The cemetery of Varna on the Black Sea coast in Bulgaria, excavated in 1973-76, is a prime addition to our knowledge of the Karanovo civilization. The eighty-one graves thus far uncovered, presumed to constitute about a half of the total number in the cemetery, are sensational for the extraordinary richness in gold, copper, marble, obsidian, flint, various semi-precious stones and Aegean shells, as well as in their technological achievements—including graphite and gold-painted ceramics. This cemetery is also remarkable for the unique “mask-graves,” the burial of the mask of the goddess which has been showered with gifts.

The cemetery belongs to the Karanovo VI period with good parallels from well-known stratified tells such as Azmak and Karanovo in central Bulgaria, and Gumeçnita and Căsătorele in the lower Danube basin of Romania, all dated by radiocarbon dates and recalibrated to their true age (Table 1). Close analogies of finds are known from northern Bulgarian settlements and cemeteries, Chotnica, Ruse, Devnja, and Goljamo Delchevo (Angelov 1959; Angelov and Georgiev 1957, 1959; Todorova et al. 1975).

Calibrated radiocarbon dates place the Karanovo VI period between 4800 and 4000 B.C. (Kohl and Quitta 1966; Todorova et al. 1975). Typological studies of gold and copper show that Varna is roughly contemporary with Chotnica, Ruse and Gabarevo in Bulgaria (Angelov and Georgiev), with Gumeçnita A2 and Vidra in Romania, and the colossal hoard of Karbuna (with 852 objects stored in a large pear-shaped vase of Cucuteni A type) in the
Moldavian SSR (Sergeyev 1962; Klein 1868), this is "Copper Age A" in Bogoslov-Kutuzin's classification (Kogoslov-Kutuzin 1979). In absolute chronology, the Varna cemetery very likely belongs to the middle of the fifth millennium B.C.

The discovery of the Varna treasure began in November 1972 when workmen digging a terrace at Lake Varna chanced to open a grave pit containing a total of 222 gold objects. Soon after, the Varna Archaeological Museum investigated the objects and excavations were immediately started under the supervision of Mikhail Lazarov, museum director, Ivan Ivanov, Chetolzhikha specialist, and Georgi I. Georgiev, consultant from Sofia.

There are no sepulchral structures above or within the graves which are actually deep pits (1.50 to 2 m.) with rounded corners. Unfortunately, no wood or plant remains were preserved; but impressions of textiles on grave walls and floors and on copper axes were observed. Copper tools wrapped in fine textiles may have been kept in the graves. The dead are buried with their heads oriented toward the sea and, with very few exceptions, are accompanied by jewelry, tools, figurines, stone and ceramic wares. Nearly one-third of the grave pits lack human bones, but contain funeral gifts arranged as if a skeleton were present.

The equipment found in the graves is testimony to a prosperous society. From 81 graves only five were without grave goods; three male graves were extraordinarily rich (Nos. 1, 4 and 52); at least three female graves were very rich (Nos. 20, 30, 41); sixteen were "mask-graves"; the remainder included copper tools, flint blades, gold beads, and more limitation. Gold jewelry and copper, stone and flint tools appeared in both male and female graves. From what has been uncovered already a certain degree of egalitarianism can be observed. The interpretation of the social structure at Varna must await the completion of excavation.

Male skeletons were found in an extended position, females were contracted. There were no graves of small children, for the youngest are 12-14 years old. Most of the skeletons were sprinkled with red ochre.

Among the richest graves is a cenotaph (grave No. 4). A stone axe of beautiful workmanship with a tubular gold shaft, was placed as if at the right shoulder of the missing skeleton. Other grave goods included: a copper pick-axe (of the same shape as found in Ahlatmar copper mine); a shaft-hole axe; a flat axe; a chisel and awls (one with a preserved bone handle); a dark green stone axe; an enormous flint blade (over 40 cm. long); oblong and rectangular breastplates of gold, having small perforations in each corner; a circular convex gold disc; 7 cm. across, lying at the shoulder next to the golden shaft of the axe; one very large globular gold bead placed at the head; round gold earrings; a necklace of annular gold beads; three massive arm rings of gold in the center of the grave; 41 circular convex discs of gold with perforations at the side, probably garment ornaments; and a mass of beads of Spondylus and dentatulum shell and of semi-precious orange, red and black stone. At the head were a large gold painted dish and vase and three other pots with lids.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>KARANOVO</th>
<th>True Age</th>
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<tr>
<td>5000</td>
<td>Galjano</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2000</td>
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<td>4100</td>
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The dating is based on the periods of Varna graves.
Very similar grave equipment was encountered in another rich man’s grave (No. 43) including the skeleton. The man had three golden necklaces around the neck (each different); three massive gold arm-rings on each arm; two golden earrings, one in each ear, made of a wire with a rectangular cross-section; six small gold hair-rings; three large golden discs with two perforations on each side; two oblong golden discs; numbers of convex golden discs apparently sewn on the garment; and a large disc of gold in the center of the grave. A necklace of electrum beads and another of golden biconical beads were laid at the side, probably as gifts. A stone axe of superb workmanship with a shaft in a golden tube laid at the shoulder, and on the other side, along the body, a spear of copper, the shaft of which was also wrapped in gold. There was also a flint spearhead. The copper and stone tools in this grave were of somewhat larger proportions: a flint knife (ca. 45 cm. long), a stone celts, a copper shaft-hole axe, and awls. In addition, there were gold plate mountings and gold nails. At the head stood a three-legged, pear-shaped vase decorated in bands of “u-teri” design. This type of vase appeared in only one other grave (No. 14). A small pot, found at the side of the big vase, had a lid which was also decorated with the same symbolic “u-teri” design.

Grave No. 36, again with no trace of human bones, also yielded a plethora of symbolic sacrificial gifts. These include: a solid gold axe with gold-plated shaft, a headed gold shaft, two bull figurines and thirty bull horns of gold plate. Other gold offerings were a double-handed arm-ring, embossed and perforated convex discs, beads, earrings, insignia in the form of a crooked staff and a “V”, a sheep astragulus (of gold), and six pendants. The grave also contained a copper shaft-hole axe, flint knife, flint saw, marble dish, copper needle, and four banded pots.

The volume of copper recovered suggests that Karanovo VI, a period in the middle of the fifth millennium B.C., is no longer “Chalcolithic” (or “Eneolithic”), but a flourishing Copper Age civilization. The classification of Old Europe should be as follows:

Neolithic 5500-5000 B.C.
Chalcolithic 5000-4500 B.C.
Copper Age 4500-3500 B.C.

The end of the latter coincides with the disintegration of the Cucuteni-Tripolye civilization and the introduction of arsenic copper. The fall of Karanovo followed the time of the Varna cemetery.
Copper objects—shaft-hole axes, pick-axes, chisels, flat axes, awls, and needles—of virtually the same shape have been discovered in about forty Karanovo VI (Gamohitza) sites in Bulgaria and Romania. The tools were cast. To this period belong miniature vessel-shaped crucibles known from a number of sites in Bulgaria—Karanovo, Bereket, Gabarevo, Poljovgrad—(Toucheva 1961). Trace analysis of the objects shows the metal came from mines at Alabun in southeastern Bulgaria. The very long flint blades—cutting tools of unknown function—must have been prestige items: almost all graves, particularly the symbolic ones, had “mask-graves” and the richest ones, included one or several of various lengths. The source of flint may have been in the northern Bug region of Soviet Moldavia, but the answer will come when the spectroanalytical studies of 180 flint deposits in Bulgaria will be completed by Knorov of the Archaeological Institute, Sofia. Marble quarries, from which beautiful rhyol, conical dishes and symbolic shaft-hole axes were produced, are likely to be those of the Cyclades in spite of the fact that there are marble sources in southern Bulgaria, which could have reached Varna in the same way as the thousands of Spondylus and dentium shells, i.e., imported from the Aegean. The sources of greenstone, blackstone and orange-red stone (carnelian or quartz) used for celts, axes and beads are not yet identified.

Varna appears to have been a harbor where exotic materials, such as Spondylus and dentium shells and perhaps marble arrived by the sea from the south, obsidian and flint from the north and were exchanged for gold and copper. The latter were domestic, i.e., Karanovian. There is no doubt that lively trade activities existed between the Black Sea coast, central Europe, Moldavia, the western Ukraine, and the Cyclades. The area involved in trade extended north-south and east-west for more than 1000 km. From Varna or Alabun the copper traveled north for about 600 km.

Symbolic graves with no human bones containing life-size clay masks decorated with gold attachments are another impressive discovery at Varna, with no analogies elsewhere. The mask was rather well preserved in graves Nos. 2 and 3. Two gold discs represent the eyes, a horizontal gold plate with a row of seven or more gold nails below apparently signified a mouth and teeth. A golden diadem covers the forehead region; earrings were attached to pierced clay earholes; and ring-shaped pendants with “eyes” were on either side of the chin. The face depicted on the masks is the same found on a certain type of East Italian figurine. The function of the pendants with “eyes,” a stereotype of an abstract human female widely distributed throughout the Danubian and Carpathian region, was unclear until they were found in situ attached to the chins of the Varna masks. As grave gifts, the mask-graves contained exquisite marble vases and conical bowls, thousands of gold, stone and dentium beads, delicate gold pins with quadrangular heads, bone pins with double-eye (or double globe) heads, bull figurines, spindle whorls, lunate knives, and sickles.
anthropomorphic figures of bone and marble were found, probably abstract images of the goddess. These were of two kinds. The first has head and legs indicated and there is an accentuated pubic triangle, or "worm," usually surrounded by dots. Made of gold, marble, bone or clay, these are known in considerable numbers from Bulgaria and Romania. One of gold from Russe and another of marble from Razgrad in Bulgaria are reproduced here. The second are "T" or "mushroom"-shaped abstractions of human form, made of bone or marble and worn as pendants. Round convex plates with perforations on the sides were attached to indicate eyes, breasts and pubis. Morphologically the latter are relatives of the gold pendants with "eye" perforations. Variants of such gold pendants as found in eastern Hungary and northern Yugoslavia, have round embossings, apparently for eyes, breasts, and pubis.

The "mask-graves" are possibly ritual tombs for the Goddess of Regeneration. Perhaps it was necessary to bury her in order to ensure the rebirth. Symbolic designs painted in graphite or gold on large dishes and lids had globular vases from this cemetery accentuate the idea of regeneration. The whirl pattern motif of helixes and "uteri" on Varna vases are a four-corner composition of symbols. This composition, as well as the "uterus" and egg motifs, is commonly associated with the Goddess of Regeneration in all parts of Old Europe and persisted in Bronze Age Crete. Vases with related design motifs have been discovered in shrines. The best analogies for Varna are from Chotina near Trafo in northern Bulgaria; in this Karanovo VI village, which is contemporary with Varna, a sanctuary almost quadrangular in plan (ca. 4.80 m. x 5 m.), consisting of two walls, with wall paintings in red color, was unearthed in 1957 (Angelov 1959). In its inner room, at the northern wall, on an elevation (probably a dais), was a gold treasure of forty-four objects, all decorated with whorl, egg and "uterus" design. Among the gold items were four anthropomorphic pendants—the abstractions of the Goddess we assume—of a type similar to those in Varna (cf. Fig. 14); the other items were bracelets and rings of various dimensions, placed singly or in sets in two or four. The sanctuary evidently was dedicated to the Goddess of Regeneration. An earlier sanctuary from the beginning of the fifth millennium B.C., consisting of two rooms with two pillars in the inner room has been unearthed at Chotina, an island village in the lower Danube region (Hortensia Dumitrescu 1960). Obviously the Goddess had her own sanctuaries and she was the prime goddess of the Karanovans. Naturally, she was invoked at the crisis of death.