

Mohylov Oleksandr,
Candidate of Sciences (History),
Senior Researcher,
Institute of Archeology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine,
mogilovod@gmail.com
 ORCID ID: 0000-0002-2400-2380

KNIVES OF THE SKYTHIAN PERIOD IN THE SOUTH OF THE DNIPRO FOREST-STEPPE RIGHT BANK REGION (BASED ON THE MATERIALS OF THE SVITLOVODSKY BURIAL GROUND)

The article examines knives of the Scythian period discovered in the southern part of the Dnipro Right-Bank Forest-Steppe, specifically those recovered from the Svitlovodsk burial ground in the Kirovohrad region. The Svitlovodsk burial ground is one of the largest and best-studied Early Iron Age burial sites in the Northern Black Sea region. Excavations were conducted over eleven field seasons in 1975–1986 and 1989–1990 by expeditions of the Kirovohrad Regional Museum and the Kirovohrad Pedagogical Institute under the direction of N. M. Bokii and I. A. Kozyr.

A total of 161 Scythian burials have been investigated at the site. Several of them date to the Middle Scythian period, while the majority belong to the 4th century BC. The necropolis is believed to have belonged to a relatively large but socially ordinary community. The most common categories of grave goods include weapons and jewelry. Knives represent one of the most frequent tools deposited in the graves with the deceased.

In total, 71 knives were recovered from 62 burials (over 38% of the total number). Evidence from undisturbed graves suggests that the proportion of burials containing knives may originally have been much higher (up to 73%). In most cases knives were placed together with food offerings for the deceased (40 out of 44 cases where the position of the artifact could be established). In two additional cases knives were found together with a horytos. In most burials only one knife accompanied the deceased, while two knives were recorded in nine graves.

All knives from Svitlovodsk are made of iron. Specimens with bone handles significantly outnumber those with wooden handles (62 % versus 37 %). The handles were attached to the blade tang with iron rivets. The large number of knives discovered at the Svitlovodsk burial ground demonstrates their widespread use in various aspects of everyday life among the population of the Scythian period.

Key words: *Scythian period, knife, burial, mound, burial ground, Dnipro Right Bank Forest-Steppe region.*

Knives were among the most common tools used by various tribes inhabiting the Northern Black Sea region during the Scythian period. In the Forest-Steppe zone they are known from the Dnister region (Sulimirski T., 1936, tabl. IV: e; Hutsal A. F., 2011, fig. 4: 8, 9), the Southern Buh region (Bessonova S. S., 1994, p. 26), the right bank of the Dnipro (Petrenko V. G., 1967, table 17: 5–15; Kovpanenko H. T., 1989, pp. 60, 80), the Sula (Ilyinskaya V. A., 1968, p. 160) and Psel rivers (Ilyinskaya V. A., 1957, fig. 2: 4, 5), the Povorskla region (Kovpanenko H. T., 1967, pp. 132–133), the Siverskyi Donets (Hrechko D. S., 2010, pp. 92–93), and the Middle Don (Liberov P. D., 1965, p. 16; Merkulov A. N., 2011, pp. 185–195). They are also frequently recorded in Steppe Scythia (Gavrilyuk N. A., 1999, p. 259).

Most knives from the Scythian period in the Northern Black Sea region were made of iron. The blade was attached to the handle by means of a tang, usually secured with iron rivets. Throughout the Scythian era, knives with wooden handles were widely used. In the Middle and Late Scythian periods, knives with bone handles became widespread. In some cases the handles were decorated with carved ornamentation

One of the important regions where cultural exchange occurred between the sedentary forest-steppe population and the nomadic Scythians of the steppe was the southern part of the Dnieper Right-Bank Forest-Steppe. Archaeological sites of this region have yielded a large series of knives from the Scythian period. A significant number of these artifacts were discovered at the Svitlovodsk burial ground in the northern part of the Kirovohrad region.

The necropolis near Svitlovodsk is one of the largest and best-studied Scythian burial grounds in the Northern Black Sea region. Excavations at the burial ground were conducted over eleven field seasons. In 1975–1986 the excavations were directed by N. M. Bokii, and in 1989–1990 by I. A. Kozyr (Bokii N. M., 1985; Kozyr I. A., 1989; Mohylov O. D., 2025c, p. 8). In total, 161 Scythian burials have been investigated at this site. Most of them are flat graves lacking burial mounds.

The study of the burials at the site (Kozyr I. A., 2014; Boki N. M., 2014; 2015; Boki N. M., 2013; Mogilov O. D., 2016; 2017a; 2017b; 2019b; 2025c, pp. 27–88; Panchenko K. I., 2014) has made it possible to reconstruct the burial practices of the community (Mohylov O. D., 2019c; 2023; 2025b; 2025c, pp. 93–114) as well as various aspects of its material culture, including weapons (Mohylov O. D., 2019d), mirrors (Mohylov O. D., 2019a), different categories of jewelry (Mohylov O. D., 2020), spinning tools (Mohylov O. D., 2025a), and other artifacts.

Knives represent one of the most common categories of finds from the Svitlovodsk burial ground. In terms of quantity they are second only to necklaces and arrowheads. In total, 71 knives were recovered from 62 burials (over 38 % of their total number). A larger number of knives were discovered in flat graves: 64 artifacts from 57 burial complexes (37%). Meanwhile, seven knives originate from five burials within burial mounds (71%). Evidence from undisturbed burials suggests that the proportion of graves containing knives may originally have been much higher. Knives were present in 14 of the 19 undisturbed burial complexes (73 %), including 13 of 18 flat graves (over 72%).

The knife from grave 21 dates to the Middle Scythian period, whereas the remaining artifacts belong to the 4th century BC.

Iron knives with bone handles outnumber those with wooden handles: 37 specimens (62%) compared with 22 specimens (37%). Usually a single knife was placed in the grave with the deceased. Only nine burials contained two knives. In some cases more than one individual was buried in a grave, accompanied by only one knife (for example grave 48). In another case two knives were placed with a single portion of food offerings for two individuals (perhaps one knife for each of the deceased): burial mound 2, burial 1. Burials of a single individual accompanied by two knives are also known. In such cases the knives likely had different functions. For example, in grave 148 and burial 1 of mound 3 they were placed with food offerings and next to a quiver.

Knives occur in burials belonging to individuals of different sexes. They are more frequently associated with male burials: 25 individuals (55%), while female burials account for 16 individuals (35%). Four knives were found in child burials (almost 9%). In grave 107 the child was identified as female, while in burial 108 the child was identified as male.

Knives were present in burials belonging to all social and property groups. They occur both in wealthy graves with large pits and sometimes burial mounds containing rich grave goods (for example the burial of a warrior in mound 3, burial 1), and in poor graves with small pits and minimal grave goods. In several graves (5, 24, 43, 86, 89, 140) the knife was the only artifact recovered. However, all of these graves except grave 86 had been looted.

Knives were among the most widely used tools in everyday life in Scythian society. They were extensively used in various crafts, including the processing of bone and wood, the manufacture of weapons and horse equipment, the production of spinning and weaving tools, tableware, and ritual objects. They were also widely employed in leatherworking and clothing production. It is difficult to imagine the preparation and consumption of food in Scythian society without knives. In this context

knives most frequently occur together with food offerings in the burials of the Svitlovodsk burial ground: in 40 out of 44 cases where their position within the burial was recorded. In two further cases knives were placed together with a quiver, and in one burial they were found near the left hand of the deceased, while in another they were located near the head next to a mirror.

Knives with bone handles (fig. 1–2) clearly predominate: 37 specimens (over 62% of the total number). They originate from 34 burials. According to the typology proposed by B. A. Shramko (1983, p. 53, table 5), these artifacts correspond to various types of group IIB.

The bone handle was attached to the tang of the iron blade with rivets. For this purpose a groove was cut in the bone blank into which the iron tang was inserted. In other cases two separate horn plates were attached to the sides of the tang. Most commonly the handle was secured with two rivets located closer to the blade (fig. 1: 1, 3, 5, 9, 11, 12, 15; 2: 2, 3, 9, 10, 12). Less frequently three (fig. 1: 2; 2: 7, 8, 16), four (fig. 2: 6, 11, 13), or five rivets (fig. 1: 13) were used, arranged along the handle. The knife with five rivets from grave 94 also has two additional rivets at the end of the handle (fig. 1: 14). The specimen from grave 41 has a handle decorated with circular ornamentation and fixed with rivets at the end and near the blade (fig. 1: 6).

The knife from burial 98 was subjected to metallographic analysis. The results indicate that the smith first produced a semi-finished piece from a heated wrought iron plate. After cooling and the stabilization of the metal structure, the blank was reheated and reforged (Sereda A. I., 1988, p. 69).

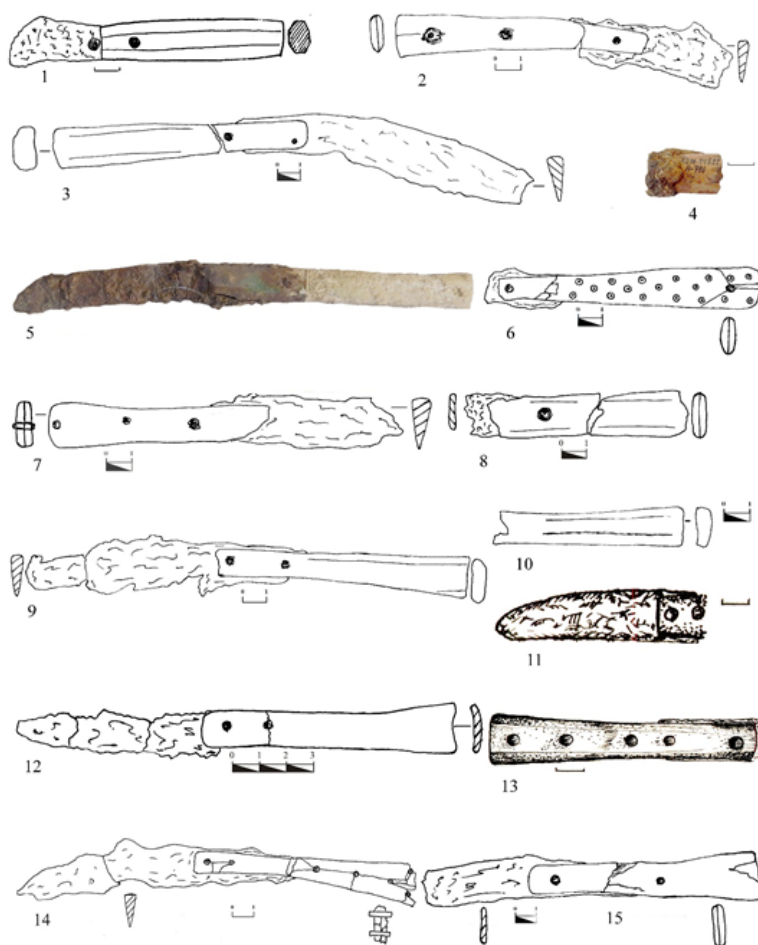


Fig. 1. Knives with bone handles from Svitlovodsk:
 1 – grave 5; 2 – grave 15; 3 – grave 31; 4 – grave 3; 5 – grave 32; 6 – grave 31; 7 – grave 34; 8 – grave 44;
 9 – grave 48; 10 – grave 49; 11 – grave 66; 12 – grave 55; 13 – grave 68; 14–15 – grave 94

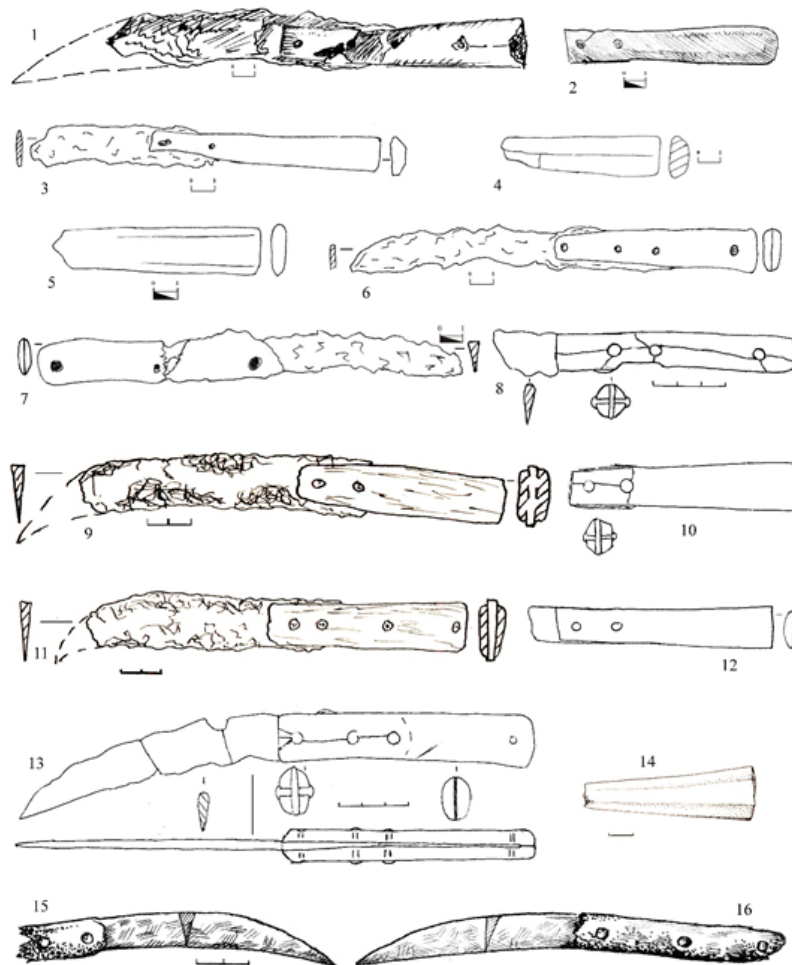


Fig. 2. Iron knives with bone handles from a burial ground near Svitlovodsk:

1 – grave 95; 2 – grave 100; 3 – grave 105; 4 – grave 107; 5 – grave 110; 6 – grave 113; 7 – grave 115;
8 – grave 122; 9, 10 – grave 123; 11 – grave 128; 12 – grave 146; 13 – grave 129; 14 – mound 3, grave 2;
15, 16 – mound 3, grave 1

Many knives have broken blades. When preserved, the blade usually has a characteristic curved back, while the tip is straight or slightly concave and sharpened. Based on the shape of the blade two main types can be distinguished:

1. *Knives with a straight blade aligned with the axis of the handle.* These represent the majority of the finds (fig. 1: 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 14; 2: 3, 7, 11, 16).

2. *Knives with a blade bent away from the axis of the handle* (fig. 1: 2, 3; 2: 13).

The appearance of knives with bone handles in Scythia is traditionally attributed to the 5th century BC (Petrenko V. G., 1967, p. 26). However, taking into account the chronology of early Middle Scythian monuments, such knives may already have appeared in the second half of the 6th century BC.

Such knives are widespread throughout the Northern Black Sea region. In the Dnipro Right-Bank Forest-Steppe they were found in burial mounds near Ryzhanivka and in the Dariivka tract near Shpola (Petrenko V. G., 1967, fig. 17: 11, 14). In the Left-Bank Forest-Steppe they are known from mound 504 near Brovrky on the Psel River (Ilyinskaya V. A., 1957, fig. 2: 5), mounds 3 and 11 near Staryi Merchik (Bandurovsky A. V., 2000, fig. 7: 4; 20: 15), and mounds 18 and 24 of the PISOCHYNSKI burial ground belonging to the SIVERSKODONETSKA group (Babenko L. I., 2005, fig. 26: 8; 32: 8). In the Middle Don region such knives were discovered in mound 15 near

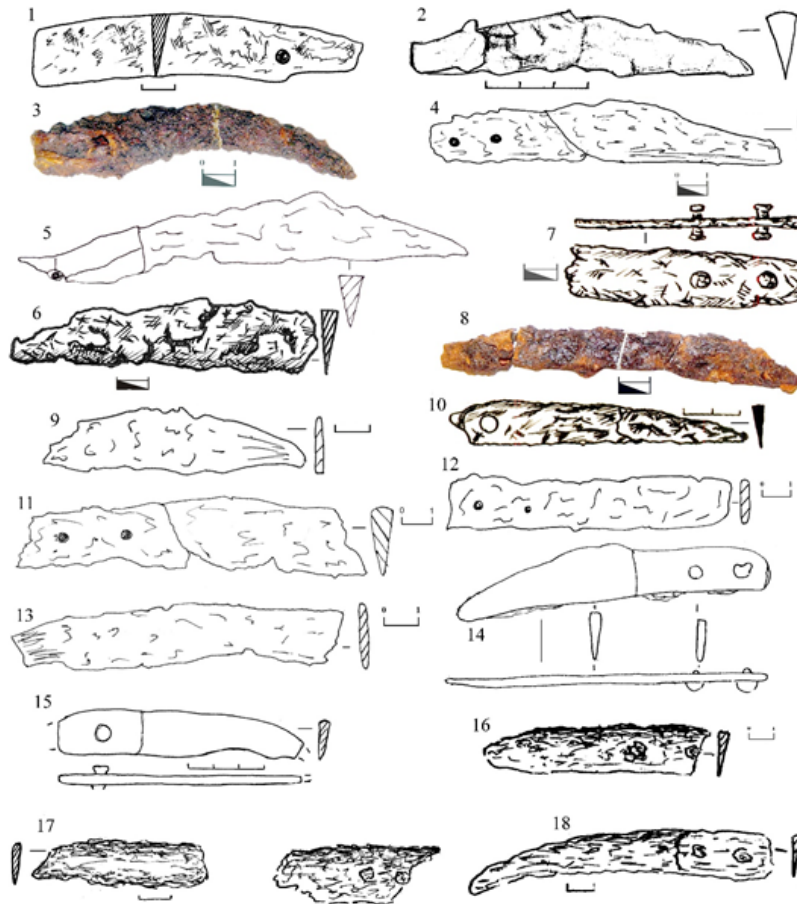


Fig. 3. Iron knives with wooden handles from the Svitlovodsk burial ground:
 1 – grave 1; 2 – grave 10; 3 – grave 12; 4 – grave 32; 5 – grave 46; 6 – grave 71; 7, 8 – grave 65;
 9 – grave 86; 10 – grave 89; 11 – grave 104; 12 – grave 109; 13 – grave 114; 14 – grave 119;
 15 – grave 128; 16 – grave 131; 17 – grave 137; 18 – grave 140

Ruska Trostyanka (Puzikova A. I., 2001, fig. 24: 9) and in mounds 6, 8, and 18 of the Kolbino burial ground (Savchenko Ye. I., 2001, fig. 27: 6; 40: 13; Shevchenko A. A., 2009, fig. 9: 1).

In the steppe zone similar knives were discovered in complexes dated to the 4th century BC, including burial mounds 13 and 1 of the Kapulivka burial ground (Terenzhkin A. I., 1973, fig. 9: 13; 15: 11), mound 3 in Dudchany (Fridman M. I., 1987, fig. 4: 8), Chortomlyk (Alekseev A. Yu., 1991, fig. 66), mound 4 near Baltazarivka (Kovpanenk H. T., 1973, fig. 1: 1), mounds 1 and 4 in groups VI and II at Pervomayivka (Evdokimov G. L., 1987, fig. 17: 7; 1991, fig. 6: 10), Soboleva Mohyla (Mozolevsky B. M., 2005, fig. 104: 7), Tovsta Mohyla (Mozolevsky B. M., 1979, fig. 105: 11), and mound 1 at Haimanove Pole (Terenzhkin A. I., 1977, fig. 3: 13).

At Svitlovodsk knives with bone handles date to the 4th century BC.

Knives with wooden handles (fig. 3: 1–18) are represented by twenty-two artifacts (over 37 % of the total number) originating from 19 burials. According to the typology of B. A. Shramko (1983, p. 53, table 5), they correspond to various types of group IIA.

The wooden handles are rarely preserved. They were attached to the tang with two rivets placed near the blade. The blades display the typical curved back and a straight or slightly concave sharpened tip. Based on the shape of the blade two types can be distinguished:

1. *Knives with a straight blade aligned with the axis of the handle.* These are the most common specimens (fig. 3: 2, 4, 6, 8–12, 14–16).

2. *Knives with a blade bent away from the axis of the handle* (fig. 3: 18).

Knives with wooden handles are a common find in Scythian sites of the Northern Black Sea region (Hrechko D. S., 2010, fig. 88; Merkulov A. N., 2011, fig. 2). They are already known in the Early Scythian period (Kovpanenko H. T., 1981, fig. 58: 1–3) and continued to exist until the end of the Scythian period (Petrenko V. G., 1967, table 17: 5–15). The specimens from the Svitlovodsk burial ground date to the 4th century BC.

The large number of knives discovered at the Svitlovodsk burial ground clearly demonstrates their important role in the daily life of the population of the southern Dnieper Right-Bank Forest-Steppe during the Scythian period and reflects their use in a wide range of economic and household activities.

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Олександр Могилов

НОЖІ СКІФСЬКОГО ЧАСУ НА ПІВДНІ ДНІПРОВСЬКОГО ЛІСОСТЕПОВОГО ПРАВОБЕРЕЖЖЯ (ЗА МАТЕРІАЛАМИ СВІТЛОВОДСЬКОГО МОГИЛЬНИКА)

Стаття присвячена вивченню ножів скіфського часу з півдня Дніпровського Правобережного Лісостепу, які виявлені у Світловодському могильнику в Кіровоградській області. Світловодський могильник відноситься до найбільших і краще вивчених поховальних пам'яток доби раннього заліза в Північному Причорномор'ї. Некрополь розкопувався одинадцять польових сезонів у 1975–1986, 1989–1990 рр. Роботи Кіровоградського краєзнавчого музею та Кіровоградського педагогічного інституту проходили під керівництвом Н. М. Бокій та І. А. Козир. Всього на пам'ятці досліджено 161 захоронення скіфського часу. Декілька з них датуються середньоскіфським періодом, але більшість відносяться до IV ст. до н.е. Припускається, що некрополь залишила чисельна, втім рядова община. Наймасовішими в гробницях є озброєння та прикраси. Зі зрядь праці з покійниками найчастіше клали ножі.

На пам'ятці знайдено 71 ніж, які походять із 62 захоронень (понад 38% від їхньої загальної кількості). Не пограбовані поховання показують, що відсоток могил з такими знахідками міг бути набагато вищим (73%). Ножі найчастіше лежали поруч з заупокійною їжею (40 із 44 встановлених випадків). Ще двічі вони покладені поруч з горитом. Частіше з покійним клали один ніж, і лише 9 разів по 2 вироби. Світловодські ножі виготовлені з заліза. Предмети з кістяною ручкою переважають над виробами з дерев'яним руків'ям (62% і 37%). Ручки кріпились на черешкові за допомогою залізних заклепок. Велика кількість ножів у Світловодську ілюструє їх масовий вжиток у різних сферах життя давніх племен скіфського часу.

Ключові слова: скіфський час, ніж, поховання, курган, могильник, Дніпровський Правобережний Лісостеп.

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