

# Mountainous Crimea: A Frontier Zone of Ancient Civilization

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Mountainous Crimea, Taurica, was a region separated from the ancient centers of the peninsula and the communication lines connecting Chersonesos and the Bosporan Kingdom. This region is not particularly well studied and therefore it has been impossible to trace its development in Antiquity, and to clarify its role in the history of ancient Crimea as a whole.

The geographical conditions of the Mountainous Crimea determined that the ancient population of this area dwelled almost entirely on the main mountain range. From a modern point of view it seems unlikely that a mountain ridge could unite a population into a single ethnic group instead of splitting it into several distinct segments. Yet our evidence from Antiquity suggests the opposite. Thus, for example, Plinius the Elder wrote that the Scytho-Taurians inhabited the range (Plin. *NH* 4.85). This evidence has evoked bewilderment among scholars<sup>1</sup> because this part of Crimea has the harshest weather conditions and is covered with snow from November to May almost every year.

The main mountain range of Crimea is formed by a chain of plateaus situated at about 1,000-1,500 m above sea level. Here an ancient road system was laid out uniting all the mountain passes into a single system of communication.<sup>2</sup> The plateaus with their alpine meadows served as excellent summer pastures. They were effectively protected against any threats from outside.

The Taurians, who inhabited the mountain range, were not obliged to struggle for the steppe's nomad territories or to drive their cattle for hundreds of kilometers. Their agricultural valleys were isolated too, and the largest and the richest of them, Bajdarskaja Valley, was defended by the ring of mountains surrounding it. The proportions of cattle breeding and agriculture in the households of the Crimean Mountain population were determined with an algorithm assigned with the same nature. It is important to note, that even 1,000 years after the disappearance of the megalithic cemeteries of the Taurians, new Gothic ones appeared in practically the same places – around the southwestern edges of the main mountain range.<sup>3</sup> The self-sufficient economic life of the Taurians was ensured by their strict control of the most important agricultural territories and the alpine meadows. Their system of life would have been destroyed by the loss of the mountain pastures. Possibly, this was the main reason for the widely known *xenophobia* of the Taurians who kept information about their mountain communications routes and passes a secret.

The ancient literary tradition presents the Taurian society as preserved in a single, definite stage of development for centuries. Fabulous tales of rituals of human sacrifice in the Taurian temple and the worshipping of Greek deities by the Taurians have been recorded from the time of Herodotos to Euripides and Ovidius almost without change. We may assume, however, that because the Taurian world was distinct and self-sufficient it developed in isolation from other ancient civilizations. Therefore, the true character of the relations between the rest of the ancient world and the barbarians of Mountainous Crimea is better examined through our archaeological sources.

### *The sanctuary near the Gurzuf Saddle Pass*

The present paper is based on data from archaeological investigations, carried out by the author in Mountainous Crimea since 1981. The sanctuary near the Gurzuf Saddle Pass is the most intensively investigated site among the archaeological sites which belong to the culture of the ancient population of Mountainous Crimea. Their sanctuaries were located at particular points in the landscape having particular natural and climatic features, and were in use for centuries. Thus, the sanctuary at the Gurzuf Saddle Pass was situated at the highest part of Mountainous Crimea (1,434 m) and used for ritual purposes from the late Stone Age until the late Medieval period.<sup>4</sup> Antiquity, however, was the brightest period in its history. It was in this period, according to literary and archaeological sources, that the southern part of Mountainous Crimea was inhabited by tribes of Taurians (Hdt. 4.99) and Scytho-Taurians (Plin. HN 4.85). Because of the discovery and subsequent examination of this sanctuary we were able to add new details to the map of the Black Sea coast in Antiquity, having determined that ancient imports had reached this area in a constant flow from the 4th century BC until the 1st and 2nd centuries AD.<sup>5</sup> The ritual culture of the local population as shown by our excavations, differed radically from ancient Greek ritual practice but also from the rituals, described by ancient authors as Taurian.

The sanctuary was isolated from the ancient coastal centers – it was not part of the territories of Chersonesos, the Bosporan Kingdom or the late Scythian state. The material from the excavations, however, gives us the opportunity to understand the sanctuary's connection with the outside world. This material displays strong influences from the spiritual cultures of the Greeks and late Scythians, and reveals just how powerful the political impact of the Bosporan Kingdom and of Rome was on life in and around the sanctuary.<sup>6</sup>

The remoteness of the sanctuary protected it against plundering in contrast to the ancient coastal cities and settlements which periodically suffered destruction. Its rich archaeological material consists of a great number of objects which are typical for Crimean settlements and, especially, cemeteries. Among the abundant imports found there are objects which are valuable

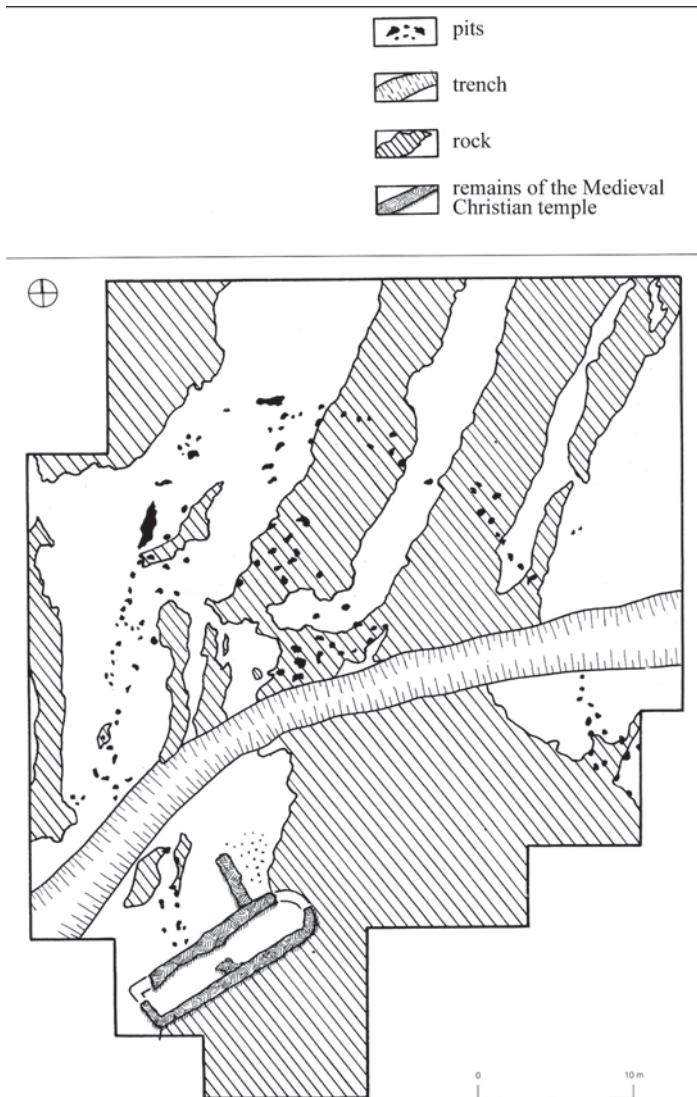


Fig. 1. Plan of the Gurzuf Saddle sanctuary.

and rather rare for the territory of the northern Black Sea coast: unique coins, silver wares, glass and metal vessels, and Roman armour.<sup>7</sup>

At the earliest stage of the sanctuary's history (7th-5th century BC) there were no imported items. Instead artifacts typical for the barbarian population of Mountainous Crimea were found, which we know from settlements and cemeteries (stone cists of pre-Scythian and Scythian periods), as well as Scythian swords (*akinakes*).<sup>8</sup>

In the 4th century BC the use of imported objects and votives of precious metals began. A silver gilded plate with a representation of an eagle-headed griffin in relief belongs to that period.<sup>9</sup> Amphorae from Herakleia Pontike, Thasos, and later – Sinope and Rhodos, appeared in the sanctuary. These fragments were found among lower jaws and teeth from sacrificed animals (primarily cattle) in an area encompassing some 600 m<sup>2</sup>. A possible explanation for the appearance of the amphorae is that they were part of a cattle trade. Such an exchange might have been carried out in the frontier zone due to the limited means of contact.

In the 2nd-1st century BC we can note an increased activity within the sanctuary. The quantity of imported objects from this period is greater than before. Besides a vast number of skulls from sacrificed animals (mainly cows and bulls) as well as an abundance of broken amphorae, metal utensils, weapons, and fragments of cast glass cups of different types, rare for the northern Black Sea coastal areas, have been unearthed. 50 Hellenistic glass vessels have been restored. They came from an eastern Mediterranean production centre (probably the settlement Tel-Anafa in Upper Galilee) and can be dated to the late 2nd and first half of the 1st century BC.<sup>10</sup> Some mosaic vessels, similar to the finds of the shipwreck near the Antikythera Island, and dated to c. 80 BC have also been found. These objects can be taken as evidence for a considerable widening of trade contacts. Particular finds (the cast glass *kantharoi*, *skyphoi* and the pieces of armor) have analogies in rich Sarmatian warrior graves.

Although the ritual life of the sanctuary developed further, its users continued to follow existing local traditions. The discovery of an abundance of neatly placed cattle offerings has caused scholars to suggest that bulls were of great importance in the cult of the Taurians, and that there is a connection between the Greek etymology of the name *Taurians* and these animals.<sup>11</sup>

It is notable that cattle were raised on the pastures of the main range of Mountainous Crimea and only later in Antiquity was farming developed here. It was during this period that Crimea, owing to the communications between the Bosporan Kingdom and Athens, supplied Greece with grain. Finally, in late Antiquity, the mountain pastures were used mainly for goats and sheep.

In the sanctuary the creation of a semi-circle made of uncut stones can be dated to the second half of the 2nd century BC (Fig. 1). The bronze details of a *kline* found there find an analogy in the well-known details of iron *strigils* from the grave in the Artjuhov Barrow on the Taman' Peninsula (about 140 BC).<sup>12</sup> A fragment of a gold necklace, which looks like a chain with the head of a lynx, with an oval pendant containing a purple piece of glass, also has an analogy in the Artjuhov Barrow, while something similar has been found in Olbia, as well. Together with the necklace an earring made of wire also decorated with the head of a lynx was found. Earrings with animal heads appeared in the 4th century BC and were widespread in the ancient world in the Hellenistic period.

At the Gurzuf Saddle sanctuary some copper coins of Hellenistic states

were found: four Lysimachos-type *staters*, two *tetradrachms* of Mithradates VI Eupator together with a large number of other imported wares. In the 2nd-1st century BC, at the time of Mithradates Eupator, the tribes of Mountainous Crimea were drawn into contemporary political events and took part in the Mithridatic wars on the southern Black Sea coast (App. *Mith.* 15.67). The appearance of a series of Hellenistic objects at Gurzuf Saddle was possibly connected with these events, for example the trophies which were uncovered near the semi-circular structure. The bronze *umbo* of an oval shield (a *scutum*) was apparently given as an offering in the sanctuary by warriors after they returned home.<sup>13</sup> Another shield and many bronze and iron details covering the two oval shields together with the above-mentioned *umbo* give us an opportunity to reconstruct the height of the shield to which it belonged to 109 cm. The two bronze *umbos* of the shield dating to the Republican period are the first such archaeological finds on record. Large parts of an iron helmet and a cheek plate are similar to parts of an iron helmet from a rich grave, possibly belonging to King Skilouros, who was buried in a mausoleum in Scythian Neapolis. Further, some La Tene objects of bronze (different handles and feet of vessels) were used as offerings, as was a horse harness, similar to those found in the rich graves of Sarmatian warriors or in the votive hoards on the eastern European steppes.

In the late 1st century BC the sanctuary and its ceremonial rites radically changed. The sanctuary entered a period of prosperity as both a religious and public centre. The reformation of the cult practices was connected with rituals of burning in a new ritual complex. The construction of a rather large ritual complex with a carefully developed spatial structure, demonstrating its creators' notions of cosmogony, tells us about a radical and definite change in the public consciousness of the population of Mountainous Crimea on the eve of the new era. The sacrificial center was in the shape of an oval with 153 holes along its perimeter. The holes contained the remains of burned skulls and the teeth of sacrificed animals. According to its structure the sanctuary was a model of the world. It was used for consecrating the existing order – spatial and social, thus the possibility of involving casual objects into it was minimum, in one word those things, which were not sanctioned by the sacred power.<sup>14</sup>

The quantity of offerings to the gods, especially imported wares, markedly increased. The composition of these votive gifts was enriched with silver and bronze statuettes of ancient deities, Bosporan and Roman coins, pieces of jewelry, various tools, weapons, and a great number of glass vessels. These imported objects were used in the rituals of the Taurians' society, which lagged behind technologically in comparison to the achievements of ancient Greek civilization.

The appearance of a cult of fire was perhaps the most important novelty at this time. We can observe such details of this ritual as the preservation of ashes and animal bones for ritual purposes, the deliberate breaking of many

votives, including metal figurines and vessels. Certain barbaric features can be traced due to the unique preservation of the sanctuary: the use of primitive structures built of crude stones, the absence of monumental constructions, altars and temples, and of dedications and other inscriptions.

The mountain top was the main object of worship. The composition and structure of the ritual center, constructed in the last decades of the first century BC, were in the form of a crescent. To this symbolic shape was added a vertically symmetric line, which connected the top of the mountain with the top (middle part) of the arc line. This magical image was completed under the surface of the earth by the digging of pits.

Three groups of statuettes were centered on this symmetric line. The first one (farthest to the north) included metal figurines of a snake and young female and male deities: Artemis, Kybele, Fortuna, Hermes and Apollon. The second group (in the middle) consisted of statuettes of a horse and two male deities – Zeus and Poseidon. Only one metal figure was found in the third place on the vertical line (furthest to the south, near the top of the mountain) – it was a silver statuette of an eagle.

The creators of the complex realised the ideas about the construction of the Universe in the image of a World Tree that was “drawn” in the sanctuary. Typical for this model three levels of the universe (the sky, the earth and the underworld) were represented in the structure of the sanctuary near the Gurzuf Saddle Pass. They were marked with the three different groups of votive statuettes. The underworld was indicated by grouping of the snake and of the young gods, connected with fertility cult and the ideas of death. It was placed at the roots of the World Tree. The surface of the earth and the world of the living were embodied in the figures of Zeus, Poseidon and of the horse. This sacred animal was closely connected with the trunk of the World Tree. The silver statuette of the eagle represented the birds in the crown of the World Tree. These religious views appeared in the late Paleolithic period and were idealized in the sanctuary in the form of images of a World Tree or of a World Mountain.

In the last decades of the 1st century BC military offerings increased. The gap between the customs of the population of Mountainous Crimea on one side and the Bosporean Kingdom and late Scythian culture on the other was now noticeable. In the sanctuary sets of objects from this period (especially early Roman glass vessels, different adornments) are somewhat similar to those found in Pantikapaion and in the barbarian sites surrounding the Bosporean Kingdom. This suggests that there were stable and strong connections between the military nobility of the barbarian population of Mountainous Crimea and the Bosporean Kingdom, which in turn had formal relations with the neighboring barbarian world. Seemingly, a great number of imports appeared in the region via the Bosporean Kingdom.



*Coin votives*

The variety and state of preservation of Roman and Bosporan coins possibly testify to a special selection of these coins for sacrificial rituals, perhaps connected with magic purposes. Coins as votives played a special role in ritual practice, symbolizing the power of the state, and often offered pictures of the cult attributes and portraits of the powerful rulers who were often worshipped as gods.<sup>15</sup>

It is probably no coincidence that the coins of late 1st century BC and the 1st century AD from the sanctuary at Gurzuf Saddle carry images of the most important political leaders of the Roman epoch, who used their influence on the political developments of the Black Sea coastal areas. It is possible that the sanctuary situated high in the mountains, closely followed the events, which were taking place in the world outside or "below." We can assume that all changes in the political situation and the rise to power of new Bosporan and Roman rulers were marked by a new series of coin votives.<sup>16</sup> This is supported by the fact that among the 313 coins from the sanctuary most were dedicated when newly minted; they are excellently preserved and display an extraordinary variety. There are even *denarii* of emperors who were in power for very short periods (Otho and Vitellius). One can illustrate the entire histories of Rome and the Bosporan Kingdom from the middle of the 1st century BC to the 1st century AD on the basis of the portraits from the coins found at Gurzuf Saddle.

Gold coins struck by the Bosporan kings began to appear in the sanctuary for the first time during the reign of Asander, who was married to Dynamis, a granddaughter of Mithradates VI Eupator. There are two *staters* of Asander: one which is dated K (20th year of his reign = 31 BC) and another dated ZK (27th year of his reign = 24 BC).<sup>17</sup> Together with other Bosporan coins, these *staters* testify to a strengthening of Bosporan political influence on the barbarian population of Taurica.

It is very important to note one unique coin from the sanctuary — a golden *stater* of Dynamis, dated to the 177th year of the Bosporan era (ZOE = 21 BC). The previous earliest known *stater* of Dynamis, dated to 17 BC is kept in the State Historical Museum in Moscow. On the obverse is a bust of Dynamis to the right and the legend includes the title of the queen. Dynamis became the ruler either after the death of Asander or after he was removed from power.<sup>18</sup>

The stabilisation of the political and economical situation in the Bosporan Kingdom in the late 1st century BC, when it came within the sphere of Roman interests, coincides with a period of prosperity in the sanctuary near Gurzuf Saddle Pass. At this time more coins from the Bosporan Kingdom and Rome began to be accumulated. Roman coins can be regarded as a small part of the subsidies received by the Bosporan Kingdom (since the time of Dynamis) for the purpose of keeping the surrounding barbarian world peaceful. The submission of the Bosporan rulers to Rome was reflected in the minting of coins, which showed similarities to the Roman coins.

A gold coin of Aspourgios, the son of Dynamis, with the new date of coinage – the 314th year of the Bosporan era (AIT = 17 AD) has also been found. It is well-known that Aspourgios subdued both the Scythians and the Taurians (CIRB 40). On the obverse of the Aspourgios *stater* is the head of Tiberius facing to the right, and on the reverse is the head of Agrippa facing to the right, as well as the monogram “BAP” on the left.

The Bosporan influence on the population of Taurica was maintained during the reign of Aspourgios' elder son, Mithradates VIII (39-45 AD). He minted gold coins, which were distinguished from other Bosporan coins by their design. On these coins the image of the emperor is represented on the obverse. On the reverse there is a picture of Nike with a wreath, palm branch and the complete name and title of Mithradates. This shows his wish to pursue a policy, independent of Rome. Two *staters* of Mithradates VIII, both of which were found at the Gurzuf Saddle sanctuary, were struck by the same pair of stamps in the 337th year of the Bosporan era (ZAT = 40 AD). Both coins bear this date unknown from the previous known specimens.<sup>19</sup> The *staters* of Mithradates VIII are the most recent finds of Bosporan gold coins from the site.

As we know from Tacitus, Claudius organized a military expedition against Mithradates VIII. The Roman-Bosporan war (45-49 AD) ended with the defeat of Mithradates. But these events happened in a period when the sanctuary's golden period was near its end, just before it entered a period of decline.

Before the appearance of the Romans in the Crimea any proper contacts between the Crimean Mountain region and Chersonesos cannot be traced on the basis of the sanctuary finds. In the period of the sanctuary's prosperity the coins of Chersonesos were not used for sacrificial purposes by the barbarians of Mountainous Crimea despite the territorial proximity of the city. The reason for this could be unfriendly relations caused by the subordinate position of Chersonesos in relation to Rome and the Bosporan Kingdom, thus limiting Chersonesos' role in the political arena. It is quite possible, that the population of Mountainous Crimea played an active part in the complex relations between the Bosporan Kingdom and Chersonesos taking the side of Bosporos on the eve of the new era.

It should not be forgotten that the territory of Chersonesos on the Herakleian peninsula was expanded after it was seized by the Greeks. The Taurians were forced out from a large part of their native land both after the establishment of Chersonesos and later. The excavations discovered many settlements belonging to the Taurian and Kizil-Koba cultures which had been situated in the area before the appearance of the Greeks. From the 6th-5th centuries BC on the Taurians began to concentrate around the southwestern part of the main mountain range, because it was the safest area in the Crimea during the Greek period.



*Roman objects in the sanctuary and Roman activity in the Crimea*

From the middle of the 1st century BC (when the period of Roman influence and entrance into the region began) the local population had definite contacts with Roman culture, as a result of which they obtained Roman objects. Perhaps these objects were dedicated in the sanctuary at different periods (many sanctuaries of various European tribes were full of trophies taken from the Romans).

During the excavations of the sanctuary at the Gurzuf Saddle Pass hundreds of objects and thousands of fragments of Roman artifacts belonging to the late Republican and early Imperial periods were discovered: coins, metal figurines, jewelry, glass, metal and red-glazed vessels, window panes, tools, writing accessories, details of military uniforms, and armaments. The majority of the finds are dated to the 1st century BC and the first half of the 1st century AD. Various periods of Roman penetration into the Crimea are differently represented by the finds from the Gurzuf Saddle.<sup>20</sup> That is why the collection of Roman objects from the sanctuary may serve as an important source for the studying of Roman influence and the immediate presence of Romans in the northern Pontic region as well as their appearances near the shores of southern Crimea.

Roman military equipment is usually found in places where Roman troops have camped, but here they are found in a sanctuary high-up in the mountains. This is the largest collection found within the entire territory of the Black Sea coast and unique in its composition. Besides arrowheads of catapults, spearheads, fragments of three to four Roman swords of the Mainz type and their scabbards, and spurs, there are details of two bronze helmets (cheek plates, forehead guards, a handle of the Coolus type for fastening the helmet during a march), and many fragments of a Montefortino type bronze helmet. The Roman coat of mail (*lorica hamata*) which had been cut into pieces in the sanctuary (848 fragments) is also unique.

A group of early Roman hinged arc *fibulae* from the second half of the 1 century BC to the first half of the 1 century AD (17 items) includes different variants of the Alesia type and the early Aucissa type (made of bronze, silver, iron and gold). Golden hinged *fibulae* of an arched shape with a knob at the end of the hasp and an inset of a drop-shaped garnet represent a further development of the early Roman hinged arched *fibulae* of the Alesia type (mid-1st century BC to 15 AD). These *fibulae* are known in Western Europe in places where Roman legions have been present, but they are extraordinarily rare in the northern Black Sea coastal areas. Only one specimen of an Alesia type *fibula*, made of gold from the Ak-Burun Barrow near Kerch was known in Crimea before the find at Gurzuf Saddle.

Of special interest are some unique *fibulae*: a dolphin-shaped one, the so-called omega-shaped one, and a brooch with a glass cameo. There are also such details from a Roman military uniform as a buckle with a sleeping Pan,

some bronze and silver buckles from Norico-Pannonian belts dated to the 10-40s AD, as well as plaques with *umbos* in the center and silver rivets which would have ornamented sword belts.

A massive cast silver ring with sculptural representation of two snake heads which had a cubic box in their open mouths was covered by engraving which imitated snake skin. The insets for eyes were made of green glass. The surface of the box was covered with soldered gold ornament in a crescent shape. Similar rings with the terminations of snake heads very close to each other are well known from finds at Herculaneum and Pompeii.

Stratigraphic data points to the fact that the crescent-shaped bronze plaque (apparently a detail of a *signum*) found in the sanctuary was offered there in the last third of the 1st century BC. This and other evidence confirm our assumption of Roman military activity in the Taurian region in connection with the internal strife within the Bosporan Kingdom in the first decades of the reign of the Augustus. One other group of objects could be attributed to the events of the Roman-Bosporan war of AD 45-49, when Romans had to make an effort to neutralize the separatist tendencies of Mithradates VIII. A group of Roman objects from the second half of the 1st and the early 2nd century AD pertaining to the period of the Roman military presence in the North Pontic region is likewise noteworthy.

The pieces of Roman military equipment from the sanctuary among which four chronological groups could be singled out may reflect the unstable situation in the Crimea which was connected with the complicated relations that existed between Rome, the Bosporan Kingdom and Chersonesos, as well as local tribes. The objects might have been donated to the sanctuary by the military elite of the local mountain population. This region was under the influence of the Bosporan Kingdom and supported Bosporos in the period of the establishment of Roman influence in the Northern Pontic region. This took place in the second half of the 1st century BC – first half of the 1st century AD, when the sanctuary was at the peak of its glory.

From the second half of the 1st century AD on, Roman gold coins were used in rituals at the sanctuary instead of Bosporan gold coins. Six *aurei* were found belonging to Tiberius, Claudius, Nero (2 coins), and Vespasianus (2 coins) respectively. Rome had previously carried out its policy through the rulers of the Bosporan Kingdom, but after the barbarian threat towards Chersonesos diminished and the Romans strengthened their position in Taurica, the influence of the Bosporan Kingdom declined.

In the second half of the 1st century AD (at the beginning of the Roman military presence in the region) the sanctuary gradually lost its former significance as an important social and religious center. The ritual structure that had existed during its high period began to decline. Imported wares occurred more rarely. The decline of the sanctuary coincided with the beginning of the Roman military presence in the Northern Black Sea coastal region and on the southern coast of Crimea (60 AD). This time is marked by the appearance of

Chersonesean *staters*. Thus, within a 100 year interval isolated coins of Chersonesos (the military base of the Romans on the Northern Black Sea Coast) appeared at the sanctuary. A unique *stater* of the city of Chersonesos from 95/96 AD is the most recent gold coin from the sanctuary. On the obverse of this coin there is the head of a divinity with a snake to the left and an inscription. On the reverse there is Parthenos in full figure, wearing long clothes, in the characteristic pose of an archer, with her weight on her left leg, the monogram IIAP, the date PK (year 120 of the Chersonesean era = 95/96 AD). Parthenos is depicted with a tower crown on her head and a bow in her hand. She carries an arrow taken from the arrow case in her raised right hand.<sup>21</sup>

A number of essays have been devoted to analyses of the rare gold minting of ancient Chersonesos. Before the find at the Gurzuf Saddle six specimens of Chersonesean *staters* were known – from the years 71, 73, 104, 109, 131 and 158 of the Chersonesean era (from 47 to 134 AD). These had been purchased by museums from antique dealers. In all of these instances the circumstances of their discovery were unknown. Our *stater*, which enlarges the number of known specimens, demonstrates a new date of minting. The proposal by A.N. Zograf that the minting of the rare golden *staters* in Chersonesos (as in Bosporos) was regulated by Rome in accordance with a general eastern policy has been considered and accepted by all the scholars.<sup>22</sup> Following the pictures from the Chersonesean coins, one can imagine the sculptural representations of Parthenos – the main divinity of the city. At first, she was represented in the image of Artemis with a deer, and later she looked like the stern defender of the city.

From the middle of the 2nd century AD the ritual complex for burnt offerings was abandoned and covered with grass. Chronologically the degradation of the sanctuary coincides with the beginning of the Roman military presence in Crimea in the 60s AD. The appearance of the Romans on the southern coast of Crimea is connected with the erection of the Roman fortress Charax. The influence of the Romans was thus strengthened and Chersonesos now became their main military base in Crimea. At the same time the sanctuary in Mountainous Crimea weakened further. Earlier it had fulfilled a role as an important public center, but from this period on it became merely a small shrine situated along a mountain road. One cannot, however, conclude that this was caused by a decline in, or the extermination of, the local population and their economic situation. The Romans oppressed the social and military activity of the local tribes and their nobility. This means that the population of Mountainous Crimea lost their role as an independent political entity that the Bosporan rulers depended on and used for their mutual benefit in the struggle against Chersonesos. With this radical change in the political situation the influence of the Bosporan Kingdom was diminished.

The strained relations between the local population and the Romans in the beginning of this period can also be seen in the material of the excavations from the outer defensive wall of the Roman fortress Charax. It was rapidly

and carelessly constructed in the first third of the 2nd century AD<sup>23</sup> and its erection could well be connected with a threat from the local population.

The discovery of a large number of settlement remains from the first centuries AD, situated along the southern coast of the Crimea, and containing ancient pottery similar to finds from Charax and Chersonesos<sup>24</sup> allows us to suppose that the Romans could organize peaceful and mutually beneficial relations with the local population of Mountainous Crimea.

Moreover, the region's relations with the Mediterranean that were established in ancient times created favorable conditions for the reception of Christian culture in the following Byzantine period.

### *Conclusion*

Based on the results of the archaeological research of the last decades it is now possible to use more efficiently the resulting finds in the analysis of the problem of contacts between the population of Mountainous Crimea and the ancient more civilized world.

This may help us to achieve a better understanding of the problem of the relationship between local tribes and Greeks and Romans. Mountainous Crimea were a distinctive frontier zone in the ancient world that never saw a constant state power. This means that we may view the cultural processes that occurred here as merely "meetings of cultures". The history of these cultural contacts and meetings developed through different stages.

With the beginning of the Greek colonization of Crimea the first meeting of the different cultures can be connected with the entry of the Greeks into Crimea (the 6th-5th centuries BC). In the territory of the western part of Mountainous Crimea this colonization had an unfriendly and destructive character because the Taurians were forced off the Heraklean peninsula as a result of the foundation of Chersonesos.<sup>25</sup> The contacts were minimal after the Taurians left their original locations and settled around the main mountain range. Despite the extremely favorable conditions and mild climate of the southern coast of Crimea, particularly for growing grapes, one can observe a total absence of Greek settlements there. It was a closed zone for them. The burial culture of the local tribes of that period employed megalithic tombs.

Chersonesos situated in the immediately neighboring territory was considered more dangerous than, for instance, Pantikapaion by the mountain population. Besides that, Bosporos unlike Chersonesos had strong traditions of coexistence with the surrounding barbarian world, especially in connection with the barbarian settlements to the north of Theodosia on the Kerch Peninsula.

The favorable conditions of beneficial cultural contacts began in the 4th century BC. This can be seen in the dissemination of amphorae (Thasos, Herakleia, Sinope, Rhodos, and Knidos) in the territory of Mountainous Crimea, notably in the finds of the excavations of the sanctuary at Gurzuf Saddle and

the cemetery in Upper Massandra near the palace of Alexander III. These contacts might be linked with the exchange of cattle from the mountain pastures for products in imported amphorae from Bosporos.

The 3rd century BC is not characterized by noticeable finds, but in the 2nd century a new period of contacts connected with the strengthening of the activities of the mountain tribes began. This activity was displayed in the appearance of prestigious objects of metal. From this period the population of Mountainous Crimea was more closely connected with the outside world, possibly primarily with the Sarmatians and late Scythians. Similar compositions of grave goods have been found in the rich Sarmatian barrows of southern Russia and Ukraine and in the mausoleum of Scythian Neapolis as well as in the sanctuary at the Gurzuf Saddle Pass. This shows where the militarized groups of the barbarian population were concentrated. Particular combinations of objects were found there: iron and bronze helmets of the Montefortino type, La-Tene style weapons, bronze vessels and horse harnesses, cast glass vessels, necklaces with butterfly pendants, *unguentaria*, late black-glazed and early red-glazed vessels, *strigils*, amphorae from Rhodos, terracottas, cast glass *kantharoi*, and even bronze fittings for furniture. Mithradates Eupator played a definite role in the organization of military alliances with the barbarian tribes of Mountainous Crimea – a practice which survived even into the early Medieval period when the Goths of Crimea served the Byzantine Empire.

The connections with late Scythian culture can be traced from the 2nd century BC, and all the periods of the sanctuary's development (the rise, flourishing and fall) have the same chronology as the late Scythian culture. The sanctuary was situated in the centre of the Taurian area and later of Crimean Gothia. This mountainous region with its high pastures was the main source for the prosperity of the population who had strict religious traditions which they protected from foreign influence during the entire Greek period of Crimean history.

From the beginning of the Roman period (mid-1st century BC) the situation changed radically. The Romans not only tirelessly sought to establish their influence not only on the internal politics of Chersonesos and Bosporos and on the relations between these states, but they also tried to establish peaceful relations with the surrounding barbarian tribes through subsidies for Bosporos or diplomatic gifts for the barbarian nobility (sets of silver vessels, etc.). All these mechanisms can be observed in the sanctuary at Gurzuf Saddle. Further, we have evidence that indicates that the first attempts of Roman military actions in Mountainous Crimea (in the late 1st century BC and in the 40s AD) were not successful, since many trophies of Roman origin were sacrificed in the sanctuary. At the beginning of the new era ancient sources mention Scytho-Taurian tribes, who inhabited the range. This might be a result of a barbarian consolidation as a result of external threats. Evidently, the Scytho-Taurian tribes were closely connected with Bosporos in the period when the Romans established their power.

In the period of Roman military presence the situation in the Crimean Mountain area was stabilized according to Roman plans. A proper dissemination of ancient material culture began and mutually beneficial economic relations were established causing the loss of political independence until the Romans abandoned the Crimean Mountain region in the middle of the 3rd century AD.

## Notes

- 1 Ol'hovskij 1981, 56.
- 2 Novichenkova 1996, 182, fig. 1.
- 3 Noviĉenkov & Noviĉenkova 2003, 35, figs. 2, 3.
- 4 Noviĉenkova 1994a, 59-86.
- 5 Novichenkova 1996, 186-188.
- 6 Noviĉenkova 1994b, 53-58.
- 7 Noviĉenkova 1998, 51-67.
- 8 Noviĉenkova, 1995, 134.
- 9 Noviĉenkova, 1995, 126.
- 10 Noviĉenkova K.V. 2002, 15-26.
- 11 Tolstoj 1918, 135; Rostovcev 1919, 194.
- 12 Maksimova 1979, 29, 97, 100.
- 13 Noviĉenkova 1998, 53-54, figs. 3, 4.
- 14 Noviĉenkova 1994b, 53.
- 15 Noviĉenkova 1994b, 53-54.
- 16 Noviĉenkova 1994b, 54-55.
- 17 Anochin 1986, 78, 148.
- 18 Anochin 1986, 150.
- 19 Anochin 1986, 151.
- 20 Noviĉenkova 1998, 65-66.
- 21 Noviĉenkova 1985, 260-262.
- 22 Zograf 1951, 155.
- 23 Blavatskij 1951, 278, 281, 291; Noviĉenkov & Noviĉenkova 2002, 29.
- 24 Noviĉenkova 1984, 308.
- 25 Zubar' & Kravĉenko 2003, 192.

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## Abbreviations

AO	<i>Archeologičeskie otkritija.</i>
CIRB	<i>Corpus inscriptionum regni Bosporani</i> , ed. V. Struve. Moskva 1965.
IAK	<i>Izvestija imperatorskoj Archeologičeskoj Komissii.</i>
MAIET	<i>Materialy po archeologii, istorii i etnografii Tavrii.</i>
MatlsslA	<i>Materialy i issledovanija po archeologii SSSR.</i>
SovA	<i>Sovetskaja archeologija.</i>
VDI	<i>Vestnik drevnej istorii.</i>

