

# Caucasus

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In Russian terminology the region south of the Caucasus mountain range is called Transcaucasia. It includes the former Soviet republics of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Whereas Transcaucasia formed a kind of strategic unity from the Russian point of view, the geography as well as the political history of these three countries have little in common.<sup>1</sup>

Textual sources are rather quiet concerning the above-mentioned Transcaucasian countries for the time of the Achaemenid empire. Nevertheless, there is little reason to doubt that they became part of the empire some time in the later 6th c. B.C. For instance, Herodotus (3, 97) states: « *Gifts were also required of the Colchians and their neighbours as far as the Caucasian mountains (which is as far as the Persian rule reaches, the country north of the Caucasus paying no regard to the Persians);...* »<sup>2</sup> Although we can hardly determine where exactly those Caucasian tribes which Herodotus mentions (3, 97; 7, 79) were living in the 5th c. B.C. the localization of the Caucasus is quite clear.<sup>3</sup>

In the following the reader will find short descriptions of those archaeological sites where monuments have been found which either can be connected with the Achaemenids, made by foreigners or local imitations. Already in the 19th c. spectacular finds attracted the interest of scholars from all over the world, best known are the so-called Akhagori and Kazbeg treasure, often including Achaemenid metal vases and jewelry. Soon, local workshops copied such imports or they created new shapes and motifs combining foreign and local elements. The great majority of these small finds reflecting some kind of Achaemenid influence in this region have been found in burials of the local Colchian and Iberian aristocracy.

The archaeological sites are presented below from West to East, from Georgia to Azerbaijan and Armenia.

## Mtisdziri

Near the village Mtisdziri remains of a wooden tower have been excavated. It must have been part of a greater defensive system, which had been erected in the 5th/4th c. B.C. in order to protect the nearby Colchian centre at Vani. Not far from the tower a necropolis was unearthed. A number of graves contained local products as well as imports and objects which must have been made by Colchian craftsmen who were strongly influenced by foreign models. A silver rhyton with a goat-shaped protome was found in a burial which can be dated to the 4th c. B.C. Typologically it comes close to Achaemenid prototypes, however, some ornaments are of Greek origin. This combination as well as some local features make sure that this rhyton has been worked by a local craftsman.

**1** The region which the Russians call Cis-Caucasia, *i.e.* Dagestan, Tshetshnia, Ingushetia, North Ossetia and the Kuban region, all still belonging to Russia, have been beyond the Persian sphere of influence and will therefore be omitted in this paper.

**2** In the light of Herodotus' statement it is up to those who do not believe in the Persian presence in this region to prove their point of view. The sheer number of Achaemenid and Achaemenizing artifacts found on the territory of modern Georgia is striking. It goes well beyond trading contacts and diplomatic exchange of neighbouring countries, moreover, the art and architecture listed below confirms a degree of acculturation which is exceptional for any country that had been part of the Achaemenid empire; see already Knauss 2001: 125-126, 129-133.

**3** The mountain range south of the river Kura, nowadays called "Small Caucasus", in antiquity was never bearing this name. In Hellenistic times some authors even called the Hindukush Caucasus.

Bibliography: Lordkipanidze 1991: 116, 125, 143, fig. 56,2; Gamkrelidze 1998: 211-216; Knauf 1999a: 218-222; Knauf 1999b: 170-171, fig. 8.

## Vani

Vani is situated in Colchis (Western Georgia) on the Akhvledianebis hills on the left banks of the river Rioni. Early excavations were conducted by N. Khoshtaria (1947-1963), since 1966 O. Lordkipanidze directed the archaeological investigations at this important site. Vani developed from a modest settlement of the 8th-6th c. B.C. to become one of the major centres in Colchis in the following centuries. N. Khoshtaria identified the site as "Surium", which is mentioned by Pliny, *naturalis historia* 6, 13; cf. Claudius Ptolemaeus, *Geography* 9, 6. The epigraphic evidence found during the excavations seems to support this hypothesis. Quite a few rich burials of the local aristocracy of Vani have been unearthed. Many of them contain Greek imports, mostly pottery. In the 5th-4th c. B.C. Persian gold and silver objects play a major role, too. Local products, painted pottery as well as gold and silver bowls and jewelry, show significant influence by oriental, *i.e.* Achaemenid models. Vani flourished in Hellenistic times (3rd-1st c. B.C.). According to O. Lordkipanidze, Vani was a "temple-city" at that time, closely linked to the sanctuary of Artemis Leukothea, while others raised serious doubts concerning this theory. The citadel of Vani includes a number of religious complexes surrounded by a fortified wall. On the foot of the hill along the banks of the river Sulori there once was a settlement, now called Saqanchia. Housing areas as well as workshops and trading bases have been excavated so far.

Bibliography: Vani I-VIII; Lordkipanidze 1974: 879-948, 1985, 1995a: 353-401, 1995b: 49-52, fig. 14, 2001: 173, fig. 17-18; Braund 1994: 122-151; Kipiani, Amashukely 1995.

## Itkhvisi

The rich inventory of a number of burials in Itkhvisi/Eastern Colchis (5th-3rd c. B.C.) supports the assumption that they belong to members of the local aristocracy. Products of local workshops as well as Greek imports were among the grave goods. However, some objects apparently follow Iranian prototypes, *e.g.* locally made small jugs imitating shape and decoration of the so-called Classical Triangle-Ware.

Bibliography: Braund 1994: 101-102; Gagošidze 2000: 57.

## Kazbegi

In 1877 G. Filimonov had recovered a number of objects near the village Stepanzminda (now called Kazbegi) under difficult circumstances. They are now called "Kazbeg treasure". The site was looted just after its discovery. The greater part of the finds was immediately moved to the Historical State Museum in Moscow, the rest of it was spread across several museums and private collections. Only those objects which have been found by F. Bayern during his later investigations (1878) are now in the Djanashia State Museum in Tbilisi. Among the approximately 200 objects are an Achaemenid silver phiala with almond-shaped embossing, lotus palmettes, stylized swan heads and an Aramaic inscription on the rim. The archaeological context is still obscure. There was a cemetery nearby. However, most objects of this complex have been found in bronze vessels tied with bronze chains, and remains of skeletons were missing. These details as well as some animal bronze figurines rather point to a ritual context. On the other hand, parts of harnesses, weapons, jewelry and costume have close parallels in local burials. The majority of the finds can be dated to the 6th-5th c. B.C. They come from local workshops, however, many of them show connections with products from Iberia and the Colchian lowlands. Only few pieces are precious imports (see above).

Bibliography: Smirnov 1909: 7, pl. III; Miron, Orthmann 1995: 163-164; Boardman 2000: 191, fig. 5.73a-b.

### **Qanshaeti (Kanshaeti)**

In the upper Ksani valley near the village Qanshaeti (Šida Kartli) a rich tomb has been unearthed. The inventory as well as the date of the burial can be linked with the so-called Akhalgori hoard and the Kazbeg treasure, though it is less rich. Among the objects found is an Achaemenid silver phiala. The finds point to a slightly later date than the Kazbeg treasure, but earlier than the Akhalgori hoard, *i.e.* in the middle of the 5th c. B.C.

Bibliography: Gagošije 1964; Lordkipanidze 2001: 180, fig. 22-23.

### **Akhalgori**

The rich burial of a woman which has been excavated in 1908 near the village Sadseguri (Šida Kartli) became well known as the so-called “Akhalgori treasure” or “Akhalgori hoard”. The deceased must have belonged to the local aristocracy. She was buried together with six harnessed horses and more than 100 small finds, lots of golden jewelry (horse-shaped pendants, earrings, bracelets, necklaces, gold appliques for the decoration of the garment, a fingerring and a belt buckle). By far the majority of these objects were made in local workshops, however, some pieces betray Greek and oriental influence. Two silver phialai and a silver jar were made in Achaemenid workshops. The lady was most probably buried in the late 4th c. B.C., but the inventory of the tomb—at least parts of it—has been made earlier.

Bibliography: Smirnov 1934; M. Lort’k’ip’anije 1981: 26-30, pl. 1.1; 5.1; Gagošidze 1985; Abka’i-Khavari 1988: 126; Lordkipanidze 1991: 154, 156, pl. 53.2-11; 54.1-2, 2001: 143-171, 182-185, fig. 2-16; Miron, Orthmann 1995: 161, 165-266, 305-306, nos 299-303, fig. 162, 166-167, 169; Gagošidze 1997: 123-125, 135.

### **Takhtidsiri**

North of the village Takhtidsiri (Šida Kartli) on the left banks of the river Eastern Prone a cemetery has been excavated. The burials of the 4th c. B.C. contained Greek as well as oriental (Iranian) imports and local imitations of those. The same is true for the later graves of the 2nd-1st c. B.C. The mostly unpublished finds are now in the Djanashia State Museum in Tbilisi (*e.g.* Parthian coins of Artashan I, Orod II and Mithridates III).

Bibliography: Gagošidze 2000: 51-58.

### **Cincqaro (Tsintsqaro)**

Near Cincqaro in the Algeti valley in 1940 a rich burial of the 4th c. B.C. was discovered, which contained an Achaemenid glass bowl as well as two silver phialai.

Not far from there, in Enageti, in 1990 another cemetery was excavated. Among the small finds in tomb no.16 were a so-called Kohl-tube and a Greek glass amphoriskos. The burial may be dated to the end of the 5th/beginning of the 4th c. B.C.

Bibliography: Saginašvili, Gagošije 1973: 81-98; Gagošidze, Saginašvili 2000: 67-68 fig. 1.2; 2.1; 3.2; Lordkipanidze 2001: 180, 182, fig. 24.

While J. Smirnov already in the early 20th century claimed an Achaemenid origin for some of the finds from Transcaucasia O. Lordkipanidze and some of his Georgian colleagues persistently deny a significant Achaemenid impact on the material culture of Georgia. They insist that most of these objects are of Hellenistic date—without a plausible explanation why Georgian craftsmen should have copied Achaemenid models after the fall of the empire. Although numerous finds come from graves and hoard finds which have been deposited in the late 4th c. B.C. or even later, there can be no doubt that most of the well known gold and silver vessels have been worked in Achaemenid times. Some of them are imports from Achaemenid workshops in Persia or Anatolia, others have been made in Colchis and Iberia by local craftsman who often gained their inspirations from concurrent Persian models, e.g. the famous horse-shaped pendants from Akhagori were locally made. Such precious objects give ample proof of close contacts with the Achaemenid empire. Nevertheless, they may have found their way to Georgia through trade or as diplomatic gifts.

What is the contribution of Transcaucasia, its archaeological sites and finds (*fig. 1*), for the archaeology of the Achaemenid empire? To my opinion, it is not just an increase of finds, a number of new sites providing Achaemenid bowls, seals, etc. which we already know from other areas of the empire! More important, the finds from Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia really do help to get new insights concerning life under Persian rule.

The great number of sites and the amount of finds related to the Achaemenids enables us to draw a lively picture of the development of the material culture in Achaemenid times. We may even draw conclusions concerning the development of society. The density and quality of Achaemenid monuments in this region, especially in Eastern Georgia, is striking. It isn't less impressing than what we know from Western Anatolia for example. Archaeology in the Caucasus will not change our entire image of the Achaemenid empire, but it may provide some interesting additional details.

Among the vast archaeological and historical literature there are only a handful of publications which take a more general view of the countries under discussion. For Georgia, D. Braund (1994) presents a decent historical overview. However, only selected archaeological monuments are mentioned and usually not treated in greater detail. For the interpretation of the written sources publications by M. Schottky (1989) and B. Meissner (2000) are of major importance. O. Lordkipanidze (1991) still gives the fullest account of the archaeological record in Georgia, but his commentaries often reflect a rather biased view, especially concerning any foreign influences. So far only J. Gagoshidze (1996) has treated the time of the Achaemenid empire as a distinct and important period in the development of Georgian art and architecture in a brief article. G. Tsatskhelidze (1993/1994, 1994, 2001, 2003) has collected a great number of objects that can be connected with the Achaemenids somehow, but he may be too generous concerning the attribution of items to Achaemenid craftsmen. Some of these objects rather derive from local workshops who became inspired by Achaemenid models.

A summary of the archaeology of Armenia by G. Tiratsjan (1988) unfortunately neglects the Achaemenid era. Some of the major sites of the Achaemenid period have been presented in the proceedings of two symposia in Tbilisi (2001) and Athens (2001).

For Azerbaijan a diachronical overview as well as detailed studies of single sites are still completely lacking. An article by A. Schachner (2001) may serve as an introduction. The author has gathered a significant number of sites from prehistoric times until late Iron Age. Some of the latter provide evidence for occupation in Achaemenid times. A brief summary of Azerbaijan in the Iron Age has been given by D. Chalilov (1985), however, only very few plans, drawings and photographs of even the major monuments have been published so far.

The discovery of monumental architecture in Eastern Georgia and Western Azerbaijan for example (*fig. 2-3*), is closely related to models from the centre of the empire and gives ample proof of at least temporary Persian presence on the northwestern border of their empire.

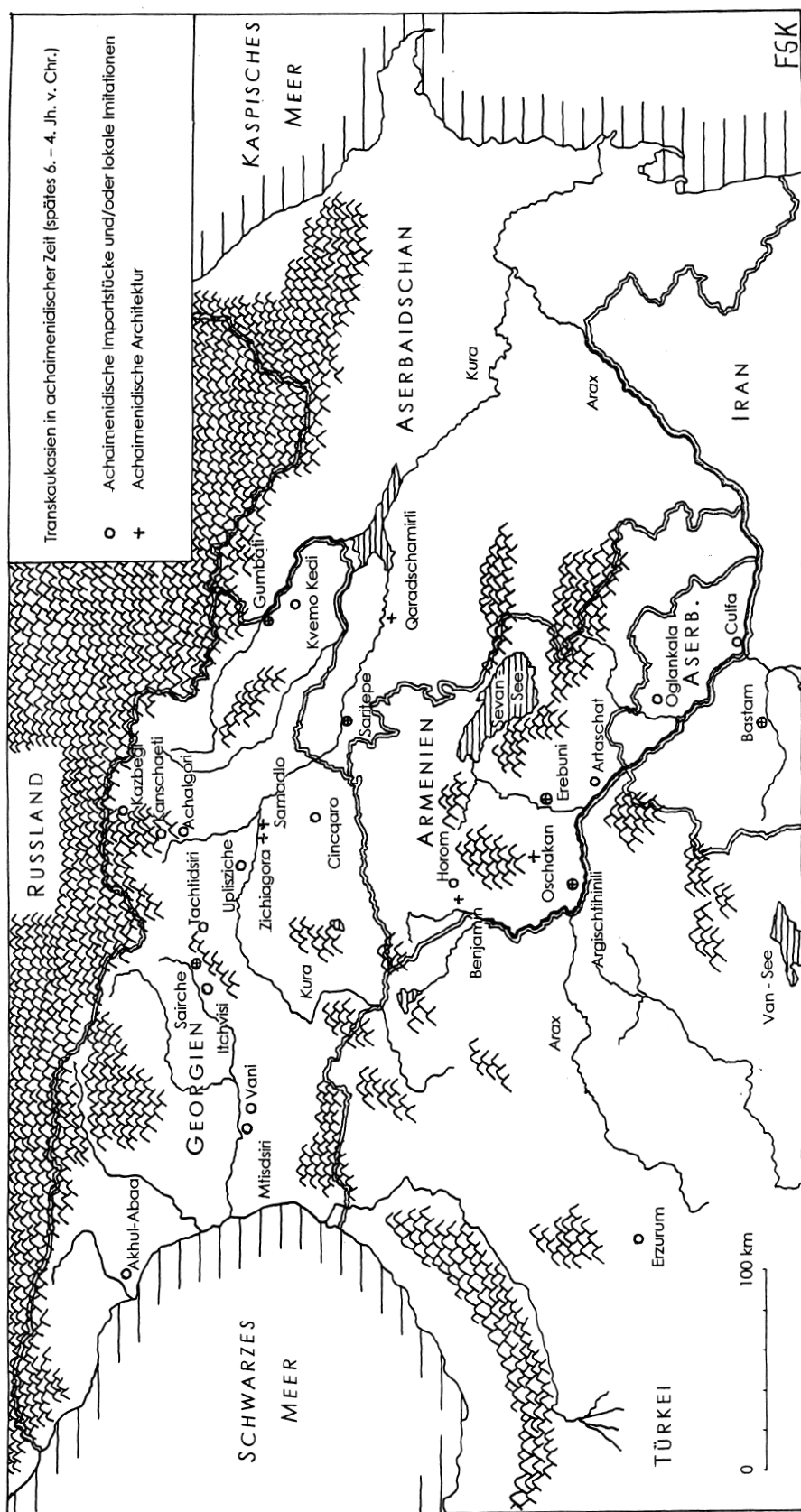


Fig. 1—(Map 1) Transcaucasia in Achaemenid times.

Until the 1970s excavations of Iron Age settlements were almost completely lacking in Georgia. J. Gagoshidze was the first to emphasize the important role of the Achaemenids in this region when he compared the tower temple in Samadlo, Central Georgia, with similar buildings in the Urartian and Achaemenid empire. The excavation of another huge building in Gumbati, Eastern Georgia, provided further evidence for his assumptions (Knauss 1999c, 2000, 2001). In the meantime we know about monumental architecture closely related to Achaemenid prototypes from at least five sites in Central and Eastern Georgia (Sairkhe, Samadlo, Zikhiagora, Uplistsikhe, and Gumbati), which prove the presence of Persians in Iberia (Eastern Georgia) for a longer time. Similar plans and architectural ornamentations are known exclusively from Achaemenid palaces, temples or similar official buildings, as G. Kipiani has shown in his detailed investigations (1987, 1993).

## **Sairkhe**

The village Sairkhe is situated on the Eastern hillside of the river Kwirila in the easternmost part of Colchis (Zemo Imereti). Since 1957 remains of settlements have been excavated on several hills. At a place called Lominauri N. Gambaschidse found the remains of a temple (?) building. Until the present day a plan of the architecture has not been published. Two limestone-capitals from this building are now in the Museum of Fine Arts in Tbilisi. B. Shefton proposed that they have been worked in late Achaemenid workshops.

The settlement at Sairkhe, which existed at least since the 8th/7th c. B.C., had become a regional centre in the 5th c. B.C. On a hill named Sabaduris Gora there is a necropolis where burials of the local aristocracy have been excavated in recent years. The small finds in these rich graves of the 5th-4th c. B.C. (golden pendants with depictions of Ahuramazda, a glass phiala, etc.) give further support to the theory that Sairkhe played a major role in the Colchian kingdom which most probably stood under Persian supremacy at that time.

In Hellenistic times (3rd-1st c. B.C.) Sairkhe remained to be an important settlement. The excavator D. Nadiradse identifies the site with "Sarake" mentioned by Claudius Ptolemaeus (Geography 9, 6). From the archaeological record it seems that the ties with Central and Eastern Georgia (kingdom of Iberia) became closer now.

Bibliography: Nadiraje 1975: 80-145, 164-166, pl. 22, 25-26, 27.1-2, 28.2, 1990a; Nadiradse 1990b: 213-222; Braund 1994: 123, 126-127, 129-131, 145; Shefton 1993: 178-209; Boardman 1994: 221-222, fig. 6.52; Gagoshidze 1996: 133, fig. 5, pl. 13.2; G. Maxaraje 1997: 12-20, 1998: 24-29, 54.

## **Uplistsikhe (Upliszikhe)**

Uplistsikhe is situated on the left banks of the river Kura, 10 km east of Gori. Since Hellenistic times, monumental architecture was carved out of the limestone rocks. It is still uncertain whether Uplistsikhe was only a necropolis or whether it sometimes served as an acropolis for the surrounding settlements. In the Western and Southern part steep rocks made the site almost inaccessible. In Hellenistic-Roman times additional moats, walls and towers built with ashlar and bricks gave further protection in the North and East. Then, at least some of the rock shelters served for religious purposes.

In a crevice a chariot burial of the 4th c. B.C. was found. The remaining parts of the wheels belong to a type of chariot well known from Assyria and Achaemenid Persia. Among the small finds in this grave was a Greek terracotta figurine. Its type is well known from the necropolis of Tanagra/Boeotia. Not far from this burial, G. Kipiani (1999) reconstructed a tower-like building close to Achaemenid prototypes, but the archaeological evidence is scanty.

Bibliography: Gagoshidze 1996: 133, n. 41; K'ip'iani 1999: 7-18, 2000: 74-95; Licheli 2001: 253.

## Zikhiagora (Zikhia-Gora, Kawtiskhevi)

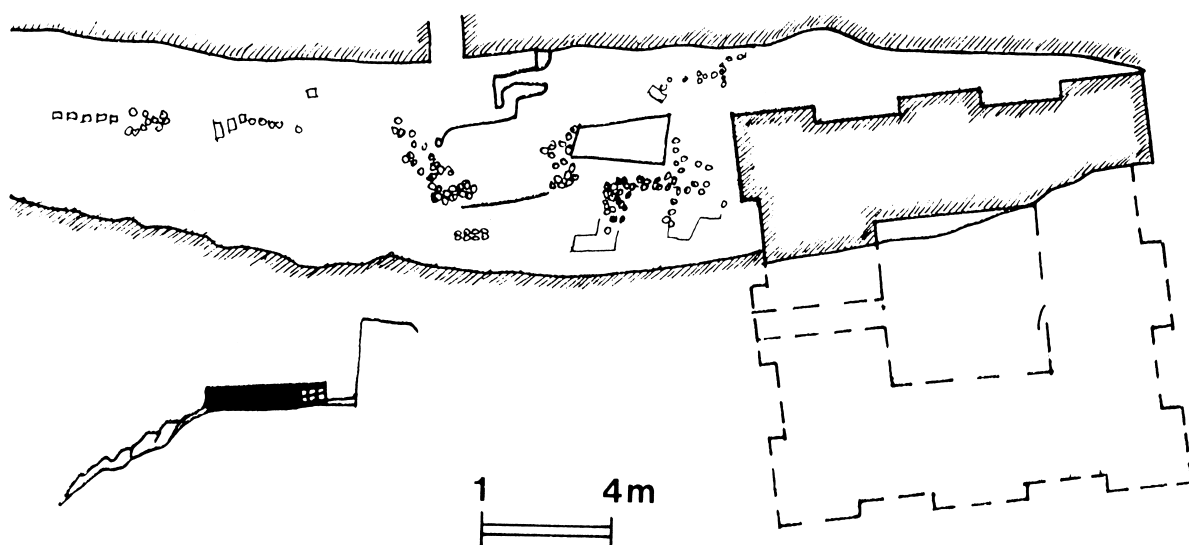
Since 1971 a hill called Zikhiagora (Šida Kartli) is the aim of extensive archaeological investigations. There once was an architectural complex encircled by a stone-wall with rectangular towers. Most scholars are convinced that it once was a sanctuary, but only two buildings may be interpreted as temples. They have been connected with Zoroastrian religious habits. The date of this complex is still under debate. Most of the monumental buildings, which have been excavated so far, were probably erected in the 3rd-2nd c. B.C. However, some finds seem to be of an earlier date. There is evidence for an occupation of the site already in the Achaemenid era. Among the finds without stratified context are pottery of the so-called “Samadlo-type” as well as a fragment of a bell-shaped column base. Similar bases have been found in Gumbati, Qaradshamirli, Sari Tepe and Benjamin. The famous bull protome capital (*fig. 7*) was found in a 3rd/2nd c. B.C. level of the main (fire) temple, but in secondary use. It is not unlikely that it belonged to an earlier building in Achaemenid times.

Bibliography: Lordkipanidse 1991: 152-154, *fig. 72.1*; Zkitischwili 1995: 86-96; Gagoshidze 1996: 132-134, *fig. 4*; Knauß 1999b: 180-181; Z. Maxaraje 1999: 57-66; Gagošidze, Kipiani 2000: 59-64, *fig. 1.7-8, 2, 3*; Licheli 2001: 251, 256.

## Samadlo

Samadlo is situated on the banks of the river Kura. On three hills J. Gagoshidze excavated remains of Iron Age settlements. In the earliest levels on Samadlo III simple structures of the late 8th or early 7th c. B.C. have been interpreted as remains of a ceremonial site. In the 5th or early 4th c. B.C. a tower (*fig. 2*) had been erected on top of the hill which recalls Achaemenid models such as the Zendan-e Sulaiman in Pasargadae and the Kaabah-e Zardusht in Naqsh-e Rostam.

On Samadlo I and II—since the early 20th century divided by a deep ravine, but in antiquity forming one hill—several buildings from the late 4th to the mid-2nd c. B.C. have been unearthed. A limestone relief carved in an oriental style as well as painted pottery of the so-called “Samadlo-Style” belong to an early Hellenistic phase (4th-3rd c. B.C.).



*Fig. 2—Samadlo, temple tower, 5th/4th c. B.C.*

Bibliography: Gagošidze 1979, 1981; Kleiss 1992: 91-94; Lordkipanidse 1991: 148-153, fig. 69; 70.1-5; 71; Gagoshidze 1996: 129-130, 133-134, fig. 3 pl. 13.3-4; Knauf 1999c: 94.

## Kvemo-Kedi

In the easternmost part of Georgia, at a site called Kvemo-Kedi (Širaki), a complex has been uncovered which was a bronze foundry according to the Georgian excavator. Here, in a 6th c. B.C. level a clay phiala was found strongly reminiscent of Achaemenid metal bowls. Similar clay vessels are known from Gumbati.

Bibliography: Picchelaury 1979: 34-43.

## Gumbati

In Kakheti in Eastern Georgia parts of a huge building of the Achaemenid era have been excavated in the Alasani valley at a site called Gumbati. The ground plan as well as a number of architectural details closely link this monument with a building at Sari Tepe in Azerbaijan. Similar bell-shaped column bases have been found in Qaradshamirli/Azerbaijan and Benjamin/Armenia, too. The prototypes of such monumental architecture are royal palaces in Persepolis and Susa. Since any forerunners in the local East Georgian architecture are missing the monumental building in Gumbati must have been planned and built by foreign, namely Achaemenid craftsmen. Architectural plan and small finds make it probable that it served as the residence of a Persian officer or a local chieftain—as vassal of the Great King. Anyway, it gives ample proof of Persian presence in this region, at least for a while. The pottery is of local provenance, but some bowls copy Achaemenid metal prototypes. The ceramic material from the “palace” -level dates to the later 5th or early 4th c. B.C. However, the historical background suggests that the Persians gained control over Eastern Georgia already in the time of Dareios I (521-486). The “palace” in Gumbati as well as similar structures at Sari Tepe, Qaradshamirli and Benjamin probably formed a kind of network of administrative headquarters from where e.g. the delivery of tributes could be controlled.

Bibliography: Furtwängler 1995: 177-211; Furtwängler, Knauf 1996: 363-381; Gagoshidze 1996: 129-130, fig. 2, pl. 13.1; Furtwängler, Knauf 1997: 353-354; Kipiani 1998: 31-47, 113; Knauf 1999: 81-114, 2000: 119-130; Knauss 2001: 125-143, [forthcoming a].

Recent excavations have shown that the architecture of the early Iron Age in Central and Eastern Georgia was rather modest. It must not be linked with the monumental buildings described above. The local architecture not only lacks their monumental size but also a number of constructional details: regular mud bricks, recesses, stepped walls and stone masonry. The quality of execution of the buildings in Gumbati, Zikhiagora and Sairkhe makes us suspect that at least some of the craftsmen were foreigners. The column-bases and capitals show that the builder-owners had close relationships to the Achaemenid empire.

From the archaeological record we may conclude that before the arrival of the Persians there were no large supraregional political institutions, which would have been able to create monumental architectural complexes.<sup>4</sup> In a region without any prototypes of monumental mud brick and stone architecture buildings such as the palaces in Sari Tepe and Gumbati and the temple tower in Samadlo must have been planned and built by architects and craftsmen trained in Iran, Mesopotamia or Anatolia.

<sup>4</sup> Now Knauf, [forthcoming b].



It is interesting to contrast the implementation of Achaemenid elements in Georgia with Western Anatolia. Elspeth Dusingberre in her recent publication on “*Aspects of empire in Achaemenid Sardis*” deals with the question how life was in Sardis under the Achaemenids, and in particular how much the foreign rulers affected the local culture.<sup>5</sup> While Sardis was the capital of an important satrapy and the former capital of the Lydian kingdom, Eastern Georgia neither had reached a similar state of civilization nor did any recognizable state exist before the arrival of the Persians. The art and architecture of Georgia reflects a paradigmatic process of acculturation, that affected all levels of society.<sup>6</sup> When the Persians conquered Babylon, Egypt, or Lydia they rather adopted the local models than trying to implement their own eclectic art and architecture which hardly existed at that time. But the local vassals or Persian officials who built their residences in Sari Tepe, Qaradshamirli, Gumbati and Zikhiagora didn’t have the possibility to take over the palaces of the local leaders because they simply didn’t exist. Excavations of pre-Achaemenid sites in this region provide at most ring-shaped rampart complexes, which can be interpreted as regional sanctuaries and refuges, as well as modest private houses with pisé-walls.

Since 1994 a Georgian-German team has made surveys and excavations in the easternmost part of Georgia, in Kakheti. They started in Gumbati in the lower Alasani valley. One of the major goals is the investigation of the Achaemenid influence upon the local material culture in this region. Two symposia in Tbilisi in 1997 and 2000 were devoted to “Iberia (Kingdom of Kartli) and its Neighbours in Achaemenid and Post-Achaemenid Times”. Since 1996 the investigations focus on settlements of the early 1st millennium B.C. in the Shiraki plains. In the 8th-7th c. B.C. many of these settlements were destroyed by mounted nomads (Cimmerians, Scythians?).

## Shiraki

The Shiraki plain is situated between the rivers Alazani (north) and Iori (south) about 600 m above sea level. Steep slopes in the east border on Lake Mingcevir/Azerbaijan, in the West it is limited by the Gombori mountain range. The only access here is the so-called Uzun Dara-Gate. Surveys and excavations have been carried out at Ciskaraant Gora, Nazarlebi, Noname Gora, Didi Gora, Uzun Dara, etc. in order to explore the character and typology of early Iron Age settlements in this region.

Bibliography: Furtwängler, Knauf 1997: 353-387; Furtwängler, Knauf, Motzenbäcker 1998: 309-364, 1999: 233-270; Ludwig, Tauscher 2003: 5-10;  
<http://www.altertum.uni-halle.de/archaeology/projects/georgien/grabungen.html>

It is often said that tolerance towards indigenous cultures and habits was characteristic of the Persian rule. This kind of “liberality” serves as a usual explanation for the extensive lack of discernible Achaemenid art and architecture in many parts of the empire. In Georgia, however, one can touch Achaemenid art almost undistorted.

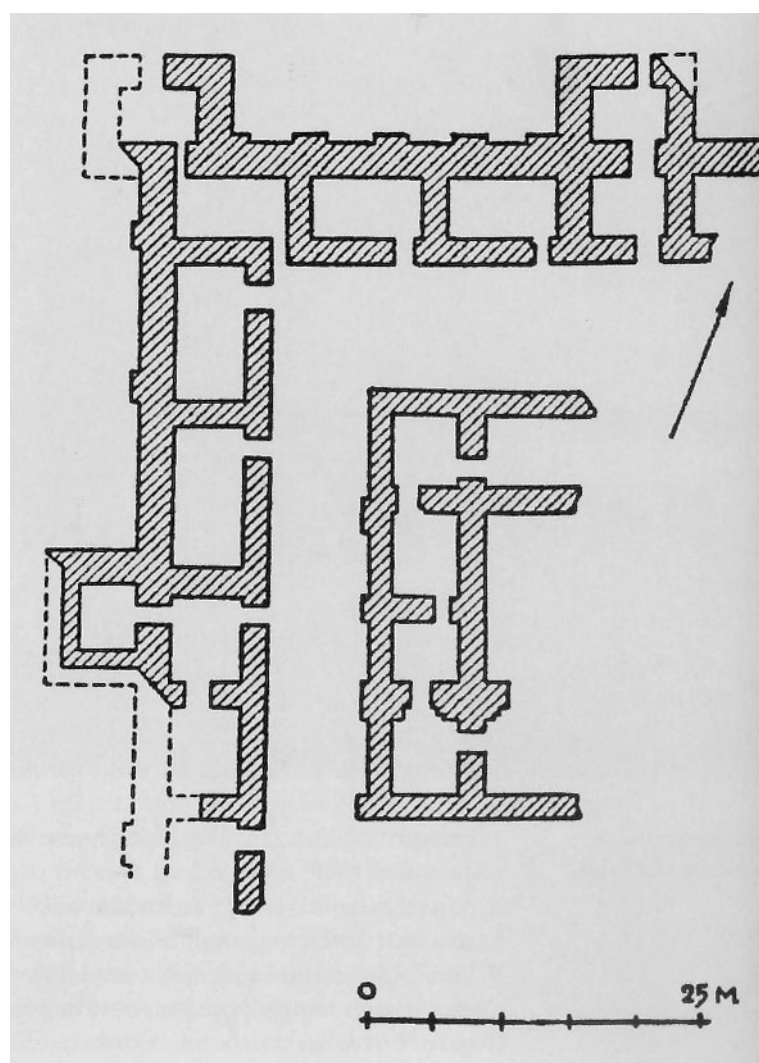
As we learn from the graves and hoard finds since the late 6th c. B.C. the local aristocracy received precious glass, gold and silver objects, most probably diplomatic gifts from the Great king or

<sup>5</sup> Dusingberre 2003.

<sup>6</sup> Here we can observe the acculturation not only of the local elite, but of the common people, too. The impact of Achaemenid rule (and Greek colonization) on the cultural development in Georgia is the major goal of investigations by U. Sens, N. Ludwig and the author himself forming part of a research program by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft; cf. Knauf [forthcoming a]; Ludwig, Tauscher 2003: 5-10; Ludwig [forthcoming a, b]; Sens 2003: 237-240; <http://www.altorientalistik.uni-mainz.de/achaimeniden/>

his satraps to ensure their loyalty (*fig. 4*). Local workshops, for instance the highly developed gold smiths, immediately copied these precious objects. We have some indications that the adoption of Achaemenid models didn't remain superficial. The tower in Samadlo (*fig. 2*), which has been mentioned before, suggests that some Georgians already in the 5th c. B.C. adopted religious beliefs of the foreigners. In Hellenistic times there can be no doubt that the aristocracy and the mountaineers who were traditionally loyal to the Georgian kings were Zoroastrians.<sup>7</sup> And even ordinary people didn't remain untouched. The change from greyish, low fired wares to reddish hard-fired pottery in the 6th or early 5th c. B.C. must be explained by the introduction of new technologies from Iran, because at the same time we observe some new shapes closely following Achaemenid prototypes (*fig. 5*). See also in Iran, below Boucharlat's paper p. 258.

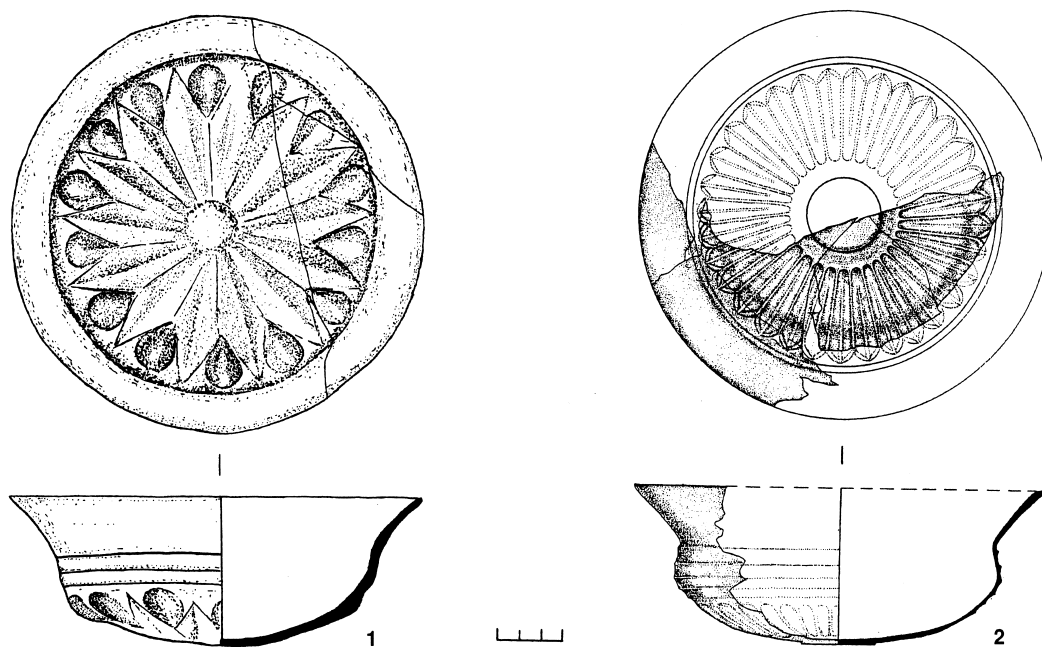
In Azerbaijan the situation may have been similar, as the few published results from Sari Tepe (*fig. 3*) and Qaradshamirli suggest, but until the present day there has been hardly any archaeological investigation of late Iron Age sites worth mentioning east of Lake Mingcevir.<sup>8</sup>



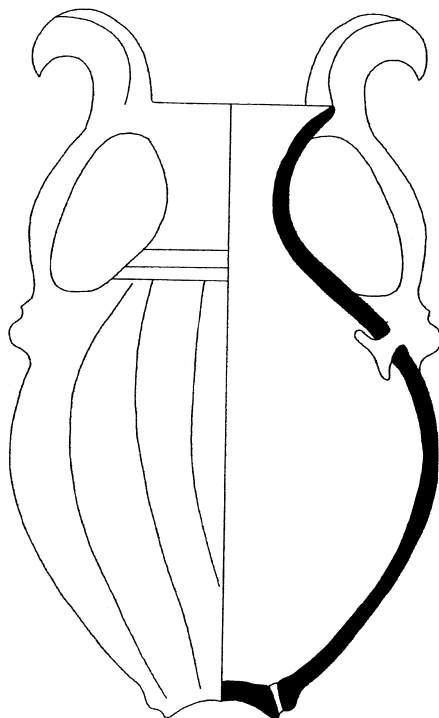
*Fig. 3—Sari Tepe, Achaemenid palace, 5th/4th c. B.C.*

<sup>7</sup> Gagoshidze 1996: 135-136.

<sup>8</sup> We find Achaemenid shapes among the pottery from Kara Tepe in the Mil Steppe; Ismizade 1965: 215-217, fig. 19.



*Fig. 4—Glass phialai from Sairkhe (1) and Tsintskaro (2), 5th-4th c. B.C.*



*Fig. 5—Amphora-rhyton from Takhtidsiri, early 3rd c. B.C.*

The archaeological remains at Qaradshamirli and Sari Tepe in Western Azerbaijan show significant parallels to the “palace” in Gumbati concerning their location, building plan, architectural sculpture and the ceramic material. It seems highly probable that the column bases from Gumbati and Qaradshamirli even had been made in the same workshop. The lack of systematical archaeological investigations does not allow us to draw a representative picture of Azerbaijan in Achaemenid times. Many of the sites, especially those in Nahicevan, have not been visited by the author so far.

## **Sari Tepe**

On the outskirts of the modern town Kazakh in the Kura valley I. Narimanov conducted archaeological excavations in the late 1950s. He uncovered the western part of an extensive structure (*fig. 3*) which reminds one of Achaemenid palaces. Two bell-shaped column bases—today in the Historical Museum of Baku—as well as the pottery support this impression. The column bases form a variation of type B according to the classification of Wesenberg (1971: 144), which is well known from Susa, but from Benjamin, Gumbati and Qaradshamirli, too.

Bibliography: Narimanov 1960: 162-164; Chalilov 1985: 44, Taf. I; Furtwängler 1995: 183-184; Furtwängler, Knauf 1996: 374-376, fig. 10; Knauf 1999c: 94-96, 101-103, fig. 9, 10c, 11, 15; Kipiani 1998: 31-47, 113; Schachner 2001: 308-309, fig. 37.

## **Qaradshamirli (Karadschamirli Köyi)**

Northeast of fiamkir in Western Azerbaijan near the village Qaradshamirli a local peasant had found a column base of Persepolitan type. Cut into two pieces it now rests in the courtyard of his farm. The material (limestone) as well as the execution of several details suggest that it had been worked in the same workshop as the bell-shaped column bases from Gumbati 60 km to the north. There have been no regular archaeological investigations at the site. However, ceramic chance finds on a flat mound near the find spot of the base hint at a middle or late Iron Age settlement. The dimensions of the mound as well as the location of the site in a broad valley near the river Kura can be compared to Gumbati, too.

Bibliography: Furtwängler, Knauf 1996: 374-376, fig. 9-10.

## **Culfa**

In Southern Azerbaijan griffon-shaped bronze legs of some kind of furniture have been found near Culfa in Nahicevan. For stylistic reasons the excavators Aliyev and Agazade proposed an Achaemenid origin. However, to judge from the figures in the publications it seems likely that they rather belong to a Roman fulcrum. No archaeological context has been recorded.

Bibliography: Aliyev, Agazade 1986: 75-80, fig. p. 76; Schachner 2001: 308, n. 80.

## **Oglankala (Oglanqala)**

There are quite a few Iron Age fortifications in Nahicevan, getting bigger and more sophisticated from about the middle of the 1st millennium B.C. onwards. Oglankala is one of the largest fortified sites that has been thoroughly investigated. It was not just a refuge. Dense buildings inside the walls testify of a permanent occupation.

Stone walls with regular buttresses may be compared typologically to Qal'eh Gavur (Kleiss/Kroll 1976: 108-113 fig. 2-5). The preliminary analysis of the pottery, *i.e.* the total lack of either Urartian or Hellenistic-Parthian wares, may suggest a date in the time of the Median or Achaemenid empire. The column bases which have been found *in situ* in the levels of this phase stress the importance of the

site, but they do not show any Iranian (Achaemenid) influence. Huge round towers of the latest phase may belong to the same period or to a Hellenistic restoration.

Simultaneously, with significant changes in the architecture of Nahicevan one can observe similar changes of the local pottery as in Iberia (Central- and Eastern Georgia); cf. Gagoshidze 1996: 125. Reddish and black-polished hard-fired wares slowly replace the typical low-fired grey wares of early Iron Age.

Bibliography: Bahcaliyev 1994: 106-120, fig. 1, 6; Schachner 2001: 310-311, 313, 318, fig. 42-44.

The Persian conquest of Armenia on the other hand didn't have such far-reaching effects on the material culture. Yet, an analysis of the transition from Urartian (via Median) to Achaemenid rule, which has been studied in greater detail for example at Bastam 30 years ago, in Armenia still has to be done. So far, it seems that the local tradition of Armenia has been much stronger than in Georgia and Azerbaijan. This is true not only for the architecture—the new rulers often occupied former Urartian residences—but also for the applied arts. Achaemenid bowls, rhyta and bracelets sometimes inspired Armenian gold- and silver-smiths but the pottery, for example, does not display any external influence.

In Armenia, which had been part of the Urartian kingdom until the early 6th c. B.C., a number of former Urartian residences in the southern part of the country are known that have been re-used with minor modifications during Achaemenid rule, such as Erebouni, or Argıştihenale. In Benjamin, Northern Armenia, a huge building had been erected in Achaemenid times without discernable forerunners. However, here the indigenous element in the architecture as well as in the pottery is definitely stronger than in Eastern Georgia and Western Azerbaijan.

## **Benjamin (Draskhanakert)**

About 10 km southwest of Kumairi (Gümri, former Leninakan) in Western Armenia F. Ter-Martirossov uncovered several monumental architectural complexes since the late 1980s. Three different phases of a huge building can be distinguished (5th-1st c. B.C.). The earliest levels must be contemporary with the “palaces” in Sari Tepe and Gumbati. The shape of the column bases, worked in local black tufa, is reminiscent of the finds at these sites. The excavator assumes that this building had cultic functions in the first stance. This interpretation remains uncertain as no significant cultic installations or small finds have been observed. Even a palatial use seems possible. Bell-shaped column bases seem to belong to this earliest phase, however, simple bases with a torus profile as well as capitals decorated with leaves can not be ascribed to any building phase with certainty.

Bibliography: Zardarian, Akopian 1994: 187, fig. 6; Furtwängler, Knauß 1996: 377, fig. 10; Ter-Martirossov 1996a: 187-189, 2001: 158-161, fig. 4-5; Knauss 2001: 130, 133.

## **Horom**

Since 1994 an Armenian-American-German expedition explores the Shirak plain in Northwestern Armenia. An Armenian-American team already worked there between 1990 and 1993.

The investigations focus on Horom, near the city of Artik. Horom is the major site in this area, measuring 200m by 500m. It was inhabited since the early Bronze Age. In Urartian times (8th-7th c. B.C.) a huge fortification was built. The walls are partly preserved up to a height of 4 m. The major goal of the excavations is to investigate the transition from the Urartian to the Median-Persian period. So far, a single Achaemenid seal is the only witness of Persian influence.

Bibliography: Badaljan, Kohl, Stronach 1994: 1-29; Badaljan, Kohl, Kroll 1997: 191-228; Kroll 1998: 33-34; Kohl, Kroll 1999: 243-259; <http://www.vaa.fak12.uni-muenchen.de/Armenia/horom.html>

## Ochmik

Ochmik, on the banks of the river Niliget, a tributary of the Achurjan in Northwestern Armenia, has been excavated since 1987. A number of houses of the 2nd c. B.C. and the 3rd c. A.D. had been erected on a ledge. Three column-halls reminded the excavators of Urartian buildings at Teišebai URU and Aragac. Triggered by certain installations (altars) as well as several small finds they interpreted some buildings as temple complex of a sun god, extended by economic entities. H. Akopjan takes the architecture at Ochmik as a proof of the reception of the Urartian legacy in Achaemenid and Hellenistic times. However, so far there is no evidence for any occupation of this site before the 2nd c. B.C.

Bibliography: Akopjan, Vardanian, Zindschirdschjan 1992; Akopjan 2000: 21-35, fig. 1-2.

## Argištihenale (Armavir)

Regular archaeological excavations at Argištihenale (today called Armavir) started as early as 1964. Once an important Urartian centre, the ancient city lost its prominent role after the fall in 585 B.C. However, in Achaemenid times the top of the hill was still inhabited. It is difficult to define an "Achaemenid" level, but several renovations, e.g. a hall in the western part of the citadel, have been linked with the Achaemenid occupation by Armenian archaeologists. The ceramic assemblage sometimes shows close affinities to Achaemenid shapes. Nevertheless, it remains uncertain whether these vessels have been made in Achaemenid or in Hellenistic times. Some of the cuneiform tablets with Elamite texts date from the 6th or 5th c. B.C. The content of these documents, however, is a matter of debate (see Diakonoff, Jankowska, Koch, Vallat).

Bibliography: Arakeljan 1969; Martirosjan 1974; Kafadarjan 1975; Tiratsjan 1988; Diakonoff, Jankowska 1990: 102-123; Koch 1993: 219-236; Karapetjan 1996; Mahé 1996: 1279-1312; Vallat 1997: 258-270; Kanetsyan 2001: 145-153, fig. 3-6, 9.

## Erebuni (Arin Berd)

The Urartian fortress Erebuni on a hill called Arin Berd is situated on the eastern outskirts of Erevan. Archaeological investigations began in 1950. According to the archaeological evidence the fortress has not been destroyed at the time of the fall of the Urartian empire, whereas Teišebai URU (Karmir Blur) on the northwestern border of Erevan (excavated since 1939 by B. Piotrovskij), residence of the Urartian governor of Transcaucasia was razed to the ground and completely abandoned in the second half of the 6th c. B.C. In Achaemenid times Erebuni was an important administrative centre.

In the 1990s F. Ter-Martirossov started to dig at this site again. His investigations mainly focus on the Achaemenid levels. From the preliminary reports one gets the impression that a number of column-halls have been redesigned in a significant way.

Bibliography: Tiratsian 1960: 99-115; Oganessian 1961: 75-79, 1980; Ter-Martirossov 1996b: 1279-1312, 2001: 157-158, 160, fig. 3, [forthcoming]; Kanetsyan 2001: 145-153, fig. 1-2; <http://www.erébouni.ontheweb.com>

## Oshakan

In the 1980s S. Esajan and A. Kalantarjan uncovered two architectural complexes on the banks of the Kasakh. The so-called "palace complex" on the foot of the hill was occupied from the 7th through the 4th c. B.C. In Achaemenid times a rectangular hall was built where the excavators found cylindrical stone bases; wooden columns must have supported the ceiling. To judge from the small

finds, this room had a religious function. However, neither the architecture nor the small finds published so far can prove direct Achaemenid influence at Oshakan.

Bibliography: Jesajan, Kalantarjan 1988; Ter-Martirossov 2001: 155-156, fig. 1.

While all these phenomena might be found in a similar way in some other parts of the empire the aftermath of Achaemenid rule in Transcaucasia, especially in Georgia, is something special. The archaeological evidence makes obvious that at least some of the local vassals of the Great King were able to maintain their regional position of power which they had gained under the Persians. The “palace” in Gumbati is abandoned some time in the later 4th c. B.C. But the excavation results at Sairkhe, Zikhiagora (*fig. 6-7*) and Samadlo give evidence for continuity rather than a break. Monumental architecture and the art of metal-working still follow Achaemenid models, and the painted pottery in central and eastern Georgia is very much indebted to the late Achaemenid so-called “triangle ware”.<sup>9</sup> A number of fire temples show that some kind of Zoroastrianism is the religion of the ruling class, at least. In most parts of the former Achaemenid empire, only few Achaemenid elements of the material culture survived in a distinct hellenized form. When the palaces in Persepolis and Susa were razed to the ground, when Achaemenid elements in the arts were almost imperceptible even in Persia, at this time the Achaemenid legacy was flourishing in the art and architecture of Georgia (*fig. 8*).<sup>10</sup> The followers of the Persians in Georgia had every reason to adhere to the Achaemenid symbols and traditions. They knew that they were owing their regional position of power and perhaps even their legitimation to the Achaemenids. And there was hardly any alternative, if they didn’t want to get back to their former huts.

The evolution of the kingdom of Kartli, or Iberia as it was called in Greek and Latin sources, the first state that included wide parts of modern Georgia, occurred almost two centuries later in the mid 2nd c. B.C.<sup>11</sup> The name of the legendary first king, Pharnavas (Pharnabazos), signals his Iranian descent. His mother was said to be Persian. The administration followed Persian prototypes. A number of names for state officers as well as cultic terms in the earliest Georgian texts betray Persian origin. Since the time of Alexander the Great the material culture in Iberia had developed, indigenous and foreign (Persian and Greek) elements were amalgamated. Thus, in this final stage, an unmistakable new art and architecture was formed. Nevertheless, some Achaemenid roots are discernable: the plan of the main temple at Dedoplist Mindori (*fig. 9*) recalls Achaemenid and Post-Achaemenid temples and gateways; and the name of the Iberian capital Armazistsikh, *i.e.* “castle of Armazi/Ahuramazda”, proves that Georgia further received decisive impulses from Iran. It is especially remarkable that in Iberia Achaemenid traditions do not end before the 1st c. B.C. For instance, Iberian toreutics and glyptic art of the 1st c. B.C. still follow Achaemenid prototypes.

The long tradition of Zoroastrianism in Georgia (until the 19th century) may be explained by steady contacts with Persia and Media Atropatene. However, the continued existence of Achaemenid architectural elements and iconography, especially in glyptic art, in Post-Achaemenid times is amazing, all the more no similar traces of Achaemenid art and architecture can be found in Persia itself at that time. The following sites betray the Achaemenid legacy in Georgia after the fall of the empire.

**9** A small jug from Takhtidsiri is imported, whereas at Itkhvisi we find local imitations of “triangle ware”.

**10** In Georgia the situation is apparently different, probably, because the Macedonian army never touched this region during Alexander’s campaigns. A part of Media, approximately the territory of modern Azerbaijan, was left to the satrap Atropates. Unfortunately, not a single site from this period in Azerbaijan has been excavated.

**11** Meissner 2000: 203; Knauss [*forthcoming c.*].

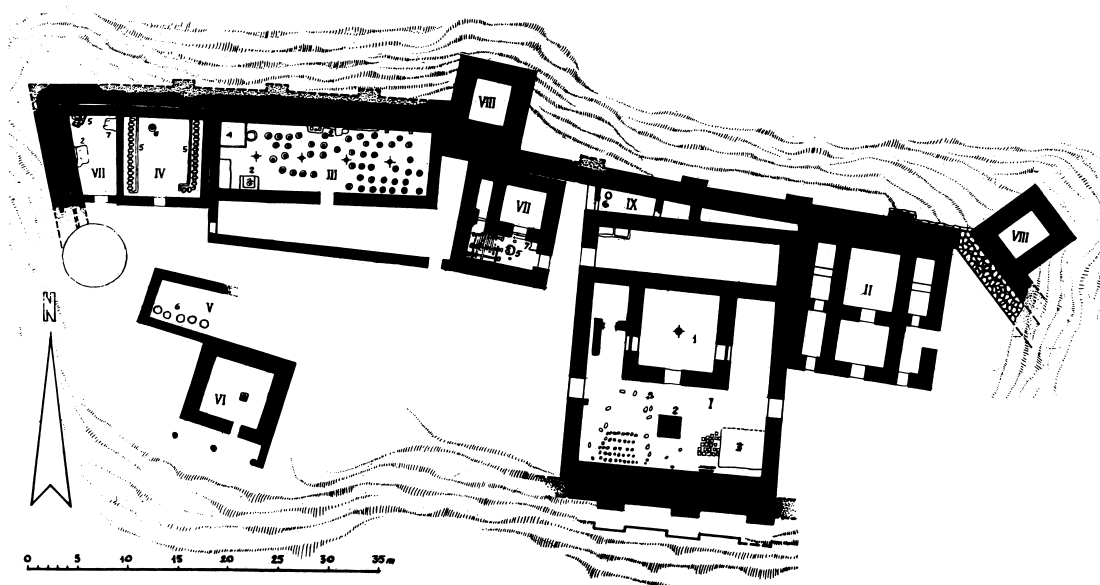


Fig. 6—Zikhiagora, sanctuary, 3rd-2nd c. B.C.: I main temple; II granary; III wine cellar; IV mill; V bakery; VI dining room (?); VII temple (?); VIII towers; IX room with an open hearth; 1 cella; 2 altars; 3 sacrificial altar (?); 4 wine press; 5 grain mortars; 6 ovens; 7 stove.

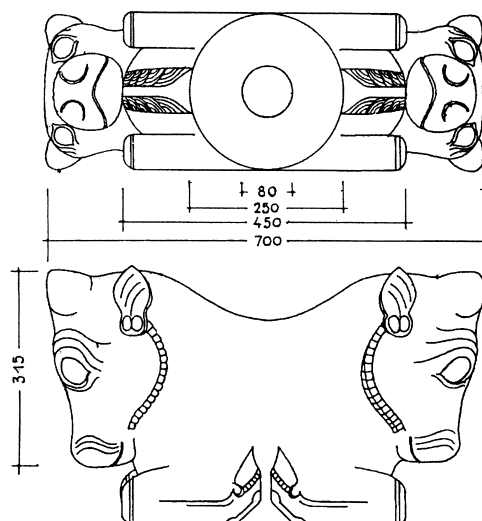


Fig. 7—Zikhiagora, limestone capital, 4th/3rd c. B.C.



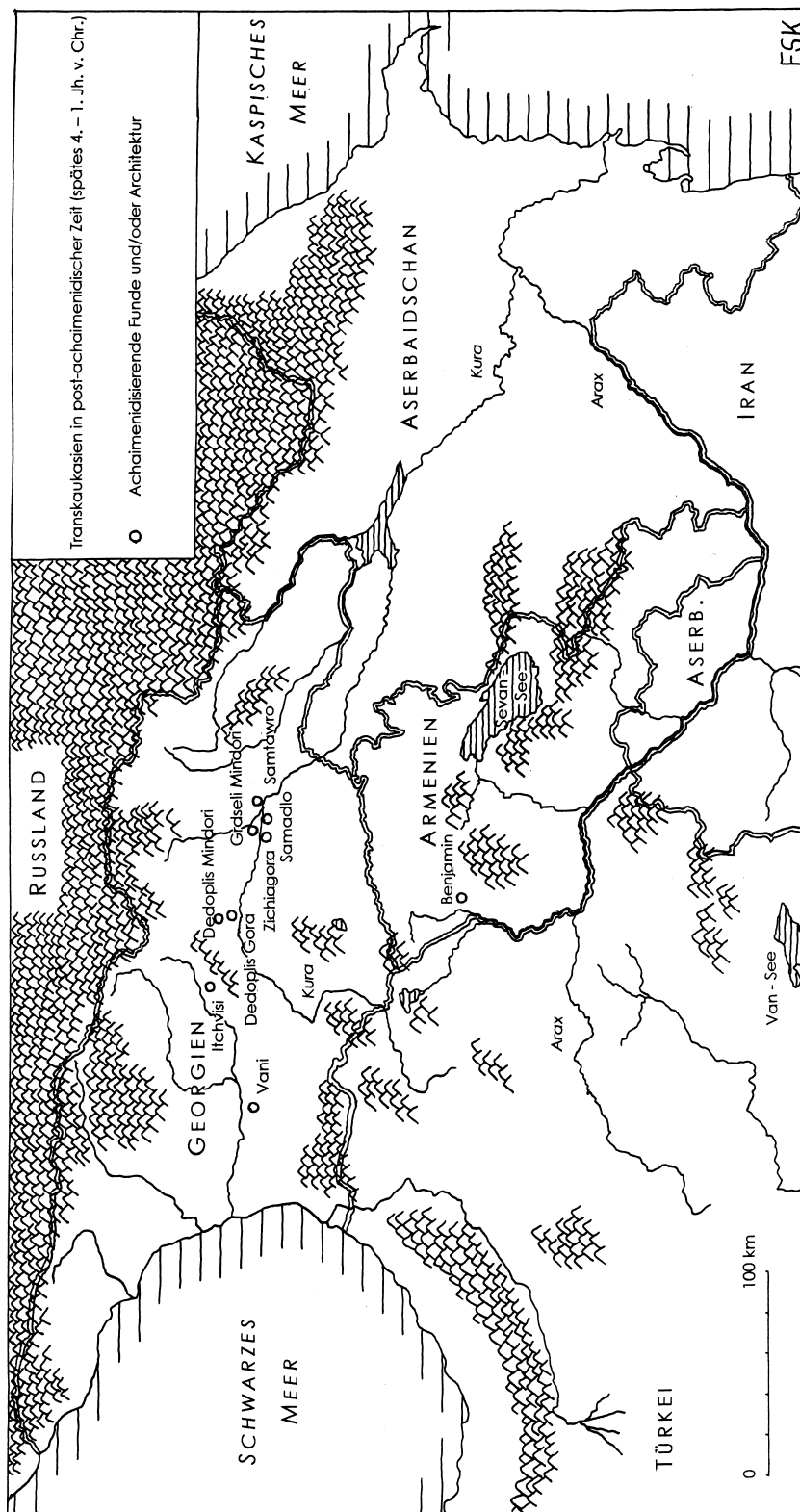


Fig. 8—(Map 2) Transcaucasia in Post-Achaemenid times

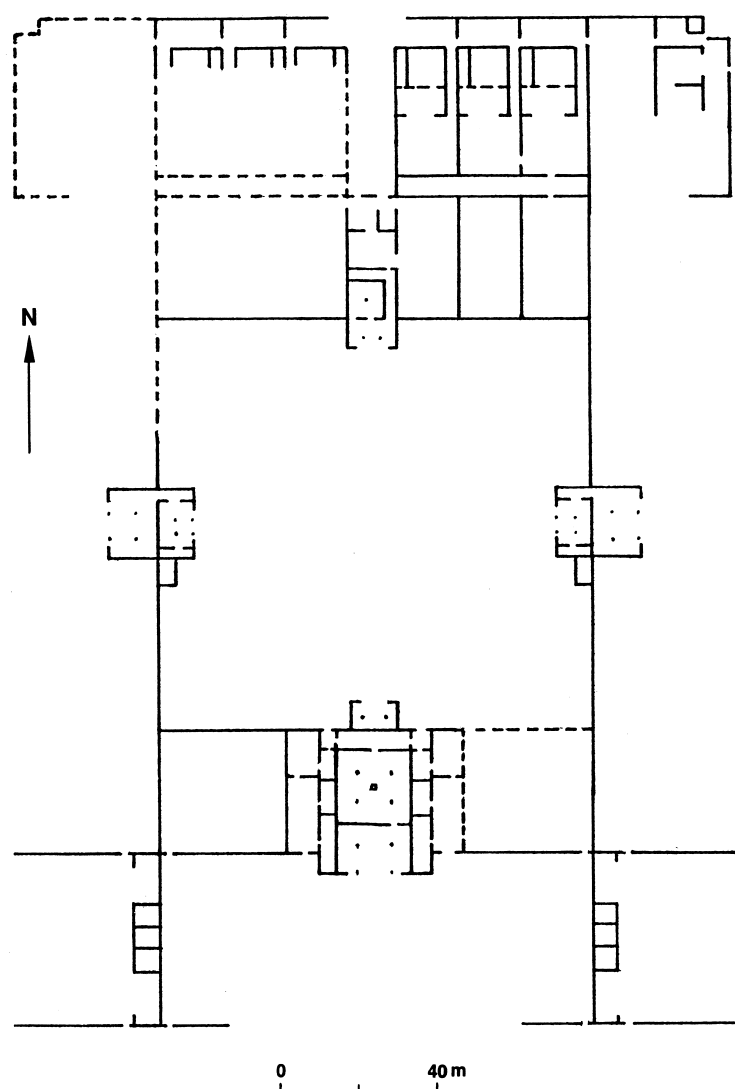


Fig. 9—Dedoplis Mindori, sanctuary, 2nd c. B.C.-1st c. A.D.

## Dedoplis Gora

On a natural hill called Dedoplis Gora, situated on the banks of the Western Prone, a tributary of the Kura, a huge architectural complex had been erected at the end of the 2nd c. B.C. on the ruins of chalcolithic, late Bronze Age and early Iron Age settlements. This “palace” was destroyed at the same time as the nearby sanctuary of Dedoplis Mindori, probably in the second half of the 1st c. A.D. During the 4th-7th c. A.D. the site was inhabited again.

Between 1985 and 1993 the so-called palace was partly excavated by J. Gagoshidze. The whole complex was encircled by a strong wall, 3 m thick on the foot. All the differently sized rooms are connected by a porticus. In the centre is an open courtyard. The sockle of the walls is made of “opus gallicum”, above they are made of regular mud bricks. The outer walls have a stone facing in the lower part.

Roof tiles as well as arrow head-shaped clamps which connected the ashlar betray Greek influence. On the other hand some altars and small finds might be linked with Zoroastrian rituals. The extraordinary rich small finds give proof of the importance of the site, and they demonstrate close contacts of the inhabitants with the western (Hellenistic-Roman) as well as with the eastern (Iranian) world. These objects were imported or copied by local workshops. Dedoplis Gora must have been the

residence of a high official of the Iberian king who controlled the area around the royal sanctuary at Dedoplis Mindori. Although quite a few weapons were found in the ruins of the palace, its military function was modest, at most. It may have served as a royal residence when the Iberian king and his entourage visited the sanctuary of Dedoplis Mindori.

Bibliography: Gagošidze 2000: 51-58; Gagoshidze 2001: 259-279; Furtwängler, Gagoshidze [*forth-coming*].

## **Dedoplis Mindori**

In the plains between Eastern and Middle Prone (Šida Kartli), tributaries of the Kura, J. Gagoshidze conducted archaeological excavations from 1972 until 1993 at a site called Dedoplis Mindori (“queens meadows”). Though inhabited from Stone Age until the Middle Ages there can be no doubt that Dedoplis Mindori reached its climax when a vast sanctuary (*fig. 9*) was built here in the late 2nd c. B.C. The temple area alone takes up an area of 180 by 250 m. The excavator has closely linked this complex with the Iberian royal family. The architectural plan as well as the small finds suggest that the main building served as a Zoroastrian fire temple. In the northern part of the sanctuary is another, small temple. The function of at least six more similar buildings is not clear yet. However, they may have been used as temples, too. The temenos walls and all other buildings have a stone sockle. The upper part of the walls had been built with mud bricks. Monumental gates in the west and in the east had a tiled roof. A great number of fragments of stone capitals were found in the ruins of these gates as well as in the other (temple) buildings. The shape of these capitals reminds one of the column bases found in several Achaemenid “palaces” in Transcaucasia (Gumbati, Sari Tepe, Qaradshamirli, Benjamin).

400 m northwest of the sanctuary, houses and workshops of the same period were uncovered. Here, the roof tiles, mud bricks, stone capitals, glass vessels and iron nails were produced. Nearby a contemporary settlement and a cemetery were located.

Bibliography: Lordkipanidse 1991: 160-161, *fig. 70.6-8*; Gagoshidze 1992: 27-48, 1996: 134, *fig. 6-7*, 2001: 260-261, *fig. 3-5*.

## **Grdseli Mindori**

The fragment of a late Hellenistic bell-shaped base is now kept in a museum in Tbilisi. It was found half a century ago by the Georgian archaeologist Gambašidze in Grdseli Mindori, 13 km west of Mtskheta on the left bank of the Kura. The capital was decorated with a lotus-leaf ornament similar to those of the Achaemenid bases. Additionally it carries an interlace like many of the capitals from Dedoplis Mindori.

Bibliography: Kipiani, Gagošidze 2000: 64, *fig. 1.9*.

For more evidence concerning the Achaemenid legacy in Transcaucasia cf. the Post-Achaemenid levels at Vani, Itkhvisi, Takhtidsiri, Zikhiagora, Samadlo, Benjamin.

Finally a short outlook what kind of results future archaeological research in Transcaucasia may provide shall be given.

In Armenia and Georgia the diachronical investigations with a special look at the transitional periods around the rise and fall of the Persian empire should take priority over mere increase of precious small finds.

But, actually probably the most urgent aim should be to preserve the knowledge of the local scientists before they die. Many of them never properly published the results of their investigations

and often they have not even orally handed down this knowledge to younger colleagues. Mostly for political and language reasons, archaeological evidence from the Achaemenid period remained almost unknown to most western scholars until the collapse of the Soviet empire. The still very instable political and economic situation in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia is not only a serious problem for any foreign scholar, but as well endangers ancient sites and national science. The additional evidence of new sites and finds partly is the result of recent excavations. A great part has been investigated fairly early, but only recent publications or translations have made them known to western archaeology.<sup>12</sup> We may hope that the incorporation of that material into today's scholarship will not take as long a its discovery.

Beyond this, Azerbaijan was—and for the greatest part still is—archaeological “*terra incognita*” at least for the 1st millenium B.C. One of the major questions is, whether a similar continuity from the Achaemenid into the Hellenistic period as in neighbouring Georgia can be observed. Furthermore, here we might have the opportunity to find archaeological evidence of the state of Media Atropatene for the first time. Thus, another large area for new discoveries still remains.

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**12** Recent publications on Achaemenids in Transcaucasia (in alphabetical order): Braund 1994; Chacatrian 2000, 43-49; Chalilov 1985: 43-47; Dandamaev 1985; Furtwängler 1995: 177-211; Furtwängler, Knauf 1996: 363-381, 1997: 353-387; Furtwängler, Lordkipanidze 2000: 1-279; Gagoshidze 1996: 125-136, 1997: 123-136; Kanetjan 2000: 103-110; Karapetjan 2000: 111-117; Kleiss 1994: 91-94; Knauf 1999a: 218-222, 1999c: 81-114, [forthcoming c]; Lordkipanidze 1991; Lordkipanidze 2001: 143-190; Ludwig, Tauscher 2003: 5-10; Meißner 2000: 177-206; Plontke-Lüning 1998: 878-879; Schachner 2001: 251-332; Schottky 1989; Ter-Martirossov 2001: 155-163; Tiratsjan 1988; Tsatskhladze 1993/1994: 11-49, 1994: 78-102, 2001: 470-480, 2003: 229-269.

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