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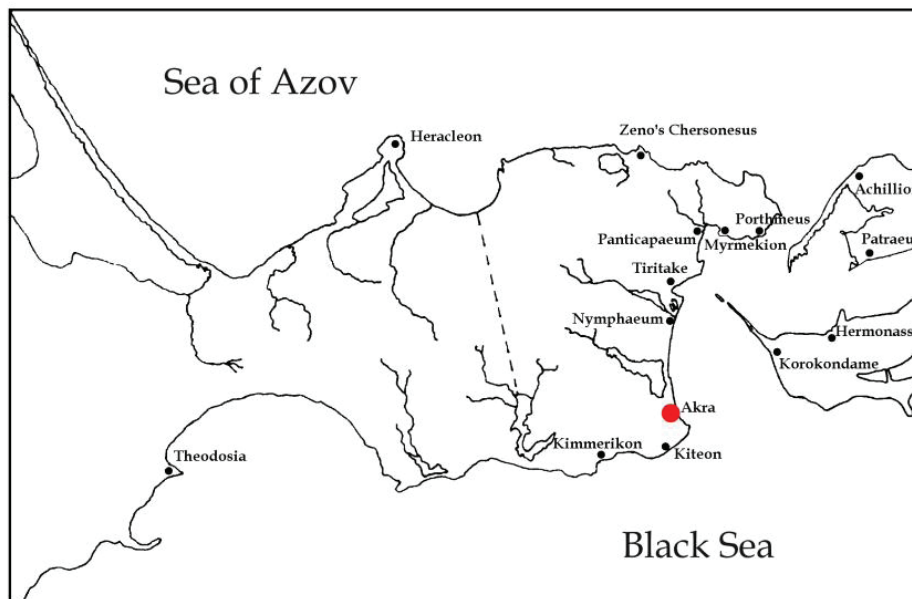
Underwater Archaeological Project at the Ancient City Akra in 2013 (Eastern Crimea)

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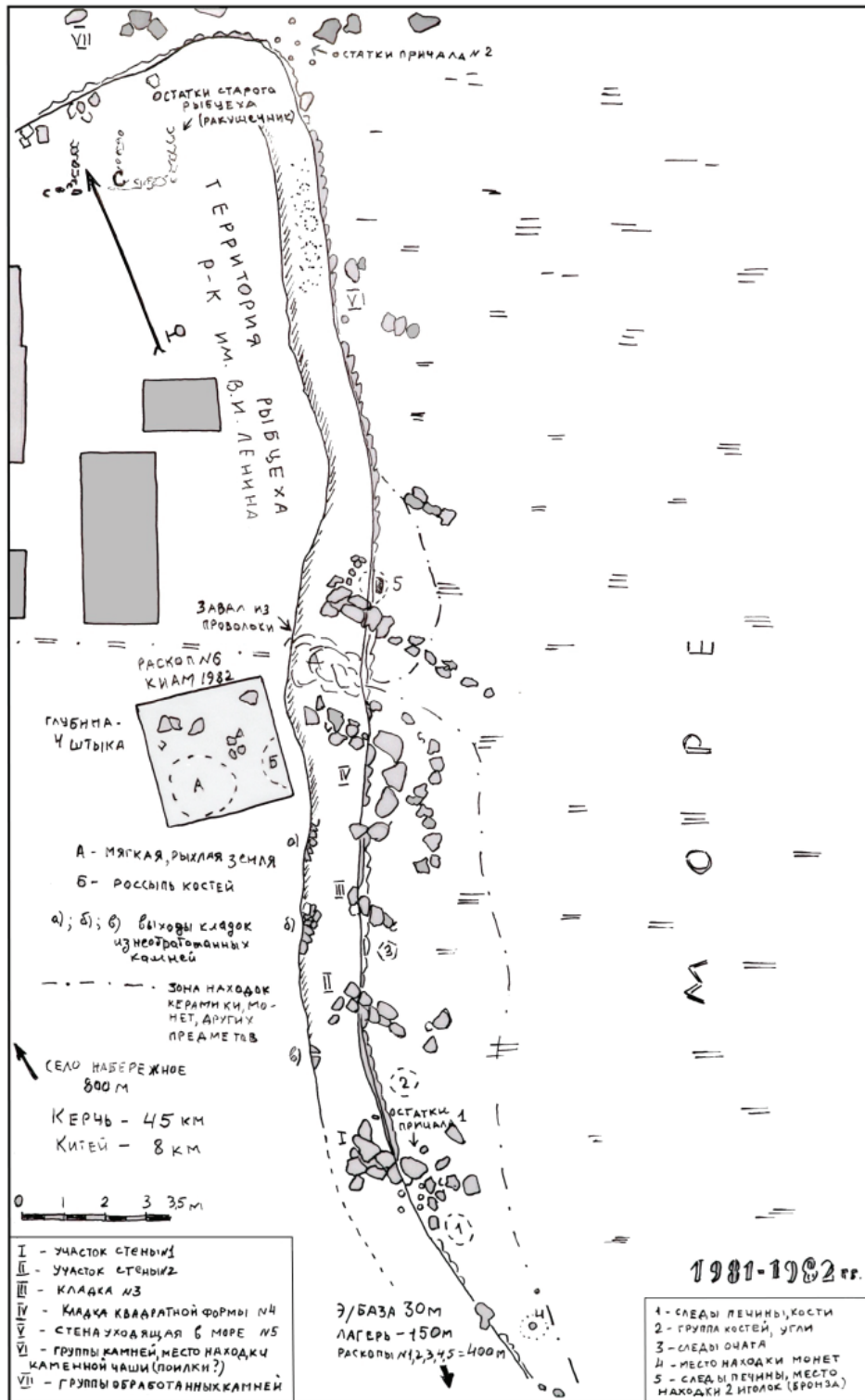
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The ancient city Akra has been located nearby the modern Naberezhnoe village (Leninsky district, Crimea AR). It seemed to be founded by the settlers from Nymphaeum or Panticapaeum in the late 6th century BC, and kept its position as a city of the Bosporan Kingdom till the early 4th century AD. The city occupied the north-eastern extremity of the cape formed by the mouth of the ancient nameless river and Cimmerian Bosphorus. Its territory has

probably took shape of a trapezoid area of approximately 3.5 hectares, which was almost completely hidden by seawaters at the present time, except for its small western part on the sandy crossbar, that turned the mouth of the river into the modern Yanysh Lake off the coast of the Kerch Strait. Due to transgression of the Black Sea, which began about the middle of the 1st millennium BC, the ancient city has got into the depth of up to 4.5

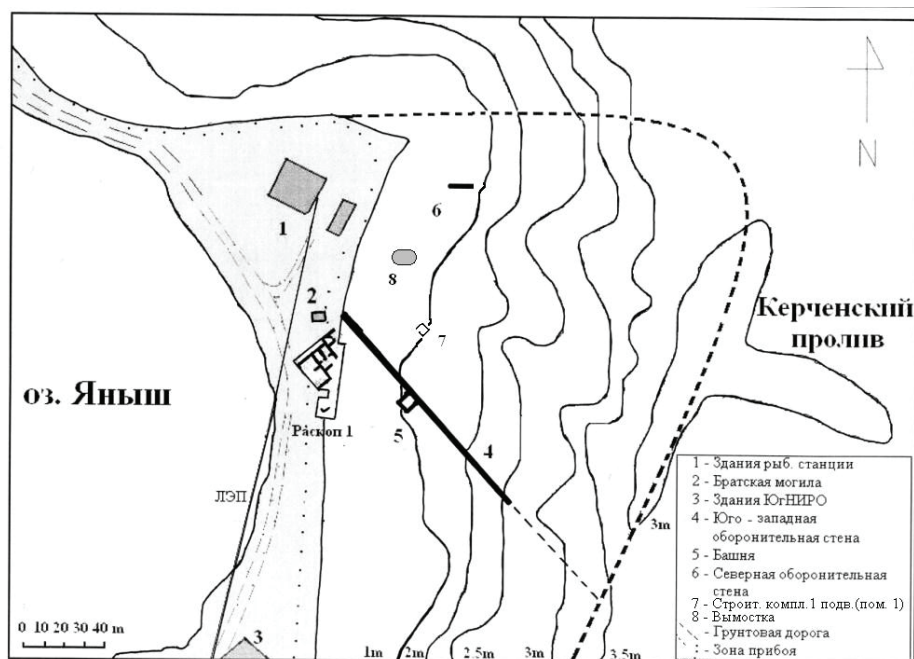




meters. Features of the wave conditions in this part of Kerch Peninsula led to the fact that the cultural layers of the ancient city were not mainly washed away, and its building constructions were not completely destroyed, but only partially covered with sea sand deposits.

In the early 1980s on the sand cross-bar between the Yanysh Lake and the sea was accidentally found more than a





hundred ancient coins, and also discovered the remains of ancient walls going under the water. In the summer of 1982 V. N. Kholodkov (Kerch Museum) held the first excavations both on the crossbar and on the hill to the south from the Yanysh Lake. Resulted these works, there were opened ancient cultural strata and building remains. In 1983–1985 K. K. Shilik (Leningrad Branch of the Institute of Archaeology of Academy of Sciences of the USSR) started underwater investigations of the area, and found out that the ancient city lied at the depth of up to 4.5 meters, and further to the east seaward up to the depth of 7.5 meters there was a harbour. In the course of the undersea explorations there were discovered defensive walls, the two towers and the well. In their filling there were found seven 4th century BC amphorae of Heraclea Pontica, the pieces of black-glazed pottery, the fragment of a lead anchor stock, wooden details made on the lathe. In 1994–1997 the archaeological survey at Akra, both on land and at the sea bottom, were continued by A. V. Kulikov (Kerch Museum-reserve).

Akra in the context of underwater research in the Northern Black Sea Littoral

In Classical archaeology there was formed an opinion about the widespread and total destruction of ancient cultural strata and building constructions as a result of the historical natural flooding of coastal parts of the Greek colonies in the Northern Black Sea Littoral. Because of this belief underwater archaeology is called upon to play the secondary, application role, mainly coming to collecting redeposited archaeological materials. Examples of such state of things were underwater investigations at Chersonessos, Olbia and Phanagoria, where the cultural layers were not only washed out, but sometimes were almost completely removed by dredging. However, unlike these sites, Akra has demonstrated the situation that of unique for the Black Sea, when almost the whole city has got under water, largely not losing its integrity. These circumstances have brought Akra in the one of the

first places on value for underwater archaeology in the Black Sea basin. Thus, the study of this ancient city are of paramount importance not only for the study of ancient history and culture of the Black Sea coast, but not least for improvement the methods of underwater archaeology as a specific and still very young branch of archaeological science. Good preservation of submerged archaeological objects at Akra makes it that of the unique monument of underwater archaeology in the Black Sea region.

The main results of the underwater archaeological research in 2011–2012

Underwater archaeological investigations at Akra were resumed in 2011. Visual exploration of the underwater part of the site to the depth of 7 meters attested the following features. On the beach and in the surf zone there were discovered plenty of ceramic pieces, washed out by the sea and cast their ashore already gravelled. Up to the depth

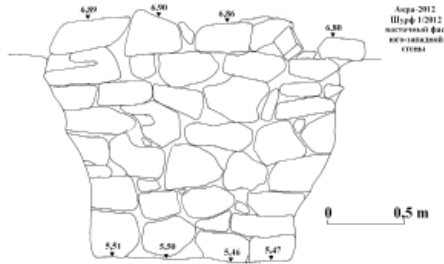
of 1–1.5 meters the site was covered by the sea sand deposit, except for the northern part of the city. Up to depths of 2.5 meters almost everywhere in the area we could see the agglomerations of the large and medium-sized stones, which possibly belonged to the upper parts of ancient walls washed out by the sea. At the depth of 4–5 meters there were observed small pieces of pottery and rough large stones, passing in the natural ranges; the sea bottom was silty.

The main attention was paid to the South-Western and Northern defensive walls. The South-Western wall has been traced running 150 meters long from NW to SE up to the depth of 2.5 meters. The width of the wall was of 1.75–2.0 meters. There was two-facade three-layer masonry that consisted of two faces, laid out on self-faced system of poorly dressed stones of medium size, elaborated at the fronts, with the middle layer made of rubble stones of small and medium size. The wall raised above the sea bottom on the one–two rows of stones.

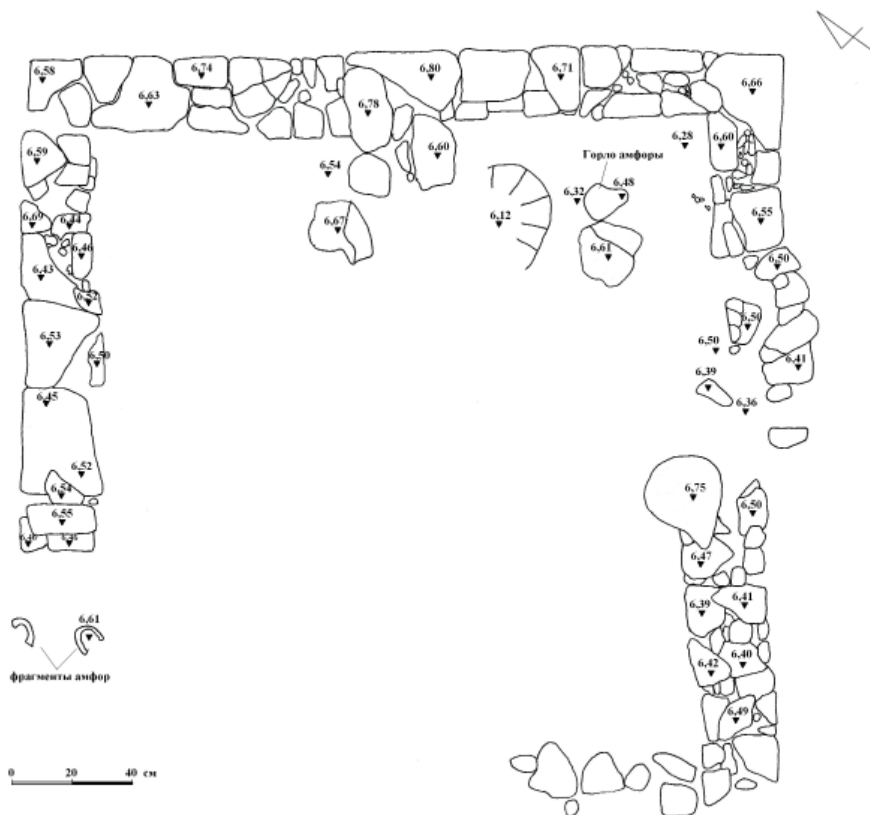


For the detailed mapping, on the one section of the wall was set up by the grating of 8 x 5 m, and the prospecting trench was also laid to check the thickness of cultural layers. In 2012 the depth of the

trench has reached 1.8 meters. The east facade of the defensive wall was opened on the length of 1.9 meters in seven-nine rows of stones. Archaeological materials from the layer of solid grey clay loam can be dated not earlier than the middle of the 4th century BC. Among the finds there were several fragments of amphorae with stamps, including the neck of the Heracleon amphorae with the stamp of ΕΠΙΚΑΛΛΙΑ ΑΓΑΘΩΝ. The heaps of the large stones abutted to the masonry from the east. Exploration of the trench will be going on in the 2013 field campaign.



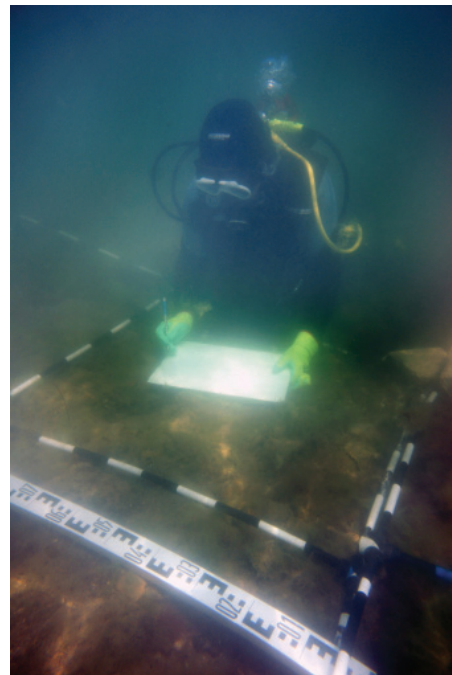
To the north-east of the prospecting trench on the sea bottom under the sandy deposits at the depth of 1.6 m there were found the remains of the stone structures. After clearing, it turned out that they belonged to the room on the area of 25 square meters formed by the stone walls, preserved up to the height of 0.8 meters to the three rows of stones. At the north-eastern corner on the floor there was found the broken Heraclean amphorae. The archaeological materials from the room can be dated to the mid-fourth century BC.



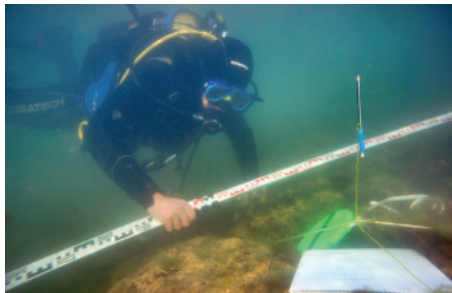


To the north-west of the room at the depth of 1 meter on the area of 20 square meters there was opened the stone pavement, built of stone slabs. With the help of hydroejector it was cleared of seaweeds and sandy deposits, and the rigid grating frame of 2 x 2 meters allowed us fixing of the object graphically. Location of the pavement, as well as the archaeological materials found on its surface, makes it possible to associate the pavement with the room and date it the same time of the 4th century BC.

In 2012 the investigation of the ruined Northern defensive wall, which was directed towards W–E, was going on. It situated not far from the remains of the berth of 1930–1940 at the depth of 0.5–1.35 meters. After removing seaweeds off the wall, it turned out that its upper part raised above the sea bottom on one–two rows of stones, and had the width of 2 meters. The northern face of the wall was hidden by rubble stones,



the southern face was visible. There was three-layer two-facade masonry; its facades composed of roughly elaborated



The program of underwater investigations at Akra in 2013

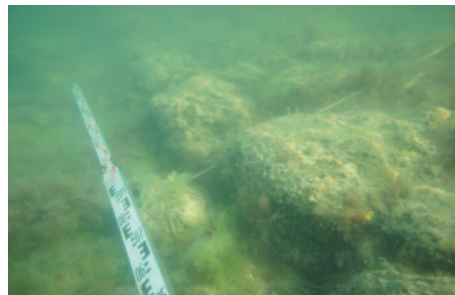
In the season of 2013 it is planned to continue comprehensive survey of the underwater part of Akra for the solution of the following tasks:

mapping of the defensive walls and the constructions previously found, their photo and video fixation;

underwater archeological excavations with the help of hydroejectors;

topographical survey of the settlement;

developing the concept of Museum exposition of the cultural heritage objects found during the underwater archaeological research at Akra.

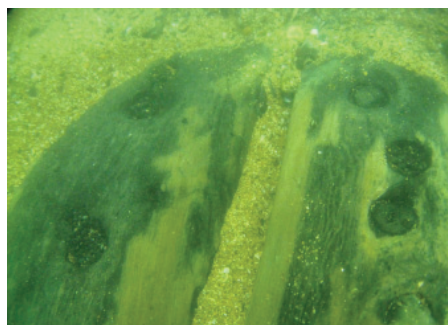


stones of medium and large size, the middle layer was made of rubble stones of small and medium size. The orientation and the character of masonry of the Northern wall were somewhat different from the South-Western defensive wall, so that construction should be assigned to a later time. The study of the wall will be going on in the 2013 field campaign.



The study of newly revealed shipwreck

In 2011 there were found the remains of the wreck of a wooden ship in the distance of several kilometers from Akra on the depth of 4 meters. The observed length of the ship was about 30 meters; its hull was covered with brass plates. Small depth and good preservation of wooden structures make possible detailed describing of the object and conducting its research.



To participate in underwater investigations at Akra, to its financial and technical support in 2013 we invite all, who are interested in underwater archaeology and are ready to contribute to the study and preservation of the cultural heritage of the Black Sea.



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