
TEXTILES FROM SCYTHIAN BURIAL COMPLEXES

**Elena Fialko
Yurii Boltryk**

In the early Iron Age epoch the Northern Pontic steppes were inhabited by various nomadic tribes - Cimmerians, Scythians and Sarmatians. The Scythians left the most prominent trace in the history and material culture. More than 3 thousand Scythian kurhans were excavated in the steppes of North Pontic Area. Large amount of artifacts were found in the investigated tombs. Among them there were weapons, tools, household items (including mirrors), jewelry and sets of clothes. Many of these articles were in leather or made of cloth covers. But unfortunately the leather and textiles items were preserved just in exceptional cases.

The fullest representation about the cloth used by the Scythians can be given by a costume. Some information about the Scythian costume is given by the works of art of Greek masters. First of all, these are the toreutics works: ceremonial metal bowls, decorations of goryta, jewelry, sewn plates etc.

Among the most informative images are: a neckring from Kul-Oba kurhan (fig. 1/3), a comb (fig. 1/1) and a bowl from the Solokha kurhan, a bowl from the kurhans Gaymanova Mogyla, Kul-Oba (fig. 1/2) and Chastye Kurhany; an amphora from Chertomlyk; pectoral from Tolstoya Mogyla; gold plaques from the kurhans Kul-Oba, Solokha,

Berdyansk and others (Piotrovsky, Galanina, Grach 1986). On these objects we can see various details of the costume. Often, they appear so realistic that we can suppose what the nature of the materials and cut of clothes of Scythian warriors were. We can assert that there were two styles of trousers - tight-fitting shape and wide trousers. Moreover, the wide trousers, according to the soft folds, were made from a quite thin fabric. Scythian caftans are double-breasted. Their front flaps are made in the form of a triangle (or a gore) (fig. 1/1). Often on the border of the outerwear we can see the fur trimming. The clothes are bind with a narrow belt. Footwear corresponds to the low boots made of soft leather, tied with long tight straps. On various items all these details are usually repeated. Therefore, such images can be considered as a reliable ethnographic source.

As we can see, the costume of a male warrior is depicted on these things. Occasionally there are some items with the images of Amazons. Among them we can mention a sword sheath from the kurhan Chertomlyk and a kalathos from Bolshaia Bliznitsa kurhan (fig. 2/1) (Piotrovsky, Galanina, Grach 1986), Greek painted vases (fig. 2/2). But as correctly notified the Greek masters, the costume of Scythian Amazon did not differ from



Fig. 1. A male warrior's costume in the toreutics works.



Fig. 2. Images of women in the works of art.

the costume of a man. The images of women are extremely rare. They are presented on a plate from the kurhan Karagodeuashkh (fig. 2/3), gold plates from the kurhans Chertomlyk (fig. 2/4) and Nosaki (Piotrovsky, Galanina, Grach 1986). Typically, this is the image of the goddess. At the same time everyday clothes of the Scythian women were ignored by the ancient artists.

Ancient Greek authors left really scanty information about fabrics, which were used by the Scythians. For example, Herodotus, who described the events of the 5th century BC, in his "ICTORIAI" reported that in the country of the Scythians there was cannabis (Herodotus IV, 74). In the territory of modern Ukraine this culture appeared apparently due to advancements of the nomads. Strabo in "ΓΕΩΓΡΑΦΙΚΑ" wrote about the widespread use of flax in the Mediterranean. According to him, in the territories of Thrace and Colchis they grew the flax and weaved the cloth from it (Strabo XI, 2:17).

In Scythian burials the remains of textiles are extremely rare. These are usually small pieces of tissue, fragments of joints or imprint on metal articles (for example, on the bronze mirrors or on the iron arrowheads). The study of these materials is difficult because of a bad preservation of organic materials in the conditions of the steppe region.

The remains of the different fabrics are fixed in a series of burials (Gleba, Krupa 2012, 405-407). **The pieces of linen cloth** were found in: kurhan n. 22, tomb 2 near the village Volnaya Ukraina (Kherson region), kurhan n. 12 at Nosaki village, kurhan Chertomlyk (Dnipropetrovsk region) (Rolle, Murzin, Alekseev 1991, 208, №134).

The tissues made from plants and a woolen one remained in a kurhan Vishnevaia Mogyla (Zaporizhia region) (Прилишко, Болтрик 1991, 26-30) and kurhan Blyznets-2 (Dnipropetrovsk region) (fig. 3/1) (Ромашко, Скорый 2009, рис. 68, 92; Krupa 2009, 151-152; Krupa 2012).

Fragments of woolen fabrics were found in kurhan n. 26 near Kholodnyi Yar (Cherkasy region). The textile with linen weave remained there with the embroidery and blue, red and yellow paint traces extant on it (Петренко 1967, 29). Several scraps of various sizes were founded in kurhan Chertomlyk. One fragment with a coarser weave has an edge bent in the form of a joint (Rolle, Murzin, Alekseev 1991, №120, 127, 135).

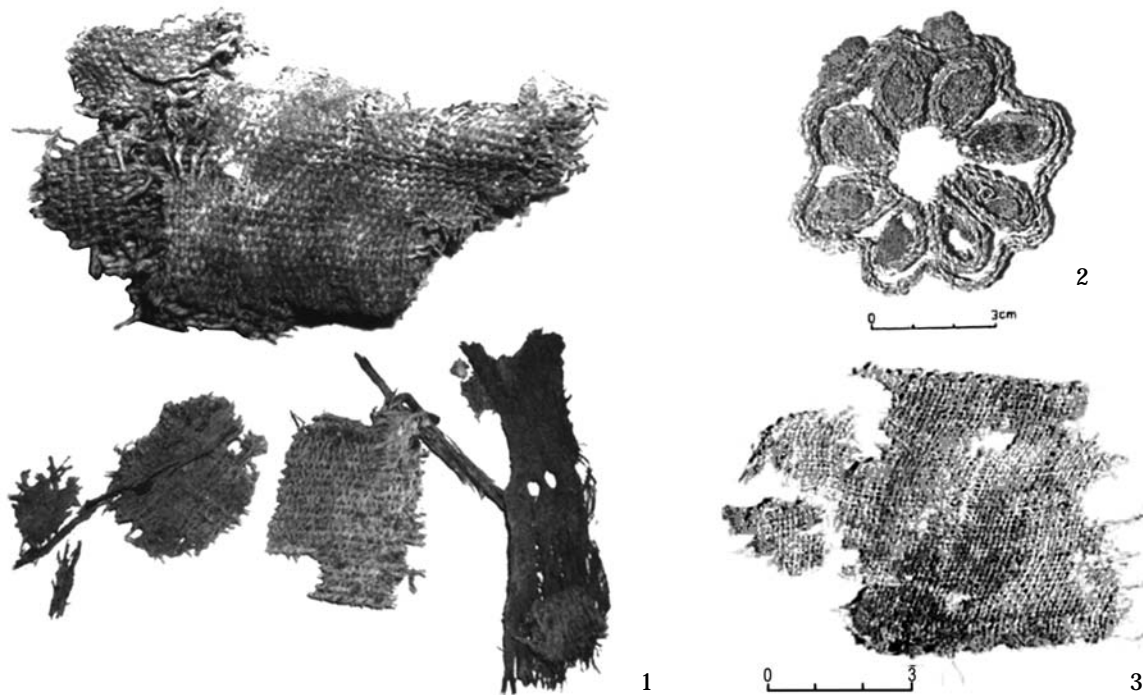


Fig. 3. The remains of the different fabrics from scythian burials: 1 - kurhan Blyznets-2; 2, 3 - Ryzhanovskyi kurhan.

Satin fabrics are also known. For example, in the women's grave of the kurhan Tolstaya Mogyla (Dnipropetrovsk region). The clothes of a Scythian woman were sewn from satin, made by the following scheme: seven threads of the warp are over the thread of the weft, and one is under it (eight-thread structure) (Мозолевський 1979, 206, рис. 136). There is no information about the composition of raw materials in this case.

Several scraps of different fabrics were preserved in the male grave in **Ryzhanovskyi kurhan** (Cherkasy region) (Chochorowski, Grigor'ev, Skoryj 1996). Four types of fabrics were identified. Mainly there were gray or brown fragments made from rather thick threads. Embroidery and a hemmed edge were preserved on some of them.

1. One fragment of textile was woven from wool threads and embellished with embroidery. Background, on which was made a pattern is almost lost. The pattern is made in the form of a rosette with eight petals. The contours of this rosette are also underlined with embroidery (fig. 3/2). The embroidery is made with thick threads of plant origin (probably hemp) in chain stitch technique.

2. A scrap of strip of a fabric (size 9×6 cm) of plant origin fibers. The threads of different thickness, plain weave, slightly twisted (density: 8×8

threads) (fig. 3/3). The short stitches of seam are clearly visible on both sides; this seam is called "over the edge". This seam can play also a decorative role. On the surface of the strip the stains of dark brown color were preserved. Probably these are the traces of painting.

3. A few more pieces represent the woolen cloth of a complex structure. We can see a twill texture. We can also see a pattern on the certain pieces of fabric; it is made in tapestry technique. These fabrics are known among the findings in the Northern Black Sea Greek necropolis (Бабенко, Бредис, Клочко 1999).

4. Some more small patches of woolen fabric of linen structure conserved very badly.

Review of materials from Scythian kurhans allows suggests that for flax, hemp and wool were used for the fabrication of the tissue. The fabric of linen and twill structure was produced with these materials. Apparently the thick felt was also produced. Silk fabrics were also used (Клочко, Васи́на 2004, 34).

As we can see there are just the tiny scraps of fabric and sets of decorative plates as only representation of clothes in the graves of Scythians. Most often these are the gold appliquéés of a costume.



Fig. 4. Kurhan Tolstaya Mogyla: 1 - golden appliques of a costume; 2 - the reconstruction of ceremonial dress (by L. Klochko).

If we compare these elements with the images on the works of art, we can try to recreate the costume or some of its elements. The headdresses – the caps and shawls were decorated with the gold plaques. There were also sleeves, the front upper part and flaps of the outerwear, footwear (as in kurhan Tolstaya Mogyla) (fig. 4/1). Golden appliques on the clothes of the nomads appeared in the 5th century BC. In the 4th century BC this method of costume decoration became popular throughout the Scythia. The costume was completed by the jewelry - necklaces, earrings, bracelets and rings. Naturally such trimming is typical only for a costume of the representative of social elite of the Scythian society. The costume of ordinary Scythian girl was much more modest. Due to the metallic applications it was possible to reconstruct ceremonial dress of the Scythians from Tolstaya Mogyla (fig. 4/2) and other burial complexes.

An interesting finding was discovered in the vault n. 620 of the **necropolis Ust`-Alma** (near the village Peschanoe, South-West Crimea) (fig. 5/1). It dates to the middle - the third quarter of the 1st century BC. Due to the preservation of several details of clothes here, Tatiana Krupa reconstructs a whole costume of a woman. Such details were preserved in this tomb: **1**) the remnants of the headdress (wood, tissue and gold foil); **2**) the re-

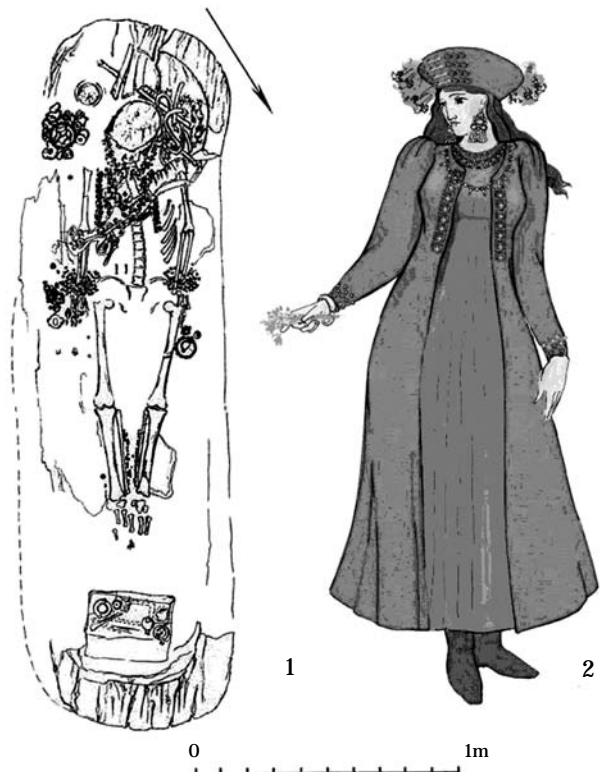


Fig. 5. The vault n. 620 of the necropolis Ust`-Alma: 1 the plan of the grave (fragment); 2 the reconstruction of costume complex (by T. Krupa).

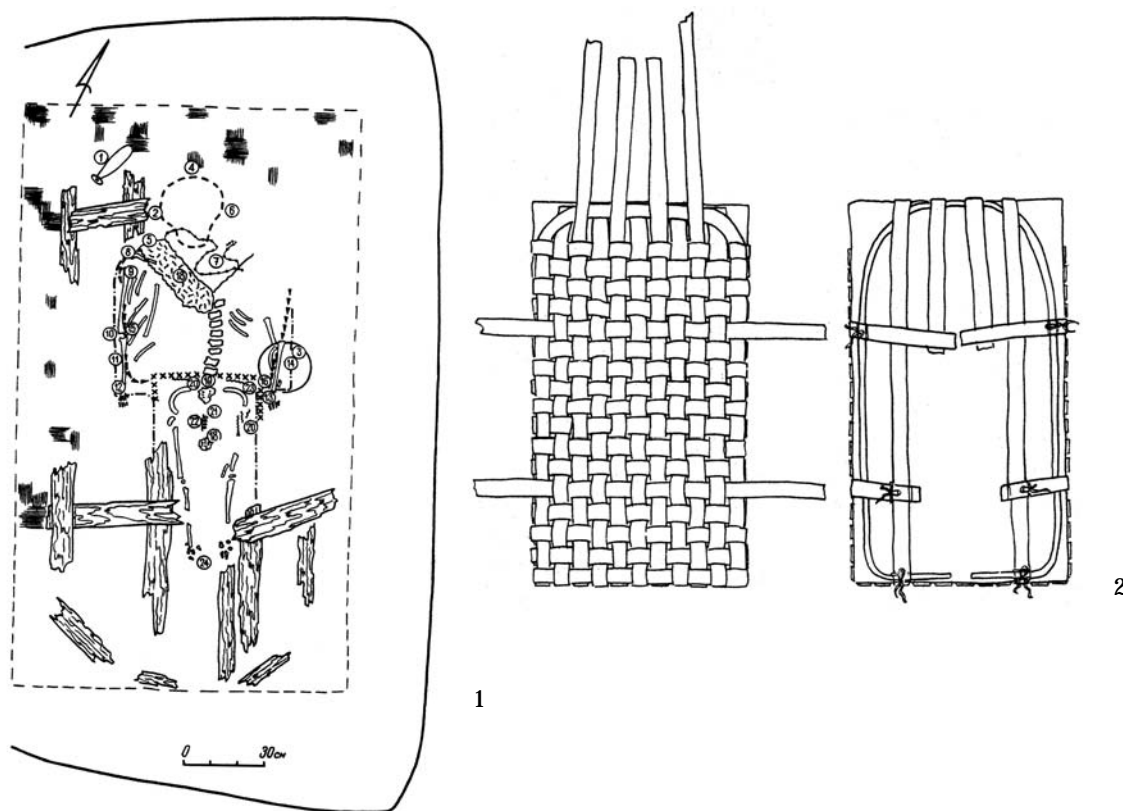


Fig. 6. Kurhan Vyshneva Mogila: 1 - the plan of the grave (fragment); 2 - a kind of sarcophagus with a curved wooden frame (by Ya. Prilipko and Yu. Boltryk).

mains of two dresses (woolen cloth of two types and the golden applications); **3**) the remains of footwear (red leather and glass beads). Furthermore, the costume was completed with the jewelry: gold earrings, a necklace and bracelets of beads, a ring and a fibula (Крына 2007, 162-163).

Woman's clothes consisted of: the lower dress (red – brown wool with a blue stripe), decorated with gold plaques; and outer dress looked like a robe (red wool from Asia Minor), decorated in the center and on the edge of the sleeves with sewn patches. The location of the applications on both dresses proves that this costume was originally modeled as a single set. In addition the ensemble includes high boots of soft red-brown leather and a headdress like kalathos (fig. 5/2). It is clear that in this case we see the full dress of a representative of the Scythian aristocracy. Textile (fine-fleece wool) for clothing was apparently imported.

Funerary complex of the 4th century BC discovered in the **kurhan Vishneva Mogyla** (Zaporozhye region, Ukraine) (fig. 6/1) is extremely important.

Burial of the Scythian girl remained undisturbed in the ground crypt. The unique preservation of textile and leather remains allowed reconstructing the entire multicomponent costume of the Scythian girl.

A girl aged eight to ten was lying on her back (head to the west) in a kind of sarcophagus with a curved wooden frame. The bottom of the so-called sarcophagus was made of laths and covered with leather piece. It was secured by leather straps (fig. 6/2). On top, there were layer of grass, piece of linen and thick pile mat. Examination of textiles and other organic materials, particularly their details (seams, edges, strings and other things) preserved in the tomb, allowed to restore the entire costume. The latter consisted of six types of clothing: undershirt, hip, shoulder, shoes, hat and removable jewelry. Different parts of the clothes were made of different materials – white linen, orange satin, reddish-brown wool, black cloth, fur and red leather (Прилишко, Болтрик 1991).

Set components were as follows:

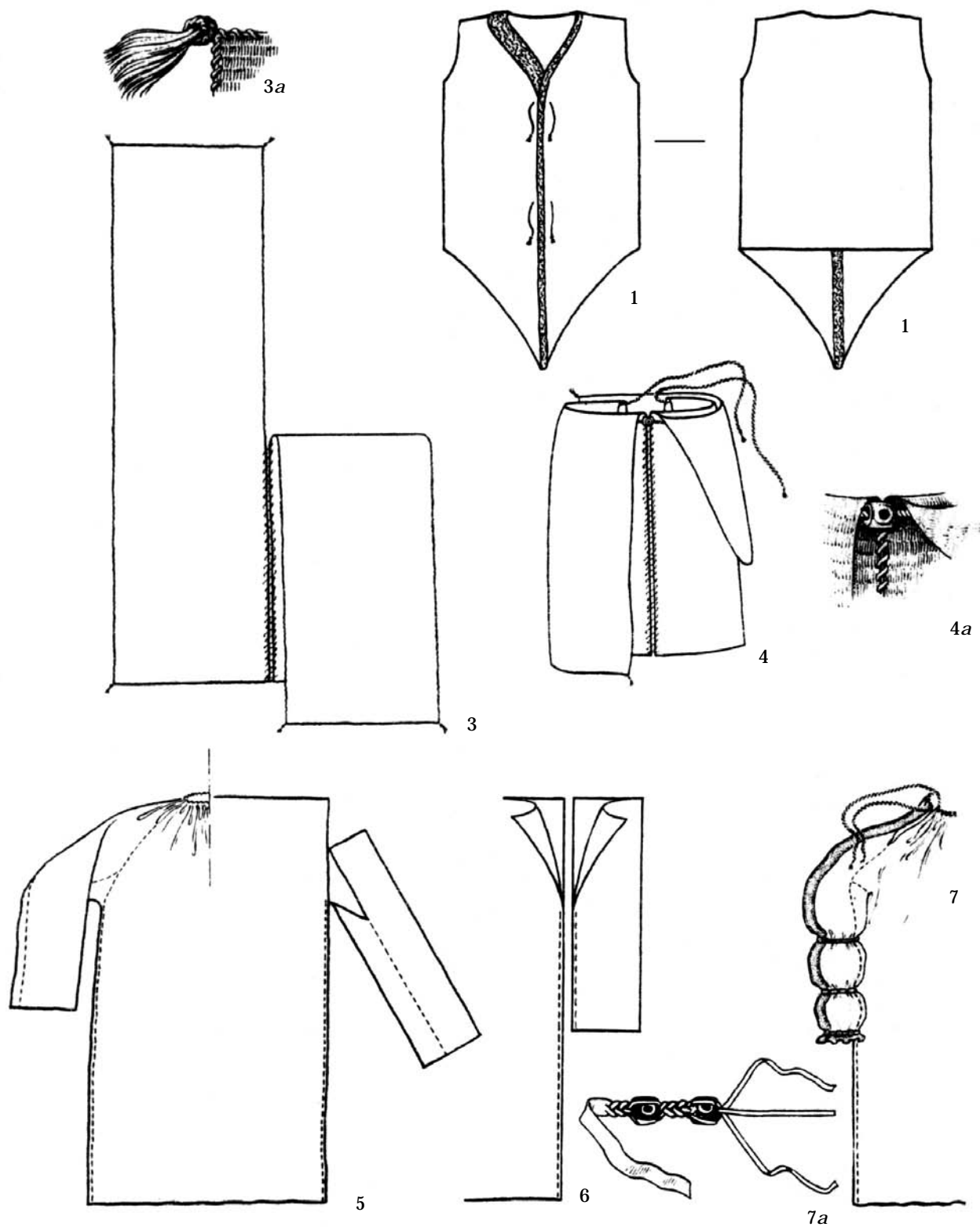


Fig. 7. Kurhan Vyshneva Mogila. Details of Scythian girl's costume set: 1, 2 - sleeveless jacket; 3, 4 - wrapper skirt; 5-7 - long shirt (by Ya. Prilipko).

- 1) Long white linen shirt with long one-piece sleeves (fig. 7/5-7). Along the sleeve face, there were appliqués (2 cm wide bright orange satin stripe in the center and two narrow (1 cm wide) scarlet strips on the sides). Either of the sleeves being added by three leather straps with beads.
- 2) Wrapper skirt (fig. 7/3-4) consists of two reddish-brown wool sheets, sewn to the mid-length, with tassels on the corners. Folded fabric is wrapped around the hips and tied behind with woven belt with eyed bead.
- 3) Sleeveless jacket of black cloth with long wedge-shaped front laps (fig. 7/1-2). It is likely that it had a tunic cut (seamless). The right lapel was decorated with wide edging (possibly wool).
- 4) On her feet the girl had stockings of thin soft fabric. Scrim puttees (?) were wrapped over them.
- 5) Shoes were made of a single piece of red leather with stitched toes and backs (fig. 8).
- 6) Headpiece was a leather strap with dark blue eyed bead and temporal pendants.
- 7) Colorful glass beads complemented the costume (fig. 9).

Well, this is a single paleo-costume complex in the Northern Black Sea region. That is why now it became the reference of early nomads' female costume of this region. It is notable that some elements of the above Scythian costume are similar to those of the Ukrainian national one (Одаренко 1992; Болтрик 2007).

Review of remnants from the Scythian burial complexes testifies that the people of Scythia were able to treat various types of raw materials

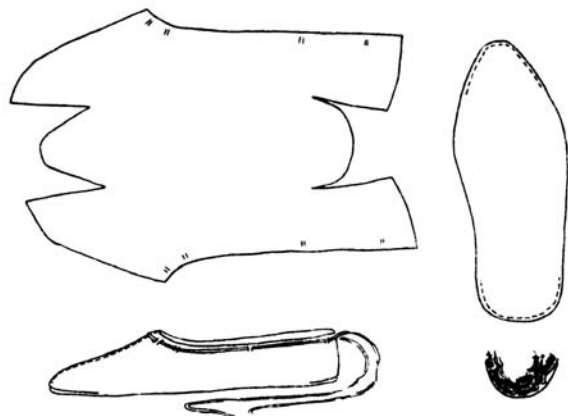


Fig. 8. Kurhan Vyshneva Mogila. The reconstruction of shoes (by Ya. Prilipko).

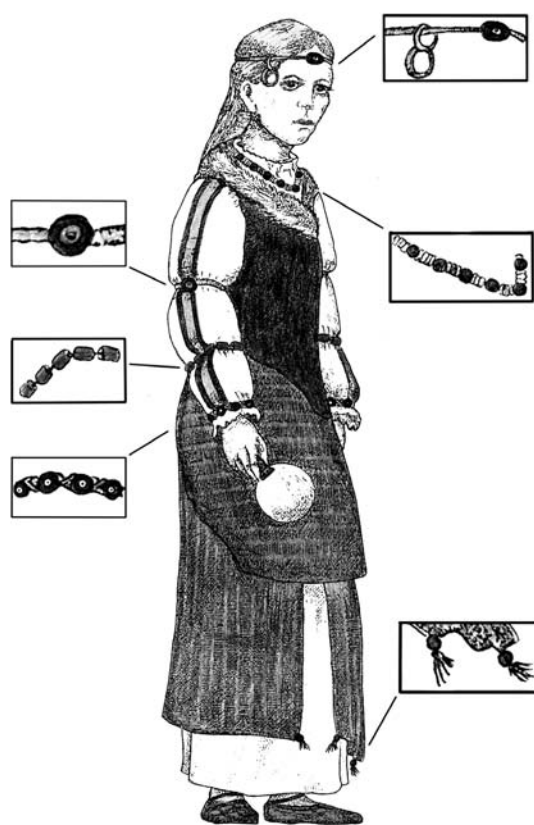


Fig. 9. Costume set of Scythian girl from Kurhan Vyshneva Mogila. The reconstruction (by Ya. Prilipko and Yu. Boltryk).

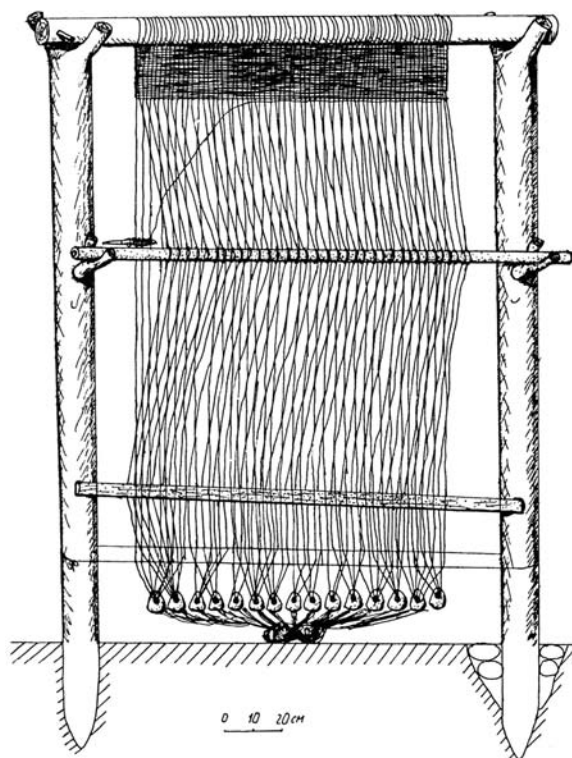


Fig. 10. Vertical loom from Belskoye settlement. The reconstruction (by A. Scherban).

– plant origin and wool. They used (and probably produced) different types of textiles – linen, twill and patterned weave. We can not say with certainty what type of weaving loom they used. It is well known that in Greece and Greek states of the North Pontic Area vertical looms were employed while in the Near East and Egypt horizontal ones (Гайдукевич 1952, 403-497; Лукас 1956, 237; Ruffle 1977, 169). Ethnographic data suggest that the nomads preferred horizontal looms easy to disassemble (Бабенко, Бредис, Клочко 1999).

In the region of the Left-Bank Forest-Steppe of Ukraine in the 7th - early 6th century they were supposed to use horizontal looms. Since the end of the 6th until early 3rd century B.C., vertical looms were employed within this area. Remains of loom for manufacturing fabrics 1 m wide (fig. 10) were found at the Belskoye settlement. It is not improbable that for some time these two types of looms coexisted (Щербань 2007, 150-156, figs. 71-72). It is quite possible Scythians also tial dress.

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Pânza din complexele funerare scitice

Rezumat

În stepele din nordul Mării Negre au fost cercetați peste trei mii de tumuli scitici, din care provine un număr considerabil de artefacte. Însă, hainele din piele și pânză se întâlnesc foarte rar. Informații mai ample despre îmbrăcămintea sciților oferă piesele de toreadică, confecționate de meșterii greci, – cupele de metal, plăcile ce serveau pentru împodobirea tobelor, aplicile etc. Pe ele pot fi urmărite unele detalii ale costumului. În unele cazuri, imaginile de pe aceste piese sunt atât de detaliate, încât se poate presupune ce material a fost utilizat și care a fost croirea îmbrăcămintei. De regulă, pe obiectele de toreadică este redat costumul militarilor bărbați sau al amazoanelor, îmbrăcămintea obișnuită a femeilor rămânând, practic, necunoscută.

În această ordine de idei destul de important este complexul funerar din sec. IV a. Chr., descoperit în tumulul de la Vișnevaja Mogila (reg. Zaporozie, Ucraina). Aici, într-un cavou din pământ, s-a păstrat intact mormântul unei fete scite. Starea excepțională de conservare a rămășițelor de pânză și piele a permis reconstituirea întregului set de îmbrăcămintă a defunctei. Setul era alcătuit din șase tipuri de îmbrăcămintă: de corp; de acoperire a coapselor, a umerilor; de învelire a tălpilor; acoperămintă de cap și podoabe detașabile. Diferite elemente ale îmbrăcămintei sunt făcute din diferite materiale: țesătură din pânză albă, pânză portocalie din atlas, lână de culoare roșie-cafenie, postav negru, blană, piele roșie.

Este unicul complex paleocostumologic din nordul Mării Negre, considerat în prezent drept etalon al costumului purtat de femeile nomazilor timpurii din această regiune.

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- Fig. 2. Reprezentarea femeii pe piese de toreadică: 1, 2 - amazoane; 3, 4 - divinități.
- Fig. 3. Bucăți de diferite pânze din înmormântările scitice: 1 - tumulul Bliznac-2; 2, 3 - tumulul Ryžanovka.
- Fig. 4. Tumulul Tolstaja Mogila: 1 - aplici din aur, descoperite în camera funerară; 2 - reconstituirea costumului (după L. Klochko).
- Fig. 5. Cavoul nr. 620, necropola Ust'-Alma: 1 - planul camerei funerară (fragment); 2 - reconstituirea costumului (după T. Krupa).
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- Fig. 8. Tumulul Vișnevaja Mogila. Croirea și reconstituirea încălțăminte din piele (după Ya. Prilipko).
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- Fig. 10. Reconstituirea războiului de țesut vertical, descoperit în cetatea de la Bel'sk (după A. Scherban).

Текстиль из погребальных комплексов скифов

Резюме

В степях Северного Причерноморья раскопано более 3 тысяч скифских курганов. В исследованных погребениях обнаружено большое количество артефактов, однако изделия из кожи и текстиля сохраняются в единичных случаях. О costume скифов некоторое представление дают произведения греческих мастеров. Прежде всего, это произведения тореветики – парадные металлические чаши, украшения горитов, нашитые бляшки и др. На них видны различные детали костюма. Иногда они настолько детализированы, что можно предположить материал и крой одежды. Однако, как правило, на этих предметах изображен ко-

стюм мужчин-воинов или амазонок. Повседневный костюм скифских женщин оставался без внимания мастеров.

В этой связи чрезвычайно важен погребальный комплекс 4 в. до н.э., открытый в кургане Вишневая Могила (Запорожская обл., Украина). В грунтовом склепе не потревоженным сохранилось захоронение девочки-скифянки. Уникальная сохранность текстильных и кожаных остатков позволила реконструировать весь многокомпонентный костюм скифянки. Он состоял из шести родов одежды: нательной, набедренной, плечевой, настопной, головного убора и съемных украшений. Различные части одежды сделаны из разных материалов, это: белая полотняная ткань, оранжевая атласная ткань, красновато-коричневая шерсть, черное сукно, мех, красная кожа.

Это единственный в Северном Причерноморье палеокостюмологический комплекс, являющийся в настоящее время эталонным примером женского костюма ранних номадов этого региона.

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Рис. 1. Костюм скифского мужчины-воина на произведениях торевтики.

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Dr. Elena Fialko, Institute of Archaeology, National Academy of Science of Ukraine, Pr. Geroew Stalingrada, 12, 04210 Kyiv, Ukraine, e-mail: ofialka@ukr.net

Dr. Yurii Boltryk, Institute of Archaeology, National Academy of Science of Ukraine, Pr. Geroew Stalingrada, 12, 04210 Kyiv, Ukraine, e-mail: boltryk@ukr.net