

## BONE OBJECTS

*Eugenii Ya. Rogov*

During the excavation of building U6 a very small number of objects made of bone were discovered. In fact, the list amounts to just a few finds. But this does not necessarily mean that the settlement inhabitants did not use such a convenient and handy material as bone, or that they used it only on a limited scale. Judging by the numerous bone articles and the quantity of debris left over from bone-carving found at other sites in the northern Black Sea region, such articles were in very wide use and the bone-carving industry was fairly well developed. The small number of bone objects from U6 evidently finds its explanation in the conditions that characterise the site under consideration. We may well suppose that some of the bone objects were destroyed in the fire, or, having been partially burnt in it, decayed soon after. We must also take into consideration the high lime content of the soil, which would certainly not be favourable to the preservation of such a material as bone.

Those bone objects that have survived represent quite common everyday articles that have numerous parallels from the sites of the ancient period in the northern Black Sea region. Particularly widespread are bone haft-plates (or plaques) for knife-handles: these were fashioned from animal ribs or tubular bones and fixed on both sides of the tang by means of iron or bronze rivets.<sup>1</sup>

**○ 1.** U6 courtyard, E-3. 1969. Pl. 176.

Knife-handle haft-plate made from a hollow bone. It has a segment-shaped cross-section, and was originally secured to the matching second plate by means of iron rivets, of which only one has survived. The inner surface is flat, while the outer one is convex and has been polished and decorated with concentric circles with a dot in the centre; there are eight circles in all, making three rows. One end of the haft-plate has decayed. Dimensions: length 7.7 cm; width 1.9 cm; thickness 0.9 cm.

**○ 2.** U6 courtyard, E-3. 1969. Pl. 176.

Knife-handle haft-plate made from a hollow bone. It was originally secured to the matching second plate with three iron rivets, of which two are still fixed to the iron tang. Part of the tang has preserved. The inner surface of the plate is flat, while the outer one is convex and has been polished and decorated with five concentric circles with a dot in the centre. Dimensions: length 9 cm; width 1.7 cm; thickness 0.6 cm.

Decoration of the type described above is not uncommon on bone articles – in the collection of the Chersonesos Museum there is a stylos decorated with exactly similar concentric circles.<sup>2</sup>

**○ 3.** U6 courtyard. Pl. 176.

Bone spindle whorl in the form of a flat profiled disc that was originally part of a bone spindle. Dark brown polished bone. Dimensions: diameter 0.7 cm; diameter of hole 0.6 cm.

Similar whorls and spindles are known from excavations of many sites, they are met with in Pantikapaion, Olbia, and Chersonesos.<sup>3</sup>

**○ 4.** U6 well. 1973. Pl. 176.

Bone spindle whorl made from the knee-cap of some animal. Fragmented. Dimensions: preserved height 2.3 cm;

diameter 3.5 cm. A hole 0.6 cm in diameter is bored through the centre.

**○ 5.** U6 courtyard, B-6. 1972. Pl. 176.

Bone rod made from a hollow bone cleft lengthways. One end is pointed, while the other is blunt and sawed flat. The blunt end has a notch at one side. Dimensions: length 6.0 cm; diameter 0.6 cm.

**○ 6.** U6 courtyard, B-6. 1972. Pl. 176.

Fragment of a bone rod similar to **○ 5**. Only a part of the upper blunt end with a notch is preserved. It is made from a hollow bone cleft lengthways. Dimensions: length 2.2 cm; thickness 0.6 cm.

**O 7.** U6 courtyard, B-6. 1972. Pl. 176.

Fragment of a bone rod similar to **O 5**. Only a part of the upper blunt end with a notch has survived. It is made from a hollow bone cleft lengthways. Length 1.1 cm.

**O 8.** U6 courtyard, B-6. 1972. Pl. 176.

Fragment of middle section of a bone rod similar to **O 5**.

The upper and lower ends are broken off. It is made from a hollow bone cleft lengthways. Length 1.8 cm.

**O 9.** U6 room 15. 1971. Pl. 176.

Fragment of a bone rod similar to **O 5**. The pointed end is broken off; and the blunt end too is incompletely preserved – only part of the notch has survived. It is made from a hollow bone cleft lengthways. Length 4.4 cm.

Finds of similar rods having one end pointed and the other blunt with a notch in it are quite common in excavations at sites in the northern Black Sea region. There is no generally accepted opinion as to their purpose. Some scholars interpret them as bone awls,<sup>4</sup> or as some similar implement for boring holes.<sup>5</sup> The discovery of similar rods among tableware has led to the suggestion that they were used as utensils for cooking and eating solid food.<sup>6</sup> Recently the identification of these objects as multifunctional implements become more popular.<sup>7</sup>

**O 10.** U6 courtyard. Pl. 176.

*Stylos* made from a cleft animal bone. The pointed end is broken off. Dimensions: length 9.7 cm; diameter 0.6-0.8

cm. It is less carefully finished than the *styloi* found during excavations at other sites in the northern Black Sea region.<sup>8</sup>

#### NOTES

1. *Cf.*, e.g., Nalivkina 1940; Šelov 1972, 90-92.
2. Peters 1986, pl. XII, 19.
3. *Cf.* Peters 1986, pl. XI, 1-26.
4. Belov 1941, 261.
5. Kruglikova 1966, 136; Burakov 1976, 126.
6. Peters and Efimova 1967, 222.
7. Peters 1986, 56; Krapivina 1993, 137.
8. *Cf.* Peters 1986, pl. XII, 1-22.