

JOURNAL OF ROMAN ARCHAEOLOGY

VOLUME 26 2013

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REVIEW ARTICLES AND LONG REVIEWS
AND BOOKS RECEIVED

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL

Table of contents of fascicule 2

Reviews

V. Kozlovskaya	Pontic Studies 101	473
G. Bradley	An unexpected and original approach to early Rome	478
V. Jolivet	Villas? Romaines? Républicaines?	482
M. Lawall	Towards a new social and economic history of the Hellenistic world	488
S. L. Dyson	Questions about influence on Roman urbanism in the Middle Republic	498
R. Ling	Hellenistic paintings in Italy and Sicily	500
L. A. Mazurek	Reconsidering the role of Egyptianizing material culture in Hellenistic and Roman Greece	503
S. G. Bernard	Politics and public construction in Republican Rome	513
D. Booms	A group of villas around Tivoli, with questions about <i>otium</i> and Republican construction techniques	519
C. J. Smith	The <i>Latium</i> of Athanasius Kircher	525
M. A. Tomei	Note su <i>Palatium</i> di Filippo Coarelli	526
F. Sear	A new monograph on the Theatre of Pompey	539
E. M. Steinby	Necropoli vaticane — revisioni e novità	543
J. E. Packer	The <i>Atlante: Roma antica</i> revealed	553
E. Papi	<i>Roma magna taberna</i> : economia della produzione e distribuzione nell'Urbe	561
C. F. Noreña	The socio-spatial embeddedness of Roman law	565
D. Nonnis & C. Pavolini	Epigrafi in contesto: il caso di Ostia	575
C. Pavolini	Porto e il suo territorio	589
S. J. R. Ellis	The shops and workshops of Herculaneum	601
A. Wallace-Hadrill	Trying to define and identify the Roman “middle classes”	605
T. A. J. McGinn	Sorting out prostitution in Pompeii: the material remains, terminology and the legal sources	610
Y. Perrin	L'écrit au quotidien dans le monde romain	634
D. L. Stone	Surveying urban landscapes	640
C. Williamson	The consul at Rome	642
S. Thakur	Organized opposition to a principate in transition?	645
L. L. Brice	The emperor (Claudius) in the Roman world	648
J. S. Nikolaus	The study of slavery: past issues and present approaches	651
M. L. Laird	The progress of scholarship on <i>liberti</i>	662
N. M. Ray	A collected economy	673
W. Scheidel	Italian manpower	678
A. L. Goldman	Rome and the power of the <i>gladius</i>	687
B. I. Sandor	Jupiter's finest wheels	693
V. H. Pennanen	Seeing the gods — or not	701
T. V. Franconi	Rome and the power of ancient rivers	705
B. D. Shaw	Collected historical essays around Apuleius	712
R. S. Bagnall	The Antonine Plague returns	714
M. MacKinnon	Modern perspectives on ancient animal sacrifice	718
W. Heinz	An engineer studies heating systems in baths	721
W. Heinz	Bedeutende Forschung zu einem ‘anrühigen’ Thema	723
R. Ling	Wall-paintings in Greek and Roman sanctuaries	727
A. E. Hanson	A farming handbook and its relevance for science and medicine	730
A. M. Small	A major conference on central Apulia and Peucetia and a new synthesis on rural settlement	741
E. Fentress	The <i>patrimonium</i> and the peasant	750
I. J. Marshman	Return to sender? Letters, literacy, and Roman sealing practices	755
J. L. Davies	A major work on temporary camps in Scotland	760
H. W. Horsnæs	Coins from Roman Britain in light of the Portable Antiquities Scheme	763

Table of contents of fascicule 2 (continued)

T. V. Buttrey	Gold coins from <i>Britannia</i> and their (archaeological) value	768
M. Segard	Gestion et usages de l'eau dans les Alpes occidentales romaines	770
P. Visonà	Monetary circulation in the south of France from the 6th c. B.C. to the age of Augustus	775
D. L. Bomgardner	The Fréjus amphitheatre: to be or not to be? The place of an ancient monument in a modern world	780
R. Reece	Cremation and cremation burial in NE Gaul	785
A. Gavini	<i>Isiaca et aegyptiaca</i> nella penisola iberica	788
W. E. Mierse	Post-colonial theory and the study of Roman Spain	791
H. Williams	Lamps from Algeria	797
E. Papi	Châteaux en Espagne? <i>Lixus</i> 3 et le palais de Juba II	800
S. Stevens	Cyprian's intangible Roman foundations	808
J. Freed	Excavating Roman Carthage: two contrasting (French and German) reports	810
S. Keay	African olive oil and its distribution to Spain and Rome	820
D. P. S. Peacock	Getting around in Albania	825
C. Eger	Some late graves, mortuary practices, and their relevance for social life at Isthmia	827
C. S. Lightfoot	The results of surveying around Aphrodisias	839
J.-P. Sodini	L'île de Cos et ses basiliques proto-byzantines	848
R. Gordon	Hero-cults, old and new	852
C. Foss	The archaeology of cities (and more) in Turkey	861
P. Kenrick	The joys of studying Roman cooking ware in the Middle East (Syria and Turkey)	864
M. Fischer	The minor arts and cultural influences at Dor	867
Z. Weiss	How do we study daily life in the Second Temple period?	871
J. A. Overman	Roman temples in Israel: <i>caveat emptor</i>	877
B. Ward-Perkins	Le Mura Aureliane	879
R. Reece	Archaeological <i>versus</i> historical 'facts'	882
T. D. Barnes	The <i>Theodosian Code</i> and the personality of Constantine	887
L. Dossey	Late-antique peasants: tensions, misunderstandings, and élite distaste	895
E. Rizos	Keszthely-Fenekpuszta and the Danube from late antiquity to the Middle Ages	898
A. H. Chen	Sorting out palaces and villas in late antiquity	904
J. Conant	Christians 'persecuting' Christians in North Africa, and intrusions by the State	910
M. Whittow	The Maeander valley in the Long Ancient World: or, Why bother with archaeology?	914
W. Eck	Zur Analyse der Kriterien politisch-administrativer Entscheidungsprozesse der römischen Kaiser von Augustus bis Phocas	925
D. Frankfurter	Books, lists, and scribes in Early Christian Egypt	929
J. Magness	A colloquium on the Byzantine-early Islamic transition	933
J.-P. Sodini	Le commerce byzantin du IV ^e au XV ^e siècle: de la région au monde méditerranéen	941
BOOKS RECEIVED		952
BOOKS REVIEWED IN THIS ISSUE		962

Pontic Studies 101

Valeriya Kozlovskaya

PASCALIE BURGUNDER (ed.), *ETUDES PONTIQUES. HISTOIRE, HISTORIOGRAPHIE ET SITES ARCHÉOLOGIQUES DU BASSIN DE LA MER NOIRE* (= *Etudes de Lettres* n° 290 [1-2, 2012], Université de Lausanne 2012). Pp. 366, figs. 52, planches en couleur 40. ISSN 0014-2026; ISBN 978-2-940331-27-7.

If you are not a novice in the field of ancient Pontic studies, the first thing you might notice about this book is that its title is reminiscent of *Pontische Studien*, a collection of 30 articles by the late J. G. Vinogradov written over a span of almost 30 years.¹ Vinogradov's *Pontische Studien* was a monumental large-format volume of over 700 pages covering a variety of subjects. *Etudes pontiques* gathers 10 papers presented at a series of roundtables on the history and archaeology of the Black Sea held at the University of Lausanne in 2009. Thus, apart from the general topic, the two publications are not very similar. Still, it is possible that P. Burgunder chose the title as a tribute to Vinogradov, one of the most important epigraphists and historians of the Northern Black Sea region; after all, a large part of Burgunder's collection is devoted to major scholars without whose fundamental work the field would not be what it is today.

His general description of the book (10) is preceded by a concise history of the relations (or lack thereof) between Russia/the Soviet Union and the Swiss cantons in the fields of ancient history and archaeology (7-9) and is followed by a note on transliteration. In general, the bibliography is impeccably presented, with its many Cyrillic titles accurately transliterated and translated. The origins of the volume explain its structure: it is arranged in three parts according to the *Tables rondes* and their respective topics, but the latter range widely, both thematically and geographically, from the history of archaeology to the latest results of ongoing projects, and from the Black Sea's W coast to Central Asia. It must not have been an easy task to arrange this diverse material in a single publication. In the Introduction, the editor implies that the book is intended for francophone readers with an interest in the archaeology of the Black Sea but no knowledge of Russian and Ukrainian (10), but it is more likely that different articles will appeal to different audiences.

The only chapter that can be viewed as general introductory reading is "Le royaume du Bosphore Cimmérien aux époques grecque et romaine: un aperçu," by A. V. Podosinov (87-109). In a dozen pages he covers the entire period of this state's existence, from the early 5th c. B.C. to the 4th c. A.D. This concise overview, based primarily on literary and epigraphical sources but also on some archaeological evidence, contains only a few references and is accompanied by a carefully selected but basic bibliography along with a helpful chronological table of the Bosporan rulers. The author discusses the succession of rulers, the evolving of their titulatures, and territorial expansions; it also draws to the reader's attention the unique character of the kingdom, uniting Greek *poleis* and their barbarian surroundings under the monarchy of non-Greek rulers. He reviews the most important political events and touches upon various aspects of economic, social and cultural life. This is a good overview of Bosporan history for the uninitiated but its scope does not permit longer discussions on any of the controversial points, diverging opinions on any topic, or even comments by the author, which results in some overgeneralizations and occasional oversimplifications.²

The remaining chapters fall under two broad categories: those focusing on the historiography of ancient studies in Russia, and those discussing the results of the most recent

1 Ju. G. Vinogradov, *Pontische Studien. Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte und Epigraphik des Schwarzmeerraumes* (Mainz 1997).

2 Thus, e.g., when describing the Greek colony of Tanais, the author maintains that the city was divided in two different parts, of which one was inhabited by Greeks, the other by barbarians, although the latter cannot be viewed as a proven fact any longer, according to the latest excavation results: S. M. Il'jašenko, "Die Ober- und Unterstadt von Tanais in der hellenistischen und römischen Periode," *Eurasia Antiqua* 11 (2005) at 158.

archaeological research in the context of the history of the North Pontic Greek colonies. The first part (“Histoire du royaume du Bosphore Cimmérien”; 17-110), has one of each. Burgunder’s “Une introduction à l’archéologie du royaume du Bosphore Cimmérien” (17-55) is more historiographic in nature and a good starting point for anyone developing an interest in the archaeology of the N Black Sea region. The reader should not be deterred by the author’s romantic style (e.g., his description of the Black Sea “bound to the Mediterranean by a strait, as a fetus is bound to mother by umbilical cord ...” [17] or by the nostalgic black-and-white photograph on the cover) for he is very familiar with the subject and well aware of inherent problems. At the outset he offers analysis of N Black Sea archaeology as a discipline, with a number of important observations about this field of studies and its reception in the West. First, he points out that the results of many years of archaeological research reach a western audience only in synthesized presentations either by Russian and Ukrainian or by foreign scholars. This results in a pitfall for many western scholars when they base their own research on such publications, almost oblivious to the fact that they are dealing only with conclusions and with the data that someone else has picked out to present. Thus many pieces of information are left “ignored and unrecognized” (18). Secondly, he reminds the reader that, on the one hand, study of the Black Sea has a long history in Russia and Ukraine,³ and, on the other, has acquired “allures encyclopédiques”, having added sciences to the disciplines of ancient history and archaeology (18). Thirdly, he emphasizes that the current state of Black Sea studies has been further complicated by the geopolitical situation and the region’s cultural diversity. The author also maintains that the *Pontus Euxinus* was a rather homogenous entity in antiquity, but this is arguable and subject to confirmation or refutation only after a very thorough and comprehensive study, which remains to be produced. The chapter then continues (19-23) with short biographies of three prominent figures of Swiss origin: Frédéric Dubois de Montperreux, Louis Kolly and Florian Gille. Burgunder’s enthusiasm for the well-recognised rôle his countrymen played in the early development of classical archaeology in Russia is justified. The biographies are full of curious details: e.g., among his many other responsibilities, “Florian Antonovič” Gille was employed as the home teacher for the children of Nicholas I, including young Alexander (future Alexander II), and served as the director of the First Department of the Imperial Hermitage (21). The rest of the chapter (23-45) introduces some of the publications in N Pontic archaeology and epigraphy from the end of the 19th c. to the present. The focus is naturally on monographs and articles accessible to readers having no knowledge of Russian. It includes some information about major Russian and Soviet scholars whose work has shaped the field (25-35), showing that all great scholars of N Pontic archaeology were (and are) fine scholars of classical antiquity in general. Does this have to do with the fact that they always perceived the Black Sea as an integral part of the Greco-Roman world, and studied this region accordingly? This brief survey also shows that in the most recent volumes accessible to western readers the number of contributors tends to be higher, but academic standards are often lower, than in the past (42-45). This can only mean, on the one hand, that the most interesting work of our Russian and Ukrainian colleagues still does not always reach a western audience, and, on the other hand, that when they do, they often arrive over-synthesized and by a “third party”.

“La colonisation grecque du Bosphore Cimmérien” by Ju. A. Vinogradov (57-85) complements Podosinov’s article by covering the earlier period in Bosphoran history, from the end of the 7th/start of the 6th c. B.C., when the first Greek settlements appeared, to the beginning of the rule of the Archaeanactid dynasty in c.480, but the nature of his article is quite different, with a main focus on archaeological material and intended for a reader who is familiar with the region and the general issues of the field. He presents some of the most recent archaeological evidence and offers his opinions on a number of the key questions surrounding the N Black Sea region, adding a complex bibliography with many specialized titles. From the archaeological point of view, the early history of Greek colonies on the N coast of the Black Sea is

3 The monumental publication by I. V. Tunkina on the development of classical archaeology in Russia and archaeological research of the 18th to mid-19th c. alone is a large-format volume of 675 pages: *Russkaja nauka o klassičeskikh drevnostjakh juga Rossii* (Moscow 2012).

difficult, since the early layers are not well preserved at many sites. He mentions several of the important Bosporan Greek cities (including those from later periods), such as Panticapaeum, Theodosia, Phanagoria, Hermonassa, Kepoi, Nymphaeum, Gorgippia and Tanais, as well as the early settlement on the site of Taganrog, but none is discussed in detail (understandably, given the scope of the article). Yet for a number of reasons his choice of focus — on smaller settlements such as Myrmekion and Porthmion, for the foundation of which literary sources provide no information — is interesting. On the basis of recent excavations at Myrmekion, in particular, he proposes (65-66) a possible alternative scenario for the colonization of the region and for the development of Bosporan Greek settlements during their early stage. His model of colonization, which takes into account the specifics of the region, is different from models suggested for other parts of the N Pontic coast.⁴ Another site featured in more detail (73-74) is Artjuščenko-1, identified as a seasonal agricultural settlement. He uses it as an example in his broader discussion of rural settlements and the development of the *chora* of the Bosporan *poleis*. The main focus, however, is on the interaction between the Bosporan Greeks and their barbarian surroundings and, especially, on the relation between the ethnicity of the inhabitants of various settlements and their material culture. He disagrees strongly with scholars who claim that ceramics (in this case, handmade) cannot necessarily be used as ethnicity markers for a population; while he mainly refers to his colleagues in the N Black Sea region (68), the highly debated issue is central to archaeology generally.⁵

Part 2 (“Ecriture de l’histoire antique en Russie et en Asie centrale”) brings us back to the historiography in Russia with three more detailed and more specialized articles. I. L. Tikhonov’s “L’archéologie classique à l’Université de Saint-Petersbourg du XVIII^e siècle à nos jours” (113-50) also serves as a rather extensive “Who’s who” in Russian archaeology, accompanied by many photographs. The reader will recognize some of the names, but the chapter contains plenty of new information and less well-known facts. The author includes the names of archaeologists from St. Petersburg who work in different parts of the region today, showing how much has been done in Black Sea archaeology (and beyond) just by one institution.

C. Meyer’s “Le sacrement scythe. Rostovtzeff, son interprétation de l’art gréco-scythe et l’étude de l’interaction culturelle dans le royaume du Bosphore” (151-82) continues the historiographical discussion begun earlier in the book. The author briefly discusses Bosporan archaeology as a discipline before making a historiographical analysis of the ideas presented by M. Rostovtzeff in *Iranians and the Greeks* (Oxford 1922) and its predecessor *Ellinstvo i iranstvo na jube Rossii* (1918). Meyer outlines Rostovtzeff’s views on Bosporan art and religion and on cultural interactions in the region within the context of the Russian historiographical tradition and contemporary political events. Detecting teleological tendencies in Rostovtzeff’s interpretation of “Greco-Scythian” art (in particular, representations of “communion” scenes in metalwork), he maintains that Rostovtzeff’s inferences about some aspects of Bosporan religion and society do not correspond to the reality of the Bosporan kingdom. Meyer’s own methodological reasoning works for most of the discussion but becomes less convincing when applied to one particular piece of Greco-Scythian toreutics. The focus of Rostovtzeff’s argument (and of Meyer’s counterargument) is the scene depicted on a gold plaque found in the late 19th c. in the Karagodeuashkh kurgan of the Bosphorus’ Asiatic part. Broadly dated to the 4th c. B.C., the

4 For the most recent one, see A. V. Bujskikh, “O grečeskoj kolonizacii Severo-Zapadnogo Prichernomor’ja,” *Vestnik Drevnei Istorii* 1 (2013) 22-39.

5 Vinogradov mostly refers to publications by his Ukrainian colleagues, in particular to the article by S. B. Bujskikh in D. Braund and S. D. Kryzhitskiy (edd.), *Classical Olbia and the Scythian world* (New York 2007) 23-35. Bujskikh’s opinion is supported by Kryzhitskiy (ibid. 17-22). Their argument concerns not only the ceramics but demonstrates a more general approach to the issue of correlation between archaeological data and ethnicity: they maintain that any single category of artifacts (e.g., pottery) cannot be used as evidence for the presence of a certain ethnic group in a population unless supported by other archaeological finds. I have commented on this issue in general, and on the approach used by archaeologists working in the NW part of the Black Sea in particular, in my review in *JRA* 22 (2009) at 727-29. See also Caspar 153 no. 2 in the volume under review.

plaque, part of an elaborate headdress, was discovered in a female burial along with other artifacts. Rostovtzeff interpreted the representation in the lower register as a “communion” scene, identifying the central figure as the supreme goddess of the Bosporan pantheon (157). Meyer, on the other hand, argues that the scene is not of a theological character and that all of the figures depicted represent humans; he also maintains (171-72) that most modern scholars follow Rostovtzeff. One of these statements still requires verification, while the other is not entirely accurate. First, although many scholars do indeed see in the female figure a representation of a goddess, their identifications of the deity and interpretations of the scene differ significantly from Rostovtzeff’s and from each other’s.⁶ Secondly, many scholars base their conclusions on the archaeological context (the nature of the object on which the scene was embossed, on the other parts of the same headdress set, the burial goods) and on an iconographical analysis of the scene (which includes the height of the seated female, her attire, the symbolic decoration of the spaces separating the three registers, comparisons to other objects of Greco-Scythian art, and so on). In other words, their arguments for their respective cases differ from the reasoning used by Rostovtzeff. Although the female figure in the lower register does not have to be a deity, it could still be one. But quite a few scholars who have written after Rostovtzeff suggest that this figure can represent a woman, not a deity. As a result, they offer several alternative interpretations,⁷ with one scholar even describing its style as “ethnographical realism”.⁸ Lastly, the information about Bosporan cult places and religious practices that Meyer extracts (173) from the decoration of the Karagodeuashkh plate, based on his own interpretation of the scenes, requires further consideration since he does not provide references to archaeological evidence from the region that would corroborate his inferences, and he seems to be using the very approach for which Rostovtzeff has been criticized.

S. Gorshenina’s “L’archéologie russe en Asie centrale en situation coloniale: quelques approches” (181-219) is also concerned with the historiography of Russian and Soviet archaeology but she focuses instead on Central Asia. She analyzes the field’s development in pre-revolutionary (pre-1917) and later Russia from the postcolonial perspective and discusses related issues in modern Russian and Soviet historiography. Although the chapter does not fit with the rest of the book in terms of its geographical scope, it does raise questions that are pertinent to the historiography of archaeology as a discipline. She notes (184, 195) that contemporary scholars in Russia rarely use a postcolonial approach, whereas their western colleagues consider the postcolonial critique a pressing issue. In fact, her observation about the application of this approach reflects the field as a whole: Russian scholarship generally does not often use theoretical approaches of any kind, and historiographical studies tend to be a “documented narrative” carefully assembled on the basis of archival and bibliographical research (of which the article by Tikhonov in the present volume is a good example), rather than a “deconstructing analysis” of historiographical material. Each of the two styles has its own advantages, nor do they have to be mutually exclusive; moreover, the new generation of Russian and Ukrainian archaeologists working in or on the N Black Sea region is now turning its attention to theoretical aspects of historiographical research.⁹

6 For some of the interpretations and identifications, see, e.g., I. Ju. Šaub, *Mif, kult, ritual v Severnom Pričernomor’e (VII-IV vv. do n. è.)* (St. Petersburg 2007) 84-85 and 100-1. In his analysis of modern scholarship, Meyer seems to rely (171 no. 42) on the discussion and bibliography provided by Y. Ustinova in *The supreme gods of the Bosporan kingdom: celestial Aphrodite and the Most High God* (1999), but Ustinova’s bibliography was neither complete nor is it up-to-date.

7 A. P. Mancevič, “O plastine iz kurgana Karagodeuashkh,” *Arkheologičeskij sbornik Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha* 6 (1964) 128-38; E. A. Savostina, “Tema nadgrobnog stely iz Trjokhbratnogo kurgana v kontekste antichnogo mifa,” *Istoriko-arkheologičeskij al’manakh* 1 (1995); M. Ju. Vakhtina, “O kompozicii na zolotoj treugol’noj plastine iz ženskogo pogrebenija kurgana Karagodeuashkh,” in I. I. Marčenko (ed.), *Pjataja Kubanskaja arkheologičeskaja konferencija. Materialy konferencii* (Krasnodar 2009) 39-43.

8 Vakhtina *ibid.* 40.

9 A recent example is the brilliant article by V. Mordvinsteva, “The Sarmatians: the creation of archaeological evidence,” *OJA* 32 (2012) 203-19.

Part 3 (“Sites archéologiques du bassin pontique”), written more for specialists than for a general audience (although even the shorter articles include an introduction to their sites), contains four articles presenting archaeological work at particular sites. Berezan, Olbia and Histria represent the NW and W coasts of the Black Sea, thereby complementing the earlier articles on the Bosporan kingdom. D. E. Čistov’s “La Borysthène archaïque (site de l’île de Bérézan)” (223-60) focuses on the site of the earliest Greek settlement along the N coast, on the island of Berezan (Ukraine). The most recent archaeological investigations shed new light on the long-debated question of the nature of this early settlement, the date of its foundation, the emergence of its early urban structure, and its relations with the city of Olbia. Olbia itself is the subject of V. V. Krapivina (261-78); sadly she has now died, so this will be one of her last publications, presenting the results of her work from 2006 to 2010.¹⁰ They will be probably be most interesting for those who have some background knowledge of the site — indeed, Olbia is among the few sites in the region that are well published, not only in Russian and Ukrainian but in many European languages. The same is true of Histria (Romania), the site of the earliest Greek settlement on the Black Sea’s W coast, founded, like Borysthènes, by Milesian colonists and at about the same time. A. Avram’s “Fouilles récentes dans la zone sacrée d’Istros” (279-310) focuses on the development of its sacred zone from the earliest period to the 1st c. B.C. It includes information about past work and a detailed discussion (287-305) of the most recent (1990-2009) discoveries. V. F. Stolba’s “La vie rurale en Crimée antique: Panskoe et ses environs” (311-64) offers a broad overview of a rural settlement belonging to the greater *chora* of Chersonesos (Ukraine). Unlike the other sites discussed, Panskoe lies in the NW Crimea (which, along with the Bosphorus and NW coast, was certainly a major part of the N Pontic region); further, it is the only rural site to be featured in the book in such detail. At the same time, to appreciate all the information fully one needs some degree of familiarity with the Crimea, and with Chersonesos in particular.

The book is diverse both in terms of its contents and style, but in this particular case the diversity seems to be working to its advantage, assuring that different readers with different backgrounds, all having a shared interest in Pontic archaeology but no knowledge of the original languages of publication, can benefit. And that, after all, was the goal, stated from the very outset. In many senses, however, this is still “Pontic Studies 101”, and if one really wants to move to the next level, to appreciate all the discussions, to formulate one’s own opinion on controversial topics or to get to the bottom of the arguments, one has no choice but to learn the “Black Sea languages”: Russian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Turkish, and Georgian.

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10 V. V. Krapivina was in charge of the excavations from 1995 to 2010; in 2011 A. V. Bujskikh, Krapivina’s long-time colleague, became director.