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Tokens of time: on anthropological periodization of the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture

Igor Manzura
Chişinău

Abstract: The article presents an attempt to develop the periodization of the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture in terms of cultural anthropology. The scheme is based on common consideration of different manifestations of material culture and related social and historic-cultural phenomena. It is built along three separate but interrelated lines. The first line embraces the most significant material symbols of each phase. The second line exemplifies the nature of social leadership on different stages of cultural development and corresponds to material symbols. The third line reflects main phenomena, events or processes which took place in different periods.

Key words: Copper Age, Cucuteni-Tripolye culture, cultural anthropology, periodization, symbols, social leadership.

Introduction

The Cucuteni-Tripolye culture can be undoubtedly considered as one of the most remarkable phenomenon in later prehistory of Europe. Complex spatial and chronological structure, rich material manifestations seen in settlement organization and dwelling interior, sophisticated pottery and diversified sculpture as well as unbelievable duration for about 2000 years sometimes doesn't allow apprehending this culture in its whole integrity and complexity. Also, one of amazing traits of the culture is mainly evolutionary development trends during hundred years when alterations in different fields had rather gradual character. It is still possible to discern on any new stage many attributes of previous period, and only in final phase the culture goes through radical transformation of majority of basic elements. However, even in periods of regular cultural development some relatively evident borders can be distinguished which give possibility to separate one phase from another. These borders are firstly visible in evolution of the pottery, and precisely on classification of various ornamental styles in ceramics which is base for periodization of the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture.

The first periodization schemes of the culture were elaborated in the first half of the 20th century by H. Schmidt (1932) and T. Passek (1935)¹ For many years of research these initial schemes were essentially developed and completed by numerous additional parts, and currently the periodization of the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture can be regarded as one of the most precise and detailed in European prehistory. For a non-specialist it is indeed impossible to understand main trajectories of cultural development which are mostly presented in terms of ceramic evolution. It is so easy to lose our way in the tortuous labyrinth of endless ornamental styles, groups, variants and other cells of archaeological classification. From outside, the periodization of the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture seems to represent a special domain in archaeological investigations, and scholars involved in resolution of these problems sometimes resemble Celtic druids possessing esoteric knowledge which is unavailable for the uninitiated.

Nevertheless, the history of the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture can be also considered from different side, and another kind of periodization can be suggested. This new approach can be constructed on the most distinctive features of the culture

¹ Schmidt, 1932; Passek 1935.

expressed in terms of cultural anthropology. Of course, in the basis of this structure elements of material culture should be disposed components which can reflect some important novelties in social and economic life. In this context, the development of the culture can be traced along three independent but interrelated lines (Tab. 1). The first line embraces the most remarkable elements of material culture which serve as specific signs of certain time or materialized symbols of relevant period. Within this line we can discern time of serpents, time of weapons, time of proto-cities, time of daggers, and time of hamlets.

The second line exemplifies the nature of social leadership on different stages of cultural development which should correlate to major material symbols to some extent. In this sequence the first phase can be designated as time of priests, the second phase – time of warriors, the third phase – time of managers, the fourth phase – time of chiefs and the last one – time of patriarchs.

The third line reflects main phenomena, events or processes which took place in different periods. These processes and events should roughly correspond to major social figures in each development phase on the one hand and in their manner explain relevant material tokens on the other one. Then, the first phase can be seen as time of colonization, the second phase – time of conflicts, the third phase – time of technologies, the fourth phase – time of hierarchies and the fifth phase – time of uniformity. Of course interrelation between three lines requires additional explanation.

All five phases answer to certain periods of traditional chronological scheme. Time of serpents-priests-colonization is related to the Precucuteni – Tripolye A period (c. 5000–4600/4500 BC). Time of weapons-warriors-conflicts is equivalent to the Cucuteni A – Tripolye BI period (c. 4600/4500–4200/4100 BC). Time of proto-cities-managers-technologies corresponds to the periods of Cucuteni AB – Tripolye BI/BII (c. 4200/4100–3900/3800 BC) and Cucuteni B – Tripolye BII and CI (c. 3900/3800–3500 BC). Time of daggers-chiefs-hierarchies embraces the first half of the Tripolye CII period (c. 3500–3300/3250 BC). Most of basic traits of previous stage in material culture are still maintained at this time although totally new ideological and social phenomena appeared. Time of hamlets-patriarchs-uniformity can be equalized with the second stage of the Tripolye CII period (c. 3300/3250–3000 BC) which is represented by archaeological sites of the Horodiștea-Gordinești and Gorodsk type.

It is beyond any doubts that some material objects or cultural phenomena existed in different periods of the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture. For instance serpent-like ornamentation is characteristic of the Cucuteni-Tripolye pottery in almost all periods of development of the culture and actually disappears only on the final stage. Similarly, various categories of armaments are also evidenced in different periods while conflicts and technological innovations accompany all development stages of the culture. At the same time, some material tokens like depiction

Dating BC	Archaeological periodization	Periodization according to main material symbols/manifestations	Periodization according to the character of social leadership	Periodization according to main phenomena/events/processes
3000	Horodiștea-Gordinești-Gorodsk Tripolye CII	Time of hamlets	Time of patriarchs	Time of uniformity
3500	Brânzeni-Vykhvatintsy-Ustatovo	Time of daggers	Time of chiefs	Time of hierarchies
	Cucuteni B Tripolye CI	Time of proto-cities	Time of managers	Time of technologies
3900	Cucuteni AB Tripolye BI/BII		Time of warriors	Time of conflicts
4200	Cucuteni A Tripolye BI	Time of weapons	Time of colonization	
4500	Precucuteni I-III Tripolye A	Time of serpents		Time of priests
5000				

Table 1. *Traditional and anthropological periodization of the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture.*

of snakes have peculiar traits precisely in certain period and they are not evidenced in subsequent phases. Other material objects like weapons are especially numerous only during one period and they are accompanied by additional traces of conflicts which are not manifested so distinctively in earlier and later time. Technological development has different speed, and there are separate periods when a bundle of innovations can be introduced into economic activities and related social domains in a very short space of time. Supposedly, only special conditions can generate necessity for rapid technological changes, and some elements of material culture can really signalize existence of such conditions. Also, specific situations in different periods had to bring on the upper level of power to those social leaders who could correspond adequately to established conditions, and changing leadership had to be embodied in concrete material realities, too. Consequently, anthropological periodization of the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture must demonstrate a junction of different cultural components including elements of material world, social, economic and ideological phenomena in order to understand state of ancient society on each stage of its development.

Time of serpents-priests-colonization (the Precucuteni – Tripolye A period)

The Precucuteni-Tripolye culture emerged at the turn of the 6th and the 5th millennia BC east of the Carpathian Mountains and in South-Eastern Transylvania. From the beginning it was a classic early farming culture which inherited basic elements of the Carpathian-Balkan agricultural communities especially related to the Boian and Vinča cultures.² In the course of its development, the Precucuteni-Tripolye culture spread eastwards across the forest-steppe zone, and approximately by the middle of the 5th millennium BC and occupied vast territories between the Carpathians and the Southern Bug basin. Its advance to new territories was relatively slow and gradual so this process can be considered as usual agricultural colonization similar to many other European regions. The newly settled area served as

a springboard for further territorial expansion of the culture in subsequent periods.

The Precucuteni-Tripolye culture represents a typical Copper Age farming society. It is characterized by small but substantial villages on lower river banks or terraces, a rich toolkit, a sophisticated pottery assemblage, and numerous anthropomorphic and zoomorphic figurines. One of the most prominent traits of the culture in this period is a presentation of serpents on walls of vessels made in carved technique (fig. 1, 2, 3). There are different interpretations of this image, from harmless grass snake³ to a woman-snake with protective functions⁴ and even to mythical flying dragon symbolizing male principle.⁵

However, the most convincing semantic explanation was presented by Vera Balabina who compared depictions of serpentine heads on the vessels with real snakes.⁶ This comparison obviously demonstrates almost full coincidence of the images on the vessels with serpentine skull (Fig. 1, 1). Then, the image itself could display a real snake with scaly snakeskin but with “death’s head”. Moreover, it is quite often that the snakes on the Cucuteni-Tripolye vessels are depicted in the form of spiral with the head inside. This image clearly resembles aggressive position of real snake just before its leap. In the nature, a snake preparing for attack frequently coils up into a spiral and draws its head to the centre.⁷ As a matter of fact, the image shows a chthonic creature, dangerous and threatening, which probably was one of central mythic figures in cosmogony of ancient farmers. Serpentine representations are known in other farming Neolithic and Chalcolithic cultures of South-Eastern and Central Europe but only in the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture they have such realistic embodiment.

As V. Balabina⁸ suggests there were some rational reasons among ancient farmers for reproduction of well-known images in maximally realistic form. In the first half of the 5th millennium BC the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture constantly expanded its area to new lands. Migrating farming communities had to leave known ethnic territo-

²Бурдо 2003.

³Рыбаков 1965, 36.

⁴Мельничук 1990, 44.

⁵Даниленко 1974, 24; Збеневич 1980, 154.

⁶Балабина 1998, 141-143.

⁷Ibid., 150.

⁸Ibid., 145.



Fig. 1. Material of the Precucuteni-Tripolye A (2.3) and Cucuteni A-Tripolye BI (4-10) periods: 1 – the skull of a viper; 2 – vessel with depiction of a serpent from Aleksandrovka; 3 – fragment of vessel with depiction of serpentine head from Okopy; 4-7 – flint arrow- and javelin-heads from Putinești II (4) and Duruitoarea Veche (5-7); 8 – copper battle axe-hammer from Glybochok; 9 – stone mace-head from Bârlălești-Sturza; 10 – stone battle axe-hammer from Bodești-Frumușica (2.3.8 photos by N. Burdo, 4-7 – photos by M. Vasilaki-Curoșu, 9 after Govedarica 2006, 10 after Mantu et al. 1997)

ry finding themselves in relative isolation, new environment and new cultural milieu. In order to survive in this situation and resist external pressure they had to support their ideological foundations. This is why it was necessarily to reproduce all basic elements of character system in extremely clear and initial forms which could serve in these circumstances as effective mnemonic device. In this case the realistically depicted serpent as one of the most important mythic figures could symbolize an attempt to maintain own cultural identity in rapidly changing conditions.

The same necessity for ideological resistance could significantly strengthen authority of religious leaders in the community. Such leaders could possess sacral knowledge expressed in history of community, mythology, ritual and social norms. Of course, it is difficult to assume existence of a social institute of priests for this period in small and isolated agricultural villages. These leaders could be probably represented by sorcerers, shamans or heads of community with privileges for ceremonial activities, connected with priestly functions. They were main keepers of basic cultural traditions and that is a reason why sacral leader could become a central figure in social organization of the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture at that time. However, new situation in the next period changed dramatically the distribution of social roles and generated new material symbols of time. It was the time when priests had to give their place to warriors.

Time of weapons-warriors-conflicts (the Cucuteni A – Tripolye BI period)

Noticeable changes in the Cucuteni A – Tripolye BI period manifested themselves in different components of the culture. These alterations were especially marked in the pottery assemblage, owing to widespread use of painted multicolour ornament, as well as in changes of settlement pattern. The western part of the Cucuteni-Tripolye area experienced the dramatic growth of settlement density, whereas its eastern part was still sparsely settled. At the same time, in this period, the southern border of the area began to expand towards the Danube, in the steppe zone. Evidently this movement can be traced between the Carpathians and the Prut River where Cu-

cuteni-Tripolye settlements penetrated the territory previously occupied by the Gumelnița (Bolgrad-Aldeni) culture. Recent survey of southern regions in the Republic of Moldova brought to light settlements of the Cucuteni A – Tripolye BI period in the steppes between the Prut and Dniester Rivers,⁹ too so it can be stated that southern expansion of the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture in the second half of the 5th millennium BC was a common process for western part of the area.

One more new trait can be discerned in the Cucuteni-Tripolye area in this period. The numbers of weapons significantly increased especially in the western part of the area. They are mostly represented by arrow-, javelin- and spearheads (Fig. 1, 4-7) but stone mace-heads, battle stone and copper axes are also evidenced (Fig. 1, 8-10). Such rapid growth of armament items was probably connected with conflict situation in the Cucuteni-Tripolye area, at least in its western half. There are also other tokens which can support this assumption. The great majority of settlements in this period between the Carpathians and Dniester are situated in naturally protected locations, and some of them have artificial defensive structures in forms of banks and ditches.

It is possible to find direct evidence of armed conflicts. For instance, the surface of the naturally protected Druța I settlement on high promontory was literally sown with arrowheads which were scattered by the edge of dwellings.¹⁰ The disposition of finds indicates that the settlement was assaulted from unprotected side of the field. Moreover, the author supposes that the settlement was shot up by culturally the same population, perhaps from a neighboring village, because the arrowheads were made in traditional Cucuteni-Tripolye technique of flint working.

In general, different opinions were expressed concerning causes of war situation in the Cucuteni-Tripolye area. Some scholars have tried to explain this situation by incursion of warlike stockbreeders from the steppe zone that terrorized peaceful farming population and caused disturbance in cultural development.¹¹ According to another opinion, the critical situation could be caused rather by internal reasons related to

⁹ Vodean et al. 2018.

¹⁰ Рындина 1990, 110, Fig. 2.

¹¹ Дергачев 2000, 222.



Fig. 2. Material of the Cucuteni A-Tripolye BI period: 1 – masculine figurine with symbols of status from Rugionasa-Dealul Drăghici; 2 – masculine figurine with a belt and a sash from Dumești; 3 – clay model of a phallus from Poduri-Dealul Ghindaru; 4 – fragment of stone abstract scepter from Jora de Sus; 5-7 – vessels with spiral painted ornament from Drăgușăni-Botoșani (5.6) and Dumești (7) (1 after Lazarovici et al. 2009, 2.3.5-7 after Mantu et al. 1997, 4 photo of the author)

demographic problems.¹² Indeed, precisely in the western part of the area, especially between the Carpathians and the Prut River can be observed a very dense concentration of settlements. Additionally, most of artificially protected sites are situated in this zone,¹³ and numerous armament items are also evidenced there.

Supposed frequent war conflicts had to increase role of armed men in social structure although there is no convincing evidence of existence of professional warriors at that time. All adult males capable of carrying arms could be involved in raids and skirmishes. On the other hand, tensions between different communities could be also accompanied by internal antagonism. Protection of villages and successful war expeditions required qualified commanders who could suggest effective solutions of difficult situations. In these circumstances new generation of war leaders had to come to power whereas former sacral leaders were moved to the background of social arena. Precisely this new type of chiefs more adequately corresponded current situation and was able to mobilize society for overcoming of arising crisis.

The possible rearrangement of social roles in the Cucuteni A – Tripolye BI period can be partly illustrated by some new material traits emerged at that time. First of all, it is necessary to mention the emergence and wide spread of clay masculine figurines which were almost unknown in previous period.¹⁴ Many of them bring some details of equipment in form of belts and sashes and/or symbols of high social status like different discs, pendants, necklaces, etc. (Fig. 2, 1, 2). Additionally, new male-related attributes of social symbolism appear in form of stone scepters (Fig. 2, 4) and various phallic figures (Fig. 2, 3). Simultaneously, depictions of serpents on vessels come to have more conventionalized character (Fig. 2, 5-7) while images of the “death’s heads” disappear at all. Serpentine motives in ornamental designs of the Cucuteni-Tripolye pottery, intimately connected with female virtues, maintained until the late phase of the culture since this image probably occupied one of the central positions in

the cosmogonic system of ancient farmers being related to ideas of fertility.

Supposed changes in social organization probably could favour the resolution of conflict situation but didn’t cause intensification of social differentiation, and indications of social inequality and hierarchical social structures are still not detected in this period. Different hoards with metal and other valuable things could belong not to representatives of social apex but to whole community and reflect some manifestations of religious activities. Finally, the most successful communities could survive in these conditions whereas less successful ones seem to have been forced to leave the crisis area migrating eastwards to sparsely populated territories. By the end of the Cucuteni A – Tripolye BI period settlements became larger and better organized. Time to destroy passed and time to create came.

Time of proto-cities-managers-technologies (the Cucuteni AB – Tripolye BI/BII and Cucuteni B – Tripolye B2-CI periods)

In the period under consideration new significant changes occurred in the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture. Most of settlements, just as in the Precucuteni – Tripolye A phase, were again located on lower river terraces. The concentration of sites in the western part of the area significantly decreased, whereas their density in the basin of the Southern Bug River became higher. Precisely in this period the culture splits into two quite different spatial segments: the Cucuteni area with the painted pottery and the Tripolye area with grooved ornament. Subsequent development of the culture was due to the permanent spatial extension of the Cucuteni tradition, at the same time as a reduction of the Tripolye area in the forest-steppe zone.

One of the most outstanding events in the development of the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture at that time was the emergence of extremely large settlements which are sometimes designated as super-centres or proto-cities. The largest sites were localized in the basin of the Southern Bug. Their dimensions in that area could reach 400 ha and in population number up to ten thousand

¹² Манзура 2000, 282.

¹³ Ibid., Fig 24.

¹⁴ Enea 2016.

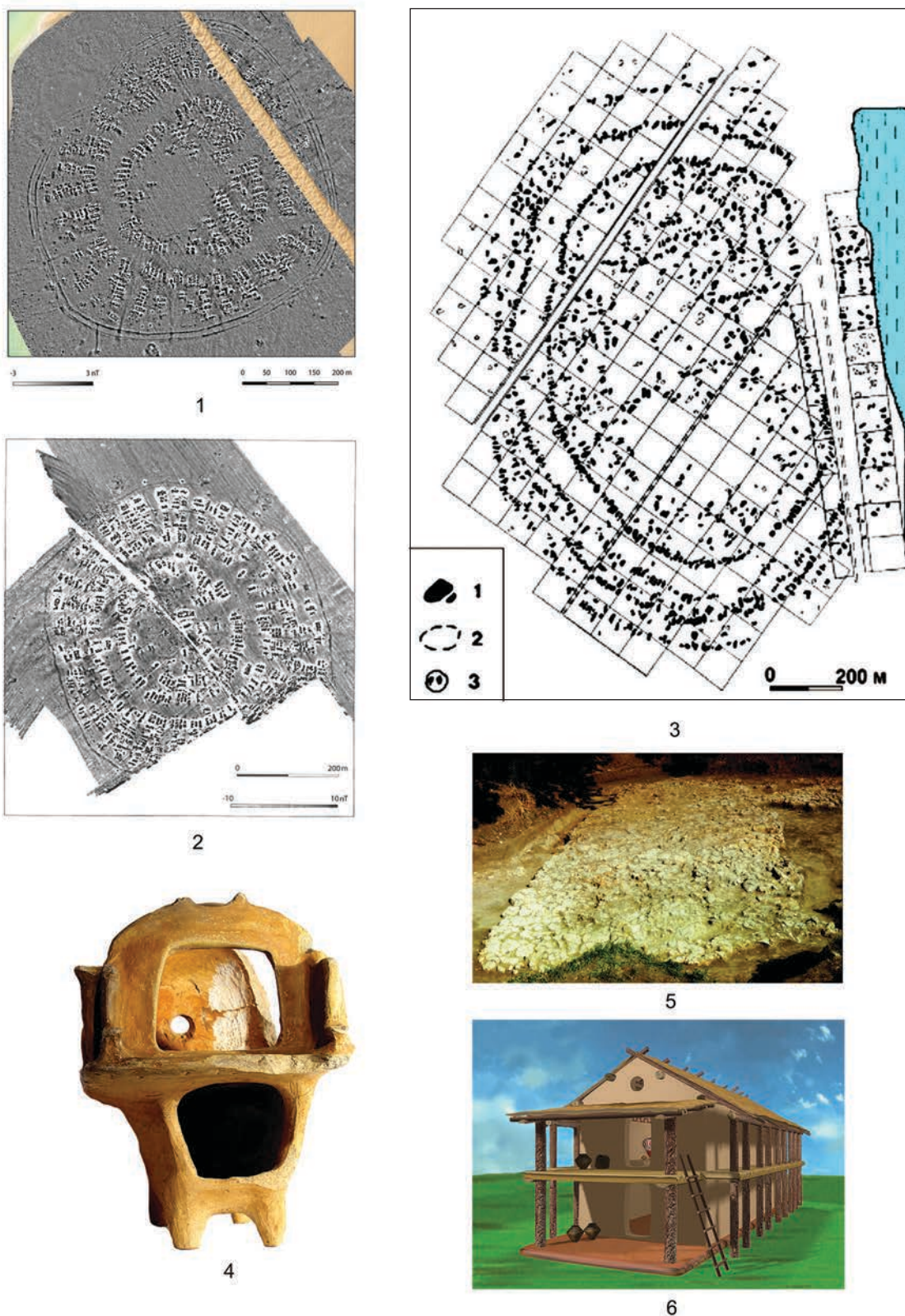


Fig. 3. Super-centres and domestic structures of the Cucuteni B-Tripolye CI culture: 1 – geomagnetic plan of the Stolniceni settlement, 2 – geomagnetic plan of the Petreni settlement, 3 – geomagnetic plan of the Maydanetskoe settlement; 4 – model of a two-storeyed house from the Roccokhovatka settlement; 5 – remains of a surface dwelling at the Maydanetskoe settlement; 6 – reconstruction of a two-storeyed house from the Maydanetskoe settlement (1 after Scholz et al. 2018; 2 after Rassman et al. 2016; 3 after Rassman et al. 2014, 4-6 after Ляшко et al. 2004)

people and even more (Fig. 3, 3). Recently similar mega-sites were also uncovered and surveyed in the western part of the Cucuteni-Tripolye area¹⁵ (Fig. 3, 1. 2). These sites are not large in dimensions as those in the eastern part but they demonstrate a general discernible trend in the development of domestic structures and centralization of population.

There are different hypothesis concerning the appearance of these settlements. Some researchers believe that the main reason was related to a danger from the steppe pastoral groups.¹⁶ Other specialists explain the emergence of large settlements by permanent internal conflicts between different agricultural communities for territories.¹⁷ It was also supposed that the emergence of large Cucuteni-Tripolye settlements was stimulated by situation when extensive territorial expansion is no longer possible.¹⁸ It is conditioned by the need to intensify productive activities and exchange operations within restricted resources.

Administration of such astonishingly giant settlements with many thousands of people had to be quite a troublesome matter and required leaders of new generation with managerial abilities. As analysis archaeological attributes revealed the Cucuteni-Tripolye super-centres do not demonstrate traces of any complex hierarchical organization of society with evident social stratification and property inequality.¹⁹ The society of the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture could belong to heterarchical type of social organization which are usually not less complex then hierarchically built social systems. The role of wise and experienced managers in such societies had to be very significant for effective organization of labour, redistribution of products, control for rational utilization of resources, reproduction of social relations, etc.

Unlike priests or warriors it is difficult to find traces of managers in archaeological record. However, tokens of their activities can be discerned in results of efforts applied. The super-centres look as thoroughly organized agglomerations with well-defined layout, sub-

stantial houses (Fig. 3, 5. 6) exemplified also by models (Fig. 3, 4), economic facilities and well thought-out logistic network. These attributes reveal the existence of certain social control and regulative functions which had to be definitely executed by a group of leaders-managers. Such leaders also seem to have been responsible for development of technological innovations in order to intensify production and exchange.

The 4th millennium BC is considered as a real breakthrough in technological progress.²⁰ Introduction of innovations often has not gradual but almost simultaneous character representing a compressed bundle of new ideas, approaches and discoveries. These trends are also evident in the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture.²¹ One of the most important innovations was introduced into the traction complex. In the Cucuteni B – Tripolye CI period, numerous finds of models of sledges harnessed wit oxen are found at different sites (Fig. 4, 9). According to their construction they belong to the type of freight sledges designated to transport various burdens. It can be supposed that the traction complex was introduced into cultivation, too although traces of wooden ploughs are still not found. Another essential novelty in agricultural activities is represented by toothed sickle which was more effective in comparison with previous types (Fig. 4, 5-7).

Some important innovations took place in different fields of handicraft production. A new multi-channel kiln was introduced in ceramic production which provides possibility for more regular burning of pottery. Another significant innovation was vertical loom which could intensify production of textile (Fig. 4, 8). Essential changes can be observed in metalworking. They were connected with a significant increase of heavy tools instead ornaments with more extensive typological nomenclature (Fig. 4, 1-4). Metal tools came to use more intensively in processing of other materials. Perhaps, in this period first objects made of arsenic bronze were introduced in economic domain.

Numerous innovations in different fields of economic activities could cause contradictive effects. On the one hand, they stimulated development of more intensive and effective subsistence

¹⁵ Scholz et al. 2018.

¹⁶ Черныш 1977; Круц 2003, 179-180.

¹⁷ Збенович 1990, 12; Шмаглий / Видейко 1990, 16; Видейко 1998, 147-148.

¹⁸ Manzura 2005, 325-326.

¹⁹ Müller et al. 2018.

²⁰ Hansen 2014.

²¹ Видейко 2017.



Fig. 4. Technological innovations of the Cucuteni B-Tripolye CI culture: 1-4 – production of metalworking; 5-7 – flint toothed sickles on large blades; 8 – reconstruction of vertical loom; 9 – clay model of freight sledges with ox head (1.3-9 after Ляшко et al. 2004, 2 after Mantu et al. 1997)

strategies needed for supplying of large collectives. On the other hand, such intensity and efficiency had to result in more rapid exhaustion of vitally important resources and undermine economic basis of society. Perhaps, disappearance of the Cucuteni-Tripolye super-centres by the middle of the 4th millennium BC can be partly

explained by these reasons. In the beginning of the Tripolye CII period (the third quarter of the 4th millennium BC) most of traditional elements are still recognizable in material and spiritual culture but it was just a final chord in evolutionary development. Time of radical transformation already came.

Time of daggers-chiefs-hierarchies (1st half of the Tripolye CII period)

The second half of the 4th millennium BC corresponding to the Tripolye CII period can be additionally designated as a period of transformations. Ironically, the transformation was chronologically directed to opposite sides. In the beginning of the period most of traditional attributes of the culture still survived. Time of mega-sites was over but settlements remained relatively large and well arranged as it can be evidenced from the plans of the Brânzeni III and Costești IV settlements related to the Brânzeni local variant of the Tripolye CII culture.²² As a rule, the settlements occupied commanding positions in surrounding landscape and sometimes were protected with banks and ditches.

Other elements of material culture also continued their development. The architecture of houses actually did not change: large one- and twostoreyed buildings with similar interior occur at this time as earlier. Most of the ceramic assemblage consisted of painted pottery with curvilinear ornament complemented by anthropomorphic and zoomorphic images. The tool-kit maintained almost the same character, and economic activities, at least in the forest-steppe zone or in the core area of the culture, were as before based on extensive agriculture and stockbreeding although percentage of small cattle increased to some extent in the domestic herd.²³

At the same time, three important novelties in different but interrelated domains were introduced in this period. One of them belongs to technological field, the second innovation is related to social and ideological relations and the third improvement is connected with military realm. Although all these innovations are registered in different cultural fields they are largely combined by the common idea of social prestige.

The technological innovation is represented by wheeled wagons which appeared actually simultaneously on vast European territories from the Caucasus to Central Europe approximately in the middle of the 4th millennium BC. This invention is evidenced in different cultural areas in various forms: either as clay models of wagons

in the Baden culture²⁴ or as tracks from wheels under a long barrow²⁵ or as a pictogram on a vessel.²⁶ Meanwhile, parts of real wagons were uncovered in the mortuary context in the steppe zone of Eastern Europe, on the Lower Don and the Northern Caucasus.²⁷ It means that wheeled vehicles became one of elements of burial rite and new important instrument of social display.

Although direct evidence of wheeled transport is not found yet in the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture it is difficult to assume that this culture located between Central Europe and the Caucasus could avoid this innovation. Previous experience in construction of sledges for transportation of burden, rich technological potential and extensive relations with other regions made this invention simply unavoidable. This new type of transport could substantially stimulate economic activities, exchange operations and exploring of new territories especially in the steppe belt. In general, it was a factor which could significantly raise level of population's mobility.

The second innovation is applicable to three different spheres – technological, military and ideological. In the beginning of the second half of the 4th millennium BC a new type of introduced weapon was represented by bronze daggers. Although such kind of metal objects which mostly resembled a small knife was known earlier the new type of the dagger had bigger size, more advanced technological procedure of production and was designated solely for fighting. Moreover, the dagger acquired very deep symbolic significance and played important role in construction of social identity.²⁸ The identity was connected with the idea of a supreme leadership and warriorhood.

The third remarkable event in the beginning of the Tripolye CII period is related to funerary practice. At this time, formal disposal areas for the dead appeared in different parts of the Cucuteni-Tripolye territory. In the western and central parts they took form of flat extramural cemeteries with graves made according to inhumation rite whereas extramural graveyards with cremat-

²² Маркевич 1981, Рис. 42; 67.

²³ Дергачев 2012.

²⁴ Bondár 2012.

²⁵ Mischka 2011.

²⁶ Kruk / Milisauskas 1982.

²⁷ Файферт 2014, 337, Рис. 248; Кондрашов / Резепкин 1988.

²⁸ Hansen 2013, 107.



Fig. 5. Examples of burial complexes and typical grave inventory of the Vykhvatintsy (1) and Usatovo (2) groups

ed burials were spread in the Dnieper region. Both flat and kurgan cemeteries existed in the North-Western Pontic region. They are related to the Usatovo group which is firmly connected with Cucuteni-Tripolye communities. It is even suggested that this group represents a local variant of the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture.²⁹

For about 1.500 years of development no cemeteries in the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture were evidenced except isolated graves on the territory of settlements. Their sudden appearance can be probably explained by disintegration of previous societal structures based on social balance and growing social differentiation leading to emergence of social hierarchies. In these conditions mortuary domain could provide additional arena for social display among competitive clans. Actually all cemeteries demonstrate such social competition to a different degree and in some cases contain clear evidence for existence of hierarchically organized structures. Unequal social position of individuals or groups as a rule is expressed in restricted access to special funerary place, different forms and monumentality of burial structures as well as distinctions in the arrangement of grave goods.

Such principles can be traced for instance at the Vykhatintsy cemetery located on the Middle Dniester (Fig. 5, 1). Here, funerary area was divided in two parts. The first, larger part was occupied by irregularly situated graves which do not manifest especially obvious distinctions in burial rite. The second part was separated from communal area and included three small groups of graves with special selection of grave goods probably exemplifying structure of social leadership.³⁰

Even more apparent example of social differentiation is discernible in cemeteries of the Usatovo culture (Fig. 5, 2). All cemeteries can be divided in three distinctive groups which are distinguished by degree of complexity of burial customs and grave inventory. This division can testify the existence of three social strata within the Usatovo society. The upper stratum was represented by supreme chiefs and representatives of their families and lineages. The second social layer was occupied by a noble people perhaps

with some priestly functions. The third lowermost stratum probably included commoners who could be involved in economic activities connected with agriculture, herding and handicraft.³¹ Additionally, apparent ranking is observed not only within one community but between different communities too. Position of the supreme leader or chief had probably inherited character since some children in the richest cemeteries possessed the same attributes of the highest social status as adult individuals. To some extent similar pattern is evidenced on the Middle Dnieper basin in the Sofievka group.³² Nevertheless, these societies existed not very long. Approximately 3300/2500 BC cultural transformation in the Cucuteni-Tripolye area turned to other direction.

Time of hamlets-patriarchs-uniformity (2nd half of the Tripolye CII period)

On the final stage of its development represented by archaeological sites of the Horodiștea-Gordinești type the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture lost many of previous traits and acquired some new ones. Relatively large settlements still presented in the beginning of the CII period now were mostly replaced by small hamlets with several dwellings which according to their dimensions and architecture differed essentially from substantial houses of earlier phases (Fig. 6, 1). Cultural layers at settlements became very thin that can evidence for more mobile way of life. In ceramic assemblage fine pottery constituted insignificant quantity, and previously dainty painted ornament degraded to unpretentious geometric styles (Fig. 6, 2-6). Traces of metalworking are almost invisible and metal objects are represented by isolated finds. Rich graves disappeared and funerary rite is characterized mostly by flat burials with weak elements of social distinctions (Fig. 7, 1, 2).

One of the most prominent tokens of the period in question was increasing uniformity of material culture. Such situation reflects a common trend which is expressed in decreasing of local

²⁹ Дергачев 1980, 148.

³⁰ Манзура 2014.

³¹ Manzura, in press.

³² Колесников 1993.



1



2



3



4

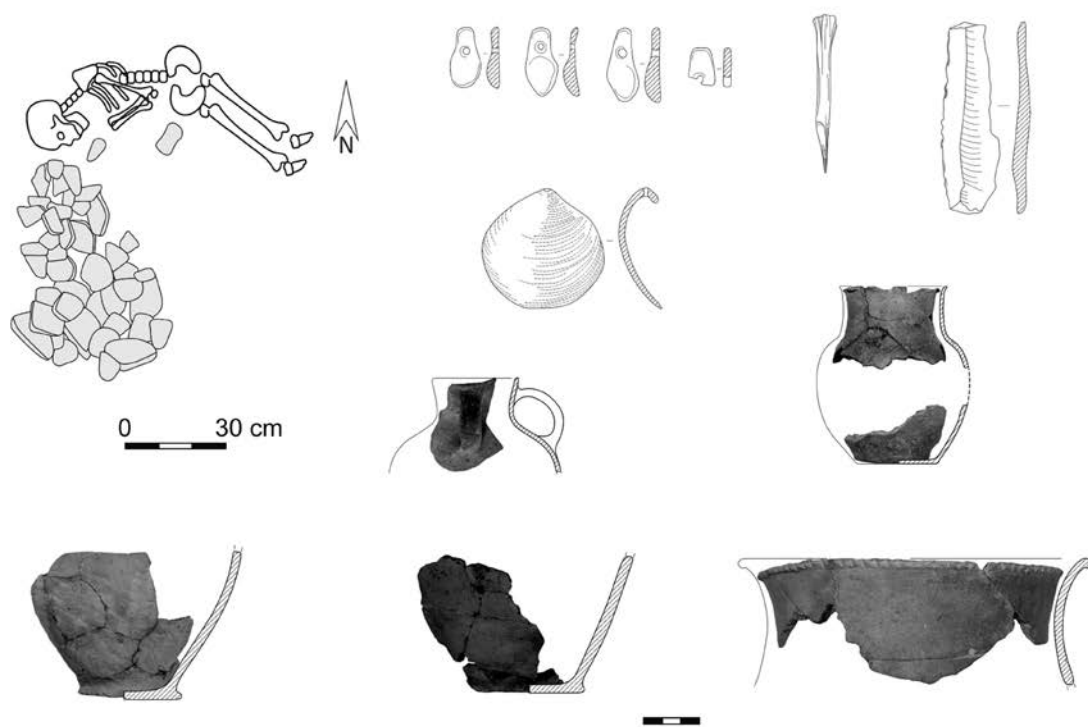


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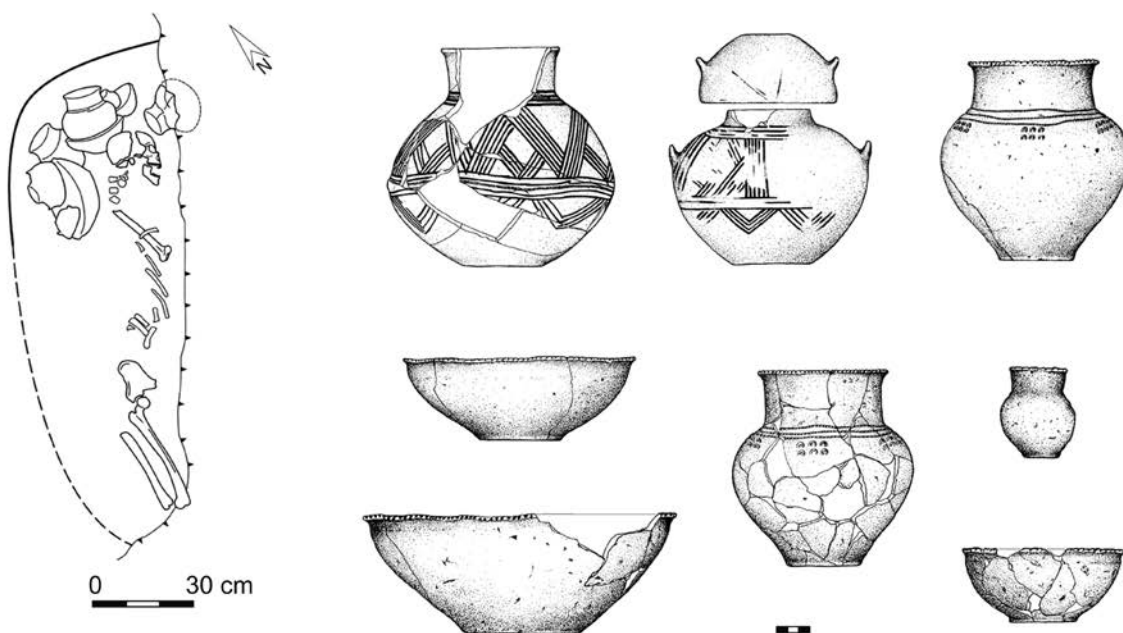


6

Fig. 6. Material of the Horodștea-Gordinești group: 1 – remains of a surface dwelling at the Trinca-Izvorul lui Luca settlement; 2,5 – painted vessels from the Stena settlement; 3 – painted vessel from the Cunicea cemetery; 4 – fragmentary vessel with incised geometric ornament from the Trinca-Izvorul lui Luca settlement; 6 – painted vessel from the Tsviklovtsy settlement (1,4 after Sîrbu 2019, 2,5,6 after Ляшко et al. 2004, 3 photo of D. Topal).



1



2

Fig. 7. Graves of the Horodștea-Gordinești group: 1 – the Gordinești cemetery; 2 – the Cunicia cemetery (1 after Манзура / Тельнов 1992 and Sîrbu 2019, 2 after Топап / Церна 2010).

diversity in later periods of the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture.³³ This process could be conditioned by disintegration of well structured regional communities and disappearance of centralized social control which was able to establish territorial borders and support local cultural standards distinguishing these societies from neighboring ones.

This situation could generate two opposite trends. On the one hand, the absence of centralized control embracing large territorial unions removed the process of decision-making on the level of isolated hamlet or even a separate family. In this case social power could be concentrated in the hands of a leader of small community or just a head of family (patriarch). On the other hand the elimination of territorial borders and increasing mobility of population could provoke more intensive cultural exchange and more extensive and unrestricted circulation of different cultural standards. Then, the best illustration of this period can be regarded burial sites of the Zhivotilovka type.³⁴ They are stretched all over the steppe and forest-steppe zones from the Caucasus to the Carpathians crossing areas of numerous local cultural groups and organically combine attributes of different cultural traditions.

Conclusion

The development of the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture has flown along a trajectory from one simple form of social organization through the highest material, social and spiritual standards to another simple type of society comparable with the earliest social structure. Nevertheless, such simplification on the final stage of cultural evolution cannot be considered as ordinary degradation. In this case, degradation can be treated as a reverse side of success. Essential transformation of the Cucuteni-Tripolye culture in the latest phase can be regarded as forced (and clever) adaptation to changed internal and external conditions. Simply such type of culture was more appropriate in new situation. However, this adaptation probably changed initial cultural code and made agricultural communities less resistant to external influence. The culture turned into open system and was prepared to adopt any new ideas

³³ Diachenko 2019, 79-80.

³⁴ Manzura 2016.

and novelties. That is why it is not surprising that the formerly brilliant Cucuteni-Tripolye culture disappeared actually endless under the wave of the monotonous Pit-Grave (Yamnaya) culture.

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Sažetak

Znakovi vremena: o antropološkoj periodizaciji kulture Cucuteni-Tripolje

U radu je predstavljen pokušaj razvoja periodizacije Cucuteni-Tripolje kulture u smislu kulturne antropologije. Shema se temelji na zajedničkom razmatranju različitih manifestacija materijalne kulture i povezanih društvenih te historijsko-kulturnih pojava. Ona je izgrađena duž tri odvojene, ali međusobno povezane linije. Prva linija obuhvaća najznačajnije simbole materijala svake faze. Druga linija prikazuje prirodu društvenog vodstva na različitim nivoima kulturnog razvoja i odgovara materijalnim simbolima. Treća linija odražava glavne pojave, događaje ili procese koji su se odvijali u različitim vremenskim razdobljima.

Razvoj Cucuteni-Tripolje kulture kretao se trasom od jednog jednostavnog oblika društvene organizacije, preko najviših materijalnih, socijalnih i duhovnih standarda, do drugog jednostavnog tipa društva usporedivog s najranijom društvenom strukturom. Ipak, takvo pojednostavljenje u posljednjem stadiju kulturnog razvoja ne može se smatrati običnom degradacijom. U ovom slučaju degradacija se može tretirati kao obrnuta strana uspjeha. Bitna transformacija Cucuteni-Tripolje kulture u posljednjoj fazi može se smatrati prisilnom (i pametnom) prilagodbom promijenjenim unutarnjim i vanjskim uvjetima. Jednostavno, takva je kultura bila prikladnija u novoj situaciji. Međutim, ta je prilagodba vjerojatno promijenila početni kulturni kod i učinila poljoprivredne zajednice manje otpor-

nima na vanjske utjecaje. Kultura se pretvorila u otvoreni sistem i bila je spremna usvojiti sve nove ideje i novitete. Zato nije iznenađujuće da je nekada sjajna kultura Cucuteni-Tripolje nestala zapravo pod valom monotone Pit-Grave (Yamnaya) kulture.

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