Italian Ambassador visits Archeological site in Shida Kartli

By Salome Modebadze

The Ambassador of Italy to Georgia Federica Favi visited the Shida Kartli archeological site in the Khoskuri district with The Messenger. The Georgian-Italian Shida Kartli archaeological project was reopened in 2009 by the Ca' Foscari University of Venice (Italy) in cooperation with the Georgian National Museum and Tbilisi State University (Georgia). It aimed at investigating the relations between the Early Bronze Age cultures of Georgia and the contemporary cultures of the northern regions of the Near East.

The Natsargora site had been the subject of interest as early as the 1980s when a Georgian archeological team led by the late Alexander Ramishvili first excavated the hill in 1984, but the studies were suspended due to lack of finances.

Professor Elena Rova from Ca' Foscari University said the settlement with a nearby cemetery belonged to the early Bronze-age period dating to around 3,500 BC, but the site was reoccupied in the late Bronze age, then supposedly followed by Hellenistic-Roman occupation.

2 hectares of the partially natural and partially artificial mound has a mixture of two different cultures – Mikvari (Kura) - Araxes and

CONTINUED ON Page 4
Italian Ambassador visits
Archeological site in Shida Kartli

GRAVE 355
Burial goods

Artifacts recovered at the Natsargora archeological site in Shida Kartli, Georgia.

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

Bedeni, which were not contemporary cultures. "It was interesting to find these two cultures together," she said explaining that the main difference between the two cultures was in their social structure. If the Kura-Araxes culture had simple shaped objects, Bedeni culture had refined shapes and improved technologies.

Rova said her team came across some very interesting things that differed from what was previously known about this area. Showing us the remains of small round huts which contained fireplaces, she said the fire inside the house was not only for cooking but it was the 'God' of the house.

People in this region were making use of copper and gold; when in the same period in Mesopotamia, metal was a rare and elite commodity. These local people were supposed to be agriculturists and also cattle breeders moving across the landscape with cows, beef, and other domestic animals.

Giulia De Nobili from Ca' Foscari University has been working on the site for four years now. Studying the distribution of settlements in the South Caucasus, she found Georgian archeology very interesting. De Nobili supposed that there may be some connection here to the architecture of Mesopotamia. "It will be really interesting to find a connection with a more well-known area and to understand if the population form here was exchanging things with them," she said.

Salome Jamburia, from Tbilisi State University, just began her participation in this expedition although she had wanted to work with the Italian team at Natsargora since 2009. Jamburia found the place very interesting and enjoyed working with the Italian team. Stressing the necessity for building a relationship with her Georgian colleagues, Elena Rova hoped that the Georgian students will come to Italy to undertake their PhD and spend some time there.

This year, the Georgian-Italian team will finish excavations at Natsargora and move to other places in the same region. Italian Ambassador Favi found it amazing to see Italian archeologists in Georgia. "I did not expect such a rich amount of discoveries. I hope they find another interesting part in the country where they can continue their work," she told The Messenger and added that "you should love your job to share it with others and I think you will have a lot of satisfaction."

Although the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs finances archeologists every year, the financial crisis has somehow decreased the finances. But Federica Favi hopes the Italian Embassy to Georgia will find sponsors to promote archeology. Welcoming the great engagement of the Georgian side, she said everything the archeological team has discovered at Shida Kartli belongs to Georgia and will stay in the Khashuri museum thus add another proverbial brick in the promotion of Georgian tourism.