

The Apotheosis of the Dead (Based of the Article "The Olbia Pontica Necropolis")

by Valentina Papanova

Ancient Greeks idolized their dead - not only illustrious citizens, but also their relatives. Echoing them Cicero wrote, "Our ancestors wished people who left this life to be reckoned to the assembly of gods" (Cicero, II, 30). It is precisely this idea that explains the rite of funeral feast, the building of grandiose crypts, and the erection of tumuli (Latyshev 1899, 251; Coulange 1906, 14 - 15). This cult came into being in archaic times. The flowering of barrow architecture at the Olbio necropolis was observed twice: in the 4th c. BC and in the 2nd c. AD. It was the time when the highest Olbian barrows were erected reaching the height of 18 meters.

The apotheosis of the dead had been spread in Olbio since the time of Hellenism and achieved its acme in the first centuries AD (Rousyaeva 1992, 187 - 189). It was in the second half of the 4th c. BC that at the Olbio necropolis appeared a new type of funeral erection - a stone crypt. According to their planning, these crypts were divided into one-chamber and two-chamber constructions. According to the type of ceiling, they were two-slope, semicircular, corbelling, and horizontal (flat) ones. A number of crypts had a ground or stone faced *dromos*. During the Hellenistic period they were erecting one-chamber crypts with two-slope, semicircular, and corbelling vaults (fig. 1 - 3). In the first centuries AD two-chamber crypts with horizontal floors appeared together with one-chamber crypts with two-slope floors.

In the 2nd c. AD Euresivius and Arete's stone crypts under Zeus barrow were built (fig. 4 - 5). At the Olbio necropolis there are five types of stone crypts. One-chamber stone crypts with two-slope floors erected in the 4th - 3rd c. BC and used for repeated burials in the first centuries AD belong to the first type (Parovich-Peshikan 1974, 49 - 50, 172-175; Burakov 1979, 81; Papanova 1985, 83). Some crypts of this type had a ground stepped *dromos* or in the form of a ramp. Obviously, this type of stone crypts was brought to Olbio during the second war of the colonization. Probably among the migrants there were those who came from the colonies of Great Greece, in particular from the south-western part of Italy and from the town of Naxos in Sicily. It was just that locality where they excavated the crypts absolutely analogous to those in Olbio (Sastieri 1959, 33 - 37; Rastrelli 1988, 45, fig. 45, 324, fig. 46, 334, fig. 56).

The second type is represented by one-chamber crypts with semicircular floors dated the 4th c. BC. According to M.B. Parovich-Peshican, this type of "Macedonian" crypt was brought to Olbio from Thracia where it had been modernized (Parovich-Peshikan 1974, 49 - 50).

The third type includes monumental crypts with corbelling floors erected during the Hellenistic times (Ouvarov 1851, 42; *Sobranie kart...* 43, tabl. XI).

Small one-chamber crypts with horizontal (flat) ceiling dated the first centuries AD belong to the fourth type (Suruchan 1891, XII).

The fifth type of the Olbio necropolis stone crypts is represented by two-chamber monumental crypts with flat ceiling: the crypt under Zeus barrow and the above-mentioned that of Euresivius and Arete (Pharmakovsky 1906, 13).

The *stelae* with the pictures of the "beyond the grave meal" where the departed is identified as a god or a divine hero (Toncheva 1964, 37; Ivanova 1970, 76; Zubar 1990, 63; Rousyaeva 1992, 184) also bear witness to the apotheosis of the dead. Such *stelae* were spread in the Hellenistic and Roman times. The rite of burying with a gold wreath is connected with considering the dead a hero. This tradition appeared in the Hellenistic period and was widely spread in the first centuries AD. Gold wreaths were found in the ground and stone crypts, in the crypts with bays and in pit tombs. Those Olbian citizens who were not rich instead of gold funeral wreaths laid on the graves gilded bronze ones with glass or clay berries (tomb 1901/89) or gilded wooden ones with bronze leaven (tomb 1901/26). A number of Olbian decrees ran that, according to the great services performed for the city and pious life, its citizens were awarded gold wreaths on behalf of the people posthumously. Both youths and people of age could be honored in that way (IOSPE, I - 2, N39 - 62). Subject matters of the decrees were read out during bearing-out, and then they were carved on *stelae* mounted on conspicuous sites of the city (IOSPE, I - 2, N21, 34).

The custom of grave-side oration was not widely spread among ancient Greeks. Such speeches were delivered only during the funerals of particularly outstanding citizens. Some grave-side orations delivered by Pericles, by Lysius about those who died in the battle of Aigospothamos, by Demosthenes, Hiperides, Socrates' epitaph in Plato's "Menexene" have reached our times (Shultz 1895, 140 - 143). The main idea of a grave-side oration was stated briefly in epitaphs' on *stelae*.

We dare suppose that in Olbio the part of grave-side orations was played by decrees read out in honor of deceased citizens.

The usage of funeral masks and face plates (fig. 6) in the form of lips and eyes is also connected with the apotheosis of the dead in the first centuries AD. Funeral masks are known among the peoples of Egypt, Palestine, Italy, Greece, the northern coast of the Black Sea (Piatysheva 1967, 183 - 187; Pogrebova 1957, 146; Sokolov 1973, 160; Kazansky 1985, 45; Rieth 1973, 29 - 30, Abb. 1 - 11). The dead's mask often had a portrait resemblance reproducing individual features of the dead.

Two specimens of the gold funeral masks from the Olbio necropolis are known. In 1841 the peasants from the neighboring village dug a stone crypt out of the plot of the necropolis situated on the former territory of a Hellenistic city. In the crypt there was a clay cinerary urn in the form of an amphora. Beside it in the glass bowl with a lid there was a gold mask, wreath, ear-ring, necklace, a shut lantern with the picture of a cock on its top (Murzakevich 1844, 622 - 624). The further fate of this mask is unknown.

The second mask (fig. 7) was found in a stone crypt under the barrow situated 3,500 feet from the village of Parutino in 1842 (Ouvarov 1851, 43; *Sobranie kart...* 42 - 43. tabl. XIV). Together with it there was found a gold wreath, a gold neck-lace, as well as a pair of ear-rings. As Professor A.S. Rousyaeva thinks, this mask belonged to the burial vault of a Sarmat tzar Farzoy's stock representative (Rousyaeva 1992, 180). The mask is being kept in the Hermitage (St. Petersburg, Russia).

In addition to the masks at the Olbio Necropolis they found face plates that covered eyes and lips of the dead. They were used instead of a funeral mask (Oreshnikov 1892, 8; Kuftin 1941, 39; Shultz. 1953, 63; Zubar, Mescherikov, 1983, 109 - 110). Funeral masks and face plates are also known in the necropolises of the Bosphorus and Chersones kingdoms (Piatysheva 1956, 30; Sokolov 1973, 156; Zubar 1982, 110 - 111).

There are different points of view explaining to the rite of burying with gold mask and face plates. A number of scholars believe that

according to the ancients' conceptions, masks, lips or eyes plates protected the living against the dead (Litvinsky 1972, 146; Rieth 1973, 29 - 30). In other respects they kept a body serving as the receptacle of the soul from decomposition (Kazansky 1985, 45 - 46). A. Oreshnikov, V. Zubar, V. Mescheryakov, and A. Rousyaeva consider that these plates serve as *apotheoses* (Oreshnikov 1892, 7 - 8; Zubar, Mescherikov 1983, 110; Rousyaeva 1992, 180).

Gold or its substitute bronze was widely used in the ancient Greek rite of burying as they were the symbols of light, warmth, and divine purity (Ouvarov 1847, 12).

As a rule, funeral masks used to be present in the burials of rich and famous citizens for whom special funeral buildings were erected: pyramids in Egypt, done tombs in Mikonos. We observe the same phenomenon in Olbio: both of the masks were found in the stone crypts with rich funeral stack.

Gold funeral wreaths, masks, lips and eyes plates of Olbian making. I. Tolstoy, N. Kondakov, and A.S. Rousyaeva mentioned the low quality of these things. This fact proves their local origin (Tolstoy, Kondakov 1899, 17; Rousyaeva 1992, 180). In ancient times funeral things were sold in temples. In Rome they sold them in the Temple of Venus Lebythene, in Chersones - in the Temple of Aphrodite (Plutarchus, *Mor. Quest. rom.*, 23, 7 - 8; Zubar,

Mescherikov 1983, 111). In Olbio, most probably, their sale took place in the Sanctuary of Dionysus whose cult had been spreading since the end of the 5th c. BC including the Roman period, the more so Olbian citizens honored the cult of Dionysus Chthonic (Rousyaeva 1979, 89 - 99; eadem 1992, 96 - 100).

Funeral masks and their substitutes in Olbio are connected not only with the apotheosis of the dead, but also with the idea of soul's reincarnation which was disseminated all over Classic Greece, and we find its witness in Hippocrates' corpus "On a diet" (Hip., Diet. I, 25). This idea is more antique than that of Hades. It gets a new development in the teaching of orphics which was widely spread in Olbio; it is known that it possessed some elements of the more ancient cult of Dionysus-Zagreus (Rousyaeva 1992, 199).

The flowering of funeral architecture, the erection of *stelae* with pictures of the "beyond the grave meal" in Hellenistic and Roman times were closely connected with the development of conceptions on idolizing the dead. A hero crowned with a gold wreath or covered with a mask had to leave an illustration of his posthumous glory and a barrow or crypt as a place of cult. Crypts - heroes were honored by the descendants in accordance with their fathers' precepts.

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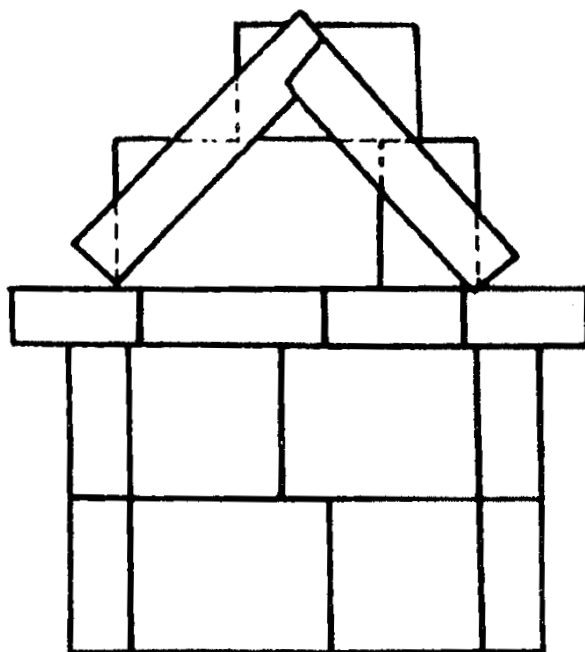


Fig. 1.

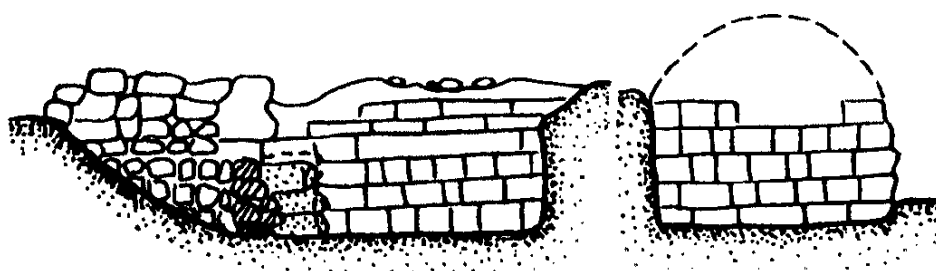


Fig. 2.

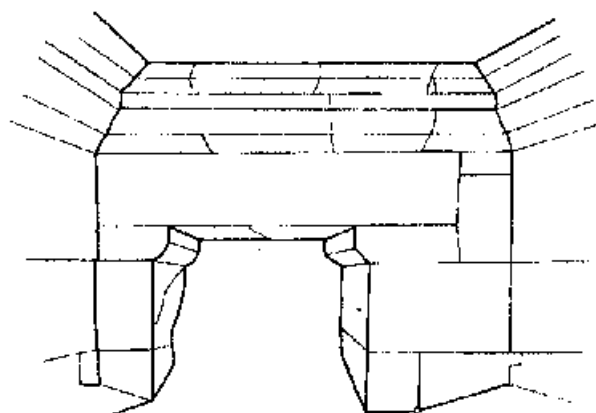


Fig. 3.

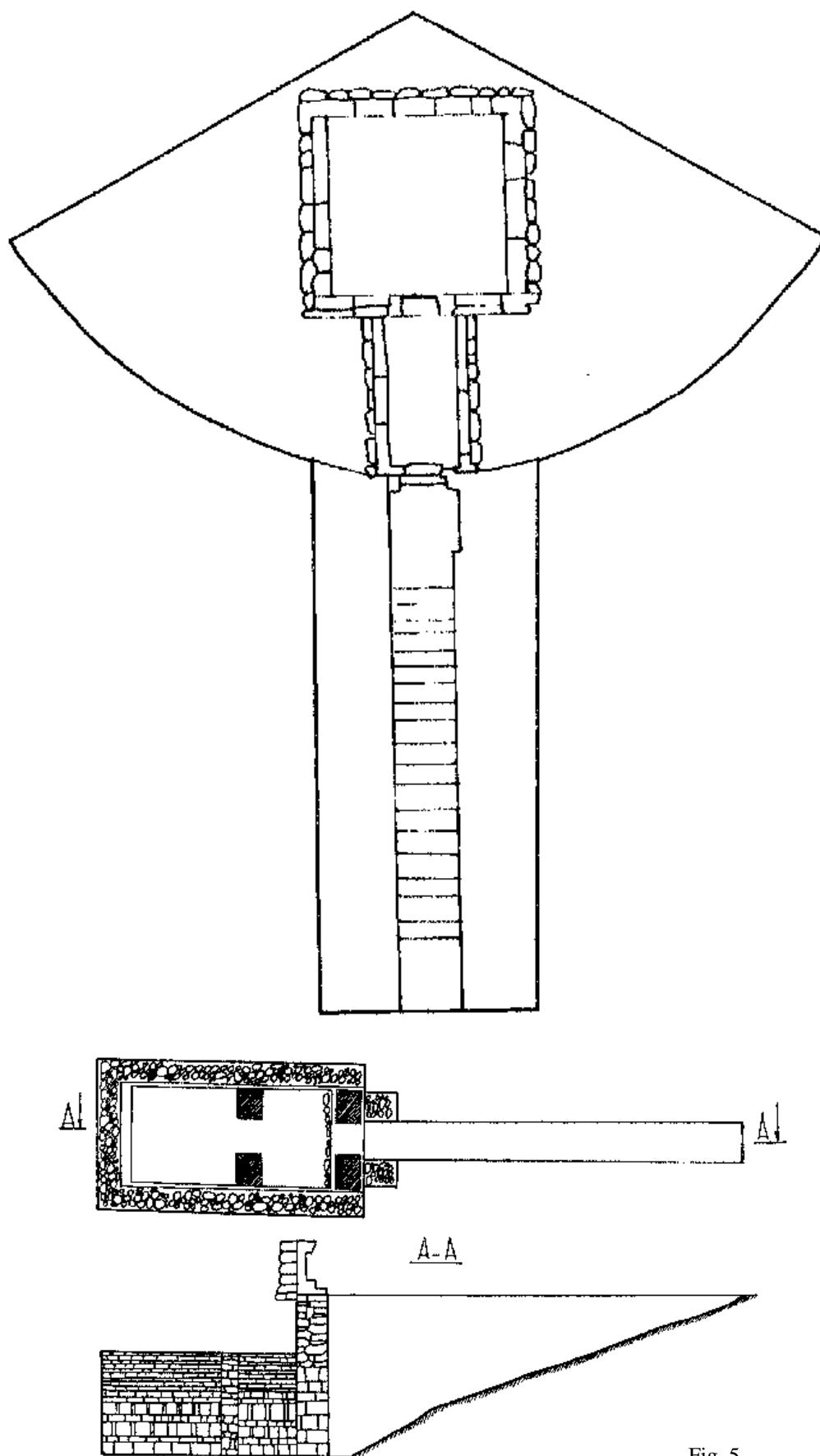


Fig. 5.

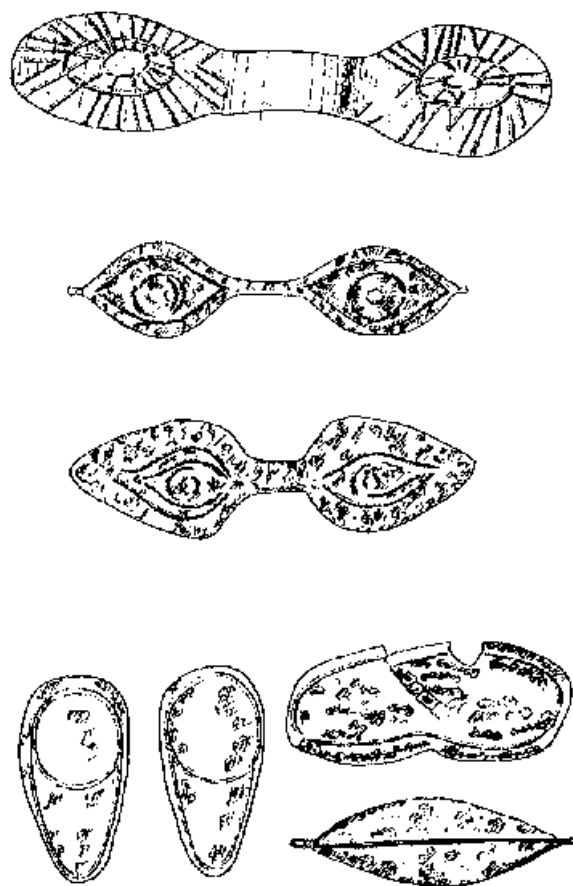


Fig. 6.



Fig. 7.

