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## COLCHIAN CULTURE, COLCHIS, IBERIA

The stereotype of the traditional division of Georgia into east and west has played decisive role in establishing the idea that the so-called Colchian archaeological culture, the period of whose efflorescence and expansion is VIII-VII cc B.C. is created by Zan-speaking ethnos. This idea is also encouraged by the conclusions obtained by applying the glottochronology method about the early divergence of the proto-Kartvelian language. However, the vast geographical area of expansion the Colchian culture that spreads further away from the boundaries of west Georgia, excludes the possibility of ascribing the culture only to Zan people. The very fact of expansion of the absolutely homogeneous material and spiritual culture on such a vast territory enables us to admit that the related tribes, who spoke several more dialects of the Georgian language (and not only the three ones) without any language barrier on the level of communication, were bearers of the same culture.

The recent archaeological discoveries gives right to assert that VI-IV cc B.C. Colchis Kingdom apart from the west part of the east Georgia and the new kingdom of Kartli (the same Iberia kingdom) that emerged in the III c B.C. is an heir of Colchis state in some definite respects. The kingdoms of Colchis and Iberia had never existed simultaneously. In the beginning of III c. B.C. there was a shift of the political centre within a single state and King Parnavaz, the first king of Kartli (Iberia), had no need of interpreter conversing with Kuji, the ruler of Egrisi (Colchis).

In IV-VIII cc Georgia was divided into two kingdoms but its population cherished the memory of the country's original unity and as it is confirmed by Byzantium written records Greeks and Persians of the period were very well aware of the unity and kinship of Iberians and Laz. The faith of unity of "Qoveli Kartli" (entire Georgia) underlines the old historical literature and even during the extreme disintegration of the country. Georgian politicians aspired restoring the unity. This aspiration was initially enlivened by the language affinity of the Georgian tribes who subsequently gained its gearing force by formation the common literary language, that was the language of prayers and literacy of all Georgians with relation to which all the other speeches in Georgia have had the function of dialects to these days.