

Beata Polit

(review) Irina I. Gushchina, Denis V. Zhuravlev, *Nekropol rimskogo vremeni Belbek IV v Yugo-Zapadnom Krymu* (Part 1 – Text; Part 2 – Tables) (= *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Istoricheskogo muzeya* 205). Moscow 2016: Istoricheskiy muzey, 272 pages, 18 charts, 75 unnumbered drawings, 317 tables, summary in German.

In 2016, a new, two-volume monograph, *Nekropol rimskogo vremeni Belbek IV v Yugo-Zapadnom Krymu* by Irina I. Gushchina (†) and Denis V. Zhuravlev (National Historic Museum in Moscow), was issued. It had been long awaited by scholars dealing with the Roman period in the northern Black Sea Coast. The reviewed monograph is the 205th publication of the series *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Istoricheskogo muzeya* published by the National Historic Museum in Moscow with the participation of the Eurasian Department of the German Institute in Berlin. The work presents the results of comprehensive research that encompassed the Belbek IV cemetery from the Roman period in the southwestern Crimea.

Earlier, the results of the archaeological works conducted in the site had been partially presented in numerous publications. They were not only of a reporting character, but they also resulted from elaborate examinations of chosen artefact categories (e.g. Gushchina 1973; 1982; 1997; Gushchina and Zhuravlev 1999; Zhuravlev 1999; 2010; 2014; further literature there). Undoubtedly, they represent an important source base for the issue of the Crimea in the Roman period and they complement our knowledge of the Late Scythian culture. Nevertheless, the data provided in them do not represent comprehensive research results, and breaking them into several publications impedes readers from analysing the materials. This fact impelled the authors of the reviewed work to attempt to gather all previous conclusions in a single monograph complemented with sets unpublished beforehand. The first manuscript of the work was created in the year 2000. Unfortunately, due to reasons beyond the control of the researchers, that version was not published. During the following decade, the monograph was reworked several times and enriched with new data that appeared on the academic circuit during that time. Eventually, in the year 2013, conditions making it possible to print the book appeared.

The reviewed work was issued in two volumes. The first volume is 272 pages long. It consists of an introduction and two chapters presenting the results of the material analysis. Additionally, in this part, there are also 7 supplements completing the information about the studied sources. The first volume's last section consists of a bibliography, a list of abbreviations used, and an extensive summary in German. The second one is 320 pages long and contains 317 elaborate tables presenting the drawings and photographs of inventories from the burials and from the cultural layer, as well as the plans of the necropolis and of particular graves. The illustrations and photographs of the artefacts created for the purpose of the discussed book meet the current standards.

The introduction informs the reader that the cemetery is situated in the south-western Crimea, on right bank of the Belbek river. The site, spanning the slope of an unnamed hill that stands near a locality named Liubimovka (near Sevastopol), was discovered in the year 1901. The first systematic archaeological works, conducted by Irina I. Gushchina, on behalf of the National Historic Museum in Moscow, were carried in 1969 and continued over a total of 20 seasons (1969-1976, 1979, 1981-1991). In this time, 331 graves were explored, which resulted in obtaining numerous and diverse artefacts from the 1st-3rd centuries AD. Further on in the introduction, the authors list a wide circle of persons who contributed to the issuing of the work and presents the history of its creation (from the first manuscript version to its publication).

In the first chapter of the monograph, the elements of the funeral rites recorded on the Belbek IV necropolis, as well as the planigraphy of the cemetery, are discussed. This short but essential section of the work is composed of seven subdivisions. Undoubtedly, the data presented there are important for deliberating the sphere of sacredness. In the subdivision entitled *Konstruktsiia pogrebalnykh sooruzhenii*, the authors focus on the description of grave constructions discovered in the discussed cemetery. Here, it is necessary to mention that this issue was reviewed in previous articles (Gushchina 1997; Zhuravlev 1999). Nevertheless, contrary to the former publications, this version is complemented particularly with the discourse regarding the provenance of particular funeral construction elements (occurrences of stones in grave pits, presence of grooves hollowed in the walls, of wooden elements, etc. in grave pits). The analysis of the position and the orientation of the dead with the consideration of changes in chronological aspect is present in the two following subsections (*Polozhenie pogrebennogo*, *Orientirovka*). In the fourth part of the chapter, entitled *Sledy ritualnykh deistvii*, the authors focus particularly on elements which are observable in the analysed materials and which confirm the thesis, commonly found in subject literature, concerning the importance of fire in the ceremonials of Late Scythian and Sarmatian cultures (Muld 1996, 282). Among others, partial cremation, as well as the presence of charcoal lumps, ash layers, ochre traces, and hand-moulded censers in the graves, were included into this group. Flints discovered in the burials can also be linked to fire worship. The authors of the reviewed work rightly draw the reader's attention to the presence of these artefacts in the examined complexes and emphasise that this is not an

isolated case. Unfortunately, the presented information indicates that these relics did not undergo a technological and functional analysis. What is more, the lack of illustrations presenting this artefact category makes it impossible to determine their forms and to understand better the context of their discoveries, as well as their destination. Here, it is worth mentioning that, according to the most recent assumptions, flints were used as fire striking tools during the whole of the Roman period (Mączyński and Polit 2016, 77). It is possible that part of the flint inventory found in the Belbek IV necropolis was used for this purpose. The authors of the work pay attention also to other elements that might have a connection with the sphere of sacredness (presence of small lathed stones, various objects that might have played the role of amulets, and chalk in the graves). The ensuing subdivision (*Kon-skoe pogrebenie*) discusses the subject of graves containing horse burials. The reader may have an impression that this part of the monograph does not present data concerning harness elements found in this type of graves and, admittedly, this category of artefacts is meticulously discussed in the subsequent pages of the work. Nevertheless, the information about these ceremonial items should be also present in the fifth part of the chapter. In the sixth subdivision (*Prochie elementy pogrebalnogo obriada*), the authors focus on the topic of vessel and animal bone fragments found in the burials, interpreting them as feast remains. This section of the work also presents the discussion concerning inventory arrangement in the burial space, which, according to the scholars, is typical for the local funerary rite. Taking into consideration the subject matter of the book, it seems that this type of information should be linked to the fourth part of the chapter (*Sledy ritualnykh deistvii*). The last subdivision (*Planigrafia nekropolia*) is devoted to the cemetery layout analysis. In this section, the authors attempt to reconstruct the necropolis development scheme. They emphasise that its individual feature is the fact that the chronological division of different burial groups is clearly delineated here.

The second chapter discusses the topic of movable historical objects. It consists of 12 subdivisions, each of which is dedicated to a different artefact group. The contribution of particular authors in preparing a given section was different and the reader can find information about the scholars in the table of contents. This part of the book is of classifying and descriptive character. Here, the whole of the material is painstakingly analysed. The authors not only pay attention to the artefacts' morphology, but they also undertake to analyse them carefully, which makes it possible to establish the chronology of the material, as well as to determine analogies. The longest part of the chapter is dedicated to pottery. The study regarding this artefact category is presented in the first four subdivisions (*Amfory* by D. V. Zhuravlev; *Lepnaia keramika i kurilnitsy* by I. I. Gushchina and D. V. Zhuravlev; *Krasnolakovaya keramika* by D. Zhuravlev; *Prochie goncharnye izdeliia* by D. V. Zhuravlev). Due attention should be paid to the *terra sigillata* vessel group, which is called by the author, according to the East European nomenclature "*krasnolakovaya keramika*". The whole of the presented material is carefully classified into groups, which are arranged into vessel types and sub-types. The scholar attempts to

establish the chronology of individual forms and mentions analogies. However, we should pay attention to the fact that the text is an abridged version of earlier publications (Zhuravlev 2010). The authors of the discussed work had rightly decided to repeat previously presented conclusions because the monograph concerning the cemetery ought to contain the whole of the elaborated materials.

Departing slightly from the traditional construction of such chapters, the authors annex two additional subdivisions which concern bronze vessels, as well as their elements and figurines (*Bronzovaia posuda* by I. I. Gushchina and D. V. Zhuravlev; *Bronzovye statuetki i detali bronzovoy posudy* by D. V. Zhuravlev). Next, they describe glass vessels (*Stekliannaia posuda* by I. I. Gushchina and D. V. Zhuravlev). The subsequent 5 parts of the chapter are dedicated to the rest of the metal artefacts (*Vooruzhenie i konskoe snariazhenie* by I. I. Gushchina and D. V. Zhuravlev; *Detali odezhdy i ukrasheniia* by I. I. Gushchina and D. V. Zhuravlev; *Tualetnye prindlezhnosti* by I. I. Gushchina and D. V. Zhuravlev; *Podveski i amulety* by D. V. Zhuravlev; *Orudiia truda* by I. I. Gushchina and D. V. Zhuravlev). These sections present examination results of various objects made of iron, bronze, and precious metals. Discussing further the artefact categories, the authors present accurate analyses of these items, which results in the introduction of many important, previously unpublished sources into scholarly circulation. Owing to this fact, the chapter contributes considerably to the future study of the Roman period in the northern Black Sea coast.

The information presented in the final section of the discussed book is important for studying the social and cultural situation in the Crimea of the Roman period. In light of the analysed materials, the authors distinguish three phases of the cemetery's existence and each of them is carefully discussed. At the same time, they emphasise the fact that the obtained results of the analysis are not sufficient enough to establish whether the site should be associated with the Late Scythian or with the Sarmatian culture. Thereby, the authors continue an earlier discussion, started by I. N. Khrapunov (1995; 2012), regarding the social stratification of the Crimean population during the Roman period. Presenting their reflections about this subject, they define the directions from which the impulses shaping the material culture of the population inhabiting the discussed area may have arrived. Nevertheless, they do not give a decisive answer to this difficult question.

It is worth emphasising the fact that the book is enriched with supplements and which are an unquestionable merit. They were prepared by scholars with long experience in their fields of work. Each of the seven supplements concerns an issue that hitherto has not been discussed. The first one (*Opisanie kompleksov pogrebenii*), prepared by the authors of the monograph, carefully discusses 331 graves. The presented description is a result of partial copying of earlier reports and putting them together (cf. Gushchina 1973). However, it should be stressed that much information was corrected and supplemented by the authors and which undoubtedly required a great deal of work. The researchers, not limited to the popular custom of presenting artefact catalogues in a casual way, or even of omitting them

in monographs concerning archaeological sites, discuss each grave individually (cf. Vyotskaya 1994). An invaluable feature of the supplement is the fact that it presents accurate descriptions of grave constructions and the body positions in which people were buried, as well as the enumeration of inventory elements in view of their location in relation to skeletons. The subdivision is enriched with drawings of grave plans. Unfortunately, they are not numbered, which makes it difficult to quote them. The employed method of describing particular burials is the reason why the data presented in the catalogue are a priceless compendium of knowledge not only about the discussed site but also about the funeral rites of the Late Scythian population inhabiting south-western Crimea.

The author of the next supplement (*Monety iz mogilnika Belbek IV*) is N. A. Frolova, a numismatics expert who published a lengthy, two-volume work *Monetnoe delo Bospora* (1997a, 1997b). The scholar, making use of her scrupulous scholarship and writing with erudition, presents a modest collection of coins encompassing elements found in graves, as well as in the cultural layer.

Oleg Ia. Neverov, an eminent specialist in antique art and culture, discusses the topic of *gemmas* discovered in the sepulchral structures. The results of the study on 10 such artefacts are presented in the third supplement (*Gemmy iz mogilnika Belbek IV*). The author paid attention to the fact that most of the images engraved on the intaglios are related to Roman mythology. Nevertheless, the collection of accessible antiquities is too small to state unequivocally whether they represent Roman imports. At the same time, basing on a comparison between the *gemmas* from Belbek IV and those found in other sites, we can make an assumption that rings ornamented with this type of inserts arrived in the Crimea with Roman legions that were garrisoned here. It is also signalled in the chapter that considerable percentage of the artefacts were made of glass, whereas the standard raw material used in their production was carnelian. As the scholar remarks, there were workshops specialising in the production of glass items in Chersonesos in the first centuries AD and for this reason, part of the *gemmas* from the Belbek IV cemetery could have been of local production.

Among the artefacts discovered in the necropolis to which the reviewed monograph was dedicated, beads represent the most popular item group. The laborious study of these objects was prepared by E. K. Smoliarova, and the results of the analysis were published in the form of the fourth supplement (*Busy nekropolia Belbek IV*). The scholar presents the quantitative and the percentile makeup of particular forms within a given raw material of which the beads were made, as well as determines their provenance. In the text, Smoliarova repeatedly undertakes an attempt to describe the production technology of particular artefact categories. Analysing the material, the scholar resorts to Alekseeva's typology and refers to conclusions made by her. It is a correct research direction because the three-volume study of beads discovered in the northern Black Sea coast represents a flagship work dedicated to this issue and conclusions presented there are still actual (Alekseeva 1975; 1978; 1982). The supplement is enriched with 18 charts presenting the quantitative and

the percentile distribution (in terms of a given raw material group) of particular forms, sizes, and bead production technologies. Despite the somewhat extensive analysis, the reader may have an impression that the text lacks quantitative and typological differentiation of beads within a given grave. Such an overview could have been presented for example in the form of a chart. Undoubtedly, the data given there would be of considerable cognitive value, because such information has not been hitherto published and it is absent in the reviewed monograph.

The fifth supplement (*Kostium pogrebennykh v mogilnike Belbek IV*) is dedicated to the reconstruction of attire. This part of the book was prepared by S. A. Yatsenko. Based on the position of ornaments and clothing elements, the author presents several variants of dress, as well as methods of decorating garments by the population buried in the Belbek IV cemetery. Thereby, the scholar depicts fashion trends prevalent in that society and establishes the cultural elements that had an influence on them. The supplement is enriched with illustrations of fibulae and beads which were the main elements of the attire. A table presenting a schematic configuration is present in the second part of the discussed work. Unfortunately, the supplement lacks information allowing the reader to ascertain whether the author attempted to track the chronological changes in fashion. Such an analysis would have produced interesting conclusions, having regard to the fact that the authors of the monograph distinguished three phases of the necropolis' functioning.

S. A. Yatsenko also prepared another, immensely important supplement (*Znaki-tamgi iz nekropolia Belbek IV*) dedicated to so-called tamgas. The scholar analysed artefacts from 29 burials, which resulted in differentiating 13 basic types. Scrutinising their provenance, he reached the conclusion that their occurrences in the Belbek IV cemetery materials may attest not only to the contact between the south-western Crimea and other areas but also the fact that the discussed territory had been visited and settled by other populations as well. The scholar remarks that among the artefacts dated to between the end of the 1st century and the middle of the 2nd century AD, the tamgas find analogies chiefly in Central Asia and in the so-called eastern Sarmatia. Among the materials dated to the middle of the 2nd century AD, there appeared tamgas that can be associated with ancestral signs discovered in the territories adjacent to the Sea of Azov. Undoubtedly, a very interesting group of tamgas is the one which includes signs assigned to types 1 and 4. As the author remarks, in the period between the 1st and the 3rd century AD, the territory of their occurrences encompassed the Crimea, the Kuban region, and the area of the lower Dnieper. Probably, such a distribution is not accidental and can be linked to a specific ethos, that is, according to S. A. Yatsenko, the Siraki. As in the previous supplement, the author's considerations are enriched with a table that occurs in volume 2.

The final annex (*Raskopki mogilnika Belbek IV v 2004 godu*), created by D. V. Zhuravlev and K. V. Firsov, presents the results of an archaeological prospection conducted in the Belbek IV necropolis in 2004. The research was performed by a team of archaeologists from the National Historic Museum in Moscow and their goal was to establish the eastern

limits of the necropolis, as well as to evaluate the possibility of undertaking research in the devastated part of the site, where approximately 300 graves had been robbed between 1991 and 1996. The data presented in the discussed chapter were previously published (Zhuravlev and Firsov 2007) nonetheless, according to the concept of merging all information concerning the Belbek IV cemetery into one integral whole, it was decided to present the research results anew. Contrary to the publication from the year 2007, the scholars omit the artefact analysis and limit themselves to discussing graves and describing the examination results.

The reviewed work constitutes an interesting and complete foundation presenting the results of perennial research conducted in the Belbek IV cemetery. Such a detailed report concerning the results of the analysis makes it possible for us to state that, despite the existence of sparse editorial errors, the necropolis represents one of the best discussed archaeological sites of the Crimea. Owing to the endeavour of the authors, who assiduously strived to publish the monograph, the reader is offered a series of new data which constitute an important step in debating and discussing the ethnic origin of the population inhabiting the Crimea in the Roman period.

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