On the Question of the Function of Some Buildings on Berezan Island and in Olbia (6th and 5th centuries BC)

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Abstract
In the second half of the last century in Olbia and on the island of Berezan buildings were discovered in situ, which were linked with the building of temples. Their functional purpose was determined in some cases purely on the basis of the nature of their lay-out (there were two buildings on the island of Berezan with an apse at the end and two structures viewed by those leading the excavations as megara in Olbia) and in others not merely on the basis of their lay-out, but also thanks to the accompanying material (the temples of Apollo Delphinios in the Eastern Temenos and of Apollo the Healer in the Western Temenos at Olbia and also the temple of Aphrodite on the island of Berezan). Among these only two buildings could definitely be identified as temples: the temple of Apollo the Healer in Olbia and that of Aphrodite on the island of Berezan. The definition of the “temple of Apollo Delphinios” of the 5th century BC as a temple is not really reliable and at best one alternative among several. The buildings with apses on the island of Berezan, as far as their lay-out is concerned, could be either religious or civic buildings. As for the two “megaron” structures in Olbia, it is at present not possible to define their type or lay-out satisfactorily, let alone their functional use.

Keywords
Greek Colonization, Black Sea, Berezan, Olbia, architecture, temples

For a long time it did not prove possible in the course of excavations in the North Pontic region to discover in situ any remains of cultic buildings dating from the Late Archaic period, which might have been reliably interpreted as temples and might have served as a ‘reconstruction’ for the lay-out of such buildings on the basis of which their type could have been established. Only in the second half of the 20th century were the remains of buildings other than

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1 This applies for example, in particular, to the shrines in Nymphaion, where the building remains were too fragmentary for attempting to achieve a more or less reliable reconstruction of even their lay-out (Khudya 1962, pl. 15, 32).
dwellings – thought to be temples – discovered *in situ* in Olbia and on the island of Berezan. In some cases their function was determined on the basis of the nature of their lay-out, but in others on the basis not only of their lay-out, but of the accompanying archaeological material as well.

Buildings of the first group, *i.e.* those whose function was identified on the basis of their lay-out include two buildings with an apse at one end, which were excavated at the turn of the 19th century by G.L. Skadovskii and in the 1960s by V.V. Lapin\(^2\) and also two sites in Olbia investigated at the beginning of the 1970s by E.I. Levi and L.V. Kopeikina.\(^3\)

The second group includes the temple of Apollo Delphinios in the Eastern *Temenos* and that of Apollo the Healer (ἰητρός) in the Western *Temenos* in Olbia and that of Aphrodite on the island of Berezan. The first of these temples was excavated by A.N. Karasev and E.I. Levi in the 1950s,\(^4\) the second by A.S. Rusyaeva in the 1980s\(^5\) and the last by V.V. Nazarov at the end of the 1990s.\(^6\)

The first building with an apse was discovered in the necropolis which had been investigated by Skadovskii. Remains of its apse – a good nine metres wide – had survived and also lengthwise walls approximately 4 m long (Fig. 1).\(^7\) A logical suggestion was made by Lapin to the effect that the original length of the building could not have been less than 20 m.\(^8\) Judging from the plan drawn by Skadovskii, there had not been any other building of the same period in the temple’s immediate vicinity.

Analysis of the remains discovered by Skadovskii enabled Lapin to put forward a hypothesis to the effect that by no means all the remains of buildings discovered there had belonged specifically to the necropolis: indeed, some of them could logically be identified with the *temenos* which, according to Lapin, had stood in the area that in the second half of the 6th century BC had already been occupied by a necropolis.\(^9\) The arguments put forward by Lapin regarding the fact that the building remains come from two different structures are convincing, apart from the date he proposes for the building with an apse – the 5th century BC. To judge from the plan of the necropolis published in Lapin’s monograph, the building with the apse was not only covered over by

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\(^{2}\) Lapin 1966, 118 etc; Lapin 1967.


\(^{4}\) Karasev, 1964, 49 etc.

\(^{5}\) Rusyaeva 1988; Krzhizhitskii 1998; DTOP, 17-19, 36-38, 47-52.


\(^{7}\) Reproduced from: Lapin 1966, plan between p. 112 and 113.

\(^{8}\) Lapin 1966, 118.

\(^{9}\) Lapin 1966, 109-121.