

## LEAD LETTER FROM THE EXCAVATIONS OF AREA ‘O-WESTERN’ AT THE BEREZAN SETTLEMENT IN 2017

In 2017, during the excavations of an ancient Greek settlement-site on the island of Berezan at the mouth of the Dnieper and Bug estuary, the expedition of the State Hermitage found a letter on a twice folded lead plate.<sup>1</sup> For the correct dating of the letter it is important to determine the proper date of Storage Pit no. 266, in which it was found. This pit was investigated in the northern part of the Sector ‘O-Western’. This sector, located in the north-eastern part of the modern Berezan Island, currently is the largest of the Archaic city: the total territory excavated by Russian and Ukrainian archaeologists since the early 1960s to date is more than 7000 sq. m (Fig. 1, nos. 8, 9, 10 on the plan).<sup>2</sup>

The ongoing excavations of the State Hermitage in the Sector ‘O-Western’ in the last decades has resulted in the discovery of the residential quarters of the city of the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> – first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC (period II), as well as of a remarkable complex of two Late Archaic civil buildings. This included at least two buildings of similar size and layout, both houses were constructed in the late 6<sup>th</sup> – early 5<sup>th</sup> century BC (phase II-B) and had existed up to approximately the second quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>3</sup> Numerous structures of the earliest, 1<sup>st</sup> period of the Berezan settlement’s occupation (dugouts and storage pits), dated to the late 7<sup>th</sup> – first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC were also investigated within the same area.<sup>4</sup>

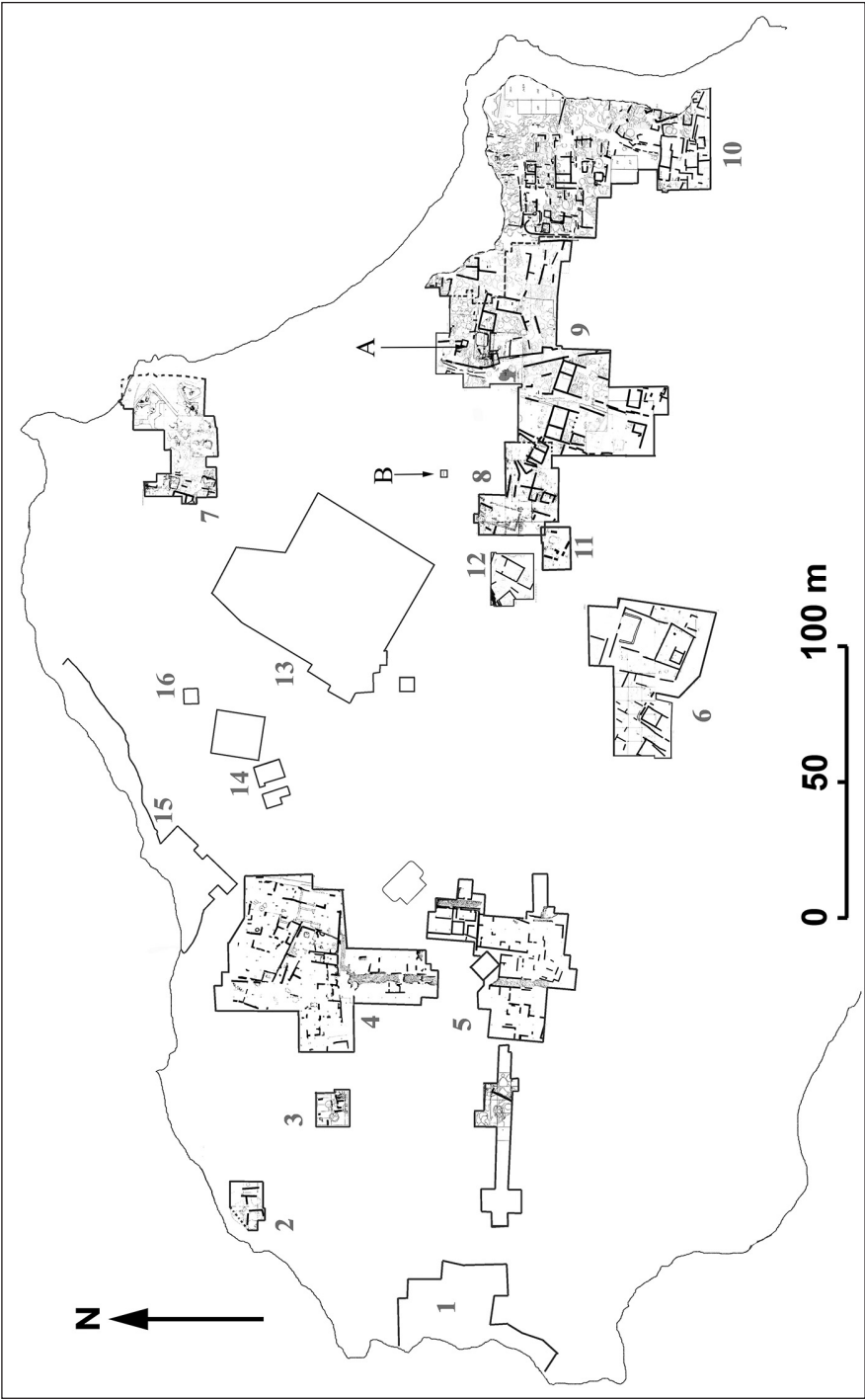
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<sup>1</sup> Field number БЭ 2017.57/364. At present, it is kept in the Mykolaiv Regional Museum of Local Studies ‘Old Navy Quarters’ (city of Mykolaiv, Ukraine). The authors are sincerely grateful to A. V. Verlinsky for his valuable comments and also to M. Dana, D. Dana and S. Minon, who made many important points in the discussion of this letter on December 11, 2018, at the seminar “Dialectologie et linguistique du grec ancien” at the École Pratique des Hautes Études/ANHIMA.

<sup>2</sup> The place where the lead letter was found is marked by the letter “A”.

<sup>3</sup> About the main results of the investigations of the Sector ‘O-Western’ see: Chistov 2005, 287–291; 2015a, 106–110; 2015b, 403–413; 2019, 97–106; Chistov–Krutilov 2014, 209–230.

<sup>4</sup> Chistov 2017 [Д. Е. Чистов, “Землянки архаической Березани”], 127–144.



← Fig. 1. Northern part of the Berezan settlement with the main excavation trenches. Numbers of the sectors on the plan: 1 – Necropolis; 2 – Sector “S-1” (Northern-1); 3 – Sector “S-2” (Northern-2); 4 – Sector “North-western A”; 5 – Sector “North-western B”; 6 – Sector “T”; 7 – Sector “G”; 8 – Sector “R-1v” (Eastern); 9 – Sector “O”-Western; 10 – Sector “O”-Eastern; 11 – Sector “R-1” (Western); 12 – Sector “G.Sh.”; 13 – Sector “A1”; 14 – Sectors “C4-6”; 15 – Sector “B8”; 16 – Sector “Zh”. Locations pointed by the arrows: A – location of pit no. 266 (excavated in 2017), Sector “O-Western”; B – exploratory pit no. III (excavated in 1982)

Bell-shaped storage pit no. 266 is a quite typical structure for the Archaic Berezan settlement: it had a narrow mouth with the walls strongly flaring toward a flat bottom. With a measured depth of 1.75 m it had a diameter of 0.83 m at the level of the mouth and 1.90–2.0 m – at the bottom. This pit was located fairly close to the external south-western corner of the semi-basement premise no. 29. However, the masonry of this structure, belonging to the residential house of the third quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, did not cut through the filling of pit no. 266 (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Sector “O-Western”, area of investigations of 2017.  
View from the West

The fragmentary preservation of the construction remains of the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC in this part of the excavation sector makes it very difficult to determine the boundaries of individual housing plots as well as to reveal their internal layout. Apparently, the house, to which premise no. 29 belonged, was adjacent to the meridionally oriented urban street from the west, and from the south, it adjoined residential house no. 3.<sup>5</sup> Since the stone and mudbrick buildings in this area were constructed taking in account the character of the terrain, to the north of the previously investigated premises of house no. 3, the soil was cut in antiquity to form a low terrace up to 0.5 m high. To the north of the latter, semi-basement premises nos. 28, 29 and the remains of premise no. 27 were investigated: to the south of the latter there was, probably, the courtyard of the house. All these structures belonged to a single stratigraphic phase: in the filling of the structures, as well as over the territory of the courtyard, layers of destruction in the fire were revealed.

Traces of massive destructions of the earliest stone and mudbrick houses of stratigraphic phase II-A, which happened approximately in the last quarter or the late 6<sup>th</sup> century BC had been uncovered earlier almost everywhere over this area.<sup>6</sup>

However, the question arises whether pit no. 266 was synchronous to the phase II-A houses or preceded them? The stratigraphic context gives us no unambiguous answer to this question. None of the investigated structures of this phase overlays or cuts its strata. The pit itself was dug into the ground from the level of the buried soil, however, the surface level of premise 29, apparently, almost coincided with this level. On the other hand, pit no. 266 cuts through some other storage pits (no. 264, 258) as well as dugout no. 72: all of these objects are datable to the I<sup>st</sup> period (late 7<sup>th</sup> – first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC), and preceded the multi-chamber houses, to one of which premise no. 29 belonged. Thus, a narrower dating of this structure is possible only based on the assemblage of finds from its filling.

464 ceramic fragments were found in pit no. 266, 86.21% came from transport amphorae. Finds of other groups are represented by only 64 fragments, 40 of which belong to East Greek pottery. Ionian cups are the most frequent of the tableware. A large fragment of a 'rosette bowl' (Fig. 3.2), due to the peculiarities of its form (massive walls with a rim slightly bent inside) and ornamentation (which contains no vertical

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<sup>5</sup> Chistov 2016, 15–20.

<sup>6</sup> Chistov et al. 2012 [Д. Е. Чистов, В. Ю. Зуев, Ю. И. Ильина, А. К. Каспаров, Н. Ю. Новоселова, "Исследования на острове Березань в 2005–2009 гг."], 41–42, 122–123.

strokes) can be referred to early samples of bowls of this type dated to the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> – first quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>7</sup> An almost complete Ionian cup with an everted rim (“Knickrandschale”) with a graffito “A” on the outer side also belongs to the early type (5.3B or A-2) (Fig. 3.1). This vessel has thick walls and a low foot. The lip and upper body of the cup, at the level of the handles, bears a banded decoration. The lower part of the bowl and the foot are black-glossed. The entire internal surface is also covered with the gloss and has a narrow reserved band in the upper part of the lip. The cup under consideration belongs to a type which was produced for a rather long time; one of its variants dates back to 640/630–600/590 BC.<sup>8</sup> Early cups of this kind are often found on Berezan, but usually they are represented by small fragments.<sup>9</sup> Our vessel has some analogies among the cups found on Samos in the sanctuary of Hera.<sup>10</sup> These parallels are considered to have been products of Southern Ionia, but the vessel from pit no. 266 is different from the finds from Samos in the black shiny gloss and the presence of white inclusions in the clay which does not allow us to attribute it as a product of the same region.

Thus, the assemblage from pit no. 266 contains cups of two types dated to the late 7<sup>th</sup> – the first quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC: one of them is represented by a large fragment, while the second is almost complete, so that it is impossible to suppose an occasional association of these finds. However, some small fragments of Ionian pottery from the same assemblage (the rim of a plate, the bottoms of rosette bowls with ray ornament in a reserved circle at the centre (Fig. 3.3–4) are dated rather broadly to within the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, and they also occur in Berezan structures of phase II-A dating from after the middle of that century.

A sherd of an amphora of the “Fikellura” style with a lotus painting (Fig. 3.6) can be considered as the latest find among the assemblage of East Greek pottery from the pit. Since this fragment is very small, it is possible only to state that the shape of the lotus corresponds to the ornamental pattern of the earliest examples of ceramics in this style, including amphorae of the Altenburg painter.<sup>11</sup> It is datable to the late second or third quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Nevertheless, an occasional late admixture to the fill of the pit cannot be here excluded. The absence

<sup>7</sup> Пыина 2016 [Ю. И. Ильина, “Ранние килики на Березани”], 224, Pl. 5.1–4.

<sup>8</sup> Schlotzauer 2001, 94–97, 296.

<sup>9</sup> Bujskikh 2016 [А. В. Буйских, “Ионийские килики из Борисфена”], 31 Fig. 1.1–7.

<sup>10</sup> Schlotzauer 2001, 502, Cat. 106, Pl. 20; 503, Cat. 108, Pl. 20, 112.

<sup>11</sup> Schaus 1986, 267, Fig. 5.15, 19.

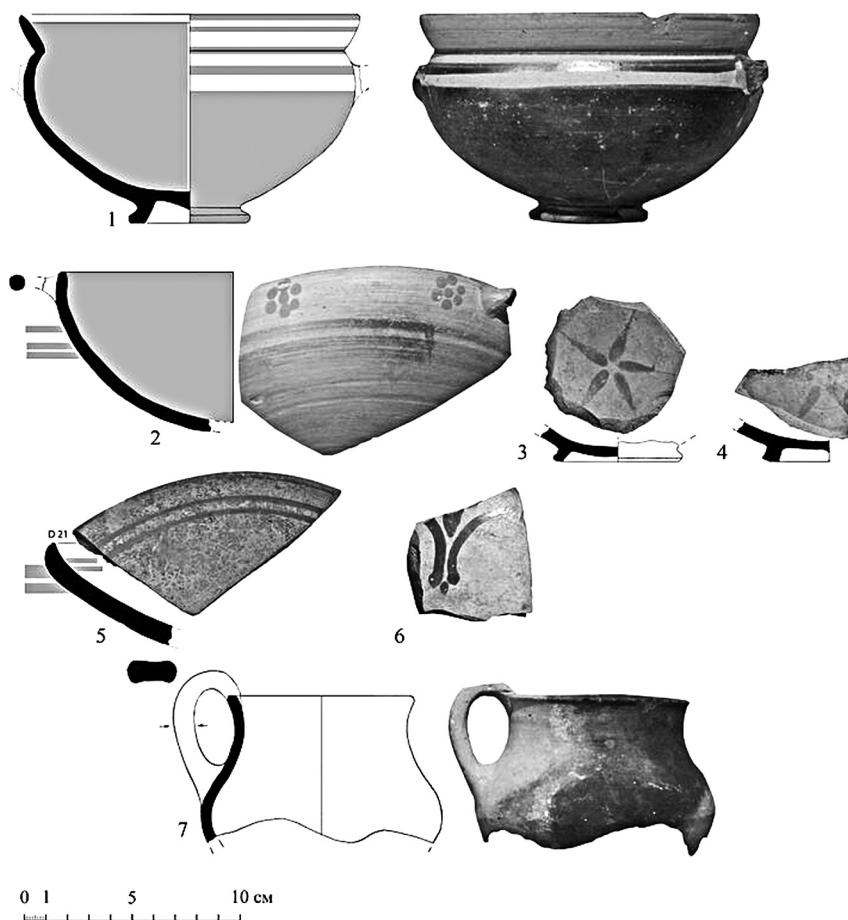


Fig. 3. Pottery from the filling of Storage Pit no. 266: 1 – Ionian cup (field number БЭ 2017 57/181); 2 – fragment of the “rosette bowl” rim (field number БЭ 2017 57/129); 3–4 – fragments of the “rosette bowls”; 5 – fragment of an Ionian plate; 6 – fragment of a Fikellura style vessel; 7 – Ionian chytra (field number БЭ 2017 57/130)

of fragments of Attic black figure pottery is indicative of an earlier date, because the numbers of Attic tableware, quite rare in the storage pits and dugouts of the 1<sup>st</sup> period, sharply increase in contexts on Berezan from the third quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.

Finds of kitchenware from pit no. 266 are not essentially helpful for its dating. The handmade pottery is few; the wheelmade imported cooking ware is represented by pots – *chytrai* (Fig. 3.7). Samples of similar forms

of archaic imported cooking vessels are well known on Berezan, and can be dated to within the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>12</sup>

Among the fragments of transporting amphorae (Fig. 4), the Klazomenian amphorae and those of the “Klazomenian circle”, Milesian, Samian, Lesbian red and grey wares can be identified. Profiled parts of the amphorae represent the assortment of types common for the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC; some fragments (such as a massive Klazomenian rim, Fig. 4.2) definitely dates back to the early 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.

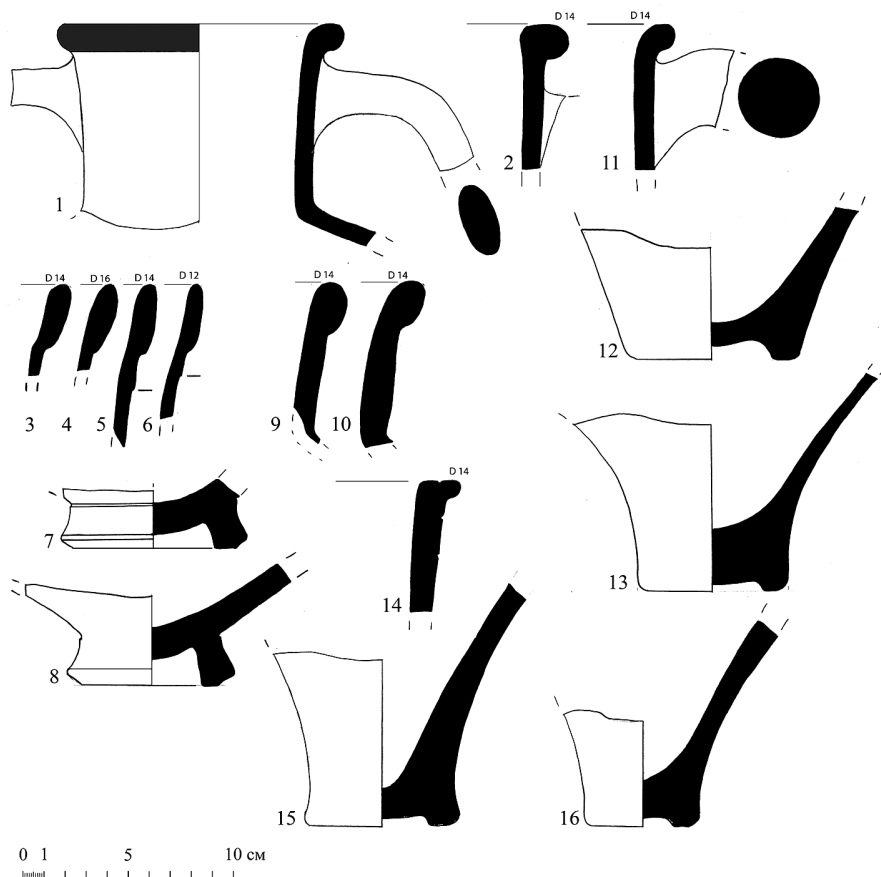


Fig. 4. Transporting amphorae fragments from storage pit no. 266:  
1–2 – Klazomenai; 3–8 – Miletos; 9–10 – Samos; 11–13 – Lesbian grey  
amphorae; 14–16 – Lesbian red amphorae

<sup>12</sup> Chistov–Iljina–Shcherbakova 2015 [Д. Е. Чистов, Ю. И. Ильина, О. Е. Щербакова, “Кухонное оборудование и кухонная керамика архаического Березанского поселения”, *Клио*], 18–19.

It is also indicative that ceramics from pit no. 266 do not include fragments of the so-called ‘Protohasian’ amphorae – transporting containers of an unknown, probably North Ionian, production center, which are characteristic chronological markers for the Berezan layers from the mid-6<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the combination of finds from the filling of Storage Pit no. 266 is the most convincing evidence for its belonging to the earliest, 1<sup>st</sup> period of the Berezan settlement’s occupation, which preceded its rapid urbanization in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.

The letter under consideration was found folded two times (Fig. 5).<sup>14</sup> Dimensions of the plate: 5.8 × 4.1 cm, the height of the letters 2–3 mm, the width 1.5–2 mm, the interval between the letters is 1.0–1.5 mm.

The inscription is drawn on a narrow specially cut plate. As it is well discernible even from the photo, its upper and lower edges are specially smoothed. The plate contains eight lines of an inscription executed in the boustrophedon style, interpunction is absent. None of the lines of the inscription is completely preserved. The left edge of the plate is completely broken off, on the right one the lower right corner is preserved. Probably, this is the end of the letter. However, since the 8<sup>th</sup> and last line is completely preserved, it can be concluded that, in the broken off right part of the plate, in lines 1–7 approximately 2–3 letters were lost in each line. The end of the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> lines is higher than the beginning of these lines, but it is difficult to say why.

On the reverse side of the plate there are no evident traces of the continuation of the text or its addressee. The unclear dashes on the reverse of the plate are traces of the signs deeply impressed during their scratching.

The *alpha* of the letter of 2017 has an inclined oblique cross-bar, the *epsilon* has oblique hastae, the *gamma* is with a raised horizontal hasta, the *eta* is inclined to the right, the *omicron* and *omega* are fairly large within the dimensions of the line; there is a characteristic pointed *rho*; the *sigma* is in a zigzag form; and the *upsilon* is in the form of the Latin letter “V”.

The closest parallel of this letter is represented by the Berezan letter of 1982 (field number АБ-82/146) found not far from the findspot of the letter under consideration. It also was written in the Ionian dialect and has the same palaeographic features as the letter under publication, and

<sup>13</sup> Chistov 2018 [Д. Е. Чистов, “Импорт товаров в амфорной таре на Березанское поселение в VI–V вв. до н. э. (по материалам раскопок участка ‘О-Западный’ в 2004–2016 гг.)”], 22.

<sup>14</sup> The letter was read by N. Pavlichenko from a photograph.

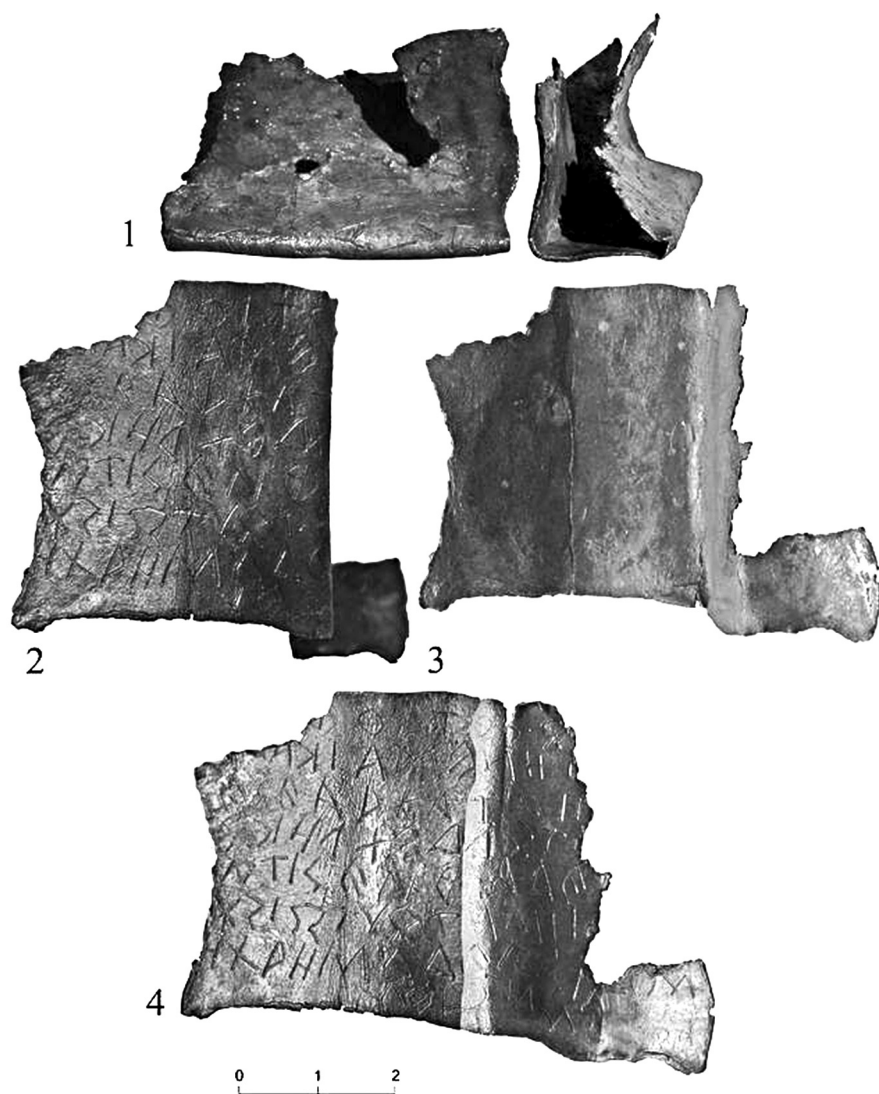


Fig. 5. Lead letter from Storage Pit no. 266 (2017):  
 1 – the letter after the field conservation; 2, 3 – the letter in the condition prior to conservation; 4 – photomontage of the front side of the letter

also was scratched in boustrophedon style. The lead letter of 1982 was found in the lower layer of the filling of Storage Pit no. 2, in exploratory trench no. III during excavations of S. N. Mazarati. This small trench was situated to the north-west from the modern “O-Western” sector:<sup>15</sup> the distance between the latter and pit no. 266, where the letter was found, is only 48 meters. As this trench had very small dimensions (6.25 square meters), no structures surrounding the storage pit have been disclosed within the borders of the trench. So, it is difficult to propose a date of this find only on the basis of the stratigraphy. Yu. G. Vinogradov, who published this letter sixteen years afterward,<sup>16</sup> dated the pit itself and the letter from it to a period not later than the third quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. The finds of East Greek pottery presented in S. N. Mazarati’s field report<sup>17</sup> suggest rather a date around the second quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. These finds include the rim of a North Ionian oinochoe with an ‘eye’ depiction,<sup>18</sup> part of the neck of a North Ionian painted table amphora (NiA I), which belongs to a type widely known among the materials of Berezan and Olbia,<sup>19</sup> and rims of early-type Lesbian red clay storage amphorae. Thus, the lead letters of 1982 and 2017 not only were found in a single part of the ancient settlement relatively close to each other, but are also very closely associated through their archaeological context. Their palaeographic features do not run contrary to their dating through the associated material.

The following reading of the Berezan letter of 2017 can be proposed (Fig. 6, 7):

1 [--] φόρτος ὠ[νη]-	→
2 [θε]ίη NEMAIKA[--]	←
3 [--πρ]ὸ[ς] ἔαρ καταπ[λέο]-	→
4 [μεν e. g.]. τῶν δὲ χρηιῶ[--]	←
5 [--]ν τις ἐνθάδε[2-3]	→
6 [--]    μὴ τῶντῶι σχ[ήματι ? --]	←
7 [--]Η. χρῆμα δ’ ἐπίστ[ῆλο]-	→
8 ν ὅ τι ἀνάγοιεν.	←

<sup>15</sup> Fig. 1, pointed by the arrow with letter “B” on the plan.

<sup>16</sup> Vinogradov 1998, 154–157, Fig. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Mazarati 1982 [С. Н. Мазарати, “Отчет об исследованиях Березанского поселения в 1982 г.”], Pl. 28.

<sup>18</sup> Walter-Karydi 1973, 77–78, Pl. 106–107; Cook–Dupont 1998, 55, Fig. 53, 55, 8.20

<sup>19</sup> Kerschner 2006, 136–138; Posamentir–Solovyov 2006, 119–120; Bujskikh 2013, 45, Fig. 3.29–44; Chistov et. al. 2012, 31, Fig. 30–31, 44.

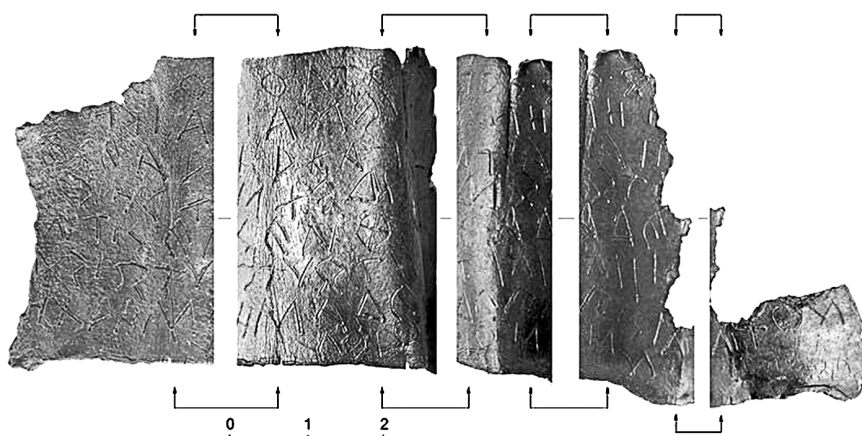


Fig. 6. Photos of the front side of the lead tablet of the letter at places of the folds. Alignment points are marked by arrows

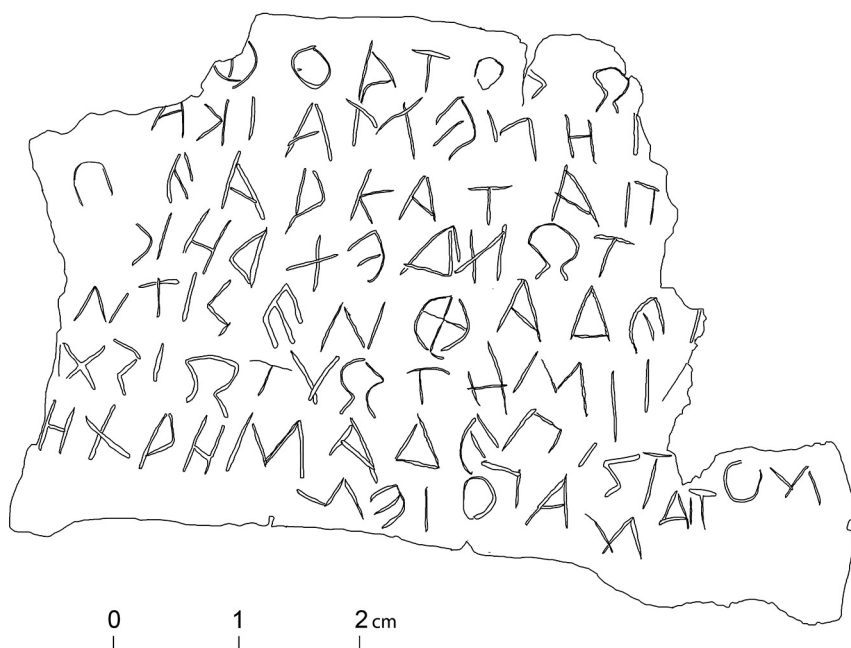


Fig. 7. Drawing of the front side of the letter from Storage Pit no. 266 (2017)

Line 1–2. Unfortunately we do not know what the length of a single line was on this plate. That is why the question about the genre of the inscription arises – i.e. whether our plate is a letter or just some record on trade transactions, written with a purpose unclear to us. In the case it is a letter, it may be supposed that the greeting formula was ὁ δεῖνα τῷ δεῖνι ἐπιστέλλει like in the letter of Achillodoros<sup>20</sup> or παρὰ τοῦ δεῖνος vel τὸν δεῖνα, with which, in the opinion of Yu. G. Vinogradov, the Berezan letter of 1982 began.<sup>21</sup>

In the first word of the letter under publication, M. Dana justly proposed to see a form of the noun φόρτος.<sup>22</sup> According to the evidence by Pollux, the terms φόρτος and φορτία, along with ἀγώγιμα and some other words designated a ship's cargo.<sup>23</sup> The term φόρτος meant, for example, a ship's cargo in *Odyssey* (*Od.* 8. 163, 14. 296). Herodotos employs the words φόρτος and φορτία in his tale about Egyptian and Assyrian goods which the Phoenicians brought by sea to Argos (*Hdt.* 1. 1).

The closest Black Sea parallel, it seems, is τὸ φορτηγεσίο from the Berezan letter of Achillodoros. The meaning of this word remains arguable: Yu. G. Vinogradov believed that it implied a freedman busy with transportation of cargoes, i.e. an active agent, while in the LSJ it is a noun of the neuter gender designating “the business of carrying merchandise or equipment for it”. Dubois believed that it is ‘*cargaison*’ of a merchant ship.<sup>24</sup>

In either case, φόρτος, equally as its derivatives φορτηγέω and τὸ φορτηγεσίο, belong to the vocabulary employed in the description of transportation of cargoes by ships (cf. *Hdt.* 2. 96). The letter under consideration is thus one where the matter is concerned with transactions on purchase and sale of ships and their cargoes. Examples of letters of this type are those from Emporion, Pech Maho and Torone.<sup>25</sup> This fact allowed M. Dana to suppose that Ω scratched after ΦΟΡΤΟΣ is the first letter of some form of the verb ὠνέομαι. In this case ΦΟΡΤΟΣ must be a form of *nominativus singularis* or *accusativus pluralis*.

<sup>20</sup> Vinogradov 1971 [Ю. Г. Виноградов, “Древнейшее греческое письмо с острова Березань”, *ВДИ*], 75. Cf. ὁ δεῖνα τῷ δεῖνι in the letter of Apatourios to Leanax (Dana 2004, 6).

<sup>21</sup> Vinogradov 1998, 155, see also Ceccarelli 2013, 336 no. 2.

<sup>22</sup> This reading was proposed at the seminar “Dialectologie et linguistique du grec ancien” at the École Pratique des Hautes Études/ANHIMA on December 11, 2018.

<sup>23</sup> Poll. 1. 99: Τὰ δὲ ἐντιθέμενα ταῖς ναυσὶ φόρτος, φορτία, ἀγώγιμα, ῥῶπος, γόμος, παρενθήκαι, see also Poll. 7. 8.

<sup>24</sup> Vinogradov 1971, 87–94; *SEG* 26. 845; Dubois 1996, 52; see also Ceccarelli 2013, 336 no. 1.

<sup>25</sup> Ceccarelli 2013, 346 no. 23, 350 no. 33, *SEG* 38. 1036, 48. 1038.

However, φόρτος in the meaning of ‘cargo’, as it seems, was employed only in singular (cf. e.g. Hdt. 1. 1. 10, 194; Hom. *Od.* 8. 163, 14. 296). In this case, after ὠνέομαι, the form of a passive participle is possible,<sup>26</sup> or a personal verbal form, e.g. that of *optativus aoristi* with the end of the word transferred to the 2<sup>nd</sup> line – ὠ[νη/θε]ῖν. In this case, in every line, we would have to reconstruct two letters rather than three as in the 8<sup>th</sup> line. Then the letters NEMAI must be probably understood as the *infinitivus aoristi activi* from νέμω – “the cargo was bought in order to divide / distribute (it)”, but this variant of reconstruction yields no satisfactory sense. The letters KA might be the beginning of the conjunction καί.

Line 3. Before the distinctly readable letters EAP in the beginning of the line there is a place for one letter, while on the left, near the very edge of the plate, parts of a letter of a rounded form are preserved. Since inside this circle there are no traces of vertical or oblique hastae, this letter, most probably, is *omicron*. In this case it seems possible to reconstruct here [πρ]ὸ[ς] ἔαρ, i.e. “in the beginning of the spring” or “with the approaching spring”.<sup>27</sup> After EAP, letters KATAΠ follow which, considering that in the 1<sup>st</sup> line some transported by sea freight (“goods” or “cargos”) are mentioned, can be interpreted as the beginning of some form of the verb καταπλέω. If we suppose here the form of the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> person *pluralis*, then the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> line can look as KATAΠ[ΛΕΩ]/[MEN] or KATAΠ[ΛΕΕ]/[TE] – “with the coming of the spring we (e.g.) shall sail...”.<sup>28</sup>

Line 4. In the beginning of the line there were possibly two or three letters of the ending of the preceding word, and after them was ΤΩΝ with a carelessly drawn *nu*. The last letter in the line is not completely preserved. Most likely it was a *sigma*. This line thus can be reconstructed as [μεν/τε] τῶν δὲ χρήσι[ουσιν e.g.] – “the things that they will need...”.<sup>29</sup>

Line 5. While ἐνθάδε (‘here’) is read fairly reliably, the first four letters can be treated as [--]ν τις, i.e. the last letter of conjunction, for example ἐπειδάν or ὅταν and an indefinite pronoun.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>26</sup> Cf. ἀριθμὸς βοῶν τῶν εἰς τὴν ἑορτὴν ὠνηθέντων in the accounts of the amphiktyons of the sanctuary of Apollo on Delos (377/6–373/2 BC, *IG* II<sup>2</sup> 1635<sup>35, 36</sup>).

<sup>27</sup> ...τοῦ χειμῶνος τελευτῶντος ἤδη καὶ πρὸς ἔαρ... (Thuc. 5. 39. 3), as well as Thuc. 5. 56. 5; 81. 2; Xen. *Cyneg.* 7. 1. 2.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. ἅμα τῷ ἔαρι καταπλέωμεν ἐπὶ Ἑλλεσπόντου (Hdt. 8. 109. 23).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Τοῦτον ὃν δοκέω τὸν ἄνδρα ποιήσιν τῶν ἂν χρηζόμεν (Hdt. 5. 3).

<sup>30</sup> This interpretation of [--]ν was proposed by A. L. Verlinsky. Otherwise it may be supposed that these letters belong to a single word proposing here such words as [μά]ντις or personal names – [Κλεόμα]ντις, [Λεο]ντίς etc, but in the Black Sea littoral similar names so far have not been recorded – see *LGPV* IV s.v.

Line 6. The oblique bar drawn at the beginning of the line is, most probably, a chance scratch. The following two vertical dashes with no traces of other lines between and over them can *inter alia* present numerical signs.<sup>31</sup> After them we can see, probably, conjunction or simply a negation μή followed by the *dativus singularis* τῶντῶι with crasis of the article and the pronoun. After the next two letters, Σ and Χ, a vertical bar is discernible which may be the hasta of an *eta* or, less probably, an *iota*. Here it is possible to restore, for example, the form from the noun σχῆμα, i.e. μή τῶντῶι σχ[ήματι] ‘not in the same manner / in order that not in the same manner’.<sup>32</sup>

Line 7–8. Since the end of the last lines of the lead letter is, for reasons unknown to us, higher than their beginning, the letters Ν, Ο, Τ, Ι and Α in the right corner of the lead plate proved to be between the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> lines, which fact makes their interpretation rather difficult. Most probably, these letters are the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> line.

At the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> line, after *eta* the word χρῆμα is distinguishable. The plural tense χρήματα often is found in Black Sea inscriptions in the meaning of ‘money’ or ‘goods’. As the closest example, the letter of Apatourios to Leanax may be cited, where some goods were confiscated by Herakleides, son of Eotheris.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, according to the statement of Pollux (9. 87), among the Ionians, the singular χρῆμα has the same meaning as χρήματα.

As an example, we may adduce the well known place in the 3<sup>rd</sup> book of Herodotos (Hdt. 3. 38), where it is narrated that King Darius asked Hellenes, for how much money they would agree to eat their late parents. Another example of a similar meaning of the form of singular number from χρῆμα can be found in the letter, or rather a memorandum, from Pech Maho, the author of which tells that he “paid the money, the 2 1/2 hektai” or, according to another interpretation, “completed the sum of two octania and a half” (ἀπέδωκα τὸ χρῆμα τρίτον [ἡμ]ιοκτάνι[ο]ν).<sup>34</sup>

The letters ΔΕΠΠΣΤ following χρῆμα are explainable in the following ways: 1. δὲ and the word derivative from the stem πιστ-; 2. δ’ ἐπιστ[ατέω]/ν,

<sup>31</sup> Cf. the receipt of delivery from Coreyra which says that the carriers broke four tiles – κατέφραξαν ||| πλίνθους (ca. 475–450 BC, *SEG* 48. 604).

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Ὅστις... ἐτέρῃ ὁδῷ καὶ ἐτέρῳ σχήματι ἐπιχειρεῖ ζητέειν (Hr. *VM.* 2. 5); τούτῳ δὴ κατόκουν τῷ σχήματι (Pl. *Criti.* 112 d).

<sup>33</sup> Dana 2004, 6, 13 – τὰ χρήματα σισύλῃμαι ὑπ’ Ἡρακλείδew τὸ Ε[ὐ]θήριος. Cf., also ΧΡΗΜΑΤ from a fragmentary lead letter of the mid-5<sup>th</sup> century BC found in Olbia in 2010 (Mitina 2017 [B. B. Митина, “Письмо, найденное в Ольвии в 2010 году”, *Hyperboreus*], 257, 262).

<sup>34</sup> Chadwick 2012, 161, 165; Somolinos 1996, 78.

supposing here the *genitivus pluralis* from ἐπιστάται – a term designating the heads of some college of magistrates, with hyphenation of the final *nu* to the next line; 3. δ' ἐπίστ[ελο]ν, i.e. the form of *imperativis aoristi activi* of the 2<sup>nd</sup> person singular from the verb ἐπιστέλλω, also with hyphenation of the final *nu* to the next line. Taking into consideration that our letter tells about some trade or economic activities, the last variant seems the most probable one.

The verb ἐπιστέλλω has previously been recorded in lead letters. It is found at the beginning of the letter of Achillodoros from the island of Berezan of the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>35</sup> In a letter from Emporion from the turn of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century BC, this verb is employed, similarly as in our letter, not in the beginning but the end of the letter, in the end of the list of instructions of the trader to his agent – κάπιστελάτω ὁκόσο ἄν [--].<sup>36</sup>

In this case we see in the last line an object clause depending from ἐπίστ[ελο]ν – ὅ τι ἀνάγοιεν, which is an attribute for χρῆμα. The last two lines then should read: [--] H. χρῆμα δ' ἐπίστ[ελο]ν ὅ τι ἀνάγοιεν i.e. – “in the case they would bring money (whatever money they would bring) inform me”.

Thus our letter can be translated as follows:

... the cargo was bought ... with the coming of the spring we (e.g.) shall sail. The things that they will need ... someone here ... not in the same manner / in order that not in the same manner... in the case they would bring money (whatever money they would bring), inform me.

Despite the poor state of preservation of the letter under discussion, it may be concluded that it probably belongs to letters with an economic content, in particular to a correspondence between a merchant who conducted large-scale exporting operations on Berezan and his counter-agent. This letter bears evidence on the lively trade connections of Berezan settlement in as early as the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, i.e. in the period preceding to the stone house building on the site.

Trade in this early period could have been mostly seasonal: the text of the letter mentions preparations for sailing with the onset of spring.

<sup>35</sup> Vinogradov 1971, 75. Concerning the Northern Black Sea region see also for the other examples of the Classic and Hellenistic period – Hermonassa, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC (Pavlichenko–Kashaev 2012, 230), Patraeus, last quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC (Pavlichenko–Zavoykina 2018, 41), Nikonion, 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC (Dana–Brujako–Sekerskaja 2018, 115).

<sup>36</sup> Ceccarelli 2013, 346.

Apparently, the letter refers to trade expeditions over long distances. There is reason to believe that Borysthene was the main centre of transit trade with the barbarian world from the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. Through the Berezan settlement, Milesian ceramics at the stage of the earliest contacts were delivered and appears on the settled and funerary sites of the Right-Bank Forest-Steppe, Central Dnieper, as well as in the eastern Crimea, and possibly in the lower reaches of the Kuban.<sup>37</sup> The published letter may be directly related to similar trade relations of the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.

Moreover, together with the recent discovery of the graffito on an Ionian rosette bowl with the dedication to Hermes from another pit,<sup>38</sup> which is also dated before the middle of 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, this finding is another important argument for Greek ethnicity of a large part of inhabitants of the early Berezan settlement.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Bujskikh 2018, 225–227.

<sup>38</sup> Chistov 2019, 102, Fig. 6.2.

<sup>39</sup> N. Pavlichenko conducted this investigation according to the program 0184-2019-0005 of Fundamental Scientific Investigations of the State Academies of Sciences (FNI GAN): “Culture of states of the Classical period in the Northern Black Sea region. Subcultures of the ruling elite and common people”.

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In 2017, during excavations of an ancient Greek settlement-site on the island of Berezan in the mouth of the Dnieper and Bug estuary, the expedition of the State Hermitage found a letter on a twice folded lead plate. This letter, on the plate broken on left and right, contains eight lines scratched in boustrophedon style. It was discovered in the fill of a household pit located ca 50 m from the place where,

in 1982, a fragmentary lead letter also of the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC was found. Both the archaeological context (e.g. Attic pottery and ‘proto-Thasian’ amphorae were absent in the pit) and the palaeographic peculiarities of the inscription allow us to date the find under consideration to the 1<sup>st</sup> half or even the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. This is the early pit-dwelling period in the occupation of the Berezan settlement. Despite the poor state of preservation of the letter here published, it may be concluded that it probably belongs to letters of an economic contents, in particular, to a correspondence between a merchant who conducted large-scale exporting operations on the Berezan and his counteragent.

В 2017 г. во время раскопок античного поселения на острове Березань в устье Днепро-Бугского лимана экспедицией Государственного Эрмитажа было найдено письмо на дважды сложенной свинцовой пластинке. Письмо на обломанной слева и справа пластинке содержит 8 строк, процарапанных в стиле бустрофедон. Оно было обнаружено в заполнении хозяйственной ямы, расположенной примерно в 50 м от места, где в 1982 г. было найдено фрагментированное свинцовое письмо 2-й четв. VI в. до н.э. И археологический контекст (например, в яме отсутствовала аттическая керамика и “протофасосские” амфоры), и палеографические особенности надписи позволяют датировать находку 2017 г. 1-й пол. или даже 2-й четв. VI в. до н.э. Это время раннего, земляночного периода в жизни Березанского поселения. Несмотря на фрагментарную сохранность письма, можно заключить, что оно относится к категории деловых писем и представляет собой послание от торговца, доставлявшего на Березань по морю грузы, к его контрагенту.

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