

**ESZTER ISTVÁNOVITS / VALÉRIA KULCSÁR, Sarmatians – History and Archaeology of a Forgotten People.** Monographien des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums volume 123. Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum, Mainz 2017. € 90.00. ISBN 978-3-88467-237-2. 501 pages, 329 illustrations.

The book of well-known Hungarian archaeologists Eszter Istvánovits and Valéria Kulcsár offers a review of the history and archaeology of the Sarmatians. This voluminous monograph contains excellent illustrations, abundant bibliography and detailed indices of places, names and subjects. Sarmatian studies possess a prominent position in Eastern European archaeology, which is why the most publications discussing the Sarmatians are written in Russian and therefore not available for many Western archaeologists.

The introduction supplies geographical characteristics of the Eurasian steppe (pp. 3–14). The first nomads appeared in the Eurasian steppe in the Early Iron Age, known as Cimmerians and Scythians. The Scythians are particularly important for the research into the origins of the Sarmatians, as they were, according to the famous legend of the Amazons retold by Herodotus, related to the beginning of the ethnogenesis of the Sarmatians. The authors stress that, in general terms, the Sauromatians and the Sarmatians, known from later sources, were the same ethnos (pp. 48–53). They reasonably consider that the Sauromatians descended from the Scythians, and their origin was related to the region in between of the rivers Don, Volga and Ural (p. 30; fig. 25). Regarding the linguistic attribution of the Sauromatians, Herodotus stated that their language was Scythian, and it is argued that the Scythians were Iranian-speaking (Herodotus, IV. 110–117).

The Sauromatians appeared in textual sources describing the events of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC, and synchronous and earlier archaeological finds are interpreted as Sauromatian / Sarmatian. The period of transition from the Bronze Age steppe civilisations to the Sauromatian culture is dated to the 8<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. The earliest phase of this culture is characterised by rich “chiefly” burials, such as Filippovka near Orenburg, Russia (pp. 35–48), and the Sarmatian animal style resembling the Scythian animal style. In archaeological terms, Sarmatian antiquities are divided into three phases, Early, Middle and Late Sarmatian. The Early Sarmatian period dates from the 4<sup>th</sup> to mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century BC (pp. 53–80). According to archaeological data, since the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BC Sarmatian groups were migrating to the south, towards the Kuban, to the borders of the Bosphoran Kingdom, where the Sarmatian-Greek contacts resulted in the formation of a synthetic Iranian-Hellenic culture (pp. 56–78; figs 44, 46). The authors state that the time of the Sarmatian expansion broadly coincides with the activities of the Parthians and Hsiung-nu in the East. Simultaneously, from the 4<sup>th</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, the number of burials in the steppe to the south of the Urals rapidly increased (p. 79). Perhaps these events were related in some way.

The authors pay considerable attention to the Sarmatians’ presence in the northern Black Sea area in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC. The well-known inscription of Protogenes from the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC, addressing events related to the Greek city of Olbia located at the estuary of the Southern Bug, mentions in particular the Sarmatian tribe of the Saii with their king Saitaphernes (pp. 101 f.). To the west of Olbia, the Sarmatians had to establish contacts with the Dacians and their mid-1<sup>st</sup> century BC leader Buresbista. Simultaneously, as archaeological evidence suggests, Sarmatians in the Middle Dnieper area came up against the people of the Zarubintsy culture, which is often attributed to the Bastarnians (see in particular Mark B. ШЧУКИН, e. g.: *Rome and the Barbarians in Central and Eastern Europe. 1<sup>st</sup> Century B. C. – 1<sup>st</sup> Century A. D.* [Oxford 1989]); other researchers such as Andreï OBLOMSKY and Rostislav TERPILOVSKY consider the people of the Zarubintsy culture as the ancestors of historical Slavs – the Venedi / Venethi (A. Обломский / Р. Терпиловский [ред.], *Познезарубинецкие памятники на территории*

Украины [вторая половина I–II в. н. э.] [The Sites of the Civilization of Late Zarubintsy on the Territory of Ukraine (Second Half of 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> Century AD)] [Москва 2010] p. 332). This military conflict ended with the disappearance of the Zarubintsy culture and the retreat of the remnants of its people to the southern part of the forest zone of Eastern Europe by the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century AD (p. 103).

I doubt the authors' interpretation of Sarmatian finds in the forest zone from the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries AD as an evidence of the Sarmatians' contacts, matrimonial in particular, with the population of the post-Zarubintsy culture (p. 103). In fact, there are very few typically Sarmatian artefacts discovered in the forest zone of Eastern Europe. Also written sources give no evidence: Tacitus, who created rather detailed accounts of the Eastern European Barbaricum in the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, did not mention any kind of subversion of settled barbarians to the Sarmatians, and the rest of ancient historians also do not possess such information. Moreover, if Strabo is to be trusted, in the age preceding the period in question, i. e. in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, the Sarmatian tribe of the Roxolans joined the alliance headed by the Bastarnae, so the former were rather subordinated to the latter. As for the matrimonial alliances, Tacitus mentioned that the Sarmatians established them not with the forest zone populations, but rather with the Bastarnae, who in the period in question lived in the Lower Danube area, according to reliable accounts of written sources. Therefore, the Sarmatians-Bastarnae relations should be analysed in the context of the Lower Danube history, where the Sarmatians were well known to ancient historians in the period in question (pp. 103–106).

The Sarmatian civilisation reached its climax from the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, which corresponds to the first half of the Middle Sarmatian period (p. 84). From this period, about 4000 Sarmatian graves are known in the Black Sea steppe to the west of the Don. The number of graves to the east of the Don also increased (pp. 85 f.). It was the time when written sources indicate that the Sarmatians played a prominent role in the military and political sphere of the Black Sea area, the time of the war between Rome and King Mithridates VI Eupator of Pontos, who also was the master of the Cimmerian Bosporos. Sources such as Strabo and epigraphic evidence also reveal that the Sarmatians established close military and political connections to the Bosporan Kingdom, and that they participated in internal struggles in Bosporos, as well as in the relations between Bosporos, the Scythian kingdom (led by King Palacus) and Chersonese in the Crimea (pp. 94–98, 114–122). In relation to the above-said events, the sources mention the names of Sarmatian *gentes* in the Northern Black Sea area, such as the Siraci, Iazyges, Urgi, Roxolani, Aorsi or the “royal” Sarmatians (pp. 86–93).

The situation changed drastically in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, which is reflected in Pliny the Elder's texts (pp. 106–109). According to Pliny (towards AD 77–79), the Iazyges now are mentioned not for the Black sea area but appear in the Carpathian basin, and the Aorsi, Roxolani and Alans obviously occupied the steppe between the Dnieper and the Danube, with the Aorsi playing the leading part. The authors consider that the Aorsi were related to the famous king Pharzoios, who subordinated Olbia, and that someone from his dynasty, his son or his heir, was buried in the well-known “chieftain” grave of Porogi, on the left bank of the Dnieper (p. 109).

Archaeological finds from the second half of the Middle Sarmatian period (mid-1<sup>st</sup> to mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD) are also numerous (pp. 122–139). Famous “princely” graves which are best represented in the Lower Don area at Khokhlach, Sadovyi, Kobiakovo and Dachi date to this period. This age is typical of the so-called “gold-and-turquoise” style, definitely of eastern, Asiatic origin. The book provides excellent illustrations of such finds (figs 98–108). There are reasons to relate these rich graves located in the Don area to the Alans who came from the East (pp. 139–158).

A great part of the volume is dedicated to the archaeology of the Late Sarmatian period (mid-2<sup>nd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> century AD) (pp. 158–181). Although the number of Sarmatian graves in the Pontic steppe became much smaller than in the previous period, a concentration of Sarmatian graves is documented in the territory of modern Moldavia. The graves in the Don area from the Later Sarmatian period are thought to relate to the Alans-Tanaitae accounted to by Ammianus Marcellinus. Among them are extraordinarily rich burials, such as Azov-Aerodrom or Komarov. However, burials of these types are also known in other areas, such as Ceauș and Cazacchia in the Lower Danube area (figs 141; 142). Simultaneously, in the Lower Volga area in the east, burials like Barrow 51 at Susly are documented, which testify to the migration of new population groups from the East. “Western” elements penetrated into the culture of the northern Black Sea Sarmatians, supplying evidence of the appearance of eastern Germanic tribes, primarily the Goths. A new archaeological culture developed called Cherniakhov, which contains a considerable Germanic component (pp. 171–181).

A large part of the book addresses the Sarmatians in the Carpathian basin (pp. 183–397). The authors provide a detailed analysis of written and archaeological sources, uncovering specific periods of the development of the Sarmatian culture in the Carpathian area. The Sarmatian tribe of the Iazyges was for the first time documented in the Carpathians by Tacitus and Pliny in the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. They established themselves to the east of the Danube in the Great Hungarian Plain, perhaps in between of the Danube and the Tisza (fig. 143), though the first groups of the Sarmatians in the Carpathian basin possibly were not migrants but mercenaries of Germanic leader Vannis of the tribe of the Quadi, who lead a barbarian unit created by the Romans in the Middle Danube area (p. 187). The name of the *Iazyges metanastae* on Ptolemy’s map is sometimes interpreted as the indication that local Sarmatians were settled there by the Romans (p. 189). The Sarmatians in the area of modern Hungary are represented by big and well-researched cemeteries and settlements. Early Sarmatian graves in Hungarian territory form the “golden horizon” with rich gold ornaments among the grave goods (pp. 193, 194; fig. 145). The book supplies a detailed analysis of demonstrative types of artefacts (pp. 194–212). Particular attention is paid to the funeral rituals with inhumations being predominant (pp. 212–214). This material dates from the late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, thus reflecting the culture from the period a little later than the first settlers, when a great number of the Sarmatians already established themselves in the Great Hungarian Plain.

The authors rightly consider the Dacian Wars, when the Roman province of Dacia was established, as the crucial point in the history of the Danubian Sarmatians (pp. 216–254). The book supplies a detailed analysis of the Sarmatians’ relations with Rome in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD, especially in the context of the *expeditio Marcomannica* in AD 89, as well as the *expeditio Suebica et Sarmatica* in AD 96–98, when the Iazyges became the allies of Rome (pp. 216–221). The Romans created the province of Dacia, almost simultaneously with the appearance of numerous Sarmatian sites to the west of it, in the territory of modern Bačka and Banat. Perhaps these two events were related to each other (pp. 223–225; fig. 175). Archaeological finds supply evidence that in the course of the Dacian Wars the entire territory of modern eastern Hungary to the east of the Tisza found itself under Sarmatian control (pp. 234–236; fig. 176). Plausibly, it was the time when new groups of the Sarmatians arrived from the East, carrying new cultural elements with them (pp. 237–246). Moreover, the Sarmatians on the Danube kept vivid contacts with autochthonous populations of the areas under their control, with their Germanic neighbours and with the Roman Empire (pp. 246–254).

The Marcomannic Wars of AD 166–180 occupy an important place in the book (pp. 258–273). Danubian Sarmatians, the Iazyges in the first instance, played an important role in these wars. Archaeology documents the appearance of new cultural elements of the Sarmatians in this

period in the Middle Danube area, which was related to the migration of new Sarmatian groups from the East (pp. 273–288). Simultaneously, there appeared an influx of imported Roman wares, which could partly be spoils of war (pp. 281–284).

The period following the Marcomannic Wars up to the evacuation of Dacia by the Romans in AD 272 was relatively calm in the Middle Danube area, despite of a series of military conflicts (pp. 289–307). However, not far from there, in the Lower Danube and the northern Black Sea area, in the AD 250s–270s there developed the so-called Scythian Wars, related to military operations of the Goths and their allies. Increasing military activity of the barbarians in the Middle Danube area and the evacuation of Dacia by the Romans in AD 272 should be analysed within the framework of the Scythian Wars, after which the Danubian border stabilised for a century.

The period from the Tetrarchy to the Hunnic invasion is characterised by a new situation, when the Sarmatians in the Middle Danube area found themselves neighbouring with the Visigoths-Tervingi, who strengthened themselves in Transylvania, and the Pontic steppe was firmly blocked by the Ostrogoths-Greuthungi (pp. 307–367). According to archaeological materials in possession, the Vandals established themselves in the Upper Tisza area (p. 323).

In the period in question, the military conflict between the Roman Empire and the Sarmatians in the Middle Danube area aggravated. The relations between the Sarmatians and Rome developed in extraordinarily contradictory ways. On the one hand, there obviously was military conflict; on the other hand, the Sarmatian territory in modern eastern Hungary became the zone where the fortification system of Csörsz Dyke (Alföld Ramparts) was constructed, obviously with participation of the Romans, and following the Roman projects (pp. 343–358; fig. 276). Most likely, its aim was to protect the Sarmatian territory to the east and the north. In archaeological respect, the Sarmatians on the Danube in the Late Roman period are well studied. There were large cemeteries with inhumations, as well as settlements with workshops where ceramic ware was produced (pp. 361–367).

The invasion of the Huns terminated the domination of the Iranian-speaking nomads in the steppe (pp. 367–397). C. AD 375 the Huns defeated the Alans-Tanaitae and incorporated them into the Hunnish horde. Then the Huns attacked the Goths and, in result, the whole Pontic steppe appeared under the rule of the Huns. The time when the Huns established themselves in the Carpathian basin most likely was the AD 380s. Simultaneously, a large part of the Sarmatian population of the Carpathian Basin integrated into the Hunnic alliance, forming an agrarian base for the Huns and supplying them with auxiliary troops. Archaeological research has shown that the settled population of the Sarmatian cultural tradition remained in place (pp. 385 f.).

The final chapter of the monograph addresses the Sarmatians after the Sarmatian period (pp. 399–429), referring to antiquities of the Crimea, particularly such cemeteries as Luchistoe and Skalistoe, which the authors interpret as created by a mixed Gotho-Alanic population. In the eastern European steppes, there were no real archaeological traces of the Alans before the appearance of new ethnic groups of Alanic migrants from the North Caucasus in the first half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD. These newcomers, as well as local Turkic-speaking Bulgarians, created numerous sites of the Saltovo-Maiatskoe culture, associated with the population of the Khazarian kingdom (p. 402). In the Great Migration period and in the Early Middle Ages, numerous sites of the Iranian-speaking Alans existed in the North Caucasus (pp. 403–408). In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, separate groups of the Alans and the Sarmatians as Roman mercenaries and *foederatoi* established themselves in western Europe, where isolated finds of their artefacts remained. The final pages in the book (pp. 414–429) address the “Sarmatian myth” in the history of modern nations of western and central Europe, as well as mediaeval Iasi (Jászok) of Hungary. Regarding the real Sarmatians,

they were mentioned for the last time in the Danube area in the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD by Jordanes' *Getica* (pp. 421 f.).

Generally, the monograph under review creates a very positive impression. It comprises a great deal of information on the history and archaeology of Iranian-speaking peoples of the steppe, thus supplying modern scholars with an excellent research tool.

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Schlachtfeld-Archäologie ist „in“. Quer durch alle Zeitepochen und Kontinente hat sie sich in den vergangenen Jahrzehnten fast schon zu einem eigenständigen Forschungsgebiet etabliert. Der vorliegende Band hat sich das ambitionierte Ziel gesetzt, einen wichtigen Beitrag zu diesem Thema zu leisten. Darin werden die Ergebnisse des langjährigen wissenschaftlichen Forschungsprojekts „*Baecula*“ der Universität Jaén (Spanien) (2002–2011) vorgestellt, das von wechselnden Geldgebern gefördert wurde, in den ersten fünf Jahren von der Universität Jaén selbst (2002–2006), nachfolgend für dieselbe Dauer von der Junta de Andalucía und dem Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia (2007–2010/11). Um es vorweg zu nehmen: Allein die Vielzahl der eingesetzten Methoden und die Mannigfaltigkeit der daran anknüpfenden analytischen Überlegungen wirkt imponierend.

Auf der Grundlage ihrer jahrelangen intensiven Forschungen sehen die Autoren den eindeutigen Beweis dafür erbracht, dass es sich bei dem Höhenrücken Cerro de las Albahacas de Santo Tomé, Prov. Jaén, um das Schlachtfeld von *Baecula* von 208 v. Chr. handelt. Die Bedeutung des Fundplatzes wird dadurch verständlich, dass der dortige römische Sieg während des zweiten Punischen Krieges (218–201 v. Chr.) eine entscheidende Wegmarke bei der Verdrängung Karthagos von der Iberischen Halbinsel durch Rom bildet. Die Fundstelle liegt im östlichen Andalusien, ca. 40 km nordöstlich der Provinzhauptstadt Jaén. Nicht zuletzt aufgrund der auffälligen Namensgleichheit war das Schlachtfeld von *Baecula* stattdessen zuvor oft ca. 30 km weiter westlich bei Bailén lokalisiert worden. Das gilt auch für die deutschsprachige Forschung, die im Übrigen von den Autoren des Bandes kaum zu Rate gezogen wurde; vgl. zum Thema z. B. J. SEIBERT, Hannibal (Darmstadt 1993), bes. 371–373; DERS., Forschungen zu Hannibal (Darmstadt 1993), bes. 266 (mit Literatur).

Seit Beginn des Forschungsprojekts wurde laufend auf nationalen wie internationalen Tagungen über die jeweiligen Fortschritte berichtet, wie auch dem Literaturverzeichnis zu entnehmen ist. Die Ziele dieses Projekts galten nicht nur der Lokalisierung des Schlachtfeldes, sondern waren ungewöhnlich breit konzipiert: Untersucht werden sollten insbesondere die Besiedlungsgeschichte des Umlandes, die Lagerplätze der Kriegsparteien, Fragen der Logistik, der Ablauf der Ereignisse vor, während und nach der Schlacht, schließlich mögliche Auswirkungen auf das Umland. Außer-