

АРХЕОЛОГІЯ, ЕТНОЛОГІЯ, ІСТОРІЯ КУЛЬТУРИ

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DOI <https://doi.org/10.32782/cusu-hist-2025-1-1>**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***SPINNING AMONG THE SCYTHIANS OF THE SOUTHERN DNIPRO FOREST-STEPPE REGION (BASED ON THE MATERIALS OF THE SVITLOVODSK BURIAL SITE)**

The article is devoted to the study of spinning tools discovered at the Scythian cemetery near the town of Svitlovodsk, Kirovohrad region. This necropolis is one of the largest and best-studied of its time in the Northern Black Sea region. Expeditions led by N. M. Bokiі and I. A. Kozyr in 1975–1990 investigated 161 burials of that time. Most of them were barrowless. Important materials for the analysis of funerary rites and material culture were obtained.

Finds from the necropolis reveal, among other things, the production and crafts of the ancient population. One of them was spinning: the process of making thread from yarn. Later, it was used to weave a cloth that could be used to make clothes. Traditional raw materials of both plant and animal origin could be used to form yarn in this region: hemp stalks, flax, and animal wool. From the Early Iron Age, we have insignificant material remains of this process. Most often, these are spindles, bone parts of spindles, and very rarely their wooden parts. These finds are almost always discovered in the burials of women who were engaged in this craft during their lifetime.

In Svitlovodsk, spindles have not been preserved. Only once was a wooden trace of one noted, and otherwise bone disc-shaped objects with a hole in the centre survived. More common are finds of ceramic spindles with through holes that were put on the spindle. They had various variations of conical or biconical shapes. Two lead spindles were also found, which are linked to ancient centres. The material remains of the spinning craft from Svitlovodsk date back to the fourth century BC and illustrate the final stage of Scythian history, on the eve of the Sarmatian conquest, when the area of their culture narrowed to the Crimea and the Lower Dnipro.

Key words: *burial, cemetery, Scythian period, Dnieper region, spinning, spindle, spinning wheel.*

The Svitlovodsk burial site is one of the largest and best-researched necropolises of the Scythian period in the Northern Black Sea region. The site is located near the town of the same name in Kirovohrad Oblast, in the south of the Dnipro Right-Bank Forest-Steppe. During 11 field seasons, in 1975–1990, archaeological expeditions led by N. M. Bokii and I. A. Kozyr investigated 161 burials of the Scythian period (Bokii N. M., 1980; Kozyr I. A., 2014). The overwhelming majority of them (154) are ground burials, and another 7 were discovered under 7 mounds (Mohylov O. D., 2019a; 2023). The earliest complexes date back to the Middle-Scythian period, but there are only three of them (Mohylov O. D., 2017b). The vast majority of burials date from the IV century BC. Anthropological data (Efimova S. G., 2000, pp. 39–40; Kruts S. I., 2021, pp. 288–291) and the analysis of the funerary rite, comparison with other necropolises of the settled Steppe Scythians (Ostapenko M. A., 2007; Popandopulo Z. Kh., 2004; 2011; 2012; Mohylov O. D., 2018b; 2022), suggests that the main core of the community was made up of Iranian-speaking Scythians, although the presence of forest-steppe autochthons is not excluded (Mohylov O. D., 2023, p. 51)¹.

¹ For previously published materials on the complexes of the Svitlovodsk cemetery, analysis of its funerary rituals and material culture, see: (Bokiі N. M., 1980; Kozyr I. A., 1989; 2014; Bokiі N. M., Mohylov O. D., Panchenko K. I., 2013; Bokiі N. M., Mohylov O. D., 2014; 2015; Panchenko K. I., 2014; Mohylov O. D., 2016a; 2016b; 2017a; 2017b; 2018a; 2019a; 2019b; 2019c; 2019d; 2020; 2023).

One of the crafts reflected in the materials of the Svitlovodsk cemetery is spinning, the task of which was to make yarn threads that were later used in weaving. It is known that in Scythian times there were two large ethnic and economic worlds in the Northern Black Sea region that closely interacted. The first was a nomadic steppe world inhabited by Iranian-speaking Scythians. The second was a settled agricultural and pastoral forest-steppe society, consisting mainly of descendants of the pre-Scythian Chornolissya-Jabotyn tribes. It was subjected to expansion by the steppe nomads, who not only raided the area but also conquered the local lands and lived there permanently (Skoryi S. A., 2003).

Spinning, which was a traditional household craft, was widespread in the Forest-Steppe of Eastern Europe (Petrenko V. G., 1967, p. 28; Radzievska V. Ye., 1979; Shcherban A. 2007) and in Steppe Scythia (Havryliuk N. A., 1987; 1989, pp. 84–89). Women were engaged in it, which is fully illustrated by the materials of the Svitlovodsk burial site. In the process of spinning, a thread was spun from yarn (for the production of which hemp or flax fibres, animal wool could have been used in the region). The latter could be used for weaving cloth.

The fact that the ancient population was engaged in spinning in the Svitlovodsk necropolis is reflected in the placement of spindles with spinning wheels in tombs in the IV century BC. In one case, a spindle was also placed in a child's tomb. It has long been noted that in the Northern Black Sea region these items are an attribute of women's burials (Meliukova A. I., 1975, p. 150; Bunyatian Ye. P., 1985, p. 92). Some doubts have been expressed about the spinning purpose of the spindle-shaped objects from male burials in the Left-Bank Forest-Steppe. However, the position of the described artefacts in the graves of children and adolescents is known in this region as well (Shcherban A., 2007, p. 32).

Over the millennia, only modest material remains of ancient production processes have come down to us. This is also the case with traces of spinning. From the Early Iron Age to the present day, spindles, either ceramic or made of lead, have survived. Less common are bone folding spindles, and very rarely are such tools made of wood. Sometimes massive toothed “combs” are also included in such products. The Svitlovodsk burial ground is no exception to this situation.

As a rule, nothing has survived from the wooden *spindles*. Only in grave 143 was there any decay next to the spindle. In the tombs, only spindles are found, and in one case, bone circles from a spindle. The materials of the Svitlovodsk cemetery thus suggest that the population that left this necropolis used mostly the simplest type of spindle in the form of a wooden rod on which a clay spindle was placed. N. O. Havryliuk identified such products as type 5 (1987, pp. 124, 125).

The *spindle parts* probably include a pair of *bone round plates* from dirt grave 155 (fig. 1: 1, 2). The finds of different diameters come from a female burial, where there was also a spindle. Unfortunately, due to the robbery, their relative position remains unclear.

It can be assumed that these items played the role of a kind of “flywheel” (Havryliuk N. A., 1987, fig. 3) or spindle (Radzievska V. Ye., 1979, fig. 4) in the spindle. Similar details are known in multi-part spindles of the Greek type from steppe burials (Fialko Ye. Ye., 1984, fig. 1). However, in some cases they may also have a rounded or cut-conical shape on one side. Among the steppe analogues, we can name earlier products of the V century BC: mound 11 (grave 3) near Akymivka (Boltrick Yu. V. 2010, fig. 5: 3). However, most of them date to the IV century BC: mounds 2 of Pervomayivka III group (Evdokimov G. L., 1991, fig. 5), 11 (tomb 2) near Lvove (Fialko Ye. Ye., 1987, fig. 1: 4). The ornamented bone spindle from the stone chest 9/18 in Zolote has one rounded surface (Maslennikov A. A., 1995, fig. 9: 17). It is more carelessly executed, which may indicate a barbarian affiliation. A more precise analogy to the Svitlovodsk object is an artefact from the burial 71 of the Frontove barrowless cemetery in Crimea. It is interesting to note that one side is polished, while the other is rough (Korpusova V. N., 1964–1966, pp. 53, 54).

These plates from Svitlovodsk date back to the IV century BC. Moreover, judging by these finds, they were also used in simple indigenous spindles with ceramic spindles.

Spinning wheels (fig. 1: 3–22), as mentioned, are a traditional attribute of Scythian women's burials (Boyko Yu. M., 2017, p. 75). This is also true for Svitlovodsk. Of all the cases, there is only 1 example where the sex is identified as «possibly male(?)», the rest of the complexes are female.

A total of 22 spinning wheels were found in the cemetery, which come from 21 burials (13% of the total) of the IV century BC. The percentage of unlooted graves with spinning wheels is 15.8%. It may be noted that in Steppe Scythia of the IV century BC, according to N. O. Havryliuk, the percentage of burials with these artefacts is even higher – up to 20% (1987, p. 119). A. I. Meliukova notes that for the women's burials of the Mykolaivka cemetery the presence of such finds is “almost obligatory” (1975, p. 151). According to K. P. Bunyatyan, in her sample of the IV century BC in the graves of ordinary Scythian women, such artefacts were found in more than 68% of the tombs (1985, p. 92).

In Svitlovodsk, most often the spinning wheel was placed next to the head (both on the right and left) – 8 cases, which is 61.5%. Less frequently (3 graves, 23%) these objects were recorded near the left hand. Another 1 time (7.7%) – near the shoulder blade and shoulder. This is fully consistent with the tradition of their location in the funeral ritual of the Steppe Scythians (Havryliuk N. A., 1987, p. 119). In the Left-Bank Forest-Steppe the situation is somewhat different. Here, the positions on the side, near the arms and legs prevail, although they are also found near the head (Shcherban A., 2007, p. 30–31).

There was always 1 artefact with the deceased. Most of them are ceramic, and only 2 items are cast from lead. The following types are distinguished:

Biconical ceramic spindles (fig. 1: 3–11). This is the most numerous group, which includes 9 items (41%). They were found in graves 14, 17, 74, 83, 95, 113, 125, 151, as well as in burial 1 of barrow 2.

In the Steppe, this is also the most common species – 35.4% of the total. N. O. Havryliuk identified them as type 1. In the early 80s of the XX century, there were 86 specimens in this region (1987, pp. 120–121, fig. 1: 1). Studying the spinning and weaving of the Left Bank Ukraine, A. L. Shcherban identified biconical yarns as type 2. At the same time, some of the Svitlovodsk finds (fig. 1: 3–5, 7–9, 11) fall into subtype 1: biconical. And others fall into subtype 3: with a cut-off top and base (Shcherban A., 2007, pp. 173, 174). V. E. Radzievska, studying the spinning wheels of the Bilsk hillfort, identified similar products as types 3 and 5 (1979, fig. 1).

This type was already widespread in the Early Scythian period. This is confirmed by their findings in mounds 454 near Makiivka (Galanina L. K., 1977, table 7: 11), 4 of the Medvyn I group (Kovpanenko G. T., 1981, fig. 28: 12), 2 in the Solodke tract near Aksutyntsi and 2 near Herasymivka (Ilyinska V. A., 1968, table XII: 24; XLVI: 3), as well as at the Western Bilsk hillfort (Shramko B. A., 1996a, table VI: 9).

They continued to exist later. Such artefacts are known from Motronynske (Bessonova S. S., 2001, fig. 55: 3, 5), Eastern Bilsk (Shramko B. A., 1996b, fig. VI: 19), Sharpivske hillforts (Kovpanenko G. T., 1989, fig. 18: 18), on the fortification near Horodyshche (Buynov Yu. V. 2004, fig. 2: 9). Their existence in the V century BC is confirmed by a find from mound 3 in the Staikyn Verkh tract near Aksutyntsi (Ilyinska V. A., 1968, table VIII: 12).

Most of the finds date back to the IV century BC. Many of them have been found in the Steppe: the mounds Haymanova Mohyla (Bydzilia V. I. 2012, fig. 248), 14 (tomb 1) in Sholokhove (Volkoboy S.S. 1979, fig. 8: 13), 20 (tomb 3) on Mamay-Hora (Andrukh S. I., 1999, fig. 32: 7), Melitopol (Terenozhkin A. I., 1988, fig. 92), 2 (tomb 2) near Nikolske (Agulnikov S., 2004, fig. 14: 6), and 4 (tomb 2) of the Butor I group (Serova N. L. 1987, fig. 45: 6). They have also been found in the ground graves in this region: №№ 23 and 65 of the Mykolaivka cemetery (Meliukova A. I., 1975, fig. 53: 1, 3, 9), 11, 24, 54 in Skelky (Popandopulo Z. Kh., 2011, fig. 8: 14; 17, 3; 29: 6), 54 of the Dugino X necropolis (Prokofiev R. V., 2014, figs. 84, 75). They are also known at steppe settlement complexes of the IV century BC: Kamianka hillfort (Havryliuk N. A., 1999, fig. 12: 11), Mykolaivka settlement (Meliukova A. I., 1975, fig. 23: 1, 2).

Finds of the Late Scythian period are also found in the Ukrainian Forest-Steppe region (Kovpanenko G. T., 1989, fig. 40: 12).

Svitlovodsk spinning wheels date back to the IV century BC.

Biconical ceramic spinning wheels with one wider base (fig. 1: 12–16). Five objects (22%) come from 5 burials: №№ 94, 122, 124, 143, 155. According to A. L. Shcherban's typology (Shcherban A., 2007, pp. 173, 174), they can be attributed to type 2, subtype 2 (biconical, with a cut-off top). V. E. Radzievska attributed such objects to type 4 (1977, fig. 1).

A number of analogies come from the forest-steppe hillfort complexes of the Middle Scythian and Late Scythian periods: Bilsk (Shramko B. A., 1987, fig. 20: 4), Sharpivske (Fabrytsius I. V., 1949, table III: 27), Liubotyn (Shramko B. A., 1998, fig. 25: 39), Horodyshe (Buynov Yu., Okatenko 2004, fig. 2: 9). They are known from the mounds of the V century BC: "A" near Basivka (Halanina L. K., 1977, table 27: 27), 1 of Bilsk burial ground "B" (Suprunenko O. B., 1996, fig. 10: 2). Such items are also found in burials of the IV century BC: mounds 4 at Haimanove Pole (Terenozhkin A. I., 1977, fig. 3: 21), 4 (burial 1) near Petrivka (Bokyi N. M., 1977, fig. 2: 18), 1 near Vyshnopil (Hryhoriev V. P., 2011, fig. 9: 4), and a grave 44 near Mykolaivka (Meliukova A. I., 1975, fig. 53: 4).

The light-water finds are synchronous with later analogues of the IV century BC.

Barrel-shaped ceramic spindles (fig. 1: 17, 18). Two items (9% of the total) were found in graves 104 and 113. A. L. Shcherban (2007, p. 174) allocated such products to type 3, subtype 3 (spherical products, with cut-off tops). According to V. E. Radzievska's classification, they belong to type 6 (1977, fig. 1).

In the Ukrainian Forest-Steppe region, such wares are known from the Early Scythian period, continuing to occur later: Motronynske (Bessonova S. S., 1991, figs. 55, 23), Western (Shramko B. A., 1987, fig. 11: 25) and Eastern Bilsk (Shramko B. A., 1996b, fig. VI: 16), and Liubotyn hillfort (Shramko B. A., 1998, fig. 25: 23).

In the Steppe, finds of the IV century BC have been recorded from mounds 20 (tomb 3) on Mamai-Hora (Andrukh S. I., 1999, fig. 32: 14), Kapulivka I group 1, 12 near the Bohdanivka factory (Terenozhkin A. I., 1973, fig. 15: 15; 37: 8), ground burials 62 of the Mykolaivka cemetery (Meliukova 1975, fig. 53: 6), and 21 in Skelky (Popandopulo Z. Kh., 2011, fig. 31: 7). There are also known finds of the Late Scythian period in the Right Bank Forest-Steppe region (Kovpanenko G. T., 1989, fig. 40: 13).

The Svitlovodsk finds date back to the IV century BC.

Spherical ceramic spinning wheels (fig. 1: 19–21). Three specimens (13%) come from graves 16, 59 and 76.

They can be correlated with the 1st subtype of the 1st type of yarns according to the classification of A. L. Shcherban (2007, p. 174). Or with the 8th type according to V. E. Radzievska's typology (1977, fig. 1). N. O. Havryliuk allocated similar artefacts to type 2. In the steppe, according to her calculations, they accounted for 8.2% of the total number of such finds, spreading here in the IV century BC (Havryliuk N. A., 1987, p. 121, fig. 1: 2).

In the Eastern European Forest-Steppe region they have a «wide» period of existence from the VII to the IV centuries BC: Motronynske (Bessonova S. S., 1991, fig. 55: 22, 25), Western (Shramko B. A., 1996a, table VI: 10) and Eastern Bilsk (Shramko B. A., 1987, fig. 16: 32) hillforts, Lubentsi settlement (Kovpanenko G. T., 1989, fig. 18: 26).

In Steppe Scythia, these items are known from both burials: Brane Pole, barrow 3, tomb 2 (Yakovenko E. V., 1970, fig. 2: 7), and from settlements: Mykolayivka (1975, fig. 23: 13), which date back to the IV century BC. The finds from Svitlovodsk are also dated to the same period.

An asymmetric-biconical ceramic spindle (fig. 1: 22) was found in burial 101. It is similar in shape to some products of type 2, subtype 1, variant 6 according to the classification of A. L. Shcherban (2007, p. 174), or type 7 according to the classification of V. E. Radzievska (1977, fig. 1).

Analogues are known from Motronynske (Bessonova S. S., 1991, fig. 56: 1), Sharpivske (Fabricius I. V., 1949, table III: 34) and Bilsk (Radzievska V. Ye., 1977, fig. 1) hillforts in the Ukrainian Forest-Steppe region, where they have a wide period of existence. And also from some steppe mounds

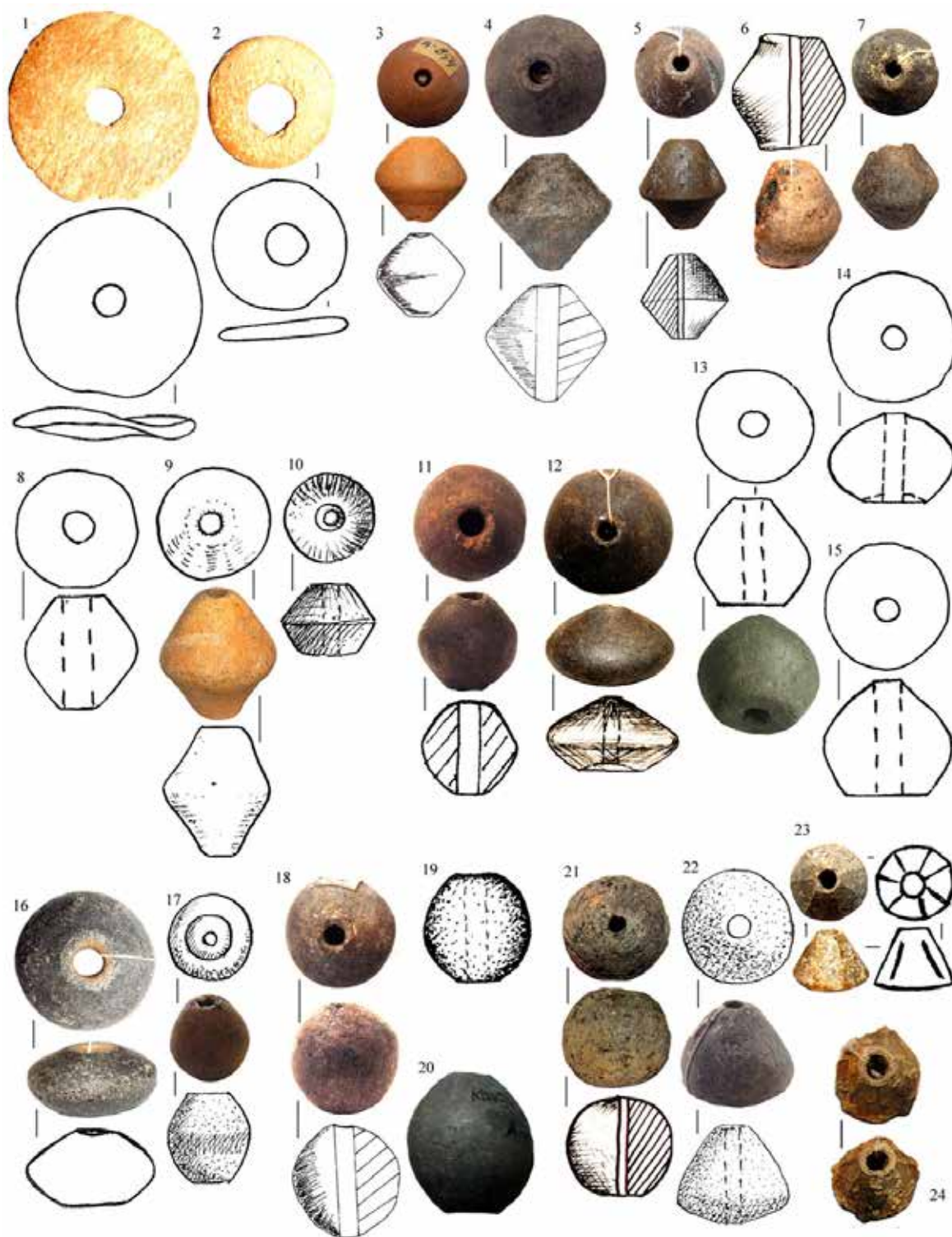


Fig. 1. Details of spindles and spinning wheels from the Svitlovodsk burial ground: 1, 2, 16 – grave 155; 3 – grave 14; 4 – grave 17; 5 – grave 74; 6 – grave 83; 7 – grave 95; 8 – grave 125; 9 – grave 151; 10 – grave 113; 11 – mound 2, burial 1; 12 – grave 94; 13 – grave 122; 14 – grave 143; 15 – grave 124; 17 – grave 104; 18 – grave 16; 19 – grave 59; 20 – grave 113; 21 – grave 76; 22 – grave 101; 23 – grave 32; 24 – grave 44

of the IV century BC (Yakovenko E. V., 1970, fig. 2: 10). Objects from the studied cemetery also date back to the IV century BC.

Lead tapered heptagonal spinning wheels (fig. 1: 23, 24). Two items (9 %) were found in graves 32 and 44. N. O. Havryliuk attributes the conical products to type 5 (1999, p. 210, 211; 2017, p. 369). S. P. Smolianinova characterises them as the most numerous first (in order of description) group (2009, p. 202).

Some lead spinning wheels are known from the Archaic period. In particular, the Early Celermes burial of barrow 1 of mound 5 in Rostov-on-Don (Brashinsky I. B., 1973, p. 54) suggests that the Scythians used them in the middle to 2nd half of the VII century BC. In the necropolis of Olbia, conical spinning wheels are known in complexes of the 2nd half of the VI century BC (Skudnova V. M., 1988, no. 172; 215). The spinning wheels from the Yahorlytske settlement may date to an even earlier time (Vinogradov Yu. A., 2000, fig. 3: 5–7). A similar object is known from a Late Archaic ancient settlement of the 2nd half of the VII – 1st third of the V century BC. Kutsurub-1 (Marchenko K. K., 1999, p. 69). In the Olbian estate Shyroka Balka-6, such objects were found in the layers of the 2nd third of the V – early III century BC (Papanova V. A., 2016, p. 418).

However, analogues from neighboring Steppe Scythia are mostly dated to the IV century BC (Havryliuk N. O., 1999, p. 211; 2017, p. 369). This is the date of mounds 8, tomb 1, near Nove (Fialko Ye. Ye., 1991, fig. 4), Denysova Mohyla (Mozolevskyi B. N., 1980, fig. 67: 15), 11 near the Bohdanivka concentration plant, and 4 near Bilenke (Terenzhkin A. I., 1973, figs. 37: 3; 53: 8). A hexagonal object is known from burial 1 of barrow 3 in Zaporizhzhia (Popandopulo Z. Kh., 1987, fig. 3: 6). The spindles from Svitlovodsk are dated in the same way. A number of lead spinning wheels of various shapes have been found in recent years in the south of the Dnipro Right-Bank Forest-Steppe – in the basin of the Tiasmin River: (Liashko Yu. Yu., 2018, fig. 2: 13; 3: 16). Unfortunately, they have not been found in complexes, and their precise dating is difficult.

Lead spools are considered to be products of ancient Black Sea workshops. The basis for this is not only the numerous finds of such finds, but also the casting moulds from there (Ruban V. V., 1979, pp. 249, 250; Kryzhitsky S. D., 1989, p. 79). Recently, however, data have emerged that suggest that some of them could have been produced in barbarian foundries. This is based on a collection of lead spools and the remains of foundry production found at the Scythian settlement of Sorokina Balka near Velyka Znamianka on the Lower Dnipro region (Andrukh S. I., 2018, pp. 50, 51).

The materials from Svitlovodsk add to our knowledge of the history of Scythian crafts in the Northern Black Sea region.

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ПРЯДІННЯ У СКІФІВ ПІВДНЯ ДНІПРОВСЬКОГО ЛІСОСТЕПУ (ЗА МАТЕРІАЛАМИ СВІТЛОВОДСЬКОГО МОГИЛЬНИКА)

Статтю присвячено висвітленню знярядь прядильного ремесла, виявлених на могильнику скіфського часу біля м. Світловодськ Кіровоградської області. Цей некрополь є одним із найбільших та добре вивчених для свого часу в Північному Причорномор'ї. Експедиціями під керівництвом Н. М. Бокій та І. А. Козир у 1975–1990 рр. тут досліджено 161 поховання того часу. Переважно вони були безкурганними. Отримано важливі матеріали для аналізу поховальної обрядовості та матеріальної культури.

Знахідки з некрополя розкривають, зокрема, питання виробництва та ремесел, якими займалося давнє населення. Одним із них було прядіння: процес виготовлення нитки з пряжі. У подальшому з неї ткалося полотно, з якого можна було шити одяг. Для формування пряжі у вказаному регіоні могли використовувати традиційну сировину як рослинного, так і тваринного походження: стебла коноплі, льону, вовна тварин. З доби раннього заліза до нас доходять незначні матеріальні рештки від цього процесу. Найчастіше це прясла, кістяні деталі веретен, дуже рідко – їх дерев'яні частини. Ці знахідки майже завжди виявляють у похованнях жінок, які за життя й займалися цим ремеслом.

У Світловодську веретена не збереглися. Тільки раз відзначений дерев'яний слід від нього, а в іншому випадку вціліли кістяні дископодібні предмети з отвором у центрі. Значно частіші знахідки керамічних прясел з наскрізними отворами, які надівалися на веретено. Вони мали різні варіації конічної або біконічної форм. Виявлено також два свинцеві прясла, пов'язані своєю генезою з античними центрами. Матеріальні рештки прядильного ремесла зі Світловодська належать до IV ст. до н. е. й ілюструють завершальний етап скіфської історії, напередодні сарматського завоювання, коли ареал їхньої культури звужується до Криму та Нижнього Подніпров'я.

Ключові слова: поховання, могильник, скіфський час, Подніпров'я, прядіння, веретено, прясло.