CHAPTER SEVEN

TEXTILES AND DRESS

Andronovans employed felt, fur, leather and wool in the manufacture of their clothes. The use of fur is indicated by the recovery of bones of wolf, fox, ferret, beaver, and hare on Andronovo settlements.

Leather production skills is testified by blades and scraping implements made from the jawbones of horse and cow found at Alekseevka, Sadchikovo, Shandasha, Tursumbay, Chaglinka, Yavlenka, Atasu, Kanay, Ust’-Narym, Malokrasnoyarka, Tasty-Butak, Kipeł’ and other sites. According to G. F. Korobkova these objects were used for manufacturing leather (Sharafutdinova 1982: 136; Leskov 1970: 39). Andronovans used leather for the sewing of outer clothing, caps and footwear.

Wool was the main material for clothes. It was spun with wooden spindles with clay spinners as shown by their discovery in settlements, and the twisted threads themselves are preserved inside beads in burials. The simplest way of producing woolen things was knitting. In western Siberia in the Andronovo, Orak, Pristan’, and Ust’-Erba burials, knitted textiles were found (Tugarinov 1926: 158; Sosnovsky 1934: 95-96; Kiselev 1949: 44, 48; Komarova 1961: 51; Maksimenkov 1978: 72). At Orak narrow strips were knit in the Tambur chain-stitch manner from rough twisted wool 29 microns wide. They were then sewn on in spirals to form a conical cap with a herring-bone pattern (Sosnovsky 1934: 93-95). At Andronovo, a conical cap was also sewn in spirals from narrow strips, not knit but twisted, from thick wool thread. In two other graves at Orak there were found narrow strips of fabric fragments from clothes and a cap, plaited in galloon weave from untwisted wool using a shuttle, the thread width being 18 and 22 microns (Sosnovsky 1934: 93-95)

Weaving also existed. At the Elovka burial cloth of ‘diagonal’ type woven from thin wool threads was preserved (Matyushchenko 1973a: 59). There are imprints of cloth from woven linen, made of threads 1.3-1.6mm wide, on Petrovka and Alakul’ pots. Such fabric is known from imprints on ceramics and a knife from Seyma (Bader 1970: 123). Analogous fabrics of linen and diagonal weave were found in Pazyryk (Rudenko 1953: 245, table 25.4). Apparently they wove on a primitive vertical loom without shafts, using knitting needles for stretching the base and sometimes clay or stone weights. The discovery of knitting needles, weights, and a shuttle are known from Andronovo settlements (Sal’nikov 1951a: 139); a shuttle was found at Chaglinka (Orazbaev 1970: 134).

The spinning and weaving of the Andronovo culture are analogous to west European techniques that are especially well studied in Denmark (Glob 1947) and with east European textiles of the Bronze and Early Iron ages (Pislariy 1981; Gavrilyuk 1989: 84-91). Andronovo and Timber-grave spinners belong to a widespread ancient type preserved by the Ossetes and Iranian-speaking peoples
of the Pamirs (Karmysheva 1979: 250-269). A. A. Semenov and G. F. Korobkova (1983: 130-132) have shown that twisting and knitting preceded weaving. The proto-type loom comprised a wooden frame with a stretched base and then the weft was threaded with a needle or kochedyk. The base might also be tightened with wooden pegs that had been driven in. A primitive loom without weights is preserved among the Mountain Tadzhiks (Pisarchik 1958: 372, fig. 80-81).

Terms connected with spinning and weaving derive from the most ancient layer of Indo-European heritage. Semantic bundles of words are built from the stems *ten and *tek (‘draw’, ‘twist’, ‘braid’, ‘spin’, ‘weave’, ‘thread’, ‘web’, ‘stripe’, ‘cloth’; Abaev 1949: 54; 1979 III: 220, 221, 302, 336, 337; Elizarenkova and Toporov 1995: 522). The names for wool and weaving share a common origin with the word for ‘sheep’ (Gertsenberg 1972: 56, 57, 228; Gankrelidze and Ivanov 1984: 583, 704-705). In the Rigveda clothes from fur and skin are mentioned (Elizarenkova and Toporov 1995: 521). Apparently alongside wool, vegetable fibers, hemp in particular, were used (Gryaznov 1956a: 40; IK SSR: 123). Imprints of a textile hurdle from organic fibers are found on Eneolithic ceramics, for example, at Botai. In the Urals hemp processing survived till the 19th century (Sal’nikov 1961a: 139), and in the Ukraine and Ossetia it is cultivated to the present. Cloth made from hemp was found at Pazyryk (Rudenko 1953: 104). According to Herodotus (4,74) hemp grows in the country of the Scythians, where it “much surpasses flax. It grows both by itself and is tilled” (Dovatur et al. 1982: 127). In the Indo-European languages names for flax and hemp are of common origin: the same word is used to denote home-spun cotton fabric (Abaev 1958 I: 513; Gertsenberg 1972: 181, 183; Steblin-Kamensky 1982: 63f.).

Spinning and weaving are very frequently used in Vedic literature. Terms and notions connected with them have been studied by W. Rau (1971); some data are found in general works on the history of crafts (Rau and Chakrabarti 1975) and Indian costume (Mili Chandra 1972; Parpola 1985). Spinning and weaving were female occupations; they used primitive looms without spindles. It is described in the Rigveda (10.130): a base, on which a weft is used for weaving, is tightened on pegs. Vegetable fibers and woolen yarn were employed. According to the Avesta, Yima taught people to use the loom. The goddess Anāhitā, who appears as a weaver, is the protectress of female occupations. In Indo-Iranian tradition weaving is a ritualized process with cosmological associations.

The style of women’s clothes in the Andronovo culture is reconstructed on the basis of the position of bronze and paste beads sewn on the sleeve cuffs, collar and hem. They are known from Alakul’, Petropavlovsk, and Ataken-say (Sal’nikov 1951a: 140; Kuz’mina 1986b: 978). The clothes comprised a long, straight dress, over knee length, with long rather wide sleeves reaching the wrists and with a rounded neck. The front of the dress is often decorated with bronze plates. The dress was tied up with a waistband with attached amulets from perforated animal teeth. It has been claimed that in Orak and Petropavlovsk clothes were dyed red with organic dyes (Kiselev 1949: 48; Sal’nikov 1981a: 140). Red color played a great role in Aryan ideology (Elizarenkova 1995: 481f).

The costume was accompanied by ornaments. A standard set included a pair of earrings, or temple rings, one or two bracelets sometimes with spiral ends, a string of beads on the ankles and some breast plates, often of perforated shell. In