

PREFACE

Samshvilde is one of the remarkable cities of Caucasus. It is located in the south of Tbilisi, in the historic Kvemo Kartli, on the cape at the confluence of Khrami and Chivchava rivers which represents a naturally reinforced place. Convenient geographic location, abundance of natural resources and proximity to the northern branch of the "Silk Road" created a favourable condition for settlement of humans in this place from the ancient times.

Despite the centuries-long past, strangely enough, systemic, consistent study of Samshvilde had not been carried out until recently. Even though certain research works were conducted on the former settlement and in the vicinity of it in the second half of the last century, but they were not stable and the obtained results were not enough for full formation of the past picture of the monument.

The situation changed in 2012 when the University of Georgia initiated a project which in addition to archaeological survey implied conducting multidisciplinary surveys of Samshvilde. As a result of consistent and stable work during seven years, the project developed rapidly and became international. Currently, European and Canadian research-educational institutes, specialists and students are engaged in the surveys together with the University of Georgia. It is also noteworthy that the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia submitted a plan in 2018 aiming to conduct rehabilitation-conservation works in Samshvilde and full realization of the touristic potential of the monument.

Today it may be said that significant scientific novelties were discovered about Samshvilde as a result of the above surveys. This is primarily related to discovery of the earliest cultural layers of the monument and archaeological materials which belong to the end of the Stone Age – Neolith. Until present, it was considered that history of Samshvilde starts from the antique period, however, as it was mentioned, discovery of archaeological materials of the Stone Age broke this stereotype and made the history of the monument older by several thousand years.

Discovery of the Late Bronze-Early Iron Age grave under archaeological layers of the Middle Ages in Samshvilde citadel is also important which must be a confirmation of existence of the burial ground and possibly, a former settlement of the above period on this place. Due to the convenient geographic location, it is absolutely possible that Samshvilde cape might have been used by humans in such early period.

However, remnants of the Middle Ages are presented in Samshvilde most widely and this is natural, because it represented the largest political-economic and religious center of the region over centuries. Complexes of the Middle Ages are presented by materials and remnants of buildings and structures of the early, and developed and late Middle Ages. The recently discovered materials of various phases of the Middle Ages are clear indication of the political, cultural and economic relations which Samshvilde had both within the country and outside of it.

However, significance of these relations and the monument is most vividly demonstrated by the coin treasure discovered in Samshvilde citadel which unites up to three hundred Georgian and foreign coins of the developed Middle Ages. Discovery of such large treasure as a result of stable and consistent archaeological excavations, while the contemporary contexts and layers are well preserved, is very important. Accordingly, full study and publication of coins included in the treasure is an urgent issue.

Various forms of money circulated on the territory of Georgia throughout its centuries-long history were preserved in the form of coin treasure. Therefore, study of the treasure may allow for restoring the picture of monetary circulation of this or that period in the country, reviving the domestic and foreign trade relations and of course, conveying external political relations of the country. Therefore, discovery of each coin treasure has the greatest importance for study of historic past of our country. Due to its specific nature, the process of processing and analysis of information preserved by numismatic treasures is associated with certain difficulties. In frequent cases, anonymous origin of treasures makes it complicated to read the secret historic messages hidden in the treasures. Several hundreds of coin treasures are saved in the numismatic depository of the National Museum of Georgia today, but the circumstance, archaeological context of discovery of most of them is not known.

The coin treasures which were discovered as a result of planned archaeological campaigns provide much more information, because in this case, there is more information by means of the accompanying archaeological materials and it is easier to "read" the secret.

In this regard, discovery of Samshvilde treasure is a significant phenomenon both for the Georgian numismatic science and the general historic science.

The numismatic department of the National Museum of Georgia issued a number of catalogues, mostly of foreign coins, saved in its depositories earlier. It may be said that Kirmanian coin which was minted in the West Georgia is the only exception. Thus, it became necessary to publish catalogues of Georgian coins, including coins of Tamar's epoch a long time ago. Coin is a source and it should be available to everybody similar to the Georgian and foreign narrative sources which were translated and are translated by Georgian researchers with great care.