

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS OF THE HERMITAGE EXPEDITION ON BEREZAN ISLAND IN 2005

Borysthenes, an ancient Greek settlement on the Island of Berezan in the estuary of the Dnieper and South Bug rivers, is one of the key sites in the classical archaeology of the northern Black Sea littoral. According to the evidence of Eusebius, the earliest Greek colony in the region was established in 647/646 BC by settlers from Miletus (though no cultural layers or structures dated to a period earlier than the last quarter of the 7th century BC have been ever uncovered within this territory).

The history of archaeological investigations of the settlement of Berezan goes back to the end of the 19th century. They began with excavations conducted by R. A. Prendel, member of the Odessa Society of History and Antiquities. Afterwards, B. V. Farmakovskiy (1896), G. L. Skadovskiy (1900–1901), E. R. von Stern (1903–1909, 1913) and the latter's student M. F. Boltenko (1924, 1927–1931, 1946–1947) participated, among others, in the excavations at the settlement and its necropolis. Investigations on the island were resumed in 1960 by the Ukrainian archaeologist V. V. Lapin, who has worked for two decades at the Berezan settlement-site. After his death, the Ukrainian expedition was headed by S. N. Mazarati and V. V. Nazarov, and at present by V. V. Krutilov. From 1962, the Russian expedition of the State Hermitage Museum took part in the investigations on Berezan Island under the direction of K. S. Gorbunova, L. V. Kopeykina, Y. V. Domanskiy and S. L. Solovyov. These regular excavations, interrupted in the early 1990s, were then renewed in 1998 (by Y. V. Domanskiy and K. K. Marchenko, and since 2004 by D. Chistov).

Since the end of the 1990s and up to the most recent field season, the main object of our studies has been area "O" located in the eastern part of the island.

One of the most significant results of these excavations was the discovery of a number of structures related to metalworking, *viz.* the remains of two copper-smelting workshops. They were dated to the end of the 7th–first half of the 6th century BC and must have been intended for commodity production of copper. These finds allowed the researchers to put forward a new hypothesis on the main function of the earliest Greek ἀποικία in the northern Black Sea area as related to the production of raw metal.

In 2005, the archaeological expedition of the State Hermitage proceeded with the investigations in the eastern section of the classical-period settlement. During this field season, a square of approximately 270 sq. m in area was excavated. The main (and absolutely unexpected) result was revelation of the remains of a large complex of buildings in the southern part of excavation "O". Two successive building periods have been distinguished for these houses built from mixture of adobe and stone. The earliest phase, dated to the second half of the 6th century, corresponded to the remains of a rectangular room (Fig. 1.1), as well as to three stone foundations left from a later annexe or some neighbouring structure. All of the structural remains of that period belonged to buildings destroyed in a conflagration in the last quarter or the very end of the 6th century BC.

The room uncovered was of a considerable area (50 sq. m). The foundations of its western, eastern and northern walls were revealed. However, no remains of the southern wall have been traced. Inside the room, there was a hearth (Fig. 1.2) in the form of a rectangular pit measuring 1.10 × 0.80 m. The walls of the pit were plastered with a thick layer (2–3 cm) of baked clay. Inside the hearth, two portable adobe stoves were found *in situ*. Each was equipped with a pair of side handles in the form of massive lugs applied to the walls. One of the stoves was set on three legs, while the other had no legs but was installed instead on three flat stones so that free access of air was provided to the fire in the lower section of the stove.

Another household object of special interest was found north of the destroyed structure under its debris. This consisted of a small pit (no. 85) filled with a thick layer of brownish clay baked on the top by the fire. Its excavation revealed traces of a basket, probably woven from reed, imprinted on the walls of the pit and on some of the fragments of the clayey fills. It seems that this pit was intended for mixing clay mortar used for construction or household purposes.

The pottery found in the layers of fire and destruction was fairly numerous and diverse. Especially noteworthy are rich amounts of fikellura pottery including a fragmentary amphora of the Altenburg Painter (Fig. 2.1). Moreover, in the fills of one of the storage pits either synchronous to the fire or at least closed shortly before, a black-figured Chian beaker of the Comast Group was uncovered, its decoration including dancing comasts (Fig. 2.2) and a cockerel on the back side.

All of the structural remains of the two periods uncovered during the last season were arranged in the same way as those structures and a small patch of a paved street that had been excavated earlier to the south and east of this area. They all were oriented in the meridional direction with a slight

north-west deviation. It seems that it is exactly this orientation that the regular grid of streets followed throughout this area of settlement in the second half of the 6th – early 5th century BC.

In the northern section of the excavation of 2005, numerous structures of the earliest period of the Berezan settlement were uncovered: semi-dugouts and storage pits (Fig. 1.3). Semi-dugouts were small rounded structures (2.5–3.4 m in diameter) set 0.25–0.50 m into the bedrock. All of these except for one had a single posthole in the centre suggesting a simple hip-roof like that of a yurt. The walls of one of the structures were obviously constructed of wattle and clay as indicated by an encircling groove traced along the periphery of the pit and five holes for supporting posts dug along that groove.

These structures seem to have remained in use for a very short time-span. Finds of pottery from their fills allow us to date them to the second quarter and the middle of the 6th century BC. In the filling of one of the storage pits synchronous to the dugouts described above, three anchor rods were found. Two of them were made from local limestone, whereas the third (measuring 0.90 × 0.23 × 0.14 m) was carved from marble (Fig. 2.3).

Although during the excavations of 2005, no structures datable back to the last quarter of the 7th or beginning of the 6th century have been revealed, the amount of early pottery found in the occupation layers was fairly considerable. Noteworthy among these finds is an Ionian bird-bowl dated to the end of the 7th century BC (Fig. 2.4).

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Fig.1.1



Fig.1.2



Fig.1.3

Fig. 1.1. Remains of a rectangular structure (view from the South)

Fig. 1.2. Hearth with two stoves

Fig. 1.3. Round dug-outs (view from the North)

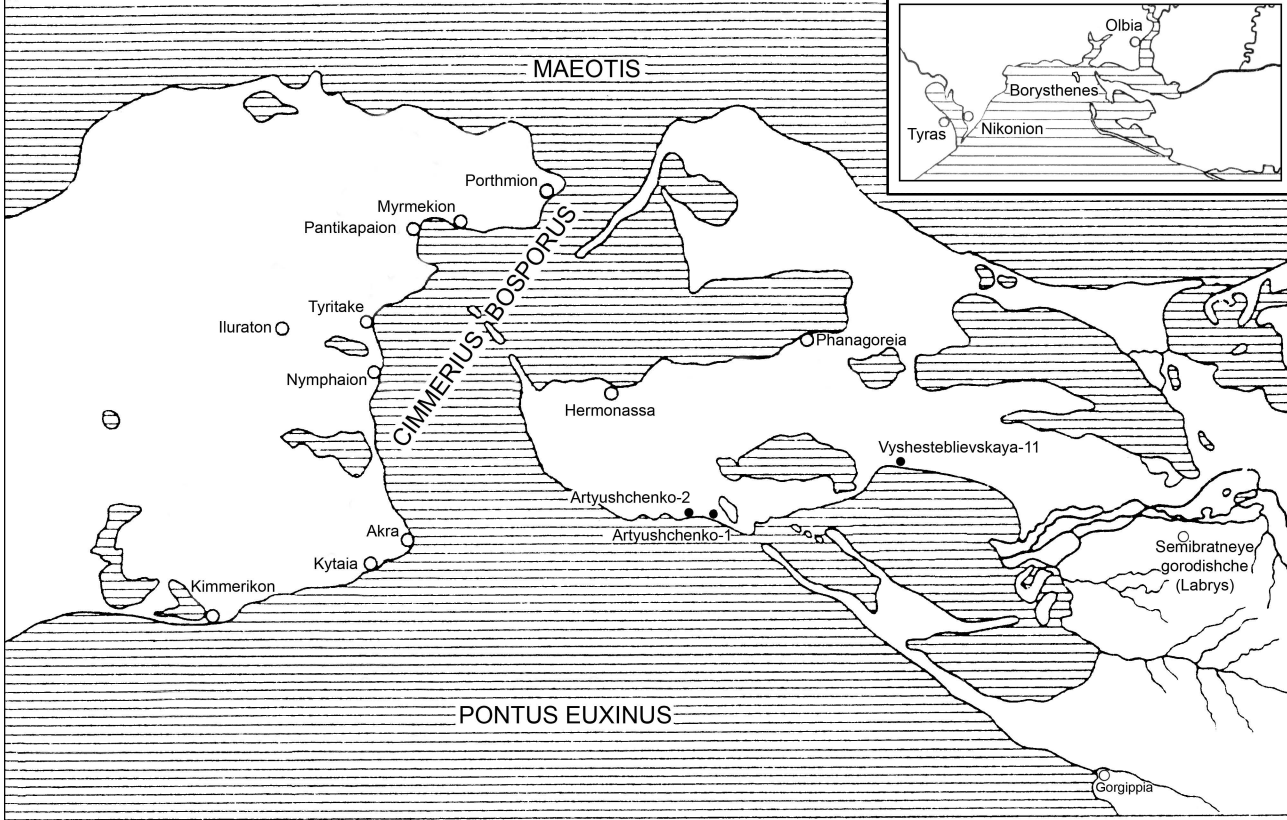




Fig. 2.1



Fig. 2.2



Fig. 2.3



Fig. 2.4

Fig. 2.1. Fragments of an amphora. Altenburg Painter

Fig. 2.2. Black-figured Chian chalice. Comast Group

Fig. 2.3. Anchor rod

Fig. 2.4. Ionian bird-bowl