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THE ROMAN MILITARY PRESENCE ON THE BEREZAN ISLAND

In the article, some categories of items found at Berezan island and testifying the Roman military presence are discussed. The proposal for accommodation of Roman troops units on the island are confirmed in the form of: architectural remains, some types of amphorae, a bronze eagle, medical instruments, numismatic material and Roman military ammunition.

Key words: Berezan island, Olbia, Roman troops, fleet, ammunition.

The study of the Roman military presence in the Lower Buh region covers several key settlements of the first centuries of the new era, among which, due to the strategic location, is Berezan island (Fig. 1). At one time, it was suggested that in the Roman period there were guard posts of Olbian citizens (Буйских 1991, с. 56), or Roman troops. However, until recently, excavations on the island haven't provided reliable data that could confirm this hypothesis, and those materials that could indirectly testify to this were not introduced into scientific circulation.

At the beginning of the XX century during excavations at Berezan island, a bronze figurine of an eagle was found (Колесниченко 2017, с. 167-170). Along with it were found: a bronze key, a bronze necklace, gold earrings, fragments of ceramic dishes and a glass cup with the inscription «ΕΥΦΡΑΙΝΟΥ ΕΦΩ ΠΑΡΕΙ», analogies to which are known, in particular, in Roman camps (Колесниченко, Савельев 2015, с. 41-43). According to the dating of the glass vessel, the complex was assigned to the 1st century AD, which correlates with the find at the island of the same glass item fragment in combination with the denarius of the emperor Vespasian (69—79 AD). The dating of the bronze eagle and its presence on the island is associated with the campaign of T. Plautius Silvanus to Chersonesos (Колесниченко 2017, с. 170).

Similar bronze figurines are known from excavations of settlements and military camps along the Roman limes (e. g.: Dragomir 1983, s. 45-46; Deschler-Erb 1999, S. 62, Abb. 65; Bondoc, Dinkă 2003, p. 20; Vega 2007, p. 476; Bondoc 2011, p. 245-254; Gencheva 2013, p. 90, no. 237-238)¹, and are generally associated with the Roman military presence. A series of bronze eagles comes from the Roman fortification Barboși, near the crossing at the confluence of the Danube and Siret Rivers (Ștefan 1938, p. 345, fig. 6; Dragomir 1983, p. 63-68; Paraschiv-Grigore 2017, p. 118), a few kilometers to the east of which is the Galați fort. Probably, these fortresses appeared as a result of the activity of T. Plautius Silvanus in the North-Western Black Sea region (CIL XIV 3608). They could be strongholds for the exodus of Roman troops to the north from the Danube River, towards Tyras, Olbia and Chersonesos. Both fortresses are identical in size to the Roman camp Didova Khata III (Буйских 1991, с. 67), and the two internal fortifications of the Roman fort Kamianka V (Козленко 2016, с. 80-82), located on the northern and north-western border of the Olbian state.

In the Northern Black Sea region, a bronze eagle with outstretched wings comes from Panticapaeum (Колобов 2004, с. 18-22), where, due to epigraphic and archaeological data, the Roman military presence is known (Treister 1995, p. 157-181), in particular, the Roman fleet (Сапрыкин, Ермолин 2010, с. 72-84). A silver eagle of Roman times is recorded in Taurica, in a sanctuary near the Gurzufske Siedlo pass (Новиченкова 1998, с. 58-59, рис. 8), the complex of which is dated by the 1st century AD. It is interpreted as a detail of the military badge of a Roman unit, or as an element of decorating furniture or utensils (Трейстер 1992, с. 109; see i. e.: Galili, Rosen, Sharvit 2010, p. 101).

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¹ The images of eagles on Roman military ammunition are widely known (e. g.: Ulbert 1959, Taf. 16, 10; Bishop, Coulston 1993, p. 116, fig. 77: 2; p. 129, fig. 88: 1, 3; p. 142, fig. 100, 3; p. 150, fig. 106: 2; p. 158, fig. 114: 3; Deschler-Erb 1999, S. 62, Abb. 66; S. 167, no. 551; D'Amato, Sumner 2009, p. 93, fig. 85).

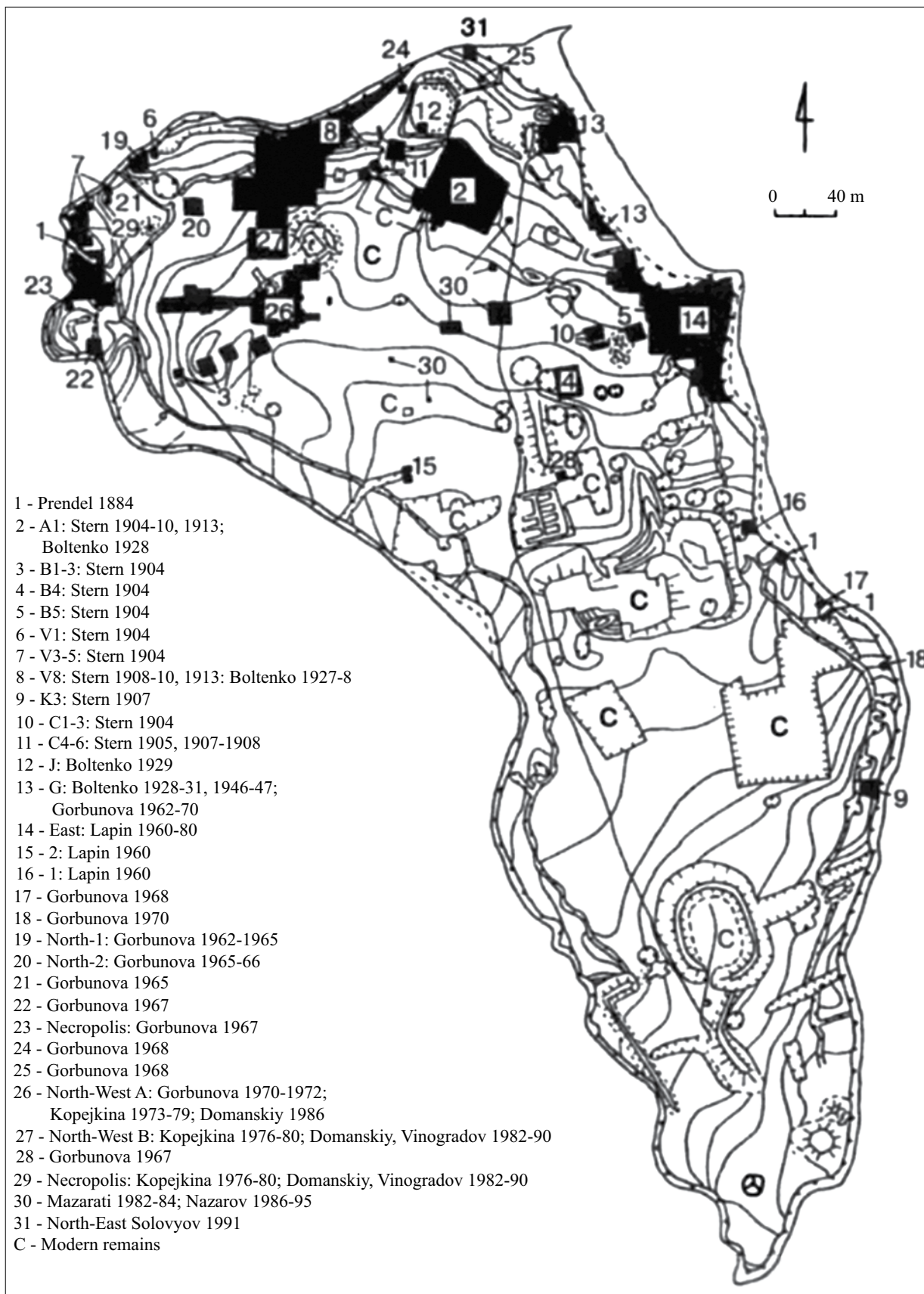


Fig. 1. Plan of the Berezan island (Solovyov 1999, p. 16, fig. 6)

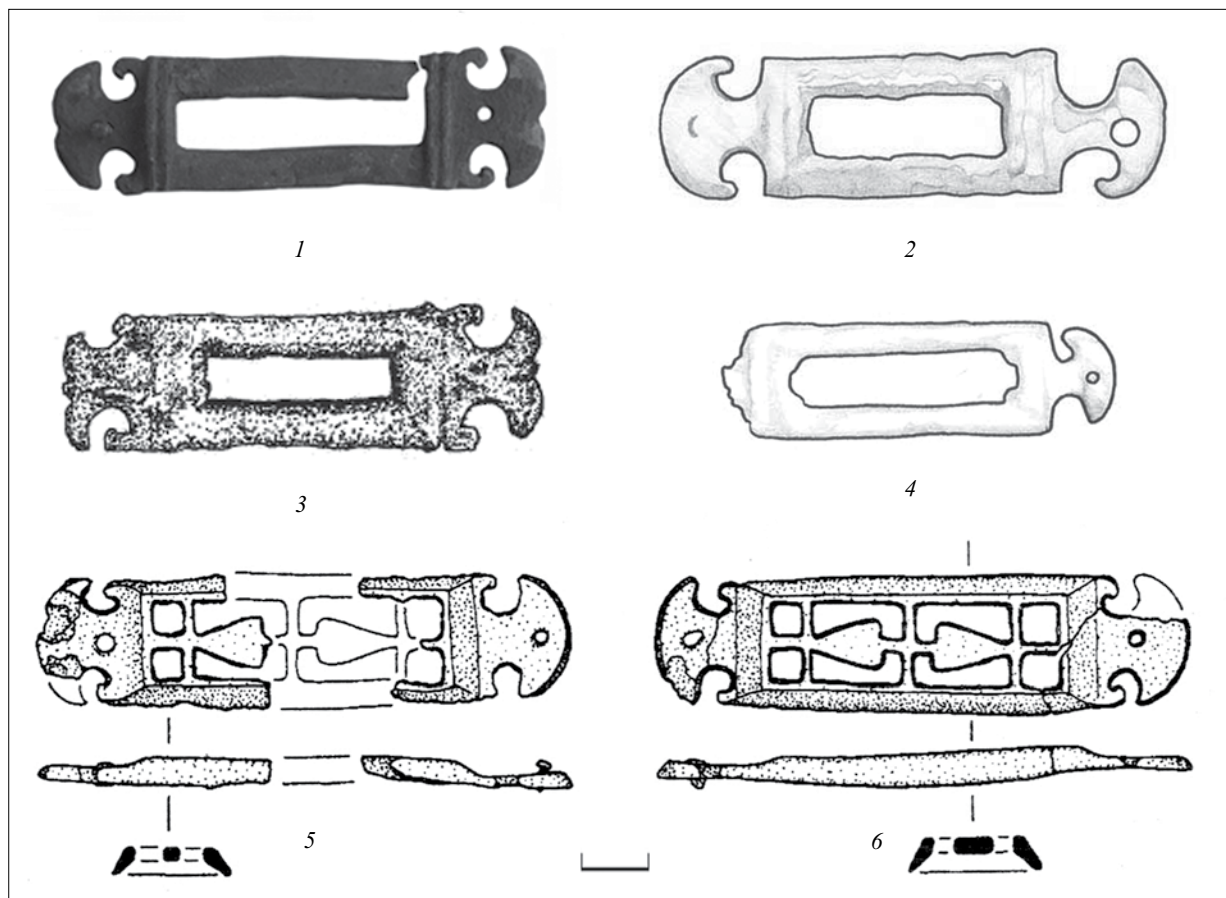


Fig. 2. Roman belt straps: 1 — Berezan island; 2—3 — Viminacium (Redžić 2013, T. XLVII—XLVIII: 435, 439); 4 — Singidunum (Redžić 2013, T. XLVIII: 441); 5—6 — Chersonesos (Костромичев 2011, с. 56, рис. 23: 1—2)

Another silver eagle was found in the Upper City of Olbia (Новиченкова, Буйських 2019, с. 353, 359, рис. 2: 5), and can be dated by the second half of the 2nd — early 3rd centuries AD. The terracotta eagle was found in Olbia, in the building of the praetorium of the second half of the 2nd — first half of the 3rd centuries AD (Верштейн 1967, с. 136-137). A series of terracotta eagles with outstretched wings were found in the premises adjacent to the Roman barracks in the Lower City of Olbia (Козленко 2021а, с. 369). It is possible that such metal figurines and terracotta eagles (*Aquila Romana*), imitated Roman military pommels (see, for example: Durham 2013, p. 100; Vladkova 2009, s. 334-339)².

Bronze eagles with such parameters are known from the Roman provinces, and are also interpreted as the Roman standards pommels (e. g.: Vega 2007, s. 476; Vladkova 2009, s. 334-339). However, given the diversity of opinions regarding the

purpose of metal³, marble and ceramic figurines of eagles (see, for example: Колобов 2004, с. 18-19; Bondoc 2011, p. 253-254), one should agree that their interpretation depends on each case from the context of the find itself (Treister 1995, p. 158). It is possible that the bronze eagle from Berezan island must be dated by the second half of the 2nd — first half of the 3rd centuries AD, since all the terracotta and metal eagles of the Roman time from Olbia are dated by the time when the stationary Roman garrison was in the city⁴.

Together with the figurine of an eagle, a bronze key was found (Колесниченко 2017, с. 169). Bronze keys and locking devices of the

² Together with items of Roman weapons and equipment, a bronze eagle figurine was found at Vani hill-fort, near the fortress gates (Лордкипанидзе 1970, с. 33, рис. 2).

³ Silver eagle-pommels of military standards were used in the Byzantine state, with identical iconography of Roman times. On the territory of Ukraine, the find of such an eagle is known in the Voznesensk treasure, at Khortytsia island (Грінченко 1950, с. 45-49; Білецький, Шаповалов 2014, с. 290-291). A silver figurine of an eagle of a Roman vessel handle is known from excavations at Ust-Alma necropolis (Пуздоровский 2007, рис. 110: 16).

⁴ A bronze eagle figurine from Berezan island was found in a pit at a deeper level than a glass cup (Колесниченко 2017, с. 167).

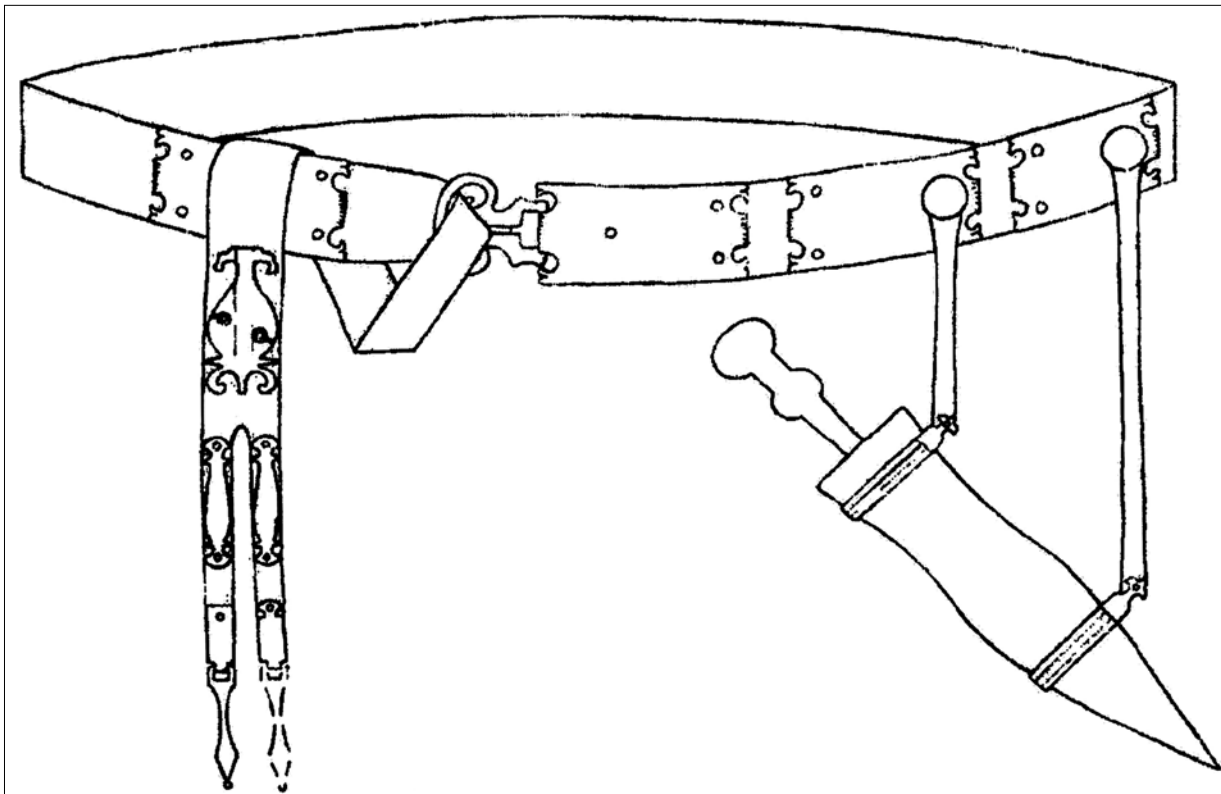


Fig. 3. Reconstruction of the Roman soldier's belt set from a burial in the necropolis of Chersonesos (Костромичев 2005, с. 118, рис. 11)

Roman type are known in Olbia and Berezan island (Solovyov 1999, p. 125, fig. 115). One of these keys was found near the gates of the Roman citadel, during excavations of the northern defensive wall (Крыжицкий, Хмелевский, Дятроптов 2007, с. 55, табл. 26: 4), in a complex with a fragment of Roman ammunition from the second half of the 1st — early 2nd centuries AD. Such items were widely used in Roman camps (Ulbert 1959, Taf. 66: 1, 4; Rendell et al. 1986, p. 72, fig. 5.4, 3183; Grummy 1995, p. 84, fig. 89; 134, fig. 136: 4136; Tudor et al. 2011, pl. LXIX: 360; Dieudonné-Glad, Feugère, Önal 2013, p. 138, no. 711), and they could have appeared in Olbia with the personnel of the Roman garrison.

During the excavations at Berezan island, Roman coins were found (Назаров 2006, с. 173; Колесниченко 2017, с. 169; Смирнов 2018, с. 102-104), which may be associated with the presence of Roman troops (from references: Козленко 2021b, с. 197-205), since the payment to the Roman military personnel was carried out with denarii. In favour of the Roman military presence in the region, Roman coins and tesseræ found at the Tendra Spit (Tunkina 2007, p. 231-239), and at Levka island (Абрамзон, Тункина 2018, с. 56, 80, 82), where the military presence of units of the Legio V Macedonica and the The Flavian Fleet of

Moesia was evidenced by the stamps on the tiles (Охотников 1996, с. 51).

From the excavations at Berezan island, there are fragments of Kapitän II amphorae types (Solovyov 1999, p. 123, fig. 112: 4; Masyuta 2021, p. 92, 103, fig. 5: 3—5), which are dated by the second half of the 2nd — first half of the 3rd centuries AD (Kapitän 1972, p. 243-252), and are typical for the material culture of the Roman camps (Dyczek 2010, p. 993-999; Bondoc 2014, p. 109-110, fig. 12). In Olbia, early types of the Kapitän II amphorae are known from the excavations of the citadel (Krapivina 2010, p. 71, pl. I, 40; III, 3), and the flooded part of the Lower City (Krapivina 2007, p. 626, fig. 17), where the barracks of the Roman garrison were located (Козленко 2021a, с. 364-374). In addition, Roman medical instruments were found at the island during archaeological research (Solovyov 1999, p. 126, fig. 116), the finds of which may also indicate a military presence (from the references: Козленко 2021a, с. 373).

In 2019, at the North-Western part of Berezan island, in the area of the «А» site⁵, a Roman belt

⁵ I express my gratitude for the information to one of the authors of the find — the head of the Black Sea International Underwater Archaeological Expedition of the Institute of Archaeology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Junior Research Fellow V. Ye. Herasymov.



Fig. 4. Bronze object from excavations of building CK-8 at the Berezan island (Назаров 1990, табл. 16)

open-work strap with an internal rectangular cutout was found (Fig. 2: 1), which belongs to the elements of a military harness set (Fig. 3)⁶. The ends of the strap have semicircular edges. At the bases of the edges there are figured cutouts in the shape of volutes. It was attached to the belt with the help of small holes on the side ledges, with two small nails, one of which has been preserved. In the Northern Black Sea region, straps of these types, with a cut-out ornament in the middle part in the *opus interrasile* style (Fig. 2: 5—6), are known as parts of belt sets at Chersonesos necropolis (Костромичев 2005, с. 96-98, 111, рис. 2, 7—8; 2011, с. 55-56, рис. 23: 1—2). Stylistic analogies to it are also known from the northern part of Chersonesos (Костромичев 2011, с. 61, рис. 27: 8; 67, 136). The belt strap of this type, with a pattern in the inner part, is known from Olbia (Уваров 1851, с. 123,

⁶ The item is stored in the funds of the Mykolaiv Regional Local History Museum.

табл. XVI: 7), and has analogies at the territory of the Roman *limes* (Redžić 2013, T. L: 477).

Along the Roman *limes*, analogies to the straps come from Roman fortresses on the Danube (Petculescu 1995, p. 134-137; Црнобрња, Крунић 1997, с. 283, 467; с. 293: 505; Redžić 2013, T. XLVIII: 439-441; Hoss 2017, p. 94, fig. 14, a—b), on the Rhine (Oldenstein 1976, Taf. 65: 832), in Dacia (Ciugudean 2017, p. 345-346), and in the Middle East (James 2004, p. 80-81, figs. 38, 84—85, 89). There is an assumption that some types of such items could be produced in Dacia (Ciugudean 2017, p. 345). In general, they are dated by the second half of the 2nd century AD. Certain variants of straps of this type are dated by 150—180 AD (Ciugudean 2017, p. 346). Thus, this find reliably testifies to the Roman military presence at Berezan island.

In this regard, it should be noted that with the Roman military presence at Berezan island can be associated the rectangular structure of the first centuries AD, explored by V. V. Nazarov at the «P-1B» site (Назаров 1990, с. 1; 1991, с. 1; Назаров, Виноградов 1991, с. 6-12; Буйських 2021, с. 23). The room (building CK-8) is 11.25 × 8.00 m in size, has a rectangular shape, is oriented along the north-east and south-west axis, with blockages of stones in the inner part, formed as a result of the destruction of the western and eastern walls of the building (Назаров 2006, с. 176, рис. 2). The masonries of three walls of the building were discovered — southern, eastern and western. No remains of the northern wall were found, which allowed the researchers to assume that a wooden gate could be located at the northern side (Назаров, Виноградов 1991, с. 9). Fragments of amphorae of the 2nd—3rd centuries AD were found in its filling, red-slip pottery, glassware and a bronze coin of emperor Septimius Severus (193—211 AD) (Назаров 1990, с. 3; 2006, с. 173)⁷, as well as a bronze belt strap (Fig. 4), which has analogies among the elements of Roman belt ammunition (for example: Redžić 2013, T. LXXVIII—LXXIX: 968, 979), or it can be a detail of a bronze vessel.

Another architectural structure of the Roman time at Berezan island was excavated in 1962 under the head of K. S. Horbunova at the «Г» site, in the

⁷ Materials of the second half of the 2nd — third quarter of the 3rd centuries AD were found at the «O» site (Новоселова 2012, с. 115-119), in the north-eastern part of the island. From the excavations at Berezan originates red-slip figured ware of the first half of the 3rd century AD (Solovyov 1999, p. 125, fig. 114), as well as Roman hinged fibulae and other metal objects of the Roman period (Solovyov 1999, p. 125, fig. 115).

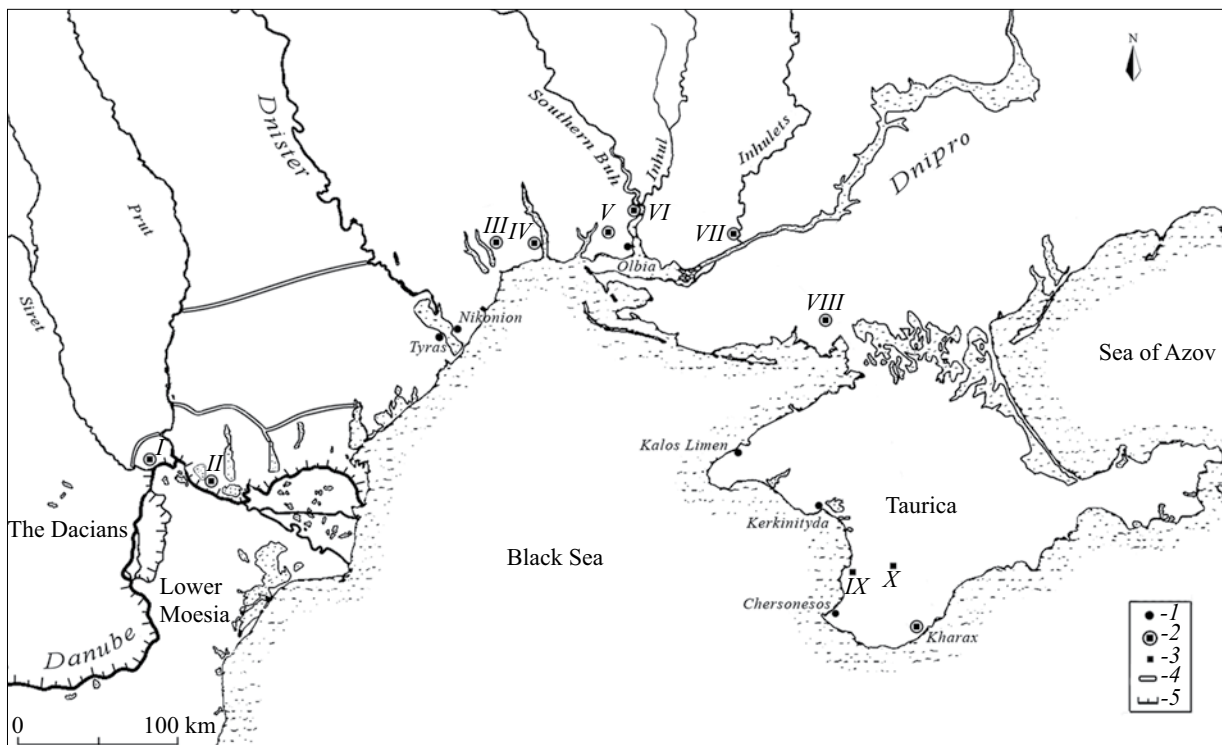


Fig. 5. Map of the Northern Black Sea region in the Roman period: 1 — cities; 2 — Roman forts (I — Galați; II — Orlovka; III — prospective fort Shevchenkove II; IV — Tyshkivka; V — Kamianka V; VI — Didova Khata III; VII — Dar'ivka; VIII — prospective fort near Myrne village); 3 — hill-forts with traces of the Roman military presence in the second half of the 1st century AD (IX — Ust-Alma hill-fort; X — Alma-Kermen hill-fort); 4 — shafts; 5 — borders of Lower Moesia province at the end of the 1st century AD

northern part of the island, opposite the sandy spit that at that time connected the peninsula with the mainland. The building with basements dated by the second half of the 2nd — third quarter of the 3rd centuries AD, — during the stay of the Roman troops in Olbia — was destroyed by fire (Новоселова 2012, с. 119). It is worth noting that in the Upper City of Olbia, the basements of the Roman period are typical for structures associated with the Roman garrison (Вештгейн 1967, с. 134-137), which also suffered as a result of the Gothic invasion in AD 269—270 AD (Кривина 2007, р. 608).

The Roman military presence in the Lower Buh region is recorded from the second half of the 1st century AD, when the Roman field camps (*castrum*) of Didova Khata III, Kamianka V, and Dar'ivka were erected on the northern and north-western borders of the Olbian state that were built with the direct participation of auxiliary units of the Roman army (Козленко 2016, с. 80-84). The material found at these monuments indicates the date of their erection during the campaign of the governor of the province of Moesia, T. Plautius Silvanus Aelianus, to Chersonesos, besieged by the Scythians, «beyond Borysthenes» (CIL XIV 3608). It seems quite reasonable to conclude that the

campaign led by T. Plautius Silvanus Aelianus to Taurica was carried out in combination: by the sea (Зубар 1988, с. 19-27) and by land (Дьяков 1941, с. 92; Воронятов 2013, с. 158), as a result of which the Berezan island could be used as a strong transshipment point (Fig. 5).

In the middle of the 2nd century AD, in connection with the invasion of the «Tauri-Scythians», the emperor Antoninus Pius (138—161 AD) introduced the Roman garrison into Olbia (SHA. Ant. Pius. IX, 9). Together with Legio I Italica, V Macedonica, XI Claudia units, of which the Roman vexillation consisted (Постовцев 1915, с. 7-14; IOSPE I² 322), detachments of the Classis Flavia Moesica were based in the city, which is evidenced by the Roman military diploma issued to a sailor in 157 AD (Ivantchik, Krapivina 2007, р. 219-242)⁸. Quite likely, Berezan island, like Olbia, was used by the Roman troops as a stronghold of the naval fleet in the waters of the Dniipro-Buh estuary. In addition, most of

⁸ The presence of Roman naval units in the ancient centres of the Northern Black Sea region is attested by a series of epigraphic finds (Карышковский 1979, с. 87; Соломоник 1983, № 6—7, 9, 18, 26, 34).



Fig. 6. Map of the Lower Buh region of the first centuries AD: 1 — hill-forts (I — Dnirovske II; II — Petukhivka II; III — Ochakiv; IV — Mys; VI — Kozyrka I; VII — Stara Bohdanivka I; VIII — Radsad I; X — Popova Balka; XII — Semeniv Rih; XIII — Skelka; XIV — Stanislav; XV — Zoloty Mys; XVIII — Staroflotski Barracks); 2 — forts (V — Chortuvate; IX — Didova Khata III; XI — Siversiv Maiak; XVI — Ostrivka; XVII — Kamianka V)

the Roman settlements around Olbia are located precisely along the coastline (Fig. 6).

It should also be noted that in the inscription of the 180's AD from Africa with the *cursus honorum* of T. Plautius Ferruntianus (CIL VIII 619), where he is called: «*trib(unus) milit(um) leg(ionis) I Italicae, praepositus vexillationibus Ponticis apud Scythia(m) et Tauricam*», it may imply Pontic vexillatio, which were stationed at the coasts of Olbia and Chersonesos (Ростовцев 1900, с. 144; Беляев 1968, с. 127-137; Соломоник 1973, с. 144; Sarnowski 1987, s. 72, 77).

An important evidence in favour of the existence of Roman land and sea routes in the North-Western Black Sea region is the itinerary on the Roman shield from Dura-Europos, which is dated by 230—260 AD (Cumont 1926, p. 323-327; from the references: Подосинов 2002, с. 77-99). The map shows the road from Moesia Inferior to Taurica (Fig. 7). Along this path, in the form of stone fortresses, the ancient centres of the Northern Black Sea region are marked, among which is Βορυσθηνης, that is, Olbia, or Berezan island.

The roads of the Lower Moesian part of the itinerarium are reliably attested by the Tabula Peutingeriana. Archaeologically the area from the Danube to the Dniester is traced. From the Danube delta the road passed along the upper reaches of the estuaries, through Perekop, along the coast of the Crimean Peninsula. In the Crimea, its remains have been traced in the passes near the Roman fortress of Charax (Ростовцев 1900, с. 123). Thus, the itinerary from Dura-Europos confirms the existence of an overland section of the route from Moesia Inferior to Taurica. Based on this map, the significance of this route as a *via militaris* is obvious, since it shows allied strongholds of Rome, which had ports and fortifications (Буйских 1991, с. 139). It is difficult to establish the exact location of this road, but, probably, Roman field camps at the river crossings mark its route: Kamianka V, Didova Khata III and Dar'ivka.

Judging by the location of the forts near the crossings on the Lower Danube, the road crossed the river deltas in the narrowest places (Сапожников 2017, с. 219), and could go along the upper

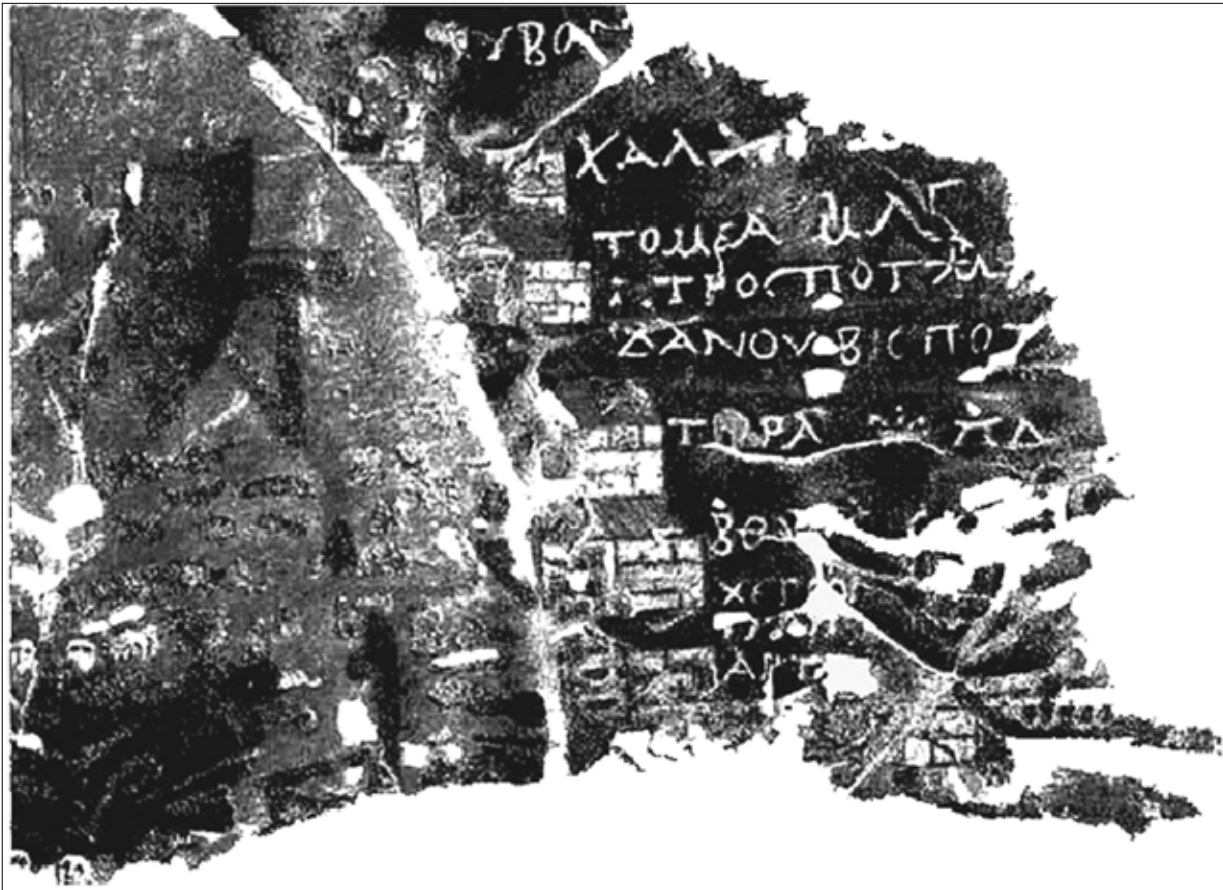


Fig. 7. Itinerarius from Dura-Europos (Cumont 1926, pl. CIX)

reaches of the estuaries. Some fortified points could be connected with it by branches. A number of observations suggest an ancient road through Perekop⁹. The distance between Perekop and the camp near Dar'ivka village is equal to a daytime soldier's forced march. Probably, this path originated in the 1st century AD, and connected the cities and Roman fortresses on the Lower Danube (Булкин 1997, с. 286). These roads, most likely, simultaneously served as trade routes, which may testify in favour of the existence in the Roman period of an extensive system of transshipment points between Tyras and Olbia, both along the land and sea routes.

At the Berezan island, no epigraphic monuments have been found yet that would reliably testify to the stationary presence of Roman troops. However, a series of objects found, typical for the material culture of the Roman garrison in Olbia, and Roman camps on the Danube, directly indicates the Roman military presence at Berezan island. A small number of things related to the presence of Roman troops on the island may indicate the

situational nature of their stay, or the small number of the military contingent, whose main task was to control the waters of the Dnipro-Buh estuary and the coastal sea zone.

Thus, the assumption regarding the Roman troops placement on the Berezan island is confirmed in the form of the following: architectural structures, some types of amphorae, a bronze eagle, numismatic material and Roman military ammunition. Convenient geographic location of the island provided control over a significant continental strip of land, and the entry of ships into the Dnipro-Buh and Berezan estuaries. In this context, the placement of the Roman garrison barracks in the second half of the 2nd — first half of the 3rd centuries AD looks indicative in the Lower City of Olbia (Козленко 2021a, с. 364-374) that was due to the need to ensure control over the port part of the city. Against this background, the strategic role of the sea area within the framework of the Roman military presence in the Northern Black Sea region looks obvious, since namely by the sea the provisions were delivered, troops were transferred and military units were provided.

⁹ In the Middle Ages, the overland road to Taurica, through Perekop, is attested in the sources (Constant. Porphyry. De adm. imp., 11).

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РИМСЬКА ВІЙСЬКОВА ПРИСУТНІСТЬ НА О. БЕРЕЗАНЬ

Розглянуто окремі категорії речей, що свідчать на користь римської військової присутності на о. Березань. З нею можуть бути також пов'язані дві архітектурні споруди перших сторіч нової ери, одна з яких мала підвальні приміщення, що характерно для будівель у Верхньому місті Ольвії, пов'язаних із римською залогою. У їх заповненні було виявлено фрагменти амфор II—III ст. н. е., а також червонолаковий та скляний посуд. 2019 р. на о. Березань, в районі ділянки «Північно-Західний А» було знайдено римську поясну ажурну накладку, що належить до елементів військового портупейного набору і датується другою половиною II ст. н. е. У Північному Причорномор'ї накладки цих типів відомі у складі солдатських поясних наборів на некрополі Херсонеса. Уздовж лімесу аналогії цій накладці походять із римських фортець на Дунаї. Незважаючи на те що на о. Березань досі не знайдено епіграфічних пам'яток, які б надійно свідчили про стаціонарну присутність римських військ, серія знайдених на Березані предметів, притаманних матеріальній культурі римського гарнізону в Ольвії та римським таборам на Дунаї, безпосередньо вказує на римську військову присутність.

Припущення стосовно розташування на о. Березань римських військових загонів знаходить підтвердження у вигляді архітектурних споруд, деяких типів амфор, бронзового орла, медичних інструментів, нумізматичного матеріалу та римської військової амуніції. Невелика кількість речей, пов'язаних із перебуванням на острові римських військ, може свідчити про ситуативний характер їх перебування або нечисельність військового контингенту, головним завданням якого був контроль над акваторією Дніпро-Бузького лиману та прибережною морською ділянкою.

К л ю ч о в і с л о в а: о. Березань, Ольвія, римські війська, флот, амуніція.

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РИМСКОЕ ВОЕННОЕ ПРИСУТСТВИЕ НА О. БЕРЕЗАНЬ

В статье рассматриваются некоторые категории вещей, которые свидетельствуют о римском военном присутствии на о. Березань. С ним могут быть также связаны два архитектурных сооружения первых веков новой эры, одно из которых имело подвальные помещения, что характерно для зданий в Верхнем городе Ольвии, связанных с римским гарнизоном. В их заполнении были обнаружены фрагменты амфор II—III вв. н. э., а также краснолаковая и стеклянная посуда. В 2019 г. на о. Березань, в районе участка «Северо-Западный А» была найдена римская поясная ажурная накладка, которая относится к элементам военного портупейного набора и датируется второй половиной II в. н. э. В Северном Причерноморье накладки данных типов известны в составе солдатских поясных наборов на некрополе Херсонеса. Вдоль лимеса аналогии накладке происходят из римских крепостей на Дунае. Несмотря на то что на о. Березань до сих пор не найдено эпиграфических памятников, которые надежно бы свидетельствовали о стационарном присутствии римских войск, серия найденных на Березани предметов, характерных для материальной культуры римского гарнизона в Ольвии и римских лагерей на Дунае, непосредственно указывает на римское военное присутствие. Предположение относительно размещения на о. Березань римских военных отрядов находит подтверждение в виде архитектурных сооружений, некоторых типов амфор, бронзового орла, медицинских инструментов, нумизматического материала и римской военной амуниции. Небольшое количество вещей, связанных с пребыванием на острове римских войск, может свидетельствовать о ситуативном характере их пребывания или немногочисленности военного контингента, главной задачей которого был контроль над акваторией Днепро-Бугского лимана и прибрежной морской зоной.

К л ю ч е в ы е с л о в а: о. Березань, Ольвия, римские войска, флот, амуниция.

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