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CHERSONESUS TAURICA IN THE 4TH CENTURY BC–1ST CENTURY AD: URBAN DOMESTIC BUILDINGS, HOUSE ARCHITECTURE AND DAILY LIFE

Until today, the remnants of the city of Chersonesus have been explored for 180 years (fig. 1. 2). Archaeologists and historians have shown particular interest in the topography of this Byzantine city, whose buildings have been fairly well preserved. At present, investigations focus on the architecture of the churches and residential buildings of the 6th–14th c. Numerous publications have been devoted to the issue of the expansion of the municipal area of Chersonesus Taurica. At the beginning of the 20th c., A. Bert'je-Delagard proposed an original system of the numbering of the fortifications of Chersonesus and arrived at certain fundamental conclusions concerning their military and strategic significance¹.

The fortifications are among the most important archaeological sources for the topography of the city. I. Antonova made a substantial contribution to the investigation of the fortifications of Chersonesus and to its topography. Her chronology of the expansion of the city limits, confirmed by the archaeological data, essentially seems convincing². Most recent publications tend to draw more general conclusions from the collected data and to establish patterns of the expansion of the territory of the city during the Antiquity³. A summary of the collected material yields the following reconstruction of the expansion of the municipal area of Chersonesus.

The first stage of the erection of the defensive walls took place between the 5th and the early 4th c. BC, the period when – as most scholars believe – the city of Chersonesus Taurica was established⁴. The subsequent expansion of the municipal territory made it necessary to tear down the existing walls, which were now located in the middle of the city. It was possible to establish the original layout of the fortifications based on the still existing sections of the walls, of which there are very few, due to various reasons⁵. Because of the poor condition of the preservation of the defensive walls, additional proof of the location of the city limits during the first period is provided by the sites of the necropolises, which were set up outside the area of the city⁶. Information on the development of the city during its early period is only available from a small area in its north-eastern section⁷. The remnants of buildings of the turn of the 4th c. BC turned out to be residential buildings with their foundations inserted into the bedrock. Because of the intensive construction activity during later periods, it has unfortunately not been possible to determine the exact nature of the urban buildings in Chersonesus from the Classical period. The layout of the blocks of houses changed due to objective reasons resulting from the topography.

The second stage of the construction of the municipal fortifications took place between the 4th and the early 3rd c. BC. The westward expansion of the territory of the city was caused by a period of economic prosperity and political stability in the second quarter of the 4th c. BC. The text of the oath of the Chersonesites from

¹ A. L. BERT'JE-DELAGARD, *O Chersonesě. Izvēstija Imperatorskoj archaeologičeskoj komissii* (Saint Petersburg 1907).

² ANTONOVA 1990.

³ L. V. MARČENKO, *Zapadnyj rajon Chersonesa v ěllinističeskoj period. Chersonesskij sbornik 9* (Sevastopol 1998) 80–82; L. V. MARČENKO, *Ēllinističeskoj kompleks u perekrestka glavnyc magistralej goroda. Chersonesskij sbornik 10* (Sevastopol 1999) 101–106; BUJSKICH – ZOLOTAREV 2001; ZUBAR' et. al. 2005

⁴ ANTONOVA 1990, 12; BUJSKICH – ZOLOTAREV 2001, 111–115.

⁵ S. G. RYŽOV, *Oboronitel'naja stěna V v. do n.é. v Sěvernom rajoně Chersonesa. Materials in Archaeology, History and Ethnography of Taurica 13* (Simferopol 2007) 20–30.

⁶ A. A. ZEDGENIDZE – O. J. SAVELJA, *Nekropol' Khersonesa V–IV vv. do n. e.*, KSIA 168, 1981, 3–9.

⁷ M. I. ZOLOTAREV, *Chersones Tavričeskoj: osnovanije i stanovlenije polisa*, in: S.V. UŠAKOV (ed.), *Chersonesskij Sbornik 14* (Sevastopol 2005) 18.

the 3rd c. BC provides information on the area of the state, which covered the north-western part of Crimea, on the flourishing of agriculture in the immediate vicinity of the city, and on severe political conflicts, which brought about the victory of the democratic party⁸. In the late 4th c. BC, the land on the outskirts of Chersonesus was taken up by viticulture⁹. In the last thirty years of the 4th and the first half of the 3rd c. BC, due to the general business prosperity, the monetary economy of the city underwent a change, as silver and copper coins of large nominal values began to be minted¹⁰. Organised planning of the layout of the city, which was preserved until Byzantine times, began at the turn of the 4th c. BC. A period of intensive building activity in Chersonesus commenced in the last quarter of the 4th c. BC¹¹.

We now have reliable epigraphic evidence of the existence of an agora, a bouleuterion, a theatre, a stadium, a fish market and an acropolis, as well as of temples and other sacral edifices in Chersonesus. However, archaeological exploration has only confirmed the existence of the theatre and a sacral complex in the east of the city, featuring a temple of the goddess Parthenos. All the other uncovered buildings of ancient times are residential buildings. So far, residential buildings of two types have been encountered in Chersonesus: houses with *pastades* (an entrance hall or a corridor providing access to the court) and houses with peristyle courts.

Houses of the first type were discovered on a plain on the northern shore of Chersonesus. In one block of houses are two buildings of the surface area of, respectively, 146.64 and 149 sq. m. (fig. 3, 2). In the neighbouring block, on an area of 24 × 27 m, four houses were identified (fig. 3, 3). In another block, three houses were unearthed on the area of 23.20 × 26.20 m; one of these has an untypical layout, extending along a transversal street (fig. 3, 1). Residential buildings with *pastades* were especially common in Olynthus (Macedonia) in the Hellenistic period.

The other type of residential houses discovered in Chersonesus are large buildings with inner peristyle courts. One house of this type with a surface area of app. 661 sq. m. (fig. 4, 1) was excavated on the northern shore. Unfortunately, its bad condition of preservation does not allow a reconstruction of the purposes of most interior rooms. The floor is only preserved in one room, it is decorated with a pebble mosaic and dates to the first half of the 3rd c. BC (fig. 5)¹². This room was apparently an *andron*.

Most of the houses with peristyle courts were located in the blocks between the main street and the first longitudinal street, as well as in the area of the theatre.

One of them was uncovered at the eastern *temenos* in block II. It was built on a plot of a size of app. 634 sq. m (26.20 × 24.20 m) (fig. 4, 2). The layout of the interior of the house is excellently preserved. Access to the house was provided by an entrance on the side of the main street, followed by a *pastas*. This entrance was used by the customers of the shop; the latter was located above a storage cellar to the right of the entrance and had a surface area of about 100 sq. m. The other entrance to the building was on the side of the south-western transversal street and was apparently used by private guests. The room to the left of this entrance was probably an *andron*. Inside the building, a stylobate and the stone paving of the court, including a well, have been preserved. The *oecus* was located in the north-western section of the house. The detached structures in the south-eastern part of the plot were household and storage buildings. The roof of the peristyle was supported by porticos with columns of the Doric order¹³. The capitals (with a diameter of 36.6 cm) and fusts of columns of this order were uncovered during the excavation. The roof of the house was covered with tiles dating to the late 4th to early 3rd c. BC; some of them made in Sinope. The walls of the rooms were painted in red and yellow, as unearthed fragments of these colours suggest.

Another residential house with a peristyle court was identified north of the ancient theatre; its north-western side faced the main street. Although frequent alterations have essentially destroyed the part of the building that was above the ground, its subterranean rooms have been excellently preserved. The total surface area of the structure is app. 649 sq. m (26.80 × 24.20 m) (fig. 4, 3). Its north-western section was taken up by

⁸ É. I. SOLOMONIK, *Kamennaja lětopis' Chersonesa* (Simferopol 1990) 9–11.

⁹ G. M. NIKOLAJENKO, *Chora Chersonesa Tavričeskogo* (Sevastopol 1999) 33.

¹⁰ JE. JA. TUROVSKIJ, *Monety nezavisimago Chersonesa IV–II vv. do n. é.* (Sevastopol 1997) 42 f.

¹¹ BUJSKICH – ZOLOTAREV 2001, 113.

¹² D. SALZMANN, *Untersuchungen zu den antiken Kieselmosaiken. Von den Anfängen bis zum Beginn der Tesseratechnik*, AF 10 (Berlin 1982) 89.

¹³ RYŽOV 1985, 155–161.

dwelling rooms, under which, in the western corner, lay a cellar consisting of three rooms connected by a corridor. The cellar rooms could be entered from the court by a stairway in its western corner. Another stairway, located in the north-east corner of the court, led to the *oecus*. There was also a well in the court, close to the north-western colonnade.

In 2003, the Ukrainian-Polish archaeological expedition headed by the present authors under the scientific research project ›The Topography of Chersonesus Taurica‹, carried out by the National Reserve ›Chersonesus Taurica‹ and the Adam Mickiewicz University of Poznań in the years 2002–2011, discovered the remnants of an ancient residential building in block LV in the western section of Chersonesus. This structure took up the area of 26.80 × 26.80 m (718 sq. m) (fig. 4, 4. 6), being the largest residential house discovered so far in Chersonesus. Unfortunately, the structures of the house which were above the ground were entirely destroyed when a church was erected at its site in Byzantine times. The ancient building material and the architectural details were recycled during this construction activity.

Based on a study of the archaeological material from the filling of the foundation in the bedrock of the north-east side-street, the beginning of construction in this section of the city may be dated to not earlier than the turn of the 4th c. BC. This layer included many fragments of amphorae made in Chersonesus between the late 4th and the first half of the 3rd c. BC, some of them bearing stamps from the first thirty years of the 3rd c. BC¹⁴, as well as fragments of amphorae produced in Sinope in the 3rd to early 2nd c. BC and black-slip tableware of the late 4th to early 3rd c. BC. As we can see, residential peristyle houses began to be built throughout Chersonesus at the same time.

In the centre of the residential house in block LV was a courtyard surrounded by porticoes on all sides. At the south-eastern portico, a well was identified, which was bored into the soft rock. At the depth of 2.70 m below the present surface level, there is a layer of yellow-green clay and underneath subsoil water. The well was filled up in the early-Byzantine period, when the house was abandoned. The filling features a few small pieces of ancient and early-Byzantine earthenware vessels, dated to no later than the 6th c. AD. In the upper layers of the filling, we found a terracotta head of a woman, made locally in the 3rd c. BC (fig. 8). It is the head of a young Greek woman, turned slightly upward and to the left; its oval face is framed with thick waves of hair, which is tied back.

The rooms in the south-eastern and south-western parts of the complex were entirely destroyed in the Byzantine period. Apparently, these were single-story household structures. No foundations or cellars could be identified.

In the north-eastern part of the house, auxiliary rooms were excavated, where food was stored in *pithoi* and *amphorae*. One of these rooms is rectangular and has a floor of the size of 4.80 × 7.70 m (36.96 sq. m). Three recesses cut out in the rock were found, where initially *pithoi* and later *amphorae* had been kept. In the layer of the destruction, a marble half-finished product of marble *mortaria* was been found (fig. 9). The slab constitutes the upper left-hand section of a tablet bearing the text of a Hellenistic decree from the 4th to 3rd c. BC¹⁵. The same layer included an earthenware spindle wheel, loom weights, three astragals and a dice from the 2nd to 1st c. BC¹⁶, hair-pins and a bracket with the image of a lion, both made of bone, and a fragment of a terracotta volute (fig. 13). In the northern part of the room, two amphorae bodies were located *in situ*, made respectively in Sinope between the first half of the 1st c. BC and the beginning of the 2nd c. AD and in Colchis between the second half of the 1st c. BC and the beginning of the 2nd c. AD; they were buried in a layer of yellow-brown soil of medium thickness. Inside one of them was a red-slip jug. The layer of destruction dates to the turn of the 1st c. AD.

Adjacent to the first storage room to the south-east lies a second one, where three 0.78–0.80 m deep recesses were cut out of the rock for the keeping of *pithoi* as well. The dimensions of this room are 4.80 × 7.25 m (34.8 sq. m); the recesses lay along the north-eastern wall. Under a filling from the first half of the 11th c., a floor level with pieces of charcoal was uncovered. According to a carbon-14 test, this floor level dates to

¹⁴ The authors wish to express their gratitude to E. Turovskij for the identification of the stamps, which will be published in the monograph of the excavation work in block LV.

¹⁵ The complete text of the decree will be published by Zara Gočeva of the Institute of Thracian Studies of the Bulgarian Academy of Science in our monograph of the excavation of this housing block.

¹⁶ B. G. PETERS, *Kostoriznoje delo v antičnyh gosudarstvach Sivernago Pričernomor'ja* (Moscow 1986) 148 f. 152.

the year 180 AD (± 90). Underneath the floor was a filling dating to the turn of the 2nd c. AD. The original level of the floor above the rock featured a significant amount of charcoal as well. Carbon-14 tests date this level to the year 10 A. D. (± 80). During a reconstruction of this structure in Roman times, the room for the storage of *pithoi* was dissolved, and the recesses cut out in the rock were filled in; hereby, the level of the floor rose substantially.

In the northern corner of the house, to the right of the entrance, lay another room for the storage of *pithoi*. Here, four round recesses for *pithoi* were found. Because of subsequent reconstruction, it has not been possible to determine the exact dimensions of the room; presumably its width was 4.80 m and its length, 4.20 m (20.16 sq. m). In the layer of destruction, loom weights, some bearing stamps, spindle wheels and a bone spindle were discovered.

The central room in the north-western part of the house was the kitchen (5.50 \times 4.80 m). In the middle of this room, a hearth was found, consisting of a 0.20 m deep hollow, cut out of the rock and lined with a thick layer of clay with straw. The walls and the dome of the hearth were also made of clay with an addition of straw. This lining was 2 cm thick. During the excavation, a large number of big pieces of fallen-off baked lining were found inside the hearth. North and west of the hearth were recesses for two *pithoi*.

West of the kitchen, two more rooms with semi-cellars that were not connected with each other were discovered. The cellars were accessible through stairways on the side of the portico. Both rooms were partly cut out of the rock (up to a depth of 0.50 m), and their walls were lined with blocks of rough stone. It is difficult to establish the purpose of these rooms, due to the presence of a later filling from the turn of the 1st c. AD. In the western corner a recess for a *pithos* was discovered (fig. 7). Amongst the material filling the rooms, pieces of red stucco and tiles covered with red slip are worth mentioning. These rooms might have been used for religious purposes, indirect evidence of this is the presence of a similar sanctuary in another house in Chersonesus¹⁷.

In one of the semi-cellars valuable objects were found: the head of a marble statue of a woman, a fragment of a torso from a marble sculpture group, and a marble head of Dionysus, originally part of a bas-relief altar (fig. 10–12). Spectral and isotopic tests revealed that the sculptures were made of marble from the quarries on the island of Paros and in Pantecalion, which supplied sculptures to Athens as well. Of most artistic interest is the portrait of a mature woman. This is a marble woman head with an oval face, of a maximum height of 26.5 cm and a width of 16.5 cm (15.9–16.0 cm at the level of the eyes). It has regular features and a high forehead with two deep wrinkles in the middle. The oval eyes are symmetrically disposed, spaced 4 cm apart from each other. The distance between the outer corners of the eyes amounts to 11 cm. There are three wrinkles at the outer corner of the right eye and four at the outer corner of the left one. The nose is straight and slightly curved, widening downward; its height from the end of the eyebrows is 6.8 cm, and its width 4 cm. The end of the nose is broken off. The lips are medium-sized and tightly closed. The upper lip is narrow, the lower one is swollen and wider. The distance between the corners of the mouth is 4.8 cm, the total width of the lips is 1.7 cm. The woman's almost imperceptible, haughty smile is directed to the right. The smile produces two wrinkles at the right corner of the mouth and one at the left one. Two conspicuous mimic wrinkles run from the nose to the lips. There is a dimple in the right cheek. The chin is clearly delineated; it narrows downward and has a deep dimple in the middle. A slight double chin is visible. On the woman's throat, one can see two vertical veins and two horizontal wrinkles, the so-called Venus's girdle, which might have appeared at an earlier age. The neck is 13 cm wide. The model's wavy hair is parted, with six locks on each side of the straight part, and tied back in a thick bun. The ears are partly covered with hair. The head is slightly turned to the right. The top back part of the head was cut off on purpose by the sculptor. This cross-section has a roughly circular shape (14.0 \times 16.0 cm) and bears traces of an organic glue. A recess in the shape of a truncated cone was cut in the neck, of the dimensions 4.5 \times 4.2 by 8.5 \times 8.5 cm and the depth of 8.6 cm. The maximum preserved height of the sculpture is 39 cm.

The sculptor must have known the woman whom he portrayed. Based on the high artistic standard of the piece and the expensive material, it may be surmised that the sculpture represents a high-ranking Roman matron. The location of the find and the artistic technique applied by the sculptor of the portrait date the

¹⁷ M. I. ZOLOTAREV, *Éllinističeskoje domašnjeje svjatišče v Chersonesi. Pričernomor'je v épochu éllinizma. Materialy III Vsesojuznogo simpoziuma po drevnej istorii Pričernomor'ja* (Chaltubo 1982) 267.

sculpture to the turn of the 1st c. BC. The other two works of art found here date to the Hellenistic time. The living rooms (the *oeci*) were located in the same part of the house, above the semi-cellars.

The Hellenistic house existed from the beginning of the 3rd c. BC to the turn of the 1st c. AD. The preliminary reconstruction of the house was made by M. Makgraf, based on the archaeological data and analogical studies (fig. 14). The layer of destruction provides evidence of a disaster, following which the house was rebuilt. The filling includes home altars made of clay and stone, loom weights, some of them with seals impressed by the owners, spindle wheels and a bone spindle.

As the reader can see, the distribution of residential buildings in the ancient city of Chersonesus followed a systematic pattern which resulted from the characteristics of the local topography and from Hippodamus' concepts of spatial planning. The area of the city was located on three terraces placed above one another. The lowest level (some 0–2 m asl) was at the Quarantine (Karantinnaja buхта) or Chersonesus Bay in the south-eastern part of the city. Above it, there was the terrace of the north-eastern section of the city (10–12 m asl), where buildings had been erected as early as the first period of the history of Chersonesus. Finally, the north-eastern part of the city joined the highest terrace through a narrow watershed between two gently sloping ridges, one of which (the ›Theatre Ridge‹) descends southward, and the other one down to the northern shore.

The entire area within the city walls was divided into rectangular blocks. According to various hypotheses, the blocks had the sizes of 25–26 × 52–53 m, 24.60 × 65.70 m or 24.48 × 65.30 m¹⁸. Our own measurements have proved that the dimensions of the blocks differed from one section of Chersonesus to another. In the south-eastern and north-western parts of the city, they depended on the relief of the ground as well. This regular grid of blocks hinges on two base lines, which intersect in the centre of the city. The main axis of the grid was the 1st longitudinal street, which could be traced along the ridge of the watershed from the north-east to the south-west, rising smoothly toward the latter direction. The blocks of houses situated between two base lines had the dimensions of 24.20 × 65 m, or 74 × 199 Doric feet. On the northern shore, the division into blocks took the shape of the shore into account, and so these had a smaller length of 51 × 53.9 m (156 × 165 Doric feet). In all the sections of the city, the blocks had a fixed width of between 24.20 and 26.80 m (respectively 74 and 82 Doric feet). Public and residential buildings with peristyle courts have been identified in blocks which adjoin the main axis of the city, insofar as the blocks could fit such buildings.

Nevertheless, it must be stressed that the layers of the ancient times have not yet been properly investigated, and that the available archaeological material is scarce; accordingly, our investigation into the topography and ancient residential buildings of Chersonesus Taurica has only just begun.

List of Bibliographical Abbreviations

The citation follows guidelines of the German Archaeological Institute <www.dainst.org> (16.01.2009) and those of the Austrian Archaeological Institute <www.oelai.at/publik/autoren.html> (16.01.2009).

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| BUJSKICH – ZOLOTAREV 2001 | A. V. BUJSKICH – M. I. ZOLOTAREV, Gradostroitel'nyj plan Chersonesa Tavričeskogo, <i>Vjstnik drevnej istorii</i> 1, 2001, 111–132. |
| ZUBAR' et al. 2005 | V. M. ZUBAR' – A. V. BUJSKICH – JE. A. KRAVČENKO – M. V. RUSIAJEVA, Chersones Tavričeskij v tret'jej četverti IV–seredině I vv. do n.é. (Kiev 2005) 307–344. |
| RYŽOV 1985 | S. G. RYŽOV, Dom IV–III vv. do n. é. v Chersonesi. <i>Sovitskaja archaeologija</i> 4, 1985, 155–161. |

¹⁸ L. V. MARČENKO, Topografija i planirovka Chersonesskogo gorodiša, *Chersonesskij Sbornik* 8, 1997, 64; RYŽOV 1985, 161; ZUBAR' et al. 2005, 308.

Sources of Illustrations

Fig. 1: E. Klenina, N. P. Andruschenko, T. I. Bazhanova.

Fig. 2: A. I. Romanchuk, B. A. Philippov.

Fig. 3: after ZUBAR' et al. 2005.

Fig. 4: 1–3: E. Klenina after ZUBAR' et al., 2005. 4: A. B. Biernacki, E. Klenina, P. V. Peresvetov.

Figs. 5. 7–13: A. B. Biernacki.

Fig. 6: E. Klenina.

Fig. 14: M. Makgraf.

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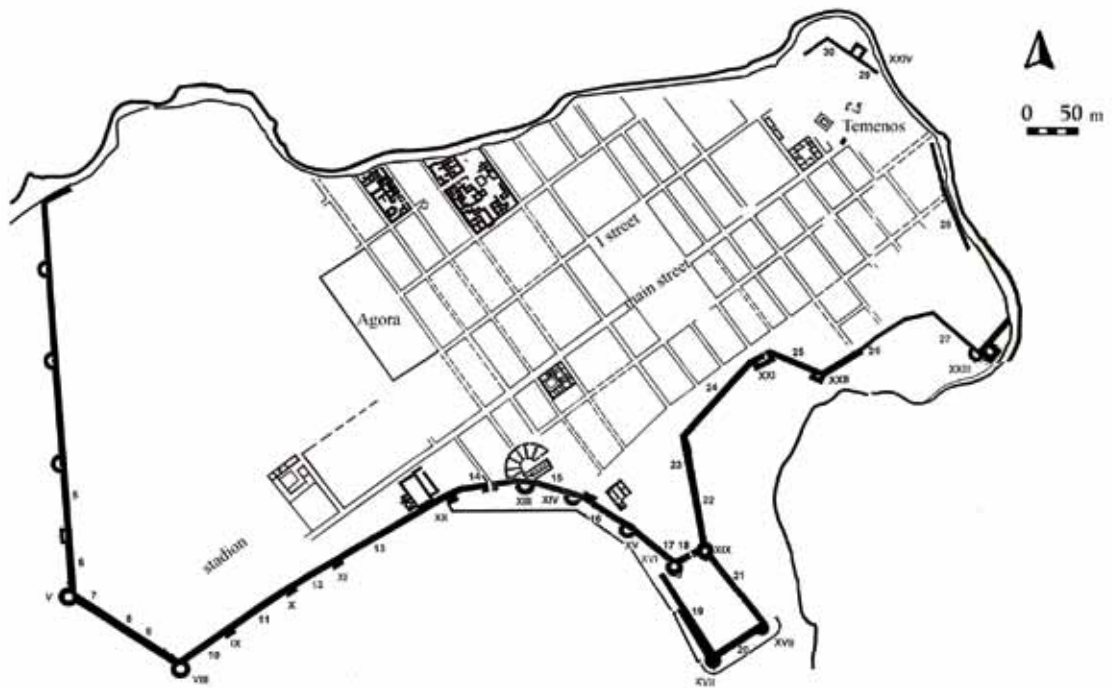


Fig. 1: Map of ancient Chersonesus Taurica



Fig. 2: Aerial photograph of Chersonesus Taurica

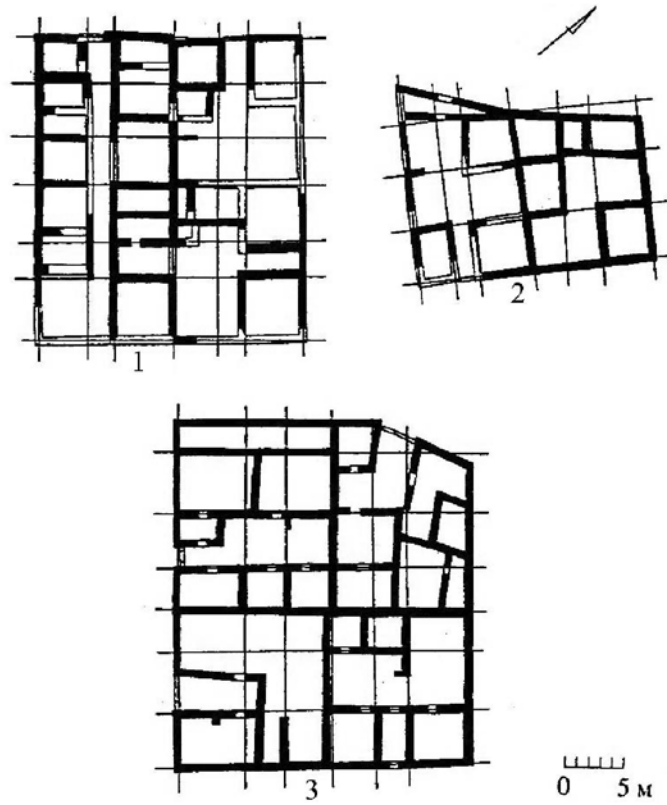


Fig. 3: Plans of houses with pastades in Chersonesus Taurica

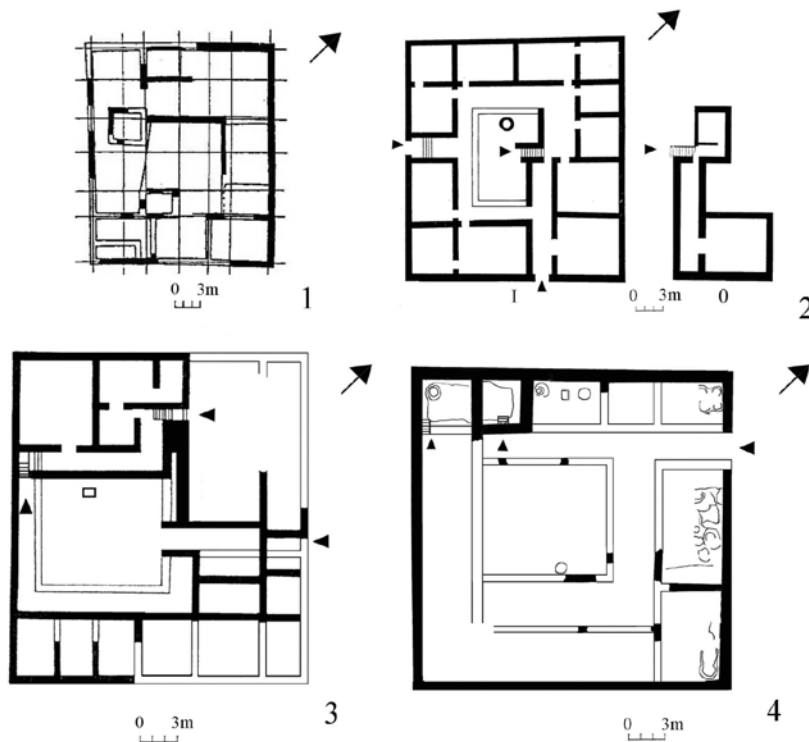


Fig. 4: Plans of houses with peristyle courts in Chersonesus Taurica



Fig. 5: Early 3rd c. BC-mosaic of small pebbles



Fig. 6: Aerial photograph of block 55 in the western part of Chersonesus Taurica; view from Northwest



Fig. 7: Semi-cellar at the western corner of an ancient house



Fig. 8: Fragment of a terracotta statuette made in Chersonesus



Fig. 9: Fragment of a Hellenistic decree from the 4th–3rd c. BC



Fig. 10: Head of a marble statue of a woman, 1st c. AD

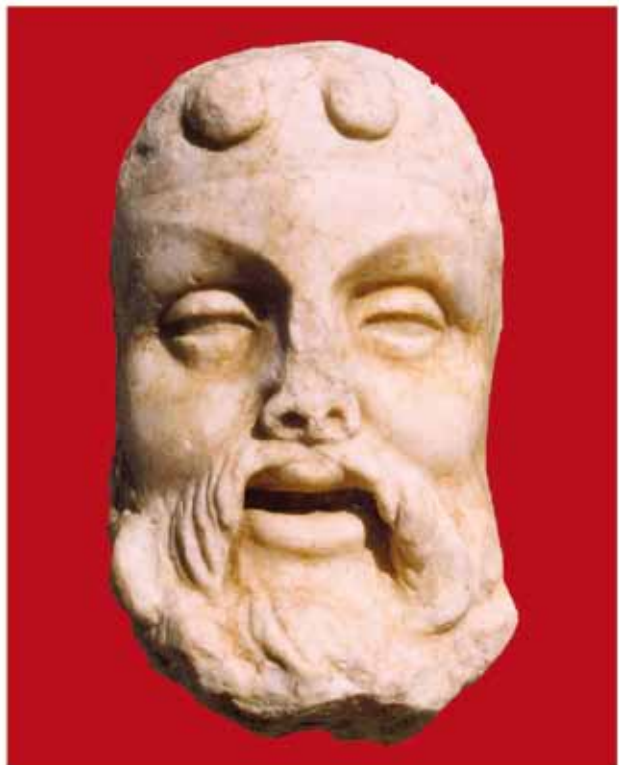


Fig. 11: Marble bas-relief head of Dionysus, 4th c. BC

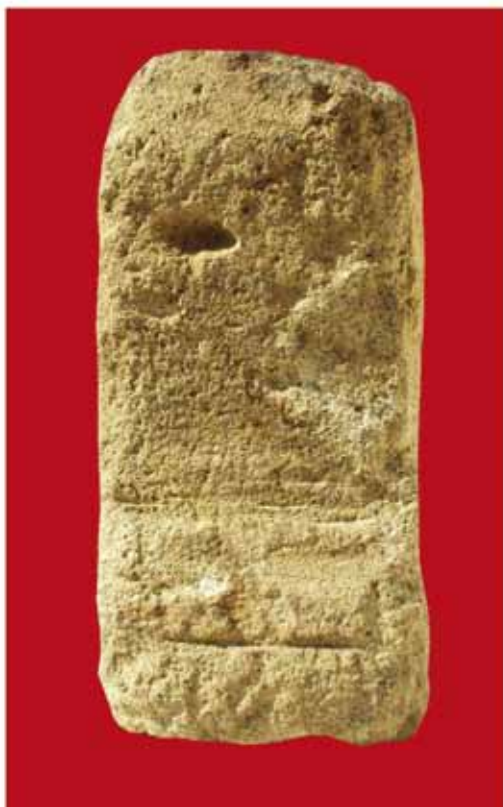


Fig. 12: Domestic limestone altar



Fig. 13a: Bone bracket with the image of a lion (?)

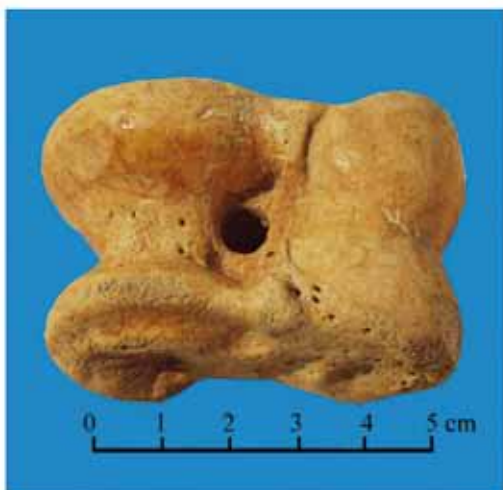


Fig. 13b: Astragal



Fig. 13c: Bone hair-pin



Fig. 14a: Architectural plan of block 55



Fig. 14b: Computer reconstruction of the exterior of an ancient house; view from North



Fig. 14c: The inner court of a house, a top view from South



Fig. 14d: The inner court of a house

