




S. Makhortykh ^{1*}, N. Kotova ¹, P. Stadler ²

¹*Institute of Archaeology Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, Kyiv, Ukraine;*

²*Natural History Museum Vienna, Vienna, Austria*

(E-mail: makhortykh@yahoo.com; nadja.kotova@hotmail.com; peter.stadler@univie.ac.at)

Bronze belts with zoomorphic images in the Koban culture

The bronze belts represent one of the most notable artefacts left by the ancient cultures of the Caucasus, and indeed the most striking ones from an artistic point of view. These belts represent the development of various artistic styles and are remarkable expressions of the advanced metalworking that developed in the mountainous highlands of the region at the beginning of the Early Iron Age. An article is devoted to the consideration of sheet bronze belts decorated with various zoomorphic images that were found in graves of the Central Caucasus region, mostly in Tli and Koban cemeteries (North and South Ossetia). Belts accompanied male or female individuals were essentially personal objects. Many of them have highly distinctive incised designs featuring animal and less often human figures. There are two main groups among them — belts decorated with zoomorphic images, made in the local Koban art style and belts executed in the southern, Transcaucasian traditions. Statistical analysis of numerous funerary objects found with decorated belts allowed us to clarify their chronological position between the 9th and 7th century BC. The gender correlation of finds also revealed certain regularities in their distribution.

Keywords: Central Caucasus, Koban culture, Tli and Koban cemeteries, graves, 9th–7th century BC, bronze belts, zoomorphic images, snakes, seriation, correspondence analysis.

Introduction

Belts made of thin bronze sheet are found in the sites of the Koban culture exclusively in the mountainous areas of the Central Caucasus, in the Tli and Koban cemeteries (Fig. 1). While approximately 150 bronze belts have been unearthed in the Tli burials (South Ossetia), only about 25 examples are known from the Koban necropolis (North Ossetia), indicating the priority of the southern slope of the Great Caucasus in the spread of this category of material culture [1; Fig. 38–41]; [2; 360]. Most of the belts are decorated with dotted bands along the edges or have no decoration. Practically all of them are accompanied by bronze buckles. These belts are considered to be products of local Caucasian craftsmen [3; 138].

Materials

Bronze belts of the Koban culture with zoomorphic decoration have been widely published and described. Various interpretations of these images have also been proposed, so we will focus only briefly on their characteristics [2], [4], [5], [6], [7], [8], [9], [10]. The width of the belts with animal motifs varies between 10 and 15 cm. There are several groups among them, which will be analyzed below.

Belts with zoomorphic images made in the Koban art style

The most numerous of this group are belts decorated with snakes, which should be regarded as a local, Koban production that did not spread outside the Central Caucasus (Fig. 2, 3). Similar images of serpents are represented on axes, daggers, belt buckles and tweezers in this region. In the cemetery of Tli, 17 such belts are known. Five of them are associated with male burials (№ № 50, 57, 101, 112, 266). Seven belts were found with female remains (№ № 141, 148, 256, 276, 346, 349, 380). In graves 18b and 158a the skeletons of a man and a woman were disturbed. Burials 82 and 208 contained mixed male and female bones. Two belts were found in both, one of which was decorated with a snake. A “serpent belt” was also found in burial 401, which was a heap of bones from several skeletons. In grave 4 (1883) of the Koban cemetery a belt decorated with the image of two snakes was accompanied by a typical female inventory, including temple pendants, amulets in the form of birds and a ram's head, a clay pyxis, etc. [11].

In most cases, a single image of a snake was placed on the belts. However, there are cases where two or even three images of snakes were presented simultaneously (Fig. 2, 1, 2, 10; 3, 7, 8). The snakes generally have triangular heads. This suggested that they belong to the viper family typical for the Caucasus Mountain

*Corresponding author's e-mail: makhortykh@yahoo.com

plateau [2; 65]. Practically all the belts with serpent images were accompanied by rectangular bronze buckles decorated with geometric designs. The available materials indicate that images of snakes on belts, as the main and sole personage, were characteristic only of the Central Caucasian region. An exception can be observed in grave 104 of the Krasnyj Majak cemetery in Abkhazia [2; pl. 112]. On the Southern Caucasian belts, single small snakes are inconspicuously situated amidst the multitude of animal images.

In addition to the belts decorated with serpents' motifs, two other bronze belts were found at the Tli cemetery, which warrant consideration as local Koban production. The belt from grave 208 features 11 birds arranged in a row, while the belt from tomb 224 portrays 21 running horses (Fig. 4, 1, 2). The edges of these belts had round holes to attach them to a leather base.

Belts with zoomorphic images made in the Transcaucasian art style

The accumulation of bones from burial 161 at Tli, which probably comprises the remains of two individuals, included two bronze belts. One of these was made in the Koban tradition. It is evident that the belt included a curved buckle [5; Fig. 111, 3, 13]. The second belt exhibited distinctive characteristics when compared to the local products, namely a decorative border of triangles and rhombuses, as well as the images of six fantastic predators in "blankets" decorated with solar symbols (Fig. 4, 3).

The composition of the belt from male burial 363 of the Tli cemetery includes a central figure of a horse and two figures of fantastic beasts on the sides (Fig. 4, 4). All the animals are depicted in "blankets" with solar signs. There are numerous images, presumed to be dog heads, that run along the contour of the belt. Reduced images of animal heads are a common feature of the Koban artistic tradition, as evidenced by their appearance on belt buckles and axes [3; Fig. 69; 5; tab. 89]. In contrast, they are not typical of Transcaucasia, where the main centers of production of richly ornamented bronze belts were located.

Belts with scenes, including depictions of animals and humans

Belts belonging to this group were discovered in four male burials of the Tli necropolis. All of the belts feature a decorative border comprising triangles, semi-ovals, spirals, or concentric circles. Three belts from burials 74b, 76b and 350 depict various animals (deer, predators, bulls) in "blankets" with solar motifs and warriors with bows. The belt from burial 74b also had a figure of a goat and probably a scene of a feast with two men (Fig. 4, 5).

The belt from grave 76b included images of birds, a pig and a rider with a severed human head attached to the horse's neck (Fig. 4, 6). The belt from grave 350 portrays a pig and two horses harnessed to a chariot with a driver positioned on it (Fig. 4, 7). The belts from burials 74b and 76b depict writhing snakes in a vertical position. They are "stinging" a deer (Fig. 4, 5, 6).

Another "Transcaucasian" style of imagery is illustrated by the belt from grave 419, which also shows a figure of a man with weapons as well as a variety of animals, including goats, bulls, deer, birds, and fantastic creatures with wings (Fig. 4, 8). It is noteworthy that the belts from burials 74b, 350, and 419 lacked buckles, a feature characteristic of the Transcaucasia where the belt was fastened with leather straps [12].

The Koban belts in question exhibit a border frame and a series of animal figures (bulls, goats, pigs, predators) that are typical of the Transcaucasian region. However, in contrast to the South Caucasian examples, the depictions of horses on these belts are more realistic and demonstrate a greater respect for body proportions [cf. 2; Figs. 74; 75]. "Blankets" are depicted on the torsos of most of the animals.

The Urartian belts

The three belts from male burials 40b, 215b, and 425 are regarded as predominantly Urartian imports and are dated to the 7th or 7th-6th century BC [7; 13]. They all have holes around the perimeter for attaching to the leather base. The belt from burial 425 is divided into horizontal ornamental zones by a series of "ribbons" [7]. One end of the belt has a vertical zoning of the decoration. Bulls, horsemen and sacred trees are placed there. The main decoration of the belt from tomb 40b is also divided into three ornamental zones by horizontal lines. The succession of the figures is reproduced identically on all three bands. They include animals, hybrid creatures, horsemen and soldiers on chariots [5; tab. 94]. The series of figures on the Tli belt from tomb 215b is identical in all three registers which are not separated from each other. The figures are mostly horsemen, bulls, lions, and hybrid creatures [5; Tab. 127].

The belts from Tli graves 40b and 215b are completed by a belt clasp in the form of a ring, which is characteristic of Urartian belts. The belt from grave 425 lacks such a ring, as well as a bronze buckle, that is a specific feature of the local Koban belts.

Methods

In order to determine the chronological position of the burials with bronze belts in the Tli cemetery, we employed the typological method, which is an indispensable tool in the analysis of archaeological evidence. Furthermore, we utilized modern computer technologies based on quantitative methods for processing large databases. More than 13,000 images of various grave goods from reliable and well-documented Caucasian Late Bronze and Early Iron Age complexes have been entered into the Montelius image database [14]. The typological analysis and classification of the archaeological material was carried out using the “Dragon Drop” computer program integrated with the Montelius database*. Only Early Iron Age burial assemblages were used for the current research, as the Correspondence Analysis (CA) shows that the Middle and Late Bronze Age burials (№ № 29, 43, 45, 46, 58) are alien to the Koban culture. Assemblages from destroyed burials containing the remains of several skeletons were also eliminated. Artefact types occurring in more than three chronological groups and complexes with only two types available for analysis were also eliminated from the seriation and CA. Children's graves and adult burials without categories of inventory characteristic only for men (weapons) or only for women (leg rings, needles, spindles, etc.) were also excluded from the chronological analysis. Two variants of seriation and two variants of CA were developed separately for male and female burials (Fig. 5, 6). The male and female variants were synchronized by comparing parts of the parabolas and by joint burials containing male and female skeletons together.

Our seriation and CA are not the first to be developed for the Tli cemetery. Taking into account the seriation proposed by S. Reinhold [15], we decided to keep the same nomenclature for the chronological groups: KoA, KoB, KoC, KoD, KoE. Our parabola of CA bears resemblance to that of S. Reinhold, exhibiting a comparable distribution of chronological groups of burials. However, the sets of graves within each group are not identical. The point is that an alternative computer programme and typology was used. We also have discrepancies with S. Reinhold in the dating of some periods of the Koban culture, who, following B. Tekhov [3], and V. Kozenkova [16] uses the “long” chronology, according to which the existence of this culture begins about 1300–1200 BC and ends in 500–400 BC [15; 279]. Our chronology of the Koban culture of the Central Caucasus, beginning with the Styrfaz (KoA) and ending with the latest burials of Tli (KoF), may be described as “short” (1000–500 BC).

Furthermore, radiocarbon dating was employed to ascertain the age of grave 4 (1883) in Koban cemetery, which contained a belt with a snake image.

Results and Discussion

The gendered relationship between the belt and the images of animals

A significant part of the skeletons from the Tli necropolis have anthropological determinations [4–7]. In their absence, the sex of the deceased was determined by the composition of the grave goods, which indicated either female (leg rings, needles, spinners, etc.) or male (weapons) burials. This approach was also used in the analysis of the burials in the Koban cemetery.

Of the 17 belts with snake images from the Tli burial ground, six graves belonged to men and eight to women. A further three tombs contained mixed bones from several skeletons. The majority of male burials with “serpent belts” were accompanied by a bronze axe and dagger. In burial 57, a dagger and a mace were discovered, along with a pin decorated with an axe image. Tomb 112 contained only a dagger and a fibula, but given its partial preservation, it is plausible that some of its original contents may have been lost [4; 28]. Burials with “snake belts” also contained images of serpents on other objects. Snakes were depicted on axes in graves 18b, 101 and 208, and on tweezers in grave 50.

Female burials with “snake belts” included leg rings and beads covered with gold or silver foil. The jewellery of four skeletons is represented by temple pendants of silver and gold (№ № 148, 276, 349, 380). Based on the material available from Tli, we can assume that anklets were typical of women of fertile age who had children. Precious metal pendants and beads indicate the high social status of the family.

The discovery of “serpent belts” in both single modest graves and in more numerous rich burials indicates that these belts, along with snake images on axes, daggers, tweezers, and buckles, were symbols of the deceased's affiliation with a clan that worshipped a snake deity. According to B. Tekhov, the wearing of belts with images of snakes was also a means of protection against evil forces or disease [3; 127].

* More information about the software developed by Dr. P. Stadler can be found at <https://www.winsersion.org>.

The belts, which depict horses and birds, are representative of the local Koban artistic tradition. The belt from the male Tli burial 224, which features the figures of horses, can be assumed to have belonged to a military leader or priest, as evidenced by the crozier finial in the form of a bull's head that was found within it. The deceased from Tli bone accumulation № 208, whose belt was decorated with numerous birds and whose grave goods included a pin with bird images and bird-shaped pendants, also occupied an unusual social position [4; tab. 90]. As with the belts adorned with serpent motifs, it seems reasonable to posit that the images of birds and horses are associated with the totems of the deceased. This hypothesis is corroborated by the discovery of analogous figures on a range of other Koban artefacts, including axes, belt buckles, fibulae and pins.

Belts, probably of Transcaucasian origin, with images of animals and humans, were found only in male warrior graves. All of them contained an axe and a dagger. The assortment of other grave goods varied. Graves 76b and 350 yielded gold foil beads. In contrast, no gold or silver items were recovered in the burials 74b, 363, 419. It can be assumed that the above belts belonged to warriors who participated in the southern campaigns. However, these individuals belonged to families of different wealth, as evidenced by the presence or absence of precious metal jewelry and other funerary objects (bronze vessels, ingots, etc.). The diversity of the inventory could also correlate with the age of the buried persons, but unfortunately this cannot be verified on the basis of the Tli material. Tli burials with Urartian belts also probably belonged to warriors who took part in the southern campaigns. The best-preserved complexes 215b and 425 contain an axe and a dagger, supplemented by an iron knife.

Chronology of the belts

B. Tekhov assumed that belts decorated with snake figures were in use from the 12th to the 7th century BC. He attributed burials 18b, 50, 57, 82, 101, 112, 148, 158a, 208, 266, 276 to the 12th-10th century BC [4]. Tombs 141 and 349 have been included by B. Tekhov in the complexes dated to the end of the 10th and/or 9th century BC, while grave 346 was dated to the 7th century BC [5; 6; 7; 14, 17]. S. Reinhold has placed the above belts within a similar chronological framework (1150–900 BC) [15; 279, Abb. 64].

In our seriation and CA, several burials with “snake belts” fall into the KoB period (50, 112, 349), while the remainder fall into the KoC group. Accordingly, the time of their existence is determined within 900–700 BC. This dating is also confirmed by the radiocarbon date of 750–570 BC obtained for tomb 4 (1883) of the Koban cemetery, which contains a belt with serpent figures* [11].

The belt with an image of a horse herd (Tli, grave 224) was initially considered to be among the complexes dating to 1200–1000 BC [4]. In the seriation proposed by S. Reinhold, this tomb is assigned to the KoB2 period (1000-900 BC) [15; 279, Abb. 55]. Our CA, however, places it at the beginning of the KoC period, i.e. between 800 and 750 BC. In addition to the sites of the Koban culture in the Central Caucasus, horse images are known from northern Armenia. The burial at Kurtan includes a bronze belt with several running horses, which reminds of the images on the belt from Tli burial 224 [17; Fig. 4]. A bone figurine of a horse, crafted in a realistic style, has also been recovered from the Lori Berd cemetery [17; Fig. 12]. The horse images from Lori Berd and Kurtan have been dated from 8th to the first half of the 7th century BC [17; 86].

According to the burial inventory, the belt decorated with bird figures (Tli, tomb 208), which was not included in our CA due to the mixed male and female grave goods, belongs to the same period. The chronological proximity of these two belts is indicated by the presence of an unornamented smooth section on the left side, as well as through holes for connection with the leather base.

It seems reasonable to posit that imported belts from the Tli cemetery may be indicative of distant cultural, trade and potentially military contacts. So, the belt from burial 419, which dates to the end of the 8th century BC, displays stylistic similarities to the depiction of figures on belts from Azerbaijan, particularly in grave 95 of Kalakent [2; pl. 96]. Other “southern” belts from Koban culture sites are similar to those from Georgia (Samtavro, Pasaauri, Sagarejo, Maralin Deresi) [2; pl. 90, 290; 98, 303; 100, 309; 101, 312; 102, 313].

In the 1980s, Tli burials 74b and 76b with belts of the Transcaucasian type were dated to the 12th–10th century BC [4]. Of particular interest to researchers was the belt from grave 76b, which depicted a horseman with the severed head of an enemy (Fig. 4, 6). The interpretation of this image has led scholars to attribute it to the Scythian period [18], [19], [19; 45]. However, we should take into account the opinion of B. Tekhov,

* Radiocarbon date is calibrated with quickcal@calpal-online.de and calibration curve [CalPal2007_HULU](#).

who points out that the burials of the Scythian time in the Tli cemetery after 650 BC are already characterized by numerous iron objects, which are absent in burial 76b [8; 232].

In later publications, the Tli belts of the “southern” type B. Tekhov began to date within the 7th century BC. The similarity of the images on the belts from tombs 350 and 76b was also highlighted [7; 17, 23, 214; 8; 242]. B. Tekhov considered that the belts from tombs 74b, 76b, 350 and 363 belong to the Cimmerian-Scythian period and were made in the style of Koban-Tli-Scythian art [8; 357]. Besides, an alternative dating of 800–600 BC has been proposed for the belts from graves 74b, 76b and 161 at Tli [10; 84, 85].

The “Transcaucasian” belts from the Tli burials 74b, 76b, 350, 363 and 419 in Reinhold’s seriation and our CA belong to the KoC period, which is dated to 900–700 BC [15; 279] or 800-700 BC according to our scheme. S. Reinhold attributes Tli grave 161 to the Early Scythian period (KoD, 700-600 BC) [15; 279, Abb. 55]. In our CA it correlates with KoC period, as is the case with the other “southern” belts. The belt from tomb 419 is probably the youngest of this series, because it adjoins to the group of burials with elements of the Early Scythian culture.

It is notable that depictions of humans are scarce in the art of Koban culture, with the earliest known examples dating to the 8th century BC. For instance, in the Tli cemetery, where over 400 burials were investigated, bronze pendants in the shape of a female figure and a human head are known only in two cases [4; tabs. 91, 3; 105, 4]. It is symptomatic that anthropomorphic images are frequently associated with those of horses. This phenomenon is not mere coincidence; rather, it reflects significant shifts in the ideology and social structure of the local Koban society. These changes are shaped by the influence of nomadic, steppe traditions and the spread of the prestigious institution of horsemanship in the south of Eastern Europe.

Three belts from Tli burials 40b, 215b and 425 were considered by B. Tekhov to be Urartian imports and dated to the 7th century BC [7; 48, 210]. Other researchers have attributed these belts to the period between the 7th and 6th century BC [13].

In S. Reinhold's seriation, burial 425 is assigned to the Late pre-Scythian period KoC2, while graves 40b and 215b are positioned in the Early Scythian period KoD1. However, in the text of her book, both 425 and 40b are included in the KoC group [15; 148, Abb. 55]. Unfortunately, we were unable to use the grave goods from tomb 40b in our seriation, as they contained only of a belt lying on a heap of bones.

The material from grave 425 and the accumulation of bones from grave 215b in our SA are consistent with the Early Scythian chronological horizon. The 7th century BC dating is also supported by the way the sacred tree buds are depicted on belts from Tli burials 40b and 215b, which are similar to the images on the belt from Kani Koter (Iran). The latter correlate with the images depicted on the artefacts from the time of the Urartian king Rusa II (680–639 BC) [20; 65].

Conclusions

Bronze belts with zoomorphic images in the Koban culture can be divided into two categories. The first category comprises local production belts, characterized by a series of convex dots running along both edges. The second category consists of belts with a richly decorated border along the contour, presumably to have been imported from Transcaucasia. Bronze buckles are a characteristic element of belts of the Koban culture in the Central Caucasus, while their absence, and thus a different way of fastening the belt at the waist, is typical of the South Caucasus. The locally produced belts are mainly characterized by the depiction of snakes and, to a lesser extent, birds and horses. These animals were also part of a wider set of images on the Koban bronzes: axes, daggers, buckles and fibulae. Additionally, the native bestiary included fish, dogs and deer. The above assortment of animals is executed in the form of sculptures that served as pendants, belt plaques or crozier heads. Among the bronze figurines, there are also images of rams, goats and bulls, which were not usually depicted on local products. It may be assumed that these animals were totems of indigenous clans, recorded in the elements of the funerary inventory.

The images of animals on the belts, which were imported or custom-made, have a different semantic content, where, in addition to the animals common to Koban art, there are also depictions of fantastic beasts, bulls, goats, pigs and humans that are not typical of the Koban culture. Most of these animals are depicted in “blankets” decorated with solar symbols, suggesting that the belts represent scenes associated with religious rituals and animal sacrifice.

The Koban belts close to Transcaucasian examples were probably imported in most cases. Some of them may have been produced in workshops of the South Caucasus on behalf of representatives of the Tli community and in accordance with their tastes. This is evidenced by the more realistic depictions of horses on the imported Tli belts compared to the Transcaucasian ones, which are similar to horse images on axes

and buckles of the Koban culture, as well as the specific border of the belt from burial 363 in the form of “waves” of dog heads. Interestingly, that the other animals depicted on these belts were rendered in a style characteristic of Transcaucasian craftsmanship.

Koban burials, with weapons and Urartian belts belonged to warriors. They should probably be considered in the context of the Scythian campaigns to the Near East and the participation of the Koban population in these events. The belts decorated with zoomorphic images are clearly gender-specific. For example, the local bronze belt depicting horses, as well as those likely imported from the South Caucasus and Urartu, accompanied the burials of male warriors occurring between 800–650 BC. Belts with images of snakes were characteristic of both female and male burials dated to around 900–700 BC.

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Figures



Figure 1. Map of findings of Koban bronze belts with zoomorphic images and their Transcaucasian analogues: 1 — Koban; 2 — Tli; 3 — Krasnyj Majak; 4 — Pasanauri; 5 — Narekvavi; 6 — Samtavro; 7 — Sagarejo; 8 — Maralin Deresi; 9 — Kurtan; 10 — Kalakent.

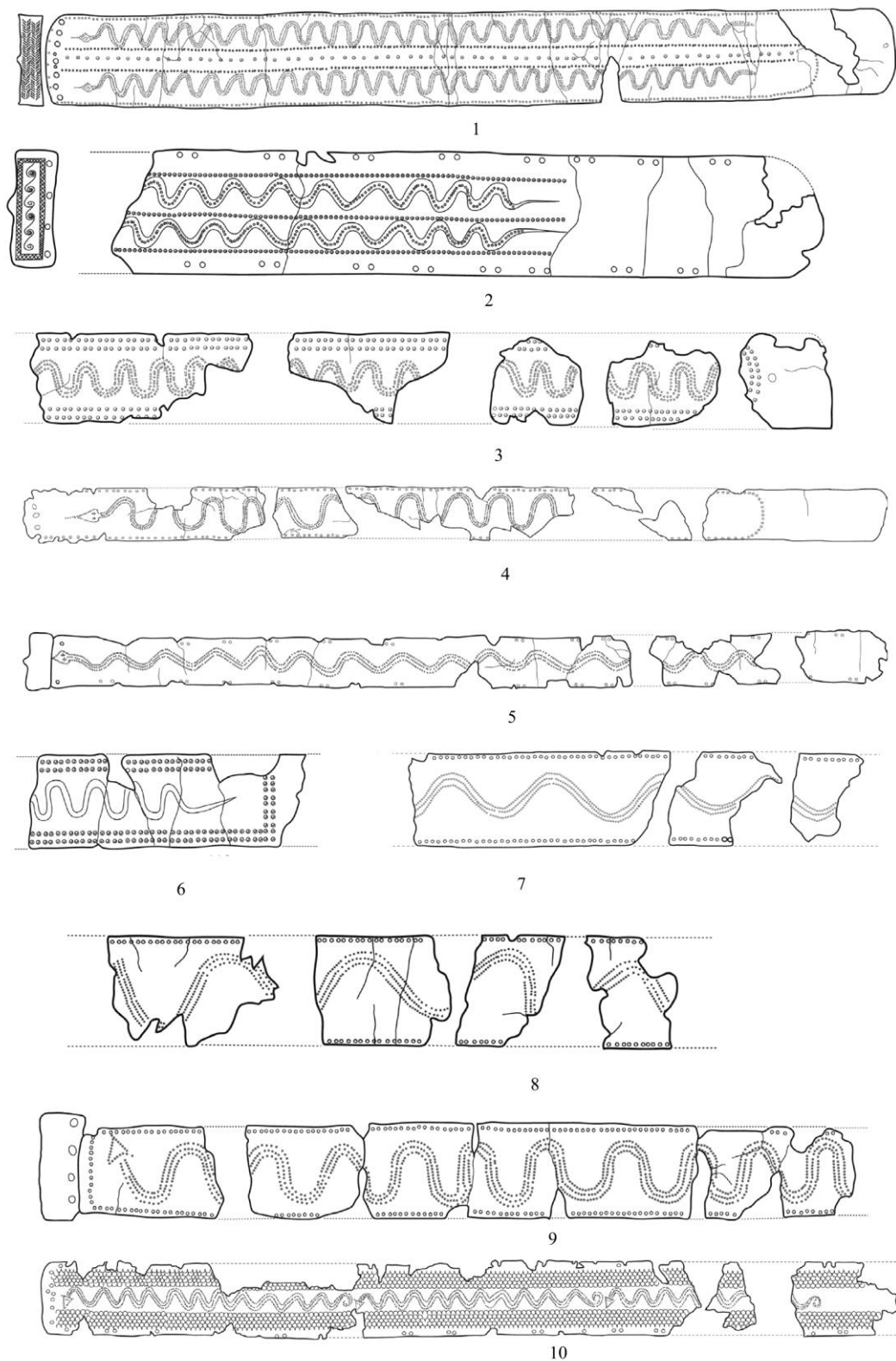


Figure 2. Snakes depicted on belts from Tli cemetery: 1 — grave 18b; 2 — grave 50; 3 — grave 57; 4 — grave 82; 5 — 101; 6 — grave 112; 7 — grave 141; 8 — grave 148; 9 — grave 158a; 10 — grave 208 [2; 4].

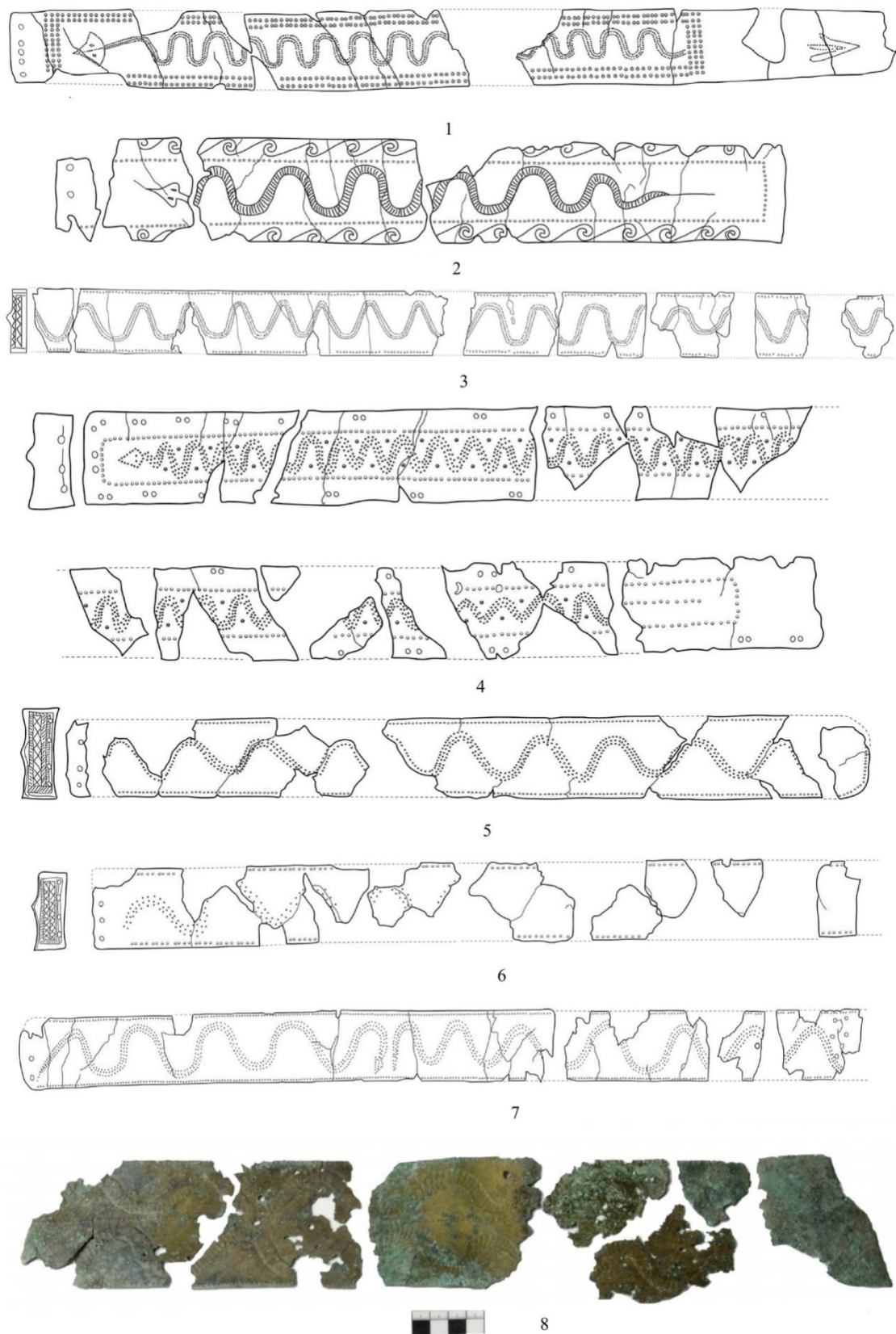


Figure 3. Snakes depicted on belts from Tli (1–7) and Koban (8) burial grounds: 1 — grave 256; 2 — grave 266; 3 — grave 276; 4 — grave 346; 5 — grave 349; 6 — grave 380; 7 — grave 401; 8 — grave 4 (1883) [2; 11].

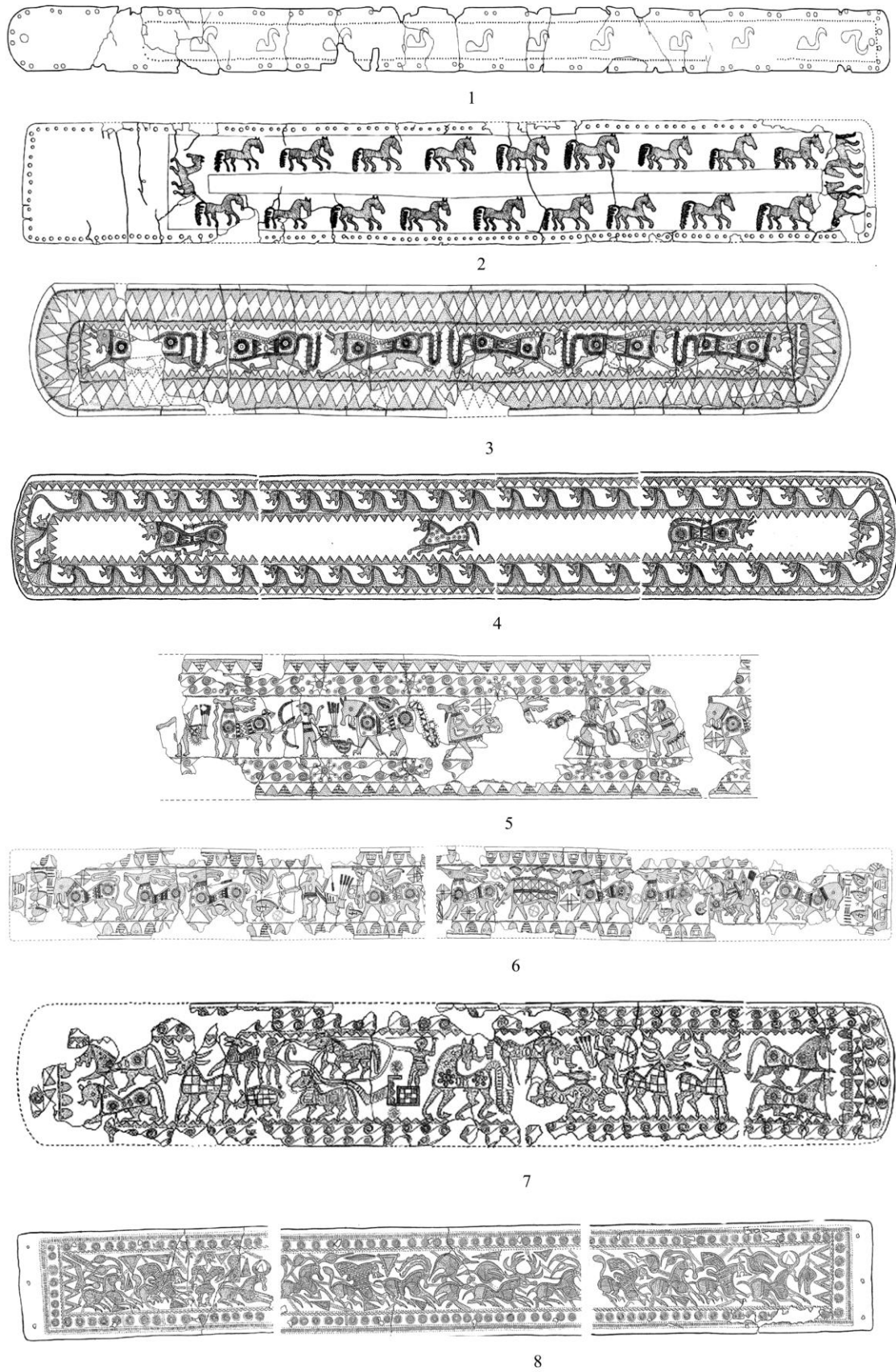


Figure 4. The figurative belts from Tli cemetery: 1 — tomb 208; 2 — tomb 224; 3 — 161; 4 — tomb 363; 5 — tomb 74b; 6 — tomb 76b; 7 — tomb 350; 8 — tomb 419 [2; 7].

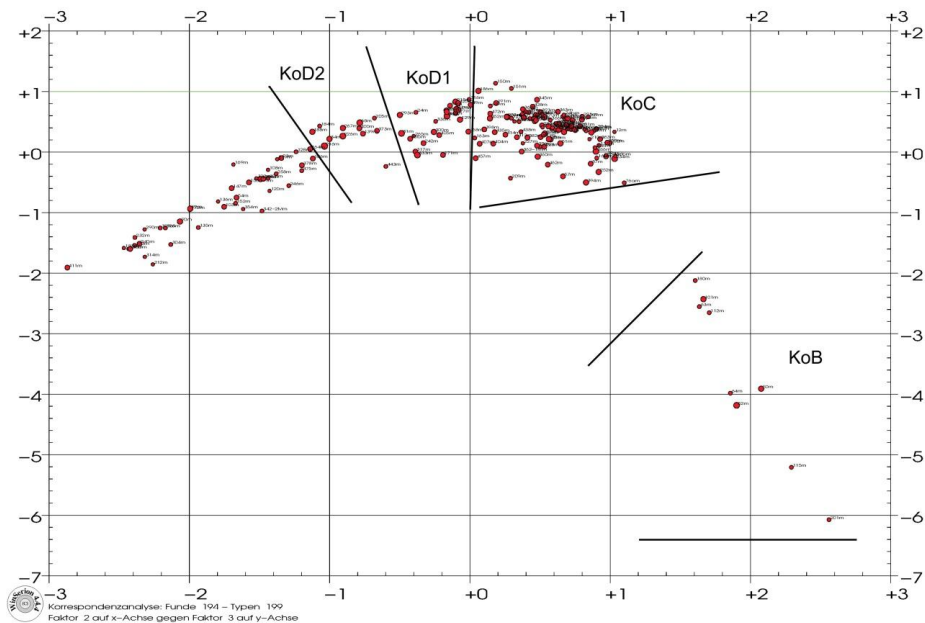


Figure 5. Correspondent Analysis of the male burials of the Tli cemetery.

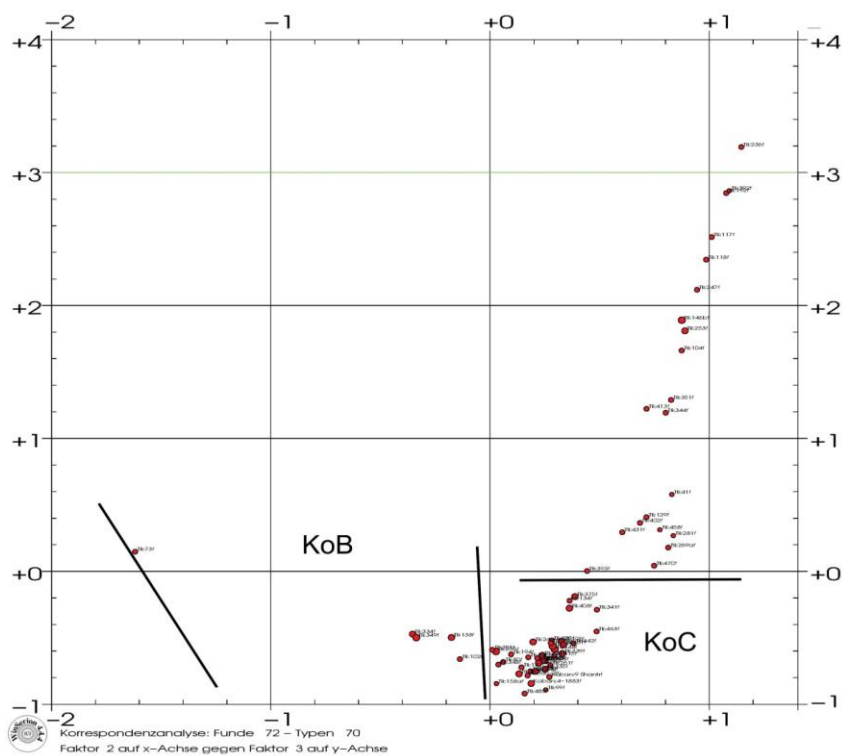


Figure 6. Correspondent Analysis of the female burials of the Tli and Koban cemeteries.

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Қобан мәдениетіндегі зооморфты бейнелері бар қола белдіктер

Қола белбеулер Кавказдың ежелгі тұрғындарынан қалған көркемдік жағынан ең таңғаларлық жәдігерлер қатарына жатады. Олар өнердің әртүрлі стильдерінің дамуын білдіреді және ерте темір дәуірінің басында аймақтың таулы аймақтарында белсенді дамып келе жатқан металл өңдеу процесінің жаңашыл көрінісі. Мақала Орталық Кавказдың (Солтүстік және Оңтүстік Осетия) Тли және Қобан қорымдарынан табылған әртүрлі зооморфтық бейнелермен безендірілген жұқа жайма қоладан жасалған белдіктерді қарастыруға арналған. Ерлердің де, әйелдердің де жерлеуіне ілесіп жүретін белдіктер жеке пайдалануға арналған заттарға жатқызылды. Олардың ішінде екі негізгі топ ерекшеленді: зооморфтық бейнелермен безендірілген, жергілікті қобандық стильде жасалған белдіктер және оңтүстік, Закавказье дәстүрінде жасалған белдіктер. Қарастырылып отырған ою-өрнекті белдіктермен бірге анықталған көптеген бейіт бұйымдарының статистикалық талдауы олардың б.э.д. IX-VII ғасырлардағы қолданылуының хронологиялық шеңберін анықтауға мүмкіндік берді. Нәтижелердің гендерлік корреляциясы да олардың таралуының маңызды заңдылықтарын айқындайды.

Кілт сөздер: Орталық Кавказ, Қобан мәдениеті, Тли және Қобан қорымдары, б.э.д. IX-VII ғғ., қорымдар, қола белдіктер, зооморфтық бейнелер, жыландар, сериация, корреспонденциялық талдау.

С. Махортых, Н. Котова, П. Штадлер

Бронзовые пояса с зооморфными изображениями в Кобанской культуре

Бронзовые пояса относятся к числу наиболее ярких, с художественной точки зрения, артефактов, оставленных древним населением Кавказа. Они представляют развитие различных стилей искусства и являются инновационным выражением процесса металлообработки, который активно развивался в горных областях региона в начале раннего железного века. Статья посвящена рассмотрению поясов, изготовленных из тонкой листовой бронзы, украшенных различными зооморфными изображениями, которые найдены в Глийском и Кобанском некрополях Центрального Кавказа (Северная и Южная

Осетия). Пояса, найденные в погребениях как мужчин, так и женщин, относились к предметам личного пользования. Среди них выделяются две основные группы: пояса, украшенные зооморфными изображениями, выполненные в местном кобанском стиле, и пояса, изготовленные в южных, закавказских традициях. Статистический анализ многочисленных предметов погребального инвентаря, выявленных вместе с рассматриваемыми орнаментированными поясами, позволил определить хронологические рамки их использования, а именно IX–VII вв. до н.э. Кроме того, гендерная корреляция находок выявила важные закономерности в их распределении.

Ключевые слова: Центральный Кавказ, Кобанская культура, Тлийский и Кобанский некрополи, IX–VII вв. до н.э., погребения, бронзовые пояса, зооморфные изображения, змеи, серияция, анализ соответствий.

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Information about the authors

Makhortykh Serhii — Doctor of historical sciences, Principal researcher, Institute of Archaeology Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, Kyiv, Ukraine; <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7865-0263>

Kotova Nadiia — Doctor of historical sciences, Principal researcher, Institute of Archaeology Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, Kyiv, Ukraine; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8197-7782>

Stadler Peter — Doctor of historical sciences, Natural History Museum Vienna, Vienna, Austria; <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4000-3778>