

*Categoria A*

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**Vitalii Hutsal, Oleksandr Mohylov, Yuliia Ushkova**

## **Bronze Age burial mounds on the Husykova Hill in the Zbruch region**

**Key words:** kurgan, burial, Bronze Age, Subcarpathian Corded Ware culture, Komariv culture, ceramics, weapons.

**Cuvinte cheie:** tumul, mormânt, Epoca Bronzului, cultura ceramicii șnurate varianta subcarpatică, cultura Komarov, ceramică, arme.

*Vitalii Hutsal, Oleksandr Mohylov, Yuliia Ushkova*

### **Bronze Age burial mounds on Husykova Hill in the Zbruch region**

This article presents the results of an archaeological investigation of Bronze Age burial mounds 11 and 12, which were excavated on Husykova Hill, the highest point of the Tovtry mountain ridge in the Zbruch River region. Each of the examined mounds contained several burials. One of them was located in a natural deepening, while the other burials were made in pits. It is recorded that the walls of the graves were covered with stone slabs. The bodies were buried in a flexed position on the side, with diverse orientations. A separate burial of a skull was also discovered during excavations. The accompanying burial goods were not numerous: hand-made ceramics, stone axe, flint tools. The details of the funeral rite and the burial goods share numerous similarities with the Subcarpathian Corded Ware culture and Komariv culture. Bone samples dated by the radiocarbon method also belong to the Komariv period. The funerary traditions recorded in the mounds on Husykova Hill were developed in the kurgan and flat burial grounds of the Middle Dniester region during the Pre-Scythian and Scythian periods.

*Vitalii Hutsal, Oleksandr Mohylov, Yuliia Ushkova*

### **Movile funerare din epoca bronzului de pe dealul Husykova din regiunea Zbruch**

Acest articol prezintă rezultatele unei investigații arheologice a movilelor funerare 11 și 12 din epoca bronzului, care au fost cercetate pe dealul Husykova, cel mai înalt punct al crestei muntoase Tovtry din regiunea râului Zbruch. Fiecare dintre movilele examinate conținea mai multe înmormântări. Una dintre acestea era situată într-o depresiune naturală, în timp ce celelalte înmormântări au fost făcute în gropi. Se poate de subliniat faptul că pereții mormintelor erau acoperiți cu plăci de piatră. Defuncții au fost îngropați în poziție chiricită pe o parte, cu orientări diverse. În timpul săpăturilor a fost descoperită și o înmormântare separată a unui craniu. Vestigiile funerare nu au fost numeroase: ceramică, topor de piatră, piese din silex. Detaliile ritualului funerar și a inventarului prezintă numeroase asemănări cu cultura ceramicii șnurate varianta subcarpatică și cultura Komariv. Datele radiocarbon obținute pe probele osteologice corespund perioadei Komariv. Tradițiile funerare înregistrate în movilele de pe dealul Husykova au fost dezvoltate în kurganele și necropolele plane din regiunea Nistrului Mijlociu în timpul perioadelor pre-scitică și scitică.

Between 2007 and 2011, the archaeological expedition of Kamianets-Podilskyi National University<sup>1</sup> conducted an archaeological investigation of the burial mounds on the right bank of the Zbruch River (left tributary of the Dniester), near the villages of Spasivka and Ivankivtsi (Horodotsk district, Khmelnytsk region, Ukraine) [Gutsal *et al.* 2009, 91-93; Gutsal *et al.* 2010, 101-103; Gutsal, Gutsal, Mogilov 2011, 93-94; Gutsal *et al.* 2012]. The excavations were directed by A.F. Gutsal, V.A. Gutsal, O.D. Mogilov, V.P. Megei, O.L. Bazhenov, P.A. Boltaniuk, and M.V. Khadadova participated in the fieldwork during this period.

1. With the participation of the Institute of Archaeology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine and Zhytomyr State University.

The majority of the excavated mounds were situated in several clusters on river watersheds in elevated areas of the landscape. They are mainly dated to the Early Scythian period and can be included in the Western Podillia group [Gutsal, 2014, 44-46; Mogilov, Gutsal, Gutsal 2016a, 247-267; Mogilov, Gutsal, Gutsal 2016b, 212-230; Gutsal, Gutsal, Mogilov 2021, 86-95]. Several mounds were located on the highest point of the microregion, which is known as Husykova Hill. This hill is part of the Tovtry ridge and reaches an altitude of 375 metres above sea level. The Shandrova River, a tributary of the Zbruch, flows at the foot of Husykova Hill.

The group of four mounds (numbers 11-14) was situated on the crest of the ridge and extended

for 150 m from the southeast to the northwest. Kurgan 13 was the largest of the group with a height of 1.8 m and a diameter of 30m. Mound 11 was located 47 m northwest of kurgan13. Mound 12 continued the line in the same direction and was located 47 m from kurgan 11. Tumulus 14 was situated 33 m southeast of kurgan 13. It was 0.5 m high and 10×25 m in diameter. It is possible that several mounds merged here. Two smaller kurgans of this group (numbers 11 and 12) were investigated during the 2010 and 2011 field seasons. The results of these excavations demonstrated that the mounds on Husykova Hill were constructed during the Bronze Age.

The analysis of the human remains discovered during the archaeological excavation of mounds 11 and 12 was conducted by Yuliia Ushkova in 2024, employing classical anthropological methods. Sex determination was based on pelvic and cranial morphology. Age at death was estimated using the state of cranial suture closure, epiphyseal union, dental development and attrition [Alekseev, Debets 1964; Alekseev 1966; Buikstra et al. 1994; Bass 1995; Stloukal *et al.* 1999; White, Folkens 2005; Krenzer 2006]. Long bone measurements were conducted in accordance with the established osteometric techniques, as outlined by Alekseev [1966]. Dental morphology was evaluated according to the methods developed by A.A. Zubov [Zubov 1968; 2006; Zubov, Khaldeeva 1993]. The paleopathological issues were addressed using protocols developed by M. Schultz and O.D. Kozak [Schultz 1988, 480-496; Kozak 2010].

**Mound 11** was covered with perennial grasses and was barely visible on the surface. The kurgan was 0.4 m high and 12-13 m in diameter. The upper layers (0.3-0.4 m from the surface) consisted of chernozem (black soil) with stone inclusions. At a depth of 0.3-0.4 m, an accumulation of small and medium-sized stones began to be visible. The stones were distributed randomly across the entire mound area, with a particularly high concentration observed in the eastern sector and central part (fig. 1). Beneath the stone accumulation were denser layers of medium and large blocks, which lay unevenly.

The stone structure had an irregular oval shape, measuring 10.45×9.75 m and extending from north to south. However, if its outline was

rounded from the south, the corners were visible from the north and northwest. It can be noted that the outer perimeter from the south consisted of larger blocks. From the north, the stones on the edge were smaller. On the southeastern edge of the mound, the stones formed a structure resembling a stone chest. Its external dimensions were 3.05×1.98 m, while its internal dimensions were 1.8×1.03 m. However, no traces of a burial were found inside this structure.

The northwestern sector appeared to be the most intact. A large slab measuring 0.9×1.2×0.3 m was located in the outer ring on the northern periphery. A stone with a natural depression can be noted on the northwestern edge of the stone accumulation. In the northeastern sector, three outer stones were found inclined to the center at an angle of about 60°. It is probable that they have been preserved in their original position, and, given the angle, it is possible to determine the original height of the mound. The southeastern sector also appeared to have been less intact, although in two locations gaps with a minimal amount of stones were visible. Among the stones two flint blades (1, 2) were found.

Tumulus 11 overlay three Bronze Age burials. Burial 2 was situated in the center of the mound, while burials 1 and 3 were shifted to the south from the center. Burial 1 is dated to the Komariv period.

**Burial 1** was discovered 3.8 m south of the center of the mound at a depth of 0.6 m from its surface (fig. 3,1). It appears that the grave was dug into the mound to a depth corresponding to the prehistoric ground surface. The upper part of the skeleton rested on and was covered by small stones. The lower extremities were situated at a depth of 0.2 m below the skull bones and were surrounded by stone-free soil. The grave was oblong, although its shape and size are not clear. It is only worth mentioning that the western wall of the burial, situated near the head of the buried individual, was defined by two stone slabs measuring 0.2×0.3 m.

The skeleton of a male, estimated to be between 30 and 35 years of age, was discovered in an extensively flexed position on his left side, with the head oriented to the west. The hands were bent at the elbows with the palms facing the skull. A white flint flake (3) was discovered beneath the cranial

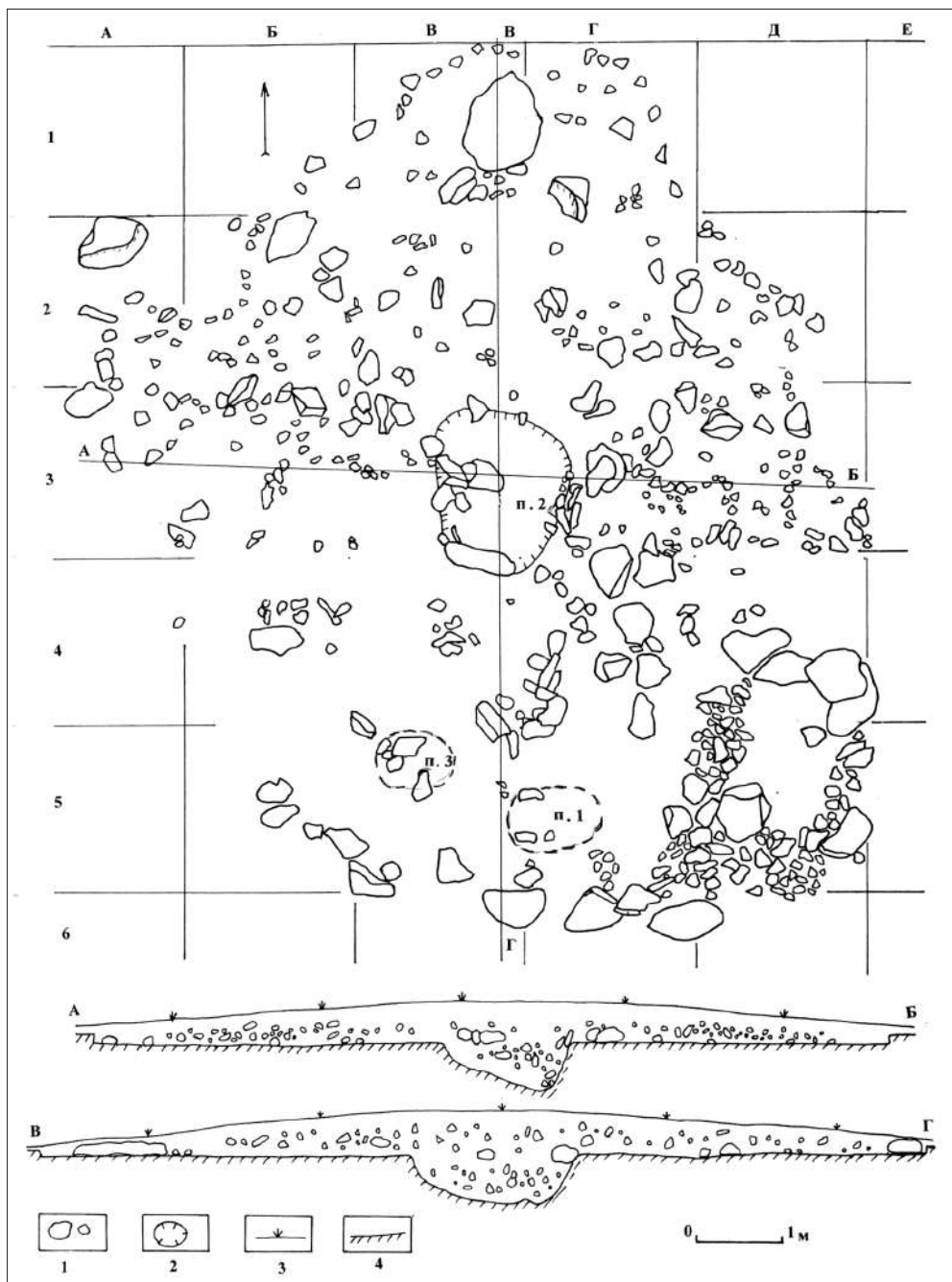


Fig. 1. Husykova Hill, mound 11, plan. 1 – stones; 2 – burial pit; 3 – the upper layer of the soil; 4 – basal deposits (limestone soil).

bones. The vertebrae and bones of the pelvis were partially preserved, the same applies to the left arm and the left part of the lower jaw. The right leg was brought strongly to the abdomen and its bones formed an acute angle of up to 300 in the knee joint. The left leg was not so much raised to the abdomen, but formed the same sharp angle at the knee joint.

The cranial and postcranial bones available for anthropological analysis are only partially pre-

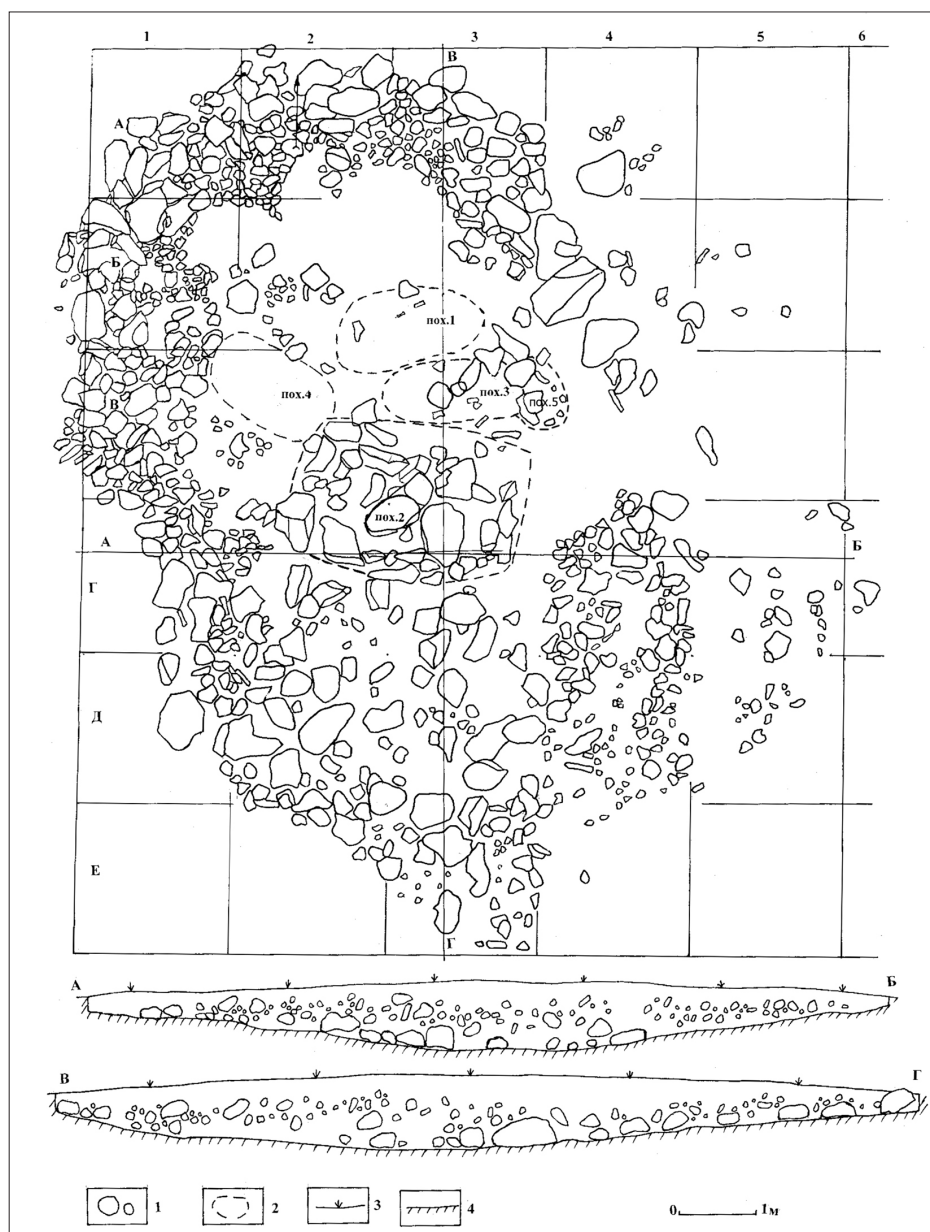
served, fragmented, have an eroded surface, and exhibit signs of animal gnawing. The color of the bones is light yellow. The mastoid process is large (grade 3<sup>2</sup>), which is indicative of the male sex of the individual. The sutures of the skull in the areas accessible for examination are open. The age of the individual was estimated to be between 30 and 35

2. The sexually dimorphic cranial features are evaluated according to [Aleksseev, Debets 1964].

years old, based on the degree of dental attrition. No enamel extension is observed on the molars.

**Burial 2** (central) was discovered during the disassembling of the stone accumulation in the center of the mound (fig. 3,2). At a depth of 0.6 m from the top of the mound, several slabs standing on the edge were found. To the west of them, the ground was free of boulders and was easy to excavate. The irregular shape of the pit, which had a trapezoidal outline on top and an irregularly rectangular outline lower, as well as a naturally deepened bottom in the center, suggests that it may have

been a natural depression with dimensions of approximately  $1.8 \times 1.35$  m and a depth of 0.66 m from the prehistoric ground surface. The pit narrowed to the bottom and was oriented along the north-south axis. The eastern wall of the pit was outlined with large slabs placed on the edge. One of them was of considerable size:  $0.3 \times 0.6$  m. An equally large slab was found in the basis of the southern wall. The northern and western walls consisted of basal deposits – a mixture of white clay and small pieces of limestone. This indicates that the grave was adapted to the existing natural relief, which required less ef-



**Fig. 2.** Husykova Hill, mound 12, plan. 1 – stones; 2 – pit; 3 – the upper layer of the soil; 4 – basal deposits (limestone soil).

fort for construction. The pit's filling contained separate human bones. In the western part of the grave, at a depth of 0.3 m below the prehistoric ground surface, the remains of the first individual were found: a crushed skull with a left part of the lower jaw, bones of the upper limbs and the bones of the right leg and pelvis. The bones of the leg and pelvis were found in anatomical order, with the knee joint bent at an angle close to 90°. The lower leg with the foot was partially covered by the large stone that marked the southern wall of the burial. The position of the bones of the right leg allows us to infer that the body was buried in a flexed position on the right side, with the head oriented to the northeast. A crushed skull of another individual was discovered near the eastern wall of the grave, at a depth of 0.5 m. In close proximity to the skull was the right portion of the lower jaw of the first individual. In the southeastern direction from this skull, several fragments of upper limb bones were found. They were covered by the stone slab. The skulls and other bones of the skeletons exhibited notable differences. In the case of the first individual, the bones were more massive and robust. They were also more yellow in color. In contrast, the bones of the second individual were more thin and fragile.

The results of the anthropological analysis indicated the presence of bones belonging to three individuals in the burial. Two of the individuals were male, aged between 35 and 45, while the third was female, aged between 20 and 22. All three skeletons are incomplete, and the bones exhibit taphonomic changes. The color of the human remains from this burial is yellow and brown.

The cranial and postcranial bones of the *individual 1* are yellow and brown in color. The presence of a pronounced glabella (grade 4) and supraorbital ridge (grade 2), large mastoid process (grade 3), thick and rounded supraorbital margins allows for the determination of the individual's sex as male. Dental attrition of the mandibular teeth is asymmetric. If the right molars exhibit attrition typical of the 35-45-year age range, then the left second molar exhibits signs of only slight wear. This can be attributed to the intravital loss of the antagonist tooth. The mandibular left third molar was extracted during the individual's lifetime. The socket of this tooth is filled with newly formed bone. No enamel extension is observed on the molars. The bones of the pelvis exhibit charac-

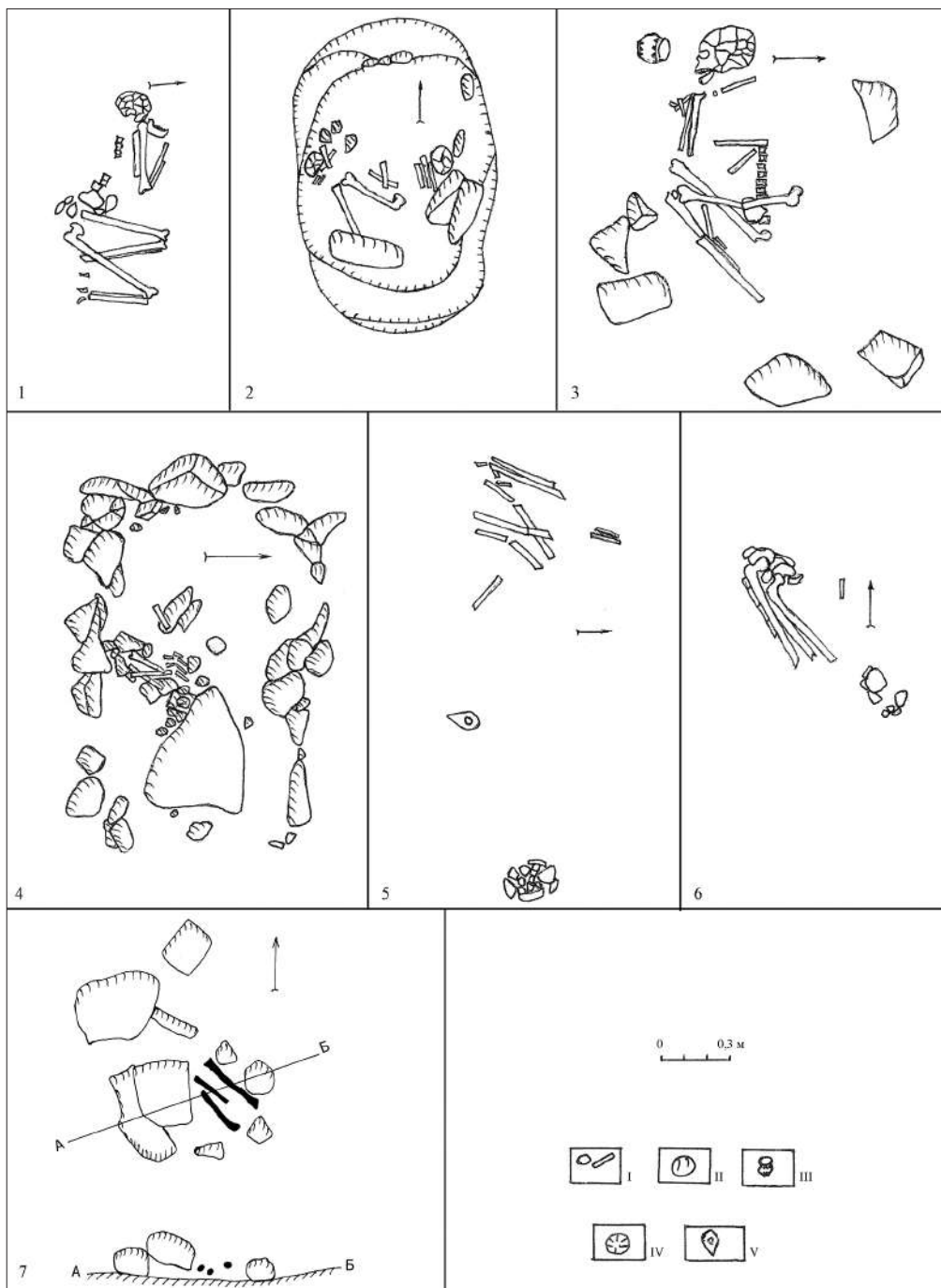
teristics that are consistent with the male sex of the individual. These include narrow and asymmetric shape of the greater sciatic notch and the absence of preauricular sulcus. The femur exhibits a distinct pilaster (pilastry index = 122). The remains belong to a male individual aged between 35 and 45 years.

The cranial and postcranial bones of *individual 2* are brown and yellow in color. The bones of the skull are gracile, with a thin supraorbital margin and medium-sized mastoid processes (grade 2). These features indicate that the bones of the individual belong to a female. Cranial sutures are not obliterated from the outside or inside, indicating that the individual 2 is likely to be young (up to 25 years old). Two teeth (maxillary second and third right molars) found in the burial also probably belong to this individual. The second molar exhibits slight wear (grade 1<sup>3</sup>), while the third molar displays no signs of enamel wear, allowing for an estimation of the individual's age within the range of 20-22 years. No enamel extension is observed on the molars. The long bones are gracile. The union of the distal epiphysis of the humerus is complete, with the line of junction obliterated. A preauricular sulcus is present on the bones of the pelvis, which is consistent with the female sex of the individual.

The cranial and postcranial bones of *individual 3* are very massive and are yellow in color. There are signs of animal gnawing on the bones of this individual. The skull is fragmented and massive, exhibiting the most pronounced glabella (grade 5) and supraorbital ridge, large mastoid process (grade 3), thick and rounded supraorbital margin. These features point to the male sex of the individual. The coronal suture is partially obliterated. Signs of mastoiditis can be observed on the skull of this individual. The bones of the postcranial skeleton are also notable for their considerable robustness, thickness of the compact layer and signs of pronounced muscular development. The femurs exhibit the most pronounced pilasters (pilastry index = 138.2/135.7<sup>4</sup>). The tibia exhibits clear evidence of muscular activity, particularly at the attachment site of the m. tibialis posterior. The

3. The evaluation of dental attrition is conducted in accordance with the methodics proposed by M. Gerasimov [Segeda 2009, 71-72, tab. 4].

4. Hereafter right/left.



**Fig. 3.** Burials in mounds. 1 – mound 11, burial 1; 2 – mound 11, burial 2; 3 – mound 12, burial 1; 4 – mound 12, burial 2; 5 – mound 12, burial 3; 6 – mound 12, burial 4; 7 – mound 12, burial 5. I – bones; II – stones; III – ceramic vessel; IV – contours of the burial pit; V – axe.

remains belong to a male aged 35-45. The bones of this individual were not identified on the photographs of the burial floor. It is possible that they were discovered within the grave's filling.

**Burial 3** is situated 1m west of burial 1. Here, between several stones, at a depth of 0.6m, a hu-

man skull without a lower jaw was discovered in a state of severe deterioration. A white flint flake was also found in the vicinity (4).

Only fragments of cranial bones and two teeth were present in the burial. The state of preservation of the bones is poor, with the surface

heavily eroded. The color of the bones is light yellow. The bones of the skull are very thin (4.5 mm). A number of morphological features allow for the determination of the sex of the individual as female. These include the small and thin mastoid process (grade 1), the sharp supraorbital margin, minimal expression of the nuchal crest, and the moderately pronounced glabella (grade 3). The lambdoid suture is completely open from both the inside and outside. Two maxillary teeth were found among the bones: the left canine and the first right molar. The state of attrition is consistent with an age of approximately 25 to 30 years.

#### Archaeological finds from Mound 11:

1. Flint blade covered with white patina. It is possible that the blade has undergone retouch on the edges. Length – 6.5 cm, width – up to 2 cm, thickness – 0.5 cm (fig. 4,1).

2. Flint blade covered with white patina. It is shaped like a segment and is a fragment of a pebble. Half of the blade has traces of outer crust. The cross-section is subtriangular. Length – 7.6 cm, width – up to 2.2 cm, thickness – 1.3 cm (fig. 4,2).

3. Flint flake covered with white patina. Length – 4.2 cm, width – up to 3.1 cm, thickness – 0.8 cm (fig. 4,4).

4. Flint flake covered with white patina. Length – 4.4 cm, width – up to 0.5 cm, and the thickness – 0.5–2.1 cm (fig. 4,3).

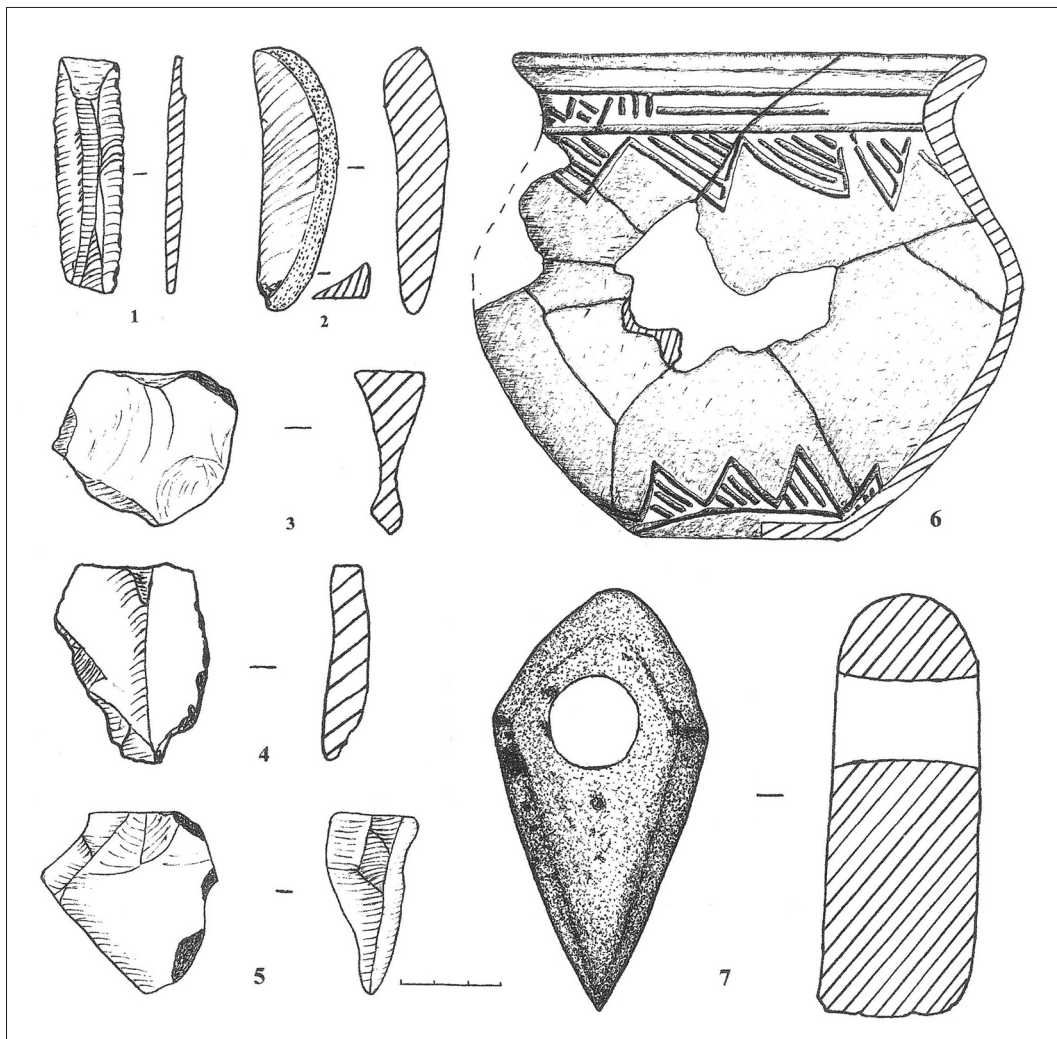
**Mound 12** was 0.25 m high and 11-12 m in diameter. The upper layers consisted of chernozem soil with minimal inclusion of small stones. At a depth of 0.15-0.2 m, there was a thick layer of stones (fig. 2). This layer is better preserved in the northern part of the mound and in the southwestern and southeastern sectors. In contrast, in the northeastern sector, a narrow band measuring approximately 2 m in width exhibited a paucity of blocks, extending in a western direction. Subsequent excavations revealed that the burials were situated precisely in this sector.

After the removal of the soil and stone top layer, the lower stone mound became visible, stretching from north-northwest to south-southeast. The dimensions of the stone construction were 11.65 m (along the northwest-southeast line) × 7.94 m. In general, its shape was oval, though a narrowing in the center was present, as if two

tumuli were connected here. However, burials, including the central one (No. 2), are located in the center of the structure, which does not support the existence of two mounds here. It is possible that the northern semicircle is connected with the enlargement of the tumulus during the arrangement of inlet burials. The stone construction was up to 0.6-0.7 m high and composed of stones of various sizes. However, it was noticeable that everywhere along the perimeter, except for the south-eastern sector, larger slabs were situated. The majority of the blocks were relatively small, with a weight between 1 and 10-15 kg. However, there were also larger blocks, with some that may weigh up to 100-150 kg. These larger boulders tend to be located at greater depths. In the northern part of the structure, the most substantial stone blocks were observed, with the longest sides measuring at least 1 m. From the south, the structure exhibited a protrusion that could be described as a kind of improvised path, measuring 1.7 to 3.5 m in width. From the eastern side, a gap in the stones could be observed, as if forming an entrance to the burial sites. The basal deposits, a white layer of gravel and clay, were underlying the stone structure. Among the stones of the construction, fragments of the bottom part of the ceramic vessel (1) and a flint flake (2) were discovered. Additionally, human remains were found here, including a distal fragment of the diaphysis of the left humerus, a distal fragment of the ulna, two fragments of skull bones, and one tooth (mandibular premolar). The remains belong to an individual of undetermined sex, estimated to be between 40 and 60 years of age based on the premolar attrition (grade 4).

A total of five burials, dated to the Bronze Age, were discovered beneath the mound. The burial 2 was the closest to the center, while burials 1, 3-5 were carried out to the north from it. Burial 1, which is attributed to the Komariv culture, stratigraphically overlay burial 3.

**Burial 1** (Komariv culture) was discovered at a distance of 2.45 m from the center of the mound. The grave was dug into the kurgan to a depth of 0.35 m from its surface. It overlay burial 3 and did not reach the level of the basal deposits. The shape of the pit was not clear; it was probably oriented latitudinally (fig. 3,3). The skeleton of an individual estimated to be between 25 and 30 years of age was discovered in a flexed position on the right side,



**Fig. 4.** Archaeological finds from mounds. 1–2 – flint blades from the mound 11; 3 – flint flake from burial 3 of mound 11; 4 – flint flake from burial 1 of mound 11; 5 – flint flake from mound 12; 6 – ceramic vessel from burial 1 of mound 12; 7 – stone axe from burial 3 of mound 12.

with the head oriented to the west and facing the center of the mound. The upper left part of the skeleton was not preserved. The humerus was displaced, and the radius was situated near the skull. The lower part of the spinal column was partially preserved, up to the level of the chest. The skull was crushed, a portion of the lower jaw was displaced and discovered at a distance of 0.6 m southwest of the head. A fragment of the skull was found at a distance of 1.15 m southeast of the cranium. The feet of both legs were not preserved. At a distance of 0.12 m south of the skull, an ornamented ceramic vessel (3) was discovered lying on its side in front of the face of the buried individual.

The fragmented bones of the skull and post-cranial skeleton were available for anthropological

analysis. They are brown in color and exhibit signs of erosion. A number of morphological features allow determination of the sex of the individual as male, including well-defined glabella and supraorbital ridge, thin but long mastoid process, and the presence of marginal tubercle on the frontal process of the zygomatic bone. However, the nuchal crest is not pronounced. The front teeth are more worn (grade 4-3) than molars (grade 2-1). Cranial sutures are open. The squamous part of the occipital bone is divided by a suture above the external occipital protuberance. An analysis of the dental pathologies reveals the presence of enamel fractures in a number of teeth and a minimal development of dental calculus (grade 1) on the distal side of the maxillary third right molar.

No enamel extension is observed on the molars. The bones of the postcranial skeleton are not massive. Platymeria is well expressed on the femoral shafts (platymeric index = 67.6/70.4). The human remains from this burial belong to a male aged 25-30 years.

**Burial 2** was located slightly to the north of the center of the kurgan and was disturbed by looters. The grave was dug into the burial mound to a depth of 0.45 m below the surface of the kurgan and 0.29 m above the level of basal deposits. Its walls were covered with stone blocks forming a kind of stone chest (fig. 3,4). A well-preserved row of stones on the southern side formed a straight line, which could be interpreted as a wall of the burial chamber. Additionally, similar stone constructions were observed from the west and north. The dimensions of the chest were 1.7×1.1 m, with a long axis oriented in a west-east direction. On the floor of the burial, separate bones of a female aged 40-45 (50) years were discovered. It is possible that only the femurs, which were found in close proximity to one another, partially retained their original position. A skull fragment was found 0.63 m to the west and a fragment of a left humerus 1.2 m to the east. Other small bone fragments were also found in this area. It can be assumed that the body was lying in a flexed position on its right side, with the head to the west.

Fragments of bones of both the cranial and postcranial skeletons are available for anthropological analysis. They are brown in color and exhibit significant taphonomic changes. Based on the morphology of the skull, it can be determined that the individual was female. This is evidenced by the sharp supraorbital margin, minimal prominence of glabella and supraorbital ridge. Cranial sutures in the area of the bregma are completely closed inwardly and partially closed outwardly. Granular foveolae are observed on the inner surface of the frontal bone. Platymeria is well expressed on the femoral shafts (platymeric index = 67.1). The bones belong to a female 40-45 (50) years old.

The destroyed **burial 3** was discovered under grave 1 (fig. 3,5). Fragments of bones of the lower extremities were found at a depth of 0.15-0.20 m below the ceramic vessel from burial 1. A fragment of a thin skull was located 0.75 m southeast of them, and more than half of the skull was found 1.4m farther in the same direction. A stone axe

with a drilled hole (4) was discovered between the bones of the skull and the long bones.

The bones from this burial complex are gracile, thin and brown in color, exhibiting signs of erosion on their surface. Nuchal crest and supraorbital margin are moderately expressed, while supraorbital ridge is well-pronounced (grade 2). The coronal suture in the C1 section is completely closed internally and partially closed externally. Persistent metopic suture is observed on the frontal bone of the individual. Among the pathological conditions, hypervascularization on the supraorbital region of the skull is notable. The fusion of the proximal epiphysis of the ulna is complete, and the line of junction is obliterated. The soleal line is very well defined on the tibia (in the form of a ridge with exostoses). Signs of osteoporosis are visible on the long bones. The human remains belong to an individual between 40 and 55 years of age.

**Burial 4** was discovered to the southwest of the center of the mound, on the level 0.2 m below burial 3 (fig. 3,6). The remains of a 50-55 year-old woman were found, comprising fragmented bones of the skull, pelvis, and lower limbs. It is possible that the bones of the pelvis and femurs were preserved in their original position. The thigh and lower leg bones were nearly parallel. It can be assumed that the body was laid in a flexed position on its left side, oriented in an east-northeast direction.

The bones are gracile and have brown color. Their surface exhibits signs of taphonomic changes. The coronal suture is completely closed internally and externally, and the lambdoid suture is partially obliterated. The bones of the pelvis exhibit characteristics consistent with the female sex of the individual, including a broad shape of the greater sciatic notch and the presence of a preauricular sulcus. Platymeria is well expressed on the femoral shafts (platymeric index = 71.7/74.6). Long bones exhibit signs of osteoporosis. The human remains from this burial complex belong to a female aged 50-55 years.

**Burial 5** was discovered to the northeast of the center of the mound (fig. 3,7) at the same level as burial 3 and slightly deeper, at a depth of 0.55-0.6 m. The bones were found in a 15 cm deepening in the layer of gravel basal deposits. The boundaries of this pit were not clearly visible, its edges transitioning smoothly into the basal deposits. Only fragmented bones of the lower limbs

were preserved in the burial. The position of these bones suggests that the skeleton may have been laid in a flexed position with strongly bent legs, the head oriented to the southwest.

#### Archaeological finds from Mound 12:

1. Fragment of the lower part of a hand-made pot. The height of the fragment is about 7.5 cm, the approximate diameter of the bottom is up to 12 cm, the approximate diameter of the preserved part of the body is up to 19 cm. It can be assumed that the vessel was of considerable size. The exterior of the sherd is brown, while the interior is black. The ceramic paste contains inclusions of sand, chamotte, and a considerable quantity of crushed flint. The pot is low-fired, and thus, it crumbles and delaminates.

2. Flint flake coated with patina, exhibiting a white and pink coloration on opposite sides. Length – 5.6 cm, width – 5.5 cm, thickness – 1.5–2.6 cm (fig. 4,5).

3. Ceramic hand-made vessel in the form of a deep vase or bowl. The rim is rounded and outwardly curved. The neck is low and narrowed. The body is rounded. The bottom is flat. Height – 14.3 cm, diameter of the bottom – 6 cm, diameter of the rim – 14 cm, diameter of the body – 16.3 cm. The vessel's coloration is gray-black on both sides, with a light brown tint on the exterior. Upon cross-sectioning, the sherd is black with inclusions of sand and crushed flint. The vessel is low-fired, thus exhibiting a tendency to crumble and delaminate. The upper and lower parts of the vessel are decorated with a recessed linear geometric ornament. Below the rim, there are 3-4 horizontal lines, in one place additionally decorated with longitudinal specks. Below these lines, there are hatched triangles with the apex pointing downwards. In the lower part, there is another horizontal line from which triangular figures ascend (fig. 4,6).

4. Stone axe of asymmetrical rhombic shape with a drilled hole. The blade is straight, the butt is rounded. It is made of gray stone. Height – 12.5 cm, thickness – 6.5 cm, width – 4.5 cm, diameter of the hole – 2.8 cm, the hole narrows slightly in the middle (fig. 4,7).

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The burial complexes from Husykova Hill share numerous similarities with other mound burials of the Bronze Age Forest-Steppe Dnister

region in terms of the topography and planigraphy of the necropolis, the size of the mounds, the burial goods, and other features of the burial rite, primarily the flexed position of the skeleton. However, the lack of burial goods in a number of burials complicates their cultural attribution. In the future, the chronological position of such complexes is planned to be clarified by means of radiocarbon dating. In the present study, the available data will be the focus of our analysis.

A stone axe with a drilled hole was discovered in burial 3 of mound 12, which was overlain by a burial 1 dated to the Komariv culture. Such axes are considered to be quite common for Corded Ware cultures of Western Ukraine [Sveshnikov 1971, 302, 304; 1974, 30, 33, 35, 36, 48, 60-64; Sveshnikov 1985, 377-380; Voitovich 2012, 150; Voitovich 2014, 127-128; Voitovich 2016, 99-102; Voitovich 2021, 164]. The Husykova Hill site is situated within the territory of the Podillia group of the Subcarpathian Corded Ware culture [Sveshnikov 1971, 303-304; Sveshnikov 1974, 54-71]. The axe from Husykova Hill differs from its counterparts discovered at sites of the Subcarpathian Corded Ware culture [Sveshnikov 1974, ris. 4, 6, 19; 6, 13; 7, 10, 11; 9, 14, 20; 11, 2, 7; 13, 3-8; 15, 5, 6, 9, 12; 17, 11; Włodarczak 2006, tab. XXII; Voitovich 2012, ris. 2, 18-19; 2014, ris. 17, 4-7; 24, 5, 6; Okhrimenko *et al.* 2016, ris. 1, 3-15] by its comparatively smaller butt and slightly different proportions. Among the specimens of a similar shape, we may mention the finds from barrow 3 (grave 1) near Kolokolyn [Sveshnikov 1974, ris. 11, 8], barrow 1 near Sirnyky [Sveshnikov 1974, ris. 10, 7], barrow 6 near Kachanivka, and also from Vorvulyntsi [Sveshnikov 1974, ris. 11, 3, 10], although in the last three cases the butt is somewhat more massive. During the Komariv period, the number of drilled axes declines significantly. It is noted that a significant portion of them, found in fragments, originate from settlements [Berezanskaia 1972, 107; Berezanskaia 1982, 59]. Among the rare finds in Dnister mounds are axes from mounds 16(14)/1931 and 48 of the eponymous burial ground in Komariv [Makarowicz *et al.* 2016, ris. IV, 334; VIII, 174]. It is also notable that drilled hammers and axes in the Middle Dnister region were utilized until the Pre-Scythian period (9th-8th centuries BC), due to the persistence of stone processing traditions in the region [Shovkoplias, Maksimov 1952, 97, ris. 3, 3; Smirnova, Kashuba 1988, 18, 19; Mogilov 2021, 105].

It is noteworthy that a number of characteristics observed in the burial rituals of the Husykova Hill burial ground are also present in other necropolises belonging to the Upper Dnister and Podillia groups of the Subcarpathian Corded Ware culture. These include the location of the burial ground on a watershed, the arrangement of mounds in a chain, and the prevalence of single burials in pits containing skeletons in a flexed position. The most notable similarities are observed with the Podillia group, which is characterized by small groups of low mounds, with the largest not exceeding 2m in height [Sveshnikov 1971, 302-303; Sveshnikov 1974, 29-30, 45-47; Sveshnikov 1985, 377-379; Voitovich 2014, 110-112; Voitovich 2016, 70-71; Voitovich 2021, 88-89, 94, 100]. In light of the considerable diversity of the orientation of the skeletons, it is evident that the eastern orientation cannot be considered an exception, despite the predominant western direction on the Dnister river region [Sveshnikov 1974, 29, 35, 45, 47, 55, 58; Voitovich 2014, 112; Voitovich 2021, 100]. Indeed, examples of eastern orientation are also known in the region [Voitovich 2021, 100]. Additionally, the practice of lining the grave walls with stone is also attested to in the burials of the Podillia group of Subcarpathian Corded Ware culture [Sveshnikov 1974, 56]. However, this custom also existed during the Komariv period [Berezanskaia 1972, 140]. It is also noteworthy to mention the central burial 2 of mound 11. It is hypothesized that this burial could be the primary one, or at least could precede the inlet burial 1, which is dated to the Komariv period. Furthermore, it can be hypothesized that one of the three individuals buried in this collective burial had their head oriented to the northeast.

The settlement of the Corded Ware culture with which the burial ground on Husykova Hill could be connected has not yet been discovered. However, in general, the sites of this cultural circle are known in the region and are included in the Podillia group of the Subcarpathian Corded Ware culture [Sveshnikov 1974, ris. 3]. In the vicinity of the former district center Horodok in the 1960s, three flexed burials were discovered. A brief publication only provided a succinct description of the burials, attributing them to the Komariv culture [Prikhodniuk 1975, 89; Vinokur *et al.* 1984, 29]. However, a fragment of a vessel with a distinctive “cord” or-

namentation beneath the rim, which is currently stored in the Kamianets-Podilskyi National University's collections, indicates that the complex belongs to the Corded Ware cultural circle. The mounds of the Subcarpathian culture are known to have been constructed both to the south, in the vicinity of Zavadynsi, and to the west, on the right bank of the Zbruch River, near the villages of Lysychyntsi, Ostapie, Khorostkiv, and Klymkivtsi. Additionally, burials have been discovered in the Dnister region, in the vicinity of Studenytsia and Kyseliv [Sveshnikov 1974, 31, 55-56].

The necropolis on Husykova Hill continued to exist during the Komariv period. During this time, a number of graves were dug into the mounds. A Komariv vessel with vase-like outlines was discovered in burial 1 of mound 12, which overlay burial 3. It was decorated with a typical recessed ornament consisting of horizontal lines, to which hatched triangles were added. The only artifact discovered in burial 1 of mound 11 was a flint flake. However, 14C date (1615-1447 BC) obtained by the Poznań Radiocarbon Laboratory<sup>5</sup> indicates that this burial is chronologically close to the Komariv culture. This date contributes to the substantial corpus of 14C dates for the Trzciniec-Komariv cultural circle, and it is consistent with them.

Although the Komariv burials were dug into the existing barrows, the topography of burials in necropolises on watersheds, where the mounds are arranged in a chain, generally does not deviate from the Trzciniec-Komariv burial rites [Makarowicz 2011, ris. 6-11]. Such features as several burials under the mound and single burials in pits with the predominance of the flexed position of the body on the side (along with the presence of cremations) are common for the Trzciniec-Komariv cultural circle [Lagodovs'ka 1948, 69, 76; Lagodovs'ka, Zakharuk 1956, 73; Sveshnikov 1968, 164; Berezanskaia 1982, 55; Berezanskaia, Goshko, Samoliuk 2004, 112-113; Lysenko 2018, 99]. Furthermore, numerous necropolises exhibit a notable proportion of burials oriented towards the west [Sveshnikov 1968, 164; Berezanskaia

5. Oxcal program, version 4.3.2 [Ramsey 2017, 1809-1833], IntCal 13 calibration curve [Reimer *et al.* 2013, 1869-1887], the work was performed within the project “Dynamics of prehistoric culture: comprehensive analysis of records from Central and Southeastern Europe” (2018/29/ B / HS 3/01201; Iwona Sobkowiak-Tabaka, PI) funded by the National Science Center, Poland.

1982, 55]. These characteristics are consistent with the observed ritual practices in other burials of the Trzciniec-Komariv cultural circle [Berezanskaia 1972, 57-60, 70; Berezanskaia 1982, 51]. Typical archaeological finds associated with the Komariv culture include vessels with characteristic decoration. This motif can be observed on a variety of ceramic vessels from Komariv culture sites, particularly on pots that may have additional handles [Lysenko *et al.* 2015a, 11-49; ris. 4, 4; 5, 3; 13, 3; 17, 1, 5; Makarowicz 2016, ris. 19, 8; Makarowicz *et al.* 2016, ris. IV, 314, 317, 323; VIII, 156, 4], vases or bowls, sometimes ladles and cups [Lysenko *et al.* 2015a, ris. 6, 3; 7, 1; 8, 15; Makarowicz 2016, ris. 19,6; Makarowicz, Szmyt 2016, 20, ris. 3; 8, 1; Makarowicz *et al.* 2016, ris. IV, 304, 306, 313, 325; VIII: 129, 167; XI: 37, 2; XIII, 13; Makarowicz, Lysenko, Kochkin 2013, 18, ris. 9, 15]. A variety of flint tools are quite common on the sites of the Trzciniec-Komariv cultural circle, although their number is somewhat smaller for the Komariv culture. In the burials of the Dnister region their number also decreases in comparison to the previous period. Furthermore, a certain degree of carelessness is noted in the production of flint artefacts [Berezanskaia 1972, 93, 97, 104, 144; Berezanskaia 1982, 52].

The Komariv burials from Husykova Hill are slightly shifted to the east from the Upper Dnister complexes and are located in an area with a lower concentration of such sites [Makarowicz 2011, ris. 2; Makarowicz *et al.* 2016, ris. 0, 1; III, 1; Makarowicz, Cwaliński, Romaniszyn 2016, fig. 1; Romaniszyn *et al.* 2023, fig. 2]. However, they organically fit into the already quite large series of burial complexes of this culture in the Forest-Steppe Dnister region. As previously noted, the flat burials in the nearby Horodok are attributed to the Komariv culture [Prikladniuk 1975, 89]. However, some of them, based on the pottery recovered at the site, may belong to the Corded Ware cultural circle. In the Zbruch region, the discovery of Komariv burials has been documented in Sokyryntsy [Okhrimenko, Lokaichuk, Skliarenko 2017, 6; Romanishshin *et al.* 2017, 244] and Husiatyn [Romaniszyn *et al.* 2023, fig. 2.]. To the south, on the Dnister, near Luka Vrublivetska, fragments of Komariv pottery and isolated human bones were discovered beneath the Pre-Scythian mound 5, leading to the assumption that a destroyed Komariv burial may have been

located here [Shovkoplias, Maksimov 1952, 99-100, table. II, 1-3, 7]. It seems probable that the number of burials of the Komariv culture in the Middle Dnister and Upper Prut regions will increase in the future, since the settlements of this population are known all over this area. These sites still require further research, although the situation is better compared to the earlier settlements of the Subcarpathian Corded Ware culture. Settlements with Komariv layers were excavated in Magala [Smirnova 1976, 118] and Nezvysko [Smirnova 1974]. Sometimes it was possible to record only separate archaeological finds of this culture on the settlements, without any apparent connection to specific features: Dolyniany [Smirnova 1981, ris. 16; Smirnova 2000, ris. 3], Komariv [Smishko 1962, 29-30.]. In the latter locality, the Komariv ceramics was also brought to the Early Scythian mound of the Western Podilia group, along with the soil transported from the neighboring settlement [Mogilov, Reida, Mostoviy 2023, 98-99]. A number of other settlements are known from the results of archaeological surveys [Vinokur *et al.* 1984, 212].

With regard to the chronology of the Komariv sites [Berezanskaia 1982, 59], it is important to note that some researches indicate that the classical monuments of this culture are dated to the 16th (second half of the 17th) – 13th centuries BC [Lysenko 2005, 39-45; Lysenko 2017, 24]. Radiocarbon dates for number of burials extend even into earlier centuries [Makarowicz, Cwaliński, Romaniszyn 2016, 140, 144, tab. 2; Romaniszyn, Niebieszczański, Makarowicz 2020, 567, fig. 5]. It cannot be ruled out that the burials from Husykova Hill are dated to an earlier period within this timespan. The radiocarbon date (1615-1447 BC) obtained for burial 1 of mound 11 lends support to this assumption. The type and decoration of the vessel found in burial 1 of kurgan 12 point to not the latest chronological position of this burial. In any case, the ornamentation of this vessel aligns well with the decoration of ceramics from a number of early mounds. One such analogy is the pottery from the Bukivna mounds. Radiocarbon dates available for Bukivna complexes point to the second quarter of the 2nd millennium BC [Lysenko *et al.* 2015a, 19; Lysenko *et al.* 2015b, 74-75]. Another illustrative example is the pottery from the mound near Netishyn [Berezanskaia, Goshko, Samoliuk 2004, 119, ris. 4, 7].

With regard to the other burials from Husykova Hill, which did not yield any distinctive burial goods, the clarification of their dating is a matter for future research. It should be noted that due to the compact location of the burials in the specific sector of the mound, the commonality of other features of the funeral rite (position of the skeleton, its orientation) creates the impression of cultural homogeneity with burials described above. It is noteworthy to highlight burial 3 of mound 11, where only a skull accompanied by a flint flake was discovered. The characteristics of this burial are pertinent in the light of the discussion on manifestations of the cult of the head, which some researchers see in burial rites of the population of the Subcarpathian Corded Ware culture. For instance, in barrow 2 near Bugliv, a man was buried without a head. In a female burial, the skull was placed in a separate pit near her feet, while a cup was placed instead of the skull [Sveshnikov 1974, 55]. S.D. Lysenko hypothesizes that examples of decapitation can be observed in the burials of the subsequent Komariv culture [Lysenko 2011, 67]. Therefore, it can be inferred that the tradition of separate head burials may have persisted for a considerable period of time in the region. An illustrative example of this ritual practice can be found also in a number of Pre-Scythian burials [Gutsal 2004, 34-42].

In light of the aforementioned discussion on the cult of the head and decapitation during the Corded Ware and Komariv periods, the results of the anthropological expertise are crucial. It is important to note that no traces of dememoration were found during the analysis of the human remains from kurgans 11 and 12. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that all the bones are in a poor state of preservation and have traces of taphonomic changes on them. A number of individuals have evidence of animal gnawing on the bones. The burials are located close to the surface, and there are indications of posthumous intrusion into the mounds. Therefore, it is possible that the fragmented state of the majority of the skeletons is explained by taphonomic processes.

The minimum number of individuals identified during the anthropological study of the human remains from both mounds is ten, comprising four males, four females, and two adult individuals of undetermined sex. It is notable that

the individuals from collective burial 2 of kurgan 11 differ from those discovered in other burials in terms of skeletal robustness and the presence of physical activity markers (particularly the very well pronounced pilaster). This suggests that the individuals from this burial may have had a different lifestyle and possibly belonged to a different population than those from other burials. Among the dental characteristics of the series from Husykova Hill, the absence of an enamel extension is notable (the feature could be recorded in four cases). For the paleopathological profile of this sample, interproximal grooves, dental calculus, enamel fracture, and enamel hypoplasia are uncharacteristic. This profile distinguishes the studied group from the population of the Bronze Age steppe zone, where abundant dental calculus, which is recorded even in children, and high frequencies of hypoplasia, enamel fracture, and interproximal grooves are observed [Schultz 1991, 30; Buzhilova 2005, 58, 123; Kozak 2016, 272; 2020; Ushkova 2022]. These differences in the paleopathological characteristics of the population of different geographical zones of Ukraine during the Bronze Age may be indicative of differences in dietary habits. It is possible that Bronze Age population of Podillia consumed smaller proportion of meat products and solid food in comparison with the populations of the steppe zone [Buzhilova 2005, 33, 57-58; Kozak 2016, 272; Kozak 2020; Ushkova 2022]. Additionally, the population of Podillia may have experienced less stress loads on the organism during childhood. This conclusion can be inferred from the absence of enamel hypoplasia in the sample [Buzhilova 2005, 49; Kozak 2016, 272; Kozak 2020, 260-261]. It is noteworthy that a comparable paleopathological profile is observed in some Corded Ware groups [Balciunene 1985a; Balciunene 1985b; Szczepanek, Haduch 2013; Scheibner 2016, Tab. A-11].

The construction of the burial mounds excavated on Husykova Hill is of significant importance because it provides insights into the genesis of burial rites of the Early Iron Age in the Middle Dnister region. It can be stated that the Pre-Scythian and Scythian tradition of constructing mounds from stones can be traced back to the Bronze Age period. Such barrows are known in the region in the Pre-Scythian period [Shovkopliias, Maksimov 1952, 90-102; Artamonov 1955, 85; Smirnova 1977,

94-98; Smirnova 1982, 31-32; Gutsal 2019, 148-157]. In the Early Scythian period, stone constructions were also prevalent in the mounds [Gutsal 1980, 76-77; Mogilov 2013, 203-205; Mogilov 2020, 137]. The tradition of delineating grave walls with stones persists during the Early Iron Age. In the Pre-Scythian period, this practice was observed in both flat [Gutsal 1998, 34-35] and kurgan burials. [Gutsal 1995, 94-95; Gutsal 2006, 47-50]. This practice persisted in the region at the turn of the Pre-Scythian and Scythian eras [Gutsal *et al.* 2004, 114-115; Gutsal, Gutsal, Mogilov 2023, 112]. During the Early Scythian period, it evolved and became more complex with the construction of much larger tombs [Gutsal, Gutsal, Mogilov 2022, 91]. It also occurred in flat burials, which were rare in this period [Ossowski 1891, 27-34]. It is also worthy of note that the placement of large stones on the periphery of the kurgans is also documented in both the Pre-Scythian period [Shovkopliias 1952, 6] and the Scythian era [Gutsal *et al.* 2008, 7].

The tradition of burials in a flexed position also persists in the Middle Dnister region. In the

Pre-Scythian period, this was the dominant practice in the late Chornolissia-Zhabotyn burials [Shovkopliias 1952, 6; Gutsal 2019, 150; Mogilov 2010, 108]. In the Early Scythian period, the flexed position prevailed among inhumations [Mogilov 2011, 222], in contrast to the more eastern forest-steppe and the steppe regions, where straightened burials dominated. This may indicate the autochthony of a significant part of the population of the Middle Dnister region in the Early Iron Age.

The study of the Bronze Age burial complexes on Husykova Hill contributes to our understanding of burial and memorial rites, as well as the material culture of the population of the Middle Dnister region during the Bronze Age. This region has not yet been sufficiently studied in this regard. In the future, radiocarbon dating of the human remains from the burial mounds will enable the creation of an absolute chronology scale, thereby elucidating the sequence of construction of the burial complexes of this necropolis over an extended period of time.

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