At the end of September 1994, while collecting surface finds on the northern hill at Gonur, I picked up a sherd, on which two clear signs had survived. This find that did not appear out of the ordinary at first may well possess key importance for resolving vitally important questions (whether the population of Margiana had a written language in the Late Namazga V-Namazga VI era and the language group to which the population of Gonur, or at least part of it belonged) and also provide a serious argument in the controversy over the absolute chronology of the settlements in the ancient delta of the Murghab.¹ In view of this we feel that it merits a special publication (Fig. 1).

The sherd is 8.2 cms high, 4.3 cms wide at its base, 1 cm thick along its top edge and 1.2 cms thick along its bottom edge. Unfortunately the fragment is not sufficiently informative to enable us to establish the shape of the whole vessel. On the basis of the measurements and calculations the author has made it is possible to suggest that the vessel broadened out towards the top: the external diameter of the original vessel at the level of the lower break was 27 cms and approximately 40 cms² (Fig. 2) at the widest point. Vessels of this type have been encountered at all 3 building levels in Gonur³ and there is no doubt concerning the fact that the vessel under discussion was manufactured locally. It is highly unlikely that anyone would question that last point, even if my reconstruction of the vessel's shape is not entirely accurate. It would not only have been difficult to...


² Khums and certain other types of vessels, the lower parts of which may have a similar concave profile, are distinguished by the thickness of their walls or diameter. The walls of khums, as a rule, are far thicker and the walls of cups and so on are thinner: the diameters of the latter are considerably smaller as well.

Fig. 1. Photograph and drawing of the potsherd bearing signs — Scale 0.1 cms.