

PORTHMION ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPEDITION
OF THE INSTITUTE FOR HISTORY
OF MATERIAL CULTURE, RAS –
INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY, NASU

The joint Porthmion archaeological expedition of IIMK, Russian Academy of Sciences, and the Institute of Archaeology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (until 2009, the Porthmion section of the Bosporan expedition of IIMK) is continuing the study of the ancient settlement of Porthmion and its necropolis in the eastern Crimea.¹ The excavations are basically of a rescue-conservation nature. Their primary goal is the completion of the study of earlier excavations and damaged parts of the site.

The settlement. In the south-eastern sector of the site (excavation area Г/1) the expedition examined the course of the southern defensive wall of Porthmion in the archaic period, which survives in fragments. Fortifications here went along the southern limit of the plateau on which the ancient town was located. Huge, natural rocks of limestone were used in this wall's construction, sometimes slightly worked. Intervening space between these rocks was filled with smaller stones, while natural outcrops were incorporated within the structure (Fig. 1). It was possible to trace the course of this wall for some 20 metres. In an area adjacent to its north were found the remains of mud-brick walls, which belonged to houses of the archaic period. During cleaning of these houses were found fragments of East Greek tableware belonging to the third quarter-second half of the sixth century BC.

From 2008 to the present, excavation was conducted in the north-eastern portion of the site (excavation area В/2, Fig. 2). Here, over an area of about 400 square metres, were found items from different periods, from archaic to Hellenistic. Of particular interest were finds and complexes dated to the fourth century BC. This is a period very little studied at Porthmion, since its remains suffered particularly during the reconstruction of the town in the second half of the third century BC and are especially hard to trace. In

¹ Vakhtina 2005, 306–309; Vakhtina 2009 [М. Ю. Вахтина, “Порфмий – греческий город у переправы через Киммерийский Боспор”, *Боспорские исследования*], 91–126.

the eastern section of this area, over some 30 square metres, were found the remains of a large above-ground complex, whose walls were aligned with the four points of the compass (Fig. 3). Two rooms survived, a northern and a southern (nos. 1–2). They shared a western wall, running north-south with minor deviations. The foundations of the wall were found to a length of 5.3 metres, surviving to a maximum height of some 0.4 metres and breadth of 0.60 metres. A second wall (no. 2, now demolished) separated the two rooms, running in an east-west direction. Its foundations could be traced for 3.75 metres, while its extant height reached 0.56 metres and its breadth 0.55–0.60 metres. The construction of these walls was irregular, with two extant courses. Wall no. 3 ran parallel to wall no. 2 and formed the northern wall of the complex. Only one course of its stones survived, traceable for a distance of 5.6 metres at a height of 0.35 metres and breadth of 0.4–0.45 metres. During study of the fill of these rooms were found remains of their clay floors. Fragments of amphorae and tableware here allowed the dating of this complex to the second half of the fourth century BC.

During work on the lower level of the floor of the northern room, by its western wall, a domestic pit (no. 1) was located (Fig. 4), sunk in the earth to a depth of 2.5 metres. Its upper part was oval, almost circular in shape, and measured 1.4×1.3 metres at its mouth. However, the pit as a whole was pear-shaped in that, at a depth of some 0.6–0.7 metres from its mouth, its sides began to open outwards, so that its base was 2.7 metres in diameter. It contained an abundance of finds – fragments of amphorae, plain tableware, black glaze, lamps and metal objects. Among these last were parts of two iron knives, two bronze rings (one, poorly preserved, depicting a bird or imaginary winged creature), and a belt-buckle. Most of the finds from this pit (no. 1) were dated to the fourth – first half of the third century BC.

Cleaning to the west of this complex showed an area devoid of building remains, or stonework. It is provisionally termed a “roadway”, and runs in a north-south direction. This “roadway” was studied for a distance of 7.15 metres, at a breadth of 3.20 metres. A lot of pottery was found here, overwhelmingly fragments of amphorae, of which the earliest date to the end of the sixth century and beginning of the fifth century BC. Most, however, belong to the fourth and third centuries BC.

In the western part of the “roadway” were found two rectangular limestone blocks, abutted (Fig. 5). They are of a soft, yellow-to-white limestone, well worked. They were probably part of a small altar of four such stones, from which the other two have been removed.² It is not hard to imagine the original form and size of this altar on the basis of the two

² Vakhtina, Vinogradov, Goroncharovsky 2010, 367–398.

extant blocks. It was rectangular, almosy square, in shape, approximately 2.05×2.01 metres, with a height of 0.70 metres. The original four blocks encompassed a rectangular space between them. It may be tentatively suggested that this altar at Porthmion was dedicated to chthonic deities.³ This assumption bases on the construction of the object, which originally had a hole in the central part, allowing the offerings to get from the upper part to the soil. The lay in this area was soft and dark. We know that in ancient times this feature was typical for the altars where chthonic gods were worshiped.⁴

During study of the whole cultural layer in the eastern part of the excavation, very slight traces were found of an earlier structure (Fig. 6). Best preserved were the foundations of wall no. 4, running east-west. It was visible up to 1.90 metres in length, 0.40 metres wide at its base. Evidently, these are the remains of a building of the second half of the sixth and beginning of the fifth centuries BC. At a distance of 0.65 metres to the east of wall no. 4, cleaning revealed a portion of yet another wall (no. 5), running north-south. It survives to a length of 1.8 metres, being up to 0.25 metres high and 0.45 metres in breadth.

To the south of wall no. 4 was found a rectangularish depression, whose northern part went under that same wall. Its dimensions were 2.10×2.30 metres, to a depth of 0.83 metres. It was filled with dark brown sub-clay and other earth, including fragments of mud brick. This depression was cut into the ground beneath the cultural layers. Among the finds in this depression were fragments of Chian banded amphorae, with “eyes” at the neck, fragments of Aeolian amphorae (grey and red clay), a bronze ring and fragments of black glaze. Evidently, the depression is to be dated around the last quarter of the sixth century BC. Despite the lack of any remnants of construction here, we cannot exclude the possibility that this was part of a dugout structure.

The southeastern corner of the depression was cut by pit no. 3. It was round in shape, with a diameter of 1.10 metres at its mouth and a depth of 0.7 metres. It contained a large quantity of amphora fragments, including Chian and a stamped fragment of the upper portion of an amphora from Heraclea (Fig. 7).

In the western part of the excavation was found a building-complex of the hellenistic period (Fig. 8), from which we have the eastern (no. 7) and southern (no. 8) walls. The foundations of wall no. 7 were located to

³ Vakhtina 2013 [М. Ю. Вахтина, “Порфмийский алтарь”, in: А. В. Коваленко (ed.), *Причерноморье в раннеантичное и скифское время. Сборник научных трудов, посвященных проф. В. П. Копылову*], 142–145.

⁴ Yavış 1949, 92–93.

a length of 6.20 metres and a height of 0.80 metres, running north-south with minor deviation. Wall no. 8 was built so as to join it at the southern side, surviving to a length of 3.60 metres and a height of 0.39 metres. In the area encompassed by these walls was found paving, being fragments of large limestone slabs. In the southern wall, at a distance of 1.2 metres from its eastern corner, was found a threshold, made of large, cut flagstones. This was probably the entrance to the interior of the building. The area excavated seems to have been part of the courtyard of a small dwelling of a kind typical for so-called “Late Porthmion”. Finds there suggest a date in the second half of the third to second centuries BC.

In the northern sector work continues along the northern hellenistic wall of the settlement. Here were found large, unworked boulders of limestone, strewn about, which in antiquity belonged to the structure of the wall. Here in 2013 was found part of the foundation of a substantial wall, running north-south. It was traced to a distance of 3.80 metres, at a breadth of 1 metre at its base. Further east were found numerous fragments of Bosporan tiles with “royal” stamps.

The necropolis. The expedition continues its work on the necropolis of Porthmion, situated to the west of the settlement. Here were found burials of different types – individual inhumations in simple pits or in pits lined with stone slabs, as well as collective burials in crypts made with worked slabs of local limestone (Fig. 9).⁵ Most of what was excavated here belongs to late hellenistic times.

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⁵ Vakhtina, Stol'yarenko 2013 [М. Ю. Вахтина, П. Г. Столяренко, “Некрополь Порфмия (по материалам раскопок 2004–2012 гг.)”, in: Е. А. Молев (ed.), *Культурный слой*], 114–145.

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A survey of the excavations at Porthmion conducted by the archaeological expedition of IIMK, Russian Academy of Sciences, and the Institute of Archaeology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine.

Обзор раскопок в Порфмии, проводившихся совместной экспедицией Института материальной культуры РАН и Института археологии Национальной академии наук Украины.



Fig. 1. Porthmion. The remains of the trace of the southern Archaic defensive wall (view from the West).



Fig. 2. Porthmion, excavation area B/2, composite plan.



Fig. 3. Porthmion. The remains of above-ground complex of the second part of the 4th century BC.



Fig. 4. Porthmion. Pit no.1.



Fig. 5. Porthmion. The remains of the altar in the north-eastern sector of the site.



Fig. 6. Porthmion. Depression (dugout structure?).



Fig. 7. Porthmion. The upper part of Heracleian amphora with a stamp.



Fig. 8. Porthmion. The remains of the Hellenic house.

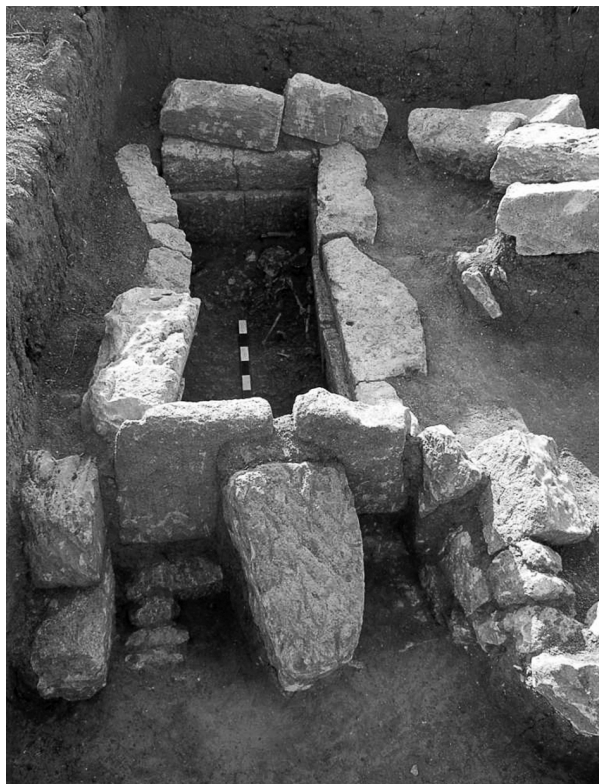


Fig. 9. Porthmion. Necropolis, crypt no. 4.



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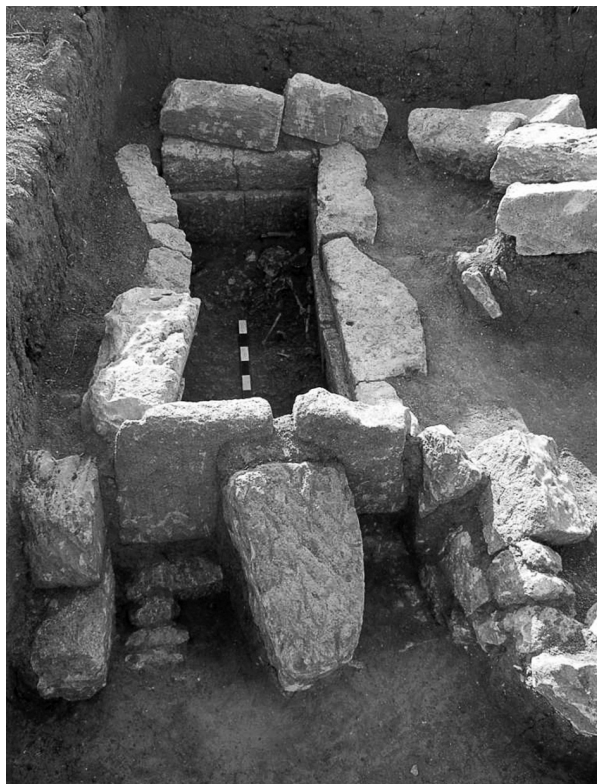
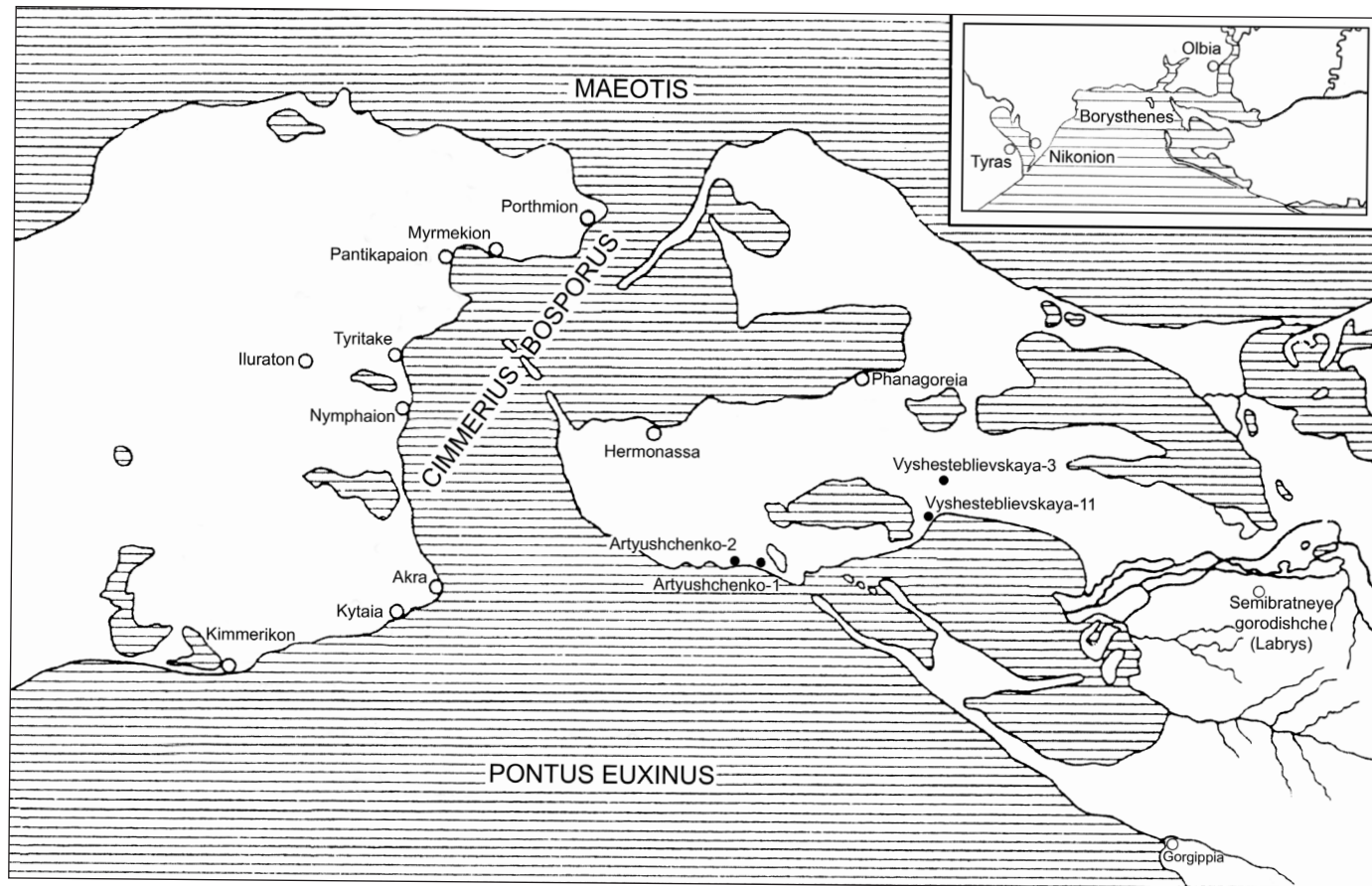


Fig. 9. Porthmion. Necropolis, crypt no. 4.



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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