

## Preface

The papers presented in this volume were delivered at a conference entitled „Arms and Armour as Indicators of Cultural Transfer. The Steppes and the Ancient World from Hellenistic Times to the Early Middle Ages“. It took place in Wittenberg, Germany, November 25-27, 2003, at The LEUCOREA Foundation. The conference was organized by the project group „Transfer of Arms and Armour Among Nomads and Sedentary Peoples in Parthian and Sasanian Times“ of the Collaborative Research Centre 586 „Difference and Integration – Interaction Between Nomadic and Sedentary Peoples in Civilizations of the Old World’s Arid Zone“ of the Universities of Halle-Wittenberg and Leipzig. In conjunction with this conference, the Research Centre held an International Symposium „Nomadic and Sedentary Peoples in Past and Present“.

This volume contains a considerable part of the papers read at the conference. They give an impression of contemporary archaeological, art historical, and historical research in military equipment of and under the influence of nomadic peoples in Eurasian history. The studies cover a considerably long time span and a broad territory: from the Iron Age up to the Middle Ages, and from Central Europe to the heartlands of China.

At major turning points in the history of the old world, nomadic confederations were repeatedly mentioned in written sources of settled societies. Primarily it was the lightning-like appearance and the military success of these nomads, be it Scythians, Huns, Turks, or Mongols, that impressed and even shocked sedentary states and their historians.

Aside from strategical and tactical points of view, reasons for nomadic successes in warfare can obviously be seen in their equipment, the systems of weaponry, armour and accessories. Even questions regarding nomadic war equipment are questions for the archaeologist.

What we know about the material life of the early Eurasian nomads comes to a great extent (or: almost entirely) from nomadic cemeteries. Cemeteries and graves are a job for the archaeologist. A great deal of the buried goods from within these graves - besides the deceased - belong to the military sphere of the nomadic life cycle; i. e., arms and armour as well as supplementary accessories and the equipment for the horses. In the mid-20th century, Russian archaeologists even defined one of the most famous nomadic cultures of the past, that of the Scythians, by a material known as the „Scythian Triad“, consisting of special sets of weaponry and horse harness, and the so-called „animal-style“ in art.<sup>1</sup> But the works of

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<sup>1</sup> B. N. GRAKOV - A. I. MELYUKOVA: Ob etnicheskikh i kul’turnykh razlichiyakh v stepnykh i lesostepnykh oblast’yakh evropeyskoy chasti SSSR v skifskoe vremya. In: Voprosy skifo-sarmatskoy arkhologii (po materialam konferencii IIMK AN SSSR 1952 g.). Otv. red. D. B. Shelov. Moskva 1954, pp. 39-93 (p. 93).

art last mentioned, in fact belong mostly to the first two components of the triad. And therefore, in the end, the diagnostic complex of Scythian artifacts would turn out to represent a complex of military items only. This kind of definition of an archaeological culture is certainly oversimplified, at least when seen from a contemporary perspective.<sup>2</sup>

Analysing and reconstructing forms, establishing typological sequences, comparing enhancements with the shortcomings of arms and armour, the archaeologist is in the position to supplement facts to written history of campaigns and the reasons for successful or lost wars. Nevertheless, it seems questionable to call this speciality in archaeological research a „military archaeology“ or an „archaeology of war“.<sup>3</sup> Weapons and their accessories cannot be seen reduced to their use in a strictly military sense; they also explain, beyond their primary character as means for warfare, the broader sphere of life of - of course, not only nomadic - peoples, efforts in technology and in art, and aspects of the spiritual world of past societies. Thus being an integral part of the assemblage of all finds defining an archaeological culture, arms and armour are but one topic within the framework of well established special archaeologies, either regional, or chronological; therefore, there is no need for any „military archaeology“.

One special value of arms and armour as archaeological and art-historical sources is their potential to indicate the sharing of technological knowledge, but also the sharing of experience in a broader sense, among completely different cultures; that is, they may be named „indicators of cultural transfer“. And with this, the conference papers in this volume seem to be well established within the framework of the Collaborative Research Centre „Difference and Integration“.

The present volume cannot claim to cover all aspects of the theme both in chronological and geographical ways. This is simply impossible within the framework of a conference. Thus, our collection of papers should be considered as a glimpse on military technologies and their spread over the cultural borders between nomads and sedentary societies in Eurasia. As seen mainly from the perspective of archaeologists, the papers shall enhance and supplement our knowledge of warfare in ancient Eurasia with aspects sorely lacking in a recently published „handbook“ on „Warfare in Inner Asian history“.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For a discussion, cp. L. T. YABLONSKY: „Scythian Triad“ and „Scythian World“. In: Kurgans, ritual sites, and settlements. Eurasian Bronze and Iron Age. Ed. by J. DAVIS-KIMBALL, et.al. Oxford 2000 (=BAR International series, 890), pp. 3-8.

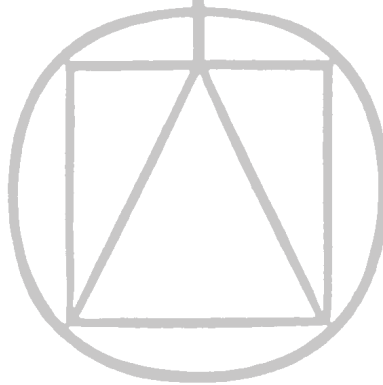
<sup>3</sup> In Russian „voennaya arkheologiya“, cp. the conference organized in 1998 by the Hermitage Museum and the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg: Voennaya arkheologiya. Oruzhie i voennoe delo v istoricheskoy i social'noy perspektive. Materialy Mezhdunarodnoy konferencii 2-5 sentyabrya 1998 g. Otv. red. V. M. MASSON. Sankt-Peterburg 1998. - Another recently published collective work operates with the same formula („Military archaeology of the Altai“): Materialy po voennoy arkheologii Altaya i sopredel'nykh territoriy. Sbornik nauchnykh trudov. Otv. red. V. V. GORBUNOV, A. A. TISHKIN. Barnaul 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Warfare in Inner Asian history (500-1800). Ed. by N. Di COSMO. (= Handbook of Oriental Studies/Handbuch der Orientalistik, sect. 8, vol. 6). Leiden, Boston, Köln 2002. - Of course, we don't want to discredit the pioneering character of individual studies in this volume.

For various reasons, the following papers read at the conference could not be included in the present volume: „Depictions of Arms and Armour in the Art of Turfan-Oasis“ (JORINDE EBERT, Vienna), „Savirian Knights“ (MIKHAIL V. GORELIK, Moscow), „Die Schwerter vom Taq-e Bustan“ (GERD GROPP, Hamburg), „Once More on ‚Draco‘-Standarts“ (MARIUSZ MIELSZAREK, Torun), „Archaeological Context for a Reconstruction of the Hsiung-nu bow“ (SERGEY S. MINJAEV, St. Petersburg), „On the origins of the Cavalry Type of Cataphracts“ (VALERIY P. NIKONOROV, St. Petersburg), „On the Origin of Roman Scale Armour“ (ALEKSANDR SIMONENKO, Kiev), „Sasanian Helmets from Niniveh“ (ST. JOHN SIMPSON, London). The volume includes two papers, by SUSAN DOWNEY and ULF JÄGER, not read at the conference.

The editors would like to express their gratitude to the German Research Foundation for a significant grant that made the event possible, and the LEUCOREA Foundation for hosting us at the comfortable conference centre in Wittenberg. We are indebted to the Special Research Centre 586 „Difference and Integration – Interaction between Nomadic and Sedentary Peoples in Civilizations of the Old World’s Arid Zone“ (a Cooperation by the Universities of Halle and Leipzig) for publishing this book within the series „Nomaden und Sesshafte“. Special thanks go to Sören Stark and Sylvia Winkelmann for their organizational work before and during the conference days. Last, but not least, we thank Yves Cossette for correcting some of the English contributions.

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Jürgen Tubach