

Overview of Ethnic Structure of Dardania during the Roman Period



Archaeology

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Abstract

Pre-Roman Dardania was inhabited by an indigenous Dardanian population. The Roman invasion was followed with the introduction of a number of novelties regarding the administration, political and economic system, but it also reflected in the differentiation of ethnic composition. Consequently, the ethnical structure in Dardania changed significantly and became multi-ethnic inhabited by the local population, the Romanised locals, the Thracians, the Romans, the Celts, the Greeks and the Orientals. This multi-ethnic structure is best reflected by epigraphic monuments discovered throughout the Dardanian territory. A general overview on the ethnical structure living in Dardania during Roman period will be presented in this paper, based on onomastic data offered by epigraphic sources.

Introduction

Prior to the arrival of Romans, the Dardanic territory was inhabited by locals. Notwithstanding this, due to lack of epigraphic evidence little is known about the Dardan ethnic structure of that time. Following Roman invasion, the ethnic structure changes significantly by becoming multi-ethnic where the local population, the Romanised locals, the Thracians, the Roman, the Celtic, the Greeks and the Orientals co inhabited the territory. The majority of epigraphic names are Roman with both imperial and non imperial *gentilic*, but there are also foreign names present which derive from different provinces of the Roman Empire. Based on onomastic data offered by epigraphic sources, it is possible to have a general overview of the ethnic structure of the population living in Dardania during the Roman period². Bearing in mind the way the *nomina* and *cognomina* were formed, especially within the provincial population, and having in mind that the *cognomina* variations are a product of religious, political and cultural circumstances, especially after *Constitutio Antoniniana*³, it is necessary to have a critical thought given that we are dealing with a complex phenomenon where generalizing is impossible.

Local population

In epigraphic inscriptions found throughout the territory of Dardania, belonging to the 1st – 4th centuries, alongside Roman, Oriental and Greek names, we also find a considerable amount of local names. However, compared to the number of Roman names, their numbers are relatively low. Lack of local names in epigraphic monuments can be described differently. It is possible that the locals were not yet accustomed to stone monuments, or perhaps, given that the majority of them belonged to the agrarian caste, the material, cultural and education level was low, or the Romanisation process had not yet involved all areas of their life.

In writings which regard the locals within the territory of Dardania⁴, the names in most of the cases are present in a form of a name (*nomen*) and a patronym expressed by a filiation and is not different from the onomastic formula known within the local population in the Dalmatian province⁵. In writings from Dardania this

² Heterogeneous composition of the ethnic structure in Dardania is also reflected indirectly by the votive monuments whereby one can notice adoration of goods for the local pantheon, as well as the Roman, Greek, Thracian, and Oriental pantheons.

³ Šašel, Jaroslav, Contributo alla conoscenza del commercio con gli schiavi Norici ed Illirici a la fine del periodo repubblicano”, *Atti del III Congresso Internazionale di Epigrafia Greca e Latina*, Roma 1959, p. 143.

⁴ Čerškov, Emil, *Romakët në Kosovë dhe Municipium DD*, Prishtinë, 1973, p. 66.

⁵ Rendić-Miočević, Duje, “Illyrica. O problem ilirske onomastičke formule u rimsko doba”, *JAS*, Split, 1960, p. 163-170.

patronym in the majority of cases was used as a name, which is a feature for this region⁶. After their involvement within the Roman society, the locals became subject to new rules. In most of the cases they took the imperial *gentilic* such as: *Ulpus*, *Aelius*, *Aurelius*, etc, but maintained their local traditional names in a form of cognomina such as *Ulpus Andinus*, *Licinio Andie*, *Callia Dasi*, etc.

Epigraphic sources discovered in the territories of the Scupi settlement, Municipium of Ulpiana, Naissus, Municipium DD and in the area of Dukagjini, whereby rightfully there are hypotheses of at least two urban centres in the level of municipium, in the village of Dërsnik⁷ and in Prizren area⁸, which clearly reflect the heterogeneous character of the population in these areas. However, the local population as presented through epigraphic inscriptions remained small in numbers. Based on onomastic formula and the character of the names, as locals stemming from the territory of Scupi can be considered *Druti*, *Maema*, *Mestula*, *Momonina*, *Mestylas*, *Posis*, *Delus*, *Mucatus*, *Dicco*, *Dida*, *Mania*, *Mesta*, *Mescena*, *Sita*, *Times*, *Varanus*, *Bellus Dasius*⁹, *Lumia*, *Andia*¹⁰, *Euporus*. Further on, the liberated slaves *Blicities*, *Teres*, *Varidius*, *Surus*, *Iustinus*¹¹, etc. Whereas from the territory of Ulpiana the following can be considered as locals *Aelia Nanea*, *Septimius Dassius*, *Annius Timenti*, *Ulpus Andinus*, *Tattia Fidia*, *Sillvae*, *Trita*, *Callia Dasi*, *Vanno*, *Nanae Galli*, *C. Valerius Varanus*, *C. Valerius Marulus*, *Udinadius*. As autochthonous (Celtic or Thracian) can also be considered *Citanu*, *Sextus Ba...*, *T. Flavius Paetinus*, *Flavi Lyci*, *Atta*¹². From the territory of Naissus as locals can be considered *Plannius*, *Andia*, *C. Iulius Annus*, *Dassius* all members of the same family *Licinius* and *Ruffus*, also members of this family, though they have Latin names, it is no doubt that they are locals. Furthermore, to this are added names such as *Atta*, *Tatto*, *Attianus*, *Gentione*¹³ etc.

Whereas from all the names proved by epigraphic monuments, in municipium DD, only *Aurelius Maximinus* and daughter *Aurelia Nanera* can be considered to pertain to the local Dardanic population¹⁴. The romanising powers in the area of Dukagjin is obvious to have been much less significant than in other centres. From the names presented in epigraphical monuments, the following belonged to the local population *Andia Dassi*, *Rufinus Dassi*, *Ania Dassi*, *Valens Sita* from Peja; *Cittunis*, *Valens Timentis*, *Valens Tureli*, *P. Aurelius Turellius* from Dërsnik; *Sit*, *Sumi*, *Desumena*, *Aurelia Catulla*, *Popar*, *Scerulaedus Sitaes*, *Sita Dasi*, *Caia Dasi*, *Andius Austeri* from Rahovec; *Septimia Pitta*, *Dunnus* from Prizren; *Nanea Prudentis*, *Cinna* from Gjakova¹⁵, etc.

Italic and western provinces settlers

There is no accurate data on the Roman immigrants into Dardania and their origins. Epigraphic data, as the only evidence available on this issue, provides information based on which we can detect the first settlements of the incoming population in Dardania. In general, this has to do with sporadic fluxes of immigrants during 1st-3rd centuries. The insufficient data based on inscriptions, make it difficult to draw a clear view on the features of

⁶ Katičić, Radoslav, "Die Illyrischen Personennamen in ihrem südöstlichen Verbreitungsgebiet", *ŽA 12*, Skopje, 1962, p. 268.

⁷ Čerškov, Emil, *op. cit.*, 1973; Zef Mirdita, *Antroponimia e Dardanisë në kohën romake*, Prishtinë, 1981.

⁸ See: Čerškov, Emil, *op. cit.*, 1973.

⁹ Present also in the form of *Dassius* and *Dasi*.

¹⁰ Same name has been found also in mal form *Andius*. This is a theophoric name deriving from an epithoric good. See: Marić, Rastislav, *Antički kultovi u našoj zemlji*, Beograd, 1933, p. 13.

¹¹ Regarding the epigraphic sources where the names of local population have been found in the area of Scupi area refer to Dragojević-Josifovska, Borka, *Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure: Scupi et la Région de Kumanovo*, vol. VI, Beograd, 1982; Mirdita, Zef, *Antroponimia e Dardanisë në kohën romake*, Prishtinë, 1981.

¹² Regarding epigraphic sources where the names of local population have been found in the area of Ulpiana area refer to Mirdita, Zef, *op. cit.*, 1981; Hajdari, Arben, *Ulpiana et la romanisation de la Dardanie*, Doctoral Thesis, Grenoble 2013.

¹³ Regarding epigraphic sources where the names of the local population have been found in the area of Naissus area refer to Petrović, Petar, *Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure vol. IV, Naissus-Rermesiana-Horreum Magi*, Beograd, 1979; Mirdita, Zef, *op. cit.*, 1981.

¹⁴ Čerškov, Emil, *Municipium DD kod Sočanica*, Prishtinë, 1970.

¹⁵ Regarding epigraphic sources where the names of the local population have been found in the area of Dukagjin area refer to Vulić, Nikola, "Antički spomenici našezemlje", *Spomenik SKA 71*, Beograd, 1931; Mirdita, Zef, *op. cit.*, 1981.

such settlements. There is no doubt that the main incentive attracting such incoming flows was based on the abundant natural and especially mineral riches in Dardania. There is a number of inscriptions found around mines in Dardania (Janjevë, Novobërdë, Kopaunik, Rogoznë, Kishnicë), that represent a number of Roman officials, engaged in the direct exploitation and mine administration. Except for mining, the areas with a strong agricultural potential, played an important role in the settling of Roman settlers. This can be best seen by the presence of renowned Roman families, *Furii* and *Pontii*, who owned the mining districts and *latifundia* in Ulpiana, Skopje and Prizren area¹⁶.

The epigraphic evidence found in Roman settlements in Dardania, reflect a domination of a majority of Roman settlers and liberated slaves in the ethnic structure. The Roman settlers played an important role in the economic, political and cultural life in Roman cities in Dardania. What stands out is the fact that the non-imperial *gentilic* domination over imperial ones. With regards to imperial *gentilic* the following come across more frequently: *Iulius*, *Claudius*, *Flavius*, *Ulpus*, *Aelius*, *Coceius*. The greatest parts of the nomina present in the epigraphic inscriptions are made of common names on the whole of the Empire, and almost none is specific to Dardania.

In the Scupi settlement, the *Valerii* stand out, who for the most part came from the west, but also from the east¹⁷. Moreover, there are the *gentilic Cornelii*, *Petronii*, *Petili*, *Lucilii*, *Antonii*, *Atilii*, *Attii*, found in this city's epigraphic monuments. The bearers of the *gentilic Petronii*, *Petili*, *Lucilii*, are most probably from the western regions, while the *Corneli* are from Hellenic areas¹⁸. The decurions *L. Aufidius*, *Casius*, *C. Cornelius*, *L. Marcianus*, *M. Octavius*, *P. Petilius*, *C. Sempronio*, were bearers of the non-imperial *gentilic*¹⁹. Different from Scupi, where the settlers are present in the first century, in Ulpiana we come across sporadic inflows in the second century, coinciding with a period when the city flourished. Based on the prosopography in the epigraphic sources from Ulpiana, of certain Italic origin are the *Furia Caecilis*, *Caius Furius Octavianus*, *M. Pontius*, *Varanus Sabinus*, *Antonius Silvanus*, *Publius Licinius Aelianus*. To this can be added that a number of Italic names of liberated slaves, as evidenced in Ulpiana, as imperial miners, servants to Italic families but who also engaged in trade²⁰. In regards to Naissus, the first incoming settlers came mostly from previously romanized areas. Amongst imperial *gentilic* spread around in the Naissus, the following are to be found: *Aurelius*, *Iulius*, *Ulpus*, *Claudius*. There are also a number of non-imperial *gentilic* as bearers of *Atelius*, *Atilia*, *Petilius*, *Gnorius*, *Rufria*²¹. Whereas, in regards to the DD Municipium, the Italic settlers make up for a small number of the population in proportion to the Hellenic population, which was a feature of this municipium²².

Oriental and Greek settlers

Besides the number of settlers who came from Italy and other western provinces, epigraphic sources from the territory of Dardania have proved the presence of Greek immigrants and those who came from the eastern provinces. The presence of Orientals and Greeks represents an interesting element to the ethnic composition of Dardania. Among them, not all had the privilege of being Roman. To define their origin is not easy considering the lack of data provided by the inscriptions. We know that some of them were originally from Asia Minor, whose presence in Dardania was a result of being representatives of the army and traders, but also as workers involved with the extraction and processing of metals.

¹⁶ Mócsy, Andras, *Gesellschaft und romanisation in der romischen Provinz Moesia Superior*, Budapest, 1959, p. 86; Dragojević-Josifovska, Borka, *op.cit.*, Beograd 1982, f. 54 et 64; Šašel, Jaroslav, "Furii e Pontii", *Opera Selecta, NML*, Ljubljana, 1992, f. 152-159.

¹⁷ See: Dragojević-Josifovska, Borka, *op. cit.*, 1982, p. 34.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ In relation to the epigraphic data on roman settlers in Scupi area refer to Dragojević-Josifovska, Borka, *op. cit.*, 1982; Mirdita, Zef *op. cit.*, 1981.

²⁰ In relation to the epigraphic data on roman settlers in Ulpiana refer to Mirdita, Zef, *op. cit.*, 1981; Hajdari, Arben, *op. cit.*, 2013.

²¹ In relation to the epigraphic data on roman settlers in Naissus refer to Petrović, Petar, *op. cit.*, Belgrade, 1979; Mirdita, Zef *op. cit.*, 1981.

²² In relation to the epigraphic data on roman settlers in Municipium DD refer to Čerškov, Emil, *op. cit.*, 1970.

The ethnic structure of the Roman cities in Dardania is characterized by the Greek and Oriental element, which in most cases is emphasized through the text of the inscription²³, but which also reflects the *cognomina*. Some of the common *cognomina* we encounter in inscriptions from the Scupi area are *Tyche*, *Hyperphanus*, *Hedyle*, *Flavius*, etc. From the total names featured in the realms of Scupi inscriptions, the entering group names can be considered Hellenistic speaking *Antiocus*, *Euhelpis*, *Afrodisia*, *Alexandro Epitynchanus*, *Xanthippus*, *Alexander*, *C. Aphroditus*, *Eutychia*, *P. Aelius Menodotus*, *Valeria Lysimachei*, *L. Atilius Eucharistus*, *Fulcinio Evangelo*, *Pulcinia Hedyla*²⁴, etc.

The Ulpiana ethnic structure also records the presence of a number of citizens originating from the Orient and Greeks. For some it can be assumed that they were originally from Asia Minor. On plantation settlers from Asia Minor in Ulpiana, of quite notice is the spread of the cult of Jupiter Malanos²⁵. Originating from Phrygia is *Victor Demetrius* and *Demetrius Ambibus* priests, all of Eastern origin, probably Syrian. Judging on the basis of their *cognomina* as Oriental or helenophonic can also be considered *Eros M. Cocceius*, *Asclepiades Septimius*, *Asclepiades*, *Aurelius Asclepiades*, *Ionicus Ulpus*, *Ulpus*, *Alexandria*, *Tatt Idate*, *Ablabius*²⁶, etc.²⁷.

Even the city of Naissus had a relatively large number of Greek immigrants in its ethnic structure of the city. Most of them were slaves or liberated slaves, but there were also soldiers. *Augustrum Philoxenus* we distinguish as servants, as well as *Zosimus*, whereas liberated slaves could be *Nica*, *Hermes*, *Hermogenes*, *Nicias*, *C. Iulio Vindex*, and among Roman citizens who carry Greek names we recognize *Posidonius*, *Plato*, *Philippa*, *Rhoimetalks*²⁸, etc. Unlike other centres where the aristocracy municipal column consisted mainly from Italy and other western provinces, in the Municipium DD, the Orientals and Greek settlers have played a crucial role in the political and economic life of the city. Among them, quite noticeable is the large number of liberated slaves. From the knights we recognize *M. Aurelius Asclepiades*, as well as the procurator *Titieno Verō*²⁹. As Oriental or helenophonic the following names can also be distinguished: *Vel Eros*, *Herculanus*, *Aelia Hesperia*, *Telesphorus*, *Eros Mae*, *Voconia Epicaris*, *Menander*, etc. A number of names are Greek and oriental are also present in the Dukagjin Plain, as *Atticus Ulpus*, *Ulpus Thalassus*, *Aelius Maurus*, *Aelius Niceforus* from Peja, *Tiberius Surus* from Prizren; then in the district of Kumanovo, *Abascantus*, *Apollonides*, *Hercul*, *Pomphorus*, *Achilleus*, *Public*, *Callirhoe*³⁰, etc.

In the end one can say that both the geostrategic position of Dardania, and especially its immense economic importance within the Roman Empire, were the main reasons that enticed a great number of Roman citizens who bound by their economic and political interests came from western and eastern to Dardania. Among those who settled in Dardania are parts of the Roman senatorial families *Pontii* and *Furii*, whose economic interests were closely linked with Dardanian territory. There are a number of epigraphic data which observe that the presence of settlers in Dardania is closely associated with the exploitation of minerals and the use of fertile lands.

Being faced with the fact that the entire territory of Dardania witnessed a large number of varying names, whose names are based on the onomastic scheme composed of *tria nomina*, it is extremely difficult to

²³ That is especially characteristic of Scupi realm.

²⁴ Epigraphic sources about where settlers are proven names in the realm of Greek and oriental in Scupi area refer to Dragojević-Josifovska, Borika, *op. cit.*, 1982 ; Zef Mirdita, *op. cit.*, 1981.

²⁵ Peja, Fatmir, "Jedan zanimljiv natpis sa Ulpiane", *BMK XII-XIV*, Prishtinë, 1984, p. 59-61.

²⁶ *Ablabius* is characteristic Cretan name. *In connection with this compare Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* 1, 1900, 120.

²⁷ Epigraphic sources about where settlers are proven names in the realm of Greek and oriental in Ulpiana area refer to Mirdita, Zef *op. cit.*, 1981; Hajdari, Arben, *op. cit.*, 2013.

²⁸ Epigraphic about where resources are proven names oriental and Greek settlers in the realm of Naissus areal area refer to Petrović, Petar *op. cit.*, Beograd, 1979; Mirdita, Zef *op. cit.*, 1981.

²⁹ Epigraphic sources about where settlers are proven names in the realm of Greek and oriental in Municipium DD area refer to Čerškov, Emil, *op. cit.*, 1970.

³⁰ Epigraphic sources about where settlers are proven names in the realm of Greek oriental and the Dukagjini compare Mirdita, Zef, *op. cit.*, 1981.

distinguish the population equipped with *civitas* from those who earned this right throughout the waves of Romanization. The large number of imperial nomina *Aelii Ulpii* as proven in epigraphic sources in Dardania, clearly demonstrate that Dardania was involved in the early stages of separation of the Roman civil law, applied by the emperors Trajan and Hadrian. That complicates greatly the desecration between the local and foreign population in epigraphic sources.

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