

Finding Scythian Identity Through the Use of the Material Found in
the Kurgan Excavations and the Experimental Approaches Able to
Amplify Their Usefulness.

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Introduction

When it comes to the study of classical civilisations there is a general assumption that it is difficult to reconstruct a detailed knowledge for any societies in which neither historians nor the remains of permanent building survive, only maintained through the groups close to Empires and states of the East and Western world .¹ This can be truth for many of the European peoples considered to be detached from the civilisation of the Graeco-Roman expansions across the continent, situations where we find that much of the material culture was taken or lost through time, their histories forgotten, and way of lives abandoned. Often, we find little relief when looking outwards to other civilisations, however, when it comes to the peoples who would later be considered of the Scythian society a rare relief comes in the form of endless information from their neighbours and some limited material remains. Some of the information comes from the writings that were spawned from contact with the Mediterranean, telling of the horse riding nomads who would arrive from the mysterious lands of the Eastern world, warriors who would be the scourge of the Near East, toppling the Assyrian empire.² They would topple empires who had survived centuries of warfare with other empirical powers through their expert execution of experienced horse riders, armies of individuals who had spent their lives in the saddle, marrying a level of control with the use of a unique bow which the armies of the Near-Eastern kingdoms were unable to replicate.³

¹ Chugunov 2017:72

² Rolle 1989:86

³ Khazanov 2015:34

These bloody thirsty warriors would gain numerous reputations among numerous societies as being bloodthirsty savages who were completely lacking any aspect of a “civilised” people.⁴ Ovid despised the Scythians, his bias gained through his comfortable Roman life which had been thrown asunder by his exile to the barbarian lands of the Steppe.⁵ Diodorus Siculus speaks of their military prowess and women fighting side by side with their men,⁶ Herodotus would be one historian who has been seen by many scholars of Scythian focus as the most accurate source on this shrouded society.⁷ Herodotus writes in-depth of their many practices to do with the burial of their aristocracy, showing these supposedly barbaric individuals to have a wonderful approach to their own activities, with a clear devotion to the respect owed to their rulers.⁸ Their rulers would be individuals of great prowess, able to wrestle control over restless subjects in a hierarchy built on strength as they would lead their armies from the front.⁹ Such kings were seen throughout Scythian history, for example, King Aetius lead his hordes against Phillip of Macedon and even though defeated, he was given the vengeance through the shattering of Phillip’s leg and the theft of Phillip’s spoils gained through his victory.¹⁰ These warriors were seen as completely lacking in honour and the ability to conduct proper warfare,¹¹ Herodotus mentions Darius’s aggravation at the hands of the Scythian warriors when they chose to chase after a hare that broke through the Scythian battle line, showing a lack of concern when it came to their mighty foe.¹²

⁴ Diod. 2.44 Rolle 1989:8 ; Rolle 1989:14 ; Polosmak 1995:76

⁵ Rolle 1989:14

⁶ Diod. 2.44

⁷ Herod. 4 Penrose. 2016:112 ; Rolle. 1989:13

⁸ Rolle 1989:32

⁹ Rolle 1989:69

¹⁰ Rolle 1989:127-128

¹¹ Rolle 1989:86

¹² Rolle 1989:98-99

The ability to rely on the literary sources would have been a serious issue if archaeologists had not had come across one of the largest amounts of material evidence found throughout the known Scythian world. This combination would be the beginning of how we could understand the mysterious tribes of the Eastern world, the Scythian peoples had buried their dead within kurgans, tombs which have been built into the ground and covered with a mound. These kurgans are not constructed from a universal design shared by all throughout the Scythian world, subtle differences are obvious across all kurgans, seemingly separated by the vast tracks of land between burial grounds.¹³ As will be described through the with the introduction of modern approaches upon the ancient world, it becomes clear that older interpretations no longer hold the strength in their arguments as they once did, especially when discussing “barbaric” nomadic cultures. The early Christians found them as a perfect target for vilification, claiming them to be the scourge of God and his followers, beginning again the idea of primitives whom without the guidance of the Mediterranean style of life were rendered to nothing but savages.¹⁴

¹³ Comparing the archaeology of kurgans from each area of known Scythian territory, described by scholars Polosmak 1995:76, Rolle 1989 11-55, Bourgeois et. al. 2000:77-78

¹⁴ Rolle 1989:70

While this lengthy period of demonising has been broken, it does not mean that there is any more of a solid evidence about the culture of these nomadic peoples. Various issues arise throughout the modernised approaches as we see a clear dispute between what being a Scythian even meant, let alone their languages, societal structures, religious and festive practices.¹⁵ These issues must be approached with an elevated level of theorisation, using a variety of approaches which may differentiate from topic to topic. To attempt a history of these peoples that could be considered grounded, the use of experimental archaeology along with identifying features of the peoples who came later can help understand how their way of life may have been, examples can be seen across the central and east Asian steppe with the people who still maintain the nomadic lifestyle to this day with their sole difference being involvement with warfare. Combining this with genetic sampling, the ability to trace true ancestors linked to the people who now inhabit the region mixed with a heavy amount of personal interpretation of the evidence have brought about a multitude of examinations. An attempt will be made through this study, with the use of cross-examining these theories, in a manner that shows the use of merging the archaeological evidence with numerous experimental studies. To begin with we shall look at the notion of what a Scythian was and how its culture can be considered as the catalyst for the rise of pastoral nomadism across the Steppe lands.

¹⁵ Penrose 2016:68 ; Khazanov 2015:32 ; Argent 2013:99

What is a Scythian?

Time and time again we see with ancient sources a penchant for referring to groups of people outside of the “civilised” world by a unifying name, because of this a discussion is formed around the notion of how these people actually would have identified themselves. This can be seen with Historians still having the habit of following an empirical tradition leaving little room for the study of what actually considers a Scythian. Scholars have chosen to take the territories coveted by Scythian material culture as one domain, Claiming a single Scythian people to be the rulers of a vast empire.¹⁶ Khazanov suggests this to be far from the truth, concluding that Scythian meant a host of nomadic groups bound through common cultural traits, beliefs and lifestyles.¹⁷ Khazanov mentions, even though the khurgans were subject to an incredible level of robbery, more than twenty thousand pieces have been found in the Western Scythian khurgans alone.¹⁸ Khazanov begins his discussion on the basis of Scythian culture, referring to triad of the vital aspects of Scythian life.¹⁹ included within this triad was the unique Scythian recurve bow, which would naturally rest in a concaved position and strung to become convex,²⁰ a weapon that would become a famed proficiency of the Scythian horse archers when paired with the bilobate and trilobate arrows that were near impossible to pull out of the wound, a trait which Rolle suggests has given us much when it comes to how accurate and deadly these warriors were²¹. The Scythian horse archers would go on to devastate sedentary militaries that could not compare to the versatility of the nomadic warriors.²²

¹⁶ Pankova, Simpson 2017:10

¹⁷Khazanov 2015:33

¹⁸ Khazanov 2015:41

¹⁹ Khazanov 2015:33

²⁰ Khazanov 2015:34

²¹ Rolle 1989:65

²² Khazanov 2015:34

Through this triad Khazanov believes that various pastoral nomadic groups from various origins were bound together through the common basis of how pastoral nomadism succeeds in the wide-open steppe.²³

Their lifestyles are interwoven into the necessary survival through animal certainly seems to have influenced their material culture, the numerous depictions of wild animals are so frequent within Scythian crafts and art that scholars currently debate the sheer impact on Scythian culture from the animals they were surrounded, this can be seen in more depth in the chapter on the symbolism of the horse tattoo.²⁴ Khazanov eludes to a theory that follows an idea that the appearance of the unique animal style across all parts of their material culture could be seen as an endeavour into a coded pictorial language of some kind, used to alert individuals to potential dangerous paths for traversal through the winter, potentially aided by the site of petroglyphs, carved with the potential to be a form of guide.²⁵ As our knowledge on just what the near obsessive level of animal depictions meant to the Scythian peoples themselves is lacking. Scholars have begun to draw from less conventional approaches rather than running with a single form on topics that have proven to become reliant on taking multi-specialist approaches.²⁶ This is something seen frequently with many studies of Scythian culture and social dynamic. This approach is taken in chapter x, where I discuss the knowledge of what it takes to grow and maintain a horse-human symbiosis to help understand the consistent dedications to horses, the decision to tattoo many upon the individuals body and the decision to have their horses buried within the khurgans themselves.

²³ Khazanov 2015:37

²⁴ Rolle 1989; ; Khazanov 2015:41

²⁵ Khazanov 2015:41 ; Bourgeois et al 2000:85-88

²⁶ Penrose 2016:68-117

Examples of a Scythian identity seem to have been maintained throughout the Scythian world with later tribes continuing the use of sacred grave regions.²⁷ The strongest example showing the continued use of Scythian sites would be of the Turkic nomadic peoples, these tribes continued to bury their dead within proximity of the kurgans, yet they kept their burials separate from what is thought to be the dynasty chains of Scythian peoples.²⁸ Unfortunately, the reasoning for the Turkic peoples' actions is unknown. However, it seems possible that these next inhabitants had a reason based in their beliefs or believing that they were directly linked to their predecessors. The similarities between later nomadic societies such as the Mongolians shared with the Scythians remain a point which can help break down how Scythian society would have seemed. Khazanov argues for the using of later Mongolian culture through the many shared practices, the sacred burial sites, the tour of the deceased across their domain and their maintained used of Khazanov's triad shows that although the Scythian identity seemingly evolved shows a maintained acknowledgment of what how this material culture helped created a unifying identity whilst maintaining local traditions.²⁹

²⁷ Bourgeois et al 2000:91 ; Khazanov 2015:38 "valleys dedicated to specific clans could be burial grounds chosen by the first noble to be buried, similar burial processes for leaders, place of epiphany such as Genghis' forbidden lands".

²⁸ Bourgeois et al 2000:91-92

²⁹ Khazanov 2015:37

On the issue of defining what a Scythian may be considered we have already seen a near uniform material culture found across an expansive coveted territory,³⁰ the most notable change being the artistic forms of the Greek colonists upon what still maintained a very Scythian essence through the animal style and seemingly favoured animal imagery itself. Even with this compelling argument for how a material culture can define the lands showing the presence of the cultures endorers, there remains many issues with being able to define what we know of Scythian expansion and more importantly their society itself. As said by the scholar in their passage about discovering nomadic languages, “pots are not people”³¹ this is true especially when attempting to construct notions of the Scythian peoples. This one quote puts the idea of using the multitude of Scythian period khurgans to define these peoples and their ways, as basing these peoples on a material culture can jeopardise the many truths that can be concluded with Scythian studies. To be able to maintain the many artefacts and their use throughout this study we must approach with great care as to not overstate the presence that this material culture had upon the nomadic peoples. With this in mind, using the material culture in such a way to say that these peoples had not maintained their individual and clearly strong attachment to their nomadic way of life would be a prime example of what this quotation attempts to avoid. The assumption can easily be made that the extensive finds of shattered amphorae surrounding the kurgans, with some examples of amphorae being buried within the kurgan itself,³² is exactly what the quote from Anthony warns to avoid.

³⁰ Polosmak 1995:77-80 ; Khazanov 2015:32-33 ; Anthony 2008:103

³¹ Anthony 2008:103

³² Rolle 1989:93 “finds of large wine cellars in the tombs of rich” ; Rolle 1989:35-36

The presence of foreign objects within the societies material culture merely resembles the ongoing trade with black sea Greek poleis.³³ This trade we know of appears to have been incredibly lucrative for the Scythians and as Khazanov points out that, in a seemingly similar process as the traders implemented with the First Nations peoples, the Greeks of the colonies may have flooded the Scythians with alcohol in an attempt to control the trade or for other controlling purposes.³⁴ This can serve as a warning when attempting to assess the lives of these Scythians, the foreign materials found within these tombs may not suggest that they had abandoned their own culture or integrated themselves into the Hellenistic way. The discovery that the animal style was maintained, even though a Hellenised craftwork was implemented across the Scythian West, shows the resolve to maintain their identity.³⁵ To show an outside source potentially correct in their portrayals of the Central Asian area, also adding to the success of archaeology supporting of outside sources, archaeologists discovered Large mounds found in Central Eurasian Steppe,³⁶ which were unfortunately subject to successful grave robbery. However, the Issyk kurgan had an added side grave in the southern half, buried quite simply was an individual wearing a uniform of some sort which was covered in gold scales. Included was a large pointed hat also decorated with gold.³⁷ Rolle couples the recreated appearance of this person with the appearance of a tall hatted Scythian king on Persian reliefs, if this connection was accepted it could show the deceased to be a chief of some form.³⁸

³³ Anthony 2008:103/105

³⁴ Khazanov 2015:42

³⁵ Khazanov 2015:41

³⁶ Rolle 1989:46-47 "Issyk found in Kyrgyzstan, Arhzan found near Western Russian-Kazakh borderlands"

³⁷ Rolle 1989:47

³⁸ Rolle 1989:47

To find another way to track these origin theories alongside the cultures movement, a team of scholars came together to publish an article which goes in-depth in to genetic sampling and simulations ran with these sample in an attempt of finding the origin points of the Scythian population rather than following the uniformity of the material culture as a solely valid basis of argument for the contested origin point or points.³⁹ They began by highlighting the regions where the samples were taken and used these Western based burials to find a potential origin point.⁴⁰

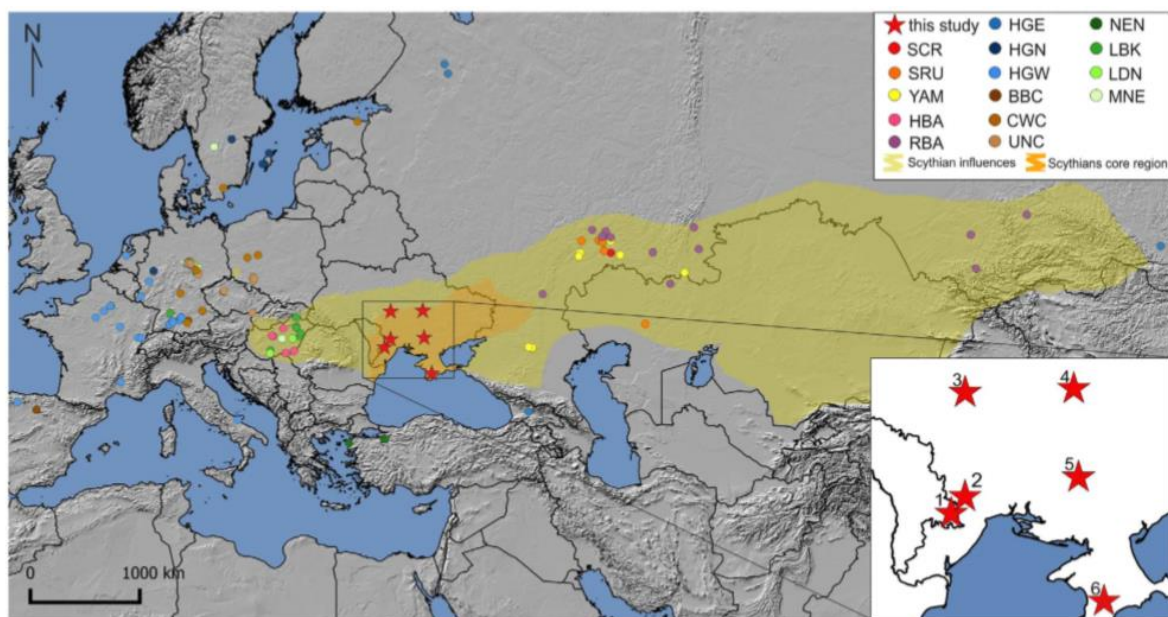


Fig. 1. Map of the Scythian Core Region and Territories of Their Possible Influences in 7th-3rd century B.C.E. Joraz et. al. 2017:2

³⁹ Joraz et. al. 2017:6

⁴⁰ Joraz et. al. 2012:2 “teeth taken from 29 iron age Scythians from Moldova and Ukraine, found prominent DNA strands from Central and East Asia”

The state of the genetic sampling and what it could tell us about the genetic origins of the Scythian peoples is quite impressive but, one issue being presented by the team themselves shows the limits of such sampling. Although the samples were limited to the Ukrainian and Moldavian area, the results show a mix of influences in their DNA, the issue that can be seen is the limited samples they took and the fact that it is solely the West..⁴¹ That being said the finds were intriguing, the teams had several focus areas confirming the fact that the Scythians had not descended from one large ancestry.⁴² This shows the fact that the Scythian culture had bound the diverse peoples instead of a single origin model, being descendants of the Yamnaya, Srubnaya and Karasuk. The team concludes that the ⁴³

Support for the Scythian impact upon Chinese can be found through Shelach-Lavi, who talks of the adoption of the chariot came from eastern nomadic groups instead of within China itself, even with a King declaring that nomadic clothing should be adopted for ease of horse riding.⁴⁴ The connections between early Chinese kingdoms and Asian steppe nomads can be clearly seen, Polosmak attests to women mentioned in Chinese sources being sent to princes, archaeological finds of these women have been unsuccessful at this current point in time, however Polosmak suggests Chinese artefacts prevalent in the eastern Scythian kurgans, setting the basis for the understanding of how cross pollinated the people of the Scythian cultural lands were.⁴⁵ The level of contact shown between these peoples makes the notion of political marriages seem a more plausible theory.

⁴¹ Joraz et. al. 2017:2-4

⁴² Joraz et. al. 2017:8

⁴³ Joraz et. al. 2017:6

⁴⁴ Polosmak 1995:82 ; Shelach-Lavi 2015:26-27

⁴⁵ Polosmak 1995:82 ; Rolle 1989:116

Various scholars have described the potential appearances of such individuals, Rolle suggests that the power structure of the Scythians was decided through their origin the taller, fairer skinned individuals were the ones who were held in the aristocracy whereas the more 'Mongolian' individuals occupied a lower status.⁴⁶ This theory holds no real strength due to no knowledge of evidence suggesting a form of racial hierarchy within Scythian society present at this time.

Through the use of the genetic analysis we can see some of influence upon the peoples connected to the Scythian culture, the team suggest through the tests that there were three individual groups in which the Scythian DNA of the Northern Pontic Region could be broken into, a mixture of Altai bronze age nomadic populations, DNA connecting them to the Yamnaya culture and the expansive Srubnaya Culture, migrating in waves to the region samples were taken from and becoming the Scythian peoples of the seventh century B.C.E..⁴⁷ The many theories that can be presented show the main issue with defining the people of the Scythian world themselves, even though the genetic tests involving some of the highest level of technology and modern analysis its conclusion of the Scythians targeted for the sampling were descendants of the Srubnaya culture, who began their migrations in latter half of the second millennium B.C.E.,⁴⁸ seems may not vouch for the entire ethnicities. The argument for a diverse multi-origin culture was made in the beginning of this dissertation however, it is clear that, even though the team suggest more testing to be certain,⁴⁹ there was cross-pollination of ethnicities created over the multiple migrations from different cultural identities over a long period of history.

⁴⁶ Rolle 1989:56 ; Polosmak 1995:76-81 ; Joraz et. al. 2017:1-8

⁴⁷ Joraz et. al. 2017:8

⁴⁸ Joraz et. al. 2017:8

⁴⁹ Joraz et. al. 2012:8

We are able to identify modern ancestors of the Scythian material culture through Penrose, who points out the tracing of a young Kazakh girls ancestors to the burial of a warrior woman entombed in the Pokrovka,⁵⁰ This woman was of the Sauromatian nomadic group, but the links between the people of the Scythian culture and those of the Sauromatian were bound through the material cultural, societal practices and similar traditions have already been stressed in the chapter on roles of women. The continued migratory living spaces inhabited by the modern nomadic peoples once inhabited by the pastoral peoples they consider their ancestors married with the continued dedication to Khazanov's Scythian triad can be seen as a monumental effort to preserve a culture tied into their very way of lives.

⁵⁰ Penrose 2016:109

Roles of Women in Scythian Societies and the Amazonian Influence

Herodotus and Diodorus give us much to work with when it comes to their own observations of the Scythian peoples and the fortune of many Scythian kurgans across the western steppe we can confirm, elaborate or debunk their writings with a high level of accuracy, an advantage which is a welcomed difference compared to the numerous issues with nomadic societies. The issue shown by scholars, including absolute denial of what the ancient sources have said, is that there are obvious gaps in various aspects of our understanding even with the vast number of kurgans close to the classical world.⁵¹ This issue can be solved by expanding the geographical study and looking at burials across the central Asian steppe; for in doing so we can identify Scythian material culture and life in ways that would be out of our grasp otherwise, as well as maintaining a multi-disciplinary approach. To progress with their use, we run into various issues. The first clearly obvious problem being can these people be considered as Scythian when they are so far from the Scythian peoples with whom Herodotus engaged. These excavations also open new debates on Scythians, such as how common conflict may have been, connections with other Scythian peoples across the expansive steppe and the level of engagement between these peoples separate across such distances.⁵² One burial in particular shows us more information on the Scythians than imagined previously, this being the Kurgan of the “Altai Princess”. This Kurgan defies much of the understanding of the life of females in Scythian society and potentially helping to further the discussion itself into a more solidified conclusion.

⁵¹ Penrose 2016:112 ; Polosmak 1995:76

⁵² Jordanna et al 2009:1326

To begin the Altai princess's series of peculiarities in what has now become a basis for Scythian society we will first notice that this woman was buried independently.⁵³ As well as being buried independently she is also clearly a woman of high status within her society due to the artefacts buried with her.⁵⁴ This kurgan challenges the notion presented by the archaeologist who found the site, Polosmak, who seems to agree with Herodotus's role of Scythian women, being placed in the wagon away from male way of life.⁵⁵ If anything, there is more evidence for the women playing a more active role in the nomadic lifestyle. To begin the discussion there are the female warriors referenced throughout Greek history, Diodorus suggests that the Scythian women would fight alongside their menfolk, a statement which counters Herodotus' own writings.⁵⁶ The existence of tribes of Amazonian warrior women who dominated their male counterparts has seen a variety of debate leading to numerous conclusions over time, to which any progress of finding the truth of these warrior women has been met with further issues with which archaeology may help to enlighten current knowledge.⁵⁷

⁵³ Polosmak 1995:81

⁵⁴ Polosmak 1995:79

⁵⁵ Herod. 4.114 ; Polosmak 1995:77

⁵⁶ Diod. Herod. 4.114

⁵⁷ Penrose 2016:68 ; Balgabayeva 2016:5276 ; Rolle 1989:86-91

According to Balgabayeva there appears to be a fair number of female warriors buried in the Eastern area of Scythian territory.⁵⁸ Rolle's book was published in 1989 when the Altai princess was found in 1993⁵⁹, we now know that the Altai princess appears as to be one of the few female burials in the East with strong evidence suggesting her societal position. From the off set there appears to be overwhelming evidence for women seemingly being the belongings of the men.⁶⁰ However, this may be placing too much into the mere appearance of the burials and neglecting the fact that these burials may not represent how these nomadic societies were built. As we look in the West for these warrior women we see a plethora of written sources from the Greek viewpoint, a unique chance to see how these women were perceived by foreign societies in their time. They were known to the Greeks as the Amazonians⁶¹ and the Scythians called them Oiorpata.⁶² Although they were subject to plenty of writings thanks to the Greeks, the reality of these individuals also became obscured because of this, as we see with the "Spartan mirage" discussed by Hall, this habit of outside writers idolising a different society to their own, therefore creating a utopian mirage shrouding the truth of the matter.⁶³

⁵⁸ Balgabayeva 2016:5277 ; Rolle 1989:86-91 "solely discusses women of West, Central Steppe Regions and kurgans of the Near East"

⁵⁹ Polosmak 1995:76-80

⁶⁰ Herod. 4.114 ; Polosmak 1995:77

⁶¹ Herod. 4.110 Rolle 1989:86

⁶² Herod. 4.110 Rolle 1989:86

⁶³ Hall 2006:203-204

Herodotus writes on the origins of the Amazonian women, According to his account, they rebelled from imprisonment at the hands of the Greeks whilst on transport ships. After rebelling they beached on what is now the sea of Azov where they would arm themselves and begin to raid within Scythian lands. Once the Scythians engaged the Amazon women in battle they were supposedly so impressed that they wanted have offspring with them, pitching their camps opposite the women's camp they would begin a series of back and forth before a man and woman had intercourse, every time these two met after this they would bring companions until both camps have merged. Once this merging had occurred the Amazonians, not wanting to be render to the uninteresting and 'traditional' roles of women the two camps rode towards the East where they became the foundations for the Sauromatian nomadic peoples.⁶⁴

Herodotus tells that these women never fully grasped the Scythian language, instead remaining with a broken form of the language.⁶⁵ After the founding of the Sauromatian peoples, The Amazonians go onwards to feature in many Greek myths, such as the Iliad with the siege of Troy and this begins their movement into legend, abandoning their reality.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Herod. 4.115

⁶⁵ Herod. 4.117

⁶⁶ Appol. Epit.E.5.1 ; Penrose 2016:68-69

There have been several scholars who have attempted to find the truth of the matter. To begin with we shall look at Herodotus' accounts of the Amazons and place it under scrutiny.

Penrose points out that Herodotus getting this vital piece of information wrong seems out of place with the rest of his writings.⁶⁷ He points out the fact that Herodotus's discussion on the burial customs, as well as much of the societal aspects of the Scythian peoples, have been confirmed through archaeology.⁶⁸ The "cleansing ritual" Herodotus refers to, which is to be discussed in further detail in the Altai Princess chapter, has had evidence provided for it across the entirety of the known Scythian world,⁶⁹ the same is true with the embalming processes⁷⁰, even the notion of the deceased's tour before entombment of their domain can be supported through burial finds.⁷¹ To top this amazing level of support through the materials Penrose later says that the many mythical beings tied to the gold lands past and within the Scythian lands.⁷² The one-eyed peoples of the far east have been supported through the find of corpses within kurgans showing sign of such genetic deformities.⁷³ The same support can be seen of the goat footed peoples, who Penrose has tied to the club footed corpses also found in various kurgans.⁷⁴ The simple explanation of these "mythical" peoples given by Penrose is that the Greeks simply could not comprehend the notion of Scythians not killing the disabled.⁷⁵ The nomadic lifestyle would have created the need for no human life to be wasted, everyone had their use and the herding from horseback would have allowed these individuals to still be of use.

⁶⁷ Penrose 2016:112

⁶⁸ Penrose 2016:112

⁶⁹ Rolle 1989:93-95 ; Guerra-Doce 2015:757

⁷⁰ Herod. 4.71.1 ; Rolle 1989:27-28

⁷¹ Herod. 4.71.3 ; Rolle 1989:28

⁷² Herod. 4.13 ; Penrose 2016:113

⁷³ Penrose 2016:113

⁷⁴ Penrose 2016:113

⁷⁵ Penrose 2016:113-114

The ability to still herd, help with daily tasks and so forth instead of believing these people to be monsters as the Greeks did is a clear point in which we see the Greeks unable to comprehend such actions. This carries through the discussion on the Amazonians, Penrose alerts us to the works of Hartog, a scholar who, with his research on the perception of outsiders within Athenian society, was able to uncover the truth of the Scythians, subsequently the Amazonians tied into their history given by the Greeks without declaring the physical evidence to belong to the Amazon warrior women.⁷⁶ Penrose reiterates that this was not an attempt to deny and discourage the use of archaeology in these discovers,⁷⁷ instead Hartog believes that the warrior women of the burials, that Balgabayeva suggests are found across the Scythian world, are separate from the “Greek” Amazonians.⁷⁸ To support Hartog’s point they reaffirm the strength of Greek bias, saying that because the Greek audience to Herodotus was of such a conservative mind frame that Herodotus would create his version of Scythians, taking what would be the history of the real Scythians and placing it within Greek history through common links and the implementation of the logos.⁷⁹ This provides a strong example of the repeated distortion the Greek writers employed when discussing a society in which they warp for their own reasons, seen with the Amazonian origins. As we’ve seen this notion of not fulfilling your pre-determined role was incomprehensible to the Greeks.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ Hartog 1988:3-11 ; Penrose 2016:114-115

⁷⁷ Penrose 2016:115

⁷⁸ Hartog 1988:7 ; Penrose 2016:115-116 ; Balgabayeva 2016:5277

⁷⁹ Hartog 1988:5-8 ; Penrose 2016:117

⁸⁰ Penrose 2016:117

Saying that the Scythian men who approached the women had similar structures as the Greeks implies a male figure, with this origin tale we see the Amazonian women become the dominant figure as they are the conductors of warfare and The submissive role is given to the Scythian men. as the story is an inversion of these roles we see the clear difference which fuelled what was thought to be an error, the notion that Scythian women followed ‘traditional’ roles are debased by the addition of Greek bias to the story, that is not to say that all Scythian women enjoyed a respected life and were free from mistreatment, they were however able to engage on an equal footing with the men of their groups What was once thought to be an error is in fact a move on behalf of Herodotus. Although women were treated equally in Scythian society, this to the Greeks was unknown and therefore had to be adjusted. With this bias in mind, Penrose shows us that when discussing the Amazonian women and the warrior women found throughout a multitude of kurgans, we must be incredibly careful when one considers them to be one and the same.⁸¹

After defining the separations between the Greek Amazonians and the true warrior women of the plain, as well as showing again the notion of the Greek bias put upon the Scythians, we shall move on to examining the graves of the warrior women and uncovering the lives of these women as best we can. To begin with what has already been said Balgabayeva gives us a description of a multitude of sites with these warrior women entombed within.⁸² The immediate acknowledgment given by Penrose is that the finds of warrior women predated Herodotus’s writings, seen through a 6th century vase depicting three warriors all named, two being women.⁸³ Penrose suggests from this that the Greeks took their Amazonian origin story from a previous Scythian tale,⁸⁴.

⁸¹ Penrose 2016:116

⁸² Balgabayeva 2016:5277-5278

⁸³ Penrose 2016:99

⁸⁴ Penrose 2016:99

We see a reasonably large percentage of female burials to contain weapons, shown by Balgabayeva and Penrose, as well as fulfilling priestess roles, Penrose argues this because of their burial with numerous objects associated with priestlyhood and simply being of incredible wealth due to their dress.⁸⁵ From the grave goods, it is evidence that women of the Scythian culture certainly had their own places within some of the most respected societal positions.⁸⁶ There is possible evidence for a matriarchal society within the Scythian world seen with the Pokrovka burial, dated by Balgabayeva to be circa six hundred B.C.E. where many women were found entombed within a large kurgan.⁸⁷ These women were from a multitude of societal backgrounds, warriors, women of a priesthood and aristocracy whose central burial site was surrounded by men with little adornment holding children.⁸⁸ There is little in the way of an explanation for this unique burial, something unseen throughout the rest of the Scythian world. However, it proves that women were not rendered to the insignificancies that the Mediterranean placed on their female counterparts.

When modern scholars began their discussion on the idea of warrior women being clearly visible through literary sources they approached with roughly the same bias as the Greeks had. Rolle puts the use of the bow and arrow by the female warriors to be necessity due to their inferior strength when compared to male fighters,⁸⁹ yet the opposite can be supported when factoring in the varied arsenal women have been found buried with as Penrose suggests.⁹⁰ When talking about the roles these warrior women fulfilled, both Balgabayeva and Penrose agree that the idea of hordes of warrior women roaming the land as one large army seems unlikely, they assert that women almost definitely fought alongside the men of

⁸⁵Balgabayeva 2016:5279-5280; Penrose 2016:110 ; Penrose 2016:106

⁸⁶ Penrose 2016:110-111 ; Polosmak 1995:76-80 ; Balgabayeva 2016:5279-5280

⁸⁷ Balgabayeva 2016:5278

⁸⁸ Balgabayeva 2016:5278

⁸⁹ Rolle 1989:90

⁹⁰ Penrose 2016:110 “arrowheads, also argues for these being a sign of both hunting and at least retaliatory measures, lances, swords, spears and axes signifying their martial prowess”

their migratory groups.⁹¹ Balgabayeva argues that men were primarily the scouts who would find the next pastures, including a warning system against aggressors, this would leave women who were able to fight protecting the caravan.⁹² This need for protecting the belongings and very livelihood seems to be necessary when the evidence of interpersonal conflict is clearly shown to be present in the Eastern Scythian range, seen with the family buried who are agured to have died in an ambush.⁹³ To deny the role of women being more engaged with the pastoral nomadic life and reserving them to a life in the shadow of the men would make little sense given our knowledge from the burials and from Herodotus' warrior women. A notion of these warrior women potentially being a border guard for the Western Scythian peoples could be theorised through the high percentage of female burials along the Caucasus and the area close to what is now Odessa.⁹⁴ This idea of a border guard is merely a theory however, especially when factoring in the lack of knowledge as to if the Scythian peoples even entertained the notion of borders.

When searching for the evidence to be able to back up the more engaged lives of Scythian women it can be deemed both safe and necessary to look further afield into the history of nomadic clans in Central and East Asia. To use Mongolian history seems to be a solid basis as it is stated by Khazanov that until the introduction of outside religions such as the Buddhist sects, the numerous Chinese faiths and Islam, the practices, cultures and society that had been crafted under the Scythian period remained essentially unchanged.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Balgabayeva 2016:5279 ; Penrose 2016:107

⁹² Balgabayeva 2016:5279-5280

⁹³ Jordanna et al 2009:1236

⁹⁴ Rolle 1989:87-88 ; Balgabayeva 2016:5277

⁹⁵ Khazanov 2015:37-8

For the ancient sources of the Mediterranean world to acknowledge such notions of women and men engaging in the same physical labours and warfare would have been unimaginable, as suggested by Hartog, through Penrose's article.⁹⁶ Earlier modern scholars, such as Rolle, seem to be plagued with a pre-determined disposition towards the abilities of women,⁹⁷ Balgabayeva shows that before recent archaeological advancements skeletons within burials were not sexed and the assumption that all warrior burials were men was the default notion. It seems there is still much to discover about how women lived within Scythian society.

⁹⁶ Hartog 1988: ; Penrose 2016:115-116

⁹⁷ Rolle 1989:90 "natural weaker physique when compared to men."

The Altai Princess and her Insights into Scythian Society

Returning to the burial khurgan of the Altai princess we come to the discussion of the who she was and how her role fits in their society. To begin with we will examine the woman herself, she was clearly someone of a high status seen through her independent burial.

Polosmak also alerts us to the fact that she was Caucasian, putting the beginning of her life in northern Europe until she somehow found her way to the Altai region.⁹⁸ The reasoning for her crossing such a distance is yet unknown, but it seems clear from her burial and adornments that she was not a captive of a noble, to find out more her clothing may shed light on her role, Polosmak refers to a pair of cups depicting a healer with a similar headdress treating warriors however,⁹⁹ where we see usual captives being sacrificed after the noble's death and simply placed by the room of their occupation within the main burial mound rather than independent burial.¹⁰⁰ In a reconstruction of the woman's appearance seen in a news report in the Siberian Times it is clear that this princess was most certainly an individual of importance, she was buried with extraordinary headdresses and clothing and both are adorned with plenty of gold accessories.¹⁰¹ This does not tell us much, but Polosmak does theorise that she was a form of shaman or healer who was greatly revered,¹⁰² to understand this we must look at the causes of her death.

⁹⁸ Polosmak 1995:79

⁹⁹ Polosmak 1995:80 "beautifully preserved fingers wrapped in string, something seen in China, with preserved nails" this would be improbable if the woman was a working slave as her hands would have been worn and battered, image of Sacred hands? Liesowska 2014. "Siberian times say she was found buried with a cosmetics bag"

¹⁰⁰ Rolle 1989:24-28

¹⁰¹ Liesowska 2014.

¹⁰² Polosmak 1995:80

Thanks to the scans done on the body of the princess they were able to determine that she had breast cancer as well as other tumours throughout her body, the news report suggests that the illness that plagued her may have been what caused her to be revered by the Scythians as they may have caused her to have “visions”.¹⁰³ This ability to find out what was killing her helps to explain the fact that the princess was originally found with a bowl containing charred cannabis,¹⁰⁴ showing the Scythians to potentially have knowledge of medical substances and its ability to ease this woman’s pain.¹⁰⁵ This entire discussion however relies on an elevated level of theory as the burned substance found in the bowl of the Altai Princess turned out to be coriander, whereas the cannabis seeds were in another container. This does not take away from the notion of the Scythian peoples having knowledge of the medicinal uses of cannabis, especially for a woman suffering from a serious case of breast cancer.

Returning to the discussion on the woman herself, her burial can tell us much of her place in her society. She was buried in a gold covered chest and entombed independently, her kurgan to the side of but still in proximity to the “dynastic chain” of the North-South burial lines.¹⁰⁶ Her khurgan stands off to the side showing her to be unmarried yet highly important to the people who buried her. This type of respect may not have been given to all, as she was also buried with coriander seeds, an herb that seems to have been reserved for the tombs of Scythian nobles.¹⁰⁷ The present local inhabitants of the region seem to believe the woman has a guardian like task, taking into account these peoples claim to be upholding their Scythian ancestral traditions then it seems likely that she was in fact some form of shaman.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ Liesowska 2014.

¹⁰⁴ Guerra-Doce 2015:757

¹⁰⁵ Guerra-Doce 2015:757 ; Liesowska 2014. ; Rolle 1989:94-95

¹⁰⁶ Bourgeois 2000:91

¹⁰⁷ Guerra-Doce 2015:757

¹⁰⁸ Liesowska 2014.

This would help to explain her special treatment among her group, people who went out of their way to travel with a seriously ill person rather than killing her for reasons discussed in the chapter showing Scythian treatment of disabled. The fact that she was taken up in the middle of summer, far before the time where winter pastures would be sought after, Polosmak suggests the muscles remaining in the body matched with the time the trees were felled placed her death and her burial close to each other in winter are clear signs of this timeframe¹⁰⁹. Polosmak does state that the colder temperatures before winter could have helped with preservation even with the muscles still within,¹¹⁰ yet there seems to be more evidence for the former. Bourgeois discusses how the soil composition helped to both incubate permafrost and create perfect pasture grass, further supporting the idea of travelling to these pastures near the burial sites for winter instead of another season.¹¹¹ Whatever this woman's role was in her group it is clear that she was treated with the similar respect seen with royalty, as well as being honoured with similar items seen with the khurgans of noble Scythians,¹¹² rather than following Polosmak's suggestion of women being kept away from such importance.¹¹³

In an article written by Guerra-Doce on the use of psychoactive substances it showed a clear presence of cannabis within Scythian history, known from Herodotus's writings as well as archaeology, presenting theories on its medicinal properties.¹¹⁴ Guerra-Doce begins by repeating a passage from Herodotus where he discusses one of the ways in which the Scythians, Herodotus mentions the importance of cannabis to the funerary customs where it was used in a cleansing manner.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ Polosmak 1995:81

¹¹⁰ Polosmak 1995:81

¹¹¹ Bourgeois et al 2000:91

¹¹² Polosmak 1995:79-80

¹¹³ Polosmak 1995:77

¹¹⁴ Herod. 4.75 ; Guerra-Doce 2015:752-753

¹¹⁵ Herod. 4.75

*“The Scythians would burn the substance within a tent, he goes on to say they would be filled with much joy once they had entered the smoke”.*¹¹⁶

This was a process that occurred once the burial had been done, Herodotus goes on to say that they grew cannabis across their lands and frequently used the hemp for textiles.¹¹⁷ The main use of cannabis that remains through this is the ritualised use of the plant by Scythians, we see plenty of vessels used for burning cannabis across Central Asia, a place that according to Herodotus grew cannabis and hemp in abundance.¹¹⁸ We see at the Pazyryk khurgans that a man and woman were buried together with bronze vessels used to burn the plant in nearly the same manner as the Scythians Herodotus discusses¹¹⁹, but instead the stones have been placed in a more mobile vessel, one with handles that could be held even when the heated stones had been placed inside. The reasons for these vessels being buried with the deceased is left unilluded to by Guerra-Doce, Herodotus’ writings on the cleansing ritual comes after the burial itself.¹²⁰ These vessels were found to have charred seeds with the stones,¹²¹ This raises a theory of the deceased being entombed with the herbs still burning as the funerary goers would move outside and continued with the tent usage.

¹¹⁶ Herod.4.75

¹¹⁷ Herod. 4.74

¹¹⁸ Herod. 4.74

¹¹⁹ Guerra-Doce 2015:756

¹²⁰ Herod. 4.73 ; Guerra-Doce 2015:757

¹²¹ Guerra-Doce 2015:756

Tattoo discussion

With the clear importance of the skin's need to be preserved through the embalming process, the decision to have tattoos must have been an important one, as suggested by Khazanov, who alerts us to the importance of the animal style and Argent.¹²² When examining the bodies fortunately preserved through permafrost with Scythian peoples of the east, studies began on the skin showed that they found that they displayed many tattoos over their bodies.¹²³ These tattoos consist of many different animal species, either tattooed independently or in large motifs, as well as the uncommon plant motifs.¹²⁴ The style is unique to the nomadic cultures. It is known as the "Scythian animal style" and characterised by the animals which are contorted into unnatural positions and appearing as if they float across the body.¹²⁵ Many scholars have various theories on the matter of these tattoos and their significance to the Scythian societies, few suggest a form of hidden language through the materialisation of animal frequented throughout their nomadic lives.¹²⁶ Argent highlights two theories from other scholars as to what place these tattoos held, Pearson suggesting that these could have been seen as a form of protection;¹²⁷ and Polosmak who theorised that these tattoos held a higher significance within the individual's community rather than being purely personal in their meanings.¹²⁸ Argent agrees with Polosmak in conforming the significance of their community significance, but goes further and suggests that although these tattoos had a strong communal meaning.

¹²² Argent 2013:189 ; Khazanov 2015:41

¹²³ Polosmak 1995:81 ; Rolle 1989:83-86

¹²⁴ Argent 2013:182

¹²⁵ Argent 2013: 183 ; Rolle 1989:84-85 ; Polosmak 1995:81

¹²⁶ Khazanov 2015:42 ; Argent 2013:188 ; Rolle 1989:84-85

¹²⁷ Pearson 1999:65 in Argent2013:188

¹²⁸ Polosmak 1998:153 in Argent 2013:188

The foundations of this can be found with small scale examination of the tattooed individual and their personal connection to their tattoos.¹²⁹ In order to properly examine and theorise the meaning behind every tattoo would be a colossal effort and require more space than this discussion allows, therefore it will focus on a particular animal, the horse, portrayed on the bodies can still help to understand the possible motivations behind the depiction of other animals.¹³⁰

Argent focuses in on the tattoos that they have said closely resemble a horse's physique.¹³¹ He breaks down the anatomy of the animals thought to be horses, beginning with one of the main thoughts on what animal they represented¹³². Argent points out that scholars such as Polosmak, Vitebsky and Rudenko who believe that the particular tattoos portray horse-like mammals, but argues that the anatomy is likened to a horse more than any other animal.¹³³ This argument seem plausible when taking into account the fact that we see sacrificed horses entombed with their riders across the Scythian world: e.g. the Altai burials, the substantial kurgans of the central Asian Steppe plains and the kurgans of the West.¹³⁴ These sacrificial horses are decorated with large Ibex horns, a host of elaborately crafted saddles and other golden adornments.¹³⁵ Argent argues that these adornments are represented through the tattoos as the anatomy of the animal's body is horse-like but its head is quite mythical.¹³⁶ Following this theory, it gives us a new level of debate when it comes to what these horses may have represented to the Scythian peoples which Argent attempts to uncover.

¹²⁹ Argent 2013:188

¹³⁰ Argent 2013:183

¹³¹ Argent 2013:183

¹³² Argent 2013:179

¹³³ Argent 2013:183-186

¹³⁴ Rolle 1989:43 ; Argent 2013:186

¹³⁵ Argent 2013:187

¹³⁶ Argent 2013:186

Argent discusses the close interspecies bond shared with modern riders and their horses, in order to help understand more about how horses impacted on a nomadic culture in which both rider and horse rely on each other.¹³⁷ In this discussion, Argent raises multiple points, the fact that new riders, no matter how old or young, begin with an experienced horse that will teach the rider more than the rider teaches it.¹³⁸ Another point is that the modern inhabitants of the Altai mountains track their life time with the life and death of their horses being a climactic point in the individual's lives who, with the death of his horse, begins a new stage in life.¹³⁹

Horse training finds itself vital to the rider for after they have trained with the practice horse, they would go on to train their own, through these developing powerful personal bonds.¹⁴⁰ This importance is amplified by the notion of the horse's death beginning the rider's next stage, believing that the modern ancestors of these nomadic peoples have maintained their traditions then it is not a wild assumption to suggest that the Scythian peoples had this very mentality.¹⁴¹ Having shown the connection between horse and rider for nomadic peoples, it seems reasonable to suggest, as Argent does, that these horses would have meant a lot to their rider and may have been commemorated through tattoos. With the death of the horse it would be possible for the individual to have their horse's spirit follow them into their own death as the body itself may have been absent.

¹³⁷ Argent 2013:179

¹³⁸ Argent 2013:180

¹³⁹ Argent 2013:188

¹⁴⁰ Argent 2013:188-189

¹⁴¹ Argent 2013:179 "Argent argues for the 'born in the saddle' tradition and its ability to build the close bonds whether intended or no"

Conclusion.

After covering certain aspects of Scythian society and the foundations of what a Scythian may have been we are able to form these aspects into a clearer form of identity. To begin with the notion of being a Scythian can mean a variety of different definitions, some scholars continue to believe in a grand Scythian empire and some feel it was a series of tribes who had shining examples throughout the culture. It seems apparent to the author of this dissertation that theories along these lines appear to lack the depth needed when talking about a culture fuelled by ethnically diverse patrons over such an expansive landmass. To render such a unique occurrence void in the ‘civilised’ world, without the use of violence, undermines the achievements made by the Scythian culture, uniting a people at the foundations of their very livelihood rather than forcing the adoption. With little to no evidence portraying infighting between these peoples on the scale of war and conquest rather than the interpersonal conflict shown in the report on the evidence of conflict found in the Bayan-Olgii, situated in western Mongolia¹⁴². The team found kurgans containing evidence of the skeletons once belonging to warriors, seen through healed bones from injuries sustained before their deaths, showing that skirmishes occurred throughout the coveted Scythian territory.¹⁴³ The basis for such was found with wounds inflicted, reminiscent of an ambush to the team, including the death of the woman and child, presenting an attack of opportunity rather than open conflict.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Jordanna 2009:1320

¹⁴³ Jordanna 2009:1233-1236

¹⁴⁴ Jordanna 2009:1235

This interpersonal level of conflict shows a dynamic of feuds between separate groups, showing instability on a lower level as well as the potential for the conflict being of a larger level.

Covering the scale of conflict would have taken up more room in this dissertation than is allowed so a full conclusion was not reached however, the insight into this personal level is a welcomed one, showing the internal strife to be present within the numerous local societies. To continue the conclusion of what a Scythian may have been, through the combination of the genetic sampling results and Khazanov's theories we see support for the multiple origin points given the evidence needed. This would help to explain how the kurgans themselves seem to vary, including the placement and construction, after the distances between each nomadic group with the Scythian patrons in the west favouring a large central kurgan with smaller tombs surrounding what would have been the aristocratic individuals. The Eastern patrons seemingly followed a north to south line of kurgans, theorised to be a line of lineage with closely related or highly respected individuals built separately but kept close to the lineage set up. The Scythian peoples of the central plains seem to have used larger necropolis style burials with individual buried in a large timber complex, seen with the Issyk Kurgan in modern day Kyrgyzstan ¹⁴⁵. With these differences highlighted the binding factors appear to be mainly the strong presence of the material culture, the buried individuals embellished with some of the most intricate crafts of precious metals seen in the ancient world, alongside a plethora of the deceased inventory which again were of the highest quality for a person of high society.

¹⁴⁵ Rolle 1989:47

The offerings to the deceased were of a great magnitude found within the tomb or, in some cases, atop the tomb near its stelae. The stelae themselves have been found in massive quantities, placed in various places with a still mysterious reason, warrior guardians protecting a sacred area seemingly the most plausible conclusion. These stelae are not the only signs of protective “magic”, Rolle raises the archaeological find of “spirit horsemen” created after the burial was conducted.¹⁴⁶ Each individual horseman consisted of a sacrificed servant as well as the horse itself,¹⁴⁷ these were not meant to fall after a short duration either, it seems likely that the Scythian peoples believed these would protect the burial site, even going as far to make sure these horsemen could be further supported upon a wagon wheel. From this level of dedication to the protection of the kurgans it seems that they were very aware of the rampant theft plaguing each burial site,¹⁴⁸ understandable due to the intense level of effort exerted and the respect they possibly had for the buried. The level of engagement is further supported from Rolle’s explanation of the distances building resources were brought over, use of a particular stock of trees and a black earth was seen across the known Scythian world.¹⁴⁹ Also relevant to Scythian ritual is the purposeful cultivation of permafrost within the Eastern part of the cultures coveted territory shows the need to preserve the skin, skin which was adorned with many tattoos and decoration, unfortunately the same cannot be said elsewhere due to the lack of preservation available to the Western burials.

¹⁴⁶ Rolle 1989:28

¹⁴⁷ Rolle 1989:28

¹⁴⁸ Rolle 1989:28

¹⁴⁹ Rolle 1989:32-34

From the discovery of the tattoos, the discussion precedes to the potential relevance these tattoos had to those of the Scythian culture. Khazanov hints at the notion of a form of petroglyphic language lost to us through the inability to translate which seems plausible due to the mixture of some of the animal tattoos being carved onto certain rock faces across burial areas and atop them, seen with certain pillars. Once again, the issue of what these tattoos could have meant would be an article in itself however, the importance of one animal visually represented can unravel fresh insights into one of the crucial co-operative necessities for the nomadic way of life. Argent's article discusses the importance of human-horse co-operation through examining the treatment of tattoos as well as the reasons for displaying the horse in the first place. This was a more personalised approach with Argent's use of the known physical traits of the horses the nomadic peoples of the steppe regions had contact with. This was implemented in order to secure the idea that the tattoos in question resembled horses as the tattoos were adorned with deer and ibex like horns, to which argent argued was the representation of the superbly decorated horses buried with their deceased rider. With the matching of the tattoo to the buried horses Argent begins to lay out the respect that the Scythians would have needed to gain the strong bond between the horse and rider in order to be able to be accurate in ranged and close quarters combat.

To represent the way the training has to be conducted Argent examines the modern horse rider and their explanation of how the horse teaches the new rider as much as the rider will teach the inexperienced horses they move onto after. The requirements for the training do not necessarily require gentle treatment as Argent suggests however, they further the point saying that a cruelly trained horse will not become a good teacher, a trait that is necessary for the horse to be able to guide the new rider to become the quality they needed to be to maintain such strength over the average warfare these horse archers would have come across. Moving onto the finalisation of their discussion, Argent suggests that the horse being adorned in such a way rendered it to the subject of myth either transforming the horse from life through into death or seeing this as the representation of what the horse's spirit appeared to be. Either choice made arrives at the same conclusion on the idea that these rider's lives were highly effected by the horses they would go on to train and spend much of their lives with. Argent shows the modern nomadic horse riders within the Kazakh region to trace their lives by the lifespan of their horse, with the death being marked as a pivotal point in their lives.

Returning to the known fact of these nomadic peoples having ancestors of the Scythian cultures, seen with the young Kazakh girl having a fifth to fourth cent. B.C.E. ancestors buried within what is now Kyrgyzstan. It seems clear to the author of this dissertation that the positive attitudes taken towards the training of the horse was necessary to create the superior, skilled riders needed to succeed in survival and violence. This being suggested, merged with Argent's conclusion saying that the conservative, exploitative nature other civilisations had over natural "resources" still maintained through modern historical studies harms the study of interspecies reliance, could show the Scythians to care deeply about their horses, especially the horse's spirit being preserved upon the skin.

The skin of the embalmed seems to have sacred status due the sophisticated level of preservation, the tattooing could have been a way to respect the spirit of their lost horse, potentially including the ability to carry their horse into the afterlife alongside the rider.

The discussion moved on to the Altai princess, a woman who had many tattoos herself and the developments gathered from her burial. She appeared to travel a great distance in increasingly poorer health as the journey went on, autopsies revealed in a news report proved the woman to have died of an incredibly invasive cancer which would have left her with little ability to move. The fact that this woman would have been disabled towards the end of her life shows her people to be compassionate towards the disabled, it was suggested by Polosmak that this woman may have been some form of healer or shaman like figure.

This notion of a woman being held in such high regard as to be buried independently close to a lineage chain of kurgans is in direct conflict with the widely accepted notion of the women of Scythian society being rendered to a quiet and near non-existent life, a notion that was confronted in the next chapter on the role of women. Her clothing was preserved through the permafrost, giving us a vivid image of what this woman may have looked like as she was alive. Her clothes were made of hemp and follow Scythian fashion closely, reflecting her patronage to the Scythian material culture as well as the finds of braziers for burning herbs.

These braziers match the ones found among numerous kurgans, attributed by both Herodotus and archaeological evidence to have been used to burn cannabis. Although the woman was found with scorched coriander she was buried with a pouch of cannabis seeds which fuelled Guerra-Doce's notion that she would have used the cannabis as a way to dull the incredible pain she would have been put through by the cancer. This would lead onto the next chapter identifying the ways Scythians used such psychoactive substances.

The chapter including the discussion on psychoactive substances showed that the Scythians may have known of many uses for the plant itself. Herodotus, supported by archaeological finds across the known Scythian world, recorded the tents set up by the Scythian to burn cannabis as part of cleansing ritual which would drive the individuals mad with laughter. Rolle suggests that Herodotus did not partake in such a ritual and therefore could not have understood the reasons for such behaviours, explaining his lack of information on its effects however it was clear from the start that the Scythian peoples had a ritualised use of the substance itself.¹⁵⁰ It has been seen with many kurgans that the burning of cannabis for a funeral was not solely for the living, evidence for the burning of cannabis within the tombs themselves seen with the charred remains left in the braziers.¹⁵¹ The reason for this is unknown however, it seems to have played a vital role to the completion of the forty-day burial process. As well as a ritual use, Rolle suggest cannabis as well as could have been used as a pain and nerve suppressant both before and after battle¹⁵². Although there seems to be no evidence supporting such usage, it seems clear that the Scythian peoples would have discovered its trauma numbing effects after continuing a tradition that Guerra-Doce shows evidence for the beginning of such practices seen, at least in Eastern Europe, in the early bronze age¹⁵³.

To finalise the conclusion of this chapter the hemp was used to a great extent for creating clothing, which has both literary and archaeological evidence supporting its use for clothing. If all other points are to be seen as highly theorised one thing is certain, Herodotus claims that the Scythian peoples grew hemp across the entirety of their domains, which would have been necessary for its extensive capitalisation.

¹⁵⁰ Rolle 1989:94

¹⁵¹ Guerra-Doce 2015:756

¹⁵² Rolle 1989:94

¹⁵³ Guerra-Doce 2015:754

For the final chapter the role of women within Scythian societies was placed under great scrutiny. As was hinted to in the conclusion of the previous chapter, it has been believed that Herodotus was correct when stating the roles of women. This statement saw support from Rolle and Polosmak however Balgabayeva and Penrose, as well as a multitude of kurgans and even Diodorus' writings suggest that women had a much larger role to play. We saw with the Altai princess a woman of high status and respect being buried individually¹⁵⁴, when the attention is brought to central Asia and the West the amount of support for a class of warrior women, Penrose suggests the reality of the Scythian warrior women, not as a large horde of man-slayers, instead fighting side by side with the men or tasked with the defence of the nomadic groups livelihood whilst the men were scouting or engaged in warfare themselves. Rolle highlights a text suggesting the existence of a Queen of the Saka Scythians¹⁵⁵. Both Balgabayeva and Penrose show these warrior women to be respected in the many societies, Balgabayeva discusses the finds of Pokrovka where there were many women from various societal classes found in a large necropolis dated 600 B.C.E. with a unique surrounding of burials containing men clutching children, a unique site not seen anywhere else in Scythian kurgans.

Moving on we get to the separation of Amazonian and Scythian warrior women pointed out by Penrose, highlighting the works of Hartog and the conclusion reached that Herodotus needed to make the Scythians of his Sauromatian origin story into a middle ground with which his Greek audience could relate to, bringing the warfare priority of men and the marriage priority of women into the nomadic tradition and flipping the genders.

¹⁵⁴ Polosmak 1995:81-82

¹⁵⁵ Rolle 1989:86

This meant that the Scythian women placed in the roles of life in the back of a wagon to be the binding of Greek and Scythian treatment of women for the Greek tradition unable to perceive an undetermined level of equality between the men and women of the Scythian world. Balgabayeva's conclusion is representative of the conclusion gained from this research to show a respect towards women as equal gained through the necessity of women working alongside their menfolk as well a wealth of maternal traditions found in many nomadic groups.

There remains many aspects of Scythian culture, traditions and societal practices that could be discussed to create a more in-depth notion of what can be said of the Scythian world however, through this dissertation it can be determined that the Scythian was a patron of a unifying material culture, its foundations built upon the necessities created by nomadic life and able to expand their styles thanks to regular migratory patterns. The roles which women filled can be seen across the entirety of the class system, ranging from warrior to priestesses and the wealthy aristocracy. Peculiarities in their roles have been identified as well, seeing the unique situation presented by the Pokrovka burial to be evidence of a matriarchal society within Scythian domain. The Interspecies bonds discussed show the potential for healthy co-dependence between the nomad rider and their horses, hinting at the reasons possible for the skilful mastery of these nomadic peoples. Through the examination of this crucial bond we are able to examine potential reasons for the animal tattoos covering the Eastern Scythian bodies, theorising that this was a way for the individual to carry their steed's now free spirit with them into the afterlife.

The presence of a high level of ritual was found through the use of psychoactive substances throughout funerary service, the physical demand called upon for the construction of the kurgans and the lengthy process of embalming and touring the deceased's body across their domain. In the finalisation of this study it is clear that the amazing opportunity given by the kurgans to be able to understand what would have otherwise been pure fantasy, coupled with the utilisation of the traditional and experimental approaches allows us to theorise a culture intriguing to no end.

Discussion on Central Kurgan seen in Kyrgyzstan; Large mounds found in Central Eurasian Steppe,¹⁵⁶ subject to successful grave robbery. However, the Issyk kurgan had an added side grave in the southern half, buried quite simply was an individual wearing a uniform of some sort which was covered in gold scales. Included was a large pointed hat also decorated with gold.¹⁵⁷ Rolle couples the recreated appearance of this person with the appearance of a tall hatted Scythian king on Persian reliefs, if this connection was accepted it could show the deceased to be a chief of some form.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Rolle 1989:46-47 "Issyk found in Kyrgyzstan, Arhzan found near Western Russian-Kazakh borderlands"

¹⁵⁷ Rolle 1989:47

¹⁵⁸ Rolle 1989:47

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Fig. 1. 'Geographical map showing the location of the DNA samples around the Northern Pontic Region' Joraz, A. ; Krzewinska, M. ; Nikitin, A. ; Ehler, E. ; Chylenski, M. ; Lukasik, S. ; Krenz-Niedbala, M. ; Sinika, V. ; Piontek, J. ; Ivanova, S. ; Dabert, M. ; Götherström, A. 2017. 'Diverse origin of mitochondrial lineages in Iron Age Black Sea Scythians'. Scientific Reports (Nature Publisher Group)