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GREEKS ("HELLENISM") IN THE HINTERLAND OF GEORGIA (4th-1st cent. B.C.)

Firstly, It should be noted in the first place that the time of formation of Hellenism as a concrete phenomenon was quite reasonably shifted back to the 3rd cent. B.C., while the end of the 4-th cent. B.C., has been recognized as a transition period. Helping to define this time line has been the interaction of Greece and the East. Indeed, Alexander the Great's campaign in the East and consequent close inter-relations were the primary driving characteristics of this interaction. The direction of the interests of the Graeco-Macedonians to the East was fully determined, while in the West "they even not intend to conquer Sardinia, Sicily and Libya, having no idea about more martial peoples of Europe" (Polyb. v. I,2). Therefore, the area of Hellenism is correctly circumscribed by Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt and by the territory lying eastward of the Euphrates. However, as is known, there are no single, strictly defined chronological limits of Hellenism, and in each separate region it manifested itself in different ways, continuing to exist in various chronological periods (e.g., according to P. Leveque, features characteristic of Hellenism in Arabia began to show only in the 1st cent. B.C.). The point is that, on the one hand the synthetic and versatile nature of Hellenism, as a particular phenomenon, determined the degree and place of infiltration of its various components into indigenous cultures. On the other hand, the form and content that were characteristic of the political, economic and cultural structures of Hellenism - progressive for the period under discussion - made for the viability that proved adequate for the introduction of elements of the Hellenistic way of life not only into Alexander the Great's empire and in the countries which subsequently came within the dominion of Hellenistic monarchies, but in to peoples inhabiting adjoining territories as well.

As is known along with its other aspects Hellenistic civilization manifested itself in various sides of urban life. Nastakisi, Atskuri, Samadlo and Tsikhiagora are considered the earliest relics of the Kartli Hellenistic period. However, the archaeological material obtained during excavations in recent years gives ground for a different interpretation of these relics, as well as of other city- sites of 4th-1st cent. B.C. Iberia.

First the chronological limits of Nastakisi, Samadlo and Tsikhiagora should be determined the earliest layers of s.c. "Hellenistic" period is dateable to a period not earlier than the 4th-3rd cent. B.C. (However, double prothoma capital and the chance find of the bell-shaped base for column on the Tsikhiagora site could be from the layer of 6th-4th cent. B.C.). Furthermore, the function and cultural affinity of these relics are beyond doubt: Samadlo was from the start related to the Eastern world. The principal relic - excavated here and determining its entire function is a tower-type fire temple. The temple represents a square building whose walls are built of adobe bricks on a foundation of rock-faced stones. There were risalites on the outward side and at the corners. It has been ascertained that the structure belongs to the typological group of cult buildings connected with the Urartian world and found in Achaemenid culture in the shape of a tower-type temple, though it has close parallels with similar temples of Midia. It is noteworthy that in the preceding period fire temples are not known in Iberia.

Remains of the only crypt (5.5×4) in Iberia of the 3rd-1st cent. B.C. have been discovered on the Samadlo city-site, part of its wall (up to 2m) being of stone, the rest of adobe brick. The walls were plastered with clay on both sides. The crypt had a tile roof. Unfortunately, of those buried in the crypt, only seven, corpses survived, lying in a crouched position accompanying the main corpse. It is worth noting that, like in the Samadlo tomb, the seven crouched skeletons (either servants or slaves of the main deceased person) were unearthed in a robbed burial (n.12) on the Vani city-site, dated to the 3rd cent. B.C. The inventory of the servants in both burials is extremely poor (bronze temple-rings, bronze bracelets). One more coincidence is of interest: the concentration of cult buildings and rich burials on the

same hill; besides, the appearance of such a burial rite, unknown at other relics of Georgia - is a new stage at Samadlo and, to a certain extent at Vani. This can hardly be explained by the cult nature of the city-sites, as at the synchronous relic of Tsikhiagora - also of a cultic function - such a fact is unknown. Therefore, it is conceivable that at both 3rd cent. B.C. relics (Vani-Samadlo) record developments that are perhaps connected with more than one wave but of similar cultural and religious traditions.

In the 2nd cent. B.C. life at Samadlo comes to an end. Not far from the hill However, a relic dated to the 2nd cent. B.C. has been identified.

The same fate befell Tsikhiagora - another religious centre of Iberia, which sprang up in the 3rd cent. B.C. on the top of a hill, enclosed by 1,5 m thick fortifications, built of mudbrick wall. Without going into a detailed architectural and archaeological analysis of the intricate templar complex, it should be noted that it is built in conformity with the Achaemenid architectural canon (construction engineering, special organization of the central hall) of the temple. The same cultural tradition is observable in the function in terms of the organization of the surrounding space, as much as the complex, whose dominant element is the temple with barns, bakeries and other economic facilities, is analogous to Ancient Eastern planning, with rural communities grouped around the sanctuary.

However, the tile - an element so characteristic of Hellenistic town constructions - occurs in the cited three localities. Nevertheless, the emergence of Samadlo and Tsikhiagora - relics of purely Achaemenid function - can hardly be taken for a precursor period, though the use of such a technical novelty is in itself indicative of an incipient influence of Greek culture. However, the process of this mutual influence, being the basic determining feature of Hellenism, most likely took place beyond the boundaries of Georgia, since neither the Achaemenid temple nor the tile were known in Iberia prior to the 4th-3rd cent. B.C. Therefore, relics of the Samadlo and Tsikhiagora type could have appeared as a definitively formed idea. After their destruction this tradition was temporarily interrupted, but in the 1st cent. B.C. a new templar complex devoted to Mazdean gods was built at Dedoplis Mindori. In the interval between these developments the architecture of Iberia came under the influence of such a powerful wave as Hellenistic culture. Uplistsikhe was the only cultic city to function in the 2nd cent. B.C., whose intensive life at the period just cited is attested by numerous archaeological finds. Cities built according to Hellenistic architectural standards (Bagineti, Tsitsamuri, Sarkine, the Ghartiskari defensive system, Uplistsikhe, Akhali Zhinvali, Dedoplis Gora) on the territory of Iberia (Kartli) are dated to the 2nd cent. B.C. At any rate, this period is the earliest chronological limit for building according to the indicated canons. The earlier dating - proposed for the Ghartiskari system (beginning of the 3rd cent. B.C.) - is unacceptable, as the pottery discovered here is characteristic of the entire Hellenistic period, while in terms of construction engineering the Ghartiskari wall bears analogy precisely with relics of the 2nd and 2nd-1st cent. B.C. (Dedoplis Mindori, Artashat, Dvin, Khinisli, Saqanchia). Nor is this data contradicted by the general principles of building defensive structures. As is known, after the invention of torsion weapons preference was given to long fortifications encircling the entire territory of the city. (Magnesia on the Meander, Smyrna, Ephesus, etc.). From the 3rd cent. B.C. such walls were considered unpractical and their length began to be reduced. But already at the end of the 3rd century, and especially from the 2nd cent. B.C., the conception gained popularity which envisaged control over the entire system and hence did not restrict the length of the wall (e.g. Perga, built in 200 B.C., Side in 180 B.C.). Proceeding from the foregoing, the Ghartiskari defensive system, enclosing the whole territory of the capital of Iberia Mtskheta from the north, should be dated to a period not earlier than the 2nd cent. B.C. From the view point of the penetration of Hellenistic culture into the interior, the discovery of a structure built of mudbrick with a cobblestone foundation in the Aragvi valley is noteworthy. Taking into account the Rhodian amphoriscos and painted pithoi unearthed here, the existence of a fairly large centre, may be assumed here, its task being the control of the road to the north and distribution of manufacture in the mountain regions of Iberia (Kartli). The kingdom's western boarder was controlled by the Shorapani (Sarapanis) - Dimna fortified line. Thus, it is obvious that from the 2nd cent. B.C. principles of Hellenistic town planning, which, naturally depended on definite developments became widespread in Iberia (Kartli). It should be noted in the first place that such construction was connected with great expenses. Therefore, simultaneous construction of massive Hellenistic-type walls almost all over the country could be realized only under a State conception, guaranteed by a powerful economic basis.

This would seem to indicate, that in the 2nd cent. B.C. the king of Iberia was still in possession of a well-adjusted administrative and economic mechanism. Otherwise he would not have been able to build such walls round Mtskheta and to fortify politically unreliable points. However, such great expenditure must have been necessitated by a great danger. It is known that the advent of the Romans in the

East at the beginning of the 2nd cent. B.C. was followed by the weakening of the Slesked monarchy. Taking advantage of this, some countries, hitherto subject to Antioch the Great, formed independent states. Armenia - a former satrapy - was headed by Artashes 1, setting up an Armenian State and subjugating the territories of neighboring countries (Median regions: Caspian, Phavnitides, Basoropeda and part of Iberia: the southern slopes of the Pariatdrian hills, Khorzene and Gogarene - Strabo XI,14,5). Thus, at the beginning of the 2nd cent. B.C. the Armenian State presented a rather formidable and aggressive neighbor of Iberia. However, in 166 B.C. the Seleucid king Antioch IV put an end to the power of Artashes 1, taking him captive. Therefore, from that time Armenia's position in the Transcaucasus must have weakened some what, no longer constituting a threat to Iberia. Accordingly, the construction of massive defense line around the capital of Iberia apparently started in the 180-160 B.C. continuing for centuries. It may be said that the activity of the kings of Iberia (Kartli) was manifested most strikingly by the creation of fortification systems. This explains the fact - paradoxical at first sight - that only two cities (Eshera and Vani), built according to the principles of Hellenistic city-building are archaeologically evidenced in Colchis, which had an experience of centuries-old relations with the Greek world, while in Iberia, which came into the field of vision in the end of the Hellenistic period, the number of such cities is much higher. From this viewpoint, reference to Strabo's known evidence seems to the point: "Furthermore, the greater part of Iberia is so well built up in respect to cities and farmsteads that their roofs are tiled, and their houses as well as their market-places and other public buildings are constructed with architectural skill" (XI.3.1). This confirms the view that urban life flourished precisely in the late Hellenistic period (2nd-1st cent B.C.) but not earlier, as it reflects the situation existing by the 60 B.C. The question naturally arises as to the town building activity of the Iberian (Kartlian) kings of the "Hellenistic" period; As for the theme of the activities of the kings we are interested in the sources emphasize the building of defensive structures by the kings (e.g. Parnavaz strongly fortified the city of Mtskheta, and rebuilt all the cities and strong holds of Kartli... Saurmag, the second king "strengthened all the fortifications of Mtskheta and Kartli", the third king Mirvan "entered Dzurdzuketi, ravaging it... then he erected a stone gate and called it Darubal", etc.).

This evidence "KTs" ("Kartlis Tskhovreba", Georgian historical sources of XI cent. "Life /history/ of Kartli") actually reflects the real situation, confirmed by archaeological discoveries: Mtskheta is fortified by the massive defensive line of Ghartiskari from the north; Irreproachable were, evidently, the Sarkine fortifications; Defensive walls have been brought to light in Uplistsikhe; The Armazistsikhe fortress and the whole defensive system around Mtskheta were also built in accordance with the fortification rules. Though it is quite indisputable that such large-scale construction in Kartli is the result of the energetic activity of Kartvelian kings. But notwithstanding the activities typical of Hellenistic kings, Kartlian kings were not completely Hellenized. In addition to the fact that they did not recognize Greek-Hellenistic deities, they even formally did not try to resemble the Greeks, differing in this from the dynasties of northern and eastern Asia Minor which, as is known, declared Greek the official language (while in Kartli the situation was the reverse: Georgian became the state language) and took cultic (Eusebius, Epiphanes, etc.) and simply Greek names (e.g. Nicomedes which became the dynastic name for Bythinian kings), at the same time the Kartlian kings preserved their non-Greek names. However, a later interpolation of "KTs" has preserved the only evidence on the Greek cult in Iberia (Kartli): St. Andrew, arriving in southern Georgia, saw in Astir the temple of Artemis and Apollo. The city-site of Astir is situated on the left bank of the Mtkvari (Kura) river, This is the reason that the southeastern part of the site is fully washed out by the river.

The stratigraphy is the same at each section of the site. The humus (5-15 cm thick) is followed by a loamy sterile layer (0.8-3 m thick) which at some places (ditch 3) is replaced by a sandy sterile layer (5.5 m thick) or by a loose sterile one.

The cultural layer, which directly follows the sterile one, is of varying thickness (from 0.6 in, as in ditch 1, to 1.8 in, as in ditch 5).

The materials found on the site are, mainly, of two kinds: architectural remains and pottery. The architectural remains are mainly represented by various foundations built with cobblestones and quadrels, allowing to distinguish two different types of planning: rectangular and circular. It should be noted that, chronologically, circular structures are characteristic of the 5th -4th cent. B.C., while in the subsequent period only rectangular buildings occur. /It is noteworthy that the circular altar (diam. 1 m) found in ditch 1, (of cobblestone structure) is also datable to the 5th -4th cent. B.C./

The ceramic material falls into two groups: local and imported. The local manufacture is represented by Colchian (jugs with tubular handles, Pithoi, cups) and Iberian (painted jugs, pithoi, phiales,

plates, etc.) forms. Pottery that imitated the Greek forms is in separate group (luteriae, some types of bowls) and dates from the Late Hellenistic period (2nd - 1st cent. B.C.).

Imported wares, represented by Ionian bowls date from the 6th cent. B.C. (the first case for the hinterland of Transcaucasia), Attic Kylices date from the 5th cent. B.C. and black-glazed pottery from Asia Minor dates from the 4th-2nd cent. B.C. The discovery of amphorae is also noteworthy. According to the color and fabric they must be the product of South Pontic cities. Taking into account the archaeologically confirmed fact of the existence of a large settlement of the Hellenistic and subsequent periods here, the existence of the temple of Artemis and Apollo in Astir is quite probable. Thus, not unlike other peripheral countries of the Hellenistic world, infiltration of the Greek cult in the Hinterland of Georgia took place in the late "Hellenistic" period (the temple in Sarkine) and at the turn of the Old and New eras.

Finally, the comparison of this chronological stages of Iberian monuments shows influence of Hellenistic culture only in Iberian II stages (200 B.C. -64 B.C.). In all other stages there is clear influence of oriental World.