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CHAPTER 12

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

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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 1994:31-48; 2000; Curtis 1995; Dalley 1998; Tsetkhildze 1999:478-487; Pogrebchova 1977:10-32, 141-173; 1984:10-46, 162-206). The mechanisms of cultural exchange are 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 (Tsetkhildze 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 culture in the territory of Georgia had very close links with the cultures of the central Caucasus. Colchian and Kusan armor (daggers, axes, adzes, pickaxes, and so on) have close parallels with the same types of weapons from western Iran (Pogrebchova 1977, Vorontsev 1980; Panahkhaia 1966). 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 (Tsetkhildze 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 (Teetskhidze 1999:488). 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 Sulorii, not far from Vani, Colchis, with the figure 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 Sarkids (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 Naxiun. After Mikhaladze et al. 1987: Plate 20.
parallels with material from Karmir-Blur (Piotrovskii 1967:60). Urartian belts and helmets are known from central and northern Caucasus (Tkibul 1981: Plates 94-96, 127-129; galalina 1985:180); and a few bronze bowls have been found in Tbil (Tkibul 1981: Plate 106,4; 1985: Plate 192,9; compare Merzhan 1991:211). Urartian ' Artemis' weapons had a strong impact on the design of central Caucasian urns (Voronov 1982:216-217). Most probably the use of the chariot and horse fittings came from Urartu as well (compare Merzhan 1991:113). 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 Ravitkevi 1997:5-9, 58-71; Bouzek 1997:18); 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 Caucasia have been made, both from Ergera burial ground (Mikeladze 1990: Plate XXX 1; Papasvili 1999: Plate IV,57). The most striking find is that at Namara settlement (not far from Ergera); 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. Muzhakhishvili (1978:18-21), on the basis of a study of red burnished pottery from "K neb 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 (Zirmazsky 1995:199; Joukowksy 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 (Kakvidze 1976:197-209; Khidasheli 1988; Lornkipanidze 1986:178-181). They are large and consist not only of a place for cultic ceremonies but also of many other buildings. The shrine at Karmnisi-Mekhvari, situated on the hill, on the smaller were storage and auxiliary buildings; on the larger, the shrine itself. Three shrines contained rooms with altars, hearths, ovens, smithies, etc., in which many objects have been found—and most, it can be assumed, offerings to the gods. In Meli-Cele,
86,000 objects have been discovered in Melani, 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 Kartlianskan 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 Esere 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,
rectangular in shape and probably a tower, was incorporated into a dwelling and production complex. On its floor were two "batins" (in the terminology of the investigator), probably for animal blood, and five round altars (Figure 12.3, Chartulani 1996:146-147). Unfortunately, little has been published about this settlement and its place. The remains of another cultic place were found at Udugult settlement, situated on a hill 2,310 m above sea level (Chartulani 1996:147-149).

Rescue excavation at Gorakize 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 northeastern 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, Gorakize. After Chartulani et al. 1998:72.
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 (Meshvetiani et al. 1999).

As the abovementioned complexes show, the idea of a cultic center, situated within a settlement, 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 (1-8, 7-10) and terracotta (4-8) items from boulak No. 36, Tell. After Abramaki 1993: Plate 11.
I am not suggesting that eastern Georgia and the mountains of Colchis had been part of Urartu (although we are far from establishing the final limits of Urartian expansion; see, for example, Burne 1994; Parker 1999, Sevan 1991, Smith 1996:196–217, 274–285; 1999:44–57). 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 architectural buildings 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: cypress and stone constructions, and the predominating 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 Pirskhalauri 1999:144, 146).

Thus, the idea of cultic centers as well as certain architectural features can most probably be found in Urartu. The origins 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) (Ostrowski 1967). In Urartu, this type of temple did not appear until the late ninth century BC (Usikshin 1999:121–122). The overall date for ancient Georgian temples of the same type is the eighth/seventh centuries BC (Khidashel 1980). Furthermore, although Urartian burial rites are not well known (Derin 1994:49, Zismansky 1995:109–110), cremation in stone cists was widespread (Derin 1994:49).

Tombs Nos. 18 and 24 in Trebi, Tbilisi, stood 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 north-western 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 Thracio-Cimmerian ethnic groups, and 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 that Scythian is our current knowledge (Tsiskhabladze 1999:482–490). 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 and 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 (Tsiskhabladze 1999:481–482).

THE SCYTHIANS AND GEORGEA
To turn to the Scythians—the 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, akimakes, arrowheads, bows, chapes, bronze bracelets, bone cheek-plates, scabbard chapes, ornaments of horse harness (Esinian and Pogrebova 1985; Pirzkhalalava 1995). From Iberia, even a Scythian balal
Figure 12.7 ‘Palace complex’ from Gumbisi. 1, plan; 2, bell-shaped column base. After: Reisfeld 1999: Plate 2 and 5.
dated to the seventh-sixth centuries is known (Dashkevskaya and Lordkipanidze 1995). There are so many sites and such a variety of objects that expla-
nations such as trade or sporadic contacts between Scythians and the peoples of Colchis and Iberia are in-
sufficient. The hulk 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 crow-
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 de-
serted 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 (Pershchhalova 1995:61). Until the fifth/fourth centuries BC there is a lacuna in the archae-
ology of eastern Georgia. Life does not reemerge in full until the Hellenistic period (Lordkipanidze 1989:1FF-182, 312). The Scythians destroyed every-
thing in Colchis as well: traces of fire can be identified in many of the settlements dated to the end of the sev-
enth and through most of the sixth century BC (Tsketishvili 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 terri-
tory of modern Abkhazia, where the largest numbers of Scythian objects have been found). This is also dem-
onstrated 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 (Tsketishvili 1995:327).

THE ACHAEMENID EMPIRE AND GEORGIA

Both the creation of the Achaemenid Empire and its subsequent expansion had an impact on ancient Georgia (Brian 1996:82-81, 130-133, 1997:24-26). Recently, this subject has received a great deal of scholarly atten-
tion (Tsketishvili 1993/94, 1994, 2001; Gagoshidze 1996; Knoss 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 vast status. I must men-
tion immediately the discovery in Gambati 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; Knoss 1999:85-92). It is built of mud brick and it yielded bell-shaped column bases (figure 12.7.2; Knoss 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, espe-
cially those of the Classical period, bear a very strong resemblance to the tower-type buildings of Urartu. This typ of architecture was characteristic for the Achaemenids as well, and also came to them from Urartu (Strochach 1967; Gagoshidze 1996:130). In Tsakhirgora, for example, the temple complex has for-
ti features (Zitzschewski 1995:84) reminiscent of Achaemenid 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 (Kanissiuli and Narimanisvili 1995:96). Most probably, the earliest ex-
ample 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, baki-
ery, winery, as in Tsakhirgora, for example, which is the best studied and very well preserved (Zitzschewski 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 built double-protona capital (Zitzschewski 1995: Figs. 5, 6) was set up in the center of the cella to carry the tile beam (Kanissiuli and Narimanisvili 1995:361). The capital represents a clear example of provincial Achaemenid style (Gagoshidze 1996:32). 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
up to 2 m in 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; Kismisivili and Narimanislav 1995/96:311–312). Other temples of the Hellenistic period, less well studied and less well preserved, have been excavated in Gharbiskari, Samadolmoschid, and Uplushnikhe (so-called two column hall), Kismisivili and Narimanislav 1995/96). In Dedelopi Mindori a whole complex of temples from the late Hellenistic period has been studied (Gagoshidze 1992). An Achaemenid-type capital is also known from Shangmeime (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 Akhalgirz and Kohegi treasure and braziers (Gagoshidze 1996:127). One fourth century BC glass phialai 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 satrap’s 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 begins in Iberia (figures 12.9, 12.10; Gagoshidze 1979:81–84; Narimanislav 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 Samadolmoschid 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. Strangely 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 [Nolosivili 1992:3–10; 75–120 with bibliography])—appears in eastern Georgia, indicating the arrival of some new ethnic groups(s) (Nolosivili 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 1991/94). 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 Sairkebi, as well as Akhal–Moav in Akhboxa, are well known and have been published and republished many times (Lordkipanidze 1981b:11–89; 1983; 1991a: Plates 3–7; Tsetskhladze 1993:94; Gogolashvili 1999; Makharadze and Sigitaishvili 1999; Nadirzade 1990:22–97; Kvirkvelia 1999: Fig. 4). There is no doubt that they represent diplomatic gifts to the local site (Tsetskhladze 1991/94:24–31). 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 torches is most probably connected with ancient Iranian tradition, although it could be linked to the Scythians (Gogolashvili 1989; Pereniko 1978:41–48). The same is true of burial rites used for the burial of local noblemen in Vani and Sairkebi (Lordkipanidze 1972a:66; Nadirzade 1990:22–97).

The architecture of Colchis displays Greek influence more strongly than in the Iranian satrapies (Tsetskhladze 1998:114–133). 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 1987:13–22; Sheftor 1993) and, possibly, a full protoconic architecture in Sairkebi (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 Gogebidze 1992 and Narimanishvili 1992.)
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 (Noneshivili 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 flasks 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 (Narimantshvili 1991:149). 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 Gogebidze 1981 and Narimantshvili 1991.
Figure 11.11 Százalé. 1. red-painted decoration on pillow; 2. relief sculpture with hunting scene. After Gogolyánszky 1987: Plate XVII and XIX, 246.
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 1982: Figs. 3, 9). Lugged pots with wave ornament came to Colchis from Iran as well (Cartor 1994: Fig. 12, 5).

A further group of pottery articles from central Colchis is of interest: one-handled, 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 swirled在我cicles 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 e.g., Muscarella 1994: Pl. 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 12:4, top right, 12:102-3; Narjivanashvili 1991:276–280).

Finally, let us pay attention to pottery marks. Colchian pottery provides much more evidence than Iberian (Tsietskhiladze 1993). There are two kinds of marks: stamped and incised. Examples of the former are few: from Colchis, impressions of seals, four-segmented rosettes on pots and stylobi (Tsietskhiladze 1993: Plates 2 and 3); from Iberia, impressions of seals (figure 12.12.1; Zitkischwilli 1995: Plates 12, 16). In two cases, the impressions of seals are on bullae (figure 12.12.2–3; Zitkischwilli 1995: Plate 16, Mshveliani 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, swoika motifs, tree motifs, pitchfork motifs, dot impressions, etc. (Shambli 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
marks, such as Greek letters, which are probably num-
metric, a., for example, on the site at Tbilisi (Tsatisrachi and Tshitistvili 1980; Kizitschwilli 1995: Plate 17). These incised marks have striking similarities with the marks of Urartian potters (Derin 1991; see also Martirosiaia 1981, Khodzhasali 1981). Close similarities can also be seen in the ornamentation of Colchian (Lerdkipanidze 1981a: Plate 18) and, for example, Phrygian pottery (Sams 1994: Tugs. 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, 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 (Tsitskhladze 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 only the degree to which sites and whole areas have been excavated.