



Summary :

The Taman peninsula is located in modern Russia, occupying a very important geostrategic position, as it controls the channel from the Black Sea to the Sea of Azov. In Antiquity, its geopolitical location made the peninsula a hub of colonizing activity. Among the settlements that were founded is Phanagoreia, Hermonassa, Kepoi and Gorgippia. The fertile lands of the area allowed the development of intensive agriculture, inside the cities as well as in their *chorai*. The financial development of the region can also be seen in its commercial activities, in their exchanges with the hinterland as well as with places in the Aegean and the Mediterranean.

Geographical Location

Black Sea

Historical Region

Cimmerian Bosphorus

1. Geographical location - research

The Taman peninsula is located on the Asiatic side of the Cimmerian Bosphorus, in the district of Krasnodar Krai in modern Russia. To the north it is defined by the Sea of Azov, to the south by the Black Sea and to the west by the [Kerch](#) straits. Among the settlements that were founded are [Phanagoreia](#), [Hermonassa](#), [Kepoi](#) and [Gorgippia](#). Recent archaeological investigations conducted by the German Archaeological Institute attempt to bring out the rural settlements which belong to the chora of various larger cities, unearthing the ruins of two more settlements, Batareyka II and Golubitskaia 2.

2. History

Before the establishment of the colonies, the Taman peninsula was occupied by the Maeotians¹ and the Sindians,² nomadic tribes which later settled in the local cities and were absorbed. During the Classical period, the peninsula was annexed into the [Kingdom of Bosphorus](#), while in the 4th cent. AD the region was captured by the [Huns](#).

Colonizing activity in the Taman peninsula begins in the first half of the 6th cent. BC, when the citizens of [Miletus](#) founded Kepoi and [Panticapaeum](#) in the Kerch peninsula, on the east side of Crimea. The simultaneous establishment of these two [colonies](#) allowed the Milesians the opportunity to control the straits of the Cimmerian Bosphorus, through which merchandise destined for the Sea of Azov and the Danube delta had to be transported.

The fertile lands of the Taman peninsula in the delta of the Kubar river, transformed the residential network of Phanagoreia, Hermonassa and Kepoi into a large agricultural and financial centre. This prosperity was also the result of the peaceful relations the Maeotians and Sindians maintained with the Greek colonists.

3. Recent research

Recent geo-archaeological investigations by the German Archaeological Institute attempt to highlight the relationship and hierarchy between the cities and their hinterlands, as well as between the colonists. The researchers aim at incorporating the geo-archaeological results and the archaeological finds from Kepoi, which are kept on the Historical Museum of Moscow. One very interesting discovery has been made so far: it is the up to now unknown settlement Golubitskaia 2. Surface investigation, as well as test cuts revealed the largest part of the city's walls, as well as pottery, which indicates that the site was occupied from the 6th cent. BC to the Hellenistic period (2nd-1st cent. BC).

Scholars nowadays are aware of the land-partitioning system in the Taman peninsula, especially in the region of Phantalovskij (modern NW Taman), and argue that apart from the main settlements, roughly another 185 satellite settlements existed on the



peninsula.

4. The rural settlements

4.1. Phanagoreia

Judging from the pottery finds, Phanagoreia was established in the mid-6th cent. BC, by inhabitants from Abdyra originating from [Teos](#).

Phanagoreia is the largest in extent Greek colony in the area (it occupies an expanse of approximately 65 hectares). Although there are few references to it in the written sources (thus most of the information available on the city originates from the archaeological finds) [Hecataeus of Miletus](#) as well as [Strabo](#) mention the place and its commercial activity.³

Its agricultural output (the city exported [grain](#)) as well as its geographical position on the straights of Kerch (thanks to which Phanagoreia controlled the trade routes up to the Urals) helped the city prosper during the 5th cent. BC. The fertile lands of the Taman peninsula, especially around Phanagoreia, greatly helped the development of agriculture in the area. Furthermore, archaeological research has brought to light the so-called 'House of the Grain-merchant', dated to the 5th cent. BC. This residence yielded a series of storage jars containing grain remains. Apart from grain production, archaeological evidence indicates that the inhabitants of Phanagoreia also practiced viniculture. Furthermore, they lived off [fishing](#), as suggested by the bronze hooks and fishing weight discovered in the city.

During the 5th cent. BC Phanagoreia merged with Panticapaeum and other cities in the Kerch and Taman peninsulas, forming the Kingdom of Bosphorus, which was first ruled by the [Archaeanactids](#) and then by the [Spartocids](#). During the 3rd and 4th cent. AD Phanagoreia entered a period of decline, before finally succumbing to the Huns.

4.2. Hermonassa

Hermonassa is located in the modern Russian city of Tmutarakan, south the Taman gulf. It was founded in the 6th cent. BC and was the sole Aeolian colony in the northern Black Sea. The city's name changed several times: its Greek name, Hermonassa, became Matluka and Tamatarkha under the [Khazars](#), while the Genovese called it Matrega and the Ottomans Taman. We have several references to Hermonassa in the ancient sources: Strabo and Dionysius Periegetes mention the city.⁴ In particular Dionysius praises the city's architecture.

The city enjoyed a very long history, from the 6th cent. BC to the 17th cent. AD, while its site was still occupied as recently as fifty years ago. Its geo-strategic position allowed it to control the route leading from the Black Sea to the Sea of Azov. Notwithstanding systematic excavations it was not possible to reveal all of the city's strata, while its northern part has been unfortunately submerged due to the geological changes in the area. The exact site of the city of Hermonassa can not be pinpointed accurately, not only because of the geo-morphological changes that have taken place in the area, but also because no inscription bearing its name has been found in the wider region of the peninsula.

The city's agricultural development was similar to that of its neighbouring Phanagoreia, and already in the 6th and in the 5th cent. BC Hermonassa expanded, and started cultivating its surrounding countryside. Hermonassa's commercial activity can be gleaned by the 6th and 5th cent. finds, which include many examples of Corinthian pottery as well as Chian amphorae used for the transport of wine; by the 5th cent. BC it is clear that the city maintains contacts with the Cyclades and northern Aegean. The long-standing winemaking tradition of the city is attested in the two wineries that have been excavated in its outskirts, dating to the 3rd cent. AD.

4.3. Kepoi

Kepoi is located approximately 3km off Phanagoreia, close to the modern village of Sennoi in Russia, in the eastern part of the



Taman peninsula. It was founded by Milesians in the 6th cent. BC,⁵ and occupied the top and foot of a hill, covering an area of approximately 20-25 hectares.

The city of Kepoi was excavated in two phases: the first from 1957 to 1972, the second from 1984 to 1989. Notwithstanding the extensive stratigraphy problems, the excavations proved that the site was occupied since the 6th cent. BC and remained in use until the 4th cent. AD. Because of the various issues that have been identified, there are few uncontested data pertaining to its public architecture and its residential grid. Among the rarest and most important finds is the Temple of Aphrodite (2nd-1st cent. BC), as well as the basement of a 4th cent. BC residence.

4.4. Gorgippia

Gorgippia was founded by Gorgippus, brother of Leucon, in the 6th cent. BC, on the site of the earlier settlements of Sindos or Limenas Sindikos. Excavation in the site commenced in 1982 and was completed with the rescue excavations that were carried out in the area in 1989-91. Unfortunately we have no extensive reference to the city in the ancient sources: Strabo only mentions the city's proximity to the sea.⁶ Gorgippia was obviously a port with intense commercial and agricultural activity.

Its foundation aimed at developing agriculture in the area and strengthening commercial ties with the city of Athens. By the 5th cent. BC the city had been fortified, probably to withstand the expansionary tendencies of Panticapaeum under the Spartocids. The city's fortifications possibly reflect its financial independence due to its significant agricultural output. The archaeological finds indicate the city's commercial relations with the hinterland and the neighbouring settlements.

The chora of Gorgippia included a number of smaller, satellite settlements like Dzhemetete, Natukhaewskaya, Su-Psekh, Krasnaja skala a.o., and it was rather thinly populated.

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1. Strabo 11; Pliny 4.7.26; Pomp., 1.2.6, 1.19.17.
 2. Hdt. 4.28.
 3. Hecataeus Milesius fr. 164 *FHG* (212 *FGH*); Strabo 11.2.10.
 4. Strabo 11.2.169; Dionysius Periegetes 541-553.
 5. Pliny, *HN* 6.18.
 6. Strabo 11.2.11.
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Strabo 11.2.10, 11.2.11, 11.2.169.

Pomp. Mela, *De Situ Orbis* 1.2.6, 1.19.17.