

The role of Kosovo in littoralisation processes around the Adriatic and the Aegean

Tomor Kastrati

Abstract

There is no evidence that Kosovo rivers have ever been navigable, but river valleys have played a role as a road artery in the concentration of social and economic activities in coastal areas, namely in the processes of littoralization.

Due to its position, Kosovo is bridge between the seashores and continent within the Mediterranean basin in the part of southeastern Europe.

Kosovo with its rivers mostly belongs to the Black Sea watershed, but in this paper will be emphasized the relations to the Adriatic and Aegean area due to the close distance and specific social, economic, cultural links extended in these spaces throughout history.

Keywords: Kosovo, Adriatic, Aegean, Littoralizations, Links.

1. Introduction

Water has been and remains a basic condition of life that plays a key role in the distribution of human settlements. The shores of the sea, the terraces of rivers, lakes, places near water sources and the like have been attractive to living space since the beginning of human life. When added to this the ease of circulation of floating and road traffic in river valleys, the use of natural resources with an emphasis on agriculture, livestock

and mining, and the development of commercial and industrial economies and other forms of cooperation then the changes in social life in developmental processes acquire a geographical feature.

Kosovo has a territorial distance of about 100 km as the crow flies from the Adriatic and it is connected through the river Drini i Bardhë (ancient Drilon) which valley covers most of western Kosovo, otherwise known as the Dukagjini plain.

Drini i Bardhë springs from the northwest of Peja, joins near Kukës with Drini i Zi that springs from Lake Ohrid and together they join in one branch with the river Buna which flows in the Adriatic and continue with another branch flowing into the sea near Cape Rodoni in a bay known as the Drini Bay.

The valley of the Drini i Bardhë River has been used as the natural route from the Neolithic period. From the Roman period through this route passed the Lissus-Naissus highway, crossing western and eastern part of Kosovo.

Through the valley of this river the central of Balkans is linked to the nearest point with the Adriatic coast, in Albania.

With the Aegean, at about 300 km, Kosovo in its eastern part, is connected through the valley of the river Lepenc, which springs from the mountains of Sharr.

2. Interregional links in the past

Until the establishment of the Museum of Kosovo in 1949, knowledge of Kosovo's historical links to the Adriatic area was little known. The first reports of Kosovo's contacts with the Adriatic were published in the 19th century by archaeologists A. J. Evans (Evans, 1885), A. von Domaszewsky (Domaszewsky, 1890), A. Buday (Buday, 1918), etc., and the first known archaeological excavations in Kosovo were carried out by F. Kanitz (Kanitz, 1892). Prior to them, ancient authors such as Strabo mentioning the ancient population of Kosovo - Dardania, are not considered reliable evidence, unlike Ptolemy, who with the allocation of geographical coordinates for settlements along the roads of the Roman period in today's Kosovo is considered, but primary support remains archaeological and historical literature (Çershkov, 1973, p. 21).

The main role in relations with the coast has historically been played by the area of the Dukagjini plain, namely the Drini i Bardhë river basin.

The first cultural and historical contacts between the territory of Kosovo, the Adriatic coast, and the general Mediterranean basin, are known from archaeological sites.

Research results from the project Archaeological Map of Kosovo during the period 2000 - 2005/2012, helped to better understand Kosovo's relations originally with the Adriatic in terms of social, economic, cultural processes throughout the past.

According to research, the earliest period in which people lived in Kosovo was the Neolithic Age about 8000 years ago according to relative chronology. Since then, almost uninterrupted connections of the Adriatic coast.

Given the spread of human cultures from the eastern Mediterranean and the southern Balkans, the area of today's Kosovo could serve as a suitable place to live and a station for the spread of cultures in the Balkans and Southeast Europe. Although the origins of pre-urban cultures are not clearly defined, the options that characterize this aspect are classified into three main considerations: migratory, diffusional, and indigenous.

In the early Neolithic, a few skeletons were discovered at the site of Runik in the western part of Kosovo, similar to the Mediterranean Neolithic tradition of burial rites (Kastrati, 2016, p. 28-29). The research of these skeletons has been carried out from an anthropological point of view (Mikić, 1988, p. 21). This type of burial is known in the Early Neolithic in the eastern Adriatic area as well (Batović, 1979, p. 495). From the Neolithic, the cult of burial remained the same (body on the side of folded legs) or very similar until the Bronze Age (body on the back of folded legs).

While typology and variants of the material production differ, the Neolithic burial tradition is preserved in its typical form not only on the shores, but even in the depths of continents that surround the Mediterranean such as in Africa, in southern Egypt by the river Nile near Sudan - Jabal Ramlah. In the Middle East this type of burial practice has been discovered in Tell Sabi Abyadas well (Plug, Plicht, Akkermans, 2014, p. 545). The spread of this burial rite is also known beyond Gibraltar, in Britain. The research in the field of genetics confirms the spread of Mediterranean influences even in Scandinavia since this Age (Nicholls, 2012).

During the Middle and Late Neolithic again in the western part of Kosovo, discoveries show the coexistence of the Adriatic cultural elements

of Danilo and Hvar and the Central Balkan of the Vinča culture, with local specifics of cultural development.

The typical Adriatic Neolithic culture is known in Kosovo, exactly in its western part at the sites of Rreshtan, Hisar I, Vlashnjellb. Rhytons or vases, ceramic vessels, and fragments similar to those at the coastal sites of the Danilo III-IV and Hvar - Lisičić I were discovered (Bunguri, 2009, p. 306-307). These objects culturally belong to the Neolithic of the Adriatic-Aegean complex (Korkuti, Andrea, 1972).

Cultural remains of the Mediterranean origin in Kosovo from the Bronze Age are known in the archeological site of Iglarevo, about 7 kilometers from the river Drini i Bardhë. The remains are represented by Aegean-type swords and ornaments discovered in the tombs of the Middle Bronze Age - 14th century BC (Đurić-Slavković, 1984, p. 17-24).

The Iron Age in Kosovo lasted from the 11th century BC until the emergence of the Roman Empire in the 1st century BC.

At the beginning of 11th-9th century BC, in Sinai, northwest of the Drini i Bardhë basin, an ax of the Albanian-Dalmatian type was discovered (Garašanin, 1955, p. 226), which is actually considered to be the first form of monetary currency. This fact shows the first contacts of the use of objects of this type of exchange on the territory of Kosovo with the Adriatic area, which chronologically coincides with Phoenician expansion period. Due to the geographical position of the area where it was discovered, it is possible that there was a special road that through the Ibër valley passed the famous medieval Adriatic Road that went to Bosnia and Dubrovnik.

The finds originating from the coast are discovered in the even later in the 7th century BC at the site of Vlashnje, while in the 6th - 7th century BC at the sites of Romajë (Djurić, Glišić, Todorović, 1975), Banja e Pejës, Hisar (Parović - Pešikan, 1987) and probably at the site of Janjevë.

The Influence of Greek culture continued in the Hellenistic period 3rd - 2nd century BC, evidenced by some discoveries from the locality of Banja e Pejës (Kastrati, 2006, p. 135-141).

Since the discovery of Damastion coins from 4th century BC in area of Janjevë and Novobërd near Prishtina, the location is debatable whether it is in Kosovo.

On the establishment of the province of Moesia in the period between 2nd and 6th centuries, the territory inhabited by the Dardanians also entered it. This marks the beginning of Roman rule in today's Kosovo. The foundations of Romanization were gradually laid; the wars of this Illyrian

tribe with the ancient world ended in the second half of the first century and the consolidation of Roman power in this area was completed (Čerškov, 1973, p. 23, 27).

In the context of global expansion and power in the Mediterranean basin, the Roman Empire developed economic, cultural, and social policy to the extent that it was forced to manage the in the countries it ruled in the most organized way known until then.

Due to the complexity and the need for effective territorial management, the construction of roads that connected the coast with the interior of the continent began, namely through Kosovo passed the Lissus-Naissus road.

About 100 agglomerations of Roman settlements are known in Kosovo, which covers an area of about 2000 m² to about 100 hectares (Čerškov, 1973, p. 28). Among them, the most prominent being the systematically explored, Ulpiana near Pristina - otherwise known as "urbs splendissima" (great city), Municipium DD north of Mitrovica and Dresnik near Klina.

The factors that influenced the establishment of these Roman cities in Kosovo were fertile lands and ores.

The Late Antiquity known in 4th - 6th centuries will be marked by riots due to the invasion of so-called barbarian peoples, which will bring a new situation in the region. As a result of the circumstances at the time, defensive fortifications would be built at strategic hilly points.

In the 6th century in the province of Dardania, Emperor Justinian engaged in the establishment of a fortification system to control territorial integrity and ensure road communication by keeping open the hinterland connections with the coast within the Byzantine Empire.

Of particular importance during this period was the surveillance of important traffic routes and strategic points on the Lissus-Naissus route, which penetrated the Drini valley into Kosovo, connecting the centers of Lisi and Scodra on the Adriatic coast, including other coastal centers from Bar to Durrah. with the interior of the continent (Hoxha, 2006, p. 195-197).

Global developments that took place in the Mediterranean basin during the Middle Ages such as the crusades of the 11th. - 13th centuries; the so-called Spanish Reconquista of the 15th -16th centuries; Ottoman period from 14th century; have resulted in different ethnocultural infiltrations in the Albanian territories (Kastrati, 2020 a, p. 138).

By the development of mining in Kosovo at the beginning of the 14th century are mentioned in 1303 Trepça and Janjeva, rich in silver and lead; the Bërvenik mine even earlier, in 1280, and the most famous Balkan mine

in the Middle Ages - Novobërda, is mentioned in 1326. These centers have developed economic relations with coastal centers such as Dubrovnik, Kotor as well as with merchants from Venice, etc. (Berisha, et al. 1973, p.114, 117).

The interest of coastal countries in minerals and agricultural products also influenced the development of certain centers in Kosovo such as Pristina, which was a village at the time when the byzantine emperor Kantakauzenos was there in late 14th century, but due to its important communication position and proximity to mining centers such as Novobërda, Trepça and Janjeva, became a center of special importance.

Zeta's medieval road led from Shkodra through Danje and the Drini i Bardhë valley to Prizren, then to Lipjan, Janjevë and Novobërd. From Bar, Budva and Kotor they went to Peja, one branch was leading to Prizren, and the other branch to Novobërda. From the Croatian territory, people traveled through Bosnia, through Banjski, Zveçan, Vuçitërn, to Pristina and Novobërda. The Dubrovnik Road led from Novi Pazar to the territory of Kosovo and all these roads were articulated and led further to Istanbul (Ibid. p.115). Kosovo has influenced the social and economic development of the Albanian Adriatic coasts, the cities of Shkodra, Lezha and Durrës.

During the Ottoman period, cities began to expand in the lowlands, near the old centers, but on new ground. A new form of urban concept began to be used in Kosovo; for the first time, the city was open, with no surrounding walls.

In this period that lasted from the end of the 14th century until 1912, about 500 years, Kosovo played an intensive role in the littoralization of urban centers especially around the Adriatic through transit and foreign trade.

Cities in Kosovo developed very quickly, shortly after the beginning of Ottoman rule due to its civilizing influence, which was systematically urban. The forts were built only to house garrisons. Cities had managed to develop due to their position at important road traffic junctions. (Berisha, 1973 et al., p.137).

Kosovo in relations with coasts, took place in two main phases during the Ottoman period: Phase 1 - second half of the 14th century until the middle of the 15th century, when self-governing towns or colonies near mines in Kosovo coexisted with Ottoman rule and Phase 2 -second half of the 15th century until the beginning of the 20th century, when the Ottomans had the territory under total administration (Kastrati, 2020 b, p.115).

3. Littoralizing developments on the eve of the modern period to date

Trade relations between Kosovo and Adriatic significantly will change in 1873, on the occasion when the Thesaloniki-Shkupi-Mitrovica highway was built shifting thus the main role of relations from the cities of the Adriatic coast like Shkodra, to the centers of the Aegean like Thessaloniki.

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 marks a turning point in the use of Mediterranean Sea routes by Western European countries, which during the Ottoman Empire - when it was a Mediterranean power, used ocean routes as a convenient opportunity to exploit African and Asian countries, as well as the development of the slave trade and the realization of other economic and political benefits.

After 1912, when Kosovo seceded from the Ottoman Empire, the wars that followed such as the Balkan Wars and World War I, respectively after 1918, when a new state order known as the old Yugoslavia or the Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom was established, Kosovo's foreign trade with the coast of Albania marks a severance of relations, while after the Second World War a general severance until the fall of communism in the early 90s.

In the period of the new Yugoslavia after the Second World War, a modern highway was built that connected Kosovo with the Adriatic coast known as the Adriatic Highway, which passes through northern Kosovo and continued to Montenegro, Bosnia, and Dubrovnik. Currently, the main cooperation has been in the field of coastal tourism.

Since the beginning of the 21st century, Kosovo has been facing difficult challenges in the general plan of social development. The non-liberalization of the visa regime for the newly declared state in 2008 and internationally recognized, represents another difficulty that creates obstacles to the normal and progressive development of social and economic processes.

In the new geopolitical circumstances, the last two decades of the 21st century, in which Kosovo and the Balkan region in general have been included, the barriers between Albanians in their historically inhabited lands have begun to be released.

Recently, important events have taken place in the field of Kosovo's contacts with the Adriatic area. After a long period of suspension of Kosovo's access to the Adriatic, on October 2, 2020, after the agreement in Peja on November 26, 2018, and after the presentation of the project in July 2020 for customs points in the port of Durres, an agreement was reached on

cooperation between the two countries Albania and Kosovo in the field of customs clearance of goods.

According to this agreement, Kosovo is practically allowed to have its customs officials directly in the port of Durrës to inspect goods entering its territory without hindrance from the state of Albania.

On the opening of the Kosovo customs office in the port of Durrës, the economic opportunities of Kosovo with the Adriatic coast through the Albanian coast have been restored and reopened after more than a hundred years of interruption.

4. Conclusion

The general physical-geographical conditions with rich natural resources, have made Kosovo an attractive place for living and exchanges. These factors have influenced the important coastal centers to have relations with Kosovo in various fields, especially in economic aspects.

In the process of littoralization of urban coastal centers, Kosovo has contributed to some extent, especially around the Adriatic with emphasis and the Aegean.

Kosovo has an important place in social, economic, cultural, political developments in the context of Mediterranean relations throughout history.

List of References

- Barber M., (2018), *Pre-Christian Cemeteries: Introductions to Heritage Assets*. Swindon. Historic England. <https://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/selection-criteria/scheduling-selection/ihas-archaeology/> accessed on 22 October 2020.
- Batović Š., (1979), "Jadranska zona" *Praistorija Jugoslavenskih Zemalja II*, Sarajevo, p. 473-645.
- Berisha A., Maletić, M., Kuzmanović, D., Bërlajolli, S., et al., (1973), *Kosova, dikur dhe sot*, Beograd.
- Buday A., (1918), *Régészeti Kutatás Allaniában 'Dologzatok azedélyi nemzeti Múzeumérem-és régiségtárából' II*, Kolozsvár.
- Bunguri A., (2009), "Tipare të qytetërimit neo-eneolitik në Rrafshin e Dukagjinit", *Vepra themelore në albanologji*, Aktet e Konferencës Shkencore Ndërkombëtare 18-20 dhjetor 2008, p. 301-315.
- Çershkov E., (1969), *Rimljani na Kosovu i Metohiji*, Beograd.

- Çershkov E., (1973), *Romakët në Kosovë dhe Municipiumi D.D. te Soçanica*, Prishtinë. wrote about the doubts about Strabo's information Ć. Truhelka, str. 66. On the character of Strabo's data: N. Vulić, Something about Roman Dalmatia, Glas SKA CXIV/1925, p.81. As for the Roman itineraries see K. Müller, *Iteneraria Romana*, Stuttgart 1910, p. 556-557.
- Domaszewsky A. Von., (1890), *Die Grenze von Moesia superior und der Illyrische*, Grenzoill.
- Djurić N., Glišić J., Todorović J., (1975), *Romaja parahistorike*, Beograd.
- Evans A. J., (1885), "Antiquarian research in Illyricum", part. III, *Archaeologia* XLIX, Westminster.
- Garašanin D., (1955), "O problematici sekira jadranskog tipa povodom sekire iz Sinaje na Kosmetu", AV, Ljubljana.
- Đurić N., (1984), "Bronzanodopski nalaz iz Iglareva", GMK XIII - XIV, Priština, p.17-24.
- Kanitz F., (1892), *Romische Studien in Serbien*, Akad. Wissensch XLI, Wien.
- Kastrati T., (2006), "Gjetje rasti nga Banja e Pejës", *Kosova Arkeologjike*, Prishtinë, p. 135-141.
- Kastrati T., (2016), *Veçoritë më të hershme të qytetërimit në Europë*, Prishtinë.
- Kastrati T., (2020), "Trade between Kosovo and South Adriatic in the Ottoman period", *ILIRIA International Review - Vol 10, No 2 (2020)*, p. 109-117.
- Kastrati T., (2020), "Mediavelarcheolinguistic evidence in Kosovo on Albanian and Iberian relations", Barcelona, 10 February 2020, p. 131-140.
- Kobusiewicz M., Kabaciński J., Schild R., Irish J.D., Wendorf F., (2009), "Burial practices of the Final Neolithic pastoralists at Gebel Ramlah, Western Desert of Egypt", *British Museum Studies in Ancient Egypt and Sudan* 13, p. 147-174.
- Korkuti M., Andrea Zh., (1972), *Fouilles 1969-1970 dans l'agglomération néolithique de Cakran (Fieri)*, St.alb. IX-I, Tirana.
- Mikić Ž., (1988), "Antropological Remains from the Neolithic Sites in Serbia", *The Neolithic of Serbia*, Belgrade, p. 20-23.
- Nicholls H., (2012), "Ancient swedish farmer came from Mediterranean", *International weekly journal of science*, www. Nature.com, accessed: 03.11. 2020.
- Parović-Pešikan M., (1987), "Odras grčkih keramičkih oblika u keramici starijeg gvozdenog doba centralnog Balkana", *Starinar* XXXVII, Beograd.
- Përzhita L., Luci K., Hoxha G., Bunguri A., Peja F., Kastrati T., (2006), *Harta Arkeologjike e Kosovës I*, Prishtinë.

Plyg H., Plicht van der J., Akermans PMMG., (2014): "Tell SabiAbyad, Syria: Dating of Neolithic cemeteries, Radiocarbon", Vol. 56 No. 52, University of Arizona, p.