

EXCAVATIONS OF THE SETTLEMENTS ARTYUSHCHENKO-2 AND VYSHESTEBLIEVSKAYA-11 BY THE TAMAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL GROUP

In July-August, 2005, the Taman Group of the Bosphorus Archaeological Expedition of the Institute of the History of Material Culture RAS (IIMK RAS) continued its explorations in the south of the Taman Peninsula.¹ In 1998–2000, the Group was directed by Evgeniy Ya. Rogov; since 2001 it has been headed by Sergey V. Kashaev.

As in previous years, the studies were conducted at two rural settlements of the Classical period which were named Artyushchenko-2 and Vyshesteblievskaya-11 (Temryuk Region of the Krasnodar Kray). The field directors were M. S. Pavlova and A. S. Tsin'ko.

The site of Artyushchenko-2 was discovered during archaeological surveys in 1997. It is situated 3 km south-east of the village of Artyushchenko and about 15 km south-east of what is now the *stanitsa* (Cossack village) of Taman on the site of ancient Hermonassa. In antiquity, our settlement probably formed part of the rural lands of the latter city.

The site under consideration is situated on a high precipitous Black Sea cliff which is in the process of intensive erosion. Therefore, considerable areas of the cultural layer are annually eroded away from the main shore, slipping down the slope and being washed away by the sea. Aside from these natural damages, the settlement and its necropolis are frequently disturbed by robbers' excavations.

Since 1998 an area of more than 600 sq. m has been excavated at this settlement where household pits with material dating from the 5th – 3rd centuries BC have been explored. Among the finds of pottery, fragmentary amphorae from Chios, Lesbos, Thasos, Mende, Heraclea, Sinope and Rhodes have been recovered.

¹ С. В. Кашаев, “Таманский отряд Боспорской экспедиции ИИМК РАН (1998–2004 гг.)” (S. V. Kashaev, “The Taman Group of the Bosphorus Expedition of the Institute of Material Culture RAS [1998–2004]”), *Проблемы изучения античной археологии Северного Причерноморья. Материалы научной конференции, посвященной 100-летию со дня рождения В. Ф. Гайдукевича* (СПб. 2005) 64–70.

In 2002, east of the settlement of Artyushchenko-2, its necropolis was discovered, and in the subsequent season the group started its excavation.

The flat graves of the necropolis have no above ground structures and are in no way distinguishable on the present-day surface. Necropoleis of this type are very difficult to expose, and as a rule they are disclosed only by chance disturbance – e. g. in the course of construction or demolition works. This was the case with the cemetery under consideration. The graves were discovered after one of the burials had been disturbed by severe landslips.

In 2003–2004 an area of 165 sq. m with graves dated to the 5th century BC was excavated at the necropolis. A total of 13 graves have been discovered. Of these, eight burials have been excavated (nos. 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13), while the remaining five (nos. 1, 2, 4, 5, 8) have been totally demolished by abrasion. Some of the male graves contained iron weapons: swords-*acinaces* and spearheads.

In female graves bronze mirrors and rings, spiral pendants, pyxides, beads and bronze needles were found. Glass flasks and amphoriskoi of Phoenician manufacture served as toilet vessels.

In 2005 the rescue excavations were continued at the necropolis over an area of 320 sq. metres. The layers were excavated to a depth of 1.6 m. During the excavations, 12 burials of different periods were uncovered (nos. 14–25).

The graves were dug into the loam of the bedrock, the contours of the grave pits being rarely discernible above the level of the skeletons. The deceased were laid into the graves supine, the arms parallel to the body. The corpses were poorly preserved. The pottery of the grave offerings was concentrated either at the legs or along the body on the left of the deceased.

In burials no. 19 and no. 23 no grave offerings were found. They are dated probably to the Roman period, as well as grave no. 22 where a small iron knife and an awl were uncovered. Burial no. 14 was partly disturbed by the abrasion. The arrangement of the bones suggests that the grave was robbed in antiquity. The main ‘loot’ of the robbers was probably the breast armour of the warrior here interred. Of the burial items preserved in this burial there was only a fragmentary iron sword dated tentatively to the 5th–7th century AD.

A series of burials (nos. 15, 16, 17, 18, and 20) may be dated to the first half of the 5th century BC. In burial no. 15, of the grave offerings there was only a fragment of a massive animal bone. In grave no. 16, the burial items comprised a jug and a bowl of red-ware, a lekythos, a bronze mirror, a bronze needle, an iron awl and a string of 40 beads. In grave no. 17 were

found a red-ware jug, a handmade bowl, a lekythos, a small bronze ring and a ceramic spindle-whorl. Burial no. 18 was probably a cenotaph. It was possible to distinguish the outlines of the grave pit in which a small jug and a cosmetic vessel – kalpis were found, but no skeleton. The toilet vessel suggests that the grave belonged to a female. It is the first cenotaph discovered at this necropolis. Grave no. 20 belonged to a girl of 5–7 years of age. Here were found a red-ware bowl and three silver and two gold beads. A tear-shaped pendant was attached to one of the gold beads.

Three of the graves (nos. 21, 24, 25) were collective, probably familial, burials in mudbrick tombs. They are dated to the late 5th – first half of the 4th century BC. Grave 21 contained the skeletons of a male and a female. Of the offerings there were a red-ware jug, a small plate, a ceramic spindle-whorl, an iron sword (*acinaces*) and an iron spearhead. In grave no. 24, the skeletons of a male and a female were uncovered. The grave offerings included a complete Chian amphora (Fig. 1), a red-ware jug, two bowls, a ceramic spindle-whorl, an iron sword and iron spearheads, a black-glazed kylix and black-glazed lekythos, four bronze finger-rings, a set of arrows with iron and bronze arrowheads, and an animal bone. Burial no. 25 held the skeletons of a male and a female and that of a child (girl?). The burial items included red-ware (a jug and a bowl), an iron sword, iron spears and a knife, three black-glazed lekythoi – one with a representation of a hare (Fig. 2), a skyphos, a small handmade pot, a set of iron and bronze arrows, and an animal bone.

The results of the studies of the necropolis have enabled us to define its approximate spacial limits and chronological frame. It has been established that the necropolis extends at least 200 m along the precipitous cliff. The material recovered from excavations of the settlement site of Artyushchenko-2 was of a humbler character as compared with the relatively rich finds from the necropolis. The most impressive are burials of the 5th century BC with miscellaneous burial items which enable us to form an impression of the life of the Asiatic Bosphorus of the period. The dates of the earliest of the excavated burials running from the beginning of the 5th century BC and the youngest ones of the 5th – 7th century AD suggest that the necropolis was functioning over the course of a millennium, though such a prolonged time interval must have had certain interruptions.

The second object of the excavations was the settlement of Vyshestebli-evskaya-11. It is situated on the north-western shore of the Kiziltash Liman (*liman* is a bay in a river delta), 3 km south-east of the stanitsa of Vyshesteblievka. In Greek and Roman times, the Kiziltash Liman did not exist, so

the settlement must have been situated in the delta of the Kuban River flowing into the Black Sea. Judging by the proximity of Phanagoria – the capital of the Asiatic Bosphorus, – the settlement under consideration belonged to its *χώρα*. Moreover, it was the first large settlement in the way of the seafarers coming to the delta of the Kuban River from the sea. Considering this geographic position, the site may have been functioning as an outpost at the southern approaches to Phanagoria.

In 1998, reconnaissance was carried out at the site and in the subsequent season its excavation was started.² The area excavated at the settlement site (Excavations nos. 1, 2, 3) has exceeded 800 sq. m; 15 building complexes and over 80 household pits of variable dates were investigated. On the basis of these dates, three major chronological phases of occupation of the site are distinguishable. The first phase is dated to the 5th – beginning of the 2nd centuries BC, the second one – to the Roman and early medieval periods (1st – 6th centuries AD), and the third phase was of medieval date with finds characteristic of the Saltovo-Mayatskaya culture of the 8th – 10th centuries.

The main goal of the excavations of 2005 was to check the supposition that there was a street (or road) here continuing Street-1 discovered in 2004. The area excavated amounted to 225 sq. m, thus making the total excavated area of Excavation R1 equal to 690 sq. m.

Within the newly added area, six household pits of the Roman period (nos. 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 48), two pits of the early medieval period (nos. 45 and 47), four building complexes (SK-10, 12, 13, 14), Well no. 2, Hearth-1, and part of Street no. 1 have been excavated.

The area of Street no. 1 was one of the most important objects investigated in Excavation R1. It was possible to trace this structure for an additional 10 metres, its total extension having amounted to 25 m with a width of 3.5–4.0 m. The street is oriented from SE to NW, running along the fortress from the settlement's edge to its centre. All of the building complexes (or SKs) excavated in 2004–2005 (nos. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14) were ranged along Street-1 on both its sides presenting a regular and easily predictable layout. The street was paved by a layer of compact clay with inclusions of numerous fragments of pottery of the second half of the 5th century BC (Fig. 3).

² Е. Я. Рогов, С. В. Кашаев, Й. Форназир, “Керамический комплекс из хозяйственных ям поселения Вышестеблиевская-11 на юге Таманского полуострова” (E. Ya. Rogov, S. V. Kashaev, J. Fornasier, “Ceramic Assemblage from Household Pits at the Settlement of Vyshesteblievskaya-11 on the South of the Taman Peninsula”), *Боспорские исследования VIII* (Симферополь – Керчь 2005) 177–217.

Street (Road) no. 1 was, presumably, built in the first half or the end of the 5th century BC. Later it was reconstructed and used for a fairly long time (probably with certain interruptions) for its direct purpose. The building complexes were ranged along the street with their entrances facing it. Different layouts have been discovered in many ancient cities, but this is a new and very poorly studied phenomenon among rural sites on the Taman Peninsula.

Earlier, in the course of the excavation at the settlement, a series of Judaic limestone gravestones, possibly of the late Classical or early medieval periods, were found. On the front side of the slabs there were representations of a seven-branched candelabrum (menorah) as well as a stylized palm branch (lulab) and a blasting horn (shofar). Seven such gravestones were found e. g. at the building complex SK-6.

On the floor of SK-13 were found a half of a round millstone and a Judaic gravestone, lying the front side down, with representations of a menorah, a shofar and a lulab (Fig. 4).

Sergey V. Kashaev

*Institute of the History of Material Culture,
St.-Petersburg (IIMK RAS)*



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4

Fig. 1. Chian amphora. Artyushchenko-2. Necropolis, burial 24

Fig. 2. Black-glazed lekythos. Artyushchenko-2. Necropolis, burial 25

Fig. 3. Fragment of a protome of Heracles. Vyshesteblievskaya-11. Excavation 1

Fig. 4. Judaic gravestone. Vyshesteblievskaya-11. Excavation 1, building complex SK-13