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A NEW HELLENISTIC OSTRACON FROM NIKONION


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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. Głuśzak 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]μιϲαι δὲ - - - ἀποδούϲα. 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  ΔΙΟΝΥϹΙΟϹΤΟΙϹΕΝΟΙΚΩ[]
    ΟΥϹΥΜΕΙϹΔΕΜΑΛΑΚΙΑ[]
    ΤΕΙΛΟΝΤΙΝΑΚΙΕΝΤ]
4  ΥΑΟϹΥΜΟΜΟΜΟΥΕΝΕΠΑΗ[]
    ΑΥΤΟΑΝΑΚΙΣΤΩΧ[]
    ΟΥϹΕΜΙΑΕΚΤΙΝΑΚΙ[]
    ΤΗΙΜΕΙΜΝΟΙΕΝ[]
8  ΠΟϹϹΙΚΡΑΤΗϹΙΚ[]
    ΘΟΑΨΩΝΗΜ[]
    ΤΟΕΙΜΑΤ[]

Transcription of the joined fragments2:

Διονύϲιοϲ τοῖϲ ἐν οἴκω[1] χαίρειν. ἐως τοῦτον ἔρ⟨ρω⟩μαι καὶ ὁ ύοϲ. ὑμεῖϲ δὲ μιακίϲ[1] μπθὲν ἐνδώτε, ἄλλα ἀπόϲ-
τειλόν τινα καὶ ἐντειλαὶ Μαρακάτῃ· τὸ μονὸϲ-
4 ἐξεράϲαϲ ἐμὲ υλο⸌ν⸍ ἄμμου ἐνέπληϲα.
    ἐξεράϲαϲ 
    μετέωρον ἀυτὸ ἀναϲπαϲατω, ὡς πλῆν ἐκεῖνον ἐλλῆς ὁυδεμία ἔττιν. καὶ κριθῶν εἰϲιν παρὰ Ποϲϲικράτηϲ[—]
    τῇ μήδιμῳν ἐννέα. ἐρρωταὶ δὲ καὶ
8 Ποϲϲικράτηϲ. [1] κ[ό]μιϲαι δὲ καὶ παρὰ τῶν Θοαψων ἡμ[ι]ϲ[τ]έτηρον ἀποδοῦ-
    τὸ εἰμάτ[ιον].

1 For the information concerning amphora stamps found in Nikonion I would like to thank Inga Głuśzak.
2 I would like to thank Charikleia Armoni, Robert Daniel and Klaus Maresch for help with the transcription and commentary.
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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 Bosporan poleis (Gorgippia, Hermonassa, Myrmekion and Pantikapaion) and 20 times in Skythian Olbia and Chersonesos; see LGPN IV, pp. 101 and 104.


2 δὲ μαλακία[1]: The letters ΔΕ, apparently ex corr., are incised distinctly deeper than the other letters.

3–4 ἐντείλαι Μαρακάτη καὶ μονο[1], ἱλον 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.
4 The V-shaped incision directly before the beginning of line 4 is difficult to explain as a letter. μονόξυλον seems be a boat made of one piece of wood, see Awianowicz, *ibid*.

ἀμμόϲ: 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 κριθῶν: Coins of the Greek colonies from the north shore of the Black Sea (e.g. Olbia and Tiras) 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, *Antične monety*. MatIsI 16, Moscow 1951, plate XXXI, 21; XXXII 2, 3 and The British Academy SNG vol. XI: *The William Stancomb Colletion of Coins of the Black Sea Region*, Oxford 2000, no. 353, 355–358 and 363).


9 Θοαψων: 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 εἱμάτιον, r. ιμάτιον: 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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