

# The finds: a brief introduction

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This introduction is intended to give some background information to allow an understanding of the finds in their context. Given the enormous number of finds excavated in Sector NGS over more than 20 years, it was decided to include the finds only from the years 1985-2002 and only those from so-called closed deposits in order to limit the volume of the catalogue. In some chapters these restrictions are rigorously followed, whereas in other chapters material excavated later as well as material found outside the closed contexts is considered as well. The finds from closed contexts, as also mirrored in the *Context List*, represent the backbone of the material analysed.

The analysis of the finds has been carried out by an international team of researchers, primarily Ukrainians and Danes, although a Russian and an American scholar participated as well. Therefore, the individual chapters represent different research traditions. The editors have attempted to streamline the catalogue, but it has not been possible to iron out all differences in approach and interpretation. Similarly, the interpretation in the chapters on architecture and the chapters on finds and the *Context List* are not completely congruent either, because the latter two operate with a division into periods, which is based on the detailed analysis of the finds.

## FIELD PRACTICES

Because it is the aim of the present publication to find an audience beyond the Black Sea region, we provide here some information as to how the finds were excavated, selected and recorded, which may be of value when the individual find and the individual context is evaluated.

1. In general, excavated areas were of a considerable extension. The upper (surface) layers accordingly were allocated only a broad area designation.
2. When a room or another archaeological feature was reached, this was mostly excavated in its entirety from the top downwards. It was uncommon to excavate, for example, one half only. Therefore, the excavators depended on observations in horizontal layers and did not preserve a baulk against which the stratigraphy observed could be tested.
3. Height marks are given either over the general level of the Bug liman (p. 27) or measured down from the modern surface.
4. Excavation in the same feature could take place over many years. For example, House II-5, Basement 390 was excavated in 1993, 1994, 1995 and 1996.
5. The category of “open deposit” is designated to features defined by less than four walls; closed deposits require four walls (or similar).
6. Each year all excavated finds were counted and entered into a *Find List* with a broad attribution to a find category. Appendix 2 is based on these lists.
7. Finds considered either characteristic or of particular interest were kept for further analysis. These were furnished with an individual number (in Sector NGS: O [=Olbia]-NGS-year-serial number) and entered into an *Inventory Book*, where they were briefly described.
8. Finds that were not inventoried were dumped near the site at the end of the excavation season.
9. In some years part or most of the finds were transported to Kiev; in other years they were partly or fully left in the local storeroom in the village of Parutino. In Kiev the finds are partly kept in the storerooms in the Archaeological Museum and partly in the storerooms of the Institute of Archaeology, National Ukrainian Academy of Sciences. Some of the finds are exhibited in the Archaeological Museum. The transfer of objects has had the effect that some finds could not be located (noted as “not seen” in the Context List).

10. Floral and faunal remains were recorded during excavation, but none were kept. Therefore, the present volume does not contain an analysis of these types of finds.

## PERIODS

The analysis of the finds, especially the finewares, lamps and stamped amphoras, has led to the division of the material into the following main periods of activity in the sector.

### Period 1

Late Archaic.

### Period 2

Classical, with very few contexts preserving only 5th or only 4th century BC material.

### Period 3

Early Hellenistic, very late 4th through to early 3rd (first half?) century BC construction activity in many houseblocks. It is possible that all of this construction actually took place within the 3rd century and not in the last decades of the 4th.

### Period 4

Middle Hellenistic, mid- to late 3rd century BC abandonment fills, especially in Houseblock VI.

### Period 5

Late Hellenistic floors and abandonment fills (there is no clear distinction between these).

### Period 6

Latest Hellenistic contexts with independently datable material after ca. 130 BC.

The above-mentioned periods give structure to the artefact catalogues without overly pushing the precision of the period dates mentioned. It should be noted that in most of Sector NGS virgin soil was not reached during the excavations. This is a result of preservation strategies, which aim to conserve on site the Hellenistic houses (Kryžickij in this volume p. 27 note 83). Accordingly, we are not fully informed about either the pre-Hellenistic structures or pre-Hellenistic layers.

Period 5 seemingly ended with a catastrophic event, perhaps a successful siege around 140/130 BC, after which the houses were abandoned for a period. During Period 6 the area was cleaned and levelled. During this period the sector was much more sparsely inhabited than in the preceding one.<sup>230</sup>

## REPAIRS

It is a general characteristic of the finds from Sector NGS that a considerable proportion of the vessels was repaired in antiquity. In most cases this is evidenced by the presence of small drilled holes in the vessels, but in a number of cases even the ancient lead clamp used for the repair is preserved *in situ* (B-49, B-112, C-126, Da-12, Da-27, Db-323, Db-325,

<sup>230</sup> This will be dealt with at length in a forthcoming article by M. Lawall et al. in *Black Sea Studies* 15, 2010.

Da-686, M-4). It is interesting to note that all types of vessels were repaired – even terracottas. The only exception to this practice seems to have been the lamps.

In general, pottery repairs appear to be much more common in the Black Sea region than in the Mediterranean, and in Olbia this practice prevails even when compared with other Pontic sites (see also Guldager Bilde in this volume p. 274).<sup>231</sup> It can be debated whether this can be used for the reconstruction of a local economy that was struggling. But it nevertheless demonstrates that pottery may have been a scarce commodity.

## STATISTICS, APPENDIX 2

On the basis of the Find Lists, N. Gavriljuk has endeavoured to undertake a statistical analysis of the find composition (Appendix 2 and the chapters by Kryžickij and Gavriljuk in this volume). Appendix 2 gives a broad overview of the overall find composition in the sector. Throughout the layers we may note that – not surprisingly – fragments of amphoras are by far the most abundant find category, normally constituting more than 50% of the finds in any given location. At the other end of the spectrum we may note the general scarcity of lamps. In the appendix the presence of 106 lamps is noted, whereas J.M. Højte (in this volume p. 423) arrives at the total sum of 325 lamps listed in the Find Lists. In most houses no more than a handful of lamp fragments were excavated. In all likelihood, this figure represents a historical reality, probably the fact, as mentioned by Højte, that fuel was in short supply. Coins are also rare finds. In Appendix 2 a total of 332 coins is listed. Of these, the earliest Olbian coins, the dolphin coins and the arrowhead coins, constitute approximately one-third (100 dolphin coins and 2 arrowhead coins).<sup>232</sup> One group of pottery does not occur in the appendix at all, namely late Hellenistic white-ground lagynoi. To our knowledge fragments of only two such vessels were found in Sector NGS (93-64; 93-538; neither from a context).

When it comes to a detailed analysis of individual houses and comparison between them, we are more sceptical as to how useful the statistics are. For one thing, the numbers refer to numbers of sherds, not to numbers of vessels. This is problematical, because the level of breakage is uneven between the different groups. For example, a lamp breaks in a few pieces, whereas a large thin-walled vessel will tend to break into many fragments. The representativeness of the individual find groups will be uneven therefore and consequently it is difficult to compare them. In addition, in the statistics no discrimination between periods of use is made. Therefore, the statistics for a single room may include finds covering a period of up to half a millennium. Since precisely the same function of a room or basement over half a millennium is hardly conceivable, this figure will be problematic. Moreover, it is an open question as to whether or not the finds relate to activities in the locale where they were found. Again, surely some of them do (as in Basement 253, where a pithos was dug into the floor and amphoras stood along its wall). But in many cases we are of the opinion that the finds come from fill layers, which were the result of clean-up and levelling operations in the area. Accordingly, the finds tell us nothing about the place where they were found. This becomes particularly clear when the distribution of joining fragments found in different layers (or even in different structures) is analysed (e.g. Guldager Bilde in this volume p. 270).

## ABBREVIATIONS AND CONVENTIONS

In the catalogue each catalogue number is followed by the object's inventory number<sup>233</sup> and information of its find context including Houseblock, structure number (R=Room, B=Basement, C=Courtyard, P=Pavement) with the context number separated from the former with a slash, e.g. Da-184 95-575, VI-2 B 410/256.

<sup>231</sup> An article on repairs from Olbia is being prepared by P. Guldager Bilde and S. Handberg.

<sup>232</sup> The coins from Sector NGS were to be published by V.F. Stolba. His identification of the coins is included in the Context List. Unfortunately, the manuscript for the catalogue was never submitted and is therefore lacking.

<sup>233</sup> Throughout O-NGS is omitted, since all objects have this appellation.

## ABBREVIATIONS USED

H	Height
L	Length
W	Width
D	Depth
Ø	Diameter
WT	Wall thickness