Author's Preface

Richard Posamentir

I begin with a matter of particular importance to me: expressing my profound gratitude to Joseph Coleman Carter, director of the Institute for Classical Archaeology (ICA). Professor Carter initially intended to be the author of a new, comprehensive work on the grave stelai of Chersonesos. Over time, though, coordinating the constantly expanding Chersonesos project in collaboration with the National Preserve of Tauric Chersonesos (NPTC) became such a responsibility that he was unable to pursue the study of the grave-stones. In the end, showing an incomparable generosity of spirit, he handed the privilege of writing this volume to this author. He has also supported my work in every imaginable way, trusted my judgment when I decided that some huge stone blocks somewhere in the city wall were probably parts of our gravestones, and, by doing so, provided me with an example of what scientific endeavor can be, and what, in fact, it always should be.

Likewise, I owe my unbounded gratitude to the National Preserve of Tauric Chersonesos and its director, Leonid Marchenko, who supported my work with sympathy and interest. I began working in Chersonesos as a senior research fellow in the German Research Foundation's (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, or DFG) priority program "Forms and Approaches in Acculturation in the Eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea Area," based out of Ruhr Uni-

versity in Bochum. I cannot give enough credit to Adolf Hoffmann, then director of the Istanbul Section of the German Archaeological Institute, for making it possible for me to continue that work freely in Istanbul. I must also thank the DFG and its reviewers for accepting me into their priority program in the first place, and for providing funds for my position from December 2001 to March 2003 and for certain additional materials later on.

A great many people were involved in the creation of this book, making it perhaps more appropriate that I relate briefly the events of the past years rather than simply give a list of their names; this may also help to explain why publication of this unique group of monuments has taken so long. Although the gravestones of Chersonesos had already witnessed a fair amount of turmoil in their history, their reexamination from 2001 to 2006 is likely to remain vivid in the memories of those involved for a long time to come.

I began to study the gravestones in the summer of 2001 following a brief introductory visit in the summer of 2000. At that time the stelai were stored in a dilapidated but nonetheless remarkable complex that had once been part of the monastery associated with the cathedral of St. Volodymyr at Chersonesos. Officially called Fondi 4, it served as a storage space for the stelai and other artifacts. After being tentatively arranged and cataloged by Professor Carter and photographer Chris Williams, they stood, one next to the other, leaning against steel support structures built especially for that purpose (*Fig. vi*). In that dimly lit setting—a circumstance practical for my work—I photographed the stelai under ultraviolet (UV) and raking light, and made the first attempts to find matches among the various pieces. Meanwhile, a small garden of stones took shape in front of the building as additional stele fragments were found. These were discovered, or rediscovered, at three different locations around the excavation site, but no space could be made for them in the storage structure, which by then was bursting at the seams.

Figure vi The author, Joseph Carter, and John Twilley in Fondi 4.

Figure vii Planning for the relocation of the display; lines in yellow indicate structural support for gravestones.

In the winter of 2001–2002 the condition of the building’s wooden roof, which had long before begun a gradual slide into disrepair, deteriorated to such an extent that relocating the valuable monuments had become imperative by the summer of 2002. After considerable debate, we decided with heavy hearts to move the gravestones into the “Ancient Hall” of the Chersonesos Museum. Formerly the monastery’s refectory, this was the exhibition space for artifacts from the Greek and Roman periods. Architect Jodi Lane supplied digital plans for this facility; these plans managed to convince even those with lingering doubts that the project could succeed (*Fig. vii*). Meanwhile, the ever increasing number of unrestored and uncleaned stele fragments would be stored temporarily in steel storage buildings (see *Fig. 3.4*) constructed for the Preserve by ICA. Within days these temporary structures were built in what had been the garden of the monastery. Three of them still stand there today, full to the brim with unrestored stone monuments. With the help of strong, specially manufactured wooden stretchers (known as *nasilkias*, these often fulfill the role of wheelbarrows at excavations in the Black Sea region), plastic-foam packing blankets,

and with the aid of staff members representing many different nationalities, the stelai were painstakingly transferred “by hand” from Fondi 4 into the Ancient Hall. Every person involved in that job found out, in a manner not soon to be forgotten, which sizes of stones could be manipulated more or less without the aid of machines, and why others had to be broken more than 2,000 years earlier in order to be reused in the Tower of Zeno, part of the city’s fortifications.

Fondi 4 and the monastery complex were torn down in the winter of 2002–03. In their place, a modern restoration laboratory with workrooms and a storage facility was planned for construction with funds from the Packard Humanities Institute. The lower floors of this building were intended to supply the urgently needed space and ideal storage conditions for the gravestones. It should have come as no surprise to anyone, though, that construction workers would encounter the remains of ancient structures shortly after beginning to dig for the new project. This discovery meant that an archaeological investigation had to be conducted and several modifications made to the original plan. That process was led by Stanislav Ryzhov in the summer of 2003, and I was involved because it delved into layers that were of chronological relevance for the gravestones that we were studying (*Fig. viii*). Moreover, there was reason to suspect that the site might contain the remains of an earlier necropolis and shed light on its organization in the 4th–3rd centuries BC. In the end, that hope was not entirely satisfied, but the investigation did bring to light one section of a grave monument (next to an *ustrinum*) that had been destroyed by a massive structure, possibly part of the 4th-century BC city wall (*Fig. ix*).

Figure viii Excavation on site of future Packard Lab.

Figure ix Remains of grave monument, Packard Lab site.

The events described above and other hindrances delayed work on construction of the new laboratory and storage facilities, and the project was not completed until the summer of 2006. During that time the gravestones lived out a kind of shadow existence in the Museum, which by then had also fallen into disrepair and was closed to visitors. Only limited access was possible. As a result, in the 2004 and 2005 summer expeditions, archaeological activities concentrated on determining the overall reconstruction and precise location of the necropolis in which the stelai once stood. For this purpose, a team of architects—Christina Lippert, Andreas Schanze, Iris Engelmann, and Marco Böber—closely reexamined the various structural elements that came from the Tower of Zeno. The results of their efforts will be presented in a second volume. The search for comparable monuments in other Black Sea cities continued in those summers as well.

Once the new storage facility had been completed, relocating the gravestones proceeded more rapidly, in part because the staff knew what needed to be done and in part because a professional conservator, Chris Cleere, was on hand to supervise and coordinate the effort. By the time of the move, the Museum had been

closed down completely due to safety concerns. That inspired the idea of organizing a small exhibit and creating a catalog devoted to the gravestones of Chersonesos to mark the occasion of the ceremonial opening of the Packard Laboratory. That exhibit, in one of the new building's workrooms, also provided the ideal occasion to clean those stele fragments that had been matched and have them reconnected through the most advanced restoration standards. The work on the exhibit and catalog did delay the task of preparing the final results for publication, but all of the people involved felt a need to take that delay in stride because it was relatively clear that were this exhibit not created, there would be essentially no archaeological artifacts of the Greek period on display at Chersonesos for a long time to come.

A celebration of the opening of the Packard Laboratory and of the exhibit was held on July 20, 2006, in the presence of Ukrainian and U.S. dignitaries, including the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine at the time, William Taylor, and former ambassador William Miller and his wife, Suzanne. With that event, the travels of the gravestones came to an end, at least for some time. All of these tasks, from the transfer of the stones to their cleaning, storage, and reexhibition, placed great demands even on those who were not directly involved in the manual processes, because everyone had to keep track of what was going on. The various relocation activities did have one positive side effect, however: every move was accompanied by the rediscovery in some long forgotten cabinet of objects belonging to the necropolis that could then be included in the study. Chris Williams created a database with photos that he provided, and this served as an indispensable tool in our work. Adela Sobotkova helped me, during the 2002 expedition, to compile descriptions of many more pieces, some of which have not made it into this first volume. This holds especially true for a huge variety of architectural elements that will be presented in a future volume.

My work from 2002 on profited greatly from conversations with several of my Ukrainian colleagues, who willingly put up with the “Western scholar” and his “Atheno-centric” worldview while exchanging thoughts and ideas on the issues. Galina Zheszkova, Ludmilla Golovchenko, Inga Shvedova, and other employees of the Chersonesos Museum have kept a watchful eye out for the well-being of the

painted gravestones, both in their old surroundings in the monastery building and in the new Packard Laboratory. They also supported me in my yearly work expeditions in the kindest and most liberal way imaginable—particularly when it came to working hours—and for that I would like to voice my heartfelt thanks. This also applies to the staff of the Archives of the National Preserve of Tauric Chersonesos and the Library of the National Preserve of Tauric Chersonesos, which, although small, is unsurpassed in the field of Chersonesan studies. I would also like to mention Ludmilla Grinenko in particular, who was an invaluable source of information and assistance.

My gratitude also extends to Adam Rabinowitz and Jessica Trelogan, both members of the ICA project for many years, and to Jodi Lane, with whom I had the opportunity to spend time in the remarkable atmosphere of Chersonesos Taurike. Chris Cleere, Erin Tyson, Natalya Streltsova, and Duygu Cleere were responsible for the cleaning, gluing and placement of the stelai in the Packard Lab. As I mentioned above, Chris also supervised the second move of the stelai into that facility.

I will not forget the organizational support that Asele Surina and later Marina Krotova provided over the course of multiple expeditions, with great sympathy and humor at all times, nor Natalia Streltsova and above all Yulia Miroshnichenko, who spent many a long day with me in the library, helping me with translations. Staff member Sergey Koseykin accompanied me with his Lada and his driving skills to many excavation sites, museums, and depots, increasing my familiarity with and understanding of the region. Iris Engelmann and Chris Williams managed the complicated production of the standard photographic work, which presented a special challenge in view of the constantly changing conditions and requirements. I also make grateful mention of Ethan Spanier and Adela Sobotkova, without whose assistance and commitment the first move of the stelai in 2002 would hardly have been possible.

We are thankful for the ongoing support of Prof. Dr. M. Piotrovskii, director of the Hermitage, St. Petersburg and Dr. Y. Kalashnik, senior curator

of the Chersonesos collection for providing invaluable access to the relevant objects stored in their museum and permission to photograph them. Additional thanks to the following colleagues for permission to reproduce items from their collections: Dr. V. Tolstikov, Director of the department of antiquities at Pushkin Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow; Dr. D. Zhuravlev, senior curator at the State Historical Museum, Moscow; Dr. E. Ustaeva, senior curator at the Taman Museum; Dr. N. Bykovskaya, senior curator at the Kerch Museum, and Dr. O. Galut, senior curator at the Anapa Museum. We are especially grateful to Dr. D. Zhuravlev, State Historical Museum, Moscow, for discussion, substantial help with images, and information from Russian and Ukrainian museums.

Finally, it is also very important to me to mention all of the Ukrainian students and staff who helped me in handling the stones. In the early days I laboriously rolled the stones myself from point A to point B, driven by a rock-solid faith in the ultimate success of the project. Later, during the first expedition of 2001, I had the assistance of Alexandr Sakhno and Andrej Boltenko; in 2002, Katja Motia, Larissa Novitskaja, Aleksandr Kuzmin, Dmitry Davydov, Roman Reida, Felix Filipianko, Vladimir Kinin, and others took part in these activities and ultimately in the move of the stelai. Some of the staff from that group are still on the job today and removed more stelai from their shelves once again (and, we hope, for the last time) in the summer of 2006, so that Iris Engelmann could photograph them. Only someone who has worked firsthand with large stones can appreciate how difficult and even dangerous such work can be. In retrospect, the knowledge that all involved headed out each evening with smiles on their faces and that no one was ever seriously injured (the stelai emerged unscathed as well) fills me with profound satisfaction—and, of course with gratitude to the entire staff. This volume is dedicated to all of you and, above all, to Dr. David Packard and the Packard Humanities Institute, whose generous financial support made this project possible.

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Chersonesan Studies 1

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**I. The Polychrome Grave Stelai
from the Early Hellenistic Necropolis**

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