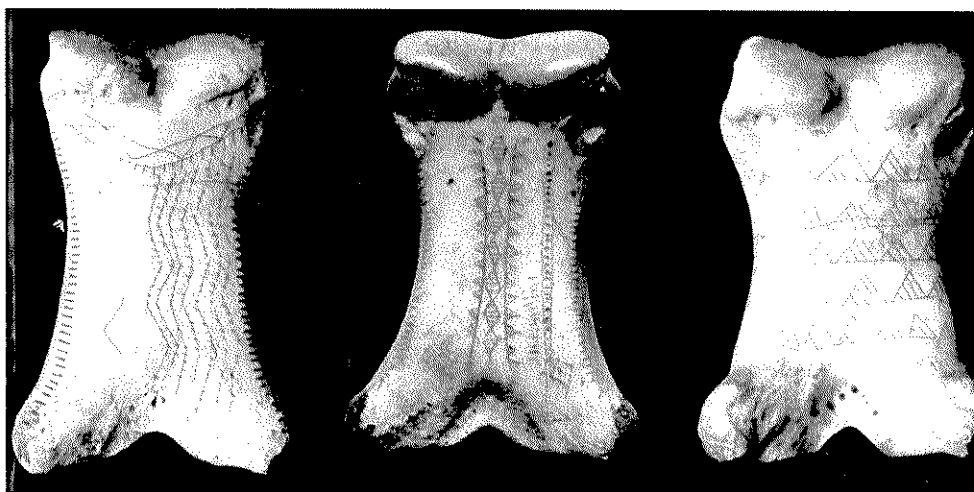


ARE ALL WARRIORS MALE?



GENDER ROLES ON THE
ANCIENT EURASIAN STEPPE

EDITED BY
KATHERYN M. LINDUFF
AND KAREN S. RUBINSON

Are All Warriors Male?

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Foreword

Exploring Unknown Lands and Bringing New Worlds into Gender Studies

Rita P. Wright

My first paper from a gendered perspective was about an unusual group of women, called the *naditu*, who lived in Old Babylonian southern Mesopotamia. There was very little material evidence and I was almost totally dependent on translated documentary sources. What interested me about the *naditu* was that they bought and sold land in substantial quantities in a society always described as dominated by males. I wanted to understand in what ways these women were integrated into the Old Babylonian political economy. Much later, when I was a faculty member in the Anthropology Department at the College of William and Mary, I was asked to write a paper on gender in the Indus Valley. In that context, I focused on divisions of labor among a group of potters whose production area my colleagues and I had discovered at the site of Harappa (Wright 1991). As there are no decipherable texts in the Indus, my challenge was to reconstruct this aspect of the culture's history based solely on its material culture.

These same types of evidence (literary, linguistic, and material) are the primary sources the contributing authors bring to this volume, *Are All Warriors Male? Gender Roles on the Ancient Eurasian Steppe*. Their focus on the ancient steppe takes us to an area less well-known to other Western scholars and the general public than Mesopotamia or the Indus. The authors successfully introduce us to the patterns of subsistence, settlement, social life, and gender issues that are unique to the region and yet bear comparison to other early cultures.

The editors have brought together an international group of specialists in steppe culture to view the region through an engendered lens, filling an important niche not previously incorporated into gender studies. Many aspects of gender studies have changed since a paper published in the *Journal of Archaeological Research* by Meg Conkey and Janet Spector in 1984 broke

the ice by opening gender studies to a wide readership, whereas formerly gender papers were circulated among a small group of specialists (Nelson 2006). Since then, methodologies and theoretical approaches have undergone significant advances, opening new areas of research to archaeological investigations. The steppe zone was not a focus of that early research. Study there often requires a background in Russian, Chinese, and other, less well-known languages, and there were few opportunities for Western scholars to conduct research in the region. In that sense, this volume and other recently published books that I refer to later are gifts to those of us who do not command these languages or who are unable to travel to this distant region. Knowledge of its somewhat unique landscape, subsistence practices, and social arrangements contributes a basis for comparative study with better-known regions.

Several reviews of the current state of gender studies can be briefly summarized as an added background to the works presented here. They include Sarah Milledge Nelson's introduction to her *Handbook of Gender in Archaeology* (2006), a monumental edited work that covers just about everything relevant to gender studies, though not the steppe, and Elizabeth Brumfiel's chapter on methods in feminist and gender archaeology in Nelson's volume.

My foreword has two goals: to discuss topics addressed in this volume that are of broad significance to scholars working in other regions and to comment on conditions specific to the steppe and considerations of gender. It includes general issues such as "women warriors," women on horseback, representation, and ornamentation. In addition, the extensive excavations of cemeteries and burials on the steppe are unrivaled in the ancient world and the contributing authors have used this base for discussions of pastoralism and the interconnectedness of its sedentary and mobile populations, topics that are virtually unknown in most other parts of the world at the level of detail possible here.

WOMEN WARRIORS

Nelson (2006) identifies many of the struggles encountered by archaeologists in the days of early publication, some of which persist today. First and foremost is the very idea of "finding" women in the archaeological record. Examining the past has always meant setting aside our own culturally based assumptions and not imposing universal criteria to identify, for example, wealth or ethnicity or, as is the case for the steppe, dealing with confounding accounts of the existence of women warriors.

Brumfiel (2006) highlights some methodologies scholars have employed to avoid pitfalls when ethnohistoric and ethnographic data are used as guidelines to cultures in deep prehistory. Although ethnographic evidence can

serve as a first approximation for assessing factors like divisions of labor, they often are poor guides to the social relations in an ancient culture (Wright 1996; Brumfiel 2006).¹

Several early historic accounts of the steppe zone create similar challenges. While few scholars accept Herodotus' writings (5th century BCE) as whole cloth on many matters, his views about the women who inhabited the steppe have cried out for investigation, as have those of other influential historians (for example, Sima Qian, a 2nd-century BCE Chinese historian). Obviously, these historians and others fell victim to the norms of their own cultures, leading them to understandings that now can be tested against archaeological evidence. Still, the issues they raised are of continuing interest and remain "questions in the public eye" (Nelson 2006). Most immediately, the question, "Are All Warriors Male?" this volume's title, comes to mind. Here, the authors examine this question based on literary sources in the Indo-European world (Jones-Bley), and with archaeological materials from tombs of the 1st century CE in present-day Afghanistan (Rubinson) and artifacts associated with warfare in female burials in the Eurasian Iron Age (Berseneva). For example, 20 percent of female graves in kurgans, richly furnished elite burials, from the 2nd to 4th centuries CE, contained weapons, including arrowheads and, less frequently, "swords, daggers and spearheads" (Berseneva). Fans of the television program *Xena, Warrior Princess*, will be relieved to learn that this idea is not a total fantasy, as shown in the detailed analysis of literary sources brought to this volume (Jones-Bley), though not at all what Herodotus and others had in mind and much more interesting, but see Hanks (this volume) for some interpretive issues requiring additional study.

WOMEN AND HORSES

While general readers may envision the steppe as a featureless grassland, it is not ecologically homogeneous, a factor relevant to women, horses, and pastoral practices. The open plain was a prime location for horse herding, while lands on forested margins were less so and more conducive to specializing in sheep, cattle, or mixed groups of animals. Given the varied ecological conditions and animals exploited, we can expect variation among pastoralists. In general, the term *pastoralism* refers to a "continuum of lifestyles" (Khazanov 1994; Meadow 1996, 401) marked by degrees of mobility. As Barfield outlines (1989), nomadic pastoralists live a "portable" life suited to the frequent movement of animals but within a fixed range. They move about on a seasonable basis, seeking pastureland for their animals. Present-day nomadic pastoralists may trade items they produce (milk products, meat, or textiles, for example) with settled farmers in exchange for agricultural

products. Semisedentary pastoralists have a home settlement, which may be in an agricultural community, where they remain the major part of the year; some members or the entire family leave for short periods in order to move animals to areas of preferential grazing. Movement typically occurs during dry periods or when nearby available land is being used for agricultural purposes. Sedentary pastoralists remain in one location throughout the year and may engage in farming and animal husbandry.

The variability of subsistence practices bears directly on the significance of evidence that women rode horseback. As several of the contributors note, artifacts and skeletal remains in some burial contexts link gendered activities to horses and horse riding. While the first thing that comes to mind is warfare and the power behind rider and horse in military incursions, the use of horses and riding included a broader base of activities. For example, Sargat grave goods in a female tomb included an iron bit and cheek piece but was absent of military equipment (Berseneva). The use of horses for herding many different animals on the steppe might account in some cases for the presence of artifacts used for horse riding. Shelach develops this idea in the context of late 2nd and early 1st millennium BCE on the eastern part of the Eurasian steppe when “packages” of artifacts and grave size mark different identities. Grave size, coffin construction, and animal sacrifice signify social and economic prestige; weapons and bone artifacts (arrowheads mostly) “reflect a type of warrior (perhaps masculine) identity.” Plaques fastened to clothing “visible on day-to-day interactions” and found in other “packages” are interpreted as expressions of personal or ethnic identity and burials with ceramic vessels and small bronze ornaments “with lower social and economic prestige.” In general, horse sacrifice is associated with male burials, while cattle and sheep are present in male and female graves. On the other hand, horse gear was placed in female graves but not in graves of males, singling them out as horse riders but not warriors. In a society devoted to herding horses, cattle, sheep, and goats, the horse-riding gear (given the presence of cattle and sheep in their grave goods but not horse) suggests they may have participated in animal herding. Shelach ties the multiple and overlapping identity packages to a “florescence of identity construction” resulting from a broadly experienced period of instability and increasing sociopolitical change in the late 2nd and early 1st millennia BCE on the eastern edges of the Eurasian steppe.

Finally, horse riding is attested to among the entire population in the Kingdom of Silla (57 BCE–668 CE), based on archaeological evidence and historic documents (Nelson). Men and women, elites and commoners, all rode horseback, the primary mode of transport in the Silla state. While women may have been warriors, warfare and hunting were considered “upper-class male occupations,” as represented in tomb depictions and later history. The essential point, as discussed in the above examples, is that horses are ridden

for a variety of reasons. Finally, in the case of the Silla, horses and gear associated with riding were strictly prescribed by sumptuary rules according to rank. Within each rank, some types of gear and ornament were not permitted for women, but such restrictions also were applicable to men of inferior statuses.

REPRESENTATION

Steppe cultures that practiced horse herding attached great symbolic significance to the horse. In the only chapter in this volume based upon settlement data, the authors (Olsen and Harding) examine representational objects from north-central Kazakhstan between 3700 and 3100 BCE among the Botai, who lived in pit houses and practiced horse pastoralism.² Unlike nomadic pastoralists, who are mobile and travel over large territories, the Botai settled in villages and “practiced radial migration” around their settlements.

The ritual burial of a horse in a Botai house appears to follow a practice known from later tomb burials and their use of horse bones (specifically the phalanges) to produce female figurines complements the religious significance of horses and the figurines themselves. The figurines are inscribed with decorative elements suggestive of cloth and women’s garments, and based on the examination of surface textures using high-powered microscopy, the authors have been able to reconstruct weaving and possibly appliqué and embroidery technologies.

The female figurines, some of which are decorated and others not, were found in houses. More specific contexts at various sites include pits outside of houses in which ceremonial offerings were placed. Others were found in semisubterranean floors in small pits and at the center of a house near a hearth. A clay house model placed below a house floor included male and female figurines.

The female figurines clearly had a symbolic importance but cannot be associated solely with females, since they were as likely to be meaningful to both men and women as to females alone. Olsen and Harding interpret them as possible female spirits or deities or alternatively spirits of dead ancestors.

MACRO- AND MICROHISTORIES

The publication of a book on steppe cultures and gender comes at an opportune moment. Asia’s ancient history, especially in South Asia, Central Asia, and East Asia, alongside that of other, better-known regions in Asia, such as the ancient Near East, is of interest given the increased opportunities for

outsiders to conduct research in those regions. Of no less importance are the currently increasing economic and cultural ties with the region in the growing global economy. These awakened interests in the Anglophone world are providing new understandings and a broadened view of the “possible” in the way humans construct their cultures.

Two books, *The Making of Bronze Age Eurasia* by Philip Kohl (2007) and *The Urals and Western Siberia in the Bronze and Iron Ages* by Ludmila Koryakova and Andrej Epimakhov (2007), together synthesize the prehistories of the regions and time periods covered by this book. Whereas Kohl and Koryakova and Epimakhov adopt what Kohl refers to as a “coarse-grained spatial and temporal macro-perspective on the basic activities carried out by different groups, and then attempt to discern how these various activities relate to one another or are interconnected” (Kohl 2007, 258), the authors in *Are All Warriors Male?* pare these processes down to size, revealing details and providing insights into the different ways they were felt by steppe cultures. These engendered views from local areas afford complementary, but different, perspectives on how pastoralism was experienced within this vast zone.

As noted above, field research in many parts of the steppe zone has focused on the excavation of cemeteries and burials and less on settlements. Although most of the skeletal remains were aged and sexed, few were subject to bioarchaeological examination. As Bryan Hanks points out in chapter 1, the skeletal remains need additional study, given certain issues regarding subadults. Nevertheless, the contributors have put burial evidence to good use by employing multiple lines of evidence involving the elaborate arrangements of tombs, the spatial distribution of skeletal remains, and associated artifacts in order to identify gendered activities, gender equality, and social relations.

Tombs excavated at the site of Daodunzi on the eastern frontier of the Eurasian steppe in a valley at a high elevation better suited to pastoralism than agriculture evince images of life among mobile pastoralists (Linduff). Based on the discovery of sheep, and to a lesser extent bovine, bones in female tombs at Daodunzi, we can safely state that the Daodunzi were not horse herders, as was the case with their neighbors, whose tombs include horse skulls and hoofs. In pastoral societies the presence of sacrificed animals can signal high status, and their presence in women’s tombs along with animal plaques may be indicative of their economic roles among pastoralists specializing in sheep. Linduff suggests that the spatial distributions of the catacomb burials in which the women were interred, in distinction to males who were buried in vertical pits, may be indicative of marriage patterns, in which women were from local families and males were intrusive.

Semimobile agropastoralists in the Karasuk region specialized in cattle and sheep (Legrand). No excavations have been undertaken in settlements. Clustered arrangements of tombs, situated on the edges of rivers and lakes,

include both local materials and other objects more broadly distributed, an indication of the group's mobility. The spatial distribution of individuals within the clusters, adults at the center, with subadults and infants at increased distances from the center, is interpreted as family groupings by age and gender. Unlike the Daodunzi tombs, there are gender differences in the distributions of cattle offerings, the majority of which are found in male tombs, and sheep (in male and female), possibly indicative of a division of labor. Other grave goods indicative of specialization between males and females include bronze awls placed near the waist of females and bronze knives at the waist of males. The awls likely have multiple implications (Spector 1993), including ritual functions, but may have been used in hide preparation; the richly decorated bronze knives at the waist of males are interpreted as prestige weapons and were possibly used in butchery.

The stock-breeding pastoralists of the western Siberian Iron Age (the Sargat referred to above—Berseneva), although seminomadic, inhabited permanent settlements and fortresses. They specialized in domestic animals, the most dominant being horse, then cow and sheep and goat, and were more rigidly stratified than any of the other groups discussed above. Bioarchaeological examination of female skeletal remains indicates that women spent time on horseback, conceivably for herding purposes or, considering evidence for weaponry, for military purposes. Spatial distributions within the kurgans contain both males and females placed at their center and, based on limited anthropological study and artifact clusters, are interpreted as the remains of elite family burials. Although male burials contain larger numbers of high-status items, especially weapons associated with warriors, female burials also contain these elements and many are identified among the elite segments of society.

As these examples of different pastoral economies document, steppe cultures were not totally undifferentiated, although there are many similarities in artifact styles and a penchant for metal technologies that were widely shared. As Kohl (2007) and several of the contributions to this volume indicate, during periods of transition, cultures appear not to have been totally replaced, and many artifacts, especially those in burial contexts, demonstrate the traces of shared sets of ideas and residues of past lives.

Many burials in steppe cultures contain large quantities of sumptuous goods produced from sophisticated technologies and created with elaborate design elements that can be traced to specific cultural traditions. Artifacts recently recovered from a vault in the palace in Kabul, Afghanistan, where they were hidden during many years of conflict, included sumptuous goods from the excavations at Tillya Tepe in northern Afghanistan. Among them were elaborate gold plaques, ornaments, clasps, and belts (Rubinson). In addition to the golden objects, the six excavated burials contained others

produced from nonlocal materials, or based on nonlocal models, or imported from elsewhere. The cultural identities of these individuals have been variously interpreted. The skeletal evidence of one woman with a flattened skull is evidence of a tradition identified with regions to the northeast of the burial site and suggests she may have been born elsewhere, either having brought the objects buried with her when she came to the area or maintained ties with people from her “homeland” through long-distance contacts.

The evidence from Tillya Tepe, the Sargat, and other sites discussed by various authors in this book on gender in the steppe complement Kohl’s (2007) and Koryakova and Epimakhov’s (2007) emphases on the interconnectedness of Eurasia. They provide hints of the possibilities for travel of ideas, technologies, and peoples across the steppe. The specifics of variability of its subsistence and settlement document this exchange in local contexts.

PROJECTS FOR THE FUTURE

The authors provide us with new pathways for understanding the social construction of pastoral lifestyles. Future studies will build on these works in reevaluating long-held assumptions and adopting new methodologies, such as better sampling strategies, collection of botanical and zoo-archaeological evidence, and excavations of different types of settlement sites to establish social arrangements within houses, villages, and larger communities, where these are available. Artifact analyses involving use ware need to be conducted. Awls and knives and other instruments discussed throughout the book cry out for functional analysis. Here, I am thinking of the types of analysis (for example, Kehoe 1992; Brumbach and Jarvenpa 2006; Weedman and Frink 2006; Gifford-Gonzalez 1992) conducted in connection with the subsistence practices of hunter-gatherer societies.

There is now a significant literature on technological styles (Lechtman 1977, 1994; Hosler 1994) and human agency in the selection and practice of specific technologies (Hoffman and Dobres 1999). The spread of metal technologies, in particular, in various parts of the world, was a dynamic force for societal change, revealing choices made at local levels often resulting in the reorientation of social practices, as Kohl discusses (1989) for the steppe, but with significant variability in different areas of the world, such as Ehrhardt notes with respect to Native American contact with European cultures (2005). Studies of ceramics also lend themselves to similar analyses of the exchanges of technical knowledge and material goods (Wright 1989, 2002), although such evidence is often lacking on the steppe. An engendered approach, such as proposed by Marcia-Anne Dobres (2000), would build on the contributions herein.

Another tantalizing area of research involves stylistic analyses of the objects interred in burials. Although analyses of ornamental styles have long been part of the research of steppe materials, especially so-called animal style and other 1st millennia BCE and CE art (see, for example, Minns 1913, 1944 and Rostovtzeff 1929, or more recently Jettmar 1967 and Bunker et al. 1970), combining such research together with study of the distribution of raw materials and technological styles is of equal interest. For example, Chernykh magisterially did such a study of ancient metallurgy, where cultural context and technological styles are explored on a broad scale throughout the Bronze Age steppe (1992). Calligaro has begun the raw material studies for Tillya Tepe (2006), a site where a study of technological styles in the context of the ornamental styles would potentially be enlightening.

The authors have drawn extensively on the burial evidence from cemeteries, tombs, and pit burials to reconstruct pastoral modes and social relationships. Additional study of human remains, as Hanks notes, should include osteological sexing and aging in cases in which it has not been conducted. In addition, studies of health and nutrition (Lovell 1994, 1997), activity patterns based on signature on bone (Molleson 1994) and genetic relations either through DNA or discrete trait analyses where bone is poorly preserved (Hemphill et al. 1991; Lukacs 1993, 1996), types of studies which have just begun on steppe materials, would contribute important data to the patterns and questions discussed in this volume.

In summary, the contributors to this volume have “broken the ice” (Nelson 2006) and provided benchmark contributions for more extended analyses of an archaeology of the steppe and gender. An array of evidence for pastoral societies and gendered relations on local levels described here will now be the framework from which to engender new evidence, to encourage new field approaches, and to create possibilities for future research. The work justifiably provides a broadened perspective with which to view pastoral societies and brings the steppe into the mainstream of gender studies.

NOTES

1. Long-held views on the relations of early states to kinship groups, based principally on ethnographic analogs, have been discussed extensively in the context of early southern Mesopotamian states by Norman Yoffee (1995). I develop the topic from an engendered perspective in “Gendered Relations in Ur III: Kinship, Property and Labor” in Diane Bolger, ed., *Gender through Time*, forthcoming from AltaMira Press.

2. For a discussion of the Botai and whether the horses there were wild and hunted or domesticated and herded, readers can begin with Kohl (2007, 139) for a review of the evidence and extended bibliography.

Introduction

The Nature of Nomads, Cultural Variation, and Gender Roles Past and Present

Katheryn M. Linduff and Karen S. Rubinson

Although the study of gender has opened new avenues of research in many parts of the ancient world, one very large area and distinctive lifestyle are often absent from the literature: Eurasia and its ancient nomadic societies. This volume is intended to stimulate thinking about the rich diversity of gender roles among the pastoral peoples found in the Eurasian steppe in antiquity. We sought to take a careful look at this issue by bringing together a set of chapters that not only expands the study of gender in this region, but also provides insight into problems of sorting out the evidence, a task particularly complicated among these cultures where written records are most often absent.

What little we do have in writing about these past cultures is from historians of neighboring literate cultures (Greece and China, for instance) who observed and interacted with them. Both Herodotus and Sima Qian describe these peoples as ruthless “barbarians,” who had no permanent homes and whose lifestyles they thought were both incomprehensible and primitive. Men versus women’s activities or roles were not of interest and were rarely recorded, and some of the observations, such as those about the presence of “warrior-women,” were highly mythologized rather than accurately observed.

The chapters brought together here address issues about the veracity of myths surrounding the nomadic peoples, including the “warrior-women” (Jones-Bley, Hanks, Rubinson), the mobility of pastoral peoples (Legrand, Linduff, Olsen and Harding, Shelach), family life (Berseneva, Legrand, Linduff), and migration theory and the transmission of ideas, objects, and peoples (Jones-Bley, Nelson, Rubinson, Shelach). Many of the chapters rely on the data collected in recent excavations, much of it reported in languages not accessible to most scholars and students of the study of gender and of archaeology. We conceive that this book will change the way we think about

pastoral peoples and provide a rich new context in which to understand the shared lifeways as well as distinctive local features of these previously highly romanticized groups.

OBJECTIVES

In their book *In Pursuit of Gender: Worldwide Archaeological Approaches*, Sarah Milledge Nelson and Myriam Rosen-Ayalon note that “women’s activities are as important to study as men’s and the relationship between them is critical to describe in order to really understand a particular society . . . [and this] has led to far more sophisticated archaeology” (2002, 5). Determining the archaeological correlations that display the concept of gender and its relationship to biological sex has stimulated much discussion and the archaeology of gender, as it has been studied for the past two decades, has brought evidence from many parts of the ancient world under scrutiny. In this volume we hope to bring archaeological remains from Eurasia and its pastoral societies to the discussion on gender, as this region was completely absent from the latest review of gender studies and archaeology in *A Handbook of Gender and Archaeology*, edited by Sarah Milledge Nelson and published in 2006. Consideration of this vast and diverse region simply has not been attempted before in a single volume.

Eurasia forms the largest landmass on the globe, an area that extends from the Balkans to the Yellow Sea and links Europe and Asia. Lying between the fortieth and fiftieth latitude of this enormous land belt is a steppe with a fairly uniform terrain at an average altitude of between five hundred and a thousand meters. The peoples who lived there in premodern times practiced distinctive lifestyles: Most were pastoralists, although many were agropastoralists and semisedentary, while others were more mobile. Some lived near empires, while others crossed the open steppe tending to their herds. Archaeological evidence of the lives of these peoples includes both mortuary and habitation settings excavated in recent decades. Often excavation is carried out on a broad scale, unlike the North American tradition of the past half-century, so that extensive data sometimes come from a single site. That is not to say that research questions were formulated about gender so that information specific to it was sought and collected, therefore conclusions in all chapters here are tentative, and sometimes provocative. Our posing the questions about gender and how to find and assess it in the archaeological record in Eurasia, will, hopefully, stimulate those in the field to develop research projects that include such inquiry and collection strategies.

Exploration of how gender was constructed in several locations within this vast land and at different times has provided an opportunity to place this

information into the discussion about gender worldwide and to analyze how to read it archaeologically, while also providing a more nuanced understanding of particular societies and their social structures, especially in relation to the steppe lifestyles. The evidence here is primarily mortuary, so direct association with daily life is risky, but it seems that what we have begun to discover is what women and men did in these societies (especially because women's and men's roles and tasks have been ignored or taken for granted in previous literature), and where possible, how gender roles and families were constructed. Because of some of the apparent commonalities, we have hints about how both may have been distinctive to a mobile lifestyle.

THE HISTORICAL PROBLEM

This volume is based on the expectation that archaeologists and art historians who study ancient Eurasia have important contributions to make to the study of gender. Current archaeological work and research on steppe lifeways has provided enough evidence to show that the peoples described by the Greek ethnographer Herodotus (5th century BCE) in *The Histories*, and the Chinese historian Sima Qian (2nd century BCE) in the *Shiji* (Records of the Historian), were only a subset of those living across the Eurasian steppe, and the details of their ways of life as described by the ancient writers seldom mentioned gender roles. In fact, the ancient as well as contemporary literature on the nomads has emphasized the successes of their male military leadership but do not talk much about women. When they do, such as the discussion of the Amazons (Herodotus 4.110–117; 9.27), the descriptions are idealized and schematic, leading to sometimes wild and often untested speculation about the role women warriors might have played on the steppe. Detecting how gender was actually constructed in these societies as evidenced in the archaeological materials now available is the goal of the volume's contributors.

We have gathered together chapters by people who bring diverse types of expertise: in gender studies (Nelson, Linduff), in Eurasian archaeology (Berseneva, Hanks, Harding, Legrand, Linduff, Olsen, Rubinson, Shelach), in analysis of symbol systems and mortuary remains (Hanks, Linduff, Jones-Bley, Rubinson), in scientific expertise useful for analyzing materials (Hanks, Harding, Olsen), and in reconstruction of lifeways of ancient peoples from archaeological as well as historical materials (Legrand, Linduff, Rubinson, Shelach).¹ We come from many different nations, and together represent training and intellectual depth held by no single person. A well-known archaeologist, Rita P. Wright, who has worked on virtually all issues listed above, and is among the pioneering scholars of gender roles in ancient societies, writes the foreword.

In an effort to understand just what the construction of gender was in each of the locations studied by our participants, and how that played into the daily lives as well as the memorialization at death, we assume that not all nomadic peoples thought, behaved, or lived the same way. Comparative analysis has required explanation, and the authors have been asked to address such issues. Were roles gendered similarly in many, most, or no mobile societies? Why? Did gender roles shift in relation to historical, environmental, or economic circumstances? What role does gender play in selection of leadership? Are roles fixed, or do they adjust according to task? Season? Age? Ethnographic studies have recorded societal patterns for mobile groups that give equal status to men and women, and shifting leadership strategies depending on circumstances and season, for instance (Barfield 1993). Can these patterns be found in the archaeological record for ancient times? Does mobility itself support certain gender roles? What role does gender or kinship play in determining status? Is status achieved or ascribed? Do these patterns differ or complement the sedentary neighbors of the pastoral peoples at the frontiers of the steppe? When and where are women associated with weapons on the ancient steppe? And can we really call them warriors? Such questions have guided the writing of the following chapters.

We have discovered that, as Nelson claims, searching for universals in gender studies turns out to be less productive than concentrating on variables and finding the revealing differences (2006, 19). The authors here, for example, have found social hierarchies among women and men; have found that cultural heritage is marked in burial, especially in elite tombs and where marriage and political change can be documented; have determined that sometimes the most important features to define status at death were age, marital status, and/or lineage, and not gender; have discovered that social status may change with marriage, age, occupation, and/or accumulation of goods or animals. In addition, we found many instances where the definition of gender roles and status proposed in historical literature was not confirmed in archaeological settings. That is, there is often a considerable difference between what the texts say happened and what is documented in burials. And vice versa. For instance, the idealized image of women warriors as professed in texts was sometimes played out in burials, but not often. We also confirmed that we were more successful reading the archaeological setting if we examined the full context, including textual evidence where possible, rather than limiting our investigations to study of a single type of artifact or interpretation. In other words, striving to understand the whole site, tomb and/or household, marriage or lineage leads to richer interpretations of each family member than studying only one feature in isolation.

THE AUTHORS

The authors contributing to this volume are people with different types of training and intellectual backgrounds as well as diverse types of data. All are active and published scholars and include professors and museum personnel, as well as very recent PhDs. The participants present archaeological work in China (Inner Mongolia); Mongolia; the Altai region of Russia; Kazakhstan; Russia, east and south of the Ural Mountains; Afghanistan; Korea; and Ukraine. Time periods considered range from the late Neolithic through the Bronze and Iron ages (c. 6000 BCE–c. 700 CE), and include study of peoples who lived many different types of fully and semimobile lifestyles. We editors anxiously awaited first drafts to come in because we were not sure just how each author would approach the data, what each would find, and what sort of interpretations could be made.

We divided the chapters into three sections that represent the main topics addressed throughout: the warrior ethos, the gendering and marking of identity in pastoral societies and how that changes, and the commemoration of marriage, families, and lineage at death. Each chapter brings an approach particular to the evidence and comes to critical conclusions that may be useful in moving forward to more nuanced interpretation and the construction of field projects that take into account gender issues in a more scientific and systematic way.

Bryan Hanks's (University of Pittsburgh) chapter, "Reconsidering Warfare, Status, and Gender in the Eurasian Steppe Iron Age," deals primarily with interpretive theory. He considers how the tombs of Iron Age Eurasian steppe nomads have become a popular topic among scholars in discussions concerning gender, status, and warrior activities in later Eurasian prehistory. The majority of these social interpretations have been based exclusively on mortuary evidence in the form of human skeletal remains and the inclusion of certain categories of grave goods such as weaponry. He argues that there are two major problems connected with these interpretations. The first is a general lack of acknowledgment of the complexity of mortuary ritual activities and interpretations regarding social status, identity, and gender. It is suggested that recent theoretical trends developed in connection with European Iron Age mortuary studies offer a potentially important conceptual framework for investigating mortuary practices in the Eurasian steppe Iron Age as well. The second problem discussed focuses on the need for stronger bioarchaeological approaches to the analysis of Eurasian steppe human remains, particularly with regard to juvenile sexing, muscle activity stress markers, and trauma patterns connected with violence and warfare. In conclusion, Hanks argues that new conceptual theories and bioarchaeological methods for skeletal analysis must be employed before improved understandings of social organi-

zation, status, and gender roles among Early Iron Age steppe societies can be achieved. His chapter reminds us that the conclusions drawn by other authors in this volume are based on the best available data, not perfect data sets.

Karlene Jones-Bley (University of California, Los Angeles), in her chapter “*Arma Feminamque Cano: Warrior-Women in the Indo-European World*,” assesses the myth of the “warrior-woman” and its archaeological correlates. It has often been suggested that the Amazon, known from the ancient Greeks, was invented as a kind of sociopolitical bogeyman, who lived a life contrary to all that the Greeks saw as women’s roles. Although there is no denying that bearing and raising children was a primary role for most women, recent scholarship has shown that women who spoke Indo-European languages went beyond the boundaries of hearth and home. Jones-Bley’s chapter reviews the linguistic and literary evidence, together with archaeological data, that demonstrate that at least some women were indeed warriors in many of these societies and that perhaps, with more careful sexing of remains, more such women can be identified. Further, the role of horse riding and chariot driving among women is examined based on archaeological, artistic, and literary evidence, including the fact that the Greek word for horse, *hippo*, is found in the names of three of the Amazon queens. The evidence indicates unquestionably that some women held military positions in these ancient societies—that enough women engaged in warrior activities that they were not anomalies. Either they stepped in when necessary or lived within societies that did not have the rigid gender roles that were ascribed to them in the 19th century.

Karen S. Rubinson (Barnard College) brings the materials from a well-known cemetery, Tillya Tepe, under the lens in her chapter, “Tillya Tepe: Aspects of Gender and Cultural Identity,” to suggest that there are multiple identities for women (and probably men) and that only a full contextual analysis can get closer to seeing how that was displayed, in this case at death. She discusses six burials excavated in northern Afghanistan that are said to be those of the settled descendants of the nomadic Yuezhi, who, according to Chinese texts, came to Central Asia from the Chinese borderlands and are customarily viewed as the ancestors of the Kushan rulers. The graves of five females and one male date to the middle of the 1st century CE. An analysis of the rich materials buried with these individuals suggests both their eastern steppic roots as well as documents the process of creating new cultural identities for themselves. They wear ornaments that point to strong ties to the eastern steppe and one woman even has the flattened skull well-known from the culture of the Huns. Another practice known from nomadic steppe societies, burial of women with weapons, is also apparent in these tombs, but whether one can characterize any of the five women as warriors must await detailed publication of the weapons found with them. Even so, the oldest of the women is buried with “Siberian-style” daggers and a pickax, in contrast

to the other women, two of whom were buried with either knives or daggers (tools?) and two with none. This senior woman does not possess in death the weapons of the male (sword, bows and arrows, as well as knives and daggers), but the pickax might be construed as a warrior's weapon as well as a marker of her senior status. The combination of eastern steppe elements with local Central Asian practices implies that a newly formed, mixed or blended, identity was emerging.

The second section of this volume (part II) is titled "Horses and the Gendering of Identity on the Steppe and Beyond," and the chapters address the importance of livestock, especially horses, to the definition of identity, both cultural and sexual. Sandra Olsen (Carnegie Museum of Natural History) and Deborah G. Harding (Carnegie Museum of Natural History) reconstruct clothing of females from materials excavated in northern Kazakhstan in their chapter "Women's Attire and Possible Sacred Role in 4th Millennium Northern Kazakhstan." During the Copper Age of Northern Kazakhstan, the Botai and Tersek cultures manufactured female figurines by incising ornate decorations on the phalanges of horses and more rarely saiga antelope. These objects provide significant details about the clothing of the women of these cultures, as well as shed light on their rituals and the roles of women in the religions of these horse herders of the Eurasian steppe. The context of horse phalanx caches in small pits in the floors of houses may indicate the practice of placing icons there to represent goddesses or female spirits to protect the domicile. Evidence regarding textiles derived from pottery impressions indicates that twined bast fiber cloth, most likely hemp or nettle, would have been available to make clothing. In this chapter, all of the data are compiled to reconstruct both attire and female roles in the Copper Age societies of Northern Kazakhstan. Examples in Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Spain suggest that the use of these bones to represent females was widespread in the 4th and 3rd millennia BCE and probably defined gendered attire for all.

Gideon Shelach (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem), in his chapter, "He Who Eats the Horse, She Who Rides It? Symbols of Gender Identity on the Eastern Edges of the Eurasian Steppe," looks at excavated materials from pastoral societies and proposes that identities change as lifeways adjust to local circumstances. He examines the symbols and conception of gender roles among societies located in the eastern part of the Eurasian steppe during the late 2nd and early 1st millennia BCE, a time of vast and meaningful sociopolitical and economic change. He considers the evidence from three cemeteries from different parts of this area, set against a background of related archaeological data. Although the early 1st millennium in this region has long been characterized as fully pastoral, data show that pastoralism was adopted to expand the economic base of these societies, not to replace agriculture. Nevertheless, it was in this period that the groups of the Northern Zone, as it is

called, developed an identity distinctly different from their southern Chinese neighbors. The mortuary data demonstrate that not only were apparently new gender identities defined at this time, but also social and economic statuses as well. Using the analytic tool of hierarchical clustering, the data reveal the interrelationships of social/economic, ethniclike, and masculine identities, which, in differing ways in the three cemetery areas, cut across biological sex. Overall, average wealth and prestige are not closely correlated with the sex of the deceased, but it appears that access to the highest sociopolitical strata was a male prerogative. One interesting outcome is that although horse sacrifice at burial is strongly correlated with male identity in these data sets, grave goods associated with horse riding are not associated with that identity. In fact, the earliest representation of horseback riding in the region comes from the grave of a woman.

Sarah Milledge Nelson (University of Denver) moves even further to the east to take careful look at evidence from the Korean peninsula in her chapter, "Horses and Gender in Korea: The Legacy of the Steppe on the Edge of Asia." In the past, Korean history has been seen through the lens of Chinese culture, but this chapter addresses yet another legacy, that of the Eurasian steppe during the Silla period (traditional dates 57 BCE–668 CE). The sumptuary rules of the early Korean state of Silla describe in detail the number of horses and quality of horse trappings that are permitted to all ranks and genders. The implication of these documents is that riding horseback was the primary transportation for everyone in the Silla state, elite and commoner alike, both male and female, in contrast to, for example, China at this time, where we know that particular urban elites (mostly male, some female) and the military rode. The widespread role of horse riding in Silla society can be traced back to the founders of the state, who had strong connections to the steppe. Nelson documents ties to the steppe and forest steppe in the archaeological background of Silla and earlier peoples of the Korean peninsula, including the importance of birch bark artifacts and reindeer leather boots, both of which could only be owned by the top rank of men and women in Silla times. Earlier, mounded burials, a reverence for white horses, and a preference for gold artifacts over other precious materials marked early Korean culture. With these material ties to the steppe apparently came social behaviors, such as the prevalence of horse riding among both men and women, which distinguished the gender and status roles of this state in East Asia from most other Chinese-related states, where women seldom rode horses, except in limited periods, and then only among the elite. It is important to take into account these long-lived steppe traditions when examining Silla culture.

In part III of this volume, "Marriage, Families, and Death on the Steppe," the authors consider gender in relation to commemoration of identity in marriage unions and the construction of families on the steppe. The authors have

found multicultural families and also that lineage and age were important in how family members were displayed at death. According to Natalia Berse-neva (Institute of History and Archaeology, Ural Division, Russian Academy of Sciences) in her chapter, “Women and Children in the Sargat Culture,” gender dimensions can be seen in the Sargat culture as an important part of mortuary analysis. As a social construct, she reconstructed sex-related roles of individuals inside and outside of marriage from mortuary evidence. Among the possible variations, gender may be patterned by sex in relation to the human biological life cycle so that childhood, adulthood, and old age may constitute different and separate genders. These latter patterns are examined here among mortuary remains of the Sargat, a nomadic population which occupied the vast forest-steppe area in Western Siberia from the early 6th century BCE to the 3rd and 4th centuries CE, although a complete picture cannot be formed, since children and females are underrepresented in the burial contexts studied. Sargat burials contain a wide variety of grave goods, many originating far beyond the steppe, including, for example, glass beads from Egypt, the Levant, southwest Asia, and China. In fact, the single diagnostic artifact for Sargat identity is pottery. In approximately one-half of all the burials analyzed, the grave goods are gender neutral, whether male, female, or child. Greater differentiation is seen in the goods found in richer burials at the center of grave clusters; these can belong to men, women, and even children. Horse trappings and armor and most weapons are not found with children; in fact armor and long swords are found only in adult male burials. Some weapons were found in 20 percent of the female burials (bows and arrowheads), and 60 percent of male burials. The absence or inclusion of certain burial goods may suggest a vertical hierarchy among individuals, as well as gender differences. In fact, a few male burials were found containing no weapons and much jewelry, presumably characterizing men with different social roles, at least in death. The rich children’s burials confirm that at least some small children had important social roles in Sargat society.

Sophie Legrand (University of Paris) brings material from central Siberia to her chapter, “Sorting Out Men and Women in the Karasuk Culture.” She considers family structure of Bronze Age peoples of the Karasuk culture, circa 1400–1000 BCE, in light of gender. The Karasuk culture is known almost exclusively from excavation of cemetery sites and the data set for this study are four hundred tombs from various cemeteries where the burials were anthropologically sexed. Cemetery arrangement, tomb structure, and grave goods, together with age and sex of skeletons, are considered, with the goal of understanding something of family organization in Karasuk society and its relationship to social organization. The arrangements of burials in cemeteries show that kinship is the base of the Karasuk societal organization, since funerary clusters are small family cemeteries. Adults are placed in the central

units and other family members arranged according to both age and gender. Age does not appear to influence the grave complexes, but there are differences in gender and social rank markers. On the whole, female burials contain more jewelry and bronze clothing ornaments than male burials, and high-status women are buried with awls placed at their waists, imitations of cowry shells, and body ornaments such as beads. In general, male burials contain little jewelry and few bronze clothing ornaments. Males of high social status are buried with bronze knives placed at the waist, celts, and “bow-shaped” bronze artifacts. Overall, it appears that the Karasuk had a hierarchical social order based on a patriarchal system and, with one exception, the women and children assumed the social rank of the man with whom they were associated in burial.

In her chapter, “The Gender of Luxury and Power among the Xiongnu in Eastern Eurasia,” Katheryn M. Linduff (University of Pittsburgh) looks at mortuary data from the Ordos region in present-day China and finds a multicultural marriage pattern that displays particular steppic identities determined by gender. The chapter looks at nine cemeteries of the later 1st millennium BCE from the northern borderlands of China that Chinese texts ascribe as land belonging to the nomadic groups called Xiongnu. The analysis of the graves and their contents, together with the skeletal data, shed light not only on how gender played into the construction of political and economic power, but also on the complex social relationship within the local groupings. Xigoupan, a spot where Chinese records tell us that Xiongnu headquarters were, with its rich male and female burials containing many Chinese goods, probably belonged to regional Xiongnu notables. Examination of other cemeteries of less powerful and/or wealthy individuals reveals regional distinctions among the groups and varied burial practices within cemeteries, and indicates that the Xiongnu was not a homogeneous group, as suggested in the Chinese written records. Furthermore, the archaeological research contradicts the Chinese characterization of the Xiongnu as having no respect for their elders; in fact, the graves of older men and women are consistently richer and larger than those of younger individuals. Women and men of similar age appeared often to have similar social status. Analysis of burial location and contents also makes clear the formation of intercultural families, as well as observation of certain practices, such as bride price, also found among living pastoralists.

AUDIENCE

Finally, the chapters in this volume are written in a style that is, hopefully, readily accessible and about topics that appeal to a diverse audience. Because of the wide geographic distribution of the peoples of Eurasia, they were in

contact with neighboring groups from across a vast area. Therefore, scholars whose main focus is on the adjacent regions, including China, the ancient Near East, and Eastern Europe, would benefit from reading this volume. The large group of archaeologists, cultural anthropologists, historians, art historians, and those with concern for gender issues we hope will be very pleased to learn about these new data. In addition to this more academic set of readers, and because there has been such popular interest in “women warriors,” including in TV, movies, and even comic books, there could be an audience of a sort not usual to scholarly publications.

NOTE

1. Some of the papers included here (by Linduff, Rubinson, and Olsen) were first presented at the Second University of Chicago Eurasian Archaeology Conference—Social Orders and Landscapes: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Eurasian Archaeology, held in April 2005.

Chapter Seven

Women and Children in the Sargat Culture

Natalia Berseneva

Gender dimensions can be an important part of mortuary analysis. As opposed to biological sex, gender is a social construct, involving the sex-related roles of individuals in society. In addition to the masculine-feminine pairing, nonheterosexual categories may also exist. Also, gender may be patterned by sex in relation to the human biological life cycle so that childhood, adulthood, and old age may constitute different and separate genders. Although the universal importance of gender in the mortuary domain is now known, gender relations in Western Siberian Iron Age societies still remain absolutely unexplored. I hope to correct that omission by examining mortuary practice among a group known as the Sargat.¹

The Sargat society is known only archaeologically, and neighboring nomadic cultures have a direct impact upon the Sargat. These groups are known from ancient written sources such as Herodotus, Hippocrates, and Strabo. Therefore, we can use these accounts as information.

From the beginning one needs to say a few words about stock breeding. Approaches to stock breeding cannot be classified as one uniform economic strategy without accounting for specific conditions and respective cultural attributes. One population can simultaneously practice economic patterns characterized as fully nomadic, seminomadic (seasonal pastoralism), and sedentary forms of stock breeding. The degree of mobility, herd composition, amplitude, and distance of migration obviously depend on local environment, social and economic levels of development, and the traditions of any given society (Khazanov 1984). By the 6th century BCE the western Siberian forest steppe, which lay on the real crossroads between east and west, south and north, forest and steppe, and in the path of transcontinental movements and migrations, experienced the direct impact of a nomadic population. The new synthesis of cultures is represented by numerous sites displaying a settlement

hierarchy and burial grounds which show an almost completely nomadic model of mortuary practice. The Sargat culture was formed through interaction between these nomads and the local population. The model of such interaction can be understood in relation to the intersection of settled herders, hunters, and pastoral nomads (Koryakova 1994).

Eurasia became more densely populated in the Iron Age. The way of life of ancient stockbreeders was characterized by certain economic instability and high mobility. The active interchange among different cultural traditions took place in both the steppe and forest-steppe zones. In a fully settled, farming mode of life, people's place in society had been fundamentally established by birth and could stay quite stable during their lifetime. The mobile way of life may dictate certain markers of self- (ethnic) identity. For instance, tattoos, artificial cranial deformations, weaponry, decorated metalwork, and clothes served to identify the people anywhere, in life or in death. The "animal-style" tattoos on the bodies preserved in frozen tombs at Pazyryk in the Altai Mountains are a case in point (Polos'mak 2001). The Sarmatians practiced artificial deformation of the head, where a "long head" served as evidence of higher military status. All these markers reflected social hierarchy as well as gender symbolism.

Herodotus writes about "royal Scythian," "Scythian-nomads," and "Scythian-ploughsmen" (IV.120). Some scholars suggest that Scythian women held relatively low status by comparison to Sauromatian and Sarmatian women (Khazanov 1975). This conclusion was based mainly on accounts of ancient authors, such as the famous legend about Amazons, recorded by Herodotus (IV.114) and, indirectly, on mortuary data. The Scythian female graves contained small numbers of weapons, whereas Sauromatian and Sarmatian female burials are relatively rich in weaponry. However, this question, undoubtedly, should be reexamined, in light of the latest large-scale investigations of Scythian mortuary practice conducted twenty years ago (Bunyatyan 1985). Now there are new materials that document the presence of elite Scythian females in tombs with heavy weaponry (Petrenko et al. 2004). Probably, the armed women were part of a group of women in the higher echelons of nomadic society; they could participate in raids on creek-side settlements or other sedentary communities. Female participation in raiding may have included a system of military obligation, such as Hippocrates implies (Taylor 1996, 205; Polos'mak 2001, 276).

Information about "late" nomads is much better known. A hierarchical organization based on a vertical genealogical principle governed social relations that included some number of patronymic groups (patrilineages). The social status of any individual was determined by the status of his lineage and birthright, usually according to the position of this lineage in relation to real or mythical ancestors. According to travelers' and ethnographers'

accounts, the nomadic women (both free and slaves) performed the greater part of household and economic activity in medieval societies (Turkic, Kazakh, Mongolian groups) in contrast to men (Klyashtorny and Savinov 2005, 156–158; Polos'mak 2001, 276–277). Free women often had high status and great self-sufficiency, but leadership and certain types of decision making usually belonged to men. Women could completely substitute for men during their absence. Women did not take part in military campaigns, but we cannot extend this pattern of relations directly to prehistoric societies.

Iron Age nomadic societies were rather complex. Scythia is accepted as an early state; the Saka, Sauromatians, and Sarmatians are assessed by scientists as complex chiefdoms (Khazanov 1975; for more details see Koryakova and Epimakhov 2007). The Sargat society was highly hierarchical as well. Its vertical symbolism is clearly displayed in huge royal (leaders') kurgans. Family ties are fundamental for mobile societies, including the Sargat, and both vertical and gendered social roles can be recognized *between* families. The gender distinctions inside one family, perhaps, were less pronounced (or visible) and significant than in sedentary communities of comparable complexity. The connections between women and men are correspondingly distinct because of the mobile mode of life and the different relationship to property. It is possible that early nomadic women had higher status in contrast to agricultural women. In order to understand the Sargat case, these problems must be approached carefully and contextually.

The Iron Age Sargat population occupied the vast area between the Ural Mountains and the Baraba lowlands (the Ural-Siberian forest-steppe zone). Western Siberia is an almost flat plain, and while the river network is not of great density, this is an area of large transit rivers: the Ob, Irtysh, Ishim, and Tobol. Chronologically, the sites cover the period from the early 6th century BCE to the 3–4th centuries CE. Although these people are thought to have been seminomadic with an economy based on stockbreeding, the majority of the population inhabited permanent settlements and fortresses (Koryakova 1996, 243–280; Koryakova and Daire 2000, 63–74). Judging by paleoanthropological observations, the Sargat people, including the women, spent some time on horseback (Razhev 2001).

This study concerns the burials of these Sargat peoples. Their cemeteries in the Trans-Urals and Western Siberia consist of burial mounds (kurgans) that are located on high river terraces. They include one or two big kurgans that are surrounded by smaller ones. The mounds of "elite" kurgans reach five to six meters in present height and from fifty to one hundred meters in diameter. One or more ditches usually surround the kurgan. Each kurgan contains from one to fifteen burials placed both in the sterile soil and in the mound. There was usually a central (primary) grave in the geometric center of the kurgan, and the peripheral graves were grouped around it. Quite often above the cen-

tral grave was a structure constructed from the subsoil supported by a wooden framework. The primary pits were much larger than those on the periphery and they contained more imposing wooden structures, including large roofed areas. Often the central grave is a paired burial. Cenotaphs are rare in Sargat mortuary practice. Flat grave cemeteries are not found.

The Sargat mortuary ritual was, in general, stable through time although it varied in details. The deceased was placed in a supine position and was oriented in a northerly direction. Usually pots and offerings of food were placed near the head. Clothing, ornaments, and slashing weapons were placed where they would have been worn or used in life. Bows were put at the side of the body. The most constant and distinctive features of the Sargat mortuary practices are:

1. Burials took place in a pit grave under a kurgan.
2. Supine inhumation was used, normally with a northwest–southeast orientation.
3. One or more *hand-formed* ceramic vessels with recognizable Sargat decoration were offered, even in burials of elites that contained bronze and silver vessels.
4. Remains of animal bones, clothing, ornaments, and often weaponry were found.
5. Tools usually are not found as grave goods.

These characteristics are included in every undisturbed Sargat grave and in one way or another can be traced even in graves that had been looted. Exceptions are rare. Quality and quantity of grave goods as well as energy expenditures for grave construction should all be assumed as attributes. Both shallow pit graves with minimum grave goods and rich burials containing a great number of gold and silver artifacts have been found in the same cemetery.²

GENDER SYMBOLISM IN ADULT BURIALS

The Sargat kurgans contain burials of males, females, and children. The dead of all ages are represented in mortuary sites, the largest number of which were buried in individual tombs. In this study I analyzed 410 burials (454 skeletons) of 110 Sargat kurgans, which were located in the Middle Irtysh area (Western Siberia). Due to poor bone preservation, only 214 skeletons were biologically sexed (adults) and 313 aged (adults + children), but from this we can see that children and females are underrepresented in burial context in contrast to males (table 7.1).³

Table 7.1. Those buried in the Sargat kurgans (Middle Irtysh area)

Adults			Juveniles (0–13 years)	Total Number of Skeletons	Cenotaphs
Males	Females	Nonsexed			
136	78	141	99	454	6
30.0%	17.1%	31.0%	21.8%	100%	

As is well known, the gender distinctions often are not obvious in archaeological contexts. However, male/female/child differences can be recognized from several perspectives: (1) spatial distinctions (localization of burial); (2) structure and orientation of the grave; (3) arrangement of the body and selection of artifacts.

LOCATION OF BURIALS WITHIN A KURGAN

Spatial organization may be the most important means of marking distinctions between males and females. In the Sargat kurgans, clear differentiation according to burial location was not observed, nor did male/female burials follow the cardinal directions or other physical structures. All burials were consistently situated within the enclosed kurgan area. There were no graves outside the ditches. Both male/female and children's graves were organized along the same principle, however, the central (primary) tomb usually belonged to an adult (or adults).

In total, there are 112 primary tombs, because two pits held two separate interments (one over the other). The skeletal remains from seventy central tombs (of 112) were anthropologically sexed and aged (table 7.2). Only three of the central graves contained children. Of the remaining sixty-seven graves, nine individual graves were those of females (12.3%) and twenty-five were those of males (35.7%). In nine cases the central tombs contained two males, and in ten cases—one male and one female. In one case, two females were buried in the center of the kurgan. In three paired burials, only males were distinguishable; in four cases, only one female was discernable (sex of the second skeleton was indeterminate due to the small amount of surviving remains). Thus, in the central tombs sixty-six males and thirty-one females (excluding sixteen nonsexed individuals) were interred.

There are also central graves that were collective, including more than three people. From Bogdanovo I cemetery (kurgan B), the four skeletons are identified as males; from Kokonovka II (kurgan 1), there are four females and one male; at Isakovka I (kurgan 6), of the five deceased, two females and one male were able to be sexed. It is interesting to note that the ages of the deceased buried together vary: for example, a young man and an older woman;

Table 7.2. Primary tombs (67 adult graves and 3 subadult graves)

<i>Individual</i>			<i>Paired</i>				<i>Collective</i> (more than 3 skeletons)	<i>Total</i> (pit graves)	
Male	Female	Child	M+M	F+F	M+F	M & ?	F & ?		
25	9	3	9	1	10	3	4	6	70
35.7%	12.3%	4.3%	12.3%	1.4%	14.4%	4.3%	5.7%	8.6%	100%

or two men, one young and one old. We cannot say whether the dead were kinsmen, but that could be possible. Judging from anthropological observations, certain multiburial kurgans were linked to specific families (Koryakova 1988, 156; Koryakova and Daire 1997, 165). But these osteological and biological tests were conducted within very restricted limits since complete skeletons from central graves are extremely rare. This problem is common for prehistoric kurgan mortuary sites. One hypothesis suggests that access to the central grave was open until both individuals were buried (Pogodin 1988, 31–32). It is quite possible that in these central tombs members of social or kin groups were buried. L. Pogodin proposes that the central graves belonged to warrior elites (*cataphractaries*) because protective armor fragments have been found almost exclusively in these tombs; exceptions are very rare (Pogodin 1997, 118–19). In any case, the central tombs invariably belonged to major personages.

The *individual* primary tombs of females make up 12.3 percent of the total, and *individual* tombs of males total 35.7 percent; about 30 percent of graves are either male + male or male + female groups. Therefore, male tombs constituted more than twice the number of female tombs. Kurgans, therefore, were constructed most often for men, not for women.

However, in the late Sargat sites (Isakovka I and Sidorovka, 2nd–3rd centuries CE) there are exceptions. In two kurgans, the most wealthy and elaborate “warrior” burials were secondary. They were unique undisturbed tombs. Their peripheral localization can be explained by the intention of the mourners to disorient probable robbers. The primary burials were wealthy as well, but they were looted because of their central place.

One interesting discovery was at Sidorovka, kurgan 1, which had a well-preserved peripheral burial. Its large pit held two interments; the upper grave was destroyed, but a lower burial was well preserved. Its contents were intact and rich (Matyuschenko and Tataurova 1997). In the huge grave (3.1 x 4.95 m, 1.85 m deep) was buried a warrior with a full set of weaponry, including iron armor, a sword, dagger, spearhead, bow and quiver, and beautiful gold and silver ornaments and vessels. Another intact elite burial (grave 6 in kurgan 3) was excavated by L. Pogodin in the Isakovka I cemetery. The grave (3.0 x 4.25 m, 5.0 m deep) was covered with a massive three-layer wooden

roof. A wooden bed (2.2 x 1.0 m) held the remains of a man dressed in golden textiles. The burial contained a great variety of grave goods: two silver phials, silver bowls adorned with dolphins and swimming ducks, a large ceramic vessel of Central Asian origin, and many other things. The deceased wore a massive gold torque around his neck and one gold earring. Two gold plaques decorated his wide red belt, to which was attached a lacquer-covered scabbard holding a long iron sword. An iron dagger adorned with stone-inlaid gold plaques hung from the belt as well. In the corner were iron armor and a large iron belt. A small handmade Sargat-type pot was placed near the head of the deceased (Pogodin 1989, 1996, 1998a,b).

These kurgans contained wealthy female secondary burials as well. Isakovka I, grave 3 in kurgan 3, mentioned above, also held a rich female (2.25 x 4.3 m, 1.7 m deep). Unfortunately, it was robbed; nevertheless, surviving grave goods allow us to judge its initial wealth. More than five hundred small gold clothing (or funeral shroud) ornaments (tiny plaques and beads) were found in the infill of the pit. Dozens of colored glass and stone beads, threads of golden embroidery, fragments of glass vessels, and an iron bit and cheek piece were collected. The bone remains belong to a woman, 35 to 40 years old. Secondary burials 5 and 3 (kurgan 5 of the same cemetery) were similarly rich. Central female Sargat burials are also well known, but are less numerous than those of males. It is interesting that the central grave 1 of kurgan 1 (Sidorovka cemetery) was that of a female (20–30 years old), whereas the “golden tomb” of the warrior, mentioned above, was peripheral. Female primary burials are totally looted, with the exception of a few glass beads and fine gold clothing ornaments, but their imposing sizes (2.35 x 3.5 m, 1.85 m deep) and the central location suggest the high status of the deceased.

Underrepresentation of females in burial contexts has commonly been recognized archaeologically—sometimes as much as 75 percent in favor of males (McHugh 1999, 30). The Sargat kurgans contain both male and female graves, but the total number of male burials is greater than that of females (approximately 60%–65% of sexed adult graves are identified as male) so that male burials constitute at least two-thirds of the total number of adult dead (see table 7.1). The same proportion can be observed for the central tombs. It is interesting that a similar proportion was determined for Sauromatian and Early Sarmatian sites (Pokrovka cemetery in the southern Ural steppes, 6th–2nd centuries BCE) whose location and date is very close to the Sargat culture of Western Siberia. From that study of 174 identified skeletons, 69 were females (35%) and 105 were males (65%) (Davis-Kimball 1998, 142). Nevertheless, this proportion can vary in different contexts (sites). Table 7.3 catalogues data from five Sargat cemeteries of different chronological periods. We can see that numbers of males vary within the limits of 31.6 to 58.8 percent; females—11.2 to 31.6 percent; children—11.8 to 44.4 percent. The number of males exceeds

Table 7.3. The proportion of males, females, and children at some Sargat sites (only identified individuals)

<i>Cemetery</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Children</i>	<i>Number of Individuals</i>
Strizhevo I (8 kurgans)	6th–3rd centuries BCE	6 (31.6%)	6 (31.6%)	7 (36.8%)	19 (100%)
Strizhevo II (9 kurgans)	3rd–1st centuries BCE	14 (43.8%)	9 (28.1%)	9 (28.1%)	36 (100%)
Isakovka III (3 kurgans)	3rd–1st centuries BCE	8 (44.4%)	2 (11.2%)	8 (44.4%)	18 (100%)
Isakovka I (12 kurgans)	2nd–4th centuries CE	25 (45.4%)	15 (27.3%)	15 (27.3%)	55 (100%)
Sidorovka (3 kurgans)	2nd–4th centuries CE	10 (58.8%)	5 (29.4%)	2 (11.8%)	17 (100%)

female skeletons almost everywhere. There is no specific patterning of percentages in relation to the chronological position of the sites.

If a living society had roughly the same number of women as men, this discrepancy in our numbers may indicate deliberate exclusion. It may also be possible that some families could not guarantee an elaborate mound burial for all women. Moreover, the most impressive and wealthy Sargat burials (the so-called golden tombs) are identified as male.

STRUCTURE AND ORIENTATION OF THE GRAVE

The structural features of the grave, such as depth and interior organization, position and orientation of the body, and presence of certain grave markers, may also indicate male/female differences. The internal space of all Sargat burials (male, female, and child) was similarly organized; the position and orientation of the dead, the location of grave goods for males and females, and wooden structures were constant in the majority of tombs. There was no difference in the volume and depth of the grave pits of males and females. But as a rule, adult graves are significantly larger and deeper than those of subadults.

Usually the most impressive sizes are found in primary burials. The size of peripheral graves of both males and females varied significantly. In addition to probable status differences, the plausible reason for this variability may be the cold climate and winter frost in this area. Obviously, it is impossible to dig a deep grave or to erect a high mound during the Siberian winter, and the paleosoil investigations of Sauromatian kurgans demonstrate clearly that all kurgan burials in the Volga region were created in the warm season because

of the permafrost conditions and the poor quality of tools (Demkin 1997, 180–181). In addition, the quantity of grave goods to be placed in the grave played a part in determining the size of a tomb.

ARRANGEMENT OF ARTIFACTS

In many societies gender distinctions are marked in burial by artifacts, and they can be traced archaeologically. There are clear examples in modern funerals where sex (gender) is represented by particular items or combinations of them (Ucko 1969; Kulemzin 1994, 334–422; McHugh 1999, 32). As a rule, these artifacts are associated with “femaleness” or “maleness” and may reflect social roles performed by individuals of different sexes. Burial with artifacts typical of the opposite gender, especially the inclusion of “male” items in a female grave, may indicate higher status. It is well known, for instance, that in kurgans of the Eurasian Iron Age nomads, weaponry is often included in female burials.

According to K. Smirnov, 20 percent of Sauromatian female graves contained weapons, mainly arrowheads, but sometimes even swords, daggers, and spearheads (1989, 169). Arrowheads are found in Sarmatian female burials more often as compared with Sauromatian ones (Moshkova 1989, 177–191). Furthermore, among Scythian and Sarmatian female graves even swords and spears can be found, although rarely (Davis-Kimball 1998, 143; Petrenko et al. 2004, 194–210). According to J. Davis-Kimball, 94 percent of male burials and at least 15 percent of female burials contained weapons, including arrowheads, quivers, and, rarely, swords and daggers, at the Pokrovka site (1998, 142–143). According to E. P. Bunyatyan, in 97.4 percent of Scythian male burials and in 50 percent of female ones weapons were present (1985, 91–92). In the latter case, most of the dead have been designated male or female by Bunyatyan on the basis of grave goods and, hence, it is not so precise a proportion. Nevertheless, these designations should not be ignored completely; however, they must be used with caution. Pazyryk Iron Age mounds in the Altai Mountains also included weapons in female graves. The grave of a 16-year-old girl from the site of Ak-Alakha-1 contained a bow, quiver, bronze ritual ax, and dagger (Polos'mak 2001, 58).

In Russian Iron Age archaeology, arrowheads traditionally are accepted as weapons in both the steppe and forest-steppe societies (nomadic and seminomadic). The prevailing view of specialists is that the nomadic bows were for battle rather than hunting due to their constructional characteristics (Khudyakov 1986). Before the 3rd century BCE, Sargat burials contained small bronze arrowheads for bows of the Scythian type and bone armor. In the 3rd century BCE, a big composite (so-called Hunnic) bow first appeared.

This bow usually survives in mortuary contexts only as four or seven bone plaques, which were used for strengthening its central part and two shoulders. Such a bow was about 1.50 meters in length. Iron and long-bone arrowheads, which appeared en masse in the 3rd to the 2nd centuries BCE, were used by this larger bow. As a result of this more powerful weapon, bone armor was replaced by iron. It seems likely that this bow appeared in the Sargat area earlier than in Sarmatian territory (Moshkova 1989, 184). “Undoubtedly, at first the forest-steppe inhabitants adopted many military inventions from the southern nomads. However, in the second half of the first millennium BCE, they made their own contribution to the general development of warfare” (Koryakova and Epimakhov 2007). The bow of the Hunnic type was the most effective bow of the late 1st millennium BCE (Khudyakov 1986).

Furthermore, abundant archaeozoological material, obtained from settlements, clearly testifies to a stock-breeding economic basis of the Sargat society and, judging by bone collections, the hunt played an extremely small part in the economic activity of the Sargat people. At the Pavlinovo fortified settlement, which was systematically studied during the last decade, 98.4 percent of all obtained bones belonged to domestic animals (57.1% horse, 30.4% cow, and 12.5% sheep/goat). Only 1.6 percent of the total number of bones consisted of wild animals—elk, small deer (roe), fox, and beaver (Kosintzev and Borodina 1991; Koryakova et al. 2004). We can see that the highest frequency of identifiable remains relates to the horse species, which is a common pattern for Early Iron Age settlements in the Trans-Ural region.

Sargat burials contain a wide variety of grave goods. Only 5 percent of the dead, including men, women, and children, are not accompanied by any grave goods at all. As mentioned above, tools usually are absent and the majority of ornaments and other luxury goods in the tombs were imported from different territories. According to the results of chemical, technological, and morphological analysis of glass, undertaken by N. Dovgaluk (1995), the Sargat people received glass beads from Egypt (presumably Alexandria), the coast of Syria, southwest Asia, and China. The beads were decorations for the masses; burials contain beads quite often (sometimes up to several hundred). Elite graves in the Isakovka and Sidorovka cemeteries produced rich material, including gold objects decorated with turquoise, silver phaleras, bowls, or phialae (Livshits 2002), probably of Bactrian origin. Imports from China dating from the Han dynasty period were numerous: beautiful bronze kettles and vessels and remains of lacquered objects—about twelve belts and around twenty daggers and swords with lacquer coverings. There are remains of silk fabric with golden stitching; these fabrics are rather numerous in the Sargat graves (Pogodin 1996; 1998a, 38). Some scholars have concluded that the northern periphery of the Silk Road trade system embraced the distant lands of the western Siberian forest-steppe (Koryakova and Epimakhov

2007). Sargat society could have participated in long-distance interactions and trade.

The complex of Sargat elite armament included a bow, dagger, long sword, and in special cases, a shield, helmet, and lamellar armor, initially fashioned from bone and leather, and then later from iron. The complex of elite weaponry recovered from unrobbed graves in Sidorovka and Isakovka I belonged to the catafractarian type of heavily armed mounted warrior, which became widely known in Eurasia from the last centuries BCE (Matyushenko and Tataurova 1997; Pogodin 1998b). There is a direct analogy between Sargat weapon types and those in the Scytho-Sarmatian world. It may seem strange, but the single diagnostic artifact for Sargat identity is pottery: hand-formed vessels with round or slightly sharpened bases with festoons covering the shoulder.

Sargat adult graves *with weaponry*, both male and female, most frequently include arrowheads and parts of bows; swords, daggers, and protective armor are less frequently found and only in male burials. Approximately 20 percent of female graves contained arrowheads and parts of a bow, but we *never* find swords or armor in female and child burials. Another group of artifacts much more rarely found in female graves is horse trappings: harnesses, bits, cheek pieces, buckles, and metal belt plaques. In the Middle Irtysh region, only two female (18–20 years old and 50–55 years old) burials containing daggers have been found, and three female graves contained parts of compound bows and quivers. In the first two cases, the remains belonged to young women (18–25 years old) and in the last case, a more mature woman (35–40 years old). In general, the most usual artifacts buried with females and children are clothing attachments and ornaments, glass and stone beads, earrings, bracelets, mirrors, and pendants. Ceramic spindle whorls are frequently found. Interestingly, big bronze cauldrons, so often considered “male” signifiers, are also included in female graves (for example, Bogdanovo III cemetery, kurgans 1 and 2). The deformed skulls, everywhere recognized as a high-status marker, are known both among Sargat men and women (Kovrigin et al. 2006, 188–204).

The ceramic vessels with food offerings and animal meat (bones of animals), iron knives, individual glass beads, and small clothing ornaments have been found equally in the graves of males, females, and children. As opposed to females and children, more than 60 percent of the male graves contained weapons of various types, and no less than 8 percent of the male burials contained jewelry and 12 percent also contained spindle whorls. Therefore, certain types of artifacts were limited to females, while none were limited only to males, including the mirrors.⁴

It is important to note that at the Sargat cemeteries approximately half the burials do not contain weapons or jewelry at all. The grave goods of such

burials appear to be *gender neutral*; they contain ceramic vessels, animal bones, iron knives, and individual beads or ornaments. Moreover, they are primarily peripheral graves. Fifty percent of these burials consist of child graves, 13 percent are adult male, and 22 percent are adult female (another 15% are represented by collective tombs and cenotaphs). Although 20 percent of the women were buried with weapons, the majority of females (at least 50%) were accompanied with gender-neutral items such as pottery, animal bones, “table” knives, and so on.

In total, only 46 percent of the entire number of graves actually conforms to traditional gender stereotypes: Males are buried with weapons and females are buried with jewelry. The explanation for this cannot be ascribed to anthropological errors only. Of course, the assignment of biological sex may be systematically biased (often toward males), but if the validity of some sexing is rejected, then the validity of sexing all burials must also be doubted, including those graves where gender stereotypes are observed in their fullest extent.

There are no items that *always* accompany women, and not men. Not long ago, the spindle whorl was considered such a gendered artifact among archaeologists (Polos'mak 1987, 27; Matveyeva 1993, 143), because spinning and weaving traditionally were accepted as female work. However, if we look more carefully, we can see that spindle whorls are associated not only with female burials but also with male and child burials (Pogodin 1998a, 31; Berseneva 1999, 115–117; 2004, 198–201), and this is not unique to the Sargat data. Apart from the Sargat culture, this practice is typical, for example, in the Iron Age Jetyasar culture of Central Asia (Levina 1994, 69). From the Roman Iron Age in northern Europe over 10 percent of burials with spindle whorls were those of males, while almost 15 percent of burials that included weapons were those of females (Parker Pearson 1999, 108).

Spindle whorls are sometimes found with weapons in the Sargat male graves. The central burial at Strizhevo II cemetery, kurgan 4, contained two males; it was a single-burial kurgan. Despite the looting, the tomb contained the remains of iron armor, iron and bone arrowheads, and two spindle whorls. In the undisturbed “golden tomb” of a warrior at Isakovka I, a spindle whorl was found along with a full set of heavy weaponry (Pogodin 1998a, 31). The primary tomb, kurgan B (Bogdanovo II), contained two males who were accompanied by a bow, arrowheads, and a spindle whorl. Of 136 burials that have been identified as male (including the paired males), at least sixteen contained spindle whorls (11.8%). Even so, spindle whorls are found more often in female graves. Twenty graves out of seventy-eight contained these items (25.6%). Spindle whorls are sometimes found in female burials along with weapons (only arrowheads). Rarely, children's graves contained spindle whorls: nine burials of ninety-eight (9.2%), usually along with jewelry.

Traceological (use-wear) analysis of the Sargat ceramic spindle whorls clearly demonstrates the multifunctionality of these items (Berseneva 2004). In addition to spinning and weaving, spindle whorls could have been used as flywheels on an axis for making fire. It is possible that the presence of spindle whorls in graves was not connected to the sex or gender of the dead. I am sure that this problem needs to be considered as a semantic matter because the meanings of things might be varied along with the context of their usage. What might be the symbolic meaning of spindle whorls? In world mythology there are many stories and myths concerning spindles. In many human cultures, these items usually symbolize life cycles (solar, lunar, annual, and so on) and movement, death and rebirth. In her study of Sarmatian sites J. Davis-Kimball also suggests that “this ‘tool’ had a magical (or cultic) attribute(s)” and was connected with female burials of the highest status (1998, 143). Sargat ceramic spindle whorls (handmade) often were decorated with concentric rows or festoons that have been associated with solar connotations.⁵ Could the deceased men, women, and children have received the spindle whorls as magic protective talismans to show the way to the Otherworld?

SUBADULT SYMBOLISM IN BURIALS

Subadult burials constitute, on average, about a quarter of the total number of dead that I analyzed (see table 7.1). Children of all ages are represented in the Sargat kurgan cemeteries, the largest number of whom were buried in individual tombs. Common characteristics of the funeral rite discussed above were found in the graves of both adults and subadults. Nevertheless, it is possible to find features that distinguish burials of subadult members of the society.

SPATIAL LOCATION OF BURIALS WITHIN A KURGAN

Child tombs are secondary in 97.7 percent of the cases (see table 7.2). They usually were located in sterile soil below or in the mound itself, and in general, the number of child graves in each context is approximately equal to what was observed for adults. Like adult burials, subadults were always situated in the enclosed kurgan area, and there were no child burials outside the ditch.

There are only a few examples of primary (central) burials belonging to subadults. In the Middle Irtysh area two kurgans out of 110 were primary burials containing children. An extremely interesting and unique grave was found at the Strizhevo I cemetery, kurgan 11, which contained three burials:

the primary grave (3) and two secondary ones (1 and 2). The undisturbed central grave contained a child (6–7 years old) inside a boat (Pogodin 1991). The grave had a rectangular pit with a wooden roof, 1 x 2.5 meters and 1.4 meters deep. The child was accompanied by various types of rich grave goods: a bronze mirror, astragali, a green stone pendant in a gold mount, a blue stone pendant, a gold earring, blue glass beads, carnelian or amber beads, and a spindle whorl. This is a unique tomb not only because such a small child was buried in the central place of the kurgan, but also because he or she was deposited within a boat. It is the only example of a boat burial in the Sargat culture. Secondary graves 1 and 2 belonged to adults. Pit grave 1 was situated in the mound, and held a woman (50 years old), who was buried only with an offering of meat. The second peripheral grave (2) held a man (50–55 years old) and a baby (0–3 months old) and lacked grave goods.

The chronology of the central child tombs is also of interest. They are dated generally to the 6th through the 2nd centuries BCE, or the early phase of the Sargat culture. These burials may reflect the attempt of certain families or lineages to make their high status more institutionalized. James Brown notes, “as the hierarchical aspects increase, children will be accorded relatively more elaborate attention in proportion to the decline in the opportunity for replacement of the following generation” (1981, 29). Later, when ascribed status was secured, the necessity to bury children in the central place diminished. In the late Sargat sites primary child graves are absent.

STRUCTURE AND ORIENTATION OF THE GRAVE

The internal space of the child burials was organized much like that of the adults. A wooden frame made of boards usually represents the internal construction of ordinary child tombs. The roof is usually made of boards or birch bark. The position and orientation of the dead were constant; the location of grave goods for adults and subadults is also the same, and wooden structures were found in the majority of tombs in the same manner as in adult graves. However, there were differences in the size of the constructions and depth of the grave pits. As a rule, adult graves are significantly larger and deeper than those of subadults. The majority of child graves, as we would expect, are smaller in size and depth and thus usually correspond to the smaller size of the deceased and smaller quantity of accompanying grave goods.

The majority of child burials are rather modest in terms of grave goods and construction, although “rich” child burials are known. They are distinguished by significantly larger dimensions of the grave, both in complexity of construction and the number and quality of accompanying artifacts. For instance, kurgan 2 in the Isakovka I cemetery, Middle Irtysh area, contained

three graves: the central grave (1) and two secondary graves (2 and 3) both of which belonged to children. The kurgan was approximately 3.1 meters high and more than 35 meters in diameter. Ditches surrounded the mound. The central grave (1) was totally destroyed. One of the child tombs (3) was large (2.7 x 1.6 m), with a depth of 0.7 meters below the sterile subsoil level (Mogil'nikov et al. 1977). This grave was secondary, and its construction crosscut the second ditch. The grave pit was furnished with an impressive wooden structure; the roof had four layers of boards, and the bottom was also made from boards. After the child interment in grave 3, the kurgan was surrounded with a third ditch, and the mound was enlarged. Goods in grave 3 included a bronze mirror, a gold pendant, a bronze spindle whorl, four agate beads, a massive gold bracelet, an iron knife, small bronze ornaments for clothes, and two ceramic vessels. The skeletal remains were very poorly preserved, and only the milk teeth remained.

Such child burials are quite rare in the Sargat funeral practice. It is obvious that this tomb is not only very impressive in terms of grave goods but that it also required a great deal of physical expenditure for its construction. Interestingly, grave 2 was much more modest than grave 3, mentioned above. The grave pit was not as large: 1.15 x 0.75 meters, with a depth of 0.5 meters below the sterile soil. The grave goods included only one ceramic vessel, animal bones, and a small bone spoon. This burial, like the central grave, was located within the first ditch.

ARRANGEMENT OF ARTIFACTS

Determining what grave goods regularly accompanied the dead is very difficult because many graves are destroyed. Nevertheless, the known data allow us to make some preliminary conclusions. Only four (no more than 4%) of child burials are not accompanied by grave goods; for adult burials it is 6.5 percent (undisturbed graves). Therefore, the proportion of burials without grave goods for children and adults is nearly identical. Clearly, providing the dead with burial items was not strongly linked to age. But several types of accompanying goods are almost completely absent in child burials, primarily weapons. We usually find only single arrowheads and, even more rarely, daggers, but never swords or armor.

Another group of artifacts not found in child graves is horse trappings. We have only one iron bit found so far in a child's grave in Western Siberia. Nevertheless, ceramic vessels with food and animal meat have been found equally in the graves of subadults and adults, and massive amounts of horse bones are no exception, even in tombs of babies. Still, the basic artifacts of child burials are clothing elements and ornaments like those found in female

graves (beads, pendants, small bronze or bone clasps). Ceramic spindle whorls are less frequently found. A nearly unique offering in subadult burials is the sheep astragalus. In the Middle Irtysh area all finds of astragali, with one exception, belong to child burials. However, the total number of burials with astragali is quite small, or fewer than 10 percent of the tombs. Therefore, astragali do not serve as an age marker. I would suggest also that some items could be toys (the big ivory arrowhead in a double child burial at the site of Kartashovo in the Middle Irtysh area, sheep astragali, cowry shells, various beads, and probably spindle whorls) and their choice was completely subjective and left to the discretion of the adult mourners.

The “wealthy” burials belonging to children three years and older *in general* are characterized by a greater complexity of inner constructions and variety of accompanying grave goods. Burials of babies are usually more modest. It is difficult to explain what caused these distinctions, but the treatment of children may indicate the degree of their integration into the community so that sentimental aspects are potentially very powerful. Perhaps the affection and attachment of parents, or other family members, was deeper with older children than with babies.

The mortality rate of children in prehistoric populations was high, and it seems unusual that those children were buried in the same way as adults, with such an intensive investment of labor and wealth. Probably the kurgan burial form was hereditary and was determined by the social status of the deceased or his or her family. Interestingly, some impressive Sargat child burials (for instance, Strizhevo I and Isakovka I, mentioned above) had a nonstandard west-east orientation as opposed to the normal north-south one. Still, it is difficult to explain why certain children would receive more elaborate mortuary treatment than some adults. The elaborate treatment of some children cannot be explained since, among other things, we do not know where and in what way their parents were buried. James Brown notes that the wealth and typicality of subadult burials could be determined by specific demographic circumstances. “If the loss of children to a community or lineage can be argued to be critical to the future of a heritable claim, then children can be expected to be singled out for elaborate treatment when the birth rate is low or the family circle is narrow” (1981, 29). Thus, wealthy child burials may not always be a sign of a hierarchical society and ascribed status. The degree of importance of children for the community also needs to be taken into account.

The subadult category in the Sargat society was limited to 12 to 14 years and as with many ethnographic and historical communities, the juvenile age is extremely underrepresented in burial contexts. The main reason for this is not so much an insufficient presence of this category in the kurgans as in a lack of qualified anthropological identification. The difference between 12- and 14-year-olds and young adults is not always easy to determine. The problem is

that small adult individuals are identified by some archaeologists as teenagers and conversely. This fact is evidence of the difficulty in distinguishing teen-aged burial from the adult burial without anthropological identification.

The possibility of determining the sex of the deceased on the basis of accompanying artifacts is very troublesome for adults and, especially, for subadults. Strong gender markers have not been firmly identified. We can only suppose the sex of a child even in “extraordinary” burials with a great number of grave goods. For example, the sex of the child that was buried in the boat (Strizhevo I cemetery, kurgan 11, mentioned above) is impossible to determine in such a way. Another child (1.5 years old) was buried with a dagger and iron arrowheads (Sidorovka cemetery, kurgan 2) (Matyuschenko and Tataurova 1997). Most likely, this was a boy, but it is a very rare case in Sargat mortuary practice.

The Sargat child burials in most cases seem to be gender neutral (70% of graves). Only a very small number of graves included weapons or a lot of jewelry and thus allow us to suppose the sex of a subadult. One may suggest that children were *perhaps* males or females before they reached sexual maturity. It is only in their middle teens that boys and girls start to practice binary, gender-specific roles. Among the Sargat burials, there are juvenile male graves with full sets of weaponry, including a sword and dagger. But in the case of a premature death, a child usually received gender-neutral grave goods.

The age-sex analysis of Anglo-Saxon cemeteries in eastern England highlights the ways that age-based relations linked children and women; male children were rarely found with male sex-linked artifacts, whereas many children, both male and female, were treated as female in terms of grave goods. Later relationships between the sexes became apparent in the consistent associations with sex-related artifacts (Parker Pearson 1999, 103). Rarely in Russian archaeology are child burials a matter of special study. E. P. Bunyatyan in her study of Scythian burials established on average the high degree of similarity between adult and subadult graves recognized by the observance of basic canons of mortuary ritual. These similarities included an orientation of the dead, arrangement of the grave pit, and a presence of grave goods, including pottery, a knife, beads, and earrings. The distinction consisted of the spatial location of subadult burials and the absence of child primary burials, the size of the grave pit, and the absence of weapons. Bunyatyan also points out that burials of adults are distinguished by greater variety in artifacts and grave constructions in contrast to subadults (1985, 59–63). These features are typical for Sargat mortuary practice as well.

According to ethnographic surveys, differences in social status in egalitarian societies often relate to age, sex, and ability, whereas in hierarchical societies, differences in social status can be inherited, thus allowing the pres-

ence of wealthy child burials. The Sargat society was, without any doubt, quite complex (Koryakova 1996, 2003). Burial practice was uniform, but it is difficult to say what niche was occupied by children in the social structure. We can, however, suggest that their place was significant. Some wealthy and elaborate child tombs are known, among them the central burial within a boat. Rich, but not primary, child burials are found both on early (Strizhevo I), and late (Isakovka I, Sidorovka) Sargat sites. Central (primary) child burials were absent in the late period.

The archaeology of children is an interesting but not easy subject of study. It is difficult to say what place children occupied in the world of adults. The child burials, noted by some archaeologists, point out to us the gap between those being buried and those doing the burying. As funerary archaeologists, we only see children as manipulated entities within an adult world—they are buried by adults. Thus, we never experience the world of children, only attempts of adults to ascribe meaning to their foreshortened lives and premature deaths (Parker Pearson 1999, 103).

CONCLUSION

It is likely that the Sargat society practiced several different forms of disposing of the dead. There is an evident disparity between the number of buried people and the potential number of people that could be accommodated by settlements (Daire and Koryakova 2002). Additionally, demographic parameters of the buried population are not normal (Razhev 2001). In this case, we have to presume some alternative burial rituals did not leave traces in the archaeological record or at least have not yet been found. Apparently, not all the deceased (adult and subadult) were buried in kurgans, but we do not know what criteria were used for selection of individuals for kurgan interment. We cannot hope to reconstruct the gender and age structure of the ancient Sargat society in full based on the evidence currently available. It is possible that the society was quite complex and probably even more hierarchical than can be seen from the existing evidence.

Gendered symbolism had a significant part in funerary rituals of the Sargat population. A gendered social structure is represented in Sargat mortuary practice through assemblages of artifacts (weapons and jewelry) that accompany certain dead and, to a smaller extent, through a spatial location of burial, such as the *male* predominance among the primary tombs. At least 50 percent of all burials demonstrate unambiguous correlation between the sex of the dead and grave goods. To the greatest extent this concerns men (a minimum 60% of male burials contained one weapon or another), although only about 30 percent of women were buried with a significant amount of jewelry. Approximately

20 percent of female burials contained weapons; the remaining female assemblages seem to be gender neutral (about 50%). Weapons, horse trappings, and jewelry do not appear to be markers of biological sex as such, even though they were often directly related to the sex of those buried. These items can be referred to as markers of social position of a sex—or of gender. The significant number of female graves that include weapons, as well as the number of male/female/child burials with sex-neutral artifacts, confirms this conclusion.

Archaeologists frequently point out that stereotypes such as “weapons equal male burial” and “spindle whorls signify the female” quite often are based on ignorance or depend on analysis of a particular excavated context (Pogodin 1998; McHugh 1999, 33; Parker Pearson 1999, 108; Mortensen 2004, 105). In the Sargat kurgan cemeteries, for example Beshaul II and Beshaul III, it is well known that male burials sometimes contained a great quantity of jewelry—glass and stone beads (up to several hundred) and earrings—and not weapons (Matveyeva 1993, 143). Of course, these graves were relatively small in number. Nevertheless, in this respect the Sargat culture is not unique. Similar examples can be found in cemeteries of other cultures, and many ethnographic examples are known as well. Sometimes it is evidence of the presence in society of particular gender groups, usually small in their number. One should not exclude, however, the possibility of incorrect osteological identification (and certain categories of individual may be biologically indeterminate due to hormonal abnormalities).

Absolute age and gender markers have not been firmly identified. There is no *absolute* distinction between male and female in terms of types of burial goods in the Sargat cemeteries, excluding the swords and armor, but these things are very rare. The clothing, headdresses, or other organic items could help to define the age and gender of the dead. In wealthy intact tombs survived the remains of golden fabrics; leather; belt buckles; gold, silver, or bronze ornaments; and shoe buckles.

Despite the fact that children are underrepresented in the Sargat burial mounds, they obviously were major contributors to the life of the society. Numerically, children were the predominant group of individuals in most past societies, and they clearly were included in adult projects from an early age (Chamberlain 1997, 250). Sociologists argue that the category of “childhood” was constituted to support a particular model of social order and adulthood, and that it is very important for a normal functioning society (Scott 1997, 6). The fact that the subadults are buried in the same manner as adults in the Sargat society may confirm their stable and important place in the social structure.

In summary, it is important to stress a few points:

1. The materials from kurgan cemeteries do not suggest a strong male/female dichotomy in the Sargat society that could be fixed in the mortuary

domain. There are no distinctions in the treatment between males and females, neither in their orientation, position in the grave, nor in spatial location of the accompanying artifacts. There are distinctions in the composition of grave goods—the weapons are mainly connected with males. Undoubtedly, the gendered category of “male-warriors” is represented most clearly in mortuary practice. It is difficult to comment on the existence of “women-warriors” even though females were quite often buried with weapons, since the overwhelming majority of these artifacts are arrowheads, sometimes only one or two. One may suggest more confidently that these women belonged to warrior (elite) clans, and arrowheads may well have been a marker (or sign) of this.

2. The weapons in burials may indicate that there is a vertical hierarchy between the individuals buried with weapons and those without, not just gender division. The circumstances of death (in battle, for example) could be taken into account.
3. The groups of people who were buried with gender-neutral artifacts or without grave goods at all could be identified by not using exclusive material symbols for each biological sex.
4. The children are accompanied by a significant number of artifacts and sometimes were buried in big elaborate tombs; consequently, they must be recognized as quite important social actors. Based on the burials of small children with rather rich personal belongings discovered in the Sidorovka and Isakovka I cemeteries, one may assume social status was inherited. Burials of babies, as a rule, are simply arranged in comparison with tombs of 4- to 5-year-old children or older. Most likely children constituted a separate gender class before they reached sexual maturity. The social status of children was similar to that of women, judging by their gender-neutral set of burial items. Specific gender determinations were not achieved by the children before death.
5. Although there is an almost complete absence of tools as grave goods, we can infer from indirect evidence and from ethnographic analogs that the division of labor was organized along lines of gender and age—but this inference is not evidenced in the graves.

In general, the gender structure and gender relations in past societies (including the Sargat) need further serious study, since previous investigations are clearly insufficient. A rigid binary division into males and females, well-defined in the funerary domain, seems to be too simple. If we suppose that the mortuary treatment reflects a social relationship between sexes, a stable and significant position of women in the Sargat society can be posited, despite the dominant roles that clearly belonged to men. In certain realms of life, including management of craft and food production and war, their roles could be

quite comparable if not identical. Although the range of items from female burials is quite wide, male burials display more variety. One may suggest that women's social roles were more restricted, but more stable over time, in contrast to that of men's.

NOTES

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1. In the village Sargatskoe near Omsk (Middle Irtysh area), in the 1920s, kurgans with specific festoon ceramics were excavated for the first time. Since the 1920s, the number of newly discovered cemeteries and settlements has increased greatly. These sites were named "Sargat Culture." Literary sources concerning the Iron Age Western Siberian population are completely absent.

2. It is necessary to note that most of the Sargat kurgans were robbed in the 17th–18th centuries CE at the time of the Russian colonization of Siberia. This problem has been exacerbated by plowing in recent times. Many graves in general are characterized by bad preservation of bone remains and suffer from animal activity. This is especially true when the burials were constructed within the kurgan mound.

3. Of the total of sexed adults, 63.6 percent were male and 36.4 percent were female.

4. In general, the Middle Irtysh Sargat burials contained one silver and fourteen bronze mirrors. Two of all numbers belonged to children, six to women, and three to men. The sex of remaining mirror possessors is undetermined.

5. This ornamentation is typical also for Sargat pottery found in the burials.

Glossary of Chinese Terms

- beifang 北方
Budonggou 補洞溝
Caoyuan (steppe) 草原
Chifeng 赤峰
Dadianzi 大甸子
Dahuazhongzhuang 大華中庄
Daodunzi, Tongxin County, Ningxia Autonomous Region 宁夏自治區同心縣
倒墩子 (匈奴墓地)
Dashanqian 大山前
Fengtai 丰台
Gansu 甘肅
Guandongche 关东车
Han Dynasty 汉代
Heqin 和亲
Huhhot 呼和浩特
Hulusitai 葫芦丝台
Liuja 六甲
Maodun 冒頓
Maoqinggou 毛庆沟
Ming'anmudu 明安木獨
Nanshan'gen 南山根
Ordos 鄂尔多斯
Qin Empire 秦朝
Shanyu 单于
Shiji 史记
Sima Qian 司马迁
Taohongbala 桃红巴拉
wuzhu coins 五铢钱
Xiaobaiyang 小白阳
Xigoupan 西沟畔
Xiongnu 匈奴
Zhou 周
Zhukaigou 朱开沟

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