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Quarterly Report For FaRiG Rothschild Research Grant

I have started to realize my research project since 1 March, 2011. Project is about “Georgian secular depiction between Sassanian and Byzantine prototypes” The first quarter lasts from March up to the end of May. Initial goal for the first quarter was to collect the materials concerning the research topic as well as arrangement of presentation of my project at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University also wherever it is possible, namely at scientific research conferences.

The materials that I have already collected are accumulated from the various institutions and special literature. Among the archives and libraries I am indebted to Georgian National Center of Manuscripts and National Parliamentary Library of Georgia. Some materials are collected from the special literature. The list of bibliography is included in the article that I have prepared.

Now briefly about the presentations over the research project that I have managed to accomplish. The first presentation was held at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU). Another one took place in Vardzia at 3rd International Conference of Student-Archaeologists organized jointly by Tbilisi State University (TSU) and University of Oxford, 12-15 April, 2011. The title of my conference paper was – “Social Motives in Late Antique and Early Medieval Georgian Secular Depiction (According to Archaeological, Numismatic, Glyptic and Relief Materials Discovered in Georgia)”

During the first quarter I have also managed to write an article that reports the early stage of my research project which is very important to understand the secular depiction of medieval Georgia. This article I have presented in 3rd International Conference of Student-Archaeologists at Vardzia. The materials that I have included in my research are about the secular depictions of the Late Antique and the Early Medieval periods of Georgia. The various aspects of those depictions are examined. The full of article is attached as appendix one to this report. The article includes the eleven pages with illustrations but for the next quarters I am going to supplement it with other materials as well.

For the second quarter I am going to as many fresco materials as possible from the various regions of Georgia. Also I am going to accomplish an article about Byzantine and Persian impact on Georgian secular imagery that should be the second article under the FaRiG

Rothschild Research Grant. The second report will be ready for the beginning of September, 2011.

Appendix one

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SOCIAL MOTIVES IN LATE ANTIQUE AND EARLY MEDIEVAL GEORGIAN SECULAR DEPICTION

(According to Archaeological, Numismatic, Glyptic and Relief Materials Discovered in Georgia)

The Late Antique and Early Medieval periods of Georgian History is distinctive with various social changes that took place during that epoch. As far as we know from history of Georgia country was divided into two parts: The Western Georgia was occupied by Colchis/Egrisi and Eastern Georgia was represented by Kingdom of Iberia/Kartli.¹ In 4th century Mirian III was the first ruler of Kingdom of Kartli who received Christian faith, soon whole country followed to him. Sudden changes were connected with transformations in landholding system – from collective or communal use of lands to private or latifundial ownership of domains. Social hierarchy was formed inside those domains where each man was obliged to serve his superior in return for the latter's protection. Those changes occurred in lowland while mountainous regions of Georgia has maintained the old system of collective use of lands. The changes marked to be the beginning of feudal era in Georgia, hence the beginning of medieval period of Georgian history is largely in connection with social and religious changes that had happened from AD 4th throughout 8th centuries.² Because of lack of narrative or other types of written sources we think that archaeological, glyptic and relief materials discovered in Georgia are, all very important to study the Late Antique and Early Medieval history of Georgia.

Various materials are available to study the Georgian depiction of upper mentioned periods. Archaeological materials are largely from Mtskheta, especially from so-called funeral of

¹ For the General history of this period, see: D. Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity: A History of Colchis and Transcaucasian Iberia 550 BC – AD 562*, (Oxford 1994); D. Muskhelishvili, *sakartvelo IV-VIII saukuneebshi* (Tbilisi 2003).

² About the changes in the Georgian society, see: S. Janashia, *shromebi*, vol. I, (Tbilisi 1949), pp. 288-295; *loc. cit.*, *shromebi*, vol. II, (Tbilisi 1952), pp. 131-235; *Sakartvelos istoriis narkvevebi*, vol. II – *sakartvelo IV-X saukuneebshi*, ed. by Shota Meskhia, (Tbilisi 1973), pp. 144-158; T. Papuashvili, *pheodaluri senioriebis tsarmoqmna-ganvitarebis istoriydan sakartvelosh IV-VIII ss.*, in vol. – *sakartvelos pheodaluri khanis istoriys sakitkhebi* - III: *sakartvelos pheodaluri khanis istoriys periodizatsia* (Tbilisi 1980), pp. 84-93; D. Muskhelishvili, *sakartvelo IV-VIII saukuneebshi*, pp. 401-432.

Armazian Eristavis. Some numismatic materials are very important as well. The coins of Prince Stephanos I the Great (589-604) of Kartli is significant. Two examples of toreutics are of peculiar interest. Each have secular pictures that exhibits Iranian Shahs and members of their family. Stela from Samtsverisi has a depiction of unknown sovereign with certain royal regalia in his right hand. This relief is dated on the bound of 5th and 6th centuries and the attribution and costume of secular person is quite multinational and unique. The reliefs of Jvari monastery have several very interesting depictions on the eastern facade of the temple. Prince Stephanos I the Great, his brother Demetrious, Adarnarse and his son Kobul are depicted in the church walls as a ktitors and main donators of this temple.

Consequently, our analysis is based upon those materials discussed over, together with other sources that we use for our research as well. Mainly, the problems of social history is researched, also the royal insignia and attribution is very essential, especially to study the social and political case. All those features are very important to establish the social position of various Georgian sovereigns and officials.

From the materials found in Georgia, we may pick out the portraits of two ethnic category of historical persons: The first is the local element represented by indigenous aristocracy also other lower class members: masons, artisans, builders and etc. The second category is represented by foreign privileged social elements whose depictions are crafted in Georgia or outside her borders.

Materials from the first category was crafted either in Georgia or outside her borders. The names of manufacturers are not known according to written sources, hence their identification remains unclear. Here is a possibility that some of the craftsmen were ethnically Georgians or specialists from the other countries were engaged in that labour. The outsiders were, mostly, from Greece.

Ancient capital city of Kingdom of Kartli/Iberia – Mtskheta was excavated in 1937-1946 and during the archaeological expedition several very important artefacts were revealed.³ probably the most important are the materials that were preserved in the funerals of *Armaznian Eristavi*. Those coffins preserve the essential artifacts about the early period of the topic we are interested in.

³ Mtskheta: *archeologiuri kvleva-dziebis shedegebi*. Vol. I. by A. Aphakidze, G. Gobejishvili, A. Kalandadze, G. Lomtadidze. *Armaziskhevis arhceologiuri dzeglebi 1937-1946 ganatkharis mikhedvit*. Tbilisi 1955 (After we quote this book as – Mtskheta I).

The most splendid among the *Armazian Eristavi* coffins is the grave of Asparuk *pitiakhsh* of Iberia – so-called the first grave of *Armazian Eristavi* funerals. The tomb has the seal that bears the name of Asparuk on it. Inscription is fixed around the portrait and the Asparuk is called to be the *pitiakhsh*. Consequently, he was the *pitiakhsh* of Kingdom of Iberia (Kartli).



Now briefly about the description of the gemma that belongs to Asparuk. The description that we provide here is in accordance to Mtskheta I, therefore we provide the translation of that part which is more interesting for the study of secular depiction in Georgia. The description of the Asparuk's gemma found during the archaeological expedition of Mtskheta is as following:

*That [seal] shows the profile of aged male. The male has long, strong aquiline nose; a bit long hair combed out on the side and wavy hair that half covers the forehead. The long beard; the big and deeply inserted eyes. The lowered cut of the lips and the strongly strained muscles on the face gives his face harsh appearance. Except for the face the naked and very lean chest and the upper part of the right shoulder is visible.*⁴

According to Simon Janashia's assumption the seal is the insignia of *pitiakhsh* and he dates it to AD 2nd and 3rd centuries.⁵

The same funeral includes, one more seal, that has the depiction of two persons – man and woman. Around their portrait we have the Greek legend that bears: “*Zevakh life of mine Carpack*”.⁶

The gemma has the depiction of couple – husband and wife whose names are Zevakh and Carpack. Presumably, gemma was handcrafted according to Carpack's decision after the death of her husband, and its discovery in Asparuk's grave shows that Asparuk acquired it as a

⁴ Mtskheta I, p. 23.

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 24.

⁶T. Kauchtshchischwili, *Korpus der Griechischen Inschriften in Georgien*, 3rd ed., (Tbilissi 2009), pp. 259-260, 343.

lawful successor of theirs.⁷ Here we provide the description of this seal, again according to Mtskheta I:

Carpack – the face of the woman is beautiful and haughty. The shape [of the face] is proportional but cold and rigid. The numerous and long eyebrows are outlined with strong and dip line. Hair is wattled, and her head is



decorated with round diadem or head accessory, from that the hook is hanged. Clothing is well suited the shape of hooks and diadem makes us to think that the gemma has a depiction of a representative of the high cycles woman.⁸

Zevakh – face of male is handsome soft and virtuous; beard – short, hair is waved; moustache – a little bit lowered; neck – is well shaped, the clothing seems to be wealthy.⁹

Funeral of Asparuk that contains the seal of Carpack and Zevakh gives the reason for the assumption that they, both were the parents of Asparuk. Zevakh in this case is identified with Zevakh the Junior father of Seraphita from the Armazi bilingual inscription discovered in Mtskheta.¹⁰ If the whole identification is correct following picture of house of Armazian *pitiakhshi* can be drawn:

Zevakh pitiakhsh of Iberia + Carpack

Asparuk pitiakhsh of Iberia, Seraphita + Yodmagan epitropos of Iberia

⁷ Mtskheta I, p. 25.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Mtskheta I, p. 25; G. Tsereteli, *Armazis bilingva*, Journal – “*enimkis moambe*”, vol. XIII (Tbilisi 1943), pp. 37-40; About the office of *Pitiakhsh* and materials concerning this position, see: M. Bakhtadze, *eristavobis insthithuthi sakartveloshi*, (Tbilisi 2003), pp. 30-71.

Two examples of toreutics from Georgia contain the depiction of Iranian Shahs and their family. One among them was found after an archaeological expedition in Armaziskhevi (expedition we already discussed)¹¹ and another in the village of Sargveshi by a local inhabitant.¹² Here we present the description of those materials – first is a plate that had belonged to Papack *pitiakhsh* of the Persian Empire who donated it to *pitiakhsh* of Iberia. Kitty Machabeli thinks that the person depicted in this plate was Papack himself¹³ but we share the opposite assumption that the male figure depicted on the plate is Ardashir I (r. 226-241) the first Shahanshah of Sassanid Persia. Description of Ardashir's iconographic portrayal is as follows:

*Male appears with right hand, elbow is hunched. Little finger is put aside, and holds the lily with his thumb and index finger, which is raised up near the nose. Flower that has a form of lily is stylized.*¹⁴



Now about the second example of toreutics found in Georgia – in the garden of Mr. Chikviladze, a local folk from the village of Sargveshi. As we have already mentioned, that example also belongs to the Sassanid royal family. The plate has a depiction of the Shahanshah of Persia – Varahran II and members of his family. Description of this plate is provided by Kitty

¹¹ Mtskheta I, pp. 45-46.

¹² K. Machabeli, *dzveli sakartvelos vertskhli*, (Tbilisi 1983), pp. 13.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 99.

¹⁴ Mtskheta I, p. 45.

Machabeli in her monograph about the silvers discovered in Georgia. The most interesting passage is as following:

*A little silver plate that has well-shaped form... it contains iconographic depiction of four portraits inside the medalion that has picturesque elements. The depiction of Iranian Shah Varahran II, his wife and heir are the brilliant instance of official Sassanid portraits.*¹⁵

Kitty Machabeli speculates that the upper mentioned example was manufactured in the royal forge of Sassanid Empire in the 80s of 3rd century.¹⁶ Shah and his wife are depicted facing at each other. The consort of Shah holds the insignia (symbol of power) fleur-de-lis (lilium) that is raised close to her eyes, passage is similar to scenario of so-called Papack's plate where the Shahan Shah of Persia – Ardashir is depicted. Shah Varahran is represented on the left side of the picture. He raises his right hand up to the sky. Shah wears the long royal crown that is similar to queen's crown.

Sassanid motives are presented in Stephanos I the Greats (r. 589-603) coins, minted by the end of 6th century. Obverse of this coins has a depiction of Iranian Shah Hormirdes IV. Here we have the brief description of this emission of Stephanos's coins according to Giorgi and Tedo Dundua's book:

Obverse – Hormizd IV depicted on the right. Around the bust of the King on the left and on the right the Georgian legend of Asomtavruli script ~~Stephanos~~ –Stephanos. All this are inserted in two encirclement joined by points all together.



*Reverse – Altar has the raised cross. The date and the name of the mint is very damaged, hence the inscription is impossible to read. The triple-linear is connected by points.*¹⁷

¹⁵ K. Machabeli, *dzveli sakartvelos vertskhli*, p. 112.

¹⁶ K. Machabeli, *dzveli sakartvelos vertskhli*, p. 112.

¹⁷ G. Dundua, T. Dundua. *Kartuli numizmatica*: part one, (Tbilisi 2006), p. 135, PL. 41.

Samtsverisi stele has depiction of male sovereign with symbol of power (insignia) on his left hand. The stone cross pillar is described by Kitty Machebeli and her report is as following:

*Erected on the large pole, the medallion with a cross shows a man holding a flower-insignia in his hand. The clothes he wears is a variety of official Byzantine court costume. This vitive stub points to the legal and religious creed of the nobleman from Kartli.*¹⁸



Nino Silagadze in her work about Sassanid symbols in the Early Christian Georgian toreutics and relief supplements the Samtsverisi stele with several features, namely: Diadem decorated with precious stones, which represents the symbol of power for the sovereign of this country (e.i. Kartli/Iberia); coat that was tied with fibula which ties the two different part of garment; she also outlines the long watted hair that was fashionable in Byzantium for the 5th century. As author piont's it out – the long and watted hair was maintained by Huns in this epoch, but in

Byzantium it had become popular during the age of Justinian I the Great (r. 527-565).¹⁹

Among the early medieval Georgian depictions of the secular persons, presumably the most important is the Jvari monastery reliefs from Mtskheta. Those images are dated to the end of 6th and beginning of 7th century.

The most interesting is the depictions handcrafted on the eastern facade of the church walls – three different ktitorial compositions are divided from each other (Pic. № 1). Relief that is positioned on the left belongs to Demetrious *hypatos* – brother of Stephanos I the Great. The same composition has a picture of archangel over the head of Demetrious (Pic. № 2). Central part of the same facade is occupied by portrayal of Grand Prince Stephanos I the Great, who stands on his knees before the Lord – Jesus Christ (Pic. № 3). On the right side, we see the images of Grand Prince Adarnarse I and his son Kobul-Stephanos. The archangel is placed over their head (Pic. № 4).

¹⁸ K. Machabeli, *Early Medieval Georgian Stone Crosses*, (G. Chubinashvili NRCHGAMP 2008), p. 113.

¹⁹ N. Silagadze, *sasanuri simboluri mothivebi adreqristianuli kartuli reliephisa da torevthikis numushebz*, (Tbilisi 2010), pp. 9-10.

Idjareti relief is one more, fascinating monument for the latest period we are concerned over for this moment. Here, we see the depiction of two unknown male figures. Between those secular persons, we see the insignia – spear that has a “*Bolnuri*” cross on its head and male that is placed on the left and holds this symbol of power with his right hand.²⁰ Sarah Barnaveli



thinks, that insignia which has a cross depiction is of the Byzantine influence, hence she tries to find the analogies in the Byzantine reality, respectively. The fact that this “spear-cross” represents the symbol of power does not seem to be a mistake. The same author assumes that imagery must be dated to a period when the governance was occupied by two persons. Concerning G. Botchoridze, she dates the relief by 9th century.²¹

So, that kind of social categories we see in all those Georgian (at least they were discovered in Georgia which suggests that people being depicted on those materials have certain impact on Georgian countries) secular depictions?! of course, judging from the nature and the inscriptions that they bear, the majority of those historical persons were from the high class noble circles, but even among them we see the certain social stratification, that is more vivid if we analyse them closer.

²⁰ Sarah Barnaveli believes that this insignia could be the labarum or the cross that is similar to it, see: S. Barnaveli, *sakartvelos sabetchdavebi da skhva gliptikuri masala*, (Tbilisi 1965), p. 36. In our opinion insignia from Idjreti is not labarum. Later was the Roman standard that has a Christogram (combination of XP – Greek initials for the name of Jesus Christ) atop of it. Constantine I the Great (r. 306-337) is believed to use it as symbol of power before the battle, see: ODB, vol. I, p. 441; *loc. cit*, vol. II, p. 1167.

²¹ S. Barnaveli, *sakartvelos sabetchdavebi da skhva gliptikuri masala*, p. 36.

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ABBREVIATIONS

NRCHGAMP – National Research Center for History of Georgian Arts and Monument
Protection

ODB – Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium, in 3 volumes, ed. by Alexander P. Kazhdan, (Oxford University Press 1991)

PICTURES:

Picture № 1



Picture № 2



Picture № 3



Picture № 4