

THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCES OF THE EARLY PERIOD OF MILITARY CONTACTS BETWEEN THE BLACK SEA NORTH LITTORAL AND THE ANCIENT EAST AND THE "CIMMERIAN PROBLEM"

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NOTA: Los nombres y títulos rusos, que aparecen en el texto y en la Bibliografía, se dan en transliteración española (véase Calonge, 1969). El texto inglés se ha mantenido tal y como fue entregado por el autor.

Abstract

The author distinguishes the archaeological evidences of the early military contact of The Black Sea North Littoral with the Ancient Near East, belonged to the group of the Novocherkassk-ward type. He proposes what such evidences presents the most adequate archaeological conformity to the Assirian written evidences about the Cimmerians of the Sargon II era.

Key words. Cimmerians. Skythians. Chariots.

Resumen

El autor destaca los testimonios arqueológicos de los contactos militares más antiguos en el litoral Norte del Mar Negro y en el Próximo Oriente de la época preescita.

Supone, que estos testimonios, pertenecientes al grupo del tipo del tesoro de Novocherkassk, son los que corresponden más adecuadamente desde el punto de vista arqueológico, a los testimonios escritos más antiguos de los asirios de época de Sargon II sobre los cimérios.

Palabras clave. Cimerios. Escitas. Carros de combate.

Since the last century there have been two tradition on the origin of the Cimmerians shown in the historical literature. The first tradition, which follows the information provided by Herodotus and other

Greek authors, proposed that the Cimmerians inhabited Black Sea North littoral before the invasion of the Skythian. In addition to the legend of the Cimmerians, Herodotus pointed out existence of contemporary "Cimmerian" toponyms in this region: "The Cimmerian Bosphorus", "Cimmerian banks", region of "Cimmeria" (Her.IV.12.).

Among the archaeological literature the conception of the North Pontic origin of the Cimmerians was most consistent in a monograph of Alexey Terenozhkin "The Cimmerians" (Terenozhkin, 1976). He referred all pre-Scythian complexes 8th - 7th cent. B.C. of The Steppe and The Forest-Steppe of Ukraine to the Cimmerian culture. Terenozhkin also included in this culture two groups of nomadic population remains: the Chernogorovka and the Novocherkask ones. Complexes of Novocherkask hoard's type group presented in The South-East of Europe were picked out earlier by Aleksandr Iessen (Iessen, 1954). Now the idea of existence of the Cimmerian archaeological culture is supported by majority of Russian and Ukrainian archaeologists.

On the other hand, in the last 20 years a series of issues revising many aspects of the Cimmerian problem and reviving the tradition that had rejected the Pontic origin of Cimmerians were published. The Italian scholar Umberto Cozzoli proposed that tradition told by Herodotus and the "Cimmerians" toponyms were brought by the Greeks from Asia Minor, and they were used because North Pontic barbarians were similar to the real Cimmerians of Asia Minor (Cozzoli, 1968).

These ideas were developed in M.Salvini and A.Kristensen's works, published in 80s. The main argument of these authors was the absence in Assyrian inscriptions of direct mentions of the coming of the North the Cimmerians from The Caucasus.

Later information from the Assaraddon time placed The Cimmerians in The Country of Manna. That's why, Salvini and Kristensen suggested the search of the fatherland of the Cimmerians, firstly mentioned in sources of Sargon time, in The East and South-East of Urartu (Salvini, 1984; Kristensen, 1988). Anna Kristensen believed that the Cimmerian tradition and the toponyms were brought in Black Sea North Littoral by the Scythians who acted jointly with Cimmerians in the 7th cent. B.C. in Asia Minor. This point of view is close to the propositions of some Russian scholars such as Irina Kuklina (Kuklina, 1984, 56), Andrei Alekseev and Nataliia Kachalova (Alekseev, Kachalova, 1989), Sergei Tojtas'ev (Tohtas'ev, 1992). They refuted the existence of the Cimmerian culture in the North Pontic region. Igor' D'iakonov supposed that "The Cimmerians" were not ethnic group. He translated "Gammiri" the Iranian languages into Assyrian texts as any "mobile detachment of horsemen" (D'iakonov, 1981).

In our article we'll try to examine one problem, closely connected with Cimmerians: the problem of the archaeological evidences of early military contacts of the Novocherkask group with countries of the Ancient East.

Considerable findings made in the 70s in The Northern Caucasus permitted to review until a high degree the Early Scythian chronology by comparing with the Neo-Assyrian one (Petrenko, 1980, 1983). In contemporary time the new early date 650-625 B.C. for the most important Scythian monuments the Kelmesskaia and Krasnoe Znamia barrow cemeteries, is supported by most scholars.

The following investigation leads to the accumulation of archaeological evidences from the contacts of Northern Caucasus and North Pontic region with Middle East and Trans-Caucasian area in the pre-Scythian times. Generally speaking, these evidences were not new. In 50-60s findings of horse-bits of Middle East form were published together with details of harness similar to the ones on Assyrian reliefs. All of them were found in The Forest-Steppe region of Ukraine (Titenko, 1954, 78, fig.1-3;

Kovpanenko, 1956, 174-179). Even earlier some findings of fragmentary helmets of Assyrian-Urartian forms were known in the cemeteries of Faskau and Verhnia Rutha (in The Norther - Caucasus) (Uvarova, 1909, 227; Kozenkova, 1990, 79 - fig. 8, 20).

The increase of such material created the necessity of recording, dating and going into a deeper study of these findings. it; more correctly explain it.

Almost all the artefacts are writing about belong to the armament and harness fields. They can be divided into two groups.

Within the first group we distinguished objects, which were directly adopted from Assyria and Urartu and which had details of armour and helmets. Now we can't say exactly whether these objects were brought from The Middle East or Urartu or made in The Caucasus from imported original. In the local culture these artefacts had not any prototypes, however they had been known to The South of The Caucasus a long time before. Some Bronze pieces of scaly armour were found in several graves of the pre-Scythian (Novocherkassk) time in The Northern Caucasus: the cemetery "Industriya-1", grave 4; the grave near Kaban-gora; the cemetery Klin-Iar, grave 16 (all from the region of Kislovodsk); Zaiukovskiy and Psedah Cemeteries (Checheno-Ingusheriya); the Uashljitu barrow (Adygeia) (Vinogradov, Runich, Mihallov, 1976, fig. 5,21; Afanasjev, Kozenkova, 1981, 152-153; Dudarev, 1991, 50). Besides that, in the cemetery "Industria" together with the armour they were also discovered long and narrow bronze "scales", which could be considered as the details of an armour belt (Vinogradov, Runich, Mijailov, 1976, fig. 5, 22).

All of these finds permitted to revise the date of appearance of scale armour in The South-Eastern Europe, which was suggested by Evgeni Chernenko (6th cent. B.C.) (Chernenko, 1968), and to support the opinion of Valentina Kozenkova of belonging this data to The End of 8th cent. B.C.(Kozenkova, 1982). But the supposition of Chernenko about Assyrian origin of the scale armour of the Scythians could now be confirmed by new evidences.

Apart from the above mentioned bronze helmet from Fakau and Verhnia Rutha, now we know other two ones in the cemetery Klin-Iar (Kielovodek city) Both helmets belong to the type of conichelmets with ear plate represented in the Assyrian reliefs (Fig.1,3) (Belisnikiy, 1990, 193, fig 3,1; Dudarev , 1992, plate 17).

Groups of objects created in the local culture, without any doubt, under the Middle Eastern and the Transcaucasian influence, are distinguished in the second group of evidences. It meant "the import of ideas".

The type of horse bits with fasted cheek-pieces "Endzhe-Konstntinovka" is included into these innovations (type IV of our classification) (Erlj, 1991). It was presented not only in The Northern Caucasus, but in The Forest-Steppe region of Ukraine. The Northern Caucasus (Novocherkassk) basis for this type is obvious. The shape of these horse-bits, character of their ornaments, blades and "hats" of cheek-pieces are the confirmation of this idea.

On the other hand, Middle Asian manner of fasted cheek-pieces were used in this bridles. In the contemporary time the series of finds of horse-bits of this type consist of 8 objects. Two bits from Chishjo (Adygeja) (Tov, 1990, 40, fig 1; 41, fig.2) (Fig.1,1) are known to have been found in the Northern Caucas territory ; one finding from the city Maikop area was mentioned by Alexander Iessen (Iessen, 1953, 92), one specimen was found near Krasnodar (reported by Dmitriy Vasilinenko). There are 3 specimen of this type of bits from the Ukrainian Forest-Steppe region: The Teremtci, The Konstntinovka, barrow mound N 375 and from The Museum of Kiorvograd (Gorishni, 1978, 56, fig.1 ; Titenko, 1954, 79, fig.5). One object of this type was found in Endzhe (Bulgaria) (Popov, 1932, 101, fig. 88). It seems, what the center of production of this type of bits was The Trans-Kuban region of The Northern Caucasus.

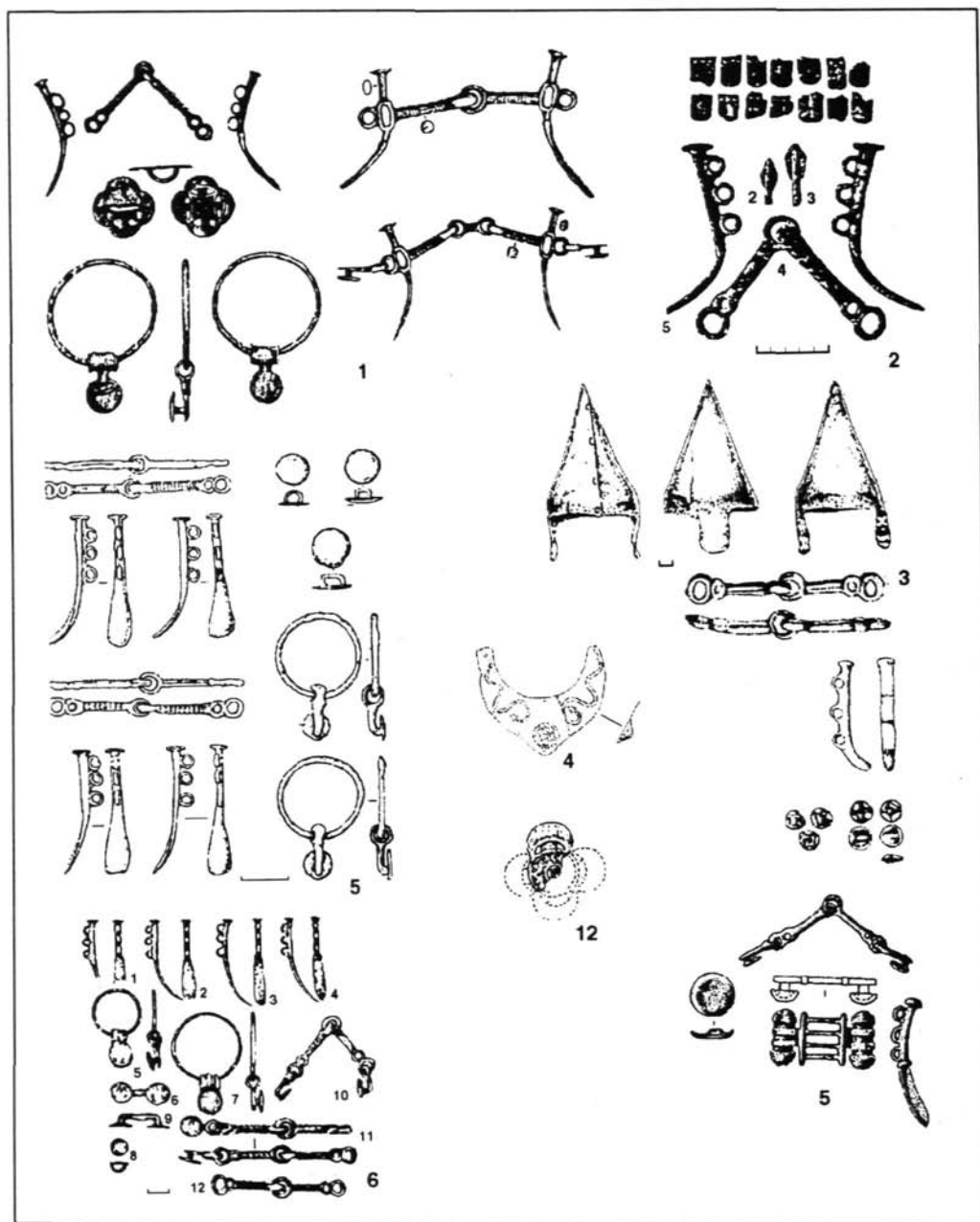


Figure 1. The early horizon of complexes: 1. Cnishjo ; 2. Kaban-Gora; 3. Klin-Uiar, grave 186; 4. Klin-Uiar (surface find); 5. Kladi, barrow 46; 6. Pshish hoard; 7. Nosachovo

Other finding of horse-bits with fasted cheek-pieces are known from the Trans-Kuban region to the East: coming from Koban and Tereze cemeteries (Iessen, 1953, 70, fig. 1 - , 1; Kozencova, 1989, 186, plate XXXIX). But these shapes of artefacts were not developed in a separate type.

The same kind of innovation was produced by the appearance of chariots and chariot's harness among the group of "Novocherkask- hoard type".

They could be distinguishable after the research in 1988 of the barrow Ush'kitu near Kabekhabl Adygeia, Trans-Kuban region) .

Under the mound of this barrow was discovered the 13 meter long and 7 meter wide pit-grave (Fig.3). Although the funeral place in the grave was plundered in ancient times, remains of chariots were preserved in situ. A reconstruction of them showed that the arrangement of the team was similar to Assyrian one, which is well-known by reliefs. There was a two-wheeled chariot with one draught-pole linked to a four-horsed team under one yoke. The bronze equipment of team consisted of a pair of rings with pendants, a pair "bracelet-shaped rings", same plates of horse-traces etc. (Fig.4). These objects could have been created on the local basis after the acquaintanceship of the Assyrian and the Urartian army, headed by charioteers. Now we know more than 20 complexes with details of chariots in The Northern Caucasus and The Ukrainian Forest-Steppe region. Two complete of such chariots harness were found in Central Europe in Komliod and Priud hoards (Hallus, Horvath, 1939, plate XX; Kemenczei, 1981, 31, fig.5,3); one object was found in the horse grave Norshun-Tepe (Anatolia) (Hauptman, 1953, fig. 4,9) (Fig.5,10).

The appearance of North Caucasian "pectorals", apparently used as a poitrel belongs to such group of innovations. Maria Pogrebova underlined the local features of these series of artefacts and their differences from the Urartian poitrel (Pogrebova, 1984, 20-23). Most probable center of production of these objects, which appeared as the result of adopting this idea, was the region of city Kislovodsk. They were introduced in the hoard from Beshtau-mount, in Sultan-gora and Klln-Yiar cemeteries (all 5 specimens) (Iessen, 1954, fig. 13; Vinogradov, 1972, fig. 9,2; Dudarev, 1991, plates 15; 16,4) (Fig.1,4) Furthermore, such "pectorals" were found in Transcaucasian, in the area of the Kolhida culture (two objects from Esheri and Anuhva) (Kufirin, 1949, fig. 31; Domanskiy, 1979, fig. 137). Most probably, they were imported from Northern Caucasus.

As for the characteristic of the contacts with The Middle East and Transcaucasian it's necessary to point out the following. If evidences of contacts among the first group (helmets and armour) could have appeared as a result of import, the innovations of the second group clearly demonstrated the acquaintance of the local population with the army of Assyria and Urartu. Both groups of evidences could be created as a result of a military campaign from the North Caucasian territory.

All the complexes with the evidences of contacts can be chronologically divided into on upper and early horizons. The upper horizon belongs to the so-called "pre-Kelermesskaiya (by Iessen, 1954) or "transmission" (by Illinskaiya and Terenozhkin, 1983) group. It was distinguished by the presence of the Scythian arrowheads of a rhombic outline "Endze-Gaborin" type (by Polin, 1987) and cheek-pieces with three holes "Sialk B" (by Erlj, 1992). These types had a Central Asiatic(Siberian) origin and were connected with the first wave of Scythians. The upper date of this horizon is limited by the beginning of the Kelermesskaya period. Now it's dated to 650-625 B.C. by the time of I Krasnoznameniskiy barrows where a plate of a chariot's pole with image of goodness Ishtar was found, such images were presented on Assyrian reliefs of Assyrbaniyal's time (Petrenko, 1980). In the upper chronological horizon we included, Ush'kitu, Kvitki, huror Alekseevskiy and other complexes (Fig.2).

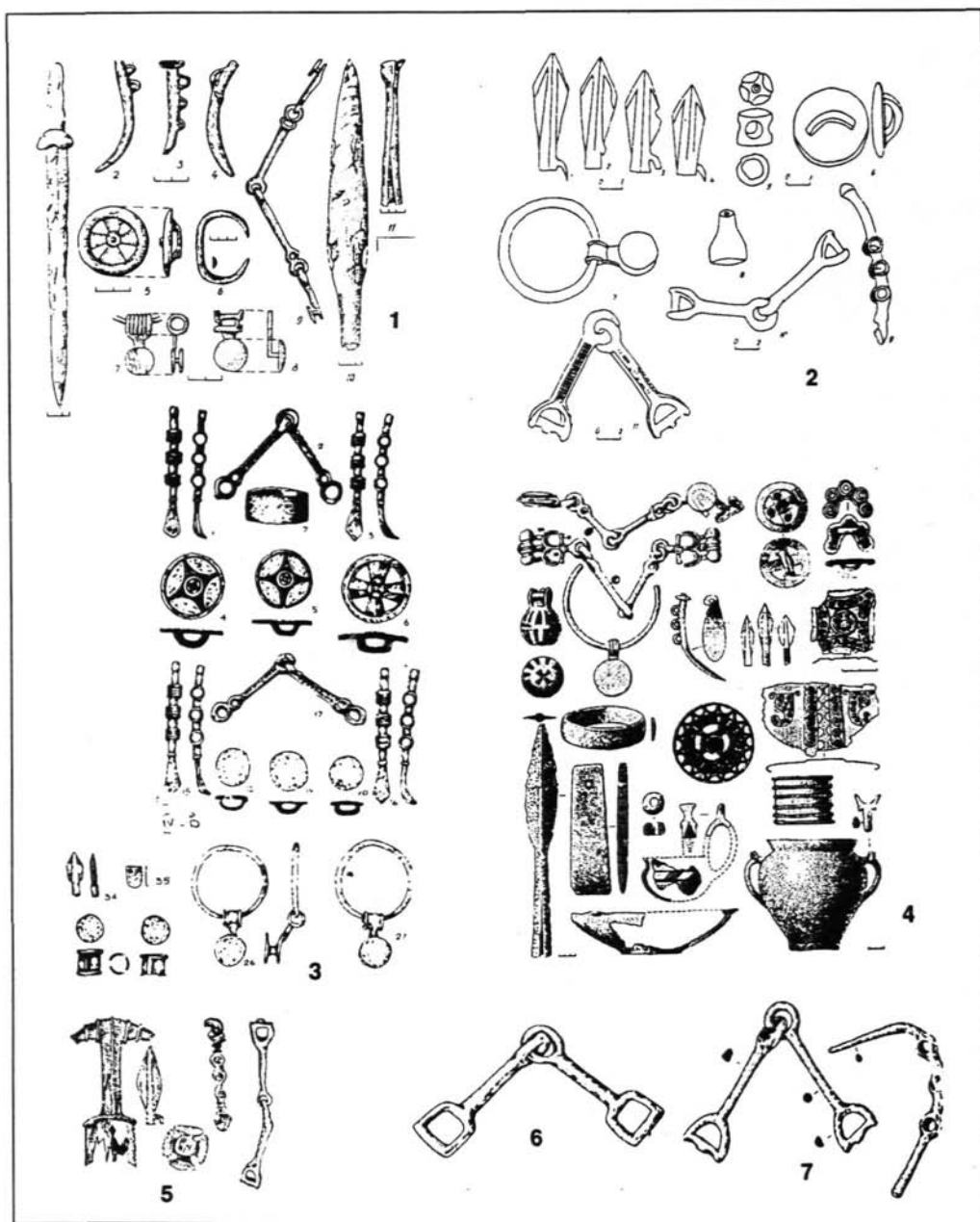


Figure 2. The upper horizon of complexes. 1: Lermontovskii raz'ezd; 2: Alekseevskii; 3: Uashkjiu; 4. Kvitki; 5: Kubanski cemetery, grave 35; Psish cemetery (surface find); Dukmasov (Surface find)

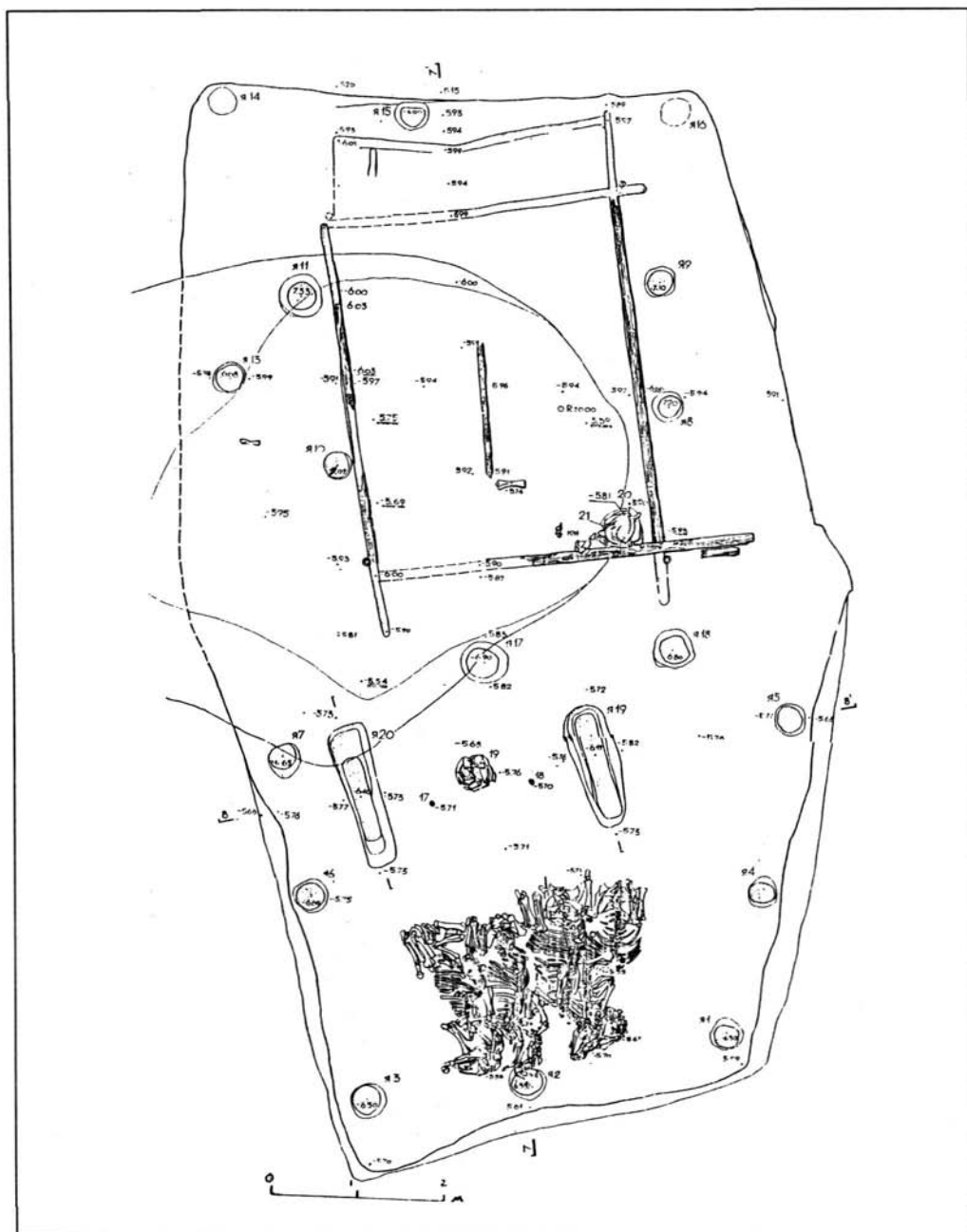


Figure 3. Uashjitu barrow. Plan of grave

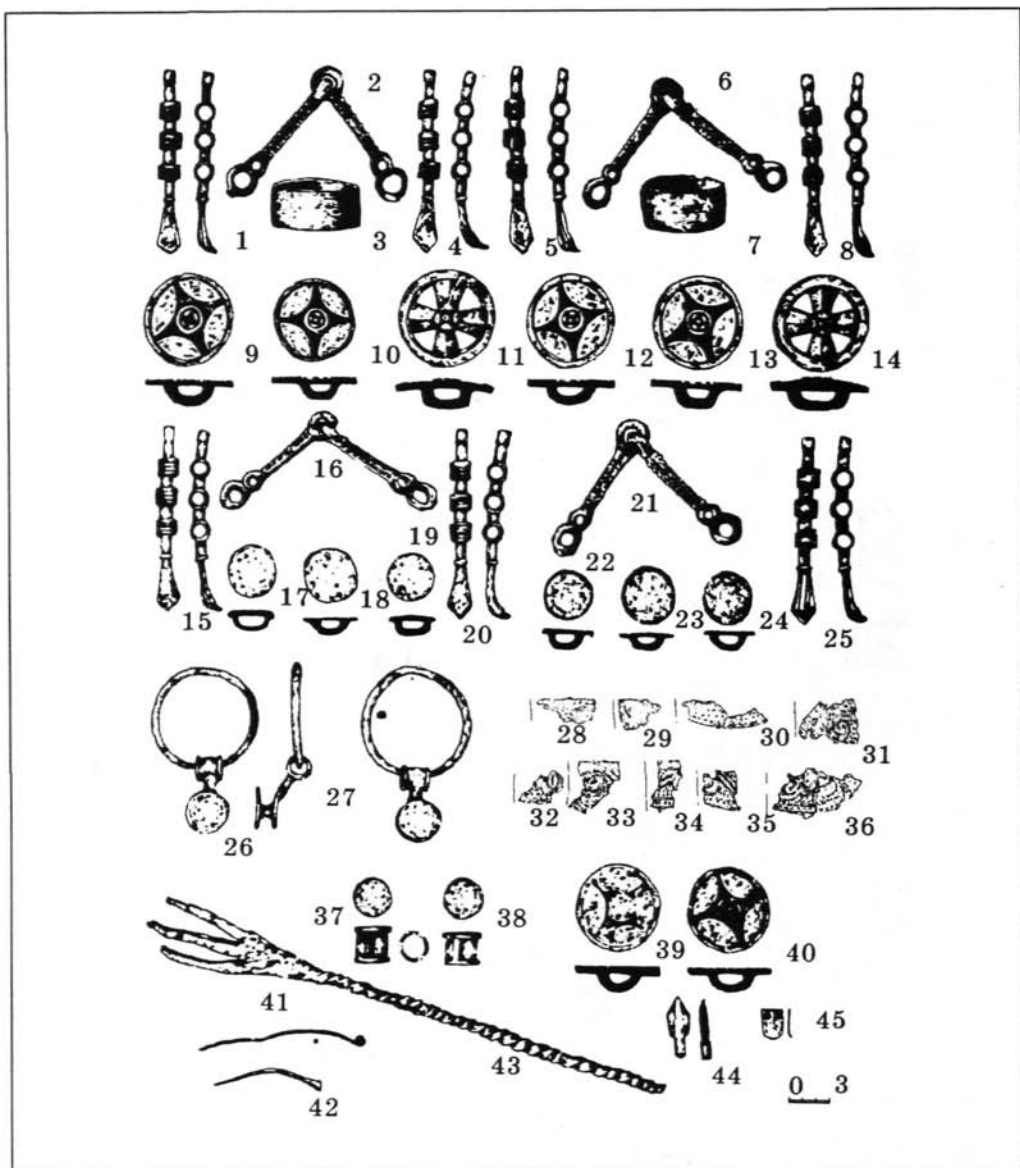


Figure 4. Uashjiu barrow. Contents of the grave

In the early horizon the Scythian types of artefacts are absent (Fig.1). This horizon can be dated by the Assyrian helmet from the grave 186 in Klin-Uiar cemetery (Belinski, 1990) (Fig.1,3) and the horse

fastening from Nosachevo (Kovpanenko, 1966). The helmet from Klin-Ular belongs to type A-2 (by Tarik Madhloom) of Assyrian helmets, hammered from one piece of bronze, they existed during the time of Tyglatpalasar III (744-725 B.C.) and Sargon II (722-21 - 705 B.C.). The same helmet as from Klin-Ular we can be seen on the reliefs of Palace of Tiglatpalasar III (Barnett, Falkner, 1962, plate LIV).

The horse fastenings from Nosachevo were widely dated to the time of Sargon II to Assurbanipal by Galina Kovpanenko (Kovpanenko, 1966, 177-178). But Georg Kossak in two of his issues pointed out, that such fastenings were present on reliefs of Tiglatpalasar III (744-727 B.C) (Kossak, 1987, 116; Idem., 1987a).

In grave 186 of Klin-Ular cemetery some cheek-pieces of a not yet classic "Novocherkask" form were found with helmet. These belonged to pre-Novocherkask "transmission" type I-g (Erljih, 1992); and the contents of this grave, most probably, marks the beginning of campaign, which we dated to The last quarter of the 8th cent. B.C. This date can be compared with the first information about the Cimmerians found in Assyrian narrative sources. This can be connected with unsuccessful campaign of Urartian king Rusa I into the country of Gamir. The time of this campaign has now been successfully dated by the scholars Anna Kristensen and Askold Ivanchik to year the 714 year B.C. (Kristensen, 1988, 42; Ivanchik, 1989, 6 ; Idem., 1990, 6-8). According to the the source shows the military contacts with The Cimmerian in that period were limited to the territory of Urartu and Western Assyria. It can be supported by some findings of the Novocherkask period in The South of The Caucasus.

The upper horizon of complexes with evidences of contacts corresponds chronologically to the Assyrian sources of The first half of 7th cent. B.C. In Assarhaddon's appeals to the oracle of Shamash (680-670 B.C) it was mentioned that alternately Cimmerians and Scythians, were acting in The East of Assyria together with the Mannaens and the Medes. As Igor' Diakonov and Askold Ivanchik supposed in this situation the name "Cimmerians" were used in inscriptions for Scythians or Saka (Diakonov, 1981, 93; Ivanchik, 1989, 7). The Cimmerians were properly located by different sources at that time in region of Kilikia and Kapoddokia.

It was published not long ago Anatolian complexes Imirler (near Amasia) and Norshun-Tepe, dated to the first half of the 7th cent. there in this time were Cimmerians) with had a mixed character. There were the elements of "Scythian triad", connected by origin with The East of Eurasia, horse bits with stirrup-shaped terminations, rhomb-shaped arrowhead and beaked axe. The word "akinake" and the ring of the chariot's harness were connected with the North Caucasus; and with Transcaucasian the bits made of twisted bronze bars (Unal, 1982, 65-81; Hauptmann, 1985, fig 4; 10).

It is very probable that these complexes display a mixture of the two nomad's waves: are coming from the Asiatic Part of the Steppe and the other from The Northern Caucasus. It may also be an Asiatic wave called "Scythians" ("Shkuza" and "Shkuda" of Assyrian sources).

The main argument of the archaeologists against the Black Sea North Littoral origin of The Cimmerians is the absence in The South of The Caucasus of artefacts of the Novocherkask period. Such finds, in fact, were not numerous. Alexander Iessen mentioned the bits with double-ring endings from Surmushi and fragments of Novocherkask's type cheek-piece from Canyon of Ksan (Georgia) (Iessen, 1953, 64). Above, we have referred to the chariot's harness details from Norshun-Tepe. Besides that horse bits are known from grave 47 in the cemetery of Kalakent (Azerbaijan). They have been created under obvious influence of the Novocherkask-type bits. They have bended blades like the Novocherkask ones (Nagel y Strommenger, 19-35, fig.19) (Fig.5,13).

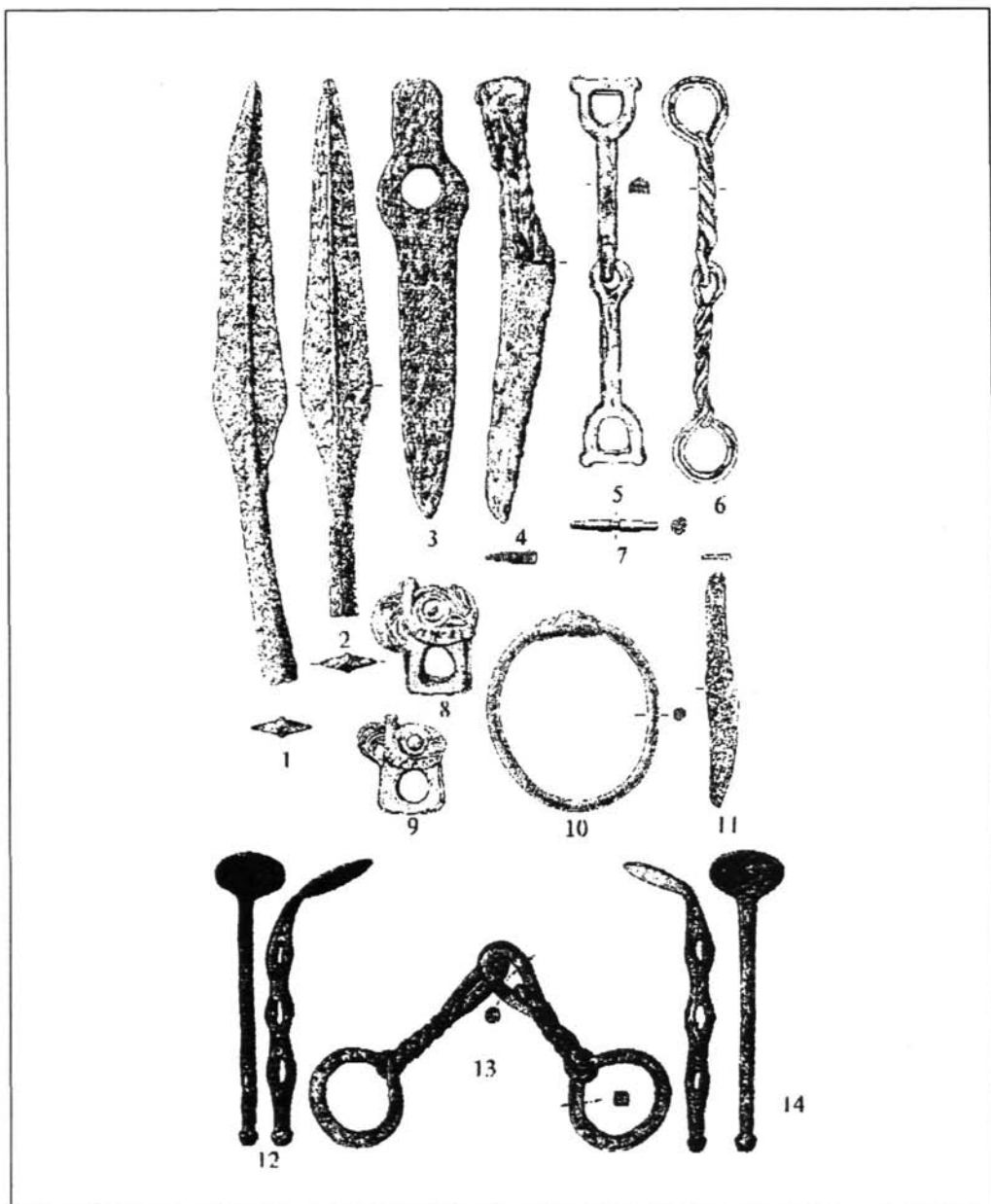


Figure 5. 1-11. Norsnun-teoe (Anatolia), horse grave b y Hauptmann (1985); 12-14. Kalakent, grave 47 by Nagel and Strommenger (1985)

Therefore we can't speak about a full absence of the Novocherkask impact in The Near East. Obviously, since the military campaign of tribes from The Northern Caucasus territory were sporadically and of short duration, they couldn't leave significant remains. On the other hand, it is necessary to carry out a special investigation for the findings of objects of the pre-Scythian time as it was with the Scythian ones.

Apparently, the Novocherkask hoard's type group on contemporary level of our knowledge presents the most adequate archaeological conformity to the Assyrian written evidences about Cimmerians on the Sargon time. Early military contacts with Middle East make us treat more attentively the North Pontic tradition defending the Cimmerians origin, and not reject it at all. It is necessary to look for some real basis in the Herodotus legend about the Cimmerians.

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