

CULTURAL IDENTITIES IN THE ILLYRIAN PROVINCES  
(2<sup>ND</sup> CENTURY BC-3<sup>RD</sup> CENTURY AD): SOME OLD  
PROBLEMS RE-EXAMINED

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A relative abundance of inscriptions and an increasing body of archaeological evidence combine to make the northeast of the Roman province Dalmatia a region of particular interest. The area in question is centered on the long course of the river Drina that in places forms the modern border between Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia. This area also includes the Čehotina, Tara and Lim valleys, along with the upper basin of the western Morava around Užice and Požega that lay within the Roman province of Dalmatia. This discussion is prompted by the recent synthesis by Radmilla Zotović of the epigraphic and archaeological evidence from this region<sup>1</sup>.

Following the pioneering studies of Irma Čremošnik of symbols and ornaments on the stone monuments of Roman Dalmatia that could be assigned to local Illyrian and to intrusive Celtic traditions, Géza Alföldy, drawing for the most part on the evidence of personal names, produced a reconstruction of the cultural and ethnic affinities of the indigenous population of northeast Dalmatia around the time of the Roman conquest early in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. A significant presence of personal names of Celtic origin in the Middle Drina (Skelani) and the western Morava basin was linked with the historical Scordisci, a powerful Celtic group whose conflict with the Romans dominated events in the central Balkans from the mid 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to the early 1<sup>st</sup> century AD<sup>2</sup>. After the conquest this group formed the civitas of the Dindari (listed by the Elder Pliny within Dalmatia), while a fragmentary inscription appears to locate this group in the Skelani area<sup>3</sup>. In material terms the Celtic presence has been identified with the La Tène culture of the late Iron Age appearing in the area hitherto occupied by the

<sup>1</sup> Radmilla ZOTOVIĆ, *Population and Economy of the Eastern Part of the Roman Province of Dalmatia* (BAR International Series 1010), Oxford 2002 (ISBN 1 84171 4402).

<sup>2</sup> I. ČREMOŠNIK, 'Les symboles populaires sur les monuments romains dans nos régions', *Glasnik Zemaljskog Muzeja u Sarajevu* 12 (1957), 217-234; G. ALFÖLDY, 'Des territoires occupés par les Scordisques', *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 12 (1964), 107-127, and in *Gesellschaft und Romanisation in der römischen Provinz Dalmatien* (Budapest 1965), 54-56.

<sup>3</sup> Plin. Nat. Hist. III 142; L'Année Epigraphique 1910, 216 cf. A. and J. ŠAŠEL, *Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Iugoslavia inter annos MCMII et MCMXL repertae et editae sunt* (Situla 25, Ljubljana 1986) p. 83 no. 1544: [D(is) m(anibus)] P. A[...] princ[eps?] civitatis ] Dinda[r]iorum ...].

Glasinac culture of the Hallstatt early Iron Age that some have identified with the historical Autariatae, a powerful Illyrian group before the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC<sup>4</sup>.

In regard to the well documented communities further south in the Čehotina valley (Pljevlja) and the upper Lim valley (Prijepolje), where the Celtic element in the onomastic evidence is not significant, Alföldy, citing not only the evidence of personal names but also formulae in nomenclature, identified a significant immigrant element from the territory of the Dalmatae on the central Adriatic. The name of the civitas of the Siculotae recorded by Pliny may be linked with the same region and denotes communities transplanted by the Romans into the lands of the much diminished Illyrian Pirustae following their determined resistance to the Roman occupation. Criticism of these reconstructions has questioned some of the attributions of names and has also suggested that the lapse of time between the Roman conquest and the adoption of the epigraphic habit by the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century must have witnessed many changes in population and character that determined the cultural character of these communities revealed in inscriptions. In this respect the contribution of archaeology, particularly that gained through the excavation of necropoleis, may be significant<sup>5</sup>.

The excavation of around ten necropoleis has yielded evidence for the distinctive burial practices of communities during the Roman period in this region<sup>6</sup>. They have been divided into two groups: (1) those, mainly of the earlier period that show little or no evidence of Roman influence in either burial practice or grave goods (Komini I near Pljevlja, the two cemeteries at Sase, Veliko Plato and Čadorišće, Munjsko brdo at Prilipac near Požega, Radoinja near Nova Varoš, Rogatica and possibly Ustikolina near Foča) and (2) those with a significant Roman element in one form or another (Komini II near Pljevlja, Kolovrat near Prijepolje, Karan and Blaskovina (Visibaba), both near Požega).

Generally the earlier group is less consistent in respect of burial rite but there is a general conformity in regard to grave goods. At Komini I there are circular and rectangular pits containing remains of the funeral pyre, circular pits in which the remains were placed following cremation, circular and rectangular grave pits containing stone or ceramic urns. The grave goods, pottery, weapons and ornaments, including knives with curved blades and

<sup>4</sup> J. WILKES, *The Illyrians* (Oxford 1992), 41-44 (Glasinac), 137-144 (Autariatae).

<sup>5</sup> ALFÖLDY, *Dalmatien* (note 2), 56-59, and a 1977 discussion by J. ŠAŠEL republished in his *Opera Selecta* (Situla 30, Ljubljana 1992), 124-142 and especially 142.

<sup>6</sup> For a detailed account of these sites with bibliography see R. ZOTOVIĆ (note 1), 33-48 and 103-105 (Appendix V).

aucissa fibulae, have affinities with the coastal region, in particular that between the rivers Krka and Cetina, the historic heartland of the Delmatae. The practice of lining graves containing burials urns with stone slabs goes back into prehistoric times. The Veliko Plato necropolis near Sase in the Srebrenica region was in use from the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century to the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century AD and contains burials that for the most part belong to the period before the development of the mining settlement Domavia late in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century while the generally later burials in the nearby Čadorišće necropolis from the evidence of grave goods relate to the more cosmopolitan mining community that had developed by the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century. Both contained three types of burial, simple pits filled with the ashes and cremated remains, rectangular graves with burnt floors and sides and pits with more than one burial layer. Graves of the third type were significantly richer in grave goods and appear to have close parallels with burials in Pannonia (Intercisa, Aquincum, Brigetio and Savaria), while some of the ceramic forms have characteristics of the Celtic regions to the north. At both Sase cemeteries Pannonian influences have also been recognized in the locally produced pottery. The excavators have identified here a non-urban and relatively impoverished community, mainly from the absence of typical Roman provincial objects, such as firma lamps, cosmetic vessels, bow fibulae, metal strap and dress fastenings, weapons and iron implements. The grave goods of the Sase burials are matched in an inhumation burial at Ustikolina in the upper Drina valley. Here distinctive La Tène (Celtic) influences have been identified in the group of metal vessels that include a libation jug, bowl and ladle and a skillet that can be closely matched with examples from Pannonia (Intercisa, Brigetio and Carnuntum). At Rogatica the cemetery continued into the 4<sup>th</sup> century and contained graves with two or more levels of burial, in one case an inhumation placed above the remains of a cremation. To the same period belong the burials at Munjsko brdo at Prilipac east of Požega. The grave goods from both here and Rogatica include weapons, fibulae, buttons, and in some cases have been identified as burials of soldiers. At the Radoinja (Bjelina) cemetery near Nova Varoš there was a re-use of a prehistoric tumulus, into which late antique inhumations and cremations were inserted, the former laid directly on to the earth, the latter in an urn with grave goods. In all these the burial rites appeared to have continued with little or no change well into the Roman period while signs of Roman influence are either minimal or absent altogether.

The second group of burials, exhibiting a significant Roman character, is best represented at Komini II near Pljevlja, where numerous burials were found with Roman stelae in situ and tombs enclosed within regular masonry walls were identified with some of the leading families (Aurelii Argeniani

and Paconii Barbarii). Tombs with this distinctive Roman feature of enclosure walls are also known at Karan, Blaskovina (Visibaba), Osatica near Skelani on the middle Drina, and Rogatica. The example excavated at Kolovrat (Prijepolje) belonged to a leading local family (Aelii Firminii). The appearance of this Roman form of tomb is dated to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD and later is believed to have arrived in this area from the Danubian region rather than from the coast. Both the cremation and the inhumation burial rite are present in the major cemeteries at Komine II (Pljevlja) and Kolovrat (Prijepolje) that were in use from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century onwards. At the former a defined group of 4<sup>th</sup> century inhumations, with similar orientation and grave goods (cruciform fibulae, glass bead necklaces, conical and hemispherical glass beakers) is identified as an intrusive group from the Danube region, and a Sarmatian group settled in this area is a suggested identification. Overall the grave goods of the two cemeteries, including jewellery, appear to be a mixture of imports and local manufactures and reflect a steadily increasing prosperity during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The Roman funerary monuments fall into three types, stelai, cippi (square blocks decorated on three sides) and decorated cubes some of which may have belonged to larger built tombs. All bear the various combinations of figures and ornament in the Roman tradition, though in some cases with strong local influence. These tend to reduce figural images and plant motifs to geometric forms, a practice best seen at Komine II and Kolovrat. The practice of placing cubic memorials over burials has been linked with the arrival of newcomers from the direction of the Adriatic.

Epigraphy remains the primary evidence for the location, creation and identity of the several Roman cities (*municipia*) known to have existed in this area<sup>7</sup>. Since no urban site with civic buildings, except for the exceptional mining settlement at Gradina (Domavia), has yet been excavated the reality of these ostensibly urban centres must remain in doubt. Though there is some evidence for Flavian citizenship among the local population there seems little doubt that the first widespread appearance of Roman citizenship in the area came in the time of Hadrian and continued during the Antonine period into the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century. Within the region there may have been established possibly as many as eight Roman *municipia*, most during the Antonine period before the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The organization of the *municipium* at Domavia may date from the time of Severus and Caracalla but its institutions remained closely linked with the imperial mines

<sup>7</sup> The epigraphic evidence is discussed by ZOTOVIĆ (note 1), 22-32, and presented in an epigraphic register (92-96); the archaeological evidence for settlement is catalogued in an appendix (101-102).

administration that was already in existence at the time. There is little or no trace of local families holding municipal office while official activities, including the construction of civic buildings, appear to have been at least in part the responsibility of the imperial procurator of the Dalmatian and Pannonian Silver Mines (procurator Augusti argentariarum Delmaticarum et Pannonicarum). Further south municipia were created at Pljevlja (municipium Aurelium S[.]lo[...]) in the Čehotina valley and at Kolovrat (Prijepolje) in the Lim valley. In the Drina valley the city at Skelani was situated at a major crossing of the river (it was a *statio* of *beneficarii consulares*) and already existed before the end of the reign of Pius and it is conceivable that this city, along with another at Rogatica to the south, were originally Flavian creations. At least one municipium appears to have been established in the upper basin of the western Morava above the Ibar confluence that lay within Dalmatia. Records of office-holding families are for the most part Hadrianic citizens (Aelii). Possible sites include Visibaba near Požega but the site of Užice further west has also been suggested. The name of that city remains in doubt. The distribution of office-holding families had suggested that the municipium Malvesatium lay in the Morava basin but the record of a *decurion* and *IIvir* of that city (the first full record of the name) from Rudo in the lower Lim valley led the late Ivo Bojanovski to argue that this was in fact the name of the city at Skelani, a Flavian foundation whose extensive territory comprised that of the Dindari extending east of the Drina to include Ljubovija, Bajina Bašta, Užice and Požega, as well as the middle Drina around Skelani. It was out of this area that the new mining settlement of Domavia was organized as a municipium in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The middle Drina belonged to a municipium at Rogatica, while the upper valley around Foča belonged to the municipium S[...] at Plevlja in the Čehotina valley<sup>8</sup>.

A final topic for discussion is the extent and significance of Roman mining and mineral working in this region, aside from the well known and extensive silver mines (*Argentariae*) controlled by a senior imperial procurator whose responsibilities extended north across the Dalmatian border into Pannonia<sup>9</sup>. These operations were centered on the lead and silver deposits around Mts.

<sup>8</sup> Much remains uncertain regarding the location and identity of Roman cities in this region. The outline here follows the detailed studies by the late Ivo BOJANOVSKI, not all of which unfortunately appear to have been accessible to R. ZOTOVIĆ (note 1). The problem of the city at Skelani on the middle Drina was first discussed in *Arheološki Rad i Razprave* (Zagreb) 6 (1968), 241-262 and was again reviewed in his full study of all Roman cities in the region, *Bosna i Hercegovina u antičko doba* (Sarajevo 1988), 169-214.

<sup>9</sup> For a summary of the evidence of mining in the area see ZOTOVIĆ (note 1), 63-64. The principal discussion of the organisation and location of Roman mining in the region remains S. DUŠANIĆ, 'Aspects of Roman Mining in Noricum, Pannonia, Dalmatia and Moesia Superior', in H. TEMPORINI (ed.), *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II.6 (Berlin-New York 1977), 52-94, especially 66-69.

Kvarac and Lisac, with the major settlement located at Gradina near Sase. The operations of the *Argentariae Pannonicae et Delmaticae* embraced workings over an extensive area and extended down the Drina to the silver deposits at Zajača across the border in Pannonia. The natural focus of the lower Drina area lies to the north and in the Roman period this will have been Sirmium (Mitrovica) on the Sava, for much of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century the imperial capital of the entire Danube region.

Otherwise the extent of mining and mineral working in this region remains uncertain. The only other proved mining centre of the Roman era lay at Čadinje near Prijepolje in the Lim valley, where pits, mining tools, a smelting furnace and slag heaps have been found. There is also a possibility that the deposits of lead, silver and other minerals in the upper Drina valley around Foča, known to have been worked on a large scale in medieval times, were exploited in the Roman period. Otherwise no certain evidence has come to light. The votive plaque from Kolovrat (Prijepolje) to *Silvanus Augustus* by *Mercurius 'argenti actor'* might be connected with some form of imperial control but after several years of modern development and archaeological research the scarcity of evidence remains a fact, already noted by Oliver Davies seventy years ago. If this was indeed the territory of the once numerous *Pirustae* we should perhaps revise an estimate of these people as experienced miners whose skills could be transferred to other regions of the Roman world.

*Appendix: Settlements and Necropoleis in Eastern Dalmatia with Map  
(based on R. Zotović)*

A. BAJINA BAŠTA REGION

1. **Vaganj**: temple of Silvanus
2. **Višesava**: villa rustica
3. **Crvica**: settlement
4. **Pilica**: settlement
5. **Dobrotin**: Roman grave monuments

B. KOSJERIĆ REGION

1. **Kosjerić**: settlement
2. **Paramun** (Gradina Kičer): fortified site
3. **Seča Reka**: votive object; Roman grave monuments
4. **Tubići**: Roman grave monuments

C. POŽEGA REGION

1. **Visibaba**: major settlement (municipium); horrea; villae rusticae; (Blaskovina): inhumation necropolis including tombs within enclosing walls)
2. **Prilipac** (Tamnice): fortified site; (Prilipačko polje): baths; (Munjsko Brdo): inhumation necropolis
3. **Bakionica** (Imanje Jovičevica): fortified site; (Pozeznica): villa, brick kiln
4. **Kalenić**: settlement and bridge; Roman grave monuments
5. **Glumač**: settlement; Roman grave monuments
6. **Duškovci**: settlement
7. **Ježevica** (Aksentijevića Kuće): settlement; (Crnokosa): fortified site; Roman grave monuments
8. **Vranjani**: settlement; Roman grave monuments
9. **Pusto Polje**: necropolis
10. **Otanj**: Roman grave monuments
11. **Gorobilje**: Roman grave monuments
12. **Donja Dobrinja**: Roman grave monuments
13. **Tučkovo**: sarcophagus

D. UŽICE REGION

1. **Užice**: major settlement (municipium); Roman grave monuments, stone urn, tomb
2. **Karan**: settlement; Roman grave monuments
3. **Kremna** (Dobro polje, Stave): settlement; (Crkvine, Stamenica Groblje): Roman grave monuments

4. **Bioska**: votive object
5. **Čajetina** (Gradina): fortified site
6. **Mačkat**: Roman grave monuments

#### E. NOVA VAROŠ REGION

1. **Nova Varoš**: settlement; necropolis
2. **Akmačići**: necropolis
3. **Radoina**: inhumation and cremation necropolis

#### F. PRIJEPOLJE REGION

1. **Kolovrat**: major settlement (municipium); necropolis with cremation and inhumation, Roman grave monuments, and tombs within enclosing walls
2. **Hisardžik**: milestone
3. **Otilovići**: milestone
4. **Čadinje**: mining
5. **Prijepolje**: necropolis (Roman grave monuments)
6. **Džurovo**: Roman grave monuments
7. **Divci**: constructed tomb
8. **Brodarevo**: Roman grave monuments

#### G. PLJEVLJA REGION

1. **Komini**: major settlement (municipium); necropolis I (cremation), necropolis II (cremation, inhumation, Roman grave monuments, tombs with enclosing walls)
2. **Ilijino Brdo**: settlement
3. **Potpeć**: settlement
4. **Radosavac**: settlement
5. **Vidre**: settlement; Roman grave monuments
6. **Pljevlja**: Roman grave monuments
7. **Kalušić**: Roman grave monuments
8. **Ljuća**: Roman grave monuments
9. **Rosulje**: Roman grave monuments

#### H. SREBRENICA REGION

1. **Gradina**: major settlement (municipium)
2. **Gradina** (Lisac, Kvarac): mining
3. **Srebrenica**: coin hoard
4. **Bratunac**: settlement
5. **Tegare**: settlement, milestone; Roman grave monuments
6. **Voljevica**: castellum, settlement, milestone
7. **Klotijevac** (Zagaj): settlement



8. **Han Gradina**: bridge
9. **Sikirići**: coin hoard; 50 tombs of 'tumba' form
10. **Han Bjelovac**: remains of road
11. **Petričko Polje**: remains of road
12. **Drinjača**: remains of road
13. **Sase** (Veliki Plato, Čadoriste): cremation necropolis
14. **Klotijevac**: chamber tombs
15. **Konjevići**: sarcophagus
16. **Knežija**: sarcophagus

I. SKELANI REGION

1. **Skelani**: major settlement (municipium)
2. **Osatica**: Roman grave monuments

J. ROGATICA REGION

1. **Rogatica**: major settlement (municipium); cremation and inhumation tombs
2. **Grobnice**: settlement
3. **Klašnik**: settlement; Roman grave monuments
4. **Stari Brod**: settlement; Roman grave monuments
5. **Kopači** (Surduk, Odžak, Slatina): villae rusticae
6. **Potpeć**: villa rustica
7. **Drijenke**: villa rustica
8. **Živojevići**: villa rustica
9. **Plješevica**: villa rustica
10. **Ladjevina**: bridge
11. **Brankovići**: necropolis with prehistoric tumulus burials
12. **Grobnice**: Roman grave monuments
13. **Štitarevo Donje**: Roman grave monuments

K. RUDO REGION

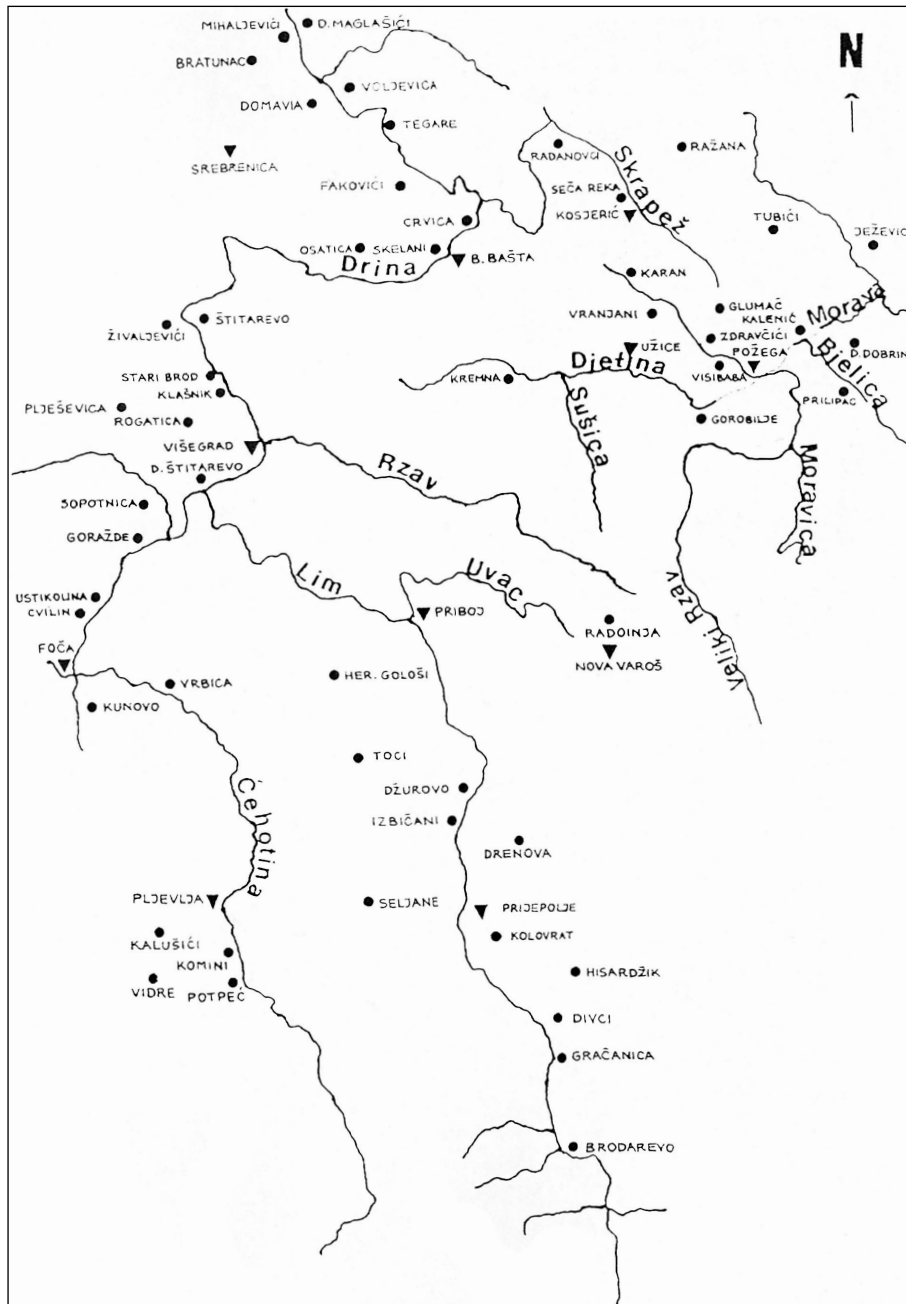
1. **Rudo**: major settlement (municipium?)

L. GORAŽDE REGION

1. **Sopotnica**: settlement

M. FOČA REGION

1. **Ustikolina**: settlement, villa rustica; stone tomb, grave monuments, inhumation
2. **Cvilin**: settlement
3. **Vrbica**: settlement; Roman grave monuments
4. **Kalinovik**: settlement
5. **Foča**: mining



Towns and peoples under the 'protection' of Rome after the First Illyrian War.