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Archaeological Textiles from urban sites in the Moscow State of the 16th and 17th centuries

Irina I. Elkina

Abstract

Archaeological textiles present an important and capacious source of information. Textile material from archaeological excavations of late medieval sites on the territory of Moscow, Suzdal, Kirillov, Tver, Nizhny Novgorod, New Jerusalem monastery (near Moscow), Pereslavl-Zalessky, Vyazma and some other locations made it possible to replenish our knowledge on the types of fabrics which existed there; the techniques of household weaving, knitting, embroidery, and braiding; on the manufacturing technology for textile products; on the cut of secular and monastic clothes; the status of the buried; previously unknown types of ornament; and on the ways of decorating clothes including other textile objects for church and household used in the Moscow State of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Keywords: textiles; cloth preservation; historical costume; decorative finishing; ornaments; reconstruction methods; Muscovy; monastery.

Introduction

Textile is a broad term including woven, braided and knitted objects made of various fibers. During the archaeological works, textiles are occasionally found along with ceramic, metal, and bone objects. These are fabrics, ribbons, braids, cords used to make clothes, household articles, churchware, etc. In the 16th–17th centuries, textiles in the State of Muscovy – a historical region and former principality in Central European Russia (13th to 16th centuries) of which Moscow was the capital – were quite diverse in the nature of fibers, ways of making, the use of ornamentation and, of course, in quality – ranging from rough ones manufactured in the local households to delicate and very expensive imported items.

Material and state of preservation

Every year, the geography of finds is expanding, their number and variety increasing. Archaeological excavations of late medieval sites gave

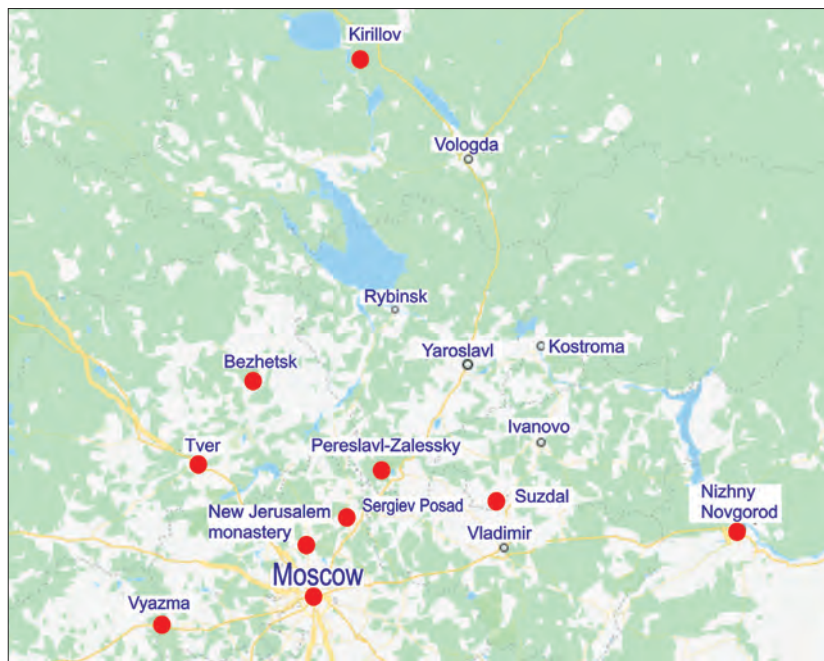


Fig. 1. Map of Central European Russia showing locations of sites mentioned in the text (Map: I. Elkina).

us a variety of medieval textile materials from Moscow, Suzdal, Kirillov, Tver, Nizhny Novgorod, New Jerusalem, Pereslavl-Zalessky, Vyazma and other localities (Fig. 1).

At present, despite a great amount of literature on the subject, there is still no integral picture of the production and use of textiles, the techniques for making textile objects and methods of their decorating in Russia of the 16th–17th centuries. In the Russian state museums, pieces of medieval textile are rare. Mostly, these are state elites' (i.e. *Tsar* and *Boyars*) clothes, made of expensive foreign fabrics (Fig. 2). There are virtually no museum items that provide an idea of the textiles used in the clothes and everyday life of ordinary and middle class people. Items of women's costume and headdress are very rare. Written sources of the 16th and 17th centuries also contain insufficient information about woven, braided and knitted products. Information on the design and cut of clothing is lacking almost completely. Thus, the study of archaeological textiles provides a unique opportunity to address many of these questions. However,



Fig. 2. The Russian Embassy in Regensburg in 1576. German painting of the 16th century (After: Rovinskij 1882).



Fig. 3. Textiles found in confined spaces: (a) in a white stone sarcophagus in Novospassky Monastery, Moscow. Photo: I. Elkina, (b) and (c) in a brick crypt in St. Danilov Monastery, Moscow. Photo: S. Shulyaev; (d) in an oak deck in Kirillo-Belozersky Monastery, Kirillov, Vologda region (Photo: I. Papin).



finding textiles during excavations in Central Russia are rather a seldom case. This is due to the humid climate and soil characteristics, which are not favorable for the organic material preservation. On the other hand, there are factors that ensure preservation even in such adverse environments.

The ideal conditions for preservation of textile are known to be constant temperature and humidity. Closed spaces with anoxic conditions, such as the inner part of a stone sarcophagus or a brick crypt, generate a favorable microclimate with a relatively stable temperature and humidity (**Fig. 3**). In such locations organic items can be found almost intact, even retaining their original color. However, contact with the atmosphere and a sharp change in temperature and humidity initiate a quick oxidation process and lead to a rapid textile deterioration right in front of excavators' eyes.

Another important factor of preservation is the presence of burnt layers. The fire layer is a germproof interlay, which prevents the development of bacteria and fungi causing decay and ensures good preservation of the



Fig. 4. Fragments of textiles found in the charcoal layer in Romanovs' Yard, Moscow (Photos: N. Krenke).

organics. Therefore, there is a high probability of finding well-preserved textiles under or within the charcoal layer (Fig. 4).



Fig. 5. Textiles with the use of metal threads found in soil burials. (a) headdress with gold ribbon and weaving of gold threads. Cemetery near the Church of the Intercession on the Moat (St. Basil's Cathedral), Moscow. Photo: I. Elkina. (b) Remains of the paraman (also paramand, from Greek παραμάντιον or παραμάνδριον, "addition to the mantle") belonging to the vestments of a monk in Saviour-St. Euthymius Monastery, Suzdal. Gold embroidery (Photo: M. Kapitonova).

Oxides of metals also help to preserve fabrics. Penetrating into textile fibers, they reinforce them, so that the fabrics in the soil lying on metal objects and next to them, as well as textiles manufactured with using a gold or silver thread, are less prone to decay. As a rule, these are fragments of brocade and golden embroidery. In some cases the fabric of an object is preserved only under the golden embroidery (Fig. 5).

It should also be pointed out that metal oxides penetrating into textile fibers are capable of completely replacing the latter. In such cases, although the textile object is lost, one can obtain information about its past appearance and structure owing to the preserved imprints (Fig. 6).

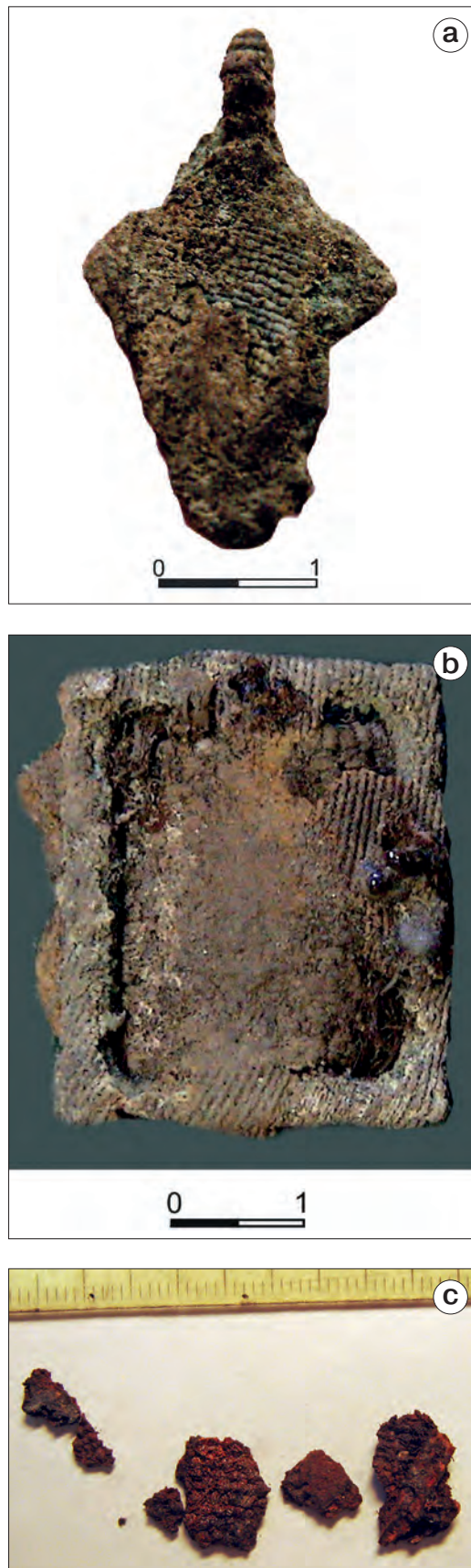


Fig. 6. Zachatievsky (Alekseevsky) convent, Moscow. Oxides of metal that retain the structure of the fabric: (a) on the copper cross; (b) on a copper buckle; (c) oxides taken from an iron object, reflecting the structure of the textile tissue (Photos: O. Glazunova).

In addition to the burial conditions, the preservation of textile objects in the soil depends heavily on the raw materials used for their manufacture. Consequently, plant fibers contain cellulose and break down in the soil very quickly, disappearing virtually without a trace. Textiles made of woolen and dyed silk fibers are more resistant to destruction than those made of plant (i.e. linen, cotton, hemp) or undyed silk fibers. Better preservation of the dyed fibers is due to the fact that dyeing with plant extracts was usually carried out on the basis of a metal (e.g. copper, iron) mordant.

The largest portion of archaeological textile finds are associated with burials in white stone sarcophagi and brick crypts. Some objects are found in the burial grounds and redeposited layers of the cemetery. Textiles from cultural urban layers, where there are no additional factors for its preservation (for example, a layer of fire or the presence of metal objects), are relatively rare. Usually these are pieces of loose fabrics, ribbons, braids, cords, laces of wool or home-made plant fibers, so-called “mass material”, while remains of clothes are found more seldom. Similar fragments can be found in household pits. In both urban layers and pits occasionally there are finds made from silk and with the use of metal threads.

The rarity of textiles in the urban strata is explained not only by conditions unfavorable for preservation, but also by the fact that it remained expensive, and imported fabrics (especially Italian and Turkish) as well as golden ribbons and braids were affordable primarily to wealthy people, so they treated them with great care. Those objects were preserved, handed down by inheritance, and often reused (even more than once). A distinct precious place was also occupied by embroidery with gold-inwoven and dyed silk threads.

As a rule, archaeological textile objects are found in fragments, which are unsightly having lost their original colors. Some of them will never become exposition objects even after the restoration; besides, a fragment taken out of the soil will often be destroyed with improper storage and without appropriate conservation processing. Therefore, archaeologists do not always include textiles in the list of individual finds. Nevertheless, each fragment is an important and capacious source, containing information about the type of textiles, technology, manufacturing techniques, cut

peculiarities, and decoration methods. However, the first and the most important task is to preserve the textile fragments found during excavation (**Fig. 7**) by timely conservation directly in the field.

Further research is aimed at maximizing the information that can be obtained. For this, various methods such as material and structural analyses, dye analysis, macro- and microphotography, photographic fixation in oblique rays and radiography are used. On the basis of the data collected, it is possible then to restore the original appearance of the object.

Traditional designs and decorative elements

The largest part of archaeological textile finds are fragments of secular clothes from rich burials, especially from crypts and sarcophagi. As a rule, these are elements of the Russian traditional costume: women's headdress, fragments of men's shirts, and decorative elements of outerwear. Each found piece of clothing was made in a certain tradition of cut, decorated with embroidery and braiding with gold and silk threads.

It should be noted that the Russian urban traditional costume is a very distinctive one. Its forms, tailoring and pattern of decorative elements were stable and practically unchanged throughout the vast territory of Muscovy. The Russian costume had been forming over many centuries under the influence of both the Eastern and the Western traditions. Additionally, the development of clothing was affected by rather severe Russian climate with long and cold snowy winters and by the established way of life of the Russian people. In addition to the basic functions (i.e. protection from bad weather and the aesthetic aspect), the clothes also served for protection from evil eye and indicated the owner's social status. Therefore, the clothes were seasonally different, often multi-layered and body-long, had special ornamentation and representative appearance, were very large and prevented high mobility. The shape of the traditional Russian costume had been formed by the late fifteenth century continuing into the early sixteenth century and remained basically unchanged until the early 18th century. The European costume started penetrating into Russia as early as the reign of Michael I (Theodorovich), and a number of decrees by Theodore III (Alexeevich) about the substitution of traditional "old-style" clothes

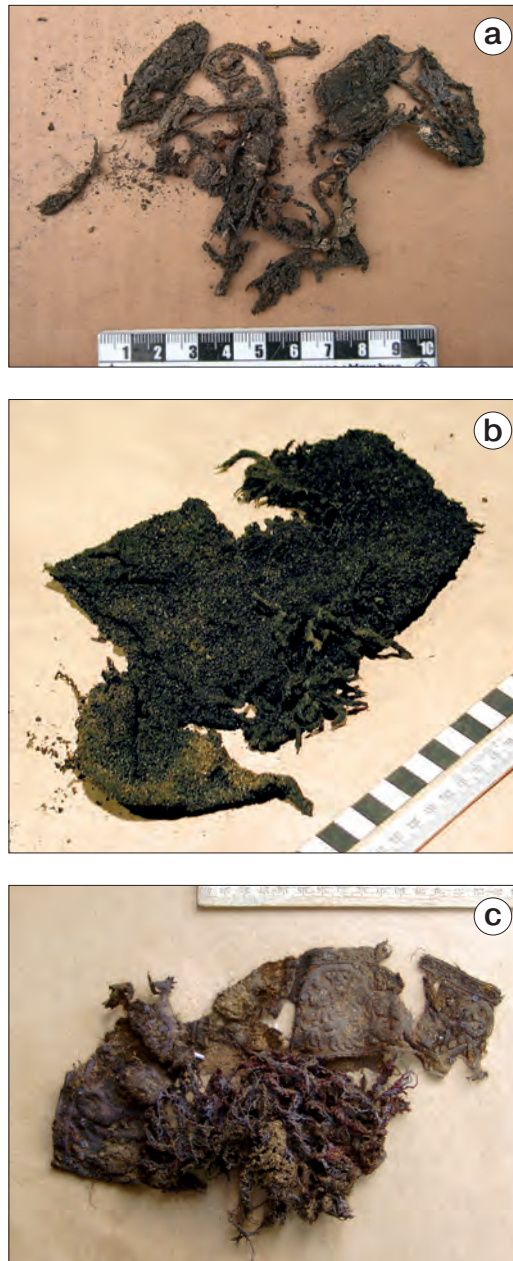


Fig. 7. Textiles after removal from the ground: (a) remains of the headdress in Zachatievsky (Alekseevsky) convent, Moscow; (b) remnants of the shirt collar in Novodevichy settlement, Moscow; (c) remains of the knitted product in Romanovs' Yard, Moscow (Photos: I. Elkina).

for "official dress" changed the appearance of the Tsar court (Shamin, 2005: 23–38). Even so, the systematic change of the Russian traditional costume of urban residents for the European style clothes took place as a result of the reforms of Peter I (Parmon, 1994: 21; Zakharchevskaya, 2004: 240–241). The traditional forms of the costume survived partly in the everyday life of the rural population and in some areas existed until the beginning of the 20th century.



Fig. 8. The volosnik from the Novospassky Monastery in Moscow. The stages of research from (a) the archaeological find to (g, h) the final reconstruction (Photo, drawings and graphic reconstruction: I. Elkina. Final reconstruction: N. Babushkina N. Khristoforova).

Women's headdress *volosnik*

Women's headdress *volosnik* (Fig. 8) are among the most striking archaeological finds from medieval burials. *Volosnik* is a compulsory element of the complex multi-piece headdress of a married woman. It was worn directly on the head and completely concealed her hair, so that no single strand of hair could be seen. They were known earlier only from written sources, but not a single *volosnik* has survived to the present day in its original kind, so their form and design have been restored exclusively based on archaeological data. Over the *volosnik*, the shawl (towel) was put on, and on the top, outdoors *kika* was worn on ordinary days and *kokoshnik* (Rabinovich, 1986: 80–82) during the holidays. In the literature, one can find other options for wearing this headdress: the *volosnik* “was put over a povoinik [headdress of a married woman] and a shawl tied to a povoinik and covering the back of the head” (Sosnina and Shangina, 2001: 48), and it could be worn along with the towel, under the towel or over it (Sosnina and Shangina, 2001: 48; Zabelin, 1869: 600).

By now, there have already been collected 33 *volosniks*, whole or in fragments. Most of them were found in the necropolises of the Moscow Kremlin (Panova and Sinitsyna, 1987: 338–341), the St. Simon (Efimova et al., 2000: 21, 228), the Novospassky Monastery (the burial vault of the Romanov Boyars) (Elkina, 2005: 98–107) and Zachatievsky (Alekseevsky) convent (Elkina, 2008: 142–149); churches of the Sign (Latysheva and Rabinovich, 1966: 228–229) and Church of the Intercession on the Moat (St. Basil's Cathedral) (Belyaev et al., 2006: 114–117; Elkina, 2017b: 240–247). Outside Moscow, the *volosniks* were recorded in the vault of the Godunovs in the Trinity–St. Sergius Lavra (Sergiev Posad) (Spirina, 1981: 461), the Intercession Convent and Saviour–St. Euthymius Monastery in Suzdal (Elkina, 2013: 230–238), in the Annunciation Convent in Bezhetsk (Tver Region), the cemetery at the Verkhneposadskaya St. Nicholas Church in Nizhny Novgorod (Orfinskaya et al., 2012: 79–86) and the church of St. Prince Andrey Smolensky in Pereslavl-Zalesky (Elkina and Zeyfer, 2015: 474–481).

Medieval *volosnik* is a kind of cap or hood, consisting of a silk forehead band (*ochelye*) with openwork lace or mesh top. When put on the hair-do, it was fastened from behind with a

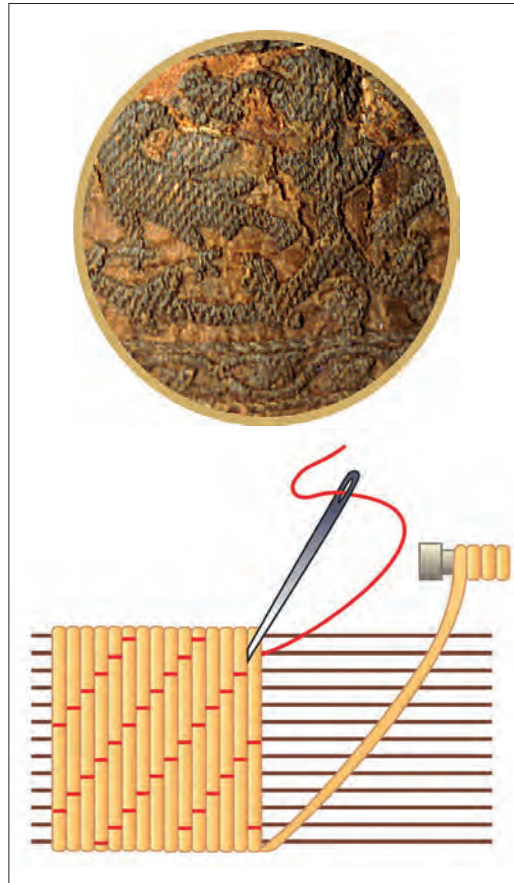


Fig. 9. Technique of gold embroidery “v prikrep” (Photo, drawing: I. Elkina).



Fig. 10. The forehead band (*ochelye*). Ornamented golden ribbon (Photos: I. Elkina).

string, so that it fit the lady's head tightly. The Forehead band was usually made of silk fabric of red colour which featured embroidery with golden threads (Fig. 9).

Sometimes a wide ornamented golden ribbon was used for the forehead band (Fig. 10). The forehead band of almost every *volosnik* had a lining fabric sewn, also of the red color.

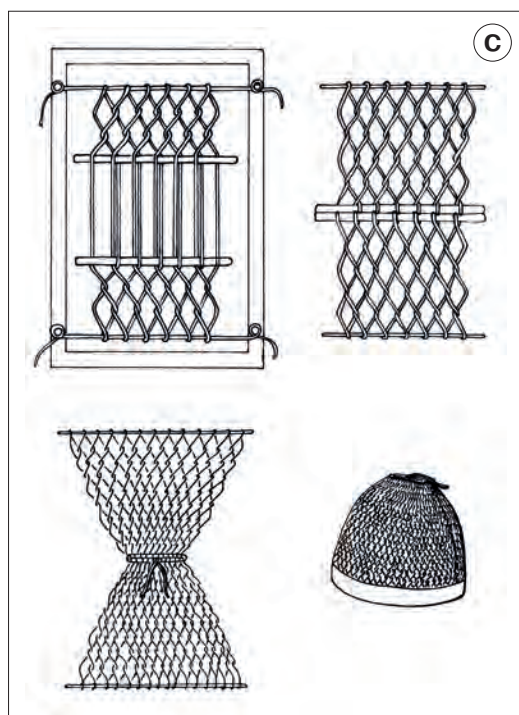
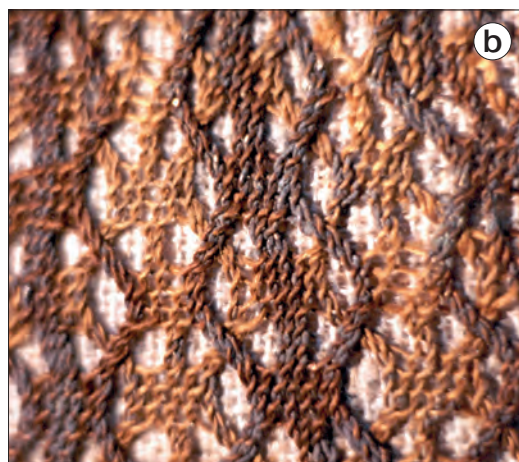


Fig. 11. Volosniks with openwork top, made in the technique of "sprang" from the Novospassky Monastery in Moscow: (a) general view; (b) macro photograph of openwork top; (c) scheme depicting the steps of making a volosnik with openwork top, made in the technique of "sprang" (Photos and drawing: I. Elkina).

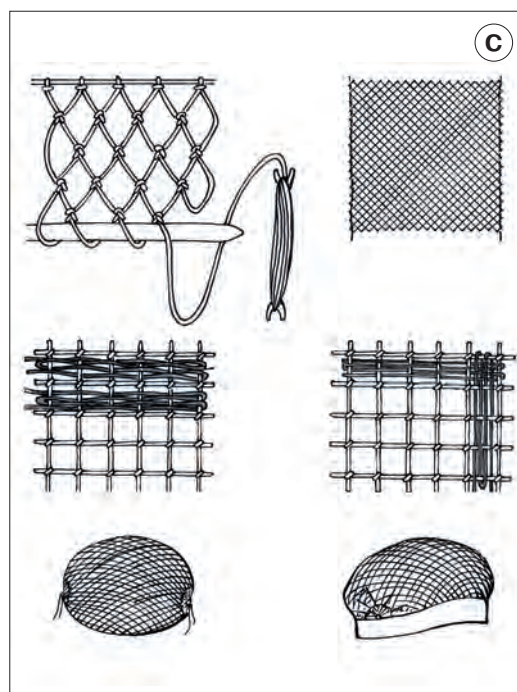


Fig. 12. The volosnik with an openwork top, made in the technique of embroidery on a mesh-fillet. The Novospassky Monastery, Moscow: (a) general view; (b) macro photograph of openwork top; (c) scheme depicting the steps of making a volosnik with an openwork top, made in the technique of embroidery on a mesh-fillet (Photos and drawing: I. Elkina).



Fig. 13. The volosnik with an openwork top, made in the technique made in the technique of lacework on bobbins. The Vvedensky monastery, Bezhet'sk, Tver region: (a) general view; (b) macro photograph of openwork top (Photos: I. Elkina).

The openwork top of the *volosnik* in most cases was done with frame weaving in sprang technique or with embroidery on a mesh-fillet (Elkina, 2005: 105–107). In some cases, it was braided with lace bobbins (Figs. 11–13).

Volosnik was the most significant of the apotropaic elements of the costume of a Russian married woman, where color and ornamentation had an important symbolic meaning. Embroidered forehead bands of the *volosnik* are of the greatest interest. As a rule, embroidery was carried out on red silk with metallic threads in the technique of golden laid embroidery. Sometimes, dyed silk threads were used along with metallic threads. The embroidered ornament consisted of certain ornamental elements carrying a symbolic message. Their composition is fairly stable. Its main and central element is almost always the “tree of life” (the „world tree“), the oldest symbol identifying the vital force of nature,



Fig. 14. The forehead bands (*ochelye*) from the Novospassky Monastery, Moscow (Graphic reconstructions: I. Elkina).



Fig. 15. The forehead band from the Zachatievsky (Alekseevsky) convent, Moscow (Graphic reconstructions: I. Elkina).

fertility (Manushina, 1983: 36), the symbol of the family and the procreation of the bloodline in the popular consciousness. Most often, only the trees (usually seven) were placed on forehead bands, or the trees alternating with the images of animals and birds moving toward the center of the composition (as a rule, five trees and four symbols of living beings). Most commonly, embroidery on the forehead band depicted lambs – a symbol of the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Belova, 2001: 48); deer – a soul renewed by good deeds, a symbol of pure love (Belova, 2001: 106–107); pigeons – a symbol of the Holy Spirit (Belova, 2001: 88); turtledoves (a sign of matrimonial fidelity); peacocks – an allegory of a person converted from sins to God (Belova, 2001: 199). These symbolic images have a deep Christian tradition and are extremely numerous in the ecclesiastic pictorial arts. The image of the unicorn, a fantasy creature widely spread in the Middle Ages, is often found on *volosniks*. It symbolizes female chastity and spiritual purity, as well as a person who remembers God and brings his prayers (Belova, 2001: 100) (Figs. 14, 15).

Among the ornaments known to date, the most interesting, perhaps, are the ornaments of the *volosniks* from ground graves in the *Zachatievsky* (Alekseevsky) *convent*, (Elkina, 2008: 142–149; Belyaev, 2008, 2010). Despite the extremely poor degree of preservation, the restoration work carried out and the graphic reconstruction undertaken made it possible to restore in part the ornamentation of their forehead bands, the composition of which is not typical for most of the known *volosniks*.

For the embroidery of forehead bands, the traditional composition consists of *single* figures of animals or birds, facing the center and alternating with the “trees”. This is a typical frieze composition, dating back to the early

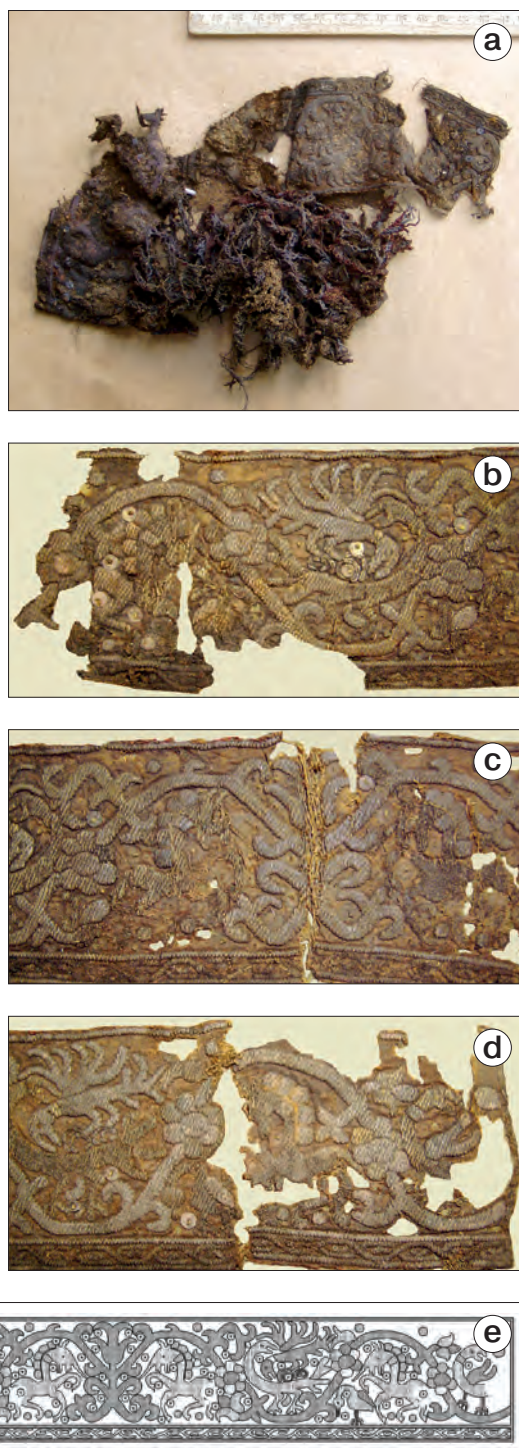


Fig. 16. The forehead band of the volosnik from the Zachatievsky (Alekseevsky) convent, Moscow: (a) before the restoration; (b-d) fragments of the forehead band; (e) graphic reconstruction (Photos and graphic reconstruction: I. Elkina).

Byzantine mosaics and reliefs. All elements are depicted separately, as independent, connected only by common participation in the procession. However, on the *volosniks* from the *Zachatievsky* (Alekseevsky) convent, the figures are joined in a single action and involved in a certain subject scene. On three bands (out of five), apart from the traditional “tree”, dynamic teratological compositions can

be definitely identified. In one case, a fight of a unicorn with a fantastic animal (“dragon”) and a waterfowl is depicted. (Fig. 16).

Ornamental pattern of another band (graphically restored based on the traces left on the fabric from punctures by a needle and partially lost embroidery) also represents a fight scene. The central element displays a “tree”, with seven-petalled flowers. Under its branches are located creeping snakes (?) with bent tails, which are hooved by unicorns (Fig. 17).

Probably, the fighting scenes on these forehead bands should be interpreted as the struggle between the good (virtue) and the evil (sin). The unicorn is a traditional symbol of the good and spiritual purity in the Middle Ages. A fantastic animal, snakes and waterfowl here serve as the embodiment of evil deeds, habits, character traits, and sins. Symbolism of the snake in the popular imagination usually includes everything unclean, evil, false, and harmful (Korinskii, 1994: 458). A waterfowl, one of the most ancient symbols of humankind, is associated with an evil force in a number of legends and beliefs. For example, among the western Slavs it is the goose; in Tula and Khar'kov provinces, people could imagine the devil, female hobgoblin (*kikimora*), and water-sprite in the guise of a duck (Gura, 1997: 667).

The surviving tiny fragment of the third band preserved embroidery, representing part of the scene with birds tearing at each other (swan and gyrfalcon?). The motif of a falcon tormenting a swan maiden, probably having a wedding connotation, is known in the folklore (it is well known, that wedding and funeral symbols are closely intertwined). Despite the fact that the plot of the birds' torment in the golden ornamental embroidery of that period was used quite often (it can be exemplified with the embroidery kept in the State Historical Museum (i.e. figs. 16 and 17 in Efimova and Belogorskaya, 1982), it is the first depiction of such kind found on the *volosnik* (Fig. 18).

Men's shirts

In medieval burial sites of men, remains of shirts are not rare finds. As the shirts were linen or made of undyed silk, and these materials can hardly be preserved in the soil, usually the only remaining fragments of them found in the burials are decorative elements made with gold and colored silk threads in the technique

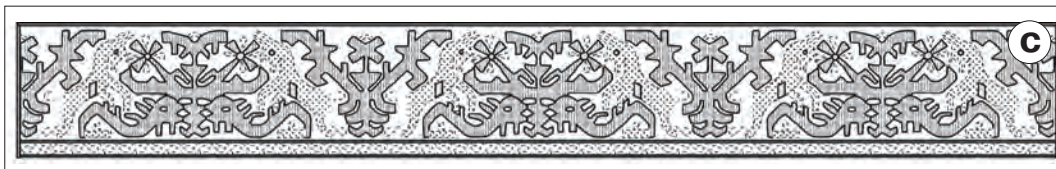


Fig. 17. The forehead band from the Zachatievsky (Alekseevsky) convent, Moscow. (a) fragment of the band; (b) enlarged fragment showing punctures from the needle fixing the lost embroidery; (c) graphic reconstruction. The embroidery ornament is partially restored by puncturing the needle on the fabric (Photos and graphic reconstruction: I. Elkina).

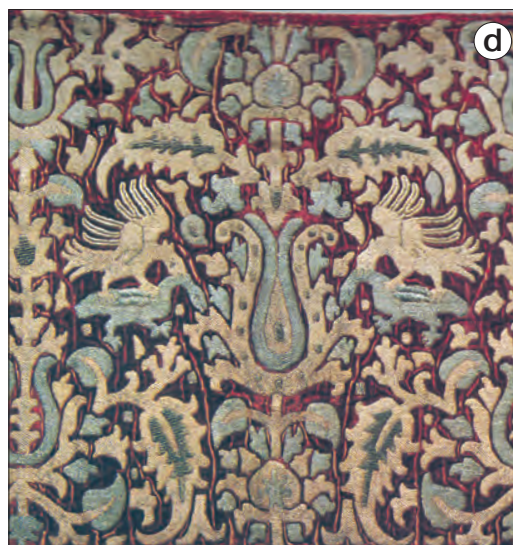
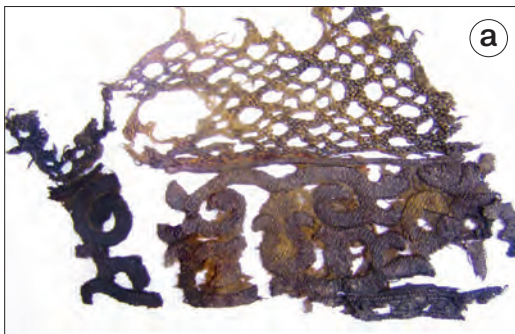


Fig. 18. Volosnik from the Zachatievsky (Alekseevsky) convent, Moscow: (a) excavated remnants of the volosnik. Photo: I. Elkina; (b) graphic reconstruction of the forehead band: I. Elkina; (c) and (d) similar subjects on samples of gold embroidery from the collection of the State Historical Museum (GIM) dated to the late XVI-XVII centuries (After: Efimova and Belogorskaya 1982, figs. 16, 17).

of embroidery or braiding. These are a collar (its front part, *peredets*, with *ozherelok* fringing neck cut or without it), a shoulder sewn-on patch (*voshva*), a slot, and cuffs. In addition to ornamental elements of embroidery and braiding, the burial sites produced dyed silk linings under decorative elements and silk strips that decorated constructive seams. Occasionally, under embroidered decorative elements or inside the finishes one can find miraculously preserved tiny remains from the fabric of genuine shirts.

The tailoring and design of the Russian medieval men's shirt were quite conservative, for many centuries they remained virtually unchanged. This makes it possible to reconstruct the general appearance of the found shirts based on the surviving decorative elements. Depending on the owner's wealth, the shirt was made of linen or silk fabric, had a tunic-like



Fig. 19. Men's shirt from the collection of GIM. Seventeenth century (After: Efimova and Belogorskaya 1982, fig. 29).

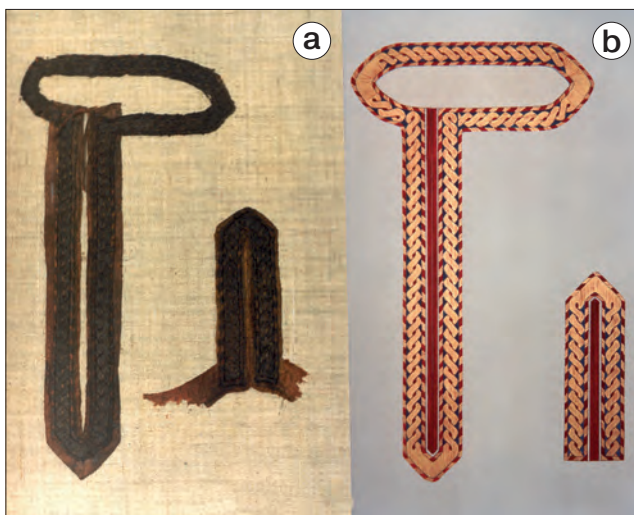


Fig. 20. Decorative elements of men's shirts. The Novospassky Monastery, Moscow. Embroidery with gold and colored threads. (a) Remaining fragments from the burial; (b) reconstruction (Photo and graphic reconstruction: I. Elkina).

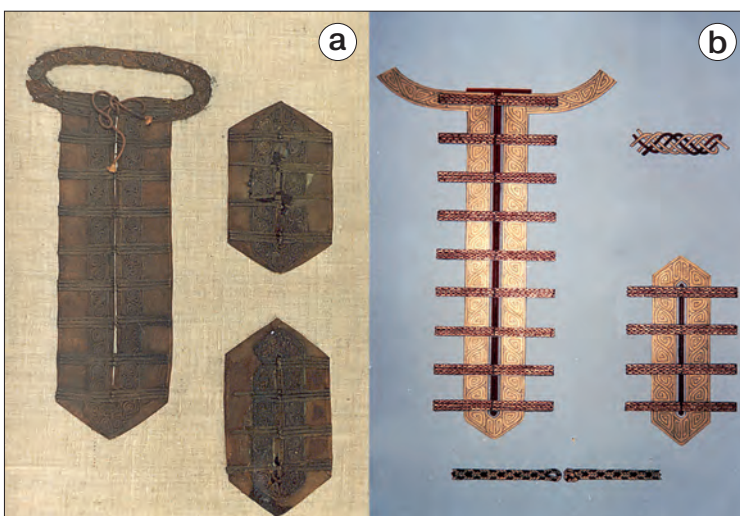


Fig. 21. Decorative elements of men's shirts. Moscow. Novospassky Monastery. Gold embroidery, weaving. (a) Remaining fragments from burial; (b) reconstruction (Photo and graphic reconstruction: I. Elkina).

cut with a deep straight or oblique cutout on the chest and was traditionally decorated with embroidered or braided decorative elements. Under the decorative elements, linings were hemmed on the underside of the shirt. The latter were usually made of red silk fabric the same size as the decorative element. They often used narrow red strips of ribbons, cloth or braid to decorate constructive seams. On the back and the shoulders from the inside, there could be another layer of fabric lining, *podopleka*, usually made of linen. The collection of the State Historical Museum has two whole medieval shirts survived to this day (Fig. 19). (Efimova and Belogorskaya, 1982, fig. 29)

The remainder of shirt findings was obtained during excavations and only in fragments. Medieval men's shirts are known from the burials of the 16th–17th centuries in the necropolises in Moscow (the necropolis of the Moscow Kremlin (Koshlyakova, 1986: 248–253), Zachatievsky (Alekseevsky) convent, the burial vault of the Romanov Boyars of the Novospassky Monastery (Elkina, 2005: 86–97) (Belyaev et al., 2017: 90–105), Novodevichy Convent (Elkina, 2017a: 208–213), the necropolis of the Church of Sts. Kosma and Damian in Tverskaya Street) (Elkina, 2016: 70), Sergiev Posad, Suzdal (i.e. the vault of the Pozharsky Princes in the Saviour–St. Euthymius Monastery (Elkina, 2013: 230–232 and supp. 5) and the necropolis of the Intercession Convent), the St. Cyril of Beloozero Monastery (the burial vault of the Vorotynsky Princes (excavation by I.V. Papin in 2010), and in Nizhny Novgorod. Now we know more than 20 medieval shirts (Figs. 20–21, 24–26, 28).

Among the shirts there are fragments from children's burials. Their tailoring, proportionality and arrangement of decorative elements completely coincide with the appearance of an adult person's shirt, only the size differs (Fig. 22). There are two little shirts found in Suzdal: a baby's one from a tomb attributed to the son of Solomoniya Saburova, the first wife of Basil III, in the Intercession Convent, and a five-year-old boy's one from the vault of Pozharsky Princes in the Saviour–St. Euthymius Monastery. In the ground burial site of the Zachatievsky (Alekseevsky) and Novodevichy Convents the remains of decorative elements of a baby's shirt are found. In two cases (children's graves of the 16th–17th centuries in the Novospassky Monastery and the Church of Sts. Kosma and Damian in Tverskaya Street),

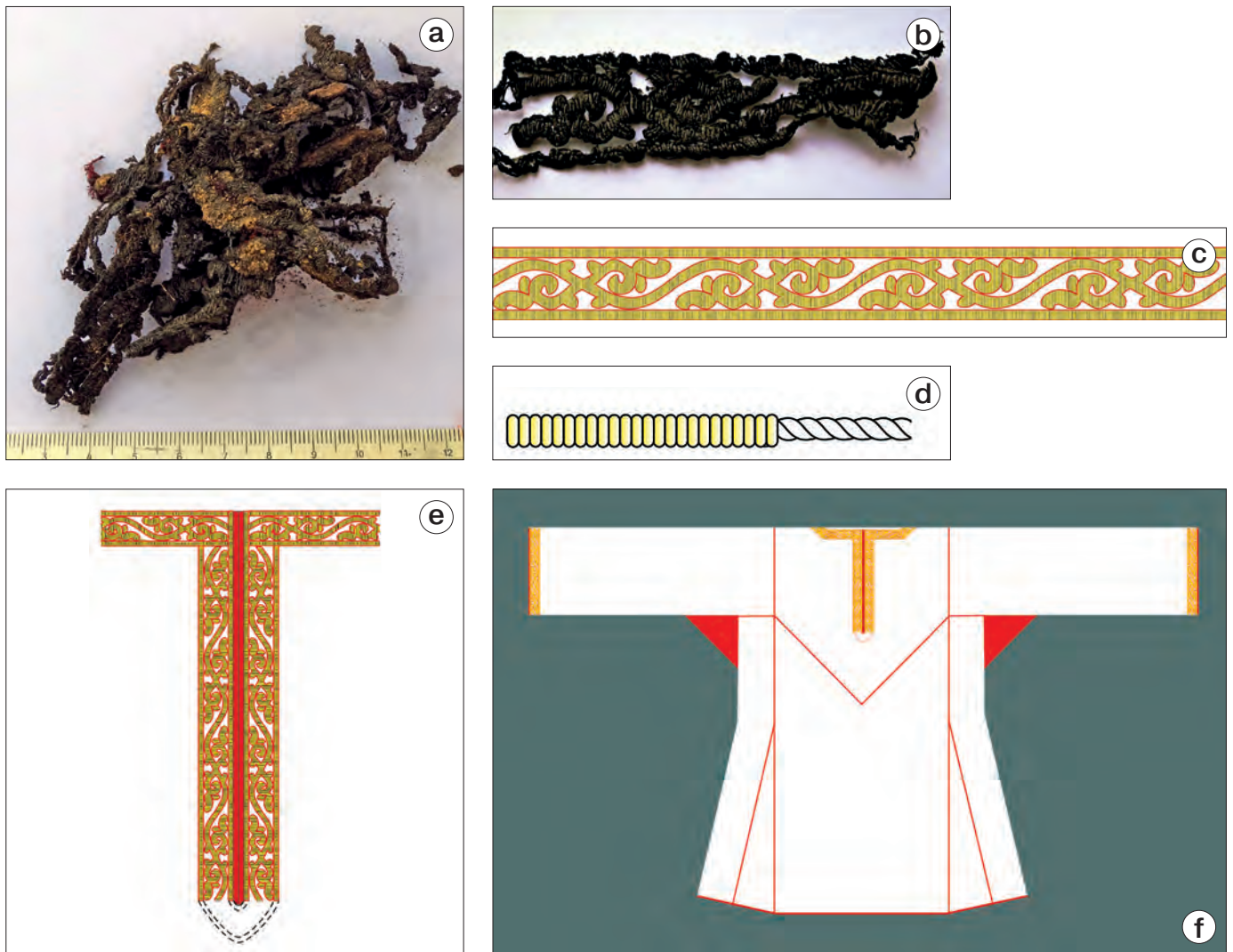


Fig. 22. Children's shirt. Moscow. Novodevichy settlement (a) Preserved fragments from the burial; (b) a fragment of gold embroidery; (c) reconstruction of the ornament embroidery; (d) gold embroidery technique; (e) reconstruction of the collar ornament; (f) reconstruction of the shirt general outlook (Photos and graphic reconstruction: I. Elkina).

the found decorative elements of shirts were disproportionate to the size of the children's shirts. Probably, these decorative elements were removed from an adult's worn-out shirt, partially shortened and reused for decorating a children's shirt.

Despite the stability of the cut and the strictly defined arrangement of the decorative elements, each shirt is unique. Medieval artisans achieved their own peculiarity, varying the decorative elements and ways of their execution. These elements are made in the technique of embroidery, using braided laces and cords.

Embroidery on shirts

Almost all known embroideries on shirts are made with golden threads in the double chain-stitch technique (Fig. 23, 24). The main

elements of the embroidery ornament executed with chain-stitch for decorating shirts were vegetative-geometric motifs, curls, and S-shaped figures. A mirror-patterned ornament of the "tree of life" elements with branches-curls was quite a popular motif for shirts.



Fig. 23. Technique "double tambour" for seam embroidery (Photo and graphic reconstruction: I. Elkina).

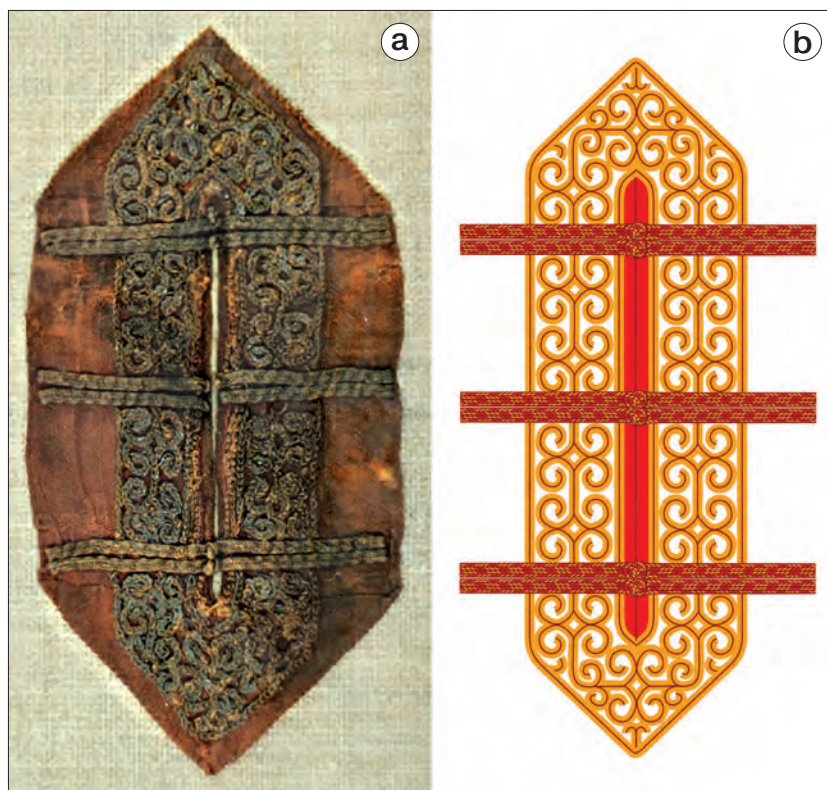


Fig. 24. Decorative element of the sleeve of the man's shirt (voshva). The Novospassky Monastery, Moscow. Gold embroidery in the technique of double tambour, weaving. (a) Remaining fragments from the burial; (b) reconstruction (Photo and graphic reconstruction: I. Elkina).

Occasionally, decorative elements on the shirts were made in the technique of golden laid embroidery. Of the greatest artistic interest is a fragment of the decorative finishing of the shirt collar from the necropolis of the Church of Sts. Kosma and Damian in Tverskaya Street in Moscow. The basis of the ornament is an image of mirror-patterned alternating golden birds in red collars, sitting on a long undulating branch (Elkina, 2016: 70), (Fig. 25).

Buttonholes on men's shirts

To date, there are three known types of decoration of Russian medieval men's shirts, depending on the type of decorative elements chosen: decorative elements with solid buttonholes; an ornament with periodic buttonholes; and an ornament without buttonholes (Fig. 26–28).

The archaeologist and ethnographer of the 19th century A.V. Tereshchenko, describing the decor of Russian shirts in the post-Mongol period, noted that “the collar and fringes of the sleeves were embroidered with red thread, silk, silver and gold, depending on the owner's status and rank (Tereshchenko, 1997: 175).” In her publication of textile finds in the tombs

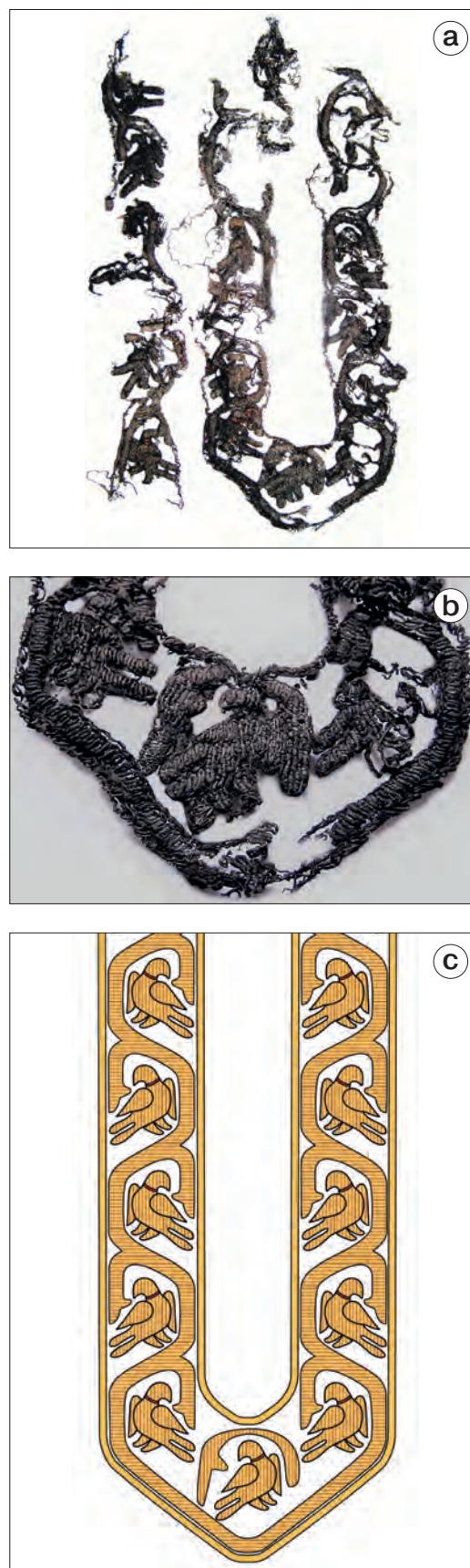


Fig. 25. Fragment of the decorative element of the collar of the men's shirt. Church of Kozma and Damian, Moscow. (a) Remains of the collar; (b) a fragment of gold embroidery; (c) reconstruction (Photos and graphic reconstruction: I. Elkina).

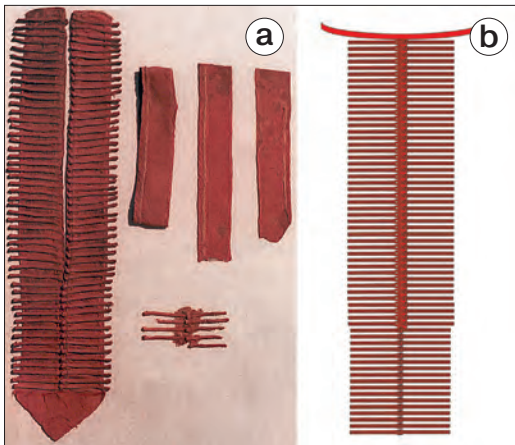


Fig. 26. Decorative element of men's shirt with solid buttonholes. Novospassky Monastery, Moscow. (a) Remains of the collar and cuffs from the burial and (b) reconstruction of the collar (Photos and graphic reconstruction: I. Elkina).

of the Archangel Cathedral, T.N. Koshlyakova specified that the four then known shirts of representatives of the reigning dynasty have only one element of decorative trimming – buttonholes, and the shirts of the highest nobility were decorated with embroideries with periodic buttonholes (Koshlyakova, 1986: 165, 172). When analyzing shirts from the Novospassky Monastery, it became clear that their owners with periodic buttonholes belonged to the princely aristocracy. Periodic buttonholes are noted on all found shirts from the tomb of Pozharsky Princes in the Saviour–St. Euthymius Monastery in Suzdal (Elkina, 2013: 230–233 and supp. 5) and on the shirt of Prince A.I. Vorotynsky, buried in the family vault in the St. Cyril of Beloozero Monastery (excavation by I.V. Papin in 2010). The collar of the shirt from the children's burial in the Zachatievsky (Alekseevsky) convent is also decorated with embroideries with periodic buttonholes: perhaps, the buried child belonged to the princely aristocracy. Probably, persons who did not belong to these categories did not have the right to wear shirts with buttonholes.

Men's caftan

Several burials provided material related to the decorative design of other types of clothing. Namely, the man's burial near the Church of the Intercession on the Moat (St. Basil's Cathedral), preserved numerous textile fragments (Elkina, 2017b: 242–247). Among them was a long fragment of a fastening with a frequent row of buttons. Upon reconstructing his clothes based on the investigation of their fragments, it is possible to conclude that the buried

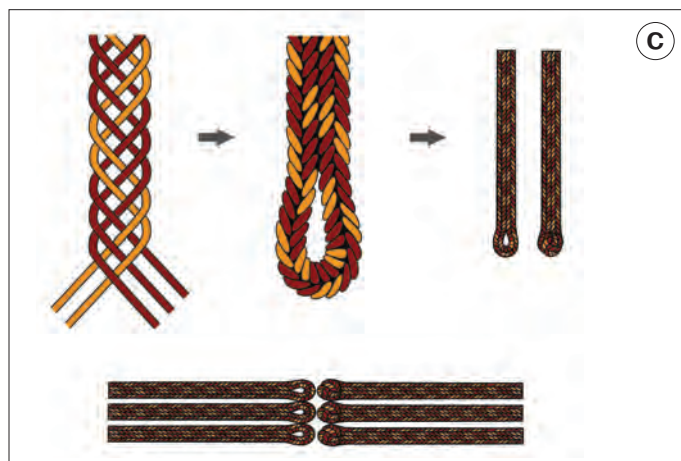
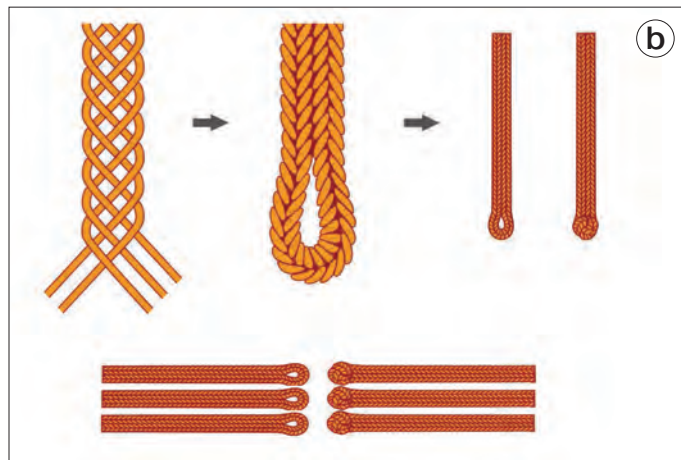
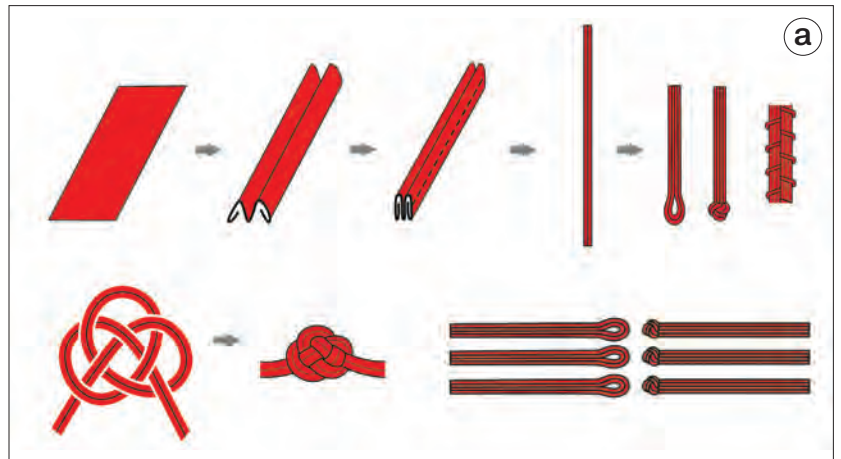


Fig. 27. Ways of making buttonholes for shirts: (a) sewn buttonholes; (b) braided buttonholes of gold threads; (c) braided buttonholes of gold and red silk threads (Drawings: I. Elkina).

man had a two-layered wrapping, probably a *caftan* (Fig. 29). The caftan was sewn from a dense silk damask fabric with a vegetative ornament supposedly dyed in red. For lining, a thin, undyed silk fabric was used. The clothes were full-length and fastened with buttons. On the edge of the right flap there was a frequent row of globular gold-plated buttons 1.2 cm in





Fig. 29. The remains of the men's clothing (caftan?). Church of the Intercession on the Moat (St. Basil's Cathedral), Moscow (Photos and graphic reconstruction: I. Elkina).

diameter (at least 26 buttons), located 1.5 cm from each other. The buttons were previously strung on a cord sewn from the same damask fabric as the main fabric of the clothing. The cord is a hidden one. It was inserted between the facial damask fabric and lining. On the edge of the left flap there were loop fasteners, made of an 8-ply braided tetrahedral cord. On the flaps of clothes there were *voshva* patches sewn on – decorative elements made of a light fabric with an ornament embroidered on them. The ornament pattern was based on branches with leaves. The embroidery is made with dark threads. The shape of the patches (*voshvas*) cannot be reconstructed.

Women's dress

During the investigations of the vault of the Pozharsky Princes in the Saviour–St. Euthymius Monastery in Suzdal, fragments of ornamental decoration of women's full-length clothes (perhaps, a summer dress, *letnik*) were recorded in two women's graves (Elkina, 2013: 233–234, 236–237 and supp. 5). The decoration represented ornamental strips of

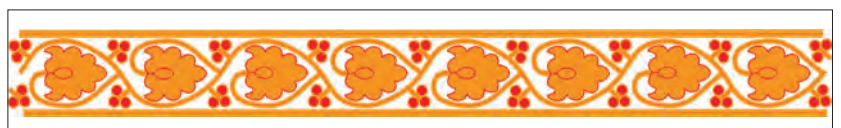
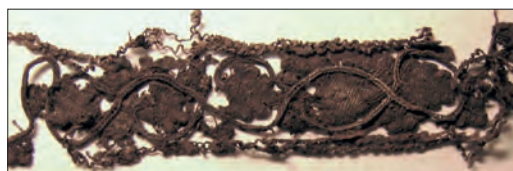
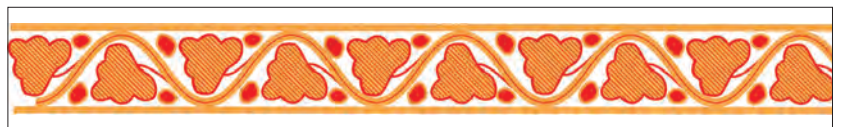


Fig. 30. Decorative stripes of embroidery on women's clothing. Saviour–St. Euthymius Monastery, Suzdal. (Photos and graphic reconstructions: I. Elkina).

golden embroidery of varying width (1.5 to 4.5 cm). The central motif of the ornaments is a vegetative branch, which is a curly stalk with trefoils and flowers. Several types of stitches were used to make the golden embroidery: double chain-stitch (double tambour), laid embroidery, and feather stitch. These ornamental stripes adorned the hem of the clothes and, possibly, the cuffs. The clothes were sewn from light silk (Fig. 30).



Fig. 31. Funeral headbands with embroidered Calvary crosses. Novospassky Monastery, Moscow (Photos: I. Elkina).



Fig. 32. Funeral headband with prayer embroidered with gold threads. Saviour–St. Euthymius Monastery, Suzdal (Photo and graphic reconstruction: I. Elkina).

Textile accessories of funeral ritual

In addition to the fragments of clothes, secular burial places contain textile accessories of funeral ritual: funerary headbands shrouds. Funerary headband was basically a strip of fine silk fabric, most often of a solid color, plain weave or a damask fabric, which was decorated with feather or chain-stitch embroidery. The appearance of this embroidery shows some negligence, indicating that the coronets were made hastily, within a limited time period. On most headbands there are five or seven images of the Golgotha Cross, made with golden threads (Fig. 31). A funerary headband from the burial of the vault of the Pozharsky Princes is of certain interest. Throughout its surface, the inscription of the Trisagion prayer is embroidered (“Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us”). Between the words of the inscription there are three embroidered round stamps, each of them including the image of the Golgotha Cross with the instruments of Passion (Elkina, 2013: 234, 237) (Fig. 32).

The funeral shrouds represented width of fabric. The remains of shrouds recorded in the various medieval burials, mostly, in sarco-

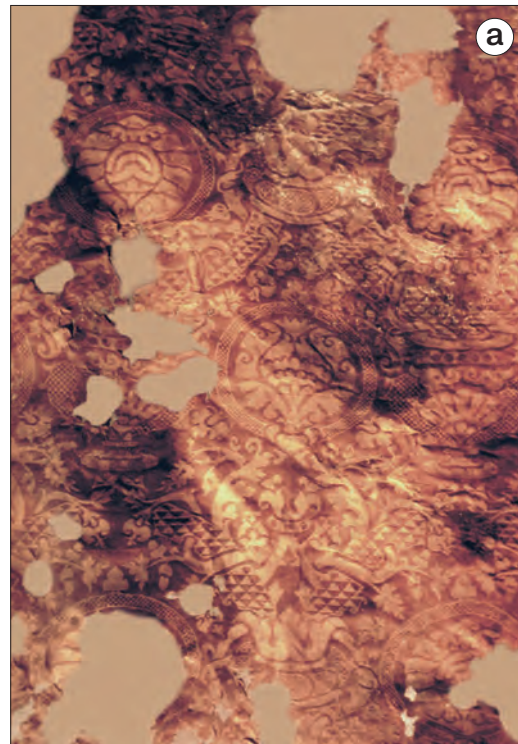


Fig. 33. Burial shroud made of silk. Novospassky Monastery, Moscow. (a) Remnants from the excavation and (b) reconstruction of the ornament (Photos and graphic reconstruction: I. Elkina).

phagi and in overwhelming majority survived in the form of disparate fragments. As a rule, these are parts of thin silk fabrics, most often patterned damask one. The brightest example is an expensive width of Venetian fabric used for the burial shroud of Mikhail Vasilievich Yakovel'-Zakhar'in (†1556) from the burial vault of the Romanov Boyars in the Novospassky Monastery (Elkina, 2005: 110). Conducted studies of the textile remains made it possible to reconstruct the complete ornament on this



Fig. 34. Burial shroud made of Turkish golden brocade. Novospassky Monastery, Moscow (Photo: I. Elkina).

fabric (Fig. 33). The pattern is a symmetrical composition consisting of vases with vegetable ring-shaped garlands. Vase contours are formed by two dolphins facing each other, with a stylized shell between them. The rings of neighboring garlands at the intersections are connected by decorative interceptions shaped as crowns. Inside the garlands and between the vases there are smaller rings, in which stylized fruits are depicted. Ornamental images of crowns and vases, careful attention to details, as well as the use of scaly (triangles) and checker elements are typical for Venetian fabrics (Fig. 33). Their direct analogies are linings of the shrouds for Tsars' tombs in the Archangel Cathedral from the Armory Chamber collection (Klein, 1925: 57–58).

Another vivid example from the same vault is the funeral shroud of Tatyana Feodorovna, Princess of Katyrev-Rostovskaya (†1611) (Elkina, 2005: 111). The shroud survived practically intact and represents a width of the Turkish golden brocade at the turn of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries 167 cm

long and 69 cm wide (Fig. 34). The fabric has a large repeat (50 × 70 cm), characteristic of the eastern fabrics of the time. The pattern is made up of gold sharpened oval marks, forming a regular lattice on a crimson background. In one of the marks there is a large stylized tulip, in the background a bouquet with three small tulips is depicted, in the another one, there is a fruit of a pomegranate with small flowers of carnations, anemones, and rose hip leaves and a bud. The contours of the lattice in the interlacing are presented with decorative interceptions. In the ancient Russia, this design was called “the bunch”, *kupa* (a similar design of the lattice of architectural structures was referred to as “bunchy” (Vostochnye i evropeiskie tkani: 4)). Inside the lattice, there is a color linear ornament shaped as a garland of flowers (Fig. 34).

The funeral shrouds studied by us mainly come from the burials of affluent people in that these are the remains of expensive silk and brocade fabrics. It can be assumed that representatives of the poorer classes used cheaper fabrics made of vegetative fibers for burial shrouds. Probably, such shrouds are not recorded in burial sites because of complete destruction of such cloths in the soil. There have been several cases of woolen cloth used for a shroud, but such examples are occasional (apparently, this is also related to preservation conditions). For example, in an oak deck of the necropolis of the St. Cyril of Beloozero Monastery (a buried man was found shrouded in woolen fabric of linen weave (excavation by I.V. Papin in 2010). (Fig. 3d)

Another category of textile objects from medieval burials are parts of monastic vestments. The remnants of such vestments of the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries are relatively well preserved in the burials of Moiseevsky Monastery on Manezhnaya Square (Veksler and Berkovich, 1999: 213–217) and the Zachatievsky (Alekseevsky) convent in Moscow, the Cathedral of the New Jerusalem Monastery, the Savvatievsky Monastery in Tver region, where the monastic burials are sometimes additionally indicated with a brick under the head, rosary and the remains of monastic leather shoes (*caligae*).

In monastic ground graves, fragments of coarse dark cloth or traces of organic decay from clothes are sometimes preserved. In one of the graves of the Zachatievsky (Alekseevsky) convent, traces of cloth were recorded in the

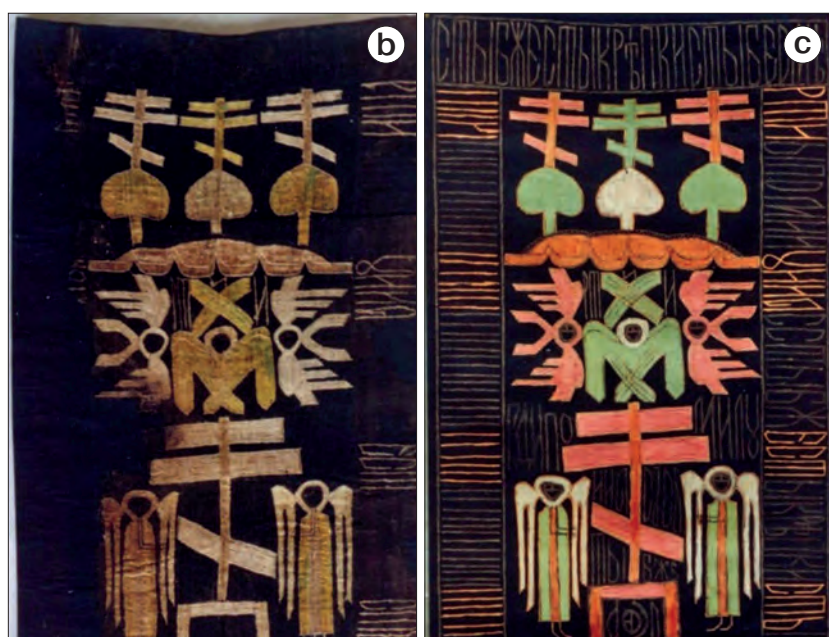


Fig. 35. Analab the Great Schema monk. Moiseevsky Convent on Manezhnaya Square, Moscow. (a) At the time of detection and (b) after restoration (c) reconstruction (Photo, restoration and graphic reconstruction: A.K. Elkina).

form of oxides on iron chains. In general, textile remains from monastic burials form the following picture: the fabrics of monastic *mantiya* were woven from the coarse undyed wool of a dark (black) sheep, on a horizontal weaving mill, in the household. The fabric was of linen weave, its density varies from 8 to 12 threads per cm. The threads are woven with Z twist, uneven in thickness.

Monastic vestments' garments

Among the category of monastic vestments' garments of Great Schema monks are distinguished. The composition of the Great Schema monks' clothes, in contrast to those of Little Schema monks and novices, includes

the analabos (the veil with the image of the cross shoulder wide and neck to the toe piece-long) and the cowl (*koukoulion*). These were the only details of the monastic vestments decorated with color embroidery or sewn-on color images of crosses.

Burials of Schema nuns were found during the archaeological research of the Moiseevsky Monastery on Manezhnaya Square (Moscow), in 1995 (Fig. 35) (Veksler and Berkovich, 1999: 213–217). In the eight oak coffins, the garment accessories of the Great Schema monks including the analabos were perfectly preserved. The found analabos are made of black coarse woolen fabric. The surface is filled with wide stitches (up to 2.5–3.0 cm) of embroidery with thick untwisted dyed silk threads. The composition of images on all analabos is canonical. The Golgotha Cross is depicted in the center, with archangels on both sides. At the foot of the Cross is the Head of Adam, and beneath there is a conventional image of a Schema monk (?) lying in a coffin. Above the Cross there are cherubs and a symbolic image of the Temple of Heaven. On the edges of the analabos a framing quadrangular inscription of the prayer is embroidered: "Holy, holy, holy. Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us." On one of the analabos has a zigzag ornament instead of the inscription.

One burial of a Great Schema monk in a white-stone sarcophagus was studied in the church of the Savvatievsky Monastery, Tver Region (excavation by A.N. Khokhlov in 2009). Upon uncovering of the sarcophagus, numerous textile remains were recorded on the entire surface of the skeleton. Unfortunately, the preservation of textiles was extremely unsatisfactory. It was full-length long-sleeved clothes (it is possible that there were several items of clothing, at least two, put one over another, but sewn from the same fabric). On the upper layer of the fabric (analabos?), in the central part of the clothes, there are spots of embroidery with dyed untwisted silk threads. The embroidery pattern can be partially reconstructed: the fragment of the upper part of the Golgotha (?) Cross in the halo (?) can be seen in the central part of the analabos (thoracic area). Fragments of embroidered equal crosses were visible in the area of pelvic bones. Embroidery is made in large stitches with thick dyed untwisted silk threads (Fig. 36).



Fig. 36. Fragments of the embroidery of the analaw from the burial place of the Great Schema monk. Savvatievsky Monastery, Tver region (Photos: I. Elkina).

Embroidery with a thick color thread along dark woolen fabric in the techniques of flat stitch, crossed Russian stitch, and chain-stitch with characteristic long stitches was used to decorate the analabos of the Great Schema monks throughout the Middle Ages and later (its analogies include the Schema of Ivan the Terrible, the analabos of St. Anna of Kashin, and the analabos from the Schema of St. Sergius).

In the New Jerusalem Monastery, graves of the two seventeenth century monks known by name were investigated (Elkina, 2014). Numerous textile fragments – remains of church vestments – were found in the grave of Archimandrite Varsonofy (†1680), under whom the construction of the Resurrection Cathedral was completed. On the skull there was a woolen hood (*klobuk*) of a very poor preservation made from dense woolen fabric. This headgear consists of two objects – *kamelaukion* and enveloping towel, or *omophorion*, the same as *koukoulion*, with three long ends with tassels) (Fig. 37). The structural seams had an additional double stitching with silk threads. The forehead band is edged with a braided cord. Despite the hood being fragmented, we can definitely identify its shape



Fig. 37. Remains of monk's clothing. New Jerusalem Monastery, Moscow Region. (a) The remains of the headdress (*kukul*); (b) the remnants of the paraman; (c) the partial reconstruction of the paraman (Photos and graphic reconstruction: I. Elkina).

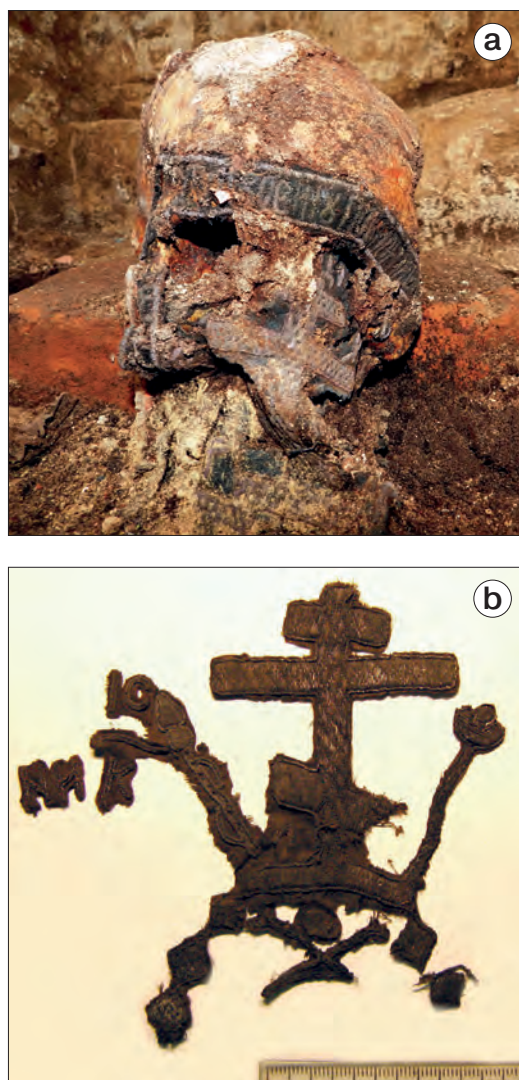


Fig. 38. Paramans made in the technique of gold embroidery (a) from the burial of the New Jerusalem monastery. Photo: I. Elkina (b) from the burial of the Saviour–St. Euthymius Monastery, Suzdal (Photo: I. Elkina).

as an ancient one, spherical, which had the symbolic meaning of “the helmet of salvation” and “the veil of obedience”. The lower part of the towel, divided into three long ends, denotes the Trinity grace that covers the monk’s thoughts. The use of dense fabric was caused by the need to protect the head during a bad weather. The monks have long had the custom to tie the ends of the *omophorion* (*koukoulion*) under the chin in cold and windy weather, and also to keep the hands free during the moments of worship when the Statute requires taking the hood off. The modern form of the monastic headgear consists of the cylindrical *kamelaukion* covered with silk and the light *omophorion* of the later origin; it was adopted by the Russian Church from the Greeks under Patriarch Nikon.

During the funeral of the archimandrite, the side ends of the *omophorion* (*koukoulion*) were folded over the face. When investigating the textile remnants of the *omophorion* under its ends the remains of a paraman embroidered with dyed silk were found. This item of the monastic vestment carried the image of the cross and the instruments of passion. The paraman covered the face of the buried person immediately. The buried was clothed in a sackcloth of hair, a dark shirt made from rather coarse fabric woven from the sheep’s wool. This is evidenced by its numerous remains on the skeleton of the buried. Over the hair sackcloth was a very fragmented *epitrachelion* sewn from stamped velvet (its ornamentation motif can be identified as the “Persian pickles” pattern) and damask silk. The lower edge of the *epitrachelion* was decorated with color silk brushes. On the hands, oversleeves sewn from velvet and damask silk survived (similarly to the *epitrachelion*). On the breast of the buried was a wooden pectoral cross on a braided silk cord. The preserved leather shoes were worn on the leggings (*onuchi*) sewn from a dark woolen fabric.

In the grave of Archimandrite Herman (†1682), the beloved disciple of Archimandrite Nikon, of all the textile items only the paraman survived – a rectangular towel with an embroidered image of the Golgotha Cross and the instruments of Passion. The text of the prayer is arranged along the contour of the paraman. The ornamentation is made in the technique of golden laid embroidery. The paraman covered the face of the buried person. Remains of a similar paraman in the form of a fragment of the central part depicting the eight-pointed Cross with instruments of Passion was found on the front of the skull buried in one of the graves in the vault of the Pozharsky Princes in the Saviour–St. Euthymius Monastery in Suzdal (Elkina, 2013: 238). It is made in a similar technique of golden laid embroidery with dyed silk threads. Under the Cross, the Head of Adam is depicted, in the left part, near the Lance, the letters IC and NIK are preserved. (Fig. 38).

Clothes and household items of ordinary citizens

Archaeological research in the urban cultural layers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries produced a number of textile finds representing, mostly, individual textile fragments. The overwhelming majority of such

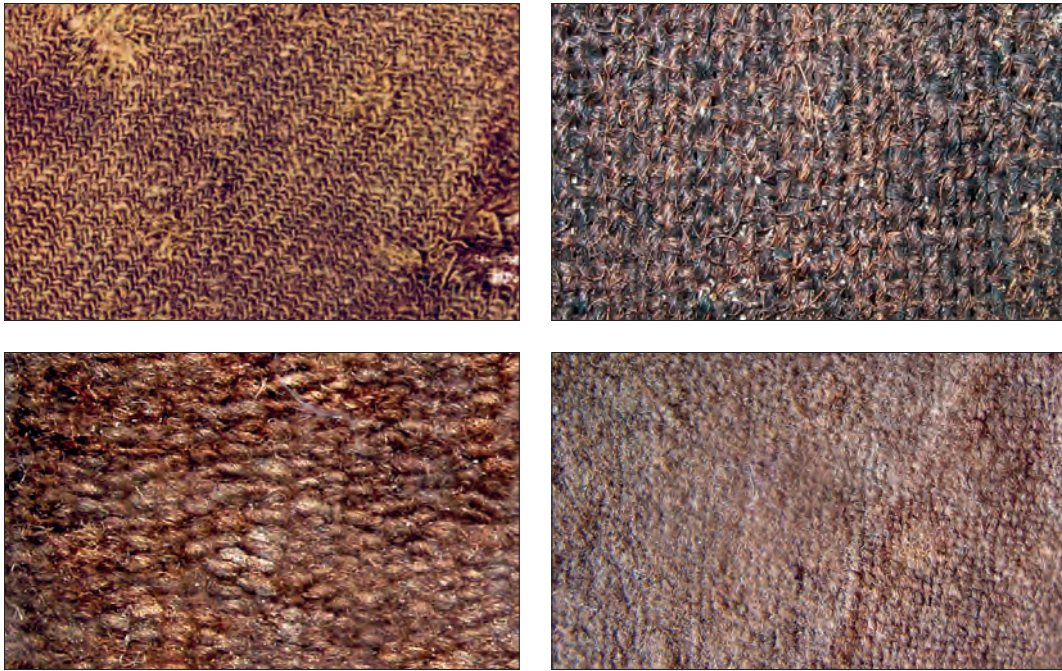


Fig. 39. Fragments of woolen fabrics from the urban layers of Moscow in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Photos: I. Elkina).

finds (fragments of fabrics, braids, ribbons) refer to the remains of clothes and household items of ordinary citizens; these are products of household craft. Ordinary textiles revealed between the two fire layers (which, apparently, ensured the preservation of objects) of the Romanovs' Yard in the center of Moscow are extremely illustrative (Elkina, 2009: 151–161).

These small shapeless fragments enrich the knowledge about textiles, which were used by ordinary citizens, about textile varieties in the type of fibers, color, structure, and methods of decoration. Among the fragments there are woolen light and dark undyed fabrics, as well as fabrics with fibers dyed in yellow-green and reddish-brown with vegetable dyes. Some fragments preserved even edges left by scissor cuts and traces of piercing with a needle. These are probably fragments of craftsmen's clothes. (Fig. 39-41).

In addition to fragments of fabrics, in these layers one can find remains of woven belts and bands, ribbons, braided and twisted cords. These are mainly products of household craft made in various techniques: the technique of weaving with a reed or on square planks and the technique of hand weaving or braiding.

The urban layers quite often bring fragments of knitted products, usually mittens and stockings. They were made using a very ancient

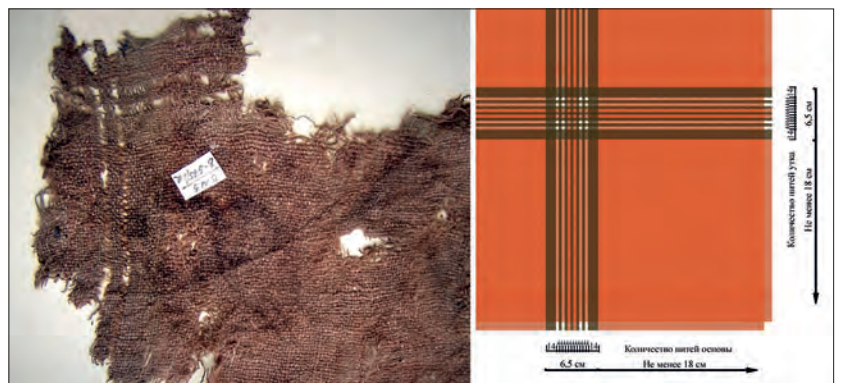


Fig. 40. Textile fragment in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from the urban layer of Vyzhma and graphic reconstruction (Photo and graphic reconstruction: I. Elkina).

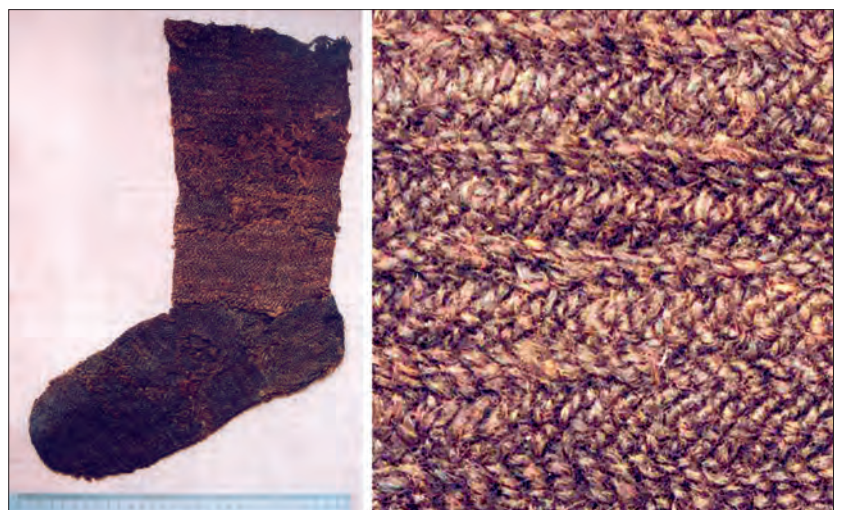


Fig. 41. Woolen stocking, made in the technique of knitting in a spiral. Moscow, Romanovs' Yard. Photos (Photos: I. Elkina).

technique of spiral knitting with a holed bone needle. In the Middle Ages stockings, or “*hoo-ves*”, were knitted in the form of a bag without a heel, such as a fragment of a stocking from Zaryadye.

Archaeological textile finds do not only correct long-held opinions, but sometimes even refute them. For example, it was believed that stockings with a heel appeared only at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Sosnina and Shangina, 2001: 352–353). However, among the knitwear found in the Romanovs' Yard there was a stocking with a high bootleg. This fact proved that the heel of the stocking was made as early as in the 17th century (Fig. 41). It was also believed that the technique of needle knitting and crocheting came to Russia from the West not earlier than in the eighteenth century. But a small knitting needle from the same excavation site proves that this knitting technique had already been mastered in Moscow of the seventeenth century.

The Romanovs' Yard produced another interesting textile object. Near one of the uncovered furnaces of the late sixteenth century a formless clump of soil was found, in which textile remnants with a strong blue coating of copper oxides could be identified. In the course of restoration it was possible to establish that these remains are fragments of decorative buttonhole-stripes with buttons that previously had adorned the outer men's clothing (*caftan*?). The clothes decayed, but the buttonholes survived, since they were made on a band woven of metal threads. A 10 mm wide band was made on a device with heddles and had a geometric ornament. A total of 11 fragments of buttonholes with fasteners and 8 fragments of buttonholes with loops survived. The 5 surviving buttons 8 mm in diameter were made by winding a golden thread round a (*wooden*?) bobbin. It was for the first time that a specimen of decorative finishing of the outer menswear with buttonholes was obtained during archaeological works.

Conclusion

Archaeological textiles present an important and capacious source of information. Textile material from archaeological excavations of late medieval sites on the territory of Moscow, Suzdal, Kirillov, Tver, Nizhny Novgorod, New Jerusalem monastery (near Moscow), Pereslavl-Zalessky, Vyazma and some other

locations made it possible to replenish our knowledge on the types of fabrics which existed there; the techniques of household weaving, knitting, embroidery, and braiding; on the manufacturing technology for textile products; on the cut of secular and monastic clothes; the status of the buried; previously unknown types of ornament; and on the ways of decorating clothes and other textile objects for church and household used in the Moscow State of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Studying new textile materials in the future during archaeological excavations will provide new information and supplement our knowledge of the late medieval textiles.

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