

THE METAL AGES AND MEDIEVAL PERIOD

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**PALEOLANDSCAPE RECONSTRUCTION
OF THE ABRAU PENINSULA LITTORAL (KRASNODAR TERRITORY):
BASED ON SEDIMENTS AT THE ENTRANCE OF LOBANOVA SHCHEL**

Burial ground horizons dating as far back as the 6th–2nd centuries BC and the cultural layers associated with settlements dated to the Late Bronze (?) Age, the Classical Antiquity, and the Middle Ages, have been identified during a multidisciplinary study of sediments exposed by trenching at the entrance of Lobanova Shchel (Lobanova Gorge), near a burial ground of the 6th–2nd centuries BC. The study has provided insights into general regularities of paleolandscape evolution in the littoral zone of the Abrau Peninsula. A correlation between the composition of plant communities, changes in sea level, seismic and sedimentary processes has been carried out.

Keywords: Paleolandscape, archaeological occupation sites, burial sites, stratigraphy, multidisciplinary study, palynology, soil science, cercetae, toreatae.

Introduction

A multidisciplinary study focused on a range of archaeological sites (Abrau Antiqua..., 2009) has been carried out in the last decade on the Abrau Peninsula (which is in the Krasnodar Territory, in the valleys of the Tsemes, Maskaga and Myskhako rivers); and in the littoral zone that includes the southern slope of the Navagir Ridge (which is fragmented by a number of deep gorges formed during tectonic and erosion processes)—a mountain area referred to as Lobanova Shchel. The valley of Lobanova Shchel*

is a rather deep gorge located on the southern slope of the Navagir Ridge stretching from Anapa to Abrau-Dyurso. At a distance of 1 km out of its mouth, a stream covered by its sediments runs through the valley and falls into the Black Sea as far as 1.3 km east of the Cape of Malyi Utrish. A deeply stratified archaeological site of Lobanova Shchel* is located on the left slope of the valley, near its mouth (Fig. 1). It is not possible to estimate accurately all the phases of occupation at Lobanova Shchel, owing to the lack of chronological data for some archaeological deposits.

*Named after a landed property which was owned by the Lobanov-Rostovsky family until 1917.

*Studied from 1984 through 2010, with a total of 230 m² of sediments exposed in this area (Dmitriev, Malyshev, 1999; Kolpakova, Shishlov, Fedorenko, 2011).

In 1998, O.E. Vyazkova conducted a reconstruction of the geomorphological situation in this region dating back to the period of Classical Antiquity (Vyazkova, 1999). In her view, the area, where the deeply stratified site is situated, has a complicated structure resulting from the long-lasting process of the valley's formation and its use by humans. The landscape formation of this region was influenced by the following factors: sea-level fluctuations that changed significantly the coastline and the land area; watercourses that flowed through the mountain valleys and turned into torrents during rainy seasons; a rather intense seismic activity that accelerated landslide processes; plus a significant sea-wave activity in the surf zone, on the one hand, and the presence of some "buffer" formed by a conglomeration of large landslide blocks protecting the foot of the ridge from the wave action of the sea, on the other hand (Fig. 2).

In 2007, an investigation of the deposits constituting the southern slope of Lobanova Shchel, which were exposed during the excavations of the cemetery, was carried out. The studied section was a 3.5-meter high trench wall (Fig. 3). The previous paleolandscape study was mainly focused on the inland areas of the Abrau Peninsula (Spiridonova, Aleshinskaya, Kochanova, 2009). Since the 2007 reconstruction of natural environment features was concentrated on the coastline, it included, in particular, sea-level fluctuations in the studied time periods, changes in precipitation patterns, and the temporal development of paleosol processes.

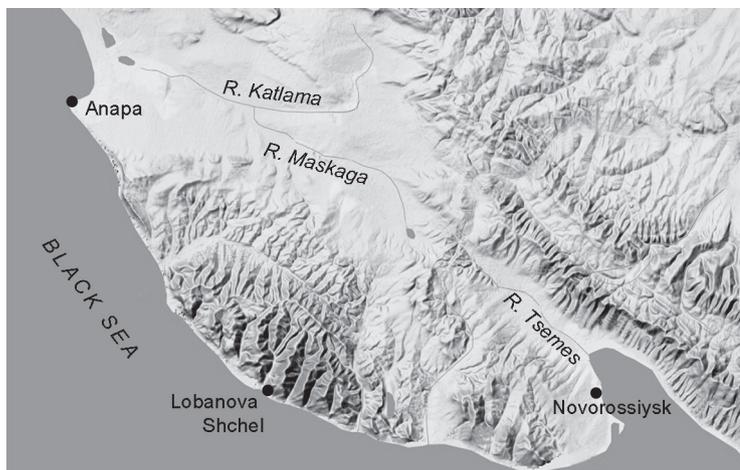


Fig. 1. Location of the site of Lobanova Shchel on the Abrau Peninsula.

Stratigraphic description of the section down from the surface

0–20 cm – the present-day sod, dark gray, loose, with abundant roots, including a considerable amount of large rock debris from the surface. The bottom interface is diffuse and can be recognized by reduction of the gray color intensity.

20–40 cm – a brownish-gray transitional organo-mineral layer. It is denser than the previous one, with a lesser amount of debris inclusions of a smaller size. The bottom interface is diffuse and symbolic. The basic criterion for recognition of the next layer is the increased intensity of whitish-brown color.

40–70 cm – a homogeneous mineral layer of light-brown and grayish colors, dense, containing a considerable

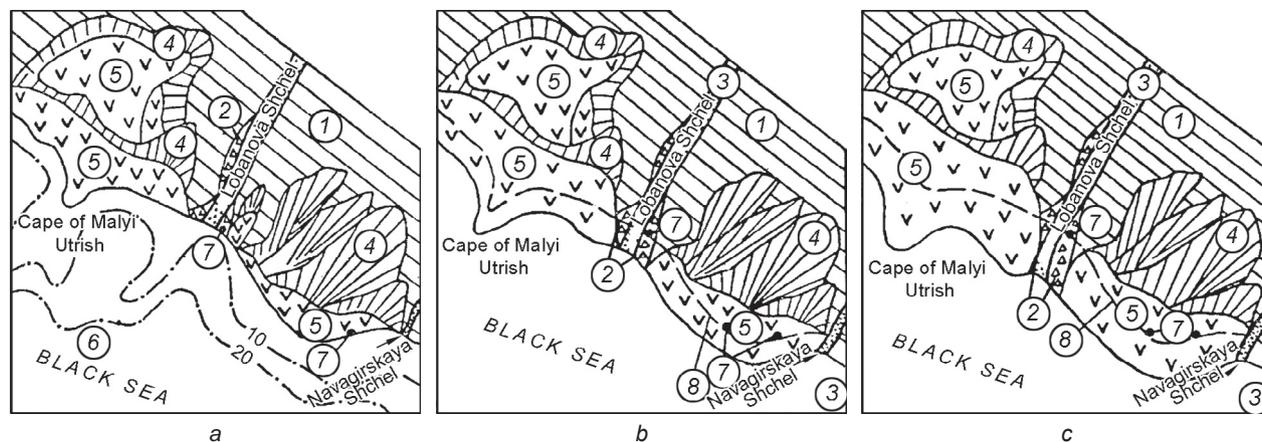


Fig. 2. Geomorphologic schematic map showing the location of the antique sites near Lobanova Shchel (scale 1:50 000) (after (Vyazkova, 1999: Fig. 1)).

a – present-day; *b* – time period before the catastrophe (ca 10th century); *c* – the early Christian Era.

1 – deluvial deposits of the Quaternary slopes; 2 – deluvial deposits of the piedmont slopes; 3 – alluvial and proluvial deposits of river valleys and gorges; 4 – cirques and planes of seismic stripping of peaks and slopes (mainly stratal or the like); 5 – stripped or redeposited bedrock massifs; 6 – isobaths; 7 – archaeological sites; 8 – the present-day coastline depicted on schemes illustrating paleoreconstructions.

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