

*Dmitry Chistov*

## INVESTIGATIONS OF VESTNIK-1 SITE IN 2021–2023

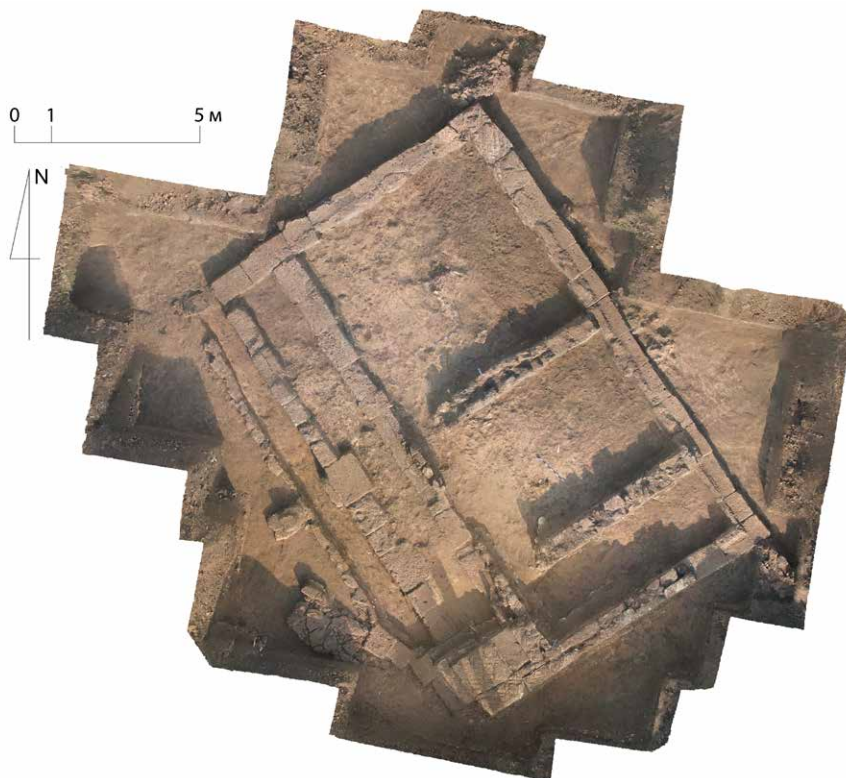
In 2021, the Hermitage Museum organised a new East Bosporan expedition, whose main task was to study ancient sites in the Asian part of the Bosporan kingdom. The first object of research of the Hermitage mission was the rural site of Vestnik-1, located near the village of Vestnik in the vicinity of the city of Anapa. It is located in direct line of sight from the most important centre of ancient Sindike, the Semibratnee city site – the ancient Labrys<sup>1</sup> – at a distance of about 6.5 km in a straight line to the south-west. There is no doubt that there was a close connection between these points in antiquity.

The main result of previous excavations, conducted in 2010–2014,<sup>2</sup> was the discovery of a monumental Greek public or cult building of the 5<sup>th</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC at excavation Sector I (Fig. 1). The walls of Structure 1 had stone plinths up to 0.8 m thick, made of large limestone blocks. The southwest-facing entrance was decorated with a covered portico between two *antae*, and the interior space was divided into three adjacent rooms of unequal area. In addition, the remains of another building (Structure 2) with a smaller area, possibly a single chamber, located about 60 metres to the south-west and up the slope, were found in Sector II. The necropolis research uncovered 10 burials from the late 6<sup>th</sup> to the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. The burial rites are identical to the barbarian sites of

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<sup>1</sup> Vinogradov 2002 [Ю. Г. Виноградов, “Левкон, Гекатей, Октамасад и Горгипп (Процесс интеграции Синдики в Боспорскую державу по новелле Полиэна (VIII, 55) и вотивной эпиграмме из Лабриса)”]; Tokhtas’ev 2006, 2–22.

<sup>2</sup> Chevelev–Kashaev–Sudarev 2011 [О. Д. Чевелев, С. В. Кашаев, Н. И. Сударев, “Новые исследования в Анапском районе Краснодарского края”, in: *Боспор Киммерийский и варварский мир в период античности и средневековья. Взаимовлияние культур (XII Боспорские чтения)*]; Ivanov–Sudarev–Kashaev 2021 [А. В. Иванов, Н. И. Сударев, С. В. Кашаев, “Поселение и могильник у хут. Вестник”, in: *Боспор Киммерийский и варварский мир в период античности и средневековья. Новые открытия, новые проекты (XXII Боспорские чтения)*].



*Fig. 1. Monumental Structure 1 of the 5<sup>th</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.  
Orthophoto map made by the author on the basis of field photographs of  
the excavated building by S.V. Kashayev (IHMK RAS), 2010.*

the Anapa–Novorossiysk necropolis circle, and the necropolis itself obviously belonged to the indigenous Sindian population.

The excavations resumed in 2021–2023 aimed at continuing the study of the immediate surroundings of the monumental building, and limited research was also carried out in the area of Structure 2. The most important result was the discovery of room no. 5, attached on the narrow side to the previously investigated public building (Structure 1) from the south-east (Fig. 2). This extension was built much later than the main building. The presence of an annex (and possibly another one on the opposite side, from the north-west, where excavations in 2010–2014 also revealed fragments of masonry) does not favour interpreting the monumental building as a temple, although it does not exclude its public function.



*Fig. 2.* Later annex (room no. 5) to the south-west of the Structure 1 and its surroundings. Orthophotomap of the field season 2021.

The annex ceased to exist no later than the second quarter or middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. To the south and south-east of it, fragments of slab limestone pavements and walls from the same period were discovered. They are probably traces of a fenced courtyard in front of the entrance to the monumental building or fragmentary remains of neighbouring buildings.

A series of structures dug into the ground from two different periods of the settlement were also investigated. The most expressive finds are related to the structures dating back to the first three quarters of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. Their cluster was revealed around room no. 5, from the south, south-east, and north-east of the building. It consists of seven household pits, circular in plan, with vertical or downward-extending walls. Four more pits look different – like relatively shallow rectangular depressions with rounded corners, or rounded or oval-shaped with traces of postholes at the bottom. In their construction and size, they resemble small dugouts of curvilinear plan, well known in the early levels of ancient sites of the Northern Black Sea coast.

The most outstanding find, made in the filling of one of these structures (no. 24), was a red-figure *pelike* (Fig. 3) depicting a battle between an equestrian Amazon and a griffin. It is a typical example of the so-called Bosporan pelikai, or pelikai of the Kerch style – a large group of vases painted in Athens in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. Such vases are identified in the large group G, which is usually dated to the second half or third quarter of the 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>3</sup> Based on the closest analogues, the *pelike* from Vestnik can be dated to about 350 BC.

Large fragments and complete amphorae of Heraclea Pontike (Fig. 4. 1)<sup>4</sup> and Chios (Fig. 4. 2)<sup>5</sup> from the second to third quarters of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC and fragments of both Laconian and Corinthian type tiles were also found in the filling of these structures. Some of them may have been contemporaneous with later annexes to the public building, but the appearance of others, including dugout no. 24, most likely coincided with its decline.

<sup>3</sup> Beazley 1963, 1462–1470.

<sup>4</sup> Heracleian amphora with the retrograde stamp Διονυσίο / leaf / ἐπὶ Λυκῶ(-). Magistrate Lykon is attributed to the group MG III-A, which is dated to the 360s–350s BC (Kac 2003, 276).

<sup>5</sup> Chian amphora of the type V-B. The closest analogies to its shape are currently dated to the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC (cf. Monakhov et al. 2016 [С. Ю. Монахов, Е. В. Кузнецова, Н. Ф. Федосеев, Н. Б. Чурекова, *Амфоры VI–II вв. до н. э. из собрания Восточно-Крымского историко-культурного музея-заповедника. Каталог*], 77 Ch. 34; 78 Ch. 36).



*Fig. 3. Red figure attic pelike from the pit no. 24.*



*Fig. 4. 1 – Heracleian amphora with the stamp of the 360s–350s BC from pit no. 24; 2 – Chian amphora, second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC from pit no. 26.*

It is noteworthy that there are far fewer traces of economic activity in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, i.e. the time of the monumental Structure 1 itself, in the investigated area. Only four storage pits can be attributed to the Late Classical period.

As the earlier works have shown, the earliest chronological level of the settlement belongs to the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> to the early 5<sup>th</sup> century BC and is represented mainly not by cultural layers, but by storage pits. Finds from them are mostly handmade vessels of local forms. Greek amphorae and table pottery are much rarer in these structures.<sup>6</sup> Investigations in 2021–2023 confirmed these observations. Eleven Late Archaic storage pits were uncovered, as well as one recessed structure (no. 34) of rectangular plan with rounded corners (dimensions: 1.40–1.60×3.85 m). The most important find from this structure is a silver *Pantikapaion triobolos*, dated between the late 6<sup>th</sup> and the first quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>7</sup>

In the course of excavations at Vestnik-1 necropolis in 2023, eight new burials were uncovered (nos. 11–18). These burials, as well as those investigated earlier in the same sector, are grouped into several funerary structures, which were probably family or clan tombs. The boundaries and construction of three such structures, located close to each other, have been identified. They had a rounded form, 5–8 metres in diameter, and were made of roughly chipped slabs of limestone and limestone rubble (Fig. 5). The burial installations of the Vestnik-1 necropolis resemble the circular stone structures or cromlechs built around most of the graves of the Sindian necropolis near Rassvet village<sup>8</sup> and the burial ground on the territory of the experimental farm “Anapa”,<sup>9</sup> but also have distinctive features: a much larger size and the presence of additional burials along the perimeter, in addition to the central grave. The burials differ in design: they include both shallow earth graves with perimeter stone linings and burials in stone boxes. This burial ground (as well as barbarian necropoleis of the Anapa–Novorossiysk area in

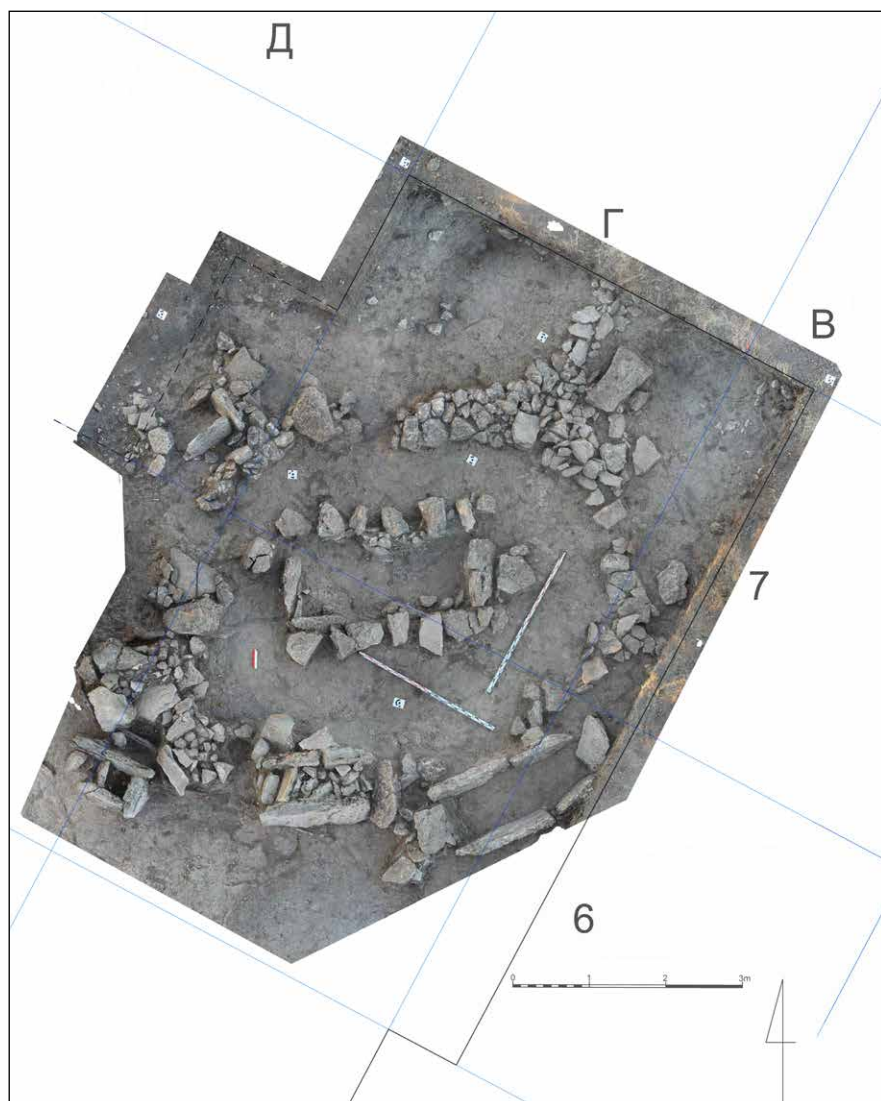
<sup>6</sup> Ivanov–Sudarev–Kashaev 2021, 145–146.

<sup>7</sup> Tereshchenko–Chistov 2023 [А. Е. Терещенко, Д. Е. Чистов, “Монеты из раскопок поселения Вестник-1”, *Археологические вести*], 222–223, Fig. 2.1.

<sup>8</sup> Novichikhin 2010 [А. М. Новичихин, “Глава 3. Погребальный инвентарь некрополя у хутора Рассвет”, in: А. А. Малышев (ed.), *Население архаической Синдики: по материалам некрополя и хутора Рассвет*, Некрополи Черноморья 3], 191–194, Fig. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Alekseeva 1991 [Е. М. Алексеева, *Греческая колонизация Северо-западного Кавказа*], 64.





*Fig. 5. Burial structure no. 1, orthophoto map of the field season 2023.*



general) is characterised by the elongated position of the bodies and their dominant easterly orientation.<sup>10</sup> However, in the Vestnik-1 necropolis, the orientation of a certain burial depended on the place occupied by it on the periphery of the rounded burial structure.

Two warrior burials (nos. 13 and 15) are the earliest on the necropolis. A very similar set of grave goods (Fig. 6) – daggers-*acinaces* with volute pommels and heart-shaped guards, bronze unclasped bracelets, and handmade pottery – allow us to assume that these burials were approximately simultaneous. Thanks to the discovery of a “proto-Thasian” amphora of the II series (Fig. 6. 6)<sup>11</sup> in burial no. 13 and in accordance with the dating of the armoury items, both burials can be dated to the third quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. The latest grave (no. 17) in a stone box is dated by the “proto-Thasian” amphora of the V series to the second quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC,<sup>12</sup> but some activities on the necropolis could have taken place even later. This is evidenced by traces of a memorial rite – the broken North Aegean amphora from the middle to the third quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC<sup>13</sup> on the surface of one of the limestone rubble structures.

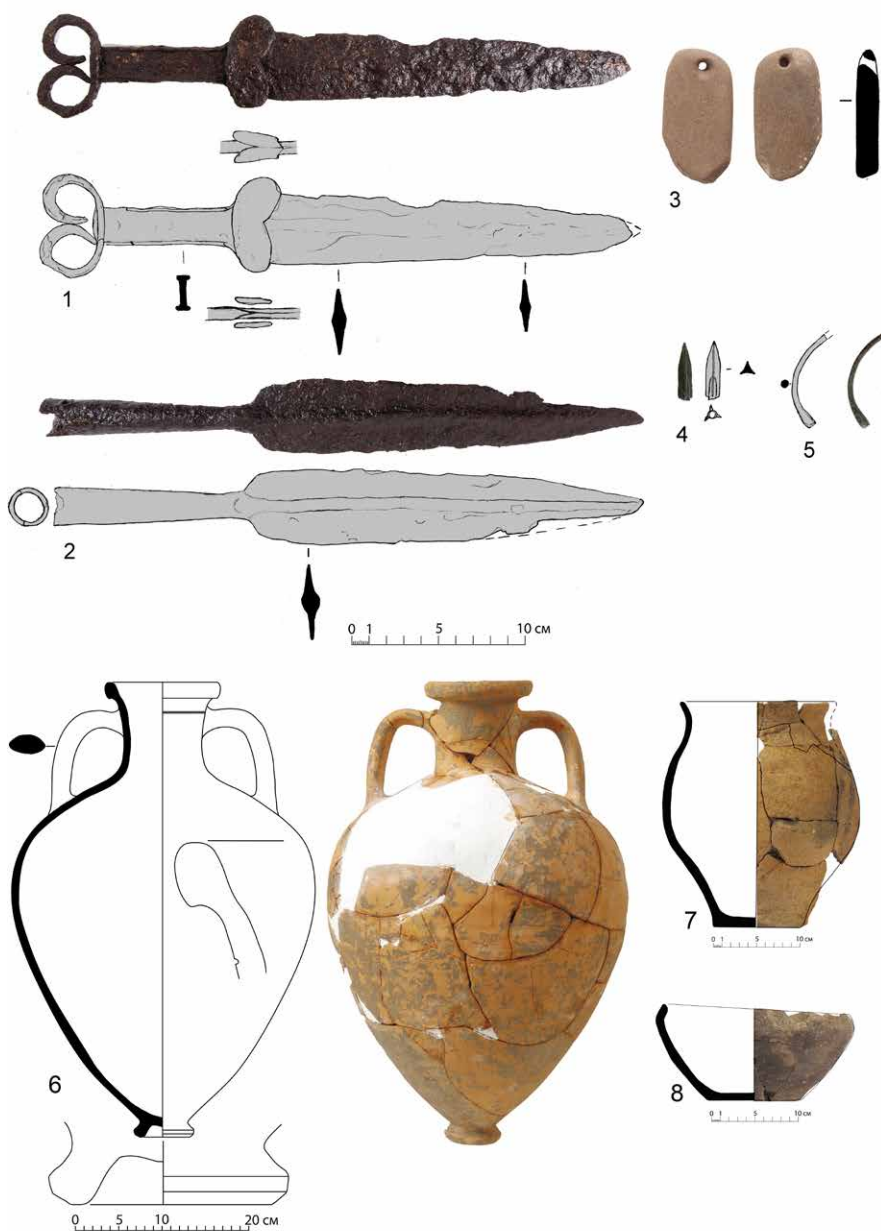
The clarified chronology of the Vestnik-1 settlement looks as follows: from the third quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, there was a small rural settlement with non-Greek, Sindian population. Considering the chronological framework of the indigenous burials of the necropolis, which definitely correlates with this period, we can say that it lasted until the second quarter, perhaps even the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC. Then the settlement sharply changes its appearance – economic activity comes to naught, and burials on the investigated area of the necropolis are no longer carried out. Apparently, it was at this time that a monumental public or cult building was erected in the tradition of Greek architecture, which existed until approximately the second quarter to the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, the building was also enlarged by additions; its purpose may have changed. At the final stage of this structure’s existence, or after the building had fallen into decay, traces

<sup>10</sup> Ivanov–Sudarev–Kashaev 2021, 150.

<sup>11</sup> Monakhov 2003 [С. Ю. Монахов, *Греческие амфоры в Причерноморье: типология амфор ведущих центров-экспортеров товаров в керамической таре*], 39–40; Monakhov et al. 2019 [С. Ю. Монахов, Е. В. Кузнецова, Д. Е. Чистов, Н. Б. Чурекова, *Античная амфорная коллекция Государственного Эрмитажа VI–II вв. до н. э.*], 113, NA.2.

<sup>12</sup> Monakhov 2003, 41–42, Tab. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Monakhov et al. 2019, 139, An.3.



*Fig. 6.* Grave goods from burial no. 15, 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.  
 1 – acinaces, 2 – spearhead, 3 – touchstone; 4 – arrowhead, 5 – fragmented  
 bronze bracelet, 6 – “proto-Thasian” amphora, 7–8 – handmade ceramics:  
 pot and bowl.

of intensive economic activity – pits and small dugouts for residential or economic purposes – began to reappear in its surroundings. The latest ceramic finds, amphorae stamps and coins, most of which belong to the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC,<sup>14</sup> allow us to trace the existence of the site to the last two decades of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC.

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<sup>14</sup> Tereshchenko–Chistov 2021.

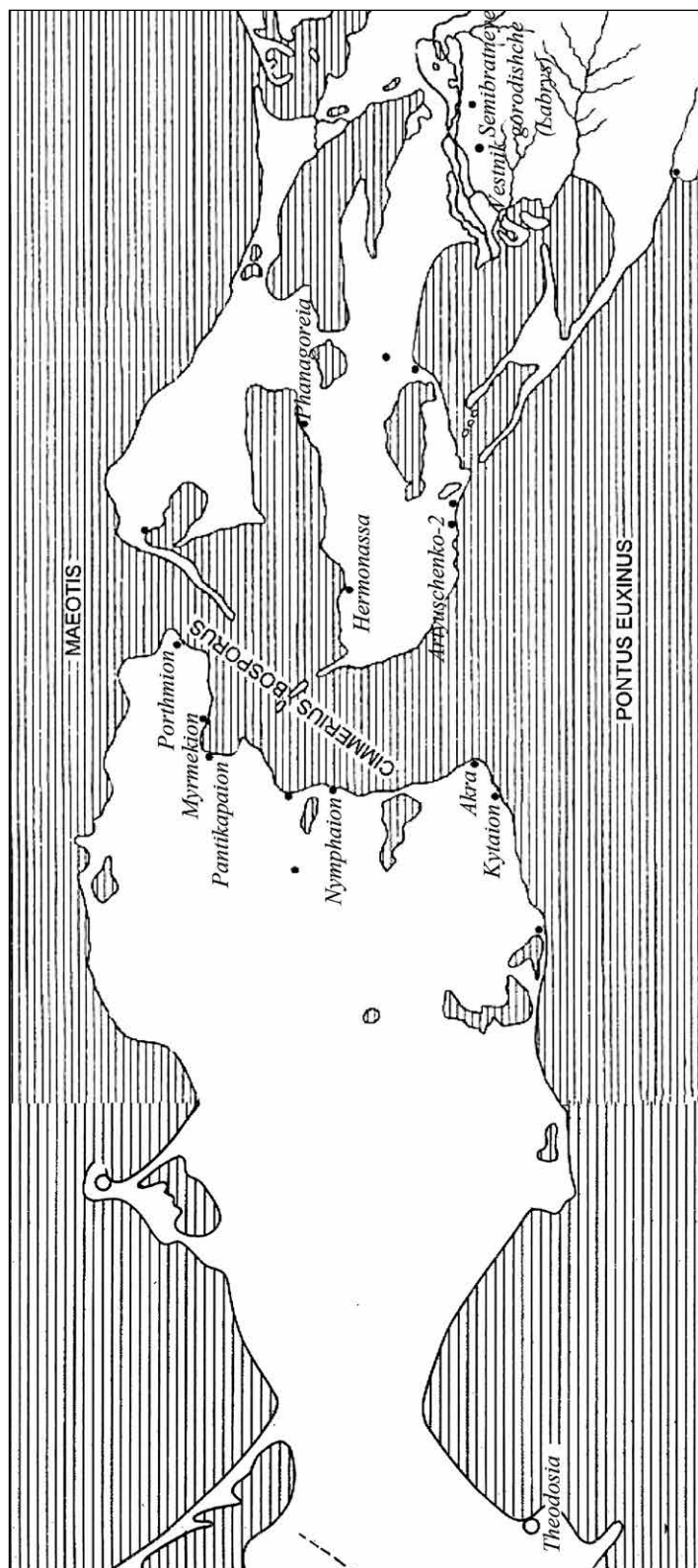
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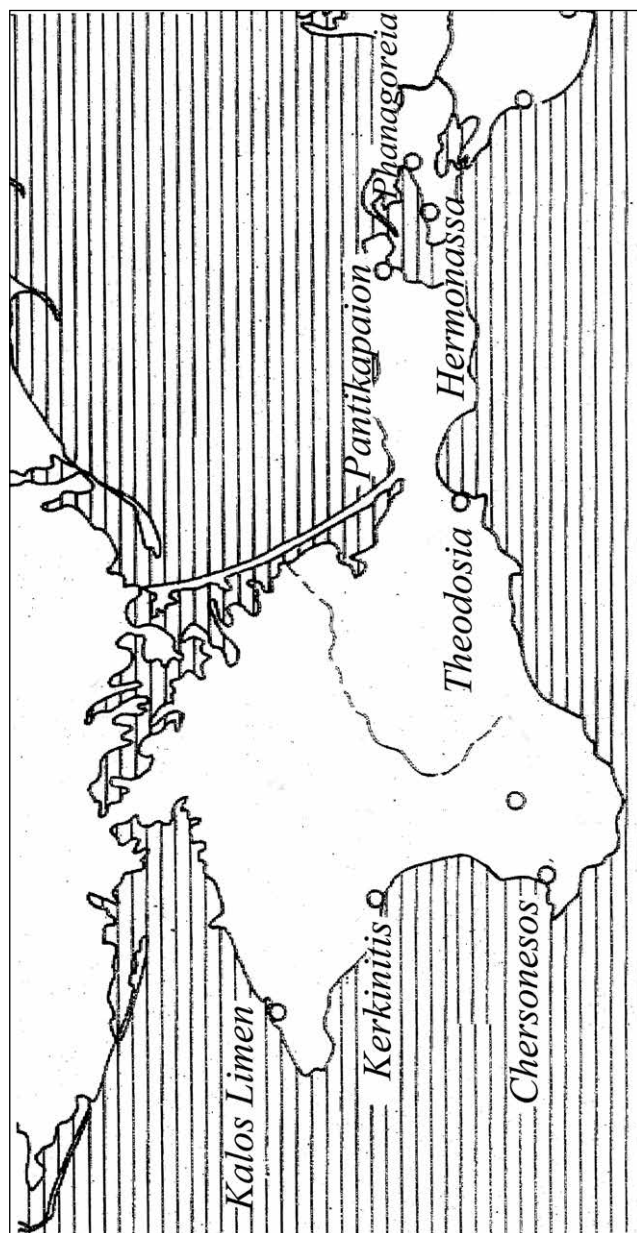
In 2021, the Hermitage organized a new East Bosporan expedition whose main task was to study ancient sites from the Asian part of the Bosporan Kingdom. The first object of research of the Hermitage mission was the rural site Vestnik-1, located near the village of Vestnik in the vicinity of Anapa. During three field seasons on the site, the immediate surroundings of the monumental Greek public building discovered earlier were investigated. A late annex to it, dating back to the first half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, was uncovered. Three funerary structures were discovered on the necropolis, probably serving as collective family tombs. The investigated burials belong to the indigenous Sindian population and date from the third quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> to the second quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.

В 2021 г. в Эрмитаже была организована новая, Восточно-боспорская экспедиция, основной задачей которой стало изучение античных памятников азиатской части Боспорского царства. Первым объектом исследований эрмитажной миссии стало поселение Вестник-1, расположенное у хутора Вестник в окрестностях города Анапы. В течение трех полевых сезонов велись раскопки самого поселения, где было исследовано ближайшее окружение ранее обнаруженного монументального греческого общественного здания. Удалось раскрыть позднюю пристройку к нему, датируемую первой половиной IV в. до н. э. На некрополе выявлены три погребальных комплекса, вероятно, служившие коллективными родовыми усыпальницами. Исследованные погребения принадлежат местному синдскому населению и датируются от третьей четверти VI до второй четверти V в. до н. э.

# **ARCHAEOLOGICA**







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