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The Classical Imports in Paeonia

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Balkan archaeology must tackle the phenomenon of ‘imports’, which includes artefacts imported from the Aegean and Mediterranean coastline during the early Iron Age and the Classical and Hellenistic periods. These are found in an area that includes the territory of the present-day Republic of Macedonia as well as southern parts of Serbia, western parts of Bulgaria and northern parts of Greece—an area that in pre-Roman times was inhabited by tribes ascribed as having Paeonian ethnicity. These imports consist largely of pottery, weapons, jewellery, as well as tombstones, terracotta decorations of architectural objects.

Chronologically, one should first mention the so-called “Sword of Tetovo” which is a Mycenaean import brought into the region sometime in the 11th century BC. Several such types of swords also came into Kosovo, some typical specimens of which have been found at Iglarevo.

Certain ceramic finds, discovered along the River Vardar, also belong to this period and to the category of Mycenaean imports. Fragments of this type are found in Stobi, though outside the chronological context. Razors and double axe-heads, which had iconic significance for the Cretan-Mycenaean cultured elite, were found in the cist graves of the “Dimov Grob” Necropolis, near Ulanci. Also, Mycenaean pottery was found near Skopje, in the village of Solnje.

Mycenaean imports and influences certainly followed the valley of the River Vardar which was the main south-north communication route. Ever more, Mycenaean influence has also been identified at sites in eastern Macedonia. In recent years, pottery and decorations characteristic for the Mycenaean imports have been found at a number of sites, as well as products originating from workshops by the Aegean Sea and manufactured under Mycenaean influence. These influences went not only along the River Vardar, but also along the River Struma.

Contacts and influence between north and south are again evident in the Archaic period. This was the period when the local Paeonian tribes, the Derroni and the Laii, first began to mint coins. The process was brought into Paeonia by artisans from the south, where coin-minting was well-established. The emergence of this so-called tribal minting was due to the rich mines of silver in Osogovo and the interest of people from the south in the mineral resources of this area. The appearance of the

names of local rulers on the coins indicates that coinage, in its basic functionality, was largely accepted by the population.

The acceptance and adoption of coin-minting techniques was one aspect of Hellenistic influence which would later reach its peak with the formation of an independent political organization in the borders of Paeonia. This realm was to be ruled by kings whose names we know from the coins they minted.

That the mines of the Osogovo Mountains were the focus of interest for southern merchants and craftsmen and artists is further testified to by certain facts and events dating from the Early Classical Period, when immigrants established permanent settlements in Paeonia. The best example of this is the settlement at Vinicko Kale. A building has been found from the time of this site's foundation, decorated with terracotta metopes and friezes depicting griffons and chimeras. This building seems to have been intended as a temple, sanctuary or vault. It was built by incomers from the city of Abdera in Thrace whose population had requested shelter in Vinica—a region rich in precious metals—after the Persians captured their city. Further evidence has been found of north-south contacts along the course of the River Struma.

Another example of immigration is that of fugitives from the city of Mende. Strabo tells us that it was the Mendeans who founded the town of Damastion in Illyria, located in a region rich in silver mines. Damastion minted coins of various values over a period of 100 years and these coins were used in the towns of Pelagia and Sarnoa, which were most probably located in Macedonia.

Evidence of southern influence from the beginning of the Classical period has been found in the techniques employed in the production of an object from Gradiste-Brazda, near Skopje. New settlers from the south imported pottery with them into this area and their style became the model for the region. Hence we find local pottery produced in grey clay with Greek shapes. In Skopje, too, has been found the well known Attic funerary relief depicting a scene of *dexiosis*.

Turning to the Lower Vardar Valley, in Demir Kapija, IMikulčić succeeded in locating one sector of the old settlement founded in the 5th century by colonists from the south in the place known as Manastir, where they buried their dead. The sanctuary of Dioscures located to the north of present-day Demir Kapija belongs to a slightly later date. Future investigations should be able to determine us whether this sanctuary, together with the relief plaques and statuettes of Hellenic deities, were brought by Greek settlers or were the products of a Hellenized Paeonian population.

Not far from Demir Kapija, the settlement located at Isar near the mouth of the River Anskaby the village of Marvinci shows that a possibly larger group of people settled on Isar at the same time. We can say with certainty that they settled on the old Paeonian acropolis and continued to use it as their own settlement. They buried their deceased ones on the ground known today as the South and the Southwest Necropolises. Cremation was the predominant burial ritual at that time

The large grave monument, with its depiction of *dexiosis* originates from this period and it was brought from the south. However, as in the case with Demir Kapija,

the cultural development of Isar-Marvinci shows marked Hellenistic influence which would later acquire individual characteristics in the context of the Macedonian society.

All these examples should be sufficient to show that Balkan regions early on became attractive to settlers from the south. This interest was primarily motivated by the natural mining resources in the Balkans, as Mikulčić has often sought to demonstrate. From the south came numerous miners, craftsmen, merchants, architects and artisans, many of them settling temporarily or permanently to practise their professions.

The grave with white lekythoi discovered in Demir Kapija was identified as a burial of an Athenian woman, as first noted by D. V. Todorović. Gorica Mikulčić has investigated the connection between imports, the foundation of colonies and the presence of people from the south in light of the mineral wealth found in the Balkans. In her recent research on painted and monochrome Greek vases from Demir Kapija, G. Mikulčić mentions the question of the Hellenic diaspora and the colonies founded by the Greeks on the Aegean coast and in the Balkan interior. She reminds us that many people emigrated from Athens as a result of the Peloponnesian Wars of 429-405, coinciding with the appearance of many Attic products in early classical settlements in Paeonia.

The greater part of ancient Paeonia was in the territory of the present-day Republic of Macedonia. It was known to the Classical authors as a land rich in gold and silver. The presence of smaller or bigger groups, immigrating to the Balkans, was triggered by their interest in minerals.

It should also be taken into account that the Paeonians had Aegean origins, as well as an affinity and inclination to adopt the cultural achievements of the Mediterranean. Later developments in architecture, pottery, coinage and even acceptance of Hellenic cults are based on the interest of southerners in Balkan minerals. How long they stayed we do not know. Judging by the Greek names mentioned on epigraphic monuments we can conclude that many Greeks settled permanently. As example we can mention *Municipium Damastium Dardanorum* where more than 20 names have been found on grave monuments from Roman times. Whether these incomers arrived in early antiquity or at a later time is not essential here; what is essential is that immigrants from the south brought with them many objects of utilitarian or religious value which they needed in their new environment. The phenomenon of 'imports' should accordingly be viewed in another light.

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Резиме:

Античките импорти во Пајонија

Веќе одамна, во повеќе свои трудови И. Микулчиќ обрнува внимание на рудните богатства кои се наоѓаат во внатрешноста на Балканот, т.е. на територијата која во времето на раната антика ја населувале пајонски племиња. При тоа го истакнува интересот и потребите на хеленскиот југ за благородните метали и населувањето на мајстори, трговци, занаетчији кои имале особен интерес за рудните богатства кои им се нуделе.

Ако тргнеме по хронолошки ред, на прво место треба да ги спомнеме микенските мечеви стигнати до Тетово во Македонија и Игларево на Косово. Појавата на монетоковањето на Дероните и Лајаите кон крајот на 6. век пр. н.е. секако е резултат на контактите на Осоговскиот регион со градовите на егејското крајбрежје. Техниката на градежништвото воочена во Бразда кај Скопје, во Кракра кај Перник, Кршевица кај Врање и Вардарски Рид кај Гевгелија е резултат на директни контакти со јужните градители уште во 5. век пр. н.е.

Наброените појави јасно зборуваат за физичко присуство на Грци во нашите региони, кои, во потрага по егзистенција се преселувале далеку на север, но сепак бирале региони богати со рудни лежишта. За ова очигледен пример е населување на Мендејците во Дамастион за кој известува Страбон.

Во исто време и нешто подоцна, во текот на класичниот период, а особено во 4. век пр. н.е., се среќаваме со масовна појава на население од јужните региони,

кои како колонисти запоседнале многу пајонски населби. На Виничкото Кале можеме да препознаеме Абдерани кои градат светилиште-трезор за свои потреби при што објектот го украсиле со метопи на кои се прикажани грифони, симбол донесен од нивната метропола - Теос, а кој ќе остане како впечатлива претстава на монетите на Абдера во подолг временски период.

Присуство на Атињаните во Скопје го препознаваме по надгробниот споменик со сцена на разделба која припаѓа на атичката уметност. Атињаните ги препознаваме и според типичната за нив керамика во стил на црвени фигури, особено по белите лекити, какви што се најдени во Демир Капија, вази кои биле карактеристични во погребниот ритуал.

Очигледен пример за масовен колонизаторски бран на население од хеленскиот југ, вклучувајќи ги и Атињаните и Олинтијците, дава локалитетот на Исарот кај с. Марвинци. Уште со првото населување во раниот класичен период тие ја запоседнале акрополата, а некрополата која се протега на јужните и југозападните падини, со својата содржина покажува масовно присуство на ново население кое носи свои материјални и духовни белези. Рудните богатства на регионот, особено на соседната планина Кожуф, се уште еден доказ за интересот на Грците за богатите пајонски региони.

Горе, накусо изнесените примери, веќе јасно покажуваат дека појавата на производи што ги среќаваме на пајонските населби а кои настанале на хеленскиот југ и градовите на Егејското крајбрежје зборуваат за физичко присуство на население од јужните балкански региони. Во таа смисла терминот “импорт” би требало да се набљудува во поинакво светло.

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