



INSTITUTE OF ARCHEOLOGY
AND ART HISTORY OF ROMANIAN
ACADEMY CLUJ-NAPOCA



UNIVERSITATEA TEHNICĂ
DIN CLUJ-NAPOCA

JAHA
JOURNAL OF ANCIENT HISTORY
AND ARCHAEOLOGY

editura
MEGA

Journal of Ancient History and Archaeology

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.14795/j.v13i1>

ISSN 2360 266x

ISSN-L 2360 266x



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JOURNALS

No. 13.1/2026

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Archaeology, Bicester 2025, 298 pages, 92 figures, 2 tables. ISBN
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Ruslan TSAKANYAN

Yervand H. Grekyan. The Urartian Onomasticon: A Prosopographic
Study, ARAMAZD: Armenian Journal of Near Eastern Studies.
Editor-in-Chief Aram Kosyan, Vol. XVII, Issue 2. Association for
Near Eastern and Caucasian Studies. Archaeopress Publishing Ltd:
Oxford, UK. Yerevan-Oxford 2023. ISSN 1829-1376, ISBN 978-1-
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Ruslan TSAKANYAN

Yervand H. Grekyan (ed.), By God's Grace: Ancient Anatolian
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Victor COJOCARU

S. Yu. Monakhov, E. V. Kuznetsova, A. N. Kovalenko, N. B.
Churekova, A. G. Yazovskikh, Amphorae of the 6th–3rd Centuries
BC from Museum Collections of Rostov-on-Don [in Russian],
Saratov: Amirit, 2025, 284 pages, 123 figs, 5 tables, and 199
catalogue illustrations integrated into the text. ISBN 978-5-00207-
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Vitalie BÂRCĂ

O. V. Symonenko, O. S. Dzneladze, D. M. Sikoza, Atlas of Late
Scythian Sites of the Lower Dnieper [In Ukrainian], Kyiv: Institute
of Archaeology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine,
2024. 214 p. ISBN 978-617-7810-43-7 340

Design & layout: Petru Ureche



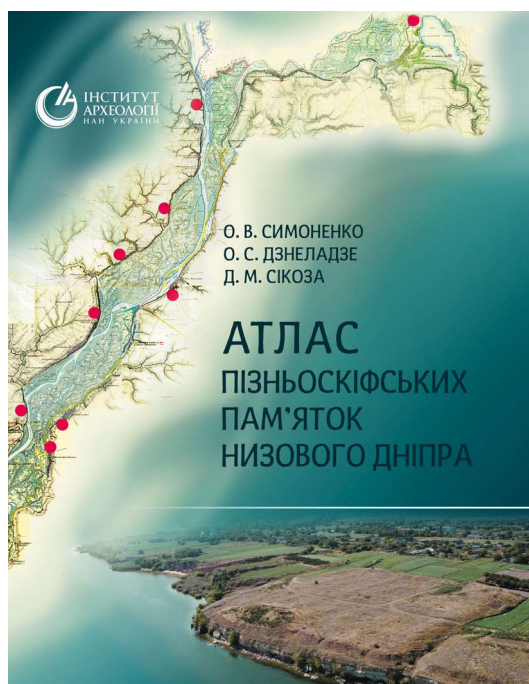
EDITURA MEGA | www.edituramega.ro
e-mail: mega@edituramega.ro

Reviews

O. V. Symonenko, O. S. Dzneladze, D. M. Sikoza, *Atlas of Late Scythian Sites of the Lower Dnieper*. [In Ukrainian], Kyiv: Institute of Archaeology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 2024. 214 p. ISBN 978-617-7810-43-7.

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The volume *Atlas of the Late Scythian Monuments of the Lower Dnieper Region*,¹ performed by Olsksandr V. Symonenko, Olena S. Dzneladze and Denis M. Sikoza, belongs to that category of works that transform not only the knowledge degree, but also the very manner in which questions are formulated. Dedicated to the Late Scythian culture of the Lower Dnieper area, the atlas far exceeds the expectations one might have of a simple repertory of sites: it functions as a synthetic monograph, as a cartographic tool and as an interpretative framework for an entire region and a whole chronological phase. The authors do not limit themselves to describing sites, but place them within a broader context—ecological, economic, political and cultural. Hence the ambition of the volume: not merely to inventory, but to explain.

The Lower Dnieper region, although rich in archaeological finds, has long remained in the shadow of other North Pontic areas. Crimea, the steppes between the Bug and the Don or the better-known regions of the Cimmerian

¹ О. В. Симоненко, О. С. Дзnelадзе, Д. М. Сікоза, *Атлас пізньоскіфських пам'яток Низового Дніпра*, Київ: Інститут археології Національної академії наук України, 2024, 214 с. ISBN 978-617-7810-43-7.

O. V. Symonenko, O. S. Dzneladze, D. M. Sikoza, *Atlas piznioskifskiykh pam'iatok Nyzovoho Dnipra*, Kyiv: Instytut arkhеolohii Natsionalnoj akademii nauk Ukrainy, 2024, 214 p. ISBN 978-617-7810-43-7.

Bosporus have attracted greater scholarly attention, while the Lower Dnieper has often been tackled as a peripheral space. The present atlas overturns this view: it proves that the region is not a limit, but a node—a space of contact, transit and cultural synthesis.

The work, in the form devised by the authors, encompasses all key elements of the discussed topic and impresses by rich data, clear structure and how the authors succeed to combine detailed description with overall interpretation.

The book comprises one hundred and ninety-nine pages of text, accompanied by a rich illustrative corpus (one hundred and eight figures), predominantly coloured, followed by an Alphabetical Index of Geographical Names (pp. 200–201), an Alphabetical Index of Anthroponyms (pp. 202–204), Archival Sources (p. 205), and an extensive bibliography (pp. 206–212). The main body of the study is structured into five chapters (pp. 11–186).

Each chapter adds a piece to a complex puzzle, while the final section in English, *General Characteristics of the Late Scythian Culture of the Lower Dnieper* (pp. 193–199), provides the conceptual key for reading the entire volume.

The Introduction (pp. 5–8) explains the pressing necessity of compiling an atlas dedicated to the Late Scythian culture of the Lower Dnieper region. Although the region is one of the richest in archaeological finds within the North Pontic space, the information compiled over more than two centuries has long remained dispersed, unevenly documented and difficult to integrate into a coherent synthesis. The authors emphasize that the absence of a unified work has hindered the understanding of the Late Scythian communities' development and their role in the cultural dynamics of the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman periods.

The authors argue that, in the absence of a synthesis, the region has been interpreted through theoretical models imported from other Scythian areas, which have generated distortions: the Lower Dnieper has been tackled either as a periphery of Crimea or as a transitional zone toward the steppes inhabited by the Sarmatians, without recognition of its cultural autonomy. The Introduction proposes to overcome these reductive paradigms through a regional approach grounded in systematic mapping, typological analysis, and chronological correlation.

The Introduction also highlights the paradigm shift in Scythian research: from strictly ethnic or descriptive interpretations to interdisciplinary approaches combining archaeology, historical geography, anthropology and comparative analysis. In this context, the atlas aims to provide not only a complete mapping of sites, but also a modern interpretative framework based on new data, critical reassessments and contemporary methods such as GIS and refined typological analyses.

In essence, the Introduction presents the atlas as a work intended to fill a major gap in the academic literature and provide a solid foundation for future research, emphasizing the importance of the Lower Dnieper region as a space of cultural interaction and as a key area for understanding Late Scythian transformations.

The first chapter (pp. 11–22), dedicated to the natural environment of the Lower Dnieper region, functions as the ecological and geographical foundation of the entire

work, and the authors address it not as a mandatory introductory section, but as an essential structural element for understanding Late Scythian culture. The analysis of the natural environment is explicitly constructed as an interpretative premise: the way of life, distribution of settlements, economy and mobility of the Scythian communities cannot be understood without a thorough assessment of the physical framework where they evolved.

The authors reject the traditional approach in which geography is treated as an inert background. Instead, they argue that the relief, climate and hydrography of the Lower Dnieper directly shaped the economic and social structures of Late Scythian communities. The low plains and river terraces favoured both extensive pastoralism and agriculture, creating an environment conducive to a mixed economy. This combination explains why the Late Scythians of the region display a higher degree of sedentism than the Classical Scythian groups.

A central element is the role of the Dnieper as natural infrastructure. The river is not merely a source of water or a geographical landmark, but a corridor of circulation connecting the North Pontic steppes with the Black Sea littoral and the interior agricultural zones. The authors show that the distribution of Late Scythian settlements follows the logic of this corridor, suggesting an economy oriented toward exchange and controlled, rather than chaotic, mobility.

The continental climate, with cold winters and hot summers, is analysed in relation to the adaptive strategies of communities. The authors suggest that seasonal alternation influenced both pastoral mobility and the organization of agricultural activities. This climatic duality explains why cultural elements associated with both nomadism and sedentarism coexist in the region.

The chapter underscores the importance of local resources: fertile soils, extensive pastures, fishing resources and access to trade routes. The authors interpret these resources as factors that enabled the development of forms of economic specialization, later visible in the archaeological material (local ceramics, metallurgy, agricultural production). Thus, the natural environment becomes an indirect indicator of economic complexity.

The geographical analysis is used to explain the region's position as a contact area between three cultural spheres: Scythian, Sarmatian and Greco-Roman. The authors argue that this liminal position is not accidental, but a consequence of the area's natural accessibility. The Lower Dnieper thus becomes a space of convergence, where external influences meet local traditions.

The second chapter (pp. 25–31) constitutes a broad historiographical excursus and functions as a critical examination of how archaeological knowledge about the Late Scythians of the Lower Dnieper region has been constructed over more than two centuries. The authors do not merely provide a chronology of discoveries, but analyse the mechanisms, limitations and paradigm shifts that have shaped the interpretation of this region. The chapter thus has a dual function: it contextualizes the material presented in the atlas and explains why a modern synthesis was indispensable.

The authors begin by showing that early finds were often accidental and that interest was dominated more by curiosity than by scientific methodology. Objects were collected for their aesthetic or exotic value, while information about their archaeological context was rarely recorded. This early stage generated a rich corpus of material, but one difficult to use in modern interpretations due to the lack of stratigraphic and topographical data.

By late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the first organised investigations emerged, leading to significant increase in the volume of information. Nevertheless, the authors emphasize that methods remained uneven: some excavations were exemplary, others superficial or insufficiently documented. The chapter critically analyses this stage, showing that although the quantity of data increased, its quality varied considerably.

An important part of the chapter is devoted to the Soviet period, when research became more systematic and archaeological institutions were consolidated. The authors acknowledge the merits of this period: numerous sites were discovered, documentation became more rigorous and interpretations were based on solid typological and stratigraphic analyses.

However, the chapter does not ignore the limitations of the era: access to certain materials was restricted, interpretations were sometimes influenced by official ideology and excessive emphasis on “ethnogenesis” led to conceptual simplifications. The authors analyse these aspects in a balanced manner, showing how they affected the understanding of Late Scythian culture.

After 1991, research entered a phase of critical reassessment. The authors emphasize that access to archives, museum collections, and previously inaccessible materials made it possible to reinterpret many finds. Concurrently, new methods—GIS, interdisciplinary analyses, more accurate dating—changed the way sites are viewed.

A paradigm shift is also highlighted: the emphasis moved from ethnic questions (“who were the Scythians?”) to processual questions (“how did they live?”, “how did they interact?”, “how did they transform?”). This shift is essential for understanding Late Scythian culture as a dynamic, rather than static, phenomenon.

The authors note that despite the large volume of information, the lack of a synthesis long prevented coherent understanding of the region. Data were scattered in obscure publications, unpublished reports, local archives or museum collections. This fragmentation generated incomplete or contradictory interpretations.

The atlas thus presents itself as a methodological response to this problem: it brings together, organises, and correlates the data, offering a unified framework for interpretation.

Analytically speaking, this chapter is not merely a review of research history, but a reflection on how archaeological knowledge is constructed, lost and recovered. The authors show that the current interpretation of Late Scythian culture is the result of a complex process marked by accumulation, ruptures, reassessments and changes of perspective.

The third chapter (pp. 35–139) represents the core of the volume, being the section in which the authors analyse in detail the archaeological sites on the right bank of the Lower

Dnieper. From a methodological standpoint, the chapter functions as a study of cultural micro-geography: each site is described not only through its material inventory, but through its positioning within economic, social and symbolic networks. Analytically, the authors treat the right bank as a space of high cultural density, where the most stable and complex forms of Late Scythian culture are concentrated.

The authors argue that the right bank of the Dnieper offered superior ecological and strategic conditions for sedentism. Settlements are numerous, relatively close to one another, and show greater continuity of habitation than those on the left bank. This density is interpreted not as a simple demographic phenomenon, but as an indicator of more stable social organization and a more diversified economy.

The analysis of settlements focuses on their internal structure: half-sunken houses, hearths, storage pits, metallurgy and pottery workshops. These elements are interpreted as evidence of a mixed economy in which agriculture, pastoralism and crafts coexisted. The presence of imported wares, especially Greek, is treated as an indicator of the region’s integration into extensive trade networks.

From an analytical perspective, the authors emphasize that these settlements are not merely “points on a map,” but nodes within a regional economic network. They reflect a society capable of producing surplus, sustaining exchange and developing forms of specialization.

The cemeteries on the right bank are treated as privileged sources for understanding social hierarchies. Grave goods are varied and differences between graves are interpreted as expressions of social status. Weapons, ornaments, imported wares and prestige objects are concentrated in certain graves, suggesting the existence of a well-defined warrior elite.

The authors avoid simplistic interpretations and propose a layered reading: cemeteries reflect not only individual status, but also community structures, models of prestige transmission and symbolic representations of power.

Fortifications are analysed as key elements of the Late Scythian landscape. The authors show that they are not merely defensive refuges, but structures with multiple functions: control of trade routes, protection of resources, affirmation of political authority. Their strategic positioning suggests a profound knowledge of the terrain and a capacity for military organization.

Analytically, fortifications are interpreted as indicators of a society which, although not urban in the classical sense, developed forms of centralization and territorial management.

An important element of the chapter is the integration of sites into a regional network. The right bank is presented as a space of cultural density and a pole of stability in relation to the left bank, which was more exposed to nomadic influences. This complementarity is interpreted as a mechanism of adaptation: Late Scythian communities strategically distributed their functions across the territory.

The chapter proves that the Late Scythians of the Lower Dnieper cannot be described through traditional clichés of nomadism. The archaeological material reveals a sedentary, stratified society integrated into trade networks and capable of political organization. The right bank thus becomes empirical support for the central thesis of the atlas:

Late Scythian culture is a complex, hybrid and profoundly adaptive phenomenon.

The fourth chapter (pp. 143–175) represents the necessary counterpoint to the previous chapter and functions as an analysis of a region which, although geographically close, displays a distinct cultural and archaeological dynamic. The authors treat the left bank of the Dnieper not as a secondary zone, but as a liminal space in which processes of contact, transition, and cultural hybridisation characteristic of the Late Scythians are most clearly manifested.

The authors argue that the left bank functioned as a buffer zone between the stabilised Scythian communities on the right bank and the nomadic or semi-nomadic groups of the North Pontic steppes. This liminal position explains both the lower density of sites and their cultural diversity. Unlike the right bank, where stability predominates, the left bank reflects mobility, contact and adaptation.

Settlements on the left bank are fewer in number, but often larger in area. This distribution is interpreted as an indication of different functions: some settlements appear to have been redistribution centres, others contact points with Sarmatian groups, and others spaces of seasonal transit.

These settlements are seen as expressions of a more flexible economy, less anchored in the stable sedentarism of the right bank. Their internal structure—varied houses, production areas, open spaces—suggests adaptation to a more fluid social environment.

The archaeological material from these settlements is an indicator of hybridity, with pottery constituting the key element of analysis. The authors observe a combination of local Scythian pottery, Greek imports and vessels with forms and decorations specific to the Sarmatian world.

This mixture is not treated as accidental, but as an indicator of intense cultural contacts. The left bank thus becomes a space in which processes of cultural hybridisation are most clearly observable: the adoption of external forms, their local reinterpretation and coexistence of traditions.

Cemeteries on the left bank display, according to the authors, greater ritual diversity than those on the right bank. Mixed burial rites, variations in body positioning, heterogeneous grave goods and the presence of Sarmatian elements in Scythian graves are noted.

This diversity is interpreted as the expression of a fluid cultural identity, in which belonging was negotiated rather than rigid. The left bank thus becomes a privileged space for observing identity transformations among the Late Scythians.

Particular attention is given to the relationship with the steppe, the authors emphasizing that the left bank was more exposed to nomadic influences from the North Pontic steppes. This exposure is reflected in weapon types, certain forms of ornaments, burial rites and the greater mobility of communities.

These influences are analysed not as signs of external domination, but as part of a process of reciprocal interaction. The Late Scythians are not passive recipients, but selectively integrate these influences.

An important element is the dialogue established between the left and right banks. The two areas are not treated as separate entities, but as parts of a coherent regional system.

The right bank represents stability, sedentism and cultural density; the left bank represents mobility, contact and adaptation.

This complementarity is interpreted as a strategy for managing risks and opportunities in a complex geopolitical environment.

The chapter proves that the Late Scythians cannot be understood through rigid models; their culture is a process, not a state. The left bank becomes the stage on which the most visible transformations unfold: contact with the Sarmatians, Greek influences, adaptation to external pressures and reconfiguration of identity.

The chapter provides an essential perspective on Late Scythian culture, showing that diversity and hybridity are not exceptions, but defining traits of the region. The left bank of the Dnieper is interpreted as a transitional space and as a cultural laboratory in which the mechanisms by which Late Scythian communities negotiated change can be observed. The chapter thus complements the image offered by the right bank and reinforces the central idea of the atlas: Late Scythian culture is a complex, adaptive, and deeply interconnected phenomenon.

The fifth chapter (pp. 179–190) represents the culmination of the volume, the section in which the authors bring together the disparate data presented in previous chapters and construct a coherent interpretation of Late Scythian culture in the Lower Dnieper region. From an analytical standpoint, this is the chapter in which the transition is made from description to explanation, from inventory to conceptualisation. The authors do not merely summarise information, but propose an interpretative model of the Late Scythian phenomenon, grounded in the interaction between environment, economy, social structure and cultural contacts.

The authors conclude that the Late Scythian society in the Lower Dnieper region cannot be understood through the traditional cliché of “nomadic warriors.” The archaeological material evidences a stratified society, with a well-defined warrior elite, but also with lower social strata engaged in agriculture, pastoralism and crafts. Cemeteries, through differences among the grave goods, confirm the existence of stable social hierarchies.

This stratification is interpreted as the result of diversified economy and constant interaction with the Greco-Roman and Sarmatian worlds. Elites asserted their status through prestige objects, while ordinary communities reflected the continuity of local traditions.

The chapter emphasizes that the Late Scythian economy was mixed, where pastoralism, agriculture and trade coexisted, while trade with the Greco-Roman world played an increasingly important role. This combination explains both the relative sedentism of communities and their capacity to adapt to change. The presence of Greek wares, luxury objects and local pottery inspired by Hellenistic models prove that the Late Scythians were integrated into regional exchange networks.

Late Scythian material culture is presented as a hybrid phenomenon in which Scythian traditions intertwine with Hellenistic and Sarmatian influences. The authors analyse pottery types, weaponry, ornaments and everyday objects,

showing that hybridity is not a sign of “decline,” but of adaptation.

Hybridity is interpreted as an active process of cultural selection: communities adopt external elements, but reinterpret them within their own cultural horizon. This perspective contradicts earlier interpretations that viewed external influences as signs of Scythian “disappearance.”

Burial rites are analysed as a privileged space for observing cultural identity. Practices display both continuity and innovation. Classical Scythian elements persist, such as body positioning and the presence of weaponry within the graves, however innovations also emerge, likely related to contacts with the Sarmatians or the Greco-Roman world.

This combination is interpreted as the expression of an identity in transformation, but not in dissolution. Ritual becomes an instrument for negotiating tradition and modernity.

The chapter emphasizes that the Lower Dnieper region cannot be understood in isolation. It is a node within the cultural and economic networks of the North Pontic world. Contacts with Sarmatians, Greeks and Romans are visible in the archaeological record, but are not interpreted as forms of control, rather as reciprocal interactions.

As a result of their analysis, the authors propose a polycentric vision: the Late Scythians are not anyone’s periphery, but a regional actor with its own internal dynamics.

This chapter is not merely a recapitulation, but a theoretical proposal: Late Scythian culture is a complex, adaptive and hybrid phenomenon shaped by the interaction between environment, economy, social structure and cultural contacts. The authors reject both the model of “disappearance” and that of “uninterrupted continuity,” proposing instead a dynamic vision in which Scythian identity transforms, but is not lost.

The five chapters are followed by a brief Postface (pp. 189–190), offering a final reflection on the importance of the atlas and the current state of research dedicated to the Late Scythians of the Lower Dnieper region. The authors emphasize that although the work represents the most extensive synthesis to date for this region, research remains open: numerous sites require further investigation, while others are threatened by natural or anthropogenic factors.

A central message of the Postface is that archaeological interpretation is a continuously evolving process. Recent finds, modern methods and the reassessment of previous materials may significantly modify the image of Late Scythian culture. The atlas is therefore presented not as a definitive conclusion, but as a working tool intended to stimulate future research.

The authors also reiterate the role of the Lower Dnieper region as a space of cultural interaction, where Scythian traditions met Hellenistic, Sarmatian and Romano-provincial influences. This liminal position confers particular importance on the region for understanding historical processes of the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman periods.

Overall, the Postface conveys a balanced message: the atlas represents a major achievement, but also a starting point for new research directions, emphasizing the need to protect archaeological heritage and promote interdisciplinary

collaboration.

The final part of the work is represented by the section *General Characteristics of the Late Scythian Culture of the Lower Dnieper* (pp. 179–190), written in English. It functions as a theoretical synthesis of the entire volume, in which the authors extract the defining lines of Late Scythian culture in the Lower Dnieper region and formulate them in language accessible to the international scholarly community. Analytically, this section is not merely a summary, but a conceptual reconstruction of the Late Scythian phenomenon based on integrated reading of archaeological, geographical and historical data.

The authors explicitly reject ethnic-based models that dominated earlier historiography. Late Scythian identity is presented as a dynamic construct resulting from interactions with the Greco-Roman world, the Sarmatians and other groups of the North Pontic steppes. Cultural hybridity is interpreted as a strategy of adaptation, not as a sign of decline. This processual perspective represents one of the major theoretical contributions of the section.

Settlements are analysed as elements of a coherent regional network. The right bank is characterized by density, stability, and sedentism, while the left bank reflects mobility, cultural permeability and exposure to nomadic influences. This distribution is interpreted not as accidental, but as a regional strategy for managing resources and risks. Complementarity thus becomes a key concept for understanding Late Scythian territorial organization.

The Late Scythian economy is presented as a mixed system in which pastoralism, agriculture and trade coexisted in a flexible equilibrium. Greek imports are interpreted as evidence of the region’s integration into extensive trade networks, while local ceramic and metal production evidence a high level of specialisation. Analytically, this mixed economy enabled communities to remain stable despite external pressures and political changes.

Late Scythian weaponry preserves traditional elements, but also integrate Sarmatian influences. This mixture is interpreted as the expression of a warrior elite that affirmed its identity through continuity while adapting its arsenal to new warfare realities. The presence of weapons in graves confirms the central role of warriors within the social structure and functions as prestige marker.

Burial rites are analysed as a space of identity negotiation. The persistence of classical Scythian elements coexists with ritual innovations, suggesting an identity in transformation, but not in dissolution. The authors emphasize that burial rituals are sensitive markers of cultural change and tools by which communities expressed both tradition and openness to external influences.

The authors propose a clear periodisation of Late Scythian culture based on material typology and regional correlations. This chronology makes it possible to understand how the Late Scythians reacted to Sarmatian pressure, Roman expansion and economic changes in the North Pontic world. Analytically, chronology becomes a tool for explaining cultural transformations.

Perhaps the most important analytical conclusion is the repositioning of the region: the Lower Dnieper is not the periphery of the Scythian world, but a cultural node where

influences, traditions and regional dynamics intersect. This view challenges earlier interpretations and offers a new framework for understanding the Late Scythian phenomenon.

Beyond the considerations presented above, it must be stated that *Atlas of the Late Scythian Monuments of the Lower Dnieper Region* is a reference work that succeeds in offering a complex, coherent and modern image of Late Scythian culture in the Lower Dnieper area. Through methodological rigour, analytical density and conceptual clarity, the volume establishes itself as a landmark for Pontic archaeology and

for the study of cultural interactions in the Late Hellenistic and Early Roman periods. The atlas not only organizes an extensive body of material, but reinterprets it within a modern analytical framework, offering a model for future research.

In conclusion, we wish to thank the authors for bringing previously unpublished information into scholarly circulation and for providing a pertinent analysis thereof. Last but not least, we congratulate the authors for having succeeded in producing a work of high scientific quality that represents a significant stimulus for the study of Late Scythian remains in Eastern and Southeastern Europe.