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FUNCTIONAL AND DECORATIVE ELEMENTS OF FURNITURE CRAFTED FROM BONE, ANTLER AND IVORY FROM OLBIA PONTICA ¹

The article examines bone, deer antler, and ivory artifacts discovered in the territory of Olbia Pontica, identified as decorative and structural elements of furniture. A comprehensive study of these artifacts, along with their comparison to finds from other archaeological sites, provides new insights into the interpretation of certain categories of objects.

Keywords: Olbia Pontica, antique furniture, furniture decor, bone, antler and ivory, overlays.

Introduction. The study of ancient furniture presents a significant challenge due to the nature of the materials from which it was made. Wood was a primary material, but like other organic substances, it rarely survives in archaeological contexts. Of course, some furniture — albeit a much smaller portion — was also made of metal, which provides partial insights into the overall range and construction of these items. Some pieces consisted of components made from different materials. For example, wooden furniture could have metal legs. For instance, in Oliban 6th century BC burial, was found — four hollows inside legs shaped like hooves, with preserved wood traces (Фармаковський 1914, с. 19, рис. 21; Сокольський 1972, с. 88, табл. I: 8).

To reconstruct ancient furniture, researchers rely on iconographic sources, as well as primal archaeological remains. This includes numerous sculptural depictions (Σταματοπούλου 2021)

and scenes depicted on painted pottery (Richter 1966). However, the rarely preserved original artifacts and their individual components hold far greater significance. Most commonly, these are klinai (κλινή) — couches that served as beds. They were used not only for resting, but also for dining (Richter 1966, p. 52). Also, klinai were an important part of funerary practice in antiquity, which, in some cases, allowed them to survive in relatively good condition (e. g. Kyrieleis 1969, S. 166—167; Letta 1984).

Additional insights into furniture reconstruction can be gained through the analysis of decorative elements — ornamental details made of glass, precious metals, natural stone, as well as bone, antler, and ivory. The use of ivory for furniture decoration in antiquity is also documented in written sources. For instance, an inventory of the Parthenon treasury lists, among other furnishings, includes information about tables, thrones, chests, and chairs inlaid with ivory (Harris 1991, p. 251—252).

History of research and attribution challenges. In the territory of Olbia, both in the necropolis and the city itself, artifacts that can be classified as decorative furniture overlays are frequently discovered. As is often the case with bone objects, which were considered «secondary» in status, these items have not received sufficient scholarly attention. Typically, they are merely listed in excavation reports (Фармаковський 1903, с. 66—67) or briefly mentioned in the context of other topics, such as burial rites (Козуб 1974; Парович-Пешикан 1974; Скуднава 1988; Папанова 2006).

One exception is a study on woodworking crafts, in which the author, while discussing furniture, specifically addresses bone and ivory decorations,

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including those found in Olbia (Сокольский 1972, с. 89—97). Another relevant contribution is the work of O. Ye. Fialko, which focuses on the interpretation of bone plaques from the area of Olbia's Western Temenos (Фялко 1985). Certain categories of objects have also drawn interest from researchers studying bone and ivory decoration on klinai (Bianchi 2010; Ignatiadou 2002).

The aim of this study is to provide the most comprehensive possible analysis of furniture elements from Olbia. Unfortunately, a significant portion of the material is stored outside Ukraine, making direct examination of the objects impossible. The near-total absence of detailed descriptions, along with the low quality of available photographs and drawings, prevents a thorough analysis of some artifacts. However, in my view, completely disregarding them would be unacceptable. As a result, the sample analyzed in this study cannot claim to be exhaustive.

Throughout the article, the terms «overlay» or «plaque» are most frequently used to refer to objects made of bone, antler, or ivory, which were intended to decorate items made of other materials, primarily wooden furniture. Some of these overlays may have been set into carved recesses on the surface of wooden objects, in which case the term «inlay» would be more appropriate. However, due to the lack of data for such differentiation, the term «overlay» will be used.

A characteristic feature of these overlays is the specific treatment of the reverse side, often marked by chaotic or crisscross incisions, which are believed to have been applied to enhance adhesion to the surface. However, this feature is not obligatory. Some overlays had perforations for attachment, secured with rivets made from the same material (bone, antler, or ivory) or metal — sometimes indicated only by traces of metal oxides on the bone.

An essential stage of the study is the systematization and classification of the entire assemblage of artifacts into separate groups. The most logical approach appears to be categorization based on their association with a specific type of furniture (klinai, thrones, etc.) or even particular furniture components (e.g., decorations for the fulcrum — back of klinai). However, in case of Olbian material, this is generally not possible. Most artifacts were found without a corresponding archaeological context, and only a few can be attributed through analogies.

Given this situation, the proposed classification is based on the shape of the artifact and the decorative motif on it. This approach has made it possible to distinguish several major groups, which also include further subdivisions. In addition to purely decorative elements, there are also structural components, as hinges for the pivoting mechanisms of chests. Also, there are some objects that cannot be specified and which served decorative and structural function (e.g., legs).

The assortment of decorative artifacts associated with furniture is diverse and can be categorized into figurative overlays, cylindrical and semi-cylindrical items, figurative plates, and rectangular plates. Figurative overlays can be further divided into volute overlays, those with plant and animal motifs, and anthropomorphic plates.

Volute overlays vary in size, compositional complexity, craftsmanship, and the materials used for their production. The first group includes spiral-shaped curls with a central eye. One such artifact (fig. 1: 1) was discovered at sector P-25 (Bujskikh 2015, fig. 7: 1). It is a small fragment of a plate made from ivory. The reverse side has a flat surface densely covered with scratches, while the front features a carved composition of two volutes with a palmette positioned between them. The carving was most likely complemented by inlays of other materials, such as glass (Ignatiadou 2003, p. 4).

Although a significant part of the artifact is missing, it can be identified as a double volute similar to those decorating klinai from a burial in the third quarter of the 6th century BC at the Kerameikos necropolis (Kyrieleis 1969, S. 166—167) and the tomb of Philip II in Vergina (Kottaridi 2013, p. 297). In Ukraine, a similar volute was also found in a 4th century BC burial tumulus at Kul-Oba (Передольская 1945, с. 72, табл. 1).

The olbian volute plaque originates from a structure that the excavators date to the first quarter of the 5th century BC based on associated materials. This structure is a bothros associated with a sanctuary dedicated to Aphrodite, where, among other finds, graffiti dedications were discovered, most of which were specifically addressed to goddess (Bujskikh 2015, p. 228). It can be assumed that this plaque adorned a kline that was kept in the temple, similar to the couches in the Parthenon, which, among other treasures, «belonged» to Athena (Harris 1991, p. 360—361).

The volute with a central eye group also includes a plaque (fig. 1: 2) from a Hellenistic-period house on plot T-3. Despite its similar shape and functional purpose, it differs significantly from the previous example, primarily in size. Considering the thickness of the artifact (7 mm), it is much more massive than the plaque from R-25 (3 mm). Like the previous one, this plaque is made of ivory but is exceptionally well-preserved, almost in perfect condition. It is crafted in the shape of a volute, with one side completely flat and covered with incisions, while the other, the front side, is in relief.

At the centre, there is a circular hole with a diameter of 2.5 cm, which was likely adorned with an inlay, similar to the volutes from Kerameikos, which were decorated with convex amber insets, and those from the Kul-Oba burial mound, which featured inlays of greenish transparent glass. Below the spiral, in the lower part,



Fig. 1. Volutes overlay (1 — O-2008/R-25/3504; 2 — O-1999/T-3/124; 3 — O-1965/1840; 4 — O-1956/280; 5 — O-1947/5329; 6 — O-1994/R-25/774; 7 — O-1957/1867; 8 — O-2004/NGS/249). Photo and editing: Alisa Semenova

Рис. 1. Накладки волюти (1 — O-2008/P-25/3504; 2 — O-1999/T-3/124; 3 — O-1965/1840; 4 — O-1956/280; 5 — O-1947/5329; 6 — O-1994/P-25/774; 7 — O-1957/1867; 8 — O-2004/НГС/249). Фото та обробка: Аліса Семенова

a groove is carved, featuring fourteen small blind holes and one perforated hole. These holes served as attachment points for inlaid plaques, possibly similar to the glass plaques from the 4th century BC burial mounds in Vergina (Κυριάκου 2008, σ. 228, εικ. 244). The perforated hole was used to secure the plaque to a wooden base, with two additional holes located on the volute itself. One of these still contains a round ivory peg, which was used for fastening. A similar attachment method, using bone pegs, was employed for securing plaques to the klinai from Kerameikos (Fischer 1990, S. 116).

The abovementioned Olbian plaque was used together with a mirrored counterpart. A similar single volute was found in Myrmekion. It was previously believed that this form was explained by the limitations of the raw material: a double

volute of the required size could not be made from the bone of a domestic animal (Сокольский 1972, с. 90—91, табл. II: 9). However, the example of the Olbian single volute suggests that this was simply one of the possible design variations, as ivory allows production of significantly larger objects than bone. A remarkably similar plaque was found in a tomb in Amphipolis, which is associated with Alexander IV (Kottaridi 2013, p. 321).

While the previously mentioned artifacts can almost unequivocally be associated with the decoration of klinai due to their size and close parallels, the objects described below present a different case. They could have served either as couch ornaments or as embellishments for smaller pieces of furniture, such as thrones. Among these potential decorative elements is a Hellenistic-period plaque, which, according to the 1965 inventory book, origi-

nates from the so-called House of Agrotas. This house is named after the discovery of a dedication inscription to Aphrodite bearing his name (Славін 1963, с. 88). The artifact is a partially damaged thin plaque (fig. 1: 3) in the shape of a volute, made of bone or antler. Its surface is polished on both sides (with a glossy finish on the front), while the reverse side bears numerous incised scratches. Despite the loss of part of the artifact, its shape can be easily reconstructed. At the center of the volute, there is a hole with a damaged inner rim, into which an inlay, similar to those previously mentioned, was originally inserted.

Another plaque originates from the residential quarters near the Olbian agora. This is a small volute (fig. 1: 4), in my opinion, made of antler. Its distinguishing feature, in contrast to the previously described items, is that it primarily functioned as a frame for an inlay. On the front side, two cut-out shapes occupy nearly the entire surface, leaving only narrow partitions. The first is a central circle, while the second is a spiral surrounding it. The reverse side of the artifact lacks distinct incised lines, which may be due to the porous internal structure of the antler, which naturally facilitated adhesion. Two holes are present in the centre of the circular recess and below it within the spiral. These holes were likely used for securing the inlay, the antler volute, and the surface to which it was attached. Unfortunately, the circumstances of its discovery, along with the lack of precise analogies, do not allow for an exact dating of this object, although it is unlikely to be later than the Hellenistic period.

Apart from finds within the city, volutes with central eyes have also been recorded in the necropolis of Olbia. However, these discoveries have not been published in a precise way, complicating their attribution. For example, one ivory volute housed in the Hermitage is mentioned in connection with 5th–4th century BC sarcophagi. Yet the caption for an illustration in the same publication provides a broader date range of the 5th–3rd centuries BC (Сокольский 1969, с. 14, рис. 1: 6). It is difficult to draw conclusions based solely on illustrations, but visually, this plaque resembles kline ornaments, which may also apply to fragments from burial 19/1901. Additionally, burial 79/1901 contains volutes similar to mentioned artifacts (Парович-Пешикан 1974, с. 58, рис. 65). It is also worth mentioning a series of heavily damaged plaques whose exact shapes cannot be reconstructed but appear to belong to various volutes (fig. 1: 5–7). Some of these have polished surfaces, making it difficult to determine the material they were made from. Others, due to their typical porous texture, can be identified as antler artifacts. Interestingly, some of these items lack a distinctly polished front side or an incised reverse side.

The second group of volutes are **the simplest spirals**, which includes, in particular, a plaque (fig. 1: 8), likely made of deer antler. Its surface

is covered on all sides with fine saw cuts, which appear to result from the manufacturing process rather than being intentionally made for adhesion. The surface was not deliberately polished, which, given the cases, does not seem to have been a necessary requirement.

The circumstances of the discovering of the mentioned object do not allow for dating on associated context. However, in our view, it most closely resembles ornaments from Hellenistic burials in the necropolis of Olbia (Парович-Пешикан 1974, с. 58, рис. 65: 1). More broadly, this motif was widespread in ancient art and appears in Olbia across different periods, beginning in the Archaic era. A notable example is the simple spirals found in an Olbian burial from the third quarter of the 6th century BC (Скуднова 1988, с. 150, кат. 234).

In addition to volute overlays, Olbia has also found figural overlays featuring floral and foliate motifs. Among them are petal-shaped elements with rounded edges, which may have been parts of palmettes (fig. 2: 1), as well as overlays with serrated edges. Some of these likely represent a schematic depiction of another motif traditional in ancient Greek art — the acanthus leaf. The artifacts range from more realistic representations (fig. 2: 2) to those that can only be tentatively associated with this motif based on their serrated edges (fig. 2: 3, 4). The aforementioned examples originate from the city area, but similar finds have also been documented in Hellenistic-period burials within the necropolis (Парович-Пешикан 1974, с. 58, рис. 65).

Another example of a floral motif is an overlay in the form of a stylized flower with curved edges (fig. 2: 5). It may have originally had an elongated stem that has not survived, similar to overlays from an inhumation grave in the Olbian necropolis dating to the third quarter of the 6th century BC (Скуднова 1988, с. 150; кат. 234).

The next group comprises figural plaques, which can be classified according to their ornamental motifs. Among them are artifacts featuring the «**running-dog pattern**», also known as the «vitruvian scroll» or «vitruvian wave» (fig. 2: 6, 7). All these pieces have survived in a highly fragmented state. Three fragments are known, one of which is documented only in a publication (Мезенцева 2001, с. 87). Unfortunately, none of these examples are dated, and the widespread use of this motif prevents narrowing down the chronological framework. A publication also mentions two fragments dated to the 2nd century BC, which, based on their description, resemble the artifacts discussed above. However, the absence of illustrations prevents a precise identification (Наливкина 1940, с. 198–199). Similar bone artifacts have been recorded not only in Olbia, but also in Nikonion (Секерська, Шевченко 2021, с. 31), on Delos (Bruneau 1970, p. 232), and in Tomb 3 of the Hellenistic-period kurgan Velika Blyznytsia (Сокольский 1969, с. 135; табл. 21).

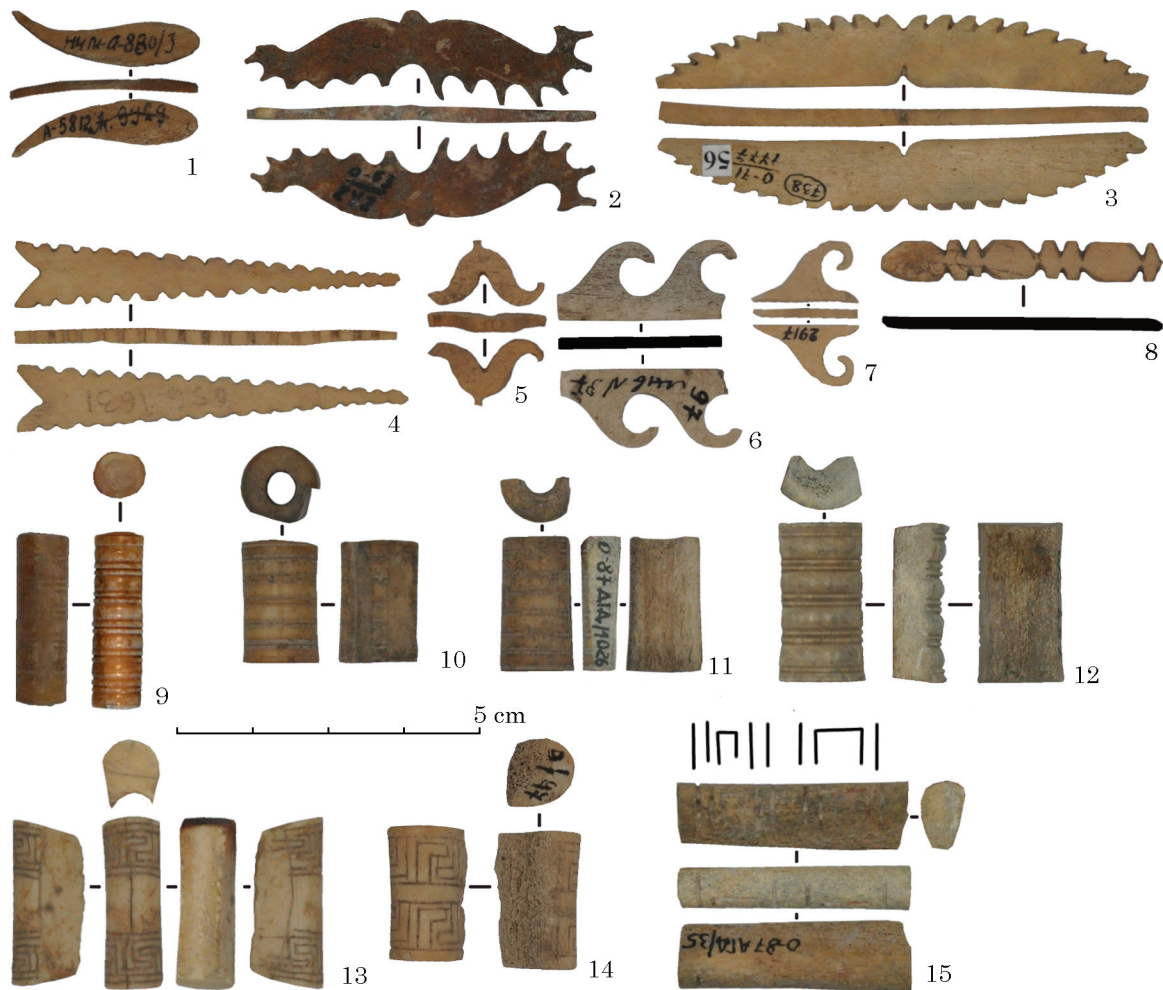


Fig. 2. Figural overlay: floral and foliate motifs (1 — O-1926/?; 2 — O-1963/242; 3 — O-1971/1777; 4 — O-1956/1631; 5 — O-1987/NGS- C/344); running-dog pattern (6 — museum № 97; 7 — O-1993/P-25/2917); bead-and-reel pattern (8 — O-1971/634); cylindrical artifacts (9 — O-1971/1825; 10 — O-1988/AGD/1025; 11 — O-1987-AGD-1026; 12 — O-1945/697); semicylindrical artifacts (13 — O-1963/149; 14 — O-47/874; 15 — O-1987/AGD/35). Photo and editing: Alisa Semenova

Рис. 2. Фігурні накладки: рослинні мотиви (1 — O-1926/?; 2 — O-1963/242; 3 — O-1971/1777; 4 — O-1956/1631; 5 — O-1987/НГС- C/344); набігаюча хвиля (6 — музейний № 97; 7 — O-1993/P-25/2917); мотив астрагалу (8 — O-1971/634); циліндричні вироби (9 — O-1971/1825; 10 — O-1988/АГД/1025; 11 — O-1987-АГД-1026; 12 — O-1945/697); навіпіл циліндричні вироби (13 — O-1963/149; 14 — O-47/874; 15 — O-1987/АГД/35). Фото та обробка: Аліса Семенова

Another variation of the type are overlays (fig. 2: 8) in the form of a **bead-and-reel pattern**, characterized by the alternating sequence of an oval bead (pearl) and two disk-shaped separating elements. At least two fragments of such artifacts, one of which is known from a publication and dated to the 3rd century BC, originate from the city area (Наливкина 1940, с. 199; табл. XLV: 5). Others have been found in the necropolis of Olbia (Сокольский 1972, с. 62; рис. 26), specifically in a Hellenistic-period tomb (Журавлев, Ломтадзе 2002, с. 76 кат. 288). A similar piece from the Derveni necropolis is also dated to this period (Θέρμελης 1997, πιν.: σ. 128; E-16).

Scholars mention two additional variants of figural overlays from Archaic-period burials, though the descriptions and images are not very informative. One is shaped as a «simple mean-

der» (Скуднова 1988, с. 122), and the other as «squares connected on one side» (Скуднова 1988, с. 150; кат. 234). Meander-shaped overlays have also been found in the Western Temenos of Olbia (Скржинская 2006, с. 206, рис. 219: 5).

In addition to flat figural overlays, **cylindrical artifacts** adorned with relief bead-and-reel patterns, consisting of alternating beads and paired separating elements, have also been found in Olbia. These artifacts primarily differ in the presence of a central hole and the technique used to create the ornamentation: some feature carved raised ridges (fig. 2: 9, 12), while others are decorated exclusively with engraving (fig. 2: 10, 11). Among the artifacts I have personally examined, those with perforations were made of antler. Another distinguishing feature of these artifacts is the presence of one or two straight

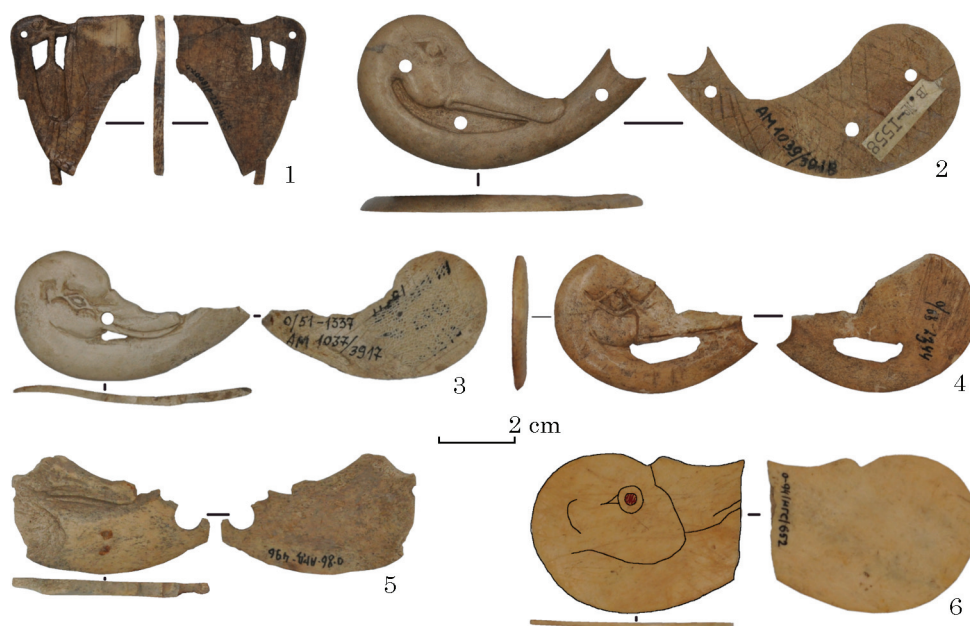


Fig. 3. Zoomorphic overlay (1 — O-2008/R-25/3475; 2 — O-?/1558; 3 — O-1951/1337; 4 — O-1968/2344; 5 — O-1989/AGD/496; 6 — O-1994/NGS/652. Photo and editing: Alisa Semenova

Рис. 3. Зооморфні накладки (1 — O-2008/Р-25/3475; 2 — O-?/1558; 3 — O-1951/1337; 4 — O-1968/2344; 5 — O-1989/АГД/496; 6 — O-1994/НГС/652. Фото та обробка: Аліса Семенова

bands that cross the object. These bands appear on both perforated and non-perforated pieces and were added after the ornamentation was applied, likely to facilitate the attachment of these decorative elements to furniture. Similar artifacts have been discovered both within the city and in several Archaic-period burials in the necropolis of Olbia (Скуднова 1988, с. 157, кат. 156, 132, 220, 243). However, only one case mentions an unworked band (Скуднова 1988, с. 158—159), and the published photographs do not provide sufficient detail to confirm its presence. Comparable artifacts have also been found on the island of Thasos, with at least some examples dated to the Archaic time ².

Another category of artifacts worth mentioning includes **semicylindrical objects** with a meander pattern on the narrower, rounded side. At least two such artifacts have been found in Olbia (fig. 2: 13, 14). Additionally, a publication features an image of a similar object. However, it is presented in a single projection, making precise identification difficult (Кузьміщев 2015, рис. 8: O-1914/P-25/1672). Beyond Olbia, similar artifacts have been found in a Scythian kurgan from the late 5th century BC (Ромашко, Скорый 2009, с. 58), as well as among the finds from the island of Thasos, where they are dated to the Archaic period.

Furthermore, another artifact is worth mentioning (fig. 2: 15), as it bears some resemblance to the previous examples. However, the placement of its ornamentation suggests that the wid-

er side, rather than the narrower one, served as the front-facing surface.

Another group of artifacts in the category of figural overlays consists of **zoomorphic plaques**. One such overlay is known only from a brief description in a publication. It is a fragment of a thin plate with a partially preserved depiction of an animal's back and tail, identified by the author of the study as a lion. It was discovered in an inhumation grave dated to 530—520 BC (Скуднова 1988, с. 112).

The most popular zoomorphic motif is the depiction of a bird with a long neck. Olbian plaques with this motif can be divided into two groups, which primarily differ in their stylistic execution. The first group is represented by a single specimen — a fragment of a thin plate (fig. 3: 1), presumably made of elephant ivory. The preserved part includes the head, neck, and part of the body with a wing. The surface of the artifact is polished to a glossy finish. A notable artistic choice is the depiction of feather texture using rounded squares on the neck and body, while parallel lines, likely representing the ends of the wings, further accentuate the detailing. Below the eye on the head is a hole, and the reverse side features a dense grid of incised lines for securing the plaque. It originates from the bothros associated with the sanctuary of Aphrodite and is dated to the first quarter of the 5th century BC (Bujskikh 2015, fig. 7: 2). I have not identified direct parallels to this overlay, and it stands in clear contrast to all other bone overlays discovered at the site.

The second, larger group consists of overlay protomes of bird with long necks, commonly identified in historiography as swans or ducks. Like

2. https://archimage.efa.gr/?r=fiche_publique&id=16186 Date of access: March 15, 2025.

similar finds from other sites, these vary in both size and stylistic execution. It appears that, while the motif gained popularity, artisans were not expected to replicate every detail precisely; instead, the production of such items appears to have been individualized rather than standardized.

These artifacts can be divided into two subgroups. The first includes low-relief pieces that vary in quality and material (ivory and bone) but are nonetheless executed at a high artistic level (fig. 3: 2–5). To date, five such overlays are known, four of which I have personally examined. The fifth is documented in a publication (Сокольский 1971, с. 92, табл. III: 2). Additionally, there are two more plaques whose attribution to Olbia remains unproven (Сокольский 1971, с. 92, рис. III: 5), including one from the Odessa Archaeological Museum. This piece has also been associated with Olbia (Сокольский 1971, с. 92, табл. IV: 1), although the museum's exhibition label designates the Bosphoran Kingdom as its findspot.

The second subgroup consists of artifacts that clearly imitate the first. In Olbia, it is represented by two objects, which also differ from one another. The first is known from a publication (Сокольский 1971, с. 93, табл. III: 3) and is housed in the Hermitage Museum. Unfortunately, it has lost its associated documentation, and its attribution to Olbia relies solely on the inventory number «No. Ol. 4733». This flat plaque features only the outline of a bird protome, without any carving or engraving.

The second is an engraved plaque (fig. 3: 6) of an indistinct shape, with a polished surface covered in numerous scratches. Among these, however, an image can still be discerned, closely resembling the relief artifacts. The eye is clearly defined, as are the curve of the muzzle and the beak, though the latter is partially damaged. The eye was additionally accentuated with paint, now faded to a dull red hue. This plaque has been published (Krutilov 2010, p. 486, pl. 368, Rd-41), with editorial notes suggesting that it was likely a blank intended for a bird protome plaque. However, in my view, this assumption is incorrect, as the relatively small thickness of the object — only 2 mm — would not have allowed for the formation of relief similar to that of the first group, where artifacts range from 4 to 5 mm in thickness. It is more likely a finished product, representing an attempt to replicate a desirable decorative element in a simpler form.

One interpretation of the discussed artifacts suggests their use as decorations for chairs and seats. This conclusion is based on depictions of seating furniture with backrests, the edges of which are shaped as bird protomes. According to M. I. Sokolsky (Сокольский 1972, с. 94, табл. III: 4, 10), the dating of these artistic representations coincides with that of the plaques featuring bird protomes (including the one discovered in 1951)

and is limited to the 6th–5th centuries BC. However, this assertion appears to be incorrect.

Firstly, the author inexplicably overlooks the very evidence he presents — specifically, the presence of plaques analogous to those from Olbia, found in Chersonesus in a context dated to the 4th–2nd centuries BC (Сокольский 1972, с. 93), as well as a specimen from Myrmekion, which predates the 4th century BC (Сокольский 1972, с. 94). Secondly, the publication cited by the author (Книпович 1953, с. 117; рис. 46: 2), along with the corresponding excavation report, does not provide a clear basis for the proposed chronological framework of the 1951 find. The artistic examples used to support this dating can also be supplemented by works from a later period. One notable case is a large Hellenistic Etruscan sarcophagus from the Tomb of the Volumnii near Perugia, which depicts a kline with headrest supports (fulcrum), the ends of which are shaped as bird heads with long necks (Hill 1963, p. 293). This example indicates that the use of this motif extends over a significantly broader chronological range and is not limited to seating furniture. Furthermore, it seems that representations in ceramics and sculpture are more closely comparable to bronze furniture fittings. An example of this is an Italian couch from the 1st century BC in the collection of the Walters Art Museum (Baltimore, USA), whose bronze fulcra were crafted in the form of lion heads on one side and bird heads on the other³.

The Olbian overlays have closer analogies in bone and ivory ornaments of couch fulcrum. These overlays also depict birds with long necks of various species. Among these are decorations from a well-preserved couch from the first half of the 1st century BC, found in a burial in Aquinum, Italy (Cormier 2022, p. 50–51; pl. XI: 1), as well as a Roman-period couch (likely assembled from multiple examples), housed in the Metropolitan Museum in New York (Cormier 2022, p. 40; XIV: 2). Individual finds of bone and ivory plaques in the shape of a bird's head with a long neck are known from other Italian sites, such as urban contexts in Pompeii (Cool 2016, p. 178; fig. 6.6: 41), a necropolis in Taranto, where they are dated to the late 2nd century AD (Hempel 2001, p. 291; kat. 19, 20), and southern France, particularly in the cremation burials of the Saint-Lambert necropolis, where they date to the reign of Augustus (Béraud, Gébara 1986, p. 197, fig. 8: 21, 22). Another fragment of a similar object, likely from the Roman period, originates from Corinth (Davidson 1995, p. 136). This artifact, along with the analogies from Chersonesus and Myrmekion, appears to be more similar to the Olbian overlays than to the Italian examples. However, as previously noted, all of them, even within the same site, differ significantly from one another.

3. <https://art.thewalters.org/object/54.2365/> Date of access: March 15, 2025.



Fig. 4. Anthropomorphic plaques (1 — O-1999/T-3/384; 2 — O-2006/NGS/325; 3 — O-2011/R-25/165; 4 — O-2005/NGS/625; 5 — O-1993/R-25/759). Photo and editing: Alisa Semenova

Рис. 4. Антропоморфні пластини (1 — O-1999/Т-3/384; 2 — O-2006/НГС/325; 3 — O-2011/Р-25/165; 4 — O-2005/НГС/625; 5 — O-1993/Р-25/759). Фото та обробка: Аліса Семенова

Thus, dating these objects is difficult without additional data. Even if the proposed 6th—5th century BC date is accepted, it must be acknowledged that such items could have remained in use in Olbia at least until the late Hellenistic period and possibly even into the Roman era. The idea that they served as decorations for thrones or chairs should also be dismissed, as, in my opinion, their form and numerous analogies allow us to confidently identify them as ornaments for the fulcrum of klinai. The hypothesis that the separation of the bird's head from the neck in some examples may indicate their use on thrones and chairs has been proposed (Bianchi 2010, p. 53). However, it seems to me that this feature does not significantly affect the overall form of the object and or determine its functional purpose.

Anthropomorphic plaques. Decorations of this type are not particularly widespread in Olbia and are highly diverse. They can be conditionally divided into two groups based on processing techniques: engraved and carved.

The first category includes flat overlays with ornamentation created using thin incised lines. One such plaque is known only from a description and a low-informative photograph. It originates from a burial dated to the third quarter of

the 6th century BC. According to the publications, the overlay depicts a man on horseback, with the saddle and saddle cloth preserved on the partially surviving torso of the horse. The human figure had long hair and a diadem, with arms extended forward (Скуднова 1988, с. 150; кат. 234).

A plaque similar to those from Olbia was found in Panticapaeum. Based on stylistic analysis, it was dated to the 3rd century BC (Кругликова 1949, с. 100, рис. 1). An analogous object was discovered in Tomb 3 of the Hellenistic-period Great Bliznitsa mound (Сокольский 1969, с. 135; табл. 21).

Another similar, but undated, artifact was found in Olbia at sektor T-3 (fig. 4: 1). It is a thin, poorly preserved plaque with an engraved design created using shallow incisions. The plaque has survived only fragmentarily and takes the shape of a human figure (with the head missing), with bent arms holding an object, possibly a casket. All known Olbian plaques were cut to follow the contours of the figure. However, similar pieces were also produced on plaques of arbitrary shape. Notably, such objects were found in a Hellenistic-period tomb in Derveni and were identified as decorations for a wooden casket (Θέρμης 1997, σ. 115—117). However, in most cases, both types

of plaques appear together in the same archaeological context. Examples include the bone and ivory plaques from the Bliznyuk 2 mound, dated to the late 5th century BC (Ромашко, Скорый 2009, с. 226, рис. 57), as well as the bone decorations of a sarcophagus and / or kline from the Kul-Oba mound, dating to the second half of the 4th century BC (Передольская 1945, табл. II—VI). Additionally, in at least some of the cases mentioned above, zoomorphic plaques were used alongside anthropomorphic ones. Thus, the previously mentioned engraved Olbian plaque depicting a lion may have been used to decorate the same objects as the anthropomorphic plaques of this type.

Beyond these parallels, bone plaques with engraved images have also been found in a burial dated to the 4th—3rd centuries BC in Odessos (Тончева 1951, с. 49—52, фиг. 96—98). These were identified as decorative elements of sarcophagi. Interestingly, some of them included oval plaques resembling the lower plaque on a kline column from Kerameikos (Banou, Bournias 2014, p. 140—141).

The next group of artifacts differs from the previous ones in terms of manufacturing technique. Unlike flat engraved images, these are carved and form a low relief. The first plaque found in the city depicts a human figure dressed in a himation, with one hand placed on the chest. Part of the arm, as well as the head, is missing (fig. 4: 2). The folds of the clothing are well-rendered, and the surface of the object is polished to a shine on both sides. However, the reverse side features numerous incised lines.

This group also includes a miniature carved depiction of Cupid in the form of a winged infant, turned to the right and holding an object in an outstretched hand (fig. 4: 3). It comes from a pit dated to the 2nd—3rd centuries AD. This motif is also reproduced in an entire series of similar artifacts from the Fitzwilliam Museum (Cambridge), which houses nine Cupids. Four of them, like the one from Olbia, are oriented to the right, while five are oriented to the left. Their movement has been aptly described as «running in flight», which is also applicable to our Cupid. This series in the museum is further complemented by two additional adult male figures holding Cupids in their arms. Although the exact meaning of the scene is unclear, it is believed that such overlays adorned couch (Nicholls 1991, p. 38—39, fig. 2). Similar overlays have been found in the necropolis of Aosta, where they were part of the decoration of a bed's legs in tomb 20, dated to the reign of Tiberius (Bianchi 2010, p. 61, fig. 47).

Another artifact from this group is a round medallion with a depiction of a female head (fig. 4: 4). It is heavily fragmented but has been restored and partially reconstructed. Surrounding the image is an unornamented border with several irregular and roughly made holes along its edge,

presumably for attachment. The circumstances of its discovery do not allow for precise dating, but the closest analogy is a medallion from Morgantina, Sicily (Jacob 2012, p. 141, fig. 92). Medallions made of various materials and decorated with a head motif are often interpreted as gorgoneion (Сокольский 1969, с. 179, табл. 43: 2, 3; Spathi 2024, p. 92, fig. 6). However, in our case, the hair is neatly and symmetrically arranged, and the facial expression is calm, making it unlikely that this image was associated with an apotropaic function. Another carved bone overlay in the shape of a human head also does not strongly resemble a gorgoneion. However, it is executed in a more schematic manner, leaving more room for interpretation. A distinctive feature of this particular artifact is the design of its reverse side, which includes a longitudinal groove (fig. 4: 5).

In addition to the figural overlays, a significant number of **rectangular and trapezoidal plaques**, both ornamented and plain, have been discovered in Olbia. These can be conditionally divided into several groups. The first group consists of thin, flat plaques of rectangular or trapezoidal shape made from bone (fig. 5, 6). Their front sides are polished, while the reverse sides are covered with scratches. Most of them were not additionally decorated; however, there are exceptions. Some trapezoidal overlays feature an ionian kymation ornament on one edge. At least two such plaques have been found in Olbia: one at sector R-25 (fig. 6: 1), and another, significantly narrower, known from a publication and dated to the 3rd century BC (Наливкина 1940, с. 199; табл. XLV: 6). Very similar artifacts originate from the previously mentioned Derveni necropolis from a burial dating to the late 4th — early 3rd century BC, where they have been identified as decorations for a wooden casket (Θέμελης 1997, Πιν.: σ. 128; E-14, E-15).

Additionally, among the decorated plaques, larger rectangular examples should be noted. One of these was found along with 15 undecorated plaques and was adorned on its edge with an engraved geometric pattern (fig. 5: 1). Another similar plaque, made of antler, was engraved with an image of two fighting roosters (fig. 6: 5).

Particularly important for interpreting of these artifacts are sets such as the aforementioned series of 16 plaques from the Western Temenos (fig. 5), dated to the first half of the 4th century BC. They were most likely part of the decoration of a wooden casket (Фиалко 1985, с. 80—81), with the large rectangular plaque featuring ornamentation identified as the lid. Although reconstructing the casket itself is impossible, this interpretation is supported by numerous finds of similar plaques in Scythian burial mounds, the largest set of which comes from the Oguz mound (Фиалко, Болтрик 1986). A distinctive feature of the Olbian casket is that, in addition to the plaques, its decoration likely included miniature carved legs made of antler (fig. 5: 12).

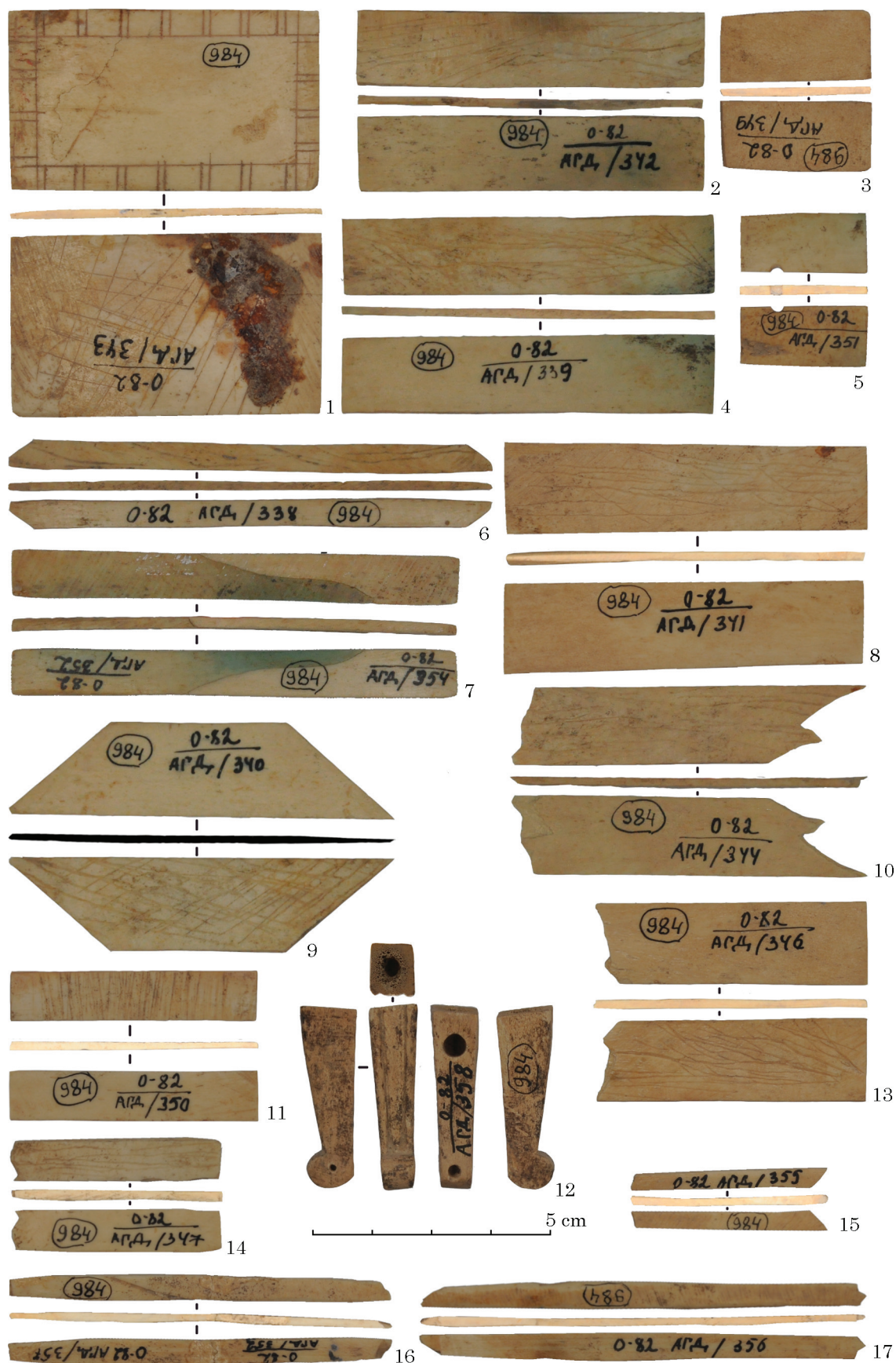


Fig. 5. Decoration of a casket from the Western Temenos. Rectangular and trapezoidal plaques (1 — O-82/AGD/343; 2 — O-82/AGD/342; 3 — O-82/AGD/349; 4 — O-82/AGD/339; 5 — O-82/AGD/351; 6 — O-82/AGD/338; 7 — O-82/AGD/354; 8 — O-82/AGD/341; 9 — O-82/AGD/340; 10 — O-82/AGD/344; 11 — O-82/AGD/350; 13 — O-82/AGD/346; 14 — O-82/AGD/347; 15 — O-82/AGD/355; 16 — O-82/AGD/352,357; 17 — O-82/AGD/356); carved leg (12 — O-82/AGD/358). Photo and editing: Alisa Semenova

Рис. 5. Оздоблення шкатулки із Західного теменосу: прямокутні та трапецієподібні пластини (1 — O-82/АГД/343; 2 — O-82/АГД/342; 3 — O-82/АГД/349; 4 — O-82/АГД/339; 5 — O-82/АГД/351; 6 — O-82/АГД/338; 7 — O-82/АГД/354; 8 — O-82/АГД/341; 9 — O-82/АГД/340; 10 — O-82/АГД/344; 11 — O-82/АГД/350; 13 — O-82/АГД/346; 14 — O-82/АГД/347; 15 — O-82/АГД/355; 16 — O-82/АГД/352,357; 17 — O-82/АГД/356); Різна ніжка (12 — O-82/АГД/358). Фото та обробка: Аліса Семенова

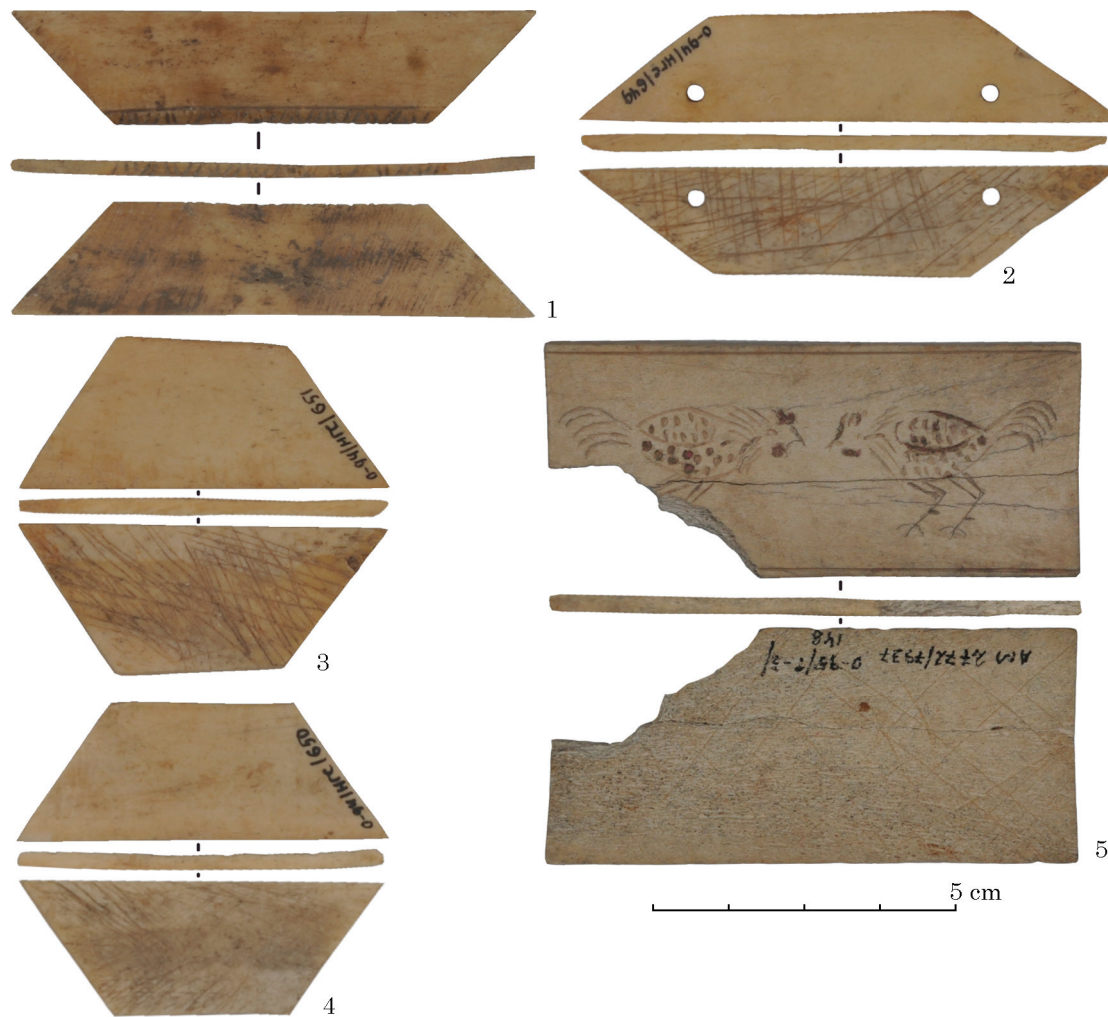


Fig. 6. Rectangular and trapezoidal plaques (1 — 2000/R-25/1339; 2 — O-1994/NGS/649; 3 — O-1994/NGS/651; 4 — O-1994/NGS/650; 5 — O-1995/T-3/148). Photo and editing: Alisa Semenova

Рис. 6. Прямокутні та трапецієподібні пластини (1 — 2000/P-25/1339; 2 — O-1994/НГС/649; 3 — O-1994/НГС/651; 4 — O-1994/НГС/650; 5 — O-1995/T-3/148). Фото та обробка: Аліса Семенова

The second group comprises ornamented rectangular and trapezoidal plaques that differ in terms of decorative patterns. These include trapezoidal plaques with **foliate motifs**, known only from publications. Their engraved ornamentation combines thin, shallow lines representing stems with deeper, more pronounced petal shapes — heart-shaped in one case, elongated and pointed in another. Both have been dated by catalog compilers to the 3rd century BC (Антична колекція... 2015, с. 74, кат. 521, 522).

Plaques with rounded relief lines can also be attributed to those with floral motifs (fig. 7: 1). However, the specific plant representation, particularly the pointed petals, cannot be identified from one or several segments alone. The complete appearance of these ornaments is known thanks to the discovery of a complete set. These plaques formed a circular composition with a hole in the centre. Although the published photograph depicts this composition as flat, it was likely semi-spherical. Additionally, the illustration suggests that the composition was complemented by a central

round plaque. Unfortunately, these objects originate from looted excavations and have lost their original context (Случайные находки... 1902, с. 125—126; рис. 245). Nevertheless, separate segments have been discovered in official excavations. Three of them are stored in the Hermitage Museum and were mistakenly published as fragments of a pyxis from the burial mound 1904/10, dated to the 5th century BC (Перепис 1986, с. 143; табл. XIV: 1). However, I was unable to confirm this information, as the publication of this burial mound mentions only fragments of a pyxis depicting Eros (Фармаковский 1907, с. 39). Another segment comes from excavations at site T-3 (inv. No O-2018/T-4/1126 in: Буйских и др. 2019). Similar artifacts are preserved in the Altes Museum in Berlin, identified as decorative elements from the legs of a kline and dated to the second half of the 1st century BC — early 1st century AD. This dating is based on formal analogies rather than ornamental similarities, as the provenance of these items has been lost (Platz-Horster 2018, p. 77—78; taf. 107.1 Y 1991-1077 Y 1996).



Fig. 7. Elements of furniture: 1 — trapezoidal plaques with floral motifs; 2 — turned leg; 3 — carved legs (after: Случайные находки... 1902)

Рис. 7. Деталі меблів: 1 — трапецієподібні пластини з рослинними мотивами; 2 — точена ніжка; 3 — різьблені ніжки (за: Случайные находки... 1902)

Another variant of rectangular overlays consists of items decorated with an **ionic kymation ornament**. Two different techniques were used to reproduce this pattern: carving or engraving. The relief-decorated pieces exhibit a higher artistic level (fig. 8: 1), whereas the engraved ones, characterized by shallow and somewhat crude lines, appear much more modest (fig. 8: 2, 3). A total of three fragments have been found: one relief and two engraved, all within the city area.

Another type consists of relatively wide bone plaques with a polished surface, decorated with guilloche patterns created using a com-

pass for the circular elements. This ornamentation seems to combine compass-drawn patterns with a running-dog pattern (fig. 8: 4, 5). At least two such plates have been discovered, though they are not identical (one is significantly damaged). The first was found in the necropolis, while the second was uncovered within the city.

The third group comprises rectangular plaques, mostly decorated with engraved meander patterns in various styles. These plaques are predominantly made from antler and are characterized by a curved shape (fig. 9: 1—6). This feature is most pronounced in well-preserved fragments, particularly in the or-

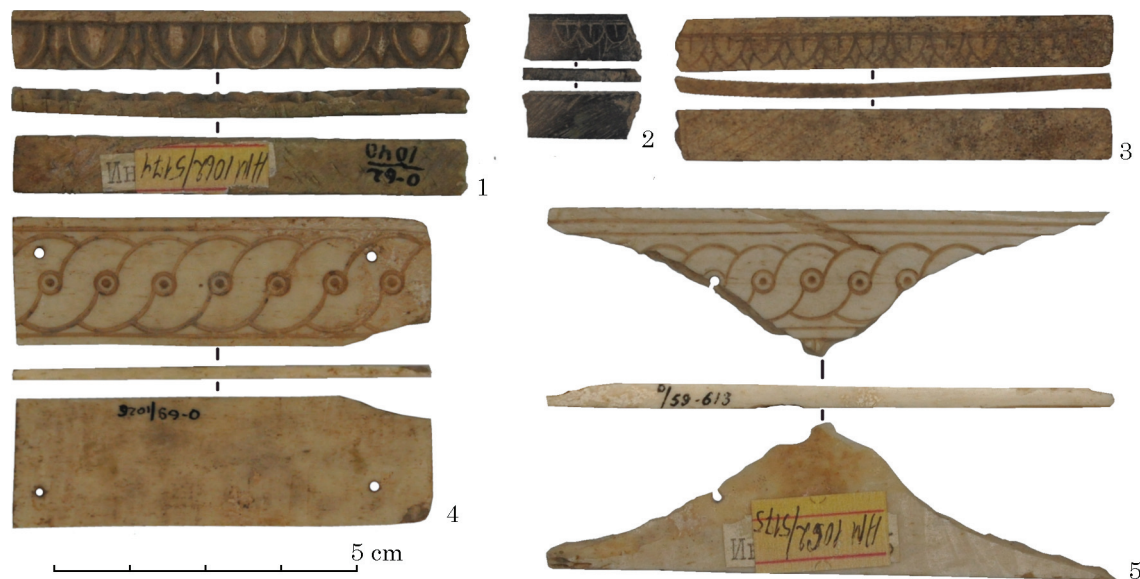


Fig. 8. Rectangular and trapezoidal plaques. Ionic kymation ornament (1 — O-62/1040; 2 — O-2009/R-25/862; 3 — O-1987/NGS-C/348); guilloche pattern (4 — O-69/1026; 5 — O-1959/613). Photo and editing: Alisa Semenova

Рис. 8. Прямокутні та трапецієподібні пластини. Іонійський кіматій (1 — O-62/1040; 2 — O-2009/P-25/862; 3 — O-1987/НГС-С/348); плетінка (4 — O-69/1026; 5 — O-1959/613). Фото та обробка: Аліса Семенова

named plaque (fig. 9: 5), whose shape and the circular hole at the preserved edge suggest that it may have been a personal adornment, possibly a bracelet (Semenova 2024, p. 77—79). Similar Roman bracelets, though differing in ornamentation, have been documented in Aquincum (Biro et al. 2012, p. 64, fig. 49). However, the Olbian plaques is much older and dates to the 5th—4th centuries BC. Another curved, perforated plaque found in Olbia, but without ornamentation, bears less resemblance to a bracelet (fig. 9: 6). It is likely that such plaques were used to decorate furniture, but there is currently insufficient data for a more precise interpretation. A visually similar plaque fragment was also found alongside other decorative overlays in the Scythian burial mound from the 5th century BC (Ромашко, Скорый 2009, с. 196, рис. 15: 4).

Structural elements made of bone. This category includes bone artifacts that are difficult to classify solely as decorative elements. Among them are three carved cylindrical bone objects with iron rods inside, depicting Dionysus, a dancing maenad, and Nike (fig. 7: 3). They were published as «sarcophagus legs», which the Imperial Archaeological Commission acquired in 1899 from Sh. Gochman (Случайные находки... 1902, с. 125—126; рис. 239—241). It should be noted that Sh. Gochman was one of the Gochman brothers, who were involved in the production and sale of forgeries to museums (for more details, see: Кузьмищев 2016, с. 322—324). Despite this fact, I am inclined to believe that the bone objects acquired at that time are genuine and originate from looting excavations carried out by residents of the Parutyne village. These residents were particularly active in plundering the site in 1899, while the Gochman brothers purchased the

artifacts they obtained (Папанова 2006, с. 36). It is unlikely that forging bone artifacts would have been sufficiently profitable, but when referring to these items, one should still keep in mind the falsification activities of the aforementioned individuals. The publication's notes also mention that another similar cylinder was acquired by the German trade agent Vogel (Случайные находки... 1902, с. 125—126).

A significant challenge in verifying the authenticity of such artifacts is the inability to examine them in person. Among all the artifacts, I have found the closest analogy for the cylinder depicting a nude Dionysus, whose torso is wrapped in a strip of fabric, one leg is covered by a draped cloak, and the other is clad in a boot. In his hands, he holds one of his attributes — the thyrsus. The closest known parallel is preserved in the Fitzwilliam Museum (Cambridge)⁴. Although this cylindrical object is not an exact copy of the Olbian artifact, it fully replicates both the pose and all key attributes. Additionally, descriptions suggest that, like the Olbian piece, it is made from a solid, likely tubular, bone (Nicholls 1991, p. 42; fig. 3: e). It is believed to have been produced in the early Imperial period in Italy, probably in Etruria, under the influence of Hellenistic traditions. Some scholars suggest that Italian craftsmen may have even had earlier examples to imitate (Nicholls 1991, p. 36). A piece from Pompeii, likely dating to the same period, also features a plate with a similar depiction of Dionysus, although in this case, one of the figure's legs is not covered by fabric (Cormier 2022, pl. 9: 3). Due to the loss

4. <https://data.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/id/object/70278>
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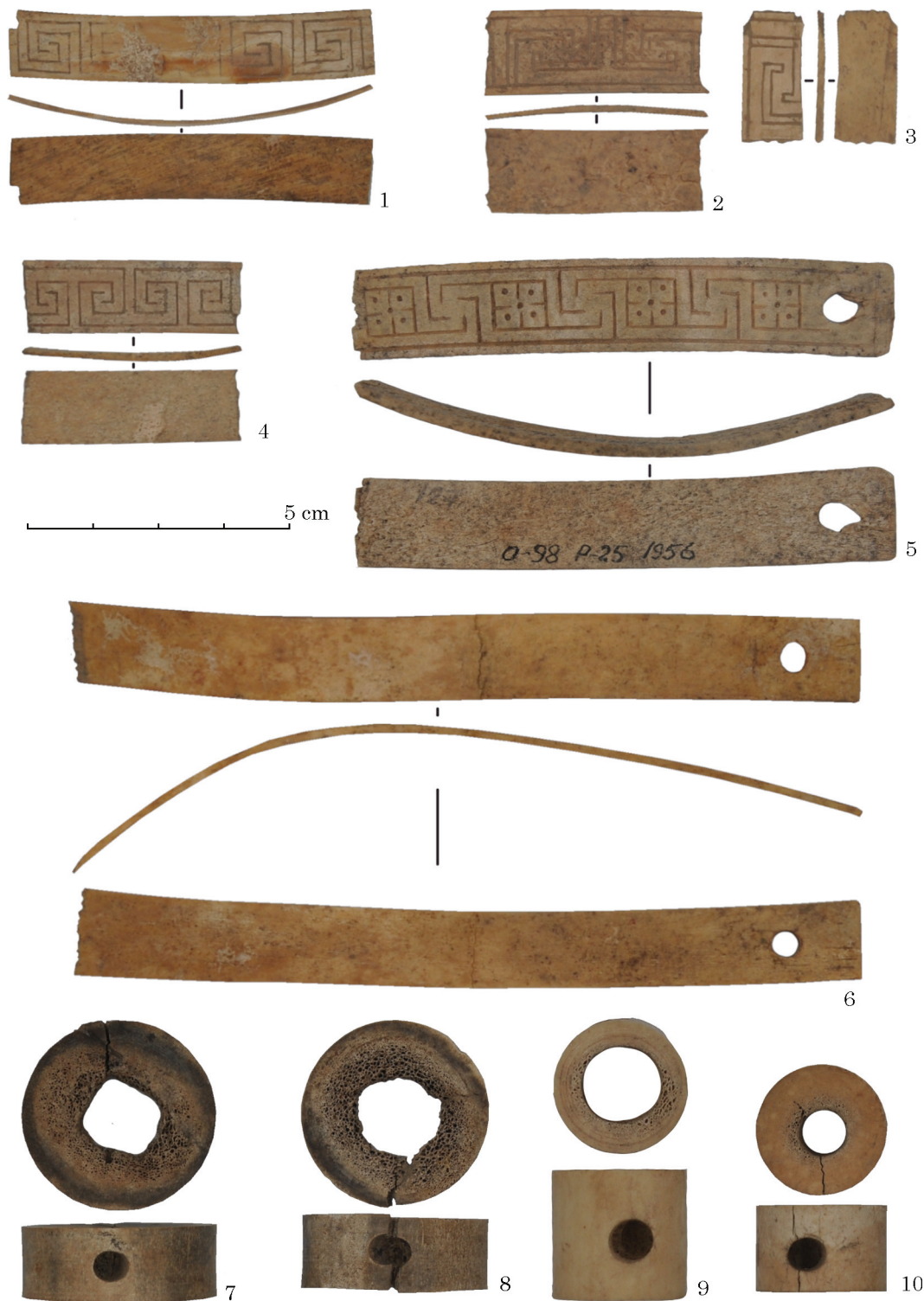


Fig. 9. Curved rectangular plaques (1 — O-2019/R-25/755; 2 — 2012/R-25/1580; 3 — 2011/R-25/1014; 4 — 2011/R-25/1070; 5 — O-98/R-25/1956; 6 — O-2001/NGS/1065-a); Hinges (7 — O-1937/230; 8 — O-1937/248; 9 — O-1946/1624; 10 — 1937/208). Photo and editing: Alisa Semenova

Рис. 9. Зігнуті прямокутні пластини (1 — O-2019/P-25/755; 2 — 2012/P-25/1580; 3 — 2011/P-25/1014; 4 — 2011/P-25/1070; 5 — O-98/P-25/1956; 6 — O-2001/НГС/1065-a); Шарніри (7 — O-1937/230; 8 — O-1937/248; 9 — O-1946/1624; 10 — 1937/208). Фото та обробка: Аліса Семенова

of its original context, it is impossible to determine whether the Olbian artifact belongs to the Roman period or to the Hellenistic tradition that inspired Roman examples. However, it is evident that both this object and other cylindrical items

from the same series were components of a kline rather than sarcophagus legs.

A similar observation can be made regarding another artifact, acquired along with the previous ones and also interpreted as a sarcophagus

leg (Случайные находки... 1902, с. 125—126; рис. 242). It has the shape of a truncated cone and resembles a turned component of kline or throne legs (fig. 7: 2). Visually similar objects are known from both the Hellenistic period (Bernard 1970, p. 330, figs. 1, 2) and the Roman period (Nicholls 1991, p. 36, fig. 1).

A significant number of cylindrical objects of varying sizes and diameters with lateral perforations have also been found in Olbia (fig. 9: 7—10). These were primarily made of deer antler, although the use of tubular bones cannot be ruled out. Based on finds of wooden furniture (MacGregor 1985, p. 203) and sarcophagi (Сокольский 1969, с. 99, табл. 3: 3), these objects can be identified as hinges for the movable parts of chests, cabinets, and similar items. While there are no definitive examples in Olbia indicating which specific pieces of furniture these hinges were used for, their presence suggests the widespread use of furniture with movable elements in the settlement.

Bone plaque in burial 1901/79: sarcophagus or kline? One of the key questions for us is determining which pieces of furniture and which parts of those pieces were decorated with the overlays described in the article. The find contexts in Olbia generally do not provide sufficient information for such reconstructions. However, certain structure is more indicative in this context. References to these items have already been provided in the text when discussing the respective categories, but it is worth highlighting them separately. Perhaps the most frequently mentioned and extensively discussed structure in this context is burial 1901/79. According to a monograph dedicated to the Hellenistic necropolis, at least six burials in Olbia from this period contained «various bone decorations of sarcophagi» (Парович-Пешикан 1974, с. 57, рис. 65). However, only one of these has been described in greater detail. This is an earthen crypt from the 2nd century BC, where many bone plaques were found. The excavator (Фармаковский 1903, с. 88) and other researchers interpreted these plaques as decorations for a wooden sarcophagus. However, M. I. Sokolsky (Сокольский 1971, с. 91) proposed a different interpretation for these and all other overlays found in Hellenistic burials of Olbia, suggesting that they decorated a kline rather than a sarcophagus. He based this argument on the dimensions of some overlays, which are too small for a massive sarcophagus, and on the visual similarity of the artifacts to furniture details depicted in 6th—4th centuries BC vase painting. The palmette petals, along with volutes, were meant to decorate the kline's support posts, while the meander and bead-and-reel pattern bands adorned its horizontal frame. The context of the bone overlays found in burial 1901/79 further supports this interpretation. According to the researcher, they were not placed around the perimeter of a sarcophagus but were instead located «in the right corner of the crypt, near the entrance», where a kline would

have been positioned on which the deceased was likely carried into the crypt.

M. Parović-Pešikan, who published her study on the Hellenistic necropolis of Olbia two years after M. I. Sokolsky's monograph, did not comment on his hypothesis and continued to interpret these artifacts as sarcophagus decorations. In addition to the previously known information, she noted that a total of 125 fragments of bone overlays were found in burial 1901/79. Perhaps the most comprehensive representation of the bone inlay set from burial 1901/79 can be found in a color illustration in the exhibition catalog of the State Historical Museum in Moscow, where these and many other artifacts from Olbia are housed (Журавлев, Ломтадзе 2002, с. 76, кат. 288). The text does not specify whether the arrangement of the objects in the display case was made for aesthetic appeal or as an attempt at reconstruction. However, the catalog caption identifies the set as decorations for a wooden sarcophagus, indicating that the exhibition curators adhered to B. V. Farmakovsky's interpretation. For our purposes, the most important aspect is that this is the only known image likely to include all the preserved bone overlays from this burial. In addition to more elaborate volutes with a central eye and simple scroll motifs, the set includes smooth and serrated petal-shaped elements that likely formed palmettes, as well as a decorative plate featuring a bead-and-reel pattern.

Greek researcher D. Ignatiadou (2002, p. 5), comparing this assemblage with Macedonian materials, noted that small leaves, flowers, and spiral elements could, in principle, have been used as sarcophagus decorations. However, she also pointed out that the curved crescent-shaped plates correspond to the cutouts found on Macedonian couches. This detail, along with the presence of volutes, led her to interpret the wooden structure in this burial as a kline rather than a sarcophagus.

Making a definitive choice between these theories is challenging due to the lack of detailed information on the find's context, which was lost as a result of the excavation methods employed over a century ago, coupled with the inability to study these artifacts first-hand. Doubts regarding their association with sarcophagi also arise from the uncertainty surrounding the presence of sarcophagi in all these burials, as their identification in the Olbian necropolis is often based solely on limited traces of wood or even just impressions left by legs (Парович-Пешикан 1974, с. 56—57). The discovery of similar decorative elements outside of burial contexts also suggests their use in furnishing everyday furniture. Given the available data, the most plausible interpretation seems to be that these overlays adorned a kline.

Conclusions. The analysis of bone artifacts from Olbia offers several important insights into the range and functional use of decorative plaques and other bone elements in ancient fur-

niture. The artifacts uncovered at the site represent a wide variety of items spanning all chronological phases of Olbia's existence. However, the majority of these objects date to the Hellenistic period, with the Roman era being comparatively underrepresented in this context. The shapes and ornamentation of the overlays exhibit significant diversity, yet they align with motifs commonly found in ancient Greek culture, including architecture and vase painting. These motifs primarily include volutes of varying complexity, palmette details, and framing patterns such as the meander, running-dog pattern, ionic kymation, and bead-and-reel pattern. Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic plaques were also in use, with the most common motif being a long-necked bird.

Two primary decorative techniques were employed in the production of these objects: engraving and carving. Engraving was used for flat designs, while carving created relief images. By analyzing these decorative elements and comparing them with finds from other sites, it has been possible to attribute certain decorative groups to specific types of furniture, primarily kline, thrones, and caskets. However, the exact function of many overlays remains uncertain. It is likely that they adorned various wooden objects, including funerary sarcophagi.

A distinctive feature of Olbia, in contrast to other ancient Greek sites where furniture decoration is primarily found in burial contexts, is the significant number of such objects discovered in urban settings, including residential buildings and cultic areas.

Most of the material examined in this study originates from the city itself. While these artifacts are also present in the necropolis, they are poorly documented in publications and inaccessible for direct study. Nevertheless, nearly all types of decorative elements are known from both the necropolis and the city, which is particularly significant for components identified as kline adornments. Notably, volutes with central eyes have, in some cases, been interpreted as sarcophagus decorations, even when no actual sarcophagi were preserved, apart from occasional traces of wood. A more detailed examination of furniture decoration and its comparison with finds from other parts of the Greek world offers new perspectives on the interpretation of wooden structures in several burials within the Olbian necropolis.

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A. Semenova

А. Семенова

FUNCTIONAL AND DECORATIVE ELEMENTS OF FURNITURE CRAFTED FROM BONE, ANTLER AND IVORY FROM OLBIA PONTICA

The article is dedicated to furniture components made of bone, deer antler, and elephant ivory, discovered in the territory of the ancient polis of Olbia. The analysis of these artifacts provides a series of important insights into their functional purpose, artistic characteristics, and significance within Olbia's material culture. The majority of these artifacts belong to the category of decorative elements — overlays of various shapes that adorned wooden furniture. The second group consists of structural components that lacked a decorative function (such as hinges for movable mechanisms) or combined both decorative and functional roles (such as legs).

The artifacts discovered at the site represent a wide range of objects spanning all chronological phases of Olbia's existence. However, the majority date to the Hellenistic period, while the Roman period remains the least represented in this regard.

The shape and ornamentation of the overlays exhibit considerable diversity while adhering to motifs traditionally prevalent in Greek culture, including architecture and vase painting. These primarily consist of volutes of varying complexity, palmette details, and framing motifs such as the meander, running-dog pattern, Ionic kymation, and bead-and-reel pattern. Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic overlays were also in use, with the most common motif being a long-necked bird.

There were two main techniques used for decorating these objects. The first, engraving, was employed for flat ornamentation, while the second, carving, was used to create relief images. The analysis of decorative elements and their comparison with finds from other sites have made it possible to associate certain groups of decorations with specific types of furniture, primarily klinai, thrones, and caskets. However, the function of most pieces, unfortunately, remains undetermined. It is likely that they adorned various wooden objects, including funerary sarcophagi.

Most of the analyzed material originates from the city's territory. In the necropolis, such finds are not uncommon; however, they are poorly represented in publications and remain inaccessible for direct study. At the same time, nearly all artifact types are known from both the necropolis and the city, which is particularly important for identifying elements as klinai ornaments. Most notably, these include volutes with eye-like features, which in some cases have been interpreted by researchers as sarcophagus decorations, even when no sarcophagus remains were found or only fragments of wood survived.

A more detailed study of furniture decoration and its comparison with finds from other parts of the Greek world allow for a new interpretation of wooden structures in several burials within Olbia's necropolis.

Keywords: Olbia Pontica, antique furniture, furniture decor, bone, antler and ivory, overlays.

ФУНКЦІОНАЛЬНІ ТА ДЕКОРАТИВ- НІ ЕЛЕМЕНТИ МЕБЛІВ ІЗ КІСТКИ, ПАНТІВ ТА БИВНЯ З ОЛЬВІЇ ПОН- ТІЙСЬКОЇ

Стаття присвячена деталям меблів, виготовленим з кістки, рогу оленя та бивня слона, що були знайдені на території античного поліса Ольвія. Аналіз виробів дозволяє зробити низку важливих висновків щодо їхнього функціонального призначення, художніх особливостей, а також значення в матеріальній культурі Ольвії. Більшість цих артефактів належить до групи декоративних елементів — накладок різноманітної форми, які оздоблювали дерев'яні меблі. Друга група представлена конструктивними деталями, що не мали декоративної функції (наприклад, петлі для рухомих механізмів) або поєднували її з функціональною (наприклад, ніжки).

Виявлені на пам'ятці артефакти демонструють широкий спектр виробів, які охоплюють усі хронологічні етапи існування Ольвії. Проте найбільша їх частина відноситься до елліністичного часу, тоді як римський період у цьому плані поки є найбіднішим.

Форма накладок та їхня орнаментация відзначаються значним різноманіттям і водночас відповідають мотивам, традиційно поширеним у грецькій культурі: архітектурі, вазопісії тощо. Це передусім волоти різної складності, деталі пальмет та мотиви для обрамлення (меандр, повторювана хвиля, іонійський кіматій, астрагал тощо). У вжитку також були антропоморфні та зооморфні накладки, серед яких найбільш поширеним можна назвати мотив птаха з довгою шиєю.

Існують два основні технічних прийоми, що використовувалися для декорування виробів. Перший — гравіювання, який застосовували для плоского декору, другий — різьблення, використовували для створення рельєфних зображень. Аналіз декоративних елементів та їхнє порівняння зі знахідками з інших пам'яток дозволили визначити належність частини груп декору певним типам меблів, передусім таким як кліне, трони та скриньки. Проте призначення більшості з них, на жаль, не можна визначити. Ймовірно, вони могли прикрашати різні дерев'яні, зокрема поховальні саркофаги.

Більшість опрацьованого матеріалу походить із території міста. На некрополі ці знахідки не поодинокі, але, на жаль, погано відображені в публікаціях і недоступні для особистого опрацювання. Водночас майже всі типи виробів відомі як на некрополі, так і на території міста, що особливо важливо для деталей, які можна ідентифікувати як прикраси кліне. Насамперед це волоти з вічками, які в окремих випадках дослідники визначали як прикраси саркофага, навіть якщо від самих саркофагів не лишилося нічого або збереглися лише окремі залишки деревини.

Більш детальне вивчення меблевого декору та його порівняння зі знахідками з інших частин еллінського світу дозволяє по-новому інтерпретувати дерев'яні конструкції в низці поховань ольвійського некрополя.

Ключові слова: Ольвія Понтійська, давні меблі, меблевий декор, кістка, панти, бивень слона, накладки.

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