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THE SOUTHERN SUBURB OF TAURIC CHERSONESOS*

The creation of the Historical and Archaeological Park on the territory of the Southern Suburb of Tauric Chersonesos demanded conducting large-scale archaeological studies. The excavations were conducted from 2021 to 2023 by the joined archaeological expedition of the IHMC RAS with the participation of the State Hermitage, the State Museum-Preserve “Tauric Chersonese”, the Institute of Archaeology of Crimea RAS, the Sevastopol State University, and the private joint stock company “Nasledie Kubani”.¹ According to the records, the total area of the archaeological heritage site “Southern Suburb of the Ancient Town of Tauric Chersonesos” was 139 444 m². By the end of 2023 85 797 m² were fully explored (Fig. 1).

The territory where archaeological studies were conducted in 2021 is adjacent to the areas of Chersonesos necropolis and ancient household development near the defensive walls of the city site studied at various times. The first excavations of southern Chersonesos necropolis were conducted by K. K. Kostsyushko-Valyuzhinich as early as 1891–1895.²

Today, the development dynamics of this territory are represented as follows.

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¹ Solovyova et al. 2021 [Н. Ф. Соловьева, В. Л. Мыц, С. Л. Соловьев, “Южный пригород Херсонеса Таврического (предварительные итоги археологических раскопок в 2021 г.)”, *Бюллетень Института истории материальной культуры РАН (Охранная археология)*], 183–188; Solovyova et al. 2022 [Н. Ф. Соловьева, С. Л. Соловьев, В. Л. Мыц, “Краткие результаты раскопок в южном пригороде Херсонеса Таврического в 2022 г.”, *Бюллетень Института истории материальной культуры РАН (Охранная археология)*], 161–169.

² *ОАК* 1893 [*Отчеты Императорской Археологической Комиссии за 1893 год*], 14; 15; *ОАК* 1894, 19; 20.



Fig. 1. The Southern Suburb of Tauric Chersonesos during the excavations. View from the south.

The intensive development of the suburban territory began in the Classical Age. It was mostly linked to the agricultural and craft activity of the first Chersonesos residents, as evidenced by the unearthed remains of the rural buildings with wells and ceramic kilns. As recently as the first half of the fourth century BC, the territory in front of the city gates was granted a special status. The sacred area with a heroon, a temple in antis, an altar, rooms for sacraments, pilgrims and priests, a paved stone yard for processions, and a sacred spring (nymphaeum) were established there.

Among the most important objects is the heroon, the unique site of the burial architecture of 400–350 BC in the Northern Black Sea Coastal Region (Fig. 2). The heroon was a monumental building. Its lower closed part sheltered a sarcophagus with the remains of a hero, probably one of the Chersonesos archegets.³ The outside was decorated with a relief frieze carved with scenes of an Amazonomachy. The ground adjacent to it was used as an open colonnade and, possibly, the place for the hero's statue.

³ Malkin 1987, 204–240; Antonaccio 1995, 245–268; Lane 2009, 248–254; Herda 2013, 67–122.



Fig. 2. The heroon. 4th century BC. View from the northwest.

One of the fragments of the relief frieze with an Amazonomachy scene (Fig. 3) turned out to be one of the most important finds from the territory of the heroon. The iconography of the scene matches the details of the known examples from the mid-fourth century BC. The relief is not high. The “heroic diagonal” is clearly read in its composition. It is the main artistic technique of Scopas used in the reliefs of the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus depicting battles between Amazons and Greeks. Such friezes with battle scenes and Amazons decorated the monumental sanctuaries of Lycia and Caria. These exemplars spread their influence all over Anatolia, Greece, Italy, and other regions in “minor forms” at sites with a burial context. Furthermore, similar to the architectural reliefs from Tarentum and Athens, the Chersonesos frieze decorated the high podium of a small temple built at the gravesite of the deified deceased person.⁴

Of particular interest is a big fragment of the red-figure pelike of the mid-fourth century BC with the depiction of a winged Nike on a quadriga found during the excavations of the heroon (Fig. 4).

⁴ Solovyev 2022 [С. Л. Соловьев (ред.), *Сокровища Южного пригорода Херсонеса Таврического. Каталог выставки*], 31.



Fig. 3. The marble frieze with the Amazonomachy scene. Fragment. From the middle of the 4th century BC.



Fig. 4. The red-figure pelike with the depiction of a winged goddess Nike on a quadriga. Fragment. Attica. From the middle of the 4th century BC.

One of the earliest Chersonesos religious buildings, the temple in antis of the first half of the fourth century BC, has been discovered near the heroon. This temple served as a sanctuary and a place for hero worship, possibly of one of the Chersonesos archegets (Fig. 5). It was built in the Doric order with a four-column portico, a pronaos and a naos for installation of the statue of a deity, and a place for sacraments.⁵ The remains of a big temenos, including a large, paved yard and a multiroom building for priests, sacraments, pilgrims and holding *συσσίτια*, have been unearthed close to the temple (Fig. 6).



Fig. 5. The temple in antis. 4th century BC. View from the southwest.

During the Hellenistic period, the first burials appeared in the vicinity of temenos. Thirty-one graves have been unearthed, primarily in simple pits, paved with stones or carved into rock (Fig. 7); some of them were covered with tiles. Five funerals were performed according to the rite of cremation. Four child burials were placed in amphorae. Two graves with the remains in a crouched position were found. The territory of the Southern Suburb of Chersonesos, allocated for the necropolis, did

⁵ Chistov 2022 [Д. Е. Чистов, “Древнейшие антовые постройки Северного Причерноморья”, *Археологические вести*], 190, Fig. 1. 5, 6.



Fig. 7. The grave. 3rd-2nd centuries BC.

not lose its special meaning for the Chersonesos inhabitants. During the Diophantine wars, it even required an additional fortification in the form of a solid defensive wall with buttresses (Fig. 8), which separated the emerging necropolis from the agricultural territory. This wall probably



Fig. 8. The defensive wall. 2nd century BC. View from the northeast.

served as an additional barrier for the soil drained across the floor of the Chersonesos gully towards the city walls.⁶

In the first centuries AD, the Southern Suburb of Chersonesos had already become a formed necropolis with its inner spatial organization. Its graves demonstrate the great variety of burial rites of Chersonesos inhabitants of that time. The territory of the necropolis was divided into sections. If they belonged to wealthy citizens, they could be richly decorated with stepped stylobates with pylons. The most privileged section was adjacent to the city gates. The unique monumental burial buildings were situated in this section. They were placed at the eastern side of the ancient street that went from Chersonesos' gates through the territory of the city necropolis.

A burial complex of the second century AD unique for the northern Black Sea coastal region, a tholos (a round building with a dome-shaped roof), contained a stone sarcophagus with a lead funerary urn (Fig. 9; 10). A complex of monumental burial buildings of the second century owned by eminent Chersonesos citizens combined the columbarium for the members of one noble family made of massive, profiled slabs with multiple grave stelae, inscriptions and anthropomorphic tombstones and slab tombs of Ariston and Annion, as well as the graves of nameless Chersonesos citizens (Fig. 11).

Another burial complex was an exedra-crypt with stone benches and four burial chambers (Fig. 12; 13).⁷ As a distinct architectural building, an exedra was a special type of burial gazebo. It was usually built in places of special social or religious significance, at the key streets of a city or a necropolis. Exedrae were popular during the Hellenistic age at Greek and Asia Minor agorae and sanctuaries.⁸ In the Roman era, they

⁶ Vakhoneev et al. 2023 [В. В. Вахонеев, В. В. Глазунов, А. А. Букатов, В. В. Панченко, “К вопросу о водоснабжении Херсонеса в античный и средневековый период (по материалам раскопок южного пригорода Херсонеса)”, *Боспорский Феномен: quarta pars saeculi*], 436–440; Glazunov et al. 2023 [В. В. Глазунов, А. А. Букатов, В. В. Вахонеев, Н. Н. Ефимова, В. В. Панченко, “Геоморфология и водоснабжение прибрежной территории Херсонеса Таврического у Карантинной бухты по данным междисциплинарных исследований”, *Материалы по археологии, истории и этнографии Таврии*], 29.

⁷ Vakhoneev–Solovyev 2023 [В. В. Вахонеев, С. Л. Соловьев, “Новый погребальный комплекс II в. н.э. из раскопок Южного пригорода Херсонеса (предварительное сообщение)”, *Античные реликвии Херсонеса: открытия, находки, теории. Материалы научной конференции (Севастополь, 18–22 сентября 2023 г.)*], 13–18.

⁸ Thüngen 1994, 3, 36–39; Lepore 2004, 127–142.

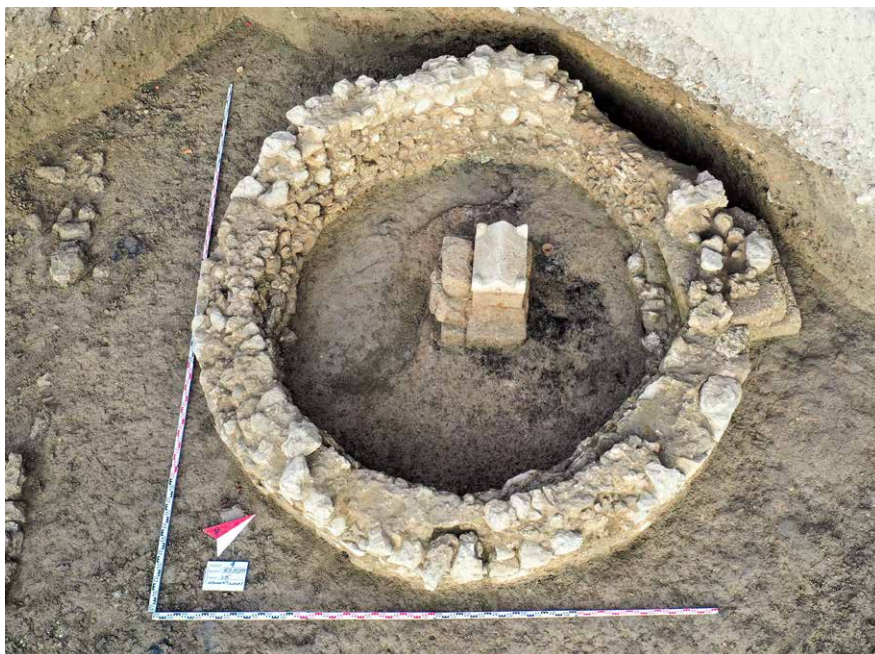


Fig. 9. The tholos. 1st-2nd centuries. View from the southeast.



Fig. 10. The lead funerary urn. 1st-2nd centuries.



Fig. 11. The columbarium. The tombs of Ariston and Annion.
1st–2nd centuries. View from the northwest.



Fig. 12. The exedra. The intersection of the streets of the necropolis.
1st–2nd centuries. View from the northwest.

were used to bestow honors on high-ranking Roman officials in these eastern Roman provinces.⁹ However, the Chersonesos exedra had its own distinctive features: its lower part was used as a family tomb for one of the noble Chersonesos families. The lower part of the building was a burial complex with two sarcophagi carved from solid limestone blocks and with two slabbed graves (Fig. 13). The tombstone of Casandra, daughter of Antisthenes, was used as a covering of one of the sarcophagi; the tombstone was dated to the brink of the eras based on the font. It is worth noting that the name Casandra was registered here for the first time in the Chersonesos epigraphy. After the removal of the covering of the burial chambers and sarcophagi, it has been discovered that burials were performed in accordance with the rites of both inhumation and cremation.



Fig. 13. The exedra crypt. 1st–2nd centuries. View from the northwest.

The sector divided by a monumental propylon with stone steps (Fig. 14), was adjacent to the privileged necropolis from the east. Behind it there were graves in pits and crypts, many of which belonged to noble

⁹ Balty 2009 [Ж.-Ш. Балти, “Большая колоннада Апамеи: письменные источники, эпиграфические свидетельства и данные археологии. Хронологические ориентиры для исследования главного памятника”, *ВДИ*], 197.



Fig. 14. The propylon. 1st–2nd centuries. View from the north.

citizens. Ordinary citizens of that time were buried to the south of these two sectors, in simple pits or stone boxes (Fig. 15). An important feature of the burial practice of Chersonesos citizens in antiquity was the constant combination of inhumation and cremation, the latter tradition being



Fig. 15. The grave. 1st–2nd centuries. View from the northwest.

predominant.¹⁰ There are surprisingly many cremation grounds (Fig. 16), funerary urns, ossuaries, and columbaria (nearly 300 objects) unearthed in all sectors of the necropolis.



Fig. 16. The cremation ground. 1st–2nd centuries. View from the north.

In the Middle Ages, with the beginning of Christianity, the tradition of burial in family crypts started to predominate in the territory of the Southern Suburb, gradually displacing other funeral rites. The crypts usually consisted of an entrance passage (*δρόμος*) and a vaulted chamber with one- or two-tiered beds (Fig. 17). These burial buildings were used as family tombs for a long time.

From the tenth to the thirteenth centuries the intended function of the Southern Suburb changed. The territory was used mainly for utility purposes, as in the earliest age. The network of roads, wells, water cisterns, lime-burning kilns, and residential and utility buildings were constructed. The land sectors were delimited with stone walls. During all

¹⁰ Solovyova et al. 2023 [Н. Ф. Соловьёва, С. Л. Соловьёв, В. В. Вахонеев, “Особенности погребальной практики жителей Херсонеса-Херсона (по материалам раскопок в Южном пригороде)”, in: *Археология и история Боспора. Сборник материалов Международной научно-практической конференции “Археология и история Боспора” (Результаты новейших исследований памятников Боспорского царства)*], 116–123.



Fig. 17. The crypt. 2nd–5th centuries. View from the east.

of Antiquity and later, the territory of the Southern Suburb was used as an inexhaustible source of fresh water for Chersonesos citizens. Since the Classical age, cisterns and wells were built there (Fig. 18). Most probably, they were used as water sources, sanctuaries of water deities, and later as baptismal fountains for the first Christians (more than 150 objects were found).

The Middle Age sites in the territory of the Southern Suburb of Chersonesos occupy almost one third of its area. In the Middle Ages, the suburban area was used both for utility purposes and as a necropolis. The Roman-era crypts were often adapted for burials, but new family tombs were also constructed. Families buried their kinsmen there from the fifth to the thirteenth centuries.

At different times in the Middle Ages, the dynamics and character of the use of the suburban area varied significantly. From the fifth to the seventh century, it was occupied by the necropolis, roads leading to the southern and harbor city gates, wells, and household waste disposal sites where animal bones, fish scales, lots of ceramic ware remains, etc. were accumulated. In the next stage (the eighth to tenth centuries), the road network was extended. Vineyards appeared; next to them, the utility buildings and wineries with the pressing grounds (the tarapans) were constructed. The number of wells tripled. The end of this stage was



Fig. 18. The water source (the cistern). 5th–8th centuries.
View from the east.

marked by mass burials not only in crypts, but also in one of the wells, where more than 80 people were buried, mainly of young age with signs of violent death. In the tenth century, another defensive wall was built parallel to the city wall. It is probably connected with the time of the siege of Chersonesos by the armies of Prince Vladimir (Fig. 19). However, it is more likely that the wall was built in the first quarter of the eleventh century, when Chersonesos was severely damaged by an earthquake. The city walls and towers were ruined; Chersonesos citizens had to build new temporary curtain walls outside of the old ones immediately. They were



Fig. 19. The defensive wall. 10th–11th centuries.
View from the northeast.

constructed of rubble stone of different sizes with clay or without mortar. When the city walls were repaired, the temporary curtain walls were dismantled. Only individual fragments of the foundation masonry remain today. The third stage in the history of the Southern Suburb (the eleventh–thirteenth centuries) was a period of decline of economic activity. Only four wells are attributed to that time. In the last third of the thirteenth century they were covered with household waste, which contained some objects made of wood.¹¹

The extent of archaeological research in the Southern Suburbs of Chersonesos is also evidenced by the collection of archaeological finds from 2021–2023. It included 6 290 696 artefacts, of which 351 780 objects reflecting the centuries-old history of this section of the ancient city were selected for transfer to the Chersonesos Museum.

The most significant part of the archaeological finds consists of amphorae assemblage from various Mediterranean and Black Sea coastal region centers of production. The collection of ceramic stamps on more than five thousand objects provides evidence of Chersonesos' economic ties from the fourth to the first century BC. Among its trading counterparts were the largest Mediterranean and Aegean production centers of wine and olive oil such as Rhodes, Thasos and Knidos, as well as the Black Sea

¹¹ Solovyev 2022, 35.

coastal region poleis – Sinope and Heraclea Pontica. In addition, many stamps on the amphorae of local Chersonesos production were found.¹²

In the burials of the Chersonesos necropolis metalware, iron weapons, bronze lamps, and even silver medical instruments are sometimes found. However, the most widespread metal objects at excavations are details of clothes and simple jewelry: buckles, clasps/fibulae, pins, bracelets, rings, earrings, and amulets/charms, including those of late times.

Bone artefacts are less common. Bone was used mainly to manufacture small objects – pins, small spoons for perfume and medicine, knife handles. In the Middle Ages, caskets were commonly decorated with bone plate incrustation. A notable bone find, a small carved support from the second or first century BC with the depiction of a fantastic winged creature resembling a sphinx (Fig. 20), testifies to the ties between antique Chersonesos and the East – Parthia or Mesopotamia.¹³



Fig. 20. The fragments of the overlay of the table's support. Ivory. 2nd–1st centuries BC.

¹² Solovyev 2022, 29.

¹³ Solovyev 2022, 20–23.

Found during the excavations of the Southern Suburb of Chersonesos were many pieces of jewelry made of precious metals – gold and silver that were part of the grave goods placed in tombs of deceased citizens of Chersonesos urban community (Fig. 21).¹⁴



Fig. 21. Pieces of jewelry from the ancient burial complexes.

The majority of terracotta statuettes from the excavations of the Southern Suburb were found in graves. They were related to the chthonic gods, which included, as everywhere in Greece, Demeter and her daughter Kore-Persephone, Dionysus and his companions, and Eros-Thanatos. One of most remarkable imported statuettes of the Hellenistic period is a small figurine of Thanatos – the winged genius of death who was represented as a standing naked young man with a calathus on his head, spreading long wings and

¹⁴ Solovyev 2022, 25.



Fig. 22. The terracotta statuette of Thanatos.
4th–3rd centuries BC.

wearing a cloak with many folds (Fig. 22). The terracotta figurine is covered with solid white paint. From the fourth to the third century BC, such small figurines were imported to Chersonesos from Callatis.¹⁵

Most of the lapidary inscriptions (about 30 of them) are various epitaphs of a wide chronological range. They are dated from the Hellenistic age to the first centuries AD.¹⁶ Among them are lengthy epitaphs, dedicated, for example, to Philo, daughter of Apollonius (Fig. 23) and to Pharnaces, son of Dionysios.¹⁷ However, the majority of the funeral stelae have only a name and a patronymic of the deceased (Fig. 24). Another interesting group of funeral artefacts consists of small marble inserts with names of the deceased. They were placed into limestone stelae (Fig. 25).

Of special interest in the large numismatic collection from the excavations of the Southern Suburb of Chersonesos is the golden stater of Mithridates Eupator (Fig. 26) with the date ΓΚΣ ΙΒ (twelfth month of the 223rd year of the Bithyno-Pontic era = September 74 BC). Among the known coins of this denomination, it is the only specimen with such a date so far.¹⁸

¹⁵ Solovyev 2022, 27.

¹⁶ One of them, the epitaph of Metrodor, son of Apollonides, from the middle of the 2nd century AD, has already been published, see Trofimova–Pavlichenko 2022, 123–143.

¹⁷ See this volume, Almazova etc. 2024, p. 149–158.

¹⁸ Abramzon–Tereshenko 2022 [М. Г. Абрамзон, А. Е. Терещенко, “Статер Митридата с датой ГΚΣ ΙΒ из раскопок Херсонеса”, *Нумизматические чтения Государственного исторического музея 2022 г.*], 21–25.

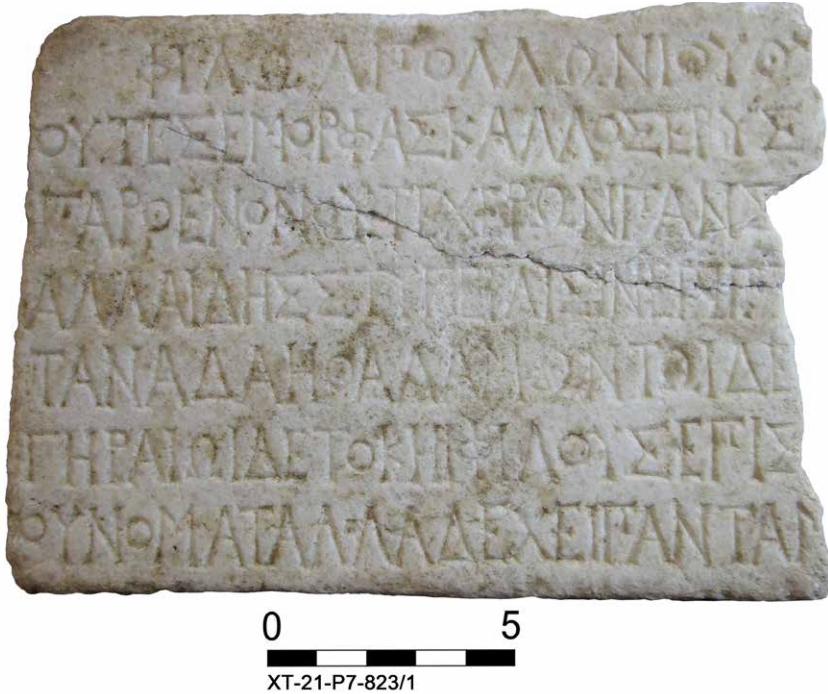


Fig. 23. The poetic epitaph to Philo, daughter of Apollonius. Marble.
From the middle to the end of the 2nd century BC.



Fig. 24. Epitaph to Antibion, son of Niceas. Limestone. Fragment.
2nd century BC.



Fig. 25. The plaque insert into the tombstone of Clymene, daughter of Apollo, the wife of Herogeitos. Marble. 1st–2nd centuries AD.



Fig. 26. The stater. Gold. Mithridates VI Eupator. 74 BC.



Fig. 27. The thalweg of the Chersonesos gully flooded by groundwater after the end of the archaeological excavations. View from the south.

Considering the uniqueness of the series of the funerary buildings of the Southern Suburb of Tauric Chersonesos, it was decided to museumify them. But since the preservation *in situ* of the sites unearthed at two meters below sea level and constantly flooded with groundwater (Fig. 27) was impossible, it was decided to disassemble them and to restore them later using the anastylosis technique¹⁹ for future exhibition on the territory of the Historical and Archaeological Park.

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¹⁹ Thuswaldner et al. 2009; Petzet 2016; Stubbs–Thomson 2016; Yavein et al. 2022 [Н. И. Явейн, Г. С. Иванов, И. В. Сабанцев, О. А. Блинов, Д. П. Кресов, “К вопросу об идеологическом и проектном подходе к реставрации Триумфальной Арки Пальмиры методом анастилоза”, *Бюллетень Института истории материальной культуры РАН (охранная археология)*].

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Large-scale archaeological studies were conducted from 2021 to 2023 on the territory of the Southern Suburb of Tauric Chersonesos. The territory is adjacent to the areas of Chersonesos’ necropolis and ancient household development near the defensive walls of the city site.

As recently as the first half of the fourth century BC, the territory in front of the city gates was granted a special status. A sacred area with a *heroon* was established there. One of the earliest of Chersonesos’ religious buildings, the temple in antis of the first half of the fourth century BC, was discovered near the *heroon*.

In the first centuries AD, the Southern Suburb of Chersonesos had already become the formed necropolis. The unique monumental burial buildings were situated close to the city gates. They were placed on the eastern side of the ancient street that went from Chersonesos’ gates through the territory of the city necropolis. Among them there were burial complexes of the second century AD, unique for the northern Black Sea coastal region: a tholos containing a stone sarcophagus with a lead funerary urn, a columbarium for the members of one noble family made of

massive, profiled slabs with multiple grave stelaе, inscriptions and anthropomorphs, and slab tombs. The burial complex also included the exedra crypt with stone benches and four burial chambers.

The extent of archaeological research in the Southern Suburbs of Chersonesos is also evidenced by the collection of archaeological finds from 2021–2023: 6290696 artefacts, including an assemblage of amphorae from various Mediterranean and Black Sea coastal region centers of production, coins, lapidary inscriptions, ceramic stamps, terracotta statuettes, many pieces of jewelry made of precious metals, and other groups of artefacts.

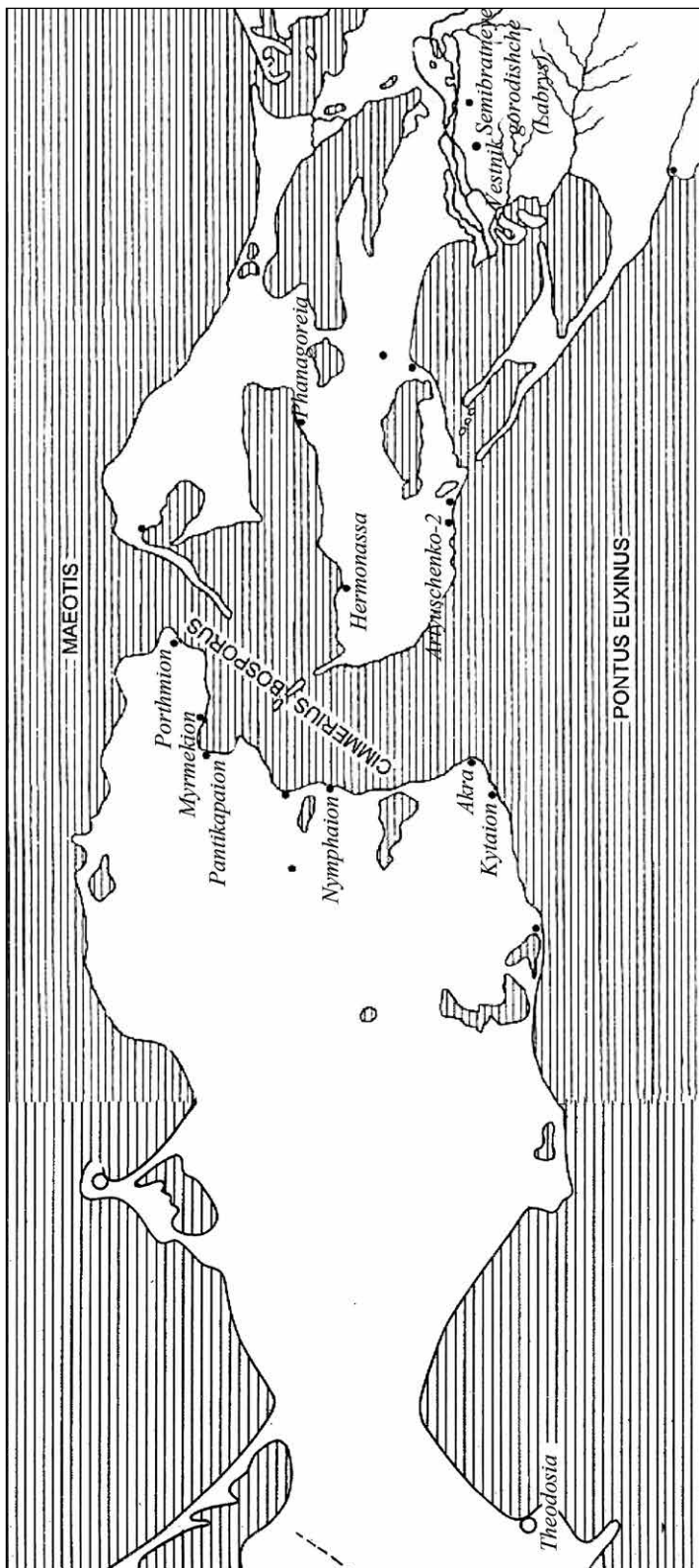
В 2021–2023 гг. на территории Южного пригорода Херсонеса Таврического были проведены масштабные археологические исследования. Территория примыкает к изученным в разное время участкам херсонесского некрополя и древней хозяйственной застройки возле оборонительных стен городища.

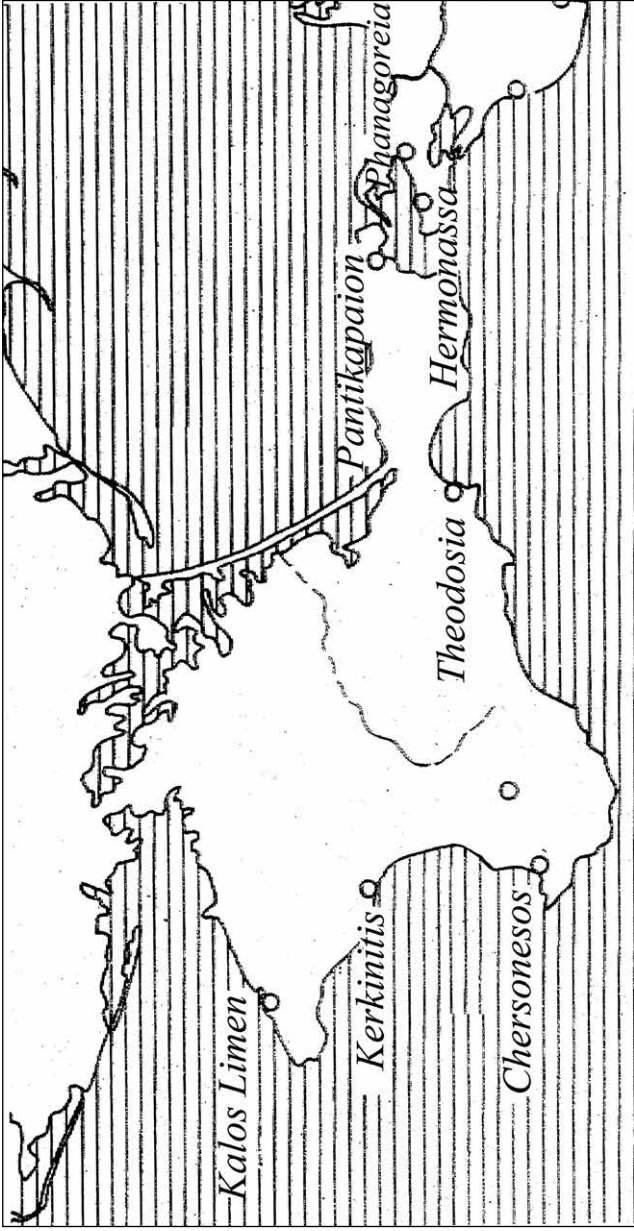
Уже в первой половине IV в. до н. э. местность перед городскими воротами наделяется особым статусом. Здесь обустраивается священный участок, на территории которого находился героон. Рядом с герооном открыта одна из самых ранних культовых построек Херсонеса – храм в антах первой половины IV в. до н. э.

В первые века н. э. Южный пригород Херсонеса – уже сформировавшийся некрополь. В непосредственной близости от городских ворот находились уникальные монументальные погребальные сооружения, расположенные на восточной стороне древней улицы, идущей от ворот Херсонеса по территории городского некрополя. Среди них были уникальные для Северного Причерноморья погребальные комплексы II в. н. э.: толос, который содержал каменный саркофаг со свинцовой погребальной урной, сложенный из массивных профилированных плит; колумбарий для членов одной знатной семьи с многочисленными надгробными стелами, надписями и антропоморфами; плитовые гробницы. Сюда же входила экседра-склеп с каменными скамьями и четырьмя погребальными камерами.

О масштабе археологических исследований в Южном пригороде Херсонеса также свидетельствует коллекция археологических находок 2021–2023 гг., в состав которой вошли 6290696 артефактов, среди которых амфорная тара разных средиземноморских и причерноморских центров производства, монеты, лапидарные надписи, керамические клейма, терракота, большое количество ювелирных изделий из драгоценных металлов и другие группы памятников.

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