

TYPICAL FINDS OF SCYTHIAN CULTURE FROM THE PIJUT CEMETERY (LORI, ARMENIA)¹

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Abstract

The Scythian artefacts found during archaeological excavations provide interesting insights into the influence and spread of the Scythian culture. The Scythians were known for their art, especially metalwork. Their influence spread over several regions, including parts of modern Armenia. Scythian artefacts found in Armenia include metal objects such as weapons, jewellery and decorative items. The presence of Scythian artefacts in Armenia indicates cultural exchange between the Scythians and the local population. The Scythians were particularly influential in the VII-VI centuries BC, when they interacted with the northern parts of Armenia. Both in Armenia and in the region, archaeological studies show that the Scythian culture had a significant impact on local and neighbouring cultures.

Key words – Pijut, Lori, funerary rite, Scythians, Iron Age, arrowhead, pottery.

Introduction

The evidence of the presence of the Scythian culture at the archaeological sites of Armenia was documented in Karmir Blur, Lori Berd, Karashamb and other sites². The data concerning the northern part of Armenia has been supplemented by the Pijut cemetery excavations, which were conducted between 2014 and 2015³. The tombs found in this cemetery include notable examples of Scythian arrowheads, sharpening stones with hanging loops, decorated bronze pipes, and other objects of luxury. These items, as posited by prevailing scholarly opinion, are associated with the Kimmerian-Scythian culture⁴. The aforementioned ritual is particularly well-documented in the region through the excavation data of

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² Tumanyan 2017, 197.

³ The excavations were conducted with the joint financial support of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography NAS RA and Teghout CJSC. Head of the expedition: Suren Hobosyan.

⁴ Թումանյան 2017, 169, Tumanyan 2017, 196-201.

Urartian castles⁵. In contrast, the newly discovered examples, which are related to the funerary rite, were found in Iron Age tombs.

The construction of tombs

The Pijut cemetery is located about 1 km southwest of the Teghut village of Lori marz, on the left high slope of Dukanadzor, a tributary of the Shnogh river (Map 1, Fig. 1).

Tomb N 1 is located in the area adjacent to the Pijut road (Fig. 3.1, 3.2). During the construction of this road the mausoleum was damaged, only the western part was preserved. It was oriented east-west, the depth from the ground surface was 0.75 m. The width of the chamber in the western part was 0.55 m. The walls of the chamber were lined with andesite fragments. The western andesite cover of the chamber was also preserved. The skeleton was lying on its right side in a squatting position, only the upper part of the skeleton was preserved. On the back of the skull there was an iron knife with an annular handle and a whetstone, small bronze pliers, 6 bronze bracelets, a bronze hairpin and 7 ceramic bowls (Fig. 4, 5).

Tomb N 7 was located 3.35 m west of tomb No. 6 in an east-west direction. The external dimensions are 1.47x1.20 m. During the road construction works the outer part of the tomb was completely destroyed. The chamber had two slabs, the western one was made of sandstone 0.70x0.51 m, and the central one – of granite 0.80x0.55 m. The chamber, 1.20x0.97x0.82 m, oriented east-west, was lined with standing stones. The skeleton was placed on its right side in a squatting position with the skull facing west. A wide bronze belt runs the length of the chamber under the north wall (Fig. 3.3, 3.4). Iron knives were placed between the skeleton and the single-handed jar (Fig. 2.10, Fig. 6.1, 6.8), in the eastern part of the chamber, right next to the bronze belt, a small sharpening stone with hanging loops, Scythian-type 8 bronze arrowheads were found (Figs. 2.1, 2.2-2.9). Among the finds from the chamber there were 5 bracelets (Fig. 6.2, 6.5, 6.6, 6.7, 6.9), two of which were decayed, and three were presented by hollow bronze pipes.

Tomb N 14. Located 0.85 m south of tomb 7, oriented east-west. Outer dimensions are 1.57x1.50 m. The outer part of the tomb was severely damaged, only the western andesite cover (1.13x0.90 m) was preserved. The dimensions of the stone chamber are (1.50x0.80x0.67 m), it is oriented east-west, it is lined with stones placed in an upright position. The skeleton was laid on its right side in a squatting position with the skull facing west. The skull was in the center of the

⁵ Çilingiroğlu 2005, Makhortykh 2023, 436.

chamber, under the north wall. The south-western part of the chamber was completely empty. A Scythian-type bronze arrow was found in there (Fig. 2.10).

Metal artefacts

Among the metal artifacts, Scythian arrowheads stand out as particularly fascinating. They are among the most prevalent finds in the study of Iron age culture. These arrowheads are frequently associated with Urartian sites⁶. Notably, the large number of arrowheads discovered at the Ayanis fortress highlights the significant military presence and influence of the Scythians in the region⁷. Scythian arrowheads have also been found in the fortress dwellings of Armenia, further emphasizing the influence of the Scythians in the region. In contrast to this context, the examples presented here are part of a funerary ritual. In total, we have 9 of such arrowheads from the tombs of Pijout, which are among the classic examples known to us.

The bronze belt found in tomb 7 is also a remarkable find, as it is also associated with the Scythian funerary rite⁸. Academician B. Piotrowski paid special attention to the bronze belts of Transcaucasia, in particular to their production techniques and uses. He notes that the bronze belts, made of thin sheet metal, were intended to be attached to the leather surface of clothing and necessarily belonged to soldiers⁹. At the beginning of the 1st millennium, the new manifestations of the iconography of the soldier in sculpture, where the belt is also a component of the warrior's armor, prove that the belt was part of the weaponry¹⁰. In this respect, the anthropomorphic idols deserve special attention¹¹. It is a well-documented fact that an anthropomorphic idol was discovered within the tomb at Lori Berd¹². In the case of other examples, it is hypothesized that they were also part of the funerary rite¹³. The idol of Voskevan, rich in iconographic details, is particularly interesting¹⁴. It has a pendant around its neck, arms on either side, an object in one palm, probably a dagger, and a bow-like figure in another.

The lower part of the idol's body is decorated. Four congruent triangles enclosed in a rectangle delimit the lower part of the statue, which seems to

⁶ It should be noted that these arrowheads are also common in the territory of Eastern Georgia, Пицхелаури 1973.

⁷ Çilingiroğlu 2005, 63-66, For more parallels, see Пьянков и др. 2019, 206-228.

⁸ Թումանյան 201, 172:

⁹ Пиотровский 1962, 73.

¹⁰ Есаян 1980, табл. 56, рис. 2, 7, Есаян 1976, табл. 148, рис. 2, 3.

¹¹ "These sculptures are markers of the former presence of Scythian tribes in the given area", Tumanyan 2017, 198, For details on these sculptures, see Ольховский, Евдокимов 1994, Елагина 1959, 187-196.

¹² Devedjian 2009, 146-153.

¹³ Թումանյան 2017, 163:

¹⁴ Կարապետյան 2004, 65:

represent a belt that completes the image of a soldier. Why do we emphasize this circumstance? Because we think that similar sculptural manifestations related to the funerary rite directly expressed the earthly image of the deceased, especially considering the fact that the bronze belts found in tombs, both in a number of ancient sites in Armenia and in the region, were found in male burials¹⁵.

Unique example of a jug

Anthropomorphism is also evident in a number of Iron Age ceramic pots. This phenomenon represents itself as a new trend in aesthetic tendencies, as exemplified by the famous ceramic pot from Talin, which features a human head and hands carved on it. These elements appear to be "protecting" the pot¹⁶.

Furthermore, the use of human body parts in decoration of pottery, such as hands or legs, was a prevalent practice during this period¹⁷.

In this context, our attention particularly was drawn to the ceramic single-handed jar found at Pijut, handle of which was decorated in detail (Fig. 4.2). This vessel has perhaps only one parallel, found in the area of the Shnogh river basin¹⁸. Both jars come from a funerary context. Therefore, if in some cases the presence of anthropomorphic statues in the burial complexes of the region is considered as an influence of the Scythian culture, it can be hypothesized that the appearance of anthropomorphic elements on pottery is probably one of its manifestations, when the stone culture gradually begins to give way to small sculptural elements, which, parallel to the change of form, continue to carry the symbolism of sculpture, but the form of expression changes. It is noteworthy that the pottery dating to the VI-V centuries BC makes up a unique group, where alongside rough, asymmetrical, and simple kitchenware there are delicately crafted ceramic pots, which indicates their special functions. Depiction of the hands on the pots is certainly not only an artistic manifestation, but also a special attitude towards the contents of the vessel¹⁹.

Whetstones

Two of the tombs contain whetstones (Fig. 2.1, 5.1), which were found with accompanying military equipment, including daggers, arrows, and a bronze belt (Fig. 3.3, 3.4)²⁰. These are well crafted, black colored tools with a smooth surface.

¹⁵ Narimanishvili, Vadachkoria, Tamazashvili, Juszczak et al. 2017, 129.

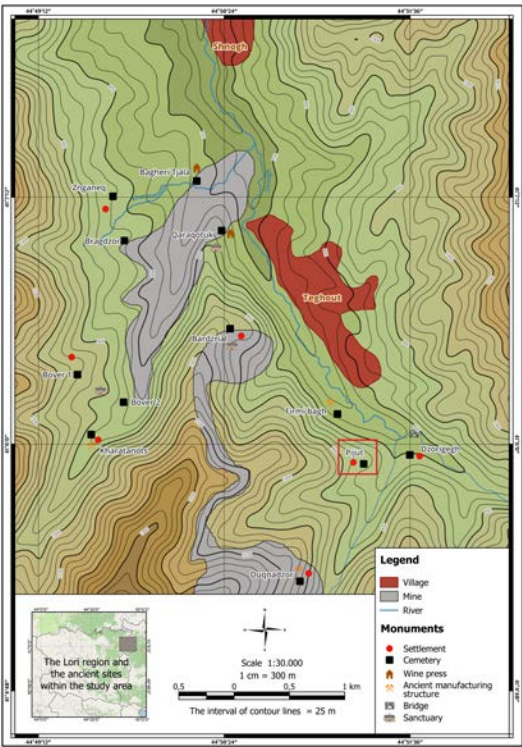
¹⁶ Ավետիսյան, Ավետիսյան 2006, 204. աղ. 8. նկ. 9, Հորոյան և այլք 2021, 373, նկ. 173-1:

¹⁷ Асланов и др. 1959, таб. XXII, рис. 8, Հորոյան և այլք 2021, 338-340:

¹⁸ Հորոյան և այլք 2021, 373, նկ. 173-2:

¹⁹ Despite the lack of proper research, we suppose that they were wine jugs (and possibly water jugs) that had no ordinary use, but were used for special ceremonies.

²⁰ For parallels, see Пьянков, Рябкова, Зеленский 2019, 218.



Map 1. Archaeological sites within the Teghut mine area (by Rafik Gabrielyan)

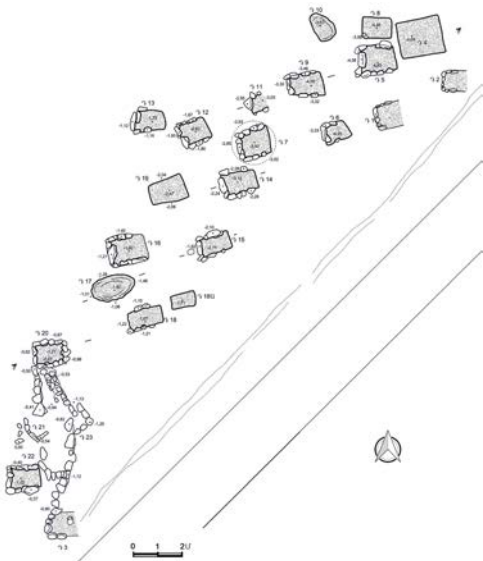


Fig. 1. Pijut Cemetery (Measurements by Lilit Ter-Minasyan)



Fig. 2. Objects of material culture from Tomb 7, 14



Fig. 3. The appearance and unfolded state of Tombs 1, 7 and 14

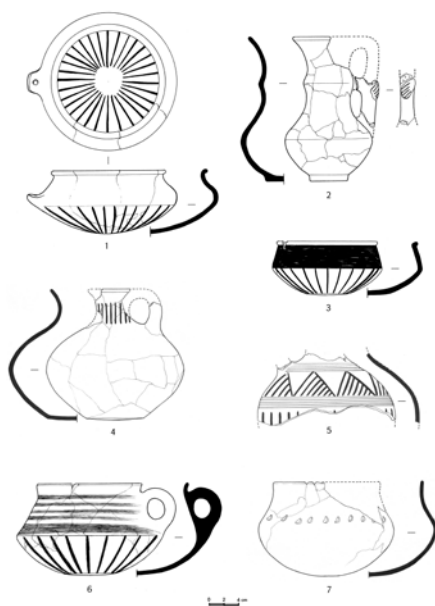


Fig. 4. Tomb N 1, A group of various forms of ceramic (Drawings by Ani Sahakyan)



Fig. 5. Tomb N 1, Metallic and stone artefacts (Photos by Vram Hakobyan)

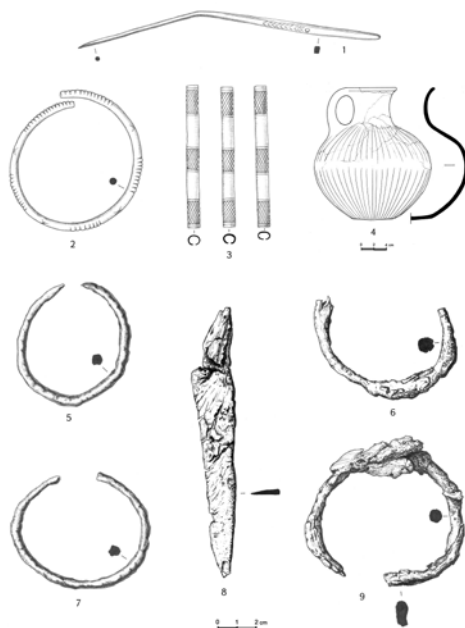


Fig. 6. Tomb N 7, Ceramic and metallic artefacts (Drawings by Ani Sahakyan)

Relation of this tool to the Scythian culture can be seen in its detailed depictions on Scythian sculptures, such as we see it, for example, on the famous statue from Ternovsk, where one can see a whetstone hanging from a belt of the statue²¹. The appearance of special whetstones is observed in the cultures of Maykop and Usatovo (Period I)²². We generally agree with the assessment made by Prof. Blagoje Govedarica that the inclusion of whetstones in the equipment of warriors of the Bronze and Iron Ages of Eurasia can be understood as one of their fundamental culture-historical characteristics. This tradition emerged in the area north of the Caucasus in the first half of the 4th millennium BC, which was the period of appearance of the first daggers made of arsenical bronze and the whetstones were used for sharpening daggers. It is in this context that the custom arose of placing such tools in graves together with weapons. The Bronze Age dagger-whetstone combination already points to a warrior. It personifies the vigilance of the deceased, the power of weapons, as well as his belonging to the warrior social class. In Iron Age graves, whetstones are frequently interred alongside swords, thereby perpetuating the tradition of combining these symbols of warfare. There is no reason to doubt that the combination of whetstone and dagger, as well as whetstone and sword, marked the place of the deceased in the social hierarchy

²¹ Елагина 1959, 189, рис. 3, 4.

²² Govedarica 2022, 92.

and their status as a warrior in real life. The ritual placement of these items with the deceased may have been of even greater importance, as it was intended to secure the same advantages in the afterlife²³.

Discussion

Among the ancient cultural realities, unique artistic approaches deserve special attention. They are expressed both in the design of objects of practical significance and in ritual or cult objects. As already mentioned, a number of changes took place in the Armenian Highlands during this period, among which the formation of separate tribal confederations, the militarization of the community and, of course, the advancement of the positions of the Urartian state on the one hand and the periodic movement of the Scythian tribes on the other are of particular importance. The material culture of the period gives the best idea of individual tribal customs. This is interesting, especially when considering the material culture of tribal communities in an intermediate position. Despite the fact that they have their own cultural peculiarities, the archaeological data prove that this culture cannot be completely separated from the contemporary sites of the region. The study of arrowheads, whetstones, other armor components provide valuable insights into Scythian military tactics, technology and conflicts with neighboring cultures.

The evidence suggests that their influence increased in the territory of north-eastern Armenia and in the southern Caucasus more generally during the period spanning the 7th and 6th centuries BC. Moreover, the advent of new forms of pottery and the emergence of new styles of anthropomorphic statuary represent significant interest in the field of archaeological studies. Nevertheless, the north-eastern region of Armenia is a zone of interesting influences, where one can see both the prevailing trends of the time – metalworking, production of luxury objects, etc. – and as local, distinctive features.

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²³ Govedarica 2022, 108.

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ՍԿՅՈՒԹԱԿԱՆ ՄՇԱԿՈՒՅԹԻՆ ԲՆՈՐՈՇ ԳՏԱԾՈՆԵՐ ՓԻՋՈՒՏ ԴԱՄԲԱՐԱՆԱԴԱՇՏԻՑ (ԼՈՐԻ, ՀԱՅԱՍՏԱՆ)

Անի Սարատիկյան

Ամփոփում

Հնագիտական պեղումներով հայտնաբերված սկյութական արտեֆակտները վկայում են սկյութական մշակույթի տարածման և ազդեցության մասին: Սկյութները հայտնի էին իրենց արվեստով, հատկապես մետաղագործությամբ: Հայաստանում հայտնաբերված սկյութական արտեֆակտները ներառում են մետաղական առարկաներ, ինչպիսիք են զենքերը, զարդերը և դեկորատիվ իրերը: Դրանց առկայությունը Հայաստանում վկայում է

սկյութների և տեղի ցեղերի մշակութային փոխառնչության մասին: Վերջին տվյալների համաձայն, Հայաստանի հյուսիսային հատվածներում սկյութական մշակույթի ազդեցության հետքեր նույնպես կան: Սկյութական մշակույթի ազդեցությունը տեղի ցեղերի վրա նկատելի է հատկապես մ.թ.ա. VII-VI դարերում, երբ սկյութները սերտ կապեր են ունեցել Հայաստանի հյուսիսային շրջանների բնակիչների հետ:

Բանալի բառեր՝ Փիջուտ, Լորի, թաղման ծես, սկյութներ, երկաթի դար, նետասլաք, խեցեղեն:

ХАРАКТЕРНЫЕ ДЛЯ СКИФСКОЙ КУЛЬТУРЫ НАХОДКИ ИЗ МОГИЛЬНИКА ПИДЖУТ (ЛОРИ, АРМЕНИЯ)

Ани Саратикян

Резюме

Найденные при археологических раскопках скифские артефакты свидетельствуют о влиянии и распространении скифской культуры. Скифы славились искусством обработки металлов. Скифские артефакты, найденные в Армении, включают металлические предметы, такие как оружие, украшения и декоративные изделия. Наличие скифских артефактов в Армении указывает на культурный обмен между скифами и местным населением. Согласно последним данным, следы влияния скифской культуры сохранились в северных регионах Армении. Ощутимым было влияние скифской культуры на армянскую в VII-VI веках до н.э., когда скифы имели тесные контакты с населением северных районов Армении.

Ключевые слова – Пиджут, Лори, погребальный ритуал, скифы, железный век, наконечник стрелы, керамика.