Contacts of Bronze - Early Iron Age Archaeological Cultures with Synchronous Cultures of the Outer World (General overview)

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Abstract. *The Eneolithic and Bronze-Early Iron Age cultures prevalent in the territory of Western Georgia do not seem to be isolated from the archeological cultures of the outside world, but there are observed quite close contact-relations between them. In the Eneolithic Age, with pottery and one group of stone artifacts, there are close contacts with Upper Imereti and pre-Maykop materials. The touching points are also revealed between the Dolmen and Proto-Colchian cultures. According to some of the metal artefacts of Upper Svaneti and Upper Racha (Brill Cemetery), contacts are observed with the materials of the Maykop and Digoria cultural materials..., Which took place through communication routes leading to some of the passes of the Central Caucasus Range.*

We have met elements of Mtkvari-Araks and Proto-Colchian cultures in Dablagomi settlement (Samtredia region).

With some of the materials found in Colchis, some contacts are revealed with the Beden culture existing on the territory of Shida Kartli. In the territory of Western Georgia (Adjara, Eastern Colchis) mainly in the composition of bronze treasures are found the axes from Central Transcaucasian, which must have gotten here as a result of the relations between the populations of Western and Eastern Georgia.

Imported pottery found in southwestern Colchis (Makhvilauri hill-settlement) reveals certain relations with the Proto-Hittite world. The connections with separate artifacts of Bronze Age ceramic materials found in Colchis with materials from Asia Minor can be seen.

Key words: *Colchis, Eneolithic, Bronze-Early Iron Age cultures, contacts with Dolmen, Maykop and Digoria cultures, eastern Georgian synchronous cultures, proto-Hattian pottery.*

Western Georgian Eneolithic, Bronze-Early Iron Age archaeological cultures show close ties with synchronous cultures of the outer world. Eneolithic culture has been revealed in the Rioni-Kvirila basin and north-west Colchis. This period is mainly represented here by cave and open type settlement-sites. [Nebieridze 1986:120; Pkhakadze 1992:218]. Beside locally produced pottery, the cave settlement-sites yielded thin-fabric red polished or chestnut brown round-bodied pottery¹ of different texture which is clearly distinguished from the material found in local cave dwellings. On the one hand, they are related to the sites of Near East of the IV millennium BC, and on the other hand – to the ceramic products of north-west Caucasus – the Kuban Valley (Maykop culture) [Pkhakadze 1985:28-29; Pkhakadze 1992:224]. Close contacts with the mentioned regions can also be observed according to stone bracelets, pearl-like (warty) ornament and other elements. It has been suggested that one of the

¹ Also red painted, red polished pottery with spherical body, funnel-like rim and flask-like shape, etc.

migration routes of the peoples of Maykop culture from Near East ran through the territory of Transcaucasia [Japaridze 1976:204; Pkhakadze 1978:33; 1993:44].

It is noteworthy that earthenware typical of western Georgian cave dwellings has been found in Samtskhe (Orchosani, Kanobili, near Abastumani) [Orjonikidze, Jibladze 2010:105-114; Gambashidze et al. 2018].² Presumably, impulses of Maykop culture spread out from the south to the north via the territory of Zemo Imereti (given the elements of Maykop culture revealed in cave dwellings). As has been suggested, these discoveries³ are another proof that one of the earliest Transcaucasian main

roads ran from eastern Anatolia along the sources of the River Mtkvari, then along the River Rioni and, going through Mamisoni Pass, linked South Caucasus with North Caucasus [Pitskhelauri 2012:68]. It is noteworthy that discovery of stone bracelets typical of Eneolithic epoch in Caucasus is evidenced at the sites that border Mamisoni Pass on the south (Darkveti, Tetramitsa, Samertskhle Klde, Sagvarjile, etc.) and on the north (Nalchik, Meshoko, Skala, Kamenomostkaja, Peshchera, Khutor Vesioloe) [Pitskhelauri 2012:68]. It is a traditional road which operated during the whole Bronze Age [Pitskhelauri 2012:68].

Bronze-Early Iron Age archaeological cultures, known in scholarly literature as proto-Colchian⁴ and ancient Colchian cultures, were common in the lowlands and hilly areas of Colchis. The area of distribution of proto-Colchian culture covers the territory of almost the whole western Georgia, which is abundantly represented in the cultural layers of cave dwellings artificially arranged in coastal, plain and swampy areas, but relatively seldom at dwelling-sites on foothill and seashore terraces, natural hills, under peatland

and cemeteries [Jibladze 2007: pl. I; Papuashvili N. et al. 2006:127-132]. Numerous bronze artifacts (accidental finds, including copper-bronze lop-eared and socket-eared axes, etc.) coming from Colchis Plain and the mountainous area must belong to this culture. The territory of present Abkhazia also falls in the zone of proto-Colchian culture which is represented more extensively up to the city of Sokhumi, and more weakly - in the area north of it. In our opinion, the territory accommodated between the River Gumista and Sokhumi must be the contact zone of proto-Colchian (phases I and II - Early and Middle Bronze Age), Dolmen cultures and the cultures of Sochi-Adler type of stone hoes common to the northern Black Sea coast [Jibladze 2007:15].

In the following Late Bronze-Early Iron Age, western Georgian territory almost to the River Psou and sometimes north of it too completely falls in the area of distribution of ancient Colchian culture. However, the coastal line of the Black Sea between Sochi and the River Bzipi is considered to be the border

² OOrchosani settlement site yielded a bronze hoe with nickel typical of an early phase of Maykop culture (Psekupsk, Zamankulsk, Maykop kurgan, Galjugai) [Мунчаев 1994: 199, таб. 48-11,18; Кореневский 2004:45-46; Инанишили, Джабладзе: 2009-2010: 99-116].

³ It implies discoveries of stone bracelets of Asia Minor type in the caves of Zemo Imereti [Pitskhelauri 2012:68].

⁴ According to some scholars, term 'proto-Colchian' (T. Mikeladze), established in archaeological scholarly literature is of more historical nature and represents ethnic meaning as well. Therefore, instead of it, they consider it more correct to use the term Early Bronze Age culture of Colchis Plain [Pkhakadze 1998:32-33].

region where metal production of Colchian and the Kuban Valley cultures meet [Иессен1951:81].

Some scholars attribute the dolmens revealed on the territory of present Abkhazia to Early Bronze culture of Colchis Plain and its hilly zone [Japaridze 1976:190-191; Pkhakadze 1993:83, 110]. In this circle of homogeneous culture, they somehow point out a local version with its specific features north of the River Gumista: burial practice, dolmens, terraced settlements, Sochi-Adler type stone hoes and other features which were more affected by northern impacts of Maykop-Novosvobodnaya culture [Baramidze 1999:24].

In western Caucasus dolmen structures are laid out in woodlands at 480 km along the Black Sea coast (width of distribution varies between 30 km and 75 km) from Taman Peninsula to Ochamchire (Bedia). Until recently, 564 dolmen structures had been discovered in 194 areas [Марковин 1978: map 20; Марковин 1994: 228-253]. On the territory of modern-day Abkhazia dolmen graves and structures have been identified in up to 30 locations. We are inclined to the opinion that the dolmens discovered in north-western Colchis should be considered part of the common dolmen culture spread in western Caucasasia. However, here they are different to a certain extent, bearing local nature, which is expressed by the trapezoid shape of dolmens, lop-eared and socket-eared axes of Sachkhere type, etc. It can be claimed that the dolmen culture discovered in north-western Colchis falls under the strong influence of proto-Colchian and ancient Colchian cultures which is reflected in a number of details.

Discoveries of artifacts that are somehow different from proto-Colchian culture at the settlement-sites of foothills and hilly areas of north-western Colchis (Gumista I, Achandara, Pali, Akhra-Kapshi, Jampal I) could be pointing to the local character of this region [Jibladze 2014:370].

Dolmens are divided into three groups by size: small, medium and large [Japaridze 1961:87; Pkhakadze 1992:240]. Apparently, dolmens belonged to the people who did not possess places of permanent habitation, followed nomadic lifestyle and were occupied by cattle-breeding. All this was promoted by arrangement of this type of graves and structures in woodlands where there were favorable conditions for developing animal husbandry. Therefore, we must be dealing with two economically different cultures. Unlike the dolmen one, proto-Colchian is mainly the culture of the lowlands, and the ancient Kartvelian ethnic group bearing this culture – Svan-speaking population – followed sedentary farming and metallurgy.

Colchis Plain and its hilly zone have not yielded a single fact of penetration of the elements of Kura-Araxes culture, except for the lower layer of Dablagomi settlement-site where proto-Colchian (upper horizon) and Kura-Araxes cultures (lower horizon) converge [Pkhakadze 1978:3-12]. Furthermore, noteworthy is the discovery of several fragments of pottery with the appearance of Kura-Araxes culture at the settlement-sites of Cholipa and Shemokmedi.

Due to unfavorable geoclimatic conditions of Colchis Plain, Kura-Araxes culture could not penetrate

its depth. It has been suggested that the ethnic group bearing this culture avoided the swampy zone of Colchis Plain and its trace can already be observed on the territory of Svaneti [Japaridze 1976:292]. It is difficult to say how real this opinion is. However, some kind of explanation should be found to the provenance of the spearheads with straight sockets and button-like ends typical of Kura-Araxes culture discovered on the territory of Zemo and Kvemo Svaneti⁵ (we also consider lop-eared copper axes of Bdadzoro and Ialbuzi type revealed here) [Чартолани 1989: pl. .X-1,2,3; XI-1,4; XV-1,2]. This problem will be discussed in more detail below.

III Proto- and ancient Colchian cultures seem to have been spread in the hilly zone. Although settlement-sites and cemeteries of this period (ancient Colchian is considered) are rarely exposed in Colchian highlands, accidentally found copper-bronze lop-eared, socket-eared and flat axes, as well as Colchian axes of various types dated to the Late Bronze-Early Iron Age [Chartolani 1996:52-59, 65-76] must be the evidence to the fact that Svaneti region fell within the area of distribution of proto- and ancient Colchian cultures.

Bronze artifacts revealed in graves of the end of the Middle Bronze and the beginning of the Late Bronze Age in Brili, as well as the axes of Kvishari hoard find a lot in common with the artifacts of analogous period found in the lowlands of Colchis. A certain part of metal artifacts recovered from this cemetery (dagger blades, spearheads) also bears resemblance to bronze weapons of this kind obtained from the cemeteries of Nuli and Kvasatala in Kartli [Japaridze 2009:185].

Black or, more rarely, chestnut polished pottery is encountered in cultural layers of Early and Middle Bronze Age settlement-sites in Colchis. In terms of shape, certain types of handles, often bi-conical form, and ornamentation, they sharply differ from local ceramics of coarse fabric [Jibladze 2007:48-51] (pl. I, II). At the time, B. Kuftin related black polished pottery of Anaklia I and that of cyclopic structures of Transcaucasia in genetic terms and

found remote parallels with artifacts from pole-dwellings of Asia Minor, Mediterranean, Syria and Switzerland [Куфтин 1950: 267]. Prior to that, L. Solovyov related origination of this type of ceramics with Near East. The majority of scholars (T. Mikeladze, O. Japaridze, D. Khakhutaishvili, A. Inaishvili, E. Gogadze, G. Pkhakadze, etc.)⁶ believe that black polished pottery penetrated from the Kura-Araxes, Bedena and Trialeti cultures common to the territory of eastern Georgia. Sometimes pottery of this fabric is considered to be local, at other times parallels are made with the material of the Black Sea coastal areas of central Anatolia (Ikiz-tepe, Alaja-Huiuk, Horoz-tepe, Alishar Huiuk, Troa I) [J. Apakidze]. The most acceptable for us is to explain penetration of black polished ceramics into Colchis Plain as a consequence of cultural-economic relationships with Bedena and Trialeti cultures spread on the territory of eastern Georgia (exchange, technological impacts, etc.)⁷ However, we are not completely

⁵ Recently a bronze spearhead of Kura-Araxes culture was discovered in a sand quarry near the Rioni river-bed in Kutaisi. This artifact is in private possession.

⁶ For further information about the opinions expressed about black polished pottery see: Jibladze 1998.

⁷ In addition, we should not exclude linking of origin of black polished pottery of Colchis Plain with the impacts coming from the territory of Anatolia. If this process actually took place, it could have been spread along the Black Sea coast from south to north. It should also be taken into consideration that black polished pottery has been revealed at the settlement-sites of Early and Middle Bronze Age on the Black Sea coast.

sure about this opinion.

Granite socketed axes with polished surface dated the end of Early Bronze and Middle Bronze Age discovered at the settlement-sites of the lower stretch of the River Enguri expose close contacts with the cultures bearing military stone axes (North Caucasian, Catacomb, etc.) [Jibladze 2007:39-42].

It has been suggested that the only conjectural overland route linking proto-Colchian and Teramar cultures must have gone through the steppe zone of the Black Sea [Pitskhelauri 2014:84]. Taking it into consideration, proto-Colchians must have had contacts with the bearers of the Catacomb culture, who had total control over this road in the Middle Bronze Age. This opinion is supported by emergence of various patterns made up of rows of dotted ornaments on ceramic vessels found at the settlement sites of Colchis Plain. This ornament is a characteristic feature of the steppes and it had been unknown to the Colchian culture before [Pitskhelauri 2014:84]. It is noteworthy that B. Kuftin had spotted these changes that had occurred in the development of Colchian ceramics even earlier [Куфтин 1950: 165-166; Pitskhelauri 2014:84].

Some of the varieties of the bronze goods uncovered in Svaneti reveal close contacts with archaeological cultures of neighboring regions. First of all, it is a broad-bladed, lop-eared copper axe and a copper dagger blade without a rib and a socket which seems to be contemporaneous with the lop-eared axe [Lvitsiani, Jibladze 2015:8] (pl. III-1,2; IV-1; VI-1). These items were revealed in Pari community of Mestia Municipality, between Kvemo Luha and Lakhamula, on the territory of the location called Lagmadi while searching for gold in the River Enguri.

Prior to the discovery of the copper axe of Kvemo Luha, there had been two archaic broad-bladed axes known from Svaneti (Ipari community, v. Tsvirmi and the Chuberi Gorge, pl. IV-2,3). At the time they were published several times and corresponding parallels were drawn from eastern Georgian (Zahesi, Ialbuzy, Kulbakebi, Brdadzori) and Northern Caucasian (ancient axes of Late Maykop culture – Novosvobodnaya, Kostromskaja, etc.) cultures. Despite the resemblance with its predecessors by some details, the axe of Kvemo Luha still differs from them. It is more striking in the shape of its socket.

The earliest lop-eared copper axes, if not considered some more developed items (Kulanurkhva, Guadikhu, Naomari Gora-Ghorjomi – Khulo District, Achkvistavi – Kobuleti District) are not evidenced on Colchis Plain. In the first half of the III millennium BC lop-eared, wide-bladed copper axes of Luha type were mainly distributed on the territory of eastern Georgia at the sites of Kura-Araxes culture: Shida Kartli (Kulbakebi – Zghuderi, Ialbuzy, Zahesi-Avchala, Mejvriskevi), Kvemo Kartli (Brdadzori) [Куфтин 1944: 35, pl. XX₄; Koridze 1965: 50-51; Кушнарева, Чубинишвили 1970: fig. 41_{1,3,4,6}; Кушнарева 1993: 80_{1,3,4}; Japaridze 2003: 112; Kvitsiani, Jibladze 2015:25] (pl. IV-6-9). Later the area of discovering this kind of copper axes spread out even further (Gambashidze et al. 2010:312, 326, pl. XV; Gogochuri, Orjonikidze 2010:110-118]. According to morphological features, the axe from Luha

stands close to those of Tiselis Seri and Kulbakebi type, but by some details they show resemblance with other weapons of the kind known on the territory of eastern Georgia. In typological terms, the artifact from Luha has close parallels with analogous samples from the sites of Maykop culture (Novosvobodnaya, Kostromskaya, Andrukovskaya, the Maykop kurgan itself, etc.) [Кореневский 1974: sur. 6-1,2,7, 8-1,2,4; Мунчаев 1994: 192, tab. 47-7,10,12,15] (pl. V-1-9). Particular similarity is observed with the sample from Kostromskaya. Resemblances of some axes of this type with analogous artifacts of the North Caucasus have been emphasized before too [Japaridze 1961:93; Koridze 1965:55]. Later, areas of discovery of similar axes from the sites of the North Caucasus, mainly the late Maikop culture (the phase of Novosvobodnaya) expanded.

Kvemo Luha-type copper axes without a rib and a socket have not been registered either in the highlands or plains of Colchis. In the IV-III millennia BC only a few socketless dagger blades

are known from the territory of eastern Georgia, specifically, from the region of Shida Kartli (two kurgans of Tkviavi, Gudabertka settlement site – accidental find, three graves of Kvatskhela) [Japaridze 1961:96; Gambashidze et al. 2010:165, 294, pl. 010^{120, 143, 272, 155}] (pl. VI-14-17). Dagger blades common to the territory of Georgia in the Early Bronze Age have abundantly been revealed at the burial mounds in Sachkhere [Japaridze 1961:126-139]. Only a single socketless dagger blade is mentioned from Koreti cemetery [Japaridze 1961:153, fig. 31₂, pl. XVIII₃], which resembles the sample from Luha by some details (shape of the blade). Sockeless and half-socketed dagger blades became especially widespread in Maykop culture during the Novosvobodnaya phase [Кореневский 2011:45] pl.VI-2-13]. According to typological features and drawn parallels, the dagger blade from Kvemo Luha should be dated by the second half of the IV millennium BC and the beginning of the III millennium BC. It seems contemporaneous with the lop-eared axe found in Kvemo Luha.

Thus, on summarizing the above discussed it can be concluded that the axe of Luha finds close parallels with lop-eared axes common to both Kura-Araxes culture (especially the lop-eared copper axes from the territory of Shida and Zemo Kartli) and the Late Maykop culture (Novosvobodnaya phase). Like other axes of this type, applying the traditional method of dating the axe of Luha should be dated to the first half of the III millennium BC [Japaridze 1961:21; Gogadze 2003-2004: pl. I]. However, if we compare it with the artifacts of Tiselis Seri and the North Caucasus (Novosvobodnaya phase), its age, estimated by radiocarbon method, can be shifted to the second half of the IV millennium BC [Kvitsiani, Jibladze 2015:29].

At this phase we tend towards the opinion, according to which the axe and the dagger blade from Luha are considered to be artifacts that fall within the area of distribution of the Late Maykop culture [Kvitsiani, Jibladze 2015:38-39]. This suspicion is enhanced by the roads running through Svaneti and linking with the North Caucasus region, as well as by particular proximity of Luha axe to the sample from Kostromskaja and close parallels of its predecessor copper axes from Svaneti with the artifacts of the late Maykop culture circle. Moreover, the copper dagger and pin accompanying the Luha axe find closest parallels with the artifacts of Maykop culture. Even the small number of early lop-eared copper axes found in Svaneti by the present (three items) probably point more to the fact that they ended up here from the outside world (Maykop culture).

VI

There are over 15 routes running through the passes that link Zemo Svaneti with the North Caucasus. Among them roads of Klukhori, Chuberi, Nakra, Tviberi, Becho seem to have been the most exploited [Kvitsiani 2000:54, 58]. There is a high probability that from the IV-III millennia BC contacts with North Caucasian region were carried out by means of these roads (Maykop culture – Novosvobodnaya phase). The mountain passes going through Svaneti region could have been one of the shortest ways for establishing contacts with archaeological cultures spread in the North Caucasus, Shida Kartli and Zemo Imereti, as well as between Maykop and Kura-Araxes cultures.

In respect to relations with the North Caucasus, particularly interesting is interrelationship between mountainous Racha (material of early burials of Brili cemetery, ca. the 15th -13th cc BC, pl. VII-1,3-13) and proto-Koban period material of the cemeteries in the Digoria Valley, situated in the mountainous western part of North Ossetia (Faskau, Zemo Rutkha, Dogui Khunta, Donifars, etc.) [Jibladze et al. 2017]. Part of scholars observe strong resemblance between the artifacts between these two regions, especially considering the bronze inventory [Gobejishvili 1952:52-51]. Digoria

culture was separated with the areas of its distribution (south-eastern and western regions of Kabardino-Balkaria, highlands of Racha, Zemo Svaneti – A. Skakov) [Крупнов 1951:17, Крупнов 1960:89-90; Скаков 2004: 188-196]. Some scholars presume that Digoria culture was spread only in the Digoria Valley, which must have been conditioned by natural geographic confinement of this region [Мошинский 2008:262; Мошинский 2009:88]. It gives them the grounds to conclude that in the II millennium BC there were two closely related independent cultures in Digoria and Racha [Мошинский 2009: 90]. Early period graves of Brili and the materials of the cemeteries of the Digoria Valley of proto-Koban period were unified in the common circle of Racha-Digoria culture [Motzenbäcker 1996:17]. Later this term was shared and, to some extent, specified by adding the northern region of Svaneti to it [Pantskhava et al. 2001:44; Jibladze et al. 2017:47]. According to some scholars, the Digoria Valley and the mountainous part of Racha were populated by kindred tribes [Texov 1977:5-6;12; Japaridze 2003:185]. V. Kozenkova considers it more correct to speak about Digoria-Tlia-Racha, as a triangle of metallurgy and metal-working [Козенкова 1996:127]. It has also been suggested that by the end of the Early Bronze and the beginning of the Middle Bronze Age Digoria must have been occupied by the tribes that had migrated from the South Caucasus, first of all, because of copper ores and favorable mountain passes [Motzenbäcker 1996:17]. This opinion was not shared and it was believed that, despite the parallels existing between the materials of these two regions in the mentioned period (metal goods, burial practices, etc.), ceramic complexes must be pointing to the North Caucasian provenance of the population of Digoria in the II millennium BC [Мошинский 2009:88].

As we see, several opinions have been expressed about separating Racha-Digoria culture, or metallurgical center and the areas of its distribution. In our opinion, today it is possible to represent this term more comprehensively by Adaidon cemetery situated on the upper stretch of the River Ardon on the territory of historical Dvaleti (Nar-Mamisoni cave). As it has been mentioned, parallels with the

materials of Zemo Racha at Adaidon cemetery prevail those in Digoria [Мошинский 2009:88]. Apparently, this discovery of proto-Koban epoch, which is identical to the materials of early complexes of Brili cemetery in terms of some components (bronze inventory, types of graves, collective burial practice, etc.), should not be the only case on the territory of Nar-Mamisoni cave. In the future, this area is highly likely to reveal the type of artifacts similar to Brili.

Mountainous part of Racha (Oni District, sources of the Rioni and the middle stretch of the River Chanchakhi) must have had intensive contacts with the regions situated beyond it, which was perfectly expressed in homogeneity of material culture in the Bronze Age. Its routes linking with the North Caucasus (Digori, Dvaleti, Balkaria) are known as mountain passes. There are five passes of this kind known on the Caucasus [Rekhviashvili 1965:8]. This region was connected to Balkaria (the Chereki Gorge) by the passes of Pasi Mount (Geze, Gezivtsek) and Machkhopari (Shavritseki, or Shduli), by Mamisoni (or Chanchakhi) pass - to the Ardoni Gorge – Dvaleti. From Ghebi a road ran along the River Chveshura and going through the pass of Mount Kirtisho (Ghebivtseki) led to the Urukhi Gorge, Digoria. Another road ran from Chiori along the gorge of the River Notsara and descended into the Karagomi Gorge, the tributary of the Urukhi, via the pass of Mount Chiori, or Gurjivetsk (Karagom) [Beradze 1975:143]. A path running along the gorge of the River Notsara went to Dvaleti via Mamisoni Pass (or Chanvkhaki). Dvaleti could also be reached from the Ghara Gorge via Zhghele (Birzond or Aveshidz) Pass [Beradze 1975:143].

Based on the bronze artifacts, three opinions have been expressed about the problem of inter-relationship between Colchian and Koban cultures⁸: 1 – Colchian is regarded as the center of Koban culture (M. Ivashenko, I. Meshchaninov, A. Jessen, A. Kalandadze); 2 – Colchian and Koban are identical cultures (B. Kuftin, I. Voronov, J. Apakidze, L. Pantskhava, N. Sulava, R. Papuashvili); 3 – Colchian and Koban are different, but closely linked cultures (E. Krupnov, O. Japaridze, D. Koridze, B. Tekhov, T. Mikeladze, L. Sakharova, V. Kozenkova) [Панцхава и друг 2003:102-117].⁹

It has been presumed that at the beginning of the I millennium BC Colchian culture invades the Kuban Valley which is clearly evidenced not only in bronze axes, but ceramics as well [Baramidze 1998:40; Baramidze 2006:57-61]. In our opinion, according to some elements there definitely seem to be some similarities between ancient Colchian and Koban cultures (V. Kozenkova points out easter, western and southern varieties in this culture) – fingermark pits, grain-like notches fashioned on a relief band, etc. [Козенкова, 1982: pl. LVI_{4,5,14,25}]. But the ceramic products differ from each other both by shapes and ornamentation [Козенкова, 1982: 72-74; pl. XV; XLVII_{1,2,6}]. This difference reflected in the pottery, type of the graves, burial practices,¹⁰ the majority of bronze inventory and other elements should cast doubt on this presumption provided by M. Baramidze. However, various, almost identical bronze artifacts [Панцхава и друг 2003:102-117], Svan and Zan toponyms documented in the Koban Valley [Ratiani 1995:17-28], as well as other elements, once again put the problem of examining inter-relationship between Colchian and Kuban cultures on the agenda and their conjectural unity according to some components.

Regarding the relationship with the outside world, noteworthy is to look at a hexagonal two-handled bronze 'kelti' found in the 11th -9th cc BC Colchian hoard at Village Tkhmori (Ambrolauri Municipality). It has been associated with an element typical of Cimmerian culture [Gambashidze 1963:35-44]. This artifact must have ended up on the upper stretch of the Rioni from the North Caucasus, but it is

⁸ According to structural-typological analysis of the bronze finds of Colchian-Kuban cultures, both distinctive and identical artifacts have been grouped recently. It is thought that manufacturing of bronze product of both regions relied on a common strong metallurgical center and the received product is referred to as Colchian-Koban [Панцхава и друг 2003:102-117].

⁹ The third opinion is more acceptable to us.

¹⁰ For grave construction and burial practice in Colchian and Kuban cultures see: Gobejishvili 2014.

not regarded as a weapon common to this region. Its provenance is related to the commence of movement of Cimmerian-Scythian waves towards the south [Gambashidze 1963:45].¹¹

Late Bronze-Early Iron Age central Transcaucasian axes expose certain contacts with eastern Georgian region. They are mainly found here as part of hoards (Bezhatubani – 5 items, Zemo Simoneti, Per-evi, Zundagi-the Ajaristskali Gorge, Mekhchi Forttruss) [Koridze 1954:24-25; Koridze 1965:27, 30-31, 34-35, fig. 18, 19, 20, 21, 26, 30; Kakhidze, Mamuladze 2000:75]. Moulds for casting this type of axes are rarely found together with complex materials (Itkhvisi settlement-site – Chilata Hill, cultural layer IV or V of the early I millennium BV) [Gagoshidze et al. 2004:78, fig. 47]. In the highlands of Colchis central Transcaucasian axes have been discovered in three areas (Kvemo Svaneti – 2 items, exact place of discovery is unknown; Kvemo Racha – Village Tbeti, Akhalsopeli; Lechkhum, Tsagera hoard – location Chikhe [Koridze 1954:25; Sakharova 1976:8-10; Чартолани 1989:84-86; Jibladze, Buadze 2016:234] (pl. VIII).¹² Central Transcaucasian axes without projections on the butt are common to the territory of western Georgia. Such details on the butts of axes are hardly encountered here (Tsagera hoard).

Specific discoveries of eastern Transcaucasian axes, area of their distribution, chronological frames, typology and other problems have been examined by several researchers (B. Kuftin, D. Koridze, G. Gobejishvili, A. Martirosyan, S. Esayan, K. Pitskhelauri, G. Avalishvili, etc.); however, it would take long to provide the whole list of the researchers and the opinions expressed by them. Therefore, we are going to discuss only a few of them.¹³

G. Gobejishvili chronologically confines central Transcaucasian axes between the periods of the earliest Colchian-Koban period and the end of the kingdom of Vani [Gobejishvili 1951:269]. D. Koridze 1951:269]. D. Koridze provides typological classification of eastern Transcaucasian axes according to this type of axes discovered in Shida Kartli, points out three groups of its development and puts them in the chronological frame of the 13th – 7th cc BC [Koridze 1954:39-42]. He considers Shida Kartli to be the center of origination of this kind of axes. G. Avalishvili believes that eastern Transcaucasian axes are the main typical weapons of the culture of Kvemo Kartli which reach the 7th c BC [Avalishvili 1974:43,47]. He defines presence of this type of axes by the 14th, 13th -9th, 8th cc BC [Avalishvili 1974:44]. According to K. Pitskhelauri, the axes in question are encountered on almost every stage of the Late Bronze and Iron Age. [Pitskhelauri 1973:166].

Based on the opinions expressed about the discovery of central Transcaucasian axes on the territory of Colchis, B. Kuftin considers it possible that they ended up in the highlands of Colchis (Svaneti, Racha, Lechkhum) by means of expansion of eastern Georgian tribes [Куфтин 1944:331-332].¹⁴ We presume the other opinion should be more acceptable, according to which it is impossible to explain these processes taking place in western Georgia based on three axes and it should more probably be reflecting the process of exchange between the bordering tribes, or sharing of manufacturing experi

¹¹ With respect to the relationship with early Scythian world (end of the 7th c BC – beginning of the 6th c BC) particularly interesting is bimetal iron pole-axes (three items) discovered at some cemeteries on Colchian Plain (Tsaishi, Ergeta II) [Папуашвили, Балахванцев 2016:199-206].

¹² If we add a grooved axe and Rachian hybrid axe whose place of origination is unknown -both are somehow different from central Transcaucasian one, there will be a total of 7 items.

¹³ For more detail see: Pitskhelauri 1973:166-169; Avalishvili 1974:38-49; Maisuradze 1997:64-81]. Here it is notable that, according to D. Koridze's classification, group I comprises the earliest central Transcaucasian axes characterized by big size, projections depicted on the butt; groups II and III include the smallest axes of less weight [Koridze 1954:41, fig. 5, 19; Koridze 1955:169-170]. Classification of the central-Transcaucasian axes are provided by E. Esayan, who separates four varieties [Есаян 1966:11, 147], while L. Martirosyan considers it appropriate to separate three consecutive chronological groups of this type of axes [Мартirosян 1964:101-102]. However, B. Maisuradze united central Transcaucasian axes in three groups and subgroups, according to which they have been revealed in about 146 areas on the territory of eastern Georgia [Maisuradze 1997:64-81].

¹⁴ B. Kuftin presumed creation of the tribal group of Racha by the several samples of this type of axes discovered on the territory of western Georgia [Куфтин 1944:331-332], which K. Pitskhelauri considers implausible [Pitskhelauri 1973:168].

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ence [Koridze 1954:36; Loidze 1955:169]. Distribution of eastern Transcaucasian axes in the highlands of Colchis should generally be presumed at the end of the II millennium BC and the beginning of the I millennium BC. This opinion must be supported by the dates of the hoards coming from the territory of western Georgia which comprise this type of axes, specifically, those of Zemo Simoneti (12th -11th cc BC), Bezhatubani, Tsagera, Zundagi (11th -10th cc BC) and Per-evi (10th -8th cc BC) [Koridze 1965:20, 30, 34; Sakharova 1976:9; Kakhidze, Mamuladze 2000:78]. Eastern Transcaucasian axes could have been distributed in mountainous Colchis relatively later than in populated areas. We share the opinion that eastern Transcaucasian axes were spread in mountainous Colchis from the territory of Shida Kartli – first in Racha, followed by Svaneti and Lechkumi [Куфтин 1944:331-332].

A bronze hand-axe, referred to as central-Transcaucasian axe, has been revealed in Racha [Куфтин 1944:331-332; Koridze 1954:25]. In our opinion, the hand-axe differs from eastern Transcaucasian axes by some details, which is why we have separated them from others. In particular, it is characterized by a comparatively long butt and

body, short cutting edge without pronounced wings. On the territory of western Georgia an analogous sample, or its exact copy, comes from the collection of Village Ghari.¹⁵ However, the bronze artifact from Ghari is relatively smaller (length – 13 cm, oval shaft-hole – 1.5 cm, weight – 267 g), while our sample has a more massive socket, large asymmetric edge and weighs more (14.05 kg) [Jibladze et al. 2018:21-30] (pl. VIII-2).

An interesting opinion has been expressed about the origination and development of Ghari-type axes. According to B. Kuftin, the eastern Transcaucasian type of the axe invades Racha and Lechkumi from Imereti in a narrow line, where it merges with the Colchian axe and forms a certain kind of hybrid which provides a scheme for development [Куфтин 1944:333, fig. 24; Куфтин 1949:pl. XXIX-9]. The

¹⁵ Our interest was sparked by the account provided by B. Kuftin and D. Koridze about an eastern Transcaucasian axe found in Racha [Куфтин 1949:45; Koridze 1954:25]. As it turned out, we were dealing with not the central Transcaucasian axe coming from Tbeti, but a bronze pole-axe from the bronze collection discovered by Glakhuna Chikvaidze in village Ghari in 1896, while digging his vineyard [Куфтин 1944:332, fig. 24-5; [Куфтин 1949; pl. XXIX-6] and the bronze pole-axe discovered in Racha in 1910 and described by us in the text [Koridze 1954:25]. The items from Ghari were submitted to the Museum of the Caucasus Kipiani, chief of Racha District. The collection (approx. 38 units) was first described by P. Uvarova, then published by B. Kuftin, who considered it part of grave goods. [Куфтин 1944:44-48, pl. XXIX-XXXI]. The renowned scholar regarded the axe from Ghari as derived by means of merging of Colchian and eastern Georgian axes, a developed type of the eastern Georgian axe [Koridze 1954:25]. Presently, the collection is kept in the main depository of the Georgian National Museum (N983-1022).

chronological table of development of the Ghari-type axe suggested by Kuftin has not been shared [Koridze 1955:169-170].¹⁶ Probably the second discovery of the Ghari-type axe in Racha supports B. Kuftin's assumption, but it cannot be fully accepted. In this case it should be taken into consideration that several items similar to those of Racha-type have been uncovered in Kvemo Kartli (Marneuli and Dmanisi districts, also in Village Gora, location Armutlukhi) [Koridze 1981:106-107, fig. pl. I; Pitskhelauri Konstantine; Pitskhelauri Kote 2001:161, fig. 32]. This item is also encountered in grave complexes of the 14th -13th cc BC and the 12th -11th cc BC on the territory of Armenia (SHiraki culture, first group of Artiki sites, complexes 3, 107, 109, 124 and 433) [Хачатриятн 1975:179,204, fig. 88, fig. 117]. As we see, Ghari-type pole-axes are thought to have covered a large territory in an earlier period. This fact casts doubt on Kuftin's opinion about formation of the hybrid-type axe on the territory of Racha. In our opinion, in this case it seems more logical to presume distribution of this type of axes across mountainous Colchis alongside with the eastern Transcaucasian axe and to seek the center of its origination in the zone where eastern Transcaucasian axes were formed.

In respect with relations between archaeological cultures, interesting are some bronze artifacts kept in Kutaisi State Historical-Ethnographical Museum. One of them is a flat axe about which only short information has been published [Gambashidze et al. 2010:382, 537, pl. XXVII-464] (pl. III-3).¹⁷ Dimensions: length – 14 cm, width at the cutting edge – 5 cm, at the head – 3.0 cm, thickness – 0.9cm. The artifact is slightly damaged in the central part of the right side. It has a slightly bent body which narrows towards the hammered circular sharp edge. It slightly shows the tendency of separating the sharp edge from the body. The surface of the axe is coarse and covered with patina. A flat axe has been discovered near Sataplia Cave in 1970, while tilling the earth. It is cast. Flat axes common to the territory of Georgia, whose typological analysis is provided by S. Chartolani, emerge from the Early Bronze Age [Chartolani 1973:116-124; Chartolani 1996:52-54, fig. 3].

Colchian Early and Middle Bronze Age flat axes have largely been discovered without complexes in Zemo Svaneti (four items - the Lasila Gorge, Latali, Nanari), Megrelia (v. Makharia-Jvari), Abkhazia and Sachkhere [Chartolani 1996:52-54, fig. 3,1-7]. They have rarely been revealed during archaeological excavations with complex goods (cultural layer VII of Pichori central hill) [Jibladze 2007:67, pl. CII-3]. By typological features, the flat axe of Kutaisi somehow differs from this kind of weapons known on the territory of western Georgia in the Early and Middle Bronze Age. The latter are characterized by a narrow body, tapering head, sometimes the tendency of marking the cutting edge out from the body (Pichori, Latali, Nanari), etc. In our opinion, typologically the flat axe from Kutaisi resembles the flat axes common to the kurgan culture of eastern Georgian territory (kurgans 1,2 of Kvemo Sarali, Nadarbasevi; 5,10 of Bedena and 4,5 of Martkopi) [Japaridze 1998:40, 47, fig. 14-80, 81, 79; fig. 28-163; Gambashidze et al. 2010:175, pl. 013]. Resemblance with early kurgan flat axes is to some extent observed in the shape of the body. Difference between them is expressed in rather bent body and dimensions [Jibladze, Buadze 2016:231].

As mentioned above, beside the elements typical of Sachkhere production center, part of the axes regarded as Sachkhere type axes (a socket-eared axe of Kharagauli, lop-eared, socket-eared axes of Ilemi-Bori, Sazano, Sviri) are characterized by a relatively wide, equal-sized body with a wedge-like end, recessed front side of the butt. By these typological-morphological features they differ from socket-eared and lop-eared axes typical of this production center, as well as from this type of samples

¹⁶ Erekle Koridze considers the axe discovered in Village Gora to the hybrid of an axe-sledge and a colchian axe [Koridze E. 1981:106]. Notably, by some features a Ghari-type axe is reminiscent of bronze axes of Ude hoard (Adigeni District) [Koridze 1965:22, fig. 11-3,4].

¹⁷ Remarkably, classification of the Late Bronze – Early Iron Age common on the territory of Georgia was elaborated by B. Kuftin and D. Koridze. B. Kuftin points out three types among these axes, but D. Koridze – three types and two subtypes [Куфтин 1944: 30, fig. 23-a; Koridze 1969; pl. I, II, III, IV].

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from Svaneti, where several Sachkhere type axes have been revealed. There is an impression that, according to some details, these axes (this is truer about the lop-eared axe from Kharagauli) tend more towards the analogous artifacts of Bedena culture common to the territory of eastern Georgia (Martkopi 4 kurgan, etc.). While discussing these problems it should also be taken into consideration that the axe from Kinoti (Zestafoni District) also exhibits particular resemblance to this type of a weapon revealed in Bredza, Shida Kartli (Khashuri Municipality) [Gambashidze et al. 2010:558, pl. XVIII-811]. There emerges an opinion that in Early Bronze Age impulses of Bedena culture were spread in this part of eastern Colchis [Jibladze 2015:76-97]. In addition, if we consider radiation of Bedena culture on Zemo Imereti plateau and, in general, alternation of archaeological cultures existing here, this opinion can be quite convincing.

Part of the pottery of proto-Colchian culture also reflects contacts with ceramic products of Bedena culture, especially with its variety of Shida Kartli (Berikldeebi, Tsikhiagora, Natsaragora, etc.). With this culture certain resemblance is exposed in wide-stemmed, band-like, grooved, double-barreled, bird's breast-like handles attached to the rim [Jalabadze 1998: pl.

I-16-18; IV5 – 7; VI-1-19], as well as in double-barreled, bird's breast-like handles with a vertical projection at the place the handle joins the rim. Resemblance can also be observed in using a lattice décor of irregular lines created through levelling the surface of the vessels with a splinter-like object, pyramidal ornament, small-size two-handled tumblers, etc. [Gogadze 1997:33-58; Jalabadze 1998: pl. IV-4,6,12; V-2; Makharadze 1994: pl. IV-167, V-707, 708, XVIII-1937, 193, 1968, 1969, XX-2291]. Interestingly, in the Early Bronze period cultures of Bedena and Colchian Plain, establishment of a number of elements typical of the above-mentioned ceramic material occurs almost at the same time. It cannot be surprising because Shida Kartli is the closest region bordering Colchis. Close contacts between eastern and western archaeological cultures in this region can be observed over the whole Bronze Age.

One group of ceramics from Colchis in the Early and Middle Bronze Age is decorated with finger-mark-notched pits made on a relief band. It can be claimed that this kind of ornament is a determinative image of proto-Colchian ceramic items. Pottery ornamented with analogous décor emerges on the territory of eastern Georgia on the later stage of Kura-Araxes culture and in Bedena culture [Дедабришвили 1979:50, fig. 10-11; Orjonikidze 1992:pl.I-17,II-3; Makharadze 1994:57; Джибладзе, Горочури 2003].

In the North Caucasus this kind of ornament appears from the end of the III millennium BC including the Late Bronze Age. This décor has the earliest roots in Daghestan [Котович 1965:158-160,178,184-186]. This ornament is presumed to have been spread from the North Caucasus as a result of migrations and cultural-economic relations [Gogadze 1972:91]. Introduction of relief-notched ornament in Shida Kartli on the later stage of Kura-Araxes culture is explained by two reasons: it could be penetration of north-eastern version of Kura-Araxes culture, which is considered less likely, or it could be a common phenomenon of the final stage of Kura-Araxes culture not only in north-east Caucasus, but in Transcaucasia as well [Makharadze 1994:59]. It is believed that this kind of decoration is spread across regions that have close cultural and historical relations [Мунчаев 1961P:96-117]. It is probable that

in Caucasia fingermark-notched pits made on relief bands have a common source of origination from Anatolia or the Balkan Peninsula.

Could Zestafoni and Kharagauli regions have been the contact zone for Colchian culture of Early Bronze Age and Bedena culture common to the territory of Shida Kartli [Jibladze 2015:83]?¹⁸ This suspicion is even enhanced by the fact that in Late-Bronze-Early Iron Age too the mentioned territories, including the basin of the upper stretch of the River Kvirila (Sachkhere District) probably was the contact zone for eastern and Colchian Late Bronze-Early Iron Age cultures. This opinion must be supported by central Transcaucasian axes and a fragment of eastern Georgian Kedabek-type dagger discovered in the hoards of Perevi, Bezhatubani and Zemo Simpneti [Koridze 1965:24, 34].

It is noteworthy that the mountain zone of Zemo Ajara is the region of south-western Georgia which immediately adjoined the southern region of eastern Georgia – the territory of historical Meskheti-Javakheti – on the east [Inaishvili 1975:33]. It is presumable that in various epochs of Bronze Age the shortest roads linking Meskheti-Javakheti ran through the mountainous Adjara. In our opinion, these roads must help us to see contacts with Kura-Araxes and Bedena cultures given lop-eared axes of Ghorjomi (Naomari Gora), Vernebi and a wooden model of a lop-eared axe of Ispani. The passes arranged in Zemo Adjara – on the one hand, Goderdzi Pass, situated at the source of the Ajaristskali – and, on the other hand, the roads running at the sources of the River Skhalta – must have been one of the main routes for distribution of Colchian culture across the territory of eastern Georgia, which is clearly expressed in metal inventory (Ude hoard, the Gujareti Gorge, etc.) [Inaishvili 1975:33]. Elements of Colchian culture can be observed in Meskheti-Javakheti from the 16th -15th cc BC, which become stronger in the 10th -7th cc BC (Tsunda, Moliti, Mzetamze) [Jibladze 2016-a:19].

The part of the territory of Shida Kartli which immediately borders western Georgia experienced strong Late Bronze-Early Iron Age Colchian influences which is mainly reflected in distribution of bronze products (Colchian bronze axes, segments, hoes, etc.) [Ramishvili 2003:41-48]. According to ceramic material, these relationships are noticeable, but they have never become subject of special study. This region probably entered the zone of radiation of the Late Bronze Age Colchian culture (Khovle, Natsar-gora, Mchadijvari, etc.).

Regarding the contacts with Near East, especially remarkable is Makhvilauri (Khelvachauri Municipality)¹⁹ hill-settlement. It yielded fragments of a large jar-like proto-Hattian vessel covered with purple red slip which is completely strange to the Early Bronze Age culture of Colchis Plain. It is thought that the environs of this interesting site could hold information connected to Hattian ethnos. There are ceramic vessels with horizontal handles, rows of wavy and notched ornaments on the side, pits, grooved ornament, relief knobs, wedgelike horizontal rows, broad flutes, false flat handles, etc. found here [Kakhidze et al. 2016:45-49; Kakhidze, Surmanidze 2019:44-55, pl. I-III] (pl. IX).

¹⁸ In the Early Bronze Age, the upper stretch of the River Kvirila (Zemo Imereti Plateau) is completely encompassed within the circle of Kura-Araxes culture and according to the metal inventory (Sachkhere kurgan cemetery) is one of the most advance centers in Caucasia [Japaridze 1976:141; Pkhakadze 1993:74-75; Makharadze, Berikashvili 2004:29]. Sites of this culture on the upper stretch of the River Kvirila sometimes expose rather thin cultural layers [Pkhakadze 1992:258-266-268; Gagoshidze et al. 2004:73-113; Berikashvili 2003:15-23]. Here some open-type settlements (Jieti, layer VI, Modinakhe, Itkhvisi-Chilata hill layer VI) reveal Bedena culture on the final stage of Kura-Araxes culture. In the following period an early group of Middle Bronze Age graves of Modinakhe cemetery show close contacts with proto-Colchian materials of Colchis Plain [Lomtadze 2000:9]. A later group of graves of Middle Bronze Age of this cemetery is placed in the culture circle which stands close to Middle Bronze Age sites of Shida Kartli (Nuli, Kvasatali, Naghvli, etc.). It is presumed that at the end of Early Bronze Age Kura-Araxes culture on Zemo Imereti Plateau is replaced by the culture common in the lowlands of western Georgia [Pkhakadze 1978:11]. This process is more striking in the Kvirila Gorge on the starting stage of Middle Bronze Age [Japaridze 1961:189; Makharadze, Berikashvili 2004:29]. However, in Late Bronze – Early Iron Age the Kvirila basin is completely encompassed within the area of distribution of ancient Colchian culture.

¹⁹ Makhvilauri settlement mound is a multi-layer site. It yielded Neolithic, Early Bronze, Late Bronze-Early Iron, Classical and early medieval cultural layers [Kakhidze, Surmanidze 2018:174]. It also revealed an Early Iron Age collective grave connected to the ritual of secondary burial typical of Colchian culture [Kakhidze, Surmanidze 2018:172].

IX

It is believed that from the end of the III millennium BC trade, economic and cultural contacts are established between the local population of the southern part of the Lesser Caucasus (it implies Ajara Region) and Anatolia, which was possible via the main waterway of the River Chorokhi. Use of Kizil-Irmak and the Pontus Sea route is also considered admissible, as well as land routes [Kakhidze, Surmanidze 2019:49]. From the Bronze Age the territory in question must have been involved in the united system of near Eastern and Caucasian contacts. It is thought that the ceramic material obtained at Makhvilauri hill-settlement is the earliest import in Transcaucasia, which is connected to both Anatolia and Near Eastern countries and Aegean civilization [Kakhidze, Surmanidze 2018:174].

Several artifacts of proto- and ancient Colchian cultures – those with horizontal handles, tripod, communicative vessels, multi-handled ones, vessels with matting impression on the bottom, black polished fruit vases – reveal close contacts with Near East, Asia Minor and the Aegean. In earlier period B. Kuftin directed his attention to resemblance between a certain group of earthenware of Colchis Plain with production of the Terramares (the plain of the River

Po), Sardinia and the Danube basin [Куфтин 1950: 237, 240, fig. 63].²⁰ Particularly striking is resemblance with an Italian vessel dated to 2000-1250. What brings them closer is the ornament and the handles of similar shape [Микеладзе 1994: 70]. Comb-like, parquet-like ornament, bird breast-like, projecting handles reflect remote resemblance with the materials of the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe.

²⁰ It is thought that ancient Colchian ceramic products of stage I (18th -12th cc BC) stands very close to the pottery of the Aegean, the Danube basin and the Terramares. Resemblance between Colchian and Terramares culture should be particularly emphasized in terms of ceramic vessels, handles and some ornamental motifs [Apakidze 2003:50]. Close parallels with the mentioned regions are observed in some bronze products too [Apakidze 2003:49]. It should be mentioned that earlier discoveries of several bronze items of Colchian culture are known from the territory of historical Georgia that is part of Turkey today. These discoveries include Colchian bronze axes, a bill-hook, a shouldered flat axe, etc. from the hoards of Artvin, Ordu and Mekhch fortresses [Koridze 1965:20-21, 37]; a Colchian bronze axe discovered in Village Berta of Batumi District (presently the territory of Turkey) in 1914 [Lomtadze 2001:9]. Also Colchian bronze axe preserved in regional museums of north-eastern Turkey (Giresun, Rize, Trabzon) [Kiliji 2019:89].

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Definition of abbreviations

AJ – Archaeological Journal
 BGAS – Bulletin of Georgian Academy of Science
 BGSM – Bulletin of the Georgian State Museum
 EGSMA – Essays of the Georgian State Museum of Arts
 IGA – Issues of Georgian Archaeology
 MAGT – Materials for Archaeology of Georgia and Transcaucasia
 CA-Советская археология
 МИА -Материалы и исследования по археологии СССР.

Description of plates

Pl. I, II – Shapes of black polished ceramic vessels from cultural layers VIII-V of the central Pichori hill
 Pl. III-1,2 – lop-eared, wide-bladed bronze axe and a dagger blade without a shaft from Kvemo Luha (according to Z. Kvitsiani and L. Jibladze); 3 – Flat bronze axe from Kutaisi State Historical-Ethnographical Museum
 Pl. IV – lop-eared broad-bladed copper axes from Zemo Svaneti (1,2,3) from the territory of present Abkhazia (4,5) and eastern Georgia (6-9)
 Pl. V – Lop-eared broad-bladed copper-bronze axes from Maykop culture (Novosvobodnaya stage – according to the work by Z. Kvitsiani and L. Jibladze)

Pl. VI – Dagger blades without and half shaft from Zemo Svaneti (1), Maykop (2-13) and Kura-Araxes cultures (14-17 – according to the work by Z. Kvitsiani and L. Jibladze)

Pl. VII – Bronze artifacts of the starting stage of the second half of the II millennium BC discovered at Brili cemetery (grave N12 – 1, 3-13) and in Zemo Svaneti (according to L. Pantskhava, B. Maisuradze and G. Gobejishvili)

Pl. VIII – Central Transcaucasian bronze axes from the territory of Ambrolauri Municipality preserved in the main depository of archaeological collections of the National Museum

Pl. IX – Proto-Hattian pottery from Makhvilauri settlement mound (Khelvachauri Municipality, according to Amiran Kakhidze and Nargiza Surmanidze).