

Between this World and the Hereafter: a Ritual of Transition¹



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I will present sources, inspirations, and possible precedents for the coffin portrait, then its characteristics, role in the funeral ceremony and, finally, its modern reception and changing place in Polish culture. It developed when the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was one of the most powerful states in early modern Europe and shared its fate.

KEY WORDS:

coffin portrait; funeral culture; customs and manners in Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

During every period of time and in every place on Earth humankind tried to find a meaning in death and a way to cope with it². Death was an important factor and a point of reference for culture, religion, art and philosophy, because, especially in the past, it was omnipresent and accompanied people's daily activities. The coffin portrait — one of the most original and unusual type of portraits in early modern Europe — is also unique on the European scale as a by-product of the Baroque, Sarmatism and the culture of the nobles in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. In this article I will present the sources, inspirations and possible precedents for the coffin portrait, then its characteristics, role in the funeral ceremony and, finally, its modern reception and changing place in Polish culture. It developed when the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was one of the most powerful states in early modern Europe and shared its fate — decline, fall and oblivion — revival and myth perpetuation as a sense of nostalgia for the lost power. Coffin portraits were highly original creations of *Sarmatian* art but also very important parts of a funeral — the ritual of transition had a number of common elements with a spectacle created for both the deceased and the mourners.

Death is an inherent and inseparable part of life. This applies equally to the Baroque period, which saw in Europe the Thirty-Years' War and which was, especially in the 17th century, a critical time for the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It is dated conventionally from the turn of the 17th century to the end of the reign of the Saxon Dynasty in 1764. It marked a period of gradual decline from one of the greatest European powers to a weak, divided and inefficient state. Wars of attrition (together with famine, poverty and epidemics) led to massive destruction of properties and commodities (over 50% of assets) and people (up to 40% of a population). They inflicted

1 Writing of this article was made possible thanks to Mgr. Lenka Stolárová's seminar *Face to Face*, her friendly and helpful cooperation, as well as a trip to Prague financed by the International Office of the University of Konstanz.

2 See e.g. Philippe ARIÈS, *Western Attitudes Toward Death from the Middle Ages to the Present*, Baltimore 1974.



unprecedented damage to the hitherto flourishing and powerful kingdom and spelt the beginning of its decline. So began a period of drastic political changes and external and internal conflicts that caused an erosion of the state system, deterioration of the material and intellectual situation of every social group, including the nobles and the clergy³. People were exposed on a daily basis to raids, robberies, fires, murders, rapes, and many other cruelties. Also, religion was affected by the dynamic changes. It is thought that the Baroque had a great impact on early modern Polish religious culture, which was also a battlefield in a confessional war: Catholicism, as well as new cultural trends in the Baroque, tried to win people's hearts and minds through the imagination which was expressed in a famous Jesuit motto: "Through the eyes to the soul"⁴.

In such circumstances there developed in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth a very specific and unique type of nobles' ideology called "Sarmatism". It was based on the conviction that all the nobles are descendants of an ancient ethnic group, Sarmatians, and therefore have some common features and attributes, such as bravery and hospitality, kindness, appreciation of the freedom and profit of the fatherland, following of the knight's ethos and hard "men's" life, as well as engagement in politics⁵. Since Sarmatism affected every part of life, it comes as no surprise that it affected art⁶.

SOURCES OF THE COFFIN PORTRAIT

Fayum mummy portraits, which are named after the place where they were found — in the oasis of Fayum in northern Egypt, originated between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD, in the Roman Imperial era. The paintings were highly naturalistic — the authors depicted the models realistically and "recorded their personal features", so that the faces, for example, vary much more than the attires⁷. People are presented against a monochrome background, *en face*, with the head slightly turned that one ear is less visible than the other. Encaustic paintings on small wooden panels were put on the top of the mummy to cover its face. As Barbara Borg points out, "the development of mummy portraiture may represent a combination of Egyptian and Roman funerary tradition, since it appears only after Egypt was established as a Roman province"⁸.

3 Mirosław BRZOZOWSKI, *Teoria kaznodziejstwa (wiek XVI—XVIII)* [Theory of preaching. 16–18th centuries], in: Marian Rechowicz (ed.), *Dzieje teologii katolickiej w Polsce II/1*, Lublin 1975, p. 396.

4 Janusz TAZBIR, *Szlachta i teologowie* [Nobility and the theologians], Warszawa 1987, p. 56.

5 Jakub NIEDŹWIEDŹ, *Sarmatyzm, czyli tradycja wynaleziona* [Sarmatism or the invented tradition], *Teksty Drugie*, 2015, Nr. 1, pp. 46–62, here p. 48.

6 See: Tadeusz ULEWICZ, *Sarmacja. Zagadnienie sarmatyzmu w kulturze i literaturze polskiej* [Sarmatia. The issues of Sarmatism in the Polish culture and literature], Kraków 2006.

7 Susan WALKER, *Mummy portraits and the Roman portraiture*, in: eadem (ed.), *Ancient faces. Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt*, New York 2000, pp. 23–26.

8 Barbara BORG, *Der zierlichste Anblick der Welt... Ägyptische Porträtmumien*, Mainz 1998, p. 40sq.



In the 1930s the Polish art historian Alfred Brosig noted “I don’t know, where does the custom of putting dead persons images came from to Poland. It, however, resembles a similar custom of ancient Egyptians, that is those famous Egyptian, Greek-Egyptian and Hellenistic encaustic portraits of mummies painted on small wooden panels”⁹. Although some art historians tried to show direct inspirations and links between the mummies’ and the coffin portraits¹⁰, there is no sound evidence for that.

The term *Eikon*, from the Greek “image”, “portrait”, may be applied to different works of art, including sculptures, mosaics and various other techniques, though the Eastern Church has a very specific and complex understanding of an icon, going far beyond the artistic features¹¹. Nevertheless, here I would like to focus on those characteristics that may be important in the context of the coffin portrait. An icon depicts a saint, an angel or a divine being, presented, as in the Fayum mummy portrait, *en face*, looking ahead. But, contrary to the aforementioned paintings, icons evolved more in the direction of allegoric representations rather than realistic ones. Depending on the icon, the background may be more detailed, presenting a biblical scene, attributes of a saint, symbols, or names written in Cyrillic.

With the economic crisis heralding the decline of the Roman Empire, the art of mummy portraits declined, but the tradition of panel paintings and frontally presented people survived in Byzantine icons, where it was directly linked to Christianity. Orthodoxy outlasted the Byzantine Empire and was kept alive in the Russian Empire and other lands of Eastern Europe. Due to the proximity, good political, economic and cultural relations plus the wars and mutual influences, the style was imported to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, affecting not only its Orthodox or Uniate citizens but also the Catholic confession¹². A typical example of this influence is a painting of the Black Madonna of Częstochowa — the painting was executed for the Queen of Poland in 1717 and remains the most important religious image in present-day Poland¹³. In the 17th century there were a great many of miraculous paintings in Poland, not only in a form resembling icons (some of them were stolen

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- 9 Quoted according to Joanna DZIUBKOWA, *Stoj pogrzebnicze, a pod glancem tej blachy upatruj prześwietne popioły*, in: eadem, *Vanitas: Portret trumienny na tle sarmackich obyczajów pogrzebowych [Coffin portrait in the context of the Sarmatian funeral customs]* (catalogue), Poznań 1996, p. 18.
- 10 Tadeusz DOBRZENIECKI, *Geneza polskiego portretu trumiennego [The evolution of the Polish coffin portrait]*, in: *Portret. Funkcja — forma — symbol [Portrait. Function — Form — Symbol]*, Warszawa 1990, pp. 73–88.
- 11 See: Piotr CHOMIK, *Kult ikon Matki Bożej w Wielkim Księstwie Litewskim w XVI–XVII wieku [The cult of icons of Mother of God in Lithuania in 16th–17th centuries]*, Białystok 2003, pp. 27–30.
- 12 See: Mirosław KRUK, *Ikony-obrazy w świątyniach rzymsko-katolickich dawnej Rzeczypospolitej [Icons — images in Roman Catholic churches of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth]*, Kraków 2011.
- 13 Joanna DZIUBKOWA, *Gdzie Wschód spotyka Zachód: portret osobistości dawnej Rzeczypospolitej 1576–1763: Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, 22 maja — 31 lipca 1993 [Where the East meet the West: portrait of personalities of the old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth 1576–1763: National Museum in Warsaw, 22nd May — 31st July 1993]*, Warszawa 1993.



in Russia during the recurrent wars); they were also associated with the East in various legends explaining their origins¹⁴. It is easy to see that the composition of an icon as well as the representation of a person are very similar to those found later in the coffin portraits.

The last source of the coffin portrait, probably of the utmost importance, is the Baroque Polish, also known as the “Sarmatian portrait”. It was a local emanation of a general tendency in European painting of that time and it developed and gained in popularity within the aforementioned time frames — from the end of the 16th century to the second half of the 18th century. The most frequent subjects were members of the nobility desirous of displaying their social status. “A common feature of portrayed people is a kind of a superficial biologism, often an expression of a haughtiness and self-confidence enhancing their social significance, and in an even stronger way — a mere fact of physis existence”¹⁵. The sitter was presented in a realistic way, at least as far as their physiognomy was concerned, with attributes symbolizing their belonging to a social class, office, merits and virtues — such as a book, *karabela* (sort of carbine), cap, mace, or a coat of arms. The person in the picture also wore a traditional national costume — a long garment with sleeves and buttons (*żupan*), over it a robe called *kontusz*, tied with a long, wide sash called *pas kontuszowy* (or more ornamented and expensive *slutski* sash). The attire was usually in vivid colours so that the two parts contrasted with each other. The background was stylized as an antique image, with a Greek column or a drapery.

Those oriental elements exert a fascination with the East and are a trace of a much broader influence from Ukraine, Russia, and Turkey. This is largely manifested in the Sarmatian attires, the shape of the swords and haircuts¹⁶, as we can now observe in those portraits. “Polish painting, represented by guild painters, king’s servants and magnate’s courtiers or by non-professionals from cities and noblemen, was a provincial painting, although not deprived of some characteristic features that testify in favour of its separateness”¹⁷. While the Sarmatian portrait was meant to present a person in the prime of life and with all the attributes befitting their status, the coffin portrait was more simple and modest.

14 Jan KRACIK, *Święte obrazy wśród grzesznych Sarmatów: ze studiów nad recepcją kultowego dziedzictwa* [Saint images among the sinful Sarmatians: studying the reception of the cult heritage], *Nasza Przeszłość* 76, 1991, pp. 141–192.

15 Tadeusz DOBROWOLSKI, *Polskie malarstwo portretowe: ze studiów nad sztuką epoki sarmatyzmu* [The Polish portrait painting: studying the art of the era of Sarmatism], Kraków 1948, p. 211.

16 See: T. ULEWICZ, *Sarmacja*, p. 197.

17 T. DOBROWOLSKI, *Polskie malarstwo portretowe*, p. 200. Nevertheless, Jarosława Szczepańska draws some interesting analogies with Neapolitan sepulchral sculptures, see EADEM, *Malowane portrety epitafijne na Mazowszu z XVII i pocz. XVIII wieku* [Painted epitaph portraits in the Mazovia from the 17th and the beginning of 18th century], *Rocznik Mazowiecki* 2, 1969, pp. 253–297, here pp. 257–258.

THE COFFIN PORTRAIT

In a way, the coffin portrait may be seen as a very specific subtype of the Sarmatian portrait which evolved from the broader genre. But, in contrast to its ancestor, the background is usually plain and monochrome in order to focus attention on the face and the character. The most important and unique feature of the coffin portrait is its shape. A metal sheet (in copper, tin or lead) with a painting in oil was most often hexagonal and made to fit the inside of the coffin where it was placed. This was the outcome of the evolution of the coffin portrait, because the first one, a portrait of the Hungarian King of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Stephen Báthory, 1588, attributed to Marcin Kromer¹⁸ — was rectangular and put, like the Fayum portraits, on the top of the coffin, probably without any special function. This ran contrary to Baroque poetry, literature, or sermons, which tend to idealize and exaggerate the subject's virtues¹⁹. "The coffin portrait was dominated by tints of flaming red, yellow and brown. The paleness of the complexion was balanced by accenting blushing cheeks and red lips"²⁰. Yet one can notice all the flaws and weaknesses of the person — he or she is shown without beautifying nor smoothing. This was meant to create the impression that the deceased, portrayed as being still alive, is taking part in the ceremony, watching the guests and the family. In that form the coffin portrait remained as a separate genre without any significant changes until the end of the Polish-Lithuanian state in 1795²¹.

Tadeusz Chrzanowski holds that "veristic explicitness, naïve minuteness, and syntheticity of minor elements (background, even attributes), graphic concreteness — all this gains meaning in the context of death, faith and attitude towards eternity. [...] The coffin portrait is above all an expression of complacency, safe trust in the efficiency of state privileges as well as in the afterlife"²². As the art historian points out, one can get the impression that the Polish nobility was not afraid of death in an eschatological sense, maybe only in a physical and material sense — as an illness and decay, not as meeting with God. This can be understood in the context of the funeral ceremony in which the coffin portrait played an important role.

Already, in the 17th century, Polish funerals were considered by foreign observers as lavish and exceedingly sumptuous. "There is so much pomp and ceremony in Polish funerals that you would sooner take them to be a triumphant event than the burial of the dead."²³ — wrote in 1698 Bernard O'Connor, the British physician to King John III Sobieski, who wrote down his memories and observations for his

18 See: J. DZIUBKOWA, *Stoj pogrzebnicze*, p. 21.

19 Tadeusz CHRZANOWSKI, *Ciało sarmackie* [Sarmatian body], *Teksty: teoria literatury, krytyka, interpretacja* 32, 1977, Nr. 2, pp. 54–83, here p. 57.

20 Zbigniew KUCHOWICZ, *Obyczaje i postacie Polski szlacheckiej XVI i XVII wieku* [Customs and figures of noble Poland of 16th and 17th century], Warszawa 1993, p. 253.

21 T. DOBROWOLSKI, *Polskie malarstwo portretowe*, pp. 146–148.

22 T. CHRZANOWSKI, *Ciało sarmackie*, p. 62.

23 Bernard O'CONNOR, *Historia Polski*, transl. W. Duży, T. Falkowski, P. Hanczewski, K. Pękacka-Falkowska, London 1698/Warsaw 2012, p. 482.



fellow Englishmen. His account, very accurate though sometimes superficial and naïve, serves as one of the most interesting sources for the Polish customs and manners as seen by a foreigner²⁴. Also Jan Kmita, a printer from the town of Lubcz, wrote a short book about the funeral of Hetman Krzysztof Radziwiłł, with a detailed description of the ceremony, as though it was a scenario for this event²⁵. We can learn in it about the homilies delivered, and what is also interesting is the excuse that Kmita provides in the preface for the lavishness of the funeral, namely that a great man deserves great honours²⁶. This is in accordance with the testimony of O'Connor and many other sources. The problem is that the *theatrum funebris* often contrasted with the last will of the deceased and their wish for modesty and simplicity. For instance, Jan Bystron quotes the last will of Krzysztof Szczedrowski, a rich nobleman from Greater Poland — who asks his descendants for a funeral to be as humble as possible, without any grandeurs, sermons, or a procession²⁷. This rather common problem was often solved by conducting two ceremonies — a humble one for the dead, and a second for the living ones — lavish and pompous, full of splendour and glamour²⁸.

Therefore, the period between a death and the ceremony often lasted a few weeks. The family of the deceased waited before the ceremony for all the relatives and guests to arrive, sometimes from very distant provinces. During that time the body was presented to the public and a mass for the soul of the deceased was celebrated every day²⁹. Usually, this was the time when coffin portraits were painted, though it happened from time to time that some nobleman ordered one during his lifetime³⁰. Joanna Dziubkova sees here another reason for the popularity of coffin portraits — “With the necessity of long procedure of preparing the body from the moment of death to the funeral, apart from short-term preservative methods, other means were resorted to. The coffin was furnished with a small glass that allowed to see the face

24 Sabina FLANCZEWSKA, *Bernard O'Connor i jego "The History of Poland"* [Bernard O'Connor and his "The History of Poland"], *Biuletyn Biblioteki UMCS* 24, 1976, nr. 4, pp. 13–19.

25 Jan KMITA, *Proces pogrzebu s. pamięci [...] Krzysztofa Radziwiłła* [The course of the funeral of holy memory Krzysztof Radziwiłł], Lubcz 1641, available online: <https://jbc.bj.uj.edu.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=364882> [retrieved 31. 7. 2019]. See also: Mariola JARCZYKOWA, *Kultura funeralna Radziwiłłów Birżańskich w świetle kazań pogrzebowych z pierwszej połowy XVII wieku* [Funeral culture of Radziwiłł of Birże in the light of funeral sermons from the first half of the 17th century], *Studia Bibliologiczne* 6, 1993, pp. 40–51.

26 J. KMITA, *Proces pogrzebu*, c. a2. v.

27 Jan S. BYSTRON, *Dzieje obyczajów w dawnej Polsce II* [History of customs of old Poland], Warszawa 1976, pp. 2–93.

28 Marcelli KOSMAN, *Litewskie kazania pogrzebowe z pierwszej połowy XVII wieku* [Lithuanian funeral sermons from the first half of the 17th century], *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce* 17, 1972, pp. 87–114, here p. 89.

29 Juliusz CHROŚCICKI, *Pompa funebris. Z dziejów kultury staropolskiej* [From the history of Old Polish culture], Warsaw 1974, p. 50.

30 For the time of painting the portraits see the discussion in: Bartłomiej LYCZAK, *The coffin portrait and the celebration of death in Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the Modern Period*, *IKON. Journal of Iconographic Studies* 4, 2011, pp. 233–242, here p. 240.

of the deceased. Undoubtedly easier was, however, to put the painted portrait on the coffin³¹. Waiting for the funeral was also a time for mourning, remembrance and lamenting. The latter intensified during the very ceremony and is discernible in sources (sermons, diaries, poetry) from that time³².

In the centre of the church there was a *castrum doloris* (Latin for “the castle of grief”), which was a form of a richly ornamented catafalque decorated with a baldachin, candles, a coat of arms, and surrounded by columns or monuments, with a platform for the coffin and a coffin portrait³³. The latter element, it is worth noting again, presented a living person, as though he or she was among the gathered guests, observing and taking an active part in the ceremony. The person presented in the coffin portrait was therefore on the borderline between worldly and future life. The official mass started often with a gun salute. After it, an *archimimus*, an actor playing the deceased, wearing his or her clothes and attributes approached the coffin riding a horse and fell down to symbolize death and the final farewell. Depending on the rank and position of the deceased the attributes — weapons (such as a hetman’s mace), rings, seals, and the like — were broken³⁴. Then a procession with the coffin left the church and went to the burial place and a tomb. If a nobleman was buried in a church crypt, the procession walked around the church and came back. Bernard O’Connor also gave a detailed description of a typical funeral procession: The body is put in the coffin, which is placed on the hearse or in a wagon drawn by six horses, while everything is covered by a black veil. The coffin is covered by a black velvety shroud, with a red satin cross in the middle, and sag from it six long, black silk tassels held by the housemates of the deceased. They all wear funeral attire. In front of the wagon walk priests, monks and huge mass of people, each with a white wax burning torch in the hand. Closest to the hearse move three horsemen, holding weapons of the deadman — one wields his sword, second his lance, and the third one his arrow³⁵.

When the coffin was placed in the tomb, the relatives delivered (usually laudatory) speeches, the coffin portrait and the coat of arms of the deceased were hung on the church wall along with the banners, the so-called *labara funebris* — they were as popular as the coffin portraits (for example, after the Moscow incursion in 1613 several dozen of them were hung in the Bernardine church in Lviv³⁶). Not many of them have survived due to the frailty of the materials.

31 J. DZIUBKOWA, *Stoj pogrzebnicze*, p. 20.

32 Bogdan ROK, *Człowiek wobec śmierci w kulturze staropolskiej* [Man towards death in the Old Polish culture], Wrocław 1995, pp. 65–72.

33 J. CHROŚCICKI, *Pompa funebris*, pp. 125–139.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 52.

35 B. O’CONNOR, *Historia Polski*, p. 483.

36 J. S. BYSTRON, *Dzieje obyczajów w dawnej Polsce*, p. 114.





MODERN RECEPTION

Today, the “ribald man with a cranky look”³⁷, a Sarmatian nobleman from the coffin portraits seems to be a stereotypical Pole. This image was perpetuated by the 19th and 20th century in literature, especially by the national bard Adam Mickiewicz and his epic poem *Sir Thaddeus*, and the Nobel-prize winner, Henryk Sienkiewicz, with his trilogy about the 17th century wars — both authors depicted the Sarmatian gentry and their customs or at least their representation of them, creating the myth of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, its culture and ideology³⁸.

The coffin portrait became a very important part of this heritage. It has added a very realistic image to the literary and poetic characteristics. Thanks to its realism and lack of idealization it could express ambivalent sides of the same phenomenon. On the one hand, the gentry were admired for inventing a political system that was ahead of its time, making the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth one of the most powerful states in Europe, tolerant of different confessions, with a flourishing economy and culture. On the other hand, the same gentry were blamed for parochialism and narrow-mindedness, xenophobia, egoism and overbearing and political ineptness that finally ended up with the Partitions of Poland (1772–1795)³⁹. This complex and contradictory image is in keeping with Polish history and its decline in the Baroque period. A popular simplified image of the Sarmatian culture was present also in historical descriptions, although, as Jakub Niedźwiedź points out, this interpretative category becomes less and less popular and modern historians pay more attention to the diversity of the Commonwealth’s culture⁴⁰. Nevertheless, it still plays an important role in the current political discussions (as a frame of reference) or in the pop-culture, as a popular image of Polish history. After World War II, the coffin portrait also generated interest in art historians and museums, and thanks to this, became widely recognized as a part of the national heritage.

This peculiarly Polish genre of the Baroque was exhibited at art shows quite as often as the Sarmatian portrait. It was a phenomenon completely incomparable to anything that might be found outside the country. Coffin portraits had a close connection to Polish funeral customs of their time. They were exhibited as some of the best examples of the realist tendencies in the local art of the period and as one of the most important elements in the rich cultural heritage of the Baroque era.⁴¹

Therefore, Baroque coffin portraits have taken pride of place in the Polish collective imagination and will for a long time shape the view of the past not only of professional historians, but also of the public-at-large.

37 Emil KŁODA — Adam SZELAĞ, “Ribald Man with a cranky look”. *The Sarmatian portrait as the pop-cultural symbol of Baroque art in Poland*, *Journal of Art Historiography* 15, 2016, pp. 1–27.

38 See: J. NIEDŹWIEDŹ, *Sarmatyzm*.

39 T. ULEWICZ, *Sarmacja*, p. 197 and ff.

40 J. NIEDŹWIEDŹ, *Sarmatyzm*, p. 60.

41 E. KŁODA — A. SZELAĞ, “Ribald Man”, p. 11.

RÉSUMÉ:

In my article I tried to present to the reader the fascinating reality of the Sarmatian borderland between this world and afterlife. In order to make the transition and the farewell more bearable and to provide the biggest chance for a place in Heaven (or at least as short as possible a time in the purgatory) a complicated and sophisticated rituals were developed. Resembling almost theatrical performances, funerals in the Commonwealth were meant to facilitate the crossing of the invisible line between life and death. In that ceremony an important role was played by the coffin portrait — the image of the deceased, portrayed as a living person — in a naturalistic and realistic way, without idealization. It was as though they were among the present guests, accompanying them for the last time. Soon that (usually) hexagonal paintings gained in popularity not only in the broad circles of the Polish gentry, but also among the richer bourgeois. This is why many of them have been preserved to this day and can be seen in many galleries. The revival of interest in the Polish coffin portrait after II World War made them again enter the collective consciousness and has established them as a symbol of an (allegedly) glorious past and times of power. On the one hand, they are fantastic sources for research on the early modern period of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth history as they show the “real face” of our ancestors and are a tangible part of their culture and world; on the other hand they jointly shape the national myths and imaginations. The dividing line between those functions is very thin. Therefore, it is even more important to investigate the place of the coffin portraits and the rituals of transition in the past ages. Along with other sources, they may provide a deep and reliable insight into the old habits and ways to face death.

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