In antiquity, a significant part of the northern Black Sea coast belonged to the Bosporan state, with its capital in Pantikapaion (modern Kerch). From the formation of the state (5th century B.C.) to late antiquity (3rd–4th century A.D.), the Cimmerian Bosporus constituted a major link in the complex ethnopolitical system that formed in the region.

Long-lasting and complex interactions with the tribes surrounding the Bosporan realm fostered significant individuality in the development of this little enclave of ancient Greek civilization. On the European side lived the Scythians and the Taurians (Fig. 1). On the Asiatic side (modern Taman peninsula) were the Maeotians (Strabo xi.2.4), numerous tribes living around Lake Maeotis (the modern Sea of Azov). Nomadic tribes of Iranian-speaking herders—the Scythians and in later times the Sarmatians—inhabited the north Caucasus steppes (Xenophon ii.1.10; Herodotus, iv.11–12, 21).

Judging by the long history of study on the subject, the relationships between city-state and tribe, and among the tribes themselves, form a seemingly inexhaustible topic of research. Decades have been spent analyzing the written evidence. Now, archaeological evidence is providing a significant new stimulus to this field of study. The warrior's burial reported here shows how this new evidence can be used to further our understanding of the world of the Bosporus in the Augustan Age.
A Warrior's Burial

In 1991, the Institute of Archaeology of the Russian Academy of Sciences conducted a large excavation near Tsemolina, a suburb of the port of Novorossiysk, on the Asiatic side of the Bosporus (Fig. 1). The site was a burial ground of the Roman period, situated not far from a defensive structure that was destroyed by fire in the middle to second half of the 1st century AD. Almost all of the burials studied date to between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD. They are generally uniform in orientation, inventory, and type of burial structure; however, a few stand out from the rest. Burial 9, distinguished by the richness and individuality of its inventory, is one of these (Fig. 2).

Burial 9 was discovered not far from the bank of the Tsemes River. Although in the rest of the burials, its mound was missing. Unfortunately, part of the structure was damaged as a result of sinking the excavation trench, but this also led to the discovery of the tomb. The burial had been placed in a specially dug side niche, or alcove. The alcove’s entrance pit lay 20 centimeters above the bottom of the burial chamber. Under a stone pile in this upper level lay two horse skeletons with harnesses that had the iron bits and circular cheekpieces typical of the period. The reins were decorated with large beads made of coral spires, sard, and chalcedony, and bronze buttons with silver or brass plating. Two gilded metal discs were attached to the chest straps of one of the skeletons, that of a 10-year-old stallion. Evidently, the discs were the central medallions of bronze bracteates. On the front of the discs are representations associated with the Dionysiac cult, executed in a coin-like technique (Fig. 3).

In addition to the horse skeletons, the skeleton of a particularly large horned bovine and the bones of a sheep were found in the entrance pit.

The deceased was a man 29 to 30 years old and, judging by his grave goods, a warrior. He lay on his back, head pointing south-southeast. Next to the warrior’s right hip lay a short iron sword with a guard at the hilt and a ring pommel (Fig. 4). Similar swords first appeared in the 2nd century B.C. and had a particularly wide distribution in the east European steppes beginning in the 1st century B.C. Also near the body were 19 three-bladed iron arrowheads with short shafts, known in the Kuban area from the end of the 2nd century B.C.

On a finger of the warrior’s right hand was a gold ring with a mounted garnet. The garnet is curved with a representation of Tyche-Fortuna (Fortune) carrying a horn of plenty (Fig. 5). The design and technique of mounting (hollow and protruding, usually filled with a sulfate mass), the convex face of the stone, and the representation itself allow us to date the ring to the 1st century B.C., the late Hellenistic–early Roman (Augustan) period (Higgs 1980:170, PL. 53 A). The sketchy executed image and the working of the garnet are typical of the products of Bosporan stonemasons.

The pile of beads discovered close to the elbow of the right arm is of great interest. Typical of necklaces of the Roman period, the beads are varied in nature—lobe-like beads of glass paste, chalcedony, and sard; spherical beads, somewhat pinched at the sides, of chalcedony and sard; and a disc-like amber bead. Along with them, however, were beads of blue glass with mosaic-like eyelets, which are usually dated no later than the beginning of the 4th century B.C. (Alekseyeva 1975:65, 113, PI. 16.12, 15.6).

The grave goods that lay behind the warrior’s head and at his feet also attest to his wealth and status. The bronze vessels are of particular interest; they include a three-footed patera dish (Fig. 6), a boba (Fig. 7), and an alabastron (wine jug) with a handle decorated with sculptural representations (Fig. 8). This assemblage is reasonably standard and resembles similar groups elsewhere; particularly widespread are combinations of paterae and pitchers or jugs. The bulk of such finds are concentrated along the old “amber trail” in the central Danube area and in the territory of Poland. We have, thus, every reason to suppose that, like the finds from certain Celtic burials, those from Tsemolina represent a set of vessels for wine or for hand-washing (Patureau et al. 1991:277–78, PL. 44, 2–4).

DATING THE BRONZES

The dating of the burial to the Augustan period (around the beginning of the first 1st century AD) is fairly secure. Paterae of the same type (Nabier 1972:19 f, PL. 3.1a–b) with analogous decoration (a support of three low projections and a supplemental ring handle opposite the main handle) come from complexes of this date.

On the other hand, we could not find direct analogies to the Tsemolina bobe. The long flat handle deco-
In ... Burial 9, we see a picture of the Asiatic Bosporus at the beginning of the 1st century A.D. reflected widespread in eastern Europe at the beginning of the 1st century A.D., influenced by mirrors from Khazan-Cha. Spectral and metallographic analysis of the metal finds performed by J. G. Rayich, the senior research associate of the VNIR, yielded an exact date for the burial. The metal discs decorating the horse harness were made of brass, which points only to the western European origin of these objects but also to a date no earlier than the 1st century A.D.

WEALTH, STATUS AND ETHNIC AFFILIATION

The elite status of the warrior in Burial 9 is supported not only by the rich inventory of the burial as a whole, but also by circumstantial evidence for cultural and religious practices. For example, close to the elbow joint of the left arm lay fragments of an iron chain, which is usually associated with a cult of the domestic hearth. Chains of this type were most prevalent in 2nd to 1st century B.C. burial complexes of the central Caes-Caucasian area, where they were usually fitted into small pots. The complex of representations associated with this cult, according to many researchers, had its beginning in the very early history of the northern Caucasus, during the period of the Kaban culture. (The Kaban culture was famous for its distinctive creations of bronze.) We find less evidence for this cult in the burial ritual of peoples of the Kaban region. The cult of the domestic hearth, evidenced in chains and hearth bases, appears in the burial of an elite Maecian woman within the principle burial of the 4th century B.C. Kurbish-Cha kurgan (turnus) (Galina 1980). Echoes of the custom appear in the burials of the Zabovskis-Vodvintshevska group, known primarily in the Trans-Caucasian area.

A whetstone and a shark tooth were found on the warrior's belt. These most likely also have cultural-religious associations. In the Kurbish-Cha burial mentioned above, a necklace of fossilized shark teeth had been placed in a coffing together with other amulets (Galina 1980: no. 34). The whetstone from Burial 9 is in the shape of a pencil, 10 centimeters long, with a gilded cup (Fig. 11). Its size allowed it to be used only for sharpening small items such as arrowheads. Numerous analogous finds indicate that belts with entire sets of apparently unused whetstones had a distinct symbolic meaning within burial assemblages. Clearly, the belt in itself played an important role in the life of the ancient people, tied to it were not only essential items of everyday life, but also protective amulets which safeguarded health and strength, pointing to the importance and power of their owner.

Some objects dating to a much earlier period than the iron that stood out among the grave goods in Burial 9. In addition to the above-mentioned necklace beads, we note a gold filula (pin) with a rhomboid catchplate decorated with sand-inlay, filigree, and granulation (Fig. 12). According to A. K. Ambrozin, the rhomboid shape with curls on the ends recalls an ancient agricultural symbol of fertility. This motif was widely applied in antiquity in the making of fibulae (Ambrozin 1966:31).

Depending on current trends and the technical accom-
plishment of the master-craftsmen, only the decoration underwent changes from period to period. Fibulas, similar in technique of manufacture, are known from finds in the Crimea and the Kuban areas (e.g., a nomad's burial in the Verkhnyi farmstead [Leskov and Lapushkin 1987:120, no. 154, fig. xxxv]); both complexes are dated to the 2nd century B.C. Judging by the distribution of the finds and the technique of manufacture, our fibula was made in a Bosporian workshop.

In the inventory and the reconstructed ritual of Burial 9, we see a picture of the Asatric Bosporus at the beginning of the 1st century A.D., reflected as if in a drop of water. How is this expressed? Let us begin with the fact that the burial was situated in territory that either belonged to the Bosporian Kingdom at the time or bordered it. The burial was placed along a road that led to a pleasant harbor and, possibly, represented one of the sections of the Maeciet-Calchidian land route connecting the northwest Caucasus with the Trans-Caucasian region and with districts of Asia Minor. Fifty-five percent of the items found are imports of varying dates; some were obviously made in the workshops of Bosporian cities. In addition to the objects already mentioned, there was a pottery pitcher on a ring base, covered with a thin slip (Fig. 13). This item was obviously made in the workshops of the Bospors for sale to the local population, among which grayware had long been popular. There was also a bottle made of bulbous (an alloy of gold and silver, or silver and copper, usually used for coinage). These findings point to the long-lasting contacts of the native population, to which the deceased belonged, with the ancient Greek world, primarily that of the Bospors.

The interpretation of the burial depends on the answers to two questions. First, what was the cultural-ethnic affiliation of the warrior buried here? On the one hand, the burial's form (a large rectangular-shaped pit with an alcove) and inventory (a grayware pitcher, a selection of weaponry, and imported bronze objects) suggest a connection with the burials of the Kuban area, which are usually combined with the previously mentioned Zhel'vovsko-Vozdvizhenskaya group (Gushchina and Zuevskaya 1989). These burials are associated with the Strakians, Sarmatian tribes who appeared in the northern Caucasus in the late 4th to early 3rd century B.C. Second, judging by the archaeological data and written sources, the Strakians controlled a significant area, including today's Kuban region and the central part of the northern Caucasus, until the middle of the 1st century B.C. Distinctly Sarmatian elements were absorbed into the material culture of the Asatric Bosporus from the 3rd century B.C. on. Sarmatian military detachments are known to have participated in armed conflicts over the control of the Bospors. Strabo, in particular, reports on the role of the Asartrians, who were, according to most researchers, a military troop (Strabo 5.12.11; Rossow and 1919) engaged in the consolidation of the Sarmatian dynasty on the Bosporian throne. Detachments of Asartrians were formed from the scions of the leading families of tribes who lived in the Kuban region and who left, apparently, the burials of the Zhel'vovsko-Vozdvizhenskaya group.

On the other hand, some aspects of the Tsemolodin burial ritual are not characteristic of proper Sarmatian burials. For one thing, the orientation of the interred is characteristic of Maeciet burials. In addition, Sarmatian burials do not typically have riding horses placed in the entrance pit. This practice associates the Tsemolodin complex with the Maeciet tradition, which has its beginning in the Archaeic period. In our opinion, it shows that the warrior buried here was affiliated with a notable clan that observed ancient Maeciet customs. Burial 9 may be taken, then, as evidence of the process of Sarma-tization of Maeciet tribes in the Helleneistic period. During this time the formation of the Maeciet-Sarmatian nobility took place through the merging of the local Maeciet elite with the representatives of the notable clans of the Sarmatian-Strakians. An analogous process took place in the Asatric Bospors, a process that surely was made easier by the circumstance that a significant part of the population of the cities and their environs consisted of Maecietans. One of the notable examples of this phenomenon is the Helleneistic necropolis, which is located not far from Ruevskoye Fort, one of the larger
The second question is no less important. How did the complex of imported objects come to be included in an elite Samarian burial? These imports include a group of objects of clearly Bosporan workmanship, as mentioned above. There is every reason to suppose that the bronze set was received as booty or as a gift for loyalty or for service in military conflicts on Bosporan territory. It is also known that the representatives of the local nobility used the political situations arising around the Bosporus for their own enrichment, supporting first one side, then the other, depending on which was more advantageous. Furthermore, the vessels could have been taken in one of the military raids on the Asia Minor cities, and could then have been brought over together with glass bowls mainly of eastern Mediterranean origin. One of the Samarian burials from the second half of the 1st century B.C. discovered near the Zubovskoye farmstead contained a silver phiale (a flat, handled libation bowl, with a raised central navel) and a 5th–4th century B.C. bowl decorated with a representation of a snake and a Greek dedicatory inscription, "I belong to Apollo the Leader, who is in Phasis," (Geshchchina and Zauetskaya 1989:113). Such items were probably obtained as the result of a military raid.

Thus we have solved our puzzle. The warrior in Burial 9 appears to be of Macedonian background, living (and dying) at a time when the Macedonian elite were merging with members of the notable clans of Samarian Strakatsi. Buried with him is evidence of the wider world around him—that east of the Bosporan city-states and their Greek motherland and of Asia Minor. To the written record, we have added an archaeological reflection of life on the northern side of the Black Sea as it moved into the Roman Period.

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