

## SOCIO-POLITICAL TERMINOLOGY FOR SARMATIANS: THE ANCIENT TRADITION, ANTHROPOLOGY, AND ARCHAEOLOGY

E.V. Vdovchenkov

The purpose of the study is to compare the political terminology of ancient authors, archaeological realities and modern scientific terminology using the example of the Sarmatians (for period 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC – 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD). The specificity of the archaeological material allows us to reconstruct the general principles of political organization and its structural features. Nomads have two alternative models: hierarchical and heterarchical models of society organization. The article discusses the use against the Sarmatians terms such as *βασιλεύς*, *σκηπτοῦχος*, *δυνάσται*, *rex*, *βασιλέως*, *principes*, *sceptuchus*, *σκηπτοῦχος*. Among the terms used by ancient authors for barbarian rulers is the term *sceptuchus*, mentioned together with the kings, which indicates a two-level system of government. The analysis of the written tradition allows us to identify an epoch for which the Sarmatians have more than 10 mentions of kings (the Middle Sarmatian culture – 1<sup>st</sup> – mid-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD). It is an obvious evidence of the processes of political centralization, as well as the increased political activity of the Sarmatians. Thus, we can talk about the correlation of archaeological data and written tradition. The areas where the kings are mentioned correspond to the regions where elite monuments were concentrated in the first centuries. At that time, we can assume the existence of a hierarchical model of nomadic society organization and a form of political organization such as chiefdoms for these regions. For the early Sarmatian culture, one can cautiously assume a heterarchical model of social organization, which does not exclude, however, the temporary rise of some leaders. Apparently, the Scythian society described by Lucian also had a heterarchical model.

**Keywords:** Sarmatians, chiefdom, heterarchy, hierarchy, Sarmatian archaeological culture, kings, *sceptuchus*.

**Evgeny Viktorovich Vdovchenkov**, Dr. Habil. in History, Leading Researcher of the Institute of Oriental Studies, RAS, Moscow, Russia.

**Евгений Викторович Вдовченко**, доктор исторических наук, доцент, ведущий научный сотрудник Института востоковедения РАН, Москва, Россия.

E-mail: [vdovchenkov@yandex.ru](mailto:vdovchenkov@yandex.ru)

## TERMS AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the study is to compare the political terminology of ancient authors, archaeological realities and modern scientific terminology using the example of the Sarmatians (for period 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC — 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD). The analysis of terminology makes it possible not only to know the sources better, but also to explore the historiography, and the methodological and methodological problems that researchers face when studying the social and political organization of the nomadic population of the Sarmatian era.

The comparison of data from ancient tradition and archeology seems obvious, but, nevertheless, such work has not yet been done<sup>1</sup>. The social terminology of ancient authors needs careful analysis and definition of the context of their use. A separate task is to search for possible archaeological realities for the societies mentioned by ancient authors. This article is still a step in this direction.

In Soviet historiography, there was no analysis of the political terminology of ancient authors in comparison with archaeological data for the Sarmatian era. This was hindered by the insufficient knowledge of the Sarmatian complexes. Many important discoveries and publications in Sarmatian archaeology have been made in recent decades. But it is also necessary to point out the Marxist methodology and conceptual apparatus, which, in my opinion, are not able to adequately describe the specifics of the political processes of the early nomads.

Due to the idea of the evolutionary nature of changes among the Nomads, as well as the significant role of autochthonism, which is fundamental to Marxist historiography, Boris Grakov, Konstantin Smirnov and their followers consistently focused on cultural continuity in the development of Sarmatian cultures. The emergence of a significant number of rich complexes and the expected complication of the social structure of society were considered as the result of progressive social and political development, as a process of class formation, weakening of family ties, and the development of family property. The idea of Sarmatian class formation has been established in the texts of the Soviet period, in full accordance with the Marxist paradigm of origin of the state. Speaking about the Sarmatians of the first centuries, Anatoly Khazanov writes that “the process of class formation among the Sarmatians is intensifying”, meaning an increase in property inequality and social differentiation;

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<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this article is to close this gap. Some of the materials have already been abstractly published (Vdovchenkov 2025). You should also pay attention to the article, which analyzes the rich complexes of Early Sarmatian culture and written tradition (Glebov, Dedyulkin 2025).

“poor and unequal strata appear” (Khazanov 1971: 82). Marina Moshkova also writes that “the Savromato-Sarmatian tribes were at the stage of decomposition of the primitive communal system and were experiencing an era of class formation” (Moshkova 1989: 208).

According to the Marxist paradigm, class formation led to the formation of the state. The assumption of the existence of a state among the Sarmatians (“The processes of politogenesis have gone the most far among the Siraks, who assume a state” (Moshkova 1989: 208)) can hardly be supported at the present time. Although this point of view about the existence of an early state among the Sarmatians is expressed recently by Alexander Medvedev (Medvedev 2010: 140, 145) and Alexander Simonenko (Simonenko 2009: 239).

In general, the source of ideas about social relations among the Sarmatians in the Soviet period was archeology, but the interpretation of archaeological data was determined by the Marxist paradigm. The Marxist paradigm that developed in Soviet times, in my opinion, does not adequately reflect the specifics of social and political processes and institutions among nomads, although it persists at the present time. The concepts of “class”, “primitive communal system”, “class formation”, “military democracy”, and “early state” need to be fundamentally revised in relation to the early Nomads, and the Sarmatians in particular.

Since the 1980s the basic postulates about the origin of the Sarmatian cultures were revised. Autochthonism is gradually being replaced by an understanding of the importance of migration in the formation of Sarmatian cultures and social changes. Studies have shown that the emergence of elite complexes and new cultures among the Sarmatians is associated with a new population.

Currently, neo-evolutionism has gained significant influence in social archaeology. This direction suggests more diverse models of evolution, which are influenced by a combination of internal and external factors. The neo-evolutionist paradigm, which uses the concepts of heterarchy, homoarchy, egalitarian tendencies, inequality, social complexity, and chiefdom, has become a fundamental step in understanding the features of Nomadic political development. This conceptual framework describes the social and political realities of the early Nomads much more adequately.

The specificity of the archaeological material allows us to reconstruct the general principles of political organization and its structural features. For nomads, two alternative models of society organization can be distinguished — hierarchical and heterarchical (Vdovchenkov 2024). Heterarchy is the coexistence of different social hierarchies and ranks, none of which is dominant. Both hierarchy (Kradin 2020) and homoarchy (Bondarenko 2006) have been proposed as an antonym for the concept of heterarchy. In this case, this

discrepancy is not fundamental, but due to the peculiarities of archaeological sources, the word “hierarchical model” is preferable in this case.

Of course, the concentration of resources and labor costs comes to the fore when determining the features of a hierarchical model. Although, of course, the scale of the Sarmatian mounds is not comparable to the classical Scythian mounds, but all the sizes of the mounds are also important markers of the richest and most outstanding burials (Yatsenko 2016). We are well aware of elite burials with outstanding wealth and symbols of power — vivid symbols of inequality. The most important feature of this model is also the established elite subculture.

The presence of a hierarchical model is usually compared with a chiefdom. Among anthropologists and archaeologists analyzing ancient societies, “chiefdom” has gradually become a central concept that allows us to understand the ways of politogenesis. The signs of chiefdom are well known (Kradin 1995: 16). Data of early nomads can be used to identify such signs as the concentration of resources, the allocation of an endogamous elite, the acquisition of various benefits as a result of exopolitan activities and their further redistribution, cults and rituals associated with the figure of a sacred ruler.

Chiefdom is an important discovery in nomadic research. In the absence of resources to form a state, it is chiefdom that is the basic institution of hierarchically organized nomadic societies. This is not an intermediate link between the tribe and the state, but a kind of peak of the political development of the nomads. After the collapse of politics and decentralization processes, nomads return to this particular political form of organization at a new stage of their rise. A striking example here is Scythia of the 5<sup>th</sup>–4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, known both thanks to Herodotus and archeology. The level of development of Scythia can be characterized as a complex chiefdom, and be a kind of model for similar reconstructions among the early Nomads, due to the significant amount of information from both ancient historians and striking archaeological sites.

The idea of the existence of chiefdoms among the Sarmatians has already been considered and substantiated (Vdovchenkov 2011, 2016; Skripkin 2015: 76), and now the existence of chiefdoms among the Sarmatians is not disputed. An important circumstance is the fact that chiefdom is not typical for *all* Sarmatian societies.

## THE ANCIENT TRADITION OF THE SARMATIAN RULERS

There is a point of view about the non-terminological nature of ancient authors, that the concepts they use are rather vague. But the appeal to the data of the written tradition on the example of Strabo’s “Geography”

showed the value of this information and the need for a detailed analysis of concepts and their meaning for each author. Strabo's special feature is a good knowledge of political diversity, a sober and realistic view of various management practices. It is possible to trace the peculiarities of the use of political terms.

The following patterns are revealed in Strabo's political terminology. The most general term for a ruler is hegemon (*ἡγεμών*), used for rulers of various levels, including representatives of the Roman administration.

The main term for a legitimate ruler-monarch is basileus (*βασιλεύς*), used for the ancient kings of Rome and Greece, for Hellenistic monarchs, kings of Persia, as well as for a number of barbarian rulers. Thus, Strabo calls Dromichetes, king of the Getae (Strabo VII, 3, 8), and Abeak, king of the Syracusans (Strabo XI, 5, 8), kings.

Dynasts in most cases are rulers of the middle rank, lower in comparison with the basileoi. Characterized by the expression "*βασιλέων καὶ δυναστῶν*" (Strabo I, 2, 32, 26; XVI, 1, 11, 33), "*καὶ βασιλεῖς καὶ δὲ καὶ δυνάσται δεκαρχίαι*" (Strabo XVII, 3, 25, 39).

Tirana (*τύραννοι*) is the rulers who violate the established order of ruling. The phrase "they were called tyrants" in relation to the Bosphorus rulers may express doubts about the legitimacy of their power.

Barbarian leaders are usually called hegemons, dynasties, sometimes kings, and also philarchs.

#### SOCIO-POLITICAL TERMINOLOGY OF THE EARLY SARMATIAN EPOCH (3<sup>rd</sup>–1<sup>st</sup> CENTURIES BC)

At the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, king (*βασιλεύς*) Saitafarn and his subordinates *σκηπτοῦχος* from the Sava people, appeared in the vicinity of Olbia. They extorted gifts and tribute from the city's population (Decree in honor of Protogenes. IOSPE I, 32).

The European ruler of the Sarmatians, Gatal, acted as the guarantor for the treaty of Asia Minor rulers in 179 BC, Polybius used the term *δυνάσται* (Polyb. Hyst. XXV, 2, 13).

Polyaen mentions, the wife of Medosacc, the king of the Sarmatians in the Northern Black Sea region for the presumably first half of the second century BC, "*Ἀμάγη γυνὴ Μηδοσάκκου βασιλέως Σαρματῶν*" (Polyaen. Strateg. VIII, 56).

Strabo has evidence of the Roxolani's participation in the Crimean Scythian war against Mithridates Eupator at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC (Strabo VII, 3, 17). The Roxolani fought under the leadership of Tasius (*ἡγεμόνα Τάσιον*) (Strabo VII, 3, 17, 24).

Strabo reports that Abeak, king of the Siraks, provided 20,000 horsemen when Pharnaces owned the Bosporus, while Spadin, king of the Aorsi, provided 200,000 horsemen (Strabo XI, 5, 8). The Aorsi were the population of Lower Don, the Siraks were nomads on the right bank of the Kuban. This message is from the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, and it uses the term βασιλεύς.

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OF THE MIDDLE SARMATIAN EPOCH  
(1<sup>st</sup>—THE MIDDLE OF THE 2<sup>nd</sup> CENTURY AD)

The “Res Gestae Divi Augusti” mentions the kings of the Sarmatians who lived on both banks of the Tanais and asked Augustus for friendship: “Sarmatarum... reges” (Res Gestae Imp. August. XXXI) (the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD).

Tacitus mentions the participation of the Bosporan king Mithridates VII in the war in the 40s of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. The Syracs were led by king Zorsin (Tac. Ann. XII, 15: “*Zorsines Siracorum rex*”) and the Aorsi were led by *rex* Eunon (Tac. Ann. XII, 19). It is important to note that Zorsin’s desire to maintain the kingdom inherited from his father (Tac. Ann. XII, 17) is an important evidence of the hereditary nature of power among the Siraks in this case.

Tacitus also mentions in Eunon’s letter the “kings of great nations” (*magnarum nationum reges*), who refer to both Eunon himself and the loser of the war, and the kingdom of Mithridates VII (Ann. XII, 19).

The well-known epitaph of Plautius Silvanus tells about the events in the year 62 AD in the Northwestern Black Sea region. According to the well-founded opinion of a number of researchers, the opponents of Plautius Silvanus — “kings unknown to the Roman people or hostile to them” (*ignotos ante aut infensos p(opulo) R(omano) reges*) (CIL, XIV, 3608) were the Alans (Yatsenko 2001). The same inscription mentions the “kings of Bastarnae and Roxolani” (*regibus Bastarnarum et / Rhoxolanorum*).

The inscription *Rasparaganus Rex Roxolanorum* (CIL V, 32) (from the city of Pola, Istria) dates back to the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD and refers to the king of the Roxolani, Publius Elias Rasparagan.

Sometimes he is considered to be the same king, whom Emperor Hadrian was in contact with: “With the king of the Roxolans (*cum rege Roxolanorum*), who complained about a decrease in annual payments, he made peace after reviewing the case” (SHA. V. Adr. VI, 8).

The Mangup Decree, which researchers date to the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD and associate with Olbia, mentions “great kings of Aorsia” (βασιλέας) (Sidorenko 1996: 36–37). Researchers usually mean by this “Aorsia” the territory in the northwestern Black Sea region in the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

In the Pantikapaion encomium of the Bosporan statesman and military figure of the time Sauromat I (according to Sergey Saprykin), the kings of the Alans in the Crimea are mentioned: “and to the kings of the Alans (*καὶ τοῖς Ἄλανων βασιλευσιν*) he considered it necessary to determine (a fair punishment?) for (their guilt?)” (Saprykin, Parfenov 2012: 169). These Alans are considered as the Don Alans at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

There are also issues with Sarmatian kings Pharzo<sup>2</sup> and Inismei (*βασιλέως*) on the coins of Olbia of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (Karyshkovsky 2003).

In addition to kings, other terms are mentioned in the sources from this period. Tacitus, in his “Historia”, when describing the Roxolani raid in the winter of 67–68 AD, mentions “the leaders and all the nobility” — *principes and nobilissimi* (Tac. Hist. I, 79, 1–4), which is an important evidence of separations among the elite of the Roxolani.

At about the same time, at the Middle Danube was mentioned “the leaders of the Sarmatian Iazyges (*principes Sarmatarum Iazugum*), who ruled the local tribes” (Tac. Hist. III, 5).

Among the terms used by ancient authors for barbarian rulers is the term *sceptuchus* (*σκηπτοῦχος*) (who are usually understood as second-rank leaders) (Strabo XI, 2, 13, 18; Tac. Ann. 12, 19; Decree in honor of Protogenes. IPE I2, No. 32; App. Mithr. 117). This word was widely used by Greek authors. The origin of the term is connected with the scepter, a symbol of power (*σκήπτρον*). Strabo reports the following about the population of the Pre-Caucasus: “they are ruled by the so-called ‘σκηπτοῦχος’, and these latter themselves are subject to tyrants and kings (*τυράννοις ἢ βασιλεῦσιν*)” (Strabo XI, 2, 13).

*Sceptuchus* are found in the already mentioned decree of the Protogenes of the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC — the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, which describes the tributary relations of Olbia and the Sayy tribe, which a number of researchers consider to be Sarmatian or Scythian. This document says: “when many of Sayy tribe came to receive gifts, but the people could not give them and asked Protogenes to help his (strained) circumstances, he offered 400 gold pieces. As an elected member of the College of Nine, he offered himself at least 1,500 gold pieces for future income, of which many skiptraders were satisfied in time. Many gifts were prepared for the king” (Decree in honor of Protogenes. I2, No. 32; IOSPE 32 A, stk. 42). The value of the decree as a source is all the more high because it illuminates the Northwestern Black Sea region at a time when the number of archaeological sites there was sharply decreasing, during the famous crisis of the “3<sup>rd</sup> century BC”.

*Sceptuchus* are known in Tacitus’ description of the Sarmatian raid on Transcaucasia: “Farasman, for his part, receives the support

<sup>2</sup> There is a point of view on these kings not as Sarmatians (Shchavelev 2025), but it requires a separate analysis.

of the Albanians and raises the Sarmatians, whose sceptuchus, having accepted gifts from both sides (*sceptuchi utrimque do nis acceptis rmore gentico diversa induere*), according to the custom of their tribe, went to the aid of both” (Tacit. Ann. VI, 33).

In Tacitus’ “Historia”, when describing the Roxolani raid, “the leaders and all the nobility” are mentioned — *principes* and *nobilissimi* (Tac. Hist. I, 79, 1–4). Here we can assume that the mention of two levels in society — the level of leaders and the level of nobility — is not accidental, and here we probably observe a similar socio-political structure among the Roxolani, the Iranian-speaking nomads of the Northern Black Sea region of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.

#### ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL COMMENTARY

In the Northern Black Sea region, in the area from the Lower Volga region to the Carpathians, in the 2<sup>nd</sup>–1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC, we see the appearance of burials united by the name of the Early Sarmatian culture. Also at this time, there was a shift of monuments to the west — from the Lower Volga region and the Don region to the Dnieper, the steppe of Tauria and then further, at the turn of the era, to the Northwestern Black Sea region.

For the early Sarmatian culture of the Lower Don region of the 2<sup>nd</sup>–1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC, a small number of imported items, metal vessels and jewelry were noted, and their quality and quantity are evidence of a less stratified society. Among the five hundred burials of Lower Don, only one golden hryvnia was found, and a fairly simple one — from a golden rod. There is no elite subculture as a pronounced phenomenon, there are no separate sections of the necropolis and mounds that can be associated with the elites. Entrance burials into mounds are absolutely predominant, and in terms of labor costs during burial construction, Early Sarmatian burials are much inferior to those of the Middle and Late Sarmatian cultures, where the main burials in mounds were common.

Currently, there is an opinion about the lack of expression of the social structure among the early Sarmatians of the 2<sup>nd</sup>–1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC and the absence of royal burials among them. The reason for this was the fact that the graves of the Sarmatian nobility of the 2<sup>nd</sup>–1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC look very modest both against the background of the grandiose royal burial mounds of the Filippovka I burial ground of the early stage of the Early Sarmatian culture, and in comparison with the elite burial complexes of the Middle Sarmatian and late Sarmatian cultures (Khokhlach, Sadovy, Dachy, Vysochino VII, Kobyakovsky, Valovy I, Cast iron-Crepe, etc.).

There is another point of view about the Early Sarmatian culture, expressed by V.P. Glebov and A.V. Dedyulkin (Glebov, Dedyulkin 2025). They drew attention to the fact that several rich burials of the Early Sarmatian period have recently become known. High-ranking burials were identified among the elite complexes: Novozavedennoye V burial mound. 1 cemetery. 7, 30; Dyadkovsky-34 burial mound. 1 cemetery. 19; Ipatovo-3 kurgan. 2 pogr. 14; Volzhsky burials 2, 3, 4; Mayerovsky kurgan. 4 pogr. 3-B; Prokhorovka kurgan. 1 pogr. 1; Nogaichinsky pogr. 18 (Glebov, Dedyulkin 2025). These elite complexes originate from Kuban and Stavropol, where they are most abundant, as well as from the Lower Volga region, the Urals and the Crimea. V.P. Glebov and A.V. Dedyulkin suggest that thanks to these complexes, we can talk about a fairly developed stratification and the presence of chiefdoms among the Sarmatians in the 2<sup>nd</sup>–1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC.

As an objection, I would like to point out that the level of richness of the burials of the Early Sarmatian culture is still not comparable with the Middle Sarmatian. Unlike in the first centuries of our era, the early Sarmatian culture has not yet developed its own elite subculture. It is also necessary to point out such an important indicator as labor costs, which are still less during the construction of entrance burials of the Early Sarmatian culture than during the construction of mounds in the Middle Sarmatian culture.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> to the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD, the Early Sarmatian culture was replaced by the Middle Sarmatian culture, the epicenter of which was, most likely, the Dono-Volga interfluvium.

What happened at the turn of the era, during the transition from one era — the Early Sarmatian — to another? Impressive changes are taking place in the steppe zone at the turn of the era. This is a change in the early Sarmatian culture of the Middle Sarmatian; an increase in the number of rich burials and the appearance of elite burials of “royal” rank; the appearance of heavy cataphract cavalry in the steppe zone and a change in nomadic tactics; the fixation of tamga — signs of family property. There is also a closer interaction of nomads with the settled world. All this indicates an increase in the complexity of nomadic society and an increase in the importance of rulers. To a large extent, these changes were initiated by the migration of nomads from the east, primarily the Alans.

It should be noted right away that the cultural standard of the early Sarmatian culture was preserved in the first centuries of our era. In the burials of the Middle Danube, the Dniester and Don basins (and correlated with the Iazyges, Aors, Roxolans) of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, and sometimes of the 2<sup>nd</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> centuries, we see the preservation of elements of the funeral rite and cultural features of the Early Sarmatian culture. But the emergence of innovations in military affairs, new models of elite culture and new social relations could not but affect the entire nomadic world

(with the possible exception of the Iazyges, who found themselves in relative isolation beyond the Carpathian Mountains on the Middle Danube).

For the early Sarmatian epoch, we have several references to the ruler. There are two other names for the four kings (Saitafarn, Medosakk, Abeak and Spadin) — hegemon Tasiy and the Gatal dynasty. Gatala is often referred to as a king in the scientific literature, although this is not the case.

For the Middle Sarmatian era, references to kings predominate. In addition, there are two mentions of principes — among the Iazyges and Roxolani, and one mention of sceptuchus in a campaign in Transcaucasia among the Sarmatians.

For the Middle Sarmatian epoch, we see 11 mentions of kings at once — and this, in our opinion, is obvious evidence of the increased political activity of the Sarmatians and greater power (and these two phenomena are mutually conditioned). The changes at the turn of the era were reflected in the political terminology of ancient authors. The concept of king (*βασιλεύς*, *rex*) has become much more often used, as well as the designation of a two-level system of political organization, which is the most important sign of chiefdom as such (*βασιλεύς* and *σκηπτοῦχος*, *principes* and *nobilissimi*).

As for the Sarmatians on the Middle Danube, they are an isolate that should be considered separately. They were separated from the Sarmatian world by the Carpathians, and the innovations that came to the Sarmatian world in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD practically did not affect them — cataphract cavalry, the use of tamgas. The first mention of the kings of the Sarmatians on the Middle Danube — Zantik and Banadaspa — refers only to the Marcomannic wars (Dio Cass. LXXII, 7), in the events of 179 AD. Therefore, Tacitus' use of the word *principes* rather than *rex* may not be accidental, and reflect the peculiarities of their social organization.

Separately, the problem of the Sayyas, their king Saitafarn and the sceptuchus in the decree of Protogenes should be discussed. Whoever it was — and in sayyah they see Sarmatians, Scythians, and even Thracians (which is quite incredible), during this period there was no stable population in the Northern Black Sea region. The 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC was a time of systemic crisis, aridization, when the steppe zone was deserted. It is unclear who King Saitafarn and the Sceptics ruled over. For this time, we are not aware of stable necropolises in the Northern Black Sea region, except for the burial ground near the village of Glinoe in Transnistria. During this period, there are no nomadic societies for which a rather complex system of relations can be assumed. There is one possible explanation — we are talking about small military units with their own hierarchy, but which do not have a large grouping of nomads. Another option is that these nomads could have come from a remote region where nomads were still recorded at that time — from the Trans-Volga region.

## LUCIAN'S SCYTHIA

There is another interesting source — the work of Lucian from Samosata. Lucian's dialogue from Samosata, "Toxaris or Friendship," as well as his other work, "Scythian or Friend," are often considered as important evidence of the Scythians described by Herodotus (see, for example: Khazanov 1975: 107–108). Many Scythologists and nomadic scholars tend to think that the dialogue is, in one way or another, about the so-called "Herodotus" Scythians of the classical period. For a "Scythian", this can still be assumed: "In his homeland, Toksarid did not belong to the royal family of 'pilophores' in felt hats, but was a simple Scythian, one of many of those who are called 'eight-legged', that is, the owners of two oxen and a wagon." The term *Pilophores*, apparently, meant the aristocracy (Lucian. Toksaris, 1). Meanwhile, in the story "Toksaris" there are many signs that distinguish these Scythians from Herodotus, and speak of a fundamentally different society. S.A. Yatsenko sees signs of a Sarmatian society among the Scythians of Lucian, possibly the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD (Yatsenko 2024).

What should be noted is that the kings of the Scythians do not appear in the "Toxaris" — neither in negotiations with the Bosphorus, nor in a large-scale battle. A very interesting feature of the Scythians in "Toxaris" is that in the case of a peaceful migration of a large horde (Lucian. Toksaris, 39), it is led by several chiefs at once. The fact that this is not an accident is shown by the repetition of such characteristics, including outside the military context, in chapter 50, in a conversation between a representative of the Scythian community (and not the Scythian king!) — Lonhata with the Bosphoran king. For A.M. Khazanov is either a deliberate primitivization of Scythian life, or a reflection of archaic everyday life (Khazanov 1975: 22). But the custom of gathering a squad described by Lucian — the "skin ceremony" — contradicts the idea of centralized power. Any Scythian can organize an "army for one raid" (Lucian. Toksaris, 48), and, according to Lucian, the Scythian Arsacom managed to assemble a detachment of 25 thousand people from relatives and volunteers. And in the political and military confrontation of the Scythians with powerful opponents, the king of the Scythians is not mentioned at all, which leads to the conclusion that a completely different society is described than the Scythians of Herodotus. Of course, in this sense, the literary text is not a full-fledged source on the social organization of the described nomads, and the "Lucian" Scythians could have their own king, but in any case, not in the first roles.

## CONCLUSION

Archaeologically, these kings correspond to the regions where there were concentrations of elite monuments in the Lower Don region and the Northwestern Black Sea region in the Middle Sarmatian era. For these regions, at that time, we can assume the existence of a hierarchical model and a form of polity as chiefdoms.

For the early Sarmatian era, one can cautiously assume a heterarchical model of social organization, which does not exclude, however, the temporary rise of some leaders. Apparently, the Scythian society described by Lucian also had a heterarchical model.

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## СОЦИАЛЬНО-ПОЛИТИЧЕСКАЯ ТЕРМИНОЛОГИЯ ДЛЯ САРМАТОВ: АНТИЧНАЯ ТРАДИЦИЯ, АНТРОПОЛОГИЯ И АРХЕОЛОГИЯ

Е.В. Вдовченков

Цель исследования – сравнить политическую терминологию древних авторов, археологические реалии и современную научную терминологию на примере сарматов (III в. до н.э. – IV в. н.э.). Специфика

археологического материала позволяет реконструировать общие принципы политической организации и её структурные особенности. У кочевников можно выделить две альтернативные модели: иерархический и гетерархический принципы организации общества. В статье рассматривается использование в отношении сарматов таких терминов, как *βασιλεύς*, *σκηπτοῦχος*, *δυνάσται*, *rex*, *βασιλέως*, *principes*, *scertuchus*, *σκηπτοῦχος*. К числу используемых античными авторами для варварских правителей относится и термин *скептухи*, упоминаемый вместе с царями (басилеями), что свидетельствует о двухуровневой системе управления. Анализ письменной традиции позволяет выделить эпоху, для которой у сарматов есть более 10 упоминаний царей (I – середина II в. н.э.), что является очевидным свидетельством процессов политической централизации, а также возросшей политической активности. Таким образом, можно говорить о корреляции данных археологии и письменной традиции. Те области, где упомянуты цари, соответствуют регионам, в которых в первые века были сосредоточены элитные памятники. Для этих территорий в то время мы можем предположить существование иерархической модели организации общества кочевников и такой формы политического устройства, как вождество. Для раннесарматской эпохи можно осторожно предположить гетерархическую модель социальной организации, не исключая, впрочем, временного возвышения каких-то вождей. Гетерархическая модель была, по всей видимости, и в описанном Лукианом скифском обществе.

**Ключевые слова:** сарматы, вождество, гетерархия, иерархия, сарматская археологическая культура, цари, скептухи.

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