

ABOUT TWO PROVINCES

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Eötvös Loránd University
Dept. of Ancient History
H-1088 Budapest, Múzeum körút 6-8.

University of Debrecen
Dept. of Classical Philology and Ancient History
H-4010 Debrecen, Egyetem tér 1.

Fax: + 36 52 512 900 / 22130

E-mail: nemeth.gyorgy@btk.elte.hu

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GYÖRGY NÉMETH

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DÁNIEL RÉFI OSZKÓ

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SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT “THE LACK OF THE GREEK INTEREST” FOR THE EASTERN ADRIATIC COAST DURING THE ARCHAIC PERIOD

FILIP BUDIĆ

Abstract: While various colonies, either Greek or Phoenician, had been established all over the Mediterranean during the period from the 8th until the end of the 6th century BC, the Eastern Adriatic Coast was almost completely deprived of any stronger colonial impact. By using the concept of the middle ground, the aim is to consider the problem from a theoretical perspective.

Keywords: Greek colonization, the Eastern Adriatic Coast, the middle ground

Although the Adriatic Sea or better to be called the Gulf (ὁ κόλπος)¹ is close to Western Greece, Greek sailors and merchants did not take much interest in colonizing the shores north of the Strait of Otranto during their earliest colonial ventures in the 8th century BCE. Their colonial aspirations in the area were weak until the late 7th century when two Greek city-states were founded in the present day Albania. Those are Epidamnos established around 627 BCE (Thuc. I, 28, 2; *Bell. Civ.* II, 39) and Apollonia conventionally dated to 588 BCE (Hdt. IX, 93 – 95; Paus. V, 22, 3 – 5; Plut. *De sera num. vind.* 7). In the second half of the 6th century BC two more settlements developed in the northwestern part of the gulf - Spina and Adria. Although not entirely Greek poleis in a proper sense, it is believed that both of them housed a significant Greek community.² On the other hand, the Eastern Adriatic coastline, i.e. from Bojana River in

1 The early Classical authors defined the Adriatic as a Gulf. For instance, Hecateus mentioned it as ὁ κόλπος Ἀδριαῖς (FHG 4, Fr. 58), ὁ Ἀδριατικὸς κόλπος (Fr. 61), or ὁ Ἴόνιος κόλπος (Fr. 61). The authors of the 5th century BCE, such as Aeschylus (*Prom.* 837) or Hellanicus of Lesbos (ap. Dion. Hal. I, 10, 28), preferred to use the term Gulf for the Adriatic Sea. See more in: Lisičar 1951, 7; Coppola 2002, 101–103.

2 The basics in Braccisi 1971, 135–159. About the mixed identities in Spina and Adria: D’Ercole 2011, 430–443; Uggeri 2009, 897.

the south to the Gulf of Trieste in the northeast, seems to be left aside in terms of colonization until the first decades of the 4th century BCE.

Some spatial and social data coming from historical sources

However, it has been assumed that the Cnidian colony might have been founded on the island of Corcyra Melaina (present-day Korčula in Croatia) during the 6th century BCE. This hypothesis is built upon three historical sources: Pseudo-Scymnus (428), Strabo (VII, 5, 5), and Pliny the Elder (*NH* III, 152), who claim that the island hosted a Cnidian city-state. Furthermore, some scholars bring forward the idea that the Cnidians established a colony with help of Corcyraeans after the death of notorious Corinthian tyrant Periander (based on *Hdt.* III, 48; *Plut. De Herod.* 860b - c).³ That would place the foundation of Corcyra Melaina in the early 6th century BCE. Nevertheless, no archaeological remains of an archaic settlement have been traced so far to support the claims of the ancient authors.⁴ Scholars agree that had there been one, it would not have survived until the second decade of the 4th century BCE when Dionysius the Elder initiated a colonial movement towards the Eastern Adriatic islands.⁵

Even though there are no traces of an early settlement, Greek authors of the Archaic and Early Classical Era supplied their audience with a rough shaping of the Adriatic geographical space. For instance, if we lean towards the idea that Spartan lyric poet Alcman, who lived in the 7th century BCE, wrote about a Venetic horse (*Fr.* I, 1, 50–51),⁶ that would imply that some Greek sailors and explorers had already been familiar with the northern shores of the Adriatic Gulf. In Hecateus' *Journey around the Earth* written at the beginning of the 5th century BCE, there is a piece of basic information about peoples dwelling on the Adriatic coast (*FGrHist* 1 F 89–101). Due to the fragmentary nature of his work, it is difficult to judge how detailed Hecateus' descriptions were. For instance, a piece of text (*FGrHist* 1 F 93) illustrating Liburians (Λιβυρνοί) provides distinctive information about their clothing style

3 This historical construct was put forward by Beaumont 1936, 173–174. Most scholars accept his idea. See for instance: Lisičar 1951, 66–77; Suić 2001, 167 with the list of older references. For more on this problem, see Kirigin 2010a, 113–117.

4 For the older historiographical discussions about the location and dating of Corcyra Melaina, see Radić and Bass 2002, 289–290; Zaninović 2015, 96–104. The recent views are presented in: Radić and Bass 2002, 290–293; Kirigin 2010a, 113–114; Zaninović 2015, 109–112.

5 Kirigin 2010a, 114; Zaninović 2015, 112.

6 For instance: Beaumont 1936, 191; West 2011, 25, footnote 17.

(Λιβυρνική μανδύη) and types of boats (Λιβυρνικά σκάφη). Moreover, Liburnian dress *mandya* is mentioned in the verses of Aeschylus' lost tragedy *Edonians* (TGFr Aesch. F 364) composed in the first half of the 5th century. In *Prometheus Bound* (837- 840), the same author designated the Adriatic as *The Great Gulf of Rhea* (ὁ μέγας κόλπος Ῥέας). The Greek lore of the Adriatic could be augmented by quotations of the later Greek and Roman authors that possibly used some more ancient sources.⁷ Considering the data provided by the historical writings, it should be emphasized that some Greek communities were indeed familiar with the Adriatic area since the 7th century BCE onwards. Their range of knowledge was not immense, but that should never be judged only by the historical sources since many of them have not survived. The claim that the Adriatic was in the eyes of an Archaic Greek sailor a distant space somewhere far in the northwest⁸ should also be reassessed.

The earliest Greek pottery on the Eastern Adriatic coast

The Greek finds from the Eastern Adriatic coast that could be roughly dated from the 7th until the early 4th century BCE are diverse. There are around forty black-figure vessels and fragments that originate from Corinthian, South Italian or Attic workshops and can be dated from the late 7th until the beginning of the 5th century BCE.⁹ In addition to that, the traces of the Attic red-figure pottery (from the 6th till the 4th century) are even more spread and greater in number.¹⁰ That should be related to the establishment of Spina and Adria during the second half of the 6th century and increasing Athenian influence. Due to their Archaic or Early

7 Plenty of such examples were distinguished by Radoslav Katičić in his monograph *Illyricum mythologicum* (Katičić 1995a). For an archaic origin of data in Apollonius' *Argonautica*, see also Čače 2002, 83–100.

8 Radoslav Katičić underlined this idea after analyzing the verses of Aeschylus (*Prom.* 837) and Apollonius of Rhodes (*IV*, 327; 509; 548). Since both writers described the Adriatic as the Sea where the Titans resided, i.e. as the Great Gulf of Rhea or the Sea of Cronus, Katičić (1995b, 64) concluded that the Greeks saw the Adriatic as a distant and strange world.

9 Nikolanci 1973, 89–115; Lisičar 1973, 4–11; Marović and Nikolanci 1977, 7; Batović 1984, 37–62; Migotti 1986, 148–151; Kirigin 1996, 123; Čače and Kirigin 1998, 65, fig. 5 and 6; Mihovilić 2002, 502–503; Kirigin, Katunarić, Miše 2005, 256–257; Kirigin 2010a, 113–117; Kirigin 2010b, 120; Čondić and Vuković 2017, 84–87. The summary of what has been found and published so far, see in Šešelj 2009, 420–422; Zaninović 2015, 84–85.

10 Batović 1968, T. XXIX and XXX; Idem 1987, T. XLII, 1; Migotti 1986, 158–163; Čače and Kirigin 1998, 65; Mihovilić 2002, 502–505; Radić 2003, 63; Kirigin 2004, 154–156; Kirigin, Katunarić, Miše 2005, 256; Miše 2005, 27–29; Kirigin 2010a, 113–117; Kirigin 2010b, 120; Čondić and Vuković 2017, 87–94. The summary in Šešelj 2009, 422–424.

Classical features, some metal objects, as well as clay and stone sculptures are usually dated to the 6th or 5th century BCE.¹¹

Caution must nevertheless be exercised while drawing a more refined conclusion about the aforementioned material. For a larger number, it cannot be precisely said if they came to light from a defined archaeological context. Some of the most prominent examples appear to be either accidental finds or their provenience remains unspecified.¹²

Moreover, since it is known that some of the artefacts originate from the indigenous settlements or funerary context,¹³ there is a complex debate about the way they ended up on the shores of the Eastern Adriatic. The items might have arrived as a result of a reciprocal gift exchange or as a tribute to the local chieftains. Nevertheless, notorious piracy along the Eastern Adriatic Coast, known from some later historical sources (for instance: Strab. VI, 2, 4; Liv. X, 2; *Bell. Civ.* II, 39), could also be a plausible option. Furthermore, a debate on the arrival of a foreign object in the indigenous culture should not be deprived of the general theoretical background based on the anthropological and sociological research.¹⁴

On the other hand, the exchange networks are as puzzling as social contact itself. Considering the Trans-Adriatic networks that had been active since the Early Iron Age, it should be reasonably assumed that some of the objects could have reached the eastern coast from the Italian Peninsula as a result of the interregional exchange and not via direct contact with the Greeks.¹⁵ If that model proves to be the case, the mentioned material should not be taken as evidence of regular exchange networks with the Greek world.

The main issue for discussion about the scope of Greco-indigenous contact is a deficient state of archaeological research. Most of the epichoric settlements on the Eastern Adriatic Coast, as well as their necropoleis, are neither systematically excavated nor well-studied. An exemp-

11 Gabričević 1969, 9–10; Nikolanci 1973, 89–104; 1989a, 84–94; 1989b, 192–194.

12 Batović 1984, 42 with further references in the footnotes 12–21. This question is especially highlighted in the case of the earliest Corinthian ware on the eastern coast of Adriatic that is claimed to be found on the island of Korčula. These vases are today kept in Dubrovnik Archaeological Museum. See more in Lisičar 1950, 35; Idem 1973, 3, 6, T. IV, 10; Nikolanci 1973, 111–113; Idem 1976, 150; Lisičar 1976, 315–316, fig. 3.

13 Parović-Pešikan 1960, 26–27; Lisičar 1973, 6, T. III, 7; Idem 1976, 316; Batović 1984, 39–50; Čondić and Vuković 2017, 84–94.

14 See for instance Hodos 2006, 4–9; Van Wees 2009, 458; Osborne 2009, 99–100; Dietler 2010, 131–133.

15 A similar conclusion in Šešelj 2009, 438.

tion is a recently published material from the catalogue *In the City's Foundations: The Archaeological Layers of the Liburnian Zadar*. It reveals the Iron Age layers from the peninsula of the northern Dalmatian city of Zadar. Based on the extent of the prehistoric layers, the position of necropoleis and natural limits of the peninsula, it could be concluded that this Iron Age settlement was one of the major hill-forts of the Northern Dalmatia.¹⁶ Among many significant finds, there are fragments of Greek pottery with black and red figural decoration that could be dated from the 6th until the 4th century BCE.¹⁷ Apart from Zadar, several pieces of the Greek pottery, dated to the 5th century BCE, stem from the layers of the hill-fort settlement Rat on the island of Brač in Central Dalmatia.¹⁸ A fragment of Corinthian painted pottery has recently been found during the field survey on the site Podkalac near Podgora.¹⁹ It is important to emphasize that such finds are not only spread along the coast and islands. Four fragments of skyphoi and aryballoi with black-figural decoration were discovered during the excavation in 1977 at hill-fort Ošanići in southern Hercegovina.²⁰ This site is strongly correlated with the Neretva river route - the most convenient way that binds the Eastern Adriatic Coast with its inland.

To sum up, the number of the Greek finds that could be dated in the pre-colonial period (for the Eastern Adriatic before the 4th c. BCE) is constantly increasing, and it is a matter of time when some new examples might come to light.

These important discoveries show us that the indigenous peoples were familiar with the Greek imports at least from the 6th century onwards. At the same time, some Greek authors wrote about the local Adriatic geographical and social features. However, during the Archaic and Early Classical Period, Greeks never managed (or even intended) to establish either a larger port of call or a colony in the area.²¹ There have been several hypotheses for the long absence of the prominent Greek influence on the Eastern Adriatic Coast, most of them highlighting political circumstances, lack of fertile land and metal ores, as well as weather conditions.²² By using the model of the middle ground, I wonder whether

16 Čondić and Vuković 2017, 31.

17 The older finds are presented in Batović 1984, 44–52; and the new ones in Čondić and Vuković 2017, 84–94.

18 Barbarić 2006, 58–59.

19 Tomasović 2016, 19.

20 Batović 1984, 42.

21 Had there been one on the island of Korčula, it would have not survived for a long time, i.e. surely not until the 4th century BCE. See the discussion above (pp. 1–2).

22 Political circumstances as the main reason (see Zaninović 2015, 11–52 with the list of

the mutual geographical and social interconnections could be the main reason for a longer Greek absence on the Eastern Adriatic Coast.

The middle ground and the Eastern Adriatic

A concept of the middle ground was defined by Richard White who tried to widen the scope of knowledge about the contact that indigenous tribes had established with the Europeans on the North American Great Lakes.²³ A model soon appeared to be useful for the Mediterranean context, especially when discussing the early encounter of the Greek explorers and colonists with the autochthonous peoples.²⁴ The basic value of the middle ground is its conceptual power – it could be elaborated both from a geographical and social point of view. It is at the same time the location of the contact, i.e. the place where newcomers are accepted or refused, where they accommodate to the local social environment and where a process of entanglement of two different cultures could develop. The middle ground is also a more advanced concept than Hellenisation or acculturation because it is not based on unilateral cultural transmission.²⁵

Several features of the middle ground concept are of great importance when discussing the cultural encounter in general. The same could be applied for the Eastern Adriatic coast.

The middle ground is a physical space, which means that spatial and geographical features of the certain area play a major role. The most important factor of the physical space is the so-called buffer zone where the worlds of the colonists and the natives meet. These are locations like beaches, capes, islets, mouths of the rivers, etc.²⁶ Geographical peculiarities of the Eastern Adriatic Coast play a distinctive role in terms of the first encounter. Firstly, its coastline is quite narrow - limited to the northeast with the rough Dinaric Alps. In the same time, it is very well indented - with plenty of relatively small islands, islets, and rocks

the older references). Other possibilities were briefly mentioned in Milićević-Bradač 2007, 37.

23 White 1991, x.

24 Malkin 2002, 155–172; Tsetskhladze 2006, lvii; Dietler 2010, 11–12.

25 More on this: Malkin 2002, 153.

26 Save for the middle ground concept, similar terms have appeared in the discussion of modern colonialism. Greg Denning names it metaphorically as “the beach” (Denning 1980, 129–163), Mary Louise Pratt as the “contact zone” (Pratt 1992), Brian Ferguson and Neil Whitehead as the “tribal zone” (Ferguson and Whitehead 1992, 8–12), etc. See more in Dietler 2010, 13.

lengthwise.²⁷ Geologically speaking, a rough karst terrain, typical for the Eastern Adriatic mainland as well as for the islands, offers very constrained life opportunities, especially when considering shortages in fertile land, sources of potable water and metal ores.²⁸

From a social and economic point of view, the middle ground locations belong to the interaction space. This is the zone of direct and sustained contact between local people and alien newcomers. Here misunderstood cultural differences could be worked through various practices, languages or even violence. That conclusion is very important in terms of pre-colonization phase when the Greeks are far away from home, trying to negotiate their place in the new environment. It is reasonable to assume that the middle ground would have developed much faster and easier if the first encounter had been non-hegemonic,²⁹ i.e. when the first impact on each other is not an open threat. Though, according to the written sources (for instance: Thuc. VI, 3 - 5), it is important to bear in mind that the first encounter had not always been friendly, but rather a violent confrontation.³⁰

A limited geographical, as well as social space offered by the Eastern Adriatic Coast, is one of the features that could act as a suitable argument for a lack of the convenient development of the middle ground. The possibility of violent conflict is here much more plausible than in the areas where social pressure on the environment is weaker. It seems that such a scenario could be visible in the “mysterious” disappearance of Archaic Corcyra Melaina. Even better evidence to support this idea is an account written by Diodorus (XV, 14, 1 - 2). He described the clash between the indigenous people and the Parians when the latter decided to establish a colony on the island of Pharos (modern-day Hvar in Central Dalmatia) at the beginning of the 4th century BCE. The similar struggle for the territory might have happened on Issa (modern-day Vis). According to an analysis of pottery finds, life on the most prominent hill-fort Talež that belonged to the indigenous

27 After the Aegean shores, the Eastern Adriatic coast is the second most indented in the Mediterranean with 1242 islands, islets and rocks. There are 78 islands larger than 1 km², 524 from 0,01 - 1 km² and approximately 640 rocks smaller than 0.01 km². See: Gržetić 2002, 21; Gržetić 2003, 21.

28 For metal ores see <https://www.hgi-cgs.hr/karta-mineralnih-sirovina-RH.html>. For the major springs see Biondić et al. 2016, 16-53.

29 For the definition of the hegemonic and non-hegemonic relations see Alvar 2000, 28.

30 A recent discussion about the violent or peaceful encounter of the Greeks and indigenous people in Zuchtriegel 2018, 6-7.

people ended when the Greek city was established in the north-eastern bay during the first half of the 4th century.³¹

A brief conclusion

The aim of this paper is to show a basic component for the framework that could be applied to pre-colonial and early colonial phases in the Adriatic zone. The ability to include the regional peculiarities of the Eastern Adriatic into the broader theoretical approach about the Greek pre-colonial ventures brings forward some additional thoughts about the long absence of the colonial intentions in the area during the Archaic Period. The claims expressed here are to be strengthened by further research.

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31 Kirigin 2010b, 119.

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ABBREVIATIONS

JHS = Journal of Hellenic Studies

PJZ = Prapovijest jugoslavenskih zemalja

RFFZd = Radovi Filozofskog fakulteta u Zadru

VAHD/ VAPD = Vjesnik za arheologiju i historiju dalmatinsku / Vjesnik za arheologiju i povijest dalmatinsku

VAMZ = Vjesnik Arheološkog muzeja u Zagrebu