

## Social structure of the Berel society

Social structure of the Berel society was many times examined in scientific literature. Nevertheless, each discovery expands and corrects existing knowledge about social and political structure of nomadic society inhabited Kazakhstan in the middle – 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC. It is known that burial monuments clearly reflect the level of social stratification in ancient nomadic societies (Boltric, 2004, p. 85-91; Tikhonov, 2007, p. 154).

Materials found in the Berel mounds indicate that ancient nomads of the region under consideration had real heterogeneous society with deeply developed process of stratification and appropriate property differentiation which were reflected in more than 70 burial monuments.

Issues of social stratification of the Saka's society of Zhetysu were in details analyzed by Kazakhstan's archaeologist K.A. Akishev on the example of "royal" and ordinary burial mounds. He noted that, on the one hand, nomadic cattle-breeding was the most progressive form of economy; but on the other hand, it contributed to the extension of poverty gaps and sharp social stratification (Akishev, 2009, c. 101). In 1960s he marked that "buried under the mounds of the Besshatyr belonged to three social classes. Thus, huge burial mounds are considered to be graves of Saka's tsars – supreme commanders; medium mounds – graves of aristocrats and the elite; while small were the graves of warriors and ordinary people (Akishev, 1963, p. 86).

A.D. Grach defined three main types of burials of different social classes of the "Scythian" period of Kazakhstan-Siberia-Central Asian line of steppes which are the following: royal mounds; mound of clan's and military aristocrats; graves of the lowest social groups (Grach, 1975, p. 161-160).

Flat burials of the Saka's elite constructed of stone and ground materials are characterized, in general, by huge size of the ground-based part (up to 20 meters) and their burial chambers were often built on the level of ancient horizon or in slightly deep soil. Ground constructions of the Pazyryk elite mounds, on the contrary, were made of huge blocks of wild stone and were relatively small (from 2,5 to 5 meters).

Surazakov A.S. investigated the question of the social stratification of the Pazyryk inhabitants on the basis of materials from 58 mounds and 19 burial grounds of the Altai Mountains. He defined the following criteria for this: a) grandness of burial construction; b) its constructional features; c) method of burial; d) composition of accompanying inventory. For the first time he made summarizing tables of the parameters of all discovered by that time Pazyryk mounds and marked out 4 social classes on this basis. According to his classification, the Caton and Kurtus mounds of small sizes from the Naryn-Bukhtarma intermountain cavity were attributed to the first group of monuments remained after ordinary people but more numerous members of the Pazyryk society who were the main productive forces (Surazakov, 1983, p. 72-86). The second group consists of burials of heads of major families or clans. Big Berel mound (№ 1) was attributed to the 3<sup>rd</sup> group of monuments where representatives of clan aristocracy were buried. The 4<sup>th</sup> group includes huge mounds of chiefs of tribes.

Social structure and institute of power formed in the Pazyryk society not later (perhaps, even earlier) than in European Scythian society which transition, according to some researchers, from tribal association to class society and state took place in the 5<sup>th</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.

### Reference:

**Samashev Z. *Berel, Almaty 2011, 236 p.***