

# Cistophori from the Artezian Settlement (Ptolemaeus' Παρόστα?)

## The evidence of the Presence of Bithynian troops in the Bosporan Kingdom

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The fortified settlement of Artezian<sup>1</sup> in the Eastern Crimea has been excavated since 1989 by the Artezian Archaeological Mission led by N. I. Vinokurov. The site is situated 5 km east of the Sea of Azov and 3 km north-west of the modern village of Chistopol'e, Leninsky Region (Fig. 1). The early Citadel and adjoining quarters of the settlement met their end during the Roman-Bosporan War (AD 45–49). Analysis of finds from the burnt level<sup>2</sup> is of great significance for advancing our understanding of military events in the European Bosporus in the course of war.

The 2009–2014 field seasons gave finds of the remains of a few wooden caskets and a small chest<sup>3</sup> containing jewellery items and Bosporan bronze coins (Caesarea<sup>4</sup>, Agrippa<sup>5</sup>, Aspurgus<sup>6</sup>, Geopaeypis<sup>7</sup>, Mithridates III<sup>8</sup>), and also Roman silver

denarii (Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius) (Fig. 2–4).<sup>9</sup> Apart from hoards and purses with Bosporan bronze coins, some thousands isolated Bosporan bronze coins dating from the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC to the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and also a few Roman silver coinages were discovered in the layer of the fall of the early Citadel. Ten gold staters of Aspurgus and Mithridates III and also three Roman cistophori<sup>10</sup> and twelve denarii are the most important numismatic finds from the burnt level. It is evident this significant numismatic material serves as the basic chronological reference point of the burnt layer at the settlement.<sup>11</sup>

The find of a unique Mithridates' gold stater marked with the year GMT (year 343 of the Bosporan era = AD 46/47) and the analysis of the archaeological context allow us to date the fortress' fall to the autumn AD 46, or even to the end of the summer – the autumn AD 47 as well. The date of catastrophe proves that Artezian and other fortresses supporting Mithridates, in which synchronous layers of the ravages of war were also revealed by the archaeology, had offered their resistance to Cotys I and the Romans during a year or two after those seized the capital and the principal cities of the European Bosporus.

In 2013 during investigation of the remains of the Citadel three silver cistophori issued at mints of the province of Asia were found in the burnt level over the Room 10 of the semi-basemen. This find deserves a special attention because of Roman coins very rarely penetrated in the Bosporus<sup>12</sup> where they did not played any role in the currency, as well as foreign coins in whole, and cistophori have al-

<sup>1</sup> The Artezian Settlement can possibly be identified with the small town of Parosta mentioned by Claudius Ptolemaeus (Ptol. III, 6.8): Зубарев/Маслеников 1987, 44. Later A. A. Maslennikov (Маслеников 1998, 125) attested Parosta to either the Artezian settlement, or the settlement of Libknekhtovka, while V. G. Zubarev (Зубарев 2005) – to the settlement of Bagerovo (Northern). Recent research in the settlement of Artezian has shown that there can be little doubt that this wealthy royal fortress may be identified with Parosta.

<sup>2</sup> Винокуров 2004, 78–88; Винокуров 2005, 50–60; Винокуров 2007, 190–199; Винокуров 2010a, 38–44; Винокуров 2010b, 46–65; Винокуров 2014, 98–105; Абрамзон 2011, 117–137; Абрамзон et al. 2012, 93–146; Abramzon et al. 2012, 207–278; Сапрыкин et al. 2014, 134–162.

<sup>3</sup> The wooden parts of caskets had not survived at all, but their remains are represented by bronze details of complex locking mechanisms fastened with copper or iron rivets, bronze rings and braces, nails, pintles, parts of linings with drills for hardware, sometimes with jammed nails and pins.

<sup>4</sup> Burnett et al. 1992, no. 1936; SNG Stancomb 614–615; Frolova/Ireland 2002, pl. 31,1–29; 32,1–7.

<sup>5</sup> Burnett et al. 1992, no. 1935; SNG Stancomb 631; Frolova/Ireland 2002, pl. 31,8–25; 33,1–23.

<sup>6</sup> Burnett et al. 1992, no. 1904; SNG Stancomb 966–997; Frolova/Ireland 2002, pl. 43,1–21; 44,9–20, 45,1–21; 46,1–7.

<sup>7</sup> Burnett et al. 1992, no. 1907; Frolova/Ireland 2002, pl. 47,1–18; 48,1–3.

<sup>8</sup> Burnett et al. 1992, no. 1910; 1911; SNG Stancomb 968–969; Frolova/Ireland 2002, pl. 47,1–18; 48,1–3; 49,2–18; 50,1–17; 51,1–12.

<sup>9</sup> Abramzon et al. 2012, 207–278.

<sup>10</sup> Абрамзон et al. 2014, 7.

<sup>11</sup> См. Абрамзон et al. 2014, 5–16.

<sup>12</sup> Абрамзон 2009, 5–14.



**Fig. 1.**  
Map of the Pontic  
Region with the location  
of the Artezian  
Settlement.

most never been found there until now.<sup>13</sup> One of cistophori belongs to Mark Antony's issue at Ephesus (?) in 39 BC<sup>14</sup> (Fig. 5.1); two others were struck under Augustus at Ephesus in 25–20 BC<sup>15</sup> (Fig. 5.2) and Pergamum in 19–18 BC<sup>16</sup> (Fig. 5.3):

#### MARK ANTONY

##### Ephesus?

39 BC

1. Obv. M ANTONIVS IMP COS DESIG ITER ET TERT; head of Antony wearing ivy wreath r.; below, lituus; all enclosed in wreath of ivy leaves and flowers.

Rv. III VIR R P C; draped bust of Octavia, r., above cista flanked by twisting snakes  
Burnett et. al. 1992, 377 no. 2201.

#### AUGUSTUS

##### Ephesus

25–20 BC

2. Obv. IMP CAE–SAR; head of Augustus, bare, r. Border linear.
- Rv. AVGVSTVS below Capricorn r.; head l., bearing cornucopiae on its back; all in laurel-wreath.

RIC I 477, 480; Burnett et al. 1992, 378 no. 2213.

#### Pergamum

19–18 BC

3. Obv. IMP IX TR PO V. Head of Augustus, bare, r. Border linear.
- Rv. COM — ASIA to l. fnd r. of hexastyle temple inscribed ROM ET AVGVST.

RIC I 506; Burnett et al. 1992, 379 no. 2219.

<sup>13</sup> In contrast to the Bosphorus, in neighboring lands of Caucasus and Trans-Caucasus a mix of denarii, Cappadocian and Parthian drachmae, Seleucid and Roman provincial tetradrachms, and Asian cistophori have surfaced in hoards concealed along trade routes: Harl 1996, 301 note 35 with bibliography.

<sup>14</sup> Kerch Museum inv. no. КП-185624. Weight 10,7 g.

<sup>15</sup> Kerch Museum inv. no. КП-185625. Weight 10,8 g.

<sup>16</sup> Kerch Museum inv. no. КП-185626. Weight 11,0 g.



**Fig. 2.**  
Artezian Settlement.  
Hoard 2 (2009).  
Remains of the casket  
containing coins, neck-  
lace, silver anklets,  
glass flask, etc.

The cistophoric tetradrachm was equivalent in value to 3 Roman denarii or 48 to 54 assaria.<sup>17</sup> So, the cistophorus acted as link between the denarius and the sundry provincial and civic coins. In due time, the Roman Civil Wars (49–31 BC) simplified currency in the East; many of coinages disappeared completely, and the Asian cistophorus also nearly vanished. After a break from 68/67 until 58 BC, a range of proconsuls whom the latest was Cicero in 51 BC, and then Q. Caecilius Metellus Pio Scipio, proconsul of Syria in 49 BC, coined cistophori at Pergamum. Mark Antony issued cistophori at Ephesus (?) in 39 BC.<sup>18</sup> Augustus restored the cistophorus by a massive recoinage after the battle of Actium.<sup>19</sup> The cistophoric silver was the fundamental coinage of the region.<sup>20</sup> Mints at Ephesus and



**Fig. 3.**  
Artezian Settlement.  
Casket from the Room 4  
(2013). Gold half-  
moon-shaped pendant  
from the forehead fillet  
*in situ* among charred  
remains.

<sup>17</sup> In Asia the denarius was officially valued as 16 assaria, however, in Pergamum exchange bankers were licensed by the city in exchange for commission fee on their profits, to by denarii for 17 assaria and sell them for 18. In Ephesus the denarius was the equivalent of 18 assaria: Verboven 2009, 101.

<sup>18</sup> On the question of the mint and the date see Burnett et al. 1992/I, 377.

<sup>19</sup> Sutherland et al. 1970; Harl 1996, 71.

<sup>20</sup> Merrington 1970, 85–120; RIC I, 36; Harl 1996, 70–71, 91.

Pergamum issued an abundant coinage of silver tetradrachms in the decade from 28 to 18 BC, while Augustus had restored Asia Minor to Roman dominions. It could have amounted at least 15 to 20 million cistophori, which flooded throughout Anatolia, in the first place Asia and Bithynia-Pontus. Cistophori likely entered circulation as distributions at festivals of the imperial cult held at the great cen-





**Fig. 4.**  
Artezian Settlement.  
Gold jewellery items  
(the casket) and  
staters of Aspurgus  
(Room 4, 2013).



**Fig. 5.**  
Artezian Settlement.  
Cistophori. 1 Mark  
Antony, Ephesus,  
39 BC; 2 Augustus,  
Ephesus, 25–20 BC;  
3 Augustus, Perga-  
mum, 19–18 BC.

ters of Asia and Bithynia.<sup>21</sup> From Bithynia our cistophori may arrive to the Bosphorus together with cohorts garrisoned in Panticapaeum in AD 45 (Tac. Ann. XII, 15), or even in the early 1<sup>st</sup> century AD<sup>22</sup> as well. Together with the denarii of Augustus and Tiberius, which were also found in the burnt level, cistophori may serve as cash-allowances for Bithynian cohorts garrisoned<sup>23</sup> in the Bosphorus.

The mix of local coinages and Roman denarii is well seen in a hoard near Halicarnassus comprised of denarii and cistophori, or in some other complexes.<sup>24</sup> This is also confirmed by finds of cistophori and denarii in the Artezian Settlement and in the sanctuary near Gurzufskoe Sedlo<sup>25</sup>. Two last finds show that it is not a mere chance, the Antony's cistophori surfaced with those of Augustus and also with Republican and early Imperial denarii in the currency, while the Antony's cistophori were permitted to circulate, not only because of their high quality, but also because of they bore the portrait of the emperor's sister Octavia.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, the Artezian cistophori are worn because of their long circulation: while the Roman-Bosporan War started, the old Antony's cistophorus was still in circulation during more than 80 years, and those of Augustus – about 60 years, like the Augustan denarius dating to 29–27 BC from the second 2009 hoard<sup>27</sup> (see below). It should be noted that after the last Augustus' issues no cistophori were produced for over 60 years until the reign of Claudius.<sup>28</sup>

The Artezian cistophori are to be probably linked with a complex comprised of 125 bronze Bosporan coins and a Caesar's denarius, which was placed in the small chest found in the Room 10 of the semi-basement of early Citadel.

Cistophori are extremely rarely found in the Crimea and the Bosphorus. We have been able to find only two references. The Pergamum cistophorus dating to 133–67 BC was recorded in Nymphaeum.<sup>29</sup> It can scarcely be doubt that it arrived in the Bosphorus with the army of Mithridates VI in 65 BC. During the excavations of the sanctuary near



**Fig. 6.** Gurzufskoe Sedlo. Cistophori. 1 Mark Antony, Ephesus, 39 BC; 2 Augustus, Ephesus, 25–20 BC (after Müller/Schmauder 2013).

Gurzufskoe Sedlo<sup>30</sup> led by N.G. Novichenkova seven more specimens synchronous to Artezian ones were found together with a denarius issued by Q. Metellus Scipio in Africa in 47–46 BC<sup>31</sup>. Six cistophori were issued by Antony at Ephesus (?) in 39 BC<sup>32</sup> (Fig. 6.1); the other specimen bearing the reverse type of Capricorn<sup>33</sup> belongs to the aforementioned Augustus' issue at Ephesus (Fig. 6.2). So, three finds are only recorded in the Crimea. While the range of synchronous cistophori and also the Roman denarii is almost one and the same in Gurzufskoe Sedlo and Artezian, we believe this is not just a merely coincidence because of the Southeastern Crimea and especially the Bosporan Kingdom were militarily depended on Bithynia rather than on Moesia, and, as M. P. Speidel and D. H. French argued long ago, the area was a part of the Bithynian command district.

It is unlikely that the presence of the Roman silver currencies in the Artezian caskets and in the burnt level would be explained by social, economic, political and diplomatic relations between their owners and the Romans before the war though such relations have, no doubt, occurred, that is con-

<sup>21</sup> Harl 1996, 100.

<sup>22</sup> Cyprian and Thracian cohorts were also dislocated in Bithynia-Pontus and the Bosphorus; some of their warriors were buried in Panticapaeum: Speidel/French 1985, 97–102; Трейстер 1993, 70.

<sup>23</sup> On the practice of using special money for military payments to garrisons which were dislocated abroad: Psoma 2009, 1–38.

<sup>24</sup> Overbeck 1978, 164–173; Harl 1996, 71 note 95.

<sup>25</sup> Müller/Schmauder 2013, 269.

<sup>26</sup> Harl 1996, 99–100.

<sup>27</sup> Abramzon et al. 2012, 251 fig. 25, 103.

<sup>28</sup> Burnett et al. 1992, 379.

<sup>29</sup> Голенко 1974, pl. 4, 352.

<sup>30</sup> The ancient route between the Bosphorus and Chersonese went via Gurzufskoe Sedlo, where the very popular sanctuary was located. About two hundreds coins were found in the sanctuary, including a gold stater of Lysimachus, a tetradrachm of Mithridates VI, cistophori and Roman denarii: Müller/Schmauder 2013, 268–269.

<sup>31</sup> Yalta Museum inv. no. КП 21155. Müller/Schmauder 2013, 269 Kat. 4, 11. For the type: Crawford 1974, no. 459.

<sup>32</sup> Yalta Museum inv. no. КП 30954. Müller/Schmauder 2013, 269, Kat. 4, 13. For type see Burnett et al. 1992, 377 no. 2202.

<sup>33</sup> Yalta Museum inv. no. КП 30960. См. Müller/Schmauder 2013, 269 Kat. 4, 12.

firmed by isolated Roman items<sup>34</sup> and coins have been found in amongst the charred ruins of the Citadel. However, the presence of Roman money definitely refers to military presence or operations in this area and may be related to military payments to Roman troops which arrived in the Bosporus in AD 45 to dethrone the disloyal Mithridates III and to install instead his brother Cotys. Cistophori which arrived from Bithynia-Pont possibly served to pay the wages to Bithynian cohorts garrisoned in the Bosporan capital and other points.

The main Roman forces under the command of Aulus Didius Gallus, governor of Moesia arrived in the Bosporus by sea (Tac. Ann. XII, 15; 17), using the well-known route running from the lower reaches of the Danube to the southern part of the Dniester valley (or the lower reaches of the River Bug) and then along the Crimean shore to the port of Panticapaeum.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile a few cohorts led by Julius Aquila, *Eques Romanus*, dislocated in Panticapaeum (Tac. Ann. XII, 15). Scholars supposed these cohorts belonged to the Moesian army.<sup>36</sup> However, the person of Aquila is well-known; his name is linked with the road-construction in Bithynia, namely with the road run to Nicaea (CIL. III. 346 = IGR. III. 15). He is presumably to be identified with C. Julius Aquila who was the procurator of Bithynia in AD 57/58.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, Aquila had commanded cohorts of the Bithynian army and the Bithynian cohorts or detachments thereof garrisoned the Bosporan kingdom during the early 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.<sup>38</sup> The Bithynian forces gave, no doubt, advisers and trainers to the Bosporan army, which was equipped in the Roman fashion (Tac. Ann. XII, 16).<sup>39</sup> Moesian troops came east of Charax only in extraordinary circumstances such as the Roman-Bosporan War (45–49) and AD 66, each time soon to be withdrawn again.<sup>40</sup>

When Mithridates III threw himself upon the mercy of the Romans, the Bithynian proconsul, Junius Cilo conveyed the captive king to Claudius and was awarded the *ornamenta consularia*, while Julius Aquila, who had conducted the war in the field, received only the *ornamenta praetorea* (Tac. Ann. XII, 21). M.P. Speidel and D.H. French right noted that the Bithynia governor decoration makes sense only

if the cohorts that fought the war belonged to his command, i. e. the army of Bithynia.<sup>41</sup>

It is clear that cistophori served to pay the wages to garrisons consisting of detachments that arrived from Bithynia-Pont and dislocated in Panticapaeum and other points of the Bosporus in the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

Apart from the cistophori, twelve Roman denarii were found in the burnt level. A strongly worn denarius of Caesar with an obverse type of a head of Venus<sup>42</sup> is the oldest coin. Together with 125 Bosporan bronze coins it was placed in a small chest whose remains were found in the Room 10 in 2013 season. A reverse type is perhaps a trophy.<sup>43</sup> The denarius is dated to 47–45 BC. A hole in the coin confirms that it served as a pendant. It is no doubt that the denarius arrived to the Bosporus with Roman troops. As we have supra noted, Caesar's coins were brought to the Bosporus by the Romans.<sup>44</sup> For instance, a Caesar denarius issued in Africa in 47–46 BC<sup>45</sup> from the 1870 Chuska Spit hoard<sup>46</sup> could probably have arrived to the Bosporus together with military detachments sent over by Caesar from Egypt in 47 BC to fight against Pharnaces. The find of two gold Caesar aurei dating from 45–44 BC<sup>47</sup> in Panticapaeum<sup>48</sup> is also linked with the presence of Romans there.

Both the 2009 hoards found in the Room 4 contained jointly four Augustus denarii and six Tiberius ones. The Octavian's denarius issued in Brundisium or Rome in 29–27 BC<sup>49</sup> is the oldest coin in hoards. It belongs to the war-coinage of Octavian for the payment of his troops after the battle of Actium.<sup>50</sup> Three rest specimens were issued by Lugdunum mint in the period between 2 BC and AD 4.<sup>51</sup> The one more such specimen was found in the leveling layer in 2013.<sup>52</sup> All five of the Tiberius denarii from 2009 hoards had been issued at the Lugdunum mint and they are of one and the same type<sup>53</sup>, which is assigned a date covering the whole of Tiberius' reign, i. e. AD 14–37.

It should be noted, finally, that all the Roman coins found in Artezian are dated to the time not later than the reign of Tiberius ended, i. e. AD 37.

<sup>34</sup> For example, the finger-ring with jet gem that is a specimen of Roman glyptics from the Late Republican or Early Imperial period: Abramzon et al. 2012, 224, 226–228 fig. 7,4.

<sup>35</sup> Сапрыкин/Ермолин 2010, 77.

<sup>36</sup> Speidel/French 1985, 97 note 3.

<sup>37</sup> Magie 1950/II, 1397–1398; 1400.

<sup>38</sup> Speidel/French 1985, 98.

<sup>39</sup> Speidel/French 1985, 102.

<sup>40</sup> Speidel/French 1985, 101 fig; 102.

<sup>41</sup> Speidel/French 1985, 98.

<sup>42</sup> Kerch Museum inv. no. КП-185628. Weight 5,2 g.

<sup>43</sup> Crawford 1974, nos. 452/5, 468/1.

<sup>44</sup> Abramzon u. a. 2012, 217.

<sup>45</sup> Crawford 1974, no. 458.

<sup>46</sup> Абрамзон/Фролова 2007–2008, 293 № 1.

<sup>47</sup> Crawford 1974, no. 475/1; 481/1.

<sup>48</sup> Трейстер 1993, 53–54; 66–69.

<sup>49</sup> RIC I, 60, no. 265.

<sup>50</sup> RIC I, 30.

<sup>51</sup> RIC I, 55, nos. 207; 210; 212.

<sup>52</sup> Kerch Museum inv. no. КП-185627. Weight 3,1 g.

<sup>53</sup> RIC I, 95, nos. 26; 28; 30.

Hence, it would seem that Roman silver currencies arrived to the fortress of Artezian under Aspurgus (AD 14–37) who was dignified by the titles “Friend of Caesar” and «Friend of “Rome”». However, the Roman silver may also came under Mithridates before the war or it could be captured by his partisans after the beginning of the Roman-Bosporan War, in course of affairs with the Romans.

While it is impossible to determine absolute date of cistophorii and denarii arrival in the Bosporus, it is clear that they came simultaneously: one of the caskets found in 2009 contained a gold finger-ring with a rouleau of Roman denarii stick to it, dating from 29–27 BC to AD 14–37 (Fig. 7). It is not a mere coincidence that isolated cistophori of Antony and Augustus and also the denarii of Augustus and Tiberius surfaced in the Artezian burnt level dating to 46/47 BC. As stated above, the mix of cistophori and denarii was a common phenomenon that is well seen in a range of hoards from Asia Minor. Artezian and Gurzuf finds confirm that all these coins served as cash-allowances for detachments that arrived from Asia Minor, i. e. Bithynia-Pontus, and garrisoned in the Bosporus in the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC.



**Fig. 7.** Artezian settlement, Hoard 2 (2009). Gold finger-ring with a rouleau of Roman denarii stick to it.

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## Summary

In 2013 during archaeological investigation of the remains of the early Citadel at the Artezian Settlement in the Eastern Crimea, which met its end during the Roman-Bosporan War (AD 45–49), probably, in the autumn AD 47, three silver cistophori issued in the province of Asia were found together with Roman denarii in the burnt level. This important find deserves a special attention, not only because of Roman coins very rarely penetrated in the Bosporus, but also cistophori have almost never been found there until now. One of cistophori belongs to Mark Antony's issue at Ephesus (?) in 39 BC. Two others were struck under Augustus at Ephesus in 25–20 BC and Pergamum in 19–18 BC.

An analysis of the archaeological and historical context and comparison with the analogous find of the Antony's and Augustus' cistophori and Roman denarii in the sanctuary near Gurzufskoe Sedlo strongly corroborated the presence of Bithynian troops in the Bosporus, which was the part of the Bithynian military command district. Authors believe that cistophori arrived to the Bosporus with Bithynian cohorts garrisoned in Panticapaeum and other points during the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC. Cistophori may serve as cash-allowances for Bithynian detachments garrisoned in the Bosporus in and long before AD 45.

## Резюме

В 2013 г. в ходе археологического исследования остатков ранней Цитадели городища Артезиан в Восточном Крыму, уничтоженной во время римско-боспорской войны 45–49 гг. н.э., скорее всего, осенью 47 г. н.э., в слое пожара были найдены три серебряных кистофора провинции Азия и римские денарии. Эта важная находка заслуживает особого внимания, поскольку римские монеты крайне редко проникали на Боспор, а кистофоры здесь до сих пор почти не встречались. Один из найденных кистофоров принадлежит выпуску Марка Антония в Эфесе (?) в 39 г. до н.э. Два других были отчеканены при Августе в Эфесе в 25–20 гг. до н.э. и Пергаме в 19–18 гг. до н.э.

Анализ археологического и исторического контекста и сравнение с аналогичной находкой кистофоров Антония и Августа и римских денариев в святилище около Гурзуфского Седла подтверждает предположение о присутствии вифинских контингентов на Боспоре, который входил зону военного контроля Вифинии-Понт. Авторы считают, что кистофоры были занесены на Боспор вифинскими когортами, которые составляли гарнизоны в Пантикапее и других пунктах в первой половине I в. н.э. Кистофоры могли служить для выплаты жалования отрядам из Вифинии, стоявшим на Боспоре задолго до 45 г. н.э.

