A RURAL TEMENOS IN THE EASTERN CRIMEA

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The *chora* of Classical city-states, when examined from the geographical and archaeological point of view, can be seen to incorporate various types of monuments and landscapes. This applies in full measure to the rural territory within the Bosporus as well. In recent decades it has proved possible in the Eastern Crimea not merely to identify dozens of settlements and large villages, but also to find the traces of ancient roads, landed holdings, man-made terraces and so on. Of particular importance in this connection are those finds, which testify to the existence of rural shrines.

One such site was excavated by the Eastern Crimean Expedition of the Institute of Archaeology affiliated to the Russian Academy of Sciences in 1991-1992. It is situated 23 kilometres to the North-west of Kerch on the relatively flat and fairly extensive summit of a large rocky hill, which is part of a ridge of hills stretching along the sea coast to the West of Lake Chokrak. The slope of the hill on the eastern side is quite gentle, but the other sides are steep.

The traces of two buildings in a very poor state of preservation had been excavated in the western part of the hill’s summit as early as 1986. The first building was at the highest point on the hill from which the land sloped down steeply in the North-west. Below it there was a route between rocks down into the valley, on the south-western side of which there was a coastal hill and on this second hill a large city-site of the early centuries AD was situated (the city-site went by the name of Generalskoye-vostochnoye). The above-mentioned architectural remains had provided the base or platform, measuring 7 × 12 metres, on which some kind of building had been erected: a watch-tower or shrine? The small number of finds, which were not very distinctive, although they were of various types (amphora fragments, terracotta figurines and ‘Megarian’ cups) spread over a wide time-span (4th-1st centuries BC) allow us to assume that both types of building had existed at this spot.

Eleven metres to the South-east, the base of the walls of the second building were cleared (3.8 × 4 metres), which appeared to be oriented according to the points of the compass. In the centre of the eastern wall there was a doorway 90 cms wide. In a very thin layer of in-fill several fragments of red-clay vessels and moulded lamps on high cylindrical feet were found. In the south-western
corner there was a space measuring 1 × 1 metre, marked off by a border of flat stones and filled with loam containing a large number of shells belonging to deep-sea scallops. In this layer (up to 25 cms thick) fragments of no less than 5 terracotta figurines were found (a late version of a depiction of a Goddess on a throne in a high head-dress holding round and flat objects in her outstretched hands, a protome depicting Attis (?) and a figure of a seated dog [I]), pieces of a miniature terracotta altar, fragments of several hand-moulded lamps on high feet, a small thin-walled red-glaze cup, a copper arrow and a red-clay amphoriskos. Almost all these objects dated from the 2nd-3rd centuries AD.

The rest of the excavated buildings were situated in the eastern part of a small plateau on the hilltop. The walls all had one and the same orientation and they formed a row extending from South to North. They were sheltered by a small hill-shaped elevation.

The building which was in the best state of preservation and the most worthy of note was almost in the centre. Outside it, in quite a thick cultural layer (up to one metre thick) numerous pieces of red- and grey-clay jugs, cups and hand-moulded bowls were found. Also encountered were fragments of various kinds of `Megarian’ cups, terracotta figurines, pale-clay amphorae with double handles, early types of red-glaze pottery. The vast majority of these finds came from the lower part of the cultural layer and dated from a period extending from the second half of the 3rd to the end of the first century BC.

The building occupied an area of 62 square metres. Its walls were 6.2, 9.4, 7.2 and 9.6 metres long and oriented in accordance with the points of the compass: the lengthways axis ran from South-North. The walls were between 70 and 80 cms thick and 33 and 96 cms high. The stones of the walls had been laid fairly neatly: they were rough-hewn stones of local limestone and medium and small in size. Larger and specially hewn blocks were used for the corners of the buildings on the outside. The building consisted of two rooms, which were entered from the East. The smaller of the two was only 12.4 metres square. The outer door was 1.1 metres wide. It had no threshold and had been blocked up with stones. The floor had been poorly preserved and the overall level was somewhat lower than that in the adjacent room. Along the northern wall there was a low

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1 “Terracotts from the Northern Pontic Region,” SAI (Summary of Archaeological Sources), Moscow, 1970, Plate 48,5; 55,3; 56,3; V.I. Denisova, Koroplastika Bospora (Terracottas from the Bosporus), Leningrad, 1981, Pl. 24a, b and also: Terrakoty Severnogo Prichernomorya (Terracottas from the Northern Pontic Region), Moscow, 1970, Pl. 52,10; V.F. Gaidukevich, Antichyne goroda Severnogo Prichernomorya (Classical Cities in the Northern Pontic Region), Leningrad, 1987, p. 137, Fig. 161, 1.