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THE RESULTS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH OF THE ROCK-CUT MONUMENTS IN THE KVEMO KARTLI REGION (GEORGIA)

Introduction

The Georgian Republic is particularly rich in rock-cut complexes belonging to different historical periods – from prehistoric times to the late Middle Ages. However, even two decades ago, Georgian and foreign scientists considered a well-known rock-cut cave ensemble created in the second half of the 1st millennium BC – Uplistsikhe (Gori District), as the earliest cut-in-the-rock monument in Georgia (АМИРАНАШВИЛИ 1963: 81–85). Absolutely different results were obtained by the Laboratory of Artificial Cavities at the Georgian Simon Janashia National Museum.



Fig. 1. Georgia, Kvemo Kartli Region (Drawing N. Bakhtadze).

Рис.1. Грузия, регион Квемо Картли.

Рис. 1. Gruzja, Region Kvemo Kartli).

Since the 1980s the Laboratory has been regularly carrying out architectural and archaeological research (headed by the author) into the ancient rock-cut monuments situated in Georgia (BAKHTADZE 2005). The obtained data shows that the tradition of cutting spaces of various purposes in rock was common in Georgia in much earlier epochs. In some regions of Georgia traces of habitation of fairly numerous groups of humans in natural and slightly transformed cave-dwellings are attested at different stages of the Neolithic as well as Palaeolithic Periods (ЛОРАКИПАНИДЗЕ 1989: 65–68). However, like in many neighbouring regions of the Eurasian continent, the foundation of the tradition for artificial cave-cutting here must have been laid at the turn of the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Ages.

Material and methods

A particularly large number of ancient rock-cut monuments were discovered by the 1986–2002 expedition organised by the afore-mentioned Laboratory in the territory of the Kvemo Kartli (Lower Kartli) Province of Eastern Georgia (Tetri Tskaro, Bolnisi, Dmanisi and Tsalka Districts) (BAKHTADZE 2002: 22–29; 2007: 15–20) (Fig. 1). Especially noteworthy among them are complexes of artificial caves with multi-layered cultural deposits (Figs. 2, 3:1,2,3). Despite a certain interest of the scientific community towards them (BAGRATONI 1959: 319–320;

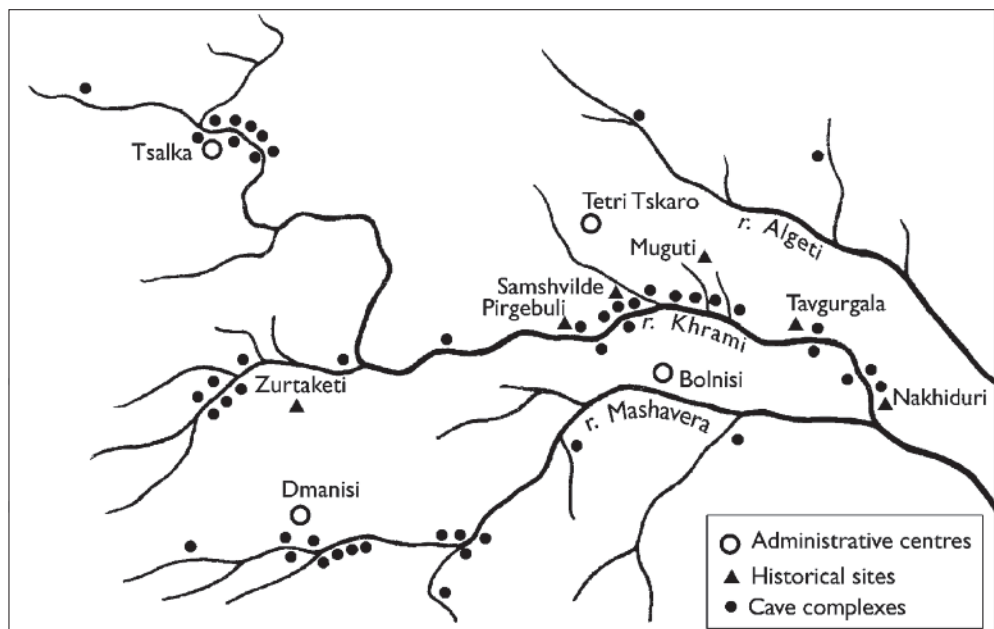


Fig. 2. Schematic map. Most important cave complexes of Kvemo Kartli (Drawing N. Bakhtadze).

Рис. 2. Схематичная карта. Самые значительные пещерные комплексы Квемо Картли.

Рис. 2. Najważniejsze zespoły jaskiń. Schematyczna mapa Kveмо Kartli.

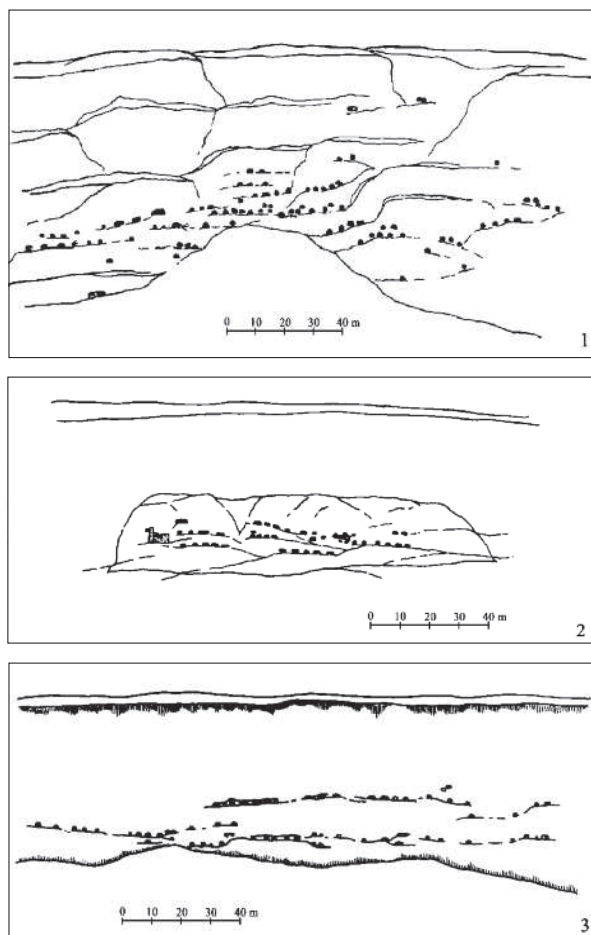


Fig. 3. Cave complexes of Kvemo Kartli. Facades: 1. Caves of Nakhiduri-2; 2. Caves of Muguti; 3. Caves of Samshvilde (Drawing N. Bakhtadze).

Рис. 3. Пещерные комплексы Квемо Картли. Фасады: 1. Пещеры Нахидури-1; 2. Пещеры Нахидури-2; 3. Пещеры Самшвилде.

Рис. 3. Zespoly jaskiń Kvemo Kartli. Fasady: 1. Jaskinie Nakhiduri-2; 2. Jaskinie Muguti; 3. Jaskinie Samshvilde.

JAVRISHVILI 1963: 5–19), until recently these monuments have not been studied from the viewpoint of architecture and archaeology. They have not been even described thoroughly. Quite often the fact of their artificial origin was disputed. As to the period of rock cutting of these monuments, scholars' opinions differed. Taking into consideration the existing doubts concerning Kvemo Kartli cave complexes and the fact that the majority of the rock-cut monuments in the discussed region are not sufficiently known to specialists, in this paper I give an overview of them.

These monuments are located along river canyons. They comprise dozens of artificial caves distributed in several layers within basalt and dolerite rocks. A certain regularity during rock cutting of the above caves was observed: the stratum of caves was mainly rock-cut in the middle and lower registers of a slope (Figs. 3, 4, 5, 6). The overwhelming majority of caves were formed in the rock without the use of metal tools. This proves to be one of the most ancient rock processing techniques throughout the world: having been heated with fire, the rock was doused with cold water and water-impregnated wedges were driven into the resulting



Fig. 4. Cave complex of Dageti (Photo N. Bakhtadze).

Рис. 4. Пещерный комплекс Дагети.

Рис. 4. Zespól jaskiń Dageti.



Fig. 5. Cave complex of Muguti-1 (Photo N. Bakhtadze).

Рис. 5. Пещерный комплекс Мугути-1.

Ryc. 5. Zespół jaskiń Muguti-1.



Fig. 6. Cave complex of Tavmrgvala (Photo N. Bakhtadze).

Рис. 6. Пещерный комплекс Тавмргвала.

Ryc. 6. Zespół jaskiń Tavmrgvala.



Fig. 7. Cave complex of Nakhiduri-1. Central sector. Plan and sections of the third tier's caves (Drawing N. Bakhtadze).

Рис. 7. Пещерный комплекс Нахидури-1. Центральный Сектор. План и разрезы пещер 3-го яруса.

Рис. 7. Zespół jaskiń Nakhiduri-1. Część centralna. Plan i profile jaskiń na trzecim poziomie.

riffs. The remains of the wedges, stuck in the cracks of rocks, sooty as a result of powerful fire in some cave interiors, confirm the given statement (GOBEJISHVILI 1952: 185; GAGE 2005: 17). As such technique of rock cutting makes it practically impossible to maintain more or less regular forms, the shapes of the caves are only roughly and occasionally geometrical. Dwellings with uneven, oval and approximating to rectangular layout are found in the complexes. Their area ranges from 4–5 to 15–20 m². In most cases the height of the caves is conditioned by the height of a standing man.

The caves are often isolated and cut at different distances from each other (Fig. 7). Irrespective of their forms, the caves open into natural or artificially-made terraces through passageways (each approximately 50–100 cm in width) that represent the only source of lighting and ventilation. Apart from dwellings linked with the external space, groups of two or more caves, interconnected with passageways in the form of doors or tunnels, have been found (Fig. 8).

Crudely-cut household pits and hearths are still preserved in the caves. One cannot find more sophisticated devices in the complexes, a fact which was presumably conditioned by the hardness of the rocks unfavourable for digging. Other materials, chiefly wood, must have been used for making household appliances as confirmed by pits

found in the walls of the dwellings. Nearly all the facades of the damaged caves were restored by dry masonry or slaked lime laying. The floors in most of the caves were covered with sterile or cultural layers of different thickness.

From the very beginning, the caves were intended for repeated use, which was conditioned by their durability – a specific feature of rock-cut monuments. It seemed extremely difficult to determine the original appearance, initial function and the time of origin of these multi-layered sites. To solve the problem, the layout, spatial planning and the results of archaeological excavations were analysed and compared.

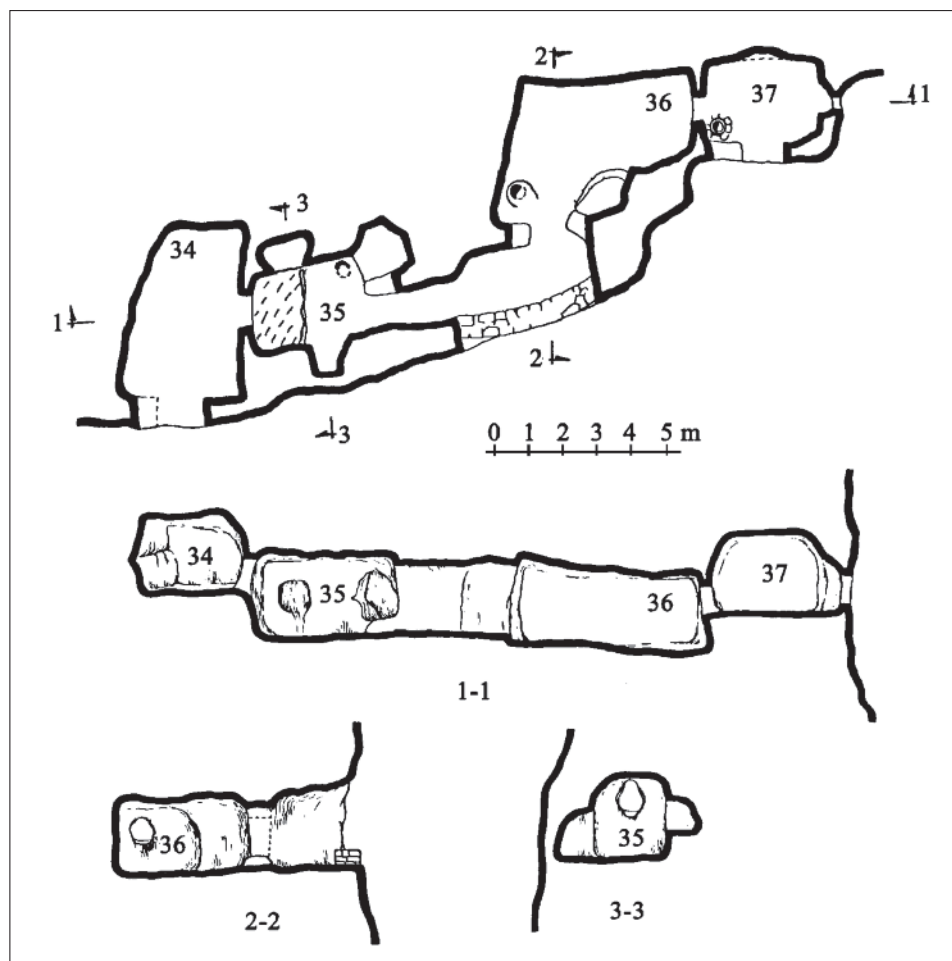
Preliminary architectural analysis of the cave complexes

Based on our studies, the earlier supposition concerning the initial defensive function of the caves could be rejected. Shelter-caves and the so-called fortress-caves of medieval Georgia are well known. The main features of such shelters include impregnability, spaciousness and availability of appliances good enough to ensure minimal living conditions for a refugee. As to fortress-caves, besides the above-mentioned conditions, they are characterised by a suitable strategic position and a number of elements needed for combat operations (LOMTATIDZE 1977: 131–132).

Fig. 8. Cave complex of Nakhiduri-2. Central sector. Plan and sections of the third tier's caves (Drawing N. Bakhtadze).

Рис. 8. Пещерный комплекс Нахидури-2. Центральный Сектор. План и разрезы пещер 3-го яруса.

Ryc. 8. Zespół jaskiń Nakhiduri-2. Część centralna. Plan i profile jaskiń na trzecim poziomie.



The majority of the monuments investigated by the expedition are characterised by contradictory features. At first sight, they resemble a group of caves, shelters having a defensive function as some fortified walls and towers are attached to them. However, without these auxiliary fortifications (**Figs. 9, 10**) the complexes would not have met a necessary requirement for defensive structures – inaccessibility. Most of the caves are situated at the foot of the rocky massif and can be easily accessed. The caves located at higher levels can also be easily accessed by means of convenient paths. One of the characteristic features of these cave complexes is the availability of dwelling caves meant for prolonged inhabitation, which is also incompatible with the defensive function (БАХТАДЗЕ 1988: 23).

While discussing the function and foundation period of the cave complexes of Kvemo Kartli, one should think over whether or not they were created in the Middle Ages to serve as monasteries. Rock-cut hermitages were widespread in Georgia, as in many other countries of Christendom in the Middle Ages.¹ Monuments of this category contain densely or sparsely cut multi-layered cave cells for monks; besides, churches, chapels and refectories are also included in such rock-cut complexes (e.g. Gareji cave hermitages, Sagarejo District) (ЧУБИНАШВИЛИ 1948; BULIA ET AL. 2008; GAPRINDASHVILI 1975: 7–18). Unlike Gareji and other Georgian cave monasteries, none of the cave complexes of Kvemo Kartli proved to have Christian cult features cut in the rock. Only in three of them (out of

¹ The Georgian Christian Church is apostolic. According to reliable historical sources, a part of the population of Georgia adopted Christianity as a result of St Andrew the First-called's sermons. In the Georgian kingdom Christianity was declared as the official

state religion in 326 (MUSKHELISHVILI 2003: 18–26). Based on the latest data, Christian monasticism in Georgia was practically established in parallel with the monastic movement of the early Byzantine world.

dozen monuments studied) it was possible to find built-in churches made of stone (Fig. 8). Therefore, Kvemo Kartli complexes were not rock-cut as hermitages.

Well before the start of the archaeological works, in spite of a limited number of domestic appliances (e.g. stationary hearths cut out for lighting fire and chimneys) and architectural details (e.g. quite wide doors, casements) it was presupposed that the main nuclei of the cave complexes may have been secular settlements, i.e. rock-cut villages. Naturally, in this case the presence of both dwelling and ancillary caves should be presupposed. Such differentiation is in fact observed in the complexes. Separate groups of caves include both –relatively comfortable, dry and well-lit caves of orderly layout, cut at a definite height (Fig. 8); as well as narrow and dark crudely cut caves at the foot of sheer slopes, which we classify as ancillary ones. Some of them may have been used for keeping cattle, etc.

At the same time, the integrity of dwelling and subsidiary caves belonging to certain families is not observed in the cave complexes: the structure of caves cut side by side is basically identical and does not allow to consider them as parts of dwellings (intended for separate families) used for different purposes. Therefore, the complexes under consideration differ considerably from the rock-cut villages of medieval Georgia known to us. For comparison it was possible to use the planning of the 10th–14th c. rock-cut villages of Pia and Chachkari situated in the Aspindza District of South Georgia, which have been well studied architecturally and archaeologically. Here, in houses intended for individual families, dwelling spaces are very clearly separated by walls according to their functions: a common room to be used in the daytime, a bedroom, a kitchen and a toilet (GAPRINDASHVILI 1959: 19–36; BAKHTADZE 2007: table 131).

The layout of these monuments differs markedly from the principles of rock-cut architecture both of the Antique Period (e.g. a rock-cut city of Uplistsikhe in East Georgia: АМИРАНАШВИЛИ 1963: 81–85) and of the Middle Ages. As mentioned above, the overwhelming majority of these caves are quite primitive. The aforementioned periods are not characterised by rock cutting techniques applied in Kvemo Kartli, with special reference to shaping passageways in the form of a human silhouette.

A close neighbourhood of the studied cave complexes with archaic-megalithic settlements,² which is confirmed in many complexes (e.g. Nakhiduri – Tetri Tskaro District, Avranlo – Tsalka District, Zurtaketi – Dmanisi District), is also noteworthy. All the above-mentioned megalithic settlements are situated near bordering rocky massifs full of archaically planned rock-cut complexes of large or small sizes (Melikset-Begi 1938). As for some cave groups, they are cut along the terraces of megalithic walls, i.e. in fact they are parts of those settlements (BAKHTADZE 2001b: 80–82).

These circumstances became the basis for our supposition regarding the origin of this type of monuments in Kvemo Kartli. I seek to prove that they were rock-cut long before the Middle Ages, more precisely in the Bronze Age.

Results of archeological research concerning cultural layers of the cave-creation period

This opinion was confirmed by the data obtained during the explorations carried out between 1986 and 2002 (by the Georgian Simon Janashia National Museum expedition under leadership of the author). Excavations were carried out at Muguti, Samshvilde, Nakhiduri, Pirghebuli (Tetrtskaro District) and Zurtaketi (Dmanisi District) cave complexes (BAKHTADZE 2007: 20–34, 133–138, 142–167). Other sites were just surveyed. As expected, the caves revealed mainly cultural layers of different thickness dating back to the Middle Ages, i.e. to the last stage of functioning of the monuments. It became obvious that the traces of the previous periods had been brought down to a minimum due to numerous alterations, and multiple reoccupations of the sites. However, remnants of cultural layers of different periods of the Bronze Age could be found in the recesses of cave floors and in abandoned household pits that were laid with adobe, as well as in cobbled areas. Ancient materials are represented mainly by fragments of black and brown burnished pottery of the Late Bronze Age, among which one can come across some fragments of pottery characteristic of the Middle and Early Bronze Ages.³ Evidently, different layers of the Bronze Age were mixed with later

² The Kvemo Kartli region is particularly distinguished by plentiful megalithic (“Cyclopean”) settlements and citadels. Walls and dwellings of these monuments are built of large unhewn basalt stones (about 1–3 m in length and width) and are made of dry masonry. Some Georgian scholars date them to the 14th–13th c. BC, but lower cultural layers of the same monuments with the material evidence of the ~~early~~ Middle Bronze Age (approx. 20th–15th c. BC) cast doubt on this date.

³ On the basis of chronological classification accepted by the majority of Georgian scientists, the isolation of various chronological stages of the Bronze Age in Georgia is as follows: Early Bronze Age – second half of the 4th millennium BC – first half of the 3rd millennium BC; Middle Bronze Age – second half of the 3rd millennium BC – first half of the 2nd millennium BC; Late Bronze Age – second half of the 2nd millennium BC – first half of the 1st millennium BC (ЛОРДКИПАНИДЗЕ 1989).

Fig. 9. Cave complex of Nakhiduri-3. Eastern sector. Plan and sections of the second tier's caves (Drawing N. Bakhtadze).

Рис. 9. Пещерный комплекс Нахидури-3. Восточный Сектор. План и разрезы пещер 2-го яруса.

Ryc. 9. Zespół jaskiń Nakhiduri-3. Część wschodnia. Plan i profile jaskiń na drugim poziomie.

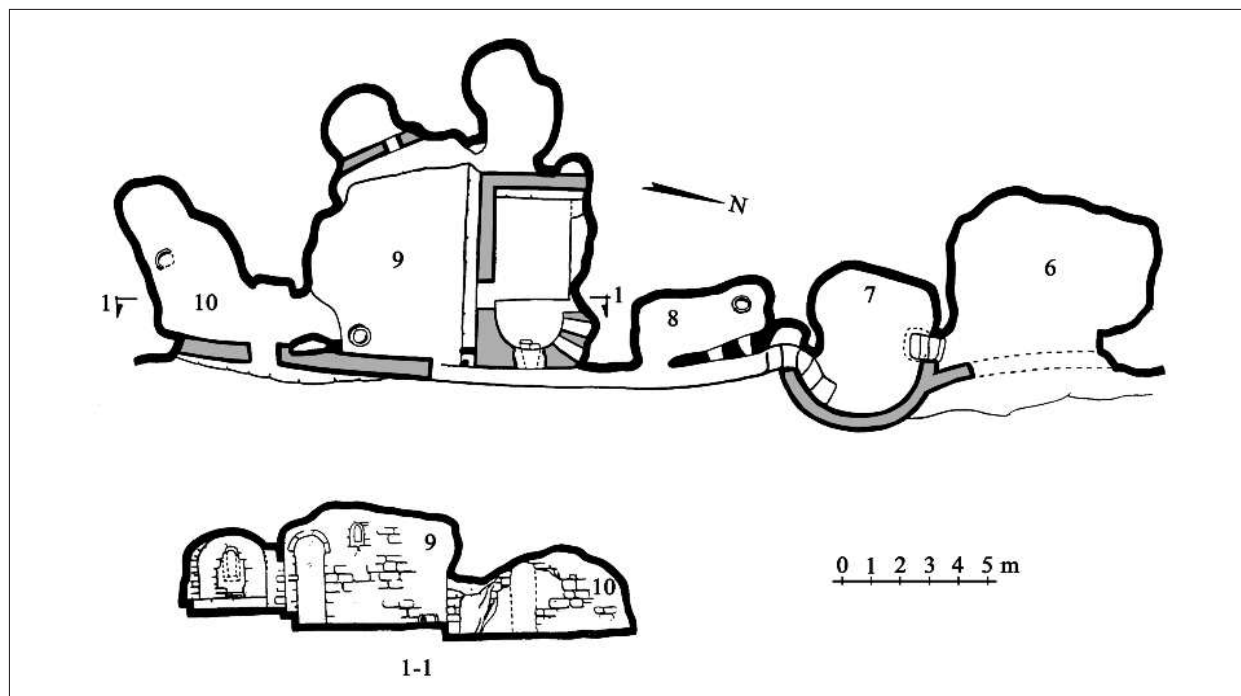
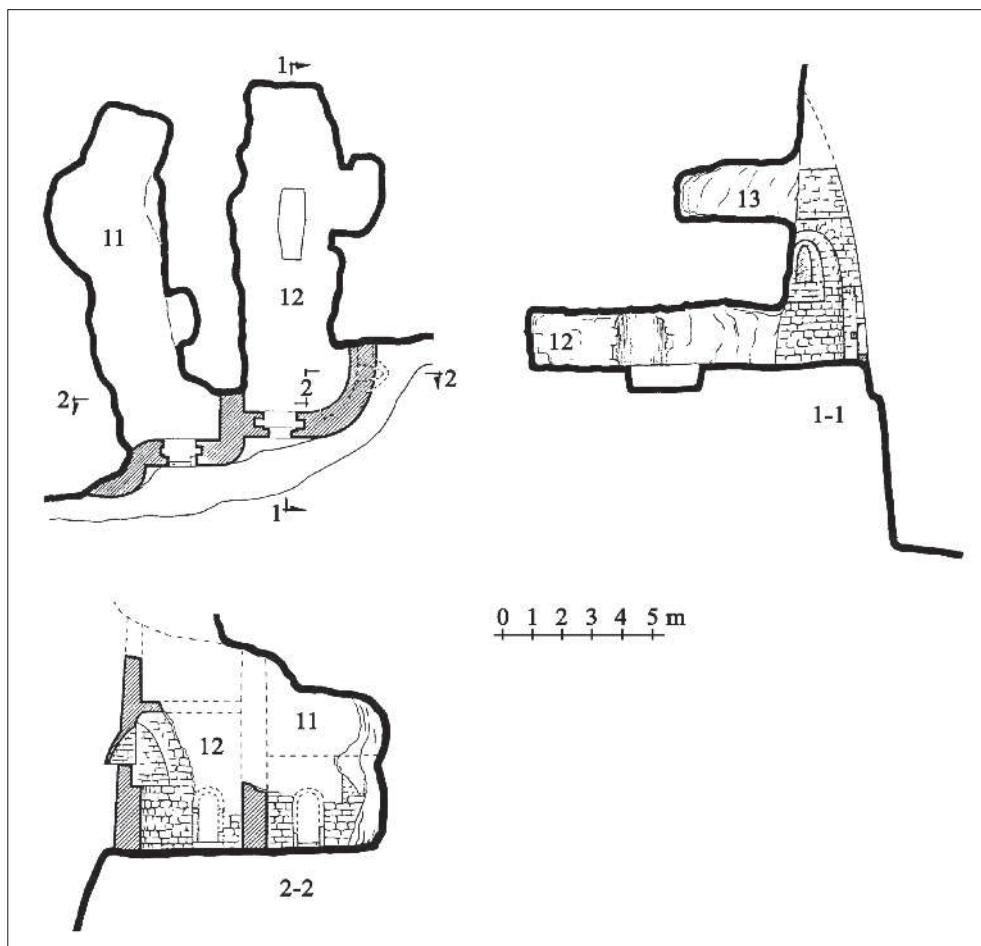


Fig. 10. Cave Complex of Muguti-1. Northern sector. Plan and sections of the second tier's caves (Drawing N. Bakhtadze).

Рис. 10. Пещерный комплекс Му-гути-1. Северный Сектор. План и разрезы пещер 2-го яруса.

Ryc. 10. Zespół jaskiń Muguti-1. Część północna. Plan i profile jaskiń na drugim poziomie.

reconstructions due to which it is very difficult to determine their original stratigraphy.

Under these circumstances, of great importance was the discovery of an undisturbed Bronze Age layer on the floor of one of cave complexes located in the close vicinity of the ruins of a powerful city of Samshvilde (Tetri Tskaro District), belonging to Antique and Early Medieval Periods. In the cave, which had fortunately escaped later reoccupations, habitation traces of different periods of the Bronze Age were found to be preserved fairly well. Under a sterile 50–70 cm thick ground layer, a flattened clay stratum was revealed. It was entirely covered with differently preserved numerous pottery fragments (up to 200 pieces) of the Late Bronze Age (Fig. 11), as well as with obsidian chips. A lot of fragments of black and brown pots, bowls and plates of different forms were found at the site. Some of the finds have reticulated, wavy and wedge-shaped decorative patterns (Fig. 11:22,24,25,26,28,31) typical of the given period. There can also be observed pot handles decorated with zoomorphic images (Fig. 11:16), bent corrugated whorls (Fig. 11:2,18,20,30), wave-profiled vessel walls (Fig. 11:9,14,21) and other details reliably dating the material (ЛОРДКИПАНИДЗЕ 1989: 150–151, figs. 65, 66; MIRON, ORTHMANN 1995: 271, figs. 197, 198).

More ancient pottery fragments were found in the cavity under the adobe floor of the Late Bronze Age. They include glitter-burnished black clay pottery fragments, some of which bear stamped and wavy decorative patterns (Fig. 12:1–7). They date back to the Middle Bronze Age (ЛОРДКИПАНИДЗЕ 1989: 129–144, figs. 57, 58, 61; GOGADZE 1972: 40–44). This period can be considered as the lower chronological limit of the cave. Fragments of a greyish-brown pot with a pair of protuberances resembling female breasts on the walls were found approximately in the same stratigraphic position (Fig. 13:4). This motif has been known from the Late Chalcolithic (second half of the 5th millennium BC) and Early Bronze Kura-Araxes (second half of the 4th millennium BC) sites in Georgia and evidently remained in use within the limits of the Middle Bronze Age (ЛОРДКИПАНИДЗЕ 1989: 85–86, figs. 33, 34; JAPARIDZE 1969: 123, figs. 69–73). It is noteworthy that some of the fragments of the earliest black and greyish-brown pottery of the Early Bronze age (Fig. 13:2,3,5,6), were found in the layers which were formed in the process of rock cutting the cave. This is indicative of the fact that the age of the pottery and the time of rock cutting of the cave is the same (MIRON, ORTHMANN 1995: 65, 271, figs. 43, 44; CHUBINISHVILI 1965: 162).

It is noteworthy that in these cave complexes the Chalcolithic, Early and Middle Bronze Age layers were destroyed and mixed in the Late Bronze Age in the same manner, just as the artefacts of the Late Bronze Age were reduced to minimum in medieval times.

Component facilities of other cave complexes in Kvemo Kartli are similar to the above mentioned cave in Samshvilde in terms of rock-cutting technology and archi-

tectural peculiarities; in addition, certain amount of Bronze Age pottery fragments of almost all periods are found in floor cracks of the caves. Therefore, a well-preserved archaeological and stratigraphic picture revealed in the Samshvilde cave before total reoccupation of the Middle Ages, may have been typical for the other cave complexes of Kvemo Kartli. At the given stage of our research, this is considered as a working hypothesis. Therefore we regard it justified to apply the conclusions drawn from the archaeological investigation of the discussed cave to other rock-cut complexes.

Discussion – comparing ancient cave-settlements in Kvemo Kartli with similar monuments abroad

It should be noted that according to many scholars, in the 3rd–2nd millennia BC rock-cut settlements and necropolises of approximately the same planning appear to have been intensively used in many regions of South Europe and Asia Minor (MELLAART 1966: 18–26; LEIGHTON 1999: 87–116, 122; PERROT 1967: 37–45). Nowadays, sufficiently investigated from architectural and archaeological viewpoint are such outstanding cave monuments as, for instance, grandiose Bronze Age tombs and dwelling complexes located in the Anatolian Peninsula and Mediterranean Sea islands. Moreover, during one or two millennia some of these complexes were almost continuously used for slightly different purposes (GARRARD 1996: 14–15; GOPER, TSUK 1996: 13–29, 52, 80, 91–107). For example, in Sicily during the excavations of some gigantic cave complexes (“Grotta de la Ciuraza”, “Grotta Maggiore”, “Grotta Caruggi” and others), the following chronological stratigraphy was observed: 1. Chalcolithic Age; 2. Early Bronze Age; 3. Middle Bronze Age; 4. Antique Age. Besides, in the Middle Ages these complexes were periodically used by hermitic monks as well (Brea 1966: 58–103).

Like in many neighbouring regions of the Eurasian continent, the foundation of the tradition of artificial cutting of caves in Kvemo Kartli must have been laid at the turn of the Chalcolithic Age and the Early Bronze Age (BAKHTADZE 2001a: 14). Like the cave complexes of the Near East and the Mediterranean basin of the same periods, the mentioned rock-cut sites of Kvemo Kartli may have been only clusters of cave habitations or tombs (ILAN 1997: 384–386). Differentiation of the ancient complexes of Kvemo Kartli by these two functional features is also very difficult: in the period under discussion, in Georgia, as well as in practically all regions where Near Eastern and the Mediterranean Sea Basin civilisations were spread, tombs often resembled dwellings. Moreover, sometimes dwelling-like tombs were even included in the structure of settlements. Hence, although no direct facts (i.e., remains of the dead) pointing to burials in the cave facilities from the studied period were identified, it can be supposed that some of the indicated cave complexes were, entirely or partly, arranged for this purpose.

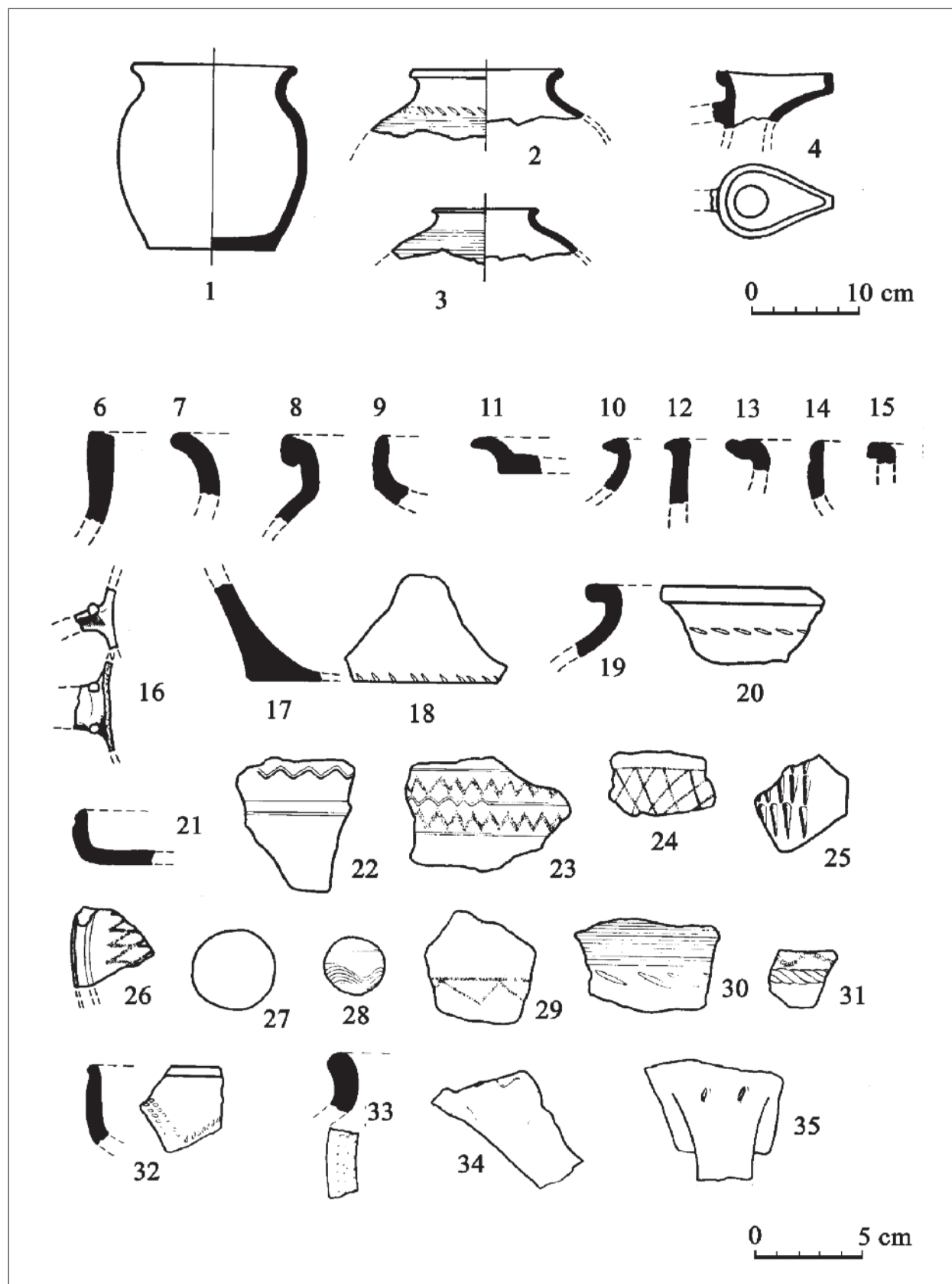


Fig. 11. Pottery of the Late Bronze Age from cave complexes of Kvemo Kartli (Drawing N. Bakhtadze).

Рис. 11. Керамические изделия эпохи поздней бронзы из пещерных комплексов Квемо Картли.

Ryc. 11. Wyroby ceramiczne z późnej epoki brązu z zespołów jaskiniowych Kvemo Kartli.

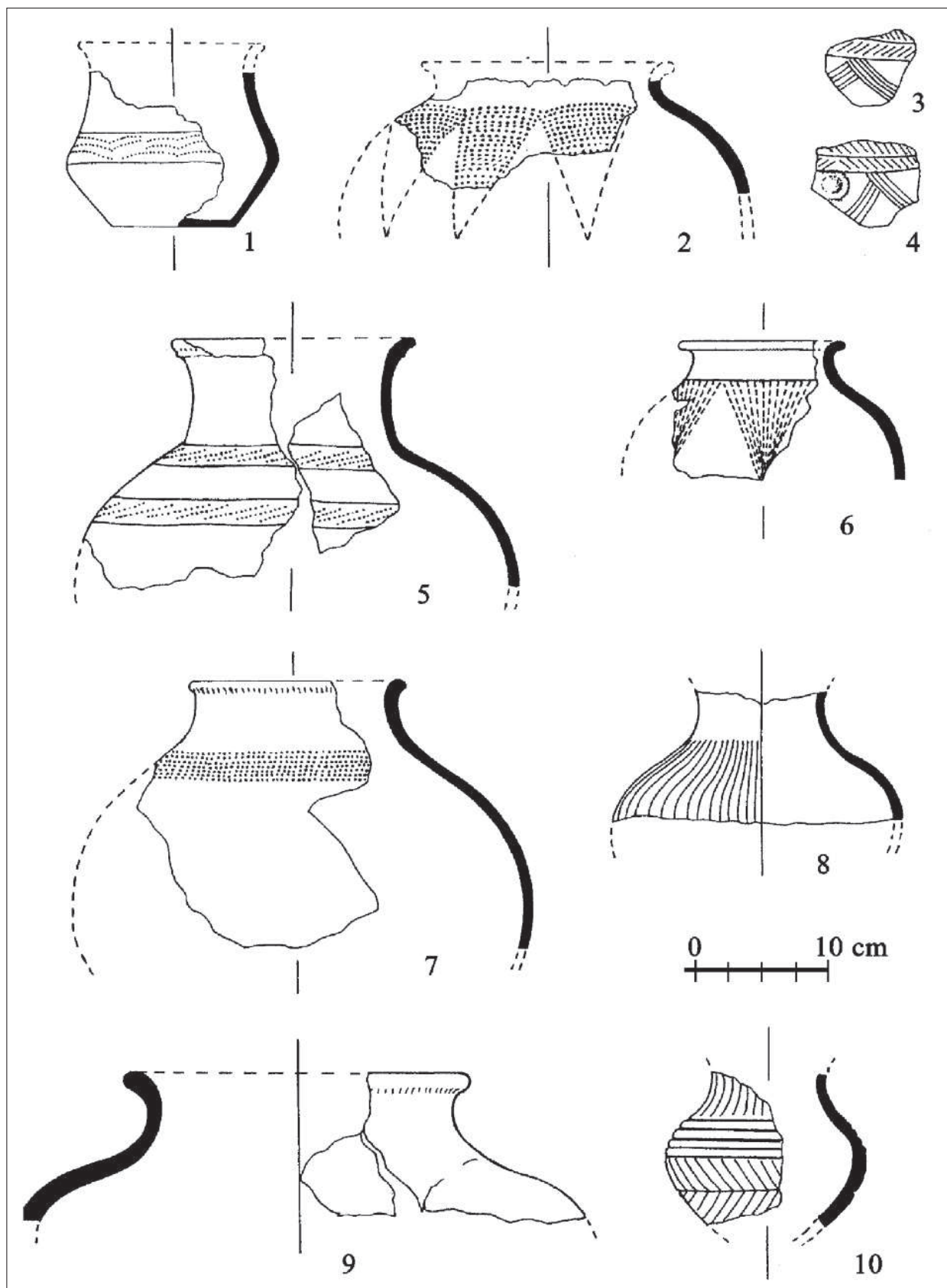


Fig. 12. Pottery of the Middle Bronze Age from cave complexes of Kvemo Kartli (Drawing N. Bakhtadze).

Рис. 12. Керамические изделия эпохи средней бронзы из пещерных комплексов Квемо Картли.

Ryc. 12. Wyroby ceramiczne ze środkowej epoki brązu z zespołów jaskiniowych Kvemo Kartli.

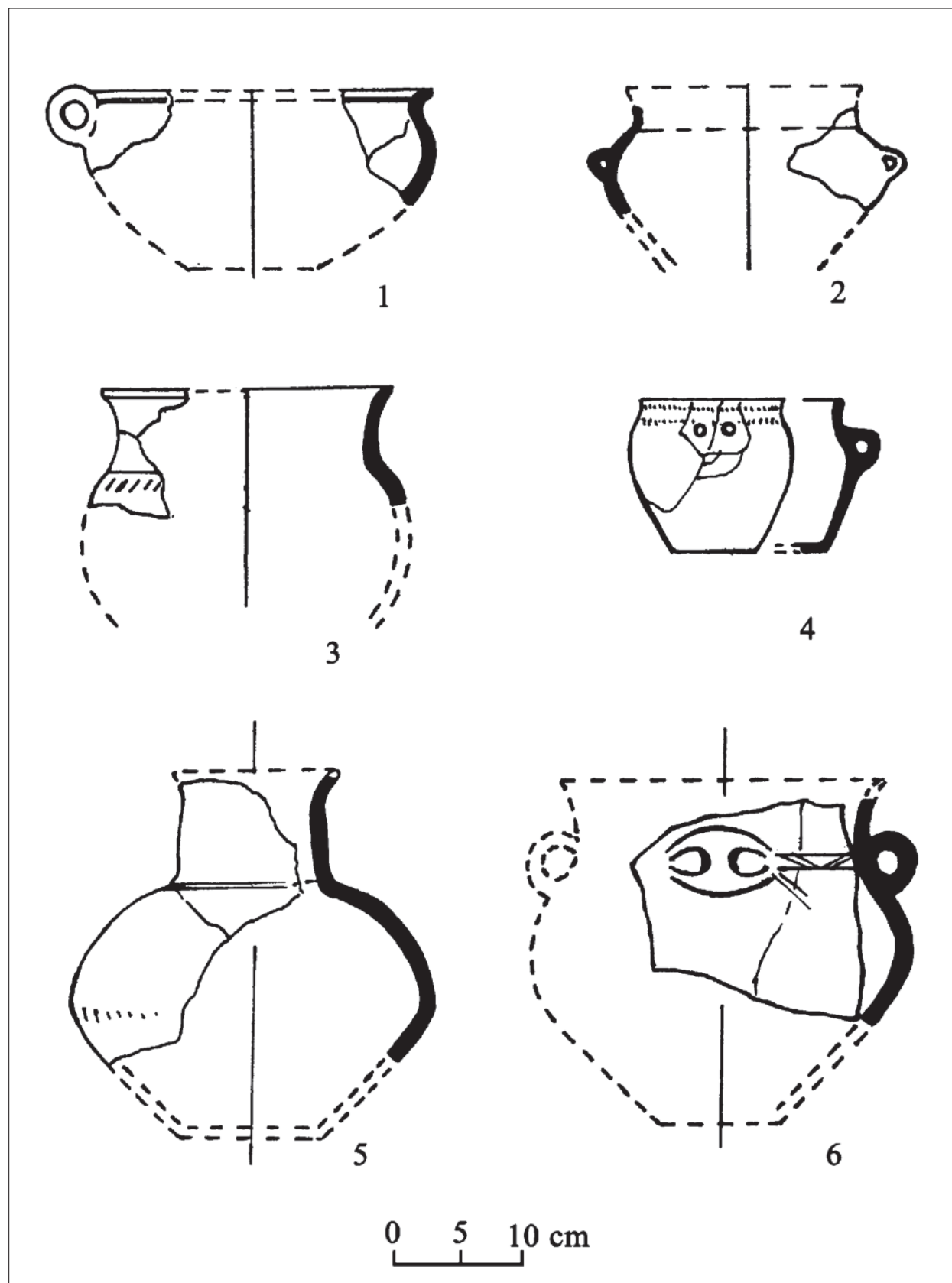


Fig. 13. Pottery of the Chalcolithic and the Early Bronze Age from cave complexes of Kvemo Kartli (Drawing N. Bakhtadze).

Рис. 13. Керамические изделия Халколита и эпохи ранней бронзы из пещерных комплексов Квемо Картли.

Ryc. 13. Wyroby ceramiczne z okresu chalkolitu i wczesnej epoki brązu z zespołów jaskiniowych Kvemo Kartli.



Fig. 14. Cave complex of Nakhiduri-2. Medieval bread oven (Photo N. Bakhtadze).

Рис. 14. Пещерный комплекс Нахидури-3. Средне-вековье. Сооружение для выпечки хлеба.

Ryc. 14. Zespół jaskiń Nakhiduri-2. Średniowieczny piec chlebowy.

Medieval archaeological layers in ancient rock-cut settlements of Kvemo Kartli

The archaeological evidence of using the same Kvemo Kartli rock-cut monuments in the Middle Ages is of interest as well. Despite reconstruction, the mentioned rock-cut villages, created on the basis of the Bronze Age cave complexes, have partly preserved the planning features characteristic of the group, tribal lifestyle. That is why they somehow resemble compact terraced settlements, which still exist in mountainous regions of Georgia (e.g. Khevsureti, Dusheti District). Such resemblance is not unexpected as even in the 18th–19th c. the tribal order was still present in mountainous regions of Georgia (CHIKOVANI 1967: 176–181).

The characteristic features of rock-cut villages established in the High Middle Ages (10th–14th c.) were best revealed during the archaeological excavations carried out in the Zurtaketi and Nakhiduri complexes. There we observed extra stone constructions of the Medieval Period set up for the purpose of restoring the facades, household appliance traces of the same period like a clay facility for baking bread (Fig. 14), hearths, various pottery, metal, glass and wooden wares, fabric, carpet and rug fragments.

The glazed pottery includes: bowls with loop-like decorative patterns on white *engobe* (slip) and covered with green or brownish glaze; various bowls with geometrical and floral decorative patterns under a translucent glaze layer (Fig. 15); monochrome jugs chiefly with green and pale blue glaze (Fig. 16); oil lamps and salt cellars. Unglazed ceramics is represented by red washed jugs with a herringbone decorative pattern; red and brown burnished, flat-bottomed and saucer type bowls of different sizes; jugs with a broad neck and flat handle; low-mouthed round pots; crude kitchen ceramics – “*kvevri*” (large pottery vessel placed in earth), basins, etc. Previous excavations in other regions of Georgia have reliably dated such pottery back to the 12th–14th c. (BAKHTADZE 2013; CHILASHVILI 1991; JAPARIDZE 1956; MITSISHVILI 1969;).

Twenty-eight Georgian copper and silver coins have also been found during the excavations of these rock-cut villages. The most ancient among them is King Giorgi III's (1156–1184) coin, followed by those dating back to the period of the rule of Queen Tamar (1184–1213), King Lasha-Giorgi (1213–1222) and Queen Rusudan (1222–1245). The most recent among them was a coin minted in Tbilisi in the 14th c. (the so-called “*kanuri*”) (KAPANADZE 1969: 211–218). The revealed material evidence, along with the coins, allowed us to determine the preliminary dates of

Fig. 15. Glazed pottery from cave complexes of Nakhiduri. 12th–13th c. AD. Fragments of bowls (Photo N. Bakhtadze).

Рис. 15. Глазурованная керамика из пещерных комплексов Нахидури. XII–XIII вв. н.э.

Рис. 15. Glazurowana ceramika z zespołu jaskiń Nakhi-duri, XII–XIII w.



Fig. 16. Glazed jug from Cave Complex of Nakhiduri-3. XIII–XIV cc. A.D. (Photo N. Bakhtadze).

Рис. 16. Глазурованный кувшин из пещерного комплекса Нахидури-3. XIII–XIV вв. н.э.

Рис. 16. Glazurowany dzbanek z zespołu jaskiń Nakhiduri-3, XIII–XIV w.



Fig. 17. Fragments of household utensils made of organic materials. Cave complexes of Nakhiduri. 13th–14th c. AD. (Photo N. Bakhtadze).

Рис. 17. Предметы домашнего обихода из пещерных комплексов Нахидури. XII–XIV вв. н.э.

Рис. 17. Przedmioty gospodarstwa domowego, wykonane z materiałów organicznych, z zespołu jaskiń Nakhiduri, XIII–XIV w.

the revival and termination of occupation of the discussed complexes. It turned out that these complexes were settled again around the 11th–13th c., which, must have been connected with the demographic explosion that stimulated the economic growth.⁴ These monuments stopped functioning at the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th c.. The complexes seem to have been abandoned due to the devastating Mongol invasions, most likely that of Tamerlane. According to preliminary data, a similar chronological cycle is typical of all the before mentioned rock-cut villages in Kvemo Kartli.

Apart from the material evidence, which allowed for a determination of the function and chronology of the

rock-cut monuments, archaeological excavations have provided information, allowing us to reconsider some facts, namely, chronology of manufacture and use of Georgian medieval artefacts, which were inadequately studied earlier. Of special interest in this respect is a group of artefacts (e.g. farming and household utensils, chiefly fragments of organic materials, fabrics, fragments of clothes, carpets and rugs, etc.) (EILAND 1998: 57, 59), which do not have analogies in Georgian archaeology (**Figs. 17, 18**). The fact that the artefacts made of organic material also belong to the 12th–14th c. is confirmed by the circumstance that they were discovered in the same layer as the well-studied types of ceramics mentioned above.⁵

⁴ In general, it is believed that the 11th–13th c. is the period of unification as well as political and economic development of the Georgian kingdom. In this epoch Georgia got rid of the influence of the neighbouring, powerful Muslim states (Persia, Seljuk states) and even reacquired territories conquered by them. The process of economic and cultural prosperity reached its culmination in the second half of the 12th and the first quarter of the 13th c.

⁵ Material evidence of this kind is extremely rare at open archaeological sites, while here it has survived abundantly in the caves protected from rainfall. Besides, the archaeological evidence (ceramic material of types which are well known to researchers) found in the highest layers confirms that most of the rock-cut villages were suddenly and finally abandoned about the turn of the 14th–15th c.

Archaeological studies have thrown light on some aspects of the economic and social everyday life and technological processes taking place in these villages in the Middle Ages. Rock-cut dwellings, often arranged vertically, represent an imitation of two-storey houses. Differentiation into household economy facilities and living quarters is noticeable in these houses – the lower, dark and comparatively damp caves were often used as cowsheds, while the upper, light facilities, equipped with elements of fortification, were living quarters.

The analysis of the material shows that the residents (mainly peasants) of rock-cut villages were involved in both agriculture (farming, vine-growing) and livestock breeding. During the excavations, pruning knives, hoes, tools for harvesting grain (e.g. fragments of a sickle, special thimbles), a large number of cow and sheep bones, etc. were discovered. Traces of various fields of domestic crafts, such as manufacturing pottery, carving wooden household objects, weaving various fabrics are evident (semi-manufactured ceramics, clay and wooden objects, spindles, primitive weaving loom parts and etc., have been found). A certain share of agricultural and domestic craft production was manufactured for the purpose of trade, as indicated by considerable quantity of coins found in the dwellings. Only the following can be

said about the social structure of the families: as a hearth or oven-hearth is attested in practically every modest-sized dwelling-cave, it should be assumed that they were inhabited by small-sized families.

According to the material in evidence, proprietary differentiation among the residents of rock-cut villages was weak: artefacts of almost the same style and quality were found in nearly all rock-cut houses. Nevertheless, a privileged stratum could still be identified in the village – presumably petty *aznauris* (gentry), who lived in cave habitations specially furnished and extended with stone structures. For example, in the villages of Nakhiduri and Zurtaketi cave complexes, among other structures one can easily differentiate fortified towers (Fig. 9).

In the Medieval Period some of the ancient cave complexes in Kvemo Kartli were reused as hermitages (EILAND, BAKHTADZE 2000: 44–46; BAKHTADZE 2007: 133–138). For these purposes heavily damaged caves were restored, and churches, cells and fortification constructions were built in them or attached to them (Fig. 10). Monasteries of that type have been found by us in the Muguti (TetriTskaro District) cave complex and in the environs of the site of ancient Dmanisi, as well as in Tezis Khrami Gorge (Tsalka District). Muguti caves were studied



Fig. 18. Fragment of a rug from the cave complex of Nakhiduri-3. 13th–14th c. AD. (Photo N. Bakhtadze).

Рис. 18. Фрагмент ковра из пещерного комплекса Нахидури. XII–XIV вв. н.э.

Рис. 18. Fragment dywanu z zespołu jaskiń Nakhiduri-3, XIII–XIV w.

archaeologically. Apart from numerous household appliances of the above-described type and various articles of domestic utility, excavations at the Muguti monastery have revealed manuscript fragments of secular and ecclesiastical character – e. g. fragments of the XII Gospel written on parchment with the old Georgian alphabet *Nuskhuri*.

On the basis of the revealed materials, the period of intensive functioning of the monastery has been dated to

the 11th–14th c. Judging from the evidence of the excavated material, the functioning of other hermitages of this type lies within the same chronological limits.

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НОДАР БАХТАДЗЕ

РЕЗУЛЬТАТЫ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ ПЕЩЕРНЫХ КОМПЛЕКСОВ РЕГИОНА КВЕМО КАРТЛИ (Грузия)

В одной из исторических провинций Республики Грузия – Квемо Картли (Нижняя Картли), встречается множество комплексов искусственных пещер, расположенных в ущельях рек. Эти памятники состоят из десятков пещер, высеченных в несколько ярусов в базальтовых и долеритовых породах (Рис. 1–4). В структуре вертикального членения этих комплексов наблюдается определённая закономерность – основное число ярусов приходится на нижний регистр скалы. Здесь зафиксирован один из древнейших в мире способов обработки скалы: раскалив скалу огнём, её затем обливали холодной водой, в результате чего камень легко ломался. Поскольку подобным методом получать правильные формы невозможно, пещеры в основном имеют сложную планировку (Рис. 5). Встречаются помещения площадью от 4–5 до 15–20 кв. м. Полы практически плоские. Стены и потолки – неровные. Высота абсолютного большинства пещер соответствует модулю, рассчитанному на распрямление человека во весь рост.

Пещеры, составляющие комплексы, чаще всего изолированы друг от друга, однако, встречаются и группы соседствующих пещер, связанных между собой внутренними переходами или тоннелями (Рис. 6).

Планировка этих комплексов исключает их оборонительное назначение, так как отсутствуют дополнительные каменные фортификационные сооружения. Также в комплексах ничто не указывает на изначальное наличие здесь монашеской жизни. В средние века большинство пещер были легко доступны.

С другой стороны, обращает на себя внимание теснейшее соседство одной части этих комплексов с типичными для этого региона мегалитическими сооружениями эпохи бронзы. На основании данного наблюдения, можно предположить, что изучаемые примитивные пещерные комплексы являются остатками пещерных поселений этого времени.

Археологические раскопки, проведенные нами в пещерных комплексах указанного типа в Квемо Картли, полностью подтвердили предположение о назначении и древнейшем происхождении этих памятников. В результате исследования весьма богатых культурных слоёв средневековья на ряде памятников этого типа под утрамбованными глинобитными полами некоторых пещер, а также в естественных трещинах скальной поверхности полов и в заброшенных хозяйственных ямах мы нашли разнообразные фрагменты глиняной посуды. Аналогичные находки керамики хорошо известны на изученных памятниках эпохи поздней бронзы, расположенные на территории Грузии (Рис. 9).

Найденные в некоторых пещерах в подобной стратиграфической ситуации несколько фрагментов керамических изделий оказались еще более ранними. Эти находки имеют прямые аналогии в археологическом материале распространённых на территории Грузии кургановт. н. триалетской культуры (эпоха средней бронзы) (Рис. 10).

Но и это не является нижней временной границей жизни в указанных пещерных помещениях: в углублениях скальной поверхности полов на некоторых участках пещер был выявлен более архаичный вещественный материал. Обнаруженные фрагменты глиняной посуды являются характерными для эпохи ранней бронзы и Халколита (Рис. 11). Примечательно, что несколько фрагментов глиняных изделий раннебронзового времени и Халколита, оказались в углублениях выровненного щебнем скалистого пола, возникших при высеке пещеры, т.е. в строительном слое помещения.

В настоящее время исследователями разных стран доказано, что на обширных территориях бассейна Средиземного моря и Передней Азии, приблизительно в диапазоне V–II тысячелетий до н.э., параллельно с культурами, для которых характерны жилища обычного типа, довольно часто встречаются племена, традиционно обитающие в высеченных в скалах помещениях. Интересно, что по методу высекания, общей структуре и планировке помещений, часть пещерных комплексов этих регионов, идентична пещерным поселениям бронзового периода, изученным нами в Квемо Картли. Что примечательно, по результатам раскопок часть пещерных комплексов Квемо Картли описанного типа, подобно аналогичным памятникам Передней Азии и Южной Европы, использовалась в эту эпоху в качестве гробниц.

Не менее интересна археологическая картина использования пещерных комплексов Квемо Картли в средние века. Очевидно, в это время часть населения этого региона с практической точки зрения сочло удобным реокупацию древнейших заброшенных пещерных комплексов, и после некоторой их реконструкции были основаны целые пещерные села. Из комплексов, на первый взгляд однообразной структуры, были выделены совокупности тесно связанных друг с другом пещер, представляющих собой имитацию каменных домов.

В результате археологического исследования этих пещерных сел найдено много разнообразного вещественного материала, характерного для быта развитого средневековья (Рис. 12). Большая часть обнаруженных здесь артефактов представляет собой простые

или глазурованные керамические изделия, которые датируются XI–XIV векам (Рис. 13, 14). Примечательно, что к этому времени относится нумизматический материал, обнаруженный при археологическом исследовании указанных пещерных сел. Отдельно следует отметить найденную там же уникальную коллекцию изделий из органических веществ (например, деревянные хозяйственно-бытовые предметы, фрагменты одежды, ковров и др.) (Рис. 15, 16).

Похоже, в большинстве таких пещерных сел жизнь внезапно и окончательно прекратилась прибли-

зительно на рубеже XIV–XV вв, во время одного из походов Тамерлана.

В некоторых из древнейших пещерных комплексов Квемо Картли в средние века были устроены пещерные монастыри. Были восстановлены поврежденные фасады пещер, обустроены церкви и кельи, построены фортификационные сооружения (рис. 8). В результате раскопок этих монастырей, помимо разнообразных предметов хозяйственного значения, были обнаружены фрагменты церковной утвари и рукописей религиозного содержания.

NODAR BAKHTADZE

WYNIKI BADAŃ ARCHEOLOGICZNYCH PIECZAR WYKUTYCH W SKALE W REGIONIE KVEMO KARTLI (GRUZJA)

W jednej z historycznych krain Gruzji – Kvemo Kartli (Dolnej Kartli) w dolinach rzek występują licznie pieczary wykonane przez człowieka. Zespoły jaskiń składają się z dziesiątków komór wykutych na kilku poziomach w bazaltach i dolerytach (Ryc. 1–4). W pionowym rozplanowaniu systemów jaskiń daje się zauważyć praktyczne podejście budowniczych – główne poziomy komór są lokalizowane u podstawy skalnych zboczy. Na stanowiskach zarejestrowano jeden z najprymitywniejszych sposobów obróbki kamienia: po rozhartowaniu skały ogniem oblewano ją zimną wodą, i tak przygotowana powierzchnia łatwiej się kruszyła i poddawała obróbce. Opisaną metodą nie można jednak uzyskać regularnych kształtów, dlatego jaskinie miały formy jedynie zbliżone do brył geometrycznych, a i to nie zawsze (Ryc. 5). Powierzchnia pomieszczeń sięga od 4–5 do 15–20 m². Podłogi są raczej płaskie, ściany i stropy nie były wyrównywane. Wysokość niemal wszystkich jaskiń odpowiada wzrostowi wyprostowanego człowieka.

Jaskinie są najczęściej wykute w pewnej odległości od siebie, choć zdarzają się grupy sąsiadujących ze sobą komór połączonych korytarzami (Ryc. 6).

Plan opisanych systemów jaskiń wyklucza ich obronny charakter. Bez dodatkowych kamiennych fortyfikacji, które powstawały w średniowieczu, większość komór jest łatwo dostępna. Najczęściej brak również śladów wykorzystywania tych miejsc jako monastyrów. Z drugiej strony zwraca uwagę bliskie sąsiedztwo części wspomnianych zespołów jaskiń i typowych dla tego regionu megalitów datowanych na epokę brązu. Z tego względu w tekście wysunięte zostało przypuszczenie, że te prymitywne komory mogły być pozostałościami osad jaskiniowych z epoki brązu.

Badania archeologiczne przeprowadzone pod kierunkiem autora niniejszego tekstu w jaskiniach regionu Kvemo Kartli, w pełni potwierdzają proponowane datowanie oraz przeznaczenie tych komór. Po wyeksplorowaniu nawarstwień średniowiecznych, pod glinianymi podłogami spotykanymi w niektórych jaskiniach, w naturalnych spękania i wykutych jamach znajdowane były fragmenty naczyń glinianych. Analogie do tych znalezisk pochodzą z przebadanych wykopaliskowo stanowisk z terenu Gruzji datowanych na późną epokę brązu (Ryc. 9).

Materiał ceramiczny znaleziony w niektórych jaskiniach, w opisanym kontekście stratygraficznym, okazał się jeszcze wcześniejszy. W tym wypadku analogie pochodzą z badań kurhanów należących do tak zwanej kultury Trialeti, datowanej na środkową epokę brązu (Ryc. 10).

Także to datowanie nie jest jednak najwcześniejszym dla opisanych jaskiń. W niektórych komorach, w zagłębieniach skalnych podłóg, znajdowano fragmenty naczyń ceramicznych datowanych na wczesną epokę brązu oraz chalkolit (Ryc. 11). Warto zauważyć, że część znalezisk ceramiki wczesnobrązowej i chalkolitycznej pochodziła z zagłębień wypełnionych rumoszem służącym do niwelacji podłóg, czyli z warstwy budowlanej powstałej najprawdopodobniej podczas wykuwania komór.

Jak wykazały badania w różnych krajach, na znacznych obszarach Śródziemnomorza oraz Azji Mniejszej pomiędzy V a II tysiącleciem p.n.e., równoległe do kultur budujących domostwa stosunkowo często pojawiały się grupy zamieszkujące w jaskiniach wykutych w skale. Zwraca uwagę fakt, że pod względem metody wykuwania oraz rozplanowania osiedli skalnych część systemów jaskiń w innych

regionach jest identyczna jak te w Kvemo Kartli, badane przez zespół kierowany przez autora. Na podstawie wyników wykopalisk można stwierdzić, że część systemów jaskiniowych Kvemo Kartli omawianego typu, podobnie jak analogiczne obiekty z Europy Południowej oraz z Azji Mniejszej, była wykorzystywana jako miejsca pochówku.

Nie mniej interesujące są ślady wykorzystywania systemów jaskiniowych Kvemo Kartli w okresie średniowiecza. Najwyraźniej część miejscowej ludności w tym czasie uznała za celowe zagospodarowanie opuszczonych pieczar. Po różnych przebudowach zespoły komór były przekształcane w skalne wioski. Pomieszczenia, z pozoru identyczne pod względem struktury, zostały podzielone na skupiska ściśle ze sobą powiązanych jaskiń naśladujących oddzielne domy. W wyniku badań archeologicznych prowadzonych w tych skalnych wioskach wydobyto szereg przedmiotów typowych dla okresu rozwiniętego średniowiecza (**Ryc. 12**). Większość pozyskanych fragmentów naczyń ceramicznych to wyroby z surowej lub glazurowanej gliny

datowane na okres od XI do XIV wieku (**Ryc. 13, 14**). Monety znajdowane podczas badań pochodzą z tego samego okresu. Należy także wymienić kolekcję przedmiotów wykonanych z materiałów organicznych (np. drewniane narzędzia gospodarcze, fragmenty odzieży, dywanów itp. – **Ryc. 15, 16**).

Niektóre z zespołów jaskiń Kvemo Kartli przekształcono w średniowieczu w klasztory. W związku z takimi adaptacjami były zabudowywane frontowe ściany jaskiń, w których organizowano kościoły lub cele mnichów. Dobudowywano także umocnienia (**Ryc. 8**). Podczas wykopalisk w takich klasztorach, oprócz różnorodnych przedmiotów o przeznaczeniu gospodarczym, znajdowano fragmenty wyposażenia kościołów i rękopisów o charakterze religijnym.

Wszystko wskazuje na to, że funkcjonowanie większości takich skalnych osiedli i monastyrów zamyka okres najazdów Tamerlana.