THE SANCTUARY OF THE CRIMEAN YAILA*

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The ancient sanctuary by the Gursuf Sedlo pass was set in peculiar natural and climatic conditions which largely determined its character. The western part of the Main Range of the Crimean Mountains is an unbroken chain of flat mountain pastures (yailas) which gradually rise from 500 to 1500 m. towards the north-east. The landscape resembles a hilly steppe.¹ The sanctuary is situated on the isthmus connecting the two highest Crimean yailas: Gursuf and Babugan (fig. 1).

Gursuf Sedlo is the highest of the ancient Crimean passes along the routes from the south coast to the north. The altitude of the double summit where the sanctuary was located is 1434 m. (fig. 2). It rises to the south-east of the pass and is on the border between the two landscape and geographical zones of the peninsula: the foothills and the coast separated by the Main Mountain Range. A vast panorama of several geographical zones of the peninsula opens up from here: part of the South Coast with a field of vision of about 150°, the northern slopes of the Main Range, almost all the Inland Range, the steppe beyond it and the sea near Sevastopol. To the north-west of the pass is the valley of the Kacha river with the medieval fortified town of Tepe-Kermen, Kyz-Kermen and the Kacha-Kalien monastery. To the North one can discern Simferopol, where the capital of the late Scythian State, Neapolis, was situated, and to the north-west one can see the Meganon promontory jutting out into the sea. On the coast below the Gursuf Sedlo pass is an area known for its archaeological monuments,

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¹ N.N. Pavlova, Fizicheskaya geografiya Kryma (Physical Geography of the Crimea) (Leningrad: 1964) 3-5, 24.

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Fig. 1. The position of the mountain road (1) and the sanctuary (2) on the plateau of the Main Crimean Range in the vicinity of the Gursuf Stream. This is a diagram of the mountain road.