

INVESTIGATIONS ON  
THE BEREZAN ISLAND, 2006–2013  
(Hermitage Museum Archaeological Mission)

An archaeological mission, established more than fifty years ago (in 1962) by the State Hermitage museum in collaboration with Ukrainian archaeologists, continues to carry out systematic complex research of the Berezan island site. The Berezan settlement, probably ancient Borysthene, today located on a small island in the Black Sea close to the estuary of Dnepr and S. Bug rivers, is an important archaeological site, considered one of the first archaic Greek colonies in the North Pontic region. While the previous article<sup>1</sup> was dedicated to the results of the excavations undertaken at sector “O” in the North-Eastern part of the island in the field season 2005, the present one contains a brief overview of the main outcome of the subsequent years (2006–2013).

The excavations, undertaken in the course of the above mentioned period, unearthed a significant part of the built-up area of the archaic town.<sup>2</sup> Uncovered architectural remains belong to various periods of the settlement’s existence: most of them are dated to the Archaic and Classical periods (from the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> up to the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC). These works provided the possibility to clarify the urban planning of the archaic Borysthene (see Fig. 1). Below are listed several structures of significant interest.

A very significant complex of late Archaic buildings was excavated in the Western part of the sector “O” (Fig. 1, sector no. 9, tagged by the letters “B” and “C”). It included at least two houses of similar size and layout. Both of these buildings emerged in the late 6<sup>th</sup> or early 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, and existed approximately up to the second quarter of

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<sup>1</sup> D. Chistov, “Archaeological Investigations of the Hermitage Expedition on Berezan Island in 2005”, *Hyperboreus* 11: 2 (2005) 287–291.

<sup>2</sup> The main results of the campaigns 2005–2009 are published in Russian in the 2<sup>nd</sup> volume of the “Materials of the Berezan expedition”: Chistov, Zuev, Ilyina, Kasparov, Novoselova 2012 [Д. Е. Чистов, В. Ю. Зуев, Ю. И. Ильина, А. К. Каспаров, Н. Ю. Новоселова, *Материалы Березанской (Нижнебугской) античной археологической экспедиции. II. Исследования на острове Березань в 2005–2009 гг.*].

the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>3</sup> Structure 1 (Fig. 2) had an almost rectangular ground plan ( $11.45 \times 11.30$  m). The Northern part of the building was divided into two rooms of unequal size (the Eastern one had a square of  $16.32 \text{ m}^2$ , the Western one –  $26.68 \text{ m}^2$ ); the rooms were divided by an internal wall (Fig. 2), which was built on prepared foundation, and definitely had no doorway. The Eastern and Western rooms therefore had no connection. The Southern compartment had no Southern wall. Apparently it was a roofed gallery, a porch, bordered by long antae from the West and the East, although there were no clear traces of column bases found during the excavations between the antae.

At a distance of 5.4 meters to the West from the abovementioned building the Structure 2 was uncovered (Fig. 3). The layout features of this building and its orientation are almost identical to the Structure 1. The second building also has a rectangular ground plan ( $12.4 \times 10.2$  m), with the internal part of the house again being divided into two rooms of unequal size, but in this case the Eastern compartment was the largest one ( $6.60 \times 5.10$  m, i. e.  $33.6 \text{ m}^2$ ). A curious feature of the structures no. 1 and 2 therefore is their mirror reflected layout: the biggest square room was located on the Western side of the first building and on the Eastern side of the second one. The Southern compartment of the Structure 2, also opened to the South, contained remains of stone constructions, which can be interpreted as bases for wooden posts. This discovery confirms the reconstruction of this compartment as a portico between two antae, and also gives the opportunity to suppose the same for the Southern compartment of Structure 1. The porch probably had five columns along the facade (only four of them are preserved). In two cases the rounded cuts of the stones forming these bases give the opportunity to measure the possible diameter of the wooden posts as about 0.32–0.34 m.

The walls of both buildings had foundations, but their construction differs. The foundations beneath the walls of Structure 1 consisted of big rolled boulders of volcanic rock, possibly brought to Berezan among the ship's ballast. Boulders were placed into a trench of 0.4 m in depth and covered by the layer of sea sand. The walls of Structure 2 had substructures which consisted of the layers of sand and shredded limestone – the constructive predecessor of so-called “layered foundations”, typical of house building in neighboring Olbia in the Hellenistic period. Both

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<sup>3</sup> Chistov, Ilyina 2012 [Д. Е. Чистов, Ю. И. Ильина, “Комплекс построек общественного назначения периода Поздней Архаики из раскопок в северо-восточной части Березанского поселения”], 19–48; Chistov, Zuev, Ilyina, Kasparov, Novoselova 2012, 87–95.

buildings also had similar walls with limestone socles of orthostatic masonry. To the South from each of these two houses big open courtyards were uncovered, contained by fences on three sides. This yard, situated to the South of Structure 2 (and almost completely excavated up to date) had an area of about 290 square meters. Open vacant space, only partially explored, was located, apparently, to the North of these buildings within the same block. It was probably also divided by the fences. Structures no. 1 and 2 were divided by a narrow street (Fig. 1), whose width varied between 2.50–3.10 m. This bystreet had an intersection with one of the major, latitudinally oriented city streets from the South.

The layout of these two buildings makes it possible to interpret them as “banquette halls”, *hestiatoria*, which were used for public dining, associated with cult and social activities and festivals.<sup>4</sup> Although there have been no discoveries of inscriptions or graffiti in vicinity of these structures, which could prove such identification, there are two marble lamps of similar kind (Fig. 4), typical of civic buildings or temples, that were found in the opened territory of the yard of Structure 1. The proposed interpretation could serve as an interesting testimony to the traditions of sacred feasts in the Greek cities of the Northern Black Sea coast, but it could also provide important information about the political history of Borysthenes. It should also be noted that all known structures of Berezan settlement identified as civic buildings of religious or social purpose are located in the same area of the site. A so-called “apsidal house”<sup>5</sup> is situated only 45 meters to the East of the fence of the late archaic public buildings, while the small temenos of the “sanctuary of Aphrodite”<sup>6</sup> is located a distance of no more than 75 meters to the South-West of Structure 2, and probably on the same city street. These observations could be evidence for the possible public centre localization precisely in this part of the Berezan settlement.

Among the other main results of the Hermitage Museum excavations of 2006–2013 one could mention the discovery of a partly preserved house with two cellar rooms (Fig. 5), dated to the middle – third quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, i. e. to the period when the archaic town was abandoned by the majority of its population. This house was built in the space of the

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<sup>4</sup> Chistov, Ilyina 2012, 36–37.

<sup>5</sup> Lapin 1966 [В. В. Лапин, *Греческая колонизация Северного Причерноморья (Критические очерки отечественных теорий колонизации)*], 119; Kryzhitskiy 2009 [С. Д. Крыжицкий, “К вопросу о функциональном назначении некоторых сооружений Березани и Ольвии”], 138–140.

<sup>6</sup> Nazarov 2001 [В. В. Назаров, *Святылище Афродиты в Борисфене*], 154–165; Kryzhitskiy 2001 [С. Д. Крыжицкий, “Храм Афродиты на Березани. Реконструкция”], 165–175.

yard belonging to the abovementioned late-archaic Structure 2, during the period when the earlier building was no longer in use. Until recently the structures of the Berezan settlement, dated to the same time, were represented mostly by relatively few dugouts,<sup>7</sup> so the discovery of a single, but rather large household makes us adjust the conception of the classical settlement's appearance.

In the course of the excavations of the earliest layers of the Berezan settlement (late 7<sup>th</sup> – first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC) numerous dugouts and semi-dugouts were uncovered. In the filling of these structures numerous finds of Eastern Greek tableware and storage amphorae could usually be found (Fig. 6, 1–3). Among the early structures, building 18 has to be mentioned (Fig. 7). This big (about 36 m<sup>2</sup>) rectangular dugout dated to the second quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC had adobe walls with stone facing, forced by wooden posts inside, fireplaces, clay floors and traces of wattle walls dividing the internal space of the building. This type of dwelling, a so-called “colonist's house”, which combines features of early dugouts and later surface multichamber buildings, is up to now represented on the site only by several similar structures, discovered in various parts of the Berezan island, but also has analogies in other urban and rural archaic sites of the North Pontic region.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Solovyov 1999, 98–113.

<sup>8</sup> Chistov 2013 [Д. Е. Чистов, “Тип ‘Дома колониста’ в Северном Причерноморье архаического периода”, in: *Боспорский Феномен. Материалы конференции*], 592–606.



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#### Further reading

- Y. V. Domanskiy, V. Y. Zuev, V. I. Ilyina, K. K. Marchenko, V. V. Nazarov, D. E. Chistov, *Materialy Berezanskoj (Nizhnebugskoj) antichnoj arkheologicheskoy ekspedicii. I.* [*Materials of the Berezan (Lower Bug Region) Archaeological Expedition. I.*] (St Petersburg 2006).
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- S. L. Solovyov (ed.), *Borisfen – Berezan. Archeologicheskaya kollekcija Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha. I.* [*Borysthene – Berezan. Archaeological Collection in the State Hermitage Museum. I.*] (St Petersburg 2005).
- S. L. Solovyov (ed.), *Borisfen – Berezan. Archeologicheskaya kollekcija Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha. II.* [*Borysthene – Berezan. Archaeological Collection in the State Hermitage Museum. II.*] (St Petersburg 2010).

A survey of the excavations on the Berezan Island (the estuary of Dnepr and S. Bug) conducted by the Hermitage Museum Archaeological Mission in 2006–2013.

Обзор раскопок на острове Березань (устье Днепра и Южного Буга), проводившихся экспедицией Государственного Эрмитажа в 2006–2013 гг.

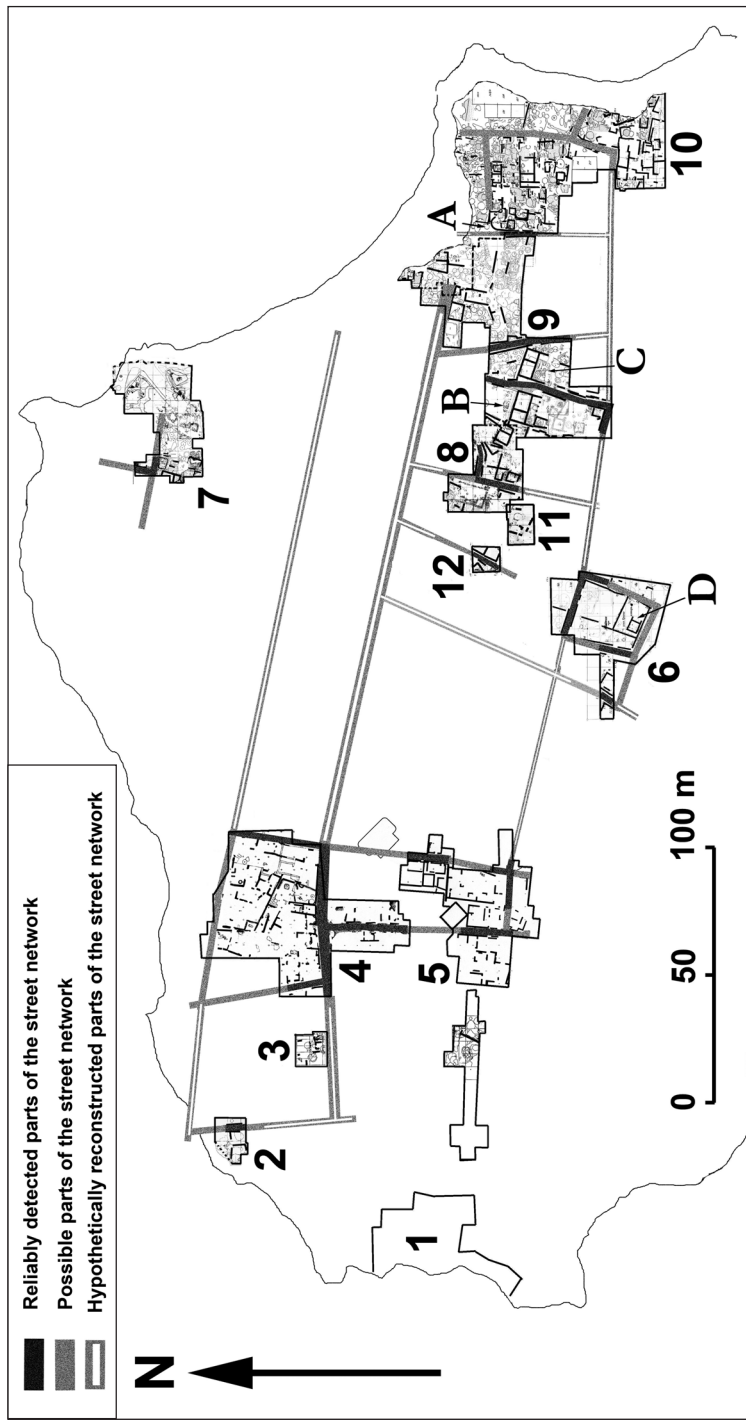


Fig. 1. Possible reconstruction of the street network of the Berezan settlement. Numbers of the excavation sectors on the plan: 1 – Necropolis, 2 – sector “S-1” (Northern-1), 3 – sector “S-2” (Northern-2), 4 – sector “North-Western A”, 5 – sector “North-Western B”, 6 – sector “T”, 7 – sector “G”, 8 – sector R-1v (Eastern), 9 – sector “O”-Western (1991–2012), 10 – sector “O”-Eastern (1960–1980), 11 – sector “GSh”. Structures mentioned in the text of the article are tagged by the following letters: A – “apsidal house”; B, C – late archaic civil buildings (probable *hestiatoria*); D – temenos with the temple in antis (“sanctuary of Aphrodite”).

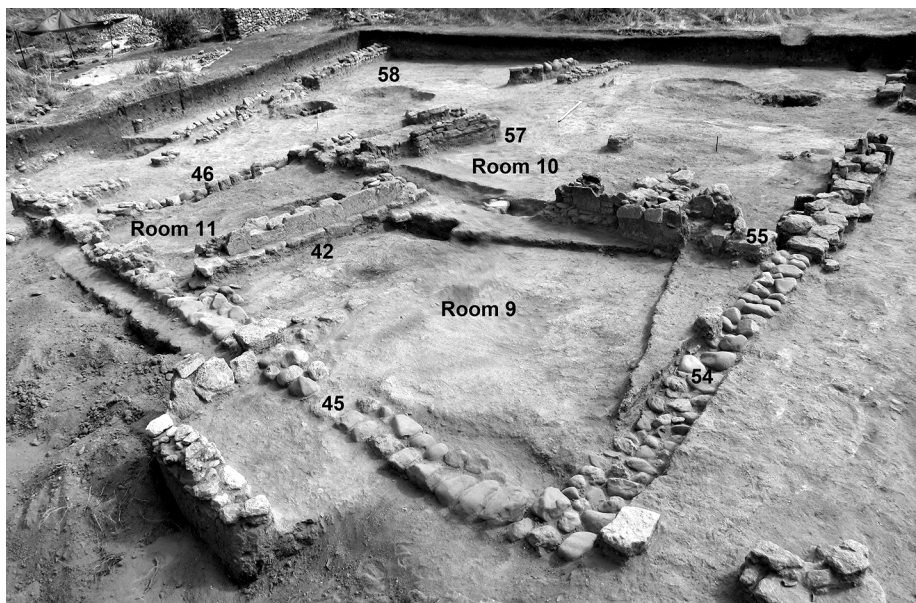


Fig. 2. Berezan. Late archaic civil building no. 1 (view from the North-West).



Fig. 3. Berezan. Late archaic civil building no. 2 (view from the South-West).



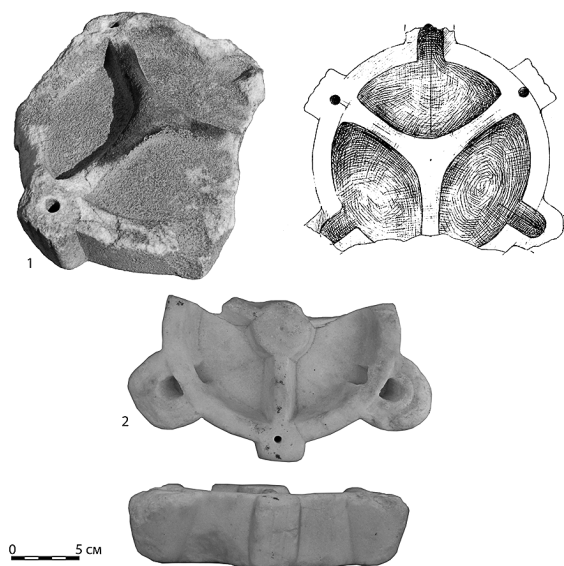


Fig. 4. Berezan. Marble lamps, found on the territory of the yard in front of Structure 2: 1–2 – БЭ 2013.49/442.



Fig. 5. Berezan. Cellar of the house, dated to the Classical period (room 21).  
View from the East.

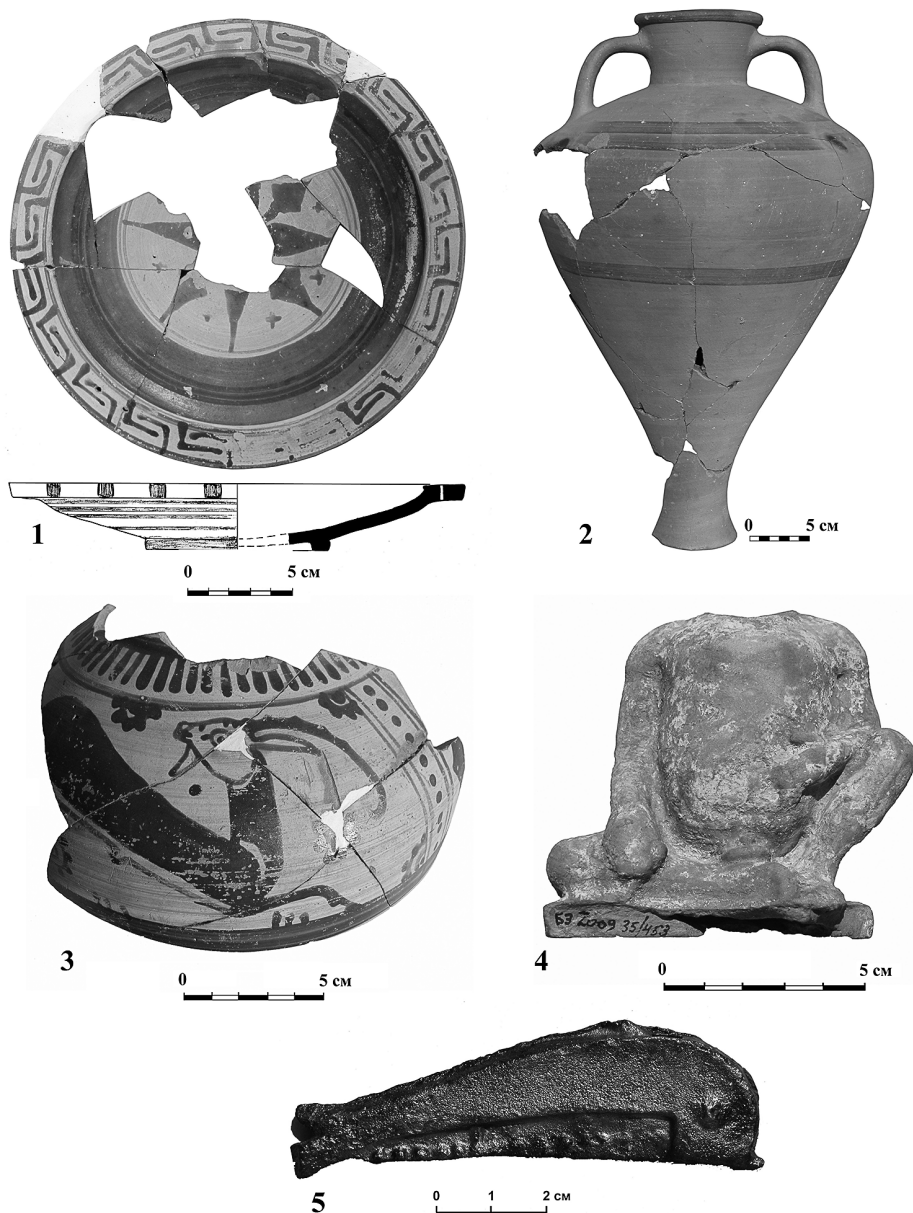


Fig. 6. Berezan. Some typical finds from the layers of Berezan settlement: 1 – North-Ionian Late Wild Goat style painted dish (second quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, structure 18). 2 – Storage amphora, second quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Klazomenai or “Klazomenian circle”. Dugout 63). 3 – Late Wild Goat style painted amphora fragment, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC (filling of the storage pit no.147). 4 – Terracotta figurine of the so-called “temple-boy” type (early 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, classical dugout no. 46). 5 – Big dolphin-shaped coin, found in the layers of the early 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.





Fig. 7. Berezan. Dugout 18. View from the West.

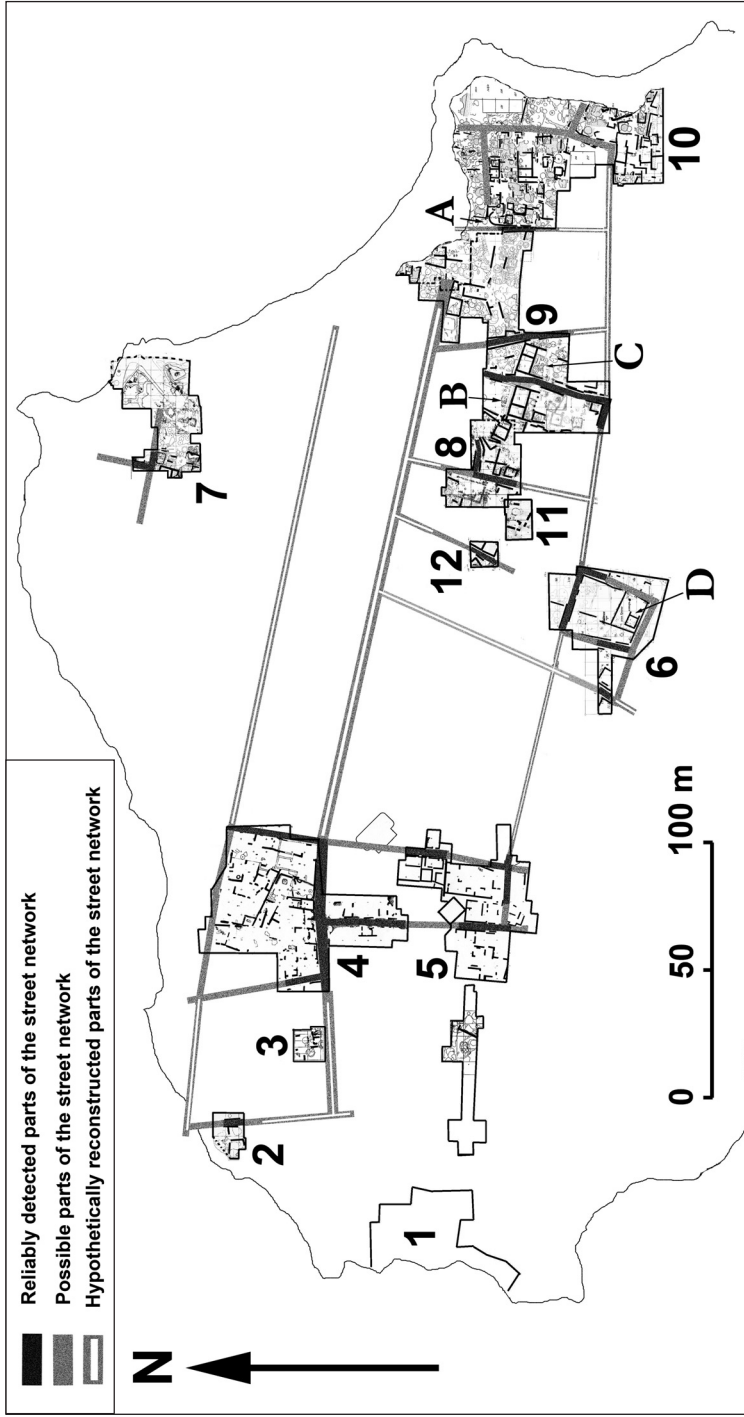


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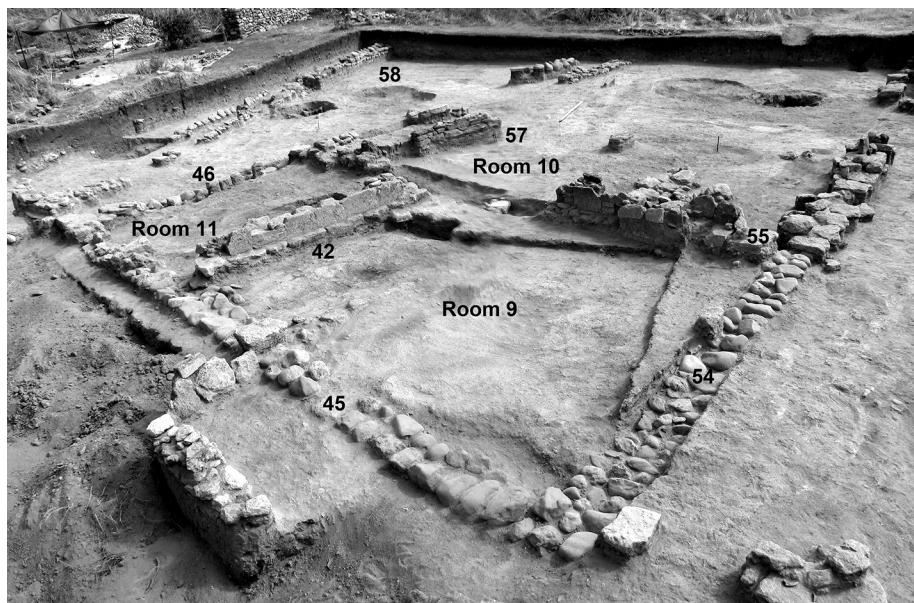


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Fig. 3. Berezan. Late archaic civil building no. 2 (view from the South-West).

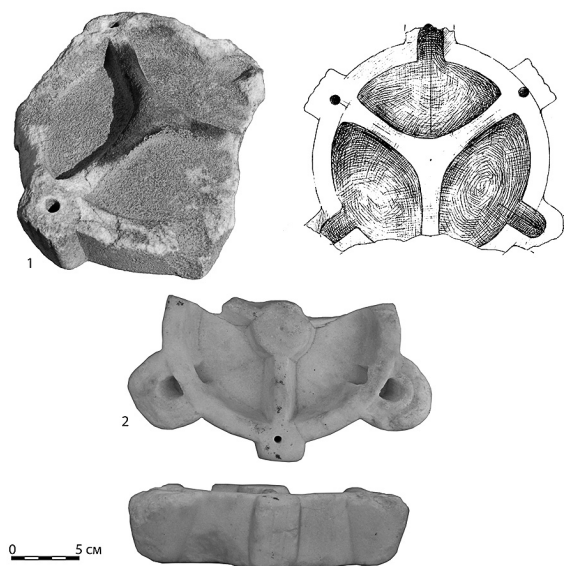


Fig. 4. Berezan. Marble lamps, found on the territory of the yard in front of Structure 2: 1–2 – БЭ 2013.49/442.



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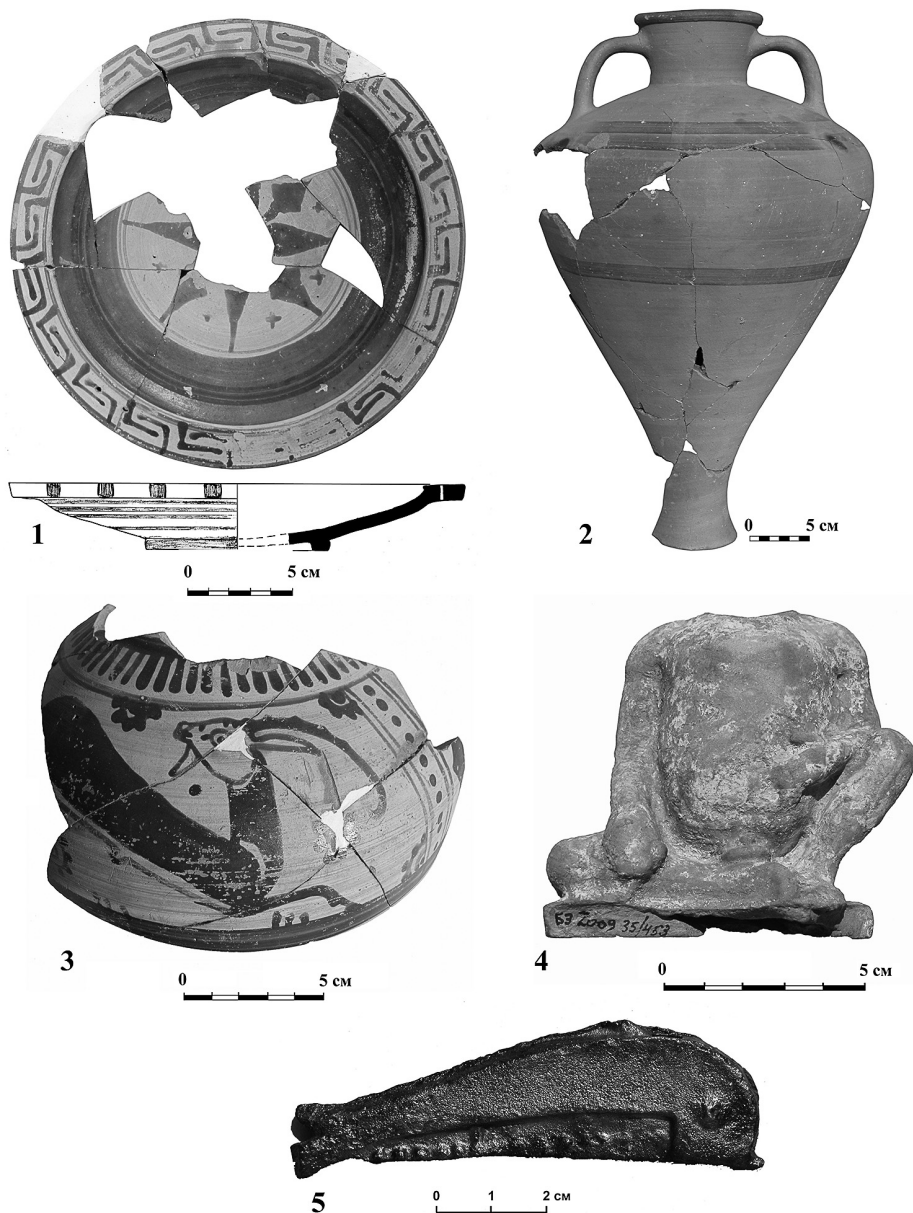
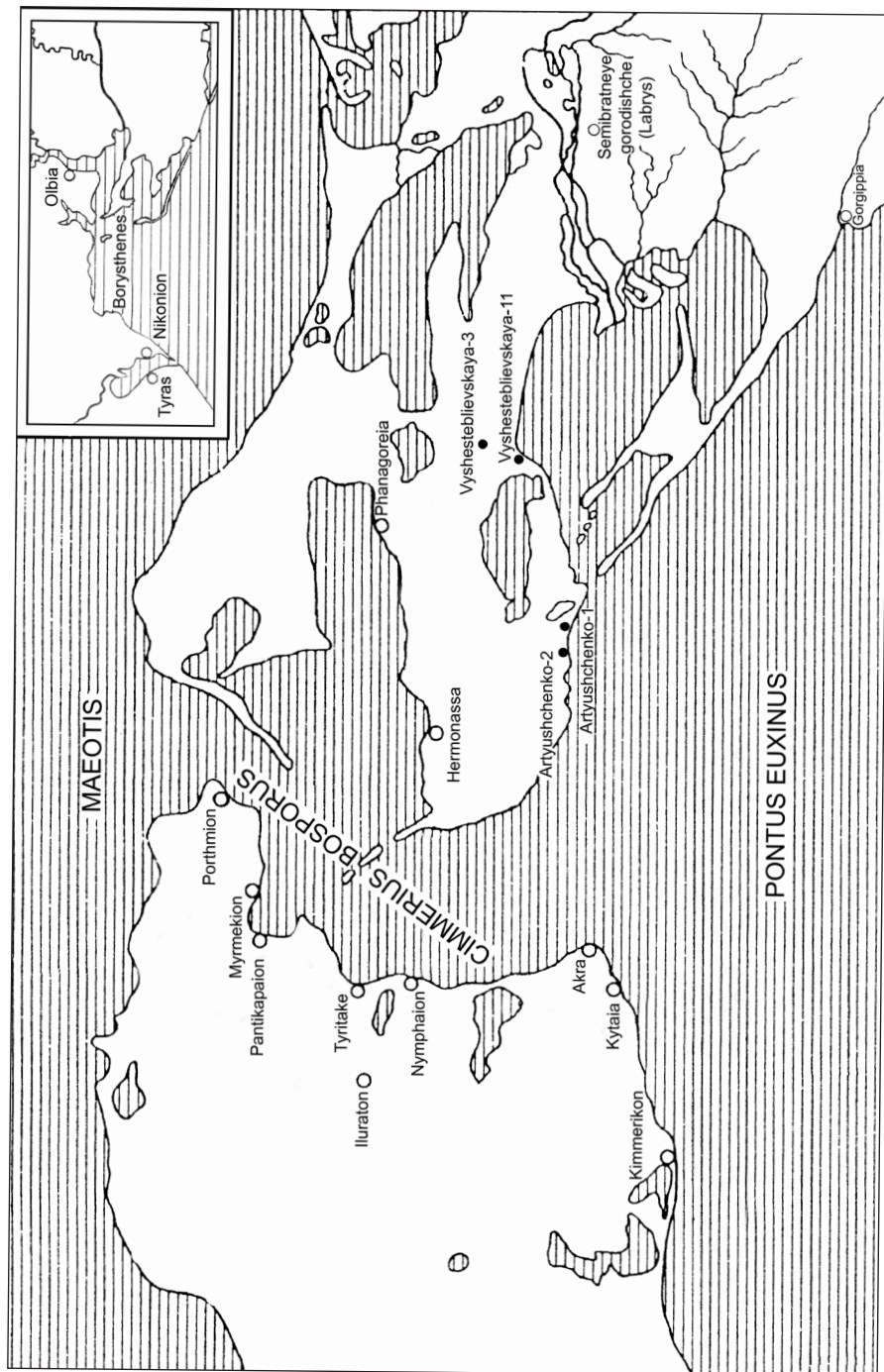


Fig. 6. Berezan. Some typical finds from the layers of Berezan settlement: 1 – North-Ionian Late Wild Goat style painted dish (second quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, structure 18). 2 – Storage amphora, second quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Klazomenai or “Klazomenian circle”. Dugout 63). 3 – Late Wild Goat style painted amphora fragment, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC (filling of the storage pit no.147). 4 – Terracotta figurine of the so-called “temple-boy” type (early 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, classical dugout no. 46). 5 – Big dolphin-shaped coin, found in the layers of the early 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.



Fig. 7. Berezan. Dugout 18. View from the West.



## 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*]

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