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THE PARADE HATCHET-*KLEVETS* FROM OLD NISA (A CONTRIBUTION TO THE STUDY OF THE COMBAT HATCHETS AND THEIR CULT IN ANCIENT CENTRAL EURASIA)[1]

Keywords: Parthia, Old Nisa, picks-*klevetses*, combat hatchet worship, Central Eurasia, Sakas, Indo-Sakas, Yüeh-chih/Tochari, Kushans, Mithradates II of Parthia

In 1946–1967, a Soviet archaeological team under the title of the Southern Turkmenistan Archaeological Complex Expedition (IuTAKE) conducted regular excavations at the Parthian fortified site known nowadays as Old Nisa which is located near Ashkhabad in Southern Turkmenistan (ancient Northern Parthyena). One of the participants of the first four seasons of work there (1946–1949) was Vadim Mikhailovich Masson (1929–2010), then a very young man,[2] who eventually became an outstanding world-famous archaeologist. Subsequently, in 1982–1986, he returned to Old Nisa as the head of field explorations that were

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[2] See Masson V. 2009; Pilipko 2001, 415.

carried out by a joint expedition composed of specialists from the Leningrad Branch of the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR and from the IuTAKE. Being his post-graduate student who began archaeological activities in western Central Asia[3] at Old Nisa (in 1984) and defended under his supervision a PhD thesis entitled *Armament and Warfare in Parthia* (in 1988), I devote this article to the memory of Academician V.M. Masson, and would like to express my deep gratitude for the knowledge which he imparted to me concerning the remote history of Central Asia and Iran.

In the course of the excavations at Old Nisa it was established that the fortress that bore in ancient times the name "Fortress of Mithradates" (Parth. Mithradatkirt) had been constructed no later than in the first half of the 2nd century BC and was in existence as a dynastic cultic centre of the Arsacids until the 1st century AD[4] (Fig. 1, *1*). As a result of the IuTAKE excavations, researchers have gathered significant data which sheds light on various aspects of the history and culture of Parthia. In particular, several interesting buildings were revealed, one of which is the so-called "Big Square House" (BSH) situated within the northern complex of the site[5] (Fig. 1, *2*). It contained works of art and household articles and so was most plausibly something like a treasure-house, the finds from which were, for the most part at least, either trophies brought there as a consequence of the Parthian kings' victorious military campaigns or diplomatic gifts.

[3] In the present article I use two broad geographical designations – "Central Asia" and "Central Eurasia". As regards the former, I follow its definition of P.B. Golden who considers it to be composed of the two main areas, viz. western and eastern. Here is exactly what he writes on this matter, proceeding from the current realities: "Today, western Central Asia, overwhelmingly Muslim, consists of the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union: Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, historically called «Western Turkestan»… Muslim Central Asia also includes Xinjiang (also called «Eastern Turkestan») in China, with its indigenous Uighur and other Turko-Muslim populations. Today, much of the region between the Amu Darya River and Xinjiang, once largely Iranian-speaking, is Turkic in language, a linguistic shift that has been in progress for 1500 years, creating a «Turko-Persian» cultural world. Southward, Afghanistan, tied to its northern neighbors by ethnicity and language, is a microcosm of this mix. Eastern Central Asia, largely Buddhist, comprises Mongolia, divided today into the Republic of Mongolia, the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region of China, and Manchuria. Tibet, linguistically distinct from Central Asia, has, at various times, played a critical role in Central Asian affairs" (Golden 2011, 1–2).

As for the second, wider, appellation, "Central Eurasia", I prefer to follow its definition proposed by the Center for Central Eurasian Studies at Seoul National University (South Korea): "Rather than «Central Asia» or «Inner Asia», we employ the broad term Central Eurasia, as it brings the East European steppes together with their Asian counterparts. Despite the diversity in languages and modern divisions caused by state boundaries, there is an urgent need to focus on the intensive interconnections within this area in terms of history, geography, and culture… Thus «Central Eurasia» encompasses most of the inland areas of the continent from Manchuria to Turkey, including the northern frontier zones of China, Mongolia, the former Soviet republics, Southern Siberia, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Ukraine, and Eastern Europe" (see at: http://cces.snu.ac.kr/eng/sub3/sub3_2_1.html).

[4] Pilipko 2001.

[5] Pilipko 2001, 145–163, 313–333.

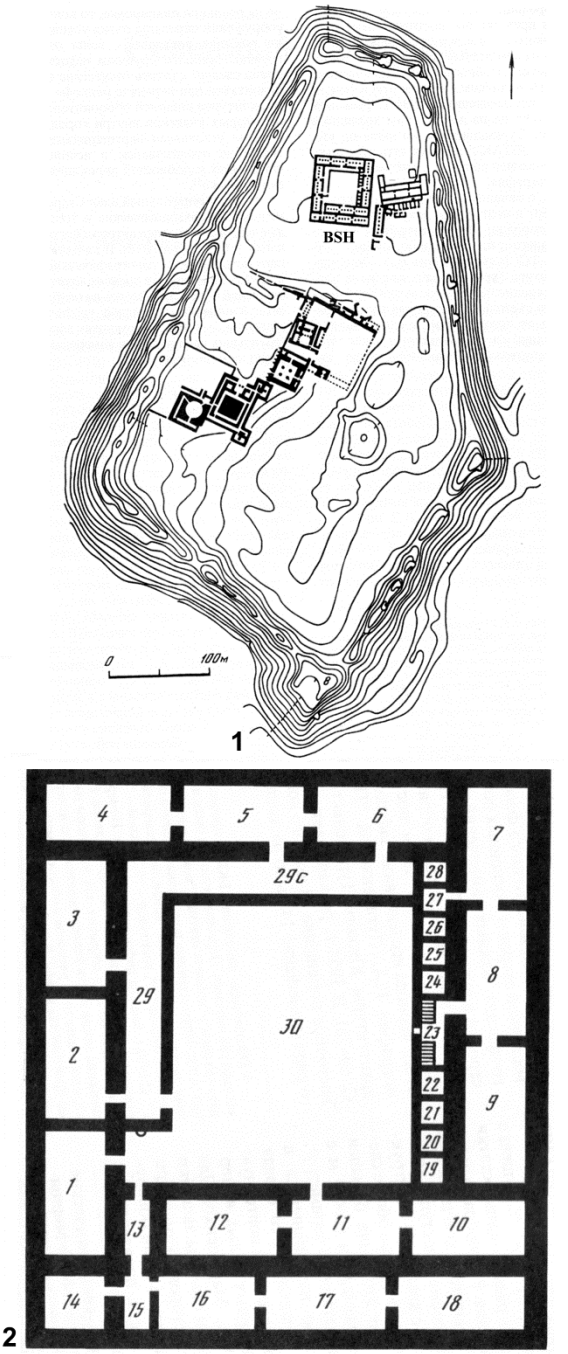

Figure 1. Old Nisa: *1* – map of the site (BSH = Big Square House/"Treasure-house"); *2* – plan of BSH with a numeration of rooms (not to scale) [after Pilipko 2001].

Figure 2. *1–3* – Parade pick-*klevets* from the room 1 of the "Treasure-house" (not to scale) [*1* – photo received by courtesy of Alexander B. Nikitin; *2, 3* – after Koshelenko 1977].

Among them, of special interest is the socketed hatchet made of partially gilt silver, which was discovered in the room 1 in 1950[6] (Fig. 2, *1–3*). Being probably composed of several different elements, it has the following dimensions: the total length of the percussive part (warhead) is 25 cm, including 3.5 cm of the butt; the cylindrical socket (with an outer diameter of 1.4 cm) and the pommel are together 11 cm long. The flat blade provided with two points is given a fanciful curved shape, it being embellished from below with a curlicue in the form of two crescents and an eight-petal rosette; two more, but six-petal, rosettes are welded to the blade (one to each side) nearer to the socket. The butt is straight and rectangular in cross-section, its end is in the form of a truncated profiled pyramid. Similarly executed is the beginning component of the blade, between which and the six-petal rosettes there is the well visible seam that may have appeared owing to a breakage of the weapon in this very spot and its subsequent repair. The socket portion below the warhead has something resembling an incrustation adornment and small protrusions triangular in cross-section (designed as means of suspension from a waist-belt?). The socket is crowned with the pommel formed as a horizontal disc combined with a vertical cupola-like knob.[7]

This find belongs to the general class of combat hatchets – hafted bladed weapons of percussion action consisting of two kinds different from each other by their blade shapes: 1) properly battleaxes with flat blades broadening from shafts; 2) picks with narrow pointed blades of various cross-sections. Inside of this class the Nisean hatchet is to be placed in the latter kind, a whole construction of which included two parts. The first one presented a bipartite warhead (*boevaia chast'*/*boëk* in Russian) produced of bronze or iron in the form of a straight or curved pointed blade (*klinok*) and a shorter, variously shaped, butt/hammer (*obukh*) (Fig. 3, *4–8, 13–33*). As a rule, warheads of battle-size picks, including their butts, were 18 to 30 cm long on average.[8] The second part was a wooden shaft (*rukoiat'*/*toporishche*), 60–80 cm in length, on which the warhead was hafted through a shaft-hole (*proukh*) broken through it or a metal socket (*vtulka*)[9] fixed to it, both with an inner diameter of 2–4 cm.

[6] Masson M. 1955a, 212–213; Pilipko 2001, 163; 2006, 271.

[7] The fullest description and comprehensive analysis of this object is given in Invernizzi 1999, 129–135, tav. H, *a*, *b*. See also Koshelenko 1977, 122, ils. 52, 53; Pilipko/Koshelenko 1985, 220, pl. LXXVIII, *B*; Pilipko 2001, 318, fig. 227; 2006, 263–264, 270–271, figs. 11, 12, *1*; Nikonorov 1997, vol. 2, 10–11, fig. 25, *c*.

[8] All the average dimensions of picks, viz. lengths of warheads and shafts as well as diameters of shaft-holes and sockets, are adduced on the basis of the published archaeological data (see n. 16 below). The picks whose warheads were less than 18 cm long may be considered as votive models, not weapons (see Kocheev 1988, 147).

[9] Some scholars have urged to avoid the term *proukh* and replace it by the one *vtulka*, see Korenevskii 1974, 14; Kuz'minykh 1983, 135. Such an idea seems to be not so fruitful because these words quite clearly designate two methods of shaft-hafting.

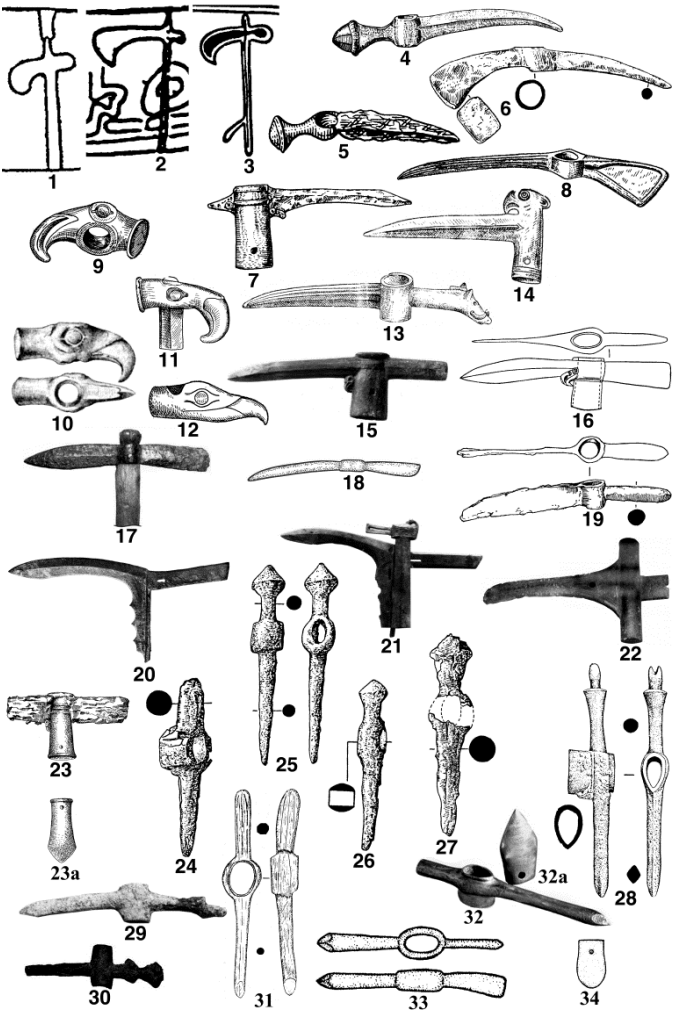

Figure 3 (not to scale). *1–3* – pictures of hatchets from the Northern Caucasian area [after Ol'khovskii 2005]; *4–7* – *klevetses* from the Northern Caucasus [after Kozenkova 1995]; *8* – *klevets* from the Taman' Peninsula [after Meliukova 1964]; *9–12* – miniature scepter-heads from the Northern Pontic area [after Il'inskaia 1965 (*9, 11, 12*) and Iatsenko 1959 (*10*)]; *13–15* – *klevetses* from the Volga-Kama region [after Zbrueva 1952 (*13, 14*) and Nefëdov 1899 (*15*)]; *16* – *klevets* from the Minusinsk Territory [after Chlenova 1967]; *17* – *klevets* from the Russian Altai [after Solov'ëv 2003]; *18* – miniature *klevets* from the Middle Yenisei region [after Khudiakov (forthcoming)]; *19* – *klevets* from Deve Hüyük [after Moorey 1975]; *20–22* – Chinese *klevetses* (*ge*) [after Loehr 1956 (*20*) and Peers 1995 (*21, 22*)]; *23–23a* – pick and its capping from the Lower Syr Darya region [after Vishnevskaia 1973]; *24–27* – *chekans* from the Eastern Pamir [after Litvinskii 2001b]; *28* – *chekan* from Persepolis (Southern Iran) [after Schmidt 1957]; *29* – *chekan* from Gilan (Northern Iran) [after Potts 2012]; *30* – miniature *chekan* from Hotan [after Stein 1928]; *31* – *chekan* from the Russian Altai [after Kocheev 1999]; *32–32a* – chekan and its capping from the Kazakh Altai [after Samashev/Ermolaeva/Kushch 2008]; *33, 34* – *chekan* and capping from Mongolia [after Khudiakov/Erdene-Ochir 2011].

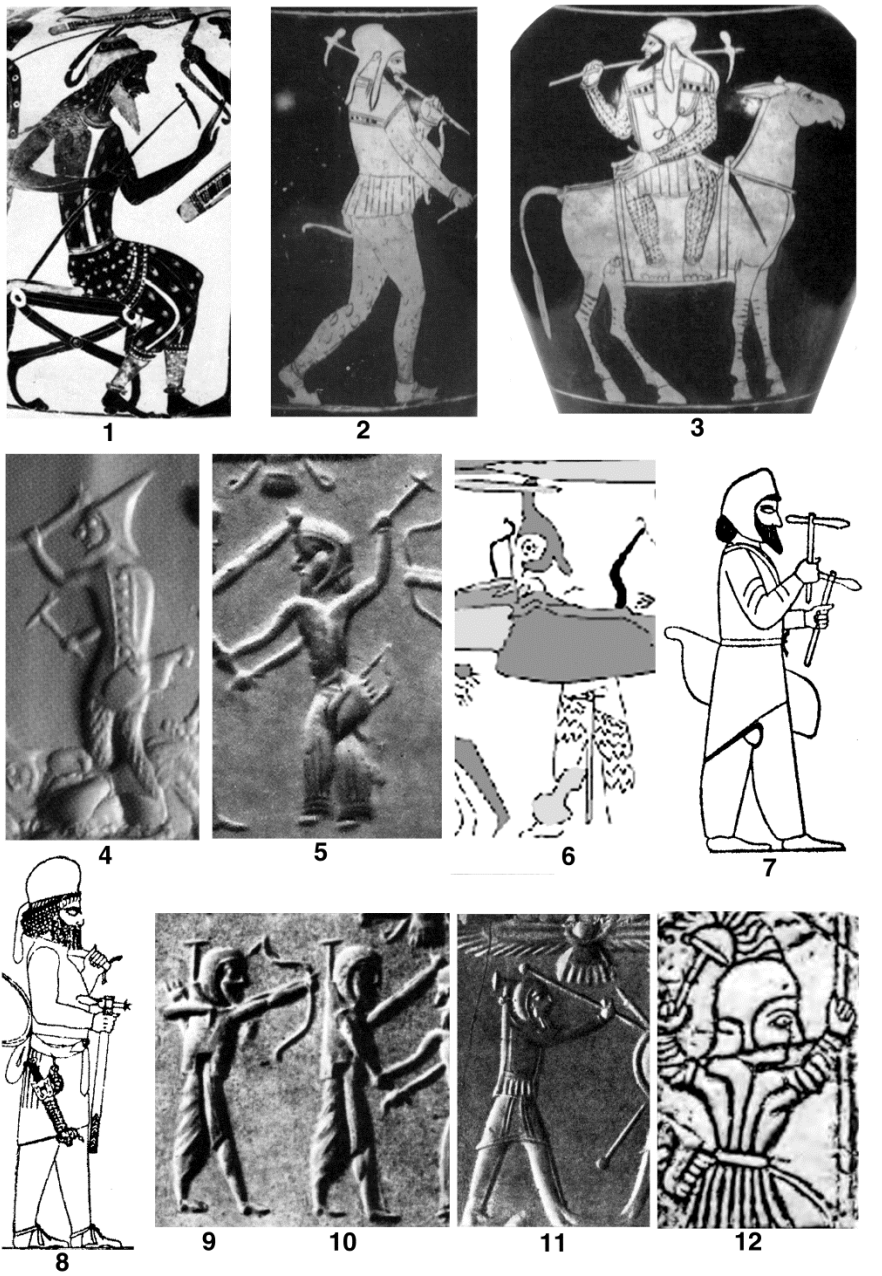

Figure 4. *1* – Attic black-figure amphora [after Ivantchik 2006]; *2, 3* – Attic red-figure *oinochoe* [after Sekunda 1992]; *4, 5* – Achaemenid seals [after Summerer 2007]; *6* – painted beam from Phrygia [after Summerer 2007]; *7, 8* – reliefs at Persepolis [after Trümpelmann 1990]; *9–11* – Achaemenid seals [after Nikulina 1994, ills. 537, 539]; *12* – gold plaque from the Treasure of the Oxus [after Dalton 1905].

The shaft's lower end was often, but not necessarily always, provided with a metal capping (*vtok*) intended for strengthening the shaft from cracking) (Fig. 3, *23a, 32a, 34*). Blows could be delivered both by the blade and by the butt: the latter had a variously shaped end (blunt, roundish, cone-like, bifurcated) fitting to stun and contuse like a hammer and mace (another function of the butt was that of counter-weight to strengthen a blow by the blade). The narrow pointed blades of picks were designed to make accented penetrative stabs over a small area. Owing to that these arms had proved to be efficient and comfortable for hand-to-hand combat combining their high capacity to pierce through protective equipment with their small dimensions and weight so as to be wielded by one hand. And what is more, taking into account their relatively short shafts, they were well appropriate for mounted warfare – the primary style of combat in the midst of the ancient Eurasian nomads.[10] Both archaeological[11] and pictorial[12] (Fig. 4, *6*, 8, *1*; cf. 8, *4*) materials are indicative of the fact that picks were worn suspended from the waist-belt through a special single strap.

M.P. Griaznov, the prominent Russian expert in Siberian archaeology, has long ago proposed to make a distinction between two varieties within the kind of picks – *chekans* and *klevetses*. According to his definition, "the *chekan* is a weapon with a straight blade, the *klevets* – with a curved, beak-like, one".[13] De-

[10] On the other hand, for foot soldiers the length of picks could even reach about 100 cm to make their fighting against horsemen easier (Khudiakov/Erdene-Ochir 2011, 133).

[11] Kocheev 1988, 151, fig. 5, *2*; Khudiakov/Erdene-Ochir 2011, 134.

[12] Schmidt 1953, 119, pls. 80–81/no. 22; Summerer 2007, 19, 20, figs. I–II and VII. Such a method of suspending picks is evidenced by both the real and iconographic data for the ancient nomads of Central Eurasia. Persian soldiers of the Achaemenid era were represented keeping their picks in special sheaths carried behind the back (Nikulina 1994, ills. 536, 537, 539; Head 1992, figs. 14, 32, *h*; Summerer 2007, fig. 3; Bittner 1987, Taf. 15, *3*) (Fig. 4, *9–11*), albeit the nomadic method could be used by some of them too.

[13] Griaznov 1956, 39. See also the usage of the term *klevets* in some Russian-language publications dealing with the medieval weaponry, where, in particular, it is thought to denote the war hammer whose "one end… was normally forged with a spike of different length to pierce mail armour, sometimes being somewhat bent downwards like a bird's beak" (Lents 1908, 49). Similar explanations are in Kulinskii 2007, 20: the *klevets* is "a percussion-action weapon, the warhead of which consists both of a beak-like spike… and of a small hammer… or axe"; Shokarev 2008, 72: it is "a percussion-action weapon provided with a short shaft, the faceted and narrow blade of which bears a resemblance to a bird's beak"; Iugrinov 2010, 30: "Under the definition «klevets» we will understand the arm of shock-crushing type on the handle, whose warhead consisting of a beak-like blade and sometimes a butt". Cf. Astvatsaturian 2002, 188: "One end [of the Turkish pick-*djokan*] was forged in the form of a pointed tetrahedral wedge, somewhat bent down; … the end resembles a bird's beak, and so in Russia this weapon was called *klevets*". If one turns to the works in other European languages, which have treated the European and Asian armament of Late Medieval and Early Modern times, the hatchet more or less similar to the *klevets*-type arms is generally named there in English "war hammer" (Demmin 1911, 437/nos. 8–10, 13; Laking 1920, 87–89, figs. 871–873; 1921, 331–332, fig. 1396; Stone 1934, 278–279, figs. 348, 349; Oakeshott 2000, 70–71, figs. 17, 18; Waldman 2005, 161–163,

spite some objections raised,[14] I prefer to follow this definition, especially as in Russian the noun *klevets* traces back to the verb *klevat'*, i.e. "to beat with a beak (*kliuv*)", the last word meaning in the Russian dialects both the beak proper and point (*ostrië*).[15] The military term *klevets* implies exactly a more or less downwards curved blade resembling the beak of a bird of prey, which allows it to easily rend and tear its catch. It is the definition proposed by Griaznov that overcomes the terminological confusion still existing in the Russian-language literature devoted to the striking-action weaponry, where the terms *chekan* and *klevets* are either used as synonyms or entirely mixed up. Thus, proceeding from this definition, the hatchet from Old Nisa must be regarded as a *klevets.*

It should be pointed out as well that some part of the *klevetses* known today, including the Nisean one, had their blades flattened, one- or two-edged, in cross-section (Fig. 3, *4, 5, 7, 14, 16, 17, 19–22*). In terms of their fighting functionality these arms differ from both the *klevetses* with non-flattened blades (Fig. 3, *6, 8, 13, 15, 18*) and the *chekans* whose blades were mostly faceted or round (Fig. 3, *24–33*) and only sometimes flattened (Fig. 3, *23*). If the former could simultaneously thrust and cut, the latter could solely thrust.

Among the peoples of Central Eurasia the picks were in use mostly during the Scythian epoch (8th – 3rd centuries BC).[16] In some lands this kind of weaponry remained in use much later – for instance, in Southern Siberia until the 1st century BC at least[17] and in Central Asia even until the early 1st millennium AD.

figs. 132, 133; DeVries/Smith 2007, 188–189, 285) and – more specifically, repeating in fact the Persian term *zaghnol* to signify the hatchet-*klevets*, – "crowbill/crow's beak" (Egerton 1880, 23, 115, pls. I, *33*, X, *471*; Irvine 1903, 80; Elgood 2004, 267/s.v. Zāghnal/zāghnol; Paul 2006, 97–99; Pant 1989, 95–97 [*jaghnol*]); in French "marteau à bec" (Egorov/Titov 2010, 156–157, fig. 61, *3*); in German "Streithammer/Fausthammer/Reiterhammer" (Boeheim 1890, 363–367, Figs. 431–433). In Polish this weapon is called "nadziak", it being especially remarkable that the noted Polish historian and memorialist, Jędrzej Kitowicz (1727/8–1804), subdivided the hatchets that were habitually carried by members of the Polish noble class (*szlachta*) into three kinds, in accordance with their blade forms: *nadziak* (with a beak-like one), *czekan* (with a small axe-like one) and *obuch* (with a bagel-like one, but it was also a common term for all the three kinds) (Kitowicz 1883, 112–113). In Turkish the *klevets*-type pick is termed *djokan* (Astvatsaturian 2002, 188, 334/s.v. *chekan*).

[14] Kuz'minykh 1983, 135.

[15] Dal' 1905, 287; Chernykh 1999, 399–400.

[16] See, e.g. Zbrueva 1952, 104–107; Illins'ka 1961, 34–36; Meliukova 1964, 67–68; Chlenova 1967, 25–39; Martynov 1979, 49–52; Kuz'minykh 1983, 135–143; Litvinskii 1984, 46–48; 2001b, 418–424; s.a.; Kocheev 1988; Novgorodova 1989, 192, 193, 263, 268, 273–275, 278, 285, 297, 298, 301, 305, 316, 323, 330, 335–339; Kurochkin/Subbotin 1992; Nikonorov 1992; Gorelik 1993, 53–57; Kozenkova 1995, 75–76; Khudiakov/Erdene-Ochir 2011, 109, 131–134; Potts 2012.

[17] True, in the Middle Yenisei steppe area and the Altai their finds from burials of that period are met, with rare exceptions, in the form of small votive objects made of bronze and wood (Pshenitsyna 1992, 231, pl. 93, *57*; Kocheev 1999, 75; Gorbunov/Tishkin 2006, 83, figs. 7, *1*; 8), and so they were designed for rituals, not for warfare. And although there is an opinion based on experimental investi-

However, by then, the picks almost completely lost their fighting significance and played mainly the role of ceremonial objects, including that of symbols of power (see below).

In light of the available archaeological evidence the picks uncovered in Central Eurasia are overwhelmingly straight-bladed *chekans*, their finds numbering hundreds for sure. In full contrast to them, those of curve-bladed *klevetses* are very few: in addition to the Nisean hatchet, I have been able to search out data on no more than a dozen and a half of what may be termed *klevetses*, which were found within the territory under review. So, four *klevetses*, three shaft-holed and one socketed, belonging to the 7th/6th – 5th centuries BC came from sites of the Koban culture in the Northern Caucasus: one of bronze, provided with a two-edged blade and a faceted cone-shaped butt, from the Eshkakon gorge[18] (Fig. 3, *4*); another hatchet, similar in design to the aforementioned, with two-edged blade and roundish butt made supposedly of iron and bronze respectively, has been poorly published, including no information about its definite provenance[19] (Fig. 3, *5*); one more iron *klevets*, with a beak-shaped blade round in cross-section and a long massive butt, from Tomb VIII of the Karras burial ground[20] (Fig. 3, *6*); a bi-metallic weapon, with an iron two-edged blade and a short pointed bronze butt, from the Perkal'skii burial ground near Pyatigorsk[21] (Fig. 3, *7*). By the way, noteworthy is the fact that something showing a superficial resemblance to *klevetses* can be seen in the figures of hatchets on three of the so-called "deer stones" that had been erected within the same, Northern Caucasian, area in the 8th – 7th centuries BC, viz. on the steles from Kyzburun, the stanitsa of Ust'-Labinskaya and the khutor of Zubovskii (Fig. 3, *1–3*, 8, *1–3*). True, there are certain doubts that they all (or some of them) are the earliest representations of genuine *klevetses* because of both their very schematic outlines executed by ancient artists and some divergences of principle in their reproductions given in various scholarly publications.[22] As already supposed, the pictures of these arms could copy some of the battleaxes manufactured by the bearers of the Koban culture.[23]

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gations that lessened metallic versions of battle-size picks were able to seriously harm a human or animal (see Martynov 1979, 51–52), their serious militant use looks more than doubtful.

[18] Kozenkova 1995, 75, 76/tabl. 22, no. 8, pl. XX, *6*.

[19] Kozenkova 1989, 262, pl. 101/B, *9*.

[20] Kozenkova 1995, 75, 76/tabl. 22, no. 4, pl. XX, *7*.

[21] Kozenkova 1995, 75, 76/tabl. 22, no. 6, pl. XX, *4*.

[22] See on these deer stones in general and on the hatchets pictured on them in particular, as well as compare their depictions in Chlenova 1984, 8–17, 24, figs. 1, 2, *b*, 3, 4, *v*, 5, *2*, 8, *1–3*; Ol'khovskii 1990, figs. 1, *1*, 2, 3, *8*; 2005, 31–35, ills. 18–22, 33, *1*, 35, *8*; Savinov 1994, 51–53, 111, pl. X, *1–3*; Erlikh 2005, 154, 155, fig. 6.

[23] Chlenova 1984, 24; Savinov 1994, 111. But cf. Ol'khovskii 2005, 61, where such an identification is contested with respect to the hatchets on the Ust'-Labinskaya and Zubovskii steles.

Let us turn now to the real finds of *klevetses* from other regions of Central Eurasia. A bronze shaft-holed pick of this kind, with a grooved blade, was excavated in a grave placed ca. 600 BC near the modern Tsukur Liman on the Taman' Peninsula[24] (Fig. 3, *8*). Besides that, in the Northern Black Sea area a unique group of four miniature bronze heads was found, three shaft-holed and one socketed, produced in the 6th – 4th centuries BC and shaped into birds' heads with curved beaks[25] (Fig. 3, *9–12*). They have correctly been interpreted as ritual wands/scepters owned by high-ranking dignitaries of the Pontic Scythian society. Their pictorial analogy in the form of a long shaft hafted on with a beak-like head is held by an old man who seems to be Scythian by his appearance and garments, portrayed on an Attic black-figure amphora of ca. 500 BC kept in Florence[26] (Fig. 4, *1*). Irrespective of what role this personage plays in the depicted scene, he had obviously been imaged by a Greek painter in the guise of a grandee among the Scythians. In this connection, one must recollect πολλοί σκηπτοῦχοι ("many scepter-bearers") mentioned in the late 3rd century BC decree in honour of Protogenes from Olbia (IOSPE, I^2, no. 32/A, l. 42), who were probably the clan elders of the Saii nomadic people, in all likelihood Sarmatian by origin, led by the king Saitapharnes, as well as *sceptuchi* (i.e. a Latinized form of the above Greek word) – the rulers of the Sarmatians, so termed by the Roman historian Tacitus when describing the events of the year AD 35 in Transcaucasia (*Ann*. 6.33.2). However, by their designs the aforesaid Scythian wands differ from the known Sarmatian scepters (on the latter see below). The former were apparently intended solely for prestigious purposes, and, what is more, their origin was hardly bound up with any real, battle-size, "bird-headed" *klevetses* of the same period, especially as such arms have not been revealed yet not only in the Northern Black Sea area, but also anywhere else. In other words, these scepters cannot be attributed to any intentionally reduced *klevets*-like weaponry. Most likely, they go back to the "bird-headed" hatchets-verges which, according to the available archaeological data, had appeared in South-Eastern Europe during the Late Bronze Age and existed, at least in Middle Europe and the Northern Caucasus, until the early Scythian era.[27] Therefore, the attribution of the group of the Scythian miniature "bird-headed" scepters to the *klevets* kind appears rather conditional.

No less than five socketed *klevetses*, four made of bronze and one of iron, were uncovered at sites of the Ananyino culture in the Volga-Kama region. As a

[24] Prushevskaia 1917, 53–56, fig. 11; llins'ka 1961, 35, fig. 5, *6*; Meliukova 1964, 68, pl. 21, *2*; Vakhtina 1993, 52–53, fig. 1, *1*.

[25] Il'inskaia 1965, 208–211, fig. 3, *4–7*; Illins'ka 1961, 43–47, fig. 11, *5–7*; Meliukova 1964, 68, pl. 21, *27, 28*; Iatsenko 1959, 43, 63, pl. III, *3*.

[26] Lissarrague 1990, 112, fig. 63, cat. A 69; Ivantchik 2006, 227–230, fig. 11.

[27] See on them Il'inskaia 1965, 206–208; Erlikh 1990; 2005.

whole they have to be dated to the late 6th – 5th centuries BC.[28] A list of the bronze picks is as follows: one brought to light near the town of Yelabuga in Tatarstan – with a faceted blade and a butt shaped into a boar's head[29] (Fig. 3, *13*); one reported to have been found somewhere in the Urals – with a two-edged blade, it being quite unique among the other *klevetses* because it does not have any butt and its socket's top is formed like an eagle's head[30] (Fig. 3, *14*); one of unknown provenance kept in the Perm Regional Museum – with a two-edged blade;[31] one from the burial ground of Relka in P'ianyi Bor (Tatarstan) – with a faceted blade[32] (Fig. 3, *15*). The iron *klevets* whose blade is round in cross-section was discovered near the site of Kara-Abyz in Bashkiria.[33]

It is important to note here that the chronology of another *klevets*, with a bimetallic warhead, from the same region (it came from the village of Tayaba in Chuvashia), which was primarily established within the limits of the early Ananyino culture,[34] should be now revised, on the basis of analyzing its production technology, ornamentation and metal composition, in favour of a serious redating – perhaps, even up to the Middle Ages.[35]

Two iron *klevetses* were revealed in Southern Siberia, both dated to the 4th century BC. They have slightly curved dagger-shaped blades and oblong butts. One of them, socketed, is said to have been found somewhere in the Minusinsk Territory and seems to belong to the Tagar culture[36] (Fig. 3, *16*). The other, shaft-holed, was excavated in a Pazyryk-culture grave of the Tashanta-1 burial ground in the Mountainous Altai[37] (Fig. 3, *17*). One more Southern Siberian curve-bladed pick, shaft-holed, its blade being round in cross-section, produced of bronze as a small votive copy of a battle-size weapon was uncovered in a burial of the 2nd or 1st century BC in the Middle Yenisei steppe area[38] (Fig. 3, *18*).

To the *klevets* group of picks must be attributed as well an iron shaft-holed hatchet provided with a flat blade from Deve Hüyük in Northern Syria[39] (Fig. 3, *19*). Going back stratigraphically to the 5th century BC, it seems to have

[28] Kuz'minykh 1983, 138.

[29] Zbrueva 1952, 107, pl. XXII, *3*; Kuz'minykh 1983, 141, fig. 75/KCh-24, pl. LVI, *14*.

[30] Zbrueva 1952, 107, pl. XXII, *9*; Kuz'minykh 1983, 142, fig. 75/KCh-28.

[31] Kuz'minykh 1983, 139, fig. 75/KCh-4, pl. LVI, *2* (but note that its figure representation and text description differ from its plate representation, where it is shown as straight-bladed).

[32] Nefëdov 1899, 51, 62, pl. 14, *1*; Zbrueva 1952, 106, pl. XXII, *5*; Kuz'minykh 1983, 140, fig. 75/KCh-16, pl. LVI, *1*.

[33] Akhmerov 1959, 159, fig. 5, *b*; Kuz'minykh 1983, 140–141, fig. 75/KCh-18, pl. LVI, *6*.

[34] Khalikov 1977, 179, fig. 68, *5*.

[35] Kuz'minykh 2003.

[36] Chlenova 1967, 37–38, 240, pl. 11, *20*.

[37] Solov'ëv 2003, 57, fig. 8.

[38] Khudiakov (forthcoming).

[39] Moorey 1975, 114, fig. 3, *7*; 1980, 67, fig. 10, *220*; Trümpelmann 1990, 84, Abb. 5; Head 1992, fig. 16, *f*.

been brought there together with a Persian occupation contingent. In this connection, of great interest are Persian warriors holding what may well be identified as picks-*klevetses*, who are depicted on Athenian red-figure pottery – a small wine-jug (*oinochoe*) dated to ca. 470 BC from the British Museum (Fig. 4, *2–3*) and an amphora made ca. 460 BC from the Berlin State Museums.[40] At the present moment, I do not know any earlier representations of *klevetses* in ancient art than these. According to P.R.S. Moorey's opinion, the Cimmerians and early Scythians from the Northern Pontic area were the first to bring such weapons to the Near East.[41] However that may be, the appearance and proliferation of picks (both *chekans* and *klevetses*) in the Persian martial equipment of the Achaemenid era was plausibly due to the impact of the Iranian-speaking nomads from Central Eurasia, viz. the Sakas and Massagetae (see below).

The above, not numerous, collection of the *klevetses* (it is, of course, hardly complete, but sufficiently representative all the same) testifies to the fact that this variety of picks was not, unlike the *chekans*, widespread in ancient Central Eurasia. Were the *klevetses*, the earliest specimens of which seem to have come into existence in the 7th century BC, products of the modification of the *chekans* invented before them, or did the former appear in the area under review from another source? The first supposition looks quite possible with respect to the *klevetses* whose blades were non-flattened in cross-section (Fig. 3, *6, 8, 13, 15, 18*) like those of the majority of *chekans*. The same can be said about the origin of the hatchets from Old Nisa and Deve Hüyük (Fig. 3, *19*), both having the flat blades, which I am inclined to bind up with the nomadic world of Central Asia (see below), where *chekans* with flat blades had already been used (Fig. 3, *23*) long before these arms were made.

The emergence of the *klevetses* with the two-edged, dagger-like, blades (Fig. 3, *4, 5, 7, 14, 16, 17*) could have been connected with China, where the use of picks with such blades was a very old tradition. Although the very idea of the dagger-like blades was seemingly borrowed in ancient China from the outside, in particular from Siberia and the Ordos,[42] it is the Chinese, to all appearances, who were the first to adapt them to a new kind of striking-action arms called *ge* (their denomination in modern literature is "dagger-axes"). These weapons produced overwhelmingly of bronze enabled thrusting and cutting blows. They had been invented as early as the Shang/Yin dynasty epoch (c. 1600–1046 BC.) and continued to be in use under the Zhou/Chou, Qin and Han

[40] The *oinochoe*: Sekunda 1992, 52; Curtis/Tallis 2005, 239, fig. 65; Miller 2011, 149, figs. 20–21; Wozniak 2011, 84; the amphora: Hansen/Wieczorek/Tellenbach 2009, 87, 292/Kat. Nr. 110. Cf. the left-hand Amazon (outfitted perhaps like a Persian) on a vessel of the second half of the 5th century BC from the Archaeological Museum in Munich (Wozniak 2011, 85).

[41] Moorey 1975, 114; 1980, 67; 1985, 27.

[42] Vasil'ev 1976, 271–273.

dynasties (i.e. up to the early 3rd century AD).[43] It is noteworthy that some of such arms, which are known at least for the periods of Zhou/Chou (c. 1046–256 BC) and Han (206 BC – AD 220), were provided with beak-shaped blades[44] (Fig. 3, *20–22*). It goes without saying that one can talk, then, about some influence exerted from China upon the blade forms of certain Central Eurasian *klevetses*. Nevertheless, it should be borne in mind that there were serious differences between them and the Chinese *ge* in methods of hafting their warheads on shafts (many of the former were hafted through a shaft-hole or socket, while the latter – through a tang) and of putting their tops and butts into shape. Besides, the Chinese dagger-axes were hafted not only on short, but also on long shafts, frequently in combination with a spearhead (*mao*) to form weapons termed *ji* that resembled halberds.[45] These long-shaft combined arms were suitable for infantrymen to fight against both chariots and cavalry, and those provided with curved blades could be used as well like gaffs to pull the enemies off their horses or vehicles to the ground.

Such are my preliminary conclusions concerning the origins of the Central Eurasian picks-*klevetses*. Doubtless, this problem deserves to be much more elaborated in the future on the basis of studying a wider corpus of various pieces of the available evidence.

It should be emphasized that among all the other *klevetses* referred to above the Nisean weapon occupies a particular place as the separate type at all, because of its unique two-pointed flat blade capable of delivering cutting blows with a concave edge formed between the two points. Such blows, similar to those by the sickle, could cause serious damage to the enemies' bodies and limbs, as well as to their armour. Surprisingly, this unique object discovered more than 60 years ago has rarely attracted the attention of experts in the field of Iranian archaeology, ancient art and warfare. Mikhail E. Masson (the father of V.M. Masson), the first chief of the IuTAKE, has given the earliest short notices of the discovery of this *klevets* and termed it *tabar zaghnol* (translated from Persian as "axe-crow's beak").[46] Indeed, it would be a quite appropriate denomination, but with one exception: in Persian the term *tabar zaghnol* means a combined double-bladed weapon consisting of the beak-like blade and a small axe on the butt's place, while a pick like the Nisean one should be more accurately called *zaghnol*, i.e. a weapon provided with the crow's beak-like blade and some kind of non-axe butt.[47]. Such *zaghnol*-type picks were used in India and Persia since the 16th century AD at the latest and afterwards.

[43] Loehr 1956, 49–64; Varenov 1981; Komissarov 1981; Kozhanov 1981; Hong 1992.

[44] Loehr 1956, 53, 55, 60, 165–167/cat. no. 79, fig. 45, *7, 8, 14*, pl. XXXII; Hong 1992, figs. 133, 136, 215, 288; Komissarov 1981, fig. 1, *8*; Kozhanov 1981, fig. 3, *a*; Peers 1995, 5, 12.

[45] Hong 1992, figs. 144–146.

[46] Masson M. 1955a, 212–213; 1955b, 33; Masson M./Pugachenkova 1959, 20–21.

[47] See Egerton 1880, 23, 115, pls. I, *33, 34*, X, *471*; Irvine 1903, 80; Pant 1989, 95–97, figs. 154, 156; Paul 2006, 97–99; Nosov 2011, 12–13/nos. 33, 34, 264–265.

Figure 5. *1, 2* – elephant goads found in Taxila [after Marshall 1951]; *3* – elephant goad from Aï Khanoum [after Francfort 1984]; *4* – gilt-silver phalera from the State Hermitage collection [after Adamova et al. 2007]; *5–7* – coins of the Kushan kings Kanishka I (*5*) and Huvishka (*6*, *7*) [after Göbl 1984]; *8* – medallion of Huvishka [after Göbl 1984]; *9* – part of the combat relief at Tang-i Sarvak [after Gall 1990]; *10* – graffito from Dura-Europos [after Rostovtzeff 1932].

Figure 6. *1–5* – Nisean hatchet (*1*) and its "analogies" (*2–5*) [after Pilipko 2006]: *2* – drawing of a "hatchet" on the Delphic coin published by O. Mørkholm (see Fig. 6, *6*); *3, 4* – axes from Luristan; *5* – axe (standard?) from Brili; *6–8* – Apollo's images on Delphic coins [after Mørkholm 1991 (*6*) and Kinns 1983 (*7, 8*) respectively]; *9* – Roman marble statue of Apollo Citharoedus from the Villa of Cassius in Tivoli, now in the Vatican Museums [after Roccos 2002].

G.A. Koshelenko, speaking very briefly of the find from Old Nisa in his popular scientific book on the monuments of Parthian art from Turkmenistan, has expressed the opinion that its prototype was the Saka iron battle hatchet.[48]

By now, the most detailed study of the artifact in question has been conducted by A. Invernizzi who devotes considerable attention to it in his monograph on the metal sculptures from Old Nisa.[49] He has examined very carefully its decor and design and arrived at a conclusion that this ceremonial hatchet could have been produced in Old Nisa or in some other center of Parthia, at any rate in the Graeco-Iranian cultural milieu of Central Asia, in the 2nd century BC. Alternatively, he has assumed that it could have been manufactured outside of the Parthian realm and had reached the place of its finding as a gift or booty.[50] It is interesting that A. Invernizzi, when analyzing the functional assignment of the Nisean object, compares it with the elephant-managing goads termed *aṅkuśa* in Sanskrit[51], which were widespread in ancient and medieval India, where war elephants formed a very important armed force.[52] Surely, we should agree with him that the result of such a comparison cannot be in favour of any resemblance between them, except a superficial one. Here I would like to add some more arguments apropos of this. All of the available real and pictorial pieces of evidence dated to antique times and coming from the Indo-Iranian borderlands show the elephant goads as the combination of a pointed rod and a sharpened curved hook, but without any butt. Among them there are three iron finds – two were excavated at Taxila in the Punjab[53] (Fig. 5, *1, 2*) and one at the Graeco-Bactrian city of Aï Khanoum in North-Eastern Afghanistan[54] (Fig. 5, *3*). Besides, the elephant goads of the same design are clearly visible on two gilt-silver phaleras with representations of war elephants and their crews, which had supposedly been produced in Greek Bactria, subsequently found themselves in Siberia and are kept now at the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg[55] (Fig. 5, *4*). Such implements are seen as well on the obverse of coins minted by the Kushan kings Kanishka I (ca. AD 127–150) and Huvishka (ca. AD 150–188): the former is shown standing before an altar with an *aṅkuśa* in his right hand[56]

[48] Koshelenko 1977, 122.

[49] Invernizzi 1999, 129–138.

[50] Invernizzi 1999, 138.

[51] Invernizzi 1999, 137–138.

[52] On this tool in India see Pant 1989, 93–95, figs. 251–258; Elgood 2004, 21–28; Nosov 2011, 340–341.

[53] Marshall 1951, 551, pl. 170, *u, v*/nos. 101, 102 (their dates are in the 3rd –2nd century BC and in the 1st century BC – 1st century AD respectively).

[54] Francfort 1984, 68–69, pls. 25, XXXI/n° 6 (its date is in the 3rd – 2nd century BC).

[55] Adamova et al. 2007, 303–305/cat. nos. 349–350; Bannikov 2012, 224–228.

[56] Rosenfield 1967, 56–57, 61–63, pls. II, *33, 34, 36–38*, III, *41, 42, 46–55, 57–59*; Göbl 1984, Taf. 4–9, 11–15, 23, *305A*, VI, *137*.

(Fig. 5, *5*), and the latter – both as a bust portrait (in most cases) and as a rider on an elephant, grasping the same tool in the left hand[57] (Fig. 5, *6, 7*). In addition, Huvishka appears once again as riding an elephant on a bronze Kushan medallion (lost by now), but this time he holds a goad in his right hand[58] (Fig. 5, *8*). Therefore, the elephant goads certainly differ in design from the Nisean weapon that has a butt and yet lacks an elongated spike-shaped pommel, not to mention the basic difference between them in their paramount functional assignments: the former were implements to control elephants, whereas the latter – a weapon to strike blows in close combat.[59]

At last, the hatchet from Old Nisa has been not so long ago studied by V.N. Pilipko in his article concerning the weapons found at this site.[60] He sees its strong similarity to "axe-like arms" depicted on Greek pieces of the Amphictionic coinage minted in Delphi in the 330s BC and connects it typologically with bronze axes from Luristan (in Western Iran) and Brili (in Georgia). According to his conclusion, the Nisean weapon "should be regarded as the product of a Hellenistic or Hellenized environment. The latter is more preferable".[61] However, such a conclusion looks to be very ill-grounded. The adduced analogies from Luristan[62] (Fig. 6, *3, 4*) and Brili[63] (Fig. 6, *5*) can hardly pretend to any genetic connection with the Nisean *klevets* not only because of their more than doubtful resemblance in contours and designs of the warheads, but also due to considerable differences in their ages: if the *klevets* from Old Nisa has to be dated to the last quarter of the 2nd century BC at the latest (see below), the axes from Luristan were produced in the late 2nd millennium BC, and the axe (or standard?) from Brili belongs to the first half of the 2nd millennium BC. But the main weakness of V.N. Pilipko's thesis consists in his statement that the Nisean hatchet bears resemblance to the "axe" as if pictured on the above-mentioned Delphic coins[64]. Obviously, it is a mistaken interpretation of the subject on their reverse. The point is that there the god Apollo is shown sitting on an omphalos and hold-

[57] Rosenfield 1967, 56–57, 61–63, pls. II, *33, 34, 36–38*, III, *41, 42, 46–55, 57–59*; Göbl 1984, Taf. 4–9, 11–15, 23, *305A*, VI, *137*.

[58] Göbl 1984, Taf. 176, *20/1*.

[59] For these reasons I am not in agreement with B.A. Litvinskii (2001b, 424; s.a.) who attributed two iron elephant goads of the 3rd or 2nd century BC from Aï Khanoum (see Francfort 1984, 68–69, pls. 25, XXXI/nos 5, 6, and also my Fig. 5, *3*) to *klevets*-type arms. Indeed, such goads could be used by the mahouts in battle not only to manage their elephants, but also to fight the enemy soldiers attacking the beasts. Nevertheless, the last function was evidently no more than auxiliary.

[60] Pilipko 2006, 263–264, 270–271, 285/figs. 11–12; 2001, 318.

[61] Pilipko 2006, 263–264.

[62] Pilipko 2006, fig. 12, *3, 4*; see also Vanden Berghe 1992, 35, 74–75/cat. nos. 202–205.

[63] Lordkipanidze 1989, fig. 96; Pilipko 2006, fig. 12, *5*.

[64] Pilipko 2006, fig. 12, *2*.

ing a laurel frond in the left hand, while the elbow of the right hand is being leant on a cithara[65] (Fig. 6, *6–8*) – one of his most significant attributes[66] (Fig. 6, *9*). To all appearances, it is the protruding part of this musical instrument (formed by its crossbar and arm) that has been erroneously determined by V.N. Pilipko as the combat hatchet, in spite of the fact that its availability in the described iconographic context is evidently inappropriate.

Now, after the introductory information about the Nisean *klevets* and the historiography survey of its studies, I shall try to ground my own ideas in regard to such important questions as: from where, why and when did this object come to the "treasure-house" of Old Nisa? In addition, I have been able to find out only a couple of pieces of pictorial evidence concerning the presence of picks within what was formerly the Parthian empire. The better of them is a graffito from the so-called "Temple of the Palmyrene Gods" at Dura-Europos on the Euphrates, where a personage is represented sitting on a high chair or throne in front of an arch[67] (Fig. 5, *10*). His image is reproduced in a quite realistic and detailed manner: he is dressed in purely Iranian garments – a long caftan and trousers; his headgear is in the form of a segmented (?) helmet provided with horns or lifted cheek-pieces on its sides; he has a beard and moustache; there is a torque around his neck and a circle with a curled edging behind the head and neck – perhaps, the nimbus or hair-do (?); his weapons are a dagger thrust into the waist-belt and a hatchet with a small warhead hafted on a long shaft held in the right hand. The warhead of the latter, obviously ceremonial, weapon consists of a straight blade and a shorter axe-shaped butt: in other words, it looks like a pick-*chekan*. Its owner is undoubtedly a very high-ranking dignitary, plausibly even a monarch. He has been identified as a "deified Parthian king"[68] and as a Sasanian noble visitor.[69] At first sight, his Parthian identity looks more preferable at least formally: the fact is that Dura-Europos was possessed by the Parthians for a very long time – from the later 2nd century BC through the 160s AD, then it was seized by the Romans, and the Sasanian Persians took this fortress from them twice – in AD 253 for a short while and three years later to destroy it completely. However, we do not have any additional strong evidence concerning the hatchet being used as a symbol of royalty in Arsacid Iran, whereas some Medieval Arabic and Persian writings have preserved information that three Sasanian rulers – the king Shapur II (309–379) and the queens Buran-

[65] Mørkholm 1991, pl. XII, *204* (it is this coin that is cited by V.N. Pilipko for his interpretation); Kinns 1983, pls. 1–4; Kulishova 2001, 173, fig. 2.

[66] On the Greek cithara see in general Landels 1999, 47–68; Mathiesen Th. 1999, 258–269; on the images of Apollo Citharoedus in antique art – Roccos 2002.

[67] Cumont 1926a, 267–270, pl. XCIX, *2*; 1926b, 181–185, fig. 1; Rostovtzeff 1932, 193, 196, fig. 1; Goldman 1990, 18–22, fig. 2; 1999, 42, 43/cat. no. C. 6.

[68] Rostovtzeff 1932, 193.

[69] Goldman 1990, 20–22; 1999, 42.

dukht (630–631) and Azarmidukht (631–632) – were officially portrayed in their times as sitting on the throne with a hatchet in the hand.[70]

Another pertinent testimony comes from the combat relief (Monument D/III) at Tang-i Sarvak in eastern Khuzestan Province (South-Western Iran, ancient Elymais)[71] (Fig. 5, *9*), dated to ca. AD 200–225.[72] We see in its centre the protagonist outfitted as a fully armoured cavalryman (*cataphract*) and charging with a long heavy lance (*contus*). After him, in the upper left corner of the relief, there are two fighting infantrymen, one of whom, the second from the left, is shown holding a big stone above his head to throw it. Behind his legs horizontally situated is a hatchet-like weapon, whose short shaft ends with a small ring. Its warhead has a straight pointed blade (or butt?), whereas the opposite part is, unfortunately, not visible as a whole, being partially covered by the horseman's lance – because of that one cannot determine whether it is a *chekan* or battleaxe. The availability of the ring attached to the end of its shaft, which was obviously intended for suspending the weapon to the belt[73] or cavalry saddle, with its warhead downwards, testifies rather to the latter assumption, especially as *chekans* normally had cappings-*vtoks* (Fig. 3, *23a, 32a, 34*), not rings, put on their shafts and were carried with their warheads upwards (Figs. 4, *6*, 8, *14*; cf. 8, *1–3, 9*).

Are the representations of the picks from Dura-Europos and Tang-i Sarvak (?) sufficient to suppose the Parthian origin of the *klevets* found in Old Nisa? I do not think so, especially since these arms resemble rather *chekans*, not *klevetses*. There are more grounds to bind the Nisean hatchet up with the nomadic world of Central Asia. In this regard of great importance are some coin series of Spalirises and Azes I, the kings of the so-called Indo-Saka/Scythian realm (established by the Sakas coming to North-Western India from the steppe area between the Caspian sea and the Pamir and Tian Shan mountains),[74] who in the 1st century BC ruled over vast territories in the Punjab and the Indus valley. On these coins Spalirises is depicted walking[75] (Fig. 7, *1*) and Azes I sitting on a camel[76] (Fig. 7, *2–2a*), both holding a curve-bladed pick-*klevets*[77] in the hand.

[70] Mohl 1841, 262, 266; Sarre 1938, 595–596, n. 2.

[71] Henning 1952, 161–162, pl. XX; Gall 1990, 13–19, Abb. 1, Taf. 3–4; Mathiesen H. 1992, 132–133/cat. no. 9.

[72] Mathiesen H. 1992, 57–70.

[73] Henning 1952, 162.

[74] On the history of the Indo-Sakas see Puri 1994; Neelis 2007, 56–79; Fröhlich 2008, 14–47.

[75] Gardner 1886, 101/nos. 1–5, pl. XXII, *2*; Mitchiner 1978, 311/nos. 2169, 2170; Senior 2001, iss. 73; Fröhlich 2008, 92–93/sér. 1 = nos. 53–60, pl. 5; Nikonorov 1997, vol. 1, 53, vol. 2, 11, fig. 26, *b*.

[76] Gardner 1886, 88/nos. 178–180, pl. XIX, *9*, Mitchiner 1978, 323/nos. 2242, 2243; Senior 2001, iss. 81; Bopearachchi 2003, 20, fig. 1, *B*; Bopearachchi/Sachs 2003, 335, fig. 1; Fröhlich 2005, 71–72, fig. 10; 2008, 103/sér. 11 = nos. 149–155, pl. 11/sér. 11.

[77] Contrary to suggestions that this royal attribute could be an elephant goad or whip (Mitchiner 1978, 311, 323; Invernizzi 1999, 138), both the curvature of its blade and presence of a butt clearly testify that it is nothing but just the *klevets*.

Figure 7. *1* – coin of the Indo-Saka king Spalirises (after Gardner 1886); *2–2a* – coin of the Indo-Saka king Azes I [after Fröhlich 2005]; *3, 4* – coins of the anonymous Kushan ruler entitled "Soter Megas" [after Gardner 1886 and Bopearachchi 2006 respectively]; *5* – Kushan gem from the British Museum collection [after Bivar 1968]; *6* – fragment of a pick (?) from Dil'berjin [after Kruglikova 1986]; *7* – battle episode on the large bone plate from Orlat [drawing by A.M. Savin].

The employment of such a weapon among the Indo-Sakas is not a surprise, since in earlier times their nomadic ancestors from Central Asia did make use of picks. The Classical writers record the presence of a bronze hatchet (σάγαρις) in the armament of the Massagetae (Herodot. 1.215; Strabo 11.8.6) as well as of the Amyrgian Sakas (Herodot. 7.64). Although it remains uncertain what kind of hatchet is meant in these reports,[78] especially as various types of combat hatchets were found in Saka graves,[79] it seems to be quite warranted to interpret the term σάγαρις as a pick. This assumption looks plausible in view of the fact that the Achaemenid-epoch iconographic data depicting western Central Asian nomadic warriors armed with hatchets show nothing but picks in their hands (Fig. 4, *4–7*) (these representations will be taken up below).

The earliest find of a pick (*chekan*?) within the habitation area of the Saka tribes came from the barrow no. 84 of the Uygarak burial ground in the Syr Darya lower reaches. Its flattened blade (incompletely preserved) and butt were produced of iron, socket and capping – of bronze[80] (Fig. 3, *23–23a*). The angle between the socket and blade is decorated with a bronze head of a predatory bird. This weapon can be dated to the 7th century BC at the latest.[81] Several iron *chekans* were uncovered in funeral sites of the 5th – 3rd centuries BC left by the Sakas in the Eastern Pamir[82] (Fig. 3, *24–27*).

Additional information concerning Saka/Massagetan picks is provided from Achaemenid Iran. We first turn to pictorial data from Persepolis. On two reliefs on the northern and eastern staircases of the Apadana (first half of the 5th century BC) is the Delegation no. XVII – a tribute procession from somewhere in the north-east of the Persian empire. Its members are dressed in the so-called "Median" garments consisting of a long belted coat and trousers, which were very typical for the nomadic world of Central Asia. Some personages of this ethnic group (two on the northern side and one on the eastern) carry in their hands two *chekans* each as gifts to the Persian king[83] (Fig. 4, *7*). This procession has already been attributed by various scholars to Sogdians and/or Chorasmians and/or Central Asian Scythians (including even the kinsmen of the last nation who lived in

[78] See Potts 2012, 465–466. Besides, Herodotus (4.5; 70) applies the term σάγαρις to axes of the Scythians from the Northern Pontic area, who had a variety of weapons of this kind as well (Illins'ka 1961). Hesychius of Alexandria (s.v.) explains the word σάγαρις as a "one-bladed hatchet" (πελέκιον μονόστομον), but this brief description is not enough to imagine its design more or less detailed.

[79] Litvinskii 1984, 46, Abb. 10; 2001b, 418–420, pl. 83; Vishnevskaia 1973, 97–98, pl. XX, *1, 2*.

[80] Vishnevskaia 1973, 97–98, pl. XX, *1, 2*.

[81] See Kurochkin/Subbotin 1992, 59.

[82] Litvinskii 1984, 46, Abb. 10, *3–6*; 2001b, 418–419, pl. 83, *3, 4, 7, 8*.

[83] Schmidt 1953, 88–89, pl. 43; Walser 1966: 93–94, Taf. 24; Trümpelmann 1990, 88, Abb. 11 (but it should be kept in mind that there is a confusion in the numbering of the delegations nos. XI and XVII); Tourovets 2002, 245, 247, fig. 8, *1*; Potts 2012, 460, fig. 5.

Southern Siberia).[84] Indeed, the problem of its ethnic identification is very complicated. However, dealing with this matter, one should take into consideration the fact that in the Persian army of Xerxes advancing upon Greece in 480 BC the Amyrgian Sakas were the only Central Asian contingent equipped with the σάγαρις, while the Sogdians and Chorasmians were armed like the Bactrians (Herodot. 7.66), viz. with bows and spears (Herodot. 7.64). For this reason, I prefer to believe some tribe of the Sakas (in the broadest sense of this ethnonym) to form the Delegation no. XVII. In any case, the delegates of the procession in question are rather not the Amyrgian Sakas who, according to Herodotus (7.64), wore tall pointed headgears, unlike the former having different ones. It is unlikely that we would see the Massagetae on these reliefs, because this nomadic people were independent of the Persians. At the same time, the Sakas (or at least some part of them) were included as subjects in the 15th tax district of the Achaemenid empire (Herodot. 3.93) and so were forced to pay tributes to the Persian kings.

The same, Saka, ethnic attribution grounded on the same argument concerns the throne-bearer no. 22 on the doorway reliefs of the Council Hall at Persepolis, who has a *chekan* suspended to his belt by means of a Y-shaped strap.[85]

Chekan-armed combatants on foot, whose clothes and armament are similar to those on the above Persepolis reliefs, are represented as well on some other pieces of the illustrative evidence from the Achaemenid domains, such as cylinder seals[86] (Fig. 4, *4, 5*) and a painted beam from Phrygia[87] (Fig. 4, *6*). They may certainly be identified as Sakas or Massagetae.

In addition, two real *chekans* were found in Iran – one made of bronze in the Throne Hall at Persepolis[88] (Fig. 3, *28*) and the other of iron in Gilan[89] (Fig. 3, *29*). The former must have been either a Saka tribute just as the Apadana reliefs demonstrate to us or one of the royal military accessories held by the Persian king's weapon-bearers who are portrayed on reliefs in the Throne Hall and the Treasury at Persepolis[90] (Fig. 4, *8*). The pick from Gilan might have been brought to the south-western coast of the Caspian sea by a soldier of a detachment composed of Central Asian Sakas (otherwise also called Scythians in our sources) who were actively involved in military service for the Achaemenids (Herodot. 6.113; 7.64; 184; 8.113; 9.31; 71; Arr. *Anab*. 3.8.3; 11.4; 6; 13.3–4;

[84] See an overview of most of the opinions in Potts 2012, 466–467.

[85] Schmidt 1953, 119, pls. 80–81/no. 22 (this personage is assumed to be a Sogdian).

[86] Summerer 2007, figs. 2 and 3; Nikulina 1994, ill. 537; Curtis/Tallis 2005, 228–229/cat. no. 415; Head 1992, fig. 32, *h*.

[87] Summerer 2007, 19, 20, figs. I–II and VII.

[88] Schmidt 1957, 100, pl. 78, *1*, 79, *1*; Bittner 1987, Trümpelmann 1990, 84, Abb. 4; Head 1992, fig. 16, *e*; Curtis/Tallis 2005, 234/cat. no. 436; Potts 2012, 459–461, figs. 2 and 3.

[89] Potts 2012, 459, fig. 1.

[90] Schmidt 1953, 133–134, 165–166, pls. 98, 99, 121; Bittner 1987, 176–177, Taf. 25; Trümpelmann 1990, 83–84, Abb. 2–3; Head 1992, fig. 13, *b*, 16, *g*; Potts 2012, 460, 461, fig. 4.

19.3–4; Curt. 4.9.2; 13.5; 15.12–13; 18; Diod. 11.7.2; 17.59.5–6; 8).[91] Alternatively, it could have belonged to a native warrior. However that might be, the Persians and other peoples of Iran adopted picks most likely under the influence of the Sakas and Massagetae. The employment of such arms among the Persians appears to be visible on some Achaemenid seals, where these are put with their heads upwards into special sheaths along Persian pedestrian soldiers' backs[92] (Fig. 4, *9–11*). One more pertinent picture, which is engraved on a gold plaque from the Treasure of the Oxus discovered in Bactria, images a foot warrior clad in full armour consisting of a helmet, corselet, arm- and thigh-guards and equipped with a *chekan*, spear and bow-case[93] (Fig. 4, *12*). He has been recognized as a Saka[94] or a Persian or a Bactrian.[95] The main difficulty of this personage's ethnic attribution is his beardlessness, because in ancient art Iranians the were usually depicted bearded. Be this as it may, by his set of martial outfit I prefer to identify him as a Persian or a Bactrian in Achaemenid military service.

It is important to note that the pick-*chekan* was one of the favourite arms of the Achaemenid kings: this is vividly illustrated on the reliefs at Persepolis showing it in the hands of their weapon-bearers standing behind the throne during official ceremonies[96] (Fig. 4, *8*). Quite possibly, it is the picks that go into hiding under the term σάγαρις referred to more than once in the composition of the martial equipment of the Persians (Xen. *Anab*. 4.4.16; id. *Cyrop*. 1.2.9; 2.1.9; 16; 4.2.22; 8.8.23; Strabo 15.3.19).

The fact that the Saka and Massagetan military since olden times employed, along with straight-bladed *chekans*, curve-bladed *klevetses* too is well confirmed by two indirect yet reliable pieces of evidence. Firstly, as said above, Persian soldiers had already made use of the *klevetses* by ca. 470 BC at the latest (Fig. 4, *2, 3*), and they had hardly become acquainted with these arms from someone else than the nomads of Central Asia. Secondly, the *klevetses* are represented on the obverse of the above-mentioned coins of Spalirises and Azes I (Fig. 7, *1, 2–2a*) – the rulers from the Indo-Saka dynasty of Central Asian Saka origin, who reigned over the Punjab and the Indus valley in the 1st century BC. And, at the same time, one should bear in mind that this kind of picks had never existed in India before the arrival of the Sakas.

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[91] Concerning the Sakas in Persian military service see also Barkworth 1992, 151–153, 158, 159, 166; Head 1992, 48–49; Wozniak 2011, 78–79; Dandamayev 2012, 44–45.

[92] Nikulina 1994, ills. 536, 537, 539; Head 1992, figs. 14, 32, *h*; Summerer 2007, fig. 3; Bittner 1987, Taf. 15, *3*.

[93] Dalton 1905, 99, pl. XIV/cat. no. 84; Barnett 1968, 37, pl. II, *2* (*right*); Zeimal' 1979, 56/cat. no. 84; Gorelik 1982, 92, 95, 99, pl. I, *4*; Head 1992, fig. 32, *f*.

[94] Barnett 1968, 37; Head 1992, 47.

[95] Gorelik 1982, 92 (n. 10), 95 (Persian); Nikonorov 1997, vol. 1, 26–27 (Bactrian).

[96] See n. 90 above.

In the very beginning of the Common Era the anonymous Kushan monarch, who governed Bactria, the Punjab and the Kabul region and proudly entitled himself in Greek legends on his coins as ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ ΣΩΤΗΡ ΜΕΓΑΣ ("The king of kings, the great saviour"), issued numerous pieces, on the reverse (or obverse – this distinction depends upon the choice of individual numismatists) of which he is shown on horseback and holding a pick with massive butt and pommel in his outstretched right hand[97] (Fig. 7, *3, 4*). It should be noted that only a few of these coins show the weapon as a curve-bladed *klevets*[98] (Fig. 7, *3*), but it is unclear whether this feature is due to the coin field curve or not. The others, more numerous, reproduce it as a straight-bladed *chekan*[99] (Fig. 7, *4*). Of course, the small dimensions of the coins could hardly allow their engravers to reproduce the royal pick in its real form. Or, as another explanation, one may suppose that the king made use of both varieties of picks as his ceremonial attributes.

The anonymous king, who is considered to have been in fact "the first Kushāṇa king to rule an extensive hegemony both north and south of the Hindu Kush" and the "principal founder of the Kushāṇa empire in India",[100] recently has quite convincingly been interpreted as an usurper on the Kushan throne reigning in ca. AD 92/97–110.[101]

A close analogue to his coin representations is that on a Kushan gem of the 2nd century AD from the British Museum collection, which depicts a royal horse-rider wielding in his left hand a cross-like object[102] (Fig. 7, *5*). Judging by its outlines, it is most probably a pick-*chekan* provided with a crescent-like pommel.

A fragment of possibly a Kushan pick (?) head made of iron was uncovered in the so-called "Temple of the Dioscuri" at Dil'berjin (Northern Afghanistan)[103] (Fig. 7, *6*). Information about this item of armament given by the exca-

[97] On these coin series see Gardner 1886: 114–116/nos. 1–22, 26–27, pl. XXIV, *1–4*, *6*; Masson M. 1950, 18–25; MacDowall 1968, 29–33; Mitchiner 1978, 399–404/nos. 2915–2924, 2928–3002; Zeimal' 1983: 160–162, pls. 19–20; Narain 1997, 48–49. As in the case of the coins of the Indo-Saka rulers Spalirises and Azes I (see n. 77 above), sometimes this royal object has incorrectly been interpreted as an *aṅkuśa* (elephant goad) or whip (by P. Gardner, D.W. MacDowall, M. Mitchiner, A.K. Narain). M.E. Masson and E.V. Zeimal' have been undoubtedly right to consider it as a hatchet (in the former's terminology, it is a *tabar zaghnol*, see Masson M. 1950, 21–22; alike he has called the Nisean hatchet, see above).

[98] Gardner 1886: 116/nos. 27, pl. XXIV, *6*; Nikonorov 1997: vol. 1, 53, vol. 2, 14, fig. 37, *d*.

[99] Masson M. 1950, 21, ill. 2.

[100] MacDowall 1968, 48.

[101] Bopearachchi 2006; 2008.

[102] White 1964, 15, fig. 1; Rosenfield 1967, 101–102, pl. XVI, *seal 1*; Bivar 1968, pl. I, *4*; Nikonorov 1997, vol. 1, 53, vol. 2, 14, fig. 37, *e*.

[103] Kruglikova 1986, 74, fig. 52, *23*.

vation director, I.T. Kruglikova, is very scanty: it has been termed "a battle hatchet-*klevets*" and attributed to a type of the hatchets found in the Eastern Pamir (including the *chekan* at my Fig. 3, *27*). Of course, a poor state of preservation together with the evident insufficiency of the description and the inferior quality of reproduction in the publication do not allow any satisfactory conclusion concerning the original form of this weapon. Furthermore, the dating of its archaeological context (Period 4) within the reign of the Kushan emperor Vasudeva I (ca. AD 188–224) proposed by I.T. Kruglikova[104] seems to be in need of serious revision – up to the 7th – 8th century AD.[105] Nevertheless, the fragmentary warhead in question could be much older, being removed upwards from a lower, earlier, cultural layer belonging to Kushan times.[106] Indeed, such removals of artifacts from lower strata to upper ones and in the reverse direction were usual in the course of building activities at those ancient cities and settlements where architectural structures were erected of mud bricks and *pakhsa* blocks produced to construct new walls from soil and debris taken on the spot of previous buildings.

As in the case of the Indo-Sakas, the availability of picks in the Kushan milieu is also not surprising. The Kushans were one of the five divisions from among the nomadic Indo-European people called Great Yüeh-chih in the Chinese annals[107] and the Tochari in the Greek and Latin historical and geographical accounts,[108] which came from eastern Central Asia to take part in the rout of Greek Bactria in the last third of the 2nd century BC. As a result of that event the Great Yüeh-chih/Tochari had settled there, at first in the northern part of Bactria lying to the north of the Oxus (Amu Darya) river. Subsequently, they crossed the Oxus and occupied the whole country, and by the mid-1st century AD the Kushans subdued the other four Great Yüeh-chih/Tocharian divisions and established a powerful empire encompassing at its zenith, under the great king Kanishka I (first half of the 2nd century AD), the most extensive territories in Central and Southern Asia – from the Tarim Basin in the north to the Gangetic Plain in the south.[109] Like the Sakas, the Yüeh-chih/Tochari employed

[104] Kruglikova 1986, 75.

[105] See Fitzsimmons 1996.

[106] There are sufficient reasons to date the erection of the "Temple of the Dioscuri" in Dil'berjin from the 1st – 2nd century AD at the earliest (see Lo Muzio 1999, 44–50), i.e. within the Great Kushan period.

[107] Besides that, there are other modern forms of Latin-alphabet transliterations of this ethnic name in ancient Chinese, e.g. Yuezhi and Rouzhi.

[108] On the identity of the Yüeh-chih and the Tochari see Beckwith 2009, 380–383; Benjamin 2007, 186–187.

[109] The history of the Yüeh-chih nation has comprehensively been analyzed in Benjamin 2007; see also Kriukov 1988, 236–241; Narain 1990; Enoki/Koshelenko/Haidary 1994; Liu 2001; Neelis 2007, 79–91.

picks already before leaving their homeland for Bactria, not only using these weapons in combat, but also considering both them and their miniaturized copies as prestigious insignia of power. In particular, this is demonstrated by finds of *chekans*, including battle-size arms made of bronze and iron (Fig. 3, *31, 32*), and their smaller copies of bronze and miniature (votive) specimens of bronze, bone and wood, from burials of the Pazyryk culture (6th to 3rd centuries BC) in the Altai.[110] As has been suggested not without valid argument,[111] the Altai area in the 4th – 3rd centuries BC was part of a spacious kingdom established by the Yüeh-chih/Tochari, which must have included present-day Xinjiang (Chinese or Eastern Turkestan), Mongolia, the Chinese province of Gansu and the surrounding regions, flourishing up to the first half of the 2nd century BC, when it was defeated by the Hsiung-nu (Asiatic Huns). In addition, finds of bronze *chekans* dating from the Scythian epoch, including fragments of two small ceremonial ones, were found in the Hotan and Turfan oases (Xinjiang)[112] (Fig. 3, *30*). In light of the fact that in the later Scythian period the Tarim basin was probably under Yüeh-chih/Tocharian sway, these arms could be connected either with the Yüeh-chih/Tochari themselves or with the local population kindred or allied to them. The same can be said about Western Mongolia, where bronze and iron *chekans* were excavated as well as their bronze cappings that belonged to the bearers of the Chandman' culture (5th – 3rd centuries BC)[113] (Fig. 3, *33, 34*).

It is important to underline that during the Indo-Saka and Kushan periods the picks, serving as ceremonial objects and badges of authority in the midst of the nations of Central Asian origins, continued to be used by their military as real arms, though not on such a serious scale as formerly. There exists only one, yet quite interesting source, viz. the well-known battle scene that is engraved on the large bone plate from the barrow no. 2 of the Orlat burial ground in the Samarkand region (ancient Northern Sogdia). It is divided into four single combats between armoured knights, both on horseback and dismounted. One of the warriors, fighting on foot, is depicted piercing with his pick the helmet of a mounted opponent who is simultaneously transfixing the former with a sword[114] (Fig. 7, *7*). The pick penetrated with its blade into the head so deeply that there cannot be any idea what variety of this weapon kind might be represented – a *klevets* or *chekan*. All of the knights pictured on this plate must have belonged to the war-

[110] Kocheev 1988; 1999, 75–76; Samashev/Ermolaeva/Kushch 2008, 62.

[111] Kliashtornyi/Savinov 1998; 2005, 21–25.

[112] Stein 1928, vol. I, 99, 114, vol. III, pl. X, *Badr. 0115–0116*; Pogrebova/Raevskii 1988, 171–173, fig. 21; Gorelik 1995, 382–383; Khudiakov 1995, 11, fig. III, *2, 3*.

[113] Khudiakov/Erdene-Ochir 2011, 131–134; Novgorodova 1989, 263, 274–275.

[114] Pugachenkova 1987, 57; 1989, 150, fig. 71; Bernard/Abdullaev 1997, 80, fig. 2; Ilyasov/Rusanov 1998, 119, pls. IV, *1*, XIII; Nikonorov/Khudiakov 1999, 145, fig. 3, *4*.

like elite of the mighty and spacious K'ang-chü realm that united a number of nomadic and sedentary peoples and flourished in Central Asia under the supremacy of the nomads from the 2nd century BC through the late 3rd century AD.[115] G.A. Pugachenkova, the author of the first publications of this significant piece of ancient art, has ascribed a complex of the finds from the Orlat barrow no. 2 chiefly to the 2nd – 1st century BC.[116] However, the later dates proposed by other scholars, viz. the 1st – 2nd centuries AD[117] or even the 3rd century AD,[118] seem to be more argued.

The attitude of both the Indo-Sakas and Kushans towards their picks as symbols of power was in line with a long-standing tradition formed in the ancient nomadic milieu of Central Eurasia, with which these peoples were closely related, to revere the combat hatchets. In the basis of this reverence there was an idea shared by various nations inhabiting Eurasia from the earliest times onward that the axes were endowed with divine and magic forces.[119] Let us take up the available evidence. It consists for the most part of the finds of picks and battle-axes from burials. Since the fact itself of their placement into graves is a quite sufficient reason to presume them to have been buried with certain intentions of cultic and/or prestigious nature,[120] this category of our sources, including the arms that have already been touched upon (Fig. 3, *8–19, 23–33*), will not be particularly concentrated on below, with very few exceptions of importance (like in case of the Sarmatians). The main attention will be paid to pertinent pictorial and, if any, written data.

[115] See on the K'ang-chü state, the territory of which included "the region of the Tashkent oasis and part of the territory between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers, with its heartland along the middle Syr Darya", in Zadneprovskiy 1994, 463–464. On the K'ang-chü historical and cultural background of the Orlat nomads see Pugachenkova 1987, 62–63, as well as Ilyasov/Rusanov 1998, 131, the former noting a similarity of their material culture to that of the Sarmatians, and the latter believing them to be descendants of the earlier Sakas. P. Bernard and K. Adullaev have supposedly attributed them to the Yüeh-chih (1997, 84). Just recently, A.N. Podushkin (2012) has very cautiously proposed that the large bone plate from the Orlat barrow no. 2 being probably a detail of a compound waist-belt produced by Hsiung-nu (Asiatic Hun) craftsmen possibly represents the Hsiung-nu warriors themselves who were involved in certain events taking place in Central Asia in the 1st century BC. However, this appears to be improbable because the fact that there depicted are the fully-armoured riders-*cataphracts*, one of whom is armed with the pick, contradicts all what we know about the warfare of the Asiatic Huns who never used either cavalry of such a kind or any combat hatchets (see Khudiakov 1986, 25–52; Nikonorov/Khudiakov 2004, 45–69). More likely, these K'ang-chü knights were of Eastern Iranian or Tocharian origin.

[116] Pugachenkova 1987, 62; 1989, 146, 148, 152.

[117] Ilyasov/Rusanov 1998, 123–130; Ilyasov 2003, 274–299; Maslov 1999.

[118] Litvinskii 2001a, 150–155; 2002, 195–201.

[119] See Darkevich 1961.

[120] See, e.g. on the semantics of weaponry in the burial rites by the example of the Pontic Scythians in Bessonova 1984.

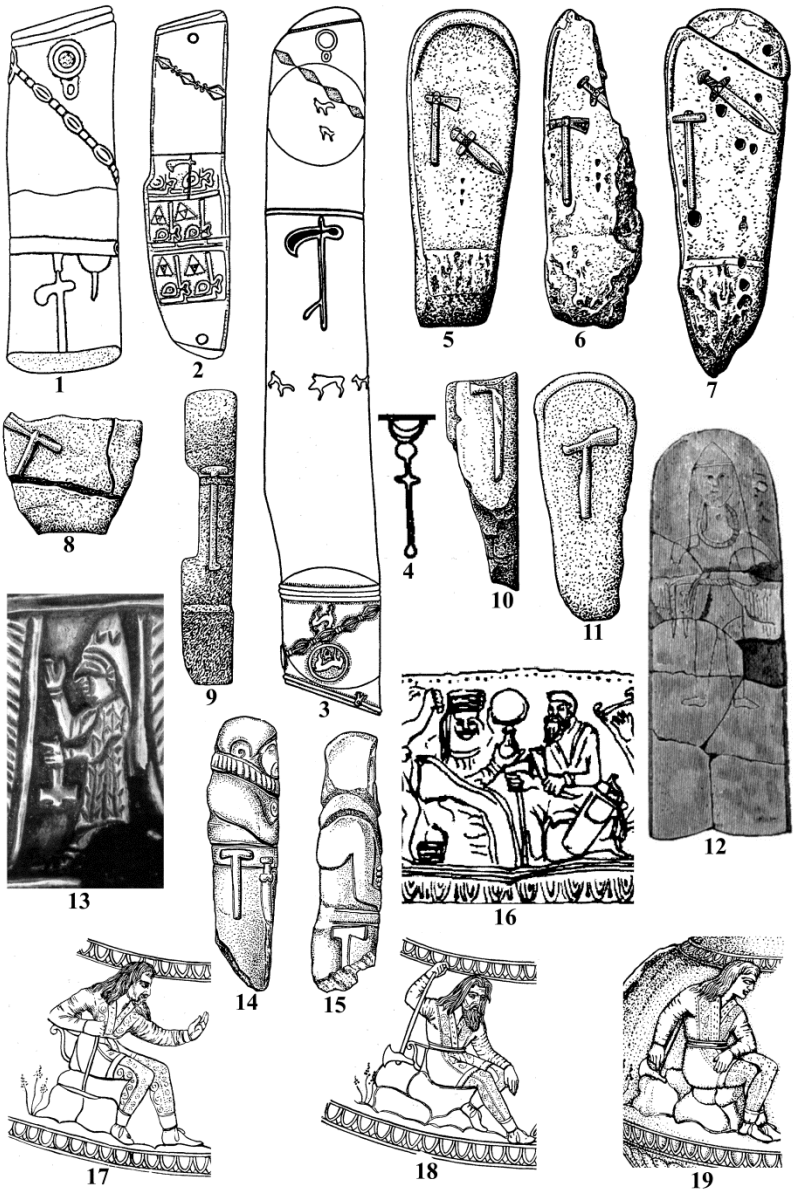

Figure 8. *1–3* – deer stones from the Northern Caucasian area [after Ol'khovskii 2005]; *4* – detail of the Tselinnoe deer stone [after Ol'khovskii 2005]; *5–7* – Novo-Mordovo I stone steles [after Chizhevskii 2005]; *8–11* – Murzikha II stone steles [after Chizhevskii 2005]; *12* – stone stele from the Ananyino cemetery [after Zbrueva 1952]; *13* – butt decoration of the battleaxe from the first Kelermes barrow [after Galanina 1997]; *14, 15* – side views of Scythian "stone women" from Sibioara (Romania) and Slavianka (Ukraine), dated to the 6th and 5th centuries BC respectively [after Ol'khovskii/Evdokimov 1994]; *16* – plate from Sakhnovka [after Raevskii 1977]; *17–19* – images on the Voronezh vessel [after Raevskii 1977].

As early as among the tribes of the so-called "Cimmerian-Karasuk" cultural and ethnic intercommunity,[121] which set up the deer stones (serving, in all likelihood, as funerary obelisks to commemorate the most distinguished chieftains and warriors) throughout an enormous territory from Eastern Siberia and Mongolia to Central Europe,[122] the cult of combat hatchets was in existence. We see them represented on many of such stone monuments.[123] These include the above-mentioned steles from the Northern Caucasus (Fig. 8, *1–3*; see also 3, *1–3*) dated perhaps to the last quarter of the 8th – first half of the 7th centuries BC,[124] as well as another deer stone of the same period found near the village of Tselinnoe in Crimea, where a miniature hatchet (pick?) suspended to the waist-belt with its handle downwards appears to have been depicted[125] (Fig. 8, *4*). It is believed that the builders of these steles must have been the Cimmerians who were immediate predecessors of the Scythians in the Northern Pontic area and the Northern Caucasus.[126] Although not so much information is presently known about this enigmatic nation at all, the already amassed archaeological material that may be linked with the historical Cimmerians demonstrates that they were very close to the early Scythians both culturally and ethnically,[127] i.e. they probably were, like the latter, of Iranian origin.

According to the available archaeological and written data, the Scythian tribes not only used various kinds of hatchets in combat, but also worshiped them as sacred objects. In a first, properly Scythian, variant of the legend about the Scythians' lineage told by Herodotus (4.5–7) a hatchet (σάγαρις) is referred to among the other sacred golden gifts (a plough, a yoke and a cup) that had allegedly fallen to the Scythians from heaven (Herodot. 4.5). All of these heavenly gifts were carefully guarded and reverently worshiped by the Scythian kings making yearly sacrifices to them (Herodot. 4.7). It is reported in another passage of the same author that the Scythians, when concluding oath agreements, im-

[121] This conditional term covers a spacious ancient Eurasian intercommunity embracing peoples kindred to each other in many important aspects of their being, such as material culture, funeral rites, and even, in a number of cases, human physical type (Chlenova 1975, 89).

[122] On the whole, the Eurasian deer stones are discussed in Savinov 1994.

[123] See in general on the hatchets depicted on deer stones Savinov 1994, 103–104, pl. XVI, *15–17*.

[124] This chronology has been proposed by V.S. Ol'khovskii (2005, 77). According to N.L. Chlenova (1984, 56), the deer stones from the Northern Caucasus were erected later, in the second half of the 7th century BC.

[125] Ol'khovskii 2005, 38, 61, ill. 27, *1*.

[126] Chlenova 1975, 88–89; 1984. V.S. Ol'khovskii considered the ethnic-cultural belonging of these Northern Caucasian sculptures as conditionally "Cimmerian" to be understood "exceptionally in a chronological context" (2005, 30). Indeed, it seems to be more preferable to use in the case under review the ethnic term "Cimmerians" with a certain degree of conditionality – in the sense that it designates pre-Scythian nomads of Eastern Europe, at least some part of whom was given such a name in the Classical literary tradition.

[127] Alekseev/Kachalova/Tokhtas'ev 1993; Ivantchik 2001.

mersed a sword, a hatchet and a spear in a special large bowl filled with a mixture of wine and the contract participants' blood (Herodot. 4.70).

The cultic role of axes in the midst of the Scythians is also testified by monuments of material culture. The earliest evidence is the famous parade axe from the first Kelermes barrow in the Kuban region, which is dated to the second half of the 7th century BC.[128] Made of iron and decorated with gold it could be used as both a weapon and a ritual object. Of particular importance is the picture on its butt of a priest wearing a high headgear: his right hand is raised in a prayer gesture and his left holds a hatchet turned over with its blade down (Fig. 8, *13*). Some of the Scythian over-barrow sculptures, the so-called *kamennye baby* ("stone women") actually representing male warriors of high status, have among their attributes a battleaxe or pick shown on the right side (Fig. 8, *14, 15*). These crude statues were built in the Northern Pontic area, the Northern Caucasus and Eastern Georgia during the late 7th – first half of the 5th centuries BC.[129] The above-said "bird-headed" miniature bronze scepters of the 6th – 4th centuries BC from Pontic Scythia (Fig. 3, *9–12*) undoubtedly served their owners as prestigious objects. It is significant that one of them, from the grave no. 25 of the Kichkas burial ground located in the Dnieper Rapids area (Fig. 3, *12*), was uncovered with remains of its wooden shaft being in the outstretched right hand of the decedent.[130] This group should be added with seven more, but differently shaped (into axes, etc.), small bronze heads of scepters, which performed the same function, go back to the same age and were found within the same territory.[131]

Figurative compositions on several works of toreutics produced in the 4th century BC well reflect the revered position that combat hatchets played in Scythian kingship ideology. One of them is on a golden plate from the barrow no. 2 near the village of Sakhnovka (Central Ukraine): it has been supposed by D.S. Raevskii to bear in the centre a representation of the mythical king Colaxaias kneeling before the goddess Tabiti and having an axe in his right hand[132] (Fig. 8, *16*). Three more personages are depicted on a silver vessel found in the vicinity of the city of Voro-

[128] See on it in detail Chernenko 1987; Galanina 1997, 98–105, 223–224, Taf. 10–11; Kisel' 1997.

[129] Ol'khovskii/Evdokimov 1994, 71, pl. 16, cat. nos. 1, 8, 15, 20, 33, 71, 74, 78, 79, 81, 83, 86, 127, 128, 147, 149; Ol'khovskii 2005, 114, ills. 64, *2*, 65, 73, *1*, 74, *2*, 76, 77, 79, *1, 2*, 89, *2*.

[130] Iatsenko 1959, 63; Illins'ka 1961, 44, fig. 11, *7*; Il'inskaia 1965, 208–209, fig. 3, *6*; Meliukova 1964, pl. 21, *27*.

[131] Illins'ka 1961, fig. 11, *1–4, 8, 9*; Il'inskaia 1965, fig. 3, *1–3, 8–11*; 1968, 155–156, fig. 42, *7–10*, pl. XI, *13*; Meliukova 1964, pl. 21, *24–26, 29*. One more axe-like Scythian scepter is a small (12,4 cm long) shaft-holed bronze hatchet uncovered in the 4th century BC barrow no. 18 (burial no. 2) near the village of L'vovo in the Kherson region. It was finely produced, its butt being formed into a gryphon's protome (Kubyshev/Nikolova/Polin 1982, 140–141, 147–148, figs. 10, 11; Tolochko/Murzin 1991, 303/cat. no. 87, 361).

[132] Raevskii 1977, 99–100, fig. 9; Vertiyenko 2010, figs. 1–1a, 2.

nezh[133] (Fig. 8, *17–19*). They have been interpreted by the same scholar in a mythological context almost identical to a second, Greek by its origin, version of the Scythian genealogic legend in Herodotus (4.8–10).[134] According to this interpretation, two similar bearded seniors represent Heracles, whereas a beardless youth is his youngest son named Scythes – the progenitor of all the Scythian kings, both leaning by the right hand on hatchets: the former on a pick (Fig. 8, *17*) and a battleaxe (Fig. 8, *18*), and the latter on a battleaxe (Fig. 8, *19*). Obviously, similar to these images in its ideological concept is a high-ranking figure (a king or chieftain) engraved on golden plaques from the barrow no. 1 near the village of Aksyutintsy in the Sula River area (North-Eastern Ukraine), where he is shown sitting on a stool and holding a hatchet (*klevets*?) in his right hand[135] (Fig. 9, *1*).

The role of hatchets as peculiar high-level insignia in the Pontic Scythian society can be seen, although indirectly, on one coin series from the town of Cercinitis in Western Crimea, which was minted in the 3rd century BC. On their obverse there is a bearded figure in Scythian garments sitting on a rock and wielding a battleaxe in the right hand[136] (Fig. 9, *2*). The presence of the Scythian-looking personage on these pieces is enigmatic and may have been due to some political or/and cultural impact made upon the inhabitants of Cercinitis by the Scythians roaming somewhere in the neighbourhood.

The prestigious and ritual reverence for the combat hatchets among the Scythians manifests not only in the very fact of their presence in grave assemblages. Thereupon, noteworthy is an iron hatchet from a 4th century BC noble Scythian warrior's burial in the Talaevskii kurgan (Western Crimea). It was situated at the decedent's waist-belt, its wooden handle being wrapped with a golden ribbon, and this feature, as well as a golden torque found on the neck, underlines a high social rank of the buried person.[137] Another indicative case is provided by a male ordinary burial (no. 43) of the 4th or 3rd century BC excavated within the Nikolaevka

[133] Rostovtzeff 1914, 7–10, pl. I; Raevskii 1977, 30–34, figs. 1, 2; Meliukova 1964, pl. 4, *3–5*.

[134] Raevskii 1977, 31–34,

[135] Rostovtzeff 1913, 8, fig. 3; Illins'ka 1961, 43, fig. 10; Il'inskaia 1968, 156, pl. XXII, *6*; Vertiyenko 2010, figs. 9–9a. The point of view that the personage has possibly no any weapon, but a harp (see Vertiyenko 2010, 323–325), looks more than strange because it is difficult to imagine that the typical Scythian male grandee, who was a soldier to the very marrow of his bones, would have been portrayed with a peaceful musical instrument instead of a tool of war.

[136] Zograf 1951, 161, pl. XXXVIII, *17*; Medvedeva 1984, 42–43, 45–48/cat. nos. 19–76, pl. I, II; Price 1993, pl. XXVIII, *693–705*. It is noteworthy in this connection that the Scythian-style combat hatchet and bow-case are on pieces of the so-called "Borysthenes" coinage issued in the other Northern Pontic Greek city, Olbia, from ca. 330 to ca. 250 BC, on which these weapons were probably depicted as signs of power and dignity (Karyshkovskii 1968; 2003, 95–99).

[137] Otchët 1893, 78; Mantsevich 1957, 155, fig. 4. The same habit of wrapping a shaft with a golden ribbon seems to be seen by the example of a hatchet-*chekan* from the rich barrow no. 1 of the Scythian burial ground near the village of Volkovtsy in the Left-bank Dnieper area. This weapon,

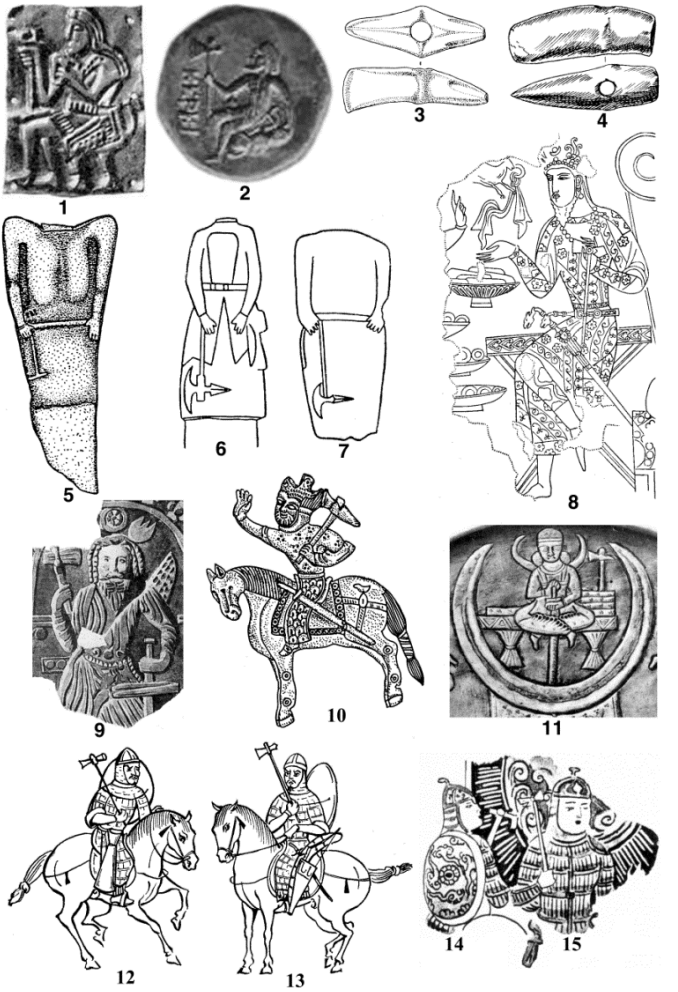

Figure 9. *1* – plaque from Aksyutintsy [after Illins'ka 1961]; *2* – coin from Cercinitis, now in the Museum of Money at Feodosiya [available at: http://www.museum-of-money.org/view/monety_kerkinitidy/]; *3, 4* – stone axes from the Kuban area [after Gushchina/Zasetskaia 1989]; *5* – sculpture from Karamunke [after Ol'khovskii 2005]; *6, 7* – sculptures from the Kuban upper reaches [after Kuznetsov 1962]; *8* – mural fragment from Penjikent [after D'iakonov 1954]; *9* – ossuary fragment from Biya-Naiman [after Pugachenkova 1987]; *10* – detail of the Anikovskaya plate [drawing after Marschak 1986]; *11* – detail of the Klimova plate [after Orbeli/Trever 1935]; *12–15* – mural fragments from the caves nos. 9/11 (*12, 13*) and 5/7 (*14, 15*) at Shikshin/Shorchuk [after D'iakonova 1984 and Grünwedel 1912 respectively].

being erroneously described in the original excavation record as a "tetrahedral iron dagger", was discovered nearly the interred warrior's right side, at his pelvis level, whereas his right hand was put on with a "ribbon-like golden bracelet" (Khanenko B. /Khanenko V. 1899, 6, 17/cat. no. 64, 32/cat. no. 425, pls. II, *64*, XXV, *425*). In reality, this "bracelet" must have been nothing but a handle wrapper of the hatchet in question (see Il'inskaia 1968, 93).

necropolis on the left bank of the Dniester Liman. It contained a battleaxe (by the way, it is the only hatchet found at Nikolaevka at all) that proved to be designedly stuck into the bottom of the grave pit, to the right of the deceased's thigh.[138] Such a placement of buried weapons, in the so-called "working" (i.e. upright) position, pursued magic goals.[139]

The veneration of the axes can be noted as well for the early Ananyino culture in the Volga-Kama region. So, seven memorial stone steles decorated with the representations of hatchets – an obvious indication for the existence of such a particular attitude towards the arms of this kind – were discovered at the Novo-Mordovo I (nos. 1, 2 and 4)[140] (Fig. 8, *5–7*) and Murzikha II (nos. 12, 18, 22 and 32)[141] (Fig. 8, *8–11*) burial grounds located in the lower reaches of the Kama river. At least five of them are battleaxes (Fig. 8, *5, 6, 8, 10, 11*), at most two – picks (Fig. 8, *7, 9*). These monuments are probably dated to the 7th century BC.[142] On a later, anthropomorphic, stele, which is said to have come from the Ananyino burial ground (near the town of Yelabuga) and is kept at present in the collection of the State Historical Museum in Moscow, there is the portrayal of a beardless combatant standing full-length and equipped with arms, including a pick-like hatchet in his right hand[143] (Fig. 8, *12*). Without any doubt, it was arranged in memory of a person of high social status, whose neck torque, hatchet and short sword-*acinaces* are certainly among his attributes of authority. In addition, within the Ananyino cultural area a few picks were found,[144] including the *klevetses* (see above and Fig. 3, *13–15*), and it is the scarcity of their finds in burials, in comparison with such local arms as *celts*-adzes and spears, that suggests the picks to have belonged exclusively to mem-

[138] Meliukova 1975, 91, 135, 177, fig. 56, *1*; Bessonova 1984, 8, 21.

[139] See Bessonova 1984, 7–11.

[140] Khalikov 1963, 181, 183, 184, figs. 1, *1–3*, 5, *1–3*; 1977, 78, 179, 181, figs. 36, *1*, *2*, *6*, 68, *2–4*; Chlenova 1987, 142–145, figs. 1, *1, 3, 4*, 3, *1–3*; Chizhevskii 2005, figs. 3, *4*, 4, *1, 4*; 2009, 81, fig. 2, *1, 2, 4*.

[141] Chizhevskii 2005, 281, figs. 14, *1*, *3*, 15, *3, 4*; 2009, 87, figs. 4, *2, 3, 5*, 5, *3*.

[142] This dating has been established for the Novo-Mordovo steles (Khalikov 1963, 185; Chlenova 1987, 145). The stones nos. 12 and 18 from the Murzikha II burial ground have been attributed to the late 7th – 6th century BC (Chizhevskii 2005, 289; 2009, 87), but such a date is merely grounded on a rather tentative chronology of the hatchets shown on them and cannot be accepted with any certainty. By their form and design features the three Novo-Mordovo steles under review are looking similar to the Murzikha II nos. 18 and 22 (the other two, nos. 12 and 32, are in a worse state of preservation), and so they all could be built more or less simultaneously, somewhere within the 7th century BC.

[143] Zbrueva 1952, 21–22, fig. 3; 1954, 102, 103. The doubts that have recently arisen as regards the authenticity of this monument (see Markov 1994; Chizhevskii 2005, 268; 2009, 81) cannot be convincing without its most careful special examination to be carried out in the future.

[144] Zbrueva 1952, 104–107; Kuz'minykh 1983, 138–142.

bers of "a rich and influential stratum of the clan nobility".[145] Finally, the famous Ananyino, not numerous too, parade axes cast from fine bronze alloys were plausibly exploited solely as badges of power; their dating may be determined within the late 6th – 4th centuries BC.[146]

However, speaking of the combat hatchet cult in the Ananyino culture, one should bear in mind the following. As it has already been observed,[147] the Novo-Mordovo I steles, judging by certain particularities of their designs, seem to go back to the deer stones of the Northern Caucasus. This circumstance, in turn, may be interpreted in the sense that in the 7th century BC the Middle Volga area was invaded by some of the nomads from the Northern Caucasus, conceivably by the Cimmerians[148] who erected the steles to honour the memory of their dead noblest warriors. What these sculptures were left rather by the Cimmerians than by the Scythians is pointed out by the fact that the Scythian typical funerary monuments were the anthropomorphic "stone women" differing from the deer stones in some important design, stylistic and iconographic details.[149] Therefore, it is the Cimmerian newcomers that could have been responsible for the introduction of the combat hatchet cult to the Volga-Kama region.[150]

[145] Kuz'minykh 1983, 137–138. It is to be assumed that something alike could have been in Pontic Scythia, for finds of picks from there are much less numerous than other kinds of combat hatchets (see Illins'ka 1961; Meliukova 1964, 65–68).

[146] Zbrueva 1952, 140, fig. 14, pl. XXXII, *2*; Kuz'minykh 1983, 143–145.

[147] Chlenova 1987, 146; 1988, 5.

[148] The Cimmerian ethnic-cultural attribution of the Novo-Mordovo I steles has been proposed by N.L. Chlenova (1987, 146; 1988, 3–5). In her opinion, some groups of armed males from among the Northern Caucasian Cimmerians in the 7th century BC made campaigns to the Middle Volga, mingled with the local inhabitants and were dissolved in their midst. On the other hand, M.N. Pogrebova and D.S. Raevskii (1992, 195–221) have supposed that those Scythians, who, accordingly to Herodotus (4.22), had seceded from the Royal Scythians, no later than at the turn of 7th – 6th centuries BC came from Transcaucasia to the Ananyino cultural area. Like N.L. Chlenova's supposition with regard to the Cimmerian migrants, they thought these Scythian warriors to have married native women and settled in the autochthonous environment. Although there could be, of course, both Cimmerian and Scythian penetrations into the Volga-Kama region in different periods of time, N.L. Chlenova's theory looks more acceptable, especially as M.N. Pogrebova and D.S. Raevskii have not taken into account the steles from the Novo-Mordovo I burial ground at all.

[149] Chlenova 1975, 81–89; 1984, 56–60.

[150] There is a different point of view, according to which the tradition of the erection in the Middle Volga region of memorial steles, including those depicting articles of weaponry (combat hatchets and daggers) from the Novo-Mordovo I and Murzikha II cemeteries, should not be linked with any alien migrations there. It was formed as a result of cultural influence from Central Asia (Chizhevskii 2009, 89). However that may be (but I am inclined in favour of N.L. Chlenova's opinion), this tradition had, in any case, no local roots and was obviously brought from outside, the Iranian nomadic world, together – it is the main thing – with the combat hachet cult that could hardly arise independently among the Ananyino indigenous population.

As for the Scythians, they may have contributed as well to the development of this cult among the local Ananyino population, when coming there some later. The evidence is provided by the above Ananyino stele portraying the hatchet-armed grandee (Fig. 8, *12*). This monument is anthropomorphic like the "stone women" of the Scythians, and the personage's accoutrement looks as Scythian in its type[151] (of course, in the broad sense of this ethnic definition). On these grounds, the Ananyino stele must not be attributed to a date earlier than the 6th or 5th century BC, when the "stone women" were already sculptured in the Scythian milieu. It should be stressed that the warrior on it is shown beardless, and this feature contrasting with what is aware of the men from the Iranian nomadic peoples, viz. that they usually wore beards, well testifies to his belonging to the aboriginal inhabitants who are generally thought to have been of Finno-Ugric origin.[152] Thus, this stele confirms the spreading, under the impact of the Iranian-extraction aliens, of the worship of combat hatchets in the midst of the natives of the Ananyino cultural intercommunity. The same is additionally testified by the picks and parade axes referred to above, which were certainly used by the local elite as prestigious objects.

The cult in question appears to have existed among another Iranian-speaking nomadic nation, the Sarmatians, who at a zenith of their history – in the last centuries BC through the 4th century AD – lived in the vast spaces of the Northern Pontic, Northern Caucasian, Lower Volga, Southern Ural and Aral-Caspian areas. It may be asserted despite the facts that any hatchets were of no importance in Sarmatian warfare at all[153] and their finds in graves of the Sarmatians are only few. The arms of this kind known to me[154] are divided into two groups –1) stone and 2) iron. The first one includes three axes, all uncovered in Sarmatian burials of the Kuban steppe area, viz. in a barrow at the aul of Khatazhukaevskii[155] (Fig. 9, *3*), the "Ostryi" kurgan at the stanitsa of Iaroslavskaia[156] (Fig. 9, *4*) and the barrow no. 43 of the so-called "Zolotoe kladbishche" ("Golden cemetery").[157] The fact that these axes were made of stone, not of iron as one would expect for the Sarmatian period, bears witness that they had likely been produced long before the Early Iron Age and much later fell somehow into the hands of the Sarmatians. They believed these archaic artifacts to be of sacred nature and so

[151] Chlenova 1975, 81, 85.

[152] Khalikov 1970; 1977, 4.

[153] Khazanov 2008, 120.

[154] For various reasons, I have not been able to collect any complete information about the available finds of Sarmatian axes. However that may be, the main thing is that they, anyway, are very rarely met in the archaeological complexes attributed to the Sarmatians.

[155] Gushchina/Zasetskaia 1989, 82, 104/cat. no. 65, 125, pl. VII, *65*.

[156] Gushchina/Zasetskaia 1989, 82, 94/cat. no. 12, 124, pl. II, *12*; 1994, 34.

[157] Gushchina/Zasetskaia 1994, 72/cat. no. 466.

used them not to fight, but to serve their possessors as badges of dignity. In this connection worthy of notice are the conditions of discovering the Khatazhukaevskii and "Ostryi" axes. The former was lying near the waist-belt of an interred woman, and the circumstance that such a weapon is unusual for the female burial points first of all at its sacral function. The latter was found on the right side of a male skeleton, being located at its shoulder level and hafted on a long iron handle that reached the buried warrior's heel. In other words, it was doubtlessly an axe-headed scepter,[158] and we should again recollect thereby the ruling "scepter-bearers" mentioned as the σκηπτοῦχοι among the Sarmatian Saii in the Olbian honorary decree for Protogenes, and as the *sceptuchi* with regard to the Sarmatians in Tacitus' "Annals" (see above). In all probability, the "Ostryi" kurgan contained the remains of one of the Sarmatian scepter-bearers.

The second group embraces iron hatchets of the Sarmatians. I am definitely aware of such arms found at the following burial sites:[159] Mechet-Sai (barrow grave no. 2/4),[160] Novoorsk II (barrow no. 2)[161] and Lebedevka (barrows nos. 1 and 2)[162] in the Southern Urals; Susly (barrow no. 46)[163] and Zhutovo (barrow no. 28)[164] in the Lower Volga area; the Sholokhovsky barrow[165] and Kobyakovo (barrow no. 10)[166] in the Lower Don area; Kitaevka (barrow grave 5/6)[167] in the Kuban region; Ust'-Kamenka (barrow grave no. 69/1)[168] in the Lower Dnieper

[158] It is to be also added that a number of scepters made of metal (mostly of iron) and different in their designs from the "Ostryi" one came to light from Sarmatian female and male burials of the Northern Caucasus (overwhelmingly of Kuban) and the Lower Don area. Some of them, e.g. from the barrow no. 1 at the khutor of Zubovskii, 1.77 m long and crowned with a deer's head, were discovered in the barrow embankment being stuck upright into the ground (Gushchina/Zasetskaia 1989, 82, 118/cat. no. 134, 127, pl. XII, *134*; on more scepters see Shevchenko 2006).

[159] Taking the opportunity when proofreading, I want to add to this list two more iron combat hatchets of the 5th or 4th century BC from Sarmatian burial sites in the Southern Ural area, viz. Filippovka-I (barrow no. 4, burial no. 3) and Novo-Kumak (see Treister/Iablonskii 2012, 107, 171, fig. 75, *4*, col. pl. 37, *3*). Please note that I do not take into account axes-adzes from Mechet-Sai (barrow grave no. 7/7: Smirnov 1975, 121, 165, fig. 42, *10*), the "Zolotoe kladbishche" (barrows nos. 34 and 43: Gushchina/Zasetskaia 1994, 47/cat. no. 97, 72/cat. no. 467), and other Sarmatian burial places (see, e.g. Prokopenko 2011, 411), which were nothing but ordinary working implements to be exploited as such in the afterlife of the dead.

[160] Smirnov 1975, 85, 87, 165, fig. 27, *1*.

[161] Moshkova/Malashev/Meshcheriakov 2011, 304.

[162] Bagrikov/Senigova 1968, 83, fig. 10, *7* (barrow no. 1), 79–80, 82, fig. 10, *6* (barrow no. 2); Moshkova 2009, 107, fig. 5, *4* (barrow no. 2).

[163] Rykov 1925, 38, 70, fig. 14; Khazanov 2008, 120, fig. 21, *2*; Skripkin 1998, 107, 109–110, fig. 9, *19*.

[164] Shilov 1975, 150.

[165] Smirnov 1984, 52, 137, 140, fig. 61, *7* (even three axes were found there).

[166] Prokhorova/Guguev 1992, 152, figs. 2, *26*, 3, *4*; Prokhorova 1994, 181, 182.

[167] Prokopenko 2011, 411.

[168] Kostenko 1993, 76, 78, fig. 25, *9*.

area; Oloneshty (barrow grave no. 4/4)[169] in the Carpathian-Dniester region. In those cases when the graves are characterized by their wealth, particular arrangement and so peculiar a feature as the woman's gender of the dead one can maintain that the hatchets buried in them were symbols of high social ranks.[170] This especially concerns the hatchets from Sarmatian female burials, of which the four made of iron were uncovered at Kobyakovo, Lebedevka (barrow no. 2), Novoorsk II and Ust'-Kamenka, and the one of stone – at the aul of Khatazhukaevskii. The ladies interred there must have belonged to the tribal elite and fulfilled priestly/shamanic or even ruling functions.[171] In turn, the axes from rich male warriors' barrows like the Sholokhovsky, Lebedevka (no. 1), Zhutovo and Oloneshty have to be necessarily considered as attributes of dignity and soldierly prestige. As long as this kind of Sarmatian weaponry was in a distinct minority compared to all the others, it is this rarity that could be a motive for the Sarmatian military nobles to make use of these arms, so unusual for their methods of warfare, more with ceremonial than battle purposes.

The pictorial evidence testifying to the prestigious use of combat hatchets by the Sarmatians is slight. So, there is a stone stele-shaped statue discovered at Karamunke, an ancient sanctuary built on the Ustyurt Plateau (between the Aral and Caspian Seas), which portrays a warrior standing full-length and having a pick attached to his waist-belt with its warhead downwards[172] (Fig. 9, *5*). The matter is that this sculpture erected supposedly to symbolize a clan ancestor in the form of a heroized male soldier[173] seems to have reproduced the image and weapon of a high-ranking member of the tribal military nobility. If so, the pick had to be an indispensable symbol of social significance. This work of nomadic art must be dated to the 4th/3rd – 2nd centuries BC.[174] It is important to note here

[169] Meliukova 1962, 205, 206; Kurchatov/Bubulich 2003, 294, 295–296, 306.

[170] It is worth noting that the two rich burials, male at Oloneshty and female at Kobyakovo, housed, in addition to the iron axes, many other objects, including – and it is immensely important – red-lacquer ceramic vessels in the shape of a ram, i.e. the animal that was perceived by ancient Iranians as one of the main embodiments of Farr, a divine entity of royal authority and glory (Oloneshty: Meliukova 1962, 201–202, fig. 5; Kurchatov/Bubulich 2003, 297–299, 306, fig. 5, *2*; Kobyakovo: Prokhorova/Guguev 1992, 154, 158, fig. 3, *16*; Prokhorova 1994, 182; see also Simonenko 1998: 68–69, 74, fig. 1, *2, 3*). Thus, the hatchets could quite bear there the same semantic meaning of the departed persons' highest social positions.

[171] Such a significant place of the women in the Sarmatian society is reflected in the "Periplus" by Pseudo-Scylax written probably in the second half of the 4th century BC, where the tribe of the Sauromatians living beyond the Tanais (modern Don) river is said to be woman-ruled (Σαυροματῶν δ' ἐστὶν ἔθνος γοναικοκρατούμενον) (71 [rec. B. Fabricius, 1878]). See also Grakov 1947; Shevchenko 2006. On the relationship between the Sauromatians of the Don-Volga area and the later Sarmatians in light of the archaeological evidence see Smirnov 1984, 9–18.

[172] Ol'khovskii 2005, ill. 150, *2*.

[173] Ol'khovskii 2005, 147.

[174] Ol'khovskii 2005, 135.

that the medieval Alans of the Northern Caucasus, who were scions of the Sarmatian Alans coming to Eastern Europe in the 1st century AD, raised, somewhere between the 10th and 13th centuries AD, stone statues of men, some of them are shown with battleaxes suspended from their waist-belts with blades downwards (Fig. 9, *6, 7*), these figures standing in the same pose as the personage from Karamunke.[175] Apparently, both these sculptural traditions, in spite of so great a difference in their ages, reflected the same or similar social-ideological conceptions that had been formed just in the Sarmatian world. This is pointed out, in particular, by a difference in affixing the combat hatchets to the waist-belts between the Scythians/Sakas, on the one hand, and the Sarmatians/Alans, on the other: the former carried them with their blades upwards (Figs. 4, *6*, 8, *14, 15*), the latter, as we see, downwards.

Now, having considered the available data on the combat hatchet cult in the European part of Central Eurasia, let us pay attention to those from its Asian territories (with the exception of the Ustyurt Plateau touched upon in connection with the Sarmatians). The practically total absence of any written testimonies for this cult in eastern Central Eurasia puts the archaeological and iconographic evidence in the forefront. The former is much more numerous and includes hatchets, almost all of which were put with certain ritual purposes into nomadic graves excavated in Southern Siberia and Central Asia. Their small part – only some of the picks, including the *klevets* from Old Nisa, has been referred to above (Figs. 2, 3, *16–18, 23–33*). It must be especially emphasized that the Nisean hatchet manufactured of silver with partial gilding, being for sure a full-size replica of a real iron weapon, was intended not for fighting, but for playing the role of a parade attribute of power.

The pictorial witnesses belonging to the antique epoch have also been discussed above. These are the representations of the picks as royalty symbols on the Achaemenid reliefs (Fig. 4, *8*), the Indo-Saka coins (Fig. 7, *1–2a*), the Kushan coins and seal (Fig. 7, *3–5*), and the Parthian or, what even is more preferable, early Sasanian graffito from Dura-Europos (Fig. 5, *10*).

However, this list of pertinent information is to be continued. First of all, it is an iron shaft-holed hatchet put together with other accompanying goods into the grave no. 2 dug at Tillya Tepe – the renowned small necropolis in Northern Afghanistan containing six extremely rich burials of the early Kushan elite representatives[176] who were scions of the Yüeh-chih/Tocharian conquerors of Bactria. The fact that this hatchet[177] had intentionally been placed along with two

[175] Kuznetsov 1962, 55, fig. 19, *3, 4*.

[176] Sarianidi 1985, 23; 1989, 56, 66.

[177] Its representation has not been reproduced in the publications of V.I. Sarianidi who simply terms it "a pick" (1985, 23) and "a hatchet-*klevets*" (1989, 56, 66). The only drawing of this weap-

iron sickle-like knives of the Siberian style in a round wicker basket laid on the deceased female's feet may well testify to its ritual assignment.[178] Apparently, the grave no. 2 must be dated to the third quarter of the 1st century AD.[179]

Besides that, some additional data belong to the Early Medieval period. Three of them are works of Sogdian art. The earliest is an ossuary fragment attributed to the 6th – 7th century AD, which was uncovered at Biya-Naiman in the Samarkand region. There represented is a standing male personage wielding a battleaxe in his right hand[180] (Fig. 9, *9*). In the opinion of F. Grenet, he is one of the Amesha Spentas, the Zoroastrian divine entities, under the name of Shahrevar, whose image in Eastern Iran assumed, as early as the pre-Sasanian epoch, a martial function.[181] On a mural of the early 8th century AD from the room VI/1 at Penjikent we see two banquet scenes,[182] on the left of which there is a high-ranking aristocrat, perhaps the royal-dignity military leader, sitting on a lofty stool and holding a hatchet for its warhead with the fingers of his left hand (Fig. 9, *8*). On the so-called Anikovskaya silver plate kept now in the State Hermitage in St. Petersburg, which was made in Semirechye (modern South-Eastern Kazakhstan and Northern Kyrgyzstan) in the 9th or 10th century AD after a Sogdian original of the 8th century, there is a scene of the siege of a castle.[183] The uppermost rider on its right, obviously the general of the besieging mounted troop, carries a battleaxe in his left hand (Fig. 9, *10*) while none of the other warriors surrounding the castle has such a weapon. The last two monuments of art provide us, therefore, with the most striking examples of the attitude towards the combat hatchet as a sign of the highest military command.

On the upper portion of another work of art from the State Hermitage collection, the so-called Klimova silver plate manufactured in the 7th or early 8th century AD,[184] we see the figure of a man sitting with the crossed legs on a couch-like throne and leaning on a long sword. To his left, behind a pile of cushions, set

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on obtained by me through the courtesy of S.A. Yatsenko (see Nikonorov 1997, vol. 2, fig. 32, *I*; Yatsenko 2001, pl. 8) shows it as a small hatchet bearing no resemblance to a *klevets*. However, the accuracy of this drawing is unclear.

[178] There is an interesting opinion that the female burial no. 2 at Tillya Tepe could belong to a warrior-priestess (see Davis-Kimball 2000, 227).

[179] Zeymal 1999, 242–243.

[180] Pugachenkova 1987, 112, 114/Bn-2; Grenet 1987, 47, 51, fig. 7.

[181] Grenet 1987, 51.

[182] D'iakonov 1954, 119, pl. XXXVI, XXXIX; Belenizki 1980, 82–83; Marshak 2002, 147, figs. 97–98, pl. 16. I follow B.I. Marshak's interpretation of this mural subject that looks quite reasonable.

[183] Marschak 1986, 322, 438, Abb. 209–211; Orbeli/Trever 1935, pl. 20.

[184] Harper/Meyers 1981, XVI, 117–119; pl. 35; Trever/Lukonin 1987, 111/cat. no. 15, 143–144, pl. 29–31; Marshak 1986, 292–294, 437, Abb. 195; Orbeli/Trever 1935, pl. 19; Belenizki 1980, Abb. 12.

upright is a hatchet (Fig. 9, *11*). This personage is probably a king[185], and the battleaxe presents one of his royal attributes. It is to be remembered in this connection that the post-Sasanian literary tradition informs us that the axe served as one of the Sasanian rulers' insignia.[186] However, in spite of the fact that the Klimova plate is usually regarded as a product of the famous Sasanian silverware school, some of its iconographic and stylistic peculiarities permit to suppose it to have been made somewhere east of Iran proper.[187]

It stands to reason that the veneration of combat hatchets appeared among the ancient Iranian-speaking sedentary peoples under the influence of the nomadic world.

Very significant for the theme in question is the fact that during the Early Middle Ages the Tocharian-language inhabitants of Xinjiang, who were kindred to the Yüeh-chih/Tochari whose part, the Great Yüeh-chih, had very long before left the motherland for Bactria and finally established the Kushan realm there, continued to revere the combat hatchets like their remote ancestors did. There are two pieces of the pertinent evidence that came from the Shikshin/Shorchuk cave temple complex in the Karashahr oasis. One of them is a partly preserved mural painting of the 8th century AD from the cave no. 9/11[188] illustrating the "Siege of Kushinagar" – the famous legend about the events after the Buddha entered *Parinirvana* and his body was cremated in the town of Kushinagar. According to this tradition, rulers of those Indian cities where the Buddha preached, having heard about his death, came to besiege Kushinagar, demanding to give them the Buddha's relics (fortunately, this matter was wisely solved without using violence). The besiegers were headed by knights from the royal clan Shakya governing Kapilavastu, to which the Buddha belonged himself.[189] Images of the Shakya knights were very popular in the art of Xinjiang in the 5th – 8th centuries AD, where they were shown bearing local sets of armament. On the mural under consideration these knights are portrayed as armoured horsemen, some holding a battleaxe in the right hand[190] (Fig. 9, *12, 13*). Another fragment of wall painting, probably representing the Shakya knights in the guise of noble Tocharian warriors armed with battleaxes, was discovered in the cave no. 5/7[191] (Fig. 9, *14–15*). Beyond any

[185] Trever/Lukonin 1987, 111.

[186] See n. 70 above.

[187] Harper/Meyers 1981, 119.

[188] In this double numeration of the Shikshin/Shorchuk caves the number before the slash was given by the German expedition working there in 1906 (see Grünwedel 1912, 194–211), whereas the one after the slash – by the Russian expedition in 1909 (Ol'denburg 1914, 11–21).

[189] See D'iakonova 1984, 98.

[190] D'iakonova 1984, 102–104, 216/figs. 11, 12; 1995, 93, pls. XXXII, XXXIV.

[191] Grünwedel 1912, 201, Fig. 451. This mural, because of certain particularities of the knights' armour, as well as of the style of its artistic execution, looks chronologically different

doubt, in the given, not directly combative, context the battleaxe serves its possessor not only as a weapon, but also as a symbol of his knightly dignity.

The listed examples quite eloquently speak that in Antiquity and Early Medieval times the combat hatchets of various kinds were esteemed as prestigious badges of sacral, social, political and military authority among the nomadic and sedentary peoples of Iranian and Tocharian origins. At the same time, it should be noted that the respective evidence for Parthia is scanty, being in fact confined to the graffito from Dura-Europos (Fig. 5, *10*) and the Nisean hatchet-*klevets*.[192] And what is more, their belonging to the Parthian ceremonial practices raises certain doubts. So, the high-ranking personage on the former, as said above, cannot be unequivocally identified as a Parthian. In turn, the latter was hardly a local parade weapon, at least because it had been concealed (together with other objects of foreign origins) in a storage-room of the "Treasure-house" at Old Nisa instead of having been employed for its designated purpose by the Parthians themselves. This *klevets* seems to have been produced in the cultural and military milieu that had very long-standing and robust traditions of using pick-like arms and of honouring them as symbols of power – in other words, in the midst of the Central Asian nomads who, moreover, were closely interacting with Arsacid Iran in many ways.

In all likelihood, the ritual hatchet in question was brought to Mithradatkirt (Old Nisa) as a trophy captured by the Parthians in the course of their campaigns against the Central Asian nomads called Scythians/Sakas and Yüeh-chih/Tochari, whose hordes invaded Eastern Parthia in the early part of the last third of the 2nd century BC. These military confrontations proved to be extremely fierce, and two Parthian kings lost their lives during them: Phraates II (ca. 138/7–128 BC) was killed when fighting the Scythians soon after his victory over the Seleucid king Antiochus VII, and Artabanus I (ca. 127–123 BC) died from a wound received in a battle against the Tochari. Only the latter's son, Mithradates II (ca. 123–88/7 BC), was able to defeat these belligerent nomads in the early years of his reign, improving very much the situation in the eastern lands of the Arsacid

from the "Siege of Kushinagara" painting in the cave no. 9/11. Proceeding from these observations, there is a good reason to think the former to have been made some earlier than the latter, perhaps in the 6th or 7th century AD.

[192] I intentionally avoid to take into consideration the representations of axes in ritual contexts on such works of art found within the Arsacid empire as some of the noted rhyta from Old Nisa (Masson M./Pugachenkova 1959, 90, 91, 107, 133, 144, 145, 148, 181, 183, fig. 35) and several reliefs from Dura-Europos (Perkins 1973, 100–101, fig. 41), Hatra (Winkelmann 2004, 248–253, 274–279 /Kat. Nr. 102, 103, 111–113; Salihi 1971, pl. XXXIII), and somewhere else (Ghirshman 1975, pl. I). The fact is that these works reflect the religious ideas of the Greek and Semitic population of Iran and Mesopotamia, and so the axes depicted on them are no more than customary attributes of their mythological and divine bearers and most probably have nothing to do with the hatchet worship that had originated in the nomadic milieu of Central Eurasia.

empire (Iust. XLII. 1.1–2.5).[193] It can be assumed that the *klevets* found in Old Nisa served as a sign of martial power for a Saka or Tocharian chieftain vanquished by Mithradates II who dispatched it as a significant item of the captured spoils to the royal residence Mithradatkirt situated not so far from the theater of war. There this hostile parade weapon could have been shown off for some time, but later on was moved to the local "Treasure-house" to be uncovered by Soviet archaeologists after more than two thousand years.

One can agree with A. Invernizzi[194] that, proceeding from its decor and design, the Nisean hatchet was produced in the Graeco-Iranian cultural milieu of Central Asia. However, contrary to his assumption, the place of its manufacture could hardly be a center located within the Parthian empire. As we have seen above, there is insufficient evidence that the Parthians used picks in war or in ceremonies, whereas the case was different with the Central Asian nomads intruding into the Arsacid domains in the latter half of the 2nd century BC. More likely, Parthia's eastern neighbour, Bactria, might well be the territory where our *klevets* had been made, especially as from the earliest times there was a considerable center of elegant working of precious metals,[195] and this craft must have particularly flourished in the epoch of Greek rule over that region (327 – ca. 145/140 BC). Somewhere between ca. 145–140 BC, Northern Bactria had been conquered and occupied by the Saka tribe of Sakarauloi, but approximately a decade later, in ca. 130 BC, they were defeated and replaced by another wave of invaders from the Central Asian steppes in the face of the Yüeh-chih/Tochari.[196] Indeed, both of these newcomers gained access to the local manufacturing base of metalworking and artisans involved in this kind of manufacture, and so their leaders were able to order the making of parade arms like the hatchet-*klevets* found in Old Nisa.

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[193] On the great deeds of Mithradates II of Parthia in the east see Olbrycht 2010, 150–155.

[194] Invernizzi 1999, 138.

[195] See Sarianidi 1989, 135–162.

[196] Any of the available reconstructions of the history of the nomadic conquest of Greek Bactria is still controversial because of its poor coverage in the surviving sources. I prefer to follow here the historical interpretation proposed by C.G.R. Benjamin (2007, 181–189).

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Abstract

This article deals with a pick-*klevets* made of partially gilt silver, which was uncovered in 1950 in the so-called "Treasure-house" of the fortified Parthian royal residence known nowadays as Old Nisa (formerly Mithradatkirt) in Southern Turkmenistan. The author argues that this hatchet was brought there as a trophy after a victorious campaign waged by the Parthian king Mithradates II (ca. 123–88/7 BC) in the early period of his reign against invasive nomadic peoples from Central Asia, recorded in ancient written sources under the names of the Scythians/Sakas and Yüeh-chih/Tochari. Manufactured probably in the region of Bactria, this unique battle-size *klevets* was certainly intended for parade/ritual purposes, not for fighting, and must have belonged to a defeated Saka or Tocharian chieftain as his attribute of power. The tradition of such an attitude towards the combat hatchets among the Iranian and Tocharian peoples from the Early Iron Age through Early Medieval times is also traced in detail by the author.