

Summary of the PhD dissertation

“Social stratification of the population of the forest-steppe area of the Dnieperland in the Scythian period”

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The aim of the dissertation entitled „Social stratification of the population of the forest-steppe area of the Dnieperland in the Scythian period” was to analyse of the social differentiation of the groups of people inhabiting the basin of the middle Dnieper, as well as adjoining small part of the Boh drainage area, during the period between the end of the eighth and the beginning of the third century BC. The basic source database is a collection of 649 funerary complexes for which it was possible to determine the gender of the deceased. The state of research on the subject of the presented dissertation is not uniform. Works dealing with the issue in question, we can divide into: publications devoted exclusively to the social differentiation of the groups of people inhabiting the forest-steppe area in the Scythian period, works in which these issues are briefly discussed while dealing with different topics, and studies of individual cemeteries and funerary complexes with added general indication of the social attribution of the deceased. The first chapter concludes with remarks about the current state of research on the ethno-cultural situation in the forest-step zone of Dnieperland in the Scythian period.

The second chapter gives a general description of the funeral rituals of the studied populations. They are discussed under five main sections. These are the nature of burials, the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the grave goods, the analysis of the size and type diversity of grave constructions and burial mounds. Additional elements of the funeral rituals, such as accompanying horse burials and funeral feasts and other ritual-symbolic procedures, are discussed separately. At this stage of the dissertation, the main emphasis was placed on studying of the similarities and differences in funeral rites used by specific territorial groups in main chronological phases. An important part of the analysis was to grasp those of them that can be considered as reflecting the rules permitting the deceased to enter the afterlife. As a result, some funeral rites were defined as norm, and other – its deviations. Furthermore, the

relationships between those two different practices were examined. It was established that one of the reasons for applying certain funeral rites to the deceased may be their position in the social hierarchy.

The third chapter describes the horizontal stratification based on the division of society by gender and age. To start with, it was established, that in single burials the correlation between age and gender of the deceased and specific elements of funeral rites is very well visible, especially when it comes to the burial method the nature of the grave goods. In addition, some differences manifest itself in the size of the grave constructions in which the deceased was placed, as well as the burial mounds. Moreover, the analysis of the collective graves showed relationships between the deceased placed in them, who were representing different age and gender classes. During the analysis of single and collective graves, the social status of the deceased was determined. It was found that in the case of age, the period between 10-12 and 15 years marked the crucial change in social rank, namely the transition from childhood to adulthood. Additionally, it was found that the "atypical" methods of burial characteristic for younger age classes could be a manifestation of their « undetermined » social identity. The differences between male and female burials reflect rather the existing funeral rules, and are not directly linked to the different social rank of women in relation to men.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the reconstruction of the social structure of the studied population groups. Firstly, it was made a critical review of the criteria and methodology of distinguishing social ranks of the population of the Northern Black Sea in the Scythian period. On this basis, it was revealed that the best indicator for the social position of deceased is the amount of work used for preparing the burial, reflected in the first place by the size and complexity of the grave and burial mound. Other important criterion is also the richness and variety of the grave goods, as well as the presence or absence of some specific elements of funeral rites, for example accompanying horse and human burials. Using the statistical methods, there were identified seven main classes of burials based on the features described above. Graves of each of these classes can be interpreted as places of burial for people belonging to diverse social groups. This distinguished classes were sorted according to the social hierarchy, that is in such a way that the transition to the subsequent classes is connected with the decreased amount of work used to build the burial construction and the burial mound, and the grave goods becoming "poorer". The second stage of the studies carried out in this part of the work was the social interpretation of the distinguished classes of graves. Based on

the data referring to the social differentiation of the Scythian groups from the literature, it was established a multistage social stratification system of the surveyed populations. According to it, the highest place in the social hierarchy was taken by members of the upper class, including local and supra-regional leaders of various ranks (class I), members of the ancestral and tribal aristocracy with „elite troopers” (class II), and members of low-ranking elites (classes III-IV). The latter classes consisted by the nomadic elites of the lowest rang, and the „equestrian” aristocracy associated with the local agricultural population. The middle level in the hierarchy was taken by members of the „ordinary population”, which was the most numerous part of the surveyed communities. This class was divided into two smaller groups. The first of them (class V) included their wealthy members with a higher social status, while the second (class VI) grouped the remaining part of the ordinary population with a slightly lower rank. One of the lowest positions within the social system belonged to “the poorest” (class VII). The list of social strata and groups within the analyzed populations is closed by the categories of population with more or less limited rights, which were in a various levels of dependency with people placed at higher levels in the hierarchy.

The fifth chapter presents the remarks on the chronological and regional diversity of the social stratification of the population groups of the forest-steppe Dnieperland of the Scythian period. On the basis of the analyzes carried out in this chapter, it was revealed that these populations were not homogeneous and sometimes differed significantly from one to another. The disparities between the groups concern, first of all, the percentage of funerary complexes, which can be associated with social classes and groups based on specific place in the hierarchy. Moreover, the detected transformations over time of the studied social structures indicates that they were not "permanent" but were characterized by quite high variability. The study of the different groups of the Scythian period showed that one of the main factors influencing the change of the social stratification was the dynamics of the ethnic and cultural processes taking place in the forest-steppe area of Dniepreland. Especially important role played the relations (and their degree of intensity) between various population groups occupying these areas. In addition, transitions of the studied social structures could be linked to some internal shifts taking place within these communities.

In the last chapter, the most important data on the social structure of the surveyed populations was summarized. Considerable attention was paid to determining the processes influencing the obtained image of the social structure. It was revealed that these factors can be discussed in two contexts. Firstly, the results of the analyses could be affected by the

selectiveness of the funeral sources. The second context is the social and ethno-cultural conditions of the studied communities, including the relations between population groups and the changes taking place within them. Moreover, on the basis of the obtained image of the social structure, it was found that in least some of the surveyed population groups meet the definition of the political and social organization referred to as "chiefdoms".

The dissertation ends with a list of literature, two annexes, a catalog in tabular form, and tables presenting selected funerary complexes.

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