

# Phalerae of Horse Harnesses in Votive Depositions of the 2nd-1st Century BC in the North Pontic Region and the Sarmatian Paradigm

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*Phalerae* are silver roundels presumably from horse harnesses with representations of different images – anthropomorphic and zoomorphic – and ornamented with floral and geometric motives.<sup>1</sup> They played a distinctive role in the material culture of the northern Pontic region. Most of them were brought into the northern Pontic steppes and neighboring regions during the last centuries of the pre-Christian era.

## *Research history*

A cultural ascription was first attempted at the beginning of the 20th century. The first study was published by A.A. Spicyn in 1909. He noted, that “these *phalerae* belong to some culture of the turn of the era, which still is scarcely known in our antiquities”.<sup>2</sup> Thanks to M.I. Rostovcev, *phalerae* took on a special significance in the study of the Sarmatians and the Sarmatian Culture of the northern Pontic region. Rostovcev saw in the *phalerae* definite cultural influences from the East and suggested, that they were brought into the northern Pontic steppes by new, migrating tribes of Iranian origin who came from the northern frontiers of Bactria and who were known in ancient sources as the Sakoi.<sup>3</sup>

As proof of his theory Rostovcev pointed to the non-Greek character of the representations on the *phalerae*, the polychrome technique applied to them (partially gilded silver), and the representations of a floral rosette, which he thought to be a purely Persian motive.<sup>4</sup>

As an analogy – even as “the only close analogy” – to the Pontic *phalerae* he pointed to horse trappings of the Sasanian period. He believed that “these Persian ornaments were taken by the Sasanians from the Parthians, and by those from the Achaemenid Persians”. Rostovcev suggested that a deity depicted on the phalera from Jančokrak had its closest parallels in the Graeco-Indian Art of Taxila and Hatra and also compared the floral rosettes of the Pontic *phalerae* with this type.

The ideas of Rostovcev and his successors were developed by K.V. Trever in

her book *Monuments of Graeco-Bactrian Art*.<sup>5</sup> In this volume, items which were held by the Department of Eastern Antiquities of the State Hermitage Museum were published. Surprisingly in many cases no attempt was made at finding analogies in the places, where some of the *phalerae* had been found. Thus, images of animals represented on the phalera found near the city of Starobel'sk in the southern Ukraine were declared to be incarnations of some deities of the Indo-Iranian pantheon.<sup>6</sup> *Phalerae* from Galiče, Jančokrak and Taganrog and many other toreutic objects from the northern Black Sea region were also defined as products of Graeco-Bactria.<sup>7</sup> As a result, this category of objects was named "*phalerae* of the Graeco-Bactrian Style"<sup>8</sup> in Soviet archaeological literature, and in academic circles their Graeco-Bactrian origin was not doubted.

N. Fettich offered another view in the ongoing discussion of the *phalerae*.<sup>9</sup> He carried out a very detailed study of new finds of *phalerae* from the territories of Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria, personally investigating some of the *phalerae* kept in the Soviet museums – at least those which were available at the time.<sup>10</sup> In this analysis he also included other silver objects from Dacian hoards. In his discussion of the material N. Fettich pointed out some central decorative features: graphic elements such as lines of dots, rows of triangles, a zig-zag pattern, wave meanders, and ovules.<sup>11</sup> He did not connect all known *phalerae* with this particular group, but took only those from the assemblages of Jančokrak, Taganrog, Balakleja, Galiče, Surcea and Heraštreu. As a result of this analysis, he concluded that all of these objects were produced in Olbia in the second half of the 1st century BC.<sup>12</sup> He believed that this production was somehow connected with the particular military events of the time (the Burebista Wars).<sup>13</sup>

In his work N. Fettich based his assumptions on Rostovceŭ's belief that the *phalerae* were used primarily as ornaments on horse harnesses and belonged to the Sarmatians. Brooches made in the same style, which were found in the Dacian assemblages, he explained, in some cases, as a secondary use of the *phalerae* of horse harnesses.<sup>14</sup> He also believed that Olbia was a production centre in which craftsmen made certain items for the Sarmatians (*phalerae*), and other items for the Dacians (brooches, bracelets, torques, and chains).<sup>15</sup>

J. Harmatta saw the *phalerae* of the northern Black Sea region as an ethnic feature of the Western Sarmatians, and suggested that the finds of such *phalerae* in the funerary assemblages in the western territories could be regarded as a sign of a Sarmatian military presence. The workshops J. Harmatta placed in Pantikapaion because Olbia found itself in a difficult political and economic situation in the 1st century BC, and – according to his point of view – could not have produced such objects.<sup>16</sup>

Harmatta's idea was supported by T. Sulimirski, who supposed that the *phalerae* found in the northern Black Sea region were made by Bosporan jewelers.<sup>17</sup> He connected the beginning of their production in this territory, to some extent, with the arrival in the Crimea of the troops of the Pontic army

of Diophantos at the end of the 2nd century BC, and with the Mithradatic Wars of the first half of the 1st century BC.

The conclusions of Hungarian and Polish researchers referred to above concerning the local provenance of the *phalerae* of horse harnesses found in the northern Pontic region have not influenced Soviet archaeologists. K.F. Smirnov (1984) considered the assemblages with *phalerae* as signs of a Sarmatian migration from East to West. He supposed that the easternmost assemblages should be dated earlier than the westernmost ones.<sup>18</sup> Despite the work of Fettich, which he mentions in his book, Smirnov still classifies all *phalerae* as items of "Graeco-Bactrian style". At the same time, in some passages of his book Smirnov suggests a Bosphoran provenance for them as well.<sup>19</sup>

Studying the genesis of the Sarmatians in the Prochorovka culture of the Volga-Ural region, K.F. Smirnov was surprised by the absence of features of this culture in the assemblages with *phalerae* of the northern Black Sea region. In discussing one of the finds he states: "it has no features of the Prochorovka culture at all".<sup>20</sup> This remark could very well be applied to many other sets of *phalerae* mentioned in his book.<sup>21</sup>

M.B. Ščukin also connected the constituting elements of Bactrian and Indo-Scythian Art in the silver *phalerae* from horse harnesses in the northern Pontic region with a new wave of nomadic migrations from the East.<sup>22</sup> He did not, however, mention any resemblance of this group of objects to the Volga-Ural culture apart from one unclear note in which he states that "they have parallels among finds from Western Siberia and the Volga region".

Unlike Fettich and Harmatta, Ščukin constantly underlined the stylistic unity of the silver *phalerae* found over a huge territory from India and Mongolia to the Island of Sark in the English Channel.<sup>23</sup> He explained this unity by suggesting the existence of a group of craftsmen, who moved through the great steppe and made their masterpieces for varying local populations.

The *phalerae* were also the topic of my dissertation delivered in 1996 and published in 2001.<sup>24</sup> In this study several stylistic groups of *phalerae* were singled out. The distribution of different sets of horse harnesses, on the one hand, and their diverse uses in rituals (depositions in graves and votive depots), on the other, have shown that in Eastern Europe there were two main regions with quite different ritual practices.

### *Two groups of phalerae*

*Phalerae* of Graeco-Bactrian Style were found east of the Volga River. All of them belong to Type 1 of the saddle *phalerae* with three loops on the back (Fig. 1.1). The saddle *phalerae* of Type 1, which belong to my Pontic Graphical Style, form the westernmost group of horse harnesses. *Phalerae* of the Pontic Graphical Style were mostly found west of the Volga River, in the northern Black Sea steppes and in the Kuban' region. Most of them belong to the Type 2 of the saddle *phalerae* with two crossed loops on the back (Fig. 2.1).

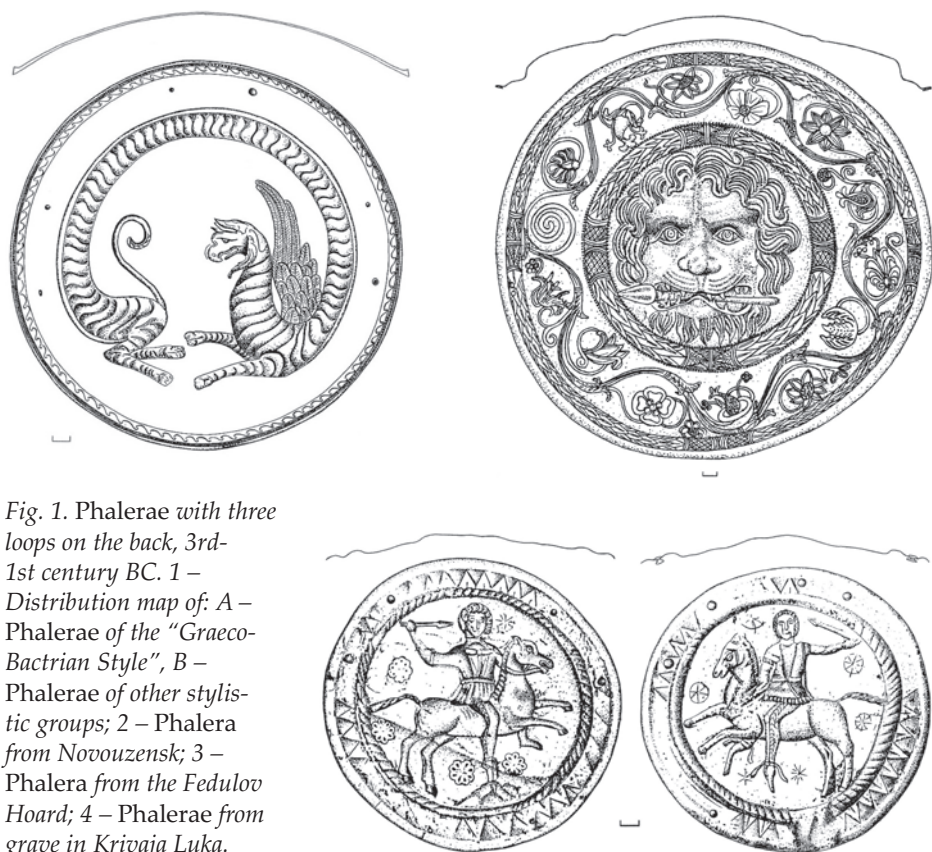


Fig. 1. Phalerae with three loops on the back, 3rd-1st century BC. 1 – Distribution map of: A – Phalerae of the “Graeco-Bactrian Style”, B – Phalerae of other stylistic groups; 2 – Phalera from Novouzensk; 3 – Phalera from the Fedulov Hoard; 4 – Phalerae from grave in Krivaya Luka.





Fig. 2. Phalerae with two crossed loops on the back, 3rd-1st century BC. 1 – Distribution map; 2 – Phalera from the Starobelsk Hoard; 3 – Phalera from the Korenovsk Hoard; 4 – Phalera from the Jančokrak Hoard.

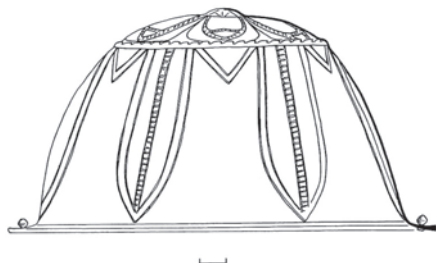




Fig. 3. Types of ritual actions with phalerae. A – Deposition of phalerae in graves; B – Deposition of phalerae in hoards.

The differences between these groups of *phalerae* are not confined only to typological and stylistic features. They are also evident in the rites accompanying their deposition.<sup>25</sup> Thus, *phalerae* of Type 1 are found mainly in burials (Fig. 3.A), whereas hemispherical *phalerae* of Type 2 are not found in graves, but in votive depots (Fig. 3.B). This fact allows us to suggest a cultural difference between the tribes, which practiced such deposition rituals.

*Phalerae* were not ordinary objects, part of the material culture of ancient tribes, but marked the social status of their owners. Therefore, different ritual actions connected with these important objects demonstrate the differing mentalities and worldviews of the tribes who inhabited, on the one hand, the northern Pontic region, and, on the other, the Volga region. In the Kuban' basin both practices (burials containing *phalerae* and votive deposits) are known.

Votive deposits of the northern Pontic region are not confined only to those, which contained *phalerae*. More commonly, the assemblages consisted of the following objects: horse ornaments of other kinds, horse bits and *psallia*,<sup>26</sup> helmets,<sup>27</sup> weapons, armor, silver cups etc. These objects are often found in damaged condition in burial mounds, in natural hills, and in river-beds.

Such assemblages are unknown in the Prochorovka culture of the Volga and Ural region, which is believed to be the motherland of the Sarmatians. They were, however, customary among the La Tène cultures of Middle Europe<sup>28</sup> and are very much in keeping with the cultural mentality of this region.<sup>29</sup> Thus the concept of the conquest of Scythia by the tribes (Sarmatians), who came from the Volga-Ural steppes, does not seem to be particularly well sup-

ported by the archaeological evidence. Yet to analyze the situation properly we must first define the terms “Sarmatians” and “Sarmatian culture”.

*“Sarmatians”, “Sarmatian culture”, and the “Sarmatian Paradigm”*

The main sources for information about the Sarmatians and their customs are the works of Greek and Roman authors writing between the 1st century BC and the 4th century AD: Strabon, Mela, Ptolemaios, and Ammianus Marcellinus. In earlier texts the land “Sarmatia” and the Sarmatians are scarcely mentioned.<sup>30</sup> A hypothetical relationship between the names “Sauromatians” and “Sarmatians” does not in fact mean that we can assume a true succession of or even connection between cultures. There are no grounds for applying the information about Sauromatian customs and legends described by Herodotos to the tribes with similar sounding names located in the same region in later periods.

It is also important to keep in mind that any text dated to the period between the 4th and the 2nd centuries BC mentioning the Sarmatians is not necessarily devoted especially to their customs or to historical events in which they participated. In general, the early information is very fragmented and unclear. These fragments, however, were used as the basis for constructing a model of the Sarmatian culture which could be called the “Sarmatian Paradigm”.

The foundation-stone of the “Sarmatian Paradigm” was the following report of Diodoros (Diod. Sic. 2.43.6-7):

It was by these kings that many of the conquered peoples were removed to other homes, and two of these became very great colonies: the one was composed of Assyrians and was removed to the land between Paphlagonia and Pontos, and the other was drawn from Media and planted along the Tanais, its people receiving the name Sauromatae. Many years later this people became powerful and ravaged a large part of Scythia, and destroying utterly all who they subdued they turned most of the land into a desert (transl. C.H. Oldfather)

This piece of information has been taken as the main proof of the mass invasion of the Sarmatians (who are usually equated in the academic literature with the Sauromatians) from the East.

The Sauromatians were a tribe, which was repeatedly placed to the east of the Scythians by ancient authors. Yet, in the record of Diodoros there is nothing that points to the fact that the Sauromatians themselves, at the time of their invasion of Scythia, came from somewhere in the East. From the text of Diodoros it can be understood that they invaded Scythia from their own lands along the Tanais and Maiotis. This territory was described in the ancient sources as the age-old land of the Sauromatians. A part of this land was also

inhabited by people with a similar name – the Syrmatae.<sup>31</sup> The Sarmatia of Herakleides has been located in the same place as well.<sup>32</sup> Thus, in the ancient sources the following ethnonyms are always ascribed to the same territory: *Sauromatae*, *Syrmatae*, and *Sarmatae*. It is not possible, however, to exclude the possibility that these ethnic designations were merely variations of one and the same name. Since we only know of these names through the Greeks, and not from the original peoples themselves, we cannot be sure that the different names really refer to different peoples. Unfortunately, our early sources are too seldom and too fragmentary to use as decisive evidence. In later writings, however, ancient authors do not see any difference between the Sauromatians and the Sarmatians.

How could it happen that the record of Diodoros was interpreted as information on a mass migration of nomads to the northern Pontic steppes from the East? Perhaps it is due to the two well-known world migrations, which thoroughly influenced European culture: the Great Migration of the 4th century AD and the Mongolian Migration of the 12th to the 14th centuries. Already in the early Medieval period, Europe was constantly under threat of nomadic invasion from the East. Later this fear was transferred into fear of the Ottoman Empire, which until the end of the 19th century played an important role in European politics. Thus, the idea of regular “waves” of eastern people, spreading over the Eurasian steppe in a westward direction, was quite logical and suitable to the European mentality of the 19th century.

The general interpretation of new ethnic designations on the map of former Scythia as a sign of newcomers from some distant eastern territory in the northern Pontic region could be regarded as a consequence of this paradigm. In principle, this possibility cannot be excluded. However, this origin of cultural contact or invasion cannot be suggested in all instances.

Polybios (1st century BC) informs us of a treaty from 179 BC, signed by the Sarmatian King Gatales amongst other contemporary rulers.<sup>33</sup> From the text of Polybios it is not possible to reach any conclusion as to the exact territory of this king. It was, however, located in the Kuban’ region and the origins of this kingdom was connected with the Sarmatian movement from the East.<sup>34</sup> I.I. Marčenko rejects the location of Gatales’ kingdom in Europe, based on the text of Polybios, because “there are no Sarmatian monuments of this time west of the Tanais River”.<sup>35</sup> On the contrary, Marčenko supposes that Polybios meant the Kuban’ River instead of the Tanais River.

Usually the term “Sarmatian monuments” refers to the archaeological remains of the Prochorovka culture of the Volga and Ural regions. Following this logic one can also suppose that the picture of western Sarmatian tribes drawn by Strabon<sup>36</sup> should be used to describe the tribes belonging to the more eastern territories (the Volga and Ural districts, for instance) because there are no traces of the Prochorovka culture between the Dnieper and the Danube in the last centuries BC either.

Some important historical conclusions about the early movement of new Ira-



nian (Sarmatian) tribes from the East were also reached on the basis of a text by Diodoros who wrote about events of the 4th century BC in the Bosporan Kingdom. The mention in the Greek original of the Thracian King Aripharnes<sup>37</sup> was already in the first Russian translations converted into the “King of Phateoi<sup>38</sup> or Syrakoi”.<sup>39</sup> The reason for this was that historians could not imagine Thracians fighting on both sides of the conflict described by Diodoros. The fact that the name Aripharnes has Iranian roots was regarded as a proof of its bearer’s Sarmatian origin. Therefore it was concluded that he was the king of the Syrakoi and not of the Thracians.<sup>40</sup> This added one more unreliable argument to the theory about an “early Sarmatian wave” from the East.

Thus, ancient written sources give no *direct* information as to a mass migration from the East to the northern Pontic region in the Hellenistic period. Epigraphic sources of the same period are also silent concerning the danger of Sauromatian (= Sarmatian) invasion from distant eastern areas. It is worth noticing that the ethnic name *Sarmatai* is more or less absent in epigraphic documents of the Hellenistic period.<sup>41</sup> At the same time there are repeated mentions of many other names, such as Scythians, Maiotai, Thracians etc.<sup>42</sup> One should not exclude the possibility that the general name “Sarmatians” (used for the barbarians who inhabited the northern Pontic region, and later the more easterly regions) to some extent could be an invention of the Greek literary tradition. Perhaps this was done in order to mark the changes, which took place after the time of Herodotos.

The decree in honour of Protogenes<sup>43</sup> describes the dangerous situation in Olbia, which was threatened *from the West*, by the Skiroi and Galatai, usually interpreted as Celts. The Sarmatians are not mentioned in the text. Some researchers suggest that the Saioi and the Saudaratai mentioned in the decree were in fact the Sarmatians<sup>44</sup>, because they are *believed* to have been there at the time.<sup>45</sup>

In the second half of the 2nd century BC Olbia was under the protection of the Scythian king Skilouros, whose name was struck on the Olbian coins together with the name of the city.<sup>46</sup> An inscription on a marble slab found recently at the *heroon* of the king Argotes – a predecessor to Skilouros – mentions victories of the Scythian king over the Thracians and Maiotai.<sup>47</sup> It is important, that the king is named – not by Greek writers but by indigenous citizens – as “the Governor of Scythia – rich in horse pastures”. The construction of the *heroon* is dated to no earlier than 130 BC.<sup>48</sup>

A decree in honour of Diophantos, which describes events in the Crimea at the end of the 2nd century BC, mentions several barbarian tribes – the Scythians, Rheuxinaloi, and Tauroi.<sup>49</sup> In the dedication of Posideos from the second half of the 2nd century BC, found at Scythian Neapolis, a group called the Satarchai is mentioned.<sup>50</sup>

Another Chersonesian decree dated to the end of the 2nd century BC tells of an attack by Scythians and possibly Sarmatians on the city of Kalos Limen. These events took place not far from the territory which is traditionally

thought to have been inhabited by the Sauromatians (= Sarmatians) – relatively close to Lake Maiotis. Thus, in the epigraphic and written sources there is no record of the arrival of the Sarmatians in the northern Pontic region from the East. Legendary information about an area called “Sarmatia”, which would be situated near the Lake Maiotis, corresponds with the traditional information concerning the territory of the Sauromatians.

The great migration from the East into the northern Pontic region in the 3rd-2nd centuries BC is not attested in the archaeological material. There is, however, evidence that the barbarians of the northern Pontic area were in contact with the Western world of the Thracians, Celts and Germans.<sup>51</sup> Traces of such connections have also been observed in the epigraphic sources. So, why therefore is it that in all works on the history and archaeology of the Sarmatians a theory that the Sarmatian tribes from the east occupied Scythia in the Hellenistic period prevails?

### *Rostovcev and the Sarmatians*

Among other things, archaeological remains were only used at a relatively late date as important evidence in the reconstruction of the historical events, which are believed to be connected with the Sarmatians. The researcher, who for the first time clearly shaped the concept of the Sarmatian invasion of Scythia, which is now so standard a part of our way of thinking, was M.I. Rostovcev. Many elements in his “Sarmatian paradigm” were viewed as an extrapolation of later records concerning the Sarmatians on the earlier periods of their history.

Before Rostovcev started to work with the northern Pontic region he was already a prominent scholar of Roman history.<sup>52</sup> Written sources of the late Roman period, in which could be found plenty of information concerning various barbarian tribes located on the edges of the Roman Empire, provided him with his historical picture of the Sarmatians. The features of this picture were established prior to the discovery of the material culture of the Sarmatians. The main elements of Rostovcev’s “Sarmatian concept” could be characterized as follows:

- 1) The Sarmatians were eastern neighbours of the Scythians,<sup>53</sup> who invaded Scythia and became rulers of the North Pontic region. Originally this information is based on the record of Diodoros. Rostovcev dated the invasion to the transition from the 4th to the 3rd centuries BC. After this “Scythia” was renamed “Sarmatia”, and the Scythians were pushed towards the west (the Dobrudja region) and the south (the Crimea).
- 2) The names “Sarmatians” and “Sauromatians”, according to Rostovcev, signify two different groups of people.<sup>54</sup> The Sauromatians were a Maiotian tribe. A very characteristic feature of this group was the many matriarchal customs embedded in their culture. In separating the Sauromatians from

the Sarmatians he supposed that the two names were mixed by later authors, and that the earlier authors used the names properly.

Under the common name “Sarmatians” Rostovcev categorized different tribes of Iranian origin, who repeatedly invaded the steppes of Southern Russia from the East. Rostovcev mentions two main waves of migrations – the early (Saki) and the late (Yueh-chi).

For Rostovcev the most splendid feature of the Sarmatian culture was a special set of weaponry (*katafrakta*), which consisted of a long heavy lance, a long sword and a dagger, armour or chain-armour and a helmet (usually of conical shape). All this – according to Rostovcev – was different from the weaponry of the Scythians. This image of the Sarmatian *cataphractarii*, described in the works of Ammianus Marcellinus (4th century AD), Rostovcev applied also to the earlier Sarmatians.

He repeatedly underlined the close similarity of the Sarmatians to the Parthians, an impression he also obtained from the ancient sources. This connection was based on the special features of Sarmatian art, which they brought with them into Southern Russia (the polychrome technique and the Animal Style<sup>55</sup>), in their religion (the worship of fire<sup>56</sup>), in their patriarchal way of life, and in the military organization of their society.

For parallels to this image of the Sarmatians Rostovcev looked to monuments of a material culture which: a) were situated east of Scythia, b) dated from the end of the 4th to the beginning of the 3rd century BC, and c) exhibited the above-mentioned features, which could point to their Iranian origin. Such material monuments included the Prochorovka kurgans (Rostovcev’s Orenburg group). Their discovery coincided with Rostovcev’s visit to his parents in Orenburg in 1915.<sup>57</sup> In kurgan 1 were found iron armour, a long sword, polychrome jewellery, items decorated in the Animal Style, and Achaemenid bowls – i.e. direct Iranian imports, which gave Rostovcev support for his belief that these monuments belonged to Sarmatians – the new Iranian people from the East. By these Sarmatians, however, he did not mean the entire local population. Rostowtzeff imagined the Sarmatians – as well as the Scythians – as a group of tribes of Iranian origin, who were a minority within the population yet at the same time ruled the majority of the local people. They were mounted warriors, who came to rule the steppes of Southern Russia. In his opinion the whole steppe eastwards of the Don was in the hands of these newcomers already by the 4th century BC.<sup>58</sup>

Rostovcev suggested that the kurgans near the Elizavetovskaja *stanica* on the Don River were very close in their material culture to the material culture of the Orenburg group.<sup>59</sup> He located a third group of similar assemblages in the Kuban’ region and on the Taman’ Peninsula (the Stavropol’ Treasure, the Buerova Mogila, and the kurgans near the *stanica* of Besleneevskaja and Kurdžipskaja).<sup>60</sup>

Thus, based on a group of approximately 10 assemblages he developed a

theory concerning the main direction of the movements of Sarmatian tribes from the East towards the West: the Orenburg group (in the East, the Sarmatians themselves) – the Elisavetovskaja group (possibly Syrmatai/Sarmatai) – and the Kuban' group. To demonstrate this movement of people from the East to the West, the *phalerae* from horse harnesses and a group of polychrome brooches found in the Kuban' region were drawn into the discussion. An eastern provenance was suggested for both these groups. As it had already been established, however, most of the *phalerae* were manufactured in the northern Pontic region. Hence, the local provenance of polychrome brooches is well argued by M. Treister.<sup>61</sup>

Before 1917 Rostovcev had defined his concept of the Sarmatian culture, which was later changed only in the details. He created a clear historical image of this culture, pointed out its main historical stages and connected the historical name "Sarmatians" with particular monuments within its material culture. This concept, however, has its weak side mostly due to the lack of archaeological material for a proper analysis. In fact, the culture of the early Sarmatians was defined on the basis of one kurgan (Prochorovka 1), which was actually not fully excavated. Many of his historical arguments were based on the projection of information from later written sources onto earlier periods. Details of his historical and archaeological pictures are often contradictory.

The task of collecting and interpreting the archaeological material from the Sarmatian culture was undertaken by a group of archaeologists from the University of Saratov, who began investigations in the Volga-Ural region in the 1920s. Their ideas and methods must be viewed in the context of the changes which took place in Russia after the October revolution of 1917.

In the first decade of the new Soviet rule, scientific investigations were not yet under such strict political control as was later the case (from the end of the 1920s onwards). Nonetheless, the pressure from Soviet officials already existed. In this period, N.Ja. Marr's "theory of stages" was widespread. It had its roots in the conception of stages of social development presented first by F. Morgan, and later reused by F. Engels which soon achieved the status of official dogma. Specific ethnic studies were not welcomed. Terms such as the "Scythian stage" followed by the "Sarmatian stage" now entered the scientific language. In this selfsame period these terms were used to cover a vast territory of the Eurasian steppe from the Danube to the boundaries of China.

Also at this time the chronological phases of the "Sarmatian stage" were defined on the basis of new excavations in the Volga-Ural region. The authority of Rostovcev's theory concerning the Sarmatian character of the Orenburg kurgans was quite strong and became an axiom in future studies.

The first proper excavations of the "Sarmatian" monuments were undertaken by Professor P. Rykov of the Saratov University.<sup>62</sup> He proposed a classification of burials in the Volga region, but this did not become a model for future investigations. He defined the culture of the Susly burial ground as Sarmatian and compared it with similar burials from the Kuban region.<sup>63</sup>



*P. Rau and his followers*

The first chronological division of the Sarmatian culture, which is still in use, was put forward by P. Rau. Rau was a local German inhabitant of the newly organized Republic of Germans of the Volga region – and was eager to collect all the sources concerned with the ancient history of this region and preserve them for future generations. He attempted to demonstrate the development of the region in the context of the neighbouring territories of Southern Russia and Siberia. In this way the Volga-Ural region became for him a centre, a sort of standard measure for the comparison of other regions.

In his early works Rau made an analysis of the archaeological material that was thorough and based on the latest methods (for example, he made use of tables of correlation)<sup>64</sup>. In his last book on Scythian arrow-heads he proposed, in brief, a historical concept of the Sarmatian culture.

The principles of the “Rau concept”, which became a part of the modern “Sarmatian Paradigm”, are the following:

- 1) The Volga and Ural steppes were the motherland of the Sarmatians, whose culture spread from this territory westwards (to the northern Pontic region) and south-eastwards (towards Middle Asia and Siberia).<sup>65</sup>
- 2) The Sauromatian (6th-4th century BC) and the Sarmatian (3rd century BC-3rd century AD) cultures are connected by their origin.

On the basis of burial customs, Rau established four stages within the common Sauromato-Sarmatian culture. Thus, he constructed a relative chronology. Rau considered the orientation and the grave type to be central cultural features.<sup>66</sup> He connected the Sauromatian stage with the culture of “Ostwestgräber”, and the Sarmatian with the culture of “Meridionalgräber”.<sup>67</sup>

In 1929 Rau committed suicide. In the short period between 1929 and 1933 something not unlike a revolution in the spheres of culture, science, and museums happened in the Soviet Union. Censorship of scientific works and a “purification” among the scientific staff was introduced, and nearly all research fellows lost their jobs and many of them their lives as well.<sup>68</sup> Non-Marxist science was not allowed. Into this new scientific world came the next generation – enthusiastic and patriotic, and ready to work hard for the young state. It was a time of records in every field – economy, art, and science, the achievement of which became an unwritten rule of everyday life. In the haste to ensure quick results, science lost its thorough analysis and well-based conclusions; scientific theories became dogmas. Research fellows followed special orders from the Communist Party to exclude “routine analysis of sources” from their work – they were to produce a purely historical conclusion.

Apart from this, the Central Committee also influenced the main directions of scientific work. Thus, in 1937 a new task was established for archaeologists – to study the questions of ethnogenesis. Directives on how to do this

were also given: "It is necessary to make... maps placing the different tribes on the territory of our motherland in different periods of their existence. It is necessary to show, how... the tribes formed the confederations, how they became bigger and, on the borderline of the history of classes, fighting each other and the external enemy, how they became the people – well-known in history".<sup>69</sup> The impact of this directive was so strong that its influence is still felt today.

For quite a long time – in fact until Stalin's death in 1953 – it was forbidden to mention the works of disgraced scientists. Many archaeological investigations were undeservedly forgotten. However, the chronological division of the Sarmatian culture by P. Rau became generally accepted within Soviet archaeological literature.

Rau's theory is also connected with the name of the well-known classical archaeologist and Scythologist B. Grakov. This is mainly due to a special article devoted to the matriarchal remains of the Sarmatian culture, in which he repeated the main statements of Rau and then built his own concept upon them. The aim of this article was to refuse Rostovcev's belief in the absence of kinship between the tribes of the Sauromatians and the Sarmatians (Rostovcev believed the first were matriarchal and the second patriarchal). In his article, Grakov clearly formulated the idea of four stages of Sauromato-Sarmatian culture giving the following names to these stages: Sauromatian (Blumenfeld culture), early Sarmatian (Prochorovka culture), Middle Sarmatian (Susly culture), and late Sarmatian (Šipovo culture). At a later date, most of these stages lost that part of their names related to specific localities.

It was K.F. Smirnov, who developed and expanded the main ideas of P. Rau. Under his direction wide-scale excavations in the South Ural and Volga districts were made. In the 1960s the number of archaeological monuments belonging to the Sarmatian culture were counted in the hundreds. In the works of Smirnov the Volga-Ural region is seen as a centre of origin for the Sauromato-Sarmatian culture in general.<sup>70</sup> This culture – as in Rau's works – is shown as a definite benchmark against which the barbarian cultures from neighbouring territories could be compared. Smirnov also underlines the connection of the Sarmatian culture with cultures of the late Bronze Age in order to demonstrate the autochthonous origin of the Sarmatian population in the Volga-Ural region. Thus, according to his point of view, the Sarmatian tribes slowly moved towards the west from their motherland located in the Volga-Ural steppes from the 3rd century BC onwards. As we have seen earlier, the sets of *phalerae*, found in votive depositions were used to demonstrate this slow movement. The lack of the archaeological monuments in the northern Pontic region which were similar to those of the Volga region was explained by the poor level of investigation in this area.

Another very important factor in the creation of the "Sarmatian paradigm" was the geographical localization of the tribes known from written sources (Aorsi, Siraki, Alanae) on archaeological maps. The name "Upper Aorsi"

was in fact created to give a name and a place to the Aorsi, who lived north of the Aorsi themselves, according to Strabon. These tribes came to be seen as a confederation of tribes. The archaeological map was connected with the chronological development depicting the stages of the Sarmatian culture. Thus, in this chronological division the ethnic aspect became a matter of the utmost importance. This division remained largely unchanged after Smirnov's work on the "Sarmatian paradigm" although it was developed in some parts.

In subsequent works by Sarmatologists the chronological periods of the Sarmatian culture were connected with the domination of specific nomadic groups – the Sauromatae, the Aorsi, and the Alanae. The dating of the appearance of specific tribes began to influence the dating of the archaeological assemblages, intuitively connected with the historical events.

### Conclusion

In order to reach a conclusion about the development of the "Sarmatian Paradigm", it is necessary to stress that initially the material culture of the Sarmatians was closely connected with the representation of the Sarmatians, which came from the works of Roman historians. This connection was so strong, that it marginalised other sources – epigraphic and archaeological, which – despite being considered the most objective in ancient historical studies – are still just passive illustrations of historical concepts.

The main difficulties with the theory arise with the identification of the Sarmatians in the northern Pontic region. The archaeological picture does not correlate with the picture presented by the historians. The Sarmatian attack, keeping in mind the monuments of the Volga region in the 3rd to the 1st centuries BC, is simply not visible. In my point of view, there is no reason to suggest that the Volga-Ural region was the centre and motherland of the Sarmatians named in the historical sources. The movement of people from the Volga basin to the northern Pontic region in the 2nd century BC is no more than a speculation based on the doubtful interpretation of fragmentary and dubious written sources. A distant eastern influence, which is definitely clear in the material culture in valleys of the Volga, the Lower Don and the Kuban' regions from the second half of the 2nd century BC, is not seen in the northern Pontic area.

Because of this one must ask: Who were the people who deposited votive sets with silver *phalerae*? This question can not be easily answered. They were not at any rate the Saka, who came from the borderlands of Graeco-Bactria and whom Rostovcev suggested as the first Sarmatians. Nor were they the barbarian tribes of the Lower Volga and Ural region, whom Smirnov suggested as the Sarmatians. It is more suitable to compare these monuments of the northern Pontic region with the western Pontic territories. Their similarities can be seen in the artistic tradition as well as in the rites connected with the votive depositions.

## Notes

- 1 This article was prepared with the support of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.
- 2 Spicyn 1909, 18-19.
- 3 Rostovtzeff 1922, 136-138; Rostovtzeff 1929, 44-45, 104.
- 4 Rostovtzeff 1922, 136; Rostovtzeff 1929, 41-42.
- 5 Trever 1940, 34-38.
- 6 Trever 1940, 53.
- 7 Trever 1940, 51, 55, 60-61.
- 8 For a critical view of this, see Mordvinceva 1999a.
- 9 Fettich 1953, 127-178.
- 10 Items from the remarkable Taganrog Hoard disappeared after the Revolution of 1917. The Balakleja Hoard met a similar fate at a later date.
- 11 Fettich 1953, 139-144.
- 12 Fettich 1953, 171.
- 13 Around 55 BC Olbia was defeated by the Getai. In the second half of the 1st century BC the city faced a political and economic crisis (Vinogradov & Kryžickij 1995, 18).
- 14 Fettich 1953, 136.
- 15 Fettich 1953, 171, 177.
- 16 Harmatta 1970, 99-100 with reference to p. 37.
- 17 Sulimirski 1970, 141.
- 18 Smirnov 1984, 80, 110, 113.
- 19 Smirnov 1984, 112.
- 20 Smirnov 1984, 80.
- 21 In the volume devoted especially to the Prochorovka Culture there are no such objects (see Moškova 1962).
- 22 Ščukin 1994, 145.
- 23 Ščukin 1994, 146.
- 24 Mordvinceva 2001.
- 25 Mordvintseva 1999b, fig. 8, 1.
- 26 Zajcev 2005, 88-94.
- 27 Raev, Simonenko & Treister 1995; Zajcev 2005, 117-135; Zajcev 2006, 81-82.
- 28 Kurz 1995, 100ff.
- 29 Wells 2001, 70-73.
- 30 Stolba 1993, 56.
- 31 The Sauromatians are located by Herodotos to the east of Tanais (Hdt. 4.21, 4.116). Ps.-Hippokrates informs us that the Sauromatians lived "around the lake of Maiotis" (Ps.-Hipp. *De aër.* 25). Ps.-Skylax (second half of the 4th century BC) mentions the names of the Syrmatae and Sauromatae, who lived beyond the Scythians. Syrmatae are named as the last tribe living in Europe – before the Tanais. Sauromatae are located as the first people in Asia (across the Tanais) (Ps.-Scyl. 68, 70). In the work of Eudox (middle of the 3rd century BC), which we know through Stephanus Byzantius, the Syrmatae are also mentioned near the Tanais (Latyšev 1947, 187).
- 32 Antig. Hist. Mirab. CLII, 97. The story of Herakleides (4th century BC) retold by Antigon of Karystos (3rd century BC) about a "stinky lake" one can see as the earliest information about Sarmatia. This lake is usually compared with the Sea of Azov (Maiotis), which was traditionally connected with the name of the Sauromatians in the ancient literature.



- 33 Polyb. *Hist.*, 25. 2,12-13.
- 34 Marčenko 1994, 52-67.
- 35 Marčenko 1994, 53.
- 36 Strab. 7.3.17.
- 37 Ἀριφάρνης ὁ τῶν Θρακῶν βασιλεύς (Diod. 20.22).
- 38 Latyšev 1909, 388; Minns 1913, 373.
- 39 RE 1997, 759.
- 40 Desjatčikov 1977, 46.
- 41 The Sarmatians could be mentioned in one Chersonesean Decree (*IOSPE I<sup>2</sup>*, 353). After having personally investigated the slab with the inscription V. Stolba suggests that the most likely reconstruction of the damaged line in the text ("Sa...") – should be "Sarmatians". The Sarmatians could also have been mentioned in the Chersonesean decrees *IOSPE I<sup>2</sup>*, 343 (Vinogradov 1997) and *IOSPE I<sup>2</sup>*, 353 (Stolba 1990, 57-59, fig. 4).
- 42 The most well-known inscriptions of the Hellenistic period are the decree in honour of Protophenes (*IOSPE I<sup>2</sup>*, 32), the Chersonesean decree in honour of Diophantos (*IOSPE I<sup>2</sup>*, 352), and a new inscription from Scythian Neapolis (Vinogradov & Zajcev 2003, 46, fig. 2; Zajcev 2004, 111-112, fig. 56-57).
- 43 *IOSPE I<sup>2</sup>*, 32; around 220s-210s BC (Vinogradov 1989, 182).
- 44 Harmatta 1970, 11-12; Smirnov 1984, 67; Simonenko & Lobaj 1991, 76-79; Ščukin 1994, 97.
- 45 Harmatta 1970, 19.
- 46 Frolova 1964, 44.
- 47 Vinogradov & Zajcev 2003, 47.
- 48 Vinogradov & Zajcev 2003, 51.
- 49 *IOSPE I<sup>2</sup>*, 352.
- 50 Zajcev 2004, 114, fig. 60.4.
- 51 Mordvinceva & Perevodčikova 2000, 51-64; Zajcev 2005, 88-89; 2006, 81-82.
- 52 Zuev 1991, 167.
- 53 Rostovtzeff 1922, 121.
- 54 "Let us remember... that the Sauromatians, who were Maeotians, are not to be confounded with the Sarmatians, who do not appear on the Don until the fourth century, and who were an Iranian people, patriarchal and not matriarchal" (Rostovtzeff 1922, 33).
- 55 Rostovtzeff 1922, 124.
- 56 Rostovtzeff 1922, 121.
- 57 Zuev 1997, 71.
- 58 Rostovtzeff 1929, 21.
- 59 Rostovtzeff 1922, 125.
- 60 Rostovtzeff 1922, 125, 128-129.
- 61 Treister 2002, 43-44.
- 62 Rykov 1925.
- 63 Rykov 1925, 24.
- 64 Rau 1929, 60-63.
- 65 Rau 1929, 49.
- 66 Rau 1929, 68.
- 67 Rau 1929, 54-55.
- 68 Tallgren 1936, 149; Tunkina 1997, 109.
- 69 Gorodcov, Efimenko & Ravdonikas 1937, 5.
- 70 Smirnov 1964.

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## Abbreviations

ESA	<i>Eurasia Septentrionalis Antiqua</i> .
IOSPE	Latyshev V., 1885-1901. <i>Inscriptiones antiquae orae septentrionalis Pontis Euxini Graecae et Latinae</i> . Leningrad.
IAK	Izvestija Archeologičeskoj komissii. St Peterburg.
RE	Pauly's <i>Realencyclopädie der Classischen Altertumswissenschaft</i> . Neue bearbeitung. Unter Mitwirkung zahlreicher Fachgenossen herausgegeben von Georg Wissowa.





# Conflict or Coexistence? Remarks on Indigenous Settlement and Greek Colonization in the Foothills and Hinterland of the Sibaritide (Northern Calabria, Italy)\*

*Peter Attema*

In any discussion touching on the subject of the meeting of cultures in colonial situations, the inevitable question will arise whether this involved conflict or was harmonious in nature, and whether it was a meeting on equal footing or one characterized by the dominance of one culture over the other. Various theoretical and case studies have been dedicated to this subject, and a substantial bibliography has developed as a result.<sup>1</sup>

## *Meeting of cultures East and West: an introduction*

Does the increasing presence of Greek goods in indigenous tombs, sanctuaries and households point to a peaceful process of acculturation, and the active adoption by indigenous peoples of foreign commodities in order to enrich their own material culture and expression of identity, or does it point to cultural dominance of Greeks over indigenous peoples as the outcome of

\* This paper draws on the practical and intellectual work of many staff and students that have been or are still involved in the excavations of the Groningen Institute of Archaeology at Timpone Motta and the surveys in the Raganello watershed. With regard to the present paper I specifically want to mention prof. dr. M. Kleibrink, director of the excavations of Timpone Motta. The discussion in the paragraph on the meeting of cultures in the sanctuary at Timpone Motta is based on her publications. With respect to the latter paragraph, thanks are due to Jan Jacobsen who discussed the pottery related to the various building phases in the sanctuary. He also compiled the three accompanying pottery plates. The results of the surveys and topographical work discussed in this paper are the fruit of close cooperation with dr. P.M. van Leusen of the Groningen Institute of Archaeology, my co-director in the Raganello Archaeological Project. Christina Williamson corrected the English text, for which I am particularly grateful. Also I wish to express my thanks to dott.ssa. S. Luppino of the Soprintendenza Archeologica della Calabria for supporting our work in the Sibaritide. Finally I like to thank Pia Guldager Bilde, who introduced me to Black Sea archaeology by inviting me to participate in the meeting of cultures congress at Sandbjerg. This was a highly stimulating meeting that resulted in a now running joint survey project around Lake Džarylgač in western Crimea, a project that addresses exactly this theme.

subjection and/or outright conflict? Should changes in regional settlement patterns in colonial situations always be interpreted as driven by colonial politics, or can they be seen as part of the process of urbanization, triggered by demographic input and, for example, new ways of cultivating the countryside? And, most importantly in the context of this paper, how are these relationships translated in space?

First, we should acknowledge that colonial situations in the Greek colonial world were not uniform; consequently there is no single model that accommodates every situation. Secondly, archaeological evidence can be extremely open to interpretation and the same evidence may sometimes “fit” totally opposed stances, the interpretation depending on the theoretical, methodological and/or ideological background of the researcher, research group or research programme.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, past colonial situations were not static and fortunes changed over time. What may have started out as a peaceful coexistence of cultures may over time have turned into a situation of conflict. Moreover, Greek colonization was not a monolithic enterprise and there will have been a variety of simultaneous sorts of relationships between Greek settlers and indigenous groups. This happened in the coastal areas of Sicily and South Italy as well as elsewhere in the Mediterranean and in the Black Sea area. Relationships and alliances could be played out on the level of individual settlements. The latter is in any case true of the Greek colonial settlements that, as we know, acted as individual entities interacting with indigenous settlements. However, they could equally be in conflict with each other as shown, for example, by the destruction of the Greek colony Sybaris by its Greek rival Kroton in 510 BC.<sup>3</sup> Whether indigenous settlements also acted as individual entities or were united in tribal alliances as a rule is hard to say; the ancient literary sources are explicit on the role of the Greek colonies, but very generic on the role that indigenous settlements played.

Recent archaeological discoveries on the Ionian coasts of South Italy and reassessments of existing evidence have reopened the debate on the complex nature of Greek and indigenous relationships in South Italy, a discussion that was vivid in earlier Italian publications on this region.<sup>4</sup> This complex nature of Greek and indigenous relationships is likely to have been the norm in the period of Greek colonization, and we may surmise that first contact situations in the Black Sea area were no less intricate than in Magna Graecia, even if the nature of the societies with which the Greeks came into contact in the two areas was quite different. Indeed, the archaeological record indicates that the measure of socio-economic and political complexity of early colonial situations in Magna Graecia was comparable to that of the northern Black Sea area.<sup>5</sup> The historical outcome of the meeting of Greeks and indigenous peoples in terms of long term cultural acculturation or assimilation, was, however, quite different in Magna Graecia and the northern Black Sea coastal areas, not least because of the very different natures of the indigenous populations the Greeks came into contact with in both areas, i.e. settled agriculturalists in the coastal plains and foothills of Magna Graecia versus nomadic and semi-nomadic groups in