

SUMMARY

The various ethnic groups of the Sarmatians, namely the Iazyges, Rhoxolani and Alans played a decisive role in the history of the Great Hungarian Plain between the 1st and 5th centuries. Their history was greatly shaped by the peoples who were their immediate neighbours, and among them the system of relations developed with the Romans was of major influence. Research can continuously draw on the inexhaustible archaeological evidence of the period, that is the settlements and the cemeteries, which represent the important and authentic sources of the history of the Sarmatians in the Great Hungarian Plain.

The thesis sets the aim to publish and to analyse the Madaras-Halmok cemetery finds unpublished to date. The beginning of the cemetery dates back to the turn of the 2nd and the 3rd centuries and lasted until the turn of the 4th and 5th centuries. This exceptional site is not only the Sarmatian burial place with the greatest number of graves in their dwelling area in the Great Hungarian Plain (632 tombs), but it was also completely dug up thanks to Mihály Kőhegyi, the prominent researcher of the era.

Methodologically, we laid great emphasis on selecting the authentic data of the cemetery and on interpreting the various phenomena and relations. Therefore we took into account not only the fact of robberies but also their extent so that as many authentic data could be obtained for the analysis of the individual groups of finds as possible. The other starting point of the analysis was the classification of burials into three groups (male, female, child), which had several pitfalls, nonetheless it yielded frequently surprising and convincing results. The three groups turned out to be considerably different from each other, the type and frequency of the costumes, jewellery and accessories were modified and changed during the use of the cemetery. We would like to emphasize that although grave groups of the same age can be clearly distinguished in the cemetery and there are also chronological differences between the grave groups, the burials demonstrate certain continuity until the end of the use of the cemetery. The relations and overlaps can be identified well in the finds, the reasons for the changes are understandable (e.g. change in fibulas due to the decreasing and cessation of Roman import). The termination of relations or the political changes in the area could be identified in the background of the changes.

In the course of systemizing and analysing the archaeological finds of the cemetery, we attempted to outline the typology of individual finds and thereby to classify them chronologically with the help of the unmatched richness of the objects. The comparison of the chronology of the same objects revealed the similarities and the differences in the use of jewellery, costumes and accessories between the two different sexes and age groups.

The children's graves (129 graves) were remarkably poorer in finds compared to the adult graves, the beads were unvaried, the jewellery (metal bracelets, earrings) was rare and atypical, but the place of the finds in the graves, the manner of their use and their chronology did not differ from those observed for the adults in any way. The greatest number of handmade vessels was found here, which we classified as an archaic feature. There were hardly any marked (2 barrowed or 9 ditched and barrowed) burials among the children's graves.

As to the finds of male graves (144 graves), only a few types of finds could be specifically associated with them (only weapons belong here), therefore, in the absence of appreciable anthropological finds, it is difficult to classify the completely robbed graves (97 graves) to any of the sexes. It also turned out that jewellery (torques, bracelets, bead bracelets, pendants), first of all typical of women and female children, were also found occasionally in men's graves. We presume that the lack of men in the cemeteries observed throughout the Sarmatian Age can be attributed to these factors. In Madaras it could be proved that the majority of the completely robbed graves belonged to the group of men. The statistics of the finds revealed the striking differences in the simultaneous occurrence of the same types of finds between men and women.

Doubtlessly, female graves (262 graves) are the richest in finds from among the three groups. The greatest number of jewellery was found here and the great variety of the accessories is striking as compared to male graves. Beads were of special importance both in their jewellery and in their wear. The comparison with the data from the Great Hungarian Plain refined, among others, the inner chronology of bottom decoration of the dresses with the help of the statistics and typology of bead embroidery.

Right from the beginning, the elucidation of the

groups of the Roman import finds had been considered by research to be the key to inner chronology. However, it turned out to be a complicated and difficult task to follow the time course of the *terra sigillata*, fibulas, glass beakers and other various, sometimes numerous, sometimes specific individual objects possessed by the Sarmatians, or to define their age (double or triple dating). The situation is made even more difficult by research having to do without studies on the exploration and summary of most Roman groups of objects from Sarmatian sites, thus systematization, the definition of rate of occurrence, geographical location and comparison with other finds have not been possible. Moreover, some of the old Sarmatian sites can no longer be relied on, or only with some reservations. The difficulties are further augmented by the great proportion of robbed Sarmatian burial places, averaging 80%, and also by the lack of variety in the finds of the settlements, by the predominance of ceramics.

The consideration of the finds of the cemetery revealed unambiguously that fibulas had a special importance among the finds as they spanned the entire Sarmatian era, were characteristic of children and adults, of women and men alike, and what is more, in a more extended period of time they got into the possession of the Sarmatians as Roman import objects. For this reason they deserved to be given special attention among all the groups examined, and the manner and period of their use as well as their inner chronology were explored in a wider context. The everyday use of the Roman import fibulas is dated by research to the period following the end of the Dacian wars, after which they became widespread in the dwelling area, which increased compared to the earlier period. It was very instructive to examine the use of fibulas in Madaras separately for male, female and children's groups. The fibulas which were fashionable after the turn of the 2nd and the 3rd centuries – the time that the beginning of the cemetery is dated to – were discovered almost exclusively in female and children's graves, they were hardly ever found in male or male children's graves. Also, iron objects were frequently observed in male graves. One-piece and two-piece types, fibulas with inverted foot were found in all three types of graves, but iron ones were again more frequent in male graves. The same applies to the use of the two-piece, laterally inverted-foot type. This means that male and female wear started to become more or less uniform, at least concerning the use of fibulas, only after about the middle of the 3rd century, which was confirmed by similar data we had found in several sites other than Madaras.

The question arises whether the different forms of marking the graves in the Sarmatian Age were due to reasons of chronology or differences in social status. The Madaras cemetery gives a definite answer to this question: the different markings of the graves, the beam chambers, the whitewashing of the graves, the scant but exceptional finds obtained after despoiling (gold and silver jewellery, costume ornaments) distinctly reflect social differences within the community. The observations made here assist the researchers to identify burial places which were destroyed but had originally been barrowed in other sites of the Great Hungarian Plain. Presumably, among the barrows left there are unmarked and ditched barrowed graves like in Madaras.

Unmarked graves are the most frequent in the cemeteries of the Sarmatians living in the Great Hungarian Plain, the barrowed and ditched barrowed manner of burial had been used from the 2nd century. On the basis of the 197 sites of the period between the 2nd and the 4th centuries, ditched and barrowed graves were found in 40 places and the number of barrowed sites came to 17. In Madaras a total number of 49 barrowed and 102 ditched and barrowed burial places could be identified in the explored area on the basis of the finds and the records of the graves of the cemetery, while the rest of the graves were unmarked. Madaras is the only place in the Sarmatian dwelling area in the Great Hungarian Plain where one of the most important elements of the ditched and barrowed rite, namely that there were barrows over the entrenched graves, was observed, recorded on a map with contemporary methods and also described at the beginning of the 20th century.

The differently marked graves do not form separate groups within the cemetery, but the groups of mixed rites constitute four territorial units: 1. The southern largest barrows, where both unmarked and ditched and barrowed graves are found, constitute a markedly distinctive part of the burial place; its use may date back to the turn of the 2nd and 3rd centuries and this part was used for burials during the entire period of the use of the cemetery. 2. The other well-distinguishable group is the group of south-western graves, where the community started to bury first – the graves of the first settlers were raised on the high bank of the Kígyós brook – and the use of which was ended, as evidenced by the finds, in the middle of the 3rd century. 3. The other earliest part of the cemetery is its central part – which is at the same time the other highest point of the area – then the cemetery spread circularly around the early graves mainly towards the SSW. 4. The first graves in the northern group date back to the middle of the 3rd century, the ditched and barrowed and the unmarked graves as well

as the barrowed group indicate this period right until the closure of the cemetery.

The beginning of the Madaras cemetery, that is the settlement of the community here, dates back approximately to the end of the Marcomannic Wars. The end of the wars (180) signalled the start of a new era for the Sarmatians in their dwelling area in the Great Hungarian Plain both from political and, in consequence, from economic aspects. This was the “period of Roman control”, when the Romans exercised increased control over the Barbarian territories beyond the limes, but at the same time closer relations brought along a significant economic boom, the enrichment of the material culture of the Sarmatians for the Sarmatian communities. After the conclusion of the peace treaty it also became possible for further groups to settle in the Carpathian Basin through the Danube valley.

The new group of aristocrats appearing in the Great Hungarian Plain at the end of the 2nd century buried their dead under barrows in Madaras, too, and while some of the burial customs in the eastern dwelling area (whitewashing of the graves, animal sacrifices, gold costume ornaments) were kept, new ones (placing of coins into the graves) and new, foreign (Roman) finds appeared in the graves, too.

The closure of the cemetery is determined by several groups of finds together. The coins placed in the graves give us only an approximate point of reference for orientation, but those from the 4th century can be authoritative as to dating. The different variations of one-piece and two-piece fibulas with inverted foot, two-piece laterally inverted-foot spiral-armed fibulas are typical finds in the sites of the Great Hungarian Plain until the beginning of the 5th century. The sporadically found glass beakers and the green-glazed ceramic also date the last burials of the Madaras cemetery to this

period. The new types of double-plate fibulas, buckles and polyhedric earrings of the sites along the River Tisza are absent from the Madaras cemetery, but in our opinion this does not mean a chronological difference but rather the appearance of new ethnic groups with new burial customs, their mixing with the locals to various degrees at the turn of the 4th and 5th centuries. The finds from the settlements characterized by the Sarmatian ceramics also help to determine the last dwelling area of the Sarmatian communities. The place/ places of production of the typical types of the late Sarmatian ceramics (micaceous pottery, steep-walled, dragon-ornamented bowls, belted vessels; etc.) is/are supposed to have been in the surroundings of the site. The characteristic forms of this ceramic material are also present in the graves of the Madaras cemetery. The stormy events of the Sarmatian history in the 4th century – King Rausimodus’s breaking into Pannonia in 322, Constantine’s revenge crusade, the attack of the Goths against the Sarmatians in 332, the prolonged domestic warfare between the *Arcaragantes* and the *Limigantes* between 332–358, the Vandal-Alanic migration (405/406) and the breakings into the provinces known from the sources (374–375) – are not reflected in the Madaras cemetery. It much rather gives the impression of being a cemetery used continuously for an exceptionally long time – until the turn of the 4th and 5th centuries –, in the immediate proximity of the limes, without the marked signs of the Roman-Barbarian relations among the finds of the cemetery after the middle of the 3rd century.

We hope that the Madaras finds can serve as a starting point for further research in the future as both the quantity and the quality of the finds hold great possibilities – even beyond the results already explored and presented in the monograph.