MEDIEVAL POPULATION OF THE UPPER PRUT AND MIDDLE DNISTER REGION (the 11th - early 13th century)

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Анотація: У монографії на основі комплексного аналізу писемних джерел, археологічного, нумізматичного, сфрагістичного матеріалів досліджується історичний розвиток давньоруського населення межиріччя Верхнього Пруту та Середнього Дністра: основні види господарської діяльності, напрямки торговельно-екonomічних зв’язків, розвиток суспільно-політичних і культурних відносин.

Ключові слова: Буковина, Верхній Прут, Середній Дністер, археологічні знахідки, нумізматичний матеріал.


Résumé: Tout en procédant à l’analyse détaillée des documents, du matériel archéologique, numismatique, sfragistique, la monographie étudie le développement historique de la population ancienne de la Russie de Kiev vivant sur le territoire situé entre le cours supérieur du Prout et le cours moyen du Dniestr. Ont été aussi examinées les modes principales de l’activité économique, directions des liens commerciaux et économique, développement des relations politiques, sociales et culturelles.

Mots-clés: Bucovine, cours supérieur du Prout, cours moyen du Dniestr, trouvailles archéologiques, matériel numismatique.


Abstract: A historical development of the old Russian population of the land between the Upper Prut and the Middle Dniester, as well as the main kinds of economic activity, directions of the trade-economic connections, development of social, political and cultural relations are studied in the monograph on the basis of a complex analysis of the written sources, archeological, numismatic, sphragistic materials.

Key terms: Bukovyna, the Upper Prut, the Middle Dniester, archeological finds, numismatic material.
The territory of the country between the Upper Prut and the Middle Dniester, the Ukrainian Bukovyna, (current region of Chernivtsi of Ukraine) has been situated on crossing of trans-European trade-routes since ancient times, in a direct closeness to the centers of ancient civilization. In time of dark ages numerous Slavonic tribes lived on the territory of the region and left sights of Prague-Corshak and Luka-Raykovets’kyi archaeological cultures. The lands of Bukovyna belonged to the Kyivan Russ and later to Terebovlia, Halych and in late 12th century to Halych-Volyn’ principalities.

Medieval history of the region came into notice of researchers in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries. In the contemporaneous works of Austrian researchers F.A. Wickenhauser, G. Kupchanko, D. Onchul, K.A. Romshorfer, R.F. Kaindl and Russian travellers, ethnographers, historians P.A. Nesterovskyi, E.I. Domanistkyi, K.Shirotskyi and others the first common reasoning concerning the past of land was expressed. Afterwards I. Nistor tendentiously lighted the local history. The new stage in the study of Bukovyna history begins in post-war time and is connected with the name of B.O. Tymoshchuk, who explored hundreds of medieval archaeological sites in the region and collected information about the life style and culture of local habitants in medieval time. A considerable contribution to research of the same problems was fulfilled by L.P. Mikhaylina, M.A. Filipchuk, V.M. Voynarovskiy, B.P. Tomenchuk, B.T. Ridush, I.G. Chekhovskiy, Yu.V. Misko etc. However a number of questions remained unsolved.

Research of Medieval History of the region leans against a wide scope of sources consisting of fragmentary written reports, archaeological, numismatic, sphyragistic and toponymic materials. Among them the leading part is acted by archaeological information. New archaeological materials which allow obtaining new high-quality information about medieval past of the country between of the Upper Prut and the Middle Dniester were accumulated in the last years.

The analysis of these writing sources and archaeological material shows that Slavonic population lived from the second half of the 5th century A.D. on the area of the region. Between the 8th and 10th centuries A.D. the tribes of East Croats and Tyverians lived here. After the hike of Prince Volodymyr in 992 the territory of the region became a constituent part of the Kyivan Russ state. Archaeological materials certify that in the 11th century certain desolation was observed on this territory and princely fortresses appeared with top military and administrative personnel and first feudal castles were being built. During that period changes happened in spiritual life of local population, being combined with Christianization.

The next one and a half centuries became a critical stage in the life of the Old Russian population of the region. At that time the first mentioning of local population points appeared on the pages of written sources. Discovered archaeological materials prove to considerable growth of the number of settlements, grave-diggers, objects of cults, treasures belonging to the 12th – early 13th centuries. There were found some settlements of the urban type with developed infrastructure. Subsequent evolution development was being observed in agriculture, handicrafts and trades, close trade and economics contact were set with the major centers of Old Russia and neighboring states. Christianity became dominating outlook of the local population.

The material culture of the region population was identical to materials from other Old Russian territories. Special resemblance traced with similar materials in Halychyna and in Volyn’. However one can find there some differences, related to boundary position of the region and influence of nomad population.

Due to data of the written sources in the country between the Upper Prut and the Middle Dniester there were a few annalistic settlements. Among them Vasyliv and Onut were reliably localized. As to other settlements the annalistic Kuchelmin seemed to be combined with settlements located between the villages of Neporotovo, Halytsya and Lomachynitsi. The settlement Plav was, obviously, localized in Khotyn. It is also assumed that there was another annalistic settlement in this region, which could be named Prut and which was most likely situated in the complex of auction-handicraft settlements and entombments near the village of Lenkivtsi.

The Old Russ population of the region was mainly engaged in agriculture and cattle breeding. Local inhabitants used usually effective draft arable instruments (of the type of the Old Russian wooden plough), soil was cultivated also by hand instruments: wooden shovels and hoes with ferrous framing. The harvest was carried out with sickles and scythes having high workings qualities. Processing of corn was conducted with the help of a stone millstone carriage of different types. The basic agricultural cultures of the region were rye, millet, barley and oat. Wheat, leguminous and technical cultures were also reared in the region. The basic system of agriculture was shifting fields
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The system of two or three fields which greatly contributed to corns productivity increasing. Cattle breeding were at rather high level. Cattle, horses and pigs prevailed in herds. The small cattle breeding were developed too. On the whole, the local agriculture continued Old Ukrainian traditions effectively.

A very important role in the life of the region’s inhabitants belonged to various handicrafts and trades. Remains of pit and surface furnaces for melting iron were discovered on local sites of the 12th – the first half of 13th centuries, tracks of blacksmith’s handicraft and colour metallurgy were traced too. Ceramic production was highly developed in the region witnessed by remains of workshops, one- and two-storied furnaces of potteries and enormous amount of ceramic products. The region was also famous for wood-processing, stone- and bone working handicrafts and such trades as leather working, spinning, and weaving. Hunting, fishing and beekeeping took an important place in economic activity of the local inhabitants. Due to the level of handicraft and trades development in the region its population did not yield to the similar types of activity from other territories of Old Russ, and at times they surpassed ahead them in development.

A certain success was attained by the inhabitants in trade and economic activities. Due to reports, one can notice trades and exchange of different levels in the region. In particular, it seems quite possible to find evidences of local, regional, all-Russian and international trade. Due to the trade links and the population of region, mainly the upper circles of local feudal society received imported goods produced in the city centers of Halych-Volyn principality, Kyivan Russ and Byzantium. The peculiarities of the region are: a) absence of objects (except for coins) related to the West European trade, and b) predominance of goods of Byzantine and Eastern origin. It is important to stress upon that West European silver bracteates of the Hungarian and German coinage were used for monetary circulation in the region. For small auction operations the standardized goods and objects made from silver, for example, temporal rings could be used by local inhabitants. Important auction routes described in medieval chronicles, passed through territory of the region.

Spiritual life of the Upper Prut and the Middle Dniester medieval population can be characterized by some features. There were pagan objects of cults in Bukovyna (the Vasilevian white-rock temple among Christian cult buildings). Syncretism of beliefs was demonstrated in cult symbols, where the Christian and heathen features are combined. Local inhabitants wore crosses encolpion, skin daggers, stone icons, various pendants representing a cross. They wore widespread temporal rings of different forms, anthropomorphous pendants, shell necklaces, amulets made of horn, teeth and bones of animals etc., which personified vestiges of primitive beliefs.

Claim of Christianity in this region promoted local population approaching to the world culture, to spreading in their environment of education and literacy. The finding of writing instruments: styluses, bronze fastenings to books, graffiti on ceramics and pottery brands can show it.

Separate materials informed us about social and political development and ethnicity of local inhabitants. In particular, many sites of ancient settlements which belonged to private locks present in the region affirmed spreading of private landownership. Some rich inventory, of imported origin, found here, demonstrated the property state of their proprietors. The signs of Ryurikovich found in annalistic Vasiliv and in Chernivka settlement were of great significance as they certified the belonging of this land to Old Russian prince families of the Ryurikovich. Anthropological materials demonstrated the ethnic composition of local inhabitants. The analysis shows (due to all indexes) their Eastern-Slavonic origin.

Investigation of the local medieval population between the Upper Prut and Middle Dniester shows that this region was a component of the Old Russian state in the 11th and the first half of 13th centuries, because there were similar processes in economic development, social, political and spiritual life (such as in other territories of Old Russia).