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ISTRIA IN THE CONTEXT OF THE 10th ITALIC REGION "VENETIA ET HISTRIA" AS A BORDER AREA OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

After the 1st and 2nd Roman-histrian war in the years 221 and 178/177 B. C., respectively, many fortified hill-fort settlements that survived the wars were getting gradually deserted and finally were ruined. The original population was rapidly diminishing in number and the ancient social relationships were slowly dying off. Towards the end of the 2nd cent. B. C. in the coastal area as well as in the interior of the Istrian peninsula life continues and is being polarized in those areas where new trade — minded settlements or new governmental centres sprung in the wake of new conditions. Istria, after 177 B. C. was subject to the rule of the roman lieutenant who ruled the region of Galia Cisalpina and consequently Istria pertained to Gaius Julius Caesar in 59 B. C. During the wars in Galia Transalpina Caesar frequently was in Aquileia and there he also stationed, in the beginning, his 15th legion to be followed by the 13th legion that in 49 B. C., when civil war broke between him and Gneius Pompeius, took part in Caesar's march on Rome.

The civil war moved the Illirian and Illiro-celtic tribes and consequently the hate, that was smothering in the inferior Histrians and the neighbouring tribes and directed against the Romans, renewedly erupted to the surface. With the exception of certain coastal towns all came to the side of Pompeius. Histrians offered a strong support to Pompeius' navy and consequently were an important factor in his victory in the Farasina channel. After this victory over Caesar cohorts stationed on the island Krk also surrendered. A universal mutiny ensued and coastal roman towns like Pula were destroyed. With the victory of Caesar, after the battle of Farsala in Greece the Histrians were temporarily ap-

peased. Some *communitas-Communes* were even paying taxes. After March the 15th in the year 44 B. C. the second triumvirate was formed containing Antonius, Octavianus and Laepidus who commenced with the persecution of the leaders of the republican party of Brutus and Casius, the murderers of Caesar. However, in the period of the triumvirate as well, a latent hate is to be found with the Illirians in Istria and the Balkans against the legal roman government. Histrians renewedly align themselves with the opponents, i. e. the republican party. In the aftermath of the victory over the Republicans, in the year 42 B. C., Antonius and Octavianus divided the Roman state in 40 B. C. in Brindisi, along a line that was running northwards from the Albanian town of Scodra. The eastern half went to Antonius, the western to Octavianus. And in this composition was also Istria who came directly under Octavianus' rule. Within the framework of new administrative and political measures that Octavianus cleverly and gradually began to put into life when the triumvirate was still on and especially after the partition of the newly acquired areas, he realized that he must primarily strengthen the economy of the state that was weakened in the course of so many wars. In order to accomplish this elementary fore-condition, he had to safeguard the land and sea ways for the trouble-free carrying-on of trade so as to appease again the rebel tribes that in the meantime gave to buccaneering. Consul Asinius Pollius crossed the river Timav as early as 39 B. C. with the ships following along the Istrian coast, subdued the Histrians and carried on across Liburnia towards Salona.

Finally after the battle of Actium in 31 B. C., in which we also find Sergius Laepidus as a participant together with his 19th legion in honour of which the Arc of Sergius was erected in Pula, Istria enters appeased the history of the Roman Empire and is given a predominant hall mark by Octavianus, later called Caesar Augustus. In the first decades of the Caesarian epoch the region of Istria was still in a difficult position. The border which run along the Timav river was transferred to the river Rižana near Koper. However, after Octavianus was made an emperor in 27 B. C. the Roman colonies that had been founded already in Caesar's era, like Trieste, Pula and the municipality of Poreč and other settlements as well enjoyed a fair amount of autonomy in government and trade. Colonies and municipalities reached relatively high level of development on the economic and cultural fronts in the first decades of the Caesarian epoch. From this era particular mention should be made of Sergius' arc in Pula and the first Capitolean temple on the forum in Pula. Their economic might and prosperity were based on a relatively big administrative and governmental autonomy, on a developed and intensive agriculture that was practised on big estates in the area of the whole western Istria and particularly around Poreč, in Vabriga,

Tar, Červar — Ulika, Sorna, and around Pula (Brioni, Barbariga, complex of villas from Premantura to Sissano). Particularly important were the manufacturing workshops like Fulonicas in Pula, Barbariga and on Brioni. A particularly important role was played by coastal and maritime trade. However, in the course of a reorganization of a new partition of the Roman Empire, *Octavianus Augustus* broadened the area of Italy by moving the north-eastern provinces from the little river of Formio-Rizana in the vicinity of Koper between 18-12 B. C. farther to the east to the river of RASA (ARSIA) and consequently integrated the larger part of the Istrian peninsula with the northern-italic region of Venetia. Thus enlarged territory of Italy on its north-eastern borders consisted of the 10th italic region named "Venetia et Histria".

The Istrian territory of Liburnia, i. e. the whole of the Istrian peninsula to the east of the Rasa river remained within the Roman province of Dalmatia.

In spite of *Augustus'* reorganization of the Empire, high cultural, architectural and artistic achievements (the development of Pula and Brioni) and of the new administrative and governmental structure already put into practice, relentless succession of struggles during the 1st and 2nd centuries did not permit a more thorough reorganization of the Empire. Only those measures were carried on that temporarily soothed the various crises, which gradually occurred be that in war holocausts or economic disturbances — one of the more severe crises was the one that got hold of agricultural production. In all respects the 10th Italic region with Istria was most severely hit by *domitianus'* Edict by which all growing of grape wine and production of wine in quantities in excess to the local domestic needs and consumption were prohibited. By the same edict Domitianus is ordering the greatest possible production of cereals needed for the nourishment of the army, the population and the Roman poor. By this edict the economic potential of Istria was greatly jeopardized as wine, alongside with oil and fish, figured as one of the most prominent articles in the export trade of this Roman region.

Under *Nerva* and *Traianus* (96—98 and 98—112) various measures were taken with the scope of regulating town finances in the colonies and municipalities of Italy because of irrational conducting of the economy and of local finances. Consequently, new imperial bureaucrats were established "State curators — *curatores rei publicae*", that had the broadest rights and authorizations. Their duty was to oversee the finances of the colonies and municipalities and to put these in line with the financial rules and demands of the central imperial government. The curators never carried out their duties in their place of residence so that in the north Italic colony of Concordia a honorary monument to *Quinto Decio Sabianus* — Q, Dec(io) f(ilio) Mett(io) Sabiniano curat(ori) r(ei) p(ublicae) Polensium (CILV 8662) was erected

by the council of decrions of Pula — *ordo Polensium* — as he was a very honest and upright bureaucrat that performed his duties of state curator in the Roman colony of Pula. Likewise a monument is to be found in Pula to *Gneius Papius Sequundinus* who apart from the functions that he was carrying out in Pula also performed the duties of state curator — *curator rei publicae flantium* — in the Roman municipality of Flanona (I. I. X) I, 88 CIL V 60 which today is called Plomin.

In the midst of carrying out further reorganizations and reforms in Italy and Istria emperor Hadrian (117—138) divided Italy into four big judicial areas that were governed by *consulares*. By carrying out this measures the 10th Italic region — *Venetia et Histria* — is entering the governmental entity that encompassed the north-eastern regions of Italy and that was named *Transpadana*. A bigger hazard to the Apenine peninsula and consequently to the 10th Italic region threatened when in 167 the *Quedi* and *Markomani* crossed the Danube. They crossed the alpine passes and surrounded Aquileia. Emperors *Marcus Aurelius* and *Lutius Verus* moved towards the region of Aquileia where belligerencies were also carried out. For this reason the emperor Marcus Aurelius organized a *praetentura* — *Praetentura Italiae et Alpium* — for the defence of Italy. The *praetentura* that was formed for the defence of Italy and the Alps extended from the Brenner to *Tarsaticae* (*Trsat*) in the mouth of the *Kvarner gulf*. Therefore the organization of the *praetentura* was extended to the pertinent zones of *Recia*, *Noricum*, *Pannonia* and *Dalmatia*, as they were bordering with Italy and its 10th Italic region on the north, north-east and east. So a defensive alpine belt was founded that extended over several administrative regions and under particular command of the imperial *LEGAT*. Consequently, in the whole of the *Carsian region*, extending from *Ljubljana valley* to the mouth of the *Kvarner gulf*, a special defensive system consisting of large fortified settlements and defensive walls was erected in order to protect Italy from the onslaught of Barbarians. "*Praetentura Alpium*" itself, as a special defensive organization lasted a relatively short time.

When in 172, the *Markomans* were stopped, the war was gradually carried to their own territories across the Danube. However, fear from these tribes was very pronounced among the *Istrian population*, so much so that the outer defensive walls around the towns of Pula and *Nesactium* were strenghtened even though these were the towns the *Markomans* never even saw. All coastal settlements and *villae Rusticae*, in the levels of continuous development and life that is the pursuit of archaeology, were in that time either abandoned or the inhabitants moved to the neighbouring islands. The great number of inhabitants escaped over to Italy only to return later on. This is the case that one can clearly follow on the localities of *Sipar* near *Umag*, *Cervar*

Porat near Poreč, the Roman villa in Verige on the islands of Brioni and in a layer of the Roman settlement in the Dobrica cove, likewise on Brioni, the so called Byzantine Castrum.

However, fortified strongholds built in the era of Pretenturas were renewedly repaired in the late Ancient era.

By the forming of the pretentura alone, some experts are of the opinion that the north-eastern border of Italy was moved from the Rasa river to Tarsatica — today Rijeka, whereby the whole of the Istrian peninsula was united to Italy and integrated in the 10th Italic region. As the organization of "praetentura Italiae et Alpium" represents only the creation of a special military defensive organization that extends onto several administrative entities and where the imperial legat is the ruling person, this does not yet entail the political and administrative annexation of the Istrian area of Liburnia in the complex of the 10th Italic region. This military encompassment played a momentous role in the later partition of the Roman empire.

During the course of Diocletianus' civil reform, the partition of the Empire into 12 Diocesaes was carried out, which were further subdivided into provinces. However, new provinces no longer existed within the old boundaries. Italy itself lost the privileged position within the empire by this partition and was itself divided into two diocesaes. In the Italian diocesa were also included the areas along the Alps among which the 10th Italic region "Venetia et Histria" which was under direct control of the vicar of Italy — vicarius Italiae — with its seat in Milan. By the carrying out of this Diocletianus' reform Venetia et Histria cease being only a geographical notion. The 10th Italic region Venetia et Histria itself, which was formed by Augustus, got certain administrative structure with certain territories and civil competences under the jurisdiction of the corrector — correctoris. Among the monuments that mentions the corrector of Venetia et Histriae one was found in the Hyppo Region in northern Africa recently, that mentioned by Marcus Aurelius. Consio Quarto — M(arco) Aurelio Consio Quarto v(iro) c(larissimo)... correctori Venetiae et Histriae (A. Degrassi, AMSIA IV/n. s. 1956, page 113 ff.).

The contests over the imperial throne had its repercussions in Istria during the 4th century. In 326 the son of emperor Constantine the Great, Crispus, was killed by order of the same in Pula and in 354 Gallus Caesar was killed in Flanona (Plomin) when travelling from Constantinople to Milan. After the partition of the Roman Empire was completed in 395, after the death of emperor Theodosius the Great, Istria was sharing the fate of the western regions. We can presume with absolute certainty that in the period when the Panonian limes was abandoned, after the attack of the Germanic tribes in 395, the renewal of the old structures of the old pretenturas was completed as well as the building

of the whole defensive system on the borders of Italy and Istria, that included the Julian Alps and the Liburnian defensive belt from Tarsatica to Prezid.

In the period of migration of the peoples the Istrian peninsula, and above all its southern part and the coastal area, was offering a secure shelter for the refugees from Panonia and Noricum. In this period the defensive wall structures surrounding towns in the colonies and municipalities of Istria were renewedly strengthened and we can see that the remains of them in Nesactium and Pula survived to this very day, but fortunately they had never served their original purposes. The influx of many refugees, particularly of the affluent ones from higher social strata, brought to the Istrian peninsula new cultural elements, but this population, together with the native romanized Istrians, and the immigrated italic *colonnae* as well as many orientals preserved till the 6th century the ancient traditions, primarily regarding the production of cereals, oil and wine and then in manufacture, production of ceramic items and trade, to all of which Casiodor's "Variae" from the 5th century bear witness.

In spite of the intensive romanization Istria retained in the border areas towards Liburnia and in central Istria, as well as in the mountainous part of Učka, many illiro-celtic elements discernible in onomastics and toponomastics and especially in spiritual culture and somewhat in funeral rites.

Such a conglomerate of ethnical, spiritual and cultural values was also present at the time of the advent of the first Slavs, towards the end of the 6th century, who in their first run melted with the autochthonous element thus creating a new form of social and cultural relations in Istria.