

Archaeology

Palaeolithic wooden artefacts from the Georgia

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ABSTRACT. Tsivi (Tsiva) settlement located on the right bank of the r. Tsiva on the territory of the village of Kulevi, Khobi municipality, was studied in 1945 by the archaeological expedition of Colchis (Institute of History, Academy of Sciences of Georgia) led by Nino Khoshtaria. One important artifact found there is the fragmentally preserved wooden vessel, which does not have any parallels neither in the archaeological material of the Bronze-Iron Ages and Classical period of Colchis, nor in any other archaeological cultures. The wooden vessel discovered at Tsivi settlement could be the wine drinking vessel Kula, which was used for special purposes. Our opinion is strengthened by the wooden vessel of the same shape and designation preserved in Georgian ethnographic reality as well as the cultural grape (*Vitis vinifera*) seeds discovered at the settlement. Supposedly, wooden vessel of Tsivi settlement should be dated to the 8-7 centuries BC. © 2015 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

Key words: *Tsivi (Tsiva) Settlement, the wooden vessel- kula, wine making.*

In September-October 1945 the archaeological expedition of Colchis (Institute of History, Academy of Sciences of Georgia) led by Nino Khoshtaria studied Tsivi (Tsiva) settlement located at the Black Sea coast of the West Georgia (Colchis). The site is situated on both banks of the r. Tsiva, on the territory of the village of Kulevi, Khobi region, 10 kilometers to the North from the port city of Poti and 0.5 kilometers from the sea.

Tsiva settlement belongs to the category of artificial mounds (Dikha-Gudzuba, Dikha-Zurga, Naokhvamu and etc) widely spread on the territory of the of Colchian lowland and sea-shore [1: 39-35]. The diameter of the site is 20 meters, height

(from the modern surface) of the central part of the mound is 0.5 meters and the depth from the modern surface is 6 meters. Unfortunately, the archaeological material found at the site is not fully published and only some artifacts revealed in various layers of the site are listed in the preliminary report [2: 77-82].

During our work in March 2011, which considered processing of materials of various periods from West Georgia preserved in the Armazi archaeological depot (among them there were artifacts from Tsiva settlement), we found the wooden vessel, which was not included neither in the list of artifacts of the preliminary report, nor in the registration book but was

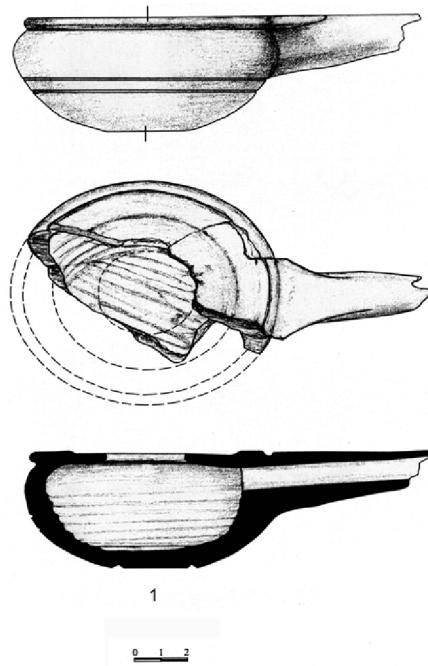


Fig. Wooden veddel of Tsivi settlement dated total early 1st millennium BC.

mentioned in the field diary of the late scientist and undoubtedly belongs to Tsiva settlement.

The wooden vessel is preserved fragmentally (Fig.). It is made of one piece of wood and has a semispherical shape. The upper part of the vessel is flat and has a hole for pouring the liquid. The slightly rounded bottom has a carved circle of 3 cm diameter. On the semi-spherical body and flat surface of the mouth there are visible engraved parallel lines (these lines are the signs of processing the vessel). The inner part of the vessel must be processed from the round hole on the flat surface, which is well evidenced by the incised semicircles left on the walls of internal surface and the bottom of the artifact as a result of processing. The pipe for drinking the liquid is jutted from the mouth and the upper part of the body of wooden vessel. The full length of the vessel is 15cm, diameter – 10 cm, height – 5 cm.

The wooden vessels of various functions and shapes from Colchis dating to Bronze and Classical periods are mainly revealed at the settlements of sea-shore line (as usual in lower layers). In this swampy and peat mixed soils (caused by the New Black Sea

Transgression and Phanagoric regression during the Holocene Era - Bronze-Iron Ages) the wooden vessels are well preserved.

The wooden bowls are known from Ispani, Pichori (8th layer), Anaklia II, Kulevi (4th layer), and Choloki settlements which are dated to the Bronze-Iron Ages.

Spoons (one of them has the depiction of the animal), dippers, butter churns (the analogies of these artifacts are well known from the ethnography of Georgia are found in the Late Bronze layer of Choloki settlement. Deep dippers, which may be linked with metallurgy are revealed near Poti, on the Early Classical period settlement of *Simagre*. In the mountainous part of Colchis, wooden vessels (big bowls) can be seen only in the Upper Racha in the copper mines of the Middle-bronze Age. On the territory of the East Georgia the wooden vessels are only revealed on Bedeni kurgans, which belong to the Bedeni Culture and are dated to the late 3rd millennium BC.

As is seen, the parallels of the wooden vessel from Tsiva settlement are still unknown in the archaeology of Georgia. According to its typology and functional designation it is close to wooden wine drinking vessel - “Kula” existing in the ethnographical reality of the west the Georgia, especially from Colchis highlands –Racha.

Kula had different shapes. It is processed from precious species of wood: box-tree, walnut, yew, also from pumpkin. The process of working on the vessel requires great patience. Its body has to be wide, semicylinder, eggshaped. The neck has to be long and the rim must be a bit cut inside [3: 74], the small horn for a finger has to be attached to the neck.

Kula, as a vessel for wine drinking has to have the pleasant voice – the noise of drinking [4: 147]; that is why the praise of the wine drunk by this vessel is still kept in Georgian speech (especially in Racha, Samegrelo and etc).

It is to be noted that wooden items (ploughs, tables, chairs, chests and etc.) are also revealed in the Pre-alpine zone Cultures of European Pile (sometimes non pile) Constructions dated to the IV-III millen-

nium B.C. (*Cortaino, Egolzwil, Michelberg*) [5: 248-255]. In spite of the fact that this is a quite distant parallel to the wooden vessel of Tsivi settlement, one thing is really notable: in the Pre-Alpine zone Cultures the wooden log pile constructions were arranged in boggy places and on the shores of lakes. Here, as in Colchis, the fortification system of trenches was arranged around the settlement. As we see, wooden vessels are frequent in the cultures, where the wood is widely used in construction of buildings, graves and etc.

Wooden vessels are also not rare in Scythian graves. Generally, only the fragments of gold and silver coverings of wooden vessels are preserved here [6: 87] but fully preserved examples are also revealed at the sites of Scythian Culture. The surfaces of some of these vessels were decorated with the silver sheets with the depictions of deer [7: 145]. For every day usage the Scythians had simple vessels without any decoration. Herodotus has a very notable information that the Scythians were pouring the

milk into deep vessels, around which blinds were sitting and shaking the vessel [8: IV,2]. These parallels from the Scythian Culture should be important for Colchian Late Bronze Culture, where, as we stated above the artifacts linked to the dairying are revealed (Choloki settlement).

Thus, the wooden vessel discovered on Tsiva settlement should supposedly be the wine drinking vessel Kula which was used for special purposes. Our opinion is strengthened by the wooden vessel of the same shape and designation preserved in Georgian ethnographic reality, as well as the cultural grape (*Vitis vinifera*) seeds discovered at Tsivi settlement, Anaklia II, and Nosiri.

In spite of the fact that in the late Bronze-Iron Age and Classical period archaeological sites of Georgia there is a big variety of ceramic and metal vessels linked to wine making and wine drinking, only one wooden vessel could be determined as a wine drinking vessel. Supposedly, wooden vessel of Tsivi settlement should be dated to the early 1st millennium BC.

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