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*The Archaeological Work in the Greek Settlements of the Black Sea
and their Environs during the Last Decade*

ABSTRACTS

arranged alphabetically by author

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The Hinterland of Tomis in the Hellenistic Period: Settlements and Necropoleis

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Preventive archaeology has led in the last 15 years to the discovery of numerous settlements and some necropoleis in the hinterland of Tomis. This paper aims to synthesize the existing data and advance some hypotheses regarding the degree of occupation of the territory of a Hellenistic emporium/polis in full development, especially in the 3rd–2nd centuries BCE. The relationship between the Greek colony and the indigenous or allogeneic populations, strongly influenced in this period by the Hellenistic material culture, will also be considered.



Archaic Mines and Metallurgical Workshops at Apollonia du Pont (Sozopol, Bulgaria)

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The city of Apollonia du Pont owes its rise to the rich copper mines scattered throughout the region rather than the immediate conquest of a vast territory or an early commercial character. Their importance for the city is reflected in the imposing bronze statue of Apollo, made in the 5th century BCE by the famous Athenian sculptor Calamis, which adorns some of Apollonia's coins issues. Copper ingots, discovered off the coast, attest to the strong export activities of local metallurgical workshops.

Rescue excavations, carried out by the Archaeological Museum of Sozopol, have since confirmed the importance of metallurgy in the urban core during the first decades. They identified imposing amounts of slag in most of the archaic levels. At the same time, three sites revealed contemporary metallurgical workshops, either in the ancient city or across, on the island of St Kirik, while from the middle of the 6th century BCE onwards, a major metallurgical zone appeared in a peri-urban location.

However, while the veil obscuring the workshops located in the city is gradually lifted, the extraction areas and the metallurgical installations linked to them, have long remained unknown. Surveys originally carried out by the Franco-Bulgarian Archaeological Mission in Apollonia du Pont from 2010 onwards in the nearby Medni Rid range, continued from 2013 to 2016 by a Bulgarian-German team (dir. R. Krauss, P. Leshtakov, and K. Dimitrov) and have since made it possible to specify the spatial distribution of the mines, while shedding light on their early chronology. The recent joint excavation of a workshop in 2023 offers a unique insight into the seasonal metallurgical installations located in the Medni Rid. This research allows us to reconstruct the entire chain of copper and iron processing operations in Apollonia, while specifying the specialization of the several workshops uncovered in the city.



The Gem Engraved with the Motif of a Nude Youth feeding his Dog from Buridava and the Influence of a Greek Motif on the Decoration of Gems

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One of the most important glyptic artefacts from Romania, with few glyptic correspondences in international collections, was discovered during the 2021 archaeological campaign in the La Tene period fortification and necropolis site from Buridava.

The Dacian site at Ocnița, ancient Buridava, can be considered unique, so far, in the landscape of the classical Dacian civilization (1st century BCE – 1st century CE). The discoveries made by Dumitru Berciu in the period 1960–1993 led to the conclusion that we are dealing with a local dynastic centre, separate from the one at Sarmizegetusa. Its development is due on the one hand to the salt deposits from the vicinity, and on the other to the proximity of the Olt River and the existence of a crossing valley up to Transylvania.

The resumption of systematic research on terraces VIII and V, starting in 2016, revealed a new situation, undoubtedly related to the funerary sector, consisting of pits dug into the rock and surface structures, which can be associated with this funerary phenomenon. Located on terrace V, M34 is a surface structure whose inventory, as in the case of other tombs, allows us to view the site of Ocnița in close relation to everything that signifies the Greco-Roman world. Along with the cremated human remains, in the inventory of the grave we have, among others, a ring with an engraved stone and a ceramic unguentarium, both statement objects, reflecting the economic relations between Dacians and the Greek world during the 2nd and 1st century BCE.

In particular, the carnelian has an engraved motif of a youth bending over to feed his dog. The central image is surrounded by a hatched border. This particular motif can be found on italic gems, originating from Greek archaic engraved gems.



Late Iron Age–Early Hellenistic Pottery Assemblage from Komana Pontica

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Komana Pontica is situated 10 km northeast of the modern city of Tokat. The settlement is located within the borders of Gümenek town and is situated on both sides of Yeşilirmak. Archaeological investigations on and around the mound called Hamamtepe began in 2004 under the direction of Prof. Dr Deniz Burcu Erciyas, of Middle East Technical University, and are still ongoing. The geophysical studies and surveys took place from 2004 to 2009, and the excavations have been carried out since 2009.

The excavations conducted between 2009 and 2018 revealed data from the Ottoman, Danishmend/Seljuk, and Middle Byzantine settlement levels of the mound. Prior to the 2018 season, pottery and small finds dating back to the Hellenistic and Roman periods were recovered only from the mixed contexts. However, considering that Komana was a temple state dedicated to the goddess Ma in the Hellenistic period, a pilgrimage centre with bi-annual festivals, and an important sanctuary throughout the Mithridatic period (early 3rd century BCE–63 BCE), the small finds did not sufficiently reflect the Hellenistic period of the settlement.

Nevertheless, a previously unknown context was reached during the 2018 excavation season, and since then more material has become available. Architecturally, the context consists of two different levels and is characterized by dry walls that are oriented in a NE-SW direction. In addition to the dense pottery and bone assemblages, female votive figurines, coins, and small finds including a fibula that could indicate interregional and overseas relations, have been recovered. The main objective of this paper is to assess the Late Iron Age–Early Hellenistic pottery assemblage of Komana based on the existing architecture and small finds and to explore any possible regional and overseas networks.

Archaeology and Agenda: between Amazons and Arimaspians

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This paper will focus on the power of modern assumptions and agendas in the conduct and interpretation of archaeology around the Black Sea. As two extreme examples of the problem in hand, I consider the archaeology, first, of Amazons, and second of Arimaspians. Both peoples are entirely imaginary but are of significance in ancient culture(s). The modern search for Amazons has generated a slew of discoveries, but nothing that brings archaeology into contact with the usual desideratum, namely the unearthing of Amazons. The agenda here seems overwhelmingly to be an attempt to establish a form of simple reality that would take Amazons from the imagination into the real world of the ancient Black Sea, and perhaps still further afield. The result of this endeavour is a confusion of terms, wherein the specifics of the ancient idea of Amazons are ignored in favour of deeming any female buried with a weapon or the like to be an Amazon, wherever that might occur and in whatever context.

Arimaspians feature extensively in Greek art, we are told. So far there seems to be no interest in excavating dead Arimaspians, though the idea will presumably emerge, if it has not done so already. Here we see the power of a literary text, in particular Herodotus and the key source that he cites for his comments on Arimaspians, namely Aristaeas of Proconnesus. It seems to be the canonical account of Herodotus that has led specialists in ancient art (especially vase painting) to see many an Arimaspians. In fact, it is far from clear how many of these perceived “Arimaspians” are likely to be accurately identified in the standard modern accounts. The key criterion for their identification seems to be their conflict with a griffin. But we know that Amazons appear in battle with griffins, and it is at least worth observing how many of the “Arimaspians” griffin-fighters seem to be female. The fact is that we are in a poor position to know whether a figure on a vase or elsewhere in art is better understood as an Arimaspians or an Amazon, but we should at least be clear that the presence of a griffin does not have the hermeneutic power that fans of Herodotus would seem to have believed.

Archaeology has often been guided, and sometimes dominated, by concerns which are alien to scientific work. Since archaeology has at least one foot in the broader humanities, that need not be a problem, and may indeed be considered as a benefit. Problems arise where and when such concerns are not made explicit. In the case of Amazons, archaeologists may well find some value in pursuing armed females but must be clear that Amazons are much more than that, with characteristics and stores which are specific to them. As for Arimaspians, we must not overstate the importance of griffins, and would do well to consider the little we are told of their appearance,



as well as the obscurity of their tradition, beyond the details of Aristeas' account that Herodotus chose to include in his *Histories*.

The Greco-Autochthonous Settlement of Albești (Callatian Territory): Archaeological Research 2008–2020

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The fortified settlement of Albești, Constanța County was the subject of a monograph published in 2008: L. Buzoianu, M. Bărbulescu, *Albești. Monografie Arheologică I*, Constanța. At that time, significant stages in the development of the fortress were established, along with the historical framework (especially related to the Callatian context) from the 4th–3rd centuries BCE, potentially impacting the evolution of the settlement. The monograph also explored the relationship between the colony (Callatis) and the surrounding territory during this period.

Archaeological campaigns in the last decade focused on the expansion zone of the fortified area to the south (Sector A) during the third phase of the settlement's operation.

New distinctive features for this sector include:

- the settlement no longer possesses a strategic and defensive character; it expands in an area beyond the fortified space (towards the west, south, and east);
- the spatial organization differs from that of Sector B: the central space is occupied by large buildings maintaining alignment along an east/west axis; arrangements near the ramparts (to the north and south) are smaller and occupy spaces that previously had public or protective roles.
- after the deactivation of the western rampart and the expansion of habitation in this area, constructions follow a deviated NW/SE direction, adapted to the terrain configuration.

Archaeological inventories, especially ceramics, recovered from the site are datable within known chronological limits, ranging from the mid-4th century BCE to the end of the 3rd century BCE.



Health Cult in Hadrianopolis in Light of Recent Data

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Diseases in ancient times had a negative impact on human life, as they do today. Especially in periods when diseases and epidemics were intense, people prayed to the gods they believed in and worshipped and asked for to find healing in the treatment. As a result, the cult of Asclepius and Hygieia, known as the god and goddess of health, gained great importance in antiquity. Since people did not have scientific medical knowledge to explain the cause of the disease, they turned to supernatural powers and believed in the healing power of Asclepius and Hygieia.

In Anatolia, this cult occurs in many ancient cities. Hadrianopolis is located 3 km west of Eskipazar district centre in Karabük province, in the area called "Viranşehir". Thanks to the archaeological excavations in Hadrianopolis, information about the health cult in the city is confirmed on finds such as coins, a votive slab, votive columns, and inscriptions. When analyzed, this data demonstrates that the cult of Asclepius and Hygieia clearly existed in Hadrianopolis. It is not a coincidence that the city is considered a health centre, since there were many natural water resources that could have supplied such a facility. When other cities with health cults are examined, it becomes evident that they have similar resources with Hadrianopolis. In other words, there are enough natural resources for the formation of a health cult in Hadrianopolis. This study presents data obtained about the health cult in Hadrianopolis and in particular, epigraphic documents regarding Asclepius and Hygieia.



Black-Glaze Pottery from Sozopol's Harbour: Preliminary Observations

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Since 2020, new underwater investigations in the harbour of Sozopol (ancient Apollonia Pontica) have brought to the surface a wealth of archaeological materials that shed light on the dynamics in the development, historical and economic, of this community oriented towards seaborne trade. The black-glaze pottery is probably the best represented category of finds from the 'harbour accumulation', the beginning of which can be traced to the late 7th century BCE and the arrival of the Ionian settlers. Hundreds of vases were collected, mainly various cups and considerably less other shapes. The paper aims to present an overview of the types and their chronology. Black-glaze vessels gradually increase in number from the end of the 6th century BCE onwards; they are particularly numerous in the 5th century BCE and the early 4th century BCE, but a sharp decrease could be observed after c. 350 BCE. While the numbers never reach the abundance of the earlier Classical Period, some revival could be detected only after the beginning of the 3rd century BCE. This evidence corresponds well with some observations on the black glaze pottery from the necropolis of Apollonia and supports the impression of a major crisis brought by the Macedonian conquest under Philip II.



The Function and Role of Hillforts on the Lower Don: Research Perspectives

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At the beginning of the 1st century BCE, a network of 11 hillforts emerges in the delta of the Don River. Since the early history of their research, from the 20th century onwards, scholars have emphasized two issues. The first one is the similarity among all the sites, and the second is their particular connection to the ancient city of Tanais located in this region. Over many years of research, these hillforts have been identified as Meotic, with a significant presence of the carriers of Sarmatian culture appearing in this period.

In my presentation, I would like to address issues related to the functions and roles these hillforts played both in the microregion of the Don Delta and the broader framework of the entire Bosporan Kingdom. I want to attempt to present research perspectives and methods to answer the most pressing questions related to the function(s) of these sites.



Ravadinovo Ancient Fortress – A Different Fortified Site in the Territory of the Greek Colony of Apollonia Pontica

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Apollonia Pontica is the earliest Hellenic colony on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. The Greek city was founded by the end of the 7th century BCE by settlers from Ionia. The territory of the colony includes the city, its adjacent lands, and the vast area along the Black Sea coast from Anchialos (in the north) to Tinias (in the south) and westward to the fortresses along Meden Rid. On the territory of the Greek colony, in area of the modern village of Ravadinovo, a strongly fortified settlement was built. The so far anonymous fortress was constructed on a squarish area of about one hectare (10,000 m²), at the higher, levelled part of a natural hill, protected by massive walls.

The archaeological excavations began in 2017 by a team of the National Museum of History led by Pavlina Devlova. During the first seven seasons (2017–2023) parts of the fortification and the interior of the fortress were revealed. The construction was based on a preliminary drawn up plan, and in some places the natural rock was used as foundation. The wall is massive, built with tall double-faced masonry. The foundations follow the elevation of the terrain in a northern direction. All this reflects the quantity and volume of the material used. In the north-eastern corner of the fortress lies an inner fortified section, the ‘Citadel,’ constructed with the same method as the rest of the circuit. The citadel’s northern and eastern walls are actually formed by the fortress wall.

The excavated areas produced debris from the fortress wall and numerous archaeological finds. In this initial stage of the excavations, imported pottery predominates. The luxurious black-glaze pottery has a rich repertoire of drinking vessels, e.g., kylikes, kantharoi, skyphoi. In their everyday life, the inhabitants used black-glaze table jugs, bowls, pans, small and large fish plates, and incense containers. Amphoras are widely attested and originate from Thasos, Chios, Mende, the North Aegean centre (so-called Thasos circle), Miletus, and others.

Based on the current analysis of the finds, the Ravadinovo Ancient Fortress can be dated between the middle of the 5th and the 1st century BCE, with its peak between the 5th and 3rd century BCE. Isolated finds indicate that the site was also used during the Roman period and the Late Antiquity. The emergence and development of the so far anonymous, well-fortified site overlaps with the late Classical complexes in the locality of St Marina and Mesarite.

Undoubtedly, such a heavily fortified and expensive facility was built by the dominant Greek colony in the area. It is likely that Apollonia Pontica invested in its construction and maintenance, because of its strategic location regarding surveillance, protection, and communication. The site



could also serve the exploitation of the nearby copper mine, in addition to a wider range of economic activities. Up to now, this type of fortress is unique in Bulgaria.



The Antique Sources of Ukrainian Philosophy: The Philosophical Views of the Olbiopolitans - Literary, Epigraphic, and Archaeological Data

Roman Dodonov

Ukrainian philosophy is based on two sources: Ancient Cosmism and the Christian belief in the immortality of the soul. This makes Ukrainian philosophy part of the pan-European tradition. The search for European roots leads us to the need to study the philosophical views of the population of Ancient Greek colonies on the territory of modern Ukraine, particularly Olbia. The empirical basis of our research is information from classical literature (Herodotus, Diogenes Laertius, Dio Chrysostom, Ovid), epigraphic, and archaeological discoveries of the last decade.

The colony of Olbia was founded by people from Miletus, a city in Ionia with a famous philosophical school. It can be assumed that the Olbiopolitans were familiar with the views of the natural philosophers of the metropolis: Thales of Miletus, Anaximander, Anaximenes. This is indirectly indicated by the prevalence of graffiti in Olbia with the name Anaximenes. The popularity of Orphism and Pythagoras in Olbia is evidenced by the archaeological discovery of bone plates with the inscriptions “Life-Death-Life-Truth”, “Truth-Deception”, “Body-Soul”, “To Dionysus- Orphics”. Dio Chrysostom in “Oratio Borysthenitica” (1st century CE) wrote about the conservatism of the views of the Olbiopolitans, who love Homer, but are familiar with the ideas of Plato. It is obvious that through Olbia and other colonies, Greek philosophy spread among the indigenous population of the Northern Black Sea region.



Sinop Regional Archaeological Project: Understanding a Black Sea ‘Small world’

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The dynamic of *astu* (urban center) and *chora* (agricultural space) has long been understood as the foundation of the *polis* economy. Recently, archaeologists have begun investigating the importance of the *eschatia*, *phelleus* and *ora*, the marginal countryside, as a third fundamental component of the polis landscape. Most studies investigating the *eschatia* focus on case studies in mainland Greece, for example the *Rationes Centesimarum* inscriptions in Athens (Lewis 1973; 1997; Lambert 1997). As a group they suggest that marginal lands were owed and taxed at a low rate in Athens. Of course, we have no reason that the Athenian model was precisely copied in other poleis in Greece, but the pattern, in which marginal landscapes are fully integrated into the social and economic community of the polis, is one which may profitably be explored in colonial contexts as well as the Greek “heartland.”

The Sinop Regional Archaeological Project has developed a strategy to apply this model in the analysis of *poleis* in colonial spaces. My interest here is in developing new strategies to explore the formation of trans-cultural communities in ways that downplay the ethno-cultural nature of particular cultural forms, and explore the Mediterranean-Pontic colonial world as a manifestation of broader Iron Age patterns of community formation and connectivity. This paper looks at the origins and development of the *eschatia* on the Sinop promontory and considers its potential role in the development of colonial-indigenous relations.



The Transformation of Komana through the Centuries

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Komana, originally a site known for a sanctuary dedicated to the goddess Ma during the Hellenistic period, evolved into a city under the Roman rule in the 2nd century CE. The introduction of Christianity led to significant changes in settlement patterns, with Komana becoming a bishopric that sent a bishop to the First Council of Nicaea in 325. During the Middle Byzantine period, the settlement of Komana spread across the fertile plain north of the River Iris, as the general political unrest led to an increase of higher-ground settlements, the city created a secondary network of sites at remote locations. With the arrival of the Turks, Komana flourished once again as a rural/industrial centre, providing necessary amenities to local inhabitants and travelers alike. Excavations conducted there since 2009 have revealed the different stages of transformation at Komana over the centuries. This paper discusses these transformations, with a focus on the urban/rural dichotomy.



Mother Goddess Worship at the Eastern Black Sea Region of Turkey in Cingirt Kayası

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The aim of this paper is to present the evidence for the worship of the Mother Goddess at Cingirt Kayası, a settlement that was in the Pontic region in the Antiquity and currently in the Eastern Black Sea Region of Turkey. The archaeological data shows that the Mother Goddess -worshipped under different names in different regions in Antiquity - was also widely present throughout the Black Sea Basin. The cult sites of the goddess on the mountain tops are considered as reference points that provide evidence for her characteristics. Cingirt Kayası, a hilltop settlement in a forested area close to the coast in the Black Sea region of northeastern Turkey supports descriptions associated with the Mother Goddess as a goddess of nature, owner of mountains, manifested in the rock formations.

In particular, the presence of a stepped rock altar located at the starting point of the ancient road leading to the summit of the settlement (which is connected to the rock-cut defense walls of this section) supports its association with the worship of the Mother Goddess, known as the protector of cities and fortifications. A hollow miniature niche carved into the rock facade surrounding the settlement from the northeast is also considered to be the symbolic element associated with the goddess. Similarly, the stepped tunnels carved into the rock which are characteristic for the fort settlements of Mithradates VI are thought to be artificial adaptations of a natural cave which relates to the essence of the Mother Goddess. In this context, the stepped tunnel of Cingirt Kayası together with other Anatolian samples are considered to reflect common beliefs regarding the Mother Goddess.



The Impact of Becoming a Colony: a Paleodietary Study of Resilience and Adaptation in Aegean Thrace using Stable Isotope Analysis

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During the second Greek colonization (8th–5th centuries BCE) numerous colonies were founded across the Aegean. Abdera is a renowned and prominent colony located on the coast of Aegean Thrace, which shows a unique case of a two-wave colonization. The city was initially founded *ex nihilo* by Ionians from Clazomenae (c. 654 BCE). The Clazomenian endeavour did not last in time and the city was successively re-founded about a century later (545 BCE) by a new group of settlers from another Ionian city, Teos. Within these parameters, we present a diachronic dietary reconstruction from the ancient city of Abdera. We apply the established method of stable isotope analysis ($\delta^{17}\text{N}$, $\delta^{13}\text{C}$, $\delta^{34}\text{S}$) in bone collagen of 109 individuals from Abdera dating from the Archaic through the Roman times. We implemented Bayesian modeling to quantify the relative consumption of different food sources within Abdera, as well as within other contemporary sites in the Aegean and the Black Sea. We also determined the duration of weaning in Abdera to investigate the nutritional and health status of infants that is believed to have affected the population fitness in the long run.



Late Hellenistic Low Dnieper Konsulivka Hillfort (archaeological and paleogeographical studies)

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This paper presents the results of archaeological, paleopedological, palynological and paleoclimatic research on the territory of the Konsulivka Hillfort (KH) of the 1st century BCE – 2nd century CE, located on the right bank of the Dnieper River near the village Respublikanets, Berislav district, Kherson region. The hillfort belongs to a system of 14 fortresses of the late Hellenistic period, which defined the water trade route from Olbia to its distant hinterland. Systematic excavations on the Konsulivka Hillfort have been conducted by the Ukrainian-Polish expedition since 2015 (leaders Dr. M. Matera and Dr. N. Gavrylyuk). It was discovered that the hillfort consists of two parts: the Citadel with an area of 0.25 hectares and the Big Fortress with an area of 3.5 hectares. In the 2021 season, work was carried out in the north-western part of the Big Fortress. Remains of a stone defensive wall, the base of a rectangular tower, and the fortress' entrance at the Northwestern corner were discovered. A section of the outer rampart and ditch, about 2 m deep, was also cleared.

In the same field season, Dr. Z. M. Matviishina carried out five paleopedological clearings on the hillfort and beyond its boundaries in the zone of agro-economic activity of the settlement's population. The research showed that the preserved ancient soil of the 1st century BCE – 2nd century CE is close to the chestnut soils of modern Ukraine based on paleopedological characteristics. The preliminary conclusion of archaeological stratigraphy confirmed that KH is a site with three layers corresponding to three phases of the ancient hillfort: the emergence of KH, the beginning of intensive economic use of environmental resources (anthropogenic impact), and the extinction of life on the site. Dr. E. A. Sirenko conducted palynological studies of soil samples from paleopedological sections. The obtained data is correlated with data on vegetation from the three mentioned layers. Therefore, not only natural but also anthropogenic factors are distinguished in the changes of soil and vegetation features.



In general, the results of a comprehensive analysis of paleogeographic data of the cultural layer of the KH, which corresponds to the period of intensive land use, indicate signs of pasture digression. At the same time, the possible paleoclimatic background of the KH functioning in the context of climate oscillations in the late (Meghalaya) stage (period) of the Holocene was considered. Thus, the first interdisciplinary study at the Konsulsvka hillfort showed the prospects for similar work on archaeological sites of antiquity in the Northern Black Sea Area.



The Preventive Archaeological Research in Constanța, Aurel Vlaicu bd. 158 - Hornbach Retailer Store. Preliminary Results

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Ancient Tomis, modern day Constanta, was in Antiquity one of the most important centres on the Black Sea coastline. The present-day excavations carried out in the city and its surroundings reveal many treasures and remains related to the everyday life in the city.

The archaeological site at the outskirts of Constanta, at no. 158 on A. Vlaicu boulevard, was discovered in the 1970s by the late archaeologist Ct. Chera. Unfortunately, because of extended works conducted by the communist regime in this area, the site was not investigated nor published until 2022. At this address, at an area expanding ca 70000 m², the communist authorities constructed a huge complex for storing cereals, while a new building was intended to be erected there in 2021. Until May 2022, the archaeologist in charge uncovered at that location the periphery of a huge settlement dated from the beginning of the 2nd century until the beginning of the 7th century CE, a small necropolis dated between the 2nd–3rd centuries CE, and also a small prehistoric necropolis.

These excavations were very important because they revealed how the inhabitants of a small settlement in the periphery of Tomis lived and worked under the Roman rule, taking into account all the political, economic and religious changes that occurred from the 2nd century until the late Roman times.



Mapping the Rural Landscape of Histria and Tomis during the Principate

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Using ArcGIS mapping, the authors calculate the distances between the cities and the rural agglomerations (settlements, vici, villae), following both epigraphic and archaeological sources. They emphasize the mobility time in connection with the proximity of resources. Finally, a comparative approach will be achieved, as well as the setting of an eventual model concerning distances between the centre, the hinterland, and the resources.



Western Anatolian (Greco – Meskian) Traditions in Iberia *Caucasica*?

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Anatolia is historically a region that has always connected the Mediterranean world with the Caucasus. These relations are particularly well seen in the archaeological material of the 2nd millennium BCE. For example, I will name two artifacts: rapiers (“long swords”) and the so called ‘Kantharos type’ ceramics. There are different opinions about the origin and distribution of rapiers: some researchers believe that they originated in the Caucasus (because of the existence of ‘prototypes’) and then spread to the west, while others consider it to be a Mediterranean creation that spread to the east. In both cases the role of Anatolia is undeniable, as a middle link, which is an indisputable fact. In the second case, the origins of ‘Kantharos type’ ceramics and its appearance in the Caucasus, in particular, in Georgia, in the first half of the 2nd millennium BCE, was never a matter of controversy controversial, because it is clearly a Mediterranean product: two-handle vessels have no prototypes in 2nd-millennium Georgia.

The role of Anatolia becomes even more intense in the 1st millennium BCE with regard to many things; for example, I would like to highlight the fibula, which is widespread in the Caucasus (and also a large territory in Europe). However, the discovery of sub-Mycenaean fibulae in the Gordion (preserved in the Ankara Civilization Museum) is an indication of this trend. Based on this background, the confirmation of Western tendencies in Iberia of the Caucasus in the 5th -4th centuries BCE should not be unexpected. However, what complicates the matter is the appearance of Greek decorative elements in Central Transcaucasia during the rise of Achaemenid Persia, a rather historical surprise, because according to both written sources and the archaeological record, the interest of the Greeks in Transcaucasia and in particular, Caucasian Iberia is not evidenced until the 2nd century BCE. To be more precise, there is no attempt to describe Iberia before Strabo, apart from the highly debated excerpt about the existence of Patroclesian ‘four gens’ in Iberia (also recorded by Strabo), as well as a single sentence about the exile of the Iberians by Nebuchadnezzar II, which is attributed to Megasthenes.

As a result of excavations carried out in the territory of Iberia, the architectural details and the buildings themselves, built in the 5th and 4th–3rd centuries BCE, do not show any connection with the Greek architectural culture. On the contrary, the remains found on Tsikhia-Gora and Samadlo bear a strong Achaemenid influence, while the buildings of the same age in Grakliani Gora continue the local tradition, in which, in some cases, oriental (Achaemenid) impulses also appear. The archaeological discoveries in Iberia show that the Greek architectural style occurs only from the 2nd century BCE (for example, the Ionian type capital of Sarkine). Similarly, in two settlements discovered in Southern Georgia -Trialeti (Darakoi settlement), where the local tradition is

preserved (e.g. “Khovle oven”), there is no trace of a Western tradition and based on the historical context, there should not be any. The same situation occurs in Atskuri.

Greek imported ceramics appear sporadically in the territory of Iberia, the earliest example of which is the fragmentary Late Archaic Ionian cup found during excavations in Atskuri. All the rest (including the import of Takhtidziri) belong to the 4th–3rd centuries BCE.

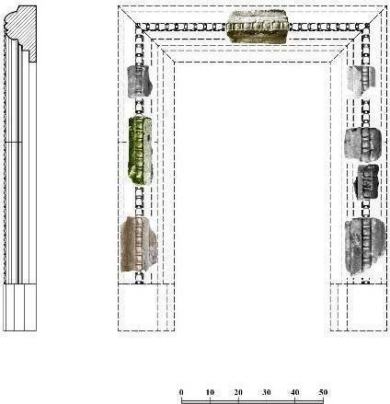
As for Colchis, where, on account of the Greek colonization, various formations had to develop, from the viewpoint of Greek architecture, there is nothing originating from the 5th and 4th centuries BCE. This is explained mainly by the fact that Greek colonies in Colchis remain unexplored: Gyenos, identified with the modern Ochamchire, is the only studied Greek emporium. This is a settlement preserving typical Colchian wooden construction techniques, without any Greek architectural details. The other two colonies - Dioscuria and Phasis, do not provide any information on the issue, because: a) In Sokhumi (if this is the true Dioscuria) there are no remains of Classical or Hellenistic architecture; b) Phasis is still unexplored, and the mention of the temple of Apollo in this city on a silver plate does not necessarily mean the existence of a temple built according to Greek architectural style. Based on the natural conditions where the city of Phasis is presumably located (central Colchis), the architecture here too (as already recognized) will be standard Colchian. In terms of Hellenization, in the exemplary city of Vani, the Greek ornamental decor appears from the 3rd–2nd centuries BCE. The architecture of the 5th and 4th centuries does not show any Greek trends here either. The only Greek architectural detail belonging to the 4th century BCE, is a Doric capital found on the Sairkhe settlement area in Eastern Colchis, the complete architectural context of which is unknown.

In such an archaeological background, the discoveries of Grakliani Gori are of special importance: as a result of the excavation of Grakliani Gora, the Greek architectural details found on the fifth terrace deserve special attention. The terrace is located on the southern slope and, as in other cases, the cultural layers here are mixed and contain material from different periods (Late Bronze and Iron Age, Achaemenid, Post-Achaemenid), therefore it is not possible to stratigraphically date the decorative elements. According to analogies from Propylaeum of Nymphaion, in the Northern part of the Black Sea in Crimea, the fragments of Greek decorative details of Grakliani are dated to the first half of 4th century BCE. The discovery of the Greek architectural details of this period is a great surprise and novelty not only for Grakliani, because of its location in the centre of Transcaucasia, which, as we have seen, was in the field of attention of the Greeks only at the turn of the millennium, during the time of Strabo. Consequently, the existence of the early 4th-century BCE Greek decoration needs to be explained: what events led to the use of Greek architectural details on Grakliani Hill, exactly in the time when Achaemenid trends were flourishing here?

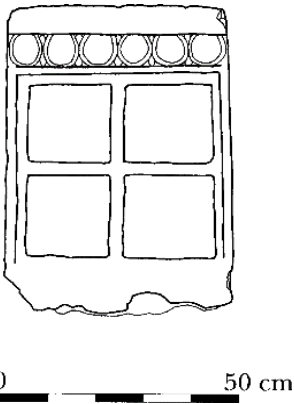
The search for these small decorative elements led me to Western Anatolia. The point is that in the 6th–4th centuries BCE, special kinds of stelae were spread in Western Anatolia – representations

of the so-called symbolic doors, the symbols of the decorative entrance into the afterlife world (e.g. the tumulus of Iqiz-Tepe). The stelae, instead of being arranged immediately on a burial, were located in its vicinity and are clearly marked with Phrygian, Greek, and Achaemenid influences. Considering the size and number of decorative patterns of Grakliani, as well as the lack of Greek interest in the region at this time, it could be assumed with a certain probability that at Grakliani we are dealing with fragments of a symbolic entrance into the afterlife world. As for a way of introducing of the traditional characteristic of Western Anatolia into Iberia, this issue can also be hypothetically resolved by recalling that the 5th–4th centuries BCE corresponded to the very period when the Meskhs (Georgian tribes who had emigrated into Asia Minor in the second half of the 2nd millennium BCE) returned back to their homeland. This return began as early as in the 8th–7th centuries BCE and a bronze figure of this time wearing a Phrygian cap found in the Borjomi valley in southern Georgia attests to it (Bornighele grave no. 32). According to Herodotus (Hdt. 1. 72; 3. 90), in the 5th–4th century BCE the Meskhians occupied territories to the east of the tribes located in the basin of the Halys River, in the region of modern Tokat –Karahisar – Gümüşhane. The foundation of Mtskheta (the capital of the Iberian Kingdom in the 4th century BCE by the Meskhs) could be regarded as proof of Meskhan’s migration back to Iberia – Grakliani region. Thus, on the basis of archaeological and written data, it can be assumed that the appearance of Greek architectural details in Iberia, at Grakliani Gora, was connected with the process of the return of the Georgian tribes, i.e., the Meskhs, from Western Anatolia to their homeland, Georgia.

However, due to the small number of these details, it is conceivable that the use of Greek decorative elements of the 5th -4th centuries BCE Iberia *Caucasica* was a one-time phenomenon and did not have a mass effect until the Late Hellenistic period.



Grakliani Gora “symbolic door”



Western Anatolian “symbolic door”

A New Corinthian Amphora discovered in Romania

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One of the Greek manufacturing centres, known for exporting its goods in large amphorae, designed for transporting and storing products, is Corinth. Corinthian pottery has been known since the Archaic period. From the 8th century to the 3rd century BCE, the ceramic workshops of this polis produced amphorae of various types, with various capacities.

Even though Corinth was a well-known polis, as a manufacturer of amphorae and an exporter of liquid products, the Pontic region was not a priority for Corinthian merchants. The vessels from the Archaic period are primarily found at Sicily and Magna Graecia.

In the Black Sea region Corinthian amphorae and fragments of amphorae have been discovered in only 16 archaeological sites, mainly in those in the north, west and north-west Pontic littorals. Until recently, fragments of Corinthian amphorae on the territory of Romania were limited to few examples from the Archaic period found in only two Greek poleis on the Dobrogean territory: at Histria and at Argamum (Orgame). Recently, the excavations carried out at the Medgidia Hellenistic site 3 (Constanța county), in an indigenous settlement, brought to light the upper part of a new Corinthian amphora, which, unlike the previous examples, can be dated to the Hellenistic period. It belongs to type A and can be dated between 330–290 BCE.



The Fortifications of Tanais in the Hellenistic Period

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Tanais, situated on the high bank of the Mertvyi Donets River, one of the anabranches of the Don River, was the northeasternmost centre of an ancient civilisation. From the first quarter of the 3rd century BCE to the middle of the 3rd century CE, the town was the only centre associated with the Bosphoran Kingdom located quite far away from other sites. The location of Tanais, far-off from other Greek cities, at a meeting point between ancient civilisations and the steppe tribes, determined its role as an important centre of trade and a melting pot for two civilisations: the steppe nomads and the ancient Greeks. Its remote location meant that the town had to be well defended, thus a developed fortification system was created already in the Hellenistic period. Although, the Roman fortifications are still best known at Tanais, the research of last few years conducted in the western part of the town brought new light on the system of Hellenistic fortifications.



Recently Discovered Ritual Pits in Odessos dated to the Early Fourth Century BCE

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This paper focuses on six relatively well-preserved pits discovered in 2022 and 2023 in Odessos (today's Varna, Bulgaria). They were located in a rather small plot of land in close proximity to the seacoast in the area of the former Cape Varna. The pits, or at least their bottom parts, were dug into the soft bedrock. They are almost identical in shape and size. The fill of the pits is also very similar and consists of dark brown earth mixed with small pieces of charcoal, stones, some pieces of roof tiles, animal bones, several types of seashells, and a great number of pottery sherds (from amphorae, tableware, etc.). Examples of both imported and local production were identified among the ceramic fragments. The pottery dates to the early 4th century BCE. The analysis of the artefacts, together with the remains of burning in the fill, lead to the conclusion that the pits served a ritual purpose.

Dozens of pits of a very similar shape, size, and content have been discovered in the past in the larger area in which the archaeological site under discussion is located. Additionally, at least two of the ancient temples of Odessos and an underground structure with a *dromos* were situated nearby. All the evidence supports the hypothesis that the six pits belonged to the temenos of the early *apoikia*.



Archaic Graves from Apollonia Pontica

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As a result of the more than a 100-year history of archaeological excavations of Apollonia Pontica, only few data and artefacts have been studied that could be linked to the identification of the archaic necropolis of the city. For the first time in 1964 about ten graves were studied and dated based on the materials to the second half of the 6th century BCE. The necropolis sector is located on a hill, northwest of the classical necropolis of Apollonia in the 'Harmanite' locality, at a short distance from its periphery.

In 2012, seven archaic graves dated to the end of the 7th–the beginning of the 6th century BCE were examined during archaeological research along the route of the southern fortification system of the late antique and medieval fortress of Sozopol. Although not large in number, these contexts shed light on the location of the archaic necropolis of Apollonia and the funerary practices of the early Apollonians. The necropolis shows close similarities with the necropoleis of other poleis founded by Miletus along the Pontic coast. The analogous trends in burial rites during the Archaic period were probably strongly influenced by the chthonic cults of the metropolis and the large Eastern Greek centres along the Asia Minor coast, which had an important role in colonization, socio-economic and cultural contacts with the newly emerging *apoikiai* on the shores of Pontic Thrace.



The Sacred Space on the Island of St Kirik in the Late Archaic Period

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The island of St Kirik at Sozopol (ancient Apollonia Pontica) was settled by Greek colonists in the late 7th century BCE, together with the arrival of the Ionian settlers on the peninsula of Skamni (Sozopol's Old Town). During the following century, an urbanized settlement took shape in the southwestern part of the excavated area. To the east of the houses, remains from cult activities were identified, dated to as early as the beginning of the 6th century BCE, before the erection of monumental temples. Hearth altars, stone platforms, and ritual pits (bothroi) with votive gifts (ceramic drinking cups, perfume vessels, lamps, isolated metal objects, etc.) and animal bones testify to the emergence of the Late Archaic sacred precinct in this part of Apollonia.



Late Archaic and Classical Basins and High Stands from Apollonia Pontica

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Daniela Stoyanova

Department of Archaeology, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski"

During the last couple of years were published several fragments of shallow and deep basins, as well as high stands made of clay and stone (marble, limestone) from Pontic Apollonia and Olbia. This paper aims at presenting a series of Late Archaic and Classical fragmentary terracotta basins and high stands decorated in relief technique, which were discovered in and around ancient Apollonia Pontica.

The Apollonia Pontica collection will enrich our knowledge of the use and distribution pattern of these objects in the Pontic littoral. Some of the finds originate from contexts with a clear function, which allows for discussing the use of the basins either as perirrhantheria (in cult context) or as louteria (in domestic and public environment). A significant number of the fragments in question find comparanda in centres such as Olbia and Zone. Furthermore, some examples can be assigned to a particular manufacture centre, such as Klazomenai, for example. The relief decoration of the basins includes variants of Ionian kyma and astragalus, while the stands are either plain or fluted. Basins with no relief decoration, also discovered in Apollonia Pontica, will also be discussed.



Gyenos – Establishment, Status and History (6th–2nd centuries BCE)

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Institute of Georgian History

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

The date and characteristics of the establishment of Gyenos became a matter of debate in literature because, although narrative sources mentioning the city of Gyenos and its exact date may be controversial, archaeological evidence is far more convincing in fixing the date of its establishment in the Ionian Era of the Black Sea colonization, i.e., the second half of the 6th century BCE, and more specifically, either before 540 BCE or between 513-494 BCE. Such a precise date can be argued based on the effect of the Persian rule on Miletus, which had weakened their colonizing abilities. As for the controversy around the status of Gyenos, scholars debated whether it was an emporium or a polis. The city seems to have been a seasonal emporium.

The main purpose of the Greeks during their activity in Colchis was to hellenize the territory and economically integrate it in the rest of the highly hellenized regions. The cities established here were supposed to improve local industrial output. While other cities in Colchis (Phasis, Dioscurias) made some attempts at this, Gyenos did not seem to even try. Eventually, the ‘project’ of hellenizing the region failed, and the Greeks who established the colonies here either were assimilated with the locals or left the territory. Still, Colchis remained an active recipient of Greek influences. These and other different aspects connected with the history of Gyenos will be the focus of our report.



Archaeological Work in North Colchis: Exploration of an Old Path from the Black Sea Coast to North Caucasian Steppes

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Friedrich Schiller University, Jena*

For several years, we have been investigating two ancient fortresses near the village of Lesale in the Tsalenjikha region (Mingrelia province) in northern Colchis together with the Archaeological Institute of the Ivane Javakishvili University of Tbilisi. The so-called 'Small Fortress' shows traces of multiple renovations from late antiquity to the late Middle Ages and requires further stratigraphic investigations. According to the construction technique of the outer walls, the extraordinary 'Great Fortress' is of late antique/early Byzantine date and was only in use for a short period of time; intensive traces of fire are probably associated with its destruction in an Arab campaign in the 8th century.

In this context, we are also investigating old communication routes in which the fortresses were involved. In doing so, we take into account the results of transhumance research in the Alps; such research is still pending in the Caucasus region. The lecture gives an account of the expeditions to explore the "Tamar Trail", an old shepherd's route through the Egrisi chain and on to the Nakra/Donguz-Orun Pass (3203m) over the main Caucasus ridge, which can only take place in sections due to lack of time.



New Data for the Earliest Submerged Fortification Walls of Mesambria

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Kalin Dimitrov, PhD

Centre of Underwater Archaeology, Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Bulgaria

Mesambria (Mesembria), present-day Nessebar, Bulgaria, is a historic town situated on a small peninsula on the southern part of the Western Black Sea Coast. According to ancient sources and some archaeological discoveries, the first settlement there was founded in the Early Iron Age by a Thracian tribe. At the end of the 6th century BCE Greek settlers of Dorian origin from Megara, Chalcedon, and Byzantium established their colony on the peninsula.

The maritime archaeological research, conducted initially by L. Ognenova between 1960 and 1984, and continued by the Bulgarian Centre for Underwater Archaeology under the directorship of the authors from 2015 to the present (2024), proved that a significant part of the ancient town was submerged due to a rise in sea level and local negative tectonic movements. Architectural remains, mostly of the fortification systems, have been discovered on the northern, south-eastern, and south-western sides of the peninsula at a depth of up to 5.5 m and at a distance up to about 200 m from the shoreline. The submerged sites were dated to the Pre-Greek, Classical, Hellenistic, and the Early Byzantine periods.

Among the most significant discoveries of L. Ognenova was the so called “Thracian wall” or the “Crescent-line wall”, discovered and explored between 1976 and 1978. It was built of large unprocessed blocks reinforced by oak timbers and was preserved at about 13 meters length of one row of stones. It was situated at about 200 m from the coastline and at about 6 m depth. It is the deepest structure from Antiquity, discovered not only in the sea off Nessebar peninsula but also in the Black Sea. It is evidence of the complex processes of the relative sea level rise and coastal inundation.

Based on the significant depth and masonry specifics L. Ognenova associated the wall with the Pre-Greek Thracian settlement and dated it to the Early Iron Age. This proposal circulated for decades in specialized literature. The archaeological excavations of the “Thracian wall” by the Centre of Underwater Archaeology in 2021 provided new data for the dating of the structure – building ceramics (roof tiles) and samples from the timber. They provide dates much later than the proposed by L. Ognenova. ¹⁴C dates from the wood fall at the end of the 6th– beginning of the 5th century BCE. The roof tiles are also from the Classical or the Early Hellenistic period. These dates shed light on the early fortification activities of the Dorian settlers, the size of the Greek fortified town, and the complex process of the relative sea level rise and the coastal landscape changes.



The Habits of the Elite and the Status of *Euergetes* in the *Poleis* of the Northern Black Sea Region in the first centuries CE (epigraphic and archaeological studies)

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This paper discusses the elite position in the *poleis* of the Roman Northern Black Sea region. Honorary and proxenic decrees, as well as archaeological material, are used to reveal the traditions of the elite in the region, their lifestyle habits and public behavior. The study focuses mainly on materials from Olbia and Chersonesos Taurica, but materials from other *poleis* of the Northern Black Sea region of Roman times will also be taken into account. This will demonstrate the cross-cultural interactions in this region, the presence of inter-*polis* relations and general Hellenic contacts, as well as the nature of interactions with the Roman Empire.

This contribution claims that glorification of citizens for outstanding services in front of the civil community during religious festivals (*Partheneia*, *Dionysia*, *Achilleia*), conferment of honorary titles, the ‘eternal proclamation’, awarding of wreaths and erection of statues, as well as edifying language in honorary decrees, ‘... that the people (appear worthy), men who strive to achieve the greater good, may the council and the people decide ...’ [IOSPE, 1916, №351], shaped traditional behavior that had moral force for these civic societies.

Epigraphic data indicate that such citizens (*euergetoi*) performed their good deeds according to the ideology that was widely spread both in the *poleis* of the Northern Black Sea region and in their metropolises. It implied *philotimia*, polis patriotism and preservation of ancestral traditions. Author concludes that in the first centuries CE (the so-called Roman period) local magistrates were simultaneously the main benefactors of the polis. In reality, they were not so much concerned with political issues as with their social status, desire for personal recognition within the *poleis* civic societies and attention from the Roman imperial administration.

The analysis of the behavioral characteristics of elite strata of the Northern Black Sea *poleis* in comparison with the socio-political situation of the first centuries can reveal the reasons and nature of the conferring of honorary titles. The title of benefactor (*euergetes*) gained political significance in this period. *Euergesia* became a characteristic feature of a closed circle of individuals, which included representatives of the most noble and wealthy families of Olbia and Chersonesos Taurica. The wealthy aristocracy acquired the status of polis political elite. The charitable acts of the wealthy olbiopolites and chersonesites included public and temple construction, organization of public festivals and agons, maintenance of the gymnasium (*gymnasiarchia*), organization of embassies, and distribution of money. Particularly prominent benefactors with aristocratic origins and significant political ambitions were given the title of homeland benefactor, ‘*pater tes poleos*’ (father of the city). This helped to strengthen their position under the imperial policy of Rome in the region.



The Final Stage of Ancient Tyra

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In the middle of the 3rd century CE Tyras was attacked by Goths and their allies. The Romans withdrew their garrison from Tyras, but life in the city did not stop. It retains the appearance of an ancient centre. New houses were erected over the destroyed buildings. Nevertheless, Tyras still maintained trade with ancient centres. Excavations uncovered numerous fragments of red-glaze ceramics, glass vessels, amphoras of various types, and ancient coins. Ceramics of different barbarian tribes do not dominate in the cultural layers. Tyras continued to be an important ancient trade and production centre until the last quarter of the 4th century.



Early Greek ceramics of the second half of the 7th - first half of the 6th century B.C. in the barbarian territories of the Northern Black Sea region: distribution features

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In the third quarter of the 7th century. BC in the Greek colonists founded the first emporium in the Northern Black Sea region, establishing trade exchanges with barbarian tribes. Despite the fact that Early Greek ceramics were discovered in a number of settlements in Forest-Steppe Scythia, during this period it quite rarely found its way into burial complexes, was not used in the funeral rites of the nomadic elite, and was not found in royal burials. Almost all known burials with early Greek pottery on the territory of the Steppe and Forest-Steppe, by the archaeological context, belonged to middle- ranking warriors.

In the second half of the 7th – early 6th century B.C. Greek ceramic imports came to the barbarians of the Northern Black Sea region from a settlement on the island of Berezan. To the western peripheral regions of the forest-steppe zone and the Northwestern Black Sea region - from Istria and Organum. To the territory of the Middle and Lower Don - from the Taganrog settlement. From the end of the 7th - beginning of the 6th century B.C. Greek pottery were brought to the foothills of the North Caucasus from Panticapaeum.

In the second half of the 7th century B.C. Wines from several production centers were delivered to the settlements of the Northern Black Sea region: Klazomenai, Lesbos and Samos. In the first half of the 6th century B.C. Teos and Miletus occupied the leading place in the market; wines from Lesbos, Chios and Samos were also in demand among the locals.

At the end of the 7th - first quarter of the 6th century B.C. The geography of distribution of Greek pottery in the Northern Black Sea region is expanding significantly, and its quantity in settlements is increasing. At the beginning of the 6th century B.C. Greek pottery begins to be found in the burials of the nobility, including in the elite burial mounds of nomads. In some cases, in the same grave, Greek vessels were found with other imported objects, including military trophies. Probably, from this time on, Greek pottery became an object of prestige, complementing local ones in burial goods.



Aspects of Greek-Autochthonous Exchange Relations: The Perspective of Monetary Signs (Tokens) in the Local Environment beyond the *Chora* in the Istro-Pontic Territory

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During the last decade, the increase of activities carried out by the authorities specialized in the protection of movable national heritage assets and the recovery of older information regarding past discoveries have created the possibility of studying afresh various categories of archaeological and numismatic artifacts. These include monetary signs (mainly treasures), cast in the west and north-west Black Sea, from the categories of Olbian dolphins and those known as arrowheads/laurel leaves/olive leaves/ willow leaves/ wheat grains, within the Istro-Pontic territory.

Monetary signs (or tokens) have not appeared in archaeological record for at least two decades and chance finds occur only in the affluent territories of the Dobrudjan Ionian colonies and along the west coast of the Black Sea. Their numbers become more and more significant, leaving the classic area of the coast, further inland, in the native environment, beyond the *chora*. One such example, comes from the local environment at the southwest of the Dobrudjan territory, with direct implications on their role and chronology.

This paper discusses more than 650 examples of west-Pontic arrowheads/laurel leaves/olive leaves/willow leaves or wheat grains from new discoveries in the western and southern area of the Istro-Pontic region, from which only about 100 specimens have been recovered. These discoveries include 13 hoards (plus some isolated finds), found near specific settlements of local populations. Added to these, from the same geographical area, have come to light over 450 specimens of Olbian dolphins, of which over 150 specimens were recovered, which mainly comprise 15 hoards (plus some isolated finds).

All these draw attention to the early exchange relations developed by the Greeks with important centres that correspond to the peripheral autochthonous communities of the Istro-Pontic territory, even if we cannot always corroborate the numismatic evidence with an archaeological context. Although they were not coins, the tokens reflect the structural changes that took place in the economy of the Greek centres on the Black Sea coast and their immediate surroundings, and later, from the end of the 6th century BCE (and especially from the first part of the 5th century BCE), their association with the local population located in a peripheral geographical position, if we refer to their casting place. The causes and implications of this phenomenon were multiple.



Thrace and Pontus Bithynia. Relations and Interactions between Two Neighboring Roman Provinces based on Material Culture Evidence

Dr Marina Tasaklaki

Ephorate of Antiquities of Rhodope

The historical bond between Thrace and Bithynia spans antiquity, with evidence suggesting significant interactions between the two regions. Greek cities played a pivotal role along the coastlines of both areas, while Thracian tribes traversed between the regions, further solidifying this connection.

Their extensive interactions across multiple domains are attested by various elements of material culture, including coins, especially during the Roman era, when both territories became provinces under imperial rule. This presentation aims to underscore the link between these neighboring regions, primarily by examining coin circulation and iconography. Of particular interest is the notable adoption of numerous iconographic types by Thracian mints, highlighting a dynamic exchange between the regions.

Moreover, other forms of material culture provide additional evidence supporting the notion that these interactions were primarily driven by the movements of traders, artisans, and other non-military individuals, rather than soldiers.



The Impact of the Hellenic Tradition on the Burial Practices of the Indigenous Inhabitants of the South-Eastern Black Sea Littoral (according to Archaeological Finds from the Pichvnari and Tsikhisdziri Cemeteries)

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Greek burial customs related to the cult of the dead, such as the placement of a coin (‘Charon’s Obol’) and ritual ceremonies in honor of the deceased on the graves, must have been established among the local population of the coastal Colchis from the middle of the 5th century BCE, under the influence of Greek settlers.

Discovered in the South-Eastern Black Sea littoral, the cemeteries of Pichvnari and Tsikhisdziri (5th-2nd centuries BCE) provide the most important information on the impact of Greek burial customs on the local inhabitants. In particular, the Pichvnari cemetery stands out as it has been intensively excavated and studied since the 1960s, comprising circa 1500 burials. According to the excavator, the late Prof. A. Kakhidze, burials of different ethnic communities (Colchean, Greek) have been identified (A. Kakhidze and M. Vickers, 2004, 2014; A. Kakhidze, 2007, 2016), or according to a different opinion, the buried individuals at Pichvnari can be characterized as ‘Hellenized barbarians’ or ‘barbarized Hellenes’ (D. Braund, 1994).

Thanks to recent archaeological research on the coastal strip of Georgia, new evidence has come to light, allowing us to talk extensively about issues related to the lifestyle of the local population, trade and economic relations with the outside world, spiritual culture, and religious beliefs. The paper discusses the blackish-colored areas, containing fragments of broken ceramics and burnt-charred bones, found near the inhumation burials of Pichvnari and Tsikhisdziri cemeteries. These areas are referred to by various names in Georgian archaeological literature and are associated with important components of the ancient funerary practice, namely sacrifices organized in honor of the dead and in appeasement of the chthonic deities, accompanied with relevant feasts. We will try to analyze the character of these ritual areas to find out whether they represent the remains of a sacrificial ritual, a funeral feast, or both.

For a long time, every discovery of coins in burials, was considered as proof of the ‘Caron's Obol’ custom, regardless of chronological, geographical or ethnic characteristics, or the placement of coin to the grave. Archaeological evidence of the last decade offers a new approach to the problem,

while some of the principal conclusions of the new arguments are subjected to thorough criticism. ‘Charon’s Obol’ is still an important issue as new information arises from the study of the ancient funeral rituals after the expansion of archaeological survey area. Therefore, in the present paper, we discuss afresh the ‘Caron’s Obol’ custom, especially the overlap between the written sources regarding the community and the archaeological evidence on local peculiarities, along with the finds from the necropoleis at the South-Eastern Black Sea littoral.

The Roman City Wall of Anchialus

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The thesis about the huge ancient city of *Anchialus*, whose fortress wall surrounded an area of 120 ha, continues to prevail in the scientific literature - a thesis based solely on the results of a geophysical survey carried out in 1986. In fact, there is only one point along this entire route where the existence of a fortress wall was confirmed by archaeological excavations as early as 1979. Meanwhile, through archaeological research and observations since 2014, in many places in the so-called fortified territory of *Anchialus* the absence of a cultural layer from the Roman period, when the city experienced its greatest rise, has been established. There is no trace of urban planning here, nor any elements of urban infrastructure. According to the available data, the systematic exploitation of this territory, which should rightly be classified as *sub urbana*, began only in the Late Roman period, which, however, by no means proves that it was *terra deserta* in the first centuries of our era. The pre-Roman *Anchialus* in all probability occupied the elevated eastern end of the present Pomorie Peninsula, which at that time was still an island.

Since 2014, archaeological investigations have provided reliable evidence about the route of the earliest north, south, and southwest part of the Roman *Anchialus* city wall. The Roman city was founded and developed over centuries on the original continental coast. The fortress wall was built in the period 178–184/5 CE, and the area enclosed by it hardly exceeded 50 ha. The newly built (around the 80s of the 2nd century) early-Roman fortress wall of *Anchialus* included areas in the south-west direction that had not been used earlier as a place for residential occupation. Subsequently (from the end of the 2nd century onwards), these areas were gradually built up. The fortification architecture has no parallels in the Bulgarian lands, but it is extremely similar to the Roman fortification system of *Hadrianopolis*.

Notes on the Roman Necropoleis of Anchialus

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From the end of the 19th century until recent times, the necropolis of the ancient city of Anchialus has been traditionally placed on the high plateau to the west and northwest of the settlement remains, where a large mound necropolis is situated. During the second half of the 20th century and under different circumstances, one of the mounds and several burial facilities dating from the end of the 1st century BCE/mid-1st century CE to the 4th c, CE were explored, while others were destroyed during construction and agricultural works.

Rescue excavations, which were carried out over the last 10 years in the *extra muros* area of the ancient city, have provided reliable evidence for the location of two necropoleis that were actively used during the Roman period. According to their location, they are defined as Western and Northwestern. Both necropoleis are flat and of similar date, but their spatial organization and funerary rites present certain differences. In 2014, 85 burials were studied in the Western necropolis. They, as well as the older finds known from its territory, show that it was used from the 1st to the mid-3rd century CE. The necropolis is single-layered and all burials are inhumations. In 2020, 12 graves were studied in the North-West necropolis and included both inhumations and cremations. Although their date is between the third quarter of the 2nd century and the mid-3rd century, the stratigraphy and the superposition of some graves allow us to distinguish at least three successive phases in the use of this place for burial purposes.

The Chora of Mesambria Pontica. Settlement Patterns in the Close Vicinity of Nessebar, Bulgaria

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The report presents the results of field surveys and excavations carried out over the last 10 years at an area in close vicinity of Mesambria Pontica (Nesebar, Bulgaria), dated to second half of the 1st millennium BCE. Settlement patterns during the considered period is the main goal of this research, emphasizing the connection of the Greek colony with the sites located around it. Clarification of the character and functions of these sites and the position they occupy in that territory are among our main priorities, focusing on the borders of the *chora*, contact zone, and trade and economy.

As a result of the field surveys and archaeological excavations carried out in 2013–2023, it was established that the settlement patterns in the immediate vicinity of Mesambria in the second half of the 1st mill BCE are diverse and complex. The total number of registered archaeological sites exceeds 100, and they are located on a territory of more than 150 km². Thirteen belong to the Late Archaic period, 45 to the Classical period, and 56 to the Hellenistic period. These results do not pretend to be comprehensive; on the contrary, these studies are at an initial stage, and their development depends not only on the conventional methods with which archaeology works, but also on the application of interdisciplinary approaches.

There is relatively limited information on structures at the early *chora* of Mesambria Pontica during the Late Archaic and Classical period. Quite opposite is the situation in the Hellenistic period, since we have more details about the nearby territory of the colony, i.e., more diagnostic artifacts, preserved architecture, structures, etc. The Hellenistic period is the time that the significance of the *chora* started to emerge. Following the spatial distribution of the registered sites, certain regularities and intentional choices are observed in their placement in precisely defined places, probably related to the road system and the cadaster of the ancient territory of Mesambria Pontica.



The Eastern Necropolis of Tieion

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Tieion is one of the most important cities of the Southern Black Sea coast. It was founded as a Milesian colony in the last quarter of the 7th century BCE. During the excavations carried out on the acropolis of the city, architectural remains of structures such as temples, pit houses, and ironworks from the Archaic Era were discovered. However, no necropolis from this period has not been located so far. Despite this, a large cemetery, situated just 50 meters from the acropolis and dating from the Late Classical to the Early Byzantine Period, has been unearthed during the excavations that begun in 2020. The Eastern necropolis, which was essentially reorganized during the Roman Imperial Period, contains earlier burials, too. During the up-to-date studies, graves dating back to the Late Classical and Hellenistic Period have been located in areas that were not affected by the Roman Imperial spatial arrangement. This suggests that this area was probably used as a cemetery during the Greek Colonization due to its proximity to the acropolis. Although data supporting this theory is still lacking, some grave goods from illegal excavations carried out in previous years date to the Late Archaic Period and thus partially confirm this hypothesis.

According to the results of the excavations and surface surveys, it is evident that Tieion developed rapidly, and its population increased during the Hellenistic and especially the Roman Imperial Period. Parallel to this development, the number of deaths and the need for cemeteries also increased. Today, in Tieion, in addition to the Eastern necropolis, there is also a very large burial ground in the south, dating to the Roman Imperial Period. Roman tombs are generally in the form of simple roof tile tombs, stone cists, sarcophagi, and chamber tombs. The eastern necropolis was built according to a plan compared to the southern one. Excavation in the eastern necropolis is still on-going, and it is expected to uncover Archaic or even graves (if any) in the future.



The Demographic Impact of Greek Colonisation in the Black Sea and Aegean Thrace

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Greek colonization (8th–5th centuries BCE) was a historical process of population movements that shaped the image of the ancient world across the Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Its effects were multi-layered, ranging from intense socio-cultural interactions between populations to the rise of urbanisation (Morris 2006). In this presentation we deal with one of the most fundamental questions regarding this process: how did populations evolve in colonial contexts? For approaching this question, we perform demographic reconstructions of several cities in the Black Sea and Aegean Thrace throughout a three-century timespan. By following the method of demographic projections (Preston et al. 2001), we estimate the most probable trajectories of population change for each city. We develop numerous demographic scenarios with the cohort component method and varying fertility, mortality, and migration levels. From these scenarios, we present the most likely ones following historical references and archaeological data.