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DE TITULIS OLBIAE PONTICAE ET VICINIIS III

Fedor Shelov-Kovedyaev

Independent researcher (Moscow, Russian Federation)

e-mail: shel-kov@yandex.ru

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6846-2856>

The paper proposes to comprehend a small fragment of a Greek inscription of roman times, the image of which was published by S.Yu. Saprykin & N.F. Fedoseev in 2010, as a concluding part of a poetic epitaph.

Keywords: *Olbia, Berezan, poetry, artifact, script, writing, letters*

5. A Piece of metrical Epitaph from Olbia Pontica? The Lower Bug region has presented science with several magnificent examples of ancient Greek poetry¹. It is noteworthy that they originate not only in the early times. So, in Berezan, a Hymn to the Island and Achilles was found, dating from the end of the second half of the 1st century AD². The traditions of high versification were not lost in the Olbia polis even much later. This, in particular, is evidenced by the artifact to which this article is dedicated.

In 2010 S.Yu. Saprykin and N.F. Fedoseev published (see Fig. 1) a fragment of an inscription that contained eight letters, in which they saw mainly the name Fl(avius) Sothus ([Φ]λ(άβιος) Σῶτος), considering the engraving as «the last line of a large inscription», from the definition of the category of which they abstained. The co-authors were not confused by the fact that «The noted Greek name in Olbia and the Black Sea region in general has not yet been attested», but was known only in Crete, requiring an explanation for its appearance in the Bug region, albeit at a later time: the marble, in their opinion (and this one might agree upon) dates from the second half of the 2nd century A.D. to the beginning of the 3rd century A.D. The comparable PN collected by them from no less distant of the North–West Black Sea oecumene regions (only Prusias ad Hypium is localized in a relatively close vicinity, in the southern Black Sea region; while the example of Athens is not indicative, because one can find any onomastics there) – from Rhodes and Phocis to Cyrene – does not help the cause (Ζῶτος recorded by them in Boeotia is mistakenly indicated as Σῶτος). The somewhat worn-out letters located below XA were rightly referenced by them to an earlier text of the funerary content (as one of the options) – «with the mention of the formula of farewell (χα[ῖρε]»». They describe the stone as a fragment of «a large

¹ For example, Виноградов Ю.Г. Киклическая поэзия в Ольвии // Вестник древней истории. 1969. № 3. С. 142-150.

² Шелов-Коведяев Ф.В. Березанский гимн острову и Ахиллу // Вестник древней истории. 1990. № 3. С. 49-62; Шелов-Коведяев Ф.В. Снова о березанском гимне острову и Ахиллу // Вісник КНУКіМ. 2020. Т. 3. № 1. С. 75-83.

marble slab 13.5 cm wide, 7.5-10 cm high, 4.5 cm thick»³.

It is the thickness of the object that is most impressive here, indicating that the inscription placed on it once should have also had a volume exceeding, as the publishers correctly write, one anthroponym. However, they misinterpreted the first sign that survived on the surface: the *lambda* (the outlines of which are characteristic only of writing papyri and dipinti) could have never fit into the series of monumental graphemes. Moreover, even in the photograph, the letter of interest to us, clearly shows the beginning of the left half of the broken crossbar. Since *mu* could not have been combined with the subsequent *sigma*, then here it is necessary to read characteristic just for the second half of the 2nd century A.D. (see IOSPE I²; IOLb 170.1, 82 passim: in the latter case with the horizontal bridging the gap) the *alpha* open at the top.

And this immediately gives us the lexeme ἄσωτος. In the passive voice it means «one without hope of salvation; abandoned; embezzler». In principle, these connotations (except: «prodigal») are suitable for an epitaph. However, the active meaning is even more expressive: «one that brings death» (LSJ s.v.: cf. ibidem the having the same root adjective ἄσωστος of a similar content).

Moreover, as «disastrous for the race» this adjective is first encountered already in Aeschylus: λαβῶν / ἔσθει βορὰν ἄσωτον, ὡς ὀρᾷς, γένει (Aeschyl. Agam. 1596/7) «began to eat food that is fatal, as you see, for the race». Thus Aegisthus, after the murder of Agamemnon, concludes his story addressed to the chorus about how Atreus, the parent of the murdered after his return from Troy king of Mycenae, once fed (a so-called «wandering plot» widespread in mythology and fairy tales) his brother Thyestes with the meat of his own sons, more closely translated by Solomon Apt («and, to the destruction of the race, he began to eat meat»⁴) than by Vyacheslav Ivanov («what went to us, as you can see, not in health»⁵).

In the sense of «destructive», the word has gotten into the epigraphic epitaphs written by elegiac distiches. Probably, the present Olbian inscription could have narrated about such phenomena and/or deities as Moira, Ananke, case, Ker (Keres), illness, battle, war/Ares, death, etc. (cf. Bulletin épigraphique). It is possible that the deceased died at a young age, and it was emphasized that his very departure was disastrous for the descendants who were never born of him.

Of course, it is impossible to say anything definite about the sequence of the poetic elements based on such an insignificant passage. However, epigraphical poems were rarely written in separate lines; and if, as S.Yu. Saprykin and N.F. Fedoseev point out, to the right-hand side of the tombstone its edge is indeed observed, nothing prevents the pentameter to be completed (for example, – γένει) in the left-hand side (disappearing after ἄσωτος) of the tombstone.

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³ Сапрыкин С.Ю., Федосеев Н.Ф. Новые эпиграфические материалы Боспора и Ольвии // GAUDEAMUS IGITUR. Сборник статей к 60-летию А.В. Подосинова под ред. Т.Н. Джаксон, И.Г. Коноваловой, Г.Р. Цецхладзе. Москва, 2010. С. 335–336.

⁴ Эсхил. Трагедии. Перевод с древнегреческого С. Апта. Москва, 1971. С. 271.

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Федір Шелов-Коведяєв

(Незалежний дослідник, Москва, Російська Федерація)

e-mail: shel-kov@yandex.ru

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6846-2856>

De Titulis Olbiae Ponticae Et Viciniis III

Нотатка присвячена републікації виданого у 2010 р. С.Ю. Саприкіним і Н.Ф. Федосєєвим невеликого фрагменту грецького напису, який пропонується розуміти як закінчення віршованої епітафії.

Нижнє Побужжя подарувало науці кілька чудових зразків давньогрецьких поетичних творів. Примітно, що вони дійшли не тільки від раннього часу. Так, на Березані було знайдено гімн Острову та Ахіллу, що датується кінцем другої половини I ст. від Р.Х. Традиції високого віршування були втрачені в Ольвійському полісі і набагато пізніше. Про це, зокрема, свідчить й згаданий артефакт.

Це фрагмент, що зберіг вісім букв, в яких побачили, головним чином, ім'я Фл(авія) Сота ([Φ]λ(άβιος) Σῶτος), вважаючи, що він становить «останній рядок великого напису», від визначення категорії якого вони утрималися. Камінь описаний ними як уламок «великої мармурової плити шириною 13,5 см, висотою 7,5-10 см, товщиною 4,5 см».

Автор пропонує свій варіант прочитання втраченого напису.

Ключові слова: Ольвія, Березань, поезія, артефакт, шриффт, лист, літери

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Aeschyl. – Aeschylus

Agam. – Agamemnon

IOlb – Inscriptiones Olbiae Ponticae

IOSPE I² – Inscriptiones orae septentrionalis Ponti Euxini, editio altera

LSJ – A Greek-English Lexicon. Compiled by H.G. Liddell, R. Scott & H.S. Jones

PN – Personal Name

s.v. – spectra verbum



Fig. 1. Concluding part of a metric epitaph from Olbia? Private collection, Kyiv (after: Saprykin, Fedoseev 2010).