

The Rural Environs of Olbia: Some Problems of Current Importance¹

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In this paper I shall attempt to review some of the important problems in current studies of the rural territory around Olbia. The discussion will be concerned with issues such as the initial character of the *chora*'s organization and of the supposed communications within the Olbian *polis*, the difficulties in identifying the types and hierarchies of the settlements, changes in the demographic situation and the manifestation of barbarian elements in the population's culture.

We will begin with the form that the colonization of the rural territory of Olbia took. According to the evidence available, neither the layout of the city of Olbia itself nor the features of settlements within its rural territory at the stage of colonization of the Lower Bug area reveal any elements of regulation whatsoever. This fact is confirmed indirectly by the routes of ancient roads at the necropolis of Olbia, as is discussed below. The layouts of individual settlements were formed spontaneously and are represented by separate dwelling or household units arranged, it seems, without any particular system. Any clearly defined residential areas within a settlement are lacking. Each of the living units mentioned included 4-6 pit houses or semi-dugouts, all but one with an area of 6-9 m² while a single unit exceeds the others in size (12-15 m²), and 10-12 pits for grain or other household purposes. The total area of each unit was a maximum of 500 m².² Separate and structurally self-contained pit houses and semi-dugouts constituted in fact the rooms of a single dwelling house or *oikos*.³ It is of importance that almost every settlement excavated, irrespective of its size, had a similar layout – from small farmsteads of about 0.2 hectares to large settlements with an area of 50-80 hectares.

The spontaneous character of the settlement of this region is also suggested by the varied density of the sites' distribution (Fig. 1). Thus, a fairly dense occupation has been traced south of Olbia in the Adžigoľ'skaja Ravine and to the city's north – between what are now the villages of Katelino and Kozyrka. These two territories do not differ from any other area of the rural neighbourhood of Olbia either in the quality of arable land or in the availability of water. This fact, as well as a fairly large number of settlements and the absence of any regularity in their layouts, argues against their having been founded by residents of Olbia or Berezan' since these two sites both had a

fairly limited population at the time. In addition, the above facts suggest that the colonists lacked any strict organization.

In connection with this, the question arises as to the social composition of the first groups of settlers responsible for the foundation of rural sites on the Lower Bug River. The material and spiritual culture of those colonists points towards a uniformity in their composition with respect both to their prosperity and evidently to their legal status. These were country folk whose level of prosperity was fairly low. In other words, as already noted by V.V. Lapin,⁴ this part of the colonization process was undoubtedly of an agrarian character. The composition of the groups of colonists who founded the settlement of Berezan', and later that of Olbia, was more varied. In the latter city, in particular, certain other elements of the population – traders, craftsmen, etc. – took part in the formation of a political entity in the beginning of the last third of the 6th century.⁵

Summing up, it seems that two major types of colonization can be established in the 6th century BC: The organized and purposeful colonization which resulted in the foundation of Berezan' and possibly the primary Olbian settlement, and a spontaneous colonization of exclusively agrarian character. The latter took place mainly in those territories, which the first settlers, who arrived in the first half of the 6th century BC, had not been able to master simply because of their small numbers. It seems that exactly this second, spontaneous colonization actually created the conditions necessary for the emergence of a political entity, i.e. Olbia as state instead of just as city, in the last third of the 6th century. The newly founded rural settlements synchronously with their emergence, or just slightly later, became part of the Olbian *polis*. The occupation of agricultural lands on the Lower Bug, however, was in no way an organized action planned beforehand, but rather a spontaneous process which in the last quarter of the 6th and the first quarter of the 5th centuries BC resulted in the formation of the true Olbian *chora*.⁶

The spontaneity of the *chora*'s organization is also reflected in the directions of ancient roads. Therefore, it will be helpful to give a brief overview of the *polis*' communication systems.

Olbia was connected with cities both in the Mediterranean and in the Black Sea region via sea routes. These routes were relatively safe and convenient. As one can judge from Herodotos' description of Dareios' campaign, there must also have been an overland route which seemingly went far from the coast. As we know, Dareios did not assault the Greek cities in the northern Black Sea area, something that probably would have occurred, if he had followed a coastal route. The itinerary from Dura-Europos, however, implies that in the Greek period there was also another overland route that went along the coast. Possibly, Olbia used it for communications with other Black Sea towns. The importance of the first route was probably limited to military purposes (for example, the raids of Dareios, Zopyrion or the Sarmatians), while the second one may have been used during the height of piracy on the

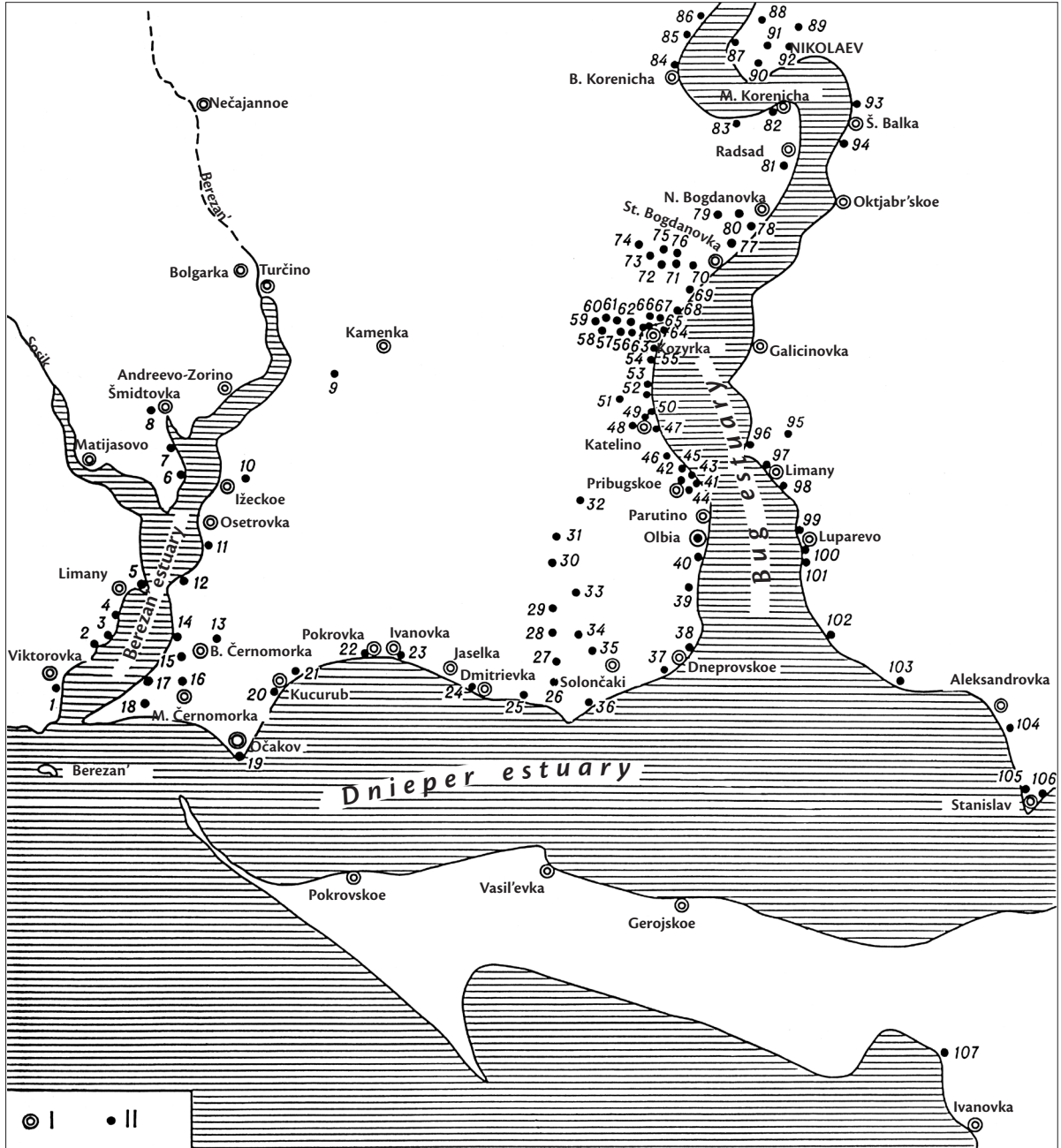


Fig. 1. Schematic map of the locations of Olbia and rural settlements surrounding it. I – present-day settlements; II – ancient settlements.

Black Sea. Possibly, the latter itinerary was also used in the early centuries of the Christian era for movements of the Roman army, two camps of which have been discovered near Olbia. In addition to the inconvenience of transporting goods overland, both routes were complicated considerably by large waterways crossing them – the rivers of Tanais (or the Straits of Kerch if one was travelling via the Crimea), Borysthene, Hypanis, Tyras, and especially Istros. To cross these water arteries, travellers had to move upstream above the river deltas.

As far as connections between Olbia and the barbarian tribes of the steppe and forest-steppe, both the rivers of Borysthene and Hypanis as well as an overland route via the watershed between the Hypanis and Tyras were evidently used for this purpose.

Internal communication between settlements of the *chora* and the urban centres, Olbia and Borysthene, were also of different kinds. Judging from the location of the settlement of Berezan' – at the extremity of what was then a peninsula facing east – one might suppose that communications by water were the most important here. For communication with practically every settlement in the *chora*, travelling by water was the most efficient. Overland roads, it seems, connected Borysthene only with settlements of the closest *chora* on the left bank of the Berezan' Liman. The concentration of sites on the left bank is consistent with the hypothesis that the Berezan' Peninsula branched from the left rather than the right bank of the Berezan' Liman.

A somewhat different situation was characteristic for Olbia. Already in the Archaic period, methods of communicating over land came to be if not of greater then at least of equal importance to water routes. The waterways were used for communications with Berezan', settlements on the left bank of the Bug Liman and those on the Kinburn Peninsula. The land roads served as connections with settlements on the right banks of the Bug and Dnieper Limans. An extensive network of roads was traced some years ago by A.N. Karasev on the basis of the sections of ancient roads preserved at the Olbian necropolis.⁷ He discovered six roads leading to the south, west and north (Fig. 2).

As to communication between settlements within the rural territory, it seems that there are solid grounds to suppose parallel ties (both overland and maritime) from one settlement to another along the coastal line, while in only a few cases was there direct communication with Olbia.

The situation changed during the next stage of the *polis's* life, a period spanning from the end of the first to approximately the end of the third quarter of the 5th century BC. This was the time when the larger rural *chora* collapsed being contracted to the limits of the urban *chora*. Though a few individual sites saw continued habitation, the general picture of depopulation of the vast territories does not change. In this situation, only water routes could maintain their efficiency.

During the *polis's* economic zenith, in the last quarter of the 4th to the first

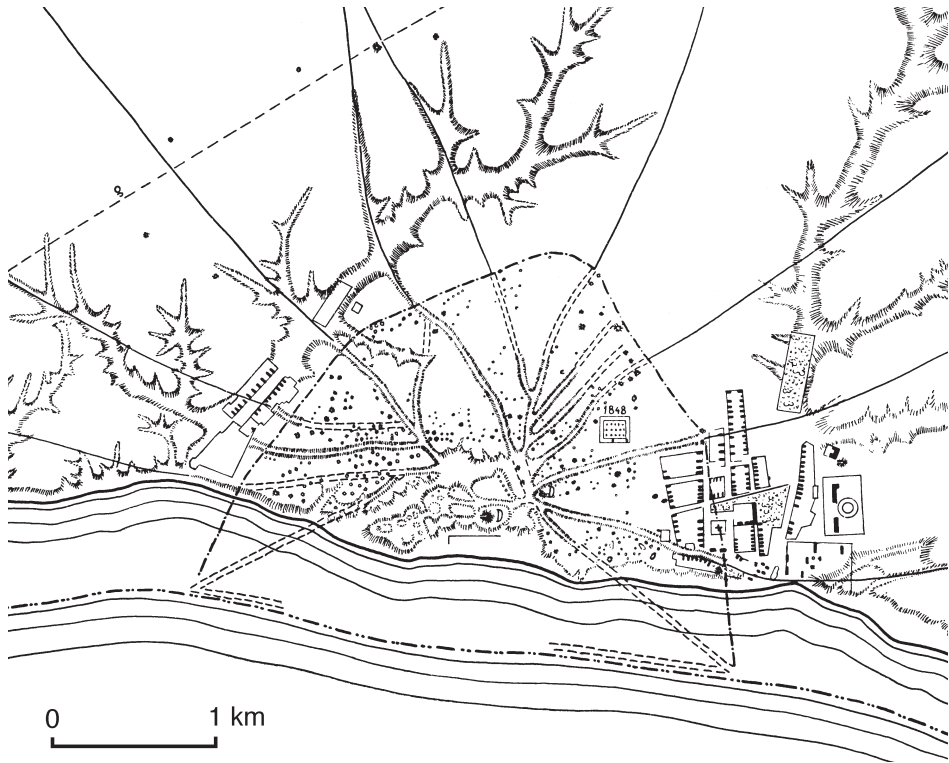


Fig. 2. Schematic map showing ancient roads within the necropolis of Olbia.

half of the 3rd century BC, a revival of intra-*polis* overland routes took place. The question therefore arises: to what extent did the appearance of all these routes, in particular the overland ones, result from regular planning activities as supposed for the Chersonesean home *chora*, Metapontion, and other centres of Doric colonization? In my opinion, it seems that in the case of Olbia, the formation of a network of overland roads was a result of the spontaneous settlement of colonists. The directions of the roads discovered at the Olbian necropolis in neither case reflected any elements of a regular (or at least orthogonal) layout of the nearer *chora*. It is noteworthy in this connection, that on aerial photographs, traces of the rectangular division of land-plots, occasionally including those situated near the roads, have been traced. The time of this division has not been established however. Yet judging from its axes, which generally do not coincide with the directions of the roads, it is likely that this land-division belongs to a later period, whereas the earliest roads appeared simultaneously with the Archaic necropolis of Olbia. Hence the character of the routes suggests in this case only a spontaneous process. Nothing was thought out or planned beforehand here, and therefore no ties with any colonization model, which would imply a certain system, can be

traced. It is also noteworthy that outside of the limits of the necropolis these roads were not straight highways but made fairly sharp turns. Therefore, I cannot discern here any tradition, e.g. a Milesian (or radial) as supposed by A. Wąsowicz.⁸

The distribution of rural sanctuaries throughout the *chora* does not contradict the spontaneity of the occupation of the region either, contrary to what S.B. Bujskich, who saw here a system planned in advance for colonization purposes, argues.⁹ Firstly, assuming the deliberate efforts of the Greeks to fix the boundaries of the *chora* by the foundation of sanctuaries, it is logical to suppose the existence of some general traits in the archaeological evidence, layout, and construction. No such uniformity, however, has as yet been traced. Secondly, the locations of only three of the sanctuaries assigned by Bujskich to the 6th century BC have been confirmed archaeologically (Berezan', Bejkuš, and Olbia, the latter having been by no means an extra-urban sanctuary). The exact locations of the others (Achilleus' Dromos, the sanctuary of Hekate and the Cape of Hippolaos) are unknown. Finally, the date of the foundation of the three latter sanctuaries has been established only hypothetically. Hence we have no grounds to view the distribution of rural sanctuaries of the 6th century BC as a manifestation of organized colonization activities.

Of considerable importance is the problem of identification of the categories, types and hierarchy of the settlements. In terms of their economical specialisation, two major areas were distinguished in the *chora* of Olbia as early as the Archaic period: the Kinburn Peninsula and the rest of the territory.¹⁰ The Kinburn Peninsula (ancient Hylaia) was predominantly a manufacturing and handicraft zone. Here logging was carried out, charcoal and iron produced, salt and soda extracted, hematite sand quarried, and various metal and glass articles manufactured. The remaining territory was used primarily for agriculture and animal husbandry. In both zones, the population was engaged in intensive fishing.

The banks of the Bug and Bug-Dnieper Limans, as well as the left bank of the Berezan'-Sosik Liman, were most densely settled. Here, the absolute majority of the permanent settlements were situated. Two of the sites were of ritual character. These were the late Archaic settlements of Bejkuš and, as supposed by K.K. Marčenko, a sanctuary near the site of Staraja Bogdanovka 2.¹¹ In addition, there existed temporary, probably seasonal, camps of fishers and herders. Of seasonal character, too, was a manufacturing "settlement" situated on the southern bank of the Kinburn Peninsula.

The layouts of the earliest settlements have as yet been studied insufficiently. It is clear only that independent of their size they had neither a regular layout nor defences. In terms of size, three groups of settlements are distinguished: the so-called *khutors* (farmsteads) with an area of up to 0.2 hectares, settlements of medium size measuring from 2-3 to 5-8 hectares, and large settlements of up to 50-80 hectares.¹² All of these settlements included separate *oikoi* each consisting of several semi-dugouts. In neither site, have

any other structures apart from household units as yet been discovered. Two settlements with a cultic function already mentioned are the only exceptions. The layout is generally of a spontaneous character – no blocks of buildings have been traced. However, there are grounds to suppose the appearance of the first rural “estates” for exclusively economic purposes already in the second half of the 5th century BC.¹³

The settlements which appeared in the 4th to 3rd centuries BC measure from 1.5 to 8-10 hectares.¹⁴ Similar to the earlier ones, these had neither defences nor a regular layout, but they do already have a block structure and surface houses. Collective and individual farms also occur, resembling in their layout the farmhouses of the Chersonesean home *chora*.

In the first centuries AD, fortified settlements with moats, earthen banks, walls and towers, as well as common above-ground buildings, emerged.¹⁵ Their size varied from a few hectares to up to half a dozen hectares. The layout of the sites excavated was irregular. Two of the sites were, in the opinion of Bujskich, of a type similar to Roman military camps.¹⁶

On the basis of the above evidence, we can suppose *a priori* the following system of hierarchy within the settlements. The first and highest level (the state) was represented by the cities – Berezan’ and Olbia. The hierarchic interrelation between these two at its earliest stage is as yet unknown. Supposedly, Berezan’ was initially dominant in the region; later, after the end of the third quarter of the 6th century, Olbia took over. These two centres were distinguished by their urban layout with blocks of buildings and the presence of *temenoi*, as well as by rich finds of accompanying materials. Olbia, in turn, differed from Berezan’ in the presence of an *agora*, a theatre, a *gymnasion*, and a *dikasterion*. Thus, as a *polis* Olbia belonged to the highest hierarchic level, while Berezan’ was at a lower one, being subordinate to Olbia.

The third level is represented by stationary rural settlements. Probably, farmsteads also belonged at this level. There is little doubt as to their dependence on the urban centres. Any buildings of administrative or other public purposes except for ritual ones were absent here. Evidently, the Archaic rural settlements around the Berezan’ Liman were related to Borysthenes. All the other rural sites in the Lower-Bug area were subordinate to Olbia, at least after the last third of the 6th century BC, i.e. the period of the establishment of the Olbian state. It cannot be ruled out that for some time-span in the 5th and 4th centuries BC, the settlements on the Berezan’ Liman continued to depend on Borysthenes.

The fourth level was represented by temporary camps of herders and fishers. At these sites, no remains of long-term buildings have been found. The most striking example in this respect is the Adžigol’skaja Ravine where about a dozen such camps were scattered over about 15 km across the steppe. It is of note, however, that permanent inland settlements are known too. We may suppose that temporary herders’ camps were subordinated rather to rural settlements than to a city.

The situation changed in the first centuries AD. On the basis of his concept of the general system of the *polis'* defence, Bujskich distinguishes different types of town- and settlement-sites of this period. Evidently, the system of hierarchy may be (or even must be) reflected here in the strength of fortifications and the character of buildings. The highest hierarchic level is represented again by the city of Olbia. The next level comprises fortified settlements with several lines of defence and a dense area of buildings within them. The third level is represented by similar settlements which have only a single line of defence. Places of refuge that is an area without buildings but having its own defensive line in addition to the general, outer, line of defence are at the fourth level.

Of considerable interest is the problem of the change in the size of the population best traceable in the countryside. Thus at the end of the 6th or beginning of the 5th century BC, probably about 5,000-10,000 people lived in the rural neighbourhood of Olbia. The estimates vary¹⁷ but according to recent studies we may assume an average of 7,000 to 8,000. However in the second and third quarters of the 5th century the number must have diminished considerably, for it is believed that life continued in only about one or two dozens of the settlements.¹⁸ The high point in numbers during the Hellenistic period suggests that the rural population increased at least up to the time of the late Archaic period (the size of an average settlement is about one third less than that of the late Archaic settlements but the density of its building is higher). In the first half of the 2nd century BC the rural population decreased sharply, with only a few settlements on the left bank of the Bug Liman continuing to be occupied. After the middle of the 2nd century BC life in the *chora* ceased completely for a long time. During the first centuries AD, or more precisely in the period beginning with the last quarter of the 1st century BC, the population growth in the *chora* actually starts from a population of zero. In the second half of the 2nd to the first half of the 3rd century AD, it reached its peak approximately equal to one third of the population of the Classical and Hellenistic periods. The ratio has been defined on the basis of the size of the residential areas of towns and settlements. The ethnic characteristics of the latter are still disputed. Therefore, the population of the *chora* proper must evidently have been lesser.

Leaving out of consideration the reasons for these variations in the size of the rural population,¹⁹ we should note that no connection between this phenomenon and the growth or decline of the city has as yet been reliably established. The two exceptions to this are an increase in the number of the urban buildings and, which is more important, the emergence of the Olbian suburb as a consequence of the collapse of the *chora* in the second quarter of the 5th century BC. Indeed, on the contrary, although the *chora* was devastated in the second half of the 3rd century BC, there is no indication that the city expanded or that there was any increase in the density of its buildings. A similar situation is to be found in the middle of the 3rd century AD when the rural

territory of Olbia ceased to exist. The lack of a clear interdependence between the size of the city and the migrations of the rural population presupposes a large rural population tied fairly loosely to the city and, consequently, either a rather weak *polis* organization or the prevalence of a non-Greek population in the *chora*. The latter supposition is not corroborated by the archaeological evidence. The question remains as to where the population that abandoned the Olbian *chora* during the adversities of the Hellenistic period was relocated. The theory of those who suppose that the town-sites on the Lower Dnieper may have been such a place, seems the most likely. At least, it is evident that the collapse of the *chora* coincided chronologically with the emergence of these sites,²⁰ while the basically Hellenic culture of their population further supports such a conclusion.

One of the questions that remain extremely controversial is the problem of the ethnic processes within the rural territory of Olbia. We may now state two important points, which leave no room for doubt. First, there was no settled barbarian population in the Lower-Bug region by the time of the Greek colonisation. Some time ago this question was the subject of a major and animated discussion to which a monograph of V.V. Lapin contributed greatly.²¹ A thorough and exhaustive archaeological investigation of the Lower-Bug region conducted in the 1970s-1980s by a peripheral detachment of the Olbian Expedition of the Institute of Archaeology, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine,²² confirmed Lapin's supposition concerning the absence of a local settled population by the time Greek colonists appeared in the region.²³ Permanent barbarian settlements of the late Bronze Age on the lower reaches of the Bug and Dnieper Rivers did not survive until this period, having already been deserted by the 9th century BC.²⁴ One may suppose only few contacts with the Kimmerians whose burials, found in the Nikolaev region, date possibly to the 8th and 7th centuries BC.²⁵ These contacts, however, may have involved only the residents of Berezan' which was founded in the second half of the 7th century BC.

The Olbiopolitans never lived in close contact with any settled barbarian tribes, except for the fairly remote Scythian settlements on the Lower Dnieper during the Hellenistic period and the Černjachov settlements on the Lower Bug which came into existence when the Olbian *chora* was already in decline. The location and ethnic attribution of tribes mentioned by Herodotos (Hdt. 4.17-24), as well as their association with particular archaeological sites, remain as yet debatable. The same is true for the tribes of the Mixhellenes, Thisamatai, Scythians and Saudaratai mentioned in the Protogenes decree (*IOSPE I²*, 32). In all of these cases, however, we are dealing with tribes which are not described by our sources as settled, although this possibility should not be excluded for some of them.

Nor do we have any grounds for supposing that there were nomadic barbarians in this area either. First, the burial grounds, which some scholars connect with Scythian ethnicity, belong to the late 6th and early 5th century

BC at best – a period postdating the foundation of Olbia and most of the rural settlements. Second, their ethnic attribution as Scythian (first and foremost I am discussing here the Maricyan and Matrosovo cemeteries) is at best arguable and most likely simply erroneous.²⁶ Finally, it is possible that we are dealing not with nomads but rather with some settled population.

The second important point is that the material and spiritual culture of the overwhelming majority of the settlements is generally of a clearly expressed Hellenic character, although some of its elements may be interpreted as barbarian. In this connection the question arises: What *ethnos* (or *ethnoi*) occupied those parts of *chora* which economically, culturally and politically were linked with the city? The range of opinion regarding this issue is broad – from genuine barbarians to no less genuine Greeks. The use of dugouts and semi-dugouts as dwellings and handmade pottery of types encountered among some native tribes are usually viewed as proof of a barbarian presence. Due to their rarity and historical specificity, personal names are of little help here. Recently, another type of evidence has been taken into consideration – the funerary rite.

The excavations of the last 25-30 years have showed quite convincingly that the presence or absence of dugout or semi-dugout dwellings is no indication of ethnicity in itself.²⁷ It has become clear that these structures are of a transient character and their use preceded the tradition of surface buildings of the common Greek types. Pit dwellings and semi-dugouts were used by Greek migrants in the earlier stages of their life as colonists under the severe conditions of the newly occupied region. The most numerous remains of pit structures have been discovered in Olbia, the settlement of Berezan' and in the rural environs of Olbia. In recent years, they have also been found in other parts of the northern Black Sea area: Kerkinitis, Chersonesos and the cities of the Bosporos. The entire aggregate of the material and spiritual culture of the people who lived in them (finds of terracottas, graffiti, *styli*, etc. in the fill of dwellings and on their floors) attests to their Greek ethnicity.²⁸ Thus, one of the two most important arguments of the proponents of a barbarian ethnic identity proves to be groundless.

Adherents of the "barbarian hypothesis" attach the highest significance to the finds of handmade pottery as an indication of ethnicity. This is natural as this category of evidence is perhaps the only one which is statistically reliable. In our case, however, statistics cannot answer the question of ethnicity. It is believed that in the earlier period (the second half of the 7th and the beginning of the 5th century BC) barbarians in the area were representatives of Thracian tribes of the Carpatho-Danubian basin, of the tribes of the forest-steppe of the Middle Dnieper and of the tribes of the steppe zone of the northern Black Sea region. In the 5th and first half of the 4th century BC, steppe Scythians were dominant; from the second half of the 4th through the first half of the 3rd century BC, a slight rise in the numbers of the Geto-Thracian element took place, and from the second half of the 3rd through the first half of the

1st century BC the occasional Celtic, Germanic, Sarmatian and Geto-Dacian traditions became apparent.²⁹

One cannot rule out that handmade pottery of these types could have been manufactured and used by barbarians who lived within the Greek *polis* (possibly the native wives of the Greek settlers, although this is no more than a supposition). Yet the opposite could also be true. These wares could have appeared in the city as a result of exchange. They could, for instance, have been used by less prosperous citizens as such pottery would probably have been much cheaper than imported ware. The manufacturers themselves may have lived just beyond the city walls. Furthermore, the barbarian handmade pottery varied in its features. Hence the question arises: Does this diversity result from the usual stylistic imitations, as attested by the Scythian imitations of the Greek wheel-made shapes,³⁰ or does its existence indicate the entry of barbarians from various tribes into the life of the *polis*? Moreover, we do not know to what extent such handmade pottery differs from similar ware in the region of Miletos.

In this respect, the assemblage of handmade pottery from the settlement of Boľšaja Černomorka 2 is worthy of special note. There the Scythian-Kimmerian group amounts to 30% of the total finds, while pottery which is typologically close to that from the right-bank forest-steppe makes up 29% of the total, Thracian pottery from the Carpatho-Danubian basin then accounts for another 30%, Kizil-Koba type for 3%, and pottery which, according to the authors, could equally be either Scythian or Greek for 6%.³¹ At the same time, the authors note the similarity of the composition of the assemblage from Černomorka to those from Olbia and Berezan'. This in turn is consistent with K.K. Marčenko's supposition that the barbarians in Olbia and its rural settlements could not have made use of any "kin-tribe" system. This leads us to the question of how pottery from the pre-Scythian period could have reached the Greek settlements of the 6th century BC. No traces of construction dating to earlier periods have been found in these settlements. This implies that either this pre-Scythian pottery reached this area from some temporary stations or that the dating of the pottery is incorrect. In either case, this is of no help in elucidating the problem of the presence of barbarian elements in the settlements. Another point of importance is that we have, unfortunately, extremely insufficient knowledge about the character of the handmade ware of the Ionian Greeks.

There is a final argument as well. The postulate that "handmade pottery cannot be conceived without its bearers" implies that representatives of six (!) different tribes, including such remote ones as the Thracians and members of the Kizil-Koba archaeological culture, were present during the lifetimes of one or two generations in the small rural settlement of Černomorka 2 where not more than a dozen families were living altogether.

Funerary rites also yield information which is equally uncertain in terms of ethnicity.³² This is particularly true of the so-called Scythian features in the

burial rites of Olbia in the Archaic period. The first attempts at their identification date back to the beginning of the 1940s.³³ These resulted in the distinguishing of some Scythian elements in both male (the presence of Scythian weapons)³⁴ and female burials (bronze mirrors, stone dishes and slabs).³⁵

The presence of weapons in male burials may be indicative of the living conditions in a city or a rural site which seemingly had no fortifications in the 6th century BC rather than the ethnicity of the buried. Moreover, the identification of these weapons as Scythian is not entirely reliable either, since the type of arrowheads found were used by both Greeks and barbarians.³⁶ A number of scholars adhere to a similar opinion regarding the ethnic attribution of those buried with weapons in the necropoleis of Bosporos.³⁷ Thus, this problem cannot be resolved with certainty.

The situation regarding the Scythian elements in female burials is not any better.³⁸ The mirrors, being undoubtedly rooted in the Hellenic tradition, represent an important object in a woman's everyday life and may, thus, hardly be seen as an indication of barbarian ethnicity of the buried. Moreover, the appearance of mirrors in Scythian burials could also point to a Hellenic influence on the barbarian culture. Hence, the finds of mirrors in Olbian burials where they are linked to the cult of the chthonic Demeter³⁹ do not necessarily have any connection to barbarian traditions. As suggested by A.S. Rusjaeva, the finds of mirrors in male graves relate to the cult of Dionysos⁴⁰ and cannot be viewed as a reflection of barbarian traditions either. It is noteworthy that out of 26 mirrors found in the Archaic necropolis of Olbia more than half belong to Greek types, while only a dozen are presumably Scythian.⁴¹ The probable manufacturing centre for the latter type is still uncertain and Olbia cannot be excluded from the list of candidates. Even if one could prove their barbarian provenance, this would not automatically imply that their owners were barbarian of ethnicity.

As to the stone dishes, their function has not so far been defined for certain. It has been suggested that they might have been used for sharpening weapons (?), grinding dyes, as dressing tables⁴² or as altars.⁴³ Besides Olbia, they are known from a large territory within the barbarian forest-steppe, as well as by the Sauromatai and Sakai.⁴⁴ They have not, however, been recorded in the necropoleis of the European Bosporos. The question then arises: Why were these dishes unknown in the necropoleis of a state, in which the process of amalgamation of the Greek and barbarian (including Scythian) populations showed itself much more strongly than in Olbia? Moreover, in the Olbian necropolis these dishes are more numerous than in contemporary Scythian cemeteries.⁴⁵ This fact is also confusing.

Thus, there are solid grounds to suppose that the Greeks were the major and absolutely dominant component of the population both in the *chora* and in the city of Olbia. This does not, however, exclude the possibility of infiltration by a small number of natives from the surrounding tribes.

This overview has touched upon only some of the most important prob-

lems in discussions of Olbia and its *chora*, for which final solutions are hardly possible, at least in the near future. Unfortunately, the majority of the settlements of the Olbian *chora* have been destroyed during the last fifteen years. For this reason, the hope of obtaining any new fundamental data from excavations is rather illusive, thus making it necessary for us to look for certain results mainly from theoretical studies.

Notes

- 1 Part of this paper has previously been published in *Kryzhitskii 2000 (Eds.)*
- 2 Bujskich 1985, 8.
- 3 Kryžyc'kyj 1989, 45.
- 4 Lapin 1966, 235.
- 5 Kryžickij & Otreško 1986, 5.
- 6 For details, see Kryžickij & Otreško 1986; Kryžyc'kyj 1989; Kryžickij et al. 1989, 37-41.
- 7 Karasev 1956, 22 ff.
- 8 Wąsowicz 1999, 250 ff.
- 9 Bujs'kich 2004, 10-11.
- 10 Otreško 1979; Kryžickij et al. 1989, 84.
- 11 Golovačeva, Marčenko & Rogov 1999.
- 12 Kryžickij et al. 1989, 23-25.
- 13 Kryžickij et al. 1989, 121 ff.
- 14 Kryžickij, Bujskich & Otreško 1990, 74.
- 15 Kryžickij et al. 1989, 56 ff.
- 16 Bujskich 1988, 111-112.
- 17 Kryžickij 2002, 211, note 3.
- 18 Kryžickij, Bujskich & Otreško 1990, 43.
- 19 I have already written more than once about the causes of the collapse of the *chora* in the 5th century BC; as far as the events of the Hellenistic period and the mid-3rd century AD are concerned, they are usually explained by external war threats.
- 20 Cf., however, the most recent study by Bylkova 2005, 217-247, and especially p. 231 - Eds.
- 21 Lapin 1966.
- 22 Kryžickij et al. 1989; Kryžickij, Bujskich & Otreško 1990.
- 23 Lapin 1966, 234-235.
- 24 Černjakov 1985.
- 25 Kryžickij et al. 1989, 20.
- 26 Lipavskij & Snytko 1990, 4-7; Kryžickij 2002, 210.
- 27 Kryžickij 1982, 148.
- 28 Kryžyc'kyj & Rusjaeva 1978.
- 29 Marčenko 1988, 132-133.
- 30 Gavriljuk 1984.
- 31 Gavriljuk & Otreško 1982, 87-88.
- 32 I will not here go into the problem of the contracted burials over which so many lances have been broken to no effect.
- 33 Kapošina 1941.

- 34 Kapošina 1950.
 35 Rusjaeva 1990; 1992, 178 ff.; Bessonova 1991.
 36 Kryžyc'kyj 2001, 24.
 37 Cvetaeva 1951, 68; Kastanajan 1959, 270; Maslennikov 1978, 30; 1981; Grač 1999, 28.
 38 In the Archaic necropolis of Olbia, according to S.S. Bessonova (1991, 95) 83 graves or about 30% of the total number of excavated burials are attributed to the barbarians. From this number, however, must be subtracted 20 graves with weapons and 18 with knives. These might belong equally to Greeks and barbarians. Of the remaining 45 graves with dishes or slabs only 17 displayed 3-4 barbarian features each (according to Bessonova's classification which is by no means indisputable). Thus only 17 Olbian burials can tentatively be attributed as barbarian.
 39 Kozub 1974, 83-85.
 40 Rusjaeva 1992, 178.
 41 Skudnova 1988, 24-27.
 42 Skudnova 1988, 31-32.
 43 Rusjaeva 1992, 178.
 44 Rusjaeva 1992, 179.
 45 Bessonova 1991, 93.

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