

Sofia S. Berezanska (15 May 1924 – 2 May 2024)

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CHRONICLE

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SOFIA S. BEREZANSKA (15 May 1924 – 2 May 2024)



After V. V. Otroshchchenko 2014

Professor Sofia S. Berezanska, an outstanding Ukrainian archaeologist, was born on May 15, 1924, in Kamianets-Podilskyi, into a noble family with intellectual traditions. Her father, Stanislav Baranovich, served as an officer in the Russian army and as adjutant to General Aleksei Brusilov. In 1932, the father of Sofia S. Berezanska was arrested, and the family was deported to Astrakhan. Following the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the Baranovich family was resettled in northern Kazakhstan (Cherniakov 2005, 6). Recalling

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those years, Sofia S. Berezanska wrote: 'In the village, the families of deportees were taken in by the Kazakhs as they needed 'slaves'. We ended up with a Ukrainian who, by some miracle, found himself in these lands. My father made me tend cows, turned my mother into a seamstress, and suggested I attend a tractor-driving course in a neighbouring village. (...) The training lasted all winter. In the spring, I climbed onto a tractor. I worked at sowing and later at harvest' (Babirov 2019).

Determined to pursue an education, she left Astrakhan illegally. She travelled to Kyzylorda (in south-central Kazakhstan), where she entered the Faculty of History of the United Ukrainian State University, an institution created from evacuated Kyiv and Kharkiv universities (ed. Zhmudskiy 1959, 368, 369). She completed her degree in history at Taras Shevchenko University in Kyiv in 1948. Immediately afterwards (1948-1949), she worked at the Kherson Historical and Archaeological Museum as a senior researcher, where she organised collections, systematised the library, and updated the archaeological exhibition (Cherniakov 2005, 6, 7; Otroshchenko 2024).

From 1949 to 1953, she pursued postgraduate studies at the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, where she defended her candidate dissertation (equivalent to a PhD in Russian and Ukrainian academic systems) under the supervision of Petr P. Yefimenko. The work was entitled 'Antiquities of the Pre-Scythian Period in the Uman Region and their Historical Significance' ('Пам'ятки передскіфського часу на Уманщині та їх історичне значення') and it focused above all on the Belogradovo culture and addressed, among other issues, the phenomenon of *zolnik* (Cherniakov 2005, 6, 7; Otroshchenko 2014, 130; 2024).

In 1953, she joined the Department of Prehistoric Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (since 1991, the Institute of Archaeology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine) as a junior researcher. She remained at this institution until her retirement in 1997, progressing through the positions of senior researcher (from 1966) and, in the years 1987-1997, principal researcher (Otroshchenko 2024).

In 1977, she obtained the degree of Doctor of Historical Sciences (habilitation). The results of her habilitation thesis, entitled 'Northern Ukraine in the Bronze Age' ('Північна Україна за доби бронзи'), were published within the collective monograph 'Bronze Age Cultures on the Territory of Ukraine' ('Культуры эпохи бронзы на территории Украины') (Berezanskaya *et al.* 1986). This work offered, for the first time, a comprehensive characterisation of four cultures: the Multi-roller pottery culture, the Sabatinovka culture, the Srubnaya culture, and the Belozerka culture (Otroshchenko 2003 [2025]; 2024).

The scholarly interests of S. S. Berezanska focused primarily on the Bronze Age of northern Ukraine. In this field, she conducted numerous excavations and published most of her works. She participated in approximately 40 archaeological expeditions (Otroshchenko 2003 [2025]). Already as a student, she joined the 'Great Kyiv' ('Великий Київ') expedition (1946-1959). From the early 1960s, she directed fieldwork herself. Among her most

significant investigations were excavations at Pustynka, Chernihiv region – a settlement from the late Trzciniec culture (Berezanskaya 1974); at Usovoje Ozero, Donetsk region – a Srubnaya culture settlement (Berezanskaya 1990); and at Hordiivka, Vinnytsa region – a barrow cemetery of the Bronze and Early Iron Ages, excavated in 1987–1988 together with B. I. Lobai and V. I. Klochko (Berezanska and Lobai 1994; Berezanskaja 1998; 1999; Berezanskaja and Kločko 1998; 2011).

Professor Berezanska remained professionally active for more than a decade even after her retirement. At the turn of the 21st century, she conducted her last fieldwork at a Trzciniec culture barrow cemetery in Netishyn, Volhynia (Berezanska *et al.* 2003; Berezanska *et al.* 2004).

Through years of research, both field and analytical, S. S. Berezanska identified and defined several new cultural phenomena, including the Multi-roller pottery and Lebedev cultures. She also significantly extended the eastern range of the Trzciniec culture ('Eastern Trzciniec culture') and deepened knowledge of other groups such as the Bondarycha, Marianovka, Abaschevo and Srubnaya cultures. Through these contributions, she played a significant role in systematising and expanding our understanding of Bronze Age and Early Iron Age communities across the forest, forest-steppe, and, to a lesser extent, the steppe zones of Ukraine.

During her 1960s excavations at Pustynka, she also developed a methodology for identifying and reconstructing the spatial organisation of settlement sites (Otroshchenko 2003 [2025]).

The scholarly output of S. S. Berezanska includes five authored or co-authored monographs (Berezanska 1964; Berezanskaya 1972; 1974; 1982; 1990; Berezanskaja and Kločko 1998; Berezanska and Klochko 2011), five collective volumes (*e.g.*, Berezanskaya *et al.* 1986; 1994), and over one hundred scholarly papers. She was also a co-author of the first monumental publication, 'Archaeology of the Ukrainian SSR' ('Археология Украинской ССР'), for which she prepared nine chapters (Artemenko ed. 1985).

Professor Berezanska's versatility as a researcher is striking. Her interests encompassed the whole of the Bronze Age and the beginnings of the Iron Age across a vast territory. She investigated economic issues (subsistence strategies, resource acquisition, and non-agricultural production such as mining, flintworking, and bronze metallurgy), as well as spiritual culture and the organisation of prehistoric societies. She also engaged with questions of ethnicity (Cherniakov 2005).

Scholars researching her legacy emphasise that she was both an undisputed authority and an informal leader, the founder of a research school under whose guidance doctoral and postdoctoral theses were written (Otroshchenko 2014, 131).

Her work was well known and highly regarded, also among Polish archaeologists (see Gurba 2005). She maintained close scientific and personal ties with colleagues in Poland, especially those in Poznań and Lublin. She gave lectures, both open and obligatory, at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, and frequently hosted Polish scholars in

Kyiv, providing them with access to her research materials and offering generous assistance.

S. S. Berezanska was a prominent figure in the Ukrainian scientific world (Mezentseva 1997, 37; Otroshchenko 2003 [2025]) and a person of great kindness and integrity.

Professor Sofia S. Berezanska passed away in Kyiv on May 2, 2024. She has left a lasting mark on science and in our memories.

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