BRUNO GENITO

The Archaeological Cultures of the Sarmatians
with a Preliminary Note on the Trial Trenches at Gyoma 133:
A Sarmatian Settlement in South-Eastern Hungary (Campaign 1985)

1. Introduction

The trial trenches effected at Gyoma 133 in Békés County (fig. 1) represent the first comprehensive archaeological activity carried out in Hungarian territory by Italian archaeologists. The opening of these new field prospects by an Italian archaeological team represents not only an important new area for both Orientalistic and Mediaevistic research in our country, but also a more effective channel of collaboration with one of the most advanced scientific communities in Europe.*

The Italian project is the result of three years of close cooperation between the Archaeological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest, the Italian Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, the Istituto Universitario Orientale, Naples and the Università degli Studi, Naples 1.

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1 The first contacts started at the end of 1981 when Prof. M. Tosi of the Dipartimento di studi Asiatici, Istituto Universitario Orientale, Naples and Prof. S. Bökönyi, Director of the Archaeological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences explored the possibilities of a new international archaeological cooperation. In April 1982 Dr. Bálint a mediaeval archaeologist of the Hungarian Institute, visited Italy giving two lectures at the Università degli Studi, Rome and the Istituto Universitario Orientale, Naples. Dr Bálint came to Italy thanks to the Italian-Hungarian agreement which allows exchange visits sponsored by the Hungarian Ministry of Culture and the Italian Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione. The lecture he gave at Rome concerned the archaeological cultures of the Khazarians; the lecture at Naples was concerning the archaeological cultures of the Avarians.

In March 1983, a group of Italian archaeologists, consisting of Prof. U. Scerrato, Prof. M. Tosi, Prof. M. Rotili and the author, visited Hungary opening concrete prospects for cooperation.
In 1983 and 1984 the Italian–Hungarian cultural agreement formulated by the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche and the Hungarian Academy of

The great Hungarian tradition of studies on Roman Pannonia made it easy for Hungarian colleagues to chose the subject of their archaeological activity in Italy. The possibilities of work for the Italian team regarding ancient Hungarian cultures could be related to interests in either Orientalist studies or Mediaevalistic studies.

It proved to be extremely interesting to operate on the Asiatic cultures which reached and lived in the Carpathian Basin.

In summer of 1983 and 1984 a Hungarian team directed by Dr F. Redő and Dr. Gabler started to work in Italy excavating a large Roman villa at S. Potito (Ovidoli) near Alba Fucens (Avezzano,Aquila) in cooperation with the Sovrintendenza Archeologica degli Abruzzi. In this respect we owe a great debt of gratitude to Prof. G. Scichilone, Superintendent at Chieti, who made possible the Hungarian excavations in Italy and who has supported the collaboration with our Hungarian counterparts from the very beginning in the first meeting with Prof. S. Bökönyi in November 1982.

Also in summer 1983 and 1984 an Italian team consisting of Prof. Rotili and the author, worked as active observers at Örménykút (Békés County), where Dr E. Garam and Dr C. Bálint were excavating an Avarian Cemetery and a Magyar settlement. The Örménykút excavations started in 1982 and it was the result of a cooperation between the National Museum of Budapest, the Hungarian Archaeological Institute and the L. Eötvös University of Budapest. A great aid and advice I received in that occasion by the Rectors of the Istituto Universitario Orientale, Prof. M. Taddei (1983 and 1984) and Prof. R. Rubinacci (1984).

In order to present the prospects and the possibilities of archaeological work in Hungary Prof. Rotili and I gave two lectures at the Hungarian Academy in Rome in March 1985. Prof. Rotili looked at the Germanic peoples of the Hungarian Plain and I focused on the Asiatic peoples of the Carpathian Basin and their relationships with the Central Asiatic culture complexes. The meeting was organized by the Hungarian Academy at Rome and was inaugurated by Prof. S. Bökönyi and Prof. U. Scerrato. I take the occasion to thank both of them and the Director of the Hungarian Academy for his kind hospitality.

At last in May 1985 Prof. Tosi and I went to Hungary again in order to select a site in which to operate some trial trenches. Following a two day survey together with Dr. D. Jankovich the site Gyoma 133 was selected.

I must here emphasize that the work would not have been completed without the friendly help of Prof. S. Bökönyi and Prof. M. Tosi who had the idea of such a cooperation in 1978. Their merit was in understanding the mutual interests which could arise in the two countries and being able to stimulate and encourage all the human and cultural energies available.

First of all I owe a great debt to my colleagues at the Hungarian Institute of Archaeology which offered its collaboration in the project : to Prof. S. Bökönyi, the Director, who gave me great support; to Drs. C. Bálint and D. Jankovich, who always helped me in every circumstances; to Mrs A. H. Vaday who was very kind in introducing to all the aspects of the Sarmatian cultures in Hungary and also in drawing the pottery fragments found at the site; to Mrs. Makkay–Tulok, the Librarian for her aid and advice; to Dr. Makkay for his friendship and the discussions had together and to all the rest of the staff of the Institute.

I am very pleased to acknowledge the support also given to me by Dr E. Garam of the National Museum of Budapest.
I cannot neglect thanking P. Medgyesi, archaeologist of the Békéscsaba Museum and the students, the restorers, the draftsmen and the workers who contributed much to my work.

On the Italian side, I must express my profound gratitude to Prof. Tosi who first involved me in this work, Prof. Scerrato for his encouragement, Prof. Rotili who was with me in 1983 and 1984 at Örménykút excavation. I also owe a great debt to Dr. E. Starnini of the Sovrintendenza archeologica, Genova, Dr. M. Cattani and Mr. Tiscornia who helped me in the 1985 campaign; without them I would have achieved very much less. Many thanks are also due for the drawings to Dr. Starnini, Dr. Cattani and to Eng. C. Cristilli.

Last but not least, I must thank Prof. Porsia, Director of the Italian Cultural Institute in Budapest, Prof. Ventola, the Vice-Director, who gave me every kind of help, and assistance.

The project has been funded not only by the Hungarian Institute of Archaeology, but also by the Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici, Istituto Universitario Orientale, Naples whose support I would like to emphasize particularly in the persons of the Directors, Prof. A. Tamburello (1983–1985) and Prof. A. Rossi (1985).

A particular thank is also due to the IsMEO (Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente) and its President Prof. G. Ghali who offered me every kind of aid and assistance even when in 1985 and 1986 the archaeological work in Hungary was not a direct field of the research of the Institute.

In January of 1987 the IsMEO and the Archaeological Institute of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences subscribed a scientific agreement for an archaeological cooperation in the respective fields of research.

The common fields of research comprise among the others, the civilisations of the steppe peoples of the Eurasia Septentrionalis. In this last field of research is now placed my specific work on the asiatic cultures in the Carpathian Basin.
Sciences allowed Italian participation in the activities of the Institute of Archaeology in Hungarian territory. In 1985 I was awarded a grant by the Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione through the Dipartimento di Studi Asiatici of the Istituto Universitario Orientale for a research entitled “Archeologia delle Steppe: culture scito-sarmatiche nel bacino dei Carpazi”; thus I was able to begin the first trial trenches on the Gyoma 133 site.

The site is numbered in a topographic survey of the Hungarian Institute of Archaeology (Jankovich, Makkay, Szöke, forthcoming). In the last years the Institute planned to define a micro-region in south-eastern Hungary for a long-term archaeological study, this area seeming the most suitable for demonstrating the historical characteristics of the settlement of the Hungarian Plain (Plate I).

From the first half of the 1st millennium B.C. until the end of the 1st millennium A.D. the Great Hungarian Plain was crossed by several different peoples: some of them were of Asiatic origin like the Scythians, Sarmatians (Iazyges, Roxolani, Alans,) Huns, Avarians and Magyars; others were of Germanic origin, like the Vandals, Gepidians and Longobards. The Scythians (6th–5th century B.C.) are more related to the Iron Age cultures and, in particular, to the largest western extension of the ancient Iranian culture; the Sarmatians belong chronologically to the Roman Era and the others are, instead, connected to the historical cultural phenomenon of the Migration Period which is usually considered to start in the 5th century A.D. and to end in the 9th–10th century (Magyar Conquest).

2. A Geographical Outline

The geomorphology of Hungary has been subdivided by Hungarian scholars in large physiographic units, which are constituted by various ecological landscape and topological elements. These six large macro-regions of the Hungarian territory are the following: I – the Great Plain; II – the Little Plain; III – the Upper Tisza Plain; IV – the Marginal Region of Western Hungary; V – the Transdanubian Uplands; VI – the North–Hungary; V – the Transdanubian Uplands; VI – the North–Hungarian Uplands (fig. 2).

This subdivision is based on ecological "facies", each facies representing the smallest homogeneous unit of the landscape; these units are very similar to each other with regard to water regime, vegetation cover, soil and economic utilisation. A number of such similar ecological facies

2 In this part I follow the outline used in Pécsei–Sárffalvi (1977), mainly in 1st chapter, as well as that used by Kosse (1979), particularly in the part related to hydrography.
costitute a micro-region and an aggregation of several micro-regions forms a meso-region; groups of meso-regions form macro-regions or physiographic landscapes.

The Great Hungarian Plain from a geomorphological point of view represents the westernmost extension of the Central-Asiatic steppe and constitutes the macro-region in which the area selected by the Hungarian Institute of Archaeology was located. The Plain was formed in the Tertiary Period and is constituted by several layers of clay and sand for a depth of 1000–4000 m. These were deposited during the Pliocene Period and rest on a foundation of alternating levels of Paleozoic crystalline and Mesozoic limestone rocks.

The present topography of the Great Plain is made up of the wide flood plains of the Danube and Tisza and the flood-free deposition fans which comprise the interfluve between the Danube and Maros. The average height of the Plain is about 110 m. a.s.l. and the lowest point, located near Szeged, is about 80 m.

The landscape of the Tisza-Danube interfluve is completely different from that of the area east of the Tisza. The Tisza-Danube interfluve constitutes a uniform plain 174 m. a.s.l. rising about 40 m. above the level of the Danube and Tisza. Occupied for the most part by sand and dunes, this part of the plain lacks any surface hydrography and is often arid. In any case water can be found fairly close to the surface by way of the several artesian wells which can transform the steppe landscapes into large orchards.
East of the Tisza River the territory is much less uniform. From north to south it can be subdivided into many parts: the Bodrogköz, an alluvial platform once swampy and now well drained and exploited; the Nyírség, a sandy region; the Hortobágy steppe where a few decades ago it was still possible to find a very typical traditional pastoral life. The rest of the region, very suitable for wheat and corn cultivation, is constituted mainly by the alluvial soils of the Tisza and its tributaries, the Körös and by loess.

The Tisza valley extends in a meander outline following the river bed with bends, lakes and swamps.

The upper valley in the north is included between the Rumanian border and the Bodrog River, the middle valley runs from the Tokaj Mountains to the Körös, and the lower valley in the south, c. 80 m. a.s.l., is located between the Maros and the Danube.

There are two flood periods a year: the first, in the beginning of spring, higher and more violent, is due to the melting of the snow in the Carpathian and Transylvanian Mountains; the second, in the early summer, is due to the late spring-early summer precipitation maximum exceeding the capacity of the catchment area of the Tisza. The flooding of the Tisza occurs at the same time as its tributaries: on the right bank, the Bodrog, Sajó, Eger and Zagyva and, on the left bank, the Kraszna, Szamos, Körös and Maros. The Maros is the largest, but only a short part of it flows through Hungary.

The Körös River basin is constituted in the north by a low flood plain with grove and swamp remnants and in the south by a high flood plain of a steppe-type character with "černozém" soil.

The Körös River is divided into three branches, called "Fehér" (white), "Sebes" (fast) and "Fekete" (black). The Körös, like the Tisza River, has often changed its course; this phenomenon, still evident, is due mainly to climatic changes. A shift in the course of a river is very important in the history of settlement patterns. Because of past alterations in the

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3 It is known that the loess (a word of Germanic origin which means porous) is a sedimentary rock, not very compact, formed by dust brought by the wind into desertic regions. It is constituted by very small granules of quartz, calcite, iron hydroxide and clay minerals.

4 The Tisza River is well known to the ancient writers; a very ample and controversial question is related to its name (cf. Szádeczy-Kardoss 1953).


6 This term as it is known comes from the Russian word černozém which means "black soil". It is the fertile characteristic soil of the continental regions of Eurasia (southwestern Russia, south and southwestern Siberia and northern Manchuria) and the plains of Saskatchewan, Alberta and Texas in North America.
course of rivers and consequent changes in the growth of swamps, many ancient villages were forced to change their location and others had to be abandoned completely.

The displacement of villages is very typical of the large endorheic basins of rivers in Central Asia such as the Amu–Darya, Syr Darya and Hilmand. Here the change in location or abandonment of villages is also due to the silting up of the rivers and not only to changes in their course.

From Pleistocene times until now the Tisza River has radically changes its course which was originally located much more to the south, following the courses of the modern-day Ér, Berettyó and Körös Rivers (fig. 3).

A geographical-ecological analysis of the Great Hungarian Plain is lacking in archaeological literature for "historical" times; such an approach would be of great interest for the study of the development and distribution of ancient settlements. In fact, with one exception relating to the prehistoric Körös culture (Kosse 1979), the analysis of the geological make-up, hydrographic and soil system, and environmental, climatic and vegetational growth variations has not yet been the subject of archaeological research regarding this area.
3. The Historical Outline

The Sarmatians of Hungary constitute a cultural entity which, for its chronological and geographical collocation, is distinct from the Sauromatian/Sarmatian culture of the Eurasian steppes\(^7\) (fig. 4). The Sarmatian tribes of the Iazyges who reached the Carpathian basin in the 1st century A.D. and the Roxolani who did the same about two centuries later\(^8\) are nevertheless ethnically related to the Sarmatians who lived on the western Eurasian steppes from the 4th to the 1st century B.C. and of which the Sauromatians are considered the antecedents in the 7th–5th centuries B.C.\(^9\).

Without dealing here with the several problems related to the ethnonyms “Sauromatian” and “Sarmatian” used for these tribes\(^10\) and to their material culture excavated in the geographical area between the Volga and Danube, I shall briefly outline the most important events related to them. The archaeological cultures of the Sauromatian/Sarmatians and of their cognates in Hungary developed during their long-term migratory movement and spread into geographical and cultural areas very different and far from each other\(^11\).

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\(^7\) The name “Sauromatian” is quoted for the first time by Herodotus (*Hist.* IV, 17, 22, 110–117) and by the pseudo–Hippocrates (Περί άρανου τάστον τόπων); the name “Sarmatian” is used for the first time by the pseudo-Scylax, 68 and also by Eudoxus from Cnidus (quoted by Stephanus of Byzantium) who gives information on this people living on the Don/Tanais.

\(^8\) The most important and largest archaeological publication about the Sarmatian period in Hungary is still the three volumes by Páducz (1941, 1944, 1950). The arrival in Hungary of the Sarmatians/Iazyges is conventionally dated back to the first decades of the 1st century A.D.; for an ample bibliography even if now out dated, see Alföldi (1943, I: 181); cf. also Mócsey (1954) and Köhegyi (1973).

Mócsey (1977) retains that the Iazygian entry in the Hungarian Plain was not an impressive military and diplomatic event but more probably the consequence of a long, almost imperceptible infiltration that he dates back to the Caesarian Age. The coming of the Roxolani is, instead a much more complex question even if it seems probable that it happened in the second half of the 3rd century (Harmatta 1950:55). Barkóczi (1959:449) thinks that in that period the Sarmatians/Iazyges and the Sarmatians/Roxolani were so amalgamated that the name “Roxolani” disappeared.

\(^9\) This hypothesis dates back to Rau (1927 and 1929); it is still generally accepted, cf. Smirnov(1980) and David (1980).

\(^10\) The question has been debated for a long time and even now it is very difficult to resolve. If we accept the hypothesis of the Soviet scholars widely prevalent, about the ethnical–cultural identity of the two peoples, the name “Sauromatians” is not derived from “Sarmatian” or viceversa cf. Dafină (1982: 18–19); Rostovtseff (1922: 113–114) considered the two names related to different peoples.

\(^11\) The geographical areas I am referring to starts approximately from the Volga, includes the territories crossed by the Don, Dnieper, Dniester and ends at the Danube.
The Sauromatians are mentioned by the ancient sources for the first time in the 5th century B.C.; at that time they were located east of the Don/Tanaïs 12. From an archaeological point of view they can be identified with the people who produced, from the 7th to the beginning of the 5th century B.C., the material culture excavated in the Transdonian, Volga and southern Ural areas 13.

Soviet scholars have divided these archaeological cultures into different groups which show a strong ethnical homogeneity although some variations, due to strong cultural exchanges in that area, are recognizable. Two variants of the Sauromatian culture have been considered the "Volga–Don" and the "Samara–Ural". The latter can be subdivided into the "Eastern–Ural", the "Central Kazakhstan" and the "Ilek" (fig. 5).

![Diagram of Sauromatian culture regions](image)

Fig. 5

12 The Herodotean account (Hist. IV, 110–117) mentions the very important role of women in the Sauromatian culture. This aspect is confirmed by the anonymous author of the Periégésis of the Euxinus Sea, XLV, which called the Sauromatians gynatko- krotounoī, i.e. "ruled by women". For this question, cf. Grakov (1947:100–121); for the myth of the amazones related to the Sauromatians, cf. David (1976 and 1983).

13 These archaeological cultures have been analysed in the main by Rau (1927, 1929), Grakov (1928) and more recently by Smirnov (1957, 1961, 1963, 1964, 1974, 1980); in western languages cf. Sulinmirski (1970) and David (1980, 1985).
Between the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 4th century in the Orsk-Oremburg area the Proxorovka culture has been interpreted by the Soviet scholars as a very profound change in the Sauromatian culture, this period being considered as the beginning of the Sarmatian Age. The enrichment in the material culture has been also considered as the effect of an increasing centralisation of the socio-economic structure which started to transform the previous tribal unit. A new warlike aristocracy arose and its material culture, mainly found in tombs, is constituted by weapons and other objects coming from the Near East, very rich ornaments and horse graves.

The widely accepted chronology of the Sauromatian/Sarmatian culture comprises four different periods: the Blumenfeld Period (Sauromatian Culture, 7th–4th century B.C.); the Proxorovka Period (Early Sarmatian Culture, 5th–2nd century B.C.); the Susly Period (Middle Sarmatian Culture, 2nd century B.C.–2nd century A.D.); the Šipovo Period (Late Sarmatian Culture, 2nd–4th century A.D.). The evident change in the Sauromatian culture at the time of the Proxorovka culture probably had a linguistic result in the use by the ancient writers of the new name Sarmatian together with the ancient name Sauromatian.

It is known that at the end of the 4th century B.C. the Sarmatians crossed the Don/Tanais (Pseudo Scylax, 68) bringing their own cultures which were very different from those previously located west of the river. This new Sarmatian culture slowly replaced the more ancient Scythian cultures which seem to have been pushed to the west of the Dnieper River. It

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14 The Proxorovka Culture is completely different from the local "Ilek Culture" belonging to the Samara-Ural group; coming from the eastern area of the latter group, the Proxorovka Culture spread further to the west in the lower Volga Basin near Saratov. At the end of the 4th century B.C. all the area, belonging previously to the Sauromatians, appears to be inside the limits of the Proxorovka Culture. The most typical characteristics of the Proxorovka Culture are the southern orientation of the graves, the diagonal position of the bodies, the presence of catacombs and graves with niches or steps along the sides and objects such as swords with bow pommels, bronze "barbarian" mirrors and small oval or circular altars decorated with reliefs (Smirnov 1980: 147).

15 This question is quite complicated; Pseudo-Scylax uses the name "Sarmatians" indicating a people located at the west of the Don, but afterwards uses "Sauromatians" to indicate the people east of the same river. The correction by Fabricius of the term Sarmatian in "Sauromatian" is not very convincing. Stephanus of Byzantium speaks about the Sauromatians i.e., Sauromatians, quoting Eudoxus. The Periplus writer (in Vulgate by Scymnos from Chios, v. 876–881) and Pliny the Elder (Nat. Hist. VI, 16, 19) do not seem to make any distinction between the two names. A very close Iranian origin is proposed by Diodorus Siculus (II, 43) and Pliny the Elder (IV, 19) who put the Sauromatians ethnically in relation with the Medes.
is very difficult to known whether the Sarmatian groups who crossed the Don had any political unity. The finding of many gold and gilded silver “phalerae” datable to the 2nd century B.C. 16 suggests the possibility that the Sarmatian tribal confederation could have been ruled, like the Scythians, by a “royal tribe”. At the present state of research this possibility is far from being confirmed 17.

The Sarmatian entry into the Pontic Steppe in the 4th century B.C. kept up the contacts between the nomads of the Asiatic steppes and the Greeks of the Black Sea who for some years had been creating the Bosporan Kingdom 18. On the northern shores of the Black Sea the contacts between the “civilized” world of the Greek colonies and the “barbarian” world of the Scythians and Sarmatians produced the typical phe-

16 They are those finiments for horse trappings decorated with religious themes and some vegetal elements. The places where they have been found are: Axtanizovskaja Stanica (Kuban Area), Severskaja Stanica (Taman Peninsula), Janeekrak (Taurid district between the Caucasus and the Dnieper steppes), Starobelijsk, Taganrog and Fedulovo (Don and Donetz regions), Uspenskaja Stanica, Novonzensk and Istečkaja Jurga (all these sites are within the southern part of the Sarmatian territory west of the Don and in the south-west Caucasian area). One site, Tobolsk on the Irtysh, east of the Urals, lay far outside that territory, as did two larger hoards found in areas west of the Sarmatian territory: one in Galiče (in the Orehowo district in Bulgaria at the south of Danube with 14 phalerae) and the other at Szőrcse (Háromszék district in the south-eastern corner of the Carpathians, with 6 phalerae), cf. Fettich (1949). One more phalera comes from an unknown site and two others, now located in the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris, from the Pontic area. On the historical importance of these finds see Harmatta 1950: 29 ff. The phalerae are published, even if not systematically, by Spicin (1909), Rostovceff (1922:136; 1926: 239; 1931: 542, 552, 554, 583), and Fettich (1937: 142).

17 We know from Herodotus (Hist., IV, 117) that the Sauromatians and the Scythians were related peoples with the same language. Strabo (VII. 3, 17) enumerates four Sarmatian tribes, the Iazyges, the “Royal Sarmatians”, the Urhi and the Roxolani. According to this description, their location might be conjectured thus: the Iazyges lived in the southern area, the Urhi in the northern area, the “Royal Sarmatians” in the central (between the Dnieper and the Danube), the Roxolani in the eastern area (between the Dnieper and the Don). According to this reconstruction it has been possible to suppose a political unity with the “Royal Sarmatians” in the middle as the ruling tribe (Harmatta 1950: 4 ff.), this unity consisting of a kind of Empire of the “Western Sarmatians” (idem: 6) datable between the last decades of the 2nd century and 60 B.C. When Dacian power increased that empire progressively disappeared in the last years of the 1st century B.C. (idem: 24).

18 The Greek colonisation in the Black Sea in the 6th century B.C. led to the formation of a state on the Bosporus in about 480 B.C. There existed a political union of about 30 towns constituting a bulwark against the attacks of the steppe peoples. This political union had a kind of a capital in Panticapaeum (the present Kerc). At the end of the 5th and beginning of the 4th century the confederation developed into a kingdom which comprised all the Greek towns on the Black Sea (cf. Blawatsky 1960 and 1965).
nomena of frontier areas. Instead of a permanent state of conflict there was in many ways a good relationship between the two worlds. Fruitful economic exchanges, in fact, were convenient for both sides. The development of trade which started with the Scythians and was not interrupted by the advent of the Sarmatians allowed the two groups to enjoy a peaceful co-existence.

The ascension of Mithridate Eupator VI to the throne of Pontus in the 2nd century B.C. strengthened the friendship between the two peoples. The new king was even able to involve the Sarmatians in his wars against Rome; at this time (79–78 B.C.), in fact, there was the first military conflict on the Danube between the Iazyges and the Romans.

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19 The wealth of the Scythians and the Sarmatians depended on their trade with the Pontic Greek towns. Agricultural products were the fundamentals goods which they could give in exchange. From the 4th century onwards South Russia exported its products through the Greek trading towns and, correspondingly enormous amount of Greek articles (precious metal objects, arms and pottery) streamed into South Russia. The most important trading centre for the western part was the Greek town of Olbia. For a bibliographical account see Rostovceff (1922, 1925, 1931), Ebert (1921), Jessen (1947) and specifically for Olbia, Belin de Ballu (1972) and Wasowicz (1975).

20 It is known that in 309 during the civil war in the Bosphorian Kingdom which had started after the death of Pairsades I, there was a violent struggle among his sons. The Sarmatians on this occasion played a more than secondary role, helping on Pairsades's son, Eumulus.
Let me now turn to the history of the western Sarmatian tribes of the Iazyges and the Roxolani which can be traced only from historical sources the lack of any archaeological evidence of their presence in the Pontic area preventing one from following their movement toward the Hungarian Plain.

The Iazyges lived in the 2nd century B.C. to the north-west of the Azov Sea between the Dnieper and the Don (fig. 6); the Roxolani at the east of the lower Volga. The latter, probably pushed by other peoples arrived on the Pontic Steppes and forced the Iazyges to arrive in the Dniester and the Danube delta 21 (fig. 7). The information we have from

Strabo (VII, 2, 97, 306) and Tacitus (Ann. XII, 29; Hist. III, 5) is related to the geographical location of the Iazyges between the Dnieper and Dniester and to their political supremacy over the tribe of the Bastarnae.

Further information about the Iazyge warriors comes from Ovid who, from 18 B.C. to 17 A.D., was in exile at Tomis - the present Constanța (Tristia, II, 191; Ex Pont. I, 2, 79; IV; 7, 9, etc.). However, they probably first reached the Rumanian Plain, and then, after crossing the

21 The Roxolani mentioned by the historical sources (Strabo II, 14; VII, 306) are not well documented by archaeological data (cf. Smirnov 1948:213-19). For an historical synthesis of the various Sarmatian movements westward and eastward, cf. Smirnov 1962: 141-44.
Transylvanian Mountains, passing through the Roman province of Moesia and following the southern course of the Danube, finally arrived in the Hungarian Plain between the Danube and Tisza 22.

After 9 B.C., when Pannonia became a Roman province, the relationship between the Romans and the Iazyges is well documented 23. The Sarmatian entry into the Hungarian Plain was probably allowed and even encouraged by the Romans but it is still not definitively proved that the latter used the former as a defensive bulwark against the increasing Dacian power. Other conditions also could contribute to the Sarmatian settlement of the Hungarian Plain; a role was probably played by new peoples which from southern Russia moved westward in successive waves. But this event too is not archaeologically very well evidenced.

The growth of Dacian power, mainly at the time of King Boirebistas 24, created a very strong political destabilisation in the area which resulted in the end of the so-called “Western Sarmatian Empire”.

The Roman wars against Decebalus, King of Dacia preceded the first military conflicts between the Romans and the Sarmatians in 89–97 at the time of the emperors Domitian (85–96) and Nerva (96–97). In 117–119, after a combined attack against the by now Roman province of Dacia from the Iazyges on the west and the Roxolani on the east, Hadrian led a new military campaign against them.

This historical period corresponds to the so-called Early Period of the Sarmatian culture in Hungary 25. This period is not very rich from the point

22 The way followed by the Sarmatians in order to reach the Hungarian Plain seems to have been the southern course of the Danube. This hypothesis is widely accepted (cf. Párducz 1942: 326–27, Mócsy 1977, Alföldi 1942 and Harmatta 1950:45). Nevertheless an alternative hypothesis proposes the crossing of the Carpathians through Ruthenia (cf. Daicoviciu 1939–41: 15, 1941, Sulimirski 1963 and Fitz 1974).

23 In the 1st and 2nd centuries the ancient Roman sources applied the name of “Sarmatian” generally to the Iazyges and never to the Roxolani. In the 4th century the name “Roxolani” had completely ceased to be used, along with the name “Iazyges” (Harmatta 1950: 5).

24 The formation of the Dacian state represented the end of a long political, social and economic evolution started in the 2nd century in the south–western region of Transylvania. The Kingdom of Boirebistas developed approximately between 82 and 44 B.C. and extended westward and northward to the Carpathians, eastward to Olbia and Dobrugia and southward to the Haemus (cf. Daicoviciu 1979: 29–30).

25 The division formulated by Párducz (1941, 1944, 1950) is based on groups of finds and on typology of objects. Usually it is not very easy to refer to any precise chronology; generally in the Sarmatian cultures in Hungary there is no close relationship between the chronology of a group of finds and that which can be reconstructed from the ancient sources (Vaday 1984: 167). The major part of the finds is constituted by the
of view of material culture; the graves are very simple and assembled in very large cemeteries. The poor quality ornaments include clay vessels, small iron knives and beads and, in rare cases, fibulae and short iron swords with a ring pommel deriving from the Crimea and Caucasus cultures. In a few graves, probably the earliest ones, were found small decorative gold plates of various shapes which had been woven on garments of a north Pontic type.

Further pushes created a new and difficult situation for the Iazyges who were pressed between the offensives of imperialistic Roman politics on the west and the increasing defensive operations of the Dacians at the east.

This new geopolitical situation of the Iazyges caused an interruption in the relationship with their fellow Sarmatians, the Roxolani, still living east to Dacia in the Rumanian Plain. It was only under Marcus Aurelius, (Dio Cassius 71, 1–2) that the two peoples were allowed to re-establish their commercial and cultural relations.

Marcus Aurelius conducted a long war against the Sarmatians and Marcomanni (167–180 A. D.), during which the Sarmatians attacked Pannonia twice, in 167 and 169; but the Roman reactions was severe and the Sarmatians were forced to surrender in 175. The peace treaty imposed by the Romans obliged the Sarmatians to live at an established distance from the Danube and to contribute 8000 horsemen to the Roman army, 5500 of whom were sent as legionaries to the far-away military camps of Britannia. Other periods of hostility occurred at the time of Commodus (177–179) and Maximinus the Thracian (236–238).

The archaeological traces of the Sarmatians in this period, which is considered the Middle Period, are more numerous and differ in many respects from those of the Early Period, even though the way of life evidenced by these remains reflects the same social system as before. The grave goods include clay vessels and brooches and in female graves whorls and bronze mirrors.

A particular set of tomb items, consisting of an iron knife, an iron awl, a flint and steel and sometimes a whetstone, belongs to shepherds’ graves.

Pottery sherds and only a small part by metal objects; some Roman objects, often indicators of a secondary chronology along with the Dacian and Celtic articles, contribute to give a very complex cultural context (ibidem: 168).

26 Cf. the finds of Eger (ibidem: 59, pl. XXVI).

27 This particular historical event can of course be interpreted in a very different way from the point of view of the Romans. In this respect the barbarians were the true actors of the fact; they could allow the Romans to cross their territory to Dacia.

28 Cf. e.g. grave no. 73 from Kiszombor E (Párducz 1950, pl. XXXVI).
A few graves differ radically. For instance, in grave no. 20 at Szentes Nagyhegy were found a kind of pectoral made of gilded plates probably sewn on dresses, some bronze ear-rings, a bronze ring, some cornelian and glass beads and some smooth gilded plates coming from the Black Sea. Another grave of the same kind has been found in Pannonia at Szil. The presence of a Roman sword makes very uncertain the hypothesis that the grave belonged to a "royal" Sarmatian herdsman (Fettich 1931: 523–24; Párducz 1944: 79).

In 253–260 Gallienus is obliged to fight against a combined attack of Roxolani and Quads; in 282–283 and 286–293, at the time of Diocletian, another seven wars against the barbarians were waged and still others at the time of Galerius Maximus, Costantine and Licinius. In this period the so-called Late Period, the Sarmatians seem to have built up a defensive vallum, probably between 322 and 332 A.D.; starting from the Danube bend, this vallum turns northeastward after Aquincum continuing along the Matra hills to Eger, Miskolc and the Nyiregyháza areas. From this point the vallum goes southward to Debrecen and to Arad (Rumania) and reaches more or less the Maros, tributary river of the Tisza (fig. 8).

The graves of this period seem to indicate an additional change in the social stratification of the Sarmatian people. Besides a lower social class, probably composed of the descendants of the indigenous Dacians and mainly engaged in agriculture there probably was a middle class, possibly the first wave of the Iazyges which absorbed subsequent waves of new peoples coming from the east. The upper social level was constituted by a ruling class, possibly the 3rd-century newcomers, whose tombs are the few barrow graves concentrated mainly to the northeast of the Tisza.

An example of lower-class graves is constituted by the Bajmok–Mórahalom group in which no weapons have been found; one example of middle class graves is the Kiszombor/Ernőháza group consisting of wooden coffins with personal ornaments which represent a completely new feature. The furnishings of the barrow grave can be related to the upper class: weapons, horses, fine Pontic jewellery and the "tendrilled" fibulae of the

29 This grave constitutes one of the most important finds for the history of Hungary in the 2nd century (Párducz 1956: 139). Other important graves of the same period are that of Szeged–Makkoserdő, Kiskunfélegyháza, Belsőerencséllás, Mezőtúr, etc.
30 For an archaeological introduction to the Quads, see Bóna 1963: 289.
33 These wooden coffins constitute the characteristic elements of the group. Párducz retains that this burial system spread in the Hungarian Plain under the influence of the kurgan burial system.
type "with the foot turned over" are the most characteristic goods (fig. 9) 34.

The presence in the Hungarian Plain, at this time, of Germanic peoples such as Goths and Gepids led to the adoption of a few objects which were characteristic of these peoples 35. One particularly interesting barrow grave, dating from about A. D. 300, was found at Herpály (Berettyóújfalu Co. Hajdú Bihar) where a Vandal warrior, evidently belonging to the upper class, was buried. The grave contained also a fine germanic gilded shield boss decorated in the Pontic Style 36.

The final moment of the Hungarian Late Sarmatian Period came about in 332, when a disastrous civil war broke out. The vassal tribe of the "Sarmatae Limigantes" moved against their masters the "Sarmates Ardagarantes" also called "Sarmates Libri". The latter were won and took refuge with the Quades and Goths, but the majority went to Roman territory in Pannonia (Hieronymus Chron. and Anonymous Valesii).

New military conflicts are attested to in 355 and 357 at the time of Constantine and again at the time of Theodosius in 364, 374 and 378. In 384 Theodosius fought again against the Sarmatians and won with the help of his son Arcadius and his Co-Emperor Valentinian III.

The end of the Sarmatian period in Hungary is generally considered contemporary to the arrival of the Huns in A. D. 430, even if the ancient writers continue to mention them until the end of the 5th century 37.

A late archaeological period seem, also to be attested after Attila's death in the southern part of Hungary, present-day Vojvodina. (Csallány 1961: 316–317).

34 For the kurgan grave culture in the Sarmatian age, see Zoltai 1938; 1941; Párducz 1931; 1941; 1950:193–214, 252–60).
37 Cf. for example Claudian and Procopius.
4. The Sarmatian Question

This short descriptive outline of Sarmatian history does not exhaust all the questions and problems related to it. This history can be reconstructed mainly on the basis of ancient sources which do not help one to explore deeper levels of the subject, i.e., the social history, socio-economic development, etc. 38.

Even some of the most elementary questions about the Sarmatians in Hungary still go without answer. Who were they? To what extent can we consider them an Iranian people? and to what extent should we consider them a people mixed with Greek, Celtic, Dacic Roman and Germanic peoples? and so on 39.

In the case of the Sarmatians it is possible to recognize in a very concentrated way, the basic archaeological problem connected to any of the peoples migrating from the Asiatic steppes: the relationship between their ethnical identity and material culture 40.

It is very difficult analysing these peoples to try to attribute a different ethnic character to each of several cultures, or, conversaly, to attempt to ascribe a single homogeneous "ethnos" to many cultures. There is evidence that different ethnic groups can be related to a single culture. In this case, there are two possible approaches: either to avoid the singling out of any ethnic group, maintaining the notion of culture, or concentrate on analysing the ethnic character, running the risk of neglecting the cultural

38 In this respect because of the large amount of archaeological documentation at their disposal, the Soviet scholars are the only ones who have had the possibility to study in a wider context the social history of this people; cf. for example the works by Xzanov about the Sarmatians (1971) and the Schythians (1972), and Smirnov (1964).

39 Here I must mention the important work done by Hungarian scholars who have been engaged in studying Sarmatian Culture for forty years: first of all Párducz and now Vaday, whose articles represent the most extensive archaeological documentation for any approach to the history of the Sarmatians in Hungary. I cannot but mention Vaday’s recent works (1976, 1978, 1980, 1981, 1982a, 1982b). At present a rich bibliography on the many aspects of the Sarmatian Culture in Hungary exists even though because of the ethnic complexity which characterizes that period, the interpretative criteria of research on the Sarmatians still oscillates between the use of archaeological data and the opting for an historical framework.

40 This, in truth, is one of the basic questions which confront modern archaeological research. The ethnical identity is practically unrecognizable even if we have at disposal an extensive historiographical documentation. Take for example, the Medes, the Iranian people who inhabited north-western Iran between the 9th and the 6th century, of which almost no archaeological traces remain. The only archaeological remains attributable to that period and to that area are a mystery as far as ethnic collocation is concerned (cf. Genito, 1986).
context. The material changes within archaeological cultures do not always lead to similar changes in ethnic-racial identity. The continuity of a material culture throughout a gradual typological evolution does not imply the continued existence of the people which first produced it; at the same time the disappearance of a "culture" does not imply the end of a people. In fact, not always can the aggregate of a "culture" be related to an ethnic collectivity (Gallus-Horváth 1938:58).

The most emblematic example, in this sense, is constituted by the presence on the Hungarian Plain of the barrow graves kurgans or tumuli, some of which have been ascribed to the Sarmatian Period 41. These "earth buildings" evidence a particular burial system and constitute a controversial question because the major part of them are chronologically connected to the "Tumulus Burial Culture or "Kurgan Culture" originated in the Ukrainian North Pontic Steppe in the end of Copper Age and beginning of the Bronze Age (Sredni Stog period 3500–3300 B.C. and Yamnaya period – 2700–2200 B.C.). This "Kurgan Culture" has been interpreted as the manifestation of the first wave of the probable original speakers of Proto-Indo-European languages (Childe 1926) and considered the most significant characteristic for explaining the cultural shifts that occurred during the late Copper Age and the following transition period in Eastern Europe leading to the Early Bronze Age 42. This "Kurgan Culture" is very different, not only in chronological sense, from the culture which, in the 1st millennium B.C. in South Russia and Central Asia, also produced a Kurgan burial system 43. But even the Kurgans attributable in Hungary to Copper Age are considered to represent the most characteristic cultural feature of a Central-Asiatic steppe people who reached the Plain at that period 44. The Kurgans are usually between

41 Cf. n. 34.
42 The question of the "Kurgan Culture" is a very complicated one. A rich bibliography exists on this matter (cf. in the main, Childe 1926, Dumitrescu 1963, Gimbutas 1961, 1966, 1970, 1980, Mallory 1977). Recently Anthony (1986) has reconsidered all the question and has singled out the lack of any interpretative utility in the concept of "kurgan Culture". His hypothesis is based on explaining the cultural changes during the period 3300–2700 in Eastern Europe with other facts, among which the domestication of the horse and its development as a mount by steppe river-valley societies. This interpretation has funded on all the recent discoveries of the archaeological research (cf. particularly Bökényi 1978, 1980, 1986).
43 The kurgans found in south Russia, in the Volga, Minusinsk and Altai areas, belong to a period between the 10th and 2nd centuries B.C. This chronology has been debated for a long time and the bibliography related to it is quite rich. The best summary of this question is in Jettmar 1964.
one and ten metres high, with a diameter between 20 and 70 m., and are assembled in large cemeteries; the distance between them is about 100 m. and only in rare cases they can be much closer to each other. In Hungary there are more than 3000 kurgans, mainly located in the east, basically in the region of the Tisza and Körös and the areas of Hortobágy, Nagykunság and Tiszazug. They form quite characteristic landmarks of the Plain and are significant for their topographical distribution; they seem to be built, in fact, along both sides of rivers and could help to identify ancient river beds (Ecsedy 1979:14–15).

The kurgans attributed to the Sarmatian Age are very different in size and topographical distribution from the more ancient ones of the Copper Age. Two geographical areas have been identified, the northern one located to the east of the Tisza, in the Hortobágy–Poroshát, the southern one at south of Szeged–Baja (fig. 10). The former group is much better known than the latter which has been topographically identified, but only partially excavated. This southern group is located in the area between the Danube and the Tisza where only a few Sarmatian remains have been found. The tumuli are much larger than those in the north and have been generally attributed to a subgroup of the Roxolani coming from Wallachia under the pressure exerted by the Visigoths (Alföldi 1939).

The chronology of the two groups of tumuli is not very certain, the burial ritual being very poor and simple, and the material culture generally resulting very atypical if compared to the rest of the Sarmatian material culture; moreover it is difficult to make comparisons with other objects because of the dearth of finds. The attempts at dating the materials made by Párducz (1950) led to a more ancient period for the northern group (3rd–4th A. D.) and to a later period for the southern one 4th–5th A. D.

45 The question of the burial ritual system is a very complicated one. The large geographical distribution of these graves from Hungary to Mongolia throughout South Russia, Enisej, Altai and Siberia does not allow one to make any generalisations. In south Russia there are graves belonging to persons of high social rank as testified by human and horse sacrifices (e.g. Čertomlyk, Kelermes, Kostromskaja); in the Volga area there is no clear evidence for the rituals; in the very large kurgans of Enisej and Minusinsk is attested the use of clay masks which were probably put on the dead person’s face; in the Altai kurgans the customs is common of burying the horse with its ornaments as in South Russia. For the south Russian kurgans in general, see Illinska 1957 and Grakov 1962, for the Volga ones, Rostovceff 1918, Rau 1927 and Rykov 1947; for those of Enisej and Minusinsk, Rudenko 1929; and for the Altai kurgans, Rudenko 1948. The big question of the kurgans is also related to the Herodotean account (IV, 21, 48, 51 57) and its archaeological evidence. For that which concerns the Hungarian kurgans of the Copper Age some evidence of rituals has been found such as ochre paint, communal burial places and domestic animals (Ecsedy 1979: 44–45).
Fig. 10
Barkócz, however, was not in agreement with him (1959: 448) and antedated the whole "tumulus" culture to the end of the 2nd century and first half of the 3rd century A. D. Wheter in the Párducz chronology or in that of Barkócz, it remains to explain the contemporary use of the barrow together with the simple flat graves, which also belonged to the previous age. In a multiethnic context such as that represented by the Great Hungarian Plain, it has been easy to attribute the two burial systems to different cultural entities (Harmatta 1950:55).

Given the historical background of the Sarmatian people in Hungary as outlined, it is of great interest to analyse the culture of the Sarmatians. Going back to the original Iranian culture and following it as it was transformed through the centuries in various geographical areas can represent a new approach to studying this people: from an Asiatic perspective, so to speak. Identifying the Iranian cultural elements in the material culture, settlement patterns, religious beliefs and burial rituals attributed to the Sarmatians will not be an easy task. This approach, combining historical, archaeological, iconographic and other types of data has already been attempted by Vaday (1984b) and it seems full of interesting prospects. To succeed in following this direction of research for these new Italian archaeological perspectives on Hungarian territory, it will be necessary to avoid forcing a false historical reconstruction to fit the archaeological data. When there is no correlation between the archaeological and historical documentation it is just this particular situation of not correlation which must be analysed.

The fact that it is impossible to correlate the historical data with the archaeological ones means, therefore, that the history must adapt to the material reality. This negative realisation gives rise to a new approach based on the dialectic contrast between the historiographical and the archaeological context.

5. Research at Gyoma 133

The short excavation campaign in 1985 must be considered as a first contact with the cultures of the steppe peoples which ultimately constitute the basic aim of the Italian field research.

The Sarmatian entry to Hungarian Plain does not constitute an isolate historical event, but it can be interpreted just as the very beginning of the Migration Period, which traditionally has been considered as started in the Hunnic period (4th–5th century) (Harmatta 1950:37).

The Sarmatians renewed, in different ways and at different times, the more ancient Iranian arrival in Hungarian territory. The Cimmerians, which had probably spread in the Plain before the Scythians, constituted the
first wave of Asiatic peoples which reached the Carpathian Basin in historical times. In the same time the Cimmerian and the Scythian cultures constitute the final moment of a migrating wave of peoples which can be dated back to the Copper Age (cf. n. 42) in which the cultures of steppe peoples seem to have spread first in eastern Europe.

The historical development of mounted nomadism which characterizes the steppe peoples had in the Carpathian Basin a particularly significant moment. In fact, for its geomorphological characteristics, that area was able to contain, as in a backwash, the major part of the cultural experiences which had taken origin in Central Asia or in South Russia, these last being the basic areas in which the nomad horsemen originally lived. In all these periods, in which this phenomenon happened, chronologically very distant from each other, the Asiatic peoples had contacts with different systems as "Copper", "Bronze" "Halstatt" or "La Tène" cultures, quite different from their own, or with a state political unit as the Roman Empire.

The cultural interferences which took origin in those contacts give us the idea of the role played by the nomad herdsmen, whose socio-economic system was able to keep its inner identity even if continuously developing and changing.

It is known that the social structures of the "barbarian" peoples constituted an important factor in the ending of the Roman Empire; furthermore they much contributed in the integration process with the Roman Empire, influencing also its expansion and, ultimately, the very origin and collocation of the frontiers.

At the beginning of the 1st millennium A.D. western Europe started to change: the ancient world entered into a long historical process which after few centuries produced the downfall of the Roman Empire; a new centre of power replaced the old political system and the "barbarian" civilisation was progressively integrated in that process.

At the eastern boundary of the Roman Empire along the Danube Limes the invading Asiatic peoples and first the Sarmatians, put the bases of the end of the western political stability bringing with them most of their original cultural values.

The interaction between the two types of societies have been known till now mainly by the written sources. The reconstruction of the ancient history of that time can be based also on material culture, i.e. on the great amount of goods (until few decades ago not sufficiently considered) which ultimately constituted the reality of the economic exchanges.

The Sarmatian material culture, as it has been recognized, gives evidence of the importance of the trade relationships with the Roman world. One of the most significant example in this sense is constituted by the
terra sigillata (Gabler 1983). This kind of pottery, in fact, not only spread in "barbarian" territory, but was also imitated in some of its shapes such as the cup Dragendorff 33 or the bowl Dragendorff 37 (Gabler-Vaday 1986).

These kinds of products of exchange were bought or imitated by the "barbarians" in order to reproduce, also symbolically, the Roman uses to which they attributed an important social value. These objects express the rank and the social position of their owners and could not be bought by everyone, but only by the highest élite of the social structure.

The perspectives of research in the historical reconstruction of the interferences of the cultural phenomena in the frontier areas are very interesting in order to single out the deep relationships between two cultural entities. Either if the cultural interferences occurred between two advanced political units or between some cultural spheres or between a political unit and an aggregate of groups of peoples as the Roman/Sarmatian Case, the steppe (peoples) cultures represent the natural and mobile driving belt between the two elements.

The perspectives of the research at Gyoma 133 appear at present very interesting.

The identification of two chronological periods, mainly based on the typology of the pottery fragments, evidentiates the importance of two significant moments of the Sarmatians settling in Hungary.

The 2nd and the 3rd centuries constitute the central moment of the Sarmatian settling in the Plain whereas the 4th and the 5th constitute the last moment in which the coming of new peoples such as the Gepids (Germanic) and Huns (Asiatic) contributed to the final disappearing of the Sarmatians.

The first period is well represented on the site by the presence of some terra sigillata fragments which can be dated to the middle of the 3rd century A.D. whereas the second period is attested by the presence of a very typical coarse pottery characterized by quartzite fragments like tempered materials and by some peculiar shapes very different from the ones used before.

The presence of the plates, cups and bowls like the Dragendorff nos. 31, 33, 37 suggests that in the area of Gyoma the Sarmatians imitated the Roman products much more selectively than we expected. The use of an imported table-ware did not prevent the Sarmatians from continuing to use their own original shapes of pottery which were ultimately dependent on their way of drinking, eating etc.

This important hystorical element contributes to the reconstruction of the typical living-system of the Sarmatians, who imitated only these types of table-ware, while for different uses they continued to produce their typical vessels such as jars, etc.
Furthermore in the history of the area an important role was also played by the Körös basin which, since prehistoric times, had had a strategic importance, located as it was between different geo-cultural areas. In the Sarmatian period the area represented in fact the crossway between the provinces of Pannonia and that of Dacia and thanks to the network of the tributary rivers of the Tisza it constituted the centre of the economic changes between west and east.

6. The Project of the Hungarian Institute of Archaeology

The zone which has been under study for the last ten years by the Hungarian Institute of Archaeology is an irregular poligonal-shaped area. The first aim of the work was to collect archaeological data by surface-surveys or by large-scale excavations in order to understand the profound changes in the archaeological cultures which occurred in Hungarian territory from prehistoric times to the Magyar conquest (fig. 11). In other words the Hungarian colleagues decided to study, in a microscale, the progressive transformation which a given area underwent, finally arriving at a process of state-formation. This micro-region is located in Békés County in the Körös basin just at the border with Szolnok County; its reference points are, at the east, Szarvas, at the south, Örménykút and, at the north, Gyoma-Endrőd (fig. 12).

This project utilizes a system of work in which the plan, based on a geo-topographical pre-selection, is rigidly executed in a coherent fashion. Thus any largescale excavation project can produce much more data if it is included in a preselected geographical zone; the quantitative changes of an area appear more evident than they would in a project containing several zones. The aim proposed by the Hungarian archaeologists seems extremely interesting, especially in the light of the most recent theories on the origin of state-formation. This approach can be based on the principle of the so-called "rank-size" ordering of settlements, i.e., the using the spatial measurements of the settlements in calculating their importance. In order to establish a socio-economic hierarchy of the sites this system needs as exact as possible data concerning their territorial extent 46.

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46 This approach resulted as being very useful for the Susiana plain settlements in order to reconstruct the inner transformations of a social structure as it developed into a state structure (cf. Johnson 1973, Johnson & Wright 1975). The topographical survey made in the micro-region lacks at moment the measurements of the area for each single chronological period. I had many discussions on this questions with Prof. Johnson of Hunter College in New York, when he was with me on the site in 1985. I take this occasion to thank him for all his suggestions, aid and advice.
7. Trial Trenches on the Site

With regard to this project the site Gyoma 133 (20° 45' to 21° E and 46° 45' to 47° N) was selected in order to start the archaeological campaigns; the finds of the site, collected in the previous topographical campaigns, are now kept in the store-rooms of the Archaeological Institute, Budapest and in the local museum at Szarvas 47. The site area contains two very large clay quarries used by a brick factory (now closed), whose central building with a characteristic high brick chimney, is still existent (Plate IIIa). The quarries, which are 3-4 m. deep and in some points c. 250 m. long, have partially destroyed the archaeological traces while allowing the discovery of pottery sherds. The digging up of such a large area of ground compared with the dimensions of the identified area of the site during the period in which the factory was operating, represents a micro-ecological catastroph which has transformed the area into sterile marshland (Plate IIIb). The edges of the western quarry constituted the area of the 1985 campaign trial trenches; around the edges had run a branch of the rail way during the time of the factory as evidenced by the traces of rail 48.

In the area closest to the central building of the factory and to a farm house were dug the first two trenches. The Northern one cut into the north-western edge of the quarry, whereas the Southern, parallel to the first one was connected by a small path to the road linking Gyárdülő to Mezőberény (fig. 13).

The preliminary investigation made by our Hungarian colleagues in a large topographical survey (Jankovich, Makkay, Szőke, forthcoming) had singled out an area of about 20 hectares where many pottery sherds were scattered. The pottery sherds belonged to different periods from

47 The site of Gyoma 133, although much destroyed, is a very interesting one; from the neighbourhood come the famous gold objects datable to the Iron Age and culturally related to the Scythian culture (Márton 1905: 236). Generally that find has been considered coming from Rigo–Halom, a big kurgan not far from Gyoma 133 (just northward out of the micro-region and not yet excavated). As suggested by Dr J. Makkay the gold objects might belong to a now destroyed kurgan called Csap–Halom which was located exactly on the site of the brick factory of Gyoma 133, as can be seen in a geographical map of 1822 (Plate I). Besides the pottery sherds collected in the topographical survey of Gyoma 133 there are others spread throughout Hungary (in the Békés-Csaba Museum, Gyula Museum, etc.); for the story of the finds, see Jankovich, Makkay & Szőke (forthcoming). Some more finds are mentioned by Kovalovszki (1958a, 1958b). Near the site of Gyoma 133 have been excavated two cemeteries of the Sarmatian Age (Juhász 1978, Vaday 1983).

48 This detail is recognizable also in the map of Békés Megye közigazgatási térképe 1967 (Official map of County).
Bronze Age to the Avarian period. The area of the diffusion of the sherds was rectangular in shape with one corner extending for 350 m. to the north-east (fig. 14).

The size of the quarry did not allow large-scale excavation but gave one the possibility of examining the walls of the quarry. Thus the long stratigraphical sequence available could supply the diagnostic capacity needed for any future large-scale projects. In this respect these quarry walls permitted to start section cuts where was a high concentration of pottery sherds. This situation offered an aid in clarifying the boundary of the site, also allowing me to open squares in the areas close to those sections. Owing to the important results collected from two of the fourteen sections, nos. 1 and 4, also two squares – nos. 1 and 3 were opened.

The methodological approach used for the excavation arises from the type of soil in the area, quite familiar to Hungarian archaeologists and is very dependent on the type of settlement system in use by the old cultures of the Great Hungarian Plain. The basic construction method, in fact consists in building architectonic structures partially into the ground, the upper parts containing a wood framework probably covered by clay. As is easy to imagine, the only architectonic remains able to be discovered was the lower part, the upper part being completely de-
stroyed. Furthermore, the people very rarely used the same place inhabited previously and so it is hard to find a rich and complex stratigraphy. On the contrary, there exists only a very interesting microstratigraphy covering the span of a few years. When dealing with architectural remains which do not rise above the ground but have a pit structured, the question is to recognize the negative sign of the cuttings into the ground. In this respect a horizontal approach alone may be not sufficient and in many cases it is much more useful to go down vertically, searching for a floor of the bottom of any architectural structure. In the case of Gyoma 133 this was the only feasible system to use at first in order to avoid any waste of time and energy, especially since the entire central area of the site identified was practically empty and only the quarry edges remained.

7.1. The Northern Area: Section No. 1 and Square No. 1

The very simple stratigraphy of section no 1 facilitated the work of identifying the layers with sherds and structural remains. The section, 14 m. long, is not quite linear but follows the quarry edge (fig. 15). The opening of the section represented a precious guide for the continuation of the work. Much material was found mainly in the eastern part of the section where a small pit was discovered (Plate IVa). In this part, in fact, before the excavation some pottery fragments had already been noted, some of which were lying on the edge of the quarry. In the western part however very few fragments were found. The decision to operate the cuttings of the section in arbitrary levels was made in order to be able to work more easily on the steeply sloping edge of the quarry and to avoid missing the very small pottery sherds. Underneath the surface a very hard blackish-brown soil was found, sometimes mixed with small whitish fragments and with a very small quantity of bricks produced by the factory. In the eastern part it was necessary to stop at the first step as the fragments became more and more numerous. On the step, about 50 cm. beneath the beginning of the quarry cut, some pottery fragments were distributed quite at random, some of which were standing upright and others lying down (Plate IVb). A semicircular outline of the sherds lying on the sloping edge of the quarry gave the impression of a small pit (Plate Va). At the beginning its identification was not so easy because the pottery sherds did not seem to be located behind the sliding surface. These sherds could represent either the negative sign of a pit destroyed by the quarry or the positive sign of a pit located behind the edge of the quarry, the remains of which should be underneath the materials spread seemingly quite at random. The opening of square no. 1 (4 × 4 m) was necessary at that moment in order to have the possibility of going down to the sherds from above and of looking for the northern extent of the finds.
Square no. 1, which includes part of section no. 1, was not fully excavated; it was decided, in fact, to leave out about 1 m. on the western side of the square. Beneath the surface a very compact level of pale-brown farmed soil was identified. This level was found in all the sections opened in the northern area of the quarry (sec. n. 2, 3, 8, 11). At the same level two parallel plough furrows were identified. Under this level appeared an archaeological level [1] of grey granular soil, corresponding to that containing most of the pottery fragments and in which the pit had probably been dug. This level is quite different from the one above in terms of hardness and compactness and is located just on top of the yellow virgin soil. At certain points above the virgin soil there was an intermediate level of black and yellow soil containing a few pottery fragments (fig. 17).

Level [1] did not cover all of square no. 1, but had an irregular outline on its northern extremity. The level, to which probably corresponds only one chronological period, consists of two layers. The upper layer represents the abandonment or the last moments of the utilisation of the pit and the lower, very different in colour (more whitish and yellowish), constitutes the one of actual use. As the lower layer was removed a few bones and some clay refuse were found (fig. 16); the quantity of the pottery fragments got scarce and finally disappeared towards the narrowing bottom of the pit (Plate Vb). This ending part of the pit is very peculiar in that it seems to get narrower and deeper towards the side destroyed by the quarry.

7.2. The Southern Area: Sections No. 4 and 10 and Square No. 3

This area of the quarry has turned out to be the most successful of all the trial trenches in 1985; in fact, along the line section no. 4 were found a simple grave, a very large oval-shaped pit of the Sarmatian period and much ceramic material belonging to a Late Bronze Age pit (fig. 19). The presence of some potsherds on this part of the southern edge of the quarry encouraged to open section no. 4. Also in this case I operated by cutting steps (Plate VIa). Some oblique lines seen in the grey-black soil of the quarry wall seemed to indicate the existence of structural remains. The stratigraphical situation was completely different from that in the Northern area: the same grey granular soil in level [1] (as in section no. 1) is here superimposed on a much wetter yellow soil with wide black and grey stripes.

This lower level is morphologically very similar to the black and yellow intermediate level of the Northern area, but it is very different in terms of content: instead of being almost sterile, it was in fact quite full of material.

This element, at the present state of research seems to indicate a chronological difference between the two areas. This possibility has also been
confirmed by some differences in the ceramic types collected in the pits of the two areas. In any case the few fragments of *terra sigillata* found in both areas seem to have been produced in the same period, that of the Severi (cf. below). The presence in the western side of the sections of a large cut going down almost vertically suggested the existence of a large pit whose opposite side and bottom were also clearly delineated (Plate VIb and fig. 20). The successive opening of square no. 3 made definitely clear the extent of the pit considering that its northern side had probably been destroyed by the quarry.

Apart from the pottery sherds which will be described later, the most significant materials collected were many plaster fragments and some small animal bones.

The identified part of the pit is located along the line of section no. 4; of this pit’s northern extension only a semicircular line on the floor of the quarry could be observed, but the excavation attempts there were not successful.

7.3. The Bronze Age Pit

On the eastern side of the Sarmatian oval-shaped pit other structural remain was found: a large Bronze Age pit. Here it was interesting to note
the distribution of pottery fragments in two or three different layers (Plate VIIa). The fragments, some of which were quite large, are all of a coarse orange ware with a black-burnished surface (Plate VIIb). After restoration the fragments collected were discovered to belong to seven or more large "urns", the most common shape being the biconical one with a large high neck, very flaring rims, small flat base sometimes decorated with very lightly engraved wavy channelling (Plate VIIIa) 49.

7.4. The Grave

The grave was located at the west side of the Sarmatian pit, on the opposite side of where the "urns" fragments were found. It was very simple as it had the corpse oriented east-west with legs folded. The absence of any goods prevented one from proposing any definite chronology. (Plate VIII b).

7.5. Ceramics

The major part of the finds at Gyoma 133 consisted of pottery fragments. Almost all of them belong to two main classes of wheel-made pottery: the first one consisted of a fine grey ware, hard very compact in

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49 This kind of vessels are related to the Pseudo–Villanova Urns, which were common in Hungary in the Gáva Culture (11th–10th century B.C.) (Kemenczei 1984: 58–86) This vessel has many variants with regard to morphology and decorative patterns. (ibidem 64, pls. CXXXIII no. 14, CLVIII, CXXXII no.1).
texture, black–burnished on the surface decorated with some engraved vertical lines; the second one consisted of a fine red ware, red–burnished on the surface. There also exists a very coarse hand–made ware of a colour ranging from pale–brown to orange buff or grey–black slipped. A fourth category, a coarse hand–made ware, has a core with small quartzite fragments and seems to have been produced in a very late period. Only one sherd with a characteristic textile decoration belongs to the Avarian age (Plate VIIc) (Szőke 1980: fig. 8 nos. 1–2, 6, 8, 9, 12).

The two common pottery types made in the first two categories are a pear–shaped pitcher with a vertical handle, produced at the end of the 4th and beginning of the 5th century A.D. (Párducz 1941: pl. XXIX) (fig. 19) and a large–mouthed disc–footed globular pot with a very short neck, produced around the middle of the 5th century (fig. 21).

Five small fragments of terra sigillata have been found: three of them come from the southern area and two from the northern. One fragment belongs to the plate Dragendorff 31 and three fragments to the cup 37; all are from Severian times; one fragment is not recognizable.

7.6. Small Finds

Only one remarkable object has been found, a whorl made of baked clay (Plate VIIIId).

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50 The presence of terra sigillata fragments in Sarmatian sites implies some particular problems in chronology. Terra sigillata can be dated generally when it carries a decoration with coin impressions or with representations of historical events or when it has particular connections with sites or layers which are clearly related to historical events. However the fact of being able to date the samples cannot automatically determine the date of the beginning and end of the production of an individual workshop which usually covers a wide span of time (Gabler 1985). The fragments found at Gyoma 133 are three from Rheinzabern (Dragendorff 37, from section no. 3 and from the oval pit on the section no. 4; Dragendorff 31 from oval pit on the section no. 4), one from Westendorf (from square no. 1). It is known that the exports of the Rheinzabern manufacture to the provinces in the central Danube region ceased after 233 A.D. (Gabler 1985: 87). The latest transportation can be dated to the end of the 2nd or to the first third of the 3rd century in the Severian time (ibidem). The Dragendorff 37 in all its centres of production (Rheinzabern, Westendorf, etc.) is the most widely used type in Sarmatia, followed by the Dragendorff 33. In the Gyoma area six more fragments have been found and are all datable to the second half of the 2nd century and the beginning of the 3rd century A.D. (Gabler Vaday 1986:15–16).
The toponym “Csap-halom” in the manuscript-map “Hydrographia... regionis... Crisiorum” drawn by Mátýás Huszár 1822. (Magyar Országos Levéltár, State Archive of Hungary).
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a) One of the reconstructed vessels from the Bronze Age site (Hungarian Institute of Archaeology Neg. No. 130.141).
BIBLIOGRAPHY


A Sarmatian Settlement in South-Eastern Hungary


Zoltai, L. (1938) *Debreceni halnok, hegyek, egyéb mesterséges és természetes emelkedések u.m.: laponyagok, telkek, ülések, dombok gerendekek és hátaik a város határában, valamint külső birtokain* (Barrow hills and other artificial and Natural Raizes i.e. Small tumuli sites Outskirts of Debrecen and in its Neighbourhood). Debrecen.


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