

THE VISIT OF AN EUBOEAN TO PHANAGORIA*

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Inscriptions provide some of the most reliable evidence on the economic and other contacts between North Pontic cities and other centres of the Black Sea littoral and the Mediterranean, especially in earliest times. They are practically the only source to reflect the physical presence of foreigners in North Pontic cities. Unfortunately, our data for the Archaic and Early Classical history of the Cimmerian Bosphorus are slight. For this reason, the study of graffiti is of equal importance with the study of inscriptions on stone. In this note I would like to concentrate on one such graffito.

In 1977, during the excavation by the Phanagoria Archaeological Expedition of the Institute of Archaeology of the Soviet (now Russian) Academy of Sciences, Moscow of the “Upper City” trench in Phanagoria, the base of a kylix type C (*ca.* 500-480 BC) was found in the levels of the end of the 6th-first quarter of the 5th century BC. On the inner part of it an inscription is incised (Fig. 1):

:ΣΙΜΟΝ ΧΑΡΙΕΣΣΑ :ΕΙΜΙ ΚΑΛΛΟΣ ΑΓΑΘΕ ΚΑΙ ΜΕΤΡΙΕ.

The metrical character of the inscription is obvious. The verse starts with ΣΙΜΟΝ in which it would be natural to see the neuter adjective which qualifies the sole subject of the text: σιμόν ... κάλλος. But this kind of grammatical agreement (neuter-female-verb-neuter-female+female) cannot be imagined in a poetic text.

Looking for a solution from another perspective, it makes much more sense to interpret Σίμων as a female name, with the meaning ‘snub-nosed, flat-nosed’. From this, only one acceptable interpretation flows. The person who cut this inscription dedicated it to someone he admired, either a loved one or *hetaira* to whom this kylix was intended to be given with a beautiful verse:

* *Editorial note.* This note is a summary of the paper which Y.G. Vinogradov intended to give at the international conference ‘Greeks and Natives in the Cimmerian Bosphorus’, Taman, South Russia, October 2000. The author died suddenly in May 2000. It is included in this volume for the very reason that it gives information on the presence of foreigners alongside Ionians (the main colonisers of modern-day Eastern Crimea and the Taman Peninsula) in the Cimmerian Bosphorus.



Fig. 1. Graffito from Phanagoria. Scale 1:1.

Σίμον χαρίεσσα· εἰμι κάλλος, ἀγαθέ καὶ μετρίε

“Simon, dear! I am myself beautiful, kind and moderate.”

In this case, both attributions ἀγαθέ καὶ μετρίε belonged naturally to the kylix. The abstract meaning of beauty is attached to a concrete object: I am a beautiful cup. As a result, this is very poetic: the beauty of the given object is in competition with the beauty of the recipient, but it gives way to the latter’s greater beauty. Χαρίεσσα in our case can have two meanings – dear or elegant. The choice of the adjective μετρίε (properly μετρίη) also deserves attention. As some analogies in the epigraphy of the 6th-4th centuries BC demonstrate, μετρίε in our text must be understood as a cup of “moderate, middle size”.

One of the most important problems is to identify the script in which the inscription is executed. There is a contrast between Ionian dialect and such key letters as γ=C, η=E, ρ=P, σ=Σ, χ= – . It is obvious that we cannot speak of the origin of the author of this inscription as being Miletus or Teos (the metropolis of Phanagoria). If so, he would have used ε – to represent H and not E. For identification, the most important character in this inscription is the form of *gamma* represented as a lunate *sigma* (C), which is characteristic of the scripts of Achaea, Corinth, Euboea, Ionia Asiatica, Lefkandi, Locris, Rhodes, Syracuse, and other colonies. After very careful study of the script used in the Phanagorian inscription and those of the above mentioned centres, only one shows very close analogies: Late Archaic-Early Classical Euboea. Thus, we can conclude with a very considerable degree of certainty, that the person who created the verse came from somewhere far from the Cimmerian Bosphorus, such as Aegean Euboea.