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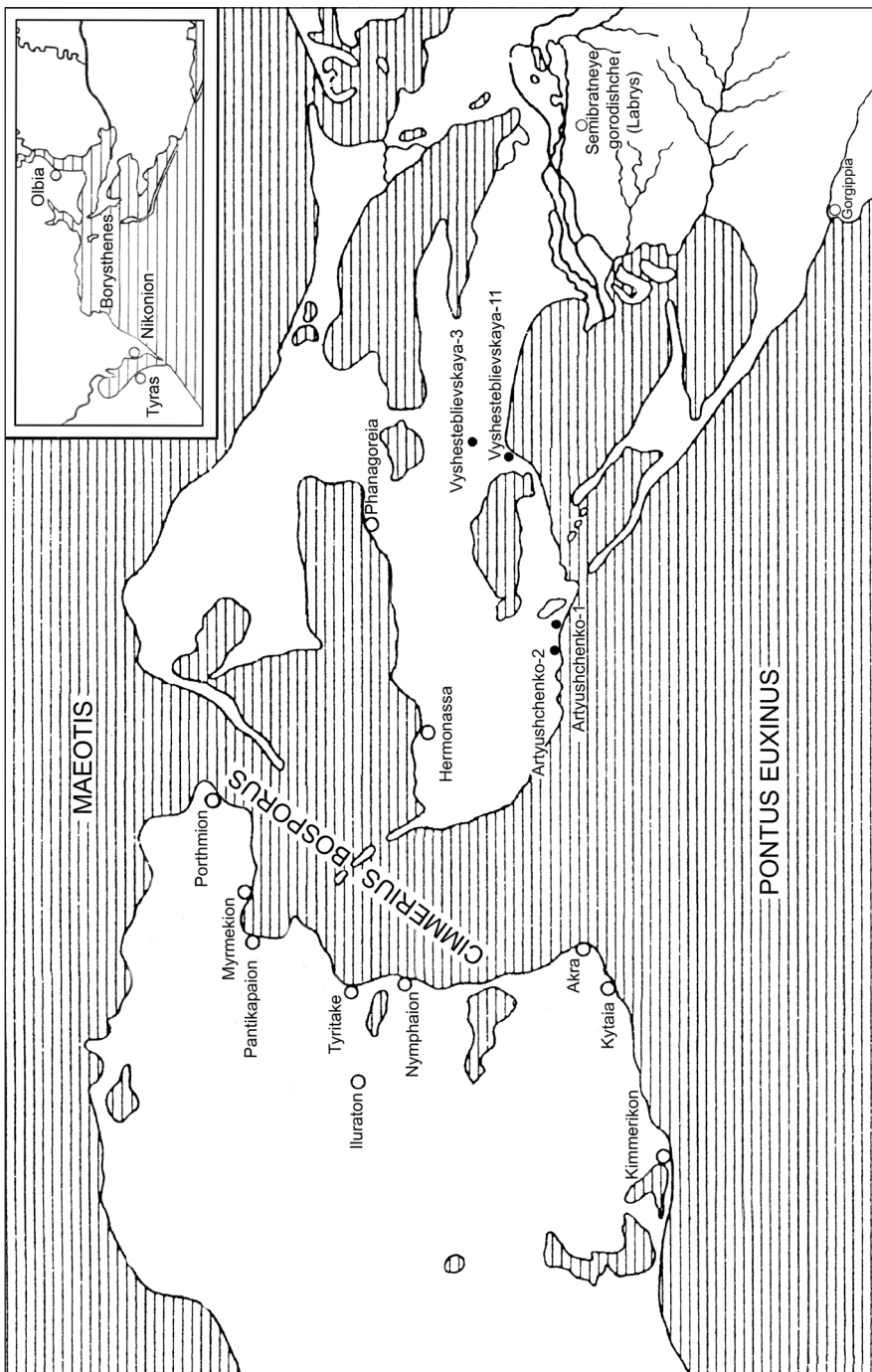
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Abbreviations

- KSIIMK = КСИИМК* – *Краткие сообщения Института истории материальной культуры* [*Kratkije soobshchenija Instituta istorii material'noj kultury*]
- MIA = МИА* – *Материалы и исследования по археологии СССР* [*Materialy i issledovanija po archeologii SSSR*]
- OAK = ОАК* – *Отчет императорской Археологической комиссии* [*Otch'ot imperatorskoj Arkheologicheskoi komissii*]
- SA = СА* – *Советская археология* [*Sov'etskaja arkheologija*]
- VDI = ВДИ* – *Вестник древней истории* [*V'estnik drevnej istoriji*]

AN INVESTIGATION OF THE NECROPOLEIS OF KYTAION AND THE ILURATON PLATEAU (2006–2013)

From 2006 to 2013, under mutual collaboration, the State Museum of the History of Religion (until 2008), the Institute of the History of Material Culture of the Russian Academy of Sciences (since 2009) and the Institute of Archaeology of the Ukrainian National Academy of Sciences continued investigations of the necropoleis of Kytaion (Kytaia) and the Iluraton Plateau. The results of these studies have been presented by the author of this paper in several publications.

Necropolis of Kytaion

At the necropolis of Kytaion, the investigations were carried out in the central, South-Eastern and South-Western sections. In the central area, primarily trenches with (both historically and recently) plundered burials (vault no. 373; graves nos. 364–372, 375) were re-excavated. In the South-Eastern area, undisturbed rock-cut grave-cenotaph no. 376 was found. It was of regular rectangular plan ($1.7\text{--}1.9 \times 0.6$ m, depth 0.7 m). The grave was oriented from West to East with a small deviation Southwards and Northwards respectively. Over the grave, two slabs forming the roof have survived in situ. In the soil filling of the grave a fragmentary bronze signet-ring with a representation of a kantharos on a flat bezel was found. However, no traces of a skeleton were discovered. In addition, a buried skull and bones (metapodia and the lower phalanges) of the fore- and hind-legs of a young horse (aged about 2.5 years according to palaeozoological analysis) were revealed under a layer of gravel in the immediate vicinity to this grave (0.6–0.7 m to the South-East). The arrangement of the cranium and teeth bones suggested that the skull was buried vertically facing East with a slight deviation northwards. The most surprising find here (on the bones of the horse's cranium under the lower layer of the gravel) was a strongly corroded copper coin (without holes for suspension, meaning that it was placed here separately and on purpose). Its nearest equivalent (the obverse showing the head of Athena facing to the right; on the reverse ΠΑΝ. and a ship's bow) is dated to 140–130 BC. Accordingly, this date

defines the terminus post quem of the burial complex under consideration where the coin, a peculiar “Charon’s obol”, was placed together with the skull and leg bones of a horse which was buried alongside the cenotaph. The archaeological association here suggests that this Hellenistic rock-cut grave of the 4th–3rd century BC (the grave offerings possibly included the abovementioned bronze signet-ring with the representation of a kantharos) was reused for making the cenotaph in the 2nd–1st centuries BC.

During recent years, the efforts of archaeologists have focused upon protection and rescue excavations in the South-Western part of the necropolis of Kytaion located in the coastal erosion zone. Here, near the three large Hellenistic tombs most probably constructed in the last quarter of the 4th century BC, a rock-cut earth-filled crypt (no. 344) of the late Roman period was discovered and extensively explored. The grave was extended in a meridional direction. Its chamber was 5.5–6.3 m long, 4.0–4.3 m wide, with a nearly square dromos that was 2.0–2.6 m long, 2.5–3.5 m wide and 2.4–2.5 m deep down to its floor – made by levelling the virgin clay – from the present-day ground surface level (Fig. 1). The crypt was plundered in ancient times, but even the scanty finds (a bronze figurine of a small dog, Fig. 2, and a figured fibula with enamel coating representing a lion, Fig. 3) were of undoubted interest, while coins of the last Bosporan kings (Phophorses, Rescuporis V) yielded a reliable upper date of its construction and functioning as the late 3rd–4th century BC.

To the East of grave no. 344, also in the zone of coastal erosion, a monumental burial and ritual assemblage was discovered, datable preliminarily to the same period and culture. In 2010–2013, sacrificial pits covered with a single common mound were uncovered here. These included burials nos. 377–379, 381, 383, ritual complex no. 380, a horse burial and two flat graves nos. 382 and 384. The mound presented a bank running from North to South. Its height was roughly 2 m, with a width (accounting for its deformation with time) of up to 20 m. The Southern section of the mound was disturbed by the shoreline erosion. The Northern part of the bank reached a length of at least 80 m.

The most monumental structure of those uncovered beneath the mound was the ritual complex no. 380. It was almost rectangular, extending from the South to the North (with a slight Eastward deviation). It was 5.2–5.7 m in length, and 2.8 m wide. The walls of the installation were constructed of irregular masonry, consisting of 2–3 layers of slabs of different size laid flat. It is believed that they are preserved to their full height of 0.8–1 m around most of the perimeter. Within the enclosed space, in the centre of the complex, there was a circular pit measuring around 1.8 m in diameter, with a depth of 1.7 m. On its bottom was found a discoid sacrificial altar cut from limestone. Numerous fragments

of amphorae, along with black-glossed and red-glossed ware, a painted lagynos, fragmentary wheel-made and handmade vessels have been retrieved from the soil fill over complex no. 380 and are broadly dateable to the period from 4th century BC to 3rd – 4th century AD. Inside the complex, above and along the floor level, materials of the late Roman period were predominant.

On the outside of the ritual installation, immediately beyond the Northern part of its Eastern wall, yet another sacrificial pit related to the complex was discovered. It was numbered 381. The diameter of the pit was about 2 m, and the determinable depth was at least 1.25–1.3 m. The pit was sunk into the mound that covered ritual complex no. 380, and consequently was of a later period. A poorly preserved horse burial was discovered beyond the Southern part of the Eastern wall. The skeleton within was abutted with a sculptural representation of a horse head carved from marl.¹ Beyond the North-Western corner of ritual complex no. 380, two undisturbed flat graves (nos. 382 and 384) were revealed. Preliminarily, they are also dateable to the late Roman period (Fig. 4). Hopefully, a handmade amphora-like vessel (Fig. 5–6) found at the feet of the buried in grave 384 will present an ethno-cultural indicator. Within the mound covering the entirety of the excavated objects, as well as on the floor of complex no. 380, there were large accumulations of animal bones, both in the form of separate remains and complete skeletons (horses, cows, pigs, sheep or goats, dogs). There were also bones of birds and fishes.

Along with synchronous traces of animal sacrifices, amphora remains, crushed handmade ware and copper coins of the last Bosporean kings from ritual deposits over graves of the late 3rd to 4th century AD, there were also large amounts of Hellenistic materials from the 4th – 2nd centuries BC: numerous fragments of imported amphora containers (including those with stamps) from Chios, Thasos, Herakleia Pontike, Sinope, Rhodes, sherds of painted black-glossed and red-glossed vessels (some of them bearing graffiti, Figs. 7–8),² terracotta statuettes and early Pantikapaion coins. These finds possibly originated from Hellenistic tombs situated nearby (and, probably, already destroyed and plundered by the period specified). In smaller quantities, objects were found (amphorae, painted pottery, coins) dating from the 1st century BC to 2nd century AD. An item

¹ Kucherevskaya 2013 [Н. Л. Кучеревская, “О консервации скульптуры из осадочных камнеподобных пород”, in: *Боспорский феномен: греки и варвары на евразийском перекрестке*], 703–705.

² The publication of all the stamps and graffiti from the necropolis of Kytaiion is now under preparation.

of note among these finds is the stamp VISELLI which is rare to see in the Northern Black Sea region.³

The general number and findspots of the asynchronous artefacts possibly indicate that these ‘foreign’ objects were collected on purpose and reused in late Roman funerary rites sensibly and intentionally. An indirect confirmation of this supposition is in the fact that many fragments of stamped amphorae appear deliberately chipped or broken. Furthermore, some stamps were found on sherds that had been smoothed after their presence in the sea and, perhaps, collected from the seabed or from the shore. In addition, along with the Hellenistic objects, there were here stone tools (a grain-grinder, a fragment of an axe, a knife) and “wastes” of their production discovered.

The question of the ethno-cultural belonging of the funerary and ritual complexes of the late 3rd to 4th century AD, which were excavated in the South-Western area of the necropolis of Kytaiion, remains so far unsolved.

Archaeological sites of the Iluraton Plateau

In 2003–2008, three very large and closely grouped tombs were discovered and excavated in the South-Western area of the Iluraton Plateau. They were constructed from blocks and slabs of limestone and roofed in antiquity by semicircular vaults (nos. 213, 220 and 225). In one of the tombs (no. 213), the vault is preserved completely over a niche in the Northern wall (Fig. 9). Along with the fine and monumental architecture, the elite character of these prominent funerary installations is indicated by some of the finds. In particular, the grave goods from the aforementioned tomb no. 213 comprised a fragment of a funerary wreath made of golden foil, a wide openwork gold signet-ring with a flat figured bezel ornamented with five inserts (cabochons) – two have survived in casts. It is one of the three most magnificent rings of this type and artistic level in the Northern Black Sea littoral (Fig. 10), all dating from the first half to the middle of the second half of the 2nd century AD. Two other examples of this rare category of openwork signet-rings with inserts were found in rich burials from the first half of the 2nd century AD at the necropolis of Gorgippia.⁴

³ Pavlichenko 2013 [Н. А. Павличенко, “Находка римского клейма в Китее”, in: *ФИДИТИЯ памяти Ю. В. Андреева*], 108–110.

⁴ Zakharenkov, Khrshanovskiy, Treyster 2004 [Н. В. Захаренков, В. А. Хршановский, М. Ю. Трейстер, “Выдающийся памятник погребальной архитектуры некрополя Илурата”, in: *Историк. Археолог. Литератор. К 90-летию М. М. Кубланова*], 79–83.

In 2006, excavation of another tomb, no. 220 (Fig. 11), was completed. Similarly to tomb no. 213, it was oriented from South to East. However, in contrast to the former, it had two chambers (a smaller one and a larger one). The first chamber was separated from the dromos and the second one from the first by thresholds. Between the dromos and the first chamber, a blocking slab was standing in situ. The dromos was of regular rectangular form and had a length of 3.6–3.7 m and a width of 1.2–1.58 m. The height of the walls of the dromos almost completely preserved was up to 2.45 m. The floor cut in the virgin clay was ramped downwards. The maximum height of the walls of the chamber was 1.9 m. The first chamber was of nearly square plan. It is notable by the fact that its width (2.8–2.9 m) slightly exceeded its length (2.6–2.65 m). The second (larger) chamber of tomb no. 220 was of regular rectangular plan (5.6 × 3 m). The floors, both in the larger and smaller chambers, were paved with limestone flags of different shapes (square, rectangular, trapezoid).

The most ancient finds synchronous to the period of the construction of the tomb (late 1st century – first half of the 2nd century) consisted of amphora fragments, sherds of red-glossed pottery and bronze objects. Of special note is a cornelian signet-ring insert with an intaglio representing a capricorn (Fig. 12). It is, however, necessary to state that after its construction, the tomb was repeatedly reused also in the 3rd – 4th and 5th – 6th centuries as indicated, in particular, by a cross carved of limestone found in the upper layers during the excavation.

Twenty metres to the West of tomb no. 220, yet another (the third in this area) tomb of the same rank constructed of blocks and slabs was discovered. To this tomb number 225 was assigned (Fig. 13). It most likely constituted a common burial and ritual installation together with two tombs/cenotaphs (nos. 226–227). Traces of ritual feasts were found nearby. Similarly to the two previously described tombs (nos. 213 and 220), this tomb was oriented meridionally: the dromos led from the South to a chamber roofed in antiquity by a semi-spherical vault. This tomb was exceptional in the fact that its construction was not completed: amidst the rear (Northern) wall of the chamber there was another doorway with a vaulted roof which led not to the second chamber but to the cenotaph tombs (nos. 226–227) and a ritual area fenced in front of them was found.

The dromos of tomb no. 225 was of regular rectangular plan. It was cut in the natural loam and on both sides was faced with stone walls. The dromos was 2–2.2 m long and 1.6–1.7 m wide (slightly expanding towards the entrance of the chamber). The walls were up to 2.3–2.35 m high. The chamber was of regular rectangular plan (3.5 × 4.6 m) extended in the meridional direction. The walls of the chamber (like those of the dromos) were constructed from smoothly cut limestone blocks carefully cut to fit

together. The maximum height of the survived walls was up to 2.4 m (!). In the middle of the Northern wall (directly in front of the entrance to the chamber) there was an entrance way (width 1–0.97 m) leading to the cenotaph tombs. The floor of the chamber was paved with limestone flags.

Among the earliest artefacts synchronous to the time of construction of tomb no. 225 (late 1st half of the 2nd century AD) and its initial use are diagnostic amphora fragments, red-glossed vessels, lamps and terracotta statuettes including a rare protome of a goddess with a high head-dress (Fig. 14).

Cenotaph tomb no. 226 was located about 1 m from the Northern wall of tomb no. 225, directly opposite the entrance opening in the Northern wall of its chamber. However, its threshold was positioned considerably higher (by 1.4–1.5 m) than the threshold of the chamber, i. e. almost at the level of the lower blocks of the arched roof of the opening. Crypt no. 226, which was constructed from limestone slabs set on edge was of regular rectangular plan oriented meridionally (with a very slight deviation to the South-East). The length of the tomb was 2.3–2.5 m, with a width of 1–1.2 m and a height of 1.45–1.5 m. The entrance, which was 0.7–0.6 m wide and 0.95 m high, was barred by three rectangular blocks. The levelled natural loam served as the floor of the tomb chamber.

Cenotaph tomb no. 227 was placed in “mirror fashion” to tomb no. 226: its entrance was in the North. It was also a regular rectangle in plan oriented meridionally with a slight deviation to the North-West and South-East, respectively. The tomb was 2.4–2.3 m long, had a width 0.75–0.8 m and a height of 1.35 m. The entrance to the chamber (0.75 × 1.45 m) was blocked by a vertically placed limestone slab, which was close to having a rectangular shape with an uneven upper edge. The slab was 0.8–0.97 m wide, with a height of 1.95 m, and was 0.08–0.12 m thick.

Tombs nos. 226 and 227 had a common internal wall and separate roofs composed each of three transversally laid limestone slabs.

The finds from cenotaphs nos. 226 and 227 were almost identical: there was a set of gypsum appliqué pieces (slightly differing from each other) in each. The figures are poorly preserved. Among those found in tomb no. 226, one may guess representations of Niobidae, a wounded Niobid, theatre masks (Fig. 15) and female protomes (?). The latter types were encountered also in tomb no. 227. However, by contrast to the appliqués from the neighbouring tomb, representations of Niobidae here were absent but the head of a feline predator (panther?) was placed within instead (Fig. 16). At the same time, no wooden coffins have been found, where gypsum appliqué pieces are usually the decorations. On the floor of each of the tombs was found a lamp (one of grey ware with an elongated spout and a rounded red-glossed example in the other) and

a snake skeleton. The extended position of this skeleton, according to the opinion of ophiologists, is unnatural for snakes in burrows suggesting their intentional use in the burial ritual.

Burial and ritual complex consisting of the uncompleted tomb no. 225 and cenotaph crypts nos. 226–227 undoubtedly is an evidence of some historical events which took place in the first half of the 2nd century AD. The supposition that these events concerned the elite (or perhaps even the ruling top) of the Bosporan kingdom is confirmed by the fact that the compactly grouped tombs nos. 213, 220 and 225 are among the five of the largest ones of the Roman period known in Bosporos up to now. Moreover, their location suggests a special (sacral?) status of the Iluraton Plateau in general. The latter hypothesis is also suggested by the presence of later archaeological monuments dating from the 4th to 13th centuries.

During recent years (2009–2013), three further funerary ritual complexes (nos. 228–230) were excavated in the Eastern area of the Iluraton Plateau. These were functioning in the post-Iluraton period when the ancient site closest to them – the city-fortress of Iluraton – had already ceased to exist (during the last third of the 3rd century AD).

Ritual complex no. 228 was a regular rectangle in plan extending in the South-East to North-West direction with the walls constructed of rather small flat limestone boulders. Its dimensions (along the internal contour) were a length of 4.6–4.7 m, a width of 3.0–3.1 m, and the thickness of the walls was 0.6–0.7 m, with a height of 0.6–1.1 m. On the South-Eastern side, the wall was absent. It was replaced with a row of three smoothly cut limestone blocks carefully cut to fit together. In the Southern part of the block joining the South-Western wall, on its upper side, there was a cup-like hollow (diameter 0.3 m, depth 0.1 m) where the foot of a Hellenistic Sinopean amphora was lying in situ. The basically Greek type of the masonry that differs from the mediaeval one suggests that the date of construction of this installation (perhaps in place of some earlier one) was the 3rd – 4th century AD. However, as may be judged from a crushed amphora and handmade pottery found on the floor, the last ritual activities at this assemblage were practiced as late as in the Khazar times, i. e. in the 8th – 9th century.⁵

South-East of the row of blocks, another (of a later date?) addition was discovered. A masonry of small flat stones, up to 0.6 m high, fenced off a space (1.5–2.2 × 4 m) divided into two parts. Each was of

⁵ Tul'pe, Khrshanovskiy 2011 [И. А. Тульпе, В. А. Хршановский, “Новый комплекс хазарского времени на Илуратском плато”, in: *Боспорский феномен: население, языки, контакты*], 228–236.

semicircular “apsidal” plan. The Southern area measured 1×1.3 m and the Northern area was 1.5×1.5 m. Some structures of dressed limestone slabs uncovered within these areas can be justifiably interpreted as altar installations. The scanty and non-diagnostic ceramic finds form no basis for narrow dating of the functioning period of this room, but there are no doubts concerning its belonging to the late-antiquity period and early Middle Ages.

Sanctuary no. 229 revealed nearby, like the one described previously, was oriented from South-East to North-West. However, by contrast to the latter, it was cut in the form of amphitheatre in the rock to a depth of about 2 m from the ancient surface. It was of a circular plan (3×5 m). On the South-Eastern side it was framed by a thick circular masonry. Inside the fenced area near the altar (?), were found skulls of a gilt and of a bird of prey (eagle-owl?). In addition, in the filling soil of the ritual complex, bones of other animals (cows, sheep or goats) were encountered. The materials retrieved in the course of excavations (fragments of amphorae, wheelmade and handmade pottery, a bronze buckle) suggest that this complex was also constructed in the late-antiquity period (4th century AD) and, possibly, was reused in the 8th – 9th century AD. However the final conclusion regarding the time of its construction and functioning can be made only after the completion of the investigations.

The last of the ritual installations excavated in the same area of the Iluraton Plateau (no. 230) was also a structure of circular plan, measuring 2.5–3.0 m in diameter and about 1 m deep. Its lower section was sunk into the natural loam; in the upper section (humus layer), along its entire circumference there was a circular masonry 0.2–0.3 m high constructed from different sized pieces of stone and small blocks. The entrance to the ritual structure was on the Eastern side. Below the level of the floor, on a pavement of limestone flags extending from South-East to North-West (length about 3 m, width 1 m), was found the lower jaw of a horse facing the North-West. This find confirms the ritual character of the structure under consideration. Not numerous artefacts (handles of late light-ware amphorae) from the complex date the period of its functioning to the 4th century AD.

The question as to the ethno-cultural belonging to the late antique ritual complexes nos. 228–230 on the Iluraton Plateau remains open.

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A survey of the excavations of the necropoleis of Kytaion and on the Iluraton plateau conducted by the expedition of the State Museum of the History of Religion (2006–2008), the Institute for the History of Material Culture, RAS (since 2009) and the Institute of Archaeology of the Ukrainian National Academy of Sciences.

Обзор раскопок некрополей в Китее и на плато Илурат, проводившихся совместной экспедицией Государственного музея истории религии (2006–2008), Института материальной культуры РАН (с 2009) и Института археологии Национальной академии наук Украины.



Fig. 1. Necropolis of Kytaion. Excavation XL. Tomb no. 344.
View from the North.

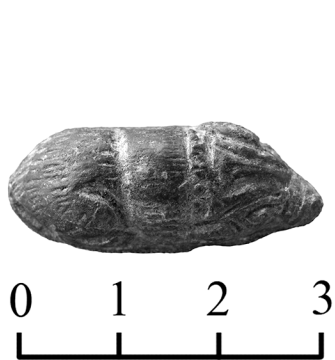


Fig. 2. Necropolis of Kytaion.
Excavation XL. Tomb no. 344.
Bronze figurine of a dog.



Fig. 3. Necropolis of Kytaion.
Excavation XL. Tomb no. 344.
Figured fibula with an enamel
coating representing a lion.



Fig. 4. Necropolis of Kytaion. Excavation XLVI.
Ritual complex no. 380 and flat graves nos. 382 and 384. View from the South.



Fig. 5. Necropolis of Kytaion. Excavation XLVI. Flat grave no. 384.
View from the West.



Fig. 6. Necropolis of Kytaion. Excavation XLVI. Flat grave no. 384.
 Amphora-like handmade vessel.



Fig. 7. Necropolis of
 Kytaion. Excavation XLVI.
 Graffito "...OMAP..." on
 the wall of a black-glossed
 vessel.



Fig. 8. Necropolis of Kytaion. Excavation XLVI.
 Graffito "KAΘA" on the rim of a red-glossed vessel.



Fig. 9. Iluraton Plateau. Tomb no. 213.
View from the South.



Fig. 10. Iluraton Plateau. Tomb no. 213.
Openwork signet-ring with garnets.

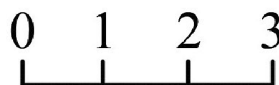




Fig. 11. Iluraton Plateau. Tomb no. 220.
View from the North-North-West.



Fig. 12. Iluraton Plateau. Tomb no. 220.
Cornelian insert from a signet-ring with
a representation of a capricorn.



Fig. 13. Iluraton Plateau. Tombs nos. 225–227.
 View from the South.



Fig. 14. Iluraton
 Plateau. Tomb no. 225.
 Terracotta protome of a
 goddess.



Fig. 15. Iluraton
 Plateau. Tomb no. 226.
 Gypsum appliqué in the
 form of a theatre mask.



Fig. 16. Iluraton Plateau.
 Tomb no. 227. Gypsum
 appliqué in the form of the
 head of a feline predator
 (panther).