

The Situation and Relations of the Geographies of Today's Türkiye and Today's Georgia in the Ancient Period

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(Presented by Academy Member Liana Melikishvili)

Abstract. The relations and interactions between the lands of modern-day Türkiye and Georgia have continued almost uninterruptedly since the prehistoric period, and sometimes it is seen that they are governed by the same political power, or ruler. On March 11, 2015, artifacts from an ancient necropolis were discovered during the construction of the Sinop Cultural Center, and a rescue excavation was subsequently conducted. Amphora-covered graves are a rarely seen grave type and in this unearthed necropolis, Colchian amphorae (originating from the territory of present-day Georgia) were placed on top of the graves. By virtue of the scientific research permit issued to Babür Mehmet Akarsu by the Sinop Archaeological Museum technical drawings, measurements, photographs and then decoupage of the six Colchian amphorae registered in the museum's inventory and housed in its warehouses were conducted. This study focuses on only two of the mentioned Colchian amphorae. © 2026 *Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.*

Keywords: Colchian amphorae, Georgia, Colchis, Türkiye

Introduction

Archaeological data show that settlement has continued within the borders of Sinop since the Neolithic Age and in the city center of Sinop, that is, in the ancient natural harbor area, since the Chalcolithic Age (Akarsu, 2021, p. 46). The seashore is located about 50 meters in front of the Sinop Cultural Center, where archaeological rescue excavations were carried out and amphorae of Colchis origin (today's Georgia) were found. The ancient necropolis unearthed during the Cultural Center excavation

faces north/northeast, i. e. towards Georgia. The necropolis is in the direction of the northern port of Sinop, which is a peninsula and natural harbor. The location of the ancient necropolis is right at the end of the ancient city walls. It is a little further from Kumkapı, which is the entrance gate to the city from the north, from the coast.

Similar to amphora production in the city of Sinop, amphora production in Colchis began in the mid-4th century BC and continued until the 6th-7th centuries AD. A significant portion of Colchian amphorae in Türkiye has been uncovered from

excavations in the modern cities of Sinop and Trabzon (Kassab Tezgör, 2020: 50). Although its borders varied in the ancient period, amphora production in Colchis, which seems to have encompassed a wide geography from the Abkhazia region within today's Georgia to the today's city of Trabzon, and lasted for approximately ten centuries, and one of the settlements mentioned in hypotheses regarding the production centers of Colchian amphorae is Trapezous (Trabzon) (Kassab Tezgör, 2020, pp. 15, 50, 51).

This study aims to reveal the historical relations between the geographies of today's Türkiye and today's Georgia from the Chalcolithic Age to the 6th century AD, with the support of new data, and to increase positive bilateral relations between these two countries. This work was presented orally in-person at the 4th International Kartvelological Congress organized by the National Academy of Sciences of Georgia in Tbilisi. The drawings, photographs and measurements of the amphorae are published for the first time in this study. The official excavation reports of the Sinop Archaeological Museum were used as the source of information about the ancient necropolis of Sinop and its findings that were unearthed during the Cultural Center Excavation introduced in this study.

A scientific study permit was granted to examine six amphorae included in the inventory of the Sinop Archaeological Museum, which were unearthed during the Cultural Center Excavation and dated to the 6th century AD, and originated from Colchis (today's Georgia and its surroundings) and their inventory numbers are as follows: 8.1.2016, 8.2.2016, 8.3.2016, 8.4.2016, 8.5.2016, 8.6.2016. This study examines the first two amphorae with inventory numbers 8.1.2016 and 8.2.2016 included by following the inventory sequence number. The remaining amphorae are not discussed because of the page limitation imposed by the Bulletin of the Georgian National Academy of Sciences.

Discussion

The historical connections between the countries of Türkiye and Georgia within their current borders have been ongoing since the prehistoric period. For example, the Kura-Araxes (Karaz) Culture, which emerged during the Late Chalcolithic Age and is characterized by numerous Early Bronze Age ceramic finds extended across Transcaucasia, encompassing territories within both modern Türkiye and Georgia (Yalçın, 2020, pp. 169, 170). Although the core of the Urartian civilization centered on the Lake Van basin during the Early Iron Age, archaeological research carried out in today's Eastern Georgia shows that both the pottery and cultic traditions of this region were influenced by the Urartian civilization (Ozan, 2006, p. 42; Pınarcık, 2014, pp. 35, 36, 48).

The capital of the Kingdom of Pontos, one of the kingdoms of the Hellenistic period, was the city of Sinop in present-day Türkiye, and it had borders that included many regions of Georgia and the Crimean Peninsula in the northern Black Sea (Akarsu & Tarakçı, 2019, p. 1033; Arslan, 2007, p. 91). Present-day Sinop is situated on a peninsula with natural harbour geographical features and it's one of the cities of Türkiye's Black Sea coastline; located on the ruins of Sinope (the city of Sinop was called Sinope in ancient times), which was the magnificent main colonial port city of the ancient period (Akarsu, 2017, p. 39). Although according to ancient sources, the city of Sinop, which is stated to have been founded during the Greek colonization in the 8th century BC, archaeological excavations carried out in the city revealed that the oldest finds related to Greek Colonization dated to the 7th century BC (Akarsu & İmamoğlu, 2021, p. 325). However, in the city center, i.e., in the natural harbor, findings dating back to the Chalcolithic Age were also unearthed (Akarsu, 2021, p. 46). The city of Trapezous (present-day Trabzon) was founded as a colony of the colony city of Sinop during the Greek colonization period (Akarsu, 2017, p. 39).

According to Apollonios Rhodios the name of the city of Sinop (called Sinope in ancient times), which has various stories about its origin, is related to Sinope, one of the daughters of the river-god Asopus (Akarsu, 2016, p. 44). Some other ancient writers, attribute the name to Queen Sinope, a daughter of the Amazon Queen Marpesia (Akarsu, 2016, p. 44). The Amazon Queen Marpesia, who organized many military expeditions, founded a city in the Caucasus Mountains known as the Rock of Marpesia or the Marpesian Cliff, and after she was killed by a group of barbarians, her daughter Sinope took over as the leader of the Amazons (Akarsu, 2016, P. 44).

King Mithradates VI Eupator of Pontus Kingdom took control of the ancient Colchis region in today's Georgia, along with the port settlement of Phasis (present-day Poti) in this region and most of the Black Sea basin (Arslan, 2007, p. 91). In the Black Sea region, in addition to the construction of houses and items to furnish the interior of houses from various types of trees, shipbuilding was also carried out. The Phasis commercial settlement, located west of Colchis within the borders of today's Georgia, was a famous shipbuilding center in the ancient period. Founded as a Greek colony in the 7th-6th centuries BC, this city was advanced in the shipbuilding industry, as it had suitable trees, hemp, flax, pitch, beeswax and other similar materials used in shipbuilding, and trees cut from the mountains could be transported to the city via the surrounding rivers. Phasis, the city that founded as a Greek colony, known today as Poti; is still one of the largest ports in Georgia and is involved in the Black Sea trade (Baz, 2010, pp. 32, 33; Işık, 2001, pp. 13, 14). However, Colchis was already a densely populated region with advanced metallurgy before the cities founded by the Greek colonization movement (Connor et al., 2007, p. 25). In ancient times, Colchis had intense and multidimensional trade relations with both the Black Sea, the Mediterranean and the Aegean, and examples of these trade elements are the slave trade, wine and high-quality fabrics (Braund&Tsetskhladze, 1989, pp. 114, 115, 122).

Colchian Amphorae from the Necropolis of Sinop

The relations between the geographies of today's Türkiye and Georgia continued in the following periods. For example, in the city of Sinop in today's Türkiye, a section of the city's western necropolis was unearthed during the foundation excavations of the Cultural Center on Fatih Street in Gelincik neighborhood, carried out between 2015 and 2017. In this necropolis, where a rescue excavation was carried out, amphorae originating from Colchis (today's Georgia and its surroundings) dating back to the 6th century AD were unearthed. Colchian amphorae were placed symmetrically alongside the stone-laid graves. These graves covered with amphorae are named "Type 5" because they differ from the other graves in the necropolis area. They were obtained from the grid squares of the excavation in the middle parts of the necropolis area.

According to the Sinop Archaeological Museum Excavation Result Report (dated 18.01.2017), Plate of the Photographs, Artifacts Inventory List, General Sheet of the Artifacts, the List of the Artifacts for Study and the Plate of the Graves belonging to the Cultural Center Excavation; a total of four graves named "Type 5" were unearthed. Furthermore, Colchian amphorae were also found in some other graves called "Type 4" (stone-laid grave). For example, in Grave No. 70, named "Type 4", 170 cm long and 80 cm wide, oriented northwest x southeast, one Colchian amphora, dated to the 6th century AD, was found at the head and two at the foot. Three broken Colchian amphorae were found in Grave No. 9, called "Type 4" (stone-laid grave).

If we look at the number of amphorae in the graves named "Type 5," which are covered with amphorae and all of these amphorae are 6th century AD Colchian amphorae. A total of 9 amphorae were uncovered in Grave No. 18, four of which were broken, and all the amphorae were placed on top of the grave, one upside down. Grave No. 22 was covered with 10 amphorae. six broken amphorae

rae were found on Grave No. 43. Grave No. 86 was covered with 8 amphorae.

The amphorae, unearthed during the Cultural Center Excavation are of Colchian origin (today's Georgia and its surroundings) and are dated to the 6th century AD. They are included in the inventory of the Sinop Archaeological Museum under the inventory numbers 8.1.2016 and 8.2.2016, both are of the following paste; they are seen to be well-cooked and mica-added. Both amphorae are seen to be of asymmetrical form. Of these two amphorae, the surface color of the one with inventory number 8.1.2016 is "10 R 6/8" (reddish gray) according to the Munsell soil-color charts 2009 year revised. The dimensions of the amphora with inventory number 8.1.2016 are as follows: height – 60 cm; body diameter – 18.5 cm; mouth diameter – 6 cm; lip thickness – 0.8 cm (see Figs. 1-3).



Fig. 1. Decoupage photograph of an amphora from amphora-covered graves. Inventory number: 8.1.2016. Colchian amphora (originating from modern-day Georgia), recovered from the Cultural Center Excavation, in the Western Necropolis of Sinop. 6th century AD (from the Archive of Babür Mehmet Akarsu).



Fig. 2. Decoupage photograph of an amphora from amphora-covered graves. Inventory number: 8.1.2016. Side view. Colchian amphora (originating from modern-day Georgia), recovered from the Cultural Center Excavation, in the Western Necropolis of Sinop, 6th century AD. (From the Archive of Babür Mehmet Akarsu).

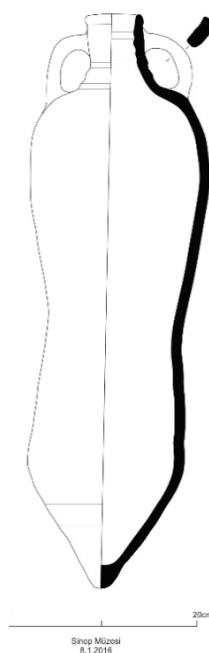


Fig. 3. Technical drawing of an amphora from amphora-covered graves. Inventory number: 8.1.2016. Colchian amphora (originating from modern-day Georgia), recovered from the Cultural Center Excavation, in the Western Necropolis of Sinop. 6th century AD (from the Archive of Babür Mehmet Akarsu).

The surface color of the other amphora unearthed in the Cultural Center Excavation is "2.5 YR 6/6" (reddish gray) according to the Munsell soil-color charts 2009 year revised and is one of the amphorae of Colchis (today's Georgia and its surroundings) origin dating back to the 6th century AD and is included in the inventory of the Sinop Archaeological Museum with the number 8.2.2016. The dimensions of the amphora with inventory number 8.2.2016 are as follows: height – 57.3 cm; body diameter- 17.4 cm; mouth diameter – 6 cm; lip thickness – 0.9 cm (see Figs. 4-6).



Fig. 4. Decoupage photograph of an amphora from amphora-covered graves. Inventory number: 8.2.2016. Colchian amphora (originating from modern-day Georgia), recovered from the Cultural Center Excavation, in the Western Necropolis of Sinop. 6th century AD. (From the Archive of Babür Mehmet Akarsu).



Fig. 5. Decoupage photograph of an amphora from amphora-covered graves. Inventory number: 8.2.2016. Side view. Colchian amphora (originating from modern-day Georgia), recovered from the Cultural Center Excavation, in the Western Necropolis of Sinop. 6th century AD. (From the Archive of Babür Mehmet Akarsu).



Fig. 6. Technical drawing of an amphora from amphora-covered graves. Inventory number: 8.2.2016. Colchian amphora (originating from modern-day Georgia), recovered from the Cultural Center Excavation, in the Western Necropolis of Sinop. 6th century AD. (From the Archive of Babür Mehmet Akarsu).

Also in this necropolis, stone-laid Jewish graves dating back to the 4th-6th centuries AD were unearthed, with menorahs (seven-branched candelabums) carved on the stone and marble plaques used as the headstone of the grave. Stone-laid graves, identified as Jewish graves and known as “Type 4”, where menorahs were unearthed, were found in the grid squares of the excavation in the middle parts of the necropolis area and a little deeper than the others. According to the findings, it is understood that necropolis was used between the

4th century BC and the 12nd century AD and Christian graves were also found in this necropolis.

Conclusions

In the light of the archaeological data presented in this study, it is evident that there was maritime trade and transportation between the city of Sinop in Türkiye and Georgia, which is accessible by air and land today, in ancient times. The fact that Colchian amphorae, i.e. ceramics used in maritime trade, originating from the ancient Colchis region in today's Georgia, were placed on the graves in the western ancient necropolis of Sinop shows how intertwined the two Black Sea cultures were. The custom of necropolis provides very comprehensive and detailed information about the society under study and is a very emotional phenomenon for societies. The necropolis, unearthed during the Cultural Center Excavation, which was used from the 4th century BC onwards, contains finds from the Jewish and Christian periods and ceramics such as Colchian amphorae. This shows that there was a very cosmopolitan social structure in the city of Sinop. The necropolis, which was used for a very long period, also indicates cultural continuity; the next culture did not exclude the previous cultures and did not destroy the artifacts.

Revealing, presenting and publishing the past relations between today's Türkiye and today's Georgia can provide a foundation for strengthening positive relations between the two geographies in the future, as in the past. Further strengthening relations between Türkiye and Georgia can also be seen as a continuation of their cultural heritage from the past to the present. In this context, in the first stage, through the sister-city application, a union can be established between the city of Sinop and geographically distant settlements in Georgia for the purpose of cultural and commercial exchange. This partnership can be aimed to effectively develop friendship between different cultures in areas such as trade and tourism.

არქეოლოგია

თანამედროვე თურქეთისა და თანამედროვე საქართველოს გეოგრაფიული არეალის მდგომარეობა და ურთიერთობები ანტიკურ პერიოდში

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თანამედროვე თურქეთსა და საქართველოს შორის ურთიერთობები პრეისტორიული პერიოდებიდან მოყოლებული თითქმის შეუფერხებლად გრძელდება და ზოგჯერ ჩანს, რომ მათ ერთი და იგივე პოლიტიკური ძალა, კერძოდ ერთი და იგივე მმართველი მართავს. 2015 წლის 11 მარტს, სინოპის კულტურული ცენტრის მშენებლობის დროს ანტიკური ხანის ნეკროპოლისის არტეფაქტები აღმოაჩინეს, რის შემდეგაც სამაშველო გათხრები ჩატარდა. ამფორებით დაფარული სამარხები იშვიათად გვხვდება და ამ აღმოჩენილ ნეკროპოლისში საფლავებზე კოლხური ამფორები (წარმოშობით დღევანდელი საქართველოს ტერიტორიიდან) იყო განთავსებული. სინოპის არქეოლოგიური მუზეუმის მიერ ასისტენტ-პროფესორ დოქტორ ბაბურ მეჰმეთ აკარსუსთვის გაცემული სამეცნიერო კვლევის ნებართვის წყალობით, არქეოლოგიური მუზეუმის საწყობებში განთავსებული სინოპის არქეოლოგიური მუზეუმის ინვენტარში რეგისტრირებული 6 კოლხური ამფორის ტექნიკური ნახაზები, გაზომვები, ფოტოების გადაღება და შემდეგ დეკუპაჟი ჩატარდა. ეს კვლევა, ნახსენები კოლხური ამფორებიდან, მხოლოდ ორზეა ფოკუსირებული.

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