

# ПАМ'ЯТКИ СХІДНОГО ПОХОДЖЕННЯ НА ТЕРЕНАХ УКРАЇНИ

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## SCYTHIAN *GORYTOS* THROUGH THE GREEK PRISM: THE CHORTOMLYK SERIES

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The article analyses the use of the term γωρυτός in ancient Greek sources and its etymology. The author re-examines the visual programme of the well-known gold *gorytos* overlays from the Chortomlyk series (Chortomlyk, 1863; Illintsi, 1902; Melitopol, 1954; and the Five Brothers, no. 8, 1959), which were found in the burial mounds from the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century. Unfortunately, one of the overlays from Illintsi was lost during World War II. The technical process of creating *gorytos* overlays is re-emphasized in detail. The method of making *gorytos* by hand introduced unique features to each overlay, which possibly were further enhanced by variations in alloys and additional detailing. For the first time, a comparative analysis was made of each scene on the three surviving overlays. Additionally, the author provides a brief analysis of existing interpretations of the scenes' meaning, including myths about Alope, Achilles and Telephus, as well as Iranian and Scythian myths. According to the author, the visual programme of the overlays is associated with the death and rebirth of the ideal hero (Achilles?), pointing to eschatological semantics using Greek model. Consequently, the *gorytoi* of the Chortomlyk series may have been crafted specifically for the funeral rites of Scythian high aristocracy, rather than for diplomatic relations.

**Keywords:** *gorytos*; Chortomlyk series; manufacturing technique; iconography; visual programme; semantics

ὥς οὐδέν γε δέος μὴ κενωθείς λάθοι ὁ γωρυτὸς αὐτῷ

“At least there is no fear that its *gorytos* will unexpectedly run short!”

(*Luc.*, Soph. Hercules, 8.10)

### Introduction

A *gorytos* used by the Scythians and other Iranian-speaking peoples, was an integral part of a Scythian warrior's property, his individuality, and in a sense, it was the repository of his soul and even its “substitute”<sup>1</sup>. On the gold pectoral from Tovsta Mohyla (4<sup>th</sup> century BC) [Reeder 1999, *Cat.* 172; Полідович 2023, 65, 67–68, 136], two *gorytoi* are depicted in a ritual or eschatological scene involving the making of clothes from sheepskin by two Scythians. The *gorytoi* are in different positions: one is near the leg of a man, while another is hanging on a “tree” in the middle of the composition, which perhaps indicates its special importance (see in detail [Вертиєнко 2010]).

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The word γωρυτός has meaning as “quiver... wrongly explained as bow-case” in the classical Liddell and Scott *Greek-English Lexicon* [Liddell, Scott 1996<sup>2</sup>, 364]. The *Etymological Dictionary of Greek* defines it as “quiver, which was also a bow-case” [Beekes 2010, 294]. The most recent edition of the *Cambridge Greek Lexicon* translates γωρυτός as “bow-case” [Diggle 2021, I, 318]. However, in ancient Greek there was another, more common word for a “quiver” – φαρέτρα [Liddell, Scott 1996, 1916–1917; Diggle 2021, II, 1454], and this lexeme clearly has a Greek etymology [Beekes 2010, 1553]. The word γωρυτός has been preserved in the forms *gorytos* and *corytos* in Latin, and is translated as “quiver” [Lewis, Short 1879, 476; Glare 1968, 769].

Nevertheless, based on archaeological finds from over a century ago, it has been established that γωρυτός, is not only a quiver or only a bow case, but both together [Minns 1913, 66–68; Blümner 1917, 1121–1127; Ebert 1921, 91–93; Bonnet 1926, 178; Rostovtzeff 1931, 326, 372; Benveniste 1937, 43–44]. E. Chernenko undertook a specialised study of Scythian *gorytos* based on archaeological material, reinterpreting many “quivers” as *gorytoi* [Черненко 1981, 29–93]. The scholar confirmed that they consist of two parts, dividing the *gorytos* into a compartment for a bow at the back and a pocket for arrows at the front. The separate arrow pocket has flaps that were fastened with metal or bone clasps in the 6<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. However, not all *gorytoi* have flaps. *Gorytoi* with gold overlays are unlikely to have them [Черненко 1981, 91].

The database of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* gives about one hundred occurrences of the word γωρυτός in Classical and Byzantine sources<sup>3</sup>. I am not going to look through all of them in this article, but I will point out some of the more remarkable ones.

The earliest and unique mention of γωρυτός is known in *Hom.*, *Od.*, XXI, 54. According to Homer, Odysseus was given his bow by Iphitus, the son of Eurytus, the king of Oechalia, during a visit (*Hom.*, *Od.*, XXI, 11–41). However, this friendship did not last long, as Iphitus was killed shortly afterwards by Heracles in a fit of fury (*Hom.*, *Od.*, XXI, 22–30) [Crissy 1997, 41–42]. His father Eurytus, one of the Argonauts, was a renowned archer who challenged Apollo himself. During an archery contest, he was killed by Apollo’s arrow [Andersen 2012, 142–143]. This bow was kept in a storeroom in Odysseus’ palace on Ithaca, as a memorial of his friend Iphitus (*Hom.*, *Od.*, XXI, 38–41), hanging there in a *bright* (φαεινός) *gorytos*. It was the bow that Penelope brought to the final contest that revealed Odysseus and destroyed her so-called “suitors”: ἐνθεν ὀρεξάμενη ἀπὸ πασσάλου αἶνυτο τόξον αὐτῷ γωρυτῷ, ὃς οἱ περίκειτο φαεινός – “Then she stepped upon the high floor [...] and stretched out her hand from thence and took from its peg the bow together with the bright case which surrounded it” (*Hom.*, *Od.*, XXI, 54; translation by A. T. Murray after [Homer 1919, 309])<sup>4</sup>. Upon analysing this fragment in detail, some scholars have questioned the Greek origin of γωρυτός, considering it to be a Scythian loanword [Blümner 1917, 1121–1127; Benveniste 1937, 44]. Such doubts are justified given the different periods of creation and late insertions in Homer’s poems. As M. Lloyd notes, “the weapons and armour in the epics seem to reflect different chronological periods” [Lloyd 2020, 404]. As we know the Hellenes used a completely different type of bow. As they were not mounted archers, they had no need for a specialised two-part case for bow and arrows. For this reason, it is unlikely that γωρυτός belongs to the Greek lexicon. I would rather share the view of É. Benveniste<sup>5</sup>, who believed that a word γωρυτός, along with others of nomadic weapons (τόξον, ἀκινάκης, σάγαρις), could have been borrowed into the ancient Greek language [Benveniste 1937, 41, 45–46].

The next author I should pointed out is Lucian of Samosata (2<sup>nd</sup> century AD) mentions the *gorytos* twice in the work “Heracles: An Introduction”. In one instance, γωρυτός is mentioned as a weapon of Heracles (*Luc.*, *Soph. Hercules*, 1.12). In two fragments of Aeschylus’ lost tragedy, Ajax is mentioned in the context of the Trojan cycle (*Aesch.*, *Trag. Fragmenta*, Tetralogy 29, play B, frag. 292b.4; 292d.2). This refers to the myth according

to which, when Ajax was born, Heracles (“lion”) covered him (“eaglet”) with his lion skin and prayed to Zeus (Comyrus) to grant the infant invulnerability<sup>6</sup>. This story is described in more detail in the poem *Alexandra* by the poet Lycophron of Alexandria (4<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC), which echoes the text of fragment 292d.2 of Aeschylus, and in which Heracles’ armpit is explicitly referred to as Scythian: μίαν πρὸς Ἰδην καὶ φθιτοὺς πεπαμένον κέλευθον, ἣν γωρυτὸς ἔκρυψε Σκύθης, ἥμος καταίθων θύσλα Κωμύρῳ λέων σφῶ πατρὶ λάσκει τὰς ἐπηκόους λιτάς, σκύμνον παρ’ ἀγκάλαισιν αἶτα βράσας – “One way alone to doom and death was his, a way the Scythian bow-case had concealed, when, burning sacrifice to Comyrus his sire, the lion prayed and answer found, dangling the eagle’s youngling in his arms” (Lycophron, *Alex.*, 458; translation by G. W. Mooney [Mooney 1921, 49]).

As far as I am aware, this fragment from Lycophron is the only mention of the *gorytos* in a Scythian context. It should be recalled here that, according to the Hellenic version of the Scythian “Genealogical legend” recounted by Herodotus, after his journey to the lands of future Scythia, Heracles left one of his bows and a belt to his three sons by the snake-footed goddess (*Herod.*, *Hist.* IV, 8–10) (see [Ivantchik 2001, 207–220]). A description of the statue of Heracles with a *gorytos*, which contained a bow and arrows, can be found in Memnon of Heracleia (1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD) in his fragmentary “*History of Heracleia*” (καὶ γωρυτὸς τῆς αὐτῆς μὲν ὕλης, βελῶν δὲ γέμων καὶ τόξου) (Frag. 52, line 14).

In Josephus Flavius’s work *The Wars of the Jews*, the word γωρυτὸς is used to describe a case in which Roman horsemen carry javelins (*J. Flav.*, *De bello Judaico*, III.96, 3). In Julius Pollux’s *Onomasticon*, it is mentioned among a warrior’s equipment, along with another term for a quiver (γωρυτὸς φαρετρεῶνες) (*J. Pollux*, *Gramm. Onomasticon*, X.142, 9). In the *Ephesiaca* by Xenophon of Ephesus (2<sup>nd</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD) (I.2, 6), the protagonist, Antia, carries the *gorytos* with bow and arrows (?) (γωρυτὸς ἀνημμένος, τόξα [ὄπλα]), which brings her closer to the image of Artemis, the supreme goddess of Ephesus, and possibly the Amazons.

This brief review of Classical sources reveals that ancient authors see the difference between a quiver and a *gorytos*. For example, this distinction is evident in the stories of Heracles, Ajax and Odysseus and Eurytus. In this regard, many researchers draw parallels between the images of Heracles and Odysseus<sup>7</sup>. The presence of a *gorytos* of Odysseus’ bow, like the one worn by Heracles, can therefore be considered another clue left by the author of the epic to emphasise their similarities. Consequently, the depiction of a “Scythian *gorytos*” of Odysseus, akin to Heracles’, is entirely plausible. In 5<sup>th</sup> century BC vase paintings depicting Odysseus shooting Penelope’s “suitors” with his bow, he is often shown with a *gorytos* hanging from his left thigh [Blümner 1917, 1126], as on the Attic red figure skyphos from Tarquinia in the Berlin collection (inv. no. F 2588, ca. 440 BC [Furtwängler, Reichhold, Huber 1924, *Taf.* 10]).

Another noteworthy aspect is the description of the *gorytos* in *Od.*, XXI, 54 is the accompanied adjective φαεινός, meaning “radiant”, “shining”, “bright”, etc (from the verb φαίνω, “to shine”, “to radiate light”) [Liddell, Scott 1996, 1911; Beekes 2010, 1551–1552; Diggle 2021, II, 1451]. This adjective is often used to describe bright items of military equipment, such as weapons and armour. Therefore, I can infer that this is not a reference to an ordinary *gorytos*, but rather a richly decorated (gold?) item, which brings it closer to gold *gorytoi* overlays from the Chortomlyk series.

Conversely, translators almost exclusively use the word “quiver” when translating γωρυτὸς. This is not entirely accurate in terms of the purpose of this piece of military equipment, as it does not enable readers who are unfamiliar with the original ancient Greek text to distinguish between a γωρυτὸς (a case for a bow and arrows) and a φαρέτρα (a case for arrows only). However, in “Scythian Logos”, Herodotus uses the

term *φάρετρα* once according to Scythians (*Hist.*, IV.64.2; cf. I.216.1). It is a question why the historian did not use the term *γωρυτός* when saying about Scythian weapons.

É. Benveniste proposed that *γωρυτός* was a loanword from a Scythian/Iranian compound with *γω-* (*gau-*) “ox, cow” which exists as the first element in Iranian proper names. He traces the second part of the word *γωρυτός* to the root *\*rauta-*, known from Iranian forms meaning “gut, intestine” or “flayed skin” [Morgenstierne 1933, 29–36; Эдельман 2020, 430–431]. Accordingly, he interprets *γωρυτός* as meaning “the intestine (or skin) of an ox”, a term which was used metaphorically to describe an object made from skin [Benveniste 1937, 44–45]. As is known, the *gorytos* was made of wood and skin (see in detail [Brandt et al. 2023, 1–21]). Beekes traces the etymology of the lexeme *γωρυτός* back to the Indo-Iranian languages. However, A. Lubotsky views *γωρυτός* as a derivative of the Iranian *\*varūtra-* / Sanskrit *varūtār-*, meaning “something that protects” or “protector” (cf. [Lubotsky 2000, 314]), with the *v-* > *g-* transmission [Beekes 2010, 294].

The Iranian and Scythian *gorytoi* continues to be the subject of scholarly interest (cf. [White 2020, 20–21; Tuplin, Jacobs 2021, 1168–1169]). This is evidenced by recent publications devoted to *gorytoi* with gold overlays, the so-called Chortomlyk series (Chortomlyk, Illintsi, Melitopol, and the Five Brothers [barrow no. 8] burial mounds of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 4<sup>th</sup> century BC)<sup>8</sup>, which offer a new interpretation of some scenes or semantic programme [Daumas 2009; Sanz 2019, 61–74; Полідович 2022, 75–92; Бабенко 2024, 122–124; see also Meyer 2013, 203–205]. However, these interpretations need some explanation and commentary to make it clear what the *gorytoi* in this series were for. It is important to emphasise the differences among *gorytoi* of a single series, because captions relating to *gorytoi* in specialised works can contain errors. This causes confusion between the *gorytoi*, because although differences between them may be minor, they are still present. Secondly, it devalues, for example, the *gorytos* from the Melitopol barrow, which is the highest quality of this series. For example, the Five Brothers overlay was in the New York and Los Angeles exhibitions, but the catalogue gives a photograph of the Melitopol overlay [Piotrovsky 1975, 128 (Cat. 186)]. In another book, the identification “Melitopol” is incorrectly attached to the image of Chortomlyk overlay<sup>9</sup>.

Recently, the question was raised about the circumstances surrounding the loss of one of the *gorytoi* from Illintsi during World War II, when an aerial bomb hit an evacuation train carriage from Kharkiv on the station at Alekseevka (Belgorod region) on 10 October 1941 [Бабенко 2018, 597; 2021, 103–116; 2023, 161]. In studies of the Chortomlyk *gorytoi* series, the prevailing view is that they are practically identical and that the presence of minor differences in detail should not be considered [Черненко 1981, 77; Treister 1999, 71]. In my opinion, it is precisely these differences that reveal more about each item than could have been imagined and this is reason for reconsidering this category of objects.

It should be noted that, even in the most recent works [Sanz 2019, 61–74; Полідович 2022, 87 (with bibliography); Бабенко 2024, 122–124], most scholars continue to view the Chortomlyk *gorytoi* series as expensive diplomatic gifts from the Greeks of the Northern Black Sea colonies (primarily the Bosphoran Kingdom) to Scythian (“barbarian”) leaders. In this article, I will also attempt to answer how justified this interpretation is.

### **Manufacturing technique**

Researchers usually explain the differences in the overlays by gradual distortion and wear of the matrices, which purportedly provided grounds for establishing the sequence of their manufacture [Онайко 1970, 26–28; 1974, 78–86]. At the same time, less attention was paid to the quality of the gold in the overlays and the specifics of their manufacturing technique. Scholars probably assumed *a priori* that all overlays were made of

gold of similar alloy [Sanz 2019, 71], although this is not the case<sup>10</sup>, or that differences in the alloy did not significantly affect other matters. Recently, Yu. Polidovych emphasised the incorrect technical characterisation of all overlays in publications made at different times according to different criteria [Полідович 2022, 75–77]. Unfortunately, there is still no ligature of the overlay from Melitopol. For now, we have to use the only available data: the gold from sample 800 [Тереножкин, Мозолевский 1988, 243]. In a sense, it was precisely the error in determining their technical manufacture that led to a misunderstanding of the reasons for the differences between overlays [Минасян 1991, 380]. Identification of the manufacturing technique can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the object.

Many scholars believe that all the *gorytoi* of the Chortomlyk series were manufactured in a single workshop using one bronze [Онайко 1974, 79–81; Rolle 1979, 107, *Anm.* 190; Черненко 1981, 87] or a unified set of metal matrices [Szymanska 1984, 106–110; Treister 1999, 71–73]. At the same time, B. Farmakovsky, based on an analysis of the overlays from Chortomlyk and Illintsi, suggested that these overlays were produced by different workshops, and accordingly from different matrices [Фармаковский 1911, 77]. The preserved joints on the overlay from Melitopol and their varying heights allowed M. Treister to estimate the number of matrices and the sequence of production<sup>11</sup>. Treister identified two matrices for the anthropomorphic upper frieze: 1. The nine figures from left to right (the last is a dancing woman); 2. The two men at the far right. He suggested that the lower one used three matrices: 1. The four female figures; 2. The figures of a seated and standing man; 3. The four<sup>12</sup> remaining figures [Treister 1999, 71–73]. The selection of bronze as a material for matrixes was also pivotal, given the virtual impossibility of damaging such a matrix with soft gold [Минасян 1991, 380; cf. Онайко 1974, 82–83]. This suggests that the sequence in which the overlays were applied did not impact their quality, which scholars have supposed deteriorated as the matrixes were subjected to wear and destruction. Consequently, the *gorytoi* overlays were made in a workshop (“the *gorytos* and scabbard workshop” (F) by Treister) in a fixed location that possessed a highly skilled team who undertook the work (cf. [Treister 1999, 79; 2005, 60, 62, 63]). However, in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, a few [Williams, Ogden 1994, 126–127], or up to seven [Treister 1999, 79; 2001, 159–160; 2005, 63], jewellery workshops could have existed in the cities of the Northern Black Sea region, especially in the Bosporan Kingdom, which was oriented towards servicing the orders of the barbarian elite. According to Treister, several workshops in Bosphorus may have united and cooperated. However, he attributes the variation in design of the Chortomlyk *gorytos* series to the work of several craftsmen within a single workshop [Treister 2005, 62–63]. Nevertheless, the researcher’s views on the operational period of these workshops are unclear, as he suggests that they worked “for a limited time span” but at the same time “these workshops were probably in existence over several generations of craftsmen” [Treister 2005, 63].

Gold possesses favourable qualities for foundry work and is amenable to a wide range of mechanical treatment, so that it could be the best material for the overlay. In its molten state, gold combines readily with silver and copper. However, when minor impurities in the form of lead, tin, zinc and their alloys are present, gold becomes brittle and exhibits a tendency to tarnish [Минасян 2014, 55]. In the production of an overlay, a sheet of gold was initially applied to one matrix and manually abraded, resulting in its deformation. Pressure was exerted with wooden, bone, and metal tools. This technique of embossing reliefs in sheet metal on cast metal or wooden dies is termed *basma*, and it is precisely this technique that was used to make *gorytoi* [Минасян 2014, 230; 2016, 281, 290]. On the front of items made in this way there are tool marks in the form of stripes or impressions of chisels on the recessed areas of the relief. On the reverse side, *basma* works have no traces of the use of tools. The resulting image differs from the die in its softer

contours, with the difference increasing with the thickness of the metal. When comparing items made using one or a set of matrices, differences may be found in the nature of the marks left by the tools and in the clarity of the imprint in specific areas; these differences are due to the repeated and random pressure exerted on the metal [Минасян 2014, 229]. The using of a mechanical-manual method of production engendered variations in the overlays, with the result that each example had a distinctive character. Thus, differences among them are primarily and directly caused by the production technique. The deformation of the metal had been found to be more pronounced in purer gold, whereas the addition of alloying materials increased its hardness [Минасян 2014, 34]. The quality of transfer from bronze matrixes was determined by the material and its alloy. During the process of production, wear in the bronze matrixes was very insignificant. The degree of purity of gold, and its plasticity, allowed for a more perfect and higher-quality transfer of the imprints of the matrix [Минасян 1991, 380]. Consequently, overlays crafted from purer gold should have exhibited a more distinct relief pattern and it could be the reason in their differences.

To my mind, the “high-quality” Melitopol overlay could be created at any point in the timeline production for the series. While this overlay may be made of purer gold and have higher plasticity than the others, this does not provide reliable evidence that it was the first to be manufactured. For this reason, I disagree with the statement that “the Melitopol cover was done first” [Jacobson 1995, 226; Treister 1999, 74] and that the rest of the overlays were made afterwards in this or that order reconstructed by scholars<sup>13</sup>.

The material composition of the matrixes and the method of transferring the relief to the gold leaf did not permit any refining of the relief details. The detailing of the image was apparently carried out by the subsequent master (or assistant) after the removal of the lining from the matrixes and the filling of the cavity with a plastic support, to protect the reliefs from accidental damage. Any subsequent processing of the item was carried out by *metal plastering*, which is a manual method of drawing relief images on thin sheet metal with different tools [Минасян 2014, 52; 2016, 286]. According to V. Shilov, the back of the Five Brothers overlay was filled with ordinary gypsum mixed with some kind of adhesive, covering its entire inner surface [Шилов 1961, 162, 165]. Identical traces of plaster were found on the *gorytos* overlays from Chortomlyk [Шилов 1961, 165] and Melitopol [Тереножкин, Мозолевский 1988, 121–122; 125, *рис.* 139; Черненко 1981, 76]. The same technology can be seen in earlier *gorytoi* from Solokha (gilded silver) [Фармаковский 1922, 23–48] and Vergina (gold, Karagodeuashkh series) [Черненко 1981, 71–72]. Researchers agree that gypsum filling was used to protect the relief from deformation [Treister 2001, 136, *fn.* 85; cf. Jacobson 1995, 225–226 and *fn.* 13], while its composition may also have served as an adhesive.

All *gorytoi* of Chortomlyk series are united by a single iconographic design, but the geography of their discoveries varies greatly [Shcheglov, Katz 1991, 115, *fig.* 30].

1. **Chortomlyk** overlay, Hermitage, inv. no. Dn 1863 1/435 (dimensions: 46.8 × 27.3 cm, w. 195.96 g (perhaps without bottom?); 48.1 % gold, 47.2 % silver, 2.2 % copper (see note 10)) (**Fig. 1**). This *gorytos* overlay was found in 1863 by I. Zabelin’s expedition in the central tomb of the Chortomlyk burial mound [Древности Геродотовой Скифии 1872, 2, *табл.* XXXIV; Толстой, Кондаков 1889, 143–145, *рис.* 121; Алексеев, Мурзин, Ролле 1991, 223–235]. It was in the southern niche “k” of Chamber V [Rolle 1979, II, 30]. Along with the upholstery, the remains of a wooden case and bronze arrowheads were also found. Nearby were a sword in a scabbard covered with a gold plate depicting the battle of the Greeks with the barbarians, as well as four other swords, bronze and iron belt buckles, a gold-framed whetstone, and gold openwork plates.

**Fig. 1.** Gold *gorytos* overlay from the Chortomlyk burial mound, Hermitage, inv. no. DN1863 1/435 (after [Daumas 2009, pl. I,1])



2. *Illintsi* overlay, ex Hermitage inv. no. Dn 1902 2/4 [Бабенко 2023, 160] (dimensions: 47 × 26 cm, w. 220.76 g; 49.3 % gold, 47.6 % silver, 1.4 % copper (see note 10)) (**Fig. 2**). Excavations of the burial mound near the Illintsi (Vinnytsya region, Ukraine) were begun by N. Brandenburg in 1901. In 1902, the gold *gorytos* overlay was found in a large wooden tomb that had been plundered in ancient times [Фармаковский 1911, 51–54]. Since the author of the excavations died in 1903, the results of this burial mound were not published, and the field documentation was lost<sup>14</sup>. The *gorytos* overlay was transferred to the Hermitage. The further museum history of this artefact is usually reported very briefly. Thus, M. Treister indicates that the overlay was in the Hermitage until 1932 but then was transferred to Kharkiv and that it was lost during World War II [Treister 2001, 136, No. 79; cf. Русяева 2002, 125 (№ 2)]. He does not mention the reason for transferring this object to Ukraine, but it is important. Based on Order No. 17092 of the Science Sector of the People's Commissariat for Education of the RSFSR dated 20 January 1932, the transfer of museum collections from the State Hermitage to representatives of Ukraine took place on 31 January 1932, but the process had been dragging on since 1918 [Бабенко 2018, 594–595; 2021, 103–104; 2022, 62–64; 2023, 156–164]. Unfortunately, the overlay was not evacuated when World War II started, and it was destroyed because of German bombing of the evacuation train near Belgorod in 1941.

**Fig. 2.** Gold *gorytos* overlay from the Illintsi burial mound (lost in World War II) (after [Фармаковский 1911, табл. I; Daumas 2009, 18, fig. 1])





3. **Melitopol** overlay, Treasury of the National Museum of History of Ukraine, inv. no. AZS-1416 (dimensions: 47 × 27 cm, w. 206.49 g) (**Fig. 3**). This *gorytos* was found in the central male burial No. 2 of the Melitopol mound [Тереножкин 1955, 23–34; Покровская 1955, 191–199; Онайко 1970, 25f., № 421, табл. 20, 45; Rätzl 1978, 175; Schiltz 1979, 309, fig. 3; Черненко 1981, 81, рис. 58; Тереножкин, Мозолевский 1988, 121–128 (110), рис. 140–148; Stähler, Nieswandt 1991–1992, 85–108; Толочко, Мурзін 1991, кам. № 2; Treister 1999, 70–81, figs 1–4; Treister 2001, 136–139; Полідович 2022]. This mound was discovered by chance in an urban area among several private houses. In this area, known as Yurovka, a group of burial mounds that was found in the early 1930s included at least eight large barrows. In the spring of 1954, a local resident, G. Mozgovoy, was constructing a well in his property when he happened upon a collapsed dome-shaped underground structure. Subsequent investigation revealed this to be the burial chamber of a Scythian burial mound. When the discovery was made public, the staff of the Melitopol Local History Museum, who arrived at the site, decided to report the find to the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR. Consequently, an expedition led by O. Terenozhkin initiated emergency excavations, which continued until the autumn of 1954 [Тереножкин, Мозолевский 1988, 9–12]. The burial had been disturbed by ancient robbers. It is only possible to assume that the skeleton lay in the middle of the burial chamber. In the chamber's north-eastern corner, behind the dromos, a small recess in the floor (0.58 × 0.4 m and 0.16–0.18 m deep) was identified as a cache, oriented from south to north [Тереножкин, Мозолевский 1988, 13, 51, рис. 5, 44]; the *gorytos* was discovered at its base [Тереножкин, Мозолевский 1988, 52–53, рис. 44–46]. The gold overlay was found to be well-preserved, while the wooden components had decayed into a brown residue. The Melitopol overlay has variation in colour on photos: the main part is paler, while another is more reddish. However, it is regrettable that no metallographic or other analysis of the overlay has been conducted to provide an explanation of this feature. In consideration of the data available for me, it is not feasible to offer an explanation at this time, but according similar cases J. Ogden noted that during melting together different bits of gold could give such a result when “the temperature... was insufficient to fully melt the gold and therefore patches of different colours of gold are discernible” [Ogden 2024, 49]. The other reason could be a modern restoration.

**Fig. 3.** Gold *gorytos* overlay from the Melitopol burial mound, Treasury of the National Museum of History of Ukraine, inv. no. AZS-1416 (after [Полідович 2022, 76, fig. 1])



4. **Five Brothers** overlay, Rostov Regional Museum of Local Lore, inv. no. KP 1638/17 (dimensions: 48 × 25 cm [Schiltz 2001, 122 (Cat. 89)]<sup>15</sup>; 60.89 % gold, 36.61 % silver, 0.92 % copper; 0.60 % iron (see note 10)) (**Fig. 4**).



**Fig. 4.** Gold *gorytos* overlay from the Five Brothers burial mound, Rostov Regional Museum of Local Lore, inv. no. KP 1638/17 (after [Schiltz 2001, 123])



This overlay was discovered in 1959 by an expedition led by V. Shilov during the investigation of burial mound 8 in the Five Brothers (Pyatibratny) group near the village of Elizavetovskaya in the Rostov Region (now the village of Elizavetinskaya in the Azov District of the Russian Federation). In this mound, the remains of a noble warrior were found, buried in a stone crypt [Шилов 1961, 158–162, рис. 13; 1962, 52–69; The Treasures... 1991, 60–61 (Cat. 31); Shcheglov, Katz 1991, 110–111, рис. 22, 24; Schiltz 2001, 122–125]. A *gorytos* with 108 arrows was found on the left side of the deceased [Schiltz 2001, 111]. On top of the *gorytos* lay a sword in a scabbard decorated with a gold plate similar to the one found in Chortomlyk, as well as a bundle of 48 arrows. Next to it was a gold ribbon decorating the handle of a whip and an iron knife with a bone handle. It should be noted that this is the only case where a *gorytos* of this series was found on the body of the deceased. In other cases, the overlays were found in caches deposited in recesses in the floor of burial chambers.

Shilov noticed a difference in the gold alloy on the inside and outside of the overlay: “On the front, the gold content is slightly higher. This is an example of gilding, whereby objects made of lower-grade gold are given the appearance of being made of pure gold on the outside” [Шилов 1961, 166]. The same situation with gilding the outer side of the plates probably applies to other overlays as well, which were reddish on the upper part and yellow on the inside [Richter 1932, 116, fn. 25].

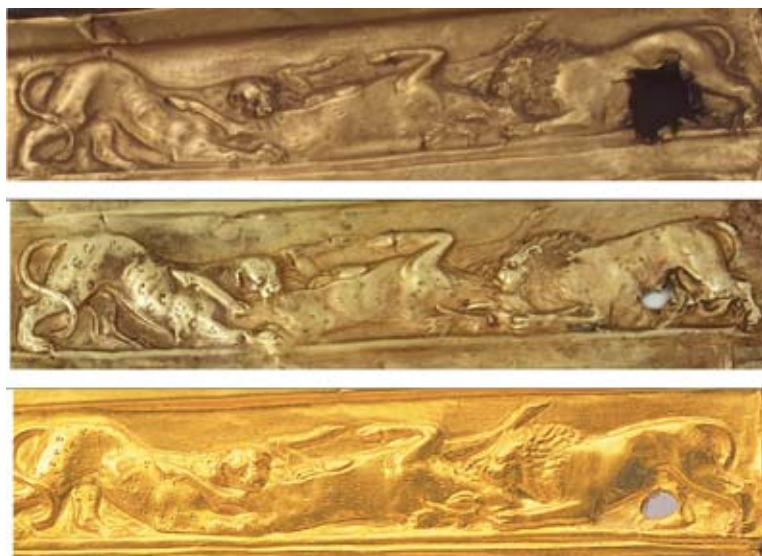
#### Discussion

Contrary to the established order of “reading” the upper narrow zoomorphic frieze, from bottom to top, it seems logical to me to read this frieze on the overlays from the scene of torment from right to left (I.1) and downward to the bottom. In this way the final scene is a dog chasing a hare (I.3), which does not contradict this direction, but on the contrary indicates it. For a clear understanding of the difference between overlays, I will consider the scenes in comparative tables using the abbreviations Ch = Chortomlyk<sup>16</sup>; M = Melitopol<sup>17</sup>; F = Five Brothers, no. 8<sup>18</sup>. A comparative study of the scenes depicted on all surviving *gorytos* overlays of the “Chortomlyk series” will be proposed for the first time<sup>19</sup>. The focus will be on the similarities and differences between the details on different overlays, while the actual semantics of the scenes will be considered.

**Zoomorphic frieze (Table 1–5).** The **scene 1** shows a lion and a spotted leopard tearing up an upended stag (Table 1). It is noteworthy that only the Melitopol overlay has the end of the lion’s tail under the hind leg. Above the lion’s back there is a hole for attaching a belt, possibly in the Illintsi overlay (Fig. 2). In all the others (Chortomlyk, Melitopol and Five Brothers), this hole is under the lion’s belly. I would like to dwell on an error that is present only on the Chortomlyk overlay in this scene. M. Treister has pointed out that the leopard and stag have the same decoration of parallel linear strokes; one more example is a gold ring from Kurgan 6 of the Seven Brothers (Semybratny); normally the

leopard should be decorated with groups of chiselled dots forming a kind of irregular rosette [Treister 1999, 76–77, *fig. 6*]. The scholar did not offer any explanation for these examples. In my opinion, in this scene the leopard has lost its original character and is transformed semantically from a predator into an herbivore.

**Table 1.** Zoomorphic frieze, scene 1



The next composition (**scene 2 a-c**) consists, in my opinion, of three scenes and is united by the single idea of animal confrontation (**Tables 2–4**). The compositional closure of three potential victims – a bull, a deer, and a wild boar – by lions on both sides prompts us to consider them together as a semantic block. First, the **scene 2a** is a lion and a boar are depicted confronting each other (**Table 2**). A gold plaque from the First Vovkivtsi burial mound, 4<sup>th</sup> century BC (excavations of 1897, Sumy Region) resembles the lion in the same pose and could have had the same prototype [Treister 1999, 75; Полідович, Величко 2023, 51–67] (**Fig. 5**).

**Table 2.** I Zoomorphic frieze, scene 2a



**Fig. 5.** Gold plaque from the First Vovkivtsi burial mound, 4<sup>th</sup> century BC  
(after [Reeder 1999, *Cat. 106*; Полідович, Величко 2023, *pl. I.1*])



The next **scene 2b** of this block shows a return to the tearing in the first scene, but this time a spotted female leopard is tearing up a young deer (**Table 3**). The enlarged teats could signify that the leopard has recently given birth that would mean that she had be extra-ferocious. Again, the leopard in the centre of the frieze on Chortomlyk is decorated with parallel lines and the young deer with chased dots. Indeed, only on the Chortomlyk overlay we could see the transformation of an animal in fur, but it does not agree with the reverse in the previous scene [Treister 1999, 76]. Thus, the leopards have lost their characteristic features twice in this frieze on the Chortomlyk overlay; there is no similar transformation on the other overlays.

**Table 3.** Zoomorphic frieze, scene 2b





This block ends with a **scene 2c** showing the confrontation between a bull<sup>20</sup> and a lioness<sup>21</sup> (compare the image of a female leopard in scene 2b) (**Table 4**).

**Table 4.** Zoomorphic frieze, scene 2c



This frieze ends with **scene 3** of the dog chasing the hare<sup>22</sup> (**Table 5**), which survives complete only on the Melitopol overlay. Describing the upper frieze of the Five Brothers overlay Shilov does not mention the scene with the dog [Шилов 1961, 161], which suggests that this scene is poorly preserved there. Treister made an observation while studying the Melitopol overlay in 1998, noticing the possible presence of part of another animal, a feline's curved tail moving in the opposite direction to the dog. Scholar explains this as a trace of an original sketch, from which the master accidentally transferred an element to the overlay. Other overlays do not have this detail [Treister 1999, 74; 2001, 139].

**Table 5.** Zoomorphic frieze, scene 3



**Anthropomorphic frieze I, scene 1 (Table 6–7).** This frieze can be divided into three scenes. **Scene 1 (a-b)**, which is oriented from left to right, has five figures. The depiction

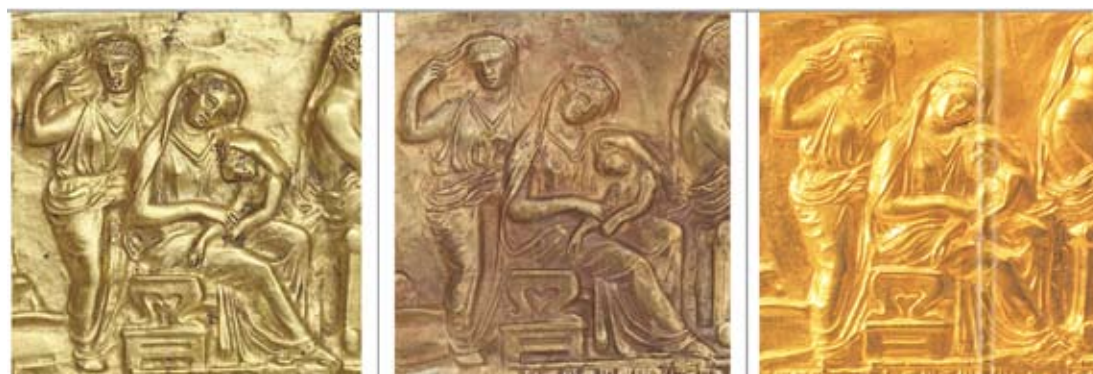
is of a nude male seated on a rock, teaching archery to a small boy (I.1a – **Table 6**) who is standing on a rocky outcrop that is elaborated with dots on the Melitopol overlay.

**Table 6.** Anthropomorphic frieze I, scene 1a



**Scene 1** ends with two women and a boy (I.1b – **Table 7**). The first woman stands, pulling at her veil with her right hand, next to the other woman, who is seated on a chair atop a stool and holds the boy. One of the chairs is decorated with dots on the Illintsi overlay [Фармаковский 1911, 73; Daumas 2009 21].

**Table 7.** Anthropomorphic frieze I, scene 1b



**Scene 2 (a-b)** is composed of four figures (**Table 8–9**). The first figure, who is in a right profile against a background of drapery that frames his head and shoulders, sits on a chair. He uses both hands to hold the right hand of a youth who grasps a dagger (I.2a – **Table 8**).

This scene is key to understanding the mythological narrative of the images on the overlays. In 1889, C. Robert suggested (*Archäologische Anzeiger* 1889, No. 8, 151–152), apparently drawing on analogies with Roman sarcophagi (see [Matz et al. 1890, *Taf. X–XIX*])<sup>23</sup>, that this scene depicts Achilles discarding his women's clothing and choosing weapons on the island of Skyros. According to the story (*Apollod.*, III.13.8), Thetis, Achilles' mother, hid him on the island of Skyros as a guest of King Lycomedes to avoid his fate of dying in the Trojan War. However, the cunning Odysseus managed to infiltrate the royal palace on Skyros and show weapons to Achilles, who was dressed in women's clothing and surrounded by Lycomedes' daughters. Seeing the weapons aroused Achilles' warrior spirit, causing him to throw off his women's clothing and choose a weapon. This determined his predestined path to glory and death. Robert also drew an analogy with a painting by Polygnotus with the same plot, described by Pausanias (I.22.6). Later, Farmakovsky offered a detailed interpretation of the scenes depicted on the *gorytos* overlays in the context of the Ionian myth about Achilles [Фармаковский



1911, 82–102]. This interpretation has become dominant in modern scholarship, although others exist<sup>24</sup>. The eschatological nature of this scene should be emphasised. Initiation into the female sphere was the equivalent of death, whereas Achilles' choice of weapons and his decision to become a warrior was *resurrection* [Шайб 2007, 186; Виноградов 2015, 90; Лазаренко 2020, 37–38]. This explains why this plot was placed on funerary objects, such as the *gorytoi* in this case. *Gorytos* played an important role in the Scythians' eschatological beliefs. For instance, the image of a *gorytos* hanging on a tree could symbolise the death and rebirth of its master [Вертиенко 2010, 91–102; see also Vertiienko 2023, 131–148].

**Table 8.** Anthropomorphic frieze I, scene 2a



Next, in **scene 2b**, are two women, of whom the left one is seated on cushion resting on a stool. The other woman is depicted in impulsive movement, while the first woman tries to stop her by pulling at her garment (I.2b – **Table 9**).

**Table 9.** Anthropomorphic frieze I, scene 2b



This scene demonstrates different matrix matching. On the Melitopol, Five Brothers, and Illintsi overlays [Фармаковский 1911, 78; Daumas 2009, 21], the scenes merged without loss in the resulting composite image – a seated bearded man with his right arm raised<sup>25</sup>. On the Chortomlyk overlay, for unknown reasons the surface was flattened, affecting the man's hand holding a staff along with part of the drapery.

**Scene 3** occupies the triangular extension of the *gorytoi* and is separated from the previous one by a narrow ridge composed of two men (I.3 – **Table 10**). M. Treister asserted that the figures of the seated man and the youth were executed before the scene to the left [Treister 1999, 72]. Special attention should be paid to the quality of the reflections of the folding chair on which the man sits. Only the Melitopol overlay shows the crossbars in full, whereas the other overlays lack some elements of them. The sword held by the youth on the far right is stippled on the Chortomlyk and Illintsi overlays, whereas it is smooth on the overlays from Five Brothers and Melitopol [Jacobson 1995, 226].



**Table 10.** Anthropomorphic frieze I, scene 3

**Anthropomorphic frieze II, scene 1 (Tables 11–13).** **Scene 1** is composed of four women in left three-quarter profile. They are seated under a canopy that is carefully depicted only on the Melitopol overlay [Полідович 2022, 81; see also Jacobson 1995, 226; Daumas 2009, 21–22] (II.1 – **Table 11**). The central woman sits on a draped chest that rests on a stool. This woman places her left arm over the shoulder of the woman in front of her. Differences between hairdos on the Melitopol and Chortomlyk overlays have been pointed out [Полідович 2022, 81, прим. 4, рис. 3, 1–2].

The left part of **Scene 2 (a-b)**, which is separated from Scene 1 by a vertical ridge, shows three bearded men and a youth. The man closest to vertical ridge is seated in three-quarter right profile, with his left arm raised above his head and his right arm resting on the back of his chair (II.2a – **Table 12**). I should note the presence of an image of a ram's head on the throne arm on the Chortomlyk overlay, which is absent on the other items.

In the centre of **Scene 2b**, a seated youth is surrounded by older bearded men (II.2b – **Table 13**). The youth holds some objects in his hands. In all overlays except Melitopol, they are shown as elongated rectangles with a smooth surface. Only the Melitopol overlay has these items with internal relief and a rounded top edge [Полідович 2022, 83]. Farmakovsky proposed to see them as elements of armour (*prometopidions*) [Фармаковский 1911, 49], but Chernenko rejected this definition [Черненко 1981, 86; 1998, 38]. Daumas, based on his interpretation of the scenes on the *gorytoi* as illustrations of the Telephus myth, sees the objects on the overlays as tables with maps depicting the route to Troy through Asia and Europe [Daumas 2009, 59–60].

**Table 11.** Anthropomorphic frieze II, scene 1



**Table 12.** Anthropomorphic frieze II, scene 2a



II 2a Ch

II 2a M

II 2a F



**Table 13.** Anthropomorphic frieze II, scene 2b



**Scene 3** depicts a female figure standing with her head bowed, holding something in her hands that is wrapped in the lapel of her chiton (II.3 – **Table 14**)<sup>26</sup>.

**Table 14.** Anthropomorphic frieze II, scene 3



Some researchers see this as a wrapped baby [Черненко 1981, 86; Тереножкин, Мозолевский 1988, 127]. Other scholars believe that the woman is holding an urn with the ashes of Achilles, but Daumas convincingly proved that the object in the woman's hands cannot be an urn containing ashes but is indeed a depiction of a baby. He pointed out that vessels of this shape were not used for ashes in Greek funerary rites [Daumas 2009, 51–52]. On the Chortomlyk overlay is it clearly visible that this is an elongated pouch, drawn together at the top [Полідович 2022, 83].

Under the two anthropomorphic friezes is a floral frieze divided by a narrow-undecorated ridge (III – the floral frieze **Table 15**). The first part of this frieze is decorated with an acanthus scroll containing rosettes, which continues along the bottom (see in detail [Daumas 2009, 78–86; cf. Treister 1999, 75]). The second part has lotuses and palmettes. This part of the frieze has holes for nails, which were used to attach the overlay to a wooden case. The degree of curvature of the lower part of the overlays varies.

**Table 15.** The floral frieze



The rectangular extension shows a scene in which two eagle-headed griffins are tearing apart a leopard (**Table 16**). Despite the proverb “a leopard cannot change his spots”, on the Chortomlyk overlay this animal has stripes (typical of herbivores) instead of three dots, but in this case the “error” seems more justified than in the zoomorphic frieze (see **Table 3**, scene 3b, Ch). Since in this case the leopard is the prey, the change in “colour” or texture is understandable in semantic terms. The griffins have pronounced gender differences, and only “the necks on the Chortomlyk griffins are rendered to suggest fur” [Jacobson 1995, 226].

On the drop-shaped bottom of the overlay there are two heraldic lion-griffins. They stand on their hind paws, and they have horns that take the form of an acanthus scroll. Their paws rest on an acanthus plant that supports an undecorated vertical ridge between them (**Table 17**). The upper part of all the gold plates used to decorate the bottom of *gorytoi* shows both damage and repair. The poor condition of the upper part of the bottom is explained by its being connected with small gold nails around the perimeter to the main part of the *gorytos*.



**Table 16.** A rectangular extension



**Table 17.** The drop-shaped bottom



### ***Semantics of the scenes***

Researchers interpret the semantics and plots of scenes with anthropomorphic images on the Chortomlyk series overlays ambiguously, and several interpretations have historically developed around them, replacing and complementing each other<sup>27</sup>. Let us consider the main ones.

1. *Scenes from the myth of Alope*. L. Stefani first put forward the idea that the Chortomlyk *gorytos* was produced in Attica, suggesting correspondences between individual pictorial plots and the Attic legend of Alope [Стефани 1865, 152–171]. Several other researchers in both the Russian Empire and abroad supported him [Толстой, Кондаков 1889, 143–145; Лаппо-Данилевский 1894, 56; Minns 1913, 284, *fn.* 2]. According to the myth, Alope was the lover of Poseidon and bore him a son named Hippophontes. For this reason, she was killed by her father, Kerkyon, the king of Eleusis. Poseidon subsequently transformed her body into a spring named after her (cf. *Paus.*, I.39.3). It should be noted that Stefani “read” the scenes on the overlay from the lower register to the upper one, seeing only separate episodes with a mythological basis and not a connected sequential plot.

2. *Scenes from the myth of Achilles*. The hypothesis that the Chortomlyk *gorytos* overlay depicts scenes from the Ionian myth of Achilles was first proposed by K. Robert at a meeting of the Berlin Academy of Sciences in 1889. He drew attention to the similarity between scene No. 2 in the upper frieze of the overlays and the story of Achilles on the island of Skyros, as depicted on Graeco-Roman sarcophagi. This was soon supported by V. Malmberg, who compared the scenes on the Chortomlyk overlay with those on the fragmentary silver overlay of the *gorytos* from the Karagodeuashkh burial mound (4<sup>th</sup> century BC) [Мальмберг 1894, 180–190]. V. Farmakovsky proposed the most detailed interpretation of the plot on the Chortomlyk and Illintsi overlays [Фармаковский 1911, 82–102]. He suggested reading the scenes on the overlays from the upper frieze and, most importantly, viewed them as a single narrative. This interpretation found many supporters, who repeated it in various forms in their publications (see, e.g. [Шилов 1961, 161–162; Онайко 1970, 26; Rätzl 1978, 174; Раевский 1985, 166–169; Тереножкин, Мозолевский 1988, 125–128; Алексеев, Мурзин, Ролле 1991, *Kam.* 189; Jacobson 1995, 227; Алексеев 2012, 206–207]). In several cases, researchers pointed to difficulties in interpretation (e.g. [Черненко 1981, 78–89; Meyer 2013, 201–205]). In other cases, scholars attempted to make certain clarifications but generally did not go beyond Farmakovsky’s proposed division of scenes and main characters (e.g. [Русяева 2002, 125–144]). An attempt to revise the interpretation of the Chortomlyk series overlays plot was made by Yu. Polidovych [Полідович 2022, 77–79]. The scholar arranged the scenes in a different way, with nine scenes instead of the five described by Farmakovsky [Полідович 2022, 79, *pus.* 2]. Scholar also proposed a new interpretation of some of the characters. For instance, in the first scene of the upper frieze (I.1a), in the archery teaching scene, Polidovych interprets Apollo as teaching Achilles. This seems questionable to me, given the circumstances of Achilles’ life and death who was in a liminal period between youth and adulthood at the beginning and during the Trojan War (see [Bremmer 1978, 5–38, esp. 6–7]). He is not Apollo’s follower, but rather his dark counterpart<sup>28</sup>. His death by Apollo’s arrow is consistent with the ritual death of a liminal hero at the hands of a god who is most closely connected with male initiation and *ephebes* [Bremmer 2021, 77]. Therefore, the image of the young Achilles being taught archery by his father Peleus at the start of his military training<sup>29</sup> provides a more satisfying explanation for this scene. Regarding the four female figures in the first scene of the lower frieze (II.1), Polidovych identifies only Briseis there and believes that “this scene symbolically depicts the female experience: from girlhood to grandmotherhood” [Полідович 2022, 82]. Regarding the bearded man sitting on a chair in scene II.2a, the scholar does not see Agamemnon as the most scholars do, but rather Zeus resting on his throne [Полідович 2022, 82].



3. *Interpretations from the perspective of the Iranian/Scythian mytho-epic tradition.* K. Stähler and H.-H. Nieswandt proposed that the scenes on the overlays depict a particular Iranian epic involving a love story and the theme of succession to the throne, as referenced by Athenaeus of Naucratis (2<sup>nd</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> century AD) (Ath. 13.575a-f) [Stähler and Nieswandt 1991–1992, 85–108]. D. Raevskiy expressed the opinion that the Scythians could recognise the plots of the myth about their own hero, Kolaxais, in the scenes on the examined *gorytoi* [Раевский 1985, 164–169]. Some researchers have suggested that the Scythians may have seen Tagimasad in the image of Achilles in the scenes depicted on the *gorytoi* overlays [Болтенко 1962, 16–32; Шайб 2002, 188; Акимова 2013, 612].

4. *Scenes from the Telephus myth.* The French scholar M. Daumas, who devoted a monograph to analysing the iconography of Scythian *gorytoi*, suggested that the scenes depicted on the overlays of the Chortomlyk series not only show scenes from the life of Achilles, but also depict another character associated with the Trojan cycle: King Telephus. According to Apollodorus (III.17.20), it was Telephus who showed the Achaeans the sea route to Troy (see scene II.2b) [Daumas 2009]. Daumas also proposed that, following Stähler and Nieswandt [Stähler and Nieswandt 1991–1992], that the figure of a boy with a bow in the perhaps most controversial scene of archery training (I.1a) should be seen as a representation of a statue of Apollo [Daumas 2009, 59–60]. However, this hypothesis has been criticised by C. Meyer [Meyer 2013, 204].

5. *The meaning of the zoomorphic frieze.* Most scholars who have studied the iconography of the Chortomlyk series of *gorytos* overlays have not paid particular attention to the semantics of zoomorphic images, nor to their possible connection with anthropomorphic subjects via zoomorphic symbolic codes. Nevertheless, Polidovich advances in his recent article the hypothesis that scenes of torment on overlays may be interpreted as a metaphorical representation of the battle motifs of the Trojan War, with the character of Achilles being compared to a lion [Полідович 2022, 87]. L. Babenko expressed the opinion that, since scenes of torment in Scythian art were perceived as “a metaphorical image of death and the equivalent of sacrifice”, “the Greeks depicted on the overlay could be interpreted as ‘captives’ gathered for sacrifice” (see Herod., *Hist.*, IV, 62) [Babenko 2024, 124]. The placement of these characters under a zoomorphic frieze, i.e. in the symbolic underworld, “indicates their possible entry into the world of the dead to accompany and serve the master of the *gorytos*”.

## Conclusion

The method of making *gorytoi* by hand inevitably introduced individual features into each overlay, and these were enhanced by differences in alloys and individual secondary detailing after. It can be hypothesised that overlays made of alloy were stamped harder because they were less plastic, so that they required more extensive refinement. It is the subsequent plasticisation of the metal that has been identified as the factor responsible for the distinctive features observable in the overlays, with scholars endeavouring to deduce chronological series from these features. In order to determine the effect of the gold alloy on the quality and malleability of the plates used to create the overlays for the Chortomlyk series, the Melitopol overlay must be analysed, as it is the only one whose alloy has not yet been studied. Nevertheless, it remains challenging to establish the chronology of the manufacture of *gorytoi* solely based on evidence of processing. The variation in these details should be considered to display stylistic features that were introduced by the master (or assistant) who finalised the relief details after the plate was removed from the matrix, so that it is indicative of the extent of their creativity. As a result, inaccuracies or even some “errors” appeared, as I have noted in the comparative analysis of the scenes. At the same time, all the differences among the overlays relate to the second stage of manufacture. They may indicate that the artists had different sketches or a generalised scheme that allowed for a freedom of execution that led to some semantic

“errors” and differences in the rendering of both faces and details. It is plausible that there were several similar sets of matrices for producing overlays in different Bosporan workshops in 4<sup>th</sup> century BC or used by different groups of craftsmen in a same workshop. Due to the prevalence of overlays of this series, it is possible that new examples could be discovered in the future.

Perhaps in the eyes of the Scythians the presence of an image of a well-known hero (Achilles) on the *gorytos* overlays marked the bearer of the object as belonging to the pantheon of heroes. As I have previously mentioned, *gorytos* also played an important role in the Scythians’ eschatological beliefs. The depiction of the eschatological scene of Achilles’ “death” and “rebirth” (scene I.2a) is important to emphasise. The idea of the birth of a new hero, i.e. the cycle of life and death, is also conveyed by the final anthropomorphic scene on the overlays, which depicts a woman with a baby (scene III.3). The motif of the hero’s birth can also be seen in the final scene of the zoomorphic frieze, if we interpret the hare chase scene in the context of the Nart legend about Khamytz’ pursuit of the hare, who turns out to be the daughter of the water deity Donbetyr. Their union produced Batraz, the hero and patron of warriors<sup>30</sup>. Therefore, it can be assumed that the *gorytoi* of the Chortomlyk series, with their expressive eschatological decoration, which was apparently equally important and visible to both the Hellenes and the Scythians, were specifically made for the burial needs of the Scythian elite. This assumption calls into question the widespread belief that the so-called “ceremonial” *gorytoi*, which are decorated with precious metal made by Bosporan Greek workshops, were diplomatic gifts to Scythian leaders.

I hope that my article will stimulate a new level of interdisciplinary research into *gorytos* overlays and other Scythian toreutics, including detailed metallographic analysis of artefacts.

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<sup>1</sup> In the Nart epic, Soslan takes the quiver of a fallen warrior on a military campaign as his equivalent [Чочиев 1985, 121].

<sup>2</sup> First published in 1843.

<sup>3</sup> Thesaurus Linguae Graecae®, available at: <https://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/> (accessed September 25, 2025).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. comments by Apollonius the Sophist (1<sup>st</sup> century AD) (γωρυτός ἢ τοξοθήκη, οἶονεὶ γωρυτός, παρὰ τὸ τὸ τόξον χωρεῖν· συγγενὲς γὰρ τὸ γ τῷ χ. οἷον χώρημα τοῦ τόξου. τῶν ἅπαξ εἰρημέων) [Apollonii 1833, 56 (line 1)].

<sup>5</sup> É. Benveniste’s study of the term “*gorytos*” (γωρυτός) in conjunction with the term “bow” (τόξον) is methodologically sound, as it disregards the fact that Homer describes them together, and it is possible that both terms originate from ancient Iranian [Benveniste 1937, 37–46].

<sup>6</sup> This action is explained by Heracles’ close friendship with the Argonaut Telamon, Ajax’s father.

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the parallelism between the bows of Heracles and Eurytus, and the resulting similarity between the images of Heracles and Odysseus see [Crissy 1997; Andersen 2012, 139–146].

<sup>8</sup> The bibliography on subject till 2001 see: [Treister 2001, 136, *fn.* 78–81].

<sup>9</sup> See e.g. [Schilz 1994, 142–143, *figs* 105–106]. The error was pointed out by M. Treister [Treister 1999, 81, *fn.* 3] and then by Yu. Polidovich [Polidovich 2022, 75, *fn.* 2]. The book by Véronique Schilz is published in French, German, and Italian [Schilz 1994]. The duplication of such errors in several languages can exacerbate the confusion.

<sup>10</sup> E.g. Chortomlyk: 48.1 % gold, 47.2 % silver, 2.2 % copper; Illintsi: 49.3 % gold, 47.6 % silver, 1.4 % copper [Фармаковский 1911, 59]; Five Brothers: 60.89 % gold, 36.61 % silver, 0.92 % copper, 0.60 % iron [Шилов 1961, 166].

<sup>11</sup> Hypothetical matrix junctions can be seen in the upper frieze before the fifth figure and in the lower frieze after the fourth female figure with raised arms on the *gorytos* from “Philip’s tomb” in Vergina (Macedonia) [Andronicos 1984, 182–183].

<sup>12</sup> In fact, after the two figures mentioned above, three figures are shown on the overlays. Perhaps the scholar saw a separate figure in the so-called “child” held by the woman in the final scene but then it was corrected [Treister 2001, 138].

<sup>13</sup> E.g. A. Mantseвич proposes the following order of manufacturing overlays: 1. Melitopol, 2. Illintsi, 3. Five Brothers, 4. Chortomlyk [Манцевич 1962, 109–110], while N. Onaiko: 1. Melitopol, 2. Illintsi, 3. Chortomlyk, 4. Five Brothers [Онайко 1974, 79–80].

<sup>14</sup> The report is known only from 1901 (see: [Галанина 1977, 32, 35; pl. 16]). This is the reason why some scholars cite this year as the year of discovery of the Illintsi *gorytos* overlay.

<sup>15</sup> But in other catalogue: 45 × 25 cm [The Treasures... 1991, 60 (Cat. 31)].

<sup>16</sup> Photos after [Aruz et al. 2000, Cat. 162; Алексеев 2012, 206–209; Daumas 2009].

<sup>17</sup> Photos after [Reeder 1999, Cat. 105; Полідович 2022, 76, рис. 1].

<sup>18</sup> Photos after [The Treasures... 1991, Cat. 31; Schiltz 2001, Cat. 89].

<sup>19</sup> The overlay from Illintsi has been excluded from this review on account of its loss and the substandard quality of the accompanying photographs.

<sup>20</sup> For the iconography of the bull see [Shcheglov, Katz 1991, 110–111].

<sup>21</sup> See [Daumas 2009, 71–73; Полідович 2015, 127–128]. Other examples of similar images of a lioness are known on the ends of paired bracelets from the Bolshaya Bliznitsa (Kuban region) [Piotrovsky et al. 1986, pl. 234] and on the gold upholstery of the hilt of a sword from the Tovsta Mohyla [Полідович 2015, 125, fig. 1, 3–4].

<sup>22</sup> On the origins of iconography and possible semantics of this plot in the Scythian environment, see [Иванчик 1988, 41–42; Ivančik 1993, 314–315; Ivantchik 2005, 177–180; Раевский 1985, 60ff; Treister 2001, 52; Полідович, Вольная 2005, 421, 426–428].

<sup>23</sup> See [Robert 1890].

<sup>24</sup> E.g. [Stähler, Nieswandt 1991–1992] (interpretation according to Iranian mythological tradition); [Daumas 2009] (the scenes of Telephus’ myth), etc, see below.

<sup>25</sup> According to Treister [Treister 2001, 137–138] – “a left arm”. But cf. [Treister 1999, 72].

<sup>26</sup> This scene was compared in detail on different overlays by Onayko [Онайко 1974, 79–80, рис. 1, 5–8].

<sup>27</sup> See reviews [Minns 1913, 284–287; Daumas 2009; Полідович 2022, 77–79; Лазаренко 2020, 16–62; Meyer 2013, 201–204].

<sup>28</sup> See e.g. “Achilleus fast ein Doppelgänger Apellons, steht zum Gott gleichen Verhältnis wie Iphigenie zu Artemis, Poseidon, oder Hyakinthos zu Apollon: der Heros dunkles Spiegelbild des Gottes in der unauf löslichen tät des Opfers. Darum muß Achilleus durch Apollon nicht weil dieser Troia beschirmt – als Troia greift Apollon” [Burkert 1975, 19]. Cf. also [Hirschberger 2012].

<sup>29</sup> For education of Achilles and his teachers see *Statius*, Ach., 2.96–167 and [Heslin 2005].

<sup>30</sup> See in detail [Кузьмина 1977, 20–21; Полідович, Вольная 2005, 425].

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#### **Скіфські горити крізь грецьку призму:**

#### **Чортомлицька серія**

У статті аналізуються вживання терміна γορυτός у давньогрецьких джерелах та його етимологія. Авторка розглядає візуальну програму відомих золотих накладок горитів Чортомлицької серії (Чортомлик, 1863; Іллінці, 1902; Мелітополь, 1954; П'ять братів, № 8, 1959), які були знайдені в курганах другої половини IV ст. до н. е. На жаль, одна з накладок, з Іллінців, була втрачена під час Другої світової війни. Детально розглянуто технічний процес виготовлення накладок горитів. Спосіб виготовлення горитів вручну надавав кожній накладці унікальних рис, які, ймовірно, ще більше підкреслювалися варіаціями сплавів та додатковими деталями. Вперше проведено порівняльний аналіз кожної сцени на трьох збережених накладках. Крім того, авторка подає стислий розгляд наявних інтерпретацій значення сцен, включно з міфами про Алопа, Ахілла та Телефа, а також іранськими та скіфськими міфами. На думку авторки, візуальна програма накладок пов'язана зі смертю і відродженням ідеального героя (Ахілла?), вказуючи на есхатологічну семантику за грецьким зразком. Отже, горити Чортомлицької серії, можливо, були виготовлені спеціально для поховальних обрядів скіфської вищої аристократії, а не для дипломатичних відносин.

**Ключові слова:** горит; Чортомлицька серія; техніка виготовлення; іконографія; візуальна програма; семантика

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