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**PALEOBALKANSKA PLEMENA IZMEĐU
JADRANSKOG I CRNOG MORA OD
ENEOLITA DO HELENISTIČKOG DOBA**



Redakcija

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CULTURAL GROUPS OF THE EARLY IRON AGE IN THE WEST AND CENTRAL BALKANS AND THE POSSIBILITIES OF THEIR ETHNICAL IDENTIFICATION

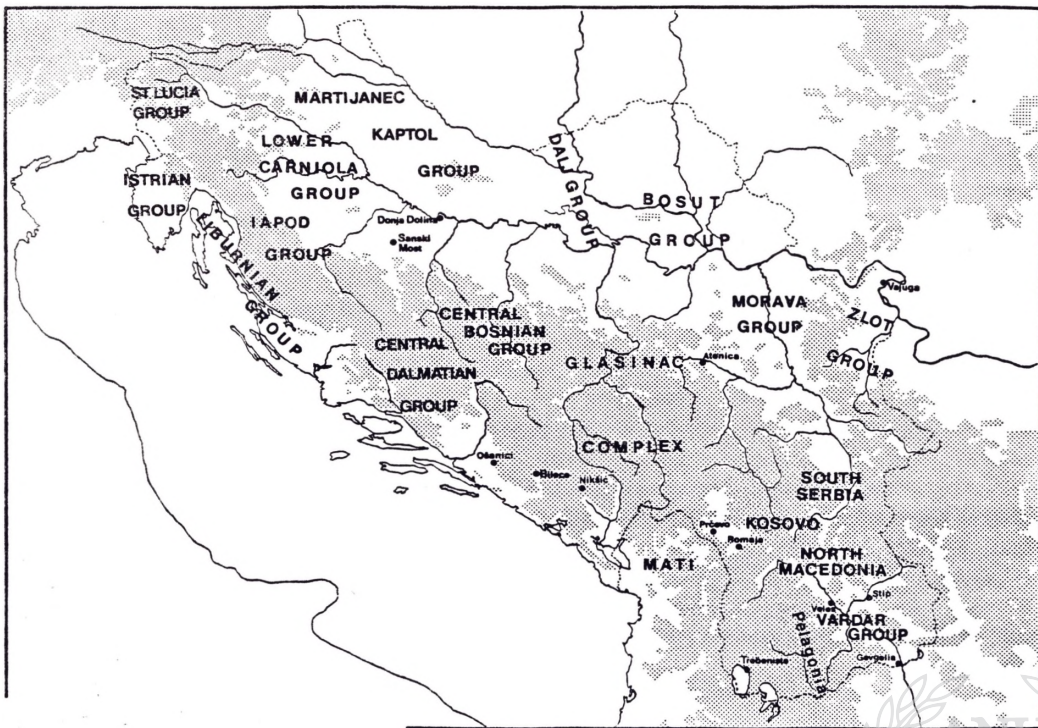
RASTKO VASIĆ

Abstract — In this paper the author speaks of various cultures and groups which appeared during the Iron Age on the territory of present-day Yugoslavia, and tries to connect these groups with names of ancient tribes known from the sources to have lived in these areas. Due to the unreliability of the sources on one side and insufficient archeological investigations on the other, most of the suppositions in this direction have to be taken with prudence and reserve.

The ethnical identification of particular groups and cultures of the Iron Age presents more difficulties than such attempts in earlier periods. Namely in the Bronze Age one can speak only in general about groups and cultures which, due to cultural continuity with the later appearances, could have been same pre- or protoelements of future populations. In the Iron Age, on the contrary, thanks to the numerous data of the ancient authors, we meet together with names of large populations the names of small tribes, more or less significant in historical events, whose connections with archaeological material should be very concrete and precise.

In this respect the territory of Yugoslavia offers special problems. Firstly, our country is not archaeologically equally investigated. In some regions Early Iron Age groups are very well defined, while in others, in spite of many finds from the respective period, all the elements which make up a group have not been found. Secondly, ancient sources known to us do not provide us with many data concerning the interior of the Balkan peninsula before the Roman conquest. So, a proper picture of the tribes inhabiting the Balkan interior appears from the written sources only in the very last centuries b. c. when by some strange coincidence our archaeological data are scarcer than they were in the Early Iron Age.

The Iron Age in the west and Central Balkans, south of the Sava and the Danube, begins in the 8th century, or possibly somewhat earlier, when the iron objects appear in large numbers in the material culture. In the course of the next eight centuries in the spacious area between the Adriatic sea and the eastern frontiers of Yugoslavia, differing cultures and groups were formed of various strength, territory and duration, through the mixture of autochthonous elements



Early Iron Age cultural groups in Yugoslavia

and newcomers. As we have said, the archaeological data from this large area because of its incompleteness resulted in inadequate picture of the cultures and groups: in some regions particular groups are well separated and characterised, in other parts they are only discerned with many unknowns. Yet, thanks to the efforts of our archaeologists, and the Center for Balkanological Studies in Sarajevo in particular, results of Iron Age research on the territory of Yugoslavia have been summed up recently and an acceptable basis for eventual ethnical determination of various archaeological groups is given¹. These results will serve us as a basis for further analysis.

In the west three cultural groups are quite well defined. One is the Istrian group on the Istrian peninsula², the second the north Adriatic or Liburnian group in the north-east Adriatic with its nucleus between the rivers Zrmanja and Krka³, and the third the Lika or Iapod group in Lika and in the valley of Una in north-west Bosnia⁴. In spite of some movements and changes, especially within the Liburnian and the Iapod group, the cultural development of these three groups can be followed continually from the beginnings of the last millenium b.c. to the arrival of the Romans in these regions.

¹ Praistorija jugoslavenskih zemalja V, Željezno doba, Sarajevo 1987 (further on PJZ V).

² S. Gabrovec, K. Mihovilič, *Istarska grupa*, PJZ V, 293—338.

³ Š. Batović, *Liburnska grupa*, PJZ V, 339—390.

⁴ R. Drechsler-Bižić, *Japodska grupa*, PJZ V, 391—441.

In central Dalmatia, south-west Bosnia and west Hercegovina a Central Dalmatian group has been clearly defined whose beginnings date to the first centuries of the last millenium b.c. and its end to the period around 300 b.c.⁵ Somewhat to the north, around the upper course of the rivers Vrbas and Bosna, a Central Bosnian group can be located, dated as the Central Dalmatian group, but determined less precisely⁶.

In the west parts of the Central Balkan area the most significant is the Glasinac group, named after the plateau Glasinac in east Bosnia, where thousands of tumuli belonging to the Bronze and Iron Age are found. This group embraces a large territory which includes east Bosnia, east Hercegovina, south-west Serbia, south Adriatic, north Albania, Montenegro, Metochia and parts of Macedonia⁷. It seems that its main nucleus was east Bosnia and south-west Serbia where the cultural continuity can be followed from the Bronze Age and where the group reached its cultural and political culmination in the 6th and 5th centuries b.c. In this period rich princely graves appear in this area (Arareva gromila, Pilatovići, Novi Pazar, Atenica, Pečka banja, Kruševica) and Glasinac objects are spread towards the north as far as Slovakia, towards the east as far as Romania and towards the west as far as the Middle Adriatic. The 4th century marks the decline of the Glasinac group and the beginning of the 3rd century its end.

Similar development but with somewhat less splendour and intensity is noticed in the south, in the valley of the river Mati in north Albania, thus the Glasinac group or culture is sometimes called the cultural complex Glasinac — Mati⁸. All the areas of this complex are not equally investigated but almost everywhere single or group finds clearly demonstrate connections with the Glasinac material. We point out in particular important group finds from the surrounding of Bileća in Hercegovina⁹ and Nikšić in west Montenegro¹⁰.

In this context the Romaja—Prčevo group in Metochia, or Drilon variant of the Early Iron Age, as J. Glišić expressed himself, has a particular place¹¹. Its material dates mainly from the 6th and 5th centuries and shows many parallels with some of the necropolises around Kukës in north-east Albania (Kënetë, Bardhoc)¹². Its appartenance to the Glasinac—Mati complex is without doubt, but because of some differences (f.e. lack of fibulae and bracelets, so

⁵ B. Čović, *Srednjodalmatinska grupa*, PJZ V, 442—480.

⁶ B. Čović, *Srednjobosanska grupa*, PJZ V, 481—528.

⁷ B. Čović, *Glasinačka grupa*, PJZ V, 575—643.

⁸ F. Prendi, *Un aperçu sur la civilisation de la première période du Fer en Albanie*, Iliria III, 1975, 103—130. D. Kurti, *Nouveaux éléments sur la civilisation illyrienne des tumuli de Mati*, Iliria IV, 1976, 237—248. K. Kilian, *Zur Frühheisenzeit in Albanien*, Iliria IV, 1976, 192 etc.

⁹ B. Čović, PJZ V, 633.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 634.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 579. Cf. N. Đurić, J. Glišić, J. Todorović, *Praistorijska Romaja*, Beograd-Priština 1975, 126.

¹² A. Hoti, *Varreza tumulare e Bardhocit në rrethën e Kukësit*, Iliria XII, 1, 1972, 15 sq. B. Jubani, *Tumati ilire të Kënetës*, Iliria XIII, 2, 1982, 77 sq. A. Hoti, *Tumat V e VI të Kënetës*, Iliria XVI, 2, 1986, 41 sq.

frequent in the Glasinac material) this group should be considered as a separate entity. There are also regional varieties in burial customs and typology of the material which point to the possible existence of several smaller communities within this group.

East of the Glasinac—Mati complex the situation is less clear and the cultural groups are less well defined. Yet, research up to this date has shown the existence of three cultural circles whose material culture intermingles with that of the neighbouring areas, and still is relatively clearly distinguishable. The northern circle embraces Vojvodina, east and west Serbia, the middle circles includes south Serbia, Kosovo (without Metochia) and the northern parts of Macedonia, and the southern circle includes central and south Macedonia, around the middle and lower course of the river Vardar.

The most characteristic feature of the northern region is the Bosut group in Vojvodina and the north parts of Serbia, beginning in the 10th and lasting to the 5th or 4th century b.c.¹³ The group is best known by the settlements which contain large quantity of pottery, on the basis of which several chronological phases are determined, but metal finds are rare and the cemeteries are mainly unknown. A similar cultural development from the Late Bronze Age to the end of the Early Iron Age is noticed in the Morava valley where settlements have also been found in large numbers but necropolises are not known¹⁴. The Bassarabi pottery, characterised by rich decoration and belonging to the second phase of the Bosut group represents a particular problem here. The question arises could this pottery be considered as a sign of a new culture spreading from the east to the west, as some archaeologists think¹⁵? Although it is possible that newcomers were partly responsible for its spreading, one should underline that its appearance did not provoke any important crisis in the development of the Bosut group. At the moment it seems that several groups of differing characteristics in this region used the Bassarabi pottery (the Bosut group, the Morava group, the Vajuga group in the Iron Gate area)¹⁶. Moreover, to emphasise the complexity of the question, I would add that in the Morava valley, particularly noticeable on the hillfort Lanište, the carriers of the «S» decoration which marks an earlier phase in the development of the Bassarabi pottery, were attacked and defeated by the carriers of «tremolo lines» or a later phase of Bassarabi pottery¹⁷. All this shows that new evidence is needed to solve this question. After the appearance of the tremolo decoration, from the middle of the 7th century, in the area between the rivers Morava and Isker in north-west Bulgaria, a certain cultural unity is noticed in metal finds as well as in pottery, which

¹³ R. Vasić, PJZ V, 536—554.

¹⁴ R. Vasić, *Pomoravlje*, PJZ V, 652—660.

¹⁵ A. Vulpe, *Zur mittleren Hallstattzeit in Rumänien* (Die Basarabi Kultur), *Dacia N. S.* IX, 1967, 105 sq. A. Vulpe, *Zur Entstehung der geto-dakischen Zivilisation*. Die Basarabi Kultur, *Dacia N. S.* XXX, 1986, 49 sq.

¹⁶ R. Vasić, *Područje Đerdapa i Ključa*, PJZ V, 668—669.

¹⁷ M. Stojić, *Gvozdeno doba u basenu Velike Morave*, Beograd—Svetozarevo 1986, 92.

can be followed till the end of the 6th or the beginning of the 5th century b.c.¹⁸ We named it the Zlot group, after the cave Zlot, its most important site, although all the elements of this group can not yet be clearly determined.

The middle circle, including Kosovo, south Serbia and north Macedonia, is characterised by a certain unity of the material culture from the 8th to the 5th century b.c. although differences in burial customs speak for the existence of several regional groups¹⁹. Due to insufficient investigations but also a quantity of unpublished material, we are unable to speak more precisely about this region. From the 5th century, the cultural unity can not be followed, north Macedonia and south Serbia as far as Vranje became hellenised to a large degree, but it is not noticeable in other areas.

The third circle embraces central and south Macedonia, a region which possessed also a certain cultural unity in the Early Iron Age. From the 8th and 7th centuries a higher degree of hellenisation is more noticeable in the south, around Gevgelia in the Gevgeli group²⁰, while stronger connections with the interior of the Balkans and the north Macedonian—south Serbian area are visible in the groups around Titov Veles and Štip²¹. In the 5th century the entire area is fully hellenised and the cultural entity is more apparent.

In Pelagonia an early phase of the Iron Age, characterised by the appearance of tumuli, lasted till the 7th century when the area was hellenised — the south to a greater and the north to a lesser extent. This difference can be followed as far as the 4th century b.c.²²

This in general is the picture which archaeology gives us of the Early Iron Age groups on the territory in question. What suppositions can we make concerning the ethnical appertenance of these groups?

The Istrian, the Liburnian and the Iapod groups are connected with sufficient certainty to the tribes Histri, Liburni and Iapodi. Mention of the name of these tribes by early writers, their location by modern scholars on the basis of ancient sources in the regions where the respective groups are discovered, and finally the cultural continuity of these groups up to the time when according to the sources, these groups were defeated by the Romans — all this proves the validity of the above supposition²³.

The Central Dalmatian group, or at least the best part of it, is connected with the tribe Delmatae. Although this conjecture is probably exact in general, insufficient archaeological data about the continuity of the group in the last centuries b.c. and the late mention of the name Delmatae in the sources suggest some prudence²⁴. The proposed

¹⁸ R. Vasić, *Istočna Srbija*, PJZ V, 660—665.

¹⁹ R. Vasić, *Oblast Kosova, južne Srbije i severne Makedonije*, PJZ V, 673—690.

²⁰ R. Vasić, *Đevdelijska grupa*, PJZ V, 701—711.

²¹ R. Vasić, *Srednja i istočna Makedonija*, PJZ V, 690—700.

²² R. Vasić, *Pelagonija*, PJZ V, 712—723.

²³ A. Benac, *O etničkim zajednicama starijeg željeznog doba u Jugoslaviji*, PJZ V, 776—779. Comp. also ref. 2,3 and 4.

²⁴ A. Benac, PJZ V, 779—782. M. Zaninović, *Ilirsko pleme Delmati*, God. CBI IV/2, 27 sq.; God. CBI V/3, 5 sq.

relation between the Central Bosnian group and the tribe Daesidiatae, located in Roman times north of Sarajevo, offers even more uncertainties of the same nature²⁵.

The nucleus of the Glasinac group (east Bosnia, south-west Serbia, north Montenegro) has been identified as the Autariatae, the bravest and most significant Illyrian tribe which at the height of their might defeated the Triballi and the Ardiaei. There are several reasons for accepting this supposition.

a) The modern historians locate the Autariatae according to the sources in the region where archaeologists place the nucleus of the Glasinac group²⁶.

b) The Autariatae disappeared from the historical scene at the end of the 4th century which means that the 4th century was the period of their decline and that their zenith may be placed at the latest to the 5th century. The data on the Triballi corroborate this and date the peak of the Autariatan power to the first half of the 5th century²⁷.

c) Finally, the culmination of the development of the Glasinac group (its north part) is dated to the end of the 6th and the first half of the 5th century — the period which corresponds to the full rise of the Autariatae. This is particularly stressed by the concentration of gold and silver objects and Greek imports in the second half of the 6th and the first half of the 5th century in east Bosnia and south-west Serbia²⁸.

Historians and archaeologists agree that the Autariatae at the height of their power did not represent the one and only tribe but most probably a coalition of several tribes with the Autariatae at their head. The princely mounds in Atenica near Čačak are an instructive example in this direction. The character of the material seems to indicate a non-Autariatan tribal community, affiliated with other central Balkan groups. Yet, parallels in gold and silver point to friendly relations and probably inclusion of the Atenica princes in the Autariatan coalition²⁹.

Whatever the strength of the Autariatae was, it is incredible that the entire Glasinac-Mati complex should be identified with this coalition. Most probably other tribes lived in the south part having strong economic and cultural connections with the north as we can see from resemblances in the material culture. Which tribes these were it is difficult to suppose. We do not even try to locate the Ardiaei, a tribe whose force was certainly already considerable at that

²⁵ A. Benac, PJZ V, 797—798. G. Čremošnik, D. Sergejevski, *Gotisches und römisches aus Breza bei Sarajevo*. Vorläufiger Bericht. *Novitates Musei Sarajevoensis* 9, 1930, 8—9.

²⁶ F. Papazoglu, *Srednjobalkanska plemena u predrimsko doba*, Sarajevo 1969, 71—78.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 11 sq.

²⁸ R. Vasić, *An Etruscan Box from South-west Serbia and the Problem of Late Archaic Import in the Central Balkan Area*, *Arch. Jugoslavica* 25 (in print).

²⁹ R. Vasić, *Kneževski grobovi iz Novog Pazara i Atenice*, PJZ V, 648—649.

time. Historians do not agree on their location and archaeology up to date has not uncovered any group in this surrounding which would match their significance³⁰. It is possible that the Daorsi were placed around Stolac in Hercegovina. This tribe is apparently mentioned by Hecatheus, the historians consider that the tribe lived in this area, while the excavations on the hillfort Ošanići by Stolac show a cultural continuity from the 6th to the 2nd century b.c.³¹ It would be tempting to identify the Mati tumuli with the Taulanti, the most important Illyrian tribe in this region which lived in the 5th century in the hinterland of Epidamnus³², but it may happen that new discoveries from Albania will point in the future to a more plausible solution.

In the north part of the central Balkans there are attempts to connect the Bosut and the Morava groups with the Triballi who lived according to the sources approximately in this area. However, I believe that the Zlot group of the 7th and 6th centuries is the earliest group in this region which could be possibly identified with this tribe. The disappearance of the Zlot group in the beginning of the 5th century and the appearance of a new strong group in north-west Bulgaria in the 4th century would coincide with the data from the Tribal history — their defeat against the Autariatae and an increased interest in the south-east from the last third of the 5th century b.c.³³

The cultural entity in south Serbia, Kosovo and north Macedonia should be connected with the Dardani, who lived according to the sources on this territory³⁴. And yet, all the groups and appearances here probably can not be linked with Dardanian development. In the sources the Dardani appear very early, but in historical events they play a significant role only from the 4th century on. It seems clear that the strength of the Triballi and the Autariatae who fought partly for the Dardanian territory, prevented the Dardanian earlier rise to power.

In Macedonia, the excavations of the hillforts in the lower course of the Vardar: Vardarophtsa, Vardina, Kilindir, and Kastanas in particular, showed that their main cultural and political climax was in the 13th and 12th centuries b.c. which could be connected with the Paeonians who took part in the Trojan war³⁵. The retreat of the Paeonians to the north under pressure from the Macedonians in the 7th century can be seen in the decline of the settlements mentioned above and the formation of a strong group in the Gevgeli area. In the 5th century this area was under the Macedonians, but it is possible that the population was mixed, consisting of Macedonians and

³⁰ A. Benac, PJZ V, 782—784. Comp. F. Papazoglu, *O teritoriji ilirskog plemena Ardijskega*, Zborn. Fil. Fak. Bgd. 7, 1963, 71 sq. Also S. Dakari, *Anaskafi tou ierou tis Dodonis*, Praktika Arh. Etair. Athens, 1966, 76 sq. Pl. 78a.

³¹ A. Benac, PJZ V, 788. Z. Marić, *Daorsi. Ime, teritorija i etnička pripadnost plemena Daorsi*, God. CBI X/8, 1973, 114 sq.

³² Thuc., I, 24.

³³ F. Papazoglu, *Srednjobalkanska plemena*, 11 sqq.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 143 sq.

³⁵ N. G. L. Hammond. *A History of Macedonia*, Oxford 1972, 296—298. B. Hänsel, *Ergebnisse der Grabungen bei Kastanas in Zentralmakedonien 1975—1978*, Jahrbuch RGZM 26, 1979, 202.

Paeonians³⁶. The main Paeonian centres at that time around Veles and Štip were already inhabited from the 8th or 7th century at the latest, by other Paeonian tribes³⁷. Having in mind a wide area where the Paeonians were settled, their movements and migrations — the necropolis on the river Philouri in Greek Thrace may also belong to them³⁸ — such supposition seems possible.

Tumuli in west Macedonia (Visoi in Pelagonia, and in particular Vergina in Greek Macedonia) are connected with the Brygoi, who according to the sources went to Asia Minor in the 8th century and formed there the Phrygian kingdom³⁹. The hellenisation of Pelagonia in the 7th century is linked with the Linkesti, a Macedonian tribe which penetrated there and the archaeological differences between north and south Pelagonia as far as the 4th century can be explained by the ethnical differences — the Linkesti stayed in south Pelagonia, and the Pelagonians, a tribe similar to the Paeonians, lived in the north⁴⁰.

This is in general the ethnical picture of the west and the central Balkans in the Early Iron Age based on archaeological evidence. The main problem, as we see it, is to which extent we are ready to believe that the tribes mentioned on a particular territory in the 1st century b.c. were there also three or four hundred years earlier. It was a long period even in prehistory, and we have to keep an account also of the Celtic invasion and their partial settling in the north Balkans at the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 3rd century. It provoked disturbances in the local tribes, not only among those in the neighbourhood but also in distant areas. The finds from Krajčinovići near Priboj, in the area to which the Celts did not arrive, contain Celtic elements and speak clearly in favour of this⁴¹. Thus, only in cases when the material culture shows undoubted continuity, not only on one site but on several sites, can we suppose, as in the case of the Histri and Liburni, the use of the same name during the entire period. There, where such continuity does not exist, we must be careful, the case of the Autariatae is the best example of how a tribe, very powerful in the 5th century, disappeared completely before the arrival of the Romans. This could have been the case with other significant groups of the Early Iron Age in the Balkan hinterland.

Finally, a few words about the Illyrians. At a symposium dedicated to the Illyrians in prehistory, which was held in Sarajevo in 1964, one of the main conclusions was the location of the Illyrians in the west and central Balkans and their separation from the Pannonian tribes which inhabited Pannonia⁴². New investigations show that

³⁶ Thuc., II, 100.

³⁷ R. Vasić, PJZ V, 698—700.

³⁸ D. Triandafyllos, *Arhaiko nekrotefeio sti ditiki Traki*, Ann. d. scuola arch. di Atene LXI (N. S. XLV) 1983, 179—207.

³⁹ N. G. L. Hammond, *op. cit.*, 407.

⁴⁰ R. Vasić, PJZ V, 720—721. Comp. I. Mikulčić, *Pelagonija u svetlosti arheoloških nalaza*, Skopje—Beograd 1966, 71—74.

⁴¹ M. Zotović, *Arheološki i etnički problemi bronzanog i gvođenog doba zapadne Srbije*, Titovo Užice—Beograd 1985, 100—108.

⁴² Symposium sur la délimitation territoriale et chronologique des Illyriens à l'époque préhistorique, Sarajevo 1964, 285—287.

the Illyrian territory should be narrowed even more⁴³. The Histri were not Illyrians, and the Liburnians and the Iapods may have only some common antecedents with the Illyrians. There are also doubts about the Illyrian roots of the Central Dalmatian and the Central Bosnian groups because the Pannonian component is very visible in the formation of these groups. East of the Illyrian territory a large interzone existed between the Illyrians and the Thracians. This is inhabited by the Daco-Mysians, as these tribes have been conditionally named and to which the Triballi, the Dardani and the Paeonians belong. As we can see these suppositions are corroborated by the archaeological material of the Early Iron Age in Serbia and Macedonia.

Thus, the Illyrians, in the true sense of the word, can be connected with certainty to the Glasinac—Mati complex in the Early Iron Age and probably to the area south of it, in the central Albania. It is true that in bordering areas one should expect mixed tribes and some Illyrian elements were probably on the move constantly. It is possible that the spreading of the Glasinac elements in the 6th, and especially in the 5th century meant not only cultural and economic links but also the migrations of smaller groups to the neighbouring areas, led by some daring condottieri — this can also partially explain the desertion of the Glasinac plateau. However all this does not enlarge to a greater extent the Illyrian territory than is documented by archaeology.

KULTURNE GRUPE RANOG ŽELJEZNOG DOBA NA ZAPADNOM I
CENTRALNOM BALKANU I MOGUĆNOSTI NJIHOVE ETNIČKE
IDENTIFIKACIJE

Kratak sadržaj

Gvozdeno doba na zapadnom i centralnom Balkanu južno od Save i Dunava počinje negde u 9. ili 8. veku pre n. e. (o preciznom datumu se još uvek diskutuje), kada se gvozdeni predmeti javljaju redovno i u većem broju u materijalnoj kulturi. U toku sledećih osam vekova, uz izvesno narušavanje kulturnog kontinuiteta keltskom invazijom krajem 4. ili početkom 3. veka pre n.e., što se naročito osetilo u Posavlju, na širokom prostoru od Jadranskog mora do istočnih granica Jugoslavije, formirale su se na ranijim osnovama ili delom pod stranim uticajima različite grupe i kulture. Zbog neravnomerne istraženosti ovog širokog prostora, naša znanja o ovim grupama i kulturama su različita, negde su pojedine grupe jasnije izdvojene i identifikovane, na drugim područjima su samo nagoveštene uz mnogo nepoznanica. Na zapadu, u Istri, severnom Jadranu i u Lici, mogu se sa dosta sigurnosti izdvojiti određene kulturne grupe sa karakterističnom materijalnom kulturom, koje su, uz izvesna gibanja, egzistirale sve do dolaska Rimljana. Isto tako, mogu se izdvojiti i jedna srednjobosanska i jedna srednjo-dalmatinska grupa, mađa su kulturni razvoj i odlike ovih grupa kroz čitavo gvozdeno doba manje uočljivi. Posebno mesto zauzima glasinačka grupa, koja zahvata široku oblast — istočnu Bosnu, jugozapadnu Srbiju, Crnu Goru, delove Makedonije i Kosova i severnu Albaniju i koja najbolje reprezentuje kulturu gvozdenog doba u unutrašnjosti Balkana. Na prostoru između reka Morave i Iskera u Bugarskoj, može se takođe govoriti o izvesnom kulturnom jedinstvu, no ne tako jasno izraženom i ne tako dugotrajnom kao u glasinačkoj grupi. Posebni kulturni kompleks gvozdenog doba nazire se i u južnoj Srbiji, severnoj Makedoniji i istočnom Kosovu. Srednje Povardarje i istočna Makedonija odaju takođe određeno kulturno jedinstvo u kojem se razaznaju dva hronološka horizonta jasno razdvojena u razvoju u kojem se na osnovu intenzivnijeg istraživanja

⁴³ PJZ V, passim.

pojedinih područja mogu izdvojiti pojedine manje kulturne grupe. U zapadnoj Makedoniji takođe postoje mogućnosti da se izdvoje manje kulturne grupe ograničenog vremenskog trajanja.

Na osnovu ovakve arheološke slike, postoji mogućnost povezivanja pojedinih grupa sa nazivima i lokacijama određenih plemena koja su, prema antičkim piscima, obitavala ove prostore, mada su u iznošenju tih pretpostavki potrebne sve moguće rezerve. Tako se istarska, severnojadranska i lička grupa sa dosta razloga pripisuju Istrima, Liburnima i Japodima, dok se povezivanje srednjo-bosanske grupe sa Desidijatima i srednjodalmatinske grupe sa Delmatima čini manje sigurno. Glasinačka grupa bi, po širokom prostranstvu koje zahvata, bila najbliža Ilirima u pravom smislu te reči. Između Ilira na zapadu i Tračana na istoku Balkanskog poluostrva, obitavala je grupa starosedelačkog stanovništva, koje se u nauci u poslednje vreme naziva Dako-Mizijcima. Tribali, Dardanci i Peonci bi se možda najpre mogli smestiti u ovu međuzonu i arheološki povezati sa kulturnim pojavama konstatovanim u vardarsko-moravskoj dolini.

Ključni elemenat za diskusiju o ovom pitanju predstavlja, kako nam se čini, Strabonov podatak o Autarijatima, najvećem i najmoćnijem ilirskom plemenu koje je u jednom trenutku porazilo Tribale na istoku i Ardijejce na jugozapadu. Posle dužih diskusija, prihvaćena je pretpostavka o identifikaciji glasinačke grupe ne toliko sa plemenom Autarijata koliko sa autarijatskim plemenskim savezom, koji je u trenutku najveće moći ovog plemena nastao na širokoj teritoriji. Uz sve rezerve, dileme i varijacije u mišljenjima, čini se da je ovakva postavka ispravna i da se, sledeći tu ideju, na osnovu arheološkog materijala ovo širenje Autarijata može datovati u kraj 6. i prvu polovinu 5. veka. Autarijati nestaju sa istorijske pozornice već krajem 4. veka, što znači da je njihova snaga i moć trajala određeno vreme i da se posle toga savez raspao i pleme potpuno oslabilo. U tom povremenom uzdizanju i raspadanju pojedinih plemena i plemenskih saveza mogu se objasniti mnoge pojave u gvozdenom dobu Balkana i materijalnoj kulturi ovog perioda.

