

## THE TOWNSITE OF SEMIBRATNEYE (LABRYS) RESULTS OF EXCAVATIONS IN 2006–2009

The site of Semibratneye, covering an area of about 10 hectares, is located 28 km to the northeast of what is now the city of Anapa (ancient Gorgippia) on the left bank of the Kuban River (Fig. 1). It has been known by this name for more than a hundred years dating from 1878 when the first small excavations were conducted here by Vladimir G. Tiesenhausen,<sup>1</sup> who had previously excavated the famous Semibratneye (*Seven Brothers*) barrows. The next phase of the investigations began with an expedition of the Krasnodar Museum under Nikita V. Anfimov (1938–1940, 1949–1952, 1954–1955).<sup>2</sup> At that time no epigraphic documents were available which would have enabled us to identify the name of this ancient city. It only became possible after the fortunate discovery of a dedicatory inscription of the Bosporan king Leukon I (389/88–349/48 BC).<sup>3</sup>

It is now possible to identify five building periods of construction in Labrys: (1) the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC to the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC: the erection of defensive walls, first in the northern part and later in the southern section of the city which then flourished under the power of the so-called Sindian Kingdom; (2) the second quarter to the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC: the total reconstruction of the entire defensive line after fires and destruction caused by the military events in Sindike (Polyaen. 8. 55) and the annexation of the latter by the Bosporan Kingdom under Leukon I; (3) late 4<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC: the gradual recovery of urban life after yet another devastation of Labrys and the final destruction

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<sup>1</sup> ОАК 1878–1879, VIII–IX.

<sup>2</sup> Anfimov 1941 [Н. В. Анфимов, “Новые данные к истории Азиатского Боспора”, СА], 258–267; Anfimov 1951 [“Раскопки Семибратнего городища”, КСИИМК], 238–244; Anfimov 1953 [“Исследования Семибратнего городища”, КСИИМК], 99–111.

<sup>3</sup> Tokhtas'ev 1998 [С. Р. Тохтасьев, “К чтению и интерпретации посвяtitельной надписи Левкона I с Семибратнего городища”], 286–302; Vinogradov 2002 [Ю. Г. Виноградов, “Левкон, Гекатей, Октамасад и Горгипп”, ВДИ], 3–22; Yaylenko 2004 [В. П. Яйленко, “Вотив Левкона I из Лабриса”, Древности Боспора], 425–445; Tokhtas'ev 2006, 1–25.

of the former defensive system, the creation of the *temenos* in the southern area of the townsite; (4) late 3<sup>rd</sup> to 1<sup>st</sup> century BC: construction of new defensive walls with towers and a large fortified building in the northern part of the townsite; (5) the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC to the turn from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD: most of the urban area was abandoned, and there arose a settlement which existed for about a hundred years near the ruins of the fortified building.

In 2001 the archaeological investigations of Labrys were resumed under the direction of the author of this article by the Bosporan Expedition of the Institute for the History of Material Culture of the Russian Academy of Sciences (St Petersburg). During the first five field sessions, the excavations were carried out mainly in the southern part of the townsite.<sup>4</sup> Archaeologists have found here the remains of the *temenos* of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC with a fencing wall and a small two-stepped altar. The encircling wall consisted of a single row of enormous yellowish limestone blocks measuring from  $0.6 \times 0.32 \times 0.28$  m to  $1.1 \times 0.56 \times 0.26$  m. This structure is very similar to that of the remains at the eastern limits of the Olbian *temenos* dating from the late 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC<sup>5</sup> and the boundaries of the sacred precincts at the temple complex dating from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC in Nymphaion.<sup>6</sup>

Studies of the earlier levels have revealed a defensive wall and an entrance-tower dating to the second quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. They were destroyed in the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC and rebuilt about the middle of the same century. At the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, the defensive system of Labrys once again suffered from military operations. The three-step staircase preserved at the *temenos* up to the destruction level suggests that there were no defensive walls in this section of the town during the subsequent period.

From 2006 to 2009, the main goals of the expedition included geomagnetic surveys throughout the entire archaeological site (Fig. 1) and further investigation of Anfimov's excavation area 'A' in the northern area of Labrys where he uncovered the remains of a Hellenistic fortified building.

The first attempt at magnetic prospecting of the territory of Labrys was undertaken in 2006 by a German geophysical team of Prof. Harald Stümpel (Kiel University) who used a mobile multi-sensor system.

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<sup>4</sup> Goroncharovskiy 2005, 320–325.

<sup>5</sup> Levi 1985 [Е. И. Леви, *Ольвия. Город эпохи эллинизма*], 74 fig. 62.

<sup>6</sup> Sokolova 2001 [О. Ю. Соколова, "Новая надпись из Нимфея", *Древности Боспора*], 375 Fig. 1.

However, because of the numerous large stones and deep furrows in the field, it was only possible to investigate a strip about 70 m wide and 160 m long, at which the surface of the townsite was the smoothest. In the same year, another geomagnetic survey was conducted by Tatyana N. Smekalova in a raised area near excavation I. In 2007–2008 she composed a geomagnetic map of the entire southern part of the settlement (Fig. 2).<sup>7</sup> The complications mentioned above allowed the researchers to conduct the surveys only in successive passes using the GSM-19WG magnetometer. A second identical apparatus was installed at a ‘reference’ point with the ‘normal’ magnetic field. Subsequently the reference data was used for correcting the results by subtraction of the variable values of the Earth’s magnetic field from the spatial measurements. From the very beginning a coordinate grid oriented to the four cardinal points was used. In order to cover the maximum area in the western part of the townsite, this grid was later re-oriented along the edge of the forest shelter-belt. The measurements were conducted with an interval of 0.5 m between the measuring lines and 0.25–0.3 metres lengthwise. The sensor was kept at a height of approximately 0.3 m above the surface.

One substantial result of the studies described above involved the identification of the precise boundaries of the southern section of our archaeological site. The magnetic map composed suggests that this area had a trapezoid form. Apparently it was the result of the ditch having been filled with burnt wooden material which had collapsed in the fire. It is notable that this magnetic anomaly is observed only at the southern edge of the defensive line where the surface is absolutely even. Possibly, at some stage of the occupation of Labrys, a rampart and wattle fences, the gaps between which were filled with earth, were constructed as an extra obstacle in front of the ditch. The height of these defensive structures barely exceeded 4 m.<sup>8</sup>

The base of the ‘trapezium’ is approximately 200 m wide. The lengths of its lateral sides are around 100 and 130 metres. They are at an angle of 77° to the base. At the southern, eastern and western sides, a noticeable increase of the intensity of magnetic anomalies is observable at several points which, so it seems, correspond to a gate defended by towers. It is of interest that at the southern line of the fortification there are two similar points, which enabled unexpected sallies if the enemy would have attempted to seize the city from this side.

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<sup>7</sup> Smekalova 2010, 103–110.

<sup>8</sup> Compare with the reconstruction of the defensive walls of this type: Marčenko, Žitnikov, Kopylov 2000, 76–77 Pl. 9 Fig. 18.

After examination of an aerial photo of 1959 fifteen years ago, Yuriy V. Gorlov and Yuriy A. Lopanov reconstructed the contours of the townsite of Labrys as having the form of a keyhole with a rectangular southern part.<sup>9</sup> Most likely, this assumption was due to the authors interpreting the external outlines of two large rectangular buildings as the remains of the defensive walls (Fig. 2, letters C and F) and another building with two extended rooms as the tower of the southern gate (Fig. 2, letter B). As typical of other examples of Greek fortification, the buildings were located at some distance from the defensive walls: a free passage at least 10 m wide ran along the inner perimeter. In our case, the results of geomagnetic surveys are naturally of more importance, as they reflect the real situation more accurately.

It is of considerable interest that at the place of supposed defensive walls of the early 5<sup>th</sup> century BC with the addition of the projecting fortifications in the southern part of the townsite, the magnetic map shows a distinct anomaly with a sectional structure. This consists of two parallel bands with a negative magnetic field gradient at an interval of about four meters between them (Fig. 2, letter A).

According to new data provided by the geomagnetic surveys of the encircling wall, the *temenos* stretched westward for at least 30 m to as far as the foot of the hill. The extension of the sacred precincts from north to south was at least 40 m. Thus the total area of the sacred precincts was approximately 2000 sq. m taking in account that their eastern limits must have been following the edge of the ditch. Such an area seems rather considerable when compared to the well-studied Olbian *temenos* which encompassed a space of nearly 3500 sq. m.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, to the west of excavation area I of 2001–2005, negative magnetic anomalies have been recorded (schematically shown in Fig. 1 as a black rectangle) which indicate the presence of a large rectangular building with a minimum width of 15 m (Fig. 2, letter D) and, presumably, an altar. These architectural remains were partially uncovered in 2006. They were located on a small artificial terrace cut into the slope of the hill and strengthened by large rough stone blocks measuring from  $0.22 \times 0.11 \times 0.08$  m to  $0.34 \times 0.29 \times 0.09$  m. This terrace slopes down to the west to a depth of 0.54 m near the border of the excavated area.

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<sup>9</sup> Gorlov, Lopanov 1999 [Ю. В. Горлов, Ю. А. Лопанов, “Опыт предварительной дешифровки аэрофотоснимков Семибратнего городища”, *Проблемы истории, филологии и культуры*], 172–174.

<sup>10</sup> Levi 1985, 73.



Within the area measuring  $4.4 \times 1.9$  m where the geomagnetic surveys had indicated an anomaly, a corner of a building constructed from limestone blocks (from  $0.16 \times 0.1$  m to  $0.92 \times 0.16$  m) was excavated (Fig. 3). Most of its area was carefully paved with small rubble. On the pavement a coin of Pantikapaion was found, dated to 314–310 BC with the head of a Satyr on the obverse and a winged Pegasus on the reverse.<sup>11</sup> In the eastern section of the pavement, an area about 1 m wide was found between the poorly preserved pavement and the external wall of the building. It is likely that this place was reserved for some structure.

At the eastern edge of the terrace there was a large altar constructed from massive limestone slabs (Fig. 4) which partly continued into the southern edge of the trench.<sup>12</sup> The uncovered part of the altar was measuring  $1.87 \times 1.74$  m at the base with a height of 0.27 m. Originally it must have been two-stepped but, if so, any remains of the upper step are missing because its slab was in an area that became a cultivated field and was probably removed by a plow. Its width, according to some indications, must have been about 1.32 m. The internal space of the altar near its rectangular lower step ( $1.14 \times 0.62$  m) was filled with densely packed grey clay containing fine pieces of stone. At the base of the western part of the altar there was a cracked stone step ( $1.03 \times 0.35 \times 0.14$  m).

The altar was an independent structure located to the east of the temple as is considered normal practice. The distance of over 2 m between the building and the altar was paved with Bosporan tiles measuring  $0.53 \times 0.45$  m. A few complete and five fragmentary unstamped tiles were found there, paving a square of  $1.73 \times 1.61$  m. Above the latter, tile fragments from the collapsed roof were partially preserved but these differed in their type from the tiles used for the pavement. The remains of a roof were discovered within a strip ca. 1.7 m wide to the north of the structure. A redware bowl, an iron adze tip with a triangular edge, and a small lead weight bearing the graffito “ΔΥ” ( $2.4 \times 2.2 \times 0.6$  cm; weight 36.3 g, i. e. 1/12 of a mina of Euboean-Attic standard) were uncovered to the north of the altar (Fig. 5).

Although the sequence in which the buildings discovered within the Early Hellenistic *temenos* were constructed has not been identified, their presence is proved by such architectural details as a pilaster of Ionic order measuring 0.39 m in diameter at the base (Fig. 6). It was found 38 m to the southwest of area I. The height of the original semicircular half-column

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<sup>11</sup> Anokhin 1986 [В. А. Анохин, *Монетное дело Боспора*], 140 Pl. 3, 112.

<sup>12</sup> In the geomagnetic map, there are fairly numerous distinct negative anomalies of rectangular outlines. The length of the altar thus must have been about 2.4 m.

might be calculated to have been about 2.7 m. In the 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, when Labrys was a flourishing city, it is possible that a large cult center also stood here. In view of this, of note is the find of a reused limestone block ( $0.97 \times 0.47 \times 0.27$  m) which was originally decorated with a relief zone in an egg-and-dart pattern. This architectural detail must have come from the cornice of an Ionic temple. The height of its columns was at least 7.5 m. It seems hardly credible that this temple stood alone on the site. The architectural remains here can probably be preliminarily attributed to the cult of Phoebos-Apollo – the “lord of the city of the Labrytians”.<sup>13</sup> This epithet, known from an inscription of Leukon I, confirms that the cult of Apollo was dominant in the area under study. Recently A. Rusyayeva came to the conclusion that Phoebos-Apollo was the protector of all the Bosporan colonists who had founded this city in the territory of the tribe of the Sindi.<sup>14</sup> Apparently, by the time of the events described in the inscription of Leukon I, Phoebos-Apollo had already become the divine patron of Labrys.<sup>15</sup>

North of the excavation area I, beyond the fence of the *temenos*, there was another stone building indicated by the geomagnetic map (Fig. 2, letter E). Inside the sacred precincts, we have identified objects which were probably production kilns or the remains of a metalworking workshop.

After continuation of large-scale geomagnetic surveys in Labrys by A. V. Chudin in 2009, the total investigated area amounts to 3.8 hectares, i. e. about 40% of the townsite. These magnetic surveys have allowed us to correct conclusions made before and obtain additional information on the defensive structures of the ancient settlement, as well as its inner layout. The surveys were carried out in the northern oval part of Labrys (Fig. 1). During these investigations we used a quantum magnetometer PKM-1 and a proton gradientmeter MPG-1. The studies were conducted throughout three areas.

Plot no. 1, to the northwest of the forest shelter-belt, was shaped as a rectangle measuring  $40 \times 50$  m. At some point, the bed of the Kuban River was not far from the northern edge of the townsite and traces of a small inlet are identifiable in the relief of the locality suggesting that the port of Labrys might have been located here. For that reason a plot at the edge of a level field was investigated in an area where it slopes down

<sup>13</sup> In the inscription of Leukon I, line 3: ...τῆσδε πόλεως μεδέοντι Λαβρυτωμ... (see Tokhtas'ev 1998 [С. Р. Тохтасьев, “К чтению и интерпретации посвячительной надписи Левкона I с Семибратнего городища”], 299).

<sup>14</sup> Rusyayeva 2003 [А. С. Русяева, “Феб Аполлон на Боспоре”, in: *Боспорские чтения*], 225 ff.

<sup>15</sup> Graham 2002, 98.

towards the ancient river bank. The geomagnetic map indicates distinctly only traces of tillage in the form of vertical bands with the complete absence of any architectural remains. Apparently, the local port was about 300 m to the west from the city, near the mouth of the Shakon River which now has almost disappeared.

Plot no. 2, measuring  $60 \times 50$  m, was investigated at the northern boundary of the present-day ploughed field to the south of area 'A' excavated by Anfimov (1938–1940) where a number of positive anomalies have been revealed. These were probably connected to part of a large building oriented to the four cardinal points. Judging from the features of the building's layout which have been identified, it included a courtyard measuring  $14 \times 12.5$  m and one or several rooms on the northern side with a total area of  $12 \times 8$  m.

Plot no. 3 was square in shape with sides of 50 m. Its larger part is a low oval-shaped area overgrown with high grass and reeds. Earthen banks up to 2 m high are located along its perimeter. On the map, positive anomalies are clearly distinguishable. Probably these are induced by ash-heaps or rooms filled with remains of burning. A stone fence 57 m long and 1 m thick was also found here. It runs along the southwestern boundary of the previously discovered depression in the local relief. In the center of the depression, only a collapsed wall 20 m long and 1 m thick perpendicular to the fence was observable. It is difficult to interpret correctly this structure. The assumption that the positive magnetic anomalies here were induced by ash layers was further confirmed by visual examination of the area east of excavation 'A'. Twenty-two meters from the latter, three robbers' trenches about 1.5 m deep were discovered. Below the turf layer (which was up to 0.25 m thick), the pits contained only ashes in which there were fine fragments of tiles, amphorae, redware pottery and bones of domestic animals. Among the surface finds, only an amphora foot of variant I-F of Rhodian amphorae of type I according to S. Yu. Monakhov is of interest.<sup>16</sup> It is dated to the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. In any case, it seems possible to conclude that during the period in which the fortified building functioned – the 3<sup>rd</sup>–1<sup>st</sup> century BC – ashes were habitually thrown out of the house on its eastern side. Accordingly, there were no buildings in this part of Labrys during the period specified.

An interesting discovery was made at plot no. 4, where a distinct anomaly corresponds to a ditch about 6 m wide. To the north of the latter, there is a positive anomaly about 7 m wide which must correspond to a wall

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<sup>16</sup> Monakhov 2003 [С. Ю. Монахов, *Греческие амфоры в Причерноморье*], 120 Pl. 84, 5.

separating the northern oval part of the Labrys area from its southern trapezoid part. In this case, the width of the positive anomaly would be due to the fact that the masonry of the wall was gradually destroyed, crumbled out and spread over the field as a result of its cultivation. This assumption may confirm the previous hypothesis regarding two stages in the local urban evolution.

The studies of the final stage of the occupation of Labrys included a still uncompleted investigation conducted in 2007–2009 in the northern section of excavation area 'A' where a fortified Hellenistic building was discovered (Fig. 7). By now, due to the depredatory quarrying of stone by local residents, nothing has survived from the building's external walls, once about 1.7 m thick. As new evidence suggests, the dates of the building proposed by Anfimov as the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC – 1<sup>st</sup> century AD possibly require revision of their lower chronological boundary because no early Hellenistic materials have been found here. However, we can accept this final conclusion only after re-examination of all available collections of finds from the excavations. The fact that the foundation of this monumental building had sunk into the destruction layer of the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC (Fig. 8), at the upper level of which only a few fireplaces and pits of the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC have been excavated, would seem to suggest that this area was temporarily desolated after the military and political events of the period when the city became part of the Bosporan state. Meanwhile, studies of the lower layers dated to the 5<sup>th</sup> – first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC revealed a similar situation inside room A of the building under consideration. Here, within a limited area of about 30 sq. m, 14 pits were uncovered with no architectural remains except for some fragments of clay plaster on a wattle fence. The data of the geomagnetic surveys suggest that this part of the Labrys territory was used not for urban development but rather for economic purposes or perhaps as a refuge place.

To conclude, it should be noted that a comprehensive study of Labrys can yield a substantial amount of new information about the early Greek-Sindian interactions, the time of inclusion of Sindike into the Bosporan Kingdom, and the subsequent development of this region.

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## Further reading

- В. А. Горончаровский, “Лабрис (Семибратнее городище): синдский город или греческий эмпорий?” (V. A. Goroncharovskiy, “Labrys (Semibratneye Townsite): Sindian Town or a Greek Emporion?”), in: *Международные отношения в бассейне Черного моря в скифо-античное и хазарское время* (Rostov-na-Donu 2009) 99–106.
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A survey of the excavations at the townsite of Semibratneye/Labrys (28 km to the Nord-East of Gorgippia) conducted by the Bosporan expedition of the Institute for the History of Material Culture, RAS, in 2006–2009.

Обзор раскопок Семибратнего городища (Лабрис), 28 км к Северо-Востоку от Горгиппии, проводившихся Боспорской экспедицией Института материальной культуры РАН в 2006–2009 гг.



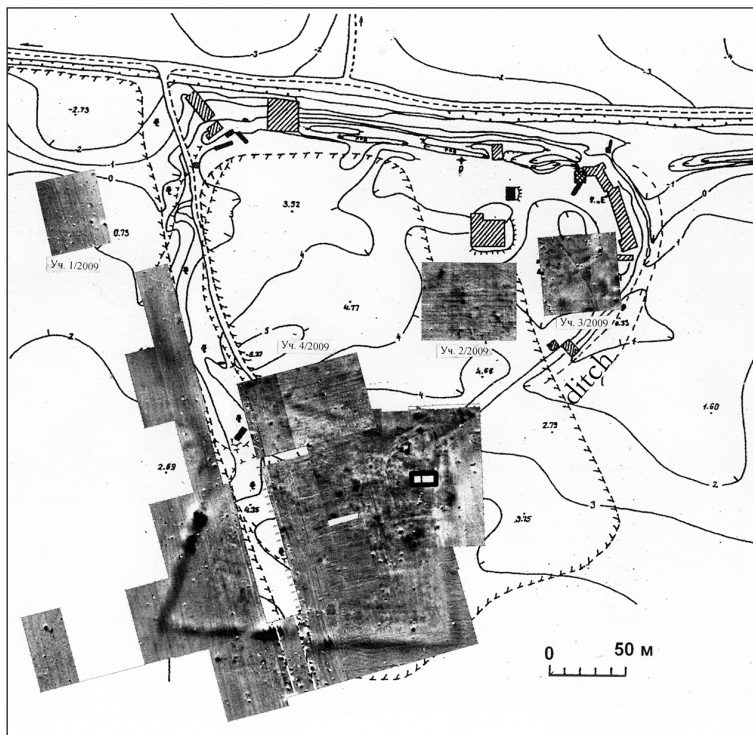


Fig. 1. Labrys. Composite monochrome magnetic map composed in 2006–2009 superimposed onto a topographic plan.

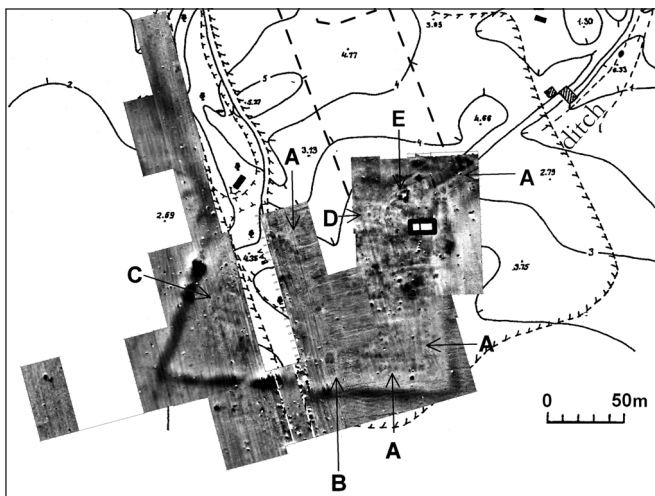


Fig. 2. Labrys. Geomagnetic map with results of the surveys of 2006–2008 and their interpretation:

*A* – sectional structure of magnetic anomalies in the area of the defensive walls; *B* – stone building consisting of two rooms; *C* – large rectangular building in front of the western gate; *D* – rectangular monumental building; *E* – metalworking workshop.





Fig. 3. Labrys. Remains of a building on the lower terrace of the *temenos*.



Fig. 4. Labrys. Large altar on the lower terrace of the *temenos*.

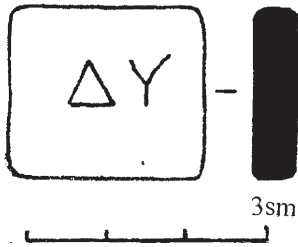


Fig. 5. Labrys. Lead weight with a graffito.



Fig. 6. Labrys. Pilaster in the Ionic order. Chance find from near the lower terrace of the temenos.

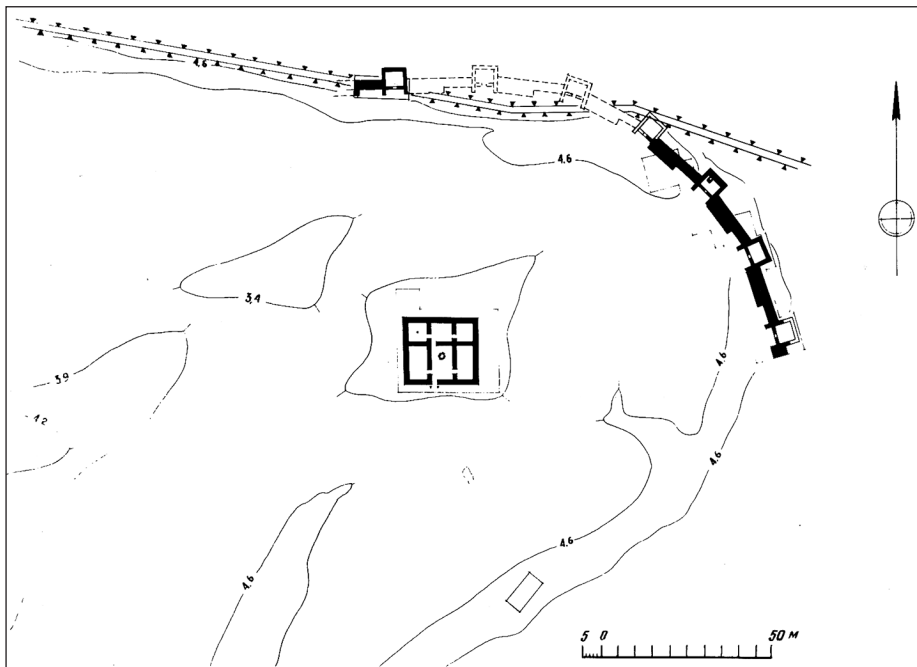


Fig. 7. Labrys. The plan of N. V. Anfimov's excavations in the northeastern part of the Semibratneye townsite (after V. P. Tolstikov).



Fig. 8. Labrys. Additional investigations of excavation area 'A' with the remains of the fortified building (general view from the South-West).



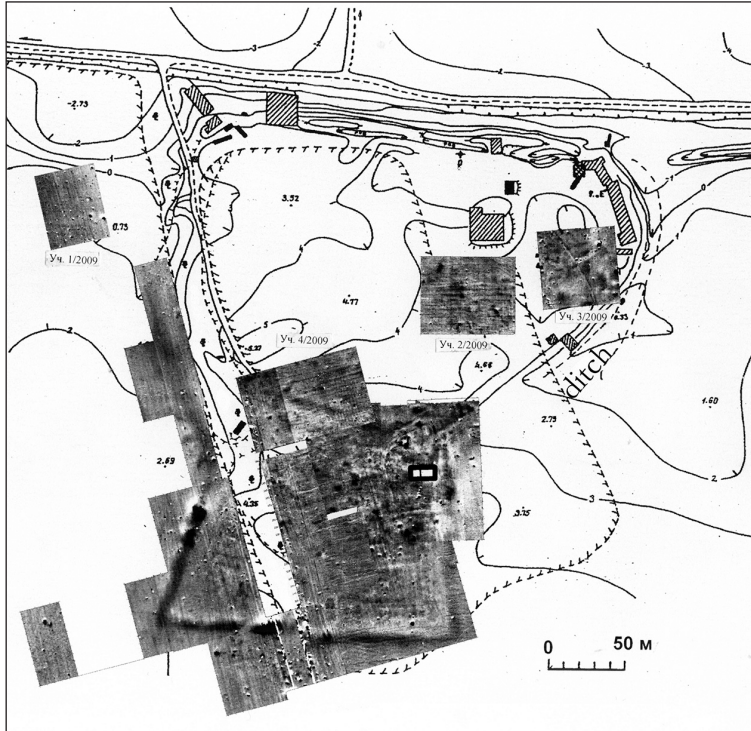


Fig. 1. Labrys. Composite monochrome magnetic map composed in 2006–2009 superimposed onto a topographic plan.

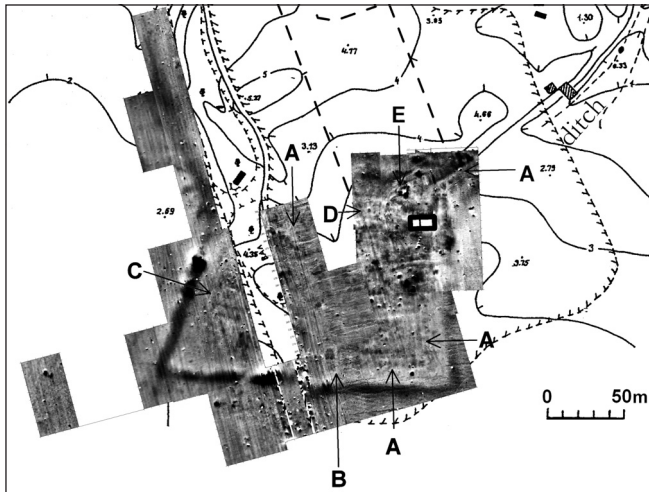


Fig. 2. Labrys. Geomagnetic map with results of the surveys of 2006–2008 and their interpretation:

*A* – sectional structure of magnetic anomalies in the area of the defensive walls;  
*B* – stone building consisting of two rooms; *C* – large rectangular building in front of the western gate; *D* – rectangular monumental building; *E* – metalworking workshop.



Fig. 3. Labrys. Remains of a building on the lower terrace of the *temenos*.



Fig. 4. Labrys. Large altar on the lower terrace of the *temenos*.

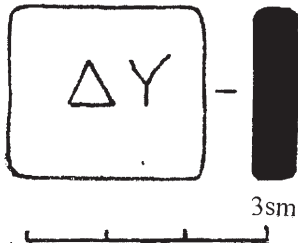


Fig. 5. Labrys. Lead weight with a graffito.



Fig. 6. Labrys. Pilaster in the Ionic order. Chance find from near the lower terrace of the temenos.

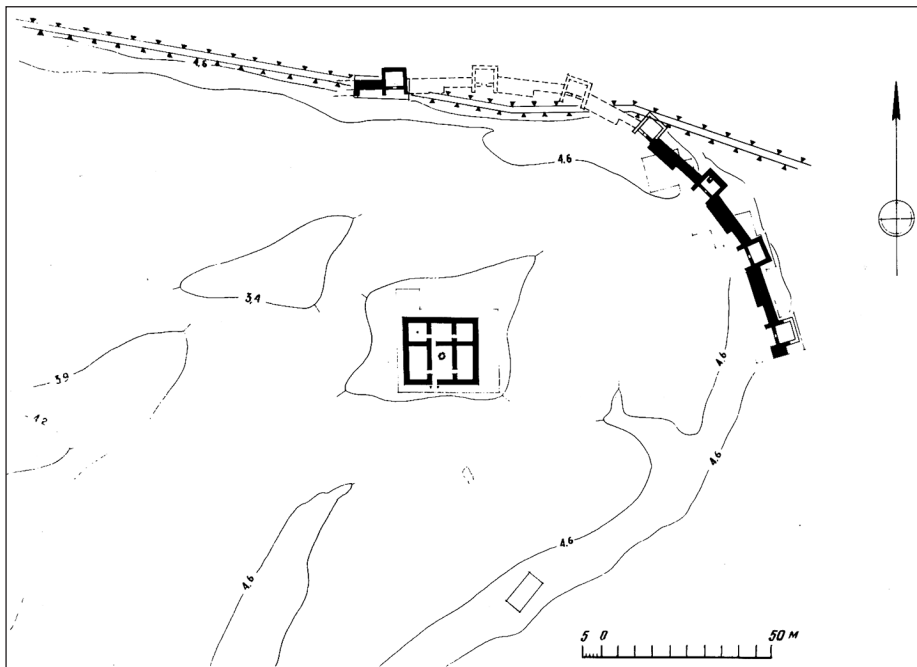


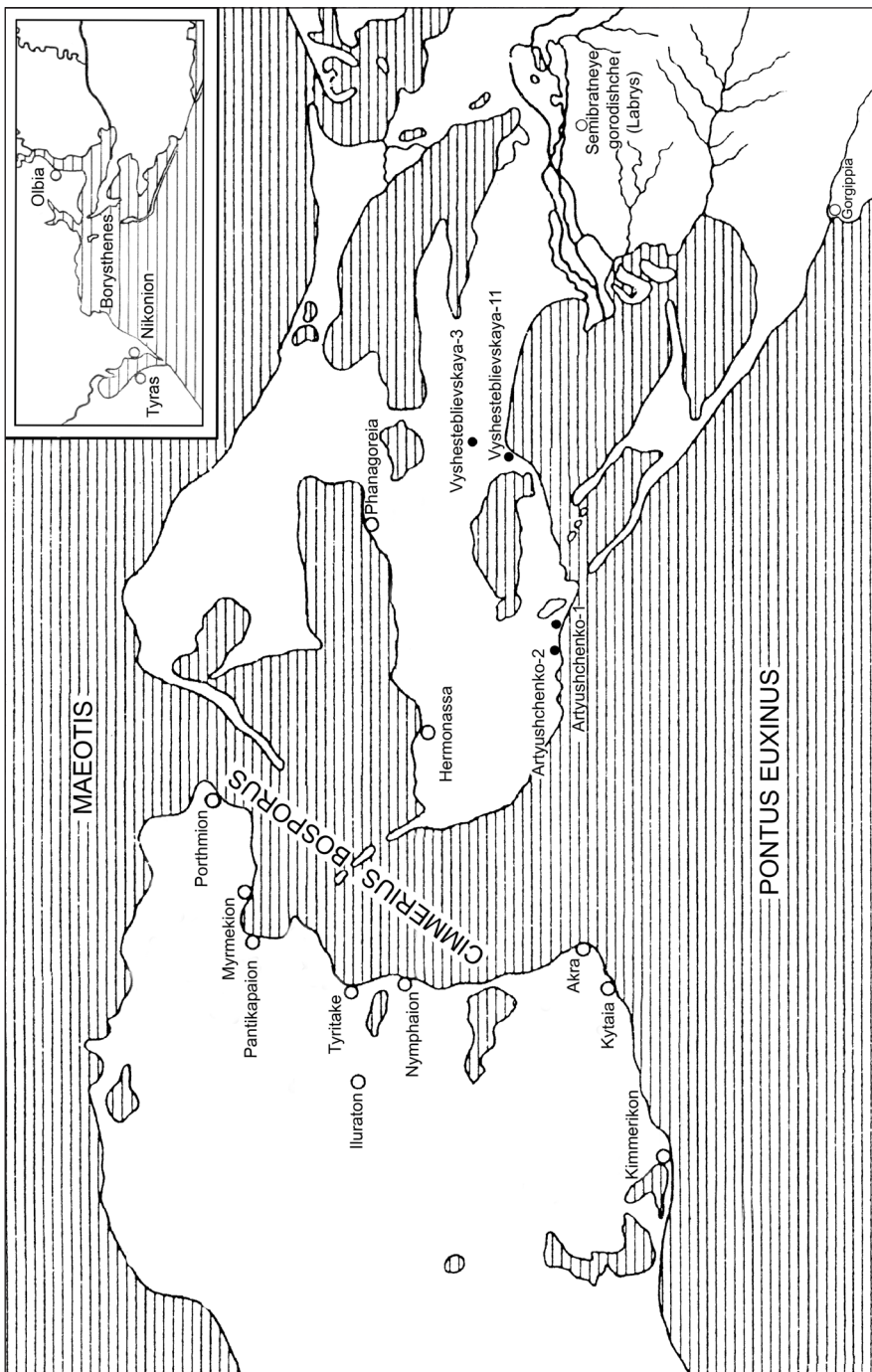
Fig. 7. Labrys. The plan of N. V. Anfimov's excavations in the northeastern part of the Semibratneye townsite (after V. P. Tolstikov).





Fig. 8. Labrys. Additional investigations of excavation area 'A' with the remains of the fortified building (general view from the South-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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