

EXCAVATIONS OF GORGIPPIA AND ITS NECROPOLIS IN 2012 AND 2016*

Excavations of ancient Gorgippia were conducted intermittently over almost one hundred and ninety years and gave a fairly complete picture of its boundaries and dimensions in different chronological periods from the 6th century BC to the 3rd century AD (Fig. 1).¹ Works of the last decade have complemented these results, although they were inconsiderable and concerned mainly with the areas of construction in connection with various building projects in Anapa. Some of the objects were investigated by the staff of the Department of History of Classical Culture of the Institute for the History of Material Culture (IHMC) RAS.

Necropolis. In 2012² the Anapa detachment of the Bosporan Expedition of IHMC RAS conducted protective excavations in the area of about 300 sq. m of the cinema and concert hall “Victory” (Fig. 1; 2). In antiquity, here was the south-eastern border of the necropolis of Gorgippia.³ During the construction of the projected building in 1987, several burials of the 2nd century BC – 3rd century AD were opened here. The opportunity to complete the study of this territory appeared in connection with the planned reconstruction of the former cinema hall.

In the course of the preparation of the site for excavation it was necessary to remove a ballast trash layer approximately 2 m thick. Some materials of the Hellenistic time were uncovered in a redeposited stratum beneath it. Among the finds, noteworthy are a Koan stamp of the 3rd – early 2nd centuries BC (rare in the Northern Black Sea coast) with an

* The investigation was conducted according to the program 0184-2019-0005 of Fundamental Scientific Investigations of the RAS: “Culture of states of the Classical period in the Northern Black Sea region. Subcultures of the ruling elite and common people”.¹ Alekseeva 1997 [Е. М. Алексеева, *Античный город Горгиппия*].

² For technical reasons a brief report on these excavations was not included in the archaeological section of the journal devoted to the St. Petersburg archaeological expeditions that worked in the Northern Black Sea region in 2006–2013.

³ Alekseeva 1991 [Е. М. Алексеева, *Греческая колонизация Северо-Западного Кавказа*], 282 Pl. 2.

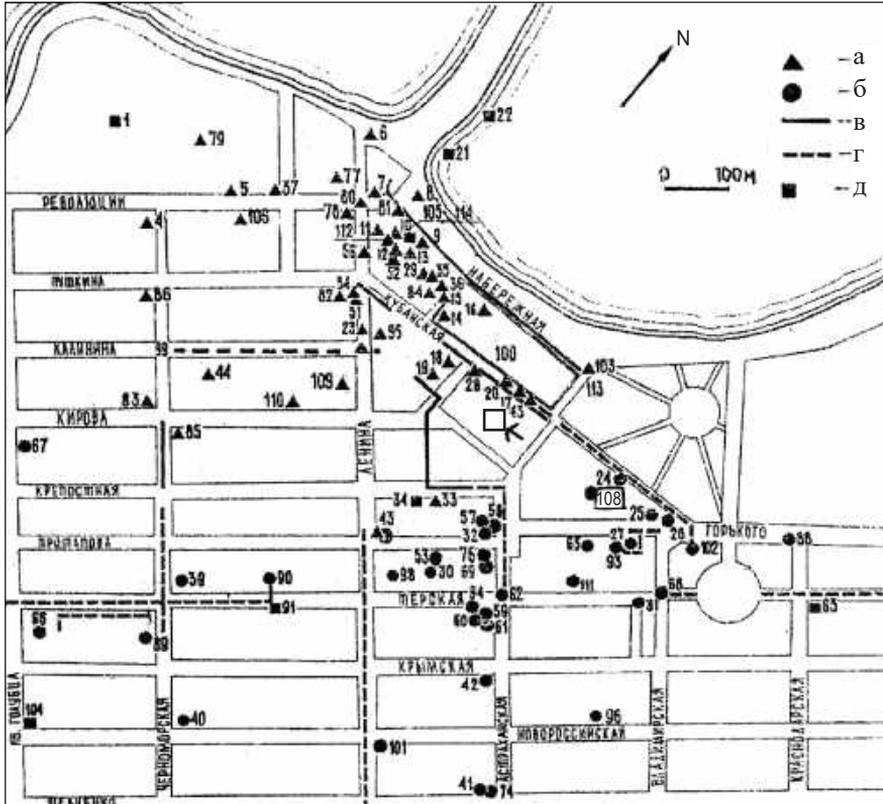


Fig. 1. Archaeological plan of Anapa (by E. V. Alekseeva):
 а – cultural layers of the townsite; б – area of the necropolis;
 в, г – building trenches under supervision; д – excavated area of 2016;
 108 – the legend number for the excavation trench
 in the territory of the cinema “Victory” in 2012;
 □ – excavation area of 2016 on the territory of the resort “Motylyok”

emblem representing a caduceus and the name $\Sigma\alpha\rho\alpha\pi[\iota](\omega\nu\omicron\varsigma)^4$ (Fig. 3. 1) and a Sinoprean stamp $\acute{\alpha}\sigma\tau\nu\nu\omicron\mu\omicron\upsilon / \Upsilon\omicron\beta\acute{\alpha}\kappa\chi\omicron\upsilon \tau\omicron\upsilon / [\text{Μολ}]παγ\omicron\rho\omicron\upsilon. / \text{Λπατούριος [prow of a ship]}$ of 250–215 BC (Fig. 3. 2).⁵

⁴ The only analogy is the stamp from the excavations of Olbia in 1912. I take this opportunity to thank Prof. Sergey Monakhov (Saratov State University) for his advice on this matter.

⁵ Compare: Katz 2007 [В. И. Кац, *Греческие керамические клейма эпохи классики и эллинизма (опыт комплексного изучения)*], 266 Pl. 13, 10.

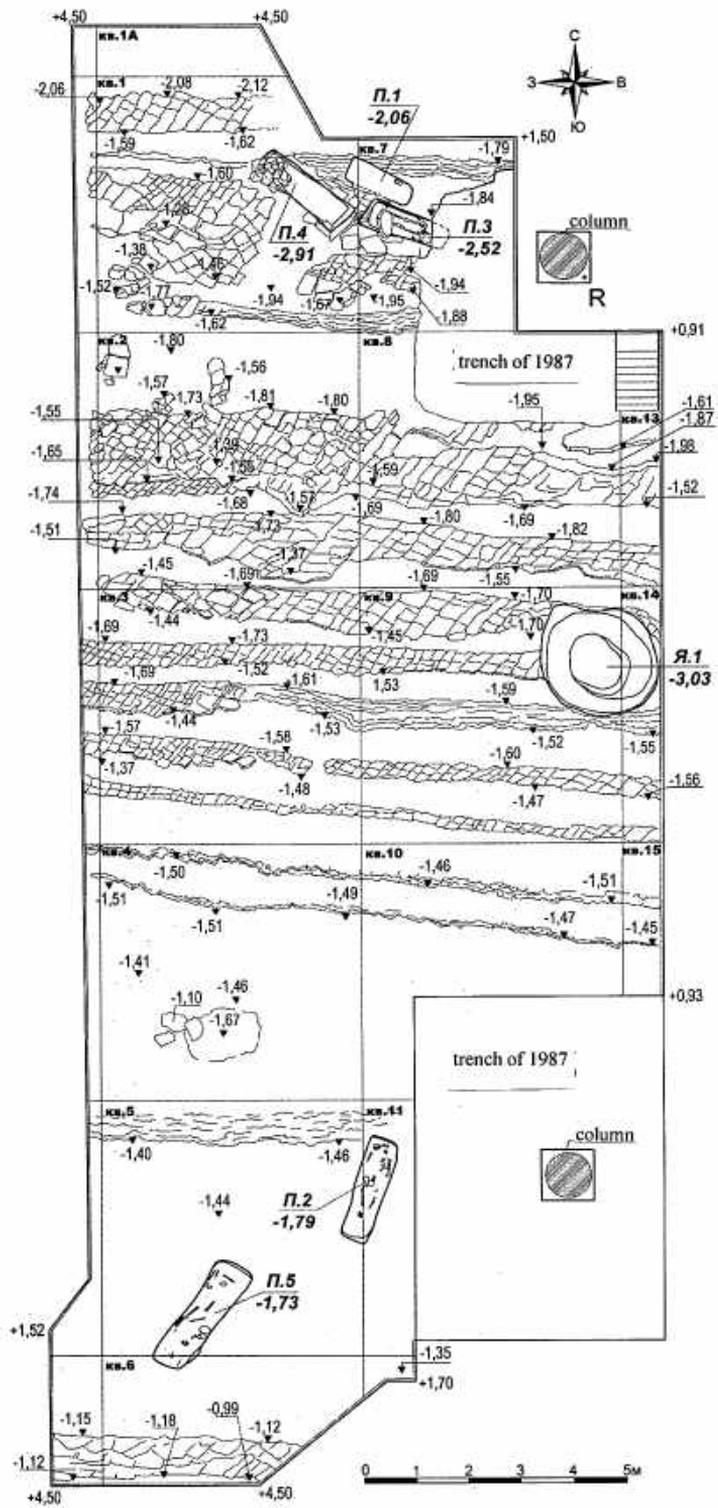


Fig. 2. Plan of the excavation trench of 2012 in the territory of the cinema



Fig. 3. Finds from the excavations in the territory of the cinema:
 1, 2 – pottery stamps of the 3rd – early 2nd centuries BC;
 3 – grayware oinochoe; 4 – glass aryballos; 5 – redware jug;
 6 – bronze rectangular girdle clasp

When clearing the rock's surface in the northwestern corner of the excavation trench, Burial 1 was found. Its dimensions were 1.2×0.44 m with the depth of 0.14–0.23 m down the edge of the grave. Its fill contained skeletal remains of a 2–4-year-old child, a grayware oinochoe (Fig. 3. 3) and a glass aryballos of the second half of the 1st century AD (Fig. 3. 4). Excavation of a layer of rock debris opened Burial 2 in the southern part of the excavation trench. The dimensions of the grave were 2×0.57 m with the depth of 0.25–0.35 m down the edge of the pit. It contained only skeletal remains of a woman 25–35 years old, a child 3–7 years old and a redware jug of the 1st century AD (Fig. 3. 5).

Burial 3 was measuring 1.5 m × 0.52–0.56 m and was 0.64 m deep. At the bottom of the grave there were the remains of a male aged 35–45 years old. At his pelvis there was a bronze rectangular girdle clasp of the 1st century AD (Fig. 3. 6).⁶ Obviously the interment was made in a wooden coffin. Anyway, wood decay was present under the remains of the skeleton, and two iron nails were found in the upper part of the fill of the grave. Burials 4 and 5 were robbed still in antiquity.

Summing up the results of the rescue excavations it is of note that in the Hellenistic period the investigated site was not used as a cemetery. Two groups of burials in grave pits are chronologically close to the 1st century AD. Three burials of the northern group are characterized by their orientation to the south-east or south-east-east. By contrast, the burials of the southern group were directed to north-east or north-north-east. Perhaps these local features are due to the fact that they are associated with burials of relatives.

Townsite. In 2016, IHMC RAS jointly with the organization “Kuban Archeology” (Krasnodar) conducted rescue excavations in the south-eastern part of Gorgippia in the territory of the Resort “Motylyok” (Fig. 1). The investigations comprised an area of 250 sq. m intended for the construction of a swimming pool (Fig. 4). Below a rubbish layer about 1.6 m thick, a redeposited layer was found dated to the 4th century BC – 3rd century AD. In addition to the archaeological mass material, a fragment of a black-glossed kantharos with the graffito Πανίσκος (Fig. 5. 1), a terracotta with an erotic scene (Fig. 5. 2), a bronze locking plate from a casket in the form of a herm (Fig. 5. 3), a tetrassarius of the emperor Diadumenian of the 218 AD (Fig. 5. 4), and an oval almandine insert of a ring (cabochon) with a representation of a cornucopia (1st century BC – 1st century AD)⁷ (Fig. 5. 5) were here unearthed.

⁶ Compare: Simonovich 1983 [Э. А. СЫМОНОВИЧ, *Население столицы позднескифского царства*], 64 Pl. XXXIX, 16.

⁷ *Catalogue of the Collection of Antique Gems* 1993 [Каталог собрания античных гемм], 23 Fig. 12.

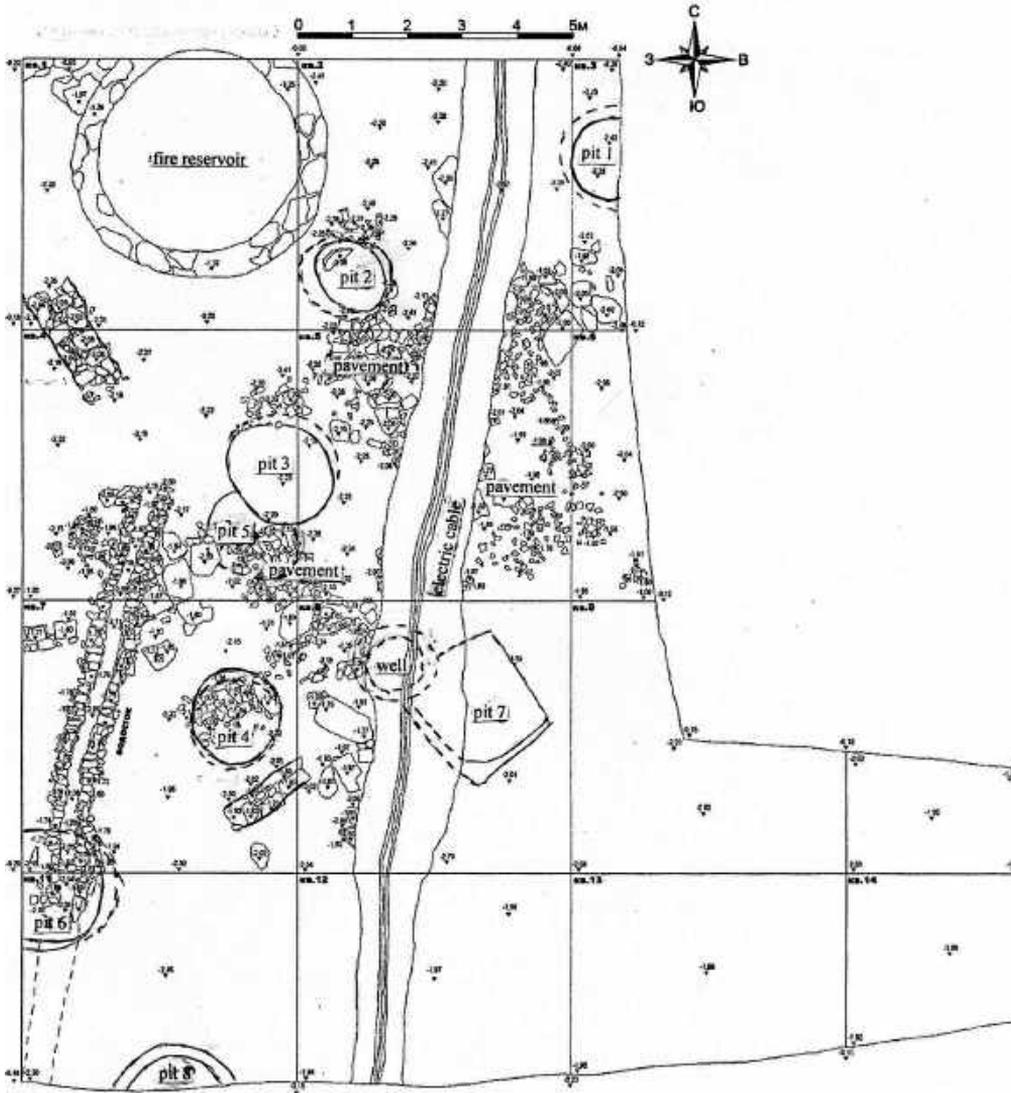
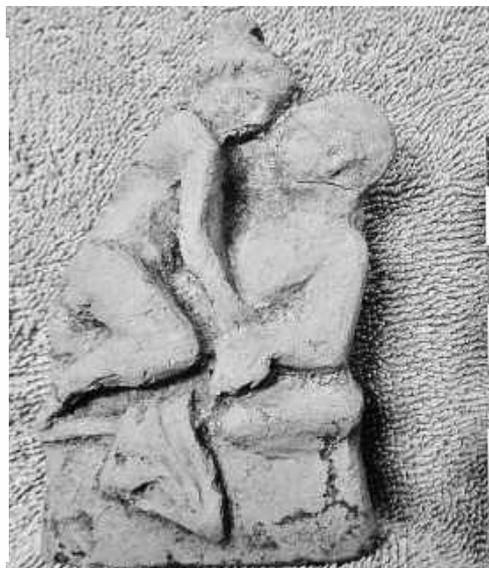


Fig. 4. Motlyok-2016. Plan of the excavation trench

Fig. 5. Finds from the redeposited layer of the 4th century BC – 3rd century AD:
1 – fragment of black-glossed kantharos with graffito;
2 – bronze plate in the form of a herm;
3 – terracotta with an erotic scene;
4 – copper coin of the emperor Diadumenian of 218 AD;
5 – oval almandine insert of a ring



In the course of further excavations, the urban area of the middle of the 4th century BC – 240 AD was investigated. The remains of a house of the second half of the 4th century BC (a section of the wall, a pavement, as well as a pit containing a Chian amphora) were here partially preserved. One of the finds suggests a public purpose of the place. It is a tile of local manufacture with the stamp APXEIA (Fig. 6. 1). Over two dozens of similar stamps are known. It seems that the buildings where they were found were somehow related with authorities of Gorgippia.⁸ Of considerable interest is also a bone part of the chair back in the form of a swan's head (Fig. 6. 2).⁹ It gives us an idea of some types of ceremonial furniture of the 4th century BC used in the Bosporan Kingdom.

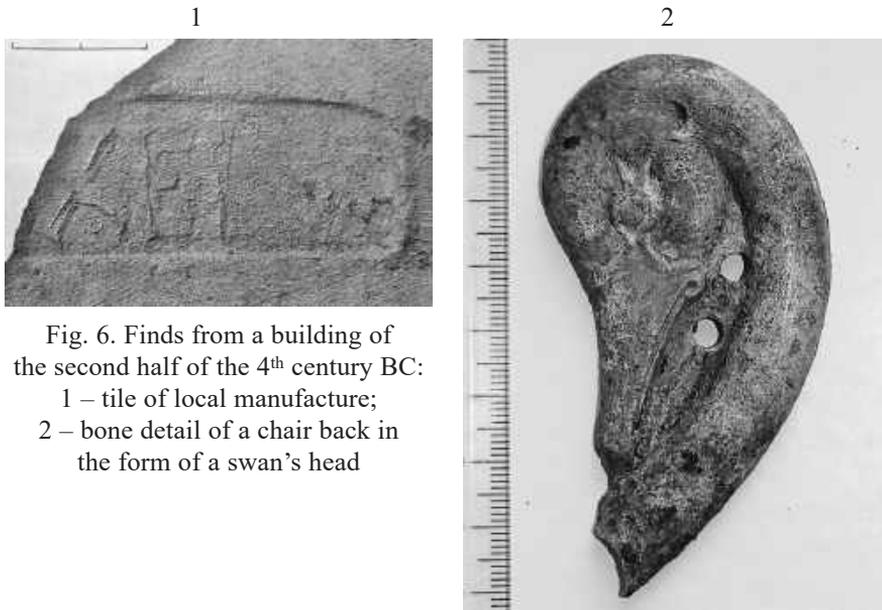


Fig. 6. Finds from a building of the second half of the 4th century BC:
1 – tile of local manufacture;
2 – bone detail of a chair back in the form of a swan's head

In the Hellenistic period this urban district was actually abandoned and used only for economic purposes. In particular, the remains of a rectangular hearth and a pit of this date were found near the northern side of the trench. In the southern part of the excavated area a circular well appeared at the same time. Judging by the finds in the fill, the circular well continued in use until the 2nd century AD.

⁸ Katz 2015 [В. И. Кац, *Керамические клейма Азиатского Боспора. Горгиппия и ее хора. Семибратнее городище*], 182, 186–187 Pl. 2, 1–4.

⁹ Goroncharovskiy–Tikhonova 2016 [В. А. Горончаровский, Т. С. Тихонова, “Костяная деталь спинки кресла IV в. до н. э. из раскопок Горгиппии”], 79–83.

The next building period (1st–2nd century AD) involves the remains of the walls, a paving of tiles and stone in the courtyard between them and four pits. Numerous pottery was retrieved from the fill of one of the latter (no. 2), including two cooking pans (Fig. 7. 1, 2), two frying pans with traces of soot, two one-handled pots, a jug with a zoomorphic handle (Fig. 7. 3), two grayware lamps, a red-glossed goblet (Fig. 7. 4), a bowl (Fig. 7. 5), a cup (Fig. 7. 6), a pinax (Fig. 7. 7), a handmade bowl, a bronze key of a casket (Fig. 7. 8), and two sestertii of Sauromates I (93/94–123/124 AD). Pit no. 2 was 1.41 m deep, 1.92 m in diameter, with the dimensions of the bottom 2.18×1.73 m. To the south of pit no. 2 at the level of the paving of tiles and stone, a bone plaque with four holes (detail of musical instrument?) was found (Fig. 7. 9).

The paving of tiles and stone mentioned above was partially demolished and reused in the construction of a water drain in the end of the 2nd century AD. The drain was in use until the destruction of the city around 240 AD. This water drain 0.24 m wide was traceable over a distance of 12 m. It was carelessly blocked with small flat pieces of stone. Two pits of the same period are associated with the final period of the city's occupation. One of them (no. 7) was of a rectangular plan and served for storing lime.

Thus the studied cultural layers excavated belong to the period about six centuries long and give additional information on the boundaries of Gorgippia and its necropolis corresponding to different historical stages.

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Fig. 7. Finds from pit no. 2 of the 2nd century AD: 1, 2 – cooking pans; 3 – jug with a zoomorphic handle; 4–7 – red-glossed pottery; 8 – bronze key of a casket; 9 – bone plaque with four holes

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Further reading

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