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25 YEARS OF BARROW ARCHAEOLOGY AT MSU

In 1997 in Mariupol State University a permanent archaeological expedition (AE MSU) was created, the main purpose of its work is to identify, survey, register and study archaeological sites in the field conditions. The objects of research of the expedition are ancient archaeological heritage of Mariupol and Azov region, which have scientific value, are located in the area of construction works or are destroyed under the influence of time and external factors.

Mariupol State University, being a peer of Ukrainian statehood, has already managed to demonstrate its commitment to European standards of higher education, which in turn had a positive impact on both educational and scientific activities. The status of any classical university, among other things, is determined by the quality and level of development of humanitarian knowledge, including historical knowledge. In the field of historical knowledge, university science from the beginning of the 19th century was enriched by such a special direction as archaeology. Over time, archaeology has acquired and continues to retain the status of almost mandatory discipline for all reputable universities.

Mastering the methods of field archaeological research by students is an important step in the professional training of future specialists. Every summer, as part of the archaeological practice, students of history carry out explorations and excavations of archaeological objects, which are so rich in the Northern Azov region. Trends in the development of the archaeological direction of educational and scientific activities of MSU allowed to create conditions for the application of the latest techniques in the study of objects. This made it possible to cover complex and controversial problems of history in a new way[7].

Despite the relatively young age of archaeology at MSU, the university expedition passed the stage of its formation in Soviet times, as it is a direct successor of the Mariupol Archaeological Expedition (MAE), which existed in the second half of the 80s – early 90s of the last century. The activity of Mariupol archaeologist Volodymyr Kulbaka (1954 – 2009) is inextricably linked with the MAE. During the whole time of its existence, the expedition investigated mainly such specific archaeological objects as burial mounds. The works were carried out mainly in the North-Eastern Azov region. During the period 1984 – 1995, the expedition investigated 62 burial mounds and one medieval earth cemetery. A total of 274 burials were discovered, dating from the Eneolithic to the late Middle Ages. In 1997, having moved to teaching at the Mariupol State University (then the Humanitarian Institute), with the support of the management of the educational institution, V. Kulbaka created a permanent archaeological expedition, which successfully functioned under his leadership for 12 years.

In the field season of 1998, the university expedition continued excavations of the mound group of 3 mounds on the eastern outskirts of Mariupol (mound 1 of this group was investigated in 1990 by the MAE). In the same year, excavations of the burial ground of the Golden Horde time, located at a distance of 1.5 km from the above-mentioned mound group, were continued. The main part of this cemetery was also investigated by the MAE in 1987. In total, 8 burials of the Zrubna/Timber-Grave culture (ZC) of the Late Bronze Age were investigated in two mounds. The analysis of the ritual and inventory complex of burials of the Mariupol-East cemetery allowed to attribute them to the early – late phase of the II horizon of the ZC cemeteries of the Northern Azov region [1].

The following year, the research of the "Did" mound destroyed by construction works on the western outskirts of Mariupol continued. Back in 1993, the mound was partially investigated by the MAE and 3 burials of the Bronze Age were found. In 1999, a pair-burial of catacomb time of the Middle Bronze Age were additionally investigated [4, c. 29].

In 2005 - 2006, the expedition of the Donetsk Regional Museum of Local Lore investigated a burial cemetery of 4 mounds on the western outskirts of Mariupol (Zintseva Balka). In 2006, students and teachers of the MSU took an active part in the expedition to study barrow 4 of this group. The mound contained 10 burials of the ZC of the II – III horizon of the ZC cemeteries of the Northern Azov region [6].

At the next stage of the existence of the AE MSU, one of the priority directions of scientific and practical activity continues to be the study of the archaeological heritage of the Northern Azov region. Moreover, the work was carried out in parallel in several key areas - the organization and conduct of annual field archaeological practices of first-year students, the activities of the student scientific historical and archaeological society, the protection and preservation of archaeological heritage.

The current state of Ukrainian barrow archaeology is characterized by a sharp reduction in the volume of excavations, it is distinguished by sporadic and insignificant accumulation of sources on the study of burial sites, in particular the barrows of the Northern Azov region. It is quite natural that the AE MSU, continuing the previously established traditions, focuses on the research of the Azov kurgan burial grounds. Based on the many years of positive field experience of generations of predecessors and continuing the traditions of Azov kurgan archaeology, AE MSU in the field seasons 2011 – 2021 conducted scientific excavations of two single mounds, a mound group of 3 kurgans "Babakov's Grave" and 2 mounds in a kurgan group of 5 mounds.

In 2011, rescue excavations of the ruined barrow, which was part of a group of two mounds, were carried out. The mound was located near the village of Pavlopil on the left bank of the Kalmius River (basin of the Azov Sea) in the Haidamatsky Kut tract. In total, 9 burials of the ZC were investigated in the mound. The ritual and inventory complex of burials investigated in the barrow allows attributing them to the II and III horizons of ZC cemeteries of the Northern Azov region [2].

In the season 2013 AE MSU continued the research in the eastern outskirts of Mariupol. The investigated barrow in a group of 3 mounds was located on the left bank of the Kalmius River at the top of the watershed. The oldest in the mound were two cult pits, which belong to the Ingul Catacomb culture. The discovered 7 burials of the Late Bronze Age belong to the ZC (III horizon). The most recent complex of the Middle Ages is a Pecheneg burial of the 10th – 11th centuries [3].

In the seasons 2016 – 2020, the expedition conducted scientific excavations of the mound group "Babakov's Grave" near the Azov Yalta. The mound group of 4 barrows is located on the watershed plateau between the small steppe rivers Komyshuvatka and Mokra Bilosaraika. In the summer of 2016, excavations of barrow number 3 were carried out. A total of 13 Bronze Age burials were investigated. The mound was built in the Early Bronze Age over the burial of the Pit culture. At the late stage of the Bronze Age, 12 more burials of the ZC were let into the mound.

In 2019, barrow number 2 was excavated. In total, 9 burials of the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age were investigated. The primary mound was built in the Early Bronze Age over 4 burials of the Pit culture. Another 2 burials date back to the Bronze Age. In the Late Bronze Age, the population of the ZC continued to use the necropolis, making at least 2 burials. The latest burial in the cemetery was the burial of the Early Iron Age, which according to a number of features belongs to the circle of antiquities of the Cimmerian time.

The following year, 2 burials of the pit culture and at least 7 burials of the ZC were found in the mound number 4. In total, in three mounds of the "Babakov's Grave" group, 7 burials were found, which according to ritual and funerary features can be attributed to the Pit culture, 2 burials date back to the Bronze Age. 21 burials of the ZC (II developed and III late horizons) and 1 burial identified with the historical Cimmerians were investigated [5; 8].

In 2021, the expedition carried out scientific excavations of 2 barrows in a group of 5 mounds near the village of Komyshuvate on the watershed plateau between the Berda and Komyshuvatka rivers. The MAE investigated three barrows from this group in 1989. In total, 2 burials of the Late Bronze Age and a ritual complex of the medieval period were investigated in the barrow number 4. In the barrow number 5, a single burial (cenotaph or ritual complex) of uncertain cultural and chronological affiliation was recorded.

Thus, for a quarter of a century, archaeological expeditions of MSU have investigated 60 burials and a number of cult complexes from the Early Bronze Age to the late Middle Ages in 10 mounds. However, university barrow archaeology is not limited to excavations of burial archaeological sites. Important work was carried out to identify and survey the objects of historical and cultural heritage with the definition of their parameters and modern technical condition. Technical documentation was prepared for the state registration of these sites. In just four seasons of 2018–2021, the AE MSU in the Northern Azov region surveyed 104 barrow groups and 116 single barrows. In

total, 488 archaeological objects – barrows were taken into account during the exploration, 46 of them are newly discovered sites.

During 25 years of development of archaeology at Mariupol State University, his expeditions have explored many ancient sites and accumulated a considerable fund of sources. Many years of experience in practical field work and the obtained archaeological materials have a positive impact on the formation of future specialists who study at the Faculty of History and directly participate in the work of the university expedition. In general, the results of the study of the barrows by the university expedition enrich the source fund for the study of the ancient population of the Azov steppes and contribute to the preservation and protection of archaeological heritage - an integral part of the cultural heritage of humanity, a unique and irreplaceable source of knowledge about the historical past.

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ЧИ ПОТРІБНО ЗАРАЗ ДОСЛІДЖУВАТИ ДОВОСННУ ІСТОРІЮ МАРІУПОЛЯ?

Загарбницька війна РФ проти України зруйнувала Маріуполь як фізичну реальність, знищила тисячі його мешканців, знівечила сотні тисяч доль наших земляків – позбавила елементарного добробуту, роботи, розкидала по різних куточках Батьківщини та світу. Внаслідок російської агресії було знищено його потужний промисловий потенціал, міські самоврядування та господарство, громадське та культурне життя, на руїни перетворились пам'ятки архітектури й пересічні будівлі, що визначали красу та своєрідність міста.