

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPEDITION OF THE STATE MUSEUM OF THE HISTORY OF RELIGION IN EASTERN CRIMEA

Since 1968, i. e. for almost 40 years, the archaeological expedition of the State Museum of the History of Religion has been carrying out excavations of the necropolis of Iluraton – one of the “small towns” of the European Bosphorus. During the last two decades, the expedition has been investigating simultaneously the necropolis of another Bosporan city – that of Kytaiia (Kytaiion).

Iluraton (Ἰλουόρατον) is mentioned by Ptolemy (Ptol. *Geogr.* III, 6, 5). The hypothesis first proposed by V. F. Gaidukevich, that the townsite near the village of Ivanovka (the Tartar name is Djapar), 17 km to the southwest from Kerch, can be identified as Iluraton, has been confirmed by the results of recent excavations. The necropolis of Iluraton is situated on the same rocky plateau as the city itself.¹

The archaeological investigations of the Iluraton necropolis began as early as 1947, but only since 1968 have they been conducted systematically by the expedition of the State Museum of the History of Religion. During the first five field seasons (1968–1972) the excavations were headed by M. M. Kublanov. During twenty two successive archaeological campaigns from 1984 till 2005 they were taken over by V. A. Khrshanovskiy.² Throughout the entire period of investigations, about 220 archaeological objects (funerary complexes and ritual deposits) have been discovered and excavated at the necropolis of Iluraton.

Although the majority of burial complexes belong to the period of occupation of Iluraton (1st – end of the second third of the 3rd century AD), buri-

¹ As the Iluraton necropolis considered here is only the upper burial ground. The lower necropolis situated within the territory of the modern village of Ivanovka belongs most likely to some other settlement so far undiscovered on the lowlands.

² В. А. Хршановский, “Исследование некрополей Илурата и Китея в 2000 году” (V. A. Khrshanovskiy, “Excavation of the necropoleis of Iluraton and Kytaiia in 2000”), *Археологічні відкриття в Україні в 1999–2000 рр* (Киев 2001); idem, “Раскопки некрополей Илурата и Китея в 2003–2004 гг” (“Excavation of the necropoleis of Iluraton and Kytaiia in 2003–2004”), *Археологічні відкриття в Україні в 2003–2004 рр* (Киев 2005).

als were occasionally carried out on the Iluraton plateau until the 13th century AD.

The most surprising finds from this necropolis undoubtedly include a terracotta statue of a Greek goddess (Demeter or Aphrodite) of 62 cm in height. It is the largest of the terracottas found on the northern Black Sea littoral (Fig. 1).

In July 2005, the archaeological expedition of the State Museum of the History of Religion conducted its 27th campaign at the necropolis of Iluraton. Studies were concentrated at the northern and southern excavation areas. At the northern area, the excavation of ritual complex no. 214, discovered in 2003, was continued. The excavation was extended to the north and to the south, its total area covering 90 sq. m (15 × 6 m). The eastern and western borders of the complex were identified. Among the surface heap of stones, new traces of ritual activities were discovered here, e. g. numerous fragments of ornamented handmade pottery, flint flakes, a fragment of a stone axe, a limestone altar with a hole in the centre, and animal bones. Of great importance for dating the complex is a bronze coin of Kotis II (second quarter of the 2nd century AD). The nature of the complex may be finally clarified after the completion of its excavation, planned for the next campaign.

At the southern area, excavation of catacomb no. 215 cut out in the rock was completed: the dromos and slab cover of the entrance were uncovered as well as the south-western section of the burial chamber. In the latter two horse burials were found under a fragment of the vault. Near catacomb no. 216 another catacomb (no. 218) was discovered and excavated completely. Part of its vault and walls were collapsed. The catacomb was robbed sometime in antiquity. There is insufficient evidence to date it exactly, but its construction and location suggest that it was synchronous to the adjacent catacombs (nos. 215 and 216) thus dating from the mid-2nd century AD.

South of the dromos of burial vault no. 213, which is distinguished by its dimensions and a niche with a completely preserved semicircular arch (Fig. 2), investigation of the ritual deposit was continued. The materials found (fragments of amphorae, red-glazed pottery and glass vessels) date it summarily to the 2nd–3rd centuries AD.

Close to the northern wall of vault no. 213, another excavation was started with an area of 10 × 15 m. Here were found slab-constructed grave no. 219 robbed in antiquity and remains of the walls of large vault no. 220 built of limestone blocks laid without mortar. During the last campaign only its dromos and the southern part of the funeral chamber were uncovered. The length of the dromos was 4.5 m, its width 1–1.2 m; the

height of the completely preserved walls amounted to 2.5 m (Fig. 3). Judging by the fill of the burial chamber, the latter was reused for a second burial in the Late Classical or Early Mediaeval period. The vault itself (similarly to vault no. 213) on the basis of the rather scarce finds available so far is dated preliminarily to the 2nd – 3rd century AD.

The Bosphoran city of Kytaia (Κύταια, Κύται, Κύταιον) is situated a few kilometers west of the mouth of the Kerch Strait (Cimmerian Bosphorus) on the coast of the Black Sea. Kytaia is mentioned by a number of Classical authors (Ptol. *Geogr.* III, 6, 5; Ps.-Scyl. 68; Plin. *NH* IV, 68; Anon. *PPE*, 50; Steph. Byz. s. v. Κύται). After an inscription dedicated to the community of Kytaia (*CIRB* 942) was found in 1918, a town between capes Kyz-Aulsky and Takil was finally identified with Classical Kytaia. Contemporary investigations agree with this localization.

The necropolis of Kytaia begins in the immediate vicinity of the northern defensive wall of the city and extends over 2 km from north-east to north-west up to the mountain ridge. Recently, the western section of the Kytaia necropolis was discovered approximately 200 m to the west of the western city-wall.

The first excavations headed by Yu. Yu. Marti at the necropolis of Kytaia were carried out in 1928–1929 by the expedition of the Kerch Museum of Antiquities. In 1972, the Kerch Museum of History and Archaeology resumed excavations of the Kytaia necropolis. These investigations as well as excavations at the Kytaia city site were directed by E. A. Molev. During the works conducted by the expedition, 80 archeological objects have been investigated. Following E. A. Molev's suggestion, the expedition of the State Museum of the History of Religion directed by V. A. Khrshanovskiy began in 1989 systematical excavations of the necropolis, which are on-going. The total number of the objects uncovered at the necropolis amounts to 367.

The predominant burial mode, as has been recorded at the necropolis, was inhumation, but single cremations also have been found. The chronological range of the necropolis of Kytaia given by complete burial complexes is the 5th century BC – 5th century AD. The dates suggested by the aggregate of the finds run within a still wider chronological scale – from the late 6th century BC to the 6th century AD. The oldest materials dated to the late 6th – early 5th century BC include a fragmentary black-figured krater with a representation of Dionysus's head (Fig. 4).

At the central area of the Kytaia necropolis (Excavation XLIII), during the last campaign the excavation of a catacomb (no. 360) cut in the rock was completed; three child graves (nos. 364–366) and a burial (no. 367)

covered over by two anthropomorphous sculptures were excavated. In addition, examination of despoiled grave no. 361 cut in the rock was completed; in its north-eastern corner were found a human skull and bones of the right leg under the defense of a Sarmatian sword inserted upright into the earth on the north-west side (Fig. 5). The sword dates the burial probably to the mid-2nd – mid-3rd century AD.

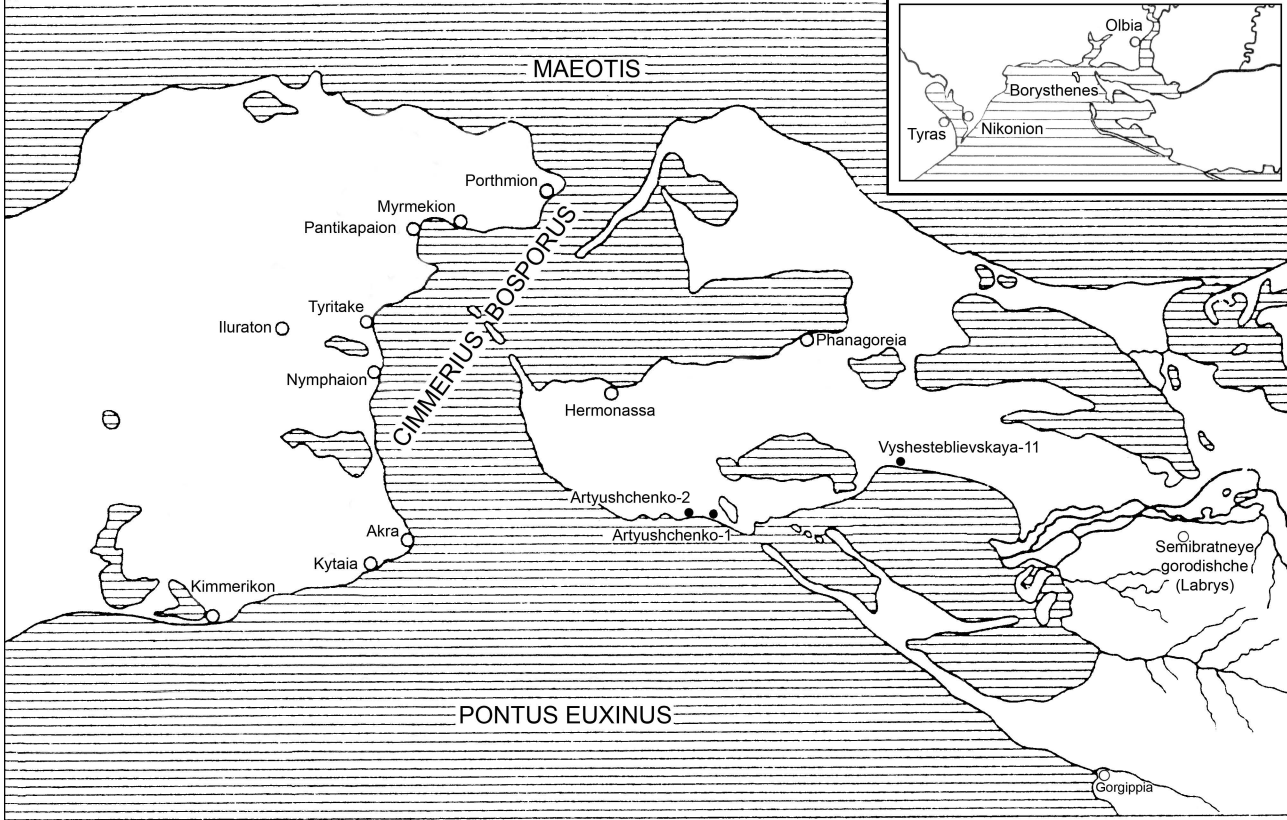
At the area added on the east to the same excavation, fragments of a red-figured krater and a Chian amphora of the last quarter of the 5th century BC were found.

In north-north-east section of the necropolis, excavation of two recently robbed graves cut in the rock (nos. 362 and 363) was finished; the graves are dated probably to the Hellenistic period.

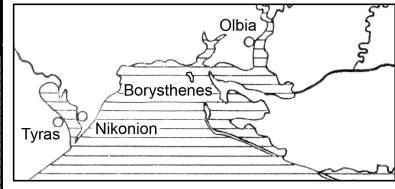
In the south-western (seaward) section of the necropolis, investigation of burial complex no. 344 was continued and its north-western corner uncovered. The finds have confirmed its previous dating to the late 3rd – early 4th century AD. Here investigations of a hidden external chamber of vault no. 206 and the ritual deposit to the west of its dromos were also continued. In the ash layer, positioned as it seems over the sacrificial pit, a buried horse skull and lower-limb bones were uncovered.

During the coming campaign we are planning to continue excavation of burial complex no. 344 and the ritual deposit near the vault no. 206.

Vladimir A. Khrshanovskiy
*State Museum of
the History of Religion*



MAEOTIS



PONTUS EUXINUS

CIMMERIUS BOSPORUS



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

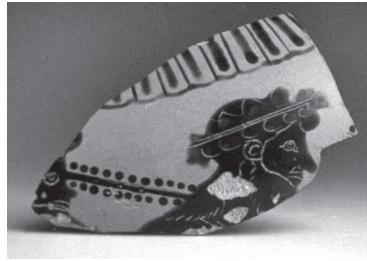


Fig. 4



Fig. 5

Fig. 1. Terracotta statue of a goddess. Necropolis of Iluraton

Fig. 2. Vault no. 213. Niche with semicircular arch. Necropolis of Iluraton

Fig. 3. Vault no. 220. Dromos. Necropolis of Iluraton

Fig. 4. Head of Dionysus. Fragment of a black-figured krater. Necropolis of Kytaia

Fig. 5. Burial with a Sarmatian sword. Necropolis of Kytaia