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EVIDENCE OF THE RELOCATION OF THE POPULATION FROM THE EAST (HELLENIC-SPEAKING COUNTRIES) TO THE MUNICIPIUM DARDANORUM IN THE SOUTH OF THE PROVINCE OF UPPER MOESIA

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Abstract. *Introduction.* In this paper, evidence is presented about the relocation of certain citizens of oriental origin to the *Municipium Dardanorum* in Dardania. The territory of Dardania, which included today's Kosovo and Metohija, belonged to Upper Moesia (86 CE). These territorial changes also caused ethnic changes in the south of Upper Moesia, about which we do not have enough information. The previous period was marked by events related to the military conquest of Dardania, while the upcoming period, from the second half of the 1st century CE, is typical of the penetration of Roman culture and civilization into the Balkans and work on the organization of administration in Upper Moesia. *Methods and materials.* The article focuses on the analysis of mainly epigraphic material: these are inscriptions on tombstones, altars, and temple slabs from the Roman era. *Analysis and results.* The political and economic occupation of these areas was carried out by organizing the administration, building roads, establishing colonies and municipia, settling the Italic population and veterans, and granting civil rights to individual members of the local population, as well as settling the population of eastern origin. It is believed that the local population was unable to meet the increased need for labor in the mines, or rather in the production of precious metals, so a number of new residents of oriental origin (Asia Minor region) were relocated (by imperial decree) in an organized manner to the Roman settlement near the present-day village of Sočanica (*Municipium Dardanorum*). The original data that is the basis of research on the population structure of the Roman provinces, and thus Upper Moesia, is almost exclusively based on the epigraphic texts. Epigraphic monuments mentioning persons of oriental origin, dated to the reigns of Antoninus (98–192 CE) and Severus (193–235 CE), are especially important. The names and naming formulas contained in the inscriptions allow us to draw conclusions about the regional and ethnic origin and legal and social status of individuals, as well as the degree of Romanization. *Funding.* This research was supported by the Ministry of Science, Technological Development, and Innovation of the Republic of Serbia (Contract No. 451-03-136/2025-03200184).

Key words: oriental population, relocation, Dardania, *Municipium Dardanorum*, Upper Moesia, Kosovo and Metohija.

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СВИДЕТЕЛЬСТВА МИГРАЦИИ НАСЕЛЕНИЯ С ВОСТОКА (ЭЛЛИНОЯЗЫЧНЫХ СТРАН) В МУНИЦИПАЛИТЕТ ДАРДАНОРУМ НА ЮГЕ ПРОВИНЦИИ ВЕРХНЯЯ МЕЗИЯ

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Аннотация. Введение. В этой статье представлены свидетельства о миграции граждан восточного происхождения в муниципалитет Дарданорум в Дардании. Территория Дардании, которая включала сегодняшние Косово и Метохию, принадлежала Верхней Мезии (86 г. н. э.). Эти территориальные изменения также вызвали этнические изменения на юге Верхней Мезии, о которых у нас недостаточно информации. Предыдущий период был отмечен событиями, связанными с военным завоеванием Дардании, вместе с тем время, начиная со второй половины I в. н. э., является типичным для проникновения римской культуры и цивилизации на Балканы и работы по организации управления в Верхней Мезии. *Методы и материалы.* В статье уделяется внимание анализу преимущественно эпиграфического материала – надписей на надгробьях, алтаре, храмовых плитах римской эпохи. *Анализ и результаты.* Политическая и экономическая оккупация этих районов осуществлялась путем организации администрации, строительства дорог, создания колоний и муниципалитетов, расселения италийского населения и ветеранов, предоставления гражданских прав отдельным представителям местного населения, а также расселения населения восточного происхождения. Считается, что местное население не могло удовлетворить возросший спрос на рабочую силу в рудниках, а точнее, в добыче драгоценных металлов, поэтому часть новых жителей восточного происхождения (из Малой Азии) была переселена (по императорскому указу) в римское поселение муниципалитет Дарданорум (сегодня это деревня Сочаница). Исходные данные, лежащие в основе исследований структуры населения римских провинций и, следовательно, Верхней Мезии, почти исключительно основаны на эпиграфических текстах. Особенно важны эпиграфические памятники, упоминающие лиц восточного происхождения, датируемые правлениями Антонина (98–192 гг. н. э.) и Севера (193–235 гг. н. э.). Имена и формулы присвоения имен, содержащиеся в надписях, позволяют нам сделать выводы о региональном и этническом происхождении, правовом и социальном статусе отдельных лиц, а также степени латинизации. *Финансирование.* Данное исследование поддержано Министерством науки, технологического развития и инноваций Республики Сербия (контракт № 451-03-136/2025-03200184).

Ключевые слова: восточное население, миграция, Дардания, муниципалитет Дарданорум, Верхняя Мезия, Косово и Метохия.

Цитирование. Самарджич Г. Свидетельства миграции населения с Востока (эллиноязычных стран) в муниципалитет Дарданорум на юге провинции Верхняя Мезия // Вестник Волгоградского государственного университета. Серия 4, История. Регионоведение. Международные отношения. – 2025. – Т. 30, № 5. – С. 52–58. – (На англ. яз.). – DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15688/jvolsu4.2025.5.4>

Introduction. The end of the campaign of Marcus Licinius Crassus against the Bastarnae and their allies in 28 BCE is taken as the end of Dardanian independence. The regions north of this area, up to the Danube, were probably organized then as the province of Moesia in the first years of the Principate (from 12 CE to 15 CE). Thus, the present-day area of Kosovo and Metohija found itself within the borders of the Roman state. After the division of Moesia into two provinces in the first years of Domitian's reign (81–96 CE), Kosovo and Metohija belonged to Upper Moesia, forming its southwestern part, which bordered on the west with the province of Dalmatia and on the south with Macedonia [2, ill. 30, 86; 12, p. 317; 22, p. 22; 25, pp. 49–50; 26, pp. 82–85; 30; 31, pp. 163, 192; 35, pp. 17–29; 37; 38; 39; 40; 47, vol. I, p. 80; vol. VI, p. 39; 46, pp. 512–513].

It is believed that the area of Kosovo and Metohija was appealing in Roman times for several reasons: for strategic military-political reasons, due to the large mineral wealth,

especially on the slopes of Kopaonik (Sokoljača), Rogozna, and Kukavica (Plakaonica, Grebna, Grkalje), and also because of the agricultural potential of the plains in Kosovo and in the Metohija valley. The first reliable data on the settlement of Roman citizens in the present-day territory of Kosovo and Metohija come from the end of the 1st and the beginning of the 2nd century CE, when the process of their increased relocation began. It is believed that the main reasons for their settlement in these areas of the province of Upper Moesia lay in the increased needs of the Empire for silver, gold, and zinc ore in order to maintain its monetary system. The empire organized these regions as imperial domains and mining regions, trying to initiate the exploitation of their mineral wealth. One such center was organized in the center of the Ibar region, most likely near the present-day village of Sočanica (*Municipium Dardanorum*) [5, p. 50; 7, p. 57; 8, pp. 163–177; 9, pp. 27–30; 13; 15; 20, p. 252, no. 242 (41); 29, p. 181, no. 65; 35, pp. 184–199; 36, pp. 127–137; 37; 38; 39].

The archaeological finds discovered in the settlement near Sočanica testify that it existed from the end of the 1st to the first half of the 4th century. The serious crisis that the Empire was faced with after the Severan dynasty (193–235 CE), during the era of the barracks emperors (235–284 CE), did not spare this city either. If we add the rapid decline of towns and the reduction of the population, the causes that led to the end of life in the settlement, based on the mining activity, become understandable. With the end of life, the reasons for its existence also disappeared [5, p. 83; 21, p. 356; 35, pp. 184–199].

Analysis and criticism of epigraphic materials. Archaeological research has confirmed the assumption regarding the existence of a Roman settlement near today's village of Sočanica, but its exact name and location remain unknown. Hierocles mentioned the towns of Scupi, Ulpiana, and Merium or Merion in Dardania [16, 655, 7]. According to Mócsy, Merium or Merion was the original name of the settlement near Sočanica [25, p. 44]. Three epigraphic monuments indicate the status of the settlement and also provide some information about its possible name. The first is a fragment of a tombstone that the decurion of the municipality, whose abbreviated name was *DD*, erected for his wife (1.25 × 0.50 × 0.60 m). The text of the damaged inscription reads: *Sta[- - -]la[- - -]a[- - -]fave[- - -] / vixit ann[is] VI [- - -] / M(arcus) Aurel(ius) Felicianus / dec(urio) mun(icipii) D(ar)d(anorum) coniugi / rarissimae b(ene) m(erenti) f(ecit)* [3, 8297; 10, p. 56, fig. 27; 5, p. 62, no. 1; 21, p. 349]. The *nomen gentilicium* Aurelius provides only a *terminus post quem* for dating the monument, which is the reign of Marcus Aurelius (161–180 CE). Some researchers believe that it was built in the 3rd century [20, p. 270, no. 352 (46); 21, p. 349]. A fragment of a sandstone slab with a poorly preserved inscription was discovered in the rubble in the atrium of a basilica. The inscription reads: *[- - -] / [- - -]O[- - -] / [- - -] mun(icipii) D(ar)d(anorum) [- - -] / [- - -] Herculanus [- - -] / [- - -]MO[- - -] / [- - -]* [43, 517; 5, p. 66, no. 17]. Traces of mortar suggest that it was used as a building material. The next testimony to the status of the settlement is an altar (0.98 × 0.37 × 0.31 m) from the village of Slatina near Sočanica. The text of the inscription reads: *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) et Nemesi / Reg(inae)*

Genio / stat(ionis) m(unicipii) Dard(anorum) / Sep(timius) Vitalis / b(ene)f(iciarius) co(n)s(ularis) leg(ionis) / VII Cl(audiae) v(otum) l(ibens) s(olvit) [5, p. 63, no. 8; 21, p. 349; 43, 69 = 41, 602; 49, p. 102, no. 223]. Septimius Vitalis is believed to have lived in the first half of the 3rd century [5, p. 63, no. 8; 20, p. 270, no. 353 (47)].

All three mentioned epigraphic monuments mention a municipium. Therefore, it is assumed that the Roman settlement somewhere near the village of Sočanica had the status of a municipium. The abbreviation *DD* on these inscriptions is read as *D(ar)d(anorum)*. Since the same wording, *MVNDD* is mentioned on monuments of different characters and apparently of different times of production, it is considered that this abbreviation already contained well-known geographical terms. Čerškov and Mirdita believe that the cause should also be found in the fact that the monuments originate from the innermost town area, so the radical shortening of the name was understandable for local use. Finally, these researchers believe that the location of the Roman municipium *DD* is no longer questionable. It (*Municipium Dardanorum*) was located in the center of the ore-bearing area of Rogozna and Kopaonik, and its remains can be identified with the ruins of a construction complex near the village of Sočanica in the Ibar valley [5, p. 63, no. 8; 21, p. 349]. However, Dušanić's conclusion is completely different. He believes that only the center of the imperial mines was located in the village of Sočanica and that the *Municipium Dardanorum* was in Bresje (2 km south of the village of Sočanica), where a votive altar was found with the words *statio m() Dard(anorum)* [43, 69; 6, p. 253].

At the end of the 1st century, when the settlement of the area of Kosovo and Metohija, i.e., the southern area of Dardania in Upper Moesia, began, the Romans began to exploit mining areas. They found mines in these regions that were exploited by the Dardani; they increased production and made them the basis of their economy in the area of Kosovo and Metohija [5, p. 50]. The Ibar mining region includes the Rogozna mountain massifs and the southern and southeastern slopes of Kopaonik. The *Municipium Dardanorum* (a Roman settlement near the village of Sočanica) was built at the foot of these mining areas, which

became the main mining center of the Ibar region [34, p. 27]. In addition to the small local population, freedmen and slaves of foreign origin worked in the Dardanian mines, who were relocated from different areas for the purpose of greater exploitation of mineral wealth. This is evidenced by examples from the wider area of the *Municipium Dardanorum* [4, p. 57].

Among the finds that indicate the importance of the settlement near Sočanica as a mining center and the presence of settlers, it is necessary to mention the marble slab with an inscription ($0.60 \times 0.50 \times 0.09$ m) discovered in the porch of the temple on a forum (in the village of Sočanica). This is a votive inscription that testifies to the construction of a temple to the deified Antinous and a mine procurator [5, pp. 65-66; 6, pp. 241-247]. The text of the inscription reads: *Antinoos He[roi aedem (?) iussu] / Imp(eratoris) Caesaris T[raiani Hadriani Aug(usti)] / et L. Aelii [Caesaris Aug(usti) f(ili)] / coloni arg[entariarum Dardanicarum ?] / curante Telesph[oro proc(uratore) Aug(usti) lib(erto) fec(erunt)]*. Based on the mention of Hadrian's stepson Lucius Aelius, the inscription is dated to 136–137 CE, during the short period of their joint reign [5, pp. 65-66, no. 15; 6, pp. 241-247; 20, pp. 266-267, no. 331 (25); 32, p. 131, no. 12; 44, 501]. The *Coloni* from the silver mines of Dardania most likely took care of this undertaking (*argentariae Dardanae*). Dušanić believes that the *coloni*, who erected the monument, were from Bithynia, since the Bithynians, as experts in working in quarries and mines, were already witnessed in Dacia, in the iron mines near Malo Trnovo, as well as the possible migration of a large number of inhabitants of northwest Asia Minor, an area quite close to Antinous' homeland, headed by a mining procurator [6, p. 255]. Although part of the name of the mine is missing, scholars assume that these are the silver mines of Dardania [6, pp. 246, 255]. The mine procurator could have been from the Hellenic-speaking provinces of the Roman Empire, as indicated by his Greek name, *Telesphorus* [18, vol. I, IIA, IIIA, IIIB, IV, VA]. It is important to emphasize that the monument states that he was the imperial procurator who worked from the settlement near Sočanica [8, p. 172], which means that the Dardania mines were part of the imperial fiscus and were not leased to private individuals (conductors).

It is believed that the migration of a large number of inhabitants from northwestern Asia Minor (freedmen and slaves from large imperial estates) at Hadrian's request would have coincided (before 136–137 CE) with the time of the construction of a temple in the Roman settlement of Sočanica. Dušanić states that such conclusions are supported by an epigraphic monument found in Prizren [6, p. 255; 43, 531a]. Certain researchers dated the inscription to the second half of the 2nd century or the first half of the 3rd century [20, p. 262, no. 303 (8)], whereas Dušanić pointed out that nothing more precise can be said about the date [6, p. 256]. *Iuppiter Melanus*, mentioned on this monument, may be analogous to Zeus with the epithet Melenus, attested on Trajan's coin from the city of Dorylaeum in Asia Minor [6, pp. 256-257; 14, pp. 129-130]. This would indicate the claim that the dedicators of the monument from Prizren moved from Asia Minor. The presence of inhabitants from the east in Dardania is linked to work in the mines [6, pp. 256-257].

About 20 km northwest of Sočanica, at the site of Rudnica, a tombstone ($0.138 \times 0.62 \times 0.8$ m) was discovered with the following inscription: *D(is) M(anibus) / Fl(aviae) Atalantes / vix(it) annis L / P. Aelius Aug(usti) / l(ibertus) Menander / (contrascriptor) officinar(um) / coniug(i) pientis(simae) / b(ene) m(erenti) / h(ic) s(ita) e(st) [3, 14606 = 45, 1378; 5, p. 68, no. 28; 33, pp. 166-167, no. 66; 20, p. 265, no. 318 (12)]*. The *nomen gentilicium* Aelius provides only a *terminus post quem* for dating the monument, which is the reign of Emperor Hadrian (117–138 CE). The cognomen Menander is of Greek origin and is known everywhere, especially in Italy [1, p. 245]. Publius Aelius Menander was an imperial freedman and worked as a *contrascriptor* in an ore smelter controlled by the emperor [17, p. 357].

A fragment of a marble tombstone ($0.60 \times 0.38 \times 0.16$ m) with a damaged inscription was discovered in the village of Sočanica. The text reads: *D(is) [M(anibus)] / Aeli[- - -] / vixit [annis] / XXXXV[- - - m(ensibus) - - -] / d(iebus) XVI[- - -] / Teles[- - -] / [- - -]s[- - -] / [- - -] [5, p. 62, no. 4; 45, 1383; 48, p. 93, no. 218]*. The *nomen gentilicium* Aelius provides a *terminus post quem* for dating the monument, which is the reign of Emperor Hadrian (117–138 CE). The name in the sixth line can also be completed as

Teles[phorus] [18, vol. I, IIA, IIIA, IIIB, IV, VA]. Some of them are *Telesinus*, *Telesphorianus*, *Telesphoris*, etc. [28, p. 111]. We could assume that the dedicator's family originated from some of the eastern provinces (Hellenic-speaking countries) of the Roman Empire. A colonist from the east was also discovered on the monument, which was discovered in Prizren. The monument is dated to the 2nd century [21, p. 192, no. 1; 22, p. 261, no. 297 (2); 43, 1438; 48, p. 133, no. 322]. The monument is dedicated to Telesphorus, Hygia, Asclepius, the Genius of the cohort, and the genius of Dolichen [24, p. 49, no. 9; 23, pp. 129-131; 27, p. 278]. It is assumed that the dedicator, Surus, may have been originally from Syria. The researchers concluded that most likely the dedication to the Genius of Dolichen, with the epithet *paternus deus*, is in fact a dedication to the deity of the native region [11, p. 474; 23, p. 128; 42, p. 182].

Results. Evidence from the *Municipium Dardanorum* that mentions settlers of eastern origin (Hellenic-speaking provinces of the Roman Empire) dates from the reigns of the Antonine (98–192 CE) and Severus (193–235 CE) dynasties. It is believed that this refers to the population that was relocated (by imperial decree) from the eastern provinces of the Empire to the Roman settlement near the present-day village of Sočanica (south of Upper Moesia). In the south of Upper Moesia, one of the colonists of eastern origin is Telesphorus, the procurator of the mines in the vicinity of the *Municipium Dardanorum*. His name is recorded on a votive inscription dedicated to Antinous in 136–137 CE, which was found in Sočanica. It is believed that the settlers from Bithynia erected this monument, because the cult of the deified young man was particularly widespread there. Such examples of the settlement of population from the eastern provinces of the Empire in mining towns were recorded in Ulpiana, as well as in other Roman provinces. It is believed that the relocation of a large number of inhabitants from northwestern Asia Minor (freedmen and slaves from large imperial estates) at Hadrian's request would have coincided (before 136–137 CE) with the time of the construction of a temple in the Roman settlement of Sočanica. The claims about the settlement of inhabitants of eastern origin to the south of Upper Moesia are also supported by the

fragment of the tombstone found in Sočanica with an incomplete name that can be completed as *Teles[inus]*, *Teles[phorianus]*, and *Teles[phoris]*. It is also confirmed by a *stela* from the Rudnica site north of the village of Sočanica. It mentions Publius Aelius Menander, an imperial freedman, who worked (*contrascriptor*) in an ore smelter. The cognomen *Menander* is of Greek origin and is known everywhere, especially in Italy.

The epigraphic evidence discovered so far indicates that the arrival of inhabitants of eastern origin in the *Municipium Dardanorum* was most likely connected with work in the mines. It is believed that this resettlement of the population of eastern origin was supposed to contribute to more fruitful production in the mines in the south of Upper Moesia. It is assumed that the policy of relocating the population of eastern origin into this area during the reign of Antoninus and Severus was connected with the intensive exploitation of mineral wealth in the area of Upper Moesia, since this was a period of serious crisis when the reserves of precious metals, largely all silver, in Spanish and British mines were exhausted.

ABBREVIATIONS

- AE* – L' Année épigraphique. Revue des publications épigraphiques relatives à l'Antiquité romaine. Paris, 1972.
- ANRW* – Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung. Berlin, New York, 1977, 1979.
- CBFIR* – Schallmayer E. et al. Corpus der griechischen und lateinischen Beneficiärer-Inschriften des Römischen Reiches. Der römische Weihebezirk von Osterburken I. Stuttgart, 1990.
- CIL* – Corpus Inscriptiones Latinarum. Berolini, 1873.
- ILJug* – Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Iugoslavia. Ljubljana, 1963, 1978, 1986.
- IMS* – Inscriptions de la Mésie supérieure. Vol. I. Beograd, 1976.
- JÖAI* – Jahreshefte des Österreichischen Archäologischen Instituts in Wien. Wien, 1900.
- LPGN* – Lexicon of Greek Personal Names. Vol. I, IIA, IIIA, IIIB, IV, IVA, VA. Oxford, 1988, 1998, 2001, 2005, 2010.
- OPEL* – Onomasticon provinciarum Europae Latinarum. Vols. I–IV. Budapest, Wien, 1994, 1990, 2000, 2002.

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