



Climate changes and paleohistorical processes at North-Western coast of Black Sea on the Pleistocene-Holocene boundary: catastrophe or cultural transformation?

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Pleistocene-Holocene boundary traditionally is regarded as important margin in human history on which natural and cultural processes intersection has resulted in alluring and unequivocal mosaic of human livelihood activity and social life. On the North-Western coast of Black Sea these events are subject of systematical interdisciplinary studies over the second half of XXth century. Collected at this region archaeological, paleontological, palynological, geomorphological database gives chance to verify existing controversy between catastrophic and evolutionary character of historical processes happened there at Dryas III – Preboreal period of Holocene.

From archaeological point of view we have series of evidences of principal transformation of livelihood system and population ethnic and social mosaic in comparison with LGM. Diminution of archaeological sites number per square unit, disappearance of long-lasting big settlements, absolute predominance of short-term sites and preponderance of small non-gregarious game bones in faunal assemblages implies significant reduction of population density, increase of separate group mobility, formation of dispersal occupational system based on extensive economy during Dryas III – Preboreal. It is in full conformance with modifications in character of tool processing and functional characteristics. Such changes in social behaviour and mobility system were accompanied with ethnic transformation of local population, and traditionally altogether it implies beginning of new stage of human history – Mesolithic one.

On the other hand, there are no firm arguments in favor of these processes interpretation as catastrophic ones, i.e. happened quickly and caused by simultaneous environmental processes. In sediments of archaeological sites we have no reliable evidences of abrupt climate and palaeogeography changes happened in the region just at the Dryas III – Preboreal border. No one of mentioned facts of local population livelihood activity, social and ethnic mosaic changes could be referred directly with the Dryas III – Preboreal border. First displays of some of them are traced as early as Allerod, and during Dryas III and Preboreal they become stable tendencies. Moreover, in some cases main components of paleohistorical processes transformed non-simultaneously: procurement system and mobility strategies are changing easier in comparison with ethnic mosaic, and archaeologically it could be traced already at the beginning of Dryas III. Some ethnic groups (like Anetivka) have successfully adapted to the new situation, slightly modifying only their livelihood activity. Background of others (e.g., of Tsarinka-Rogalik unit) have been formed at Allerod and since Dryas III till the Boreal their main traits are changing evolutionary. Another argument refuting catastrophic character of cultural history of inhabitants of North-Western coast of Back Sea during Dryas III – Preboreal emphasizes on spatial variability of ecological and cultural situation in different patches of the region under study which implies influence of series multi-oriented agencies and factors.

So, cultural transformation happened at that time was purely adaptive in its essence; its time, place and scale varied in deep dependence with local peculiarities of climate and environment changes.