COVERED TAIL AND “FLYING” TASSELS*

BY

Jangar ILYASOV
(Linden-Museum, Stuttgart)

«A horse does not run faster, a mounted bowman will not
shoot better or farther whether the mane is crenelated or not.
It is its very uselessness which makes the practice of crenelation
a valuable criterion for establishing historical connections»

Otto Maenchen-Helfen,
Crenelated Mane and Scabbard Slide.

Introductory remarks

In his article, which was published more than 40 years ago, Prof. Otto
Maenchen-Helfen wrote about one, at first sight not very important detail
of horse decoration. Namely, about the crenelated mane1. Careful analysis
of iconographic and archaeological material enabled him to define the ter-
ritorial and chronological limits for the dissemination of these features. As
a result he drew important conclusions about the directions in which cul-
tures of nomadic origin spread2. I want to write about other details of
horse decoration, which have also been studied in some publications3,
 namely covered horse-tails and “flying” tassels.

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* This article was prepared in May-October 2001 with a fellowship grant from the
Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung (Germany). I want to express my deep gratitude to Prof.
Dr. J. Kalter (Linden-Museum Stuttgart), to Prof. Dr. H. Gaube (Tübingen University), to
Prof. Dr. Marthe Bernus-Taylor (Louvre, Paris) and to Dr. F. Grenet (CNRS, Paris) for the
opportunity to work in various libraries and academic organisations. I am sincerely grateful
to Academician B.A. Litvinsky for his invaluable advice concerning the bibliography of this
question, and also to Dr. V.P. Nikonorov (IHMC, Sankt-Petersburg) and to Dr. T.K. Mkrt-
chev (SMOA, Moscow) for their help in searching for Russian academic literature. I wish to
thank Mrs. Katharine Judelson (Southampton, UK) for correcting my English text.


2 The study of the long sword and scabbard slides for carrying them was brilliantly
continued in W. Trousdale’s fundamental monograph, see: Trousdale, 1975; see also:

3 Tanabe, 1990, pp. 51-62; Ilyasov, Rusanov, 1998, pp. 112-113, pl. XI; Ilyasov,
Covered Tails

Findings from the 1st Pazyryk Barrow revealed one characteristic feature of horse decoration, namely a manner of covering the tail of a horse with a special sheath (case), made from pieces of leather sewn together. These covers were decorated, edged at the bottom with a stripe of dark-blue coloured fur and a fringe of horse-hair dyed red (pl. I: 1). Judging by the fact that covers were found on the tails of two horses, which were also decorated with horned masks and mane-sheaths, these tail-covers served not a practical, but a ritual-decorative purpose. Masks, mane-sheaths and tail-covers were used to make horses “unrecognizable”, to give them an unusual (frightening? fantastic?) appearance (like that of a totemic or mythological creature?). Apparently, such splendid decoration was not a practical, but a ritual-decorative purpose. 

4 Griaznov, 1950, pp. 32, 40, 63, figs. 10, 16, 24: 1, 2; Rudenko, 1953, p. 227, figs. 140: a, 141. Furthermore, tails of horses were often plaited or knotted, see: Griaznov, 1950, pp. 26, 30, 32, 34, figs. 7-9, 12, 14, 15; Rudenko, 1953, p. 150, fig. 87. I have no idea, what P. Bernard and K. Abdullaev are implying, when they write that “there are many covers for horse tails in the Pazyryk complex, made from coarse material or leather and decorated sometimes with colour”, see: Bernard, Abdullaev, 1997, 1, p. 82. Unfortunately, they do not give any reference for the source of such information. 

5 For the decoration of horse tails with narrow copper and gold bands known from findings in the Arzhan barrow, see: Griaznov, 1980, pp. 21, 25, 32, 36, 37, 42, 44, figs. 10: 1, 12: 5, 10, 11, 20: 1. It is hard to be sure, but most likely they had only decorative significance. 

6 There existed an opinion that a horse wearing a mask with antlers embodied the image of a reindeer — one of the most ancient draught-animals, which was displaced in real life by the horse, but still retained its significant place in ideology, see: Griaznov, Golomshotk, 1933, pp. 38-41, figs. 17-18; Griaznov, 1950, p. 84. This opinion was criticized by K. Jettmar, see: Jettmar, 1952, pp. 63-66. In his turn F. Altheim suggested we should interpret the Pazyryk mask as an elk — another ancient draught-animals, see: Altheim, 1959, pp. 307-311. Yet, in the 2nd Bashadar barrow and in the 1st Tuekta barrow, which were studied by S.I. Rudenko and dated to the 6th century BC, wooden horns were found, imitating the horns of ibex (covered with silver plates and gold foil in Bashadar Barrow), see: Rudenko, 1953, p. 220; Rudenko, 1960, p. 78, pls. 38, 68-70; Zwei Gesichter, 1997, pp. 218-219, No. 111. In the course of excavations in 1998-99 by the joint Kazakh-French-Italian expedition in Berel (Eastern Kazakhstan) similar «ibex» horns were found: Samashev et al., 2000, p. 13, fig. 19. Barrow 11, in which horned masks decorated the heads of three horses, preliminarily dated to 294 BC on the basis of dendrochronology: Ibid., pp. 19, 20. As far as I know, the ibex has never been a draught-animals. On the other hand, horned horses do exist in the natural world, though there are many images of such horses. For instance, in the Bronze age petroglyphs from Kazakhstan (Tamgaly), petroglyphs of the Saka-Parthian period from the Upper Indus region, among wooden sculptures from the burials at Ulandryk, or Yustyd in the Altai, etc. For more detail see H.-P. Francfort’s section in: Francfort et al., 1997, pp. 185-198. Frequently encountered statements about the depiction
intended for special rituals and ceremonies (like funeral processions and so on) and was not used in everyday life, because it would have proved inconvenient in battle, during hunting or migration. Yet the tail-cover, which had come into being as a part of ritual decoration, but did not seem to inconvenience the rider (as, for instance, a mask with branched antlers), could have gradually evolved into a part of ordinary horse trappings (which became traditional, but not absolutely compulsory). If we paraphrase our epigraph, it can be confidently stated that the cover on a horse’s tail does not affect the speed and endurance of the horse, or the fighting qualities of the horseman. Therefore, the presence of a tail-cover is an indication of some specific ideas, customs or traditions of a particular ethnic group. It is well known that various innovations in military equipment, weaponry or tactics — invented by some nation or tribe — would be fairly rapidly adopted by its neighbours. Yet, I repeat, given that the use of a tail-cover does not help to improve the fighting qualities of horse and horseman, its use, as reflected in ancient works of art, helps us to trace the

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of a horse with ibex horns found in the Issyk Barrow, seem to me to be incorrect. It is, in my opinion, a very realistic image of an ibex-teke (apart from the wings). This can clearly be recognized, if we compare it with golden horse-protomes, which were also found in the Issyk barrow, see: Akinichev, 1978, pp. 18-19, 24, 25, 57, figs. 9, 17; Nomads of Eurasia, 1989, pp. 24-25, 28-29. Quite another matter are «ibex-horses» from petroglyphs and from Pazyryk barrows. Here we can recall the mythological draught-animals ("vahana" in the Hindu terminology), which are so popular in Indo-Iranian (and other) mythology. I should like to point out the «diadem» from Karghali, on which an ibex, dzheiran antelope (?) (mountain-ram according to E.E. Kuzmina), winged leopard (?) and dragon are represented as draught-animals. One can also see “unsaddled” winged horses, deer and bear, see: Kuzmina, 1987, p. 158; L’Uomo d’Oro, 1998, p. 225, Nos. 466-468. Draught-animals, transformed into zoomorphic thrones, survive in West Central Asia till Islamization. In wall-painting, toreutics, ossuaries and terracottas one can see horses and camels, mountain-rams and dragons, represented like vahanas or details of thrones: Belenizki, 1980, p. 45; Marshak, Raspopova, 1990, fig. 16; Mode, 1992, fig. 6: a-d, f, fig. 7: a, b, d, fig. 14: b, fig. 18: a-h; Krašeninnikova, 1993, 1, p. 54, fig. 6. Bronze ram-heads and ibex-shaped throne supports, found in Tajikistan, should also be mentioned: Atakhanov, 1988, pp. 156-157, figs. 1, 2; Oxus, 1989, pp. 24-26, Nos. 1, 2. Evidently, notions about vahanas also existed in the mythology of nomads. In these notions images of ibex and stag played an important role (we should do well to recall the crown from the Khokhlach Barrow, which is decorated with images specifically of an ibex and a stag). Horses, real draught-animals — decorated with various masks and furnished with felt and wooden horns and antlers, were only represented mythological draught-animals (stags, ibexes, gryphons) in funerary and other rituals. It was probably, not these mythological animals, but horses in ritual attire, which were depicted in petroglyphs, although one cannot rule out the possible existence of the image of the horned horse and other polymorphic animals in mythology, see: Kuzmina, 1977, pp. 104-106; Denisov, 1997, pp. 229-336.
routes of migration of an ethnic group, the directions and range of its closest contacts and its strongest influences on other nations. This is what I shall attempt to do in this article.

The unique conditions of the Altai mountains helped to preserve genuine examples of tail-covers. All other evidence pointing to the existence of this category of horse decoration is provided by works of art, made from a wide variety of different materials. Let me turn to their description.

The depiction of a tail-cover can be seen on the felt hanging from the 5th Pazyryk barrow: it covers the upper part of the plaited tail of a foal ridden by the mustached horseman riding up to the goddess (pl. I: 2). The works of art chronologically and, probably, territorially closest to the Pazyryk depictions are articles from the Siberian Treasure of Peter the Great complete with depictions of tail-covers. They can be seen on the pair of gold buckles with the composition known as “Riders under a tree”.

The upper parts of tails of pacer-horses depicted in this composition are encased in quite short covers: one tail is plaited (pl. III: 1). In my opinion, on buckles from the same collection depicting boar-hunting, a cover can be seen on the top part of the tail of the main hunter’s horse (pl. II: 1, 2). The shape of the covers on the left and the right buckle is not quite the same, because the depictions on this pair of buckles do not mirror each other exactly. They show a mounted archer and boar from both sides, in full accordance with nature. The horse-tail on the 4th/2nd-century BC bronze altar with a rider figure found in the Almaty (Kazakhstan) is sleek.

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7 Rudenko, 1953, pl. 95; Idem, 1960, fig. 152: j.
8 There exist different opinions concerning the functions of these buckles, see: Rudenko, 1962, pp. 15-16; Y.A. Motov recently proposed a version of his own — “decorative-marking of a textile which was used as a ritual curtain” (Motov, 1999, p. 147). Like many other researchers (Rostovtzeff, 1933, p. 99; Artamonov, 1973, p. 128; Bunker, 1992, pp. 201-222, etc.), I think that these objects were buckles of ceremonial belts (Ilyasov, Rusanov, 1998, p. 109, pl. IX). It is very difficult to agree with some scholars (see: Fettich, 1952, pp. 253-254, 268; Nickel, 1973, p. 135; Idem, n. d., p. 152; Idem, 1996, p. 44; Alexander, 1996, p. 55), who thinks that they were used for carrying a sword.
9 Rostovtzeff, 1933, p. 109, figs. 3, 4; Rudenko, 1962, pp. 52-53, pl. VII: 1, 7; for good reproductions see: Cultural Contacts, 1985, No 15; Schiltz, 1994, pp. 240-241, fig. 177.
10 J. Haskins wrote about covered tails on the Pazyryk felt-hanging and on these buckles in his day: Haskins, 1961, p. 163; see also: Bunker, 1992, p. 211, she thinks that the leather sheaths simulate plaiting: Motov, 1999, p. 142.
11 Rostovtzeff, 1933, p. 100, figs. 1, 2; Rudenko, 1962, pp. 49, 51, pls. I: 5, IV: 5, XXIV: 4; Haskins, 1961, p. 154, pl. 1, fig. 1; Schiltz, 1994, fig. 178.
in the upper third and notched to indicate plaiting in the lower part\textsuperscript{12}. Perhaps, what we have here is a depiction of a tail-cover.

There are several representations from the 4\textsuperscript{th}-3\textsuperscript{rd} century BC in which the horse-tail is sleek and appears to be of a different texture in its upper part. This evidence allows us to refer to the presence of a tail-cover\textsuperscript{13}. The problem is, however, that all these are representations of horses without any trappings. If saddle and bridle are not represented, is it possible that a tail-cover would be? The bronze sculpture of a horse from Maoling (see below) would appear to enable us to give an affirmative answer. With reference to the images from Xigoupan (Inner Mongolia) K.M. Linduff wrote that they were *kulans* identifiable by their tufted tails\textsuperscript{14}. Yet the image on the gold decoration of Issyk scabbard cannot in any way be interpreted as a *kulân* (Asiatic wild ass). Since this question is controversial I cannot with any confidence include such depictions in my list.

The practice of putting covers on horses’ tails was borrowed by the Chinese from their nomadic neighbours, probably at the time when the state of Zhao (Chao) was organizing cavalry troops so as to fight more effectively against the mounted hordes of the northern nomads. This is thought to have taken place in 307 or 305 BC\textsuperscript{15}. The terracotta saddled and chariot horses from the burial complex of Qin (Ch’in) emperor Shi Huangdi (246-210 BC) display covered and tightly plaited tails, and also tails with knotted ends (pl. IV: 1), as do the horses of the terracotta warriors from burials of the Han period\textsuperscript{16}. A tail-cover is shown very

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{12} Nomads of Eurasia, 1989, pp. 18, 21; Grigor’ev, Ismagil, 1996, pp. 245-247, fig. 1: 2; L’Uomo d’Oro, 1998, p. 213, No. 428.\textsuperscript{13} Examples: buckles from Peter the Great’s collection with a mirror-image of a horse being tormented by a fantastic beast of prey (Rudenko, 1962, pp. 52-53, pl. VIII: 7, 8; good reproduction in: Schiltz, 1994, pp. 66-67, fig. 40); gold decoration of a dagger scabbard from the Issyk barrow with a depiction of a horse whose tail has been divided into two and plaited (Akishev K., 1978, p. 29, pl. 25; about dating see: Akishev A., 1984, p. 5); articles from Ordos: a golden diadem (?) from Aluchaideng, the ends of which have been decorated, in particular, with the figure of a recumbent horse with a tail divided into two narrow plaits (Linduff, 1997, p. 49, figs. A 53, A 54; Yatsenko, 1999, p. 160, fig. 2: 2); golden plaques from Xigoupan (CPAM, 1980, fig. 3: 5, fig. 4: 5, 7). For the dating of Ordos finds see: Bunker, 1993, pp. 102-109.\textsuperscript{14} Linduff, 1997, p. 52.\textsuperscript{15} Trousdale, 1975, pp. 61-62; Vainshtein, Kriukov, 1984, p. 120; Bunker, 1992, p. 211; Linduff, 1997, pp. 37, 52, 54.\textsuperscript{16} The Great Bronze Age, 1980, pp. 342, 346, no. 102, 104; Pirazzoli-t’Serstevens, 1982, p. 31, fig. 9; Terracotta Legion, 1988, figs. 59-61, 111, 113, 114; Sotheby’s, 1994, No. 240; Kaikodo, 1998, pp. 172-173, No. 54; Sotheby’s, 2000, p. 93, No. 114.}
clearly on the bronze and gilded statue of a horse from the Maoling Museum, which was found near the burial of the Han emperor Wudi (140-87 BC)\textsuperscript{17} (pl. III: 3). These examples show very well how strong the nomad influence was on the creation of the Chinese cavalry — they tried to imitate everything, right up to crenelated mane and covers on horses’ tails\textsuperscript{18}.

The next chronological group of depictions with covered tails are riders on the coins of the states, which were created by nomads within the territory of modern Afghanistan and Pakistan. Despite the miniature size of the images, careful examination reveals that the horse-tail is curved at the top. This creates the impression that the tail is covered: see, for instance, the coins of Vonones and his co-rulers (vassals?) Spalahores, Spalagadames, Spalirises (c. 100-65 BC according to M. Mitchiner), and also the coins of Spalirises as an independent ruler (c. 65-40 BC)\textsuperscript{19}. Coins of the Indo-Saka (Indo-Scythian) rulers starting from Maues (c. 90-57 BC) provide a more definite picture: the upper part of the horse-tail is in a cover, which is shown horizontal or curved with a pointed edge extending behind. Hanks of tail hang vertically from under the cover\textsuperscript{20}. It is interesting that the same image also appears on the coins minted by the Indo-Greek king Hippostratos (c. 65-55 BC according to O. Bopearachchi), who ruled in the western Punjab. On his coins one can see both a prancing horse with a loose flowing tail (traditional for Graeco-Bactrian and Indo-Greek coins) and also a slow ambled horse with a covered tail (so typical for many emissions of the Indo-Scythian dynasty of Azes)\textsuperscript{21} (pl. V: 1). The appearance of this new variant from the mint of King Hippostratos is definitely not some chance phenomenon, but is connected with the influence of his Scythian neighbours. On the coins of the kings of the Azes dynasty (c. 57

\textsuperscript{18} E. Bunker writes that the similarity between the sheathed horse-tails of the Peter the Great plaques, Pazyryk horses and pottery horses from the burial complex of Qin Shihuangdi “should not be surprising in view of the fact that Chinese horsemanship and riding equipment were directly borrowed from their northern nomadic neighbours”, see: Bunker, 1992, p. 211.
\textsuperscript{20} Mitchiner, 1976, p. 473, type 719.
\textsuperscript{21} Whitehead, 1914, pl. VIII: 617; Mitchiner, 1975, p. 266, type 445; Bopearachchi, 1998, pl. 70, Nos. 1627, 1628-30.
BC - 30 AD according to D. Mac Dowall\(^{22}\) the upper part of the horse-tail, as a rule, is covered, while the tail can be arranged in different shapes: either consisting of two (upper and lower) spindle-shaped parts with a knot or some round decoration between them (coins of Azes I, types 739, 745, 747, 748, 750, 752, of Azilises, types 776, 781, of Azes II, types 827, 846, etc.)\(^{23}\) or hang like a thin hank, sometimes divided in two beneath the decoration (coins of Azes II, types 824, 828)\(^{24}\) (pl: V: 2, 3). Another variant is a thin and sleek curved upper part bent at an angle of 90°, apparently representing the cover and the hanks of tail represented by slanting strokes (coins of Azes I, types 743, 744, 749, 751, of Azes and Azilises, type 764, of Azilises, types 801, 802)\(^{25}\). There is a similar depiction on the coin of Naštên\(^{26}\). The rider is depicted on the coins of the satraps Zeionises, Arsak, Indravarma, his son Aspavarma and others, who reigned in the territory of the Indo-Scythian kingdom (c. 1-35 AD according to M. Mitchiner), which gradually declined under pressure from Kujula Kadphises and Gondophares. In some of these depictions one can see covered horse-tails\(^{27}\). Coins of the Indo-Parthian rulers Gondophares and Abdagases create the same impression\(^{28}\).

Tail-covers are also depicted on Kushan coins. First of all, on coins of “Heraios-Sanab-Kushan”\(^{29}\). On these a plaited horse-tail can be seen — indicated by 5-6 dots and a sleek cover on the top\(^{30}\) (pl: V: 4). On coins of “Soter Megas”-Vema Takto there is also a horse-tail, plaited or hanging

\(^{22}\) Mac Dowall, 1996, pp. 117-118.
\(^{28}\) Whitehead 1914, pl. XV: 1; Bopearachchi, Rahman, 1995, pp. 202-205, Nos. 988, 990-995, 999-1002; Bopearachchi, 1998a, figs. 8, 9.
\(^{29}\) Recently E.V. Rtveladze put forward the hypothesis that the proper name of the ruler, known as “Heraios”, was Kushan, see: Rtveladze, 1999, pp. 6-7.
\(^{30}\) Mitchiner, 1975a, pp. 304-305; Davidovich, 1976, p. 57, pl. I: 1, pl. II: 4, 5; Idem, 1979, p. 18, pl. I. E.A. Davidovich considers that the horse-tail on Heraios coins was knotted 5-6 times, but my interpretation I would regard as more realistic.
loose, and with its top covered\textsuperscript{31}. The tail-cover and hanging hanks are clearly to be seen on dinars of Kanishka I bearing images of the god Mazdaovan (Mozdooano) sitting on a two-headed horse and of the deity Druvaspa (Lrooaspo) standing beside the horse\textsuperscript{32}. Careful investigation of coins from all the above-mentioned groups would probably produce further examples\textsuperscript{33}.

Various other kinds of Kushan art also include depictions of covered horse-tails. On the 1\textsuperscript{st}/2\textsuperscript{nd}-century AD gold buckle from the city-site of Saksonokhur (Southern Tajikistan) with a depiction of a rider hunting boar with a spear, tail-hair is hanging down from under the horse’s tail-cover\textsuperscript{34} (pl. III: 2). Another example is provided by the bone plates with engraved hunting scenes from the famous Temple of the Oxus (Takht-i Sangin)\textsuperscript{35}. On the intact plate, the tail of a horse galloping to the right is sheathed by a cover with a slanting tapering edge: this is very clear in photographs published by B.A. Litvinsky\textsuperscript{36} (pl. VI: 1). Also, on the fragment of a second plate, a horse galloping right has a clearly visible tail-cover and plaited tail (pl. VI: 2). The tail of the horse galloping left is slightly different: it has a cover with a tapering end, the lower part of the tail is knotted or held in place with the help of a round buckle\textsuperscript{37}. The dates suggested for the Takht-i Sangin plates vary between the end of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} or 1\textsuperscript{st} century BC and the period from the beginning of the Christian era till the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century AD\textsuperscript{38} — I shall examine this at greater length below. The next example we found in the monumental art of Dalvarzin-tepe — the Kushan town in the Surkhandarya valley (Southern Uzbekistan). In a fragment of a wall-painting from the temple in the potter’s quarter (DT-9) one can see a

\textsuperscript{31} Zeymal, 1983, pl. 19: 45, 48, 59, pl. 20: 63, 66, 72, 91.
\textsuperscript{32} Tanabe, 1993, p.18, fig.12; Weihrauch und Seide, p. 134, fig. 119.
\textsuperscript{33} The author of this article has not yet had a chance to work directly with the numismatic material. As regards the publications, the quality of pictures is, regrettably, not always good.
\textsuperscript{34} Drevnosti, 1985, p.117, No 324; for a good illustration see: Oxus, 1989, pp. 52-53, No. 25.
\textsuperscript{36} Litvinsky, 2001, p. 138, fig. 2, p. 141, fig. 4.
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., p. 143, fig. 5.
horse's croup and a covered and plaited tail (pl. V: 6). In this temple, two building periods were identified: the first period fell in the 1st century AD, and the second in the 2nd-3rd century AD, but the period to which the painting belongs is not clear from the publications. E.P. Denisov drew attention to the resemblance between the tail of a horned and winged horse on a seal from the Beshkent-Valley (Southern Tajikistan), which he published, and the covered tails of horses from the 1st Pazyryk Barrow. He dates the seal to the period 1st century BC to 1st-2nd century AD.

Depictions of tail-covers from the territory of Sogdiana are known from the Orlat bone plates, which have been published and described many times. Nine horses, six in the battle scene (four of them are undoubtedly pacer-horses) and three in the hunting scene, are engraved on two large belt-buckles. Covers are seen on the tails of four horses taking part in the battle, the croups of the other two are hidden (pl. VII: 1). The tail of the dark horse is plaited, the rest of the tails hang free. Three tail-covers are decorated with short strokes and spots, to convey decoration or seams. One of the three horses on the plate with the hunting scene has an undecorated tail-cover: the tail of this horse is decorated with a rounded buckle, as on the plate from Takht-i Sangin (pl. VII: 2). It may be assumed that on the Orlat plate with the battle scene the tail-covers are depicted as part of the usual horse harness. Various authors have suggested widely differing dates for the Orlat plates: from the 2nd-1st centuries BC to the 4th-5th centuries AD. I have suggested the 1st-2nd centuries AD and shall discuss this question in more detail below.

Examples of the use of tail-covers are also known in Parthia and in the territory of her former possessions. It is possible to make out a tail-cover on the tetradrachms of Artabanus II (III) (10/11-38 AD) (pl. V: 5). On the Hung-e Kamalwand rock-relief the horse-tail is thin at the top and fluffy lower down and appears to be covered (pl. VIII: 1). The same

42 Mitchiner, 1978, p. 117, Nos. 617, 618; Weihrauch und Seide, fig. 76.
impression is created by two rock-reliefs in Tang-e Sarwak, one of them depicts a horse and rider wearing armour. A tail-cover has definitely been depicted in the wall-painting from Dura-Europos named “Mithras the Hunter” and in “amateur” graffiti and drawings, also found in that ancient city (pl. VIII: 2, 3). It is considered that the Dura-Europos depictions were created in the second quarter of the 3rd century AD, when the city (captured by Romans from the Parthians in 164/165 AD) had not yet been taken by the Sasanians (253 AD). Although the city was for a long time under Roman control, horsemen’s apparel and horse trappings show definitely that “Parthian customs and manners did not disappear with the last of the Parthian kings.” This fact is borne out by the rider’s costume in the scene of the sacrifice to Iarhibol; the top-part of the horse-tail in this composition would appear to have a cover (pl. VIII: 4).

Another region where one may find depictions of horses with tail-covers is the Bosporan Kingdom, or, to be precise, the Panticapaeum area. Here, they are depicted in the funerary monuments of the Bosporan nobles, who were very much under the influence of the Sarmatians: in paintings in the so-called “crypt of Anthesterius” and the relief on the tombstone of Athenios (pl. V: 7) dating back to the middle or second half of the 1st century AD we find riders on very lean horses, reminiscent of Orlat horses, with covered tails.

44 Kawami, 1987, pp. 200-201, fig. 18, pl. 48; Gall, 2001, figs. 8, 11, 15: 2. H. von Gall writes that on the relief of the heavily armoured horse a protective tail-cover (“Schwanzschutz”) can be seen: Gall, 1990a, p. 16, fig. 1.
45 Rostovtzeff, 1935, fig. 79; Cumont, Rostovtzeff, 1939, pp. 112-115, pls. XIV, XV. Unfortunately I cannot agree with the opinion of Prof. B.A. Litvinsky that a flying tassel is depicted in this painting, see: Litvinsky, 2001, p. 151. This opinion probably goes back to the comment by F. Cumont and M.I. Rostovtzeff that the most typical features of the trappings of Mithras’ horse were “the large breast phalerae and the balloon-like tassels behind” (Cumont, Rostovtzeff, 1939, p. 112). Yet, after examining high-quality illustrations, I cannot find any tassels here. I think it is obvious that a plaited horse-tail with an almond-shaped end and a covered upper part has been depicted in this painting (pl. VIII: 4), see: Ilyasov, 2001, p. 20.
48 Rostovtzeff, 1935, fig. 57; Goldman, 1999, p. 69, F.2.
49 Desyatchikov, 1972, fig. 2; Antichnye gosudarstva, 1984, pl. 104: 2, pl. 109: 1; Yatsenko, 1995, p. 189.
50 The presence of tail-covers in the painting in the crypt of Anphelerios was noted by S.A. Yatsenko: Yatsenko, 1995, p. 189. It is necessary to note that D.A. Machinsky was
Judging from numerous representations of riders and horses in the art of European Scythia from the 4th–3rd centuries BC, the covering of horse tails was not a customary practice there. I failed to find it in the pictorial art of Achaemenian or Sasanian Iran as well. In Achaemenian art (reliefs, toreutics, gems) horse-tails are half the normal length, they were often plaited in a special way and their ends were tied in a knot with hanging ribbons. This practice is very different from Orlat depictions, despite the fact that V.E. Maslov has compared them with some Achaemenian depictions from the Oxus Treasure. Judging from Sasanian toreutics, horse-tails were arranged in a variety of different ways, but covers were never used. On the rock-relief in Naqsh-i Rustam showing the investiture of Ardashir I, the first Sasanian King of Kings, the tails of the horses of Ahura Mazda and Ardashir “are tied with a ribbon at the top but otherwise hang free”, according to G. Herrmann. Judging from the drawing published in her article, it would seem that the tail of Ardashir’s horse had a cover at the top with a stepped edge at the bottom. Nevertheless, it is probably a ribbon after all, wrapped around the top part of the tail. Similar ribbons can be seen in early Sasanian graffiti drawn on the walls of the so-called harem in Persepolis, which appear to depict Ardashir I and his ancestors — the kings of Fars. If it is after all a tail-cover, which has been depicted at Naqsh-i Rustam, it is the only case we know of, and this detail of harness was not adopted subsequently. In some of the rock-reliefs of Shāhpūr I, for instance with a scene of victory over the Roman emperor Valerian or one of Shāhpūr’s investiture in Naqsh-i Rustam, horse-tails are tightly wrapped in ribbons, the ends of which are tied in a bow. This feature is slightly reminiscent of a tail-cover, but it is not a tail-cover at all.

52 Herrmann, 1969, p. 71, fig. 4.
53 Calmeyer, 1976, p. 67, figs. 3, 4; Gall, 1990, p. 104, fig. 3.
54 Lukonin, 1961, pl. 8; Idem, 1969, figs. 8, 10; Herrmann, 1981, figs. 1, 2, 3; Herrmann, MacKenzie, 1989, p. 16, text fig. 5, fig. 1, pls. 9, 16, 17.
“Flying” Tassels

Another variety of horse-trapping is the tassel, made from light materials and as a rule attached to the saddle by long strings. The fast movement of the horse would lift them and make them “fly” behind the horseman. Flying tassels are represented most frequently in Sasanian art. It is thought by some that this attribute once symbolized legitimate kingship (Xvarnah) in Sasanian Iran and was an accessory for horses of the King of Kings and his heir\(^55\). Therefore representations of the tassels in other regions show us the directions in which the contacts and influences of Sasanian Iran developed. The incorrect depiction of tassels, moreover, would show that a craftsman was not familiar with the original tassels and had depicted only an approximation of them\(^56\). Naturally, all non-Sasanian depictions of horses decorated with tassels cannot be dated earlier than to the second quarter of the 3rd century AD. Such conclusions stem from the hypothesis proposed by K. Tanabe and supported by B.A. Litvinsky. To what extent, however, does this opinion correspond to the facts? Before answering this question it is necessary to enumerate depictions of the tassels known to us.

First, as in the case of the tail-covers, we should turn to finds from the 1st Pazyryk barrow. We must pay attention to one kind of decoration used for horses: three round straps with tassels of horsehair dyed red and inserted into short wooden pipes, so-called “vorvorka”, hanging from both sides of the saddle (pl. I: 1) ("troichatka" is the term used for them by M.P. Gryaznov)\(^57\). This decoration is easily recognizable as the prototype for the Sasanian tassels\(^58\).

Probably we can see the earliest examples of tassels on the above-mentioned golden belt-buckles with depictions of a boar hunt from Peter the

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\(^55\) Tanabe, 1990, p. 53. B. Goldman recently made the witty suggestion that tassels may serve as fly whisk (swats) as well as decoration: Goldman, 1999, p. 28. For the similar opinion of R. Ker-Porter, which was first published in 1821 ("to disperse, by its motion, flies from annoying the horse") and for another, most exotic opinion of W. Hinz ("Oder hat vielleicht der Ritter mit ihnen dem Gegner Sand in die Augen gestreut?") see: Hinz, 1965, p. 155 and note 2.

\(^56\) Tanabe, 1990, p. 56.

\(^57\) Griaznov, 1950, p. 57, figs. 8-10, 12-16, 22, pls. VII, XVI.

\(^58\) On Sasanian rock-reliefs of the 3rd century these “troichatkas” are also depicted. They look like wavy ribbons with balls (or discs?), trefoils or bells hanging from their ends and sometimes without any decorations at all.
Great’s collection\(^{59}\). Decorative tassels worked in incrustation hang down from the harness in front of and behind the saddle, while the largest tassel hangs down from the browband disc by the cheeks (pl. II: 1, 2). Tassels are also depicted on bronze belt-buckles from Ordos with figures of two fighting warriors and their horses\(^{60}\). A large tassel hangs down on the right side of the horse standing to the left, while the right-hand horse with its left side visible has no tassel on its left side (because it is hanging down on the opposite side?) (pl. IV: 3). Belt-buckles like this date back to the 3\(^{rd}\)-1\(^{st}\) centuries BC\(^{61}\). On the belt-buckle from Xichagou (Liaoning Province, North-eastern China), housed in the Chinese Historical Museum, two riders with long swords are arranged one behind the other\(^{62}\). The first rider sits on a rearing animal, and as a result the large tassel is shown touching the ground and can be seen under the rider’s left foot. Another tassel in the normal position hangs down behind the saddle of the second horseman: this tassel is also long and almost touches the ground. I have come across opinions to the effect that no tassels were depicted on the Ordos buckles, but rope or leather loops, predecessors of stirrups\(^{63}\). Without touching upon the problem as to when and where stirrups and their prototypes first appeared, I shall merely note that stirrups appeared no earlier than the 4\(^{th}\) century AD\(^{64}\). On the

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\(^{59}\) See note 11. Tassels depicted on these buckles were mentioned by M.I. Rostovtzeff, who wrote: “Note also the tassels behind the saddle, which reappear later on Sassanian and Chinese monuments”, see: Rostovtzeff, 1929, p. 53, pl. XVI: 2. For the objects from the Siberian collection as a whole and for these buckles in particular various dates have been proposed, but the 4\(^{th}\)-3\(^{rd}\) century BC seems to me the most probable. The obvious similarity between many details depicted on the belt-buckles and the Pazyryk complex has been noted by many scholars (Maenchen-Helfen, 1957, p. 136; Haskins, 1961, pp. 159-165; Trousdale, 1975, pp. 117, 265).

\(^{60}\) Jettmar, 1964, p. 237 (from the collection of the British Museum). This buckle would appear to have been presented as an object from the Victoria and Albert Museum, see: Bunker, 1978, p. 137, pl. 2b.


\(^{62}\) The Great Treasury, 1988, p. 68, No. 76. It is likely that the riders on this buckle are seated on fantastic creatures, not on horses (Trousdale, 1975, p. 68, fig. 45; Bunker, 1978, p. 128, pl. 4b; Linduff, 1997, p.80, fig. A112). Yet these monsters are saddled and decorated like horses.

\(^{63}\) B.A. Litvinsky think that a strap loop, the precursor of the stirrup might be depicted on the Takht-i Sangin plates: Litvinsky, 2001, p. 140. It seems to me that this is more likely to be a band used for tightening footwear, just as in the case of the footwear of the Orlat warriors and hunters, see: Ilyasov, Rusanov, 1998, p. 111, pl. XII.

Ordos buckles the above-mentioned detail is, firstly, too large and hangs down almost touching the ground and, secondly, it is attached behind the saddle. Obviously, this detail cannot help the rider to mount, which we know to be the main purpose of stirrups. So, what we find depicted on the Ordos belt-buckles is tassels. They could be found singly and might hang down on either the left or the right side, but they could appear in pairs: the Ordos depictions do not provide a definite answer. Smaller tassels hang down the cheeks, like the small tassels of Orlat battle-horses (pl. VII: 1), and they also hang in front of and behind the saddle.

Horses decorated with tassels can be found among Chinese funerary terracotta statues dating from the Han era (206 BC-220 AD): for example, on a terracotta horse from a private collection (Tokyo) with harness depicted in paint, there are head, chest and under-tail straps, buckles, phalerae and also tassels painted in red and hanging on cords attached to head-straps. It seems that a large tassel is hanging down from the phalerae on to the horse’s side. A similar painted horse from the collection in the Tsui Museum of Art (Hong Kong) is decorated with large tassels hanging down on cords from the brow-band discs on to the neck and behind the saddle. A pottery horse of the Han period with painted blue tassels hanging from long red cords was once on sale at a Christie’s auction (pl. IV: 2). A pair of painted terracotta horsemen dated to the 2nd-1st century BC, are mounted on horses decorated with almond-shaped tassels, hanging down on cords over their necks and behind their saddles. This shows how the decoration of horse harness with tassels — including those hanging behind the saddle — was widespread in Han China. On stamped tiles of the 3rd century BC, stemming from old Lo-yang in Honan, tassels “flying” behind the saddlecloth can be seen: on one of these two small tassels are shown attached to the saddle-cloth and fluttering behind the horsemans, not behind his back but lower down. Often the horse-tail, not the tassel, was depicted in China in the “flying” position, symbolizing the rapid movement of the horse. A very famous example is the bronze statue.

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65 Pirazzoli-t’Serstevens, 1982, p. 232, fig. 157. The terracotta horse is 39 cm long and is dated to the 2nd century BC — 2nd century AD.
66 The Tsui Museum of Art, 1993, pl. 17. The terracotta horse is 57 cm high, and has been dated to the Western Han period (206 BC — 9 AD).
67 Christie’s, 1997, p. 57, pl. 13, lot 443.
69 Maenchen-Helfen, 1957, pp. 95-96, fig. 12.
of the pacer-horse from Leitai, Gansu Province (Eastern Han Dynasty)\textsuperscript{70}. Sometimes there is something like a plume “flying” behind the rider, for instance, on the pottery tiles from the Sichuan Province (Eastern Han Dynasty) with a depiction of mounted Hsiung-nu huntsmen armed with bows\textsuperscript{71}.

On the Orlat plate with the hunting scene flying tassels are engraved behind two riders (pl. VII: 2). Tassels are attached to the saddle (with short cords?), on the left side of the horses and each horse has only one tassel. Tassels are depicted with thin lines, it looks as if they were made from hair, for example horsehair, and clipped to lend them the necessary shape. The middle part of the tassels is covered by a ribbon (so that they keep their shape\textsuperscript{72}). Made this way a tassel would be very light and rise in the air when a horse moved quickly, as in the “flying gallop” depicted on the plate\textsuperscript{73}. Behind the rider in the bottom register we do not find a tassel, but something else, that is diamond-shaped. This object is engraved with oblique, not horizontal lines. Perhaps it is a piece of a cloth fluttering in the wind as the horse gallops along.

Tassels on long cords or straps are depicted on both the Takht-i Sangin plates. In spite of the horse’s flying gallop, the tassel is shown hanging at a slight angle backwards from the vertical line. Each horse has only one tassel, hanging on the side opposite the viewer\textsuperscript{74} (pl. VI: 1, 2).

Two tassels are depicted in the above-mentioned scene of the sacrifice offered to Iarhibol in Dura-Europos. One of the tassels is “flying” despite the slow movement of the horse, while the other is hanging down at a slight angle (pl: VIII: 4). Both tassels are shown on the right side of the horse, which is reminiscent of the “troichatka” from the 1st Pazyryk barrow. Two flying tassels are shown in the depiction of the mounted archer from the N8 quarter in Dura-Europos\textsuperscript{75}.

The largest number of depictions of tassels is to be found in Sasanian official art. There are rock-reliefs, graffiti, toreutics. In these images the

\textsuperscript{70} The Great Treasury, 1988, p. 92, No. 148.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., p. 86, No. 131.
\textsuperscript{72} There is a cross-band similar to the Orlat bands on the tassel depicted on the Ordos belt-buckle with fighting warriors.
\textsuperscript{73} Such tassels are not depicted in the battle scene: the harness of the battle-horses is decorated with small tassels attached to round plaques linking the straps of the head harness (pl. VII: 1).
\textsuperscript{74} Litvinsky, 2001, pp. 140, 143, fig. 6.
\textsuperscript{75} Goldman, 1999, pp. 24, 28, A.6.
way tassels are depicted depends on how the horse is moving: they can hang almost vertically\(^76\) or fly behind the rider.

**Horse-trappings and problems of interpretation of plates from Orlat and Takht-i Sangin**

Details of horse-trappings were used for some late dates of bone plates from Orlat and Takht-i Sangin\(^77\). Careful study of these details allows us to turn our attention to such interesting finds once more. In an article published in 1998 we attempted to analyse the function and date of the Orlat plates and to describe specific features of the depictions, in particular of the range of weapons\(^78\). One of the main questions, namely the problem of dating, has been mentioned by me since then as well\(^79\). Interest in the Orlat plates is not fading and in recent years several studies have been published, in which many questions have been discussed including the dating of the plates\(^80\). In a number of works the Orlat plates are mentioned briefly or used as examples to substantiate opinions of various authors\(^81\). Yet, despite the abundance of publications specialists still do not agree on the dating and function of the plates. All this explains the need to study the question once more. I intend to analyse briefly not only new publications, but also the old ones which I did not use when writing my first article.

\(^{76}\) Herrmann, 1969, pp. 70-71, 73, 76, 77, 85, 88, figs. 4, 6-10, pls. Ia, IV, VIa, VIIIa, XIIa, XVIa; Hinz, 1969, pls. 69, 69a, 71-73, 76, 77, 106; Trümpelmann, 1975, pl. 1, 7; Calmeyer, 1976, figs. 3, 4, pl. 14: 2; Herrmann, 1977, p. 7, pls. 1, 2b, 3, fig. 1; Herrmann, 1981, figs. 1-3; Herrmann, 1983, pl. 1, fig. 1; Vanden Berghe, 1983, figs. 8, 11, pls. 18, 20-22, 25, 28, 30, 33, 37; Herrmann, MacKenzie, 1989, p. 16, text fig. 1-4, fig. 1, pl. 9; Harper, Meyers, 1981, pp. 77-79, pls. 9-11, 15, 17, 18, 20-23, 25, 26, 28, 30, 32.

\(^{77}\) Tanabe, 1990, pp. 55-58; Litvinsky, 2001, pp. 150-152.

\(^{78}\) Ilyasov, Rusanov, 1998, pp. 107-159.

\(^{79}\) Ilyasov, 2001, p. 17-30.


B. Brentjes was the first scholar after G.A. Pugachenkova to dedicate specialist publications to the Orlat (Kurgan-tepe) plates\(^82\). He was also the first to write about covered horse-tails (in an article appearing in 1989)\(^83\). B. Brentjes considers that the plates should be dated to about AD 200 and that they are “the first depictions of Central-Asian Huns”. Some of his comments, for instance, about the non-Iranian character of the representation of the horse with its head turned back, were rightly criticized by V.E. Maslov\(^84\). Adding to his arguments I should like to note that similar depictions are also to be found in Scythian (more precisely Graeco-Scythian)\(^85\) and Sasanian\(^86\) depictions of horses. Discrepancies regarding the dating of the Orlat plates as presented in B. Brentjes’ monograph dedicated to the weapons of the Sakas and other Central-Asian tribes are astonishing\(^87\). Dates for the plates and Barrow 2, where they were found, fluctuate from the 3rd-2nd centuries BC (date of Barrow 2 on p. 30) through the 2nd-1st century BC (plate with a battle scene, p. 62 and caption for pl. X) to the 3rd-4th century AD (sword from Barrow 2, caption for pl. IX). Given that one and the same range of material is under discussion, it is not clear how B. Brentjes could date it or how these dates could correlate with his publications of 1989-90. Perhaps it is a question of misprints and insufficient proof-reading, though already in the article published in 1993 one can find the 3rd-2nd century BC as an unsubstantiated date for the Orlat barrow 2\(^88\).

The idea that the Orlat plates should be dated to the 3rd-4th century AD and represented the Hephthalites was proposed by M.V. Gorelik\(^89\). This

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\(^85\) Silver gilded vessel from the Solokha barrow, 4th century BC, see: Scythian Art, 1987, Nos. 158, 159; Schiltz, 1994, Abb. 332.
\(^86\) Silver gilded vessel from a private New York collection (the former Fabricius collection) see.: Harper, Meyers, 1981, pp. 77-79, pl. 26; Marschak, 1986, p. 27, fig. 9; and also silver vessel from the Tenri Museum collection (Nara, Japan): Tanabe, 1987, fig. 1.
\(^87\) Brentjes, 1996.
\(^88\) Brentjes, 1993, p. 43.
\(^89\) Gorelik, 1993, p. 159 (however, in caption to fig. 2 4th century BC is indicated); Idem, 1995, pp. 403-404. Recognizing the Orlat warriors as Hephthalites, one may consider that the major problem regarding the origin of the Hephthalites has been conclusively resolved in favour of the Central Asian, and not the Badakhshan theory. There are too many Chinese (particularly from the Han period) parallels for the iconography of the Orlat images.
interpretation gave rise to serious objections on my part. First of all, I do not accept that the armament complex of the warriors from the “Painter’s cave” in Kyzyl (pl. IX: 1) is “nearly identical” to the Orlat one.\(^90\) The Orlat warriors do not have any “pèlerine” or scale-armour sleeves, which the Kyzyl warriors have. The figured plates which covered the skirts of the Kyzyl riders (plates of type 6 according to M.V. Gorelik\(^91\)) are similar to the cover of Penjikent armour, but in no way to the Orlat armour. The warriors from the “Painter’s cave” in Kyzyl have different-shaped helmets (they are almost conical in shape with a flap extending downwards over the nape of the neck and also covering the ears) with figured terminals, some of which are zoomorphic: in one instance a plumage was depicted attached to the end of a long shaft and some of the helmets had no terminal.\(^93\) They also have bow-cases of a different construction, which M.V. Gorelik described as a “tube-like case for arrows with a narrow curved case for a bow without a bow-string sewn on at the side”\(^94\). Kyzyl swords have a broad straight guard and disc-shaped pommels and they were carried using a scabbard slide, like the Orlat swords (pl. IX: 1, 3). Yet, the Kyzyl swords are an example of a further stage in the evolution of swords of the Orlat type. They appeared in Eurasia “at the time of the Great Migration of the Peoples and were particularly widespread in Europe in the 5th-7th centuries” as aptly noted by M.V. Gorelik.\(^95\) A classical example of such a sword is provided by the 5th-century sword from Altussheim (South-west Germany) with a massive rectangular guard with cloisonné style decoration\(^96\) (pl. IX: 8). Incidentally, this sword’s scabbard had a tip (chape) which is made from the re-used lapis-lazuli guard of a typical Chinese shape (similar to Orlat guards)\(^97\). I should also like to mention the sword from Dmytrivka (in the Zaporozhye region of the Ukraine) and the sword from the 5th-century Alanian burial on Lermontov’s Rock (North

\(^{90}\) Gorelik, 1995, p. 404.

\(^{91}\) Ibid., p. 418.

\(^{92}\) Belenizki, 1980, pp. 80, 82, 109; see also the armour of warriors on the 7th-century Sogdian silver dish from Kulagsh: Marschak, 1986, pp. 284-286, fig. 198.

\(^{93}\) Gorelik, 1995, p. 423, pl. 54: 1, 2.

\(^{94}\) Ibid., p. 378, pl. 46: 2.

\(^{95}\) Ibid., p. 389.


\(^{97}\) Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, pp. 236, fig. 10A.
Caucasus region)\textsuperscript{98} (pl. IX: 6, 7). A sword with a long grip and guard similar to the Kyzyl ones is held by King of Kings Khusrav II (591-628) depicted on a silver dish with a throne scene (from the Hermitage collection)\textsuperscript{99}. Even for non-specialists in the field of ancient arms and armour it must be clear that there is little similarity between the Orlat and Kyzyl ranges (if we do not take into account the obvious fact of their common origin)\textsuperscript{100}. They reflect different stages in the development of weaponry and there are no cogent arguments for assuming, like M.V. Gorelik, that “the whole range of weaponry is almost identical: distinctions are only a question of phases, and they are very short — 50-100 years”\textsuperscript{101}. Equally dubious is his categorical assertion that the Orlat (Kurgantepe) plate can be “dated quite reliably to the 3rd-4th century”\textsuperscript{102}. It is not clear — by whom and why? K.I. Retz and Yui Su-Hua aptly noted with every justification concerning Gorelik’s opinion regarding the similarity between Orlat depictions and those from Kyzyl and Tepsei: “The observed similarity is established beyond doubt, and it can be explained not by the chronological proximity of the depictions, but by the long existence of the tradition for manufacturing armour, which can be traced back to the middle of the I millennium BC”\textsuperscript{103}. These authors believe that on the Orlat plates K’ang-chü armour and helmets have been depicted dating from the time of the struggle between Jïjï (Chih-chih) Shan-yü of the Hsiung-nu and Han forces (36 BC).

Highly controversial opinions on the dating of the Orlat plates have been expressed by S.A. Yatsenko. While in his articles dedicated to Sarmatians (one of which was written together with M.Y. Treister) he mentioned the first centuries AD\textsuperscript{104}, in a recent work dedicated to costume in Eastern Turkestan another quite different date was suggested — the 4th-5th centuries\textsuperscript{105}. The reason for such a shift in the author’s view is not

\textsuperscript{98} Lebedynsky, 2001, p. 121.
\textsuperscript{100} It is very clear from the illustration in Gorelik’s article, where he shows warriors from the “Painter’s Cave” and Orlat together, see: Gorelik, 1993, p. 152, fig. 2.
\textsuperscript{101} Gorelik, 1995, p. 404.
\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., p. 404.
\textsuperscript{103} Retz, Yui Su-Hua, 1999, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{104} Yatsenko, 1992, pp. 79-80; Yatsenko, 2000, p. 88, note 11, p. 90; Treister, Yatsenko, 1998, pp. 64, 65.
\textsuperscript{105} Yatsenko, 2000a, p. 361.
explained. We find a reference to articles by M.V. Gorelik and P.P. Azbelev (who drew parallels between the Orlat and Tepsei depictions106). Yet M.V. Gorelik “confidently dates” the Orlat plates to the 3rd-4th and not the 4th-5th centuries. Earlier in this article I have examined Gorelik’s line of argument which is unconvincing in my opinion. I have also made clear my opinion about Azbelev’s dating and interpretation107. In his recent two articles S.A. Yatsenko referred to the article D.V. Rusanov and I had written criticizing the idea of a battle between the K’ang-chü and Yüeh-chih depicted on the Orlat plate108. So as to avoid the false impression that this is our opinion, I stress that on the page in question we had outlined Y.A. Zadneprovsky’s opinion, which we immediately preceded to refute there and then109. In general, I should note that the images depicted on the Orlat plates can with every justification be used to add weight to the theory of the Central-Asian origin of the Alans which is energetically defended by S.A. Yatsenko and T.A. Gabuev110.

M. Mode dates the Orlat plates to the 2nd-4th centuries AD and thinks they depict the Hsuing-nu111. It is to be assumed that in this matter he simply follows B. Brentjes’ opinion. E. Istvanovits and V. Kulcsar consider that the Orlat plate with the battle scene “because of its size and shape, is likely to have served as a bag cover”112 — an opinion that lacks any foundation. Other equally groundless definitions have been put forward: for instance, “appliqués de carquois”113. Most specialists agree that the Orlat plates were used as belt-buckles. This opinion was first suggested by us in 1991, but taking into account the character of the publication, no detailed argument was provided114. This has subsequently been confirmed in publi-

111 Mode, 1997, p. 546. His attempt to specify how the scabbard slide was attached to the scabbard of Kanishka’s sword on well-known statue seems to me not very successful.
113 Les arts, 1999, p. 97, figs. 135, 136 (the photograph of the plate with a battle scene on p. 96 in this book is the wrong way round).
114 See my explanatory text “Orlat burial ground” and my and D. Rusanov’s annotations in the catalogue “Culture and Art of Ancient Uzbekistan” (Moscow, 1991, pp. 176-178), and also our annotations in the catalogue “Antiquities of Southern Uzbekistan” (Tokyo, 1991, pp. 306-307). Thus, V.E. Maslov is not entirely correct in attributing the
cations by a number of other authors\textsuperscript{115}. Significant materials from China and Korea were published by Sun Ji. In his article one can find paired belt-buckles which are similar in shape to Orlat belt-buckles, as well as suspended shield-shaped elements\textsuperscript{116} (pl. X: 1, 2).

In my opinion, K.A. Alimov and G.I. Bogomolov were not successful in their attempt to use the Orlat depictions as parallels\textsuperscript{117}. A sword with a round pommel and straight guard found in the barrow near Achamaili Village (Tashkent Province) (pl. IX: 4) undoubtedly links in with swords with metallic disc-shaped tops on their hilts and a straight guard from Liavandak and Agalyksai (pl. IX: 5) burial mounds (the Bukhara and Samarkand areas within Sogdiana) as aptly noted by the authors\textsuperscript{118}. Yet the statement that the sword of a warrior depicted in the top left corner of the Orlat battle plate “is almost a direct parallel for the Achamaili sword” seems to me incorrect. This rather inappropriate comparison of the Agalyksai and Liavandak swords with the Orlat swords had already been made by other authors\textsuperscript{119}. It was repeatedly noted that Orlat warriors had horsemen’s swords of the Chinese type. First of all this is indicated by the typical Chinese shape of the guard already known from the bronze swords, cast in a similar mould, of the Eastern Zhou era, dated to the end of the 5th or beginning of the 4th century BC. In the Han era they were made detachable and fashioned mainly from bronze and nephrite\textsuperscript{120}. These guards are depicted in the engravings on the Orlat plates very carefully. On the other hand, the guard of the Achamaili sword (like those of the Agalyksai and Liavandak swords) have no saddle grooves or triangular ridges on the side of the blade, which are so characteristic for Chinese and Orlat guards. Detachable disc- or mushroom-shaped pommels and heads of nails hammered into the sword-handles to hold them in place, are also clearly visible on the plates. Although they are engraved with different degrees of detail, there are not “different kinds of

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\textsuperscript{116} Sun Ji, 1994, pp. 50-64, figs. 5: 2, 6: 1-3, 7: 1, 2, 8: 1-3, 11: 1, 2, 12: 1.

\textsuperscript{117} Alimov, Bogomolov, 2000, pp. 166-167, 171-172, fig. 1, 4.

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., p. 171; see: Obelchenko, 1967, p. 185, fig. 3: 1.

\textsuperscript{119} Bernard, Abdullaev, 1997, p. 80.

\textsuperscript{120} Trousdale, 1975, pp. 12, 52, 54-55, figs. 3, 35, 37; Gorelik, 1995, p. 389.
pommels — stepped, bar-shaped and spherical”, as these authors would have us believe\textsuperscript{121}. In the Orlat depictions we do not have a single pommel which is comparable with Achamaili (Agalyksai, Liavandak) pommels. Orlat pommels, as well as scabbard slides and rectangular (trapezoidal) shapes at the end of the scabbard (all of which can be seen on the plate) are typical for Chinese swords of the Han era\textsuperscript{122} (pl. IX: 2). The nephrite guard and scabbard slide, as well as a marble pommel (which were found in Barrow 2 together with the engraved bone plates) confirm the attribution of the Orlat swords. V.E. Maslov suggests that the scabbard from Barrow 2 may have had a nephrite chape before, which was lost while the sword was in use, and this is perfectly possible.

To carry this subject further I shall touch on some questions raised by N.G. Gorbunova, in particular that regarding the date of the Orlat sword or dagger. After incorrectly calling the Orlat guard (which is cut from a single piece of nephrite) an iron guard covered with nephrite plates, she goes on to note that she knows of no swords with such guards found within the territory of the Russian steppes\textsuperscript{123}. It will be recalled, however, that a sword complete with a similar nephrite guard and scabbard slide was found in Barrow 19 of the Sladkov burial ground\textsuperscript{124}. An agate guard of this shape was found in Chersonesus\textsuperscript{125}. Finds of bronze guards of this shape from South Tajikistan, Bashkiria, near the Ishim and Kuban rivers are listed by V.E. Maslov\textsuperscript{126}, these have all been dated to the 1\textsuperscript{st}-2\textsuperscript{nd} centuries AD and are undoubtedly of Chinese origin.

Before moving on to works that are specifically dedicated to Orlat and Takht-i Sangin plates, I shall dwell on an article by B.I. Marshak published

\textsuperscript{121} Alimov, Bogomolov, 2000, p. 171.
\textsuperscript{123} Gorbunova, 2000, p. 47.
\textsuperscript{124} Maximenko, Bezuglov, 1987, p. 183, fig. 2: 1, 2, 7; Ilyasov, Rusanov, 1998, pl. XIV: 6, 7, pl. XV: 5; Maslov, 1999, fig. 1: 4. I should note some discrepancies in information about one and the same finds — in the monograph of V.E. Maximenko this guard and scabbard slide are described as from Barrow 19, and elsewhere as from Barrow 21, see: Maximenko, 1998, pp. 282-283, figs. 74, 79. Yet judging from the main publication (Maximenko, Bezuglov, 1987) and some other publications (Bezuglov, 1988, p. 113; L’Or des Amazones, 2001, p. 246, No. 282), these finds did come from Barrow 19.
\textsuperscript{125} Maenchen-Helfen, 1973, pp. 236, fig. 12; Mode, 1997, fig. 5.
\textsuperscript{126} Maslov, 1999, p. 221. I would add to his list one more article in which one can see a picture of the guard from Barrow 1 of the Seriogino burial-ground in the Trans-Kuban region: Kozhukhov, 1999, fig. 2: 3.
recently in a volume of papers delivered at an international conference entitled “La Sérinde, terre d’échanges” (Paris, 1996). In this article he mentioned the Orlat plates, but usually dated them to the 3rd-4th centuries and makes a habit of not substantiating his point of view\textsuperscript{127}. Perhaps, in the interests of an objective solution for the problem of dating the Orlat plates, it would be very useful if B.I. Marshak, an eminent specialist in the archaeology and ancient art of West Central Asia, would substantiate his own position at greater length. Possibly his authoritative opinion supported by scientific proofs could long ago have put a stop to all discussions and debates on this topic. Yet so far his assertions have been rather unconvincing, alas!

A very detailed and competent analysis of the Orlat warriors’ range of weapons has been published by V.P. Nikonorov and Y.S. Khudyakov. Without dwelling on the obvious merits of this work, I would mention a few points which seem to me disputable. I think that all the archers are armed with asymmetrical bows and not just one\textsuperscript{128}, as the description implies. On the small shield-shaped plate with the depiction of single combat the depiction is of a more diagrammatic nature. Therefore what we have here is a rather “imprecise picture” and not “a single-bladed broadsword with a slightly curved handle”\textsuperscript{129}. One warrior in the drawing on this plate looks bare-footed and yet his feet “have straps round them”\textsuperscript{130}. Careful investigation of the original shows that the plate at this spot is covered with tiny cracks, which the artist, who made the drawing, could have taken for a depiction of toes, so the straps are to hold footwear in place and not wrapped round bare feet. There is no “tassel or any other kind of hanging decoration” at the point where the slide was attached to the scabbard\textsuperscript{131}. It would appear to me to be the loosely hanging end of a sword-belt\textsuperscript{132}. There are no special protective armlets\textsuperscript{133}: on the outside protective plates cover the arms down to the wrist, while on the inside they

\textsuperscript{127} Marshak, 2000, pp. 31, 33, fig. 5. See also: Marshak, 1987, pp. 235-236; Marshak, Raspopova, 1992, pp. 86, 87, 88, 89; Marshak, 1992, pp. 208-211; Marshak, 1996, p. 430.

\textsuperscript{128} Nikonorov, Khudiakov, 1999, p. 144; cf.: Antiquities, 1991, p. 306; Ilyasov, Rusanov, 1998, p. 120, pl. XIII.

\textsuperscript{129} Nikonorov, Khudiakov, 1999, p. 145.

\textsuperscript{130} Ibíd., p. 146.

\textsuperscript{131} Ibíd., p. 145.

\textsuperscript{132} Ilyasov, Rusanov, 1998, p. 117, pl. XIII.

\textsuperscript{133} Nikonorov, Khudiakov, 1999, p. 146.
only reach down as far the elbow-joint\textsuperscript{134}. It is hard to see the “small round shield”\textsuperscript{135} mentioned as being on the original plate. I was unable to make out sheathed horse-tails on the Tepsei plaques\textsuperscript{136}. In general the authors bring out similarities between the Orlat and Tepsei depictions and date the plates to the Hunno-Sarmatian era.

A detailed argument in favour of the 1\textsuperscript{st}-2\textsuperscript{nd} centuries AD as the date for the Orlat plates is proposed by V.E. Maslov. In many points our opinions coincide. Some of his observations complement ours, for example, with regard to the golden threads — remains of brocade\textsuperscript{137}. I find his criticism concerning our opinion that the artisan made a mistake when he engraved the armoured skirt of one of the warriors, definitely justified\textsuperscript{138}. To be precise I should also note that some of his arguments had already been voiced by us\textsuperscript{139}. As far as I know, not four but three small shield-shaped plates go to make up the Orlat belt-set. V.E. Maslov’s statement about similarity in style between depictions of trees on the Orlat hunting plate and in the Buddhist wall-paintings at Kara-tepe coincide with the opinion previously expressed by B. Brentjes\textsuperscript{140}. It should be emphasized that very similar conclusions drawn independently by V.E. Maslov would appear to testify to the clearly objective character of our shared conclusions.

Recently an article was published by B.A. Litvinsky dedicated to a detailed study of the Takht-i Sangin plates\textsuperscript{141}. He pays a good deal of attention to the Orlat plates (comparing the Takht-i Sangin and Orlat plates has already become a traditional practice)\textsuperscript{142}. B.A. Litvinsky profounds a detailed analysis, criticizes opinions voiced previously and expounds his own arguments in favour of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century AD as a date for the Takht-i Sangin and Orlat plates. Yet some points in this remarkable study seem to me debatable. First of all, I doubt that the Takht-i Sangin plates ever

\textsuperscript{135} Nikonorov, Khudiakov, 1999, p. 146.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., p. 147; cf.: Efimov, Pauls, Podolsky, 1995, figs. 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b, 4b, 6a.
\textsuperscript{137} Maslov, 1999, p. 226.
\textsuperscript{139} For instance, for discussion of the dagger fastened to the hip, some features of the armour and parallels for the Saksanokhur belt-buckle, see: Maslov, 1999, pp. 222, 227; cf.: Ilyasov, Rusanov, 1998, pp. 115, 116, 127.
\textsuperscript{140} Brentjes, 1990, p. 178.
\textsuperscript{141} Litvinsky, 2001, pp. 137-166.
served as the covering for a casket. We have already expressed our suggestion that they are belt-buckles: they are similar to the Tulkhar bone belt-buckles as regards their slightly trapezoidal shape and size (the Takhti Sangin plate measures 21.2 x 6.2-6.4 cms and the Tulkhar plate 20 x 6 cms). Bone belt-buckles were found in situ in Barrow II, 7 in the Tulkhar burial-ground (South Tajikistan)\textsuperscript{143}. V.E. Maslov supported our suggestion\textsuperscript{144}. Unfortunately, all that remains of the left-hand plate, which usually served as a clasp and had an aperture through which the belt-end could be passed, is a fragment. This means we are unable to say anything definite about its function.

I also consider that the description of the horse-tails is incorrect. B.A. Litvinsky thinks that on the whole plate the horse-tail “is twisted in a braid at its base”, while “on the fragmentary plate the tail of the right horse is twisted, and that of the left is tied up and finishes with a small bow”\textsuperscript{145}. As pointed out above, in contrast to what are, unfortunately, rather inaccurate drawings, the photographs in Litvinsky’s article show very clearly that three of the four horses depicted on the two plates have covered tails (pl. VI: 1, 2).

It seems to me that all that is hanging from the belt of the Takht-i Sangin huntsman on the right is a bow-case, which — like the Orlat one — consists of several parts, while no sword sheath is visible. The huntsmen’s only weapons are bows and arrows and in this respect they are just like Orlat hunters\textsuperscript{146}. I do not really understand why attention is focussed on the position of the hands of the rider on the fragmented plate depicted in the pose of the so-called “Parthian shot”. His bow is held “not in his right, but in his left hand”\textsuperscript{147} merely because that would be the normal practice for any Bowman, except a left-handed person.

Apparently by chance a dating of the Orlat plates to the 2\textsuperscript{nd}-1\textsuperscript{st} centuries BC has been attributed to me\textsuperscript{148}, although in the cited publication the reference was to the 1\textsuperscript{st}-2\textsuperscript{nd} centuries AD\textsuperscript{149}.

\textsuperscript{143} Mandelshtam, 1966, pp. 29, 114-115, pl. XLVI; Ilyasov, Rusanov, 1998, p. 109, pl. VI: 1, 2.
\textsuperscript{144} Maslov, 1999, p. 225.
\textsuperscript{145} Litvinsky, 2001, pp. 138, 143.
\textsuperscript{146} B.A. Litvinsky writes about the scabbard: Ibid., p. 140, fig. 8. G.A. Pugachenkova also wrote about the sword of the Takht-i Sangin hunter: Pugachenkova, 1989, p. 102.
\textsuperscript{147} Litvinsky, 2001, p. 143.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., p. 146.
\textsuperscript{149} Culture and Art, 1991, p. 176-178.
While supporting in general K. Tanabe’s opinion that the depiction of the tassels on the plates reflects the influence of Sasanian royal iconography, B.A. Litvinsky correctly suggests that, judging from the Firuzabad rock-relief, tassels could have been included in the standard range of a Parthian warrior’s accoutrements. Yet he does not claim this categorically, because the sculptor might have depicted these tassels “only as a sign of royal dignity familiar to Iranians”. It will be recalled that the Firuzabad relief, dating from the first third of the 3rd century, depicts the victory of Ardashir I and Prince Shahpur over the last Parthian king Artabanus V and possibly his son (or Grand Vizier Darbendan). The horse of King Artabanus falling with its rider is decorated with one tassel. This fact demonstrated clearly that the Parthians used to decorate their horses with tassels. The sculptor has carefully depicted the corresponding signs (nis-han), as well as the differences between the armour and weapons of the Parthians and Sasanians: their different-shaped helmets, the Parthians’ coat of mail with a skirt consisting of scales or platelets and scale-armour sleeves and the Sasanians’ smooth cuirasses worn over chain-mail. Unlike all the other riders, Artabanus has a quiver with two sections for arrows. Such precision in details allows us to maintain that the tassel was a part of the real trappings of the Parthian ruler’s horse and was not simply added as a whim of the sculptor. Above, I have mentioned tassels that were depicted in Dura-Europos in the period immediately before the Sasanian conquest, when all Iranian features in the art of the city were a Parthian legacy. It would be difficult to take the rider in Parthian costume, sitting on a be-tasselled horse and taking part in the worship of the Syrian god Iarhibol, for a Sasanian ruler or one of his relatives. It is also unclear what the reason was for imitating Sasanian models in a city which was still under Roman rule. As regards the mistakes in the depiction of tassels — allegedly resulting from a misunderstanding of their function, I find this argument somewhat speculative. If contemporary scholars have

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151 Herrmann, 1969, p. 73; Gall, 1990a, p. 20-30, fig. 3, pls. 5-8.
152 Gall, 1990a, p. 23.
153 As G. Herrmann writes: “a ‘balloon’ flies up behind his (Artabanus — J. I.) horse and we can therefore assume that the use both of devices and of balloons was common Parthian practice”, see: Herrmann, 1969, p. 73.
been able to understand the purpose of tassels, ancient artists (sculptors, engravers, etc.) would also have been able to understand this not very complex matter. Two tassels or only one, on which side it (or they) hung, whether they were “flying” as the horse galloped along or simply swinging sideways a little — all this apparently depended on the material which was used for making the tassels according to various traditions and the way they were used to adorn horses. Incidentally, it may well be that single tassels are depicted in the Sasanian graffiti at Persepolis. In any case, one of the riders depicted there has a tassel which is hanging on the side opposite the viewer, just as on the Takht-i Sangin plates156. We know of some cases when provincial craftsmen of the Sasanian period ‘misunderstood’ the ‘flight’ of tassels. Tassels are shown flying even when horses are not depicted bounding forward with the speed of wind, but reined in157. Tassels are depicted in pairs in all instances. The craftsman knew well what he was depicting, but possibly deliberately disregarded some of the laws of physics, so as to lend additional “royal” splendour to his compositions.

Returning to the article of B.A. Litvinsky, I must note that comparing the chains of phalerae, which decorate the cruppers of the Orlat horses, with the phalerae of the Sasanian horses158 does not seem to me very convincing. In all the Sasanian depictions which I have seen in publications (rock-reliefs, toreutics, gems), phalerae decorate chest- straps and cruppers in virtually identical numbers. In usual profile depictions, for instance, one can see 2-4 phalerae on a chest-strap and haunch-strap (in the reliefs of Ardashir I, Shapur I and Varahran I from Naqsh-i Rustam, Darabgard, Naqsh-i Rajab and Bishapur159, on one of the gems160 and on a silver dish with Shapur II’s hunt from the Hermitage Museum161). As I mentioned above, Orlat horses have phalerae only on haunch- straps, and the closest

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156 Calmeyer, 1976, Abb. 3.
157 A dish from Kerchevo (Hermitage) with Kushanshah Varahran hunting boars, a dish from the British Museum with Varahran V during a lion-hunt and a dish from a private collection (New York) with Yezdigerd II defeating a bull. P.O. Harper linked those dishes together in group III: it seems that they were produced in provincial workshops (Merv?) of the 4th-5th centuries, see: Harper, Meyers, 1981, pp. 72-81, 136, pls. 23, 25, 26; Marschak, 1986, p. 428, figs. 6, 7, 9.
159 Herrmann, 1969, figs. 4, 8, 10; Idem, 1980, text fig. 1; Idem, 1981, figs. 2, 3.
160 Ghirshman, 1962, figs. 211, 295.
parallel for these is provided by phalerae depicted on a Saksanokhur gold buckle dating from the 1st-2nd centuries\textsuperscript{162}.

The hair of the Takht-i Sangin hunters gathered in at the nape of the neck can be compared not just with Sasanian haircuts\textsuperscript{163}; one can recall other examples, one on a gold plaque with a depiction of Scythian archers standing back to back as they shoot their arrows (Kul-Oba, 4th century BC)\textsuperscript{164}, the above-mentioned belt-buckles decorated with boar-hunting scenes from the Siberian collection to the Saksanokhur buckle and the so-called “anecdotal plaques” of the Hsiung-nu\textsuperscript{165}. So we cannot be sure that “this detail of the coiffure expresses Sasanian influence”\textsuperscript{166}.

It should be noted that crenelated manes and scabbard slides are also to be found on the Orlat plates. There is only a crenelated mane on the Takht-i Sangin plates, because “hunting Bactrians” do not have any swords. It is not necessary to repeat O. Maenchen-Helfen’s observations about the style of mane-trimming and its spread. It is, however, worth noting the opinion recently published by P. Bernard and K. Abdullaev to the effect that “special uncut long hanks of mane were used, probably for making jumping on to a horse easier. In any case, the rider on the Pazyryk carpet is holding on by just such a hank”\textsuperscript{167}. It seems to me that a hank of mane really can help a horseman mount, but only if it was retained in the lower part of the mane (near the withers)\textsuperscript{168}. Yet, a hank which is left untrimmed in the upper part of the neck, as in the case of one of the Takht-i Sangin horses, could hardly be of use here. This would apply even more to the crenelated manes of the Orlat horses taking part

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{162} Ilyasov, Rusanov, 1998, p. 127; see also: Maslov, 1999, pp. 226, 227; Nikonorov, Khudiakov, 1999, p. 147.
\item \textsuperscript{163} Litvinsky, 2001, pp. 153-154.
\item \textsuperscript{164} Scythian Art, 1987, No. 199; Schiltz, 1994, p. 180, fig. 130.
\item \textsuperscript{165} Bunker, 1978, pp. 124-125, pls. 3b, 4a; Maslov, 1999, p. 226.
\item \textsuperscript{166} Litvinsky, 2001, p. 154.
\item \textsuperscript{167} Bernard, Abdullaev, 1997, p. 81. It is not a new idea. A similar opinion about the Pazyryk depiction was expressed by F. Hancar in 1956 and was criticized by O. Maenchen-Helfen in 1957. The latter believed that the rider was holding an upside-down rhyton (Maenchen-Helfen, 1957, p. 126). J. Haskins, in his turn, wrote that the Pazyryk rider was holding a horse-reins (Haskins, 1961, p. 159). I consider the latter opinion to be correct.
\item \textsuperscript{168} One can see similar hanks in the composition with the Amazon thrown from her horse on identical Scythian gold scabbards of the 4th century BC found in the Chertomlyk Barrow and the Elizavetino burial-ground, see: Scythian Art, 1987, No. 221; L’Or des Amazones, 2001, pp. 120-121, No. 88.
\end{itemize}
in battles and hunting\textsuperscript{169}. These “juts” can be of no more help for climbing on to a horse, than, for instance, the horse’s ear. A crenelated mane was a kind of decoration which arose as a distinctive sign and was connected with an ancient tradition of Central Asian (Yüeh-chih?) origin. O. Maenchen-Helfen has written about it in detail.

In our first article we devoted more attention to scabbard slides\textsuperscript{170}. It is necessary, however, to return to some points here. B.A. Litvinsky considers that the nephrite scabbard slide from Barrow No. 2 at Orlat does not belong anywhere in the classification of Chinese scabbard slides: it was made outside China and was obviously not as old as the Chinese ones\textsuperscript{171}. Yet in the book by W. Trousdale, a recognized specialist in this field, an undecorated scabbard slide was published, which had been made in some outlying region of China and dated back to the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century BC. A number of undecorated nephrite scabbard slides exist which date from the Han period: W. Trousdale classifies them as belonging to the category of undecorated Chinese scabbard slides\textsuperscript{172}. So, if a scabbard slide is undecorated, this alone does not give us grounds for a later dating. According to W. Trousdale, a very important feature for distinguishing authentic Han scabbard slides and later imitations are the proportions of the upper and lower hooks and the correlation of their height to the height of the central aperture. Without touching on details, since we have already written on this subject\textsuperscript{173}, it is as well to recall that the Orlat scabbard slide cannot be regarded as a late imitation, when it possesses these features. The 2\textsuperscript{nd}-1\textsuperscript{st} century BC scabbard slide from Tompak-asar (in the lower reaches of the Syr Darya) which was mentioned by B.A. Litvinsky and is undeniably a Chinese scabbard slide from the 1\textsuperscript{st}/2\textsuperscript{nd}-century AD burial at Roshava-Dragana (Bulgaria) which he did not mention, eloquently indicate that scabbard slides which are made

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\textsuperscript{169} The trapezoidal ‘jut’ decorating the mane of the Orlat hunter’s horse in the upper register is very similar to those on the manes of two horses depicted on a gold pendant incrusted with turquoise from female burial No. 3 at Tillya-Tepe. These horse-protomes also have a long hank between the ears and are shown at an unusual ‘three-quarter’ angle, just like the mountain rams pursued by Orlat hunters, see: Baktrisches Gold, 1985, p. 246. pls. 40, 41. It should be recalled that in the same grave aureus of Tiberius which was minted between AD 16 and 21, was found, see: Koshelenko, Sarianidi, 1992, p. 23; Zeymal, 1999, p. 240.

\textsuperscript{170} Ilyasov, Rusanov, 1998, pp. 117-118, 121-123, 126-127, pls. XIV-XVI.

\textsuperscript{171} Litvinsky, 2001, p. 148.

\textsuperscript{172} Trousdale, 1975, pp. 122-124, fig. 12, pl. 1a.

\textsuperscript{173} Ilyasov, Rusanov, 1998, pp. 122-123.
within China or its borderlands started to reach Western Central Asia and territory even further West long before the 3rd century AD. B.A. Litvinsky has mentioned a fragment of a nephrite scabbard slide, which was found by A.V. Sedov in a level of the 3rd-4th (or 4th-5th) century at Ak-tepe (Southern Tajikistan)\textsuperscript{174}. This fragment, however, is of no functional use and could have been preserved as a piece of a beautiful and rare mineral for as long as anyone pleased.

Some words concerning a “flying gallop” would be appropriate at this stage. After accepting H. von Gall’s view that this motif is of Chinese origin and was adopted by Sasanian Iran via Central Asia, B.A. Litvinsky believes that the depictions of horses in a flying gallop on the Takht-i Sangin and Orlat plates might have appeared as the result of the influence of both Chinese and Sasanian prototypes. On the basis of certain details (unfortunately he does not specify which) B.A. Litvinsky opts for the Sasanian source\textsuperscript{175}. The choice, however, is not a straightforward one. After studying the motif of the flying gallop, scholars came to the conclusion that two main varieties of this motif should be distinguished from each other. In one case the lower surface of the hind hooves of horses and other ungulate animals is turned upwards (up-flipped hooves), while in the other this surface is perpendicular or at an angle of less than 90° to the ground surface (down-turned hooves). The first variety is associated with Han China and its nomadic neighbours, while the second can be seen on Graeco-Persian gems of “mixed style” (end of the 5th — beginning of the 4th century BC), on the frequently mentioned “Parthian” depictions from Dura-Europos and in Sasanian art\textsuperscript{176}. From this point of view the flying gallop on the Orlat hunting plate and that on the Takht-i Sangin plate differ. On the Orlat plate the horse and all the pursued animals are represented in a “Chinese” up-flipped gallop\textsuperscript{177}, while on the Takht-i Sangin plates the picture is more complex. Three of the four horses are depicted in an “Iranian” flying gallop with down-turned hooves, while the horse of the rider on the right and all the pursued animals on the intact plate are depicted in a


\textsuperscript{175} Litvinsky, 2001, p. 154-155.

\textsuperscript{176} Jaffe, 1983, pp. 187, figs. 9, 10, 13, 19, 22, 23, 28; Bunker, 1978, p. 123.

\textsuperscript{177} Maslov, 1999, p. 228.
“Chinese” gallop. On the Orlat plate the hind legs of horses and pursued animals are shown apart, as in the Chinese depictions and on the Siberian belt-buckles with boar-hunting scenes. On the Takht-i Sangin plates the hind legs are together, one leg is almost hidden behind the other. The hind legs of animals were depicted in this way in Iran and early medieval Sogdiana, while in Syria both variants can be found. A feature which sets apart the Takht-i Sangin depictions is that the forelegs of horses and most animals are close together, in contrast to the majority of depictions of the flying gallop, which show forelegs apart. Thus we evidently have a mixture of styles on the Takht-i Sangin plates. Without examining in detail the various opinions about the origin and the spread of the flying gallop motif, let us recall that its

178 In the drawing (Litvinsky, 2001, p. 144, fig. 6) the hind hooves of this horse are shown incorrectly: the lower surface is nearly at right angles to the direction of movement. This detail is shown more correctly in the photograph, where «up-flipped hooves» can be seen (Litvinsky, 2001, p. 141, fig. 4).

179 Sarre, 1925, pls. 86, 87; Albaum, 1975, figs. 17, 18, 20, pls. XXXV, XXXVI; Harper, Meyers, 1981, pls. 8-10, 14, 15, 17, 19, 22, 28, 30, 32, 37; Gall, 1990, fig. 4; Belenizki, 1980, pls. 26, 28, 34, 44, 45, 48; Marshak, Raspopova, 1992, p. 89. One Sasanian gem represents the image of a horse with hind legs apart (Harper, Meyers, 1981, p. 136, fig. 45).

180 Goldman, 1999, pp. 22, 26, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37, 85.

181 See: Rostovtzeff, 1935, pp. 288-293; Rostovtzeff, 1937, pp. 44-56; Jaffe, 1983, pp. 183-200. M.I. Rostovtzeff believed that for Chinese art the motif of the flying gallop was absolutely alien and appeared suddenly in the Han period. It was borrowed by the Chinese from northern nomads. I. Jaffe believes that the flying gallop appears in China earlier and illustrates this view with a bronze vessel from the 1st half of the 5th century BC. Yet, her examples do not convince me. Note should be taken of the findings from the 1st Pazyryk Barrow. These include a wooden mouth guard in the shape of a wild ram and stag, depicted in a pose different from a classical flying gallop only as regards the position of the forelegs. These are bent, and not thrown forward (Griaznov, 1950, pp. 31, 34, figs. 9, 12, pls. IX, XIV: 1; see also: Jettmar, 1964, fig. 89; Schiltz, 1994, fig. 25). Nevertheless, this did not prevent M.P. Griaznov from writing about “figures in flying gallop” (Griaznov, Golomshotk, 1933, p. 41). The hind legs of these animals are in the “classical Chinese” up-flipped position. The same is also true for the running wild rams tattooed on the right leg of the chieftain from the 2nd Pazyryk Barrow (Rudenko, 1961, fig. 22). Finally, we should recall the Siberian belt-buckles with the boar-hunt. All these materials precede the Han period, to which belong not hypothetical but real examples of the Chinese flying gallop motif. Despite all efforts to bring forward the date of the Pazyryk barrows, even the latest of them (Barrows 3, 5 and 6) are given a date no later than the end of the 4th — beginning or middle of the 3rd century BC (Lerner, 1991, p. 12; Kawami, 1991, pp. 18-19; Bunker, 1991, p. 23; Juliano, 1991, pp. 25, 28, Rubinson, 1992, pp. 68-76). This fact testifies in favour of Rostovtzeff’s theory and the motif might be borrowed by the Chinese together with other nomadic innovations. The sword of the hunter on the Siberian buckle (pl. II: 1) looks very
appearance in Sasanian art is linked by H. von Gall with the borrowing of the Chinese motif by way of Central Asia.\textsuperscript{182} The mixed nature of the flying gallop as depicted on the Takht-i Sangin plates does not enable us to see an unquestionable Sasanian influence here. These depictions show us rather the process of the motif's transformation on its way from China — through West Central Asia — to Iran.

Let me sum up my extensive digression into the history of the study and interpretation of the Orlat and Takht-i Sangin plates. I believe that dating them to the 3\textsuperscript{rd} - 4\textsuperscript{th} century — or to be precise the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century — on the basis of comparisons with Sasanian iconography, has no reliable foundation. Above I have tried to point this out with reference to various archaeological materials and iconography. In order to confirm this conclusion I want to compare Orlat and Takht-i Sangin depictions with Sasanian depictions once more:

1. There is little similarity between the lean Orlat horses and monumental heavy Sasanian ones.
2. The Sasanian flying gallop differs from the flying gallop of Orlat and, to some extent, that of Takht- Sangin.
3. I have not found any Sasanian depiction of mouth guards (cheek bars or psalia) with two disc-shaped ends like those depicted on the Takht-i Sangin and Orlat hunting plates.\textsuperscript{183} At the same time, similar mouth

\textsuperscript{182} Gall, 1990, pp. 81-87.

\textsuperscript{183} See, for instance, “the standard Sasanian bridle” of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century in: Herrmann, 1980, p. 38, text fig. 3; see also: Herrmann, 1989, pp. 757-809. Only one Orlat battle-horse has a so-called “propeller-shaped” psalia, typical for Sasanian depictions. Yet, such mouth guards are depicted on the 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD silver vessel from Kosika Barrow: they were also found in Ai-Khanum and in the 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD layer at Sirkap (see: Treister, 1994, pp. 189-190, fig. 7; Idem, 1997, pp. 61-62). On the Orlat psalia see also: Nikonorov, Khudiakov, 1999, p. 147; Maslov, 1999, p. 226.
guards from wood have been found in the Pazyryk, they are shown on the Siberian buckle with a boar-hunt and, finally, the iron mouth guards with disc-shaped ends decorated with gold and stones were found in the Shaushukum burial-ground (South Kazakhstan) and in Sarmatian (Aorian? Alanian?) burials of the 1st-2nd centuries AD (Zaporozhskii, Sadovyi, Dachi, Barrow No. 10 at Kobiakovo)\textsuperscript{184}.

4. Usually browband discs of the Sasanian horses were decorated with ribbons, and not with tassels like the Orlat horses. A few exceptions have been recorded, as follows: cameo of the 3rd (or 4th) century with a depiction of Shapur I and Valerian (or Shapur II and Iovian) from the collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale (Cabinet des Médailles) in Paris, and also rock-reliefs — Naqsh-i Rustam 3 and 7. All these cheek-tassels differ in shape from the Orlat ones\textsuperscript{185}. Cheek-tassels of a pointed shape similar to the latter are depicted on Siberian and Ordos belt-buckles.

5. Tassels which are attached to the saddle on the Orlat and Takht-i Sangin plates are not double tassels like Sasanian ones, but single.

6. The phalerae of Sasanian horses are symmetrical, while Orlat horses have phalerae only on cruppers.

7. Sasanian horses do not have tail-covers.

8. There are no fluttering ribbons — so popular in Sasanian art — in the Orlat and Takht-i Sangin depictions.

9. There are no wide folded trousers as worn by Sasanian riders.

10. The armour of the Orlat warriors differs markedly from early (Firuzabad relief), as well as from late (Taq-i Bustan) Sasanian armour.

11. Royal Sasanian hunters, even if they pursued herbivorous animals, were always equipped with a sword as well as a bow; Orlat and Takht-i Sangin hunters do not carry swords.

12. Swords in early Sasanian depictions are different from Orlat ones, although they were carried on a scabbard slide; they have a different shape of guard\textsuperscript{186} and chape, not like the “sinicized” swords of the Orlat

\textsuperscript{184} Griaznov, 1950, fig. 14, pl. XVIII: 5; Rudenko, 1953, pl. 66; Shilov, 1983, p. 184, fig. 7; Bespaly, 1992, p. 180, fig. 4; Guguev, 1992, pp. 101-114, fig. 3; Ilyasov, Rusanov, 1998, pp. 135; Maslov, 1999, p. 226; L’Or des Amazones, 2001, pp. 200, 206, Nos. 225, 231.

\textsuperscript{185} Ghirshman, 1962, fig. 195; Gall, 1990, p. 33, fig. 4: a, d, p. 56-59, pl. 19.

\textsuperscript{186} One can find depictions of guards of simplified Chinese (or “sinicized”) shape on the Kushan sculpture (statue of Kanishka I, Gandharan reliefs) (Rosenfield, 1967, fig. 2a; Trousdale, 1975, figs. 46, 50, 55, 56; Mode, 1997, figs. 2, 4a), and also on Palmyrean
horsemen: mushroom-shaped pommels are only rarely encountered\textsuperscript{187}. Sasanian swords are the result of the evolution of the Orlat type swords.

This list of differences should demonstrate fairly convincingly that it would be a profound mistake to discern Sasanian influence in the Orlat and Takht-i Sangin depictions or to base arguments for their dating on such an influence. I do not see any specifically Sasanian features here. I have noted on more than one occasion that the Orlat depictions were executed with scrupulous care. The engraver knew exactly what he was depicting and reproduced all the details very precisely — as far as the miniature size and technical potential of his tools allowed him to do so, of course. My favourite example of an engraver’s precision is the following: the sword-guards which are depicted on the plate with a battle scene and the nephrite guard which was found in the burial together with bone plates are of the same shape. Now we have some new materials available to confirm the engraver’s accuracy. Describing the bow-cases of the Orlat riders we wrote that they consisted of four parts (not three, as many scholars had assumed). Besides two sections for arrows of different lengths and a section for a battle-ready bow, there is another section which was probably used for carrying a bow without a bow-string (in a discharged state)\textsuperscript{188}. We paid attention to the specific shape of the bottom part of this fourth section, which can be clearly seen on the Orlat battle-scene plate. Recently published findings of the Chinese-Japanese joint expedition at Niya (Xinjiang) confirm the high degree of accuracy in the Orlat depictions. In the double burial M8 of the 95MNI necropolis (owing to the dryness of climate) a bow-case very similar to the Orlat ones was found. It has two leather cylindrical sections for arrows of different lengths (one of these sections also has a cylindrical lid fastened on by a small leather strap), a leather bow-case and a figured detail made from some hard material (lacquered leather or wood?) which protrudes at

\textsuperscript{187} Overlaet, 1989, pp. 741-755; Masia, 2000, pp. 188-194, 196-200, figs. 2, 9, pls. 1, 9.
\textsuperscript{188} Ilyasov, Rusanov, 1998, p. 121. V.P. Nikonorov and Y.S. Khudiakov came to the same conclusion: “on the inside of the saadaks (i.e. gorytus. — J.I.) ridges protrude top and bottom. Perhaps, this is a second ‘compartment’ in which an unstrung bow was placed”, see: Nikonorov, Khudiakov, 1999, p. 144.
the bottom\textsuperscript{189}. The latter precisely echoes the shape of the parts of the Orlat bow-case\textsuperscript{190} (pl. X: 3, 4). So, we can with ample justification state that the engraver had depicted on the Orlat plates things which were well-known to him, moreover to a very precise degree. Conversely, we have no grounds for assuming that single flying tassels depicted by him were copied from some Sasanian model or based on hearsay. On a Hephthalite silver bowl from the British Museum features of Sasanian iconography (which was the main source for the style of Hephthalite art) are clearly visible. We find crowns and ribbons, monumental horses and double tassels\textsuperscript{191}. It is worth repeating that none of these features are to be found on the engraved plates.

A silver vessel from the Kosika Barrow ( stylistically this would appear to be the work of a nomad craftsman) shows that pictorial compositions combining battle and hunt scenes on one object were typical in the 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD for Sarmatians (Alans?)\textsuperscript{192}. Plates from the Orlat burial-ground demonstrate a similar combination of the two subjects. On the plates these subjects occupied the left and right parts of a belt set, while on the vessel they are divided between the upper and lower registers\textsuperscript{193}. Taking into account that hunting and war were the most honourable occupations of nomads, it is possible to contemplate the purpose and ideological implications of such subjects\textsuperscript{194}. The date — 2\textsuperscript{nd}-3\textsuperscript{rd} century AD — proposed by

\textsuperscript{189} Excavation, 2000, figs. 25, 28. Burial M8 was preliminarily dated within the wide limits of the Han — Jin periods, “but not later than the Former Liang dynasty” (i.e. between 206 BC and AD 316-376).

\textsuperscript{190} Ibid., p. 40. In the Burial M8 an asymmetrical bow was found which is similar to Orlat bows. However arrows are different — they have flat and diamond-shaped heads. The scabbard of one of the daggers found in this burial was also reminiscent of the depiction of a dagger or knife fastened to the left hip of one of the Orlat warriors (Ibid., figs. 27, 31).


\textsuperscript{192} Dvornichenko, Fedorov-Davydov, 1993, pp. 148-150, fig. 5; Treister, 1994, pp. 179-184, figs. 1, 7-11; Idem, 1997, pp. 58-62, figs. 24, 28-32.

\textsuperscript{193} Yatsenko, 1992, p. 80.

\textsuperscript{194} Marshak, 1992, pp. 208-211; Treister, 1994, pp. 172, 199; Ilyasov, Rusanov, 1998, p. 115; Maslov, 1999, p. 229; Yatsenko, 2000, pp. 86-104. B.A. Litvinsky believed that the real hunting life of the Bactrian nobility was depicted on the Takhti-Sangin plates. He noted very precisely that the animals depicted on the intact plate live in the mountainous regions of Bactria and that the stag-hunt depicted on the fragment of the second plate occurred in some another locality (Litvinsky, 2001, p. 156, 160). On the Orlat hunting-plate riders are pursuing two mountain sheep or argali, three kulans, two stags and a doe (judging by the shape of the large branched antlers they are Bukharan red deer and not roe
H. von Gall for the Kosika vessel, is actually based merely on the assertion that the arrangement of the “pursuit scheme” was a characteristic feature only for Sasanian art of the 3rd century\textsuperscript{195}. Let us recall that the Kosika Barrow was dated to the 1st century AD on the basis of the whole range of finds\textsuperscript{196}, and we should also note the following: a composition representing a “pursuit scheme” has been depicted on the gold object from the Siberian collection of Peter the Great and on the Khalchayan relief, as accurately noted by P. Bernard and K. Abdullaev, who suggested that the origin of composition in which pursuit on horseback is depicted should be sought in the art of the steppe peoples\textsuperscript{197}. A composition of this kind is also to be found in Han China: on an engraved plate from Sunjiacun (upper register) and on the eastern wall of the Xiao Tang Shan Shrine (90-120 AD), where we find, among others, scenes with a rider striking another rider with a lance, who falls from his horse with his arms and legs flung wide\textsuperscript{198}. If the flying gallop, as H. von Gall suggested\textsuperscript{199}, was introduced to Central Asia in the Han era and was not borrowed by Sasanian Persia before the 3rd century, the composition depicting a “pursuit scheme” could have passed down the same route, reaching Sarmatian lands as early as the 1st century AD.

We would suggest that the Orlat and Takht-i Sangin plates should be dated to a pre-Sasanian period, most probably to the 1st-2nd centuries AD. It should also be noted that besides the undeniable similarity between these plates (material, technique, function, subject, realia), there are also some differences. These differences are not the result of chronological factors, but can be explained by the differences between the regions and peoples.

deer, as G.A. Pugachekova suggested). In Western Central Asia these animals represent three different geographical zones: mountains and hills (wild sheep), steppes and semi-deserts (kulans), flood-land forests or tuqai (deer). It is obvious that in reality it was difficult to chase such different animals at the same time. Either each rider is in the appropriate locality and is pursuing animals which are common to this locality, or the hunt takes place within the confines of some special landscape with a rich variety of animals. In both cases this scene cannot be regarded as a straightforward depiction of real life. It is a «magic hunt» (Yatsenko, 2000, pp. 89-90).

\textsuperscript{195} Gall, 1997, p. 179.


\textsuperscript{197} Bernard, Abdullaev, 1997, pp. 69-70.

\textsuperscript{198} Pirazzoli-t’Serstevens, 1982, pp. 169, 170, figs. 94, 96; James, 1988/89, p. 40, fig. 2.

\textsuperscript{199} There is the picture from Xiao Tang Shan in his monograph, see: Gall, 1990, pl. 23: b.
from which the plates stemmed. While the Orlat ones reflect the spirit and style of the art of nomads, who once inhabited the steppe and piedmont regions in the north of Sogdiana, the Takht-i Sangin plates relate to the culture of the already settled Yüeh-chih — Tocharians. I cannot agree with V.E. Maslov, when he writes, following in the footsteps of G.A. Pugachenkova, that the Orlat plates were made “in one of the urban centres”\textsuperscript{200}. The manner, all the stylistic features and objects depicted on these plates are what has come to be associated with the art of nomads. This nomadic spirit could not be felt so deeply and conveyed with such precision by some urban craftsman (no matter how skilful he was). This was well understood by B.I. Marshak, who emphasized that the Orlat plates “reflect not a local, but a Central-Asian artistic tradition of nomads”\textsuperscript{201}. Concerning the Takht-i Sangin plates, I think that here we indeed have the work of an urban craftsman, who had worked for nomads (actually speaking, for former nomads). Hence the artistic features so sensitively discerned by B.A. Litvinsky: “the sharp contrast between the vivid and very precise treatment of the movements of the animals… and… the figures of the riders… depicted rigidly as if they were sitting not on galloping horses, but on immovable thrones”\textsuperscript{202}. Hence the heavy and realistic rendering of the Takht-i Sangin horses, which differed radically from the hyper-elongated proportions of the Orlat ones. Hence also the inescapable formalism reflected in the depiction of the bow-cases and tassels. The former are sometimes on the right and sometimes on the left side of the riders galloping in opposite directions. This means that the artist was aiming to show the bow-case on the side facing the beholder, regardless of how it was actually worn. Tassels, on the other hand, are always shown on the side furthest from the beholder irrespective of the direction in which the rider


\textsuperscript{201} Marshak, 1987, p. 235. Yet it should be noted that this tradition was inherited by Sogdian art. So, in the earliest known Sogdian wall-paintings from Jartepa (4\textsuperscript{th} — the beginning of the 5\textsuperscript{th} century) and also in early paintings from Penjikent (6\textsuperscript{th} century) we find an artistic technique typical for Orlat depictions. In other words, in scenes of hunting on horseback the rapid movement of horses is emphasized by deliberate distortion of their bodies — natural proportions are not observed and they are significantly elongated, which stands out particularly clearly in the Penjikent paintings (Berdimuradov, Samibaev, Grenet, Marshak, 2001, pp. 63-64, fig. 4; Marshak, Raspopova, 1992, p. 84, fig. 6; Marshak, 1996, fig. 1). In numerous Sasanian, as well as later Sogdian hunting scenes distortion of this kind is not found (Marshak, Raspopova, 1992, p. 84; Marshak, 1996, fig. 3).

\textsuperscript{202} Litvinsky, 2001, pp. 141-142.
is moving. In reality, the way weapons are worn and positioned was a question of comfort and rationality and was quite definite (although it could have varied depending upon the period and territory). It seems to me that the difference between the somewhat naïve and exaggeratedly expressive style of the Orlat depictions and the refined and reserved style of the Takht-i Sangin engravings reflects the difference between the nomad and the urban “sedentary” artistic styles (or, in this concrete case, between the art of real nomads and that of settled nomads). It would seem that this difference might be extrapolated to the almost unknown art of K'ang-chü, on the one hand, and, on the other, to that of the neighbouring Kushan Empire, which, in contrast, is known from countless examples. While the former is described in Chinese sources as a “nomad state with customs similar to those of the Ta Yüeh-chih and Yen-ts'ai”, the latter by the 1st-2nd centuries AD embraced Bactria and India and was hardly reminiscent of a “nomad state” any more. Yet some rudiments of the nomadic style of art, as well as some objects of material culture (weapons, clothes) and some traditions (for instance, decorative covers for horse-tails) were still retained in Kushan state. The resemblance between Takht-i Sangin figures and the so-called “relatives and successors of Heraios” from Khalchayan was first noted by G.A. Pugachenkova and acknowledged by B.A. Litvinsky who wrote that “the resemblance actually exists, but it is rather of a general, that is to say of a tribal character, and is connected… with the representation of a narrow ethnic type”. It seems to me that this resemblance allows us to call the Takht-i Sangin motif not “Bactrians out hunting”, but “Tocharians (or Yüeh-chihs) out hunting”, bearing in mind that the physical type of actual Bactrians would be slightly different.

In the Orlat depictions we have a combination of Iranian (in the broad sense of the word) art with very strong elements of the Chinese art of the Han epoch. Where and when could the fusion have taken place of all these

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203 If we assume, like K. Tanabe, that the artisan always showed the tassel on the side furthest from the beholder, because he did not know precisely, where and how it should have been attached (Tanabe, 1990, p. 56-57), we must assume that the artisan was also unaware as to the side on which a bow-case should be carried: yet this would seem highly unlikely.

204 It is precisely in this way — with careful observation of all nuances regarding the arrangement of accoutrements that the Orlat warriors and boar-hunters (Siberian collection) are depicted.


206 As G.A. Pugachenkova had already done in her article «Obrazy yuedzhiytsev i kanguytsev v iskusstve Baktrii i Sogda» (Pugachenkova, 1989a, pp. 101-103).
features, which are so harmoniously depicted on the plates? I suggest that such a synthesis of art forms reflects the complicated political and ethnic processes at work within the territory of K’ang-chü from the second half of the 1st century BC. The bearers of the ancient culture of the Iranian-speaking nomads — the K’ang-chü, whom we — like B.A. Litvinsky — regard as the descendants of the Sakas207, have, to all appearances, at one time or another been subjected to a strong influence from the Hsiung-nu and Wu-sun, who were, in their turn, subjected to the extremely strong influence of the Han Empire. Chinese sources have preserved some information about events which took place in the third quarter of the 1st century BC and at the beginning of the 1st century AD. I mean the activities of the Chih-chih (Jiï) Shan-yü of Hsiung-nu, who found refuge and help in the territory of their ally the K’ang-chü in the fight against the Wu-sun. Despite the small number of warriors who succeeded in reaching the land of the K’ang-chü through a snow-storm — only 3000 horsemen — the Hsiung-nu played a really active part in the internal affairs of the K’ang-chü. Chih-chih Shan-yü and the ruler of K’ang-chü made a treaty with one another and each married the other’s daughter in order to make this treaty more binding. Shan-yü built a fortified capital in the eastern part of K’ang-chü (it is assumed to have been on the Talas River), in which he was crushed and decapitated by the Chinese in 36 BC208. Furthermore, there is information about the resettlement of an 80,000-strong horde of Wu-sun to K’ang-chü in 11 BC, led by their rebelling prince, who was killed by the Chinese (who had supported his brother) in 3 AD.209 Such typical objects of Chinese (or “sinicized”) weaponry, as well as elements of Han iconography (namely, “Chinese” swords, the Chinese variant of the flying gallop, special features in the depiction of horses and kulans noted by V.E. Maslov: a ridge across the eyes to emphasize them, a curved muzzle, pricked ears, etc.)210, could have

207 Litvinsky, 1967, p. 33; Idem, 1968, pp. 14, 109. L. Torday thinks that K’ang-chü of Chinese sources and Asioi/Asiani (a ‘Scythian’ folk) of Strabo and Trogus “have to be the same people, in spite of the different names by which they were known in the west and east”, see: Torday, 1997, pp. 308, 360, 387.


210 Probably, one more similarity with Chinese stylistic features is the resemblance between the “stretched like a string” Orlat hunting-horses and the “hook-nosed” horses spread flat in the air from certain painted pottery vessels of the Early Han period, see: The Tsui Museum of Art, 1993, pl. 11; see also: Sturman, 1988, p. 56, fig. 1a; The Splendor
made their way into K’ang-chü territory just in the course of these events and after a certain time have been superimposed on the earlier Saka base (a generally non-Mongoloid appearance of the warriors and hunters\textsuperscript{211}, Saka armour\textsuperscript{212}, covered horse-tails)\textsuperscript{213}. The result of this synthesis we find in the depictions discovered in one of the barrows near the northern border of Sogdiana. V.E. Maslov also agrees that the symbiosis of Iranian and Han art, which is reflected in the Orlat plates, could have happened within the territory of Sogdiana\textsuperscript{214}. Not all scholars agree that Sogdiana was once part of K’ang-chü\textsuperscript{515}. It should, however, be noted that the Orlat burial-ground was

\textsuperscript{211} It should be noted that the outward appearance of the Orlat figures gives rise to widely differing interpretations. According to G.A. Pugachenkova, “there are no Mongoloid features visible in the faces”, while V.E. Maslov held that the “outward appearance of the Orlat warriors should not be regarded as of a definitely European type”. “Their eyes which are emphasized by lines on both sides, may belong to representatives of a mixed racial type” (Pugachenkova, 1989a, p. 108; Maslov, 1999, pp. 225-226). The latter conclusion seems to me more valid — for example, as early as the 7th-6th century BC the Saka tribes living near the Aral Sea definitely exhibited some Mongoloid characteristics (Yablonsky, 1986, p. 52; Idem, 1998, pp. 39, 41, 44-45). What is important is that both authors (in my opinion, quite correctly) have compared the Orlat warriors and huntsmen with portraits of rulers on the Sogdian coins of the first centuries AD: so-called «coins of Hyrkode» (Pugachenkova, 1989a, p. 108; Maslov, 1999, p. 225; cf.: Mitchiner, 1976, pp. 436-438, types 669, 670, 671, 675, 676).

\textsuperscript{212} In an article by P. Bernard and K. Abdullaev it is suggested that “the bearers of the culture of the Orlat burial ground” might be called Yüeh-chih (Bernard, Abdullaev, 1997, p. 84). Yet, when we compare Orlat and Khalchayan depictions it is easy to see that the Orlat warriors resemble more closely not Khalchayan’s lightly armed Yüeh-chih archers, but the heavily armed warriors from Khalchayan designated as Saka by the same authors (in my opinion, quite correctly; according to G.A. Pugachenkova these Khalchayan warriors were Bactrians). The following fact also prevents us from regarding the Orlat figures as Yüeh-chih. We know that the Orlat plates were found in a barrow with a catacomb of the so-called Liavandak type. Yet among the hundreds of barrows of the 2nd century BC — 2nd century AD excavated in Northern Bactria-Tokharistan, which can be linked with the Yüeh-chih, not a single catacomb has been found (of either the Liavandak or the Kenkol type).

\textsuperscript{214} Maslov, 1999, p. 229.

separated from the vast steppe lands incorporating the middle and the lower reaches of the Syr Darya (no-one would appear to question that these territories were part of the K’ang-chü State\textsuperscript{216}) only by the low Nurata Range. The city-site of Kurgan-Tepe in its foothills (adyr), occupied by barrows of the Orlat burial-ground, was very likely one of the extreme northern Sogdian outposts, intended both to deter the military activity of nomads and for trading with them. The traditional inclusion of these lands in the sphere of nomad culture is confirmed by the fact that this area is still settled today by descendants of the nomad Uzbek tribes\textsuperscript{217}. In the last centuries BC and the first centuries AD this territory was undoubtedly part of K’ang-chü (or was very much under its influence), the most powerful nomad state in this part of Central Asia\textsuperscript{218}. I am totally in agreement with G.A. Pugachenkova regarding her definition — “image of the K’ang-chüs” — and I would only wish to amend her dating slightly in favour of the 1\textsuperscript{st}-2\textsuperscript{nd} centuries AD.

Now for a few words about the archaeological context of the Takht-i Sangin plates. Judging by the fundamental publication of the results obtained from the excavation of the Oxus Temple, the final stage of its functioning falls in the Kushan period. The plates were found in a cluster of cultic objects (No. 3) located on the second floor in Corridor No. 2, at a level 22 and 25 cms above the virgin soil\textsuperscript{219}. It seems to me that the data about the stratigraphy of Corridor No. 2, as well as the whole temple, demonstrates sufficiently clearly that “the following 2 metres of layers (above floors 1 and 1a. — J.I.) should be linked with the Yüeh-chih period and to the heyday of the Kushan period — the reign of Kanishka and Huvishka”\textsuperscript{220}. The total range of the finds of cultic articles in Cluster No. 3, as well as finds of Kushan pottery in Corridor No. 2 — at a level 60 cms above the virgin soil and in the in-fill of the last construction period also point to this date. Further evidence is the fact that among the 379 coins

\textsuperscript{216} Vainberg, 1999, pp. 268, 282.

\textsuperscript{217} In the region in question this is reflected in the names of some settlements, for instance Orlat (more correct would be Arlat), Barlas, Mitan, Alchin, etc., see: Sultanov, 1977, pp. 166, 171, 172, 174; Pugachenkova, 1989, p. 187.

\textsuperscript{218} See materials from the Bulakbashi site which belongs to the Kaunchi archaeological culture and was found in the Koshrabad district: Pugachenkova, 1989, pp. 107-120. The Orlat burial-ground is also situated in this district.

\textsuperscript{219} Litvinsky, Pichikian, 2000, pp. 83-86; Litvinsky, 2001, pp. 142, 144 (here Corridor No. 3 is incorrectly indicated).

\textsuperscript{220} Litvinsky, Pichikian, 2000, p. 97.
found in the course of excavations at the Oxus Temple not a single Sasanian or Kushano-Sasanian coin was found\textsuperscript{221}. This was noted as early as 1990 by K. Tanabe\textsuperscript{222}. As A.P. Kerzum and P.P. Kerzum write, the final stage in the development of the temple complex is represented by two small shrines built on the ruins of the temple and dating back to the late Kushan period according to the pottery finds. These shrines, as well as other architectural remains of the temple, “were damaged by pits sunk from the level of the modern ground-surface, which contained material clearly stemming from the Kushano-Sasanian period. These pits represent the final chapter in the history of Takht-i Sangin\textsuperscript{223}. Since the plates were not found in these late pits, it can be said with certainty that Sasanian influence on the Takht-i Sangin depictions is impossible, as I have tried to demonstrate above through analysis of the iconography. Judging by the find-spot, the Takht-i Sangin plates were an offering brought to the temple (which would be quite logical in the case of a ceremonial belt) no later than the Kushan period.

**Conclusion**

It now remains for me to conclude my investigation. Tassels which are “flying” as result of the rapid movement of horses might have appeared during the evolution of decorative apparel for nomads’ horses\textsuperscript{224}. It is quite possible that they were originally tails of wolves, foxes (or even yaks, as P. Ackermann has suggested\textsuperscript{225}) and that they decorated not only harness but also the clothes of nomads. Tassels made from dyed horsehair had already been used in the Pazyryk complex.

A survey of depictions of horses decorated with tassels attached to their saddles shows that they should be divided into two categories: tassels hanging from short cords (Ordos, Orlat, Dura-Europos) and from long cords (China, Takht-i Sangin, Dura-Europos, Sasanian Iran). The following conclusions can be drawn:

\textsuperscript{221} Litvinsky, Pichikian, 2000, pp. 81, 83-86, 182, 183; Zeymal, 2000, pp. 393-404.

\textsuperscript{222} Tanabe, 1990, p. 55.

\textsuperscript{223} Kerzum A., Kerzum P., 2000, pp. 36-37.

\textsuperscript{224} The emergence of the tassel might have been called forth by intrinsically practical considerations. Using the tassel (which was made, for instance, from horsehair) as a fan to drive away persistent insects should not be omitted from the list (see note 55). In this case one tassel would have been enough.

\textsuperscript{225} Ackermann, 1936, p. 197.
1) tassels which decorated horses were depicted in the art of nomads and in China long before the Sasanian era;

2) double tassels flying behind the rider were represented most clearly of all in Sasanian art.

Yet variants of the latter category can be found among pictures (dipinti) from Dura-Europos. They were depicted within the space of two decades after the fall of the Parthian Empire, but before the Sasanian conquest of the city\textsuperscript{226}. It was a period of Roman rule, when all Iranian motifs in the Syrian borderlands of Rome and Iran derived only from Parthian sources. As B. Goldman writes: “The cavalier in the Iarhibol drawing shows other details of Parthian style that moved from Roman Syria into Sasanian Iran. The plates on the harness straps and the large tassels on chains drawn elsewhere at Dura were continued in use in Sasanian Iran”\textsuperscript{227}. These materials do not allow us to maintain that flying tassels were an innovation of the emergent Sasanian iconography. What can, on the other hand, be established is that this motif was borrowed very early by the Sasanians and became an almost obligatory element in the ceremonial portrayal of Royal Sasanian riders. Examples of the Sasanian variant of this motif on non-Sasanian objects are found on the Hephthalite silver bowl from the British Museum collection, on the Tocharistanian silver jug of the 6\textsuperscript{th}-7\textsuperscript{th} century from Yuldus Village and on an early-Islamic silver bowl with a depiction of a king striking lions with a spear (probably made in a Merv workshop during the years 806-817, as suggested by B.I. Marshak)\textsuperscript{228}.

The examples illustrating the use of tail-covers which I have examined above show us how this custom spread from the Altai Mountains (where it was known from the 4\textsuperscript{th}-3\textsuperscript{rd} centuries BC) and China to the Eastern Crimea and Western Parthia, from Northern Sogdiana to the lands of the Indo-Scythian dynasty of Azes and the Kushan Empire. This territory coincides with the region inhabited by mainly Iranian-speaking nomad tribes whose power extended over a number of settled states in the 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} centuries BC. The exception is China: however this custom had already been adopted there, possibly, at the end of the 4\textsuperscript{th} century BC (or later) together with other elements of nomad equipment and clothes, namely harness, the

\textsuperscript{226} Goldman, 1985, p. 291.
\textsuperscript{227} Ibid., p. 292.
long sword, scabbard slide, leather belt and hook, trousers. With the exception of the unique conditions obtaining in Pazyryk, in all other cases we only have images of tail-covers, which have been described above. The earliest of them are evidently objects from the Siberian collection of Peter the Great (4th-3rd centuries BC), while the latest are, most likely, Dura-Europos depictions which determine the period during which Parthian artistic traditions and, apparently, certain realia were retained under Roman rule (which lasted until AD 256). We can conclude that unlike the crenelated mane and scabbard slide which originated, in all probability, from the same source, tail-covers existed over a short period and disappeared at the time the Sasanian Empire was taking shape. It can be assumed that this practice was found alien or unacceptable for the new emergent style of official Sasanian art, which have borrowed the crenelated mane and the use of tassels. The annihilation of the Parthian Empire and the crushing of the Kushan Empire by Sasanians in the 3rd century, as well the subsequent destruction of the old Saka—Yüeh-chih traditions under the onslaught of Chionites and Hephthalites led to the disappearance of the custom examined here, from Central Asia and other regions in which it had formerly been found. At any rate, depictions of tail-covers from the 4th-5th century and later are unknown to me. There is no conclusive answer to the question concerning the ethnic origin of those who introduced and spread this tradition of tail-covering. I can only put forward some suggestions.

Judging by the fact that the earliest tail-covers were found together with other features of ritual horse-decoration, like masks and mane-covers, we can assume that finds from the 1st Pazyryk Barrow establish the emergence and development of this custom. It gives us grounds for regarding as its inventors and propagators the tribe (tribes?) which left behind Pazyryk Barrows. These barrows are variously attributed to the Scythians, Yüeh-chihs, Massagetae (Greater Getae), Wu-suns, Hsiung-nu and the Arimaspians of Aristaeas. It is obvious that the racial composition of the nomad hordes, which in the 7th-2nd centuries BC lived in the lands between

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230 Judging by numerous terracotta statues of the periods of Northern Wei and Tang, in China also tail-covers were not used after the Han epoch.
Western Central Asia and the Chinese border, was not homogeneous. This can be seen from the physical appearance of the people buried in the Pazyryk Barrows and from data pointing to the markedly Mongoloid features of skulls in Saka burials of the 6th-7th century BC in territories near the Aral Sea and also from the presence of Mongoloid features in the population of Northern Bactria in the last centuries BC and the first centuries AD as visible in anthropomorphic depictions from the territory of Bactria-Tocharistan. I failed to find any reliable depiction of a sheathed horse-tail on objects which can safely be attributed to the Hsiung-nu (Ordos, lands beyond Lake Baikal), so this was clearly not a Hsiung-nu practice (and this is one more argument in support of the view that the Orlat plates do not bear depictions of Hsiung-nu). Thus, the bearers of the tradition investigated here were either Tocharian-speaking (?) Yüeh-chih or some Iranian-speaking tribes known by the common name Saka. It is hard to give preference to any particular one of them. For the present it is impossible to prove that the Pazyryk Barrows belonged to the Yüeh-chih, but the existence of tail-cover depictions in Kushan materials could indicate such a line of succession. On the other hand, Indo-Scythian coins show that this practice was customary for Sakas. It is hard to say to what extent the events of the 2nd century BC (when the Yüeh-chih forced some of the Saka tribes to move south, which in its turn led to the fall of the Graeco-Bactrian Kingdom) furthered the adoption of such practices. Most likely this borrowing took place during the previous period of interaction between the nomadic cultures in the eastern part of the area inhabited by Eurasian nomads. So we can now call this practice a “Saka-Yüeh-chih custom” or, bearing in mind its absence from European Scythia and appearance in Europe only in the 1st century AD (with Alanians?), a “Yüeh-chih custom”. It is to be hoped that future discoveries and investigations will enable us to arrive at a more precise definition.

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232 Rudenko, 1953, pp. 62-69; Yablonsky, 1996, 6, p. 50; Idem, 1999, p. 46; Khodzhayov, 1980, pp. 102-103, 108; Ilyasov, Mkrtchew, 1992, pp. 118-119; Abdullaev, 2000, pp. 149-155. Apparently, the linguistic situation was also mixed and some Turco-Mongolian tribes, as well as Iranian ones, made up part of the Yüeh-chih confederation at the height of its power (Bunker, 1993, pp. 111-112).

In conclusion I would merely note that the crenelated mane and scabbard slide, as well as covered tails and flying tassels are seemingly insignificant elements of equipment, but their widespread use reflects the enormous influence and creativeness of Asian nomads, whose achievements included more than the ability to destroy kingdoms and establish empires by force of arms.

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COVERED TAIL AND “FLYING” TASSELS 307


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Abbreviations
ArA: Artibus Asiae.
BAI: Bulletin of the Asia Institute.
CAJ: Central Asiatic Journal
IA: Iranica Antiqua. Gent.
IGISC: Indo-Greek and Indo-Scythian Coinage. London.
IHMC: Institute of the History of Material Culture, Sankt-Petersburg.
IMKU: Istorinya materialnoy kultury Uzbekistana.
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>NTA:</td>
<td>Numizmatika Tsentralnoi Azii. Tashkent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RA:</td>
<td>Rossiyskaya arkheologiya. Moskva.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA:</td>
<td>Sovetskaya arkheologiya. Moskva.</td>
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<tr>
<td>SI:</td>
<td>Studia Iranica</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMOA:</td>
<td>State Museum of Oriental Art, Moscow.</td>
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<td>SRAA:</td>
<td>Silk Road Art and Archaeology. Kamakura.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Pl. I. 1. Decorated horses, 1st Pazyryk Barrow (after M.P. Griaznov); 2. Horseman, felt carpet from 5th Pazyryk Barrow (after S.I. Rudenko).
Pl. II. 1., 2. Golden belt buckles, Siberian collection of Peter the Great (author’s drawings after photograph).
Pl. III. 1. Golden belt buckle, Siberian collection of Peter the Great; 2. Golden belt buckle, Saksonokhur; 3. Bronze horse sculpture, Maoling. (1-3 — author’s drawings after photograph)
Pl. IV. 1. Terracotta horse, burial complex of Qin Shihuangdi (after Wenwu, 1, 1991); 2. Terracotta horse, Han burial (author’s drawing after photograph); 3. Bronze belt buckle, Ordos (after H. von Gall).
Pl. VI. 1., 2. Takht-i Sangin (after B.A. Litvinsky, with some corrections).
Pl. VII. 1., 2. Orlat (after G.A. Pugachenkova, with some corrections).
Pl. IX. 1. “Cave of the Painter”, Kyzyl (after A. von Le Coq); 2. Han sword (after Xia Nai); 3. Sword depiction from Orlat; 4. Sword from Achamali (after K. Alimov, G. Bogomolov); 5. Sword from Agalyksai (after O.V. Obelchenko); 6. Sword from Dmytrivka; 7. Sword from Lermontovskaia Skala; 8. Sword from Altušheim. (6-8 – after Ia. Lebedynsky).
Pl. X. 1., 2. Reconstruction of belts (after Sun Ji); 3. Gorytus depiction from Orlat; 4. Gorytus from Niya (after Wenwu, 1, 2000).