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A NEW HELLENISTIC OSTRACON FROM NIKONION

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A NEW HELLENISTIC OSTRACON FROM NIKONION

In July 2007 at ancient Nikonion near Roksolany on the Dniester *liman* (Ovidiopol region, Odessa Oblast, Ukraine) during excavations conducted by the Department of Classical Archaeology of the Institute of Archaeology of Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, under the direction of M. Mielczarek, and the archaeological expedition of the National Academy of Sciences of the Ukraine, represented by N. M. Sekerskaya of the Odessa Archaeological Museum, was found an incised ostracon containing the right side of a Greek letter. It was published by the undersigned in this journal, vol. 168 (2009), pp. 196–198.

Thanks to a stroke of good luck, the left side of that ostracon turned up in July 2010 on the same site during excavations directed by N. M. Sekerskaya from Odessa Archeological Museum and M. Mielczarek and I. Głuszak from the Institute of Archaeology of Nicolaus Copernicus University. The new piece was found on the stone floor of what seems to have been the internal courtyard of a house. Most of amphora stamps and black-glazed pottery found near the ostracon may be dated to 4th and the turn of 4th to 3rd century B.C.¹, confirming my dating of the letter to the second part of the 4th or the beginning of the 3rd century B.C. The new object measures 7.5 cm in width and 9.4 cm in height. Both pieces are now housed in the Odessa Archaeological Museum (fig. 1).

The joined texts yield a short but complete ten-line letter. A certain Dionysios addresses it to members of his household. He maintains the plural in line 2 ὑμεῖς - - - ἐνδῶτε, but then switches to the singular, 2–3 ἀπόστειλον. That he had in mind chiefly this single recipient and that this person was a woman is shown by lines 8–9 κ[ό]μικαι δὲ - - - ἀποδοῦσα. The ostracon touches on various matters of a commercial nature. The loading and unloading of a boat seems to have been of special importance.

Diplomatic transcription:

- 1 ΔΙΟΝΥΣΙΟΚΤΟΙΚΕΝΟΙΚΩ[
 ΟΥΟΚΥΜΕΙΣΔΕΜΑΛΑΚΙΑ[
 ΤΕΙΛΟΝΤΙΝΑΚΑΙΕΝΤ[
 4 ὙΛΟΝ'ΑΜΜΟΥΕΝΕΠΛΗ[
 ΑΥΤΟΑΝΑΠΑΡΑΤΩ[
 ΟΥΔΕΜΙΑΕΣΤΙΝΚΑΙΚ[
 ΤΗΜΕΔΙΜΝΟΙΕΝ[
 8 ΠΟΚΚΡΑΤΗΣΚ[
]ΘΟΑΨΩΝΗΜ[
]ΤΟΕΙΜΑΤ[

Transcription of the joined fragments²:

- Διονύσιος τοῖς ἐν οἴκῳ[ι] χαίρειν. ἕως τούτου ἔρ(ρω)μαι καὶ
 ὁ ὕος. ὑμεῖς δὲ μαλακία[ι] μὴ ἐνδῶτε, ἀλλὰ ἀπό-
 στείλον τινα καὶ ἐντείλαι Μαρακάτη· τὸ μονόξ-
 4 { } Ὑλον' ἄμμου ἐνέπλησα. ἐξεράσας μετέωρον
 ἀπὸ ἀναπαράτω, ὡς πλὴν ἐκείνου ἐλπὶς
 οὐδεμία ἐστίν. καὶ κριθῶν εἰς παρὰ Ποκκρ[ά-]
 τη μέδιμνοι ἐννέα. ἔρρωται δὲ καὶ
 8 Ποκκράτης. {ι} κ[ό]μικαι δὲ καὶ παρὰ τῶν
 Θεοαψων ἡμ[ι]στ[ι]ν ἀποδοῦ-
 τὸ εἰμάτ[ιον.] ca

¹ For the information concerning amphora stamps found in Nikonion I would like to thank Inga Głuszak.

² I would like to thank Charikleia Armoni, Robert Daniel and Klaus Maresch for help with the transcription and commentary.



Fig. 1. The two ostraca (the fragment on the left is the new piece)

Translation:

“Dionysios sends his greetings to the household. Until now I am in good health and so is the son. You should in no way give in to weakness, but dispatch someone and instruct Marakates, (that) I loaded the boat with sand. After emptying (the boat) he should haul it up high, since except for this there is no hope. And there are nine medimnoi of barley with Possikrates. Possikrates is in good health. Receive from the Thoapsoi (?) a half-stater after returning the cloth.”

Commentary:

1 Διονύσιος: A very common name attested in inscriptions from the northern region of the Black Sea; in IV–II century B.C. it appears 23 times in the known monuments connected with the Bosporean poleis (Gor-gippia, Hermonassa, Myrmekion and Pantikapaion) and 20 times in Skythian Olbia and Chersonesos; see *LGPN* IV, pp. 101 and 104.

1–2 ἕως τούτου ἔρ(ρω)μαι καὶ ἰ ὁ υἱός (r. υἱός): The sentence does not seem to make sense with Ἐρμῶι καὶ ἰ ὁ υἱός. The reconstructed text is close the first-century B.C. private letter P. Lips. 104, 9–12 --- χαίρειν καὶ ἔρρωσθαι. ἔρρωμαι δὲ καὶ τὸς καὶ τὰ παιδιά καὶ οἱ ἐν οἴκῳ πάντες. On the common spelling of υἱός for υἰός, cf. *CIRB* 225, 226, 700, etc.; L. Threatte, *The Grammar of Attic Inscriptions* I, Berlin–New York 1980, pp. 340 ff.

2 δὲ μαλακία[ι]: The letters ΔΕ, apparently ex corr., are incised distinctly deeper than the other letters.

3–4 ἔντειλαι Μαρακάτη· τὸ μονόξ[ι] } υλον κτλ.: After Μαρακάτη one should understand ὅτι.

3 Μαρακάτη: Mistakenly given as Παρακάτη in the earlier edition. The name Μαρακάτης is to my knowledge elsewhere unattested.

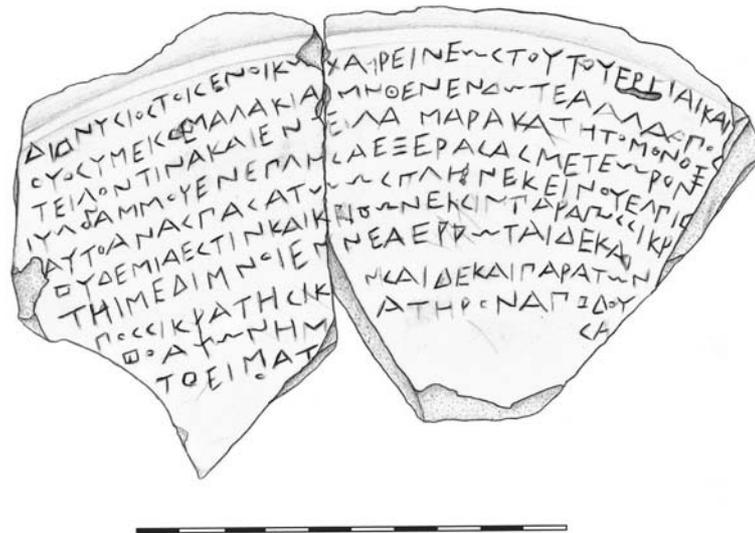


Fig. 2. The two ostraca. Drawing by Agnieszka Dzwonek-Koziet

4 The V-shaped incision directly before the beginning of line 4 is difficult to explain as a letter. *μονόξυλον* seems to be a boat made of one piece of wood, see Awianowicz, *ibid.*

ἄμμος: The sand, as a commodity, was perhaps to be used to make cement and might have been of a special quality; cf. Strabo V 4, 6 on the quality of the sand at Puteoli, and see Preisigke, *Wörterbuch* I, col. 69 s.v. Another possible use of the sand might have been for the manufacture of glass.

6 κρηθῶν: Coins of the Greek colonies from the north shore of the Black Sea (e.g. Olbia and Tyras) suggest that barley was probably one of the most important products traded between these colonies, Greece and the Scythian Barbaricum (see e.g. P. O. Karyškovskij, *Monety Ol'vii*, Kiev 1988, p. 54, 58, 66, 89 and ill. 7–9; A. N. Zograf, *Antičnye monety*. MatIsslA 16, Moscow 1951, plate XXXI, 21; XXXII 2, 3 and *The British Academy SNG* vol. XI: *The William Stancomb Collection of Coins of the Black Sea Region*, Oxford 2000, no. 353, 355–358 and 363).

6–8 Ποσειδάωνος: Cf. W. Pape – G. E. Benseler, *Wörterbuch der griechischen Eigennamen*, Braunschweig 1911, II, p. 1242; *LGPN* IIIA, p. 73 and VA, p. 377.

9 Θεοσφρων: Apparently an elsewhere unattested ethnicon. It seems that no letter is missing to the left of the theta in view of the even contour of the curving left edge.

ἀποδοῦσα: The writer added the last two letters below the line.

10 τὸ εἰμάτ[ιον], ἢ ἰμάτιον: Whether this refers to a quantity of ‘cloth’ or to a single ‘garment’ may remain open. That it was to be returned in exchange for a payment suggests that it may have served as a surety.

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