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Aleksandar PALAVESTRA Institute for Balkan Studies Belgrade

#### THE IRON AGE AMBER TRADE IN THE BALKANS

Study of trade in amber during the Iron Age in the Balkans enables one to more clearly define and perceive several archaeological problems pertaining to the region. First, it is the dynamism of prehistoric and protohistoric cultures and ethnic groups, their openness and contacts with other cultures. That dynamism is reflected in trade with faraway territories. Findings of amber in the Iron Age of the Balkans point to complex social relations, social stratification as well as to differences among some groups in the region.

This paper deals only with the findings of amber in the Iron Age of the western and central Balkans. It may be well assumed, based on the profusion of findings, that in the Iron Age these regions not only were on the routes of amber traffic, but were perhaps the very centers of that trade. Ancient sources point to the significance of the northern Adriatic as the key site of the trade in amber. The myths relating to the Electrides Islands in northern Adriatic in the vicinity of the Eridanus River, and to black poplar trees secreting amber, are probably only the result of an error made in identifying the final point of the amber route as the site of its provenance. The importance of northern Adriatic and its hinterland for amber traffic from the Balkans to the Mediterranean centers, had already been acknowledged in earlier archaeological literature,2 and the new methodology, such as infra-red spectrography, revived the problem anew.3 The analyses of amber findings of the Bronze and Iron Ages in the western and central Balkans carried out in the course of several

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Katičić 1970: 103—104.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Navarro 1925.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Beck, Wilbur, Meret, Kossove and Kermani 1965; Back 1966, 3970, 1985; Beck, Southard and Adams 1968.

last years, have established that almost all samples are of Baltic origin.<sup>4</sup> These investigations have refuted a thesis, rather present in the Yugoslav archaeology, that prehistoric amber in the Balkans is in fact just a kind of domestic resin.<sup>5</sup>

East and south Balkan regions, and even Macedonia and Greece, were to a certain extent at the margins of that trade. An analysis of amber trade in those regions would constitute an entirely separate field of investigation. Furthermore, the very choice of the Iron Age has posed certain limits to the analysis of amber traffic. Numerous findings point to the existence of this trade, as well as to the importance that amber had in the Bronze Age in the western and central Balkans, Italy, Mycenaean Greece, even in the eastern Mediterranean all the way to Palestine. The amber trade routes across the Adriatic, its east coast and hinterland, had already been established in the Bronze Age. During the Iron Age the circulation of amber continues along those same routes in ever larger quantities.

The findings of amber dating from the Iron Age paint a considerably picture of the cultural dynamism of palaeo-Balkan peoples. Greater concentration of amber in the findings from the Earlier Iron Age indicates that two regions in the Balkans may have been the pivots of amber trade.

The first is the western Balkans and Slovenia, Istria and the Bay of Trieste hinterland, the ultimate point of the amber route which went across entire Europe and linked the Baltic with the Adriatic. That region included Liburnian and Iapodian areas of northern Adriatic and its hinterland, which, on the basis of amber findings, as well as according to some historic sources, should be considered as the region of the busiest amber traffic. The mobility of Liburnian ships, the proven links with Italy, and even a certain cultural and ethnic uniformity of the east and west Adriatic coasts in protohistory, as well as considerable affluence in amber, are the foundations of the assumption that amber trade was a very important branch of economy for Liburns and Iapods. 10

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Beck and Liu 1973, 1974; Todd, Eichel, Beck and Macchiarulo 1976. Todd and Eichel 1974; 1976.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Bošković 1961, Todd and Eichel 1976.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Popović 1975: 50.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Harding 1973; Harding and Hughes-Brock 1974; Hughes-Brock 1985; Beck 1966; Beck, Southard and Adams 1968; Negroni Catacchio 1975; Todd, Eichel, Beck and Macchiarulo 1976; Batović 1976, 1983; Teržan 1984b; Todd 1985

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Teržan 1984b; Batović 1976; Todd, Eichel, Beck and Macchiarulo 1976; Todd and Eichel 1974.

Wells 1985a, 1985b; Batović 1976; Drechsler-Bižić 1958, 1961, 1973;
 Marić 1968; Raunig 1968.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Batović 1976; Peroni 1976; Negroni Catacchio 1975; Palavestra 1984b.

The Glasinac region of eastern Bosnia and Podrinje with its numerous tumulus where relatively large quantities of amber had been found, would constitute a transition toward the other large whole: the central area of the Balkan peninsula.<sup>11</sup> This Glasinac group of findings might include as well the material from the Illyrian tombs of Metohija and Albania, which bears certain stylistic uniformity with the culture of Glasinac.12 Some findings in Metohija are, however, typologically connected with the central Balkan region of princely tombs.

A large group of amber findings would include those of Serbia. Montenegro, and Kosovo. 18 It is characteristic of this region that amber findings are being linked with the horizon of princely tombs from the end of sixth century B. C.14 It is evident that these regions should be considered conditionally and that their borders cannot be clearly defined since the material in question circulated a lot and can hardly be linked to any certain

culture or ethnic group.

It is impossible to give here a thorough review of the amber material of all these groups, but it is possible to give an outline, at least a rough one, of the cultural model of amber trade in those regions. That model can be most clearly formed and contrasted if amber findings and their context in the western and central Balkans are compared. In the western Balkans amber shows up in a number of Hallstatt tombs, such as is the case, e.g. with the Stična necropolis in Slovenia, where 32 per cent of tombs contained amber. 15 or with Iapodian necropoles in Kompolje, Jezerine and Ribić, 16 as well as Glasinac, where also a number of tombs contained amber. On the other hand, in the central Balkan region, amber appears exclusively within the context of rich princely tombs such as Novi Pazar. Atinica near Čačak, Pečka Banja and Ivangrad.<sup>17</sup> These findings are, as a rule, related to a certain type of luxurious import of large bronze dishes and pottery, most probably from southern Italic centers. 18 In addition to amber, there was a considerable number of gold and silver homemade articles, and chariots which were an expression of power. These princely tombs testify to the rise of the warrior aristocracy in the second half of the sixth century

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Benac i Čović 1957; Čović 1979; Косорић 1979; Zotović 1985; Pala-

vestra 1984a: 60—65.

12 Prendi 1976; Jubani 1972; Kurti 1978; Тасић 1979; Srejović 1973; Đurić, Glisić i Todorović 1975; Palavestra 1984a: 58—60.

13 Букнић и Јовановић 1966; Mano-Zisi i Popović 1969; Palavestra 1984a; Srejović i Marković 1981.

14 Palavestra 1984a.

Wells 1985b: 271.

Wells 1985b: 271.

Palavestra 1958, 1961, 1973; Marić 1968; Raunig; 1968.

Palavestra 1984a; Srejović i Marković 1981.

Palavestra 1984a: 73—74; Parović-Pešikan 1964; Popović, Mano-Zisi, Veličković i Jeličić 1969: 11—14.

B.C. and are not characteristic only of the Balkans, but can also be found in central and western Europe (Hochdorf, Hohmichele, Magdalenenberg, Vix).19 The analysis of the material found in the princely tombs of the central Balkans enables one to perceive the important role that trade and exchange played in the creation of a wealthy and powerful class of local chieftains, princes and even kings.20 Presence of many imported objects in their tombs, as well as large quantities of amber, show that the root or at least a part of their power lay in their monopoly over the trade in luxurious goods of prestige, to which amber undoubtedly belonged. Control over the external trade and redistribution of luxirious goods, formation of trade partnerships and organization of an internal trade network, constituted the basis for social differentiation and social order of the Hallstatt society in some parts of central Europe.<sup>21</sup> Judging by the similarity of findings in princely tombs, it can be assumed that the said model functioned also in the Iron Age in the central Balkans. Absence of more relevant data on poorer tombs in the central Balkan region does not permit an in-depth analysis of social stratification. Findings of the Pilatovići necropolis near Užička Požega, which in addition to princely tombs include also some poorer tombs are, however, in favour of the above model.22

Princely tombs of the central Balkan region allow for a thesis of the existence of an almost feudal social structure where the key of the chieftain's power lay in the very control over information and in monopoly over circulation of prestige goods.28 Amber beads and neclaces, so numerous in those tombs, could constitute that kind of prestige arcticles which were used to carry out and confirm trade, or to buy the affection of distinguished tribesmen.<sup>24</sup> Amber was a more than adequate equivalent for trade, since it was easily transported, precious, had magic features, and not everybody had access to it.25 It was available only to those outstanding members of the community who possessed sufficient information, power, social esteem and wealth. It can even be assumed that there existed a chain of partnership relations with distinguished individuals in other regions enabling the acquisition of prestige goods, and thus providing for the social standing and power of all partners.26

The Glasinac necropoles also show a certain degree of social stratification as well as the presence of princely tombs rich in

<sup>19</sup> Palavestra 1987; Biel 1981, 1982; Cunliffe 1979; Kimmig 1983; Joffroy 1954. \*\* Cače 1985.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Frankenstein and Rowlands 1978: 76—84. <sup>22</sup> Zotović 1985: 80—100.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Palavestra 1984a: 71; Frankenstein and Rowlands 1978: 75—84.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Mos 1982: 70—73. 25 Todd and Eichel 1974: 302-303; Todd 1985: 299. Rowlands 1973: 596; Mos 1982: 70-73.

amber, such as Arareva Gromila, but it seems that social differences were not as drastic or simply that the princes of Glasinac were not as rich as their eastern nighbours.<sup>27</sup> Similar is the case with the warriors' tombs in Kosovo and in Metohija, such as Kargač, Romaja or Prčevo, which also contain amber but in

considerably smaller quantities.28

The situation in the western Balkans in somewhat different. Iapodian necropoles, at least where amber is concerned, testify to a lesser stratification of society. Reasons for this can be found in the very organization of society, but there are probably other reasons as well. Iapodian and Liburnian areas, as well as parts of the Bay of Trieste hinterland, were more directly involved in the traffic and processing of amber, and large quantities of the material were present in that territory. This helped diminish the exclusive character of amber as luxurious and prestige merchandise to be acquired only with difficulty. A similar phenomenon can be noticed if Slovenian necropoles are compared with central European princely tombs, where the distance from the centre of production also increased the exclusivity of products, as well as the power of those who possessed them. 29 The greater the distance from the centre of processing and trade, the greater the value of that merchandise itself, this being characteristic of wholesale.30 There are even some assumptions that amber was intentionally buried in tombs in order to reduce its circulation and thus increase its value.31 In some parts of the western Balkans, and in the case with the Illyrian populations of Metohija and northern Albania, amber was, like in Etruria, popular and luxurious jewelry, and probably constituted an integral part of women's costume.32 In the princely tombs of the central Balkans, however, it has an entirely different function and, together with imported dishes, pottery of Graeco—Italic provenance and gold jewelry, it con stitutes a luxurious and prestige commodity, and serves as a proof of wealth, power and social standing.

The source of imported objects found in the princely tombs of the central Balkans used to be rather controversial, but, based on bronze dishes and amber material, one can well draw a conclusion that they originated in the workshops of southern Italy.33 It is characteristic that elaborately crafted amber beads with presentations indicating paragons in Archaic plastics, are found almost exclusively in the central Balkans. In the western Balkan

Benac i Čović 1957; Čović 1979; Palavestra 1984a: 60.
 Srejović 1973; Đurić, Glišić i Todorović 1975; Tasić 1979.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Wells 1985: 85—86. 30 Rowlands 1973: 593.

<sup>31</sup> Wells 1985b: 274.

Drechsler-Bižić 1961; Teržan 1978, 1984a; Wells 1985b; Bonfante

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Strong 1966: 88; Palavestra 1984a: 73; Popović 1975; 50; Cović 1983.

area, amber beads are most frequently simple, probably home -made. Carved beads from the princely tombs of the central Balkans have close analogues in the findings of southern Italy and Picenum.<sup>34</sup> There are also similarities between bronze dishes and the bronze of southern Italy, 25 and also with findings of the princely tombs in western and central Europe (Vix, Hochdorf).36 In the sixth century B.C., at the time of strengthening of tribal warrior aristocracy and of its acquisition of wealth, Etruscan and Graeco—Italic import penetrated central Europe.<sup>37</sup> A similar if not the same process evolved in the central Balkan region, the proof of which is to be found in the exceptional typological similarity between the princely tombs of the central Balkans and those of central Europe.<sup>38</sup> This paper does not permit further analysis of the reasons underlying this trade between the Mediterranean and the barbarian Europe in the sixth century B.C. It can nevertheless be assumed that traffic via Adriatic played an important role in it, particularly if the data regarding the Liburnian thalassocraty<sup>89</sup> and the need of Etruscan and south Italic centers for new markets are taken into account.40

The western Balkans had an important role in the trade of amber. Probably a large portion of uncarved amber, which came from the north, remained in the region, while another part continued across the Adriatic into the cities where it was crafted. A part of that processed amber returned as luxurious import to the central Balkans, which was a region outside the primary trade in amber and where it, therefore, had greater importance as merchaidise of prestige.41

The trade route along which amber beads came to central Balkans cannot yet be determined. It may be assumed however, that it led across the Adriatic, and then, at least partly, over the western Balkans. Beside numerous home-made amber beads found in the Iapodian necropolis in Kampolje, luxurious beads were also found similar to those in the central Balkan princely tombs, and also in south Italic centers and Picenum. 42

At the begining of the fifth century B.C., princely tombs in the central Balkans begin to disappear and with them most amber findings.48 In this region amber can be found only sporadically, in richer tombs from the fifth century B.C., mostly uncarved, re-

Strong 1966; Negroni Catacchio 1975; Palavestra 1984a.
 Nikolanci 1966; Popović, Mano-Zisi, Veličković i Jeličić 1969: 11—14.
 Cović 1983; Palavestra 1984a: 73.
 Joffroy 1954; Biel 1981, 1982; Kimmig 1983.
 Nash 1985: 55—60; Wells 1985a; Megaw 1985: 168—169.
 Palavestra 1997

<sup>■</sup> Palavestra 1987

<sup>Palavestra 1984b; Batović 1976.
Bonfante 1981, 1985; Wells 1985a: 84; Frey 1984.</sup> 

<sup>41</sup> Rowlands 1973; Frankenstein and Rowlands 1978: 82; Wells 1985a. 42 Drechsler-Bižić 1961: 102-103.

<sup>48</sup> Palavestra 1984a.

presenting only a shadow of one-time trade.44 Great unrests, social and political upheavals which engulfed central Europe and at that precisely the regions of princely tombs, did not circumvent the central Balkan area. 45 Similtaneously with this, there were disruptions in trade in the Mediterranean, and new relations and interests came into being.46 These social developments contributed to the downfall of the powerful warrior aristocracy trade monopolies and control over the circulation of luxurious goods existed no longer. The western Balkan area was to a certain extent spared these upheavals.<sup>47</sup> The necropoles in the region testify to a certain continuity of culture. In Iapodian tombs amber is found all the way until Roman occupation. 18 Reasons for this may be twofold: either the inhabitants of the western Balkans continued to trade along the well-established routes, or the quantity of accumulated amber at the time of the most intensive trade was such that it continued to circulate several centuries after the cessation of direct trade. Disruption of the trade in amber after the year 500 B.C. is nevertheless substantiated by the ever more seldom amber findings in other regions in the Balkans. Even the late Illyrian necropoles rich in jewelry, such as Momišići and Gostili.49 or the jewelry depot in Ošanić,50 contain little or no amber at all.

It can therefore be concluded that trade in amber in the prehistory of the Balkans had already begun in the Bronze Age and that it successively followed the ascent of tribal communities in the western and central Balkans. The trade was differently organized in the western and in the central Balkan regions. In the western Balkans amber was considered one of more important commodities, popular jewelry and a part of womes's costume. It played a catalytic role in the excange and cultural ties between that region and Italic and Greek centers, the immediate Balkan neighbours, and also distant regions of central and northern Europe. The central Balkans, in the similar vein as parts of central and western Europe, underwent a somewhat different development. The warrior aristocracy became rich and separated itself from the rest of the society. One of indicators, and also of the root-causes of its power, were the luxurious imported objects of prestige, among which amber held an outstanding place. Thus amber, like a sensitive instrument, monitored and displayed the destiny, cultural and social trends of the palaeo-Balkan peoples and their place in the late European prehistory.

<sup>44</sup> Vasić 1977: 27—30. 45 Pauli 1985: 35. 46 Nash 1985; Wells 1985a; Bonfante 1981. 47 Cović 1976: 122—263. 48 Drechsler-Bižić 1958, 1961, 1973; Marić 1968. 48 Barlon 1969: Barlon 1978; Marić 1966.

<sup>Basler 1969; Велимировић-Жижић 1966.
Marić 1978.</sup> 

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## ТРГОВИНА БИЛИБАРОМ У ГВОЗДЕНОМ ДОБУ БАЛКАНА

#### Резиме

Проучавање трговине ћилибаром у гвозденом добу Балкана омогућује јасније опртавање и ближе сагледавање неколико археолошких проблема овог подручја. У првом реду то је димензија праисторијских култура и етничких групација, њихова отвореност и контакти са другим културама. Овај динамизам очитује се у трговини са удаљеним територијама. Налази ћилибара у гвозденом добу Балкана указују на сложене друштвене односе, социјалну стратификацију и разлике међу појединим групама овог подручја.

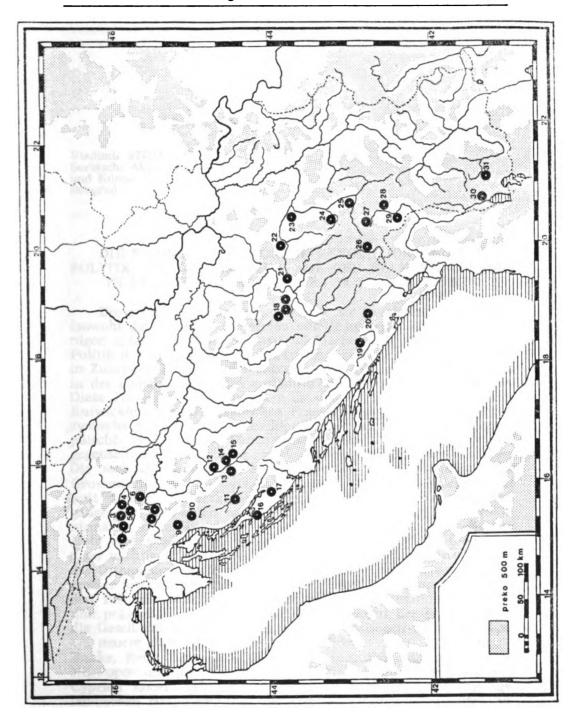
Билибарски налази на тлу Југославије до сада су констатовани на већем броју локалитета и то на широком подручју. Већи део налаза везан је за некрополе гвозденог доба, а у мањој мери за налазишта бронзаног доба. Неки од тих налаза очигледно су појединачни и случајни, док су други изразито богати ћилибарским накитом, као што

су рецимо кнежевски гробови старијег гвозденог доба у Новом Пазару и Атеници или јаподска некропола у Компољу. Југословенске земље су се још у бронзано доба налазиле на путу продирања балтичког ћилибара ка југу и његове обраде и дистрибуције о чему сведоче и налази микенских ћилибарских зрна балтичког порекла и на Апенинском и на Балкланском полуострву. Археолошки налази са подручја Југославије речито говоре о томе да се промет ћилибара у гвоздено доба појачао и то импорт сировог аморфног ћилибара са Балтика ка југу где је обрабиван, као и дистрибуција стилизованих форми обликованог ћилибара, који се као драгоцен лични накит и ширио по медитеранском и јадранском басену и дубљем балканском залеђу. Билибарски пут ка југу и са југа повезивао је културне слојеве бронзаног и гвозденог доба на ширем подручіу Балкана и централне Европе. То се измеру осталог види у типолошкој сличности тзв. кнежевских гробова старијег гвозденог доба у централној Европи и на Балкану, (Магдалененберг, Хохдорф, Хохмихеле, Каптол, Стична, Беремед, Атеница, Нови Пазар, Пилатовићи. Пећка Бања), где се управо ћилибар јавља као један од карактеристичних елемената културне сродности.

Нарочита пажња посвећена је јадранском басену као важном подручју трговине ћилибаром. Археолошки налази упућују на то да је јужна Италија током читавог гвозденог доба била један од најважнијих центара продукције ћилибара, а да је италијанска јадранска обала, а посебно Апулија и Пиценум, била значајни трговачки пункт за промет ћилибаром. Када се узме у обзир постојање јаких културних и етничких веза између две јадранске обале и жив промет либурнских и других бродова Јадраном у пра и прото историји ћилибарски налази у балканском залеђу Јадрана морају се сагледавати у другачијем светлу него до сада.

Може се закључити да трговина ћилибаром у праисторији Балкана почиње још у бронзаном добу, да би затим пратила успон племенских заједница централног и западног Балкана. Та трговина је била различито организована и различито је деловала на западном и централном Балкану. На западном Балкану ћилибар је био једно од важнијих трговачких добара, омиљен накит и део женске ношње. Служио је као катализатор трговачког промета и културних веза овог подручја са италским и грчким центрима, са непосредним балканским суседима, али и са удаљеним областима централне и северне Европе. Централни Балкан имао је, слично деловима централне и западне Европе, нешто другачији развој. Ту се обогатила и издвојила ратничка аристократија. Показатељ, али и један од узрока њеног богатства и моћи, били су престижни увозни луксузни предмети, мебу којима је ћилибар имао истакнуто место. Тако је ћилибар, као неки осетљив инструмент, пратио и показивао судбину, културна и друштвена кретања палеобалканских народа и њихово место у позној европској праисторији.

Map showing principal Iron Age sites containing amber artifacts: 1. Magdalenska gora, 2. Stična, 3. Brezje, 4. Smarjeta, 5. Novo Mesto, 6. Podzemelj, 7. Černomelj, 8. Dragatuš, 9. Kompolje, 10. Prozor, 11. Vrebac, 12. Ribić, 13. Golubić, 14. Jezerine, 15. Ripač, 16. Nin, 17. Jagodnja Donja, 18. Glasinac, 19. Kačanj, 20. Kličevo, 21. Kremna, 22. Pilatovići, 23. Atenica, 24. Novi Pazar, 25. Karagač, 26. Lisijevo polje, 27. Pećka banja, 28. Prčevo, 29. Romaja, 30. Trebenište, 31. Petilep.



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