

## OBSERVATIONS ON THE SITUATION IN THE NORTH-PONTIC REGION IN THE III<sup>rd</sup> CENTURY B.C.

One of the main issues that have attracted the specialists' attention over the last two centuries is the one examining not only the causes of Scythia's quick fall, but also the fall of most of the Greek and the indigenous population's rural settlements and the transformation of the entire system of relationships between the Greeks and the Barbarians.

The opinion of M. I. Rostovcev took root until not long ago in the specialty literature. Detaching itself from his predecessors' hypotheses<sup>1</sup> and relying on the accounts of Diodor of Sicily (II, 43, 7), he considered that the Sarmatians were responsible to the largest extent for the decline and fall of Scythia, as they crossed the Don river and entered Scythia at the end of the IV<sup>th</sup> century B.C. or the beginning of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.<sup>2</sup>

There are presently four viewpoints in contemporary historiography that explain the causes of the events in the first half of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. The first opinion blames this phenomenon, at least for the north-western part of the Black Sea, on the incursions of the Celts-Galatians<sup>3</sup>. According to the second viewpoint, the causes must not be searched for in the political-military sphere, but in the rapid change of natural and climate

<sup>1</sup> In connection with these opinions, see S. V. Polin, *Ot Skifii k Sarmatii*, Kiev 1992, p. 7-32.

<sup>2</sup> M. I. Rostovcev, *Amaga i Tirgatao*, ZOOID, 1915, p. 60 sqq.; idem, *Ellinstvo i iranstvo na juge Rossij*, Petrograd 1918, p. 43, 127 sq.; M. Rostovtzeff, *Iranians and Greeks in South Russia*, Oxford 1922, p. 85, 139; M. Rostowzew, *Skythien und der Bosphorus*, Berlin 1931, p. 405, 605. The hypotheses of his predecessors (V. N. Tatiščev, N. M. Karamzin, P. I. Šafarik, I. E. Zabelin, V. V. Latyšev etc.) and his ideas, further developed by his followers (Ju. V. Got'e, B. N. Grakov, D. A. Mačinskij, P. O. Karyškovskij, A. N. Šeglov, K. F. Smirnov, V. I. Kostenko, V. E. Maximenko) are exposed by S. V. Polin (S. V. Polin, op. cit., p. 7-32). Among the latest works published, see K. K. Marčenko, *Tretij period stabilizacii v Severnom Pričernomor'e antičnoj epohi*, SA 1, 1996, p. 70-80; Ju. A. Vinogradov, K. K. Marčenko, E. Ja. Rogov, *Sarmaty i gibel' "Velikoj Skifii"*, VDI 3, 1997, p. 93-103; Ju. G. Vinogradov, *Hersonesskij dekrat o "Nesenie Dionisa" IOSPE I<sup>2</sup> 343 i vtorženie sarmatov v Skifiju*, VDI 3, 1997, p. 104-124; V. E. Maximenko, *Sarmaty na Donu (arheologija i problemy etničeskoj istorii)* (= Donskie drevnosti, 6), Azov 1998, p. 74 sqq.

<sup>3</sup> V. V. Ruban, *Problemy istoričeskogo razvitiia ol'vijskoj hory IV-III vv. do n. e.*, VDI 1, 1985, p. 43-44; idem, *Osnovnye etapy prostranstvennogo razvitiia Ol'vijskoj polisa (dogetscoe vremja)*, Avtoreferat disertacii na soiskanie učenoi stepeni kandidata istoričeskikh nauk, Kiev 1989, p. 19; V. P. Jajlenko, *Ol'vija i Bospor v ellinističeskuju epohu*, Ellinizm: ekonomika, politika, kul'tura, Moskva 1990, p. 274 sq. The internal problems of the population living in the steppes between the Danube and the Dnepr are explained through the Celto-Galatians' unfriendly actions by I. Brujako (I. Brujako, *Despre evenimentele din sec. III a. Chr. în nord-vestul Mării Negre (patru concepții despre criză)*, Istros, 1997, p. 71-73, 77; idem, *Ot dioramy k panorame (O perspektivah na puti rešenija problemy severopontijskogo krizisa III v. do r. H.)*, Stratum 3, 1999, p. 325-332). Furthermore, Ju. A. Vinogradov, K. K. Marčenko, E. Ja. Rogov, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 94, 102 do not reject the possibility of the Celts' involvement in the events that occurred in the first half of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. in the lower Bug and Dnepr area. The supporters of this opinion consider the Celts to have invaded the Balkans after the death of Lysimachos and constituted the Celtic kingdom in the eastern part of the peninsula (Polybios IV, 45-46; VIII, 22), having its capital in the not-yet-identified city of Tylis (cf. for this kingdom A. Popescu, *Raporturile dintre regatul celtic de la Tylis coloniile grecești de pe țărmul apusean al Mării Negre*, AUB, Științe Sociale series (History) 5, 1956, p. 25-44; G. Mihailov, *La Thrace aux IV<sup>e</sup>-III<sup>e</sup> siècles avant notre ère*, Athenaeum 39, 1961, p. 33-44; P. O. Karyškovskij, *Istrija i eo sosedi na rubeže III-II vv. do n. e.*, VDI 2, 1971, p. 36-56; M. Domaradski, *L'état des Celtes en Thrace avec la capitale Tylis et en Asie Mineure – Galatie*, Pulpudeva 3, 1980, p. 52-56). The spread and boundaries of this kingdom are still incompletely known at present.

conditions, that forced the Scythians to leave the territories on which they had lived previously and also triggered the extinction of the Greek towns' rural settlements<sup>4</sup>. N. A. Gavriljuk also adds to this factor the economic crisis followed by other negative events, including the one having political features<sup>5</sup>. The defenders of the third opinion search for the explanations of this phenomenon in the economic sphere, which hardly has any followers today, although it used to be accepted for a while. At the bottom of it lays the economic crisis in the first half of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.; more specifically, the situation of the wheat market in the Mediterranean basin which, according to the defenders of this idea, had negative effects on the economy of the Greek north-pontic cities and, first and foremost, on the agrarian base represented by rural settlements<sup>6</sup>. Finally, the last and the most popular opinion blames the destruction of Big Scythia and the decay of the Greek cities and their rural area on the penetration of the Sarmatians into the territories to the west of the Don river<sup>7</sup>.

The main weakness of the first opinion resides in the fact that it resorts to a local approach in order to explain the processes that spread to the entire north-pontic territory, and not only to the Dnestr and lower Bug areas. Moreover, we have reasons to believe that not only the manifestations and the concrete directions of the destabilization factors' action, but also their chronology are identical in the different corners of the huge space between the Dnestr and the Don. Thus, the extinction of the fortified and non-fortified settlements of the Greeks and Barbarians in the Don delta, the north-western part of Crimea, lower Dnepr and the vicinity of Olbia in the second quarter – the middle III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.<sup>8</sup> gives the impression of a massive military action, which, taking into

<sup>4</sup> S. V. Polin, *Pro sarmats'ke zavojuvannja Pivničnogo Pryčernomor'ja*, Arheologija (Kiev) 45, 1984, p. 28-31; idem, *Ot Skifi...* (n. 1), p. 102 sqq., 122; M. M. Ievlev, *Rol' prirodnogo faktora v proniknovenii sarmatov na territoriju severopričernomorskih stepej*, Problemy arheologii Severnogo Pričernomor'ja, Tezisy dokladov arheologičeskoj konferencii, II, Herson 1990, p. 131-132; S. D. Kryžickij, S. B. Bujskij, A. V. Burakov, V. M. Otreško, *Sel'skaja okrug Ol'vii*, Kiev 1989, p. 96; A. Ju. Alexeev, *Skifskaja hronika*. Skify v VII-IV v. do n. e. Istoriko-arheologičeskij očerk, Sankt-Peterburg 1992, p. 141, 142.

<sup>5</sup> N. A. Gavriljuk, *Domašnee proizvodstvo i byt stepnyh skifov*, Kiev 1989, p. 93.

<sup>6</sup> S. A. Žebelev, *Severnoe Pričernomor'e*, Moskva-Leningrad 1953, p. 84-85, 147-148; V. F. Gajdukevič, *Bosporskoe carstvo*, Moskva-Leningrad 1949, p. 76-78; D. P. Kallistov, *Severnoe Pričernomor'e v antičnuju epohu*, Moskva 1952, p. 135-137; V. D. Blavatskij, *Zemledel'e v antičnyh gosudarstvakh Severnogo Pričernomor'ja*, Moskva 1953, p. 10; idem, *Pantikapej*. Očerki istorii stolicy Bospora, Moskva 1964, p. 101-104; I. G. Šugraja, *Voprosy bosporsko-egipetskoj konkurencii v hleboj torgovle Vostočnogo Sredizemnomor'ja ranneellinističeskoj epohi*, KSIA 138, 1973, p. 51-59; I. B. Brašinskij, *Černomorskaja torgovlja v epohu ellinizma*, Pričernomor'e v epohu ellinizma, Tbilisi 1985, p. 199-206; S. Ju. Saprykin, *Gerakleja Pontijskaja i Hersones Tavričeskij*, Moskva 1986, p. 163-164; I. Brujako, *Despre evenimentele...* (n. 3), p. 75-77 does not exclude this idea from the causes that set off the crisis in the north-pontic area.

<sup>7</sup> M. I. Rostovcev, *Amaga...* (n. 2), p. 60 sqq; idem, *Ellinstvo i iranstvo...* (n. 2), p. 43, 127 sq.; M. Rostovtzeff, *Iranians and Greeks...* (n. 2), p. 85, 139; M. Rostowzew, *Skythien...* (n. 2), p. 405, 605; D. A. Mačinskij, *O vremeni pervogo aktivnogo vystuplenija sarmatov v Podneprov'e po svidetel'stvam antičnyh pismennyh istočnikov*, ASGE 13, 1971, p. 30-54; A. N. Šeglov, *Severo-zapadnyj Krym v antičnuju epohu*, Leningrad 1978; K. F. Smirnov, *O načale proniknovenija sarmatov v Skifiju*, MIA, 177, 1971, p. 191-196; idem, *Sarmaty i utverždenie ih političeskogo gosudarstva v Skifii*, Moskva 1984; V. N. Kostenko, *Sarmatskie pamjatniki Dnepro-Donского междуречья III v. do n. e. – serediny III v. n. e.*, Dnepropetrovsk 1983; V. E. Maximenko, *Savromaty i sarmaty na Nižnem Donu*, Rostov, 1983, p. 18, 43-49, 116-129; idem, *Sarmaty...* (n. 2), p. 74-81. Among more recent works that support this idea, see K. K. Marčenko, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 70-80; Ju. A. Vinogradov, K. K. Marčenko, E. Ja. Rogov, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 93-103; Ju. G. Vinogradov, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 104-124.

<sup>8</sup> A. N. Šeglov, op. cit. (n. 7), p. 128; idem, *O greko-varvarskih vzaimodejstvijah na periferii ellinističeskogo mira*, Pričernomor'e v epohu ellinizma, Tbilisi 1985, p. 192; Ja. V. Domanskij, K. K. Marčenko, *Poselenie Ol'vijskoj hory Kozyrka II*, ASGE 21, 1980, p. 38; V. V. Ruban, *Problemy...* (n. 3), p. 43; Arheologija Ukrainskoj SSR, II, Kiev 1986, p. 323; S. D. Kryžickij, S. B. Bujskij, A. V. Burakov, V. M. Otreško, op. cit. (n. 4), p. 100; A. A. Maslennikov, *Krymskoe Prizov'e v antičnuju epohu*, Problemy antičnoj kul'tury. Tezisy dokladov Krymskoj konferencii, Simferopol' 1988, p. 207; K. K. Marčenko, *Bosporskie poselenija na territorii Elizavetovskogo gorodišča na Donu*, VDI 1, 1990, p. 137; idem, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 71; S. V. Polin, *Ot Skifi...* (n. 1), p. 41, 44, 45, 66-69, 101.

account the immensity of the space, cannot be attributed to the Celts or Germanic populations in the Balkan-Carpathian-Danubian basin<sup>9</sup>. Besides, the destruction of Big Scythia and of the agrarian basis of the north-pontic Greek cities by the Celts cannot be sustained solely on the basis of the Protogenes decree, which mentions preparations for an incursion against Olbia made by the Galatians which, as we shall see, are not Celts, and who made an alliance with the Scirians<sup>10</sup>. Last but not least, we must mention the fact that the Celts' rule seems never to have been extended over the Haemus Mountains, to the north<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, if the instauration of the kingdom of Tylis and the disturbances it caused in the south of Thracia only affected Dobrudja and the Greek cities here<sup>12</sup>, then the north-west and north-pontic region was even less affected.

As for the second theory, which blames the worsening of the relations between the Greeks and the Barbarians in the north-pontic region on the changes in natural and climate conditions, there are even more flaws in it than in the others<sup>13</sup>. Judging by the data provided by researchers in this field, there have been minor changes in the climate in the Hellenistic period, but the moment when this process began is not very clear<sup>14</sup>. Moreover, we must make the precision that, however we might date the beginning of the global and climate change, we must take into account the fact that these changes went on for a long time (several centuries) until reaching their climax. On the other hand, archeological data indicate a sudden termination in the existence of most of the Greeks and Barbarians' rural settlements in this region. Another equally interesting fact indicates that on the eve of this phenomenon, in the first quarter of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., the living standard and economic activity in all of the Greek and barbarian settlements in the territories between the Don and the Dneestr reached their highest standard<sup>15</sup>. This state of facts made several researchers reject this opinion, which is in contradiction with the data mentioned above<sup>16</sup>.

In what regards the economic viewpoint, whose defenders explain the decay of agriculture and the extinction of the Greek cities' rural settlements by the strong

<sup>9</sup> Ju. G. Vinogradov, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 105-106; M. Domaradski believes, not without a reason, that the existence in the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. of Thracian kings, powerful from a military and political viewpoint, excludes the possibility of the foundation of a Celtic kingdom that could have subordinated the entire eastern Thracia. The same author considers that the role of the Galatians was limited to an episodic control and to incursions made for the plundering of Greek cities and the neighboring small Thracian kingdoms (M. Domaradski, *Keltite na Balkanskija poluostrvo*, Sofija 1984, p. 83, 88).

<sup>10</sup> However, even though there is no certain data, we cannot exclude the Celts' involvement in the fall of the rural settlements of the Greek cities of Tyras and Olbia, nor in the fall of Nikonion, no later than the second half of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. (S. D. Kryžickij, S. B. Bujskih, A. V. Burakov, V. M. Otreško, op. cit. (n. 4), p. 100; I. V. Brujako, S. V. Polin, *Ot Skifii k Sarmatii*, Kiev, 1992, 202 s., 22 ris., RA 1, 1995, p. 235-236; idem, *Despre evenimentele...* (n. 3), p. 64, 71-73, 77). The construction activity on the fortification system of the city of Tyras in the first half of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. is blamed by I. Brujako on the Celtic danger (I. Brujako, *Despre evenimentele...* (n. 3), p. 73).

<sup>11</sup> G. Mihailov, *La Thrace aux IV<sup>e</sup>-III<sup>e</sup> siècles avant notre ère*, Athenaeum 39, 1961, p. 40; S. V. Polin, *Ot Skifii...* (n. 1), p. 29.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. L. Ruscu, *Relațiile externe ale orașelor grecești de pe litoralul românesc al Mării Negre*, Cluj-Napoca 2002, p. 311-315. The same conclusion had been reached initially by S. V. Polin, *Ot Skifii...* (n. 1), p. 29 sqq.

<sup>13</sup> Very solid arguments against this idea were brought by I. Brujako (I. V. Brujako, op. cit. (n. 10), p. 236; idem, *Despre evenimentele...* (n. 3), p. 73-75; idem, *Ot Skifii k Sarmatii bez prirodnih katastrof*, RA 4, 1997, p. 215-218).

<sup>14</sup> I. E. Bučinskij, *Klimat Ukrainy v prošlom, nastojaščem i buduščem*, Kiev 1963, p. 59.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Ju. A. Vinogradov, K. K. Marčenko, E. Ja. Rogov, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 94, for the situation of the settlements in the chora Olbia see S. D. Kryžickij, S. B. Bujskih, A. V. Burakov, V. M. Otreško, op. cit. (n. 4), p. 100.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. in this sense Ju. A. Vinogradov, K. K. Marčenko, E. Ja. Rogov, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 94; Ju. G. Vinogradov, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 106-107; I. V. Brujako, op. cit. (n. 11), p. 236; idem, *Despre evenimentele...* (n. 3), p. 73-75, 77; idem, *Ot Skifii k Sarmatii...* (n. 13), p. 215-218.

competition represented by the cheaper wheat brought from Egypt on the markets in the Mediterranean and Circumpontic basin, we must say that this theory has its weak points, as well. Thus, until now, just like Ju. G. Vinogradov noted<sup>17</sup>, the defenders of this theory have brought no proof for the idea of a well-coordinated or competitionist protectionist economic policy applied. As the same author justly remarked, there are no data to prove that Pontic wheat was more expensive than the Egyptian one. On the contrary, up to now nobody has rejected M. I. Rostovcev's thesis, based on the information from several epigraphic sources, according to which in the Hellenistic period the demand exceeded the offer on the wheat market<sup>18</sup>. However, the given opinion stands on a couple of solid arguments that have been exposed not only in older works, but also in a more recent study<sup>19</sup>, which makes certain aspects of it be taken into account.

As for the fourth theory, which blames the Sarmatians for the destruction of Scythia, it is supported by a large number of researchers<sup>20</sup>, who rely to a great extent on information from written sources. A novelty in this approach is the establishment by Ju. A. Vinogradov, K. K. Marčenko and E. Ja. Rogov of two successive Sarmatians attacks in the north-pontic territories to the west of the Don river<sup>21</sup>. According to this, the first Sarmatian attack took place right at the boundary between the IV<sup>th</sup>-III<sup>rd</sup> centuries B.C. or at the beginning of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. and was aimed exclusively against the Scythians<sup>22</sup>. After this blow against the Scythians, there was a quiet period that lasted about 30 years. The second attack of the Sarmatians occurred between the '70s-'60s of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. and was directed against the sedentary population to the north of the Black Sea. The authors believe that most of the Greek and barbarian settlements ceased to exist precisely as a consequence of this attack not only in the lower Don, Dnepr, Bug, and lower Dnestr area and north-western Crimea<sup>23</sup>, but also in the European part of Bospor. The same authors explain the lack of material traces belonging to the Sarmatians in the north-pontic area to the west from the Don river by the fact that they ran their devastating blows from the steppes between the Don and the Volga or the Kuban region<sup>24</sup>.

The arguments of those who criticize this opinion, whose main representatives are S. V. Polin and A. V. Simonenko can be brought down to three theses. The first refers to the events accounted for by Diodor of Sicily (II, 43, 7), which, in their opinion,

<sup>17</sup> Ju. G. Vinogradov, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 107.

<sup>18</sup> Cf., in this sense, Ju. G. Vinogradov, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 107 and all the bibliography.

<sup>19</sup> I. Brujako, *Despre evenimentele...* (n. 3), p. 75-77 considers this factor as being parallel and independent from the Sarmatic and Celtic one.

<sup>20</sup> M. I. Rostovcev, *Amaga...* (n. 2), p. 60 sqq.; idem, *Ellinstvo i iranstvo...* (n. 2), p. 43, 127 sq.; M. Rostovtzeff, *Iranians and Greeks...* (n. 2), p. 85, 139; M. Rostowzew, *Skythien...* (n. 2), p. 405, 605; D. A. Mačinskij, op. cit. (n. 7), p. 30-54; A. N. Šeglov, op. cit. (n. 7); K. F. Smirnov, *O načale...* (n. 7), p. 191-196; idem, *Sarmaty i utverđenje...* (n. 7); V. N. Kostenko, op. cit. (n. 7); V. E. Maximenko, *Savromaty i sarmaty...* (n. 7), p. 18, 43-49, 116-129; idem, *Sarmaty...* (n. 2), p. 74-81. among more recent works, see K. K. Marčenko, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 70-80; Ju. A. Vinogradov, K. K. Marčenko, E. Ja. Rogov, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 93-103; Ju. G. Vinogradov, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 104-124.

<sup>21</sup> Ju. A. Vinogradov, K. K. Marčenko, E. Ja. Rogov, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 98-101.

<sup>22</sup> I. V. Brujako, *Ot dioramy k panorame...* (n. 3), p. 328 considers that the Sarmatic attack was not directed against the nomadic Scythians that were constantly moving, but against the settlements in which most of Scythia's economic and thrift potential was concentrated.

<sup>23</sup> Towards the middle III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. life ceases to exist in virtually all ancient settlements in the lower Dnestr area (I. Brujako, *Despre evenimentele...* (n. 3), p. 64).

<sup>24</sup> Ju. A. Vinogradov, K. K. Marčenko, E. Ja. Rogov, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 101; Ju. G. Vinogradov, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 122-123; V. M. Klepikov, A. S. Skripkin, *Rannie sarmaty v kontexte istoričeskikh sobytij Vostočnoj Evropy*, *Donskie drevnosti* 5, 1997, p. 38 considers that in the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., the Sarmatians were responsible for the devastating incursions in the north-pontic territory to the west of the Don, in the steppes between the Don and the Volga.

cannot be dated with great accuracy and therefore are not truthful<sup>25</sup>, and the second is based on the fact that in the last third of the IV<sup>th</sup> century B.C. the construction of Scythian "royal" tumuli and the tumuli built by the common people are dated from the beginning of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.<sup>26</sup>, at the latest. The third is based on the fact that the earliest Sarmatian vestiges in the north-pontic territory west from the Don river are from the II<sup>nd</sup> century A.D.<sup>27</sup>, which also comes from the analysis of early Sarmatian discoveries in the north-pontic area<sup>28</sup>.

We have to state, as a digression, that the archeological material inside Scythian settlements indicates the fact that most of them cease to exist in the time frame comprised between the first third and the middle III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.<sup>29</sup>. This inaccuracy related to the extinction of these settlements is due first of all to the fact that the archeological material found in the last inhabitation level is dated broadly, which hinders the exact establishment of their extinction. However, we can generally state that in the first half of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. the great north-pontic Scythia ceased to exist on most of its territory<sup>30</sup>.

As for the Sarmatians, we must state that archeological data allow us to conclude firmly that in the second half of the IV<sup>th</sup> century B.C. they began to penetrate and settle down in the vicinity of the territories inhabited by the Scythians. This fact is also confirmed by the finding, in the steppe areas to the east of the Don, the Kuban region and north-Caucasian territories, of funerary complexes belonging to the new nomads that

<sup>25</sup> Cf. S. V. Polin, *Ot Skifii...* (n. 1), p. 96-98; S. V. Polin, A. V. Simonenko, *Skifija i sarmaty*, Donskie drevnosti 5, 1997, p. 93; A. V. Simonenko, *Sarmaty Tavrii*, Kiev 1993, p. 104; idem, *Rann'osarmatskyj period u pivničnomu Pryčornomor'i*, *Arheologija* (Kiev) 1, 1994, p. 33-34; idem, *The Problem of the Sarmatian Penetration in the North Pontic Area According to Archaeological Data*, *Il Mar Nero I*, București 1994, p. 102-103; idem, *Sarmaty Pivničnogo Pryčornomor'ja. Hronologija, periodyzacija ta etno-polityčna istorija*, Avtoreferat dysertacii na zdobuttja stupenja doktora istoričnyh nauk, Kiev 1999, p. 23.

<sup>26</sup> S. V. Polin, *Pro sarmats'ke...* (n. 4), p. 24 sqq.; idem, *Ot Skifii...* (n. 1), p. 33-50, 101-123 with all the bibliography; for the dating of the last Scythian tumuli, see A. Ju. Alexeev, op. cit. (n. 4), p. 157-164. None of the thousands Scythian tumuli in the north-pontic territory that have been researched along the years is dated later than the beginning of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., and the earliest tombs in late Scythian necropolises are dated no earlier than the middle II<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. S. V. Polin, A. V. Simonenko, *Rannesarmatskie pogrebenija Severnogo Pričernomor'ja*, *Issledovanija po arheologii Podneprov'ja*, Dnepropetrovsk 1990, p. 76-95; S. V. Polin, *Ot Skifii...* (n. 1); A. V. Simonenko, *Roxolany (posuk arheologičnyh vidpovidnostej)*, *Arheologija* (Kiev) 4, 1991, p. 17-28; idem, *Sarmaty...* (n. 25), p. 7-29, 104-112; idem, *Rann'osarmatskyj period...* (n. 25), p. 32-48; idem, *The Problem of the Sarmatian...* (n. 25), p. 99-134; idem, *Sarmaty Pivničnogo...* (n. 25), p. 7-9, 21-25.

<sup>28</sup> After having analyzed the situation of the north-west pontic region in the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., I. V. Brujako reached the conclusion that the situation of the Hellenistic and barbarian population in this region is not connected to the Sarmatic danger (I. Brujako, *Despre evenimentele...* (n. 3), p. 71, 77; idem, *Ot dioramy k panorame...* (n. 3), p. 325-332.). The same author considers that the Sarmatic factor must be analyzed from a territorial and chronological viewpoint, together with the examination of other possible causes that led to the extinction of Scythia (I. V. Brujako, op. cit. (n. 10), p. 235). A compromise variant is suggested by the works of Ju. A. Vinogradov, K. K. Marčenko and E. Ja. Rogov. It consists in the fact that both the Celts and the Sarmatians were involved in the extinction of Scythia, at the same time (Ju. A. Vinogradov, K. K. Marčenko, E. Ja. Rogov, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 102). This compromise variant was proposed and supported, independently from the above-mentioned authors, by I. V. Brujako as well, who also considers that the economic factor also contributed to the ending of Scythia's existence (I. Brujako, *Despre evenimentele...* (n. 3), p. 77).

<sup>29</sup> Cf. S. V. Polin, *Pro sarmats'ke...* (n. 4), p. 24-34, idem, *Ot Skifii...* (n. 1), p. 101 sqq. In the second quarter – the middle III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., many of the settlements situated at the foot of the Mountains in Crimea ended their existence (A. E. Puzdrovskij, *Očerki etnosocial'noj istorii Krymskoj Skifii vo II v. dc n. e. – III v. n. e.*, VDI 4, 1999, p. 100).

<sup>30</sup> In connection with Scythian vestiges in the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. in the north-pontic region, see S. V. Polin, *Ot Skifii...* (n. 1), p. 33-72; I. V. Brujako, op. cit. (n. 10), p. 235-236.

have come from the East<sup>31</sup>. We must note that the Sarmatians' penetration and settling in these territories destabilized the political-military situation in the Kuban region and the north of the Caucasus, which resulted in the construction of fortification systems inside the indigenous population's settlements, and in some cases in the extinction of these dwellings<sup>32</sup>.

A similar situation was produced in the second part of the IV<sup>th</sup> century B.C. at Scythia's eastern border, as well. The conclusive proof is the building of supplementary defensive systems in the fortified settlement of Elizavetovsk, on the Don river<sup>33</sup>. Equally relevant is the fact that a displacement of Scythian "royal" tumuli to the west was noticed in that respective period, which indicates the limitation of the territory very well-controlled by the Scythians<sup>34</sup>.

Thus, taking into account the above-exposed situation in the entire north-pontic region, and also all the pieces of information and the opinions existing at present, we consider that they allow us to believe that at the frontier of the IV<sup>th</sup>-III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. or at the beginning of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., judging by all the existing data, the Sarmatians crossed the Don river and invaded a part of Scythia. An indicator of these events is the fortified settlement of Elizavetovsk, whose population leaves the premises without the slightest resistance<sup>35</sup>. It is probably at that moment that a series of settlements around it cease their existence, as well.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Cf. in this sense Ju. M. Desjatčikov, *Process sarmatizacii Bospora*, Avtoreferat disertacii na soiskanie učenoj stepeni kandidata istoričeskikh nauk, Moskva 1974, p. 6-7; A. M. Ždanovskij, I. I. Marčenko, *Sarmaty v Prikuban'e*, Problemy sarmatskoj arheologii i istorii, Azov 1988, p. 42-43; I. I. Marčenko, *Sarmaty stepej pravoberež'ja Nižnej Kubani vo vtoroj polovine IV v. do n. e. – III v. n. e. (Po materialam kurgannyh nekropolj)*, Avtoreferat disertacii na soiskanie učenoj stepeni kandidata istoričeskikh nauk, Leningrad 1988, p. 7-8; idem, Siraki Kubani (po materialam kurgannyh pogrebenij Nižnej Kubani), Krasnodar 1996.; M. P. Abramova, *Central'noe Predkavkaz'e v sarmatskoe vremja (III v. do n. e. – IV v. n. e.)*, Moskva 1993; V. E. Maximenko, *Savromaty i sarmaty...* (n. 7); idem, *Sarmaty...* (n. 2); A. S. Skripkin, *Aziatskaja Sarmatija. Problemy hronologii i ee istoričeskij aspekt*, Saratov 1990; I. V. Sergackov, *O vremeni zaselenija Sarmatii severnoj časti Volgo-Donskogo meždureč'ja*, SA 1, 1992, p. 162-174; V. M. Klepikov, A. S. Skripkin, op. cit. (n. 24), p. 28-40.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. V. B. Vinogradov, *Sirakskij sojuz plemen na Severnom Kavkaze*, SA 1, 1965, p. 112; A. M. Ždanovskij, I. I. Marčenko, op. cit. (n. 31), p. 47-48; I. I. Marčenko, *Sarmaty stepej...* (n. 31), p. 13; idem, *Siraki...* (n. 31), p. 116 sqq.

<sup>33</sup> Ju. A. Vinogradov, K. K. Marčenko, E. Ja. Rogov, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 98.

<sup>34</sup> A. Ju. Alexeev, *Hronologija Skifii vtoroj poloviny IV v. do n. e.*, ASGE 28, 1987, p. 39. It is considered that the pressure from the Sarmatians at the east from Scythia stimulated the rapprochement between the Greeks and the Scythians (Ju. A. Vinogradov, K. K. Marčenko, E. Ja. Rogov, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 98). A proof of this is represented by the written sources that attest the rapprochement and collaboration between Scythian aristocracy and the Greek cities to the north of the Black Sea. The account of Diodor of Sicily (XX, 22) is relevant in this respect, as he writes about the battle for the throne of Bospor in 310/309 B.C., in which the Scythians supported Satir, the elder son of Parysades, the legal heir to the throne, and the Sarmatians (Siraces) supported Eumelos, who went to fight against his brothers (Cf. Ju. M. Desjatčikov, *Process sarmatizacii Bospora*, Avtoreferat disertacii na soiskanie učenoj stepeni kandidata istoričeskikh nauk, Moskva 1974, p. 7-8, idem, *Arifarn, cari sirakov*, Istorijskaja i kul'tura antičnogo mira, Moskva 1977, p. 45-48; Ju. A. Vinogradov, *Osobenosti greko-varvarskikh vzaimootnošenij na Bospore v VI-III vv. do n. e.*, Avtoreferat disertacii na soiskanie učenoj stepeni kandidata istoričeskikh nauk, Leningrad 1990, p. 14; I. I. Marčenko, *Siraki...* (n. 31), p. 113 sqq.; Ju. A. Vinogradov, K. K. Marčenko, E. Ja. Rogov, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 98). Last but not least, it must be mentioned that it is considered that Eumelos' enthronement in Bospor with the help of the Sarmatians was a turning point for the relations between the Greeks and the Barbarians to the north of the Black Sea, and that from that point on, the Sarmatians would be the main ally of the Bosporan kingdom (Ju. M. Desjatčikov, *Process sarmatizacii...*, p. 11 sq.; Ju. A. Vinogradov, op. cit., p. 14).

<sup>35</sup> I. B. Brašinskij, K. K. Marčenko, *Stroitel'nye komplekxy Elizavetovskogo gorodišča na Donu*, SA 2, 1978, p. 221.

<sup>36</sup> V. P. Kopylov, *O vremeni prekraščenijsa suščestvovanija varvarskogo torgovogo centra v del'te Dona v svete Bosporsko-skifskikh otnošenij konca IV - nač. III vv. do n. e.*, Antičnaja civilizacija i varvarskij mir v Podon'e i Priazov'e, Novočerkassk 1987, p. 14-15; S. V. Polin, *Ot Skifii...* (n. 1), p. 67.

Other pieces of evidence of the devastating incursions made by the Sarmatians in the steppe and silvosteppe to the west of the Don are the fortified settlements in the silvosteppe that ceased to exist as a consequence of violent attacks to which they were subject at the end of the IV<sup>th</sup>-III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. and the beginning of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.<sup>37</sup>. Thus, the central part of the fortified settlement in Semiluksk was transformed into a real ossuary that contained no less than 70 human skeletons (45 complete and 25 damaged). The people that died in Semiluksk were buried in the holes of the abandoned homes and in those existing in the households. Most of the burials were collective and the skeletons were put inside in different positions. As for the orientation of the deceased, it stretched over all the 360 degrees. Moreover, it was noted that many of the burials were done in haste. In many cases, the deceased were merely thrown into the hole. A proof of this is the fact that in many cases, the skeletons were thrown inside, one on top of the other, crossing the others. Without stopping to examine too many details, it is worth mentioning that a bronze arrowhead was found inside the body of a deceased in one of the tombs. Another fact that draws attention is that many weapons were discovered outside these "funerary complexes", and the research carried out lately identified traces of burn on the wooden part of the fortification<sup>38</sup>. All of this allows us to state that we are dealing with a massacre, the deceased having probably been buried by the winners.

An almost similar situation was discovered in the fortified settlement of Kolomaksk. As a consequence of archeological research, it was discovered that at the frontier of the IV<sup>th</sup>-III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., the site was subject to a blazing devastation. The skeletons of at least 50 of the settlement's inhabitants were discovered here, found in the position in which death had fallen upon them. They were not even buried. The skeletons of the dead were often discovered in the households destroyed by fire set upon them. Moreover, the bronze and iron arrowheads that had killed these people were found inside many of the skeletons<sup>39</sup>. Traces of destruction have been recently discovered in the fortified settlements of Knyševsk and Pekševsk, as well<sup>40</sup>.

Judging by the character of the destruction, all of these fortified settlements must be examined together with those situated to the north-east of the Azov Sea, the east and north-east of Crimea and other regions to the north of the Black Sea, where multiple pieces of evidence have been found recently, to prove the destruction of many settlements and also the violent death of a part of their population right between the IV<sup>th</sup> century B.C. and the beginning of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.<sup>41</sup>. Finally, we must make the precision that a series of pieces have been recently found in the middle Don area, and partially reflect the devastating invasions of some groups of Sauromatae-Sarmatians to the east of the Don<sup>42</sup>. Practically, as we very well know, the construction of Scythian tumuli ceased at the same time in the steppes to the north of the Black Sea. For the III<sup>rd</sup> century – the beginning of the II<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., the number of funerary complexes is practically inexistent in the steppe and silvosteppe areas<sup>43</sup>, and the population was substantially reduced and concentrated itself in the Don area and that of the lower Dnepr, Crimea and lower Danube regions<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>37</sup> A. P. Medvedev, *Novye materialy o finale lesostepnoj Skifii*, *Donskie drevnosti* 5, 1997, p. 50-66.

<sup>38</sup> Idem, op. cit., p. 50-58 with all the bibliography.

<sup>39</sup> Idem, op. cit., p. 58 with all the bibliography.

<sup>40</sup> Idem, op. cit., p. 58-59.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. A. N. Šeglov, *O greko-varvarskih...* (n. 8), p. 192; K. K. Marčenko, V. G. Žitnikov, E. V. Jakovenko, *Elizavetovskoe gorodišče – greko-varvarskoe toržišče v del'te Dona*, SA 3, 1988, p. 71; A. A. Maslennikov, *Skifija i Bospor v III-I vv. do n. e.*, Skifija i Bospor. Arheologičeskie materialy k konferencii pamjati akademika M. I. Rostovceva, Novočerkassk 1993, p. 60-61.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. A. P. Medvedev, op. cit. (n. 37), p. 60-61.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. S. V. Polin, *Pro sarmats'ke...* (n. 4), p. 24-34, idem, *Ot Skifii...* (n. 1), p. 33-72.

<sup>44</sup> Idem, op. cit., p. 34.

Taking all of these into account, we believe that the above-presented data do not allow us to accept, together with other researchers<sup>45</sup>, the opinion according to which Scythia ended its existence as a consequence of natural and ecological cataclysms.

Coming back to our initial point, we believe that the Sarmatian invasion that took place sometime between the IV<sup>th</sup>-III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. or at the beginning of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. was followed all through the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. by many others, of a greater or lesser intensity. Some of the Greeks and Barbarians' economic sites in the Don and lower Dnepr areas, the European part of Bospor, or the lower Bug region probably ended their existence after one of these incursions<sup>46</sup>. One of the clearest proofs of this possible evolution of events is represented by the Olbian decree in the honor of Protogenes. It is from this particular source that we find out about the Sarmatian king of the Sai, Saitafarn, who forced the people from Olbia to pay a tribute to him, threatening them that otherwise, he would attack the city<sup>47</sup>.

All these pieces of information makes us stop and ponder once again upon the account made by Diodor of Sicily who states, in a fragment of his work *Historical Library*, that many years after they had been brought from Media and had settled down to the east of Tanais, the Sauromatae became much stronger, devastated a large part of Scythia and exterminated the defeated population without exceptions, ravaging most of the country and turning it into a desolate waste land<sup>48</sup>. Modern researchers appreciate differently the degree of truthfulness of this fragment. The most radical appreciation has been recently exposed in S. V. Polin's book, where he made extensive efforts to demonstrate the legendary and mythological character of this episode and moreover, that this fragment should be seen as an episode from the history of archaic Scythia<sup>49</sup>.

It is well-known that Diodor was a very good compiler who had trustworthy sources at his disposal, although often have they been superficially verified. His information is worth taking into consideration, because many of the sources he had used are now lost. Moreover, he introduced in his work fragments from the works of his predecessors, in an exact chronology. As compared to Herodotus and other historians, Diodor of Sicily made no comments and appreciations; therefore he did not introduce knowledge from his own historical period in an earlier source. It is important for us that he knew the history of the region very well and especially the history of Bospor at the end of the IV<sup>th</sup> century B.C.<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>45</sup> I. V. Brujako, op. cit. (n. 10), p. 236; idem, *Despre evenimentele...* (n. 3), p. 73-75, 77; idem, *Ot Skifii k Sarmatii...* (n. 13), p. 215-218.

<sup>46</sup> Although in the lower Bug area the traces of destruction were accounted for in several settlements, we cannot speak about a total destruction (Cf. I. A. Snytko, *K voprosu o pričinah prekraščeniia žizni na hore Ol'vii vo vtoroj polovine III v. do n. e.*, Nikonii i antičnyj mir Severnogo Pričernomor'ja, Odessa 1997, p. 245). There are not many traces of destruction in the settlements in the lower Dnepr areas that were abandoned by their inhabitants in the first third of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., either (V. P. Bylkova, *O hronologii poselenii Nižnego Podneprov'ja*, Nikonii i antičnyj mir Severnogo Pričernomor'ja, Odessa 1997, p. 186-192). In the fortified settlement in Kamensk, which is considered (not by everybody, though) the political-administrative center of Scythia and which would have to be subject to destruction, first and foremost, there are no traces of a violent extinction. It is most likely that most of the settlements were abandoned beforehand, as a consequence of threats, and only a few of them had an abrupt extinction, following devastating attacks to which they were subject.

<sup>47</sup> IOSPE I<sup>2</sup>, 32A, 11, 34, 42-45, 84-92. See K. F. Smirnov, *Sarmaty i utverždenie...* (n. 7), p. 67 sqq.; Ju. G. Vinogradov, *Političeskaja istorija Ol'viiskogo polisa VII-I vv. do n. e. (istoriko-epigrafičeskie issledovanija)*, Moskva 1989, p. 181-184; A. V. Simonenko, B. I. Lobaj, *Sarmaty Severo-Zapodnogo Pričernomor'ja v I v. n. e. (pogrebenie znati u s. Porogi)*, Kiev 1991, p. 78-79.

<sup>48</sup> Diodor of Sicily 2, 43, 7, *apud* V. V. Latyšev, *Scythica et Caucasica – Izvestija drevnih pisatelej, grečeskikh i latinskih o Skifij i Kavkaze*, I, Sankt-Petersburg 1893, p. 458-459; idem, *Izvestija drevnih pisatelej o Skifij i Kavkaze*, VDI 4, 1947, p. 251.

<sup>49</sup> S. V. Polin, op. cit. (n. 1), p. 97. This viewpoint is also shared by A. V. Simonenko (A. V. Simonenko, *Sarmaty...* (n. 26), p. 104; idem, *Rann'osarmatskij period...* (n. 26), p. 33-34).

<sup>50</sup> M. B. Ščukin, *Na rubeže er*, Sankt-Petersburg 1994, p. 84.



What is somewhat surprising is S. V. Polin's reproach, according to which Diodor provides no information on the events taking place in the III<sup>rd</sup>-II<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.<sup>51</sup>, when Scythia came to an end, and when the Sarmatians and Sarmatia entered the history arena. It is otherwise well-known that, especially for the Hellenistic period, the books that made up his works were preserved very fragmentarily, which makes us believe that he knew very well when the events discussed upon took place. Finally, we insist in underlining that, in spite of S. V. Polin's opinion, Diodor was familiar with the ethnonim „Sarmatians“<sup>52</sup>, and in his days, and also later on, the terms „Sauromatae“ and „Sarmatians“ that he used referred to the same population<sup>53</sup>.

Even though the events described in this book refer to the events in the early history of Scythia, we can notice that Diodor's text does not conclude that he would attribute this particular event to archaic Scythia. Diodor's statement that the devastation of a part of Scythia took place many years after the Sauromatae had been brought in from Media has the form of an inserted piece of information, a typical method used by Greek historic literature and characteristic for Diodor's works. In fact, the respective fragment refers to the history of Scythia, and stands out through the syntagm “many years later”. After this parenthesis, Diodor comes back to the events in early Scythian history that took place many years before those described in the above-mentioned fragment. If things did not stand this way, then any impartial reader of Diodor's works would be confused, and wouldn't understand how Scythia could continue to exist if most of its population had been killed or how it was possible for an interregnum to be instituted in a country that had once been devastated and deserted<sup>54</sup>. Archeological data do not contradict Diodor's assertions either, but rather confirm them, since he does not write about the conquest and occupation of Scythia by the Sauromatae, but only about the devastation of a part of it<sup>55</sup>. All of these elements support our conviction that the fragment II, 43, 7 from Diodor's works is very important for the history of early Sarmatians and can be used as a source confirming the Sarmatians' incursions in Scythia in the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.

It is important to make the precision that archeological material from the IV<sup>th</sup>-III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. allows us to speak about a migration of Sarmatians to the west and south-west within the boundaries of the region including the south of the Ural mountains, the Volga area and that of lower Don, North Caucasus, as well as about a gradual concentration of the new nomad groups to the east of the Don<sup>56</sup>. This migration of the Sarmatians in the above-mentioned direction beginning with the IV<sup>th</sup> century B.C. was caused by the pressure they were put under by the nomads more to the east of

<sup>51</sup> S. V. Polin, op. cit. (n. 1), p. 97.

<sup>52</sup> Diodor of Sicily IV, 45, 4, *apud* V. V. Latyšev, *Izvestija drevnih pisatelej o Skifij...* (n. 49), p. 255.

<sup>53</sup> See about this Strabo, Ovid, Pomponius Mela, Lucan, Plinius the Old, Valerius Flaccus, Martial, Dionisius Perieget, Appianus or Ammianus Marcellinus, who use in their works the name of Sauromatae, together with the name of Sarmatians. Otherwise, we believe that M. I. Rostovcev was right when he said that the fact that sometimes some Greek and Roman used the name Sauromatae instead of Sarmatians is the result of the resemblance of their names, which confused them, but also a result of the preservation of their name in the historic tradition (M. Rostovtzeff, *Iranians and Greeks...* (n. 2), p. 113. For an analysis of the information provided by ancient authors, Greek and Roman on Sauromatae and Sarmatians, see M. I. Rostovcev, *Skifija i Bospor*, Petrograd 1925, p. 10, 11, 22, 23, 25, 26, 39, 43-44, 46, 50, 54-55, 57, 60-61, 79-80, 91, 94, 99, 103, 106-115, 128, 131, 137-138). It is most likely that M. I. Rostovcev was right when he stated that the Sauromatae had nothing in common with the Sarmatians and that the Sauromatae were probably conquered by the Sarmatians and rode out of the history arena subsequently (M. Rostovtzeff, *Iranians and Greeks...* (n. 2), p. 113).

<sup>54</sup> Diodor of Sicily II, 44, 1, *apud* V. V. Latyšev, *Izvestija drevnih pisatelej o Skifij...* (n. 48), p. 251.

<sup>55</sup> We insist in making the precision that it is very important to make the difference, when discussing issues like the expansion of Sarmatians to the west, between the penetrations, the incursions made in a neighboring territory and its actual occupation.

<sup>56</sup> V. M. Klepikov, A. S. Skripkin, op. cit. (n. 24), p. 28-33.

the south of the Ural Mountains<sup>57</sup>. It is most likely that these Sarmatians in the territories to the east of the Don and Volga were the destabilizing factor for a major part of the north-pontic territories and that they are the ones responsible of the devastating incursions organized periodically, throughout the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. to the west of the Don. Probably the Sarmatians were not interested in taking over the territories to the west of the Don in the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. Thus, a piece of information relevant in this respect is the fact that the number of Sarmatian vestiges found in the Don-Volga interfluves and to the left of the Volga is not big enough to create demographic tensions in this area<sup>58</sup>. This situation is probably the cause for which the Sarmatians do not resort to the occupation of the territories to the west of the Don in the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. However, in the II<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., a series of changes occurred in the ethnic and political structure of the east of Europe, which had a completely different character from the migrations in the IV<sup>th</sup>-III<sup>rd</sup> centuries B.C., and which were much more limited territory-wise. We are faced, at this point, with the activation of the Huns, the penetration of nomads in Central Asia, the fall of the Greek-Bactrian kingdom, the substantial increase of nomad population in Asian Sarmatia, the penetration of a new group of Sarmatians on its territory, and the pressures over the Asian part of the Bosporan kingdom<sup>59</sup>. We can also add the innovations in the Sarmatians' material culture, among other elements<sup>60</sup>. Under the pressure of these moves, the Sarmatians crossed the Don river most likely in the II<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. and occupied the entire territory between the Don and the Dnepr. It is also from this moment on that literary sources mention new groups of nomads on the territory occupied by the Sarmatians: between the Dnepr and the Don – the Roxolans and Iazigs, on the Don river – the Aorsi, in the Caspian Sea region – the upper Aorsi, and in the Kuban region – the Siraces.

Coming back to the north-pontic region in the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. we believe, however, that not all the Greek cities' or Scythians' rural settlements in the silvosteppe (especially those to the west of the north-pontic territories) ceased their existence as a consequence of the danger represented by the Sarmatians and their invasions. Moreover, it is very likely that the total incursion in the north-pontic territory to the west of the Don never even existed, in the form and to the extent described by Diodor. Last but not least, the Sarmatian factor must be examined taking into account not only the territorial-chronological aspect, but also other possible causes explaining Scythia's extinction as well as that of many of the Greek cities' rural settlements and the crisis in which they were absorbed starting with the '70s-'60s of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. For example, the extinction of many rural settlements in the European part of the Bosporan kingdom, the north-west of Crimea and the chora of Chersonesus in the second quarter – the middle III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. should probably be explained by the Scythians' incursions<sup>61</sup>.

<sup>57</sup> A. D. Tairov, *Rannie kočevniki Južnogo Zaural'ja v VII-II vekah do našej ery*, Avtoreferat disertacii na soiskanie učenoj stepeni kandidata istoričeskikh nauk, Moskva 1991, p. 23. It is most likely that the penetration of Sarmatic tribes to the west occurred, as M. I. Rostovcev justly remarked, because of the political and economical situation in Central Asia in the time lapse between the IV<sup>th</sup>-II<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. (M. Rostovtzeff, *Iranians and Greeks...* (n. 2), p. 113-115). The same author pointed out the fact that the critical point of the Sarmatic expansion in the south of Russia occurred in the II<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., but also mentioned that archeological data and some historic events show that the Sarmatic tribes slowly headed west long before this period (M. Rostovtzeff, *Iranians and Greeks...* (n. 2), p. 115).

<sup>58</sup> Cf. V. M. Klepikov, A. S. Skripkin, op. cit. (n. 24), p. 34.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. in this sense A. S. Skripkin, *K probleme istoričeskoj interpretacii arheologičeskikh paralelej v kul'turah Altajskogo i Dono-Ural'skogo regionov v poslednie veka do n. e.*, *Antičnaja civilizacija i varvar-skij mir*, II, Novočerkassk 1993, p. 7-9; idem, *O haraktere vostočnyh svjazej kočevnikov rannego železnogo veka Volgo-Donskih i Severokavkaskih stepej*, *Tret'ja Kubanskaja konferencija. Tezisy dokladov meždunarodnoj arheologičeskoj konferencii*, Krasnodar-Anapa 2001, p. 180-182; V. M. Klepikov, A. S. Skripkin, op. cit. (n. 25), p. 37-38.

<sup>60</sup> Ibidem, op. cit. (n. 24), p. 34-37.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. in this sense A. N. Šeglov, *O greko-varvarskih...* (n. 8), p. 192; M. I. Zolotarev, E. Ja. Turovskij, *K istorii antičnyh sel'skikh usadeb Hersoneses na Geraklejskom poluostrve*, *Drevnee Pričernomor'e*, Odessa 1990, p. 85 sq.

As for the extinction of the city of Nikonion and the rural settlements of Tyras and of the Barbarians in the area, it can be probably blamed on barbaric populations. It is hard to believe that the Sarmatians' incursions in the first half of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. reached the Dnestr, as the corresponding proofs are missing. As compared to the situation in the lower Dnestr region, that of the Bug area is a bit more complicated. Thus, the fall of most of Olbia's rural settlements can be explained both by the incursions of the Sarmatians that reached this region, and by the ones of closer barbarian neighbors.

On the other hand, the fact that we are dealing with similar negative phenomena at the same time and on a wide territory<sup>62</sup> enables us to believe that the given situation was probably determined by other factors as well, which played a bigger or smaller role in the process. Thus, apart from the danger represented by outside enemies – which constituted the main cause of the situation in the first half of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., we can count among other negative factors that were like successive links in the chain of events: the economic and political crisis in the Hellenistic world, the changes that occurred within the society, and also the irrational use of resources. Otherwise, it cannot be denied that, as proven by unwritten laws generally valid in the evolution of human societies, after a period of glory, expansion and prosperity, human societies always go through a period of decay, due to internal and external causes.

A slight stabilization of the situation was noted in the European part of the Bospor in the second half of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.<sup>63</sup> More precisely, according to I. T. Kruglikova's opinion, it is in this period that a new stage began in the history of agrarian territories in the above-mentioned kingdom, when in "new settlements and big, reinforced households were created in well-defended places"<sup>64</sup>. However, we must make the precision that the number of newly-created settlements is inferior to the number of those built until the beginning of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.<sup>65</sup> Equally, there are no question marks related to the renaissance of life in the settlements in the chora of the city of Chersonesus. The archeological researches carried out over the past few years prove that, after a long period, a series of Greek settlements were built in the surrounding area of this city<sup>66</sup>. We have to note as well the fact that, just like in the case of Bospor, the re-colonization amplitude of the city of Chersonesus' rural area, especially, and the colonization of Crimea in general, cannot be compared to the period of time elapsed before the first third of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C..

However, we cannot say the same about the stabilization of the situation in the north-west pontic region. Thus, in the lower Bug area, pretty far away from Olbia, only two settlements are known so far, among which a fortified one, where not only archeological material from the second half of the III<sup>rd</sup> century – the first quarter of the II<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. has been discovered, but also the traces of households and their annexes dating from this period<sup>67</sup>. But there has not been any comeback of the population in the immediate vicinity of Olbia in the settlements abandoned in the third quarter of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.. The discovery of fragments of Rhodian amphors on the surface of these are interpreted as traces of seasonal inhabitation<sup>68</sup>. Besides, in the entire period of time

<sup>62</sup> For the situation of the extracarpethian Getic area, as well as of the Thracian world to the south of the Danube see V. Vasiliev, A. Rustoiu, E. A. Balaguri, C. Cosma, Solotvino – "Cetate" (Ucraina transcarpatică). Așezările din epoca bronzului, a doua vârstă a fierului și din evul mediu timpuriu, Cluj-Napoca 2002, p. 54-55 with bibliography; A. Rustoiu, Războinici și artizani de prestigiu în Dacia preromană, Cluj-Napoca 2002, p. 131 sq.

<sup>63</sup> K. K. Marčenko, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 74.

<sup>64</sup> I. T. Kruglikova, *Sel'skoe hozjajstvo Bospora*, Moskva 1975, p. 101.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. eadem, op. cit., p. 95; A. A. Maslennikov, *Sel'skaja territorija Evropejskogo Bospora v antičnuju epohu*, Avtoreferat disertacii na soiskanie učenoi stepeni doktora istoričeskikh nauk, Moskva 1993, p. 36.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. K. K. Marčenko, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 75 with all the bibliography.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibidem*. Compare Ju. G. Vinogradov, *Političeskaja istorija....* (n. 47), p. 188, 189.

comprised between the second half of the III<sup>rd</sup> century – the first half of the II<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., there are settlements only on the left bank of the Bug<sup>69</sup>. According to the information in the decree in the honor of Nikeretas<sup>70</sup>, this refers, in the opinion of Ju. G. Vinogradov, to the events that occurred in the first two decades of the II<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.<sup>71</sup>, the situation in the lower Bug area was rather tensed, as Olbia had to face attacks from the Barbarians around.

A somewhat similar situation was created in the lower Dnestr region, as well. Just like in the surroundings of Olbia, material evidence of the restoration of life in the vicinity of Tyras is lacking. There are only three settlements in this area where more or less clear traces of the Greeks' household activities in this period have been found up to now<sup>72</sup>.

The first vague marks of the Scythians' return to the settlements and fortifications they had left previously begin to show up sometime towards the end of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., in the lower Dnepr region<sup>73</sup>, and around the middle II<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., Scythian dwellings on the lower Dnepr are transformed into fortifications, as a consequence of the construction of defensive systems<sup>74</sup>. The tombs in the flat necropolises of these fortified settlements are dated to the second half – the end of the II<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.<sup>75</sup>

The earliest vestiges belonging to late Scythian culture in Crimea are also dated to the end of the III<sup>rd</sup> century – beginning of the II<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.<sup>76</sup>. In fact, from this point on can be noticed a concentration and later on, a rapid consolidation of nomads, especially in the pre-montaneous region where Little Scythia was created, with the capital at Neapolis. From the II<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. on, the Scythian population in Crimea increases significantly, and their fortified settlements begin to appear in the north-western part of the peninsula at the middle of the same century<sup>77</sup>.

Bastarn tribes enter the scene at some point, in the last decades of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C., in the east of Europe, at the western border of the territory in question, and their interventions in the events in that period made them be mentioned in literary sources<sup>78</sup>. They have been archeologically identified, in the central and northern part of the area between the Eastern Carpathians and the Dnestr, with the Poienești-Lukaševka culture<sup>79</sup>,

<sup>69</sup> S. D. Kryžickij, S. B. Bujskih, A. V. Burakov, V. M. Otreško, op. cit. (n. 4), p. 101.

<sup>70</sup> IOSPE I<sup>2</sup>, 34.

<sup>71</sup> Ju. G. Vinogradov, *Političeskaja istorija*.... (n. 47), p. 183-189.

<sup>72</sup> I. V. Brujako, *Demografija i ekonomika Severo-Zapodnogo Pričernomor'ja vo vtoroj polovine VII-načale III v. do n. e.*, Avtoreferat disertacii na soiskanie učenoj stepeni kandidata istoričeskikh nauk, Sankt-Peterburg 1993, p. 6.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. K. K. Marčenko, op. cit. (n. 2), p. 76 with all the bibliography.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. S. V. Polin, op. cit. (n. 1), p. 107-108; V. P. Bylkova, op. cit. (n. 46), p. 191; eadem, *K voprosu o naselenii Nižnego Podneprov'ja v III-II vv. do n. e.*, *Problemy skifo-sarmatskoj arheologii Severnogo Pričernomor'ja*. K 100-letiju B. N. Grakova, Zaporž'e 1999, p. 57-59.

<sup>75</sup> Arheologija Ukrainskoj SSR, II, Kiev 1986, p. 227-229; O. A. Gej, I. A. Bažan, *K voprosu o vremeni vozniknovenija pozdneskifskoj kul'tury po materialam mogil'nika u s. Krasnyj Majak*, *Problemy skifo-sarmatskoj arheologii*, Moskva, 1990, p. 138.

<sup>76</sup> A. E. Puzdrovskij, *Očerok etnosocial'noj istorii Krymskoj Skifii vo II v. do n. e. – III v. n. e.*, VDI 4, 1999, p. 101.

<sup>77</sup> O. D. Daševskaja, *Skify na severo-zapodnom poberež'e Kryma v svete novyh otkrytij*, MIA 177, 1971, p. 153; A. N. Šeglov, op. cit. (n. 7), p. 37-42.

<sup>78</sup> Polybios 25, 6; 26, 9; Pseudo-Scymnos 794; Diodor of Sicily 30, 19; 31, 14; Titus Livius 39, 35, 4; 40, 5, 10; 41, 19, 7-11; 44, 26-27; 57, 2; 58, 7-9; Strabon 7, 3, 15-17; Plinius the Old 4, 14, 100, 109; Tacitus, *Germania*, 46; Trogus Pompeius, 32, 3, 16; Appian, *Macedonia*, 11, 2; 18, 1; *Mithridates*, 15, 53; 71, 304; Ptolemy 3, 5, 7; Cassius Dio 38, 10, 3; 51, 23-25 etc.

<sup>79</sup> M. Babeș, *Die Poienești-Lukaševka Kultur. Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeschichte im Raum Östlich der Karpaten in den Jahrhunderten vor Christi Geburt*, Bonn 1993 with all the bibliography. Coming from Northern Europe, the Bastarns are less civilized than the indigenous population they subdue. They do not coin their own money and seem not to use coins at all, and Hellenistic products reach them to a

constituted in the last decades of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.<sup>80</sup>. Without resorting to too many details, we consider that an indirect proof of the Bastarn's presence at the end of the III<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. in the north-west pontic region is represented by the Olbian decree for Protogenes. We find out from the second part of it that the Galatians and Scirians make an alliance, gathering consistent armed forces, and getting ready to set for Olbia<sup>81</sup>. It is clear today that the fact that the Germanics - Bastarns were called Galatians (Celts) by some ancient authors (Polybios, Diodor of Sicily, Titus Livius and later Plutarch) is based on a confusion characteristic of those times, when the barbarian populations to the north of the Alps and the Danube were classified according to the traditional scheme: "the Celts to the west, the Scythians in the east"<sup>82</sup>. As for the Scirians, they are definitely a Germanic tribe that was part of the first wave that entered the eastern-Carpathian area and are, probably, a branch of the Bastarns, (they can eventually be identified with the Sidoni mentioned by sources as a branch of the Bastarns)<sup>83</sup>. From here, they represent an extra-danger for Greek cities on the north-western and western shore of the Black Sea.<sup>84</sup>

In the same period, when the Bastarns enter the territory of Moldova, the bearers of the Zarubineck culture settled down in the middle Dnepr region<sup>85</sup>. They are Germanics as well, and, very probably, related to the Bastarns<sup>86</sup>.

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very small extent. On the basis of the information written in ancient sources, we can note that war was their main occupation. Therefore, they used to serve as mercenaries to all those who needed them, such as the last Macedonian kings or Mithridates VI Eupator from the kingdom of Pontus (cf. M. Babeş, op. cit., p. 72-75, 127-128, 178).

<sup>80</sup> The beginning of the Poienişti-Lukaşevka culture was initially set towards the half of the II<sup>nd</sup> century B.C. (M. Babeş, *Date arheologice istorice privind partea de nord-est a Daciei în ultimele secole înainte de erei noastre*, SCIVA 36, 1985, 3, p. 209). The analysis of the stamps on Greek amphora in a Bastarnic environment, as well as the presence of "imports" specific to this population in the archeological levels in the Getic settlement in Satul Nou – Valea lui Voicu, determined an earlier dating (N. Conovici, *Noi date arheologice privind începuturile culturii Poienişti-Lukaşevka şi prezenţa bastarnilor în Dobrogea*, SCIVA 43, 1992, 1, p. 3-13). M. Babeş has recently re-analyzed the initial dating, and he opted for a time interval between 200-175 B.C. (M. Babeş, op. cit. (n. 79), p. 153) or around the year 200 B.C. (Istoria Românilor, I, Bucureşti 2001, p. 527). See also, for the beginning of this culture M. B. Ščukin, *Problema bastarnov i etničeskogo opredelenija Pojanešty-Lukaševskoj i Zarubineckoj kul'tur*, PAV 6, 1993, p. 89-95; idem, *Na rubeže...* (n. 50), p. 116-119; V. E. Eremenko, "Kel'tskaja vual" i zarubineckaja kul'tura. Opyt rekonstrukcii etnopolitičeskikh processov III-I vv. do n. e. v Central'noj i Vostočnoj Evrope, Sankt-Peterburg 1997, p. 105-120.

<sup>81</sup> IOSPE I<sup>2</sup>, 32B, 5-8. Judging by the information in this decree, it seems however that the threat was never put into practice, the proof being also the absence from the inscription of information regarding the attack of the Scirians and Galatians on the city.

<sup>82</sup> A well-argued demonstration that the Galatians are Bastarn Germanics and not Celts was made by S. V. Polin (S. V. Polin, op. cit. (n. 1), p. 26-32 with all the bibliography and opinions regarding this issue).

<sup>83</sup> M. Babeş, *Noi date privind arheologia şi istoria bastarnilor (O "fibulă pomeraniană" descoperită în România)*, SCIV 20, 1969, 2, p. 195-218, în special p. 214; M. Babeş, I. Untaru, *Der früheste latènezeitliche germanische Fund aus der Moldau. Der Kronenhalsband von Davideni*, Dacia N. S. 13, 1969, p. 283-290.

<sup>84</sup> Scirians are also mentioned on an inscription from Bulgaria, that has not been published yet and was mentioned only by D. M. Pippidi, in which there is mention about their attack on Histria around the beginning of the II<sup>nd</sup> century B.C., attack with no consequences (D. M. Pippidi, *Les relations politiques des cités de la côte occidentale de l'Euxin à l'époque hellénistique*, Parerga. Écrits de philologie d'épigraphie et d'histoire ancienne, Paris-Bucarest 1984, p. 165, note 8; D. M. Pippidi, *Gètes et Grecs dans l'histoire de la Scythie Mineure à l'époque de Byrebistas*, Parerga. Écrits de philologie, d'épigraphie et d'histoire ancienne, Paris-Bucarest, 1984, p. 181-182, note 19; See also L. Ruscu, op. cit. (n. 12), p. 324).

<sup>85</sup> E. V. Maximov, *Zarubineckaja kul'tura na territorij USSR*, Kiev 1982, p. 25.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. in this sense M. B. Ščukin, *Problema bastarnov...* (n. 80), p. 85-95; idem, *Na rubeže...* (n. 51), p. 107-119; V. E. Eremenko, op. cit. (n. 80), p. 119-120, 121-171.

What is certain is the fact that, in the times before the Sarmatians settled down to the north of the Black Sea, the steppes here were free from the nomad population that had been here, but was now concentrated in the lower Dnepr area, Crimea and, to a small extent, in Dobrudja. In the silvosteppe area on the middle Dnepr lived the bearers of the Zarubineck culture, to the west of the Dnestr lived the Bastarns and the Getae-Dacians, and on the shore, the Greek cities that were going to a crisis period.