The Cult of Female Warriors and Rulers in the Scythian and Sarmatian Cultures

Abstract:

The research regarding the depictions of Scythian females in the ScythoSarmatian and Greek art shows that there is a division between images of armed Scythian females (who are represented as ordinary people) and Scythian females without weapons (who are represented as rulers on the throne or mythological beings with zoomorphic or vegetative limbs). The written sources and archaeological findings show that sometimes the last two functions were united, as was the case of the Massagetian queen Tomyris and burials of armed females from the Mound No. 5 near village Zelenoe of Kherson, which contained weapons and pronounced female objects (bronze mirror, beads, stone tile with a wooden grinder), as well as symbols of the supreme Scythian goddess (plaques with an image of the goddess). Even though Scythian women could carry weapons and participate in military actions, in Scythian art they were never depicted with weapons. Graves of Amazons are very common in the Northern Black sea region during the Scythian and Sarmatian periods. Even though the written sources also point to the presence of Amazons in Athropatene, the archaeological evidence to support these statements is very rare. The graves of female warriors were registered in the archaeological findings from Azerbaijan during the Late Bronze (or Early Iron) Age, in the burial mound No. 6 (with a child) and mound No. 12 from the necropolis of Plovdag in Nakhchivan. The reason for the female burials to be rare in this particular geographic area may be due to insufficient studies of skeletal remains to establish the gender of the buried. As a conclusion – the archaeological sources alone are insufficient to determine social and military status of females in the Scythian and Sarmatian burials. Only a comparative research of written sources, ancient art, archaeological and anthropological remains will allow us to establish it.

Keywords: *Amazons, Scythians, zoomorphic art, goddess Ishtar, hare.*