

Michel Kazanski & Vanessa Soupault (eds.), *Les sites archéologiques en Crimée et au Caucase durant l'Antiquité tardive et le haut Moyen-Age*, Colloquia Pontica 5, Brill, Leiden/Boston/Köln, 2000, X + 302 pp., 106 illustrations. ISBN 90 04 11746 6, ISSN 1389-8477, € 117,-.

It is a fact that Greek colonisation in the Black Sea region cannot be studied in the isolation of one period but has to be observed all over the Archaic Greek, through the Classical, Hellenistic and Roman periods till the Early Medieval period, not only because the history of the later is a result of that of the earlier periods but also because it shaped this society for the next thousand years.

This book is already the 5th volume of the *Colloquia Pontica* series, edited by G.R. Tsatskhelidze, and concerned with the archaeology of the Roman and (the migrations during) the Early Medieval period in the North Pontic region, more specific the Crimean and Northern Caucasus.

So the title does not exactly matches the content, as almost 30 % (5 out of the 16, in fact those of V. Koulakov, A. Lagutin, S. Saprykin, S. Dyatchkov and I. Arzhantseva *et al.*) of the articles are dealing with Roman archaeology (1st - 4th century AD), which is rather early for the term Late Antiquity. Unluckily, most of the articles are concerned with a description of jewellery found in graves and only a few with a more economic or political subject like trade, epigraphy, ceramics or weapons.

The first three articles have a wider geographical scope. First of all, V. Kuznechov is writing on the invasion of the Alans and Sarmatians in Eastern Europe and M. Kazanski and P. Périn on Alano-Sarmatian fibulae found in Gaul.

V. Koulakov's interesting paper is on the material contacts between the Baltic and Rome during the reign of Nero but fails to put this in a larger perspective of the role of the amber road in history.

The next four articles are mostly concerned with the Crimean area as A. Lagutin turns the interesting find of 20 iron arrow heads, found at the Graeco-Scythian fortified settlement at Kara-Tobe (the Crimea) in an more or less unsupported archaeological proof of a war between the Scythians and the Bosporian king Aspurgus during the mid-20's of the first century AD. So using the epigraphically evidence of this period to force his archaeological data into a certain historical context.

From a much higher level is S. Saprykin's paper on the Bosprian king Sauromace I (93-123 AD) and the political consequences of his reign for the Northern Black Sea coast, especially of interest for the Roman period of towns like Panticapaeum and Gorgippia.

Two articles by A. Aibabin, C. Pilet, M. Kazanski, M. Treister and E. Khairedinova are dealing with the Crimean necropolis from Late Antiquity at Loutchistoe, J. Andrási is doing some interesting detective research on a partly lost collection of Early Medieval jewellery from a pre-revolution collector from Russia but hardly adds something to the understanding of this period.

A. Gavrilov writes on a nomadic tomb from the late 5th century AD and S. Saprykin and S. Dyatchkov on epigraphical evidence for the historical developments in Late Antiquity.

The most interesting paper in this book is undoubtedly that of A. Sazanov on the 6th-7th century AD ceramics from Chersonesos, being one of the few publications on this subject in a western language (as those working on excavations in the Pontic area of this period know very well), which is found on almost all Early Medieval excavations along the Black Sea coast and in Thrace.

Next in this volume are three articles on the Northern Caucasus as V. Kuznechov, this time together with H. Härke and A. Belinsky, writes on an Alan tomb at the interesting Klin-Yar necropolis.

I. Arzhantseva, D. Deopik and V. Malashev have a very interesting report on the excavations of one of the first excavated Alan proto-cities in the Northern Caucasus, especially as this town probably was a crucial point for trade in one of the earlier silk roads.

The concluding chapter by the editors is an overall description of sites from the west (Chersonesos on the Crimea) till the east (Cimmerian Bosphorus and the Steppes).

This specific volume is edited and written by specialists in this field from France, Great Britain, Hungary, Russia and the Ukraine and as most of the many publications dealing with the Early Medieval period of the Pontic region were never translated in a western language, this book offers a great opportunity to open this field of studies to readers in the western world. In spite of the changing quality of some of the contributions, this book remains an enrichment in an area where publications in a western language are extremely scarce and can be recommended to scientist and students specialised or interested in Roman or Early Medieval history of the Pontic area.

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