

LETTER ON AN OSTRACON FROM THE SETTLEMENT OF VYSHESTEBLIEVSKAYA-3

In the summer of 2013 the Taman Archaeological Team of the Institute of the History of Material Culture (IHMC) RAS conducted protective archaeological investigations within the framework of reconstructing the railway station Vyshesteblievskaya (State Project no. 4848).

The site under study is situated in territory of the Vyshesteblievsky rural district of the Temryuk region of the Krasnodar Kray. It is located between the railway stations of Vyshesteblievskaya and Starotitarovskaya. The settlement stretches from north-west to south-east with a nearly trapezoid shape. Its dimensions are 540 × 500 m. The excavation trench ran across the entire area of the site from west to east over the southern edge of the settlement (Fig. 1) along the line of the railway, 4 to 5 m north of its embankment.

The most numerous finds from the cultural level and the investigated structural complexes are represented by fragments of clay pottery – mostly container amphorae of Greek production. Also discovered were small quantities of fragmentary handmade pottery, wheel-made tableware, rare shards of black-glossed ware and animal bones (Figs. 2, 3, 4). Found among the amphora fragments were mostly redware vessels from such manufacturing centres as Chios, Lesbos, Thasos, Herakleia and Sinope.

The earliest types include plump-necked Chian amphorae and ‘proto-Thasian’ amphorae dating from the first half of the 5th century BC. Examples of the later period are represented by straight-necked Chian vessels and amphorae with a conical foot, amphorae from Sinope, Herakleia and Thasos dated to the 4th century BC.

Fragments of redware and greyware table pottery were found in small quantities. Thus the fragmentary amphorae from different manufacturing centres were the main category of finds.

Among the finds there were also some 70 amphora fragments with stamps from different Greek centres (Thasos, Herakleia, Sinope, Chersonesos, Rhodes etc.).¹

¹ Kashaev, Pavlichenko 2015 [С. В. Кашаев, Н. А. Павличенко, “Коллекция керамических клейм с поселения Вышестеблиевская-3”], in print.

Black-glossed and painted ware of Attic production² is represented mostly by small fragments, though archaeologically complete vessels have also been retrieved. The finds include, in addition, objects of everyday use and armaments – whetstones, fragmentary lamps, arrowheads, a leaden sling-bullet. The finds representing the religious notions of the ancient residents of the village include terracotta statuettes of the most revered goddesses – Demeter and Aphrodite.

Generally all the finds from the cultural levels are datable to between the 5th century BC and the 1st century AD. The earliest artefacts are datable to the late 6th or the turn from the 6th to the 5th centuries BC.

During the excavations, 32 different structural complexes were discovered – a series of household pits and an object arbitrarily called a ‘Ditch’ (Fig. 1). These archaeological complexes are dated from the 5th to the 2nd centuries BC.

Uncovered in the western section of the excavation in Areas nos. 1 to 26 were complexes and artefacts dated predominantly to the early 5th century BC. In the eastern section in Areas 27 to 50 were found complexes and objects dated mostly to the late 5th to 2nd centuries BC. The chronological distribution of the finds could well be understood to characterize in a general way the limits of the evolution of the site during the historical periods mentioned above.

Noteworthy among the finds are two multiline graffiti on amphora walls including a private letter.

The letter was found at the first spade dig in the turf layer of excavation square A, Б-80 (Area 40) where the structure ‘Ditch’ was found and excavated to the level of the virgin soil.

The depth of the ‘Ditch’ precisely at its the centre was 2.0 to 2.2 m from the present-day surface. Its depth from the ancient ground surface was possibly some 1.7 m.

Considering the fact that only a small area of the ‘Ditch’ has been excavated, it is difficult to guess the latter’s original purpose. Initially the ‘Ditch’ may have been a fortification structure defending the eastern border of the settlement from external attacks. The plan of distribution of household pits studied in this excavation area seems to confirm this supposition. The majority of the excavated pits are located over the area limited by the ‘Ditch’ on the east and by Area 28 on the west. Both from Area 28 and the fill of the ‘Ditch’ anomalously great numbers of pottery fragments have been retrieved.

² Dracheva 2014 [Е. Ю. Драчева, “Краснофигурный килик из раскопок поселения Вышестеблиевская-3”], 43–47.

The fact that no stratigraphic layers, lenses, soil leakages nor early artefacts have been discovered at bottom of the 'Ditch' suggests that if filling of the latter did not take place all at one time then anyway very quickly. It might have been the case that numerous pottery fragments and ashes had already been thrown into it in the course of clearing the settlement (or part of it) after a fire. This fire could have been caused by warfare as indicated by finds of a bronze arrowhead and a leaden sling-bullet.

The overwhelming majority of the pottery fragments from the fill of the 'Ditch' are dated from the second half of the 4th century BC whereas the latest finds are datable to the first quarter of the 3rd century BC. Thus the date of the filling of the 'Ditch' seems to have been circa 275 BC.

Most of the materials from the fill are fairly homogeneous in terms of chronology and typology. For instance fragments of Chian conical-toe amphorae and feet of Sinopean ones were found both in the upper and near-bottom layers of the 'Ditch'.

East of the 'Ditch' the number of artefacts from the layer and of archaeological structures sharply decrease. Possibly, in the late 4th to early 3rd centuries BC, the 'Ditch' formed the eastern border of the settlement.

As mentioned above, the letter on an ostrakon was found not in an association but at the first spade's length in the turf layer over the structure 'Ditch'. It is possible that it belongs to the fill of the 'Ditch' but that in the course of recent tillage or other economic activities the sherd would have been displaced into the upper layers.

The earliest materials yielded by these layers – i.e. from the first to fourth spade's lengths in square A, Б-80 – are represented by fragments of rims and handles of Chian plump-necked amphorae from between 490 and 470 BC (Fig. 2. 6); this is variant III-B after S. Yu. Monakhov.³ It should be noted that these pieces are fairly rare and came to the layer in the early period of the settlement's occupation.

The latest and most widespread finds include fragments of rims, handles and feet of Chian conical-toe type amphorae dated to some time in the 4th century BC (Figs. 2. 1, 5, 22, 23; 3. 12, 14); it is variant V-B after S. Yu. Monakhov.⁴

As is common in many settlements of the 4th century BC, tableware is represented by numerous fragments in this layer – pitchers, bowls, plates,

³ Monakhov 2003 [С. Ю. Монахов, *Греческие амфоры в Причерноморье. Типология амфор ведущих центров-экспортеров товаров в керамической таре. Каталог-определитель*], 17, 236 Table 6.

⁴ Monakhov 2003, 21, 22, 242 Table 12.

fish-plates etc. For instance the excavation of the settlement Panskoye I yielded numerous similar finds from layers and complexes of the same period.⁵

The quantity and percent composition of the finds from square A, Б-80, is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Quantity and Percent Ratio of Finds from Square A, Б-80

	Tiles	Am-phorae	Table-ware	Hand-made	Glossed	Other	Total	%
Spade's dig 1	1	341	20	3	1	0	366	33.39
Spade's dig 2	2	132	5	0	0	0	139	12.68
Spade's dig 3	0	103	5	4	0	1	113	10.31
Spade's dig 4	3	407	48	19	1	0	478	43.61
Total	6	983	78	26	2	1	1096	100.00
%	0.55	89.69	7.12	2.37	0.18	0.09	100.00	

All the finds from spade's depths from 1 to 4 are dated to the time span from approximately the second half of the 5th century to the mid-3rd century BC and thus enabling us to date the ostrakon with the letter only to a very indefinite period.

The text of the letter consists of three lines in Greek scratched on the external side of a fragment of an amphora wall (field no. 340/30).⁶ The well-levigated reddish clay with admixtures of gold-yellow mica and white quartz (?) with a slip lighter than the texture would seem to suggest an amphora of a Mediterranean origin (Thasian circle?). Unfortunately the surface of the shard is chipped off on the left side. On the internal surface of the fragment, near the left edge of the inscription, traces of intentional scraping or cutting are discernible. These were produced by some tool with a flat edge, apparently in order to make this area of the wall as even as possible. Thus the left edge of the shard was parallel to this scraped area at that point when the graffito was written. The amphora fragment measures 8.0 to 7.5 cm. (Figs. 5, 6).

⁵ Kašaeв 2002, 150–179.

⁶ The authors are grateful to Alexander Verlinsky for his valuable remarks and corrections on the epigraphic part.

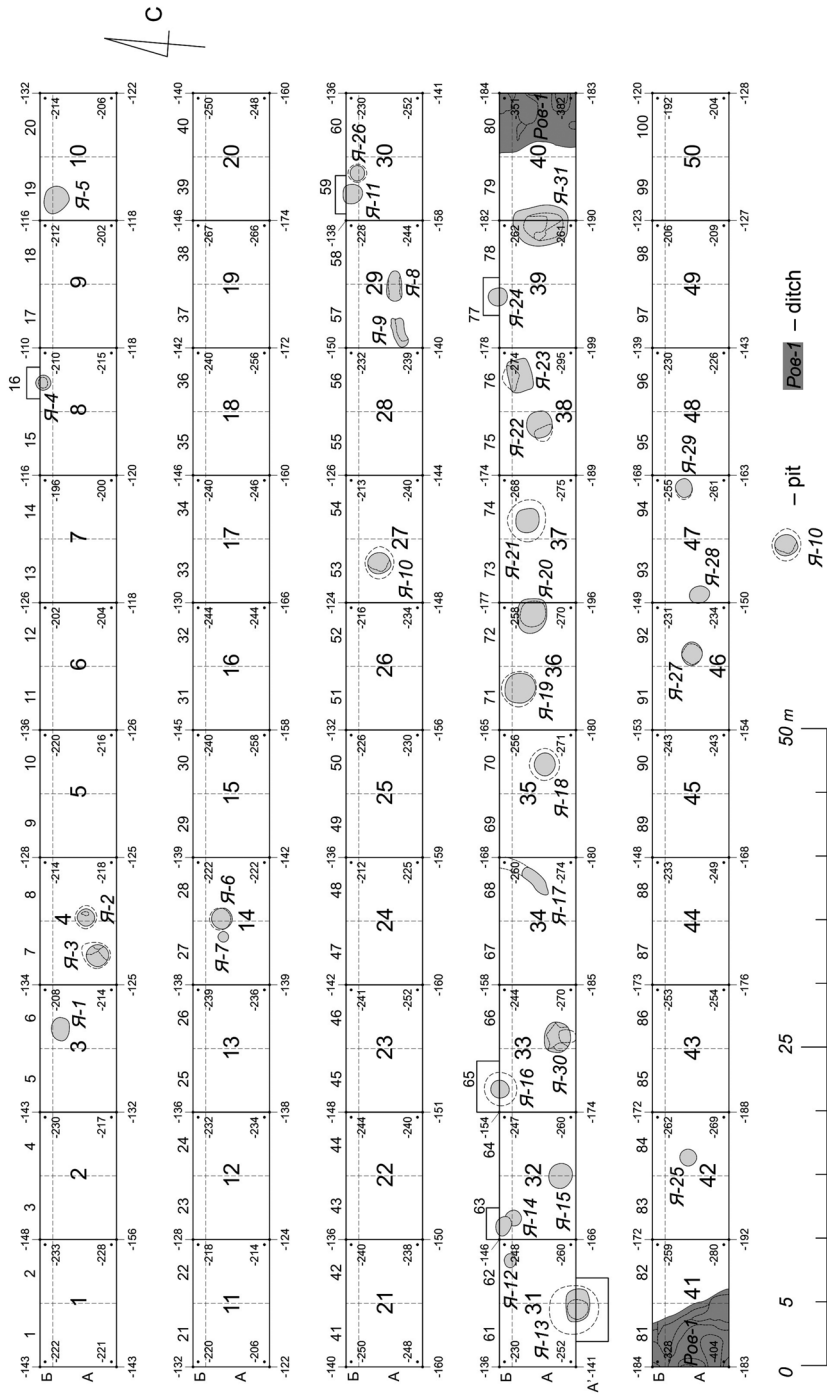


Fig. 1. Plan of excavation at the site of Vyshesteblievskaya-3.

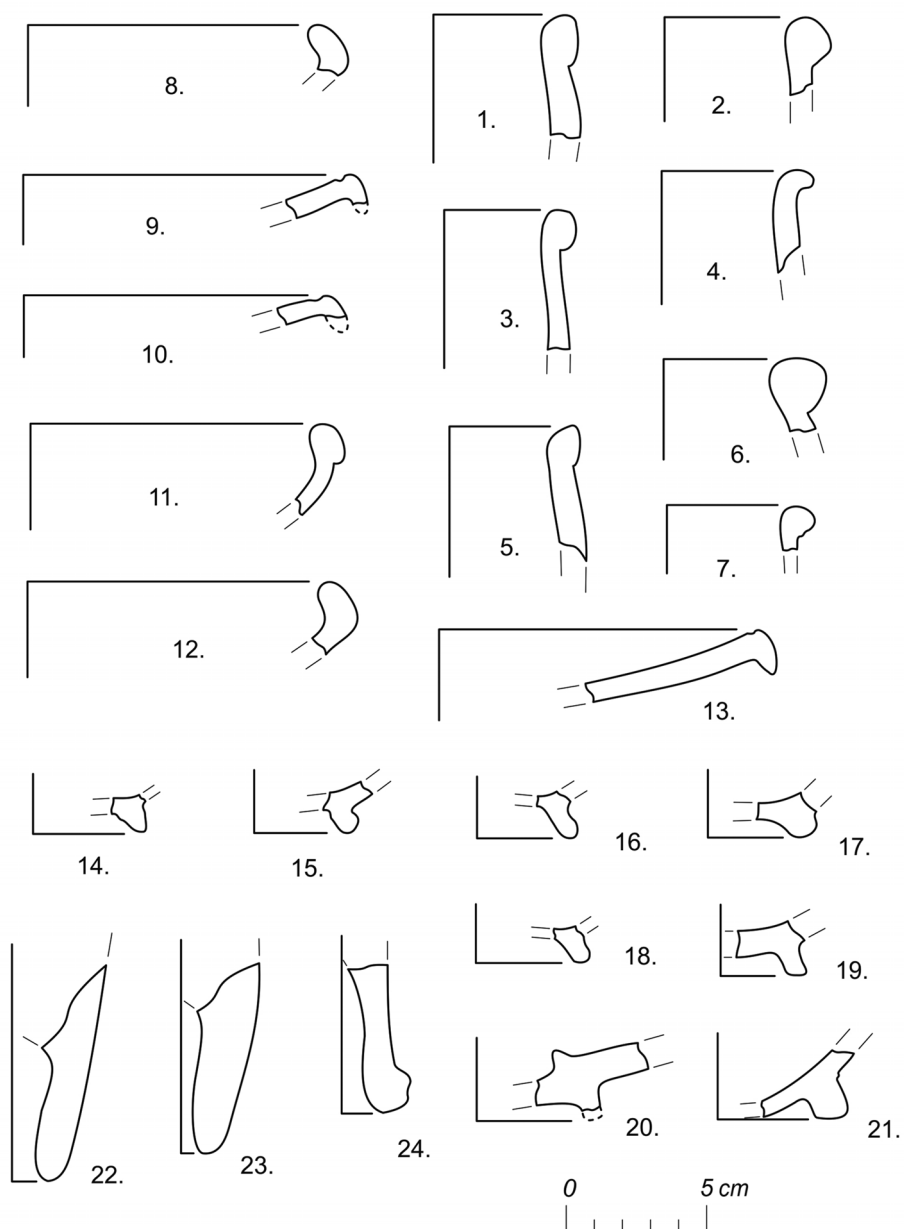


Fig. 2. Excavation area 40, square A, Б-80. Finds:
1-7, 22-24 – amphora fragments; 8-21– fragments of tableware. Spade dig 1.

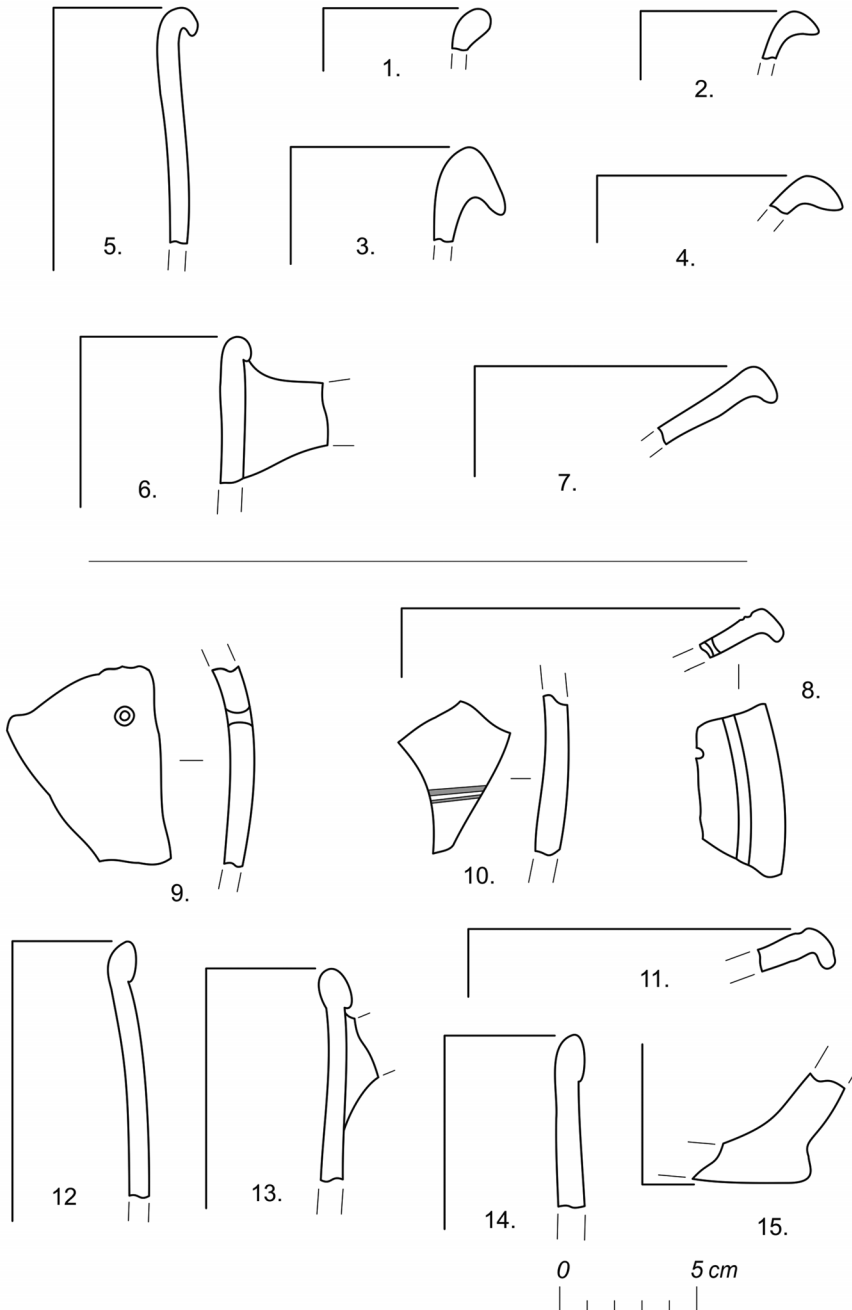


Fig. 3. Area 40, square A, Б-80. Finds:

1-7 – amphora fragments. Spade dig 2; 8-11 – fragments of tableware;
12-14 – amphora fragments; 15 – fragment of a handmade jar. Spade dig 3.

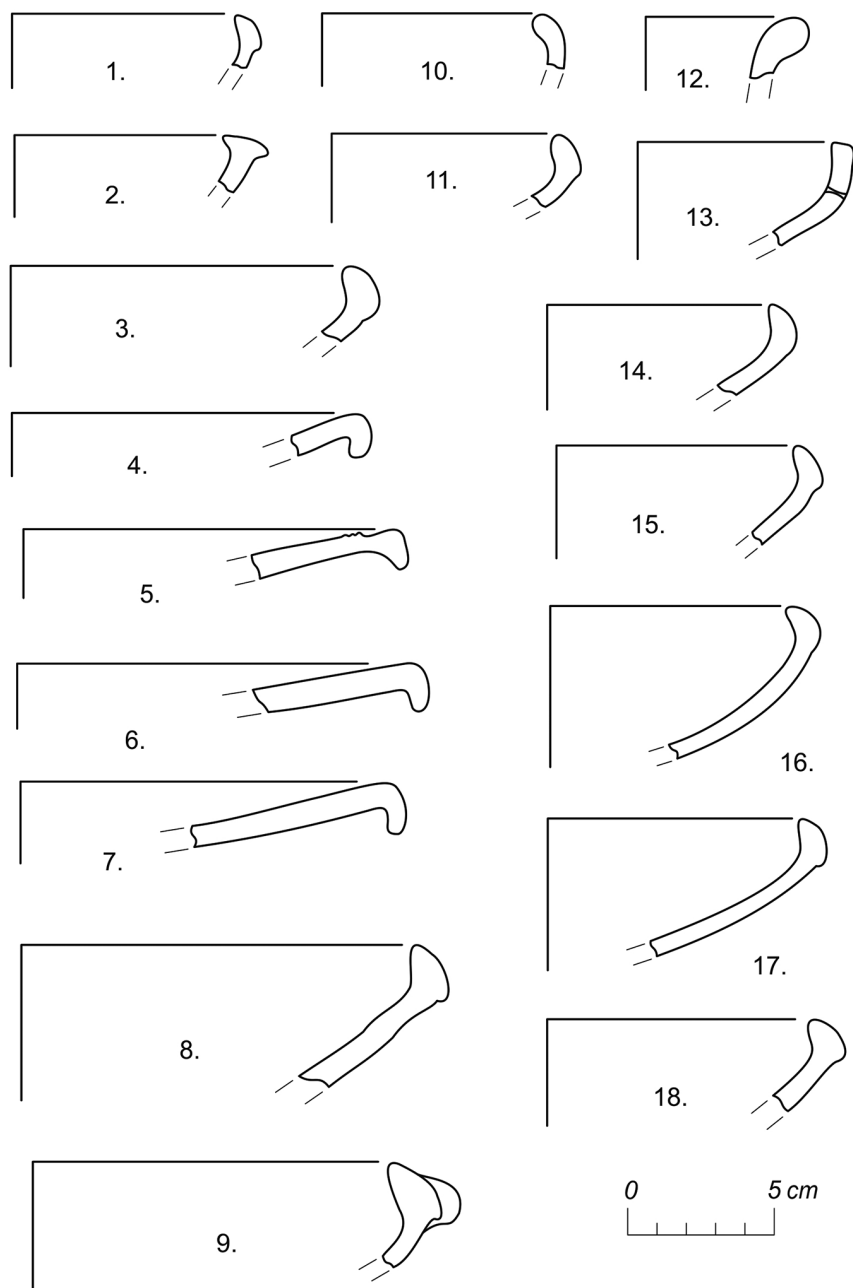


Fig. 4. Area 40, square A, Б-80. Finds:
1–18 – fragments of tableware. Spade dig 4.

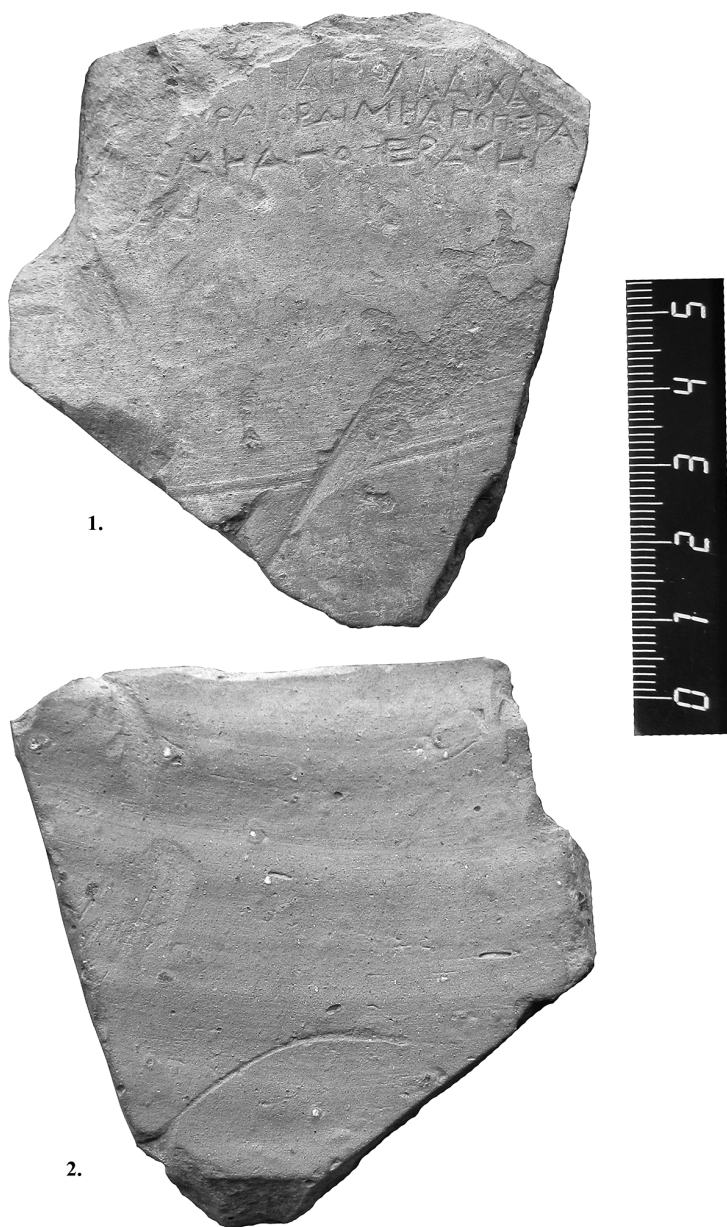


Fig. 5. Letter on an ostrakon.
1, 2 – photograph of the front and reverse side.



Fig. 6. Letter on an ostracon.
1 – representation of the inscription.

The type of the letter is characterized by the following features:

The letters of the inscription vary in size (0.2 to 0.5 cm), the lines are curving and follow the outlines of the upper edge of the shard. The *alphas* are fairly broad and present two types – with straight or slightly curved hastae, a horizontal crossbar and a vertical dash on top of the letter. *Epsilon* has horizontal hastae of varying length. *Lambda*, similarly to *alpha*, in the first line of the letter has slightly curved hastae and a vertical dash on the top of the letter. *Pi* has the right vertical hasta shorter than the left one. *Rho* has a rounded semicircle. *Sigma* is of lunar type with a ‘break’ in the middle. *Omega* has horizontal feet. Both *omega* and *omicron* are considerably smaller than the size of the lines and are raised above the lower edge of the line of writing.

In lapidary inscriptions the gradual decrease of the size of *omicron* and *omega* began by the late 4th century BC as attested by inscriptions of Spartokos III.⁷ In inscriptions of Perisades II⁸ *omicron* and *omega* become considerably smaller than the height of the line; moreover *omega* acquires the same shape as that in the letter from the settlement of Vyshestebliievskaya-3, and *alpha* and *lambda* have slightly curving lines. On the basis of such inscriptions as CIRB 254 where the lunar *epsilon*, *sigma* and *omega* are combined with the forms of letters typical to the 3rd century BC, Anna I. Boltunova and Tatyana N. Knipovich surmise that the appearance of the lunar *sigma* in lapidary inscriptions can be dated as early as this period. We must naturally take into account that in epitaphs the type was not regulated like in decrees for example.

The combination of the lunar *sigma* with a ‘bend’ and *epsilon* of classical form with the *alpha* having slightly bent hastae is also present in a graffito on the wall of a Thasian (?) amphora from Nymphaion (area M, Hellenistic level; State Hermitage, inv. no. НФ.82.226).⁹ Identical forms of *sigma* and *alpha* are attested by an invocation with the word ΑΝΩΝΥΜΟΣ from a private collection. This inscription published by Alexey V. Belousov apparently comes from the necropolis of Pantikapaion. *Omega* here also has a form similar to that found in our letter although the size of *omicron* and *omega* in the Pantikapaion invocation is varied – occasionally they are considerably smaller than the neighbouring letters while in other cases they correspond with the size of the line.¹⁰ The presence of the lunar *sigma*

⁷ Boltunova, Knipovich 1962 [А. И. Болтунова, Т. Н. Книпович, “Очерк истории греческого лапидарного письма на Боспоре”], 13; CIRB-Album 18, 974, 1043.

⁸ CIRB-Album 20, 21, 26, 1036.

⁹ Namoylik 2010 [А. С. Намойлик, “Граффити на амфорах из раскопок Нимфеи в коллекции Государственного Эрмитажа”], 443 Table 6.105.

¹⁰ Belousov, Fedoseev 2014, 145.

induces Belousov to date this inscription to the 3rd century BC, albeit he gives no reasons for this dating.

Forms of *alpha*, *epsilon*, *lambda*, *pi*, *rho*, *sigma* and *omega* similar to those employed in our letter are found in a letter on a lead tablet retrieved from a layer of the Hellenistic period on the northeastern slope of Mt. Mithridat in association with finds (stamps on Bosporan tiles; Herakleian, Sinopean and Thasian amphora stamps; Pantikapaian tetrachalkoi of the type ‘bearded satyr – protome of griffin, sturgeon’) which were dated by the authors of the publication to between the mid-4th century to circa 300 BC.¹¹

More evidence for the the lunar *sigma*’s appearance in non-lapidary inscriptions as late as the second half of the 4th century BC is represented in the temple’s mark $\text{IEPO}\Sigma \Delta\text{HMHTPO}\Sigma$, $\text{IEPO}\Sigma$ on an Attic black-glossed plate (rolled rim) from the sanctuary of Demeter in Nymphaion (State Hermitage, inv. № НФ.39.345) with a stamped pattern of six (?) palmettes inside several circles of incisions.¹² S. A. Danil’chenko dated this plate to circa 325 BC.¹³ And it is approximately during the same period that the lunar *sigma* appears in invocations on lead tablets also in other Black Sea poleis – Olbia and Histria.¹⁴

The form of *omega* in the letter from Vyshestebliievskaya-3 is similar to one of the variants of the shape of *omega* in a Gorgippian graffito (line 3) – the latest one in Yuri Vinogradov’s opinion, dated by him to the middle or third quarter of the 4th century BC. Madalina Dana dates this graffito to 350–325 BC.¹⁵ Similarly to our graffito, here the *omega* is also smaller than the height of the line, has straight feet and is raised above the lower edge of the line.¹⁶

¹¹ Saprykin, Kulikov 1999 [С. Ю. Сапрыкин, А. В. Куликов, “Новые эпиграфические находки в Пантикапее”, in: *Древнейшие государства Восточной Европы. 1996–1997*], 201, 202 Fig. 1.

¹² The present authors are sincerely grateful to the head of the Nymphaion Expedition of the State Hermitage Ol’ga Yu. Sokolova for her kind assistance in our examination of these materials.

¹³ Danil’chenko [С. А. Данильченко, “Чернолаковая керамика из святилища Деметры в Нимфее”, in: *Материалы Нимфейской экспедиции. Святилище Деметры*], in print; Sparkes, Talkott 1970, Pl. 310. Fig. 10, No. 1060 (325–310 BC); Tolstoy 1953 [И. И. Толстой, *Греческие граффити древних городов Северного Причерноморья*], 79 No. 123; Namoylik 2007 [А. С. Намойлик, “Граффити на чернолаковой керамике из святилища Деметры в Нимфее”, in: *Боспорский феномен: сакральный смысл региона, памятников, находок*], 317, 320 Fig. 1.1.

¹⁴ Tokhtas’ev 2007 [С. Р. Тохтасьев, “Новое заклятие на свинце из Северного Причерноморья”], 48 n. 1; Avram, Chiriac, Matei 2007, 391–393.

¹⁵ Dana 2007, 89.

¹⁶ Vinogradov 1997 [Ю. Г. Виноградов, “Письмо с горгиппийских наделов”, in: Е. М. Алексеева, *Античный город Горгиппия*], 545.

Thus, considering the inevitable gap between the time of appearance of particular shapes of letters in inscriptions of a private character on ostraka and lead tablets on the one hand and in lapidary inscriptions on the other,¹⁷ the letter on the ostrakon from Vyshesteblievskaya-3 can be dated broadly to the second half of the 4th century BC.¹⁸

The ostrakon was found at a settlement located in the rural territory of Phanagoria. This circumstance – as well as the fact that lead tablets would have been more convenient for correspondence with more or less remote localities – suggests that we are dealing with “local” correspondence. This would in turn lead us to expect the Ionian dialect typical of inscriptions on stone, lead and ceramics even from those Bosphoran poleis where among the founders there were Teosians who founded Phanagoria, or Mytileneans as was the case in Hermonassa where so far no Aeolisms have been recorded.¹⁹

Below we analyse the text.

Line 1. In the beginning of the first line we can discern I and H, further on the personal name Ἀπολλῶς in dative, then *chi*, *alpha* and *iota* thus immediately suggesting one of the standard epistolary introductions – a nominative, a dative and χαίρειν: “such and such a person wishes such and such to be well”. IH in the end of the first name indicates that the author of the message was most probably a woman. Considering the size of the lacuna, it seems acceptable, of all the known feminine names ending in -ιη, to reconstruct, e.g., a name Δημητρίη well-known in the Bosphoran onomasticon with the Ionian -ιη instead of the Attic -ια.²⁰

¹⁷ For a comparison between the types in lapidary inscriptions and those in inscriptions on lead tablets and ostraka, see also: Saprykin, Belousov, Fedoseev 2013 [С. Ю. Сапрыкин, А. В. Белоусов, Н. Ф. Федосеев, “Два фрагмента свинцовых пластин из Пантикапея”], 272.

¹⁸ Kashaev, Pavlichenko 2014 [С. В. Кашаев, Н. А. Павличенко, “О датировке письма на остраконе с поселения Вышестеблиевская-3”, in: *Боспорские чтения XV. Боспор Киммерийский и варварский мир в период античности и средневековья. Актуальные проблемы хронологии*], 219–225.

¹⁹ Tokhtas'ev 2011 [С. Р. Тохтасев, “Греческий язык на Боспоре: общее и особенное”, in: *Боспорский феномен. Население, языки, контакты. Материалы международной научной конференции*], 675–676.

²⁰ Naturally there are also other women's names ending in -ια/-ιη. Among the names found in Bosphoran inscriptions of the 4th and 3rd centuries BC where the number of letters and the ratio between the ‘broad’ and ‘narrow’ letters corresponds to the size of the lacuna in the present message, one may cite, e.g., Ἀρτινοίη (CIRB 169 – Pantikapaion, 2nd half of the 4th century BC) or Φιλονοίη (CIRB 1017 – Patrasys, 4th century BC). Finally, quite possibly there were feminine variants of such names as Ἐκατοῖος (CIRB 117 – Pantikapaion, late 4th to early 3rd century BC) or Μητρόβιος (CIRB 1137. Gorgippia, 1st half of the 3rd century BC).

This name is known, inter alia, from the Pantikapaian dedication to Demeter of the second half of the 4th century BC in the name of the priestess of Demeter, Ἀριστονίκη Ξενοκρίτου θυγάτηρ, asking a favour for her daughter Δημητρίη (*CIRB* 14)²¹ and a Pantikapaian epitaph also of the 4th century BC to [Δημ]ητρίη [Π]οσειδίου (*CIRB* 176). The Bosporean epigraphy presents many examples of theophoric names derived from the name of one of the main gods of the Bosporean pantheon: Ἀπολλόδωρος, Ἀπολλοφάνης, Ἀπόλλων, Ἀπολλώνιος, Ἀπολλωνίδης. The personal name Ἀπολλῶς also has been already encountered, e.g. in the list of names from Nymphaion of the 3rd century BC (*CIRB* 912.1.8) – [Ἀπ]ολλῶς Ἀπατουρίου, twice – [Ἀπολ]λῶς Καβαθάξεω and Ἀπολλῶς Τι---] – in the name list from Hermonassa of the 4th century BC (*CIRB* 1056.1₂₀; 1056.2₂) and [Ἀπ]ολλῶς Σατύρου in the Gorgippian agonistic catalogue of the first half of the 3rd century BC (*CIRB* 1137 B. 1₆). Hence the two names – both the reconstructed Δημητρίη and Ἀπολλῶς – are quite typical ones in Bosporos.

The formula of the introduction with a χαίρειν is well attested. It is remarkable that it was used both in relatively lengthy messages and in very brief notes. For instance it is encountered in a recently found verbose letter on an ostrakon from Nikonion (second half of the 4th or beginning of the 3rd century BC) – Διονύσιος τοῖς ἐν οἴκῳ[ι] χαίρειν. ἕως τούτου ἔρ<ρω>μαι καὶ ὁ υἱός,²² in the letter of Artikon from Olbia (ca. 350 BC) – Ἀρτικῶν τοῖς ἐν οἴκῳ(ι) χαίρειν,²³ as well as in a note on a fragment of the lid of a red-figure pyxis or lekane from Platon O. Burachkov's collection (late 5th to early 4th centuries BC; kept in the State Historical Museum): Ῥόδων Ἡρακῶι χαίρειν. Ἔλαβε, i.e. "Rhodon is greeting Herakas. Received".²⁴ The same form of greeting is employed in an inscription, possibly a love letter, on a fresco from Nymphaion (250/49–240 BC), scratched by some Theodora – [Θ]εοδώρα Πίθωνι χαίρειν. καλῶς ποιήσεις με, ἀγρυπνίσεις με ("Theodora sends her greeting to Python (Pothon?). Thou will nicely treat me and lose your

²¹ The publishers of the *CIRB* regarded this inscription, after Vasiliy V. Latyshev, as a monument from Pantikapaion, but Yuri Vinogradov surmised that it came from Gorgippia – see *LGN IV*. s. v. Δημητρίη.

²² Awianowicz 2011, 237.

²³ Dubois 1996, 63 No. 25.

²⁴ *Na kraji oikumeny* 2002 [На краю ойкумены. Греки и варвары на северном берегу Понта Эвксинского. Из фондов Государственного исторического музея, Государственного музея Востока, Краснодарского государственного историко-археологического музея-заповедника. Каталог выставки], 36, no. 74.

sleep because of me”).²⁵ Χαίρειν is also used in the greetings sent by three residents of Nymphaion to Satyros and sons of Perisades.²⁶

Lines 2–3. In the second and third lines, μὴ ἀποπεράσῃ is strikingly twice repeated. The form is clear – it is the conjunctive of aorist, third person singular. In the third line, it is preserved completely, while from the second line it is partly carried over to the third line. Ἀποπεράσῃ can be derived from ἀποπεράω (‘move, cross’); besides, this form can originate from the verb ἀποπέρνημι (‘sell’). If πέρνημι in the meaning of ‘sell’ can be interpreted as ‘carry out for sale’ or ‘sell as bribery’ (see LSJ, s.v.) then ἀποπέρνημι can be employed, as it seems, where the matter is concerned with the sale of immovable property, e.g. land plots. Two inscriptions, both in the Ionian dialect, can be cited. A treaty about the establishment of property rights on disputable immovable property, i.e. land and a house, concluded by residents of Halikarnassos and Lygdamos in 454/453 BC (Halikarnassos, *Syll.*³ 45₃₂) says that

καρτερός δ' εἶναι γῆς καὶ οἰκίων οἵτινες τότε εἶχον ὅτε Ἀπολλωνίδης καὶ Παναμύης ἐμνημόνευον, εἰ μὴ ὕστερον ἀπεπέρασαν.

Those must possess the land and the houses who possessed them at the moment when Apollonides and Panamyas were the mnemons unless they did not sell them.

A decree from Zeleia of the last third of the 4th century BC on the sale of the land of exiles says:²⁷

ἔδοξεν τῷ δήμῳ τὰς γέας τῷ φυγάδων ἀποπεράσαι, τὸν [δὲ] πρὶ ἄμενον τὴν τιμὴν ἀποδοῦναι τεσσάρων ἐτέων, τέταρτον μὲν ἔτος ἑκ[α]τ[ο]νθ[ε] δὲ μὲνός Κε[κ]υπ[ω]σίου]

The People has decided: the lands of exiles must be sold so that he who has bought them must pay for four years one quarter of the cost in the month of Kekyposios.

²⁵ Tokhtas'ev 2006 [“Новые материалы по истории койне”, in: *Индоевропейское языкознание и классическая филология – X. Материалы чтений, посвященных памяти профессора Иосифа Моисеевича Тронского. 19–21 июня 2006 г.*], 295. Of note is also an incompletely preserved lead letter from Pantikapaion which, as it seems, began in the same manner – Saprykin, Kulikov 1999, 202 – Ἑρμαῖος τῷ δεῖνι χαίρειν ---]. M. Dana noted that simplicity or the total absence of an established form are typical for Black Sea letters in general (Dana 2007, 91 No. 52).

²⁶ Tokhtas'ev 2006, 302.

²⁷ *SGDI* III. 2 (Göttingen 1905) 654. No. 5533 f (= *Inscriptiones Mysia & Troas* [IMT], eds. Matthias Barth and Josef Stauber. Leopold Wenger Institut. Universität München. Version of 25.8.1993 (Ibycus). Packard Humanities Institute CD #7, 1996. – Mysia, “Aisepos & Kadiköy Dere”, no. 1136).

Before ΜΗΑΠΟΠΕΡΑ in the second line we see ΟΡΩΙ. According to its form, it is a dative singular of a noun of the second declension, i.e. it can be a form of dative case of τὸ ὄρον – ‘the wooden part of the press for grapes and olives’ or derived from ὁ ὄρος – ‘whey’ which seems rather senseless. Also it may be a dative of ὁ ὄρος in the sense of ‘limit, boundary’ or ‘landmark’.

Between the second syllable in χαίρειν and [---]ΟΥΠΑΙ in the second line there is space for two or maximum three letters. The context suggests here either an imperative or an infinitive used as an imperative that is fairly frequently found, inter alia, in letters (e.g. in the address of Mnesiergos’ letter [*Syll.*³ 1259, Attica, 350 BC] it is written: Φέρειν ἰς τὸν κέραμον χυτρικὸν, ἀποδόναι δὲ Ναυσίαι ἢ Θρασυκλήϊ ἢ Θυϊῶϊ). Inverse glossaries propose ἀποῦραι as a variant – an infinitive attested only by Eustathios (Il. IV, p. 661, 17) and, as it seems, derived from Homer’s participle ἀπούρας (ἀπηύρων – ‘deprive of, bereave of’). Even if one accepts that the popular etymology could have derived ἀπηύρων from ὁ ὄρος (‘limit, boundary, landmark stone’) it is necessary to explain the appearance of this form in the text of a simple note. Correspondingly, although the preserved part of the word, as well as the general context, allow us to suggest here the infinitive of a verb meaning ‘to mark, to designate’, a faithful reconstruction of [---]ΟΥΠΑΙ is difficult.

Ὅρωι probably does not imply ‘a limit, a boundary’,²⁸ but rather an object which marks this boundary, i.e. a ‘landmark stone’,²⁹ or a ‘safeguard stone’. Both in Attica, and in other regions of Greece, ὄροι, placed at the boundary of a sacred precinct or a land plot, not only delimited the ownership like the landmark stones proper (by contrast to the latter, ὄροι often were installed as a single sign, which corresponds to the singular form of the ὄρωι in the letter here published here), but served as information about the ownership and status of the land plot. Thus along with ordinary land-division stones the *horoi* functioned as protection of a land plot against intrusion and profanation. *Horoï* may have been installed at the corners of a plot or in places convenient in terms of the relief of a particular locality. The stele which served as a *horos* occasionally bore inscriptions on its two sides or only on the external

²⁸ E.g. see an Athenian decree of 352/1 on the reinstallation of the ὄροι of a sacred precinct in Eleusis which tells that one should σημαίνεισθαι λίθοις τοὺς ὄρους, i.e. ‘mark the boundary using (landmark) stones’ (*Syll.*³ 204 72).

²⁹ For instance Theophrastos (*Char.* 10. 9), when characterizing a μικρολόγος, writes that in the nature of a person of this kind is to check daily whether the boundary stones are still in their place – καὶ τοὺς ὄρους δ’ ἐπισκοπεῖσθαι ὅσημέραι εἰ διαμένουσιν οἱ αὐτοί.

one facing the passerby. Occasionally it was an opisthograph and, in this case, the inscriptions were related to the land plots on both sides of the land-division line. Some of the ὅροι bore inscriptions indicating some encumbrance of the plot, e.g. containing information that the particular land was a debt security.³⁰

If we thus assume that the inscription concerns the definition of the legal status of the land, which shall be designated by a horos, we obtain the following text:

Demetria (?) wishes Apollas well. [---]OYPAI (*scil.* the plot) with a landmark stone in order that he not sell it.

It is unclear who was meant as the subject concerned with ἀποπεράσῃ, however it may be supposed that some resident of Phanagoria or of a neighbouring rural settlement attempted to sell a disputed land plot and Apollas had written to Demetria (?) that “Such and such wants to sell the land” – to which she answers: “Install a landmark stone so that he cannot sell it”.

The last syllable -σῃ in ἀποπεράσῃ is carried over from the second to the third line. The letters in the third line are set fairly loosely with large intervals between them, so that between the final iota in -σῃ and the *mu* in the beginning of the third line there remains space for only one or two letters. At start of the third line an oblique dash is discernible which might very possibly have been part of a *sigma*. If we supplement the *omega* we obtain the conjunction [ὥ]ς with the subsequent repetition of μὴ ἀποπεράσῃ. Why is μὴ ἀποπεράσῃ repeated twice? Perhaps for greater expressivity.³¹

Line 4. Behind the chipped area we see a horizontal dash and a vertical one. It is impossible to know with confidence whether we are dealing here with remains of letters or just chance indentations. In the first two lines the last syllable in χαί[ρειν] and in ἀποπερά[σῃ] is carried over to the next line. In the third line, however, between the final *iota* in ἀποπεράσῃ and the edge of the ostrakon, there remains sufficient space for only one or two letters, so that the author of the text was able to write the next word only in a new line. This word could have been a direct

³⁰ Fine 1951, 41–60; Lalonde 1991, 5, 7, 18–21; Guarducci 1995, II, 430–434; III, 227 ff. Inscriptions of this kind include, inter alia, a *tabula ansata* from Pantikapion with the inscription Στρατηγῶν (CIRB 827, 2nd half of the 1st century BC) which designated the limits of the cemetery plot allotted for interment of strategoi.

³¹ Cf. μάλλον, μάλλον in a letter of an Athenian boy – Jordan 2000, 93; see also Denniston 1952, 90–95.

object for μὴ ἀποπεράσῃ – for instance any word meaning ‘land’ / ‘land plot’ e.g. γέας or, rather, χωρίον by analogy with the Athenian *horoi*.³² Unfortunately, we can speak about it only at a hypothetical level because of the ostrakon’s poor state of preservation.

As a whole the text of the letter seems to be as follows:

[Δημητρ?]ή Ἀπολλᾶι χαί/[ρειν. - - -]ΟΥΠΑΙ ὄρωι μὴ ἀποπερά/[σῃ.
᾿Ω]ς μὴ ἀποπεράσῃ [- - -?].

(Demetria (?) wishes Apollas well. [- - -]ΟΥΠΑΙ (*scil.* the plot) with a safeguard stone so that he cannot sell it! So that he cannot sell it [- - -?]).

Along with ‘royal’ and temple lands, or lands owned by the barbarian tribes, in Bosporos there were naturally a number of plots belonging to private persons. It is exactly the problems concerned with determination of the property rights for a plot of this kind that have found their reflection in the letter on the ostrakon from the settlement of Vyshesteblievskaya-3. Thus the ostrakon published here supplements the mass of written evidence on the existence of a system of ancient land division on the Taman peninsula,³³ as is also confirmed through archaeological excavations and surveys of the recent years. Thus there have been discovered traces of land division near Cape Tuzla,³⁴ on the Fontalovsky Peninsula,³⁵ in the

³² *IG II* 2 2593, 2594, 2631, 2642, 2658, 2659, 2714, 2765 etc.

³³ The written sources informing us about land use in Bosporos are extremely scarce. They include for instance the story by Diodoros (*Diod.* 20. 25) about Eumelos having allotted land to a thousand Kallatians in Bosporos and having divided it into plots (τὴν χώραν κατεκληρούχησεν). Demosthene’s oration *Contra Lacritum* (*Dem.* XXXV. 32) mentions the owner of a large land tenure who bought 80 amphorae of Koan wine for its workers, the wine turning out to be sour. In addition, land plots are mentioned in a number of inscriptions from the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD. *CIRB* 976 (Phanagoria, 151 AD) tells us of the existence of temple lands – Rhoimetalkos returns to a certain goddess the γέας ἐν Θιαννέοις dedicated to her sometime before. *CIRB* 837 (Hermonassa (?), late 2nd century to 1st half of the 3rd century AD) is a typical *terminus* defining the boundaries of a land plot. In addition, a Phanagorian dedication of the 1st half of the 2nd century AD (*CIRB* 983) mentions τοὺς τόπους], that also may imply ‘land plots’.

³⁴ Gorlov, Porotov, Trebelev 2006 [Ю. В. Горлов, А. В. Поротов, Г. В. Требелев, “Юго-западное побережье Таманского полуострова в античную эпоху”], 68–70, 75 fig. 1.

³⁵ Garbuzov 2006 [Г. П. “Гарбузов, “Древнее землеустройство нелинейного типа и характеристики современного ландшафта Таманского полуострова”], 57 fig. 5.

region of the Central Ridge of the Taman Peninsula³⁶ as well as in the plots near the settlement of Vyshesteblievskaya-3.³⁷

Sergey Kashaev
*Institute for the History of Material Culture,
 St Petersburg (IHMC RAS)*
 kashaevs@mail.ru

Natalia Pavlichenko
St Petersburg Institute for History, RAS
 nat.pavlichenko@gmail.com

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³⁶ Garbuzov 2005 [Г. П. Гарбузов, “Признаки древнего землеустройства в районе Центральной гряды Таманского полуострова”], 107 fig. 2.

³⁷ Garbuzov 2009 [Г. П. Гарбузов, “Районирование античных агроландшафтов Таманского полуострова”], 137 fig. 10.

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In 2013 at the settlement of Vyshesteblievskaya-3 was found a fragment (broken on the left) of the wall of a Mediterranean amphora with an inscription: – [Δημητρ?]ῆς Ἀπολλᾶι χαί/ρειν. – –]ΟΥΡΑΙ ὄρωι μὴ ἀποπερά/σῃ. Ὡς μὴ ἀποπεράσῃ [- - -?]. ("Demetria (?) wishes Apollas well. [- - -]ΟΥΡΑΙ (*scil.* the plot) with a safeguard stone so that he cannot sell it! So that he cannot sell it [- - -?]"!). The ostrakon was retrieved from a turf layer (square A, Б-80; area 40) in the area where a structure arbitrarily called the 'Ditch' was excavated at the level of the virgin soil. The type of letter allows us to date it only broadly to the second half of the fourth century BC. The ostrakon published here is thus one of the rare pieces of written evidence of the existence of a system of ancient land division on the Taman Peninsula as also confirmed by archaeological excavations and surveys of recent years.

В 2013 г. на поселении Вышестеблиевская-3 в дерновом слое (квадрат А, Б-80 [участок 40], в котором на уровне материка зафиксирован и исследован объект "Ров") был найден обломанный слева фрагмент стенки средиземноморской амфоры с текстом письма – [Δημητρ?]ῆς Ἀπολλᾶι χαί/ρειν. – –]ΟΥΡΑΙ ὄρωι μὴ ἀποπερά/σῃ. Ὡς μὴ ἀποπεράσῃ [- - -?]. ("Деметрия (?) Аполле желает здравствовать. [- - -]ΟΥΡΑΙ (*scil.* участок) с помощью hogos, чтобы он не продал. Чтобы он не продал!"). Шрифт письма позволяет датировать его в широких рамках 2-й половины IV в. до н. э. Публикуемый остракон является, таким образом, одним из немногих письменных свидетельств существования на Таманском полуострове системы древнего размежевания земельных наделов, что подтверждается также археологическими раскопками и разведками последних лет.

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