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THE DARDANS IN ANTIQUITY

There are two questions which are worth discussing concerning the Dardans during the antique period: their ethnic character and the nature of their political organization, which was established in the Dardan regions in the IVth century before our era. We should accept from the beginning that, besides its scientific aspect, this discussion has recently become a part of the polemics concerning the question of Kosovo. Being principally against the use of the arguments of antique history in the support of today's policy, we should try to pass from politicized distortions to the historical truth.

In the publication "The Illyrians and the Albanians" prepared by the commission for the study of Kosova near the Serbian Academy of Sciences, the negation of the Illyrian character of the Dardans is especially mentioned. The Serbian archaeologist, M. Garashanin, accuses his Albanians colleagues that for political reasons attribute to the Illyrians the ensembles of the territories between the Adriatic and Sava, including in Dardania the South of Serbia, Kosova and North Macedonia. He continues, that this efforts is in the service of official policy which, starting from the identification of the Illyrians with the Albanians, takes from it historical arguments to the benefit of the Big Albanians¹.

This accusation of Garashanin was immediately assimilated by the politicians and the Serbian police in Kosovo, who classified the thesis on the Illyrian character of the Dardans as nationalist propaganda and counterrevolutionary. Of course, even Garashanin himself was excluded from the accusation, which he had written at a time, when today's political events, were not foreseen that the "Dardian area, their Illyrian belonging could not be doubted apart from the role of the Thracian element in a part of this territory, extended beyond Morava, and likewise that of Pajons beyond Vardar².

Of both opposite opinions expressed by Garashanin for the Dardanians the latter has its historical support at Herodoti, who writes that "from the Illyrian soil, continuing in the direction north of the Angri River, after it enters the field of Tribals, pours in the Rong River. While the Brong is easterly, the Angri River is south Morava". The Illyrian soil at that time Herodoti, calls the north part of the Dardanian area, making at the same time the earliest mention of the Illyrian ethnic name and its broadest extension.

The written sources are clearly opposed to the latest thesis of Garashanin on the ethnicity of the Dardans. Strabon, describing the ethnic situation in the centre of the Balkans in the first century before our era, informs us that the Illyrian tribes were on this side of the Adriatic, while the Thracian tribes were on the side of Ponti; on the border with Thesalia is Rodop, a very high mountain behind Henn, and in the North Illyrian regions that is the Dardanian country. Somewhere else he considers the latter as "Dardan of the Illyrians" to distinguish them from the Dardans mentioned by

Homeri as inhabitants of Troja's outskirts.

In opposition to the thesis on thracization or the romanization of Dardania in the time of Roman occupation where there exist all historical data of the first centuries of our era, Nicola of Damascus considers the Dardanians as an Illyrian tribe. And Appian, in his book on the Illyrians (*Iliri* 5), puts the Dardanians in the first row of the Illyrian genealogical tree and appreciates them explicitly as an Illyrian tribe. In the 5th century after our era when a part of the ethnic situation in Dardania looked the same as that of Herodotus' and Strabon's time. The biographer of the Emperor Justinian's "Procopius of Caesarea" writes about the European Dardanians and the Fortress Bederiana, near Nish. The emperor himself was from Nish. Three young peasants of Illyrian origin he considers as compatriots and the uncle of Justinian, who come to serve as soldiers in Byzantium.

The historical and archeological data brought F. Papazoglun, one of the most known Macedonian scholars, to the objective conclusions that "Dardania is represented as one of the less romanized Balkan regions. It seemed that its domestic population greatly preserved its ethnic individuality and consciousness, and that's why the possibility should not be ignored that the Dardans who escaped romanization also survived the Slav migration, to appear in the Middle Ages with the name of the Albanians³.

In the evaluation of the preserving of the ethnic identity of the Dardans their conservatory character is mentioned, without seriously posing the problem of the existence of an ethnic Dardan civilization and of the state as a political structure in the general Illyrian framework, having two fundamental axes of orientation; one towards Aegean and the other towards the Adriatic. Analyzing the archaeological material of the ancient Dardan centres before our era. E. Shukriu proved that in the 5th century before our era Aegean orientation in the relations with the Greek civilization dominated, undoubtedly having as their main road the valley of Aksi. Since the 4th century, Dardania turned its face to the Adriatic, which then became interesting because of the trade created by the Greek colonies and Illyrian cities in their land. But this scholar has determined that the period of the 5th-6th centuries is the protuberant one and has underlined the role of urban centres in the antique history of Dardania.

The archaeological data create an interesting picture of the development of urban life in Dardania in the centuries that precede the Roman invasion. Of course it did not reach the level of coastal Illyria, but at the same time it was not hidden from the historians of the time.

The old city of the Dardans Dumastin or Sintian, mentioned by Strabon and quoted by Livi should be looked for in the destructions of Godinije, Hisari, Balloçevi, Kërshëvices etc., which are declared archeologically and exchanging centres of an urban character.

The 4th century marks the beginnings of monetary circulation with the coins of Damasti or the local coins of the Celt type.

It is not an occasion that these steps towards the ancient civilization coincide with the first information on the political character on the Dardans as it is their tricky submission by Philip II, in 344/3 or the description of the Dardan society by Agatarkidi. We would have to wait until the 3rd century before our era in order to distinguish an authentic political formation in Dardania. Its leader, who offered the aid of 20 000

fighters to Ptoleme of Macedonia near the year 276 before our era is called king by the Yustimi (XXIV, 49).

He was able not only to forecast the suffering of misfortune by the Macedonians because of the immaturity of their own king, but also the ending with the complete destruction of the Breni army in Dardania. These events had as a result the temporary weakness of Macedonia and marked Dardania as a state with a specific role in the Balkans. As a result the Dardan name would cover for about 3 centuries the Illyrian one, with consent of political qualification over the ethnic one.

The invasion of North Pajonia and Bylozore would have taken place precisely at that time, thus marking the start of a long Dardanian-Macedonian conflict. It is this conflict interpreted in the analytical style of Livi, who has identified the Dardan state policy with the one of its aspects - the uninterrupted trouble with the Macedonian border. In reality, the historical resources give the possibility of reconstructing a part of the policy of the Dardan state in the 2nd - 3rd centuries before our era, discovering as other important factors its relations with

the Illyrians and the Romans. The Macedonian-Illyrian-Roman triangle becomes clear especially at the time when Roma, engaged with Hannibal in Italy, required Balkan allies against the Macedonians who threatened their rule on Apollonia and Dyrrachium. In 219 the Dardans exploited the absence of Philip V in order to go to Macedonia, Xhile. The latter, two years later, stopped the road of invasion through the Bylozore invasion and later on that of Sintias. Eropi, an ally of the Romans, who invaded Dasaretine in 208 before our era, at the same time urged the Dardans to invade west Macedonia.

After the victory of the Romans against Philip V in Arestide, Dardan-Illyrian-Roman cooperation was realized. The first were represented by the consul Sulpicius Galba, the second by Pleurat and the Dardans by King Bato, the son of Longari. In later battles against Philip, the Dardans would act together with the Illyrians coordinating their attacks with the Etols as well.

The conflict took on the measures of a struggle between the population of the Balkans where Philip got on his side Achees and later on Perseu engaged on his side Bastards.

One century conflict with Macedonia influenced the closing of the Aegean road with Dardania. During the 3rd century and the first half of the 2nd century, economic links were adopted with the political ones paying attention to coastal Illyria. It was the time of ceramic's import of Durrahas in western Dardania.

Gent's rule marked an important moment in the changing of the proportion of alliances. The increase of Roman pressure put

him in the dilemma of choosing the strongest ally against Rome. Gent preferred Macedonia although he had marriage relations with the Dardan King Manun. Perhaps he respected the tradition.

It seemed that he assured the neutrality of the Dardans, because they hadn't made any attacks on the eastern borders of the Illyrian state as had happened in the time of Teuta's rule. The Dardans, on their side acted against Macedonia, taking as a reward the region of Pajonia in the year 167.

The Dardan king of this period Monuni, undoubtedly has been an outstanding political figure and his government the most important military power in the Balkans

after the fall of Macedonia. The greatest military victory against, the Bastarns in 174-175 before our era saved Dardania from the danger of ethnic annihilation. It should be mentioned here that this king has nothing to do with the king Monun, who ruled in the Illyrian state one century before him, cutting the famous coins with the early Monun operated in Dasaret, where a head piece with his name is found and perhaps his grave in Selca do not exclude the Illyrian-Dardan dynasty link at the beginning of the 3rd century before our era, but all these are hypotheses. The most certain thing is the politically organized character of the Dardan state, which was very clear in its military features. This character is stressed by Livi in how he fought the Dardans. He wrote, "a few were killed, a lot got wounded, but none of them was caught as a prisoner, because in rare cases they came out of their ranks and fought all together". If history is studied in order to build both the present and the future, it would be a very good lesson

not only' for the predecessors of the Dardans in their own areas, but also for the Albanians, the successors of the Illyrians.

1 *Iliri i Albanci*, Beograd, 1988, p.370.

2 *Vendbanime të fortifikuara ilire*, Sarajevo, 1975, p.113.

3 *Iliri i Albanci*, p.199.