

## Preface

The present monograph is devoted to the publication of the results of the excavations carried out in the living quarters of the previously uninvestigated northern part of the Lower City of Olbia by the Olbian expedition of the Institute of Archeology, the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine. This area (Sector NGS) is now one of the largest and most fully investigated sectors of the city, and, due to the extended area of excavation and the informative potential of the finds, it is now also the most significant sector in Olbia.

Excavation of Sector NGS was initiated in 1985 and has to date been carried out over more than 20 years. The present publication is concerned with the excavations between 1985 and 2002. During this period a rather significant area – about 3,500 m<sup>2</sup> – was opened. The cultural layers of the sector cover all the main chronological periods of ancient Olbia – from the late Archaic to the post Antique period. However, the fullest evidence comes from the Hellenistic period, as reflected in the seven inhabited houseblocks, in each of which three to five families lived simultaneously. In these building complexes two to three building phases could be discerned. These phases were not only connected with internal reorganization and repair, but were also influenced by military intrusions and acts of nature.

The sector is located in the immediate vicinity of the city's northern defensive wall. During recent years and in particular in 2005, this area has been investigated. Here were found traces of fire dating to the time of Zopyrion's attack (ca. 331 BC) and cleaning activity of the late Hellenistic period, as well as testimony of enemy attacks during the late post-Getic period.

The earliest stone constructions in the sector consist of isolated walls or rooms as well as pits dating to the mid-5th century BC. It is only during the 4th century BC that the essential reorganization of the northern part of the Lower City took place. By this time the basic layout, with main streets and blocks of three to four houses forming entire houseblocks, can be ascertained. The Hellenistic constructions on the site and, accordingly, the cultural layers of this period, are the best documented. In the early Hellenistic period Olbia had a blossoming economy and this is mirrored in the living conditions of its inhabitants. Dwellings of prosperous citizens existed in Olbia during the Hellenistic period until the middle of the 1st century BC (the time of the Getic invasion). The chronological framework is determined by a number of events, such as the siege of the city by the army of Zopyrion, a commander of Alexander the Great, and by acts of nature – landslides and fires – as well as a general crisis in Olbia at the end of the Hellenistic period.

A complete publication of an entire living quarter with full documentation of the various types of archaeological sources is here undertaken for the first time – not just for Olbia, but for the entire Black Sea region. It is hardly conceivable that such an extensive study could have been undertaken without the close collaboration and involvement of a large number of specialists. The editors would like to thank the Ukrainian, Danish, Russian and American scientists, who have contributed to the analysis of the excavation and the finds.

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