



Summary :

Colony of Miletus in the Cimmerian Bosphorus, in the east ('Asian') part of the state. The history of Kepoi is linked to Gylon, grandfather of Demosthenes, who served as the city's governor. During the period of the first Spartocids the city was annexed to the Kingdom of Bosphorus. The city's archaeological strata cover the periods from the 6th cent. BC to the 4th cent. AD.

Geographical Location

Chersonesus of Crimea

Historical Region

Cimmerian Bosphorus

Administrative Dependence

Kingdom of Bosphorus

1. Topography

Kepoi has been tentatively identified with the remains of a settlement located in the Tamanski peninsula, on the northern borders of the Sennaya country town on the eastern coast of one of the branches of Buh River (ancient Hypanis). Part of the city is nowadays submerged due to the constant shifts of the course of that river. It is estimated that the settlement occupied an area of 200,000 to 250,000 sq.m. The preservation state of the city's archaeological strata is rather poor.¹

According to descriptions from ancient authors, the modern Tamanski peninsula was in antiquity a complex of islands, the largest of which were called Cimmeris and Phanagorus. Kepoi together with [Phanagoria](#), the other important city in this region, was located on Phanagorus Island, on the coast of the deep strait linking the large bay of the Black Sea (Corocondamitis Lake) with the Sea of Azov (Maeotian Lake). Considering that the strait offered an alternative route from the Black Sea to the Maeotian Lake, bypassing the Cimmerian Bosphorus, the city's geographical location was very important.

2. Historical evidence

Kepoi is mentioned by Pseudo-Scylax, Pseudo-Scymnus, Aeschines, Diodorus Siculus, [Strabo](#), [Pliny the Elder](#) and Pomponius Melas as one of the cities of the Cimmerian Bosphorus.² The city was founded by [Milesians](#) during the first third of the 6th cent. BC.³ Nothing remains of the city's earliest buildings, save for some wall sections made up of unbaked mud bricks dating to the late 6th - early 5th cent. BC. A deep basement, divided into four sections, was discovered in one of the residential units. During the second building period, the basement was used for storing [amphorae](#). On the basis of the archaeological record, Kepoi maintained close commercial ties with the Ionian cities during the Archaic period.

How and exactly when Kepoi was annexed to the [Bosporan Kingdom](#) remains unknown. From Aeschines' testimony we know that by the reign of Satyrus I⁴ (433/32-389/88 BC) the city was already under [Spartocid](#) rule and had lost some of its political privileges. During this period, Kepoi is governed by a special official, who was appointed by the rulers of the Bosporan Kingdom and represented Spartocid rule in the city. One such governor of Kepoi was, according to Aeschines, [Gylon](#), grandfather of Demosthenes, who received the city from the Spartocids as a reward for delivering the city of [Nymphaeum](#) to them.⁵

The period between the 4th and 2nd cent. BC is an era of prosperity for the city. Its importance, as a city in the Spartocid state, is indirectly confirmed by an event connected with the dynastic feud between the sons of Paerisades I (349/48-310/309 BC) in the late 4th cent. BC. One of them, Prytanos, following an abortive coup against his brother Eumelus at [Panticapaeum](#), attempted to seek refuge at Kepoi, where he was murdered.⁶ Strata dated to the late 2nd and early 1st cent. BC preserve traces of a destruction, which probably occurred during the civil war in Bosphorus.⁷ Later the structures were rebuilt by making use of building material from earlier,



ruined buildings.

In the late 2nd cent. BC, together with the other cities of the State of Bosphorus, Kepoi was incorporated into the [Kingdom of Pontus](#) of [Mithridates VI Eupator](#). By the late 1st cent. BC the city was under Roman control.

Changes in the economy and culture of Kepoi during the 3rd-4th cent. AD reflect a deep financial crisis and changes in the city's population. The residential groups include domestic workshops, while wheat storage areas are also constructed. An important proportion of the pottery of that era is handmade. The population becomes mixed with barbaric elements.

The final destruction of Kepoi dates to the 370s AD and is connected with the invasion of the [Huns](#).

3. Economy

The city's economy, as indicated by its name (kepoi=orchards), was based on [agriculture](#), while trade played an important role as well. At any rate the city, immediately after its establishment, was an important commercial centre for the region. The main trading partners of Kepoi were the cities of [Asia Minor](#) and the [Aegean](#) islands. In the Archaic strata of Kepoi, large numbers of painted Ionic pottery sherds have been unearthed, as well as [amphorae](#) from Chios and Thasos.⁸ By the early 5th cent. BC, Athens takes the place of the Ionic centres and becomes the main trading partner of Kepoi, which is also true for the other cities of the Cimmerian Bosphorus.

In the 3rd-2nd cent. BC Kepoi maintained commercial relations with the cities of Bosphorus and the Mediterranean. The main commodities were grain and fish; the area of Kepoi was famous for its [fishing wealth](#).

Judging from the moulds for clay figurines and the local pottery seals, Kepoi featured [terracotta figurines](#) and pottery workshops.⁹ A furnace for firing clay pots has been dated to the 1st cent. BC.¹⁰ During the excavations at the Temple of [Aphrodite](#) a small votive, iron, vine-pruning knife was discovered, as well as fragments from a marble wine press, which indicate the existence of viniculture and winemaking in the area. Two wineries were discovered in 2nd-3rd cent. AD layers.¹¹

4. Monuments

The worship of Aphrodite was undoubtedly the most important in the city. This is confirmed by the testimonies of ancient authors as well as by inscriptions testifying the proliferation of the goddess' cult, which was invoked as 'Apaturus', throughout the Asian Bosphorus. Judging from an inscribed base of a [kylix](#) dating to the 6th cent. BC, the city had a temple or sanctuary dedicated to Aphrodite already in the Archaic period, with a certain Molpagoras being mentioned as its priest.¹² This is also confirmed by the fragments of a 5th cent. BC marble [lekanis](#) which bear an inscription of the goddess' initials,¹³ the votive inscription to Aphrodite by Spartocus, son of Paerisades, on a marble [pedestal](#) of the late 4th or early 3rd cent. BC,¹⁴ incised inscriptions on pottery sherds¹⁵, as well as by the marble head of a statue of Aphrodite, a work of the Alexandrian school, dating to the 3rd-2nd cent. BC.¹⁶

Only one temple has been discovered in the city, and only its foundations survive. It is a small, probably [in antis](#), temple located in the eastern edge of the city, which was dedicated to Aphrodite. It covered an area of approximately 30 sq.m. Its interior was veneered with multi-coloured, painted plaster and was roofed with clay tiles. The temple was constructed in the 2nd and was destroyed in the 1st cent. BC. Among the finds from the temple are a small marble head of a [kouros](#) or Apollo of the late 6th cent. BC,¹⁷ a votive marble offering in the form of a marble female head with the Horn of Amalthea¹⁸ and a marble figurine of Aphrodite, the work of an unknown sculptor from Asia Minor, dating to the 2nd cent. BC.¹⁹

The baths, with a rectangular ground plan and two auxiliary spaces, date to the 1st cent. AD. The walls were made up of unbaked mud bricks and were surrounded on the inside by seats, veneered with marble slabs. The seats featured internal ducts through which warm air flowed. North and east of the building lay the water-pipe, constructed of roughly hewn blocks coated with slabs of rock



and clay tiles. At the entrance to the baths, under the wall, the water-pipe was made up of clay tubes which covered other, internal lead tubes, of a smaller diameter.²⁰

No defensive walls have been discovered so far in the city. Furthermore, there is no reference to their existence in ancient sources. In the 1st cent. AD the north section of the city was surrounded by a defensive mound, constructed in a hurry.

North of the city lies the necropolis. East of the necropolis, as well as north and south of the city, there are more graves. Some are in clusters, others are arranged in lines along Mt Tsimbalka. The necropolis was excavated between 1959 and 1970.²¹ 60 square kilometres were excavated in total, resulting in the discovery of more than 400 burials, dating from the second half of the 6th cent. BC to the 3rd cent. AD.

The norm for the 6th-5th cent. BC are burials in rectangular or ovoid pits, graves built with mud bricks and children inhumations in amphorae. The skeletons were mostly found in a supine position, facing east, while in rare cases the body was contracted. Among the funerary gifts are simple or painted clay pots, while male burials often contain weapons.

In the section of the necropolis investigated so far we have no 4th cent. BC burials. The largest group of graves dates to the 3rd-1st cent. BC. During this period, grave types remain unchanged, with the parallel appearance of tiled graves,²² graves carved in the bedrock²³ and burials in pits featuring a lateral chamber.²⁴

While the burial customs identified are predominantly Greek, the latter type of burial is associated with the [Sarmatians](#), who made their appearance in the region in the 3rd cent. BC. Inhumations are still performed in accordance to the customs of the previous period, but we also have the appearance of cremation. Cremation was performed either in a burial pit or next to it, and then the ashes were placed in funerary urns. The funerary gifts from this period are numerous: clay pots, mostly locally produced, beads and Bosphorus coins. There are no weapons in the burials dating to the 3rd-1st cent. BC. Typical of these burial customs are the memorial feasts, with which the surviving escharai for libations and small limestone tables are associated. The feasts were often accompanied by ritual burning of sacrificial offerings and breaking of pottery. Dogs, as well as horse or cow heads were often buried in the graves cut into the bedrock. During this period the practice of erecting sepulchral stelae becomes widespread; these feature relief depictions of male and female figures, horsemen, as well as anthropomorphous stelae.

During the first centuries AD, the necropolis shrinks, and burials are concentrated on its northern section. As in earlier periods, the prevalent form of burial is in ovoid graves, while the graves dug into the ground become larger and acquire corridors. We often find inhumations in graves featuring a lateral chamber. The prevalent position of the bodies is the supine, while in rare occasions bodies are found in the foetal position. Cremation and memorial feasts disappear. Funerary gifts continue to be numerous. Weapons are once again found in male burials. As in the previous period, sepulchral stelae continue to be erected.

1. The city was excavated during the 1957-1972, originally under the direction of N. Sokolsky and N. Sorokina, and during the period of 1984-1989 under V. Kuznetsov. See Сокольский Н.И., «Раскопки в Кεпах в 1957 г.», *КСИИМК* 78 (1969), pp. 53-63; Сокольский, Н.И., «Работы в Кεпах в 1958 г.», *КСИА* 83 (1961), pp. 66-72; Сокольский, Н.И., «Раскопки в Кεпах в 1959 г.», *КСИА* 86 (1961), pp. 55-65; Сокольский, Н.И., «Раскопки в Кεпах в 1960 г.», *КСИА* 91 (1962), pp. 83-91; Сокольский, Н.И., «Раскопки городища Кεпы в 1961 г.», *КСИА* 95 (1963), pp. 52-59; Сокольский, Н.И., «Кεпы» in *Античный город* (1963), pp. 97-114; Kuznetsov, V.D., «Κεποι-Phanagoria-Taganrog», in Grammenos, D.V. — Petropoulos, E.K. (eds.), *Ancient Greek Colonies in the Black Sea 2* (Thessaloniki 2003), pp. 895-897.

2. Ps.-Scylax 5.72; Ps.-Skymnus 899; Aeschin. 3.171; Diod. Sic. 20.24; Strabo 11.2.10; Plin., *HN* 6.18; Pomp. M. 1.112.

3. Николаева, Э.Я., «О времени основания Кεп», in *Проблемы греческой колонизации Северного и Восточного Причерноморья, Материалы 1 Всесоюзного симпозиума по древней истории Причерноморья, Цхалтубо -1977* (Тбилиси 1979), pp. 142-145.



4. Supreme governor of the Bosphorus state, who in the 4th cent. BC usually bears the official title 'archon of Bosphorus and Theodosia and king of the [local tribes]'
5. Aeschin. 3.171. See also Кошеленко, Г.А. - Усачева, О.М., «Гилон і Кепи», *Археологи*. 2 (1992), pp. 51-56.
6. D. S. 20.24.
7. Maslennikov, A.A., *Οι αρχαίοι Έλληνες στο Βόρειο Εύξεινο Πόντο* (Θεσσαλονίκη 2000), p. 103.
8. Николаева, Э.Я., «О времени основания Кеп», in *Проблемы греческой колонизации Северного и Восточного Причерноморья, Материалы 1 Всесоюзного симпозиума по древней истории Причерноморья, Цхалтубо -1977* (Тбилиси 1979), pp. 143-144.
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17. Height 0.118m Moscow, State Historical Museum. See Сокольский, Н.И., «Курос из Кеп», *СА* 2 (1962), pp. 132-141; Kobylina, M.M., *La sculpture antique sur le littoral nord de la Mer Noire* (Moscou 1972), pl. I.
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22. Graves carved into the bedrock, covered with large clay tiles.



23. Apart from these graves, in some regions of the Cimmerian Bosphorus another grave type was popular: it features a burial chamber carved into the hard, loamy subsoil. The corresponding Russian term is 'грунтовой СКЛ8Π'.

24. A popular type of grave construction in the northern Black Sea: it features a pit, on the side of which a special space was carved to place the deceased. The corresponding Russian term is 'подбойная могила'.

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Glossary :

	1. lekane, the, 2. lekane, the 1. low bowl with two horizontal handles and a broad low foot. The handles are regularly ribbon-shaped. The lekane is shallow, lidded and often decorated. Examples of it appear in marriage-scenes and other scenes involving women, and are themselves regularly decorated with scenes of marriage. It flourished during the end of the 5 th and the 4 th centuries BC. 2. In general, similar to lekane but the lekane is usually lidless and often undecorated.
	amphora, the from the greek words "αμφί"(on both sides) and "φέρω" (carry): vessel with long ovoid body and a considerably narrower neck made in various sizes from the smaller perfume oil container to the large storage receivers of liquids and solids. It stands on a small foot and it bears two invariable vertical handles on either side. Some of the distinguished types of the amphorae are these whose lower part is tapering to the point (narrow bottomed), the neck type, the Nicosthenian, the Nola, the Panathenaic, the Tyrrhenian, the SOS type.
	kouros, the Conventional term used by modern researchers to describe the statue of a standing still, naked, young man, dated to the archaic period.
	kylix, the The most essential ancient drinking cup. It bears a wide and shallow body raised on a stem from a foot. It always has horizontal handles disposed symmetrically, often swinging upwards . The interior, flat, round bottom of the vessel was used as surface for painted decoration. There are many different types of kylikes such as the Komast type, the Siana type, types A, B, C, the Droop and the Cassel cups.
	pedestal Base on which stands a bust, a stele or a statue.
	temple in antis Temple with two or more columns between the antae of the pronaos.