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**An attempt at re-defining the Late Bronze/Early Iron Age sequence
of the Shida Kartli region of Georgia (Southern Caucasus) on the
basis of data from recent excavations.**

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Chapter 1 – Geographic and Ethnic situation of the Caucasus (General background)

The Caucasus have been described as a land of diversities with the exceptional variability of in hydrology, ecology, climate, elevation, linguistic, political system, social history and ethno-psychology (Smith, et al 2009, 3).

The Caucasus mountains form a sharp geographic boundary between the Eurasian steppes to the north and the highland plateaus of Anatolia and Iran to the south (Fig:1). The physical border created by the Caucasus is much sharper than that which divides the steppes and deserts of Central Asia from northern Afghanistan and northeastern Iran on the eastern side of the Caspian sea (Kohl 2007, 62).



Fig:1. General view of Caucasus

The Caucasus region consists of the isthmus between the Black and the Caspian Seas that is cut by Grate Caucasian range. The mountains extend roughly for 1200 km from northwest to southwest, encompassing an area of about 440,000 sq. km. The region can be divided into several basic zones. Valleys and plains are found in central and eastern Georgia; the broad Ararat plain in southern Armenia and the Nakhichevan province of Azerbaijan, which extends along the middle course of the Araxes river, represents a particularly productive sub-region that today is intensively

cultivated as it was in the prehistoric past. Forests, consisting of an oak and juniper canopy, may have largely covered southern Georgia, including Tsalka plateau, from the Neolithic through the Middle Bronze age (Kohl 2007, 65). Traditional Soviet geography divides Caucasus between Terek river and Gear Caucasus and South Caucasus itself. The Northern territory referred as Ciscaucasia while Southern part as a Transcaucasia¹ (Smith, et al 2009, 4).

The Caucasus mountain range appears to be great barrier throughout the history. Barrier from northern steps to the empires (Rome, Persia etc.). The Caucasus mountains rises up across the region and separates Black and Caspian seas and represents meeting point of Europe and Asia. The mountains generally consist of two ranges: The Great Caucasus and Lesser Caucasus (in South). The three highest mountains on Great Caucasus are Elbrus (5642m), Shkhara (5201 m) and Kazbegi (5047). In lesser Caucasus highest mountains are mount Ararat (5137m) and mount Aragats (4095m) (Alpfenidze, et al 2001, 18) (Fig:2)



Fig:2. Greater Caucasus range and Lesser Caucasus range

¹ Contemporaneously within the term of Transcaucasia some western and post-soviet scholars consider both North and South part of it. As we are not intend to bring new terminology in the thesis or some confusion, we will refer Transcaucasia in order to mention only South Caucasus.

The Caucasus for thousands of years has been considered not only a geographical, but historical and cultural border between two different and yet linked worlds: The Near East and the one of Eurasian steppe. Since the concentration of languages, cultures and traditions, the area has always been too complex to define a unitary space and also for a long-lasting control by the enemies. This intricacy of differences is reflected also in the extremely complex ethno-linguistic peculiarity; a feature that has always caught the attention of foreign observers who had the chance to cross these lands. Herodotus in the V century was already writing about the plenty of different groups living in the Caucasus and Strabo himself noticed and wrote about it in its “*Geography*”. Later, the Arabs, impressed by this linguistic variety, defined the Caucasus as “the mountain of languages” (Shurgaiia 2003).

The indigenous languages spoken in the Caucasus are around 38 and it is often difficult to mark them as languages or as dialect; moreover many of these majority languages are endangered since the speaker-number range is very low, the Ubykh language is an example, extinct since 1992, spoken in the North Caucasus, part of the Abkhaz-Adighe family (Hewitt 2004).

Nowadays the languages spoken in the area belong to three main families: Caucasian, Indo-European and Ural-Altai or Turano- Mongolian (Fig.3).

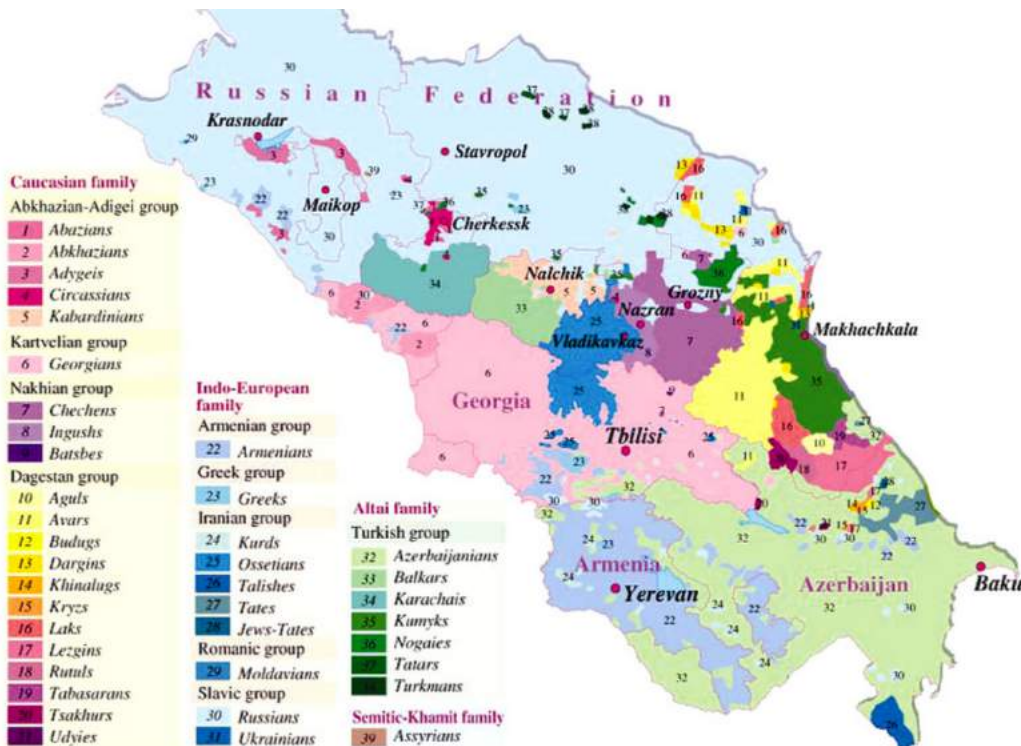


Fig.3. Language distribution of the Caucasus nations

The Caucasian family consist of 32 entities, twelve literary languages and twenty spoken. Four languages subgroups are recognized:

- a. *Kartvelian* spoken in the South Caucasus, mainly in Georgia. It includes the Georgian as literary language, the Svan spoken in the mountain region of Svaneti and the Zan or Mingrelian-Ch'an spoken in the region of Mingrelia (Fig.4).
- b. *Abkhaz- Adighe* spoken in the North-West Caucasus (Ciscaucasia),
- c. *Nakh*, named also "Batsbo-Kist'o", spoken in North-Central Caucasus (Chechenia, Ingushetia)
- d. *Daghestani* spoken in the Nord-East Caucasus

Among all these languages, only the Georgian language has an ancient writing tradition, even if during the Soviet Period all these languages reached a literary status (Hewitt 2004).

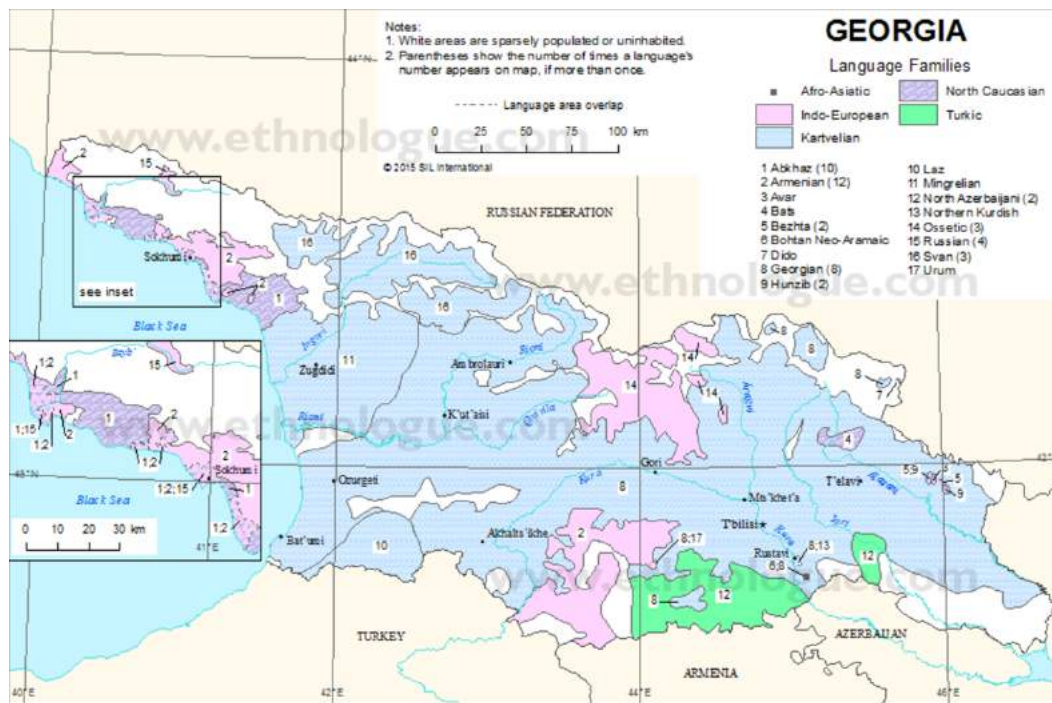


Fig.4. Language distribution in Georgia

(Map from: <https://www.ethnologue.com/map/GE>)

Regarding the Indo-European group, the main language families recognized are Slavic (oriental subgroup: Russian and Ukrainian language), Iranian (Ossetian, Kurd, Tata and Tallish languages), Armenian, Greek and Neo-Latin (Moldavian language).

Finally, in the Ural-Altai family group, are considered the languages Azeri, Karachai, Balkar, Kumakh, Tatar and Turkmenian.

As for the linguistic diversity in the Caucasus nations, which are distributed in the small areas in the territory causes political destabilization, especially in the north Caucasus. For nowadays north Caucasus countries are making part of the Russian federation, for the South part of the Caucasus there three different countries: Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan with three disputed conflicts in Abkhazia, South-Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh. The outstanding orographic climate diversity (Fig:5) of the South Caucasus represents “..*strong argument for more refined attention to distinct geographic provinces*” (Smith, et al 2009, 5). However, this climate diversity of the South Caucasus, gave possibility to establish socio-economic relationship between countries which happened to be involved in trading with their resources throughout the history. Climate diversity also gave the possibility to establish economic relationship in the regional scale. In Georgia this relationship chained lowlands with the highlands, which with its pastoral economic development would trade with lowland which happened to have agricultural economy. This long-lasting relationship often was disrupted as climate change as well artificially by the invaders.

The climate changes have often been invoked as a factor in the destabilization of socio-economic structures. In Southern Georgia, there are signs that the climatic instability of the second millennium BC brought about changes in the human sphere. For example this is the widespread abandonment of the highland that had been the focus of so much activity during the early and Middle Bronze age (Connor 2011, 242). It seems that the Late Bronze and Early Iron ages, more than any other period, were afflicted by climatic changes that had a profound impacts on the distribution and economy. Pollen and isotopic records from across the region indicate a progressive and lasting decrease in both temperature and precipitation from the beginning of the second millennium BC. Coniferous trees on the Tsalka Plateau responded to this climate change positively, displacing the oaks that had been so widespread during the Early and Middle Bronze age. On the hill above Tbilisi, oak-ash forest gave way to open vegetation. Even in Southern Colchis the climate became less humid. On the main Caucasus range, glaciers reactivated around 1000 BC (Connor 2011).

Reviewing the available pollen data from the lowland of East Georgia, Gogichaishvili concludes that human impact of vegetation intensified dramatically during the Late Bronze and Iron ages. (Gogichaishvili 1990). The Late Bronze Iron age phase of intensive human impacts in Georgia corresponds to change occurring around the same time in Southwestern Turkey (Connor 2011, 242)



Fig:5 Climate diversity of the Caucasus

(Map from: <http://planetbye.blogspot.com/2008/08/caucasus.html>)

Our thesis will discuss the Shida Kartli region, central part of the Georgia, which historically happens to be cross road as from the highlands to the lowland as well as international one. Shida Kartli region consisted by mountain ranges (highlands) across the Greater Caucasus, where mountains dropping down feet to the lowland. For nowadays, north (highland) part the area is occupied with the disputed region so called “South-Ossetia”.

The region of Shida Kartli represents center of the country Georgia. This central region is 5,729 sq.km large with the population of 264,633. Shida Kartli region is a lowland between Surami mountain range from West, from North central Caucasus mountain chain, Trialeti range (expanded over 100 km (Shengelaia 1979, 10) mountain from South and highlands of Saguramo from East. Shida Kartli region is crossed by the main river of Georgi, Kura. Kura river is dividing the region by North and South part. From South other small rivers join Kura, which are: Dzama, Tana, Tedzami and Kavtura, from North it’s joined by Frone, Liakhvi, Lekhura, Ksani and Aragvi rivers (Gvasalia 1983, 8).

The territory of the region Shida Kartly is characterized by its hypsometric location. All the territory of the region amplifies more then 500 m from the sea level. Average elevation of the

region is 1000 m. It changes between 450 to up to 2000m high from the sea level. Lowest amplitude of the region is Kura valley from village Tashiskati to the city Mtskheta, where the lowest point of the region is located (450m from the sea level) (Shengelaia 1979, 7-8).

In comparison of the other East Georgian regions the climate of the shida Kartli is more humid, but in comparison to the West Georgian regions it is much more continental (Gvasalia 1983, 9).

Chapter 2 - History of Archaeological Research in Georgia. Theoretical Developments, the Influences of Nationalism and Politics on Georgian Archaeology

2.1 General historical background

Caucasus is a large territory, divided by the Caucasus Mountains system into two parts, the Northern and the Southern Caucasus. This vast area is characterized by a high geographical diversity, and by the presence of a multi-ethnic population. Throughout its history, the region has suffered from both ethnic movements and invasions by both neighboring (the Ottoman empire, Iran, Russia) and more remote powers (Mongolia, Turk-Selchuks), and has witnessed influxes of different provenance, thereby maintaining strong indigenous traditions.

Contacts with Western Europe date back to very ancient times, namely at least to the time of Greek colonization. The area was described by Greek historians and geographers, and it was one of the key players in Greek mythology (the Colchian Kingdom is the seat of the Argonauts myth, Prometheus was chained on Mount Caucasus). In spite of these repeated contacts and influences with/from other cultural and ethnic groups, the region maintained its indigenous traditions, re-shaped imagination of its inhabitation and this made it interesting and mysterious.

The history of archaeological research in the area is strongly connected to its recent political history; before describing the former, it will therefore be useful to briefly summarize the latter.

In the second half of 18th century the Russian empire entered in the Caucasus as a rescue force for the Caucasian nations; on this occasion, an agreement was signed in the North Caucasian city of Georgievsk between the Georgian king Erekle II and the Russian emperor. In 1801 a part of Georgia was officially incorporated into the Russian empire, and during the next 40 years other regions followed, so that the country was finally unified under the Russian rule. In looking for assistance in dealing with rebels, the country thus came under the attack of Russian imperialism. The process was relatively quick, due to the intelligence thus protest come to be for every complication of ruling.

Gradually, until the 1850ies, the Russian imperialistic approach penetrated into science and influenced national scientific approaches too. The Russians took the role of educators and rescuers for the Caucasian Christian population from their Muslim neighbors. Emphasizing their noble

origin, they began to criticize Georgian language by calling it “language of dogs and poor people,” laughing on Georgian history and antiquities. This attitude is echoed, in 1883, in the authorities' refusal to give permission to Heinrich Schliemann to seek for the lost city of “Phasisi”, because they believed that Georgia as a country or as a people couldn't be more ancient than ruling nation (Gamkrelidze, 2008. 24).

“Caucasian people were treated condescendingly. Their culture were considered vestigial, if not savage, and their so-called "voluntary" entrance into the Russian State was deemed indisputably progressive, despite the readily admitted predation of various Tsarist officials, Orthodox priests, and greedy merchants in pre-Revolution times (Chernykh 1995, 142)”.

A similar treatment also affected Georgian church and its independence. The Russian church considered the empire as "a third Rome"; in order to claim its property all over the country, the independence of Georgian church was dismissed also. Similar developments affected national opposition movements, and were also perceptible in the field of science from 1801 till 1852, when, by the initiative of the “Russian Geographic committee,” the Caucasian Museum was founded in Tbilisi, an enterprise in which Georgians were also involved.

During the following decades, a national movement headed by I. Chavchavadze rose in Georgia in opposition to this treatment by Russians. Chavchavadze came to the idea to put down the weapons, because time had changed and time to “fight by pen,” had come. Together with his group, he tried to awake national ideals in Georgian people by writing publications, and these ideas were spread by way of both prose and poetry. This movement continued even after Chavchavadze's assassination in 1907.

After the outburst of Russian revolution in 1917, the South Caucasian countries claimed their independence. From 1918 to 1921 Georgia was ruled by the “democratic” party and Noe Jordania was president of the republic. After the “White army” (Mensheviks) was defeated by the Red army (Bolsheviks), the new Russian government came to claim Caucasus as part of their own country. On February 25th, 1921 the Red army entered the last independent portion of Caucasus, Georgia, and defeated the republican army. The local government escaped to France (Guruli 2003).

The time of a new ideology came for those intellectuals who stayed in the country. Those Georgians, who had been fighting for the Soviet revolution (Joseph Stalin, Lavrenti Beria, Sergo Orjonikidze, Philippe Makharadze), obtained high positions in the Soviet Union. The new ideology was thus introduced in the country, since Soviet ideology was considered necessary for re-

organizing the whole union: *“Ideology was also important, because it was the glue that held together an ethnically very diverse group of people (Marshall 2012, 6). As a consequence, the idea of freedom or independence for Georgia died, and those who still believed in it were killed in 1937.*

After the death of the Stalin and the assassination of Beria, Russian nationalists, headed by Khrushchov, who came in power in Russia. This was a breaking point in Soviet history; in 1956, a new campaign began against Stalin, and Georgians and Caucasians were dismissed from all the high positions in the government of the Union. As a consequence, protests rose in Georgia by people who tried to defend Stalin’s name. The post-Stalin reorganization changed the whole ideology of Soviet Union.

A new era for the Union came during the “Perestroika”. In 1970ies a new Georgian player, Eduard Shevardnaze, appeared in the life of Union. He created his career by giving an image of patriotism, but presented himself as a defender of communist ideas in his country, Georgia. This period can be evaluated as a phase of creativity in arts and poetry in Georgia. Ideology was transferred to writings and moviemaking. In 1978 protest against Moscow was even dared for the decision to change the main language of Soviet Georgia from Georgian to Russian. By the help of Shevardnadze, the defenders of national language won. During the *Perestroika*, therefore, more liberty penetrated into social life, writings, art and science.

A most troubled period started for all Caucasian nations with the fall of Soviet Union in 1990. With the fall of the "Russian empire," economy collapsed and national conflicts arose, that had their roots in Soviet times.

"Stalin’s own enormous crimes undoubtedly further complicated this picture, particularly in the Caucasus, where the forced migration of whole ethnic communities in 1944 created a savage social, political and territorial disjuncture, one which has still not been fully healed today" (Marshall 2012, 6).

In fact, such conflicts had their strong impact on the Caucasian communities, which was outlined during the 1990ies.

In fact in Georgia nationalistic ideas were so strongly practiced during the 1880ies that they transformed into brutality. This nationalistic approaches were used by the politicians in order to gain people’s trust, which came to have heavy consequences during the civil war in 1991. Political disorganization created economic disaster in the country. Several wars and changes of the

national currency had its results. The Georgian political establishment couldn't overcome the crisis (Guruli, 2011). The first steps in the new development of the country have been taken after "Rose revolution" in 2003. After this time, the country changed its international politics and transformed its aim into "bringing back the country to the European family". This politic of opening toward Western Europe brought many international projects in country, and this process involved archaeology as well.

2.2. Archaeology in Georgia during the period of the Russian empire and of the Soviet Union

During most of the 20th century, the Caucasus was part of the Soviet Union. This fact had deep consequences on the knowledge, in Europe or in the United States, of the area's developments, both from a political and as well from a scientific point of view. The “Iron Curtain” didn't allow news from outside to penetrate into the Soviet Union and, vice versa, this part of the world became a “Great Unknown” in the circle of western researchers (Sagona 2010, 144). After the Soviet Union fell, boundaries were opened and the South Caucasian countries obtained their independence. A process of mutual knowledge by local and western scholars was thus initiated, which culminated in the establishment of joint research projects in different parts of the region, and is still in progress, in spite of the difficulties caused by persisting ethnic conflicts and economic and social problems, which characterize the last decades in several countries of the Caucasus.

Since the history of Caucasian Archaeology is still poorly known in Western Europe, it is useful to briefly summarize its main general developments in the following, before describing the history of research concerning the Late Bronze and Iron Ages, which represent the object of this work. We will especially focus on the history of field research in Georgia and on its political and socio-economical background as examples of more general trends, and make only occasional references to similar developments in other Caucasian countries, e.g. Armenia and Azerbaijan. In fact, Georgia had a leading and central position in the region throughout the history, and especially during the last century, when its political and intellectual resources often gave a significant contribution to other Caucasian countries. Even during the Soviet period and in spite of the rises and falls of the country within the Union caused by political changes, intellectual leadership can be considered as one of its characteristic features. In particular, Georgian archaeological sites represent remarkable reference sites over the whole Southern Caucasus. (Kohl, Tsetskhladze 1995, 149-150; Smith 2005, 233).

Archaeological research in the area began ca. 150 years ago, only after the expansion of the Russian empire into the Southern Caucasus. Since Russian archaeology developed contemporaneously with economy, military and political expansion, it was practiced only by aristocrats. The aim of these pioneering researches was to collect and describe valuable materials:

“Russian archaeology was certainly imperialist in that it served to appropriate local prehistories to the glory of the empire... Russian archaeology during the late nineteenth century might be described as antiquarian (Smith 2005, 236-237).

These early works were only rarely published.

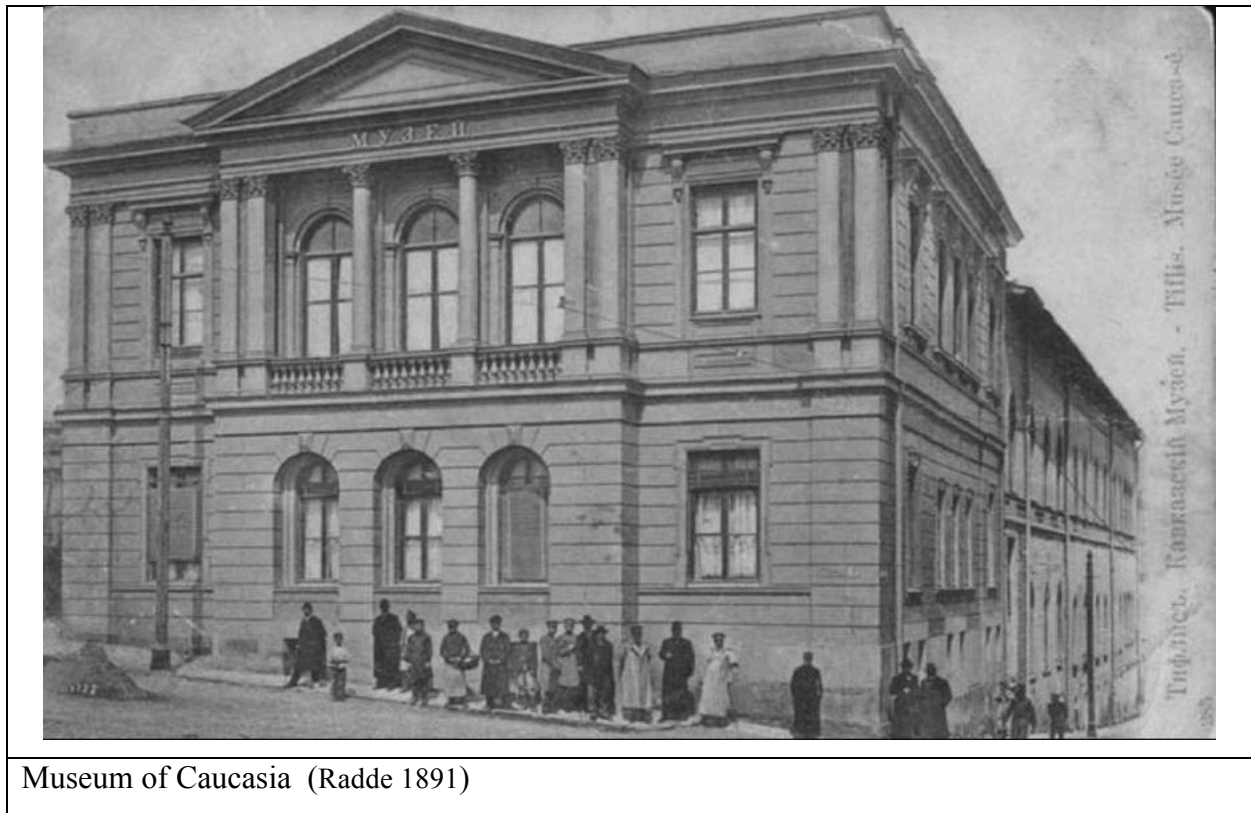
The opening by the Geographical Committee in 1850-52 of the Museum in Tbilisi, which immediately hosted 3300 artifacts of material culture, proved the country's wealth in archaeological remains, and highlighted the need for new museums in the region. Furthermore, this event rose an interest for archaeological research in the country.

The first scientific archaeological excavation took place in 1852 in the area of the rock-town of Uplistsikhe close to the city of Gori. The excavator, D. Megvinetukhutsishvili, followed a relatively correct methodology (for the standards of that time) and also published several reports in Journals (Gamkrelidze 2008, 8-9). The Museum of the Geographic Society was closed in 1863, and all the collections were transported to the new “Caucasian Museum”.

An important excavation began in 1872 in the area of Mtskheta, the country's historical capital, when some tombs were discovered while repairing the road. The Austrian researcher Friedrich Bayern began investigations, which lasted from 1872 to 1876, at the Samtavro cemetery, near Mtskheta (Sagona 2010, 145). At this time the journal “Caucasian Antiquity”, dedicated to the Ethnology, Archaeology and History of Caucasus began to be published, as well, but it lasted only two years.

A turning point in Georgian archaeology was the establishment of the “Archaeological Committee” in Tbilisi. For the first time, plans were thus made to archaeologically investigate Transcaucasia (as the Southern Caucasus was then called, from a Russian perspective). In 1873 the head of the committee, D. Bakradze, published a paper in no. 3-4 of the “Tsisk’ari” journal, in which he emphasized the importance of the region's location, and discussed about perspectives and needs of archaeological research in Georgia and more generally in the Caucasus. On this occasion, for the first time he approached methodological issues, and also defined archaeology as a science to be used "to fill historical dates" (Gamkrelidze 2008, 12, 17). This archaeological society was basically working in Georgia. Another remarkable discovery of this period was the Kazbegi Treasure in the Mtskheta-Mtianeti region of north-eastern Georgia, also excavated by Bayern (Bayern, 1882).

At the same time, however, archaeological activities work took place also in Armenia, in particular at the II-I millennium cemetery, which became famous by the name of “Redkin Lager ” (Bayern, 1882). Bayern for the first time noticed similarities between materials excavated at Samtavro, Kazbegi and at Redkin Lager. Most of the items which had been dug at Redkin Lager and Samtavro were transferred to the Museum, which was established by the above-mentioned society (1874-1878) in Tbilisi, but part of them were sent to St. Petersburg. In 1878 all the materials from that Tbilisi museum were moved to the new “Museum of Caucasia” (presently Georgian National Museum, S. Janashia building) (Pitskhelauri 1971, 13).



Museum of Caucasia (Radde 1891)

In the meanwhile, the Archaeological Committee was also reorganized: the new name of the group was “Society of amateur archaeologists in the Caucasus”. In 1881 the “Society of amateur archaeologists in the Caucasus” organized an important conference. The conference, which lasted 12 days, defined archaeological perspectives in the region (Gamkrelidze 2008, 23). Not long after the conference, the society joined the “Caucasian Society of History and Archaeology,” which was headed by D. Bakradze till 1886. However, these activities were carried out in a difficult social and political situation. From the 1870ies a nationalistic movement

developed in Georgia, and most intellectual resources were devoted to these ideas. The Russian empire, for its part, reacted to these movements, and this complicated scientific activity, although it did not stop it completely. Be that it may, very few archaeological activities were carried out in the country in the 1880ies and in the 1890ies.

In 1889, however, one important discovery (Bagineti) contributed to re-shape local archaeologists' thoughts and approaches. Since Bakradze could not carry out the excavation himself, he sent there a young scientist, E. Takaishvili. While excavating the site, he came to the idea of using ethnographical materials and historical narratives in order to “read” archaeological data (Gamkrelidze 2008, 24, 27). Approximately at the same time as Takaishvili, other influential scientists began their career: N. Marr and Iv. Javakhishvili in the field of Caucasian studies, and Giorgi Nioradze in the field of archaeology. This was also the period when revolutionary movements begun in the Russian empire, and science could feel more free in an ideological sense. Iv. Javakhishvili was one of the first who saw the need for archaeology as an independent science, which should be practiced by professionals (Javakhishvili 1960, 7-8).

In spite of these progresses in archaeology and in the local tradition of Caucasian studies, theoretical bases were still weak. In fact, as A. Smith writes,

“Russian archaeology during the late nineteenth century might be described as antiquarian, in so far as excavations primarily constituted a method of collecting a diverse array of objects rather than a method for documenting variation within or between assemblages described in context ” (Smith 2005, 237).

In comparison with contemporary European achievements, methodology in Russian imperial archaeology, especially in the Caucasus, dwelt on questions of artifacts description and periodization. Quoting Smith, this could be due to several factors:

“The nineteenth century archaeology in the South Caucasus was limited in its intellectual development by several factors. In particular, lingering antiquarian priorities focused attention almost exclusively upon cemetery contexts. Mortuary sites offered remarkable artifacts suitable for museum displays, but they generally lacked the stratigraphic relationships amongst complexes necessary to define temporal sequences of materials. As a Springer result, regional chronologies remained poorly defined (for example, any find of a stone tool was presumed to date a site to the Neolithic period). Only Bayern showed any interest in correlating materials across sites; and only Morgan strove to situate Caucasian discoveries within a broad historical narrative of the ancient world” (Smith 2005, 240-241).

In particular, it was believed that in Georgia or more in general, in territory of the Caucasus, cultural life began with development of metallurgy; in fact, Caucasians were credited with a high knowledge of metal crafts (Apakidze 1972, 29).

We could add other political and intellectual factors to the list, such as:

1. A limited will from the government to finance scientific activity, that could awake feelings of national identity and pride among the local people;
2. The availability of few intellectual resources that, even with a high motivation, could not be enough for large scale research;
3. Finally, all resources were mobilized to explore and describe national heritage.

2.3 The Soviet Union and the development of Georgian archaeology

“Those who control the present,
control the past and those who
control the past control the future.”

— George Orwell, 1984

Georgian archaeology during the period of Stalin

During the short period of independence (1918-1921) not much activity was going on in Georgian archaeology. During this period, the same generation of scholars as during imperial times was involved in humanistic sciences; as a consequence, research was dominated by inertia in its scientific approach.

However, the establishment of Tbilisi State University represented one important step forward of this phase. The idea actually already existed at the time of the Russian empire: its initiator was Ivane Javakhishvili (Gaiparashvili, 2011) together with a group of scientists that supported it and contributed to the implementation of his idea. First they established a society and then, by the name of the society, in 1917 they obtained the permission to build a University. On January 26th, 1918, the University was officially opened and its first rector, Giorgi Melikishvili, was elected. The creation of the university building was a continuing nonstop activity during the independence period, which was financed by the businessmen brothers Zubalashvili and Davit Sarajishvili. Tbilisi University was the first one in the Caucasus: it was meant to be the base of scientific research in the country in every field. However, during the first years, courses on human sciences were mainly attended. In spite of the fact that several activities took a place during the time of independent Georgia, there still was not enough time for the sciences, since the independence only lasted three years (Guruli 2011, 7).

After Georgia was conquered by the Soviet Union, officially in February 1921, the country became a part of the Soviet empire. Georgia was the last country in South Caucasus that the Bolsheviks entered, and with it the whole of the Caucasus became “Red”. This was a difficult period for countries like Georgia, since the history of other countries was falsified in order to show the priority of the Russian nation.

As concerns archaeology in particular, we can say that during the Soviet period it became a weapon for political decisions and ideological achievements. Georgian archaeology suffered many difficulties caused by politics, and it was isolated from the rest of the scientific world. In spite of this, the interest for this region by the Western world has not diminished during Soviet times, and it even increased after this, during the post-soviet period. However, mostly due to lack of information and unawareness of the involved processes, it was difficult for western scholars to understand the achievements of Soviet archaeology. Even today, these seem to be still only vaguely understood, as Antonio Sagona mentions –

“Most western researchers have only a vague understanding of the accomplishments of Soviet archaeology. Although the archaeology of the Transcaucasus is no longer a great unknown, it nevertheless remains a rather shadowy and elusive area for many Near Eastern archaeologists” (Sagona 2010, 144).

Several reasons can be outlined why archaeological data were and are misunderstood when “reading” archaeological publications about the ancient cultures of the Caucasus. The first which can be mentioned is the linguistic problem, which is exacerbated by the diversity of languages and cultural differences throughout the Caucasus. Besides Russian, which is poorly known to most western researchers, already the three main languages (Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaijani) of the Southern Caucasus represent an invincible challenge, in a linguistic sense, for them. In addition to poor knowledge of the local languages, lack of familiarity with local archaeological terminology and methodology traditions often causes confusion and misunderstandings by foreign scholars when dealing with old archaeological reports about this region.

Furthermore, when western scholars generalize about research history in the former Soviet Union, at first sight theoretical and practical achievements of indigenous researchers of the South Caucasus are perfectly set into a framework of critical analysis about archaeological methodology, but somehow even here one can observe some misunderstandings by western scholars. These mainly arise from a generalization of the South Caucasian countries by taking only one of them in account as if it was representative of the other ones as well. In addition, foreign researchers appear to be influenced by the ideology of the country and of the local people they are in touch with, which deeply impacts their understanding of the history of research. In other terms, western scholars working in Azerbaijan, Armenia, or in Georgia, are telling the same story, but in different ways, and with different references.

For instance, there is no full convergence in archaeological literature about the very names to be used to define the same archaeological culture (thus, what is known in Georgia as the Lchashen-Tsitelgori culture becomes the Lchashen-Metsamori culture in Armenia, and so on), the choice of the name used by each foreign scholar depending on the country he/she are working, or worked in. In the course of our work, we will try to illustrate some examples, which are relevant to our own research, by analyzing them in detail.

A fact, the importance of which should not be underestimated, is that, in spite of the fact that they during the Soviet era all the Caucasian countries were belonging to the Union, they actually underwent rather different historical developments. On the one hand, local traditions and "ethnopsychology" somehow played a main role in people's lifestyle and ideology; so that it is wrong to generalize and consider some phenomena as typical for all the Caucasian nations and countries. On the other hand, when studying research achievements of Caucasian archaeologists, the period's political background should always be considered.

As we mentioned before, individual countries were involved in different processes during the Soviet period, so they should be first researched one by one, and then contemporary processes should be compared with each other in order to extract generalities valid for all of them. However, since our research only concerns Georgia and its path through Soviet history, we will try to avoid generalizations concerning all Caucasian countries: all the facts we will describe will only be representative of local traditions and achievements of this country.

Socialism and Communism was an ideology which was mostly forced on Georgian people, and it was hard for them to get used to it. A completely new path of development had been chosen for the country, and its soon led to vibrant protests. Be that as it may, in a good or bad way, the new ideology of Marxism progressively entered every field of material and spiritual life. Marxist ideology, however, was transformed in a way first by Vladimir Lenin, and later on it was changing time by time according to the different soviet leaders. The original idea of "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry" (Daniels 1993, xxvii introduction) changed into dictatorship in Stalin's hands. The changed situation caused a deep change in school programs and scientific approaches and achievements. Just to make an example, in school, the historical protagonist Shamil (The Checheni leader of the rebellions in the XIX century) was first represented as a hero and a patriot of the Caucasian nations, but then it become a British spy (Charkviani 2013, 14).

The first years were a time of stabilization and transformation for the Georgian country. Before Georgians get used to be in a system, in 1924 they began a liberation process, but this attempt failed and its leaders suddenly disappeared. The first two decades, when Stalin was reinforcing his position in the Communist party and transforming socialism in “Stalinist communism” were a time of big changes not only in Georgia but even in Russia. The first steps that Stalin took was to exile Trotsky from the party after winning in debates about the construction of the state. His idea was to prepare the country for capitalism by using socialism at the beginning, but as it seemed, Josef Stalin had different ideas, and wanted to utilize communist dictatorship instead. This transformation was not only theoretical, but had deep impact on the practice, since it changed all what had been thought to be communism before, and applied the change of the doctrine of communism system (Daniels 1993, xxvii, introduction).

The transformation was painful for Georgia (as well as for all the countries in the Soviet Union), since the communists cleaned up all the intelligence that somehow was protesting against their being in the country. Those who were lucky were exiled in Siberia (those who were not were killed). Some of them were victims of subjective decisions, or even direct orders by Stalin. Charkviani (2013, 58) thus describes the chief of the communist party in Georgia in 1938-1952: “He was a jealous men, he could sacrifice everybody in order to achieve his goals, and he was looking for intrigues where there were not”. This author also underscores that all the power was in one men’s hand, and nobody was able to debate his decisions (Charkviani 2013, 87).

The creation of a new ideology began rather soon. This needed some "re-interpretation" of the local history, and for this reason the Institute of Research was created in Tbilisi in 1921. The party history was leading all researches during that time (Guruli 2011, 8). As Alex Marshall mentions:

“... Ideology was not peripheral to reality, but rather central to the Bolshevik party-state. Violent methods in particular were justified amongst the ruling Bolshevik elite by an absolute belief in their own ideology” (Marshall 2012, 6).

Bringing in new ideological references caused a falsification of the history in order to justify their existence. A consequence of this attitude was the repression of the scientists who did not agree to this attitude. For that reason the attacks of Stalinism upon intellectuals provoked catastrophic losses also in the field of archaeology. In some cases, however, they also had unexpected positive consequences. For example, the famous archaeologist Boris Kuftin started his career in St.

Petersburg, but he was then exiled in the periphery: in this way he landed in Tbilisi. This in the end allowed him to explore the most significant prehistoric sites in the Caucasus, and thus to create the first reliable relative chronology for the Caucasian archaeological cultures (Smith 2005, 245; Abulashvili 2009, 4-5).

From a theoretical point of view, at the beginning of the Soviet rule in Russia the so-called “Pokrovski school” was formed, which was dominant in historical sciences from 1920 through the early 1930s. Pokrovski began a campaign against pre-revolutionary historiography. His works were sharply opposed to the Tsarist monarchy. In the linguistic field, Nikolai Marr was dominating in this period. He was a well-trained orientalist and a representative of internationalism (Shnirelman 1995, 120-121). He was working about the formation of South Caucasian languages, and created a theory about it. At the beginning his international ideas were not favored among Soviet rulers, except for Josef Stalin, who used them against his opponents, who were favoring national ideas for the Soviet future. But the situation changed when Stalin’s version of Marxist ideas appeared in archaeology, as this changed the whole perception of archaeological research. Marr believed that the exploitation of “true” methodologies could compensate poor knowledge of the discipline, or of its subject matter, but, indeed, for Bolshevik scientists methodology didn’t matter in order to achieve the results (Shnirelman 1995, 124).

Marr’s theories echoed also in Georgia, at the periphery of Soviet Union, during the and contemporary local historians shared Marr’s ideas. So they became the ideological ally of Soviet Union in Georgia, as it began to shape the new-born Soviet science. Such process had deep consequences, which lasted well after Stalin's death. The famous archaeologist Andrea Apakidze for instance, on the occasion of the 50 years anniversary of the Georgian Soviet Republic, writes how happy the Georgian nation was to be in an equal union with other countries, and how happy scientists were to have the opportunity to pursue national liberty and truth in their researches (Apakidze 1972, 4-5). The historian Niko Berzenishvili, went even further and began to criticize pre-soviet period archaeology by calling it “the time of colonial archaeology” and qualifying previous archaeologists as “uneducated, deceivers or amateurs” (Berdzenishvili 1971, 72). With this concepts, they eliminated past researches, and set the idea of “rebirth” in the study of past.

“Researches which have been done during the Soviet Period are a clear example to see how deeply changed the approach of Soviet Georgia in regard to the study of the past of Georgian

people, and how pleasingly they implemented Lenin's program about cultural heritage."
(Apakidze 1972, 6).

In spite of prevailing internationalism, in reality nationalistic ideas continued to be represented. Chernyck mentions that

"Soviet archaeology never overcame the nationalist tendencies of the countless peoples that lived within its borders – not only because seventy-four years was simply too short a period to overcome the prejudices built up over millennia, but also because the internationalism it espoused all too often was not genuine. The empty mouthings of Party officials and Russians chauvinists were perceived accurately by non-Russians and quietly but fiercely resisted. Real internationalists were either silenced and/or too few numerically to resist the stronger historical forces of nationalism and counter-nationalism arrayed against them (Chernykh 1995, 147).

The beginning of the era of internationalism in Soviet Union during the 1930ies simply came to be false in practice (Kohl, Tsetskhladze 1995), especially in the field of human sciences, and especially in the smaller countries of the union, like for instance in Georgia. This was the period when the local University was established and writing of Georgian history began, so the country was not ready to embrace internationalist ideas. Thus, by using the small independence they were allowed, and the possibility to use the local language, Georgian scholars wrote a huge amount of books which represented national ideas. In fact, the authors of these books belonged to the generation which had been educated in St. Petersburg, and which had lived the period of Georgian independence. These national ideas penetrated also in archaeology, and the most famous Georgian archaeologists (Otar Japaridze, Otar Lortkipanidze, Andrea Apakidze) began to discuss about ethnic movements in Caucasia and the role played in them by Georgian tribes, by using archaeological data as evidence.

In fact, in Georgia national ideas and researches about ethnicity became more and more popular. The perceived necessity of "creating the archaeological bases for Georgia" (Apakidze 1972, 7) also helped, since, in fact, it encouraged to spread archaeological fieldwork all around the country. However, it also had some side effects: it localized archaeology and directed all attention into national ideas and local researches. It created the idea of Georgian archaeology, and separated it from the rest of Caucasian archaeology. The spreading of this trend can be seen in almost all publications that were published in Georgian language, where discoveries made in Armenia, Azerbaijan, or any other Caucasian country were used only for occasional comparisons, and not

in comprehensive analyses of general phenomena, or in discussing the impact that these discoveries could have had on one another.

The impact of Soviet ideology that gave to the small nations the possibility of having their identity appreciated, or demonstrated contributed to narrowing archaeological activities in Georgia. This fact brought a new era into Georgian archaeology. Numerous field researches on every historical period, but especially on the stone age, begun at that time. The discovery of Paleolithic sites gave the opportunity to the archaeologists to study and analyze them. In connection with the new national ideology, archaeologists began to speak about pre-ethnic inception in the upper Paleolithic period (Apakidze 1972, 18) and about genetic links between the early inhabitants of the country and the cultures of the following ages. Hence comes the theory:

“... The importance of all the researches is that: first of all we can argue, quoting new archaeological discoveries, that Caucasus was the first homeland of Georgian tribes. So we have to search for remains of the material goods in Georgia.” (Apakidze: 1972, 53).

In spite of the fact that archaeological science in Georgia was at one of its highest points of development, and that Georgian scientists were leading most archaeological excavations and carrying out most studies, the general periodization of the country's cultures was created by scholars of foreign origins. The first contribution to this aim had been accomplished in 1930ies by the Russian “Caucasiologist” Iessen. Based on the materials stored in St. Petersburg and in Moscow, he created the first periodization system for the Caucasian stone age (Iessen 1935, 120).

The next important step was taken by the famous archaeologist B. Kuftin (Abulashvili T. 2009). As we mentioned before, this was ironically a consequence of Stalin's attack to the intellectuals, which forced

Boris Kuftin to end up in Tbilisi and begin to work on the Caucasian materials, in particular after his excavations at Beshtasheni and in the Tsalka plateau. His approach changed the direction of Georgian archaeology, in a sense which overcame the idea of nation and brought to Caucasian archaeology the idea of culture as connected to social developments (Smith 2005, 244). He created a chronological framework for Caucasian archaeology from the stone age to the classical antiquity.

The original internationalism of Soviet ideology was also modified after the second world war. In fact, on the one hand, Stalin announced the advantage of the Russian nation among Soviet peoples. On the other hand, however, in 1945 he invited Georgian history professors to visit him

in his residence, and after debating several issues, he ordered them to develop national ideas about the self-determination of the Georgian people.

He also ordered to begin a campaign against Marr's theories, and to promote a new perception and approach in linguistics (Charkviani 2013, 73-74). The situation went even farther in 1946, when a new campaign was started. The ideas, or quotes, which were thought to be (by the state rulers) non communistic were eliminated and accused of "foreign influence", "knelling in front of west" etc. (Guruli: 2003, 171). This period seems to be one of the breaking points in Georgian archaeology. Since then, for instance, all researches started quote Leninr or Marx at the beginning of their works.

Thus the "international" idea came officially to the end and nationalism rose in Soviets, although in practice, as we have seen, it had never been consequentially used, as even during the Stalin's period international ideas had never been considered as a leading direction of the union, in particular in Soviet Georgia. The consequences of the ideological change were also felt in the archaeological field. The process continued even after Stalin's death, which also brought a new perception of ideology in the country in general and in archaeological science in particular (see below). The logical conclusion of this phase of Georgian field archaeology was the publication, in 1959, of the manual of "Georgian archaeology" (Khoshtaria 1959), which systematically described the results of research for the periods from the stone age to the medieval period (Abulashvili 2012, 4). This represented the beginning of a new period in Georgian archaeology, which was also encouraged and by the new grand projects that helped archaeology to become a leading science for the study of the ancient local cultures.

Georgian archaeology after Stalin's death

After Stalin's death, the situation of Soviet Union changed in all fields of life, and in ideology as well as in politics. After the 1960es, a new generation of Georgian archaeologists brought into scientific discussion new methodological issues. .

Sagona divides Soviet archaeologists into two groups, that had different approaches to the discipline. One group includes those scientists who approached archaeology as being a part of history. This position is comparable to that of those western archaeologists who were influenced by neo-evolutionary and system theories, who were interested in explaining sociopolitical processes and structures, and did not pursue a strongly theoretical approach to material culture (Sagona 2010, 147). In Georgia in particular, these scholars (e.g. O. Japaridze) were especially interested in ethnic approaches to archaeology, and often were used ethnography as explanatory of archaeological evidences. They considered ethnicity as a possibility to rise the national identity of a small country as Georgia was, and establishing its legacy among the nations in Soviet Union. The second group (which includes, among others, Bulkin, Klejn and Lebedev) argued against subjectivity, and favoured objective methods to extract information from material culture. They considered explaining artefacts production as the best way getting the objective results about cultural dynamics.

This approach shares many similarities with the functionalist ecological approach of Grahame Clark and some later New Archaeologists. Like Clark, this group of Soviet archaeologists believed that the primary function of culture was survival, and, in turn, this was influenced to a certain degree by the constraints of the natural environment. Ancient communities and their material manifestations were seen as products of an ever changing interaction with ecology. Yet this multi-disciplinary school of Soviet archaeology differed from its Western counterparts by stressing productive forces in their framework of socio-cultural relations. (Sagona 2010, 147-148).

After the 1970ies, however, issues movements of populations and their influences on the culture become secondary, and new questions, emerged in scholarly debate. Indeed, during that time chronological issues acquired a leading role in Georgian archaeology. The need for a better chronological framework rose during the large-scale archaeological excavations between the 1960ies and 1970ies. At that time huge construction projects involved much field archaeological research, and this revealed many new archaeological sites and evidences about previously unknown past cultures. This new evidence required to be inserted into the chronological system, but this chronological system was based on the facts that were known several decades before, and therefore proved inadequate and required a radical revision.

In 1977 the famous archaeologist Otar Lortkipanidze initiated the foundation of the Archaeological Research Centre, an institution where he gathered all the leading Georgian

archeologists, and set the agenda the archaeological researches. The research center was divided into departments, which followed different directions of research. These were: Statistics and chronological classification of the Georgian archaeological sites, first human traces on the Georgian territory, issues of ethno-genesis, issues of paleo-urbanism, archaeological cultures and socioeconomic structures and their relationship with the ancient world, metallurgy and weapons, numismatics, medieval cities, etc. (Gamkrelidze2008, 34-35). The creation of archaeological bases (all around the country) also had a huge impact on Georgian archaeology. In fact, this produced a huge amount of archaeological work and resulted in a significant increase of knowledge although, as we mentioned before, it also encouraged a certain localization of Georgian archaeology. Bringing up chronological issues also had other reasons for example introduction of C14 date method, which caused grate debate. The “cold war”, which had closed the links between Soviet countries and rest of the world, had isolated Soviet archaeology from the developments of archaeology in the neighboring areas, e.g. in the Near East, and transformed Caucasian archaeology into the “Great Unknown” (Sagona 2010, 144) for western archaeologists working in those areas. Soviet archaeology had thus difficulties in analyzing local traditions in a wider framework, in concerning both artifacts, and general historical interpretations, and preferred to concentrate on the reconstruction of local chronological sequences.

However, the long gap in relationships caused the local debate about chronology to be somehow cut out of the revision of relative and absolute chronologies which involved Near Eastern archaeology in the last decades of the 20th century. .

Chronological issues continued to be central in Georgian archaeology in the next decades too, as long as new archaeological discoveries pushed them. This trend continued till the end of the Soviet Union and even with the continuing soviet influence in the course of the first decade of Georgian independency. However, in spite of this emphasis on chronological issues, that have been leading for several decades, national ideas have never been forgotten. on the contrary.

2.4 Post-soviet archaeology in Georgia

After the fall of Soviet Union in Georgian archaeology all the research projects stopped. It was the time of “Great confusion” as in archaeological direction as well for the country. Non of the researches have been cared out, the only thing the archaeologists could do was to protect the materials in the museum or in the research centers, from the criminals or the civil war participants. However, the risk was high the job has been done greatly. Next thing that happened in the Georgian archaeology that rescued science and archaeologists itself was the gas and petrol pipeline by “British Petroleum”². The company has played important role in preservation of the cultural heritage in Georgia and Georgian archaeology itself (Gamqrelidze, Vikers, 2010). On the one hand archaeology have been rescued in Georgia but on the other hand the “Archeological research center” lost the ability to be scientific organization after BP become the contractor of the GNM. For that reason archeological research took a place where the pipeline could cross and obviously archaeological researches were taking place in the corridor of the project. However, many new archaeological sites were discovered and studied with the financial support of the BP the long term researches went on second place.

All up mentioned problems left the Georgian archaeology into “*Promethean*” legacy and as smith mentions:

“...Archaeology of southern Caucasia is likewise promethean in both its objects — communities that steadfastly resist reduction to archetypical models — and its subjects — a tradition of scholarship that was neither steeped in Western colonialism nor exhausted by Russian imperialism... (Smith 2005, 230).

The post-soviet period witnessed to a new wave of “political use” of archeology in the countries of the Southern Caucasus. The 1990is was the time of “anti-Russian polemics” (Marshall 2012, 2). In the 1990ies, when extreme nationalistic political groups came in power in some of these countries, history and archeology were exploited in the course of the national conflicts. As in the Caucasus the political situation changed, and big changes began, all conflicts were ruled, or headed by historians and archaeologists, or, in other words, by leaders “who have taken Marx's

² Nowadays known as a BP

famous XI-th Thesis on Feuerbach seriously” (Chernykh 1995, 143). In fact, many of these leaders were well trained in ancient history:

“Thus, for example, the official leader of Abkhazia, the new republic that seceded from Georgia in fall 1993 after protracted and exceptionally bloody struggle, V. Ardzinba, is a trained specialist in ethnology and oriental studies; the philosopher historian M. Shanibov is one of the leaders of the Confederation of the Mountain People of the Caucasus; the archaeologist Yu. Boronov heads the "Slavonic house" in Abkhazia and is now the Vice-Prime minister of this new "Republic"; and the archaeologist V.E. Oganessian is one of the most important leaders of the Dashnaktsutiun nationalist party in Armenia, a party which, among its other activities, has been stoking the fires burning over Nagorno-Karabagh. He is now in prison for anti-government activities. In addition an archaeologist G.E. Areshian was formerly a government minister and ideologist for the Armenian President, L. Ter-Petrosian, himself a trained orientalist (Chernykh 1995, 143-144).”

The facts from the “dark 90-ies” can explain how Soviet archaeology was used after its crash, as people couldn’t avoid this side effect of archaeology. They can also represent an example for future behavior, by showing what impacts can have reinterpreting the past for making it a tool for conflicts.

Georgian archaeology is nowadays in a period of important changes. The establishment of new international archaeological missions helped to overcome some of the past ideas, as it was bringing up importance of the C14 date, but, despite the fact that new international excavations are carried out in Georgia, the methodology of local archaeology in this country is still based on Soviet approaches. At a first look, in many cases the result seems to be a “great mix” of soviet and western methodology.

In spite of these difficulties, the presence of these international projects jointly directed by foreigners and Georgians gives hope for the emergence of a new generation of archaeologists, who will abandon old paradigms and adopt international standards of scientific research. On the other hand, it is also clear that, as Kohl and Fawcett wrote:

“... Archaeologists need to be aware of the political implications of their work and be sensitive to the contemporary social setting of their studies of the remote past. They need to recognize and articulate the limits to which the archaeological record can be pushed when identifying prehistoric ethnic groups and territories they ones occupied....” (Kohl, Fawcett 1995, 8).

2.5 Researching the Late Bronze in Georgia. The History and Critic

Many Late Bronze Early Iron age materials have been discovered and stored in museums during the last 150 years of archaeological research in Georgia. During those times many archaeological activities took place as well. All those activities were carried out by the dedicated individuals who pioneered the archaeological researches in the country. Among Many of them were not trained as archaeologists; most of them were historians and educated people, who were interested in the past. They were the generation who sacrificed their free time in search of the unknown and generation after generation achieved the experience which subsequently inspired many scholars. During those 150 years of archaeological research, the history and even ideology of the country changed several times. In spite of that fact research continued and the large amount of archaeological research resulted in a very substantial contribution to the uncovering of the past. Over time the archaeologists faced different unanswered questions. In this chapter we will try to demonstrate how the research style changed throughout this period and what questions were responded to by archaeologists. This chapter is dedicated only to the Late Bronze-Early Iron research history, so we will concentrate only on the arguments from the LB and EI epoch.

As we saw in the previous chapter the soviet archaeologists in Georgia defined and criticized 19th century archaeology as imperial; at the same time local archaeologists were considered as amateurs and imperialists, “without any knowledge, or education” (Apakidze Andrea 1972: 4-5, Berdzenishvili Niko 1971: 72). This mistaken direction in archaeology had been conditioned by Soviet ideology, which implemented these theories in order to prove that real science started with Soviet times.

19th century archaeologists were clearly not trained as archaeologists; they were representatives of other sciences, among them were historians, who were motivated to conduct research with the advanced methodology that was appropriate for their time. Because of this they were, for the most part, working to resolve the issues what were suggested by the epoch.

Systematic archaeological work in Georgia began in 1871 and the archaeological investigation at first started with the discovery of a Late Bronze – Iron age cemetery. The cemetery excavation began when Bayern excavated the tombs in Mtskheta city, as a result of the implementation of a governmental order. The work was financed by the state and afterwards, during the widening of the military road from Tbilisi city towards the Northern border, several graves were discovered. In the same year the Caucasian archaeological committee was established.

At first, the committee was initiated only for that event and in the committee, the first research plan was discussed. Afterwards this committee was reorganized as a “Caucasian society of amateur archaeologists”. Basically this society worked in Georgian territory and one member of the committee, F. Bayern, began his first excavation in the Samtavro cemetery in the city of Mtskheta, on what is called the Samtavro field (Fitskhelauri, K. 1971: 12-13. Lortkipanidze, O. 2002: 33).

The Samtavro excavation is considered the first and most important Late Bronze Early Iron archaeological investigation in the Georgian territory. The archaeological site is still a leading archaeological site in the research on the Late Bronze and Iron age phases. Excavations in the Samtavro cemetery lasted almost 100 years but still, there are many unexcavated tombs left in place. In the research on the Late Bronze – Iron age, many substantial and important conclusions were made based on the materials excavated at the Samtavro site.

The cemetery of Samtavro was not discovered within the context of an archaeological research project, or survey; it is credited as a “chance find.” F. Bayern himself, the first excavator of the site, was a geologist and natural scientist, who afterward became an expert on antiquities. This shows the approach of the first archaeological studies. Excavators were interested and motivated but not professional archaeologists with the result that they had not enough material and experience to study the epoch. Speaking about the first excavation in Samtavro and about Bayern, the archaeologist Otar Japaridze emphasized the critical attitude of the committee and dissatisfied members of it, especially concerning Bayern’s “unscientific” conclusions (Japaridze, O. 1991: Pp 6). This kind of criticism did not come to light because of the Soviet Ideology. But were a result of Japaridze’s study of the materials from Samtavro and Redkin Lager sites. Based on his research, he argued that Bayern’s conclusions about the Late Bronze issues were wrong, particularly when he refused to admit the existence of the Late Bronze age in the Georgian territory.

In the 1870s and 80s, Ernest Shantir began to work on materials from the South Caucasus. For the next two decades archaeological activities and excavation plans were defined by the “Fifth Russian Archaeological Congress”. The congress was held in Tbilisi, organized by the “Moscow archaeological society”. The society also began a series of publications on the materials that were collected, or excavated by the Caucasian archaeological committee. In 1901 they also established an office in Tbilisi (Fitskhelauri, K. 1971: 13. Lortkipanidze, O. 2002: 33-34).

After the excavation of “ancient” archaeological sites in Georgia, such as the Samtavro cemetery in Mtskheta city (Bayern 1882), Avchala burials and other archaeological sites in the surroundings of Tbilisi (Nioradze 1931, Koridze 1953), graves in Borjomi (Fitskhelauri 1973) and Redkin Lager in Armenia (Bayern 1882, Abramishvili 1957, Lortkipanidze, 2002), chronological issues came into importance in the scientific discussions. In the first place, general chronological issues and specifically how the discovered materials were to be placed in the overall relative chronology of the area were discussed. The agenda of research had been set during the “Fifth Russian Archaeological Congress” which continued to be followed even during the first quarter of the 20th century. The first chronological determination of the Samtavro and Redkin Lager sites was proposed by Fr. Bayern. He stated that the low level graves in Samtavro are 100 years later than Redkin Lager graves and earlier than the Koban³ cemetery. According to his chronology, Samtavro began its existence during the early phase of the Early Iron age and Redkin Lager in the Late Bronze (Bayern 1882). This chronological framework caused debates among scholars. Later, concerning the same issue, Ernest Chantre argued that none of the excavated sites can be defined as Late Bronze (Chantre 1886). Subsequently, Russian archaeologists also created a chronological framework. For example, according to them, all the excavated materials from the Samtavro cemetery and Redkin Lager belonged to the Iron Age (Iesen, 1935). None of the well known scientists, who discussed chronology, believed that in the Georgian territory, the Late Bronze phase existed. According to the widespread opinions in Russian scientific circles, none of the ancient periods existed in the Caucasus down to the Iron age.

In the creation of the chronological framework for the Late Bronze age, all the archaeologists concerned with this issue used only metal tools as the basis of their research on the chronological ordering of the ancient cultures. Even if many bronze tools gave evidence of the existence of the Bronze age in the Caucasus, they refused to accept the fact of its existence and they did not give any weight in their arguments to the pottery artifacts. Chronological debates continued during the period of the Soviet Union⁴. The first Soviet researcher who tried to bring clarity to this issue was Giorgi Nioradze⁵. He examined daggers, excavated in Samtavro grave

³ The Koban culture occupies territory in North Centre and NW part of N Caucasus. See detailed information in chapter 3.

⁴ This issue also comes to be the main question also nowadays.

⁵ He was also the first trained archaeologist in the history of Georgian archaeology.

N591 and compared them to his own discovery from the Avchala burials. He also gave importance to the bronze pin, discovered in the same grave N591 and a flat axe?????. Nioradze compared the mentioned materials to the Hittite figures where this kind of axe???? was carved on the figures themselves and dated the materials to the XIV-XII century (Nioradze, 1931: 202. Abramishvili, 1957: 116-117).

There were other archaeologists who also worked on the same problems. One of the main researchers in this direction was Al. Kalandadze, excavator of the Samtavro cemetery. He collected grave goods, excavated in 1938-1939 and divided them in two chronological groups. According to his early research conclusions, burials were dated to a first phase of the Late Bronze and another group was dated to a second phase of the period, XII-X BC (Abramishvili, 1957: 118). Therefore according to his reconstruction of the relative chronology, the Samtavro graves were dated to the period between XIII-V c BC. .

A new chronological picture was suggested by Boris Kuftin, who disagreed with Kalandadze and used Bayerns data to doubt previous chronological approaches (Kuftin, 1941; 69-70). Kuftin also used the excavated materials from the Tsalka plateau and the Baiburti Kurgans, where with the Trialeti middle bronze Kurgans and Late Bronze barrows were excavated. With new discoveries, Boris Kuftin created a new, relative chronological reference for the Middle bronze as well for the Late Bronze age (Abulashvili 2009). The most important aspect to note about Kuftin was not only the creation of the reliable relative chronological reference, but his cultural approach as well. He was the first who approached the culture as a social event (Smith 2005;244).

Widespread archaeological work in the Georgian territory starts during the Second World War. This activity has been carried out by the Academy of Science created in 1941 (Pitskhelauri 1973; 14). Even though the Soviet Union was witnessing economic collapse and war troubles, the creation of the Academy of Science and spreading archaeological work was a great help in demonstrating its strength and its greatness.

We could say that modern archaeological work, especially in the Late Bronze field, started during the 50s. This is a time when the state started to implement large projects for irrigation systems, as well road construction. With these new state projects, archaeological excavations were implemented and new discoveries were made. Within the same projects, a Late Bronze cemetery was discovered in Tbilisi, in the Avchala area ; its discovery in 1949 was due to the creation of

the irrigation system. During the 1949 and 1950, two archaeological seasons were carried out (Koridze 1953; 128). The excavator Koridze used the chronological system that was created by Boris Kuftin and dated the site to XIV-XII BC, that is the early Late Bronze stage (Koridze 1953; 154). With the discovery, the excavator went even further and suggested that materials, excavated in Grmagele cemetery show features of a new culture, that has no similarity with other surrounding cultures. However, the materials were mostly similar to the artifacts discovered in Samtavro cemetery in terms of ceramic vessels, but several metal objects excavated were completely unknown for that time. This attitude of considering every new archaeological find as belonging to a new cultural group is evident also in the next two decades. As a consequence, in the archaeological literature appeared several different terms defining different micro groups for the Late Bronze period in the South Caucasus. Another example confirming this approach can be seen with the discovery of the Melighele temple in 1964 (Pitskhelauri 1973; 112). The site was excavated by the “Kakheti archaeological Mission” directed by K. Fitskhelauri. After three seasons of excavation, ceramic vessels were discovered which were rarely found in the other sites. As a consequence, this type of vessels is mentioned as a Melighele type even today.

This kind of approach brought confusion in reading the archaeological literature. We cannot consider this approach seriously in this present research because the same kind of materials that were excavated in Grmaghela cemetery and in the Melighele temple were also discovered by the other excavations. Grmaghele materials are well known also for the Trelī Gorebi site and Melighele type of ceramic vessels are well known in the Shida Kartli area. This kind of pottery was excavated with other types of ceramics also in Aradetiṣ Orgora. Another example is that Grmagele cemetery pottery artifacts and Melighele metal objects have similarities with the other sites like Tsaghvli cemetery (Ramishvili 2008), Trelī Gorebi (Abramishvili 1979), Samtavro Cemetery (K’alandadze 1981) and Aradetiṣ Orgora.

The most interesting stage in the history of the Late Bronze research starts in the 70s, when two archaeologists R. Abramishvili and K. Fitskhelauri started scientific discussion about the chronology of the Late Bronze age and its cultural boundaries.

Regarding the chronological framework, the most discussed issue was the Transitional phase from the Middle Bronze to the Late Bronze age. New discoveries in the 70s gave the possibility to the researchers to study new materials and to analyze them. Fitskhelauri became a pioneer in the study of ceramic vessels and in the creation of the new chronological framework.

Until that time, ceramic was considered as the most standardized material goods for 1000 years, starting from Late Bronze to the end of Early Iron age. Not considering ceramic artifacts was the direct effect of the creation of a chronological system based only on metal objects. Considering ceramic objects in order to create a new reference, Pitskhelauri suggested the existence of a transitional phase between Middle to Late Bronze (Pitskhelauri 1973). He based his study on the materials excavated within the Kakheti archaeological mission in the East Georgian territory.

During the 70s many important discoveries of Late Bronze sites were made in Shida Kartli (Central Georgia) and Kakheti (East Georgia). The discoveries that were made by Abramishvili, excavating Tbilisi archaeological sites, went in a different direction. He refused to agree with Pitskhelauri concerning the existence of a transitional phase from the Middle to the Late Bronze (Abramishvili 1978). His major theoretical occupation focused on the cultural boundaries and its chronological references. He argued that during the Late Bronze period in the Eastern Georgian territory there existed two main cultures: Lchashen--Tsitelgori and Samtavro cultures which are quite different from each other and he was never convinced that there existed a transitional period.

This kind of scientific discussion brought new insights and interest in the research surrounding problems concerning the Late Bronze age. Many Late Bronze sites were excavated and surveyed during the 80s and 90s. Many archaeological research projects on the Late Bronze and Iron ages were carried out in the Shida Kartli region and the Kakheti area and most importantly, several settlements were excavated.

In the Shida Kartli area there are several important sites. First of all, it is important to mention the fully published Samtavro cemetery and the partially published settlement in Mtskheta V. The settlement was excavated during the 70s and in the beginning of 80s by the Mtskheta Archaeological Mission. Then, the Staliniris Natsargora was excavated in early years of 50s. This site has never been completely published and, moreover, its materials have never been re-studied because of poorly preserved documentation. Another important site is the one of Trelis Gorebi settlement and cemetery, whose materials were published in Tbilisi I by R. Abramishvili. We have to mention as well the Tsaghvli cemetery, which is one of the well studied and fully published Late Bronze sites by Al. Ramishvili. In addition, Natsargora Settlement, excavated by Al. Ramishvili during the 80-ies and lately by “Georgian-Italian Shida Kartli Archaeological expedition” is an important contribution. The materials from old excavations were partially

published in museum's reports. Interesting results came from the Berikldeebi Kurgans, but unfortunately the materials were partially published and the majority of them are still being studied. Our special attention is also focused on the Khovle Gora site, which was excavated in late the 50s until 1961 by N. Berdzenishvili and recently fully published by D. Muskhelishvili. The excavation on site has been renewed by the Georgian-Austrian archaeological mission. According to the new C14 dates provided by the Georgian-Austrian project the chronology of the site Khovle Gora needs to be reconsidered. Interesting results have been given by the excavation of Doglauri cemetery, excavated by I. Gagoshidze and the Tbilisi State University archaeological team. The excavations lasted for three seasons, from 2012 to 2015. The excavations started during the Tbilisi-Leselidze highway construction. The materials have never been published as they are still in the process of analysis. Finally, its important to list the site of Aradetis Orgora, which was excavated by the "Georgian-Italian Shida Kartli archaeological expedition". The results of the excavation will be discussed in this Ph.D thesis.

Chapter 3 – The Late Bronze — Early Iron period in Georgia (Shida Kartli): state of the art

3.1 Late Bronze – Early Iron Age cultures in the Southern Caucasus (XV-VIII cent. BC)

Caucasia is a large territory, which in the period at issue shows a diversity of archaeological cultures, many of which show interesting connections with the cultures of the ancient Near East. During the last decades systematic archaeological investigations were carried out in the territory of Georgia and a large number of new sites were discovered. This new research gave the opportunity to the scholars to better define the chronological distribution of the different cultures on the basis of comparative stratigraphy (See chapter 2).

While researching the Late Bronze Age in the Southern Caucasus, scholars also approached the question of the Iron Age in the region, which appeared as a long and poorly defined transitional period between the Late Bronze and the Classical Antiquity. The main question was, and still is, that of precisely defining the end of the Late Bronze and the beginning of the Early Iron age. On the other hand, at least until the 1970-s the transition between the Middle and Late Bronze Ages was equally obscure. However, due to the discovery of a large number of cemeteries and settlements, the question of the transition between the Middle Bronze Age Trialeti culture and the Late Bronze Age cultures has been partially clarified (Ramishvili 2000; Gomelauri 2011).

Nevertheless, several archaeologists did not accept the suggested theory about the Transitional phase from the Middle Bronze to the Late Bronze Ages. The main scholar in this group was R. Abramishvili. He refused to admit the existence of the Transitional phase from the Middle to the Late Bronze and suggested a different interpretation of the evidence. He proposed to define the time period from 1450 to 1350⁶ as an Early Late Bronze phase (Abramishvili 1957; 139. Abramishvili 1978; 66-69). He rejected attributing to the Transitional those archaeological assemblages of Late Bronze materials were associated with Middle Bronze ceramic vessels. In fact, according to him, whenever there was a majority of Late Bronze artifacts, the complexes should be defined as belonging to the Early Late Bronze phase. On the other hand, whenever the

⁶ K. Fitchelauri suggested that the Transitional phase from Middle to Late Bronze that there should be placed in the time period of 1450-1350 BC.

archaeological context exhibited a majority of artifacts belonging to the Middle Bronze period, the complexes should be defined as belonging to the Late Phase of the Middle Bronze (Abramishvili 1978; 68). For the Late Bronze/Early Iron Transition, the main problem is represented by the difficulty in distinguishing, in the material culture, what is new and what is continuing. This is a widespread chronological problem in cultures which have a high level of continuity and no sharp breaks occasioned by such decisive events such as invasions or natural disasters. The question of distinguishing what may be the effect of slow chronological changes in the material culture, and what might be attributed to the presence of different contemporary cultures in the same area, is a difficult one especially in a society that is characterized by a very strong continuity, most prominently in ceramic production. As a consequence, even today at many sites archeological levels are still dated to the “Late Bronze/Early Iron Age” without any further specification. This problem is basically due to the dearth of C14 data, which resulted from the fact that the radiocarbon methodology was poorly introduced in Georgian archaeology during the Soviet period and continued to be poorly represented in the archaeological tradition later.

Furthermore, there are several other features that have to be considered in researching the Late Bronze Age. One of the main problems contemporary researchers are facing concerns the fact that in the past four decades the cultural groups in Eastern Georgia have been identified by different terms; this is especially the case for several local scholars. As a matter of fact, every researcher has argued about the special characteristics of the Late Bronze Age in his/her site, and its cultural peculiarities. The division of the cultural groups was based on the new discoveries of that time, which brought to the light previously unknown Late Bronze artifacts.

Besides, terminology became a problematic issue when it came to naming those groups. This terminological and cultural division was first announced during scientific discussions in 1970s, when Abramishvili argued from a point of view of the non-existence of a Transitional phase between the Middle and Late Bronze Ages. His main opponent was K. Fitskhelauri, who was chief of the Kakheti Archaeological Mission during the Soviet period. This scientific discussion involved the whole scientific community of Georgian archaeologists, that is each and every archaeologist who was working on Late Bronze issues. At the beginning, this scientific discussion started with chronological problems and differences of opinion. Unfortunately later it spread to cultural issues important for understanding and evaluating the Late Bronze Age. In the end it was

often transformed into a personal matter. Our intention here is to use their publications only regarding chronological and cultural issues (Bareti, Lchashen Tsitelgori and Samtavro cultures, which are attested on the Eastern Georgian territory). The main difficulty lies in defining the chronological and geographic extension and mutual relations of three different archeological cultures: Bareti, Lchashen-Tsitelgorebi (or Central Transcaucasia Culture) and Samtavro.

To begin with, the lately so-called “Bareti” culture (Narimanishvili 2006; 102) was first discovered by B. Kuftin (Kuftin 1941; 5), but the materials were not sufficient for him to distinguish them from other cultural groups. It has only been with subsequent archaeological excavations that those materials could be well defined.

The so-called “Lchashen-Tsitelgori” culture witnessed three contrasting theories in terms of terminology. For instance, Abramishvili quoted the Early phase of the Late Bronze as the Lchashen-Tsitelgori culture (Abramishvili 1978) while, by contrast, according to the Armenian researchers the same culture was named Lchashen-Metsamori⁷ (Lindsay 2006; Smith 2002). Meanwhile, Fitskhelauri quoted the same culture as Central Transcaucasia Culture (Fitskhelauri 1982; Fitskhelauri Kote 2005).

As we mentioned in the previous chapter, with the discovery of the Grmagele cemetery the excavator defined the materials of the cemetery and other similar artifacts found in other sites as belonging to a new cultural group (Koridze 1953). However, most of the materials from this cemetery had many similarities with those from the Samtavro cemetery, especially in terms of ceramic vessels. Interestingly, several metal objects excavated at the site were completely unknown. The tendency to name every new archaeological assemblage with new terms, as if it were a new cultural group was evident also in the next decades. As a consequence, in the archaeological literature several different terms appeared defining different micro-groups in the Late Bronze period. Another example confirming this approach can be seen with the discovery of the Melighele temple in 1964 (Pitskhelauri 1973; 112). The site was excavated by the “Kakheti archaeological Mission” directed by K. Fitskhelauri. After three seasons of excavation, a rare type of ceramic vessel was found and, consequently, these vessels were considered as “Melighele pots”.

⁷ The Tsitelgori graves were discovered and excavated by R. Abramishvili, but his work has never been published (Akhvlediani 2005); this is why the term “Tsitelgori” is not widely accepted.

Regarding the "Bareti culture", G. Narimanishvili was the first who, after excavating the Sapar Kharaba cemetery, named and highlighted its archaeological inventory and distinctive characteristics (Narimanishvili 2006). According to him, this cultural group was the descendant of the Trialeti culture and was the Earliest Late Bronze cultural group. He then added that the materials of this cultural group were different from those belonging to the Central Transcaucasia cultural assemblage. He also agreed with Fitskhelauri's terminological definition concerning the Central Transcaucasia culture. He finally linked the Bareti culture to the Trialeti culture, placing it chronologically between the Trialeti and the Central Transcaucasia cultures.

Another opinion was advanced by R. Abramishvili (Abramishvili 1957). He based his ideas and defined its chronological system on the Samtavro cemetery materials⁸. He described two main cultures present in Eastern Georgia during the Late Bronze Age. He named one group as the Lchasheni Tsitelgori culture, characterized by complexes with rich barrows and large pottery vessels, decorated with triangle ornaments. At that time, the Lchasheni Late Bronze barrows from the Armenian territory were well known in the archaeological circle, but were not published. After the excavation, in the 1960s, of the Tsitelgori Late Bronze kurgans in Eastern Georgia, Abramishvili defined the territory from Central Armenia (Lchasheni) to the Eastern part of Georgia (Tsitelgori) as belonging to the same culture..

He also examined materials from central Georgia (Samtavro cemetery) and came to the conclusion that these cultural groups were different though. He suggested that the Lchashen-Tsitelgori culture started to exist earlier and continued in the Georgian territory from the 15th to the 13th cent. BC. He also considered that the Samtavro culture in Shida Kartli territory began in the 14th cent. BC and co-existed with the Lchashen-Tsitelgori culture there (Abramishvili 1957; Abramishvili 1978).

Abramishvili suggested this co-existence theory of two cultures within the same contrasting theory. He didn't agree with the idea of the co-existence of two cultural groups, and suggested that Samtavro culture followed the Central Transcaucasia culture in a chronological row. He

⁸ See the next chapter about the chronology problems

highlighted the fact that in the central part of Armenia (Lchasheni) and in Eastern part of Georgia (Tsitelgori) the same cultural impulses were observed in the Early phase of the Late Bronze and stated that it would be a mistake to diversify them into two cultural groups. Therefore, instead of naming this culture “Lchashen-Tsitelgori”, he coined an according to him more appropriate term (“Central Transcaucasia Culture”) in order to better describe the geographical borders of this culture (Fitskhelauri 1973. Fitskhelauri 1990).

Nowadays, the most accepted theory regarding Late Bronze cultures in Eastern Georgia accepts the existence of only three different cultures: the Baret culture, the Central Transcaucasia culture⁹ and the Samtavro culture. The Baret culture occupied the territories of the Tsalka and Trialeti regions, and it is credited as a descendant of the Trialeti culture. The Central Transcaucasia culture existed in Armenia, North-Eastern Azerbaijan, and in the Eastern and central Georgian lowlands. It chronologically continued after the Baret culture disappeared. At the end of the sequence is the Samtavro culture, which at its beginning was located in the Shida Kartli area, but lately expanded also in the Kakheti territory of Eastern Georgia after the Central Transcaucasia culture disappeared there (Narimanishvili 2006; Fitskhelauri 1990; Akhvlediani 2005).

⁹ As well known as a Lchashen-Tsitelgori culture

3.2 A detailed description of the contrasting opinions about cultural occupation

As we already mentioned in the previous paragraphs, contrasting theories about the Bronze cultures have been discussed between archaeologists. The discussion specifically centers on their the geographical boundaries and chronology, and how they interact with each other. In this section we will describe the different theories which have been suggested by leading archaeologists in Georgia and highlight the major aspects of the cultures focusing on their material culture, burial traditions and architecture.

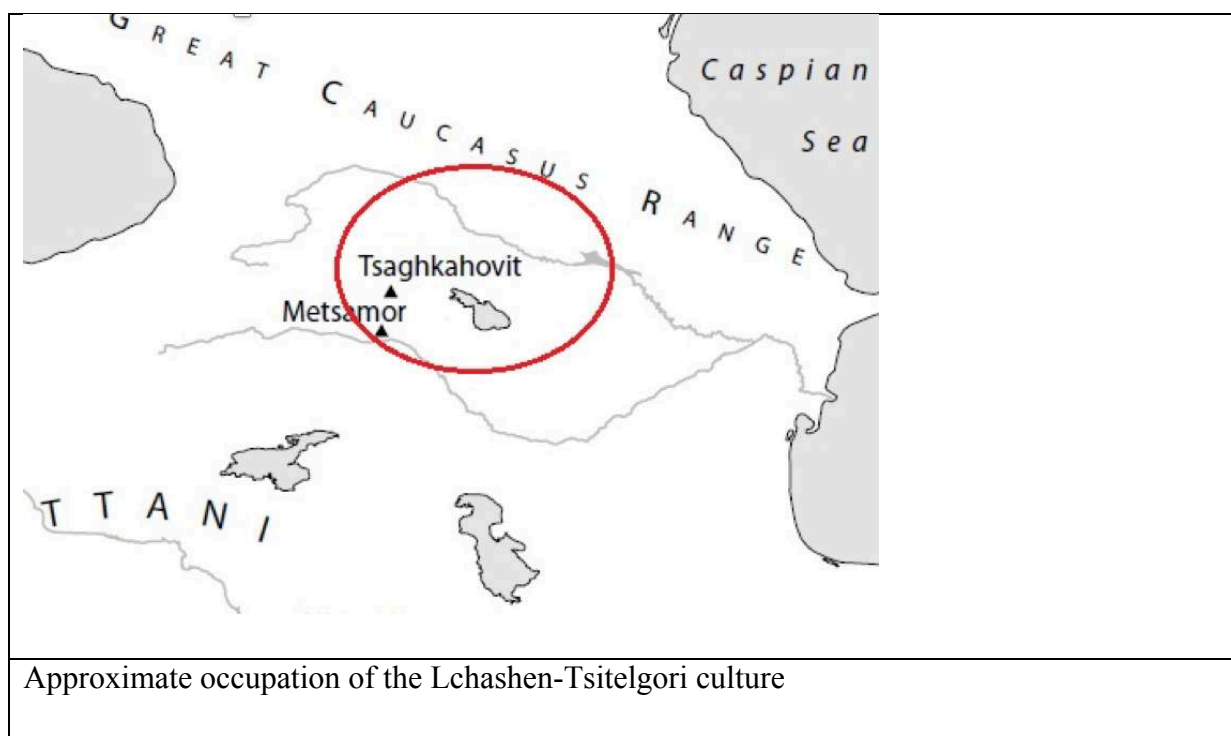
According to the definition by R. Abramishvili, during the Late Bronze/Early Iron Ages two main cultures have been defined for Eastern Georgia¹⁰: the Lchashen-Tsitolgori (As well called “Central Transcaucasia culture”), and the Samtavro cultures. They have been identified by R. Abramishvili, and named by him with the location names where they were represented. Based on Abramishvili's research these two cultures differ from each other both from the geographical, and from the chronological¹¹ point of view (Gomelauri 2011, 240; Pitskhelauri 1971; Abramishvili 1978).

The Lchashen-Tsitolgori culture, known as well as Lchashen-Metsamori culture in Armenia (Lindsay 2006; Lindsay et al. 2008; Smith et al. 2002) predominated in the territory of South-Eastern Georgia, and, outside of this, in central Transcaucasia (Armenia and the north-western part of Azerbaijan) during the 15th-13th centuries BC. It is represented by rich, Kurgan type barrows. This culture stands out for its highly developed social structure and its far-reaching achievements in the field of metallurgy. The cemetery excavations on Georgian and Armenian territories resulted in the possibility to study the social differentiation between the population as well. On the other hand, until the culture existed in Georgian territory, the style of grave construction was similar for every buried person. Burial traditions were very similar even between the Lchasheni-Tsitolgori and the Baret'i culture. However even within this overall similarity there were large differences in the material goods, which showed a clear social division within the


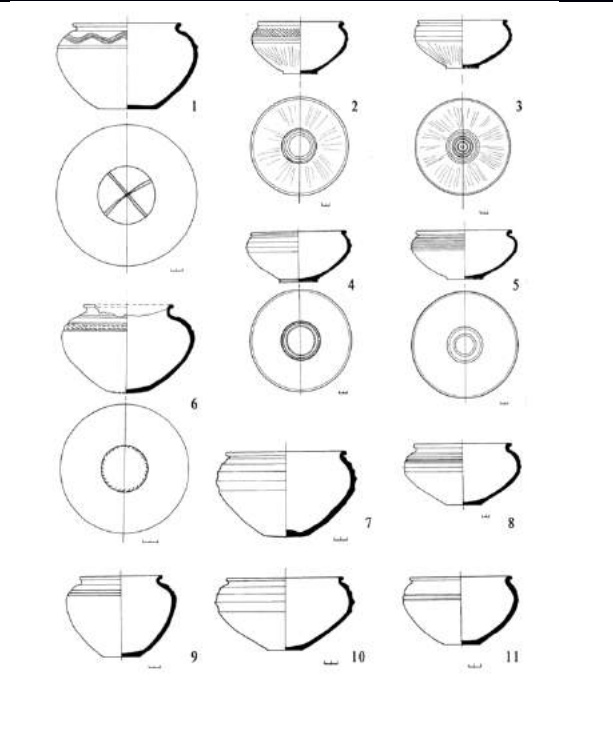
10 In Western Georgia contemporary cultures are definitely different, and do not concern us here.

11 There are very few C14 dates, so the debate about chronology is mainly about relative chronology and periodization, and those absolute dates which are given are somehow only indicative.

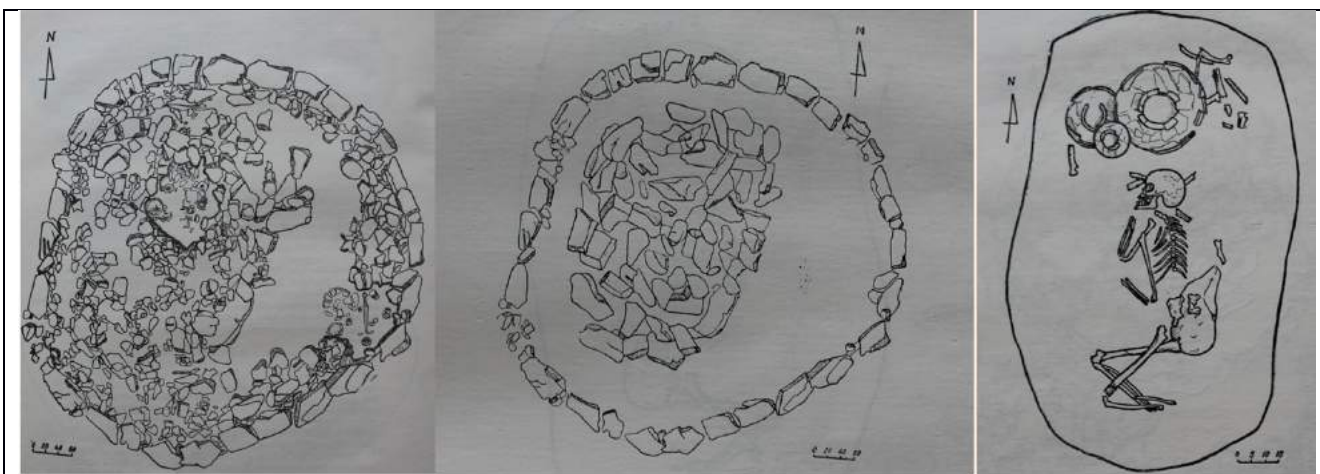
population. While in the previous cultures the use of expensive metals represented hierarchical power, in the cultures of this period social division was not expressed in the same style. For instance, only few golden objects were found in Late Bronze sites. In fact, the indications of social division are mostly in weapons, tools and bronze art objects.



This division was clearly observed during the Sapar Kharaba cemetery excavation in 2003-2005. The Sapar Kharaba cemetery occupied a 1500 m long and 400-500 m wide area, on which 115 graves were excavated. All the graves' pits were surrounded by flat basalt stones (Narimanishvili 2006; 92). Generally, the diameter of the stone circle varied from four up to 18 m. This style of grave construction, where the chamber pits were dug inside the stone circle was well known in the early phase of the Late Bronze Age. The cemetery is dated as 15th-14th cent. BC. Moreover, the same tradition in grave construction was observed also in central Georgia.

	
<p>Sapar Kharaba, Grave N51 (Narimanishvili, G. 2008; 109)</p>	<p>Ceramic vessels from Sapar Kharaba graves (Narimanishvili, G. 2008; 122)</p>

In the central Georgian area a great number of excavated cemeteries yielded the same results. In Treli Gorebi this kind of construction style continued its existence until the 13th century. Here, both Middle Bronze graves and Late Bronze burials were discovered. Generally, the grave pits were surrounded by round-shaped flat stones. The interior space, between the flat stones circle and the chamber, was covered by cobblestones. The diameter of the round-shaped stone mounds was approximately 5 up to 7 m (Abramishvili 1978: 77-78). A similar type of grave construction was also observed in the Madnischala cemetery, in South Central Georgia, where almost all the excavated graves were pit graves with a stone mound (Tushishvili 1972). The stone mounds on the burials and the stone circles were also characteristic for the Tsagvli cemetery (Ramishvili 2008) and for cemeteries in Kakheti region (Fitskhelauri, Menabde1982), i.e. for Eastern Georgian Late Bronze sites. The same feature was observed also in Armenia in the Lchasheni area.



Treli Gorebi, Grave No. 55, Stone mound, grave after removing scattered stones and the excavated skeleton (Abramishvili 1978; 76-78)

Numerous bronze funeral gifts manufactured with the complex lost-wax technique, producing hollow cast pierced objects, distinguish the Lchashen-Tsitelgori culture from the neighboring ones. Especially, a distinguishing feature of Lchashen-Tsitelgori culture culture was the ceramic decorations, which in Georgian territory happened to be a determinant feature for the relative chronology. Rich decorations were noticed on the ceramic vessels of this Late Bronze culture. Particularly well known are rows of impressed triangles of elongated shape on the neck or body of the vessels. It seems that this decoration was typical of the earlier phases of the Late Bronze, while in the late phases it is only rarely represented (Fitskelauri, Menabde 1982; 136-138). These triangle ornaments are credited as a typical Lchasheni-Tsitelgori culture decoration.

Furthermore, in the Lchashen-Tsitelgori (Central Transcaucasia culture) there were several other decorations unknown in the Samtavro culture: for example, the dot in the centre of an impressed circle, wave ornaments on the vessel's neck, sandwiched between two horizontal lines. All these decorations were completely alien to the Samtavro culture, and they existed in Georgian territory until the 13th century BC.

Because of the continuity of this decoration style, K. Fitskhelauri linked the Late Bronze

culture (Central Transcaucasia Culture according to his definition) to the previous Middle Bronze culture (Fitskelauri, Menabde 1982: 137). This conclusion was based on the examination of the ceramic data excavated by him in the Kakheti area. The Lchashen-Metsamor culture in Armenia continues its existence even during the Iron Age, while the Lchashen-Tsitelgori culture in Georgia is supposed to stop in the 13th century¹². This break in continuity was tentatively explained by the fact that this culture in Georgia is connected with southern influences, which disappear later on.

Contrary to the Lchashen-Tsitelgori-Central Transcaucasia culture, the Samtavro culture mainly covers the region of Shida Kartli in Central Georgia. Because of the impressive continuity of the tombs of this cemetery from the 15th to the 6th century BC (Akvlediani 2005-I, 130) the culture was named as Samtavro culture. It is characterized by relatively small pit graves, and appears to be comparatively less developed in terms of material culture, than the other one. This culture is distinguished by particular types of buildings: “semi-subterranean-huts”¹³ with clay plastered walls, characterized by the presence of an oven in SE corner. During the Early phases the houses were also built by stone walls.

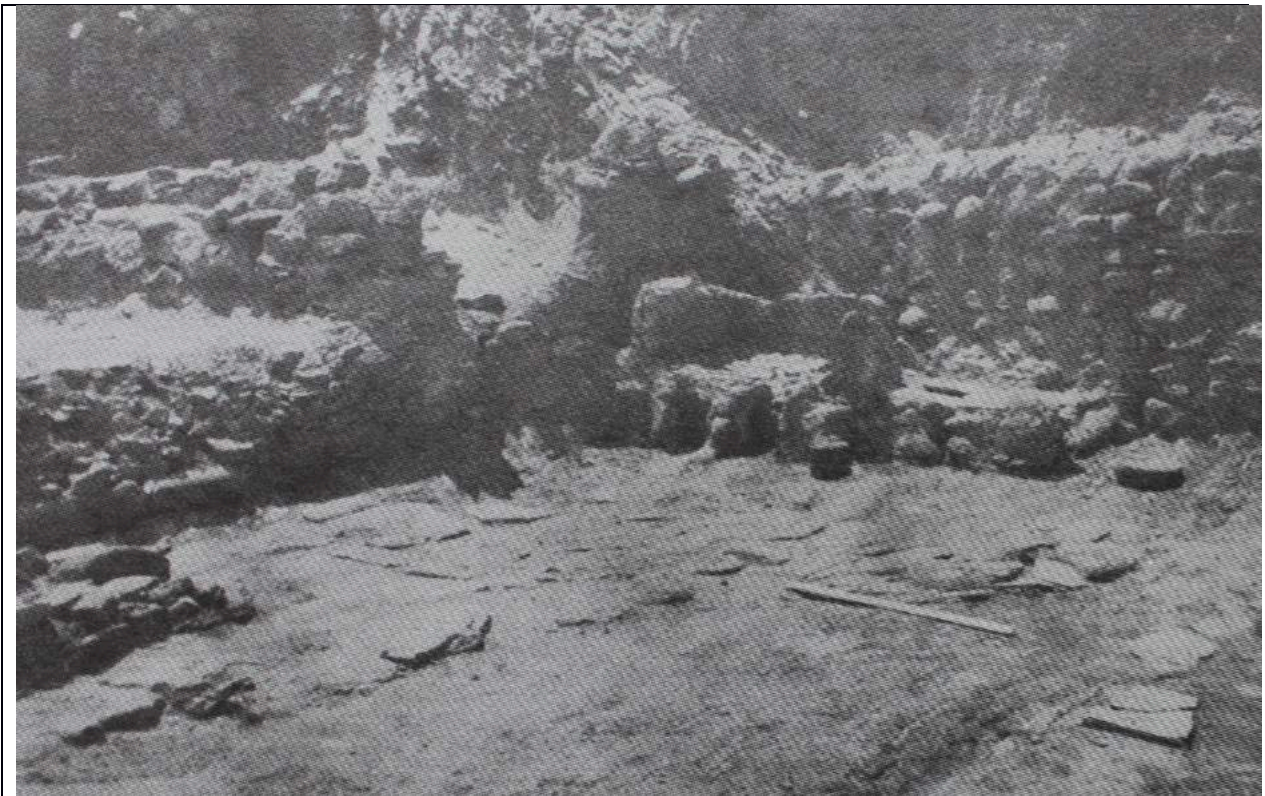


Approximate occupation of the Samtavro culture

12 This fact may justify the fact that in Armenia the culture is called "Lchashen-Metsamori".

13 The term is taken from the Georgian archaeological terminology . During that time and also later on, some houses on the Georgian territory were completely subterranean . In some cases only half of the houses were emerging from the ground: this type of houses is called “semi-subterranean houses”.

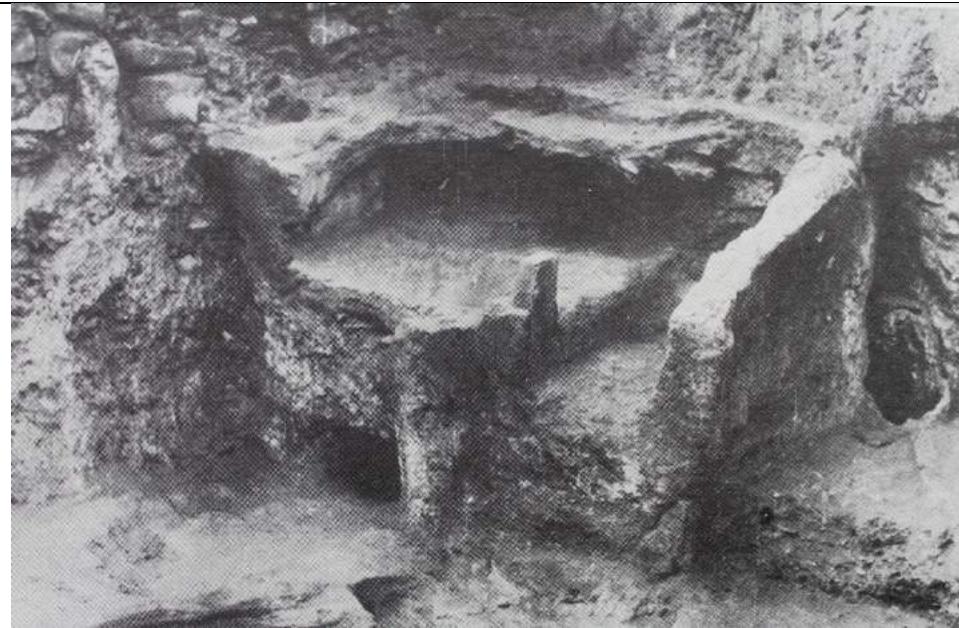
This type of house was the most standardized feature for the Samtavro culture after the 11th century, and was used throughout the entire Iron age (K'alandadze 1981). The distribution of this house type was predominant in the Shida Kartli area and in some cases also in the Western part of the Kakheti region. As we already mentioned, all the houses had the oven in SE corner. The ovens were usually constructed with clay and were used for bread making. Their construction comprised several phases, beginning with the bases, which used several layers of clay, pebbles and ceramic sherds. The same type of plaster was used for the walls. The oven's internal space usually was divided into three sectors: the upper part for making bread, the lower part for the fire, and a small chamber for the ashes.



Treli Gora II, House N13, typical L.B. room (Abramishvili 1978; 219)

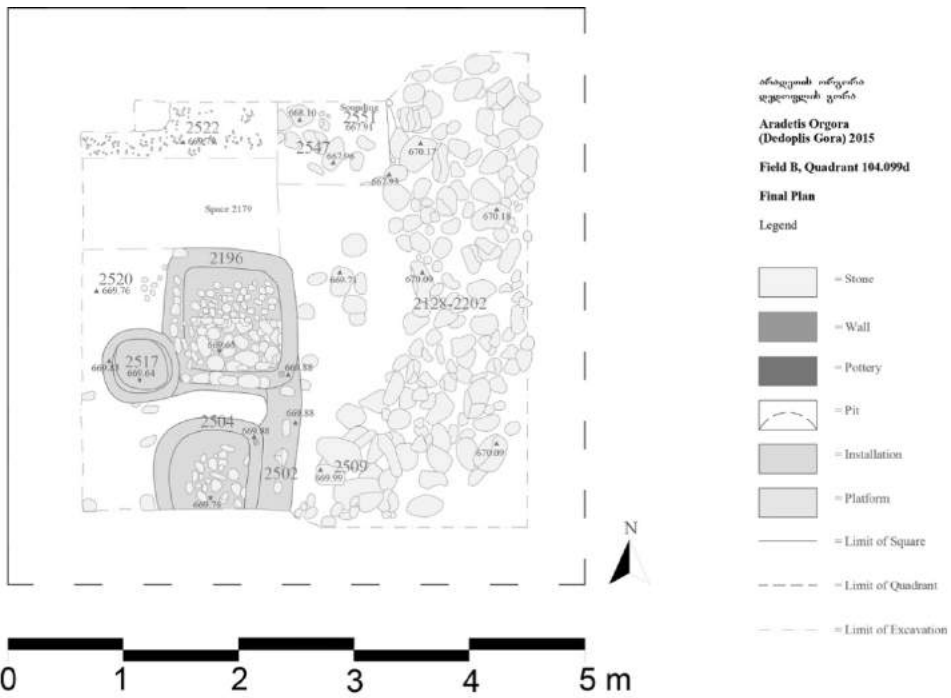
The same tradition of construction was noticed in the Grakliani Gora site¹⁴. During the archaeological excavation on the site, several different types of ovens were discovered, few of the Late Bronze Age and most of them dated as first half of the I century BC.

An interesting discovery regarding firing installations in the region resulted from the recent excavations at Aradetis Orgora, where several examples were discovered both in the Western and in the Eastern part of the mound (Rova&Gagoshidze, In print) It appears that they first appeared in the Transitional period between the Middle and the Late Bronze Age and continued until the late phase of the Late Bronze. These new discoveries showed a significant continuity in firing installations technology from the Transitional phase to the Late phase of the Late Bronze.



Treli Gora II, oven from house N9 (Abramishvili 1978; 217)

14 The excavations in Grakliani Gora are still ongoing; site has not yet been published. We thank prof. Vakhtang Licheli, the director of the excavation, for giving us information about the site.



Oven excavated in Aradeti Orgora, in Field B, Quadrant 104.099d (Georgian-Italian Sida Kartli Archaeological Project)

It seems that the burial tradition in the Samtavro culture was different from that of the other Late Bronze cultures. Regarding the Samtavro culture, pit graves were more characteristic, while the burials with stone circles and stone mounds were rather a characteristic feature for the Baretí and Central Transcaucasia cultures. The unique cemetery complex that shows a continuous development of the grave typology within this culture is the Samtavro cemetery itself. The site represents the typical late Late Bronze/Early Iron Age assemblage in the province. Since the excavation of the pit graves lasted more than a century, starting with F. Bayern and finishing with A. Afakidze, there is a large amount of data to base conclusions on. One of the excavators, A. Kalandadze, divided the excavated graves in three Late Bronze periods, Late Bronze I, Late Bronze II and Late Bronze III, dating them from the 14th to the 10th century (Kalandadze 1981). The most characteristic diagnostic object of the early graves in Samtavro field was the “Leaf-Shape” dagger shape. These artifacts have been used in the creation of the chronological system for the Samtavro Culture (Abramishvili 1957, Fitskhelauri 1973, Kalandadze 1981). The so called "Leaf-Shape" daggers were represented in the grave assemblages dating from the 14th to the 13th centuries. For the subsequent chronological stage the so called “Kakheti type Swords and Flat Axes” are considered typical¹⁵ for all the complexes from the 12th until the 7th-6th centuries BC.

The majority of the evidence for material culture found in the Late Bronze sites were ceramic vessels, and the Samtavro cemetery was no exception. In fact, the Samtavro vessels typology shows a variety of shapes for different domestic purposes. Overall, in most of the cases the ceramics are similar to the shapes of the Lchashen-Tsitelgori culture and, most importantly, they show a linear continuity in the vessel shapes from the Late Bronze to the Iron Age. While, as already mentioned, the shapes, in some cases, are similar to those of the other cultures, however the decoration types are different in style, placement and technology. In the framework of the Samtavro culture the triangle ornament was not familiar, even though it was highly developed in the Lchashen-Tsitelgori culture. The ornaments were mostly placed on the neck of the vessels even up to the rim in some cases; decoration is also found on the body and on the edge of the base. The ceramic was rather rough and in the majority of the cases it was not polished (Kalandadze 1981).

15 These two types of metal objects were found both in Shida Kartli and the Kakhetian territory. As swords and axes are represented in a very large quantity in the majority of the Kakheti Late Bronze complexes, the name of this region was chosen in order to define them. This name is widely used in Georgian archaeological terminology.

Within the past three decades several other important archaeological sites of the Samtavro culture have been excavated in the Shida Kartli area or near its borders: examples of these are Samtavro, Narekvavi, Kaspi and Khovle. Some of them may be especially useful for understanding the chronological development of these LB-EI cultures, but also their geographical distribution and connections with the neighboring cultures. For example, West Georgian and East Georgian Late Bronze cultures are divided by the Likhi range, but at the site of Khashuri Natsargora, which is located close to the western limit of Eastern Georgia, influences from the west-Georgian cultures (“Jargvali” type dwellings, specific pottery types and materials) can be observed (Ramishvili 1991: 24).

The site of Natsargora was partly investigated by A. Ramishvili during the Soviet Union period (1984-1992). He excavated 515 graves¹⁶ and part of the Late Bronze-Early Iron period settlement (Ramishvili 1991). He also excavated a large Late Bronze cemetery at the neighboring site of Tsaghvli. Excavations in Natsargora were re-opened in 2011-2012 by the “Georgian-Italian Shida Kartli Archaeological Expedition” of Ca’ Foscari University in collaboration with the Georgian National Museum. Although the excavation focused on the Early Bronze Age, it brought to the light a large number of pottery sherds of the Late Bronze/Early Iron Age periods, which were recognized as belonging to different phases within the period. Most of these, however, came from pits and mixed layers, and could therefore not be used to build a reliable ceramic sequence. After the reopened excavation, the expedition was able to process 1000 diagnostic ceramic fragments (Babetto, Gavagnin 2017). The Natsargora ceramic sherds also show some similarity with the West Georgian Late Bronze, but mostly in the chronological framework of the first half of the first millennium (Ramishvili 2008; 156-178). This new ceramic evidence corroborates the evidence excavated and analyzed by A. Ramishvili, which included the discovery at Natsargora of a “Jargvali” type house, which characterizes the West Georgian Late Bronze (Ramishvili 1995). The site of Natsargora is therefore an important amalgamation of East and West Georgian Late Bronze cultural elements. The location of the site is critical, as it is on the crossroad between East and West.

¹⁶ One hundred fifty of these are dated to the Late Bronze-Early Iron period, 26 to the Early Bronze Age (see Puturidze, Rova 2012), while the remaining ones belong to the Early Bronze and Classical Antiquity periods.

Not far from Natsargora in E direction, the site of Aradetis Orgora and other Late Late Bronze sites in the surrounding area, revealed both Samtavro and Lchashen-Tsitelgori material culture (Akhvlediani 2005). Added to this mixture, sometimes West Georgian Late Bronze pottery types¹⁷ were also found.

The most characteristic feature of both, Lchashen-Tsitelgori and Samtavro cultures are the presence of weapons: burial goods are represented by a large quantity of swords, daggers and axes. This suggests that important social changes marked the end of the Middle Bronze Age and that, in particular, the need for defense significantly increased.

In general, a characteristic feature of the Late Bronze age is that important changes appear in every aspect of the life of Caucasian people, possibly both as a consequence of internal developments and also as a consequence of the appearance of new, strong political powers in the neighboring areas.

The most evident phenomenon is that of the re-appearance of settlements, which had been quite rare for almost a millennium (starting from the Early Kurgan period and continuing into the Trialeti culture). This has been connected with a trend toward complete sedentarization by groups previously practicing a semi-nomadic transhumant way of life (Lordkipanidze 2002: 104; Fitskhelauri 1971, 1973: 123-125; Muskhelishvili 1978). Furthermore, it appears that weapons became very common in the assemblages of the local cultures, which suggests increasing warfare and conflicts. Also defensive walls, built with huge stone blocks, became more frequent, especially in the Lchashen-Tsitelgori culture in the territories of Armenia and on the Tsalka plateau. This is a territory where the “so called” Cyclopean fortresses can be observed. The Cyclopean fortresses are constructed on the very large scale with huge walls. The archaeologist G. Narimanishvili described three types of Cyclopean fortresses in the area. The first type of consisted of two concentric walls using the relief in the surrounding landscape as a natural defense. The second type integrates the populated fortress with the settlements inside and outside of the walls. Finally, the third type saw the fortresses standing separately from the settlement (Narimanishvili,

17 One such find was made in Doglauri cemetery, adjacent to the Aradetis Orgora settlement (salvage excavations 2012-2015 directed by Iulon Gagoshidze). The excavation results are not yet published; therefore we also cannot incorporate finds from them into this analysis, to the exception of some selected graves, that we were allowed to use and even to publish.

Shanshashvili 1997: 29-30). These huge buildings were defined as Early Late Bronze constructions but this chronological reconstruction has not been definitely proven, because they continued in use even during the late periods. The construction of the defense walls sometimes also are linked to the earlier kingdoms in the Georgian territory (Narimanishvili 2016).



Distribution of the Cyclopean fortresses (map by D. Narimanishvili 2016)

Important changes also occurred in burial customs: from elite burials – large Kurgans (monumental barrows) with impressive concentrations of wealth (especially in precious metals) – to small graves equipped with numerous, less precious grave goods (vessels and jewelry for females, and weapons for males). In pottery production, the fast wheel was introduced (presumably from the south) and spread to all pottery vessels.

In spite of these common features, the limits between the Lchashen-Tsitelgori and the Samtavro culture are still quite vague. As for their chrono-stratigraphic definition, according to scholars, who undertook it (Pitskhelauri, Abramishvili), the analysis of excavated pottery revealed several shapes and decoration types which appear to have a high continuity, so that a distinction between earlier and later types is not always easy: e.g., the same decoration found on vessels of the 15th-13th centuries can be found on later ones as well. A careful revision of the stratigraphic sequences of different sites is therefore necessary in order to define a new ceramic periodization for these phases.

The geographical limits of the distribution of the two cultures are also vague, and influences are noticeable both among them and between them and other neighboring Kobani and West Georgian Late Bronze cultures. The Western Georgian Late Bronze culture had its particular features, which were completely different from those of the East Georgian Late Bronze cultures. The first of these is the “so called” “Colchian” axes, which came to be the determinant artifact for the Western Georgian Late Bronze. This type of axe was also well known in the Kobani culture of the Northern Caucasus. Bronze axes continued their existence even during the Iron Age as a ritual attribute, and they co-existed with iron weapons.

The second characteristic feature of the West Georgian Late Bronze is the settlement type. The settlements usually extended over several hills (so called “Dikha Gudzeuba” type). The main settlement always occupied the central, highest hill, and the smaller ones were placed around it. The region was humid and rich in forests: therefore the houses were constructed with wood. This type of houses is called “Jargvali” in specialist's terminology. This type is also familiar at the Natsargora site in the Khashuri district of the Shida Kartli province¹⁸ (Ramishvili 1991; 24. Ramishvili 1995; 72-73). Regarding pot making, ceramic vessels were made with a low quality clay, with mineral inclusions of different color and size in the fabric (Lordkipanidze 2002: 130; Jibladze 2003) Nowadays, researchers think that West Georgian Late Bronze and Kobani cultures represent the same cultural group (Lordkipanidze 2002: 128-140).

18 The detailed information about the description of the jargvali house in Natsargora site is included in the excavation report, stored in the Archaeological Research Centre in Tbilisi.

	
<p>Colchian exe, early type, chance find. (from Tskvitinidze 2011)</p>	<p>Typical Jargvali house, Colchian Late Bronze. (from Mikheladze 1990; 108-109)</p>

Several other important archaeological sites, especially of the Samtavro culture, have been excavated in the Shida Kartli area or near its borders: examples of these are Samtavro, Narekvavi, and Kaspi.

The one thing that all the LB specialists could recently agree on was the fact that, contrary to the general reconstruction proposed by previous scholars (for example Roin Abramishvili: Abramishvili 1978) which postulated that the Lchashen-Tsitelgori culture didn't arrive in the territory of Shida Kartli at the beginning of the Late Bronze, the dominant culture in on this area was since the beginning the Samtavro Culture (Abramishvili 1978). In fact, at the same time as Kote Fitskhelauri (Fitskhelauri 2005) published his PhD work, Nino Akhvediani (Akvlediani 2005) published an article where she presents the hoard from the unpublished Sasireti site and compares it to the materials from burials from Aradeti (Doghlauri cemetery) and materials from Berikldeebi. A new opinion thus appeared, that also Shida Kartli was involved in the development of Lchashen-Tsitelgori culture. The evidence of this also was discovered during recent excavations at Aradetis Orgora.

This kind of cross-cultural intermixing thus appears in the Aradetis Orgora area and in particular, at the site itself. Here the excavated pottery includes shapes which are generally considered typical of both the Lchashen-Tsitelgori culture and of the Samtavro culture. The Shida Kartli region could thus represent a type of cross-cultural area between both cultures, and could

prove particularly important in order to clarify the relations between them (this issue will be discussed in the following sections of this work).

3.3 Issues of periodization and absolute chronology

Background and Historical Overview of the Problem

As soon as the first Late Bronze site was discovered in 1871, the issues of chronology came to be foremost in discussions of this material. Each and every researcher tried to bring new chronological references into the analysis of the archaeological evidence. The first goal that every archaeologist tried to reach was to create a reliable relative chronology for the Late Bronze period. This became possible in the light of those discoveries that were made in the last five decades in the Georgian territory. As we mentioned in the previous paragraph, the serious scientific discussion surrounding chronological issues started in the seventies of the last century. Since that time, many points of view have been published, but no general agreement could be reached concerning this problem. As a matter of fact, several different chronology systems were suggested by several scholars. In the next pages we will discuss each and every proposal for a new chronological system and will try to bring clarity about the matter.

Chronology became a problematic issue in the study of Late Bronze archaeology because there were not enough exact dates that one could rely on. In fact, the method of dating through radiocarbon analysis was rarely used in Georgian territory for the Late Bronze until 2000.

The main disputed questions surrounding the chronology of Late Bronze-Early Iron Age in the area derive from the fact that existing periodizations are primarily based on cemetery materials, and that data from settlements are rarely taken into consideration. A second problem, the one cited above, is the dearth of reliable ¹⁴C dates for these phases.

There are three reliable main points of view among Georgian scholars about the periodization and chronology of the period, but several other systems exist as well. These chronological schemes were proposed by R. Abramishvili (Abramishvili 1957), K. Pitskhelauri (Pitskhelauri 1973, 1979, 1990) and lately by Kavtaradze and Narimanishvili (Kavtaradze 1983: 125-134; Narimanishvili, G. 2006: 98-101); other chronological proposals were based on these main schemes and differ from them only in details. For instance A. Ramishvili transferred

chronologically the Transitional Phase from the Middle Bronze to the Late Bronze, based on the important chronology of Pitskhelauri (Ramishvili 2008: 156-162). These systems differ from each other in other aspects besides periodization.

One of the reliable chronological systems for the Samtavro culture is based on the proposal by R. Abramishvili. As it appeared, the Samtavro cemetery consisted in graves that were continuously represented on the site from the Late Bronze Age until the end of the Iron period. As a matter of fact, Abramishvili created a chronological system for the Samtavro culture built on the metallurgy developments in the graves. In his research he did not exclude ceramic artifacts as well, but did not rely on them to the extent that he depended on the metal objects found along with the ceramics. According to his chronological framework, the two represented cultures that existed in the Georgian territory: the Lchashen-Tsitolgori and Samtavro cultures, followed each other chronologically (Abramishvili 1978: 66-67).

Contrary to this conclusion K. Fitskhelauri (1973, 1979, 1990) suggested that Lchashen Tsitolgori¹⁹ materials were older than Samtavro culture materials and furthermore he thought that during the Late Phase of the culture (Lchashen Tsitolgori) they co-existed with each other. In his reconstruction he also proposed, in terms of the terminology, to call this culture “Central Transcaucasia Culture”. In fact, he placed the Central Transcaucasia culture before the Samtavro culture started its existence, but during the later phases they overlapped. In fact, at the end when Lchashen-Tsitolgori culture disappeared Samtavro culture continued its existence.

G. Kavtaradze based his research on Fitskhelauri's work, but he also used calibrated C14 data to create his chronological system (Kavtaradze 1983: 125-134), moving the existence of the Late Bronze from the traditional framework of the 16th-11th centuries to the new chronological framework of the 17th-12th centuries. Kavtaradze's suggestion was partially criticized by Narimanishvili who, after the excavation of Sapar Kharaba cemetery, defined a new cultural group (which he called Baret'i culture) and placed it within a new chronological system. Based on his research, this Baret'i culture existed during the Late Bronze II (L.B. II in the Ramishvili

¹⁹ According to the Fitskhelauri, Central Transcaucasia Culture.

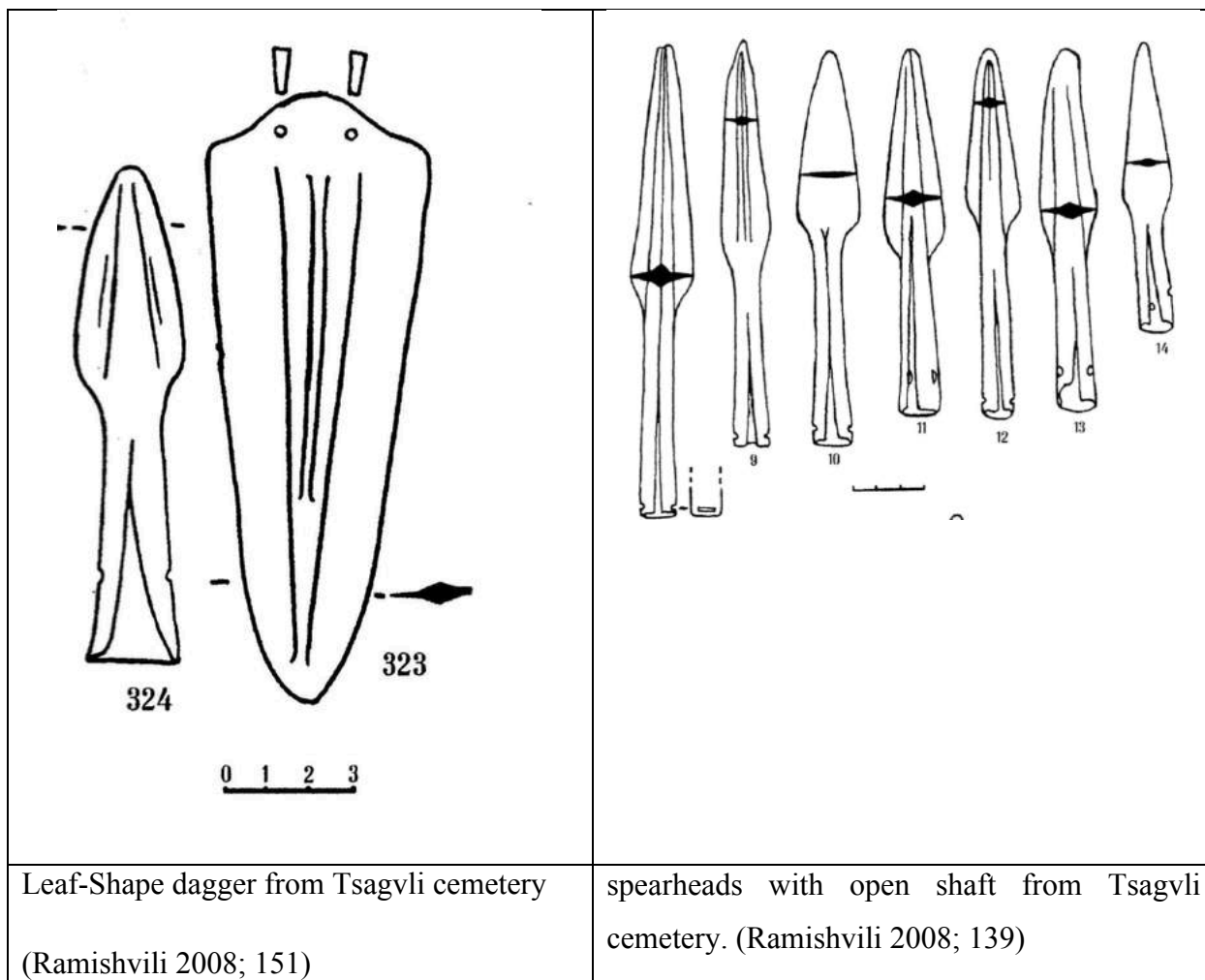
chronological system), after the Transitional phase, before the Central Transcaucasia Culture started its existence.

Years BC (appr.)	Traditional periodization (after Abramishvili 1957, 1978)	Traditional periodization (after Fitskhelauri 1973)	Traditional periodization (after Kavtaradze 1983)	
700	Iron Age II (The second stage)	Iron Age II (The second stage)	Iron Age	
800	Iron Age II (The first stage)	Iron Age II (The first stage)		
900	Iron Age I (Early Iron)	Late Bronze III (The Late Phase of the L.B. and Early Phase of the E.I.)		
1000	Late Bronze III (Transitional phase from Late Bronze to Early Iron Age)	Late Bronze II (Leaf-Shape daggers and daggers with "compiled handles))		Late Bronze III (Samtavro culture in Shida Kartli and Kakheti)
1050				
1100	Late Bronze II (bronze daggers with compiled handles)	Late Bronze I (Central Transcaucasia culture (Lchashen-Tsitelgori))	Late Bronze II (Central Transcaucasia culture (Lchashen Tsitelgori))	
1150				
1200				
1250	Late Bronze I (The Early Phase of L.B. Leaf shape daggers and spearheads with open shaft)	The Transitional Phase from M.B. to L.B.	Late Bronze I	
1300			(Transitional phase from M.B. to the L.B.)	
1350				
1400	Middle Bronze III (Late Phase of the Middle Bronze)	Middle Bronze III (Late Phase of the Middle Bronze)	Middle Bronze III (Late Phase of the Middle Bronze)	
1450				
1500				
1600				
1700			Middle Bronze III (Late Phase of the Middle Bronze)	

The Earliest Chronological Reconstructions and the Importance of the Samtavro Cemetery Excavation

The first chronological system for the Late Bronze Age was suggested by Kuftin. His system was based on the new findings in Baiburti and the Tsalka plateau (Kuftin 1947). His methodology was simple; however, he tried to place the new discovered artifacts in a major chronological system. Later, the researcher A. Kalandadze (chief of the Samtavro expedition) tried to distinguish the materials excavated in the Samtavro cemetery as a chronological continuation. He used the widely accepted methodology for that time, which consisted in using metal objects in order to date the graves. According to his work, the Late Bronze graves in Samtavro cemetery were divided into two chronological groups: 13th-10th cent. BC and 10th-6th cent. BC graves. In fact, he dated all the cemetery graves as 13th-5th cent BC (Kalandadze 1940: 107). Later, he revised his own opinion about the chronological division of the graves, changing his periodization and proposing three chronological groups: Late Bronze I, Late Bronze II and Late Bronze III (Kalandadze 1980,1981,1983).

The revision was published after Kalandadze's death in the systematic publication of the Mtskheta archaeological expedition in Volume IV (K'alandadze 1980), Volume V (K'alandadze 1981) and Volume VI (K'alandadze 1983). In Mtskheta IV were published the graves belonging to the Earliest phase of the Late Bronze Age (Late Bronze Age I), complexes which revealed the "so-called" "Leaf-shaped daggers". This metal type is important because they were first found in Samtavro cemetery, then within the next decades of the research this type of dagger appeared also in graves from other sites, basically in the Shida Kartli area. In parallel to the Leaf-Shaped daggers, one of the other defining materials of the period was the so-called "spearheads with open shaft" (Abramishvili 1978; 66).



According to Kalandadze's research, the graves with Leaf-shaped daggers represented the Earliest Phase of the Late Bronze, which he dated as belonging to the 15th-13th century BC (K'alandadze 1980: 6-140). He then went much further in the chronological reconstruction of the sequence of the Early Phase graves in Samtavro cemetery. Through his analysis he separated the graves into two stages, the earliest being the 15th-14th cent. BC graves, characterized by the presence of ceramic vessels that had a specific decoration on the neck, a wave ornament sandwiched between two horizontal lines. This type of ceramic decoration allowed him to outline the stages of the Early Late Bronze phase. Regarding the Leaf-shaped daggers, Kalandadze was able to describe an earlier and more primitive technological stage in the production of daggers. He separated this earlier stage from a later, more advanced technological stage in which he saw more

developed objects. Kalandadze dated the next stage of the Early Bronze phase to the 14th-13th cent. BC (Kalandadze 1980; 7-8).

His research on the development of the materials of Samtavro cemetery also gave him the opportunity to divide the later stages of the Late Bronze phases. He placed the Late Bronze II in the framework of the 13th-12th centuries. As we already mentioned, he defined the characteristics of the graves in phase II and he described graves Nos. 14-16, 20, 30, 39, 41, 43, 67, 76, 80, 203, 107, 132, 240, 263, 312 as having purely Late Bronze II materials (Kalandadze 1981: 7-30). The other graves (Nos. 2, 8, 87, 88, 96, 111, 125, 127, 150, 155, 255, 267, 269) he considered as consisting of mixed Late Bronze II and Late Bronze III materials (Kalandadze 1981: 31-44).

In his reconstruction the final phase of the Late Bronze (III) is dated to the 12th-11th centuries. In this framework he placed graves No. 17, 39, 40, 47, 49, 56-58, 84, 89, 90, 92, 97, 133, 257, 294 ... (Kalandadze 1981: 45-80).

As for the Iron Age, he did not propose any phase division: he placed all the remaining graves excavated from 1939 to 1946 and later in 1970-s in the chronological framework of the 10th-6th cent. BC (Kalandadze 1983: 7-134).

Kalandadze's work was published later than Abramishvili published his research about Samtavro cemetery chronology (Abramishvili 1957), where he tried to systemize the Samtavro culture chronology basing on the Samtavro cemetery graves.

Abramishvili's chronological system

Abramishvili in his research on the graves in Samtavro cemetery compared the grave offerings with materials excavated in other places. The methodology he used was to date first of all the graves that yielded materials similar to those of other well dated sites. He started from the Samtavro graves that had Scythian arrowheads and compared them with evidence from the well dated sites and, in this way, he synchronized the cemetery and placed it into a chronological framework. According to his theory, in the Georgian territory, the Late Bronze cultures chronologically follow each other: first the Lchasheni-Tsitolgori culture started to exist, and after it disappeared the Samtavro culture came into existence (Abramishvili 1957; Abramishvili 1978).

Regarding the Samtavro culture, Abramishvili divided the previously excavated graves in the Samtavro cemetery into six chronological groups: the Early Late Bronze phase (15th-14th cent. BC), the second Late Bronze phase (13th-12th cent. BC), the Transitional phase from the Late Bronze to the Early Iron (11th-10th BC)²⁰, the Iron Age I (9th-beginning of the 8th cent. BC), the Iron Age II, which was divided into two stages: 8th BC- first half of the 7th and respectively second half of the 7th-6th cent. BC (Abramishvili 1957: 139). In the following paragraphs we quote the chronological division system from the Later Periods to the Earliest ones.

According to Abramishvili, the latest stage of the Samtavro chronology referred to the second half of the 7th and 6th cent. BC. For synchronization of the phase in the chronological system was used the material culture. In fact, as it appears the Scythian arrowheads have the so-called “rhombus shape”, which are considered even today as a second half of the VII century arrowheads. The other materials to use were crooked iron knives. This materials are considered as a VI c BC feature (Abramishvili 1957; 126, 129). The parallels were Tsitsamuri graves (Shida Kartli), Dvani graves (Shida Kartli), Manglisi graves (Kvemo Kartli), and Beshtasheni graves (Tsalka plateau) (Abramishvili 1957: 132)

The next stage he dated from the 8th cent BC until the first half of the 7th cent. BC. The division of the time period was based on the appearance of Iron bracelets and iron rings; these had not been present in the earlier graves. At this stage of the Samtavro cemetery, material goods increased in the graves and jewels were also found. Scythian arrowheads were also not common artifacts in the grave materials as they would be the next stages. The last indication of the division between this group of graves and the next ones came from the stratigraphy. For example, in the next stage grave No. 29 was constructed on top of grave No. 30 and was cutting another one. In fact, that was put into the group of the 8th cent. BC layer graves (Abramishvili 1957; 133-134).

The next group followed chronologically the Transitional phase, when the iron items were in the majority in the graves and the bronze objects were only occasionally represented.. Based on Abramishvili's research on this group, the technology of iron making expands its presence in the Georgian territory. According to the stratigraphic contexts this group of graves was placed in-


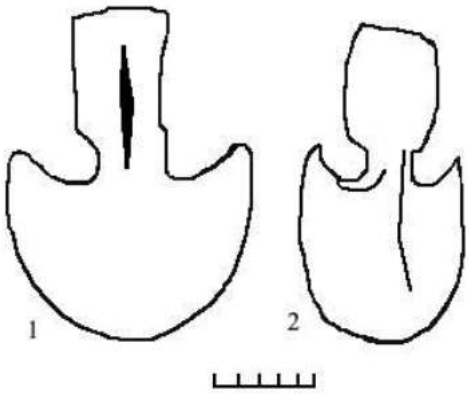
²⁰ Lately he updated the chronological system and placed the phase into the framework of the Second half of the XII c and X c BC

between the stage of the Transitional phase and that of the 8th century graves. In fact, they were dated to the 9th c BC. This group of graves in Samtavro cemetery was represented by the following graves: Nos. 19, 44, 70, 83, 114, 119, 134, 151, 168, 177, 281, 289, 311 and, among those excavated in Area South, Nos. 91, 284, and 375 (Abramishvili 1957; 135).

Abramishvili considered the previous group and the following one together for some aspects, but he also divided them in the framework of chronology, and diversified iron items. The earliest group of pit graves included the following numbers: 39, 51, 56, 77, 96b, 152, 208, 211, 279 and graves from the Area South with the following Nos. 29, 96, 275. According to Abramishvili, this group should be considered as a Transitional phase from Late Bronze to the Early Iron Age. He dated this group to the 11th-10th cent. BC. To synchronize this group of graves and to define the Transitional phase, he used the bronze pin discovered in grave No. 591 by F. Bayern and dated the complex where the pin was found as XII-X c BC (Abramishvili 1957, 136). By the help of these parallels, Abramishvili considered the Transitional phase covering the period from the Late Bronze to the Iron Age as belonging to the 11th-10th cent. BC. Lately, after the excavation of the Trelis Gorebi (Tbilisi) cemetery, he slightly changed his first date for the transitional phase and dated it from the second half of the 12th BC to the 10th cent. BC (Abramishvili 1978; 85-90).

The next group of graves belonged to the late phase of the Late Bronze Age. Apparently, no iron objects were discovered in this group of graves. If we look at this chronological period in Southern Caucasionly few iron items were discovered in this time. These included a short sword from Beshtasheni (Kuftin 1941: 56, 58, 63) and a knife from grave No. 13 in Gerik-Chai cemetery (Kuftin 1941: 67)). The most characteristic tools among the material goods from this grave group were the so-called “bronze daggers with compiled handles²¹” (Abramishvili 1957: 137). This type of dagger is considered to be a local metallurgic creation during the Late Bronze period. Moreover, the typical East Transcaucasian axes were represented in the grave goods. This type of axe was more massive and heavier than the similar types of axe found in the later levels.

²¹ In some cases in literature they are also defined as “Kakhetian Swords”.

	
<p>Bronze daggers from the Treli Gorebi, Graves N37, 44. (Abramishvili 1978; 213)</p>	<p>“So-called” Khakheti type exes (Inanishvili 2014; 205)</p>

According to Abramishvili's chronological system, this group of graves dated to the 13th-12th cent. BC (Abramishvili 1957: 138). According to his later reconsideration of the next, transitional phase, he moved this group into the framework of the 13th and first half of the 12th cent. BC (Abramishvili 1978: 82-85)

Regarding the earliest phase of the Late Bronze, Abramishvili agreed with the chronological reconstruction of T. Chubinishvili and dated the phase to the 15th-14th cent. BC (Abramishvili 1957: 138; Chubinishvili 1954: 16-17). According to him, this phase was well known in Georgian archaeology as the “leaf-shaped dagger period”.

Later, the archaeologist V. Sadradze proposed a different opinion about the earliest graves of Samtavro cemetery and the Samtavro culture itself. According to this scholar, the Earliest Phase of the Late Bronze in Abramishvili's chronological system, which he divided into two stages, should be placed in the framework of 1350-1250 BC.. He dated the first stage (1350-1300) as the period of the Central Transcaucasia sites (Lchashen-Tsitelgori), while he placed the sites with cultural materials characteristic for the Samtavro culture between 1300 and 1200 BC (Sadradze 2002: 148-161).

Fitskhelauri's Chronological Reconstruction

Another serious attempt at establishing the chronology of the Late Bronze can be seen in the research of K. Fitskhelauri (Fitskhelauri 1973, 1979, 1983, 1990). In fact he proposed a new methodology to date the Late Bronze period, as the focus of his chronology was the study of the ceramic evidence from Kakhetian archaeological sites. He tried to prove that the Lchashen-Tsitelgori culture was earlier than the Samtavro culture, except for the fact that in his reconstruction the final phase of the Lchashen-Tsitelgori culture overlapped with the Samtavro culture. Practically he tried to change the chronological system that was dominant in that time, which had been created by Abramishvili.

Fitskhelauri criticized Abramishvili for his methodological approach²² (Fitskhelauri 1973: 1979). His research took into account the evidence of ceramic vessels and separated the Transitional phase leading from the MB to the LB Ages. Based on his research, regarding the material culture, he also thought that the Late Bronze I phase was a direct continuation of the Transitional phase. Then he placed Abramishvili's Late Bronze I (second half of the 15th-14th cent. BC) (Abramishvili 1957: 136-139) in his Late Bronze II (second half of the 13th century-12th cent. BC) (Fitskhelauri 1973: 168-174). He also concluded that the “so-called” Samtavro culture in the Shida Kartli region, during the Late Bronze II period (in his chronological system),

²² Abramishvili in his research considered only metal objects and didn't give the credit to the ceramic items

co-existed with the Lchashen-Tsitelgori culture (Fitskhelauri 1973: 178). This opinion was controversial with regard to Abramishvili's theory, who saw two different cultures (Samtavro and Lchashen-Tsitelgori) in to chronological continuation (Abramishvili 1978; 66-68).

Fitskhelauri used all the materials that had been discovered at that time and regrouped them in a different way. In his first (oldest) group he placed the sites, which he thought were belonging to the Transitional phase from the MB to the LB. For this stage he quoted the following sites: Upper Bodbe Barrows I and II (Kakheti), Graves Nos. 11, 13 in Ole cemetery (Kakheti), Barrow No. 5, upper grave and lower grave²³, in Baiburti (Tsalka), Graves Nos 5-6 in Lilo (Tbilisi), Ulianovka barrow No. 2²⁴, Ilto settlement (Kakheti) and Meli Ghele I (Kakheti) (Fitskhelauri 1973: 127-137).

According to Fitskhelauri's research, this group of sites belonged to the Transitional Phase from the Middle to the Late Bronze. The ceramic artifacts showed a similarity with the pottery of the Late Phase of the Middle Bronze Age. The ceramic decoration of the Transitional phase was similar to that of the Middle Bronze, but the decoration techniques were Late Bronze in style. The fabric was based on two colors and the inclusions were whitish and fine. More importantly, the handles, which had been a common feature for Late Phase of the Middle Bronze, were not present in the Transitional phase except on Meli-Ghele I. Later, during the Early phases of the Late Bronze, the handles reappeared on the ceramic vessels (Fitskhelauri 1973; 140).

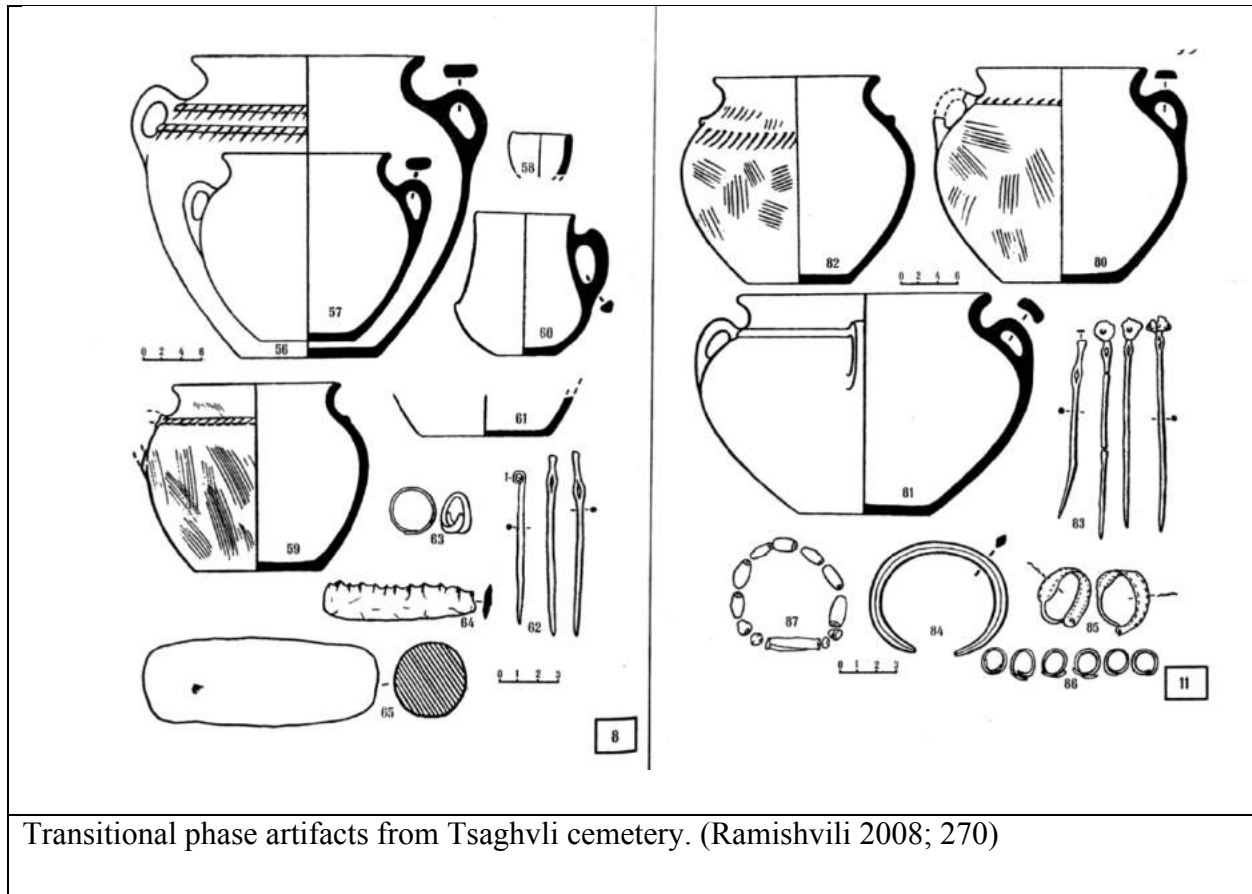
To reinforce his ideas about the existence of the Transitional phase, Fitskhelauri incorporated similarities in burial traditions into his considerations. For example, the tradition of burial construction was almost the same in the Late Phase of the Middle Bronze as it was during the Transitional phase, because there still existed graves with a stone mound and the pits were placed inside a stone circle. In fact, according to him, the Transitional phase barrows co-existed in the same geographical area with the barrows of the Late Phase of the Middle Bronze²⁵ (Fitskhelauri 1973: 138-139). Fitskhelauri assumed that the development of the Transitional phase should have lasted for about 100 years. He argued that the existence of large cemeteries should be the sign of a century long period and therefore dated the Transitional phase between the second

²³ Excavated by Kuftin. The terms are used according to Kuftin's diary.

²⁴ Excavated by R. Abramishvili.

²⁵ Late Phase of the Middle Bronze.

half of the 15th cent. BC and first half of the 14th cent. BC, specifically 1450-1350 BC (Fitskhelauri 1973: 146).

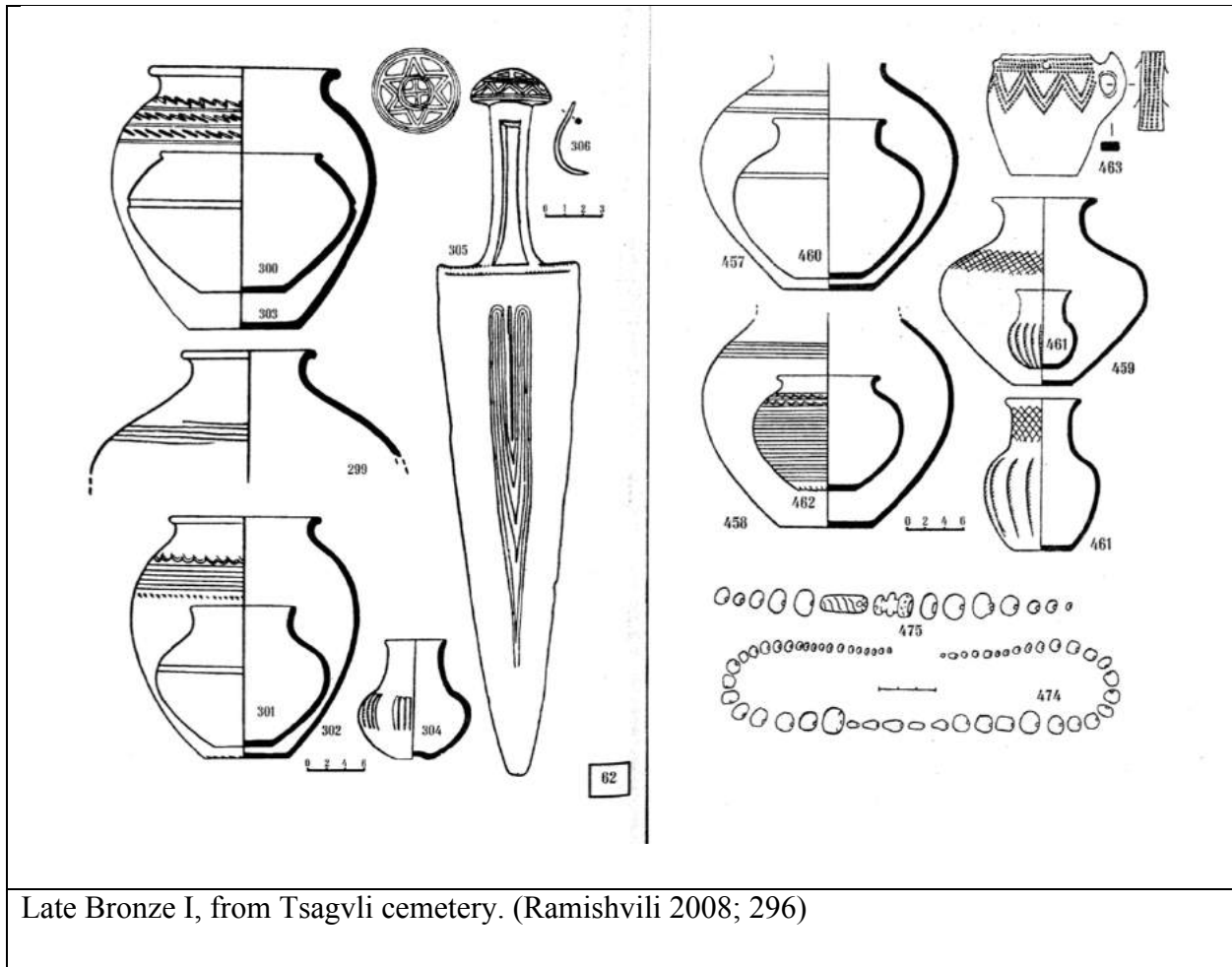


Transitional phase artifacts from Tsaghvli cemetery. (Ramishvili 2008; 270)

The next stage of the Late Bronze according to Fitskhelauri's periodization system is the Early phase of the Late Bronze and this phase he called Late Bronze I. According to him, the sites yielding Late Bronze I materials were: the Necropolis of Plavismani (Kakheti), Staliniris Natsargora (Shida Kartli), Khatlaniskhevi settlement (Kakheti), Meli-Ghele I (Kakheti), Nasadgomari cemetery (central Kakheti), the Grma Ghele Barrows (Tbilisi), the Ulianovka (Eastern Kakheti) barrow No.1, several graves of the Samtavro cemetery²⁶ (Mtskheta) and the earlier layers of Mchadijvari Gora settlement No. 2 (Kakheti), Khatlaniskhevi II settlement (Shida Kartli), and Gadrekili cemetery (Kvemo Kartli).

²⁶ Graves Nos. 62, 139, 153, 160, 163 (all the graves were concentrated in Area South).

In Armenia Late Bronze I stage materials were observed in Khalnar, Artik, Tazak'ent. As in the previous, Transitional phase, as well as on this stage the weapons were in the minority and only on rare occasions found in the graves (Fitskhelauri 1973: 147-148). He also mentioned that, for the most part the Late Bronze I stage sites were located geographically either close to the Transitional phase sites or in the same place (Fitskhelauri 1973: 149). For this stage he regrouped the sites within the Central Transcaucasia culture (Lchashen-Tsitelgori). Fitskhelauri dated the period from the second half of the 14th BC until the end of the first half of the 13th cent. BC (Fitskhelauri 1973: 159). According to him, this Late Bronze I stage was earlier than the stage considered by Abramishvili as an Early Phase of the Late Bronze (15th-14th centBC) (Abramishvili 1957 139). Regarding the same chronological period, Fitskhelauri considered it as Late Bronze II, which he dated to the second half of the 13th to the 12th cent. BC.



Late Bronze I, from Tsagvli cemetery. (Ramishvili 2008; 296)

As we already mentioned, Fitskhelauri thought that the Leaf-Shaped daggers period and the bronze daggers with "compiled handles" co-existed in the Late Bronze II period. Leaf-shaped daggers were found only in Shida Kartli and "bronze daggers with compiled handles" only in Kakhetian territory (Fitskhelauri 1973: 168-174). In Abramishvili's periodization the Leaf-shaped dagger period was earlier than the phase when the bronze daggers with compiled handles appeared. In fact, his chronological system reconsidered leaf-shaped daggers as dating to the Early Phase of the Late Bronze (15th-14th cent. BC) and the sites with the "bronze daggers with compiled handles" to the Late Bronze II (14th cent. BC) (Abramishvili 1957: 139).

According to Fitskhelauri's research, during the Late Bronze III one culture with two different local versions spread in the Eastern Georgian territory. One of them, with influences, mostly in pottery making, from the West Georgian Late Bronze, was found in the Shida Kartli area. The other locally important LB III version of the culture existed in Kakheti, where some local traditions appear on the lowland between two large rivers, the Iori and the Alazani (Fitskhelauri 1973: 181). According to Fitskhelauri's chronological reconstruction, the LB III period was also considered as Early Iron Age. This Late Bronze III in Fitskhelauri's system comes closer to Abramishvili's transitional phase from the LB to the Early Iron (12th-10th cent. BC) and Early Iron Age (9th BC). Fitskhelauri unified in one period Abramishvili's two periods and dated it as 11-9th cent. BC (Fitskhelauri 1973:186. Abramishvili 1957: 139).

Chronological Reconstructions by Ramishvili

Concerning the same issue an interesting argument was brought forth by the archaeologist Al. Ramishvili. In fact, we think it would be appropriate to mention him now. Based on his excavations of the Tsagvli (Shida Kartli) cemetery (Ramishvili 2008) he suggested dividing the Transitional phase into two groups. The first group included the majority of the ceramic vessels with similarity to the Middle Bronze artifacts, characterized by being made on the slow wheel, by inclined thumb ornaments on the base, and by grooved non-systematic lines on the body. In this stage he grouped the following sites: Ilto Cenotaph (Kakheti), Cenotaph No. 1 and graves Nos 62, 70, 123, 178, 196 excavated in Area S in the Samtavro cemetery (Mtskheta city), graves Nos. 43, 53 in Treli Gorebi cemetery (Tbilisi), Kurgan No. 32 in Trialeti (Tsalka, and, finally, graves Nos.

1, 3, 7, 8, 11, 13, 16-18, 21, 31-33, 38, 41, 44, 48,49, 55, 59, 63, 72, 76, 77, 80, 81, 92, 93, 96, 98, 101, 108, 116, 119, 122, 123, 125, 133, 135, 136, 140, 150 in Tsaghvli (Shida Kartli) cemetery (Ramishvili 2008: 168-169). Regarding the second group of the Transitional phase, he grouped the following sites there: Upper Bodbe barrows Nos 1 and 2 (Kakheti), Gadrekili barrows Nos 1-2 (Kakheti), Kurgan No. 5 from Lilo (Tbilisi), barrow No. 11 from Ole (Kakheti), grave No. 198 from Samtavro cemetery (Mtskheta), graves Nos 56, 74 in Treli Gorebi (Tbilisi), Upper and Lower graves in Baiburti (Tsalka), Kurgans Nos. 28 and 42 in Trialeti (Tsalka).

Ramishvili basically agreed with Kavtaradze's periodization regarding the whole Late Bronze period, which defines the transitional phase from the middle of the 16th until the beginning of the 14th cent. BC (Kavtaradze 1983: 125-134) and made small corrections to it. He placed the first stage sites into the second half of the 16th cent. BC and the second stage sites into the 15th c BC (Ramishvili 2008: 175-176).

The Influence of Fitskhelauri's System on Contemporary Chronological Reconstructions

At the beginning, Fitskhelauri's chronological system was not completely shared in academic circles, but later, with the new archaeological discoveries, his ideas were given more credit. In fact, basing on his research, G. Kavtaradze tried to revise the chronological system by using C14 data and parallels. He relied on calibrated C14 dates and took also into account the material culture and its parallels from the surrounding world.

Kavtaradze divided the Late Bronze into three phases: Late Bronze I as a Transitional phase from the Middle to the Late Bronze (he dated it from the middle of the 16th cent. to the beginning of the 14th cent. BC); Late Bronze II, as an early phase of the Late Bronze (he placed it in the framework of the 14th cent. BC) and lastly Late Bronze III (which he dated to the 13th cent., lasting until the end of the 12th cent. BC. For the last phases he relied on Abramishvili's system. According to him, the Iron age started in the 12th century in the framework of the Samtavro culture, whose material is similar to contemporary Iranian artefacts (Kavtaradze 1981; 125-134).

In the framework of the Late Bronze I Kavtaradze placed the following assemblages: Graves No. 53, 74 and 115 from Trelis cemetery (Tbilisi), Cenotaph from Ilto (Kakheti), Kurgan No. 5 from Lilo (Tbilisi), grave No. 5 from Samtavro cemetery, Graves Nos 1-7 from upper Bodbe (Kakheti), Grave No. 2 from Naomari Gora (Kakheti), complexes from Brimatskhali (Kakheti), a settlement from Chaliantkhevi (Kakheti) and survey materials from Besastskhali (Shida Kartli) (Kavtaradze 1981: 125).

Within the Late Bronze II he placed the following complexes: Grave No. 2 from Ulianovka (Kakheti), Graves Nos. 37,42,55,56 from Trelis Gorebi 90 (Tbilisi), the graves from the lower levels in Gadrekili (Kvemo Kartli) and Pevrebi (Kakheti), the upper level of Chaliantkhevis' A settlement (Kakheti), MeliGele I (Kakheti), and Grma Ghele (Tbilisi). According to him in the Armenian territory the parallel sites are the II group of graves from Arktic (Kavtaradze 1981; 128).

In the framework of the Late Bronze III he placed the sites from Kakheti and the rest of the Samtavro graves (Kavtaradze 1981: 131)

Subsequently, G. Narimanishvili tried to revise Kavtaradze's chronological system and suggested some corrections for Fitskhelauri's chronological scheme. He proposed, apart from the transitional period, the existence of four phases in the Late Bronze. He dated the Transitional period to the 17th cent., the LB I to the 16th cent BC, the LB II between the 15th and the 14th cent BC, the LB III phase in the second half of the 14th and in the 13th cent. Finally, according to him, the LB IV phase dated to the 12th-11th cent. instead of the 13th-12th cent. as Fitskhelauri thought (Narimanishvili 2006: 101). In addition, for the Armenian sites new chronological system was suggested by Tsagovit project, which relies on the C14 data (Lindsay 2006, 2008. Smith, Badalyan, Avetisyan 2009). As a conclusion, we should give credit to all the previously mentioned chronological discussions and the main suggested points of view of the last four decades. However, in the creation of a chronological system for Aradeti Orgora, we cannot completely rely on any of them. Aradeti Orgora showed²⁷ a continuation without a break in the ceramic artifacts, which gives us the possibility of reconstructing the chronological development of the site from the Late Phase of the Middle Bronze until the Iron Age. As a matter of fact, we can rely

²⁷ See chapter 6.

on Fitskhelauri's and Ramishvili's division for the Late Bronze and for the Iron age we take in consideration Abramishvili's system.

Years BC (appr.)	Traditional periodisation (after Miron, Orthmann 1995)	¹⁴C-supported periodisation (after Smith, Badalyan, Avetisyan 2009)	Archaeological sites mentioned in the text (Armenia and Georgia)
800	Iron Age	Iron Age Ib	Ciskaraant Gora, Kvemo Kedi, Ochkhomuri, Samtavro
900			
1000	Late Bronze III	Iron Age Ia	Didi Gora, Khovle, Naokhvamu, Noname Gora, Udabno, Artik, Samtavro
1100			
1200	Late Bronze II	Late Bronze III	Avranlo, Nosiri, Tqisbolo Gora, Udabno, Samtavro
1300			
1400	Late Bronze I	Late Bronze II	Agarak, Nosiri, Sajoge, Tsaghkahovit, Artik, Lchashen, Samtavro
1500			
1600	Middle Bronze	Late Bronze I	Nosiri, Tblisi Treli Gorebi, Tsaghvli, Tqisbolo Gora, Artik, Samtavro
		Middle Bronze III	Didi Gora

Tablet by Babetto, Gavagnin 2017

Chapter 4: East Georgian archaeological sites

4.1 Late Bronze-Early Iron sites in East Georgia

As we already mentioned in the chapter 2 research of the Late Bronze sites in Georgian territory has began in 19th century and first serious archaeological research took a place on LB cemetery in Samtavro. However, existence of the long history of research, systemization of the the period couldn't have been done. There have been several problems for that. At the beginning few existing settlements on the different places of Eastern Georgia. Than missing C14 dates for chronological reference. Quite opposite situation appears in Armenian territory, after ArAGATS project takes a place (Lindsay 2006; Lindsay et al. 2008; Smith et al. 2002). Different situation can be observed for the West Georgian Late Bronze, where the difference of the material culture between Eastern and Western Georgian Late Bronze was clear from the beginning.

For the East Georgian Late Bronze settlements one of the characteristic feature are that they exist up on Early Bronze (Kura-Araxes) settlements. As far as the practice has shown many of Kura-Araxes levels are covered by the LB sites (Khashuris Natsargora (Ramishvili, 1991), Aradetis Orgora (Rova-Gagoshidze, in print), Tsikhiagora (Makharadze,)). However, existence of the one millennium gap of the sedentarisation of the people, have been filled by new wave of the social system. New, Late Bronze period settlements were constructed on the same hills, or places. This fact can be explained by the strategic use of the places as for the Kura-Araxes people the location could perfectly be fitted also for Late Bronze people. The hills, used by Kura-Araxes people are reach by the river sources and with its outstanding location. As for the Aradetis Orgora from the top of the hill can be seen all the lowland between Likhi and Ksani ranges. The main river Kura passes through and the crossroad from N to S and from E to W is even recently represented. The excavated settlements in general were constructed on the natural hills with good defense perspective. In some cases excavations evidenced the settlements that were surrounded by defense channels (Muskhelishvili, 1978).

For the Early Iron period live continues in all the settlements for this reason analyzing material goods results many similarity. For one thing can be noticed is expansion of the settlements on surrounding areas.

Our database consists the description of the Late Bronze Early Iron sites in Eastern Georgia. The special attention is paid of settlements which can define stratigraphy of the Late Bronze sequences and be useful for the comparison of Aradeti Orgora stratigraphy. There are represented the opinions of the site excavators. The database is constructed by alphabetical order.

Grma Ghele cemetery

Location: Shida Kartli

Coordinates:

Excavator: D. Koridze

Excavation year: 1949

Type of site: cemetery

Site description and periodization:

The cemetery was discovered in 1949 during the construction of the Tbilisi-Rustavi water pipeline. Excavation uncovered 4 kurgan-type burials with material goods (Koridze 1953); In the same year the materials were archived in the GNM. Although at that time not much LB archaeological sites and material had been discovered, in order to date the graves use could be made of the already existing chronological scheme created by Boris Kuftin (Kuftin 1948) and of parallels with the Samtavro materials. Accordingly, he dated the materials XIV-XII centuries (Koridze, 1953, 154). He considers the Grma Ghele cemetery as belonging to a local cultural horizon where considers this cemetery as a eastern and western cultural features meet and mutually influence This conclusion was based on the fact that material goods (both ceramic and metal artifacts) have much in common with the materials from “Staliniris Natsargora” and Samtavro, but also show several features which according to him are influenced by the west Georgian LB.

Comments:

We have to consider we consider that at the time of excavation the Lchashen-Tsitelgori and Santavro cultures had not been properly defined. As a matter of facts, the described pottery from Grma Ghele shows all the features of the Lchasheni culture. If we consider, in addition, the presence of triangle impressed decoration on the pottery and the leave shape dagger that was discovered in one of the graves , we can attribute this cemetery to the LB. I phase, i.e. to the XIV century.

Bibliography:

Koridze 1953

Irganchai Barrows

Location: The site lies in the Dmanisi district, in the Kvemo Kartli province of Southern Georgia, and is situated at an altitude 1700-1800 m above sea level.

Type of site: The site consists of a barrow cemetery.

Coordinates:

Excavation year: 1984-1996.

Excavator: Kakha Kakhiani (Archaeological research center of Georgia).

Site description, periodization: 50 barrows of three different periods were excavated: the first group was dated Early Bronze Age (3rd millennium BC), the second group in the first half of II millennium (Middle Bronze Age, Trialeti culture) and the 3rd group was dated to the excavator at 1600-1300 BC (Kakhiani 2008: 229, 230). Some barrows also contained layer intrusive Iron Age Graves.

Excavated barrows were divided by three groups according to their chronological stages I group dated III millennium, II group first half of II millennium and III group barrows as a 1600-1300 BC. The barrows of the third group barrows are nos. 5, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 19, 22, 31, 32, 35, 36, 38, 40, 41, 42, 45, 47), They are dated to 1600-1300 BC and they belong to the central Transcaucasian culture. The barrows are low and broad, about 1 m high and 8 to 23 m dm. The exterior of the barrows was covered by large stone slabs and the interiors were represented by series of pits, especially in barrow no. 5. *“It has a 17 m long passageway paved with cobblestones that connect the circular stone cairn with the enclosed chamber”*. Middle Bronze Age (Trialeti) barrows of Javachi, Orzmani, Gantiadi, Orskhelebi, and some new barrows excavated by the Tsaska-Trialeti archaeological expedition have similar passageways. The chamber of the barrow was covered by large stones that created a false dome. The chamber itself consisted of two levels. An interesting find was the skull of a bull, ceremoniously placed in both corners of the eastern wall. A similar tradition of placing bull skulls in graves has been observed in many Bronze age sites in the Caucasus. Indeed, it mostly reminds one of the "Royal graves" at Alaca Höyük in Anatolia (II half of the 3rd millennium BC). Inside the barrow there were numerous pieces of pottery, a bronze

dagger, a piece of dagger blade, two bird figures, tin beads, obsidian arrowheads, and past beads. The pit of the grave had been robbed. A similar wooden construction was discovered also in barrow 32, where, in addition, there was a wooden couch with six supports in the shape of the animal's leg.

Description of material goods: The pottery uncovered in group III barrows included large polished jags, pots of the so called "Bayburt" type, nutshell-shaped bowls and various pottery of small size(Kakhiani 2008: 231-232).

Absolute Chronology:

One calibrated C14 sample has been taken from barrow 5:

Barrow 5	1512-1406	Cal.BC	(Tb-478)
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Bibliography:

Kakhiani 2008

Khashuri Natsargora

Location: The site lies in the Khashuri district of the Shida Kartli province, to the west of the homonymous village,

Coordinates:

Excavation year: 1984-1992, 2011-2012

Excavator: Al. Ramishvili (institution) Z. Macharadze, B.Murvanidze, E. Rova (Georgian-Italian Shida Kartli Archaeological Project, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, GNM).

Site description: The site was partiallyly investigated by A. Ramishvili during the Soviet Union period (1984-1992). He excavated 515 graves (150 of which dated to the Late Bronze-Early Iron period, the remaining ones being of the Early Bronze and Classical Antiquity periods) and part of

the Late Bronze-Early Iron period settlement (Ramishvili 1991, 1995), as well. In the same years he also excavated a large Late Bronze cemetery at the neighboring site of Tsaghvli (see above). The LB-EI cultural layers occupied a thickness of ca 2.5 m, and deeply cut into the underlying EBA levels (Babetto, Gavagnin, In press). Excavation at Natsargora was re-opened in 2011-2012 by the “Georgian-Italian Shida Kartli Archaeological Expedition” of Ca’Foscari University in collaboration with the Georgian National Museum. Although the new excavation focused on the Early Bronze Age, since most of the later levels had already been removed by the Georgian expedition, it brought to the light a large number of pottery sherds of Late Bronze/Early Iron Age date, which were recognized to belong to different phases within this longperiod. Most of these, however, came from pits and mixed layers, and could therefore not be used to build a reliable ceramic sequence.

Description of material goods: The Late Bronze pottery excavated at Natsargora shows a diversity of decorations and shapes.. In continuity with Trialeti production, LB vessels are usually decorated with an incised geometric decoration, but pattern-burnishing. Sometime incised lines appear also under, or over, the pattern-burnished decoration. Also pottery fragments with pattern-burnished decoration are quite frequent at Natsargora (Babetto, Gavagnin, In press).

Absolute Chronology: Here you have to mention the c14 dates (excluding the KA ones) which we have published from the site

Bibliography:

Babetto, Gavagnin in press

Ramishvili 1991

Ramishvili 1995

Rova, Puturidze, Makharadze 2011

Khovle Gora

Location: The Khovle mound lies in the district of Kaspi (Shida Kartli province), in the area of the Khovle village, 2 km to the NE of this

Coordinates:

Excavator: N. Berdzenishvili

Excavation year: 1954-1961.

Type of site: Mounded settlement and cemetery. The Khovle settlement seems to be rather large in comparison to other contemporary sites.

Site description and periodization: -

During the excavation seasons, part of the settlement in the N part of the hill and some burials were excavated. 5 meters of cultural layers were uncovered, which corresponded to two basic archaeological levels with 8 different building horizons. Horizons were counted from the top to the bottom, and mentioned by roman numbers: thus level I will be latest one, and level VIII the oldest one. The first level consisted of five building horizons (VIII-IV) and the second one of three (horizons III-I) (Muskhelishvili 1978: 63). These are the dates proposed by the excavators for the different Levels (Horizons):

Level VIII — XV BC

Level VII — XIV BC

Level VI — XIII BC

Level V — XII-X BC

Level IV — IX-VII BC

Level III — VI BC

Level II — V BC

Level I — IV BC

During the mound's excavation large amount of materials were collected, the majority of which consisted of ceramic vessels and fragments.

Description of material goods: Khovle Gora shows an interesting diversity of ceramic shapes and ornamentation techniques and designs, as well as of metal or bone material types. In order to date them, Muskhelishvili used the traditional chronology, and for most materials referred to the Samtavro Cemetery materials, which show the closest connections with the Khovle materials. The Khovle sequence was divided by Muskhelishvili into three main periods : the first, consisting of 5 horizons (VIII-IV) where pottery is mainly of dark colors, the second is a transitional layer in which black and red pottery co-exist, and the third of (III-I) is characterized by red-colored pottery.

According to the him, the VIII and VIIs horizons should be contemporary with those burials in

Samtavro which belong to I phase of the Late Bronze (XV-XIV centuries). This complexes are known as “Leave shape” dagger burials (daggers of this shape were one of the diagnostic features dating Samtavro materials). For dating horizon VI he also used Samtavro reference, in particular the similarity of the pins with rounded (spiraled) heads and bone cylindrical beads. These kinds of pins and beads were discovered in Samtavro and in Beshtasheni burials, and were dated by R. Abramishvili to the XIII-(XII) centuries. It appears that this similarity was the only reason for proposing this date for horizon VI.

Comparisons for the V horizon were found in funnel-shaped vessels , which were uncovered in Samtavro and Beshtasheni burials, and dated to the XIII-XII centuries. Other materials from this horizon (beads, ceramic and horn objects) were similar to those found in burials nos: 19 and 18 at Beshtasheni Horizon V was accordingly dated to the XII-X centuries (Muskhelishvili 1978: 71).

The date of horizon IV was mainly based on ceramic materials. In this level, the first reddish ceramic fragments also noted. One of the main elements in dating this horizon was the small settlement to the N from the Khovle mound, which is considered to stop its existence in the IX century. This small settlement was attributed to the V horizon; therefore the IV horizon was dated to the IX-VII centuries. Good parallels for the III horizon are given by arrowheads and other materials: on this base the level was dated to the VI century. Arrowheads references were also used to date the II horizon in the V century, while ceramic parallels suggested, for the I horizon a date in the IV century (Muskhelishvili 1978: 63-81).

Comments: Excavated materials from Khovle were studied in 1963 by Davit Muskhelishvili, member of the expedition, but the final report was not published because of Berdzenishvili's death. Finally it was published in 1978, but several theories were reconsidered according to new archaeological data which in the meanwhile appeared in Georgian archaeology (Muskhelishvili 1978: 3, 5).

As we can see, according to the excavators life in Khovle continued for ca one millennium, but since the beginning there were several doubts on this proposed chronology. According to the new results by researchers of the Georgian-Austrian project, which during the last years is re-excavating the hill and made some ¹⁴C analysis on its material, the stratigraphic sequence of Khovle was correct, but the absolute dates proposed by the excavators were not. Following this new evidence, the beginning of the sequence should be dragged down to the beginning of the Early Iron Period. So, The Khovle sequence should not span the XV-IV centuries, but begin in the XII

century, and last till the time of the Achaemenes occupation in Eastern Georgia (V century BC).

The new absolute dates clearly show that there were some problems with the attribution of some of the diagnostic elements used to build the traditional chronology. For instance, one of the main bases of the chronological scheme was impressed triangle decorations on ceramic vessels. This kind of decoration is a characteristic feature of the so called Lchashen-Tsitelgori culture, and is considered to a feature of the first phases of the Late Bronze Age. This kind of decoration was considered to exist in the XV-XII centuries, and to disappear after this time, when different decoration motives appear on ceramic vessels. . Accordingly, the presence of this decoration at Khovle was considered a prove of the antiquity of the site. Although this decoration actually appears on several ceramic sherds at Khovle, these levels cannot now be dated so early any more. The majority of the ceramic forms that were excavated at the Khovle levels are in fact definitely characteristic of the LB II and of the final phase of the Late Bronze. It thus remains to be clarifies whether impressed dtriangles decoration continues being in use later than expected, or whether the sherds discovered at Khovle represent residual sherds originally from older levels. Be that as it may, it is clear that Khovle chronology should be reconsidered and re-dated again.

It appears that the material from Khovle Gora is especially interesting, since the site has has a continuous sequence of Early Iron layers, which is presently being revised in the framework of renewed excavations at the site by the joint Georgian-Austrian expedition.

Absolute Chronology:

Bibliography:

Muskhelishvili 1978

Mchadijvari Gora

Location: Mchadijvari Gora is located in Shida Kartli, on the high terrace of the Narekvavi River, in the Mtkvari basin.

Coordinates:

Excavation year:

Excavator:

Type of site: The site consists of a cemetery and a mounded area, but was damaged by human

and animal disturbance. In spite of this, significant finds of the Early Bronze, Late Bronze, Early Iron, Hellenistic and Early Medieval periods have been uncovered (Tsitlanadze 2008: 185).

Site description, periodization: The settlement occupies a 1000 square mound oriented on an east-west axis, and has 7 m deep cultural layers, Early Bronze (Kura-Araxes) layers were directly superimposed by a 3 m deep Late Bronze phase. Some mud-bricks dwellings, mainly small in size, had survived. There were also various storage pits.

The Early Iron Age is represented by a different building technique: buildings have stone foundations and mud-brick walls. (Tsitlanadze 2008, Pp:186)

Description of finds: Pottery is wheel-made and highly fired. The majority of it is black burnished, either fully, or with burnished bands on the matt surface. Decorations consist of grooved or relief ornaments, with horizontal grooved lines demarcating the base from the body of the vessel. Other significant artifacts are: flint sickle, grinding stones, various bone tools, some metal tools, wooden tanning implement. Site Seems that economy of the settlement was based on agriculture and cattle-breeding. (Tsitlanadze 2008,186).

The pottery of the Iron Age level is light gray and decorated with polished bands (**Fig: 14-17**). There are also few examples of black polished pottery.

Bibliography:

Tsitlanadze 2008

Sajoge

Location: Sajoge is located in the fourth sub-district of Didi Dighomi in the new building district of the Georgian Capital Tbilisi, 3 km to the west of the Georgian Military Road, . It was discovered in 1988 and excavated during rescue archaeological excavations due to the building of a new apartment block.

Coordinates: E44435046/N41474551

Excavation year: 1988-1990, 2001-2003.

Excavator: Mikheil Abramishvili; Winfried Orthmann

Type of site: flat settlement.

Site description: The settlement occupies an area of more than 20 hectares with a depth of 1.5 - 2.5 m of cultural layers, which are buried 1.5 m deep from the modern surface. It is attributed to the Lchashen-Tsitolgori culture. It represents the only settlement attributed to this culture which is mainly known through rich finds of graves. This fact makes it especially interesting. According to the excavators, the local culture shows a continuity from the Middle Bronze Trialeti culture to the Late Bronze: “*Despite some obvious difference, certain attributes of the Lchashen-Tsitolgori culture clearly reflect their roots within the earlier and well known Middle Bronze age Trialeti culture* (Abramishvili, Orthmann 2008: 277)”. The excavators connect the abandonment of the settlement (which they date to approximately) to the deterioration of the Lchashen-Tsitolgori culture, which they suppose might have been caused by the collapse of the Hittite Empire in Anatolia and the onset of “Dark Age”.

The buildings of the upper level were built by sand stones (sometimes mixed with cobblestones), while those of the lower level were built with mud-bricks. Buildings were like of the “pit house” type, and were entered through a step down from the contemporary outer surface. The construction of such buildings could clearly somehow destroy the earlier levels: this may provide an explanation to the appearance of Middle Bronze ceramics in to the Late Bronze levels. The buildings, belonging to the Late Bronze Age were several. Building 4 was square in shape, and measured 85 square meter approximately. Its walls were to a height preserved between 40 and 150 cm. It seems that upper part of the building was constructed in wood. Circular stones in the center of building were used as a bases of the pillars; next to them there was a hearth was made with flat sand stones. Apart of this hearth, traces of the fire have been noted in other corners of the building too. The floor of the corridor-like entrance was 20 cm higher then the floor of the other room. Yet not clear if there was any doorway between buildings 4 and 2.

Excavation in 2003 season confirmed two rows of building 2, whereas the walls of building 2 (Abramishvili, Orthmann 2008, 276).

Description of material goods: Pottery finds of this level are characterized by impressed triangles and star motives, both comparable what was found at other sites of the so-called Lchashen-Tsitolgori culture dating 1500-1250 BC. Among the ceramic sherds there wasn't any example of zoomorphic handles, which are one of the most characteristic feature of the Samtavro culture, whose early stage is supposedly contemporary to the Lchashen-Tsitolgori culture.

Absolute Chronology:

14C date from the site are the following:

Building 2, Sq ON1	Charcoal (Sample 1)	3180+-50BP	1499-1419BC
Building 2, Sq ON2	Charcoal (Sample 2)	3260+-40BP	1593-1469BC
Building 1, Sq JS3	Charcoal (Sample 4)	3070+-40BP	1381-1277BC

Bibliography:

Abramishvili, Orthmann 2008

Treli Gorebi (Cemetery)

Location: The site lies within the territory of the Georgian capital Tbilisi, in the Didi Digomi district.

Coordinates:

Excavation year: 1968-1975

Excavator: R.Abramishvili

Type of site: Cemetery.

Site description: A Total of 129 graves were excavated, of which 105 belong to the Late Bronze - Early Iron period (Abramishvili, R 1978:48). In addition to these, graves burials of other periods were also discovered : two graves of the Early Bronze (nos. 26 and 54), 8 of the Middle Bronze (nos. 43,51,53,74,81,84,104 and 105), 12 of the Classical antiquity period (nos : 15-27), and one of the Middle Age (n.: 61). Abramishvili divided the graves according to both shape and burial goods. The latter method, in particular was use to divide Middle from Late Bronze Age graves method. Graves from this periods mainly contained hand- made pottery, but some graves also contained vessels are made on the slow wheel (Abramishvili, year: 85-86).

From the III millennium until the IXth century pit graves with stone mounds and flat-stone circles around the grave dominated. More in particular, In some cases the space between the flat-stone circle and the stone mound was filled with cobble-stones; some of the graves of this type also had some whitish quartz blocks mixed into the cobble-stone layer . This mix of quartz and cobble stones exists until the XIV century and then disappears. Pit graves with a stone mound on them,

existed from the XIII till the IX century. The flat-stone circle appears only in some of them, which the excavator considers characteristic for the dominant social class (Abramishvili year: 55-57). While in the Middle Bronze graves men and women are buried on their right side, in the Late Bronze graves at Treli men were buried on the right side and women on the left side, (Abramishvili year: 59-61). This tradition is also attested in Samtavro and at other east Georgian Late Bronze sites. According to this facts Abramishvili assumes that this tradition starts during the Late Bronze Age).

During the 1970-1975 42 graves were excavated which the excavator dated to the XIII-XII century BC (Pp:86). These graves, like the graves of the Iron Age, were rectangular shaped pits, with wooden cover and a stone mound on them (Abramishvili year:114).

Description of material goods: The majority of material goods found in archaeological sites, in Georgia as elsewhere, consists of ceramic vessels, and Treli Gorebi is no exception. The XIII-XII century ceramic at Treli is made on the slow wheel; their color is black and they mostly have geometrical impressed, incised and pattern burnished decoration t on them,. Attested ornaments are waves, horizontal lines, impressed triangles, scratched and grooved lines. Vessels have mostly outturned and in some cases in-turned rims; the majority of the bases are flat, as in the majority of the Late Bronze pottery. Handles applied on the vessels are attested only in a few Bronze items were also foun in the graves. Most of them are weapons: swords, daggers, arrowheads, spearheads etc. Other typical artifacts are beads, pins and other decoration elements for cloths.

Comments: Before publishing the Treli Gorebi excavation report, Abramishvili had already a good knowledge of materials of these period. His chronology of the Late Bronze - Iron Age periods had been a significant achievement. After excavating the site, he didn't change his chronological scheme, except for one point. Since he found an an iron knife in a XIII century grave, he shifted to that time the beginning of the Iron Age assumed While creating his chronological reference, he only used metal objects and he dated ceramic artifacts according to them. His chronological scheme looks like this:

XIII-XII BC: He dates this level based on bronze daggers and swords. He does not discuss but he does not discussed the earlier phase, but agrees with Tariel Chubinishvili , who before him divided the early phase of the Late Bronze from the Middle Bronze period (Chubinishvili 1950).

XI-X BC: This level is considered a transitional period from Late Bronze to the Early Iron age.

Typical for this phase is considered the presence in graves bronze tools and iron tools which are made as a replicas of bronze tools. So this level contains both kinds of materials, but with a dominance of bronze tools.

IX BC and beginning of the VIII BC: This period's assemblage consists of a major component of iron tools, and is considered as a stage between the Transitional and the next period. From Late Bronze to the Early Iron were dated well and this layer he put between them noting difference in tool making typology.

Second half of the VIII and First half of the VII BC: Graves are attributed to this phase on the basis of the presence of finger rings and pins, which is limited to it. The most precise chronological indicator of this phase, however, is a type of arrowhead, which finds precise parallels in the territory of the kingdom of Urartu. Some of them bear inscriptions which mention the names of Kings Arishti I (781-760) and Sarduri II (760-730) (Abramishvili 1957: 74), which provide a secure chronological reference

VII-VI BC: For dating this level Abramishvili used the influences of the Scythian culture, which are especially visible on such arrowheads. Arrowheads of this type were also found in graves at Samtavro. He also used iron knives, which appear in the second half of the VII century, and also other types of weapons. (Abramishvili, 1957).

The second issue is the questions which were asked at that period and most work and findings were used as an explanatory of the chronological issues, so the materials were analyzed only for one reason, to set the chronological schemes and define connections between Middle Bronze and Late Bronze. Another issue which is worth discussing is the ambiguous use of terms like "Bronze Age" and "Iron Age", which have a both technological and chronological value, which may represent a source of confusion and misunderstandings. A good example of this is Abramishvili's attribution of Trelis Gora grave no. 65, where an iron knife was associated with other bronze tools. He dates this grave in the XIII century and concludes that the beginning of the Early Iron Age in Shida Kartli should be changed, and moved in the XIII century (Abramishvili 1978: 75). This may by itself create some misunderstanding with scholars using the traditional chronology. In this case, furthermore, as no iron finds were made since then in contemporary context, it is even possible that the alleged presence of the iron knife in the grave is due to some excavation mistake or anomaly

Absolute Chronology: no dates?

At the time of Abramishvili's excavation analyses of human or animal remains were not used, and apparently there are no records of them. Most of the human and animal remains were collected and buried in unknown locations.

Therefore the possibility to obtain 14C dates from these items is lost for us. This comment can be made for all archaeological excavations in Georgia till 1980ies.

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Tsagyli cemetery

Location: In the Khashuri district of the Shida Kartli province, 3 km away in northern direction from Khashuri Natsargora.

Coordinates: E43413534/N42070462

Excavation year: Discovered in the 1970ies and excavated in 1976-1979 and 1984-1986 (Ramishvili 2008, 291).

Excavator: Aleksandre Ramishvili

Type of site: cemetery.

Site description: The site consist of a large cemetery. During the excavation seasons 150 burials attributed to the period between the final phase of Middle Bronze and the early phase of the Late Bronze (XVII-XIII) period were excavated. They which yielded a total of 542 pottery vessels (Ramishvili 2000, 29). It thus appears that Tsaghvli is the most comprehensively studied cemetery of this phase in the whole Caucasus²⁸. According to the chronology suggested by Kavtaradze, the cemetery of Tsaghvli should be divided into different phases (Middle Bronze age II phase and Late Bronze age I phase), In his chronological scheme, Ramishvili divided the graves from Tsaghvli into three groups: he attributed the first of them to his Middle Bronze II B phase, the third to his Late bronze I A phase, and the second to the transitional period between the Middle and the Late

²⁸ If we consider the fact that excavation was completed and published.

Bronze (Ramishvili 2008, 294). It was in fact the presence of graves with pottery characteristic of the Middle Bronze, graves with typical Late Bronze pottery and graves where this two aspects were associated together, which suggested to him the idea of a transitional period (Ramishvili 2000).

Graves were covered with stone mounds, and consisted of pit graves covered with wooden roofs. The collapse of the roof caused the destruction of grave goods and disturbed the initial positions of the skeleton. Single inhumation burials are dominant in Tsaghvli cemetery: only three graves contained two skeletons. The original position of the body was defined in 81 graves. the dead lay either on the right (47) or on the left (34) side. 40 individuals faced South, 33 N, 6 W, and 2 E. According to the grave good (accompanied by weapons) men lie on the right side, women (accompanied by jewelry) on the left side. Only 6 graves were without artifacts.

Description of material goods: 479 from the 542 vessels were restored to such a state which permitted to establish their shape and size (Ramishvili 2008, 291). The fabric, like at other contemporary sites, shows with whitish inclusions and is quite crumbly. The surface is basically black or dark brownish (Ramishvili 2000: 29).

Absolute Chronology: No 14C dates are available from the site

Bibliography:

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Ramishvili 2008

Tskhinvali (Staliniris) Natsargora

Location: The site of located at the confluence of the rivers Tbetura and Liakhvi, at a distance of 1.5-2 km in SW direction from the city of Tskhinvali in the part of Shida Kartli which is presently contended, .

Coordinates:

Excavation year: 1948-1949

Excavator: Discovered by S. Nadimashvili, excavated by G. Gobedgishvili ()

Type of site: Settlement mound

Site description and periodization:

Three different level (description begins from deeper, earliest level).

Layer I

This layer represented by cobble-stones, ceramic remains, animal bones and charcoal fragments. Sequence of the layer 0.5-0.8 m. Under this layer have been uncovered five pit-graves with the individuals placed on their side with (curved) bent-limbs.

Layer II

Sequence of the layer 0.5-1.2 m. Layer was covering layer I. This layer formed by remains of the clay constructions. On several places construction bases made by cobble-stones were uncovered.

Layer III

Sequence 0.5-2.5 m. This layer is a top level on the hill and it is just continuation of the culture excavated in Layer II. During the construction of layer III the layer II have been flattened by sand mixed in clay or pebbles and on this platforms have been constructed buildings. The bases of the buildings were (as in layer II) constructed by cobble-stones and the walls and ceilings by wood plastered with clay.

According to the excavators opinion the houses bases on the hill were constructed with cobble-stones and they had wooden walls plastered with clay.

Description of material goods:

Layer I

Ceramic remains, animal bones and charcoal fragments.

Layer II

Majority of the finds are ceramic remains. Ceramic fragments and vessels mostly are black colored, with various type scratched, or pattern-burnished ornaments. Most of the handles are anthropomorphic. In this layer was also discovered clay tool for melting metals.

Layer III

On this layer with black vessels appears reddish ceramics. With color change also decoration innovations appeared which are “spiral” made with rounded circles, impressed triangle and rhomb shape decorations, rarely appears anthropomorphic decorations on the vessels. This is a first case that anthropomorphic decorations appear on the vessels. Out of ceramic goods also clay molds for

axes were discovered, one of it for miniature ex.

Chronology:

To date the settlement excavator used methodology of the comparative chronology. All the chronology set by excavator G. Gobedjishvili.

Layer I

This layer dated according to the material goods excavated in pit-graves, under the layer. Edge of III and II millennium.

Layer II

According to the ceramic typology layer II have been placed in II half of II millennium.

Layer III

To date this layer like in the case of Layer II were used ceramic goods. He places this layer in the end of the II millennium and at the I half of the I millennium.

Comments:

This chronology have to be re-evaluated again for several reasons.

Bibliography:

Fitskhelauri 1973

Chapter 5 – Late Bronze – Early Iron age pottery

The Late Bronze Age in South Caucasus, especially in Georgian territory appears to be most complicated period during the bronze age. As we saw in the previous chapters the terminological definitions of the cultures still are in the discussions. Moreover, there is not clear definition about cultural change and its cause. At the beginning of the Late Bronze research first problematic issue was the chronology, which still remains in some cases. Lately, the research of the material culture moved in front and became the first issue in the research. Within past century many Late Bronze sites were revealed, excavated and studied by the archaeologists. The most of the excavated sites were and still remain cemeteries and most of the Late Bronze Age studies rely on its materials, in which majority of the artifacts were pottery vessels. However, until 70-s of the past century pottery vessels were not use in the research of the chronological issues. The ceramic vessels were quoted as a most conservative items throughout the millennium, starting from Early Phase of the Late Bronze until the end of the Iron Age. In fact, until 70-s only metal objects were used in the research methodology. As a consequence, using only metal objects and not giving credit to the ceramic vessels became the cause of many false conclusions. For example, when Abramishvili created his chronological system based on the metal tools excavated in Samtavro cemetery, and did not include the ceramic vessels in his study (Abramishvili 1957: 138). During that time the same methodology was applied by the most famous archaeologists in order to develop most chronological systems (Kalandadze 1980, 1981, 1983). While creating the chronological framework for the Late Bronze, Abramishvili tried to link (in the chronological sense) the Early Late Bronze phase to the final stage of the Middle Bronze. The chronological framework for the end of Middle Bronze, for that time, was considered to correspond to the second half of the 15th cent. BC. In fact, linking the Early phase of the LB (in Abramishvilis' system) to the MB was a mistake. Since he did not consider ceramic artifacts and based his study only on the metal objects, there appeared the gap between the Late Phase of the Middle Bronze and the Late Bronze. In fact, it seemed that the MB culture disappeared completely and that the LB culture appeared from nowhere. As a matter of fact, the researchers began to theorize the Late Bronze in the wrong way. In fact, several opinions suggesting that a new population had arrived in Eastern Georgian territory

within the beginning of the Late Bronze epoch (Ramishvili 2008: 156-162). Fitskhelauri tried to fix the problem by studying the ceramic vessels (Fitskhelauri 1973: 1979).

The first study of ceramic vessels in order to theorize links between Middle Bronze culture (Trialeti culture) and Late Bronze Age was suggested by K. Fitskhelauri. Considering ceramic items in his research he suggested existence of the Transitional Phase from Middle Bronze to the Late Bronze. With his study he filled the gap of material culture between the Middle Bronze and the Late Bronze (Fitskhelauri 1973; 123-207). The idea was to define similarity in the pottery vessels and pot making.

His idea to find the similarity on the pottery vessels between two epoch became possible after E. Gogadze changed chronological continuation in Kuftin's system (Gogadze 1984. Kuftin 1941). According to the Kuftin's periodization system²⁹ the Middle Bronze (Trialeti culture) was divided in three phases: Middle Bronze I, II and III. Lately E. Gogadze moved early group of the Kurgans (Middle Bronze I) into Middle Bronze III and vice versa, Middle Bronze III period moved as Middle Bronze I (Gogadze 1984; 3). This change appeared to be sufficient for Fitskhelauri in order to see the link in ceramic artifacts (Fitskhelauri 1973; 127). The second sufficient study of the ceramics for Transitional phase was suggested by A.I. Ramishvili who excavated Natsargora settlement in Khasurai, Shida Kartli region and Tsagvli cemetery next to it (Ramishvili 1995, 1997, 2008). In his research, he distinguished two steps of the Transitional Phase (Ramishvili 2008; 169-170). As for the Transitional phase as well for the Early Phase of the Late Bronze (I) we rely on the Fitskhelauri (Fitskhelauri 1973. 1979. 1990) and Ramishvili (Ramishvili 2008). The next Late Bronze stages are well defined in Abramishvili's studies (Abramishvili 1957. 1978). In his research he defined well the aspects of the Samtavro culture and its material goods. He also studied Transitional phase from Late Bronze to the Early Iron Age (Abramishvili 1957; 126-129), which we think that is sufficient for our research. At last should be mentioned the ceramic artifacts from Khovle (Shida Kartli) (Muskhelishvili 1978), where was discovered non-stop continuation of the occupation levels. Lately there was some problematic issues about Khovle chronology (See chapter 4). However, the ceramic artifacts show good reference to make parallels to Aradeti Orgora.

²⁹ This chronological system was shared by every scholar until Gogadze suggested otherwise

Ceramic features during the Transitional phase and Late Bronze I

Regarding the Transitional phase from Middle Bronze to the Late Bronze Age the materials, especially pottery which are distinguished within several features. Belonging to the Transitional phase is considered the sites which have the material goods belonging to both periods. As we already mentioned in the previous chapters the transitional phase was distinguished by pottery artifacts (Fitskhelauri 1973; 157-168) which were in majority of the finds. The metal objects for the phase are few and rarely found on the archaeological sites. During the transitional period the pot vessels were hand made as well made on the wheel (Tushishvili, 1972). The slow wheel and fast wheel appears to be in use since that times, slow wheel from Late Phase of the Middle Bronze and also in Transitional phase and fast wheel came in use from the beginning of the Late Bronze Age.

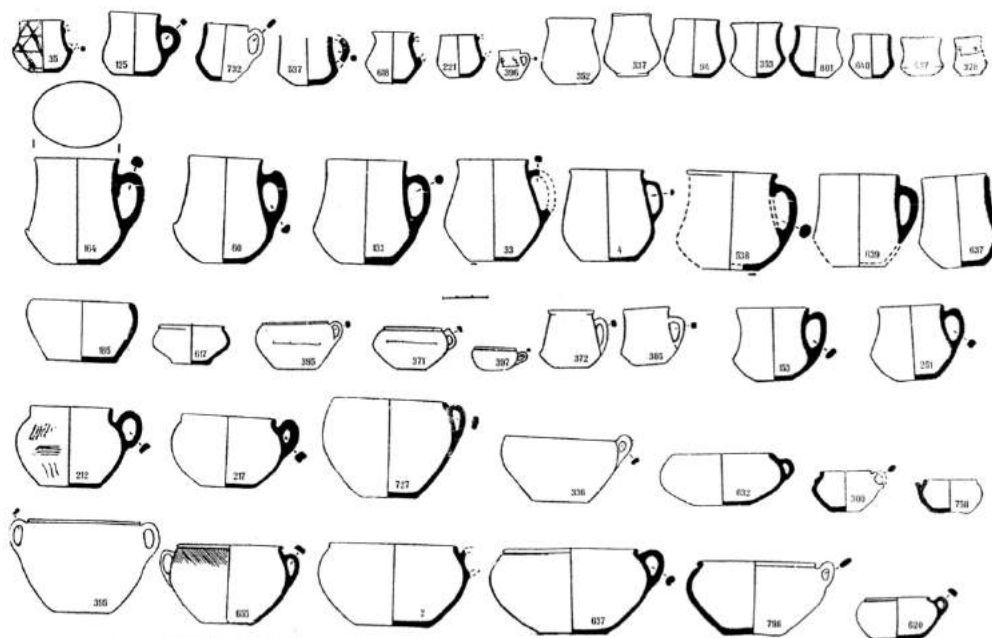
Following up to the Fitskhelauri's typology and observation the ceramic materials in Late phase of the Middle Bronze, have pure fabric, always with whitish inclusions. This type of inclusions was defining feature for the period and the Transitional phase, over this time period whitish inclusions in the fabric disappeared and it became more solid, with various type and size inclusions (Fitskhelauri 1973; 139). The fabric during the denoted period was mostly burnished in two different color, black and reddish (Fitskhelauri 1973;100, Fitskhelauri Menabde1982; 130). This same features were observed also for the Transitional phase, which during the next stages disappear. The next defining feature for the fabric was the solidity. The crumble fabric was observed for the Transitional phase. This type of fabric represents Middle Bronze tradition and for the Late Bronze I the fabric became solid (Fitskhelauri 1973; 139). Aslo Al. Ramishvili mentions in the pottery typology the vessels with a blackish outer surface and reddish inner surface (Ramishvili 2008; 79-106). In fact, during the Late Bronze Age the quality of the fabric dropped but the solidity of it notably increased.

Apart of the fabric for the period there are some distinctive decoration motives for the ceramic vessels which has to be considered as a defining feature for the period. Denoted features are: nail motives on the base of the vessels and the wave decorations on the body of the pots (Fitskhelauri 1973; 137), wave ornaments following horizontally to the body of the pot which in between has the "broken" lines (Abramishvili 1978; 56, Pic 426). This decoration features continued to be in use on the pot vessels, at list until I, or even II phase of the Late Bronze age.

Same features on the pot vessels were observed also in Tsagvli cemetery for the transitional period graves. In addition, decorations on the vessels during the Transitional phase were made by several technics; Polished, impressed and scratched ornaments (Fitskelauri 1973; 100).

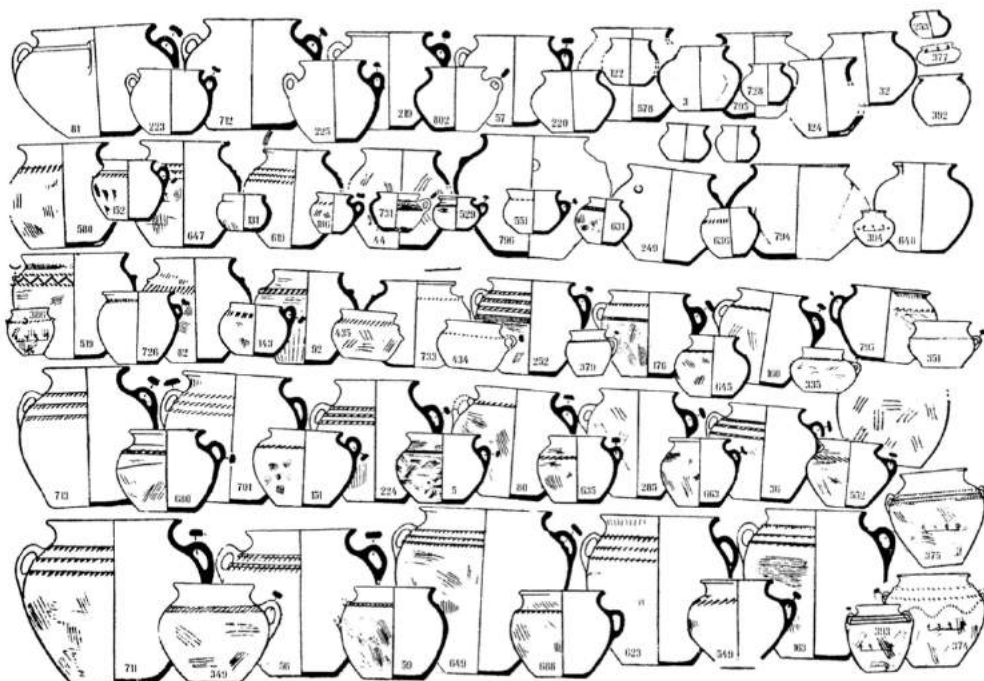
Excavation on the Tsagvli cemetery revealed existence of the well defined Transitional phase in Shida Kartli region. During the excavation various different types of pottery vessels were discovered and on the Tsagvli site as in the case of Kakheti Late Bronze age graves were placed on the several level. The cemetery revealed fact that transitional phase pottery making stile was quite similar to the Kakheti region finds. Thick fabric with black outer surface and reddish inner surface. During the Transitional times decoration on the pottery appears only on the neck of the pottery and some on the bases, decorations on the body of the vessel appears to be later feature. Mostly the vessels are polished, this feature can be outlined as a characteristic for the transitional phase from Middle to Late Bronze, because in the first phase of the Late Bronze surface of the pottery becomes roughly elaborated (Ramishvili 2008; 113).

However, for the Transitional phase one of the defining feature of the pottery was handleless vessels. As Fitskhelauri mentions in his research ..”*None of the Transitional phase pottery has the handle, except pottery vessels from Meli Ghele I site ..*” (Fitskhelauri 1973; 140). This observation seems to be re-considered when it touches to the Shida Kartli area. Tsagvli cemetery and Natsargora settlement revealed several shapes with various types of the handles (Ramishvili 2008; 114, 143-144). The handles were mostly similar to those from Late Phase of the Middle Bronze Age, but also new type. Some of the pot vessels had the handles not for use but for the decoration motives.



Pottery vessels, belonging to the Transitional phase from Tsagvli cemetery.

(Ramishvili 2008; 144)



Pottery vessels, belonging to the Transitional phase from Tsagvli cemetery.

(Ramishvili 2008; 144)

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