

Polis and Chora in the Kingdom of Bosphorus

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The Kingdom of Bosphorus is situated on the European and Asian sides of the Strait of Kerch, The greatest cities are Panticapaeum and Theodosia, founded by the Milesians in the early 6th c BC, Nymphaeum, colonized by the Samians, Phanagoria, settled up by the outcomers from Teos, Hermonassa, the single Aeolian colony on the northern Black Sea area; "small" cities like Myrmekion, Tyritake, Parthenion, Porthmion, Chersonesus of Zeno, Hermision, Heracleion etc appeared later, for example, Myrmekion, founded in the second quarter of the 6th c BC, could have been inhabited from Panticapaeum (or directly from Ionia, as some scholars think); literary sources (Strabo, periples, Stephanus of Byzantium etc) allow to suppose that while colonizing Panticapaeum the Milesians concluded a treaty with the Scythians to get land for living along a narrow strip of land on the coastal zone. That is why we see only few archaic sites mainly in the coastal zone of the Kerch peninsula (European Bosphorus), which give layers of the middle_ late 6th _ early 5th century BC and divided between Nymphaeum (Geroevka, South Tchurubash, Vasil'evka, Opuk or Kimmerikos Hill A etc), Panticapaeum (Cape Zyk, Cape Tchokrak, Andreevka the Southern, early Porthmion), Theodosia (Gogolevka, Starij Krim, Batalnoe etc). Panticapaeum and Nymphaeum as well as probably Theodosia started to develop and enlarge their chorai only 50-60 years later their own founding (except Myrmekion, which appeared earlier). This speaks for a traditional model of colonization in form of centralized founding of apoikiai when chora was arranged as a secondary phase of colonizing process.

In the Asian side the spread of Archaic sites over the Taman peninsula was much more active as the three Hellenic cities Phanagoria, Hermonassa and Cepoe created a dense network of rural sites throughout the whole peninsula and the mouth of the Kuban River which was due to peaceful and good relations with the local Sindians and Maeotians. The earliest material of the mid-second half of the 6th c BC comes from the "small" cities like Patraeus and Tyramba, and we can attribute about 30 sites to a period of the middle – third quarter of the 6th c BC, and even 63 sites to the period of the late 6th – early 5th c BC. Unlike the Kerch peninsula they were situated on the banks of the Kuban River, along the coast and in the interior. It means that they could have been either created by Phanagoria and Hermonassa, which were enlarging their agricultural possessions, or, and it seems more probable, they could have been created in the process of colonization just directly from Ionia simultaneously with the foundation of Phanagoria in 542 BC, having been later on swallowed up by the poleis of Phanagoria, Hermonassa and Cepoe. If so than the model of colonization here reminds of what we know about Olbia and Berezan. Although the most part of these sites wasn't studied archaeologically, we can be sure that the Greeks on the Asiatic Bosphorus started to develop chora a bit earlier than on the european part of the future kingdom as a result of good terms of the Greeks with the resident population, much better than with the Scythians on the Kerch peninsula. In the beginning of the 5th c BC the rural sites of the european part suffered a great disaster, some of them were devastated and ruined, some perished in fire as a consequence of a Scythian raid or political and military troubles after the dynasty of the Archaeanactids coming to power in the 480 BC. Approximately in the early 5th c BC Myrmekion was surrounded by a defensive wall, the acropolis of Panticapaeum was enlarged at the expence of new public and cultural buildings. On the contrary, the chora of Asiatic Bosphorus was greatly enlarged at that time where more than 100 sites functioned. Among them we can find Akhtanizovskaya 4 and Golubizkaya 2, linked by roads with Phanagoria which confirms the developing of chora at that period by this polis - state.

After a short period of destructions in the late 6th c BC Phanagoria enlarged its urban territory already in the very beginning of the 5th c BC, around these years a rural shrine of female goddesses appeared in the vicinity of the city, by the end of the century Phanagoria minted own coins. In the second half of the 6th – first half of the 5th c BC Hermonassa and Cepoe were also rather prosperous, and could develop rural territories around.

Since the second quarter of the 5th c BC rural sites on the Kerch peninsula were mostly situated to the north, north west and west of Panticapaeum, being part of its chora which embraced to the west up to the Uzunlar rempart (as the western extreme point of the chora). The chora of Theodosia included about 30 sites, Nymphaeum enlarged a number of its rural sites as well. For that particular period we are probably aware of mixed Hellenic Scythian sites, to which could refer Kimmerikos Hill A (Opuk) and the so-called Thokraskij Spring on the Crimean Azov Sea coast. The situation on chora of Panticapaeum confirms stable and even good relations with the barbarians to be held in course of the Archaeanactid rule in 480 – 438 BC. The same one can say about the Nymphaeum's chora and the city itself, as proved by the necropolis with Helleno – Scythian barrows of the 5th c BC. The agrarian territory of the European Bosphorus was in the 5th c BC developing completely as the polis chora of Panticapaeum, Theodosia and Nymphaeum with Myrmekion as a part of the rural area of Panticapaeum, as proved by the coins. It means that we can speak about the rule of the Archaeanactids as tyrannic by origin being originally a kind of polis administration, established in Panticapaeum.

The Asian side was developing independently. In the second quarter of the 5th c BC the rural sites continued to appear mostly in the interior of the Taman peninsula and to the south in Sindica as earlier in the framework of the chorai of Phanagoria, Hermonassa and Cepoe. This indicates the originally polis land structure in Bosphorus. An early settlement on the place of ancient Gorgippia (modern Anapa), presumably called Sind or Sindian Harbour, also started to develop the nearest vicinities, where we know for that time an Archaic settlement Alekseevskoe which was functioning in the late 6 – early 5 c BC and it is confirmed by a pottery fragment of the 7 c BC from there. But this region was not in possession of Bosphoran tyrants until later times.

In 438 BC the Archaeanactids were overthrown by Spartocus I who became a founder of a new Bosphoran dynasty in Panticapaeum – the Spartocids and since then a new period of chora's development began. Spartocids' regime was also a kind of polis Panticapaeum's tyranny like that of the Archaeanactids, but were completely Hellenized as a noble Thracian, Maeotian or Iranian family. It is not until the Satyros I coming to power in the last quarter of the 5th c BC when the tyrants of Panticapaeum started to expand their power to the other regions: at first they captured Nymphaeum in 405 BC, around the last decade of the 5th – early 4th c BC a town of Cepoe on the Asian side fell into their hands (Demosthenes' uncle from mother's side Gylon the Athenian was appointed as governor there for handing Nymphaeum over to Satyros), Satyros began a siege of Theodosia and hold diplomatic activity in Sindica – a policy successfully continued by his son Leucon I who established the highest spread of territorial expansion of the kingdom by the middle – third quarter of the 4th c BC, having conquered Theodosia, then included Sindica into his domain and finally Phanagoria became a part of his state. Despite the strengthening of the tyrants power, polis chorai of Panticapaeum and Nymphaeum still kept their position: we are aware of more than 35 sites on the Nymphaeum's chora in the early 4th – beginning of the 3rd c BC (the greatest are Geroevka, Ogon'ki, Tchurubash 9, South Tchurubash etc), agrarian territory was divided up into plots of land approximately 29,5 and 35, 4 ha in size, some part of the peninsula west of the city's chora was also incorporated into its' possessions; Panticapaeum was enlarging its rural area to the west and to the south, thus embracing the hinterland and the coastal zones of the Strait of Kerch and the Sea of Azov.

That was also a period when the Spartocids were creating new "small" or townlike cities on chora – Acra, Cytaeum, Parthenion, Zephirion, Heracleion, Hermision on the European side and Stratocleia on the Asian side of Bosphorus, Leucon's brother Gorgippos organized a new city of Gorgippia which also had its own chora and probably included into it or appeared on the place of former place, known as Sindos or Sindian Harbour. That was especially done for cultivating grain and getting income from trade export of it to the Aegean, as the top of commercial activity with Athens is going down to this particular time.

But the main grain and other agricultural resources were got from the local agrarian population of the interior parts of Kerch peninsula and the territories along the Kuban river. This were mostly the so-called villages or *komai* of Scythians in the European part (Koshara, Zolotoe Plateau, Ak-Tash etc) and Sindo-Maeotians in the Asian part of the kingdom. Some of them are situated around Theodosia and Nymphaeum, but chiefly they belong to the chora of Panticapaeum (though there is much argues about their administrative status: some think that they inhabited the royal lands of the Spartocids as dependent or semi-dependent population), but we consider their living territory to be of polis origin and characterize it as distant chora of Panticapaeum, and the population itself depended on this polis. Spartocids were archons of Bosphorus and Theodosia, and it was their official status as in numerous inscriptions, but they were kings only over resident population on distant lands of Sindica and Maeotica, so we can hardly consider their land possessions on the Kerch peninsula and on the Taman as royal or *ge basilike*, thus being completely polis lands of the largest cities there. We can distinguish the following types of settlements on chora: country estates of Greek origin which really belong to the polis chora of Panticapaeum (Andreevka the Southern, Oktiabrskoe, Baklan'ja Rock) – they appear in the beginning of the 4th c BC after a certain devastation on chora, caused by a Scythian invasion or a war with Theodosia and Heraclea Pontica, then they were enlarged in the late 4th – early 3rd c BC after a war of Paerisades I with the Scythians in 328 BC; Greek sites beyond the urban chora, mostly in the coastal zone – country estates or farms (Pustynnij Coast), large fortified sites as centers of administrative district (Cape of Tchokrak), large fortified sites with number of towers and rooms with huge defensive walls and forts around to defend them from the step, probably, a kind of trading settlements to hold commerce with the hinterland and to store grain, got as phoros from local population in the interior villages to bring it then to the city, i.e. Panticapaeum, like Generalskoe the Western on the Crimean Azov coast. The chora of Theodosia reminds that of the Panticapaeum's with Greek farms closer to the city walls and villages of mixed population on far distant chora; in the Asian side we know now more than 185 sites around Phanagoria, Hermonassa, Cepoe, we are also aware of land division system on the Taman peninsula, most of all covering the Phantalovskij peninsula (modern northwest Taman); Gorgippian chora included such sites as Dzhemete, Natukhaevskaya, Su-Psekh, Krasnaja skala etc and a lot of separate buildings at a distance of 50 or 100 m from each other. That is a good confirmation of the fact that the Spartocids were basing their power mostly on polis lands and supported polis communities in economic policy, having put a Greek polis into a central point of their political and military power. Bosphorus spread its influence to the mouth of the Tanais (Don) river where a former Greek *emporion* Elizavetovskoe fell under control of the Spartocids. All these sites on chora were living in until the second quarter – middle of the 3rd c BC when they were ruined or fired by the Scythians or by the Sarmatians who became active in the region between Don and Dnieper rivers, having touched Taman, Gorgippia and the Crimean settlements.

The situation radically changed in the second half of the 3rd – turn of the 2nd/ 1st c BC when the whole agrarian territory, but mostly on the Kerch peninsula, suffered a reduce of sites, disappearance of villages in the interior, and it coincided to a great reduce of grain trade of the kingdom since the second quarter of the 3rd c BC. There was a popular opinion that Bosphorus was in deep economic crisis, but archaeology shows that it was not quite correct, as the chora was still

developing but in other economic conditions. Instead of farms, country estates of the Greek type and *komai* in the hinterland of the Kerch peninsula, large fortified sites appeared and they were located along the Azov sea coast. It was chiefly the sites with strong defensive walls, large towers, linear inner planning, single-roomed houses united into blocks, divided by longitude streets (Zolotoe the Eastern, Krutoj Bereg, Porthmion, Semenovka, Polianka on the Kerch peninsula), a part of resident population of the hinterland was moved to the coastal zone and settled up to live in around these newly erected forts like semi dependent land-tillers of the *katoikoi* type. Ordinary country estates like a residence of a governor by the Lake of Tchokrak and *villa urbica* near Myrmekion (Soldatskaja slobodka) were still functioning on the chora of Panticapaeum. Though it seems so that large forts belonged to chora basilike, we still think possible to attribute them to the distant chora of Panticapaeum, Nymphaeum and Theodosia, as the rulers of Bosphorus, once called now kings, kept all features of polis tyrans, as earlier. This system of land relations kept on functioning until late 2nd – early 1st c BC, having partly driving into the Mithridatic period. The polis system on the Asian side continued to live in at that time and was even more prosperous than the Crimean one: we are aware of more than 203 rural sites on the Taman and a lot of urban country estates on the chora of Gorgippia. We know there also large forts like Raevskoe and Semibratnee, but in lesser number than on the Kerch peninsula. Although the Theodosian rural vicinity seriously reduced because of the Scythian and Sarmatian invasion, the city's chora continued to function. That was a reason why Mithridates the Great initially started to use the facilities of urban agricultural environs for supplying his army, but when they were unable to give him more, he stopped supporting them and began to create a real ge basilike like in classical Hellenistic states with large forts as a main point of it in different places.

This new system of land tenure and character of landscape started living in already in the 80-60s BC when Bosphorus became an ancestral domain of the Pontic king, having been ruled by his sons Mithridates the Younger, Machares and later on by Pharnaces. It was finally created only under the successors of Mithridates Eupator in the second half of the 1st c BC – first half of the 1st c AD. Now the rural sites were mostly *katoikiai* of the Hellenistic type and looked like very big settlements with citadels, strong fortifications as centers of administrative districts on royal land (Novootradnoe, Artesian, Belinskoe, Ilourat etc). Though polis territories still were kept in, they seriously reduced in size and because of that were defended by royal forts and sites, which only could withstand the aggressive barbarians. Not polis land, as before, but royal land with large sites and a system of dependent small fortifications (like in the vicinities of Gorgippia, Phanagoria and Batae) could now serve as a main source of supply for the Pontic and later for the Bosporan royal armies. The other reason for its creation seems to be a policy of the kings who were coming in good terms with the barbarians, having used them either as soldiers or mercenaries, or military settlers on land of the *katoikoi* type, like in Hellenistic states, so turning them off from aggressive motions against the Hellenic cities and royal domain. Such policy was began by Mithridates and was continued by his successors on the throne of Bosphorus, having made this kingdom one of the main states of the Black Sea and Eastern Mediterranean. Bosphorus managed to keep this system on until late antiquity mostly because the Roman Empire helped to maintain it in its own interests, willing to see Bosphorus as a main client kingdom for suppressing the nomadic threat from the northeast.

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