

Clothing Remains from Grave No. 215a, Basilica No. 2 in Drastar – Visualization

Kalina Atanasova

Abstract: This article presents visualization of published observations on the grave of a boy in Basilica No. 2 in Medieval Drastar. Traces of a textile belt with metal decorations and remains of a caftan with golden embroidery and a linen shirt were found in the grave. The belt was found wrapped twice around the waist of the boy and it is probable that it was not worn by him when he was alive. There are illustrations of the position of the belt in the grave, the manner in which it was worn, the manner in which the caftan was fastened and the general appearance of the clothing.

Key words: Drastar, clothing, belt, caftan, Terter

Резюме: Онагледяване на вече публикуваните наблюдения върху гроб на момче от базилика № 2 в средновековен Дръстър. В гроба са открити текстилен колан с метални апликации и останки от златовезан кафтан и ленена риза. Коланът е намерен опасан два пъти около кръста на момчето и твърде вероятно изобщо не е носен от него приживе. Приложени са визуализации на положението на колана в гроба, начина на носене на колана, начина на закопчаване на кафтана и общия вид на облеклото.

This paper presents an attempt to illustrate the observations on a boy's grave¹ in Basilica No. 2 in Medieval Drastar which have been published before. It is thought that the graves of the rich in this Basilica, dated to the 14th century, may be connected with the family of Ivanko Terter, Despot Dobrotitsa's son who was an independent ruler of this area.² Dobrotitsa's family had both Bulgarian and Cuman roots and was probably related to the Terter royals.³ Specifically Grave 215a is not only

¹ Atanasov 2011, 88 determines the boy's age to be 11 years old; Chokoev 2017, 111 determines the boy's age to be 13-14 years old.

² Angelova 1996, 38-39; 2002, 18.

³ Atanasov 2009, 113, 422.

rich in findings, but also well-examined.⁴ There are sufficiently-preserved materials to allow the complete visualization of the body's clothing which is otherwise rarely possible due to the state in which other findings have been discovered in our lands. However, any such attempt would invariably contain elements of conjecture and assumption.

Various clothing elements⁵ were discovered in the grave and they are listed here in accordance to the degree to which they were preserved:

1. **Textile belt**, 2.12 m long, densely covered with metal decorations which has been described in details in Georgi Atanasov's article.⁶ The belt was wrapped twice around the body's waist leading to the assumption that initially it had belonged to an adult man. The length of the belts found in Bulgaria varies, but depictions of boys show them wearing shorter belts than their adult relatives as a rule.⁷ The full set of elements has been preserved allowing a precise recreation.⁸ A point of special interest is the nut with a pendant found 17 cm away from the end of the belt to which the buckle was attached.⁹ The nut has a solid ear-like part attached to it suggesting the idea that after buckling, the end of the belt would rather hang from it than go through it¹⁰ (Sample.1).¹¹ The pendant itself, in the form of a trefoil, was probably used to hang a purse from it (Sample.2).¹²

When visualizing the manner in which this belt was probably worn, two different positions should be taken into account: the manner in which it was placed in the grave and the manner in which it was

⁴ Atanasov 2011; Chokoev 2017.

⁵ A little glass vessel was also found at the breast (Angelova 2002, 20, table XIV-II) according to the drawing made on the spot. It, however, does not belong to the clothing and there is no reason to examine it in this paper.

⁶ Atanasov 2011.

⁷ There is a pertinent example for this in the depictions of a father and son in Dolna Kamenitsa and of a Serbian family in Psacha.

⁸ Atanasov 2011, fig. 6, 11.

⁹ Atanasov 2011, 88.

¹⁰ Some buckles with 'metal pins' published in Fingerlin 1971, 103, fig. 148 – 150 are very similar in shape to this nut. According to the author, they were used in the 14th century and were attached to a long woman's belt lying freely low over the hips. (Thanks to Petya Krusheva who helped with the translation).

¹¹ All my drawings and sketches have been made in cooperation with Dr. Chokoev.

¹² Chokoev 2017, 111.

supposed to be worn by the initial owner.

When picturing the first position, the on-the-spot drawing¹³ was viewed where the buckle and the strap end were shown to be close to each other and the strap end was at an angle to the skeleton. An experiment was made, using a 12-year-old boy,¹⁴ with a 2.07 m long replica of a medieval belt.¹⁵ I have shown part of the possible versions (Sample 3, 4). At this length of the replica, the nut would fall to the side or even under the body of the boy. After twice wrapping the belt around the body, its end could still be hanged from it, but in this case the plate would not lie so close to the buckle.

For the second position, the placement of the nut in proximity to the buckle could be taken as a point of reference. A stretch of 17 cm suggests that the buckle should have been placed in the middle of the waist in front while the end of the belt should have been hanging on the left side. The belts of ktetors from Dolna Kamenitsa¹⁶ and Psacha¹⁷ (Sample 5-7) were depicted as worn in a similar style, though there is no pendant there. Having in mind the fashion of the 13th and 14th centuries, it is not impossible that the belt could have been left to hang freely forming an additional oval shape in front of the body (Sample 8), even though there is no hook depicted in the wall paintings where such a style can be seen (Sample 9).¹⁸ The pendant for the purse was mounted together with the nut which means that this purse was covered by the freely hanging end of the belt. In the 13th-14th centuries, Byzantine nobles started wearing purses on a long string hanging precisely on the left of their belts.¹⁹ Some of the belts found in Bulgaria have such pendants, therefore it may be posited that this was also the practice of Bulgarian aristocrats. Another fashionable accessory which was often worn with expensive belts was a handkerchief tucked in on the right, but there is no evidence of its presence in this case.

2. Silk clothing with buttons and lining. According to the

¹³ The drawing belongs to Ralitsa Ivanova, one of the deputy directors of the excavations, and it was kindly given to me by Dr. Chokoev.

¹⁴ Thanks to Sava Spasov from Dux Antica Club for his cooperation.

¹⁵ Made by Ivan Rendakov.

¹⁶ Photos: Krasimir Yovchev.

¹⁷ Reproduction: Vasich 1968, 10.

¹⁸ Drawing of the portrait of ktitor Konstantin from Stanichene published by Popovich *et al.* 2005, 86.

¹⁹ Parani 2015, 423-424.

field observations of the researchers of grave No. 215 (Assoc. Prof. St. Angelova, PhD, director of excavations, and deputy directors Senior Assistant R. Koleva, PhD, Senior Assistant E. Angelova, PhD, R. Ivanova), and the research of Ivan Chokoev,²⁰ it reached the knees and was split in the middle in front. A row of silver buttons in various sizes, most of them gold plated and sewn close to each other, fastened this split down to the waist. From the waist down, there is only one button at the level of the thighs (Sample 10).²¹ Probably the clothing had freely falling skirts, similar to a caftan, and there was another split at the back from the waist down. The sleeves were tight as there were splits to the elbows fastened by buttons.

Although the belt left in the grave was probably not made for a little boy, the upper garment was originally intended to be wrapped by a heavy belt whose buckle and decorations are of similar sizes to those found. Of particular interest is how any discomfort which may arise from covering the buttons with this belt has been avoided – at the waist the line of big buttons is interrupted and the garment is fastened by little silver buttons sewn on the inside instead of on the outside (Sample 11-13).²² The caftan was very striking: it had a red lining and its edges were lined with a red silk cord. It was embroidered with gold thread and silk and part of the ornaments are similar to bird feathers.²³ The researcher assumes that it is possible that it was embroidered with double-headed eagles. This assumption stems from the fact that there is a double-headed eagle depicted on the coins of Ivanko/Yoan Terter as well as on ceramics and a bronze mold dated to the years of his rule²⁴ and it is probably also a symbol of his father Dobrotitsa who was a despot and a relative of the Palaiologos.²⁵ In two female burials in the necropolis of Basilica No. 2, there were golden earrings decorated with a double-headed eagle and Terter's monogram.²⁶ It cannot be known for sure whether the sleeves were also embroidered.

²⁰ Chokoev 2017, 121-122.

²¹ The location of the three small buttons in the upper part of the drawing is one possible version; another one will be discussed below.

²² Chokoev 2017, 117-119.

²³ Chokoev 2017, 113.

²⁴ Atanasov 2003.

²⁵ Atanasov 2009, 293.

²⁶ Angelova 2002, 20; table XIV – I; for detailed description and photos see Pavlova 2007, 31.

3. **Undershirt**, probably linen. According to Chokoev, the material has 'a plant origin'.²⁷ At the neck of the body there were three small-sized buttons similar to those at the waist but gold-plated. They were fastened by gold-thread loops.²⁸ Their different size and the different style of fastening pose an argument that they may be part of the undershirt and not the caftan. If, however, they belong to the caftan, the only explanation for their style is that they were used to fasten a high collar. Both options are equally possible (Sample 14).

The greatest challenge before the complete visualization of the clothing is the embroidery on the caftan. There is information about the materials and technologies used and its probable elements, but their exact size and configuration remain unknown. Having in mind the fact that the caftan is evidently luxurious, it is logical to suppose that there was embroidery on most of its upper surface. However, for the purpose of thoroughness, two visualizations should be shown – one with and one without embroidery (Sample 15, 16). The base colour of the caftan, the colour of the undershirt and the shoes are only the result of assumptions. However, without some use of speculative reasoning, it is impossible to present the magnificence of the findings in Grave 215a well enough. And this magnificence should be made clear in the most obvious manner. The boy from the 14th century, supposedly one of the heirs of despot Dobrotitsa's son, wore all symbols of the family's high status and wealth, similar to adult men.

It is also important to note that here the clothes used when sending the boy on his way and the clothes he used to wear when he was alive were probably different. The caftan with golden embroidery was probably worn by the boy as official clothing.²⁹ The belt used for this caftan was probably shorter and possibly cheaper. The long belt found in the grave was not only not made for this boy, but probably not worn by him. At the same time, the careful manner in which it was wrapped around his waist hints that it may be more than a funeral gift. According to a widely-quoted point of Dušan's Code, the son should have inherited his father's belt.³⁰ Even though they were not insignia, expensive belts showed their owners' position in society and were given as inheritance. It is not impossible that this youth was the last or the

²⁷ Chokoev 2017, 116.

²⁸ Chokoev 2017, 117, 119.

²⁹ The silk bears traces of wearing and it is even possible that the garment was worn by the boy's father when he was his son's age – Chokoev 2017, 120-121, n. 42.

³⁰ Novakovich 1870, 31.

only son in the family and the fact that he was buried with his father's belt may mean that the male line died with him.

Angelova, St. (1996) 'Tsarkva №2 v Drastar (Silistra) (predvaritelno saobshtenie)', *Minalo* 3, 28 – 40.

Angelova, St. (2002) 'Razkopki na tsarkva № 2. Arheologicheskoprouchvane na Drastar (14 godini po-kasno)', *Dobrudzha* 20, 12 – 39.

Atanasov, G. (2003) 'Otnosno prinadlezhnostta i datirovkata na bronzovata plocha (matritsa) s dvuglav orel i krast or Drastar – Silistra', in: V. Gyuzelev, V. Tapkova-Zaimova & P. Pavlov (eds) *Studia protobulgarica et mediaevalia europensia. V chest na prof. Veselin Beshevliev* (Veliko Tarnovo), 322-330.

Atanasov, G. (2009) *Dobrudzhanskoto despotstvo* (Veliko Tarnovo).

Atanasov, G. (2011) 'Two belts from 14th – century male burials in Drastar (now Silistra, NE Bulgaria)', *Archaeologia Bulgarica* 2, 87–97.

Chokoev, I. (2017) 'Takani i tehnologichni belezhi za drehata ot grob № 215a, bazilika № 2 v Drastar', *Dobrudzha* 32, 111 – 122.

Fingerlin, I. (1971) *Gurtel des hohen und spaten Mittelalters* (Munchen).

Novakovich, S. (1870) *Zakonik Stefana Dushana, tsara srpskog (1349 i 1354)* (Beograd).

Parani, M. (2015) 'Optional extras or necessary elements? Middle and Late Byzantine male dress accessories', in: Pl. Petridis & V. Foskolou (eds) *Daskala. Apodisi timis stin Katigitria Mairi Panayiotidi-Kesisoglou* (Athens), 407-435.

Pavlova, V. (2007) *Sakrovishtata na srednovekovna Balgariya. Katalog na izlozhba* (Varna).

Popovich, M., Gabelich, S., Tsvetkovich, B. & Popovich, B. (2005) *Tsrkva Svetog Nikole u Stanichen'u* (Beograd).

Vasich, P. (1968) *Nosnja naroda Jugoslavije kroz istoriju* (Beograd).

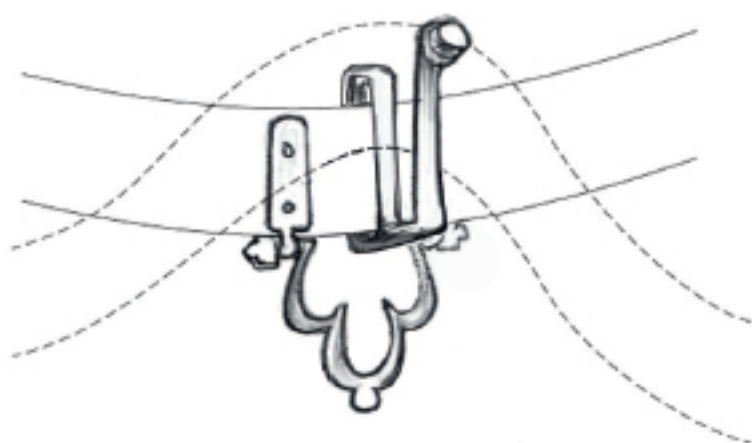


Fig. 1. Belt from Grave 215a – hanging on the nut (drawing: Kalina Atanasova).



Fig. 2. The pendant on the belt as used to hang a purse (drawing: Kalina Atanasova).



Fig. 3. The position of the belt in the grave – recreation (model: Sava Spasov; creator of the belt: Ivan Rendakov; photo: Kalina Atanasova).



Fig. 4. Options for wrapping the belt around the body in the grave – recreation (model: Sava Spasov; creator of the belt: Ivan Rendakov; photos: Kalina Atanasova).



Fig. 5. The son of the ktetor from Dolna Kamenitsa (photo: Krasimir Yovchev).



Fig. 6. The belt of the ktetor from Dolna Kamenitsa – detail
(photo: Krasimir Yovchev).

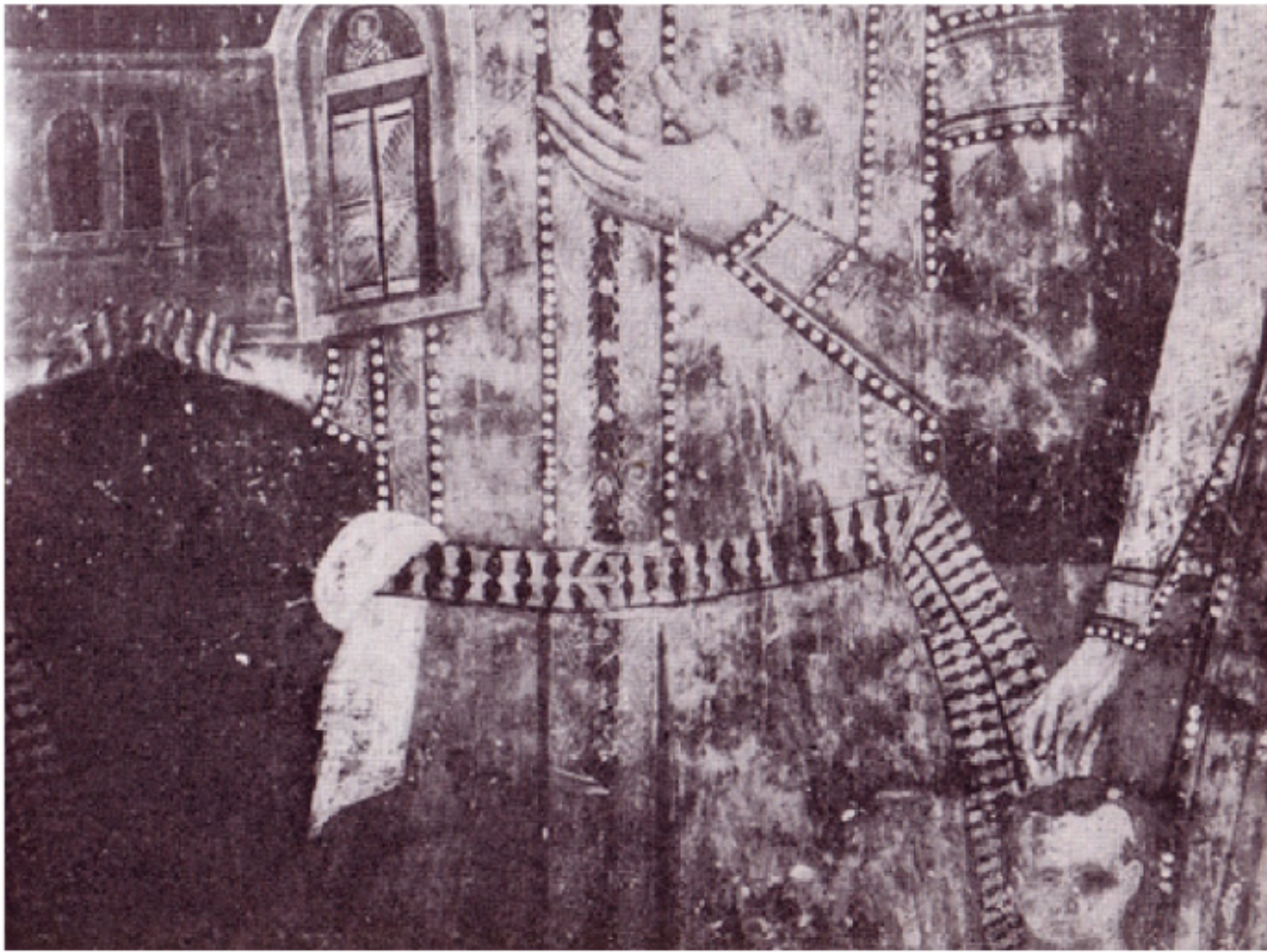


Fig. 7. Ktetor from Psacha – detail (after: Vasich 1968, 10).

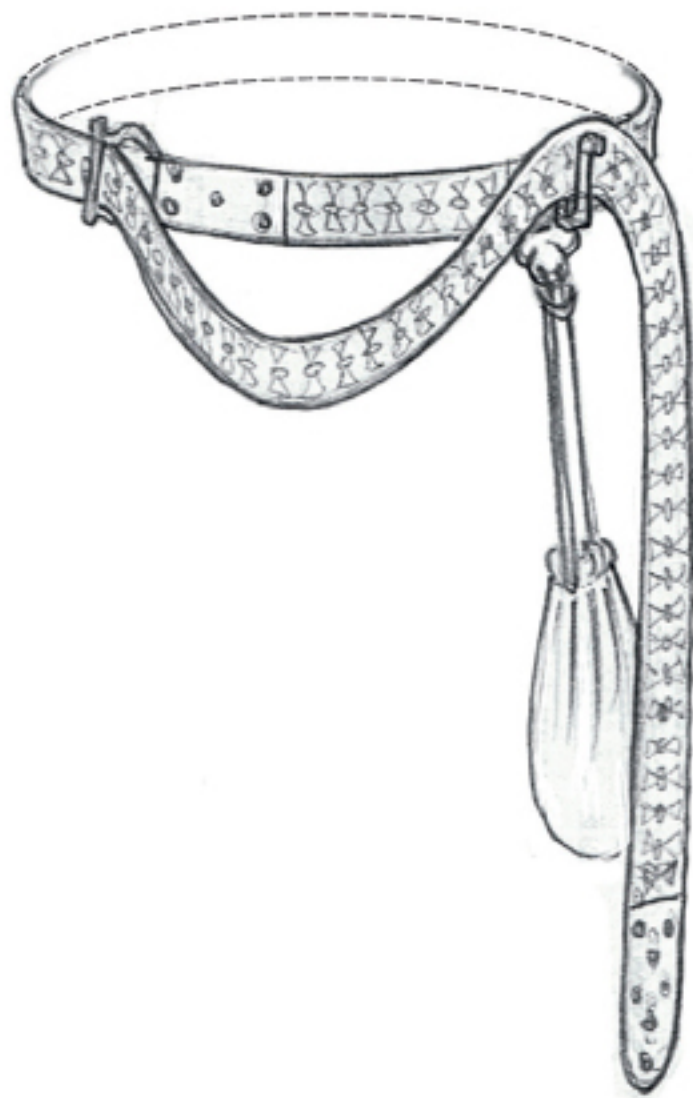


Fig. 8. Possible manner of wearing the belt found in Grave 215a (drawing: Kalina Atanasova).



Fig. 9. Ktetor Konstantin from Stanichene - detail (after Popovich *et al.* 2005, 86).

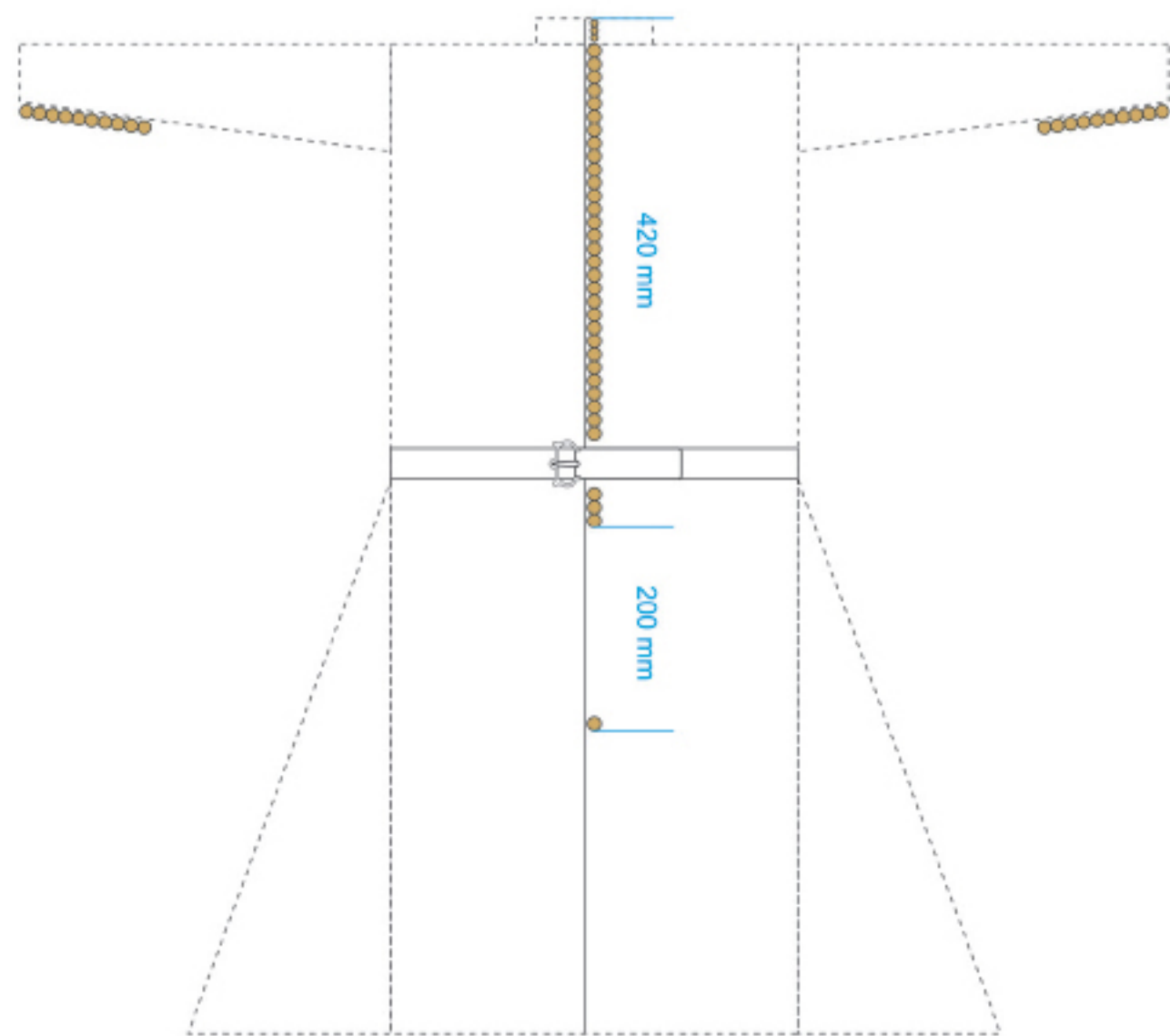


Fig. 10. Position of the buttons found in Grave 215a (recreation based on Chokoev 2017; drawing: Kalina Atanasova).

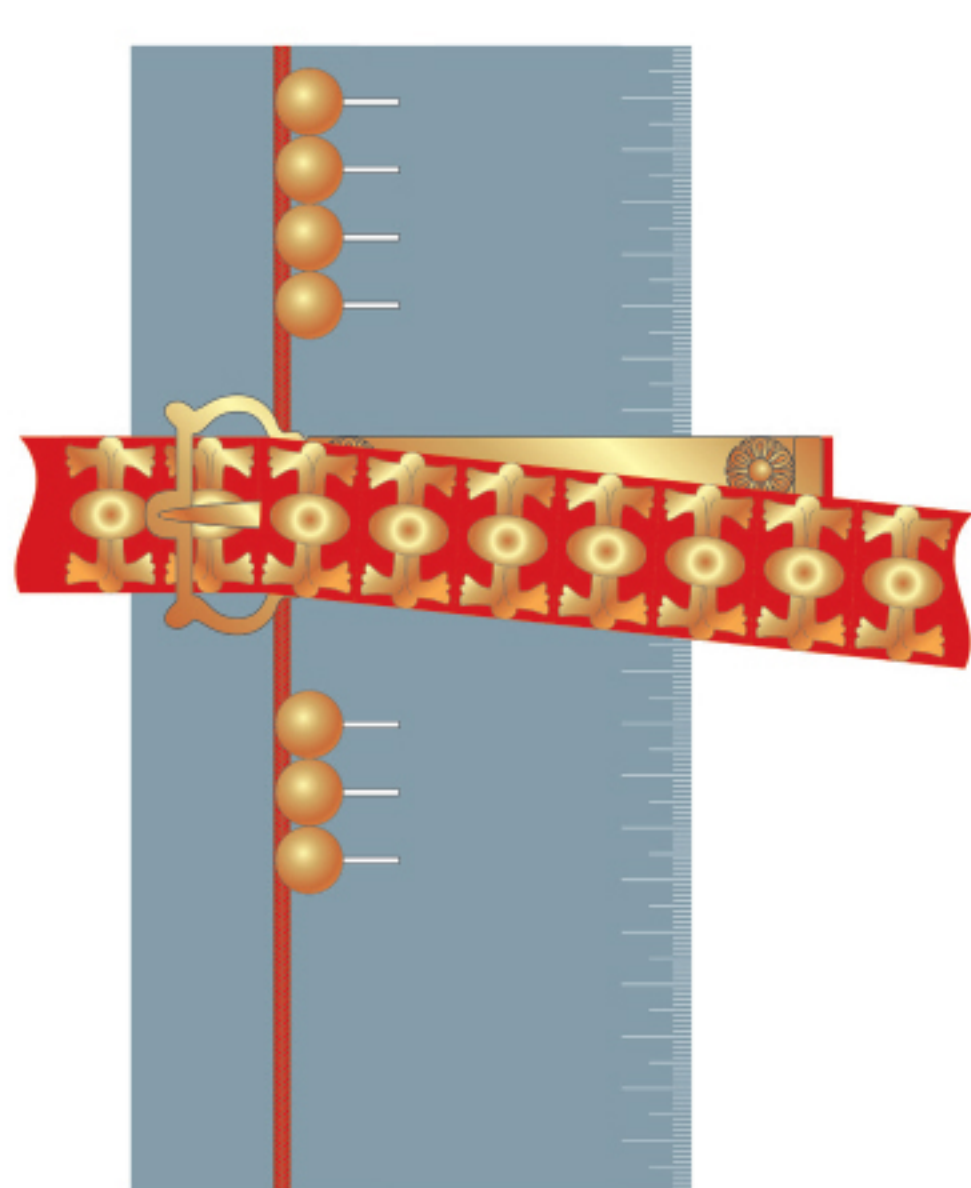


Fig. 11. Fastening of the garment and belt found in Grave 215a – outer side (recreation based on Chokoev 2017; drawing: Kalina Atanasova).

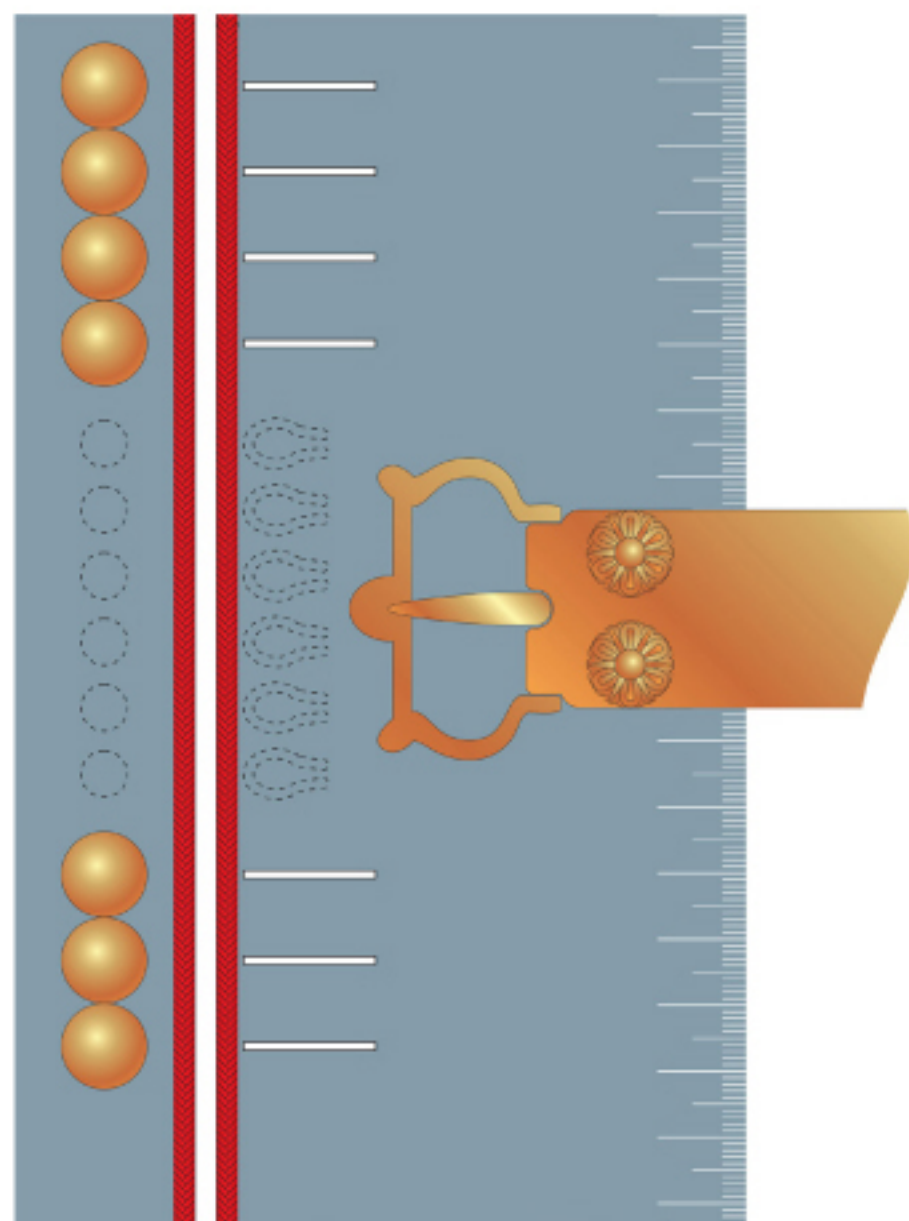


Fig. 12. Fastening of the garment found in Grave 215a – outer side (recreation based on Chokoev 2017; drawing: Kalina Atanasova).

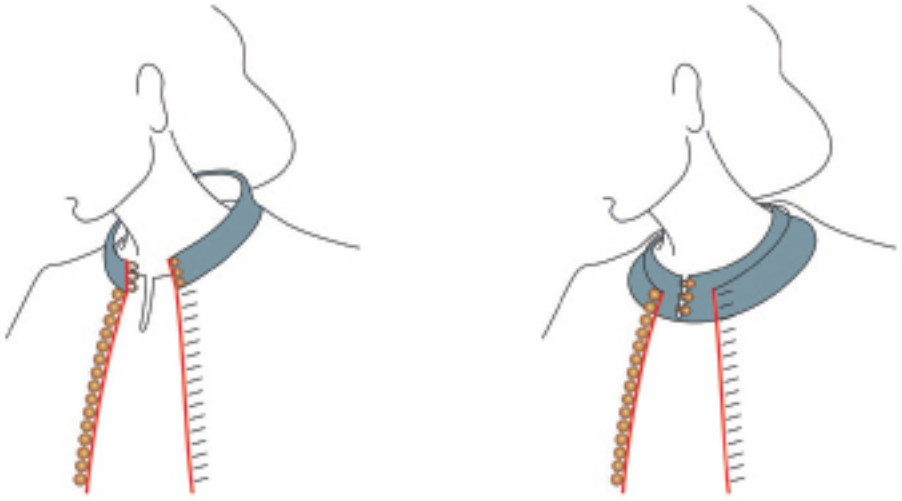
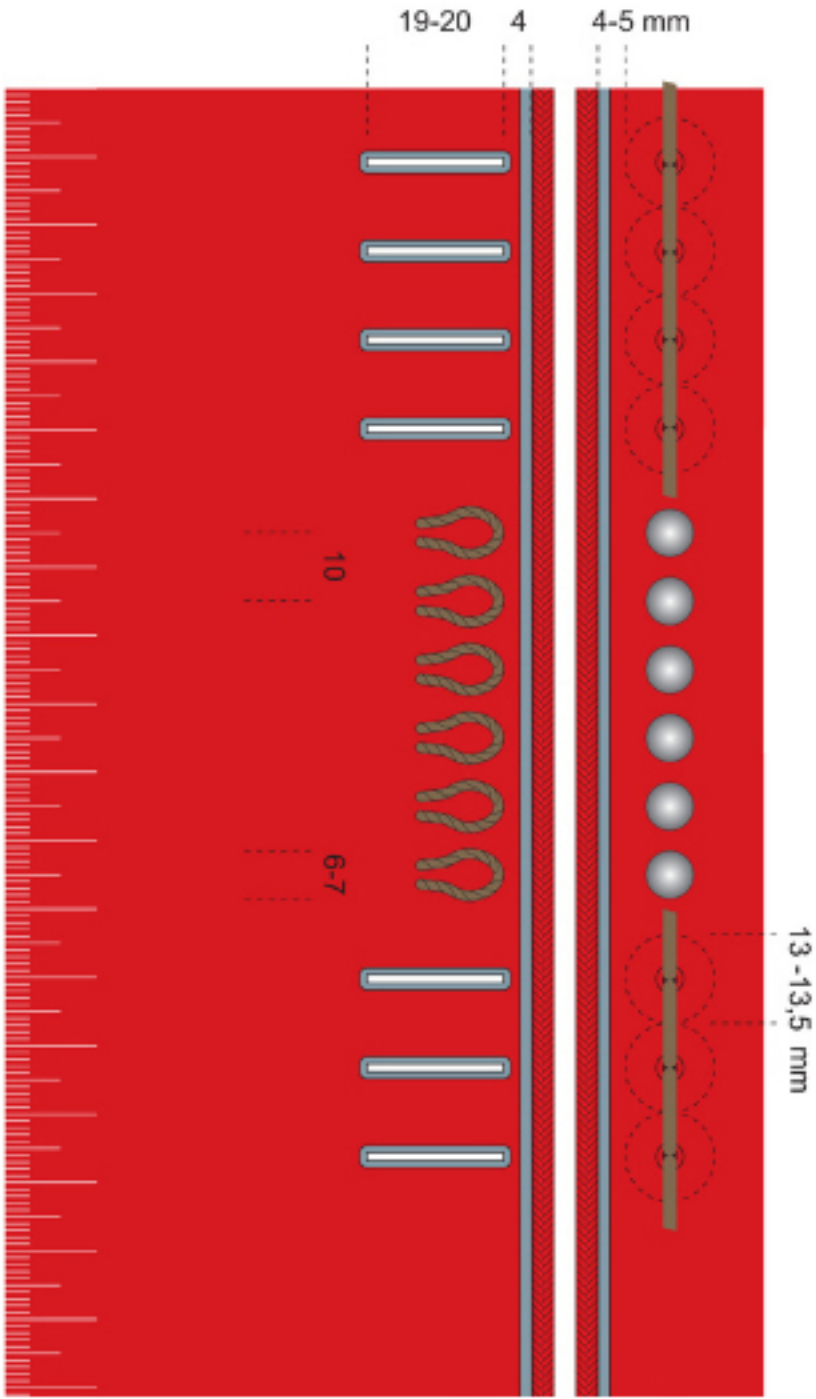


Fig. 14. The use of the small buttons at the neck found in Grave 215a – two versions (drawing: Kalina Atanasova).

Fig. 13. Fastening of the garment found in Grave 215a – inner side (recreation based on Chokoev 2017; drawing: Kalina Atanasova).



Fig. 15. Clothing found in Grave 215a – recreation without embroidery (drawing: Kalina Atanasova).



Fig. 16. Clothing found in Grave 215a – recreation with embroidery (drawing: Kalina Atanasova).