

## Dissemination of the Clay Jar (*Kvevri*) Types in Pontic Area

Amiran Kakhidze\* and Shota Mamuladze\*\*

\*Batumi Archaeological Museum, Batumi, Georgia

\*\*Gonio-Apsarus Archaeological and Architectural Museum and Sanctuary

(Presented by Academy Member Guram Lordkipanidze)

**ABSTRACT.** Field present research is being carried out in the southern Black Sea littoral, namely on the territory of central Chaneti. It is known that this region is still poorly studied. According to rich data of the Georgian Black Sea littoral, it became possible to conduct parallel study on a number of similar problematic issues of the southern Black Sea littoral (Republic of Turkey). This time we will focus reader's attention to the issue of spreading of one type of agricultural ceramics – kvevri (earthenware egg-shaped wine vessel) – in southern and eastern Pontus littoral. It is the age of strong Lazica and Byzantine Empire, namely, the early medieval period, when the gradual development of Roman pitchers, beginning from Sinope including the Batumi vicinities, led to the highly exquisite new shape wine vessels of big capacity. Earlier discoveries and recent data verify that the contacts of deep historical relations (Classical, Hellenistic) between southern and eastern Pontus littoral still continue in the late Antique and early medieval periods as well. It is obvious that these parts of Oeckumene actively participate in the world historical processes. © 2018 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

**Key words:** Pontus, Trapezus, Lazica, *Kvevri*

The research has been conducted in past few years on the territory of the south-western Georgia, namely, on the territory of Ajara and the southern Black Sea coast, Republic of Turkey. Compared to the south-eastern part of Georgia, Black Sea coast of north-east part of Turkey is significantly less studied. This especially refers to the eastern part of the region [1-3].

Recent studies on the territory of Ajara conducted similar researches of the related monuments in Turkey. Among many other artifacts, clay jars (*Kvevris*) dated to the late

Antiquity and early Byzantine periods are presented.

During the field works conducted in Shuamta district of village of Chakvis Chaisubani wine cellar with five clay jars (*Kvevris*) was discovered in 2012 and 2017 (Fig. 1). They have massive, triangle shaped profile edging. Width of upper body is 7 cm. Main neck of the jar does not significantly separate wide upper body. Scratches at one point are also observed. Main shell is a column (tower) shaped, lower half is half spherically rounded, and bottom is the disc/round shaped, sharply separated. The neck at the beginning is rounded by



Fig. 1. Chakvic Caisubani early discovered Kevri



Fig. 2. Kevri from Sinope saved in Hagia Sophia

horizontally finned oval indentation, connected by oversized notches of horizontal embossed strip. The rest of the neck and the upper narrow section of the shell is covered by horizontal stripes with sharp beams (2 cm). Different types are observed. Larger sized clay jars are the rectangle shaped and reasonably high. The bottom is the disc/round shaped. On its outer edge, on one side, the sharp ribbed dent connected with horizontal stripes. According to the pieces, observed the following line, not sequentially connected with each other. On the horizontal scales, the separation of three, two or one notches are also observed. Diameter of the shell body is 1,5 meters. Similar clay jar (*Kevri*) pieces also were collected around of the fort of Arhavi, northeastern Turkey in 2012. They seem to be similar in shape as well as in ornaments [4]. The analogue clay jar found in Hagia Sophia, Trabzon as well (Fig. 2). According to the information received, it is confirmed that the clay jar was discovered in one of the most important trade center of region, Sinope. It is 1.67 meters in height. The triangle of the outer layer of the edge is cross-sectioned. On the bottom, oversized notches of horizontal embossed strip are aligned and the area of upper neck and lower shoulder area is tightly covered by horizontal canals. The base is

cylindrical, tall. Both clay jars plate is homogeneous. There is no doubt that Chaisubani and Sinope wine vessels are made in one manufacturing center. It is possible that the manufacturing city itself was Sinope [4].

According to the shape, size and ornaments, similar *Kevri* was found during the excavations carried out in Todogauri courtyard in 2017. The *Kevri* itself was installed in solid, reddish colored floppy rocks. The pit was around 3 m deep. The *Kevri* creates completely new type of the jar. It has higher, massive body. Like Roman clay jars, the body is a spherical shaped. Lower shoulders and neck, rectangle cross-sectioned. Symmetrically aligned embossed rings with 3-4 cm distance ornament the upper half of the body. It is interesting that a couple of sharply separated (20 cm) pedestals fall into the lower half of the body.

New types of ornaments are represented as well. Two incomplete lines of sharply expressed circles are represented close to the neck. One is placed near the neck itself, the second one in the shoulder area. It is significantly important to note those three triangular shaped structures broken downwards in the row. There is an impression that this is the graphic representation of the grape bunches, which is a novelty for our reality. Yellow colored clay

plate, fine granular; perfectly burnt; with the dimensions of: height of the bottom is 4 cm, diameter 11 cm; body diameter 1.21 m; height 1.45 m; diameter of the edge 35 cm. It belongs to the number of high artistic artefacts.



Fig. 3. Kvevri from Trabzon Muzeum

Special attention is paid to the three clay jars that are preserved in Trabzon Archaeological Museum (Fig.3). They look more older, dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. One of them is relatively small. According to the shape, it is similar to the ones, found in Chaisubani. However, there is no horizontal canal on it. It is ornamented by only two rows of notches. The first row of larger notches is followed along the neck; the second one is visible in the shell area.

Following clay jars are reasonably larger. It has a rectangle shaped cross-sectioned edge, lower neck, spherical body and higher cylinder-shaped bottom. One of them, compared to the first clay jar, has a smaller sized, continues line of horizontal notches; third one has two lines of notches. Notches in the neck area are continuous; second line has five notches with symmetrical spaces. Unlike those two clay jars, both above-mentioned clay jars have canal ornaments, which are tightly aligned. They were discovered in Of, close to Trabzon [4].

Similar clay jars seem to be spread in the coast and mountainous areas of Ajara. The clay jar, discovered during the excavations in the village of Makho, Khelvachauri Municipality in 2010 has high neck, rectangular cross-shaped, body-drawn, bottom cylindrical. The beginning is followed by a horizontal row of larger notches. Followed by not too wide canal belt. It is interesting that the three rows of horizontal rings, like the Todogouri clay jar, is also encircled in the lower half of the body [5]. The clay jar, accidentally discovered at the village of Chelta, Khelvachauri Municipality was transferred to Batumi Archaeological Museum also could be of same period. It seems that this type of imported clay jars is widespread in Ajara. This shape of wine vessel continues to exist in the early middle Ages by the slightest changes in shape and even more enhanced ornamental characters. This is well illustrated by the example of village of Kapnistavi, Khelvachauri Municipality. One part is dated to early middle Ages [5]. They are similar to the clay jars (*Kvevris*) extracted in Chaisubani in 2012 and 2017, which is dated to late Romanian and early Byzantine times. The existence of similar clay jars was previously unknown in Georgia. Clay jars accidentally found at the village of Sarpi, Khelvachauri Municipality in 2013 were of the same type of jars as the ones found in Chakvis Chaisubani. However, due its long utilization, like Kapnistavi, their shell was covered in lime [5].

Besides the coastal and hilly areas, the clay jars of this type were also common in the mountainous region of Ajara. Important artifacts were discovered during the archaeological excavations in the fortress of Khikhani, Khulo Municipality. During fieldworks in 2014, the first cellar was identified, which held reasonably well protected 28 clay jars. Another cellar with 43 clay jars was discovered in 2015. Those are dated to the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries AD [6].

One part of the clay jars belong to the 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. One of them is almost entirely preserved. The bottom of the shell has the horizontal belt of notches, the ends of which are not perfectly

connected. Eight pair of circled lines are shown on the lower part. Clay plate is typical, like all the above-mentioned patterns. There are separate pieces of the drawings with circles on them [6]. It is obvious that, like Sarpi and Kapnistavi, the perfectly burned and large-capacity clay jars were the subject of long-term use. According to other Georgian monuments, including Adjaristskali valley, it is easily to assess that in order to create wine reserve, grapes to the mountainous parts were delivered from the lower valleys.

In the settlement of Tamara, close to Batumi fort (Batumistsikhe), during the construction works, completely preserved clay jar was discovered in 2017, which was partially destroyed by the workers. Remaining part was studied with appropriate methodology. According to the studies, the clay jar belongs to the first type of jars found in Chaisubani. The only difference is visible in clay plate, which is burnt in brownish-red color. The fine pieces of

limestone and pyroxene are mixed. There is an impression that, like the southern Black Sea industrial centers, the inhabitants of Lazica, ancient western Georgia have been able to produce similar wine vessels with pretty proportions and ornaments. According to early findings and the latest data, it is confirmed that the deep historical connections of the eastern and southern Black Sea residents that started back in Classical and Hellenistic periods are still in action in late Antique and early Middle Ages. This is the period of glory of Lazica and Byzantine Empire when the region of Pontus actively participates in historical processes of the world.

This work was supported by Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation (SRNSF) [grant no: 217910. Georgian Cultural Heritage Monuments Protected in the Central Part of Historical Chaneti (Fortifications, Churches, Communication and Domestic Architecture)].

არქეოლოგია

## ქვევრების ერთი სახეობის გავრცელების საკითხისათვის პონტოსპირეთში

ა. კახიძე\* და შ. მამულაძე\*\*

\*ბათუმის არქეოლოგიური მუზეუმი, ბათუმი, საქართველო

\*\*გონიო-ავსაროსის არქეოლოგიურ-არქიტექტურული მუზეუმ-ნაკრძალი

(წარმოდგენილია აკადემიის წევრის გ. ლორთქიფანიძის მიერ)

საინტერესო საველე კვლევა–ძიებანი ხორციელდება სამხრეთ შავიზღვისპირეთში, კერძოდ, ცენტრალური ჭანეთის ტერიტორიაზე. საქართველოს ზღვისპირეთის უკვე მდიდარი მონაცემების მიხედვით შესაძლებელი ხდება პარალელური კვლევა ვაწარმოოთ სამხრეთ შავიზღვისპირეთში (თურქეთის რესპუბლიკა). ამჯერად მკითხველის ყურადღებას შევაჩერებთ სამეურნეო კერამიკის ერთ–ერთი სახეობის – ქვევრების გავრცელების საკითხზე სამხრეთ და აღმოსავლეთ პონტოსპირეთში. ეს არის ლაზიკისა და ბიზანტიის იმპერიის ძლიერების ხანა, კერძოდ, ადრე შუასაუკუნეები, როცა რომაული ქვევრების თანდათანობითი განვითარების შედეგად, სინოპიდან დაწყებული ბათუმის მიდამოების ჩათვლით, ყალიბდება მეტად მოხდენილი ფორმის, მაღალი გემოვნებით შემკული და დიდი ტევადობის ახალი ფორმის საღვინე ჭურჭელი.

## REFERENCES

1. Bryer A., Winfield D. (1985) The Byzantine Monuments and Topography of Pontus, 2 vols. Washington.
2. Mamuladze S., Kakhidze E. (2014) Cultural Heritage Monuments Protected in the Eastern Part of Historical Chaneti. Batumi (in Georgian).
3. Sinclair T.A. (1987-1990) Eastern Turkey: an Architectural and Architectural Survey, 4 vols. London.
4. Kakhidze A., Surmanidze N. (2013) Results of Archeological Intelligence of hill settlement of Chakvis Chaisubanis „Shuamta”. *Ajara: Past and Present*.1: 222–264 (in Georgian).
5. Kakhidze A., Shalikadze T., Nagervadze M. (2017) New archaeological discoveries in village of Kapnistavi. *Ajara: Past and Present*. 3: 25–34 (In Georgian).
6. Mindorashvili D. (2017) Archaeological Excavations of Khikhani Fortress in 2014-2015. *Ajara: Past and Present*. 3: 323-379 (In Georgian).

*Received February, 2018*