

**Archaeological Investigations
at Site IV-338, KP199, Sakire Village, Borjomi District**

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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Abstract | 3 |
| 1.0 Introduction..... | 3 |
| 2.0 Environmental Background | 5 |
| 2.1 Site Location and Description | 5 |
| 2.2 Past Environment | 6 |
| 2.3 Land Use history | 7 |
| 3.0 Cultural Background | 7 |
| 3.1 Prehistoric and Historic Context | 7 |
| 3.2 Summary of Previous Archaeological Research | 14 |
| 4.0 Methodology | 15 |
| 4.1 Field Methods | 15 |
| 4.2 Laboratory Methods | 15 |
| 5.0 Results | 16 |
| 5.1 Basic Data Summary | 16 |
| 5.2 Features | 17 |
| 5.3 Artefacts | 18 |
| 6.0 Interpretation | 20 |
| 7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations | 21 |
| 8.0 References Cited | 21 |

List of Plates

- Pl. I. Map of the Project Location in Georgia
- Pl. II. Map of Sites within 1 Kilometre of the Project Area
- Pl. III. General plan and sections of excavations
- Pl. IV. Plan and sections of excavations
- Pl. V. Plan and sections of excavations
- Pl. VI. Burial No. 2
- Pl. VII. Artefacts from Layer II
- Pl. VIII. Artefacts from Burial No. 2
- Pl. IX. Artefacts from Layers I and II
- Pl. X. Artefacts from Layer I
- Pl. XI. Craniological Material from Burials Nos. 1 and 2

Abstract

This report presents the results of archaeological and laboratory investigations carried out in connection with the construction of the pipeline. The investigations took place at Site IV-338, which is located at the village of Sakire, in Borjomi District, Samtskhe region, KP 199+320.

At Sanatsreebi, near Sakire castle, occupation layers and a pit burial were damaged in digging a trench for the gas pipeline. Work was temporarily stopped at this section and the expedition began small-scale excavations with the object of identifying the nature and stratigraphy of the site, cleaning the damaged burial, gathering data, and creating documentation.

Field and laboratory work was carried out by the Borjomi Archaeological Expedition of the Otar Lordkipanidze Centre of Archaeology under the supervision of Irine Gambashidze in 2005-2007.

The expedition studied occupation layers 3.0-3.5 m wide within an area of 32 square metres. The research showed that the site was a Late Bronze to Early Medieval period multi-layer settlement and cemetery. The first layer of the site belongs to the Early Medieval settlement: a wine cellar, where four wine storage jars and a pit filled with stone were found. The second layer consists of two levels: one of them produced two Hellenistic period burials, while another had remains of a settlement of an even earlier date, damaged when the burials were originally dug. The excavations produced 97 artefacts.

1.0 Introduction

Purpose of the Investigation

At Sanatsreebi, near Sakire castle, occupation layers and a pit burial were damaged while digging a trench for the gas pipeline. Work was temporarily stopped at this section and the expedition began small-scale excavations with the object of identifying the nature and stratigraphy of the site, cleaning the damaged burial, gathering data, and creating documentation.

Project Sponsor

Field investigations and laboratory processing and analysis were funded by the BTC Pipeline Company.

Permits and Contract Numbers

Permit N3, form N1 issued by the Archaeological Board of the Georgian Academy of Sciences licensed Irine Gambashidze to conduct archaeological investigations in Borjomi and Akhaltsikhe Districts, on the area of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline construction.

Contract references related to the works are C-03-BTC-52923, C-03-SCP-52927, HL-194, HL – 196, HL – 197, HL – 242.

Legal requirements

According to Georgian legislation the Archaeological Board of the Georgian Academy of Sciences was authorized to license any kind of archaeological work on Georgian territory. The archaeological work had to be carried out according to the requirements of the Archaeological Board.

Dates of the Investigation

Archaeological investigations at Sanatsreebi, in the village of Sakire took place 8-17 December 2005.

Final disposition and repository address

Archaeological material from Site IV-338 and the related field and laboratory reports have been deposited with the Otar Lordkipanidze Centre of Archaeology of the Georgian National Museum.

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Archaeological Investigations at Site IV-338, KP199, Sakire Village, Borjomi District

The final depository for the archaeological artefacts will be the Borjomi Museum of Local Lore, History and Economy. Address: 5, St. Nino St 1200, Borjomi, Georgia.

2.0 Environmental background

Borjomi District corresponds to the historical region of Tori. It includes the valley of the Mtkvari from Akhaldaba to Dviri as well as the Gujaretitsqali, Shavtsqala (Borjomula) and some other small river gorges. To the north-west it is bordered by the Meskheta Range and to the south by the Trialeti Range.

The area of Borjomi District is mainly formed by Eocene volcanogenic layers, andesite, tuff and sedimentary deposits. Quaternary river and lake deposits also occur. There are volcanic centres at Bakuriani, Gujareti and Dabadzveli. Noteworthy among relatively large formations is the Tsikhisjvari lava plateau.

The climate is transitional from continental subtropical to humid subtropical with cold winters and long summers. The average annual temperature is 6°-10° Celsius, the annual temperature amplitude 23°-25°, the average annual precipitation 400-600 mm, and the average snow cover 20-40 cm (*Georgian Physical Geography* 2000).

Borjomi District is rich in vegetation. Over 1,600 species of plants exist in the region. Woodlands are predominantly fir and beech, although pine also occurs. In mixed woods in addition to coniferous trees, there occur beech, maple, oak, and birch. Above 2,100 metres woods give way to sub-alpine meadows.

The fauna is diverse. It includes a number of mammals such as deer, roe, otter, squirrel, badger, marten, wolf, fox, rarely bear, and very occasionally lynx; birds such as eagle, Caucasian black grouse, woodpecker. The rivers contain mainly trout and barbel (*Georgian Soviet Encyclopedia* 1977). Borjomi District is rich in natural warm springs. In the village of Sakire and its environs there are cold turbulent springs. Nearby, at the village of Dviri there are warm springs that possess medical properties.

2.1 Site Location and Description

The settlement and cemetery are located at Sanatsreebi, south-east of the village of Sakire, Borjomi District. The site covers an area of about two hectares and is situated at an altitude of 1,358 metres on a steep slope on the right bank of the river Sakirula, a tributary on the right of the river Mtkvari.

Geologically the relief is of volcanic origin. The site area is covered with sterile greyish-white soil. The site soil overlies bedrock to a depth of about one metre. Most of the area near the site is covered in woods and shrubs.

2.2 Past Environment

The earliest settlement in Georgia was discovered at Dmanisi, where stone artefacts and faunal material of the Olduvai period (of 1.8 million years ago) were found together with hominid remains. It is also worth mentioning Akhalkalaki Amiranisgora, otherwise the only Early Acheulean site in south-east Georgia, and which was succeeded in time by hundreds of sites of different periods of the Stone Age (Gabunia, Vekua 2005). Anthropological and palaeontological materials from these sites have great importance for the study of the environmental development of Georgia in the Quaternary period (between the Pleistocene and Early Holocene).

Before the Mindel period (0.6-0.7million years ago) in present day Georgia there was a moderately warm climate and a savannah-type landscape. A dramatic change of climate took place at the beginning of the Mindel period. This phenomenon occurred in Georgia too, although, due to its southern location, there was no large-scale fall of temperature here. After this the Mindel-Riss warm period began which was followed by the Riss period, the greatest glaciation in the history of the Earth. The Riss glaciation was followed by the warm interglacial epoch, which can be dated to 120-70,000 years ago.

About 70,000 ago there began dramatic fall in temperature, which brought about the Wurm glaciation. This glaciation strongly affected human settlement patterns in the Stone Age. Because of the severe conditions humans left the upland and highland areas and used them only during the warm summer season, mainly for hunting. In this period in Georgia humans lived only in the plains.

The transition from old to new Stone Age coincided with the transitional stage from the upper Pleistocene to the Holocene (approximately 10-12,000 years ago). At this time there occurred dramatic changes in environmental conditions and it began to get much warmer.

In the Mesolithic period humans went back to the highlands which had been abandoned during the previous Wurm glaciation. Since then humans have lived in every landscape zone in Georgia. During the period after the Holocene glaciation the environment did not change much. (Georgian Archaeology, 1991).

Thanks to faunal and floral data we can to a certain extent reconstruct the palaeo-ecological picture of Georgian territory in the Pleistocene. No substantial environmental changes occurred between the Early Pleistocene and Early Holocene. The climate was moderately arid and warm (Gabunia, Vekua, 1997, pp. 13-15). The landscape of eastern Georgia consisted of medium height mountain ranges traversed by deep gorges. Studies of floral fossils suggest that in the forests of the eastern Georgian plains there grew thermophilic tree species and those suited to a climate of average humidity, such as oak, willow, poplar, aspen, birch, or walnut, (Gabunia, Vekua, 1978). Studies of bone material of mammal fossils suggest the existence of the following mammals: raccoon-like dog, hyena, lynx, sabre-toothed tiger, porcupine, mastodon, giant *damana*, rhinoceros,

elephant, reindeer, fawn, oryx, hornless cow, and birds such as the ostrich (Gabunia, Vekua 1997).

2.3 Land use History

In the area next to Sanatsreebi the Early Medieval Gujari fortress and settlement are located. The settlement preserves remains of stone buildings, including church ruins. There is arable land on the south-east side of the site.

3.0 Cultural Background

3.1 Prehistoric and Historic Contexts

Lower Palaeolithic (2,000,000-100,000 years ago)

Geologically, the lower Palaeolithic corresponds to the early stage of Pleistocene. It was then that a human of modern appearance emerged. The first representatives of the genus *Homo* (*Homo erectus*) lived in small groups and fed themselves with natural resources from around their dwellings. On the territory of Georgia there is evidence for this period at Dmanisi. Here, alongside stone inventories and Pliocene fauna fossils, remains of *Homo erectus* were also found, the oldest of those discovered outside Africa. Together with evidence from Ubeidiya in the Jordan Valley, they suggest the route of hominid migration beyond Africa.

There exist 16 sites in Georgia where Acheulean type stone tools have been found belonging to the Palaeolithic period or later. Two of these sites are located in the southern part of the country in an area adjacent to the ROW.

Middle Palaeolithic (100,000-35,000 years ago)

This period coincides with the appearance of the oldest *Homo sapiens* or Neanderthal man. In Europe and south-east Asia the later stage of this period of human history is marked by what is generally termed the Mousterian stone tool culture which, compared to the Acheulean is more sophisticated and is represented by tools of more diverse shapes. Like northern Europe, Georgia spent most of this period in a glacial or periglacial environment. More than 75 sites producing Mousterian stone tools have been found in Georgia. Seven were found in southern Georgia, in the main region of the project area.

Upper Palaeolithic (35,000-14,000 years ago)

Upper Palaeolithic corresponds to Late Pleistocene. During this period the technology of making stone tools greatly improved. Some archaeologists consider that the diversity of stone tools excavated at different sites might point to the existence of culturally different human groups.

The emergence of verbal communication is also attributed to this period. The principal occupation of the inhabitants of Georgia in the Upper Palaeolithic must have been hunting in groups. Their prey will have included deer, bison, wild horse, wild goat, bear, and the cave lion, remains of all of which are found in abundance on upper Palaeolithic sites. People lived in natural caves or grottoes, near the paths of hunted animals.

Three of the 33 or more significant upper Palaeolithic sites discovered in Georgia are in southern Georgia, but none of them is near the ROW.

Mesolithic (12,000-8,000 BC)

The beginning of the Mesolithic period is defined by the end of the Pleistocene and the beginning of the Holocene. Once the Würm glaciation was over, the climate became milder which made it possible to occupy considerably larger areas. Hunting remained the main means of sustenance but humans started looking for more diverse quarry. They hunted animals of different sizes such as deer, horses and sheep that lived in herds as well as separately.

The systematic gathering of seasonal plant products became an important part of the domestic economy. The people of the period, whether in Georgia, Europe or south-western Asia, switched from caves to occupying open areas. The diversification of materials and tools is a characteristic feature of this period. Microliths (flint and obsidian burins) and burnished stones used for processing plants are quite common at this time. Stone sinkers and harpoons point to the popularity of fishing. The transition from upper Palaeolithic to Mesolithic is simply identified as the process of adapting to diverse and more available resources conditioned by the mild environment of the Holocene. In Georgia there are 12 significant Mesolithic sites, but none of them is near the ROW.

Neolithic and Eneolithic periods (8,000-3,500 BC)

The beginning of Neolithic is known as a revolutionary period since it was then that dramatic changes in economic life occurred. Hunting and gathering were replaced by farming and livestock breeding and the cultivation of crops and domestication of animals began, as did the practice of using pottery for the storage and preparation of vegetable food. Stone tools like the hand-axe, sickle, grindstone and hoe, which were used for clearing and ploughing earth, became common.

Unlike Palaeolithic and Mesolithic, Neolithic archaeological complexes in Georgia are mainly represented by fragments of pottery (vessels for preparing and keeping food), which points to the great importance attached to food preparation and preservation.

The first isolated Neolithic structures in Georgia consisted of round or ellipsoid rooms open towards one another. They were built of adobe and were probably strengthened with wooden beams. Dwellings were roofed with tree branches and clay. The organization of a settlement is clear from the site of Imiri hill in Kvemo Kartli (southern Georgia).

In the 6th-5th millennia BC an advanced farming culture was formed in eastern Georgia. Remains of a wide variety of wheat, barley, millet, oats, pea, lentil, melon, sorrel, etc. have been found. Grape pips discovered there are supposed to be transitional to the domesticated grapevine. A simple irrigation system was also practiced.

About 60 Neolithic sites are known in Georgia. Most of them are in western Georgia, although their concentration can also be observed in southern parts of the country. One site of Late Neolithic (Eneolithic) is located in the area contiguous to the project in Akhaltsikhe District.

Bronze Age (3,500-800 BC)

Bronze Age culture in Europe, Mediterranean and south-west Asia formed a new type of society based on cattle breeding and agriculture, the technical development of pottery and raw metal processing. It was the first stratified society ruled by a military and religious elite. Their high social status is reflected in elaborate jewellery made of precious stones, precious metals and bronze.

The Bronze Age is divided into Early, Middle and Late Bronze periods. On the territory of Georgia the earliest culture of this epoch is represented by the Kura-Araxis Culture, which developed in the Neolithic period and Early Bronze Age (3,500-2,500 BC). It is characterized by adobe, stone or earth and timber wall constructions, advanced pottery and metallurgical activities and, at the same time, by developed agriculture and cattle breeding. Remains of this culture are concentrated in the central part of southern Georgia. It was also widespread over the territories of present-day Armenia, Azerbaijan and eastern Turkey and even to the south reaching Syria and Palestine.

The area adjacent to Sakire and Tadzrisi seems to have been intensively populated since the Early Bronze Age. In 2005 a settlement of the Kura-Araxis Culture was found at Tislis Seri, near Tadzrisi.

The Kura-Araxis Culture was replaced by the Early Kurgan Culture, which had two stages: Martqopi and Bedena. In 2004 a Martqopi stage kurgan of the Early Kurgan Culture was excavated at Kodiana hill, KP193 of the ROW (Report of the Borjomi Archaeological Expedition 2004). To the east of Sakire, at Qochos Gora, a settlement and cemetery of the second millennium BC were discovered as a result of prospecting. The diverse bronze tools and ornaments found here are typical of what is often termed “Meskhian” metal production.

In the Middle Bronze Age the Trialeti Culture became widespread (2,500-1,500 BC). Its impact extended even beyond the borders of present-day Georgia, to the south and to the east. The name of the culture derives from the Trialeti plateau (the south-central part of Georgia which is traversed by the pipeline corridor), where the first archaeological investigation of its remains was conducted in the 1930s. The Trialeti Culture is characterized by large kurgans, fine pottery, bronze metallurgy and jewellery. The Trialeti Culture has only been studied through the medium of burial complexes. Inhabited settlements belonging to this culture have not yet been discovered.

In the Late Bronze Age a rapid process of consolidation of south Georgian tribes occurred, reflected in the formation of a homogeneous culture among related tribes over a vast area. In western Georgia Colchian Culture developed in the Late Bronze Age. In the 13th-12th centuries BC great pre-state unions were formed on the bases of these two cultures, the Diaokh (in the south-western part of historical Georgia, now in Turkey) and the Colchian (in western Georgia).

During the last stage of the Middle Bronze Age (mid-second millennium BC) and in the Late Bronze Age, Samtskhe, Javakheti and Tori were being settled with particular

intensity and became culturally advanced. Among the Bronze Age sites recovered in these areas the following should be mentioned: a chance find of an occupation level in the village of Rveli (*Izvestia Arkheologicheskoi Komisii*, 1911 [in Russian]); the remains of a metallurgical workshop and several burials in the village of Tsagveri; the remains of a copper and bronze processing workshop and characteristic associated material from Gujareti gorge; chance finds of bronze artefacts in the village of Telovani (Colchian axes, metal moulds, ingots, etc.), recognized to be material of special importance (O. Gambashidze, 1967); a cemetery in the village of Gomna (G. Nioradze, 1943, p. 173). In the 1970s and 1980s Trialeti Culture burial sites of the Middle Bronze Age (Japaridze, Kikvidze, Avalishvili, Tsereteli 1981) and Late Bronze-Early Iron Age sites were excavated in the villages of Rveli, Chitakhevi, Kviratskhoveli, Bornighele, Berbukebi and Machartsqali; also Middle Bronze Age kurgans at Zveli and Okroqana-Akhcha (Gambashidze, Kvizhinadze, 1979, pp. 55-60; 1981, pp. 57-64; 1985, pp. 31-36 [in Russian]).

Iron Age and Early Classical Period (800-500 BC).

At the beginning of the first millennium BC the transition from bronze processing to iron metallurgy brought about significant changes in economic development and social life.

In eastern Georgia the oldest centre of iron production was Kvemo Kartli, which was rich in iron ores. Iron Age sites have also been found in Tsalka and Borjomi Districts. In western Georgia there is evidence for iron production centres both in the coastal areas of the Black Sea as well as inland, whence iron was exported to Greek cities.

This period is marked by the decline of Kartvelian communities. Diaokh was destroyed by the kingdom of Urartu in the tenth or ninth century BC. Colchis collapsed around 720 BC as a result of the Cimmerian invasions.

Classical Period (500-325 BC)

During this period eastern Georgia was under the strong political and cultural influence of Achaemenid Persia. This influence is demonstrated in the Akhalgori treasure and in the finds from Tsikhiagora. A process of consolidation of the various tribes took place in which Meskhian tribes played a leading role. It was at this time that the city of Mtskheta was founded.

In the second half of the 6th century BC in western Georgia the kingdom of Colchis was created with its cities, religious centres, advanced and complex craft systems and wide international contacts. In the 6th-4th centuries BC Greek cities emerged on the Black Sea Coast: at Phasis (near Poti), Gienos (Ochamchire), and Dioskuria (Sokhumi), a development that promoted an increase and extension of economic and cultural ties for Colchis. The wide trade contacts that Colchis had with the Greek world are attested to by Classical authors as well as by a broad range of archaeological material. In the main, the Colchians exported wood and flax and imported luxuries such as precious vessels and jewellery. Here both Greek coins and locally minted Colchian tri-obols were in

circulation. Excavations at the city of Vani, the religious centre of the kingdom, which have been conducted since 1947, have revealed some extraordinarily rich archaeological material.

Hellenistic Period (325-65 BC)

Alexander of Macedon did not invade Iberia and Colchis. Georgia was left beyond the Hellenistic world, although political, trade, economic and cultural contacts had a great influence upon the development of the country.

At the turn of the 4th-3rd centuries BC in eastern Georgia, the kingdom of Iberia (Kartli) was formed with its capital in Mtskheta as a result of a struggle between separate groups. Georgian historical tradition (*Kartlis Tskhovreba* ["Life of Kartli"]) mentions Parnavaz as the first king and ascribes to him the building of the citadel Armaztsikhe, and the erection of an idol of Armaz. Parnavaz had close contacts with the Hellenistic kingdom of the Seleucids and established a similar state organization.

In Hellenistic times, one of the most important trade and transit routes went through Georgia, which helped to spread Greek production (e.g. pottery, metalwork and stone-carving) throughout the country. The Hellenistic monetary system was introduced: in Colchis: coins of Lysimachus were minted, while in Iberia they made gold imitations of Alexander staters.

The Hellenistic period is marked by an intensification of the process of urbanization and city development. It was then that Mtskheta, the capital of Iberia, and Vani, the main religious centre of Colchis, prospered. Hellenistic building methods and certain types of buildings became widespread. Some crafts also show evidence of Hellenistic influence, for example, the vertical loom was introduced in textile production. Greek religious cults (especially that of Dionysus) and beliefs became popular, also reflected in burial practice, e.g. the placing of coins in burials as payment to Charon.

Roman Period

In 65 BC, the Roman commander Pompey invaded Caucasia and conquered Iberia and Colchis as well as other countries. Colchis became a province of the empire. Roman garrisons were stationed in coastal cities (Phasis, Dioskuria, Trapezus, Apsaros) until the 4th century AD. Iberia maintained its royal power. The Iberian kings Mithridates I, Parsman I, Parsman II defended themselves from both Rome and Parthia but with unequal success. In the 2nd and the beginning of the 3rd century AD Iberia was a strong state with an independent policy.

At this time the status of Mtskheta, the capital of Iberia, was enhanced. In 75 AD the wall of the Armazi castle was fortified with the help of the Romans. A well-preserved vaulted crypt built of hewn stone points to a high level of architectural sophistication. A tombstone with a Greek inscription found in Mtskheta attests to the existence there in the 3rd or 4th century of the position of head of architects and artists.

In the 2nd-3rd century necropolis in Armaziskhevi near Mtskheta, a cup with an Aramaic inscription and Parthian gold coins were excavated. There are numerous burials of this period in the Samtavro necropolis in Mtskheta itself. Greek and Hebrew inscriptions, coins, quantities of jewellery, silver and glassware have been unearthed there.

Thanks to the influence of Roman culture and way of life Georgian cities began to acquire baths with water pipes and drainage systems (e.g. Armaziskhevi, Bagineti, Urbnisi, Dzalisa, Bichvinta, Shukhuti. In the last three remains of mosaic floors have been found).

Early Medieval Period (4th-10th centuries)

In Georgia, the year of the conversion of Kartli to Christianity, either 326 or 337, is conventionally the beginning of the Medieval period. The establishment of Christianity in eastern Georgia is associated with St Nino, who first converted Queen Nana and then King Mirian and the whole pagan population of Mtskheta. Very large Christian communities already existed in the coastal cities of western Georgia, although Christianity was only later declared to be the state religion in the kingdom of Egrisi.

In the 5th and 6th centuries the Byzantine Empire and Sassanid Iran fought to establish their rule in Georgia. In the second half of the 5th century Vakhtang Gorgasali, king of Kartli, successfully met the aggression of his powerful neighbours. His name is associated with the founding of the city of Tbilisi, which soon became the capital of Kartli. He was also responsible for founding the Kartlian Patriarchate, from which emerged the autocephalous status of the Georgian church.

In 627 the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius invaded Kartli. According to *Kartlis Tskhovreba* ("Life of Kartli") he built several churches there, among them Atskuri cathedral. In the middle of the 7th century the Arabs conquered Georgia. In the 9th century a powerful kingdom was formed in Tao-Klarjeti (historical south-western Georgia, now in Turkey) with the Bagrationi royal family at its head. The great monastic movement that developed in this area under the leadership of St. Grigol Khandzteli was followed by significant cultural advances. At this time western Georgia was part of the kingdom of Abkhazia, but in 978 Bagrat III became the king of both kingdoms, through which he initiated the unification of Georgia. The end of the 10th and the beginning of the 11th century are marked by an extraordinary flowering of art and architecture.

By the Early Middle Ages the province of Tori already existed on present-day Borjomi territory. In the middle of the 9th century two of disciples of St. Grigol of Khandzta, Theodore and Christopher established themselves here. Their foundation of two monasteries, Nedzvi and Kviriketsminda, was followed by a huge wave of monastic building. In the second half of the 9th century cloisters were constructed at Likani, Chitakhevi ("Mtsvane Monastery"), Kvabiskhevi, Dviri. By the 10th century this movement also reached the Tadzrisi-Sakire region. It was then that monasteries were built at Sanarias Gele, in Sakire itself, and at the present-day cemetery at Tadzrisi and

Gujriskhevi. The last-mentioned is located in the immediate vicinity of the Sanatsreebi settlement. Gujristikhe is also nearby, and was apparently once the residence of the local governor.

Site surveys have revealed dozens of Medieval settlements in the vicinity of Sakire-Tadzrisi, which indicates a high population density.

High Medieval Period (11th-14th centuries)

During the first half of the 11th century kings Giorgi I and Bagrat IV attempted to complete the unification of Georgia and to eradicate any Byzantine influence. In the 1070s the country's development was thwarted by an invasion of Seljuk Turks. During the reign of David IV the Builder (1089-1125), however, Georgia started to advance again. David annexed Kakheti, which had been a separate kingdom before then, as well as Tbilisi, which had been in Arab hands for 400 years. By these means the political unification of Georgia was finally achieved. David made Georgia the most powerful state in the region and defeated the Seljuk Turks in several battles. His success was assisted by the activities of the Crusaders in the Near East. Georgia remained a powerful unified state under David's successors and achieved the culmination of its power in the reign of Queen Tamar (1178-1213). Tamar's kingdom covered almost the whole of Transcaucasia, while its influence extended as far as the northern Caucasus and the empire of Trebizond. In 1235 Georgia was conquered by the Mongols. Now began a gradual degradation of the state system, of economics and culture. This process could not be halted by the occasional successes of Giorgi IV the Brilliant (1314-1346) or of Alexandre I (1412-1442). After the collapse of the Byzantine Empire in 1453 the country seemed to be surrounded by Moslem countries. In the second half of the 15th century Georgia disintegrated into several separate kingdoms and provinces.

Late Medieval Period (16th-18th centuries)

The Late Medieval period was a time of serious political, economic and cultural crisis in Georgia. A country that had disintegrated into kingdoms and provinces could not withstand its enemies and often became the victim of invasion. In the 16th to 18th centuries Kartli and Kakheti were mainly subordinated to Iran. Western Georgia was under Ottoman influence.

Late Medieval Period (16th-18th centuries)

In the 1570s south-west Georgia (Samtskhe-Saatabago), including Tori, became part of the Ottoman Empire. In 1613 Tori was returned to Kartli. The unification of Kartli and Kakheti and several successful wars conducted by Erekle II were followed by the devastating invasion of the Iranians in 1795. Although in the 17th-18th centuries Tori remained within the borders of Kartli, its condition was especially poor. Kartlian kings were unable to defend these border regions. Tori was permanently ravaged. Particularly violent were raids by the Lezgin, who attacked Tori from Akhaltsikhe. The population became significantly less numerous. Some were killed in battle against the enemy and

others migrated to Kartli and Imereti. By the end of the 18th century the Borjomi Valley was abandoned, apart from a small of population remaining in the mountains and narrow gorges (and also around Tadzrisi-Sakire). At KP201 of the pipeline near Tadzrisi part of the 17th-18th century settlement has been found (Ramishvili, Mindorashvili, 2005, pp. 12-10).

Modern Period (19th-20th centuries)

The Persian invasion of 1795 involved the country in disaster. The Russian Empire took advantage of the situation and annexed the kingdom of Kartli and Kakheti in 1801. This was followed by the conquest of the kingdom of Imereti and of the provinces of Guria, Megrelia and Abkhazia. In 1828, following her victory over the Ottoman empire, Russia annexed Samtskhe-Javakheti, and in 1878 Ajara and Shavshet-Klarjeti. It was through Russia that European culture and a European life style penetrated Georgia.

Tori began to be resettled from the 19th century onwards. People moved from upper Imereti and lower Kartli. Here Greeks also settled (in Tsikhisjvari), as did Ossetians (in Bakuriani, Mitarbi), Russians, and Ukrainians. In 1871 the Borjomi valley became the princely estate of the Great Russian governor Mikhail, son of Nikolai.

In 1918, after the Russian revolution, Georgia gained its independence. In 1921, Bolshevik Russia annexed Georgia once more and made it into a Soviet Socialist Republic.

In 1991 Georgian independence was restored.

3.2 summary of Previous Research

Before the construction of the BTC/SCP pipelines no archaeological excavations had been carried out in the environs of Sakire-Tadzrisi. Only site surveys had been conducted in the area in the seventies and eighties of the 20th century by the Samtskhe-Javakheti Archaeological Expedition, which revealed a wide variety of sites. None of them appeared within a one kilometre radius of the Sanatsreebi settlement.

During the building process three sites were identified within 1 kilometre radius of the site IV-338. None of them have been researched or published.

| Site Name | Pipeline (km) | Site Type | Date |
|-----------------------------|---------------|------------|----------|
| The Kurtanidze Land, Sakire | 198 | settlement | ? |
| Sanakhshireebi, Tadzrisi | 200 | settlement | Medieval |
| Gigastsqaro, Tadzrisi | 200 | settlement | Medieval |

4.0 Methodology

4.1 Field Methods

A datum point was chosen outside the area to be investigated. The area was divided into squares of 10m x 10m. The squares were partitioned into grids of 2m x 2m. On the plan the 10m x 10m squares were denoted by a capital letter of Latin alphabet and an Arabic numeral, e. g. A/15, while the 2m x 2m grid was identified by a small Latin letter and an Arabic numeral.

Both manual labour and a mechanical excavator were used in the excavations. On site, earth and sterile layers were removed manually, while the trenches were extended with the help of machinery.

The area under investigation was dug layer by layer, by removing 0.2 metre thick strata until features were revealed.

Each feature was numbered, measured and drawn. A general plan of the square was made and the features drawn in section. Photo documentation of both site and artefacts was made. The material was collected and recorded according to layers. The material was wrapped in the field and labelled. Undiagnostic potsherds were buried in a specially dug pit on the field. The other artefacts were taken from the field for laboratory processing.

Only crania were collected for anthropological investigation. The rest of the bone material was reburied in a specially dug pit outside the ROW.

4.2 Laboratory Methods

The artefacts were grouped according to material and place of recovery. Pottery artefacts were cleaned with brushes and washed in a solution of hydrochloric acid. A stylistic and typological analysis was subsequently carried out.

Every artefact was numbered, described and catalogued, labelled and placed in a plastic bag.

Digital photos were classified.

Palaeo-anthropological research was conducted, and the methods and results are described in the accompanying interdisciplinary report.

Hard copy and electronic versions are deposited at the Otar Lordkipanidze Centre of Archaeology of the Georgian National Museum.

5.0 Results

5.1 *Basic Data Summary*

The investigated area is situated at the bottom of the SE slope of Gujris Tsikhe (Sakiris Tsikhe). Over an area of 32 sq. m, 3.0-3.5 m thick occupation layers were studied.

Excavations revealed a settlement, two Hellenistic period burials, an Early Medieval wine-cellar with four wine storage jars and a household pit, and also the remains of walls of different periods.

A total of ninety-seven artefacts were recovered: four wine storage jars, 81 fragments of pottery, two stone artefacts (a hand mill fragment and a bead), two bronze objects, 37 glass-like paste beads, two architectural details made of mortar. The anthropological material consisted of two crania, and the palaeo-zoological of five items.

Research showed that the site was a Late Bronze to Early Medieval multi-layer settlement and cemetery.

The upper occupation Layer I was an Early Medieval settlement. At a distance of 9.4-9.6 m from the datum point, in grids b 4-5, c5 and d4 of Square E5, four wine storage jars were identified. They had been buried in the earth in a row aligned EW. At the same level, in Square E5c2 there appeared a pit filled with stones and earth that had been damaged during the construction of the pipeline. Potsherds, mostly painted black, were found in the pit. In grids a3,4; b3,4,5 and c3 were casually heaped stones which included fragments of pottery.

Occupation Layer I was followed by a 0.8-1.0m thick sterile sandy layer, beneath which the two building levels of Occupation Layer II were recorded. At the first building level of Occupation Layer II, at 10.5m from the datum point, in the eastern corner of the pit, we cleaned the remains of a wall of huge stones (grid d2,3), that continued through the southern section of the pit. Lack of time meant that we were not able to study it more fully.

The building strata of Occupation Layer II were separated by a 1.3m thick dump of ash, charcoal and crushed stone. This layer contains undiagnostic potsherds and palaeo-zoological remains.

At the second building level of the Occupation Layer II, at a distance of 11.8m from datum, in grids b3; c2,3 and d2 of Square E5 there appeared remains of walls built of average size stones using a dry-stone masonry technique. The walls are fragmentary and their function thus remains indeterminate.

Layer II is cut by two Hellenistic burials. One of them (Pit Burial No. 1) was damaged while making a trench for the gas pipeline. The pit burials were situated at a distance of 11.10-11.20m from datum.

5.2 *Features*

The remains of a wine cellar with 4 wine storage jars were cleaned in Occupation Layer I. They were identified at a distance of 9.4-9.5m from datum, within grids b5, c5 and d4 of Square E5. The wine storage jars were laid in the earth in a single row 5m long and aligned EW. Their compact nature suggests that we might be dealing with a wine cellar. Inside the wine storage jars, 45 fragments of 14 different items of pottery and 5 fragments of animal bones were identified.

In Layer I, in grid c2 of Square E5, at a distance of 9.4-9.5m from datum, a household pit was cleaned. Half of it had been cut by technical equipment when the trench was dug for the gas pipeline. The pit was 1.1m deep, and its diameter at the top was 1.0m, and 0.5m at the bottom. The pit was filled with stone and earth including seven fragments of three clay vessels (No. 8, No. 10, No. 11).

Occupation Layer II is contained two building levels.

At Level I of Occupation Layer II, the remains of a wall were excavated in the eastern corner of Square E5, grids d2,3,4, at a distance of 10.5m from datum. The wall was built with large stones using a dry-stone masonry technique. Three or four courses of the masonry were preserved to a height of 0.8m (width 0.5m). Near the wall a burnt, spherical, white sardonyx bead (No. 97) was found at Level II of Occupation Layer II. In the eastern corner of the pit, where burials Nos. 1 and 2 were found, a small fragment, a single course of masonry, of a wall built with medium and small stones was preserved. It was 1.5m long and 0.45m wide. The wall was situated in grids d2 and c2,3 of Square E5, at a distance of 11.5 metres from datum.

The remains of another wall were identified in the western part of the pit, in grid b3, at a distance of 11.8m from datum. The wall was built with dry masonry, with large uncut stones. Two courses of stones were preserved to a height of 0.8m (width 0.5m). The precise purpose of the wall remained unclear due to the limits of the excavated area.

Two pit burials were cut into the second building horizon of Occupation Layer II. Both burials were aligned EW. They were crouch burials, one lying on its side and another on the back. Grave goods occurred only in No. 2. The finds consisted of:

1. A pair of bronze earrings (No. 61, No. 62);
2. Two glass-paste beads (No. 63);
3. A ceramic jug (No. 64) (Pl. VIII)

5.3 Artefacts

A total of 97 artefacts were recovered at Site IV-338 during the rescue work carried out at Sanatsreebi settlement: four wine storage jars, 81 fragments of pottery, two stone artefacts (a hand mill fragment and a bead), 2 bronze objects, 37 glass-like paste beads, two architectural details made of mortar. The anthropological material consisted of two crania, and the palaeo-zoological of five items.

The majority of the finds are ceramic. After restoration it became possible to classify them by types. The artefacts are discussed here according to occupation layers and levels.

The first building level of Occupation Layer II dates to the 6th-5th centuries BC. The following type of pottery was identified here: pots (No. 27, No. 29 [2], No. 82), judging by rim and wall fragments of rim and side, there were four pots in question (Pl. VII, 82). They were all plain with a blackish-grey exterior. They were wheel made with low necks, out-turned rims and rounded lips. The pots appeared in the occupation layer, were used for domestic purposes, and date to the 6th-5th centuries BC.

A sardonyx (?) bead (No. 97), plain, spherical, burnt white in a fire (Pl. VII, 97); handmade, burnished; found at the remains of the wall in the first building horizon in Square A3; used as an ornament; dateable to the 6th-5th centuries BC.

Bowls (No. 26, No. 28 (2 items), No. 34, No. 40, No. 41, No. 49): at the lower building level, fragments of seven bowls were found (Pl. VII, 26). The bowls differ from each other in shape, are wheel made, and are either hemispherical (No. 28, No. 40), rimmed (No. 26, No. 41), or have ribbed sides (No. 49). The fragments are plain, blackish-brown and have a pale pink exterior and interior. The bowl fragments were discovered in the occupation layer and in the fill of Burial No. 2. They are dateable to the 6th-5th centuries BC.

Two spindle whorls (No. 48 and No. 51) (Pl. VII, 48), made from pottery fragments. Both are plain, one is perforated, the other half-finished; one is black, the other reddish-pink. They appeared in the western part of the trench, outside the circular wall on the bedrock. They possessed both a domestic and ritual function. They were discovered in the 6th-5th century BC layer. In general, similar spindle whorls were also very common in the Early Medieval period.

Hand mill; a fragment was found within the circular wall; made of basalt; used in the household for grinding grains and seeds; belongs to the Early Classical period.

The second building level of Occupation Layer II belongs to the 3rd-1st centuries BC. It produced:

One small jug (No. 64) (Pl. VIII, 64); plain, wheel made, black-polished exterior and interior; the handle attached to rim and shoulder; pear-shaped; identified in Pit Burial No. 2; dateable to the 3rd-1st centuries BC.

Beads (No. 63), whitish glass-paste, 37 items, round and flat (Pl. VIII, 63); found in Pit Burial No. 2; dateable to the 3rd-1st centuries BC.

Pair of earrings (No. 61), bronze (Pl. VIII, 61); the ring is open, plain, made from a bronze rod round in section; found in Pit Burial No. 2; dateable to the 3rd-1st centuries BC.

Occupation Layer I belongs to the 5th-7th centuries AD. It contained four wine storage jars as well as fragments of various kinds of pottery.

Wine storage jars Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4; in the first layer, presumably the remains of a wine cellar, four wine storage jars were found (Pl. IX, 2). All of them are decorated with rope-like relief bands between shoulder and base. One has a rope-like meander relief; the wine storage jars are oval, with out-turned rims and flat lips; greyish-black exterior, greyish interior; the wine storage jars were hand-built with clay coils. They were identified in the southern part of the trench, placed in a row aligned EW; they were used for storing wine, and are dateable to 5th-7th centuries AD.

Pots (No. 7 [3], No. 8, No. 18 [2], No. 23, No. 23, No. 58, No. 65, No. 71), in Occupation Layer I and in the fills of the wine storage jars sherds of 10 pots were found (Pl. X, 65). The pots have plain exteriors and show traces of concentric circles from the potter's wheel. They have low necks, wide, out-turned and thickened (occasionally faceted) rims, greyish-black exterior and exterior. This kind of a vessel, especially the smaller pots, was used as kitchenware. The pots date to the 5th-6th centuries AD.

Washbasin (No. 72), represented by rim and wall fragments of a single item in Occupation Layer I (Pl. X, 72). It was wheel made with a carelessly executed exterior, an incurved rim, and a thickened lip. The fragment of the washbasin was found inside the filling of wine storage jar No. 3. It was used for domestic purposes, and dateable to the 5th-7th centuries AD.

Large pot (No. 10), a single fragment from the rim and neck of this ware was found in the upper Occupation Layer I (Pl. X, 10). It was wheel made with a carelessly executed exterior, an out-turned rim, a round lip, and a reddish-pink exterior and interior. Found at the bottom of Pit No. 1. Large pots had domestic uses. Dateable to the 5th-7th centuries AD.

Bowls (No. 20; No. 79), the rims and sides of two bowls were found. The exterior of the rim of one bowl is decorated with notches (No. 20). Both wheel made with incurved rims, one has a flat lip, while the other has a thickened one. Both are brownish-red externally. They were both used in the kitchen, and are dateable to the 5th-7th centuries AD.

In the settlement there appeared a fragment of a ceramic vessel (No. 57) (Pl. VII, 57). It was fired brown, and was decorated on the exterior with herring-bone ornament. It recalls diagnostic elements of the pottery of the Late Bronze-Early Iron Age. Material with

similar ornament has been found in the Bornighele cemetery (Borjomi District) and dates to the 8th-7th centuries BC.

6.0 Interpretation

Our research has shown that the Sanatsreebi area has been constantly inhabited since the Late Bronze Age. A multi-layer settlement and cemetery of Late Bronze to Early Medieval period were identified. **Layer I** of the site (four wine storage jars and a household pit) belongs to an Early Medieval settlement. **Layer II** consists of two building levels: one contains two Hellenistic burials and the other produced remains of an earlier settlement that was damaged while arranging the burials.

According to the stratigraphy of the site, the Hellenistic burials must have been deposited where there was an already devastated Late Bronze Age settlement, while the Early Medieval layer emerges only after a sterile 2.3 metre thick layer had accumulated over the Hellenistic stratum.

Beneath the floors of the Early Medieval dwellings there appeared Late Classical period remains: the skeletons of the deceased buried crouch fashion in pit burials. In lower layers some finds (jugs; low, one-handled, flat based or fluted small black pots), in particular those from the burials, seem to be Hellenistic, but most of the artefacts come from the Late Classical period.

It is remarkable that Hellenistic sites have not hitherto been identified in the Sakire area. In Samtskhe-Javakheti and Tori Hellenistic sites have, however, been found at the settlement in the village of Tabatsquri, Ktsia valley (Burial No. 1), at Atskuri, Bornighele and Tsnisiskhevi cemeteries. (Gambashidze, etc., 1985, 125 [in Russian]; Kvizhinadze 1983, 14-17).

The Early Medieval settlement at Sanatsreebi is the peripheral part of the whole complex. Numerous Early Medieval settlements have been identified in the vicinity of Sakire and Tadzrisi, which are situated in the area next to Gujris (Sakire) Tsikhe. This is a typical fortress, the residence of a local ruler who lived in the centre of a unit that controlled roads in all directions. An Early Medieval church with a rectangular apse is also situated within the fortress (Berdzenishvili 2005, 96; Berdzenishvili 1964, 214-262). Around the fortress there is a large group of Medieval settlements.

The Sanatsreebi settlement is presumably part of this united system, and the recovery of rich ceramic finds typical of this period supports this view. Large wine storage jars ornamented with rope-like bands are dug into the earthen floor. Their forms and fabric are diagnostic of Early Medieval technology. Most of the wine storage jars and large pots have no necks, although their flat and out-turned rims indicate their early date.

It is mainly in eastern Georgia that Early Medieval sites have been identified and studied. The most distinguished sites are Urnisi (Chilashvili, 1964), Zhinvali (Chikhladze, 1999), Ujarma (Muskhelishvili, 1966), and Rustavi (Chilashvili, 1958). The following sites in Tori belong to the same period: Kurukheti settlement in the village of Chobiskhevi,

Gogichaant Ghele, Mandia settlement near the village of Chitakhevi, and Chitakhevi settlement itself. Special attention should be paid to the Navenakhari settlement in the village of Klde. If we consider that the Early Medieval material is identical at both Sanatsreebi and Navenakhari, the obvious conclusion is that these sites are contemporary.

During the High Middle Ages, Sakire, together with adjacent villages, seems to have been an important centre for lime burning, an activity which also lies behind the place name. The residents of the village seem to have been involved in this activity over a long period since there are very many lime-kilns. There is archival evidence for coal mining here too. The neighbouring regions will also doubtless have benefited from the development of these industries in Tori: places such as Javakheti, Samtskhe and, probably, Shida Kartli were provided with lime and coal from Tori. Until recently lime was burnt in such quantities at Sakire that it even supplied the town of Akhaltsikhe.

7.0 Conclusions and Recommendation

The archaeological excavations allow us now to see that the lower layers of the Sanatsreebi settlement are earlier than the Tori we hear about in historical sources. It is clear that ever since the Bronze Age, Sakire and its environs played an important role in structural formation of this region, which eventually resulted in the transformation of the residential centre of the Toreli-Samdzivaris.

The Sanatsreebi settlement lies on the periphery of Gujristsikhe. It is therefore particularly important to establish whether there are any Late Bronze Age or Hellenistic period sites in the Gujristsikhe region, what was the role of the area between the 8th and 1st centuries BC.

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| Material | Function | Form | Segment | Descriptor 1 | Descriptor 2 | Descriptor 3 | Count | Comments | Time Period |
|----------|----------------|--------------------|--|---------------------------|--|--|-------|----------|-------------------|
| | | | | | | | | | |
| | Archaeological | | Investigations at Site IV-338, KP199, Sakire Village, Borjomi District | | | | | | |
| Pottery | House hold | Win e stor age jar | Rim and neck,side, base | Fired Greyis h-black | Out-turned rim, round and flat bottom | Decorated with rope ornament and bands | 24 | | Early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | House hold | Win e stor age jar | Rim and neck, side, base | Fired Blackis h-red | Thicke ned rim, convex side | Decorated with rope ornament | 225 | | Early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | House hold | Win e stor age jar | Rim and neck, side, base | Fired greyish -black | Thicke ned rim, convex body, flat base | Decorated with rope ornament and bands | 160 | | Early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | House hold | Win e stor age jar | Side, base | Fired greyish -black | Convex body, flat base | Decorated with rope ornament and bands | 160 | | Early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | House hold | Win e stor age jar | Side, base | Fired reddish | Uniden tified | Decorated with rope ornament | 36 | | Early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | Kitchen ware | Ves sel | Rim, side, base | Fired blackis h- brown | Out-turned rim, flat base | Carelessly made | 20 | | Early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | Kitchen ware | Pot | Rim, handle, side, base | Fired greyish -black | Out-turned rim, flat base | Carelessly made | 19 | | Early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | House hold | Ves sel | Side | Fired reddish | Uniden tified | Decorated with rope ornament | 5 | | Early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | House hold | Ves sel | Side | Black-Fired grey | Uniden tified | Carelessly made | 6 | | Early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | House hold | Pot | Rim and side | Fired buff | Out-turned rim, concav e neck | Carelessly made | 1 | | Early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | Tableware | Ves sel | Side | Fired reddish | Uniden tified | Carelessly made | 1 | | Early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | Kitchen ware | Ves sel | Neck, base, side | greyish - blackis h fired | Concav e neck, convex body | Carelessly made | 16 | | Early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | Kitchen ware | Ves sel | Side | Fired greyish -brown | Uniden tified | Carelessly made | 1 | | Early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | Tableware | Ves sel | Side | Fired buff | Uniden tified | Carelessly made | 4 | | Early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | Tableware | Ves sel | Handles | Fired | Circula | Carelessly | 2 | | Early |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|------------|-------------------|-----------------|--|--|---|----|---------------|--------------------------|
| Pottery | House hold | Dish | Base and side | Fired buff; fine fabric | Flat base | Plain | 1 | | Roman, early Middle Ages |
| Archaeological Investigations at Shio IV-338, KP199, Sakire Village, Borjomi District | | | | | | | | | |
| Pottery | House hold | Dish | Side | Reddish and fired grey | Unidentified | Plain | 6 | | Roman, early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | House hold | Win e storage jar | Wall | Fired pale buff | Unidentified | Horizontal relief line | 1 | | Roman, early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | House hold | Pot | Rim and neck | Fired blackish-brown | Out-turned rim, concave neck | Plain | 1 | | Roman, early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | House hold | Lute rion | Rim and side | Fired greyish-black | Out-turned rim, convex body, deformed rim | | 1 | Trace of fire | Roman, early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | House hold | Pot | Side | Fired greyish-black, thin fabric | Unidentified | Plain | 1 | Trace of fire | Roman, early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | House hold | Pot | Side | Fired brown, thin fabric | Unidentified | Trace of potter's wheel in the interior | 1 | | Roman, early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | House hold | Pot | Side | Fired reddish , thin fabric, coarse surface | Unidentified | Plain | 1 | | Roman, early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | House hold | Dish | Base, side | Fired pale buff, thin fabric, smooth surface | Flat base, convex body | Plain | 2 | | Roman, early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | House hold | Dish | Wall | Fired pale buff | Unidentified | Plaited ornament | 1 | | Roman, early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | House hold | Dish | Handle and wall | Fired brownish | Oval section handle, handle broken at the bottom of wall | Plain | 1 | | Roman, early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | House hold | Dish | Rim | Fired brownish-red | Out-turned rim, straight | | 1 | | Roman, early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | House hold | Dish | Side | Fired greyish-black | Unidentified | Carelessly made | 24 | Selected | Roman, early Middle Ages |
| Pottery | House hold | Dish | Handle and side | Fired reddish | Circle | Plain | 1 | | Roman, early Middle Ages |

Anthropological Analysis Report

By Nana Kiladze

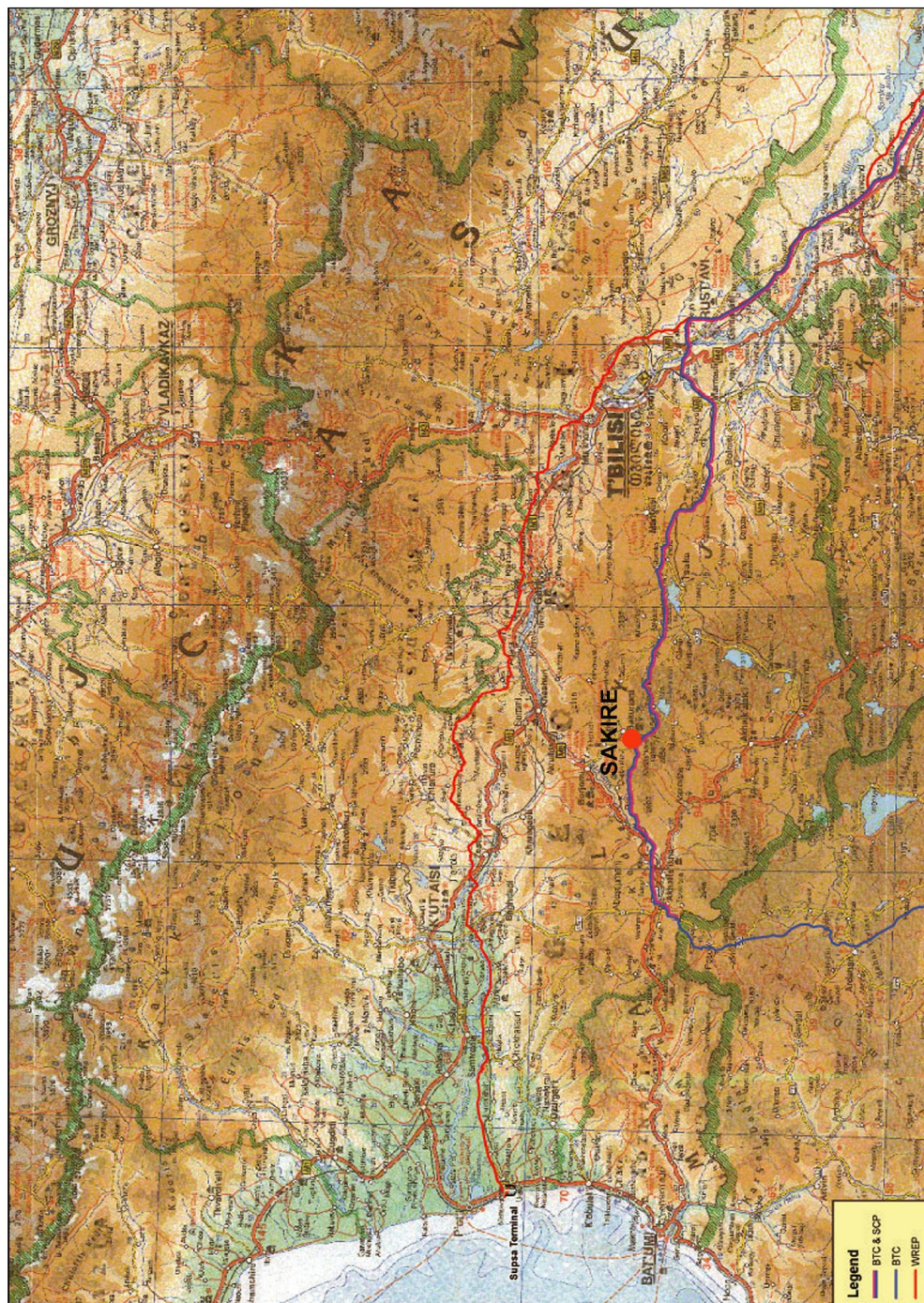
Bone material of two individuals excavated at Sakire cemetery, in particular crania, was submitted to the Department of Anthropology of the Institute of History and Ethnology. The individuals had been buried in a crouched position in pit burials, resting on their left sides.

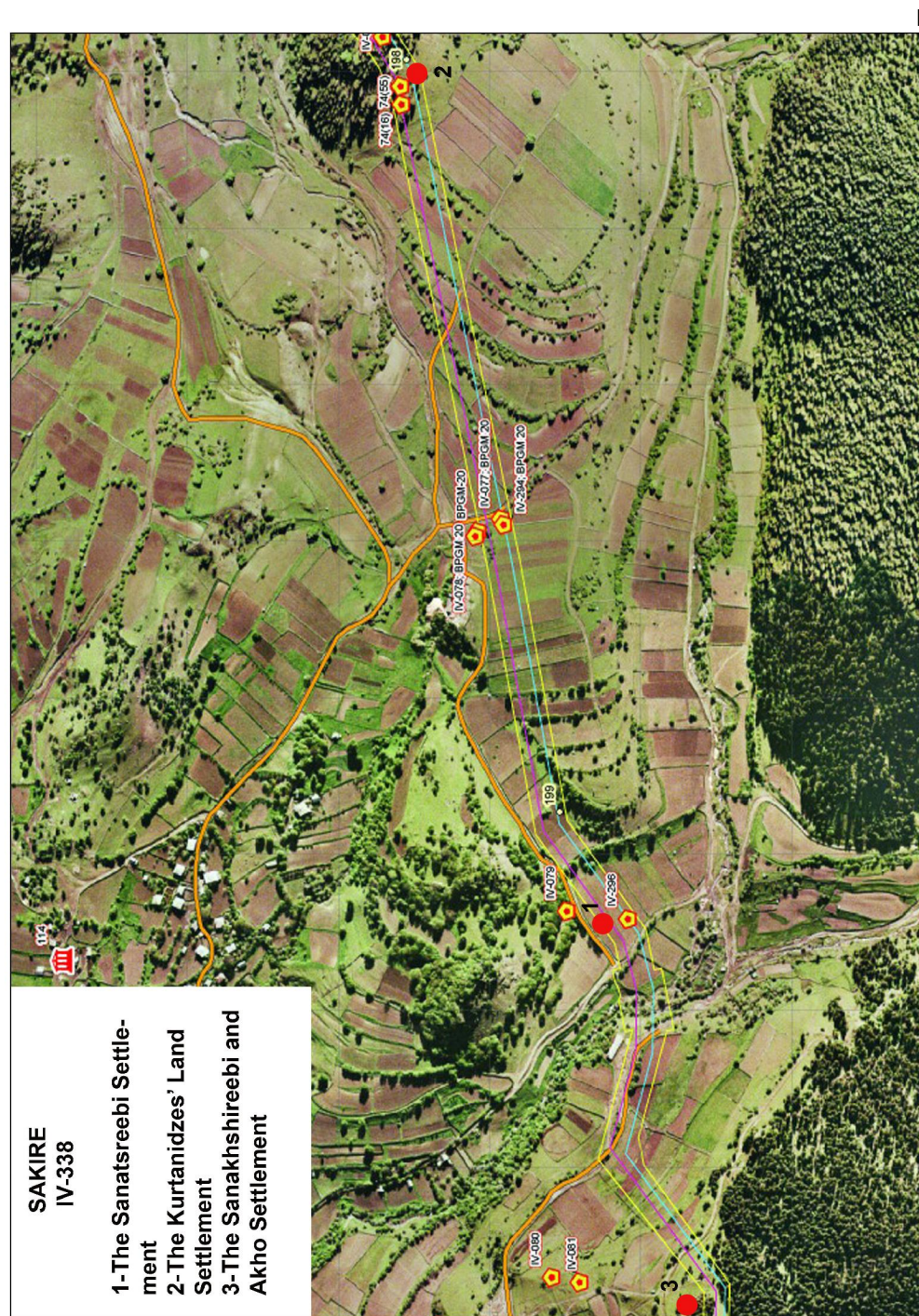
The anthropological material was treated as follows: the bones were cleaned, washed, and stabilized with a special adhesive (wax and rosin) by heating in the flame of a spirit-lamp. Then there occurred the study of anthropomorphological marks. Afterwards the bone material was stored in the departmental depository at an appropriate temperature.

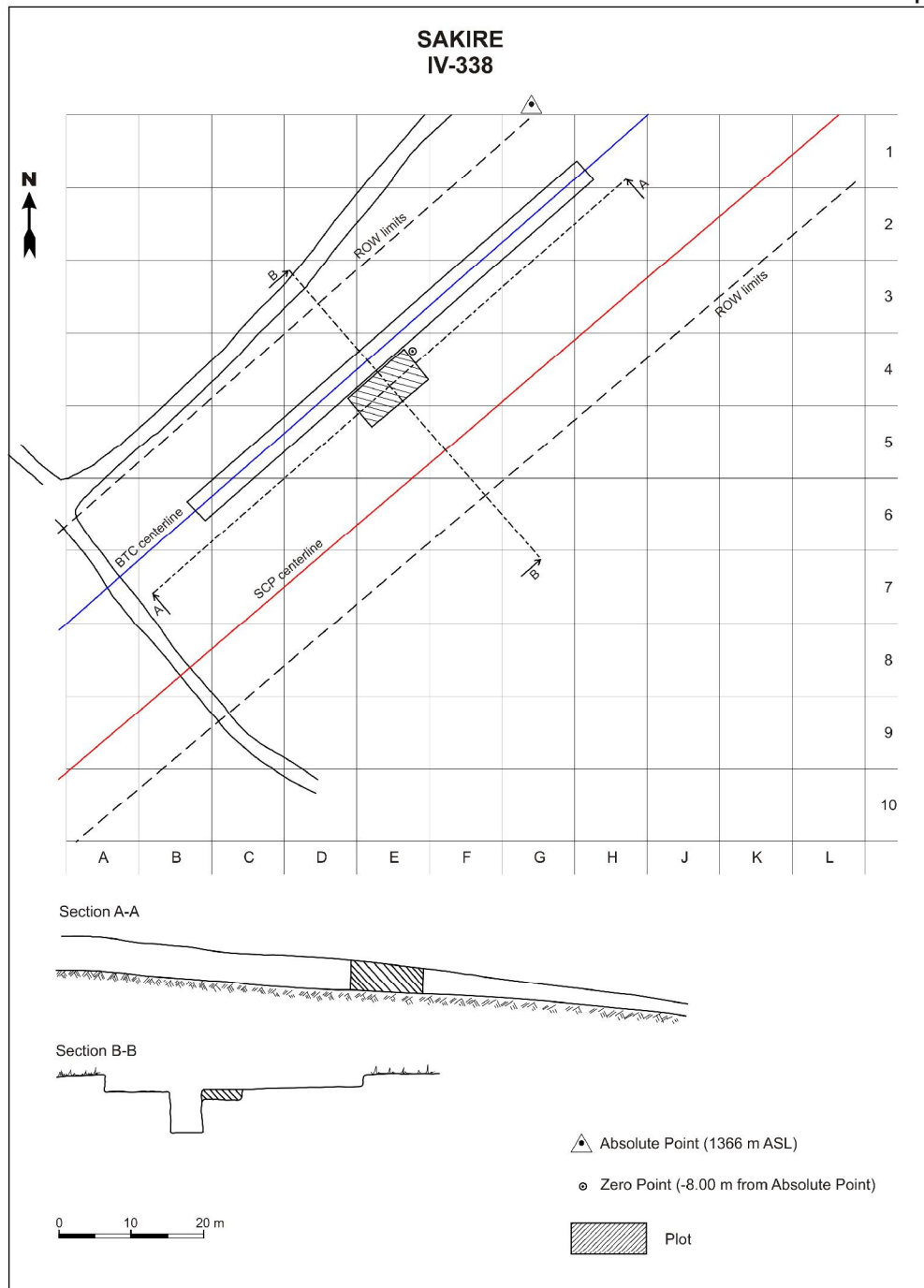
Burial No. 1: male ♂ (55-60 years old); cranium restored (pl. XI, 1).

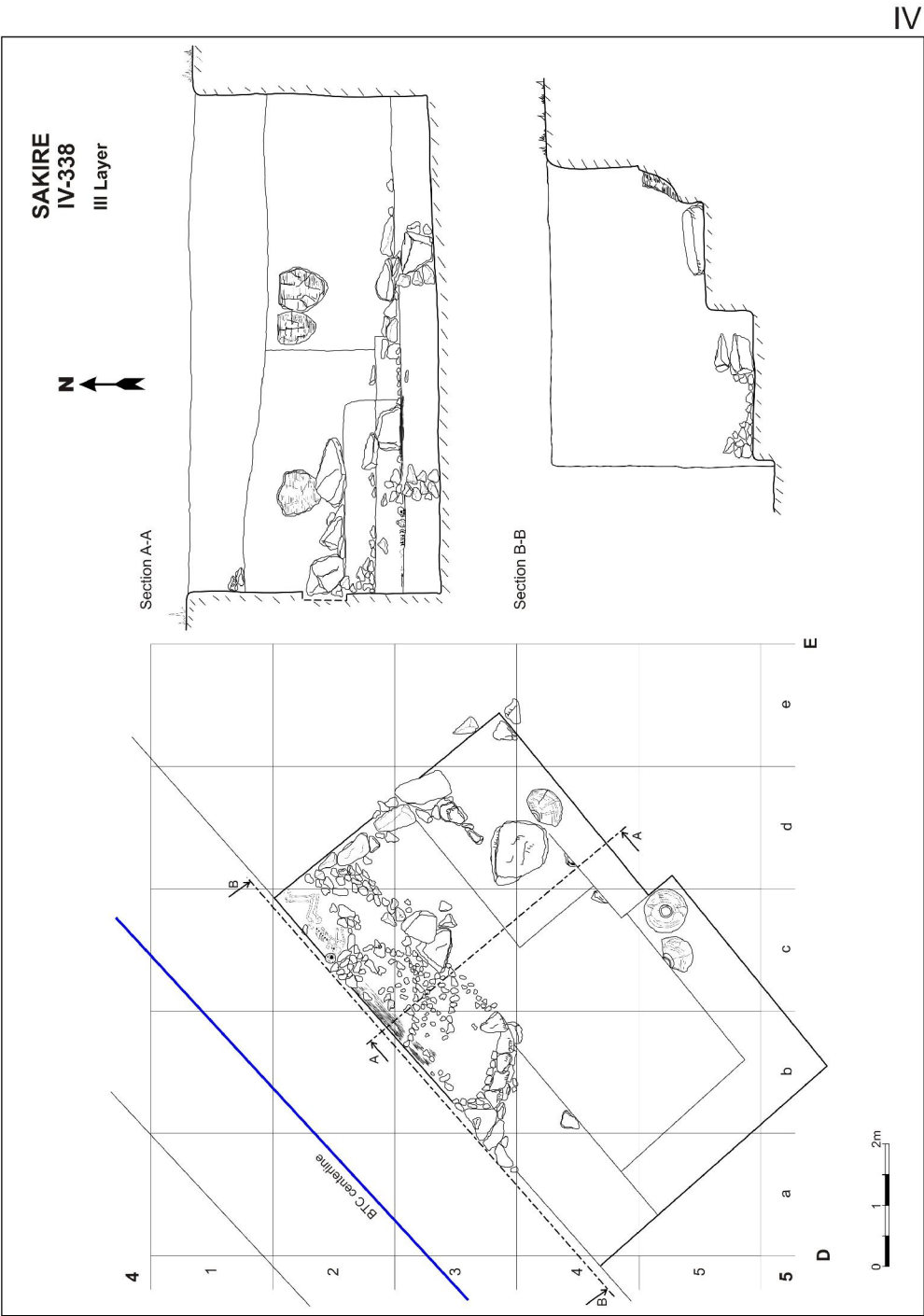
Burial No. 2: the posture of the individual was slightly different. The torso was supine, and the hands were located near the cranium. The individual is female ♀ (30-35 years old). Cranium restored. Both crania are mesocranial (pl. XI, 2).

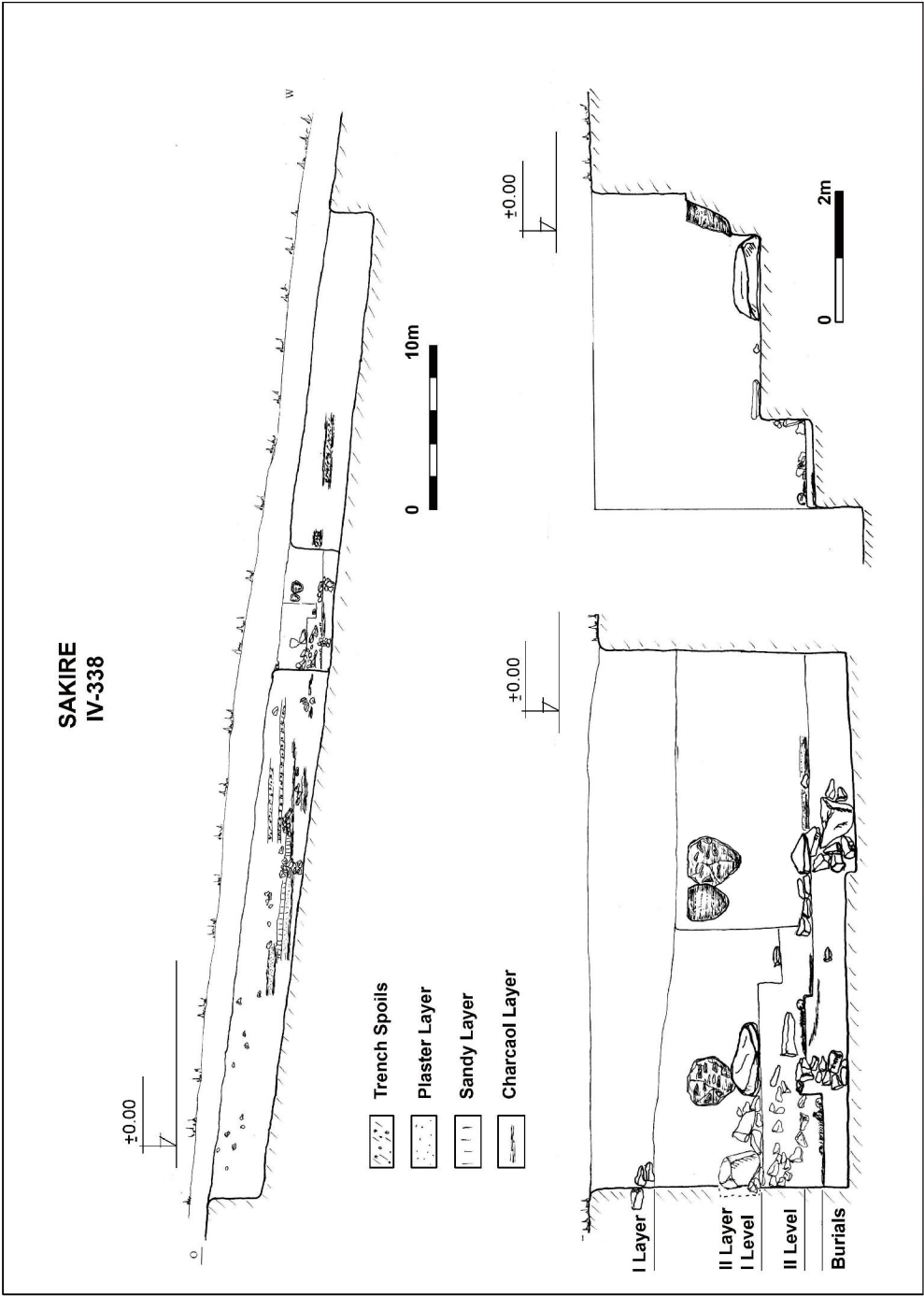
Due to the insufficiency of the bone material it was impossible to define such important data as illness, diet, trauma or demographical indicators.







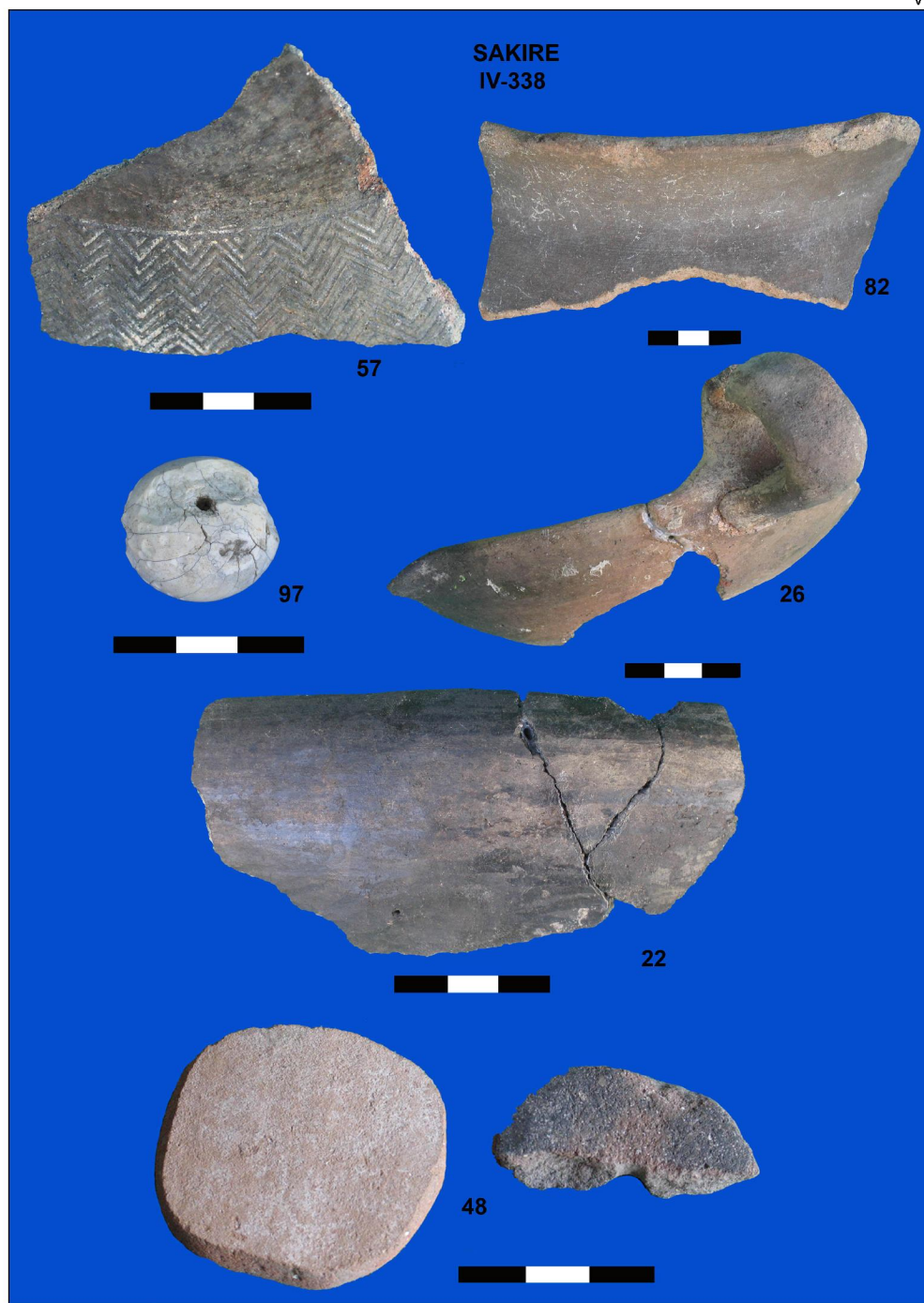




VI



VII









**SAKIRE
IV-338**

Burial N 1



Burial N 2

