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Lavinia Grumeza, *Sarmatian Cemeteries from Banat (late 1st - early 5th Centuries AD)*, Cluj-Napoca: Mega Publishing House, 2014, 414 p., ISBN 978-606-543-532-2.

The following book focuses on various historical traces left by the Sarmatians, funerary rites and rituals of the Sarmatians on the territory of Banat, starting from the study of funerary features (grave-cemetery) and the afferent archaeological inventory, linked with the contemporary historical and archaeological realities outside of this geographical area. The book is divided in seven chapter that approach us to the complex material culture of the Sarmatians, in Great Hungarian Plain, from funerary rite and rituals to chronology and other technical issues whom are regarding the finds from 1st to 5th within this area. A big aim of this study is to identify the Sarmatian groups inhabiting Banat by the end of the 1st century-early 5th century AD and to suggest a periodicity of this long timescale. From the introduction we have a clear point of view of how these nomads were linked with the historical aspects in this area. In addition with this, we can analyse the difficulties faced by nomad groups, herders or even warriors, in reaching the Carpathian Basin. They had to face limited territory, different climate (characterized by much rainfall) and overpopulation. These topographical barriers, climatologic and political made the Sarmatians develop novel survival techniques, among which also sedentariness (pp. 11-12).

The second chapter emphasizes the ***Chronology and the issue of the Sarmatian's advance in Banat***. In this stage of the research we have an extensive description of the Sarmatian time frame and, in the author's view, this chronological sequence could be divided in three parts.

1) **Early Sarmatian** period which has two stages: **a)** from the arrival of the Sarmatians in the Great Hungarian Plain-end of the 1st century/early 2nd century AD; **b)** from the end of the 1st century/ to early 2nd century AD-the Marcomannic Wars.

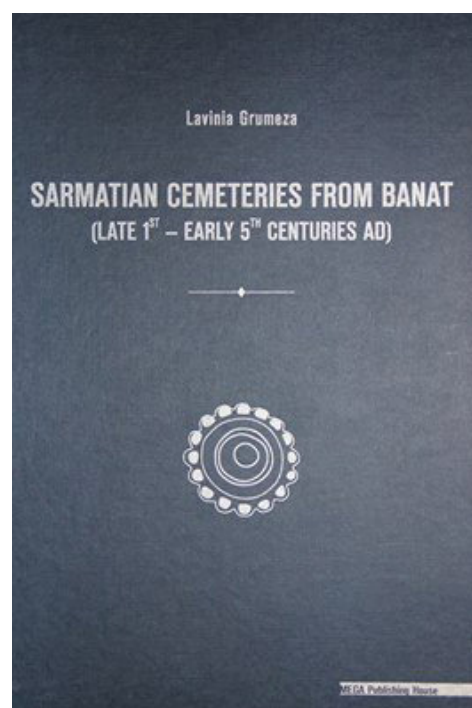
2) **Mid Sarmatian** period (the Marcomannic Wars-end of the 3rd century AD)

3) **Late Sarmatian** period which has four stages: **a)** from the abandonment of the province of Dacia- the institution of the Tetrarchy; **b)** Institution of the Tetrarchy and the establishment of a ***limes sarmatiae***; **c)** The Hunnic period (last third of the 4th century-mid 5th century AD); **d)** end of the Sarmatian epoch (mid 5th century AD-last third of the 5th century AD).

As a result large part of the items defining the first Sarmatian horizon of the Great Hungarian Plain was carried by Sarmatian communities mainly from their origin area (pp 15-16). The author briefly summarizes the main historical data and, as a conclusion for the Early Sarmatian period, it could be possible that the Sarmatians advance through the Roman empire and nearby the Dacian power centres could be drawn by mid and second half of the 1st century AD. (p.20). In the Mid period, the rule of Marcus Aurelius is deeply affected by the Barbarian attacks and as a result the central and northern area of the Great Hungarian Plain was monitored from Aquincum, while Backa and Banat entered under Dacia's surveillance. This stage is termed by A.Vaday as: ***"the period of roman surveillance, since the the Roman interest and***

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military surveillance of the area increases due to the Sarmatian and Germanic actions during the campaigns of the Marcomannic Wars".¹

As we can see, each major conflict in the Danube province's area (of the 2nd, 3rd, 4th centuries AD) or the Danube territorial reorganization set in motion various Barbarian tribes. Implicitly, we record constant changes in the rituals, funerary beliefs and type/origin of the items deposited in graves (pp.20-22). The Late period, according to A. Vaday's chronology, is divided in three stages. The first two last until the arrival of the Huns and are characterized by the advance of new waves of the Iranian and Germanic populations, while the third stage is marked by the invasion of the Huns and changes in the political balance.² As an archeological feature, from the funerary standpoint, we note individual burials, in oval pits, rarely rectangular, the supine position of the dead, the presence of coffins attached with iron clamps, mainly oriented north-south, seldom south-north.³ In conclusion, for the Late stage it is emphasized the fact that funerary rituals may become a more certain criteria in identifying certain groups of populations in Banat and we can observe a numerous offensive weapons finds, only in flat graves, oriented north-south. (p. 25).

One of the most interesting chapter from this study is the 3rd chapter, **State of Research and the issue of assigning 1st - 5th century finds on the territory of Banat**. In this part of the book we have a statistical radiography upon the scholarship from Hungary, Serbia and Romania. As we can observe from the author's statistics, almost a quarter from publications regarding the Sarmatians in Hungary were only after 1990. The main body of the Hungarian publications: M. Párducz - 25 % of publications; S.Baracki 40% of publications; B.Mileker 11 % of publications. The Hungarian archaeologists have published many Sarmatians period sites from the entire Great Hungarian Plain, and drafted major synthesis work presenting the state of archaeological research and the conclusions for the early 3rd millennium (Hungarian archeology at the turn of the millennium, Budapest, 2003), the archaeology of the Sarmatian period is not lacking from such approach. Also, the author points the fact that the Hungarian studies underline nationalist interpretations coordinating the study of Sarmatian artifacts and features in Banat, but also the publications on the area (pp. 30-31). In Serbia, starting with the 30'ies of the last century, the archaeological and historical research was subordinated to nationalist, pan-Slavic convictions. The "great hearth" of the southern Slavs would have comprised also Banat up to the Timiș-Cerna couloirs.⁴ S. Trifunovic, assumes that Limigantes were Slavs, being different from the free Sarmatians (Argaragantes). According to his theory, they have a different language, they are not nomads, but sedentary and use those barrel-vessels, typical only to this area. In Romania, starting with the 40'ies, the research of the Roman period in the Sarmatian *Barbaricum* and west Roman Dacia aimed at proving that entire Banat was part of the province Dacia during the 2nd - 3rd centuries AD and subsequently,

from the influence and interest of the Roman Empire (p.33). The historical research was focused on daco-romanist ideas and the streamline idea was that the habitat from the Banat Plain is typical to a native and sedentary population and cannot be related to a Sarmatian nomad population. As the author concludes, within the three countries that today own the Banat territory (Hungary, Serbia, and Romania), the state and aspects of the scientific research, differ from one country to another. Such discrepancies, beside the lack of synthesis for this geographical area, lead to fragmentary information regarding a certain historical period (p.35).

The 4th chapter, **Funerary rite and rituals** is divided in numerous sub-chapters. In this section of the study, the author emphasizes a huge number of points of study, from the locations and layout of the cemeteries to offerings. The data is very well organized in the context of the funerary archeology. The Barrow cemeteries, the size and shape of the grave pits, mixed with the offerings could offer us a much clearer situation of the rite and rituals from the Banat area. In the sub-chapter IV.5, it is analysed a very important feature within this context, the position and orientation of the dead. M.Parducz believed that starting from the orientation of the graves in the Great Hungarian Plain and the position of the dead, different rituals and implicitly, distinct groups of populations or cultures, may be distinguished also for the southern plain (p.46). In 1931, M.Parducz made o first classification of the Sarmatian graves based on the data below: a) Flat graves oriented South-North; b) Flat graves oriented West-East; Barrow graves oriented South-North.

The 5th chapter, **Funerary Furniture**, is the most complex of this study. In almost 90 pages, the author describes all several different kind of artifacts: *earrings*-divided in III types; *metal collars and necklaces* VI-types; *brooches* IX types; *metal bracelets* VI types; *rings*; *pendants* VII types; *belt fittings* (buckles, belt rings and strap ends) IV-types; *belt rings and loops*; *appliques*; *beads* VII types; *toilettries* (*mirrors* IV types; *boxes*; *pincers and other toiletry tools*; *combs*). Other topics shown in this part of the chapter is *coinage* and *weaponry*. Coinage evidence among the funerary finds indicates that some Sarmatian groups were familiar with the custom of Charon's obol, and the evolution of the monetary funerary offerings in the Sarmatian environment is similar to that in the Roman provincial environment. (pp.113-114). The weaponry is very structured in this chapter, as it follows: a) *swords, spears and daggers*; b) *shields*.

In the last part of the chapter we have three items: a) *harness items and their decorations* b) *household objects* (*knives, spindles, bone and stone tools*) and *pottery* (*terra sigillata*, roman copies and imports; b) *hand-made pottery* (*terrines, cups and jars, barrel-vessels*). To sum up, the 5th chapter is extremely rich in technical data, various typologies are presented alongside with artifact drawings.

In the 6th chapter of the volume. **Conclusions**, the author, on the basis of archaeological funerary finds, may indicate the type of furniture and funerary specific to the populations living in Banat between the end of the 1st century and early 5th century A.D. In addition with this, the author approach is intermediary and partial, being supported by funerary archaeological finds only, 349 graves were labeled as objects (pp.153-154). The conclusions drawn

1 VADAY, 1989, 206.

2 VADAY, 1989, 208-210.

3 BÂRCĂ/SYMONENCO 2009, 387-388.

4 MARE, 2004, 22.

by the author respect the line of the volume's structure, very technical.

In the 7th chapter, **Catalogue**, are described 147 sites with materials within. The author of the volume highlights a full archaeological informational overview upon the Banat area, from year and location of the site to funerary dating and the latest bibliography. The Plates and the photography alongside the map are highly professional and we can trace the piece of funerary inventory within the archeological context.

To sum up, the present volume enriches the specialized literature from Romania, and can be a starting point for the future scholars because of multiple research views. The vast bibliography, the illustration list are making this volume highly important for the further discussions upon Sarmatians in the Banat area.

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