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**SOCIAL STRATIFICATION OF FOREST-STEPPE
POPULATION OF THE LEFT-BANK OF THE DNEPERLAND
DURING THE CLASSICAL SCYTHIA
(the 2nd half of 6th—4th/3rd century BC).
PART 2: INTERPRETATION**

The article presents some remarks concerning the reconstruction of social structure of the Scythian populations from the forest-steppe zone of the left-bank Dnieperland, in the period between the 2nd half of 6th—4th/3rd century BC. The main aim of the paper was to propose an interpretation of a social position of deceased interred in graves belonging to the analyzed set. Following the main theories regarding this subject found in the scientific literature, I accepted a hypothesis of a hierarchical character of the studied communities. The highest place in the social hierarchy was taken by members of the higher classes, including local and supra-regional leaders of various ranks, members of the ancestral and tribal aristocracy with «elite troopers», and members of elites of the lowest rank (the nomadic elites of the lowest rank, and the «equestrian» aristocracy associated with the local agricultural population). The next strata — the middle class — consists of members of the «ordinary population», regarded as the most numerous part of the surveyed communities. One of the lowest positions within the social system belonged to «the poor», while the bottom of the hierarchy was occupied by people of more or less limited rights, remaining in a various levels of dependency from representatives of the higher classes.

Keywords: funeral rites, social stratification, forest-steppe Dnieper, Scythians.

The presented paper is a continuation of the study of the social stratification of the inhabitants of the forest-steppe zone of the left-bank Dnieperland between the 2nd half of the 6th to the 4th/3rd century BC (Burghardt 2021). In the previous work, I have described the main principles of the method of classification of graves for the purpose of social analysis. The study of 247 grave complexes led to a conclusion that the main indicators of the position of a deceased in the social hierarchy are: the amount of work ef-

fort put into construction of the grave complex (grave construction and burial mound), as well as quantity and quality of grave goods. With the help of the statistical analyses, it was possible to assort the studied complexes into few clusters (classes), which may represent various social or economic groups. The identified clusters form a hierarchical structure — the subsequent classes could be characterized by decreasing energy expenditure devoted to preparing a burial (including building a grave construction and covering it with a mound) and completing a grave inventory (increasingly «poorer» grave goods).

I should note, however, that the application of the above-presented method of classifying burials based on quantitative and qualitative criteria carries certain limitations, such as the possibility of overlooking the non-material factors determining a social position of a deceased. We should keep in mind, that among the physical remains of a funeral ceremony, which can be uncovered at a grave complex using archaeological methods, the manifestations of individual and collective identities rooted in traditions regulating social behavior, especially those linked to emotional aspects (for example feelings of surviving family / kin members towards the deceased relative), are largely absent. Realizing the constraints linked to the study of funerary finds, regardless to the selected method of analysis (classification), I must stress that there is no doubt that the picture of the past created based on archaeological sources is often oversimplified. As noted by many scholars, mortuary practices are just one of the many aspects of the past reality, which do not carry enough weight to explain all the

issues concerning the functioning of ancient societies, including those concerned with the social sphere.

Moving on to the issues of interpretation of the results of the analyses presented in the previous paper (Burghardt 2021), I must state that the belief on the hierarchical nature of the social structure of the communities inhabiting the forest-steppe areas of the left-bank Dnieperland between the 2nd half of the 6th to the 4th/3rd century BC is largely consistent with the ideas described in many works on this subject (Бойко 1994, с. 34—35; 2107, с. 49—105; Моруженко 1991, с. 163; Бабенко 2005, с. 172—183; Буйнов, Окатенко 2013, с. 130—131, табл. 3), as well as the results of analysis of other contemporary societies of the Scythian cultural model from the forest-steppe zone of the Eastern Europe (e. g. Березуцкий 1995; Burghardt 2017b) and Scythian groups from the steppe (e. g. Ильинская, Тереножкин 1983, с. 121—188; Генинг 1984, с. 124—153; Бунятян 1985). To identify the social and economic groups whose members buried their dead in various clusters of grave complexes, I decided to examine the obtained results in the context of the well established in scientific literature theories of the multi-stage division of the Scythian society. According to these systems, the highest place in social hierarchy was occupied by the individuals of the higher classes. It is generally accepted that the elite burials should be characterized by the largest grave structures and burial mounds, as well as the richest and most diverse sets of grave goods (e. g. Мозолевський 1979, с. 156—157, табл. 4; Тереножкин, Мозолевський 1988, л. 3—4; Ромашко, Скорый 2009, с. 89). Typically, inventories of graves belonging to this group contain prestige items, manifesting the high social position of the deceased, as well as high-status artefacts linked with the military and sacral spheres. Additionally, one of the most characteristic features of the high-class graves is the presence of accompanying human and horse burials. In the presented classification scheme, the above-described attributes are typical for the class I of male and female burials, as well as, to a lesser extent, inventories belonging to the class II (including male burials of the class II/III). On top of that, the analysed grave complexes of the forest-steppe elites often contain various elements — such as turf rolls, wooden structures, and subsoil heaps within the burial mounds, ditches and / or dykes around the kurgans, accompanying horse burials, wooden vessels with golden appliques, bronze cauldrons, and sacrificial foods — commonly associated with burials of nomads. Thus, we could suspect that the highest place in the social hierarchy of the studied populations may have been occupied by the groups of people of a nomadic origin.

Grave complexes interpreted as places of burial of the nomadic elites belong to few different clusters. Such internal differentiation of that group is consistent with the beliefs of many scholars. Traditionally, individuals interred in the complexes of the class I are interpreted as local leaders — «kings» (Velyka Homolsha, kurgan 11; PISOCHYN, kurhan 18, burial 1 — Буйнов, Окатенко 2013, с. 130, табл. 3), «princes», or nomarchs, who may have controlled some parts of forest-steppe areas of the left-bank Dnieperland (Volkovtsy, kurhan 1/1894 — Chernenko et al. 2004, p. 33; cf. Yu. Boltrik's comments in his studies of the territorial structures of Scythia — Болтрик 2011, с. 108—110, рис. 1). Additionally, many deceased from the class II graves were often assigned to the category of chieftains (e. g. Staryi Merchyk, kurgan group III, kurgan 11 — Ганшин 2008, с. 12; Гречко 2010, с. 104—105; Буйнов 2012, с. 27), but in their case, we could assume that the position of the decedent in the social hierarchy may have been lower than one of the «kings» (cf. Буйнов, Окатенко 2013, с. 130, табл. 3). Thus, we could conclude that the grave complexes of the class I and II could be identified as burials of leaders of groups of various sizes (e. g. individual tribes or their federations) of diverse statuses. On the other hand, while interpreting each high-class burial, we should consider not only the presence of distinctive features compared to other grave complexes from a specific region of the forest-steppe zone, but also the possibility of linking it with agglomerations of funerary and settlement sites. Consequently, both of the above-described criteria could be observed in most of grave complexes of the class I (Aksiutintsy, Staikin Verkh, kurgan 2 i (Volkovtsy, kurgan 1/1894 — upper and central Sula River basin and, possibly, adjacent areas (at least the central Vorskla River basin?) — cf. Бойко 1996, с. 274, 276; Pereshchepino, kurgan 15, burial 1 — central Vorskla River basin; PISOCHYN, kurgans 18 and 33 — Udy and Mozh River interfluve; Velyka Homolsha, kurgan 11 — Mozh, Berestova, Bereka and Donets River interfluve), as well as some graves of the class II (Staroe, kurgan 6 — Dnieper and Trubizh River interfluve; Staryi Merchyk, kurgan group III, kurgans 3 and 11 — Udy and Mozh River interfluve¹). The interpretation of female graves belonging to the class I does not seem as straightforward. In my opinion, the most reliable theory found in the scientific literature is the one claiming that the women interred in the class I graves may have been spouses or

1. Grave complexes of a younger chronological position than the above-mentioned class I graves from the same region (cf. Гречко 2010, с. 104—105; 2019b, с. 38—48).

relatives of local leaders (e. g. Буйнов, Гречко 2015, с. 194—197). In addition, some women buried in class I graves were interred alongside various items interpreted as attributes of «priestesses»¹. The main argument in favour of this hypothesis is the fact that the female burials of class I were typically uncovered in the same grave structures as male burials of class I. The layout of the graves as well as inventory devoted to each individual indicate the equal social position of the male and female burials.

Moving on, graves of the class II occupy a lower position in hierarchy than the class I complexes, regarded as burials of the elites of the highest rank. At the same time, some elements typical for the highest class of grave complexes could be identified as far as in the burials of the class III (and class IV of the male series). Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that the individuals buried in the graves belonging to the class II may have represented the forest-steppe aristocracy of the middle rank. This hypothesis is consistent with the theories expressed by some scholars (cf. Mala Rohozianka, kurgan 2, burial 1, PISOCHYN, kurgan 9 і S taryi Merchyk, kurgan group III, kurgan 11² — Буйнов, ОКАТЕНКО 2013, с. 130, табл. 3), as well as the interpretation of the deceased from the similar grave complexes from the Black Sea steppe (ГЕНИНГ 1984, с. 141, табл. 1—2). The large social stratum of the middle-rank aristocracy was most likely quite diverse. One of the most efficient methods to identify smaller groups within the discussed stratum is by the analysis of context of grave complexes of the class II. To start with, some of graves were uncovered at the same kurgan necropolises as burials of local leaders (e. g. Aksyutintsy, Staikin Verkh; Pereshchepino; PISOCHYN). Since the graves of the classes I and II from the above-mentioned cemeteries have a very similar chronology, we could suspect that the people interred in the former category of graves may have been members of the (ancestral and / or tribal) aristocracy, associated with the royal families. Another very characteristic group of the aristocracy are the so-called elite troopers, who may have served as commanders of various

military units. Such grave complexes are characterized by a high degree of militarization of grave goods, indicating that the deceased may have belonged to the group of specialized warriors (troopers). Graves of the elite troopers often were situated in the areas regarded as convenient to exercise control over locations of a potential strategical importance (intersections of trade and military routes, fords on rivers, surroundings of major trade and craft centres, cattle grazing areas, etc. — cf. Бессонова 1998, с. 57—58; 1999, с. 151; 2000, с. 121, 122). Moving on, there are some class II grave complexes located within the cemeteries or kurgan groups dominated by the graves of the class III (and class IV of the male series). Such burials often occupy the highest rank in the social hierarchy of the above-described necropolises, and were placed in graves of a distinctive position in the landscape. For that reason, we can suspect that the individuals interred in the complexes of this type may have served as leaders (elders or chieftains) of the forest-steppe elites of the lowest rank.

It seems that the members of the latter social stratum were buried in the grave complexes the class III (and class IV of the male series). As it was already mentioned, in the complexes belonging to these two classes, we could identify individual mortuary practices typical for graves of the class I and II. In addition, some of the graves are known from features characteristic for the burials of nomads (e. g. burials in grave constructions of steppe type, presence of wooden structures and subsoil heaps within the burial mounds, ditches and / or dykes around the kurgans, bronze cauldrons, and sacrificial foods). At the same time, significantly smaller energy expenditure devoted to erecting the grave structures and burial mounds, as well as low frequency of accompanying horse and human burials and poorer inventories with only few prestige items, could indicate that the deceased from the complexes of the class III (and class IV of the male series) may have occupied the lowest rank in the social hierarchy of the forest-steppe elites. We should note that this interpretation corresponds with the results of the studies of graves from the Black Sea steppe dated to the Late Scythian period. In the classification scheme of the graves of the middle class (the so-called «ordinary people» or common folk) proposed by K. P. Buniatian, graves of constructions and mounds of analogous dimensions to the complexes of the class III (and IV) from the forest-steppe were included in the models 4—5, interpreted as graves of the wealthy members of the common folk. The social status of these individuals may have been similar (model 4) or equal (model 5) to the lowest stratum of the Scythian aristocracy (Бунятян 1985, с. 96—97). We should add that

1. A classic example of a grave complex of this type would be the female burial from the grave 1 from the kurgan 8 from the PISOCHYN cemetery, which was equipped with, among other items, a cylindrical kalathos (ceremonial headdress) with a front panel with an arched edge (cf. Chochorowski, Skoryj 1999, p. 309). This type of a headdress is very characteristic for the ritual attire of «priestesses» of noble Scythian families.
2. In the cited publication, individuals buried in these graves were classified simply as «aristocracy». Nevertheless, the position of the class of «aristocracy» in the social structure — between the «rulers» and the «equestrians», may indirectly indicate its middle position in the hierarchy of upper classes.

steppe and forest-steppe graves corresponding with the elites of the lowest rank are typically characterized by comparable grave inventories. Interestingly, the sets of grave goods from the latter zone are often richer than their counterparts found in the steppe.

Similarly to the grave complexes of the class II described above, the forest-steppe elites of the lowest rank form a quite non-homogeneous group. Based on the analysis of context of grave complexes, we can distinguish burials of ancestral and tribal aristocracy (of the low rank), troopers (including burials of an elite character), as well as leaders of small kinship (or family) groups linked to the stratum of wealthy middle-class individuals, occupying the lower position in hierarchy. Interestingly, it seems that the stratum of the lowest class aristocracy may have consisted of both the nomads (Scythians and their descendants) and the representatives of the local sedentary communities. The main argument in favour of this hypothesis is the presence of small series of graves (from about 5—10 % of complexes of the class III and 25 % complexes of the class IV of the male series) without clear «nomadic» features (cf. Скорый 2003, с. 65). It is worth noticing that the burials of this type typically occupy the highest position in hierarchy of necropolises of the local sedentary and agricultural population. Thus, these grave complexes could be interpreted as burials of the members of the higher classes of the autochthonic communities.

The next position in social hierarchy of the forest-steppe populations occupy grave complexes of the class V—VI of the male series and class IV of the female series. The common features of these grave complexes are «average» dimensions of the grave structures and burial mounds, as well as «average» quality and quantity of grave goods. For that reason, we could deduce that the analyzed grave complexes could be most likely linked to the middle class of the forest steppe society (the so-called «ordinary people»; e. g. Бунятян 1985, с. 93—100; Burghardt 2017a, с. 164—165). We need to keep in mind, however, that many analogous features of funerary rites could be observed also within many grave complexes occupying a lower position in hierarchy — graves of the class VII.1 of the male series and V of female series (as well as some graves of the class VI). Nevertheless, when we compare these two large groups of grave complexes, it becomes clear that the burials of the class V—VI of the male series and class IV of the female series most likely must have required a greater energy expenditure to build, and their grave inventories are richer and more diverse. In addition, decedents buried in the graves of the middle class often were equipped in individual

luxurious items (imported vessels — typically Greek amphoras, golden appliqués of clothing, small ornaments from precious metals), which are very characteristic for the graves of the higher classes and very rare in the complexes linked to the lower classes. Typical for the latter category of grave complexes is the lack of elements of horse harness, regarded as one of the attributes of individuals of higher and middle classes¹. Thus, it seems that the individuals buried in graves of the class V—VI of the male series and class IV of the female series may have occupied higher place in hierarchy than the remaining deceased of the stratum of «ordinary people» (common folk). Very similar interpretation is often given to the individuals of the models 3—4 from the Black Sea steppe zone, corresponding to the analysed series of grave complexes. According to the proposition of the К. Р. Вунятян (Бунятян 1985, с. 96—97), such burials could be linked to the wealthy representatives of the common folk, including its most prominent individuals whose status may have been close to the aristocracy.

As it was already mentioned, the lower position in the social structure of the middle classes was occupied by the individuals buried in graves of the class VII.1 of the male series and V of female series (as well as some graves of the class VI). The smaller amounts of work effort required to the construction of graves, combined with slightly poorer, yet quite diverse grave goods, could indicate that the deceased interred in complexes belonging to the above-mentioned classes could be identified as middle-class individuals of an average status (the so-called «ordinary people» — cf. Бунятян 1985, с. 94—96, 100). Such interpretation is consistent with the works of many scholars dealing with the social structure of the forest-steppe communities (e. g. Бабенко 2005, с. 179—180; Буйнов, Окатенко 2013, с. 131, табл. 3; Бойко 2017, с. 69—70, 97—107, табл. V), as well as the common understanding of the analogous grave complexes from the steppe. Referring to the above-mentioned classification by К. Р. Вунятян (Бунятян 1985, с. 94—96), the grave complexes of the class VII.1 of the male series and V of female series (as well as some graves of the class VI) resemble the most the burials of the models 1—3 (dimensions), especially the model 2 (character of grave inventory). In the scientific literature, such graves usually are regarded as burials of poor, «ordinary» Scythians, considered as the so-called «eight-hoof

1. The connection between elements of horse harness and burials of individuals belonging to the wealthier social strata was evidenced by the written sources (see the remarks of rich and privileged Scythians suffering from «chronic defluxions» because of constant horse riding — Hippocrates, «On Airs, Waters, Places», XXII; cf. Burghardt 2017b, p. 142).

men» mentioned by Lucian (cf. Kubczak 1978, p. 70). Interestingly, some burials belonging to the analysed stratum show some features typical for nomads (e. g. burials in grave constructions of steppe type, presence of subsoil heaps within the burial mounds, ditches and / or dykes around the kurgans, and sacrificial foods), while others do not. This situation may indicate that the discussed group may have consisted of two main substrates — nomadic Scythians and their descendants and the representatives of the local sedentary communities. Additionally, we should note that most of the male graves, as well as some female graves, were equipped with one or two-element sets of weapons, mainly arrowheads, with no parts of horse harness. Thus, we can deduce that many individuals belonging to the discussed stratum may have served as archers — foot warriors. According to some theories, individuals occupying the lower position in the middle classes of the forest-steppe populations may have worked for the local aristocracy as members of mercenary military units (Бабенко 2005, с. 179; Физалко 2012, с. 40, 42). One of the arguments in favour of this hypothesis is the specific layout of the cemetery in Pischyn. Grave complexes with male burials of class VII.1 (and female burials of a similar rank) were located on two sides of a long line of kurgans belonging to local elites of various ranks (including tribe leaders), as if creating their «escort of honour»¹. Among other possible occupations of the middle-class individuals from the forest-steppe, not directly related to the military sphere, some researchers mention small-scale cattle husbandry (nomads and semi-nomads), agriculture and craftsmanship (representatives of the autochthonous sedentary forest-steppe communities).

The lowest place in the presented classification of graves is taken by the complexes of the class VII.2 of male series and corresponding group of graves of the class VI of female series. Graves belonging to the above-mentioned classes are characterized by the smallest and simplest grave constructions, covered by the lowest mounds (or dug into the existing kurgans), as well as burials with very little or no grave goods (1—3 categories of items). It is worth mentioning the lack of military equipment in inventories of male graves belonging to the analysed stratum, which may indicate that their occupations most likely were not

1. The layout of the cemetery resembles the arrangement identified in the case of few individual grave complexes (Staryi Merchyk, kurgan group III, kurgan 9), consisting of separate graves of a middle-class individual equipped with weapons and a representative of local higher classes, buried under the same mounds.

related to this sphere². According to many researchers (e. g. Бойко 1994, с. 35; 2017, с. 70, 91—97, 103—109; Моруженко 1991, с. 163), the absence of weapons in the graves of the forest-steppe low-class may indicate the inferiority of their social position compared with the higher strata (symbolized by lack of right to be buried with military equipment). For that reason, we could suspect that the deceased interred in graves belonging to the class VII.2 of male series and the class VI of female series could be regarded as «the poor» (Hippocrates. On Airs..., XXII, p. 66—71) — representatives of the lowest social group in hierarchy of the forest-steppe communities. This interpretation is consistent with the findings of archaeologists dealing with the populations from the forest-steppe (regardless from the belief whether the analysed complexes should be linked with the nomads — Гречко, Шелехань 2012, с. 86, 176; or the local sedentary and agricultural populations — Буйнов, Окатенко 2013, табл. 3; Бойко 2017, с. 102), as well as the explanation of the analogous complexes from the steppe zone (the model 1 according to К. П. Бунятян — Бунятян 1985, с. 93—94, and group I in the classification of В. Ф. Генинг — Генинг 1984, с. 134—135, 146). In addition, we need to keep in mind that many corresponding features to the above-mentioned classes of graves were identified in the case of flat graves, omitted from the statistical analyses (cf. Burghardt 2021). Thus, we could conclude that these grave complexes could also be linked to the low class («the poor»). Analysing the group of flat graves, we should note their lack of features commonly associated with burials of nomads, starting with the lack of a burial mound. For that reason, it seems that people interred in flat graves may have typically been representatives local sedentary and agricultural populations. In favour of this hypothesis is the fact that many of graves of the class VII.2 of male series and the class VI of female series were identified in a proximity of various settlements and hillforts (e. g. Pereshchepine, grave 1 and 2/2002; Dudchynsi; cf. Гречко та ін. 2019, с. 32—33). According to many researchers (e. g. Кулатова, Супруненко 2010, с. 164; Буйнов, Окатенко 2013, с. 131; Бойко 2017, с. 102—103), individuals occupying the lowest position in hier-

2. On the other hand, we need to keep in mind that the absence of weapons in a grave inventory does not have to indicate that we do not deal with a burial of a warrior. For example, a unique weapon-less grave was discovered at the kurgan group Skorobor near the Bilsk hillfort (grave 1/2013). The skeleton of a male individual, interred alongside an accompanying human burial placed in the entrance pit of the grave, did bear multiple signs of injuries, suggesting that the deceased belonged to the elite group of mounted warriors (Шрамко, Задніков 2014, с. 39).

archy of the forest-steppe communities may have been dependent, to a various extent, on the members of the higher classes. We need to keep in mind that many burials belonging to the analysed clusters were located within grave complexes (kurgan mounds) of individuals occupying the higher positions in hierarchy (e. g. Ivankiv, kurgan 6, burial 2 accompanying a burial of a male individual of the class V; Mala Rohozianka, kurgan 2, burial 2 found under a mound covering a grave a male of the class II). Depending on the group, obligations of the representatives of the low class towards more privileged relatives or kin members may have included raising herds (nomads and semi-nomads — Хазанов 1975, с. 151—152; Генинг 1984, с. 146), farming (sedentary and agricultural communities — Буйнов, Окатенко 2013, с. 131) or craft production (Бойко 2017, с. 102—103).

In the process of reconstructing the social structure of the analysed communities, we need to keep in mind that the groups of grave complexes described above do not include all burials from the forest-steppe zone of the left-bank Dnieperland dated between the 2nd half of the 6th to the 4th/3rd century BC. According to the accepted method of research, most of the accompanying burials, especially those identified outside the main grave chamber of a burial complex, were omitted from the statistical tests (cf. Burghardt 2021). On the other hand, in the analysed set of graves there is a small group of accompanying burials placed within the same grave chambers as main burials of a kurgan. Among the characteristic features of the latter group of deceased, we could note a different treatment of body comparing to the commonly accepted norms (typically placing the body on the side, in flexed or extended position), positioning the corpse in a way suggesting inferiority towards the other person interred in the grave (often perpendicularly to the main burial, on the outskirts of the grave chamber), as well as visibly poorer (or lack of) grave goods (e. g. Ильинская 1966, с. 166—168; Бунятян 1985, с. 105—106, 111, 120—121; Моруженко 1991, с. 164; Бабенко 2005, с. 175). Such criteria are met by at least 24 burials, including one grave (MalR_2/2) located in a separate pit, functionally linked to a male burial of the class II. For that reason, the feature Mala Rohozianka, kurgan 2, burial 2 was assorted to the class VII. A. In addition, there are three accompanying burials placed within the same grave structure as the main burial, but outside the main grave chamber (in an entrance pit/on a subsoil step — Skorobor, kurgan 1/2013; in niches dug in the walls of the grave chamber — Staroe, kurgans 1 and 6). In the scientific literature, there are three main ways of interpreting burials of the discussed group: as sacrificial burials

(Бессонова 1992), individuals with no right to be interred following the traditional norms¹, or people who were socially dependent on the members of higher classes, such as various servants or enslaved domestic workers (cf. Gavriliuk 2003, p. 80—81). We need to keep in mind that despite the many proposed methods of distinguishing burials belonging to these two groups, archaeological sources lack features allowing to clearly determine whether a deceased was a dependent or a slave. For that reason, I would opt for discussing these two categories together, as groups of socially dependent people of limited rights (no right to be interred in a separate grave pit following the traditional norms). However, based on the context of the burials, we could deduce the possible occupation of some of the servants or slaves. To start with, there are burials identified as various members of military escorts such as «protectors / guards» (Skorobor, kurgan 1/2013 — see above), equerries (Mala Rohozianka, kurgan 2, burial 2 — deceased buried alongside a horse), or the so-called «weapon keepers» (accompanying burials from kurgan 9 from Pischyn and mound 3 from the kurgan group III from Staryi Merchuk, identified alongside sets of pole weapons — cf. Гречко, Шелехань 2012, с. 63—64).

Before concluding the comments on the social stratification of the inhabitants of the forest-steppe zone of the left-bank Dnieperland between the 2nd half of the 6th to the 4th/3rd century BC, we should discuss the important issue of the number of grave complexes belonging to the identified groups and social strata. Based on the analysis of the data in table 1, we could make an attempt to estimate the level of representativeness of the obtained scheme of social hierarchy. To start with, in the analysed set there is an extremely high percentage of grave complexes of the various ranks of the higher classes. In the scientific literature we could find few possible explanations of this phenomenon. To begin with, some archaeologists claim that that a reconstruction of a social stratification of a past population based on grave complexes do not apply to a society as a whole, but only to its more privileged groups. This way of interpretation was accepted for the results of the study of the inhabitants of the middle Don basin between the 6th and 4th century BC, where burials of the high and middle

1. This explanation is used typically in the case of burials of juveniles or children. According to many researchers, some children who were buried in a grave belonging to an adult may have died before achieving a specific social rank (passing the initiation) and becoming full members of the community (see cf. Бойко 2017, с. 102). Thus, lack of a child's right to be buried in a separate grave could be linked to his or hers unidentified social identity, and not to a low social position (see cf. Fahlander 2011, p. 19).

class constituted over 75—80 % of all well-excavated graves (Березуцкий 1995, с. 53—54; Медведев 2004, с. 33—34, 36). On the other hand, other archaeologists suggest that some of the analysed communities could have been more or less homogenous. A great example of this situation could be nomadic groups penetrating many areas of the left-bank Dnieperland in the 1st half of the 5th century BC, known from their unique cemeteries, containing many graves of «troopers» equipped with fairly uniform sets of goods. According to some researchers (Гречко 2017, с. 100, 102), the social order of these communities may have resembled the so-called «war democracy». On the level of archaeological sources, one of characteristics of this form of a society's organization is a relative «economic “equality” of grave complexes»¹ (cf. Плетнева 1982, с. 17—18, рис. 1). On the other side, there is a third possible interpretation, claiming that the unusually high percentage of grave complexes linked to the more privileged groups of the forest-steppe society is a result of a vast underestimation of the number of burials of the individuals occupying lower positions in hierarchy. As it was noted by many scholars, archaeological research of the Early Iron Age necropolises has traditionally been focused on the most monumental grave complexes, built for the representatives for the higher classes. Excavations of the smaller kurgans or flat graves, typically linked to members of the lower stratum, have been significantly rarer. In addition, we need to keep in mind that many more modest graves are rather poorly preserved (badly damaged mounds, incomplete sets of grave goods), which results in reducing the number of complexes suitable for advanced analysis and lowering quality of obtained data. Other limitations are linked to the method of selecting appropriate sources for the study. Including in the main source database only on these graves, for which it was possible to determine the sex of the deceased (graves with anthropological analysis or complexes with grave goods allowing to deduce the sex of individuals), resulted in omitting a series of graves with the poorest inventories, typical for representatives of the low-class (cf. Burghardt 2016, p. 174).

Finally, we should discuss one more possible explanation of the issue of the underestimation of the number of burials of the lower classes. As it was already mentioned, individuals belonging to social groups occupying the lowest position in hierarchy could be linked both to the nomads (or other similar, semi-nomadic communities) and the local sedentary agricultural population. Interestingly, while the kurgan cemeteries founded by the former group are

relatively well researched (e. g. Гречко 2012, с. 119, 121; Гречко, Шелехань 2012, с. 81, 171), the identification of burials of the representatives of the latter communities is still quite problematic. In this study, as burials of the members of the sedentary groups were interpreted some kurgans and flat graves (Dudchynsi and Pereshchepine) characterized by presence of rather local features and lack of nomadic elements. Apart from these complexes, many researchers associate burials located within the area of settlement sites with the communities of discussed ethnic (ethno-cultural) attribution (e. g. Гречко 2014). Sadly, such features are relatively uncommon. This group includes both burials in separate pits used only for such purpose, and burials deposited within remains of dwellings. Interestingly, the total number of burials, that could be linked to the local sedentary communities of the forest-steppe, does not correspond with the estimated demographic potential of settlement sites, traditionally regarded as their places of life (cf. Гречко 2014, с. 79). For that reason, we could suspect that the sedentary agricultural communities from the left-bank Dnieperland may have commonly practiced some mortuary practices that could not be identified using archaeological methods.

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1. Except for graves of chieftains, which could be significantly richer than remaining complexes.

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**SOCIAL STRATIFICATION OF
FOREST-STEPPE POPULATION
OF THE LEFT-BANK OF THE
DNIEPERLAND DURING THE
CLASSICAL SCYTHIA (the 2nd half of
the 6th—4th/3rd century BC). PART 2:
INTERPRETATION**

The paper presents some remarks concerning social stratification of the inhabitants of the forest-steppe areas of the left-bank Dnieperland between the 2nd half of the 6th and 4th/3rd century BC. The main aim of the article was to propose a new interpretation of the status of deceased buried in various grave complexes of this cultural phenomenon. The process of identifying groups occupying different positions in hierarchy was multi-level. One of the first things considered in the analysis was the context of graves of individuals belonging to subsequent clusters. The next stage of the study involved an attempt to recognize social classes and groups known from written sources and / or described for other societies of similar (Scythian) cultural model among previously distinguished clusters of grave complexes. It was established that the highest place in social hierarchy of the analysed communities was occupied by the individuals of the higher classes. This social class was not homogeneous; thus, we could divide it into at least few smaller subgroups. The richest and the most elaborate graves belong to local leaders of groups of various sizes (e. g. individual tribes or their federations) of diverse statuses. Slightly lower position was attributed to the forest-steppe aristocracy of the middle rank. This social stratum included of members of the (ancestral and / or tribal) aristocracy, leaders of small groups (clans) of the forest-steppe elites of the lowest rank, as well as the so-called «elite troopers». At the bottom of the social hierarchy of the forest-steppe elites was aristocracy of the lowest rank — the most diverse group belonging to the higher classes. It seems that leaders of smaller groups utilizing specific cemeteries / kurgan groups might have had similar social status. Yet, formally speaking, the latter social stratum most likely already belonged to the middle classes. The so-called «ordinary people», or simply common folk, constituted the majority of the analysed communities. This large social class could be divided into two main groups — wealthy individuals of slightly higher social status among the middle class, and the remaining «ordinary people». The lowest place in the presented hierarchy of nominally free members of the studied populations was taken by not so numerous representatives of «the poor». The list of social classes and groups distinguished within the analyzed society is completed by people with more or less limited rights, who were socially dependent on the members of higher classes (servants or enslaved domestic workers). The interpretation of the system of social stratification presented in the study was supplemented by the analysis of differences in the number of grave complexes assigned to a specific place in hierarchy. The obtained results raise the question of the level of representativeness of the social structure of the populations of the forest-steppe areas of the left-bank Dnieperland described in the study. First and foremost, in the analysed set there is an extremely high percentage of grave complexes assigned to the higher classes. The article offers

fer possible explanations of this phenomena, including the theory that the unusually high percentage of grave complexes linked to the more privileged groups was a consequence of a vast underestimation of the number of burials of the individuals occupying lower positions in hierarchy. It seems that the disrupted proportions between burials belonging to the higher and the lower classes may have resulted from various factors, including the source database itself. We should keep in mind that most of the grave complexes that had to be excluded from the statistical analysis have features characteristic for burials of the individuals of middle and lower social status.

Keywords: funeral rites, social stratification, forest-steppe Dnieper, Scythians.

M. Burghardt

**СОЦІАЛЬНА СТРАТИФІКАЦІЯ
НАСЕЛЕННЯ ЛІВОБЕРЕЖНОГО
ЛІСОСТЕПУ ПОДНІПРОВ'Я КЛА-
СИЧНОГО СКІФСЬКОГО ПЕРІОДУ
(друга половина VI—IV/III ст. до н. е.).
ЧАСТИНА 2: ІНТЕРПРЕТАЦІЯ**

У статті подано коментарі щодо соціальної структури груп населення, які проживали між другою половиною VI та IV/III ст. до н. е. на територіях лівобережного лісостепового Подніпров'я. Її метою було представити один з можливих способів інтерпретації померлих, похованих у різних комплексах могил, залишених цими громадами. Використовуючи існуючі в літературі погляди на цю тему, було прийнято багаторівневий поділ їх соціальної структури. Сам процес соціальної ідентифікації груп, що займають наступні рівні в ієрархії, був багаторівневим. Спочатку було проаналізовано контекст, у якому існують могили померлих, які належать до певних рангів. Наступний рівень аналізу був зосереджений на спробі зіставити раніше відокремлені комплекси поховань із соціальними верствами та групами, відомими з письмових джерел та / або виділеними для інших спільнот із подібною (скіфською) культурною моделлю. В результаті було встановлено, що найвище місце в соціальній стратифікації досліджуваних груп населення посідали представники вищих сфер. Цей шар не був однорідним і розпався на менші групи. На його чолі та водночас на чолі досліджуваних спільнот стояли лідери різного розміру людських груп (наприклад, окремих племен та їх об'єднань) з неоднорідним статусом. Кочова аристократія середнього рангу розташовувалася на нижчому щаблі. До її складу входили представники родинно-племінної аристократії, вожді менших громад (родів), що походять із групи вищих класів найнижчого рангу, а також т. зв. «елітні дружинники». На найнижчому рівні в ієрархії вищих класів були представники еліт низького рангу. Вони були найнеодноріднішою частиною «лісостепової» аристократії. Вожді невеликих громад, які ховали своїх померлих на деяких кладовищах / курганних групах, також мали подібний статус. Формально ця група належала до середніх класів, тобто до населення середнього статусу. Цей шар, який є найчисленнішою частиною досліджуваних громад, розділився щонайменше на дві менші групи. Першу групу складали їх заможні представ-

ники, тоді як другу групу складали решта простих людей із середнім статусом. Найнижчий ранг в ієрархії офіційно вільних членів досліджуваних громад займало не надто численне найбідніше населення («біднога»). Список соціальних прошарків та груп, які можна виділити в межах аналізованих груп населення, закривають категорії населення, певною мірою залежні від осіб, які посідають вищий ранг в ієрархії (слуги та домашні раби). При інтерпретації візерунку соціальної структури, отриманого для досліджуваних громад, також було порушено питання відмінностей у кількості могил, що належать померлим, які займають різні місця в ієрархії. Вони провокують питання про ступінь репрезентативності отриманих спостережень. Особливо проблематичною тут є надзвичайно висока частка поховань представників вищих класів. У статті вказується кілька можливих трактувань такого стану речей, серед яких найбільш ґрунтованішою є теза, що це результат недооцінки кількості поховань, пов'язаних з категоріями населення, що займають нижчу позицію

в ієрархії, що виникає внаслідок різних факторів (в основному стану джерельної бази). На це вказує, наприклад, той факт, що серед різних могильних комплексів, пов'язаних з обговорюваними громадами, які не були включені в розрахунки, переважають ті з рисами, характерними для груп, які є місцями спочинку представників середніх і нижчих класів.

Ключові слова: поховальний обряд, соціальна стратифікація, Лісостепове Придніпров'я, скіфи.

Одержано 14.05.2021

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