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Macedonian craftsmanship in Crimean tombs from late 4th century BC to early 3rd century BC^{*}

Helle Salskov Roberts

In 1875 an interesting tomb was discovered at Ak Burun on the northeast side of the Crimea near Kerch, the ancient town of Pantikapaion. It was published the following year by Stephani.¹ The burial was an incineration (on a wooden couch) placed in a rectangular pit-grave covered by six tiles. This type of burial is common in the Crimea. Although it is not a great kurgan the grave gifts are quite impressive. Especially a solid-gold head ornament with openwork decoration, weighing 826.3 g, has attracted attention (Fig. 1).²

The tomb contained a Panathenaic amphora with part of the traditional archon inscription preserved, which, combined with stylistic analysis, places it as being from the archonship of Neaichmos in the year 320–319 BC, thus providing an important *terminus post*.³ Although it was an incineration the grave gifts were placed as if in an inhumation burial, with a gold wreath⁴ on the breast, gold cups⁵ at each hand,

- ³ Hermitage AkB 45; Guédéonow 1875, XXXIII; Stephani
- 1876, pl. I.1–3; Bentz 1998, 179 no. 4.114, pl. 133.
- ⁴ Stephani 1876, 6: Artamonov 1969, 72, like pl. 271.
- ⁵ Stephani 1876, 6, pl. II,2.

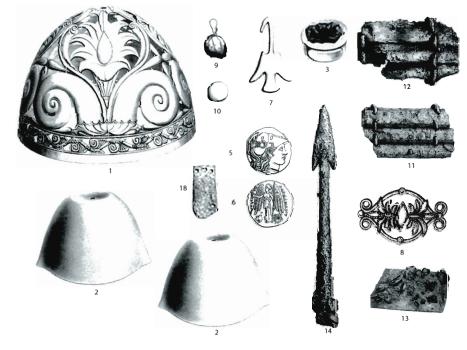


Fig. 1. Main contents of the Ak Burun tomb. C. 1:4. After *CR* 1876.

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¹ Guédéonow 1875, XXXII–XXXIV; Stephani 1876, 5–6; 109–15, pls. I–II.

² H.: 14.4 cm; diam.: 17.7–19.5 cm; Artamonov 1969, 72, pl. 272; Vinogradov 1993, 43.



Fig. 2. Gold stater of Alexander III from the Ak Burun tomb (Fig. 1) and similar coin in the Danish National Museum. 2:1. After CR 1976, SNG, Danish National Museum, Macedonia, vol. II, no. 640 and photo by HSR.

and a gold ring near the left hand.⁶ Further down were fragments of a very large iron sword, with pieces of charcoal from the pyre,⁷ and an iron belt clasp covered with gold leaf in the shape of a bird.⁸ At the feet were fragments of an iron cuirass, five or six spearheads and several iron and bronze arrowheads.⁹ Furthermore, there were fragments of a damaged silver vase, pieces of jewellery and fragments of a black-glazed fluted vase, these latter presumably belonging to a deposition of a woman buried with less care, but to whom the jewellery might belong.¹⁰ There was also a round green glass inlay and fragments of a carefully worked wooden ovolo-frieze, likely to have formed decoration of the couch, and a large piece of a brown woollen material, partly burnt, but with some strings preserved.¹¹

Another important dating evidence is provided by the gold stater found near the head with the name of Alexander with the addition *Basileus* (Fig. 2). This title had for centuries been notorious in Greece and is only found in coin issues of the East, where, in contrast, it was prestigious. This fairly rare coin was minted in Babylon, but not in the lifetime of Alexander himself. His successors found it advantageous to continue to use the name of the great conqueror, and this stater is likely to have been minted by Seleukos, who was satrap of Babylon from 321 BC. He did not use his own name before 305 BC, when he took the basileus title for himself. This variety with the monogram inside the wreath and a head of a silenus is known from coin

¹¹ Green glass inlay Stephani 1876, 6, pl. II,10; the other pieces not illustrated.





Fig. 3. Painted capitals found in the ruins of private houses on the Mithridates Mountain, Kerch 1899. After Rostovtsev 1914.

⁶ Stephani 1876, 6, pl. II,3.

⁷ Stephani 1876, 7, pl. II,13.

⁸ Stephani 1876, 6, pl. II,7.

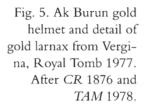
 ⁹ Stephani 1876, 7, ıron cuirass pl. II.11–12; spearheads pl. II.14.
¹⁰ Guédéonow 1875, XXXII–XXXIII; Stephani 1876, 6, pl.

II.8-9. Vinogradov 1993, 39.



Fig. 4. Detail of gilt wooden panel of sarcophagus found at Anapa. After *CR* 1882.





hoards from 311/310 BC and thus gives a later *ter*minus post than the Panathenaic amphora.¹²

The central motif of the openwork decoration of the gold helmet is a flower rising from two large volutes set in a fluted base. The flower is a pointed calyx seen in profile and, over this, are two lower petals seen from the outside, whereas seven petals are seen from above, framing the almond-shaped centre. The lower rim of the helmet is a frieze of vegetal stems ending in spirals with small palmette infills. This frieze is not unusual,¹³ but the flower of the central decoration is fairly rare.

There is a small version of it on a gold bracelet from Hadji Mouschkai near Kerch, with finials in the shape of an animal head and an intermediate element with this floral decoration.¹⁴

On a larger scale there are two painted capitals, found in the ruins of private houses on the Mithridates mountain in 1899, featuring flowers with as many as thirteen to sixteen petals (Fig. 3).¹⁵

Several nine-petalled flowers rise from acanthus stems on wooden gilt pilasters decorating a sarcophagus, found in a large tumulus to the north of Anapa (Fig. 4).¹⁶

Furthermore a series of reliefs representing nereids and other marine creatures with Lysippean proportions decorated the sarcophagus. Another series of



smaller reliefs showed fighting warriors.¹⁷ The poses of these figures in dynamic movement are reflections of the participants in the "Lion Hunt" pebble mosaic from Pella, room C of building I.¹⁸

On the cranium of the buried woman was a gold stater of Lysimachos, King of Thrace. The royal title stamped on the coin was not assumed by him until 306 BC.¹⁹ This provides an important *terminus post* for the sarcophagus and its decoration. It

¹² Stephani 1876, 6, pl. II,5–6. For the monogram in wreath group, Price 1991, 445; Le Rider 1977, 269 (Varna hoard no. 34, *IGCH*, 796). With the silenus head, Le Rider 1977, 270 hoard 11, Greece, 1960s, no. 8; Le Rider 1977, 272, hoard 12, Market 1964, no. 44; *IGCH*, 1441; Le Rider 1977, 273, Northern Greece 1959, no. 94, *IGCH*, 801. The dates of the Alexander coins from this period are based on the studies of N.M.Waggoner 1968, *The Alexander mint at Babylon*, unfortunately unpublished because of the author's death, *fl*. Le Rider 1977, 269 note.

¹³ E.g. Williams & Ogden 1994, no. 24.

¹⁴ Reinach 1892, pl. XIV.1; Vinogradov 1993, 43.

¹⁵ Rostovtsev 1914, pl. 52,2; 3; 4.

¹⁶ Kondakoff 1881–82, 71; Wassiltchikoff 1882–83, XXI– XXV; Kondakoff 1881–82, 74–5, pls. III–IV; VI.

¹⁷ Kondakoff 1882, pl. V.4–8.

¹⁸ Havelock 1968, colour pl. VI.

¹⁹ The particular coin is not illustrated, but another similar Lysimachos gold stater from the area is shown on Reinach 1892, pl. 85.10.



Fig. 6. Detail of "Stag Hunt Mosaic" from Pella, building II. After Robertson 1982.



Fig. 7. Mosaic floor with a female demon grasping vegetal stems in each corner, from Vergina palace, room E. After Andronikos 1964.



Fig. 8. Gold diadem from Kul Oba tomb. H.: 4 cm; L.: 37.5 cm. After Reinach 1892.

should, however, be noted that Lysimachos coins continued to be popular in the North Pontic commercial cities and were coined also after his death in 281 BC.²⁰

But the origin of this multi-petalled flower is to be found in Alexander's home country Macedonia, where it is placed prominently in the centre of the front side of the large gold larnax of the Main Chamber of the Royal Tomb at Vergina (Fig. 5).²¹

This larnax, as well as the wealth of silver banqueting service found in the tomb, is evidence of the artistic level of metal-working in Macedonia, where access to the raw materials in the region had long provided the basis which the best craftsmen in this field, summoned to the Royal court, could develop.²²

The multi-petalled flower literally sprouts from Macedonian ground in the border of the Gnosis mosaic featuring the "Stag Hunt" in the centre. This famous mosaic comes from building II at Pella (Fig. 6).²³ The chronology of the building phases of the architectural complex at Pella has not yet been firmly established, but a plausible suggestion for the floor of building II as well as for building I with the "Lion Hunt" might be the closing years of the 4th century BC, when Kassandros – by means fair or foul – had created sufficient stability in the reign to allow for major building activity.²⁴

Another large mosaic with a very similar vegetal ornamentation has appeared in more recent excavations of the Canal Area at Pella.²⁵

A figurative motif of a mosaic in the Vergina Palace, room E, shows a female creature wearing a kalathos (Fig. 7). Her lower body develops into acanthus volutes and a palmette. A Lysimachos coin found in the foundations of the east side of the building point to a date in the first decades of the 3rd century BC for this mosaic.²⁶

This motif must have appealed to the Scythian owner of the rich burial at Kul Oba, not far from

²⁰ Müller 1858, 19-35.

²¹ TAM 1978, pl. 18; Andronikos 1984, 166, no.135.

²² TAM 1978, 58; Barr-Sharrar 1982, 134.

²³ Robertson 1982, 243, fig. 2.

²⁴ Themelis & Touratsoglou 1997, 189–90; 223.

²⁵ Lilimpake-Akamate 1987, 145, fig.1.

²⁶ Andronikos 1984, 44, fig.19 (drawing); 45, colour fig. 20.



Fig. 9 Gold chains from main burial of the Great Bliznitsa kurgan; with amphora-shaped pendants, L.: 37.8 cm; with beech-nut pendants, L.: 33 cm. After CR 1865.

Ak Burun, where it appears in a gold open-work applique.²⁷ Here the Greek creature, who is peacefully holding vegetal stems in her hands, has been adapted to local taste. This possibly refers to a local myth, as the female demon grasps a severed head in her left hand, perhaps just having cut it off with the weapon in her right hand, while the ends of the vegetal scrolls have been transformed into fierce heads of beasts. On a gold diadem found in the same tomb a bearded version of the demon features in a repoussé design, repeated three times (Fig. 8).²⁸

A similar elaboration of the Greek volute lady adorns a gold frontlet for a horse from the Tsimbalka kurgan on the mainland on the bank of the river Dnieper²⁹ and, on the Taman peninsula, the main burial of "The Priestess of Demeter" in the Great Bliznitsa kurgan has a gold plaque for sewing on to clothing in the shape of this lady of volutes.³⁰

Both the Great Bliznitsa burial and the Kul Oba kurgan have provided gold jewellery that turn out to have parallels in the Greek world and, lately, also in Macedonia.

The main burial of the Great Bliznitsa included two sets of jewellery, each having a necklace with several rows of pendants.³¹ In one necklace the pendants are shaped like amphorae of varying size, in the other they take the form of beech-nuts (Fig. 9). The first has lion-head finials, the second has plates with a palmette design. In both cases the finials end in a small ring. The ends do not fit into one another and perhaps these straps with pendants are not really necklaces, but ornaments meant to be fastened on the dress at each shoulder. The lid of a red-figured lekanis found near Kerch shows a woman holding up the ends of such an ornament in front of her, just before having it pinned on (Fig. 10a).³²

The length of one of the chains from the Great Bliznitsa burial is 37.8 cm, which would be a reasonably comfortable fit for a woman's neck, but this example is unique. A few have a length of 34

²⁷ Artamonov 1969, pl. 230.

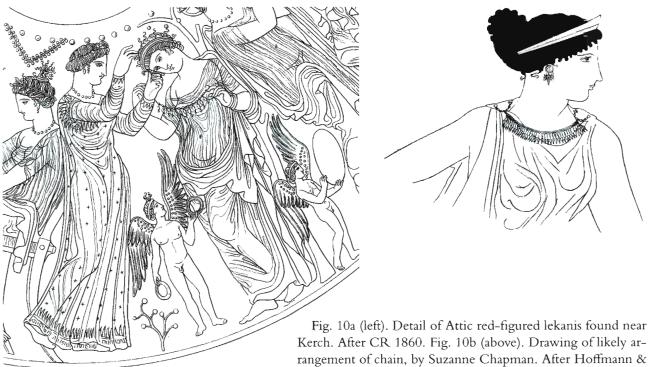
²⁸ Reinach 1892, pl. II,3; Williams & Ogden 1994 no. 85.

²⁹ Stroganoff 1867, XIX; Stroganoff 1868, XIV–XVI; Artamonov 1969, pl. 186.

³⁰ Artamonov 1969, pl. 308.

³¹ Stephani 1865, pl. II.4–5; Artamonov 1969, pls. 305–6.

³² Hermitage St. 1791; Stephani 1860, 5–38, esp. 25, pl. I; Beazley 1963, 1476.3 (The Eleusinian Painter).



Davidson 1965.

cm, which would mean a very tight fit around a woman's neck, while some are much smaller and thus unsuited for use as a proper necklace³³ (Fig. 10b).

In another burial of the Great Bliznitsa complex there was yet another such ornament with amphora-shaped pendants of varying size.³⁴

The Kul Oba tomb also had an example of this ornament with lion-head finials, and a very elaborate specimen with palmette-plate finials comes from Theodosia further south on the Crimea (Fig.11).³⁵

In the intact chamber of the Pavlovsky kurgan there was also a gold strap with eighty-nine beechnut pendants and lion-headed finials, each with a ring for fastening attached.³⁶ In the sarcophagus there was a silver coin of Pantikapaion showing a head of Pan in full view and a lion-head, also in full view, on the reverse (Fig. 12). The coin is fairly rare, but should probably be placed in the last third of the 4th century BC.³⁷

From the Greek world comes what is regarded as the finest specimen of this kind of ornament with originally seventy-nine beech-nut pendants and lion-head finials, so similar to the Pavlovsky piece that it has been suggested they were made in the same workshop (Fig.13).³⁸ It was found with a coin hoard concealed under the North Stoa at Corinth. This piece of jewellery is unique in Corinth and the find spot is hardly an indication of the workshop where it was produced. It is more likely to have been placed into this treasure trove by a person fond of precious metal, coined or otherwise, acquired by more or less honest means. Luck, however, failed this person in the end, as he was never able to come back to collect his considerable fortune, consisting of forty-one gold staters of Philip II and ten gold staters of his son Alexander

³³ Great Bliznitsa burial I, 1) L.: 37.8 cm; 2) L.: 33 cm. Pavlovsky chain no. 9, L.: 33.5 cm; Theodosia, L.: *c*. 32.7 cm. *Corinth* XII no. 2055, L.: 34 cm. Derveni 1977 tomb Z, *TAM* no. 253, L.: 30 cm; no. 254, L.: 32 cm. Pella *TAM* no. 79, L.: 28 cm. *Cf.* Hoffmann & Davidson 1965, nos. 35; 39.

³⁴ Artamonov 1969, pl. 309.

³⁵ Stephani 1865, 48 pl. II.4–5; Reinach 1892, pl. XII A.4.

³⁶ Williams & Ogden 1994, 168, no. 106.

³⁷ Stephani 1860, 13; Minns 1913, pl. V, no.14; Buratskoff 1884, XX.67; Schefold 1934, 67; Williams & Ogden 1994, 166; *cf.* Poole 1877, 6, no. 9.

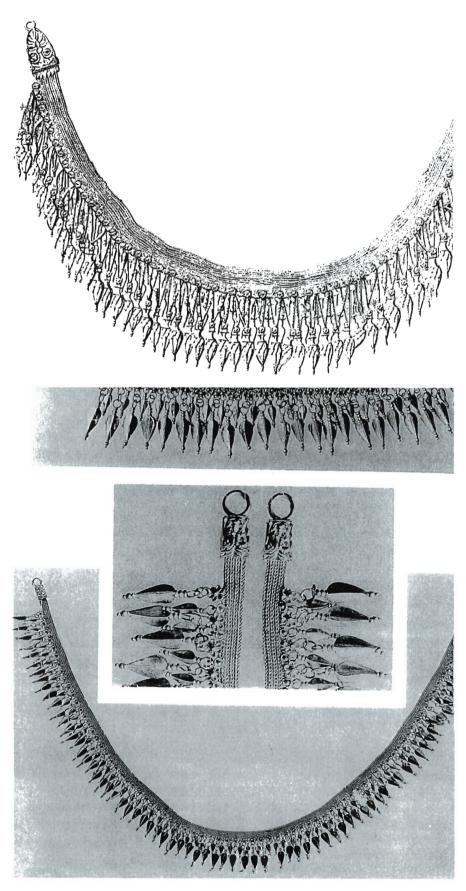
³⁸ DeWaele 1931, 418–23; *Corinth* XII, pl. 109, no. 2055; Williams & Ogden 1994, 168.

Fig. 11. Chain with beech-nut pendants from Theodosia on the Crimea. L. 32.7 cm. After Reinach 1892.



Fig. 12. Silver Coin of Pantikapaion in the British Museum and similar coin from the Buratschkoff Collection, presumably like the coin found in the Pavlovsky tomb. 1:1. After Poole 1877 and Minns 1913.

Fig. 13. Chain with beech-nut pendants, found in a coin-hoard at Corinth. L.: 34 cm. After *Corinth* XII 1952.



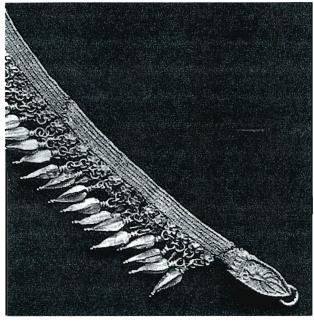


Fig. 14. Detail of chain with beech-nut pendants, found at the East Cemetery of Pella. L. of whole chain 28 cm. After *TAM* 1978.

the Great. The most significant of these coins is dated to between 333 and 330 BC. Five are minted in Macedonia, four at Tarsos and one comes from the mint of Salamis.³⁹

The pendants are sometimes described as lanceolate, but, as pointed out by DeWaele, they resemble very much the tri-lobed nut of the beech, forests of which still cover the mountains of Thessaly and Epirus, whereas they are not found in southern Greece.⁴⁰

In Macedonia the pit-grave Derveni Z^{41} provided two gold ornaments of this type and part of a third among other pieces of gold jewellery, including a ring with the inscription KLEITA, presumably giving the name of the owner of the jewellery.⁴²

No. 1 of tomb Z has eighty-six rings, from which hang lanceolate or threesided pendants and semi-elliptical finials with a ring at the end,⁴³ and No. 2 of this tomb has sixty-two amphora-shaped pendants and elaborate finials decorated with several palmettes,⁴⁴ while the fragment Z 3 has a heartshaped finial with a filigree palmette decoration.⁴⁵

From the East cemetery of the capital Pella comes a similar gold strap with about sixty-five beech-nut pendants and semi-elliptical finials with filigree palmettes (Fig. 14).⁴⁶ This is very like the specimen from Theodosia (Fig.11) and one is tempted to suggest that they were created in the same workshop.

The recent finds of this kind of gold ornament with beech-nut shaped or amphora-shaped pendants from Macedonian tombs corroborate the suggestion put forward by DeWaele that both the example from Corinth and many of those from the North Pontic region are of Macedonian workmanship.⁴⁷

It is interesting that this kind of jewellery seems to be referred to in the inventory of treasures of the Artemision at Delos. The inscription is dated to the year 279 BC by the name of the local archon Hypsokles and lists two chains with spearhead pendants, eighty-two or seventy-four in number. (*IG* XI² 2,4,161, B23–24) and another of the same kind with ninety-two pendants (298 A 149).⁴⁸

As pointed out by DeWaele, the resemblance of the pendants of the actual pieces to beech-nuts is more obvious than to spearheads. Indubitably the inventory was drawn up by a man, to whom the association with weapons came more readily to mind than a resemblance to seeds or nuts. In modern descriptions of finds the terminology "lanceolate" is often used, presumably following the terminology of the Greek inscription.

The same inventory also lists a chain with fiftyeight amphora-shaped pendants, (*IG* XI², 2,4,161; B 38; *f.* B 45) a type documented by several of the finds already mentioned.

An indication of the date of these ornaments is provided by the Corinthian hoard with the Alexander coins, especially the stater having the Persian lion-griffin on Athena's helmet, minted about 333-330 BC.

³⁹ DeWaele 1931, 419–20.

⁴⁰ DeWaele 1931, 421, n.1.

⁴¹ Themelis & Touratsoglou 1997, 121-9.

⁴² Themelis & Touratsoglou 1997, 128, Z 9, pls. 27, 144.

⁴³ Themelis & Touratsoglou 1997, 126, pls. 24, 140.

⁴⁴ Themelis & Touratsoglou 1997, 126–7, pls. 25–26, 141.

⁴⁵ Themelis & Touratsoglou, 1997, 127, pl. 141.

⁴⁶ TAM 1978, 46, no. 79.

⁴⁷ DeWaele 1931, 421, n.1.

⁴⁸ Homolle 1890, 404–5; 1891, 130–3; Durrbach *et al.* 1926 no. 298 A 149.

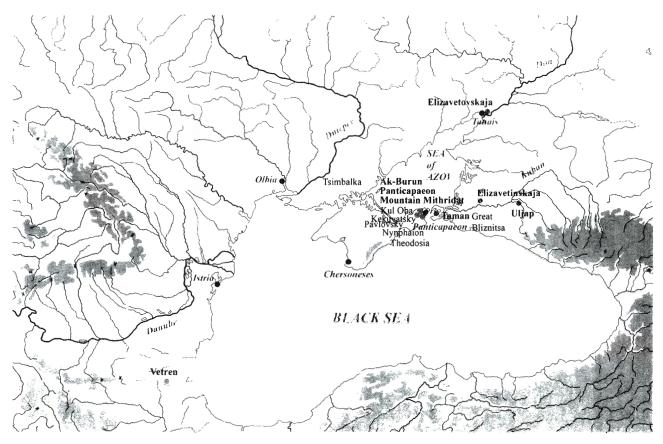


Fig. 15. Map of the Black Sea region.

Another indication pointing to a time shortly after the death of Alexander is given in the inventory of the treasures kept in the Parthenon, which was drawn up in 304/303 BC. It lists a gold rhyton, gold necklaces and other similar items which were dedicated to Athena Polias by King Alexander's wife Roxane (IG II² 1492,51-3; 54-7).49 This Iranian princess bore a son to Alexander after his death and she came with her son to live in Macedonia, being used as pawns in the power struggle following the death of Alexander. The boy was eventually made king, together with Alexander's stepbrother Philip Arrhidaios, with Kassandros, one of Alexander's generals, acting as guardian. Philip Arrhidaios and his wife were murdered on the orders of Philip II's first queen Olympias in 317 BC. Eventually Kassandros decided to take the royal power for himself, getting rid of his ward and Roxane, the young king's mother, about 310 BC.⁵⁰ But before her tragic end Roxane apparently behaved like

a Macedonian queen, dedicating precious things which she is likely to have acquired in Macedonia to a Greek goddess very much in the heroic tradition which Alexander had aspired to follow. Of this tradition there is an example in the temple inventory of Athena Lindia at Rhodes, found during the Danish excavations. This list starts with legendary figures donating treasures to the goddess and goes on to mention the participants in the Trojan war returning to Greece, *i.a.* Menelaos and Helena, who dedicated a gold rhyton, necklaces and a pair of arm-rings (or ankle-rings) with the inscription "Helena to Athana".⁵¹

⁴⁹ Lewis 1988, 305-6; Harris 1995, V no.141; V no. 358.

⁵⁰ For the political events of the period, Diod.Sic. XVIII; Lane Fox 1980; Borza 1990.

⁵¹ Danish National Museum Inv. 7125. Blinkenberg 1912, 320–27; 351–3; section XI, 70; *Lindos* II, no. 2.

As to the question of the location of the metal workshops in Macedonia we do not have specific evidence, but, in fact, a goldsmith does not need much in the way of fixed technical installations and so might easily travel and work near the places where his customers lived, *i.e.* around Pella, Vergina and other urban centres in Macedonia.

There is, of course, also the possibility that a number of craftsmen settled more or less permanently in Greek colonies like Pantikapaion, Nymphaion or Theodosia, where many of their products have been found.⁵²

An interesting example of Greek-speaking specialists at work in the Crimea is found in the Kekuvatsky kurgan, where the wooden sarcophagus was decorated with figured reliefs, the backing boards of which had Greek letters as guidelines for the placing of the reliefs.⁵³

⁵² Cf. Boardman 1994, 217.

⁵³ Stephani 1875, 6; Reinach 1892, pl. LXXXIV.2; Artamonov 1969, 72; Williams & Ogden 1994, 164.

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SNG Sylloge Nummorum Graecorum.

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