

INTERIM REPORT ON THE POLISH– GEORGIAN EXCAVATION OF A ROMAN FORT IN GONIO (APSAROS) IN 2014

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Abstract: Archaeological excavations of three sections of the inner areas of the fort of Apsaros were conducted by the Gonio-Apsaros archaeological expedition of the Cultural Heritage Preservation Agency of Adjara in 2014. Remains of several buildings were unearthed in the Roman cultural levels. Artifacts from these layers reflect a Roman presence in the area from the second half of the 1st to the end of the 3rd century AD.

Keywords: Georgia, Gonio, Apsaros, Roman army / fort / baths, glassware, mosaic glass

Apsaros was one of the principal forts of the so-called Pontus-Caucasian frontier, or Pontus Limes, in the 1st–3rd century AD. It was rectangular in plan, 4.75 ha in area; 222 m long and 195 m wide. Walls were 5 m wide, rising to 7 m at the corners, where the towers stood.

Roman and Byzantine authors, like Arrian (*Periplus* 6), Procopius (*De Bellis* 8.2.12–14) and Stephanus of Byzantium (s.v. Ἀψαρτίδης) tied the name of this locality to the myth of the Argonauts. Apsaros was first mentioned by Pliny (*NH* 6.12). When Arrian visited Apsaros, it was a large fort in which five cohorts were stationed by AD 132. *Tabula*

Peutingeriana (X,5) shows Apsaros with a schematic sketch of a fort, emphasis not given to other littoral fortifications of the region.

Georgian excavations on the site have uncovered a praetorium(?), barracks, bath, water cistern, sewerage and water supply systems, all from the Roman or early Byzantine period. Most of the structures inside the enclosure were of timber apparently, built on stone foundations. The wood deteriorated quickly after the fort was abandoned in the second half of the 4th century AD. The revival of Apsaros and restoration of the fort started in all likelihood in the mid 6th century. It was

in use through the early Byzantine period, buildings inside the circuit being erected on top of the foundations of Roman structures. The projecting rectangular towers could not belong to the earliest Roman fort, whereas both rectangular and U-shaped towers may have been added equally well in late Roman as in early Byzantine times. Soon after the Ottomans captured the fort in 1547, they restored the circuit and added merlons. Inside the circuit the Ottomans erected also new buildings including a mosque, a bath and an inner fortification in the southwestern part of the fortress.

Archaeology has revealed evidence of a local elite in the Apsaros area. In 1964, a hoard was unearthed in the village of Makho, on a slope overlooking the left bank of the Chorokhi River. The so-called Gonio Treasure was found in 1974, in the hills behind the fort. It was interpreted as a burial, but was probably

a hoard, having been found together in a metal container (apparently lost at the time of discovery).

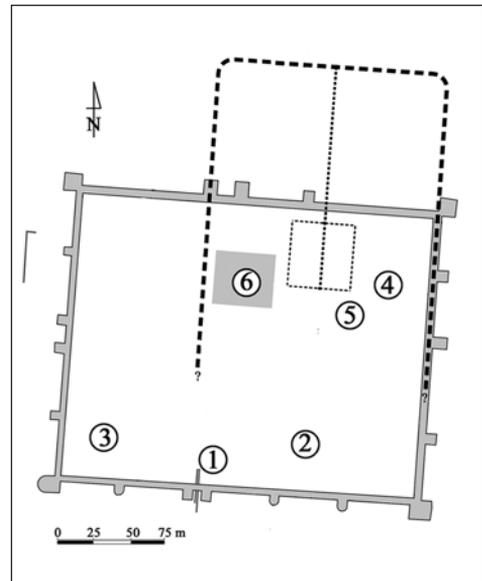
In 2014, work in the inner areas of the fort was conducted in four sectors: a) the forefront of the southern gate [marked as 1 in *Fig. 1*], mostly from the second half of the 2nd to the end of the 3rd century AD; b) the southeastern sector of the fortress [marked as 2] with Roman-period foundations covered by late antique, early medieval and late medieval remains; c) the southwestern sector of the fortress [marked as 3] with two Roman-period building levels, one from the 1st and first half of the 2nd century AD, and the other from the second half of the 2nd and the 3rd century AD; and d) the northeastern sector [marked as 4 and 5], excavated jointly with the Polish team of Radosław Karasiewicz-Szczypiorski from the University of Warsaw (for the latter, see Karasiewicz-Szczypiorski *et al.* 2016, in this volume).

Fig. 1. Roman fort at Gonio (Apsaros): location of trenches excavated by the Georgian team in 2014:

- 1 – southern gate forefront (SO 12, Squares 16–18, 25–28, 35–38, 45–48 and 55–58);
- 2 – southeastern sector (SW 2, Squares 48–50, 58–60, 68–70, 78–80, and SW 3, Squares 41, 42, 51–53, 61–63, 71, 72);
- 3 – southwestern sector (SW 8, Squares 64, 74, 84, 86, 87, 88, 94);
- 4 – eastern trench (NO 11, Squares 89, 90, 99, 100);
- 5 – western trench (NO 1, Squares 95, 96, 97) (trenches in sectors 4 and 5 were excavated by the joint Polish–Georgian team, see Karasiewicz-Szczypiorski *et al.* 2016, in this volume);
- 6 – location of the *principia*.

Dashed line marks the presumed extent of the early fortifications.

(After Geyer 2003; adaptation R. Karasiewicz-Szczypiorski; drawing J. Kaniszewski)



SOUTHEASTERN PART OF THE FORTRESS (SECTOR SO 12)

Excavations in the sector have continued since 2012, covering Squares 16–18, 25–28, 35–38, 45–48, and Squares 55–58 in an earlier season, and removing topsoil and the Ottoman-period level. The present season aimed at investigating the Roman-period architecture discovered in the trench. The objective was to determine the building sequence and chronology of the structures.

Two buildings were identified in the Roman level, both of significant size and extending beyond the borders of the trench. At the present stage of research, the trench not being extended further to the east, west and south, it is impossible to trace the full plan of these structures and to identify their function. The building in the eastern part of the trench was oriented toward the east, the one in the western part to the south. The walls of the two houses were lined up against one another, forming a double wall on the foundation level in Squares 35, 36 and 37 [Figs 2–3]. The outer face of the foundation of the eastern building was built of dressed blocks in regular bond. The core

of the wall was of relatively smaller stones bonded in clay mortar. The foundation of the western building bordered this wall. The total length was 9.20 m inside the trench, whereas the thickness of each was 0.65 m, giving a total thickness of 1.30 m. The north wall of the eastern building was

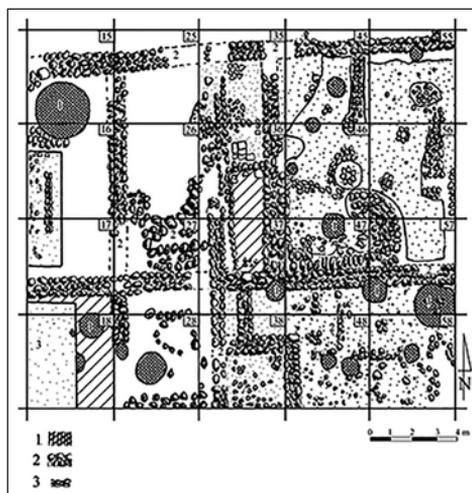


Fig. 2. General plan of the sector in the forefront of the southern gate (SO 12) (Drawing G. Dumbadze)

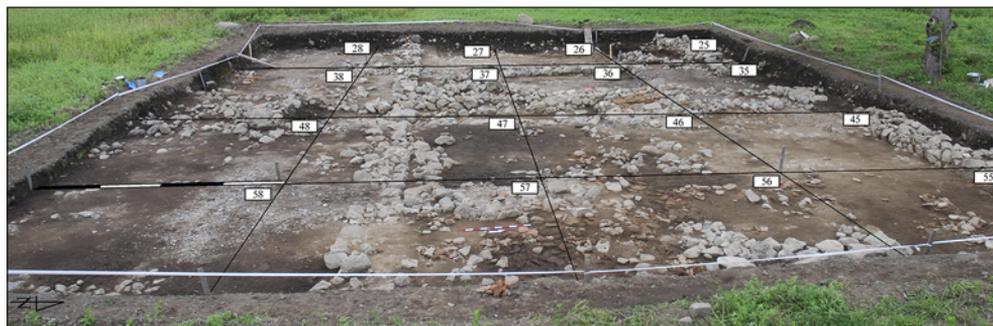


Fig. 3. General view of the trench in the forefront of the southern gate (SO 12), looking west; Roman occupational level (Photo G. Dumbadze)

relatively well-preserved along its entire length save for a spot in the northeastern corner of Square 36, where a pit dug in Ottoman times (17th–19th century) had damaged it. The remains of the foundation were recorded for a length of 11.40 m, one course in Square 36, two and sometimes three courses in Squares 45 and 55; the wall continued eastward into the unexcavated area. The height of individual courses was 0.20 m, 0.30 m or 0.45 m. The construction of the foundation layer followed the same principles as described above. The outer supporting wall on the south extended to the east to the edge of the trench and beyond. It is relatively well visible in Square 37, whereas further to the east merely the upper courses can be seen, the lower ones being covered with the layer that was intended as a floor. The width of

the foundation of the external carrying wall on the north varies from 0.70 m to 0.80 m. In the case of the south wall, the difference was just 5 cm, from 0.75 m to 0.80 m [see *Fig. 2*].

An inner partition wall set off a compartment at the western end of the structure located in the eastern part of the trench. This wall joined the north and south outer wall. Its width varied: 0.60 m, 0.70 m, 0.80 m and 0.85 m. A floor, preserved in the area 1.40 m x 1.50 m in the middle of the unit, was made of stones measuring 0.40 m x 0.26 m, 0.39 m x 0.25 m, and 0.38 m x 0.25 m. Its thickness was 8 cm. The northern section was damaged by a pit dug in the Ottoman period.

The other structure in the western part of the trench was delimited by outer walls on the north and south, in line with the

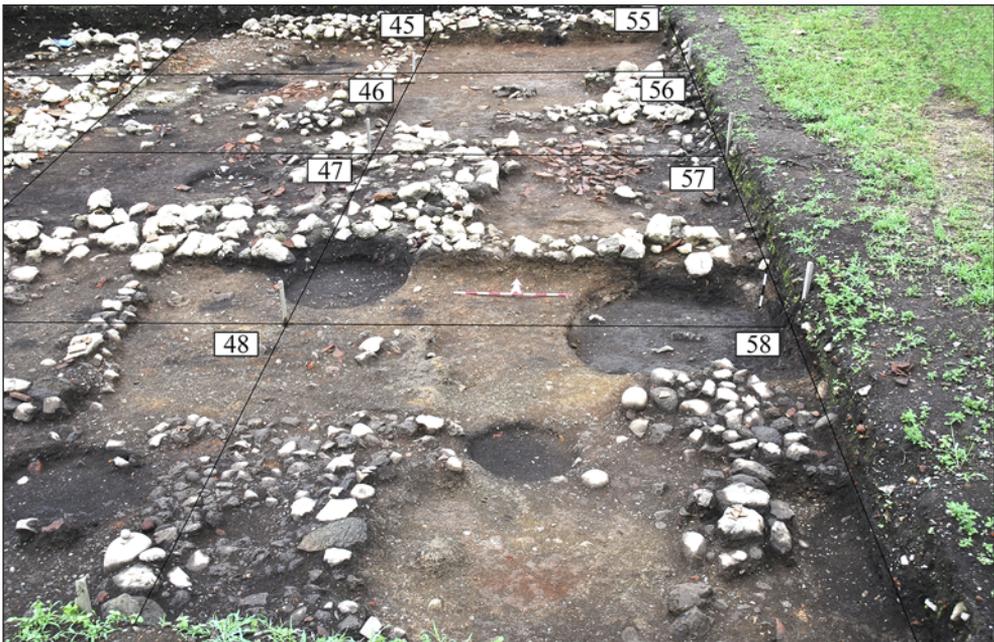


Fig. 4. Eastern part of the trench in the sector in front of the southern gate (SO 12), from the south; upper architectural level in the Roman occupational layer (Photo G. Dumbadze)



Fig. 5. Western part of the trench in the sector in front of the southern gate (SO 12), view from the south; lower architectural level in the Roman occupational layer (Photo G. Dumbadze)

walls of the already described building and both uncovered for a distance of 8.40 m; the two walls extended beyond the trench to the west. The east end of the north wall was destroyed by an Ottoman pit dug to a depth of 2 m and so was the eastern part of the south wall. The remaining parts of these walls are well preserved, with two or three courses of middle-sized and large stones still in place, their width ranging from 0.85 m to 0.90 m. A compartment of unidentified purpose was distinguished with a semicircular wall closing it off on the eastern side.

A lower level of architectural remains was recorded in tests dug in the western part of the trench, in Squares 15, 16, 17 and 18 [Figs 2, 5]. The depth reached in the utmost southern part (Square 18) was 1.40 m down from the level of 0.80–0.90 m below ground surface, which was the level of the Roman structures described above. The difference in elevation between the two levels is 0.42 m and in some places even 0.50 m–0.55 m. The wall foundation traced in the test ran north–south for 4.60 m (the rest being in the baulk). It was 0.45 m–0.50 m thick. The floor was more or less similar: middle-and large-sized stones on a bedding, the surface leveled with clay, pottery and small gravel, and covered with a thick (0.10–0.15 m) hydraulic mix made up of fine sand, mud brick and crushed pottery that gave it the usual reddish hue.

The assemblages of finds from the two levels verified their dating established in earlier excavations. The lower architectural level, dated conventionally to the 1st to second half of 2nd century, yielded some oil lamp fragments (G.A.2014/695, 780, 782, 783), cooking pots (G.A.2014/738), a few so-called Romanized cauldrons

(G.A.2014/681, 738, 787, 791) and transport amphorae from local and imported sources (e.g., G.A.2014/682, 683, 827), as well as red-slipped tableware (two ring bases and a rim fragment in either red or whitish-beige fabric, G.A.2014/772, 773, 774), a vessel with a handle ending in a ram's head (G.A.2014/784) and Sinopean *loutheria*, mostly bottoms, all attributable to the 1st through 2nd century AD. Glassware, which included, among others, the base of a yellowish-green glass drinking vessel (G.A.2014/685) and the rim of a drinking bowl made of mosaic glass, represented the same dating horizon, so did a corroded bronze coin from the northern part of the trench.

The abundant pottery assemblage collected from the layer associated with the upper construction level, which is assigned on site to the second half of the 2nd through the end of the 3rd century AD, comprised household ceramics that included drinking vessels, amphorae, cooking pots and others. Large pitchers of red-brown clay, one with relief strips on the surface (G.A.2014/990), the other with finger-like impressions between horizontal ridges (G.A.2014/931), find parallels among the finds from the central part of the fort and the area of the southern gate (see Kakhidze and Mamuladze 2004: 51–52). Finds of amphorae reflected the site typology based on earlier excavations, e.g., Colchian (G.A.2014/867, 979, 1008, 6, 1008, 1020, 640, 985, 1038) [Fig. 6:1]; imported Italic (G.A.2014/732, 601, 938, 967, 947, 1007) [Fig. 6:2]; imported with double-roll handle (G.A.2014/962) [Fig. 6:3]; and Byzantine (G.A.2014/946) [Fig. 6:4] as well as introduced new, as yet unidentified forms

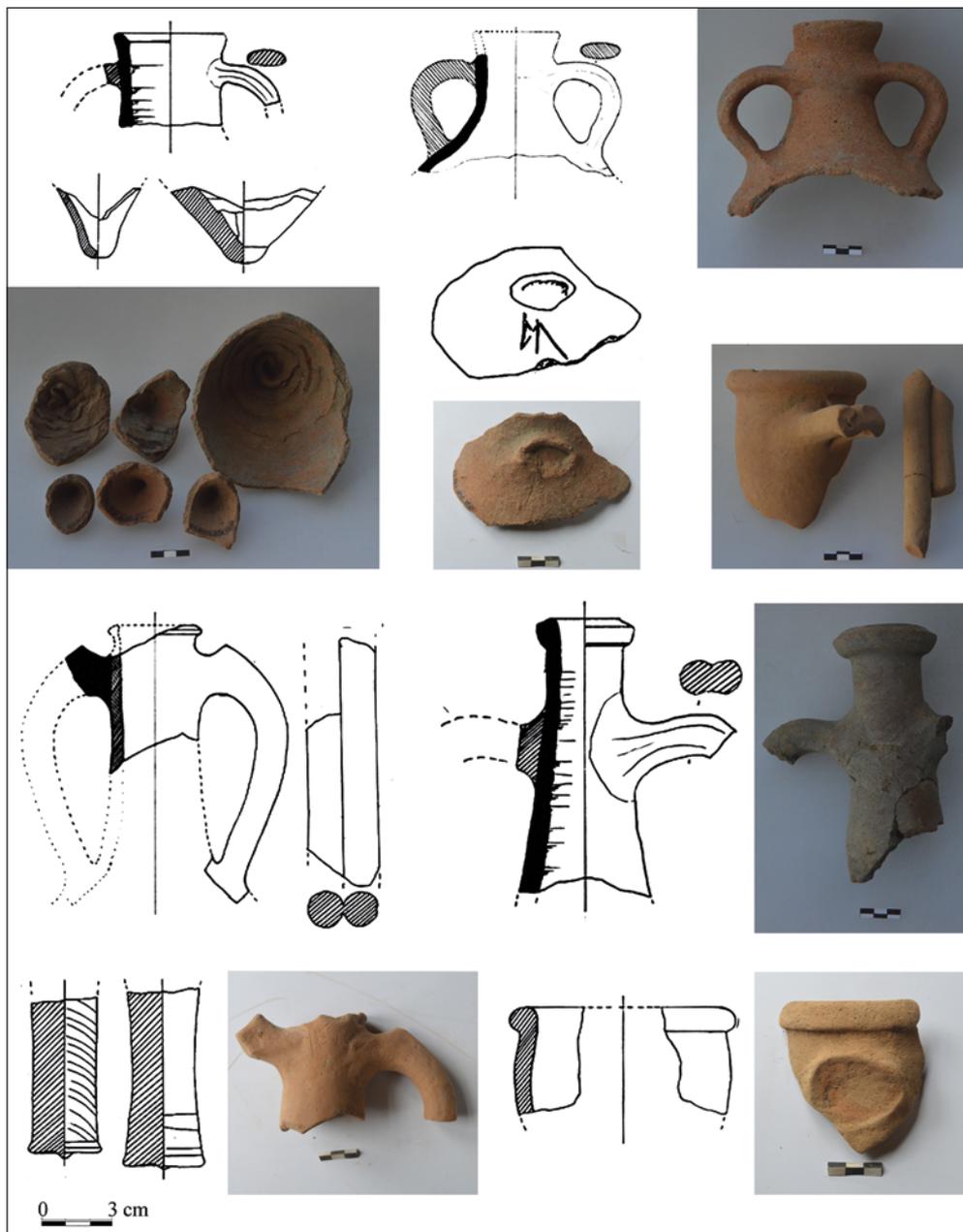


Fig. 6. Amphorae from the upper Roman level in sector SO 12: 1 – Colchian, including body sherd with graffito; 2 – Italic; 3 – imported with double-roll handle; 4 – Byzantine; 5 – unidentified (Photos and drawing G. Dumbadze)

[Fig. 6:5]. One of the Colchian amphorae body sherds preserved a graffito inscribed under the handle (G.A.2014/1000) [see Fig. 6:1]. An amphora stopper was also found, paralleling earlier examples from Gonio (Kakhidze and Mamuladze 2004: 55–56; Sulava 2009: 66; Mamuladze, Shalikadze, and Aslanishvili 2013: 194) [Fig. 8].

Kitchenware comprised pots, cauldrons, jugs and trays, made of a brown, reddish or orange fabric tempered with lime grits and pyroxene. These represented the so-called Romanized group [Fig. 7], which included plain pots and grooved pots, pots with and without lids, bearing finger impressions (G.A.2014/477). The group reflects local production in



Fig. 7. Kitchen ware representing the Romanized group from the upper Roman level in trench SO 12 (Photos and drawing G. Dumbadze)

the fort, catering to the needs and tastes of the inhabitants and demonstrating popularity of the shape (Asatiani 1975; Kakhidze and Mamuladze 2004: 54). Among the jugs were examples with a trefoil rim (G.A.2014/633, 731, 988). Parallels are known from the Pityus assemblage (Asatiani 1975: 227, Pl. 46.1).

Tableware is represented by red-slipped bowls which have already been studied for the Gonio-Apsarus territory (see Ebralidze 2005: 17–77). Pergamum production is the most frequent. The 2014 assemblage included examples of Type 3 (G.A.2014/774), dated at Apsaros to the second half of the 1st century AD (Ebralidze 2005: 32, Fig. 6) [see Fig. 9:1]; Type 6 (G.A.2014/792) [see Fig. 9:2], found in the southern gate area of the fort (Ebralidze 2004: 109, Fig. 4) as well as in Tower 2, in contexts dated to the 1st–2nd century AD (Ebralidze 2002b: 32, 12–13); Type 10 (G.A.2014/863, 828), deeper bowls with roulette decoration, found at Gonio in the 3rd century contexts (Ebralidze 2005: 41, Fig. 17). New forms at Gonio included a plate with a modeled handle [see Fig. 9:3]. It does

not match any of the subtypes of Type 4 distinguished within this group at Apsaros (Ebralidze 2009: 151–153, Figs 5–9). Jugs were present as well, although too fragmentary to allow for a discussion of their type. Straight-bodied unguentaria with long cylindrical necks [see Fig. 9], made of brownish-pink fine-grained clay, grouped in type 14 (G.A.2014/698, 699), are from the 2nd–3rd century AD in Apsarus; they originated most probably from the eastern Roman provinces (Ebralidze 2005: 45–46, Fig. 21), although they have been recorded from Mtskheta of the 1st through 2nd century AD (Berdzenishvili 1963), and also from the occupational levels of the palace of Dedoflis Gora (Chanishvili 2000: 79–80, Pl. 1.5). They were accompanied by pillar-molded drinking bowls, fragments of red-slipped jugs, bronze tweezers, a needle, a hook, a coin of Antoninus Pius (AD 138–161) and a Caesarian didrahm (Tavamaishvili 1997: 2–12). Last but not least are the Sino-pean *loutheria* of different size, shape and fabric; variants are distinguished based on rim shape. The one illustrated here [Fig. 10:2], with a groove cut with a sharp

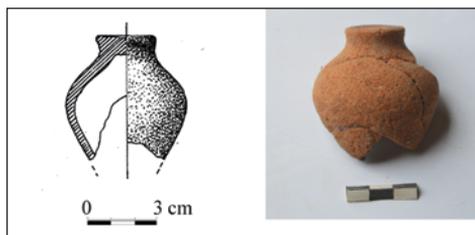


Fig. 8. Amphora stopper
(Photo and drawing G. Dumbadze)

Fig. 9. Unguentaria (left) and tableware: terra sigillata bowl of Type 3; terra sigillata bowl of Type 6; new type pf plate with molding
(Photos G. Dumbadze)



tool just under the rim, is dated at Apsaros to about the end of the 1st and 2nd century AD (Ebralidze 2002a: 90, Fig. 1; 2005: 70, Fig. 50). Some fragments of *loutheria* made of brown clay (G.A.2014/780) have a ledge rim. Fragments of *loutheria* of the Heraclean type, made of a characteristic brownish-red clay with coarse temper, were also found (G.A.2014/1012). They have a rim that is triangular in cross-section, distinguished by a slight groove. There is small disk-like clay mass modeled on the

surface of the convex mouth. They are dated to the 2nd through 3rd century AD (Ebralidze 2002a: 91, Fig. 3; 2005: 71–72, Fig. 52). Local *loutheria* rim fragments were discovered as well (G.A.2014/634, 694) [see Fig. 10:1]. Those from earlier seasons came from cultural levels dated to the second half of the 2nd and the 3rd century AD (Ebralidze 2005: 72–73).

Building materials were mostly of coarse ware; roofing tiles [Fig. 11] were of a reddish-brown fabric and represented

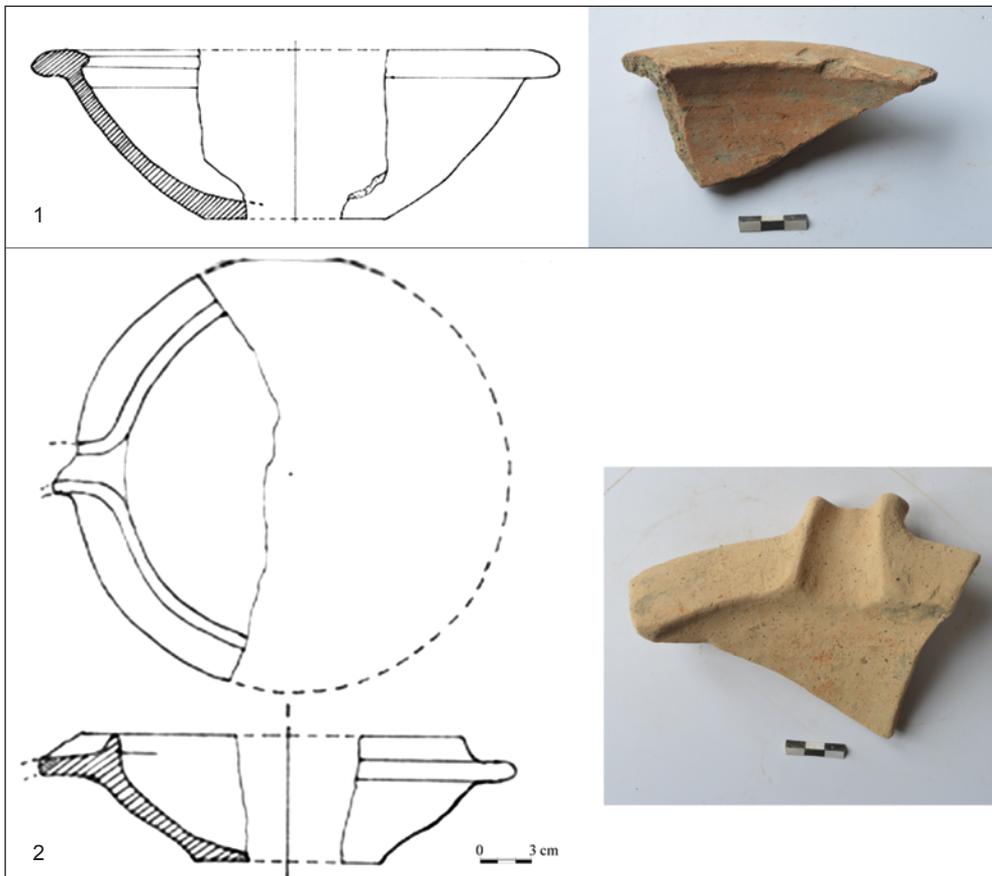


Fig. 10. *Loutheria*: 1 – local; 2 – Sinopean
(Photos and drawing G. Dumbadze)



Fig. 11. Ceramic roofing tiles from the upper Roman levels: left, folded tile of the Solen type; right, Sinopean tile; center, stamped tile (Photos and drawing G. Dumbadze)



Fig. 12. Glass: top left, jug; bottom left, goblet; right, mosaic-glass bowl (Photos and drawing G. Dumbadze)

the Solen type with upturned ridges of different size at the edges (G.A.2014/594, 53, 687, 590, 706) and occasional grooves (G.A.2014/932, 930). A few were stamped (G.A.2014/904). Sinopean tiles were recorded as well (G.A.2014/597, 898) [see *Fig. 11*].

Glassware included fragments of a drinking bowl (G.A.2014/840) made of mosaic glass with rods of opaque yellow, white, red and brownish glass in a dark green translucent matrix; the body was hemispherical, the walls 0.3 cm thick [*Fig. 12* right]. Fragments of analogous mosaic vessels were found in the central part of the fort. They are of Italian production and are dated in this case most likely to the 1st century AD (Shalikadze 2004: 20–21; Kakhidze and Shalikadze 2009: 55, Cat. 53). Fragments of similar mosaic glass drinking bowls come from the site of Bichvinta, as well as from Sarkineti and Aghaiani in eastern Georgia (Ugreldze 1984). Cast glass from Italian workshops constituted one of the most numerous groups at Gonio/Apsarus (Shalikadze 2000: 56–61, Figs 1–5), followed by glasses made by the free-blown technique. Drinking vessels were most common, including bowls, goblets, and flat-bottomed vessels. One example on a high conical foot with flat floor, made of colorless glass with faint blueish tinge (G.A.2014/884) [see *Fig. 12* bottom left]. These were accompanied by unguentaria

and decanters (for parallels, see Shalikadze 2004: 17–20; Kakhidze and Shalikadze 2009: 57, Cat. 59, Fig. 1; for flat-bottomed vessels, see Sorokina 1962: 223, Fig. 9.2, 6; 1963: 158, Fig. 6.55; Kunina and Sorokina 1972; Kunina 1997: 158, Cat. 6, 55). These vessels originated from the Eastern Mediterranean, probably Syro-Palestine, and are dated to the 3rd century AD. A series of bases with conical uplifted bottoms represents types already recorded in Gonio-Apsarus (for a classification of such bases, see Shalikadze 2004: 45, Fig. 45). Another fragment of colorless glass with yellowish tinge is a long narrow neck, 1.7 cm in diameter, with funnel-shaped mouth (Diam. 3.5 cm) [see *Fig. 12* top left]. A glass thread applied on the neck below the funnel was of the same color as the glass of the body. The technique of decorating vessels with thin glass threads appeared in the 1st century AD and was widespread from the end of the 2nd through the 3rd century AD (Saginashvili 1970: 36, Fig. 22.2). Similar decorations can be found on drinking vessels, decanter-like vessels, bowls, cups and perfume holders from Georgia, for example, an *amphoriskos* decorated with glass threads of the same yellowish color. Parallels come from the necropolis in Gorgipia, dated to the 1st–2nd century AD by finds of beads, a small gold fibula and a polychrome glass drinking cup (Aleksieva and Sorokina 2007: 8, Pls 62.2, 69).

SOUTHERN GATE AND BATHS

Excavation was continued in the vicinity of the southern gate and the bath sector (SW 2: Squares 48, 49, 50, 58, 59, 60, 68, 69, 70, 78, 79, 80 and SW 3: Squares 41, 42, 51, 52, 53, 61, 62, 63, 71, 72) [*Fig. 13*].

The topsoil had already been removed from some of these squares earlier on, uncovering a well-preserved Ottoman-period road leading northward from the gate. It was made of polished stones

(Kakhidze and Mamuladze 2004: 46, Pl. 40). In 2014, a modern pathway was removed from this area, revealing an Ottoman-period stone floor (Squares 71, 80) [Fig. 14].

Continued exploration of the trench (sectors SW 2, Squares 78, 79, 80, and SW 3, Square 71), reached the Roman level, revealing a water-pipe system [Fig. 15; see also bottom left of Fig. 14]. Three rows of wide cylindrical pipes (average length 0.40–0.46 m, diameter 0.18–0.22 m) are a continuation of pipes coming out of the southern gate (Kakhidze and Mamuladze 2004: 6–7, 20, Pls 11, 35).

Medieval pipes were located about 0.50 m higher; their average length was 0.37–0.42 m, diameter 0.18–0.22 m [Fig. 16]. They also emerged from the southern gate, one line proceeding north, the other turning west toward the bath of the same period and passing through sector SW 3 Square 100, and sector SW 6

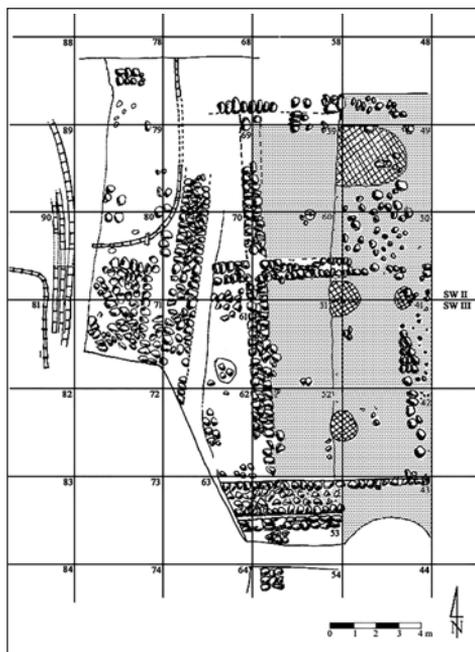


Fig. 13. Plan of the excavations near the southern gate (Drawing G. Dumbadze)



Fig. 14. Trench by the southern gate: Ottoman phase with road of polished stones, view from the south (Roman-age water pipes already visible at bottom left) (Photo G. Dumbadze)



Fig. 15. *Western part of the trench near the southern gate: water supply pipes of Roman age, view from the south (Photo G. Dumbadze)*



Fig. 16. *Western part of the trench near the southern gate: water supply system of Ottoman age, view from the south (Photo G. Dumbadze)*

Squares 10, 20 and on to Square 30 (Kakhidze and Mamuladze 2004: 10, Fig. 7).

A Roman-age water channel was discovered in sector SW 3, Squares 52 and 63, its bottom 1.05 m below the trench benchmark [Fig. 17]. A section 4 m long was cleared within the trench, continuing westward and eastward into the baulks. It was built of stone slabs, bonded in mortar in places and covered with large slabs.

Excavation in sectors SW 2, Squares 48, 49, 50, 58, 59, 60, 68, 69 and SW 3, Squares 41, 42, 51, 52, 53, 61, 62, 63, concentrated on clearing the Ottoman-period level. No structural remains were found, but the accumulated deposits, 0.40–0.50 m thick, yielded a mix of Roman as well as early and late medieval domestic and building ceramics (tiles, bricks, amphorae, pots, glass drinking vessels, faience, glazed ceramics, candlesticks and other fragments).

Finds from the Roman occupational layer comprised tiles, bricks, amphorae, pots, glass drinking vessels, faience ves-

sels, glazed/slipped ceramics, candlesticks and other artifacts. Remains of a structure were noted in the inner part of the fortress, in a lower level founded directly on a dune system (dated to the 8th–7th century BC) and repeated higher up (Roman level, 1st–3rd centuries AD), but further work is needed before they can be properly interpreted.

Finds from the sector represent three periods: late antique, early medieval and late medieval. The most numerous group are amphorae from the late antique and early medieval period, classified according to Khalvashi's study (2002) of the containers from Gonio-Apsarus territory. Represented in fragments (mostly necks, handles, bodies and bottoms) are the following types: Type 1, brown-clay nib-necked, 1st through 3rd century AD (G.A.2014/248, 270, 271, 289, 305); Type 3, nib-protrusion handle (G.A.2014/132, 205); Type 4, funnel-like mouth (G.A.2014/346); Sinopean (G.A.2014/5, 95, 325, 249, 185) and Early



Fig. 17. Eastern part of the trench near the southern gate: upper architectural level in the Roman occupational layer, view from the south (Photo G. Dumbadze)

Medieval (types 1–6; G.A.2014/107, 117, 148, 190, 309, 348, 358, 363, 364). The assemblage included also typical period kitchenware and table utensils: cauldrons (G.A.2014/4, 92, 141, 332), *loutheria* (G.A.2014/231, 252, 311), red-slipped vessels (G.A.2014/6, 269). A complete terracotta oil lamp (G.A.2014/152) represents a type extremely widespread in the 1st through 2nd century AD (Ebraldidze 2005: 56–59). Glassware consisted mainly of drinking vessels, preserved mostly as bases, either flat (G.A.2014/154, 204) or concave (G.A.2014/42, 103, 104, 151, 203, 345), similar to the glasses already reported from Gonio-Apsaros territory (Shalikadze 2004: 42–46). Coins were also found, but have yet to be cleaned to be studied.

Of particular interest are tray-like vessels of the 11th through 13th century, made of yellowish, light brown or sometimes pinkish fabric. The ledge-like rims are stamped with a horizontal band of double rhombuses. Concentric grooves run around the rim (G.A.2014/1, 236) and bottoms are flat (G.A.2014/237). The same ornaments are stamped on the floors as well as rims. Different ornaments are also encountered, namely, a single horizontal row of vertical dashes inside concentric rings. A distinct ridge separates the body from the rim part of the vessel (G.A.2014/2, 13). This particular kind of pottery was widespread from the 9th through the 14th century and originated from Central Asia and the Near East (Kakhidze and Mamuladze 2004: 62, Figs 44–45).

The late medieval layers produced glazed pottery, most of them wide bowls on ring bases, made of fine light brown colored clay glazed a uniform green or multicolored (green, yellow, and brown).

Geometrical ornaments were scratched (lines, spirals, rings) or painted with a brush (waves) on the inside walls (G.A.2014/41, 80, 81, 234). Parallels are known from the late Middle Ages (Mitsishvili 1976: 10, 14; Mamuladze 1993: 60; Ebraldidze, Mamuladze, and Aslanishvili 2013: 282, 295). Trays and jugs were distinguished (G.A.2014/79, 219–225), as well as the bottom of a candlestick (G.A.2014/17). Unglazed pottery was represented mainly by jugs, some spouted (G.A.2014/59, 180, 181). Parallels from Georgia as well as outside are dated to the 14th through 17th century (Kakhidze and Mamuladze 2004: 63).

A significant group of finds of Ottoman age is made up of faience vessels, both bowls and cup-like vessels, imported from Iznik or Kutahya (G.A.2014/50, 60, 70, 85, 166, 231, 232, 233). Pipes are found in great numbers as well (G.A.2014/8, 18, 19, 72, 74, 167, 207, 210, 212, 213, 215, 216). They differ in terms of clay, shape and ornament; some specimens have traces of painted powder. Most are decorated with fluting, notches, palmettos, flower or geometrical ornaments. Many Georgian scholars (Archvadze 1978: 119–120; Jandieri 1974: 60–62; Chkhaidze 1982; Kakhidze and Khakhutaishvili 1989; Tavamaishvili 2009; Mamuladze and Kamadadze 2013: 266) believe that pipes started to be imported to Georgia in the 16th century; others think that they did not become widespread before the end of the first half of the 17th century. Pipes are present in archaeological assemblages in the east, west and south. Domestic artifacts included also clay candlesticks and iron nails (G.A.2014/12, 35, 178), as well as horseshoes of different sizes (G.A.2014/179, 244, 245).

SOUTHWESTERN PART OF THE FORT (SECTOR SW 8)

Investigations in the southwestern sector (SW 8) in 2014 continued the uncovering of architecture revealed earlier in 2011–2013 in the southern part of the trench [Fig. 18]. The trench was enlarged to cover altogether 80 m² (Squares 64, 74, 84 and 94 opened in addition to previously explored Squares 86, 87 and 88). The structures were somewhat damaged by Ottoman-period refuse pits. The layout of the building was traced, but at this stage it is impossible to determine its function. Nothing definite can be said about the chronological framework of wall construction, although the stratigraphy and

the assemblage of finds (imported and Colchian amphorae, cauldrons, pots, lids, red-slipped ware, glass vessels and window panes, copper coins, clay lamps, etc.) suggest a Roman age for the building, between the 2nd and 3rd century AD. Of particular interest is a completely preserved terracotta floor slab and a large-size tray [see Fig. 19]. As in other sectors of Apsaros, the two construction levels from the Roman period can be dated: the earlier one to the 1st century and first half of the 2nd century AD, and the later one to the second half of the 2nd and the 3rd century AD.



Fig. 18. *Western part of the fort: general view of the trench from the west*
(Photo G. Dumbadze)



Fig. 19. Terracotta floor slab and a large-size tray from the Roman occupational level in the western part of the fort (Photo G. Dumbadze)

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