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PAGES FROM THE HISTORY OF THE AUTARIATAE AND TRIBALLOI

Abstract.– According to Strabo (VII, 5, 11), the Autariatae were the best and largest Illyrian tribe which, at the apex of its power, vanquished the Triballoi and other Illyrian and Thracian tribes. The author discusses the information offered by classical sources and, as others before him, connects them with archaeologically documented groups in the central Balkans, the Glasinac and Zlot groups.

Among the scarce information left by the classical authors regarding events in the central Balkans during the Iron Age we have singled out as particularly important the conflict between the Autariatae and the Triballoi, from which the former emerged victorious. True, several dramatic events shook the central Balkans at that time – it suffice to mention the Celtic invasion in the late 4th and early 3rd centuries B. C., when the Celts reached Greece – but those involved peoples and groups that had come from elsewhere and cannot be considered Balkanic. The Autariatae and the Triballoi, on the contrary, can be classified as central Balkanic tribes with a fair amount of certainty, and therefore their conflict was truly one of the central events of palaeo–Balkanic history.

According to Strabo (VII, 5, 11), the Autariatae were the finest and biggest Illyrian tribe. They fought and vanquished the Triballoi as well as other Illyrians and Thracians. This passage from Strabo was extensively discussed by linguists, historians, and archaeologists, who finally agreed to date the conflict discussed in it to before the middle of the 5th c. B. C. Namely, in the second half of the 4th c., at the time of Alexander's expedition against the Triballoi, the Autariatae were referred to as a weak and harmless tribe, and after the 4th c. they disappeared from historical sources altogether;[1] this means that they were

[1] F. Papazoglu, *The Central Balkan Tribes in Pre-Roman times*, Amsterdam 1978, 90 ff.

at their most powerful at least a few centuries earlier. On the other hand, during the reign of Philip II, the Triballoi were rather irksome enemies to Macedonia, which provoked Alexander's expedition against them in 335; they had campaigned against Abdera in 376–375, and in 424 had scored successes against Sitalca, the powerful ruler of the Odrysian kingdom.[2] All this indicates that the Triballoi were a considerable power after the middle of the 5th c. and that their defeat in the conflict with the Autariatae should, therefore, be dated before that time.

Archaeological exploration of the Iron Age in the Central Balkans, chiefly the area between the rivers Drina to the west and Iskar to the east where, according to classical sources, the two tribes lived,[3] has largely confirmed historians' opinions. In this paper I shall connect archaeological material with historical sources and attempt to interpret some forms of portable material as characteristic of the two tribes' material culture. It is an honour and a pleasure for me to contribute to this volume of *Balcanica*, devoted as it is to our renowned colleague Nikola Tasić, whose excavation of Zlotska pećina and discovery of rich Iron Age material at the site initiated the study of tribal material culture in these parts.[4]

Two important cultural groups were in existence between the Drina and Iskar in the Iron Age. Named after the Glasinac plateau in eastern Bosnia, famous for its thousands of mounds and dozens of hillforts for over a century, the Glasinac culture, in the west, was spread over eastern Bosnia, southeastern Serbia, and northern Montenegro, and its influence was felt in neighbouring regions too, as witness the large number of artefacts found there. The group originated in the Bronze Age, but reached its apex in the 7th and 6th centuries B. C., with a combination of indigenous and foreign elements. Although the importance of the Glasinac group was on the wane from the second half of the 5th c., it lived on until the late 3rd/early 4th c. B. C., the accepted date of the latest of graves on the Glasinac plateau and in the Poblaćenica river valley near Priboj.[5] Historical research has shown that it is preciesely in this area – southeast Bosnia, southwest Serbia, northern Montenegro – that we should locate the nucleus of the Autariatae; considering what we know of the history of the tribe, the Autariatae might well be connected with the Glasinac group.

The other group, to the east, here named Zlot–Sofronievo after the well-known sites in eastern Serbia and northwest Bulgaria, was present in the region between the Morava and Iskar rivers, and is archaeologically less clear. Also, it is chronologically limited to the 7th and 6th centuries B. C. However, common features in burial customs and portable material, especially metal artefacts, allow us to describe this as a comparatively influential cultural group.[6] The most

[2] *Ibid.*, 10 ff.

[3] *Ibid.*, see map at the end of the volume.

[4] N. Tasić, *Zlotska pećina*, Bor 1968; N. Tasić, *Osnovni rezultati istraživanja u Zlotskoj pećini i nalazišta na Đerdapu*, Materijali SADJ VI, Bor, 1969.

[5] B. Čović, *Glasinačka grupa* in *Praistorija jugoslavenskih zemalja* V, 575 ff.

[6] R. Vasić, *Moravsko-timočka oblast* in *Praistorija jugoslavenskih zemalja* V, 660 ff.

typical artefacts are probably rectangular openwork belts, decorated with rows of triangles and concentric circles; they were found chiefly in the region under consideration, but also in Macedonia and Greece to the south and, to the west, as far as Srem and northern Bosnia. (Fig. 1).[7]

According to classical sources, the geographic area peopled by the Triballoi coincided more or less with that covered by the Zlot–Sofronievo group, which means that the two might be related. In this connection it is interesting to note that the Zlot–Sofronievo group, as far as we know, disappeared from east Serbia in the 5th c., but its cultural development continued in northwest Bulgaria, though with changes in some cultural traits. This could mean that the Triballoi, pushed east from the Morava valley and eastern Serbia, concentrated around Vrace in northwest Bulgaria, where some centres of the tribe had already existed; from there, no longer interested in the central Balkans, they turned east to Thrace and the rich and prosperous Greek colonies on the northern Aegean shores, which offered better opportunities for looting and plundering than the impoverished tribes in the Morava valley to the west.[8] Available data from the history of the Triballoi in the 5th and 4th centuries support this theory. Further proof is offered by late-5th-c. and 4th-c. archaeological material from northwest Bulgaria, where grave goods and hoards often contain precious artefacts of Greek or Thraco–Getian provenance, or at least executed in a similar style.[9]

Before the final parting of the ways between the Autariatae and the Triballoi, sometime in the first half of the 5th c., there probably existed cultural ties and contacts between them, typical of a certain period in the Bronze Age of the central Balkans. Due to incomplete data on portable material belonging to the Zlot group, comparisons between the material cultures of Glasinac and Zlot in the 6th c. are not entirely possible. Yet, arguing for a degree of cultural uniformity in the central Balkans at a given point, we shall enumerate some obvious parallels.

Based on different foundations, the pottery of the two groups has little in common, but we must here single out the two-handled cups from Vrtište near Niš and Arareva gomila at Glasinac, which could be close in shape and date.[10] Similarities are more evident in the case of metal artefacts. The material from Glasinac published so far does not contain a single openwork belt, but perforated belt clasps and decorative plates from Glasinac are reminiscent of Zlot openwork belts.[11] On the other hand, the round belt plates from Zlot and Vlaško

[7] R. Vasić, *The Openwork Belts and the Early Iron Age Chronology in the Northern Balkans*, Arch. Iugoslavica XII, 1971, 1 ff.; K. Kilian, *Trachtzubehör der Eisenzeit zwischen Ägäis und Adria*, Präh. Zeitschrift 50, 1975, T. 84, 1.

[8] M. Stojić, *Gvozdeno doba u basenu Velike Morave*, Beograd–Svetozarevo 1986, 102 ff.

[9] И. Венедиков, *Новооткрито тракийское монилно погребение в гр. Враца*, Археология VIII, 1, 1966; Б. Николов, *Гробница III от Моиланската могила при Враца*, *Археология* IX, 1, 1967; A. Fol, B. Nikolov, R. F. Hoddinott, *The New Thracian Treasury from* Rogozen, Bulgaria, British Museum, 1986.

[10] A. Benac – B. Čović, *Glasinac 2*, Sarajevo 1957, T. 40, 2; R. Vasić, in *Praistorija jugoslavenskih zemalja* V, T, 68, 2.

[11] Cf. A. Benac – B. Čović, *op. cit.*, T. 23, 11–12.

Selo show obvious links with Glasinac material.[12] We are inclined to believe that a bronze bowl from Sofronievo, imported from the south, could also be connected with Glasinac.[13] Namely, several bronze vessels of a similar kind, also imported from the south, have been unearthed at Glasinac;[14] one of them might have been sent to a tribal chieftain or plundered in a skirmish with the Autariatae. There is no conclusive evidence to support this theory, but it should be noted that the Sofronievo vessel is the oldest Greek vessel in Bulgaria, and that its only parallels in the Balkans are to be found in the Glasinac group. Further research on the Zlot group will probably provide more clues. Finally, we must single out the two-piece arc fibulae with stilts in the shape of Boeotian shields, which were widespread in the central Balkans, both in the Glasinac and the Zlot–Sofronievo groups. Due to the large number of such finds at Glasinac, this type of fibula was initially called "Glasinac type", but more recent research has shown that it was no less frequent between the Morava and the Iskar, and it now seems impossible to link it with a single cultural group. From the central Balkans (Fig. 2) the fibula spread everywhere, and was at its most popular in the late 7th and early 6th centuries B. C.[15] At that time it was found throughout a very extensive area of southeast Europe and, from an aesthetic point of view, its form reached the apex of development in the hands of local workshops in the central Balkans, before the indigenous material culture was significantly affected by Greek and Italic influences.

With these few remarks we would like to wind up our comparison between the Glasinac and Zlot groups for the time being, underlining once again that the insufficient data on the Zlot–Sofronievo group, especially in our parts, preclude a more profound analysis of material culture. It can be said, in any case, that two powerful tribes emerged in the central Balkans at a certain point during the Iron Age, between the late 7th and early 5th centuries B. C. Drawn into alliances with them, smaller neighbouring tribes lost in significance and their own names were neglected, which is reflected, to a certain extent, in the writings of classical authors. A possible example might be that of the Dardanians, an ancient Balkanic tribe, which is not mentioned in written sources before the second half of the 4th century and plays an important role only after the 3rd century, i. e. after the decline of the Autariatae and Triballoi,[16] though it must have lived in the central Balkans long before that.

Historians and archaeologists should, therefore, closely cooperate in the search for solutions to a wide range of questions concerning the protohistory of

[12] D. Gergova, *Früh- und ältereisenzeitliche Fibeln in Bulgarien*, PBF XIV, München, 1987, 58, A7; Z. Stanojević, *Novi nalazi starijeg gvozdenog doba iz Zlota*, Zbornik radova Muzeja rudarstva i metalurgije 5/6, Bor 1987/90, 26, Fig. 3a.

[13] B. Hänsel, *Beiträge zur regionalen und chronologischen Gliederung der älteren Hallstattzeit an der unteren Donau*, Bonn 1976, T. 68, 7.

[14] R. Vasić, *Green Bronze Vessels found in Yugoslavia*, Živa Antika, 32, 2, 185 ff.

[15] T. Bader, *Die Fibeln in Rumänien*, PBF XIV, 6, München 1983, 85 ff. T. 49; d. Gergova, *op. cit.*, 47 ff.

[16] F. Papazoglu, *op. cit.*, 135 ff.

the Central Balkans; only a comparison of their results can yield satisfactory answers. It is to be hoped that joint study of the Iron Age in the central Balkans will help clarify many problems in the future.

НЕКОЛИКО СТРАНИЦА ИЗ ИСТОРИЈЕ АУТАРИЈАТА И ТРИБАЛА

Резиме

Најзначајнији догађај из историје предримских племена Централног Балкана који је остао забележен код античких писаца јесте сукоб два снажна племена, Аутаријата и Трибала и победа Аутаријата у том окршају. Грчки географ Страбон, који доноси овај податак, не каже изричито када се сукоб збио, али се уз извесне резерве може закључити да је до сукоба дошло негде у првој половини V века пре н. е. Аутаријати нестају са историјске позорнице крајем IV века пре н.е. па се може претпоставити да су били велико и моћно племе знатно пре овог времена. Трибали су, напротив, у другој половини IV века снажни, Александар у то време организује експедицију на север да би их умирио, а пре тога 376/5. нападају Абдеру на обали Егејског мора а 424. г. ратују успешно против моћног одријског краља Ситалка. Ови подаци такође указују на време пре средине V века пре н. е. као могући датум њиховог сукоба са Аутаријатима. Сви горе наведени догађаји упућују на њихово усмеравање ка југу и истоку а не ка западу, односно потпуно нови смер њихових интереса што је уследило после пораза од стране Аутаријата.

Иако овај закључак може да буде прихваћен са резервом, треба напоменути да археолошки подаци подупиру овакву претпоставку. Наиме, на територији на којој су се налазили према историчарима Аутаријати, јавља се велика и моћна гласиначка културна група – на простору источне Босне, југозападне Србије и северне Црне Горе, чији врхунац пада у крај VI и прву половину V века пре н. е. Група потпуно замире и нестаје негде крајем IV или почетком III века.

Историчари смештају Трибале у простор између река Велике Мораве и Искера у северозападној Бугарској. Овде се може археолошки констатовати културна група Злот–Софрониево, не тако јасно изражена као гласиначка група и хронолошки ограничена само на VII и VI век пре н. е. После тога континуитет се прекида, у долини Мораве и источној Србији може се констатовати осиромашење материјала који не допушта прецизније закључке, у северозападној Бугарској археолошки материјал указује на снажне везе са Тракијом и Македонијом.

Аутор претпоставља да је пре сукоба Аутаријата и Трибала постојала међу њима размена добара и културни контакти који су трајали једно време, можда више деценија и који су резултирали стварањем неке врсте заједничких карактеристика у култури Централног Балкана тога доба. Неке индиције за то постоје. Најупечатљивији пример су двопетљасте лучне фибуле са ногом у облику беотског штита, карактеристичне за другу половину VII и VI века пре н. е. Раније су зване „гласиначке" по великом броју ових фибула нађених на гласиначкој висоравни, али у последње време по честим налазима овог облика у Србији, Бугарској и Македонији може се рећи да су оне типичан централнобалкански облик материјалне културе који најбоље одражава културну повезаност ових области у другој половини VII и VI веку пре н. е.

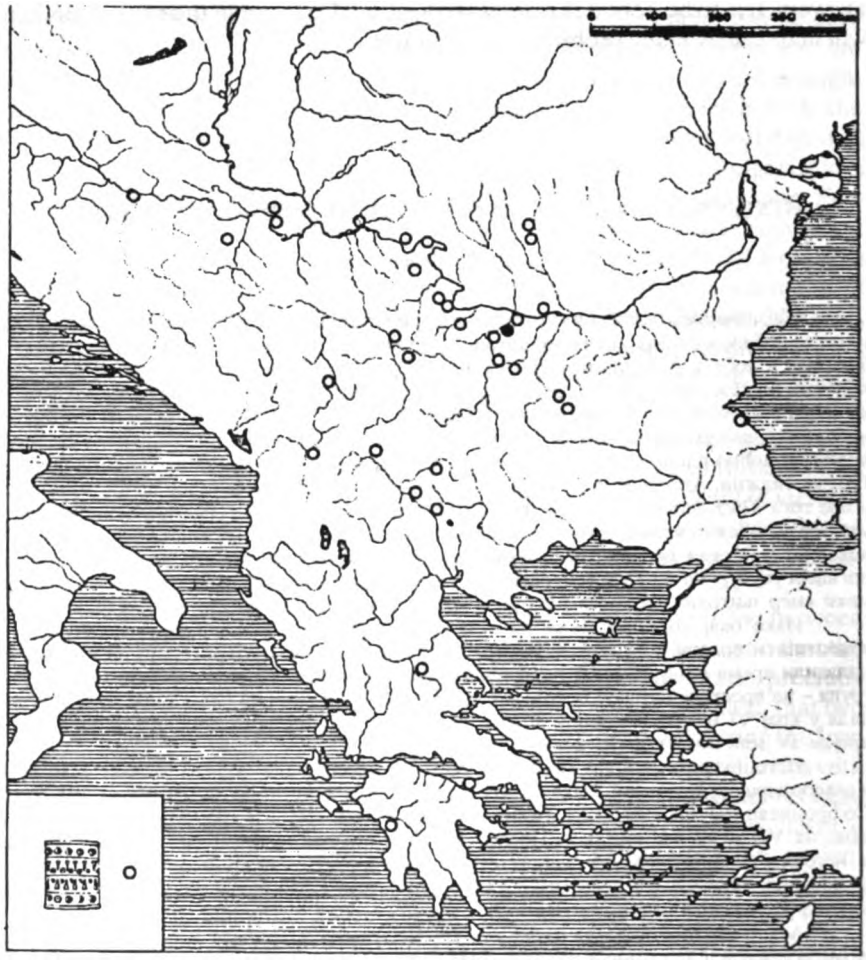

Fig. 1 The distribution of openwork belts

Fig. 2 The distribution of two-piece arc fibulae with stilts in the shape of Boeotian shields