

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH OF THE LATE SCYTHIAN SITE OF FRONTOVOYE 2 IN 2018

In May–July 2018, protective and rescue archaeological researches were conducted by the Frontovoye group of the Crimean Rescue Archaeological Expedition (CRAE) of the Institute of Archaeology of the Russian Academy of Sciences in the zone of civil engineering works: “Construction and reconstruction of the public road Kerch – Feodosiya – Belogorsk – Simferopol – Bakhchisaray – Sevastopol. Stage 7”. The ‘Settlement of Frontovoye 2’ is a site of archaeological heritage located in Nakhimov District, Sevastopol, 1 km north-east from the village of Frontovoye, on the first terrace above the flood plain of the Belbek River.

Previously, in October–November 2016, archaeological surveys were conducted along the route of Stage 7 of the road construction. They revealed various sites of archaeological heritage in the area of the construction, including the ‘Settlement of Frontovoye 2’ of the Roman period.

The settlement is located in the west part of the slope of the Mekenziyevy Gory mountain. In the post-war period, two terraces were built here. By the beginning of the archaeological work, the surface of the site was grass-covered while on the side of the floodplain, the entire slope was planted with wild shrubbery.

Stratigraphic studies revealed four horizons of ancient buried soil (CL-1 where CL means *cultural layer*; CL-2; CL-3; CL-4). The depth of CL-1 was from 0.1 to 0.7 m, CL-2 – from 0.5 to 3.8 m, CL-3 – from 2.1 to 5.2 m, and CL-4 – from 3.5 to 6.2 m. All the features found during the excavations were positioned in some of these horizons. During the excavations, we were focused on investigation of these cultural layers each pertaining to a particular period. The thickness of each layer indicates the length of occupation of the settlement as well as fairly intensive activities of the population in this part of the chora of Chersonesos in the Roman period.

During the excavations the site was divided into three areas of digging (Excavations nos. 1–3). The total excavation area amounted to 13 665 sq. m. A unified grid of squares numerated by letters was chosen for all of the three excavations. Each excavation was subdivided into areas marked ‘areas nos. 1–20’ each. For exactness, each area was marked

by letters and numbers of the unified excavation grid. Stratigraphic designation was assigned individually to each excavation.

Prior to the beginning of the works, levels and photos were taken from the entire surface. On the west side of the site, the upper made ground from 0.4 to 1 m thick was reliably identified in 8 test pits dug in the excavation area. This layer was constituted by soil added for fruit trees and it was removed by means of mechanical equipment.

The excavation squares were dug manually or using excavators layer by layer 0.1–0.2 m deep according to the accepted methods of excavating settlement sites. In this way, all finds were registered at a corresponding level. The excavation axis was deviating 15 degrees to the east from the magnetic north. The digging was carried out over areas of 20×10 m, 15×10 m, and 10×10 m of each excavated layer 0.2–0.25 m thick. The excavated soil was carefully examined. Stratigraphy was recorded at the edges of each excavation area.

During the excavation, 1660 archaeological features have been investigated: household pits and pillar holes, pit-houses or semi-dugouts, and child burials in amphorae pertaining to the Classical culture of the Black Sea region from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (Fig. 1). Also, there were found three household pits dating from an earlier period, i. e. the Kizil-Koba culture (9<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup> century BC), as well as about 40 objects dated to the mediaeval Golden Horde time (13<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> century AD).

Excavations uncovered also 11 child burials of the early Roman period. Some of these contained no grave goods, but a number of interesting finds were recovered from the other.

*Burial no. 1 (Feature No. 229)* was found in square G-5, at level 2. It is a burial of two children, one lying above the other; the upper skeleton lied on his back with the head to the east. There were a kantharos near to the lower child's head, a beaded bracelet on his wrist and a necklace on his neck. A necklace was on the neck of the upper child's skeleton as well.

*Burial no. 2 (Feature No. 327)*. Child burial in an amphora. The child was lying on the side in a flexed position with the head to the west, face to the south. Near the hip joint there was a red-glossed kantharos with a floral decoration and a handmade saltcellar inside, the arms crossed on the chest.

*Burial no. 5 (Feature No. 559)*. A child burial in an amphora at the third level of record. At the first level here there were fragments of an amphora of brown clay with two handles, and a jar. Behind the debris, a skeleton was lying head to the south-west. Near the bedhead, a red-glossed goblet with two handles was found, at the right wrist there were glass beads, near the ribs and at the right foot there were two fibulae and a fluted bead.

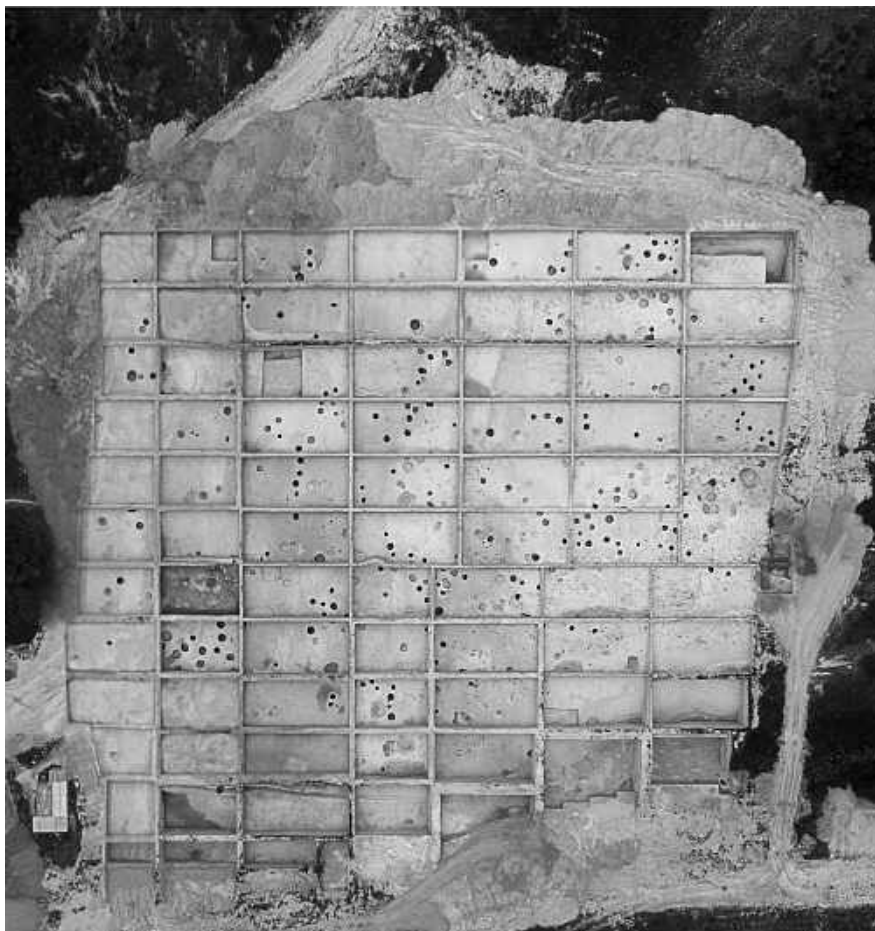


Fig. 1. View from above at the excavations of the archaeological heritage site of the “Settlement Frontovoye 2”. Objects in CL-2 and CL-3.  
View from the east

*Burial no. 6 (Feature No. 764).* Child burial in a light-clay amphora at the level of the virgin soil. The walls of the grave pit gradually tapered toward the bottom; the bottom was flat. The size of the pit was 1.18×0.53 m, the depth was 1.7 m. The fill was ashy grey loam. The finds were pottery of pale-coloured and red clay.

*Burial № 8 (Feature No. 841).* A burial in an oval-shaped amphora found at the level of the virgin soil. The size of the amphora was 0.7×0.4 m. The object was intruded from the second cultural layer. The fill was grey ashy loam with remains of decay. The finds were a greyware kantharos and beads of different types.

In addition to child burials, which through the types of beads, pendants and red-glossed pottery are dated to the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, 18 dwelling buildings were opened, mostly pit-houses. Stone was almost not used in the construction of the settlement buildings by contrast to other late Scythian settlements of the same period. Almost all the buildings have numerous household pits suggesting that the settlement had been abandoned by the beginning or the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, since already material dated to the middle or second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD was encountered in these later pits.

From the east, the settlement was separated from the floodplain of the Belbek River by a deep ditch, which ran along the entire eastern part of the settlement. The walls of the ditch narrowed toward its flat bottom. The width of the upper part of the ditch was 1.8 m; the width of the bottom was 0.4 m. The depth was 0.8–1 m. The ditch was dug from horizon CL-2.

The most of the finds are household pits and pillar holes (about 1600 objects). The number of pillar holes is considerably greater than that of the pits. So far, it has been impossible to trace the particular lines of fences and other pillar structures (perhaps also pertaining to dwelling areas) since they were repeatedly rebuilt.

Archaeological materials are represented mainly by fragments of light-clay amphorae of type C1, red-clay amphorae of Sin 3 type (Fig. 2, 1). Fragments of Colchian brown-clay amphorae of Ch I type and light-clay narrow-necked amphorae of CIVA type were also encountered. Some of the amphorae were stamped (Fig. 2, 4).<sup>1</sup>

Red-glossed pottery was also represented in a significant number by fragments of bowls, plates and goblets, as well as by complete kantharoi from child burials (Fig. 2, 3). Some plates had 'planta pedis' stamps (Fig. 2, 2).

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<sup>1</sup> All definitions and dates are according to S.Yu. Vnukov: Vnukov 2003 [С. Ю. Внуков, *Причерноморские амфоры I в. до н.э. – II в. н.э. (морфология)*]; Vnukov 2006 [С. Ю. Внуков, *Причерноморские амфоры I в. до н.э. – II в. н.э. Часть II (петрография, хронология, проблемы торговли)*].

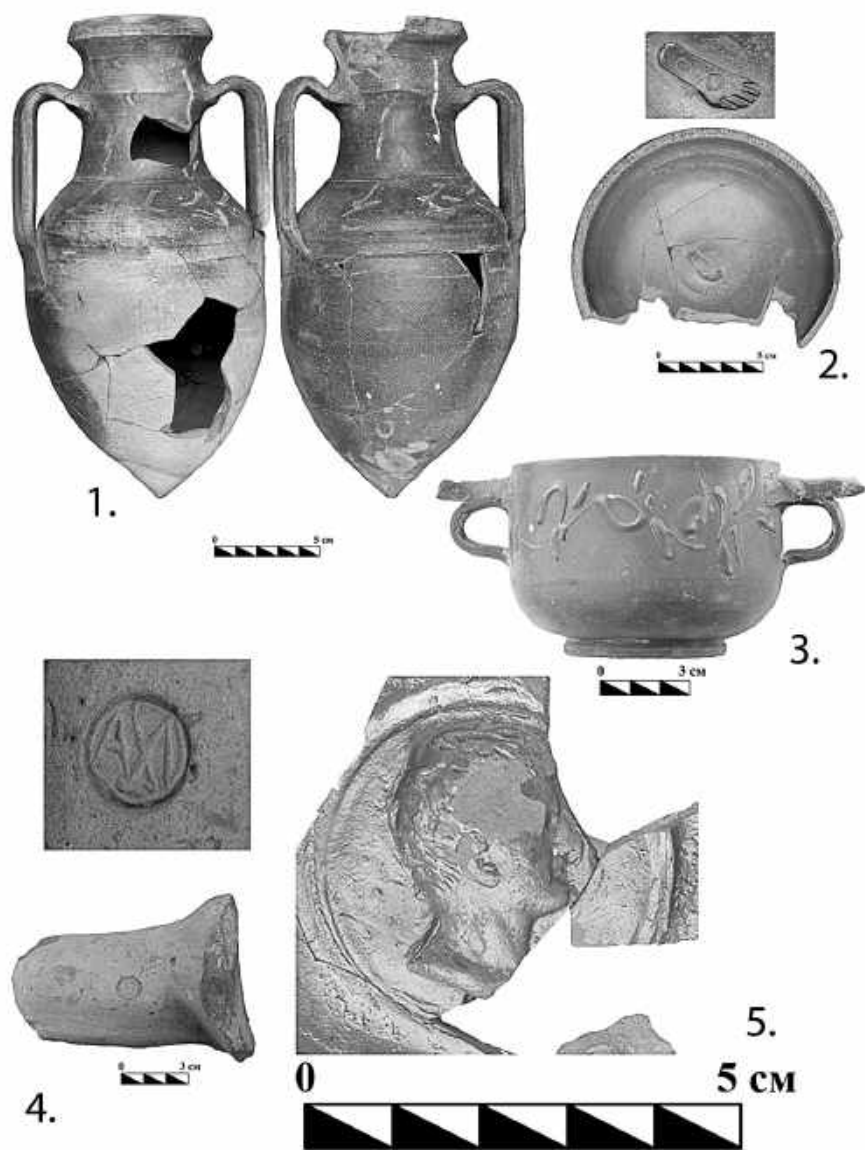


Fig. 2. Frontovoye 2. Finds from features in CL-2 and CL-3:  
 1) object no. 398; 2) object no. 398; 3) object no. 327;  
 4) object no. 25; 5) object no. 876

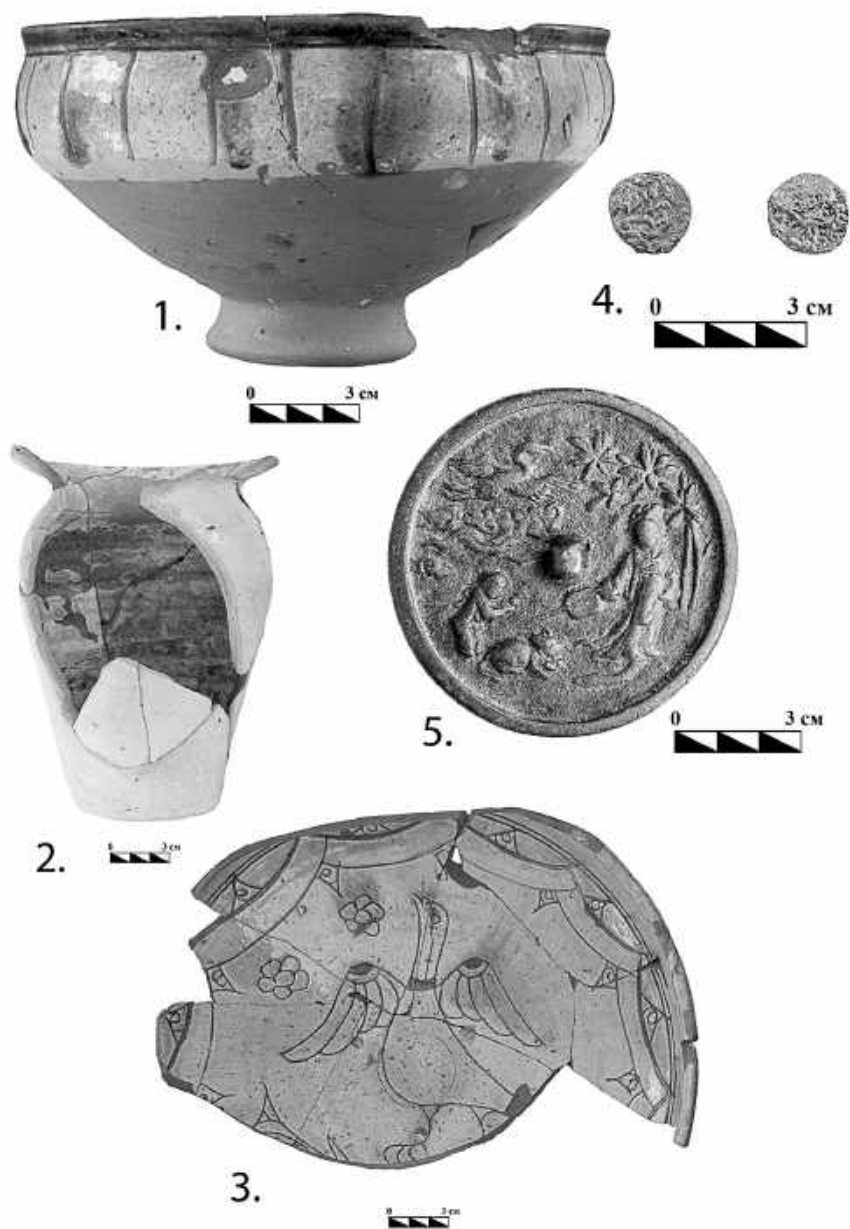


Fig. 3. Frontovoye 2. Finds from feature in CL-1



A unique finding is a fragment of a brown-glossed plate with a central medallion depicting a Roman emperor (Fig. 2, 5). Through its stylistics and iconography, the portrait resembles much the Roman emperor Tiberius, although perhaps it may be Octavian August.<sup>2</sup>

One of the features yielded fragments of an ancient terracotta depicting a character from the retinue of Dionysus, and in other object there was an anthropomorphic clay statuette depicting a Late-Scythian goddess. There were also many finds of Roman hinged fibulae of the Aucissa type which were encountered only in horizon CL-2 dated to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

The Golden Horde period is represented by 40 features found in horizon CL-1. These included household pits and pillar holes and yielded a considerable collection of coins of the 13<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> centuries (Fig. 3, 4) and glazed ware of the same time recovered from garbage pits (Fig. 3, 1–3). The numismatic collection gained includes also some coins of the Russian Empire under Alexander II and Alexander III. A unique find from this horizon is represented by a bronze Chinese mirror dated to the Jin Dynasty (1115–1234 (Fig. 3, 5).

There were only three features attributed to the Kizil-Koba culture. These were middens discovered only in the north-western part of the excavation. Only within this area, horizon CL-4 was recorded. The fill of feature no. 785 yielded a large handmade grey-clay earthen vessel ornamented with relief dots and garlands (Fig. 4) typical of the early stage of that culture.

object no.785

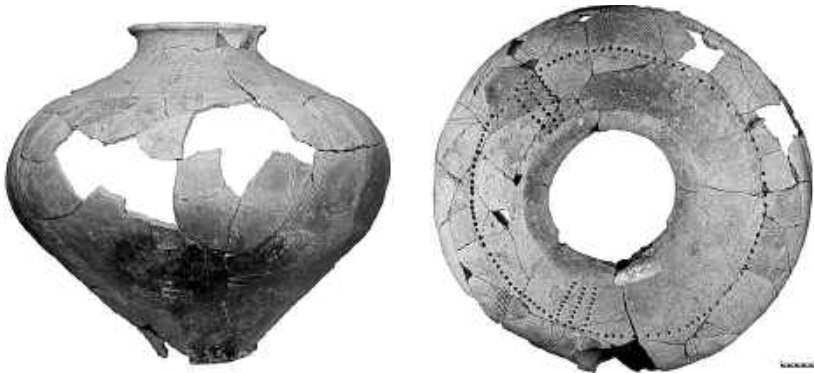


Fig. 4. Frontovoye 2. Handmade earthen vessel. Finds from feature in CL-4

<sup>2</sup> Vinokurov–Trejster 2013 [Н. И. Винокуров, М. Ю. Трейстер, “Портретные медальоны краснолаковых чаш I в. до н.э. – I в. н.э. на поселении Артезиан в Крымском Приазовье”]; Trejster 2014 [М. Ю. Трейстер, “Кто изображен на портретных медальонах из Пантикапея и Китея?”].

A preliminary conclusion is that two cultural levels (CL-2, CL-3) are identifiable at Frontovoye 2 dated to the chronological period of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC – 1<sup>st</sup> century AD indivisible before. After examination of all the complexes of the Classical period and attributing them to horizons CL-2 or CL-3 we shall be able to date them more exactly.

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