

## GREEK RELIGION AND CULTS IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

This is the first integrated study of Greek religion and cults of the Black Sea region, centred upon the Bosporan kingdom of its northern shores, but with connections and consequences for Greece and much of the Mediterranean world. David Braund explains the cohesive function of key goddesses (Aphrodite Ourania, Artemis Ephesia, Taurian Parthenos, Isis) as the kingdom developed from archaic colonisation through Athenian imperialism, the Hellenistic world and the Roman empire of the east down to the Byzantine era. There is a wealth of new and unfamiliar data on all these deities, with multiple consequences for other areas and cults, such as Diana at Aricia, Orthia in Sparta, Argos' irrigation from Egypt, Athens' Aphrodite Ourania and Artemis Tauropolos and more. Greek religion is shown as key to the internal workings of the Bosporan kingdom, its sense of its landscape and origins and its shifting relationships with the rest of its world.

DAVID BRAUND is Emeritus Professor of Black Sea and Mediterranean History at the University of Exeter. He has spent many decades travelling round and researching the Black Sea region and his publications include *Georgia in antiquity* (1994), *Scythians and Greeks: cultural interactions at the periphery of the Greek world* (edited; 2005), *Classical Olbia and the Scythian world* (co-edited; 2007) and more than one hundred papers.

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GREEK RELIGION AND  
CULTS IN THE BLACK  
SEA REGION

*Goddesses in the Bosporan Kingdom from the Archaic  
Period to the Byzantine Era*

DAVID BRAUND

*University of Exeter*



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## *Contents*

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	<i>page</i> vi
<i>List of Maps</i>	viii
<i>Preface</i>	ix
Introduction: Aims, Contexts and Connectivity	i
1 Crimean Parthenos, Artemis Tauropolos and Human Sacrifice	15
2 Crimean Parthenos in Greece, Anatolia and the Mediterranean World	61
3 Artemis of Ephesus in the Bosphoran Kingdom	96
4 Bosphoran Isis	134
5 The ‘Mistress of Apatouron’: Aphrodite Ourania and the Bosphoran Apatouria	187
6 Epilogue: Artemis, Aphrodite and Demeter	256
<i>Bibliography</i>	279
<i>Index</i>	311

## *Illustrations*

Images are my own, with the following exceptions. I am most grateful to the persons and institutions mentioned: 1–2. M. Yu. Vakhtina, Porthmium expedition, IIMK; 6. The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge; 7. V. P. Tolstikov, Pushkin Museum, Moscow; 8. V. A. Kutaisov, Cercinitis archaeological expedition; 9. O. Yu. Sokolova, The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg; 10. N. G. Novichenkova, Yalta Regional Museum; 11 and 18. Classical Numismatic Group Inc. [www.cngcoins.com](http://www.cngcoins.com); 15. V. P. Kopylov, Rostov-on-Don Historical Museum; 16–17. Dr Matthew Shillam; 22. V. N. Zin'ko, Demetra Foundation, Kerch.

1	The Bosporan narrows: view of Taman peninsula from Cape Fonar, near Porthmium. © M. Yu. Vakhtina, Porthmium expedition, IIMK	<i>page</i> 17
2	Parthenos dedication from Porthmium. © M. Yu Vakhtina, Porthmium expedition, IIMK	19
3	Probable location of Parthenos' extra-urban cult-centre near Chersonesus	20
4	Sea rocks at Myrmecium viewed from its acropolis	42
5	Panticapaeum acropolis ('Mt. Mithridates') viewed from Myrmecium	43
6	Dedication to Artemis Orthia from Sparta. © The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge	75
7	The earliest image of Artemis Ephesia? (Panticapaeum, found in 1949; Pushkin Museum, inv. no. GMII M-410). © V. P. Tolstikov, Pushkin Museum, Moscow	107
8	Dedication to Artemis Ephesia from Cercinitis. © V. A. Kutaisov, Cercinitis archaeological expedition	116
9	Nymphaeum fresco; detail at trireme prow: ISIS, Dioscurus, horse. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum. Photo by Svetlana Suetova	161

*Illustrations*

vii

10	Isis bust from Gurzuf. N. G. Novichenkova, Yalta Regional Museum	175
11	Heracles on Sindian coinage of the later fifth century B.C. © Classical Numismatic Group Inc. <a href="http://www.cngcoins.com">www.cngcoins.com</a>	192
12	Aphrodite and company: Motraye's drawing	204
13	The 'mud volcano' at Mayskaya Gora, above Phanagoria	214
14	Aphrodite Ourania riding a swan with Eros	224
15	Aphrodite Ourania riding a swan: gold pendant found at Elizavetovskoye. © V. P. Kopylov, Rostov-on-Don Historical Museum	225
16	Bronze coin of Caesarea (Panticapaeum) depicting Aphrodite Ourania (obverse). © Dr Matthew Shillam	244
17	Bronze coin of Queen Gepaepyris depicting Aphrodite Ourania (reverse). © Dr Matthew Shillam	245
18	Bronze coin of Sauromates II depicting Aphrodite Ourania, seated, holding sceptre and globe (or apple). © Classical Numismatic Group Inc. <a href="http://www.cngcoins.com">www.cngcoins.com</a>	246
19	Bol'shaya Bliznitsa: nineteenth-century drawing of excavations (F. Gross)	266
20	Depiction of Demeter or Kore from Bol'shaya Bliznitsa	266
21	Examining Demeter or Kore at Bol'shaya Bliznitsa (F. Gross)	267
22	'Tomb of Demeter' at Panticapaeum. © V. N. Zin'ko, Demetra Foundation, Kerch	269

*Maps*

- |   |  |                |
|---|--|----------------|
| 1 | Key locations in the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions | <i>page</i> xv |
| 2 | Key locations on the north coast of the Black Sea        | xvi            |

## *Preface*

More than three decades have elapsed since I began the Black Sea History Project, an enormous undertaking, of which this book is the latest creation. As I seek to explain in the Introduction, this book attempts to bridge a range of different divides in the study of the region in antiquity. It also aims to show the benefits of such an attempt for the Black Sea and for the ancient world more generally. In this book I focus upon the roles of principal goddesses and their cults in the coherence of the society and politics of the region, primarily in the Bosporean kingdom. While very many issues are at stake, my central concern is the interface between religion and politics, in the broadest sense, including society, economy and (perhaps most importantly here) the interactions between the Bosporean kingdom and other states around the ancient world. Accordingly, this book looks both at the internal workings of the Bosporean kingdom and at its dealings with the outside world, near at hand and as far away as Massalia and Egypt, for example. Further, in its larger aim at bridging divides, this book shares the overall philosophy of other works written under the aegis of the project, which I set out most explicitly in *Georgia in antiquity* (Oxford, 1994) and exemplified in *The treasures of Zghuderi* (Tbilisi, 2010), co-authored with I. Javakhishvili and G. Nemsadze. Some reflection is in order on progress over the intervening twenty years or so, which has been mixed – for the Project, for Black Sea studies as a whole, and for the shifting context of international relations within which we all live and work. The greatest advances in the ancient Black Sea have been fostered in continental Europe, where old traditions of pure academic research have remained strong and where old ties between west and east had subsisted to form a strong base for new, creative interactions of all kinds, some of them specified in the Introduction. Meanwhile, the academic culture of the Anglophone world has enjoyed little of that, despite some brave efforts. In the UK the ideology of the 1980s has flourished instead, claiming to pursue

excellence in a discourse of business management, from whose varied practice narrowness, dirigisme and short-termism seem to have been the main borrowings.

Accordingly, I am all the more grateful to the few serious students of the Black Sea region in the UK and elsewhere around the English-speaking world, not least for their moral support. Among these I include scholars of different specialisms who are alive to the potential of the region for a better understanding of the ancient world as a whole. In particular, Edith Hall has been a constant inspiration, whether in the UK or around the Black Sea. Over the years, Michael Vickers has been another important figure in my work, not only through his knowledge of material culture and thorough classical training, but also by virtue of his openness to real collaboration, most strikingly achieved at Pichvnari. Dorothy Thompson has been so kind as to give me constructive criticism of the chapter on Isis: she has saved me from more than one mistake. Stephanie West has been a regular source of wisdom, in person and in her writing, even if we often enough find ourselves on different sides of the argument. On matters of religion, I have benefited significantly from discussions with Barbara Kowalzig, in Greece and Russia. In fact, almost all the research and the writing of this book took place in Athens and St Petersburg, with occasional forays to friends in Moscow, Kiev and around the coasts of the Black Sea. Two wonderful libraries have been vital in every sense. Regular visits to the library of the Institute for the History of Material Culture (IIMK) in St Petersburg, together with its astonishing archives, have been productive and enjoyable precisely because its staff have been so very welcoming. The library of the British School at Athens has become my academic home in recent years. Again, its staff embody all the virtues that one hopes to find in the best librarians. It is, above all, these exceptional institutions and the international networks of conferences and the like that have made it possible to write this book. In the UK this serious kind of research environment has become harder to find, but it does subsist in the great centres. As to this book, I have benefited particularly from the courtesy and practical help of staff at the Institute for Classical Studies.

So many individuals have contributed to this book (even if they do not know it) that any list must be inadequate. Therefore, I shall seek to thank others in the context of institutions which have been especially important to me and to this book. In St Petersburg and Crimea, Marina Vakhtina has been a remarkable support and source of advice and constructive criticism. Without her help, I am sure that this book would never have been written (a heavy responsibility!). Her department at IIMK, headed by

*Preface*

xi

Yuri A. Vinogradov, and staffed by other key scholars besides, has opened its doors to me with a rare generosity of spirit, including me even in its internal work-in-progress seminars. Its neighbours have also been very helpful and generous with their time, wisdom and friendship. The remarkable linguist, epigrapher and historian, Sergey Tokhtas'yev, is an ever-present authority in my footnotes, as also are many of the staff of the Hermitage Museum, a truly world-class institution. I cannot specify all my many debts there, but am especially grateful to two of its scholars. First, Andrey Alekseyev, who has been overwhelmingly generous in his scholarship and in practical help, despite the fact that his broad Scythian concerns are often centred away from my primarily classical work, and amid many more pressing duties. Second, Olga Sokolova, by whose kind permission I have been able closely to study the remains of Nymphaeum, where she directs the important Hermitage expedition. A special word is also needed in acknowledgement of the series of conferences in St Petersburg under the title, *The Bosporan Phenomenon*, published by its key organisers. Together these papers form an extraordinary resource for the study of the Bosporan kingdom in all its aspects, so that it will recur through my footnotes.

Moscow has also been very important to this book and to my work in general. My first visit to much of the northern Black Sea was made in the company of Sergey Saprykin, Professor of Ancient History at Moscow State University. As so often, our friendship has made it possible and enjoyable to maintain discussions and ongoing disagreements over many years. Much the same may be said of his wife, Natalya Bylkova, whom I first met in the fine museum of Kherson. Another old friend, Aleksandr Maslennikov, is a towering presence at the Institute of Archaeology in Moscow, as also in the field in the Crimea. I shall always see him in the context of the wild and stunningly beautiful north-eastern coast of the Crimea. He is principal editor of *Drevnosti Bospora (Antiquities of the Bosporus)*, arguably the most important periodical for the region. Moscow is also the base of the remarkable team which excavates at the huge site of Phanagoria on the Taman peninsula, led by Vladimir Kuznetsov, whom I first met in 1988 in the Moscow winter. His team boasts all the skills, including the historian Aleksey Zavoykin and epigrapher Natalya Zavoykina, who together first showed me a large portion of the peninsula. From time to time, I have had valuable visits to the Pushkin Museum and to the Museum of History, whose Denis Zhuravlyov has given me important help with publications. On the Pushkin Museum's major discoveries at Panticapaeum I have much to say in the Introduction, but I wish also to take this opportunity to thank Vladimir Tolstikov, the expedition-leader, for his help in a range of

matters over the years. Also to be thanked is Aleksandr Podosinov, who maintains in Russia the highest standards of classical philology, together with philologist colleagues, especially in St Petersburg (among whom Natalya Pavlichenko has been notably helpful to me). Moscow is also the home of the venerable *Vestnik Drevnei Istorii* (*Journal of Ancient History*), to whose editorial team I am proud to belong. I am also extremely grateful to its chief editor, Askold Ivantchik (CNRS, Bordeaux, and Academy of Sciences, Moscow), who has been a constant source of support and informed debate.

In Kiev I am indebted to Sergey Kryzhitskiy<sup>†</sup> and his classical colleagues at the National Academy of Sciences, notably Alla Buyskikh, Sergey Buyskikh and Marina Skrzhinskaya, as well as several Scythologists, most notably Yuri Boltryk and Nadya Gavriilyuk. Tetiana Shevchenko gave valuable help at the Museum of the Institute of Archaeology. This key research group has also lost two close friends, prematurely deceased: their help was fundamental to all my dealings with the Black Sea region. Vitaliy Zubar worked hard to feed my hunger for literature, while Valentina Krapivina always showed me the unfailing kindness that went with her powerful intellect and genuine love for her students and her subject, especially Olbia, where I first found her – characteristically – surrounded by adoring canines. Our field has been robbed of some of its very best in recent years. Further south again, I have spent many happy and fruitful times in Kerch, ancient Panticapaeum, with its two principal institutions. I am very grateful to friends at Kerch Museum (including its breathtaking epigraphic collection) and also to the Demetra Foundation, directed by Viktor Zinko, who has always made me feel very welcome at its regular conferences. This has brought me important friendships, not least with Yevgeniy Molev and Natalya Moleva of Nizhniy Novgorod University, one of a chain of important institutions along the Volga. Elsewhere around the Crimea, I have often benefited too from colleagues at Khersonesos (Sevastopol') and Simferopol', where I am especially indebted to Valentina Mordvintseva and Yuri Zaytsev. In Yalta, Natalya Novichenkova has also been most helpful, as has Vadim Kutaisov in Yevpatoria (ancient Cercinitis). Across the Sea of Azov, I am grateful also to Viktor Kopylov, who has been unfailingly generous over the years, not least in showing me the rich archaeology in and around ancient Tanais (Rostov-on-Don).

This lengthy list could, and probably should, have been much longer. The academic world of Black Sea antiquity brings with it friendship and mutual support from scholars across many countries, besides Russia and Ukraine. Denmark has been central, through the Black Sea Centre (no

*Preface*

xiii

longer with us: its director, my friend Pia Guldager Bilde being another premature loss) and the individuals who created or came out of it. Among these, I owe a series of debts to Vladimir Stolba, and not only in matters of numismatics. In France and Germany, there are debts of all kinds, which cannot be acknowledged in detail, but some scholars here have left a particular impression on my work, including Alexandru Avram, Balbina Baebler, Claire Barat, Gaelle Coqueugniot, Anca Dan, Pierre Dupont, Yvon Garlan and Heinz Heinen, who also left us far too early, albeit with his excellent former students, notably Victor Cojocaru (Romania) and Altay Coskun (Canada). Also in Germany, Mikhail Treister has been particularly generous with his remarkable knowledge, particularly on metals of the region. Patric-Alexander Kreuz has been another inspiration, and good companion in Russia. The appearance of his great study of Bosphoran tombstones and the like has given me an extra spur towards finishing this book. More recently, I have begun to appreciate the west coast of the Black Sea much more, thanks to Alexander Minchev and Yulia Valeva, who in their different ways (together with Elias Petropoulos and Consuelo Manetta) have given me a stronger sense of Balkan-Pontic continuities, which is all the clearer from a base in Athens, where there is a constant flow of rare individuals in all fields. Among those who have helped this book in various ways, I thank especially Theodora Jim, Konstantinos Kalogeropoulos, Stephen Lambert, Vassiliki Machaira, Jeremy McInerney, Ben Millis, Cathy Morgan, Olga Palagia, Chryssanthi Papadopoulou, Robert Pitt, Linda Talata and Alexandra Villing. With these I may bracket also Dominique Kassab Tezgör, Alfred Twardecki and Maya Muratova (a north Pontic specialist in the USA on the Pushkin team at Panticapaeum, *rara avis*). In Australia (and, at times, Exeter) Matthew Shillam not only got me thinking harder about the Augustan kings, but also supplied me with information on Bosphoran coins.

Despite all this help, I have no doubt that this book contains imperfections, errors and omissions, for books always do in some degree. All responsibility for these remains with me. However, I also hope that this book may escape the (very occasional) travesty which *Georgia in antiquity* suffered, whether through ignorance, malice or both. Before denouncing omissions, I hope that critics might at least consult the index, if they cannot read the book. As for errors, critics might also consider whether their notional error is in fact a different point of view: here, consultation of footnotes may assist, as well as my attempt to elucidate recurrent methodological issues in the Introduction. No doubt this book will also face bewildering (and yet now strangely familiar) complaints from some

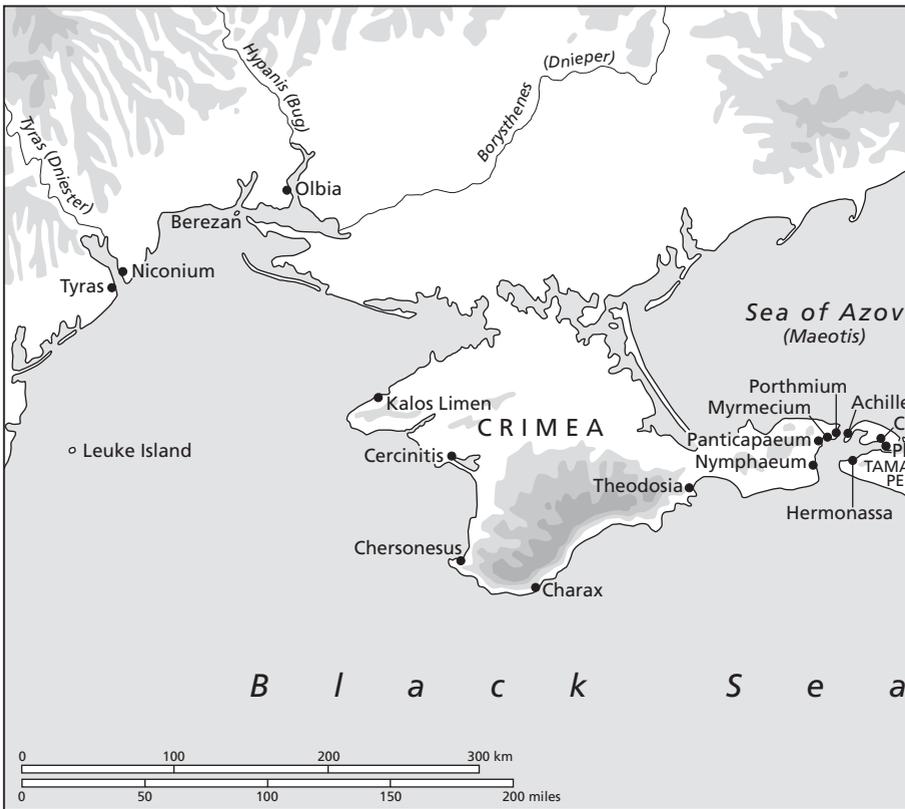
that I refer to work in languages which they cannot read. In truth, I have often given undue prominence to such studies as may exist in English, while taking into account my position on plagiarism (as set out in the Introduction), which reduces their number a little. At the same time, I am sure too that readers committed to nationalist agendas of various kinds will find much to denounce, whether in toponyms (a favourite focus) or in some more dastardly form. Throughout this book, in fact, I have found it easy to ignore all demands from the scourge of nationalism, from whatever source. I have simply used toponyms and the like in the forms in which they are most frequently employed among scholars everywhere. (It is transliteration that remains the greater problem.) I wholly resile from any attempt to use antiquity in support of claims about the world today, for these are invariably bogus and dangerous.

Finally, on happier matters, I wish to thank (and also apologise to!) those of my students and colleagues at Exeter who have been willing to engage with my curious obsessions over the years: they have contributed a lot to this book. I am very grateful also to Fritz Graf, who made a series of valuable observations on the full text, which have certainly brought improvements. Michael Sharp and his colleagues at CUP have shown a depth of interest in this book that is not always evident in the world of academic publishing: I am most grateful to them for their labours. My brilliant friend Robert Pitt not only proofread and indexed the book, but also helped me with specific issues of content, not least epigraphy. In sum, the writing of this book has been sometimes a pain and largely a joy; I shall be more than satisfied if the reading of it proves to be much the same experience.

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Map 1 Key locations in the Mediterranean and Black Sea



Map 2 Key locations on the north coast of the Black