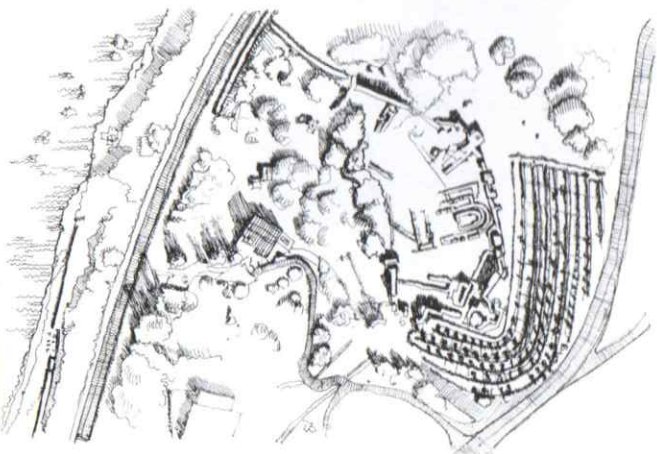


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ARCHEOLOGICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SITE OF PETRA - TSIKHISDZIRI

# ARCHITECTURE OF PETRA FORTRESS

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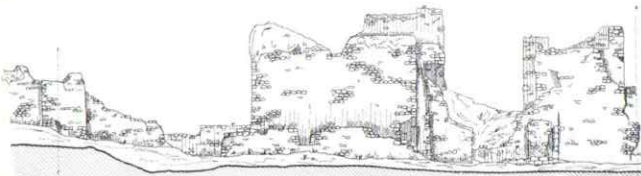
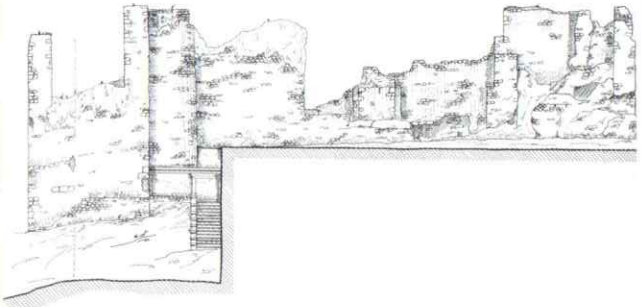
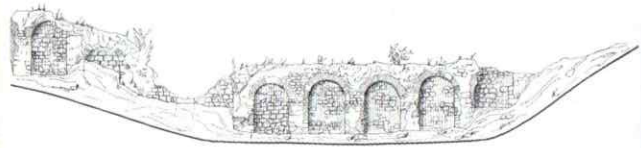
 პეტრას ციხე-სიმაგრე/Petra Fortress

აქარის კულტურული  
მემკვიდრეობის  
აგვის სააგენტო



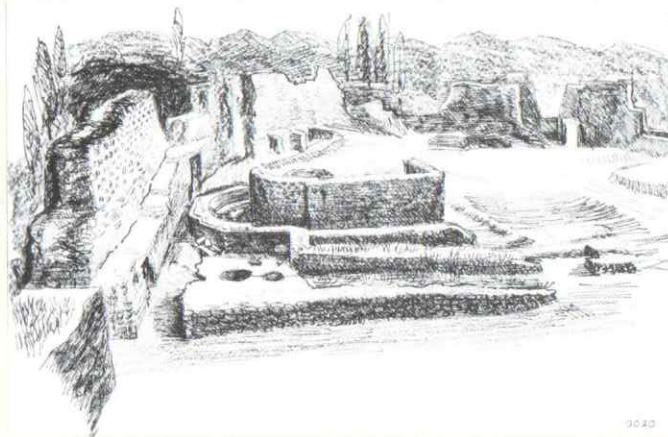
CULTURAL HERITAGE  
PRESERVATION AGENCY  
OF AJARA

Construction of the **walls of the fortress** is divided into two main periods: early medieval period and that of the presence of the Ottomans in the fortress. There is an early medieval gate in the north-east part of the citadel. Its arch is built with bricks and is buttressed on the east and the west. The east side of the northern masonry of the gate features an image of a cross with flared ends, which had been coated with lime by the Ottomans. Fortification structures situated on the northern hill are linked with the tower erected on the south-west hill with a double wall. The double wall dates to the sixth century, which is documented by the brick bands evidenced in the masonry and the archaeological material discovered in the area. The wall situated west of the double one is comparatively high and represents the main wall which has a gate arranged in its south-east part.

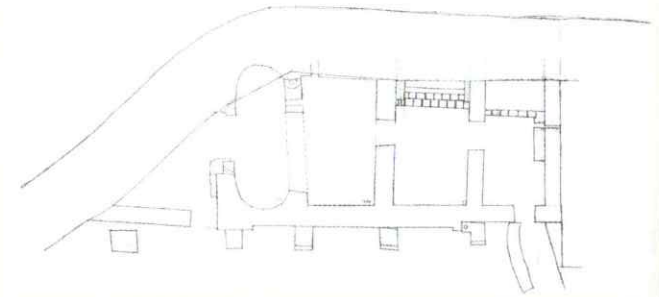


**Church-site.** The central part of the citadel has yielded remnants of churches of various periods. The most impressive is a three-nave basilica dated to the sixth century. It has large dimensions and

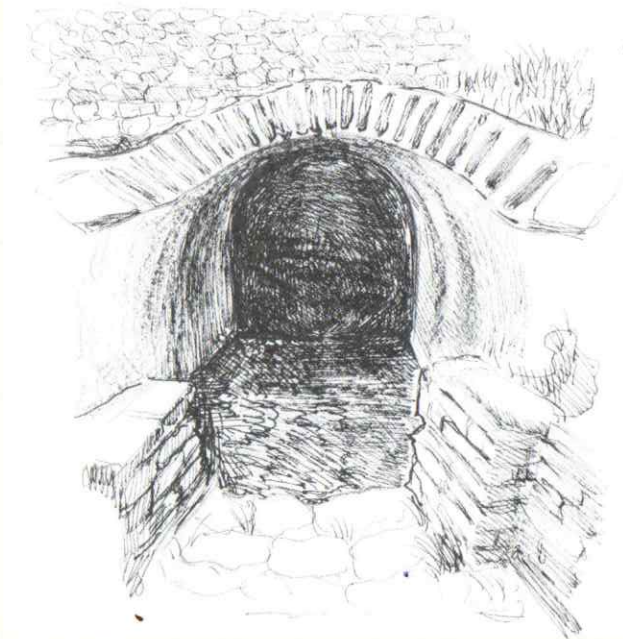
elongated proportions. Presently, only the bases of the supporting pillars have survived. The walls are built with unprocessed stone and mortar. The exterior of the apse is dressed in hewn stones of uniform size. Walls of an earlier construction which seem to be the remnants of the earliest church have been identified inside the south and central naves of the three-nave basilica, as well as outside the south nave. After the three-nave basilica was destroyed, a hall-type church with a semi-circular apse was built inside its central nave. There are pilasters inside the north and south wall. The church used to have two entrances: on the west and the south. The church generally dates to the tenth-eleventh centuries.



**Bathhouse.** The sixth -century bathhouse discovered in the center of the fortress is a structure of an elongated rectangular shape directed north-east. It comprises an enfilade of five compartments: a changing room, a cold room, a warm room, a hot room and a boiler room (dimensions: 9.2 x 6.5 m). The walls of the structure have survived at a height of 1.2 m. A portico is arranged along the western façade of the bathhouse. Presumably, the boiler room and the changing room were roofed with light wooden constructions, while the rest of the rooms were covered with vaults. After the bathhouse ceased to function, they arranged a wine cellar on the territory. The bathhouse and the three-nave basilica are contemporaneous constructions. They form parts of an integral composition.



**Household facilities.** The structure revealed in the south-east part of the citadel is contemporaneous with the basilica and the bathhouse. It is a 5-meter-long and 5-meter-wide structure directed east to west and divided into three parts by two transversal walls. The one-meter-wide walls are plastered with mortar inside. The structure in question could have been a storage for food. Another household facility is a construction arranged in the north-east corner of the curtain wall of the fortress. Its eastern part (with a mortared duct, walls and arched roof) is perfectly preserved. Presumably, the structure served as a reservoir for collecting rain water and had a specific function during the siege of the fortress.



with north-east and north-west corners was completely preserved (H – 3 m), while the apse and the foundation of the south wall were revealed as a consequence of excavations. A plastered floor and remnants of the base of the chancel screen were uncovered in the apse.

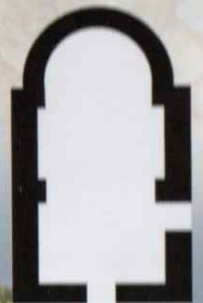
North and south walls are equipped with pilasters inside. The structure seems to have been covered with a vault which rested on an arch laid on a pair of pilasters. The church had two entrances from the west and the south. The south doorway was later bricked up because of the facility annexed to it.

The structure is mainly built with rubbles mixed with cobblestone and brick. The pilasters and the altar are built with ashlar blocks. The north wall has preserved traces of plastering.

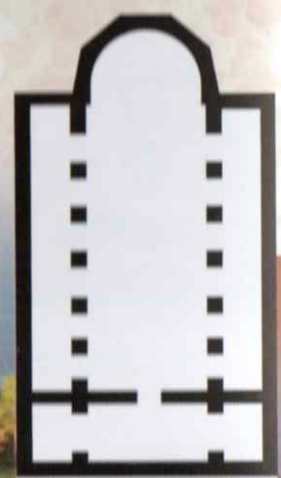
The hall-type church must have been built after the three-nave basilica ceased to function, in the tenth-eleventh centuries. Presumably, the church continued operating prior to the Turkish occupation of Tsikhisdziri.



ARCHEOLOGICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SITE OF PETRA-TSIKHISDZIRI




Hall-type Church, plan



Three-nave basilica, plan

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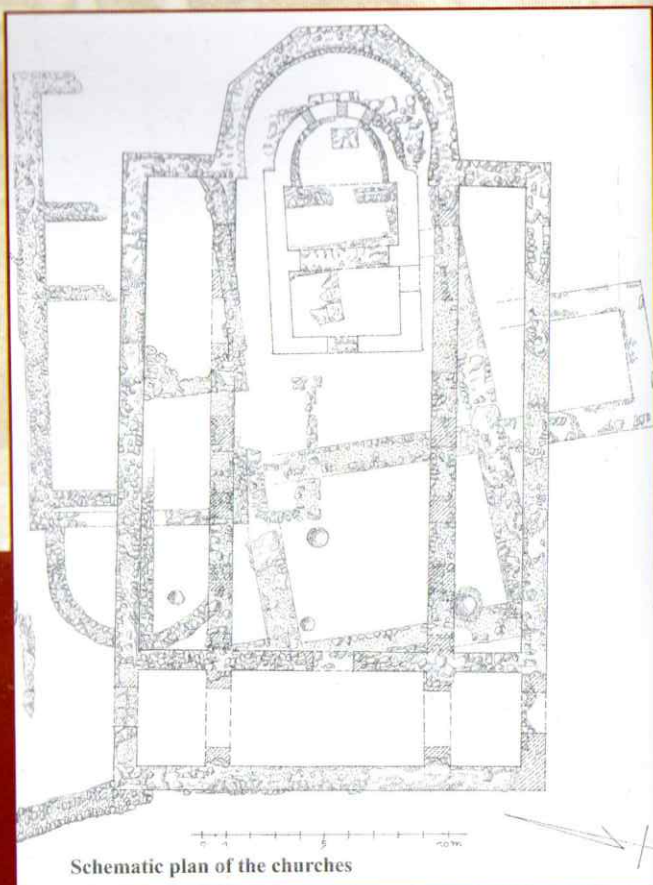
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# CHURCHES

### THREE-NAVE BASILICA

Remains of churches of two different epochs have been revealed in the center of the citadel. The ancient church, which is a three-nave basilica, is destroyed to the foundation level and it is only identifiable at the level of the plan. It has a projected pentagonal apse, a three-part narthex and rectangular columns dividing the naves. It is distinguished by its big size and an emphasized longitudinal axis (dimensions: L – 33.5m, W – 17.8 m). Compared to the dimensions of the structure, thickness of its walls is relatively insignificant, which is why it is presumed that it was roofed with wooden constructions.

The most interesting architectural detail of the basilica



Schematic plan of the churches

is the apse which is horseshoe-shaped inside and pentagonal outside. It is dressed in well-hewn, carefully arranged stone blocks, while the rest of the walls of the church are built with mixed masonry typical of the early Byzantine epoch, i. e. with the rubble of various sizes arranged horizontally on lime mortar and mixed with layers of brick to attain straightness.

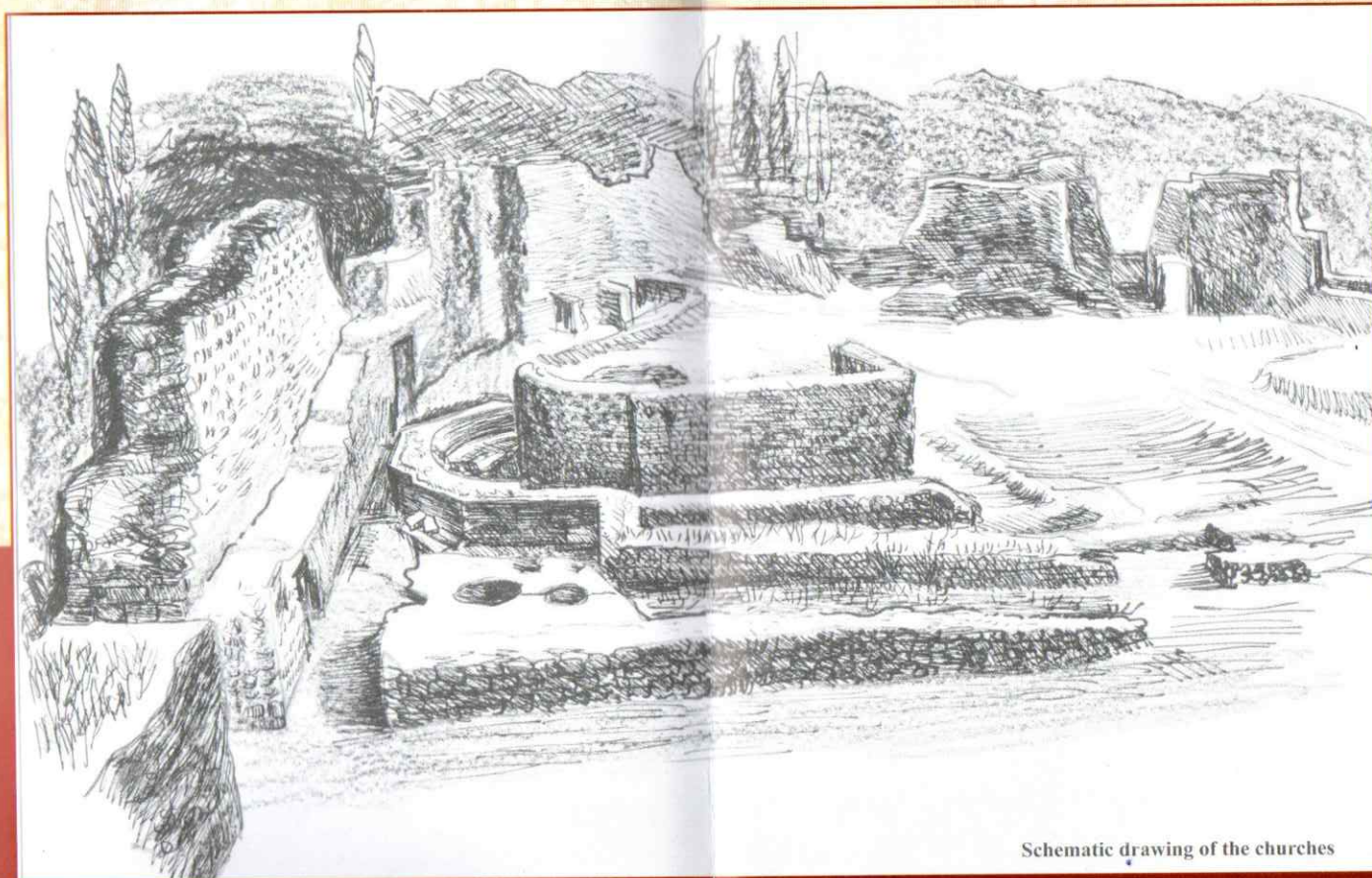
Walls of an earlier structure have been evidenced inside the central nave of the three-nave basilica, as well as outside the south and north naves. They are still under investigation.

The three-nave basilica dates to the sixth century AD and must be connected to construction activities of Emper-

or Justinian in Lazika. In addition, written sources (ancient ecclesiastical records of the patriarchate of Constantinople of the seventh -ninth centuries) document that Petra was one of the episcopal centers of Lazika Eparchy. Given the dimensions of the structure, Tsikhisdziri basilica was a rather monumental construction perfectly satisfying all the demands of an episcopal church.

### HALL-TYPE CHURCH

After the destruction of the three-nave basilica, a hall-type church with a projecting semi-circular apse (L – 9.0 m, W – 9.75m) was built in its central nave. The north wall



Schematic drawing of the churches

attract great interest. The coins in question had a wide circulation in Georgia in the 13th -14th centuries. However, in our region they are found only in Tsikhisdziri.

In chronological terms, the latest is a Turkish piastre minted in 1293 Hijri calendar (1883). Discovery of Turkish coins in south-west Georgia does not require a special comment, because at the time the region was a constituent part of Ottoman Turkey. Given the political situation, it was Ottoman coins that dominated in the monetary circulation.



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1. Coin of Tamar and David, with the 'Bagrationi family badge' on the obverse; struck in 1200; copper
2. Byzantine copper coin, with the Savior depicted on the obverse, tenth century
3. Amisos, fourth century BC; silver drachm with Hera on the obverse and an eagle with spread wings on the reverse
4. Trabzon aspr, silver, with St. Eugenius on the obverse and Caesar Manuel I (1239-1253) on the reverse; 13th century
5. Seljuk drachm, silver, Keikhosru II (1237-1246), Konya, with the sun and the lion on the reverse.
6. Gold coin of Justinian. Av: Caesar; Rev: whole figure of Victoria. 6th century AD
7. Sassanians silver coins– the 6th Century A.D.




ARCHEOLOGICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SITE OF PETRA-TSIKHISDZIRI

COINS DISCOVERED AT PETRA-TSIKHISDZIRI  
PRESERVED AT LEPLAJARA MUSEUMS -BATUMI  
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## COINS DISCOVERED AT PETRA- TSIKHISDZIRI

აქარის კულტურული  
მემკვიდრეობის  
დაცვის სააგენტო



CULTURAL HERITAGE  
PRESERVATION AGENCY  
OF AJARA



1



2



3



4

Tsikhisdziri is a very remarkable monument in terms of its numismatic finds. Being a material historical source, the coins revealed here proved one more time that Tsikhisdziri is an extremely significant strategic location on the eastern Black Sea coast. The local population is advanced, with thriving animal farming and commerce. Monetary system seems to have developed from the fifth century BC. It is one of the points where monetary circulation originated and developed. There seem to be economic relations with the Classical world. It is evidenced by the coins of the city of Amisos, the Kingdom of Pontus (fourth-first centuries BC), discovered here. The coins of Amisos dating to the first century BC are widely spread on the coastal line of western Georgia, which is related to the political activities of Mithridates Eupator. It is the place where a military garrison was camped in Roman epoch which caused accumulation of Roman silver and copper coins (Adrian [117-138], Antoninus Pius [138-161], Caracalla [211-217], Septimius Severus [193-211], Gordian III [238-244], Diocletian [284-305], etc.). The numismatic material evidenced here covers the whole period between Roman epoch and the high medieval times including. Investigation of the coins showed that Sassanian coins (Bahram V [406-439], Khosrow I Anushirvan [531-573], Khosrow II [590-628]) were in circulation on this territory in the early medieval epoch. They are found in large numbers in western Georgia and it is quite predictable to reveal them at Tsikhisdziri, because at the time it was the



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midpoint of the confrontation between the Byzantines and the Iranians. Notably, during the campaign in 2017 (leader of the expedition David Mindorashvili) a hoard of coins of the fourth-sixth centuries was revealed here together with the equipment of an Iranian warrior.

Byzantine money was in circulation from the fourth century (Emperor Arcadius [395-408], Basil I and Constantine VII [867-879], Romanos I Lekapenos [919-021], Constantine VII(?) [945], Michael IV the Paphlagonian [1034-1041], Isaac I Komnenos [1057-1059], or Constantine X Doukas [976-1025], etc.).

Two copper coins struck in the name of Queen Tamar are among the accidental finds of Tsikhisdziri. They bear names of Tamar and David. Analogous material has been discovered in Georgia in large numbers, but these are particularly important because this is the first case of recovering Tamar's and, generally, medieval Georgian coins in south-west Georgia.

A hoard of coins (150 items) struck in the Sultanate of Rum under Kaiqubad I (1219-1236), Kaikhusru II (1237-1246) and other rulers was also discovered in Tsikhisdziri. Silver coins minted in the Sultanate of Rum (Asia Minor) in the 12th -13th centuries were widespread in Georgia, but in south-west Georgia they are only encountered at Tsikhisdziri.

Among the numismatic finds of Tsikhisdziri aspers of Trebizond and their imitations – kirmaneulis (13th -15th cc)



6



WEAPON



BATTLE AXES



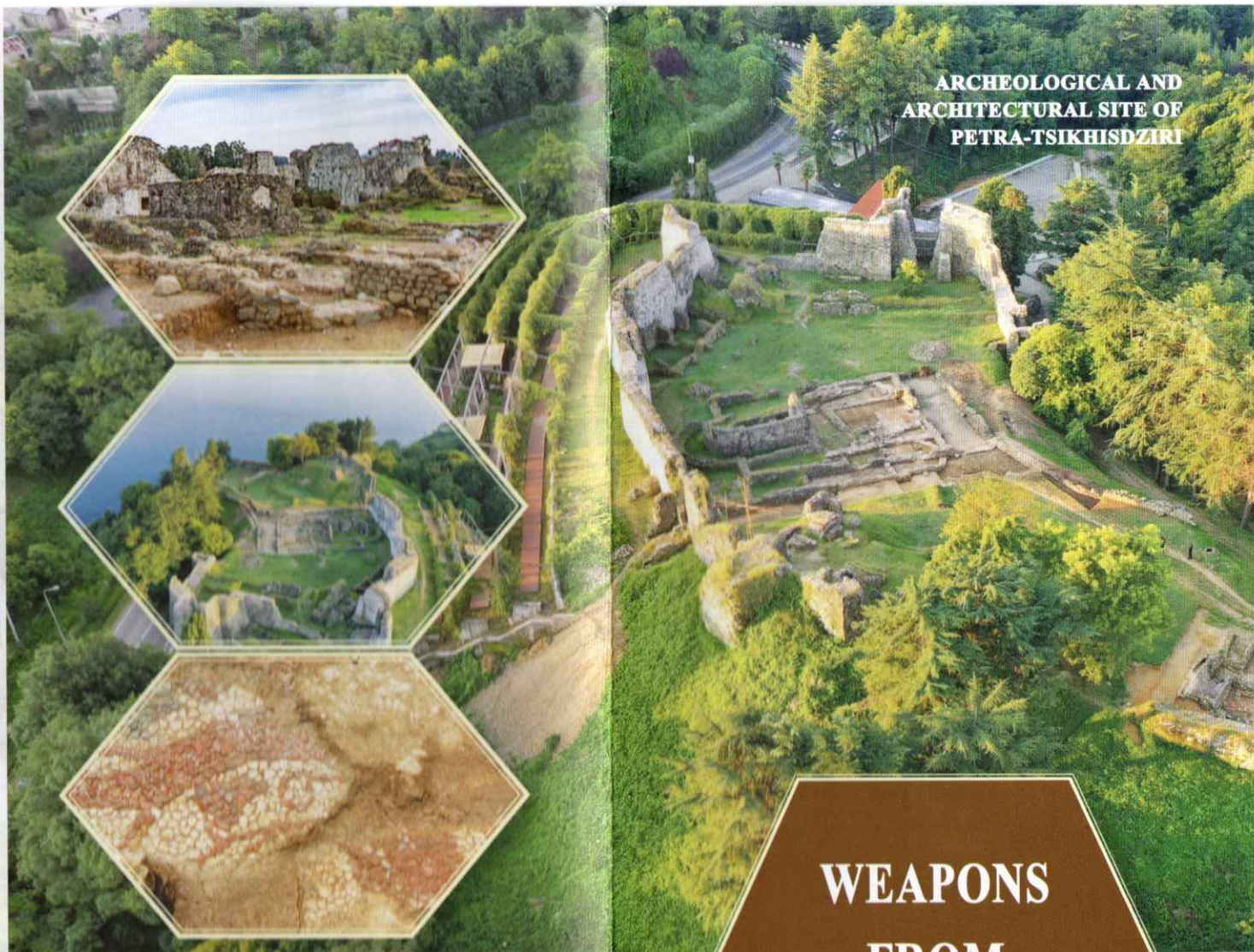
BATTLE AXES



ARROWHEADS

winged stemmed arrowheads of different size and shape. Three-winged arrowheads are common throughout the Caucasus during the early Middle Ages.

The discovered weapons belong to the mid-sixth century CE. The precise date of their burial must be the year of 551.



ARCHEOLOGICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SITE OF PETRA-TSIKHISDZIRI

WEAPONS FROM PETRA-TSIKHISDZIRI  
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# WEAPONS FROM PETRA-TSIKHISDZIRI

აქარის კულტურული  
მემკვიდრეობის  
დაცვის სააგენტო



CULTURAL HERITAGE  
PRESERVATION AGENCY  
OF AJARA

Among the materials discovered as a result of archaeological excavations at Petra-Tsikhisdziri there are numerous iron artifacts that arouse particular interest. Weapons make up their majority.

Iron helmet – damaged; its upper part is missing and it is open in one place. A bronze band with bulges and rings preserved on it runs along its edge. Only one ring is complete, others are crushed against the edge of the helmet. The rings must have served as pieces for attaching the chainmail to protect the neck. Diameter of the helmet is 25 cm, the extant height – 12cm (pl. XXIV1). Despite its being incomplete, it can be stated that the helmet is forged in a single piece and does not have eye or nose slots.

Chain armor - almost turned into slag as a result of strong fire and discovered in the form of rather big-size lumps. It is made up of small iron rings which was rather difficult to produce.

Iron plates of an armor were discovered in the form of a large burnt mass at the bottom of the eastern wall of the tower. The well-preserved plates have round and oblong holes. They must have been connected with leather laces but no trace of the latter has survived.



DAGGER, SWORD

The weapons include an iron dagger and three iron swords. The dagger is short (extant length – 13.5cm), the handle which must have been wooden is missing. One of the swords is single-edged (length – 80.5 cm), two are double-edged (length of the first one is 90.5cm, the extant length of the other is 77 cm). Similar double-edged swords are



SPEARHEADS



CHAIN ARMOR

IRON PLATES OF AN ARMOR

IRON HELMET



known all over the East. They are particularly typical of the early medieval material culture of Iran. Analogous double-edged swords are encountered in both north-west and central regions of historical Lazika. Single-edged swords that have evolved from the double-edged ones gradually become predominant in armament. The materials revealed



SHIELD BOSSES

at Tsikhisdziri suggest that by the mid-sixth century both types of swords do co-exist.

Spearheads – are of different kinds. The discovered spearheads (7 items) find numerous parallels from the sites excavated in western Georgia. Given the number of the spearheads, there were seven warriors guarding the tower.

Battle axes – four types can be distinguished among six items that have been discovered. In the sixth century axes become very common in military forces of various countries. Axes are intensively used by Iranian warriors. It can be evidenced by an account of Agathias the Scholastic, according to which in 555 Iranians attacked the Byzantines that had stood Phasis. The Iranians “attacked the wall with axes – it was a wooden wall so it could be chopped down with an axe” [Georgica 1936:114]. Thus, at the time battle axes were widely spread in the civilized countries of both west and east.

Arrowheads – thirteen arrowheads were revealed in different parts of the tower. One of them is square in section and has a considerably elongated stem. The rest are three-