

**The Archaeology of a Colchian Landscape: Results of the Eastern Vani Survey**

by

Ryan C. Hughes

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
(Classical Art and Archaeology)  
in the University of Michigan  
2015

Doctoral Committee:

Professor Christopher J. Ratté, Chair  
Professor Sharon C. Herbert  
Professor Ian S. Moyer  
Professor Nicola Terrenato  
Professor Henry T. Wright

© Ryan C. Hughes

All Rights Reserved  
2015

*To Jack Joyce  
Too Soon. Too Late.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation and the Eastern Vani Survey owe their existence to a great number of generous scholars and friends. First and foremost, I must thank my advisor and mentor, Christopher Ratté of the University of Michigan, who offered me the means and opportunity to conduct survey in Georgia, and whose own professional rigor and work ethic gave me the will and stamina to bring this dissertation into existence. I owe a deep debt of gratitude to the members of my committee, Sharon Herbert, Nicola Terrenato, Henry Wright and Ian Moyer whose support and welcomed criticisms have made my project and this document better.

Several institutions and organizations provided generous financial and logistical support for the project: the University of Michigan Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies; the Fulbright Program; the Interdepartmental Program in Classical Art and Archaeology; the International Institute at the University of Michigan; the Department of Classics; and the Center for Russian, East European, and Eurasian Studies. Nonfinancial support was given by the American Research Institute of the South Caucasus, the Otari Lordkipanidze Vani Archaeological Museum, the Kutaisi Archaeological Museum, the Otari Lordkipanidze Archaeological Research Center, Tbilisi State University and the Georgian National Museum. The Eastern Vani Survey was carried out under the permission of the Georgian National Museum and its director, David Lordkipanidze. His dedication to the archaeology of Georgia and Vani in particular meant that I had an advocate and supporter in Tbilisi. His Deputy Director, Misha Tsereteli, was always

prepared to offer assistance when it was needed, and made time for me when I needed his help and advice.

To write about Vani and its region is to engage intimately with the work of Otar Lordkipanidze. Without his tireless efforts to bring the archaeology of Georgia to the attention of the international archaeological community, there would be no Eastern Vani Survey. One of my great regrets is that he was not able to participate in the creation of this survey. The current members of the Vani Expedition have supported this project from the beginning and have treated me like an honorary member of the team. The current head of the expedition, Darejan Kacharava, has been incredibly generous with her time and her great mind. From the beginning she has made sure I felt welcome and has done much to introduce me to the broader archaeological community in Georgia. To my dear friend and mentor, Guram Kvirkevelia, I owe a special debt of gratitude. He has been my great teacher in the archaeology and history of Georgia and Vani, and he looked after me while I lived in Tbilisi and Vani making sure I had all I needed to live and work in the country. I would also like to thank the other members of the expedition, especially Dimitri Akhvlediani, Nana Matiashvili and Sulkhan Kharabadze who all offered advice and support as the project proceeded. I must single out Sulkhan Kharabadze in particular who has become a trusted friend and colleague. Though neither of us fully spoke the other's language we always figured out how to make ourselves understood. He made my stay in Vani possible and spent much of his time making sure both the project and I had what we needed. Without his help and support we would not have accomplished as much as we did.

Sincere thanks to my survey team and support staff in Vani. Omar Gabunia, director of the Vani museum, did everything he could to make sure I had access to the material I needed and that I felt welcome in Vani. Dimitri Jachvliani agreed early on to serve as my field director and

was with me almost every day of the project. He not only directed surface survey, but he also kept the project staffed with eager and hardworking students. Every survey needs a good driver, and Mindia Mjavia was one of the best. In addition to making sure we got to where we needed to go, he also served as my translator, negotiator and confidant. For long stretches of my time in Vani I lived with Soso, Saba and Nana Giorgadze and Nato Mjavia. They made me feel like I was part of their family and supported me as if I were their son. Nato was the project's cook and my adopted Georgian mother and she kept us safe and well fed. The survey itself was carried out by a great number of archaeology students from Tbilisi State University with the support of Vakhtang Licheli. There is not room to thank everyone who surveyed with us, but I will single out Shio Simsive, Ana Tetrushvili, Ketil Esebua, Lana Chologauri, Ekatarina Gelashvili, Gvanca Vachadze, Lika Mebonia, Ana Gabunia, Saba Godzaishvili and David Gagoshidze, who all spent long days with me under to the Imeretian sun. Georgians are known for their hospitality and I must also thank the people living in the villages of Zeda Vani, Salxino, Kveda Bzvani, Zeda Bzvani, Dikhashkho, Isriti, Amaghleba and Gora for allowing us into their fields and homes and for making sure our stomachs were never empty.

The Interdepartmental Program in Classical Art and Archaeology (IPCAA) and the Kelsey Museum of Archaeology have been my academic home for the last eight years. The staff of the museum have made my life easier and have provided support and encouragement even when it was not asked for. I want to thank in particular Alexander Zwinak, IPCAA's administrator and chief problem solver. Alex helped me navigate the bureaucracy of the university and kept my head above water. He took time to listen to problems great and small, and always offered encouragement and advice when he could.

Dissertations are not written alone and I must thank my colleagues at the University of Michigan for challenging me to be a better archaeologist and scholar. Special thanks to Henry Colburn, Thomas Landvatter, Colin Quinn, Daniel Diffendale, Alex Conison, Adrian Ossi, Lisa Çakmak, Leah Long, Marcello Mogetta, Laura Banducci, Lynley McAlpine, Casey Barrier, Alice Wright, Charlotte Maxwell-Jones, Michael Leese, and Michael McOsker for listening to my rants about Vani and for their willingness to bend an elbow or share a meal when the going got rough. I must especially thank Katherine Larson who was the rock I depended on while I finished this dissertation. She was my editor, my sounding board and my fiercest supporter. Kate was there for the hard parts, and she made sure I knew that I was not alone. She saved me.

I have saved the final place of honor for my family. This dissertation exists because my parents, William and Dale, never said no and supported me even when it seemed I was tilting at windmills. They gave me the courage and strength to pursue archaeology, and there are no words to express how proud I am to be their son. This dissertation is for them.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Figures	x
List of Tables	xxii
List of Appendices	xxiv
Abstract	xxv
<b>Chapter 1- The Origins of the Eastern Vani Survey</b> .....	<b>1</b>
I. COLCHIS, THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AND THE WIDER WORLD .....	<b>1</b>
II. THE REGION .....	<b>4</b>
III. THE ANCIENT SITE.....	<b>11</b>
IV. BRIEF HISTORY OF REGIONAL STUDIES AROUND VANI.....	<b>17</b>
V. ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION.....	<b>21</b>
<b>Chapter 2 - Orientation and Methodology of the Survey</b> .....	<b>23</b>
I. INTRODUCTION .....	<b>23</b>
II. THE EASTERN VANI SURVEY PROJECT .....	<b>24</b>
<i>II.1 . The Centrality of Vani in its Region</i> .....	<b>25</b>
<i>II.2 . Regional Studies in Artifact-Poor Environments</i> .....	<b>31</b>
III. DEFINITION OF THE STUDY REGION AND SURVEY CHALLENGES.....	<b>35</b>



III.1 . <i>Vani's Site Catchment</i> .....	36
III.2 . <i>The Study Region</i> .....	40
IV. SAMPLING METHODOLOGY .....	<b>43</b>
IV.1 . <i>Reconnaissance Survey</i> .....	46
IV.2 . <i>Intensive Survey</i> .....	49
V. SURVEY BY THE NUMBERS .....	<b>57</b>
VI. CONCLUSIONS .....	<b>61</b>
<b>Chapter 3 - Colchian Chronology and the Ceramic Material of the Vani Region ....</b>	<b>62</b>
I. INTRODUCTION .....	<b>62</b>
II. CERAMICS OF VANI AND WESTERN GEORGIA.....	<b>64</b>
III. LOCAL WARES .....	<b>66</b>
IV. CHRONOLOGY .....	<b>69</b>
IV.1 . <i>First Millennium BCE</i> .....	69
IV.2 . <i>Bronze Age (27<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE)</i> .....	71
IV.3 . <i>Early Iron Age (10<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE)</i> .....	74
IV.4 . <i>Classical Period (Early 6<sup>th</sup>- mid 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE)</i> .....	85
IV.5 . <i>Early Hellenistic Period (mid 4<sup>th</sup> century -mid 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE)</i> .....	92
IV.6 . <i>Late Hellenistic Period (mid 3<sup>rd</sup> century – 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE)</i> .....	101
IV.7 . <i>Post-Hellenistic</i> .....	110
V. CERAMICS OF THE VANI SURVEYS .....	<b>112</b>
V.1 . <i>Ceramic Collection of the Vani Regional Survey</i> .....	112

<i>V.2 Ceramic Collection of the Eastern Vani Survey</i> .....	119
VI. DISCUSSION.....	122
<b>Chapter 4 - The Found Landscape</b> .....	<b>125</b>
I. INTRODUCTION.....	125
II. PHASE 1 – BRONZE AGE (27 <sup>TH</sup> -10 <sup>TH</sup> BCE).....	129
III. FIRST MILLENNIUM BCE.....	134
IV. PHASE 2 – EARLY IRON AGE (10 <sup>TH</sup> -7 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES BCE).....	139
V. PHASE 3 – CLASSICAL (7 <sup>TH</sup> -4 <sup>TH</sup> BCE).....	146
VI. PHASE 4 – HELLENISTIC (4 <sup>TH</sup> -1 <sup>ST</sup> BCE).....	159
VII. PHASE 5 – ROMAN (1 <sup>ST</sup> BCE-4 <sup>TH</sup> CE).....	165
VIII. PHASE 6 – MEDIAEVAL PERIOD (5 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY – 17 <sup>TH</sup> CENTURY CE).....	168
IX. DISCUSSION.....	171
<b>Chapter 5 - Conclusion</b> .....	<b>174</b>
I . SETTLEMENT PATTERNING.....	175
II . POPULATION.....	179
III . ECONOMY.....	181
IV . NEXT STEPS.....	182
<b>Appendices</b> .....	<b>184</b>
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	<b>316</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Map of the three major watersheds that define the Vani Region. ....	8
Figure 1.2: Map of the proposed zones of habitation that define modern settlement in the region. .....	9
Figure 1.3: Plan of the Vani archaeological site. All phases are shown and individual features numbered.....	10
Figure 2.1: 1:200,000 visualization of the site catchment analysis in ArcGIS 10.2. Previously identified sites dated to the 1st millennium BCE are shown as point data. ....	38
Figure 2.2: Catchment map with the Eastern Vani Survey area included. ....	40
Figure 2.3: EVS survey area and its relationship to the catchment analysis with the grids surveyed intensively labeled. ....	44
Figure 2.4: View of survey area with modern roads and settlement showing in black. ....	45
Figure 2.5: IKONOS satellite image of grid 36 resampled using an unsupervised technique in ERDAS. Blue indicates areas of no vegetation and red areas indicate forest. Cultivated areas are shown in the range of orange to yellow. ....	47
Figure 2.6: Survey area with survey paths marked in red.....	49
Figure 2.7: Examples of the predominant techniques of ground treatment used in the region and their results.....	51
Figure 2.8: Examples of each of the four visibility classes. ....	54
Figure 2.9: Find spots identified by the EVS during extensive survey. ....	55
Figure 2.10: Total fragments recovered grouped by visibility. ....	59
Figure 2.11: Fragments per square meter surveyed grouped by visibility with grid 35 removed. (High = 0.0061 frag/m <sup>2</sup> ; Moderate = 0.0049 frag/m <sup>2</sup> ; Low = 0.0046 frag/m <sup>2</sup> and Very Low = 0.0040 frag/m <sup>2</sup> ) .....	59

Figure 3.1: Archaeological periodization of Vani and its region in comparisons to the chronological schemes used for Colchis, the Black Sea and the South Caucasus. Adapted from Badalyan et al. (2009): Fig. 1.....	73
Figure 3.2: Possible Middle Bronze Age rim fragment recovered from Kveda Bzvani by the EVS. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze. ....	74
Figure 3.3: Early Iron Age Pottery recovered from Vani. Adapted after Lordkipanidze (1995): Fig. 2. ....	81
Figure 3.4: Sample of the types of decoration found on ceramics of the Early Iron Age in the Vani region. Adapted from Tolordava (1990)): Fig. 3. ....	82
Figure 3.5: Early Iron Age Handles recovered by both the VRS and EVS. 1-4) Kveda Bzvani; 5-6) Zeda Bzvani; 7-8) Saqanchia; 9-10) Salkhino; 11) Ketchinara. Drawings by T. Sakhvadze. ....	83
Figure 3.6: Early Iron Age ceramics from the excavations at Shuamta showing the deep burnished lines indicative of the period. After Kvirkvelia et al. (2014)): Plate 5. Drawings by T. Sakhvadze.....	84
Figure 3.7: Ceramic shapes of the 7th-4th centuries BCE. 1-6) Cups; 7-8) Lids; 9-10) Bowls; 11) Jug. After AiG: Fig.59 .....	89
Figure 3.8: Sample of decoration indicative of local ceramics of the 7th-4th centuries BCE. After AiG: Fig. 59.....	90
Figure 3.9: Fragments of pithoi recovered by survey in the region. Drawings by T. Sakhvadze. 91	
Figure 3.10: Local pottery shapes of the Early Hellenistic (4th-3rd centuries BCE). After AiG: Fig. 62. ....	99
Figure 3.11: Colchian amphorae. 1) 3rd century BCE; 2) 2nd-1st century BCE; 3) 1st -3rd Century CE; 4) 4th-8th century CE After Tsetskhladze and Vnukov (1992) and Gamkrelidze (2001): Fig. 4.....	100
Figure 3.12: Local ceramic shapes of the Late Hellenistic (3rd - 1st centuries BCE). After AiG: Fig. 63. ....	106
Figure 3.13: Hellenistic rims collected from survey around Vani. Drawings by T. Sakhvadze 107	
Figure 3.14: Hellenistic period bases recovered from survey around Vani. Drawings by T. Sakhvadze. ....	108
Figure 3.15: Hellenistic amphora fragments collected from survey around Vani. Rims: 1) Colchian, Kveda Bzvani; 2) Sinopean, Kveda Gora. Handles: 3) Koan, Akhvledianebisgora;	

4) Colchian, Kveda Bzvani. Feet: 5) Colchian, Kveda Gora; 6) Colchian, Isriti; 7) Colchian, Kveda Bzvani. Drawings by T. Sakhvadze. ....	109
Figure 4.1: Possible Bronze Age rim fragment recovered from Kveda Bzvani. ....	130
Figure 4.2: Bronze Age locations identified by the VRS and EVS projects. Figure 4.3: Bronze Age activity within and around the EVS survey region. ....	132
Figure 4.3: Bronze Age activity within and around the EVS survey region .....	133
Figure 4.4: Locations of 1 <sup>st</sup> millennium BCE identified by the VRS and EVS projects.....	137
Figure 4.5: Location of activity of the 1 <sup>st</sup> millennium BCE within and around the EVS survey region. ....	138
Figure 4.6: Early Iron Age locations identified by the VRS and EVS projects. Figure 4.7: Location of Early Iron Age activity within and around the EVS survey region.....	144
Figure 4.7: Location of Early Iron Age activity within and around the EVS survey region. ....	145
Figure 4.8: Classical Period locations identified by the VRS and EVS projects. Figure 4.9: Location of Classical Period activity within and around the EVS survey region.....	157
Figure 4.9: Location of Classical Period activity within and around the EVS survey region. ....	158
Figure 4.10: Hellenistic Period locations identified by the VRS and EVS projects. Figure 4.11: Location of Hellenistic Period activity within and around the EVS survey region.....	163
Figure 4.11: Location of Hellenistic Period activity within and around the EVS survey region. ....	164
Figure 4.12: Roman Period locations identified by the VRS and EVS projects. Figure 4.13: Location of Roman Period activity within and around the EVS survey region.....	166
Figure 4.13: Location of Hellenistic Period activity within and around the EVS survey region. ....	167
Figure 4.14: Mediaeval locations identified by the VRS and EVS projects.....	170
Figure A.1: Map of grid three with find spots, surveyed fields and activity areas marked.....	187

Figure A.2: Northern bank at Ketchniara (E001) where material was collected, looking west. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	188
Figure A.3: Collection of tile fragments from E001. Photo by R. Hughes.....	189
Figure A.4: Group of diagnostic fragments collected from E001. Photo by G. Kvirvelia. ....	189
Figure A.5: Group of diagnostic fragments collected from E001. Photo by G. Kvirvelia. ....	190
Figure A.6: One handled pot collected from E001. Photo by G. Kvirvelia.....	190
Figure A.7: Drawings of diagnostic rims collected from E001. Selection is from those shown in fig. 4. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze. ....	191
Figure A.8: Drawings of diagnostic rims and bases from E001. Selection is from those found in figs. 4 and 5. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze. ....	191
Figure A.9: Drawings of handle and a reconstruction of the one-handed pot from E001. Handle and pot are from figs. 5 and 6. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze. ....	191
Figure A.10: Northern scarp of the road cut at E002. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	193
Figure A.11: Southern scarp of the road cut at E002. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	193
Figure A.12: Diagnostic fragments from E002. Photo by G. Kvirvelia. ....	194
Figure A.13: Diagnostic fragments from E002. Photo by G. Kvirvelia. ....	194
Figure A.14: Drawings of diagnostic fragments from E002. Same fragments as those shown in fig. 12. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze. ....	195
Figure A.15: Drawings of diagnostic fragments from E002. Same fragments as shown in fig. 13. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze.....	195
Figure A.16: Mshvidobis Gora looking northeast from Akhvledianebis Gora showing the location of activity areas E003 and E004. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	197
Figure A.17: Rectilinear stone structure within E003. ....	197
Figure A.18: Pottery fragments from E003. ....	198

Figure A.19: Map showing grid 8 with find spots, surveyed fields and activity areas marked..	200
Figure A.20: Activity area E004 on Mshvidobis Gora taken from Gabelauri (E009) near Salkhino looking north. Photo by R. Hughes.....	201
Figure A.21: View from crest of Mshvidobis Gora. Activity area E004 is in the foreground. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	202
Figure A.22: Selection of daub collected from E004. ....	202
Figure A.23: Diagnostic fragments from E004. Photo by G. Kvirvelia. ....	203
Figure A.24: Drawings of diagnostic fragments from E004. These fragments are the same as from figure 22. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze. ....	203
Figure A.25: Map of grid 9 with find spots, surveyed fields and activity areas marked.....	205
Figure A.26: Field 913-4, located near the center of activity area E005 and located near the ridge of the hill. Photo by R. Hughes.....	206
Figure A.27: Field 911-3 on the edge of E005. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	206
Figure A.28: Field 913-6 within E005.....	207
Figure A.29: Diagnostic fragments from E005. Photo by G. Kvirvelia. ....	207
Figure A.30: Drawings of diagnostic fragments from E005. Same fragments as in fig. 28. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze.....	208
Figure A.31: View of Sulori River valley from Mshvidobis Gora looking south.....	209
Figure A.32: View of field 912-8 located in the northwest activity area looking southeast. ....	210
Figure A.33: View of E006 looking south.....	210
Figure A.34: View of grid 9 looking southeast from Mshvidobis Gora.....	212
Figure A.35: View of field 932-7 looking south.....	212
Figure A.36: 931-5 looking east. ....	213

Figure A.37: 933-5 looking east. ....	214
Figure A.38: Hill 2 of Gabelauri taken from Hill 1 looking southeast. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	215
Figure A.39: Hill 1 of Gabelauri taken from Hill 1 looking southwest. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	215
Figure A.40: Pithoi fragments collected from Hill 1 at Gabelauri. ....	216
Figure A.41: Ceramics collected from Hill 2 at Gabelauri. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	216
Figure A.42: Photo of architectural fragments collected from Hill 2 at Gabelauri. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	217
Figure A.43: Drawing of fragmented pot found at Gabelauri and given to the Vani Museum. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze. ....	217
Figure A.44: Map of Grid 20 with find spots, surveyed fields and activity areas marked. ....	219
Figure A.45: 2011-30 looking south. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	220
Figure A.46: 2011-11 looking west. Photo by E. Gelashvili. ....	221
Figure A.47: 2011-15 looking west. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	221
Figure A.48: 2021-2. ....	222
Figure A.49: 2021-4. ....	223
Figure A.50: 2021-5. ....	223
Figure A.51: 2021-12. ....	223
Figure A.52: 2022-3. ....	224
Figure A.53: 2022-7. ....	225
Figure A.54: 2022-10. ....	226
Figure A.55: Fragment of pithos recovered from 2022-4. ....	226



Figure A.56: Drawing of fragment from figure 54. ....	227
Figure A.57: View of field 2023-6 looking south. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	228
Figure A.58: View of field 2041-3 looking north. Photo by L. Changuria. ....	229
Figure A.59: Photograph of a selection of material collected from activity area E013. Photo by G. Kvirvelia.....	229
Figure A.60: Drawings of material from figure 59. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze.....	230
Figure A.61: View of field 2023-51, looking north. Photo by R. Hughes.....	231
Figure A.62: View of field 2023-52, looking northwest. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	232
Figure A.63: View of activity area E015 taken from the east looking southwest. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	233
Figure A.64: Closer view of activity area E015 from the east looking southwest. The modern church is on the left and the medieval tsikhe sits on the higher hill on the right.....	233
Figure A.65: Photo of some of the pottery collected from E015 by the EVS. ....	234
Figure A.66: Drawing of the fragments in figure 65. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze. ....	234
Figure A.67: Photo of fragments collected at E015 by the Vani Regional Survey .....	235
Figure A.68: Drawing of some of the fragments in figure 67. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze.....	235
Figure A.69: Photo of pottery collected from E015 by the Vani Regional Survey. Photo by G. Kvirvelia. ....	236
Figure A.70: Drawings of fragments from figures 67 and 69. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze.....	237
Figure A.71: Photo of fragments collected from E015 by the Vani Regional Survey. Photo by G. Kvirvelia. ....	238
Figure A.72: Drawings of fragments from figure 71. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze. ....	238
Figure A.73: Photo of fragments collected from E015 by the Vani Regional Survey. Photo by G. Kvirvelia. ....	239

Figure A.74: Drawings of fragments in figures 71 and 73. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze. ....	239
Figure A.75: Photo of fragments collected from E015 by the Vani Regional Survey. Photo by G. Kvirkvelia. ....	240
Figure A.76: Drawing of fragments in figure 75. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze. ....	240
Figure A.77: Drawings of fragments in figure 75. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze. ....	241
Figure A.78: Photo of conical mug collected at E015 by the EVS. Photo by G. Kvirkvelia. ....	241
Figure A.79: Photo of decorated rim collected at E015 by the EVS. Photo by G. Kvirkvelia...	242
Figure A.80: Photo of rim collected from E015 by the EVS. Photo by G. Kvirkvelia. ....	242
Figure A.81: Photo of fragments collected from E015 by the EVS. Photo by G. Kvirkvelia. ....	243
Figure A.82: Drawing of fragments from figures, 78-81. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze. ....	243
Figure A.83: View of field 2032-39. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	247
Figure A.84: View of field 2032-1. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	247
Figure A.85: Photo of fragments collected from E016. Photo by G. Kvirkvelia. ....	248
Figure A.86: Drawing of fragments in figure 85. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze. ....	248
Figure A.87: Field 2042-7 looking east, photo by R. Hughes. ....	249
Figure A.88: Field 2042-63 looking east, photo by R. Hughes. ....	250
Figure A.89: Field 2042-67 looking southeast, photo by R. Hughes. ....	250
Figure A.90: Field 2042-70 looking west, photo by R. Hughes. ....	251
Figure A.91: View of area where walls were found. Photo by L. Changuria. ....	252
Figure A.92: Stone wall at E018. ....	252

Figure A.93: Field 2033-4 looking west, photo by R. Hughes. ....	253
Figure A.94: Photo of a vessel base and stone tool recovered from activity area E017.....	253
Figure A.95: Drawing of objects in figure 94. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze. ....	253
Figure A.96: Guram Lordkipanidze's House .....	255
Figure A.97: Activity area E019 as seen from Gabelauri (E009) looking southeast.....	255
Figure A.98: Field 2042-43 looking south. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	256
Figure A.99: Field 2042-44 looking north. Photo by R. Hughes.....	257
Figure A.100: Activity area E021 taken from grid 36 looking northwest. Photo by R. Hughes.	258
Figure A.101: Photo of grid 36 and 35 taken from activity area E021 looking northeast. Photo by R. Hughes.....	259
Figure A.102: Local vessel fragment recovered from E021. Photo by R. Hughes.....	259
Figure A.103: Pithos fragment recovered from E021. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	260
Figure A.104: Handle fragment recovered from E021. Photo by R. Hughes.....	260
Figure A.105: Daub recovered from E021. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	261
Figure A.106: Map of Grid 36 with surveyed fields, find spots and activity areas marked. ....	263
Figure A.107: Field 3621-8 looking north. Photo by R. Hughes.....	264
Figure A.108: Field 3621-65 looking east. Photo by R. Hughes.....	264
Figure A.109: Field 3623-15 looking north. Photo by R. Hughes.....	265
Figure A.110: Photo of fragments recovered from E022. Photo by G. Kvirkevelia. ....	265
Figure A.111: Drawing of the fragments in figures 110. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze. ....	266
Figure A.112: Field 3622-13 looking south. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	267

Figure A.113: Field 3622-39 looking south. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	267
Figure A.114: Field 3644-46 looking north. Photo by R. Hughes.....	268
Figure A.115: Photo of base recovered at E023. Photo by G. Kvirkvelia.....	268
Figure A.116: Drawing of fragment in figure 115. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze.....	269
Figure A.117: Field 3624-59, looking northwest. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	270
Figure A.118: Field 3642-1, looking north. Photo by R. Hughes.....	270
Figure A.119: Photo of fragments collected from E024. Photo by G. Kvirkvelia. ....	271
Figure A.120: Drawing of pithos rim. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze.....	271
Figure A.121: Drawing of Colchian amphora foot in figure 119. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze. ..	271
Figure A.122: Field 3613-4. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	273
Figure A.123: Field 3631-27. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	273
Figure A.124: Photo of 7th-4th century base fragment. Photo by G. Kvirkvelia. ....	274
Figure A.125: Drawing of fragment in figure 124. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze.....	274
Figure A.126: View of E026 from E021, looking west. Photo by R. Hughes.....	275
Figure A.127: Field 3631-4, looking north. Photo by R. Hughes.....	276
Figure A.128: Photo of fragments collected from E026. Photo by G. Kvirkvelia. ....	277
Figure A.129: Drawings of fragments in figure 129. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze.....	278
Figure A.130: Photo of fragments collected from E026. Photo by G. Kvirkvelia. ....	279
Figure A.131: Drawings of fragments in figure 130. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze.....	279
Figure A.132: Photo of fragments collected from E026. Photo by G. Kvirkvelia. ....	280

Figure A.133: Drawings of fragments from figure 132. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze .....	280
Figure A.134: Photo of fragments collected from E026. Photo by G. Kvirkvelia. ....	281
Figure A.135: Photo of fragments from E026. Photo by G. Kvirkvelia. ....	281
Figure A.136: Drawing of some of the fragments from figures 134 and 135. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze. ....	282
Figure A.137: Photo of fragments collected from E026. Photo by G. Kvirkvelia. ....	283
Figure A.138: Photo of fragments collected from E026. Photo by G. Kvirkvelia. ....	283
Figure A.139: Drawings of fragments in figures 137 and 138. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze. ....	284
Figure A.140: Drawing of fragments in figure 138. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze. ....	284
Figure A.141: Photo of fragments collected from E027. Photo by G. Kvirkvelia. ....	285
Figure A.142: Drawings of fragments in figure 141. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze.....	285
Figure A.143: Field 3633-1 looking south. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	288
Figure A.144: Field 3633-9, looking south. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	289
Figure A.145: Activity area E029 from E021 looking east. Photo by R. Hughes .....	290
Figure A.146: Photo of E029 looking south. Photo by R. Hughes.....	290
Figure A.147: Photo of walls of tsikhe at E029. Photo by R. Hughes.....	291
Figure A.148: Field 3641-20, looking north. Photo by R. Hughes.....	292
Figure A.149: Field 3643-41, looking south. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	292
Figure A.150: Field 3643-7, looking northwest. The location of activity area E026 is marked. Photo by R. Hughes. ....	293

Figure A.151: Field 3643-67, looking west. Activity area E021 is marked. Photo by R. Hughes. .....	294
Figure A.152: Material collected from find spot 3643-4.....	294
Figure A.153: Fragment of Sinopean amphora handle.....	295
Figure A.154: Drawing of Sinopean amphora handle with remains of handle stamp shown. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze.....	295
Figure A.155: Field 3644-29, looking east. Photo by R. Hughes.....	296
Figure A.156: Photo of base fragment collected from E032. Photo by G. Kvirkvelia.....	297
Figure A.157: Drawing of base fragment in figure 156. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze.....	297
Figure A.158: Field 3644-12. Photo by R. Hughes.....	298
Figure A.159: Field 3644-15, looking southwest. Photo by R. Hughes.....	298
Figure A.160: Photo of base fragment collected from 36-12. Photo by G. Kvirkvelia.....	299
Figure A.161: Drawing of base fragment in figure 160. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze.....	299
Figure B.1: Map showing fields and find spots surveyed in grid 3. Those fields with material from the 1st millennium have a color fill.....	301
Figure B.2: Map showing fields and find spots surveyed in grid 9. Those fields with material from the 1st millennium have a color fill.....	302
Figure B.3: Map showing fields and find spots surveyed in grid 20. Those fields with material from the 1st millennium have a color fill.....	304
Figure B.4: Map showing fields and find spots surveyed in grid 9. Those fields with material from the 1st millennium have a color fill.....	309

## List of Tables

Table 2.1: Number of sites by catchment zone divided by sites that lie to the east of Vani and those that lie to the west.....	37
Table 2.2: Percentage of intensively surveyed area in meters squared covered by particular crops. ....	51
Table 2.3: Area of each grid surveyed divided into intensive and extensive methods.....	57
Table 2.4: Quantity of material collected by type of survey.....	58
Table 2.5: Area intensively surveyed in m <sup>2</sup> divided by visibility and field preparation. ....	58
Table 2.6: Fields organized by percent slope. The number of fields that had collections and the number of fragments collected are also reported here. ....	60
Table 3.1: Pottery organized by date collected from sites using informal survey by the Vani Regional Survey.....	114
Table 3.2: Recovered ceramics from Kveda Bzvani gridded survey.....	117
Table 3.3: Recovered ceramics from Inashauri gridded survey .....	118
Table 3.4: Recovered ceramics from Dzulukhi gridded survey .....	119
Table 3.5: Recovered ceramic material grouped by grid and organized by period.....	120
Table 3.6: Recovered ceramic material grouped by grid and organized by type. ....	122
Table 4.1: Bronze Age locations recorded by the Vani Regional Survey.....	129
Table 4.2: Bronze Age locations recorded by the Eastern Vani Survey.....	130
Table 4.3: Locations of 1 <sup>st</sup> millennium BCE material recorded by the Vani Regional Survey..	134
Table 4.4: Locations of 1 <sup>st</sup> millennium BCE material recorded by the Eastern Vani Survey. ....	135

Table 4.5: Early Iron Age locations recorded by the Vani Regional Survey..	141
Table 4.6: Early Iron Age locations recorded by the Eastern Vani Survey.....	143
Table 4.7: Classical Period locations recorded by the Vani Regional Survey.....	148
Table 4.8: Classical Period locations recorded by the Eastern Vani Survey.....	155
Table 4.9: Hellenistic Period locations recorded by the Vani Regional Survey.....	160
Table 4.10: Hellenistic Period locations recorded by the Eastern Vani Survey. ....	161
Table 4.11: Roman Period locations recorded by the Vani Regional Survey. ....	165
Table 4.12: Roman Period locations recorded by the Eastern Vani Survey.....	165
Table 4.13: Mediaeval locations recorded by the Vani Regional Survey.....	168



## LIST OF APPENDICES

<b>Appendix A - Catalogue of Activity Areas .....</b>	<b>184</b>
I . GRID 3 .....	185
II . GRID 8 .....	199
III . GRID 9.....	204
IV . GRID 20 .....	218
V . GRID 32.....	258
VI . GRID 36 .....	262
<b>Appendix B - Catalogue of Surveyed Fields.....</b>	<b>300</b>
I . GRID 3.....	301
II . GRID 9 .....	302
III . GRID 20.....	304
IV . GRID 36.....	309

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines rural settlement patterns around the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE site of Vani in Western Georgia (ancient Colchis) through the presentation of the results of a new intensive archaeological survey. Beginning in the 8<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE and extending into the Hellenistic Period, Vani grew to become an important place in the Colchian landscape, becoming a center for religious, political and economic activity in the region. Evidence from the 7<sup>th</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE in particular, points to the emergence of a wealthy elite and suggest growing political and religious authority at the site. These developments occurred during a period in which the regions bordering Colchis were increasingly becoming entangled within the socio-economic spheres of larger polities from the Mediterranean, Black Sea, Russian Steppe and Southwest Asia. Unusually well-preserved and showing evidence for the emergence of strong political authority and increased contact with peoples living on the borders of Colchis, Vani has become one of the most important sites for reconstructing ancient Colchian society in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE.

Despite the intensity of investigation at the site, and the importance regional investigation has had in reconstructing ancient Colchian life, little has been done to integrate regional data into discussions of Vani's development and the affect this development had on settlement in the Qumuri, Rioni and Qvinitqsaro river valleys. The Eastern Vani Survey (EVS) was developed as an intensive survey component of the larger Vani Regional Survey project to examine an area to the east of the ancient site that had hitherto been little explored archaeologically. The main goals

of the project were to better understand rural settlement to the east of Vani, to evaluate and characterize the level and complexity of social organization in the environs of the site and to use this new data to contextualize previous research on Vani and its region. To achieve these goals, a methodology was developed that was adapted to deal with the difficulties posed by the modern landscape. Satellite based reconnaissance was used to develop criteria for selecting areas of survey where natural vegetation, agriculture and modern habitation were balanced in such a way as to offer the most access to surface remains. Survey itself was carried out both intensively and extensively to examine as much of the landscape as was practical as well as to engage with as many potential local informants as possible through a robust method of “solicitation survey”.

The data recovered by the Eastern Vani Survey, combined with previous research in the area, revealed that settlement to the east of Vani was dispersed with particular places in the landscape serving as focal points of communal and/or elite activity. The most important of these places are Mshvidobisgora, Gabelauri, Isriti, Kveda Bzvani and Kveda Gora. The survey has also made it clear that a good deal of the increase in Classical and Hellenistic ceramic material evidenced in the region is tied very closely to developments at Vani and suggests an expanded use of ceramics. Though these developments are very related to changes in population in the region between the 7<sup>th</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE, the ceramic data from the survey alone does not allow a quantification of that growth.

## Chapter 1- The Origins of the Eastern Vani Survey

“The new epos has no need  
of Jason or Medea.  
This is a different tale,  
A tale for the sincere in heart.

We do not pay with yellow dust,  
We dream not of a golden fleece.  
It is the dear earth that we embrace,  
And a new festival that we sing.

He who longed for gold deceived himself;  
Work has a value that can span  
The centuries; it is worth more than gold  
Under the enlightened rule of man.”  
-Titian Tabidze

### I. COLCHIS, THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AND THE WIDER WORLD

Colchis has long captured the popular imagination as the land of Medea and the Golden Fleece. The myth of Jason and his Argonauts gave Colchis and the Black Sea a central place in the Greek mythological tradition while at the same time physically locating it on, or better said beyond, the edge of the civilized world. This view of Western Georgia as a marginal or liminal zone has been reinforced over the centuries by the region’s unique geographic position between Europe and Asia. Even within the Caucasus, Western Georgia occupies a unique geographic position that separates the region both physically and historically from its neighbors.<sup>1</sup> An

---

<sup>1</sup> Though part of Georgia, a country of the Southern Caucasus, much recent scholarship has classified Western Georgia as its own sub-region pointing to both its topography and its divergent historical trajectory. See Smith (2005), 233 and Kohl (2007), 64 and 91; Kohl (1988), 592 and 594.

important result of this conceptual marginalization is that the archaeology of Colchis, unlike the tales of Medea, has been largely ignored by scholars of the ancient world.<sup>2</sup>

Though our earliest mytho-historical accounts point to a unified Colchian kingdom or state as early as the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE, there appears to be a consensus among Greek and Roman authors that in the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium, the people living in Western Georgia were dispersed in culturally similar but politically distinct tribal groups.<sup>3</sup> From these accounts it seems that it was not until the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE that Western Georgia would be unified under first Pontic and later Roman Rule. Between the Bronze Age collapse and the reorganization of the region by Rome's conquest following the defeat of Pontus, Colchis saw dramatic cultural changes. Material recovered from sites throughout Western Georgia shows a complex mixture of cultural unity, foreign influence and idiosyncratic patterns of regional production. Given our conflicting evidence from the historical sources, and the complexity of the material record, the nature of social organization in Western Georgia during the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium remains open for debate.<sup>4</sup>

This dissertation explores the local settlement of a Colchian landscape around the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium site of Vani in Western Georgia. It does this through the presentation of the results of

---

<sup>2</sup> Though focusing on the South Caucasus (primarily Armenia), Adam Smith (2005) offers an excellent overview of the conceptual marginalization of the region. See especially Smith (2005), 230–231.

<sup>3</sup> Tribes mentioned by ancient authors and associated with western Georgia are the Machelones, Heniochi, Zydretae, Lazi, Apsidae, Abasci, Samigae, Coraxi, Melanchlaeni, Geloni, and Suani. Hdt. 3.93; Xen. Anab. 4; Aristot. Pol. 8.1338b; App. Mith. 10; Pliny 6.4.11. *Perip* 1 1.1-2; Dio Cassius 68.19; Strabo XI.2; For the unified kingdom: Hdt 1.2, 1.104; 3.97; 4.37-40; 7.79.

<sup>4</sup> At issue is the identification of the first state-level political structure in the region. There are those who argue for an early, independent “Kingdom of Colchis” as early as the 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE (Melikishvili (1989), 205-208), though the still unlikely but more reasonable date of the 8<sup>th</sup> century-6<sup>th</sup> centuries is more widely accepted, see Kohl and Tsetskhladze (1995), 164-165. Others argue that the first state was formed in East Georgia (Iberia) by King Parnavaz in the late 4<sup>th</sup> or early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE and later spread into Colchis, see Koranashvili (1978), 257-263.

a systematic field survey that deployed both intensive and extensive techniques of investigation of an area located to the east of the ancient site, and through comparison of these results with legacy data collected from Vani and its region. This project is part of the broader Vani Regional Survey (VRS), a project designed to contextualize our knowledge of the region by unifying previous knowledge within a systematic conceptual framework, producing an archaeological map of previously known sites, as well as carrying out additional investigations at known sites including geophysical survey and new excavations. The goals of both projects are to understand the long-term history of the region around Vani and to use this to reconstruct the social organization of the region in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE and how it changed over time.

The engagement or disengagement of Colchis in regional networks remains an important area of research in Western Georgia. Narratives concerning the emergence of Colchis as first a cultural and later a political unit have been particularly interested in foreign contact and the ways that contact affected Colchian social, economic and political structures.<sup>5</sup> The presence of imported material, local imitations and the apparent adoption of foreign cultural practices have all been pointed to as evidence of the influence foreign contact had on local development. These transformations in cultural form, connected as they often were with transformations in social structure, have led to a spirited debate on the importance of foreign contact on the emergence and development of social complexity in Western Georgia during the Bronze and Iron Ages.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> The question of the importance of contact on Colchian social organization manifests itself most clearly in the literature in discussions of Colchian state formation. The continued interest in back dating the emergence of complexity to before the 7<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE is to remove its initial appearance from a period of intense foreign contact, see *supra* 4.

<sup>6</sup> A particular focus of this debate has been the Hellenistic period Lordkipanidze (1968a) and Licheli (2000) argue for late cultural influence of Greek cultural forms, putting it as late as the late Hellenistic; Tsetskhladze (1994) sees Greek influence accompanying Greek imports in the 7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE.

Vani's importance to this debate has been significant as there are few sites of comparable size identified in Western Georgia and none, besides perhaps Sairkhe farther to the east, which has the same wealth of material.<sup>7</sup> Previous research in and around Vani has led to a series of assumptions about Vani's place in settlement dynamics and the role Vani played in regional socio-political development. These assumptions come from a particular view about the centrality of Vani in its landscape, its position within a hierarchy of sites, and thus its role in a larger network of power and exchange. Moreover, these assumptions are conceived of in terms that relate to extra-regional contact and exchange. This top-down approach to understanding Vani is problematic, as it fails to satisfactorily include evidence from regional sites and has discouraged focused investigations of Vani's environs.<sup>8</sup> As a result, there had been no systematic program of survey in the region before the Vani Regional Survey, and even after the VRS large areas of the region remained unexplored through survey. The Eastern Vani Survey was developed in response to the assumptions about Vani and its region and was designed to produce a systematically collected dataset by examining a previously unexplored area using a technique of systematic, pedestrian survey.

## II. THE REGION

Western Georgia is defined primarily by its varied geography. Lying on the eastern coast of the Black Sea and divided from Eastern Georgia by the Likhi range, the region is physically isolated from its Caucasian and Anatolian neighbors by the Greater and Lesser Caucasus Mountains. The interior of the country is divided north and south by the powerful Rioni River,

---

<sup>7</sup> For the material from Sairkhe, see Nadiradze (1990).

<sup>8</sup> Only a handful of scholars have attempted to address regional patterns in a holistic way. See for instance Beradze (1977), Kvirkevelia (1990) and Kharabadze (2008).

which before some canalization under the Soviets, once ranged widely across the broad Colchian plain. The dramatic changes in elevation within Western Georgia have created a variety of landscapes and micro-climatic zones that exist in close proximity to each other. As a result, the subtropical climate of the Black Sea coast with its lowland marshes and temperate rainforests lies within sight of the perennial snows and glaciers of the Caucasus Mountains. The swift mountain streams and broad rivers that carved the valleys and foothills of the mountains, have accentuated the stark contrast between highland and lowland, and have allowed green alpine meadows to be visually juxtaposed with the deeper green of the valley forests.

The Greater and Lesser Caucasus are connected by the Likhi Range that separates the Western Kolkhida Lowland from Eastern Georgia. The highest point of the Likhi range is 1,926 masl and the lowest, most important, mountain pass is called the Surami Pass at an elevation of 949 meters. This pass links eastern and western Georgia, and a railroad and the Zestaponi-Khashuri highway now pass through it. Vani and its immediate environs occupy the northern foothills of the Meskheta range of the Lesser Caucasus Mountains. Measuring approximately 140 kilometers in length, the Meskheta range extends from the Borjomi Valley to the Black Sea and is, at its thickest, 45 km wide. The highest peak of the range is Mepistsqaro (2850 m).

The ancient settlement of Vani lies near the tectonic boundary of the Achara-Trialeti fold system, on the southern margin of the Median Mass of Georgia in an area called the South Imereti Foreland Basin.<sup>9</sup> Levan Maruashvili divided the region into six geomorphological zones which are more or less arranged beginning in the north and moving south: 1) the Rioni alluvial plain, 2) the terrace hills, 3) the low mountains and hillocks, 4) medium height meridional gorges, with rugged, heavily eroded terrain, 5) less rugged high mountains and gorges and 6) the

---

<sup>9</sup> Chagelishvili and Jaoshvili (2010).



high ridges, crests and peaks of the pre-lesser Caucasus.<sup>10</sup> The variability in the terrain is due to the rather dramatic rise in elevation that occurs as one travels south from the Rioni River plain. Just north of Vani, the plain sits at an elevation of 50 masl, but only 20 kilometers south, one of the peaks of the pre-lesser Caucasus rises to 2,320 masl.

The region is defined by an abundance of water. With a subtropical, humid climate, the region around Vani experiences moderately cold winters, and long warm summers. High annual precipitation of 40” per annum, yearly snow melt and numerous upland springs combine to produce a great many mountain streams that feed larger rivers, the largest of which are the Qumuri, Sulori, Qvinistsqaro, Phereta and the Jamsaretskhelastskaro, which are all left tributaries of the Rioni River. These major rivers, along with lesser waterways, such as the Nasirala, Kapitona and the Chishura, effectively divide the region into three major watersheds, all of which are part of the larger Rioni River system (Fig. 1.1). Previous research in the region has placed the extent of the so-called “Vanis Qveqena” (Vani Territory) within the watersheds of these rivers. Whether or not these watersheds were the legitimate edges of the system of settlement Vani was part of is unclear, but their prominence in the landscape means they must have had an influence on regional patterns of activity.<sup>11</sup> The combination of the underlying geology and the abundance of water, both from precipitation and streams and rivers, have created a lush landscape that suffers from significant erosion.

Due to the dramatic changes in elevation and the abundance of waterways in the region, many places in the landscape are not suitable for long-term human habitation. Modern settlement and previous research in the region show that there are three geographically defined zones, each

---

<sup>10</sup>Maruashvili (1971), 286-289; See also Akhvlediani and Kharabadze (2010), 41.

<sup>11</sup> The idea that a portion of the region somehow “belonged” to Vani in antiquity remains controversial. See Kharabadze (2008), 1.

with a specific set of features that influence settlement in them. Figure 1.2 shows a map of the region divided into the three zones of habitation. The first zone includes the Rioni River plain up to the foot of the hills that define its southern edge. These hills rise dramatically from the river plain and create a protective boundary between the swampy, unpredictable floodplain of the Rioni and the valleys of the tributaries to the south. Modern habitation in zone 1 is focused primarily along the base of the foothills to the south; industrial complexes, most of which have been abandoned since the collapse of the Soviet Union, are also found there. Currently, the land is used for grazing and agriculture, though the unpredictable nature of the river can in some years cause significant crop loss. The second zone is defined primarily by the gently sloping terrain of the lower reaches of the major river valleys, and has proved most suitable for both habitation and the small-scale agricultural practice that defines modern subsistence in the region. Modern habitation in this zone is fairly evenly distributed with the densest settlements found at the mouths of the major rivers. The southern edge of zone 2, like zone 1, is defined by a dramatic rise in elevation that forms a line of ridges broken only by the river channels of the Qumuri, Sulori, Qvinitsqaro, Phereta and the Jamsaretskhelastskaro rivers. Though zone 2 occupies elevations between 100 masl and 600 masl, the last 300 m of elevation is gained over less than a kilometer of horizontal distance.

The dividing line between zone 2 and zone 3 is the chain of peaks along the ridge that constitutes the beginning of the foot hills of the lesser Caucasus. Whereas zone 2 is defined by relatively gentle slopes of the lower river valleys, zone 3 is defined by the upper river valleys, which cut deep into the foot hills and make the terrain rugged and difficult to traverse. The combination of the steep terrain and the deep river gorges force movement in the region along particular axes.

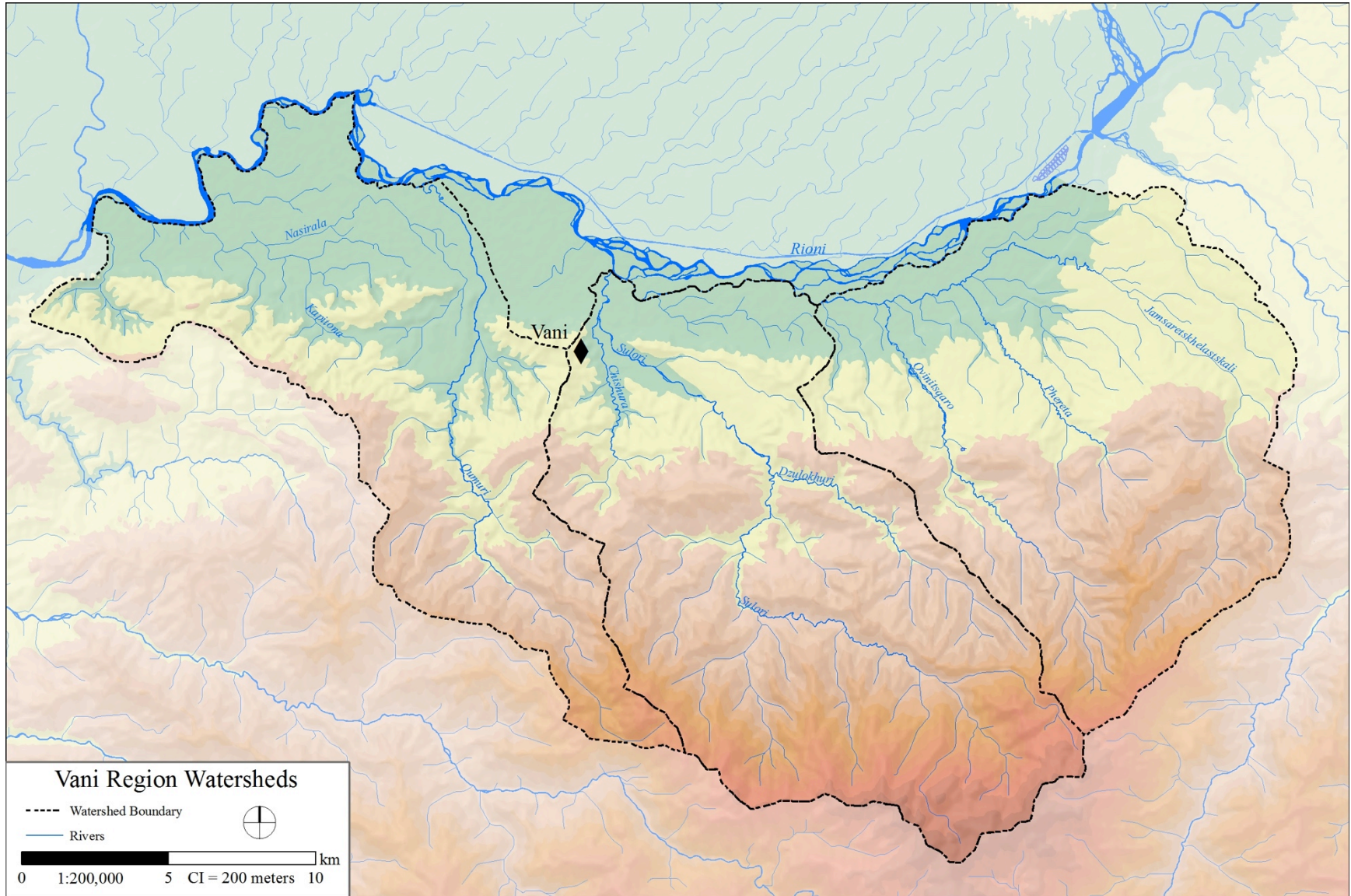


Figure 1.1: Map of the three major watersheds that define the Vani Region.

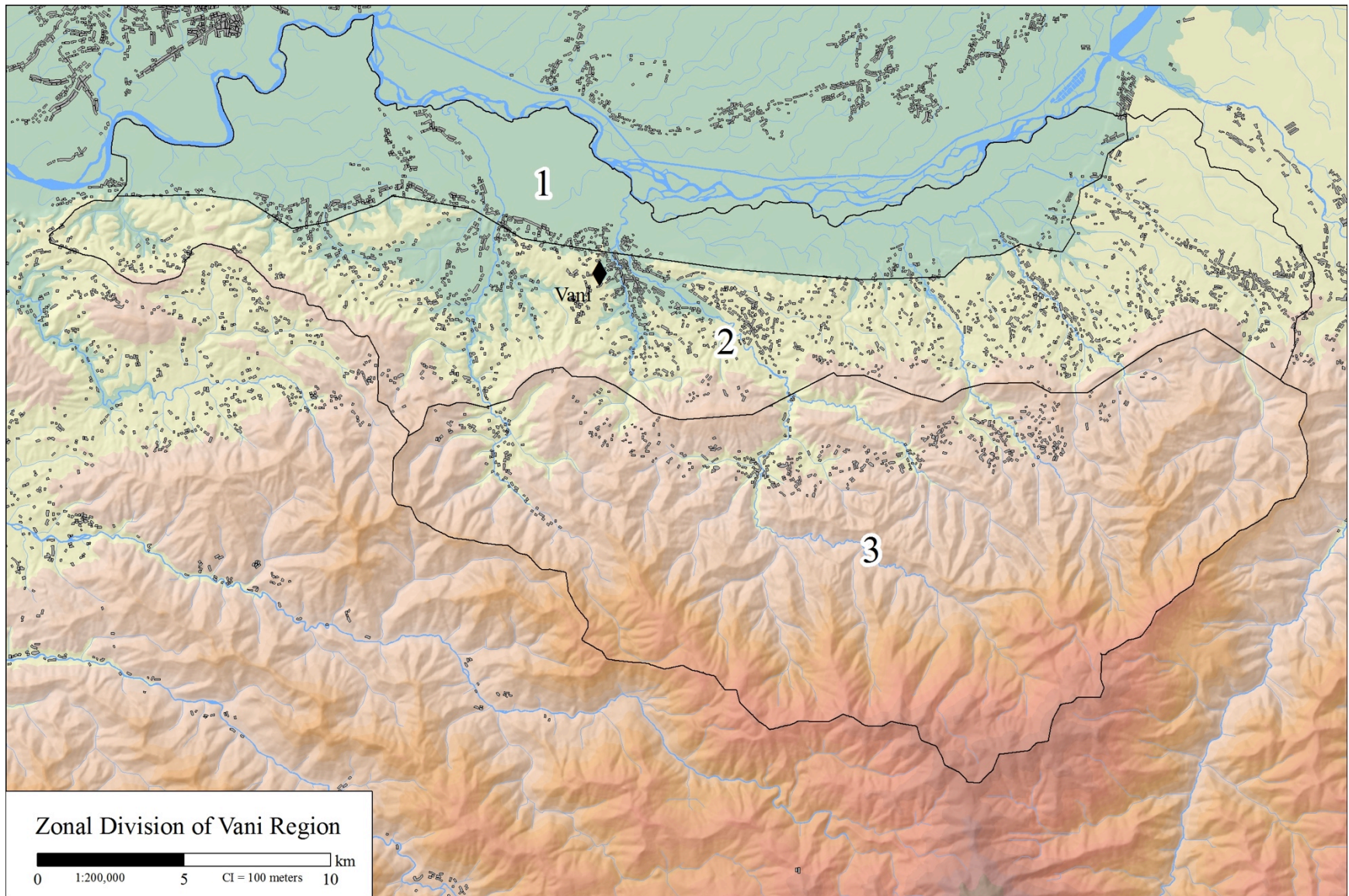


Figure 1.2: Map of the proposed zones of habitation that define modern settlement in the region.

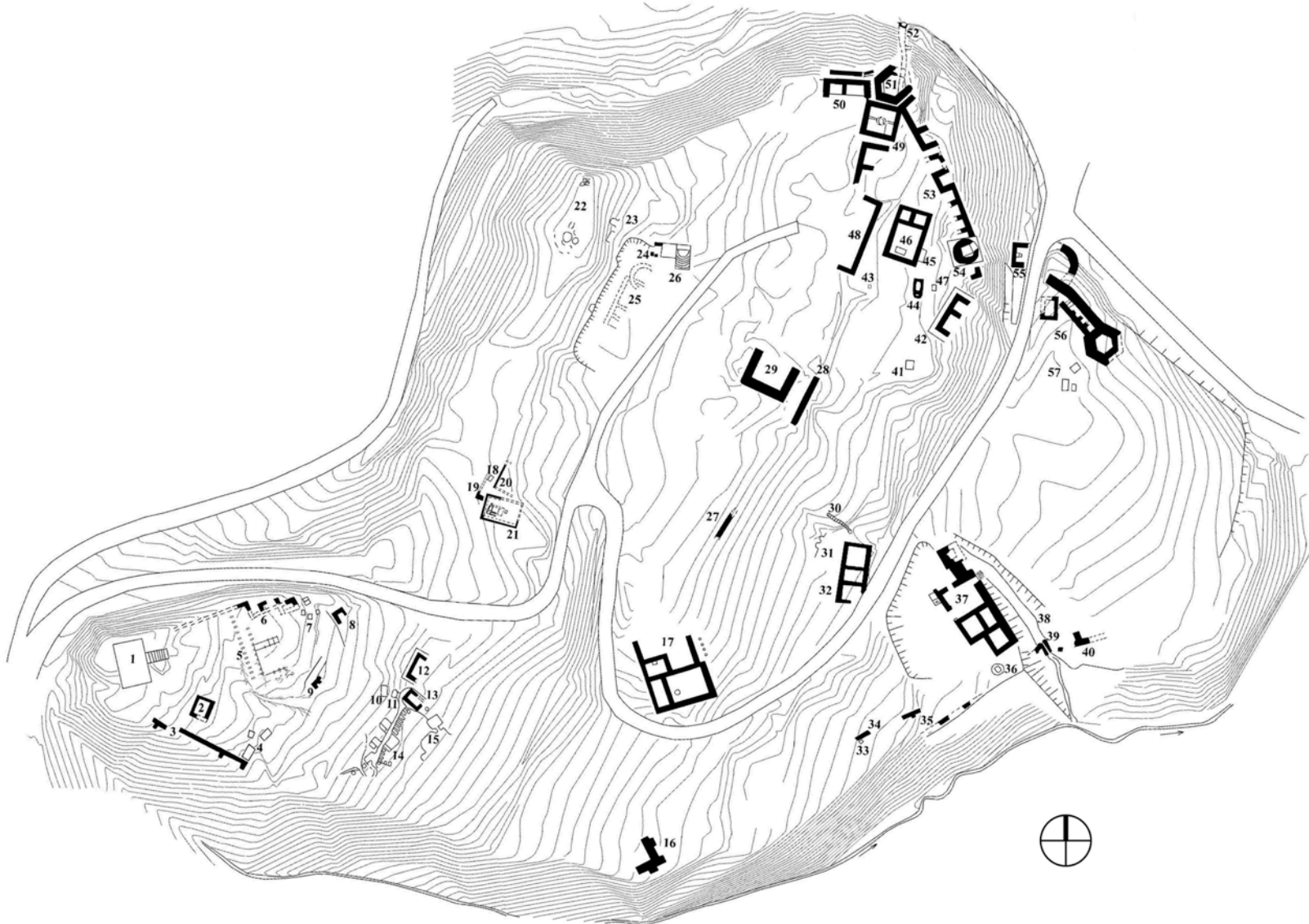


Figure 1.3: Plan of the Vani archaeological site. All phases are shown and individual features numbered.

As a result, modern settlement is focused primarily around river valleys, and only in those places where there are pockets of less steep terrain. Today, access to zone 3 is limited to only a few roads that follow along the rivers that breach the line of ridges between zone 2 and 3.

### III. THE ANCIENT SITE

Nestled in the foothills of the Meskheta Range near the confluence of the Sulori and Rioni Rivers, the archaeological site of Vani lies roughly 70 kilometers inland from the Black Sea, 35 kilometers southwest of Kutaisi and 4 kilometers due south of the main channel of the Rioni. The site, as excavated, is organized on a series of three terraces (known as the Lower, Middle and Upper terraces) on a steep-sided hillock, today known as the Akhvledianebisgora. A defensive wall dated to the Hellenistic period provides the putative limits of ancient settlement suggesting that the footprint of the site at its greatest extent was no more than 6 hectares (Fig 1.3).

Though remains from the site have been known for more than 150 years, sustained archaeological excavations at Vani did not begin in earnest until 1947. Between this time and 1963, the project was under the direction of Nino Khoshtaria whose excavations revealed occupation phases extending from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the mid 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE.<sup>12</sup> From this evidence, and using Greek and Roman literary sources, Khoshtaria identified the site with the *Surium/Surion* mentioned by Pliny (*N.H.* 6.6.13) and Ptolemy (*Geog.* 5.9.6), and associated its destruction and subsequent abandonment with the third Mithradatic War and the Roman campaigns of Pompey

---

<sup>12</sup> For other accounts of the history of excavation see Kacharava (2010); Kacharava and Kvirkevelia (2008).

(c. 64 CE).<sup>13</sup> In 1966, direction of the site passed to Otar Lordkipanidze who oversaw excavations until his death in 2002. These excavations revealed evidence for occupation as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and to date the 8th century remains the agreed upon *terminus post quem* of activity at the site.

From the excavated evidence, Lordkipanidze worked out four main phases of occupation at the site. These periods were defined by specific patterns of production, consumption, burial rites and architectural changes that suggested shifts in Vani's economic, religious and political life.<sup>14</sup> To each of these phases Lordkipanidze associated a specific regional socio-political significance to the site that changed in response to both internal and external forces. The earliest phase of occupation at the site (8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE) consists primarily of stratified deposits dated by means of local wares, which are dated by their relationship to later contexts with Greek imports.<sup>15</sup> In this period the central terrace appears to be the center of activity at the site evidenced by the discovery of two structures. The first structure consists of a layer of burnt daub, ash, animal bones and fragmentary potsherds and terracotta figurines. This has been interpreted as wooden structure measuring roughly 90 m<sup>2</sup>. The second structure, built of coarsely hewn sandstone blocks, has tentatively been dated to this first period as well and has been identified as an altar.<sup>16</sup> Additional material in the form of bronze arrowheads and pottery dating to the first

---

<sup>13</sup> Among the evidence recovered from the site was a bronze plaque in Greek which makes mention of Surion. The plaque has been published several times, see Khoshtaria (1962), (1972) and (1979) and Khoshtaria et al. (1967).

<sup>14</sup> Lordkipanidze (1991b) and (1995b) offer the most accessible discussions of the suggested phasing of the site.

<sup>15</sup> Tolordava (1990) for the early contexts and material from the site.

<sup>16</sup> Tolordava (1986), 80–81; Pirtskhalava and Kipiani (1986), 52–53, figs. 31-32.

phase was recovered from both the upper and lower terraces.<sup>17</sup> Lordkipanidze interpreted the material of this early phase as the remains of a cult center.

The beginning of the second phase of occupation (late 7<sup>th</sup>/early 6<sup>th</sup> – mid 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE) is signaled by a significant increase in investment on the site. On the Upper Terrace, evidence of a large timber building with an open frontcourt (Fig. 1.3, 2) was uncovered along with traces of two stone structures (Fig: 1.3, 5).<sup>18</sup> All three structures have been associated with religious activity. In addition to thick habitation layers and more securely dated architectural features, this period is notable for the appearance of rich inhumation burials on the site. Four burials have been dated to this period. They are uniform in practice with the deceased being placed in a wooden coffin and interred in a pit grave with numerous burial goods, often including significant amounts of gold as well as what appear to be sacrificial victims (both animal and human). Following interment, the burial pit was filled with earth and covered by a layer of stones.

When compared to contemporary burials from the region around Vani, these burials show clear signs of social stratification. In addition to the semiprecious stone beads, gold and silver items, other forms of wealth and status, including imported items from Athens and Miletus, horses and even additional skeletons thought to be the remains of human attendants. The richest grave at Vani is grave 11, and it is dated to the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century BCE (Fig. 1.3, 3). Included in this burial were Greek imports and numerous gold and silver objects, as well as three attendants and a horse skeleton. Among the gold and silver objects were head ornaments with images drawn from Eastern Anatolian and Near Eastern iconography and accompanied by temple pendants or

---

<sup>17</sup> Lordkipanidze and Mikeladze (1972), 104–107; Kacharava et al. (1979), 37, fig. 123.

<sup>18</sup> Kacharava et al. (1979), 30–34, figs 133-150; For the other two buildings see Lordkipanidze et al. (1976), 26-27, figs. 41-44.



earrings. The features of these burials are not uncommon in Western Georgia as the inclusion of additional individuals is attested at Sairkhe and Sachkere, and horse burials have been uncovered at Eshera and Gyenus.<sup>19</sup> It is only at Vani, however, that all these features are present at a single site.

An increase in both stone architecture and burial variety define the third phase of occupation at the site (mid 4<sup>th</sup> to the mid 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE). Notable structures of this period include a possible defensive wall, a cobble pavement with walls on three sides, altars, and a number of u-shaped, mud-brick structures seated in stone cut socles. Burial expands at the site to include all three terraces and a wider variety of burial types, with pit graves of the same type as the previous phase joined by rock-cut cists and at least one pithos burial.<sup>20</sup> Sixteen graves have been excavated at the site and all show significant investment of wealth. In addition to greater variety, there were also significant changes in burial assemblage. Of particular note is the appearance of coins and locally made amphorae. Both of these developments have been linked to Greek influence and an increasing unification of the economies of Western Georgia. That Vani had contacts with Greek speaking peoples during this period is without doubt. A long bronze inscription in Greek and the presence of Greek letter stamps on tiles from the site make it clear that the Greek language was, in some capacity, known and used at the site.<sup>21</sup> The dramatic increase in monumental architecture and the increased variety in burial form has led Lordkipanidze and others to suggest a greater level of political freedom for the rulers of Vani.<sup>22</sup>

The final stage of occupation (second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the mid 1<sup>st</sup> centuries) is signaled by significant changes in material at the site, and most of the remains still visible at the site are from

---

<sup>19</sup> Braund (1994), 56, 130.

<sup>20</sup> Kacharava et al. (2007), 57-59.

<sup>21</sup> For the stamped roof tiles, see Akhvlediani (1990).

<sup>22</sup> Lordkipanidze (1995a), 383–385; Lordkipanidze (1991), 182–184.

this period. To date, there have been no burials at Vani that can be associated with this fourth stage of occupation. A thick defensive wall was erected encompassing all three terraces, and many stone and mud-brick structures were built. All of these structures have been associated with cult activity. Two destruction events have been identified at the site and these have been associated with the campaigns of Pharnaces and Mithridates in the mid 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. Due to the lack of burials, the apparent ritual nature of excavated structures, and the destruction events, Lordkipanidze believed Vani was a “temple city” during this period, full of votive offerings and local agricultural produce, and thus a priority target for Pharnaces, Mithridates or even Pompey as they tried to find money and food to supply their armies. With all of this in mind, he identified the site at this fourth stage with the shrine of Leucothea mentioned by Strabo (*Geog.* 11.2.17), noting that the archaeology at Vani matched the story of the pillaging of Leucothea.

Evidence for occupation at Vani following the mid 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE is slight. A bronze sarcophagus dated to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE based on a denarius of Caracalla, a rich grave of the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> century CE, a church with associated cemetery and a potter’s kiln show that occupation at the site did not cease after the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, but indicate that Vani was nowhere near as intensely inhabited as it had been in earlier periods.<sup>23</sup>

The archaeological material recovered from Vani and dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE gives evidence to a gradual rise in investment in the site and an expansion in the quantity and variety of cultural material. In addition to items that point to the increased accumulation of wealth and greater social stratification, some of the finds from Vani give suggest the emergence of literacy, the existence of craft specialization, and shifts in systems of production and consumption. The recovery from the site of the bronze plaque, an inscribed graffito from a statue base at the city

---

<sup>23</sup> Lordkipanidze (1991): 195. The material has only been partially published, see Kacharava et al. (1979), 37. For the coin see Dundua and Lordkipanidze (1977), 152.

gate, and tile stamps, all in Greek, demonstrate that there was at least a moderate level of Greek literacy among those frequenting the site. Shifts in economic relationships are evidenced by the appearance of silver coins and the local production of transport amphorae.

This material also gives evidence to the cultural entanglements local elite discourse was navigating. The rich burials of the Classical and Early Hellenistic period, in particular, illustrate a matrix of influences coming primarily from the Persian Near East and the Greek influenced Mediterranean and Black Seas. These influences are clearly not only cultural in form, but permeate more deeply to affect social practice. The Achaemenid inspired drinking scene with an individual in Colchian dress drinking from a phiale shown on the silver belt from grave 24 (2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE) is a possible example of the influence contact with the Near East had on local customs.

The fusion of Achaemenid and Colchian elements may extend beyond cultural practice and participation in political relationships with the Achaemenid east. The head ornaments found at Vani have been interpreted as official diadems and this same form of head adornment has been found in contemporary funerary contexts at Siarkhe and Iktvisi, where they have been associated with Achaemenid Persian influence.<sup>24</sup> Farther east, Achaemenid influence is even stronger at sites like Dedoplis Gora and Dedoplis Mindori where a large Achaemenid-like administrative complex (called a palace) has been identified. Though dated to after the Achaemenid period, these complexes show clear signs of contact with Near Eastern forms of administration.<sup>25</sup>

Coins and amphorae, on the other hand, very clearly originate in centers near or on the Black Sea littoral and are likely the result of contact with traders working in and around the

---

<sup>24</sup> Gagoshidze (1996), 127-129. Knauss (2001) and (2006) has also pointed to architectural features of Siarkhe as showing Achaemenid influence. For a collection of works on Achaemenid presence in Anatolia and the Southern Caucasus Ivanchik and Licheli (2007).

<sup>25</sup> Knauss (2006): 110-113.

Mediterranean. The first coins imitated Milesian coin types and the local production of amphorae did not appear until some decades after foreign vessels first appeared in the region. When combined with the presence at Vani of Greek imports and Greek language, it is clear that Vani actively participated in western exchange routes during the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE.

Though this material gives evidence to the growing importance of Vani and the emergence of some of the key indicators of increased social complexity, many questions concerning Vani's specific role in regional settlement dynamics remain unanswered. These questions focus specifically on the role Vani played in the political, social and economic landscape of the region and what this says about the developing organization of Colchian society in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. What was the nature of the relationship between the people living in Vani and those occupying the region around it? Was Vani the center of political, social, economic and religious activity in the region? If so, how big was the territory it controlled and for how long did it control it? Was Vani a part of a larger political unit whose center lay elsewhere? Some attention has been paid to archaeological remains outside the city, but little has been done to incorporate these remains within interpretations of Vani's regional importance.

#### IV. BRIEF HISTORY OF REGIONAL STUDIES AROUND VANI

Regional exploration has been an important component of research at Vani since the beginning of systematic excavations at the site, but little has been done to integrate this knowledge into the kind of unified regional picture necessary to understand Vani's development in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium. The earliest reports of material being found in the region come from Vani itself. In May of 1876, the Tbilisi journal *Droeba* published a report detailing how material secretly being sold by local inhabitants had originated from from Akhvledianebis Gora, where

rainfall was causing buried objects to become exposed. Though there was great interest in the material being recovered by locals, it would not be until Giorgi Tsereteli's publication of finds from the site in 1880, and his call for the proper study of the material, that scientific interest in the site would finally begin. Though we have reports of informal excavations, including at least one undertaken by "a certain Akhvlediani nobleman," the first "scientific" excavations of the site began in 1896 by the famous Georgian scholar Ekvtime Taqaishvili.<sup>26</sup> In 1889, Alexandre Stoianov, a local ethnologist, conducted excavations at Vani and found "tombs of the ancient Greek period and that the objects in gold that are dug up there appear to be of considerable scientific interest." In that same year, a French team unearthed the remains of a church and a mediaeval tomb.<sup>27</sup>

From the beginning of excavations at Vani, exploration of the region has been a priority. For the most part, study of the region has been guided by chance finds reported by local inhabitants. In the same year as he began work at Vani, Taqaishvili opened a trench within the village of Sajavakho at the place where a hoard of Colchian coins had been accidentally found.<sup>28</sup> Accidental finds also drew archaeological attention to Dapnari, Mtisdziri, and Sakakile in Sulori. All of these sites were subsequently excavated.<sup>29</sup> The reliance on local informants to both identify and report material has resulted in significant voids in maps where no sites have been identified, due to irregular reporting habits and incomplete coverage of the landscape in contemporary life. Though excavation has been common at sites in the region, systematic regional survey has not. The combination of climate, geography and vegetation make survey in western Georgia difficult. Portions of the landscape are inaccessible or devoid of surface material. The broad Colchian

---

<sup>26</sup> Taqaishvili (1907), 1-12, 19-21, 23, 40.

<sup>27</sup> Vickers (2008): 31.

<sup>28</sup> *supra* 26.

<sup>29</sup> Dapnari: Kighuradze (1971); Mtisdziri: Khoshtaria (1959); Sulori: Inauri (1990).

plain between the Rioni and the foothills near Vani, for instance, is almost entirely devoid of recoverable archaeological material, save for mound sites to the far west and a few urban sites located on protected hillocks.<sup>30</sup>

That said, there have been a handful of archaeological surveys carried out in the region around Vani. In 1929, Niko Berdzenishvili surveyed around Dablagomi after reports of finds by local inhabitants.<sup>31</sup> The Kutaisi State Historical-Ethnographical Museum conducted a regional exploration in the region around Samtredia 1958, a project which included survey of Mtsidziri and Sajavakho where they found pithos graves.<sup>32</sup> After the discovery of material eroded from the scarps at Ketchinara in Tsikhesulori, a survey effort was carried out there in 1961. In 1971, Ramishvili and Lanchava carried out a new survey project at Mtsidziri.<sup>33</sup> In 1973 a team directed by Tamaz Beradze attempted to locate settlements by comparing mediaeval sources with local toponyms. In 1974, the Vartsikhe Archaeological Expedition carried out an investigation in the village of Rokhi.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to these semi-published surveys, there are a number of informal surveys that have been carried out in the region primarily by members of the Vani Expedition. In 2008, one of the members of the expedition, Sul Khan Kharabadze, completed his dissertation, which collected most of the material recovered from the region, with special attention paid to material recovered from surface contexts.<sup>35</sup> Kharabadze's work revealed that significant amount of our information

---

<sup>30</sup> The closest mounded sites to the region are Numarnu and Kodori to the west and Patriketis Gorika to the east. Apakidze (2005) provides a typology of sites of the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age in Western Georgia and a map of known sites.

<sup>31</sup> Kuftin (1950), 1–2.

<sup>32</sup> Chronicles 1971: 135-136.

<sup>33</sup> Ramishvili and Lanchava (1973): 20.

<sup>34</sup> Though difficult to acquire, Japaridze (1989) remains the best source on Vardtsikhe (Rhodopolis).

<sup>35</sup> Kharabadze (2008).

about the region is unpublished and resides primarily in the museum catalogue entries for material that has been informally recovered. There is little impetus on the part of individuals studying regions to make explicit their techniques of recovery or to record exactly where things were found, and more importantly, areas visited where no material was recovered. So though the material was helpfully gathered in Kharabadze's dissertation, integrating it into an interpretation of past activity remained undone. It was in the context of this previous research that the Vani Regional Survey was developed.

In 2009, a joint American and Georgian survey project was initiated under the direction of Christopher Ratté to increase understanding of the archaeological remains of the region. This project, called the Vani Regional Survey (VRS), had three main goals: 1) to integrate existing knowledge of the region into a systematic methodological and interpretive framework, 2) to evaluate previous assumptions about the types of social organization that characterize settlement in Colchis during the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C.E., and 3) to assess the appropriateness of archaeological survey in achieving these first two goals. Methodologically, the VRS employed predominantly extensive survey techniques: visiting previously identified sites, questioning local informants, and exploring specific places in the landscape where sites were likely to be found. More focused geophysical investigation was carried out at a selection of sites (Shuamta, Saqanchia, Vani (Area B), Kveda Bzvani and Inashauri), and three of these (Shuamta, Saqanchia and Vani (Area B)) received limited excavation. After three seasons of research, the VRS has mapped the location of 75 sites and placed them all within a robust comparative framework. Of these sites, 44 can securely be dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE, with the majority dating to between the Iron Age (10<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>) and the Hellenistic Period (4<sup>th</sup> – 1<sup>st</sup>). After the first two seasons of the VRS, two things became apparent. First, the artifact scatters (consisting of ceramics, lumps

of burnt daub, and occasionally stone tools) which constitute the vast majority of visible surface remains had never been systematically investigated. And second, the apparent lower density of activity in the area between Vani and the modern village of Gora, 15 km east of Vani. It was agreed that an intensive survey of a region to the east of Vani would offer the opportunity to contextualize previous research in the area by better understanding the nature of surface scatters, as well as to expand our knowledge of activity in the region surrounding Vani by finding additional areas of activity.

Beginning in 2011, a new intensive survey program was begun, under the author's supervision, directed at the area east of Vani. Such a survey would allow us to 1) investigate the landscape using a method previously unused in western Georgia, 2) create a dataset that would allow us to evaluate and contextualize the material being recovered by the Vani Regional Survey, and 3) more directly test previous hypotheses about the nature of settlement to the East of Vani by looking in areas thought to be devoid of significant activity in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. This dissertation presents the Eastern Vani Survey, the questions it was designed to address, the methods it used to approach the material, the discoveries that it made, and conclusions this work draws for the region. Finally, it raises questions about our understanding of the archaeology of Colchis in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE

## V. ORGANIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to present the results of the intensive Eastern Vani Survey and use them to reconstruct activity in the region around Vani in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. To these ends, it has been divided into five chapters and two appendices. The next chapter will present the theoretical foundations, methodological approaches and initial results of the



intensive survey. Chapter 3 gives a detailed accounting of our current knowledge about Colchian ceramics with particular focus on the material recovered from Vani and its surrounding region. At the end of the ceramics chapter, the surface material recovered by both surveys is reported. In chapter 4, the results of both surveys will be presented and ancient patterns of settlement reconstructed. The dissertation ends with some conclusions about the character and tempo of the relationship between Vani and the region and suggests future avenues of research.

Appendix A reports in detail all the activity areas identified by the project, including catalogue entries and images of finds. Appendix B presents those fields where material of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE was identified. For the purposes of comparability, the EVS adopted the system site numbering used by the Vani Regional Survey. The VRS uses a combination of letters and numbers to identify points of interest in the survey-region. Using a system adapted from the Aphrodisias Regional Survey, points were given a letter based on which year they were visited and a number assigned sequentially starting a “1”. This only applies, however, to the first three letters of the alphabet (with “A” being 2009, “B” 2010 and “C” 2011). Not all known sites from the region were visited by the VRS, but these places were important to include in our regional analyses, and so they were assigned the letter “D”. All the activity areas recorded by the EVS were given the letter E. In other words, sites with the letters A, B or C were visited and recorded by the Vani Regional Survey. Those sites with D were not visited by the VRS, but they have been documented elsewhere in publication and/or in Sulxan Kharabadze’s dissertation. All the places with the letter E were visited by the EVS and yielded new material as recorded in this dissertation.

## **Chapter 2 - Orientation and Methodology of the Survey**

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the theoretical background and methodological approach of the Eastern Vani Survey. The long history of sustained excavation and research at Vani make the region an ideal candidate for systematic survey. Despite the intensity of research at the site, many questions concerning Vani's specific role in regional settlement dynamics remain unanswered. Was Vani the center of political, social, economic and religious activity in the region? What was the nature of the relationship between the people living in Vani and those occupying its hinterland? Some attention has been paid to archaeological remains outside the city, but little has been done to incorporate these remains within interpretations of Vani's regional importance. Our initial survey efforts around Vani were regional in scope. The Vani Regional Survey used extensive survey techniques and attempted to record and map all the known sites of the region. Although successful in gathering information about the region from local informants and museum collections, the VRS was less successful in identifying and categorizing sites from surface material alone. It was clear that a more intensive survey effort focused on agricultural fields would help us refine our understanding surface material, find new loci of activity, and perhaps provide the data necessary to create criteria for categorizing sites in the region.

The Eastern Vani Survey (EVS) was developed to address these issues, and this chapter presents that design in detail. It begins with a discussion of the research questions of the project and the theoretical approaches invoked to address them. This dissertation engages most fully with problems of reconstruction the sustaining areas for ancient settlements, settlement pattern analysis and the appropriateness of artifact level survey in addressing regional questions. Following this first section, the chapter gives a detailed account of the specific methods used in the survey and concludes with a presentation of the particulars of the overall success the project had in survey coverage and artifact recovery.

## II. THE EASTERN VANI SURVEY PROJECT

During the spring and summer of 2011 and 2012, the EVS project conducted regional archaeological survey in the Sulori and Qvinitsqaro River valleys, both tributaries of the Rioni River. Our survey had four primary goals. The first was to use surface assemblages to identify places of activity that had not previously been identified. Traditional methods of regional investigation in the region had yet to identify activity in certain spaces in the region to the east of Vani. Our second goal was to establish the basic outlines of the regional archaeological chronology within the broader traditional periodization of human activity in Colchis. This was vital to lend temporal and spatial depth to the data we were gathering from surface remains. What we found, however, drew greater attention to the problems inherent in current periodization and suggested a need to reevaluate our basic assumptions about the temporal range of certain classes of artifacts. Our work has made it clear that more regional projects of this nature need to be deployed before current chronologies can be accepted. That said, we did our best to relate our data to material recovered from other sites in Western Georgia.

Our third goal was to expand the repertoire of methods and analytical techniques used in Georgian archaeology through the use of archaeological survey; systematic collection and mapping; analysis of locally produced artifacts in reference to regional raw material sources; and the use of digital technology in the identification, recovery, interpretation and presentation of archaeological data. The EVS was the first intensive survey project to be carried out in western Georgia and one of only a handful which have been carried out in the Caucasus.<sup>1</sup> The difficulties of the terrain, its vegetation and the nature of modern settlement made field-by-field survey difficult and required the development of techniques that were both efficient and effective. Our final goal for the EVS Project was to use the data recovered by the EVS to contextualize previous research in the region and to refine our understanding of the organization of settlement around Vani. This allowed us to evaluate the relationship between Vani and its hinterland and to get a better understanding of the structure and distribution of settlements to the East of Vani.

To achieve these goals, the EVS relies heavily on theoretical work on the relationship of loci of human activity and their physical and social landscapes. This includes work on the rise of central places, the size and importance of a site's sustaining area, settlement hierarchy and the suitability of survey in engaging with these concepts. Allied with these concerns were the more immediate problems posed by the landscape for regional analysis. The current project relies heavily on theoretical and methodological advances made on conducting survey in difficult and artifact-poor environments.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hammer (2014a) and (2014b) discusses two very recent intensive survey projects in South Caucasus. For Georgia, Anderson et al. (2014) report on their continuing survey efforts in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region of South Georgia. Demetradze and Kipiani (2012) present an example of a technologically competent application of traditional survey methods that make no use of intensive survey.

### *II.1. The Centrality of Vani in its Region*

Years of research at Vani and in the region surrounding it have encouraged the view that Vani was a center of political, religious and/or economic activity between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE. During these seven centuries, the remains recovered from the site point to increased investment in the built environment and an expanding use of material, both in quantity and type. In particular, the rich burials of the mid 5<sup>th</sup>- early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries and the monumental architecture of the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> centuries suggests that Vani was an important place in the landscape. The type and scale of activity identified at the site from the mid to late 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE is unattested at other sites in the region,. From the available evidence then, Vani appears to be unique in its region and to be a site where specialized activity took place.

The top-down model used to explain Vani's special character places emphasis on material that points to the site's growing connections with regional and extra-regional networks. The appearance at the site of exotic goods (imported ceramics, precious metals and stones), extra-regional architectural forms and foreign cultural practices are seen as the causes of change rather than the result of Vani's growing importance. Within this model, Vani grows and is differentiated from other sites in the region due to its relationship with larger and more powerful centers located in Colchis and elsewhere. Evaluating Vani's position within the landscape, however, requires the adoption of a bottom-up approach, one that focuses on the importance regional settlement and landscape use had on Vani's development. That Vani grew in importance in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE is apparent, but to what extent this growth was unique and what effects this growth had on activity taking place in the region remain open questions.

### *II.1a. The Town and Its Sustaining Area*

Archaeologists have developed a number of theoretical approaches to understanding the relationship between towns and the regions in which they are situated. These approaches rely on a set of basic assumptions about the conditions that encourage the formation of urbanized sites and that dictate their location, size and function. Broadly speaking, it is assumed that the location of any site is conditioned by two related but separate concerns: proximity to desired natural resources and the site's physical relationship to loci of social activity (i.e. other sites, roads, or socially restricted areas). Given the nature of the archaeological evidence, building models that explain how sites acquired, or failed to acquire, the materials necessary to sustain themselves are particularly important to understanding a site's existence. At the most basic level, sites require access to food and water, resources necessary to sustain the basic biological functions of the people living in, working at, or visiting the site. To these basic needs we must add access to the goods and material necessary to sustain and account for the activities attested in the archaeological record. If the site shows signs of ceramic or metal production, for instance, access to the raw material must be accounted for and the distance or proximity of these resources can give clues to a site's relationship with its social and natural landscape. Indeed, loci of social activity outside the boundaries of the site itself can be understood as resources, which sites differentially participate in based on their physical and social proximity. Approaches to understanding the relationship between urbanized sites and their regions can thus be placed into two categories: those concerned with environmental relationships and those concerned with social relationships.

Site catchment is the most basic approach to understanding the relationship between sites and their immediate environs. Claudio Vita-Finzi and Eric Higgs first introduced site catchment

analysis in the 1970's as a way of identifying and studying the resources available to any given site.<sup>2</sup> Previous ethnographic work carried out by Richard Lee on the !Kung Bushman and Michael Chisholm's study of European peasant farming suggested that resource acquisition and use was distance dependent. During his fieldwork, Lee observed that foragers were unlikely to walk more than 10 kilometers or two hours from their base. Groups of hunters, however, might roam beyond 10 kilometers, but if they did they would often make a separate overnight camp.<sup>3</sup> Studying European peasant agricultural practice, Chisholm concluded that it was very rare for farmers to travel more than 3-4 kilometers or one hour to their fields.<sup>4</sup> With these studies in mind, Vita-Finzi and Higgs drew circles with diameters of 5 kilometers around sites to be studied, figuring that this was the most likely area to be heavily exploited by the prehistoric peoples they were studying. By carefully analyzing the natural resources present within the catchment zone, Vita-Finzi and Higgs believed they could better understand a site's function and modes of subsistence.

Although site catchment analysis has become an important component of regional studies, there are some rather serious limitations to the approach. Moreover, site catchments are not static as new technologies, may encourage or discourage the exploitation of the available resources and make the catchment more or less productive. Shifts in the productivity of a catchment may result in increased investment in both the catchment area and the site itself, resulting in a rise in the site's relative importance in the region. Moreover, access to resources and social relationships may increase and decrease and other sites located within a site's catchment go through changes in their relative positions. And these distances need to be

---

<sup>2</sup> Vita-Finzi and Higgs (1970).

<sup>3</sup> Lee (1968).

<sup>4</sup> Chisholm (1962), 54-59.

mediated by social relationships. Catchment productivity is an important determinant of site location, its size and ultimately its function, but it is clearly not the only factor. This is why consideration of the social landscape is so important and why both the VRS and EVS projects are concerned with settlement patterning around Vani.

### *II.1b. The Town and Its Neighbors Town*

Regional archaeological studies are predicated on the assumption that there is more than one archaeological site in a landscape. The location of the various loci of human activity identified in a region and their proximity to each other provide information not only on regional patterns of activity, but also contextualize particular sites and the material recovered from them. Although settlement pattern analysis has been criticized, particularly from a post-processualist perspective<sup>5</sup>, it continues to be a robust means of studying political, economic and social development on a regional scale.<sup>6</sup> The perceived patterning in the spacing, number, size, use and location of *loci of activity*, or “sites”, provide spatial and temporal proxy data for the regional organization of social systems. These patterns are the result of *repeated* and *intentional* human behavior that is conditioned by environmental, social and historical factors.

The early applications of settlement pattern analysis expected that the size, density and location of artifact scatters related directly to the scale and organization of settlement systems, assuming a close and uncomplicated correspondence between surface and subsurface remains.<sup>7</sup> This view has since been challenged by the recognition of a number of methodological and post-

---

<sup>5</sup> Tilley (1994); Witcher (2006).

<sup>6</sup> For arguments in favor of settlement pattern analysis and its utility, see Earle and Kolb (2010); Bintliff et al. (2000) and Banning (2002).

<sup>7</sup> e.g. Adams (1965).



depositional biases that affect the character of surface remains.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, concepts such as *memory* and *landscape* were put forward to challenge the direct link between settlement pattern and socio-political organization.<sup>9</sup> Rather than causing the abandonment of settlement pattern studies, these critiques led to a refining of theoretical and methodological approaches which recognized the importance the landscape plays in conditioning human behavior and affecting the visibility of remains on the surface.

There are a number of ways to compare and understand sites in a given region, but the most prevalent in contemporary archaeology is settlement pattern analysis through the identification of a site hierarchy.<sup>10</sup> Archaeological studies of regions have been preoccupied with establishing site hierarchies since the introduction of settlement pattern analysis in the 1950's.<sup>11</sup> Using concepts drawn from Central Place Theory<sup>12</sup>, a site hierarchy is established by comparing sites within a region based on their size, function and location within the landscape. The most commonly used criteria for comparison is site size, which is used as an indicator for the number of people using the site and/or the intensity of that activity and thus the sites relative importance to the regions social organization. Big sites are more important than little sites and are likely to have served as the centers of economic, political and/or religious activity.

---

<sup>8</sup> Terrenato (2004).

<sup>9</sup> Tilley (1994); Van Dyke and Alcock (2003).

<sup>10</sup> Early proponents of settlement hierarchies were Earle (1977) and Peebles and Kus (1977). Settlement hierarchies are seen as essential to the functioning of tribute and tax systems, see Steponaitis (1978). In the Mediterranean World, Driessen (2001) uses settlement hierarchy to understand the political organization of Minoan Crete. Pantou (2010) uses settlement hierarchy to argue against the existence of a central place in the Bay of Volos.

<sup>11</sup> Willey (1953).

<sup>12</sup> Christaller (1933), Christaller and Baskin (1966) for the English Version; Lösch (1944) and (1967) for the English version.

All approaches to understanding the organization of regional settlement require some understanding of site size or function.<sup>13</sup> In regions, like that around Vani, where clear metrics to compare site size and function are difficult to acquire using traditional methods, approaches that focus on economic, political, and social relationships as determinants of site location are untenable. The first step in these regions is to develop a program of investigation that allows for the identification and categorization of the range of activities, their boundaries, and their distribution in the landscape.

The identification of Vani as a central place in the landscape is based on the presence at the site of specialized architecture, exotic materials, craft production, surplus storage and elite display in burial contexts. This suite of features does not appear all at once, nor are all of them contemporary, but taken as a whole these features clearly mark Vani as a special place in the landscape. Attempts to understand the emergence have assumed the presence of a settlement hierarchy of which Vani occupied a secondary tier with the primal site likely situated within the territory of Kutaisi. Indeed, evidence at Vani shows that in the Classical and Hellenistic periods, it may have been connected to other centers in Western Georgia, but the nature of these connections are unclear. Less attention, however, has been given to the organization of the region around Vani and what that has to say about the potential primacy of the site within the local settlement hierarchy, if in fact there was such a hierarchy.

## *II.2. Regional Studies in Artifact-Poor Environments*

The main goals of archaeological survey are identifying the location of activities in the landscape, discerning the intensity and duration of that activity and relating this to the spatial distribution of activity sites and their relationship with the landscape. The most robust means of

---

<sup>13</sup> Duffy (2015), 85-93 gives an excellent overview of the problems of site size hierarchies.

achieving these goals is to deploy a multi-scalar research program which collections data at spatial and temporal scales appropriate to discern the various biases and processes that produce patterns in surface remains.<sup>14</sup> The combination of *artifact level* studies, which call for intensive sampling of relatively small areas of the landscape, and *extensive survey* techniques, which use previous knowledge and researcher instinct to identify the locations of activity, produce the types of evidence necessary to understand the intensity, chronology and distribution of activity on a regional scale.

The approach to archaeological survey used in this research is grounded in settlement pattern analysis as first developed in the 50's and 60's<sup>15</sup> combined with methodological and theoretical refinements made by survey archaeologists working in the Mediterranean over the last 20 years.<sup>16</sup> In the Mediterranean, especially in Greece and Italy, regional survey's of the 1970's and 80's recognized that the landscape was essentially a continuous spread of ceramics and traditional methods of site identification and definition were called into question.<sup>17</sup> The struggle for these projects was to identify loci of human activity in "artifact-rich" environments.<sup>18</sup> There was considerable concern that projects collect and account for as much of the surface material as possible with the idea that site definition would be more robust and accurate. This new focus on artifact distribution led to the development of "site-less" surveys.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> e.g. Flannery (1976a).

<sup>15</sup> The best examples of early settlement pattern analyses are Willey (1953); MacNeish (1964); Adams (1965); and Parsons (1972).

<sup>16</sup> Bintliff and Mattingly (1999-2000); Alcock and Cherry (2004); Attema et al. (2010)

<sup>17</sup> See Cherry (1983) and Cherry et al. (1988), 159–162 for a discussion of the issues and useful bibliography.

<sup>18</sup> Caraher et al. (2006) for a recent example of the problem of artifact abundance has on site identification.

<sup>19</sup> The early proponents of site-less survey were Foley (1981), who introduced the concept of "off-site" distributions, Dunnell and Dancey (1983), Ebert (1992) proposed an approach called "distributional archaeology."

Site-less surveys focus primarily on understanding the composition and distribution of surface artifact scatters, which is why they are also called “artifact level” surveys. In the end, however, these projects are still concerned with concentrated loci of past human activity and often use complicated methods and terminology to identify these loci without using the word site.<sup>20</sup>

At the beginning of the last decade, there was a growing realization, encouraged by critiques the fields of anthropology and geography, that small-scale, intensive surveys were taking too much time to execute and were no longer able to effectively engage with regional questions as their sample sizes were simply too small.<sup>21</sup> As contemporary archaeological survey was conceived as part of the processual reaction to the single site focused cultural historical approaches of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, there is continued interest in assuring that surveys are “full-coverage” meaning they investigate systematically an entire regional unit.<sup>22</sup> Even the early intensive surveys in the Mediterranean were still focused on regional questions, which were thought to be best answered by having a “complete-coverage” of a region. This tension between full-coverage and complete-coverage survey lies at the center of contemporary debates about the role of survey in archaeological investigations, especially as surface assemblages may represent all that is left of a site and modern development continues to destroy these surface remains. Is it the responsibility of every survey to collect all surface material in

---

<sup>20</sup> Given and Knapp (2003) use the phrase “place of special interest,” but this little more than a change of clothing for the issues of site definition. Millett (1991) uses “abnormal density above background scatter” instead of site, see p. 22-23.

<sup>21</sup> On the issue of sample size, see Terrenato (2004). The critiques from anthropological archaeology have been particularly stinging, see for instance Blanton (2001). More recently, small-scale intensive survey is recognized as useful, but not in addressing regional questions. See Kowalewski (2008), 249-251.

<sup>22</sup> In his processualist manifesto, Binford (1964) placed full-coverage survey at the heart of the new scientific movement as it would allow archaeologists to consider regions rather than just sites.

hopes of recovering all visible evidence, or should projects focus on the recovery of regional scale data before portions of the landscape are lost forever?

Small-scale intensive surveys as part of larger regional projects are increasingly common, as projects wrestle with the competing demands of robust regional analysis, which requires significantly large areas to be explored, and proper systematic investigation, the quality of which improves the more time being spent per unit of survey.<sup>23</sup> Focused intensive survey directed at specific portions of the landscape is one way these competing concerns can be mediated. As part of larger survey efforts, these intensive surveys can address specific research questions that more extensive methods are unable to answer. Broadly speaking, any allied intensive survey is an artifact level survey that exists somewhere on the spectrum between inter-site and intra-site investigations. Inter-site investigations are used to examine so-called off-site distributions and to use them to identify new loci of activity, which are more or less invisible to extensive survey.<sup>24</sup> Intra-site investigations are used to explore the spatial distribution of artifacts within previously identified sites.<sup>25</sup>

The Eastern Vani Survey is best described as an intensive allied component of the larger Vani Regional Survey. Modern settlement and vegetation cover make identifying new sites through extensive survey problematic, with a majority of new locations on hilltops in areas devoid of modern settlement. The nature of ancient settlement exacerbates this problem, as there no mound settlements or remains of standing architecture. Mound settlements of the Bronze and Iron Age are common in Western Georgia, but they are concentrated on the broad, flat Colchian

---

<sup>23</sup> See Terrenato (2004).

<sup>24</sup> Examples of recent inter-site are Avetisyan et al. (2000) and Hammer (2014b) in the south Caucasus. The difficult landscapes encountered by Mayanists have necessitated intensive survey as well, see O'Mansky and Dunning (2004), 87.

<sup>25</sup> Intra-site investigations are particularly popular, especially urban survey. See Rautman (2009).

plain and do not appear in the foothills of either the greater or lesser Caucasus. Instead, in these areas settlement appears to favor hilltops, which are either occupied by modern settlement or obscured by vegetation and thus hard to recover archaeologically.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, erosion has dispersed material from activity on hills to the valleys below and it is only through close inspection of these valleys that material from past activity can be identified. The causes of poor artifact visibility in surface contexts could be vegetation, lack of agricultural development, limited ceramic use and an absence of long term, non-seasonal settlement in the hinterland. Only through focused intensive survey in the region around Vani can the problems of artifact visibility be evaluated.

Due to the intensity of survey, and the lack of clear indicators of site centers, the project was both an inter-site and intra-site survey. As a result, this project deploys a “site-less” survey method, in which collection of artifacts was carried out without identification of sites. Later, the material collected was analyzed and areas of significant activity were recorded as *activity areas*. These areas should not be confused with sites as the location of the material recovered is often the result of post depositional processes. In recording these activity areas, we made note of where the highest occurring point near the scatter was and would suggest that the area between this highest point and the edge of the activity area is the most likely location for the source of the material recovered.

### III. DEFINITION OF THE STUDY REGION AND SURVEY CHALLENGES

Defining the area to be surveyed was the first challenge of the project, and we used a number of techniques, including site catchment and satellite image analyses, to ensure the area

---

<sup>26</sup> Vita-Finzi and Higgs (1970) offers a detailed discussion of the character and distribution of mounded versus hilltop sites. See in particular fig. 1, p. 176.

would be both surveyable and, more importantly, that it had the potential to address the goals of the survey. We needed to survey areas that had no previously identified sites but that would also allow us to evaluate the distribution of surface remains and the function of known sites.

### *III.1. Vani's Site Catchment*

Our first step in defining our survey area was to carry out a basic site catchment analysis for the ancient site of Vani. Our goal in the analysis was not to establish resource availability at Vani, but rather to give structure to investigation of the region. The site's catchment served as a way of identifying places in the landscape where proximity or distance from Vani could have been a determinant of certain types of site. As travel time and not distance is the most important determinant of how people engage with the landscape, Tobler's Hiking Function was used along with a ten-meter digital elevation model (DEM) derived from contours digitized from a 1:50,000 scale map of the region. Tobler's Hiking Function is means of determining walking speed that takes slope into account. The function assumes a walking speed of 5km/h over flat terrain, a speed that is reduced exponentially as slope increases or decreases.<sup>27</sup> Although this function is best used to calculate travel along known paths, it does a much better job of accounting for topography in the calculation of time to walk a certain distance. No correction was made for the potential barriers offered by rivers and types of land use. The modern course of the Rioni river was used as the northern boundary of the analysis, though its course in antiquity was likely different, and the distance from Vani was limited to five hours as it incorporated all the known sites previously associated with Vani. The results of the analysis are shown in (Fig. 2.1).

---

<sup>27</sup> The function is expressed as  $W = 6 * \exp \{-3.5 * \text{abs}(S+0.05)\}$ , where W=walking velocity (km/hr) and S=slope of the terrain (dh/dx). See Tobler (1993). The alternate approach was to use Naismith's Rule which addresses both horizontal and vertical distance to determine travel time. The initial results of both approaches were negligible and thanks to a number of useful resources online, Tobler's Function was easier to implement quickly in GIS.

When we map the catchment analysis on the landscape with the known pre-modern sites, a number of patterns become apparent. Firstly, sites appear to be concentrated in the region between one hour and four hours walk from Vani, accounting for 85% of all sites. The general lack of sites near Vani, especially within one hours walk is at least partially due to the modern town of Vani which occupies much of the northeastern part of this zone. The complete lack of sites to the south and southeast of Vani, however, is obvious and needs closer examination. To the west the sites of Shuamta and Mtisdziri are within a two hours walk, and both have yielded significant remains of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium from both survey and excavation. Should we expect similar sites to the east within these same distances? Secondly, there are certain distances from Vani, both east and west, around which sites appear to cluster. This is particularly clear between two and four hours walk from the site. It's hard to account for this clustering by recovery bias alone and there is likely some deeper structure of settlement being revealed. Finally, the general lack of sites east of Vani at the edge of the three hour zone needed investigation as to the west it is just beyond the three hour distance that Dablagomi, one of the most important sites in the region, sits.

Distance	West	East	Total
0 < 1 hour	3	4	<b>7</b>
1 < 2 hours	10	8	<b>18</b>
2 < 3 hours	7	13	<b>20</b>
3 < 4 hours	11	13	<b>24</b>
4 < 5 hours	0	4	<b>4</b>
Total	31	42	<b>73</b>

Table 2.1: Number of sites by catchment zone divided by sites that lie to the east of Vani and those that lie to the west.



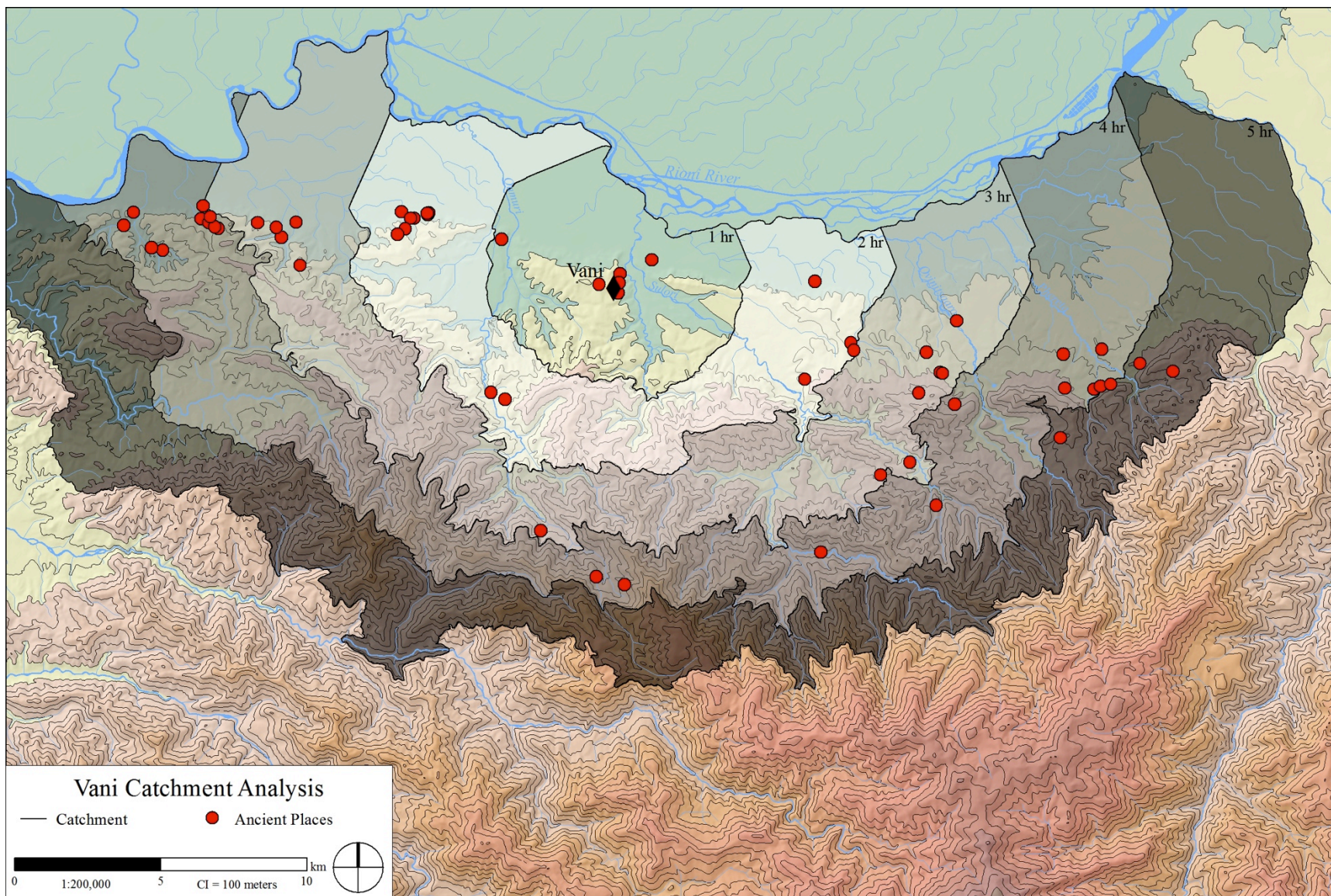


Figure 2.1: 1:200,000 visualization of the site catchment analysis in ArcGIS 10.2. Previously identified sites dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE are shown as point data.

### *III.2. The Study Region*

With the goals of the Eastern Vani Survey project in mind, and building on our site catchment analysis and the previous survey and mapping efforts of the Vani Regional Survey, a survey area was marked to the east of Vani (Fig. 2.2). As the field project is only interested in investigating areas to the east of the site, the western edge of the survey was established by drawing an arbitrary line bisecting the ancient site along its north-south axis. To the north, the survey extends to just beyond the edge of the Rioni River plain. To the south, the survey boundary was placed 4 km south of the northern boundary and is defined by a line of hills marking the beginning of the foothills of the lesser Caucasus. The northern slopes of these hills have fairly steep slopes and support very little modern habitation or cultivation making them less than ideal for intensive survey. The eastern edge of the survey was placed to ensure at least a portion of the eastern bank of the Qvinitqaro was within the survey area and that the east-west dimension of the whole survey area was in whole kilometers.

The resulting survey area encompasses 56 km<sup>2</sup> and includes the Sulori and Qvinitqaro River valleys (Fig. 2.3), both of which today serve as access points into the foothills from the greater Rioni River Valley. This survey area was selected because it balanced the goals of the survey project with the limitations of the region's landscape, which renders many areas to the east unsuitable for surface survey. One of the main goals of the project was to understand the various geographic features that may have encouraged settlement in antiquity. As was detailed in the previous chapter, in addition to the Rioni, there are four major rivers that define the landscape around Vani: the Qumuri, the Sulori, the Qvinitqaro and the Phereta. These rivers, all part of the larger Rioni watershed, can be divided into three micro-watersheds, with the Qvinitqaro and Phereta being combined into a single watershed unit (Fig. 2.3).

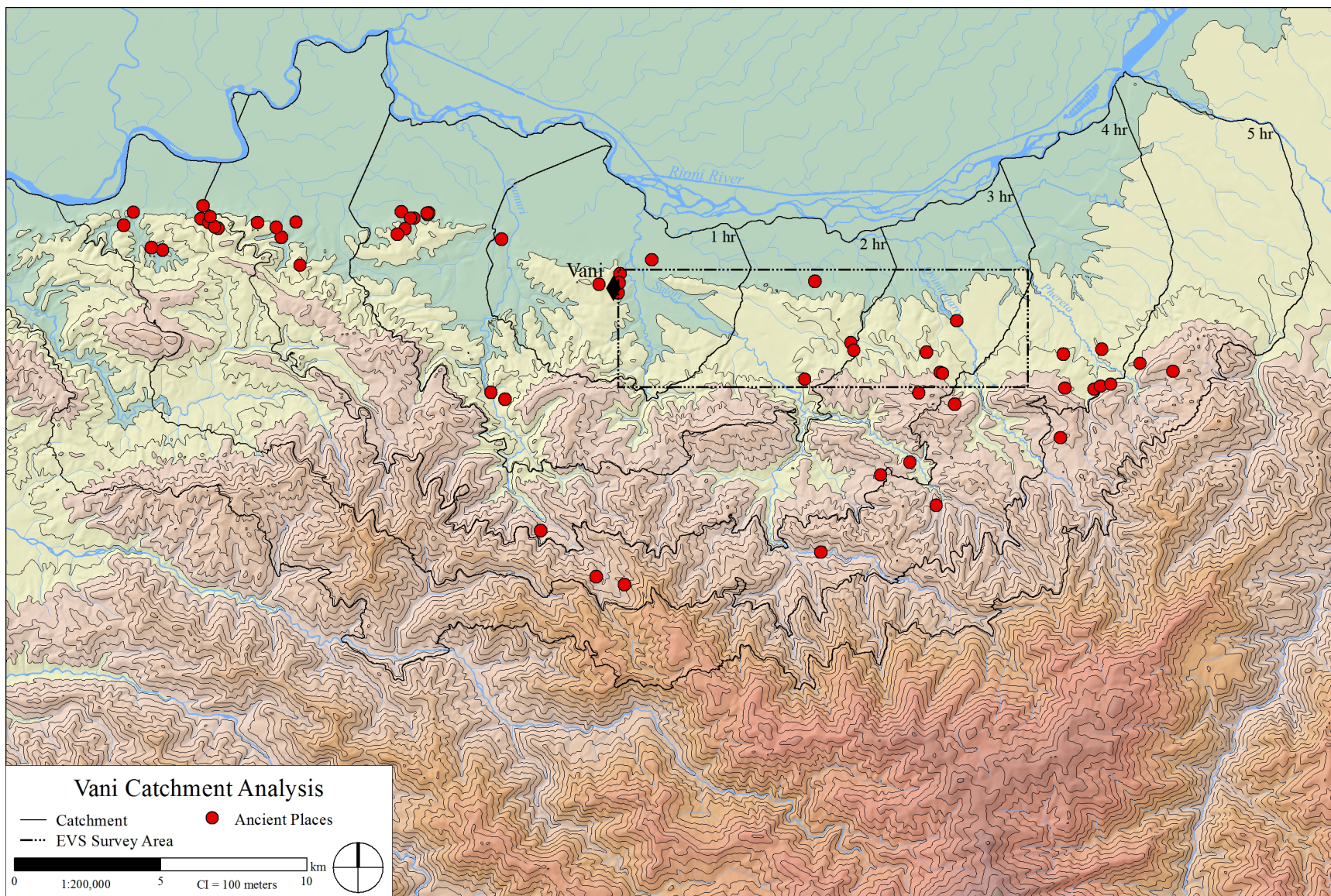


Figure 2.2: Catchment map with the Eastern Vani Survey area included.

The majority of previous survey work has been focused on the Qumuri watershed, and so the survey area chosen allowed us to conduct intensive survey in two of these watersheds: the Sulori and the Qvinitsqaro-Phereta watershed. Many of the previous reconstructions of ancient settlement in the region have noted the importance these two rivers played in defining how people lived in the landscape. This survey area would allow us to contextualize the results of the Vani Regional Survey, to test assumptions concerning the relationship between ancient settlement and the regions geography and, most importantly, identify new loci of activity.

Once a survey area had been chosen, we began developing our survey method by first addressing the two main challenges this landscape presented. The first challenge was the region's active geomorphology. The combination of heavy rainfall, modern agricultural practice and the widespread deforestation the region has suffered both recently and in historic times makes the susceptible to heavy erosion.<sup>28</sup> During the Vani Regional Survey, several areas were visited that showed clear signs of collapse, such as to the hill Nashuebi at Mtisdziri and on the northern slopes of Mshvidobisgora near Vani. Erosion bias in surface assemblages is in no way a new problem, but in the area around Vani, erosion can be sudden and violent and result in an almost complete inversion of the local stratigraphy. To account for this, we made careful study of local indicators of collapse, but there was little else we could do to try and correct for any serious erosion might have on our collections.

The second and main obstacle to survey in the region around Vani is the nature and density of modern settlement (Fig. 2.4). Modern settlement affected survey in two related but different ways. The traditional style of habitation in western Georgia is in fenced house compounds. These compounds consist of at least one house, though in some cases compounds

---

<sup>28</sup> Chichinadze and Kvavadze (2013), 238.

might have more than one house to accommodate multiple families. In Georgia, it is customary for the oldest son to live in the family home and for his wife to join him there. If there are multiple sons, the others could be given a portion of land within the compound on which to build their home. These compounds are arranged along roads radiating from village centers throughout the region. Given the size and number of these compounds, the overall result is both a dense and dispersed settlement pattern. The effect of this settlement patterning are dense lines of settlement covering most of the survey area and extending from Vani to Sajavakho in the northwest, Vardtsikhe to the north east and Phereta and beyond to the east (fig 2.4). Areas of the landscape not immediately included in house compounds are never the less fenced, as it is local practice to allow livestock to roam outside of house compounds during the day. High and sturdy fences are thus needed to protect crops from grazing. The combination of the house compounds and fenced fields creates a labyrinth of modern settlement and makes walking transects through the landscape impossible.

In addition to houses and other attendant buildings, house compounds also include agricultural land that is usually given over to viticulture, corn and vegetable gardens. Most of the fields surveyed by our survey come from house-compounds. To gain entry to the compounds and conduct survey, we had to develop a routine that efficiently explained our objectives, allayed any fears owners might have and allowed use to enter a field and leave in a timely fashion. We developed a set of methods I call solicitation survey which proved extremely effective in getting access to fields within house compounds and extracting the entire staff before a supra could be organized for us. A supra, or Georgian banquet, is an integral part of Georgian social practice and is closely tied to Georgian sensibilities about hospitality and the home. Supra's consist of three basic elements, food, alcohol and toasts with all three supplied in excess. Both the guest

and host have their respective duties and obligations. The host is obliged to provide the food and drink and it is the guest's duty to participate for as long as the host desires.<sup>29</sup> As our brand of survey required us to gain entry into people's house-compounds, it became a daily struggle to extricate ourselves before the wine, or worse cha-cha, could be poured. In fact, the avoidance of supras became an essential component of the survey and dictated the start time of survey, how we approached a house-compound, and the questions we would ask of the family living there.

#### IV. SAMPLING METHODOLOGY

To maximize the amount of information we could gather from the survey universe, the EVS utilized both extensive and intensive survey techniques. To better systematize the investigation of our study area, we partitioned the survey universe into a series of 4 km<sup>2</sup> grid squares (Fig. 2.3). Squares were chosen over rectangles as they maximize the area within any grid while minimizing the grids' perimeter. This increases the likelihood that any one grid square contains similar terrain features and allows each grid to be treated more easily as a single unit of analysis. Each grid was assigned a number for ease of identification.

The survey proceeded in two phases. In the first phase, reconnaissance techniques were deployed to gain a better understanding of the landscape using satellite imagery and extensive survey. In the second phase, information gathered from the reconnaissance survey was used to identify areas within the survey universe where intensive survey would be most effective.

---

<sup>29</sup> For more on the social and political significance of the supra see Tuite (2010). Tuite relates a Georgian saying that sums up the relationship between host and guest at a supra: "the guest is the host's donkey; he can hitch him wherever he wants", p. 22.

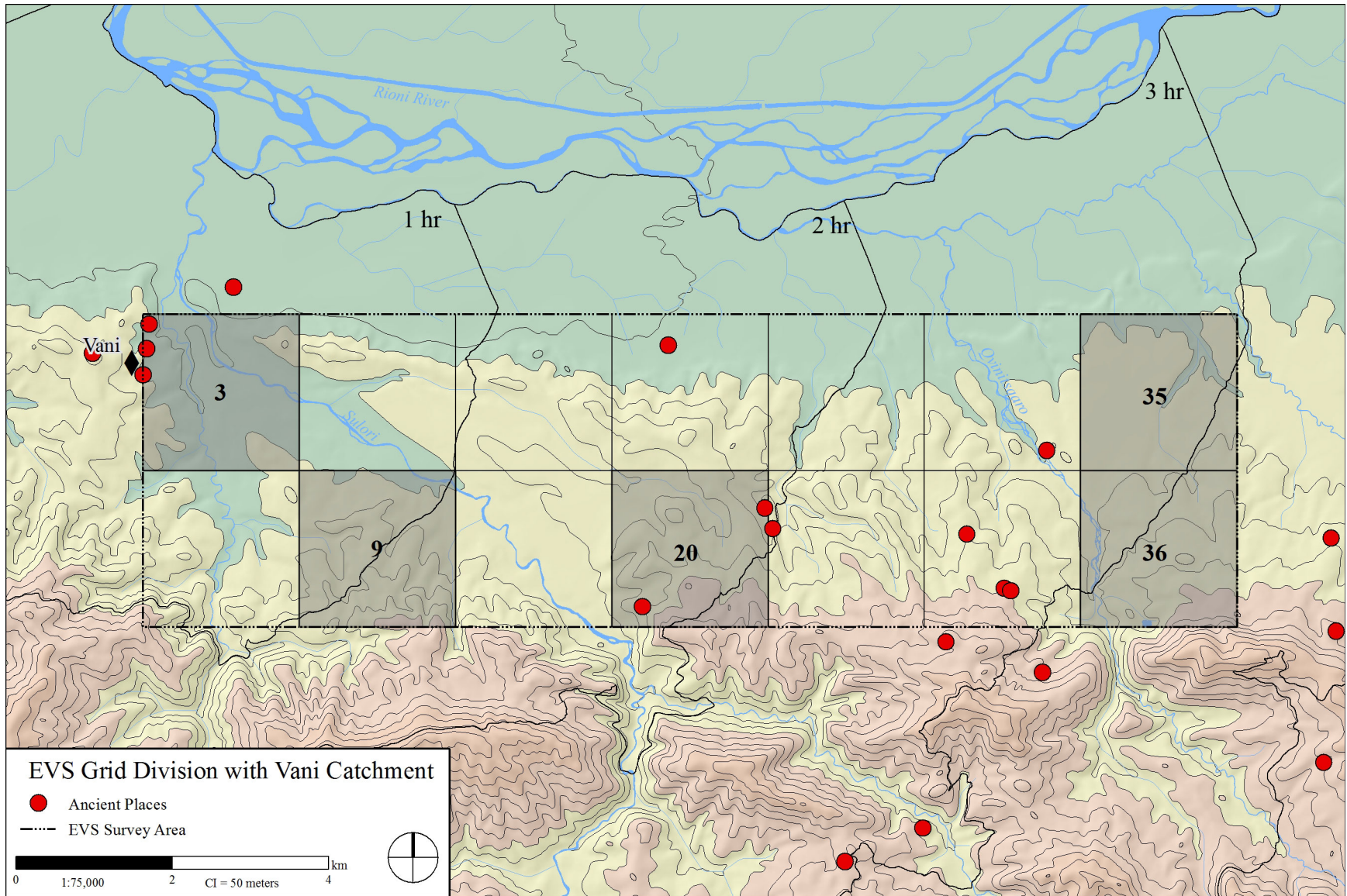


Figure 2.3: EVS survey area and its relationship to the catchment analysis with the grids surveyed intensively labeled.

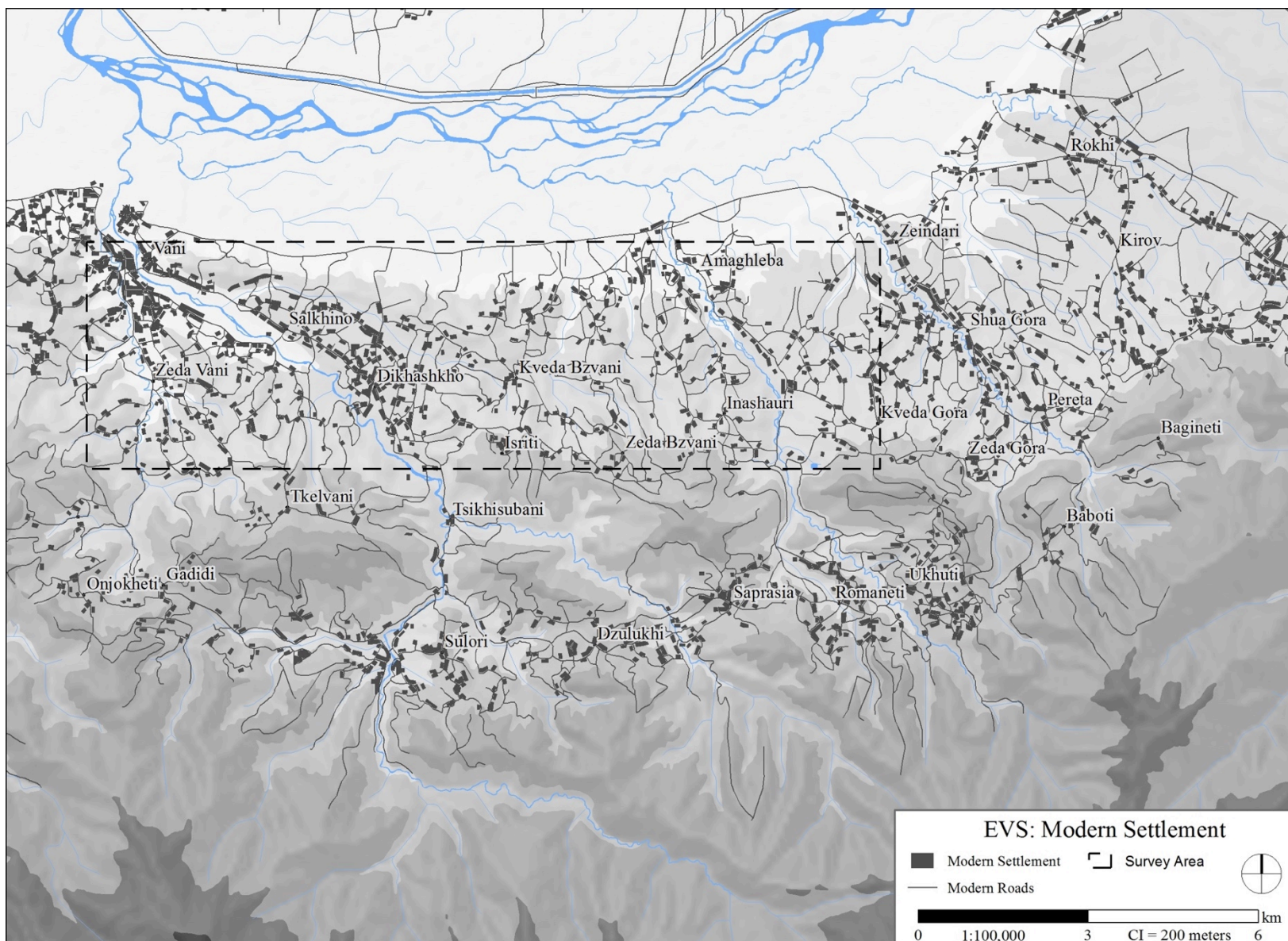


Figure 2.4: View of survey area with modern roads and settlement showing in black.



#### *IV.1. Reconnaissance Survey*

The program of reconnaissance survey consisted of two components: high-resolution satellite image analysis and extensive pedestrian survey. Our analysis of the satellite imagery began with photo-interpretation, feature mapping, and statistical analysis. Our previous work in the region has revealed that certain geographic and historic relationships exist between the features of the modern landscape and those of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. These include the common occurrence of Iron Age pottery fragments near 17<sup>th</sup> century fortifications and modern cemeteries which are often yield 1<sup>st</sup> millennium material. We also used the imagery to map modern roads and settlements to get a better understanding of how the landscape is used today and to provide logistical support once our survey efforts began.

Next, we used the satellite imagery to produce interpolated images that revealed the type and extent of vegetation cover throughout the survey region. As intensive survey works best in areas of high visibility, especially places that have been plowed due to agriculture, areas where the surface is more easily visible will generally yield more material. A novel approach to understanding surface visibility is to use vegetation cover as an indicator of where land is being cultivated and thus of surface visibility. Since we are interested most in areas which are cultivated, identifying places where crops are grown can give us a good indication of how good (or bad) surface visibility will be in any one place within the survey region. Using the image analysis software Earth Resources Data Analysis System (ERDAS) and ArcGIS, the multispectral IKONOS satellite images were analyzed using a series of statistical techniques. A series of new images were produced that revealed the vegetation type and density to be found within the survey area. Although our images represent the state of vegetation cover as it existed in the summer of 2007, these images do indicate where cultivated fields are likely to be found.

Given the relatively unchanging nature of agriculture in the region, areas that were under cultivation a few years ago are likely to be cultivated the same way today. Figure 2.5 shows the techniques applied to one of the 2 km x 2 km grid squares.

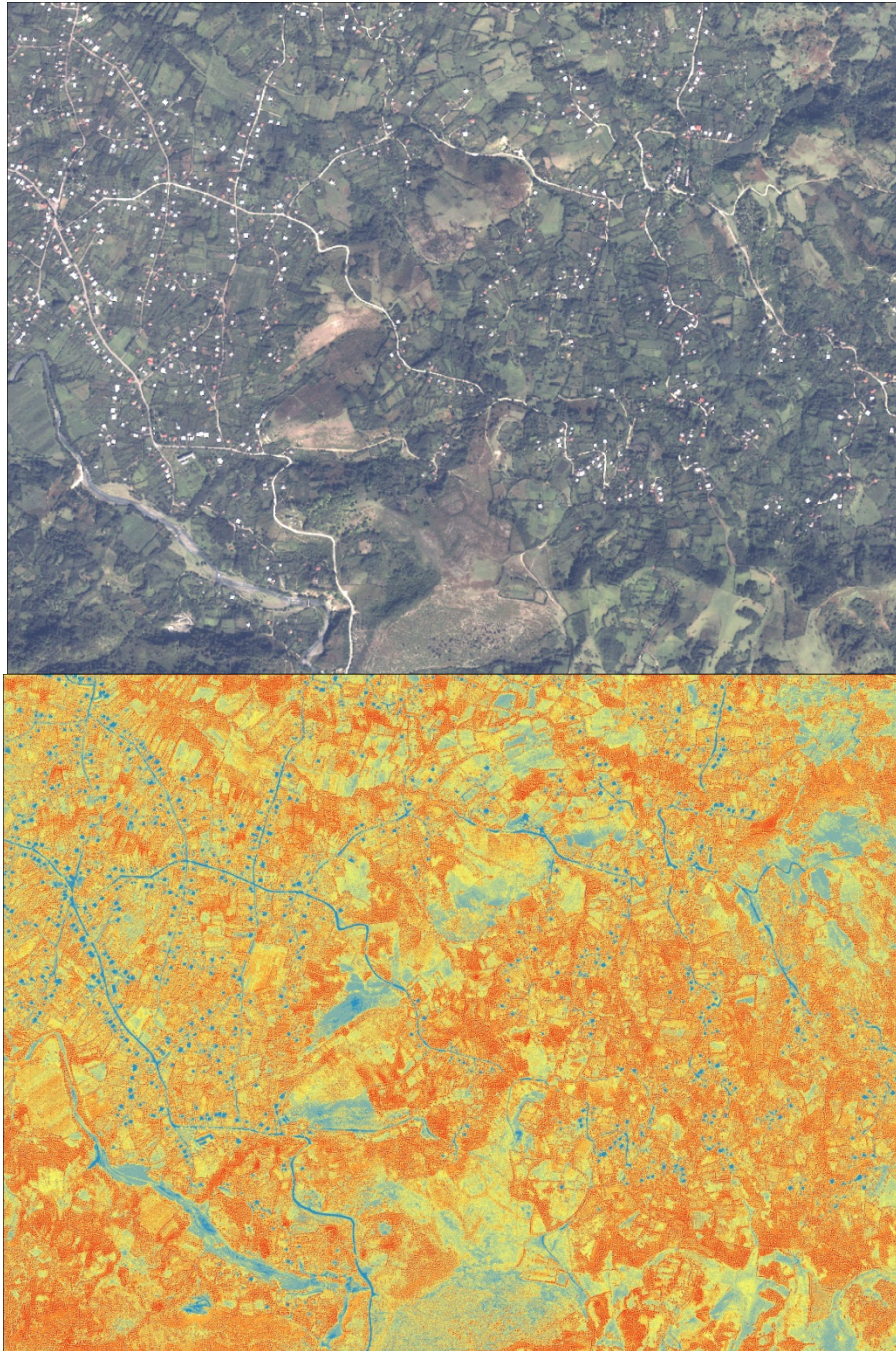


Figure 2.5: IKONOS satellite image of grid 36 resampled using an unsupervised technique in ERDAS. Blue indicates areas of no vegetation and red areas indicate forest. Cultivated areas are shown in the range of orange to yellow.

The image, taken from grid 36, displays groundcover along a spectrum from blue to red. The blue areas indicate rivers, roads, settlements and places of highly compact, bare earth. At the other end of the spectrum, red indicates dense deciduous forests and thickets, areas of green are generally meadows or other open fields and the range from orange to yellow indicates areas where cultivated fields are likely present. Using this technique we identified nine grids (grids 3, 8, 9, 20, 26, 30, 31, 35 and 36) that had the potential to have a large number of cultivated fields and thus would be suitable for intensive survey.

Having selected these nine grids, the reconnaissance survey then moved into the pedestrian survey component. Using a handheld GPS unit we mapped our paths each day and recorded points for features we found along the way. As we moved through the landscape, we solicited advice and information from people living in the area to gather a sense of what is known about the landscape. Sites found during the extensive survey were evaluated based on the description of the informant, the presence or absence of visible surface remains, and the suitability of the location for further investigation. We also gathered information about the agricultural cycle especially information about when plowing and planting would begin. Figure 2.4 shows the paths of the reconnaissance survey. Only a limited program of reconnaissance survey was carried out in 2011 with a more extensive effort carried out in 2012.

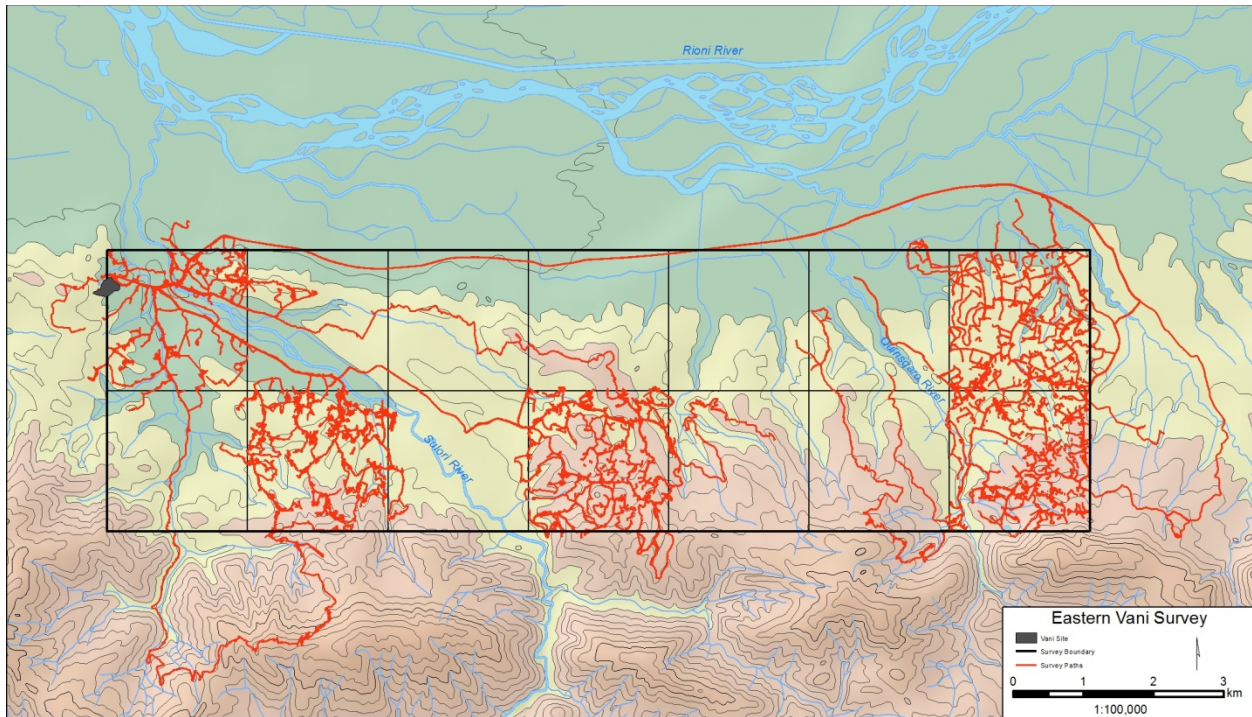


Figure 2.6: Survey area with survey paths marked in red.

Our number one concern with using the satellite data was ensuring that areas chosen for survey had a high likelihood of material being visible on the surface. During the pedestrian survey we evaluated the accuracy of our satellite image interpretation both in terms of our mapping efforts and our visibility analysis. We found that overall the imagery was accurate in identifying areas of cultivation, but was practically useless in helping us identify surface visibility of any one type of cultivated field.

#### *IV.2. Intensive Survey*

Fields suitable for intensive survey were all those which were, or showed signs of having previously been, prepared for cultivation. Georgians recognize two ways in which a field can be worked: *dabaruli* and *mokhnuli*. The predominant difference between the two methods is intensity of the labor required and the tools used. *Dabaruli* comes from the word *dabarva* which means “spade” or “shovel” and is used to describe those fields where a shovel has been used to

aerate, or “turn” the soil. In this method, the farmer begins at one end of the plot and proceeds to insert his shovel into the ground, separate a portion of soil, remove it, and then turn it so that edge of the soil created by the shovel faces upward. Through this process, the top layer of humus is broken up and the soil is aerated and made ready for planting. The EVS measured a sampling of shovels found during field work and arrived at an average shovel head length of 25 cm with no example longer than 30 cm. Thus, dabaruli fields have shallow ploughzones and are less likely to produce material on the surface. Moreover as those who use shovels are more intimately involved in the act of working the soil, any material which is turned up is more likely to be removed from the plot by the farmer. Indeed, on several occasions we found individuals shoveling their fields with a stack of material which they had found nearby. The process of preparing a field this way is extremely labor intensive and is generally only used on relatively small plots, such as small vineyards and kitchen gardens.

*Mokhnuli* best translates as tilled in English and includes the use of both mechanical and animal power in the act of working the soil. Draft animals are used with mouldboard ploughs often made from improvised materials and tractors are fairly commonly used on large fields and those with particularly difficult soil. No one standardized technique of ploughing is used and the plows themselves range considerably in both style and depth. For the most part, however, ploughs penetrate the soil much more deeply and are thus more likely to bring material to the surface. Additionally, the process is altogether less intimate with farmers spending less time examining the soil and thus material is far less likely to be collected. Most tilling, and indeed working of the land in general, however, is done by using a *romperi* (rotary tiller or cultivator) (Fig. 2.7). *Romperebi* (plural of *romperi*) penetrate the soil more deeply than turning with a shovel (*dokhnuli*) but not nearly as deeply as a plough. Moreover, tilling with a rotary tiller

breaks up soil clumps more completely which increases both the fracturing of sherds into smaller fragments and the likelihood the material will be found on the surface. Figure 2.7 shows each of the three methods identified by the survey for field preparation paired with an image of a field treated with that method.



Figure 2.7: Examples of the predominant techniques of ground treatment used in the region and their results.

The actual method of preparation used on any one field was the result of a number of factors including availability of equipment, type of crop(s) to be planted and the industriousness of the farmers themselves. Multi-cropping predominates in the region and takes one of two forms: either fields are grown with some combination of corn, squash and beans; or fields primarily used for vineyards, orchards or hazelnuts are also planted with other crops, with corn being the primary choice.

Type	Area m <sup>2</sup>	Percentage
Corn	1,179,485.89	49%
Vineyard	356,049.22	15%
Vineyard/Corn	295,977.72	12%
Unknown	192,851.52	8%
Fallow	173,816.85	7%

Tkhili	77,857.07	3%
Tkhili/Corn	76,508.74	3%
Vegetable	62,988.52	3%

Table 2.2: Percentage of intensively surveyed area in meters squared covered by particular crops.

The most common combination to be found is the planting of corn in the rows between vineyards. In fact, corn is by far the primary cultivar in the region (table 2.2). In addition to the 49% of surveyed land covered exclusively with corn, another 12% was poly-cropping with corn as the secondary crop. The unknown fields were those fields that were surveyed either before they were planted or before plants sprouted. In almost all cases, these fields were likely planted with corn. For poly-cropping where vineyards, orchards and hazelnuts are involved, shovels or romperi are used with mechanized tilling being the preferred method where space allows and the equipment is available. For fields that do not include extensive crops, mechanical plowing is the preferred method. As a result, large fields prepared for corn cultivation were more likely to produce material than any other type of field, much of this owing to the increased visibility offered by deeper plowing and the decreased chance farmers would locate and remove sherds during field preparation.

Using the data gathered from the reconnaissance survey, coupled with our previous knowledge of the area and guided by our research questions, five 4 km<sup>2</sup> grid squares were selected for intensive survey: grids 3, 9, 20, 35 and 36 (Fig. 2.3). Grid 3 encompassed most of the modern village of Vani and Mshvidobisgora Gora, a hill lying on the eastern side of the Sulori and near the area known as Saqanchia. This grid was chosen to get a better understanding of activity directly outside of Vani as well as to investigate activity across the river. Grid 9 is located to the southeast of grid 3 and encompasses the portion of the modern village of Salkhino located on the western bank of the Sulori. This grid was chosen to evaluate the extent of activity occurring to the east of Vani but to the west of the Sulori. Grid 20 is organized around the village

of Kveda Bzvani. This grid was chosen as it has the same basic geographic and geomorphological position as Grid 9, but is situated on the eastern side of the Sulori. More importantly, this grid contains four previously identified sites allowing us to contextualize the previous research efforts within the intensive survey. Grid 35 and 36 are situated along the banks for the Qvinitsqaro River, the next major river to the east of Vani after the Sulori. Grid 35 occupies an alluvial fan created by the river and was the only grid chosen which occupied the valley of the Rioni River. By surveying Grid 35 and 36 in tandem, we created a large transect extending from the edge of the Rioni plain into the foothills and we could see how elevation and distance from the plain affected activity.

Each day we would enter the survey grid and begin by approaching the first accessible house-compound. If it had a plowed or turned plot, we would request access and survey the field. Each field surveyed was mapped and given a unique identifier that included the grid number and the field number (chosen by going in numerical order). For every field, field preparation (plowed, turned, tilled) would be recorded as would surface visibility (high, medium, low, very low), the type of crop (or crops) being grown, the individuals doing the survey and the date and time were recorded. Any material that was collected would be bagged and tagged and a photograph would be taken of the field and the field surface. We would then exit the property and move on to the next plot of land or house and continue until every agricultural field we could access was surveyed.

Within the intensive survey, four categories of observed visibility were used: high, moderate, low and very low. A field's observed visibility was a rough measure of the likelihood surface material would be seen by field walkers based on the type of crops planted, and the state of vegetal growth at the time inspection of the field was conducted. A score was assigned by



assessing what percentage of the surface was visible. More than 75% received a high visibility score, between 50-75% was labeled moderate, 25%-50% was low and anything below 25% was considered very low visibility. Field preparation was recorded separately as it was not immediately clear in the field how field preparation might affect overall visibility. Figure 2.8 shows representative examples of each of the four visibility classes.



Figure 2.8: Examples of each of the four visibility classes.

Each field's visibility was defined based on the conditions on the day of survey. Photographs were taken showing both the view a field walker would have upon beginning their first pass and of the surface of the field itself. When fields exhibited variable visibility, the differing sections were separated and treated as two different survey units.

In those areas of the survey grid that were not plowed, and that were accessible, we carried out a program of extensive survey whereby we examined these areas at variable intensity focusing on features that might reveal material (surface cuts, eroded scarps, hill tops). Between fields and during the extensive portion of the survey, we set our GPS units to take continuous points to record our path. If we found material or features outside of plowed fields, we marked it as a find spot in the GPS and recorded the type of find, the date and time as well as any notes about its discovery. Find spots of the EVS are show in figure 2.10.

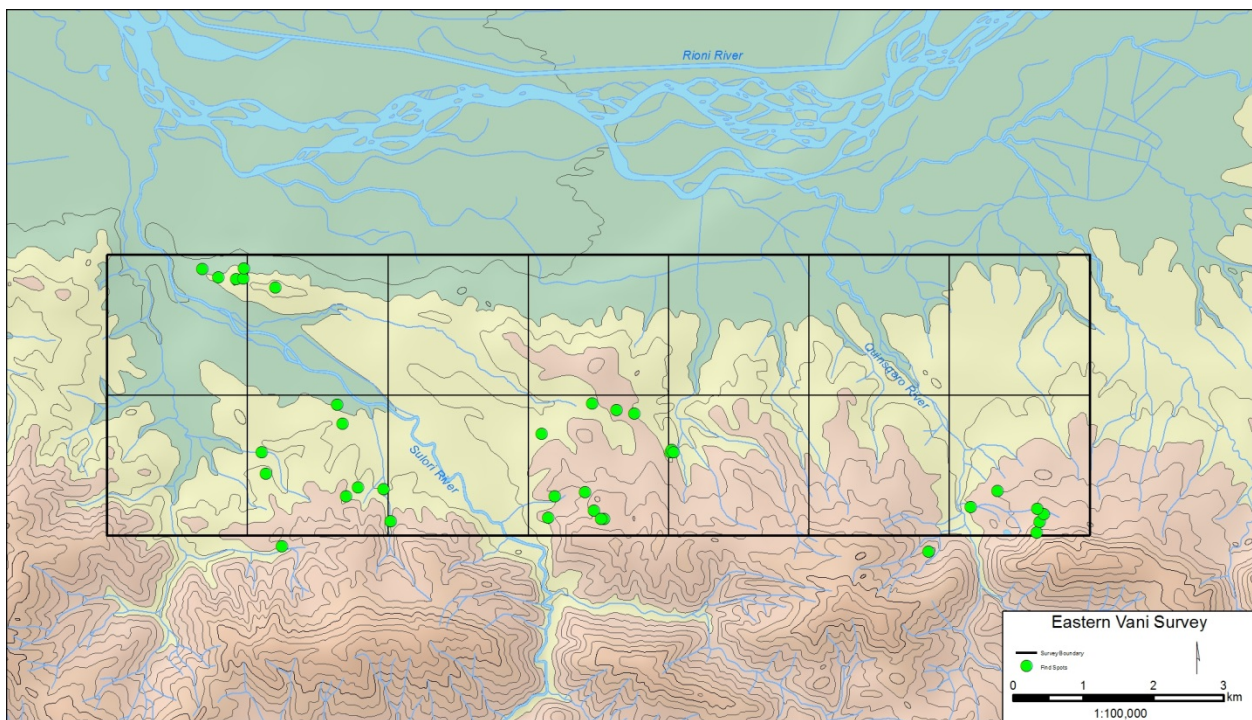


Figure 2.9: Find spots identified by the EVS during extensive survey.

Throughout the project, survey team size fluctuated from as few as two to as many as fourteen. A method was adopted that allowed fields to be surveyed uniformly regardless of the number of individuals on hand on any one day. Field walkers would position themselves at one end of the field one arm's length apart. Field walkers would then walk in a straight line collecting all material they encountered. When they reached the end of the field, they would

reposition themselves farther down the field, maintaining the arm's length apart, and would then repeat the collection in the opposite direction. This continued until the entirety of the field had been surveyed. Fields were relatively small and those that were overly large (greater than 100 x 100 m) were divided into smaller portions. As the survey was not collecting great numbers of pottery, absolute counts of sherds and density numbers were the most important component. As a result, field size to number of sherds collected was less of an indicator of activity than was total number of sherds and their location to other scatters.

In 2011, survey work was carried out in three 4km<sup>2</sup> grid squares: grids 3, 9 and 20. Grid 3 encompassed most of the modern village of Vani and Mshvidobis Gora, a hill lying on the eastern side of the Sulori and near the area known as Saqanchia. This grid was chosen to get a better understanding of activity directly outside of Vani as well as to investigate activity across the river from the site. Grid 9 is located to the southeast of grid 3 and encompasses the portion of the modern village of Salkhino located on the western bank of the Sulori. Grid 20 is organized around the village of Kveda Bzvani. This grid was chosen as it has the same basic geographic and geomorphological position as Grid 9, but is situated on the eastern side of the Sulori.

During the 2012 season, we completed work in grid 20 and added grids 35 and 36, which were both located along the eastern bank of another tributary of the Phasis, the Quinssqaro, and had very few known sites in them. Grid 36 lies immediately south of grid 35, and we thought the resultant distribution map might allow us to identify a transition in distributions as we surveyed south from the Rioni valley into the higher elevations of the southern foothills.

## V.SURVEY BY THE NUMBERS

In total, the EVS surveyed 2375 field plots, covering a total area of 2.3 km<sup>2</sup> through intensive survey, which is 12% of the surveyed squares and 5% of the total survey universe. To quantify the extensive survey, the paths we mapped each day were used, and assuming that 2.5 meters were visible on each side of these paths, we applied a five-meter buffer to each unique, non-redundant survey path. Through this method it was calculated that another 7% of the surveyed grids were covered extensively, or 2% of the entire survey universe. If we add the two types of survey together the total area examined by the EVS within the grid squares increases to 3.7 km<sup>2</sup> or 18% of the surveyed grids. There are a number of factors that affected how much could be intensively surveyed in each grid, including the nature of modern settlement, especially in grid 3 which is dominated by Vani's urban footprint, the willingness of homeowners to let us survey (difficult in Grid 3), and the physical terrain of the grid (both grid 9 and 20 were dominated by ravines and steep hills). Interestingly, the area extensively surveyed in each grid was essentially the same. There appears to be a consistency throughout the region in the density and distribution of modern settlement and roads.

Grid	Intensive		Extensive		TOTAL SURVEYED	
	Field Area	% of Grid	Path Area	% of Grid	Total Area	% of Grid
3	135,712	3%	228,879	6%	364,591	9%
9	164,529	4%	243,230	6%	407,759	10%
20	277,449	7%	278,166	7%	555,615	14%
35	941,300	24%	328,983	8%	1,270,283	32%
36	821,178	21%	249,134	6%	1,070,311	27%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,340,167</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>1,328,391</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>3,668,559</b>	<b>18%</b>

Table 2.3: Area of each grid surveyed divided into intensive and extensive methods.

Table 2.3 shows total number of fragments and the weight of daub collected through each type of survey. Intensive survey yielded more pottery fragments and more burnt daub was

collected through the extensive survey. The vast majority of the burnt daub recovered extensively comes from a single location, Mshvidobisgora (E004). This breakdown shows that intensive survey is effective in finding material that would otherwise go unnoticed if only extensive survey were practiced.

Type	# of Fragments	Weight of Burnt Daub (kg)
Intensive	7939	4.5
Extensive	338	55.71

Table 2.4: Quantity of material collected by type of survey.

Visibility played an important role in ceramic recovery, and as expected, there was a correlation between visibility and the amount of material recovered with a majority of collected material coming from high visibility fields, followed by moderate, low and very low visibility respectively. When we looked at fragments per square meter surveyed, however, we found nearly the inverse relationship. Although only 16% of fields were classified as low visibility, they accounted for approximately 24% of material recovered (Fig. 2.11).<sup>30</sup> This discrepancy is the result of our survey work in Grid 35. Very little ceramic material was recovered from Grid 35, and none of what was collected could be dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. By removing Grid 35 from the calculations of fragment per meter squared, the relationship between material recovered and surface visibility for the other grids speaks more closely to our expectations (Fig. 2.12).

Visibility	Surveyed	Turned	Plowed	Fallow	Fragments	Daub	Frag/m2
High	1,372,234	549,891	817,305	5,038	3436	36	0.0025
Moderate	450,691	347,753	68,849	34,089	1994	17	0.0044
Low	461,120	194,761	268,468	179,257	1904	30	0.0041
Very Low	127,999	71,738	18,884	37,377	506	1	0.0040
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,412,044</b>	<b>1742</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>7840</b>	<b>84</b>	

Table 2.5: Area intensively surveyed in m<sup>2</sup> divided by visibility and field preparation.

<sup>30</sup> Fields n=398; Ceramics n=1904.

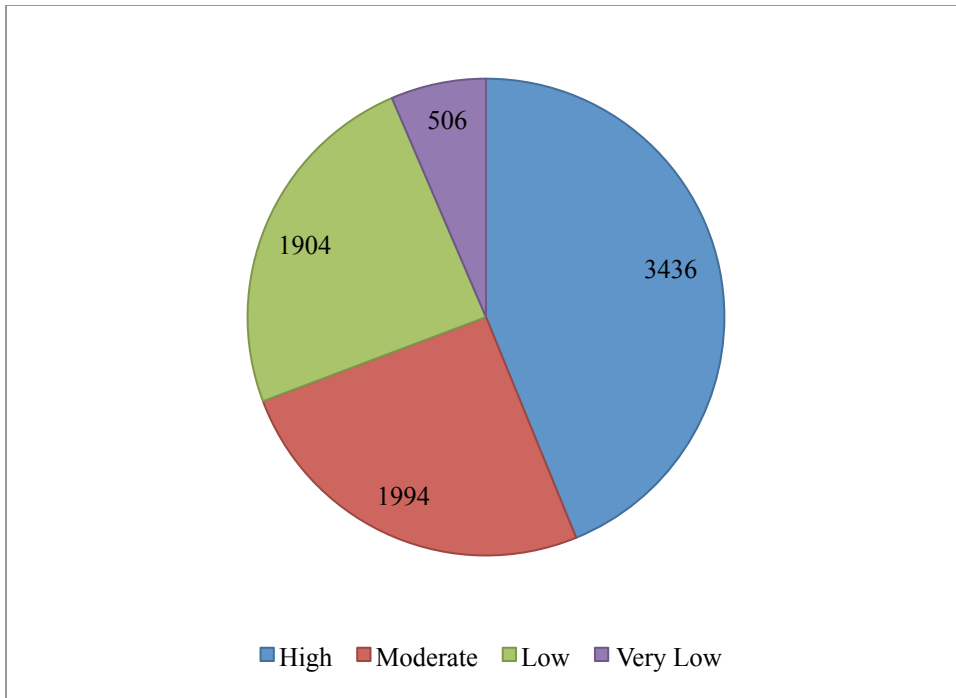


Figure 2.10: Total fragments recovered grouped by visibility.

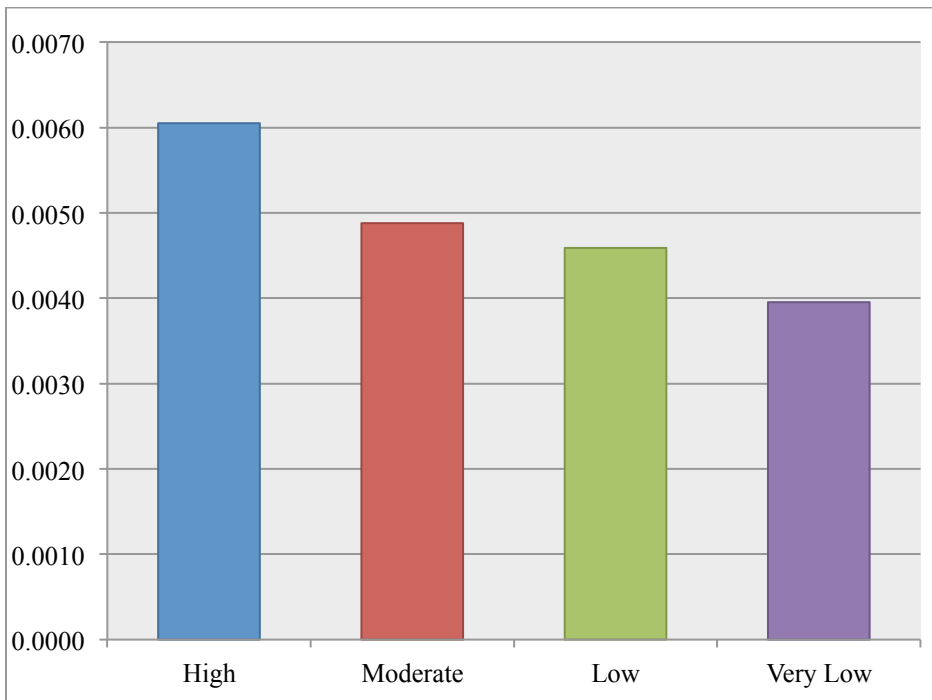


Figure 2.11: Fragments per square meter surveyed grouped by visibility with grid 35 removed. (High = 0.0061 frag/m<sup>2</sup>; Moderate = 0.0049 frag/m<sup>2</sup>; Low = 0.0046 frag/m<sup>2</sup> and Very Low = 0.0040 frag/m<sup>2</sup>)

The type of crops being grown, and the related method by which fields were prepared for planting and maintained over the growing season, had an even more important role in ceramic recovery. Most of the fields surveyed had been treated either through the use of shovel turning or by means of a rototiller (n=1742). There were fields that were deeply plowed, but they only accounted for 18% of all surveyed fields (n=418). The remaining fields were at different stages of fallow, either having been plowed or tilled the previous year or in the midst of a longer period of fallow (n=216).

The movement of the landscape posed a significant challenge to the survey, both in locating material on the surface and in reconstructing the formation processes that led to its discovery. No attempt was made to model the erosional forces, but a quick break down of the slopes and number of fragments recovered from them shows that, as expected, the steeper the field the less likely material would be collected from it. Those fields with relatively flat slopes are usually collecting points for material that has eroded downhill over time. The survey took note of this and considered the material not just in terms of where it was found but also in terms of its proximity to high points in the landscape.

<b>Slope</b>	<b>Area (m2)</b>	<b>Collections Made</b>	<b># Fragments</b>
10%	1,229,525	220	1785
15%	718,100	351	3683
20%	345,657	108	1587
25%	59,235	27	435
30%	25,696	7	81
35%	16,372	9	87
40%	2,551	0	0
45%	4,304	4	99
55%	1,487	0	0
60%	2,140	1	66

Table 2.6: Fields organized by percent slope. The number of fields that had collections and the number of fragments collected are also reported here.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

The methods developed and deployed by the EVS were successful in producing surface collections that contained material of the periods under consideration in this dissertation. More importantly, the intensity of the EVS allowed us to see a scale of surface material and thus a scale landscape use invisible to extensive techniques. The patterns of activity apparent in the material will be presented in Chapter 4, but it is important here to say that evidence points to a dispersed pattern of landscape use with areas of particularly intensive activity. Although the combination of both extensive and intensive survey was necessary to ensure each survey grid was sufficiently surveyed, intensive survey was by far the most productive, though not the most efficient. Intensive, field-by-field survey is a largely new phenomenon in West Georgia, and the material recovered by the EVS has no ready comparison outside the region of Vani itself. The solicitation survey method used by the EVS would certainly prove useful in other areas of West Georgia. In the next chapter, the ceramic material recovered by the EVS and VRS will be presented and contextualized through the presentation of the current state of scholarship on the ceramics of Western Georgia, with particular focus on the materials excavated from Vani and sites in the region.



## Chapter 3 - Colchian Chronology and the Ceramic Material of the Vani Region

### I. INTRODUCTION

Ceramics are the primary material recovered by the Eastern Vani Survey and they are essential means by which we can come to understand the location and chronology of activity in the survey-region. This is particularly true of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE, when the predominance of wooden structures and the general modesty of burial architecture render almost all archaeological features of this period invisible on the surface.<sup>1</sup> This chapter presents the ceramic material recovered from the region around Vani by both the Eastern Vani Survey and its parent project, the Vani Regional Survey, with special attention paid to diagnostic fragments and their use in establishing site periodization and the overall chronology of activity in the environs of Vani.

The difficult conditions of our survey-region limited both the quantity and quality of the ceramic material visible on the surface. At sites where previous work had been done and phases of occupation worked-out, our survey efforts failed to recover fragments from all the known periods of occupation, and in some cases failed to identify any ancient fragments at all. As a result, our survey collections alone were insufficient to reconstruct the totality of landscape history of the survey-region. The ceramic evidence collected by the project, however, has been

---

The following short titles are used in this chapter:

AiG = O. Lordkipanidze (1991a), *Archäologie in Georgien von der Altsteinzeit zum Mittelalter* Weinheim.

Vani V = O. Lordkipanidze (1981). *Vani V. Arkeologiuri gathkrebi*, Tbilisi.

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of surface remains in Georgia see Kvirkvelia (1990a) and Kharabadze (2008).

used to understand changing patterns of ceramic use and how this might reflect on social, economic and political development in the region. To fill in the gaps in our knowledge, we rely on previous research on the survey-region as well as comparisons to other sites in western Georgia where material similar to that collected by our projects has been found.

The presentation of the ceramics that follows relies heavily on previous treatments of the ceramics from Vani and western Georgia and focuses particularly on those periods represented by fragments recovered by our projects, that is from the Late Bronze Age/Iron Age transition through to the Late Roman/Early Mediaeval periods. The chapter begins with a description of the fabrics, forms and decorative elements that are diagnostic for each of the periods represented in the project's collections along with a discussion of the types of archaeological material indicative of those periods. Following this is an outline of the methods of collection used by our survey projects and a presentation of the nature and quantities of material recovered by our surface survey. This chapter represents the first detailed English language treatment of the ceramic material from Vani and its region. For the periods attested at Vani, that is the 8<sup>th</sup> – 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE, Vani is one of only a handful of places in Georgia where excavations have produced significant quantities of pottery from well published stratigraphic contexts. By presenting our knowledge of ceramics in tandem with the actual collections of the VRS and EVS projects, this chapter enriches our understanding of ceramic use at and around a site that is essential for our dating of ceramics of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE.

Locally produced vessels make up the vast majority of material recovered by the project, and the classification of particularly diagnostic forms, fabrics and decorative schemes is well established. The dating of ceramic phases relies heavily on the use of imported ceramics, particularly Greek imports of the Classical period as well as Classical and Hellenistic material

from Sinop. For the early phases of the region, particularly the Early and Late Bronze Age, metal objects of bronze and iron have been closely studied and used as chronological markers. The material recovered by the project, combined with previous research and excavations in the survey-region, is enough to reconstruct the basic patterns of ceramic use in the environs of Vani in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. The picture that emerges from the ceramic evidence is that ceramics were used in limited quantities and in a select number of contexts. Beginning sometime between 1200 and 1000 BCE, ceramics begin to be used in a greater array of shapes and are found in a wider variety of contexts. This trend continues until sometime in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE when ceramic innovation, and perhaps production, cease in the region for a few centuries, until a new trajectory of development begins in the Early Mediaeval period.

## II. CERAMICS OF VANI AND WESTERN GEORGIA

Traditionally, two chronological schemes have been used to divide the ancient ceramic material from western Georgia. The first divides the Bronze and Iron Ages into Proto-Colchian (27<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> century BCE) and Ancient Colchian (17<sup>th</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> century BCE) cultural phases based on the identification of two distinct yet evolutionarily related cultural complexes. Each of these phases is further divided into sub-phases to account for the apparent developmental stages of each cultural phase. The second scheme adopts the broadly used terminology of western scholarship and places the local developments of Colchis within it. Each of these schemes has its benefits, and though the western terminology provides the framework for the presentation of the pottery that follows, both schemes are used here to explain the periodization and development of Colchian pottery.

The ancient ceramic materials from the survey-region as traditionally reported belong to six chronological periods: Early Bronze Age (mid 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE), Late Bronze Age (13<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> century BCE), Early Iron Age (10<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE), Iron Age (7<sup>th</sup> – mid 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE), Hellenistic (mid 4<sup>th</sup> – mid 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE), and Roman (mid 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE – 4<sup>th</sup> century CE).<sup>2</sup> Additionally, fragments from the Early Medieval (5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries CE) through the modern period were recovered by the project.

The specific chronology adopted here was developed by Joni Apakidze based on evidence recovered from settlement sites in the Colchian plain located near the modern Georgian-Abkhazian border.<sup>3</sup> Apakidze focuses on three sites in particular (Anaklia, Nosiri and Pichori) that contained stratigraphic layers incorporating material from the Proto-Colchian to the early Ancient Colchian. Each of the three sites revealed stratigraphic layers interpreted by their excavators as transition layers between the Proto-Colchian and Colchian periods based on the presence of ceramics of both periods.<sup>4</sup> More importantly, at all three sites radiocarbon dates were taken and at Pichori thermoluminescence was also done.<sup>5</sup> The radiocarbon dates place the transition to the Ancient Colchian period at between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century and radiocarbon dates from other sites in southwest Abkhazia and northwest Georgia seem to support this date.<sup>6</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> The dates given are the generally accepted ranges, see *AiG* p. 20-145. For a further discussion of the phasing of west Georgian archaeology see chapter 2. Ceramics from the Early Bronze Age have only been recovered at the settlement site of Dablagomi. The Eastern Vani Survey subsequently discovered fragments likely belonging to the Middle Bronze Age.

<sup>3</sup> Apakidze (2008); This work comes out of the International Workshop on Archaeological Ceramics in the Southern Caucasus and Adjacent Areas held at Columbia University in 2003 and organized by Karen Rubinson and Anthony Sargona.

<sup>4</sup> For Nosiri: Gogadze (1982), 51-56; For Anaklia: Kuftin (1950), 248-251, Mikeladze (1990), 21, Jibladze (1997), 98; For Pichori: Baramidze et al. (1991), Baramidze et al. (1995), Baramidze et al. (1997), Jibladze (1997), 52, and Baramidze (1998), 4 and 46.

<sup>5</sup> Kavtaradze (1983), 129, 141 and 151; Apakidze and Burchuladze (1987), 24-25, 35 and 37.

<sup>6</sup> Radiocarbon dates have also been taken from Anaklia, Nosiri, Namcheduri, and Chaladidis Zurga. Kavtaradze (1983), 129, 141, 151; Apakidze and Burchuladze (1987), 24-25.

Apakidze's approach is preferable as it relies primarily on material recovered from mounded settlement sites that define the archaeology of the period, but he does draw on supporting evidence from burial mounds which characterize the Middle and Late Bronze Age contexts.

Apakidze retains the traditional division of the Bronze Age into Proto-Colchian (PC) datable from 2500 to 1700 BCE and Ancient Colchian (AC) coming after 1700 BCE, with each period further divided into two additional phases (PCI and II; ACI and II).<sup>7</sup> Outside of a single fragment of Kura-Araxes pottery, the earliest fragments of pottery recovered from Vani's immediate environs come from Dablagomi and are datable to the 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE, which corresponds to the later phases of the Ancient Colchian period.<sup>8</sup> As a result, the following discussion will focus primarily on the features of these later phases with only brief mention of aspects of earlier assemblages where appropriate.

### III. LOCAL WARES

Five local ware categories from the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE were identified by the project based on fabric, form and perceived function. The material from the Bronze Age as well as the later Medieval and Modern periods have been excluded from this discussion of ware because they were not studied by the project in any great detail. The fabrics of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE found in the region are universally micaceous with black and opaque white inclusions predominating. In many of the wares there is inconsistency in the color of vessels, with some whole examples having mottled surfaces and individual fragments displaying considerable variation in the color of the biscuit. There is a great deal of conservatism in the ceramic material

---

<sup>7</sup> For the traditional dating see Mikeladze (1974), 49-57 and (1990), 19-22, 33-39 tab. 37.

<sup>8</sup> These fragments are published in Tolordova (1976a); Tolordava (1977a).

with local fabrics staying static even as new vessel forms and production techniques are introduced.

*Common Wares:* Common wares are a broad category that includes all undecorated, utilitarian vessel forms produced in the local micaceous fabrics. These fabrics range in color from reddish-brown, gray to black with black and opaque white mica inclusions. The fabrics of these wares remain consistent throughout the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE and, in the absence of additional diagnostic features, they cannot be specifically placed in any one period. Examples of these wares from excavated contexts, such as at Saqanchia, have generally been identified as kitchen and table wares used in the preparation and consumption of food. Likely the fragments recovered by the survey were also used in this capacity, but no evidence of ancient burning has been discerned on any of the fragments we examined.

*Fine Wares:* Like common wares, fine wares are a broad category that includes all decorated and specialty vessel forms produced in the survey-region. On average, the coarseness of fine ware vessels is less than common wares, but there was too much variation in our samples to make definitive categories from coarseness alone. For the purposes of dating, there are two subcategories of fine wares that are of particular interest to the survey: burnished wares and fluted wares.

*Burnished Ware:* Indicative of the Late Bronze Age-Early Iron Age transition from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE and persisting into the Hellenistic period, burnished ware is found in the full range of shapes at sites throughout western Georgia. Though the amount of burnishing can vary, the most commonly found examples have vertical burnished lines extending from the neck to the base with horizontally arranged lines often found on the neck and rim. The ware appears to be a further development of the polished wares common in the earlier phases of the

Bronze Age. This ware comes in rather fine, micaceous fabrics with black and opaque white mica inclusions. Surface color varies from weak red (Munsell 10R 5/4) to gray (Munsell 5YR 6/1) and black (Munsell 5YR 3/1 – 2.5/1) with vessels either being more or less consistently one color, especially black and gray vessels, or exhibiting a mottling of several colors. Whether intentional or not, this variation in surface is the result of variability and inconsistency in kiln temperatures.

*“Channeled” and Fluted Wares:* Channeled wares (in Georgian *kanaluri* meaning “channel”) consist of fine ware vessels with vertical grooves impressed then fired, and they first appear at Vani during the 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. As fine wares, they appear in the same fabric types and in a range of vessel forms as the other fine ware pottery. These wares appear to be a further development of the designs of the burnished wares with the channeling replacing burnishing on many vessel forms. Fluted wares are an intensification of channeled wares where the vertical lines are much more deeply impressed and become popular in the Classical and Hellenistic periods.

*Storage Ware:* Though functionally a type of common ware, storage wares have a distinctive fabric and surface treatment that indicates a different technique of production from other common wares. Storage wares first appear in the mid 7<sup>th</sup> and extend into at least the 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE. The fabric is micaceous and extremely coarse with substantial walls that thicken over time. Exteriors are universally dark grey to black (Munsell 7.5YR 3/1 - 2.5/1) while the biscuit is orange to pinkish-red and the interiors are orange to brown. The storage wares of the Hellenistic are thicker and harder than the earlier Classical period examples, but maintain the same fabric type. The vessels made from this fabric have been interpreted as storage vessels for agricultural products, particularly the fermentation of wine. We also know that these vessels

were used as burial containers, though it is unclear if the vessels would have been specifically made for this purpose or re-used after first functioning as agricultural storage.

#### IV. CHRONOLOGY

The chronological sequencing of the pottery that follows is divided into those periods attested by the material recovered by the Vani Regional Survey. For reference, figure 3.1 shows the regional chronologies and how they relate to Colchian, regional and extra-regional chronological sequences. The sequences for Vani's region are numbered as they have no specific designation different from the traditional chronologies.

##### *IV.1. First Millennium BCE*

The majority of the pre-medieval, locally produced material recovered by both the Vani Regional Survey and the Eastern Vani Survey can be dated no more precisely than the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE.<sup>9</sup> The primary reason for this is an overall conservatism in ceramic production with most common wares being produced in the same shapes and in the same micaceous grey or brown fabric, as evidenced by a number of excavated contexts of different periods at Vani. Phasing of ceramic production in and around Vani relies heavily on the presence of imported wares, which are used to categorize and date clear changes in the decoration and form of local wares. When imported wares are absent, or in the case of survey unable to be contextually linked with local wares, or when decoration and form are not recoverable from a fragment, it is impossible to date more precisely than the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. Add to this the fact that most of the fragments recovered through survey are non-descript body sherds or heavily damaged by

---

<sup>9</sup> Of the 1,325 pre-mediaeval fragments collected by the Eastern Vani Survey, 739 (55.8%) can be dated no more precisely than the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. In the gridded site collections of the VRS, better than 90% of the material was datable only to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE (n=6,812 fragments).



post-depositional processes, and it becomes clear that recovering diagnostic fragments in an already artifact-poor environment is difficult.

Ceramic vessels, however, are not the only material that can only be broadly dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. Although ceramic vessels account for the vast majority of material recovered by the EVS project, some architectural remains have been recovered by the survey. The most common architectural material is burnt daub, residue of wattle-and-daub structures, which at some point succumbed to fire. Within the context of the archaeology around Vani, these daub fragments are broadly dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. This dating relies exclusively on the dating of known contexts in the region. Wattle-and-daub construction has a long history in the Trans-caucasus, dating back to at least the 6<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE and continuing in mountainous regions into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup> In addition to wattle-and-daub constructions, Vitruvius (2.1.4) reports that as part of the construction of their timber frame towers, Colchians used wood chips (*schidia*) and mud (*lutum*) to fill the gaps between logs. The roofs of these towers would likewise be finished with mud but this time mixed with leafy branches (*frons*). Though generally associated with the tower builders of the Black Sea Coast, particularly the *Mossynoikoi* people, these towers with their signature *darbazi* roofing technique have been associated with a number of structures excavated at sites throughout western Georgia.<sup>11</sup> Such quadrangular wooden buildings with stone foundations have been reconstructed at Vani and sites in its region including at Mtisdziri, Datishidze Hill at Kutaisi and Vartsikhe.<sup>12</sup> If indeed Vitruvius' account is accurate and small pieces of wood were used to provide structure to mud packing, identifying the particular structures associated with the daub recovered from the region

---

<sup>10</sup> Sagona (1993).

<sup>11</sup> See Lezhava (1971); Kipiani and Amashukeli (1995); Sumbadze (1960) and Gagoshidze (1974).

<sup>12</sup> Gamkrelidze (1996), 28-30.

is problematic, as both small wattle-and-daub dwellings and *darbazi* “towers” might produce the very similar fragments of burnt daub. In the context of our project, these fragments of burnt daub have not been used for dating purposes, but they have, when found in the context of material of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE, been used as the primary indicator of potential settlement in the region.

As traditional chronologies rely so heavily on imported wares, the chronological limits of the ceramic material identified here as being from the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE are uncertain. It could be that some of this material should be dated earlier and/or later than the dates provided by both the local and imported diagnostic fragments. But as these diagnostic fragments are so far the only means of dating activity in the region, current ideas about the dates of the earliest and latest occupations of the region cannot be substantively disrupted. Instead, the recovered material can only give evidence to the location and extent of ancient activity within the traditional chronological framework.<sup>13</sup>

#### *IV.2. Bronze Age (27<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE)*

Though very few ceramics of the Bronze Age were recovered by the project, there are sites within the survey-region that have yielded ceramics from the Early and Late Bronze Age. Moreover, unlike the Mediterranean and the Near East, the transition from the Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age in the Caucasus is defined by continuity and not disruption.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the ceramics of later periods are very much related to the material recovered from the Bronze Age as many forms continue well into the Hellenistic period.

---

<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, it was not within the scope of the current project to address the problems of ceramic chronology through the material recovered by the survey. Future work will seek to apply techniques to source the clay used for production and, if possible, refine our understanding of local ceramic production with dates acquired independently from imported wares.

<sup>14</sup> Smith (2005), 265.

Despite the intensity of excavation at the site, no pottery earlier than the AC IIB phase has been found at Vani, and only one site in the immediate environs of Vani had pottery that could be securely dated to the AC IIA phase, the settlement on the hill called Natsikhvari at Dablagomi Dablagomi.<sup>15</sup> To this the EVS has added a second site to the east of Vani, Kveda Gora. Only one rim fragment from this site can be dated to the Middle Bronze Age or the AC I (Fig. 3.2), with an additional three body fragments also possibly dating to this period. The rim fragment is from an open form (likely a jar or pot) and features an out-turned lip and a pyramidal applique split vertically in the center. The paste is pinkish-grey with the non-uniform composition of small white and black inclusions indicative of Bronze Age ceramics from western Georgia. Other than the application of decoration at the rim, no surface treatment was detected. Similar vessels have been found at Pichori, Tamishi, Namcheduri, Nosiri and Nakhvamu.<sup>16</sup> Each of the three body fragments has a similar paste to the rim fragment but little else can be said. All four fragments were recovered near the cemetery at Kveda Gora during the extensive phase of the EVS.<sup>17</sup>

The almost complete absence of material earlier than the AC IIB phase from Vani's hinterland suggests that ceramic vessels were not being used, and/or whatever activity was taking place in the region during the earlier phases was small-scale and dispersed. It should be noted, however, that the chronological limits of these phases of the Proto-Colchian and Ancient Colchian periods are still being debated and the transition from AC IIA and AC IIB ceramic assemblages remains ill-defined in some places. It should be noted that of the locations from Vani's hinterland that yielded Bronze Age ceramics, only one, Kveda Gora, was detected in

---

<sup>15</sup> Tolordava (1977).

<sup>16</sup> Apakidze (2008), 335-336.

<sup>17</sup> The activity area is Natsikhvari (E015) in the catalogue. It includes the site A047 identified by the Vani Regional Survey.

pedestrian surface survey.

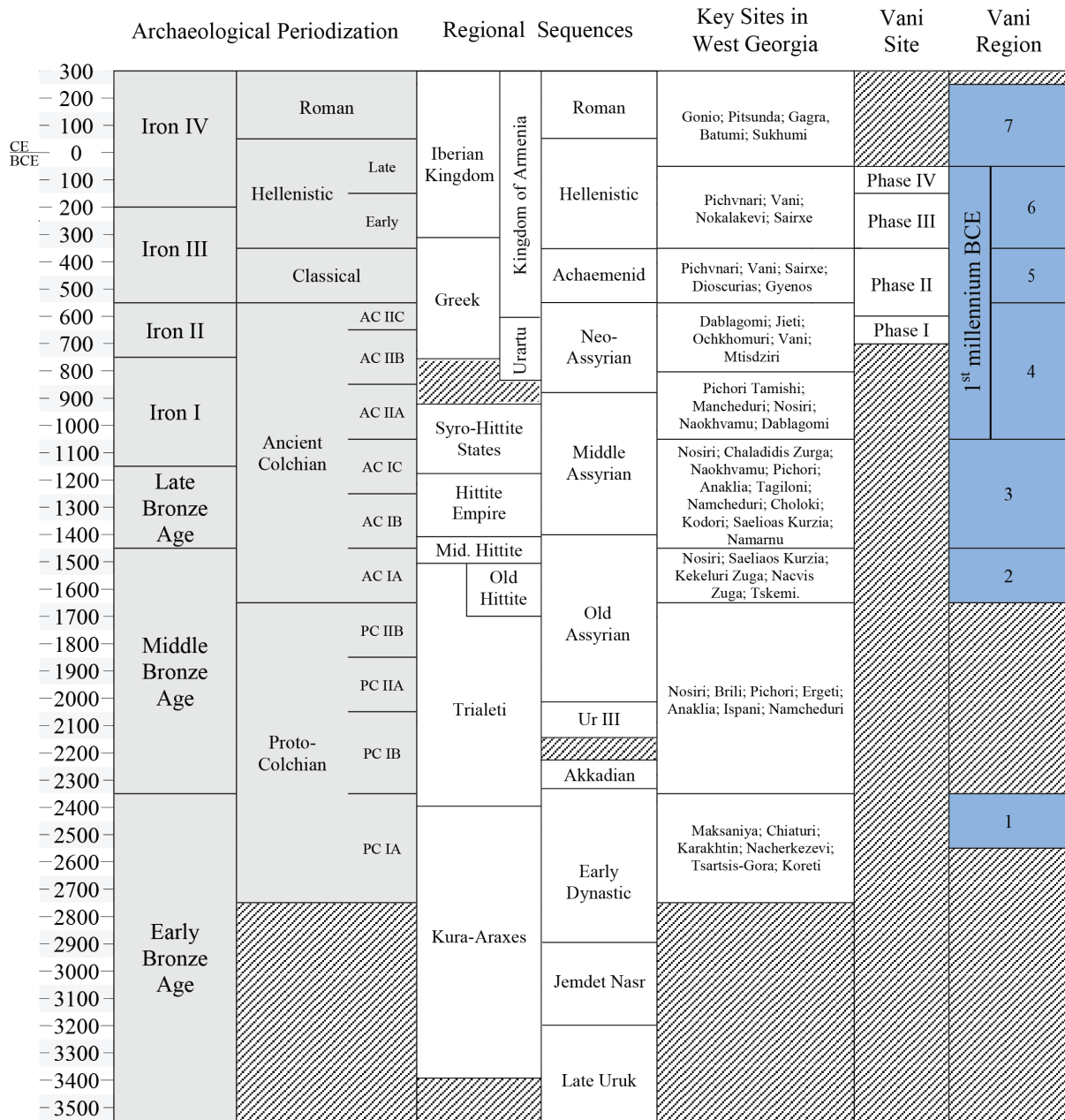


Figure 3.1: Archaeological periodization of Vani and its region in comparisons to the chronological schemes used for Colchis, the Black Sea and the South Caucasus. Adapted from Badalyan et al. (2009): Fig. 1.

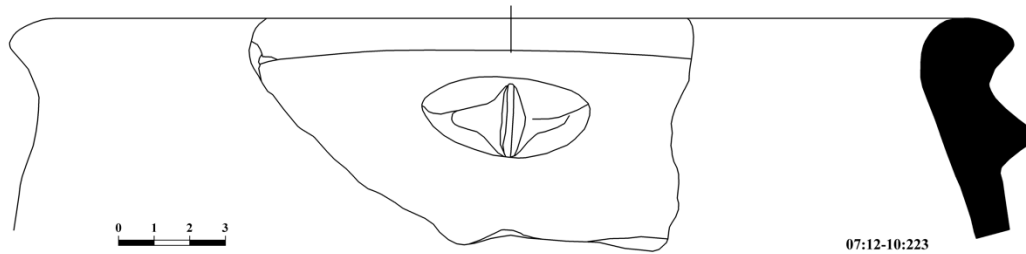


Figure 3.2: Possible Middle Bronze Age rim fragment recovered from Kveda Bzvani by the EVS. Drawing by T. Sakhvadze.

### IV.3. Early Iron Age (10<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE)

Known as the Ancient Colchian II phase and covering the transition from the Late Bronze Age into the Early Iron Age, the period between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE in western Georgia is marked by a significant shift in metallurgical practice and burial form but only a gradual refinement of earlier ceramic types.<sup>18</sup> The period can be further divided into Ancient Colchian IIB (11<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>) and Ancient Colchian IIC (8-7<sup>th</sup>) phases, though the material from our survey does not allow for this level of chronological resolution. Pottery of the Early Iron Age represents a further development of AC IIA rather than a significant evolutionary step. Though handmade pottery continues to be produced, the majority of pottery during this period is wheel-made. It is during the early Iron Age that we begin to see a significant increase in the quantity of ceramic material in Vani's immediate environs.

The timing and tempo of developments within the Bronze Age continues to be a topic of considerable debate and has led to competing frameworks for the classification of the ceramic material from the period. Increasingly, the transition from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age is being viewed as a key period for understanding the development of the South Caucasus in

<sup>18</sup> For metal production see Khakhutaishvili (2009), although many of the sites identified by Khakhutaishvili as iron smelting sites have recently been reinterpreted as copper smelting sites by Erb-Satullo (*personal communication*). Tsetsckhladze (1995) presents the evidence for the likelihood of metal in encouraging Greek colonization.

antiquity.<sup>19</sup> During this period we see an increase and diversification of settlements in the Colchian plain with the addition of hill settlements and so-called workshop settlements to the mound settlements that were already characteristic of the Bronze Age.<sup>20</sup> Burial forms also diversify with inhumation in stone cists and pit graves (collective and individual) as well as cremation burials and secondary inhumation becoming common, with the body in left or right crouched positions and occasionally supine. This dynamic change in settlement and burial form is in contrast to the considerable conservatism of ceramic materials, which maintain strong similarities in form and decoration with vessels from the Early and Middle Bronze Ages.

The earliest Iron Age pottery discovered in the Vani region belongs to Apakidze's Ancient Colchian IIA phase (1100- BCE).<sup>21</sup> This phase covers the period usually identified as the transition from the Late Bronze Age into the Early Iron Age. Vessels of this phase are either hand-made or wheel-made, with hand-made vessels constituting a majority of the recovered material. In the preceding phases of the Bronze Age, polished wares were common. The vessels can further be divided into two ware categories: Common Wares and Burnished Wares. The common wares are all hand-made, likely with the help of a mold, have received little to no surface treatment and are found in a range of diagnostic forms. These forms are:

1. **Common Ware Storage Vessels** with gently tapered bodies from a wide mouth to a narrow base; slightly concave necks; large mouths; and out-turned rims replace the earlier vessels with in-turned rims. They range in size from c. 20 cm to 30 cm tall. (Fig. 3.3:15)
2. **Common Ware Pots**, like storage vessels, have a gently tapered body and out-turned rim. They range in size from c. 10 cm – 15 cm tall. (Fig. 3.3:10, 13 and 14)

---

<sup>19</sup> Both Apakidze (2009) and Nieling (2009) believe this period is of vital importance to understanding earlier and later developments in the Caucasus.

<sup>20</sup> Apakidze (2005).

<sup>21</sup> Natsikhvari, Kveda Bzvani (E0015).

3. **Common Ware Bowls** with mouths up to three times the size of their bases with straight or slightly out-turned rims. (Fig. 3.3:1-3, 4 and 7)
4. **Common Ware Jugs** with long cylindrical necks and wide bodies and convex shoulders. These can have either (a) no handles or (b) a single handle.
5. **Common Ware Cups** have in-turned rims and an egg-shaped body. They have flat bottoms and a single handle, many of which have vertical projections reminiscent of horns. (Fig. 3.3:6)
6. **Common Ware Lids** are circular and can be either conical or flat with a semicircular handle located in the center.

Burnished Wares replace the polished wares that were so prevalent in the preceding periods and they both appear in the same range of shapes. The diagnostic shapes include:

- 1) **Burnished Ware Cups** with either flat or pointed bottoms. These vessels have single handles which are almost always decorated and are very often zoomorphic.
- 2) **Burnished Ware Pots** are nearly identical to the plain ware pots but come in a greater range of decorative elements and are occasionally wheel-made.

There does appear to be variation in the coarseness of vessels, and both wares are found in black, brownish-red or gray with transitional colors occurring. Where several fragments of a single vessel can be identified, variation in fabric color is often noticeable suggesting variable firing and an overall lack of standardization and consistency in kiln temperatures. As to decoration, many of the patterns such as comb made and fishbone patterns, depressions and notches as well as decoration conventions such as the preference for limiting decoration to the upper portion of the vessel have their origin in the preceding periods (Fig. 3.4).<sup>22</sup> To this are added vertical fluted, spiral and gridded patterns which appear for the first time. Also, we see the disappearance of hemispheric and grooved circular ornaments. Vertical zoomorphic handles and strap handles become more common, though the “bird breast” and “knee” handles continue to be used (Figs. 3.5 and 3.6).

---

<sup>22</sup> Apakidze (2008), 334.

Ornamentation during this period is simplified with horizontal lines on the belly and shoulder being the most commonly found decorative elements. All the decorative forms of the AC IIA continue with the exception of grooved circular decorations. As with the previous phase, the vast majority of rims of this period are outwardly turning. Vessels often have thickened lips and a fairly short neck. The result is vessels with considerably larger mouths than in previous phases. Pottery of this phase has been identified from excavated contexts at Dablagomi as well as the recently investigated site of Shuamta, both located to the west of Vani. At both sites, polished black and grey ceramics exhibiting the so-called “cannaluri” or fluted decoration technique (shallow vertical or horizontal channels produced by fingers or a combed tool or both) have been recovered. This technique not only produces wide and shallow horizontal decorations, it also has the effect of polishing the exterior of vessels. This technique becomes extremely popular during the AC IIB and continues into the AC IIC phase.

During the AC IIB period (c. 8<sup>th</sup>-mid 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE) there is a marked increase in the amount and typological diversity of ceramic vessels at sites throughout western Georgia. Typical forms such as jugs, pots, jars, cups, and beakers continue to be produced, but new forms including spouted jars, vases, drinking beakers, and drinking bowls become common. Tapered, horn-like drinking vessels appear to become particularly popular in this phase (Fig. 3.3:6). The fabrics of this period are comparatively thin-walled and are grey, straw-colored or black. Though the usual decorative elements remain in use (inscribed circles, simplified looping meander, horizontal grooves, notches, fishbone, chevron and wave patterns), there is a dramatic increase in the arrangement and complexity of design motifs (Fig. 3.4). Moreover, there is notable variability between vessels both in the number of elements and the way in which individual



elements are combined on each vessel.<sup>23</sup> This variability occurs independent of vessel size and form, though larger vessels tend to exhibit a greater number of individual design elements. Almost all vessels exhibit some form of decoration with the simplest being the burnished design which becomes the most popular decoration, appearing on a wide variety of ceramic shapes (Fig. 3.6). Out-turned or projecting rims continue to increase in number, with rims now occasionally receiving decoration in the form of simple notched or hatched designs. Though more simple spherical or ovoid handles continue to be used, zoomorphic handles become common.<sup>24</sup> These handles are found on open and closed vessels of all shapes and sizes. Looped handles without horns and polygonal handles, identifiable by their rectangular profile and flattened sides, are also indicative of the period. Vessels datable to this period have been excavated at Dablagomi, Shuamta and Mtisdziri.

At Vani, excavations on both the upper and lower terraces at the site reveal occupation dating to 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE.<sup>25</sup> Though no architectural remains have yet been found, one location of activity has been identified within a 90 m<sup>2</sup> area on the northeast slope of the central terrace, an area identified as a cult complex due to the presence of ceramic figurines, ash deposits and large quantities of animal bones.<sup>26</sup> Several hundred ceramic vessels were discovered during these excavations and additional fragments have been identified in scattered areas from other locations at the site. All the vessels were wheel-made, well-fired and black with a burnished surface.<sup>27</sup> Nearly the full suite of shapes was recovered including bowls, jars, pots, tapered

---

<sup>23</sup> In the display of the former Vani museum, 36 different design combinations were presented as common.

<sup>24</sup> For a typology of zoomorphic handles of the period see Innauri (1987).

<sup>25</sup> Kacharava et al. (2008).

<sup>26</sup> Tolordava (1990); Lordkipanidze (1991b) links these figurines to contemporary Greek examples from Olympia, Delphi, Athens, Crete, Rhodes and Samos.

<sup>27</sup> Lordkipanidze (1991b), pp. 155-156.

drinking cups, and spouted jars. Zoomorphic handles are extremely common, and the bodies of vessels are covered in the typical geometric patterns.<sup>28</sup> Despite the placement of these fragments in the later part of the Early Iron Age, it very well could be that they date as early as the 10<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Almost all the examples recovered are of high quality with many whole vessels recovered. The distinction drawn by Apakidze between the AC IIB and AC IIC may in fact reveal a division between finer and less fine examples of contemporaneous wares. Regardless, it is clear that the activity at Vani revealed from these excavations belongs to the Early Iron Age.

As to the surface survey, it has proven difficult to date any of the remains more precisely than generally to the Early Iron Age (10<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries). The preponderance of fragments datable to this period are burnished and fluted body fragments in grey and black. Due to the transitional nature of this decorative form, these fragments could be from either the early (AC IIB) or late (AC IIC) phases of this period. Through excavation and survey, the VRS collected a good number of fragments of this period, especially from work at Shumta. The survey work of the EVS, on the other hand, recovered very few fragments from this period. In total, 15 fragments from the Early Iron Age were recovered through intensive survey. The majority of these were burnished wares and the rest were zoomorphic handles.

A majority of evidence of this period from Vani's environs comes from excavated contexts. Indeed, surface reconnaissance at Shumta revealed few fragments that could conclusively be dated to the early phases of this period. It may be that the depth of deposits containing pottery of the early Iron Age and the relative shallowness of plowing near hillsides (the likely location of occupation of this period) results in the material of this period to be underrepresented in surface contexts. It is clear, however, that there is an overall increase in

---

<sup>28</sup> Kacharava et al. (2008), p. 54; AiG fig. 3.

activity in the Sulori and Rioni river valleys during this period. This is not only shown in the ceramic evidence, but also in the burials excavated at Dablagomi and Mtisdziri, which are the earliest dated burials in the region.

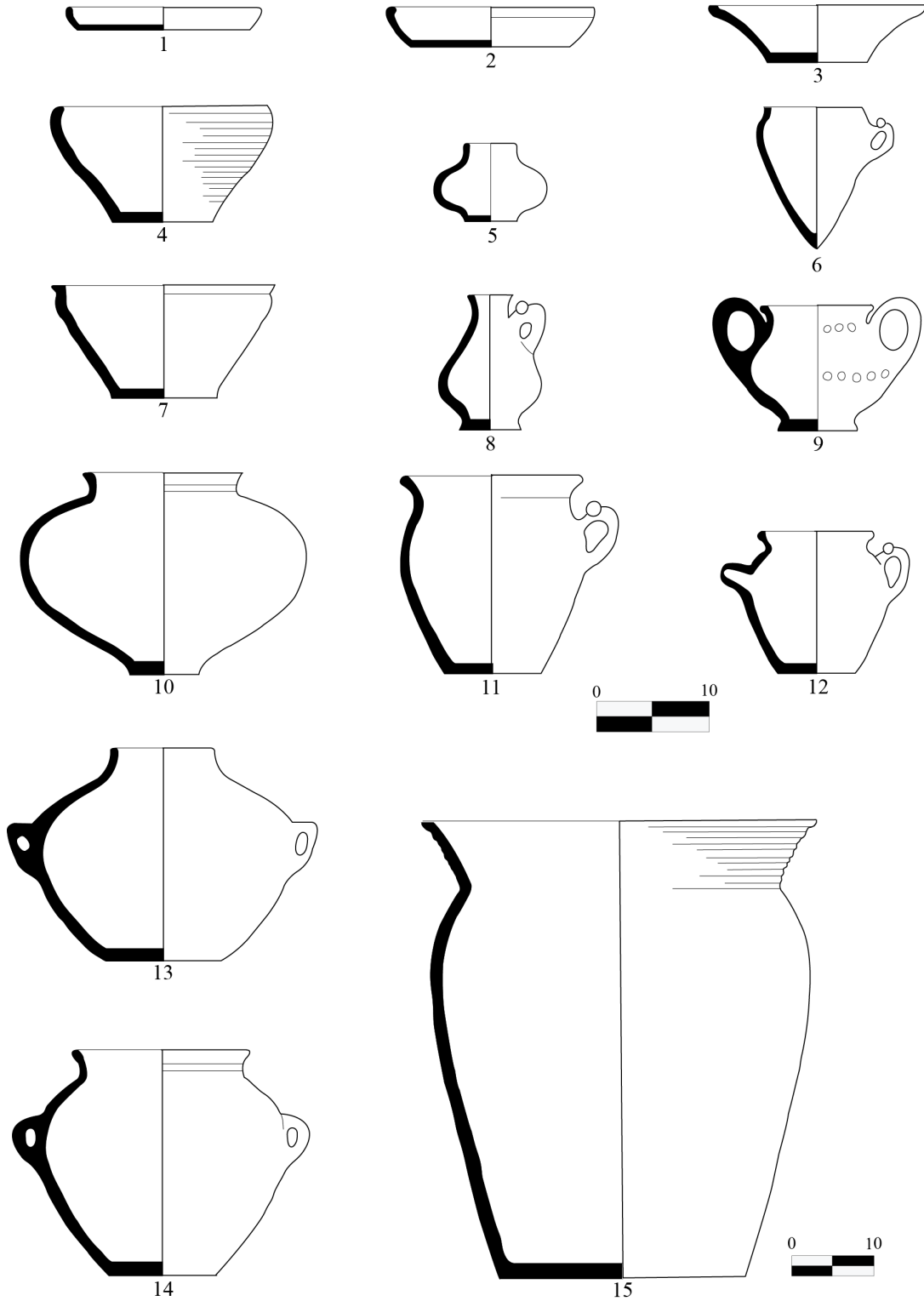


Figure 3.3: Early Iron Age Pottery recovered from Vani. Adapted after Lordkipanidze (1995): Fig. 2.

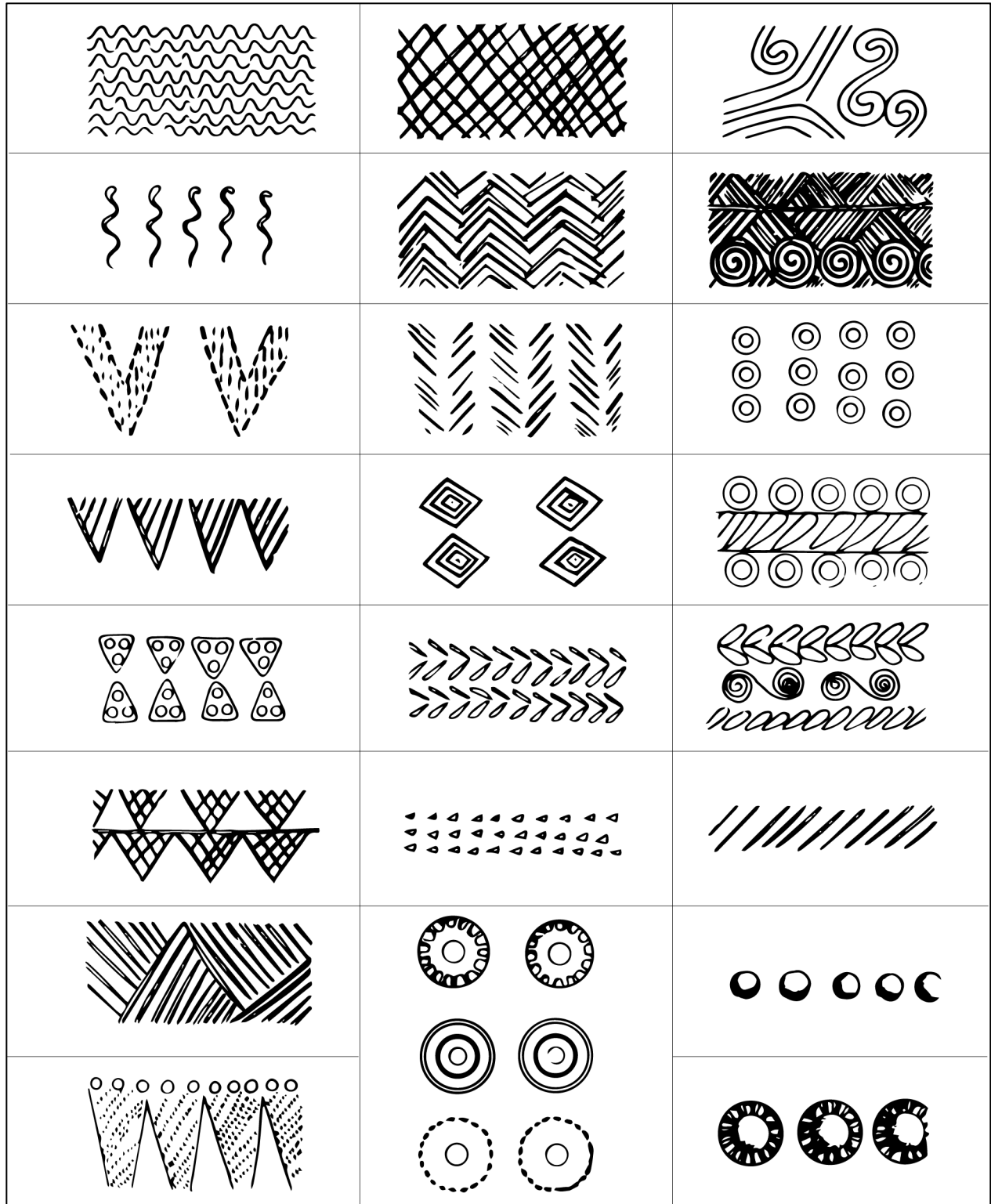


Figure 3.4: Sample of the types of decoration found on ceramics of the Early Iron Age in the Vani region. Adapted from Tolordava (1990): Fig. 3.

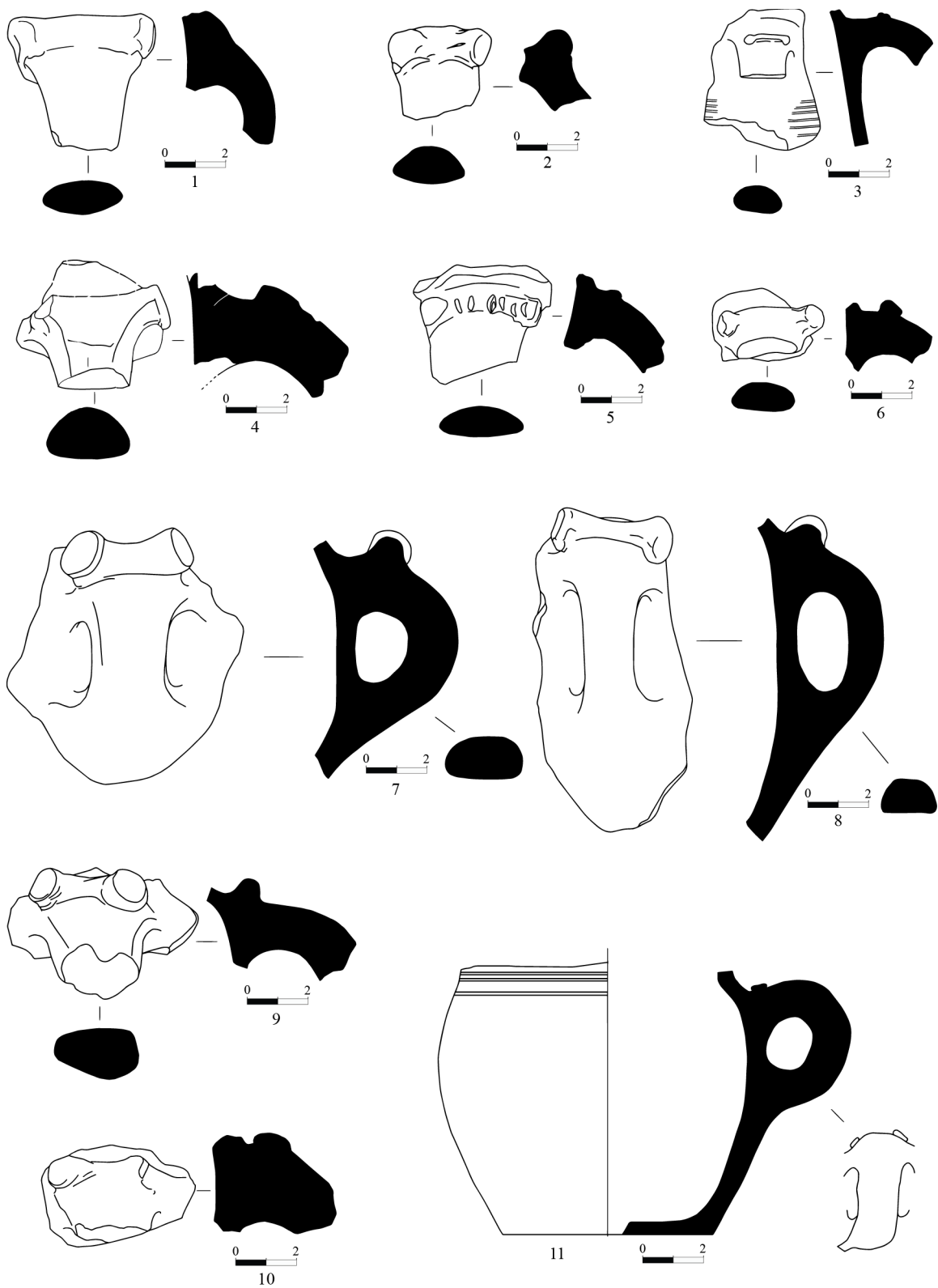


Figure 3.5: Early Iron Age Handles recovered by both the VRS and EVS. 1-4) Kveda Bzvani; 5-6) Zeda Bzvani; 7-8) Saqanchia; 9-10) Salkhino; 11) Ketchinara. Drawings by T. Sakhvadze.

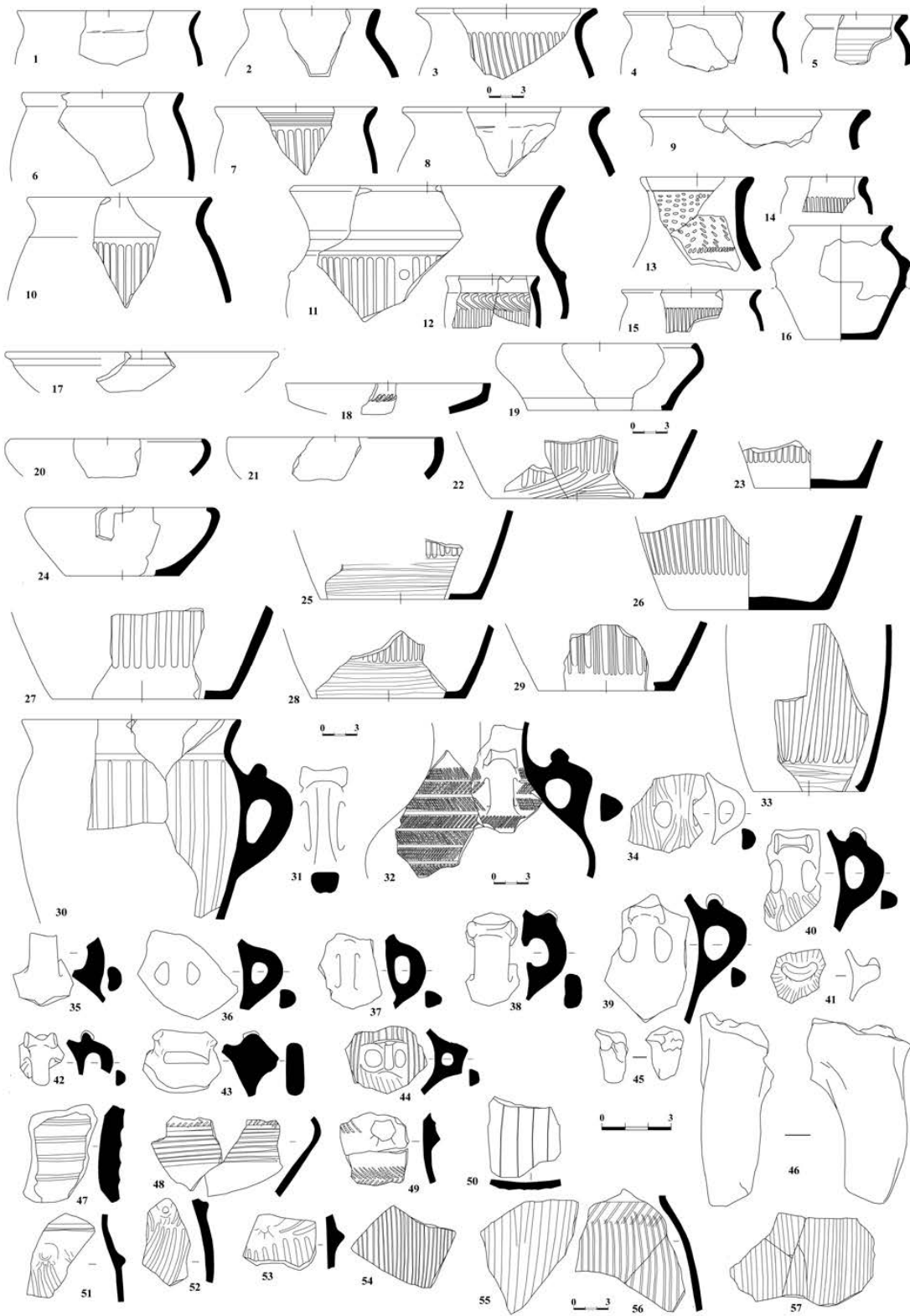


Figure 3.6: Early Iron Age ceramics from the excavations at Shuamta showing the deep burnished lines indicative of the period. After Kvirkvelia et al. (2014): Plate 5. Drawings by T. Sakhvadze.

#### *IV.4. Classical Period (Early 6<sup>th</sup> - mid 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE)*

Colchian ceramic assemblages of the Classical period exhibit a great deal of continuity with earlier periods, especially in the range of forms and in the methods used to produce them. There are, however, a few innovations that characterize the period including the addition of new shapes, a general reduction in the complexity of decorative programs, and an overall increase in the quantity of vessels as ceramics begin to be used in a wider range of activities. Important sites for ceramic evidence of the period outside the survey-region are Pichvnari, Nakhalekevi and Sairkhe.

Colchian ceramic vessels of the Classical period represent an evolutionary step in production and form rather than a dramatic revolution. The production of the vessels shows greater standardization with a vast majority of vessels being wheel made and uniformly fired. Vessel walls show an overall thickening when compared to the previous period. Vessel surfaces can be grey or black (occasionally polished) with mottling common due to uneven firing. The suite of decorative elements used in previous periods continue but motifs are simplified considerably, with decorations often limited to one or two elements. Popular ornaments of the period are polished vertical lines, rhomboid patterns, combed wavy lines, incised circles and slanting “pine” notches (Fig. 3.8).<sup>29</sup> Traditional vessel forms receive the least amount of innovation, though there are noticeable changes. The traditional biconical form found in jugs, jars and pots continues but with a slightly expanded middle giving the vessels a more “squat” appearance. The range of drinking cups increases to include tall, cylindrical cups and small spherical ones. Additionally, the conical “horned cup” is replaced with a similar shape with a flat rather than pointed base. To these traditional forms, new types are added including storage

---

<sup>29</sup> Lordkipanidze (1991b); *AiG*.



wares, especially pithoi; jugs with biconical body and vertical tubular handles (tube handled jars); and large bowls, or basins, with flat bottoms and angled walls (Fig. 3.7). Storage wares are a particularly important development as they mark the expanding use of ceramic vessels into agricultural storage. The handles of vessels are simplified with the rounded loop handle predominating and zoomorphic handles almost entirely disappearing. There are a few such handles that persist, but they are produced differently with clay appliqués of animal heads being used instead of the more abstracted horn projections of the previous period.

The primary chronological markers for this period are foreign imports coming from the Achaemenid Empire and the Greek World.<sup>30</sup> These imports include ceramics; bronze, silver and glass vessels as well as signet rings and beads.<sup>31</sup> The earliest of these imports are amphorae of Chian, Samian, pseudo-Samian and Lesbian production and are generally dated to the late 7<sup>th</sup> to early 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE and are found at sites along and near the Black Sea littoral.<sup>32</sup> Citing work by Dupont, Kuznetsov and Cook, and pointing to the now accepted re-classification and re-dating of the early imports found in Colchis, Gocha Tsetskhladze argues that none of the known Greek imports can be dated earlier than the second quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>33</sup> These early examples are few in number and do not seem to penetrate very far into Colchis.<sup>34</sup> Though the later date for the first imports has serious implications for the chronology of contact and trade between Greek speaking populations and western Georgia, it has little effect on the periodization of local ceramics, which were always tied to the far more numerous imports of the early to mid

---

<sup>30</sup> Tsetskhladze (1994); *AiG*.

<sup>31</sup> Examples can be found in Kakhidze (2004).

<sup>32</sup> Kacharava et al (1999), 84 with the earliest found at Batumi, Kobuleti-Pichvnari, Simagre, Ocamcire and Esery.

<sup>33</sup> Tsetskhladze (1994), 80, n. 15; Dupont (1983).

<sup>34</sup> Isolated examples of Chian and Lesbian amphorae have been recovered from Gurianta, Vani and Dablagomi. Lordkipanidze (1991); Kacharava et al (1999), 84.

6<sup>th</sup> century BCE.<sup>35</sup> In addition to amphorae, East Greek painted pottery and the so-called “Triangle Ware” from the 6<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries has been found at Bobokvati-Tsikhisdziri, Poti, Gyenos, around Dioscuria, Pichvnari, Vani and Sairkhe.<sup>36</sup>

At Vani, a range of imports have been discovered in both burial and non-burial contexts. The earliest fragments are that of a Chiote chalice dating to the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE and a few fragments of Little Master cups.<sup>37</sup> Transport vessels from Chios, Lesbos and Thasos have been identified. Additionally, there are three amphoriskoi and an oinochoe from Rhodes recovered from Grave 6 that date to the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Given how few they are in number and that they have only been found in funerary contexts, the presence of these imports at Vani suggest that these vessels were likely part of small-scale exchanges rather than evidence of Vani’s participation in an extensive, extra-regional trade network.

It is at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> that the first clear remains of architecture have been identified at Vani. On the upper terrace, a large wooden structure measuring ca. 12.5m x 27m was excavated and identified as a religious complex. Directly east of this structure, a series of pits and channels cut into the hill were interpreted as serving a ritual function. Additionally, the remains of two additional buildings with stone foundations were found. On the central terrace, a rectangular building with white stone foundations was excavated and a grave was excavated nearby (grave 11). On the lower terrace, three graves were excavated (graves 6-8). The burials of this period are extremely rich both in terms of grave goods and the method of

---

<sup>35</sup> That Greeks had settled in western Georgia by the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century is clear from excavations at Pichvnari and the discovery of a stele from the seabed near Dioskouria, See Tsetskhalde and Vnukov (1992), 358; for Pichvnari see Vickers and Khakidze (2004) and Khakidze (2007).

<sup>36</sup> Kacharava et al. (1999); Tsetskhalde (1999), 59, n. 32; Narimanishvili and Shatberashvili (2004), 123.

<sup>37</sup> Vani VII: 26.

interment. It was on the basis of the rich burials that Lordkipanidze posited the emergence of a landed and politically active elite during this period at Vani.<sup>38</sup> The production of pottery during this period shows signs of increased standardization and may suggest the emergence of specialized crafts people at Vani.

The Classical Period was one of the most easily identifiable in surface assemblages. There are several reasons for this. First and foremost, the color and decoration of fragments from this period are fairly easy to identify. This is particularly true of the pithoi of the period, whose black surface and tell-tale decorative design elements combined with the relative large size of surviving fragments made them easy to spot on the surface (Fig. 3.9). Second, excavations throughout western Georgia have shown that pottery production increases significantly in this period resulting in a much greater volume of ceramic material. Though examples of Colchian pithoi of this period have been found in Eastern Georgia, no significant quantities of locally produced Colchian pottery have been found outside of western Georgia, meaning production was aimed at fulfilling local needs. It is likely that not only were more vessels being produced, but they were also being used in an ever-widening range of daily activities. It is less clear how this increase in ceramic evidence relates to population densities around Vani and other sites in Colchis. What can be said with certainty is that there is more ceramic evidence to be found in surface assemblages. Third, the growing standardization of pottery attested in excavated contexts that characterizes the period allows for a greater confidence in securely dating diagnostic elements such as rims and bases.

---

<sup>38</sup> Lordkipanidze (1991b), 172.

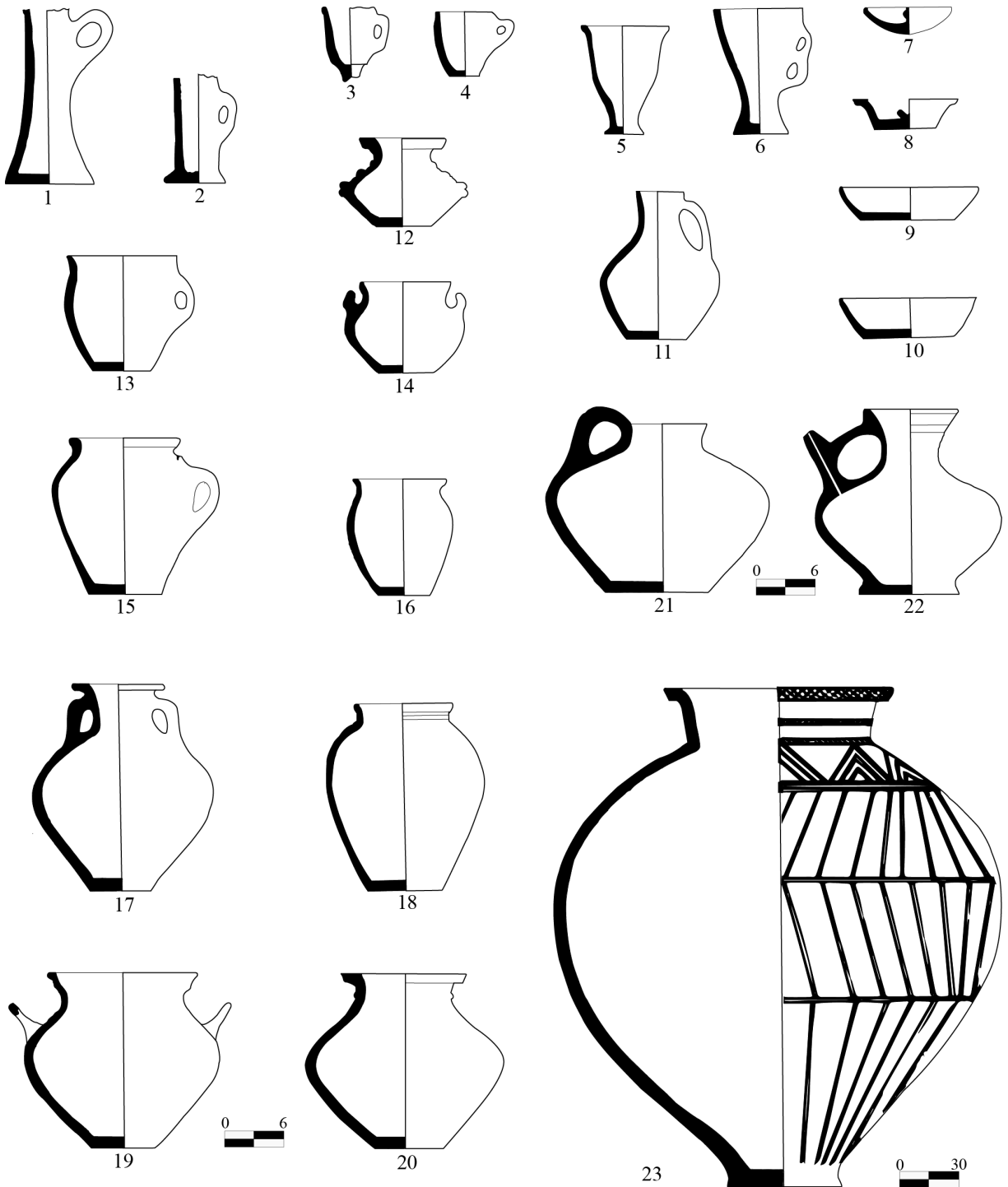


Figure 3.7: Ceramic shapes of the 7th-4th centuries BCE. 1-6) Cups; 7-8) Lids; 9-10) Bowls; 11) Jug. After *AiG*: Fig.59

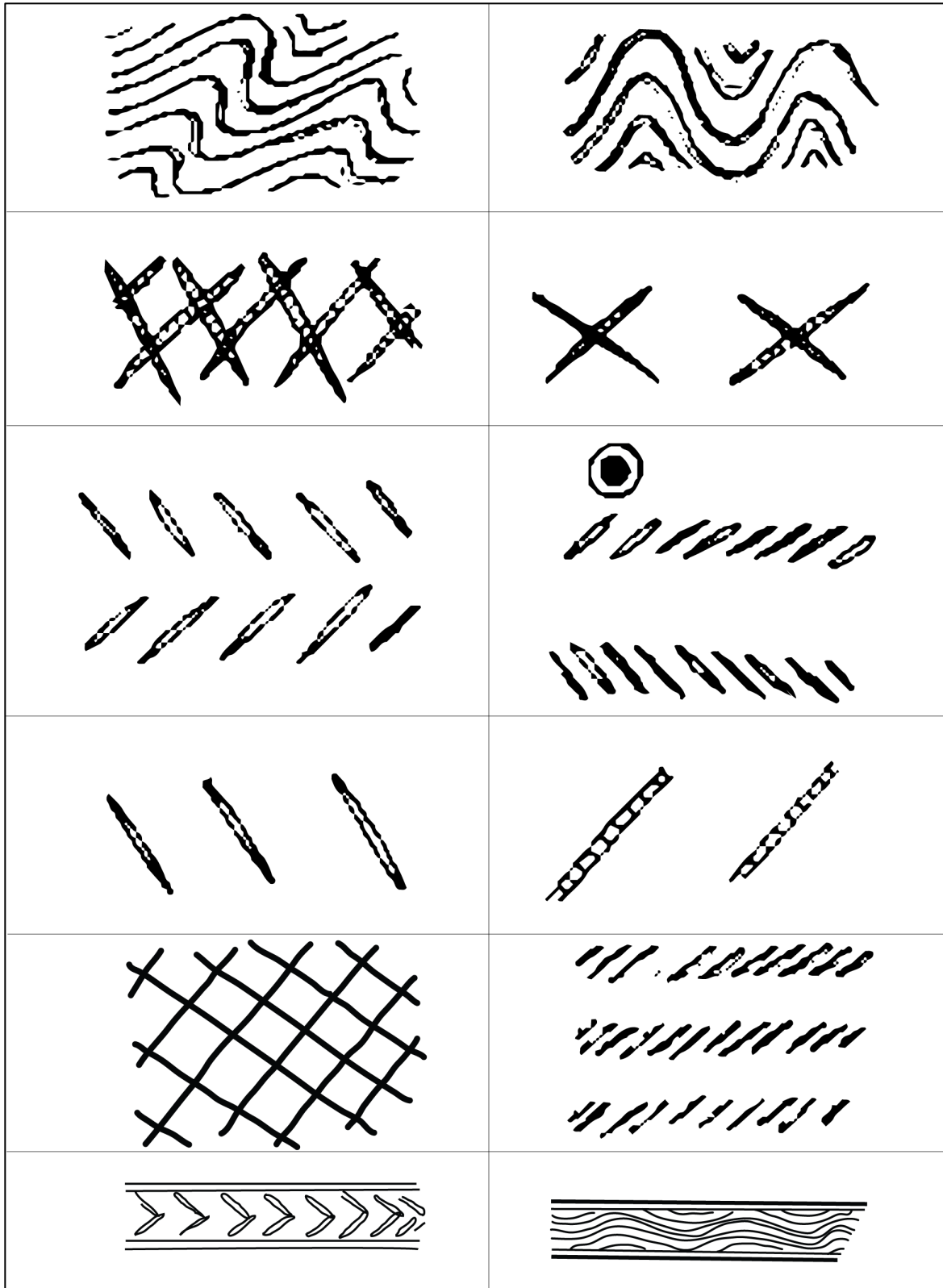


Figure 3.8: Sample of decoration indicative of local ceramics of the 7th-4th centuries BCE. After *AtG*: Fig. 59.

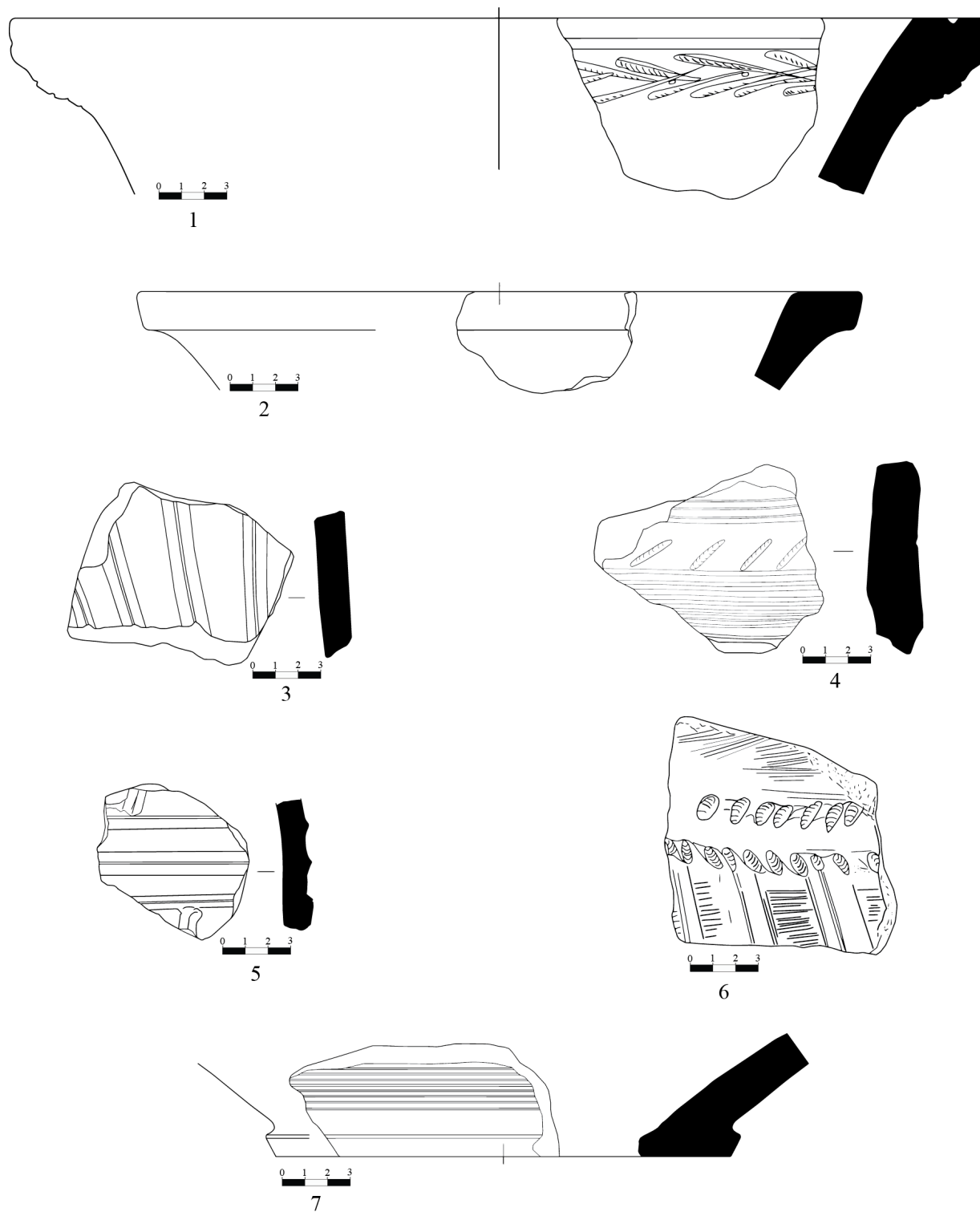


Figure 3.9: Fragments of pithoi recovered by survey in the region. Drawings by T. Sakhvadze.

#### *IV.5. Early Hellenistic Period (mid 4<sup>th</sup> century -mid 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE)*

Just how engaged Colchis and the Caucasus were in the large-scale transformations that occurred following the conquest of the Achaemenid Empire and the formation of the Hellenistic Kingdoms of central and southwest Asia and the Mediterranean remains an important area of research and debate.<sup>39</sup> Much of this attention has focused on carefully evaluating the degree of foreign, especially Hellenic, influence on material culture and establishing quantifiable characteristics by which to judge the character and consequences of “Hellenization” in the Caucasus. As a result of such analysis the ceramic assemblages of the Hellenistic period, that is the mid 4<sup>th</sup> – mid 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, are traditionally divided into two distinct periods. The first period, dating between the mid 4<sup>th</sup> to the mid 3<sup>rd</sup> and known as the Early Hellenistic, is marked primarily by the first real appearance of wares imitating foreign imports. While this innovation is significant, in general there is significant continuity in ceramic form and production technique from the preceding period.

The conservatism seen in earlier periods continues into the Hellenistic. Most of the forms indicative of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> such as pithoi, jugs with tubular handles, and basins with slanting walls continue to be produced. There are some new forms, but most of these represent new variants of old forms rather than completely new vessel types. Most noticeably, there is an increase in the variety of jugs produced including the introduction of an oenochoe style jug with the three projecting spouts (Fig 3.12:7-8). There are also jugs with two handles with rims reminiscent of Greek lekythoi (Fig 3.12:17-18). Additionally, we see the appearance of pilgrim

---

<sup>39</sup> Licheli (2000), (2007) argues against the “Hellenization” of Western Georgia; Tsetskhladze (1991), (1997), and (2004) on the other hand sees Greek contact as an essential motivating factor in change; See also Lordkipanidze (1968a), (1968b) and Kacharava et al. (1999).

flasks for the first time, generally decorated with swastikas or disk designs (Fig 3.12:19). Overall, it would appear there is an increase in vessel types associated with the storage and consumption of liquids. It has been suggested that this signals the emergence of drinking as an important social practice, perhaps as a result of exposure to Achaemenid and Greek drinking practices.<sup>40</sup> A silver belt from grave 6 shows a reclining male drinking from an Achaemenid type phiale, and such phialai in gold and silver have been found at Vani.<sup>41</sup> It could also be that the increase in ceramics used in drinking were replaced vessels in wood or leather, and thus do not represent a change in practice but rather an increase in the use of ceramics over other materials. The number of decorative elements is reduced dramatically from earlier periods, and the percentage of known vessels that are decorated is reduced. Slipped vessels, however, do begin to appear with greater regularity with various motifs of chevrons and geometric patterns.<sup>42</sup> Fabrics are predominantly brown or orange and the walls of vessels are thick when compared to the Early Iron Age wares.

Two innovations in particular mark the transition from the Classical Period to the Early Hellenistic: the appearance of locally produced amphorae and roof tiles, both in imitation of Sinopean examples.<sup>43</sup> Roof tiles point to the addition of new structures and hint at the increased presence of monumental architectural forms. The amphorae are of particular interest as they suggest not only the adoption of foreign vessel forms, but also growing economic specialization

---

<sup>40</sup> Lordkipanidze (1974).

<sup>41</sup> Lordkipanidze (1991b), 167–168.

<sup>42</sup> See Lordkipanidze (1991b), 178. He believes this type of painted vessel was first introduced from eastern Georgia. For examples see Vani I (1972) 208 no. 16, 212 no. 13, fig 176; VIII (1986) 109f, fig. 93.

<sup>43</sup> Discussion of these tiles is beyond the scope of the present discussion. For more information about the use of roofing tiles in Colchis and these tiles more specifically, see Akhvlediani (1986).



and the domestic and foreign exchange of commodities produced in Colchis.<sup>44</sup> The very first examples of Colchian amphorae come from two burial contexts of the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE: one from Vani and the other from the nearby site of Tsikhisdziri. Both burials are dated by coins and imported pottery.<sup>45</sup> A slightly later, but generally contemporary example has been found in a necropolis near the village of Zaozernoje in the Ukraine.<sup>46</sup> Though the ovoid shape of the earliest examples show strong signs of influence from Sinopean amphorae of the early Hellenistic period, when taken as a whole, there is a good deal of morphological variation between individual examples.<sup>47</sup> It was not, in fact, morphological similarities that first caused this group of amphorae to first be recognized as having a common origin. It was instead the brown-clay fabric from which they were all made.

Noting that a majority of known examples were found in western Georgia, B.A. Kuftin was the first to suggest the brown-clay amphorae were produced in Colchis.<sup>48</sup> Otar Lordkipanidze further refined this idea by noting the similarity between 1) the fabric of the amphorae and the fabric of locally produced pottery and 2) the production technique of amphorae and locally produced pithoi. A number of attempts were made to work out a chronology for these amphorae, and efforts still continue. To date the most comprehensive typology of Colchian amphorae has been offered by Gocha Tsetskhaldze and Sergei Vnukov who have presented their work in a number of languages.<sup>49</sup> Tsetskhaldze and Vnukov recognize

---

<sup>44</sup> It is still a matter of some debate what products were being put in these amphorae. Gamkrelidze (2009), 177 notes that written sources mention flax, linseed oil, honey, wine and later kerosene as products transported through western Georgia. Any one of these could have found their way into amphorae.

<sup>45</sup> Lordkipanidze et al (1972), 208.

<sup>46</sup> Tsetskhaldze and Vnukov (1992).

<sup>47</sup> Lordkipanidze (1966), 137-140.

<sup>48</sup> Kuftin (1950), 84.

<sup>49</sup> Tsetskhaldze and Vnukov (1991), (1992), (1993); Vnukov (2010).

three chronological variants of the Colchian type: A, B and C. Variant A corresponds with the earliest examples of the brown-clay amphorae found both in Colchis and the coastal regions of the North Black Sea. Though Tsetskhladze and Vnukov argue that all the known examples resemble Sinopean amphorae with an ovoid body, relatively short necks and flattened handles (Fig. 3.11); the variation between examples suggest that more than a single model may have been used. Indeed, similarities can be seen with Chian, Lesbian and Thasian examples. There are problems, however, with their system, most notably their adoption of an evolutionary approach that identifies all brown-clay amphorae as being a single type (i.e. Colchian) and thus regards morphological variation within this type as the result of change over time. This overlooks, or at the very least minimizes, the possible synchronic morphological variation that could characterize the brown-clay amphorae. That being said, Tsetskhladze and Vnukov's system provides a useful jumping off point for discussing the typology and chronology of Colchian amphorae.

The production locations of the various forms of amphorae have yet to be identified and we can only conjecture as to the reason for the variation in the amphorae of Variant A. There are, I believe, three possible reasons for the diversity of forms in Variant A. The first is that each shape represents a container for a specific product. Literary sources name a number of products (e.g. honey, flax oil and wine) that could have been exchanged in amphorae. Of the three possible solutions, this seems the least likely as it would represent a rather pronounced and dramatic change in craft specialization that is unsupported in other ceramic evidence. The second possibility is that each of the vessels is the product of a different pottery workshop and perhaps even a different production center. The third and final possibility is the diversity results from a greater number of individuals participating in the production of amphorae. Daniel Miller, studying pottery production in contemporary India, found that much of the variation in pottery

measured by archaeologists for categorization was the result of a potter's inability to manufacture identical copies. Each pot the potter makes is slightly different from the one before and from the one that will follow. Miller showed that even in the span of producing four pots this variation could be quite significant.<sup>50</sup> Regardless of the cause of the variation, the fact that the total variation is reduced in later examples of the brown-clay amphorae suggests that in the early period production was not centrally controlled in Colchis. There was little attempt to make an amphora that would be identified as Colchian. The fact that later examples are produced with a model in mind suggests that pottery production became more centralized over time.

At Vani, ceramics of the Early Hellenistic period were found on the upper and middle terraces in a range of contexts including funerary, religious and, perhaps, domestic. During this period, stone architecture predominates at the site with eight buildings and a possible defensive wall so far identified.<sup>51</sup> Five of the buildings have been interpreted as sanctuaries given the similarity of their plan and the fact all but one of them faces east.<sup>52</sup> The remaining three buildings appear to comprise a complex with one of the structures associated with cult function due to a burial in its southeast corner and the presence of a reused bronze statue.<sup>53</sup> In general, the number of burials at Vani expands with twenty-two known burials datable to this period.<sup>54</sup> A majority of the graves are the same style pit burials cut into bedrock that were common in the

---

<sup>50</sup> Miller (1985) noted variation in pottery production within and between workshops in the village of Dangwara in central India. Overall, Miller found that there was a great deal of uniformity in vessel shapes identified by consumers and the categories archaeological approaches would produce. See also Sinopoli (1991), 137-140.

<sup>51</sup> Lordkipanidze (1991b), 178.

<sup>52</sup> The one exception being the cobblestone complex located on the central terrace which opens to the north rather than the east. See Chqonia and Lordkipanidze (1986), 97-99.

<sup>53</sup> Grave 27 (3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE).

<sup>54</sup> See Kacharava and Kvirkvelia (2008), 62. Graves 1-4 (3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE), Grave 9 (third quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE), Graves 12-14 (4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE), Graves 10 and 19-26 and 28 (second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE), Graves 16 and 17 (second half of the 4<sup>th</sup>-beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE), Grave 15 (1<sup>st</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE), and Grave 27 (3<sup>rd</sup> c. BCE).

Classical period. To these are added the interment of bodies in pithoi and stone cists. Grave 9 in particular has proved important in dating the local pottery of the Early Hellenistic period. The presence of a gold stater of Philip II of Macedon establishes a *terminus post quem* of 336 BCE. This date is supported by an Athenian black-glazed kantharos and a stamped amphora handle found in the burial, both of which date to the third quarter of the fourth century BCE. Both local and imported wares were part of the burial assemblage, including a locally produced red painted jug and black fired bowl. One Variant A Colchian amphora appeared among a group of five amphorae that included two Solokha Type amphorae datable to the third quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

In the environs of Vani, there is a noticeable increase in the number of known sites. One reason for this is the emergence of well-preserved and easily recognizable pithos burials as a new form of interment in the region.<sup>55</sup> The appearance of burials of this type has unpersuasively been associated with growing influence from eastern Colchis and perhaps eastern Georgia more generally. This is, however, part of a larger narrative that sees the significant changes that occur in the Hellenistic period as the result of invasive populations, likely from the east. What the growing popularity of pithos interment does suggest, however, is that the production or importation of pithoi had increased and the vessels were being deployed in more than one activity. Perhaps when old and broken storage pithoi were replaced with new ones, the old vessels were repurposed as burial containers. The ceramic evidence and the growing influence of foreign goods on locally produced wares combined with the increased participation of Colchian products in foreign exchange point to changing social realities for the people living in western Georgia during this time. The mechanisms for change are still unclear, but at the very least west

---

<sup>55</sup> Kacharava et al (2008), p. 19.

Georgia of late Classical and early Hellenistic period was producing greater quantities of consumable goods which were either being stored in large ceramic storage vessels close to home or were being shipped in amphorae to ports all along the eastern coast of the Black Sea.

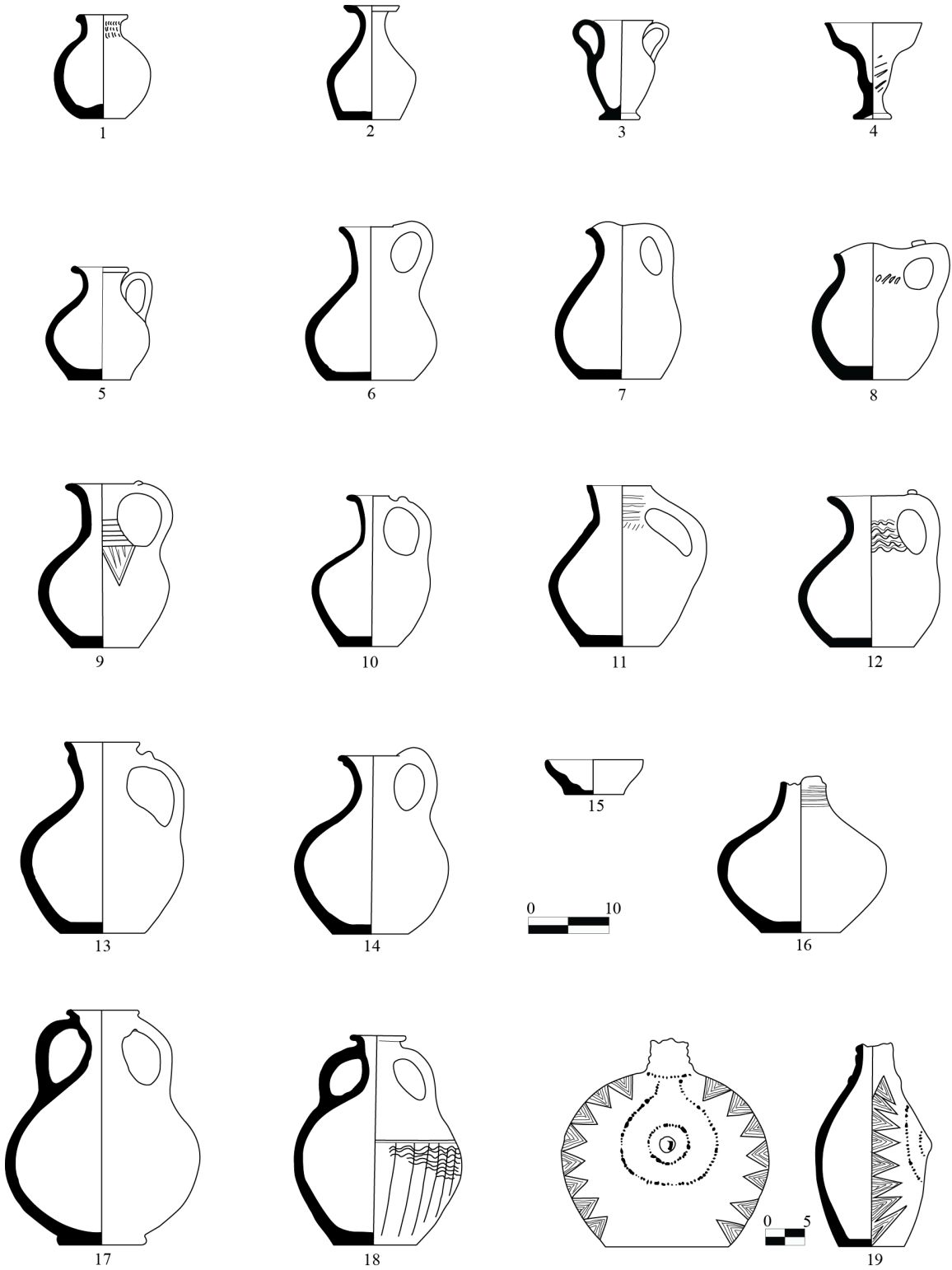


Figure 3.10: Local pottery shapes of the Early Hellenistic (4th-3rd centuries BCE). After *AiG*: Fig. 62.

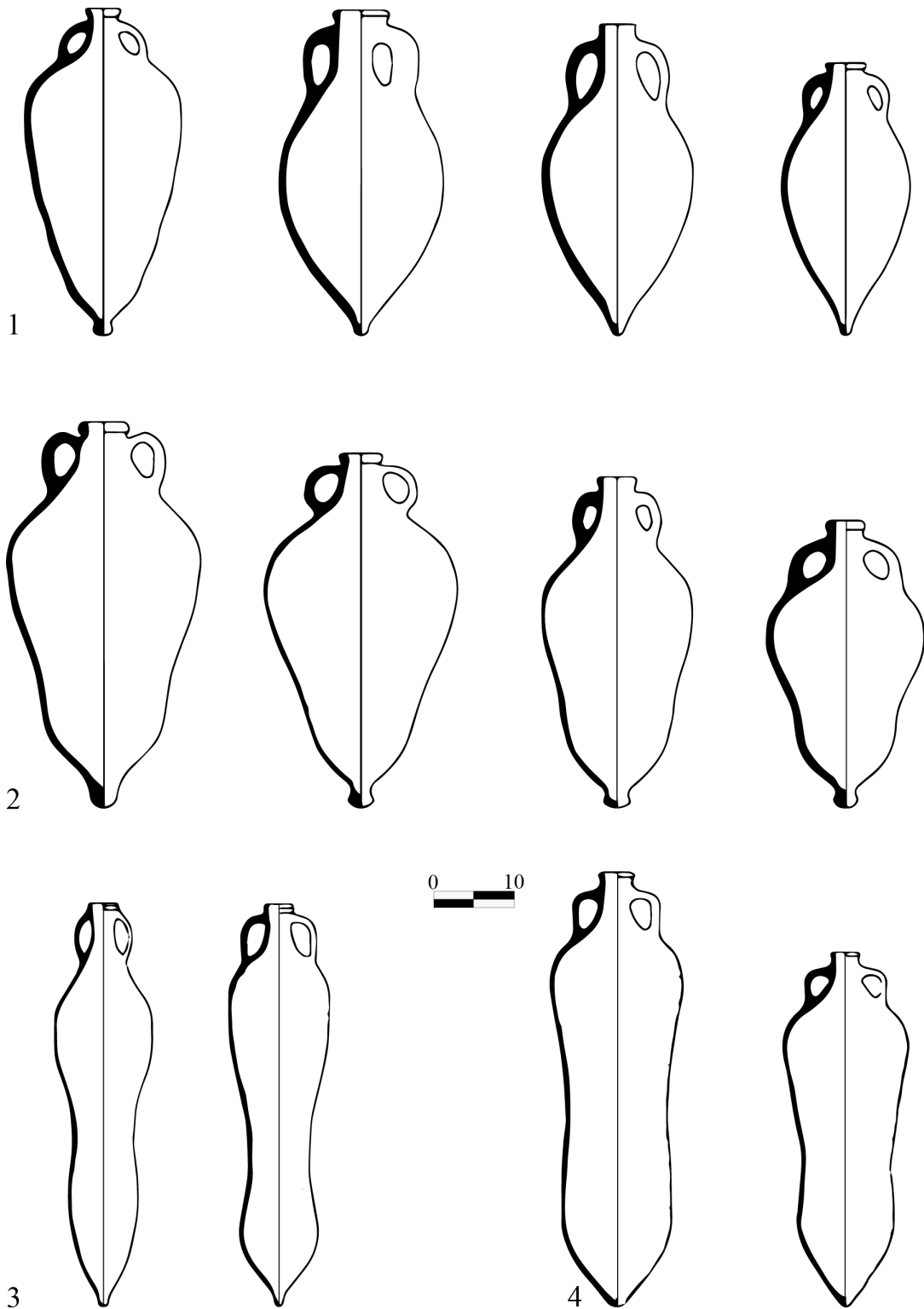


Figure 3.11: Colchian amphorae. 1) 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE; 2) 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> century BCE; 3) 1<sup>st</sup> -3<sup>rd</sup> Century CE; 4) 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> century CE After Tsetskhladze and Vnukov (1992) and Gamkrelidze (2001): Fig.4.

#### *IV.6. Late Hellenistic Period (mid 3<sup>rd</sup> century – 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE)*

The ceramic assemblages of the Late Hellenistic period bear witness to an expansion and intensification of interregional interaction between western Georgia and its neighbors.<sup>56</sup> In addition to an increase and specialization in the production of local amphorae, the range of imitation wares expands as does their geographic range within Colchis.

The influence of foreign forms on local pottery production reaches its peak in the Late Hellenistic period. Whereas in the Early Hellenistic, imitation of foreign vessels was represented by the adoption of certain features and their addition to otherwise local forms (i.e. painted decoration and oenochoe and lekythos rims), the Late Hellenistic sees the adoption of local variants of complete vessel types. Imitations of Greek style bowls, fish plates, kantharos-type vessels, spindle-form jars, and imitation red-slip wares begin to appear in Colchis.<sup>57</sup> To these may be added the appearance of Colchian amphoriskoi and jug amphorae. Purely local forms undergo little change from earlier periods. Jugs, pots, jars and bowls all continue their traditional shapes but there is a tendency for vessel volumes to be lessened by making the belly of the vessels less pronounced than in the Classical period. Miniature versions of pots begin to be produced as well. The rims of vessels have a tendency to be more angular, though rounded rims continue to be produced. The trend of reduced decoration continues with a majority of vessels receiving no decoration at all. Indeed, the distinction between common wares and fine wares for strictly local vessel forms is no longer pronounced. Pithoi continue to be notable exceptions, and they continue to be used as burial vessels in this period. Vessel fabrics remain micaceous and in grey, brown or brownish-orange color. Variation in the fabrics is reduced, however, suggesting that the vessels are more evenly fired than in previous periods. This seems to be the result of

---

<sup>56</sup> *AiG*: 135-136.

<sup>57</sup> *AiG*: 136.



increasing control over kiln temperatures and the growing use of reduction in ceramic production.

As early as the late third century BCE, Colchian amphorae begin to become more recognizable as a group and distinctive from amphorae being produced elsewhere. Tsetskhladze and Vnukov identify amphorae of the late Hellenistic Period as belonging to one type which they call Variant B. There are a number of significant morphological features which distinguish Variant B from the earlier Variant A. The key typological difference of Variant B is the dramatic narrowing of the lower third of the amphora which results in the production of a “waist”(Fig 3.12: 2). The reason for this development has been much debated, with some arguing that it had practical benefits as it would allow the amphora to be tied to animals for transport over land. Tsetskhladze and Vnukov note that it may have been the result of a new production technique as the “waist” appears at the same point as the join between upper and lower sections of the amphora.<sup>58</sup> Regardless of its origin, from the second century BCE the “waist” becomes a signature feature of Colchian amphorae. Variant B amphorae are shorter than Variant A and have shorter necks as well. Handles continue to be flattened ovals in section, but due to the short neck and much shorter and in some cases appear to have circular openings rather than ovoid ones. The amphora toe is conical and short.

Tsetskhladze and Vnukov note that the overall uniformity of the changes in the diameter and height of the amphorae point to a strictly functional rationale for change.<sup>59</sup> This is all the more clear when looking at rim profiles for Variant B which have a much greater variety than does the body of the amphorae. It seems plausible that the shape of the amphora was arrived at due to practical, functional concerns and was quickly adopted by production centers. Rim

---

<sup>58</sup> Tsetskhladze and Vnukov (1992), 365-366.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid: 366.

variation on the other hand is likely the result techniques of individual production centers using different examples from which to base their own rim version. Early examples of the Variant B type have been found at Zemo Partskhma (Georgia), Krasny Mayak (near Leningrad, Russia) and at Belyaus city (NW Crimea). Later examples have been recovered from sites in Abkhazia, in the waters near Novy Afon, at Chaika (NW Crimea), Patraeum (European Bosphorus) and Vani.

There are more than sixty sites in Colchis which date to the Hellenistic period and each has refined our understanding of Colchian ceramic production in this period. A few of these sites, however, have proven exceptionally important in constructing ceramic typologies for the Early and Late Hellenistic periods. Perhaps the most important of these sites is Pichvnari, which is situated near the modern town of Kobuleti on the Black Sea littoral. Pichvnari is most well-known for its rich cemeteries, including one that dates to the Hellenistic period. Excavations in this cemetery have so far uncovered 214 individual graves and many ritual platforms. These burials have revealed a great deal about the types and range of ceramics being used at the site. Greek imports and local wares tell a story of increasing contact during the Hellenistic period that led to large-scale local imitation of foreign wares. Evidence for significant Greek influence, if not a local Greek population, has been identified at Pichvnari starting in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE and has led the excavators to posit that Pichvnari was one of the crucibles in which Colchian pottery was forged.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Vickers and Kahkidze (2001).

The site of Saqanchia, located on the northeastern outskirts of modern Vani, provides the only ceramic evidence of the Late Hellenistic period from residential contexts.<sup>61</sup> Rescue excavations carried out in the 1970's under the direction of Vakhtang Licheli revealed several buildings, with two preserving almost their complete footprint.<sup>62</sup> From the associated finds, Licheli identified two types of building based on function: residential and household-industrial. From both contexts, the full range of local ceramic types were identified including pithoi, jars, amphorae (182 examples), and various cooking wares. Imported ceramics also appear from Rhodes, Sinope, Cos, Knidos, Chios, Corinth and Delos. Coupled with the contemporary evidence from Vani, Saqanchia represents a clear expansion in the production and use of pottery in this period.

At Vani, the Late Hellenistic Period sees a dramatic increase in the size and number of stone buildings. For the first time the entirety of the site is enclosed with a defensive wall and evidence for large-scale storage of grain was found. Burial almost entirely ceases at the site, which has led Lordkipanidze to interpret the sight as serving a "temple-city" function and ceramics recovered from the this period have been interpreted in light of the idea of the "temple-city." All are seen as being used in the performance of a cult activities or in the maintenance of individuals associated with the cult activity. An area of metal production near the city wall has been identified at the site in this period, and the presence of the "sacred barn" used to store grain suggests an intersection between the economic, political and religious aspects of daily life at the site.

---

<sup>61</sup> For a full accounting in English of excavations at Saquanchia see Licheli (1991). Licheli argues that, at the time he was writing, Saqanchia is the only known residential site of the Hellenistic period.

<sup>62</sup> Licheli (1991).

One burial has been identified at the site. In grave 22 at Vani, Mendeian and Chian amphorae were recovered.<sup>63</sup> Also found in this grave was an Attic aryballos-shaped lekythos. Accompanying these imported wares were three locally produced clay vessels: one jug and a pair of two-handled pots. The elongated form of these vessels and the polished lines found on both two-handled pots points to date between the Classical and Hellenistic periods for these local wares. This shows some continuity between the activity of the earlier phases at Vani and the Late Hellenistic and suggests a more gradual transition than dramatic change.

Though pottery from the Hellenistic period was not the most abundant identified by the Eastern Vani Survey, there was greater variation in the shapes recovered by the project for this period than for any of the others. A primary reason for this is the inability to distinguish clearly between the Early and Late phases of the period. The expanded chronological scope of the period means that more material will likely fall within its limits. That said, when compared with evidence from elsewhere in Colchis we can see a clear expansion of ceramic production and a decrease in the variability of specific shapes. This seems to point to a greater centralization in pottery production likely brought on by increased engagement in foreign trade and the resultant specialization it encouraged. It may be during this period that stronger, more centralized power structures emerge as local elites became more involved in both production and trade. This would account for the changes at Vani where grain storage and metal production appear for the first time.

---

<sup>63</sup> Kacharava & Kvirkevelia (2009), 253. The location of the amphorae in the burial are of some note. A Mendeian amphora was found in both the north-eastern and south-eastern corners. Both were of the Porticello type (see Lawall (1998)) which date from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE. A Chian amphora was found in the south-western and near the north-western corners. These date to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

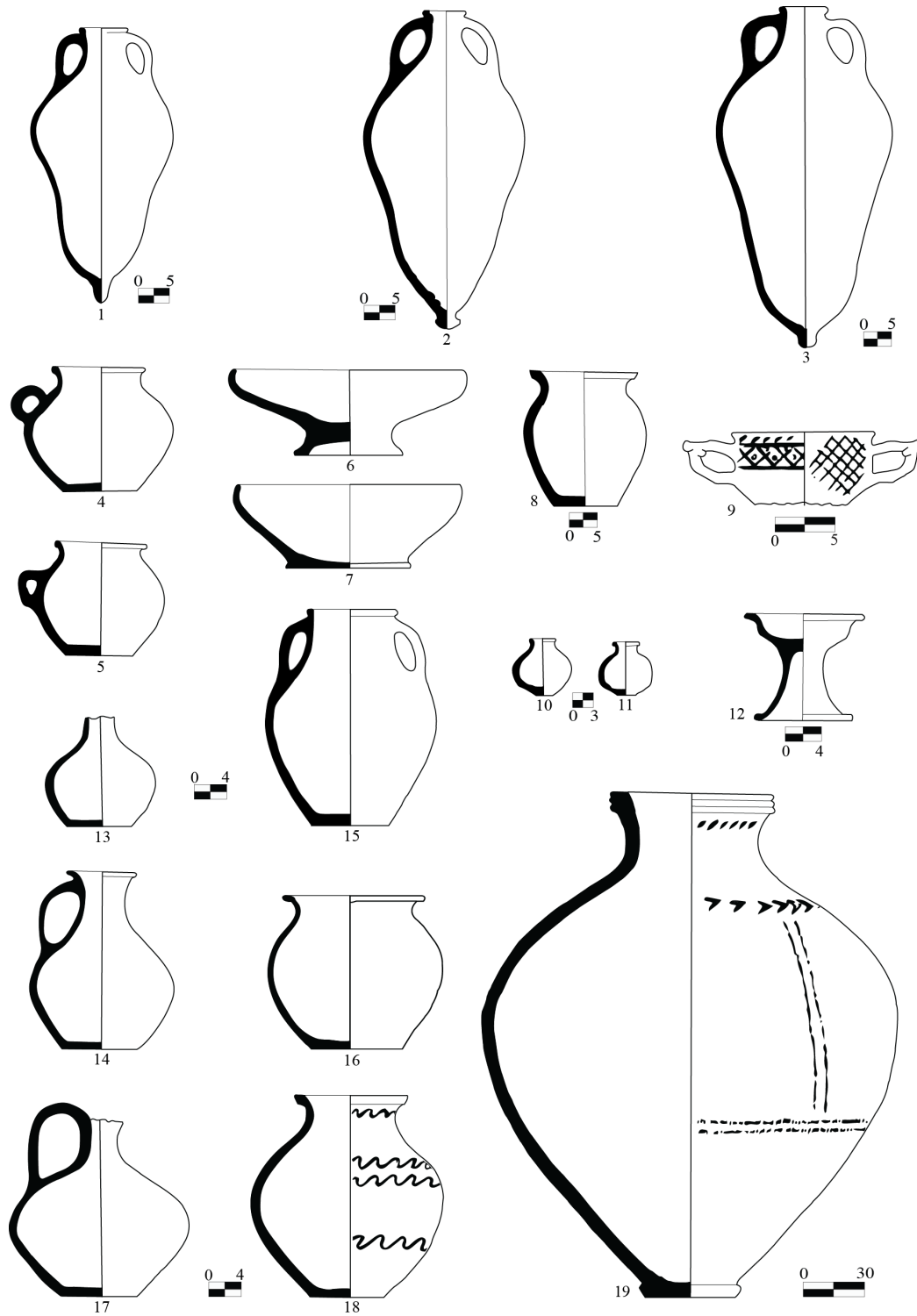


Figure 3.12: Local ceramic shapes of the Late Hellenistic (3rd - 1st centuries BCE). After *AiG*: Fig. 63.

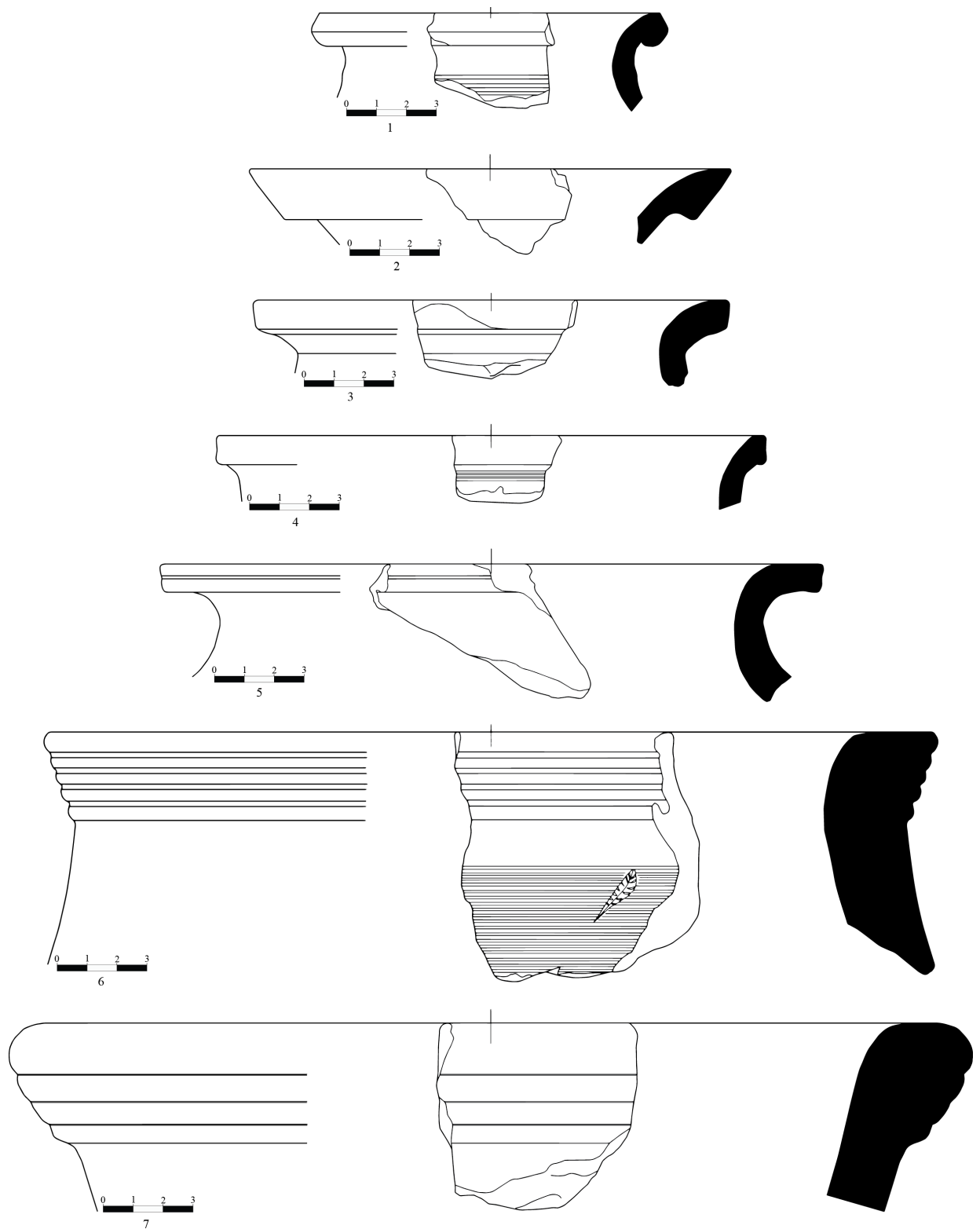


Figure 3.13: Hellenistic rims collected from survey around Vani. Drawings by T. Sakhvadze

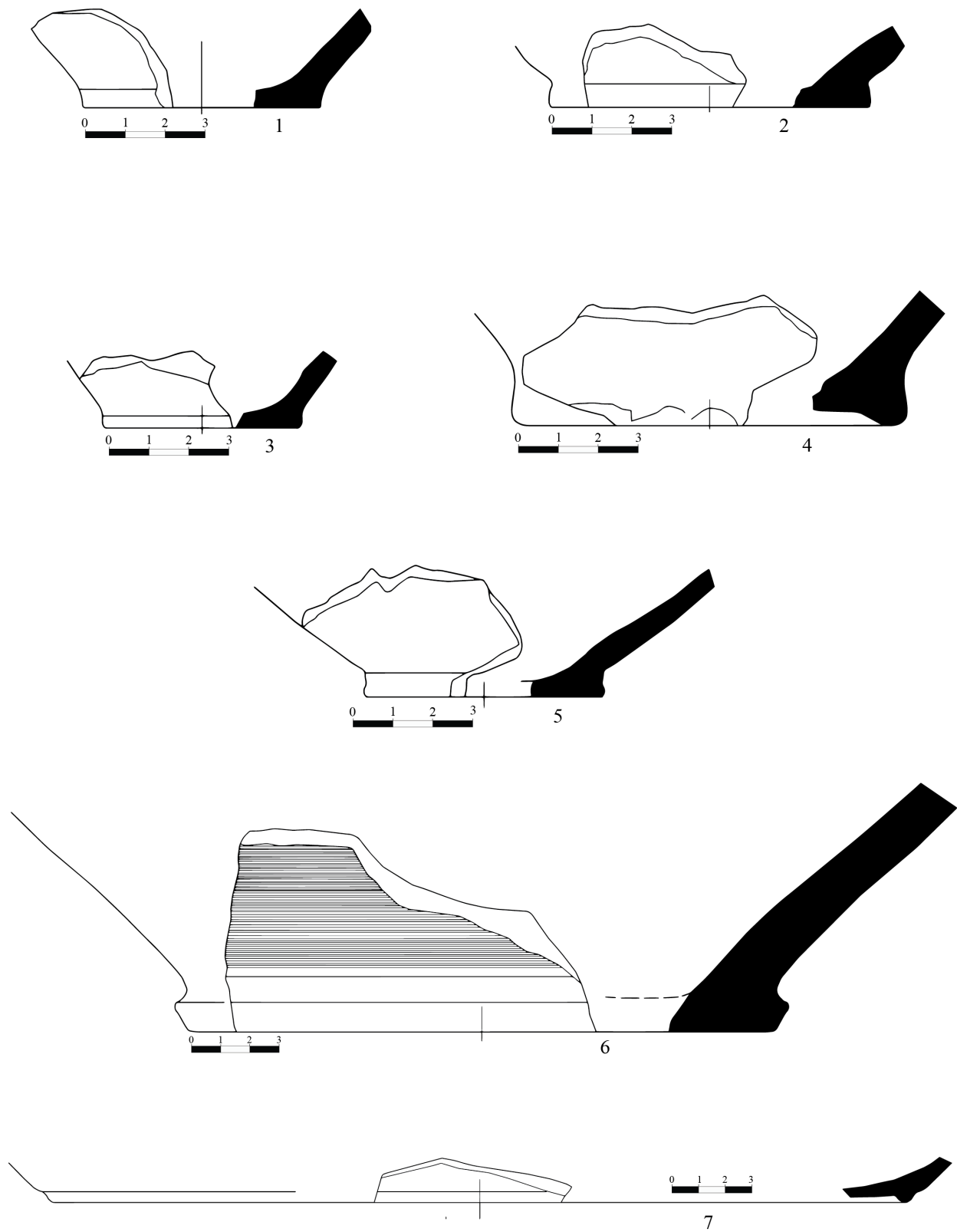


Figure 3.14: Hellenistic period bases recovered from survey around Vani. Drawings by T. Sakhvadze.

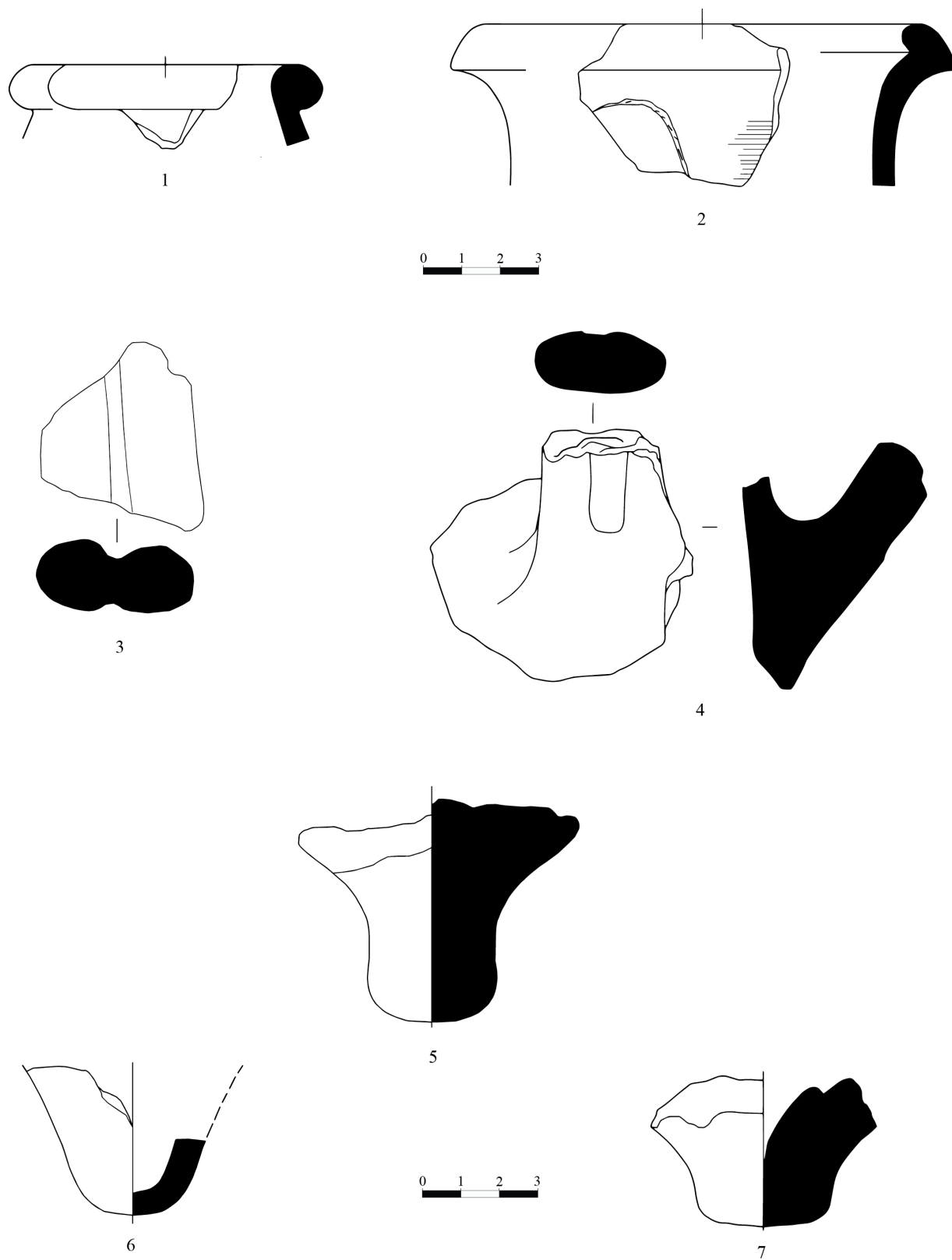


Figure 3.15: Hellenistic amphora fragments collected from survey around Vani. Rims: 1) Colchian, Kveda Bzvani; 2) Sinopean, Kveda Gora. Handles: 3) Koan, Akhvledianebisgora; 4) Colchian, Kveda Bzvani. Feet: 5) Colchian, Kveda Gora; 6) Colchian, Isriti; 7) Colchian, Kveda Bzvani. Drawings by T. Sakhvadze.



#### *IV.7. Post-Hellenistic*

Just as the dating of initial activity in the region is hampered by our reliance on ceramic chronologies dated by imports, so too is the identification and dating of material beyond the Hellenistic period. The assumption that the region was abandoned shortly after Mithridates pillaged Western Georgia in the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE has heavily influenced the dating of ceramic material recovered from the region. No imported ceramics or coins have been recovered from Vani dating later than the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, and vessels of the Late Hellenistic are the last pre-mediaeval ceramics attested in excavated contexts. These two pieces of evidence, coupled with indications that Vani was burned and abandoned in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, have suggested that ceramic production of the type and scale apparent in early periods stops. Setting aside for the moment the possibility that the material broadly dating to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE might continue beyond the Late Hellenistic, the lack of any new shapes datable to the post-Hellenistic does point to a cessation in at least a part of ceramic production. What can be said is that datable innovation in ceramic material stopped with the appearance of the suite of shapes dated to the Late Hellenistic. There is no way to be sure that these Late Hellenistic shapes did not continue to be made beyond the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century BCE.

The lack of research on regional ceramics from periods later than the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE has resulted in the creation of catchall categories for the pre-modern, post-Hellenistic material recovered from contexts in and around Vani. The two most important for our survey work were “Roman,” which accounts for material between the mid 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE and the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, and “Mediaeval,” which accounts for material between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. The Mediaeval period can be divided into early and late, but the lack of focused studies on this issue mean that the dividing line between the two phases, both in terms of date and material signature,

is unclear. Material from both of these Post-Hellenistic periods is attested in the region around Vani and has been collected through survey work.

Roman period burials were recovered at Inashauri and Phereta, both dated on the basis of coins to the last half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE.<sup>64</sup> The Eastern Vani Survey recovered a handful of fragments of heavily damaged red-slipped or red-gloss pottery, which have tentatively been dated to the Roman period (1<sup>st</sup> century BCE – 4<sup>th</sup> century CE). Imported red-gloss pottery of the Late Hellenistic period has been recovered from Vani as well as other sites in Western Georgia including Sukhumi (Dioscuria), Ochamchira (Gyenos), and Gonio (Apsaros).<sup>65</sup> However, the fragments recovered from the region do not resemble Hellenistic examples. Since no ceramics of the Roman period have been recovered from excavated contexts in or around Vani, the best comparanda for this material comes from Roman sites of the Black Sea coast, such as Apsaros or Pitsunda.<sup>66</sup> Among the pottery recovered from these sites are so-called “red-glazed” vessels, which look very similar to the material recovered by the EVS. The identification of this pottery is uncertain, however, as the fragments from survey are heavily damaged and their shape cannot be reconstructed. These fragments may also be from earlier periods, as the use of red-slip was not restricted to the Roman period.

Material of the mediaeval period accounted for the majority of ceramic material recovered by the Eastern Vani Survey. Whether this is due entirely to the broad chronological scope attached to this category is unclear, but the construction of fortifications throughout the region in the 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries suggests that activity in the region was particularly intense in this period and encourages the view that the material recovered from the region is somehow

---

<sup>64</sup> The most recently published grave comes from Kveda Gora, see Kharabadze (2003).

<sup>65</sup> Matiashvili (2004).

<sup>66</sup> For Apsaros see Kakhidze (2008), 311–312; for Pitsunda, Apakidze (1975).

connected to this construction. The Mediaeval ceramic material was produced in the local clay, but was harder fired than the material from the 1st millennium BCE. Material that was not clearly modern was classified as Mediaeval and kept in hopes that subsequent work on this pottery will refine its dating. There were also a few fragments of storage vessels, hard fired with a light gray micaceous fabric. These vessels had the traces of mortar on them and could date to the Early Medieval Period as the mortar used was not the same used in the building of the fortifications.

## V. CERAMICS OF THE VANI SURVEYS

In this section, the material recovered from both the Vani Regional Survey and the Eastern Vani Survey will be presented. The projects will be discussed separately as they deployed different collection strategies aimed at answering related but different questions. Almost all the sites investigated by the Vani Regional Survey had previously been identified and dated based on chance finds, extensive survey or, in some cases, excavation.<sup>67</sup> As a result, the ceramic material collected by the Vani Regional Survey has been primarily used to refine site chronologies and, in places where excavation has taken place, evaluate the relationship between excavated contexts and visible surface remains. The Eastern Vani Survey, on the other hand, has collected material from areas previously thought to be devoid of activity of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. Ceramics recovered by the EVS were used to establish the location and chronological sequences of activity. It begins with the VRS, as the ceramics collected by the EVS can only be understood in the context of the collections of the larger survey effort. Material recovered from

---

<sup>67</sup> For a full discussion of previous investigation of excavated sites in Vani's environs, see Kharabadze (2008).

excavation efforts of the project will not be presented here as our primary concern is understanding the ceramic material recovered from surface contexts.

### *V.1. Ceramic Collection of the Vani Regional Survey*

The Vani Regional Survey carried out three programs of surface collection: informal, systematic and transect collection. Initial visits to sites would result in the collection of grab-bag collections and if enough material was visible, a subsequent visit would include systematic, gridded collection. Systematic collection was, where possible, carried out in tandem with geophysical prospection and was done in the hopes that surface material might give some indication of the phasing of any subsurface features. The transect survey was a late addition to the project developed to address a very specific question about the nature of surface remains between the site of Saqanchia and the Rioni River. With each program of survey came a different type of collection and each needs to be presented separately.

#### *V.1.a. Informal Collection of the VRS*

During the extensive phase of survey, informal collection of diagnostic fragments was carried out anywhere ceramics were visible to the survey team. These collections were referred to as “grab-bag” and for many of the locations investigated by the project they were the only material recovered. Collections were made at twenty sites with a total of 780 fragments of ceramic material recorded.<sup>68</sup> Though these collections did recover fragments datable to each of the phases of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE, it is unlikely that the full range of occupation was identified at any of the sites visited. At sites where previous research had been carried out, at best our survey efforts recovered one or two phases and at worst found no material belonging to the

---

<sup>68</sup> Sites: A003; A005; A010; A011; A020; A022; A029; A033; A040; A045; A047; A050; A054; A056; B004; B007; B009; B013; B016; B020.

phases previously identified. Table 3.1 presents the quantities of pottery from specific periods recovered in each of the project's grab-bag collections. This table shows only those fragments that could be assigned a specific date.

Site	EBA	MBA	LBA	10 <sup>th</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup> BCE	7 <sup>th</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> BCE	4 <sup>th</sup> -1 <sup>st</sup> BCE	1 <sup>st</sup> mill BCE	Roman	Early Medieval	Medieval
Dapnaris Gora (A003)	-	-	-	-	1	12	-	-	-	-
Chais Gora (A005)	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	-	-	-
Sajavakho (A010)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	20
Nigorzhva (A011)	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	-	-	1
Gomnatakhrebi (A020)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
Dablagomi (A022)	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Mtisdziris Gora (A029)	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Melashvilebis Gora (A033)	-	-	-	-	-	1	6	-	-	-
Shuamta (A033)	-	-	-	30	-	-	-	-	-	-
Melauris Gora (A040)	-	-	-	-	73	1	3	-	4	-
Dikhashkho (A045)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2
Kveda Bzvani (A047)	-	-	-	3	2	6	3	-	-	-
Kveda Bzvani (A050)	-	-	-	-	14	3	20	-	-	-
Mskhebisgora (A053)	-	-	-	-	6	2	12	-	-	-
Inashauri (A054)	-	-	-	-	3	4	84	-	-	-
Inashauri (A056)	-	-	-	-	-	1	11	-	-	-
Tsikhesulori (B004)	-	-	-	-	-	-	38	-	-	-
Isriti (B007)	-	-	-	-	-	-	11	-	-	-
Ketchinara (B009)	-	-	-	-	-	4	183	-	-	-
Terduradzisgora (B013)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Khumlari (B013)	-	-	-	-	-	15	-	-	-	-
Amaghleba Tsikhe (B016)	-	-	-	-	-	6	53	-	-	-
Saprasia (B020)	-	-	-	-	1	-	10	-	-	-

Inashauri/Lower Saprasia (B020)	-	-	-	-	-	-	23	-	-	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>498</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>24</b>

Table 3.1: Pottery organized by date collected from sites using informal survey by the Vani Regional Survey.

### *V.1.b. Systematic Collection of the VRS*

The VRS deployed two methods of systematic surface collection. The first was a gridded collection done in tandem with geophysical prospection and the second was a transect survey designed to systematically sample the territory between Saqanchia and the Rioni River. The goals of the intensive survey were to provide a controlled sample of surface remains, supply a greater quantity of datable ceramics, and ultimately to supplement information gathered from reconnaissance survey and geophysical prospection.

Gridded ceramic collection was carried out in tandem with our magnetometry surveys at Kveda Bzvani (A050), Inashauri (A054) and Dzulukhi (A040). Previous visits to these sites had produced grab-bag collections with significant quantities of pottery and burnt daub, and both subsurface prospection and systematic surface collection were carried out in hope of identifying the location of architectural features and refining our understanding of each site's chronology. During the 2009 field season, geophysical prospection was carried out in a field on the western side slope of Melashvilebis Gora, on which the remains of a medieval fortification still stand. Previous survey efforts led by Guram Kvirvelia had discovered material here dating as early as the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE and excavations planned to begin in the late 1980's were abandoned in the wake of the collapsing Soviet Union.<sup>69</sup> The results of our prospection were encouraging and subsequent excavations confirmed the presence of archaeological features. Bolstered by these results, the project expanded our geophysical program to include a selection of other locations

---

<sup>69</sup> Kvirvelia (1990a), (1990b).

where 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE ceramic scatters were found in the proximity of medieval fortifications.

Where practicable, systematic collection and geophysical prospection were carried out in tandem within the same field (i.e. Inashaury). This coupling of surface collection and ground penetrating techniques was favored in hopes of adding greater resolution to our picture of the character of activity at the site. Unfortunately, many of the fields identified as potential candidates for intensive survey were unsuitable for geophysical techniques or vice versa. In these cases compromises were made so that systematic collection and geophysical prospection were done in close proximity.

For each field chosen for intensive collection two rows of grid squares were created forming a cross in the field. Each grid square measured 10 meters on a side. Individual field conditions dictated the actual orientation of the grid squares and, when necessary, required the use of partial squares to cover all the surface set out for survey. The survey team consisted of three field walkers who walked transects within each grid square that were two meters wide. This method required two of the field walkers to complete each square after the initial three person pass. Thus the first pass would cover meters 1-6 and the second meters 7-10. Pottery was bagged for each grid square and marked appropriately with the method of collection (intensive survey), the date, the site number, grid number, pass number (if passes were separated), start time and end time, and the field walkers responsible for the pottery's collection. Pottery was quantified in number of sherds and total weight of collected material.

At each site, survey was carried out within a series of 10 by 10 meter grid squares. Field walkers were spaced evenly along one edge of the grid square. Walking in unison, all material was collected. At the conclusion of each grid square, material was unified into a single bag and

labeled according to the grid number surveyed. This procedure systematized the collection of surface material and resulted in the complete recovery of all visible artifacts.

### Kveda Bzvani (A050)

The village of Kveda Bzvani lies 7 kilometers to the east of Vani. In 2009, an extensive survey visit to a cemetery and fortification in the village led to the identification of a field on the western slope of the fortification that yielded significant quantities of 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE fragments. In 2010, we returned to the site to do magnetometry on the fortification and in the field. Unfortunately, the field was under maize cultivation, with stalks averaging 2.2 meters in height making magnetometry impossible. Gridded collection, however, was carried out as the stalks' height and fairly regular distribution made the surface of the field visible to industrious field walkers. Six 10m<sup>2</sup> grid squares were established along a northeast-southeast axis using our handheld 2005 GeoXM Trimble, with an additional two squares established to the north and south of this line of grids at the mid-point. Collections made for each square were bagged separately. Table 3.2 gives the totals for each grid.

Grid	EBA	MBA	LBA	10 <sup>th</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup> BCE	7 <sup>th</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> BCE	4 <sup>th</sup> -1 <sup>st</sup> BCE	1 <sup>st</sup> mill BCE	Roman	Early Medieval	Medieval
1	-	-	-	-	-	2	1202	-	-	-
2	-	-	-	-	1	1	998	-	-	-
3	-	-	-	-	-	1	761	-	-	-
4	-	-	-	-	1	-	591	-	-	-
5	-	-	-	-	-	-	511	-	-	-
6	-	-	-	-	-	-	1021	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8	-	-	-	-	8	-	774	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5858</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Table 3.2: Recovered ceramics from Kveda Bzvani gridded survey



### Inashauri (A054)

The site of A054 lies 11 kilometers east of Vani in the village of Inashauri. During a visit in 2009 to a medieval fortification here, a plowed field with significant quantities of 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE pottery was found and a small informal collection of diagnostic material was made. The following year we returned to the site and carried out magnetometry survey on a flat portion near the crest of the hill with gridded surface collection occurring in the same grid squares as geophysical survey. Five squares were laid out along a north-south axis and were surveyed by field walkers from east to west, with field walkers going uphill. Three other grid squares were laid out along a perpendicular east-west orientation and field walkers surveyed them from north to south. Three additional grid squares were set up in a second area oriented along a north-south axis and surveyed by field walkers from east to west. Table 3.3 gives the totals for each grid.

Grid	EBA	MBA	LBA	10 <sup>th</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup> BCE	7 <sup>th</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> BCE	4 <sup>th</sup> -1 <sup>st</sup> BCE	1 <sup>st</sup> mill BCE	Roman	Early Medieval	Medieval
1	-	-	-	-	1	-	24	-	-	-
2	-	-	-	-	-	1	80	-	-	-
3	-	-	-	-	-	-	74	-	-	-
4	-	-	-	-	-	-	61	-	-	-
5	-	-	-	-	-	-	15	-	-	-
6	-	-	-	-	-	-	38	-	-	-
7	-	-	-	-	-	-	74	-	-	-
8	-	-	-	-	-	-	47	-	-	-
9	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	-	-	-
10	-	-	-	-	-	1	11	-	-	-
11	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

Table 3.3: Recovered ceramics from Inashauri gridded survey

### Dzulukhi (A040)

The village of Dzulukhi lies approximately 11 km southeast of Vani. Like both Kveda Bzvani and Inashauri, a field near a fortification was found to be rich in pottery. On our return visit in 2010, we found this same field densely cultivated with maize, pumpkins and beans.

Though magnetometry was impossible, we attempted to carry out gridded survey. Surface visibility was extremely low and the field's steepness proved challenging to field walkers. Three 10m<sup>2</sup> grid squares were surveyed with few finds recovered. Table 3.4 gives the totals for each grid.

Grid	EBA	MBA	LBA	10 <sup>th</sup> -7 <sup>th</sup> BCE	7 <sup>th</sup> -4 <sup>th</sup> BCE	4 <sup>th</sup> -1 <sup>st</sup> BCE	1 <sup>st</sup> mill BCE	Roman	Early Medieval	Medieval
1	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	-	-	-
2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

**Table 3.4: Recovered ceramics from Dzulukhi gridded survey**

At all three sites, fragments were small and few diagnostic rims, bases or handles were found. As a result the vast majority of material could be dated no more precisely than the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. Though the magnetometry failed to reveal any clear indications of subsurface features at these sites, the gridded collection provided a fuller picture of the nature of surface remains and thus a context in which to evaluate our previous collections at these sites and other sites in the survey-region.

### *V.1.c. Transect Survey*

Toward the end of the 2010 season, and following our excavations at Saqanchia, the decision was made to conduct a single transect survey proceeding north to the Rioni River from Saqanchia. Four fieldwalkers were evenly spaced and regular intervals were planned for material to be counted, bagged and labeled. No material was recovered from this transect survey.

### *V.2 Ceramic Collection of the Eastern Vani Survey*

As presented in the previous chapter, the Eastern Vani Survey deployed two methods of ceramic collection. The first, and most important method, was systematic intensive collection of ceramic material within agricultural fields. Surveyors collected all material regardless of date,

and it was recorded by the survey. The second method was carried out during extensive survey and was focused on those periods under consideration in this dissertation, that is the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. This was done mainly for the purposes of speed and efficiency, but also because ceramics of the post-Hellenistic phases are less well studied and thus less well understood. Obviously material of these later phases was collected during intensive survey, but no fragments were intentionally collected during extensive survey. Though our extensive survey was systematic in its coverage of areas not under agricultural development, the collection of artifacts that took place at areas where material was identified was generally unsystematic.

Detailed reporting of pottery finds made by the survey can be found in appendices A and B; here I will instead present a coarser grained aggregation of material based on the 1x1 km survey grids, which were a subdivision of the large 2x2 km grid squares. Table 3.5 breaks collections down by period giving a count of the fragments recovered and an indication of the total weight of burnt mud plasters recovered. By far the greatest quantity of material comes from periods after the Roman period, here grouped together in the category of “Mediaeval.” It is important to note that difference in ceramic quantities from the Classical and Hellenistic periods is negligible in all grids except for grid 36. Several very important activity areas were identified in Grid 36, and this data seems to suggest that there was a general reduction in ceramic activity beginning in the Hellenistic period. As the table also shows, quantities of diagnostic pottery from the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age are extremely low, but not completely absent.

Grid	BA	EIA	Classical	Hellenistic	Roman	1 <sup>st</sup> Mill	Mediaeval	Daub (kg)
3.1	-	-	5	19	-	8	7	2.30
3.2	-	-	-	2	-	5	117	-
3.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	-
3.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	8	-
8.1	-	-	6	3	-	5	8	54.32
9.1	-	-	3	1	-	2	186	-
9.2	-	4	7	5	-	15	72	0.01

9.3	-	1	2	2	-	7	169	-
9.4	-	-	7	9	-	9	61	-
20.1	-	3	4	8	1	72	431	0.01
20.2	-	3	8	11	-	68	430	-
20.3	-	1	19	11	1	68	386	0.20
20.4	-	3	13	12	-	36	357	-
26.1	2?	-	3	21	-	14	32	-
35.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
35.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
35.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
35.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
32.2	-	-	1	1	-	4	-	0.86
36.1	-	-	4	1	1	15	155	0.01
36.2	-	-	43	12	6	34	195	-
36.3	-	-	133	69	-	287	270	1.35
36.4	-	-	80	33	2	90	195	2.61
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>338</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>3089</b>	<b>61.67</b>

Table 3.5: Recovered ceramic material grouped by grid and organized by period.

Table 3.6 organizes the material presented in Table 3.5 by origin and function. Local common wares can generally be dated to no better than the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE, so most of the common wares reported here are not very precisely dated. The most commonly collected fragments were of storage vessels, followed by architectural fragments including both burnt mud plasters and roofing tiles. Most striking in this table is the very small number of imports recovered from survey and how few of them were transport amphorae. The initial assumption when the survey began was that when imported material was recovered by the survey it would most likely come from transport amphorae, because they would be both more common than other types of imports and more likely to resist degradation in the soil. That only two imported amphorae were identified is important especially when compared to the number of Colchian Amphorae, which are comparatively well attested in the collections of the EVS.

Grid	Local				Import		
	Storage	Transport	Common	Architectural	Transport	Table	Architectural
3.1	1	3	15	26	1	-	-
3.2	1	-	5	-	-	1	-
3.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
9.1	3	-	3	-	-	-	-
9.2	-	-	31	1	-	-	-
9.3	-	-	12	-	-	-	-
9.4	9	-	12	6	1	1	-
20.1	6	1	75	2	-	3	1
20.2	10	1	86	-	-	1	-
20.3	21	2	51	1	-	1	4
20.4	21	-	42	1	-	-	-
35.1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
35.2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
35.3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
35.4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
36.1	3	-	18	1	-	-	-
36.2	38	1	56	-	-	-	-
36.3	147	5	332	40	-	1	1
36.4	101	3	107	49	-	1	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>845</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>

Table 3.6: Recovered ceramic material grouped by grid and organized by type.

## VI. DISCUSSION

The ceramics recovered by intensive and extensive survey were used to establish or clarify the chronological limits of the activity taking place in the environs of Vani. To achieve this, we relied heavily on diagnostic fragments and, when possible, datable imports. The overall conservatism in Colchian ceramic production rendered a vast majority of the sherds recovered by our project non-diagnostic and only generally datable to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. Despite the lack of chronological resolution offered by non-diagnostic sherds, the fact that a preponderance of these sherds can at least be placed within broad, ancient, medieval and modern date ranges

allows us to use these sherds to establish a context in which to better understand the diagnostic remains.

Collection of surface material was carried out in three ways. The primary form of collection was informal, grab-bag collections made whenever ceramic material was encountered.<sup>70</sup> Intensive survey and excavation accounted for the largest portion of material recovered by the project, though the date ranges of these material are extremely narrow. To this we may add material that was given to the project by local inhabitants and most importantly the ceramics recovered by previous research in the region.

As can be seen from the discussion above, the primary diagnostic features for Colchian ceramics are vessel form and decoration. Fabric offers some clues as to whether the fragment belongs to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium as opposed to other epochs, but overall there is a great deal of continuity in clay and inclusion choice. The production process of ceramic vessels, on the other hand, does appear to change over time with greater centralization and a movement to the use of reductive kiln environments. In general the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE sees a gradual increase in the number of vessel types with a reduction in the overall variability among examples of any one type. Moreover, the move to reductive atmospheres in kilns resulted in more even firing and a shift in fabric color from black and greyish brown to a more orange color.

Notwithstanding the difficulties posed by traditional approaches, local chronologies are good enough to offer a comprehensive picture of settlement in the hinterland of Vani in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. Although overall ceramic densities are low when compared to contemporary evidence from other regional surveys in the Black Sea and Anatolia, the material collected by the both the VRS and EVS points to particularly intense ceramic use between 9<sup>th</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries

---

<sup>70</sup> See chapter 2 for a fuller description of the survey techniques used by the EVS.

BCE, corresponding to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age through the Hellenistic Period. Sporadic finds indicate only limited occupation of the area in the Neolithic and Early/Middle Bronze Ages. Beginning in the Late Bronze Age, however, there is a noticeable increase in the evidence for activity focused primarily on naturally protected hilltops near prominent rivers. This increase in activity continues until the Late Hellenistic period when there is a marked diminution in the tempo of ceramic development, suggesting a decline in the use of ceramics into the Roman and Late Roman periods. Whether this reduction in ceramic use represents an overall decline in the number of people living in the region is unclear, but it certainly indicates a fundamental change in the region's economy and thus may suggest an overall transformation in social organization. In the next chapter, the data recovered by the survey will be presented holistically and a reconstruction of the tempo and character of regional settlement transformations will be laid out.

## Chapter 4 - The Found Landscape

### I. INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the material recovered by the Eastern Vani Survey, places the project within the context of the settlement around Vani and more broadly within the context of Western Georgia in antiquity. In order to better understand the results of the Eastern Vani Survey, it is necessary to provide background through a preliminary discussion of the sites visited by the Vani Regional Survey. The results of the VRS are currently in preparation for publication, and Angela Commito will present a treatment of the sites recorded by the project.<sup>1</sup> The results of our work show that despite its limitations, intensive survey provides new sources of information useful to understanding the nature of settlement in ancient Colchis and its relationship to important centers like Vani.

The region's topography coupled with the dispersed settlement and the particular agricultural practices that define the modern landscape resulted in very few areas where large, contiguous portions of the landscape could be surveyed intensively.<sup>2</sup> In addition, individual fields generally yielded small collections of datable and diagnostic fragments, which, because of the prevailing topography and the willingness of farmers to place their fields on slopes as steep as 40%, were difficult to associate with specific points of origin. Within the context of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Commito's (in prep.) treatment of this material will supersede this presentation of the data and should be treated as the primary source for sites recorded by the Vani Regional Survey.

<sup>2</sup> Though the average size of all fields surveyed was ca. 1015 m<sup>2</sup>, the median size was only ca. 550 m<sup>2</sup> and the standard deviation was 1466.98 m<sup>2</sup> (n=2375).



Eastern Vani Survey, the realities of the survey area conspired to produce small, isolated punctiform scatters dotting the landscape. These scatters were too small and too numerous to be identified as individual sites, and they were too dispersed to be easily aggregated and treated as portions of sites. Moreover, the active nature of the landscape meant that where material was found was not necessarily where the activity that produced it had taken place. Our solution was to move beyond the discussion of “sites” and instead focus on locating areas in the landscape where ancient activity appears to have been focused. The goal was to group recovered material that would have likely been spatially proximate in antiquity. The erosion of material down hill slopes was the primary secondary depositional process affecting the location and character of surface finds. Fields that were near each other and that shared the same relationship to slopes in the survey region were grouped together. To determine proximity, an arbitrary distance of no more than 200 meters between fields was chosen. These groups of fields, called activity areas, were then associated with the closest elevated point, called “high-points.” This is of course not to say that these “high-points” should be equated with the location of ancient activity, but instead they are places in the landscape where elevation and slope suggest would have been the highest possible origin point for the erosional episodes that led to the movement of material. The material recovered by the survey thus originates from the zone between the high point and the recovery location. Though this approach makes it impossible to fully grapple with the change in scale of activity in any one location, it allows us to understand the long-term structural realities of settlement in the region and, more importantly, use limited surface material to identify important places in the landscape.

Our work in the region identified eight phases of activity: Late Bronze Age (15<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> BCE); Early Iron Age (10<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> BCE), Classical (7<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> BCE), Hellenistic (4<sup>th</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> BCE), Roman

(1<sup>st</sup> BCE - 4<sup>th</sup> CE), and Mediaeval (5<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> CE).<sup>3</sup> Because some periods are more difficult to identify through surface remains (i.e. the Bronze and Early Iron Ages), the presence on the surface of material datable to these periods was considered a more significant event than the discovery of material from other periods. Other periods were more likely to be found in surface contexts due in part to the material from certain periods being more visible in surface contexts than others (i.e. Mediaeval fortifications; Storage Vessels). During the extensive surveys of the VRS, we were struck by how common it was to find ancient material in close proximity to certain important Mediaeval and modern features, such as fortifications, churches, and cemeteries. The EVS was designed, in part, to test whether these relationships were significant or merely the result of biases in our methods of extensive survey. What we found was something that sounds rather obvious: there are places in the landscape that remain important throughout the history of human activity in the region. We found that the relationships between fortifications, churches, and cemeteries were consistent throughout the survey area. These features were always located in topographically important places (hills, intersections of watersheds, etc), and the significance of these places may have been further enhanced by the continued use and historicizing of the place.

With this in mind, we took our material and considered each piece to be an opportunistic find that gave evidence to a date to activity taking place in the area. Activity areas as units of analysis were developed to group material together in such a way as to make sense of the chronological scope and intensity of activity in the area. Only three types of activity could be identified based on the evidence: settlement, burial and settlement-burial. Settlements are those activity areas where architectural remains have been recovered, most commonly in the form of

---

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 3 and Table 3.1.

burnt daub. Burials are those activity areas where storage containers have been found in dense concentrations without any accompanying material. As for settlement-burial activity areas, the material from individual fields gives the impression that both settlement and burial could have taken place somewhere in the vicinity. Activity areas identified as settlement-burials include a significant concentration of and variety pottery, especially pithoi, and no evidence of architectural features. Settlement in close proximity to burials may have been the predominant form of habitation in the region. Large burial grounds are unknown from previous research in the region during the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium and where burials are uncovered in excavations, they are in relatively close proximity to excavated settlement layers.

The sections that follow give period-by-period presentations of the evidence for occupation around Vani from previous research and the results of the Vani Regional Survey and the Eastern Vani Survey. Each section begins with a discussion of the previous research gathered by the Vani Regional Survey and ends with a presentation of the new material recovered by the Eastern Vani Survey. For each period, the important locations identified by both surveys are presented in tables, which give the name, identification number, and indicate what type of activity was taking place at these locations in each of the phases identified by the survey. Individual tables are given for each period, rather than one large table as it gives focus to the data pertinent to each period but also puts each location into the broader chronological context of the survey area. Following the sections on periodization is a broader discussion of the landscape history of the region in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. Reconstructions of settlement patterning and population densities will be linked to discussions of the probable political, social, and economic relationships that conditioned settlement in the region.

## II. PHASE 1 – BRONZE AGE (27<sup>TH</sup>-10<sup>TH</sup> BCE)

On the whole, the Bronze Age is poorly attested by material recovered from the region around Vani. Previous survey and excavation at sites to the east and west of Vani have recovered material from 11 sites datable to the Bronze Age, with most of this material coming in the form of bronze tools from chance surface collections and dated to the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age transition (12<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE) (Fig 2). The most important of these sites is Dablagomi, where excavations revealed settlement deposits of the Bronze Age on a hill named Natsikhvarigora (A019). The village lies 12 kilometers to the west of Vani nestled in the hills forming the southern border of the Rioni river valley. On the eastern slopes of the hill, excavations directed by Vera Tolordava uncovered Kuro-Arax pottery and Colchian pottery of the Early Bronze Age.<sup>4</sup> Excavators report finding daub as well as a pressed clay feature they interpreted as a floor. This EBA phase has a published date of the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium, but the Kura-Araxes cultural complex has now been placed as early as the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE and the material from Dablagomi likely needs to be re-evaluated.<sup>5</sup>

Place	Site #	EBA	MBA	LBA	EIA	C	H	FM	R	Med
Dapnari	A004	-	-	SF	SF	B, S	B, S	-	-	-
Dablagomi, Natsikhvarigora	A019	S	-	S	S	B	B, S	-	-	-
Mtisdziri, Mtisdzirigora	A029	-	-	SF	SF	SF	-	-	-	-
Shuamta, Melashvilebisgora	A033	-	-	S	S	S	S	S	-	-
Sulori, Sakakile	A039	-	-	SF	S	S, H	S	S	-	-
Dzulukhi, Bughnari	A040	-	-	SF	SF	-	-	-	-	-
Zeda Bzvani	A050	-	-	S	S	S	S	S	-	-
Phereta, Serisdziri, Parousla Hill	A061	-	-	S	S	S	-	S	-	-
Kveda Tsikhesulori, Ketchinara	B009	-	-	S	S	B, S	B, S	S	-	H
Saprasia, Jijouri	B020	-	-	SF	SF	-	-	B, S	-	-
Bagineti	D001	-	-	SF	SF	-	-	-	-	-
Ukhuti	D003	-	-	SF	SF	-	-	-	-	-

Table 4.1: Bronze Age locations recorded by the Vani Regional Survey. B=Burial, C=Church/Sanctuary, F=Fortification, H=Hoard, Q=Quarry, S=Settlement, SF=Stray Find, U=Unknown.

<sup>4</sup> Kufin (1950), 138-139

<sup>5</sup> The periodization of the Kura-Araxes in Transcaucasia has most recently been worked out by Karinè Kushnareva (1997), 53-54, who places it between ca. 3500-2300 BCE, and divides it into four sub-periods (EBI-IV). Philip Kohl argues that the Kura-Araxes phenomena did not penetrate into Western Transcaucasia. Kohl (2007), 86-102; Kohl (2009).

No clear evidence of Bronze Age activity was recovered from intensive survey to the east of Vani. During a return visit to Kveda Bzani, a village located approximately 8.5 kilometers to the east and previously visited by the Vani Regional survey, a collection of pottery was made from the eroded scarps of two hills in the area called as Natsikhvari and Chitoula (“Place of Birds”) (Fig. 3). The hills are oriented northwest-southeast and separated by a low saddle and a modern dirt road. From the southern slope of the northwestern hill, a handful of ceramic fragments of a pinkish-brown fabric were found. Two of these fragments preserved portions of a rim, and though no joins were found, their form suggest they came from the same vessel, likely a large pot or pitharion. One of the rim fragments has a pair of pyramidal projections that are similar to vessels of the Middle or Late Bronze Age (Fig. 1), but the identification of this material as coming from the Bronze Age is by no means certain.<sup>6</sup>

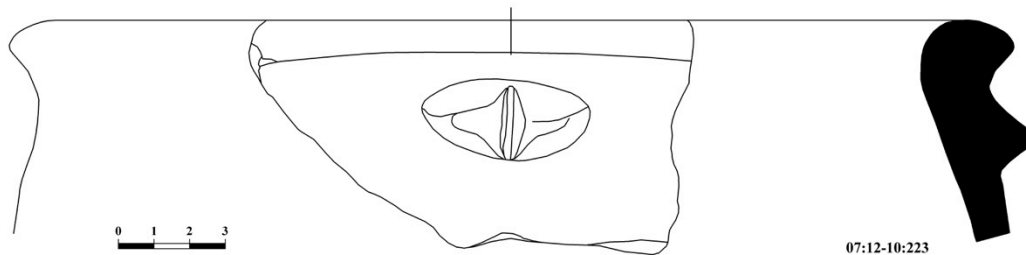


Figure 4.1: Possible Bronze Age rim fragment recovered from Kveda Bzani.

Place	Site #	EBA	MBA	LBA	EIA	C	H	FM	R	EM
Kveda Bzani, Natsikhvari	E015	-	U	U	S	S	S	S	-	-

Table 4.2: Bronze Age locations recorded by the Eastern Vani Survey. B=Burial, C=Church/Sanctuary, F=Fortification, H=Hoard, Q=Quarry, S=Settlement, SF=Stray Find, U=Unknown.

The lack of resolution for activity in the region during the Bronze Age is important. One possible reason for a lack of evidence for the Bronze Age, particularly to the east of Vani, could be the result of the reliance of regional investigation on the reporting of finds by local

<sup>6</sup> Personal correspondence with S. Kharabadze, D. Kacharava and G. Kvirkvelia. There is disagreement about what date should be given to this material. Kvirkvelia has suggested an LBA/EIA date.

inhabitants. Most of the material which has been dated to the Bronze Age comes from chance surface finds by local habitants where the exact find location was unknown or unrecorded. Where excavations have taken place, only Dablagomi yielded material of the Bronze Age from stratified contexts. Late Bronze material was recovered from Sakakile, but this material was found accidentally on the surface and not from stratified contexts.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the majority of the material datable to the Bronze Age comes in the form of bronze tools which are generally identified as coming from the transitional period between the Bronze and Early Iron Ages, and rather than being a clear indication of Late Bronze Age activity, may rather be the result of over reliance on typologies of metal objects in dating contexts of the Bronze and Early Iron Ages. Indeed, for periods before the appearance of datable Greek imports, metal objects are the primary means of dating.

Leaving the chance finds aside, there are five sites in the region identified as settlements of the Late Bronze Age or a transitional period between the Bronze and Iron Ages. Four of these places, Dablagomi and Shuamta to the west, Ketchinara north of Vani and Phereta to the east, share important topographic relationships. Each of these locations sits in the upper river valleys (zone three) in the foothills. The exception to this pattern is Zeda Bzvani, which sits within the ridge of hills that separates the Sulori and Qvinitisqaro River valleys. Due to their proximity, the material recovered by the EVS, if from the Bronze Age, could be associated with the material from Zeda Bzvani.

---

<sup>7</sup> Inauri (1990).

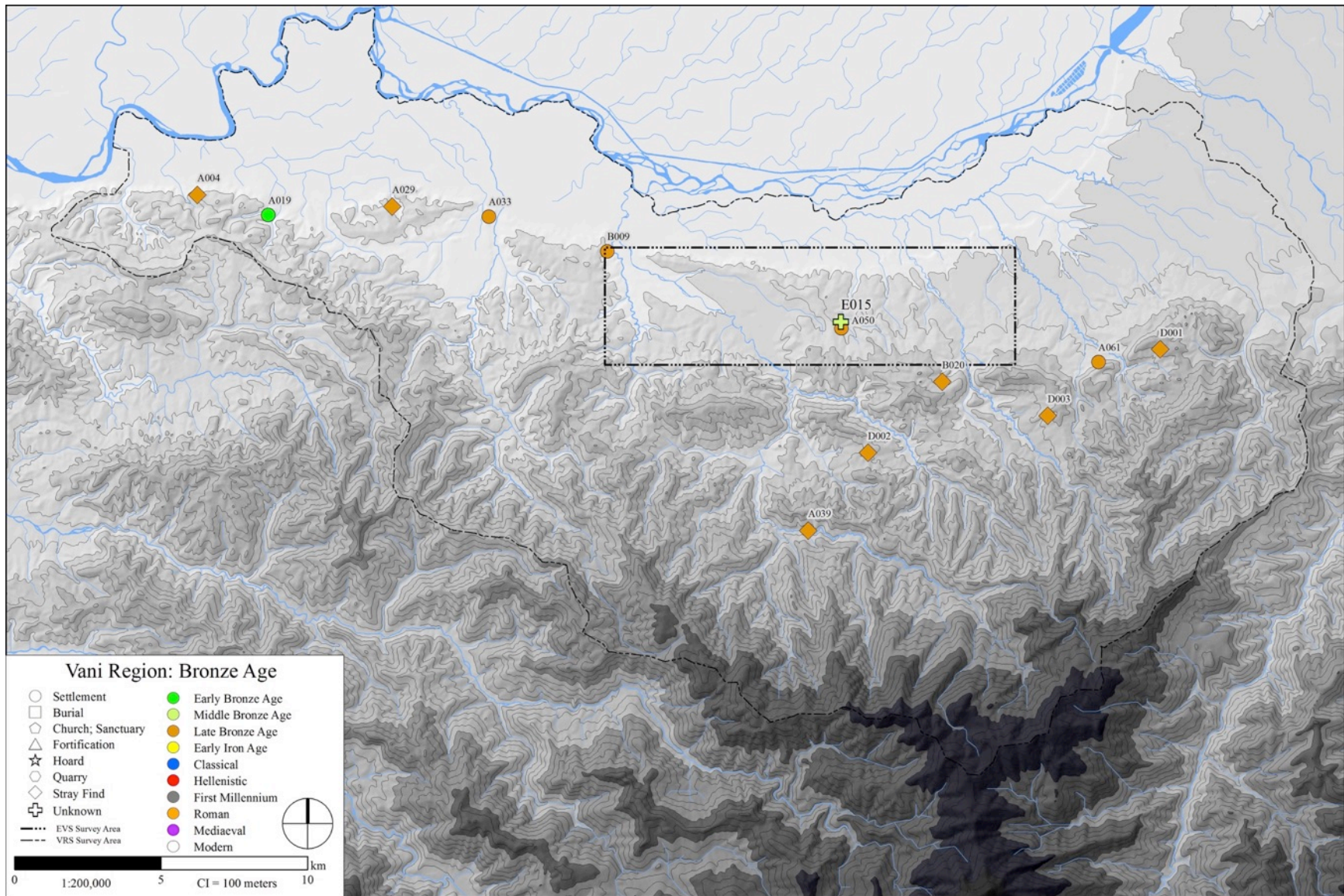


Figure 4.2: Bronze Age locations identified by the VRS and EVS projects.

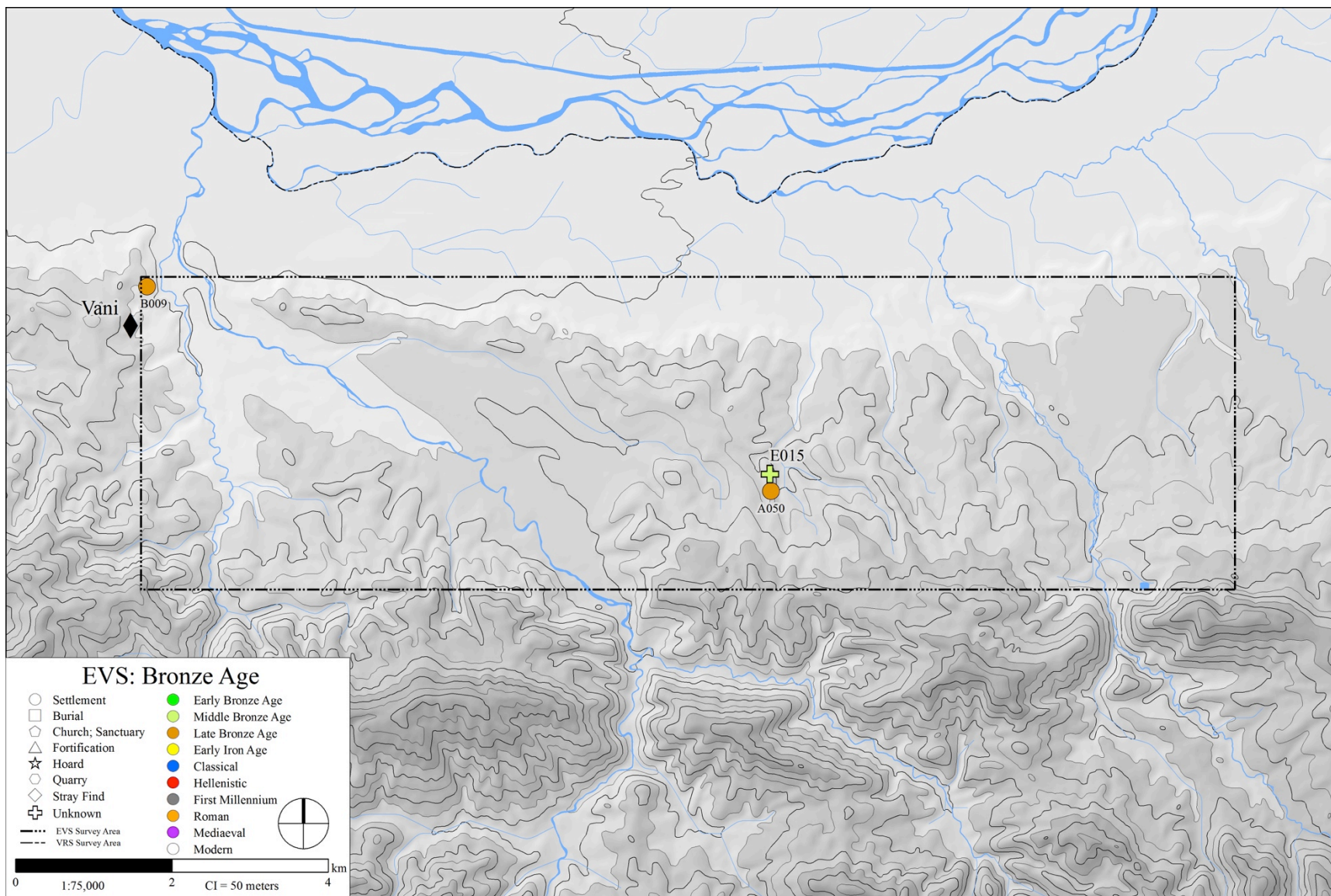


Figure 4.3: Bronze Age activity within and around the EVS survey region.



### III. FIRST MILLENNIUM BCE

A significant portion of the material recovered by both the VRS and EVS projects could be dated no more precisely than the first millennium BCE. Though ceramic fabric for this period is fairly diagnostic, most local forms produced in this fabric remain largely consistent throughout the first millennium, as evidenced by excavations at Vani and regional sites. In fact, the chronological limits of this activity may extend earlier and later than the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium, but as our dating of contexts relies on diagnostic material of the first millennium, it is impossible to more precisely date this material without additional stratified excavations and independent dating methods. The result is a number of places in the landscape that can be placed no more precisely than the first millennium, and even then this identification must be qualified with the possibility that this could be evidence of later activity. Previous research identified ancient activity of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE at Nigorghva (A011, A012), Mtisdziri, Samkharadzebis Ubani (A028), Dikhashkho (A045), Inashauri (A055), Dutskhuni (A071), Vani Area B (B001), Dzulukhi, Aptaruali (B002), and Isriti (B007). For the most part, these sites are pithos burials which were either too damaged or the burial vessel was too generic to place it in either the Classical or Hellenistic periods. The settlements are dated to the first millennium on the basis of burnt daub.

Place	Site #	EBA	MBA	LBA	EIA	C	H	FM	R	Med
Dapnari, Chaisgora	A005	-	-	-	-	S	B, S	S	-	-
Dapnari	A006	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	S
Dapnari, Tsqvetiligora	A007	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Sajavakho	A009	-	-	-	-	S	-	S	-	-
Sajavakho	A010	-	-	-	-	-	S	S	-	-
Nigorzghva	A011	-	-	-	-	-	-	S	-	S
Nigorzghva	A012	-	-	-	-	-	-	B	-	-
Dablagomi, Nasakirevigora	A014	-	-	-	-	B, S	B, S	S	-	-
Dablagomi, Nasqdevigora	A015	-	-	-	-	S	-	S	-	-
Mtisdziri, Adeishvilebisgora	A023	-	-	-	S	S	S	S	-	F
Mtisdziri, Samkharadzebis Ubani	A028	-	-	-	-	-	-	B	-	-
Shuamta, Melashvilebisgora	A033	-	-	S	S	S	S	S	-	-
Sulori, Sakakile	A039	-	-	SF	S	S, H	S	S	-	-
Dikhashkho	A045	-	-	-	-	-	-	S	-	-
Kveda Bzvani	A047	-	-	-	S	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Bzvani	A050	-	-	S	S	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Bzvani, Meskhebisgora	A053	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Inashauri	A055	-	-	-	-	-	-	B	-	-
Inashauri	A056	-	-	-	S	S	-	S	-	-
Phereta	A059	-	-	-	S	S	S	S	-	-

Phereta, Serisdziri, Parousla Hill	A061	-	-	S	S	S	-	S	-	-
Zeda Gora, Natsikhvarisgora	A064	-	-	-	S	S	-	S	-	-
Qumuri, Mskhaltavake	A069	-	-	-	S	S	-	S	-	-
Dutskhuni	A071	-	-	-	-	-	-	B	-	-
Vani, Area B	B001	-	-	-	-	-	-	SF	-	-
Dzulukhi, Aptarauli	B002	-	-	-	-	-	-	S	-	-
Tsikhesulori	B004	-	-	-	-	-	S	S	-	-
Isriti	B007	-	-	-	-	-	-	B, S	-	-
Kveda Tsikhesulori, Ketchinara	B009	-	-	S	S	B, S	B, S	S	-	H
Khumlari	B013	-	-	-	-	-	S	S	-	-
Saprasia, Jijouri	B020	-	-	SF	SF	-	-	B, S	-	-

Table 4.3: Locations of 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE material recorded by the Vani Regional Survey. B=Burial, C=Church/Sanctuary, F=Fortification, H=Hoard, Q=Quarry, S=Settlement, SF=Stray Find, U=Unknown.

None of the activity areas identified by the EVS were dated only to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. The physical extent of activity areas were defined by proximity and appeal to diagnostic fragments of pottery and fragments datable to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium were always grouped with diagnostics from specific phases of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium. There were, however individual fields that yielded fragments only datable to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium. The activity areas listed here are all those which, in addition to material of the Early Iron Age, Classical and Hellenistic periods, also included material datable only to the first millennium BCE.

Place	Site #	EBA	MBA	LBA	EIA	C	H	FM	R	EM
Kveda Tsikhesulori, Ketchinara	E001	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Vani, Akhvledianebisgora	E002	-	-	-	S	S	S	S	-	-
Mshvidobis Gora 1	E003	-	-	-	-	-	S	S	-	-
Mshvidobisgora 2	E004	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Vani, 1	E005	-	-	-	-	U	U	U	-	-
Salxino	E006	-	-	-	U	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Vani 2	E007	-	-	-	-	U	U	U	-	-
Zeda Vani 3	E008	-	-	-	U	U	U	U	-	-
Gabelauri	E009	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Dikhashkho	E010	-	-	-	-	B, S	B, S	B, S	-	-
Kveda Bzvani 1	E011	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Kveda Bzvani 2	E012	-	-	-	-	B	B	B	-	-
Kveda Bzvani 3	E013	-	-	-	U	S	S	S	-	-
Kveda Bzvani 4	E014	-	-	-	-	-	U	U	-	-
Kveda Bzvani, Natsikhvari	E015	-	U	S	U	S	S	S	-	-
Isriti 1	E016	-	-	-	-	U	U	U	-	-
Zeda Bzvani	E017	-	-	-	-	B	-	B	-	-
Isriti 2	E018	-	-	-	U	B, S	B, S	B, S	-	-
Isriti 3	E019	-	-	-	U	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Bzvani 2	E020	-	-	-	-	U	U	U	-	-
Saprasia	E021	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Kveda Gora 1	E022	-	-	-	-	B	B	B	U	U
Shua Gora 1	E023	-	-	-	-	B	-	B	-	-
Shua Gora 2	E024	-	-	-	-	S	-	S	U	U
Inashauri 1	E025	-	-	-	-	U	U	U	-	-
Kveda Gora 2	E026	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	U
Inashauri 2	E027	-	-	-	-	U	-	U	-	-
Kveda Gora, Tsikhe	E028	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Gora 1	E029	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Gora 2	E030	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	U

Zeda Gora 3	E031	-	-	-	-	-	U	U	U	-
Zeda Gora 4	E032	-	-	-	-	B	B	B	U	U

Table 4.4: Locations of 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE material recorded by the Eastern Vani Survey. B=Burial, C=Church/Sanctuary, F=Fortification, H=Hoard, Q=Quarry, S=Settlement, SF=Stray Find, U=Unknown.

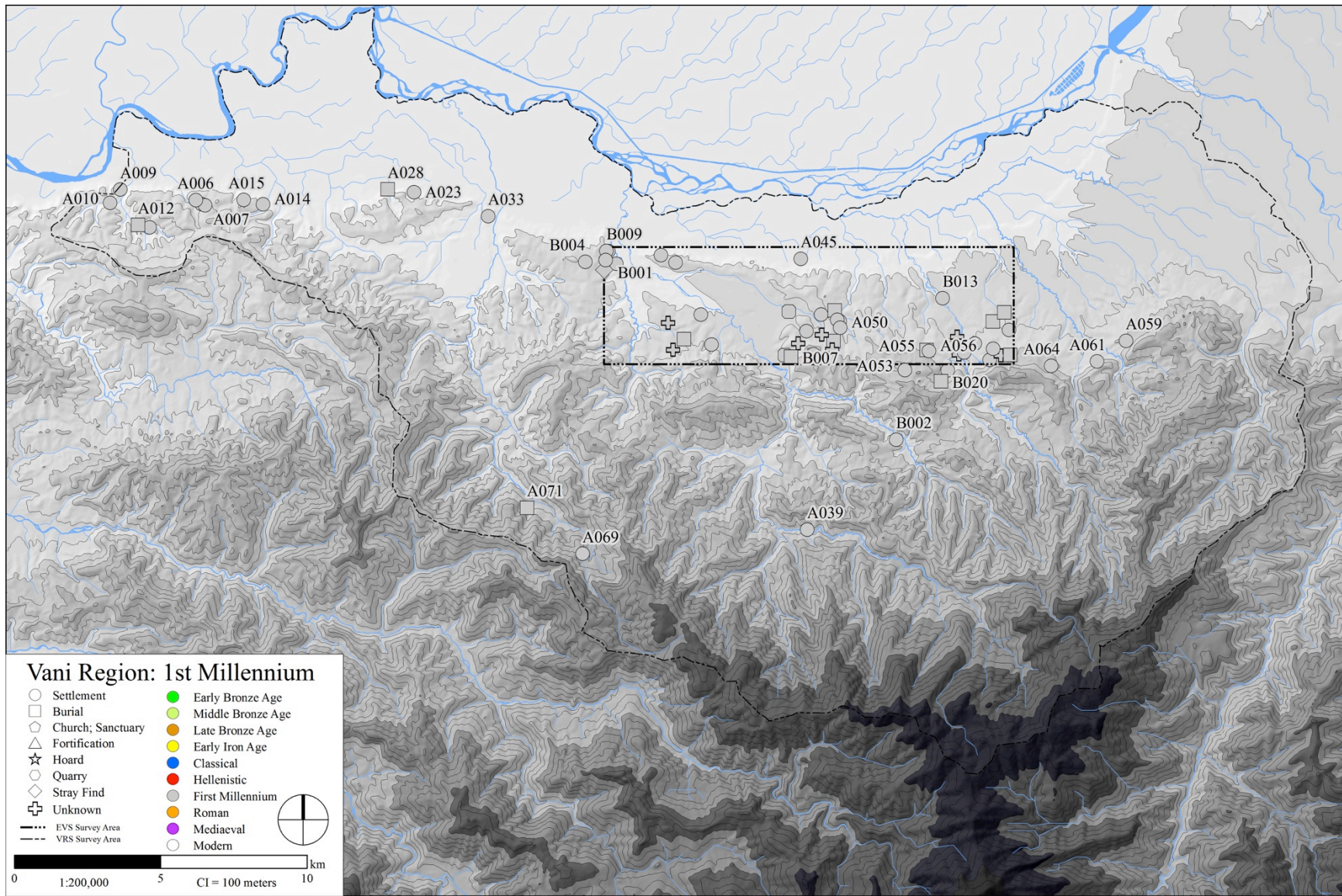


Figure 4.4: Locations of 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE identified by the VRS and EVS projects.

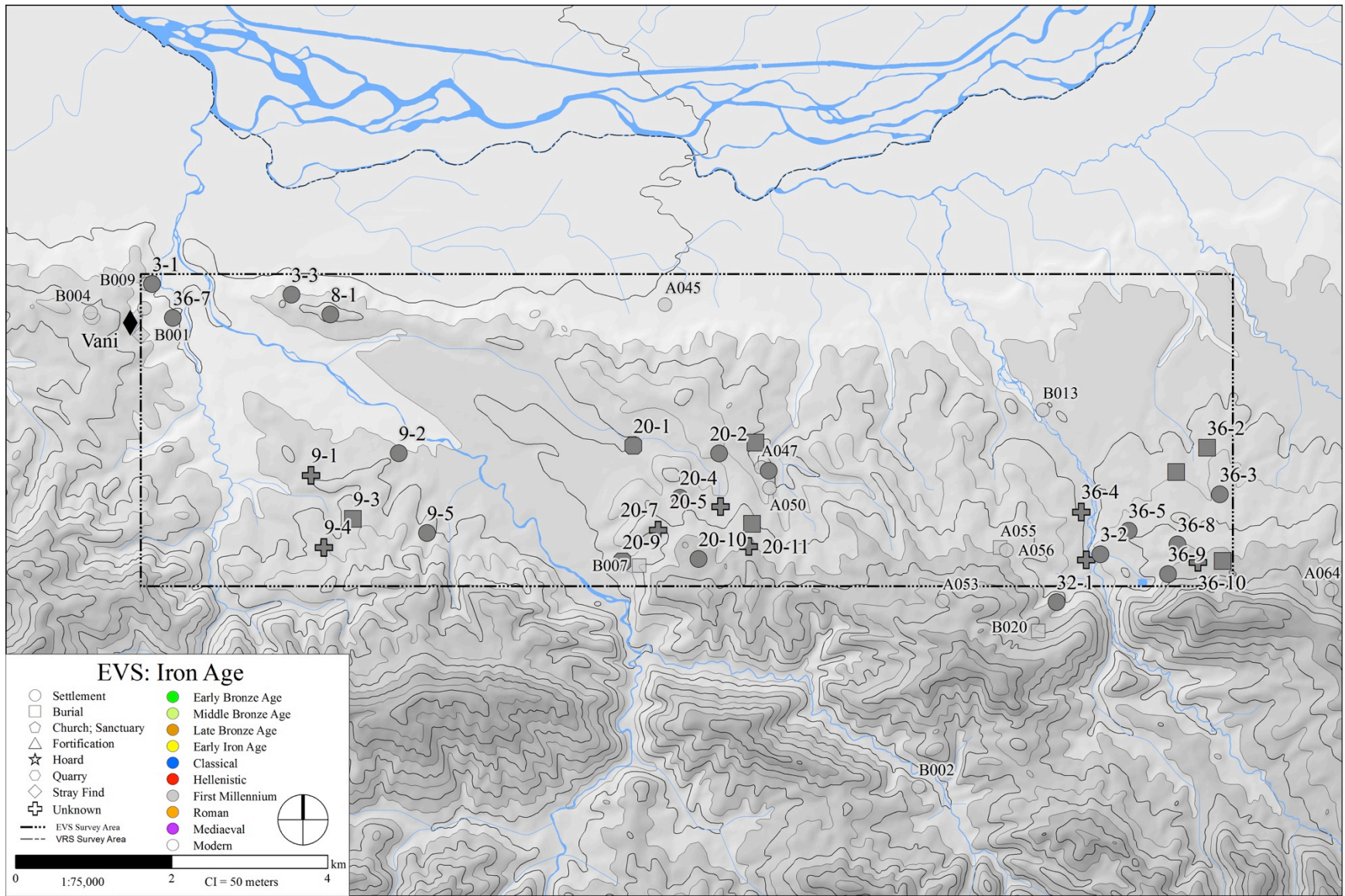


Figure 4.5: Location of activity of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE within and around the EVS survey region.

#### IV.PHASE 2 – EARLY IRON AGE (10<sup>TH</sup>-7<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES BCE)

The first datable ceramics recovered from the site of Vani itself belong to the Early Iron Age and have been dated specifically to the second half of the period (8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE). Excavations on the central terrace revealed diagnostic fragments of pottery that were found with ceramic animal figures within contexts that include the remains of a small structure.<sup>8</sup> The relationship between the ceramic material and the small structure led Otar Lordkipanidze to interpret the area as the locus of cult activity and to suggest that in this period Vani served primarily as a religious site, though with the potential of exerting religiously justified political authority.<sup>9</sup> In the region, there is a significant increase in the quantity and distribution of diagnostic fragments that can be dated from the Early Iron Age. Previous research identified 19 places where EIA activity took place, with the material of 13 of these places being interpreted as the location of some form of settlement.

West of Vani, Dablagomi (A015, A019), Mtisdziri (A023) and Shuamta (A033) are of particular interest as significant material of the Early Iron Age has been recovered from each of them. At Dablagomi, activity continues on Natskikhvarigora (A019) as attested by material recovered from both the top of the hill and its eastern slope. Material was also recovered from north-slope of Nasaqdrevisgora (A015), situated to the east of Natskikhvarigora and separated from it by the Tetri-Ghele stream. From both sites Colchian pottery and bronze tools and weapons were identified.<sup>10</sup> Ceramic material from the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age was recovered from Geperidzebis Namosakhlari at Mtisdziri. This material mainly comes from superficial finds and material eroded from the hills called Nashuebi, which means “Where the

---

<sup>8</sup> Tolordava (1990).

<sup>9</sup> Lordkipanidze (1991), 159-160.

<sup>10</sup> Khoshtaria (1940); Makalatia (1940), (1941); Kuftin (1950); Tolordava (1971), (1973), (1976); Kharabadze (2008); Tolordava (1977).

earth has fallen away.” A significant portion of the northern slope of Nashuebi collapsed sometime after excavations at Nashuebi in the 1970’s.<sup>11</sup> The final site, Shuamta, was recently excavated by the Vani Regional Survey and a vast majority of the datable material from the site comes from the Late Bronze Age/Early Iron Age, and more precisely from the 10<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE.<sup>12</sup>

Previous research to the east of Vani, when compared to that of the West, has revealed less evidence of activity in the EIA, particularly evidence of settlement. Within the survey area of the Eastern Vani Survey, only four locations have yielded material of the Early Iron Age: Ketchinara (B009); Kveda Bzvani (A047); Zeda Bzvani (A047) and Inashauri (A056). From the beginning of archaeological work in the region, Zeda Bzvani has been a site of particular interest. Surveys conducted here in 1936 and 1978 revealed significant quantities of material from the LBA/Early Iron Age, Classical and Hellenistic Periods.<sup>13</sup> The site was identified as a settlement, but it is unclear from the report of finds if the EIA material on its own can be associated with settlement activity. The material from Zeda Bzvani should be associated with the material from Kveda Bzvani as they are in close proximity and together make up the area known as Natsikhvari. The a field in Inashauri (AO56) is perhaps the best known site of the EIA as it was here that the bronze wine drinker figurine, famously known as the “tamada” and dated to the 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century BCE was recovered.<sup>14</sup> Subsequent survey of the vineyard where the figurine was found by the VRS recovered pottery datable to no more precisely than the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE.

Farther to east and outside the Eastern Vani Survey area, three locations have been identified as settlements of the Early Iron Age: Natsikhvarisgora in Zeda Gora (A064) and from

---

<sup>11</sup> Kharabadze (2008).

<sup>12</sup> Kvirkevelia et al. (2014).

<sup>13</sup> Khoshtaria (1959) v2: 150-151; Lordkipanidze et al. (1987), 55; Kharabadze (2008), 21-23.

<sup>14</sup> Kharabadze (2007).

Serisdziri (A061) and the property of the Latchqebiani (A059) in Phereta. At Natskhvarisgora, Sul Khan Kharabadze found a bronze hoe on the northeast slope of the hill, as well as daub fragments on the top and the northern and southern slopes. Pottery from the hill was dated to the Classical period.<sup>15</sup> Within the house compound of the Latchqebiani family in Phereta, fragments of the Early Iron Age were found along with significant quantities of material from later periods, including potential evidence for pit graves of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE. The other site at Phereta, Parousla Hill in a district known as Serisdziri, is perhaps the least ambiguous evidence of a settlement datable to the LBA/EIA outside of Vani itself. At the top of the hills, daub fragments were found in conjunction with LBA/EIA pottery sherds as well as stone tools.<sup>16</sup>

Additionally, there are two sites located in zone three of the survey area in the upper portions of the Qumuri (Mskhatavake, A069) and Sulori (Sakakile, A039) river valleys.<sup>17</sup> At both sites pottery scatters of the 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century BCE have been identified as well as material from later periods. At Sakakile, the cobblestone foundations of a apsidal building were excavated and a bronze axe head of the LBA/EIA was reportedly found on the surface nearby. The location of both of these sites and the similarity of material from them and the material recovered from zone two of the survey area, suggests important contacts and movement along the north and south axes of the survey region.

Place	Site #	EBA	MBA	LBA	EIA	C	H	FM	R	Med
Dapnari	A004	-	-	SF	SF	B, S	B, S	-	-	-
Dablagomi, Nasaqdrevigora	A015	-	-	-	S	S	-	S	-	-
Dablagomi, Natskikhvarigora	A019	S	-	S	S	B	B, S	-	-	-
Dablagomi	A022	-	-	-	S	-	-	-	-	-
Mtisdziri, Adieshvilebisgora	A023	-	-	-	S	S	S	S	-	F
Mtisdziri, Mtisdzirigora	A029	-	-	SF	SF	SF	-	-	-	-
Shuamta, Melashvilebisgora	A033	-	-	S	S	S	S	S	-	-

<sup>15</sup> Koridze (1965), 15-16, 107-108; Jikia (1988), 110-118; Kharabadze (2008), 11-14.

<sup>16</sup> Both sites from Phereta can be found in Abramishvili (1974), 101; Kharabadze (2002), 81-87; and Kharabadze (2008), 37-40.

<sup>17</sup> For Mskhaltavake, Gamkrelidze (1982), 33; Kharabadze (2002), 11. For Sakakile, Beridze (1977), 82-83; Lordkipanidze (1986), 82-83; Lordkipanidze et al. (1987), 54-55; Inauri (1990); Inauri (1990b); Lordkipanidze (2002), 206-207; Kharabadze (2008), 35.



Sulori, Sakakile	A039	-	-	SF	S	S, H	S	S	-	-
Dzulukhi, Bughnari	A040	-	-	SF	SF	-	-	-	-	-
Kveda Bzvani	A047	-	-	-	S	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Bzvani	A050	-	-	S	S	S	S	S	-	-
Inashauri	A056	-	-	-	S	S	-	S	-	-
Phereta	A059	-	-	-	S	S	S	S	-	-
Phereta, Serisdziri, Parousla Hill	A061	-	-	S	S	S	-	S	-	-
Zeda Gora, Natsikhvarisgora	A064	-	-	-	S	S	-	S	-	-
Qumuri, Mskhaltavake	A069	-	-	-	S	S	-	S	-	-
Kveda Tsikhesulori, Ketchinara	B009	-	-	S	S	B, S	B, S	S	-	H
Saprasia, Jijouri	B020	-	-	SF	SF	-	-	B, S	-	-
Bagineti	D001	-	-	SF	SF	-	-	-	-	-
Ukhuti	D003	-	-	SF	SF	-	-	-	-	-

Table 4.5: Early Iron Age locations recorded by the Vani Regional Survey. B=Burial, C=Church/Sanctuary, F=Fortification, H=Hoard, Q=Quarry, S=Settlement, SF=Stray Find, U=Unknown.

Within the intensive survey it has proven difficult to date any of the remains more precisely than generally to the Early Iron Age (10<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries). The most diagnostic features are the burnished wares and zoomorphic handles, which appear at sites throughout Western Georgia.<sup>18</sup> These diagnostic features are not ubiquitous to all vessels produced in the period, nor in the case of burnishing is this technique always applied to the entirety of a vessel's exterior. Within our survey, collections which include fragments datable to the EIA were extremely rare and when material was found it was never more than one or two fragments. As a result, only one of the collections of the EIA made by the EVS can be associated with a settlement, and that is the material recovered from an eroded scarp on the north slope of Akhvledianebisgora (E002). Given its close proximity to the ancient Vani citadel, this material along with the material from Ketchinara are likely the remains of activity associated with the ancient site and potentially with settlement outside the citadel walls.

The other six locations reveal only the presence of activity of the Early Iron Age and not the character of that activity. One of the long held assumptions about settlement in the region is that there was no Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age activity in the immediate vicinity of the Sulori river south of Vani and north of Sakakile. Material recovered from Salxino (E006) and

<sup>18</sup> See figures 3.6 (zoomorphic handles) and 3.7 (burnished wares) for examples recovered from the region around Vani.

Zeda Vani (E008) show there was indeed early activity at sites on the left bank of the Sulori. Also the material recovered from Kveda Bzvani (E013) and Isriti (E018, E019) show evidence for activity taking place on the ridge that defines the transition between the upper (zone three) and lower (zone two) Sulori River Valley and in close proximity to the course of the river itself. The specific type of activity attested by this material is, however, unknown. Although only a couple fragments were recovered from each of these locations, their position in the landscape reveals human activity in areas of the region around Vani previously thought to have been unused in the Early Iron Age.

Place	Site #	EBA	MBA	LBA	EIA	C	H	FM	R	EM
Vani, Akhvledianebisgora	E002	-	-	-	S	S	S	S	-	-
Salxino	E006	-	-	-	U	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Vani 3	E008	-	-	-	U	U	U	U	-	-
Kveda Bzvani 3	E013	-	-	-	U	S	S	S	-	-
Kveda Bzvani, Natsikhvari	E015	-	U	S	U	S	S	S	-	-
Isriti 2	E018	-	-	-	U	B, S	B, S	B, S	-	-
Isriti 3	E019	-	-	-	U	S	S	S	-	-

Table 4.6: Early Iron Age locations recorded by the Eastern Vani Survey. B=Burial, C=Church/Sanctuary, F=Fortification, H=Hoard, Q=Quarry, S=Settlement, SF=Stray Find, U=Unknown.

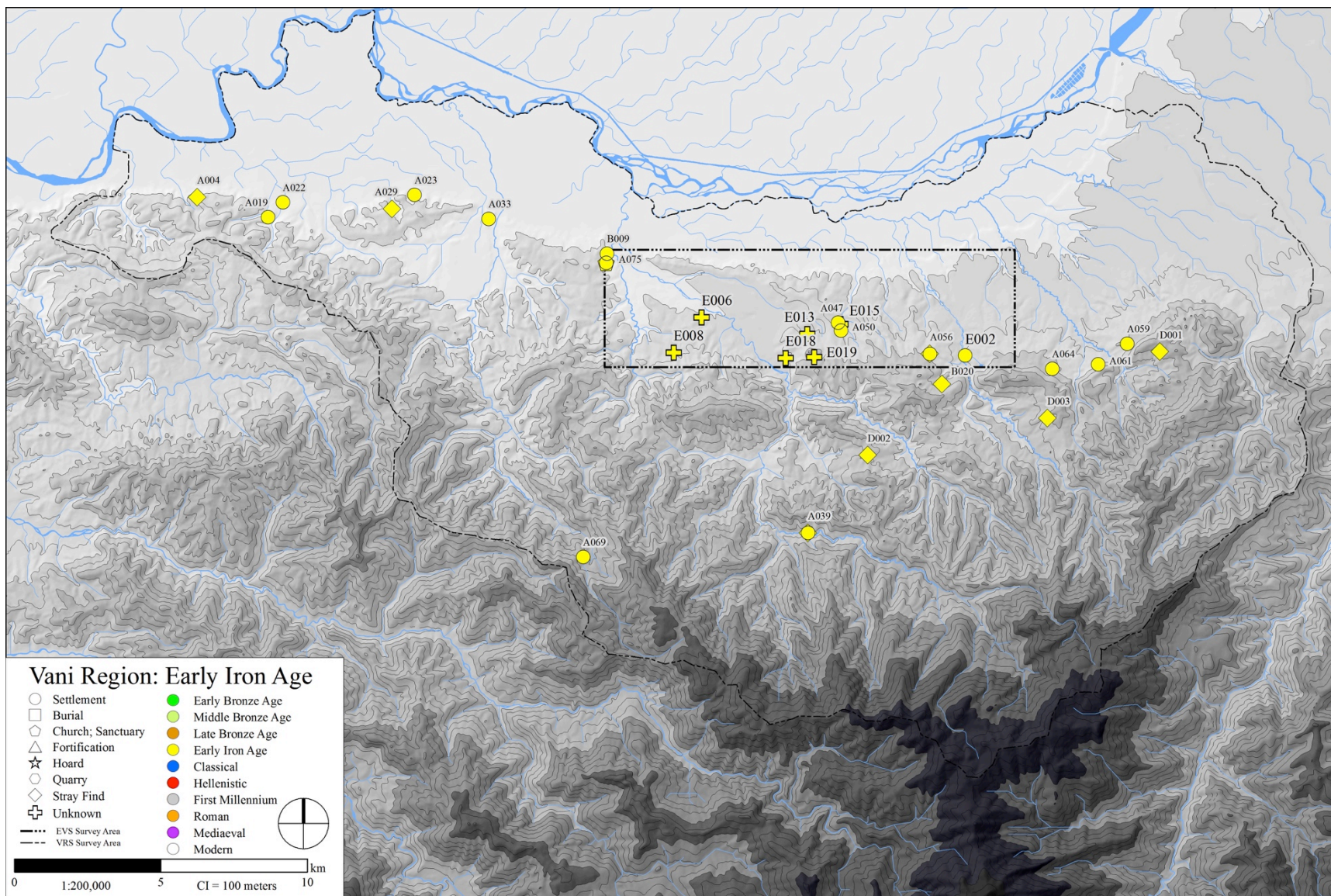


Figure 4.6: Early Iron Age locations identified by the VRS and EVS projects.

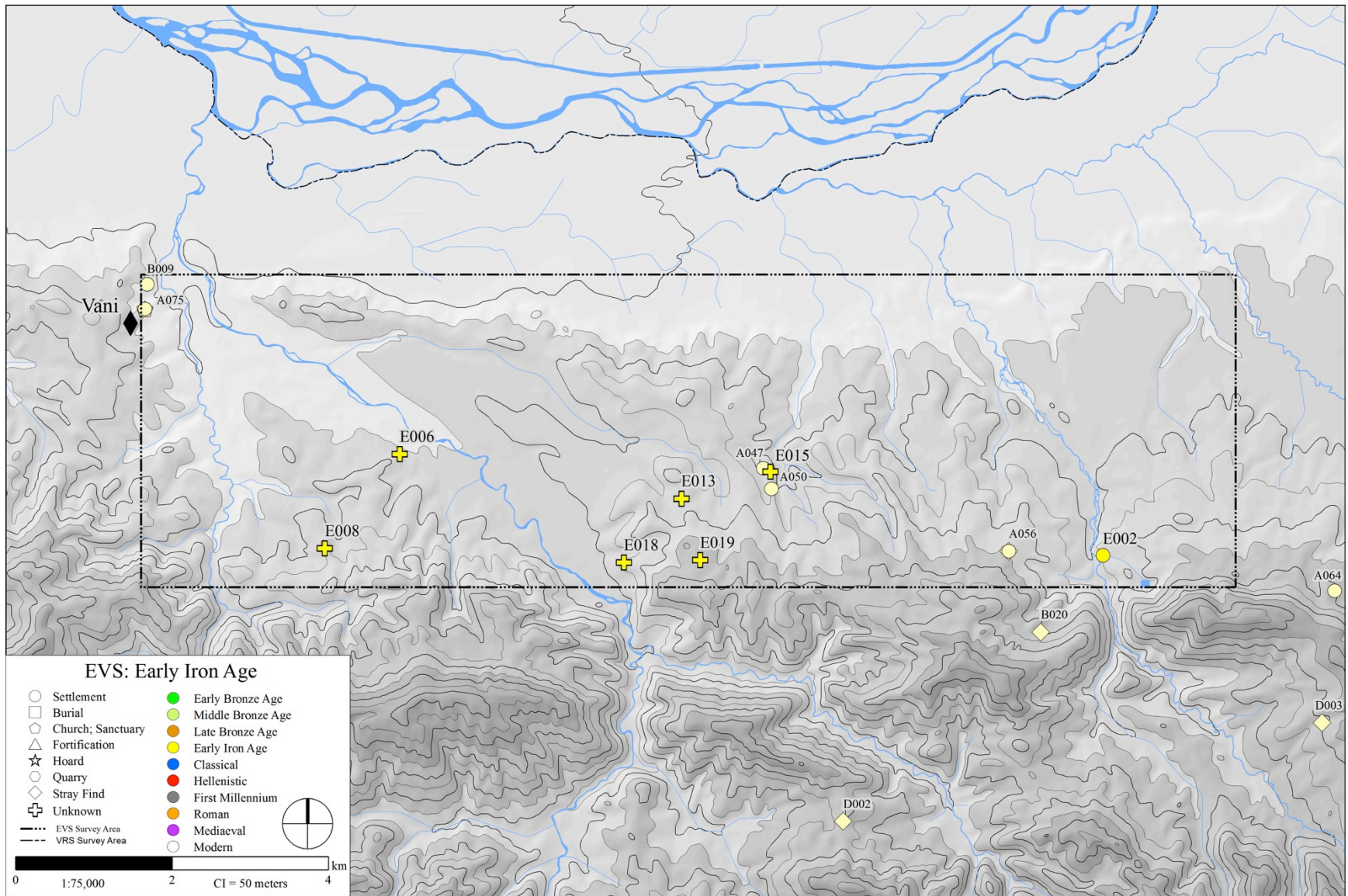


Figure 4.7: Location of Early Iron Age activity within and around the EVS survey region.

## V. PHASE 3 – CLASSICAL (7<sup>TH</sup>-4<sup>TH</sup> BCE)

Beginning at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> or the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, the citadel of Vani sees increased evidence of settlement and an expansion in the quantity and variety of ceramic forms including the number and kind of drinking vessels, and most importantly the addition of large, pithos-like, storage vessels. Evidence for both wooden and, for the first time, stone structures point to increased investment in Vani's built landscape, and the appearance of rich burials dated from the mid 5<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> gives the first clear signs for social stratification at the site. Additionally, it is in the Classical Period that Greek ceramic, metal and glass imports appear at Vani. Of particular interest for the survey, amphorae from Chios, Lesbos, and Thasos have been identified. In general, investment in burial increases throughout the region with pithoi being used as burial containers accompanied by a general increase in burial goods. Overall, there appears to be an increase in the use of ceramics in and around Vani. More activities appear to become linked to ceramic use, particularly agricultural storage, drinking, and burial.

Before the Eastern Vani Survey, there were 27 places where activity of the Classical Period was attested. Fifteen of these places were active in the preceding period and eight of those likely also active in the Late Bronze Age. The remaining twelve locations are evidence of expanding ceramic use both in terms of places in the landscape where material appears as well as in terms of the types of activities in which ceramics are being used. Three locations in particular show evidence of activity for first time in this period and give evidence to the expanding geographic reach of ceramic production and use: Melaurisgora in Dzulukhi (A041) and Meskhebisgora in Zeda Bzvani (A053) to the east and Sajavakho (A009) to the west. At Melaurisgora burnt mud plasters and ceramic material of the classical period, including a

fragment Sinopean Amphora, were found on the slopes of the hill. At the top of the hill is a medieaval fortress (A042) and ceramic material of the early and late mediaeval were found along with the classical material.<sup>19</sup> Like the sites of Mskhaltavake and Sakakile, Melaurisgora sits in zone three in the upper Dzulukhura River valley. The Dzulukhura river flows north eventually joining the Sulori river near the modern village of Tsikhisubani which is south of Dikhashkho. Sajavakho (A009) was the site that defined the western edge of the Vani Regional Survey. It sits near the tip of the long ridge that defines the southwestern and western border of the survey area. It is also close to the place where the Rioni river comes closest to the foothills that define the region around Vani. Classical material was recovered from a hill to the southeast of Sajavakho along with fragments of burnt mud plasters. Meskhebisgora (A053) lies just to the south of EVS survey area and the hill has commanding views both to the north and south. Survey on this hill revealed pithos fragments of the Classical period.

Rather than serving as evidence of brand new locations of activity, the majority of material recovered from the Classical Period is the result of intensified ceramic use and an expanded distribution of material into areas adjacent to places where previous activity had been recorded. This is especially true of Dapnari (A003; A004, A005, A006, A007), Dablagomi (A014, A015, A019), Mtisdziri (A023, A024, A026, A027, A029, A030) as well in and around Vani. In the vicinity of each of these modern toponyms, the number of identifiable contemporary locations increases. At Dapnari, contemporary activity of the classical period appear on three hills: Dapnigora (A003, A004, A006), Chaisgora (A005) and Tsqvetiligora (A007).<sup>20</sup> The same

---

<sup>19</sup> Khoshtaria (1959), 159; Kharabadze (2008), 43-44.

<sup>20</sup> Kighuradze (1967); Kighuradze (1969); Kighuradze (1970a), 15; Kighuradze (1970b); Lordkipanidze and Kighuradze (1970); Jikia (1971), 22–28; Kighuradze (1971a); Kighuradze (1971b); Kighuradze (1971c); Kighuradze (1971d); Lordkipanidze and Kighuradze (1971); Kighuradze (1972); Kighuradze and Lordkipanidze (1972); Kighuradze (1973); Kighuradze

phenomenon is attested at Dablagomi, where settlement and burial are attested on three hills: Naskirevigora (A014), Nasaqdivigora (A015) and Natskikhvarigora (A019).<sup>21</sup> At Mtisdziri, excavations and survey have recovered material of the classical period from four hills (Adeishvilebisgora (A023, A024), Nabambevi (A026, A027), Mtisdzirigora (A029) and Nashuebi (A030)) as well as in flat valleys between these hills. Mtisdziri is most famous for the excavation of the foundations of a building that has been interpreted as a tower.<sup>22</sup> The expansion of material does not necessarily mean more settlements or even larger settled areas. The expansion of ceramic use may very well make visible types of activity that in previous periods were essentially archaeologically invisible.

Place	Site #	EBA	MBA	LBA	EIA	C	H	FM	R	Med
Dapnari, Dapnigora	A003	-	-	-	-	S	S	-	-	-
Dapnari	A004	-	-	SF	SF	B, S	B, S	-	-	-
Dapnari, Chaisgora	A005	-	-	-	-	S	B, S	S	-	-
Dapnari	A006	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	S
Dapnari, Tsqvetiligora	A007	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Sajavakho	A009	-	-	-	-	S	-	S	-	-
Dablagomi, Nasakirevigora	A014	-	-	-	-	B, S	B, S	S	-	-
Dablagomi, Nasaqdivigora	A015	-	-	-	S	S	-	S	-	-
Dablagomi, Natskikhvarigora	A019	S	-	S	S	B	B, S	-	-	-
Mtisdziri, Adeishvilebisgora	A023	-	-	-	S	S	S	S	-	F
Mtisdziri, Adeishvilebisgora	A024	-	-	-	-	F	-	-	-	-
Mtisdziri, Nabambevi	A026	-	-	-	-	B	-	-	-	-
Mtisdziri, Nabambevi	A027	-	-	-	-	B	-	-	-	-
Mtisdziri, Mtisdzirigora	A029	-	-	SF	SF	SF	-	-	-	-
Mtisdziri, Nashuebi	A030	-	-	-	-	B	-	-	-	-
Shuamta, Melashvilebisgora	A033	-	-	S	S	S	S	S	-	-
Sulori, Sakakile	A039	-	-	SF	S	S, H	S	S	-	-
Dzulukhi, Melaurisgora	A041	-	-	-	-	S	-	-	-	-
Kveda Bzvani	A047	-	-	-	S	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Bzvani	A050	-	-	S	S	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Bzvani, Meskhebisgora	A053	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Inashauri	A056	-	-	-	S	S	-	S	-	-
Phereta	A059	-	-	-	S	S	S	S	-	-
Phereta, Serisdziri, Parousla Hill	A061	-	-	S	S	S	-	S	-	-
Zeda Gora, Natsikhvarigora	A064	-	-	-	S	S	-	S	-	-
Qumuri, Mskhaltavake	A069	-	-	-	S	S	-	S	-	-

(1976); Kighuradze and Lordkipanidze (1977); Kighuradze (1978); Kighuradze (1980); Tolordava (1980), 6-23; Tolordava and Lordkipanidze (1983); Kharabadze (2008), 17–18.

<sup>21</sup> *Supra* 9; Makalatia (1940); Khoshtaria (1940); Makalatia (1941); Kuftin (1950), 1-82; Jikia (1971), 26–27; Tolordava (1971); Tolordava (1973); Tolordava 1973a.

<sup>22</sup> Reconstructions of the tower have been heavily influenced by Vitruvius' description of Colchian towers, but it is very likely that this structure served as a defensive structure in the Classical period. Later structures at the site from the Roman and Early Mediaeval periods show that this location remained an important location of defensive structures.

Kveda Tsikhesulori, Ketchinara	B009	-		S	S	B, S	B, S	S	-	H
--------------------------------	------	---	--	---	---	------	------	---	---	---

Table 4.7: Classical Period locations recorded by the Vani Regional Survey. B=Burial, C=Church/Sanctuary, F=Fortification, H=Hoard, Q=Quarry, S=Settlement, SF=Stray Find, U=Unknown

There is a significant increase in the quantity of material recovered by the intensive survey in comparison to earlier periods. This is almost entirely due to the prevalence of fragments of pithoi, which is due to factors of preservation (thick bodies resistant to degradation and fragmentation), ease of locating in surface contexts (large fragments with striking fabric color and surface treatment), and the use of these vessels for storage of both liquids and solids and as burial containers, meaning these fragments are common and unlikely to be missed in surface survey. The fact these containers could be used for a range of activities, however, means that scatters of storage vessels by themselves are difficult to associate with any one particular use. Excavated pithos burials from this period show that the vessels might have been repurposed, as in those examples which seem to have defects unconnected with use as a pithos burial, or may have been produced/procured specifically for use as a burial containers. There may have even been a desire to use a new pithoi whether it was socially encouraged as a sign of membership in particular groups (i.e. those who can afford to use an unbroken pithos) or simply because no broken pithos was available and thus a new one had to be procured.

At the western end of the ridge that runs east-west between Dikhashkho to the east and Vani to the west and defines the border between the Rioni and Sulori River Valleys sits a hill known as Mshvidobisgora (Peace Hill). The hill itself consists of two crests separated by a low saddle. On the western most crest is a modern park arranged around a mediaeval tower (C001). The eastern most crest (E004), which is the highest point along this ridge, has a meadow on its southern face that slopes relatively gently down to the remains of a paleochannel of the Sulori below. The northern face is extremely steep owing to a landslide that appears to have occurred



within the last half century. Systematic collection in the meadow resulted in the recovery of a large quantity of burnt daub along with a handful of pottery fragments datable to the Classical, Hellenistic and more broadly the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. Pithos fragments were recovered from the north face, but the terrain was too steep for more systematic inspection. Though surface collection was limited by the absence of cultivated fields, the quantity of daub recovered from the area clearly indicates the presence of at least one structure of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE or later. This activity area shares much in common with the location of the tower excavated at Mtisdziri, in terms of elevation (183 masl) and position at the edge of the Rioni river valley.

Farther to the east and south, an activity area was identified at Dikhashkho from material collected in fields arranged around a modern crossroads. Among the material collected from the fields were a locally produced pan tile and the base and ring foot of an imported plate, likely of Chian production. The plate was produced in the Classical period and the local tile could also potentially date to this period. Though the tile suggests some structure nearby, we should be careful as pan tiles are attested in burials of the Classical period, such as the one at Natskikhvarigora in Dablagomi. Given the nature of the modern terrain, this material may very likely have moved from uphill areas to the southeast. This activity should be associated with activity area E013 and to a lesser extent E014.

Southwest of Dikhashkho on the left bank of the Sulori, five activity areas were identified. Three of the activity areas (E005, E007, E008) are within the modern village of Zeda Vani and all three these contain small amounts of material from the Classical Period and cannot be identified with any specific type of activity. The other two activity areas, Salxino (E006) and Gabelauri (E009) both yielded burnt mud plasters (daub) indicating the presence of wooden structures. A local pan tile fragment was also recovered from Gabelauri. It is impossible to date

this material more precisely to associate it definitively with the ceramic material of the Classic Period. The fact that at some stage in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium a structure was built in the vicinity suggests that the activity taking place here throughout the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium was likely linked to some form of settlement. Of the two activity areas, Gabelauri is the most promising for further investigation. This activity area covers two hills with a saddle between them which seems to have developed as the result of a portion of the hill subsiding. Survey within the saddle yielded most of the material recovered from the activity area. It could be that these two hills were in antiquity a single, flat-topped hill. Gabelauri offers good views of the Rioni River valley and offers the opportunity for those visiting the location to monitor movement along the Sulori River Valley. Unfortunately, the ceramic material recovered from the site datable to the Classical Period amounts to only six sherds.

On the right bank of the Sulori, intensive and extensive survey revealed four activity areas (E013, E016, E018, E019) in and around the village of Isriti. In the area of E018, pithos burials of the Classical or Hellenistic periods were reported being found but no further research has been carried out. The VRS visited the area of E018 in 2010 and recorded some ceramic fragments and made note of a stone wall made from carefully chosen, unworked chunks of limestone (B007). Though likely a late mediaeval or modern field wall, the limestone for the wall was locally sourced from the hill on which E018 sits or from a location nearby. Limestone outcroppings are visible all along the road that runs between Isriti and the Sulori River.

Farther uphill sits a now abandoned farmhouse once owned by a local nobleman named Guram Lordkipanidze. Intensive and extensive survey around this house allowed us to identify a single activity area likely focused somewhere in the vicinity of the farmhouse (E019) and yielding pithoi of the Classical period. Between the farmhouse and E018 on the northern slopes

of the ridge both activity areas occupy, a series of east-west and north-south stone field walls were identified. Local informants associated them with the time of Lordkipanidze's occupation of the house and suggested they were part of what was once an extensive vineyard. Survey of the area around these fields did not yield any material at all.

Northeast of the activity areas associated with Isriti sits the area known as Natsikhvari or Chitoula ("Place of Birds"), which is partially in both Kveda and Zeda Bzvani. The area consists of two hills oriented northwest-southeast separated by a low saddle. On the northern hill sits the foundation walls of a mediaeval building and on the southern hill sits a church and modern cemetery. This area was thoroughly investigated by the VRS with both gridded ceramic collection and geophysical survey occurring on the slopes and crest of the northern hill (A047, A048, A049). Due to the modern use of the southern hill (A050), only unsystematic collections could be made from the eroded slopes and crest of the hill. This area served as a landmark for the Eastern Vani Survey and return visits yielded additional collections of pottery (E015) including the base of a decorated beaker drinking vessel dating to the Classical Period. More importantly, however, for the discussion here are the activity areas discovered in the vicinity of Natskhvari. Intensive survey of fields on the southern slopes of hills to the northeast (E012) and northwest (E011) of the area yielded pithos fragments of the Classical Period. The presence of material of later periods as well as imported fragments at E011, suggest that this material should be associated with settlement activity in the area. Two of the pithos fragments recovered from E012 showed evidence of fine-ridged decoration suggesting they may have been used in contexts other than simple storage. I think it is likely they come from at least one burial in the area.

Intensive and extensive survey carried out by the Eastern Vani Survey on both the left and right banks of the Qvinitsqaro river in the villages of Gora and Inashuari were extremely

productive in recovering material of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. The Classical period in particular is well attested in surface assemblages and was distributed widely in survey grid 36. The distribution of material suggests punctuated locations of intensified activity separated by dispersed activity between them. Though boundaries have been set for the activity areas, these represent our best guess for the material that should be associated with particular high points in the landscape. When we stepped back and looked more broadly at patterns in this part of the survey area, it was clear that these activity areas were best understood when placed into five groups.

The first group consists of two areas on the left bank of the Qvinitzqaro where classical material was recovered (E025, E027). Five fragments of the Classical Period were recovered from these two fields, one of which was a pithos fragment and the others were non-descript fragments in a local fabric that is generally datable to the 7<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. This material likely comes from activity happening further upslope to the west. Previous research and survey by the VRS identified a 1<sup>st</sup> millennium settlement (A056) and a burial (A055) approximately 1 kilometer to the west. The material recovered from E025 and E027 is unlikely to have come from these sites, but it should at least be associated with occupation around the modern village of Inashauri in the Classical Period.

Farther to the south but still on the left bank of the river and near the modern village of Saprasia, mud plasters and ceramic material were recovered from the crest of a hill that projects north, away from the ridge-line. Only a single fragment of the Classical period was recovered, but the presence of daub and the advantageous position of the hill offering as it does good views of the Rioni and Qvinitzqaro rivers suggests a settlement site broadly datable to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. Further support is offered by the accidental discovery of a burial of the 1<sup>st</sup>

millennium to the south of the hill. The general location of the burial (B020) was visited by the VRS and material of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium was recovered from cornfields in the area.

Our intensive and extensive survey efforts in and around Kveda and Zeda Gora produced significant quantities of material of the Classical and Hellenistic period. The material suggests three main areas of activity: Shua Gora (E022, E023, E024); Kveda Gora (E026, E028) and Zeda Gora (E029, E030, E032). Though the material recovered from the fields that comprise E022, E023 and E024 are spatially close enough to be related, the small quantities of material and their broad distribution suggest that the activity they give evidence to was dispersed and not specifically focused on any one location in the landscape. The one exception is the material recovered from field 3623-10. This one field accounts for the majority of material of the Classical period recovered from the activity area. Even more striking is that this material came primarily from a dense patch on the eastern edge of the field. This material should be associated with mortuary activity given its density and limited surface distribution.

The collections made from the fields of E026 are by far the richest of the Eastern Vani Survey. This activity is centered on a spur that extends westward from the ridge that separates the Qvinitsqaro from the Phereta river valleys. The largest category of material recovered from the site were storage vessels, particularly of the Classical Period. In addition to ceramic material, 1 kilogram of daub fragments was recovered. To the southwest on a low hill next to the bank of the Qvinitsqaro is a mediaeval fortification (E028). Survey in and around this structure uncovered material of the Classical period. The proximity of these two activity areas and their shared orientation toward the river makes it clear that activity of this period at both places was linked.

Intensive survey of the fields on the steep slopes of Zeda Gora were also extremely rich in material. Classical material including large numbers of pithos fragments were found in assemblages that included large quantities of mud plaster. The richest of the Zeda Gora activity areas, E030, yielded 60 ceramic fragments of the classical period and 2.40 kg of daub. All three of these activity areas included fields with slopes as steep as 80% and strongly suggest this material has accumulated from erosion from father to the south. The crest of the hill lies outside our survey grids and extensive survey was hampered by the steep slopes and dense vegetation. It could be that the locus of activity has been largely destroyed by the subsequent slumping of the northern face of the hill. Regardless, somewhere in the vicinity of the activity areas around Zeda Gora was a site of a significant settlement in the Classical period.

Place	Site #	EBA	MBA	LBA	EIA	C	H	FM	R	EM
Kveda Tsikhesulori, Ketchinara	E001	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Vani, Akhvledianebisgora	E002	-	-	-	S	S	S	S	-	-
Mshvidobisgora 2	E004	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Vani, 1	E005	-	-	-	-	U	U	U	-	-
Salxino	E006	-	-	-	U	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Vani 2	E007	-	-	-	-	U	U	U	-	-
Zeda Vani 3	E008	-	-	-	U	U	U	U	-	-
Gabelauri	E009	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Dikhashkho	E010	-	-	-	-	B, S	B, S	B, S	-	-
Kveda Bzvani 1	E011	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Kveda Bzvani 2	E012	-	-	-	-	B	B	B	-	-
Kveda Bzvani 3	E013	-	-	-	U	S	S	S	-	-
Kveda Bzvani, Natsikhvari	E015	-	U	S	U	S	S	S	-	-
Isriti 1	E016	-	-	-	-	U	U	U	-	-
Zeda Bzvani	E017	-	-	-	-	B	-	B	-	-
Isriti 2	E018	-	-	-	U	B, S	B, S	B, S	-	-
Isriti 3	E019	-	-	-	U	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Bzvani 2	E020	-	-	-	-	U	U	U	-	-
Saprasia	E021	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Kveda Gora 1	E022	-	-	-	-	B	B	B	U	U
Shua Gora 1	E023	-	-	-	-	B	-	B	-	-
Shua Gora 2	E024	-	-	-	-	S	-	S	U	U
Inashauri 1	E025	-	-	-	-	U	U	U	-	-
Kveda Gora 2	E026	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	U
Inashauri 2	E027	-	-	-	-	U	-	U	-	-
Kveda Gora, Tsikhe	E028	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Gora 1	E029	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Gora 2	E030	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	U
Zeda Gora 4	E032	-	-	-	-	B	B	B	U	U

Table 4.8: Classical Period locations recorded by the Eastern Vani Survey. B=Burial, C=Church/Sanctuary, F=Fortification, H=Hoard, Q=Quarry, S=Settlement, SF=Stray Find, U=Unknown.

Generally speaking, the material recovered by the intensive survey datable to the Classical Period shows that activity in this period was occurring throughout the lower Sulori and Qvinitqaro river valleys. As we see with activity to the west, however, there are clear patterns to the distribution of material of this period, and groups of activity areas can be established suggesting areas of particularly intense focus in the Classical Period. From all the evidence from both previous projects and the eastern Vani Survey, we can identify particularly important locations in the landscape in the Classical Period. Dablagomi, Dapnari, Mtisdziri, Vani, and Kveda Bzvani. I would also like to add Kveda Gora and Zeda Gora as well as suggest Mshvidobisgora and Isriti as likely important settlements of this period. These sites all have common features. They all sit at elevations between 150 and 200 masl, placing them all in zone two. All the sites have advantageous views of the Rioni River Valley and many of the sites, especially those within the eastern Vani survey region, also have commanding views of one of the tributary river valleys. The combination of the expanded use and increased standardization of local ceramics and the presence of imported materials suggests these activity areas are engaged in both local and regional networks of exchange and movement.

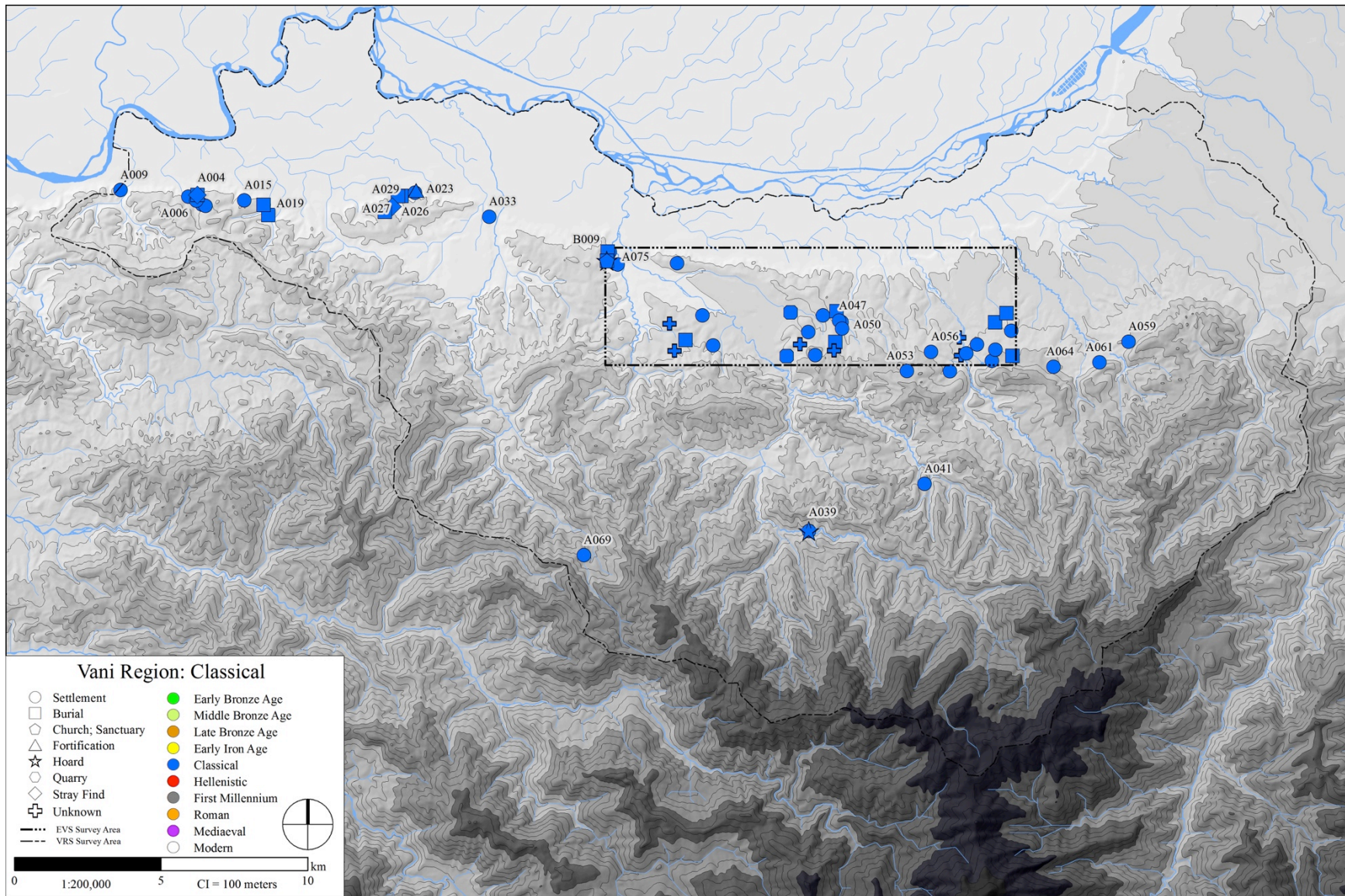


Figure 4.8: Classical Period locations identified by the VRS and EVS projects.



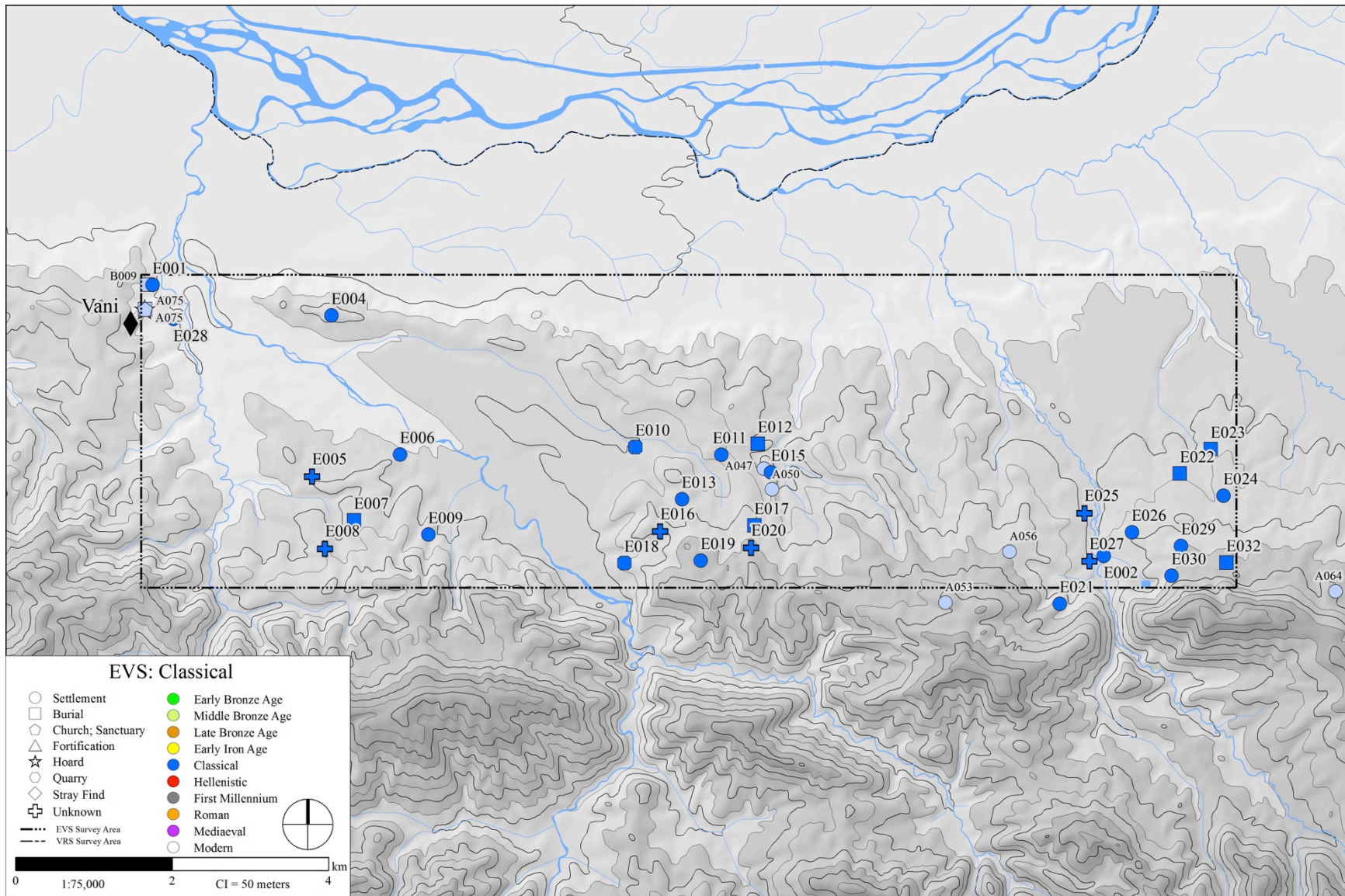


Figure 4.9: Location of Classical Period activity within and around the EVS survey region.

## VI. PHASE 4 – HELLENISTIC (4<sup>TH</sup>-1<sup>ST</sup> BCE)

During the Hellenistic Period, Vani sees increased investment in construction at the site and a gradual decrease in rich burials, with the practice of burial on the terraces of the site stopping before the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. Large fortification walls are constructed around the three terraces that comprise the ancient site and there is again an expansion in ceramic production.

Previous research in the region suggests an overall reduction in the number and distribution of Hellenistic locations of activity from 27 in the Classical period to 20 in the Hellenistic. The areas that have yet to yield Hellenistic material include Mtisdziri (A023, A024, A026, A027, A029, A030), Inashauri (A056), and Qumuri (A069). Sajavakho (A009) and Nasaqdivigora at Dablagomi (A015) should also be included in this list, but the appearance of a new location at Sajavakho (A010), and the continued use of the other hills at Dablagomi suggests that the changes at Sajavakho and Dablagomi are different from the changes at the other locations.

Despite the overall reduction in locations of activity, there are four settlements that appear for the first time in this period: Saqanchia (A001); Sajavakho (A010); Tsikhesulori (B004) Khumlari (B013). Saqanchia is by far the most important new site as it represents an expansion of settlement into the Rioni River valley and a clear focus on production and trade. Excavations at the site in the 1970's revealed a substantial settlement consisting of structures with cobblestone foundations, local and imported ceramics, and terracotta figurines. Molds for these figurines were found in the site as well. The proximity of the site to both Vani and the Rioni suggest that the site was a site of exchange and under the immediate control of the site of

Vani itself.<sup>23</sup> The most interesting thing about the site is that it only appears in the Hellenistic period with no evidence of earlier activity reported from the site.

Khumlari is similar to Saqanchia in that it only appears in the Hellenistic period, though material of the early Classical material was recovered from areas near Khumlari in 1962. The site is located along the Qvinitsqaro river within the modern village of Amaghleba. The site itself is situated on a hill called Terduradzisgora, Khumlari is situated farther south than any settlement previously recorded in the area. Survey conducted here in 1968 recovered roof tiles and Colchian amphora toes as well as common wares all dated to the Hellenistic period.

On Natsikhvarigora at Tsikhesulori (B004), M. Mtishvili excavated a mediaeval fortress and a settlement of an earlier period in the 1970's. These excavations revealed architectural fragments of the Hellenistic Period as well as imported and Colchian ceramics, including roof tiles, table wares and common wares.<sup>24</sup> This site has a commanding view of not only the Rioni, but also the Qumuri and Sulori river valleys. Activity here has been tied to Vani itself as the two sites are extremely close to each other.

The Hellenistic activity at Dapnari (A013) and Miqelaponi (A036) are both the result of intentional depositional events. At Dapnari (A013) a local inhabitant, Rapho Jeshi, reported unearthing four pithos graves. The material he showed during the VRS was dated to the Hellenistic period. At Miqelaponi (A036), a hoard of Colchian coins was recovered from the hill called Nasakiligora.<sup>25</sup>

Place	Site #	EBA	MBA	LBA	EIA	C	H	FM	R	Med
Saqanchia	A001	-	-	-	-	-	S	-	-	-
Dapnari, Dapnisgora	A003	-	-	-	-	S	S	-	-	-
Dapnari	A004	-	-	SF	SF	B, S	B, S	-	-	-
Dapnari, Chaisgora	A005	-	-	-	-	S	B, S	S	-	-
Dapnari	A006	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	S
Dapnari, Tsqvetiligora	A007	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-

<sup>23</sup> Licheli (1982); Licheli (1991).

<sup>24</sup> Mitsishvili (1971); Mitsishvili (1973), (1976) and (1983).

<sup>25</sup> Khoshtaria (1959), vol. II: 153.

Sajavakho	A010	-	-	-	-	-	S	S	-	-
Dapnari	A013	-	-	-	-	-	B	-	-	-
Dablagomi, Nasakirevigora	A014	-	-	-	-	B, S	B, S	S	-	-
Dablagomi, Natskikhvarigora	A019	S	-	S	S	B	B, S	-	-	-
Mtisdziri, Adeishvilebisgora	A023	-	-	-	S	S	S	S	-	F
Shuamta, Melashvilebisgora	A033	-	-	S	S	S	S	S	-	-
Migelaponi	A036	-	-	-	-	-	H	-	-	-
Sulori, Sakakile	A039	-	-	SF	S	S, H	S	S	-	-
Kveda Bzvani	A047	-	-	-	S	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Bzvani	A050	-	-	S	S	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Bzvani, Meskhebisgora	A053	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Phereta	A059	-	-	-	S	S	S	S	-	-
Tsikhesulori	B004	-	-	-	-	-	S	S	-	-
Kveda Tsikhesulori, Ketchinara	B009	-	-	S	S	B, S	B, S	S	-	H
Khumlari	B013	-	-	-	-	-	S	S	-	-

Table 4.9: Hellenistic Period locations recorded by the Vani Regional Survey. B=Burial, C=Church/Sanctuary, F=Fortification, H=Hoard, Q=Quarry, S=Settlement, SF=Stray Find, U=Unknown.

The activity areas identified by the EVS do not fully reflect the patterns apparent in previous research in the area. As to the number of areas of activity, there is only one less locus of activity datable to the Hellenistic period, with four activity areas of the Classical period showing no evidence of Hellenistic activity: Zeda Bzvani (E017); Shua Gora (E023, E024) and Inashuari (E027). This is balanced by the appearance of three new activity areas: Mshvidobis Gora (E003); Kveda Bzvani (E014) and Zeda Gora (E031). There is, however, an overall reduction in the number of fragments collected from individual sites. This reduction in total numbers is balanced by the increase in the variety of types of material recovered, including Colchian Amphorae, roof tiles, common wares and imported fragments. Despite the reduction in scale of activity, five sites remain important in this period. They are Mshvidobis Gora, Gabelauri, Isriti, Kveda Bzvani and Kveda and Zeda Gora.

Place	Site #	EBA	MBA	LBA	EIA	C	H	FM	R	EM
Kveda Tsikhesulori, Ketchinara	E001	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Vani, Akhvledianebisgora	E002	-	-	-	S	S	S	S	-	-
Mshvidobis Gora 1	E003	-	-	-	-	-	S	S	-	-
Mshvidobisgora 2	E004	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Vani, 1	E005	-	-	-	-	U	U	U	-	-
Salxino	E006	-	-	-	U	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Vani 2	E007	-	-	-	-	U	U	U	-	-
Zeda Vani 3	E008	-	-	-	U	U	U	U	-	-
Gabelauri	E009	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Dikhashkho	E010	-	-	-	-	B, S	B, S	B, S	-	-
Kveda Bzvani 1	E011	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Kveda Bzvani 2	E012	-	-	-	-	B	B	B	-	-
Kveda Bzvani 3	E013	-	-	-	U	S	S	S	-	-
Kveda Bzvani 4	E014	-	-	-	-	-	U	U	-	-

Kveda Bzvani, Natsikhvari	E015	-	U	S	U	S	S	S	-	-
Isriti 1	E016	-	-	-	-	U	U	U	-	-
Isriti 2	E018	-	-	-	U	B, S	B, S	B, S	-	-
Isriti 3	E019	-	-	-	U	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Bzvani 2	E020	-	-	-	-	U	U	U	-	-
Saprasia	E021	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Kveda Gora 1	E022	-	-	-	-	B	B	B	U	U
Inashauri 1	E025	-	-	-	-	U	U	U	-	-
Kveda Gora 2	E026	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	U
Kveda Gora, Tsikhe	E028	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Gora 1	E029	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	-
Zeda Gora 2	E030	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	U
Zeda Gora 3	E031	-	-	-	-	-	U	U	U	-
Zeda Gora 4	E032	-	-	-	-	B	B	B	U	U

Table 4.10: Hellenistic Period locations recorded by the Eastern Vani Survey. B=Burial, C=Church/Sanctuary, F=Fortification, H=Hoard, Q=Quarry, S=Settlement, SF=Stray Find, U=Unknown.

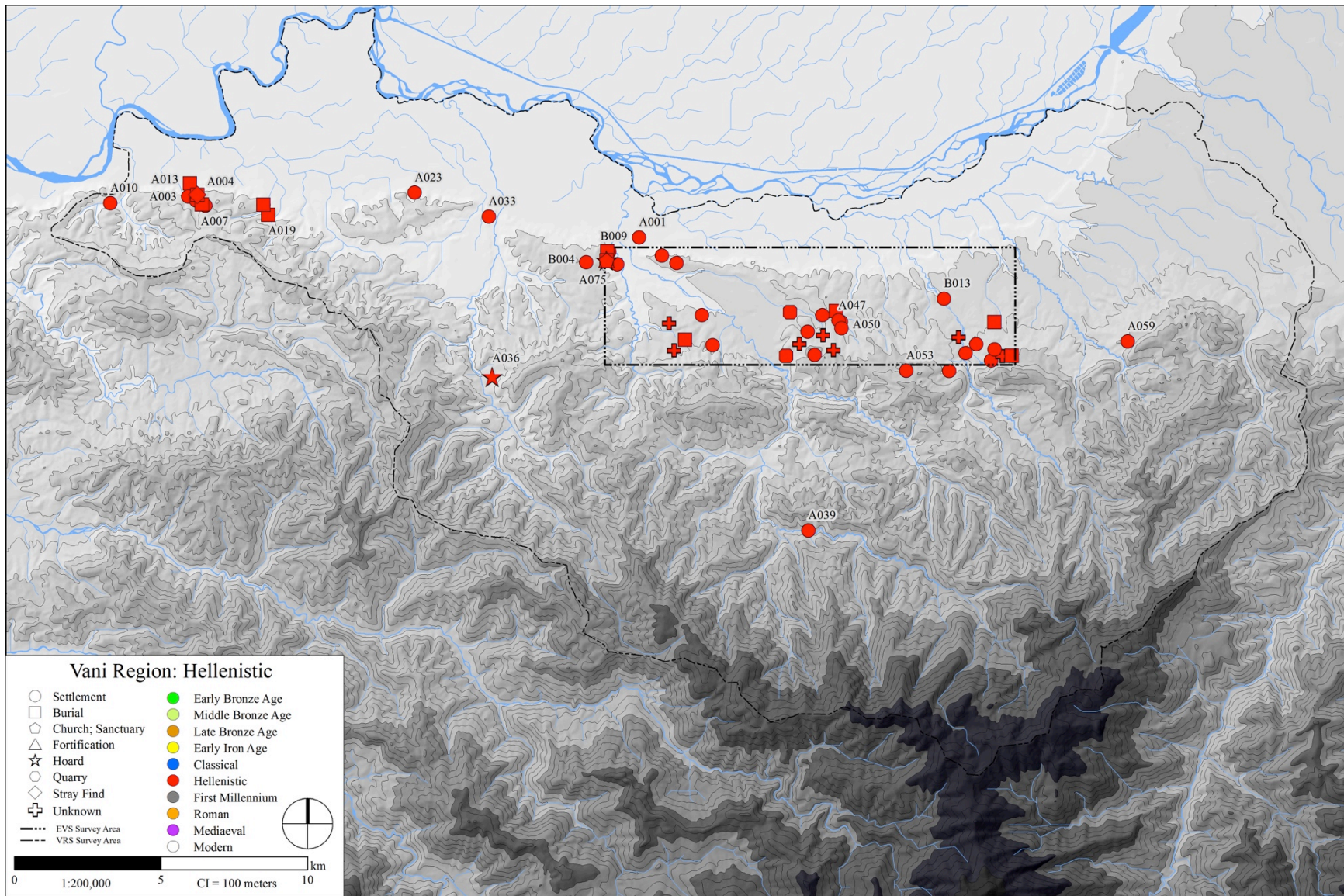


Figure 4.10: Hellenistic Period locations identified by the VRS and EVS projects.

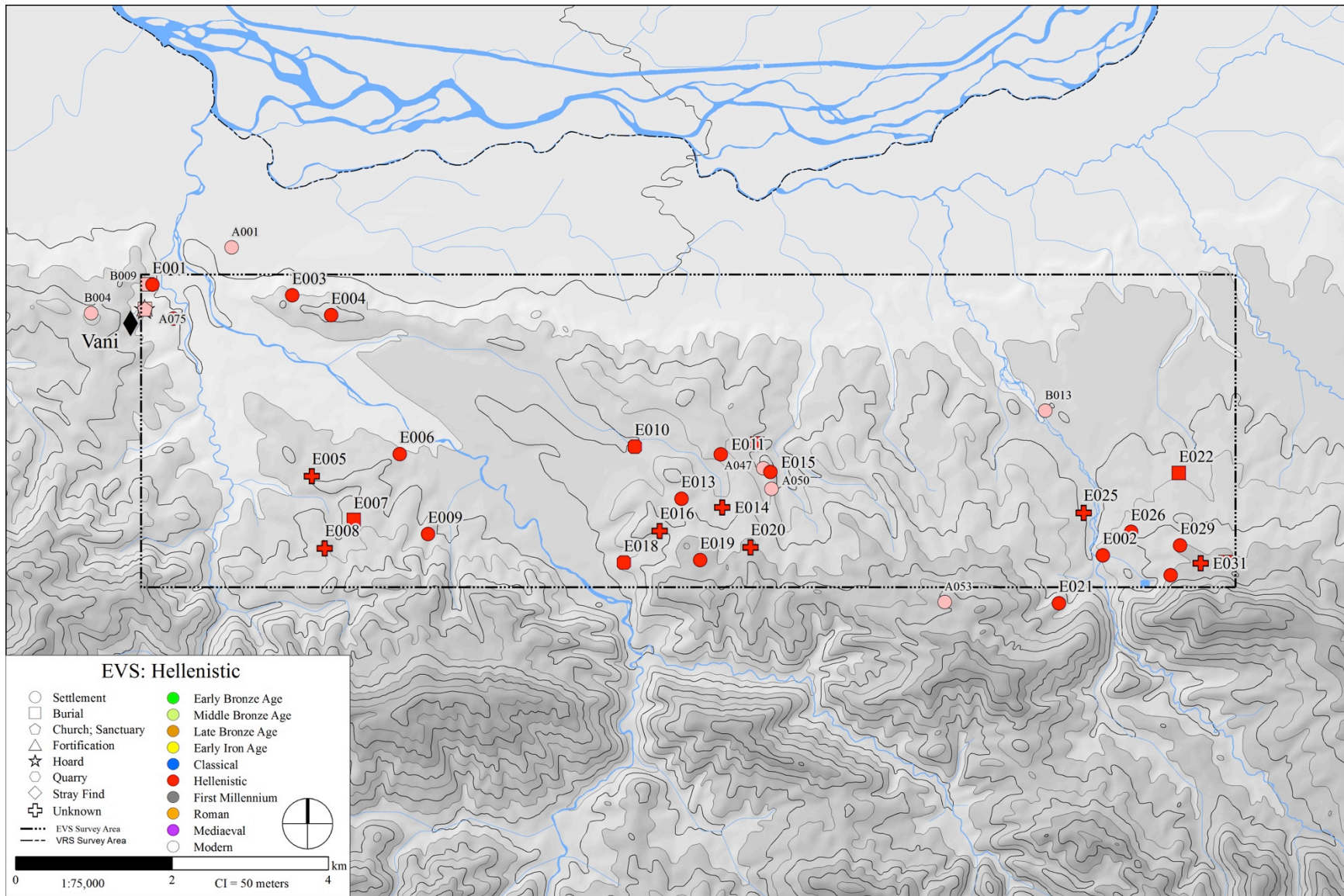


Figure 4.11: Location of Hellenistic Period activity within and around the EVS survey region.

## VII. PHASE 5 – ROMAN (1<sup>ST</sup> BCE-4<sup>TH</sup> CE)

The dominant narrative for the Vani region is that it was almost completely abandoned following the pillaging of Mithradates and subsequent subjugation by Rome, and so far the material recovered from both Vani and the region support this narrative. Five locations in the region show evidence of activity in the Roman period, and only one of these, Adeishvilebisgora at Mtsidziri, can be associated with settlement of some kind. At Phereta, very little material was found by the survey that can be placed in this period. Two previously excavated burials lie to the east of Vani and both have been associated with the burial of individuals involved in long distance trade.

Place	Site #	EBA	MBA	LBA	EIA	C	H	FM	R	Med
Mtsidziri, Adeishvilebisgora	A025	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	F	F
Phereta	A058	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	SF	-
Phereta, Serisdziri	A062	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	B	-
Zeda Gora	A066	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	B	-
Inashauri	B018	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	B	-

Table 4.11: Roman Period locations recorded by the Vani Regional Survey. B=Burial, C=Church/Sanctuary, F=Fortification, H=Hoard, Q=Quarry, S=Settlement, SF=Stray Find, U=Unknown.

Our intensive survey recovered some chance fragments datable to the post-Hellenistic phases and resembling material associated with the burials at Zeda Gora (A066), Phereta (A058) and Inashauri (B018). All of this material came from fields around Gora. This material needs additional work and comparison to the Roman material recovered from other Roman period sites of Western Georgia, especially from excavations and survey around Vardtsikhe.

Place	Site #	EBA	MBA	LBA	EIA	C	H	FM	R	EM
Kveda Gora 1	E022	-	-	-	-	B	B	B	U	U
Shua Gora 2	E024	-	-	-	-	S	-	S	U	U
Zeda Gora 3	E031	-	-	-	-	-	U	U	U	-
Zeda Gora 4	E032	-	-	-	-	B	B	B	U	U

Table 4.12: Roman Period locations recorded by the Eastern Vani Survey. B=Burial, C=Church/Sanctuary, F=Fortification, H=Hoard, Q=Quarry, S=Settlement, SF=Stray Find, U=Unknown.



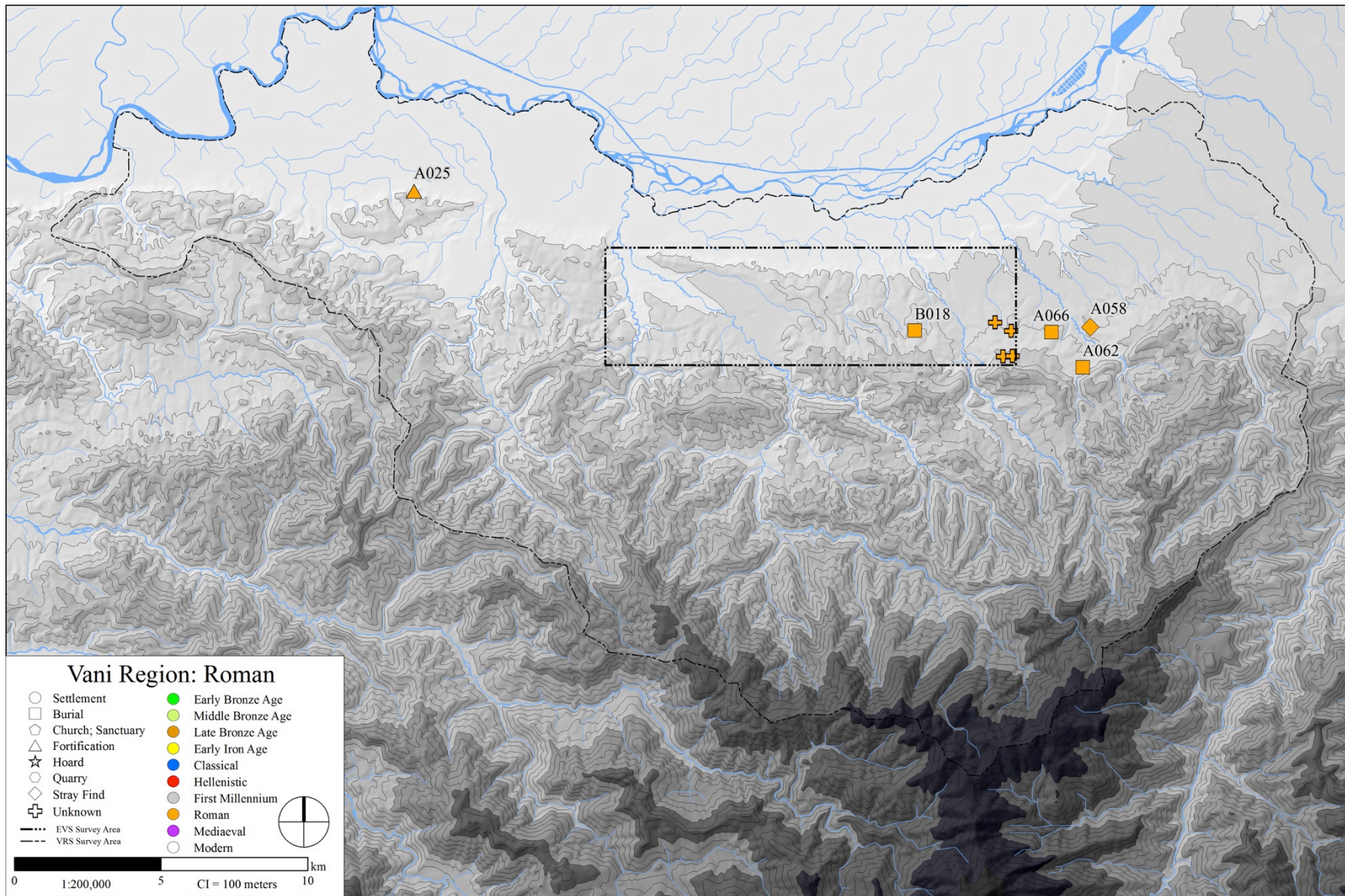


Figure 4.12: Roman Period locations identified by the VRS and EVS projects.

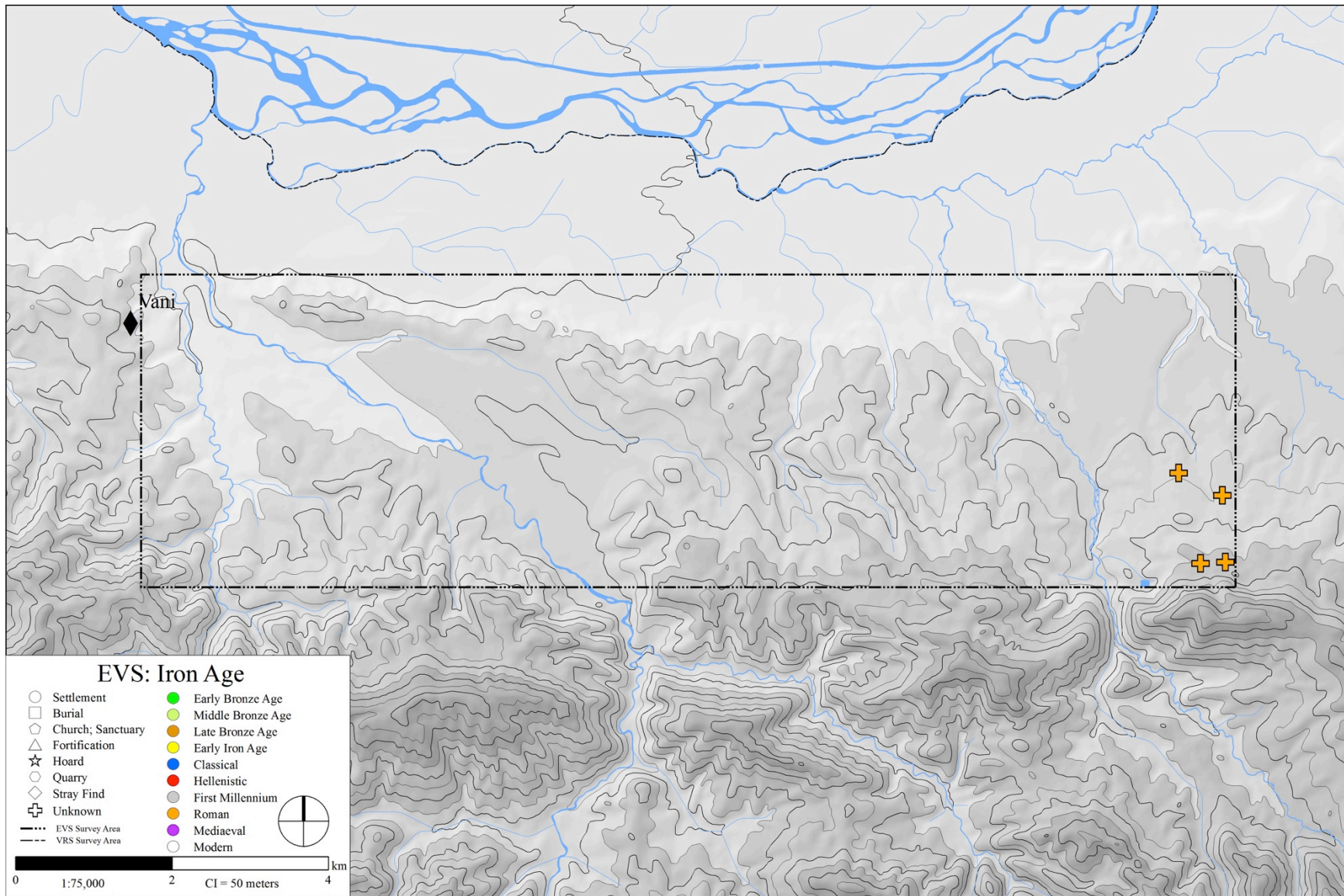


Figure 4.13: Location of Roman Period activity within and around the EVS survey region.

## VIII. PHASE 6 – MEDIAEVAL PERIOD (5<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY – 17<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY CE)

Much of the material recovered by our survey was broadly classified as Mediaeval. The later periods around Vani are less studied archaeologically and thus are lacunae in our landscape history of the region. Though there have been some focused studies on mediaeval pottery in eastern Georgia, there has been little interest in the period in western Georgia. As a result, I am unaware of an accessible study on mediaeval pottery, nor do I know of anyone currently working on material of the period, and the lack of resolution when dealing with material of this period has contributed even further to the “fuzziness” of our understanding about post-Hellenistic occupation of the region.

There are number of fortresses in the area placed in areas offering good visibility and defensibility (A025, A042, A044, A048, A052, A065, B004, B005, B015, B016 and C001). These fortresses are located in more or less the same location as our major Iron Age sites. It seems likely that these locations afforded places where surveillance of the landscape could take place. Whether this was accompanied by control of movement through the area is not clear. In addition to fortresses, there are also several churches in the region, which date to the pre-modern or early modern period (A008, A021, A049, A073, B008, B012, B017). Some of these are still in use while others are in ruins.

Place	Site #	EBA	MBA	LBA	EIA	C	H	FM	R	Med
Dapnari	A006	-	-	-	-	S	S	S	-	S
Dapnari	A008	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	C
Sajavakho	A010	-	-	-	-	-	S	-	-	S
Nigorzhva	A011	-	-	-	-	-	-	S	-	S
Dablagomi, Gomnatekhebi	A020	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	S
Dapnari, Church	A021	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	C
Mtisdziri, Adeishvilebisgora	A025	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	F	F
Shuamta, Melashvilebisgora, Natsikhvara	A034	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	F
Dzulukhi, Melaurisgora	A041	-	-	-	-	S	-	-	-	S
Dzulukhi, Melauritsikhe	A042	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	F
Dikhashkho, Isriti Tsikhe	A044	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	F
Kveda Bzvani	A048	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	F
Kveda Bzvani	A049	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	C
Zeda Bzvani, Meskhebisgora	A052	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	F
Phereta, Serisdziri, Prasoula Hill	A060	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	S
Zeda Gora, Natatralitsikhe	A065	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	F
Maisauri, Nadarbazevi	A073	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	C

Zeda Tsikhesulori, Natsikhvarigora	B004	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	F
Dikhashkho, Tsikhe on the plain	B005	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	F
Dapnari	B008	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	C
Kveda Tsikhesulori, Ketchinara	B009	-	-	S	S	B, S	B, S	S	-	H
Amaghleba	B011	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	S
Amaghleba	B012	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	C
Kveda Gora, Tsikhe	B015	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	F
Amaghleba, Tsikhe	B016	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	F
Inashuari	B017	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	C
Mshvidobisgora Tsikhe	C001	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	F

Table 4.13: Mediaeval locations recorded by the Vani Regional Survey. B=Burial, C=Church/Sanctuary, F=Fortification, H=Hoard, Q=Quarry, S=Settlement, SF=Stray Find, U=Unknown.

Ceramic material from the mediaeval period was recovered from all the activity areas of the Eastern Vani Survey. Only six locations, however, had material that could be more closely dated to the Early Mediaeval Period (5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century BCE) those were E028, E030, E032, E022, E024, E026 all located to the east in grid 36. These were single fragments of closed vessels of undetermined use. Closer study of the post-Hellenistic, and potential post-Hellenistic, material recovered by both surveys is needed to refine our chronologies and produce a clearer picture of ceramic distribution and of post-Hellenistic, pre-modern activity in the landscape.

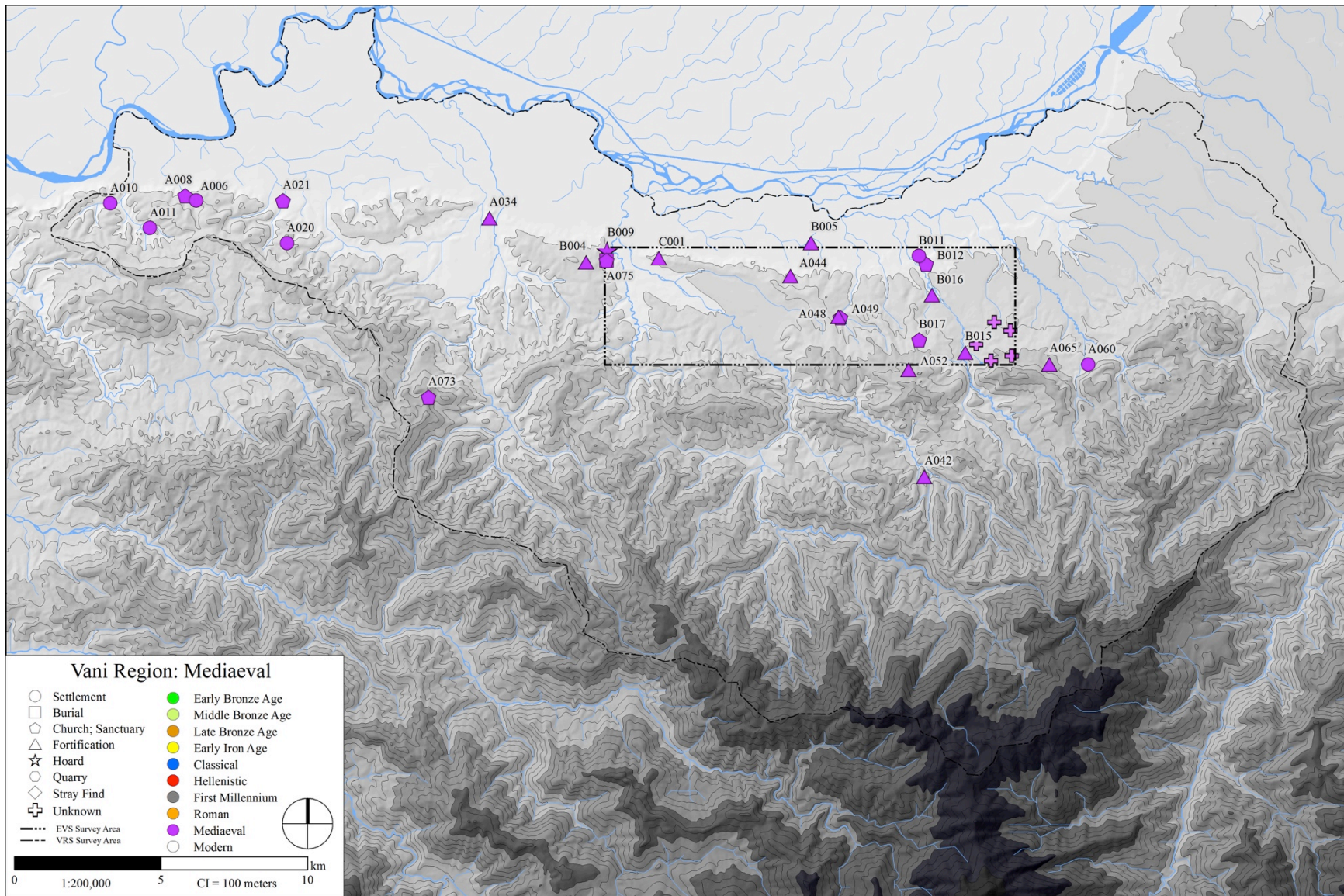


Figure 4.14: Mediaeval locations identified by the VRS and EVS projects.

## IX. DISCUSSION

The earliest sites identified by work in the region date to the Bronze Age. So far, only Dablagomi and Kveda Bzvani have yielded Bronze Age material, in the case of Dablagomi there are early and late Bronze Age layers and at Kveda Bzavani we identified some fragments that may be datable to the middle bronze age. The two most important things to note here, however, are 1) that both sites are more or less equidistant from the confluence of the Sulori and Rioni Rivers, where Vani is located and 2) that after over 60 years of almost continuous excavation no evidence of Bronze Age activity has been identified at Vani itself.

The first datable ceramics recovered from Vani belong to the Early Iron Age (10<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE). Material recovered from the site has been associated with cult activity due the presence of animal figurines in association with a small structure. It is also during this period that we see a significant increase in the number of identifiable sites in Vani's hinterland. Dablagomi and Kveda Bzvani emerge as loci of increased ceramic use in the landscape. The evidence from the other sites presented here is fairly ephemeral as material of the period (though easily identifiable) appears to have been produced in limited quantities or to have had a limited distribution. Important to note in this period is the relative regularity of site placement along the Rioni Valley with sites being found predominately between 100-250 meters above sea level.

Beginning in the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, there is a significant increase in the number of identifiable sites. One of the primary causes for this increase is the expansion of ceramic production to include more ceramic forms, including large storage vessels. The appearance of large storage vessels points to a changing economic situation, in which agricultural resources, such as grapes and grain, are being mobilized and stored on a larger scale. This would fit well with the increased wealth we see manifest in burials at Vani and the later

construction of the large storage facility at the site known as the “sacred barn”. It is during this period that Vani begins to stand out at the key site in the region, though excavations at Dapnari, Dablagomi and Mtsdziri and survey work at Gabaluri and Zeda Gora suggest that these settlements were not harmed by Vani’s growth. In terms of settlement distribution, the most important development is the increased activity at the entry points for the Sulori and Qvinitsqaro rivers into the Rioni Plain.

The greatest change in regional settlement patterning occurred during the Hellenistic Period (the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE). Generally this period is divided into Early and Late phases, but the resolution from our survey data did not allow for this finer grain periodization to be used. This period is notable for the ubiquity and standardization of pottery. It is also during this period that imported wares begin to appear at regional sites, specifically amphorae from the Black Sea and western Colchis. At Vani, we see the construction of monumental architecture and the disappearance of burials within the city. The settlement data from the region suggests a significant shift in the orientation of activity in the region. Key sites to the west show less ceramic activity, with some showing no signs of occupation of this phase. In contrast, the east of the site sees the movement of sites farther into the valley, with the most important of these being the industrial site of Saqanchia, which rather than being a separate site may be an extension of Vani’s urban area. It seems clear that Vani has become an important center of activity in the region and that control over the river valleys of the Sulori and Qvinitsqaro rivers are key to the sites growth.

Apparent sudden cessation of pottery dated to the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE is a problem the survey data does not usefully address. The reliance on traditional ceramic typologies based on the excavation of only a handful of contexts severely limits our ability to understand

both the traditional beginning and end of occupation in the region. In the periods imported ceramics and ceramic innovation are the highest, that is the traditionally dated Classical and Hellenistic Periods, we have better chronological control and areas of activity belonging to these periods can be identified much more easily. The result is that based on current ceramic knowledge and the limits of surface assemblages, the survey cannot speak to periods outside the scope of traditional pottery chronologies. This problem is apparent in both the earlier periods, that is the Bronze Age and earlier, as well as the later periods all the way to the late Mediaeval, early modern sequences of which modern sequences are more or less a continuation.



## **Chapter 5 - Conclusion**

The Eastern Vani Survey has proven that intensive investigation of surface remains is an effective method of identifying areas of ancient activity around the site of Vani. The reliance of previous regional efforts on local inhabitants to identify and report ancient material has biased our understanding of the region to include only those places where people are savvy enough to recognize ancient material and interested enough to bring it to the attention of the local museum. During our own surveys, landowners would often swear that no ancient material would be found in their fields only for fragments to be recovered. Local knowledge and help is essential to understanding any landscape. The reports of local inhabitants, however, have to be tested against systematic investigations, and the methods developed by the EVS can serve as a model for how rigorous, systematic survey can be done in tandem with extensive survey and gathering of traditional knowledge about the region.

The most important contribution of the project is the recognition that traditional definitions of “sites” in the Vani Region as a unit of analysis are difficult to operationalize in the field from surface remains, and may not be the best means of understanding surface scatters or, by extension, how people lived and organized themselves in the region in antiquity. As has been shown in this dissertation, the ephemeral nature of surface assemblages makes it difficult to approach the material using traditional methods of site definition that require the identification of the size and edges of surface scatters. The alternative method used by the EVS focuses on

identifying areas where activity may have been focused by reconstructing ceramic relationships in surface remains.

Though the methodological contributions of this dissertation are the most important, the material recovered by the project, when compared to previous research, does make a significant contribution to our understanding of the timing, tempo and nature of activity in and around Vani in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE and later. In the sections that follow, conclusions about settlement patterns, population trends and regional economics will be presented. Though in some cases the conclusions are rather general, they represent a distinct step forward in our understanding of the relationship between Vani and the landscape it inhabited.

## I. SETTLEMENT PATTERNING

The overall impression of settlement in the first millennium BCE from the survey is of dispersed habitation with some areas of focused activity. These areas of focus likely represent places of communal activity and/or centers of elite investment. The material recovered from Mshvidobisgora, Gabelauri, Isriti, Kveda Bzvani, Inashauri and Kveda and Zeda Gora represent the most likely places to yield clear evidence of communal activity, and even nucleated settlement, in the Classical and Hellenistic periods. The location of these places remained important as is evidenced by the presence of Mediaeval and Early Modern remains in close proximity to the material recovered by the survey. The remains recovered from these places, though containing a variety of vessel types, do not give clear indication of the types of activity that were taking place there. At those places where daub was recovered, we have some indication of investment and thus more-or-less sustained occupation. At Gora and on Mshvidobisgora, the amount of daub recovered could suggest the present of timber frame rather than wattle-and-daub

structures, suggesting them to be particularly important places. Further examination of these sites is necessary to clarify this picture. If we take these seven places as centers of activity, combined with the known sites outside the survey-region, we can reconstruct some of the changing patterns of settlement in around Vani.

In the Iron Age, ceramic material begins to be found throughout the region in the 10<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. This material is found predominantly in the foothills along the southern edge of the Rioni River Valley, with three patterns of site activity identifiable from the specific location of this material. The first pattern applies to that material found to the west of Vani. Here sites sit right on the edge of the Rioni plain at elevations between 65-170 masl. The second pattern applies to material found to the east of Vani where activity is focused in the lower river valleys of the Sulori and Qvinitsqaro and the ridge of hills that forms the border between zone 2 and zone 3 of habitation. In the west, no material of this period has been found in either the river plain formed by the Qumuri and Nasirala or Kapitona rivers or in the foothills to the south of this plain. The foothills that adjoin the Rioni plain are gentler slopes and broader, flatter tops than those to the east, which made them suitable for habitation. Conversely, the change in elevation in the lower river valleys to the west is more pronounced than in the east and produces steep slopes that either discouraged settlement in the past, or caused material to be obscured due to the movement of the landscape. No intensive survey was done to the west and it would certainly be useful to examine this area more systematically. The third pattern of site activity is found at two sites to the south of Vani in zone 3: Qumuri (A069) and Sakakile (A039). These sites stand out as they both site in fairly rugged environments and appear to have been physically, though not socially, isolated from other sites in the region. The position of these sites and the material recovered from them has encouraged some to believe they provide evidence for pathways of

movement between West and South Georgia.<sup>1</sup> Even if such routes did exist, they were never heavily used and the appearance at these sites of Late Bronze/Early Iron Age material highlights connections with the Rioni River plain and not with regions to the south.

In the Classical Period, the dramatic increase in ceramic material results in a great deal more evidence for activity in the period. The greatest increase in material happens at Qumuri, Nasirala and Kapitona river plains. Dapnari, Dablagomi, Mtisdziri and Shuamta all show a widening of settlement activity. It is tempting to see this expansion of material as evidence for an increase in population and the agglomerations of people in specific places in the landscape. This cannot, however, be supported on the evidence of surface survey alone. As with the Early Iron Age, no evidence of activity has been recovered from the lower river valleys to the west, while the lower river valleys to the east are the focus of activity. The appearance of Mshvidobisgora, a site similarly located to the tower at Mtisdziri on a the crest of a hill bordering the Rioni River plain, could signal a change in settlement investment, but excavation of the site is needed to refine our understanding of the scale and periodization of activity there.

In the Hellenistic period, both Qumuri and Dzulukhi cease to show signs of activity. Activity continues at Sakakile, but the overall impression is that the upper reaches of the Qumuri and Sulori rivers are no longer preferred places of habitation. A hoard of coins was recovered from Mikleponi, which is located in the southern foothills of the lower Qumuri river valley, but no other activity can be placed in the Qumuri valley. Activity is also reduced at Dablagomi and Mtisdziri, though Dapnari and its river valley show a level of activity similar to the Classical Period. Before the EVS, the area east of Vani looked much the same with an overall reduction of sites. At Vani there appears to be even more investment and expansion into the Rioni plain as

---

<sup>1</sup> Gamkrelidze (2012), 246.

evidenced by the emergence of Saqanchia. The intensive survey has shown that the quantity of material datable to the Hellenistic is less than that of the Classical period, but the overall variety in attested shapes increases. It seems clear that Hellenistic period was marked by a change in production that likely had a direct effect on the way material in the region was distributed. This change in ceramic production coincided with an overall greater investment in the built environment at Vani and the emergence of a Saqanchia in the river plain. The reduction in the overall amount of material from the region coupled with the apparent greater investment in Vani and its immediate environs suggests for the first time that Vani and the landscape were in some way dependent on each other. Did greater investment in Vani come at the expense of the hinterland? . Without a better understanding of site size and how it changed over time, it still is not clear if there were shifts in the location and distribution of populations living in the region during the Hellenistic period.

The Roman and Early Mediaeval fortification excavated at Mtisdziri represents the only unambiguous evidence of settlement in the region between the Hellenistic and Mediaeval/Early Modern Period. That Mtisdziri was the location of this fortification indicates that the junction between the Qumuri, Nasirala and Kapitona river valleys and the Rioni remained an important place. The post-Hellenistic, pre-modern remains, though poorly dated by the Eastern Vani Survey, show similar patterns of settlement to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE, that is dispersed settlement with areas of particularly intense activity. If we focus on the fortifications and settlements, however, we do see some significant differences from the patterns of activity attested in the Hellenistic and Classical Periods. In zone 3, only one Dzulukhi has shown any signs of settlement. There is also an expansion into the Rioni valley by two fortifications A044 and B005.

As for the activity areas recovered by the Eastern Vani Survey, there was little evidence of architectural features and very little of the material can be associated with clear signs of permanent occupation. Indeed, we cannot rule out the possibility of a seasonal pattern of use in the landscape. It could very well be that peoples aggregated at one or more prominent locations during certain parts of the year and then dispersed during others. The appearance of pithoi and their general dispersal in the landscape, whether for burial or storage, does suggest that Vani is unlikely to have been the focus of any seasonal fission and fusion. Instead, centers outside of Vani served as the focus of storage of and burial for groups of individuals, whether that be family groups or larger corporate groups.

## II. POPULATION

The logical next step after considering settlement patterning and the expansion or contraction of locations of activity is to address demographic patterns in the region in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE, more specifically the structure and size of the population living around Vani in this period. Reconstructing populations from survey data is notoriously difficult.<sup>2</sup> On those surveys where definite signs of settlement are visible or recoverable (i.e. tell sites, architectural remains, dense multicomponent artifact scatters), population estimates can be made by formulas that weight factors such as site size, function, hierarchy and distribution to estimate population and understand possible population trends. Within the Eastern Vani Survey, however, site size and function are difficult to interpret from survey data, due to the dispersed nature of both modern and ancient settlement. The dominant trend evidenced by the EVS is an expansion in

---

<sup>2</sup> Sbonias (1999) and Osborne (2004) offer good backgrounds on the problems and approaches. John Bintliff has been an important contributor, see Bintliff (1997), (1999) and Bintliff and Sbonias (2000).

each period in the variety of ceramic shapes recovered by the project. Variety in the ceramic data in the region correlates with trends evidenced by stratigraphic excavation at Vani, where increasing variety in ceramic form is linked very closely with an increase in the overall number of ceramic fragments recovered. Clearly ceramic production was expanding and ceramics were finding use in an increasing number of activities; activities that were either previously done with other materials (i.e. wood, leather), or were new and made possible by the expanding availability of ceramics. Ceramics, then, give evidence primarily of the changing materialization of activity taking place in the region. From the Early Bronze Age, ceramic production slowly increases with a major shift happening in the Early Iron Age as wheel made pottery predominates. Greater access to ceramics causes an expansion in its use in the Classical and Hellenistic period. Sometime at the end of the Hellenistic, major disruptions occur which cause at least ceramic innovation if not production to stop in the region.

If we look holistically at all the data recovered from the region, however, there are some broad population trends that are suggested. Vani itself is our best source of information to use to assess the changing population trends. The increased investment at the site that begins in the Classical period and continues into the Hellenistic coincides with the apparent emergence of an elite class in the region. The rich burials of the 5<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries show that a wealthy and likely privileged class of individuals enjoyed differential access to the site. In the Early Iron Age, Vani was one of a couple of sites in the region where significant remains have been recovered. Though the character of the site in the Early Iron Age appears unique, it does not yet show signs of being the chief settlement in the region. Beginning in the Classical Period and continuing into the Hellenistic, Vani grows and becomes by far the focus of local investment.

The fact that the emergence of an elite class and the apparent increased investment at Vani occurs in tandem with an expansion of ceramic prevalence in the region suggests that from the Early Iron Age into at least the Early Hellenistic period the population around Vani was expanding. How dramatic that expansion was, is uncertain, but what can be said is that greater wealth is being generated and more ceramic stuff is being consumed. This increase in population slowed or even leveled out between the Classical and Hellenistic periods and was arrested by the changes that happened during the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE following the Mithridatic Wars and the reorganization of the region by first Pontos and later Rome. The number of people living in the area may have declined following these events as evidenced by an overall impoverishment in the archaeological record. It is unlikely, however, that the region was completely depopulated.

### III. ECONOMY

Inevitably, discussion of settlement patterning and population trends leads to the realization that the answer lies with the economy. Though modern stone quarries are known in the area as well as hot springs, the region around Vani is resource poor. The landscape around Vani does enjoy a specific quality that is difficult to find in the rest of Western Georgia. Beginning at Vani and extending east all the way to the Likhi Range is land that rises rather gently into the foothills and is relatively protected from the flooding of the larger systems. Agriculture was clearly the primary resource of the Vani Region as is evidenced by recovery of bronze and iron agricultural implements as well as the abundance of pithoi of the Classical and Hellenistic periods. Additionally, the storage containers recovered from Vani in the temple complex on the central terrace show that agricultural produce had an important relationship by religious or elite ideology.



Even before our catchment analysis, it was apparent that Vani had only limited access to resources other than agricultural land. If Vani's position in the region is the result of its economic relationship with sites in its hinterland, the accumulation of wealth attested by the investment at the site of Vani beginning in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE is most likely the result of agricultural production. The so-called "Sacred barn" of the Hellenistic period from Vani's lower terrace included large storage containers thought to be for grain or wine.<sup>3</sup> Recent pollen analysis of a bronze hoard from Vani has revealed that by the first half of the first century BCE, grain, flax, vegetables and grapes were growing in significant quantities.<sup>4</sup> Flax and cotton fibers recovered from the hoard show that cloth was being produced, though flax oil may have been equally important to the local economy. The question, however, is whether the expansion of agricultural production was locally driven or was part of more general economic unification happening in West Georgia.

#### IV. NEXT STEPS

The survey work undertaken by both the Vani Regional Survey and the Eastern Vani Survey demonstrates both the need for more systematic survey in Western Georgia and the feasibility of stratified methodology in finding new sites and refining our understanding of intra and inter-site activity. Regional datasets like the one that has now been developed for Vani by both the Vani Regional Survey and the Eastern Vani Survey need to be created for other sites of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE in Colchis. In order to address the broader questions regarding the nature of economic and political relationships within Colchis, we need a better understanding of the

---

<sup>3</sup> Matiashvili (2013), 133.

<sup>4</sup> Chichinadze and Kvavadze (2013).

local trajectories of other important sites of Western Georgia. The methodology used by the Eastern Vani Survey would prove effective in these other regions as the nature of modern settlement throughout the Colchian Lowland is essentially the same.

The immediate goal, however, is to refine our understanding of the region through excavation and more survey. Excavations guided by the results of the intensive survey should be the first priority. Four activity areas in particular, Mshvidobis Gora (E000), Gabelauri (E000), Kveda Bzvani (E000) and Kveda Gora (E000), show great promise in providing new stratified deposits from areas once thought to be devoid of sites. Gabelauri and Mshvidobis Gora could be particularly important as their proximity to Vani offers real potential for working out ways of understanding Vani's particular role in the region. A significant part of these excavations should be closer scientific study of the ceramic material and the development of a radio carbon sequence for the region. Better dating of locally produced ceramics that can help us move away from coarse-grained chronologies would allow us to better sequence activity in the region.

Through this project, Vani's importance to our understanding of Colchian social organization in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE has increased. Not because the site itself gives evidence for the trappings of a state-level bureaucracy, but rather because it can serve as a model for how regional studies in western Georgia need to be approached. Building on the foundation established by the Vani Regional Survey and refined by the Eastern Vani Survey, we can now better understand how to formulate our research questions to reflect the types of material we are likely to encounter.