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GOCHA R. TSETSKHLADZE

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



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WYDZIAŁ ARCHEOLOGII Uniwersytet Warszawski

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Photography of artefact on the title page:

The National Museum in Warsaw houses a fairly large collection of artefacts from the Black Sea region. The artefact we selected is a terracotta figurine depicting Cybele (inventory no. 225367 MNW) from Polish excavations at Myrmekion. The photography is reproduced from the online collection of the National Museum (https://cyfrowe.mnw.art.pl/en/catalog/490581)

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Archaeological Research in the Hellenistic Necropolis of the Northern Sector of the City of Callatis

Two archaeological investigations were carried out on Ernest Juvara Street in the town of Mangalia. These investigations can be placed within the same historical and archaeological context – the beginning of the Hellenistic period, at the end of the 4th century BC.

At 35 Ernest Juvara Street, a total area of approximately 98 m^2 was excavated. Four pits were identified. In Pit G3, near the western section profile, a limestone funerary stele with an inscription was discovered.

The text of the inscription is as follows:

Ξενωφέλης
Ἀλκίμου

The name Xenophelēs/Ξενωφέλης is rare, being attested only in two inscriptions from the island of Delos (LGPN V, 1). The name of the deceased, the concise text of the epitaph, and the letter forms all suggest that the monument should be dated to the 4th or possibly to the early 3rd century BC.

At nos. 23–25 Ernest Juvara Cioran Street, six Hellenistic-period graves and four pits containing deposits of amphora fragments were discovered. Based on the materials recovered, both the graves and the pits with deposits of fragments from Hellenistic vessels can be dated to the last two decades of the 4th century BC.

The burial inventory uncovered in the graves consists of two Macedonian-type coins, two ceramic jugs (one of small dimensions) and an iron strigil. Particularly noteworthy is a bronze ring whose bezel depicts a griffin in front of a circular temple.

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Continuity of Worship: The Sacred Spring of Aquae Calidae in Antiquity

The significance of springs represents a vital component of many ancient Mediterranean religions. The perceived power of these water sources was attributed to various spirits, nymphs and other mythological figures believed

to inhabit them. Consequently, such locations became focal points of worship. Numerous ancient authors document that devotion was commonly manifested through the deposition of votive offerings, particularly coins, within these springs. Such practices have been confirmed at various sacred springs throughout Greece.

The mineral spring located at Aquae Calidae on the Black Sea coast, near the contemporary city of Burgas in Bulgaria, is renowned for the multitude of votive objects uncovered at the site – nearly 5000 items in total. These artefacts include coins, votive reliefs (some inscribed), fibulae and various other objects. The small finds from the spring exhibit a broad chronological span, dating from the 6th century BC to Late Antiquity. The spring's geographical position, situated near the coastline and at a convergence of significant routes, has contributed to its enduring popularity. These factors collectively render Aquae Calidae a remarkable example of continuity in religious practices, highlighting the role of the spring as a cultural intersection throughout antiquity. This paper will examine the site's development over the centuries, with particular emphasis on the transformations in the space surrounding the spring and the evolution of associated ritual practices, as evidenced by the changes in votive offerings.

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The New Excavations of a Paphlagonian Roman City: Amastris

The ancient city of Amastris, one of the most important ports of Paphlagonia (Western Black Sea Region of Turkey), was founded under the name of Sesamos in the Greek colonial age. Since the Hellenistic period, it managed to maintain its strategic position in the region until the Middle Ages. The first scientific research in the city, which has attracted the attention of European travellers since the 19th century and of scientists in the 20th century, was carried out by J. Crow and S. Hill in the Amasra Castle in the late 1980s. Apart from the detailed examinations and evaluations made by L. Robert, C. Marek and K. Belke, no archaeological studies were carried out in the city. Scientific findings have been carried out and published within the scope of the Bartın Province and Districts Survey since 2017. The rescue excavations, which started in 2022 under the direction of Amasra Mu-

seum, have broadened into a determined excavation (2024) and still continue. Excavations have been concentrated on the Roman-period stoa structure of the ancient and the Roman Baths structure. The data obtained casts light on the transitional periods of the city to the Imperial period and the Early Byzantine. It is understood that the stoa structure, in the Corinthian order with its unfluted columns, was built in the late 1st century AD and remained in use throughout the Antonine period, being destroyed in the late 3rd century AD, probably due to an earthquake. A structure with re-used masonry was built on the stylobate plane to the east of the structure in the 4th century AD. A small chapel structure built on this filling in the 6th century AD, after the building was flooded many times and thus fell out of use, also provides evidence of developments in the transition of the city from the Roman Imperial to the Early Byzantine period. As a result of these first excavations, the Roman Imperial period of the city of Amastris has begun to be revealed.

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New Style in an Old City. A Roman Insula at Histria (Contanta County, Romania)

Despite 110 years of archaeological research at Histria, the early Roman period, one of the best-known in the history of the city, was unknown from an archaeological point of view. Thus, 25 years ago, archaeological research conducted by the National History Museum of Romania was launched in a sector between the Main Gate and the Main Tower of the late fortress, but in a central area of Roman Histria. The main objective is learning about Histria during the Principate The archaeological research revealed important data about of the stratigraphy of the area, but also led to the discovery of important remains from the 2nd–3rd centuries AD. One of these is an insula, the third to be uncovered by our research, located in the southern part of the sector. The building has a researched area of 780 m^2 and at least sev-

en rooms. The discoveries are among the most interesting, both in terms of construction techniques, the building's planimetry, and the artefacts discovered. All of these indicate a preservation of old construction methods (Greek), as well as the adoption of new techniques (Roman). At the same time, the materials discovered indicate the domestic character of the building, but also elements related to the daily life and commercial relations of Histria during the Principate.

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New Greek Inscriptions from Histria

The archaeological excavations in the Main Gate–Main Tower sector at Histria have brought to light several Greek inscriptions of Hellenistic and Roman date, all found reused in both Early and Late Roman domestic contexts. The finds include several funerary and honorific inscriptions, as well as a new fragment of the horothesia. This paper presents an overview of these inscriptions, with particular attention to a nearly complete honorific decree of the 3rd century BC, recovered from a prosperous Roman house destroyed by fire. The decree records

the pledges made by a local benefactor, Menecharmos, during a severe grain crisis. He committed to supplying the city at accessible prices, comparable to those mentioned in the famous decree of Olbia honouring Protogenes. The text further refers to a cavalry force guarding the chora, as well as to an unnamed strategos collecting revenues, apparently under an arrangement with the city. Notably, the decree concludes with an unusual addendum containing an imprecation directed against those who might harm the benefactors of the city or of the strategos.

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From the Fisherman to the Oikist? Reflections on the Importance of Deltaic Areas at the Very Beginning of the Greek Colonisation

According to Herodotus, Aristeas of Proconnesus was the first Greek navigator to cross the Bosporus and sail the Black Sea. Far from conforming to the model of the oikist, designated by the metropolis to found a new city, this account sheds light on an intermediate phase during which private actors undertook the exploration of the Pontic shores on their own initiative. But what was their

motivation? While trade and arable land have long been identified as the two factors behind Greek colonisation, it is highly unlikely that Aristeas set out in search of green pastures or to transport goods to markets and trading places he did not yet know. This observation leads us to take a closer look at the unique geography of the first Greek settlements in the Black Sea. It invites us to question the particular role played by delta areas during the early days of Greek penetration, in light of the results of the Franco-Romanian archaeological mission at Orgame and the settlements of the Lower Danube.

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Roads-Customs-Army. About a New Project on Beneficiarii in Moesia Inferior and Dacia

The study of the road systems and customs in the Roman Empire has emphasised multiple dimensions, including the connection with the army. Within this approach, the role of beneficiarii (especially the beneficiarii consularis) was treated in connection with customs and with roads separately: most of the authors analysed the role of certain stationes and the strategic economic importance of various offices.

In this respect, we propose a spatial perspective concerning the mapping of roads, customs offices, stationes of beneficiarii to see the strategic and economic importance of the places where the beneficiarii are

involved. This mapping will be handy in analysing the sources. A ground-breaking result could be the identification of new secondary roads which are not mentioned nor by cartographic, neither by archaeological or epigraphic sources. Another project aim is to identify (if possible) the type of merchandise transported on the roads or the object of taxation in the customs offices.

The project also relies on a comparative approach attained using two points of view. Firstly, a comparative analysis of the activity of beneficiarii will be carried out concerning the customs and the business connected to them, and the roads and their strategic importance. Secondly, as stated before, we will address the necessity of a selective comparison with the same issues in other provinces. We will follow a chronological distribution of the text, trying to find a relationship between the dating of inscriptions and the history of both provinces.

Our project proposes a study of the economic role of beneficiarii within the customs system of Dacia and Moesia Inferior (tertia pars in the publicum Portorii Illyrici) and the strategic positions of stationes of beneficiarii in the road system of these provinces. This study has not been carried out before.

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The Environment and the Chora of a Doric colony: Geoarchaeological Insights from Callatis

This paper presents the preliminary results of a new interdisciplinary project dedicated to exploring the environmental and territorial setting of the Doric colony of Callatis (modern Mangalia, Romania) through a landscape archaeological and geoarchaeological approach. The project addresses central questions: how was the city embedded in its broader environment, and how did environmental constraints and potentialities, as well as long-term dynamics, shaped the articulation between urban core and chora? The banks of the valley that runs through the inland territory of Callatis towards the sea hosts several Albesti-type fortifications settled in the 4th century BC, functioning through the 3rd century as well. Albesti 'cetate' has been systematically researched since 1974. Therefore, it can offer a proper archaeological insight for these types of fortifications and their historical evolution,

providing a starting point for a chronological approach to systematising rural works as well. The research focuses on reconstructing the geomorphological evolution of the coastal plain and the Albesti valley, which forms a natural corridor between the urban settlement and its hinterland. By combining geomorphological mapping, coring, geo-bio-sedimentological analysis and archaeological surveys, the project aims to identify past landscape configurations and assess how environmental dynamics interacted with patterns of settlement, communication and land use. This ongoing study provides a first integrated framework for understanding the environmental context of Callatis and contributes to a broader comparative perspective on the landscapes of the western Pontic colonies.

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Changing Environments, Changing Practices? A Geoarchaeological and Archaeo-ichthyological Perspective from the Southern Danube Delta in Graeco-Roman Times

This paper examines the relationship between environmental changes, micro-ecologies and aquatic resources exploitation in the southern Danube delta from the Greek colonisation to the Early Roman period (7th century BC–3rd century AD). By integrating, for the first time, geoarchaeological and archaeo-ichthyological data we explore

how past communities adapted to the region's dynamic waterscape and engaged with its ecological and geographical diversity through settlement pattern and resource exploitation. The Danube delta, as a dynamic geomorphological system, is characterised by continuous shifts in its ecological niches, influenced by fluvial, lagoonal and marine processes that shaped the opportunities and constraints for human settlement. By focusing on three key sites, Istros, Caraburun-Acic Suat and Orgame, from the southern unit of the delta, we address the following two key questions: (1) What was the evolution of the deltaic waterscape during the functioning of the settlements?; and (2) How did past societies in the delta balance environmental constraints and potentialities with socio-cultural practices and needs? To answer these questions, we used an interdisciplinary, multi-proxy approach that integrates coring, bio-sedimentological analysis, archaeological excavations and archaeo-ichthyological investigations. Our methodological approach aimed to firstly reconstruct the paleo-environmental evolution of the southern Danube delta in order to understand its micro-ecologies and then the strategies used by past communities to interact with and harness the aquatic resources of the deltaic waterscape. Together, these methods trace how Greek and Roman communities adjusted settlement strategies and resource exploitation to long-term hydrological and ecological changes in the delta. Finally, our results highlight the complex relation between environment and practice in this area, challenging deterministic models of aquatic exploitation and offering new perspectives on Graeco-Roman interactions with dynamic coastal ecosystems.

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Uncovering the Rural Landscapes of Istros/Histria during the Roman Period. New Research in the Beidaud Archaeological Microzone (Romania)

The paper will present the evolution of a new, interdisciplinary research project coordinated by the University of Bucharest in the Hamangia valley, in the framework of the Beidaud Archaeological Microzone (Tulcea County, Romania). The latter comprises sites covering a chronological span ranging from the Neolithic to Late Antiquity. We consider issues such as settlement patterns and land use, using a multi-proxy approach that combines remote sensing (aerial photography, LiDAR, geophysics) with geoarchaeology (bio sedimentology, palynology, charcoal analysis) and archaeological excavation, in order to establish the structure and cultural profile of the settlements and their interaction with their paleo landscape.

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Functioning Spaces and Function of Spaces. Recent Research in a Late Antique insula on the Acropolis of Istros/Histria (Romania)

The paper will present the ongoing interdisciplinary research project coordinated by the University of Bucharest in Istros/Histria (Constanța County, Romania). The Late Antique insula investigated there marks the adaptation of the Istrian urban plan to a new, Christian topography.

We will present the complete plan of the residential complex, chronological framework, evolution of the internal spaces and access ways, and we will attempt to identify the functionality of certain spaces, for some of them using the input from other fields, such as archaeozoology and palaeobotany.

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Callatis: Ceramic Materials from the 5th–2nd centuries BC. Recent Discoveries

The site where the archaeological material was discovered is on the western edge of the city, intra-muros, near the western enclosure, in a place used in antiquity, especially between the 5th and 2nd centuries BC, for the deposition of ceramic fragments, animals bones, but also other household waste – highlighted by layers of burning or ash.

The stratigraphic situation – of layers of earth containing numerous ceramic fragments, alternating with layers of burning, ash or yellow earth lenses – demonstrates that we are dealing with the rearrangement of a space, resulting in a mound created in antiquity, through various deposits. Even the level of lithic fragments and crushed stone is not horizontalised, it follows the profile of the arrangement of this mound. The situation leads us to suggest that this is where, in the 5th–2nd centuries BC, a mound was formed through the successive deposits of material, in which were ceramic fragments and levels of burning/ash.

The ceramic inventory is represented by: stamps and amphoric containers (fragmented); common use vessels of Greek (and probably colonial) origin, represented by kantharoi, unguentaria, bowls, jugs, lamps, etc.; Tanagra-type figurines (fragmented); loom-weights; etc.

Analysis of the ceramic materials recovered from the site at 26 Oituz Street allows several observations: the richness and variety of the archaeological material; chronological limits between the 5th century (fragment of the Chian amphora) and the 2nd/1st century BC (more likely the 2nd: see the Hadra-style krater vessel). Well-marked periods are the second half of the 4th and the 3rd century BC.

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Timbrer autour de la mer Noire: une pratique polysémique

La réflexion sur le sens du timbrage des amphores dans le monde grec aux époques classique et hellénistique a mené à un débat entre les tenants de différentes hypothèses sur sa signification. Selon les spécialistes, ce timbrage est vu comme une marque publicitaire, comme une garantie de qualité ou encore comme un marquage fiscal. Replacer le timbrage amphorique dans le contexte plus global du timbrage des différents objets en céramique (tuiles, pesons de métier à tisser, œnochoés, pithoi, vases de tout type) permet de réinterroger à

nouveau frais ce phénomène et d'examiner les raisons de sa diffusion plus ou moins large selon les cités. Les cités pontiques permettent d'avoir une large variété de cas, de l'absence totale du timbrage jusqu'à un timbrage sur de nombreuses catégories de céramiques, du fait de la diffusion de cette pratique au sein d'une population qui est sensibilisée à cet outil dans sa vie quotidienne. Ces marques sont utilisées avec différentes significations : marque de propriété, garantie officielle, marque d'atelier… Cette réception du timbrage ne se fait pas uniquement au sein des populations grecques, mais également chez les Gètes, qui adoptent le timbrage à la basse-époque hellénistique. Cette multiplicité des réceptions et adoptions du timbrage autour de la mer Noire permet de réfléchir à la polysémie de cet acte suivant les acteurs.

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Luxury Furniture from the Hellenistic Necropoleis of Odessos and its Surroundings

During the investigations of some of the richest Early Hellenistic burials in Odessos and its vicinity, fittings made of ivory and glass have been discovered – spiral volutes, palmettes, tendrils, geometrical ornaments, and figural scenes related to the Dionysiac thiasos, published as belonging to wooden sarcophagi: from Tumulus 2 of the Five Tumuli necropolis at the village of Galata; from the tumulus at Kokardzha locality; from the tumulus with a tomb at Akchilar locality; and from the tumulus with a Macedonian tomb investigated during the construction of the Girls' High School – at present the building of Varna Archaeological Museum. The numerous published remains of decoration of luxury wooden klinai, Type B (72), larnakes, and stretchers from ancient Macedonia, as well as the proposed reconstructions of the elements of the decoration of the better-preserved ones, allow one to look at the finds from Odessos in a different light. Some of the ivory and glass fittings most probably belong to Type B luxury wooden klinai, and possibly to larnakes or other pieces of wooden furniture. The aim of the paper is

to offer a new analysis of the ivory and glass objects and to consider them within the frame of our current understanding of the place of the luxury wooden furniture in the Hellenistic burial practices in the Black Sea region, and to discuss the possible influence of the Macedonian aristocracy on its introduction in Odessos.

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On the Question of Local Identity and Representation – A Zoomorphic Figure from the Southern Black Sea Littoral

The ancient Black Sea region is characterised by the interaction of mainstream cultures (Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Achaemenid) with local cultures. In the case of the southern Black Sea littoral, however, we find the question of local identity and material culture sadly neglected by scholarship. As a result, we have little information on the fabric of local cultures encountered by mainstream migrants (Greeks, Romans, Genoese), nor how elements of migrated cultures resonated with local inhabitants.

Recent studies have begun addressing this question, including the Amasra Regional Survey conducted from 2017–23, which studied select areas outside the mainstream

centre of ancient Amastris. One of the most unique finds – a small zoomorphic figurine of coarse ceramic fabric – may prove quite significant in understanding the nature of local identity in the outlying region of the ancient city.

This paper presents the zoomorphic figurine found in 2021 outside the site of Amastris. While its features are somewhat eroded or broken, it is clearly not a domestic or agricultural animal, unlike most figurines found in regions of Central Anatolia. Closer examination suggests a sacrificial or representative animal, but perhaps a ram, or most likely a lion – a figure found in many larger figures in Bithynia/Paphlogonia. This discussion queries the combination of such imagery with a small ceramic format in order to address the local reception of representative imagery in the region.

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Coinage of the Western Black Sea Cities in the Roman Period: Between Hellenistic Tradition and Provincial Realities

This paper explores the coinage of the western Black Sea cities during the Roman period and its significance within a broader historical framework. These communities, whose traditions reached back to the Hellenistic world, were able under Roman rule both to preserve earlier monetary practices and to adapt them to new political and economic conditions. The balance between inherited tra-

ditions and the requirements of the provincial empire makes their coinage a subject of particular interest.

The analysis draws on archaeological evidence, encompassing both single finds and coin hoards. The focus lies not only on the quantity of coins struck by these cities, but also on the issues with which they circulated. Equally revealing are the absences – the types of coins never encountered in hoard contexts. Such patterns of presence and absence illuminate the character of local circulation and highlight differences between individual centres.

Taken together, the evidence demonstrates that the coinage of the western Black Sea cities constitutes not only a source of information on regional monetary exchange, but also a testimony to the persistence of local identity. Both the iconography and the distribution of these coins indicate that these cities were arenas where Hellenistic traditions engaged with the provincial realities of the Roman empire.

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Mapping the Roman Workshops from the North-Western Part of Current Dobruja

In the north-western part of the territory located between Danube and the Back Sea, in a relatively narrow area, archaeological investigations revealed a high density of workshops which developed between the 2nd and the 4th

centuries AD. They were situated not far from the Danubian military centres of Troesmis and Noviodunum and specialised in iron smelting, iron smithing, production of ceramic tableware, of ceramic construction materials (tegulae), the manufacture of ceramic projectiles and the production of lime. At the same time, in this area is recorded the presence of beneficiarii consularis (mentioned in the inscriptions ISM V, 247 and 248).

I endeavour to map these workshops and observe them in the context of their geographical connection with the Danubian military centres. The principal aim is to have an overview on the spatial distribution of the Roman workshops between the 2nd and the 4th centuries AD in the north-western part of the nowadays Dobruja and on their relation with the military presence and the road network in the respective area. On this basis, I shall analyse the possible road connections between the workshop clusters and the military centres located in relative proximity on the Danube. This will enable further research on the role of the military presence in general and of the beneficiarii consularis, in particular for the development of the craftmanship and transport activities in this area situated on the outskirts of the Roman empire.

This study is carried out in the framework of the research project 'Roads-customs-army. The strategic and economic role of beneficiarii in Dacia and Moesia Inferior' PN-IV-P1-PCE-2023-0083.

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Medgidia Hellenistic Project, an Emporion between Worlds?

The Late Iron Age sites studied in this work, named Medgidia Hellenistic 1, 2 and 3, date to the early 4th–middle 3rd century BC, a time known as the Hellenistic period for the Romanian western Pontus (Dobrogea/Dobruja). These sites, located in Medgidia (Constanţa County, Romania), were excavated during 2022–24 resulting in over 600 archaeological contexts, such as domestic or supply pits, ceramic kilns, dwellings or various types of facilities. The research area is located on the edge of an ancient commercial road, halfway between the shore of the western Pontus, an area under the influence of West Pontic Greek colonies, and the Istros (Danube), at the western end of the Karasu valley, a navigable channel in antiquity. It is worth mentioning the attestation, for the first time in a settlement context, starting with the beginning of the 4th century BC, of the presence of a North Pontic (Scythian) population in the central Dobruja, which confers new perspectives on the cultural

and economic links between the local (Thracian Getae) and North Pontic populations.

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The Fortified Site at Stolniceni (Hâncești District, Republic of Moldova) in the Context of the Getic Culture of the Pruth-Dniester Region

The Getic culture in the Prut–Dniester area is well represented by numerous sites, especially fortified settlements, which clearly reflects the peak of this culture in the 4th–3rd centuries BC. Archaeological investigations over the last decades have focused primarily on fortifications, grouped into three micro-regions. Necropolises have been less thoroughly researched, and their absence near clusters of fortified settlements raises several questions, although this may be due to the current state of research. An unusual situation is illustrated by the fortified enclosure at Stolniceni, located in the central part of the area between the Prut and the Dniester. Archaeological research has revealed the presence of both funerary and non-funerary structures here. The funerary arrangements do not reflect a consistent ritual pattern. Most of them are inhumations placed under small tumuli or in the extra-tumular area. The cremation rite has been identified in only one case so far. Some funerary features display overlapping skeletons and agglomerations of human and animal bones, indicating the presence of irregular funer-

ary practices. Another category of archaeological structures consists of the remains of three buildings – dwellings as well as other features such as hearths and refuse pits. With few exceptions, the archaeological materials from Stolniceni reflect the inventory characteristic of Getic sites in the region: handmade pottery, imported pottery (Greek amphorae and luxury vessels), and items of dress, adornment, and harness equipment. The specific situation at Stolniceni poses a real challenge in terms of establishing the functional character of the site: was it a settlement later transformed into a necropolis, or was it a space intended for cult practices from the outset?

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A View of Archaic Sea Trade: Pottery from the Harbour of Apollonia Pontica

Since 2020, several campaigns of underwater archaeological investigations in the harbour of present-day Sozopol on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast (ancient Apollonia Pontica) brought to the surface large quantity of material, mainly pottery, from the Archaic and Classical periods, and less so from later times. It belongs to what has been termed a 'harbour accumulation' – damaged goods and personal items discarded overboard from the ships moored in the harbour of Apollonia, one of the main assets of the ancient city. These finds offer a precious view

of the Archaic sea traffic and trade, starting with the foundation of the Milesian apoikia in the late 7th century BC. Not taking into account amphorae, the assemblage consists mainly of various drinking vessels and less numerous other shapes – something that remains true for the later period as well. Possibly, special circumstances led to this particular situation. It is notable that the finds are of modest character – presumably, more luxurious vessels were kept, even broken, to be repaired. Also, a clear transition could be observed from exclusively East Greek products in the late 7th and most of the 6th century BC to Attic pottery in the final decades of the Archaic period. For the early period, most numerous are the North Ionian hemispherical cups (predominantly rosette bowls and a few other) and the 'Ionian cups' with everted rim, while Attic black-glaze Type C cups mark the turn of the 5th century BC. Other types of vessels complement the repertoire, adding yet another aspect to our knowledge of Archaic Apollonia.

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Highway to the Hinterland

Rivers can be defined as natural flows of water, surrounded on both sides by land and either merging with other rivers or flowing into a sea or a lake and can be considered as natural routes for trade. As amphorae and amphora stamps have been found far into the hinterland of all four (west, north, east and south) coasts of the Black Sea, this contribution focuses on the long-term significance of the river systems in antiquity (from the Greek Archaic period till Byzantine Late Antiquity) around the coasts of the Black Sea.

The geographical position of most amphora finds in the hinterland of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea is a strong indication that the river systems that culminated in those seas played a crucial role in the transport of amphorae. In the Mediterranean, the Rhone and the Nile are examples for these transport routes. Regarding the Black Sea, both the large (Danube, Dnieper, Dniester, Don and Kuban) as well as the small rivers (like the Ropotamo in Bulgaria, the Rioni in Georgia or the Kizil-Irmak in Turkey, played an important role in the amphora trade in the Black Sea area. This means that river harbours, both on or near the mouth of and in the hinterland near the rivers can be detected. The development of settlements and trade routes, as well as the ships used on these rivers, from the Black Sea coast into the hinterland can serve as an example of the longue durée in history.

Due to the constraints on length of this paper, only a few examples from each period and area will be provided.

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Roman Imperial Silverware: Diplomatic Gifts or Spoils of War?

Fine examples of Roman silverware, recovered from the burials of the Iberian elite, are known in the material culture of Georgia. Among them are several Roman imperial bowls from the 2nd–3rd centuries AD that display divine and imperial images and show extraordinary craftsmanship. They include the Antinous Bowl, the Marcus Aurelius Bowl and the Fortuna Bowl.

In the Roman world, silverware was a visual sign of the elite's wealth and refinement. In aristocratic and imperial households, silverware was prominently displayed during banquets. Other silverware, such as libation bowls and offering vessels, was used in cult practices. Silverware with imperial imagery was a propaganda tool that reinforced political power and was presented as a diplomatic or military gift. In view of that, this paper intends to address several research questions: a) How did the Iberian nobility came to possess such Roman imperial

objects? b) Were the bowls gifts from the Romans or were they booty taken by Iberians or Sarmatians after wars or riots? c) How did Iberians use them? d) Did they use high quality silverware as serving tableware or as cult objects during religious practices?

Silver spoons and ladles have been also found alongside Roman silver bowls and plates in the graves of Iberian elites. Thus, some silver bowls may have been used during feasts, but probably not the ones with portraits of the emperor and of deities. The use of the bowls in social or religious practices is evidence that the Iberian elite adopted a Roman lifestyle.

Our study of Roman imperial silverware aims to reveal political, social and religious structures of Roman Iberia and highlight the trajectory and depth of Roman influence in the south Caucasus.

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Maeotian, Sarmatian or Local? About Technological and Stylistic Features as an Ethno-cultural Indicator of Grey Ware from the Lower Don Region.

Between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD, a network of eleven hillforts was established in the Don Delta. Archaeological research conducted at these sites has shown that they were inhabited by the Maeotians. However, from the very beginning of their existence, the influence of groups associated with the Middle Sarmatian culture is evident in both archaeological material and

funerary practices. The region's unique ethnocultural situation was shaped by several factors. Neither the Sarmatians nor the Maeotians were indigenous to the Don Delta. The Maeotians, a sedentary population, inhabited the region of the present-day Kuban River, while the Sarmatians, who were nomadic, arrived in the Don Delta around the turn of the era. Furthermore, the hillforts were closely associated with the ancient city of Tanais, which had been established in this region in the first half of the 3rd century BC.

One category of archaeological material that may provide insights into the ethnic and cultural identity of the inhabitants is grey ware. This type of pottery became increasingly widespread during the first centuries AD and is commonly found at the hillforts, in the city of Tanais, and in the necropolises associated with these sites. Its technological and stylistic characteristics may therefore serve as indicators of ethnocultural identity. In the Don Delta, three main influences on grey ware production can be identified. The first is local production, as evidenced by the presence of pottery kilns. At the same time, numerous features point to strong connections and interactions with the Maeotian communities of the Kuban region. Finally, the pottery also displays features associated with the Sarmatian cultural tradition.

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Development of the Corinthian Order along the Western Pontic Coast During the Roman and Late Antique Eras

The region of the western Black Sea coast is one of the most interesting and diversely developed during Antiquity. Unlike the inner Thracian lands and the Roman limes area, there are serious traditions in the field of architecture and architectural decoration here since the pre-Roman era.

The Western Pontic Greek colonies contributed to the first importation of traditions and architectural models (Doric and Ionic orders) into the Bulgarian lands. During the Principate, the Corinthian order also developed very seriously. This richest style in ancient architecture has numerous examples in Histria, Tomis, Dionysopolis, Odessos, Anchialos and Messambria.

In this contact zone between local Thracian traditions, old models from the era of Greek colonisation and new trends from Roman stonemasonry practices, a unique development of Corinthian decoration occurred. Large cities such as Marcianopolis and Anichalos were built. In the old colonies, new public and private complexes were being constructed – Odessos, Tomis, Messambria.

The aim of this presentation is to study the development of architectural elements in the Corinthian

style from the beginning of the Principate to the end of Late Antiquity in the Western Pontic region. This is an endless topic, worthy of a monograph, but since it has not been considered so far, it is appropriate to begin the analyses in this direction.

The architectural details from the Pontic coast, which are in the Corinthian order, are extremely diverse and in it are intertwined three main influences – old stonemasonry models from the time of Classical and Hellenistic Greece, Roman traditions, but also a very strong influence from the numerous settlers from the eastern provinces of the Roman empire. As a result, even in Late Antiquity, unique architectural and decorative models in the Corinthian order and all its variations are found along the Pontic coast.

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General Trends and Local Traditions: Georgian Imitations of Alexander- and Lysimachus-type Staters

Alexander the Great's conquests had a huge impact on coinage as well as on every aspect of life in the ancient world. Money issued by him became dominant almost everywhere. After Alexander's death, Lysimachus, king of Thrace and Macedon, struck coins with Alexander's portrait. Coins of Alexander and Lysimachus were very popular. In many places, minting of both types with the

names of the monarchs continued some two or three centuries after their death.

The issue of Colchian money ('Colchian tetri') was terminated also because of a general trend, the massive influx of Alexander staters. Coins struck later in Colchis are typologically connected to the coins struck with the name of Alexander and Lysimachus. They are Georgian imitations of Alexander- and Lysimachus-type staters. The topography of the coin find-spots proves their local, Colchian origin.

Georgian imitations of Lysimachus-type staters: Obv. Non-naturalistic head, right; radiant hair-style sometimes ornamented with bird-effigies, local tradition**.** Rev. Schematic Athena enthroned, left/right, holding Nike, trident below. Weights range from 1.1 to 7.9 g. They are found with other well-dated coins and also, in well-dated burials. General chronology for the imitations is after the 180s BC to the last quarter of the 1st century BC.

Georgian imitations of Alexander's type staters. Obv. Non-naturalistic head, right. Rev. Bull-headed, or ram-headed schematic Nike, facing. The earliest samples are not preserved. Weights range from 1.6 to 3.7 g. General chronology for preserved coins is 1st century BC to 1st century AD.

Supposedly, the Colchian sceptuchoi/dukes issued them as an appendix to the imported coins.

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Pontic Novae

The stabilisation of the presence of Roman military units along the Lower Danube took place at the beginning of the reign of Vespasian. Although the castrum of Novae was founded around AD 45, probably by the Legio VIII Augusta, it was only with the arrival of the Legio I Italica at Novae in AD 69 that a lasting network of economic connections and a coherent defensive system of the limes was established.

As we know, units of Legio I Italica operated far beyond their permanent stationing area, both along the coast of the Black Sea and in Crimea. Among the artefacts discovered at Novae are amphorae and pottery originating from the Pontic region, as well as remains of certain food products (for example, Black Sea oysters). The Pontic area constituted an important economic hinterland connected with supplying the legion.

These connections also had a political dimension. With the changing political situation and the invasions of barbarian groups, units of Legio I Italica were involved in repelling successive incursions – first by Gothic tribes in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, then in 5th century AD by the Huns, and in the 6th century by the Avars.

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Sources of Energy in the Diet of Colchians in Classical Antiquity

The largest part of the daily human food requirement for micro and macro nutrients is provided by carbohydrates. Therefore the most practical and widespread way of obtaining energy is through the consumption of grain crops, which contain a large amount of starch and other types of carbohydrate. Western Georgia has natural features that distinguish Colchis not only in Transcaucasia, but also from the ancient Mediterranean in general. The mild humid climate has a dualistic resonance, as a result of which Colchis formed a space for endemic, evolutionarily adapted fauna and flora. That is why crops were grown here that were as profitable and useful as possible. Subsequently, this contributed to the development of local, authentic and exotic dishes, although at a certain stage of the development of society, as we have already mentioned, this geographical environment created certain difficulties in everyday life.

The humid climate prevented the spread of durum wheat, i.e. tavtukhi, in western Georgia, which practically excluded the transformation of wheat into a central crop in Colchis. Of the grain crops, perhaps the most important and more productive was emmer, the same as asli, which Colchis had cultivated since ancient times; others were less common. Of the cereal crops, another important one, though also geographically

limited due to Colchis's humid climate, was barley. Barley, like bread and rye, is also confirmed by archaeobotanical materials. Of the millet-like crops, the most important and widespread in western Georgia were two species: the first is Setaria Italica, and the second is millet (Panicum miliaceum), with its subspecies. Another source of energy in ancient Colchis was honey.

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Who, What, Where, When, Why: Challenges of Researching Minor Pre-Second World War Polish Collections of Black Sea Antiquities

The aim of this paper is to present the research problems associated with studying lesser-known Polish private collections created in the late 19th and early 20th century. Their creation was part of a wider trend: numerous Poles – doctors, businessmen, engineers, but sometimes also political exiles – were active in the Black Sea regions of the Ottoman and Russian empires and amassing interesting collections, both on the antiquities market, as well as through conducting pioneer archaeological research. Many of them, driven by patriotism, later donated them to public museums that were emerging in the core Polish territories, including in Warsaw. While some notable figures, including, for example, Józef Choynowski or Władysław Semerau-Siemianowski, and their major collections consisting of thousands of objects, have been

studied to some extent, the owners of multiple smaller collections and their donations remain virtually unknown. This is caused in part by the division of some of those collections between a number of institutions, multiple subsequent exchanges and transfers between museums, as well as the loss of documentation – and many of the objects themselves – during the Second World War. The resulting challenges for research both on the collections, their donators, and the objects themselves will be presented using examples that belong to the Collection of Ancient Art at the National Museum in Warsaw. Among them are, for example, the vases from the Targoni Collection, which were recorded in the 1936 volume of CVA as coming from Kerch and belonging to the State Archaeological Museum in Warsaw.

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Evaluations of Iron Finds from the Fatsa Cıngırt Kayası 2024–25 Excavation Seasons

This paper aims to present iron finds that were obtained during excavations conducted in 2024–25 at Cıngırt Kayası, which is located in Yapraklı village, Fatsa/Ordu, in the Eastern Black Sea Region of Turkey. Cıngırt

Kayası is situated in the region settled in antiquity by the Chalybes, a tribe famous for its ironworking. The iron finds have been categorised according to their function, and they have been evaluated in terms of their typology, periodisation and purpose using excavation data and parallel materials.

In terms of dating the finds, this study also benefits from other groups of finds which were obtained from the same level and indicate an exact date for them. By presenting these iron finds, this paper aims to share data and thus enrich regional archaeology known to be rich in metal reserves since early times.

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Eurasian Connections. Greeks and Scythians: Cultural Influences from the Black Sea Area to the Nomadic Routes of China (Second Half of the 1st Millennium BC–Beginning of Our Era)

Herodotus (4. 24: Scythian logos), states that his information comes from Scythian merchants who travelled to the Orgimpei and from the Greeks of the emporia of the Pontus. The information provided by him can be interpreted as a reference to a trade route travelled by nomads stretching from the Black Sea to the Urals, where it probably connected to a wider network of Eurasian cultural and commercial relations extending as far as East Asia.

Recent historical and archaeological studies have highlighted the important cultural influences from the Greek Mediterranean world conveyed by the galaxy of Scythian populations (from Western and Eastern Asia), from the Black Sea area to the Ordos bend and areas of Chinese influence. The presentation will focus on the examination of some Graeco-Roman and Chinese historical sources and on some archaeological case studies that show evidence of cultural contacts, referring to the Qin culture, in a time span ranging from the second half of the 1st millennium BC to the beginning of our era.

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Inscribed Encounters: Reconstructing Scythian History from Epigraphic Sources in the Pontic Steppe

The study of Scythian history (700–300 BC) is defined by the near-total absence of inscriptions in a clearly identifiable Scythian language. Unlike most areas of ancient history, where epigraphy forms a central evidentiary base, Scythian history must be reconstructed largely through material produced by neighbouring literate cultures. This poster shows how this limited epigraphic record can be used to illuminate and reconstruct key aspects of Scythian history.

Focusing on the Pontic steppe and its Black Sea contact zones, the poster surveys inscriptions from Greek centres such as Olbia and Phanagoria. Although these texts reflect

Greek civic contexts, they preserve evidence of diplomatic, economic and cultural interaction with Scythian groups. Numismatic material, including coinage attributed to rulers such as Scyles and Ateas, further demonstrates elite engagement with Greek systems of representation and exchange, while also indicating patterns of authority and regional circulation. Evidence beyond the Greek sphere will also be considered, including Old Persian inscriptions.

When read alongside archaeological and literary evidence, particularly Herodotus, these inscriptions provide valuable points of reference. Despite their fragmentary and external nature, epigraphic sources allow for a more grounded reconstruction of Scythian history, political presence and cross-cultural interaction.

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Crimea, between the Persian Empire and the Athenian Empire

Since ancient times, the Crimea has been absorbed into the orbit of external powers, which have taken control of the region (or at least part of it), establishing a military or colonial presence there. In this contribution, I propose to consider the issue of the Persian empire's alleged control of the Crimea, following on from the works published in the past by Gocha Tsetskhladze and Alexandru Avram, and that of Athens's alleged control of it in the second half of the 5th century BC

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About the Actual Contents of Vases in Funerary Contexts. The Case of the Necropolis of Apollonia Pontica

In 2017, the Franco-Bulgarian Archaeological Mission launched a research project devoted to the multidisciplinary analysis of ritual contexts in the necropolises of Apollonia. Using an archaeology of gesture, the results obtained on ritual deposits and fireplaces have made it possible to reconstruct the ritual chain that presides over ceremonies. However, our study could not address certain categories of vases in the absence of visible organic remains in the sediments. These are mostly vases linked to liquid offerings, such as consecration cups placed under ritual hearths, or jugs with pierced bottoms deposited in the filling of pits or around tombs.

Furthermore, other vessels such as pots, found both in tombs and around them, strangely yielded no organic remains, making their use particularly elusive. To

this end, 11 vases from two sites of the Apollonia's necropolis, excavated in 2025 (dir. T. Bogdanova), were sampled and subjected to gas chromatography and mass spectrometry analysis at the Nicolas Garnier laboratory. This investigation was also extended to lekythoi, particularly those with red figures of the Kerch style, with polychrome and gilded decoration, in order to determine the composition of the perfumes they contained. The results obtained shed new light on the use of Greek ceramics in ritual contexts and complement the data obtained so far in our study.

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Paleoecological-Economic and Climatic Prerequisites of the Colonisation of the Northern Black Sea Area in the Archaic Period

The phenomenon of Greek colonisation has a long history of research. This process was conducted in many directions and in various fields. Traditionally, colonisation was limited to the 'economic zones of the ports' of the ancient Greek centres. The modern approach to the study of the colonisation of the northern Black Sea area should be based on principles of integration. However, economic processes took place not only coastal ports but also in extensive neighbouring inland territories. This territory is usually called Steppe Scythia. Its settlement ('colonisation' by the Scythians) began in the Early Archaic period. Analysis of the two opposing colonisation processes reveals two phases of development of the economic system of the northern Black Sea area may be distinguished:

- The first phase (second half of the 7th–first half of the 6th century BC) was associated with the emergence of the Borysthenes apoikia on the island of Berezan and with the uninhabited territory in the depths of the steppe zone. A dozen Scythi-

an burials testify to the absence of population in the region, i.e. Greek colonisation was carried out as settlement of free lands.

- The second phase (second half of the 6th–first half of the 5th century BC) is associated with the penetration of the Scythians into Southern Bug-Dnieper the interfluve of the, when an economic system was formed centred upon Olbia, its near chora and its Far Hinterland (the steppe zone of the northern Black Sea region).

There was another important driver in the causal chain of the emergence and development of Greek and 'Scythian' colonisation processes in the Archaic period. These were spatial and temporal climatic changes both in the Mediterranean and in the northern Black Sea region, which caused adaptive consequences in natural and human systems. The signs of climatically enforced change in the Archaic period have not yet been sufficiently studied.

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Between the Odrysians and the First Delian League: Apollonia Pontica in the Late 5th–Mid-4th Century BC

Founded in the late 7th century BC by Ionian settlers, Apollonia Pontica experienced its economic and demographic zenith during the 5th and 4th centuries BC. Most scholars attribute this phenomenon to favourable relations with the indigenous communities, coupled with strategic engagements with Athens – the dominant power in the eastern Mediterranean.

The changed conditions at the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War – the decline in tax revenues from the poleis along northern Aegean and Propontis, and the territorial expansion of the Odrysian kingdom – necessitated a re-evaluation of Athens' strategic goals. In this context, some scholars regard Plutarch's narrative of Pericles' Pontic Expedition (438/37 or 450 BC) as significant for understanding the Athenian efforts to expand its influence over the Pontic region. While the historical reliability of this account continues to be contested, it is well documented that in 425/24 BC, Apollonia, together with three other cities, was incorporated into the Delian League.

Recent archaeological and numismatic evidence from Apollonia reveals several significant transformations during this period – the adoption of silver coinage minted according to the Attic weight standard, an

atypical inversion of obverse and reverse imagery on the coins, and a pronounced demographic increase inferred from the rapid enlargement of the necropolis. Additional indicators are observable in substantial modifications to the necropolis's spatial organisation, funerary customs and ceramic assemblages. A thorough analysis of these data provides a new perspective on the socio-political, economic and demographic dynamics of Apollonia Pontica. The research advances through two primary avenues of investigation: first of all, by examining the impact of engagements with notable local Thracian dynasties; and secondly, by conducting a critical assessment of a novel, albeit unconventional, hypothesis suggesting the existence of a unified community of Athenian settlers within the city.

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Argamum: Investigating the Storage Quarter of the Northern Sector intra muros - Results from Recent Fieldwork

The presentation discusses new excavation results from the site of Argamum (Jurilovca, Romania), conducted as part of the project 'From Argamum to Troesmis. Land and water routes in northern Dobruja in Antiquity'. This project, within the broader framework of the 'Archaeology of the Limes Scythicus Maritimus' (ArchLiMar), in-

vestigates the land and water communication routes linking the Roman Danube frontier with the Black Sea, aiming to clarify the military and logistical relationship between these regions during the Roman and Late Roman periods.

Argamum, situated on the rocky promontory of Cape Dolojman on Lake Razim, occupies a strategically significant position within this network. The site, encompassing both Greek and Roman phases, illustrates the interplay between maritime and riverine routes, as well as the integration of local and imperial logistical systems. Its Late Antique fortification provides a key case study for understanding the organisation of storage, supply and defensive infrastructure within a fortified urban context.

Recent fieldwork has focused on the northern sector of the Justinian citadel, located in a secure yet peripheral area within the fortification walls. Excavations have revealed a series of features, including a dolium pit, a hearth and associated architectural structures, accompanied by small finds such as fishing weights, lamps and numerous fragments of amphorae and dolia. Collectively, these features indicate storage and supply activities rather than domestic occupation.

Taken together, the architectural layout and associated material culture strongly support the interpretation of the northern sector as a storage and logistical quarter of the Justinian citadel. This zone appears to have been strategically positioned within a secure, yet marginal, part of the intramural space, consistent with its proposed function. Ongoing and future excavation campaigns aim to clarify the full extent of this complex and determine

whether it extends westward towards the main gate of the fortification.

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Detecting and Predicting Archaeological Sites in the Southern Black Sea Littoral using Satellite Remote Sensing and Machine Learning

The southern Black Sea littoral is still one of the most poorly archaeologically investigated areas in comparison to other parts of both the Black Sea and Anatolia. Although slightly increased during the last couple of decades, both surveys and excavation projects continue to be quite few, despite the fact that more than a hundred settlements and installations are mentioned in the literary sources as having been established on the coast from the Archaic until the Roman periods by Greeks and Romans, leaving aside any settlements of the local populations. The reasons for this paucity are numerous and have several times been described. Nevertheless, nowadays new technologies open significant ways for scholars to discover ancient structures without prior intervention in the site, thus allowing them to save huge amounts of time, effort and cost before starting an excavation.

In this paper, we propose the use of specific Artificial Intelligence methods, especially the feasibility of satellite remote sensing in detecting and predicting locations of buried ancient structures in the southern Black

Sea littoral. To be specific, Support Vector Machine (SVM) python algorithms are developed to identify known archaeological sites in the littoral, using their satellite images. At the same time, sites of potential archaeological significance, namely those that have been considered as most probably housing ancient settlements according to the literary evidence, are also considered. Their satellite optical colour images are downloaded from Google Earth. Images of geographically similar sites, but having no indications of archaeological importance, are also obtained for comparison. A classification SVM code with an extensive comparison parameter grid is used in Anaconda Jupiter Notebook environment to predict the type of the site, archaeological or not, to which the images belong. The code extracts the image shape and edge, the fine local texture and the colour distribution by using specific feature extraction methods. Model selection is performed using grid search with cross-validation, and performance is evaluated using accuracy and classification metrics. The accuracy of the prediction depends on the image reshaping format. It is noteworthy that prediction accuracy of up to 89% is obtained with images reshaped to 128 x 128 pixel sizes. This approach shows that sites of potential archaeological significance can be located with quite high accuracy using satellite imagery.

Although such methods have been applied to very few regions so far, the significance of their results is causing intense efforts to improve the methods of detecting hidden archaeological places worldwide. Without doubt, such an approach complements the traditional excavations methods. AI-based analysis can highlight areas

of interest that might otherwise go unnoticed, allowing archaeologists to focus their efforts more effectively.

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Land Occupation and Funerary Practices in the Roman Period: An Interdisciplinary and Archaeothanatological Approach to the Settlement and Funerary Area of Beidaud in the Landscape of Moesia Inferior

As part of the extensive studies set up to understand the long-term evolution of the settlement pattern and land use of the ancient territory corresponding to the current Beidaud Archaeological Microzone (Tulcea County, Romania), an excavation programme is focusing on a settlement and a group of burial mounds from the Roman period. Geophysical surveys enable us to accurately locate the settlement and its strategic position in the landscape. This settlement is linked to a funerary area to the north. This burial ground has been under excavation since 2021. Archaeothanatology is the approach developed for the excavation and study of the mortuary structures. The three tumuli explored up to the present mo-

ment yielded inhumation, as well as primary cremation structures, coexisting within this complex, made up of various independent groups in as many distinct burial mounds. This independence between groups is characteristic of funerary complexes from the Roman period throughout the Roman world. In contrast, the use of tumuli, a legacy of the Bronze and Iron ages, has persisted here, whereas it has disappeared in the rest of the Roman world. The great variability in the types of structures is in line with what is generally found in the period.

Initial results show that the burial mounds were used over a long period of time, with the gradual establishment of several structures, sometimes in two distinct states of occupation with an intermediate rise in the height of the mound. The study of the funerary structures reveals the complexity of the rituals performed during cremation, as well as those associated with final burial and commemorative practices. Studying their location will enable us to broaden our thinking on land use, by integrating their topography into the overall topography, in relation to the other elements that make up the landscape, in particular roads and dwellings.

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Amphora Imports in the Late Iron Age Settlement from Tinosu, Prahova County, Romania (1st Century BC–1st Century AD)

The indigenous (Geto-Dacian) settlement of Tinosu is situated in the south-eastern part of Romania, on a naturally defended hilltop, with three sides protected, on the left bank of the Prahova river. The site is known from the first excavation campaign caried out in 1924 and published as an extensive report by Ecaterina and Radu Vulpe. We are focusing our attention on the amphorae discovered during the last three archaeological campaigns from 1980 to 1982, conducted by Magda Tzony. Examination of this unpublished material may better our understanding of the trade connections between the Dacians and the Romans on the edge of the Roman conquest of Dacia.

According to the amphorae, between the middle of the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD, there is a preponderance of Heraclean imports, as indicated by the fragments of Dressel 2-4/Vnukov C1a types. The second half of the 1st century AD shows a continuation of Heraclean imports through the early variants of Shelov A

type/Vnukov SIV A1 and A2. At the same time, the West Pontic amphora types Troesmix X and Straja are also present, denoting some new imports that arrived north of the Danube during the 1st century AD.

The presence of these amphorae types at the site is highly indicative of the participation of Tinosu in the commercial network of that period. These trade connections show that a wealthy elite existed at Tinosu who could afford wine brought from afar, in exchange for which they probably offered locally produced grain.

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The Province of Scythia in the Time of Justinian - Archaeological and Numismatic Sources

The reign of Justinian represents the last period of glory of the Roman empire, a period of reforms and economic, administrative and military development. The province of Scythia, located on the periphery of the empire but with good connections with the capital of the Eastern/Byzantine empire (Constantinople) forms part of the emperor's policy of refortifying the borders by reconstructing the old fortifications and urban centres (Capidava, Dinogetia, Ulmetum, Tropaeum Traiani, Histria, Tomis, Callatis, Orgame, Ibida), in the context of increasing pressure on its borders due to the invasion of the Slavs, Kutrigurs and Avars. The province experienced a period of economic development, illustrated both by the produc-

tion and circulation of goods at inter- and intra-provincial level, by the numerous secular and religious buildings built or rebuilt during this period, and by an intense monetary circulation, analysed by the author of this work especially on the basis of the monetary discoveries from Noviodunum, Histria, Ibida, Argamum, Halmyris Troesmis, etc. The author analyses the information obtained thanks to archaeological research in connection with those provided by written sources (Procopius of Caesarea), and as regards the monetary discoveries, the author makes an inventory of all numismatic discoveries from the time of Justinian, published at the moment but also unpublished, coming from his own research which he analyses statistically, chorographically and from the perspective of purchasing power. The author also tries to observe the reflection of certain political-military events in archaeological discoveries (destruction and reconstruction of buildings, fortress walls) or in monetary circulation (the statistical distribution of monetary discoveries during the reign at the level of each consistent batch of coins).

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The Archaic Sanctuary of Istros in the Light of Metal Finds from Recent Archaeological Excavations (1990–2025)

The Greek sanctuary on the north-eastern side of the acropolis of the Milesian colony of Istros/Histria was discovered in 1915 and extensive excavations revealed that it was a rich and well-connected religious site throughout its existence, from at least the late 7th century BC to at least the mid-1st century BC. The temples, altars and statue bases themselves, as well as exquisite architectural decorative elements, fine terracotta figurines and diverse pottery assemblages, demonstrate that this colonial sanctuary was prosperous and preserved tight relations with the Aegean world, reaching an apex of sophistication towards the end of the Archaic period.

Nonetheless, the evidence of metal objects was rarely considered, due to the poor preservation state of these finds and the difficulty of conducting proper restoration before the 1990s. Just a few items were published and cursorily discussed, such as the alleged bronze facing and rim of a shield found in the temple of Aphrodite in 1976 or the architectural metal clamps.

This paper aims to partially fill this gap by presenting some recently published and unpublished metal objects from the excavations conducted in the sanctuary since 1990. The main focus is represented by two lead dedications discovered in a votive and sacrificial area

situated west of the temple A, a rosette-decorated fitting and a miniature loom weight, complemented by a votive wheel from older excavations, and by two bronze vessel decorative attachments found in the vicinity of the temple of Aphrodite, depicting a sphinx and a bird. While reference will be made to some other metal finds, these objects will be discussed in greater detail, as they reveal that the Istrian sanctuary was functionally and materially comparable to better-known religious sites in the Aegean from the point of view of metal votives and cult equipment, too.

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Understanding a Journey to the Afterlife – The Ceramic Finds from the Funerary Space of Beidaud, Romania

The joint archaeological research project of the University of Bucharest and the Gavrilă Simion Eco-Museum Research Institute, Tulcea, aims to analyse the human habitat of the Beidaud Archaeological Microzone (BAM), situated in central Roman Dobruja (Tulcea county, Romania). Several sites were identified, from the

Neolithic to the Late Roman periods, as well as chance discoveries. Of these, the focus of our research over the past five years has been the tumular funerary space of a Roman era settlement situated in the outskirts of the territories of three important Roman towns: Histria, Argamum and Ibida.

So far, the team documented several tumuli in a cluster and completely excavated one sizeable mound (T01), allowing for several observations to be made regarding the rites and rituals of the local population during the Roman period (2nd–4th centuries AD). Both cremation and inhumation funerary structures were documented.

The focus of this paper is the identification (functional criterion), characterisation (fabric, morphology) and contextualisation (occurrence, positioning, connection with other types of artefacts) of the ceramic finds from tumulus T01. This approach aims to outline the presence or absence of deposit patterns, as well as similarities and differences between types of funerary structures.

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An Unknown Type of Countermark on Coins Discovered at Apsaros: Analysis and Interpretation

Among several hundred coins discovered at the Roman fort Apsaros (Georgia), a distinct group of bronze issues

of Syro-Palestinian provenance stands out. These coins are dated from the late 1st century BC up to the reign of Trajan. Within this group, denominations corresponding in weight to the Roman semis clearly predominate. On some of these coins appears an enigmatic countermark of a type not previously recorded in the scholarly literature, occurring alongside well-known countermarks, including legionary ones. The aim of this paper is to analyse this newly identified countermark type within its archaeological context and to interpret it in light of historical – particularly military – events that took place in the North Caucasus region during the Principate.

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Of Monsters and Men: On the Iconography of the Classical Pebble Mosaics at Sinope

Pebble mosaics represent the earliest known form of floor decoration in the ancient Greek world and were long believed to be concentrated primarily in mainland Greece, with little in the Mediterranean and Black Sea. However, recent rescue excavations carried out by Sinop Museum over the past decade have significantly reshaped this view. The discoveries demonstrate that Sinope – and, by extension, the Black Sea region – was another important centre where this decorative technique was employed as extensively as in other parts of the Greek

world, particularly within the private spaces of aristocratic residences.

Sinope's significance lies not only in the technical quality of its mosaics but also in the diversity of its decorative choices and iconographic themes. Abstract patterns, dynamic vegetal motifs, and figurative scenes featuring mythological beasts and humans attest to the city's close engagement with Classical artistic traditions and its role in shaping local expressions of elite culture.

This paper examines the partially published pebble mosaics of Sinope with a particular focus on their iconography. Each example is defined and contextualised within the broader framework of Greek art of the Classical period. Last of all, it emphasises that these floors, beyond their role as simple floors, emerge as works of art that convey symbolic meanings, carefully designed to complement the social and cultural functions of the spaces they adorn.

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Acculturation of the Coastal Colchian Population in the Classical Period

Pichvnari provides especially valuable information for the study of the burial customs, history and culture of the Colchians of the Classical period. Only inhumation burials have been brought to light to date: so far, no cremation burials have been discovered. Some corpses were

placed in wooden coffins. The burials which had nails on top presumably only had a wooden cover. Wooden logs seem to have been placed along the length of the burial, and wooden beams were then nailed at intervals. Sometimes the row of nails is found only at the ends. Most of the deceased were buried directly in the burial pit, and in such cases nails obviously are not attested.

Traces of funeral feasts dated to the 4th century BC are also found, but rarely. Occasionally, pots, even an amphora, appear to have been placed on top of the burial. Some take this as evidence that local Greeks may have participated in the burial ritual of the Colchians; if so, it tells something on the characteristics of the relations between the native and Greek populations.

It is clear that in the 5th century BC most of the local deceased were laid with the head to the north. Some were oriented to the west and south-east. Apparently, however, as a result of contact with the Greeks, the custom of easterly orientation became gradually popular, especially in the 4th century BC. It is clear from later, Hellenistic, evidence that the easterly orientation became the predominant burial ritual at Pichvnari.

The burial customs and craft production progressively reflected Greek models. These will have included the easterly orientation of the deceased, the placing of coins in the mouth of the deceased, the emergence of Hellenised forms in pottery and metalwork, and the introduction of the vertical loom. All this was, as might be expected, determined by the close contacts between the Colchian population and the Greek world.

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The Roman Fort of Apsaros (Gonio, Georgia) and Its Surroundings. Attempt at Reconstruction (Architecture and Environment)

Archaeological research on the remains of the Roman fort of Apsaros by Georgian scholars has been ongoing since the 1990s. An interdisciplinary Polish-Georgian project was carried out between 2014 and 2025. During this period in particular, a large amount of data was collected, enabling the partial reconstruction of the fort in successive construction phases from the 60s AD. Thanks to geological, oceanographic and geophysical research, as well as the interpretation of other data, such as LIDAR scans, it was also possible to reconstruct the shape of the coastline and the southern part of the Chorokhi river delta at that time.

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Tracing Origins: Archaeometric Analyses of Amphorae from Ancient Apsaros (Today's Gonio, Georgia)

The Roman fort of Apsaros (modern Gonio, Georgia), situated on the eastern Black Sea coast, played an important role as a frontier stronghold in the Pontic area. Among the rich material record, amphorae represent one of the most informative categories of ceramic finds, providing insight into patterns of trade, supply and consumption in this strategically significant region. Until recently, studies of these vessels have been based primarily on typological analysis, leaving their precise provenance and circulation routes largely speculative.

This presentation will show the results of new archaeometric research conducted on amphorae from Gonio, including petrographic, chemical, and organic residue analyses. By applying these methods, it has been possible to identify production centers, distinguish between imported and locally manufactured containers, and shed light on the logistical mechanisms that supplied wine, olive oil, fish products and other commodities to the Roman garrison.

The study, which is the first comprehensive archaeometric investigation of amphorae found in the Black Sea region, highlights the potential of archaeometric approaches to refine our understanding of economic and cultural connectivity in the area.

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From Steppe Traditions to Black Sea Antiquities: Scythians, Cavalry, and Imperial Warfare from the Black Sea to Persia

This paper examines the transformation of warfare in South West Asia during the 1st millennium BC, focusing on the emergence of cavalry through interactions with steppe and highland populations, particularly the Scythians and communities of the southern Caucasus. While the Black Sea steppe formed part of a broader zone of mobility, the study emphasiaes the Caucasus and north-western Iran as key regions where technological and tactical innovations in mounted warfare were transmitted, adapted and consolidated.

Challenging traditional state-centred narratives attribute military innovation primarily to imperial powers such as Assyria, this paper argues that cavalry developed through sustained frontier interaction. The Scythians of the 1st millennium BC played a central role in this process, introducing and refining mounted archery, mobile combat strategies and flexible cavalry formations. These practices exposed the limitations of chariot-based warfare, particularly in the rugged landscapes of the Zagros and the Caucasus, and contributed to the gradual shift toward mounted combat in Near Eastern armies.

The study adopts an interdisciplinary approach, integrating textual, iconographic and archaeological evidence. Assyrian inscriptions and administrative correspondence are examined alongside visual representations and material assemblages, including horse gear and weaponry. Attention is given to the evolution of weapons – such as composite bows, akinakes and equestrian equipment – as indicators of changing combat practices and the development of cavalry. Archaeological evidence from the southern Caucasus and north-western Iran demonstrates clear technological trends, reflecting both local innovation and the assimilation of steppe-derived elements.

By situating the development of cavalry within the interconnected landscapes of the steppe, the Caucasus, and South West Asia, this paper highlights the role of the Scythians and adjacent highland societies as active agents in military transformation. The transition from chariotry to cavalry emerges not as a singular innovation, but as a cumulative process shaped by cross-cultural exchange, technological adaptation and the demands of frontier warfare.

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Surprises and Unexpected Developments at Roman Military Outposts Beyond the Empire's Borders on the North-Western Coast of the Black Sea.

Despite the territorial extent of Scythia, we can only speak of the presence of Roman troops in this area in the context of the northern Black Sea coast and the interior of modern Romania, on east of the Aluta River, beyond the ancient Limes Transalutanus. We date the influence of the administration of Moesia Inferior and the appearance of Roman troops here to the middle of the first century AD, and their influence ends with the invasion of the Goths in the middle of the third century.

The Greek cities that functioned in the area have been excavated for more than 150 years; we still know relatively little about the Roman military presence, despite the fact that soldiers resided here for almost 200 years. The strategic positioning and distribution of Roman outposts indicate the importance of the border areas to the Roman Empire.

During the presentation, I will present the results of a project that has already been running for 4 years focusing on research on the Roman military presence in Scythia. I will highlight the questions arising from, among other things, the lack of publications on the results of research carried out in the area.

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An Egyptologist in Myrmekion

The aim of this paper is to present a little-known episode in the life of an outstanding, yet almost forgotten, Polish Egyptologist – Tadeusz Andrzejewski (1923–1961), who gained his first archaeological experience in 1956, during the first excavation season of the Polish-Soviet Mission in Myrmekion, a Greek colony on the Black Sea. This short episode in his career had a crucial impact on his future scientific endeavours, which, due to favourable circumstances, were later devoted almost exclusively to the archaeological works undertaken in Egypt. Myrmekion has often been described as the 'birthplace of the Polish school of Mediterranean archaeology', and this episode of Andrzejewski's career highlights this aspect of the excavations. Though most of the participants were not specialising in Black Sea archaeology, the research in Myrmekion allowed an important generation of Polish archaeologists to gain their first fieldwork experiences, later to be put to great use in other parts of the ancient world.

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The Making of the Megalithic Culture in Bulgaria: Social Construction of Religious Landscape and its 'Authorised Heritage Discourse'

In 2020, I visited a place known as Begliktash on the Bulgarian Black Sea coast, near Primorsko (district of Burgas), proclaimed to be the 'most important ancient Thracian shrine in Bulgaria' and labelled in the Wikipedia entry as the 'Bulgarian Stonehenge'. The site, known long before as a natural phenomenon, is one example of how Bulgarian Thracologists related it to the 'Thracian megalithic culture'. Begliktash is considered to be a sacred place of the ancient Thracians, where mysteries associated with the 'Thracian Orphism' were performed since at least the 12th century BC until the 4th century AD. Today, the site is an object of heritage policies and during the summer its visitors could observe a reconstitution of 'the Thracian ritual' purportedly carried out at the spot more than two millennia earlier.

The paper explores the archaeological research and the discursive practices around Begliktash in relation to questions considering the construction of the category of 'megalithic culture'. The processes of ethnicising various stone configurations as monuments of this culture are seen at the intersection of nature, culture and power. The very search for ethnicity implicates a discourse whose categories and trajectories are associated with

construction of power and identity in our own worlds. It is positioned also within the framework of identity studies, popular culture and everyday life. The crystallisation of a narrative is analysed in the framework of the 'authorised heritage discourse' separating Greeks from non-Greeks which allow the inclusion of various stone formations in the cultural matrix of Bulgarian national identity. We will discuss the question of how 'knowledge' produces 'value' for sale.

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A New Late Roman Fortified Settlement in the Northern Dobruja

The hitherto unknown late Roman hillfort or fortified settlement built on the slopes of the isolated Dealul Consul (Consul Hill) in the Taiţa river valley, which crosses Dobruja on a north-west–south-east axis, was surveyed

and investigated with geophysical prospection within the ArchLiMar project in 2024–25.

The archaeological site lies on a northern promontory slopes of an isolated elevation with three hilltops which geologically is part of the northern flank of the Babadag Plateau.

As a result of our investigations, we were able to determine the overall layout of the fortification, which is trapezoidal or roughly triangular in shape and covers a surface of ca. 1.4 ha. At the highest and southernmost point from a large tower in central position the walls ran on either side of it, first towards additional towers to the east and west and from there to the north, following the slope, which is quite steep for an inhabited area.
Surveying outside the walls and along both banks of the Taiţa brought sufficient surface material to suggest that a settlement was located here, which was further evidenced by geophysics.

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From ‘Golden Island in the Black Sea’ to the ‘Treasures of Crimea. Return’: The Story of Disputed Collections from Four Crimean Museums

I want to address the case of the Crimean collection, returned after a legal battle in the Netherlands that lasted for more than nine years. These items, dating from the 5th century BC to the 7th century AD, were at an exhibition in Amsterdam that opened in February 2014, just

two weeks before Russia occupied the Crimean Peninsula by military force.

Ukrainian Crimean institutions that lent their items to museums in Bonn and Amsterdam have been occupied by the Russian Federation for more than 11 years now. During this period, the occupied museums have been fully integrated into the Russian museum system, and their main management structures have undergone significant changes. All these actions of the occupation administration are considered illegal in the eyes of international law.

Nineteen artefacts from the Treasury of the National Museum (NHMU) collection were safely returned in September 2014, after the closing of the exhibition in Amsterdam. All other exhibits were disputed in court. Following the Supreme Court of the Netherlands' decision of 9 June 2023 in favour of returning the collections for safekeeping at the NMHU, all 565 artefacts safely arrived at the Treasury on 27 November. On 4 July 2024, the exhibition ‘Treasures of Crimea. Return’ was opened to the public.

In this paper, I shall analyse the difference in presentation of this collection at three exhibitions: in Bonn, Amsterdam and Kyiv. Using this precedent as a case study, I wish to dwell on the problem of using cultural heritage as a base for propaganda narratives that stimulate aggression within society, especially in light of current Russian internal and foreign policies.

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Common Ware from Apsaros: Insights into the Provenance and Supply Systems of the Roman Garrison.

The Roman period is one of the most enigmatic phases in the history of Colchis. Its beginning is associated with profound political, economic, and environmental changes. The eastern Black Sea coast was of considerable strategic importance, and a clear contrast can be observed between the presence of Roman troops on the one hand and developments in material culture on the other.

To date, studies of pottery from Apsaros dating from the 1st to the 3rd century AD have focused primarily on luxury goods, imports, and amphorae, while local pottery has received comparatively little attention. As a result, interpretations have largely been limited to general conclusions concerning the scale and directions of circulation of these artefacts. Common ware, whose production and consumption took place within a different political and cultural framework, constitutes an important source for understanding economic and social processes at Apsaros, as well as the relationship between the fort's garrison and the coastal population.

This paper presents observations and results of research on local common ware from the excavations of the Apsaros fort, with particular emphasis on material recovered from the remains of the so-called praetorium. A key element of the study is the analysis of pottery provenance based on archaeometric methods, aimed at identifying production areas and possible workshops.

Addressing these questions makes it possible to outline a new cultural picture and to contribute to our understanding of selected aspects of the regional economy related to pottery production and consumption. It also helps to define the extent and directions of interactions during the Roman period at the Apsaros fort and along the eastern Black Sea coast.

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Regional Governance and Diplomatic Strategies of the Bosporan Kingdom Driven by Grain Resources

Located on the northern shore of the Black Sea, the Bosporan kingdom rose to prominence in the ancient world as a major exporter of grain, capitalising on its extensive grain resources. Its strategic significance was shaped by a dynamic balance between resource endowment, geopolitical positioning and state capacity. By harnessing its grain wealth, the kingdom's rulers developed a structured three-tier geopolitical system – the 'Azov Sea–Black Sea–Mediterranean' framework – implement-

ed through nuanced maritime diplomacy and deliberate political alignments. This system effectively translated a concentric geographical layout into a layered foreign policy approach, advancing from core areas outward and shifting from direct control to indirect influence. As a result, the Bosporan kingdom not only sustained prolonged economic prosperity and preserved political autonomy through alliances with powers such as Athens and Ptolemaic Egypt, but also successfully transformed resource leverage into lasting economic and political capital. In doing so, it secured a remarkable degree of strategic independence in an era of contesting empires. This grain-fuelled model of regional governance and diplomatic practice illustrates both the pragmatic adaptation of Bosporan leadership to their environmental and resource context, and their sophisticated statecraft in pursuing proactive diplomacy to ensure enduring stability.

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An Ostrogothic-Type Buckle from Nokalakevi-Archaeopolis (West Georgia) as Evidence for Ethnic Diversity in the Byzantine Army of Lazica

In 2019, excavations near the main gate of the Nokalakevi-Archaeopolis settlement in western Georgia uncovered a bronze fragment of a two-part belt buckle within an early mediaeval cultural layer beneath 6th-century steps. The preserved rectangular section (3.4 × 2.3 × 0.4 cm) retains traces of gilding and once featured nine coloured glass inlays separated by bronze dividers within an embossed frame. Most inlays are missing, though remnants of red glass and white adhesive substance suggest that the decorations were inserted and fixed with glue rather than cast. Small holes along three sides indicate attachment to a leather strap by metal pins, while two prongs on the fourth side held the fastening ring.

Typological comparison identifies the artefact as belonging to Mechthild Schulze-Dörrlami's Type C15 – oval buckles with enamel-inlaid rectangular bronze plates – catalogued in the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum in Mainz. Such buckles, dated to the late 5th–early 6th centuries, are known from Egypt, the eastern Mediterranean, Italy, Sicily, the western Black Sea region,

Germany and France. Schulze-Dörrlami has proposed that these gilded, glass-decorated buckles were not elite Byzantine court objects but were instead used by high-ranking foreign officers serving in the Byzantine army, particularly among Ostrogothic or other Germanic contingents.

The discovery of this buckle fragment in Nokalakevi provides material evidence of the ethnically diverse composition of Byzantine forces stationed in Lazica. Historical sources confirm recurring Byzantine military presence in the region, especially during the reign of Justinian I (AD 527–565), when fortresses such as Archaeopolis housed sizeable garrisons. The Nokalakevi find, therefore, may represent personal equipment belonging to a high-ranking officer of Germanic origin – perhaps an Ostrogoth, Herule, or Gepid – serving within the Byzantine army during the mid-6th century.

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Greek Goods in the Ferigile Group. With a Special Focus on the Necropolis at Valea Stânii (Argeș County, Romania)

The arrival of Greek goods deep in the North Thracian hinterland at a time corresponding to the Late Hallstatt period is a topic that can incite contradictory discussion given the scarcity of finds. If this has not been a topic much addressed in literature, it is due to an objective re-

ality. The Ferigile group was defined in the 1960s as the main archaeological facies of the Late Hallstatt period (the 7th–5th century BC) between the Danube and the Carpathians, following the excavation and publication of the eponymous necropolis by the archaeologist Alexandru Vulpe (1931–2016). The contacts of this local North Thracian population with goods coming from the Greek territories seem to have been extremely limited, although the Greek colonies on the western Black Sea shore were relatively close, less than 300 km to the east. Apart from a few categories of personal adornments and clothing accessories (glass beads, multiheaded pins), the repertoire of Greek goods that penetrated the Ferigile environment north of the Danube is a blank spot. Even wheel-made pottery remains almost unknown there, although some Greek forms are imitated locally but only as hand-made versions. The main part of the paper will focus on a recent discovery (2024) made in the cremation necropolis at Valea Stânii (barrow 18): a small fragmentary bronze cast object representing a man riding an animal. The overall pattern of the figurine, the posture and the proportions of the depicted character lead to Subgeometric/Orientalising period figurines. This could be not only the oldest representation of a horseman in the Thracian world (albeit of foreign origin), but also the only known import of minor Subgeometric art to reach the Ferigile milieu.

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Recent Archaeological Investigations at Pessinus: From Landscape Survey to New Excavations

Located in the upper valley of the Sangarios river in Phrygia (later Galatia), ancient Pessinus (modern Ballıhisar near Sivrihisar) served as one of Anatolia's major religious and commercial centres from the Hellenistic through the Late Roman periods. Long identified with the cult of Kybele and later with the Imperial Cult, the site preserves monumental remains that attest to its sacred and civic functions. Archaeological research in Pessinus, initiated by Ghent University (1967–2008) and continued by the University of Melbourne (2009–2014), has revealed the city's architectural complexity and its regional networks through stratigraphic excavations, topographical surveys and geophysical prospections.

The recent investigations combine new landscape and urban studies within an integrated research strategy. The survey project has mapped the relationship between the urban core and its surrounding settlements, sanctuaries and road systems, providing new insights into the cultural and environmental context of the city. Since 2024, a new phase of excavations under the direction of the Eskişehir Eti Archaeology Museum and Anadolu

University has resumed fieldwork in key sectors of the ancient city. This phase focuses on the architectural conservation of the Imperial Cult Temple complex, geophysical mapping, digital documentation and the implementation of sustainable excavation methods.

This joint paper presents the preliminary results of these renewed investigations, highlighting how landscape analysis, digital technologies and interdisciplinary collaboration together redefine the understanding of Pessinus's urban and sacred topography. By bridging past and present research traditions, the project aims to reposition Pessinus as both a scientific and cultural focal point in central Anatolia.

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Across the Black Sea with Jupiter Dolichenus

In light of discoveries of artefacts associated with the cult Jupiter Dolichenus at the site of Gonio-Apsaros in Georgia, a crucial question arises concerning the route by which this cult reached the Danubian provinces. Since the beginning of research into this elusive yet fascinating cult, scholars have sought to determine how, when, and by what means it was transmitted from East to West. The fact that temples and assemblages of artefacts dedicated to this deity are found mainly along the Danubian and Rhenish limes, often in military contexts, suggests a

strong link with the Roman army (Cumont, Merlat, Speidel). Studies by Anna Collar, employing network theory, indicate that high-ranking officers may have been key 'carriers' of the cult. Yet the precise route of this transmission remains unclear.

In my presentation, I will propose one possible path – running along the coasts of the Black Sea and supported by evidence from the Roman forts at Apsaros and Balaklava ––showing that maritime communication across the Pontic region may have played a crucial role in disseminating the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus toward the northern frontiers of the Imperium Romanum.

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Περὶ τοῦ πῶς χρὴ πολιορκουμένους ἀντέχειν. Once Again about the Hellenistic Fortifications of Tanais

Tanais was a Greek colony located on the periphery of oikumene away from other ancient cities. It caused a kind of isolation of the town. In such a situation, the inhabitants had to rely solely on themselves and the strength of the town's fortifications. A well-planned system of extensive fortifications was built in Tanais at the turn of the 3rd and 2nd centuries BC, which has been confirmed by many years of archaeological excavations. However, it did not defend the town's inhabitants against the invasion

of the Bosporan king Polemon, who captured Tanais at the end of the 1st century BC.

Some of the most interesting discoveries related to fortifications come from the western part of Tanais, where an expedition from the University of Warsaw conducted its research in the years 1999–2019. Not only the remains of a complex, well-thought-out defensive system have been discovered there, but also evidence of its use over the course of two centuries.

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From the Capital of the Hellenistic Kingdom of Pontus to a Roman Colony: Religious Transformation in Sinope

The Roman conquest of Sinope and the subsequent establishment of Colonia Julia Felix Sinope marked a pivotal moment in the city's political, economic, social and religious history. Formerly the royal capital of the Mithridatic kingdom, Sinope had long fostered a diverse and syncretic religious landscape that reflected both local traditions and Hellenistic political ideology. Under Roman rule, this complex system did not vanish but was reshaped in response to new imperial realities.

Epigraphic and archaeological evidence attests to the coexistence and gradual reconfiguration of traditional and newly introduced cults. Among the

latter, the spread of Mithraic worship – closely connected to the Roman military presence –stands out as a key indicator of change. Drawing on both published and previously unpublished archaeological material, including statuettes, figurines and other minor finds, this paper explores how Sinope's religious identity evolved under Roman authority, negotiating between inherited Hellenistic legacies and emerging imperial cult practices. In doing so, it sheds light on the broader dynamics of cultural and religious adaptation in the northern Black Sea region during the Roman empire.

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Monumental Tombs in Thrace: A Tale of Intercultural Influences and Emulations

The people(s) whom the Greeks named 'Thracians' inhabited parts of the Black Sea's west and south shores long before Greek colonisation. Indeed, several Thracian tribes, such as the Getae, the Dacians and the Bithynians, are known through ancient Graeco-Roman literary sources as abiding around the Black Sea.

Even though the Thracians did not develop a writing system and their history is glimpsed at only in cases of their interaction with the Greeks or Romans, they did develop a flourishing material culture primarily known to us through their funerary art. More specifically, Thracian monumental tombs both as architectural structures and

also as containers of funerary offerings present the most characteristic examples of Thracian art. Monumental Thracian tombs date in the Hellenistic period (some few instances may even date in the late Classical period), are located mostly in present-day Bulgaria (with two exceptions on European Turkey) and share affinities but also showcase great divergence both in architectural and decorative details. Regardless of the differences within 'the group of Thracian monumental tombs' themselves, several Thracian tombs have common elements with Macedonian funerary architecture as well as with that of southern Greece (for example Boeotia), that of the Greek colonies on the Black Sea (for example Callatis) and that of satrapal Asia Minor.

This paper aims to discuss the affinities and common elements in the funerary architecture of the Thracians indigenous to the Black Sea shores and that of the Macedonians and other Greeks. It highlights the fact that Thracian monumental tombs establish Thrace as a nexus of intercultural relations for the Balkans, the Black Sea and western Asia Minor, as it is evidenced by influences and emulations between Thracian architectural forms and those of the aforementioned regions.

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Lead Mirrors from the Temple of the Pontic Mother of the Gods in Dionysopolis

In 2007, in the coastal area of the town of Balchik, ancient Dionysopolis, the temple of the Pontic Mother of the Gods was discovered and subsequently excavated. Its construction was tightly dated to the period 280–260 BC based on the use of the Ionic order, the specific architectural decoration, construction techniques and building ceramics, and on the epigraphic material. The repairs evident, and the rich interior of the temple show that it functioned at least until the third quarter of the 4th century AD. Its destruction came as a result of a fire, probably around AD 378, at a time when dozens of settlements in Moesia and Scythia were plundered and burned by the Goths. This assumption is also supported by the latest coins found under the burnt layer in the naos, which date from the time of the emperors Valentinian I (364–375) and Valens (364–378).

The inscriptions and marble sculptures discovered during the excavation constitute the largest group of artefacts related to the cult of the Mother of the Gods found in a temple dedicated to this deity.

The report focuses on 15 lead mirrors discovered during the excavation, which can generally be attributed to the 2nd–4th centuries AD. Some of them were found near the northern wall of the naos, east of the aedicule

along with the main statue of the goddess, and the rest were discovered in the eastern half of the pronaos, where a concentration of sculptures, votive offerings and inscriptions was uncovered. Almost all mirrors show the types of damage and deformations typical of votive offerings left in sanctuaries.

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Aspects of the Organisation of the Rural Territory of the City of Tomis in the Roman Period

An expanding urban centre since the Hellenistic period, Tomis became in early Roman times the seat of provincial governors and of the Pontic community in the 2nd century AD, an important economic, commercial and administrative centre, serving as the capital of Lower Moesia.

Research conducted over the last 25 years or so, as a result of various infrastructure projects and other investments carried out in the area surrounding the city of Constanța, has led to the identification of numerous structures dating back to Roman times. The most numer-

ous are rural settlements (both developed vicus-type communities and more modest settlements in which structures of indigenous tradition predominate), to which are added agricultural farms, craft production areas, necropoleis (flat or tumular), aqueducts, roads and boundary ditches. Their layout on the map provides valuable clues about the organisation of space in Roman times, its dynamics, and also offers insights into the relationships between them.

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1001_Shards. Micro-regional Ceramic Centres in Pre-Roman Dacia (2nd century BC–1st century AD)

‘1001_Shards…’ is an exploratory research project supported by a grant of the Romanian Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitisation, CNCS-UEFISCDI, project number PN-IV-P1-PCE-2023-0153, within PNCDI IV. Its main goal is to characterise, with the considerable involvement of mineralogical/petrographic and physical/chemical investigations, the local production of fine pottery from the beginning of the 2nd century BC until the Roman conquest of three micro-areas north of the Danube: the Upper Dâmbovița Valley, the Depression of Ciuc and the Vârghiș Gorges. The fine ceramics discovered in the significantly archaeologically researched sites

of these three areas (Cetățeni on the Upper Dâmboviței; Jigodin I 'Câmpul Morii' in Ciuc; and Merești 'Dâmbul Pipașilor' in the Vârghiș Gorges), although integrated into an apparently uniform cultural community – the Getae and Dacian world from the north of the Danube – is characterised by technical, morphological and decorative particularities specific to each of these zones. The project aims to identify the production techniques, the individualisation of the main forms and variants, the decoration, and the establishment of the internal chronology for each centre using the specific internal chronological markers (their determination and association with the stratigraphic units in which fine pottery specific to each site was discovered) and specific external chronological markers (Hellenistic and Roman models produced in Asia Minor or Pontic workshops for certain local forms and establishing/refining the chronology of the latter).

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Ethnos and Polis circa Pontus Euxeinos and Beyond

The question of the differences between ethnos and polis was for years fundamental for distinguishing the Hellenes from the surrounding peoples and forming the idea of barbarians. This was also a basic postulate for Bulgarian historiography, which had to distinguish the Thracian and the Hellenic. Recently, however, the idea of this opposi-

tion has been replaced by the view of active co-operation and mutual penetration. It now seems that autonomy (i.e. living according to the citizens' own laws) was not a mandatory prerequisite for the status of a polis. The previous opposite assumption led to the conclusion that the polis was incompatible with any higher or parallel form of political organisation. Now this careful abandonment of autonomy is seen as a key step in the creation of the great federations of the Late Classical and Hellenistic periods, which in turn relied on a primary, politically dormant, but present sense of ethnic (tribal) identity. The Greek values his polis-affiliation above all else, but he has many more identifications that allow him to leave his city and successfully realise himself outside it. The priority given to the polis in the vast number of studies of the 19th and 20th centuries, as the most dynamic, creative and influential form of political organisation in the Archaic and Classical world, is no longer sustainable. Grand generalisations are also inappropriate: the cities created during the colonisation of Propontis and Pontus are visibly different from those in Magna Graecia, for example. On the Pontic coast, the ethnoi and the poleis live not next to each other, but IN each other, and this does not bother anyone. They organise their production in different ways, not opposite but complementary. Some produce for the market, while others are in the subsistence economy, but nevertheless they have the same basic economic unit – the oikos.

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House-Building in Deultum-Develtos-Debelt (Bulgaria)

The study is focused on the scheme and architecture of house buildings and their associated infrastructure in Deultum, the Roman colony of veterans of Legio VIII Augusta, stationed in Novae in the province of Moesia, and the Byzantine city of Develtos, topographically and socio-culturally its inheritor. The architectonical construction of the city began in AD 70. The Roman mensores set on the ground in time no fewer than 40 insulae. The buildings follow the perimeter of the quarters, which are of a regular rectangular shape, with an area of about 1.2 jugera. The massive constructions have one or two floors. In the third quarter of 4th century AD buildings in opus mixtum were built, some two-storey. The building up of the street area had begun. From the end of 4th to the third quarter of 5th century AD, reconstructions of existing buildings were carried out and construction of the streets continued. At the end of 5th and during the 6th century AD, poor-quality repairs and reconstructions of existing buildings were carried out and streets blocked with one-room premises. Narrow passages for movement were left between the buildings. After the 6th century AD, buildings were erected which did not follow the principles of the earlier urban planning scheme. The western half of the central cardo has been preserved as

the main communication route. The impression left by the destructions of the Roman and Byzantine buildings is of a gradually decreasing standard of living and abandonment of the principles of Roman urbanism

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Archaic Cypriot Mortaria from Apollonia Pontica

Recent studies have furthered our understanding of the chronological and spatial spread of Cypriot mortaria in the 7th and the first half of the 6th centuries BC in the Eastern Mediterranean, and have made them, through morphological and archaeometrical investigations, readily identifiable. Concurrent with the earliest phase of the Greek colonisation of the Euxine Pontus, Cypriot mortaria have been hitherto documented in Histria, Borysthenes (Berezan) and Taganrog, albeit with relatively few finds. The ongoing archaeological excavations of the temenos of Apollo and the Archaic settlement on the island of St Cyricus have produced a much greater number of finds that bring about new considerations of both their quantitative and chronological dissemination in the Greek apoikiai. Well-attested in Apollonia Pontica in contexts of the last quarter of the 7th and the early 6th century BC, Cypriot mortaria now appear to be an immutable part of the assemblage of finds that characterises the earliest Greek colonisation of the Black Sea.

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The Mother Goddess in the Black Sea Region: Encounters between Phrygian and Greek Cult

The circumstances under which the Phrygian deity Matar was absorbed into Greek cult have been extensively debated without any clear agreement. Recent survey work along the southern Black Sea coast and its hinterland contributes significantly to our understanding of this process. Surveys in this region have revealed considerable evidence of Phrygian cult practice, including a relief of a Phrygian architectural façade, a Phrygian step altar, and two sculptures of a female head wearing a high headdress or polos. These characteristic features of Phrygian cult practice indicate that Phrygians were living here, even though the Pontic area lies beyond the traditional Phrygian cultural zone. The female heads suggest that Matar, the Mother Goddess, was one of the Phrygian deities worshiped in the region. It is within this context that we should evaluate the discovery in 2009 of a Greek cult bothros near Samsun, ancient Amisos, a colony of the Greek city Miletos. Among the objects in the bothros are dedications in Greek to Kybebo. One graffito may read 'to Meter Kybebo', demonstrating that Meter was an object of cult for Greeks living in Amisos. The relationship of Kybebo, the Anatolian deity Kubaba, to the Phrygian deity Matar Kubeliya within Anatolian cult is still a matter of debate, but the distinction between two Anatolian deities may not have been meaningful to the Greeks.

Phrygian Matar was the only Phrygian deity represented in anthropomorphic form, a feature of cult practice that was important to the Greeks. Thus Matar may have seemed more accessible to Greek settlers in this isolated region, and the protective features of the Phrygian Mother may have encouraged Greek acknowledgment of the deity. Taken together, the Black Sea material adds important evidence to understanding the means by which the Greeks adopted the cult of the Phrygian Mother Goddess.

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Game Boards and the Cultural Context of Play in Chersonesos Taurica

This contribution examines two game boards discovered on the territory of Chersonesos Taurica, which reflect the evolution of gaming practices and their cultural context in the ancient society of the northern Black Sea region.

The first find is a limestone slab with Latin inscriptions, dated to the early 4th century AD. The inscriptions, carelessly carved by different hands – likely to have been those of Roman legionaries – refer to the emperor Valerius Maxentius and his co-ruler Valerius. The artifact includes a game grid engraved in the lower part of the slab. The configuration of the board (12 x 10 or 12 x 12 squares) allows it to be compared with known variants of the Roman strategic game ludus latrunculorum,

which was popular among military personnel of the empire. Traces of mechanical wear and pitting on the surface, however, also allow for the possibility that the slab was used for duodecim scripta, a game requiring dice. This suggests a functional hybridity of the artefact.

The second board, dating to the Late Antique period, has structural parallels with Coptic board games known from examples in Egypt and the Mediterranean. These boards are characterised by a tripartite layout and a system of holes for pegs, indicating shared gaming traditions within a broad geographic and cultural sphere.

The study of these finds makes it possible to view gaming as an element of cultural communication and social interaction in Chersonesos. The game boards serve not only as evidence of leisure activities but also as markers of processes of Roman and Coptic-Egyptian acculturation, reflecting the integration of these traditions into the everyday life of Greek cities in the northern Black Sea region. Thus, the material evidence of gaming in Chersonesos helps reconstruct the complex cultural fabric of the ancient city, where military, civic and religious aspects coexisted in close interaction.

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A Late Antique Elite Residence at Istros

The city of Istros/Histria, situated on the western shore of the Black Sea, remained a peripheral urban settlement in Late Antiquity, much as it had been in earlier periods. Nevertheless, it participated in the broader trends of the Roman world. Its local elite regrouped around a new focal point within the transformed urban landscape: a marble basilica, constructed in a central and visually dominant position at the beginning of the 6th century. To its east, a cluster of refined residences was built during the same period, in what has come to be known as the 'Domus' district. This complex has traditionally been interpreted as the residence of the local bishop, due to its proximity to the church and certain architectural features. The present paper aims to reassess this interpretation. By considering its architectural components alongside parallels from other provinces, the complex can be more accurately understood within the spatial and social framework of Late Antique Istros.

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Hymnodoi. Associations of Hymn Singers in Cities Around the Black Sea

Associations of hymn-singers are widespread across the Greek world and constitute a distinctive aspect of the associative phenomenon in the Greek cities. Our contribution will examine such associations in poleis around the Black Sea, discussing their activities, their place within the social structure of their cities, the cults they served, and especially their connection to the cult of the Roman emperors – that is, to the integration of the respective cities into the new political order created in this area by the coming of Rome.

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Ceremonies Dedicated to Dionysos Among the Dacians? A Modiolus with Figurative Representations from the Fortress of Pietroasa Mică (Romania)

Pietroasa Mică–Gruiu Dării is a site which, from the 4th century BC to the 1st century AD, shows a unique pattern of historical development within the Geto-Dacian world: from an unfortified settlement (4th–2nd centuries BC), to a fortress (1st century BC), and later to a cult place (1st century AD).

In a pit within the Dacian fortress, dating to the end of the 1st century BC, the stratigraphy and the associated inventory indicate a deposit resulting from a ritual ceremony. At different levels within the pit, various types of Greek and Dacian ceramic vessels were discovered, either intact or broken in situ: krater, modiolus, kantharoi, bowl, cup-lamp, jars, miniature vessels, a bronze mirror and others.

The modiolus features five figures in relief: a musician playing the dyalus, a maenad performing a libation on an altar, a dancing satyr, a maenad playing the cymbals, and a female figure holding a tray with fruit offer-

ings. The upper part of the handle is decorated with a vine leaf, while the lower part depicts the head of Dionysos and a thyrsos.

This discovery is significant because: a) it is the only modiolus with figurative decoration found among the Thracians north of the Balkans; b) it was unearthed during systematic excavations, in a well-defined archaeological and chronological context; c) it suggests that the Dacian elites of the fortress practised certain ceremonies dedicated to Dionysos.

The presence of numerous and varied Hellenistic imports, especially amphorae, and the Hellenistic-inspired defensive wall, indicate that the Dacian elites at this site maintained sustained contact with the Hellenistic world.

On this occasion, we will also analyse the pieces with figurative representations that suggest the spread of the cult of Dionysos among the Thracians north of the Balkans.

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Belt Pieces on the Lower Danube in the Late Roman Period

Over time, human communities have felt the need to make changes both to their clothing and to its accesso-

ries, thereby creating styles and trends specific to a certain period, clearly defined chronologically. On this occasion, we present belt ornaments from the collection of the Museum of National History and Archaeology Constanța, discovered in the Dobruja (south-eastern Romania, bounded on the west and north by the Danube and on the east by the Black Sea). The objects are characteristic of the material culture of the Lower Danube region from the second half of the 6th century AD and consist of belt buckles with fixed shield-shaped plates, strap ends and appliqués, all decorated with openwork designs. While the buckles served to keep the belt fastened, the other pieces were used on the straps of the fittings that hung from the belts, serving both as counterweights, keeping the belt taut, and as ornaments. It is possible that these represented belt fittings from military equipment and that this type was brought into the area by soldiers stationed here during the reign of Emperor Justinian. Among the discoveries, we mention the pieces from Dunăreni, Pantelimonu de Sus (Ulmetum), Capidava, Oltina (Altinum) and Albești.

Belt fittings with openwork pieces were produced in several regions of the Late Roman empire, and the large number of discoveries from the provinces along the Lower Danube suggests possible local production, although no workshop has been definitively identified. The cessation of the production and use of this type of belt fittings may be attributed to the invasions at the end of the 6th century, which severely affected the provinces at the eastern end of the Danube.

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Names versus Ethnicity: New Approaches to the Ethnic and Socio-political History of the Northern and Western Black Sea-Region in Roman Times

The ancient contemporary historiography of the 1st century BC to the 3rd century AD, if preserved as Strabo's Geography, a supplement to his lost histories, or if only known from the use of Late Antique of Byzantine authors, was always based not only on contemporary information but especially on earlier ethnographic models and tries to use traditional denomination and definitions for new ethnic groups or new formations of socio-political or cultural entities. Thus, contemporary knowledge was pressed into earlier models or into generalising denominations. Often only the similarity of names was used to identify different groups with each other, although separated by time and space. Alien names were changed to familiar ones. At the same time, the focus on the areas around the western, northern and eastern parts of the Black Sea were changed by Roman interests and Roman expansion on the Balkan and into the Black Sea Region, later by the confrontation of Rome with formations beyond the borders of the empire. The different denomination in the mostly fragmentary preserved Latin and Greek historical and ethnographic traditions led modern authors often to erroneous reconstructions and ethnic identifications. But also the development of national and nationalistic historiography led to long-lasting

falsifications and wrong definitions. Characteristic examples for these phenomena are the 'Dacians' or the 'Goths', the Carpi, Peuci/Peugini, Herulans or Burgundians. It is astonishing that even Klaudios Ptolemaios or the Dexippian tradition were not used in a proper way against the still powerful images of the 19th century. Focusing on a selection of important examples, the lecture tries to correct or sharpen the understanding the reality of new powers in the region since the 1st century BC.

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Some Considerations Regarding Digitated/Bow Fibulae Discovered in Istro-Pontic Territory

The origin and ethnic attribution of the digitated/bow fibulae have, over time, generated lively debates, while the increasing number of discoveries has opened new perspectives for analysis and allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the initial statements. Digitated fibulae were widely distributed among Germanic populations and were also used by the Slavs, by various nomadic tribes, and by non-Slavic populations within the area of Late Roman and Byzantine civilisation.

In the Istro-Pontic territory (Scythia), the discoveries come from inhumation graves and from the areas of fortified settlements. The majority percentage from the necropoleis indicates a preference for their deposition as

part of the funerary inventory, and their association with other objects generally suggests their attribution to individuals of high social status.

Based on their main features, the digitated fibulae discovered in Scythia can be divided into two main groups: those considered of Germanic origin (mid-5th and the second half of the 6th century AD); those attributed to the Slavic world (second half of 6th and first decades of the 7th century AD).

Their popularity led to the production of these clothing accessories in numerous workshops, resulting, as the case may be, in artefacts of high aesthetic quality or in more barbarised forms. In addition to the goldsmiths' workshops of Byzantium and the Gotho-Byzantine in Crimea, the existence of workshops along the Lower Danube, including within the Istro-Pontic territory, has been suggested, based on the concentration of discoveries, the barbarised appearance, the variation of models, the presence of pattern moulds and the identification of workshops that produced specific types of fibulae. For the territory under study, the presence of digitated fibulae may reveal aspects concerning their production and distribution, the presence of certain population groups and their correlation with particular historical events, as well as indications regarding the relative identity of the wearer.

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On the Pre-Roman Habitation Before the municipium Tropaeum Traiani. Archaeological Discoveries Specific to the 4th century BC–1st century AD

The city of Tropaeum Traiani (Adamclisi, Romania) is one of the most important economic, political and religious centres in Roman Dobruja, where specialised research has provided a large amount of historical, archaeological and architectural information.

For the pre-Roman period, the information available to date is discrete. The plateau of the Tropaeum Traiani fortress, according to older limited surveys, presents at a depth of over 4 m a brown level full of ash, charcoal and disparate ceramic fragments of local and Greek manufacture. The latter, although earlier, are found in contexts datable to the 1st century BC–1st century AD.

In the area of the southern quarter, following recent archaeological research, new ceramic and monetary materials relevant to our topic were discovered in secondary contexts: a series of ceramic fragments, hand-shaped and some wheel-made; the most numerous come from jars, but fragments of wheel-made cups and an almost complete lid were also discovered. The material

dates back to the 2nd century BC–1st century AD, but there are also earlier indications from the 4th–3rd century BC. Also, for the first time at Tropaeum Traiani, pre-Roman silver and bronze coins were discovered: 40 examples belonging to the kingdoms of Macedonia and Thrace, the colonies of Istros/Histria, Tomis and Callatis, the Roman Republic, etc. The monetary material typologically and by circulation belongs to the 4th century BC–1st century AD. The presence of coins from West Pontic Greek colonies and from the southern Thrace suggests, on the one hand, the existence of Greek–autochthonous trade relations along a road axis and, on the other, that they are a consequence of the political-military context of Macedonian and Roman expansion.

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Aspects of the Practice of Depositing Groups of Coins in Tombs Specific to the Hellenistic Necropolis of Callatis in the Context of Some Unprecedented Discoveries (4th–1st Centuries BC)

The secondary use of money in antiquity has provided valuable information regarding its involvement in completely different fields outwith its intended primary purpose. One of these is the funerary and of spiritual and religious life in general.

Three hitherto unpublished funerary deposits, discovered in the second part of the 20th century at Callatis (Mangalia, Constanța county), are here considered. These include Olbian staters of the Demetra type (350–300 BC), bronze pieces from the Callatis mint of the Demetra/crown type (3rd century BC), respectively of the Athena type (2nd–1st centuries BC). These are analysed in the broader context of other discoveries of this type from Callatis.

Coins discovered in isolated funerary contexts, or associated in deposits or hoards, support the use of mon-

ey in the Hellenistic period as a 'means of payment' for the deceased's passage to the world of the dead. However, in general, we should consider that a relatively small number of graves also contain coins, if we refer to the number of graves published from the Callatian necropolis. In fact, there is no generalised practice at this stage of funerary archaeological research regarding the introduction of coins into tomb inventories. By researching necropoleis remains we can follow the pulse of the colonies' activities within the much-enlarged framework of what we would call the space of the deceased from the surrounding daily life (as Charon's obol), specific to a polis of the Hellenistic period.

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The Meander Motif: Forms and Roles in Architectural and Interior Environment

In the material culture of antiquity the meander motif/ornament is found across a very wide regional and temporal scope, on multiple placements and serving various functions. It has appeared in miniature products (for example, coins) and also large-scale architectural structures such as floors, walls, ceilings, columns, as well

as on products from the interior environment, including furniture, ceramics, sarcophagi, etc. It has decorated both objects of everyday life and those with a ritual and/or sacred use.

In parallel, the meander has been also applied in the art and the architectural environment of a number of later historical periods up to the present day. It is precisely the diversity and the high artistic relevance that were the basis of our research interest into this geometric element.

Within a paper such as this, a comprehensive review of the many material carriers of the meander, in all their visual characteristics, is not possible. Here our goal is to trace selected main features of its type, place and role in some valuable ancient compositions. We limit the study to examples created in the eastern Mediterranean in the period 7th century BC–1st century AD; and the production techniques to drawing, mosaic and relief.

The expected results are in the field of the history of ancient art, architecture and design.

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A Group of Amphorae from the Southern Black Sea Shore

Amphorae, frequently used in maritime trade, wash up on the shores of Black Sea or get caught in the nets of fishermen. Today, fishermen collect amphorae in the 52 km-long Kandıra district of İzmit (Nicomedeia), located on the southern Black Sea coast. Transport amphorae, used primarily to convey liquid commodities in Antiquity, were the main cargo of ships involved in regional or interregional trade in the Black Sea. The amphorae examined in the present study, collected by fishermen, are of various types and sizes and with varied physical features belonging to different dates. In addition to wine, olive oil and similar liquid commodities, terracotta amphorae carry gourmet foods specific to Mediterranean cuisine, such as garum, a fish sauce. Study of amphorae provides information about the ports they first departed and visited. A macroscopic examination yields basic details of the physiological characteristics of the amphorae, such as shape, size, capacity, paste colour, paste inclusions, stamps or graffiti. A comparison of these with those of other amphorae may reveal the place of production, the culture and the period to which an amphora belongs.

Our study is an ongoing endeavour that aims to illuminate emporion and apoikiai relations and trade in the southern Black Sea coast. We are doing this by examin-

ing the types, historical periods, and quantitative and qualitative characteristics of amphorae found on the shores of Kandıra, İzmit. This presentation provides a macroscopic review of recently recovered transport amphorae, which forms the first part of our comprehensive study. We look forward to sharing more insights as our research progresses.

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Graeco-Roman Culture and Hellenistic Armenian/Pontic Iconography

During the Hellenistic era, which followed the conquests of Alexander the Great, Greek culture flourished and became a prominent source of diverse iconographic styles. These styles gained significant popularity not only throughout numerous city-states in Greece, such as Athens and Corinth, but also across the entire Near East, encompassing regions such as Egypt, Persia and the Levant.

In this vibrant cultural milieu, distinct iconographic canons emerged, characterised by their innovative representations of mythology, daily life and human emotion. Artists began to explore new techniques and subjects, leading to greater realism and expressiveness in their works. This artistic evolution paved the way for

these styles to diffuse into the Roman empire, where they were further adapted and incorporated into Roman art and architecture. As the Roman empire expanded, these artistic traditions eventually influenced the early Christian artistic expression, laying the groundwork for a new era of religious iconography and artistic representation in the centuries to come.

Hellenism significantly influenced Armenian culture, with its effects still visible today. The Greek language became prominent, especially in court settings, with Greek inscriptions found in Armavir, the first Orontid capital, indicating a Greek temple dedicated to Apollo and Artemis. An inscription from 1927 suggests a connection between Mythras, a high priest, and Orontes IV. While temples to the sun and moon were unique to Armenian religion, similarities existed due to shared Indo-European roots.

The Orontids also established a large forest for hunting and enhanced trade routes linking Central Asia, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. This development made Armavir and Yervandashat prosperous, as evidenced by the discovery of various coins indicating a wealthy region.

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Greeks, Lydians and Persians in Gordion

The scope of the proposed topic is quite large. This paper aims at highlighting some archaeological evidence that could allow following the historical process on the Anatolian plateau in the Archaic and Classical periods. No written sources shed light on the Lydian expansion eastwards and its control over Phrygia. However, the archaeological studies of the Middle Phrygian period (ca. 800–550 BC) revealed the first Greek imports and the Lydian influence in material culture. While written evidence is available about the encounters between Lydians and Medes, between Lydians and Persians, as well as about the fate of the Greek cities along the western Anatolian coast under the Achaemenids, inner Anatolia remained rather in the dark during the Achaemenid period. Ancient authors present little or no information about the former Phrygian capital Gordion in this period. Thus, the fate of Phrygia under the Persian rule is not quite clear and remains understudied.

The present paper examines some constructions and finds from the Middle and Late Phrygian (ca. 550–330 BC) Citadel at Gordion, as well as those from the tumuli, in order to elucidate alternations and processes that have started after the time of King Midas and culminated in the Achaemenid period. They reflect the changes in burial customs, the increase of Greek and Lydian imports, and finally – Persian, or 'Persianising' objects.

Gordion was a backwater of the Achaemenid administration but did not decline economically. The former capital city could not now rival the satrap centres like Daskyleion or Sardis. Nevertheless, Phrygia produced important hybrid monuments that display earlier Anatolian and Phrygian traditions, Ionian art trends and elite objects in Persian style.

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Isis Jewellery from Barbarian Burials of the North Pontic Region

Some adornments with Isis symbols are known from barbarian burials of the northern Black Sea region. I am speaking about jewellery with the so-called 'Isis Crown', viz. a sun disc capped by two feathered plumes. These intricate pieces of jewellery are believed to have originated from Mediterranean workshops, showcasing fine craftsmanship.

Most of these adornments from North Pontic archaeological sites were already outdated by a century or more when they were buried. Some of them have been reworked over time, suggesting their reuse or adaptation. Alongside these original pieces, local imitations resembling the form of such jewellery are also known.

The cults of Graeco-Egyptian gods began appearing in the northern Black Sea area from the 3rd century BC. During the Roman period, trade connections with

Egypt significantly increased the influx of Egyptian artefacts to the ancient centres of the Pontic region and subsequently to neighbouring barbarian communities. The spread of the cult of Aphrodite-Isis in the northern Black Sea region is confirmed by finds relating to it from excavations at Olbia, Panticapaeum, Chersonesos and Phanagoria. However, we have no information about the acquaintance of the barbarians with it. There is no clear evidence indicating whether the local barbarians were familiar with the specific religious connotations of the Isis Crown, ascribed meaning to these attributes, and deliberately used them, or if they wore such jewellery simply as expensive adornments to show status and prosperity. The practice of repairing and replicating these motifs locally hints at possible parallels with local religious cults. Notably, all finds of Isis Crown jewellery are associated with female burials, some of which may be interpreted as those of priestesses, suggesting a deeper spiritual significance.

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Contributions to the Research of the Hun-period in the Prut-Dniester Area: The Tomb with Polychrome Pieces from Costești

In addition to various medieval funerary complexes, attributed to the 14th-century Golden Horde city, a burial tomb belonging to the early period of the Great Migrations was also

investigated in Costești (Ialoveni district, Republic of Moldova). The skeleton, belonging to an adult individual, was laid in a dorsal decubitus position, with the upper and lower limbs extended, the palms being placed on the pelvic bones. Above the skeleton, as well as below it, especially in the abdomen and pelvis area, remnants of brownish-coloured organic materials were reported, from the limits of which were recovered two ornamental gold pieces, made in the cloisonné technique, with inserts of translucent red material; an iron knife and dagger, heavily corroded and preserved in fragments; a ceramic fragment from a hand-made vessel, as well as small iron fragments, probably belonging to undefined pieces of equipment. The burial tomb from Costești falls within the circle of material culture specific to populations of diverse origins from the Hunnic era. The identified ritual and ritual elements, as well as the set of artifacts, are well attested in the Sarmatian environment, especially in the Alanian one. The decisive factor that allows the attribution of the tomb from Costești to the Hunnic era is the polychrome gold pieces, characteristic of the funerary complexes specific to this historical period. In the absence of more conclusive dating elements, we are inclined to chronologically place the tomb from Costești between the end of the 4th century and the first half of the following century. Regarding ethnic affiliation, although the available data is limited, we assume that the individual buried on the northern slope of the Botna river valley was of Hunnic or Alanian origin.

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Ancient Weights of Apollonia Pontica

As a rule, metric instruments, including weights, coin stamps and dies, are very rare finds. This rarity can be explained by their specific administrative function, and by the strict measures taken by the authorities to preserve and control them. In order to prevent attempts at fraud or falsification, such instruments were often destroyed once they were worn out or replaced. The ancient weights themselves are valuable and illustrative artefacts, providing crucial information about the metrology of a particular polis. They represent official legal standards of weight, supervised by civic magistrates, and they reflect the operative metrological system of a given historical period.

So far, three commercial and coin weights that could be connected with Apollonia Pontica (modern-day Sozopol, Bulgaria) are known. The weights are lead plates in three different shapes – rectangular (almost square), round and triangular. One of them was found in Sozopol, while the other two are of unknown provenance.

Each bears relief images of an anchor – the well-known parasemon (παράσημον), i.e. a symbol or badge of the city-state – identical, to that depicted on the city`s coins. One of the weights, due to its poor state of preservation upon arrival at the National History Museum, has

no visible inscription. The other two, however, bear distinct legends: one referring to the city's name, and the other containing a personal name in the genitive case.

What coins might these weights have been used to measure, did the shape of the weights hold any functional significance, how should the inscriptions on these artefacts be interpreted and, finally, what is the chronology of these objects? These are the key questions posed in the present study, for which reasoned answers and interpretations are sought.



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