

# PONTIKA 2008

## Recent Research on the Northern and Eastern Black Sea in Ancient Times

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*S. Chandrasekaran*

## CHAPTER 8

# THE BLACK SEA COAST BETWEEN THE BOSPORAN KINGDOM AND COLCHIS

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*Abstract: The coastal area and the hinterland between the Bosporan Kingdom and Colchis of Antiquity is one of the more poorly researched regions of the Black Sea littoral, in spite of the fact that it is mentioned by a number of ancient authors, who refer to various Greek settlements and local tribes by name. Sites excavated along the coast include two larger Greek settlements – as well as some neighboring fortified agricultural settlements, all dating approximately from the 6th century BC to the 1st century AD, suggesting continuous Greek population. A number of settlements of the same dating have been investigated further south around modern Sochi. The material culture in both areas indicates trade with all surrounding regions, with an especially strong Bosporan influence to be found even as far south as the Sochi sites, where Colchian influence could also be felt. Scythian and Meotian finds in these settlement areas and Greek ones from various sites in the mountainous hinterland testify to the trade going on between the local tribes and the coastal Greek communities. However, the evidence is scant, and much of it (in Bata and Toricus) is submerged. Future research will therefore need to include coastal and underwater surveys.*

*Keywords: Bata, Caucasus, Colchis, Dioscurias, Eshera, fortifications, Gelendzhik, Novorossiisk, pirates, Toricus*

The dynamism of the Eastern Black Sea coast (Figure 1) in the Hellenistic period is relatively well-attested for the Kingdoms of the Bosphorus and Colchis. The region in between, however, has remained more or less lacking in terms of archaeological research, a situation that is slowly but surely being resolved. This lack of knowledge is mainly due to the topographical difficulties related to this area which make its archaeological investigation particularly tedious. Unlike the fertile steppes of the Bosporan Kingdom or the swampy Colchian valleys surrounded by mountains, the area in question is very mountainous, with little farming territory in between. The mountains often run right down to the sea, making the coastal area difficult to traverse. Natural harbors are small, few, and far between. This mountainous topography influenced the lifestyle here in the most direct fashion.

### Ancient sources

Ancient sources and archaeological material tell us that the Greeks encountered many local tribes during and after the settlement of the Eastern Black Sea region. Ancient authors, amongst them Herodotus, Pseudo-Scylax, Polybius, Strabo and Diodorus, speak of the Sindi, Kerketai, Toreti, Zygi, Heniochi, to name a few of these tribes.

The locals made quite an impression on the Greeks, as can be seen by their frequent characterization in Greek sources as warlike, a pirate menace, and as slave traders. Noteworthy in this connection is Diodorus' mention of the

Bosporan King Eumelos (20. 25. 2-3), who fought against the Heniochi, Taurians and Achians at the end of 4th century BC and rid the seas of pirates, for which he (the king) was highly praised, both in and outside his kingdom.

At the same time, however, the Greeks apparently knew how to work together with these so-called pirates and slave-traders: Strabo (11. 2. 12) notes that the Heniochi were in league with the Bosporan Kingdom, which provided them with markets for their goods. Polybius (4. 38. 4-6) writes that the Black Sea markets provided the best and richest amount of slaves.

Clearly, literary sources tend to propagate the 'fierce or unfriendly' reputation of the locals. And while archaeological evidence often supports this opinion, it nevertheless often demonstrates a certain level of collaboration and cooperation between Greeks and the 'fierce' locals.

### Cities, Settlements and Fortifications

Much of the available archaeological evidence points to defense against local tribes, exemplified by cities and fortifications situated along the borders of both the Bosporan Kingdom and Colchis (Figure 1). These borders are marked by the Bosporan city of Gorgippia in the north (present-day Anapa) and the Colchian city of Dioscurias (present-day Sukhumi) in the south. Both are situated at fine natural harbors. Just

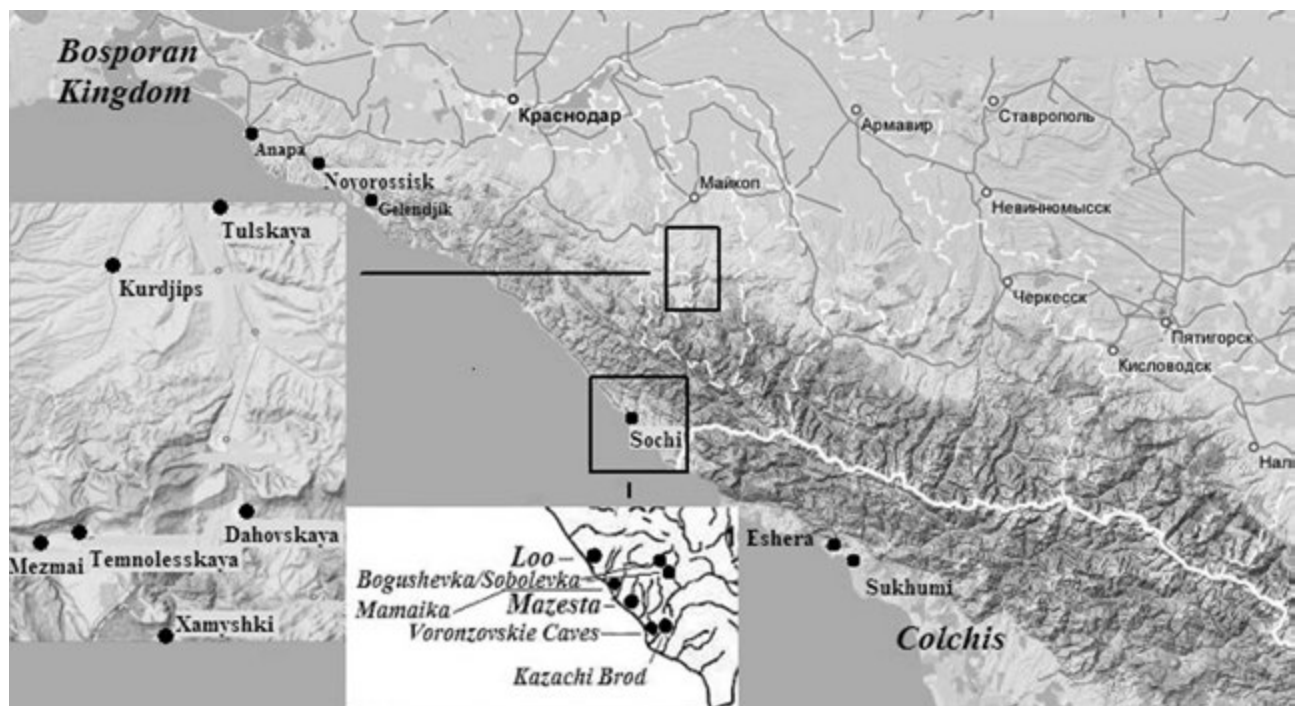


Figure 1. Map of the Western Caucasus between the Bosporean Kingdom and Colchis, with inlays of find sites

beyond Gorgippia and the known boundary of the Bosporean Kingdom, two further natural harbors can be observed – those of present-day Novorossiisk and Gelendzhik. These modern cities were identified by N. A. Onaiko (1984, 91) as the ancient cities of Bata and Toricus. Along with ancient Gorgippia/Sindica and Dioscurias, Bata and Toricus are mentioned with more or less frequency as port cities by ancient authors, but archaeological evidence remains relatively scarce, mostly because much of the ancient remains are submerged in the present-day bays or beneath the respective modern cities, leaving much work to be done to fully determine their internal structures.

#### *Novorossiisk*

Strabo (11. 2. 14) and Ptolemy (Geography 8. 25), amongst others, mention the ancient city of Bata and its location on Sindian territory. Remains of a city going back to the 6th-5th centuries BC and cultural layers from the Hellenistic period have been found in Novorossiisk in parts of the modern city and the bay area and described by N. A. Onaiko (1984, 91). A necropolis of the local population of the 6th-4th centuries BC has also been found, but the actual ancient city remains to be revealed. Parts of it lie under the fortress built by the Genoese or cemented beneath the modern city, parts are most likely submerged in the modern bay.

#### *Gelendzhik*

The situation at Gelendzhik is somewhat more informative. Onaiko (1984, 92-93) identified the present bay of Tonkii Mys as the ancient bay of Toricus mentioned by Ptolemy

(Geography 5. 8. 9), and thus the area with the city of Toricus, which is mentioned by Pseudo-Scylax (74). Various finds point to this being an area of permanent settlement (for example traces of metal processing). Onaiko identified a 1540m<sup>2</sup> stone building (Figure 2) dating to the 6th century BC with 21 rooms still preserved, providing living space for multiple families. There are no parallels for similar living quarters in the northern Black Sea area. It would seem that this city ceased to exist by the mid-5th century BC, perhaps as the result of barbarian attacks, and that Toricus was later founded in the depths of today's Gelendzhik Bay, where remains of a Hellenistic layer have been identified. Further observations remain pending on future underwater investigation and excavation.

#### *Dioscurias*

It should be noted that the situation in Dioscurias is quite similar to the above – ancient sources name it, but there is little archaeological material available at this time. Timosthenes of Rhodes (Pliny, *N. H.* 6. 5) and Strabo (11. 2. 16) describe Hellenistic Dioscurias as a Greek trading city, where representatives of 300 tribes gathered to do business. Archaeological material from Sukhumi and its bay points to permanent Hellenistic settlement with a necropolis close by. Nonetheless, much work remains to be done to identify the ancient city's infrastructure, which lies beneath the modern city and submerged in the bay. Studies of the bay have shown that the sea level here was at least 10m lower in ancient times (Gabelia 2003, 1222).

No material has been found from the 6th century BC period of Greek colonization (Erlikh 2006, 92).

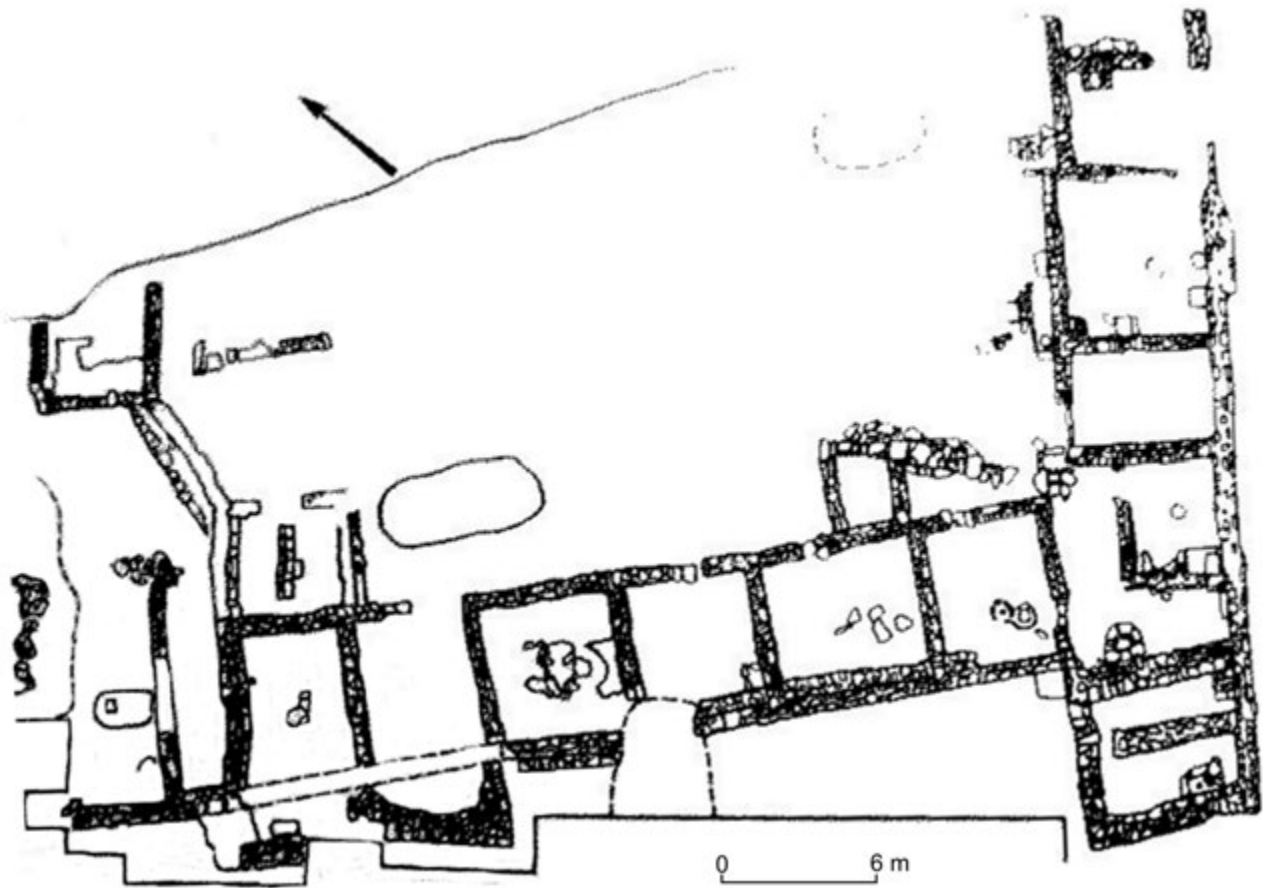


Figure 2. Toricus, fortified building (Onaiko 1984, Fig. LII, 13)

Unlike in the ancient cities proper, where much work remains to be done, a number of sites in their vicinity have been studied more successfully over the last few decades. These have revealed various settlements (Figure 3) and a number of fortifications (Figure 4). The settlements were situated both on the coast and further inland, and some of them date back to the 6th-5th centuries BC. As Onaiko has shown, such settlements were especially frequent in the Hellenistic period.

The fortifications uncovered here all date to the Hellenistic period. They tended to be situated further inland. Some of the better investigated ones include those at the present-day villages of Raevskoe, Vladimirovka and Tsem dolinsky.

#### *Raevskoe*

Excavations at the Raevskoe fortified settlement (Figure 5) have produced native Iron Age pottery and amphora sherds from the 6th century BC, as well as material from the Hellenistic period, but no material from the 5th-4th centuries BC has been found (Malyshev 2005, 174). The most significant finds here are the remains of a Hellenistic building excavated in the 50s and 60s of the last century. Figure 4 shows the remains of this 400m<sup>2</sup> fortified structure, of which two rooms and part of the *peristyle* courtyard have survived. One of these rooms

(room A) was 21m<sup>2</sup> with walls of substantial (1.2m) thickness (Onaiko and Dmitriev 1982, 112). Fragments of polychrome plaster, stone capitals and cornices, and plaster relief work were also found in the building (Onaiko 1984, 92). According to Onaiko (1967, 168), the building was originally constructed at the beginning of the 3rd century BC but destroyed around the turn of the 2nd century BC, following which the southern part of the building was removed to incorporate a new 1.4m thick fortification wall, which ran by the building described above and apparently made use of the already mentioned room A as a watchtower (Onaiko 1984, 92).

Recent excavations at Raevskoe carried out by Alexei Malyshev (2005) in 2002-04 further revealed the remains of a massive building complex of 1500m<sup>2</sup> with a defensive wall from the Hellenistic period. Malyshev (2005, 174) notes the low frequency of fire hearths inside the structures, together with the insubstantial quantity of finds in the cultural layer and the low phosphorus level, suggesting that the complex was only used seasonally. According to both excavators, the settlement was most likely founded to strengthen the Bosporan eastern borders. Its strategic importance is confirmed by its size, the solidity of its walls and its location on the Maskaga River flowing into the Anapa Liman. Amongst the finds was a stamped tile



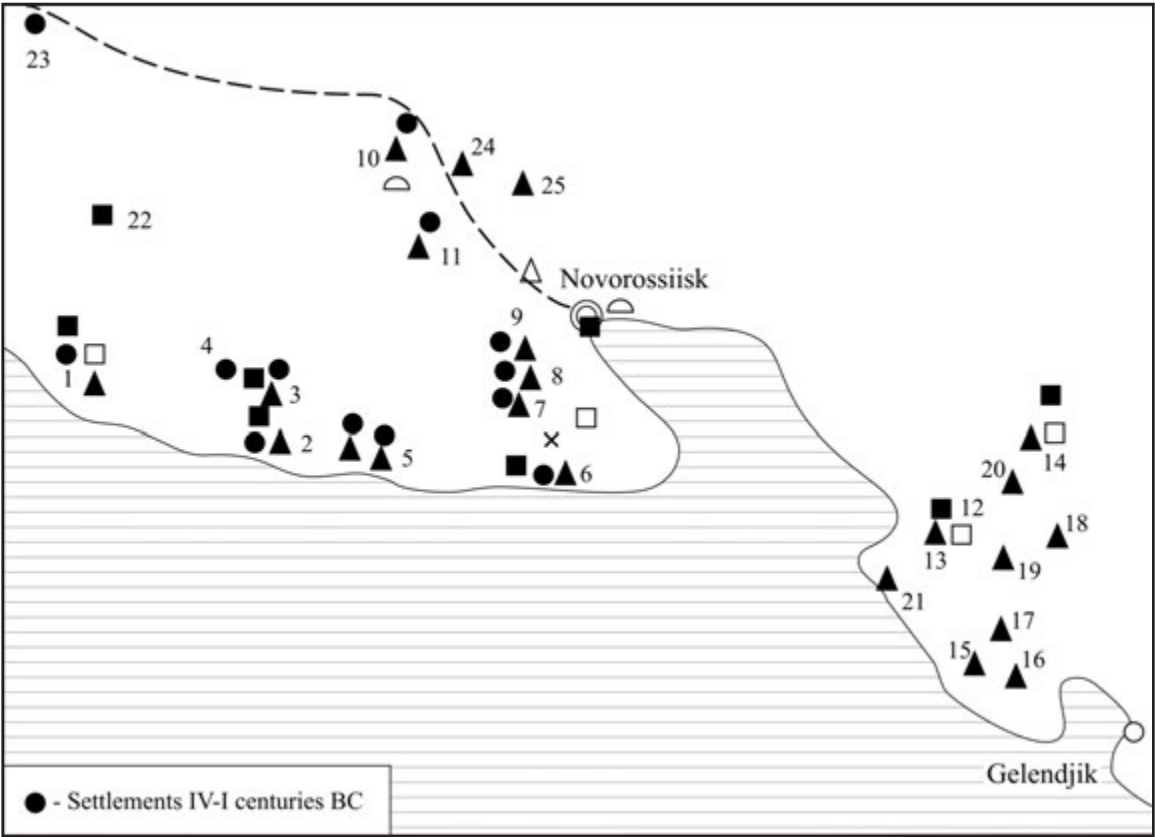


Figure 3. Settlements near Novorossiisk and Gelendzhik (after Onaiko 1984, Fig. XLIX,II)

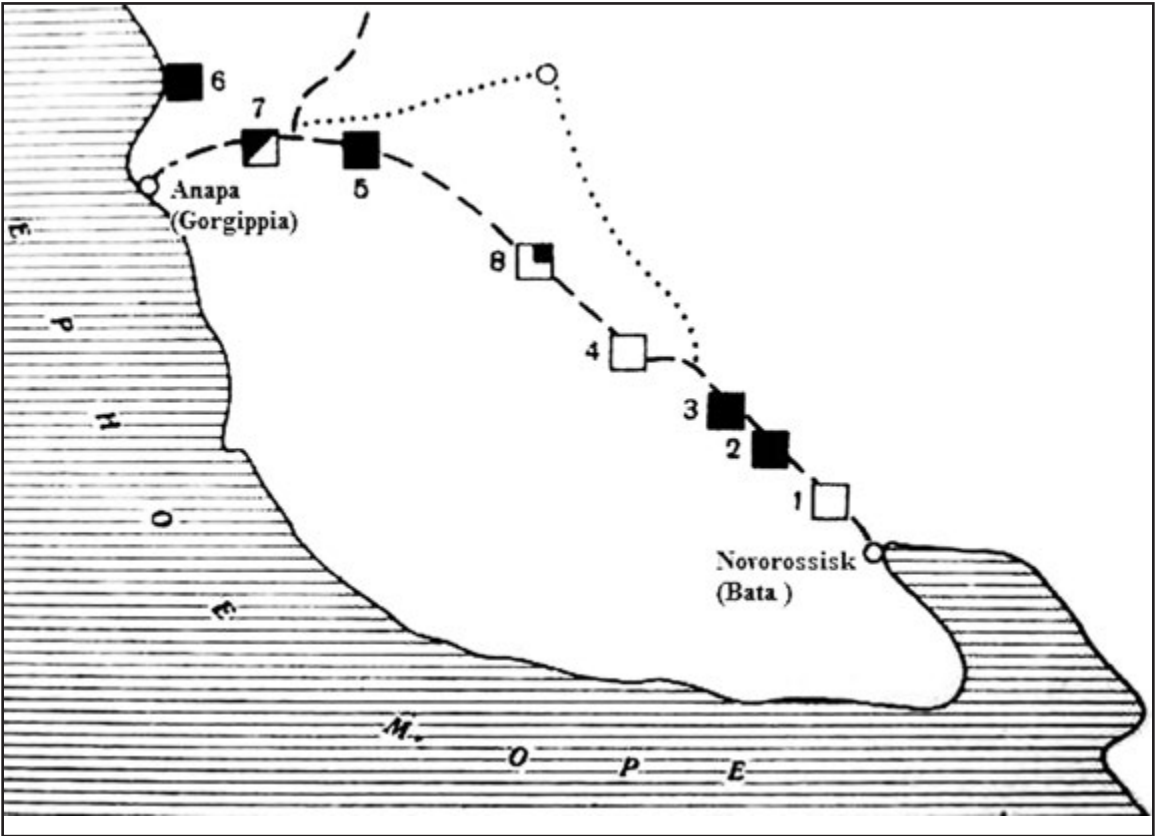


Figure 4. Fortified structures near Novorossiisk and Gelendzhik (after Onaiko 1982, Fig. 4)

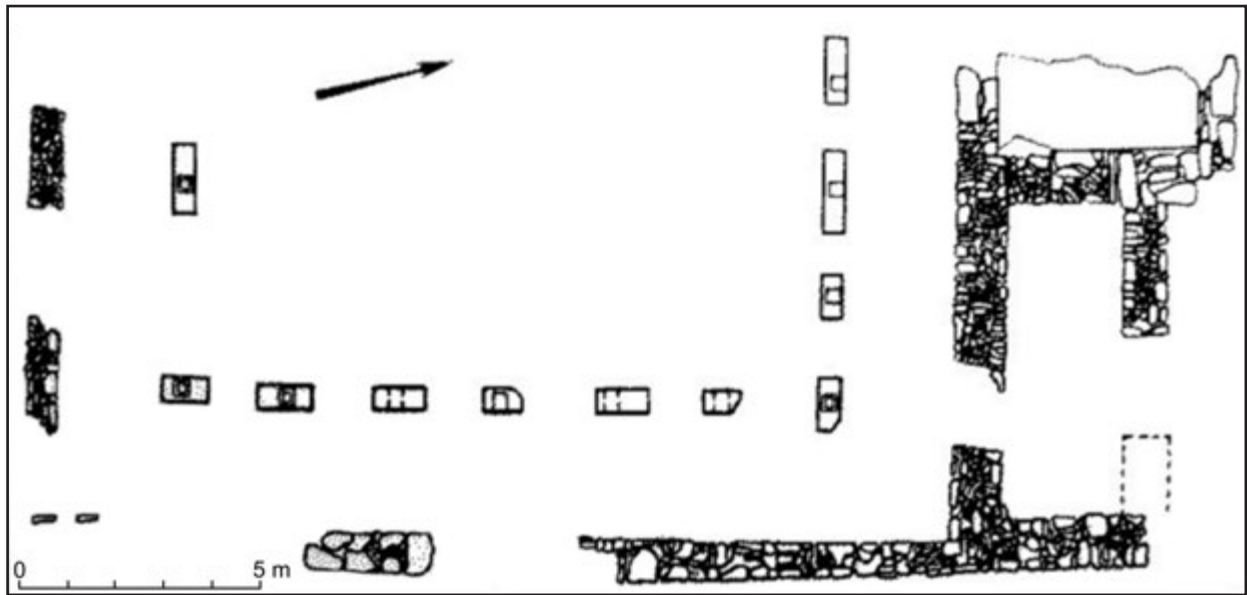


Figure 5. Raevskoe, fortified building (Onaiko 1984, Fig. LI,2)

with the name ‘EYMEAOY’, suggesting perhaps that King Eumelos was the founder of the city.

#### Vladimirovka

The fortified settlement at Vladimirovka was excavated in the 1960s (Onaiko 1984, 91). The defense structure found here (Figure 6) consisted of a 1-2-room rectangular building of 198m<sup>2</sup> with the corners facing the four points of the compass and an entrance from the southwest. Onaiko identified the construction style at the corners as typical for construction in the Crimea and the Taman peninsula: local sandstone using clay mortar and in some places yellow shells (Onaiko and Dmitriev 1982, 109). The building was constructed directly upon the bedrock or, in a few places, dug into it. The outer facade consisted of large carefully positioned blocks. The outer walls were up to 1.7m thick. Remains of inner walls were not found. The floor was earthen. The entire structure was part of a large fortified farming estate.

The scant finds from Vladimirovka include *pithoi*, amphorae and simple pottery. Unfortunately, the site could not be excavated completely due to the reservoirs and cisterns situated upon it (Onaiko and Dmitriev 1982, 107). Judging by the pottery finds, the building’s construction is to be placed somewhere around the turn of the 2nd century BC (Onaiko and Dmitriev 1982, 111) and its destruction by fire (Onaiko and Dmitriev, 1982, 109) in the 1st century AD.

#### Tsemdolinski

Approximately 3.5km south of Vladimirovka the fortified farming estate at Tsemdolinski was erected around the turn of 2nd century BC. The fortified structure (Figure 7) was a rectangular building of 212m<sup>2</sup> consisting of carefully

laid out walls and two rooms. The actual construction was more complex than at Vladimirovka: due to the soft ground, the entire structure was built upon a solid foundation of up to 0.35m in height consisting of large blocks laid out without mortar. The outer walls alone were up to 1.6m thick and, together with the foundation, 2m thick. Remains of inner walls, c. 1.3m thick, were also found (Onaiko and Dmitriev 1982, 109). The entrance, as in Vladimirovka, was slightly blocked from view by a semicircular tower-like construction from the southwest side.<sup>1</sup> Remains of flooring were also identified: stone panels in one room, pebbles in the other (Onaiko and Dmitriev 1982, 109).

Like Vladimirovka, the Tsemdolinsky structure was also constructed around the turn of the 2nd century BC (Onaiko and Dmitriev 1982, 111) and destroyed by fire around the turn of the eras (Onaiko and Dmitriev 1982, 121). Finds from Tsemdolinski included glass and glass paste beads that had melted in the fire. Interestingly, there was little pottery (Onaiko and Dmitriev 1982, 109).

#### Other nearby fortifications

Another building similar to Raevskoe was found between Raevskoe and Vladimirovka, but, unfortunately, it was not completely excavated (Onaiko and Dmitriev 1982, 112-113).

Other similar structures have been found in this area (Onaiko and Dmitriev 1982, 112). One, on the outskirts of Gorgippia, is a rectangular building of 100m<sup>2</sup> and 1.5m thick outer walls. Another one of similar size has been

<sup>1</sup> Remains of another semicircular construction (3.6m radius) – perhaps a round tower – were also found here during earlier excavations conducted by V. I. Sizov. Unfortunately, these excavations were not completed and the results insufficiently documented (Onaiko and Dmitriev 1982, 121).



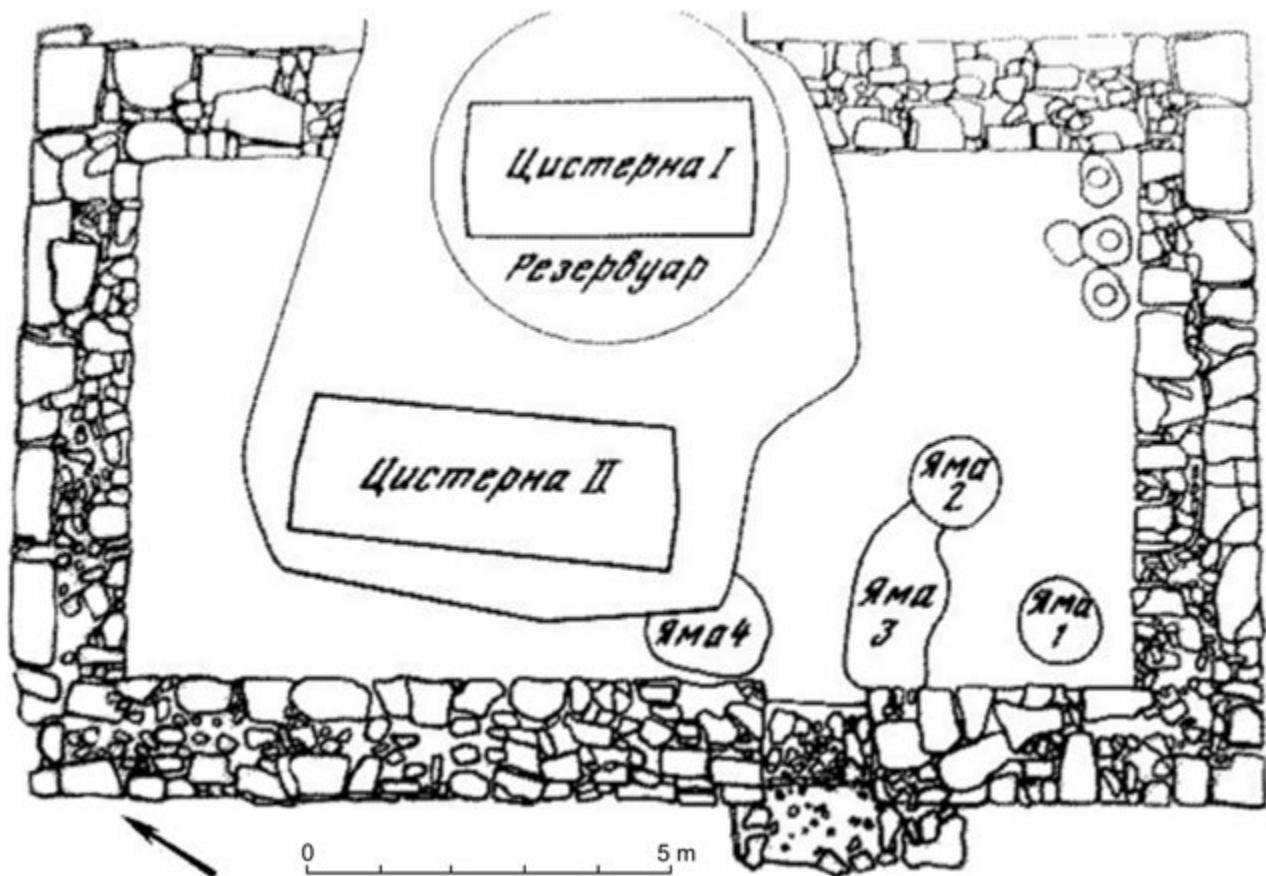


Figure 6. Vladimirovka, fortified building (Onaiko 1984, Fig. L,1)

studied at the Voskresenski poselok near Gorgippia. It was constructed in the 3rd century BC and consisted of two rooms and a corridor. The walls were 1.3m thick. It was probably destroyed in the 1st century BC or the beginning of the 1st century AD. A further such building, which existed between the 2nd century BC and the 1st century AD, was found at Rassvet Hutor. It occupied 150m<sup>2</sup>, 176m<sup>2</sup> including the outer walls, and had two rooms and a staircase. The 1.5m thick walls were later strengthened to a thickness of 3m.

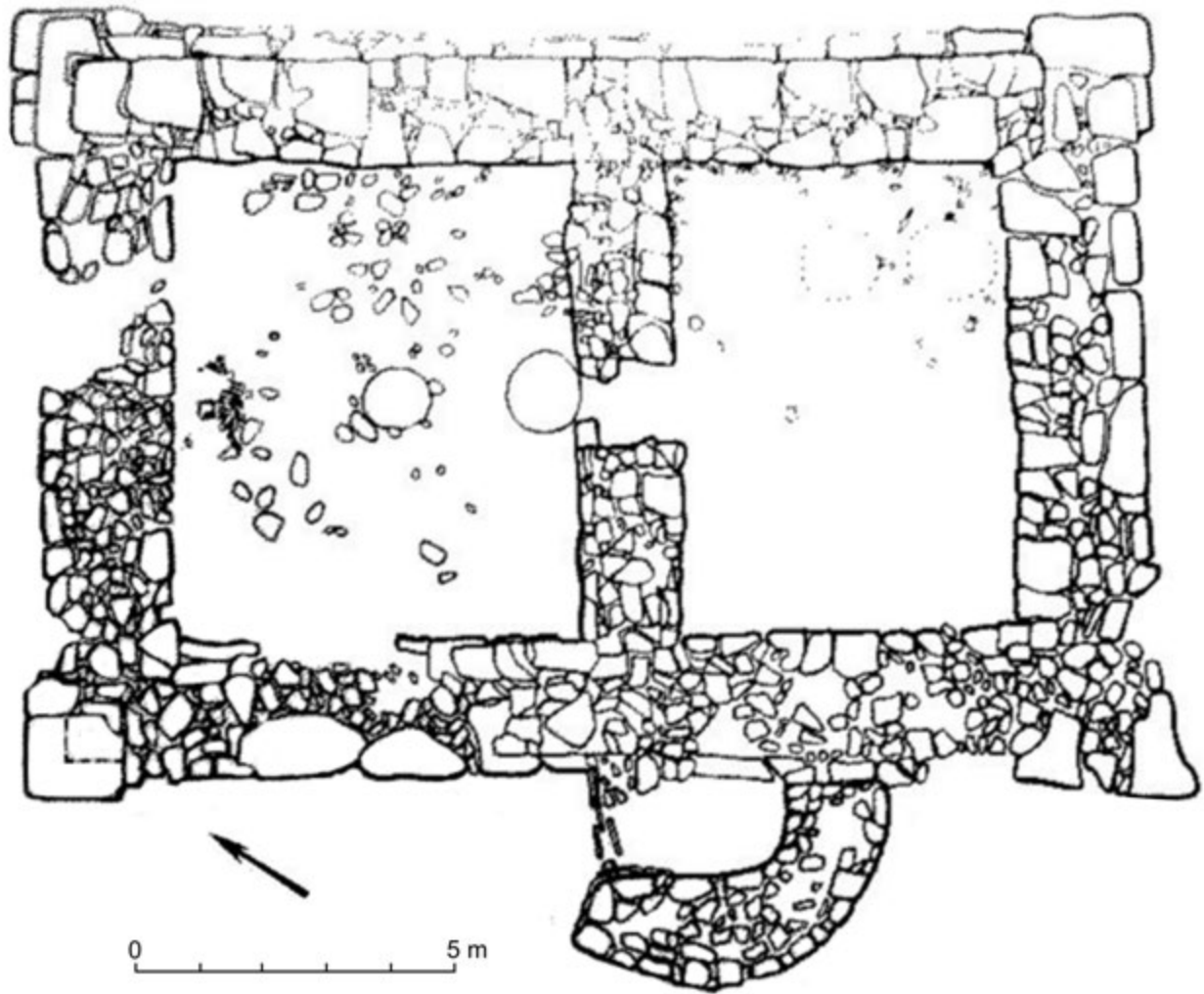
V. Dolgorukov (1984, 87-88) describes the Semibratnee fortified settlement further away to the northeast of Anapa in the modern village of Gostagaevskaia/Varennikovskaia. The settlement, identified as ancient Labrys or Aborace, dates back to the end of the 6th century BC. The earliest fortification walls with square towers were constructed around the beginning of the 5th century BC and survived until their destruction towards the end of the 4th century BC. Subsequent fortifications were constructed in the 3rd century BC, as was a reinforced building similar to those mentioned above, with strengthened walls, the outer ones c. 1.7m thick and the inner ones c. 1.4m (Onaiko and Dmitriev 1982, 111). It consisted of five rooms covering an area of approximately 400m<sup>2</sup>.<sup>2</sup> Even further away, on

the Taman peninsula, a similar building served as the fortified residence of the Hellenized Sarmatian chief Chrysaliskos (Dolgorukov 1984, 87). Built at the turn of the 2nd/1st century BC, this 300m<sup>2</sup> building constructed on a massive foundations had outer walls 1.65m thick and inner walls of 1.3m thickness (Onaiko and Dmitriev 1982, 111). It too was destroyed by fire towards the end of the 1st century BC.

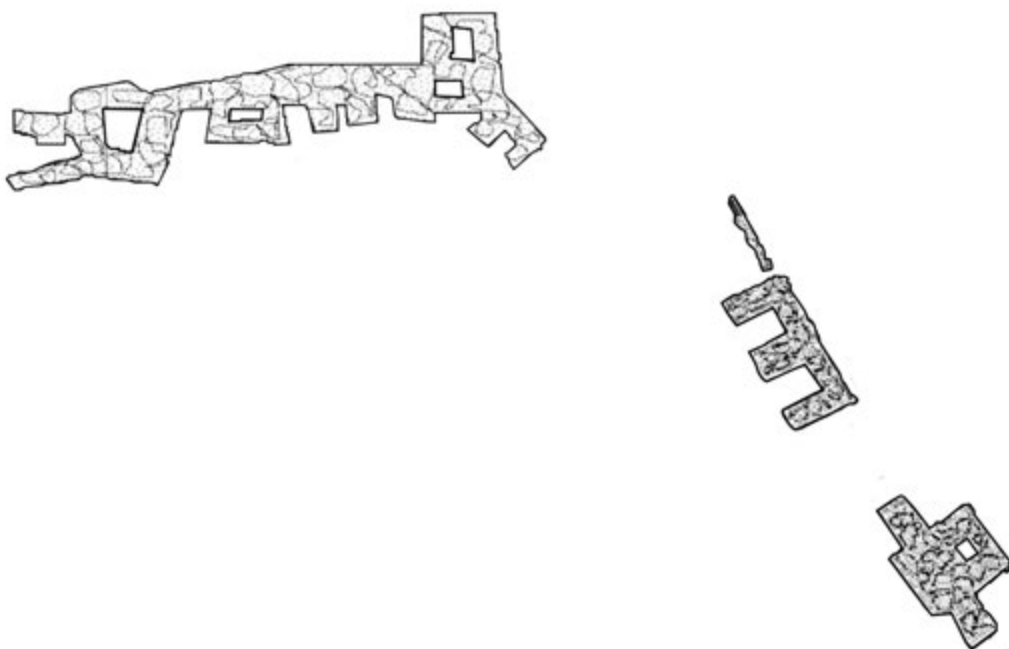
#### Eshera

A somewhat similar situation can be seen at the northern Colchian border, shown in Figure 1. Figure 8 shows the ancient fortified complex at Eshera, some 10km north of Sukhumi (ancient Dioscurias). Excavations at the site began in the late 1960s under Georgi Shamba. Work here revealed an ancient settlement of c. 4ha dating back to the 6th century BC, as well as signs of even earlier habitation in the vicinity. Following the settlement's demise at the beginning of the 5th century BC, it was used as a necropolis. Hellenistic fortifications appeared in the 2nd century BC (Voronov 1972, 104; Erlikh 2006, 90), constructed on top of earlier structures. Their walls were some 1.5-2m thick and interspersed with watchtowers (at least six), with rooms between these for the guards. The settlement and fortifications were destroyed in a great fire in the 1st century BC. Although no other such fortifications are known on

<sup>2</sup> V. D. Blavatskii (1961, 216) notes the local (i.e. Sindian) architectural elements of the building's structure.



*Figure 7. Tsem dolinski, fortified building (Onaiko 1984, Fig. LI,12)*



*Figure 8. Eshera fortifications (after Eshera topoplan, courtesy of V. Erlikh)*

Colchian territory, it is quite possible that they existed and simply await discovery.

The examples above testify to the necessity of defensive structures in the north, which, judging by the Semibratnee fortifications, must go back at least to the 5th century BC. The Sindians were defending themselves from Scythian attacks long before being annexed by the Bosporan Kingdom. The need for defense heightened in the 2nd century BC, a time of acute economic and political upheaval that was exploited by the Scythians.

Most of these fortifications were erected as part of farming estates (Onaiko and Dmitriev 1982, 111). Diodorus Siculus (20. 23) mentions a fortified residence with high towers belonging to a certain Ariparnes, ruler of one of the Kuban tribes. Such watchtowers could be used for refuge in times of trouble and otherwise as granaries. Their local design remained basically unchanged over the centuries, and Onaiko and Dmitriev (1982, 116) notes that the majority were constructed around the same time, indicating government involvement. The Vladimirovka, Tsemolinski and Chrisaliskos structures were possibly set up during, or as a result of, the dramatic happenings that ultimately led Perisades V to bequeath his kingdom to Mithridates in the last decade of the 1st century BC (Gajdukevič 1971, 303-332). The destruction of most of these sites can be tied in with the equally tumultuous period during the reign of Asander or his son Aspurgos towards the end of the 1st century BC and in the early 1st century AD – a time of internal strife and conflict with both the neighboring Scythians and Rome (Gajdukevič 1971, 334-339).

Particularly interesting is the line formed by the defensive sites from Anapa down to Novorossiisk, connecting ancient Gorgippia with what was probably its nearest port at Bata in order to protect the lands behind it. While the port city defenses provided protection from attacks by sea, those in between seem more likely to have addressed attacks from the interior.

The situation in Colchis was somewhat different. Even though the fortifications at Eshera attest to the necessity of defending the northern border, these are the only ones known to us in the Dioscurias area from the period in question. While archaeological evidence is still pending, it is quite likely that the nearby mountains were enough of a barrier to possible enemies, and that Eshera's location in the foothills was enough to secure the exits from the mountain passes into Dioscurias.

#### **Coastal sites between the kingdoms**

The coastal stretch between the kingdoms (Figure 1) has not been studied nearly as intensively as the kingdoms themselves. In spite of this, and the fact that there is little evidence pointing to permanent settlements in this area, archeology does reveal lively activity here.

The lower inlay in Figure 1 shows a number of sites in the Sochi area where chance finds were recovered, mainly from damaged burials and some cultural layers. These point to prolonged habitation of the area. Most of these finds were compiled by Iuri Voronov in 1979. However, there is some newer material from current excavations, and more can be expected.

These settlements and burials are located in the vicinity of the Mzymta River (Figure 14) and the Kudepsta and Psou Rivers, also located closely.

#### *Mamaika*

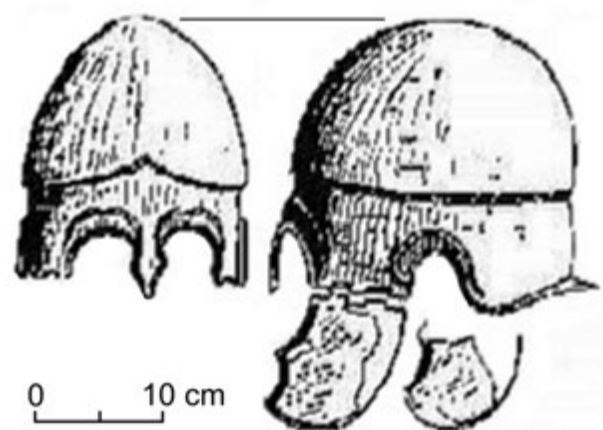
Finds from the Mamaika site (Figure 1, lower inlay; Voronov 1979, 64-66), at the mouth of the Mamaika River, point to a Greek trading settlement founded by the Bosporans that existed from the 6th century BC onwards. Pottery finds date to the 6th-4th centuries BC, relief bowls and statuettes to the 2nd century BC. The statuettes are probably of Bosporan manufacture. The Romans later erected a defensive tower structure at the river mouth.

#### **Other settlements**

Evidence from other settlements in the Sochi area is more fragmentary, consisting mainly of pottery. These include an amount of locally made Greek pottery of the 3rd-1st centuries BC of a type well-known in the Dioscurias area and other Eastern Black Sea centres.

#### *Bogushevka/Sobolevka*

Burial complexes at the villages of Bogushevka and Sobolevka (Figure 1, lower inlay; Voronov 1979, 64) brought forth interesting finds, including weapons, jewelry, beads and an imported Attic helmet (Figure 9) at Bogushevka.



*Figure 9. Bogushevka, helmet (after Voronov 1979, Fig. 33)*



### *Kazachi Brod*

This important site (Figure 1, lower inlay; Raev 2006, 304) on the Mzymta River was recently excavated and identified as a shrine, erected upon an artificially leveled terrace along a slope. A similar site is known in the Crimean Gurguz saddle, also erected on the flatter part of a slope and thus connected to the mountain system. Finds include swords, spearheads and a helmet as well as Late Hellenistic silver vessels. Similar examples have been found in other parts of the Sochi area, for example in a damaged burial at Loo and a burial in Mazesta.

### *Great Vorontsovskaya Cave*

This cave (Figure 1, lower inlay; Voronov 1979, 64) yielded an iron bracelet and other finds of the Classical/Hellenistic periods. It was probably used as a refuge by traders moving towards the mountain passes, as well as by locals.

### *Psou*<sup>3</sup>

Construction of the 2014 Olympic village will provide a good opportunity for archaeological investigation of the area near the village of Psou, just south of Sochi. In last summer, for example, surveys were carried out in Iremetinskaya Nizmennost, close to Psou, revealing the remains of small settlements. At present, we await publication of this material as well as further material from the other sites affected by construction work.

Clearly, evidence is sporadic and fragmentary, and no structural remains have yet been discovered. Nonetheless, this stretch of coastline was lined with settlements, and Mamaika was most likely a main trading post. The small and relatively unprotected natural harbors along this stretch would seem to support only smaller, insubstantial settlements of this kind. The comparatively low frequency of finds might point to the seasonal or makeshift nature of these settlements. We must however await additional material to fully interpret their permanence and function. As with Novorossiisk and Gelendzhik, investigation of Sochi Bay will probably produce new evidence, as would investigation beneath the present-day city.

The pottery and weapon finds mentioned above are indicative of trade in these parts.

We have already spoken of the locals' piratical reputation. Strabo (11. 2. 12) describes them as inhabitants of the coastal region beyond Sindica, in other words the region in question, who used narrow light boats to attack merchant ships or even towns and settlements. No doubt some of these were the settlements of which we have already observed traces. It is equally possible that places such as the Vorontsovskaya cave served as a refuge or hideout for the so-called pirates (Voronov 1979, 64).

The number of settlements and burials identified in the Sochi area alone suggests a similar pattern further north and further south. However, much work needs to be done in both directions, for example in Pitsunda, generally identified with the ancient city of Pityus. No remains earlier than the 2nd century AD have been discovered there.

### **Mountain sites and passes**

Let us now turn to the mountainous hinterlands of this region, indicated in Figure 1. Chance finds and excavations over the years indicate activity in the mountains at Tulskaia, Kurdzhips, Dakhovskaia, Temnolesskaia, Mezmai and Khamyshki, all shown in the upper inlay of Figure 1.

### *Temnolesskaia*

Chance finds include the Temnolesskaia helmet (Figure 10; Ditler 1964, 315; Chernenko 2006, No. 575) found in the vicinity of the three kurgans located some 3.5km away from Stanitsa Temnolesskaia on the terraces of the mountain slopes. The helmet itself was found outside the second kurgan, buried some 30cm deep in the clayey ground. The find circumstances can possibly be interpreted as a votive offering of the kind known to the Celts from the Bronze Age on – helmets found in rivers and other bodies of water. Ditler and others date the Temnolesskaia helmet to the 4th century BC based on its general similarity to others found in this mountain region.

### *Dakhovskaia*

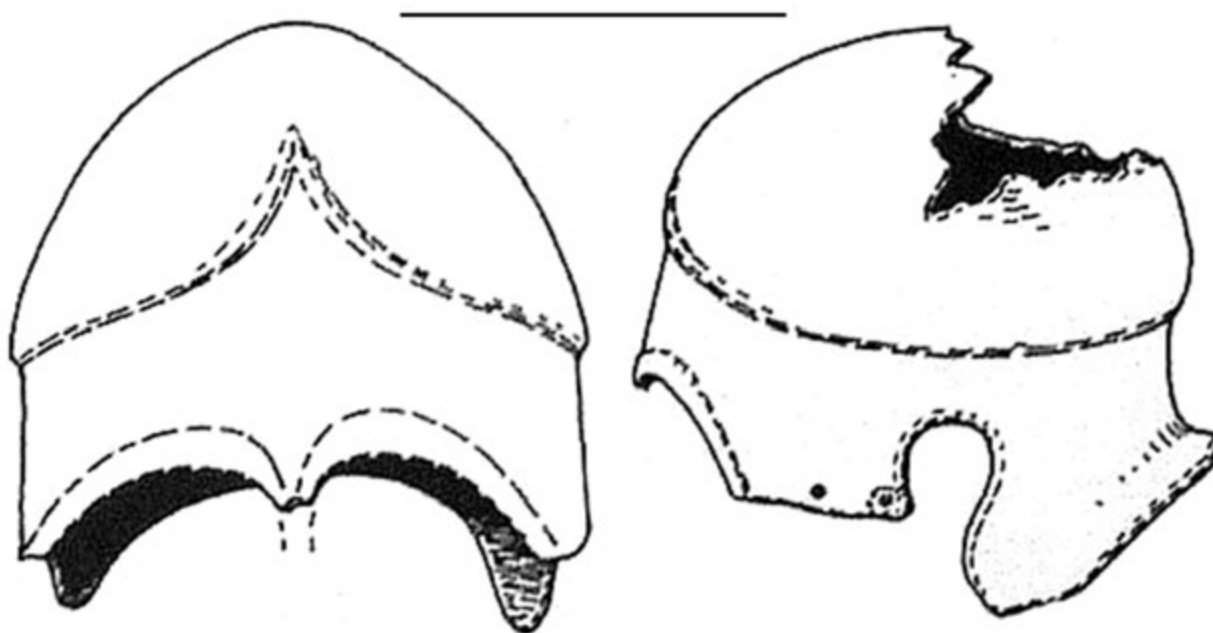
Two further helmets were found by chance near Dakhovskaia by the Belaia River. Only one (Figure 11) is somewhat completely preserved (Chernenko 2006, No. 612). While it cannot be assigned to a particular type, V. R. Erlikh (1996) has convincingly argued that it is not a Greek or Etrurian import but of local manufacture in imitation of imported types, and dates to the 3rd-1st centuries BC.

### *Mezmai*

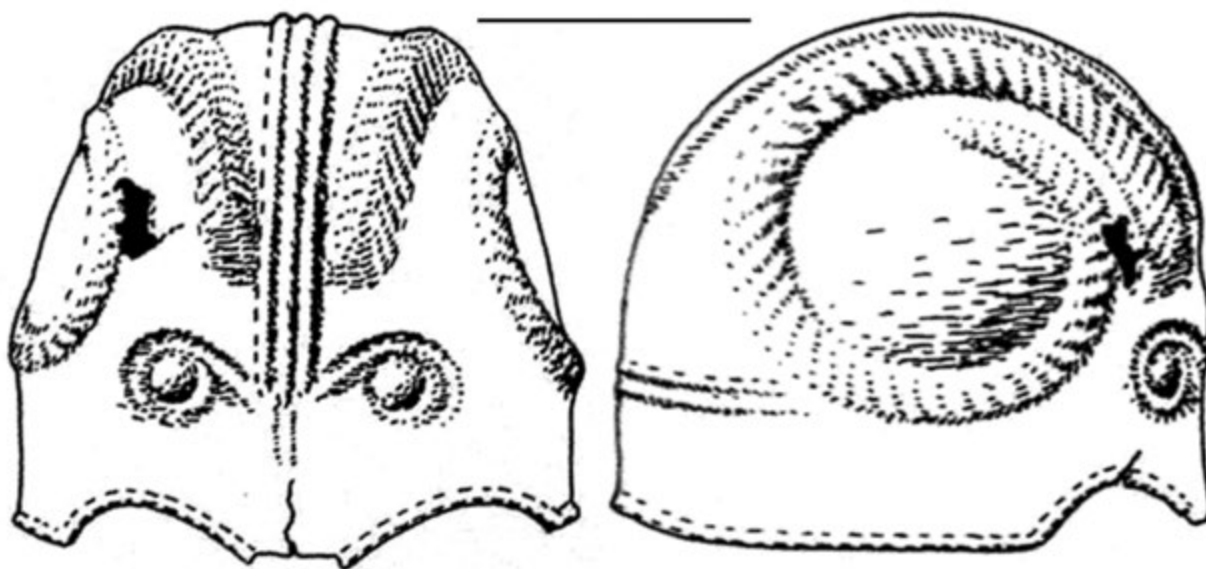
This site has produced a number of chance finds of helmets, one of which is of the so-called 'Attic' type (Figure 12; Chernenko 2006, No. 576). It was found together with two Roman swords and other items in a small kurgan of the Roman period during agricultural work close to Mezmai. The helmet's surface was silver-plated and one cheekpiece still preserved. The helmet is dated to the 4th century BC on account of its similarity to similar finds in the area.

Similar items also come from kurgan burials. These include yet another 'Attic' helmet like the one above but with missing cheekpieces. It was found in the Zolotaia Gorka kurgan near Tulskaia (Chernenko 2006, No. 577) and is also dated to the 4th century BC. In the Kurdzhips kurgan, published by Galanina (1980), yet another three 'Attic'

<sup>3</sup> I would like to thank Dr Vladimir Erlikh for providing me with information concerning recent survey activity near Psou.



*Figure 10. Temnolesskaia, helmet (Chernenko 2006, Fig. 575)*



*Figure 11. Dakhovskaia, helmet (Chernenko 2006, Fig. 612)*

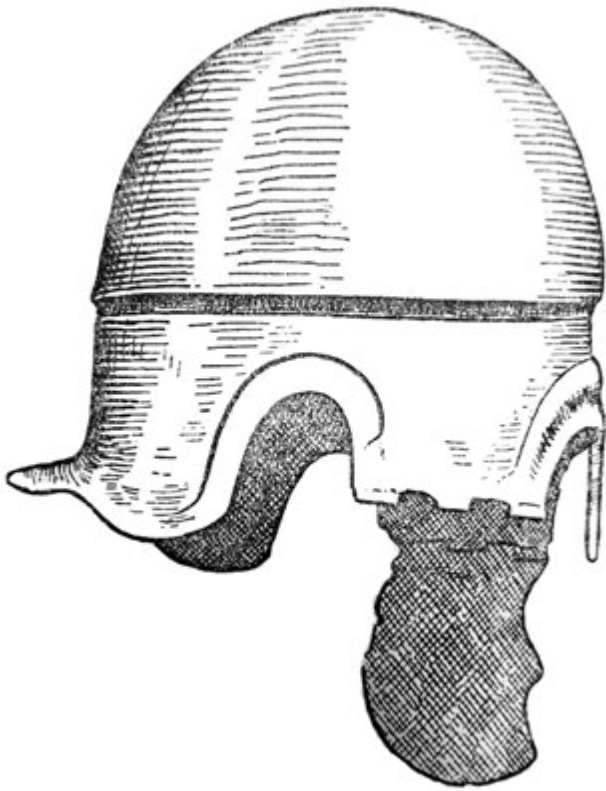


Figure 12. Mezmai, helmet (Chernenko 2006, Fig. 576)

helmets were found together with the remains of shield-plating and at least three pairs of greaves. The greaves are of the Northern Black Sea type, and some show signs of reuse. Helmets and greaves are dated to the 4th century BC.

#### Khamyshki

The 27cm diameter silver *phiale* shown in Figure 13 (Ksenofontova 2005) <sup>4</sup> was found in Khamyshki – the exact find details remain unknown. The *phiale* is marked by an *omphalos* in the center, around which the entire surface is decorated with embossed and engraved ornaments and figures. The figures form four Dionysiac scenes. The surface was originally covered to some extent with a thin layer of gold-plating, now lost. The *phiale* is probably of Attic manufacture and dates to the turn of the 5th century BC.

It is interesting to note imported items amongst these finds: helmets, weapons and metal vessels. The chance finds at Temnolesskaia and Dakhovskaia, considered together with those of the shrine at Kazachi Brod, show the importance of ritual offerings in this region and emphasize their importance to the locals moving through these mountains.

How were these items acquired? Perhaps through trade, perhaps as pirate booty. Either way, they clearly moved

through the mountains, and their find spots emphasize the use of mountain passes.

Movement across the Caucasus mountains is noted by ancient authors. They mention the passes cutting through the main Caucasian ridge. Appian (12. 15. 102) calls such passes the ‘Scythian gates, which had never been passed by anyone before’. In recent years, archeologists have paid closer attention to the Caucasus mountain passes. Alexander Skakov (2006) notes that such passes were already in use in the Early Iron Age from the 8th-6th centuries BC, and most of them are still in use today. Boris Raev has beautifully mapped out the Western Caucasus passes, shown in Figure 14, and convincingly named the major routes that were probably in use.

One could travel along the Shakhe River to the Belaya and Kurdzhips Rivers or take the more comfortable route along the Mzymta River to the Great Laba. These routes would bring the trader or traveller to the Kuban midstream, the Azov region and the Bosporan Kingdom. While the coastal route would be the shorter way to the latter two destinations, the mountain route was much more convenient (Raev 2006, 306).

Travel from Colchis to the upper Kuban or eastern Kuban region was best carried out along the Kodori or one of the neighbouring rivers. From here one could travel further to the Lower Don region along the Kuban, Yegorlik and Manych Rivers.

Let us return to Strabo’s account (11. 2. 12), where he describes how these ‘pirates’ conceal their boats in the trees and set out to wander on foot, day and night, in order to kidnap people to sell into slavery or for ransom. This would make sense, for the imported items we have seen above needed to be paid for in some form, and it is very unlikely that the locals would bring huge amounts of grain or other heavy goods through the mountains. Slaves would be the most sensible commodity, as they could be easily led to through the mountains to or from the boats at makeshift harbors and trade points along the coast. The settlements at the Lower Don, in the Azov area, the Bosporan Kingdom and at the Colchian border would have provided good markets for slaves and pirated goods. And, as already mentioned, Polybius (4. 38. 4-6) writes that the Black Sea markets provided the best and richest amount of slaves.

#### Conclusion

As we have seen, conditions were quite turbulent in the area between the Bosporan Kingdom and Colchis in the Hellenistic period. On the one hand, fortifications at the borders and fortified estates outside them confirm the literary evidence of constant threats from, and conflict with, neighboring tribes. On the other hand, settlement sites along the coastline beyond the kingdoms, combined with random find sites in the mountainous hinterland, suggest small trading ports and routes through the mountains,

<sup>4</sup> I would like to thank Dr Vladimir Erlikh for informing me of this publication.





Figure 13. Khamyshki, phiale (Photo courtesy of V. Erlikh)

perhaps used by the pirates of ancient lore for kidnapping and slave-trading.

Finally, it is important to mention the intensive construction currently going on in and around Sochi, including the sites we have already spoken of, in preparation for the 2014 Olympics. This will include highway construction along the coastline from the Russian border all the way up to Dzhugba. Archaeological survey that is to accompany this construction work may well reveal a mass of new and important material at sites hitherto unstudied, and help complete our knowledge of the ancient infrastructure of this region.

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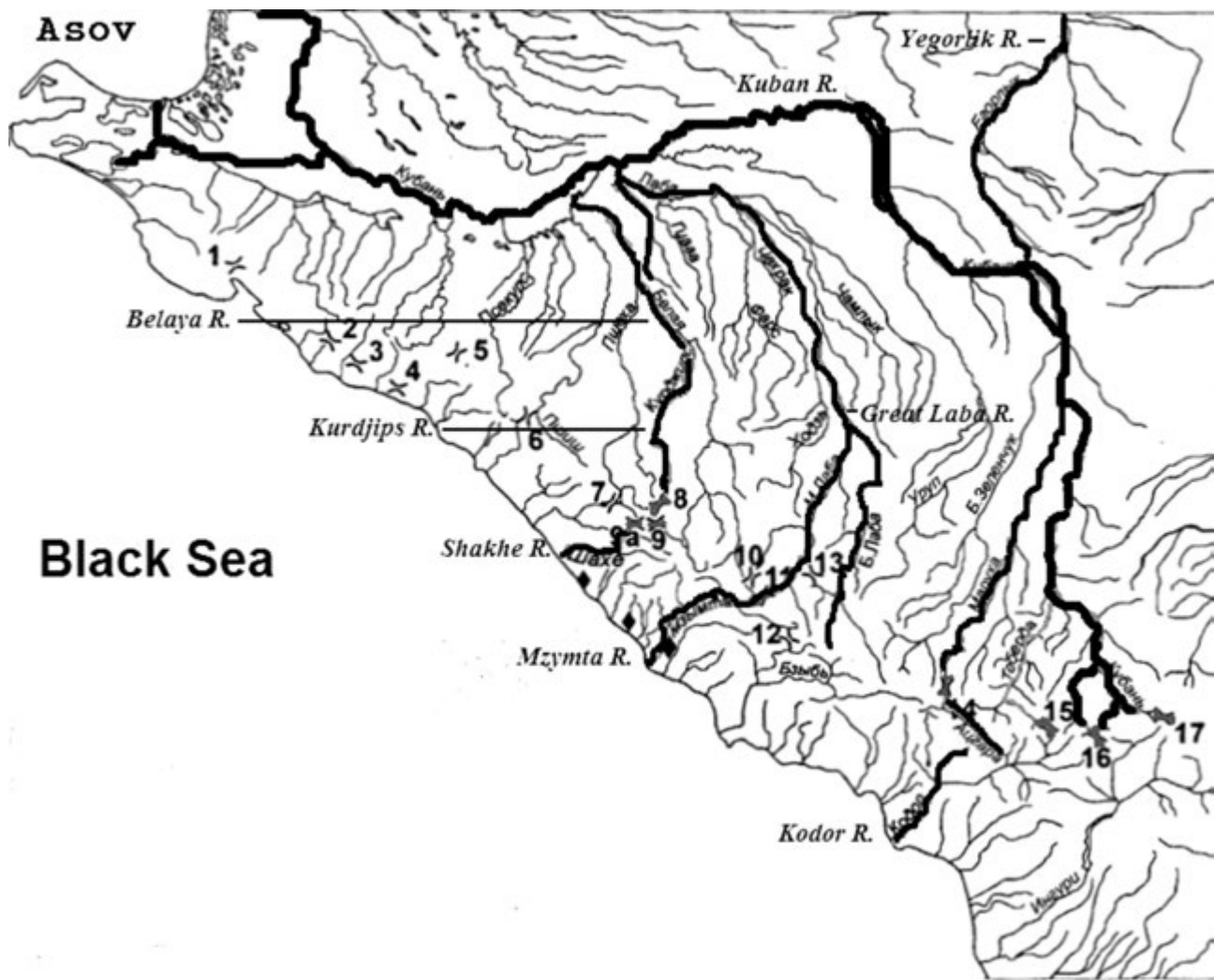


Figure 14. Map of mountain routes and passes (after Raev 2006, Fig. 1). The numbers 1-17 indicate the mountain passes

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