

## Ties between the Population of the Volga-Oka Area and the Inhabitants of the Steppe and Forest-Steppe in the 1st Millennium B.C.

Economic and cultural ties between different population groups of antiquity are of immense interest, for without their careful study our understanding of the life and culture of different tribes will be incomplete. Of great interest is the problem of ties between the population of the steppe and forest-steppe and the inhabitants of the forests.

In studying the Early Metal sites the Volga-Oka area, V. A. Gorodtsov was the first to pay attention to the items of southern origin. Among other finds from the Starshee Kashirskoe ancient town site there were some blue Scythian beads and it was Gorodtsov who determined their cultural connection, dating them to the 4th century B.C.<sup>1</sup> This dating was further specified as V.G. Petrenko noted in her research that such beads are found in Scythian burials of the 5th or 4th–3rd centuries B.C.<sup>2</sup> and K.F. Smirnov mentions them in describing Savromatian complexes of the 5th–4th centuries B.C.<sup>3</sup> Later on, such beads were also found on the sites of the ancient towns of Sherbinskoe, Kruglitsa and Borschovo.

Among the bone arrowheads from Staroe Kashirskoe gorodische V. A. Gorodtsov recognized two types, i.e. one-winged arrowheads and those with spur-like barbs, which he saw as an imitation of the bronze Scythian originals<sup>4</sup>. V. A. Gorodtsov also described a treasure found in 1830 in the territory of Moscow Oblast consisting of a few Scythian bronze arrows and a celt of the Kimmerian type<sup>5</sup>. Unfortunately the treasure has not survived to our day. The said types of arrowheads should, no doubt, be regarded as imitations of certain Scythian specimens and dated to the same period, i.e. the 7th–5th centuries B.C.<sup>6</sup> or 7th–4th centuries B.C.<sup>7</sup> The correctness of such a comparison and the precision of dating have been confirmed by B. N. Grakov<sup>8</sup>. It should also be noted that the barb at the stem of the barbed arrows is an element undoubtedly borrowed from the Scythian bronze models but borrowed only in part for to make the barb the bone had to be cut across its fibre leaving the barb brittle.

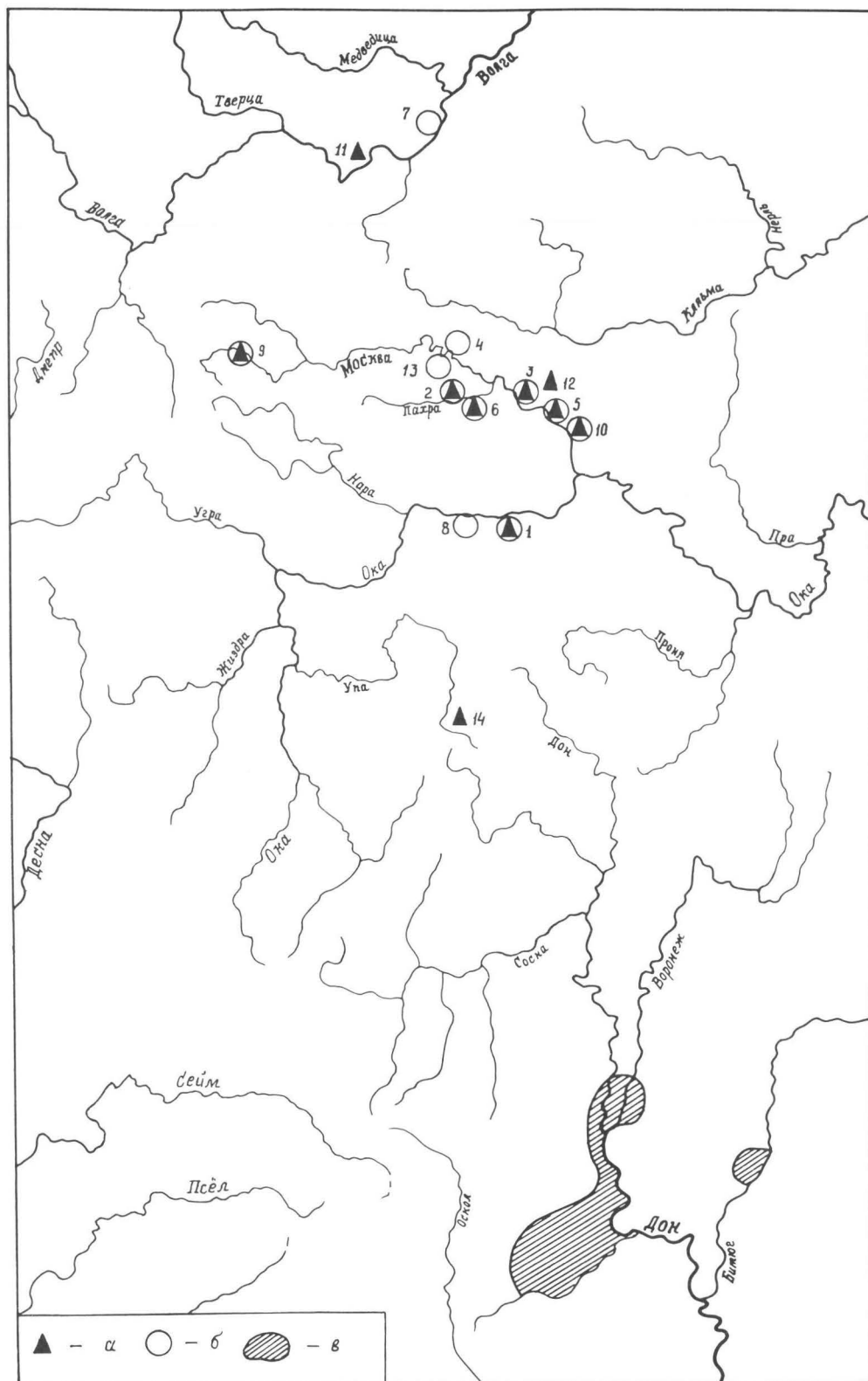
Barbed bone arrowheads have come as yet from two ancient town sites only, i.e. from Starshee Kashirskoe and Setun'skoe.

Apart from Starshee Kashirskoe one-winged arrowheads of bone have been found at the ancient town sites of Kuznechiki, Scherbinskoe, Grafaskaia gora, Kruglitsa, Borschevo, and Mutenkovskoe.

It was probably under the influence of the Scythian bronze models that the three-edged arrowheads with flattened stems were made. Between the three-edged

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Fig. 1. a. Scythian or Sarmatian finds. b. Finds of imitations to Scythian or Sarmatian artefacts. c. Scythian sites on the Middle Don river. Gorodischa (ancient town sites): 1. Starshee Kashirskoe; 2. Scherbinskoe; 3. Kruglitsa; 4. Setun'skoe; 5. Borscheva; 6. Kuznechiki; 7. Grafaskaia gora; 8. Mutenkovskoe; 9. Troitskoe; 10. Seletskoe; 11. Toporok; 12. Sokolova gora; 13. D'iakovo; 14. Satinskoe.



part and the stem there are some barbs. In the Volga-Oka area such an arrowhead has come as yet only from the Troitskoe gorodische. Similar arrowheads are known from the sites of the Gorodets<sup>9</sup> and Anan'ino<sup>10</sup> cultures. According to A. V. Zbrueva they are imitations of the three-edged Scythian models from the 7th–3rd centuries B.C.<sup>11</sup>

The spear-shaped arrowheads with stems ending in a half-moon-shaped crown should also be considered within the range of arrowheads produced under the influence of metal specimens. They are imitations of the Scythian iron originals of the 4th–3rd<sup>12</sup> centuries B.C. and come from the Troitskoe, Scherbinskoe, Kuznec'hiki, Borschevo and Seletskoe ancient town sites. Apart from bone ones the sites of the Volga-Oka area have yielded some arrowheads of the same type made of iron. The latter samples were found at the Kuznec'hiki, Toporok and Seletskoe sites.

The same group of finds should also include the three-blade arrowhead from the Troitskoe gorodische. Similar finds are known from the Sarmatian complexes of the 4th–2nd centuries B.C.<sup>13</sup>

In speaking about arrowheads we should mention a baked lump of 12 arrowheads found in the lowest cultural level of the Troitskoe gorodische. Their shape is greatly distorted by corrosion. It was however possible to determine their similarity to the arrowheads from the sites of the Mid-Dnieper area. The composition of their metal differs distinctly from all other finds of the site and they have analogues on some Scythian sites. Proceeding from their shape and metal composition, Kh.I. Kris has drawn the conclusion that they should be seen as an evidence of ties with the population of the Middle Dnieper in the 4th–3rd centuries B.C.<sup>14</sup> We cannot but agree with this conclusion.

The southern influence can no doubt be traced also in iron and bone buckles of certain types among which there are clasps made of wire of round cross-section with spiral ends lying on the same plane with the ring. Similar clasps are encountered on Scythian sites. They were repeatedly found in the Kamennoe gorodische on the Dnieper where they were dated back to the 4th–3rd centuries B.C.<sup>15</sup> The finds from Chastie Kurgani (I and II) were dated by S. N. Zamiatnin as belonging to the second half of the 4th – early half of the 3rd century B.C.<sup>16</sup> A similar buckle found in burial 40 of burial mound 8 at Kalinovka was dated by V. P. Shilov to the 4th–2nd century B.C.<sup>17</sup> In the Volga-Oka area such buckles were discovered at the ancient town sites of Troitskoe, Scherbinskoe and Sokolovaia gora. In the opinion of all researchers, the Sarmatian influence is present in the bone buckles with a single hole and a fixed tongue. The largest series of seven complete buckles and some fragments comes from the Troitskoe gorodische. One more fragment was found at the Starshee Kashirskoe gorodische and another one in Mutenkovskoe. Similar buckles are known from other sites of the forest zone outside the Volga-Oka area, i.e. from the Chaplinskoe gorodische and from the gorodische at the Deshevka village (on the upper reaches of the Oka river). Studies date these buckles by analogues found on Sarmatian sites. Indeed, buckles of a similar scheme with one hole and a fixed tongue are widespread there, the only difference compared to those of the forest zone sites being that they are made mostly of bronze or iron<sup>18</sup>. A buckle of horn with one hole and fixed tongue was found in (female) grave 12 of mound 11 near Usatovo village. I. V. Sinitsin dated that grave to the 3rd–1st century B.C.<sup>19</sup> and M. G. Moshkova later specified the date having narrowed it to the 3rd–2nd century B.C.<sup>20</sup>

Among the ornaments, we should point out the bronze pin with a biconic head from the Starshee Kashirskoe gorodische. The nearest place where such pins were discovered is the Satinskoe gorodische in the Tula Oblast where they were found

together with some Scythian objects and dated by S. A. Iziumova to the 4th-first half of the 5th century B.C.<sup>21</sup>

We shall also mention here some finds of Scythian-type earrings which have a conic-shaped shield with a stem soldered on its back side for a loop. The Volga-Oka area has yielded such earrings only twice – once from Sherbinskoe and once from Borschevo<sup>22</sup>. A similar object was found at the ancient town site of Satinskoe<sup>23</sup>. In the case of Scythian sites such ornaments are dated to the 6th, 6th–5th, and 6th–3rd centuries B.C.<sup>24</sup>

A specifically prominent place in the study of the ties that existed between the ancient population of the Volga-Oka area and the world of the Scythians and Sarmatians is occupied by the animal style objects. The earliest bone images of animals were discovered during the excavation of the D'iakovo site and were mentioned by V. I. Sizov, but due attention was paid to them only much later by V. A. Gorodtsov. In his description of the materials from Starshee Kashirskoe he made note of a unique nature of a figurine-type handle. He wrote that 'only the most characteristic upper part (of the handle) has survived which is cut in the shape of a beast of prey's head, probably, of a bear whose eyes are represented by iron nails driven in. The head is modelled schematically but, on the whole, rather well'<sup>26</sup>. This find attracted the attention of many researchers. On the strength of the interpretation of its ears and of its general design A. P. Smirnov saw this object as a result of the influence the Scythian animal style had on the arts of the people of the forest zone<sup>27</sup>. Having analyzed the image, V. I. Guliaev arrived at the conclusion that the influence was not Scythian but that of the Kama-Urals animal style where the bear image had been very popular. He also noted that the interpretation of animal eyes with the help of metal pieces is a device unknown as yet either in Scythian or in Kama-Urals art. On the basis of analogies V. I. Guliaev has dated the handle to the 5th century B.C.<sup>28</sup> I. G. Rozenfeldt has paid attention to the structural features of the handle which had a through longitudinal slot to fix a blade and a hole for its riveting. On these grounds, she considers the object as either an imitation of some Scythian samples or as an item of import. In her opinion the animal depicted is a bear<sup>29</sup>. I. G. Rozenfeldt's conclusion is undoubtedly correct, for handles similar in design are known from the Scythian sites<sup>30</sup> and unknown in the forest zone. Kh.I. Kris assumes that the handle represents a wolf's head<sup>31</sup>. In conclusion we should note that despite the assumed extent of influence, the handle was made on the Oka River as evidenced by animal's eyes of iron nails – a device completely unknown in Scythian art.

Two items of the animal style were found at the Borscheva site: a bone sheath for a spearhead made in the shape of a crawling beast and a quiver hook. Having studied the sheath, Kh.I. Kris has concluded that it was made in the Middle Don river region and must be dated to the 4th–3rd century B.C. She holds that both the sheath and the quiver hook testify to the ties of the inhabitants of the D'iakovo ancient town sites with the Scythian population of the Middle Don<sup>32</sup>. We cannot but agree with this conclusion.

The point of bone found on the D'iakov site depicting, probably, a pig, is connected by Kh.I. Kris with the Sauromatian influence<sup>33</sup>.

Kh.I. Kris' conclusion about the ties of the inhabitants of the D'iakovo sites with the Scythian population of the Middle Don in the 5th–3rd century B.C. is well founded<sup>34</sup>.

To summarize the subject of ties between the population of the Volga-Oka area with the Scythian and Sarmatian world, we should mention one more site situated on the Upa river south of the area. This is the Satinskoe gorodische that was studied by

S. A. Iziyova<sup>35</sup>. The excavations undertaken there have produced 83 bronze items, some of them with analogies in the Scythian sites of the 6th–3rd centuries B.C.<sup>36</sup> Worth mentioning among them are two-blade arrowheads with a barb on the bush and three-bladed ones, and also pins with biconic heads, which are found on the Scythian sites of the 6th, 6th–5th, and 6th–3rd centuries B.C.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, the material considered warrants the conclusion that during the period from the 7th–6th centuries and to the 3rd–2nd centuries B.C. the population of the Volga-Oka area had close contacts with its southern neighbours who lived on the steppes and forest-steppes. The major role was probably played by the inhabitants of the Middle Don area. Among the items that could, among other things, be objects of trade we should name metal (bronze and iron) items and decorations. They were brought by the steppe inhabitants to the forest zone and exchanged there for furs. This period of life of the forest inhabitants ends in the 3rd–2nd century B.C. The ties with the southern neighbours were quite lively as sufficient excavations of settlements with early cultural layers show either Scythian objects or their imitations. The inhabitants of the forests were not isolated or cut off from other peoples.

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- 3 К. Ф. Смирнов. Савроматы. М., 1964, с. 308, 331.
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- 5 Городцов. *Op. cit.*, s. 25.
- 6 Городцов. *Op. cit.*, s. 23, 25.
- 7 А. И. Мелюкова. Вооружение скифов. — САИ, Д1-4, 1964, с. 18.
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- 12 Мелюкова. *Op. cit.*, т. 9.
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- 22 Х. И. Крис, И. Л. Чернай. Городища Дьякова типа Боршева и Селецкое. КСИА, 162, с. 78.
- 23 Изюмова. *Op. cit.*, s. 122, 126.
- 24 В. Г. Петренко. Украшения Скифии VII—III вв. до н. э. — САИ, Д4-5, 1978, с. 15.
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- <sup>30</sup> П. Д. Либеров. Памятники скифского времени на Среднем Дону. — САИ, Д1-31, 1965, с. 71, т. 16.
- <sup>31</sup> Х. И. Крис. Предметы звериного стиля из дьяковских городищ. СА, 1981, № 1, с. 177.
- <sup>32</sup> Крис. *Op. cit.*, s. 175.
- <sup>33</sup> Крис. *Op. cit.*, s. 187.
- <sup>34</sup> Крис. *Op. cit.*, s. 180.
- <sup>35</sup> Изюмова. *Op. cit.*, s. 122.
- <sup>36</sup> Изюмова. *Op. cit.*, s. 128.
- <sup>37</sup> Петренко. 1978. *op. cit.*, s. 15.

#### List of abbreviations

ИГАИМК	— Известия государственной академии истории материальной культуры
САИ	— свод археологических источников
СА	— Советская археология
МИА	— материалы и исследования по археологии СССР
КСИА	— Краткие сообщения Института археологии
СГУ	— Саратовский государственный университет
АС	— Археологический съезд