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

The south-eastern Great Hungarian Plain (the historical region of Banat) is today divided between three European states: Romania, Serbia and Hungary. This administrative partition (occurring after the Second World War) also determined the different stages of archaeological research noticeable in each of the mentioned states.

In the foreword of a recent monograph, Valéria Kulcsár drew attention to the lack of interest displayed in the last decades by Romanian archaeologists and historians regarding the Sarmatian antiquities from the Carpathian Basin: *The situation is different in the southern and especially in the eastern part of the Sarmatian habitation area in Carpathian Basin. **Their research has not been a priority of Serbian and Romanian archaeology until recently** (though some excavations and publications took place earlier). Systematic research, mainly in North-West Romania, and motorway excavations in the Banat brought to light a lot of new finds pouring light to the settlements and cemeteries of the Sarmatians the study of whom **has not been too “popular” earlier in Romanian archaeology**<sup>1</sup>.*

The work authored by Lavinia Grumeza, *Sarmatian Cemeteries from Banat (late 1<sup>st</sup> - early 5<sup>th</sup> Centuries AD)*, Cluj-Napoca, 2014, attempts to fill in this ‘void of publications’ (at least from the perspective of funerary archaeology) existing in Romanian historiography – as already remarked by researchers from neighbouring countries. The mentioned volume analyses 147 cemeteries, 540 graves and over 400 years of funerary tradition pertaining to the Barbarian populations generically referred to by the literature as Sarmatians (*Iazyges Metanastae*, *Iazyges Sarmatae*, *Sarmatae Arcaragantes* or *Limigantes*). The merit of this work resides not only in its analysis of the Sarmatian cemeteries from Banat, but also in the fact that it tries to justify each theory and dating with numerous analogies, especially drawn from the Hungarian territory. The historical events that took place here are well known by Lavinia Grumeza due to the scholarships she was granted and the study visits she undertook in various museums, institutes and universities where she was able to become familiar with the archaeological matters neighbouring Romania.

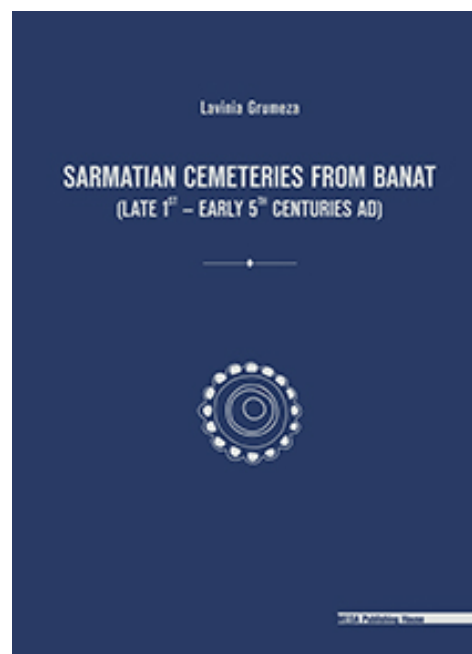
The first chapter, I. *Introductions*, briefly presents the aims of the volume and the chronological and geographical limits of the study. The research activity carried out by the author in museums and institutes from Romania, Hungary and Serbia (*Muzeul Banatului Timișoara*, *Complexul Muzeal Arad*, *Móra Ferenc Múzeum Szeged*, *Gradski Muzej Vršac*, *Herman Ottó Múzeum Miskolc* etc.) stands out.

Chapter II. *Chronology and the Issue of the Sarmatian’s Advance in Banat*, exhaustively analyses the stages of the migration and presence of Sarmatian groups in Banat between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. The early Sarmatian period coincides with the ingress of nomadic Iranians sometime at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> - beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, specifically at the time of the confrontation between the Dacians and the Romans and the transformation of Decebalus’ kingdom of Dacia into a Roman province. The middle Sarm-

<sup>1</sup> GRUMEZA/URSUȚIU/COPOS 2013, 7.

## Imola Boda

University ‘Babes-Bolyai’ of Cluj-Napoca  
boda\_imola@yahoo.com



tian period is defined and influenced by the episode of the Marcomannic Wars and the consequences inflicted by this warfare on the Danubian provinces. The affair also intensified the commercial relations of the Sarmatian groups from the Great Hungarian Plain with the Roman world and with the Germanic populations. The late Sarmatian period commences when Aurelianus withdraws the Roman administration from Dacia, a moment when there is a sharp drop in the commerce and ties between the Romans and Sarmatians on the one hand, but an increase of coins into *Barbaricum* on the other (*stipendia* sent by the Romans). The constant clashes with Rome, coupled with the appearance of the Huns and Gepids, de-stabilized the Sarmatian domination, and ultimately they were assimilated into the conglomerate of populations known in the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

We commend the fact that all these historical events, together with the rituals and funerary inventory specific to each stage were correlated both with the chronology established by Andrea Vaday for the Great Hungarian Plain<sup>2</sup>, and with the central-European chronology.

Chapter III. *State of research and the Issue of Assigning 1st-5th Century Finds on the Territory of Banat* recounts the history of researching Sarmatian antiquities from the territory of the historical region of Banat. Names of reference are noted, as well as the concepts devised in this or that age, at the same time drawing attention on some of the historiographical distortions determined by the influence of nationalist currents reflected in the field of archaeology (Pan-Slavism or Daco-Romanism, p. 33-35). The first excavations in Banat were executed by Hungarian or German ethnics at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Gy. Kisléghi Nagy, B. Milleker, J. Reizner, I. Tömörkény), whose works are summarily included in the present book. After the Second World War, the archaeological research in Banat sets on new courses, following the territorial division of the historical province between Romania, Hungary and Serbia.

Chapter IV. *Funerary Rite and Rituals* is organised in multiple sub-chapters: *Cemeteries location and layout; Barrow cemeteries; Size and shape of grave-pits; Grave-pit outlays; Position and orientation of the dead; Offerings*. An analysis of the predecessors' research is provided, and especially of Hungarian archaeologists such as Gy. Kisléghi Nagy (put to use by subsequent publications)<sup>3</sup>, M. Párducz, A. Vaday, V. Kulcsár, etc. First of all, we notice the predominantly south-north orientation of the graves, although some 'deviations' are also encountered which were potentially caused by a distinct social status, a different ethnic background or by superstitions. The northern orientation of the deceased is more seldom seen (29% of the analysed graves from the Banat region), whereas the eastern and western orientations are only exceptionally attested. All the data was carefully systematized in the form of tables which took into account not only the orientation and dating, but also the composition of the funerary inventory or the presence of animal bones.

Chapter V. *Funerary Furniture* is the most extensive chapter of the volume (pp. 55-140) because of the rich and varied material resulted from the studied graves. The presentation of the findings is structured in seven main

sub-chapters (also divided in several points): *Adornment and dress objects; Toiletries; Coinage; Weaponry; Harness items and their decoration; Household objects; Pottery*. Typological schemes, tables and clear datings are provided for each and every category.

Amongst the personal adornments and dress accessories, there are three types of earrings, seven types of metal necklaces, nine types of brooches seven types of metal bracelets, copper-alloy rings, pendants manufactured from various metals, fittings and numerous types of beads - monochrome, polychrome and made from different metals. The analysis and systematization of such rich and varied discoveries required an enormous effort entailing adequate classification and illustrations, finding analogies and discerning the influences coming from other geographical areas and cultural spaces: provincial Roman (*Dacia, Pannonia, Moesia*), north-Pontic and Barbarian (Germanic and Sarmatian).

However, one can notice an unevenness regarding the size of the sub-chapters: the coins, weapons, pottery or brooches were exhaustively treated, whereas other categories (e.g. tools or harness components) were dealt with in only a few pages.

In chapter VI. *Conclusions* the author used a correspondence analysis software (*Correspondence Analysis of Principal Components Analysis*). A number of 349 graves (defined as 'objects') was fed into the program together with information concerning the orientation and position of the deceased, the type of burial, the funerary inventory, the representative finds etc. Based on this novel analysis<sup>4</sup> nine distinctive groups of populations were identified, each of which interred themselves according to their own rituals, the funerary inventory largely differing from one group to another.

Consequently, on the basis of the funerary archaeological discoveries, the author was able to define the rite, rituals and types of funerary inventory specific to the populations that lived on the territory of the present day Banat between the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> and beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. Moreover, the cemeteries and graves located in this area of *Barbaricum* were appropriately connected with the discoveries from Hungary dating from the Sarmatian period as well as with the central-European chronology.

In the last chapter, VII. *Catalogue*, 147 cemeteries were described, with their associated graves. The author reports all the available information regarding these finds: location of the site, year of excavation, description of the grave, skeleton direction, grave sizes, anatomical position of the skeleton/ the condition of the skeletal remains, funerary inventory, dating and bibliography. The catalogue is accompanied by 113 corresponding plates presenting the planimetry of the graves, drawings/ photos of the skeletons and/ or of the funerary inventory etc. The illustration is of very high quality. A map with the geographical distribution of the cemeteries with respect to the so-called Roman 'walls' (linear earthen fortifications) as well as plates illustrating the most important pieces of funerary inventory which were used for exact datings and for the establishment of the chronological

<sup>2</sup> VADAY 1989, 205-210.

<sup>3</sup> GÁLL/TÂNASE/CIOBOTARU 2010; TÂNASE 2015.

<sup>4</sup> These kinds of correspondence analyses are rather characteristic for the research of prehistory (see e.g. DIACONESCU 2014) and less for the discussion of Romans or Barbarians.

stages would have been a welcome addition. Also, throughout the volume, it is not always clear what kind of relations these Sarmatians had with the Roman Empire during over four centuries of history (*amicitia – ius commercii* versus military clashes, power centre of these *externae gentes*).

Notwithstanding these minor critical observations and suggestions, *Sarmatian Cemeteries from Banat (Late 1st – Early 5th Centuries AD)* will prove itself to be a reference work for the study of the Barbarians from the Great Hungarian Plain and is, as yet, the only monograph of this type addressing western and north-western Romania. Thus, we recommend not only reading this book, but also its employment as a useful tool on the occasion of future archaeological investigations in Banat and even beyond.

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