

## BOOK REVIEW

### Innovations in Archaeology of the Caucasus

One-volume collection of works “Ethnocultural System of the South-East Caucasus in the Bronze-Iron Age”, in four languages (Georgian, German, English and Russian), was published within the Georgian National Academy of Sciences (Tbilisi, 2013, 559 pp.).

The author of the book is a prominent Georgian archaeologist Konstantine Pitskhelauri.

The editors of the volume are academicians Otar Japaridze and Roin Metreveli. The volume under review familiarizes us with the results of a systematic, labor-consuming research conducted by the scholar.

Kakheti being a blank spot, terra incognita on Georgia’s archaeological map for a long time, longed for an intelligent, talented, well-educated, purposeful, devoted researcher and this very person turned out to be Konstantine Pitskhelauri. In 1960, being quite young, he was appointed the head of Kakhetian archaeological group. He determined the directions for the future research Udabno, Sighnaghi, Cheremi, etc. and founded the centers equipped with depositories and libraries and laboratories. Within a short period of time he turned Sighnaghi into a large research centre for archaeological study of Kakheti where archaeologists work fruitfully side by side with anthropologists, historians, ethnologists, art historians, paleobotanists, paleozoologists, etc. His long-term archaeological strategy based on the latest methods and technologies approved in the world appeared to be very successful. Archaeological investigations conducted under his leadership in Kakheti region were completed with brilliant discoveries. Over the years Konstantine Pitskhelauri has been in close collaboration with such leading research centers as German *Archaeological Institute at Saarland University*, the Martin Luther University of Halle, Ar-

chaeological Expedition to Troy at *Eberhard-Karls-University* in Tübingen, etc. He had scholarly contacts with American, Turkish and Italian colleagues. A series of lectures on the antiquities of Bronze Age in the Caucasus delivered by the author in Germany for many years inspired the interest of some European young researchers in studying the past of Georgia. To my mind, it was a great event for Caucasiologists to receive published research in the context of antiquities data of Asian Near East and Europe. The author’s purpose was to show the reader that “while interpreting archaeological cultures each concrete issue must be studied only against the background of a new database and the reality created with it”.

Konstantine Pitskhelauri presented the results of his tireless long-term research in one-volume collection of works in the following major directions:

- the dynamics of archaeological works in Kakheti, problems, prospects;
- archaeological excavations in Kakheti and their results;
- stages of the formation of state institutions in the central part of the Southern Caucasus;
- interdisciplinary researches, ethnicization of archaeological cultures;
- principles of the topography of settlements, periodization and chronology.

Of great value are chronological schemes for the south-eastern Caucasus, Georgia of the Bronze-Iron Age compiled in the research centers of Russia, Europe, Armenia attached to the volume (pp. 483, 557), which will be extremely useful to the specialists in ancient history of the Caucasus.

I focus my attention just on a few of the main research directions, where the author’s vision seems

particularly important and, in my opinion, makes a significant contribution to the development of Caucasiology as a science. This volume clearly shows that Konstantine Pitskhelauri holds the view according to which in Neolithic period western and eastern Georgia represented one cultural area and distinctive features between two large regions emerged only in the Eneolithic period.

In the reviewed volume several works of Konstantine Pitskhelauri are devoted to the scrupulous analysis of the monuments of the Eneolithic period of the central part of the south Caucasus. In these essays the attention is mainly focused on infiltration of the Mesopotamian Uruk culture in the first half of the fourth millennium BC. In the author's argumentative viewpoint, this culture penetrates to the southern Caucasus by several ways, totally covers it and throughout the Great Caucasus Range spreads to the North Caucasus too and lays the foundation to the brilliant Maikop culture. The scholar assumes that the infiltration of the Uruk metallurgists in the Caucasus was most probably motivated by the desire for the search of metal raw materials and concludes that the formation of local Kura-Araxes culture in the Southern Caucasus during the Early Bronze Age must have been realized with participation of the migrants. It should be also noted that the scholar links the explosive development of metallurgy and exceptional advancement of culture in the Southern Caucasus during the Early Bronze Age with the appearance of a Mesopotamian ethnic flow. According to the author the trace of the Uruk migrants has not been sufficiently revealed so far and it is necessary to expand and deepen research in this direction.

It is known that on the territory of the present-day eastern Georgia, on the Tsalka Plateau, in the Mtkvari River valley and Iori-Alazani basin at the end of the last century there was revealed a brilliant, so-called Alazani-Bedenic culture of the Early Bronze Age, mainly as the burial mounds. Naturally, this discovery was accompanied with a number of unanswered questions. The thing is that the materials belonging to this culture are genetically related to ar-

chaeological artifacts of neither previous nor subsequent periods. The multilayered settlement of the Khashuri Natsargora revealed in the Khashuri district casted light on the understanding of this issue. Typical ceramic products of the Alazani-Bedenic culture were detected just on this archaeological monument. In the context of this innovation, on the one hand, chronological frames of archaeological culture were specifically determined and, on the other hand, the light was finally shed on its cultural genesis. It became obvious that it appeared in completely formed way in this region of the Caucasus.

While studying the above issue, K. Pitskhelauri discovered numerous monuments belonging to the Alazani-Bedenic culture in Kakheti in the form of a large burial constructions (in this respect it would be sufficient to mention a complex containing a monument of a golden lion), which played a great role in the study of Georgia's culture.

Konstantine Pitskhelauri made assumption on the existence of the layers belonging to the Alazani-Bedenic culture based on accidentally obtained ceramic material on multilayered settlement of the Alazani valley and Iori gorge settlement. Unfortunately, the scientific study of these valuable artifacts has not yet been conducted due to the various objective or subjective reasons.

Alazani-Bedenic culture is not genetically linked with the early culture of the Kura-Araxes of the central part of the Southern Caucasus in the Early Bronze Age. As seen from the book it is quite clear for the author that since that time Alazani-Bedenic culture steadily takes roots in that region and already at the final stage of the Kura-Araxes culture takes an active part in its formation together with the southern variant of this culture. The author considers as such the monuments of the so-called "Martkopi group". This assumption expressed by Konstantine Pitskhelauri represents an important scientific novelty and makes the basis for more valid understanding of the monuments of the contemporary to that time culture. According to the scholar the arrangement of the large mound in the central region of the Southern Cauca-

sus begins just at the stage of functioning of the Bedenic culture, which testifies to the fact that in the society of that time the rich and socially advanced strata were formed. From the author's discussion it is clearly seen that rich tombs of the so-called "Martkopi period" in his view are largely due to Alazani-Bedenic culture. In the central part of the Southern Caucasus the appearance of four-wheeled wooden wagon-burials became traditional at the final stages of the Early Bronze Age and characteristic to the Middle Bronze the so-called Trialeti culture.

The ideas maintained by the author of the single volume relating to the Alazani-Bedenic culture which are quite possible to be shared, fail to go beyond the scope of hypothesis so far. It will become possible to achieve the truth only as a result of discovery of multilayered settlements and archeological study. It is noteworthy that according to the author it would be very difficult to establish genetic relatedness of the cultures in the central part of the Southern Caucasus between the Early and Middle Bronze Ages if we take into account customs and traditions of burying the dead, construction of burial vaults, topography of the dwellings and some details of the building technique. Moreover that by the existing archaeological materials the difference between them is even more visible than the similarity. The author also offers a way out of this circumstance. In his view multilayered intensive study of the Alazani valley where cultural levels of this period stratigraphically cover each other is desirable and obligatory. However, the author also mentions that these works are so difficult to implement because this region is distinguished by underground waters.

As is seen from this collection the author has obtained rather interesting results while studying the monuments of the Middle Bronze Age in the Iori and Alazani area. The boundaries of the spread of the Trialeti culture in the northern, eastern and western directions were circled by him with certainty.

Moreover, taking into consideration the views expressed by other authors and the exposition materials from the museums of north-eastern Turkey, he

arrived at the conclusion that Trialeti culture almost reached the Black Sea coast including southern Georgia.

The scholar pays attention to that important circumstance that the monuments of the Trialeti culture bear not only the features of the Western Asia culture but also those of the north-steppe catacombs which at the final stage of Trialeti culture was reflected both in the diversity of the tombs and adornment of ceramic items.

The volume under review also presents some other important results of the scholarly researches conducted by Konstantine Pitskhelauri. The scholar is the first in Georgian archaeology who managed to discover the settlements of the Trialeti culture unknown before, which he attributed to agricultural activity. At the same time, it was he, who as a result of paleoecological research conducted in the Iori-Alazani basin established that natural conditions in this region changed because of incorrect economic activity in the post-Middle Bronze Age. According to the highly significant assumption developed by the scholar, if paleohydrological network is recovered on the entire territory of distribution of Trialeti culture of the Middle Bronze Age, especially on the Tsalka Plateau, in the lowland region of the Mtkavari middle flow and David Gareji Mravalmta caves, numerous currently dogmatic views related to economic and social life of the archeological cultures in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC will substantially change.

The reviewed volume evidences once more the unique contribution of its author to the research of the cultures in the central part of the Southern Caucasus of the initial centuries of the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC and the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC that represents a major field of his scholarly research.

It is known that a sharp discontinuity was found between cultures of the Middle and Late Bronze Age (in the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC) in the central part of the Southern Caucasus both according to the archaeological materials and from the point of socio-economic development and it was even qualified as a

total shift of culture. Konstantine Pitskhelauri has completely changed this established view and genetically connected these two epochs with each other. This rather hard task was solved by the author on the basis of correct analysis of the earlier known archaeological complexes and the data obtained by him. Between these two epochs he additionally singled out three new stages of development:

1. Final stage of the Middle Bronze Age;
2. The monuments of transitory period between the Middle and Late Bronze Ages which equally carry the features characteristic to both epochs;
3. The initial first stage of the Late Bronze Age that is termed by the scholar as “Central Transcaucasia culture”, because it is within the boundaries of distribution of the Trialeti culture.

It should be noted that a new chronological system elaborated for the monuments of the central part of the Southern Caucasia is based just on the researches conducted by the author. The innovative viewpoint offered by K. Pitskhelauri is proved by new interpretations of the monuments of the Mtkvari middle flow and Armenia. In addition to this, the chronological scheme developed by the author of the single volume as far back as half century ago is still of great service for the specialists in the history of the ancient Caucasus.

I will dwell on the author's one more important view attested in this volume. The question concerns the novelty introduced by the scholar in the dynamics of the development of archaeological cultures during the second millennium BC, in the assessment of its characteristics. Unlike the viewpoint expressed in the scholarly literature, he presented the Late Bronze Age as much more advanced epoch both from the viewpoint of production in all directions and social system as compared with the Middle Bronze Age. One of the most important scholarly achievements of Konstantine Pitskhelauri must be considered the discovery of civilization in the central part of the Southern Caucasus on the Iori Plateau in the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium and in the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium. Here we deal with the stage of the state struc-

ture based on the irrigated agriculture. According to the author's assumption the small agricultural units provide the preconditions for state formation.

The scholar considers the concentration of settlements around a certain hydrological network or other minerals, which were the main driving force in their economic life, to be an indicator of the high level of socio-economic development of the society. For the author of no less importance is the planning of the settlements according to the project designed in advance.

Konstantine Pitskhelauri also takes into account the fact that a citadel stands out from the main settlement and both parts are encircled by a strong fortified system. The scholar has also confirmed the fact that during planning of the settlements of particular importance was the construction of water supply network as a tunnel system. The scholar did not pass over the important fact that just from that time on there appeared religious centers separated from the settlement which must be an indicator of ideological unity of the society. The scholar also has established that according to the burial material of that epoch all the men were equipped with weapon that in author's view indicates great military potential of the contemporary society. Special importance is given by the author to the discovery of military chariots in the excavated materials and he arrives at the conclusion that in the main body of troops regular bodies of soldiers must have existed in the early centuries of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium. In author's view in this region of the Southern Caucasus the high level of the development of the society was determined by the advancement of the economic life (irrigated agriculture, iron production). As the scholar attests, this especially advanced culture completely seized its functioning in the south-eastern Caucasus, the region of his study, on the Iori Plateau in the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC. As has been justly pointed out by the author, the identification of archaeological cultures with concrete ethnic formations is a task of primary importance. Unfortunately, in the Caucasus the conduction of research in this direction is connected with

a number of problems. The main thing is that we still have no access to the written monuments reflecting historical processes taking place in these ancient epochs which could help in ethnic attribution of this or that archeological culture. In spite of this, as it is evidenced from the reviewed collection, the scholar has reached an important result in this direction that is invaluable in reconstruction of the ancient history of the Georgian people.

It is interesting to note the author's understanding of those passages from the composition of the 11th-century Georgian chronicler, Leonti Mroveli "History of the Kings and Patriarchs of the Georgians" which deals with the genesis of Caucasian ethnoses and the range of their settlement. Konstantine Pitskhelauri connected Leonti Mroveli's data with the reality of different epochs obtained as a result of archeological studies and arrived at the important conclusion that the boundaries of the territories of Caucasian ethnoses and descendants localized by Leonti in the majority of cases coincide with the boundaries of distribution of archeological culture of south-eastern Caucasus in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages.

Based on the above mentioned it is quite natural for the author that the research in the direction of grounding the identity of archeological cultures spread in the Eastern Georgia with Georgian substrate is promising, moreover that in the Georgian written source the data on the boundaries of Targamon and his descendants settlement and the archeological cultures found on this territory, with local groups organically related to them, germinated on one root

from the very beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium and represent the chain of each other's continuous development. The author also takes into account that numerous peculiarities of this single block of cultures are distinguished from the whole outer world. The reality obtained from the comparison of Leonti Mroveli's records and archeological artifacts discovered by the scholar creates a complete basis for dating the records of Leonti Mroveli himself that would be a great novelty in making chronology of Georgia's ancient history more precise.

Even from this comparatively brief survey it is clear that newly issued volume "Ethnocultural System of the South-Eastern Caucasus in the Bronze-Iron Age" (Tbilisi 2013, 559 pp.) by the known Georgian archaeologist Konstantine Pitskhelauri is a great acquisition for Caucasiology and Georgian Studies (Kartvelology). It not only sums up the path traversed by the scholar with discoveries and achievements but points out to the necessity of solving some important tasks to be realized in the future.

The scholarly value of the reviewed work is considerably increased by the abundance of the maps, topographic plans of archeological monuments, schemes of burial mounds and settlements, tables reflecting the results of geomagnetic fundamental studies of archeological monuments, dishes, weapon, jewellery and already mentioned chronological Tables obtained as a result of archeological research.

I hope this one-volume edition of Konstantine Pitskhelauri will occupy a dignified place in Georgian and Caucasian historiography.

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# წიგნის მიმოხილვა

## ინოვაციები კავკასიის არქეოლოგიაში

რეცენზია ეძღვნება ცნობილი ქართველი მეცნიერის კონსტანტინე ფიცხელაურის მიერ 2013 წლის დამლევს გამოქვეყნებულ ოთხნობიან (ქართულ, გერმანულ, ინგლისურ, რუსულ) ერთტომეულს „სამხრეთ-აღმოსავლეთ კავკასიის ეთნოკულტურული სისტემა ბრინჯაო-რკინის ხანაში“, თბილისი, 559 გვ. რედაქტორებია აკადემიკოსი ოთარ ჯაფარიძე და აკადემიკოსი როინ მეტრეველი. რეცენზიაში ნაჩვენებია, რომ ერთტომეული ფაქტობრივად აჯამებს მეცნიერის მიერ ჩატარებული მრავალწლიანი ურთულესი და შრომატევადი კვლევა-ძიებების მნიშვნელოვან შედეგებს. რეცენზიაში თანმიმდევრულადაა წარმოჩენილი ავტორის მიერ ჩატარებული არქეოლოგიური სამუშაოების დინამიკა კახეთში, პრობლემები, პერსპექტივები: არქეოლოგიური გათხრები კახეთში და მათი შედეგები; სახელმწიფო ინსტიტუტის ჩამოყალიბების საფუძვრები სამხრეთ კავკასიის ცენტრალურ ნაწილში; ინტერდისციპლინური კვლევები, არქეოლოგიურ კულტურათა ეთნიზაცია; ნამოსახლართა ტოპოგრაფიის პრინციპები, პერიოდიზაცია და ქრონოლოგია.

კავკასიის, არქეოლოგიის, ისტორიის რეკონსტრუქციისათვის ესოდენ აქტუალური ყველა ეს ასპექტი კონსტანტინე ფიცხელაურს სიღრმისეული მეცნიერული ანალიზის საფუძველზე აქვს შესწავლილი და ამ მიზეზით ყველა მის მიერ მიღებული დასკვნა არგუმენტირებული და გასათვალისწინებელია.

ჩატარებული ძიებების შედეგებთან ერთად რეცენზენტის თვალსაზრისით ფასდაუდებელია ნაშრომისათვის თანდართული რუსეთის, ევროპის, სომხეთის სამეცნიერო ცენტრებში შედგენილი სამხრეთ-აღმოსავლეთ კავკასიის, ბრინჯაო-რკინის ხანის საქართველოს ქრონოლოგიური სქემები, ასევე ყოველი ნარკვევისათვის უზუად თანდართული რუკები, არქეოლოგიური ძეგლების ტოპოგრაფიები, სამარხთა და ნამოსახლართა სქემები, არქეოლოგიური ძეგლების გეომაგნიტური ფუნდამენტური შესწავლის შედეგების ამსახველი ცხრილები, ასევე, არქეოლოგიური კვლევის შედეგად მოძიებული ჭურჭელი, იარაღი, სამკაული და სხვ. კონსტანტინე ფიცხელაურის სარეცენზიო ერთტომეულის გაცნობას რეცენზენტი იმ მართებულ დასკვნამდე მიჰყავს, რომ იგი ქართული მეცნიერების ძვირფასი შენაძენია.

ნანა ხაზარაძე

აკადემიკოსი