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ADAM T. SMITH & KAREN S. RUBINSON

COTSEN INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

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CHAPTER 12

The Culture of Ancient Georgia in the First Millennium BC and Greater Anatolia: Diffusion or Migration?

GOCHA R. TSETSKHLADZE

Ancient Georgia, situated at the crossroads of East and West, from the earliest period of human activity was culturally connected to the civilizations of Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and the Aegean. Although there is nothing new in this statement, many difficulties are encountered in applying this generalization to the evidence. Usually, we are dealing with single artifacts or a group of objects that have passed from one cultural milieu to another through trade, as booty, by the exchange of artistic ideas, or by chance. The independent development of the same kinds of objects cannot be excluded. The end of the Bronze Age–Early Iron Age saw many political and cultural changes in the Caucasus, Anatolia, and throughout the Near East (Kuhrt 1995:473–622, esp. 547–572). The whole first millennium BC was a period of intensive cultural interaction, and many features spread from one culture to another (Boardman 1994:21–48; 2000; Curtis 1995; Dalley 1998; Tsetskhladze 1999:478–487; Pogrebova 1977:10–32, 141–173; 1984:10–46, 162–206). The mechanism of cultural exchange is frequently unclear and often a matter of

speculation. It is difficult to establish why, how, and to what extent new elements appeared; sometimes it is impossible.

The main purpose of this chapter is to develop further the thoughts I have expressed in some of my earlier writings (Tsetskhladze 1999:469–497; 2001) about the interpretation of foreign elements in the culture of the ancient Caucasus and, at the same time, to present much stronger evidence for the possible expansion or migration of other ethnic groups into the territory of ancient Georgia.

Early Iron Age cultures in the territory of Georgia had very close links with the cultures of the central Caucasus. Colchian and Koban armor (daggers, axes, adzes, pickaxes, and so on) have close parallels with the same types of weapon from western Iran (Pogrebova 1977; Voronov 1980; Pantskhava 1986). Small bronze objects and decorations (pendants, pins, bracelets, and so on) have similarities to those of northwestern Iran. The same is also true of horse furnishings (Tsetskhladze 1999:478–479). The first Colchian goldsmiths were

inspired by ancient Iranian craftsmen (Gagoshidze 1985; 1997). Even such characteristic features of Colchian and Koban cultures as axes have incised decoration stylistically close to Luristan (Tsetskhladze 1999:480). Terra-cotta figurines of two- and three-headed animals from Vani also demonstrate artistic ideas penetrating from northwestern Iran (Lordkipanidze 1995:41-49). One axe of the eighth/seventh centuries BC from Sulori, not far from Vani, Colchis, with the figures of horsemen in relief standing on the back of it (Lordkipanidze et al. 1987: Plate

CIV) has a close resemblance to a ceremonial axe from Sarkisla (Bittel 1976: Plates VII-12).

URARTU AND GEORGIA

The question of Urartian influence on the cultures of ancient Georgia has never received detailed scholarly examination. Several Urartian objects have been found in a destroyed grave in southern Georgia, including a cylindrical jar of ivory, beads, and other bronze and ivory objects (Chubinishvili 1965). They have very close

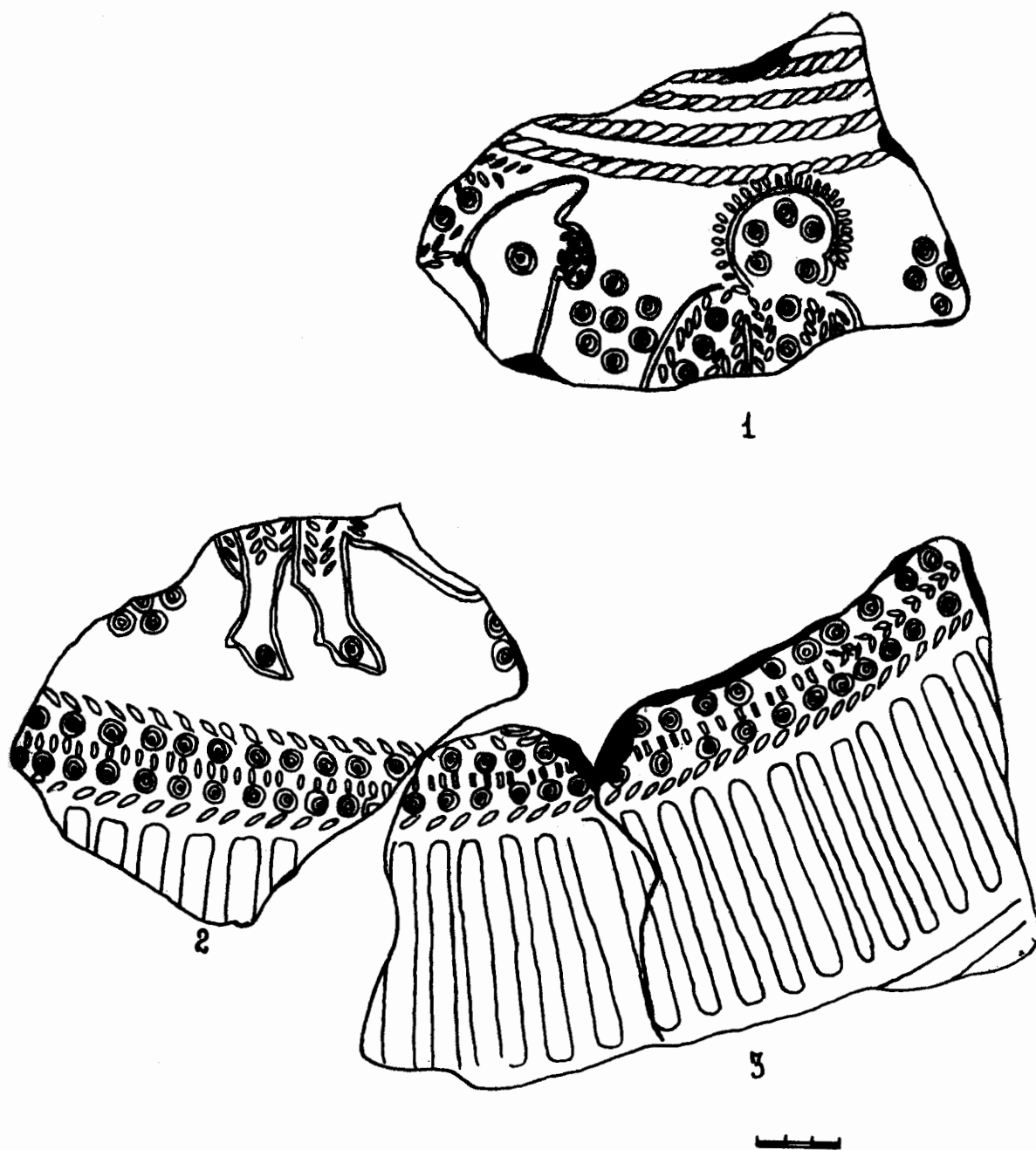


Figure 12.1 Fragments of pottery with incised decoration, from Namarnu. After Mikeladze et al. 1997: Plate 20.

parallels with material from Karmir-Blur (Piotrovskii 1967:60). Urartian belts and helmets are known from central and northern Caucasus (Tekhov 1981: Plates 94–96, 127–120; Galanina 1985:180); and a few bronze bowls have been found in Tli (Tekhov 1981: Plate 106,4; 1985: Plate 192,9; compare Merhav 1991:211). Urartian bronze weapons had a strong impact on the design of central Caucasian ones (Voronov 1980:216–217). Most probably the use of the chariot and horse fittings came from Urartu as well (compare Merhav 1991:53–113). In eastern Georgia a very well preserved bronze model of a chariot with horses of the ninth/eighth centuries BC has been found (Miron and Orthmann 1995:106).

Although the origin of Caucasian bronze belts is still a matter of debate, it is clear that the inspiration lay largely with Urartian prototypes (Khidasheli 1980; Pogrebova and Raevskii 1997:5–9, 58–71; Bouzek 1997:187; Yildirim 1991). The distinctive incised decoration might well have been added by Caucasian artists. There is now much stronger evidence for this than previously. Only two finds of bronze belts from central Colchis have been made, both from Ergeta burial ground (Mikeladze 1990: Plate XXX,1; Papuashvili 1999: Plate IV,57). The most striking find is that at Namarnu settlement (not far from Ergeta): three fragments of local pottery have the same decoration as may often be seen on Caucasian belts (figure 12.1; Mikeladze et al. 1997:28–29, Plate 20).

All these Urartian features could have come to Georgia both directly and indirectly. Is there any evidence that could point either to Urartian expansion toward ancient Georgia or to some Urartian migration? The question is as important as it is difficult to answer. D. Muskhelishvili (1978:18–21), on the basis of a study of red burnished pottery from “Khovle III,” proposed that the migration of Urartians or ethnic groups connected with Urartu. There is one kind of construction which, I think, might corroborate this: Early Iron Age shrine complexes from central Transcaucasia. As in Anatolia and the whole Near East, cultic centers had a very important part in religious life (Zimansky 1995:109; Joukowsky 1996:276–278, 348–349, 374–378; Van De Mieroop 1997:215–228). Like Anatolian and Mesopotamian cult centers, those of central Transcaucasia administered landholdings and were actively involved in animal husbandry. About seven such centers are known from eastern Georgia (Kikvidze 1976:197–209; Khidasheli 1988; Lordkipanidze 1989:178–181). They are large and consist not only of a place for cultic ceremonies but also of many other buildings. The shrine at Katnalis-Khevi was situated on two hills: on the smaller were storage and ancillary buildings; on the larger, the shrine itself. These shrines contained rooms with altars, hearths, ovens, smithies, etc., in which many objects have been found—most, it can be assumed, offerings to the gods. In Meli-Gele,

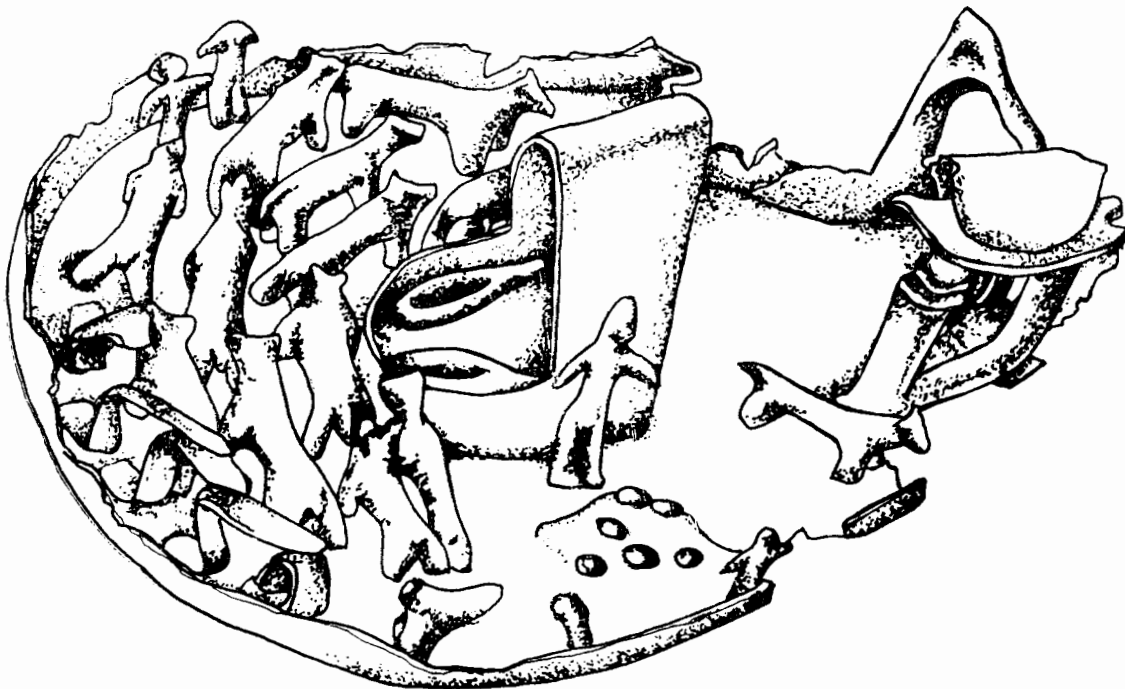


Figure 12.2 Bronze ritual object from Gamdlistskaro settlement. After Khidasheli 1988:177.

86,000 objects have been discovered; in Melaani, about 2,000; in Shilda, 3,457. The main ceremonial space was contained by dry stone walls, some with rubble infilling, and surrounded by a complex of buildings. One bronze ritual object of the eighth and seventh centuries BC, decorated with a three-dimensional scene and found in Gamdlitskaro settlement, is believed to give a general idea of the appearance of the venue and of the importance of animals in cultic ceremonies (figure 12.2; Khidasheli 1988).

Before making some suggestions, I would like to mention two architectural complexes found recently in the mountainous part of Colchis. Both demonstrate that cultic places like those mentioned above were widespread in western Georgia. In Svaneti, the Etsera settlement is situated on a high hill and surrounded by stone walls 1 m thick. There were rectangular towers at the corners of the fortification wall. Not only was domestic stone architecture discovered but also a cultic center, all dating to the middle of the first millennium BC. The cultic place,

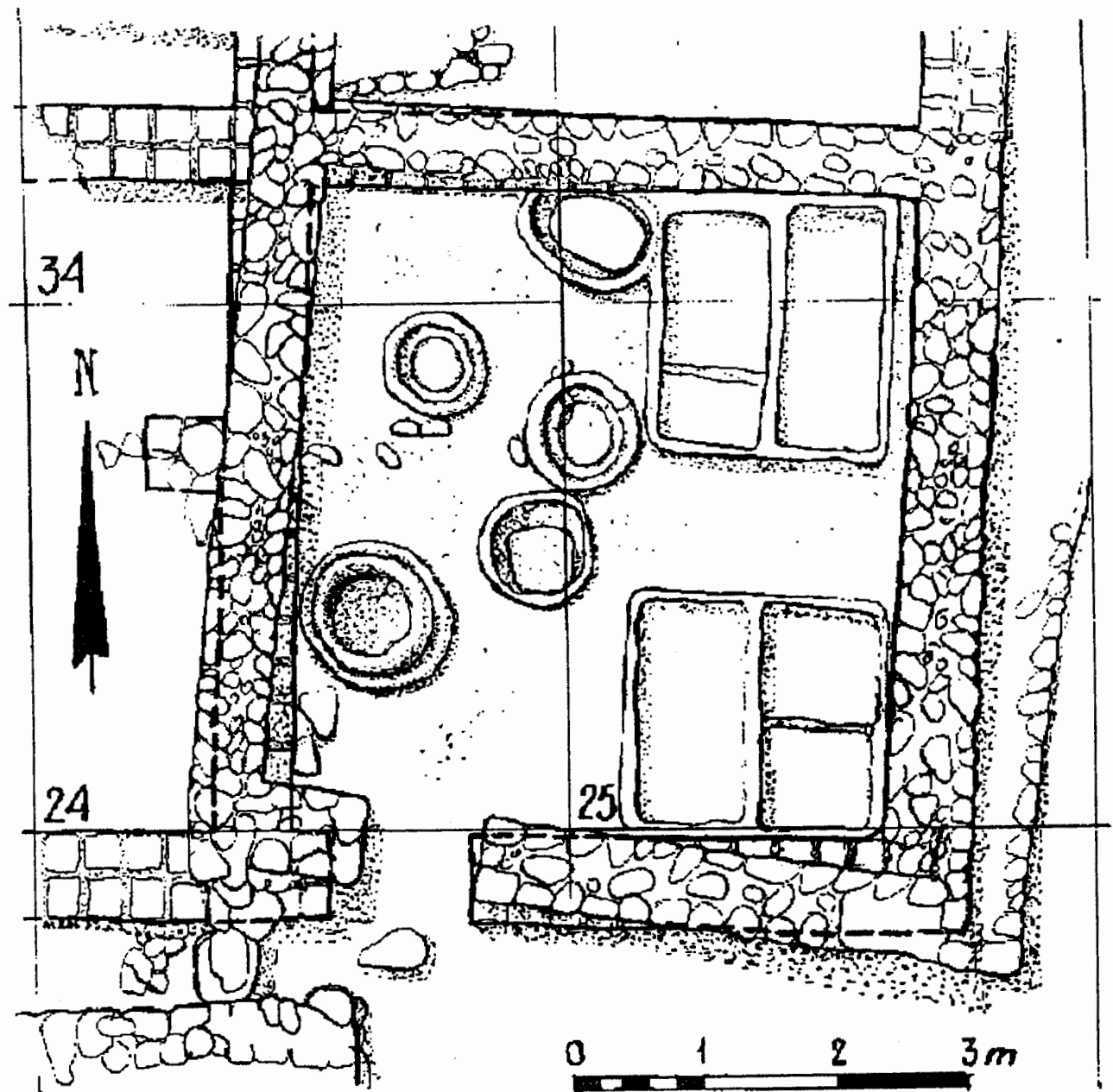


Figure 12.3 Plan of cultic construction from Etsera settlement. After Chartolani 1996: Plate XLIXa.

rectangular in shape and probably a tower, was incorporated into a dwelling and production complex. On its floor were two "baths" (in the terminology of the investigator), probably for animal blood, and five round altars (figure 12.3; Chartolani 1996:146–147). Unfortunately, little has been published about this settlement and cultic place. The remains of another cultic place were found at Ushguli settlement, situated on a hill 2,300 m above sea level (Chartolani 1996:147–149).

Rescue excavation at Goradziri in Sachkhere district, on the border between ancient Colchis and Iberia,

yielded another cultic center. It is poorly preserved. The cultic area is rectangular (10 x 8 m), surrounded by a stone wall (possibly two rows of wall) 50–70 cm thick whose surviving portion is about 1 m high. Above the stones were courses of mud brick topped off with a construction of clay-coated wooden poles and branches. One interesting detail is that in the north part and north-eastern corner of the inner wall stucco fragments with a trace of white paint have been found, which could suggest that the walls were covered with murals. Below this complex another cultic place has been discovered: 100

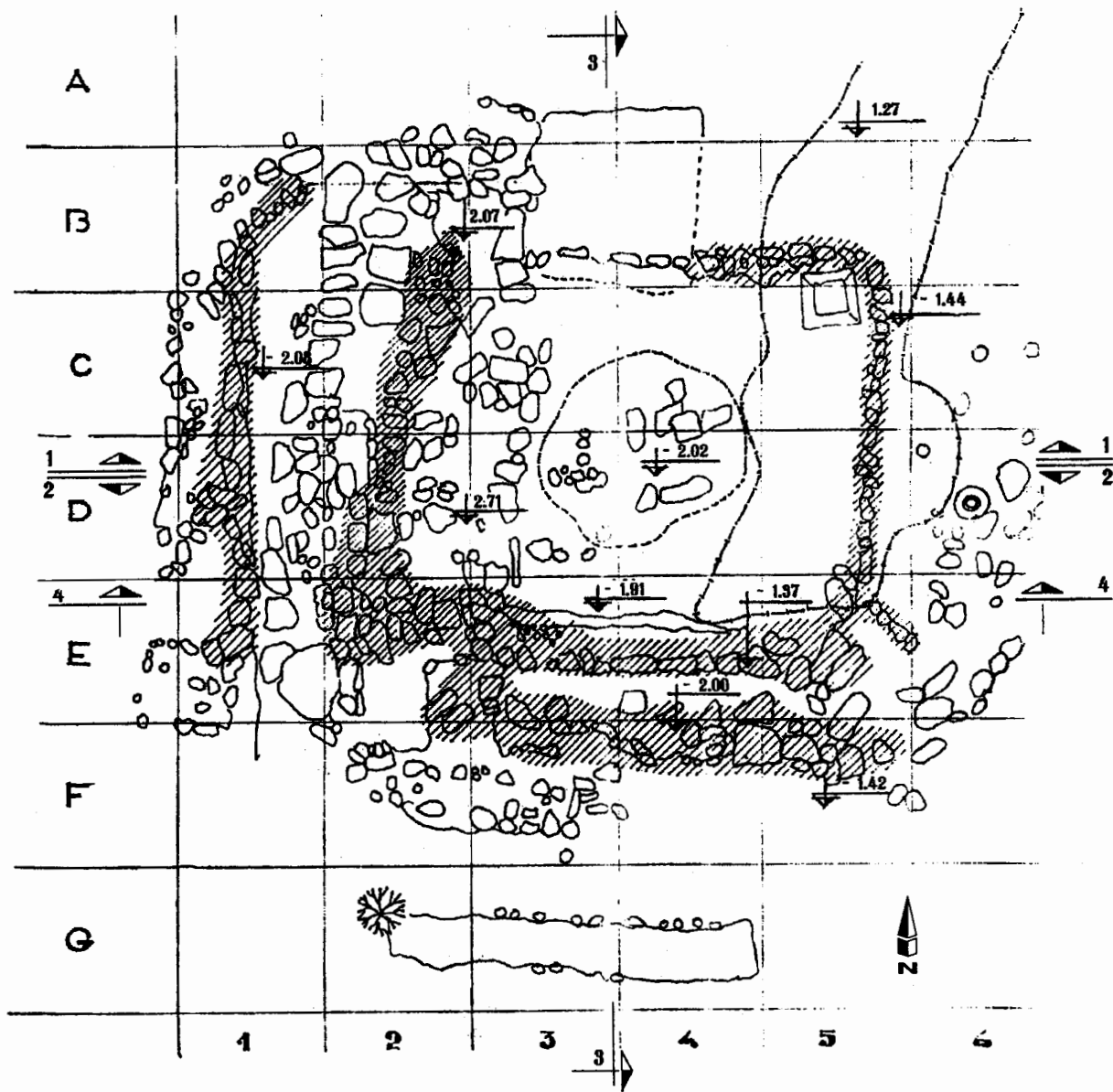


Figure 12.4 Plan of excavated trench with cultic construction, Goradziri. After Mesbveliani et al. 1999:72.

m² of cobble pavement, a plastered floor with a pit in the middle. This was surrounded by the remains of other buildings (figure 12.4). Many pottery and metal objects were found here, as well as an exceptionally high number of charred animal and bird bones. The overall date of the two complexes is between the eighth and fourth centuries BC (Meshveliani et al. 1999).

As the abovementioned complexes show, the idea of a cultic center, situated within a settlement or, with its

own production and agriculture, on a self-contained site, surely came from Anatolia. Comparing the architecture of these centers with Urartian temple architecture, many common features may be distinguished. According to D. Ussishkin:

...the available evidence indicates the existence of three different architectural types of Urartian standard square or rectangular temples. Nevertheless, all three types resemble one another and have many basic

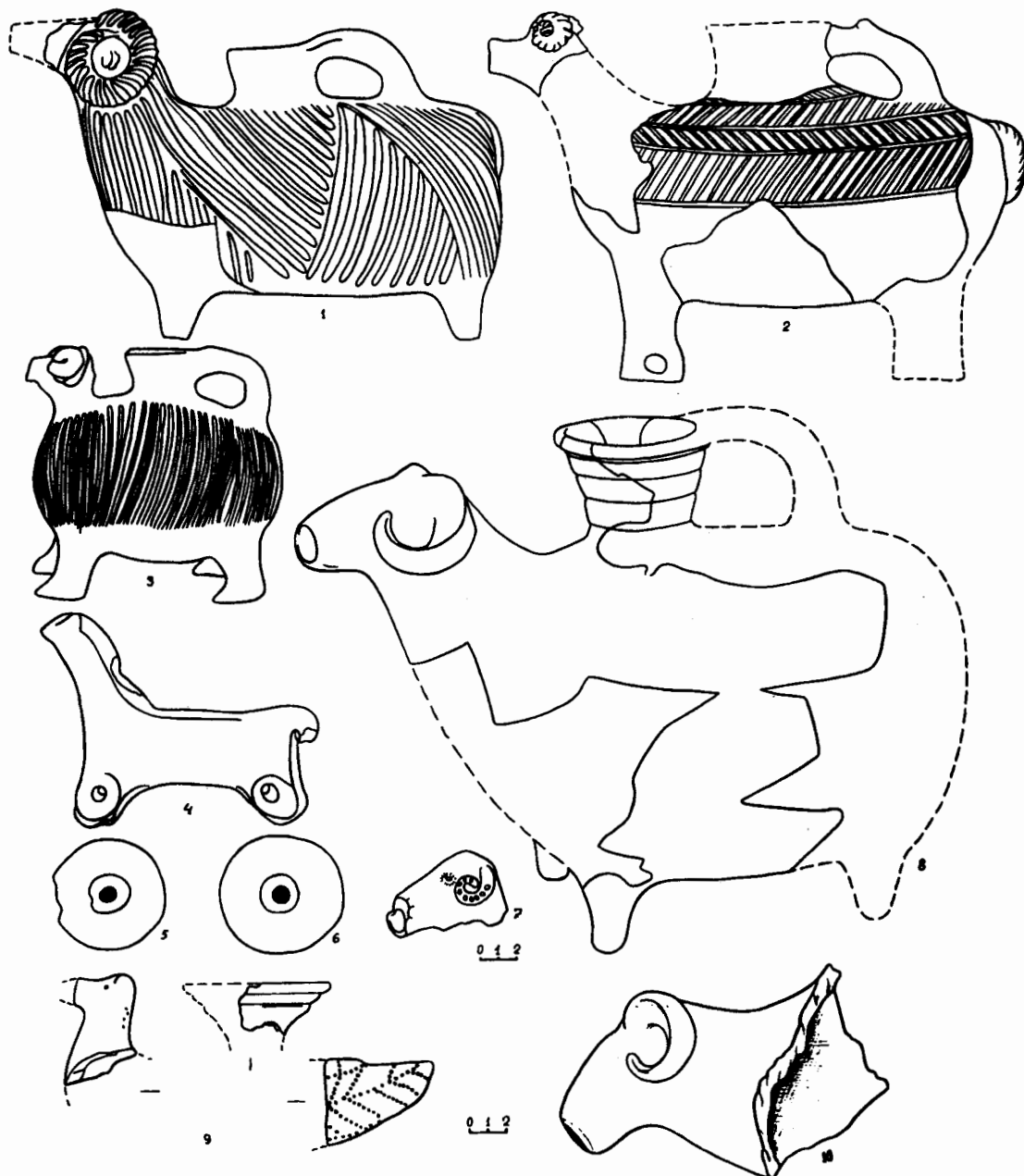


Figure 12.5 Pottery (1-3, 7-10) and terracotta (4-6) items from burial No. 16, Trelis. After Abramishvili 1995: Plate 11.

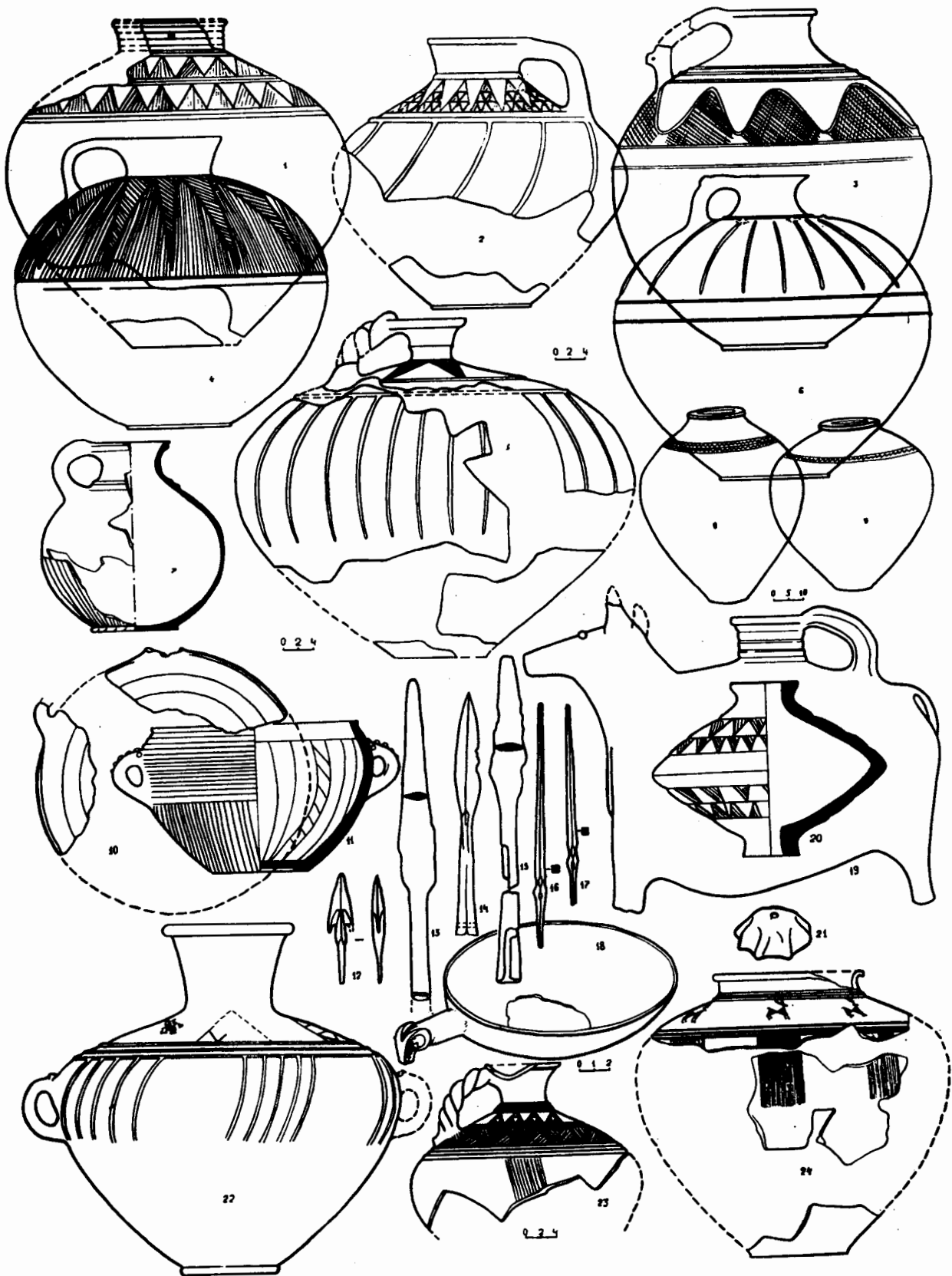


Figure 12.6 Grave goods from burial No. 24, Trelis. After Abramishvili 1995: Plate 12.

features in common: (1) all the temples are either square or rectangular; (2) a large open area, a courtyard or piazza, extends in front of them; (3) cultic installations are placed in the courtyard in front of the entrance; (4) the sole entrance is located in the center of the building's facade; (5) there is a single cult room inside the temple; (6) the walls are thick, a possible indication of a high building; (7) one temple, possibly all temples, had a gabled or a pyramidal roof; (8) the lower part of the walls is faced with ashlar masonry and their upper part is built of bricks, plastered and in some cases decorated with murals. [1991:119]

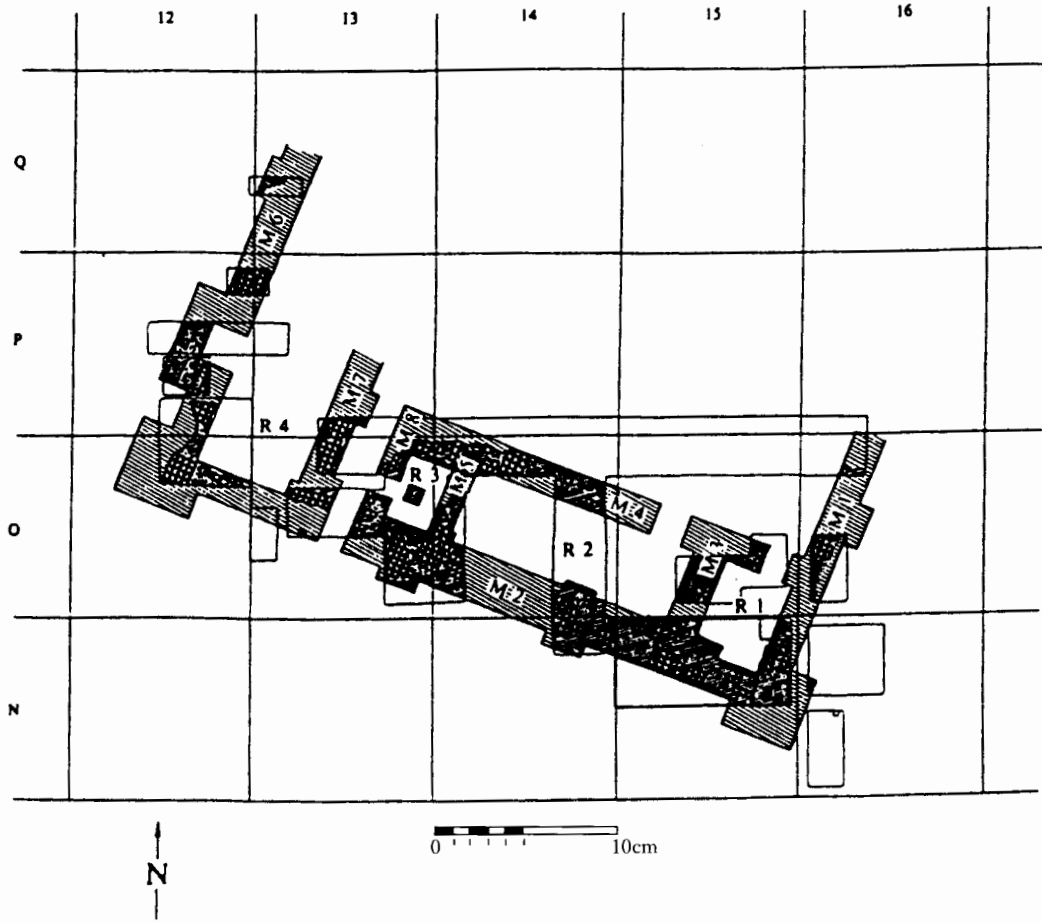
I am not suggesting that eastern Georgia and the mountainous part of Colchis had been part of Urartu (although we are far from establishing the final limits of Urartian expansion; see, for example, Burney 1994; Parker 1999; Sevin 1991; Smith 1996:196–217, 274–285; 1999:45–57). However, it is obvious that we do not have just the exchange of artistic ideas or trade. Most probably, it is now time to accept that some kind of migration of Urartian ethnic groups took place from modern-day southern Georgia (Kvemo-Kartli) to central parts of eastern Georgia. The use of Urartian architects by the ancient Georgian nobility cannot be excluded. At this point it must be mentioned that Kvemo-Kartli, anciently bordering Urartu, has archaeological features that distinguish it from other parts of eastern Georgia: cyclopean and stone constructions, and the predominant burial custom uses stone cists. In other parts of eastern Georgia, fortification systems are usually made of earth, sometimes from stone and mud brick, and the predominant burial rite is inhumation (Gobedzhishvili and Pitskhelauri 1989:144, 146).

Thus, the idea of cultic centers as well as certain architectural features came most probably from Urartu. The origin of the Urartian fortress or tower temple with a single chamber goes back to the Levant in the Middle Bronze Age. It was adopted in Urartu as a standard type of temple; later, its plan and shape made their way to Iran to yield the Achaemenid tower temples (on the same type of temples in Georgia from the sixth/fifth centuries BC onward, see below) (Stronach 1967). In Urartu, this type of temple did not appear until the late ninth century BC (Ussiskhin 1991:121–122). The overall date for ancient Georgian temples of the same type is the eighth/seventh centuries BC (Khidasheli 1988). Furthermore, although Urartian burial rites are not well known (Derin 1994:49; Zimansky 1995:109–110), cremation in stone cists was widespread (Derin 1994:49).

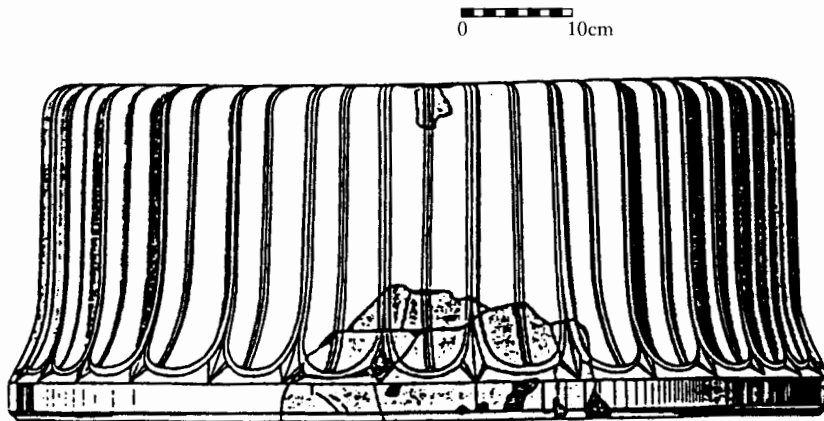
Tombs Nos. 16 and 24 in Trelis, Tbilisi, stand out not only because of their richness but also for the types of grave goods found in them. They date from the end of the eighth century/first half of the seventh century BC. Most of the goods are completely different from local objects but have close parallels with material from northwestern Iran and Azerbaijan (figures 12.5, 12.6). R. Abramishvili (1995) in his publication discusses these objects, especially pottery, very fully and draws out the parallels. His interpretation is that the graves reflect the movement of Thraco-Cimmerian ethnic groups, and he links this to the establishment of the so-called Scythian Kingdom in Transcaucasia. It is very difficult to agree with him. All his conclusions are based on a convoluted tower of speculation. We know nothing about Cimmerian culture or of the existence of a Scythian kingdom in Transcaucasia. I will not discuss this here; I have already done so elsewhere, trying to demonstrate how scant is our current knowledge (Tsetskhladze 1999:482–486). As the richness and burial practices of these two tombs demonstrate, they probably belonged to members of the local nobility, although we cannot exclude that the deceased were of foreign origin. The wealth of foreign objects shows that some kind of change is taking place in this period. It would be much more plausible to connect this change to the migration of some ethnic group(s) from western Iran or from Urartu. There is a further possibility: if these graves belonged to local nobles, the foreign objects can be considered as gifts from representatives of ethnic groups connected with western Iran or Urartu. My interpretation is more realistic than Abramishvili's in view of the close links between eastern Georgia and Urartu (see above). In the Early Iron Age, the migration of some ethnic groups from western Iran throughout Transcaucasia seems very probable as well (Tsetskhladze 1999:481–482).

THE SCYTHIANS AND GEORGIA

To turn to the Scythians: their influence on the material culture of ancient Georgia was quite noticeable. First of all, there are about fifteen sites in eastern Georgia (Iberia) and some twenty sites in western Georgia (Colchis)—burial grounds (mostly) and settlements—which have yielded Scythian or Scythian-type objects: battle axes, akinakes, arrowheads, bits, chapes, bronze bridles, bone cheek-plates, scabbard chapes, ornaments of horse harness (Esaian and Pogrebova 1985; Pirtskhalava 1995). From Iberia even a Scythian balbal



1.



2.

Figure 12.7 'Palace complex' from Gumbati: 1, plan; 2, bell-shaped column base. After Knauß 1999: Plates 2 and 6.

dated to the seventh/sixth centuries is known (Dashevskaya and Lordkipanidze 1995). There are so many sites and such a variety of objects that explanations such as trade or sporadic contacts between Scythians and the peoples of Colchis and Iberia are insufficient. The bulk of these Scythian or Scythian-type objects dates from the end of the seventh/beginning of the sixth century BC (although there is some debate), which is when the Scythians were returning from Asia Minor to the northern Black Sea littoral, after crushing Near Eastern empires (Pirtskhalava 1995:61–62).

Urartian culture had a quite strong influence on that of the early Scythians, and vice versa (Piotrovskii 1989). It is extremely likely that the Scythians did not simply pass through the territory of ancient Georgia but destroyed everything in their path. Everywhere in sites of eastern Georgia there are traces of destruction dating from the end of the seventh century BC. In the settlements and cultic centers, Scythian arrowheads are found in the destruction levels (Pirtskhalava 1995:61). Until the fifth/fourth centuries BC there is a lacuna in the archaeology of eastern Georgia. Life does not reemerge in full until the Hellenistic period (Lordkipanidze 1989:181–182, 312). The Scythians destroyed everything in Colchis as well: traces of fire can be identified in many of the settlements dated to the end of the seventh and through most of the sixth century BC (Tsetskhladze 1995:314–315).

The Scythians not only passed through present-day Georgia, especially Colchis, but some of them also settled there long term (particularly within the territory of modern Abkhazia, where the largest numbers of Scythian objects have been found). This is also demonstrated by the fact that virtually all weapons in Colchis between the fifth and first centuries BC were of Scythian type. It is likely that large scale production of iron objects in Colchis was connected with the Scythians (Tsetskhladze 1995:327).

THE ACHAEMENID EMPIRE AND GEORGIA

Both the creation of the Achaemenid Empire and its subsequent expansion had an impact on ancient Georgia (Briant 1996:80–81, 130–133; 1997:24–26). Recently, this subject has received a great deal of scholarly attention (Tsetskhladze 1993/94; 1994, 2001; Gagoshidze 1996; Knauss 1999; Furtwängler and Lordkipanidze 2000). It is frequently stated that the ancient written sources are very unclear as to whether eastern Georgia (Iberia) was part of the Achaemenid Empire or not

(Cook 1983:78–79; Boardman 1994:219; Gagoshidze 1996:125–126). At the same time, the material culture indicates that it was one of the satrapies. Excavation over the last twenty years, and especially the current efforts of a Georgian-German team, have indeed provided very strong evidence of the region's vassal status. I must mention immediately the discovery in Gumbati of an Achaemenid-type palace of the fifth/fourth centuries BC, which was very probably the residence of the local ruler (figure 12.7:1; Knauss 1999:85–92). It is built of mud brick and it yielded bell-shaped column bases (figure 12.7:2; Knauss 1999:90, 93, Plates 2, 6).

Before turning my attention to particular types of artifacts, it is essential that I discuss the architecture of Iberia, the strongest indicator of an Achaemenid presence. Most buildings of this period are built of mud brick. Although this technique was known in Georgia from the sixth to the fourth millennium BC, it was largely forgotten during the Bronze and Early Iron Ages. Its sudden revival is rightly connected by J. Gagoshidze (1996:130–131) to Achaemenid influence. Another distinctive feature is that all buildings, especially those of the Classical period, bear a very strong resemblance to the tower-type buildings of Urartu. This type of architecture was characteristic for the Achaemenids as well, and also came to them from Urartu (Stronach 1967; Gagoshidze 1996:130). In Tsikhiagora, for example, the temple complex has fortifications (Zkitischwili 1995:84) reminiscent of Urartian practice (figure 12.8; see, for example, Smith 1998: Fig. 3b; 1999: Figs. 7–8, 11–12).

From the fifth century BC all the temples so far known from eastern Georgia are fire temples (Kimsiasvili and Narimanisvili 1995/96). Most probably, the earliest example is that from Samadlo: a tower-type building (Gagoshidze 1996: Plate 3). These fire temples in Iberia formed part of complexes containing barns, a mill, bakery, winery, as in Tsikhiagora, for example, which is the best studied and very well preserved (Zkitischwili 1995). The temple there consists of a square cella, flanked by corridor-like spaces, fronted by a court enclosed by a high fence. The altar, built from rubble stones, is situated in the center of the court. It is likely that a wooden column with a bull double-protoma capital (Zkitischwili 1995: Figs. 5, 6) was set up in the center of the cella to carry the tie beam (Kimsiasvili and Narimanisvili 1995/96:312). The capital represents a clear example of provincial Achaemenid style (Gagoshidze 1996:132). The walls, coated with clay on both sides and built of rubble stones, above which is mud-brick masonry, are 1.5 m wide and

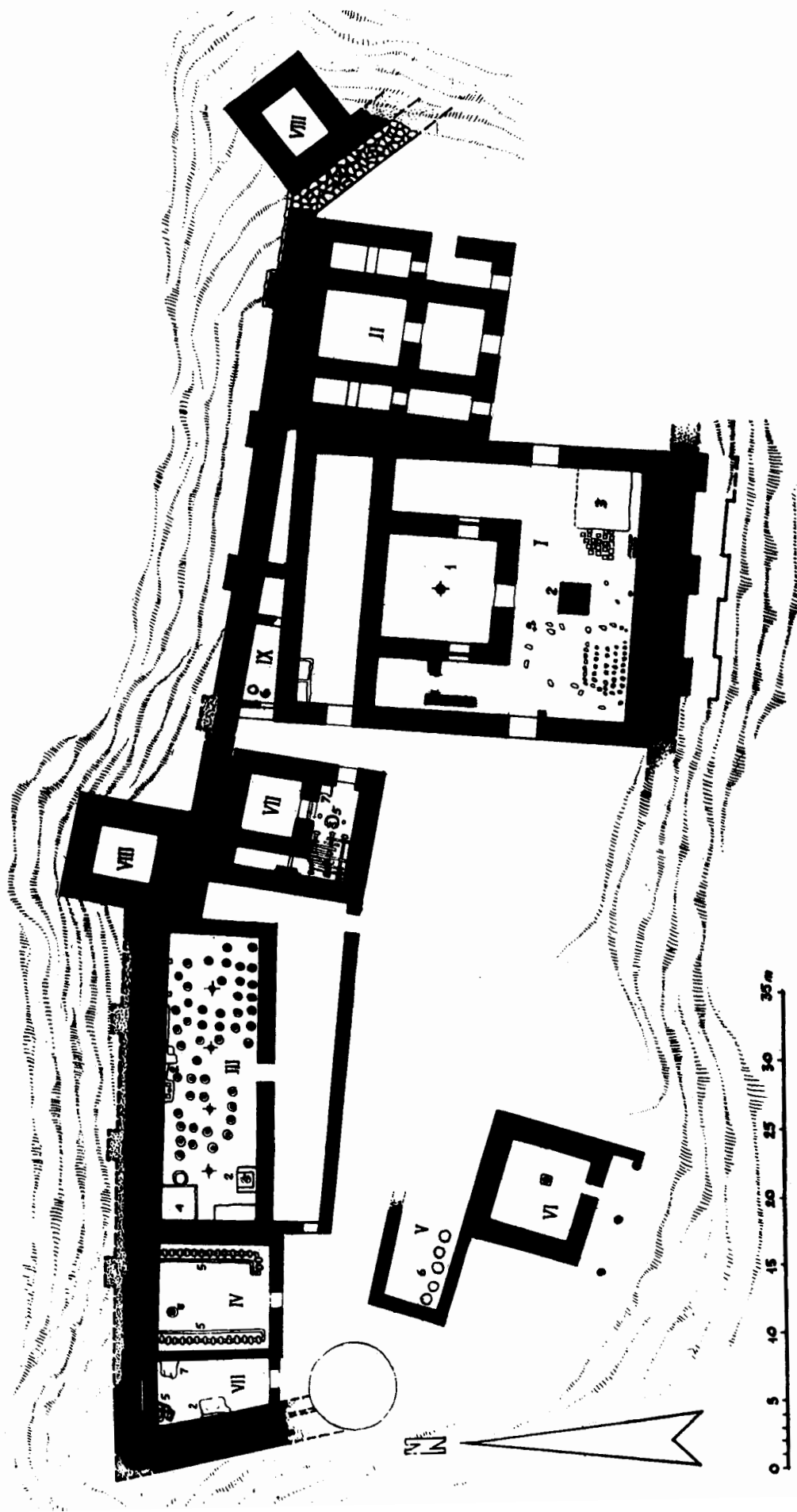


Figure 12.8 Plan of Tsikhiagora. After Zkitischvili 1995: Plate 1.

up to 2 m high. The roof was tiled; the floor made from wooden trunks covered by clay. The complex dates from the early Hellenistic period (figure 12.8; Kimsiasvili and Narimanisvili 1995/96:311–312). Other temples of the Hellenistic period, less well studied and less well preserved, have been excavated in Gharthiskari, Samadlosmidsebi, and Uphlistsikhe (so-called two column hall) (Kimsiasvili and Narimanisvili 1995/96). In Dedoplis Mindori a whole complex of temples from the late Hellenistic period has been studied (Gagoshidze 1992). An Achaemenid-type capital is also known from Shiomgvime (Gagoshidze 1996: Plate 8).

Ancient Iranian influences can be seen in other spheres of material culture. There are about two dozen precious metal phialai and rhyta from the Akhagori and Kazbegi treasure and burials (Gagoshidze 1996:127). One fourth century BC glass phiale is known as well (Gagoshidze 1996:127). Golden jewelry bears clear Achaemenid features (Gagoshidze 1985; 1997). These luxury objects can be interpreted as gifts to the local nobility. It is supposed that one of the satrapal production centers for luxurious metal objects was situated in Iberia (Gagoshidze 1996:127). Most important, from the fourth century BC, production of ceramic imitations of Achaemenid phialai and rhyta began in Iberia (figures 12.9, 12.10; Gagoshidze 1979:81–84; Narimanisvili 1991:47–50). From the Hellenistic period, local pithoi are known, red-painted with animals and hunting scenes (figure 12.11:1; Gagoshidze 1981: Plates XIV–XVIII). The excavation at Samadlo has yielded fragments of early Hellenistic stone relief sculptures depicting a hunting scene and resembling Achaemenid sculpture (figure 12.11:2; Gagoshidze 1981: Plate XIX,236).

To summarize, the influence of Achaemenid culture had a strong impact on Iberia, which can be considered, with a great degree of certainty, a peripheral part of the Achaemenid Empire. One thing in particular is noticeable. Strong ancient Iranian traditions were displayed from the end of the fourth century BC. This is also the period when a completely new burial rite—burials in pithoi (known in Armenian territory and western Anatolia from an earlier date [Noneshvili 1992:3–10, 75–120 with bibliography])—appears in eastern Georgia, indicating the arrival of some new ethnic group(s) (Noneshvili 1992:12–55; Tolordava 1980:38–52) Maybe this new ethnic group is responsible for these essentially new cultural features as well (Achaemenid features in the Classical period were much weaker, which probably reflects the current lack of evidence.) This was the period of the collapse of the

Achaemenid Empire after the march of Alexander the Great and, perhaps, as a result of its disintegration some of its former people migrated elsewhere, including to ancient eastern Georgia. Otherwise it would be very difficult to explain why there are features associated with Late Archaic-Classical Achaemenid culture preserved in Iberia in the Hellenistic period (if not, the chronology of Iberian antiquities must be revised).

COLCHIS AND FOREIGN ELEMENTS

Colchis (western Georgia) was not directly incorporated as one of the satrapies of the Persian Empire, but it was used as a buffer state between the Empire and the nomads of the southern Caucasus (Tsetskhladze 1993/94). The influence of Achaemenid culture is weaker here than in Iberia. Luxurious Achaemenid or Achaemenid-type gold, silver and glass items from rich local burials at Vani and Sairkhe, as well as Akhul-Abaa in Abkhazia, are well known and have been published and republished many times (Lordkipanidze 1981b:11–89; 1983; 1991a: Plates 3–7; Tsetskhladze 1993/94; Gigolashvili 1999; Makharadze and Siginashvili 1999; Nadiradze 1990:22–97; Kvirvelia 1995: Fig. 4). There is no doubt that they represent diplomatic gifts to the local elite (Tsetskhladze 1993/94:24–31). From the Hellenistic period traces of the cult of Mithras can be found in Colchis (Tsetskhladze 1992). As in Iberia, Achaemenid jewelry had a strong influence on local designs (Gagoshidze 1985; 1997). The widespread appearance of torques is most probably connected with ancient Iranian tradition, although it could be linked to the Scythians (Gogiberidze 1989; Petrenko 1978:41–48). The same is true of burial rites used for the burial of local noblemen in Vani and Sairkhe (Lordkipanidze 1972a:66; Nadiradze 1990:22–97).

The architecture of Colchis displays Greek influence more strongly than Iranian (Tsetskhladze 1998:114–163). This is unsurprising in view of the Greek colonies along the Colchian Black Sea coast. To Achaemenid tradition can be linked the appearance of mud-brick architecture in Vani (Lordkipanidze 1972b:28). The discovery of a stone Doric capital decorated in relief with lotus leaves (Kipiani 1987:15–22; Shefton 1993) and, possibly, a bull protome capital in Sairkhe (Kipiani 1987:12–14), indicates the presence of some Achaemenid architects decorating buildings in the style of Persian court art for the local elite. Both sites, residences of local nobles, were situated in central Colchis, not far from

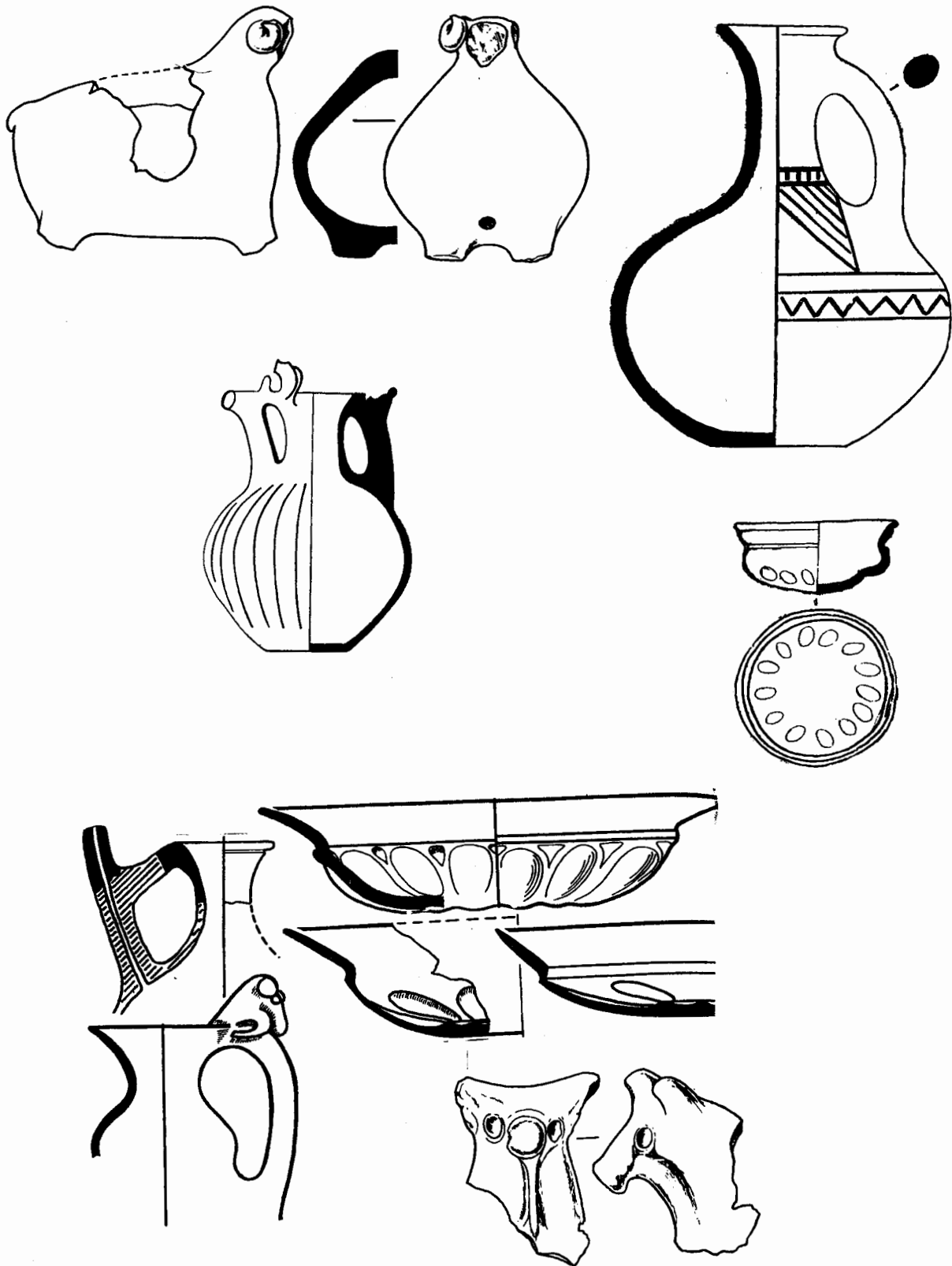


Figure 12.9 Iberian pottery of the 5th–1st centuries BC. Adapted from Gagoshidze 1981 and Narimanishvili 1991.

the Iberian border, and it is likely that both the ancient Iranian elements and the architects themselves came from there. As in Iberia, suddenly burials in pithoi appear in central Colchis from the early Hellenistic period—in the coastal zone they are, as yet, unknown (Noneshvili 1992:55–74; Tolordava 1980:6–37). Pottery from these burials, again as in eastern Georgia, represents new types for Colchian production. One kind is the flask decorated with sunlike slashes and circles, which has parallels from Anatolia

(Bilgi 1991: Fig. 02.7,1). The difference is that the Anatolian examples are asymmetrical and have one handle, the Colchian examples none (Tolordava 1980: Plate IV,9). In Iberia local asymmetrical flasks are known (Narimanishvili 1991:349). Thus, it is obvious that the appearance of this new burial tradition must be connected with the same migration process that occurred at exactly the same time in Iberia. Some of the migrants continued their journey and penetrated into central parts of Colchis.

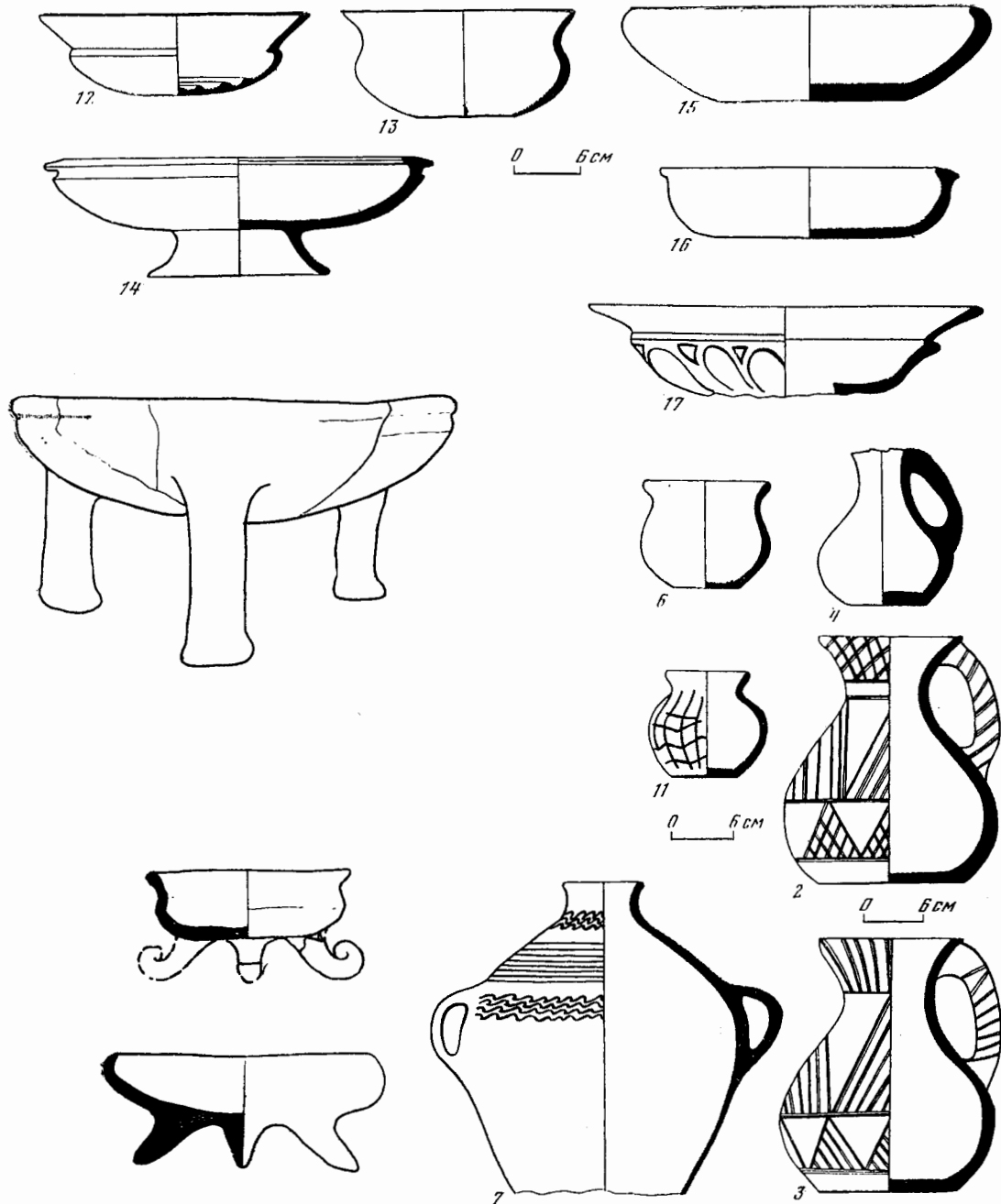
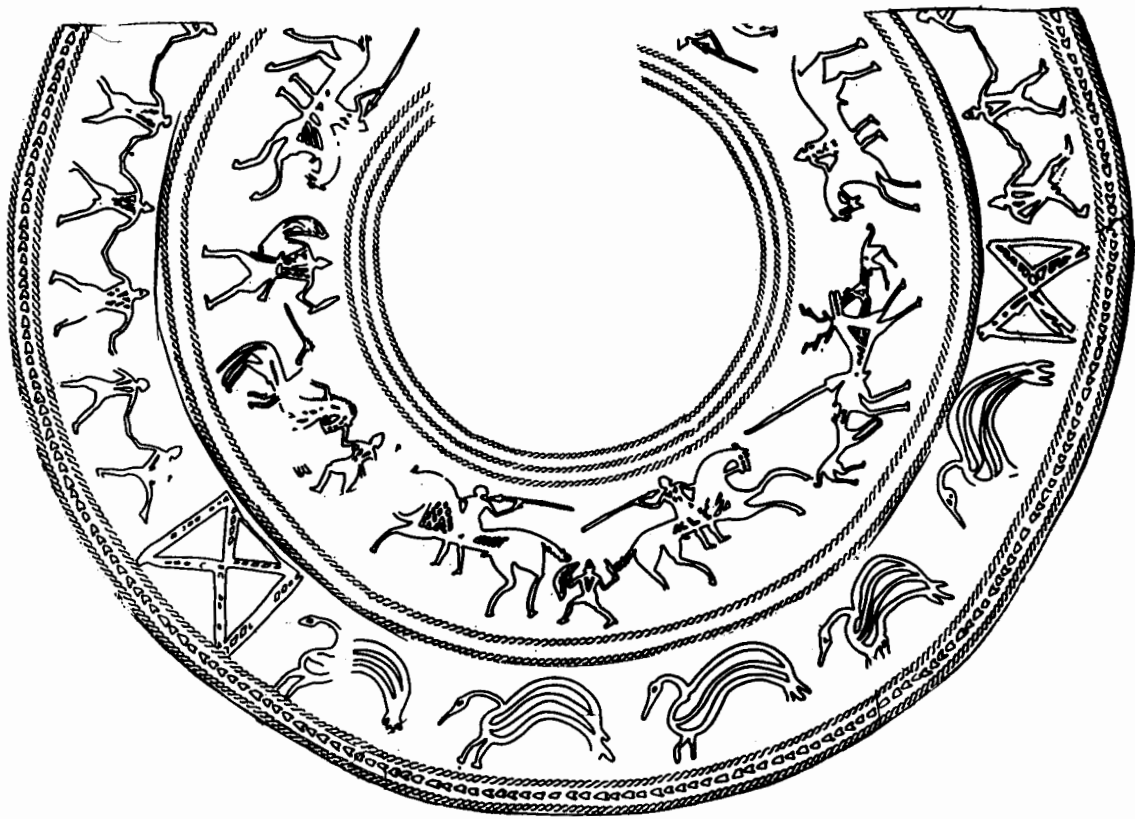
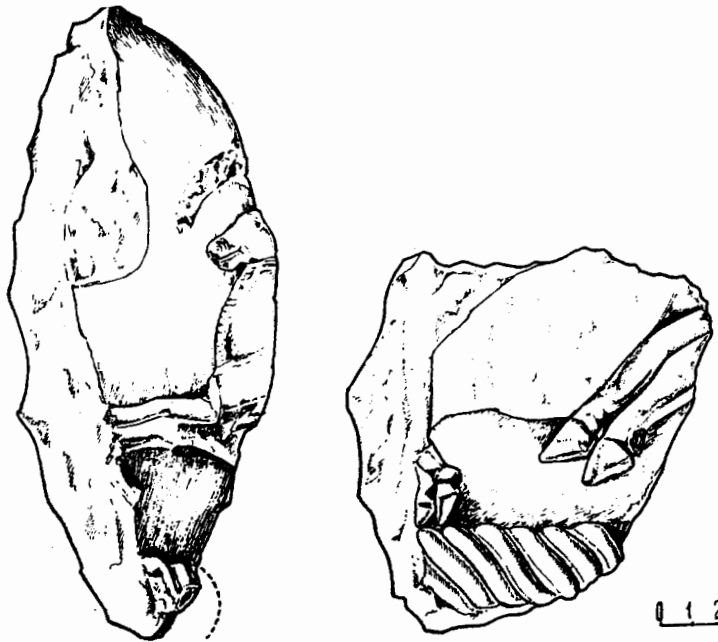


Figure 12.10 Iberian pottery of 5th–1st centuries BC. Adapted from Gagoshidze 1981 and Narimanishvili 1991.



1



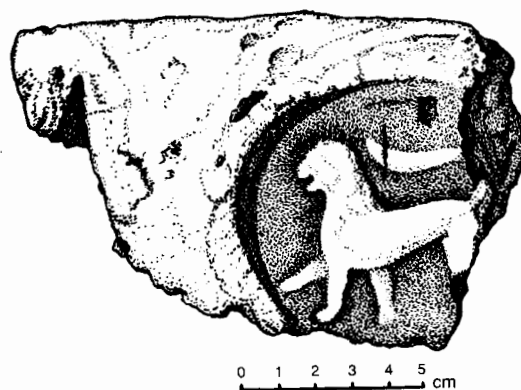
2

Figure 12.11 Samadlo: 1, red-painted decoration on pithos; 2, Relief sculpture with hunting scene. After Gagoshidze 1981: Plates XVII and XIX, 236.

Further evidence for the appearance of new features because of migration comes from Colchian pottery production. From the end of the seventh century BC jugs with so-called vertical tubular handles became widespread throughout Colchis; produced locally, they form a completely new type in Colchian culture (Mikeladze 1974:63). Jugs of the same type are known from ancient Iran, where they appeared at the beginning of the first millennium BC (Dyson 1965: Fig. 7; Seeher 1992: Figs. 3,9). Lugged pots with wave ornament came to Colchis from Iran as well (Carter 1994: Fig. 12,5).

A further group of pottery articles from central Colchis is of interest: one-handed, pear-shaped jugs made from pink clay. They have been found in Vani, both in burials and in the cultural levels (isolated fragments) (Lordkipanidze 1972b: Fig. 176; 1981b: Figs. 77, 4, 93). They are covered with yellow slip and bear red painted decoration, consisting of inverted isosceles triangles and sets of parallel lines around the neck and widest part of the body, between which chevrons are arranged. The jugs have been dated to the second or third quarter of the fourth century BC. The emergence of this painted pottery is linked with that (also with triangular decoration) widespread since early times on the Iranian plateau (see, for example, Muscarella 1994: Plate 12.1.1). So the appearance of painted jugs in Colchis should be linked to Iranian influence. As the number of such finds is quite small it is difficult to speak of direct trade relations. The jugs had probably come from neighboring Iberia, where they were widespread and where local production had started up in response (figures 12.9:top right, 12.10:2-3; Narimanishvili 1991:276-280).

Finally, let us pay attention to pottery marks. Colchian pottery provides much more evidence than Iberian (Tsetskhladze 1991). There are two kinds of mark: stamped and incised. Examples of the former are few: from Colchis, impressions of seals, four segmented rosettes on pots and pithoi (Tsetskhladze 1991: Plates 2 and 3); from Iberia, impressions of seals (figure 12.12:1; Zkitischwili 1995: Plates 12, 16). In two cases, the impressions of seals are on bullae (figure 12.12:2-3; Zkitischwili 1995: Plate 16; Meshveliani et al. 1999: Fig. 4). Incised marks are much more numerous, and all were made before the firing of the pot: cross or X-shapes, swastika motifs, tree motifs, pitchfork motifs, dot impressions, etc. (Shamba 1980: Plates XXI.8, XXIII-XXIV; Kiguradze 1976: Plate III.2; Lordkipanidze 1981a: Plate 74). All these marks are likely to be those of the potter. In fact, there are other



1.



2.



3.

Figure 12.12 1, Stamp on pithos, Tsikhiagora (after Zkitischwili 1995: Plate 12); 2, bulla, Tsikhiagora (after Zkitischwili 1995: Plate 16); 3, bulla, Goradziri (after Meshveliani et al. 1999: Fig. 4).

marks, such as Greek letters, which are probably numerical, as, for example, on tiles at Tsikhiagora (Khazaradze and Tskitishvili 1980; Zkitishvili 1995: Plate 17). These incised marks have striking similarities with the marks of Urartian potters (Derin 1999; see also Martirosian 1981; Khodhash 1981). Close similarities can also be seen in the ornamentation of Colchian (Lordkipanidze 1981a: Plate 18) and, for example, Phrygian pottery (Sams 1994: Figs. 60 and 61). I would not, however, want to suggest that Urartians or Phrygians were responsible for introducing pottery production, either in Iberia or Colchis, especially when ancient Georgian marks date from the Classical and Hellenistic periods. This is, once again, a further example of how archaic traditions can reappear independently after several centuries. I consider this to be an indicator, albeit indirect, of links between ancient Georgian and Anatolian pottery production.

The aim of this chapter has been to demonstrate that the culture of ancient Georgia in the first millennium BC was influenced by its neighbors. Although the

local culture was indigenous, the geographical location of Georgia is such that it has always been prone to external influences, thereby enriching its own culture. Some features came simply by way of the exchange of artistic ideas, but, as I have tried to demonstrate here, much more through the migration of new ethnic groups, which was often brought about by the quite frequent political changes in Anatolia and throughout the Near East. So much has been written about the strong influence of Greek culture in Colchis that I think it unnecessary to pay attention to this question here (Tssetskhladze 1998 with bibliography). It is obvious that some conclusions reached here may seem speculative. The nature of archaeological evidence is such that its interpretation can be difficult where other sources, for example, written, do not exist or survive. At best, we can establish, indicate, or illuminate. Even here, much depends on the extent to which the archaeological material has been published and studied—not to say the degree to which sites and whole areas have been excavated.