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AN ASSESSMENT OF THE LAST BATTLE AXES CAPTURED FROM THE KURGANS OF SAUROMAT-SARMATS LOCATED IN THE WEST OF KAZAKHSTAN

In this study, the emergence of Sauromat-Sarmatian tribes who lived in the South Ural region in the Iron Age is researched. It is stated that from the bases of Sauromatian tribes that lived in the early Iron Age emerged the Sarmatian tribes in Mid Iron Age, i.e. the tribes in question are from the same root. Moreover, by proving through archaeological finds the existence of such tribes in the region, the axes that were uncovered from kurgans in the region are evaluated. Part of the finds from the Kurgan excavations which forms weapons, gives important information on the dating of the buried in the Kurgan and monitoring the spread of nomadic tribes' geography. Therefore, the chronological typology of the weapons uncovered from the kurgans found in Northern Black Sea, the North Caucasus and Russia territories was constructed by scientists, relative to this, the construction of chronological typology of the weapons of nomadic tribes found in west Kazakhstan is needed. Therefore, in this study we have addressed, based on the experience of previous researchers before us, considering the old and new information the typology of the uncovered axes from the Sauromat-Sarmatian kurgans is being constructed and its historical process is being considered.

Key words: Sauromat, Sarmat, South Ural, West Kazakhstan, kurgan, ax.

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Батыс Қазақстандағы Савромат-Сармат тайпаларының обаларынан табылған балталар

Бұл ғылыми мақалада Оңтүстік Орал аймағында Темір дәуірінде мекендеген Савромат-Сармат тайпаларының қалыптасу тарихы зерттелген. Ерте Темір дәуірінде аталмыш аймақта мекендеген Савромат тайпасының негізінде Орта Темір дәуірінде Сармат конфедерациясының құрылғандығы және олардың Савромат мәдениетін жалғастырғандығы, олардың түбі бір туыстас тайпалар болғандығы анықталды. Сонымен қатар, аталмыш тайпалардың Батыс Қазақстан территориясында мекендегендігін археологиялық заттай деректер арқылы дәлелдей отырып, аймақтағы обалардан табылған балталар зерттеліп, талдау жасалынған. Жерлеу орындардан табылған жәдігерлердің басым бөлігін құрайтын қару-жарақтар, обалардың немесе оба үйіндісі астындағы жерлеу орындардың хронологиясын анықтауда және көшпелі тайпалардың таралу аймағын анықтауда маңызды мәліметтер береді. Сол себепті, зерттеушілер Ресей территориясындағы, Солтүстік Кавказ және Солтүстік Қаратеңіз аймақтарындағы обалардан табылған қару-жарақтарды зерттеп, хронологиялық классификациясын жасаған. Өкінішке орай, Батыс Қазақстан территориясында мекендеген аталмыш тайпалардың қаруының бұл түрінің хронологиялық классификациясы жасалынбаған. Осы себептерге байланысты, бұл мақалада, бізден алдыңғы зерттеушілердің тәжірибесіне сүйене отырып, ескі және жаңа деректерді топтастырып, Батыс Қазақстан территориясындағы Савромат-Сармат тайпаларының обаларынан табылған балталардың хронологиялық классификациясы жасалынды және таралу аймағы анықталды.

Түйін сөздер: Савромат, Сармат, Оңтүстік Орал, Батыс Қазақстан, оба, балта.

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Находки боевых топоров из курганов Савромато-Сарматских племен в Западном Казахстане

В научной статье исследуется история сложения савромато-сарматских племен ранне-железного века в области Южного Урала. Определен исторический факт, что сарматская конфедерация сложилась в среднежелезном веке на базе савроматских племен, проживавших на этой территории в раннежелезном веке, и продолжила культуру савроматов, а также, что они являются родственными племенами. Кроме того, на основе археологических данных о проживании этих племен на территории Западного Казахстана, были изучены и проанализированы найденные в курганах топоры. Оружие, составляющее большинство артефактов, обнаруженных на захоронениях, дает важную информацию для определения хронологии курганов или подмогильников для выяснения факта расселения кочевых племен. По этой причине исследователи разработали хронологическую классификацию исследованных оружий, найденных в курганах России, Северного Кавказа и Северного Причерноморья. К сожалению, не разработана хронологическая классификация вида такого оружия племен, проживавших на территории Западного Казахстана. По этим причинам в данной статье на основе опыта предыдущих исследователей сгруппированы ранние и новые данные, разработана хронологическая классификация топоров, найденных в поселениях савромато-сарматских племен на территории Западного Казахстана, и определены территории расселения.

Ключевые слова: Савроматы, Сарматы, Южный Урал, Западный Казахстан, Курган, топор.

Introduction

Steppes of western Kazakhstan, a region where the earliest human traces is found, also constitutes an important part of Asia. In the east Aral Sea basin and Saryaka steppes, in the west Volga River, Ustyurt region in the south, and in the north Ilek River and the Ural Mountains are located. Due to the aqueous and green nature of the region, it has led to the emergence of many cultures throughout history. One of the cultures that also emerged from the region is the Sauromatian – Sarmatian culture.

Upon analyzing the written sources and archaeological finds, it is understood that Sauromat tribes emerged in 6th century BC in the South Ural region, and in 4th century AD the Sauromat tribes started to go on record as Sarmat tribes. This is why scientists say Sarmatian tribes emerged from the bases of Sauromat tribes (Smirnov, 1976: p.18; Durmuş, 2012: p.55). The reason is, the cultural process in the region continues without interruption from the 6th century BC to the 4th century AD and this information is supported by the weapons found from the tombs identified as kurgan.

The weapons that form part of the uncovered finds from the excavated Kurgans, plays an important role in determining the history of the buried, in the Kurgans. For this reason the chronological typology of weapons belonging to the Scythian, Sauromatian and Early Sarmatian periods

started as a result of research conducted by scientists A.İ. Melyukova (Melyukova, 1964: p.46-64), K.F. Smirnov (Smirno, 1961: p.9-31), A.M. Hazanov (Hazanov, 1971: p.5-24), V.N. Vasilev (Vasilev 2001: p.27-54), A.V. Simonenko (Simonenko, 2009: p.13-61) etc. Particularly, in the typology of weapons scientists have done was examined from the uncovered weapons from the nomadic tribes located in Northern Black Sea, the North Caucasus and the Russia territories. There is a lack of taking a chronological typology of such weapons of the nomads in Kazakhstan territories. Therefore, in this study we have addressed, based on the experience of the aforementioned researchers, taking the old and new information into consideration, the chronological typology of the uncovered war axes from the kurgans of Sauromat – Sarmat located in west Kazakhstan territories is carried out.

The Political History of Sauromat – Sarmat Tribes

As a results of the archaeological work done so far from the beginning of the 20th century, the Sarmatian tribes are known to have lived between the 6th century BC and 4th century AD to the east from the eastern Caspian Sea to the west Danube River in a wide geographical area. The first time the name Sauromat was stumbled upon in the written sources, that name was given to a tribe living in east of the Don

River, as for the subsequent appearance of the name Sarmat, it is understood that the name was given to a number of tribes in a wide spread geographical area (Durmuş, 2012: p.55). Information mentioned in written sources is also supported by archaeological data. In the archaeological data in 7th – 6th centuries in South Ural Region, taking into account a number of changes seen in Western Kazakhstan territory, reveals nomadic tribes forming a new culture lived. Changes in particular, in the uncovered finds from the kurgans and traditional burial is seen clearly.

There are two theories about the emergence of Sauromat among scientist. According to the first theory the Sauromat tribes is the continuation of Andronov in the Bronze Age and the tribes who lived in the Surabnaya culture i.e. it is known to be related to the people who lived in the Bronze Age (Smirnov, 1964: p.182-188). According to the second theory, the Sauromats emerged from nomadic people who went through assimilation with Scythian tribes, i.e. it is understood that there was a connection with the Scythians and Saka tribes (Grakov, 1954: p.14; Mişenko, 1882: p.477; Rostovtsev, 1918: p.33-34). In this study we have addressed in particular, that the tribes are the continuation of tribes that lived in Andronov and Surabnaya cultures in the Bronze Age and also to specify that they are relatives of Scythian tribes. The tribes that existed in the Bronze Age did not go anywhere when the Iron Age arrived, the most powerful tribes among them became the executive class and Scythian, and the neighboring countries began to mention Sauromat or Sarmat in the records and ancient writers work. Also, we have to know that the tribes living in the early periods in Central Asia were close to each other both in terms of genetics and ethnicity, and also in terms of culture.

There seems to be a change from archaeological research conducted in the South Urals at the end of the 5th century BC – the beginning of the 4th century AD. Particularly, the changes that was starting to be seen was perceived by scientist as a transition period from Sauromatian period to Sarmatian period. The reason was, from this period the kurgans stacks began to be covered with stones, catacombs, dromos and padboi type tombs began to be common, a large amount of wood was started to be used in the construction of tombs (Gusalov, 2004: p.14-15). In earlier periods, if the head of skeletons faced west, in this period skeleton heads started to face south. Mushroom head hilt or T-shaped started to look like crescent, railing butterfly or kidney-shaped swords and daggers started to look like straight swords and

daggers (Moskovka, 1963: p.6). Also, long triptych or hidden bronze sleeve arrowheads began to be common (Pşeniçnyuk, 1983: p.109). When we look at the ceramic instead of round-bottomed pots flat-bottomed pots began to be used and talc begin to appear in ceramics dough (Moskovka, 1963: p.6).

Keeping this information in mind, we can say from the foundation of the Sauromat to the early 4th century AD in the south of the Ural Mountains, the unity of many nomad tribes from the east was the cause of the emergence of Sarmatian culture and their gaining of considerable power in Central Asia (Smirnov, 1964, p.3). From this period, due to having substantial power, the Sarmatian confederation began to expand its territory westward. As a result of the campaign organized westward, they would put an end to the Scythian domination in the North Black Sea in 2nd century BC (Durmuş, 2012: p.103). Dating to the 2nd BC – AD 4th centuries from the South Ural to the North Black Sea region will be under the dominion of the Sarmat. At the end of the 3rd century the Hun troops from the east moved the Sarmatian tribes that existed in the South Urals westward and after this period the tribes in question could only keep the North Black Sea region under their dominion.

In the 3rd century AD it is understood that the Sarmats largely began to lose power. External factors played large role on the loss of their power this way. The struggle to retain the Greek colony cities on the northern coast of the Black Sea, attacks organized by the Daks and the Romans on the Northern Black Sea steppes (Durmuş, 2007: p.102), the attacks by the Goths going down from the Baltic coast was the cause of the weakening of the Sarmatian domination. But the most overwhelming blow to the Sarmatian tribes is understood to be by the Huns AD 375 and after this date, Sarmatian tribes are known to move westward in alliance with the Huns (Sinor, 2000: p.162).

The Uncovered War Axes of the Sauromat – Sarmatian Period from the West Kazakhstan stepe

In this study we have addressed, a total of 6 axes has been recovered from the Sauromat-Sarmat kurgans located in western Kazakhstan territory so far. The axes are evaluated under two main types, namely single and double-edged rim according to their stylistic differences. Among them is a double-edged axes which in itself is examined in four subtypes (Figure 1).







Balta Tipolojisi				
Çift Ağızlı Baltalar				Tek Ağızlı Baltalar
Bir Tarafı Kesici Diğer Tarafı Çekiç Baltalar		İki Tarafı Kesici Baltalar	Kovanlı Baltalar	Grifon Başlı Baltalar
A	B			
				
				

Figure 1 – Batı Kazakistan topraklarından ele geçen baltaların tipolojisi.

1. Type I Double Edged Axes

The type of axes that form this has one side sharp and the other side a hammer and in the middle part shaped round stem hole. These types of axe are divided into four subtypes according to their form differences and function.

1.1. Type I.I One Side Sharp Other Side Hammer Axes

The axes of this type were made one side a cutting and the other side a hammering function and a round stem hole in the middle part. These type of axes is divided into two subtypes in accordance to form differences.

1.1.1. Type I.I.I One Side Vertical Sharp axes

These types of axes are made of rectangular body, one side vertical sharp edge, and the other side is made of a vertical hammer and a round stem hole can be found in the middle.

One ax that exemplifies this type was made from bronze and was uncovered during the excavation of the 2nd kurgan of Caman – Kargala 2 tombs (Gusalov and Rodionov, 1986: p.12). Particularly, the ax is known to have been made by using casting technique.

1.1.2. Type I.I.II One Side sharp horizontal axes

These type of axes are made one side horizontally curved edge, and the other side blunt shaped hammer and a round stem hole in the middle section can be found.

One ax that is this type is made from iron and was uncovered during the excavation of the Kızılhüyük

grave and shrine (Samaşev, Ongar, Kiyasbek, Jetpisbay and Oralbay 2008, p.35). Particularly, when examined it is understood that this ax was made from metal casting technique.

1.2. Type I.II Bilateral Sharp Axes

These type of axes are made of two sides, sharp edges and a round stem hole in the middle section can be found. One edge of the sharp edges of this type of ax is made vertical and the other is made horizontal.

One ax that exemplifies this type was made from metal and was uncovered during the excavation of the no. 1 kurgan in Lebedevka 1 tombs (Bagrikov, 1967: p.4). When examined it is understood that this ax was made from metal casting technique.

1.3. Type I.III Sleeve Axes

The axes found in this type is made from sharp rectangular-bodied edge, downward extending round handle sleeve short rear section.

One ax that represents this type was made from metal and was uncovered during the archeologic excavation of the no. 2 kurgan in Lebedevka 1 tombs (Bagrikov, 1966: p.1-13). The ax in question is known to be made from metal casting technique.

1.4. Type I.IV Griffin Head Axes

The axes that make up this type has both of its sides in the form of a lethal animal head or lethal griffin head on one side and the other side a hammer or a sharp edge.

One ax that exemplifies this type was made from bronze and was uncovered during the excavation of

the no. 8 kurgan in Besoba tombs (Kadirbaev ve Kurmankulov, 1976: p.7-8). When the ax in question is examined, it is understood that it was made from bronze casting technique.

2. Type II Single Edge Axes

The axes found in this type has one side sharp edge and the middle section a round stem hole. This type of axes has its sharp edge vertical.

One ax that exemplifies this type was made from bronze and was uncovered during the excavation of the no. 2 kurgan in Lebedevka 1 tombs (Bagrikov, 1966: p.1-13). The ax in question is known to be made from metal casting technique.

Comparison and Dating

Type I.I like of axes with one side sharp and the other side hammer was uncovered from no. 3.5 and 468 kurgan located in the North Black Sea region, no. 448 kurgan in the Curokva village, no. 9 kurgan in the Prussiya, no. 12 kurgan in the Volkovski village (Melyukova 1964, p.66), In the North Caucasus from the Karrassko kurgan, from the Lugovo kurgan (Krupnov, 1960: p.104), uncovered from no. 4 tombs in Industriya tombs (Vinogradov, Dudarev, Runić, 1980: p.197). A.İ. Melyukova, these types of axes uncovered from the kurgans located in North Black Sea region is dated 6th – 3rd centuries BC (Melyukova 1964, p.67-68). For E.İ. Krupnov was uncovered in Northern Caucasus region 6th – 5th centuries BC (Krupnov, 1960: p.104). The no. 2 kurgan in Caman – Kargala 2 tombs located in western Kazakhstan (Gusalov vd., 1986: p.12) and the axes uncovered from Kızılhüyük grave and shrine is dated 2nd century BC (Samaşev vd. 2008: p.35) (Map 1).

The aim of this study we have addressed, when the historical process and expansion area of the one side sharp and the other side hammer ax is analyzed, these types of axes started to be seen in the Northern Black Sea and Northern Caucasus from 6th century BC, in the Southern Ural region it was in Mid Sarmatian period, so it known that it was started to be used since 2nd century BC.

Type I.II both sides sharp axes- its oldest example was uncovered from the tombs and metal beds of the Maikop cultures in the 4 – 3 thousands BC (Yanina, 2006: p.185). The likes of these axes Starşaya Mogila, Popovka, Veremevka, Pekari, Ositnyaşka ve Chastih kurgans found in the North Black Sea region (Melyukova, 1964: p.66), in the Northern Caucasus it was uncovered from the Koban kurgans (Korolkova, 2003: p.42). A.İ. Melyukova the types of axes uncovered from the kurgans in the North Black Sea region is dated 6-4th centuries

BC (Melyukova, 1964: p.66). The type of axes uncovered from no. 1 kurgan in the Lebedevka 1 tombs in western Kazakhstan is dated 5-3rd centuries BC (Bagrikov, 1967: s.4) (Map 1).

When the historical process and expansion area of the both sides sharp axes is considered, it is understood that these types of axes appeared and started to be used in the North Caucasus, Southern Ural and North Black Sea regions in 6-3rd century BC.

Type I.III the first examples of the sleeve axes was started to be seen from the Fedorovka tombs in the late Bronze Age (Yanina, 2006: p.238-239). The likes of these axes was uncovered from the Türkisib and Novoaleksev tombs located in the Yedisu region (Akişev ve Kuşaeve, 1963: p.107-108), in the Ural region from the Ufa state in Russia (Melyukova 1964, p.113), in the Northern Caucasus region from kurgan no. 50 in the Kuban tombs (Anfimov, 1975: s.41-42), in the North Black Sea from the Neapol kurgan (Puzdrovskii, 2007: p.296). Further, the both sides piercing, one side piercing and the other sleeve hammer axes can be seen from the kurgans of the late Bronze and early Iron Age in the Altay, Tuva and Siberian regions. Aside from these, the each of the sleeve axes uncovered from the Anatolian region is being exhibited in Imirler, Muş and Istanbul museums (San, 2000: p.15) (Map 1).

K.A. Akişev and G.A. Kuşaeve the ax uncovered from Türkisib tombs in Yedisu is dated 8-7th centuries BC, and the ax from Novoaleksev tombs is dated 6-4th centuries BC (Akişev vd., 1963: p.106). N.V. Anfimov and E.İ. Krupnov these type of axes uncovered from the North Caucasus region is dated 8-7th centuries BC (Anfimov, 1975: p.41-42). A.İ. Melyukova the axes closest to these are dated 4-3rd centuries BC in the North Black Sea region (Melyukova 1964: p.68). The uncovered axes from Western Kazakhstan steppes where kurgan no. 2 in the Lebedevka 1 tombs is dated 4-3rd centuries (Bagrikov, 1966: p.1-13).

In this study we have addressed, it is understood that the sleeve axes were started to be used by nomadic tribes living in Tuva, Siberian, Altay, Yedisu, South Ural, North Caucasus and the North Black Sea regions from the late Bronze Age. Later on, the results of the expedition organized by the Scythians on Asia is known to have spread throughout Anatolia.

Type I.IV the like of the griffin head axes were uncovered from Zaporozje tombs kurgan no. 25, Aksutinets kurgan no. 15, Kığkas, Ostriy, Romen, Yarmolinsi, Pastir kurgans (İlinskaya, 1961: p.44-46). V.A. İlinskaya axes uncovered from the above mentioned kurgans are dated between 6-4th centuries

BC (İlinskaya, 1961: p.52). The type of ax uncovered from kurgan no. 8 in Besoba tombs located in the West of Kazakhstan is dated 6-5th centuries BC (Kadirbaev vd., 1976: p.7-8). In this study we have addressed, due to the small number of the griffin head axes found in the Sauromat-Sarmatian kurgans, these types of axes are ceremonial i.e. it is carried by leaders and important people (Map 1).

Type II the earliest example one edged axes were uncovered from the tombs and metal beds of the maykop cultures in 4-3 thousand years BC (Yanina, 2006: p.183-189). The likes of these types of axes were uncovered from kurgan no. 2 in Meçetsay tombs located in Southern Ural region (Smirnov, 1975: p.85-87), in the North Caucasus region kurgan no. 34 in Staniçno tombs (Vinogradov v.d, 1980: p.188), in the North Black Sea region Luki kurgan, Popovka kurgan (İlinskaya, 1968: p.92-93) (Map 1).

V.A. İlinskaya these types of axes were uncovered from the North Black Sea is dated 7 century BC (İlinskaya, 1968: p.92). K.F. Smirnov the ax is known to have been uncovered from kurgan no. 2 in Meçetsay tombs 3-2nd centuries BC located in the Southern Ural regions (Smirnov, 1975: p.91). As for the type of ax uncovered from the kurgan no.2 in the Lebedevka 1 tombs, it is dated 4-3rd centuries BC (Bagrikov, 1966: p.1-13).

As a result of the investigation we carried out over a single edged axes, these type axes were understood to have been used initially on the metal beds by the maykop cultures in the North Caucasus region 4-3 thousand years BC, and subsequently by the nomadic tribes in the North Black sea and South Ural regions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say that 6th century BC – 4th century BC the nomadic tribes known as the Sauromat – Sarmat tribes lived in a wide geographical area from South Ural region in the east to the Karpat Mountain. Furthermore, we would like to state that the tribes close to each other in terms of genetics, ethnicity and culture, they were recorded as Sauromat in the Early Iron Age, and from the Mid Iron age the tribes living in the region in question were recorded as Sarmat. The first time the name Sauromat was stumbled upon in the written sources, that name was given to a tribe living in east of the Don River, as for the name Sarmat, its subsequent appearance, the name was given to a number of tribes in a wide spread geographical area, this supports our view.

In this study we addressed, it has been determined that 4 of the axes of a total of 6 axes which were uncovered from the kurgans of the Sauromat-Sarmats were made from metal and the remaining 2 were from bronze. Also, because there are few of such weapons found in the kurgans located in the region in question, it is understood that this weapon was not commonly used by the nomadic tribes living in the region. Whereas it was commonly used by the tribes living in the North Black Sea there. The reason is, from the kurgans in the North Black Sea region two or three pieces of the war axes were uncovered. The griffin head axes uncovered from the Sauromat-Sarmat kurgans were ceremonial axes, i.e. these axes were used by important figures or leaders of the community.



Map 1 – Propagation of axes by type.

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