

PREFACE

The Sarmatians are known from the written sources for a period of around 1000 years. From the mid-1st millennium BC to the mid-1st millennium AD they settled between the steppe region of Southern Russia and Ukraine and the Great Hungarian Plain. Antique authors identified different subgroups of the Sarmatians, such as the Roxolani, the lazyges and the Alani. In the West, they are known because of their involvement in the Marcomannic wars and other additional conflicts with the Roman Empire. Although the Western Sarmatians lived near various Germanic *gentes*, they still are viewed as a bit »exotic«, not least because of linguistic difficulties. The last overview in a western language was published in 1970 by Tadeusz Sulimirski.

In recent decades some Sarmatian princely graves from Southern Russia and the Ukraine caused a stir in major international exhibitions in France, Germany, Italy and Russia. Among the most prominent examples are the »Sokolova Mogila« in Kovalevka (obl. Mikolayiv/UA), the two graves from Porogi (obl. Vinnitsa/UA), the female burial from Kosika (obl. Astrakhan/RUS), the fantastic horse equipment found in the grave in Datchi, in the southeastern border of the city of Asov (obl. Rostov/RUS), and the long-known female grave from Khokhlach in the outskirts of Novocherkassk (obl. Rostov/RUS). Those burials from the 1st century AD were not only very richly furnished with jewellery, dress accessories and horse equipment but additionally demonstrate – as did the previous, numerous exhibitions on »The Gold of the Scythians« – the complex interactions between the classical world and the nomadic peoples. But those princely graves only represent the elite of the steppe nomadic societies. There are many more archaeological settlements and burials that offer detailed information about the life, cosmological ideas, interactions and beliefs of those people whom antique writers categorised as Sarmatians.

Valéria Kulcsár and Eszter Istvánovits are both internationally recognised specialists in the archaeology and history of the Sarmatians. With this book, a good part of which is based on their own extensive excavations in Hungary, the authors provide good access to and a brilliant overview of the current state of research. For the first time since 1970, the fascinating and rich legacy of the Sarmatians from the second half of the 1st millennium BC to the first half of the 1st millennium AD is made accessible in a western language.

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