naturally offered an opportunity to develop fishing. Beyond doubt, fishing, dolphin-oil processing had economic character. It will be suggested, that like in other centre’s of the Black sea area, salty fish was
Fig.3. View of the Hellenistic Age burial

Fig.4. Bronze Rods